

Common Butterflies

A series of ID guides to help you discover more of Leicestershire's wonderful wildlife

Butterflies, along with moths, are in the insect order Lepidoptera, which means 'scaly wing' and refers to the microscopic scales that bring the colour and patterns we see. There are around 60 UK species and about half of these can be found in Leicestershire. Some overwinter as adults and these are the first to emerge - as soon as there is a warm enough day, even as early as January/February. The adults feed on nectar so visit flowers, whereas caterpillars eat the leaves of specific plants.

When viewing online, simply click on the species name to find out more.



[Small Tortoiseshell - *Aglais urticae*](#)

ID: Orange and black with blue edge dots.

Where: Anywhere. Breeds on nettles and over-winters as an adult so can appear very early in the year.

Similar: None.



[Green-veined White - *Pieris napi*](#)

ID: White with black wing tips and green veining on the under-wings.

Where: Gardens, parks – anywhere with nectar!

Similar: Small & Large White (both lack green veins).



[Gatekeeper - *Pyronia tithonus*](#)

ID: Orange patches on both upper and lower wings. Two white 'pupils' in each black eye-spot.

Where: Meadows, hedgerows. July-August.

Similar: [Meadow Brown](#) (orange on upper wing only).



[Red Admiral - *Vanessa atalanta*](#)

ID: Black uppers with red bands and white spots.

Where: Anywhere. Breeds on nettles. Numbers boosted in Summer by migrants.

Similar: None.

Become a citizen scientist! If you can spot any of these species, why not submit your sighting at www.naturespot.org.uk and contribute to our scientific knowledge of local wildlife. Record data submitted by the public is vital to conservation. Simply register online then follow the guidance on the Submit Records page.

Other Leicestershire butterflies to check out:

[Comma](#), [Painted Lady](#), [Meadow Brown](#), [Ringlet](#), [Common Blue](#), [Small Skipper](#), [Large White](#), [Small White](#)



Peacock - *Aglais io*

ID: Red and black with unmistakable eye-spots.

Where: Anywhere. Breeds on nettles and over-winters as an adult, sometimes in out-buildings.

Similar: None.



Speckled Wood - *Pararge aegeria*

ID: Brown with white speckles, row of eye-spots on lower wings.

Where: Woodland, hedgerows.

Similar: None.



Holly Blue - *Celastrina argiolus*

ID: Small with blue upper-wings (female with black edges) but with silvery, black-spotted under-wings.

Where: Gardens, parks, woodland edges. Breeds in 2 generations, first on Holly then on Ivy.

Similar: The under-wings are unmistakable.



Brimstone - *Gonepteryx rhamni*

ID: Males are lemon yellow, females much paler.

Where: Gardens, parks, hedges. With closed wings they resemble a dead leaf and overwinter in Ivy and other plants emerging in early Spring.

Similar: None.



Orange-tip - *Anthocharis cardamines*

ID: White on both upper and lower wings. Males with orange tips, females with light grey tips. Rounded wings.

Where: Meadows, often near water.

Similar: Females - other Whites (pointed wings).



Large Skipper - *Ochlodes sylvanus*

ID: Small and moth-like. Orange with black marks on the upper-wings.

Where: Meadow grassland.

Similar: [Small Skipper](#) (lacks black markings)

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Wildlife ID Guides at:
www.naturespot.org.uk/IDguides



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