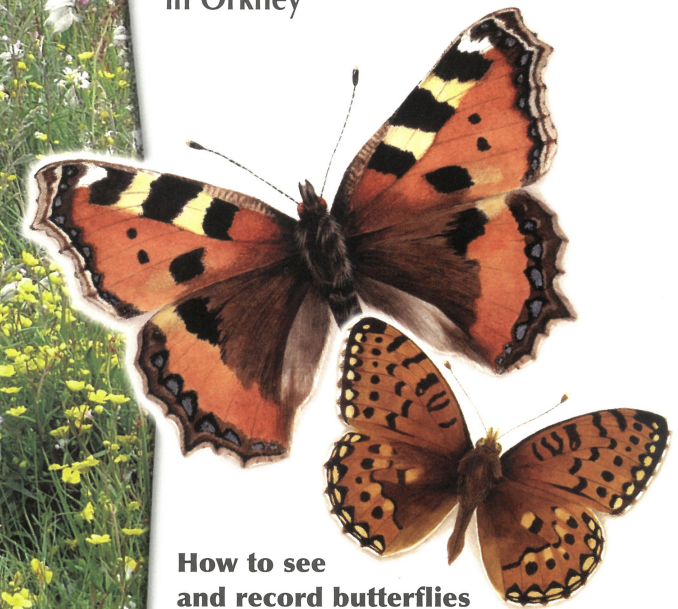


An identification guide to The Butterflies of Orkney

This simple guide will help you to learn about and identify the 9 most commonly seen butterflies in Orkney



How to see and record butterflies

Try and choose a warm, sunny and calm day to look for butterflies. They are much more active in these conditions.

Take a notebook and pen with you and record any butterfly sightings. It's useful to record the species, date and location (grid ref and/or place name).

Then give this information to:

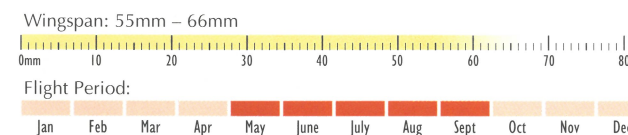
The Orkney Biodiversity Records Centre,
Orkney Library and Archive,
Junction Road, Kirkwall

Tel: (01856) 873166.

Large White



This large butterfly is common and widespread and overwinters in Orkney as a pupa. The female has two dark spots on the upper wing, absent on the smaller male. The caterpillars feed on cabbages and other brassicas, making them unpopular with gardeners.

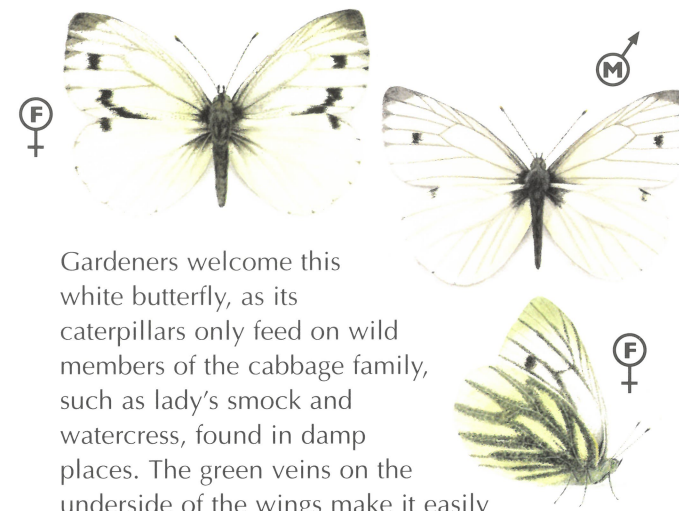


Credits: Illustrations © Tracy Hall 2005
Text: Effy Everiss, Sydney Gauld
Produced by Orkney Islands Council 2006

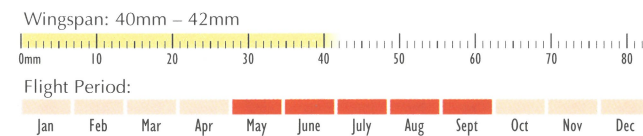
Design: K4 Graphics – info@k4graphics.com



Green-Veined White



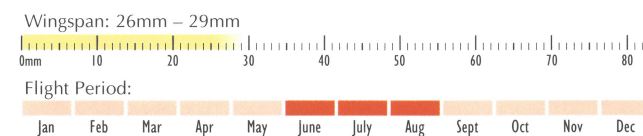
Gardeners welcome this white butterfly, as its caterpillars only feed on wild members of the cabbage family, such as lady's smock and watercress, found in damp places. The green veins on the underside of the wings make it easily recognisable, but they can be less distinct in butterflies seen later in the summer.



Common Blue



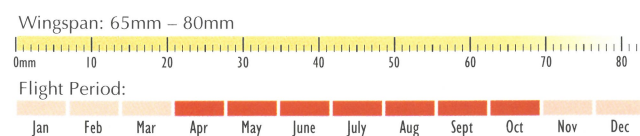
The male of this species is a conspicuous bright blue, but the female is much duller and browner. It is found in flowery grasslands, especially where the caterpillar's favourite food, birdsfoot trefoil, grows.



Red Admiral



Orkney winters are too cold for this common garden butterfly, which migrates here every year from Southern Europe and North Africa. Its caterpillar, which feeds on stinging nettles, is normally concealed in a folded leaf and spins itself a tent from which it emerges to eat.



A Butterfly's Life

The attractive adult butterfly is only one stage in this insect's complex life cycle.

It has a four stage life cycle starting with the egg laid by the adult, which then hatches into a caterpillar.

This forms a chrysalis or pupa, from which emerges the adult butterfly.

