



CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS  
HERITAGE TRUST



Butterfly  
Conservation  
**N.Ireland**  
Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

# An introduction to **butterflies and moths of the Causeway Coast and Glens**



Butterflies and moths can be found everywhere from the tops of our mountains to the seashore, in our parks, gardens, fields and woodland. This guide will introduce you to the butterflies and some of the moths that you will find as you explore the Causeway Coast and Glens, and provide information on some of the best and most easily accessible places for you to see them.



## This booklet provides a brief introduction to some of the butterflies and moths you are likely to see as you explore the Causeway Coast and Glens.

It also provides information on flight times, food plants and habitats so you'll know what to look out for as you explore. Some of the most popular sites in the Causeway Coast and Glens are profiled by habitat to help you plan your visits.

Most importantly there is information on how to feed back to us on what you see. Your sightings of butterflies and moths are really important in helping to conserve them now and in the future.



Dark Green Fritillary



Common Blue

## How to use this booklet

Our common or 'Wider Countryside' species are shown at the beginning of this booklet. They are the creatures you are most likely to encounter when you visit the Causeway Coast and Glens.

Our rarer or 'Specialist' butterflies and moths are shown at the back. These are species which are much more restricted to a specific type of landscape or foodplant.

In the middle you will find a selection of sites within the Causeway Coast and Glens AONBs, all of which are publically accessible throughout the year.

### Sites are divided into two main categories:



Family Friendly sites have lots of facilities and are often easy to find



Off-road sites are more basic and often a bit more off the beaten track.

The location of sites is shown on the fold-out map at the end of the booklet.

All of our butterflies and moths are linked to particular types of landscape or habitat. These are very varied, but have been basically described as;

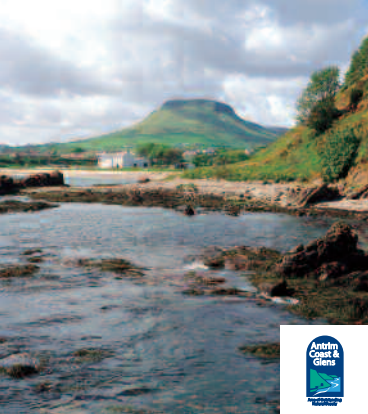
- **Peatland** - bogs, moors and fens
- **Grassland** - meadows, grassy rides and glades
- **Woodland** - forests, scrub and hedgerows
- **Rocky** - sand dunes, sea cliffs and stony outcrops
- **Urban** - parks, gardens and farmland

Each site description gives a rough idea of the different landscapes you will encounter and what creatures you may come across while you are there.

### Tell us what you see!

At the back of the booklet find out how to record your sightings online, along with lots of links to further information.

**Your sightings are really important for helping Butterfly Conservation and the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust conserve these special creatures.**



# Causeway Coast and Glens

Stretching from Belfast Lough to Lough Foyle the Causeway Coast and Glens comprises 3 AONBs, designated as landscapes of national importance.

Designated in 1989, the Antrim Coast & Glens AONB encompasses the famous '9 Glens of Antrim', the coastal area between Larne and Ballycastle and Rathlin Island. Travelling the breathtaking Antrim Coast Road, the landscape is characterised by a series of striking headlands and sheltered bays. The upland areas provide a contrast to the gentle rolling green glens, with the Garron Plateau forming the most extensive area of upland bog in Northern Ireland.

The Causeway Coast AONB was designated in 1989, extending 30km from Portrush to Ballycastle, characterised by a dramatic, complex coastline and including the Giants Causeway World Heritage Site. Contrasting with this wild coastal scenery of steep headlands and rocky bays is the Bush Valley landscape characterised by mixed farmland and pockets of woodland.

Binevenagh AONB was designated in 2006. This is a re-designation and extension of the North Derry AONB, originally designated in 1966. This AONB includes some of the finest beaches and dune systems on an international scale. The flat alluvial plain near Lough Foyle is important for arable farming overlooked by the dramatic headland of Binevenagh Mountain with its rich blanket bog.

The Causeway Coast and Glens are extremely important areas for butterflies and moths in Northern Ireland. Designated for their dramatic landscapes they contain a wide variety of important and specialised habitats including wildflower-rich meadows, woodlands, bogs, wetlands and cliffs. These in turn provide homes for some of Northern Ireland's most important and iconic species, some of which can only be seen at the sites mentioned in this booklet and nowhere else.

## Spotting butterflies and moths

- 🦋 Go looking on warm sunny days when there's not much wind.
- 🦋 They love to bask on bare earth, fence posts and stones.
- 🦋 Moths and butterflies feed on nectar so check flowers heads.
- 🦋 Don't forget your camera and binoculars!

Butterflies and moths are insects with short lifecycles, most going from **egg > caterpillar > chrysalis > adult** in less than a year. They are widely recognised as a good indicator of the health of the environment as lots of different types of butterflies and moths in good numbers implies a healthy ecosystem for lots of different plants and animals. Telling us what you see helps us to better conserve our habitats and landscapes for butterflies, moths and all biodiversity.

## Wider Countryside Butterflies and Moths

Wider Countryside butterflies and moths are found right across the countryside, gardens and wild places throughout Northern Ireland. As caterpillars, they eat a wide variety of different plants, or eat very common and widespread plants like nettles. They are mobile and can easily fly from one patch of habitat to another.



### Green-veined White

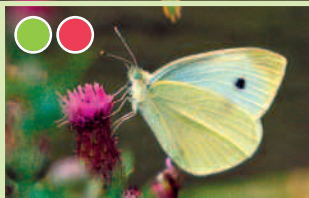
**Distribution** Everywhere.

#### Flight season

March to October.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Leaves of small crucifers including Cuckooflower.



### Small White

**Distribution** Everywhere.

#### Flight season

March to October.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Cabbage plant family.



### Large White

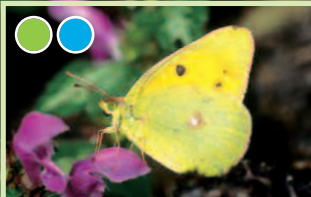
**Distribution** Everywhere.

#### Flight season

April to September.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Cabbage plant family.



### Clouded Yellow (MIGRANT)

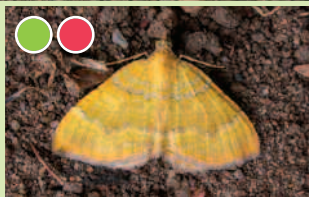
**Distribution** Widespread.

#### Flight season

May to November; peak sightings August to September.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Clovers and other members of the Pea family.



### Yellow Shell (MOTH)

**Distribution** Widespread.

#### Flight season

June to early-September.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Herbaceous plants including docks, bedstraws and chickweeds.



### Six-spot Burnet (MOTH)

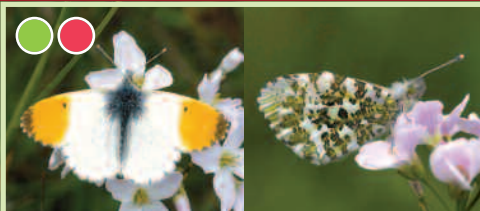
**Distribution** Widespread.

#### Flight season

Late May to early September.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Bird's-foot Trefoil.



### Orange Tip (Male and underwing)

**Distribution** Everywhere.

**Flight season** Early April to mid-July; peak sightings late April to late May.

#### Caterpillar food plant

**NB** Female Orange Tips don't have orange markings, but both have mottled green outer wings.



### Cinnabar (MOTH)

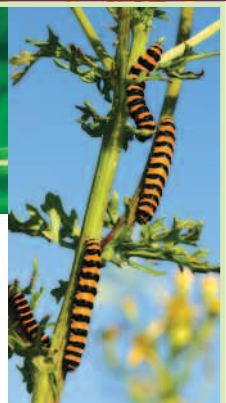
**Distribution** Widespread.

#### Flight season

May to August.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Common Ragwort.





● Peatland 
 ● Rocky 
 ● Urban 
 ● Grassland 
 ● Woodland



**Meadow Brown**

**Distribution** Everywhere.

**Flight season**

May to late October.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Grasses.



**Ringlet**

**Distribution** Everywhere.

**Flight season**

Mid-June to mid-August.

**Caterpillar food plant.**

Grasses.



**Speckled Wood**

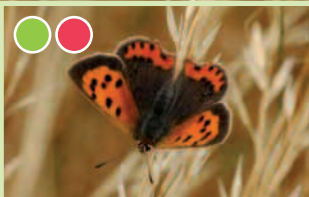
**Distribution** Everywhere.

**Flight season**

March to early November; peak sightings August to September.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Grasses at the edge of woodland.



**Small Copper**

**Distribution** Everywhere.

**Flight season**

Mid-April to mid-October.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Sheep's Sorrel and Common Sorrel.



**Small Heath**

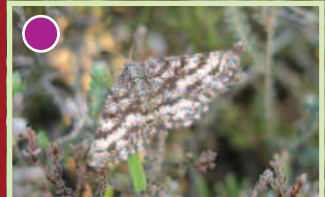
**Distribution** Everywhere.

**Flight season**

Late April to mid-October; peak sightings mid-May to late June.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Fine-leaved grasses.



**Common Heath (MOTH)**

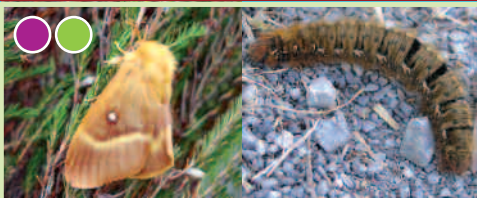
**Distribution** Everywhere.

**Flight season**

Mid-April to early August.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Various heathers.



**Northern Eggar (MOTH)**

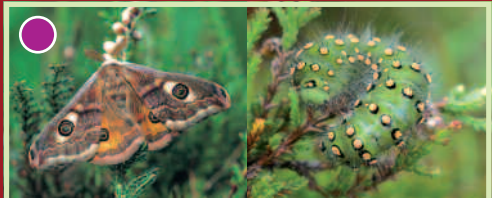
**Distribution** Widespread.

**Flight season** May to August.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Heather, Birch, Willow, Hawthorn.

**NB** Look out for caterpillars basking on vegetation in the autumn and spring before they pupate.



**Emperor (MOTH)**

**Distribution** Everywhere.

**Flight season** Late March to mid-June; peak sightings mid-April.

**Caterpillar food plant** Heath, Meadowsweet, Bog Myrtle and Willow. **NB** Look out for caterpillars basking on vegetation in August and September

## Wider Countryside Butterflies and Moths

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### Small Tortoiseshell

#### Distribution

Everywhere.

#### Flight season

All year round; peak sightings July to September.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Common Nettle.



### Red Admiral (MIGRANT)

#### Distribution

Everywhere.

#### Flight season

All year round; peak sightings

August to September.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Common Nettle.



### Painted Lady (MIGRANT)

#### Distribution

Everywhere.

#### Flight season

March to November; peak

sightings August to September.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Species of thistle.



### Peacock

#### Distribution

Everywhere.

#### Flight season

All year round; peak

sightings in August.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Common Nettle.



### Comma (MIGRANT)

#### Distribution

Rare, sightings

restricted to the east coast.

#### Flight season

July to August.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Common Nettle,

sometimes Hops.



### Humming-bird Hawk-moth

#### (MIGRANT)

#### Distribution

Widespread.

#### Flight season

April to October.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Bedstraws, but very unlikely

to successfully breed in NI.



### Garden Tiger (MOTH)

#### Distribution

Everywhere.

#### Flight season

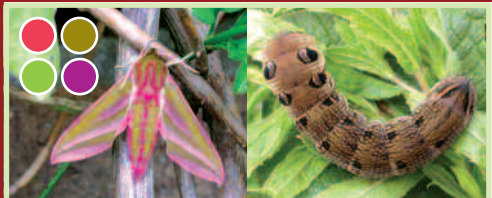
Mid-June to early September.

#### Caterpillar food plant

A wide variety of herbaceous plants.

