

THE BUTTERFLIES OF CHUDLEIGH PARISH

The following annotated checklist has been prepared by Dave Smallshire with help from Pete Hurst on behalf of Chudleigh *WILD*. All records up to the end of 2020 known to them and other local naturalists are summarised, together with records from the National Biodiversity Network Atlas (<https://nbnatlas.org/>). It should be regarded as work in progress and will be updated periodically as new information comes to hand. It does not necessarily represent all areas of the Parish equally and anyone who can add, correct or update this information is asked to send details to davesmall@btinternet.com.

The taxonomic sequence and scientific and vernacular names follow those of the 'Checklist of the Lepidoptera of the British Isles' (Agassiz, Beavan & Heckford, 2013). To jump to a particular species, try using the 'Find' function (click the magnifying glass search icon, or use <Ctrl+F> on a desktop computer, and type in the species you want to look for).

Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages*

Scarce and localized. Five in remnant limestone grassland at top of Palace Quarry on 27/5/89; further records from Palace Quarry in 1994 and 1995. Also recorded at Ruggadon DWT Reserve and Deer Park Farm. Occasional records from meadows at Puttshills Wood (27/5/89), Harcombe Cross verge (1996) and the A38 verge at Rivendell (1999).

Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*

Scarce and localized. Recorded from Deer Park Farm, Ruggadon DWT Reserve and Harcombe heathland above Ducksmoor Covert (1997). [May occur along rides in Haldon plantations.]

Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris*

Widespread and fairly common in mid-late summer, wherever tall grasses include the larval foodplant, Yorkshire-fog. For example, at the Teign Bridge/A38 verges and Puttshills Wood meadows in 1988, and Oldway Batfields Reserve (SUDS area) in 2020.

Large Skipper *Ochlodes sylvanus*

Widespread and fairly common in early-mid summer wherever tall grasses include tussocks of the larval foodplants, Cock's-foot and Purple Moor-grass. For example, at the Teign Bridge/A38 verges, Puttshills Wood meadows, Chudleigh Woods and Oldway Batfields Reserve (SUDS area). Occasionally wanders into gardens: singles in a Twindle Beer garden in five years during 1996-2020 and in Woodway Street in most years during 2010-20.

Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines*

Widespread. Males are commonly seen in spring searching for females, sometimes passing through gardens; breeds where Cuckooflower (Lady's Smock) flowers in grassland or Garlic Mustard flowers in hedgebanks. Breeding records from Oldway

Batfields Reserve (on Cuckooflower) and Oldway (on Garlic Mustard); eggs were laid on Cuckooflower in a Twindle Beer garden in 1997, 2006 and 2007. An early individual was at Puttshills fields on 29/3/90.

Wood White *Leptidea sinapis*

Rare, most probably extinct in the Parish. Recorded from Ducksmoor Covert CWS, Harcombe, in 2004. [May also occur along Haldon rides.]

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Widespread and sometimes abundant, especially as a migrant; often in gardens.

Small White *Pieris rapae*

Widespread and abundant; frequent in gardens.

Green-veined White *Pieris napi*

Widespread and fairly common, sometimes in gardens.

Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus*

An erratic migrant, brought in by warm weather from the Continent. Seen at Palace Quarry in 1994, Woodway Street in 2000, 2002, 2006 and 2017, Ruggadon in 2002 and 2005, Troarn Way in 2006, The Parade in 2019 and up to three in Twindle Beer gardens in September 2000.

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*

Widespread and fairly common, wandering freely in search of mates and its larval foodplants (Buckthorn and Alder Buckthorn). Adults overwinter and may be seen in all months.

Wall *Lasiommata megera*

Much commoner formerly, now very scarce. One in Palace Quarry 20+27/5/89; five at Beggar's Bush on 21/7/89; Chudleigh Rocks 1999. Singles in a Twindle Beer garden on 4/8/90, 10/8/09 and 10/8/20 and recorded from a Woodway Street garden in seven years during 2000-19. Also recorded from Kerswell in 2001, Beechwood Road in 2011, Highlands Park field in 2018 and at Ruggadon DWT Reserve.

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

Widespread and common in areas of dappled shade, including gardens. Multi-brooded, and may be seen from early spring through to autumn.

