

Woolly Bear

OCTOBER

HOW TO CARE FOR A “BEAR”

The **Banded Woolly Bear**, *Pyrrharctia isabella*, is a very familiar insect across North America. In the autumn these caterpillars are actively searching for places to overwinter. In the spring they will spin a cocoon and then emerge as the Isabella Tiger Moth. Since they are safe to handle, easy to take care of, and popular with children, they are an ideal insect to keep and observe throughout the winter and spring!

Where can I find Woolly Bear caterpillars?

In the fall, Woolly Bears are seeking out shelter to hibernate in or under. They can be found in lawns, shrubs, or on sides of houses. You can pick them up gently with your hands.

How do I care for my Woolly Bear?

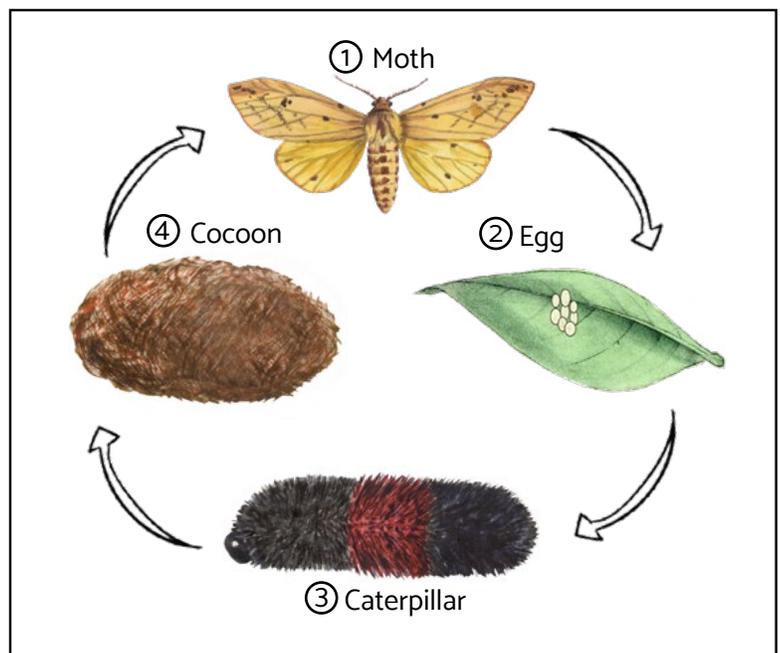
Put your Bear in a clear container with soil or paper towel on the bottom, and a lid with holes for air circulation. Woolly Bears eat goldenrod, dandelion, burdock, plantain, and some grasses. Feed your Bear fresh leaves daily. Clean out the frass (droppings) from the container daily. Keep the container outside. A garage, shed, or even next to a house works well. The Woolly Bear must feel the cooling temperatures so it knows when to begin hibernating! You may also want to frequently mist your Bear so that it can have a drink of water.

What do I do with my Woolly Bear in the Winter?

When the weather turns colder, place dead leaves on the bottom of the container for the caterpillar to sleep under. Check your Bear often and mist with water if it looks dry. In the spring, when temperatures begin to reach 15°C, feed your caterpillar fresh leaves when it becomes active.

Help! My Woolly Bear made its cocoon!

In the spring, and after your Bear makes its cocoon, the container can be moved indoors for easier observation. Place sticks in the container with the cocoon for the emerging moth to climb in order to dry its wings. When your moth emerges, place fresh nectar flowers in the container for your new moth to feed on. Moths cannot comfortably live in small containers the way caterpillars can. You can enjoy your moth for one or two days, but then it must be released outdoors near where you found it.



Isabella Tiger Moth
Pyrrharctia isabella