

## John Tilt: Limestone and grassland butterflies

John is a butterfly expert and co-ordinator for the West Midlands branch of Butterfly Conservation. He described the butterflies found on different types of grasslands, illustrated by fabulous photos. Butterflies are either generalist feeders or specialists. Worcestershire has nationally important neutral grassland and traditional meadows which are home to mainly generalist species including Green Hairstreak, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Gatekeeper, Marbled White and Common Blue. Limestone grassland has specialists such as the Dingy Skipper, Duke of Burgundy (above), and Dark Green Fritillary, and support several species of Blues – (Chalkhill, Small, Large and Adonis), that require ants as part of their lifecycle. The acid grasslands of the Malverns are notable for the Grayling, (a rare inland site), and the Small Heath and Small Copper are abundant on the Hills. The High Brown Fritillary is no longer found on the Malverns, but its habitat has been restored and this rare butterfly could be reintroduced.

This hot summer has been good for butterfly numbers and there is evidence of butterflies adapting to climate change – the Marbled White's range has moved north in recent years. However, food plants may not spread north at the same rate, which emphasises the need for careful monitoring of species.



Duke of Burgundy butterfly