



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

Hertfordshire & Middlesex Butterflies



Andrew Wood

February 2014 (covering 2013 records)

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Cover Photo: Purple Emperor at Maple Lodge Nature Reserve by Colin Rowe

INTRODUCTION

After a mild early January, the rest of the winter was very cold, April and May were also both colder than usual, giving the coldest spring since 1962, following a run of 6 mild ones. June was cooler than average but the summer improved with July and Aug being above average. Hot dry weather through most of July, helped to give us the sunniest summer since 2000. After all this autumn was reasonably average. We received 27182 records compared to 15900 in 2012. Several species had exceptional years and few repeated the declines seen in 2012.

Please read and use this booklet and, if you are not already a contributor, send in your sightings for 2014 on paper or by email to the branch record collator (details below) by November 9th 2014

Big Butterfly Count numbers are used to show the distribution of species, but have not been used for the flight charts as this survey was limited to three weeks in high summer and to have included them would unduly skew these charts.

Our branch website <http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/> has a very active sightings page and we welcome all submissions to this too. Anything sent there is added to the records received for inclusion in the branch database and this report.

Branch Contacts	
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Species not included in the main section

Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*

Phil MacMurdie reported, "21st July Wareside-I went back to photo some of the Marbled Whites ... to be greeted by 2 Wall Browns". As these have not been recorded elsewhere and Phil had recently bought in some native plants from the west country it would seem that these were accidentally introduced as eggs and developed in his garden

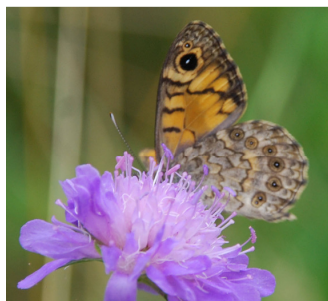


PHOTO PHIL MACMURDIE



Photo Meg Palmer

Monarch *Danaus plexippus*

The first of two Monarch reports came from Meg Palmer who was luckily able to see and photograph this one in her garden in the Twickenham area on the 6th June. It is almost certainly a captive bred specimen that had escaped or been released.

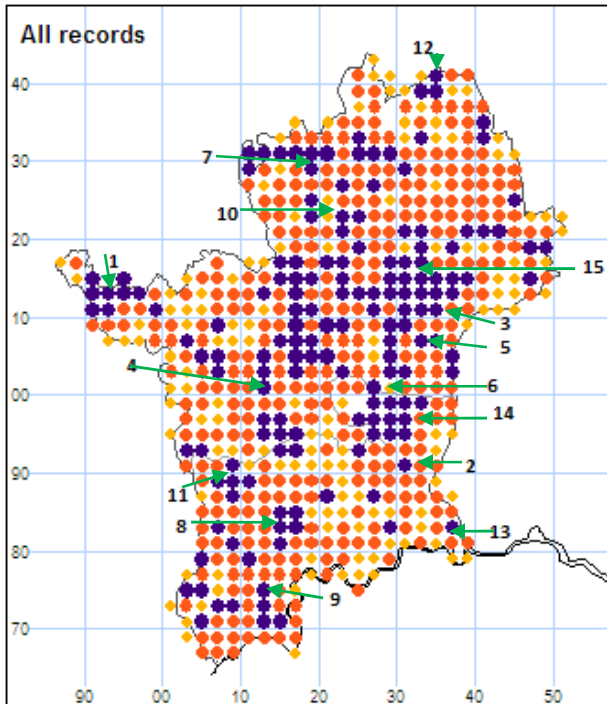
On 5th July Paul Moss visited Heartwood Forest and saw a female Monarch which is also believed to be an escape/release. Paul reported, "Unfortunately no shots, as my camera battery went flat. I was heading back to my car when I saw what I thought must be a Silver-washed Fritillary, even though it was right in the middle of a field! It was patrolling the area and being chased by at least 1 Painted Lady. In size I would estimate the wing span as twice the size of the painted lady, strong flight with gliding and floating turns too. As I couldn't get a photo I waited for it to settle ... and carefully studied it through binoculars from a distance of some 20' whilst it fed, noting the white markings on the wing and the black rather than brown markings".

SOME GOOD BUTTERFLY SITES IN HERTFORDSHIRE & MIDDLESEX

This is not an exhaustive list but a pointer to a spread of sites across our area

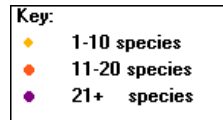
Map	Site, Grid Reference, Brief details	Good site (rare or high numbers) - Date included if one year only
1	Aldbury Nowers (SP 951129) Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) reserve north west of Tring	Chalkhill Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Dingy Skipper, Green Hairstreak, Grizzled Skipper, Small Blue
2	Alexandra Park TL296901 Park around Alexandra Palace in LB Haringey	Common Blue, Purple Hairstreak
3	Balls Wood TL 348106 At Hertford Heath 2 miles south of Hertford	Purple Hairstreak, Purple Emperor, Silver-washed Fritillary, White Admiral
4	Bricket Wood Common TL131017 North east of Watford	Purple Emperor, Ringlet, Silver- washed Fritillary, White Admiral
5	Broxbourne Woods TL323070 A large complex of woods west of Hoddesdon and south of Hertford. Grid ref above is for Broxbourne Wood west car park	Purple Emperor, Silver-washed Fritillary, White Admiral
6	Fir & Pond Woods TL277012 HMWT reserve 2 miles east of Potters Bar	Purple Emperor, Ringlet, Silver- washed Fritillary, White Admiral
7	Hexton Chalk Pit TL 107299 South of Hexton, turning off B655	Chalkhill Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Dingy Skipper, Green Hairstreak,
8	Horsenden Hill TQ 161845 Bisected by Horsenden Lane North between Perivale and Sudbury in LB Ealing.	Meadow Brown, Small Copper, White-letter Hairstreak
9	Hounslow Heath TQ141748 Off Staines Road, Hounslow	Green Hairstreak, Meadow Brown, Purple Hairstreak
10	Norton Green (Cannocks Wood/Watery Grove) TL229231 West of A1M at Stevenage. Accessed from byways south of Norton Green	Marbled White, Purple Emperor, Purple Hairstreak, Ringlet, Silver- washed Fritillary, White Admiral
11	Ruislip Woods TL080896 A complex of woods north of Ruislip along Ducks Hill Lane in LB Hillingdon	Purple Emperor, Ringlet, Silver- washed Fritillary, White Admiral
12	Therfield Heath TL347404 Downland west of Royston by A505	Chalkhill Blue, Marbled White, Small Skipper
13	Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park TL367823 Southern Grove E3 nr Mile End Central Line station	Silver-washed Fritillary, Small Blue 2012
14	Trent Park TL280969 Near Cockfosters Piccadilly line tube station	Purple Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Heath
15	Waterford Heath TL 318150 HMWT reserve North of Hertford, accessed from Sacombe Road not via Waterford	Brown Argus, Grizzled Skipper, Small Heath, Chalkhill Blue 2013

Please check local driving/parking/public transport directions. These sites may be uneven and/or muddy so please go prepared.



Squares Recorded and Key Sites

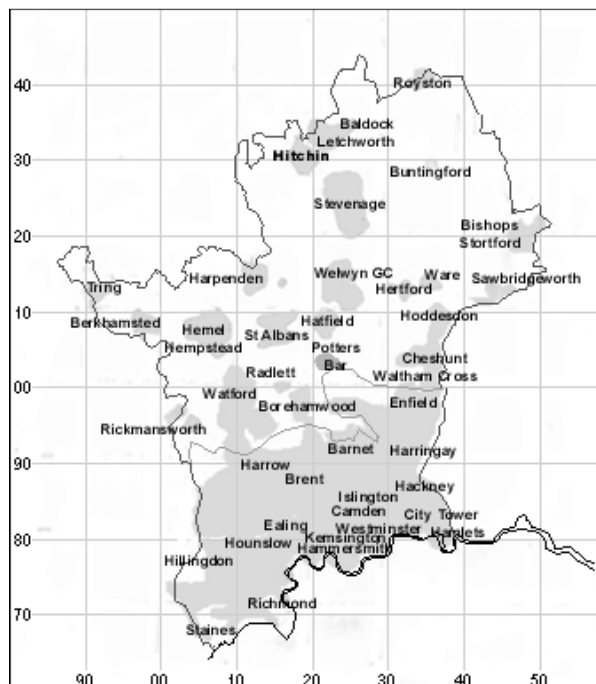
2 kilometre squares (tetrads) for which records were received in 2013



We have records from 549 out of 686 full or part squares in our area for 2013. 631 have been visited in 2010-2013. As you can see there are still a few unrecorded squares in west and north Hertfordshire.

Major urban areas

To put the position of records into context this is a map on the same grid of the major urban areas in Hertfordshire and Middlesex.

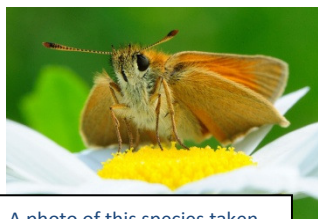
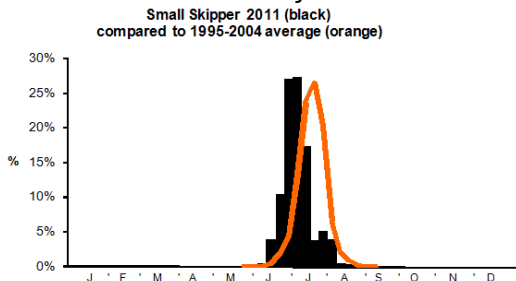


SPECIES PAGES – What each section means

Brief status for species

Common Name *Scientific name*

Widespread but declining



A photo of this species taken by one of our members

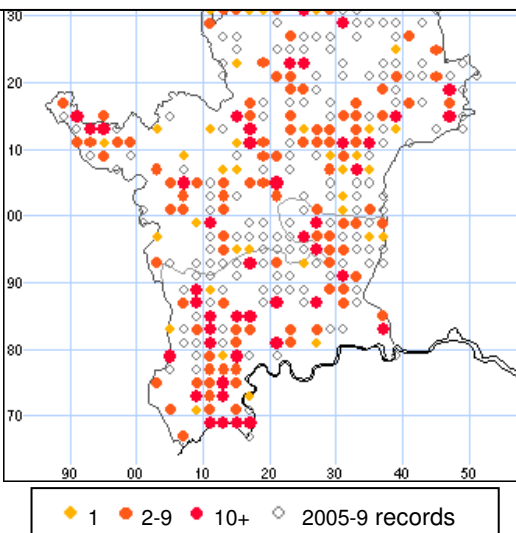
The flight period showing proportion of species flying in any week compared with the 1995-2004 average

First: 16 June

Last: 16 Aug

Peak week: 25 Jun -1 Jul

Map showing 2 km squares where a species has been recorded in 2010-2013 split into 1, 2-9 or 10 or more recorded on a single occasion and the recent historical range.



Distribution % squares

2013	28% (155)
2012	25% (87)
2005-9 mean	27%

Abundance (transects)

2013	27
2012	32
2005-9 mean	42

Distribution change

Up 3% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change

Down 36% compared with 2005-2009

Never as widespread as the Small Skipper the *E. agestor* has a greater decline in distribution. Some caution is needed to not record these two species as an aggregate due to the noticeable gap in central Herts for this species in

Notes on the species during the year

First sighting

Last sighting

Peak Week when most seen

Distribution % squares. The % and number of 2km squares with records in which this species was recorded

Abundance (transects) Average number of a species seen on transects (so comparable year on year)

Distribution and Abundance change compared with the recent 5 year period to smooth out year to year comparisons

Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris*

Widespread but declining

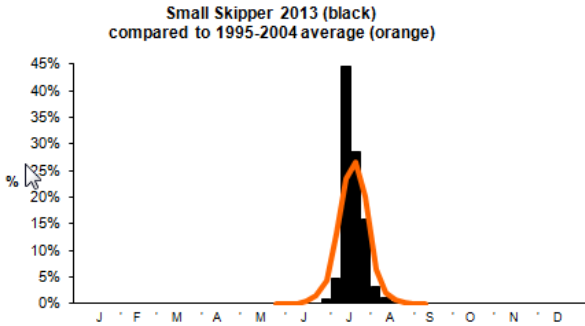
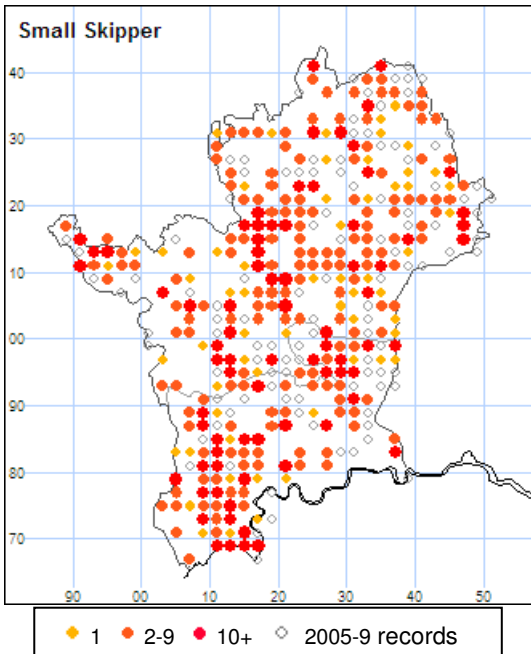


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 25 June
Last: 20 Aug
Peak week: 9-15 July



Distribution % squares	
2013	26% (140)
2012	22% (110)
2005-9 mean	27%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	16
2012	17
2005-9 mean	42

Distribution change	
Down 4% compared with 2005-2009	

Abundance change	
Down 62% compared with 2005-2009	

The Small Skipper had a rather short flight period with a very concentrated peak coinciding with the warm dry period in July. Not surprisingly given the poor spring they only emerged right at the end of June and were only on the wing until mid August. The distribution picked up a bit but abundance dropped very slightly compared to 2012. We must still be concerned about the future of this species as the long term trend points to a significant drop in numbers. As Malcolm Hull noted, “golden coloured skipper [Small, Essex and Large] numbers seemed to be well down at most sites”.

