Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

Hertfordshire & Middlesex Butterflies

Andrew Wood

March 2011 (covering 2010 records)

Free to Hertfordshire & Middlesex branch members

£5 to non branch members

Introduction

This booklet tries to answer the question "How did the butterflies in our area do in 2010?" Some species such as the, until recently rare, Silver-washed Fritillary have made huge gains. The Common Blue, Purple Hairstreak and Brown Argus had good years, but there are signs that all is not well for the Small Tortoiseshell and possibly the Peacock which are two of our most familiar species.

This publication can only exist due to the efforts of almost 200 enthusiastic volunteers (see the list on the back cover). who have contributed 15000+ records . These records (one or more species seen on a particular date at a particular location) range from organised surveys to garden lists to butterflies noted while people are out and about. Please read and use this booklet and, if you are not already a contributor, send in your sightings for 2011 on paper or by email to the branch record collator (details on back cover) by November 9th 2011.

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.

Butterfly Conservation is the national charity supporting the work of conserving butterflies and moths and their habitats. We are part of a branch network that you automatically join if you support the conservation and recording of butterflies by becoming a member of Butterfly Conservation.

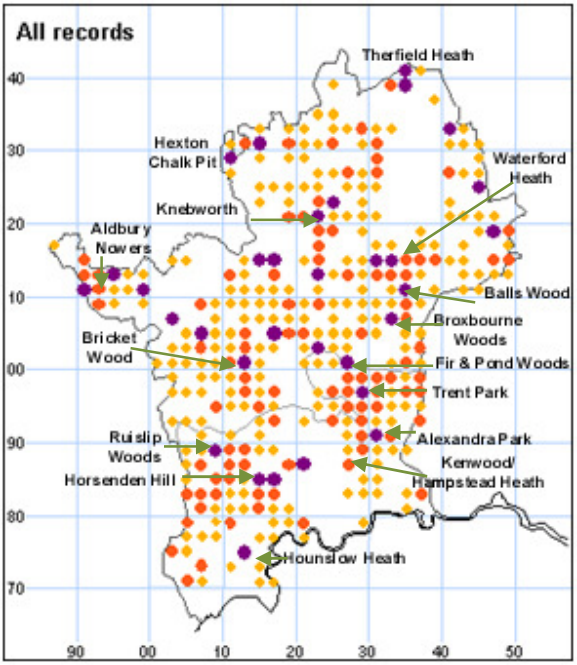
Species not included in the main section

Swallowtail *Papilio machaon* Two records on 11th July (near Chenies, Herts) and 12th July (Southgate, Middx), The British subspecies is confined to Norfolk and examples of the continental subspecies are occasionally seen in England. The origins of these two are unclear.

Brown Hairstreak *Thecla betulae* Unconfirmed records have been received from two sites: the eastern side of Welwyn Garden City near Rolls Wood off Blackfan Lane and Deard's End Lane near Knebworth Golf Course. Adults were reported in both cases during the August/September flight period. This species has not been recorded as an adult in our area since 1998 at Bricket Wood, its principal site in the past. It is important that these sites are visited during the late summer to see if we can confirm the presence of this nationally rare butterfly.

Duke of Burgundy *Hamearis lucina* No records following one in 2009.

Wall *Lasiommata megera* For the fourth year no records for this once common species.



Squares Recorded and Key Sites

2 kilometre squares (tetrads) for which records were received in 2010

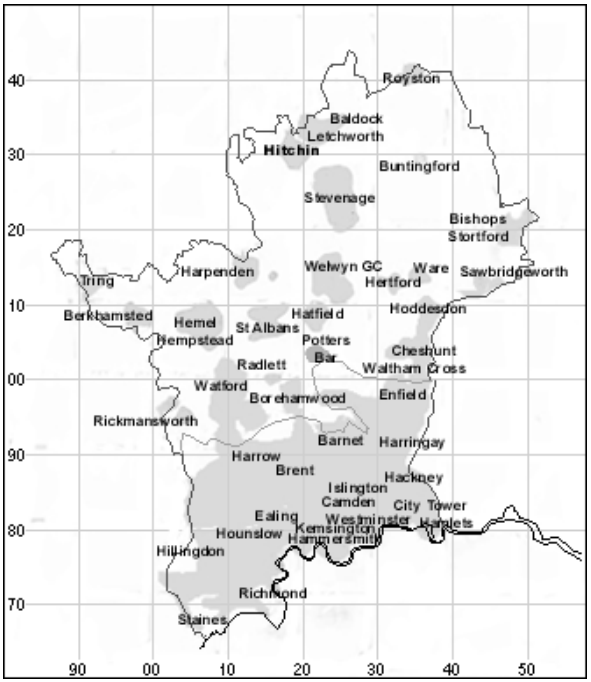
Key:

- 1-10 species
- 11-20 species
- 21+ species

We have records from 349 out of 686 full or part squares in our area for 2010. As you can see there are many unrecorded squares in central Middlesex and west and north east Herts.

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 Herts & Middx.

