

## FINDING AND IDENTIFYING BUTTERFLIES AND DAY FLYING-MOTHS - APRIL

So we are now nearing April and hopefully temperatures will be rising and there will be more butterflies to see when you are out and about, or if you are lucky, visiting your garden. I will repeat the following each month just in case you are new to this thread.

For each butterfly I have tried to indicate the best places to look, but nature is unpredictable so you may have to search an area more than once to find your quarry. The best days for butterfly hunting are sunny and still; early and late in the day will normally see butterflies less flighty and posing for photos. If I mention a food plant, this is what their caterpillars eat, so will be where the eggs are laid. I have described butterflies as either; Large, which have a 60-70 mm wingspan such as a Red Admiral, think 3 x 10p coins side by side, medium, which have a 40-50mm wingspan, such as a Speckled Wood, think 2x 10p coins side by side and small, which have a 25-35mm Wingspan such as a Common Blue, think 2 x 5p coins side by side.

Those Butterflies that appeared in March are still about, hopefully in greater numbers and starting to pair up and breed (Clockwise Brimstone, Red Admiral, Comma, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell).



### Butterflies to see in April

#### Holly Blue (April to June & July to September)

This beautiful small butterfly likes holly, ivy, a variety of ferns, yew and bay leaves and may be seen wherever they occur. Check out churchyards and any old ivy-covered walls as well as hedges beside roads and fields. They can be tricky to spot, so take your time and look for small movements amongst the leaves. Females (below center) can be distinguished from males (below right) by the thicker black borders of their wings. Similar in many ways to the Common Blue, their almost white underwing covered in black spots gives them away as the Holly Blue. The normal have 2 broods each year so can be seen pretty much from April to September with a brief gap at the end of June and the beginning of July.



### Orange Tip (April to June)

The splashes of orange on the upper wings of the male (bottom right) are a welcome sight in any garden as the weather starts to get warmer. The female can be distinguished from other 'whites' by the beautiful marbled pattern on the underwing. This medium-sized butterfly is attracted to spring plants in gardens, along hedgerows on field boundaries and on road verges. They are the most distinctive of the four white butterflies that take to the wing in April and May and seem to have a particular liking for patches of wild honesty; I grow it in the garden especially for them.



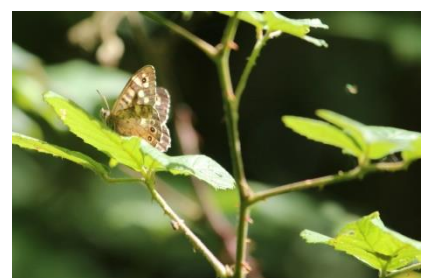
### Large White, Small White, Green-veined White (April to September)

Like me you probably grew up being told that these were Cabbage Whites and so assumed that they were all the same species of butterfly. It turns out they are in fact 3 distinct species; Large White (left), Small White (middle) and Green-veined White (right). The fact that they all start to appear at the same time does not help to identify them, but there are a few key differences, when studied closely. They are all medium-sized butterflies and despite the name most Large Whites are not very much larger than the others and can be distinguished by the large area of black on the edge of the upper wing, which is darker and runs further down the wing than with the others. In both the Large and Small White, the females have two black spots whereas the male has only one. The best way to distinguish the Green-veined White is to wait until it closes its wings, when the distinctive veins can be seen on the underside. They will all feed on any nectar-rich plants so are likely to be found in gardens, verges and in the brambles when they are in flower. The Large and Small White will be ready to lay their eggs on developing cabbages, lettuces and broccoli whilst the Green-veined White prefers hedge or garlic mustard plants.



### Speckled Wood (April to October)

This medium-sized butterfly can often be seen flying in the dappled shade of woodland fringes or leafy paths. The beautiful markings of cream spots on chocolate-coloured wings make it easy to recognise. You will often spot them basking on leaves, where rays of sunshine penetrate the canopy. The males are smaller than the females but are aggressively territorial and will chase off anything that gets too close, including you!



