

Red Admiral

Vanessa atalanta

Insects · On the wing May–Nov · increasingly overwinters



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A large, strong-flying butterfly, velvety black with a bold scarlet band across each forewing and along the hindwing margin, and white flecks at the wingtip. Red admirals are common in gardens, orchards and woodland edge around Dumfries from early summer, and are often the last butterfly still flying in November, feeding on windfall fruit and ivy blossom.

BEHAVIOUR

Red admirals are territorial and will repeatedly return to a favoured sunny perch, seeing off other butterflies. In late autumn they gorge on rotting apples and pears and can become noticeably sluggish. Caterpillars live singly inside a tent made by folding a nettle leaf and sealing it with silk. Traditionally the whole British population arrived from the south each year; increasingly some now survive our winters.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Brush-footed butterflies (Nymphalidae)
WINGSPAN	6.5–7.5 cm
STATUS	Migrant, now increasingly resident; common

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