

## WILDLIFE

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# Butterflies & Moths in the Garden

BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS BELONG TO THE SAME INSECT ORDER, THE LEPIDOPTERA (MEANING SCALY WINGS). IRELAND HAS OVER 1,000 SPECIES OF MOTH, COMPARED TO JUST 37 RESIDENT BUTTERFLIES. THEY SHARE MANY FEATURES OF BEHAVIOUR AND APPEARANCE. GARDENS ARE AN IDEAL PLACE TO WATCH BUTTERFLIES. HOURS OF ENJOYMENT CAN BE HAD OBSERVING THESE BEAUTIFUL CREATURES DANCING FROM FLOWER TO FLOWER IN JUNE AND JULY. CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, MANY GARDEN MOTHS ARE ALSO COLOURFUL, WITH BEAUTIFUL WING MARKINGS TO RIVAL THOSE OF ANY BUTTERFLY. THE MAJORITY ARE NIGHT FLIERS - TO AVOID PREDATORS - BUT A SMALL NUMBER FLY DURING THE DAY ALONGSIDE BUTTERFLIES. AS NATURAL BUTTERFLY AND MOTH HABITATS DISAPPEAR AT AN ALARMING RATE, A GARDEN CAN BE AN IMPORTANT

### NECTAR PLANTS THROUGHOUT THE BUTTERFLY & MOTH SEASON

#### SPRING NECTAR

Aubretia	Pansy/Violet
Bluebell	Clover
Cuckoo flower	Daisy
Dandelion	Forget-me-not
Honesty	Primrose
Sweet Rocket	Wallflower

#### LATE SUMMER/AUTUMN NECTAR

Buddleia	Marjoram
French Marigold	Ice Plant
Michaelmas Daisy	Mint
Ivy	Red Valerian
Knapweed	Scabious
Lavender	Thyme

ELEMENT IN THE SURVIVAL OF THESE INSECTS.

### GARDENING FOR BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

Gardening for butterflies and moths is easy and inexpensive and the results are well worth the effort involved. Here are some guidelines.

- Butterflies and moths visit gardens to drink nectar from flowers, so plant as many different nectar plants as possible in sunny, sheltered areas. Offer adult Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral butterflies nectar from Buddleia, Lilac, Ice Plant, Marjoram, Scabious, Knapweed, Michaelmas Daisies, and Honeysuckle. Planting a wide variety of nectar flowers encourages many day - and night flying moths. Buddleia, Valerian, Scabious, Lavender, Candy Tuft and Hebe may be visited by moths such as the Migrant Silver-Y, the Large Yellow Underwing, Scarce Footman, Dusky Brocade, the Clay, Dark Arches and Shuttle-shaped Dart.
- In warm weather as plants experience drought, the nectar they produce becomes thick. Butterflies and moths are unable to suck thickened nectar. Watering the flowers keeps nectar thin. Collect a supply of rain water in butts placed under drain pipes from a roof top.
- Plant at least one Buddleia or butterfly bush and keep it pruned to encourage flowering. Buddleia is especially favoured by the Garden Tiger Moth and 18 species of butterfly. Plant in a sunny position and prune

### NIGHT SCENTED FLOWERS FOR MOTHS

Bladder Campion  
Evening Primrose  
Sweet Rocket  
Tobacco Plant  
White Jasmine  
Night-scented Stock  
Honeysuckle

vigorously in March. Remove dead flowering spikes to ensure flowering from July to September. Buddleia does well grown in containers if you haven't much space.

- Position plants for butterflies and moths with as little bare earth as possible between them.
- Plant night-scented flowers to attract moths such as Bladder Campion, Evening Primrose, Sweet Rocket, Tobacco Plant, White Jasmine and Stocks. If there are lots of insects flying at night, bats may come to eat them.
- Grow caterpillar food plants such as Nettles, Ivy, long grasses and Nasturtiums.
- Avoid extensive paths or mown lawns.
- If possible, provide shelter from cold north and east winds.
- Plant ivy. The flowers produced in autumn are a source of nectar for Red Admiral butterflies and many moths. Peacock and Tortoiseshell butterflies may hibernate in Ivy over winter. Encourage ivy to produce flowering stems by pulling the top shoots away from their support so that they hang free. Ivy is also the food plant of Holly Blue butterfly caterpillars.

it's easy | to make a difference

- Help preserve habitats for rare butterflies and moths outside your garden. Don't buy peat-based composts, water-worn limestone or other materials that form vital natural habitats for endangered moths and butterflies.
- If you have to control Cabbage White butterfly caterpillars in your vegetable patch, never resort to chemicals. It's cheaper and more environmentally friendly to remove them by hand. Cabbage White butterfly caterpillars also eat Nasturtium so grow this plant as a diversion with your vegetables.
- Great nectar plants such as Marjoram, Thyme, Marigolds, Wallflowers, Nasturtiums and Ice Plant do well in containers and window boxes, so even the smallest garden can provide valuable food for butterflies and their caterpillars.
- Leave a corner of your garden to go wild to encourage butterflies, moths and other wildlife.