The female butterfly lays her eggs on, or near, the plant species which the caterpillars will eat.

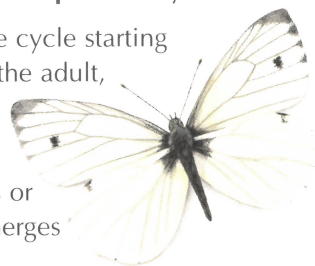
The caterpillar goes through several stages of feeding, expanding inside its skin with a larger caterpillar emerging at each stage, until it is ready to form a pupa.

This is a protective outer shell created by the caterpillar, inside which it changes into the adult phase. Within the pupa the caterpillar body is completely broken down and the adult butterfly formed – this

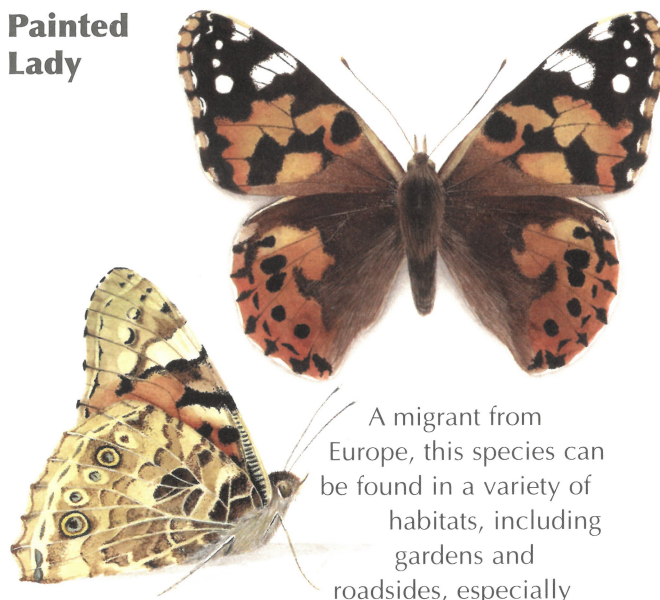
amazing process is called metamorphosis.

When the butterfly is ready to fly, the pupa shell splits and the adult emerges.

Resident butterfly species can overwinter in Orkney, either as a caterpillar, pupa or adult. Species which cannot survive the winter are migrants, arriving in Orkney by migrating northwards from their breeding areas further south, sometimes in very large numbers over a short period of time.



Painted Lady



A migrant from Europe, this species can be found in a variety of habitats, including gardens and roadsides, especially around thistles. Thistles provide food for the caterpillars and nectar for the adults.

Wingspan: 58mm – 74mm



Flight Period:



Large Heath



This species is restricted to heathland and wet areas where its food plant, hare's tail cotton grass, occurs. It is a resident species which overwinters as a caterpillar and pupates the following year in May and June.

Wingspan: 35mm – 40mm



Flight Period:



Small Tortoiseshell



This resident species lives in almost any habitat and may be a familiar sight in your garden, where the caterpillar will feed on your nettle patch. It can overwinter as an adult in buildings and is sometimes seen flying on warm winter's days.

Wingspan: 58mm – 74mm



Flight Period:

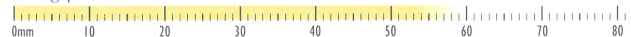


Dark Green Fritillary



A more unusual resident butterfly, which is currently only found at Bu Sands in Burray. As soon as it hatches the caterpillar hibernates in leaf litter until the following April/May, when it emerges to feed on the common dog violet.

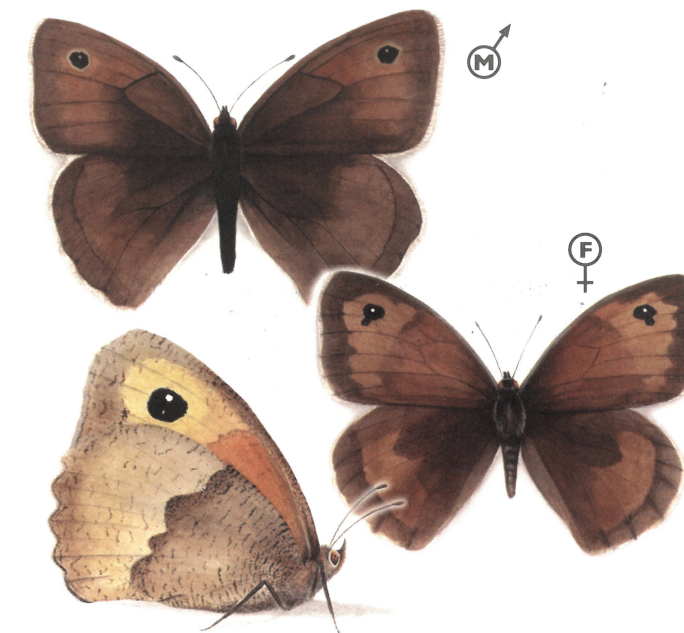
Wingspan: 54mm – 60mm



Flight Period:



Meadow Brown



The Meadow Brown can be seen in grassy places, even on dull days when other butterflies are inactive. Its noticeable that the female has a larger eyespot on the upper wing. The nocturnal caterpillar feeds on a variety of grasses and can be seen all year round, feeding on milder days in winter.

Wingspan: 50mm – 55mm



Flight Period:



Other species occasionally seen in Orkney:

- Clouded Yellow
- Small White
- Orange Tip
- Small Copper
- Camberwell Beauty
- Peacock

To identify these species we recommend you refer to a butterfly guide such as *'The Pocket Guide to Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland'* Richard Lewington. British Wildlife Publishing 2003.