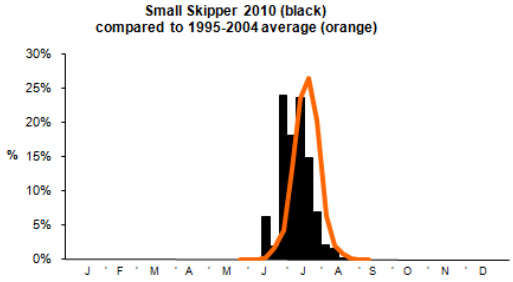


KEY TO THE SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Common Name *Scientific name*

Brief status for species

Widespread but declining



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

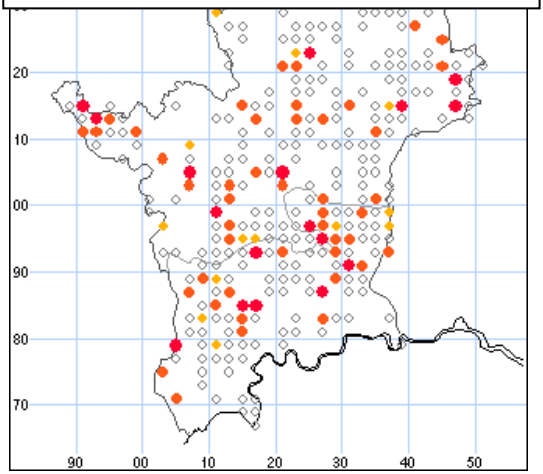
Photo Brian Knight

A photo of this species taken by one of our members

First: 16 June
Last: 16 Aug
Peak week: 25 Jun -1 Jul

Small Skipper

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



1 2-9 10+ 2005-9 records

Distribution % squares	
2010	25% (87)
2009	24% (108)
2005-9 mean	27%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	32
2009	28
2005-9 mean	42

Distribution change
Down 8% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 25% compared with 2005-2009

Notes on the species during the year

…pper the Ess…
…caution is ne…
record these two species as an aggregate due to t…
noticeable gap in central Herts for this species in …

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

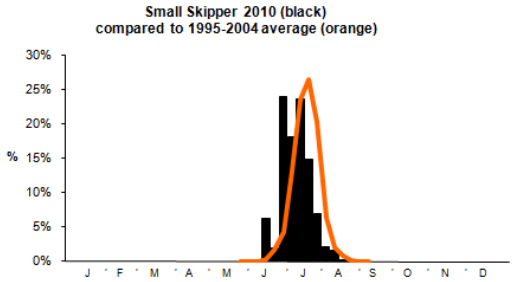
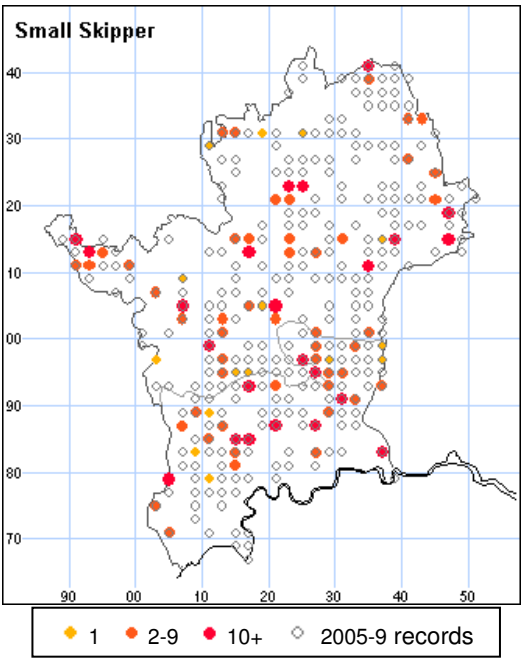


Photo Brian Knight



First: 16 June
Last: 16 Aug
Peak week: 25 Jun- 1 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	25% (87)
2009	24% (108)
2005-9 mean	26%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	32
2009	28
2005-9 mean	42

Distribution change
Down 8% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 25% compared with 2005-2009

The Small Skipper shows a decline in numbers and to a lesser extent distribution over recent years. This is illustrated by some of our transect walkers' comments, "perilously low", Andy Brown at Gunnersbury Triangle and, "Significantly below long term average" by Malcolm Hull at Bricket Wood. At an increasing number of sites the smaller numbers seen mean that more and more records are of an aggregate of Small and Essex Skippers. This makes assessing the population and distribution trends difficult as there are many fewer individuals that can be positively identified.

Essex Skipper *Thymelicus lineola*

Widespread but declining

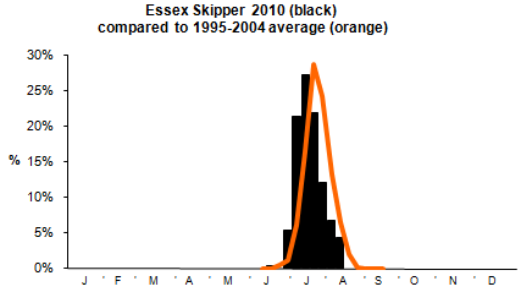
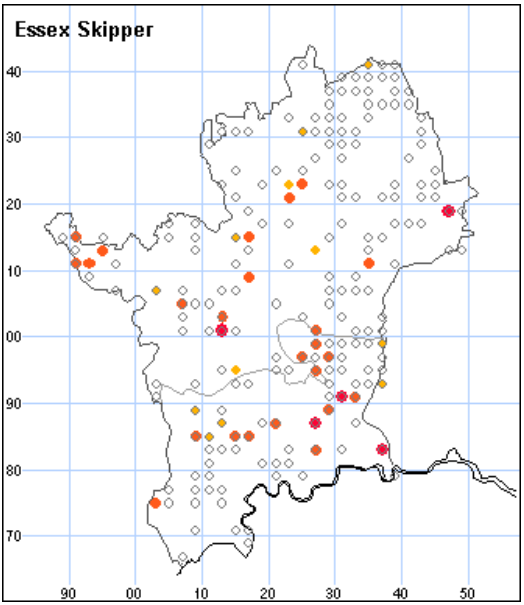


