



Butterflies of **EXMOOR** National Park Pocket Guide



EXMOOR
NATIONAL PARK



Butterfly	Flight times											Status/ Regional Trend*	Habitat
	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov			
Small Skipper												L / D	Grassy areas, woodland glades and rides
Large Skipper												L / D	Areas with long grass, scrubby areas, woodland rides
Clouded Yellow												M / NA	Sunny, open, flowery meadows
Brimstone												C / S	Scrubby grassland, hedgerows, woodland rides or glades
Large White												C / I	Gardens and allotments
Small White												C / D	Gardens, allotments and fields of Oil-seed Rape
Green-veined white												C / I	Hedgerows, riverbanks and damp vegetation
Orange Tip												C / I	Damp, grassy habitats
Green Hairstreak												L / I	Moorland, heathland, chalk downland, woodland rides
Purple Hairstreak												L / S	Oak trees in mature woodland, parkland and hedgerows
White-letter Hairstreak												R / I	Elm in hedgerows and woodland
Small Copper												L / D	Unimproved grassland, woodland rides and glades
Brown Argus												R / D	Heathland, woodland clearings, road verges, chalk grassland
Common Blue												C / D	Sunny sheltered areas, woodland clearings, grassy areas
Holly Blue												C / D	Hedgerows, woodland rides, gardens
Red Admiral												M / I	Sunny, open habitats, gardens, flower-rich areas
Painted Lady												M / NA	Dry, open, sunny areas
Small Tortoiseshell												C / D	Sunny, open habitats
Peacock												C / I	Sunny, open habitats, woodland rides and glades
Comma												C / D	Open woodland, woodland edges, gardens
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary												R / D	Woodland glades and clearings, damp grassland areas
High Brown Fritillary												R / D	Open, sunny bracken habitats
Dark Green Fritillary												L / D	Open, sunny bracken habitats, moorland, woodland rides & clearings
Silver-washed Fritillary												L / I	Sunny rides and glades in woodland, woody hedgerows
Marsh Fritillary												R / D	Damp tussocky grassland (chalk downland in Dorset)
Heath Fritillary												R / NA	Sheltered heathland combes (on Exmoor), also coppiced woodland
Speckled Wood												C / I	Woodland rides and glades, hedgerows, gardens
Wall												L / D	Short, open grassland, stony tracks, cliffs, quarries
Marbled White												L / S	Unimproved grassland, flowery meadows
Grayling												L / D	Dry heathland, chalk or limestone grassland, quarries, coastal habitats
Gatekeeper												C / D	Hedgerows and woodland with wide sunny rides
Meadow Brown												C / D	Flowery open grassland areas, verges, woodland rides
Ringlet												C / I	Tall grassland, woodland rides and glades
Small Heath												L - D	Heathland, dry grassland, coastal dunes

 Occasional/possible flight time
 Peak flight period

* **Status/Regional Trend:**
(C) Common on Exmoor; **(R)** Rare on Exmoor;
(L) Locally Common/Rare elsewhere; **(M)** Migrant;
(D) Decline; **(I)** Increase; **(S)** Stable; **(NA)** Not assessed.

Day-flying moths

If you see what looks like a butterfly on Exmoor but is not in the identification guide overleaf, it could be a day-flying moth. Some of the more common ones you might come across are included below.

There are a number of differences between most moths and butterflies, but there is no hard and fast rule which separates them. In general moths are active at night and butterflies are active during the day; moths tend to hold their wings flat against their body when resting, while butterflies tend to rest with wings held vertically; and the antennae of butterflies tend to be clubbed, rather than the feathery tips of many moths' antennae.



Cinnabar
dark ground colour with strip of bright red along top of forewing.



Silver Y
dull grey or brown, with central silver spots in the shape of a 'Y'



Six Spot Burnet
similar colouring to the Cinnabar moth, but has much narrower forewings



Chimney Sweeper
sooty black colour, with white fringe at tip of forewing



Burnet Companion
forewing pale grey-brown with bands of darker brown; yellow-brown to outer half of hindwing

All moth photos by Mark Parsons.

Butterflies in decline

Most British butterflies remain a cause for concern, with three-quarters of our native species in decline. Four butterflies and over 60 moths became extinct last century. Butterfly Conservation aims to halt and reverse these declines. Our vision is of a world rich in butterflies for future generations to enjoy.