Essex Skipper *Thymelicus lineola*

Widespread but declining

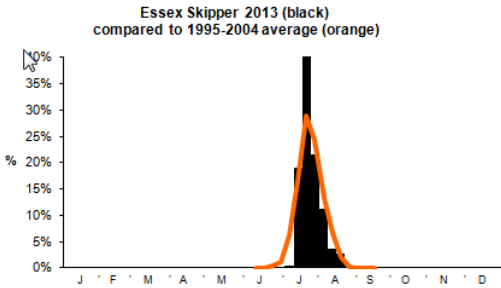
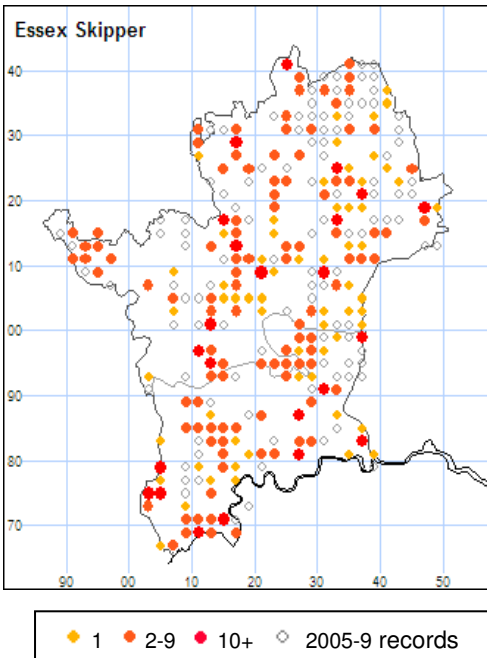


Photo Dave Miller



First: 6 Jul
Last: 31 Aug
Peak week: 16-22 July

Distribution % squares	
2013	16% (86)
2012	12% (61)
2005-9 mean	17%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	7
2012	12
2005-9 mean	46

Distribution change
Down 6% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 85% compared with 2005-2009

The pattern for Essex Skipper is very similar to the closely related Small Skipper, but running about a week later. However abundance dropped even more than for the Small Skipper. However in the right place the Essex Skipper can still be found in good numbers as Phil MacMurdie’s comments show, “In general I am finding several strong colonies of Essex Skippers, all appearing to be doing well in various places. Saturday 27th July Wareside: Amongst the grassland species Essex Skipper is doing well, good colonies along the disused railway track (9) seen”.

Large Skipper *Ochlodes faunus*

Widespread & common

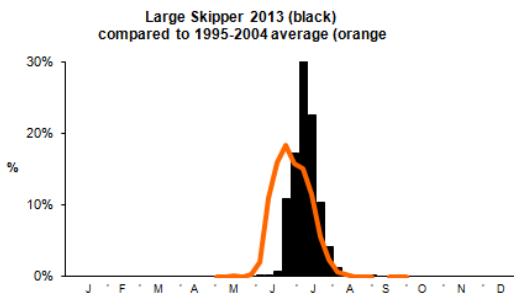
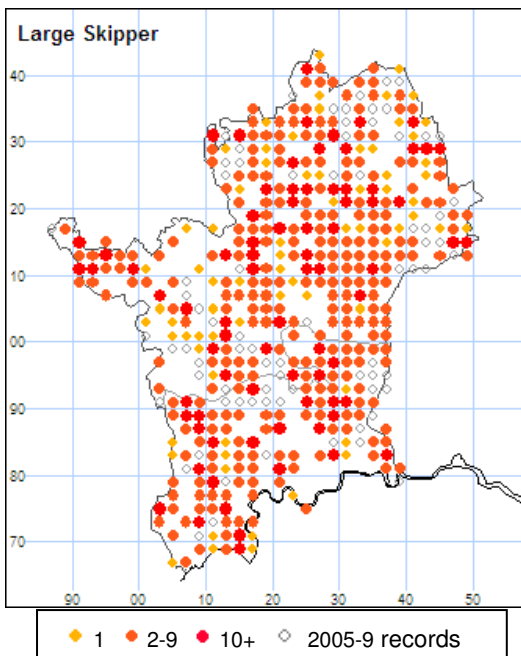


Photo Dave Miller



First: 6 Jun
Last: 5 Sep
Peak week: 9-15 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2013	44% (241)
2012	35% (175)
2005-9 mean	28%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	25
2012	18
2005-9 mean	20

Distribution change
Up 56% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 25% compared with 2005-2009

The Large Skipper continues to be a common species. The flight chart shows the weather effect with no records in May and few before mid June following the cool spring. Once the warm weather came in early July numbers increased very quickly as the peak well above the average shows. The advantage Large Skipper has over the Essex and Small Skippers is its ability to tolerate much shadier conditions, so there are several woodland sites that support good populations of this butterfly. The latter two can only breed in very open spaces in woods whereas the Large Skipper can tolerate much shadier rides and clearings.

Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages*

Restricted and rare

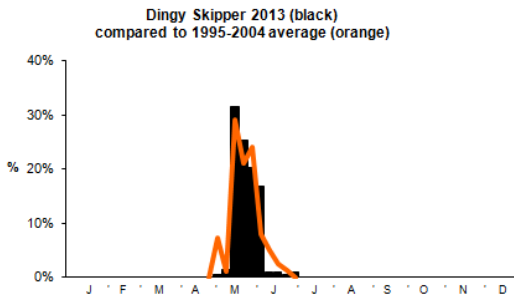
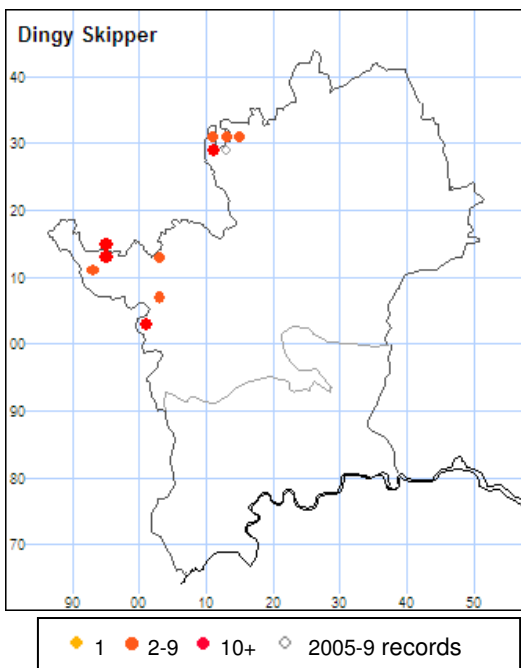


Photo Phil MacMurdie

First: 6 May

Last: 8 Jul

Peak week: 14-20 May



Distribution % squares	
2013	1% (6)
2012	1% (4)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	7
2012	17
2005-9 mean	11

Distribution change	
No change	

Abundance change	
Down 36% compared with 2005-2009	

Given that it is a spring flying species it made quite a good showing with its flight period very close to the long term mean. Good news was that it was found at a new site and also seen in good numbers at one of the new sites where it was first recorded in 2011. Roger Prue noted, "4th June I decided to have a good look around Bovingdon Brickpits. Two years ago, I recorded a Dingy Skipper there, but today I recorded no fewer than 13 Dingy Skippers. In fact, I saw more than any other butterfly species". The new site was not far from 2011's Hedgeswood Common record. Ian Carle reported, "I had a quick look at the Grizzled skipper site near Hoo Wood today. Unfortunately I didn't see any ...the only butterfly I saw was an extremely worn Dingy Skipper".

Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*

Restricted & rare

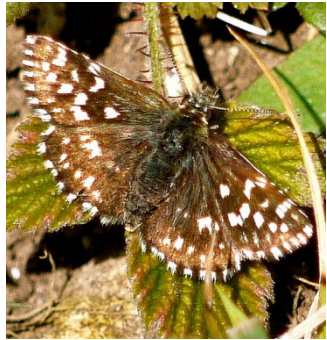
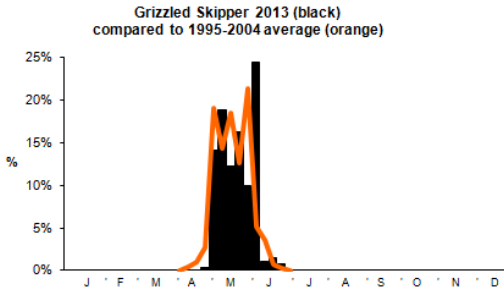
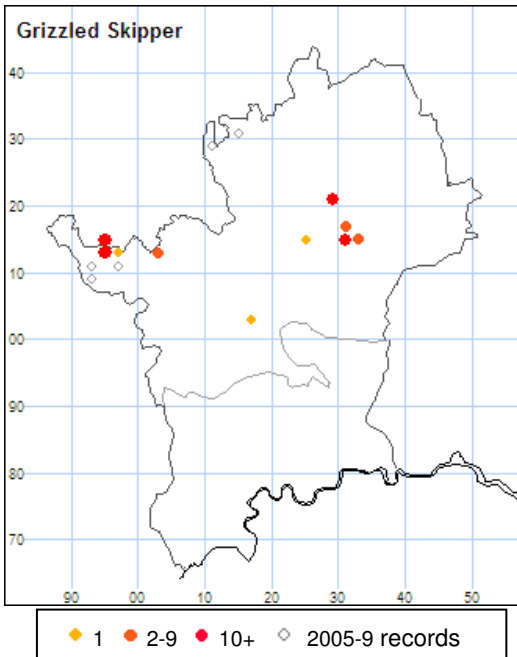


Photo Sharon Monahan

First: 25 Apr

Last: 6 Jul

Peak week: 4-10 Jun



Distribution % squares	
2013	1% (7)
2012	1% (8)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	12
2012	24
2005-9 mean	12

Distribution change
No change

Abundance change
No change

The Grizzled Skipper’s flight season coincided with the very cold wet spring so a drop in numbers from last year is not unexpected, however comparing 2013 with longer term trends suggests that they are stable in both range and abundance. The peak and last date are very late in the flight period probably a function of the cool and wet spring weather. At times it was actually easier to find adults roosting on old plant stems in cool, damp weather than to find them flying actively in warm weather. None were seen at the site near London Colney found last year but it was found near Hoo Wood north east of Great Gaddesden. This is an historic area for Grizzled Skipper but as it is little visited it is difficult to know what has happened here.

Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus*

Less common migrant

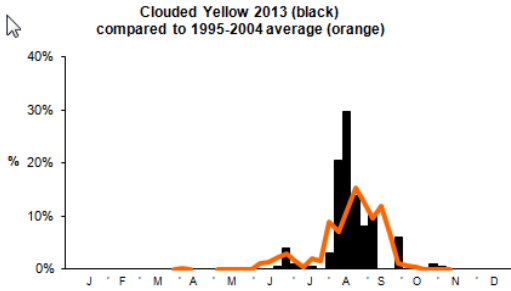
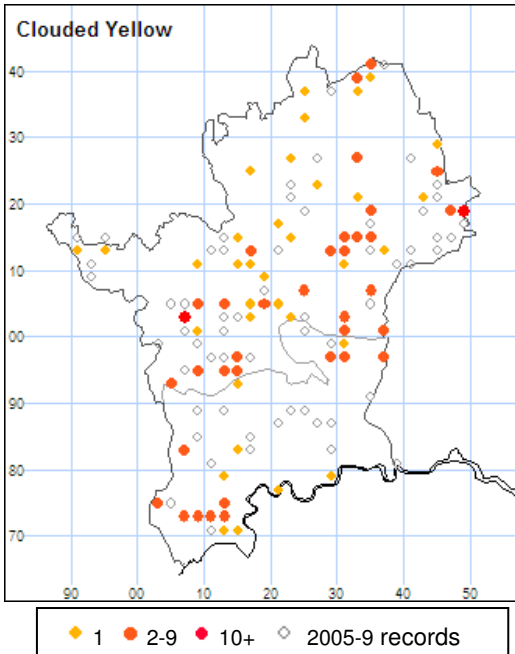


Photo Ashley Cox

First: 21 Jun
Last: 30 Oct
Peak week: 13-19 Aug



Distribution % squares	
2013	11% (61)
2012	>1% (1)
2005-9 mean	5%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	2
2012	0
2005-9 mean	2

Distribution change	
Up 220% compared with 2005-2009	

Abundance change	
No change	

2013 was not a particularly good year for migrant butterflies except for the Clouded Yellow which appeared widely across our area, usually in ones and twos often around lucerne crops. But there were some concentrations as Tony & Gill Porter noted. “Prompted by recently reported sighting, by Elizabeth Debenham, of Clouded Yellows in meadows adjacent to Barnes Lane, Kings Langley we visited the site ... we were treated to the sight of at least 15 CYs”. Samuel Perfect also visited, “recently went to see the Clouded Yellows! I counted at least 13, five in the field closer to Barnes Lane and eight in the adjacent field”. Whether the small numbers that arrived in late June bred to produce the August brood or were further migrant examples is unclear, though it seems likely that the autumn ones were offspring of those August ones.