**NB** Caterpillars are well known as 'granny greybeards'

and often found in gardens from July to September.



### Elephant Hawk-moth

#### Distribution

Everywhere.

#### Flight season

Mid-May to late July; peak sightings mid-June.

Caterpillars are most often seen from July-Sept.

#### Caterpillar food plant

Various willowherbs and Fuchsia.

● Peatland ● Rocky ● Urban  
● Grassland ● Woodland



**Antler (MOTH)**

**Distribution** Widespread.

**Flight season**

July to mid-September.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Various coarse flowers grasses.

**NB** Often seen nectaring on flower heads.



**Fox Moth (Caterpillar)**

**Distribution** Widespread.

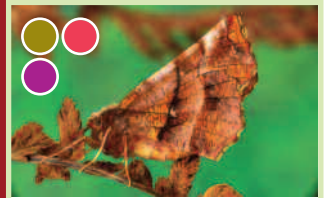
**Flight season**

Mid-May to early July.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Bilberry, Meadowsweet and Bramble.

**NB** Adults are nocturnal and not seen by day



**Early Thorn (MOTH)**

**Distribution** Everywhere.

**Flight season**

Late February to early September.

**Caterpillar food plant**

A variety of trees including Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Hazel.



**Silver Y (MIGRANT, MOTH)**

**Distribution** Everywhere.

**Flight season**

Mid-April to November; peak sightings June to late-August.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Bedstraws, Common Nettle and clovers.



**Poplar Hawk-moth**

**Distribution** Everywhere.

**Flight season**

May to mid-September.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Poplars and willows.



**Burnished Brass (MOTH)**

**Distribution** Widespread.

**Flight season**

Early June to early October.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Nettle and Marjoram.



**Common Blue (Upper-wing and under-wing)**

**Distribution** Everywhere.

**Flight season**

May to October.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Birds'-foot Trefoil.

**NB** Mostly observed flying near the ground

and especially noticeable at the coast.



**Holly Blue (Upper-wing and under-wing)**

**Distribution** Scarce.

**Flight season**

April to June, and August to September.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Holly in spring, ivy in autumn.

**NB** Mostly observed flying around trees and hedgerows.



## Dunes and Grassland



### Magilligan National Nature Reserve

C 660 390  
Postcode BT49 0LP  
Dark Green Fritillary,  
Wood Tiger, Small Eggar



### Benone Strand

C 712 357  
Postcode BT49 0LQ  
Common Blue, Ringlet,  
Six Spot Burnet



### Downhill Demesne

C 757 357  
Postcode BT51 4RP  
Meadow Brown,  
Speckled Wood,  
Figure of Eight



#### Facilities

 **Off-road, Car Park,  
Interpretation Panels**

Situated at the most north-western tip of the north coast, Magilligan is just the beginning of an extensive sand dune system that runs all the way to Portstewart. The valleys between the dunes provide warm, sheltered havens for butterflies and moths even on breezy days.

#### Access

*By Road:* Follow signs to Magilligan ferry down the B202 Point Road, off the main A2 Seacoast Road.


*By Bus:* Ulsterbus 134 service follows the Seacoast Road and stops at Magilligan Crossroads, but there is no direct bus to the reserve which is a 4 mile walk from the main road.

Owned by the Military of Defence and Managed by NIEA

[www.ni-environment.gov.uk](http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk)  
[nieainfo@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:nieainfo@doeni.gov.uk)

Site Manager Tel: 028 7776 3982

#### Facilities

 **Family Friendly,  
Car Park, Toilets,  
Visitor Centre, Restaurant,  
Access for All**

Benone is one of the north coast's best loved beaches, but explore the extensive dune grasslands at Benone Strand to find a wealth of wildlife including the delicate and striking Common Blue butterfly.

#### Access

*By Road:* Benone Tourist Complex and Strand lies 12 miles north of Limavady and 10 miles north west of Coleraine and is well signposted off the A2 Seacoast Road.

*By Bus:* Ulsterbus 134 service follows the A2 and stops at the entrance to the complex on request.

Owned and Managed by  
Limavady Borough Council  
[www.limavady.gov.uk](http://www.limavady.gov.uk)  
[info@limavady.gov.uk](mailto:info@limavady.gov.uk)  
Tel: 028 7775 0555

#### Facilities

 **Family Friendly, Car  
Park\*, Toilets, Cafe\*\*,  
Access for All, Interpretation  
Panels, Site Guides**

Downhill Demesne and Mussendun Temple is one of the most iconic sites in Northern Ireland. The extensive grasslands and garden provide important habitat for many of our wider countryside species, while the wooded reservoir provides important habitat for the Figure of Eight moth.

#### Access

*By Road:* Located 5 miles west of Coleraine, Downhill Demesne is clearly signposted off the A2 Seacoast Road.  
*By Bus:* Ulsterbus 134 service will drop off at request at the site.

Owned and Managed by  
The National Trust  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)  
[downhilldemesne@nationaltrust.org.uk](http://downhilldemesne@nationaltrust.org.uk)  
Tel: 028 7084 8728

\*Car Parking charges may apply to non-National Trust members

\*\*Check website for opening times





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## The Moors, Castlerock

C 764 361

Postcode BT51 4RH  
Ringlet, Cinnabar,  
Figure of Eight



## Portstewart Strand

C 811 366

Postcode BT55 7PG  
Dark Green Fritillary,  
Scarce Crimson and Gold,  
Yellow Shell



## White Park Bay

D 013 437

Postcode BT54 6NH  
Cryptic Wood White,  
Dark Green Fritillary,  
Six Spot Burnet



### Facilities



**Off-road,  
Car Park**

The Moors offers wonderful views of the surrounding area with the deep, sheltered valley between Castlerock and Downhill presenting a real butterfly haven even in windy weather. You can also explore the dune system along the strand to encounter some slightly different habitats.

### Access

*By Road:* Castlerock is one mile east of Coleraine, well signposted off the main A2 Seacoast Road. Head over the railway line then turn left at the crossroads along Main Street. Follow signs for the Black Glen Car Park.

*By Bus:* Ulsterbus 134 service stops in Castlerock from where there is just a short walk up to the site.