Photo Dave Miller



First: 17 June
Last: 7 Aug
Peak week: 9-15 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	12% (37)
2009	12% (54)
2005-9 mean	17%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	19
2009	27
2005-9 mean	46

Distribution change
Down 29% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 25% compared with 2005-2009

Never as widespread as the Small Skipper the Essex Skipper shows an even greater decline in distribution. Some caution is needed as many recorders record these two species as an aggregate due to their similarity. At Ware Park transect Andrew Wood noted, "Small Skipper/Essex Skipper: The decline is complete with none seen". There is a noticeable gap in eastern Hertfordshire for this species in recent years. This decline has been happening for a number of years and more research is needed into the reasons for this worrying situation.

Large Skipper *Ochlodes faunus*

Widespread & common

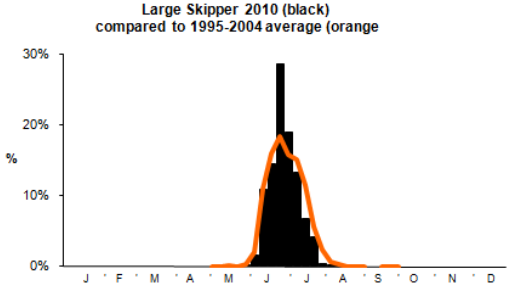
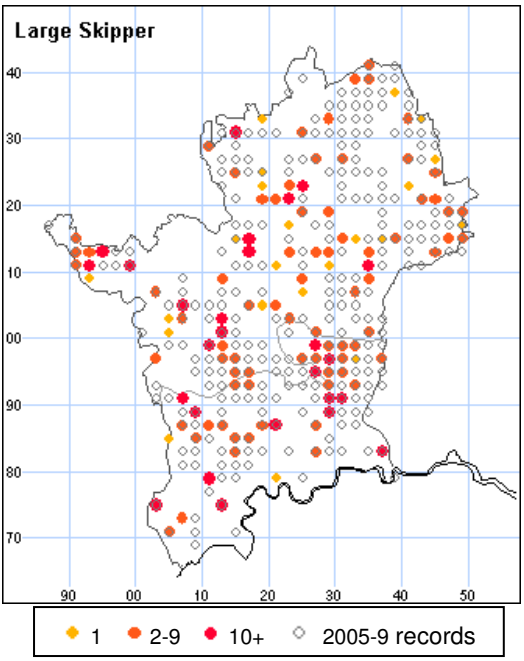


Photo Alan Gardiner



First: 2 June
Last: 19 Aug
Peak week: 25 Jun-1 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2010	36% (124)
2009	28% (128)
2005-9 mean	28%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	25
2009	26
2005-9 mean	20

Distribution change
Up 29% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 26% compared with 2005-2009

In contrast to its close relatives the Small and Essex Skippers the Large Skipper continues to thrive in many areas, that it is much more amenable to shade and activity in dull weather helps to account for this. However Pat Watt at Danesbury Park observed that this species “seems to be having a difficult time”. No individuals were seen in late May this year, an example of the cold winter retarding emergence but once on the wing it was a common sight. The map shows how it can also do well in much more urban areas than its relatives, with many records from the built up areas of London and it is much more at home in gardens too.

Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages*

Restricted but stable

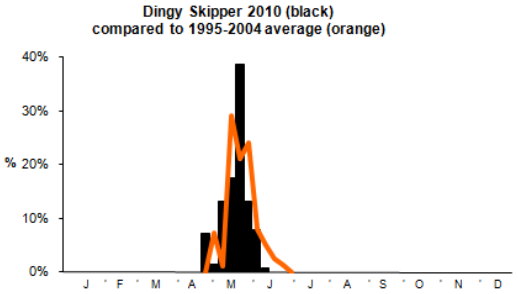
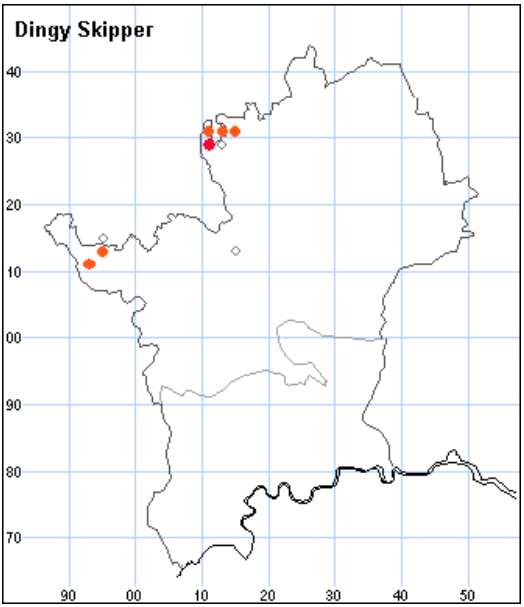


