

# Hertfordshire & Middlesex Butterflies 2019



Butterfly  
Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

Andrew Wood

February 2020

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*Cover Photo: Dark Green Fritillary at Church Hill, Therfield Heath by Richard Norris*

## Introduction

2019 had an exceptionally mild and sunny February which resulted in many sightings. Late March was mild, but it was followed by an April which began cool but was notably warm towards the end. The summer weather from late June through to late August was very warm and September was generally dry and mild, but the autumn was rather dull and cool.

2487 recorders submitted 41083 records compared to 47301 records in 2018. About 25% of these were from the three weeks in the summer during the Big Butterfly Count. As with any citizen science project there are some records that cannot be accepted but many of them help us to fill in gaps in the distribution of many species, particularly in urban areas, of which we have many.

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

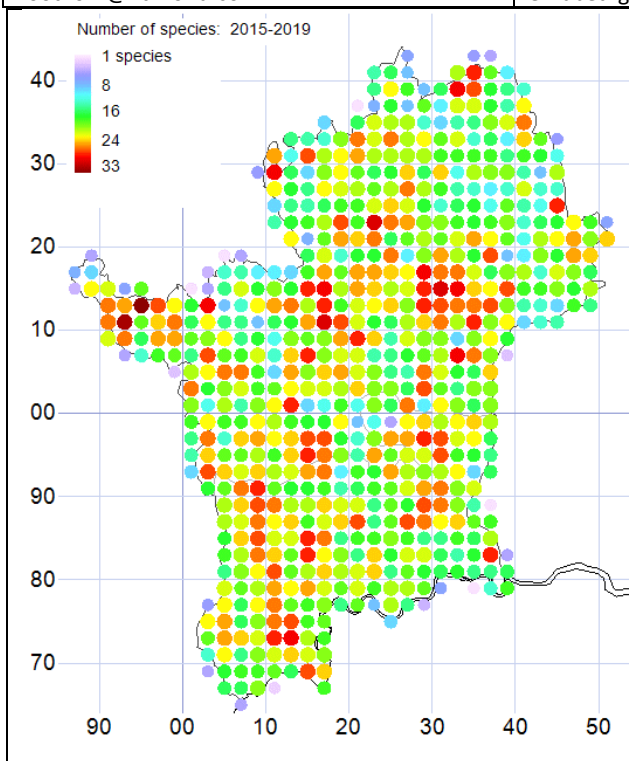
Our branch website <http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/> has a very active sightings page and we welcome all submissions to this too. Anything, once verified, sent there or submitted via the 'iRecord' app is added to the branch database and used in this report

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**Recording Effort**

In 2019 we received records from 617 squares in our area. This means we have records from 683 squares for 2015-2019 survey period. This map shows the number of species recorded for each square. This is the final year of the 5-year survey and this booklet will act as a supplement to the 2016 book on the region's butterflies (see back cover). An extra table for each species shows abundance and distribution averages for 2015-2019 and the previous 5-year period. Generally, this shows drops in abundance but stability or increase in distribution. The latter may partly reflect more recorder effort rather than a real improvement.

**Species not included in the main section****Adonis Blue *Polyommatus bellargus***

Unrecorded in Hertfordshire since 1959, we received first reports of one at Church Hill, Therfield Heath on 20 Aug, many other records were received up to 8 September, with a likely total of around 25-30 adults in flight at the peak. This was almost certainly an undocumented release, possibly of pupae.



Photo: Andrew Wood

**Camberwell Beauty *Nymphalis antiopa***

Winchmore Hill (9 Mar) and Muswell Hill (24 Mar), both north London and likely to be releases as there is no other evidence of migration of this species at that time.

**Queen of Spain Fritillary *Issoria lathonia***

One at Patmore Heath in north east Hertfordshire on 20 Aug - origin unknown.

A key to the main species accounts that follow can be found on the back cover

Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages*

Restricted and rare

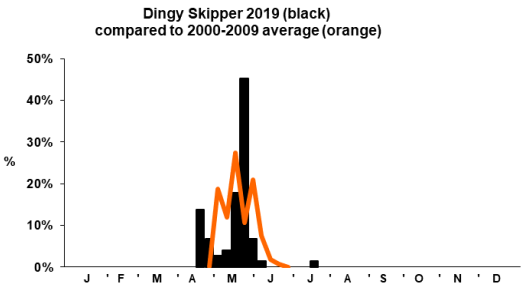
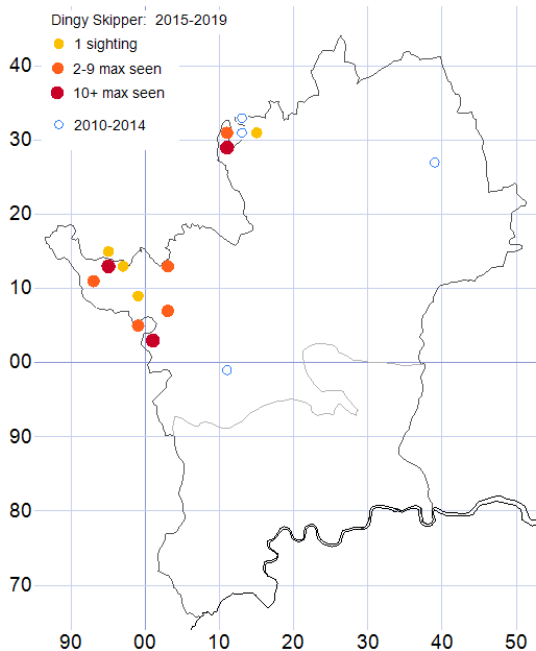


Photo Chris Benton



**First:** 22 Apr  
**Last:** 4 Aug  
**Peak week:** 14-20 May

Distribution % squares	
2019	1% (9)
2018	1% (5)
2010-14 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	12
2018	9
2010-14 mean	13

Distribution change
Unchanged compared with 2010-2014

Abundance change
Down 8% compared with 2010-2014

The increase in distribution this year relates to observations at several sites right on the border with Buckinghamshire. The main centres for this butterfly remain Hexton Chalk Pit, (all the largest counts were from here), Aldbury Nowers and Bovingdon Brickworks. There was only one second brood record on 4 Aug from the same site near Tring as in 2018. Abundance increased this year, almost back to the longer-term mean, though this is only based on two transects where this species occurs. The first flight date was over 3 weeks earlier than in 2018.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	1%	1%	Stable
Abundance (transects)	13	9	Down 31%

# Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*

Restricted & rare

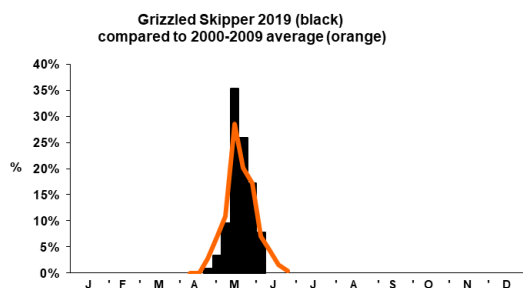
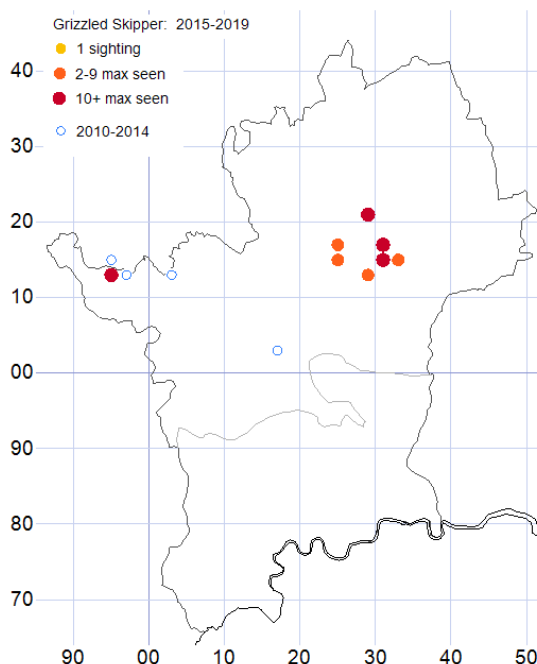


Photo Chris Benton



**First:** 21 Apr

**Last:** 3 Jun

**Peak week:** 7-13 May

## Distribution % squares

2019	1% (6)
2018	1% (6)
2010-14 mean	1%

## Abundance (transects)

2019	7
2018	11
2010-14 mean	21

## Distribution change

Unchanged compared with 2010-2014

## Abundance change

Down 67% compared with 2010-2014

The distribution of the Grizzled Skipper was unchanged in 2019, however the abundance fell sharply from last year back to near 2017s which was already much lower than the longer-term average. Double figure roost counts were achieved at two different sites. The mild spring led to a much earlier date of first emergence, but the flight period still lasted into early June.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	1%	1%	Stable
Abundance (transects)	21	8	Down 62%

Essex Skipper *Thymelicus lineola*

Widespread but declining

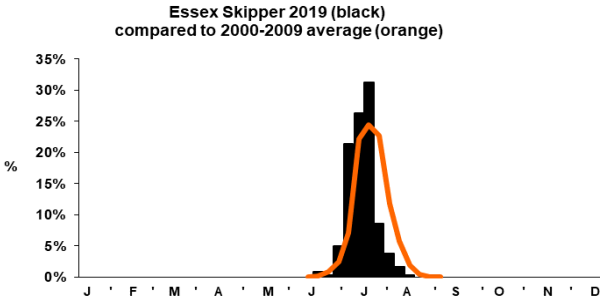


Photo Dave Miller

First: 17 Jun

Last: 21 Aug

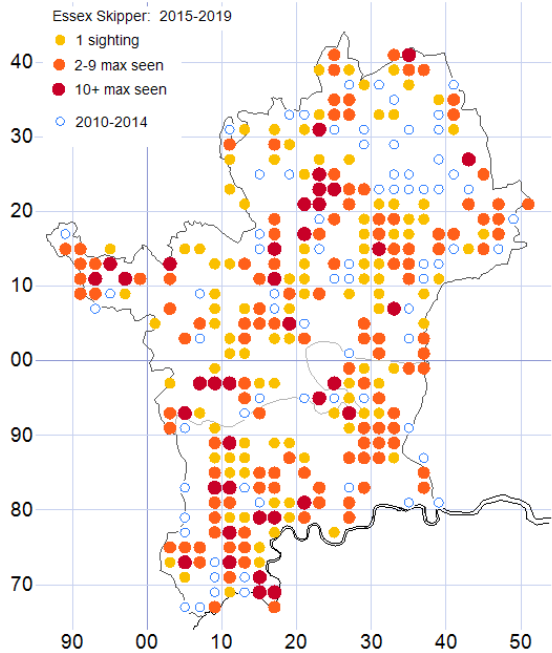
Peak week: 16-22 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	16% (100)
2018	14% (69)
2010-14 mean	14%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	11
2018	8
2010-14 mean	13

Distribution change	
Up 28% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Down 15% compared with 2010-2014	



A recovery in distribution and abundance since last year, meaning that it has gone some of the way back to the better figures of 2017. This illustrates how comparing annual changes, as opposed to longer term trends can make it difficult to draw firm conclusions over a species. Virtually all the records were of ones or twos, probably because of the difficulty of accurately identifying this species meaning that many had to be recorded as a Small/Essex Skipper aggregate, those records are not mapped or used in species analysis.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	14%	17%	Up 21%
Abundance (transects)	13	10	Down 23%



Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris*

Widespread but declining

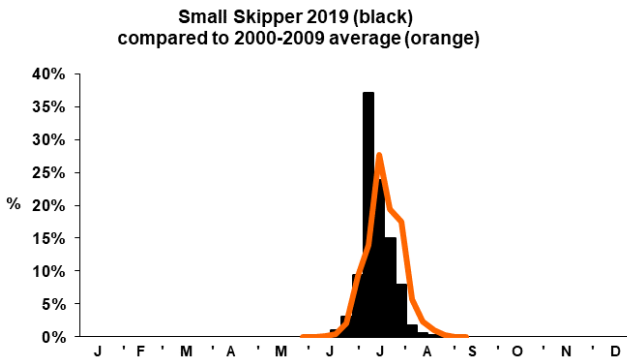
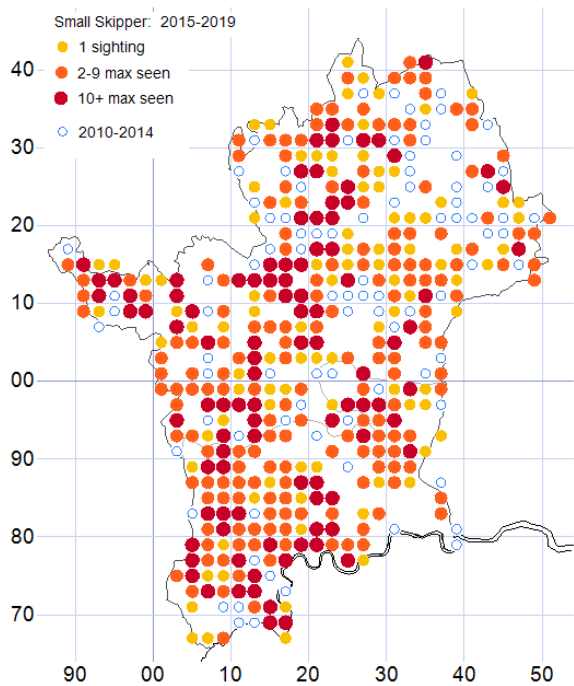


Photo Dave Miller



**First:** 9 Jun  
**Last:** 21 Aug  
**Peak week:** 2-8 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	25% (152)
2018	23% (144)
2010-14 mean	25%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	25
2018	15
2010-14 mean	25

Distribution change
Unchanged compared with 2010-2014

Abundance change
Unchanged compared with 2010-2014

A slight improvement over 2018 with abundance and distribution both matching the longer-term means. The peak flight week was noticeably ahead of the average, reflecting the mild spring conditions. The map suggests that this species is much better distributed across the western halves of both Hertfordshire and Middlesex, in arable north east Hertfordshire there are many squares where it was recorded in 2010-2014 but recently seemingly absent

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	25%	20%	Down 20%
Abundance (transects)	25	8	Down 68%

# Large Skipper *Ochlodes sylvanus*

Widespread but declining

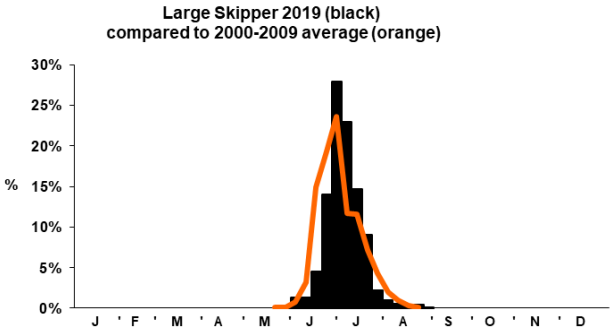
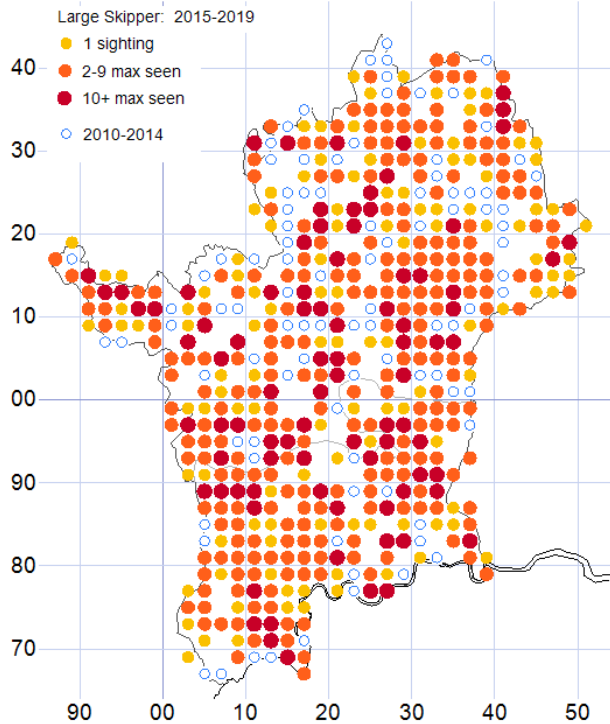


Photo Dave Miller



Very little change from last year, meaning that there is still a downward trend for this species. It emerged a week earlier than 2018 and flew almost to the end of August, this latter date probably reflecting the warmer conditions in late August this year. However, its peak flight week was very much on the longer-term average. Unlike the smaller golden skippers, it seems to be holding on better in the eastern half of Hertfordshire

**First:** 20 May  
**Last:** 28 Aug  
**Peak week:** 25 Jun 1 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	30% (183)
2018	29% (177)
2010-14 mean	40%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	19
2018	20
2010-14 mean	29

Distribution change	
Down 25% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Down 34% compared with 2010-2014	

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	40%	35%	Down 13%
Abundance (transects)	29	20	Down 31%



# Orange Tip *Anthocharis cardamines*

Widespread & Common

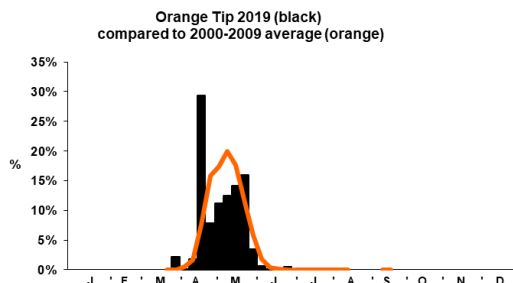
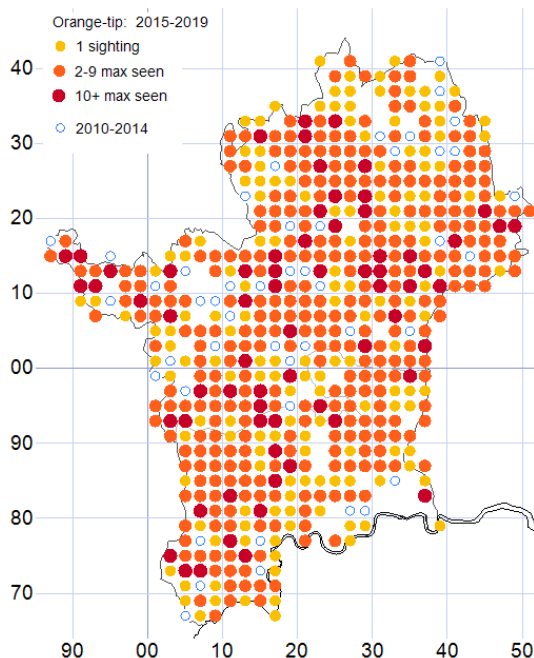


Photo Andrew Wood



**First:** 23 Mar

**Last:** 20 Jun

**Peak week:** 16-22 Apr

## Distribution % squares

2019	42% (260)
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2018	42% (263)
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2010-14 mean	42%
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## Abundance (transects)

2019	18
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2018	18
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2010-14 mean	21
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## Distribution change

No change compared with 2010-2014

## Abundance change

Down 14% compared with 2010-2014

Remarkably there were 35 records of this species from March, doubtless a consequence of the mild early spring. There were few records after the first week of June. Judged by the number of larval records it was a good year for breeding so let's hope that bodes well for 2020. Overall abundance and distribution were little changed both from last year and the longer-term pattern. The illustration above shows the female which has no orange on the wings.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	42%	42%	Stable
Abundance (transects)	21	16	Down 24%

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Widespread & common

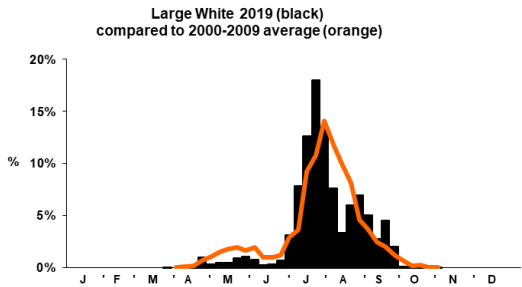
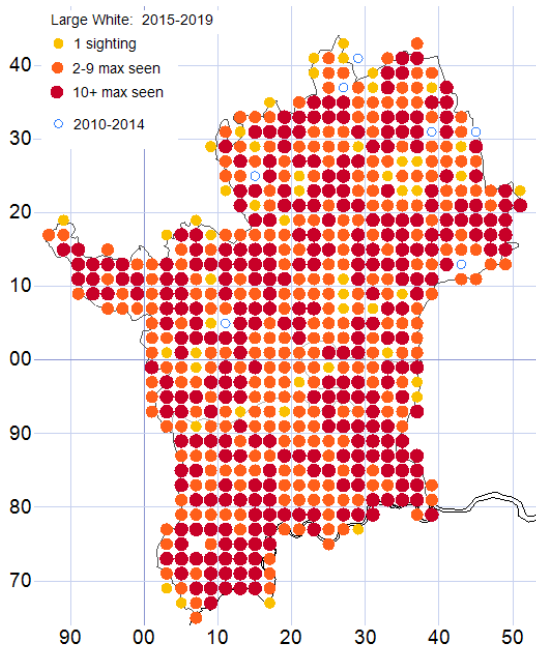


Photo Andrew Wood



**First:** 21 Mar  
**Last:** 22 Oct  
**Peak week:** 16-22 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	74% (458)
2018	82% (511)
2010-14 mean	67%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	39
2018	78
2010-14 mean	38

Distribution change	
Up 10% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Up 2% compared with 2010-2014	

It wasn't present at the huge levels seen last year, but it was still very common. Interestingly the peak flight week was a week later than last year, despite the initial flight date being almost four weeks earlier. A second, but smaller peak in August may indicate some migrant activity. Dave Miller noted that when not feeding at flowers, "they tend to be an arboreal species, spending their time cruising along woodland fringes 5 or 6 metres up, and stopping to bask in the higher foliage where they also appear to roost"

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	67%	77%	Up 14%
Abundance (transects)	38	47	Up 19%

## Small White *Pieris rapae*

Widespread & common

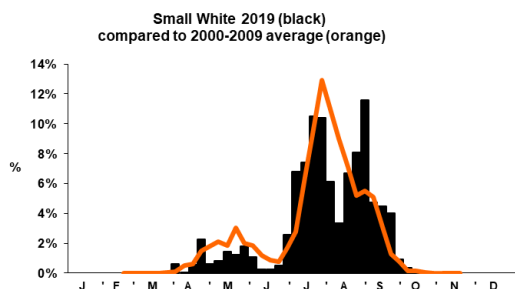
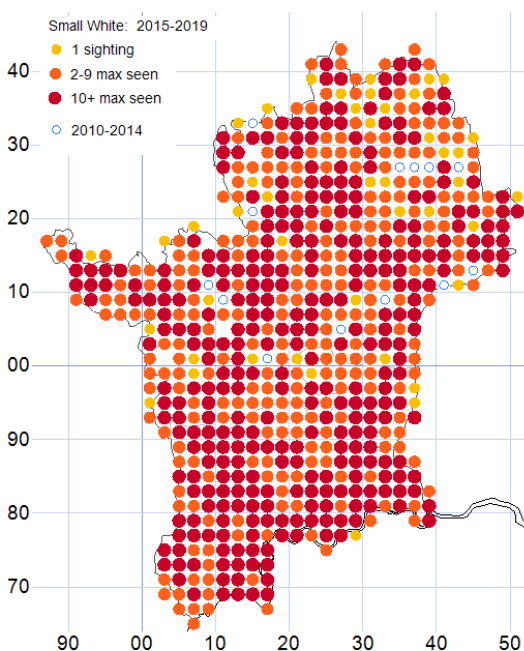