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Localized. Recorded at Deer Park Farm and Harcombe heathland (above Ducksmoor Covert) in 1997. [May also occur along Haldon Forest rides.]

Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*

Widespread and fairly common in late June-July, especially in areas of tall, damp grass. Occasional in gardens.

Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

Widespread and abundant in grassland in summer, especially where left uncut and ungrazed. Many in Oldway fields summer 2009. Recorded in Puttshills Wood meadows on 8/6/18. Small numbers in a Twindle Beer garden in most years.

Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

Widespread and common along field boundaries in July-August, sometimes wandering into gardens. Small numbers annual (probably breeding) in a Twindle Beer garden.

Marbled White *Melanargia galathea*

Widespread and fairly common in July, but localized, breeding where tall grasses (mainly Red Fescue) grow. Records include 20 at Chudleigh Bridge and 25 Puttshills fields in 1988; singles at Chudleigh Rocks and Beggar's Bush in July 1989; about eight at Harcombe A38 junction 1/7/90 (also seen there in 1998); Parr's Lane/A38 embankment in 1997-2003; and Great Hill in 2011. Also recorded from Chudleighwoods Farm, Deer Park Farm and Palace Quarry. There were good numbers flying in 2009 in uncut fields before development at Lower Trindle Close, and small numbers present in Oldway Batfields Reserve subsequently. Seen in gardens at Woodway Street (2000 and 2007) and Twindle Beer (three singles since 2007), and in the town centre in 2018.

Grayling *Hipparchia semele*

Found very locally in heathland in mid-late summer, where the larvae feed on Bristle Bent. Seen at Palace Quarry in 1994 and Ideford Common (within Parish) on 23/06/2020. Also recorded from Haldon Racecourse [and may occur along some Haldon Forest rides].

Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria euphrosyne*

Very scarce and localized, occurring in spring where violets grow among dead bracken or tree leaves. One on the side of Old Exeter Road, Haldon Plantation (near Spicers Road) on 20/5/89 [known elsewhere along Haldon Forest rides and in young plantations]. Also recorded from Ruggadon DWT Reserve in 1995 and 2003 and, remarkably, in Woodway Street in 1995.

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria selene*

Very scarce and localized, occurring in spring where violets grown among damper vegetation than the previous species. Recorded from Haldon Plantation (at SX890837) in 1996.

Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia*

Widespread and fairly common in summer in broad-leaved woodland, although wandering freely and occasionally coming into gardens, even in the town centre. Noted occasionally in a Woodway Street garden from 2009 (first), and three singles in a Twindle Beer garden since 2009 (two on Buddleia). Two dark *valezina* form at Ideford Common (within the Parish) on 28/05/20.

Dark Green Fritillary *Speyeria aglaja*

Scarce and very localized. Seen at at Ruggadon in 1997, Ideford Common (within the Parish) on 23/06/20 and several in two separate rides in Harcombe Plantation, to the south of the Kate Brook headwater, on two dates in mid/7/20.

White Admiral *Limenitis camilla*

Scarce and localized, occurring in summer in broad-leaved woodland where the larval foodplant, Honeysuckle, grows in partial sunlight. Recorded from Chudleigh Caves and Woods SSSI; Haldon Plantation (SX890837) in 2001; Coombeshead Cross in 2003; and Harcombe Forest rides on 18/7/20.

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Widespread and common, often appearing in gardens.

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

An erratic migrant, appearing in good numbers in some years. An exceptional immigration was recorded on 8 June 1996, with 15 per minute flying north across a 50m width of heathland in Harcombe Valley (a rough calculation suggests that, if they arrived on a broad front across Devon, some 1.6 million arrived in the county per hour!). Thirty on Buddleias at Pottery Court on 13/8/96. Up to six (in August 2019) seen in Twindle Beer gardens, mainly on Buddleias, in eight years during 1987-2020.

Peacock *Aglais io*

Widespread and common; often in gardens.

Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*

Widespread and common; often in gardens. Red Valerian attracted 13 in Woodway Street on 13/9/12. Hibernating adults are sometimes found indoors.

Comma *Polygonia c-album*

Widespread and common; often in gardens. Bred on small suckering elms in a Twindle Beer garden in 1989, 1992 and 1995 and seen egg-laying in a Woodway Street garden in 2019.

