

SHERWOOD FOREST SHEET 2

THE BUTTERFLIES OF



Of the 22 or so species of butterflies found in Sherwood Forest, just one is a true woodland specialist. The Purple Hairstreak is a butterfly often difficult to see, as it spends most of its life at the top of the very largest Oaks. The male Purple Hairstreak is an active flyer and can frequently be seen chasing away other butterflies or large insects. The Oaks surrounding the visitor centre car park, are worth watching for a few minutes on a sunny July day, for this elusive little butterfly.

Sherwood Forest's other butterflies are usually much more obvious and easily seen. Each year, numbers of resident species increase with the arrival two well known migrants, the Red Admiral and Painted Lady. Both these strong-flying species arrive in the UK from southern Europe every year, after travelling distances of well over a thousand miles and often more. Both species migrate north to survive. The foodplant of their caterpillars dies in the heat each Spring, so the adults fly north to find suitable new areas for breeding.

Recent milder Winters have seen the Red Admiral successfully begin to survive through the colder months, before emerging again in the Spring, but most of Sherwood Forest's butterflies will either pass the Winter in the caterpillar or chrysalis stage. Caterpillars only a few millimetres long, can survive periods of even the coldest weather, but they will sometimes feed on milder Winter days. The Speckled Wood can pass the Winter as a caterpillar or a chrysalis, and is a successful butterfly that has become one of the commonest species in Sherwood Forest during the past 20 years.

Despite attracting many thousands of visitors each year, butterfly sightings are very rarely reported from Sherwood Forest, so it is important to let people know what you see. Who knows?, it might just be possible that the Purple Emperor still occurs around one Oak tree deep in the forest, remaining undetected for over a hundred years!



Butterflies illustrated

- 1 Speckled Wood
- 2 Meadow Brown
- 3 Purple Hairstreak
- 4 Red Admiral
- 5 Common Blue
- 6 Green-veined White