1. In the mild heat of spring the Small Tortoiseshell (Ruán Beag) is the first butterfly to emerge from hibernation and is one of the commonest butterflies.

2. The male Orange Tip (Barr Buí) is easy to identify on the wing. The tips of its upper wings are boldly marked with bright orange.

3. By late spring the Large White (Bánóg Mhór) emerges and is a very conspicuous butterfly. It has white upper wings with black spots near the tips.

4. The Peacock (Péacóg) butterfly uses the large eyes on its wings to frighten away would-be attackers. The Peacock lays its eggs on Nettles and produces an autumn generation of young butterflies which then overwinter in the hollows of trees, log piles or undisturbed buildings. It is seen in April and early May.

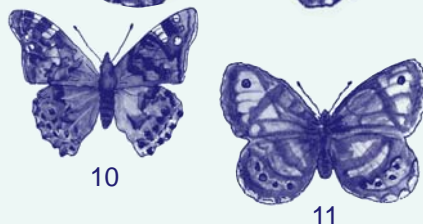
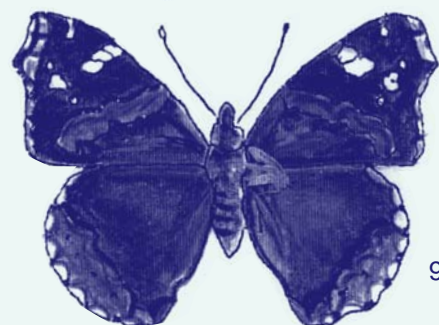
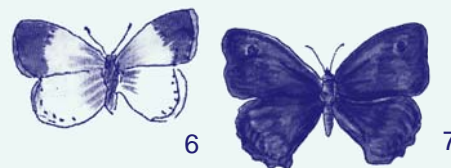
5. The Common Blue (Gormán Coiteann) favours wild flowers in uncultivated pastures - it has two broods each year and is on the wing in early summer.

6. In June the Holly Blue (Gormán Cuilinn) flits about the Holly and Ivy. It only flies for a few weeks each year.

7. The Meadow Brown (Donnóg Fhéir) has dark brown wings showing large eyes against a background of orange. It flutters over long grasses in the garden.

8. The Brimstone (Buióg Ruibheach) is the largest yellow butterfly in Ireland and is attracted to Buckthorn.

9. In August the Red Admiral (Aimiréal Dearg) and 10. Painted Lady (Áilleán) butterflies migrate from southern Europe and Africa. They are too delicate to survive the winter here so the first ones you see will have flown thousands of kilometres to Ireland. At this time the 11. Wall Brown (Donnóg an Bhalla) and brightly coloured 12. Small Copper (Copróg Bheag) are seen flying in the garden.



#### FOOD FOR BUTTERFLY AND MOTH CATERpillARS

- Make butterfly caterpillars welcome. Nettles are essential food for Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral Butterfly caterpillars and for Scarlet Tiger and Spectacle Moth caterpillars. Cut part of the Nettles back (check there are no caterpillars on them first) regularly to encourage fresh young growth. Limit their spread in the garden by growing them in a large container sunk into the ground in a sunny spot.
- Patches of long grasses and meadow plants including Fescues, Bents and herbs such as Clover, Ragwort, Bedstraw, Thyme and Bird's Foot Trefoil are essential for Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and Ringlet butterfly caterpillars and

Food for Butterfly and Moth Caterpillars		
Food Plant	Butterfly	Moth
Stinging Nettles	Small Tortoiseshell	Scarlet Tiger
	Peacock	Spectacle
	Red Admiral	Burnished Brass
Holly and Ivy	Holly Blue	
Garlic Mustard	Orange Tip	
	Green-veined White	
Buckthorn	Brimstone	The Engrailed
Alder Buckthorn	Brimstone	
Ragwort		Cinnabar Moth
Elm		Hummingbird Hawk Moth
Cuckoo Flower	Orange Tip	
	Green-veined White	

- Trees such as Hawthorn, Gooseberry, Currants and Blackthorn are food plants for Magpie Moth, Buff Arches, Yellow Tail, Brimstone, Chinese Character, Nut-tree Tussock, Dark Dagger and August Thorn.
- Plant Ivy - the food plant for Holly Blue butterfly caterpillars.