Photo Andrew Wood



**First:** 25 Feb

**Last:** 18 Oct

**Peak week:** 27 Aug-2 Sep

### Distribution % squares

2019	82% (508)
2018	84% (523)
2010-14 mean	73%

### Abundance (transects)

2019	59
2018	106
2010-14 mean	65

### Distribution change

Up 12% compared with 2010-2014

### Abundance change

Down 9% compared with 2010-2014

Searching in north east Hertfordshire filled in some empty squares for this very well distributed butterfly and this accounts for, at least, some of the increase in the distribution. However the huge numbers seen last year were not repeated as they fell back by almost half to slightly under the longer-term average. Despite this the Small White is still one of our most common species. The flight period chart is interesting as it shows two distinct and almost equal summer peaks, as if there had been an extra generation.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	73%	80%	Up 9%
Abundance (transects)	65	64	Down 2%

Green-veined White *Pieris napi*

Widespread & common

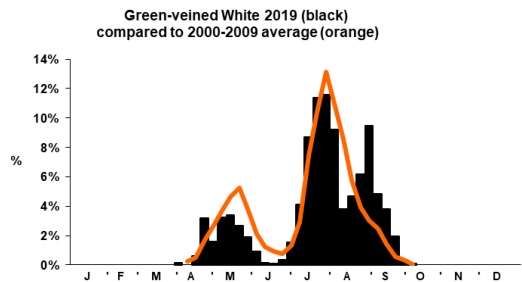
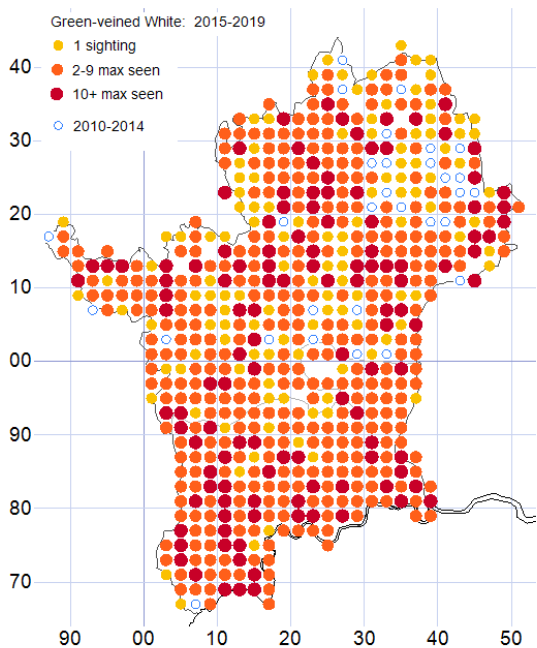


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 23 Mar  
Last: 4 Oct  
Peak week: 23-29 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2019	56% (346)
2018	68% (421)
2010-14 mean	52%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	25
2018	62
2010-14 mean	51

Distribution change	
Up 8% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Down 50% compared with 2010-2014	

Not such a good year for this species compared to the other whites. Numbers dropped off compared to last year and the longer-term average, while the number and proportion of recorded squares saw a large fall. Interestingly it shows the same flight pattern with an extra early September peak as the Small White

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	52%	58%	Up 12%
Abundance (transects)	51	38	Down 25%

# Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus*

Less common migrant

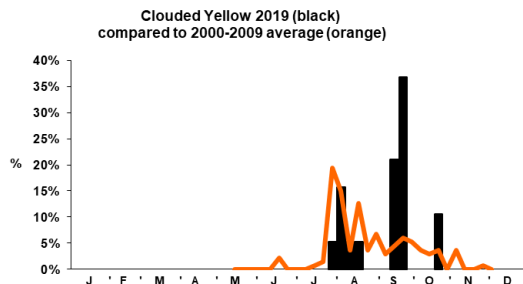
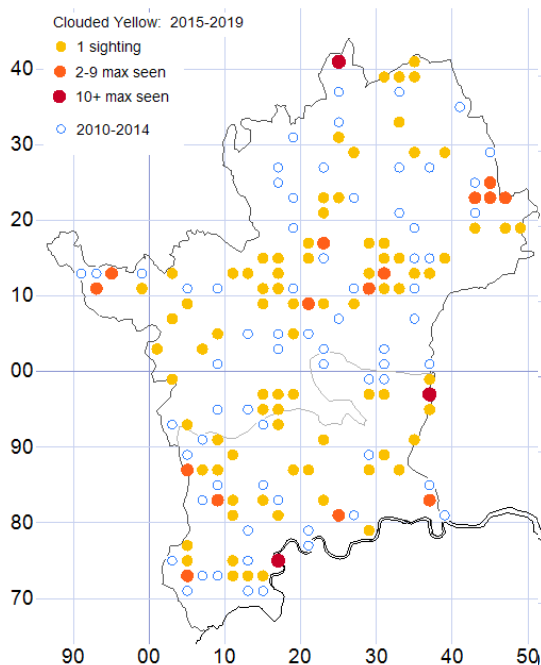


Photo Dave Miller



**First:** 29 Jul  
**Last:** 23 Sep  
**Peak week:** 17-23 Sep

## Distribution % squares

2019	3% (17)
2018	6% (37)
2010-14 mean	5%

## Abundance (transects)

2019	1
2018	2
2010-14 mean	2

## Distribution change

Down 40% compared with 2010-2014

## Abundance change

Down 50% compared with 2010-2014

There was little sign of this migrant butterfly, making it quite an unusual sight in 2019 with only 18 records spread across 17 different grid squares. Only two of these were in Middlesex. The peak, based, of course, on only a few records was almost seven weeks later than 2018.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	5%	4%	Down 20%
Abundance (transects)	2	1	Down 50%

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*

Widespread

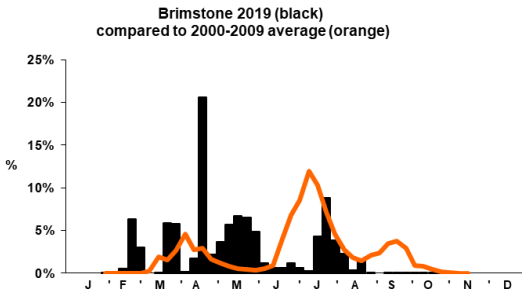
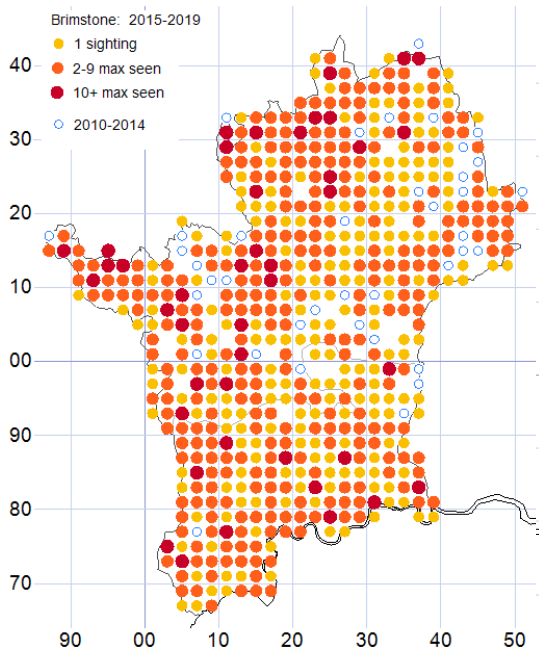


Photo Dave Miller



**First:** 2 Feb  
**Last:** 22 Oct  
**Peak week:** 16-22 Apr

Distribution % squares	
2019	56% (346)
2018	52% (326))
2010-14 mean	39%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	19
2018	20
2010-14 mean	21

Distribution change	
Up 37% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Down 10% compared with 2010-2014	

As consistent as ever, albeit with a noticeable increase in distribution. The rather disjointed flight pattern in the spring reflects the several early periods of mild weather we enjoyed. Despite this, the summer emergence was rather later than the longer-term pattern.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	39%	53%	Up 26%
Abundance (transects)	21	19	Down 10%



## Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

Widespread & common

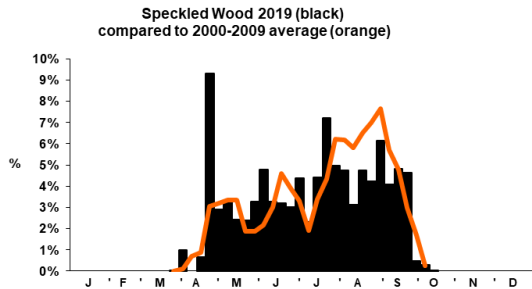
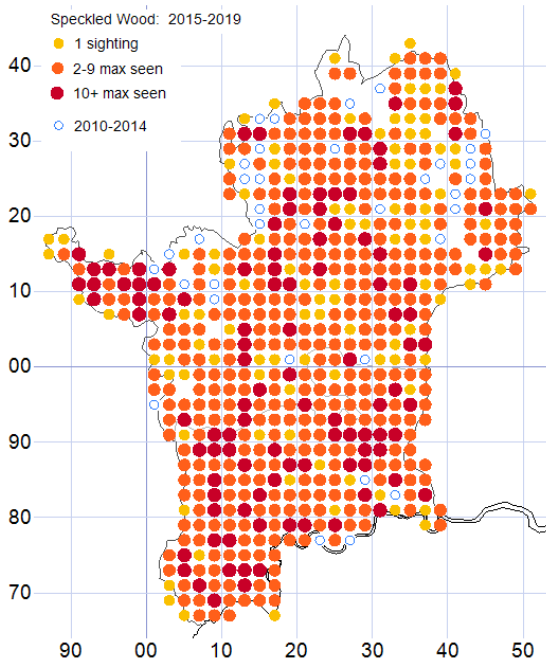


Photo Chris Benton

**First:** 24 Mar

**Last:** 16 Oct

**Peak week:** 16-22 Apr



### Distribution % squares

2019	57% (351)
2018	70% (423)
2010-14 mean	60%

### Abundance (transects)

2019	38
2018	67
2010-14 mean	58

### Distribution change

Down 5% compared with  
2010-2014

### Abundance change

Down 32% compared with  
2010-2014

Not the best of years for the Speckled Wood. This is another species with an early spring emergence for 2019, but unusually the peak was early in the year rather than in late summer as is normally the case. Overall numbers and distribution were down. There were only five transect walks where over 20 were recorded and only one with over 30. These are unusually low numbers.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	60%	61%	Up 2%
Abundance (transects)	91	90	Down 1%

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Widespread

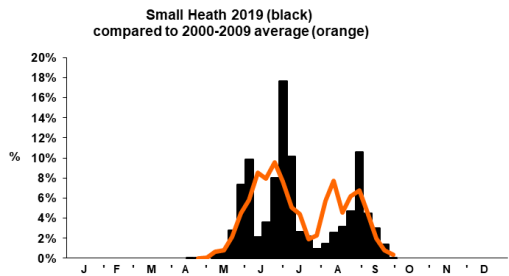
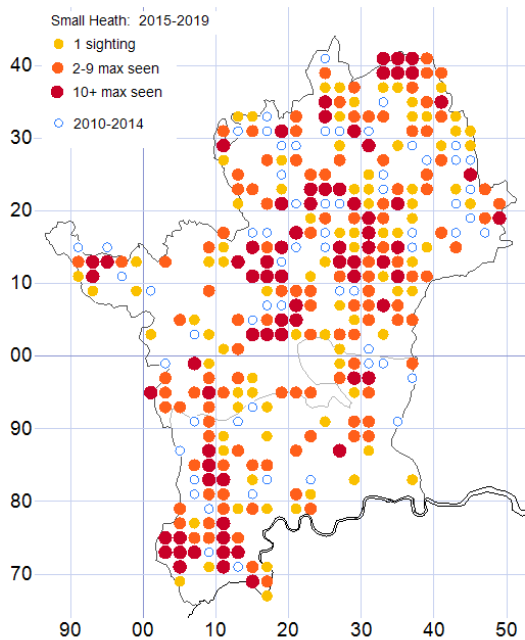


Photo Peter Tallantire



First: 15 Apr

Last: 28 Sep

Peak week: 25 Jun- 1 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	26% (158)
2018	23% (145)
2010-14 mean	17%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	52
2018	63
2010-14 mean	38

Distribution change	
Up 51% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Up 35% compared with 2010-2014	

Targeted searching in north east Hertfordshire is responsible for most of the increase in abundance over last year. It is good to find that it is present in a good number of the squares in this intensively farmed area. Numbers were down a little on last year but still well ahead of longer-term trends. 15 April is a very early date for the start of the flight period. However, it peaked slightly later than the longer-term pattern.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	17%	20%	Up 17%
Abundance (transects)	38	42	Up 11%

# Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*

Widespread & Common

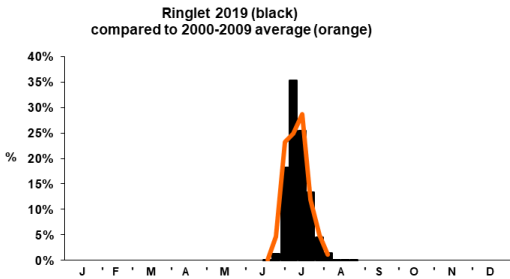
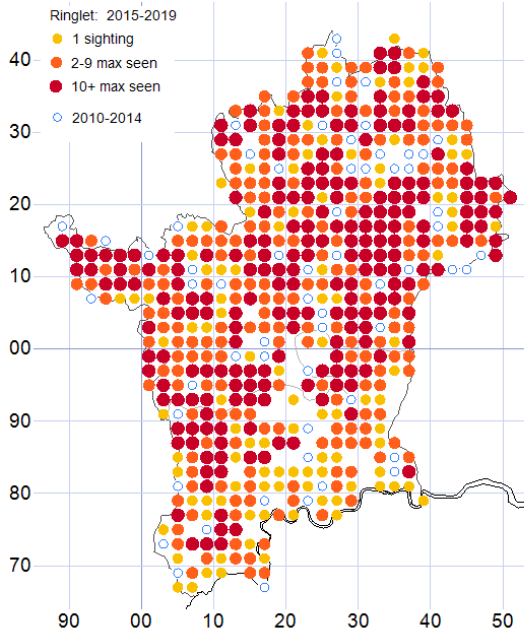


Photo Dave Miller

First: 14 Jun

Last: 31 Aug

Peak week: 2-7 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2019	48% (294)
2018	49% (302)
2010-14 mean	44%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	102
2018	100
2010-14 mean	122

Distribution change
Up 9% compared with 2010-2014

Abundance change
Down 17% compared with 2010-2014

For the third year running there has been little major change in the fortunes of this species. It peaked slightly earlier than the long term, but a week later than 2018. Every count of over 100 came from woodland sites where a combination of some degree of shade and damp grassland creates very favourable conditions for this species, especially in dry years. At Balls Wood a count of 514 in 45 minutes accounted for over 25% of the individual butterflies seen in 26 weeks of walks.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	44%	45%	Up 2%
Abundance (transects)	122	108	Down 11%

# Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

Widespread & Common

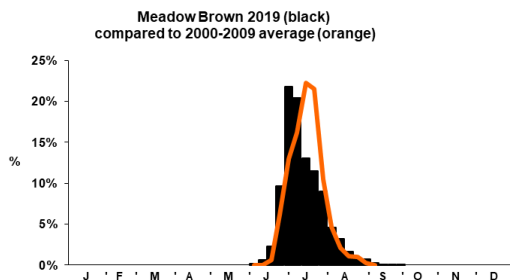
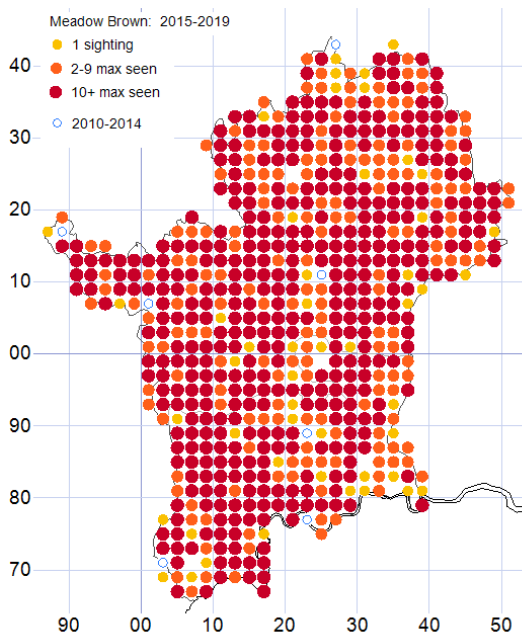


Photo Chris Benton



**First:** 30 May

**Last:** 27 Sep

**Peak week:** 25 Jun - 1 Jul

## Distribution % squares

2019	74% (455)
2018	69% (426)
2010-14 mean	63%

## Abundance (transects)

2019	440
2018	334
2010-14 mean	287

## Distribution change

Up 14% compared with 2010-2014

## Abundance change

Up 53% compared with 2010-2014

Concentrating on the squares unrecorded in the first four years of this survey period has allowed virtually all the empty squares on the map to be filled and this accounts for the increase in distribution in 2019. The abundance totals are well up on the last two years too. All in all, a good year for this species. The peak flight week was again well ahead of the longer-term trend.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	63%	68%	Up 8%
Abundance (transects)	287	307	Up 7%

Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

Widespread & common

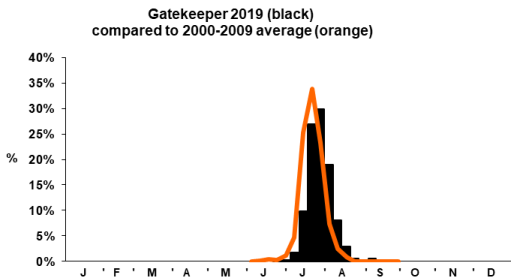
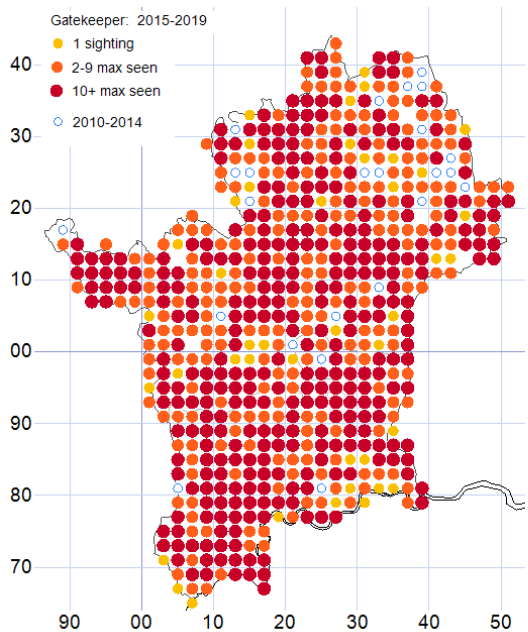


Photo Dave Miller



First: 15 Jun  
Last: 8 Sep  
Peak week: 23-29 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	73% (452)
2018	68% (420)
2010-14 mean	65%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	104
2018	76
2010-14 mean	91

Distribution change	
Up 13% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Up 15% compared with 2010-2014	

Last year’s drops were reversed in 2019 and this species is currently thriving. However, the flight period was later than the longer-term trends, despite a very early start date for a species often not seen until early July.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	65%	70%	Up 8%
Abundance (transects)	91	85	Down 6%

Marbled White *Melanargia galathea*

Widespread

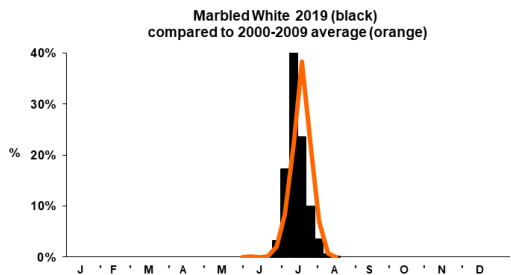
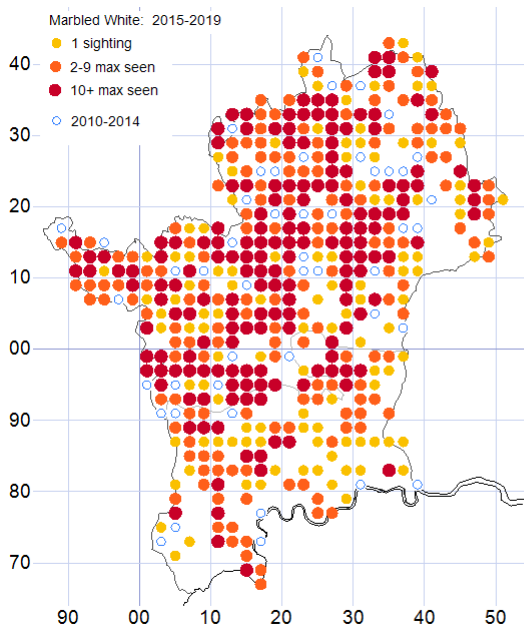


Photo Dave Miller



First: 14 Jun

Last: 26 Aug

Peak week: 2-8 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	43% (263)
2018	34% (214)
2010-14 mean	26%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	141
2018	87
2010-14 mean	91

Distribution change	
Up 66% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Up 55% compared with 2010-2014	

A continuing success story in our area with many more squares occupied at higher numbers than both 2018 and further into the past. This butterfly is now widespread over both counties. There were several reports of Marbled Whites turning up for the first time in suburban gardens.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	26%	34%	Up 31%
Abundance (transects)	91	90	Down 1%



Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*

Rare

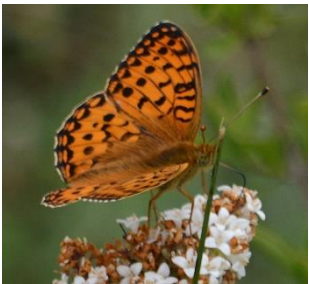
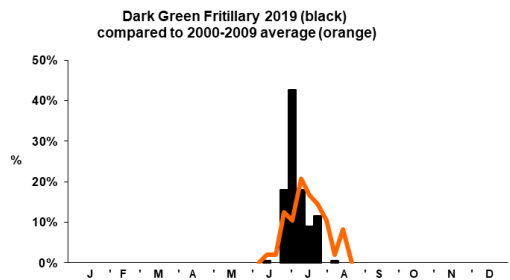
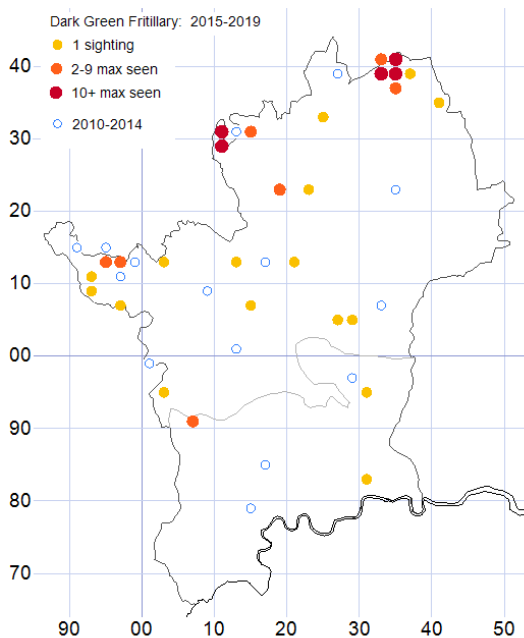


