

Comma

Polygonia c-album

Insects · On the wing Mar–Oct · hibernates as an adult



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A tawny-orange butterfly whose wing edges are so deeply scalloped and ragged that a closed-winged individual is a convincing dead leaf. The name comes from the small white comma-shaped mark on the dark underside of the hindwing. Commas have spread north dramatically in recent decades and are now a regular sight in Dumfries gardens, woodland edge and hedgerow.

BEHAVIOUR

Commas hibernate as adults, often hanging openly on a twig or in a log pile where the leaf mimicry keeps them safe. They have two forms: pale, bright individuals emerging in midsummer that breed straight away, and darker ones that go into hibernation instead. Caterpillars feed on nettle and hop, and resemble a bird dropping — white on black — for their last stage.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Brush-footed butterflies (Nymphalidae)
WINGSPAN	5–6 cm
STATUS	Native; expanding north strongly

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