



London
Natural
History
Society

LNHS LEARNING

20 Butterflies of London

PART 2



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.

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Meadow Brown

(*Maniola jurtina*)

While colonies may consist of huge numbers in large green spaces with suitable grassland habitats, it is less common in urban London.

The meadow brown prefers more open areas with rough grassland or hay meadows, particularly where the management is conducive to the growth of the larval grass food plants.



Gatekeeper

(*Pyronia tithonus*)

Two English names, Gatekeeper and Hedge Brown, aptly describe the habitat of rough grassland, hedgerows, scrub and woodland edges. Often as common at green spaces and gardens in urban London, as in the countryside areas beyond.

Compared with the Meadow Brown, look for brighter orange amongst the brown of the wings.

Marbled White

(*Melanargia galathea*)

While the Marbled White is more a species of the countryside, populations have established at some green spaces in urban London during recent years. The habitat is unimproved, rough grassland preferably containing Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*).

Look for the black and white chequered pattern on the wings.



Red Admiral

(*Vanessa atalanta*)

The Red Admiral is a migratory species from continental Europe and North Africa, but may then breed in Britain to produce a summer generation, with some remaining to over-winter as adults. You may even see them flying on a sunny winter day. A large, black, red and white butterfly.

Painted Lady

(*Vanessa cardui*)

A migrant from North Africa, the Painted Lady may occur in any habitat and will seek thistles as nectar sources and as the larval food plant.

Numbers fluctuate greatly from year to year: in some years they are practically absent from London. In other years, you may see many



Peacock

(*Aglais io*)

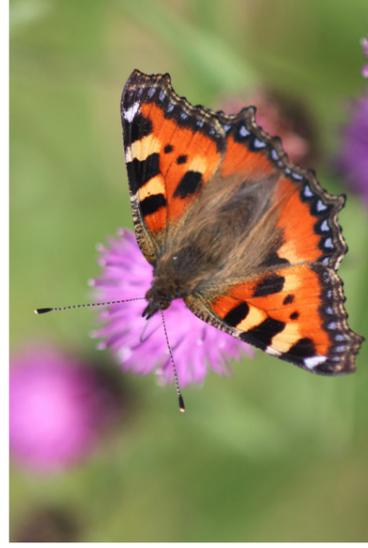
Woodland paths, hedgerows, and gardens are habitats for the Peacock though they may occur in other habitats seeking nectar plants or the Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* for egg laying.

The 'Peacock' eyes on the wings make this an easy species to recognize in summer.

Small Tortoiseshell

(*Aglais urticae*)

Once one of our most common butterflies in towns and countryside alike, the Small Tortoiseshell suffered a decline at the turn of century but we would like to find out if, and how it may recover. It will seek the Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* and the Small Nettle *U. urens* as larval food plants.



Comma

(*Polyommatus icarus*)

Look for the undulating wing margins; and when at rest, the white 'comma' on the underside of the wings mimicking the sky seen through a cracked and dead leaf.

The comma has a preference for hedgerows, woodland edges, gardens and is widespread throughout London.

Holly Blue

(*Celastrina argiolus*)

The most common blue in urban London; probably more common here than in the countryside beyond.

The Holly Blue is a widespread species dependent upon the presence of the larval food plants, particularly Ivy and Holly. It flies near shrubs, and

At rest look for the whitish under-wings with small black spots.



Common Blue

(*Polyommatus icarus*)

While less common than the Holly Blue in urban London, the Common Blue is more common on chalk grassland on the southern edge of London. The main food plant is Common Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*.

The sexes differ, but look for the intricate mosaic on the underside of the wings.



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