

Butterflies seen between 2002 and 2006

Family Lycaenidae

(coppers, hairstreaks and blues)

Small Copper (late April - mid Oct)
Common Blue** (early May - mid Oct)

Family Nymphalidae

(vanessids, emperors and fritillaries)

Red Admiral (mid June - mid Oct)
Painted Lady (early Aug - early Oct)
Small Tortoiseshell (anytime)
Peacock (anytime)
Comma (anytime)

Family Satyridae (browns)

Speckled Wood (early April - early Oct)
Marbled White** (late June - mid Aug)
Gatekeeper** (mid July - early Sept)
Meadow Brown (mid June - late Sept)
Ringlet** (late June - mid Aug)

Family Hesperiidae (skippers)

Small Skipper** (late June - early Aug)
Large Skipper** (early June - early Aug)

Family Pieridae (whites and yellows)

Clouded Yellow (mid July - early Oct)
Brimstone (anytime)
Large White (mid April - mid Sept)
Small White (mid April - early Oct)
Green-veined White (mid April - mid Sept)
Orange Tip (early April - late June)

Species marked 'anytime' are ones that hibernate as adults. Occasionally, they can be sighted on bright days in winter. But, like all butterflies, they love the sun and they are seen in large numbers only in the summer.

**believed to be breeding on site.



You will find butterfly junction beside the Create Centre Car Park, opposite the old Ashton Swing Bridge on the Avon New Cut.



Thanks to the following who helped Southville Community Development Association (www.southvillecentre.org.uk) to publish this leaflet.

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For more information about Butterfly Junction and how to help, contact Southville Centre:
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South Bristol Butterfly Junction



Discover a hidden butterfly breeding ground in the heart of Bristol

Butterfly Junction

Since 2002 a small group of local people have been monitoring this 'waste' ground for butterflies. Up to 2006 the group has identified 20 species from five different families. Some species have only been spotted once or twice, but others are regular visitors. We think that six species actually breed on site: the caterpillars of five of these feed upon specific types of grass. The mixture of grasses is a main reason why this is such a good site for wildlife. The sixth, the Common Blue caterpillar, feeds on bird's-foot trefoil.



20 butterflies is about a third of all the butterfly species in England.

Mostly, the site thrives because people leave it alone, but there is a maintenance regime carried out each year by local people. This is mainly geared to protecting the grass mixture by, for example, clearing rubbish and cutting back brambles and other bushes and trees that would swamp the grass and create too much shade.



Front cover butterfly pictures (from the top) Red Admiral, Specked Wood, Gatekeeper.

What other creatures live at Butterfly Junction?

Day moths such as the silver-y, six-spot burnet and cinnabar have been seen. Cinnabar breeds on site and others may, too. Field, meadow and lesser marsh grasshoppers are all frequent in the grassland and dark bush-cricket is present in the scrub. A proper study of night moths, beetles, spiders and other groups has yet to be made.



What's the difference between a butterfly and a moth?

Butterflies and moths form an order of insects called Lepidoptera containing about 2,400 species in Britain. These are grouped into about 20 superfamilies of which butterflies are just one. All the rest are lumped together as 'moths', ie 'any Lepidoptera that's not a butterfly.' A quick way to recognize a butterfly is to look at the tips of the antennae. If it has a 'club' at the tip, it's a butterfly. If it has something else, it's a moth. Moths are as different from each other as they are from butterflies



Any special plants?

Apart from important butterfly food grasses such as cock's-foot, red fescue and yorkshire fog, seven species have been identified as 'Avon Notable'.



They are blue fleabane, rat's-tail fescue, fern-grass, flattened meadow-grass, sea-couch, small toadflax and great lettuce.



Marbled White

(*Melanargia galathea*)

The Marbled White is actually a Satyridae or 'brown' and is mainly a butterfly of South West England. It is believed to breed at Butterfly Junction and has been seen every year since monitoring began, although numbers were very much lower in a year following engineering works on site.



The butterfly itself emerges towards the end of June and can be seen flying, usually in or just above the grass, until around mid-August. During this period they will be mating and dropping eggs into the grass. The eggs hatch after about three weeks and the tiny caterpillars then hibernate, usually on the ground. They emerge again in early spring and start feeding and growing. They eat several grass species, but it is suggested that red fescue is essential to their diet. The caterpillar forms a chrysalis towards the end of May or early June from which the adult butterfly eventually emerges.

