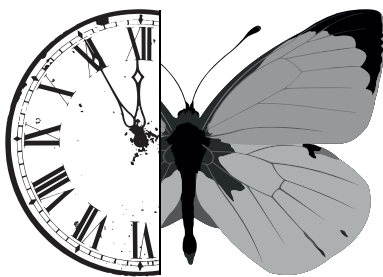


Portals to the World

Exhibition Guide



BUTTERFLIES THROUGH TIME

Use this guide to tour the Butterflies through Time exhibition

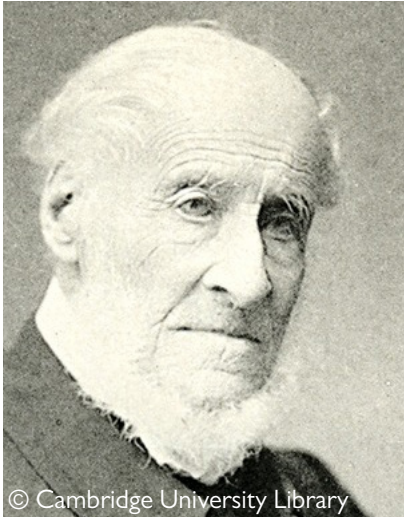


The exhibition explores the Museum's historic butterfly collection, showing us which species lived in Cambridgeshire 200 years ago.

It also looks to the future and highlights the many ways that knowledge gathered from the museum collections is being used to inform current conservation work.

Butterflies through Time

Museum collections hold huge amounts of information. The butterflies in this exhibition, including information about when and where they were collected, can show us how the abundance and distribution of species has changed over time.



Leonard Jenyns:

Jenyns was a naturalist who lived in Cambridgeshire around 200 years ago. He spent much of his life recording the wildlife he saw in notebooks.

The Museum holds four of Jenyns' handwritten notebooks. The information written in them helps researchers to explore how local wildlife has changed over the last two centuries.

The swallowtail butterfly

Find this butterfly in a square display case, straight in-front of you as you enter the gallery from the entrance hall



Wingspan of up to 9cm or
3.5 inches

The swallowtail butterfly is the largest butterfly in the UK.

Jenyns wrote that the swallowtail was once common in Cambridgeshire.

The fenland landscape has changed a lot since Jenyns wrote in his notebooks. Much of the fenland habitat has been drained to be used for farmland.

Fenland landscape as it may have
looked 200 years ago



Farmland, found widely in today's
Cambridgeshire landscape



The swallowtail became locally extinct in Cambridgeshire around 50 years ago, due to the loss of the fenland habitat.

Meadow brown butterfly and habitat change

Find this butterfly in the upper gallery, on the right just beyond the stairs

The observations that Jenyns recorded in his notebooks can show us the impact of habitat change for different species. Not all species have suffered the same decline as the swallowtail butterfly.

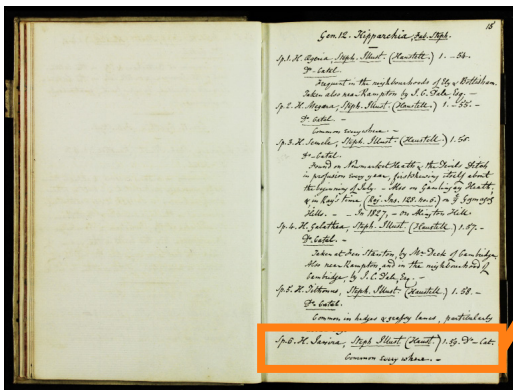
The meadow brown butterfly is often seen in abundance in many habitats. It will even fly in dull weather, when most other species prefer to wait for the sunshine.



Wingspan of up to 55mm or
2.1 inches

Image here is lifesize

Meadow brown butterfly notebook entry



*Sp. G. H. Janira, Steph. Illust. (Haut.) 1. 59. 9. - Cat.
Common every where. -*

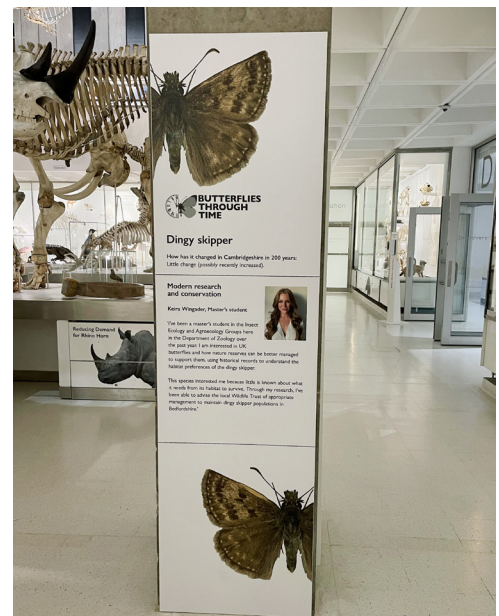
“Common everywhere”

Jenyns wrote simply that this species is ‘common everywhere’. There has been little change for this butterfly as they can still be found across the meadows of Cambridgeshire, showing how retaining wild habitats can keep a species alive.

Conservation stories

The exhibition highlights ongoing conservation stories and research projects.

These stories can be found in the upper gallery and lower gallery on display boards like the one in the image.



Example researcher display in museum

“Banking on Butterflies” project

“Banking on Butterflies” is one of the conservation projects highlighted in the exhibition. The project aims to help butterflies cope with rising temperatures caused by climate change.



Large skipper cooling off in the grass

Rising temperatures are causing butterflies to spread north in the UK. However, gaps between suitable habitat makes it difficult for them to move through the landscape.

Butterflies often cool down by finding shade in vegetation and sitting with their wings closed.

The project team have created an E-shaped series of banks on a local Wildlife Trust site.

View of banks from above, showing chalky soil, without vegetation



Ground-level view of butterfly banks, with some vegetation



The hope is for the butterfly banks to provide a range of temperatures across the slopes where butterflies can either warm up or cool down.

Dingy skipper butterfly

Find this butterfly in the upper gallery, in the case left of the top of the stairs



Wingspan of up to
3cm or 1 inch
Image here is lifesize

The dingy skipper is a species of butterfly that has suffered long term declines in the UK. It needs habitat that includes warm exposed ground in sheltered conditions.

By creating butterfly banks out of chalky soil, we have turned flat, exposed habitat into a diverse range of sheltered slopes, perfect for this butterfly.