Photo Darin Stanley



1 2-9 10+ 2005-9 records

First: 28 Apr
Last: 16 Jun
Peak week: 21-27 May

Distribution % squares	
2010	1% (6)
2009	1% (5)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	18
2009	8
2005-9 mean	11

Distribution change
No change

Abundance change
Too little data to calculate

The Dingy Skipper remains a very restricted species in Herts with colonies only at Aldbury Nowers, Telegraph Hill and Hexton Chalk Pit, all Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust reserves. The data for 2010 looks good but with so few records drawing firm conclusions about its status is difficult. However it is good to read reports such as this from John Landels, “Dingy Skippers very abundant” referring to Hexton Chalk Pit and a total of 9 seen by Paul Thrush at Aldbury Nowers on 13th May and 7 on the 17th May It is also possible that its dull appearance and moth like behaviour lead to its being ignored by less experienced observers.

Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*

Restricted & rare

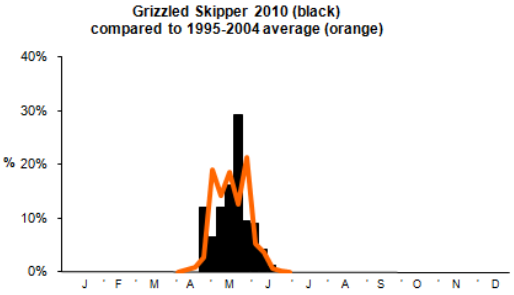
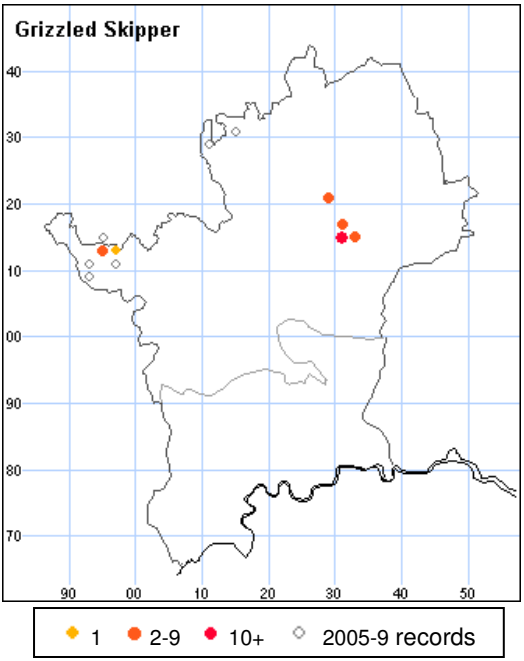


Photo Sandra Standbridge



First: 23 Apr
Last: 22 Jun
Peak week: 21-27 May

Distribution % squares	
2010	2% (6)
2009	1% (6)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	26
2009	15
2005-9 mean	12

Distribution change
No change

Abundance change
To little data to calculate

The Grizzled Skipper continues to be found at its traditional sites particularly Aldbury Nowers and Waterford Heath and nearby areas such as Rickney's Quarry. Butterfly Conservation is involved in a new management plan for Waterford Heath and this is very much focussed on encouraging this species to colonise new areas and re-colonise others while preserving the existing strongholds at the base of the Sacombe Road bank on the south pit and bank by the railway in the North pit. It is interesting to see that unlike many other spring flying species there was not a big drop in numbers in the cool period in early May.

Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus*

Less common migrant

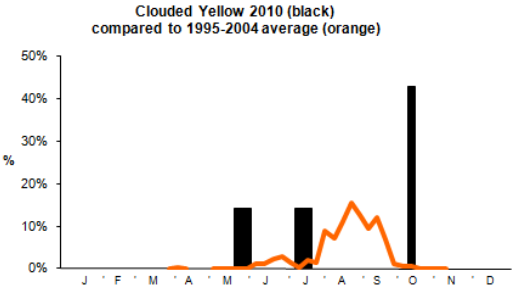
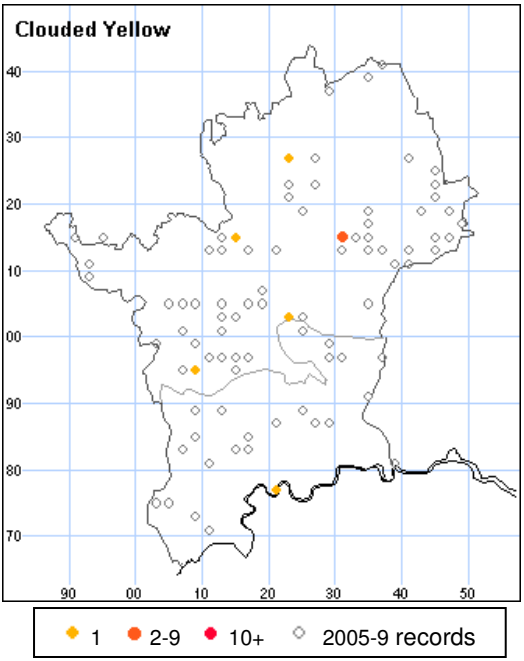


Photo Clive Burrows



First: 21 May
Last: 12 Oct
Peak week: 8-14 Oct

Distribution % squares	
2010	1% (6)
2009	1% (22)
2005-9 mean	5%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	3
2009	2
2005-9 mean	2

Distribution change
Down 80% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
To little data to calculate

This migrant is rarely common, except in occasional eruptive years and 2010 was not one of these. It can turn up almost anywhere and as the flight chart shows there were three distinct periods of sightings, which remarkably all fall outside the recent normal sighting period of late July to September. One was seen at Waterford Heath which has perhaps been the most reliable place to find it, especially later in the season. The proliferation of goats rue, an invasive weed, may well be an attractant here as it is a food plant for its larvae.