Butterflies are beautiful and intrinsically valuable. Together with moths, their sensitivity to environmental change makes them valuable indicators of the health of the countryside. Falling numbers are an early warning to all wildlife that cannot be ignored.



Fritillaries guided walk in the Heddon Valley

Butterfly monitoring is carried out to help us understand what is happening to our butterflies, and the data we collect helps us to direct our conservation resources where they are most needed. If you would like to get involved with recording butterflies, please get in touch with Butterfly Conservation (contact details are on the back of this guide).

Discover Exmoor's butterflies...

Exmoor National Park is home to over 30 species of butterfly, and offers opportunities to walk in a stunning landscape to view them. Exmoor's diverse range of habitats, including moorland, heathland, coastline, woodland, valleys and farmland, support a wealth of butterflies, including some very rare species found only in a few locations in Britain.

Butterflies vary in their flight periods and the type of habitat they use. This guide will help you identify all the species you are likely to come across, and find out where and when to see them.

Butterflies can be enjoyed in Exmoor throughout most of the year. A warm and sunny day in January or February might offer an occasional glimpse of a peacock or a red admiral; a few weeks later a brimstone or a small tortoiseshell might reveal itself, and by April the butterfly season is upon us!

Exmoor is a stronghold for some of Britain's rarest fritillary butterflies, including Britain's most rapidly declining species, the high brown fritillary. This large, bright butterfly is faring well on the steep, south facing bracken slopes in the Heddon Valley, assisted by conservation management undertaken by the National Trust. Populations of heath fritillary can be seen on warm and sunny days in June flying low to the ground in sheltered heathland valleys, whilst other species of conservation concern can also be spotted on Exmoor, including the marsh and small pearl-bordered fritillaries and the more common, fast-flying dark green fritillary.



High Brown Fritillary



Brown Argus

Walking route to view heath fritillary on Haddon Hill

As well as the butterfly interest, this walk offers fine views over open heathland habitat to farmland beyond, and across to Wimbleball Lake.

This site is particularly important for heath fritillaries, but if you keep a sharp look out, you may also spot small heath, green hairstreak, marbled white, small & large skippers, small & large whites, green-veined white or holly blue as you go. Other species you might come across include red admiral, painted lady, small tortoiseshell, peacock and comma. Heath fritillaries are generally very sedentary, with numbers concentrated in areas where the habitat is just right - sheltered heathy areas where the caterpillar's food plant, common cow-wheat, is growing in abundance. This plant, a low-growing spiky plant with small pale yellow flowers, grows in association with bilberry, and can be found in scattered patches across the heath here.

The heath fritillary flies from early June until around the middle of July, and the best time to see the butterfly is around mid-June when numbers are usually at their peak.

Directions: Park in the main Haddon Hill car park (grid reference SS 970284), around 3km east of Upton, just off the B3190. There are toilets in the car park and an information board. Leave the car park through the kissing gate, and you will see a track ahead. Turn right on the track, and very soon cross a narrow tarmac road and continue walking in an easterly direction alongside the woodland at the top of the slope.

Cross a path coming from a gate to the right (there is a lay-by here, and an opportunity for a short cut if time is short). When you reach a junction of paths towards the woods at the far end, take the left fork and head down the slope. Very soon another path joins from the right and at this point turn left to walk on a narrow path just above the woodland edge (if you get to the broad track at the bottom, you've gone too far). Your path is now quite rough and indistinct in places. If you lose the path continue walking in a westerly direction alongside the fringes of the woodland - this is where you have the best chance of spotting the heath fritillary, that bask and nectar in the sheltered areas here. Continue walking along the fringes of the wood and turn left on the track to climb the slope and re-join the track you started out on. (This track leads straight up to the gate and road lay-by and small parking area). When you reach the track at the top of the slope, turn right to re-trace your steps to the car park.



Heath Fritillary

Distance: 2.5km, 1-1½ hours (can be shortened by parking in the small parking area at SS979286, from where a shorter circuit can be taken or a direct walk down the track to the heath fritillary flight area).