Owned and Managed by  
Coleraine Borough Council  
[www.colerainebc.gov.uk](http://www.colerainebc.gov.uk)  
[info@colerainebc.gov.uk](mailto:info@colerainebc.gov.uk)  
Tel: 028 7034 7034

### Facilities



**Family Friendly, Car Park\*,  
Toilets, Visitor Centre\*\*,  
Interpretation Panels**

Portstewart Strand is an extremely important site for butterflies and moths with 2 miles of golden sand to explore as well as an extensive dune system. This is the very best site in the UK for the tiny Scarce Crimson and Gold moth which you may spot flying over areas of bare sand within the dunes.

### Access

*By Road:* Portstewart Strand is 4 miles north of Coleraine along the A2, follow signs for The Strand.  
*By Bus:* Ulsterbus 140 service, the nearest bus stop is located just up from the strand.

Owned and Managed by  
The National Trust  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)  
[portstewart@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:portstewart@nationaltrust.org.uk)  
Tel: 028 7083 6396

\*Car Parking charges may apply to non-National Trust members  
\*\*Check website for opening times

### Facilities



**Off-road, Car Park,  
Interpretation Panels**

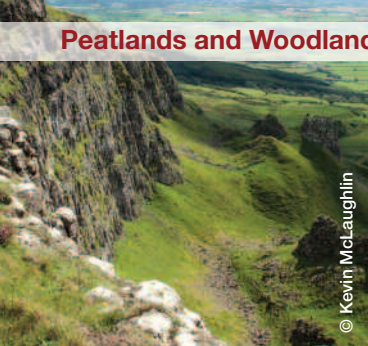
Butterfly monitoring at White Park Bay has recently confirmed this is one of the few known sites on the north coast for the Cryptic Wood White. This site is slightly off the beaten track so you are guaranteed a peaceful walk through the dunes or along the sands.

### Access

*By Road:* White Park Bay is well signposted off the A2 Whitepark Road, 6 miles north-east of Bushmills 7.5 miles north-west of Ballycastle.

*By Bus:* Ulsterbus 252 or the Causeway Rambler Ulsterbus 376 both stop at WhitePark Bay if requested.

Owned and Managed by  
The National Trust  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)  
[northcoast@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:northcoast@nationaltrust.org.uk)  
Tel: 028 2073 3320



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© Sian Atkinson

## Binevenagh

C 706 297

Post code BT49 0JG

Small Heath, Meadow  
Brown, Emperor



## Garvagh Forest Park

C 839 154

Postcode BT51 5NH  
Speckled Wood,  
Small Tortoiseshell



## Breen Wood, Armoy

D 120 336

Postcode BT53 8RZ  
Silver-washed Fritillary,  
Speckled Wood



### Facilities



**Off-road,  
Car Park**

Binevenagh marks the western end of the Antrim plateau.

A walk up through the forestry will reward you with views from Inishowen all the way along the north coast to Portrush, and you will find many rare and important plants and mosses growing on the exposed rocks.

### Access

**By Road:** Located 5 miles south west of Downhill, Castlerock, Binevenagh Forest is best accessed by taking Bishops Road, opposite the Downhill carpark. If coming from Limavady, head north east along the B201 Windyhill Road, turning left onto Bishops Road. Once on Bishops Road follow signs to Binevenagh Lake and Forest, which lies on the Leighery Road.

**By Bus:** There is no Ulsterbus service to Binevenagh.

Binevenagh is owned and managed by Forest Service

**[www.dardni.gov.uk/forests-service](http://www.dardni.gov.uk/forests-service)  
[customer.forests-service@dardni.gov.uk](mailto:customer.forests-service@dardni.gov.uk)**  
Tel: 028 9052 4480

### Facilities



**Family Friendly,  
Car Park, Access for  
All, Interpretation Panels,  
Toilets are available on  
Bridge Street in Garvagh**

Garvagh Forest lies to the west of the village of Garvagh. The Forest used to be part of the wider Cannings Estate and the long established woodlands mean there is a host of native woodland flora here including an impressive display of bluebells in May.

### Access

**By Road:** Garvagh is 12 miles south of Coleraine. From here head south on the A29. Garvagh Forest car park is signposted on the right hand side of the road, just before you cross the river.

**By Bus:** Ulsterbus 116 runs through Garvagh and past the entrance to the Forest Park.

Owned and managed by Forest Service

**[www.dardni.gov.uk/forests-service](http://www.dardni.gov.uk/forests-service)  
[customer.forests-service@dardni.gov.uk](mailto:customer.forests-service@dardni.gov.uk)**  
Tel: 028 9052 4480

### Facilities



**Off-road,  
Parking in Layby,  
Interpretation Panels**

Aptly named the 'Fairy Place' in Irish, visiting Breen Wood National Nature Reserve is like going back in time to the prehistoric forests that would have once covered the country. Spring brings a flush of woodland wildflowers including primroses and bluebells and you may even catch sight of red squirrels in the trees.

### Access

**By Road:** Breen Wood is signposted off the B15 Glenshesk Road, approximately 3.5 miles east of Armoy.

**By Bus:** Ulsterbus Service 131 and 178 run from Ballycastle to Armoy past the entrance to Breen Wood. Contact Translink for more information.

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**[www.ni-environment.gov.uk](http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk)  
[nieainfo@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:nieainfo@doeni.gov.uk)**  
Site Manager Tel: 028 7082 3600



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© Philip Hay



© Ulster Wildlife Trust

## Slemish

D 217 056

Postcode BT42 4PF

Small Heath,  
Common Heath,  
Northern Eggar



## Vanishing Lake, Loughaveema

D 206 356

Postcode BT54 5RN  
Small Heath, Northern  
Eggar, Common Heath



## Straidkilly, Glenarm

D 300 164

Postcode BT44 0LQ  
Silver-washed Fritillary,  
Speckled Wood,  
Six Spot Burnet



### Facilities



**Family Friendly,  
Car Park, Toilets,  
Interpretation Panels**

Slemish is one of the most characteristic peaks in Ireland, its isolated dome being the remains of a vent where molten magma once bubbled to the surface around 55 million years ago. The heathery slopes are home to a wide range of plants birds and invertebrates although the site is quite exposed.