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*

Widespread

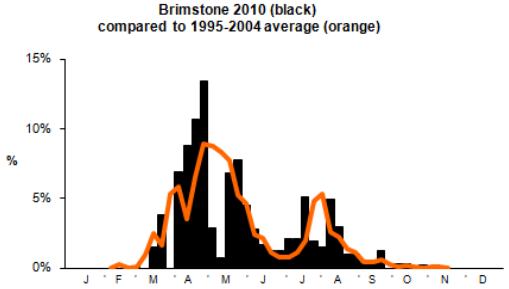
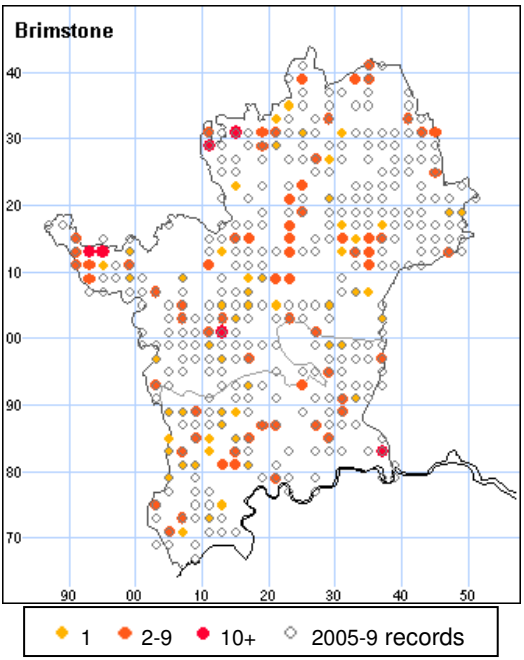


Photo Brian Price



First: 20 Feb
Last: 28 Oct
Peak week: 23-29 Apr

Distribution % squares	
2010	36% (127)
2009	37% (169)
2005-9 mean	37%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	14
2009	18
2005-9 mean	20

Distribution change
Down 3% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 29% compared with 2005-2009

Generally one of our most unvarying species, although the transect abundance figures are something of a cause for concern. Although widespread and well distributed in urban and rural areas it is generally seen in very low numbers at any particular sight. The exception to this where its larval food plant Buckthorn is commonest, either naturally or planted. These are two contrasting areas; the western chalkland sites such as Albury Nowers and Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park in the very urban south east. Indeed all the totals of 10 or more individuals seen on one occasion are at such locations.

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Widespread & common

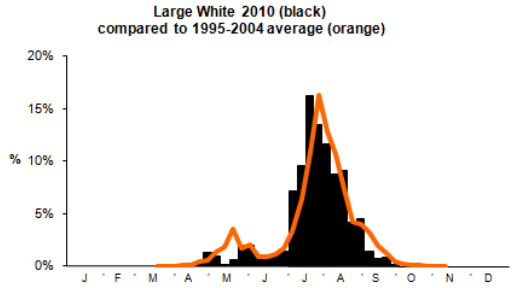
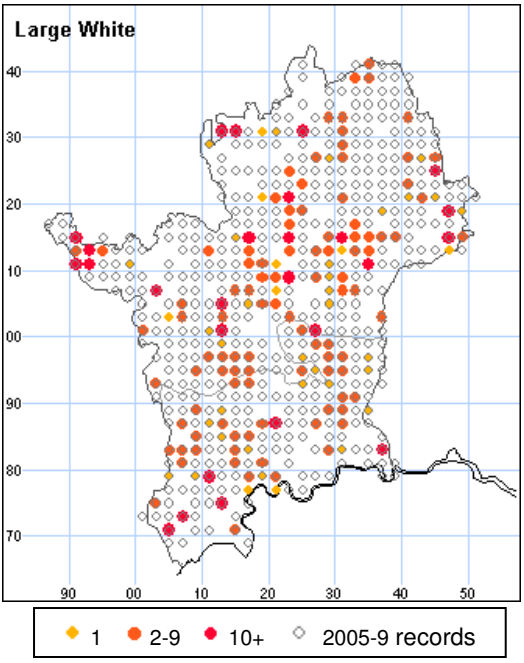


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 10 Apr
Last: 19 Oct
Peak week: 16-22 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	48% (167)
2009	71% (324)
2005-9 mean	58%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	54
2009	113
2005-9 mean	54

Distribution change
Down 17% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
No change compared with 2005-2009

This species is rather cyclic, controlled by the activities of parasites. 2009 was a high point in the cycle and data suggests that 2010 saw the parasites thriving on the larger population leading to a drop back towards more usual numbers. The flight chart shows an early emergence followed by a gap in mid May when weather was poor followed by a slightly earlier than normal summer brood. Wood Lane, Pirton transect was a particular hot spot with Val Fullforth recording 5 out of 10 of the highest counts for this species. In Phil MacMurdie's survey of butterflies in the City of London, the Large White was the second mostly frequently observed accounting for about 25% of butterflies seen.