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Where to find out more

There are many excellent guides to British butterflies available, including:

- **WildGuides: Britain's Butterflies** by David Tomlinson and Rob Still
- **Philips Guide to Butterflies of Britain & Ireland** by Jeremy Thomas

Recommended books featuring butterflies of the Somerset & Bristol area include:

- **50 Butterfly Walks in Somerset & Bristol** edited by Roger Sutton
- **Butterflies in Somerset & Bristol** by Adrian Dexter

The two publications above are available by emailing the Somerset Branch of Butterfly Conservation through the contact page on their website (see below).

For information about local events and guided walks, visit the local Butterfly Conservation websites:

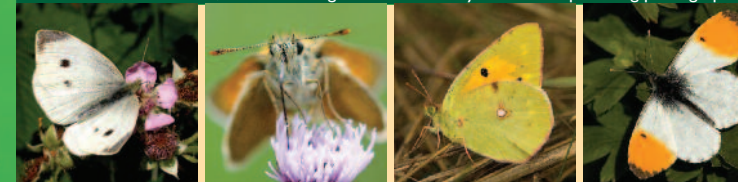
www.devon-butterflies.org.uk and
www.somerset-butterflies.org.uk

For further information or, if you would like to get involved with helping to save our butterflies, please contact either of the organisations below:

Butterfly Conservation, 01929 400209
info@butterfly-conservation.org

Exmoor National Park Authority, 01398 323665
info@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Front cover: Dark Green Fritillary. Special thanks to Jim Asher, Steve & Debbie Cheshire, Peter Eeles, Neil Hulme, Keith Warrington and Rosemary Winnall for providing photographs.



www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk
www.butterfly-conservation.org

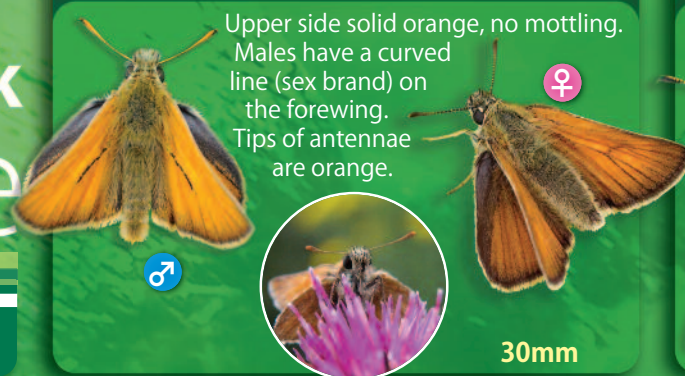
Butterflies of Exmoor National Park Identification Guide

Please note: illustrations not to scale. Measurements (shown in **yellow text**) are a guide to wing span. Where two measurements are given this indicates the range: male to female.

Small Skipper

Thymelicus sylvestris

Upper side solid orange, no mottling. Males have a curved line (sex brand) on the forewing. Tips of antennae are orange.

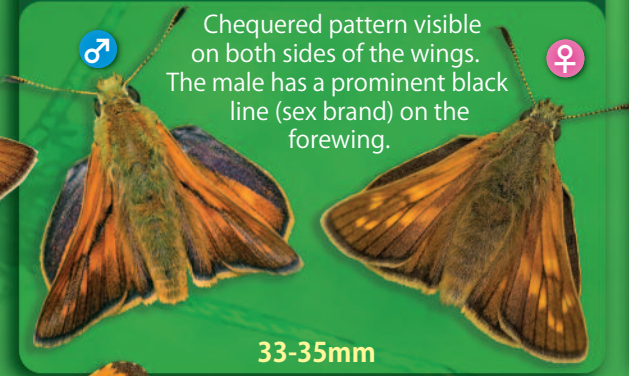


30mm

Large Skipper

Ochlodes sylvanus

Chequered pattern visible on both sides of the wings. The male has a prominent black line (sex brand) on the forewing.

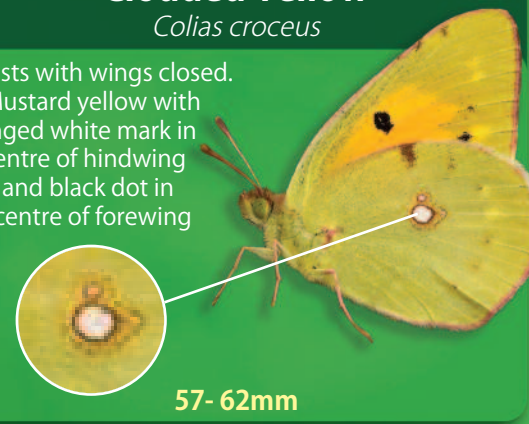


33-35mm

Clouded Yellow

Colias croceus

Rests with wings closed. Mustard yellow with ringed white mark in centre of hindwing and black dot in centre of forewing.