### Access

*By Road:* Slemish is approximately 8.5 miles east of Ballymena.

Take the A42 to Broughshane and from here head south-west along the B94 Rathkeel Road following signage to Slemish.

*By Bus:* There is no bus service to Slemish but a taxi could be arranged from Broughshane which lies on the 128 Ulsterbus route.

Slemish is privately owned with permissive paths giving access.

Managed by  
Ballymena Borough Council  
**[www.ballymena.gov.uk](http://www.ballymena.gov.uk)**  
**[council.reception@ballymena.gov.uk](mailto:council.reception@ballymena.gov.uk)**  
Tel: 028 2566 4400

### Facilities



**Off-road,  
Parking in lay-by on  
east side of Vanishing Lake**

The Vanishing Lake is a famous landmark on the Antrim Plateau which can be there one day and drained away the next. This site lies on a rich peat soil characterised by stands of heather and bilberry where many special upland species thrive.

### Access

*By Road:* Located 7 miles north-west of Cushendall on the A2, just east of Ballypatrick Forest.

*By Bus:* There is no regular bus service to the Vanishing Lake.

The Vanishing Lake is on private land with permissive paths to give access.

**[www.moyle-council.org](http://www.moyle-council.org)**  
**[tourism@moyle-council.org](mailto:tourism@moyle-council.org)**  
Tel: 028 2076 2225

### Facilities



**Off-road, Park in  
lay-by at roadside,  
Interpretation Panels,  
Toilets in Glenarm village.**

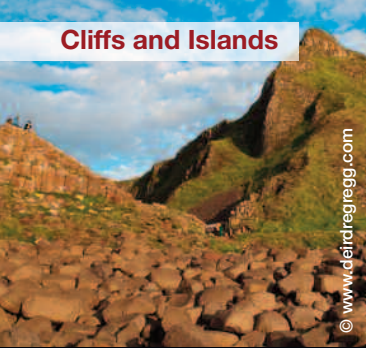
Straidkilly is a wildlife haven just north of Glenarm on a steep sided slope. The lower parts of the woodland are predominated by hazel which gives way to more mixed deciduous woodland as you climb higher. Sunny, open glades provide nectaring plants for a host of insects.

### Access

*By Road:* 11 miles north of Larne along the A2 coast road is the village of Glenarm. Heading north out of the village, follow signage to Straidilly.

*By Bus:* Ulsterbus 162 from Larne and 128 from Ballymena both serve Glenarm. It's approximately a 1 mile walk from here to the entrance to the nature reserve.

Owned and Managed by the  
Ulster Wildlife Trust  
**[www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org](http://www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org)**  
**[info@ulsterwildlifetrust.org](mailto:info@ulsterwildlifetrust.org)**  
Tel: 028 4483 0282



## Giant's Causeway

C 944 439

Postcode BT57 8SU

Grayling, Six Spot

Burnet, Common Blue



## Murlough Bay

D 191 425

Postcode BT54 6RG

Grayling, Speckled Wood,

Yellow-ringed Carpet



## Portmuck, Islandmagee

D 459 023


Postcode BT40 3TP

Common Blue, Small

Copper, Cinnabar



### Facilities

 **Family Friendly, Car Park\*, Toilets, Visitor Centre\*\*, Access for All, Interpretation Panels**

The Giant's Causeway is on every visitor's must-see list. The rocky shoreline provides perfect habitat for basking butterflies, especially the elusive Grayling which is found here in large numbers.

### Access

**By Road:** The Causeway is located 11 miles north-east of Coleraine on the B146 Causeway Road and is well signposted from the main A2 coast road.

**By Bus:** Ulsterbus 252, the Antrim Coaster, calls at the Causeway twice a day throughout the year. Ulsterbus 402, the Causeway Rambler, is a seasonal service that runs more frequently.

Owned and Managed by  
The National Trust

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

[giantscauseway@nationaltrust.org.uk](http://giantscauseway@nationaltrust.org.uk)

[nationaltrust.org.uk](http://nationaltrust.org.uk)

Tel: 028 2073 1855

\*Car Parking charges may apply to non-National Trust members

\*\*Check website for opening times

### Facilities

 **Off-road, Car Park**

Murlough Bay is an extremely steep sided cove facing out over the Irish Sea towards the Mull of Kintyre, with permissive paths allowing access to the woods and grasslands. The rocky, shaded slopes are the only known home in Northern Ireland to the Yellow-ringed Carpet moth. This site is best visited in the morning as it is shaded by the afternoon.

### Access

**By Road:** Murlough Bay is signposted off the A2 Coast Road, 6 miles east of Ballycastle. **By Bus:** There is no bus service to Murlough Bay, but a taxi could be arranged from Ballycastle.

Murlough Bay is privately owned but permissive footpaths give access.

[www.moyle-council.org](http://www.moyle-council.org)

[tourism@moyle-council.org](mailto:tourism@moyle-council.org)

Tel: 028 2076 2225

### Facilities

 **Off-road, Car Park, Interpretation Panels**

Islandmagee lies off the beaten track north of Whitehead and the peninsula forms the east side of Larne Lough. The area is well known for its bird life, but the coastal cliff paths are also home to butterflies and other invertebrates.

### Access

**By Road:** Lying 23 miles north of Belfast, Islandmagee can only be accessed at the south end of the peninsula. From the A2 Coast Road north of Whitehead, follow signs for Portmuck on the B90. **By Bus:** There is no dedicated bus to Portmuck except for Ulsterbus 169 school service which runs during the week. A taxi can be arranged from nearby Whitehead which lies on the Belfast to Coleraine train line. Contact Translink for further details.

