

6. Butterflies, Moths and Other Insects



This sheet shows the importance of burial grounds for butterflies and other, less visible invertebrates and gives guidelines on how to manage for them.

Burial grounds and churchyards offer a haven to butterflies, moths and a host of other insects such as shield bugs, beetles, ladybirds and grasshoppers. Butterflies and moths lay their eggs on many different plants and trees which then provide food for growing caterpillars.

LOOK OUT FOR...

Holly blue – a classic butterfly of burial grounds as its main food plants are holly and ivy. The holly blue has two broods and eggs are laid on unopened flowers. The first brood feeds on developing berries or young leaves of holly. The second brood is laid on ivy and feeds upon its developing berries in the autumn. Holly blue is unique among British butterflies for having alternating food plants for caterpillars.

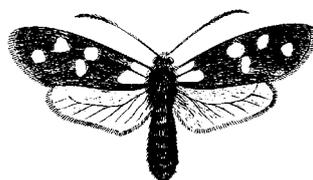
Purple hairstreak may be seen in the tops of oaks and white-letter hairstreak in elm trees (or within hedgerows containing elm) where they lay their eggs.

The orange tip hibernates and emerges early. It can be seen flying in April and May, laying its eggs on the flower stalks of several plants including garlic mustard and cuckoo flower. The male, with its orange-tipped wings, is particularly visible patrolling above the plants for a mate. These butterflies have an unpleasant taste however, so after eating one orange tip the bright orange colour warns predators against doing it again! Allowing flowers to grow and set seed before cutting benefits the orange tip and many other insects.



Orange Tip

Some butterflies need long or tussocky grassland including the speckled wood which lays its eggs on shaded long grass, whilst the wall may be seen basking on a gravestone prior to laying eggs on grass tussocks. Large and small skippers and meadow browns can be abundant in long, flowery grassland.



Six-spot Burnet Moth

Shrubs and hedges are

good for butterflies including gatekeepers and ringlets. The bright yellow brimstone will lay eggs on buckthorn or alder buckthorn bushes.

Nettles are important for butterflies providing food for comma, painted lady, peacock, red admiral, small tortoiseshell, beautiful golden Y moth, burnished brass moth, green carpet moth and spectacle moth.



Comma

As well as food for caterpillars, many butterflies and moths drink nectar from flowers which they in turn pollinate. Plants such as lavender, buddleia, ice plant, valerian and Michaelmas daisy are all attractive to butterflies. It is however the native plants and wildflowers that are such a feature of burial grounds which support a wide range of butterflies, moths and other insects.

HOW TO HELP BUTTERFLIES AND OTHER INSECTS

Choose native trees or shrubs of local provenance (this means that the seed was collected locally) when planting new trees or a hedge. Trees which are native to Britain tend to have many different insects living on them. Oak, birch, willow and hawthorn all support a great many; oak trees have about 350 different species of insect associated with them.

Have a variety of different lengths of grass including some tussocky grass which is not cut every year (see sheet A2, Caring for Grassland). Many butterflies, moths and other insects lay eggs on grass stems, within grass tussocks or on other plants found in long grass such as black knapweed.



Oak

Some wild flowers which are good for insects

- | | | |
|---------------------|----------------|------------|
| Buttercup | Knapweed | Primrose |
| Clover | Cuckoo flower | Violet |
| Bugle | Garlic mustard | Dandelion |
| Cowslip | Hawkweed | Bluebell |
| Bird's-foot trefoil | Ox-eye daisy | Wild thyme |
| Lady's bedstraw | | |

Whilst too many thistles or nettles can become a problem, having a few clumps near to a compost heap will support many insects including ladybirds (see sheet A8, Helping Wildlife).

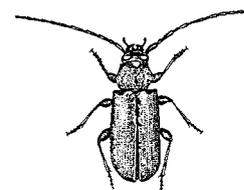
6. Butterflies Moths, and Other Insects

If you have flower beds then consider nectar-rich plants with strong scent and a long flowering time. Herbs such as lavender, thyme or sage perhaps? Poppies and daisies attract insects whilst stocks, evening primrose and tobacco flower are particularly good for moths. Native plants can look fantastic in decorative planting; bellflowers: cowslips, foxgloves, dog daisies, heathers to name a few. These plants will have evolved over time with British insects as pollinators.

Ivy flowers can be quite literally buzzing with insect life. If ivy is not flowering then try teasing the top young shoots away from their support so that they are hanging free; this can encourage the ivy to change to the flowering stage of growth.

Make a bee hotel (see sheet A8, Helping Wildlife). This will be used by many different insects as well as solitary bees.

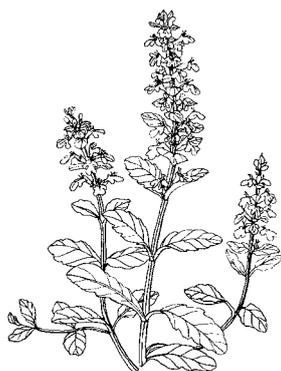
Try to identify some of the more well-known insects such as bumblebees and butterflies (see sheet B10, Surveying for Plants and Animals).



Longhorn Beetle

Grasshoppers

A combination of short, longer and tussocky grass makes a burial site a haven for grasshoppers and crickets. Some burial grounds can have more than 3 grasshoppers per square foot! These in turn are prey for spiders and birds. Whilst grasshoppers are known for their ability to jump, you may want to walk through long grass before cutting it, encouraging them out of the way of mowers.



Bugle



Primrose



Thyme

Useful contacts

Butterfly Conservation, www.butterfly-conservation.org

Buglife, www.buglife.org.uk

Useful reading

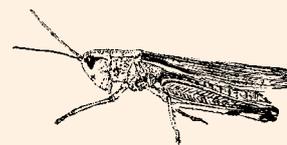
Butterflies of Britain – Field Studies Council fold-out chart

British Grasshoppers and Allied Insects - Field Studies Council fold-out chart

Caterpillars of Butterflies of Britain and Ireland - Field Studies Council fold-out chart

Guide to Ladybirds of the British Isles - Field Studies Council fold-out chart

The Butterflies of Britain and Ireland – Jeremy Thomas and Richard Lewington, British Wildlife Publishing Ltd



Cricket