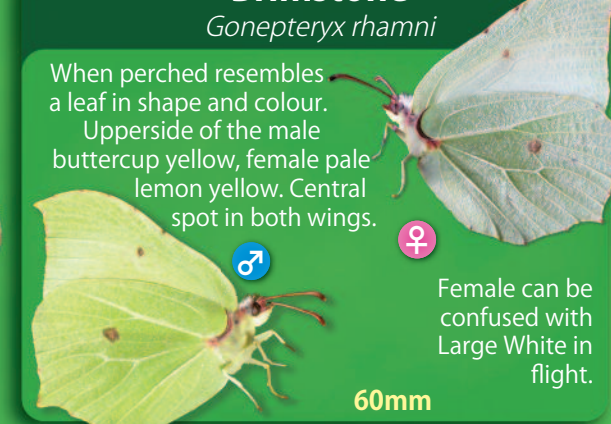


57-62mm

Brimstone

Gonepteryx rhamni

When perched resembles a leaf in shape and colour. Upside of the male buttercup yellow, female pale lemon yellow. Central spot in both wings.

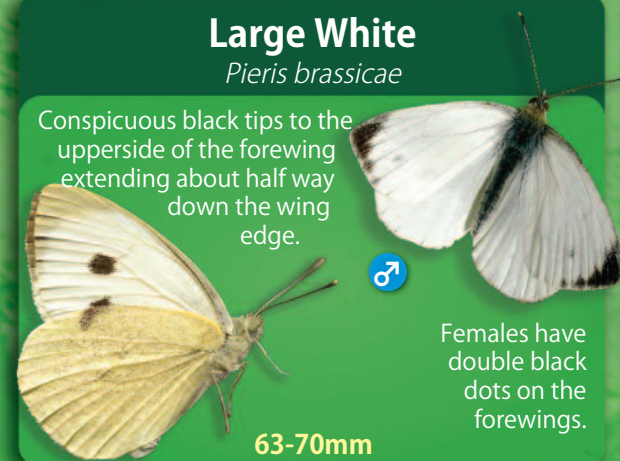


60mm

Large White

Pieris brassicae

Conspicuous black tips to the upside of the forewing extending about half way down the wing edge.



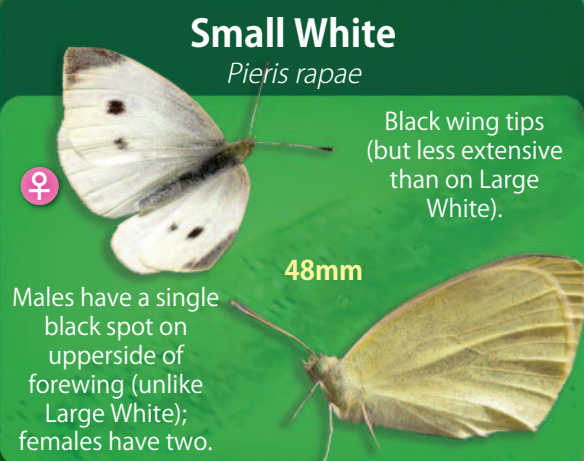
63-70mm

Females have double black dots on the forewings.

Small White

Pieris rapae

Black wing tips (but less extensive than on Large White).



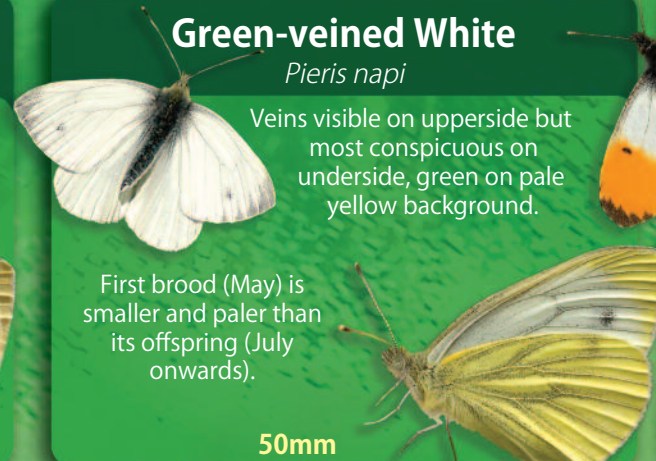
48mm

Males have a single black spot on upside of forewing (unlike Large White); females have two.