Owned and Managed by  
The National Trust

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

[minnowburn@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:minnowburn@nationaltrust.org.uk)

[nationaltrust.org.uk](http://nationaltrust.org.uk)

Tel: 02890 647787





## Rathlin Island

Small Tortoiseshell,  
Small Copper,  
Six Spot Burnet



## RSPB Seabird Centre

## Roonivoolin

**Rathlin Island is not the best place for butterflies as it is very exposed, but is a very important site for some of Northern Ireland's rare moths. No trip to the north coast would be complete without visiting the island. The two main attractions are described here, but ask locally for other places to visit.**

There is a minibus service to transport people from the ferry around the island in the summer season and bicycles can also be hired from the hostel.

Tel: 028 207 63954

Visitor facilities including toilets and refreshments can be found around the harbour and at the RSPB Seabird Centre.

For information see the Rathlin Community Page  
[www.rathlincommunity.org](http://www.rathlincommunity.org)  
[rdca@btconnect.com](mailto:rdca@btconnect.com)  
Tel: 028 207 60079

### Facilities



**Family Friendly, Car Park, Toilets, Visitor Centre\*, Interpretation Panels**

At the west side of the island approximately 4 miles from the harbour you will find the new RSPB Seabird Centre, accessed down 85 steep steps. The centre is staffed throughout the year and provides binoculars and telescopes through which to view breeding birds such as puffins. Butterflies and moths can be found on the grassy slopes either side of the steps as well as around the small car park.

\*Check with the RSPB for opening times as this is a seasonal attraction although the walk out can be done at any time of year.

Tel: 028 2076 0062

### Facilities



**Off-road, Interpretation Panels**

From the harbour, take a walk around the southern tip of the island following the waymarked trail, approximately 4 miles. There are numerous small sheltered hollows where invertebrates will thrive out of the wind and a host of wildflowers. The extremely privileged may even spot rare Choughs who use the high cliffs for their nest sites.

**If you have your own moth trap the RSPB warden can advise on the best places to run it and help arrange access.**  
Tel: 028 2076 0062



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© Kevin McLaughlin



© Cliff Henry

## Anderson Park, Coleraine

C 849 325  
Postcode BT52 1PY  
Small Tortoiseshell,  
Peacock



## Roe Valley Country Park

C 678 202  
Postcode BT49 9NN  
Silver-washed Fritillary,  
Speckled Wood, Cinnabar



## Ecos, Ballymena

D 117 034  
Postcode BT43 7QA  
Peacock, Speckled Wood,  
Six Spot Burnet



### Facilities

 **Family Friendly, Access for All, Parking on street**

In the heart of Coleraine town, Anderson Park offers a green oasis to escape to. The council are currently refurbishing the park and increasing its biodiversity value and you will find many pollinating insects feeding on the plants in the flower displays.

### Access

**By Road:** Anderson Park lies in the middle of Coleraine, just north of the town centre. Circular Road cuts through the middle of the site and car parking is available on the roadside.  
**By Bus:** Coleraine is served by many bus services including the 178 from Ballycastle and the 134 from Limavady.

Owned and Managed by  
Coleraine Borough Council  
[www.colerainebc.gov.uk](http://www.colerainebc.gov.uk)  
[info@colerainebc.gov.uk](mailto:info@colerainebc.gov.uk)  
Tel: 028 7034 7034

### Facilities

 **Family Friendly, Car Park, Toilets, Visitor Centre and Cafe\*, Access for All, Interpretation Panels**

Roe Valley Country Park covers three miles of river bank on either side of the River Roe just south of Limavady. Walks take visitors along the river and through the woodland, and there are also some sunny glades which provide food and shelter for invertebrates.


### Access

**By Road:** Roe Valley Country Park lies two miles south of Limavady and is well signposted off both the B192 and B68.  
**By Bus:** Although Goldline 246 runs regularly between Dungiven and Limavady, Roe Valley Park is not a scheduled stop. A taxi to the site could be easily arranged from Limavady.

Owned and Managed by NIEA  
[www.ni-environment.gov.uk](http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk)  
[nieainfo@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:nieainfo@doeni.gov.uk)  
Tel: 028 7772 2074

\*Check with NIEA for opening times

### Facilities

 **Family Friendly, Car Park, Toilets, Visitor Centre\*, Access for All, Interpretation Panels**

Ecos lies just east of bustling Ballymena town centre, but is an oasis for wildlife with meadows, woodlands, streams and ponds to explore. This is one of the very few sites in Northern Ireland where the rare Irish Lady's Tresses orchid can be found, as well as a proliferation of butterflies and moths on sunny days.

### Access

**By Road:** Ecos is well signposted from Junction 11 of the M2.  
**By Bus:** Ulsterbus 128 service takes you past the entrance to the park with the bus stop just a hundred metres away.

Owned and Managed by  
Ballymena Borough Council  
[www.ballymena.gov.uk/ecos](http://www.ballymena.gov.uk/ecos)  
[council.reception@ballymena.gov.uk](mailto:council.reception@ballymena.gov.uk)  
Tel: 028 2566 4400



## Watertop Farm

D 191 381

Postcode BT54 6RN

Small Heath, Emperor,  
Speckled Wood



## Glenarm Castle

D 306 152

Postcode BT44 0BQ

Peacock, Small  
Tortoiseshell, Silver Y



## Carnfunnock Country Park

D 383 068

Postcode BT40 2QG

Small Tortoiseshell,  
Speckled Wood, Ringlet



### Facilities



**Family Friendly, Car  
Park, Toilets, Visitor  
Centre, Access for All,  
Interpretation Panels**

In the heart of the Glens, Watertop offers a wide range of activities for the family, but also some wonderful walks through many different habitats and with waterfalls and rivers too. There is an admission charge at Watertop, see the website for more information.

### Access

*By Road:* 5 miles east of Ballycastle, Watertop Farm is well signposted of the A2 Cushendall Road.

*By Bus:* Ulsterbus 252 service, the Antrim Coaster, passes the entrance to the site and will stop on request.

Watertop Farm is privately owned and opened seasonally to the public.

**[www.watertopfarm.co.uk](http://www.watertopfarm.co.uk)  
[watertopfarm@aol.com](mailto:watertopfarm@aol.com)**

Tel: 028 2076 2576

### Facilities



**Family Friendly, Car  
Park, Toilets, Visitor  
Centre, Access for All,  
Interpretation Panels**

Glenarm Castle, ancestral home of the Earls of Antrim, opens to the public from May to September. The sheltered, sunny walled gardens with their huge range of plants attract many nectaring insects including butterflies and moths.