TAKE PART IN THE GARDEN BUTTERFLY & MOTH COUNT						
Your Name:		Your Address				
Location of Garden: <input type="checkbox"/> inner city <input type="checkbox"/> city suburb <input type="checkbox"/> country						
Garden Size: <input type="checkbox"/> Small <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Large						
Numbers Seen: Please record all butterfly and moth species seen in the garden, marking the numbers seen on that date using these codes: A: 1    B: 2-9    C: 10-29    D: 30-99    E: 100 or more						
Use the blank lines for any other butterflies and moths you see.						
BUTTERFLY		DATES OF RECORDS				
Brimstone						
Common Blue						
Gatekeeper						
Green-veined White						
Holly Blue						
Large White						
Meadow Brown						
Orange Tip						
Painted Lady						
Peacock						
Red Admiral						
Ringlet						
Small Copper						
Small Tortoiseshell						
Small White						
Speckled Wood						
Wall Brown						
MOTH						
Cinnabar						
Hummingbird Hawk-moth						
Magpie Moth						
Scarlet Tiger						

The butterfly season runs from April to September each year. The best months are probably June and July. Look out for moths in the garden in summer months as dusk falls. When it is dark a torchlight safari around your Buddleia bushes will reveal moths such as the Silver-Y, Willow Beauty, Mother of Pearl and Brimstone.

Moths are attracted to lights. This may be due to the fact that moths navigate by maintaining themselves at a fixed angle to moonlight, but on cloudy or moonless nights they home in on any bright light.

## COUNTING THE BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS IN YOUR GARDEN

Less than 20 butterflies occur in gardens but literally hundreds of moths visit mainly at night. Recording butterflies and moths in the garden is easy and the information is of great value to ensure the conservation of these species. The survey form provided includes the butterflies commonly recorded in gardens and four day-flying moths you might also see in your garden. All you have to do is



## SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

### BUTTERFLIES

Body in three parts - head, thorax and abdomen  
Life cycle in four stages - egg, caterpillar, cocoon and adult insect  
Antennae are club shaped

Butterflies roost with their wings held vertically together  
Butterflies are all fairly large insects

Butterflies are day fliers

### MOTHS

Body in three parts - head, thorax and abdomen  
Life cycle in four stages - egg, caterpillar, cocoon and adult insect  
Antennae are hairy or feathery, rarely club shaped. Using these antennae male moths can detect hormones emitted by female moths up to a mile distant.  
Moths roost with their wings held like a tent or wrapped around the body  
Moths range in size from tiny micro-moths to the much larger hawk moths  
Moths are mostly night flying and are attracted to artificial light.

record number of butterflies and moths you see in the garden over the course of the year, and the exact date on which you see them. By making your garden butterfly and moth friendly you will increase the number and variety of butterflies recorded. Your butterfly records can be sent to Butterfly Conservation in the UK or the Dublin Naturalists' Field Club in Ireland.

### GARDEN BUTTERFLIES COUNT

The five most widespread garden butterflies are the Large White, Small White, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Meadow Brown, Orange Tip, Green-veined White and Peacock. This is the kind of information and a lot more besides that has come from the Garden Butterflies Count co-ordinated by Butterfly Conservation, since 1990. The survey which, at present, is UK-based helps conservationists to monitor the commoner butterflies and to discover more about their behaviour. Further information from BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION, Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP, England. Web site: [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)

### MILLENNIUM BUTTERFLY SURVEY

Irish butterfly records can be sent to the DUBLIN NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB (DNFC), 35 Nutley Park, Dublin 4 as part of the Millennium Butterfly Survey to record the distribution of butterflies in any location.

### THREATS TO BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

Habitat loss is the main threat to Lepidoptera mainly from land reclamation, removal of hedges and tree felling, road widening, drainage

and agricultural intensification. The use of insecticides is also a threat and kills not only butterflies and moths but many predatory insects as well, such as Ladybirds, Ground Beetles and spiders - the natural enemies of your garden's pests.

### BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS IN PRINT

#### BUTTERFLIES OF IRELAND

IDENTIFICATION CHART published by the Dublin Naturalists's Field Club, Dublin 1999.

COLLINS GUIDE TO THE INSECTS OF BRITAIN AND WESTERN EUROPE by *M. Chinery*, published by HarperCollins, London 1986.

GARDENING FOR BUTTERFLIES by *Margaret Vickery*, published by Butterfly Conservation, Essex 1998.

THE BIRDS AND WILDLIFE IN YOUR GARDEN by *Catherine O'Connell*, published by the Irish Peatland Conservation Council, Dublin 2002.

THE MILLENNIUM ATLAS OF BUTTERFLIES IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND by *Jim Asher and others*, published by Oxford University Press 2001.

THE SMALL ECOLOGICAL GARDEN by *Sue Strickland*, published by HDRA/Search Press, Kent 1996.

### BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS ON THE WEB

Further information on butterflies and moths can be found at the following sites:

Butterflies and moths of Northern Ireland at [www.habitas.org.uk](http://www.habitas.org.uk)

Butterflies of Ireland at [www.geocities.com/butterflyireland](http://www.geocities.com/butterflyireland) and [www.geocities.com/dnfc\\_ie](http://www.geocities.com/dnfc_ie)

Butterflies and moths of the UK at [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)

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