Small White *Pieris rapae*

Widespread & common

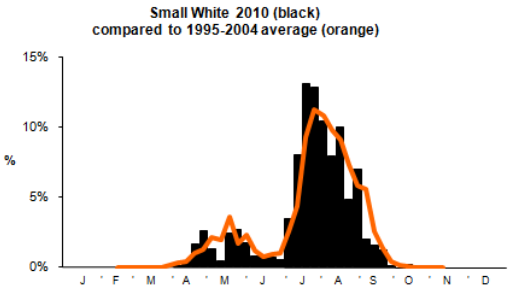
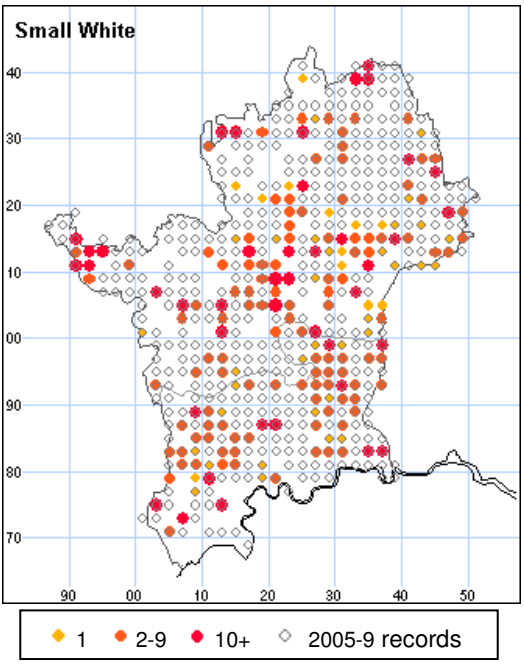


Photo Dave Miller



First: 20 Mar
Last: 17 Oct
Peak week: 9-15 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	56% (195)
2009	64% (293)
2005-9 mean	58%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	59
2009	92
2005-9 mean	67

Distribution change
Down 3% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 9% compared with 2005-2009

The Small White shows a marked decline compared to 2009 but against longer term trends there is only a small drop and the species remains common across both counties, as likely to be seen in urban areas as the wider countryside. The spring brood is split into two by the very poor weather in early May when virtually no butterflies were recorded. The effect of the warm dry summer is shown by the higher peak and slightly earlier than average summer emergence. In the City of London Phil MacMurdie's survey showed the Small White to be the most frequently observed species with it making up about 45% of butterflies seen.

Green-veined White *Pieris napi*

Widespread &Common

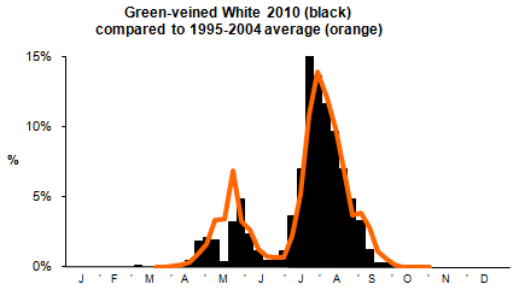
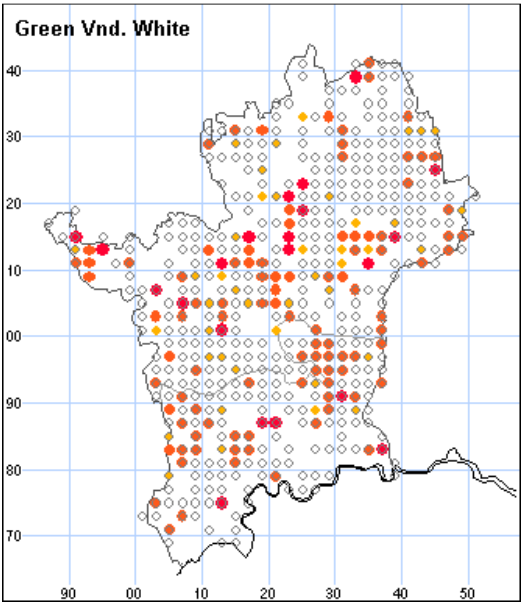


Photo Dave Miller



1 2-9 10+ 2005-9 records

First: 6 Apr
Last: 29 Sep
Peak week: 24-30 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	46% (161)
2009	61% (277)
2005-9 mean	47%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	45
2009	76
2005-9 mean	54

Distribution change
Down 2% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 17% compared with 2005-2009

Less associated with the more urbanised areas than the Small White but showing a very similar pattern to it both in variation against 2009 and in the longer term. The flight pattern and relative sizes of the two broods was very close to the historic pattern and it is unlikely that the downward changes noted above are particularly significant. David Anderson had this unusual, for Britain, observation on 19th July at Redbourn Mill, "14 Green-veined Whites in a small group on ground gathering moisture with another 10 flying in the close area".