### Access

*By Road:* Glenarm is 12 miles north of Larne and the castle is well signposted from the A2 coast road.

*By Bus:* Ulsterbus 162 from Larne and the 128 from Ballymena both bring you to Glenarm.

The castle is a short walk from the centre of town.

Glenarm Castle is privately owned and opened seasonally to the public.

**[www.glenarmcastle.com](http://www.glenarmcastle.com)  
[info@glenarmcastle.com](mailto:info@glenarmcastle.com)**

Tel: 028 2884 1203

### Facilities



**Family Friendly,  
Car Park, Toilets,  
Visitor Centre, Access for  
All, Interpretation Panels**

Situated just north of Larne, Carnfunnock Country Park has almost 200 hectares of woodland, meadows and gardens to explore as well as wonderful views across the Irish Sea to Scotland.

### Access

*By Road:* Carnfunnock is signposted off the A2 Coast Road, approximately half a mile north of Larne.

*By Bus:* Ulsterbus 162 service follows the Coast Road, the nearest bus stop is located just outside the entrance to the Park. Contact Translink for more information.

Owned and Managed by  
Larne County Council  
**[www.larne.gov.uk](http://www.larne.gov.uk)  
[carnfunnock@larne.gov.uk](mailto:carnfunnock@larne.gov.uk)**  
Tel: 028 2827 0541

## Specialist Butterflies and Moths

Specialists are only found in very particular places throughout the Causeway Coast and Glens. As caterpillars, they can only eat one or two very specific plants which might only occur in special, often isolated habitats. They are unlikely to fly very far and so rely on the areas where they are found being managed in a responsible and sympathetic way, or else they will decline, and even become extinct.



### Cryptic Wood White

Look out for pairs of Cryptic Wood White courting in May. This butterfly has a weaker flight than the larger, more common whites described earlier.

**Distribution** Widespread.

**Flight season** April to mid-September; peak sightings May to June.

**Caterpillar food plant** Meadow Vetchling and Bird's-foot Trefoil.



### Green Hairstreak

Hard to see as it spends a lot of time sitting stationary on vegetation, try shaking silver birch on warm sunny days to see if you disturb it from its roost.

**Distribution** Everywhere but very under recorded.

**Flight season**

Early April to early July.

**Caterpillar food plant** Gorse and Billberry.



### Purple Hairstreak

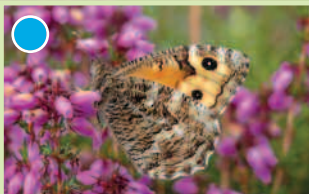
This butterfly spends nearly all of its time roosting in the canopy of large oak trees, and is almost impossible to see without binoculars. Under recorded throughout Northern Ireland.

**Distribution** Rare, only known from Fermanagh and Derry.

**Flight season**

Mid-July to early September.

**Caterpillar food plant** Oak.



### Grayling

This butterfly is a master of disguise, sitting perfectly still on bare rocks and immediately blending into its environment.

**Distribution** Widespread.

**Flight season**

Late June to late September; peak sightings in August.

**Caterpillar food plant** Fine-leaved grasses.



### Wall Brown

This butterfly has become increasingly rare, now confined to a small number of sites on the coastline.

**Distribution** Rare.

**Flight season**

Late April to late October; peak sightings late May to June, and in August.

**Caterpillar food plant** Fine-leaved grasses.



### Wood Tiger (MOTH)

This unmistakable, brightly coloured moth can be seen flying by day and can be disturbed from vegetation even on dull days.

**Distribution**

Scarce.

**Flight season**

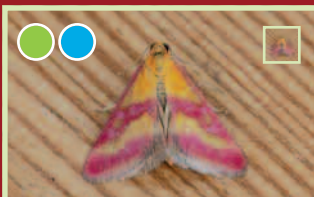
June to early July.

**Caterpillar food plant**

A variety of herbaceous plants.



● Peatland ● Rocky ● Urban  
● Grassland ● Woodland



**Scarce Crimson and Gold** (MOTH)

One of our smaller 'micro' moths (inset shows actual size), the Scarce Crimson and Gold is now restricted to a small number of sites along the north coast, its stronghold in the UK.

**Distribution** Rare.

**Flight season**

Late May to early July.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Wild Thyme.



**Small Eggar** (MOTH)

It is very unlikely you will see the Small Eggar moth, but its caterpillars form large webs that can easily be seen in May and June on their foodplants.

**Distribution** Rare.

**Flight season**

Late February to early April.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Blackthorn, Birch and Hawthorn.

**NB** Look out for webs in scrubby bushes on our dune systems.



**Yellow-ringed Carpet** (MOTH)

This moth is only known from one site in Northern Ireland at Murlough Bay although it is possibly under recorded.

**Distribution** Rare.

**Flight season**

August.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Mossy Saxifrage.



**Dark Green Fritillary**

The Dark Green Fritillary can be found around the coastal edges of Northern Ireland, and sometimes strays inland to meadows and woodland edges.

**Distribution** Widespread.

**Flight season**

Mid-June to September.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Species of violets such as Marsh Violet.



**Silver-washed Fritillary**

Our largest butterfly, most commonly found feeding on bramble and honeysuckle in sunny glades and woodland rides.

**Distribution** Widespread.

**Flight season**

Mid-June to mid-September.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Woodland species of violet.



**Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth**

This peculiar moth is a bee mimic with clear, see-through wings. It flies at about eye height and can be observed flying swiftly about hunting for nectar during the day.

**Distribution** Scarce.

**Flight season**

Mid-May to mid-June; peak sightings early June.

**Caterpillar food plant**

Devil's-bit Scabious.

## Specialist Butterflies and Moths

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### **Mother Shipton (MOTH)**

So called because of the witch-like face seen in the markings on both wings. Often seen flying during the day.

**Distribution** Scarce.

#### **Flight season**

Mid-May to early July.

#### **Caterpillar food plant**

Bird's-foot Trefoil, clovers and coarse grasses.