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*

Widespread

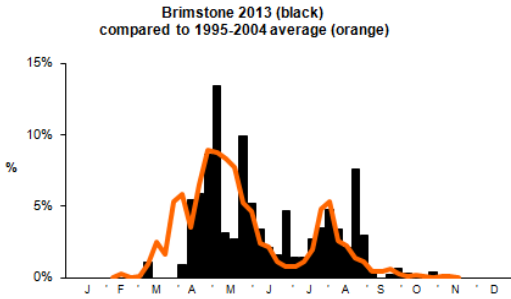
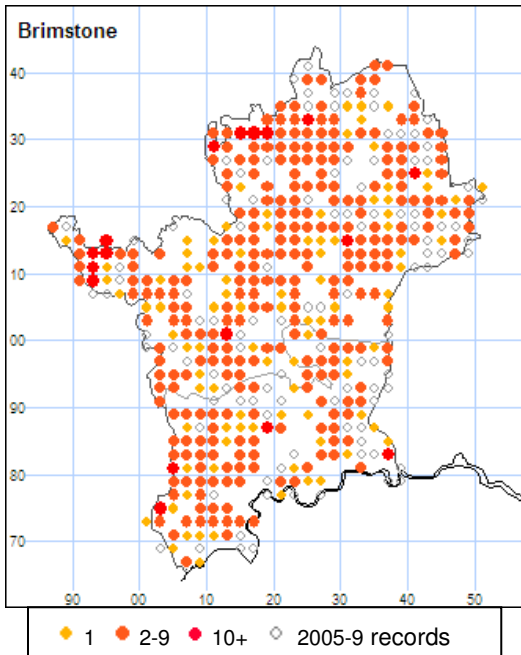


Photo Dave Miller

First: 19 Feb
Last: 29 Oct
Peak week: 30 Apr – 6 May



Distribution % squares	
2013	46% (254)
2012	29% (146)
2005-9 mean	37%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	19
2012	12
2005-9 mean	20

Distribution change
Up 24% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 5% compared with 2005-2009

Brimstones fared well in 2013 and were not far off the longer term trends for abundance and distribution. The poor spring weather has given a rather jagged flight chart, probably with peaks related to odd spells of better weather. The spring flight period seems to have lasted well into June, and consequently there were more flying in late August and early September when typically they would have already gone into hibernation. Looking at numbers seen it is clear that this species is most abundant in the west of Hertfordshire; of the 30 records with highest counts 24 are in this area, with the others as far away as possible at Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park in the south east of Middlesex!. This very much reflects where the buckthorn larval plant is most available.

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Widespread & common

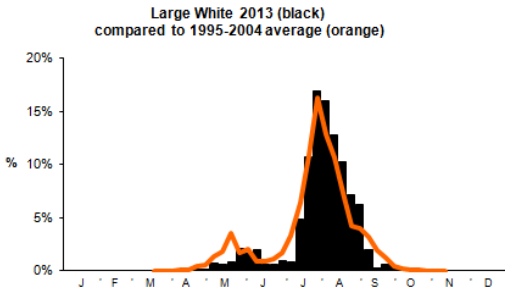
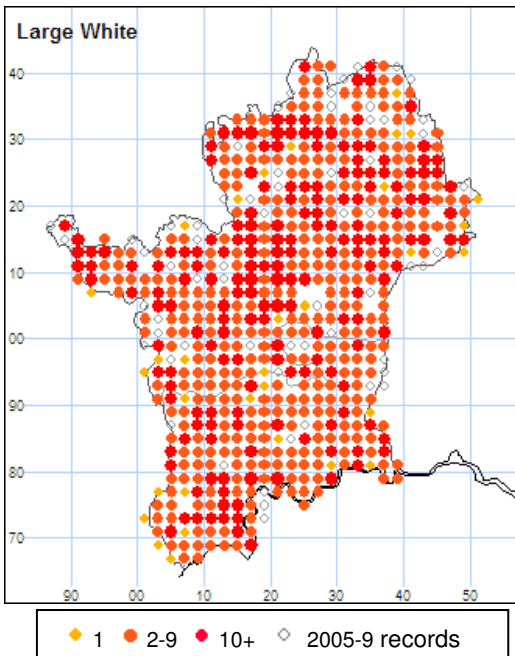


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 10 Apr

Last: 7 Oct

Peak week: 23-29 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2013	82% (451)
2012	57% (283)
2005-9 mean	58%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	74
2012	17
2005-9 mean	54

Distribution change
Up 41% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 37% compared with 2005-2009

The Large White was a very common butterfly during 2013, which suggests that the early year weather conditions actually created good conditions for larval growth and survival. The summer brood was very close in amounts to the longer term average, but just pushed forward by about two weeks. The abundance was massively up on 2012 and well up on the longer term average. The Large White can be a migratory species but I am not aware of large influxes being reported in 2013. Andrew Wood noted larvae feeding on the same honesty plants as Orange Tip larvae, whether the Orange Tip larvae consumed the Large Whites was not clear but they soon disappeared.

Small White *Pieris rapae*

Widespread & common

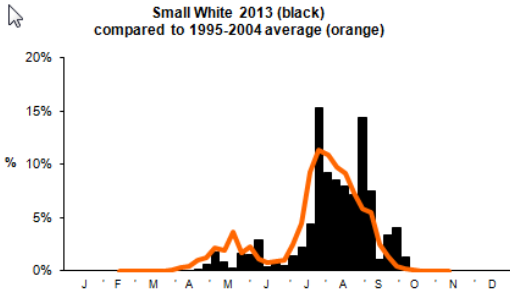
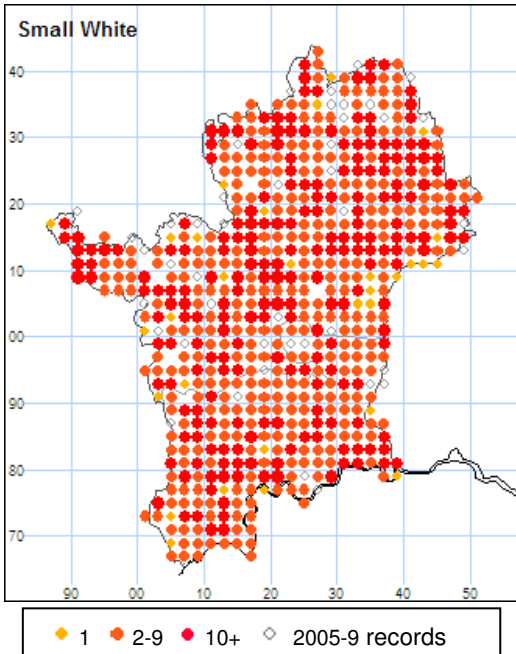


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 29 Mar
Last: 26 Oct
Peak week: 9-15 July

Distribution % squares	
2013	87% (480)
2012	66% (325)
2005-9 mean	58%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	95
2012	36
2005-9 mean	67

Distribution change
Up 50% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 29% compared with 2005-2009

For many observers this was a summer of the Small White with adults ubiquitous in town and country during the summer. The data shows that the distribution and numbers about were well up from last year. Chris Gleeson noted, "From a walk along the River Stort this afternoon from about 1.30 - 3.30: Lots of large and small whites. - I soon gave up counting". Small Whites are very active butterflies but seem attracted to a few nectar plants such as Burdock and Black Horehound, Andrew Wood found 62 on the latter in a short stretch of hedge near Dane End.

Green-veined White *Pieris napi*

Widespread & common

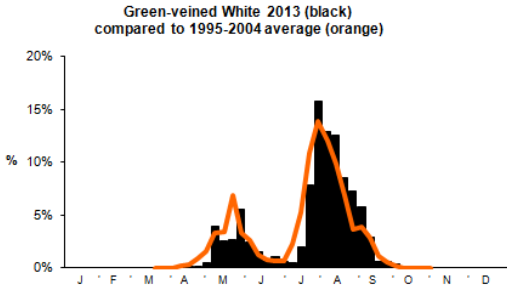
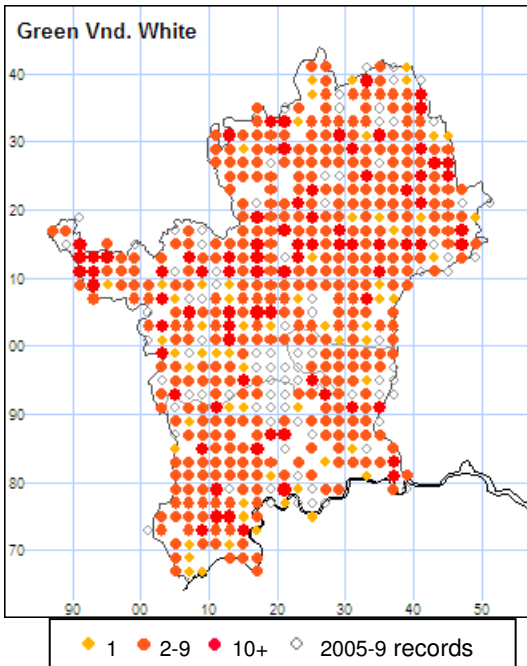


Photo Dave Miller



First: 10 Apr
Last: 30 Sep
Peak week: 24-30 July

Distribution % squares	
2013	63% (345)
2012	35% (173)
2005-9 mean	47%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	51
2012	30
2005-9 mean	54

Distribution change
Up 34% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 6% compared with 2005-2009

After 2012's drop there was a large increase in range but only a stabilisation in abundance. Like the other whites flight times were pushed back a couple of weeks owing to the poor spring weather. The males can be found in numbers "mud puddling" on damp ground in warm weather often in mixed groups with Small Whites. Andrew Wood found 46 Green-veined Whites at such a patch in a damp hollow not far from Patmore Heath on the 26th July.

Orange Tip *Anthocharis cardamines*

Widespread & Common

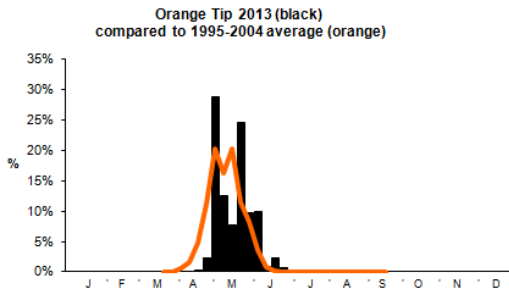
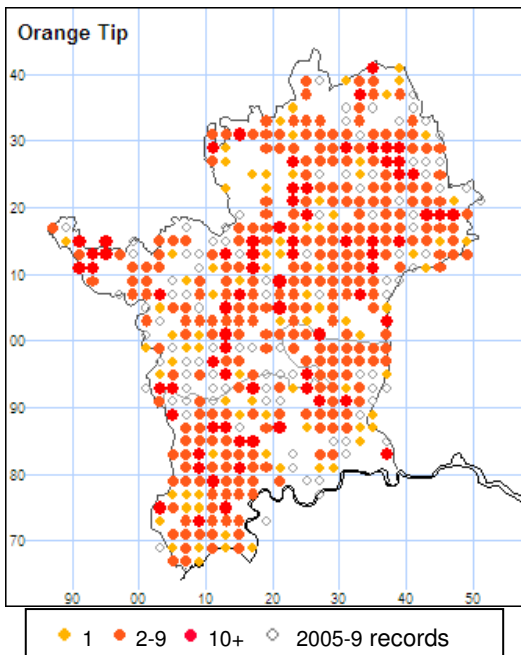


Photo Dave Miller

First: 21 Apr
Last: 2 Aug
Peak week: 30 Apr- 6 May



Distribution % squares	
2013	37% (201)
2012	38% (186)
2005-9 mean	43%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	16
2012	18
2005-9 mean	14

Distribution change
Down 14% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 14% compared with 2005-2009

Like the other whites the poor spring meant that the flight period was pushed back well beyond the normally expected time. For instance the first date was over five weeks later than in 2012. However the peak week was right at the start of the flight period suggesting that an improvement in the weather led to a sudden and concentrated emergence. Indeed the peak week was three weeks earlier than 2012! There were also some unusually late records such as, "Orange Tip, Harpenden Common - a very fresh male Orange Tip near the Walker's Road roundabout on Harpenden Common at around 13:20 today [2 August], quite a surprise! - Chris Shortall. Was this a delayed emergence or a rare second generation individual?

Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*

Very rare & restricted

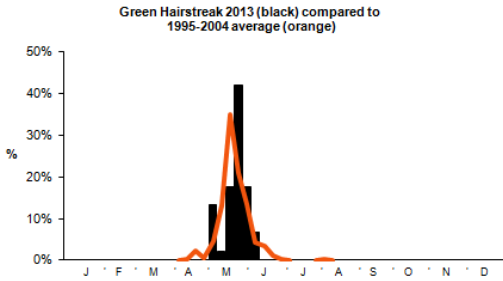
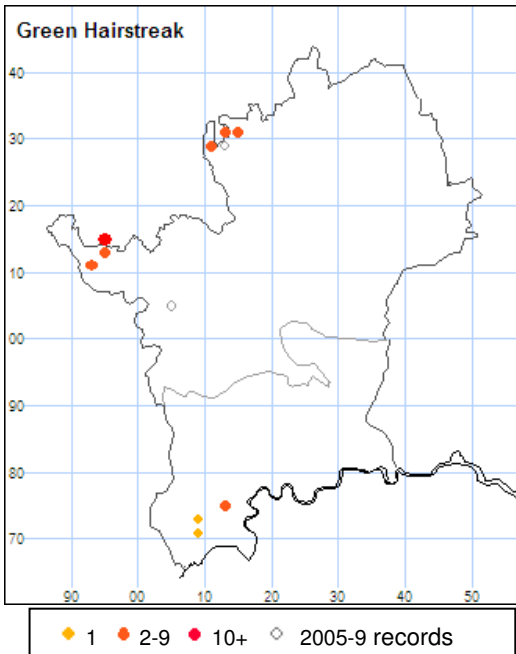


Photo Sharon Monahan

First: 1 May

Last: 6 Jun

Peak week: 21-27 May



Distribution % squares	
2013	1% (5)
2012	1% (5)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	4
2012	3
2005-9 mean	4

Distribution change	
Too little data to calculate	

Abundance change	
Too little data to calculate	

Green Hairstreak behaved in a very similar way to 2012 and was present at all the known sites in the west of Hertfordshire. The good news was further records from west Middlesex. Rob Solomon reported, "Friday 3rd May 2013 - A single Green Hairstreak seen on the south side of Bedford Lakes Country Park (just inside the gate off of challenge road)" John Eborall also observed one a short way further north. It is not possible to tell whether these are the same insect or signs of a colony, but this site will repay close examination in 2014, especially if the spring weather is better.

Purple Hairstreak *Neozephyrus quercus*

Common around oaks

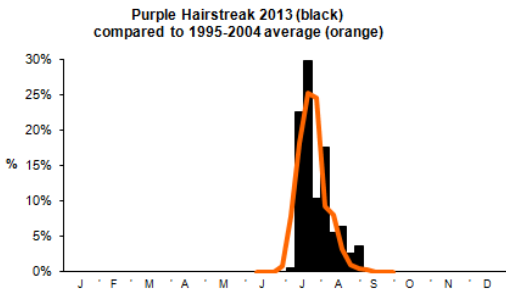
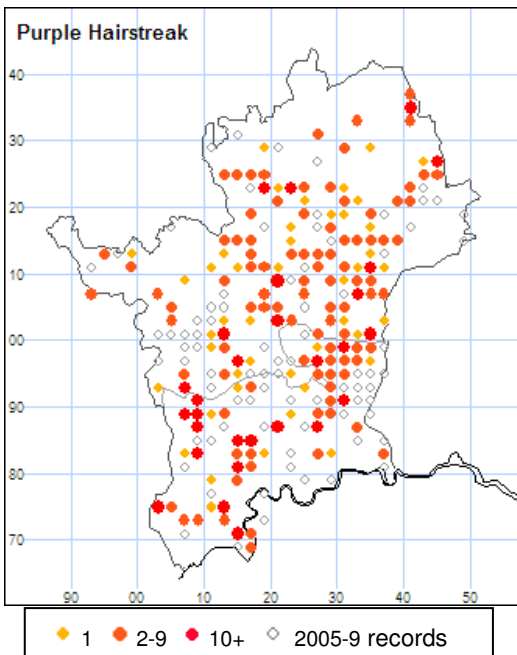


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 4 Jul
Last: 4 Sep
Peak week: 16-22 July

Distribution % squares	
2013	12% (66)
2012	9% (46)
2005-9 mean	16%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	10
2012	7
2005-9 mean	10

Distribution change
Down 25% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
No change compared with 2005-2009

Purple Hairstreak recovered from the poor performance of 2012 and was very close to the longer term trends, as with many other species the flight period was a couple of weeks later than the longer term. The best time to see this species in numbers is in the early evening on a warm day when they can be seen as small silvery butterflies flying actively around the tops of oak trees, even quite small ones. Some trees seem especially attractive, for instance in Goldingtons at Hertford Heath there is a small oak that over several years has had good numbers of this butterfly flying quite low down, even in duller weather and when there is no obvious activity on nearby trees.

White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrrium w-album*

Common around elm

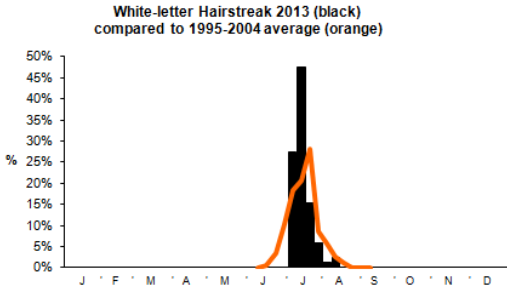
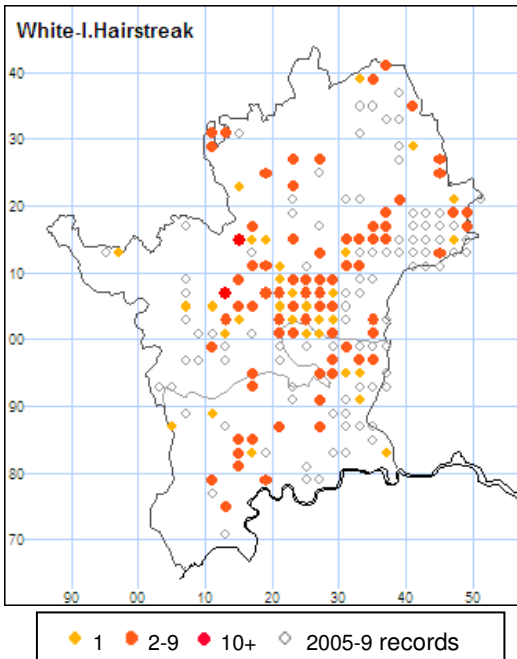


Photo Steve Lane

First: 5 Jul
Last: 11 Aug
Peak week: 9-15 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2013	5% (27)
2012	3% (15)
2005-9 mean	10%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	4
2012	1
2005-9 mean	5

Distribution change
Down 50% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 20% compared with 2005-2009

The poor spring pushed the start of the flight period back by about three weeks. Malcolm Hull, noted, "... a good year within the suburban areas of St Albans, but fared poorly in the surrounding countryside. The 100 yard long patch of elm on land behind the Abbey View Golf course on King Harry Lane produced a count of ten, my personal record for St Albans area". Despite the perceived rarity of this butterfly it can turn up in very ordinary places as these two records show, "Ware garden this morning, White-letter Hairstreak nectaring on Hemp Agrimony", - Liz Goodyear. "I just went to pick up a parcel and ended up giving a male White-letter Hairstreak a lift on my car window near London Rd, Hertford. I was about to look for an elm to leave the butterfly on when it flew off". Jenny Sherwen

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

Widespread & common

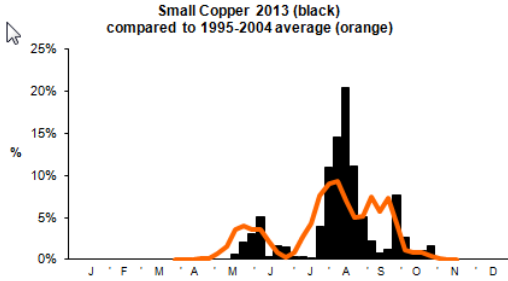
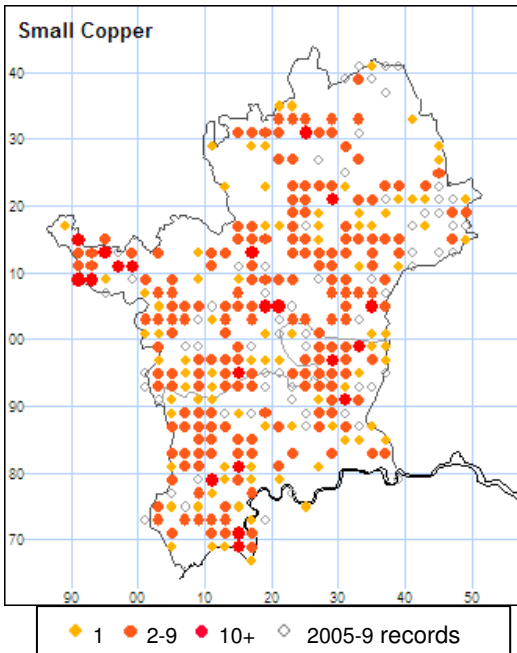


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 16 May

Last: 10 Nov

Peak week: 30 Apr- 6 May



Distribution % squares	
2013	29% (160)
2012	20% (99)
2005-9 mean	21%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	6
2012	6
2005-9 mean	11

Distribution change
Up 38% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 45% compared with 2005-2009

2013 showed three distinct broods, with the summer one being dominant, however the abundance was very similar to 2012. Observations included this from Pete Gore, "I watched a particularly lovely female Small Copper perched with open wings on a Plantain seed-head. It was only when I spotted slight movement immediately behind her that I realised she had been masking from me the much smaller, duller male, I was surprised how different the two sexes looked when seen close together". Charlie Jackson noted, "Whilst working in a private garden in Aldbury, Herts yesterday (31/07/2013) I saw at least 15 Small Coppers around a few small Wild Marjoram plants in a small paddock adjoining the garden. I was told by the owner that there were at least 25 the evening before. Quite a spectacular sight!"

Small Blue *Cupido minimus*

Very rare & restricted

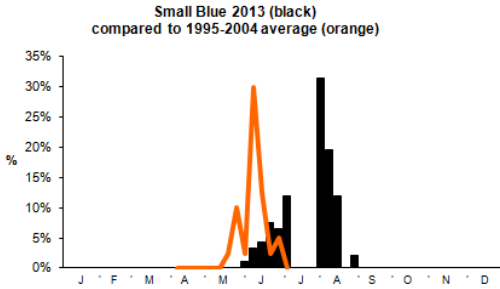
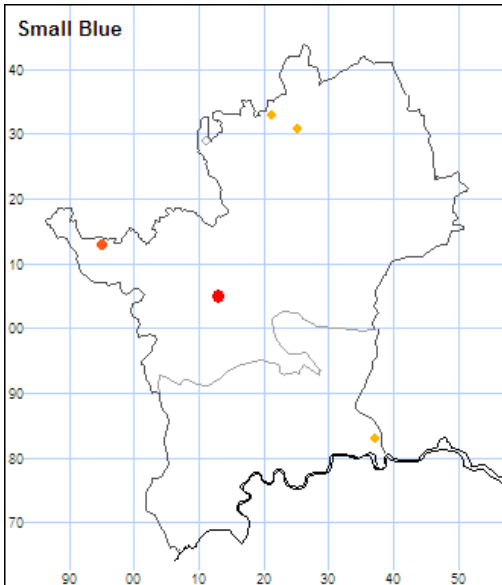


Photo Andrew Wood



● 1
 ● 2-9
 ● 10+
 ◊ 2005-9 records

First: 3 Jun
Last: 2 Sep
Peak week: 30 Jul – 5 Aug

Distribution % squares	
2013	>1% (3)
2012	>1% (2)
2005-9 mean	0%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	77
2012	9
2005-9 mean	0

Distribution change	
Too little data to calculate	

Abundance change	
Too little data to calculate	

The abundance increase is entirely due to the Butterfly World Transect where the colony there continues to thrive. The only other sightings are at the small colony at Aldbury Nowers. What is different this year is the clear division between two complete broods of the insect, in previous years the summer emergence has not been well recorded, owing to low numbers of adults seen.. The situation at Butterfly World is well illustrated by this observation from Mandy Floyd who walks the transect there, "Am very pleased to report sighting 11 Small Blues, and two pairs mating, on the kidney vetch at Butterfly World this morning". We also have a report of a Small Blue on an old site west of Letchworth.

Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*

Widely distributed

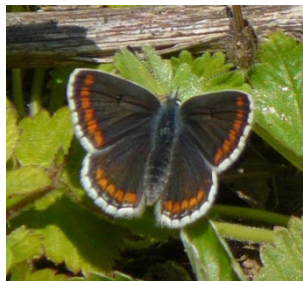
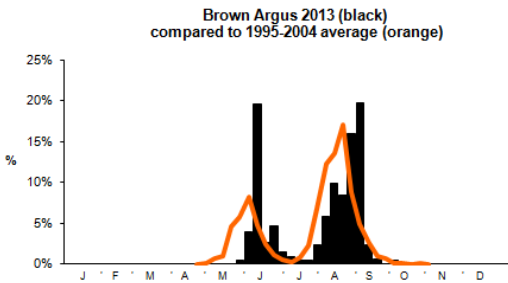
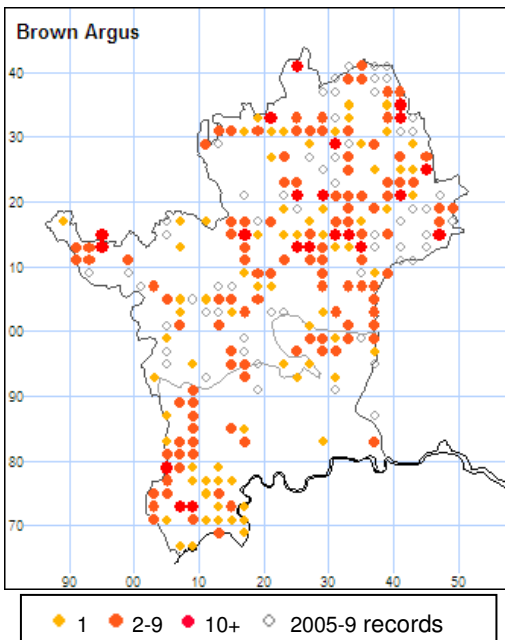


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 22 May

Last: 26 Sep

Peak week: 4-10 Jun

Distribution % squares	
2013	13% (69)
2012	7% (34)
2005-9 mean	11%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	13
2012	5
2005-9 mean	15

Distribution change	
Up 18% compared with 2005-2009	

Abundance change	
Down 16% compared with 2005-2009	

2012 was a dreadful year for Brown Argus but, thankfully, 2013 saw a good recovery back to something near to average. Both broods were a couple of weeks later than average and it seems likely that the spike in the spring brood was a function of a spell of good weather rather than anything else. It is noticeable from this year's data that many of the best sites are on old gravel pit sites that offer the poor soil that allows the low growing food plants to thrive. There seemed to be fewer records from setaside field margins than in other good years for this species which may be a result of changing rules on farmland management.

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*

Widespread & common

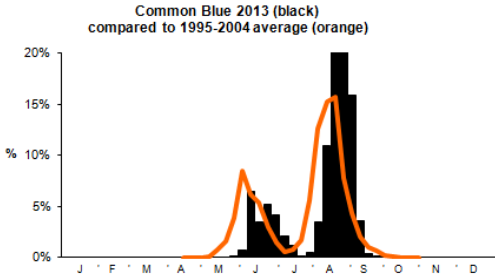
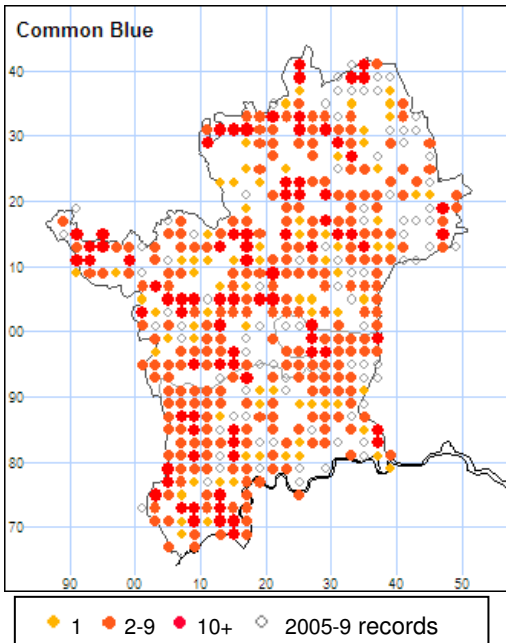


Photo Dave Miller

First: 26 May

Last: 2 Oct

Peak week: 13-19 Aug



Distribution % squares	
2013	40% (221)
2012	27% (135)
2005-9 mean	31%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	43
2012	13
2005-9 mean	30

Distribution change
Up 30% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 42% compared with 2005-2009

Like the Brown Argus the Common Blue recovered well in 2013. They are a good illustration of the fact that there is much variability in insect populations and that it is important to look at long term trends to see the true status of a species. An example of the better year for the Common Blue is shown by Graham Elcombe's comment, "One Common Blue (a female) seen in my garden in Pinner - the last time I saw one here was nineteen years ago!" and also from Peter Clarke on 26th June, "Norton Green one Common Blue (which I failed to find here last year!)". As with several other species exceptionally small examples were noted at some sites such as Nomansland Common and Stanwell Moor.

Chalkhill Blue *Lysandra coridon*

Common at known chalk sites

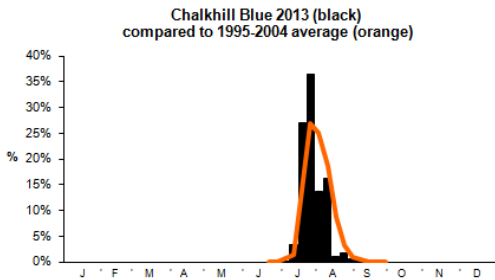
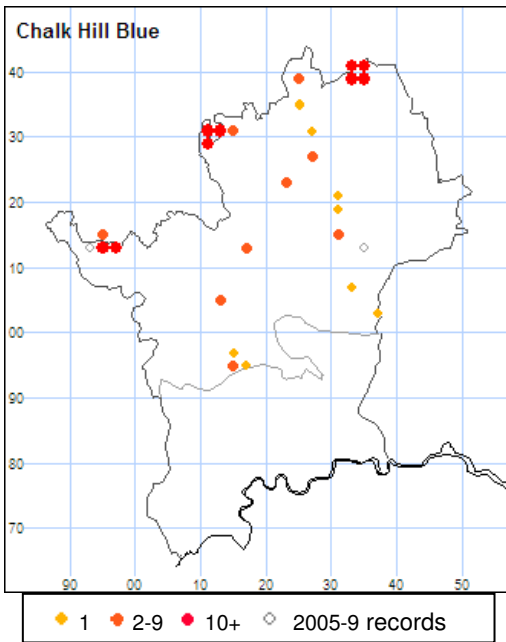


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 8 Jul
Last: 18 Sep
Peak week: 23-29 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2013	4% (23)
2012	2% (7)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	949
2012	578
2005-9 mean	96

Distribution change	
See text below	

Abundance change	
Up 891% compared with 2005-2009	

For three years now Chalkhill Blue has exceeded the previous year. 2013 saw the colonies reach bursting point and a dispersal across Hertfordshire (see the Branch newsletter autumn 2013 issue for details). A few notes give a flavour, "Nomansland Common – A male Chalkhill Blue, being mobbed by a couple of male common blues", 14 Aug - Darin Stanley. "I was very lucky to find a male Chalkhill Blue at Norton Green 20th July"- Peter Clarke. "Saturday 20th July I visited Hexton Chalk Pit this afternoon and was totally amazed at the numbers of Chalkhill Blues, not just hundreds but literally thousands and thousands all over the reserve, possibly even more than ten thousand! Stupendous!" – Phil Barron

Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*

Widespread & common

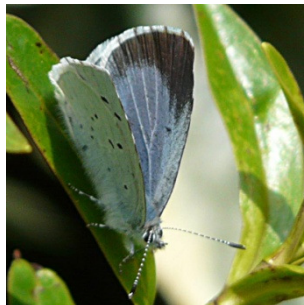
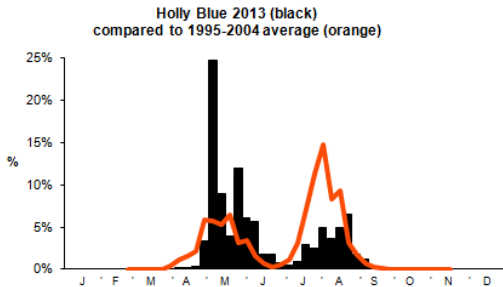
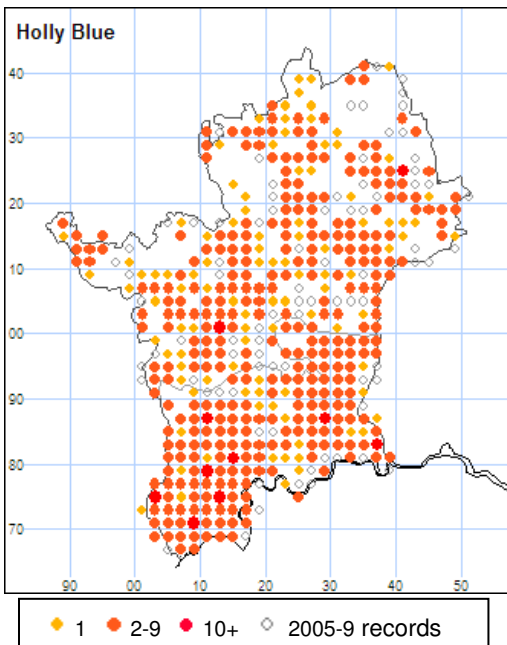


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 2 Apr
Last: 19 Sep
Peak week: 30 Apr-6 May



Distribution % squares	
2013	39% (215)
2012	43% (214)
2005-9 mean	41%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	8
2012	10
2005-9 mean	12

Distribution change
Down 5% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 33% compared with 2005-2009

In a contrast with 2012 this blue species had a poorer year, though this may well be a rebalancing of the parasite/host cycle that affects it. The spring brood was relatively strong, while the summer brood was very small suggesting that 2014 will not be a good year for this species. Alan Jackson noted that at Harpenden, “they’ve had a very poor year here” and John Moss at Hatfield on 26th July reported, “Still no Holly Blue though, even though they’ve bred on our Holly/Ivy for years”. As with many other butterflies flight times were late owing to the poor spring. The later emergence times for the first two generations probably explains the absence of any October records - there just wasn’t time to breed again.

White Admiral *Limenitis camilla*

Local in woodland

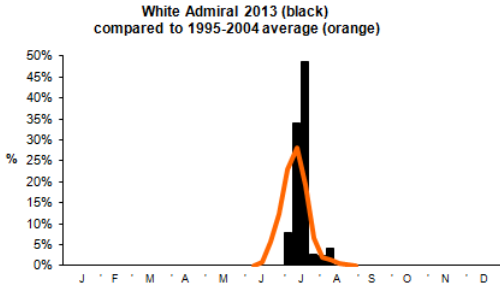
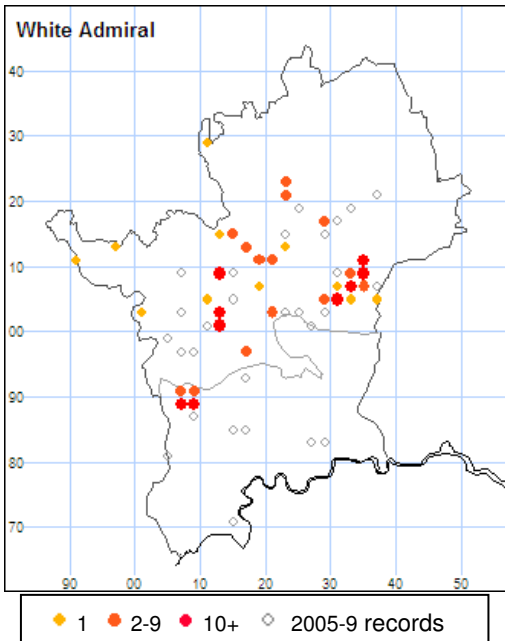


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 5 Jul

Last: 11 Aug

Peak week: 16-22 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2013	4% (21)
2012	2% (11)
2005-9 mean	4%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	14
2012	12
2005-9 mean	11

Distribution change
No change

Abundance change
Up 27% compared with 2005-2009

The earliest record was delayed into July, a week later than even 2012, but as there were few August records it can be seen that the flight period was rather short with a very sharp peak. Malcolm Hull noted some encouraging records, “appeared to be doing well on Bricket Wood Common, with much evidence of breeding in Mutchetts Wood. At Symonshyde numbers were a little below peak, but still healthy. I was thrilled to find a single individual in Potters Crouch plantation early in the season, suggesting the species may have bred here successfully in 2012”. It is well established in all the major woods across south Hertfordshire and north west Middlesex but it also continues to turn up in unlikely places, “On this morning's dog walk in Westfield, Harpenden my wife saw a White Admiral” -. Alan Jackson.