Photo Richard Norris



First: 16 Jun

Last: 12 Aug

Peak week: 2-8 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	1% (7)
2018	2% (11)
2010-14 mean	2%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	10
2018	7
2010-14 mean	20

Distribution change	
Down 50% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Down 50% compared with 2010-2014	

Not too much should be read into the distribution and abundance changes as they are based on a small sample. The main sites are at Therfield Heath, Hexton Chalk Pit and Aldbury Nowers, showing its close association with chalk and it is this that will probably prevent its becoming really widespread in Hertfordshire. Totals of over 30 were recorded at both Therfield Heath and Hexton Chalk Pit so where it does occur it can be seen in some numbers in favourable conditions.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	2%	2%	Stable
Abundance (transects)	20	5	Down 75%

## Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia*

Locally common and spreading

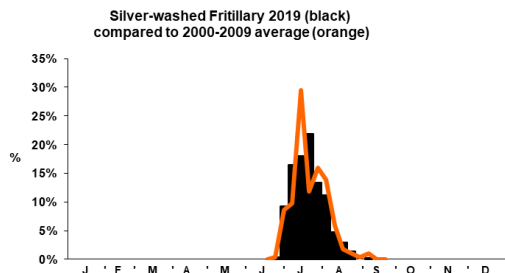
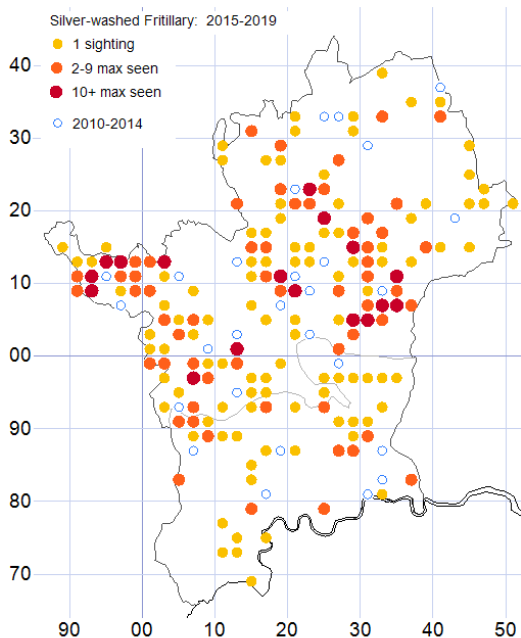


Photo Chris Benton



**First:** 16 Jun

**Last:** 26 Sep

**Peak week:** 16-22 July

### Distribution % squares

2019	12% (74)
2018	15% (91)
2010-14 mean	6%

### Abundance (transects)

2019	13
2018	14
2010-14 mean	13

### Distribution change

Up 100% compared with 2010-2014

### Abundance change

Unchanged compared with 2010-2014

The number of recorded sites was lower than 2018, but most woodlands of any size seem likely to support this magnificent butterfly and it is now increasingly being recorded at garden buddleias as well. On 4 Jul Chris Newman reported, "at Bricket Wood Common I saw what looked like a female, except it looked grey-brown rather than orangey-brown. I found that it was the *valezina* form. Walking home 2½ hours after I first spotted her, she was still in the same area, probably egg-laying on an ash tree,"

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	6%	11%	Up 80%
Abundance (transects)	13	14	Up 8%

# White Admiral *Limenithis camilla*

Declining

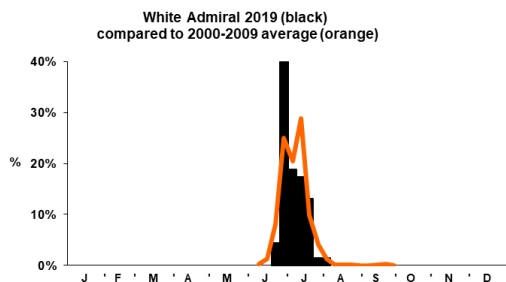
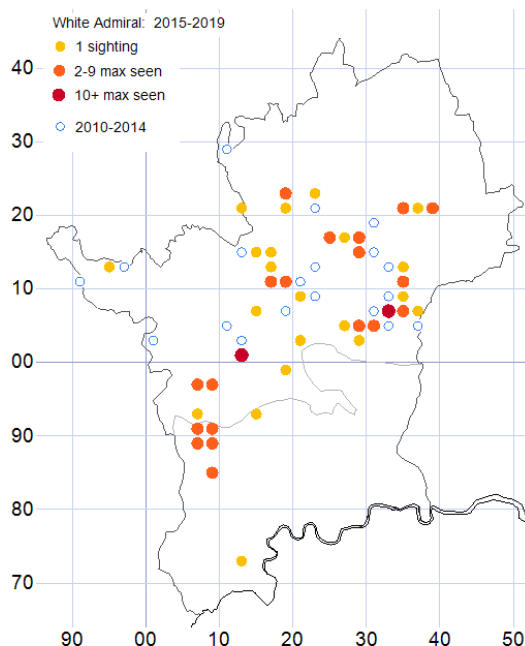


Photo Chris Benton



**First:** 23 Jun

**Last:** 1 Aug

**Peak week:** 25 Jun – 1 Jul

## Distribution % squares

2019	2% (14)
2018	3% (21)
2010-14 mean	3%

## Abundance (transects)

2019	3
2018	5
2010-14 mean	15

## Distribution change

Down 33% compared with 2010-2014

## Abundance change

Down 80% compared with 2010-2014

The worrying decline of this butterfly, unfortunately continued in 2019. What is causing this is not clear – it is not just a local issue. The highest counts were of six individuals, most records were just one or two, the abundance drop compared to 2010-2014 is stark. There were no records from outside the core woodland sites in south Hertfordshire and north-west Middlesex.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	3%	3%	Stable
Abundance (transects)	15	5	Down 67%

# Purple Emperor *Apatura iris*

Local and increasing in woodland

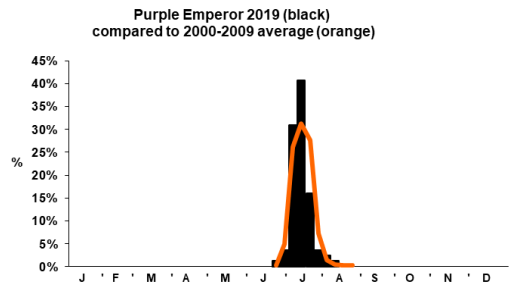
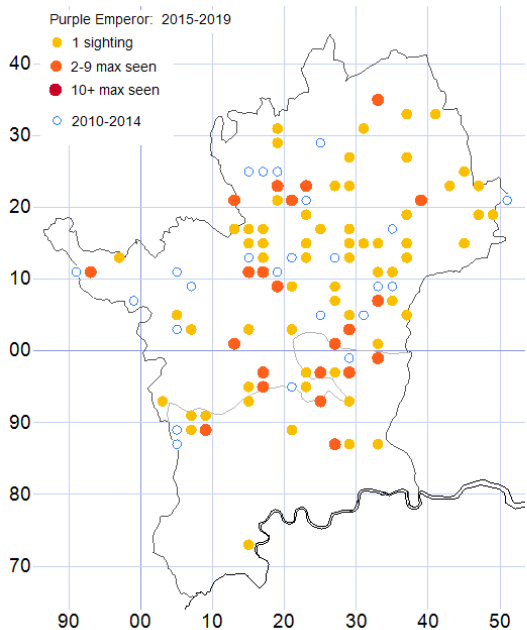


Photo Andrew Grieve



First 22 Jun

Last 11 Aug

Peak week: 9-15 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	5% (25)
2018	8% (48)
2010-14 mean	4%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	2
2018	2
2010-14 mean	2

Distribution change
Up by 25% since 2010-2014

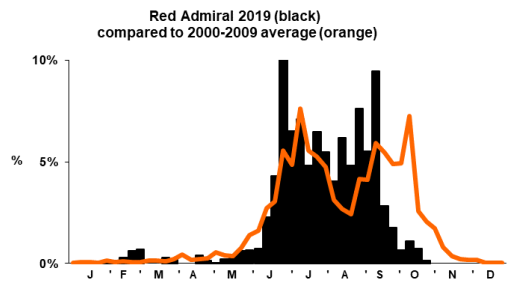
Abundance change
Too little data to calculate

A big drop in recorded sites but it still turns up at new locations, often in gardens or outhouses to the surprise of the occupants. Examples this year included at Westmill in north east Hertfordshire, Essendon and Balls Park in east Hertfordshire. However it has yet to become widespread in the urban and suburban areas of North London. In this survey period this butterfly, only recently considered very rare, was seen in twice as many squares as the White Admiral!

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	4%	5%	Up 25%
Abundance (transects)	2	1	Down 50%

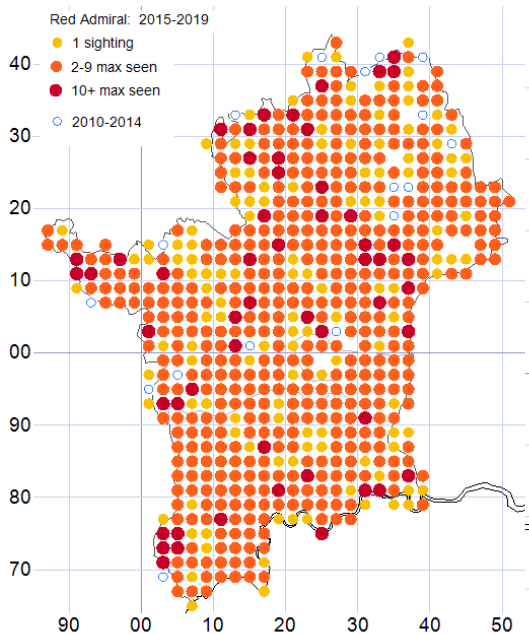
Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Common migrant/Resident



Photo

Andrew Wood



First: 18 Jan  
Last: 7 Dec  
Peak week: 25 Jun-1 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	76% (470)
2018	58% (360)
2010-14 mean	59%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	11
2018	5
2010-14 mean	11

Distribution change
Up 29% compared with 2010-2014

Abundance change
Unchanged compared with 2010-2014

The Red Admiral had a good year, the late June peak probably represents primary immigration. However they were thin on the ground in the autumn with few records beyond the end of September rather than being a common autumn sight on ivy. Was this a function of poor breeding success, lack of later migration, the weather, or a combination of all of these?