Green-veined White

Pieris napi

Veins visible on upside but most conspicuous on underside, green on pale yellow background.



50mm

First brood (May) is smaller and paler than its offspring (July onwards).

Orange Tip

Anthocharis cardamines

Male forewing tips bright orange, female wing tips black. Underside of hindwing mottled green.



45-50mm

Green Hairstreak

Callophrys rubi

Green underside distinguishes this butterfly from all other British butterflies. Upside plain brown, only seen in flight.



33mm

Purple Hairstreak

Favonius quercus

Underside grey with white streak and small tail. Orange eye spots on hindwing. Females have purple flash on forewing, male wings are purple with black edges. Fly mainly in the canopy of oak trees.

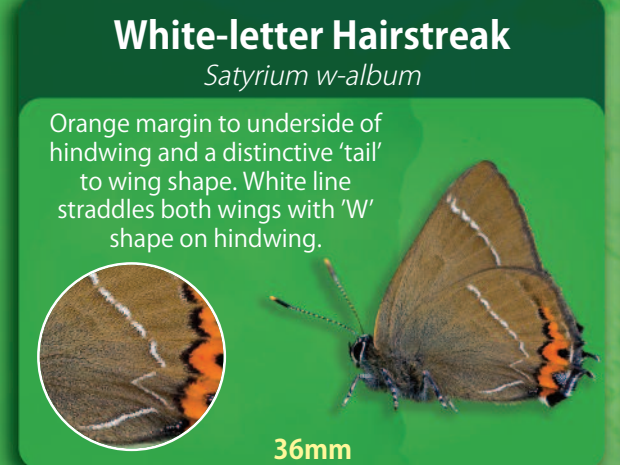


37-39mm

White-letter Hairstreak

Satyrrium w-album

Orange margin to underside of hindwing and a distinctive 'tail' to wing shape. White line straddles both wings with 'W' shape on hindwing.



36mm

Small Copper

Lycaena phlaeas

Coppery-orange forewings with black margins and spots, brown hindwings with orange margins. Male smaller than female and forewings more pointed.



32-35mm

Brown Argus

Aricia agestis

Can be mistaken for female Common Blue. Upside solid brown ground colour without blue scaling; lacks spots on underside forewing nearer than halfway to the body.



29mm

Common Blue

Polyommatus icarus

Male upside bright blue, females dusky brown with blue scaling and orange markings to wing margins. Markings on underside of forewing closer to body than those on Brown Argus.

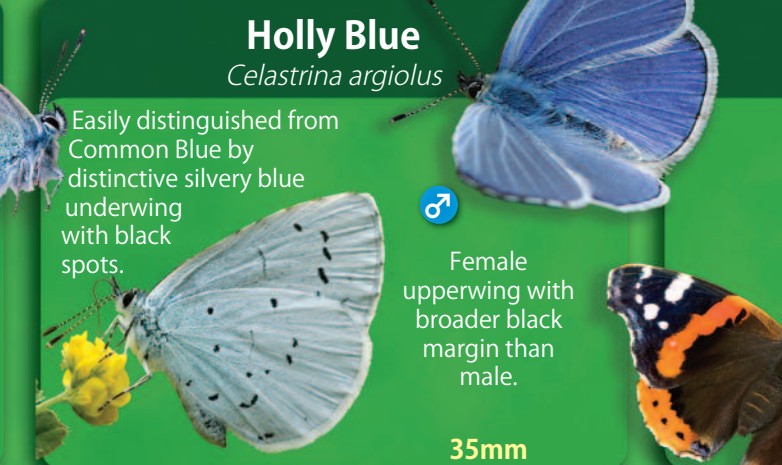


35mm

Holly Blue

Celastrina argiolus

Easily distinguished from Common Blue by distinctive silvery blue underwing with black spots.



35mm

Female upperwing with broader black margin than male.

Red Admiral

Vanessa atalanta

Distinctive black, white and red markings on upside; underside forewing mottled to offer good camouflage.