Purple Emperor *Apatura iris*

Local in woodland

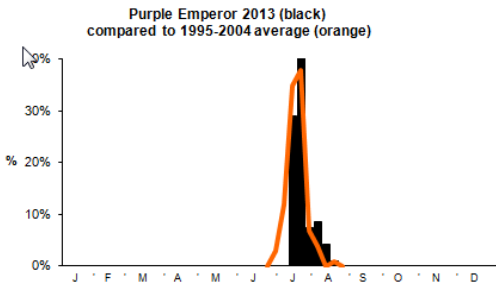
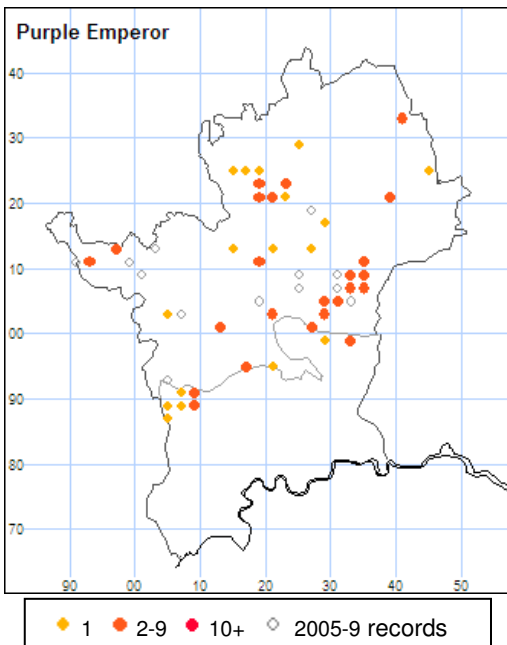


Photo Phil MacMurdie

First: 9 Jul

Last: 14 Aug

Peak week: 16-22 July



Distribution % squares	
2013	6% (24)
2012	3% (13)
2005-9 mean	3%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	2
2012	0
2005-9 mean	2

Distribution change
Up 100% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
No change

With a late flight period coinciding with the hot July we received many more records so 2013 looks like one of its best years. Here are a few comments, “.. a male visited my new pond, where it spent over 10 minutes feeding. In the 15 years I have lived here this is my first sighting for Hitch Wood” - Colin Brackston. “I have waited over 16 years to see Purple Emperor on the transect. No sooner had I seen one perched on top of an oak than a second flew by and a chase ensued high above the ride” -Malcolm Hull 26th July. “Barnet Gate Wood, Arkley - after many years of rumours and fruitless searching male on horse dung” - Kit Jones 18th July. “Balls Wood 18th July during a walk 2, possibly 3 Purple Emperors witnessed by 35 people! 1 stayed on the ground for about 10 mins. Absolutely stunning.” -Andy Brown

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Common migrant

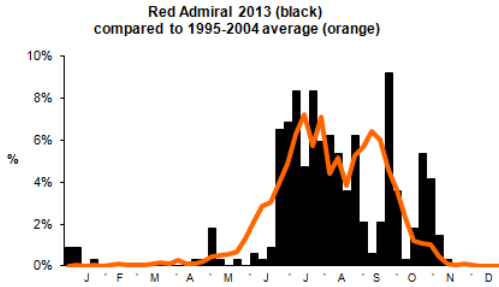
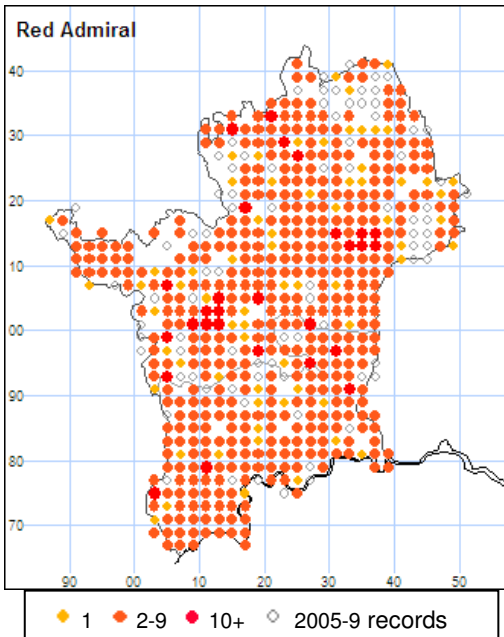


Photo Dave Miller



First: 1 Jan
Last: 16 Nov
Peak week: 16-22 July

Distribution % squares	
2013	46% (254)
2012	65% (323)
2005-9 mean	51%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	5
2012	17
2005-9 mean	10

Distribution change
Down 10% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 50% compared with 2005-2009

In contrast to other migrants this was a poor year. A few overwintering ones were seen in early January but then hardly any until mid June. This suggests that the traditional winter prevented breeding by these individuals. When migrants did arrive there were very low numbers and so this was an autumn where the ivy was largely bare of busily feeding Red Admirals. Several observers noted the dearth, “As an aside, I have seen far fewer Red Admirals this year than is usually the case. However, Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells have been present in much larger numbers than usual”. Peter Tallantire.”Hemel Hempstead, today in the garden making the most of the sunshine were four Red Admirals, the most that I have seen together this year” - Malcolm Newland on 6th October.

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

Variable migrant

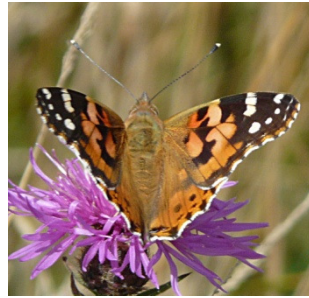
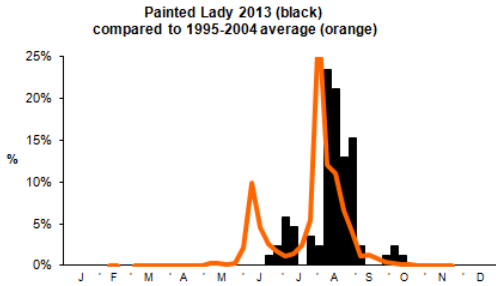
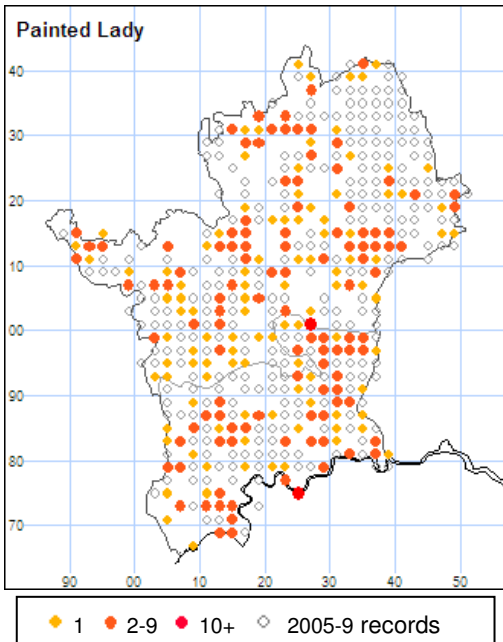


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 1 Jun

Last: 9 Oct

Peak week: 6-12 Aug



Distribution % squares	
2013	24% (131)
2012	10% (48)
2005-9 mean	33%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	6
2012	2
2005-9 mean	0

Distribution change	
Down 24% compared with 2005-2009	

Abundance change	
Too little data to calculate	

Like the Red Admiral there was no influx of migrants until mid June and these produced a slightly late summer brood with possibly a small autumn brood. Numbers and distribution were well up on 2012. Comparisons with the longer term mean are somewhat misleading as they include the huge 2009 influx. It is also worth noting that as this species cannot survive the British winter its varying numbers have no local conservation implications.

Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*

Widespread

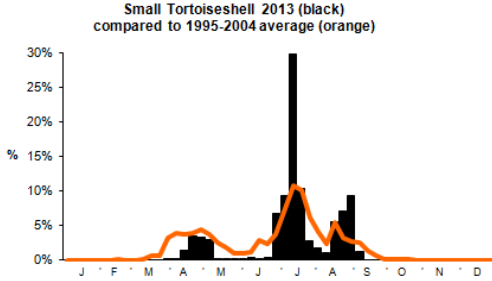
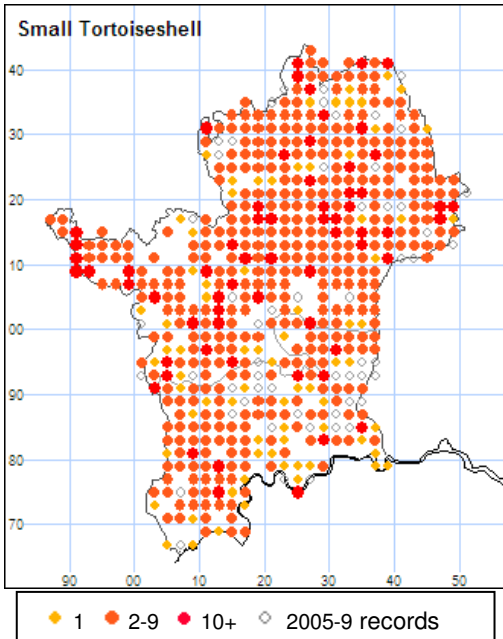


Photo Dave Miller

First: 19 Feb

Last: 19 Nov

Peak week: 9-15 July



Distribution % squares	
2013	75% (409)
2012	33% (166)
2005-9 mean	37%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	28
2012	6
2005-9 mean	10

Distribution change
Up 100% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 180% compared with 2005-2009

One of the year’s major successes. Few were seen in the spring but the hot weather in July saw large numbers recorded. Evidence of breeding was easily spotted, “I found over 20 larval webs in various stages of development all Small Tortoiseshell, most were on small new growths of nettles some were huge with hundreds of caterpillars in the web” -Phil MacMurdie on 28 Aug. Malcolm Hull noted hibernation behaviour, “The first four hibernators were seen in my outhouse on 16 July and numbers built up rapidly over the next 10 days to reach a total of 20. Out in the garden I noticed a second wave of ST’s build up in the middle/end of August. I checked in the outhouse, but all 20 hibernators were still present. A week or so later their numbers swelled to 30 as the August brood went into hibernation”.

Peacock *Inachis io*

Widespread

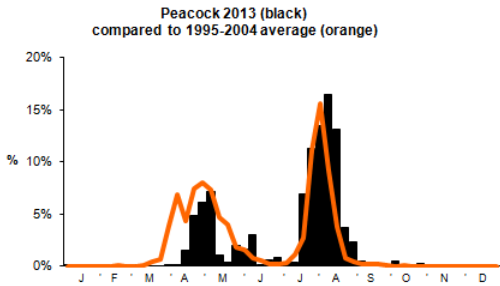
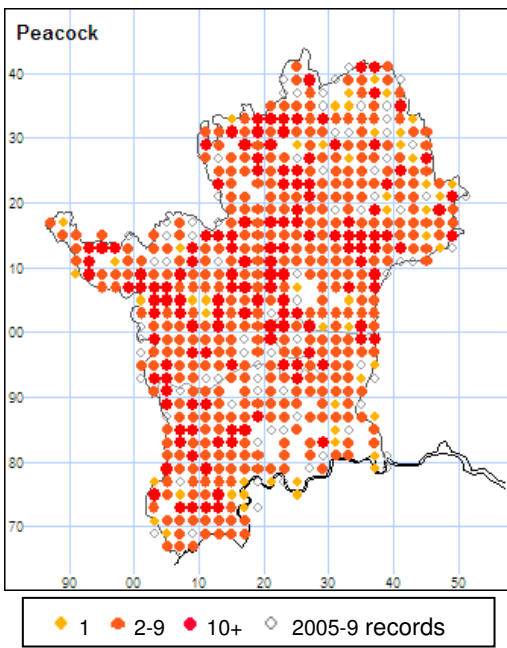


Photo Dave Miller



First: 3 Jan
Last: 12 Dec
Peak week: 6-12 Aug

Distribution % squares	
2013	77% (425)
2012	47% (234)
2005-9 mean	57%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	36
2012	9
2005-9 mean	31

Distribution change
Up 35% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 16% compared with 2005-2009

Worries of decline seemed to be reversed in 2013 with both abundance and distribution up above longer term trends. The overwintered individuals were only seen patchily but the spring weather must have meant very nutritious nettles as the summer brood was not especially late and produced numbers not seen for some years. Peter Clarke noted, "7th August An explosion of Peacocks (50+) nectaring on thistles at Norton Green". At Upper Green Tewin, Jim Farr on the same day noted, "Peacocks everywhere including 25+ on one White Buddleia bush!". Andrew Wood noted, "At a set aside field east of Patmore Heath there were 100s nectaring on thistles".

