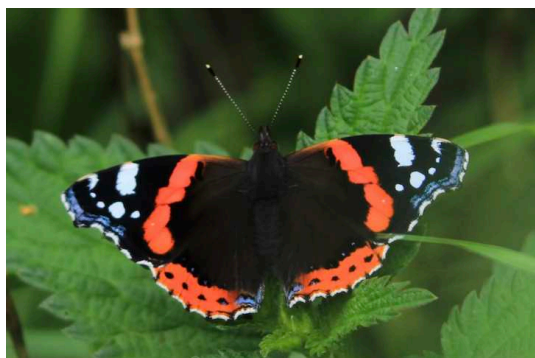




## The Butterflies of Bestwood

In 2023 the Friends of Bestwood Country Park Wildlife Group set up a walk to survey the butterflies in the Park between the start of April and the end of September.

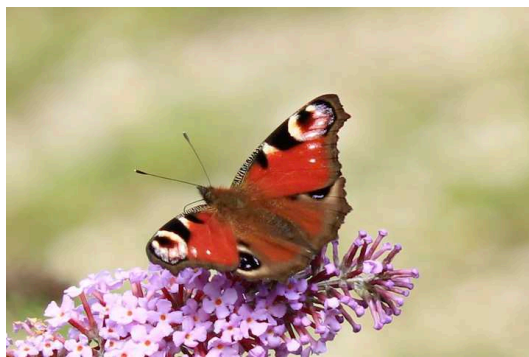
This has added greatly to what we know about the butterfly species in Bestwood, and the information we collected has been fed into a survey that monitors trends in butterflies nationwide over the years.



Red Admiral

We spotted 28 butterfly species in the Park out of a total of 33

species that occur in Nottinghamshire. You can't see all 28 at one time, of course: different species emerge as adults at different times of the year.



Peacock

Bestwood Country Park is an excellent place to see butterflies with its range of habitats providing a good selection of larval (caterpillar) food plants, and flowers for the adult butterflies to feed on. Important habitats for butterflies in the Park are woodland, scrub and grassland.

The **Red Admiral** and the **Peacock** both overwinter as adults so they can be seen on the first warm, sunny days of the year and they linger late into autumn.

Dominated by the post-industrial landscape of the former colliery pit top, the Park is a very good place for butterflies!

### Why is that?

It's the variety of habitats (woodlands, scrub, hedges and grasslands) that exist in a mosaic, abutting each other to create areas known as **ecotones**, which are especially rich in wildlife for the variety of niches they provide. A **niche** is where a species likes to live. The soils of the grasslands are nutrient-poor so have a rich diversity of flowering plants because native flowers tend not to like high levels of nutrients. This range of habitats in a mosaic provides a good selection of larval (caterpillar) **foodplants** and flowers for the adult butterflies to feed on. There are also green corridors linking the Park to other areas

allowing butterflies to reach the Park if their numbers increase elsewhere.

Years of observations by the rangers and keen butterfly watchers have built up a picture of the species using the Park, where they occur and how numerous they are.

### How do we do the Survey?

Last year, the Friends of Bestwood Country Park Wildlife Group set up a walk, called a **transect**, to survey butterflies.



Barrie Taylor and Imogen Clayson survey the scrubby ecotone between grassland and woodland

This is part of the national UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. People walk a similar length route once a week between the start of April and the end of September, recording all the butterflies they see. This builds up a database of records so year-by-year comparisons can

be made, looking at longer term trends in numbers and distribution of butterfly species.



Photographer Hayley Sears prepares to snap Barrie's latest find

It's a considerable commitment doing the weekly surveys and it was a dedicated bunch of volunteers who turned up to do them. There was a mix of identification skills in the volunteers, and it was a great learning experience for all getting to grips with setting up the survey route, following the survey protocols, and sharing tips on identifying butterflies.

Some of it was hands and knees stuff as Essex and Small Skippers are hard to tell apart.