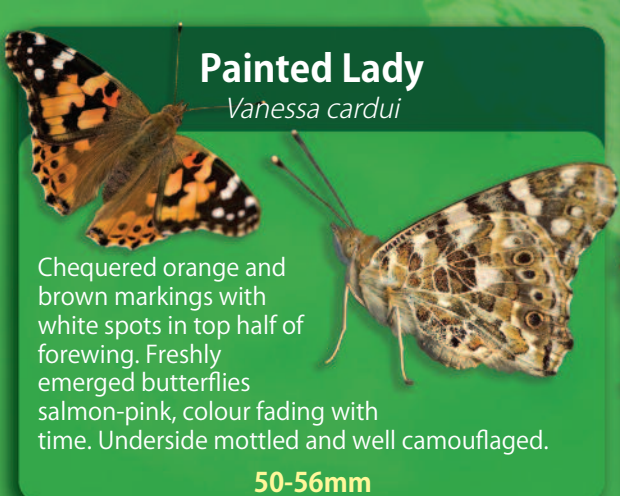


67-72mm

Painted Lady

Vanessa cardui

Chequered orange and brown markings with white spots in top half of forewing. Freshly emerged butterflies salmon-pink, colour fading with time. Underside mottled and well camouflaged.



50-56mm

Small Tortoiseshell

Aglais urticae

Upside bright orange with black markings, a white spot



50-56mm

on the forewing and blue margins to both wings. Underside is dull and well camouflaged.

Peacock

Aglais io

Orange-red ground colour with distinctive 'eyes' on the upside of both wings. Underside almost black and very well camouflaged.

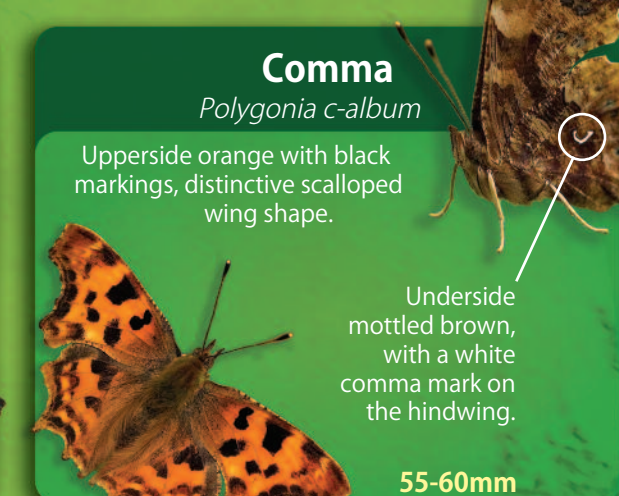


63-69mm

Comma

Polygonia c-album

Upside orange with black markings, distinctive scalloped wing shape.



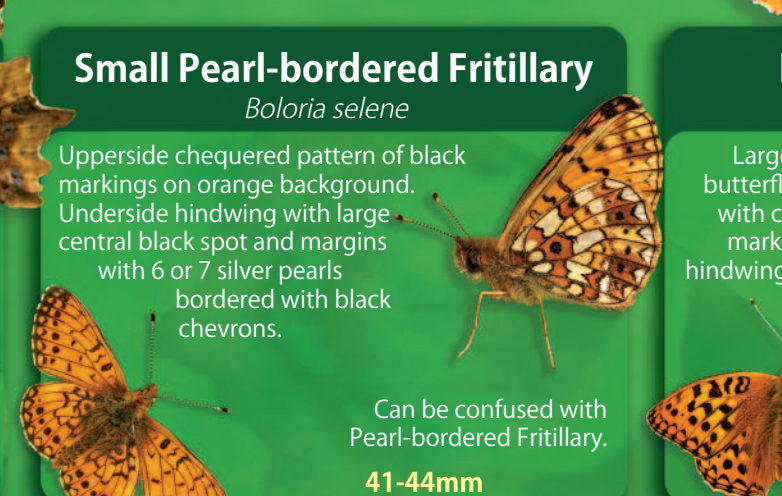
55-60mm

Underside mottled brown, with a white comma mark on the hindwing.

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Boloria selene

Upside chequered pattern of black markings on orange background. Underside hindwing with large central black spot and margins with 6 or 7 silver pearls bordered with black chevrons.



Can be confused with Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

41-44mm

High Brown Fritillary

Argynnis adippe

Large, fast flying butterfly; bright orange with chequered black markings. Underside hindwing, row of white spots with black outline ringed in brown, not present in similar Dark Green Fritillary.