Orange Tip *Anthocharis cardamines*

Widespread & Common

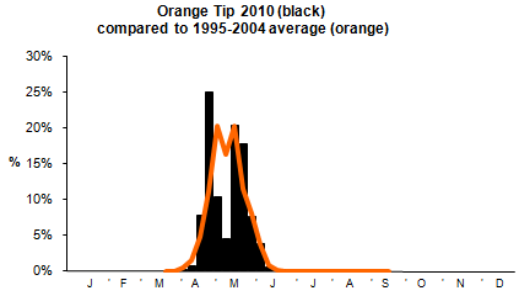
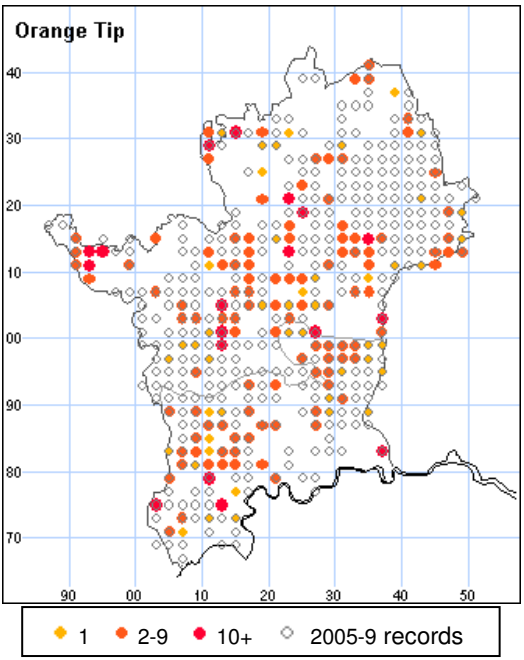


Photo Robin Pearson



First: 8 Apr
Last: 8 Jul
Peak week: 23-29 Apr

Distribution % squares	
2010	49% (171)
2009	53% (243)
2005-9 mean	43%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	20
2009	15
2005-9 mean	14

Distribution change
Up 14% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 13% compared with 2005-2009

The Orange Tip is a currently a success story. It is showing good gains in distribution and numbers over the longer term. The big area of squares in north east Hertfordshire with no 2010 records is likely caused by lack of visits to that area rather than its disappearance, although the large open fields of this area are not the ideal habitat for a butterfly associated with hedgerows, damper areas and open woodland. The dip in numbers in early May can be attributed to a particularly poor spell of weather. As in many previous years there are a few late June and early July records outside the text book flight period.

Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*

Very rare & restricted

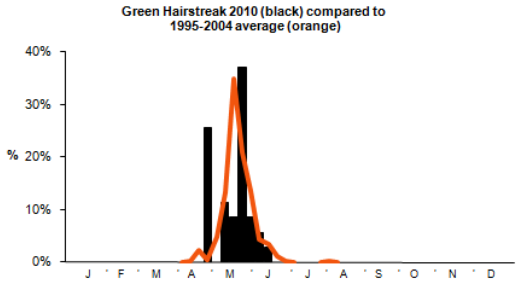
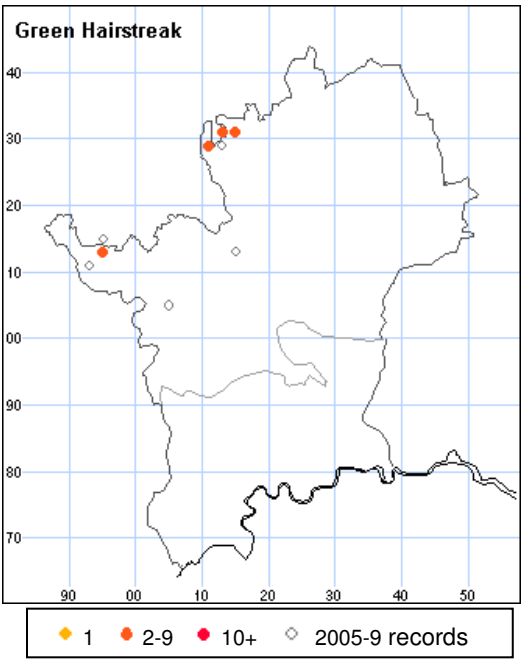


Photo Paul Thrush



First: 23 Apr
Last: 17 Jun
Peak week: 21-27 May

Distribution % squares	
2010	1% (4)
2009	1% (5)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	6
2009	3
2005-9 mean	4

Distribution change
Too little data to calculate

Abundance change
Too little data to calculate

The Green Hairstreak, like the Dingy Skipper, is exclusively a species of chalk grassland in Herts and inevitably very restricted. The small numbers recorded tend in one year to distort the flight diagram and the transect abundance is based solely on Aldbury Nowers data. The maximum number recorded at any time was 4 so it is not only restricted but only present in small numbers. Other accessible sites where it is recorded are Hexton Chalk Pit and along the Icknield Way path at the nearby Telegraph Hill. As with so many spring flyers the poor weather in early May accounts for the odd gap in 2010's flight period.