### **Grizzled Skipper (April to June)**

Although traditionally a Butterfly of southern chalk hills, it can be found in woodland rides, wasteland and railway tracks and embankments. It tends to stay close to the ground and basks in the sun with occasional frenzied periods of flight, either to find a mate or see off a rival. If the bluebells are out, then what better shot to try and get?



### **Day Flying Moths to see in April**

Just when you think you have mastered identifying most of the common butterflies you will start to notice the moths; there are somewhere in the region of 2500 species of moth in the UK compared to 57 butterflies, so I wish you the very best of luck. I will endeavour to point out the more commonly seen – based on nothing more scientific than my ability to get a photo of them. I have found the best way to identify moths is to try and get a photo of them, join a Facebook Group specialising in local moths and let the experts on there guide you.

### **Garden Carpet (April to October)**



Fairly common moth and as the name suggests, they will be found in your garden or similar habitat. They are not the moths who are responsible for eating your carpet – the name refers to the pattern on the wings.

### **Brown Silver Line (mid April to June)**



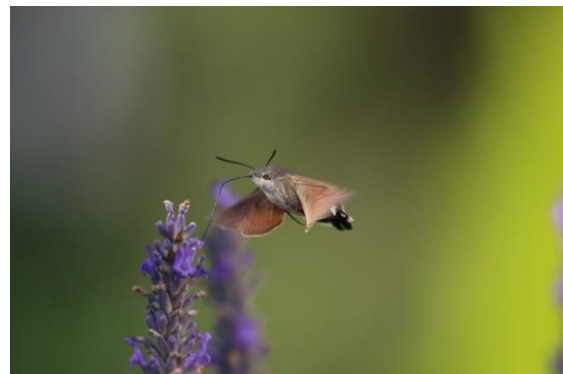
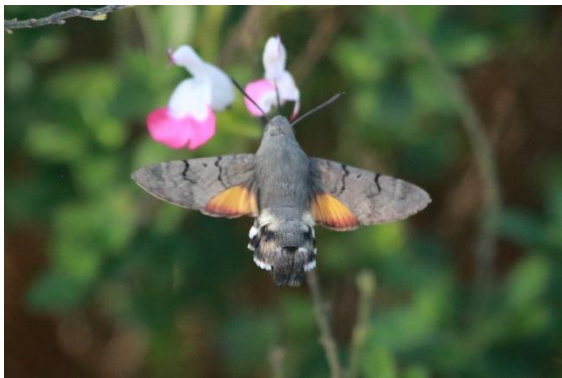
This small moth is generally a delicate silver colour with brown markings. As with most moths their common names are usually fairly descriptive. However there are normally huge variations in colour shades with moths due to age and habitat. These are usually found anywhere you have bracken and are widespread across the UK.

## Migratory Wildcards

Finally for this month, let me introduce a couple of Wildcards, one moth, one butterfly. These can be seen at any time and are well worth looking out for. Firstly the **Painted Lady** Butterfly, this butterfly migrates huge distances up from southern Europe and northern Africa each year. Some may well overwinter as adults so they can be seen early in the season. They are also the most common butterfly that you get when you buy a 'raise your own butterfly kit' that are extremely popular with children. They can therefore be released at any time during the season. Every so often they will have a boom year when thousands will be seen as they migrate and reproduce on their journey north.



Secondly, one of my favourites is the **Hummingbird Hawk-moth**. As the name suggests it is like a miniature Hummingbird and makes a similar journey to the Painted Lady up from the south. There are also some records of them overwintering in the south of the UK so you never know your luck. They are truly mesmerising to watch as they hover over plants and extract nectar with their long tongues (proboscis).



Coming to a field or garden near you in May.....



A promotional graphic for 'Wild Spaces' by Butterfly Conservation. The background is a dark teal color with stylized yellow and light green leaves and flowers. At the top center, there is a small butterfly icon and the text 'Butterfly Conservation'. Below this, the words 'WILD SPACES' are written in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font. Underneath, 'DISCOVER YOUR WILD SIDE' is written in a large, bold, pink, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the text 'CREATE A WILD SPACE TODAY TO HELP SAVE BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS GET STARTED AT:' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. A pink button with the text 'WILD-SPACES.CO.UK' is located at the bottom center.