

Sunderland's

The first flurry of butterflies can be seen as the weather warms in the spring and it is likely the first one you spot will be a peacock. This butterfly hibernates as an adult in sheds and woodpiles and is usually seen in February/March enjoying the warmth of an early sunny day. Milder, warmer winters have resulted in sightings of peacocks from as early as January. Other hibernating butterflies, small tortoiseshell and red admiral, closely follow the appearance of the peacock.



Peacock – John Bridges

A visit to a woodland site, such as High Wood, from April onwards will offer the opportunity to catch a glimpse of speckled wood, a recent addition to the Sunderland area. During March/April comma with its ragged edge wings can be seen along woodland edges and woodland glades.

The bright orange wing tip markings of the male orange tip make it easy to spot as it searches for females from April until July. The female orange tip is more difficult to



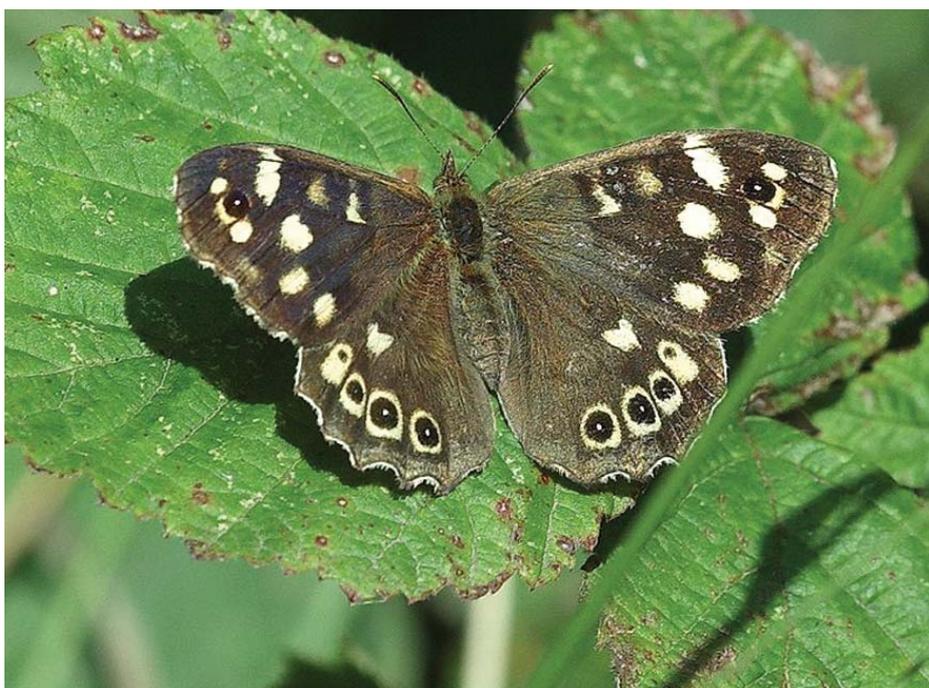
Wall – John Bridges

identify, lacking the orange markings of the male. They can be easily confused with small white and green-veined white, seen from April to September. The other white butterfly, large white, commonly called cabbage white, is a known pest to vegetable gardeners.

Three nationally declining species, dingy skipper, small heath and wall can be seen regularly in our area. Dingy skipper can be found on sites with bird's-foot-trefoil and bare ground during May and early June, try Tunstall Hills and Fulwell Quarry. Small heath prefers sites with fine leaved grasses; again try our magnesian limestone sites. Wall loves to sunbathe and is found in sun-baked places with bare ground.



Orange-tip – John Bridges



Speckled wood – John Bridges



Common blue – John Bridges

Into high summer common grassland butterflies include small copper, common blue, meadow brown, large skipper, small skipper

butterflies



Small skipper – John Bridges



Red admiral – John Bridges



Small tortoiseshell – John Bridges



Holly blue – John Bridges

and ringlet. A summer woodland visit may be rewarded with a sighting of our two tree dwelling butterflies. Spotting white-letter hairstreak in elms and purple hairstreak in oaks requires patience, a keen eye and a pair of binoculars as they spend most of their time perched in the treetops. Look for trees on sunlit woodland edges. You should also be able to see second generation speckled woods and commas in July/August.

Gardens become a hive of activity from mid July with second-generation peacocks, small tortoiseshells, red admirals and large and small whites. Joining them is the migrant painted lady that travels from North Africa and mainland Europe in varying numbers every year. Buddleia plants are ideal for attracting all these butterflies to your garden.

If you are taking a stroll through one of Sunderland's many parks keep a watchful eye for holly blue. This butterfly, commonly found in Southern England, is gradually moving northwards and has occasionally been seen in the Sunderland area. Holly blue likes

sites with hollies or ivy-covered trees. Other butterflies with potential to move into the Sunderland area include grayling, marbled white, brown argus and gatekeeper; so keep your eyes peeled and your cameras at the ready.

Records of any butterflies seen are always welcomed by the national butterfly and moth charity Butterfly Conservation, even for your garden. Visit www.butterfly-conservation.org for further information and help to identifying butterflies. Please send records to Dave Wainwright, Butterfly Conservation, 38 High Street South, Langley Moor, Durham DH7 8JW or to dwainwright@butterfly-conservation.org. The Countryside Team are also looking for volunteers to help record butterflies on sites in Sunderland, please call 0191 553 8773 or email countryside@sunderland.gov.uk for further information.



Painted lady – John Bridges