



Notes on the Butterflies of Leicestershire and Rutland

Marbled White

Ketton Quarry holds the only long-standing colony of this butterfly in the County. There have been odd records from other parts of the counties, and recently there have been a couple records from the Wigston area. Unimproved grassland, particularly on limestone, would be the favoured habitat. Flight period: mid-June to mid-August.

Gatekeeper

This butterfly is widespread and can be common in grassland habitats and is sometimes seen in gardens. Flight period: mid-July to August.

Meadow Brown

A widespread and common butterfly that is often abundant in open grassland sites. Flight period: mid-June to September.

Ringlet

Although widespread and not uncommon in many areas of the counties, the extreme west of Leicestershire is close to the edge of its range in England. This butterfly prefers tall grassland in damp situations, especially woodland type habitats. Flight period: end of June to mid-August.

Small Heath

Although widely distributed, this butterfly is rarely common in the counties. It occurs mainly on grassland containing fine grasses. Flight: June to August.

Other Species

The following species are unlikely to be seen in Leicestershire and Rutland: The Chequered Skipper, Large Tortoiseshell and High Brown Fritillary are all now extinct in the counties. The Wood White has only been recorded once in recent years, as has the Duke of Burgundy Fritillary, though it is possible that the latter species could return to some of its former haunts in Rutland. Although both the Small Blue and the Chalkhill have not been reliably recorded in the counties for over a hundred years, there is a remote possibility that they could turn-up. The Camberwell Beauty is a very rare migrant, which could be recorded in the county in suitable years.

The Butterflies for the New Millennium Project completed the largest and most comprehensive survey of Britain and Ireland between 1995 and 1999.

These notes provide a summary of what we have learnt about butterflies in Leicestershire and Rutland and are aimed at giving new recorders a basic understanding of those species likely to be encountered in the county:

Small Skipper

Although rarely seen in gardens, the Small Skipper is often common in rough grassland habitats throughout the County. Flight period: mid-June to mid-September.

Essex Skipper

Until recently this butterfly was only found in Rutland, but now it has been recorded from all but the extreme west of the County. The simplest way to distinguish this species from the very similar Small Skipper is by examining the underside of the tips of their antennae; they are black in the Essex Skipper and orange/brown in the Small Skipper. Usually found in grassy habitats. Flight period: late June to August.

Large Skipper

Another grassland species found throughout the County. Flight period: end of May to early August.

Dingy Skipper and Grizzled Skipper

Both of these butterflies have declined in recent years and are now only regularly recorded from a handful of sites in the County. Disused railway lines and quarries are favourite haunts of both species. Flight period: May to June.

Clouded Yellow

A migrant butterfly, rare in most years but more frequent in others (e.g. 2000).

For more information, or to submit records of butterflies seen, please contact:

**Leicestershire Lepidoptera Recording Scheme,
Holly Hayes Environment and Heritage Resources Centre,
216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 4DG**

Brimstone

A widespread and fairly common species throughout the counties, which can be seen in most months of the year.

Large White and Small White

Widespread and common, especially near gardens and allotments. Flight period: virtually any time between spring and autumn.

Green-veined White

Widespread and common, especially near damp habitats and hedgerows. Flight period: virtually any time between spring and autumn.

Orange-tip

Widespread and fairly common, particularly along road verges and the banks of rivers and canals. Flight period: April to mid-June.

Green Hairstreak

This butterfly is uncommon and local in the counties. It is most frequently recorded from heathland sites in the Charnwood Forest area and from disused quarries in Rutland. Flight period: May and early June.

Purple Hairstreak

Widespread but often overlooked as this butterfly spends most of its time around the tops of oak trees. Flight period: July to early September.

White Letter Hairstreak

This butterfly is also widespread but often overlooked, though this species spends most of its time around the tops of elm trees. Flight period: July to mid-August.

Black Hairstreak

One of our rarest butterflies, this species is associated with Blackthorn. It is only known from a small area in Rutland. Flight period: mid-June to mid-July.

Small Copper

This butterfly can be found in a wide variety of flowery habits throughout the counties, though it is generally not common. Flight period: virtually any time between May and the end of autumn.

Brown Argus

Like the Essex Skipper, this butterfly has recently spread across the county from its strongholds in Rutland and might now be found in any suitable grassy habitats. It could be mistaken for a female Common Blue, but the Brown Argus has no trace of blue on its upperwings. Flight period: May to June and mid-July to mid-September.

Common Blue

Widespread and often common in grassy places, though rarely seen in gardens. Flight period: May to June and August to September.

Holly Blue

Widespread and found in a range of habitats Unlike the Common Blue, the Holly Blue is often seen in gardens, flying high around bushes and trees. This butterfly undergoes large fluctuations in numbers from year to year. Flight period: late March to late June and from late June to September.

White Admiral

This woodland butterfly has been recorded from a handful of county locations in recent years. Nationally, it appears to be doing quite well at the moment and local searching could reveal the presence of colonies of this butterfly in woodland in the counties. Flight period: late June to mid-August.

Red Admiral

A migrant species which can be found throughout the counties, and is sometimes common in gardens. Flight period: any time between early spring and late autumn.

Painted Lady

Another migrant butterfly which can be found throughout the counties, although commoner in some years than others. Flight period: usually seen from June onwards.

Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock

Both are widespread and common species. Flight period: virtually any time between spring and autumn.

Comma

A widespread butterfly most commonly found in woodland habitats, though it is often a common visitor to gardens. Flight period: virtually any time between spring and autumn.

Dark Green Fritillary

A butterfly of flower-rich grassland. Only a handful of recent records, but a powerful flier that could turn-up anywhere. Flight period: June to August.

Silver-washed Fritillary

A woodland butterfly of southern England. In 2000 a pair were recorded in the Hinckley area, indicating that it may have returned to the counties. Flight period: mid-June to August.

Wall

Although widespread in the counties, this butterfly is rarely common. It is found in a variety of habitats, including disturbed ground, and sometimes gardens. Flight period: May to late June and late July to September.