



Shetland
Amenity
Trust



Butterflies



Vanessa cardui © Rob Fray

Butterflies, with their colourful wings and day-flying habit, are among the most obvious and popular members of the insect world. They are also one of the easiest insect groups to identify.

This leaflet illustrates the species you are most likely to see in Shetland and also highlights some of our rare visitors, and some that could conceivably occur in the future.

By recording the species you are seeing and returning the information to us via our email address found on the back of this leaflet, you can help us find out more about the distribution of butterflies in the islands. Ideally, records of very rare species should be supported by photographs.

The following butterflies are depicted at 1:1 scale.

Large White

Pieris brassicae

The Large White is Shetland's only resident butterfly breeding in variable numbers. Although common we have little information on its distribution or change in population size.



Wing Span Range 63-70mm



Peacock

Aglais io

Wing Span Range 63-69mm



Red Admiral

Vanessa atalanta

Wing Span Range 67-72mm



Small Tortoiseshell

Aglais urticae

Wing Span Range 50-56mm



Painted Lady

Vanessa cardui

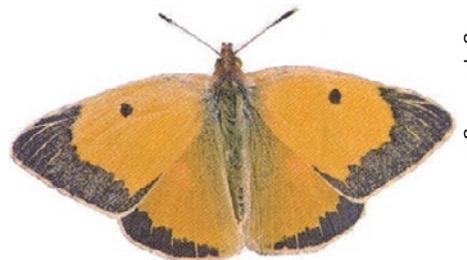
Wing Span Range 50-56mm

Peacock, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell and Painted Lady are all immigrants to Shetland. The Painted Lady and Red Admiral are recorded annually, sometimes in large numbers, but the Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock are much scarcer.

Clouded Yellow

Colias croceus

The Clouded Yellow is an immigrant occurring in vast numbers in Britain in some years. They are rare in Shetland with the last record being from 2018 but in a good summer it could be expected to occur again.



Wing Span Range 57-62mm



Wing Span Range 34-38mm

Small Heath
Coenonympha pamphilus



Meadow Brown
Maniola jurtina

Wing Span Range 50-55mm



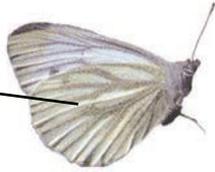
Small Copper
Lycaena phlaeas

Wing Span Range 32-35mm

Small Heath, Meadow Brown and Small Copper are all essentially brown butterflies. The Meadow Brown is quite a large butterfly and breeds in Orkney. The other two are smaller, and occur on mainland Scotland. There have been unconfirmed reports of all three species in Shetland.



Green-veined White
Pieris napi



Wing Span Range 50mm



Small White
Pieris rapae

Wing Span Range 48mm

The Green-veined White and Small White could easily be confused with their more common cousin, the Large White. Note their smaller size, and different wing-markings, especially the dark green veins on the underside of the Green-veined White (see inset), which breeds as close as Orkney.

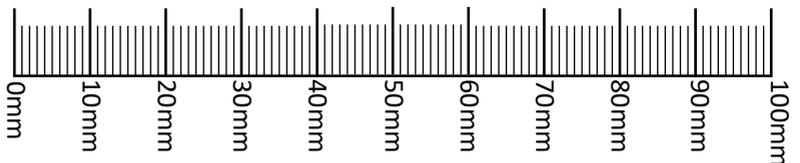


Wing Span Range 35mm

Common Blue
Polyommatus icarus

The tiny Common Blue became extinct in Shetland during the late 20th century but could potentially still survive unnoticed in some remote areas. It tends to favour flower rich meadows. We would also welcome any historical records of this species.

Scale Ruler



The following butterflies are depicted at 1:2 scale.

Monarch
Danaus plexippus

Camberwell Beauty
Nymphalis antiopa

Swallowtail
Papilio machaon



Wing Span Range: 76-88mm

Wing Span Range: 80-90mm

Wing Span Range: 95-100mm

Camberwell Beauty, Swallowtail and Monarch - This trio of spectacular butterflies have been recorded less than a handful of times in the islands. The former two are visitors from the Continent, but the Monarch breeds in North America. It seems almost unbelievable that a butterfly can cross the Atlantic unscathed.

For further information on butterflies please visit www.leps.it or www.butterfly-conservation.org Special thanks to Paolo Mazzei, Illaria Pimpinelli, Jens Christian Schou, Bernard Fransen, Raniero Panfilì & Fabio Cavallini for use of their pictures.

To be of value a record needs a date, location (with a grid reference – many free apps are available for phones that will do this) a species name and the observer's name. Photographs of all the species are welcomed as they can be helpful in confirming the identification. For rare species a photograph is important for evidencing the record.

If you have the time, you could also take part in a regular butterfly survey, recording the butterfly species you see in the same area every week (or as often as you are able). This area could be your garden or a set walking route that you take regularly. Try and complete your survey on a sunny day when butterflies are most active. If you walk a regular route then a map showing this or grid references at the start and finish point would be useful as would details of the habitats along the route (farmland, roadside verge, heather moorland, garden).

Records should be submitted to SBRC by email to: paul.harvey@shetlandamenity.org.

This project is supported by:



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