60-67mm

Dark Green Fritillary

Argynnis aglaja

Very similar to High Brown Fritillary. Differs on underside with distinctive green wash and absence of brown-ringed spots.



63-69mm

Silver-washed Fritillary

Argynnis paphia

The largest of the fritillary butterflies. Males richer orange, with four black sex brands (thickened veins) on the forewing. Underside of both sexes with silver washes or streaks.

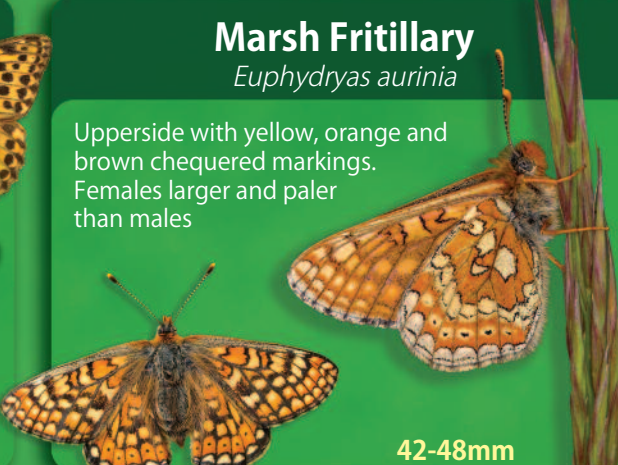


72-76mm

Marsh Fritillary

Euphydryas aurinia

Upside with yellow, orange and brown chequered markings. Females larger and paler than males

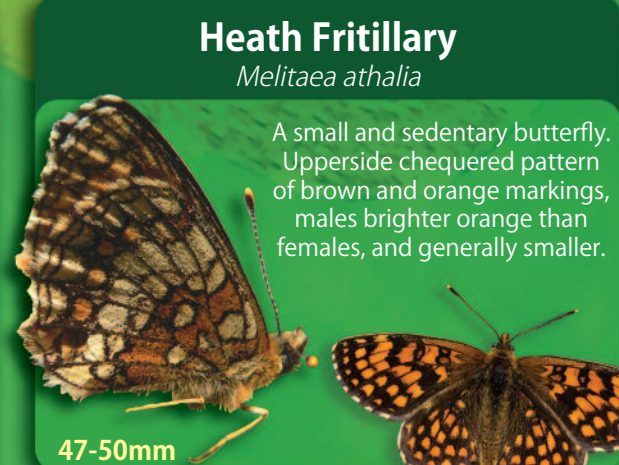


42-48mm

Heath Fritillary

Melitaea athalia

A small and sedentary butterfly. Upside chequered pattern of brown and orange markings, males brighter orange than females, and generally smaller.



47-50mm

Speckled Wood

Pararge aegeria

Upside deep brown with creamy-yellow markings on both wings. Three black eye spots with white pupils on hindwing, one on forewing. Underside mottled pale brown.



47-50mm

Wall

Lasiommata megera

Similar to a fritillary, distinguished by the 'eye' spot on the forewings and three or four 'eye' spots on the hindwing. Underside dull, mottled brown, 'eye' spots visible.



44-46mm

Marbled White

Melanargia galathea

Distinctive black and white markings. Underside pattern similar on both sexes, hindwing black on male and brownish yellow on female.



53-58mm

Grayling

Hipparchia semele

Usually rests with wings closed. Underside dull brown and well camouflaged, two prominent 'eye' spots on the forewing visible on underside.

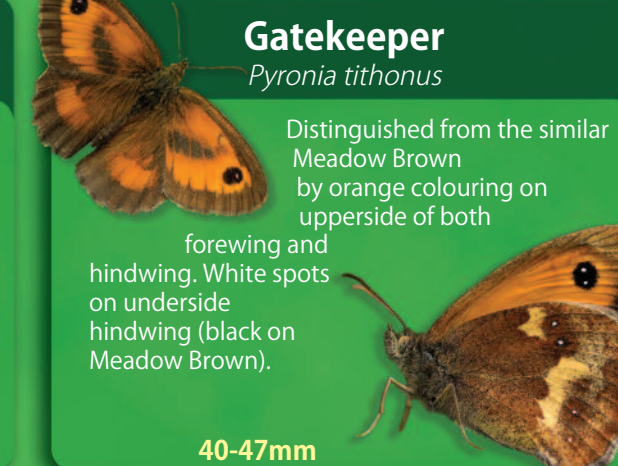


55-60mm

Gatekeeper

Pyrionia tithonus

Distinguished from the similar Meadow Brown by orange colouring on upside of both forewing and hindwing. White spots on underside hindwing (black on Meadow Brown).

