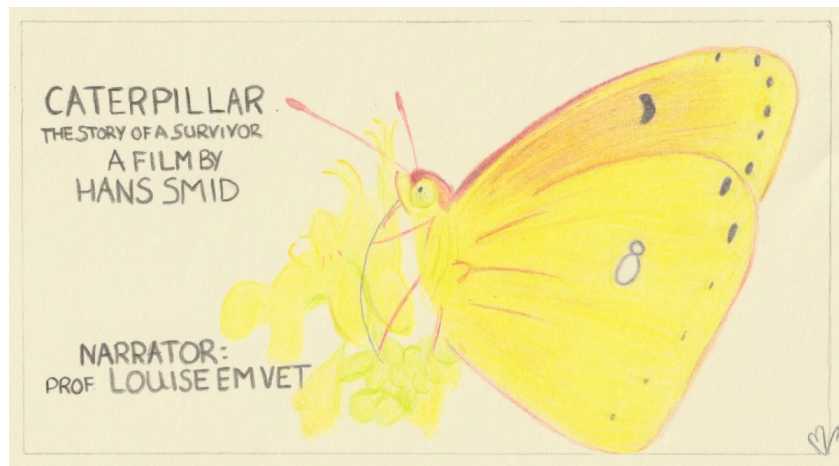


Caterpillar: The story of a survivor by Hans Smid

A movie about the hidden drama unfolding in your own backyard.



When I was attending the XIII European Congress of Entomology in France this summer, I had the opportunity to watch the nature documentary “Caterpillar: The story of a survivor” made by Hans Smid. The documentary follows a tiny, and quite frankly adorable, caterpillar. A slightly hairy variety with a yellowish-green worm-like appearance, a black head, mandibles, and eyes. What we all know to happen in the life of a caterpillar is the transformation from the yellowish-green creature to a beautiful butterfly. The main task of a caterpillar is thus to be hungry and to eat until enough resources have been gathered to start the transformation into a butterfly.

Unfortunately, that is not always reality. You may think that gazelles and zebras have a tough life living together with lions in the savanna, but as the documentary reveals: even worse torments may be happening in your own backyard. Hans takes us on a trip exposing all the perils of life as a tiny cabbage white caterpillar. The drama keeps on coming in many different forms, viewed from the outside, but also, interestingly, from inside the caterpillar’s body itself. Despite the realistic and horrific content, the sound effects and comforting voice of narrator Louise Vet keep things light, with funny moments along the way.

What the movie shows is that there is an astonishing amount of biological diversity associated with the life of a cabbage white caterpillar. While I have worked with some of the species featured in Hans's movie, it still amazes me to see the number and extent of ecological interactions involved. That notion is highlighted by recent scientific findings showing that the plethora of nightmares butterflies and other insects encounter makes a seriously large contribution to the newly estimated 14 to 20 million insect species on Earth¹, many more species than previously thought^{2,3}.

The trailer of the movie is available on Vimeo⁴ and the full movie is available for educational purposes through Hans Smid. You can find photos and more videos made by Hans on his website BUGSINSPACE⁵.

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- ¹ [Colwell RK *et al.* 2026. Constructing a lower-bound estimate of the global number of insect species on a hyperdiverse empirical foundation. PNAS 123: e2524283123.](#)
- ² [Mora C *et al.* 2011. How many species are there on Earth and in the ocean? PLoS Biol 9: e1001127.](#)
- ³ [Visser B. 2026. Why is biodiversity important? Biodiverse No. 4. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20342905](#)
- ⁴ [Trailer of Caterpillar: The story of a survivor on Vimeo](#)
- ⁵ [BUGSINSPACE, the website of Hans Smid](#)

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Visser B. 2026. Caterpillar: The story of a survivor by Hans Smid. Biodiverse No. 7. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22300128