This is the most widespread and commonest of the forester species, which, despite their name, live in open grassy habitats, not woodland. All three species are coloured 'Lincoln green' and there are few obvious visual differences between them. The differences lie in their life-cycles and the foodplants favoured by their caterpillars. Foresters fly in sunshine in June and July. They spend a lot of time nectaring on grassland flowers, and usually mate in the afternoon. Males are sometimes seen flying in the early evening.

Forester caterpillars feed on species of sorrel. They are whitish-green with pinkish-brown markings. Initially they burrow into the soft tissue between the skin of the leaves before moving to the outside as they mature after the winter. Then they chew the upper surface of the leaf, leaving the lower skin untouched. They tend to feed low down and pupate in the late spring in a flimsy cocoon that they spin for themselves in leaf-litter on or near the ground.