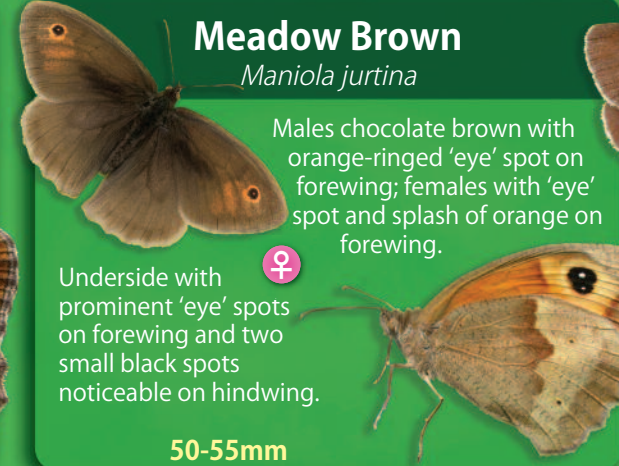


40-47mm

Meadow Brown

Maniola jurtina

Males chocolate brown with orange-ringed 'eye' spot on forewing; females with 'eye' spot and splash of orange on forewing.



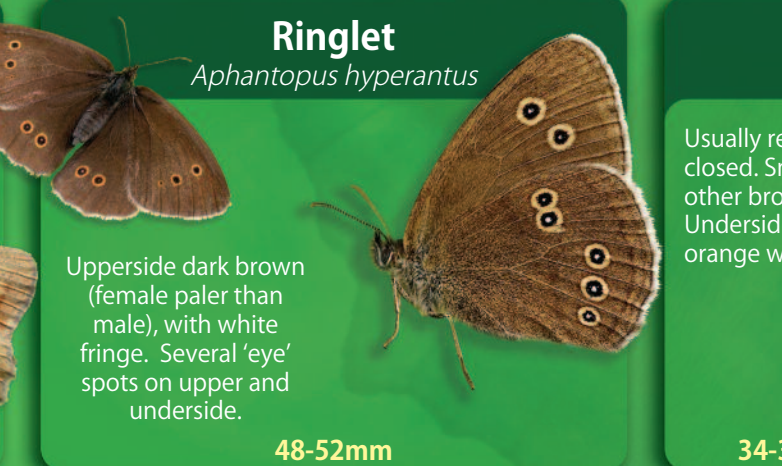
50-55mm

Underside with prominent 'eye' spots on forewing and two small black spots noticeable on hindwing.

Ringlet

Aphantopus hyperantus

Upside dark brown (female paler than male), with white fringe. Several 'eye' spots on upper and underside.

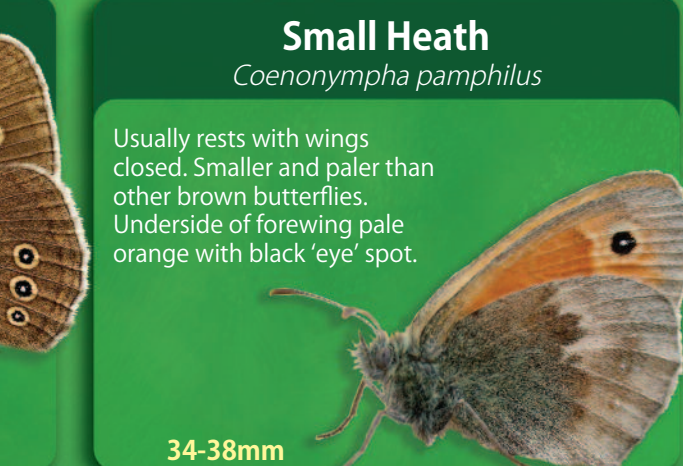


48-52mm

Small Heath

Coenonympha pamphilus

Usually rests with wings closed. Smaller and paler than other brown butterflies. Underside of forewing pale orange with black 'eye' spot.



34-38mm