

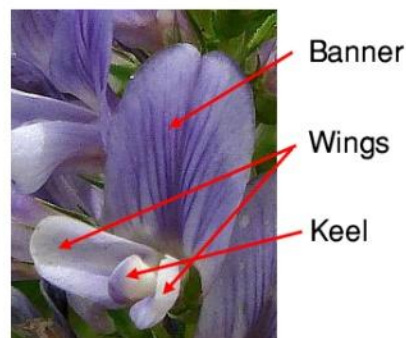


A Quick Guide to Wood White larval foodplants

If you find Wood White larval foodplants in suitable habitat in the northwest of West Sussex, they will provide useful clues as to where we should be searching for this butterfly, or where it might be found in the future. Please let us have records of any locations you survey which have significant amounts of one or more of the larval food plants described below.

Identifying "pea-flowered" plants in the field can be tricky, as they all share a classic banner-and-keel shape.

To make ID easier, split them by colour and then look for "the big giveaway" - usually the stem or the leaves.



1. Yellow Flowers

These can be confused at a distance. The trick is to look at the **leaves** and the **stems**

Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*)

The Look: Bright yellow flowers, often tipped with red/orange ("Eggs and Bacon")

Stem: Solid (if you squeeze it, it resists). Usually hairless

Key Field Mark: Sepals (the little green bits behind the flower) are pressed against the bud or point straight up

Habitat: Dry grasslands, roadsides



Wood white on Bird's-foot-trefoil (Dave Brown)



Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*)

The Look: Larger clusters of yellow flowers (5–12 per head)

Stem: Hollow. Snip a stem and see if it's a tube. Also, the plant is noticeably hairier than Common BFT

Key Field Mark: The sepals on the flower buds spread outwards like a little star.

Habitat: Damp ground, marshes, or wet ditches

Meadow Vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*)

The Look: Pure yellow flowers in clusters of 5–12

Leaves: Unlike the Trefoils, this has **tendrils** (curly climbing bits) at the ends of the leaves

Key Field Mark: It only has **one pair** of long, lance-shaped leaflets per leaf

Habitat: Tall grass, hedgerows



2. Purple/Blue Flowers

These two look very different once you look at the "architecture" of the plant

Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*)

The Look: A dense "toothbrush" spike of 10–40 bluish-purple flowers, all leaning to one side

The Leaves: 8–12 pairs of narrow leaflets ending in a **strong, branched tendril**

Key Field Mark: A true climber. It will be scrambled all over other plants

Habitat: Hedgerows and bushy grassland



Bitter Vetch (*Lathyrus linifolius*)

The Look: Loose clusters of 2–6 flowers that start crimson/purple and fade to a dull turquoise blue

Stem: Uniquely **winged** (it looks flat or bordered by thin "flaps")

Key Field Mark: **No tendrils**. Despite being a vetch, it doesn't climb but stands fairly upright

Habitat: Open woods, heaths, and upland acidic soils

Quick-Reference Table

Feature	Common BFT	Greater BFT	Meadow Vetchling	Tufted Vetch	Bitter Vetch
Flower colour	Yellow/orange	Yellow	Bright yellow	Purple/blue	Crimson to Blue
Stem type	Solid	Hollow	Angled	Fine/climbing	Winged
Tendrils	No	No	Yes	Yes (strong)	No
Leaf style	5 leaflets (3+2)	5 leaflets (3+2)	1 pair (2 leaflets)	8 to 12 pairs	2 to 4 pairs
Growth habit	Low/sprawling	Upright/tall	Climbing	Climbing	Upright

If you see a yellow pea-flower, check the leaf tips first. If there's a **tendril**, it's Meadow Vetchling. If there's **no tendril**, squeeze the stem. If it collapses easily because it's hollow, you've found Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil!