

SHERWOOD FOREST SHEET 1

THE BUTTERFLIES OF



Despite being famous across the world for its ancient Oak trees, Sherwood Forest cannot compete with woodlands in southern counties of the UK, for their range of butterflies. The reason is that the whole of the Sherwood Forest area, is extremely poor in its diversity of suitable nectar bearing flowers. A lack of flowers for adult butterflies is not the only problem, as the limited range of foodplants needed to support their caterpillars, means the majority of UK butterflies cannot be found here.



Although only about 22 species are still found in today's Sherwood Forest, that number was nearly double over a century ago. From historical records, it seems likely that many species were rare or uncommon even then and the last few adult butterflies of species such as Purple Emperor, Large Tortoiseshell and Marsh Fritillary, were all probably caught by Victorian collectors.

Thankfully, there is collecting of butterflies today, but Sherwood has lost one butterfly in the past 30 years. The Wall Brown was once a very common butterfly, even in towns and cities, but it seems to have become extremely rare in Nottinghamshire. Wall Brown caterpillars feed on grasses, so the reason for its decline is a mystery. One possible explanation could be the change in our climate, with our Winters now being warmer than they were 30 or 40 years ago.

On the positive side, Sherwood Forest has gained several new butterflies since the disappearance of the Wall Brown. Now when you walk through the forest, there are new butterflies such as the Essex Skipper and Gatekeeper, whilst Speckled Woods flutter in shafts of sunlight that filter through the Oaks Sherwood Forest is famous for.



Butterflies illustrated

- 1 Orange Tip
- 2 Comma
- 3 Gatekeeper
- 4 Brimstone

- 5 Large Skipper
- 6 Small Copper

