

How's your Nature Knowledge?

Student Introduction

- ▶ This resource will help you to practise your reading skills
- ▶ You will discover facts about some local birds and butterflies

There is an abundance of nature at Robin Hill!

- ▶ Which birds and butterflies might you see at Robin Hill Country Park?
- ▶ Can you find out about their way of life and features?

TASK

- ✓ Read the information and answer the questions!

Buzzard



Glance skywards and you might see a buzzard circling 500 metres above you! The Island's population of buzzards has increased dramatically

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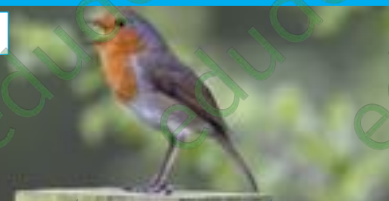
Blue Tit



The brightly coloured male (shown here) is of stark contrast to the female which has duller, light brown feathers.

Our colourful blue tits can form quite large flocks, especially in winter. Groups of at least 20 are commonly seen here at Robin Hill. It is estimated by the RSPB that there are over 3.5 million breeding pairs in the UK. A blue tit can live to 21 years old!

Robin



There are Robins a-plenty at Robin Hill, and this may well be the historical link to the park's name! Fiercely territorial and aggressive to other birds and its own kind, the Robin has more friends in the human world and is always voted our favourite native bird in opinion polls!

Sparrowhawk



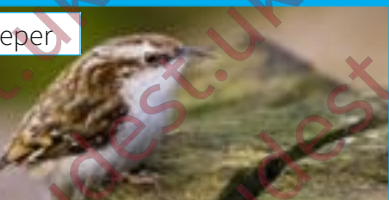
One of the most common of the UK's birds of prey, the Robin Hill woodland is a great place to see a fast-moving Sparrowhawk. As its name suggests, it prefers to hunt sparrows and other small birds like blue tits. They will fly up to 3km a day in search of prey and it's estimated that a pair of these hawks can catch over 2200 smaller birds during a year!!

Green Woodpecker



Watch out for a flash of emerald green as this colourful character flies from the ground into the air. This woodpecker is the size of a pigeon but it rarely flies in a straight line, dipping up and down like a wave with its wing beats. Its favourite food is wood ants, which is why you'll see these birds on the woodland floor rather than pecking on a tree.

Treecreeper



Treecreepers measure from 12 to 18 centimetres in length and as their name implies, they climb over the surface of trees in search for food. They fly to the bottom of a tree, then climb up in a spiral fashion searching for winged insects and spiders. Keep your eyes peeled on tree trunks as you walk through the woods.

1. Which bird is fiercely territorial and aggressive to other birds, yet is loved by humans?

2. What do Treecreepers like to eat?

3. Which is the largest local bird of prey?

4. Describe the woodpecker's style of flight (you could use a quotation from the text in your answer):

5. Which bird likes to hunt Blue Tits for food?

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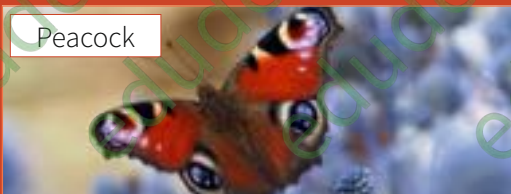
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3.



Now read the information below and on page 3 about butterflies and answer the questions.

Peacock



A beautiful and easily recognised butterfly thanks to its eye spots, designed to frighten or confuse predators. These patterns were thought to resemble those on a peacock's tail feathers, hence the name. Their black caterpillars eat nettles while the adults feed on nectar and the juices of rotting fruit.

Red Admiral



A large butterfly which migrates to reach us from Europe in the spring. These adults lay their eggs on nettles and the black caterpillars then grow to become the late summer 'home-grown' butterflies that we see in August. Although these adults will try to hibernate, very few can survive the British frosts in winter.

Small Tortoiseshell



Often the commonest of our butterflies and easy to spot, but it has regular periods when its population suffers dramatic decline. These cycles are thought to be linked to weather and the abundance of certain parasitic wasps. The caterpillars feed on nettles and protect themselves from bad weather and predators beneath a silk tent they spin together.

Comma



Commas lay their eggs on nettle and elm trees but they have a particular liking for hops. 100 years ago this butterfly was almost extinct! The closed wings of the Comma have distinctive ragged edges and almost create the perfect likeness of a dead leaf.

Gatekeeper



Gatekeepers (also known as Hedge Browns) seem to show a marked preference to yellow flowers (although they probably do not see them in the same colours we do!), and a favourite of theirs is ragwort.

Marbled White



The Marbled White is a distinctive butterfly and is unlikely to be confused with any other you might see here at Robin Hill. Unlike the Gatekeeper (above) they have a preference for purple flowers, with thistles being at the top of the menu!

Painted Lady



One of the most widespread butterflies in the world, this is a strong-flying migratory species. Adults arrive in the UK from Africa and Europe in the summer and lay eggs on thistles. None will survive our winter though, and we rely on new migrants flying across the channel the following year to begin the cycle again.

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8. What is an alternative name for the 'Hedge Brown' butterfly?

9. How did the Peacock butterfly get its name?

11. Which butterfly suffers from dramatic declines in its population, and what is the reason for this?

12. List 3 facts about the Painted Lady butterfly:

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