### **Figure of Eight (MOTH)**

Recently discovered at Castlerock, this moth loves woodland on the banks of well established lakes and ponds and is probably under-recorded as it flies late in the year.

**Distribution** Scarce.

**Flight season** October.

#### **Caterpillar food plant**

Blackthorn and Hawthorn.



### **Small Elephant Hawk-moth**

A smaller and even more brightly coloured relative of the Elephant Hawk-moth, this creature can be found in good numbers on coastal grasslands.

#### **Distribution**

Locally common.

#### **Flight season**

Early June to mid-July.

#### **Caterpillar food plant**

Bedstraws.



### **Clouded Magpie (MOTH)**

This unremarkable looking moth basks by day on low growing vegetation, resembling a bird dropping. Caterpillars can be spotted munching on elm together in September.

**Distribution** Scarce.

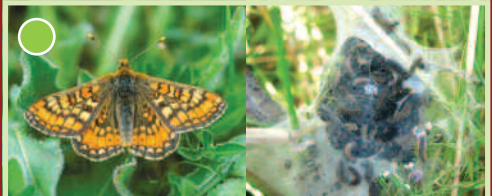
#### **Flight season**

Mid-May to late August.

#### **Caterpillar food plant**

Wuch elm and English elm.

**NB** Caterpillars can do alot of damage so look for areas of well nibbled elm leaves in September.



### **Marsh Fritillary**

Marsh Fritillaries used to be common on the north coast but have all but disappeared in recent years. Don't just look for the adult butterflies, caterpillars can be found from August to October & February to March in thick webs or 'spinnings' on the leaves of their foodplant.

**Distribution** Scarce.

#### **Flight season**

Mid-May to mid-July; peak sightings early-June.

#### **Caterpillar food plant**

Devil's-bit Scabious.

# Tell us what you see!

**Telling us about the butterflies and moths you see when you are out and about really is crucial to helping us conserve them. Even our common species are often under recorded so please tell us what you see when you are out and about.**

## **A record is simply;**

- **What** – What species you saw
- **Where** – Where you saw it, preferably with a grid reference or postcode and town
- **When** – The date you saw it
- **How Many**
- **Who** – Your name and contact details

Your photos can count as records too, plus we can help identify creatures you might not know the names of. Upload your pictures to our Flickr site  
**[www.flickr.com/groups/bcni](http://www.flickr.com/groups/bcni)**

You can put your records directly onto the Butterfly Conservation Northern Ireland branch website, **[www.bcni.org.uk](http://www.bcni.org.uk)** or contact our volunteer Butterfly and Moth Recorders directly;

## **Ian Rippey: Butterfly Recorder**

[jimrippy@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:jimrippy@tiscali.co.uk)

**028 3833 3927**

## **Ted Rolston: Moth Recorder**

[ted\\_rolston@hotmail.com](mailto:ted_rolston@hotmail.com)

**028 9258 7270**

To find grid references in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland visit  
**[www.girdreference.ie](http://www.girdreference.ie)**, a quick and simple way of finding where you are without a map.

## **Further Information**

This booklet is just a brief introduction to our butterflies and moths. To find out more try some of the following:

### **Online Resources**

**[www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)**

ID guide, species accounts, tips on encouraging butterflies (UK)

**[www.mothscount.org](http://www.mothscount.org)**

Downloadable ID guides, ways to attract moths and up-to-date distribution maps (UK)

**[www.bcni.org.uk](http://www.bcni.org.uk)**

Recent sightings, upcoming events and news about butterflies and moths (NI)

**[www.habitas.org.uk/moths](http://www.habitas.org.uk/moths)**

A comprehensive online guide to Northern Ireland's butterfly and moth species (NI)

**[www.butterflyireland.com](http://www.butterflyireland.com)**

Recent sightings, upcoming events and news about Ireland's butterflies (ROI)

**[www.mothsireland.com](http://www.mothsireland.com)**

Distribution maps, sightings news and illustrations of Ireland's moths (ROI)

### **Books and Guides**

#### ***A Guide to the Butterflies of Ireland***

With illustrations of species, flight times and caterpillar foodplants, this laminated guide is a must have. Available through the Dublin Naturalist Field Club **[www.dnfc.net](http://www.dnfc.net)**

#### ***Pocket Guide to the Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland***

– Richard Lewington - ISBN-10: 0953139913

#### ***Concise Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland***

– Townsend, Waring and Lewington - ISBN-10: 0953139964

#### ***The Butterflies and Moths of Northern Ireland***

– Robert Thompson and Brian Nelson - ISBN-10: 9780900761478

## Key to Sites

### DUNES AND GRASSLAND

- 1 Magilligan National Nature Reserve ●●
- 2 Benone Strand ●●
- 3 Downhill Demesne ●●●●
- 4 The Moors, Castlerock ●●
- 5 Portstewart Strand ●●
- 6 White Park Bay ●●

### PEATLANDS AND WOODLANDS

- 7 Binevenagh ●●●●
- 8 Garvagh Forest Park ●●
- 9 Breen Wood National Nature Reserve ●
- 10 Slemish Mountain ●●●
- 11 Vanishing Lake, Loughaveema ●●
- 12 Straidkilly, Glenarm ●●

### CLIFFS AND ISLANDS

- 13 Giant's Causeway ●●
- 14 Murlough Bay ●●●
- 15 Portmuck, Island Magee ●●
- 16 Rathlin Island ●●●

### PARKS, GARDENS AND FARMS

- 17 Roe Valley Country Park ●●●●
- 18 Anderson Park, Coleraine ●●
- 19 Ecos, Ballymena ●●●●
- 20 Watertop Farm ●●●●
- 21 Glenarm Castle ●●●●
- 22 Carnfunnock Country Park ●●●●

## Key to Habitats

- Peatland ● Rocky ● Urban  
● Grassland ● Woodland

When exploring Northern Ireland, think about where you're going and make sure you have appropriate clothing and footwear for the terrain and weather. Remember our wild places are part of a living, working landscape. Respect the wishes of landowners to ensure your visit is both enjoyable and responsible.

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