



London
Natural
History
Society

LNHS LEARNING

20 Butterflies of London

PART 1



About the London Natural History Society

The London Natural History Society traces its history back to 1858. The Society is made up of a number of active sections that provide a wide range of talks, organised nature walks, coach trips and other activities. This range of events makes the LNHS one of the most active natural history societies in the world. Whether it is purely for recreation, or to develop field skills for a career in conservation, the LNHS offers a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities. Beginners are welcome at every event and gain access to the knowledge of some very skilled naturalists.

On top of its varied public engagement, the LNHS also provides a raft of publications free to members. The London Naturalist is its annual journal with scientific papers as well as lighter material such as book reviews. The annual London Bird Report published since 1937 sets a benchmark for publications of this genre. Furthermore, there is a quarterly Newsletter that carries many trip reports and useful announcements.

The LNHS maintains its annual membership subscription at a modest level, representing fantastic value for money.

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The selection of species is a subjective decision of the contributor(s) and not based on quantitative criteria such as population numbers, database records or presence on recording grids in surveys. These PDFs are not available in print form from the LNHS.

Taking your interest further

Details of other organizations with an interest in wildlife and a whole host of information is on the LNHS website. Past copies of the printed LNHS publications are available from Catherine Schmitt. Details on www.lnhs.org.uk

Contributing to the LNHS Education Series

If you would like to contribute to LNHS Learning please get in touch with one of the following section chairpersons in the LNHS or Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne who is coordinating the series.

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Botany | David Bevan | conserving.bevan@virgin.net |
| Ecology & Entomology | Mick Massie | mick.massie@gmail.com |
| London Bird Club | Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne | gehan.desilva.w@gmail.com |

Credits

Text: Leslie Williams (leslie.williams1597@btintenet.com) is the recorder for Butterflies for the LNHS

Images: Mick Massie and Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne

Design & Layout: Keith Wijesuriya (www.totalmediadirection.com)

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Essex Skipper

(*Thymelicus lineola*)

The Essex Skipper is dependent on rough grassland habitat, scrub and hedgerow edges. In flight they can be difficult to separately identify from the Small Skipper, but at rest look for the underside of the tip of the antennae which is black for the Essex Skipper. If unsure, record as 'Essex Skipper / Small Skipper'.



Small Skipper

(*Thymelicus sylvestris*)

Small Skippers have an orange underside to the tip of their antennae, as viewed up close when at rest on vegetation. In flight they look similar to the Essex Skipper and often share the same habitats of rough grassland and hedgerow edges. Usually, but not always, the more common of the two species in London.

Large Skipper

(*Ochlodes sylvanus*)

In London the large skipper is associated with rough grassland and scrub. Slightly larger than the Small and Essex Skippers, look also for the more patterned wings.

It emerges earlier than the Small and Essex Skippers, though later all three species may be flying as adults.



Orange Tip

(*Anthocharis cardamines*)

A species of damp meadows, hedgerows, woodlands, roadsides and waterside habitats where crucifer food plants occur, in particular Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis* and Garlic Mustard *Alliaria petiolata*.

The males are obvious from the orange tip to the upper wing, but to confirm the females look for the mottled pattern on the underside of the wings.

Large White

(*Pieris brassicae*)

Widespread and associated with locations where the larval food plants occur, for example, agricultural areas where brassica field crops are grown, and in urban areas with gardens and allotments.

For this reason, the Large White and the Small White are sometimes both called the 'Cabbage White'.



Small White

(*Pieris rapae*)

Associated with brassica plants, the small white is noted for laying eggs on crops and in gardens. It is a similar size to the Green-veined White, but at rest, look for the pale yellow under-wings with only a weak pattern of veins visible.

Green-veined White

(*Pieris napi*)

The green-veined white occurs particularly in damp grassland, and alongside hedgerows, woodland, ditches and water where wild crucifer food plants grown.

But this species is seldom a problem to crops. When the butterfly is at rest, look for the prominent veins on the underside of the wings.



Brimstone

(*Gonepteryx rhamni*)

The males are fluorescent yellow and the females are whitish green. Both have ornate wing margins and veins. While commoner in the countryside, the species have been encouraged to colonise urban London by the planting of the larval food plants, Alder Buckthorn and Common Buckthorn.

A spring butterfly but with later generations during the summer.

Speckled Wood

(*Pararge aegeria*)

Typically seen in a twirling flight in the sunlit glades along paths in woodlands, gardens and parks. Larval food plants are various grasses. Now one of the most common butterflies in urban London.

It has several generations from the spring to the early autumn. Look for the dark brown colour with large cream-coloured spots



Ringlet

(*Aphantopus hyperantus*)

The ringlet is a species of rough grassland in and near to woodland. More common in the countryside areas, this is one to look out for in urban areas as it appears to be re-colonising London.

Dark brown above; look for the eyelet rings on the lower wings.



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