Comma *Polygona c-album*

Common & widespread

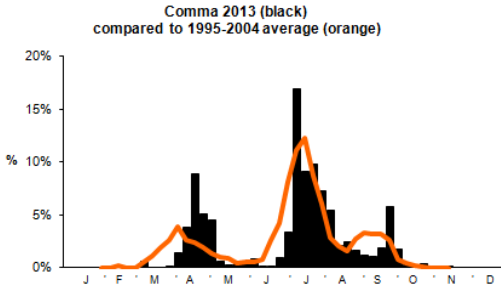
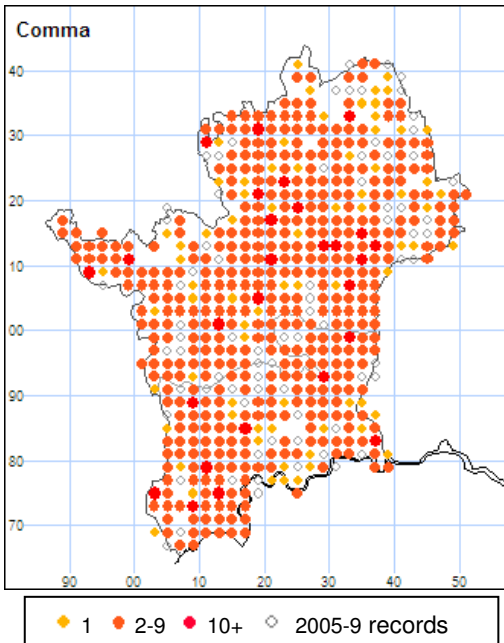


Photo Dave Miller

First: 5 Mar

Last: 15 Nov

Peak week: 9-15 July



Distribution % squares	
2013	70% (385)
2012	57% (285)
2005-9 mean	50%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	18
2012	12
2005-9 mean	28

Distribution change
Up 40% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 36% compared with 2005-2009

2012's autumn brood emerged late during April and produced a strong summer brood, the autumn brood seemed to be rather weaker. However there is no real sign of any worries over this species. Malcolm Hull commented, "Interesting to note that Commas were the most common butterfly in April at the start of the season and also doing well right at the end" - Malcolm Hull

Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*

Rare but increasing

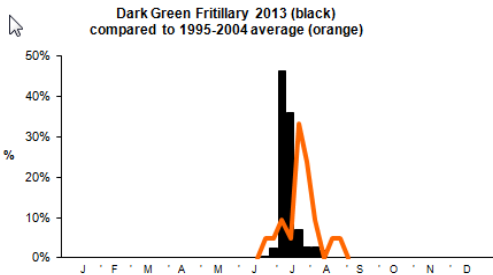
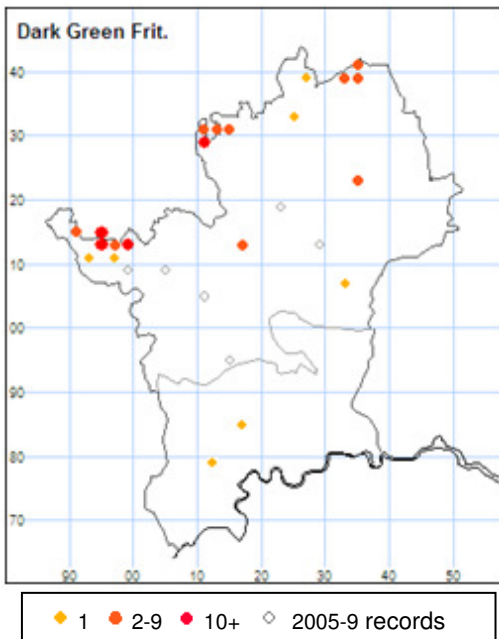


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 24 Jun

Last: 7 Aug

Peak week: 2-8 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2013	2% (13)
2012	1% (5)
2005-9 mean	0.7%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	16
2012	29
2005-9 mean	3

Distribution change
Up 200% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
To little data to calculate

Unlike many species the peak was earlier than average, though this is probably caused by the sudden hot spell in early July. There were several new sites noted, “29th July, Dane End Tributary. There really isn’t much in this square but was surprised to find a very worn old lady Dark Green Fritillary nectaring on thistles and knapweeds” - Phil MacMurdie. “Exciting news from Horsenden Hill 13th July, where I discovered a Dark Green Fritillary! It was nectaring on knapweed but occasionally visiting bramble flowers” -Andy Culshaw. Malcolm Hull (6th July), “I visited Aldbury Nowers to establish how many Dark Green Fritillaries are now on the reserve...I arrived at a count of 36 DGFs, although I suspect the actual number could be higher. I’ve certainly never seen anywhere near the number of this species in Herts”

Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia*

Locally common in woodland

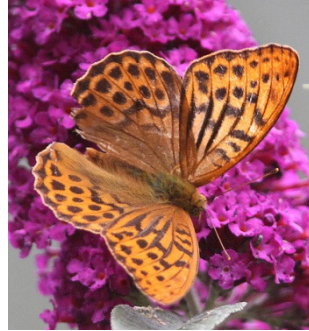
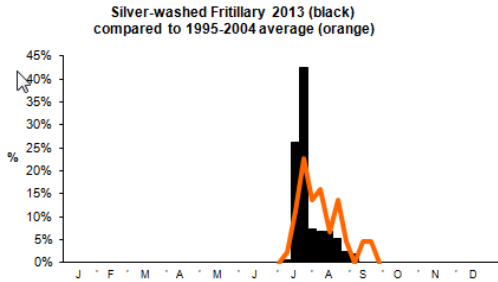
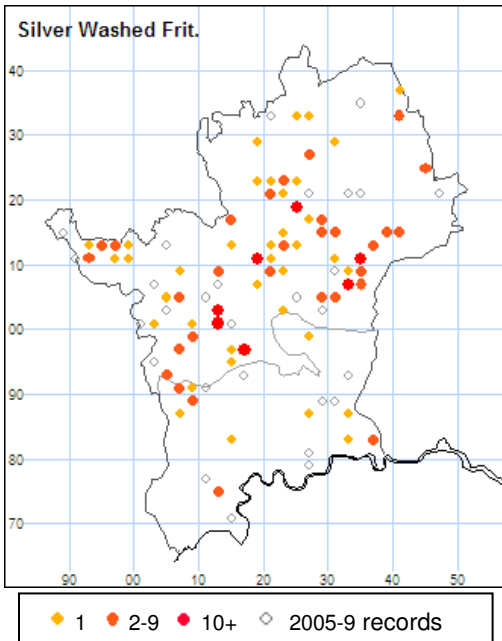


Photo Steve Lane

First: 7 Jul
Last: 2 Sept
Peak week: 2-8 July



Distribution % squares	
2013	6% (31)
2012	4% (22)
2005-9 mean	4%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	10
2012	12
2005-9 mean	3

Distribution change
Up 50% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 330% compared with 2005-2009

A good year, with its main flight coinciding with the hot July. At Aldbury Nowers Paul Thrush reported, "I saw 5 Silver washed Fritillaries (the highest number I have ever seen on the reserve). Malcolm Hull saw egg laying at Bricket Wood on 8th Aug, "The SWF males along the ride have been replaced by females looking for egg laying sites. One checked me out quite carefully, wisely deciding to deposit her eggs elsewhere. I saw another lay three eggs on an oak at heights of 1ft 18 inches and 2ft above ground. It can also turn up expectedly". A bit of a surprise today I saw a Silver Washed Fritillary on the edge of Patmore Heath Nature Reserve, sunning itself on a bush on the north side of the heath. Not really a heathland species!" - Andy Brown

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

Widespread & common

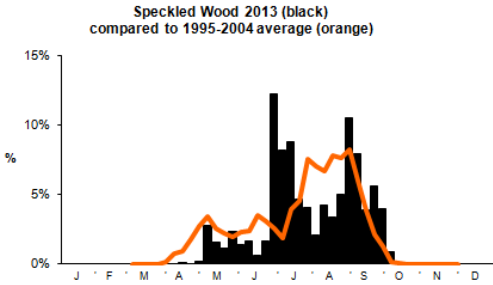
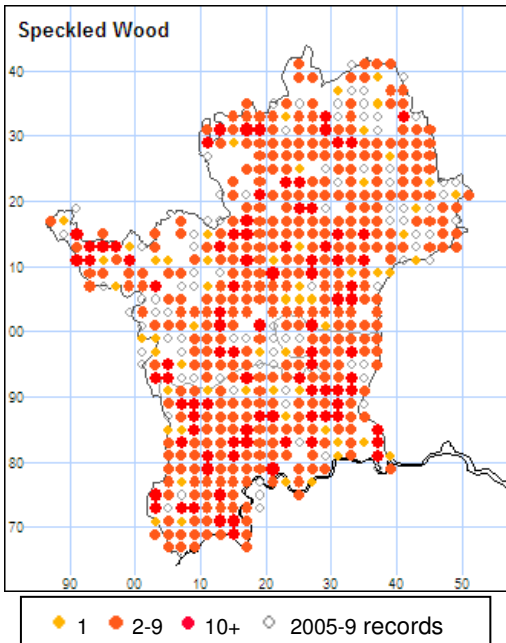


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 15 Apr

Last: 30 Oct

Peak week: 25 Jun-1 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2013	60% (330)
2012	52% (258)
2005-9 mean	58%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	43
2012	50
2005-9 mean	74

Distribution change
Up 3% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 28% compared with 2005-2009

Yet another species affected by the poor spring weather with few seen before May. The flight pattern is also unusual in showing three clear peaks. This suggests that there was less of an overlapping series of emergences caused by the differing rates of development of the overwintered larvae and pupae but that they all came out together in May creating more individual broods through the year. Given the lower numbers seen it may also be that the poor spring did not aid the growth of the larvae emerging at that time. These are just theories but it would be interesting to know if this has happened.

Marbled White *Melanargia galathea*

Widespread in Herts

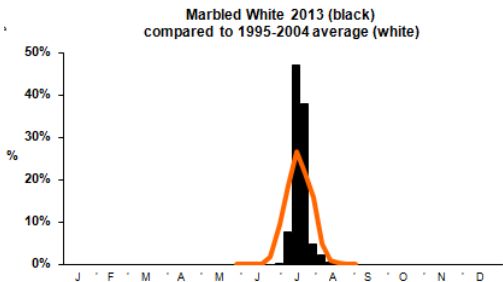
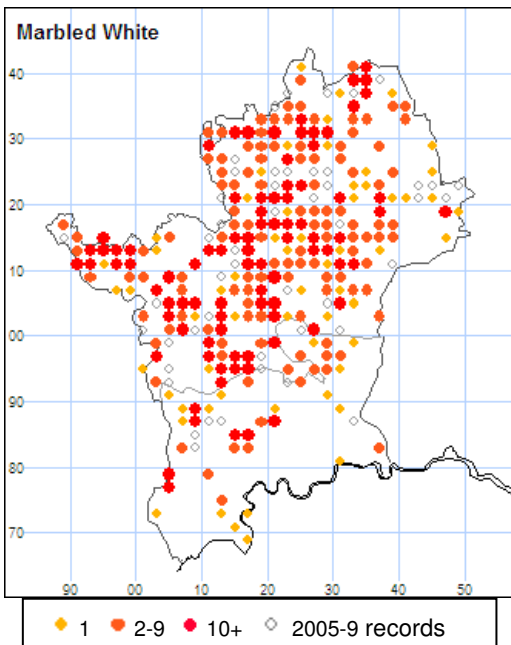


Photo Dave Miller

First: 26 June

Last: 21 Aug

Peak week: 9-15 July



Distribution % squares	
2013	31% (172)
2012	26% (130)
2005-9 mean	16%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	76
2012	81
2005-9 mean	61

Distribution change
Up 94% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 41% compared with 2005-2009

Still doing well, with the characteristic late and concentrated peak seen in many other species. The hot weather saw some interesting behaviour, "This morning 15th July, I was carrying out a farmland bird survey at Hammonds End Farm (between Harpenden and Redbournbury). There were very large numbers of Marbled Whites around; nothing remarkable about that, they're doing well here - but this was at 6.15am!" Alan Jackson. On 11th July Stuart Warrington noted, "I was walking over the grasslands over the top of the north tunnel at Digswell/Welwyn North and there were clouds of Marbled Whites there feeding on the thistles & field scabious. I estimate >200 in an area of a couple of acres"

Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

Widespread & common

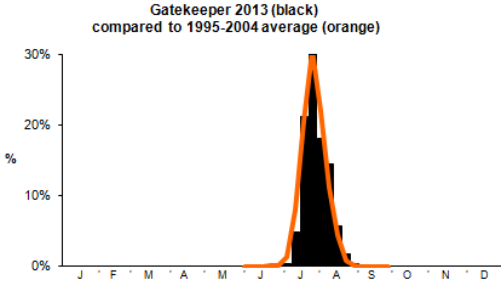
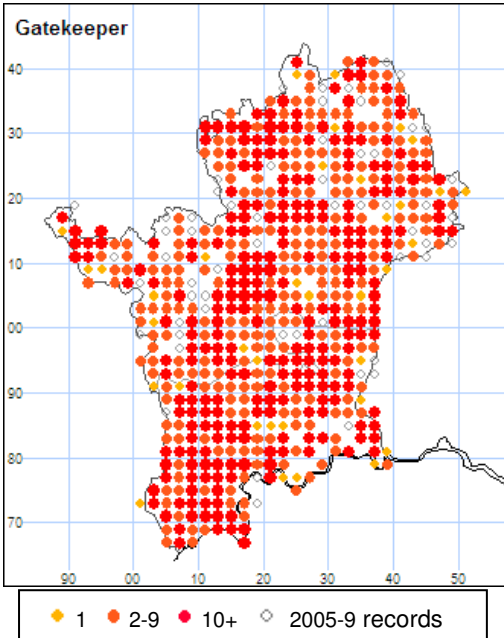


