



Butterflies

At Eglinton Country Park 13 species of butterfly are regularly encountered which is reasonable for a site in the wet west of Scotland. A Butterfly Transect takes place each week from April to September to monitor the numbers of adults present on a fixed route, and this data is used by Butterfly Conservation to track changes in butterfly populations and distribution.

The first species to appear are the **Peacock** and the **Small Tortoiseshell**. These butterflies hibernate as adults and emerge on fine sunny days as early as February and March. Until very recently a sighting of a peacock butterfly in Ayrshire was unusual, but it is now very common throughout the county and continues to spread northwards. These first emerged butterflies breed and produce further populations later in the year.

Sunny weather in April finds the **Orange Tip** patrolling grassy verges around one of its food plants: the cuckoo flower. The male has the orange tips to its wings, which the female lacks, but both sexes have mottled greenish undersides that act as camouflage when sitting on garlic mustard and cow parsley.

Summer brings several species of browns and whites: The **Ringlet** and **Meadow Brown** are common in grassy areas throughout the park, and the **Small Heath** occurs in smaller numbers at Sourlie. **Green-veined White** are the commonest white species at Eglinton, with smaller numbers of **Large White** and **Small White** in some years.

Two species found only occasionally are the **Common Blue**, most likely to be seen at Sourlie, and the **Small Copper** seen recently in open pathways around the Doocot.

Migrant butterflies also arrive at Eglinton. Every year the **Red Admiral** can be found on buddleia around the Visitor Centre, and in some years the **Painted Lady** invades the UK in huge numbers from the Mediterranean.

For more information on butterflies in Ayrshire, visit the Glasgow and South-West Branch of Butterfly Conservation at:

www.southwestscotland-butterflies.org.uk

