

Speckled wood

Parage aegeria

find me

Settling in sunny puddles of sunlight in woodland, or helter skeltering skywards in pairs battling over ownership of a territory.

this very light that the speckled wood dances, hunting for a mate or territory. Found in the tree tops, it's a favourite food source is honeydew, a tacky sugar rich fluid produced by aphids as they feed on plant sap. The speckled wood will feed on flowers only when aphid numbers are low.



zone
1, 2, 7

©John Black

woodland life

easy to find

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zone
1, 2, 7

Birch polypore

Piptoporus betulinus

zone
1, 2

A pale chestnut brown upper-side with an ivory white underside speckled with pores, this thick saucer shaped fungus grows almost exclusively upon dead or damaged birch trees. Historically birch polypore has been very useful to humans, a strip of the flesh can be stretched across a board and used to finely sharpen a blade; dried out it makes great tinder and can smoulder for a long time making it possible to travel with fire to the next camp, and a sliver cut from the underside makes a very effective self-sticking field plaster which possesses antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties.

find me

Smelling strongly of mushrooms, sprouting from bark along the trunks of birch trees.



Common hazel

Corylus avellana

Coppicing is the practice of cutting back a tree to a stump to encourage new growth, it is believed that some trees evolved this adaptation in order to survive the rooting and foraging of large animals such as the straight-tusked elephant that roamed much of Europe up until 40,000 years ago. Hazel is one of the finest examples of such a tree, its branches in spring being so flexible that they can be knotted. In January, the lambs tail like catkins are produced before the rounded saw toothed leaves, and the autumn nuts that nestle in ragged star burst leafage make it easy to identify all year round.

find me

Flowering in January with dangling green catkins being one of the first signs of the changing season, or with bizarrely gnarled nut cases in bunches of 3 in September.

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Great spotted woodpecker

Dendrocopus major

A tick.....tick.....tick chime is the first signal that this sharp dressed woodpecker is close, even when not visible. Looking towards the direction of the call will reward you with a glimpse of the unmistakable flap and torpedo bouncing flight path sucked almost magnetically towards its next tree trunk perch. In spring the male finds the hollow areas of a branch to drum out his classic hammering display, transmitting his undeniable

find me

Proudly calling at the tops of silver birch trees and drumming upon trunks and branches in spring.

beauty and virility to all potential suitors. Blackbird in size, tailored in crisp black and white and scarlet under the tail, with the female lacking the red patch on the back of the neck.

zone
1, 3

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woodland life

hard to find

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Lesser stag beetle

Dorcus parallelipedus

Clad in stout charcoal black armour plating, this is a robust little tank of a beetle. Growing up to 3cm in length the lesser stag beetle is still smaller than its spectacular cousin. Its head, almost as broad as its thorax, wields a pair of impressive looking jaws positioned below the elbowed antennae. The large plump larvae can often be found in the rotting wood of ash and apple trees, curled up in the shape of the letter 'c'.

find me

In summer wandering across woodland paths or on logs soaking up the summer sun.

zone
1, 2, 7

Woodlouse spider

Dysdera crocata

A cephalothorax is the spider version of an insects head and thorax, only in spiders these are fused together. In the case of the woodlouse spider, this, along with the legs, is a waxy rusty blood red, the abdomen an opaque muddy cream colour. On closer inspection you will find an alarming pair of formidable chelicerae (fangs), these are hollow and attached to a venom gland and used to pierce and disable its prey, which are predominantly woodlice.

find me

In warm places, such as under leaf litter, logs and rocks. If you find woodlice then it's likely that a woodlouse spider is not too far away.

zone
1, 2, 7



woodland life

a **real** find

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zone
1, 2, 7

Very shy and not often seen yet often heard, even in the daytime. Contrary to the popular belief the call of the tawny owl is not terwit-terwoo, but the female kew-wick responding to the males hoo-hoo-hoo. With impeccable camouflage its visual presence dissolves into its woodland home, feather markings greatly resembling oak bark, a favoured tree used for roosting as well as a nest site where it utilises large cracks and holes. It is also known to nest in squirrel dreys and magpie nests.

Tawny owl

Strix aluco

find me

By listening out in woodlands in the daytime for a commotion of alarmed small birds that on discovering an owl will broadcast its presence.

Brown long-eared bat

Plecotus auritus

Ears which measure up to 3.9cm long make them nearly as long as its body, and when at rest they can be curled back like the horns of a ram, or tucked under the wings to prevent heat loss. The brown long-eared bat is a marvel of audio evolution, also known as the 'whispering bat', its super-sized ears compensate for its soft locating calls, listening out for the movement of the insects themselves, these food items can then be plucked from the air as well as from leaves, branches and even the ground.

find me

Hunting above woodland treetops, mainly for moths, with a slow agile, fluttering flight.

zone
7



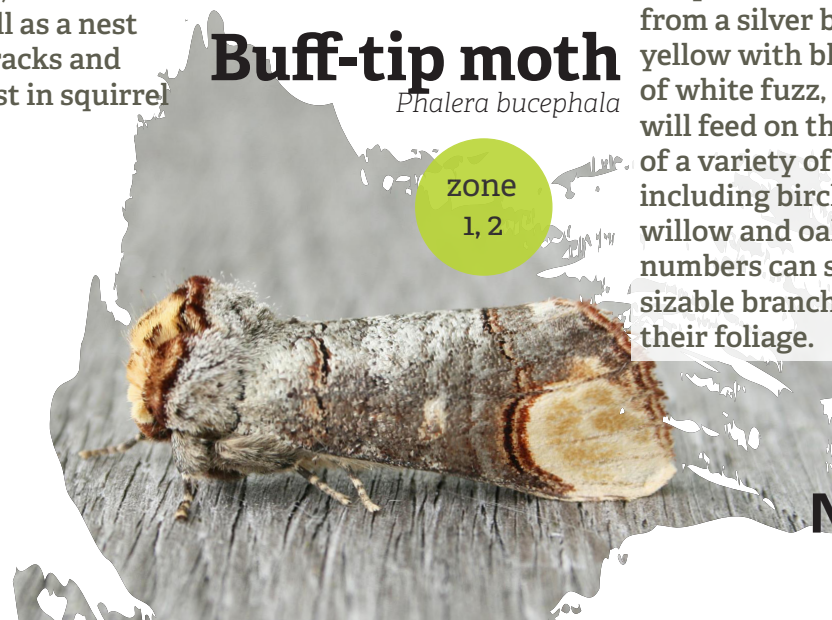
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Although quite common this medium sized moth is so well camouflaged it can be very hard to find. Its silvery ash grey wings which are held close to the body when at rest, a blunt buff coloured head and a buff patch at the tips of the wings create the perfect illusion of it being the snapped twig from a silver birch. The caterpillars are a striking yellow with black hoops and an overall covering of white fuzz, they will feed on the leaves of a variety of trees including birch, hazel, willow and oak. Large numbers can strip sizable branches of all their foliage.

Buff-tip moth

Phalera bucephala

zone
1, 2



find me

Flying at night between June and July at the edges of woodland, or in the daytime resting on logs and branches looking exactly like a broken twig.

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