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

Probably widespread in small numbers, breeding where Common Sorrel grows (or Sheep's Sorrel in acidic locations). Seen in town gardens on three occasions in Twindle Beer in 1995 and 2009, in Woodway Street in six years during 2007-18, and in Fore Street in 2016.

Brown Hairstreak *Thecla betulae*

The Blackthorns in Devon's hedgerows, scrub and woodland fringes are nationally important for this scarce and very elusive species. Most records result from the discovery of eggs during intensive searches in winter, although these are hard to find, very localized and often doomed by hedge-trimming before they hatch in early spring. Eggs have been found widely in small numbers around the Parish, especially where Blackthorn has been allowed to grow untrimmed, as follows: five at Chudleigh Rocks on 26/2/89; 24 around Puttshills Wood on 26/2/89 (one along the track from the A38 tunnel, 14 on the east side of the wood and nine along a hedge running east from there); one by Kate Brook near the Cricket Field on 11/3/89; Exeter Road allotments in 1994 and 1995; Marsh Lane Cross in 1996; near Chudleighwoods Farm in 1998 and 2006; Ruggadon in 1999, 2002, 2010 and 2015; Woodway Street in 2001-2, 2004, 2006 and 2015; Coombeshead Cross in 2010, 2014 and 2019;

Farley in 2013; Parr's Lane and Puttshills Wood in 2015; Rock Road in 2017; single eggs at the Oldway Batfields Reserve on 24/1/17 and 5/11/20; and Rattycombe Farm in 2019; they have also been found at Deer Park Farm. Adults fly in August-September, but are very hard to see – in fact none has yet been seen in the Parish, but clearly they do occur!

Purple Hairstreak *Favonius quercus*

Probably widespread, though elusive, in July-August, wherever there are mature oaks. Recorded from Chudleigh Caves and Woods SSSI, Deer Park Farm, Puttshills Wood and Ruggadon DWT Reserve. More unusually, seen Woodway Street in 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2007 and in a Station Hill garden in 2013.

Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*

Very scarce, flying in spring. Recorded in a Kerswell garden (1996), at Lower Upcott (1997), in a Woodway Street garden (2003-4, 2017 and 2020), at Ruggadon DWT Reserve (2005), on Gorse along Haldon Forest rides and at Ideford Common (within the Parish) on 20/05/20.

White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrrium w-album*

Since the demise of mature English Elms, the Parish's Wych Elms have supported one very few populations known in Devon of this scarce species, although the adults, which fly in July-August, are elusive and rarely recorded. There are records from 'Chudleigh' in 1930 and 1977, and from Chudleigh Rocks, near Garden Spot Lane, Grealy Quarry and Ruggadon DWT Reserve (all in 1977), Crockham Bridge CWS, Higher Ranscome (1998) and The Warren (1998). Eggs have been found on Wych Elms at Chudleigh Rocks (1992), Palace Quarry (1994) and in Glen Cottage garden. Nearby, single adults were seen along Parkway Road in 1987; on Privet blossom in a Woodway Street garden in 2018; in an elm sucker in a Twindle Beer garden on 4/7/19; and on Wild Carrot in Lawn Gardens on 8/8/20.

Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*

Widespread and common, wandering freely in search of its main larval foodplants, Holly and Ivy. Frequently seen in gardens, where it may fly between March and October, typically higher than a metre (whereas Common Blue stays lower).

Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*

Scarce and local. Singles seen at the Oldway Batfields Reserve (SUDS field) on 20/5/20 & 10/7/20, and Spicers Road, Haldon Plantation, 2/8/20. Also recorded at Ruggadon DWT Reserve.

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*

Widespread and fairly common in spring and summer, wherever bird's-foot-trefoils (the larval foodplant) are found. Records include at least 30 in remnant limestone grassland on the top of Palace Quarry on 27/5/89 and up to four in Oldway Batfields Reserve, 20/5/20. Seen regularly in gardens at Woodway Street and occasionally in Twindle Beer (in 11 years during 1989-2020). Breeding sites include short, dry grassland with Common Bird's-foot-trefoil and taller, damper grassland with Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil.