

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Habitat requirements

Depending on the region, this species occupies four main habitat types which may be summarized broadly as follows:

1. Woodland glades, wide rides and clearings (southern England) (Fig. 12).
2. Damp grassland and moorland (parts of northern England and Scotland) (Fig. 20).
3. Woodland edges and tracks and wet meadows (Scotland) (Fig. 3).
4. Grassland with bracken and scrub, dune slacks and coastal cliffs (Wales and south-western, central and parts of northern England) (Fig. 18).

In all habitat types it breeds in damp localities where the foodplants grow in sheltered lush vegetation.

Identification characters, variation and similar species

Average wingspan 39mm. Variation is limited mainly to extension or reduction of the black upperside markings. It is similar in size to the Heath Fritillary (p. 250), Marsh Fritillary (p. 244) and Glanville Fritillary (p. 247), but all of these species lack the prominent silver spots on their undersides. Confusion often arises with the Pearl-bordered Fritillary (p. 222) from which it differs in the following ways:

1. Emerges later and is therefore often comparatively fresher in appearance when seen flying together.
2. Hindwing underside with marginal row of silver spots edged with black,

rather than brown, chevrons; row of spots in outer third black rather than brown; central area with at least three large black-edged silver spots rather than only one; prominent dark spot near base, large and black rather than small and brown. The two species cannot reliably be separated in flight or by the upperside markings alone.

Field tips

This species roosts overnight and during dull weather on the stems and flower-heads of tall vegetation such as sedges, Jointed Rush and Bracken. Visits to known localities early in the morning should prove successful in finding the butterflies and have the advantage of providing opportunities to photograph the undersides of correctly identified individuals. As the temperature rises through the day, such chances are limited as flight activity and basking with the wings open increases. The adults regularly visit flowers of Bugle, Ragged Robin, Tormentil, Common Bird's-foot Trefoil and buttercups.

Regional prime sites

Scotland. Widespread and locally common throughout most of Scotland, though absent from the south-east, the extreme north-east, the Outer Hebrides and the Islands of Orkney and Shetland. It is represented in the north-west, the Western Isles and their adjacent mainland by the Northern Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (p. 221). Elsewhere the species can be seen in good numbers in the south-west of the country at

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Feoeh Meadows, Ayrshire, by searching the damp meadows to the north and north-east of the access point at NX 263 816. In Wigtownshire, it can be found at **Wood of Cree** along the track leading north-east from NX 832 709 and, in Kirkcudbrightshire, it is present in the area just north-east of **Lochaber Loch** (NX 924 704). In East Inverness-shire, it occurs at **Craigellachie** (NH 894 119), in Stirlingshire at **Inversnaid** (access from NN 337 088) and in Mid Perthshire it is present in good numbers at **Craigower Hill** (NN 937 593) and **Tyndrum Wood** (NN 343 292). In the east, a reliable site is **Glen Doll Forest** in Angus (NO 285 761).

Northern England. It is absent from most areas, including the Isle of Man, but widespread in the north-east of the region, and there are a few colonies present in North-east Yorkshire. Here it can be found at **May Beck** (NZ 899 014) by searching along the track leading south-east through the wood in the area known locally as 'John Bond's Sheep House'. In the north-west, the easiest places to see the species are in Westmorland at **Arnside Knott** (common in the scrubby areas near the main car park at SD 432 325) and **Whitbarrow Scar** (access from SD 458 867).



Fig. 189 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary underside. Bentley Woods, South Wiltshire