Unless you possess super-human vision that can see if the underside of the antennal club is black or orange (think of an ever-moving pinhead up to 2 m away) – no one did!

### The Butterfly Year

Not all the butterflies found in the Park can be seen at the same time of year: it depends when the adults emerge. Proving Spring has arrived, the Brimstone, Holly Blue and Orange-tip can be seen in April.



The **Brimstone** (above) overwinters as an adult so will appear on warm days in March. The buttery yellow colour of its upperwings is the reason these butterflies have their name. The larval foodplant is the shrub/

small tree Buckthorn. More Buckthorn is being planted in the new edible hedge for this species.



The larval foodplant of the **Holly Blue** (above), as its name implies, is Holly, and it also uses Ivy. They are a very active butterfly, constantly flitting around trees, and rarely sit still with their wings open. They usually sit with their wings closed and have a pale blue underwing with black spots.

The male **Orange-tip** (above right) is a very distinctive butterfly with orange tips to its white upperwings. They can be



found along hedgerows in the Park where one of its larval foodplants, Garlic Mustard, grows, and in damper grasslands where another larval foodplant, Lady's Smock, grows, such as in the grasslands by the Mill Lakes.

### Grassland Butterflies

There is a suite of butterflies that use the grassland of the Park for the different species of grasses and flowers as larval plants and the flowers as adult foodplants.

Leaving areas of grassland uncut during the Spring and Summer is important to ensure these butterflies thrive in the Park



An unexpected highlight of the Butterfly Walk Surveys in 2023 was finding a **Marbled White** (below). This large and impressive butterfly had not been seen in the Park for a few years. Look for it between the Dynamo House and Basketball Court. Hopefully it will establish itself as a regular breeder.



its mottling of subtle colours of browns, greys and white. It flies low over the ground, skipping between flowers. Its larval food plant is Bird's-foot-trefoil. The former pit top is a good place to look for it in May in sheltered areas. The FoBCP Wildlife Group has secured funding for a wildflower area near the Dynamo House that will help this species and other butterflies.

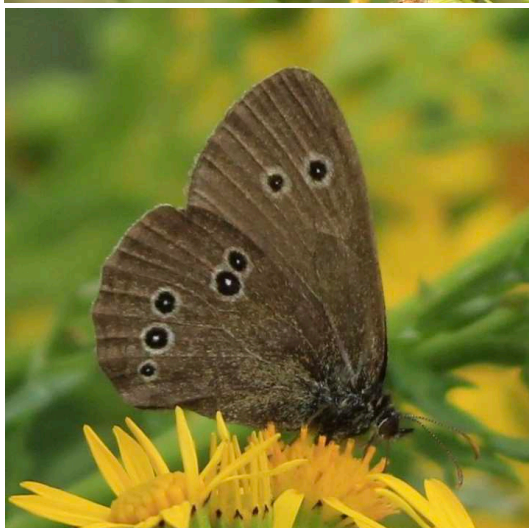
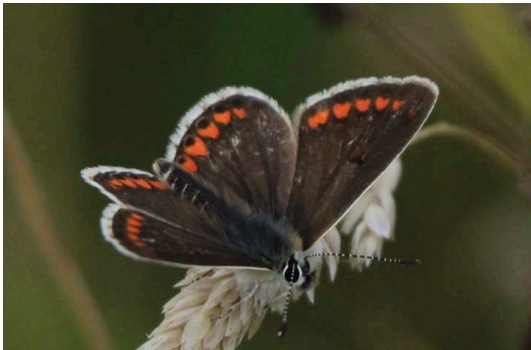


**Species of conservation importance**

Sadly, some butterfly species are not as numerous and widespread as they once were. Species that are priorities for Butterfly Conservation are the Dingy Skipper, Small Heath and White-letter Hairstreak.

**Scrub and woodland butterflies**

The Hairstreaks are a butterfly family that use shrubs and trees as their larval foodplants.



Despite its unattractive name, the **Dingy Skipper** (above right) is a gem of a butterfly with



(top left to bottom right - Large Skipper, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Small Heath, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Ringlet)

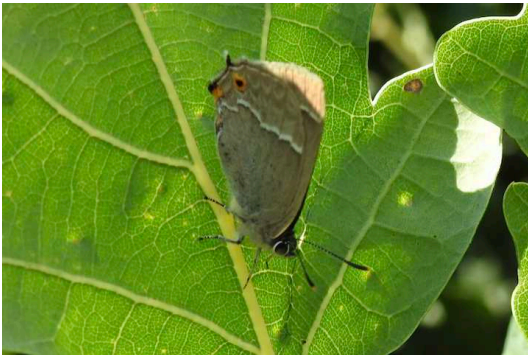
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Look for **Green Hairstreaks** (below) in areas of the Park with Gorse and Broom. This is a rare butterfly in Nottinghamshire.

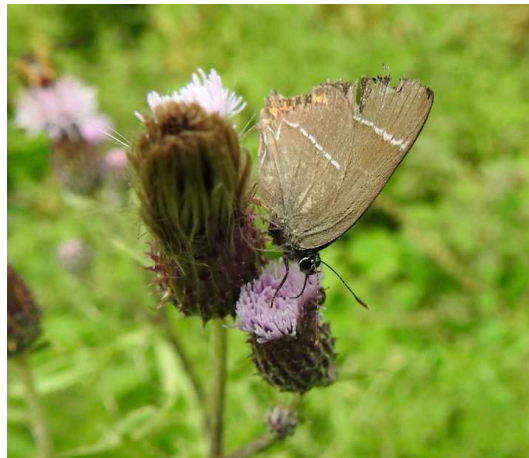


**Purple Hairstreaks** (below) use Oak trees but can also be found on Ash trees feeding on aphid honeydew.



The **White-letter Hairstreak** (above middle right) uses Elm trees as its larval foodplant and so has been affected by the loss of Elms through Dutch Elm Disease. Often seen flying around the tops of trees but will

come down to nectar sources. Look for it near the classroom.



The **Silver-washed Fritillary** (right)) is rare in the area but there are near annual sightings, and it is expanding its range, so fingers crossed it becomes established.

*Produced by the Friends of Bestwood Country Park (FoBCP) Wildlife Group's Butterfly Survey Team: Teresa Andrews, Richard Brock, Imogen Clayson, Jean Dawson, Alan Green, Rory Mooney, Hayley Sears and Barrie Taylor, with the help of Carl Cornish (RSPB).*

*Carl Cornish © Butterfly Survey. Hayley Sears © Red Admiral, Peacock, Large Skipper, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Gatekeeper, Meadow, Small Heath, Ringlet, Marbled White, Speckled Wood. Barrie Taylor © Brimstone, Holly Blue, Orange-tip, Dingy Skipper, Green, Purple and White-letter Hairstreaks, Comma and Silver-washed Fritillaries. Alan Green © volunteer photos.*



*For more information on the Wildlife Group and if you'd like to volunteer for the Butterfly Surveys please email Imogen Clayson at [Imogen.Clayson@gmail.com](mailto:Imogen.Clayson@gmail.com)*

*You can help with recording the butterflies of Bestwood Country Park by submitting sightings to [www.facebook.com/groups/fobcp](https://www.facebook.com/groups/fobcp), the FoBCP's Facebook page, or to the Wildlife Group's WhatsApp.*

*To join the WhatsApp group, please email Rory at [Rory.Mooney96@gmail.com](mailto:Rory.Mooney96@gmail.com)*

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*A W Lymn was formed in 1907, and as part of centenary celebrations in 2007, the Directors formed a charitable trust (the A W Lymn Centenary Foundation) which is designed to give back to the local community and surrounding area*