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	59%	68%	Up 15%
Abundance (transects)	11	9	Down 18%

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

Variable migrant

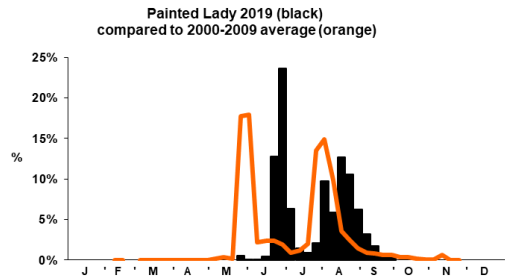
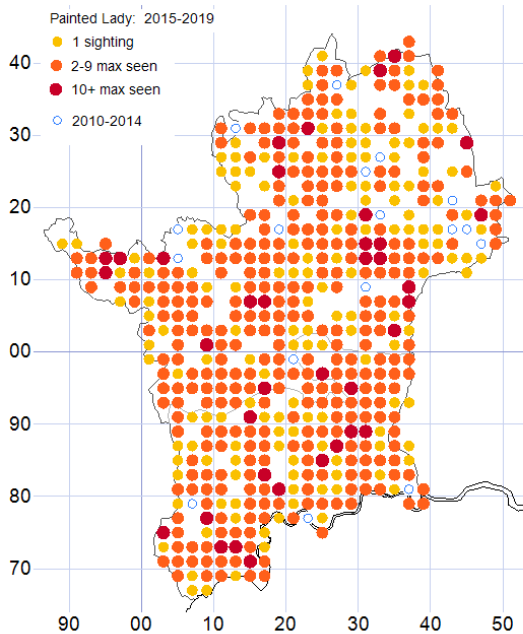


Photo Chris Benton



**First:** 23 Feb  
**Last:** 22 Oct  
**Peak week:** 25 Jun-1 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	66% (408)
2018	40% (240)
2010-14 mean	17%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	9
2018	2
2010-14 mean	4

Distribution change
Up 390% compared with 2010-2014

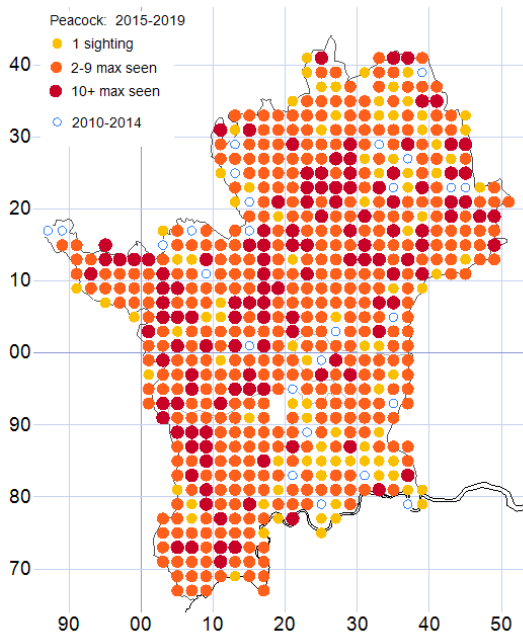
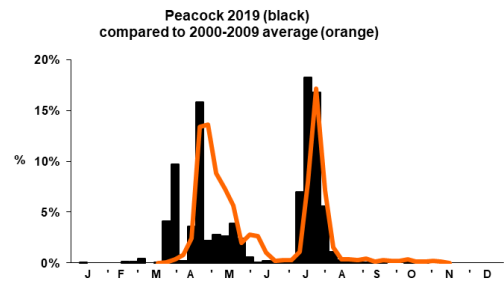
Abundance change
Up 125% compared with 2010-2014

2019 will go down nationally as a Painted Lady year but much migration and dispersal was across north east England and Scotland with rather more limited penetration of our part of the south-east. Having said that they were seen in many more places and in greater numbers than usual. The abundance figure of 9 is the highest since the 2009 Painted Lady year but the difference in scale of that year is shown by its index of 31.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	17%	43%	Up 153%
Abundance (transects)	2	4	Up 100%



Peacock *Inachis io*



Common & Widespread



Photo Chris Benton

First: 8 Jan

Last: 13 Nov

Peak week: 16-22 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	73% (449)
2018	52% (324)
2010-14 mean	62%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	23
2018	11
2010-14 mean	27

Distribution change	
Up 13% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Down 14% compared with 2010-2014	

The two early high points reflect concentrated emergence from hibernation in spells of good early spring weather. These over wintering adults bred to produce the summer generation slightly earlier than the longer-term pattern and by mid August virtually all of them had gone into hibernation.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	62%	63%	Up 2%
Abundance (transects)	27	20	Down 26%

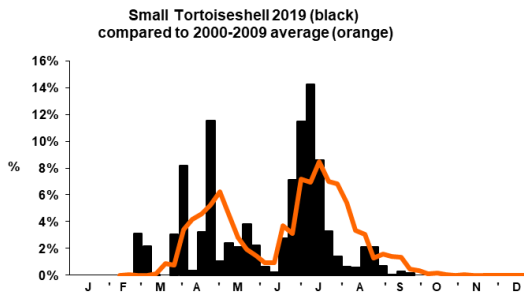
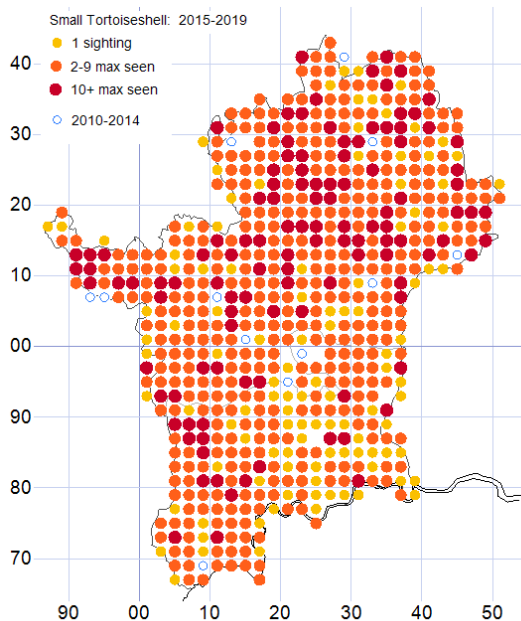


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 14 Feb

Last: 23 Dec

Peak week: 2-8 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	66% (410)
2018	58% (361)
2010-14 mean	53%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	12
2018	12
2010-14 mean	24

Distribution change	
Up 25% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Down 50% compared with 2010-2014	

Seen widely but the numbers were as low as last year. The pattern of emergence from hibernation and summer entry into hibernation in his garden shed has been monitored by Malcolm Hull, he reported, “The majority of the first-generation individuals went into hibernation before the end of July. This year there was a small second generation, which entered hibernation during late August and September. By October the total number of hibernators was 35, compared to just 13 the previous winter”.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	53%	62%	Up 17%
Abundance (transects)	24	19	Down 21%

Comma *Polygonia c-album*

Common & widespread

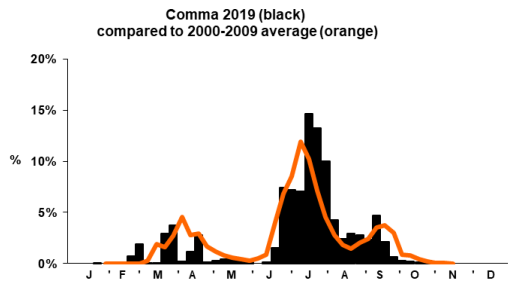
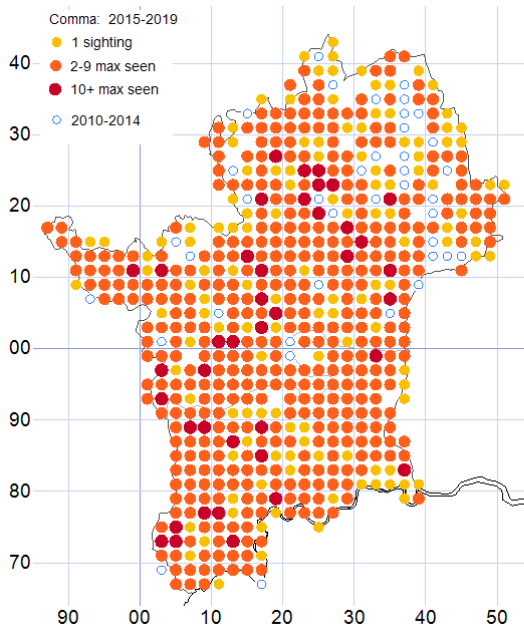


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 28 Jan  
Last: 27 Oct  
Peak week: 16-22 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	63% (386)
2018	68% (422)
2010-14 mean	61%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	11
2018	13
2010-14 mean	15

Distribution change	
Up 4% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Down 27% compared with 2010-2014	

The Comma fell back a little in 2019 but the number of butterflies that hibernated from 2018's small emergences managed to breed well and produce summer broods very much in line with long term trends. However, the abundance count has fallen for two years and is well below the long-term mean.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	61%	64%	Up 5%
Abundance (transects)	15	15	Stable

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

Widespread & common

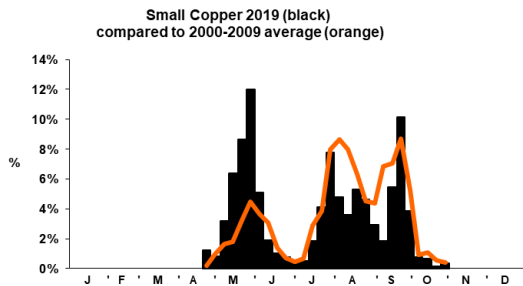
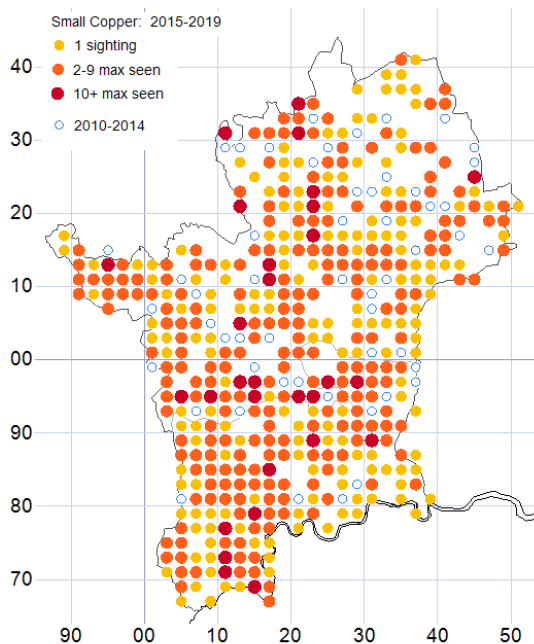


Photo Chris Benton



**First:** 20 Apr  
**Last:** 28 Oct  
**Peak week:** 21-27 May

Distribution % squares	
2019	36% (220)
2018	38% (236)
2010-14 mean	28%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	11
2018	15
2010-14 mean	8

Distribution change	
Up 28% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Up 38% compared with 2010-2014	

After two years increase it was perhaps unsurprising that this butterfly's abundance and distribution dropped back a little, however it remains above the longer-term trends. There were no November records this year.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	28%	32%	Up 7%
Abundance (transects)	8	10	Up 25%

”

**Brown Hairstreak *Thecla betulae***

Very rare & restricted

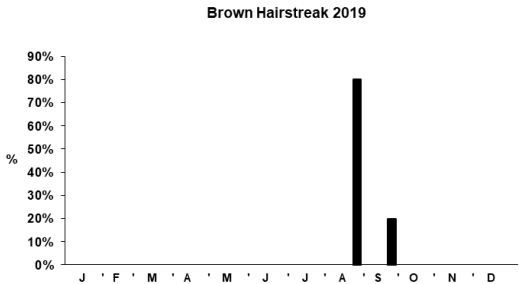
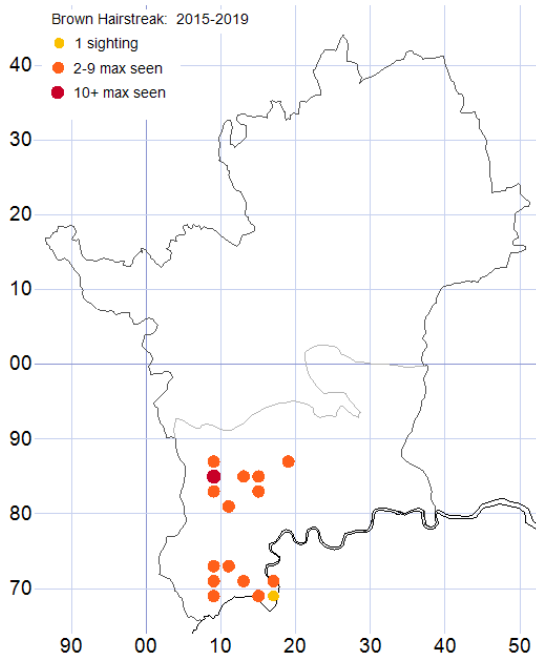


