

BUTTERFLY REPORT FOR 2022

Sue Hayes and I have completed our 14th year of recording butterflies on our Local Nature Reserve.

Last year we reported that 2021 was a disappointing year. Well this year was even worse. We only counted a total of 374 butterflies, covering 19 different species, which was the lowest count since our records began in 2009.

By far and away the biggest impact on this year's numbers was the low counts of Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns. Historically these 2 species alone account for between a half and three quarters of all butterflies seen on our site. This year we only saw a total of 142, by far the lowest number ever recorded. We believe that the lack of a proper meadow cut in the autumn of 2021 may well have had a negative impact on both these species. Certainly the much thicker undergrowth this year made it much more difficult to see them. Other meadow dwellers such as Ringlets and Small Heaths were also seen in disappointing numbers.

Old favourites not seen at all this year and have been missing for the last two years included a Large Skipper, Brown Argus and Painted Lady. Only 1 Small Skipper was seen this year, the lowest number ever and a dramatic decline from 2013 to 2015 when over 40 were seen each year. Only 2 Marbled Whites and 2 Small Coppers were seen this year. Single sightings of a Small Tortoiseshell and a Silver-Washed Fritillary made welcome visits.

3 Holly Blues and 8 Common Blues were recorded this year, way down on the record total of the 86 seen back in 2018. Large and Small Whites and Orange Tips all appeared earlier than usual this year in the warm spring. Although overall numbers ended the season with normal sightings. A total of 18 Speckled Woods, 7 Brimstones, 7 Peacocks, 7 Commas and 2 Red Admirals were seen this year, all in lower than average numbers.

With the experience of reporting butterflies on our Local Nature Reserve we can be sure that next year will again be quite different from previous years.