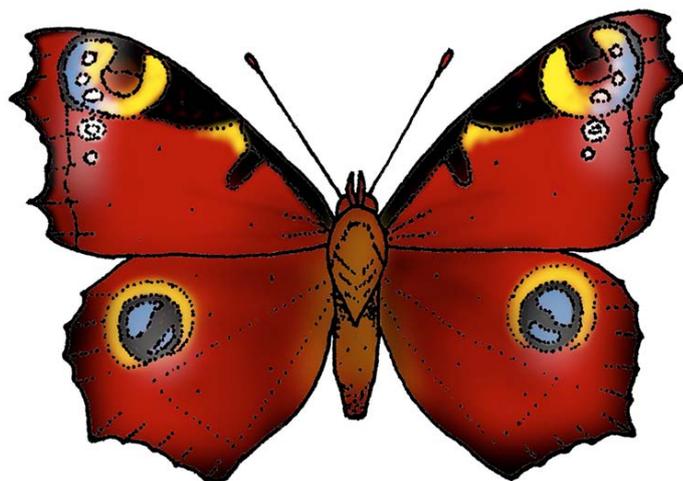


The Peacock Butterfly

Scientific Name: *Inachis io*

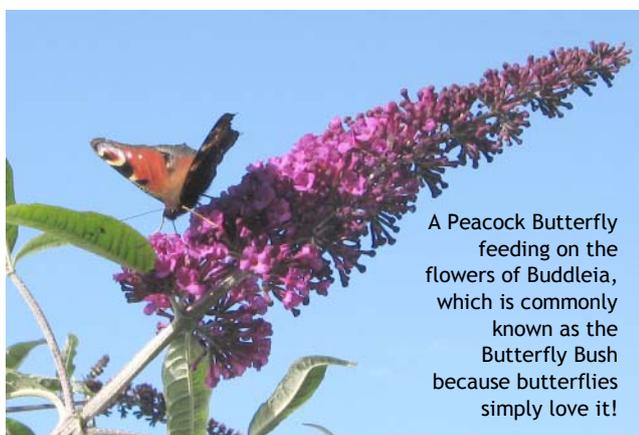
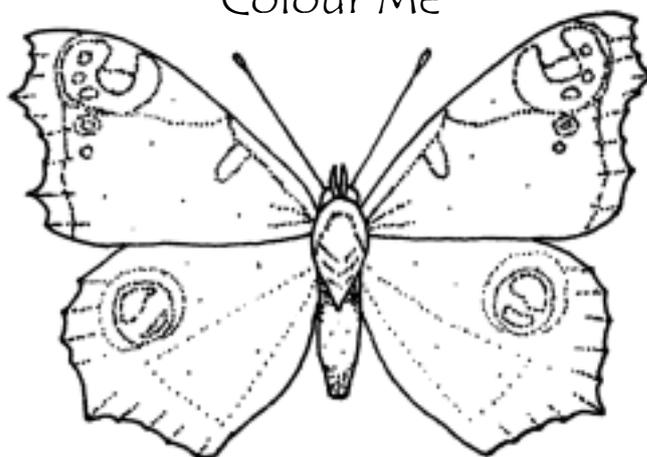
Irish Name: Péacóg

The Peacock is easy to identify by the four 'peacock eyes' on the upperside of its wings. It has very similar habits to the Small Tortoiseshell in that the adult butterfly enters houses looking for a suitable spot to hibernate for the winter. It can sometimes be found hibernating in tree trunks and piles of wood. The underside is darker in both species enabling them to hide in dark corners during hibernation. The eggs are laid in large groups or clusters on the underside of nettle leaves and hatch after 7-12 days. The new caterpillars will stay in a group until old enough to wander off on their own. The caterpillar can move quickly and if disturbed will raise the front of its body off the ground and form a hook shape. If it gets annoyed it will drop to the ground and wriggle like crazy!



Peacock butterfly

Colour Me



A Peacock Butterfly feeding on the flowers of Buddleia, which is commonly known as the Butterfly Bush because butterflies simply love it!

Images courtesy of Sherkin Island Marine Station

FACT FILE

Wingspan: 5.4 - 5.8cm. Female slightly larger than the male.

Colour: Dark reddish brown with yellow and black markings; large lilac-blue spot, like an eye, on each wing.

Diet: Caterpillar feeds on nettles and adult butterfly feeds on the nectar of Buddleia (butterfly bush) and other flowers.

Winter Hibernating stage: Adult butterfly.

Caterpillar: Black and spiny.

Camouflage

The 'peacock eyes' on the upperwings of the Peacock butterfly provide protection by helping to frighten away predators such as mice and small birds. When the butterfly is viewed upside down, it looks like the beak and eyes of a large predatory bird.

However, the underwings of the Peacock butterfly are far from colourful and are almost black.

This is the perfect camouflage for the butterfly when it is resting on a tree trunk or is hibernating. It helps it blend in with its surroundings, making it harder to see.