Marbled white butterflies tend not to fly long distances, so the Butterfly Junction colony is unlikely to be easily reinforced by individuals from outside. Also, because of their dependence on particular grasses, this colony could easily be wiped out.

Common Blue

(*Polyommatus icarus*)

In the right season, these bright blue butterflies are to be seen dodging about in the grass or basking in the sun. All of these are males, probably looking for females and fending off rival males. Less frequently seen are the females which are brown with orange markings on the wing margins. Often they are hiding in the grass. When they are ready to lay, the females usually fly low looking for suitable plants on which to deposit a single egg. They test each plant with their feet.



The preferred caterpillar food plant is bird's-foot trefoil and there isn't much of this at Butterfly Junction. This means that the colony is quite vulnerable. They may be using other plants, but we don't know.

Common Blues usually have two broods in southern Britain and this seems to be the case at Butterfly Junction where adults emerge in two pulses: early summer and late summer. Eggs are laid throughout the summer and emerge as caterpillars after a couple of weeks. The green, well camouflaged caterpillar devotes a few weeks to eating and growing before either forming a chrysalis or, if the year is advanced, hibernating.

Orange Tip

(*Anthocharis cardamines*)

This is a spring butterfly and is one of six 'whites' or Pieridae that visit Butterfly Junction. Only the male has orange tips to its forewings. These are a warning to birds that the butterfly tastes unpleasant as it is full of bitter mustard oils that were taken from its foodplant when it was a caterpillar. The underside of both the male and female has tiny black and yellow scales that give a green 'mossy' effect. This is good camouflage when the butterfly is at rest among plants. The female doesn't fly much, but waits for the wandering male to find her, so has less need of the warning orange tips. Males passing through Butterfly Junction will be looking (or 'smelling' with their feet) for food and females. Eggs are usually laid on lady's smock or garlic mustard: one per plant otherwise the caterpillars eat each other.



Orange tips can be seen from early April (sometimes earlier) until early June. Caterpillars begin to emerge in mid-May and to form chrysalises by July. This butterfly over-winters as a chrysalis.

Painted Lady

(*Cynthia cardui*)



This butterfly is a great traveler. They emerge in their millions in North Africa and Arabia and spread out across Europe. Generally, they arrive in England in May or June, but can arrive earlier and can be seen as late as October. It's not clear if this journey is done in one flight or over several generations. In some years this butterfly is very numerous. It lays eggs in England and its caterpillar eats various types of thistle and sometimes gets to the chrysalis stage. However, any remaining adult, caterpillar or chrysalis will perish once winter arrives. The entire English stock is dependant upon the annual migration.



Green-veined White

(*Pieris napi*)

This butterfly is frequently lumped together with its cousins the Large and Small White as a 'Cabbage White'. In fact, it doesn't much care for cabbages. Instead its caterpillars feed on plants such as water cress, lady's smock and garlic and hedge mustard. Like most butterflies it prefers the youngest and tenderest shoots.

The various whites are difficult to distinguish on the wing, but at rest, the underside of the green-veined white shows that the wing veins are thickly speckled with dark scales, giving the veins a greenish look.



There are usually two appearances of adults each year, about mid-April and mid-July. Courting males will shower a female with a chemical to get her in the mood. After successful mating she is smeared with an anti-aphrodisiac to deter other males, at least for a while. The advantage for her is that she can go about her egg laying without disturbance.

These butterflies hibernate in the chrysalis form.

Large Skipper

(*Ochlodes sylvanus*)

Skippers have been described as 'moth like' and 'primitive'. Two 'golden skippers' breed at Butterfly Junction. They look quite similar and are called the large and small skipper. The large skipper has more mottled wings, top and bottom, than its smaller relative. Male skippers can be distinguished by the black sex-brand, a dark line on the upper forewings.



Males are the more active, looking for females, especially in the morning. Later they tend to bask in the sun waiting for females and often driving off other males. Once mated, the female lays eggs on the underside of the grass of her choice, usually cock's-foot. After a couple of weeks, the caterpillar emerges and constructs a 'nest': it creates a grass tube by bending a leaf-blade and holding it with silk. From this base the caterpillar emerges periodically to feed. This butterfly hibernates as a caterpillar, emerging again in the spring to grow some more before forming a chrysalis in May. The new adults emerge in early June.