

British Nature Guide

How butterflies escape from predators

The Peacock butterfly

The Peacock butterfly has bright colours on the upper side of its wings which it uses to attract a mate. The underside of the wings are dark brown. When the Peacock closes its wings and stays still in a bush or among leaves on the ground it is very hard to see.

The patterns on the Peacock's upper wings are not just for decoration, they are also used to scare away predators. If a predator approaches, the Peacock will open its wings. Thinking that an owl is looking at them, the predator will panic, giving the Peacock a chance to escape.



Bright upper side of wings



Dark underside of wings



Owl eye markings to scare predators

The Comma butterfly

The Comma has bright patterns on the upper side of its wings to attract a mate. It has a brown underside, but it does not have eye markings to scare away predators. The Comma relies on the unusual shape of its wings for protection.



When the Comma is trying to hide from a predator it will land in a bush or on the ground and close its wings. The wings look just like ragged old brown leaves, and as long as the Comma stays perfectly still, the predator cannot see it.

Predators that eat butterflies

Toads, lizards, rats and birds will all eat butterflies if they get the chance.