Photo Malcolm Hull



**First:** 28 Jul  
**Last:** 19 Sep  
**Peak week:** no data

Distribution % squares	
2019	1% (10)
2018	1% (5)
2010-14 mean	None

Abundance (transects)	
2019	No data
2018	No data
2010-14 mean	No data

Distribution change	
To little data	

Abundance change	
No data	

Most of our records are of eggs, where exploration of likely sites has found them at Bedfont Country Park, Horsenden Hill, Fryent Country Park and Islip Manor Meadows. All but one of the adult sightings were from the sites between Ickenham and South Ruislip with up to 10 adults seen during one visit. The other adult was seen at Hampton Wick allotments right in the south of our area.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	Unrecorded	1%	N/A
Abundance (transects)	Unrecorded	No data	N/A

Purple Hairstreak *Neozephyrus quercus*

Common around oaks

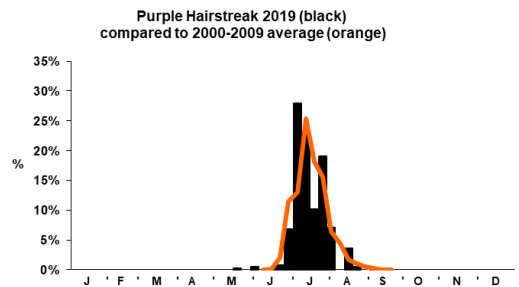
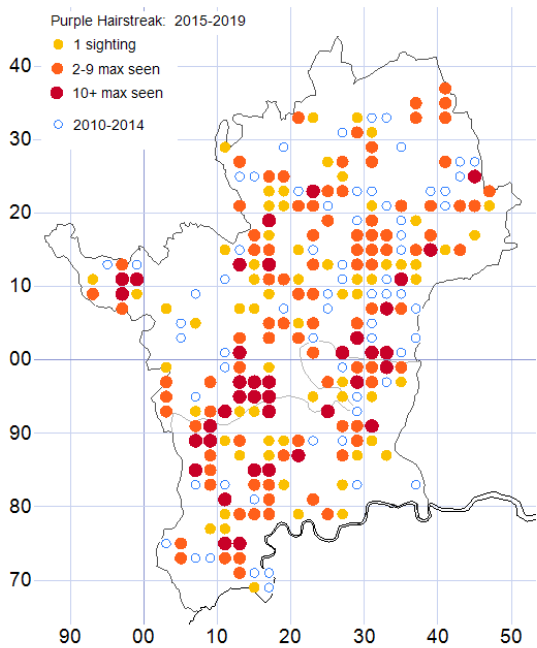


Photo Chris Benton



First: 1 Jun  
Last: 6 Sep  
Peak week: 2-8 July

Distribution % squares	
2019	11% (70)
2018	23% (140)
2010-14 mean	13%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	5
2018	10
2010-14 mean	10

Distribution change
Down 16% compared with 2010-2014

Abundance change
Down 50% compared with 2010-2014

2018's high point was not matched in 2019 with many fewer reports of low-level behaviour, indeed even the longer-term trends were not matched. However, this behaviour was seen by Dee Cullen at Northaw Great Wood transects, "Purple Hairstreaks were active low down, and on one particular oak tree were at head height. At first, I thought courtship behaviour was going on, however it seems they were taking sap or other sustenance from the young acorns".

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	13%	13%	Stable
Abundance (transects)	10	7	Down 30%



Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*

Very rare & restricted

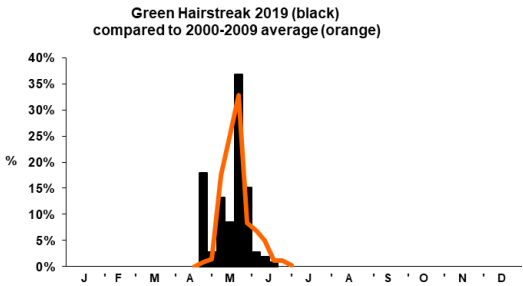
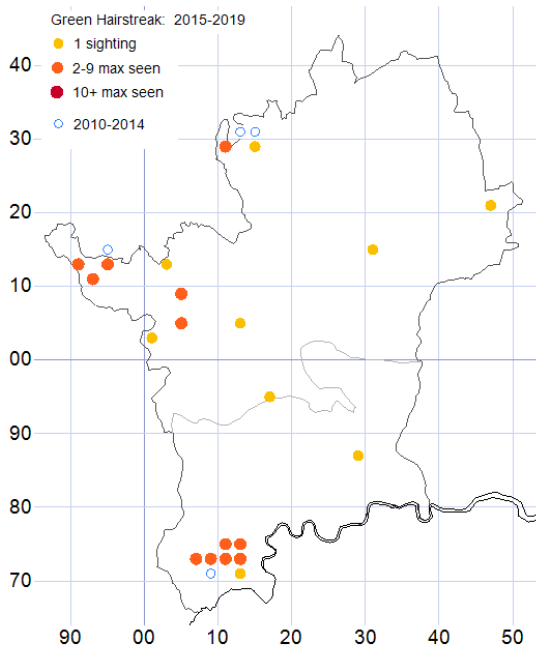


Photo Chris Benton



**First:** 19 Apr  
**Last:** 15 Jun  
**Peak week:** 14-20 May

Distribution % squares	
2019	2% (12)
2018	2% (10)
2010-14 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	5
2018	3
2010-14 mean	11

Distribution change	
Up 50% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Too little data to calculate	

The Green Hairstreak seems to be expanding its range slightly with further new sites reported. One was recorded from near the Gardens of the Rose in Chiswell Green, a good description accompanied the record from Waterford Heath and a photograph confirms the record from Dartmouth Park just to the east of Hampstead Heath in north London.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	1%	2%	Up 100%
Abundance (transects)	11	4	Down 63%

White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrion w-album*

Common around elm

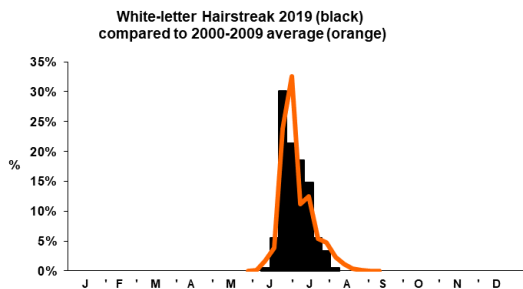
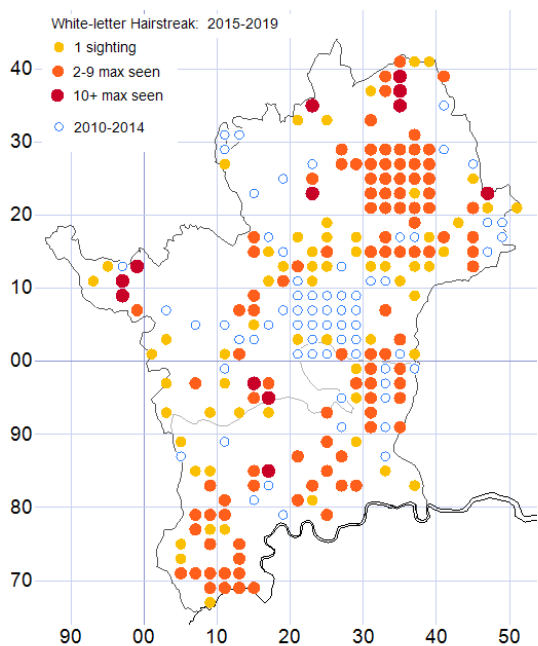


Photo Chris Benton



First: 5 Jun

Last: 31 Jul

Peak week: 18-24 Jun

Distribution % squares	
2019	8% (49)
2018	19% (118)
2010-14 mean	7%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	2
2018	3
2010-14 mean	2

Distribution change
Up 14% compared with 2010-2014

Abundance change
Unchanged compared with 2010-2014

An average year for this butterfly but with it being seen at many fewer sites than in 2018. Only around 40% of this drop can be accounted for by the lack of a systematic 10km square survey. The flight period was in line with longer-term trends, but the peak was slightly earlier. At several sites, observers mentioned a decline in elms due to Dutch Elm disease, but this is not new, and regeneration of suckers has, so far, ensured enough larval food plant opportunities for continued breeding.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	7%	9%	Up 29%
Abundance (transects)	2	2	Stable

Small Blue *Cupido minimus*

Very rare & restricted

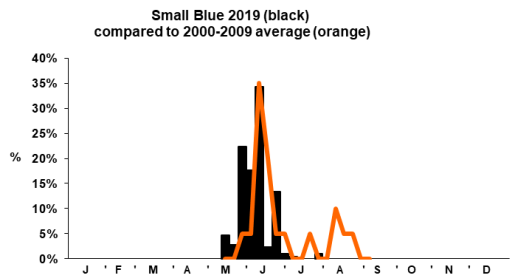
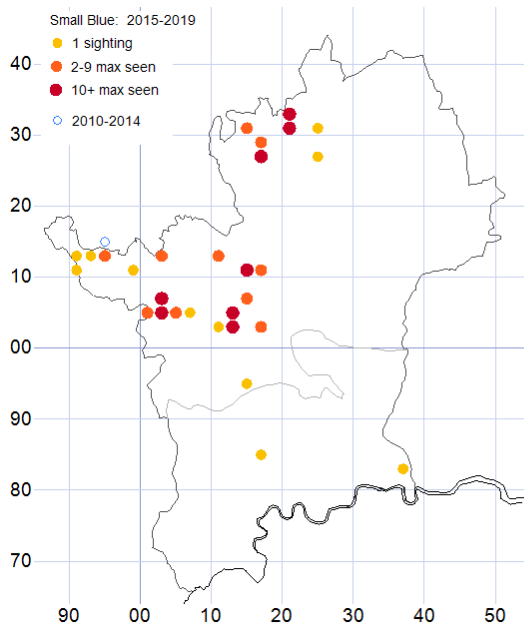


Photo Peter Elton



First: 30 Apr

Last: 4 Aug

Peak week: 4-10 Jun

Distribution % squares	
2019	2% (12)
2018	3% (17)
2010-14 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	7
2018	5
2010-14 mean	26

Distribution change	
Up 100% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Too little data to calculate	

The mild spring prompted an early first brood emergence but there were very few second brood records, it only being recorded in late summer at the A41 Bourne End junction, Aldbury Nowers and Chiswell Green. The distribution was largely confined to the well known existing sites. An adult was seen at a new site in Tring and its continued presence at Hilfield Reservoir was confirmed.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	1%	1%	Stable
Abundance (transects)	26	89	Up 242%

# Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*

Widespread & common

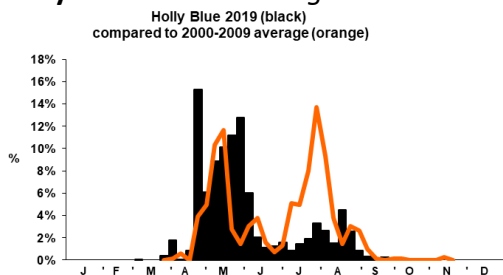
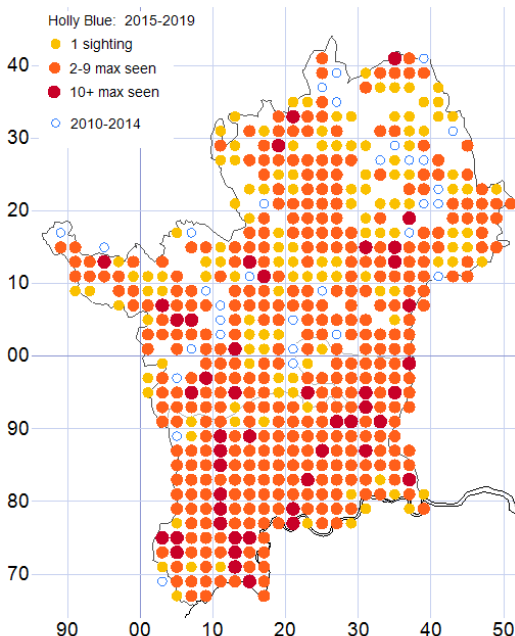


Photo Chris Benton

First 27 Feb

Last: 27 Nov

Peak week: 16-22 Apr



Distribution % squares	
2019	48% (299)
2018	65% (406)
2010-14 mean	42%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	10
2018	19
2010-14 mean	10

Distribution change
Up 14% compared with 2010-2014

Abundance change
Unchanged compared with 2010-2014

An interesting flight pattern this year following 2018's evenly matched broods. The spring brood was very strong but this was followed by a rather small summer brood. Was this due to a reassertion of the parasite which affects this species? As regularly happens there was a small partial third brood in late October/early November. Searching in arable north east Hertfordshire produced records in several squares where it has not been recorded for over 10 years.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	42%	55%	Up 31%
Abundance (transects)	10	13	Up 30%

**Brown Argus *Aricia agesthis***

Widely distributed

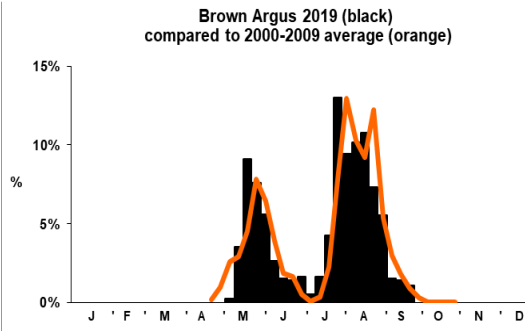
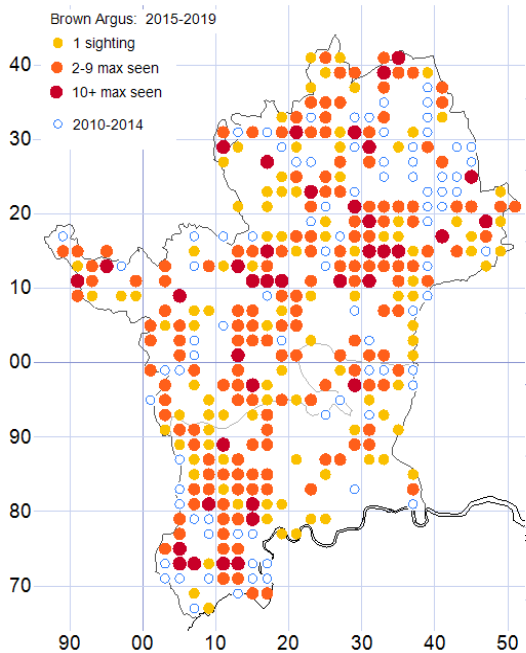


Photo Chris Benton



**First: 30 Apr**  
**Last: 23 Sep**  
**Peak week: 23-29 Jul**

Distribution % squares	
2019	24% (146)
2018	27% (165)
2010-14 mean	16%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	16
2018	28
2010-14 mean	14

Distribution change	
Up 50% compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Up 28% compared with 2010-2014	

The last two year's advances were slightly reversed but this is a species that is still doing well compared to longer term trends. The success of this species in the Hounslow area south west Middlesex is reflected in Peter Gore's comment, "Brown Argus, now seems to turn up anywhere outside the woodland area".

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	16%	20%	Up 25%
Abundance (transects)	14	15	Up 7%

# Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*

Widespread & common

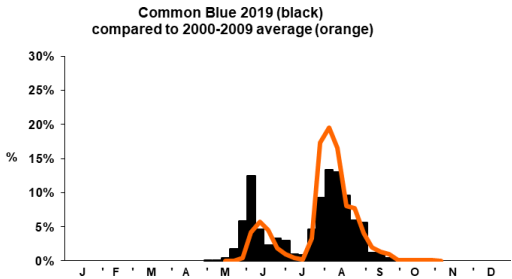
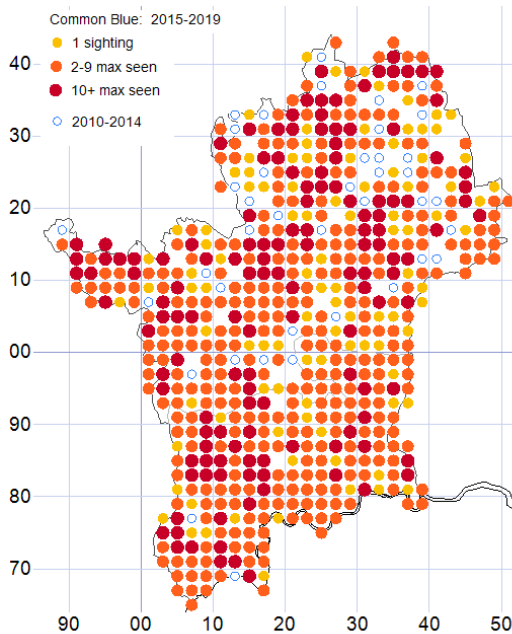


Photo Dave Miller



**First:** 20 Apr  
**Last:** 10 Oct  
**Peak week:** 30 Jul -5 Aug

Distribution % squares	
2019	52% (322)
2018	67% (415)
2010-14 mean	41%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	21
2018	83
2010-14 mean	38

Distribution change
Up 26% compared with 2010-2014

Abundance change
Down 45% compared with 2010-2014

The Common Blue had a poor year compared to the last two, but it was still widespread, albeit in rather small numbers. The spring brood, perhaps reflecting the early mild conditions, was unusually large compared to the summer brood. Several reliable observations in late April also reflect this phenomenon.

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	41%	54%	Up 32%
Abundance (transects)	38	38	Stable

# Chalkhill Blue *Lysandra coridon*

Common at known chalk sites

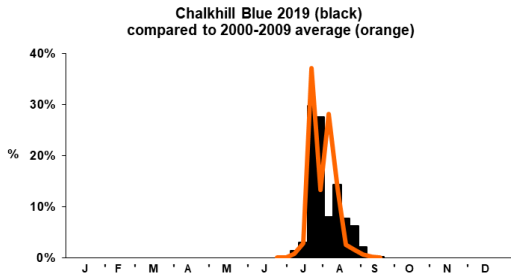
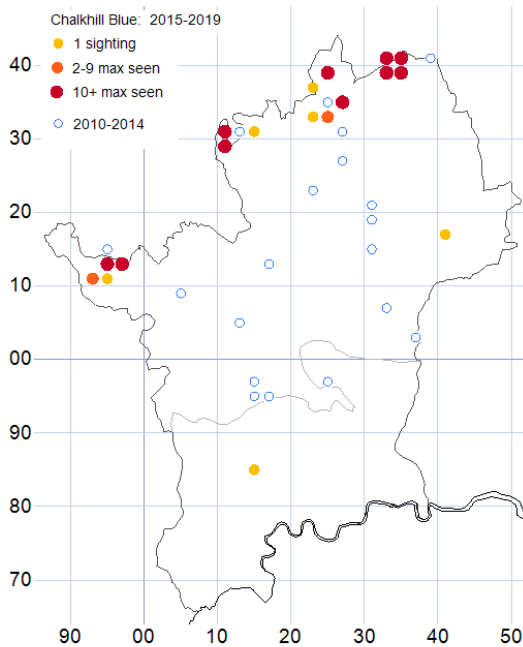


Photo Chris Benton



**First:** 2 Jul  
**Last:** 12 Sep  
**Peak week:** 16-22 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2019	2% (11)
2018	2% (10)
2010-14 mean	2%

Abundance (transects)	
2019	79
2018	91
2010-14 mean	96

Distribution change	
Unchanged compared with 2010-2014	

Abundance change	
Down 14% compared with 2010-2014	

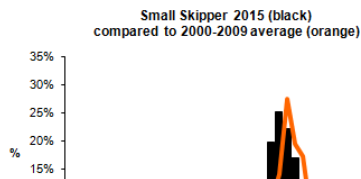
The Chalkhill Blue had another poor year with only one observation away from the core sites. This was very close to the county boundary at Baldock services where one was found on the steep cutting side near the entrance. This may have drifted from the relatively new site at Clothall Common on the eastern side of the town

Five-year Trends	2010-2014	2015-2019	Change
Distribution % squares	2%	2%	Stable
Abundance (transects)	368	188	Down 32%

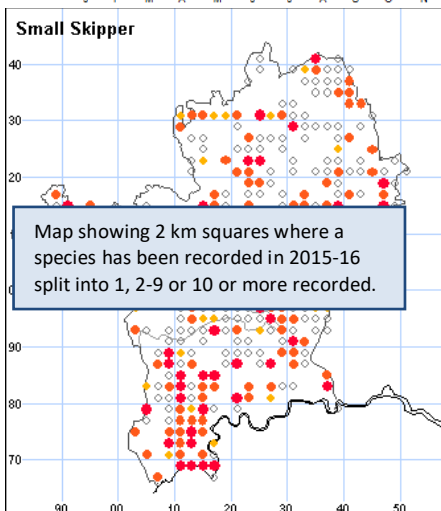


## Key to the Species pages

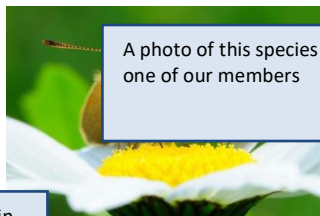
### Common Name *Scientific name*



The flight period showing proportion of species flying in any week compared with the 2000-2009 average



Widespread but declining



Brian Knight

A photo of this species taken by one of our members

**First:** 16 June

**Last:** 16 Aug

**Peak week:** 25 Jun -1 Jul

**Distribution % squares**

2019 30% (155)

2018

2010-14

mean

**Abundance**

2019

2018

2010-14

mean

**Distribution**

Up 3% compared to 2010-2014

**Abundance change**

**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**

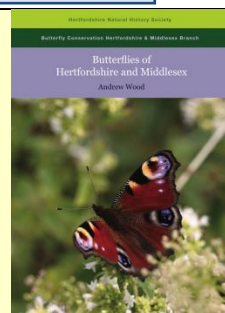
compared with the recent 5-year

period to smooth out year to year

comparisons

Some notes on the species during the year, together with interesting or unusual observations

The Butterflies of Hertfordshire and Middlesex" is still available. It is a fully illustrated 272-page hardback that updates the previous books covering our region published in 1987. There are hundreds of colour photos and detailed analysis of the changes between then and now, together with practical advice on how to find and observe our butterflies. Published by the Hertfordshire Natural History Society and ourselves at the price of £28 (including post and packing). It can be ordered at: <http://www.hnhs.org/publications>



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