Photo Helen George

First: 29 June
Last: 18 Sep
Peak week: 23-29 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2013	71% (391)
2012	62% (308)
2005-9 mean	49%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	72
2012	79
2005-9 mean	123

Distribution change
Up 44% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 41% compared with 2005-2009

The Gatekeeper’s flight period was almost exactly as the longer term average, presumably as a later emerging species any delay caused by the poor winter/spring was balanced by the hot summer. However distribution increased both against 2012 and the longer term average but numbers seen were lower. Despite this the Gatekeeper was still a common butterfly during the summer, being especially attracted to bramble and marjoram flowers

Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

Widespread & Common

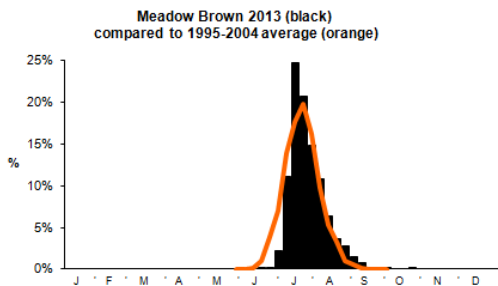
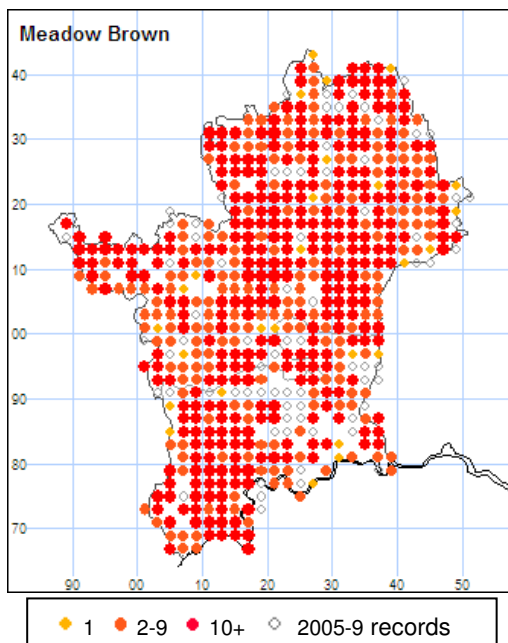


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 14 Jun

Last: 15 Oct

Peak week: 9 Jul-15 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2013	72% (395)
2012	62% (309)
2005-9 mean	56%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	262
2012	289
2005-9 mean	273

Distribution change
Up 29% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 4% compared with 2005-2009

Emerging two weeks earlier than the Gatekeeper this species did begin flying late but the flight pattern after this was very much as normal. Abundance is above and distribution very close to both 2012 and longer term, so this species seems to be looking stable. Looking at the distribution and abundance data together this is probably the commonest butterfly species in our area and can be expected to turn up in virtually any environment. The final record on 15th October at Hounslow Heath was two weeks later than any other sighting.

Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*

Increasing

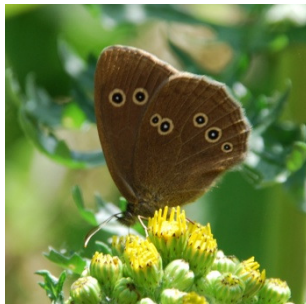
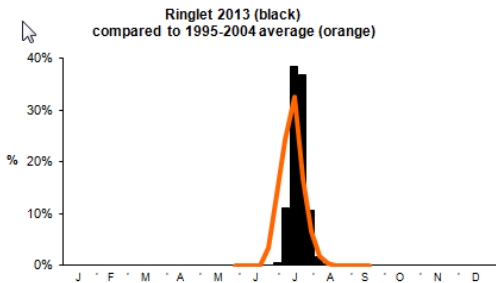
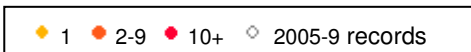
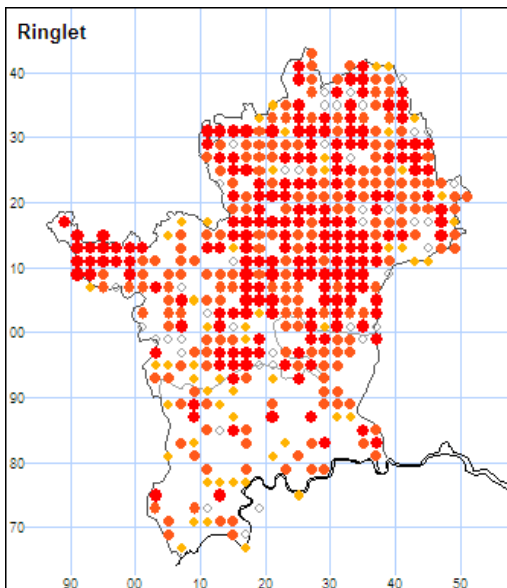


Photo Phil MacMurdie

First: 26 June

Last: 5 Sept

Peak week: 9-15 July



Distribution % squares	
2013	54% (296)
2012	43% (214)
2005-9 mean	25%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	102
2012	89
2005-9 mean	103

Distribution change
Up 116% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 1% compared with 2005-2009

Ringlet distribution has maintained its recent expansion and numbers were up from 2012, close to the longer term average. For the flight time emergence was very late, peaked quickly and finished close to normal. This species was at one time very much confined to rural areas but it has now moved very near to the centre of London. For instance Larissa Cooper reported on 17th July, "For the last 2 days we have sighted a Ringlet butterfly in the Wildlife Garden at the Natural History Museum SW7". Apart from the Chalkhill Blue the Ringlet is the species most likely to be encountered in huge numbers such as the 500+ Malcolm Hull noted at Aldbury Nowers on 6th July.

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Widespread

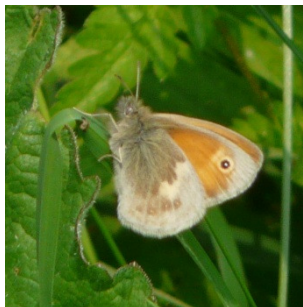
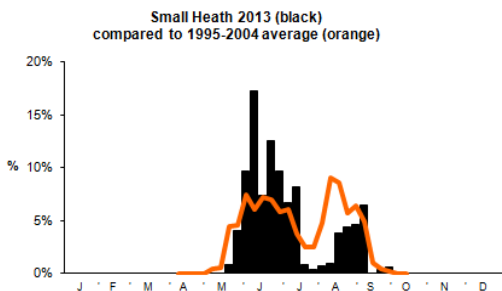
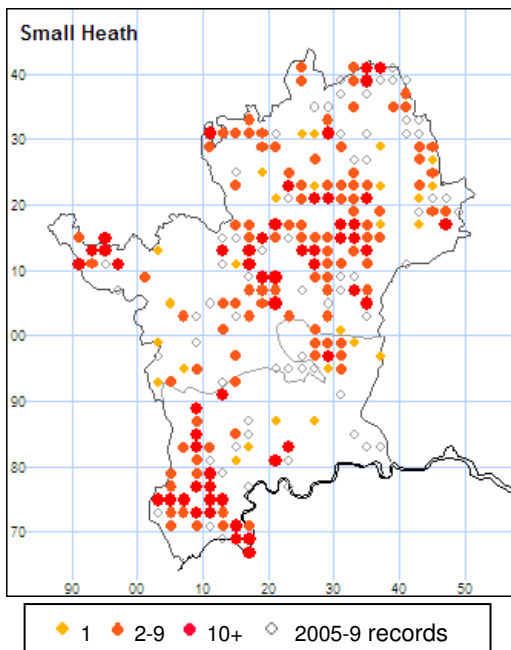


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 5 May

Last: 2 Oct

Peak week: 4-10 Jun



Distribution % squares	
2013	19% (106)
2012	18% (88)
2005-9 mean	14%

Abundance (transects)	
2013	33
2012	35
2005-9 mean	36

Distribution change
Up 35% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 9% compared with 2005-2009

As in 2012 there was a relatively small late summer brood in contrast to the longer term flight pattern. Like 2012, too, distribution and abundance were very similar. At some sites there was a definite change in fortunes, as John Moss noted on 22nd June, “on my Warren transect I recorded 21 Small Heath. Small Heaths seem to be thriving this year - I’ve already recorded many more than in the whole of last year”. Dave Miller made some interesting observations at Stanwell Moor on 4th September, “Small Heaths were more in evidence than a fortnight ago, the only species seen for which this was true. I saw one nectaring, during which it repeatedly fidgeted and flicked its wings open and closed, affording the unusual view of its upperside.”

RECORDERS - Many thanks to all who submitted records in 2013: Aaron, Roger Ackroyd, Ray Acreman, Catherine Adams, Matthew Adams, Paul Adams, Raymond Addley, Nigel Agar, Chris Aherne, Alicia Aimee, Alison Ainger, Isabella Aitken, Ruth Al-Balasmeh, Sonia Aldeaga, Colin Alderman, Claire Allen, **Emma Allen**, John Amatt, Sheena Anderson, Diane Andrews, Paul Andrews, John Angus, Ruth Arloff, Andrea Arthan, Denise Artus, Janet Ashpole, Karen Atkinson, Penny Atkinson, Miles Attenborough, Joanna Aumayer, Arthur Austin, Les Avey, Janine Avison, Colin Aylin, Lucy Azzaro, Genevieve Badia-Aylin, Glenn Baggott, Hilary Bailey, **Peter Bailey**, Emma Baker, Helen Baker, Tricia Baker, Tania Balfe, Mags Balfour, Celia Bangham, Doris Banks, Linda Banks, Martin Banthorpe, Sophie Barber, Max Barclay, Roger Bardell, Kevin Barker, Sharon Barker, Shirley Barker, Clair Barnes, Margaret Barnes, Marianne Barr, John Barrington, Phil Barron, Rose Barry, Laurence Barwell, Jeff Barwick, Claudia Bassi, Hannah Bassil, Chaz Batts, Daniel Baugh, Valerie Bawn, **Alan Beale**, Verena Beane, Suzanne Beard, Deborah Beasley, Richard Beasley, David Beattie, Hillee Bee, Yasminah Beebejeaun, **Carol Beeden**, **Dick Beeden**, Clive Bell, Colin Bell, Graham Bellamy, Rory Benning, Graham Benstead, Sue Benton, D. 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Tisdale, Richard Tomlinson, Keith Toogood, Elizabeth Towler, Su Towler, Paul Townsend, Tracey Trainor, Christopher Triplett, Cherry Trott, Frank Tuck, Judy Tucker, Anthony Turner, Ellie Turner, Nancy Turner, Maggie Tyler, Carole Tyrrell, Mairead Ulamoleka, Clare Underwood, Paul Unwin, Lorraine Vadham, Elizabeth Valentine, Sandy Varley, Stella Vaughan, **Gavin Vicary**, Kathy Vivian, Scott W, Michael Wadsworth, Mark Wakelinmar, Peter Waldron, Auriel Walker, Emma Walker, **Peter Walker**, Clare Waller, Christine Wallis, Jan Walton, Flora Ward, Roger Warne, Stuart Warner, Lenasha Warrenner, Stuart Warrington, Stephen Waters, Gemma Watkins, Bronwen Watson, Cliff Watson, Derek Watson, **Pat Watt**, Janet Watts, Anke Way, Eleanor Weaver, Martin Webb, Ann Weeks, James Weist, Simon Welander, Penelope Welch, Ellis Weller, Brian West, Giles Whalley, Chris Whately-Smith, David Wheatcroft, Birgitta Whitaker, Edwin White, James White, Nicole White, Robin White, **Keith Whitmore**, Hilary Whittington, Kate Whittington, Paul Why, Darci Wicklow, Christine Wicks, Janet Wiffen, Sylvia Wildey, Mark Wilkinson, Sarah Willett, Frances Williams, Jamie Williams, Joan Williams, **Leslie Williams**, Marie Williams, Robert Williams, S. Williams, Sally Williams, Steve Williams, Andrew Willis, Hugh Wilman, Rosemary Wilson, Wendy Wilson, **Barbara Wilton**, Barbie Wimbury, Charlotte Wims, Natalie Windsor, Julie Winstone, Thelma Winyard, Julie Wise, Gary Witham, David Withers, **Andrew Wood**, Jane Wood, Kate Wood, Terence Wood, Terry Wood, Christopher Woodham, Annie Woodhouse, Flavia Woodhouse, Angela Woods, Alan Woolard, Martin Woolard, Margaret Woollven, Rosemary Wootten, Hilary Wootton, John Worcester, Tad Woroniecki, Kevin Wright, Trevor Wyatt, Moira Wymer, Sarah Wyn-Jones, Tina Yates, Ruth Yeeles, Art Young, Teri Young,

Recorders in bold undertook one or more transect walks during the year. Detailed results from our 50+ regularly walked Butterfly Transects can be found at our branch website or are available in print from Andrew Wood

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