

Results of the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey 2013

You may have read in the national newspapers that 'Farmland butterflies flourished' in the hot summer in 2013 and wondered how we in Gloucestershire Branch were involved in obtaining these records.

In Gloucestershire there are 39 1km squares chosen at random by Butterfly Conservation headquarters. As these are selected at random, most are on open farmland but some are in woods, some are in towns and a few are in really good butterfly habitats. Recording butterflies in these squares shows how butterflies are faring generally in the wider countryside. Quite separately, we also do transects when we count butterflies on important butterfly sites to monitor how endangered species are faring and while this is very important, it doesn't tell us what is happening outside these specific areas.

For the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey, butterflies are recorded once in July and once in August although some recorders do carry out additional recording at other times in the summer. Most of the wider countryside species fly in these two summer months.

Of the 39 squares, 28 were recorded through Butterfly Conservation and 11 were recorded through BTO. These 28 squares were recorded by 18 recorders as several of us record in more than one square.

The results are very interesting and full details are on the branch website. The main points briefly are as follows:-

- Small White were recorded in every square. This is probably of no surprise to those of us who are gardeners as they seemed to be everywhere in the garden searching out the cabbages on which to lay their eggs. This is higher than nationally where Small Whites were recorded in 88% of all squares.
- Large White, Meadow Brown, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock were recorded in nearly every square, also higher than national figures.
- The most abundant butterfly recorded was the Meadow Brown with an average of 65 recorded per square in the two summer visits. This is roughly twice as high as the national average of 31.
- Small Tortoiseshell made a dramatic comeback in Gloucestershire, being recorded in 95% of squares, three times more than in 2012. Nationally it doubled from 40% of squares in 2012 to 80% in 2013. The average number per square also increased from less than 1 to 9.
- All species increased in number apart from Red Admiral and Holly Blue. This was also the case nationally.
- Most species were seen in more squares in 2013 than in 2012, Red Admiral and Holly Blue being the notable exceptions.

- Average number of species per square was 12 as compared with 5 nationally showing just how diverse and rich Gloucestershire is for butterflies.
- Gloucestershire boasts having the square which had the greatest number of butterflies and the most species seen in the whole of the UK. This is a square at Gawcombe, near to Church Westcote south of Stow-on-the-Wold in the east of the county. Here, 1680 butterflies of 17 species were counted over the two summer visits. This square is on a large farm which is devoted to wildlife. Most of the land is long grass with some flowering plants.

A big thank you to all recorders who have taken part in this survey. The survey continues this year and into the foreseeable future. I hope all recorders will continue with the recording this year.

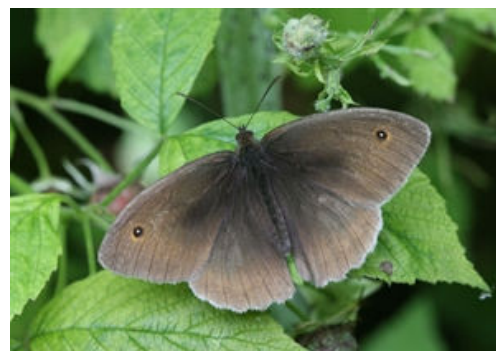
If you would like to take part in the survey, we have a few squares with no allocated recorder. These are:

SO7126 Near Newent
 SO6212 Near Speech House, Forest of Dean
 SP1643 Mickleton
 SO8708 North of Slad
 SO9224 NW Cheltenham

To take part, you need to record once in July and once in August. If you are interested, please contact Tricia Atkinson triciaatkinson@hotmail.co.uk for more information.



Small White was recorded in all squares



Meadow Brown was the most numerous butterfly



Small Tortoiseshell was recorded in 3 times as many squares as in 2012

Table 1**Occupancy****Percent of squares in which species occurs**

	Gloucestershire		Nationally	
	2013	2012	2013	2012
Small White	100.0	86.5	88.5	70.9
Meadow Brown	97.5	97.3	90.5	89.1
Large White	97.5	86.5	85.2	68.4
Small Tortoiseshell	95.0	32.4	80.4	40.8
Peacock	92.5	73.0	68.6	44.8
Gatekeeper	87.5	86.5	69.6	74.9
Green-veined White	87.5	64.9	71.4	61.9
Ringlet	82.5	83.8	69.5	65.2
Speckled Wood	72.5	56.8	62.2	52.2
Comma	72.5	40.5	45.2	31.8
Marbled White	40.0	37.8	35.4	15.2
Large Skipper	35.0	27.0	28.3	23.2
Small Copper	32.5	16.2	25.8	15.6
Brimstone	30.0	10.8	17.7	11.7
Red Admiral	27.5	45.9	35.4	48.3
Small Skipper	25.0	27.0	27.5	23.6
Small/Essex Skipper	22.5	13.5	17.4	17.2
Common Blue	20.0	21.6	32.7	16.6
Painted Lady	20.0	0.0	14.1	3
Holly Blue	17.5	27.0	12.3	20.7
Small Heath	17.5	16.2	18.9	17.1
Clouded Yellow	17.5	0.0	10.2	0.8
Essex Skipper	10.0	2.7	8.6	7.2
Brown Argus	7.5	2.7	5.1	2
Silver-washed Fritillary	5.0	8.1	6.8	7.4
Chalk-hill Blue	5.0	0.0	0.8	0.8
Purple Hairstreak	5.0	5.4	3.2	1.7

Table 2**Abundance**

Average number per square (usually in 2 visits)

	Gloucestershire		Nationally	
	2013	2012	2013	2012
Meadow Brown	64.8	54.5	31.4	24.2
Small White	44.3	4.9	26.0	4.7
Ringlet	34.3	20.0	15.9	9.8
Large White	24.4	7.8	16.1	3.8
Green-veined White	14.4	5.0	11.0	4.9
Gatekeeper	14.1	12.9	10.3	8.2
Peacock	12.3	2.8	6.0	1.3
Marbled White	10.2	3.1	1.6	1.1
Small Tortoiseshell	9.3	0.6	8.0	1.2
Speckled Wood	4.8	5.1	3.6	1.6
Small/Essex Skipper	4.1	1.0	1.1	0.7
Small Skipper	3.1	2.6	2.1	1.3
Small Copper	2.3	0.3	0.7	0.3
Common Blue	2.1	0.5	1.9	0.3
Comma	1.8	0.6	1.0	0.5
Large Skipper	1.5	1.0	1.1	0.7
Small Heath	1.0	1.3	1.9	0.9
Red Admiral	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.1
Brimstone	0.6	0.1	0.4	0.2
Holly Blue	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.3
Clouded Yellow	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.0
Essex Skipper	0.3	0.1	0.5	0.2
Painted Lady	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.0
Silver-washed Fritillary	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2
Brown Argus	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0
Chalk-hill Blue	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.2
Purple Hairstreak	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0
Total butterfly count	251.9	116.6	165.9	83.6