Purple Hairstreak *Neozephyrus quercus*

Common around oaks

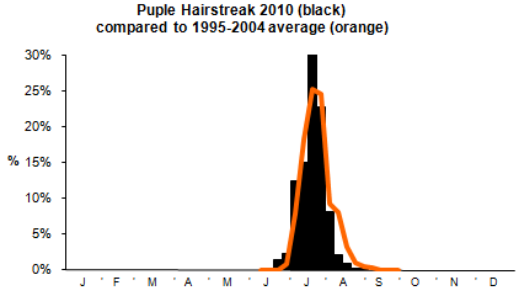
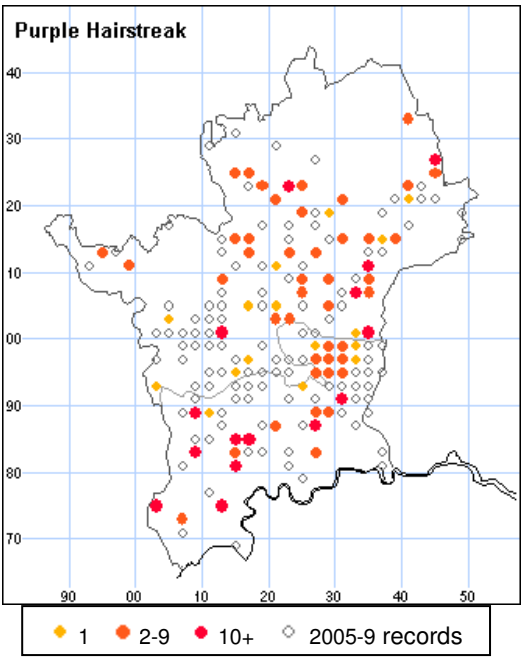


Photo Andrew Steele



First: 24 June
Last: 28 Aug
Peak week: 16-22 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	21% (74)
2009	15% (70)
2005-9 mean	16%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	16
2009	12
2005-9 mean	10

Distribution change
Up 31% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 51% compared with 2005-2009

This is one of the success species of 2010, though the increased numbers recorded may be due to the hot dry early summer which seemed to drive this butterfly from living high in oaks on honeydew to low down to feed on nectar and mineral salts from the ground. Examples are “settled on a thistle flower near Hadley Wood station”, Diane Andrews on 22 July, ”many low down, some settled on the ground”, Peter Clarke at Newton wood on 22nd July. It was the first time ever in 15 years that this species was recorded on the Ware Park transect because of butterflies low on vegetation and on the ground.

White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrium w-album*

Common around elm

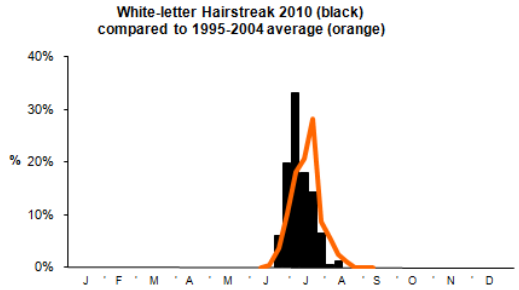
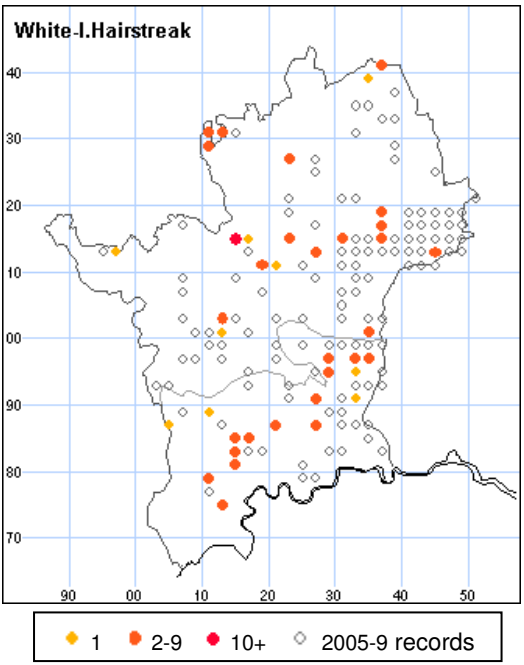


Photo Nigel Agar



First: 22 June
Last: 30 Jul
Peak week: 2-8 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	11% (38)
2009	7% (33)
2005-9 mean	10%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	9
2009	5
2005-9 mean	5

Distribution change
Up10% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 77% compared with 2005-2009

White-letter Hairstreak is well distributed wherever elm remains and there is much more of this than many people think, as the survey work by Andrew Middleton and Liz Goodyear has shown. 2010's records were also affected by the warm dry weather in summer driving it down nearer the ground. Examples are "5,6, maybe 7 on brambles" seen by Charlotte Fox in Sherrards Park Wood in Welwyn Garden City, one seen in Tottenham Cemetery on 7th July by Alastair Goodall *"taking moisture off wet ground"* and one seen on 18th July by Peter Collins on a thistle in Sunbury. This is another species as likely to be found in Middlesex as in Hertfordshire.

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

Widespread & common

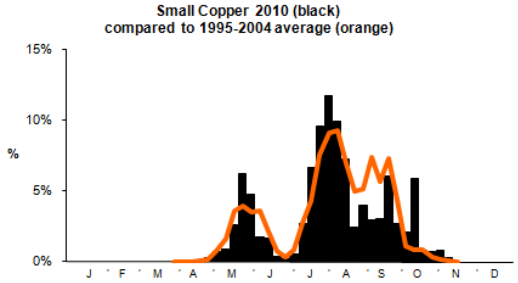
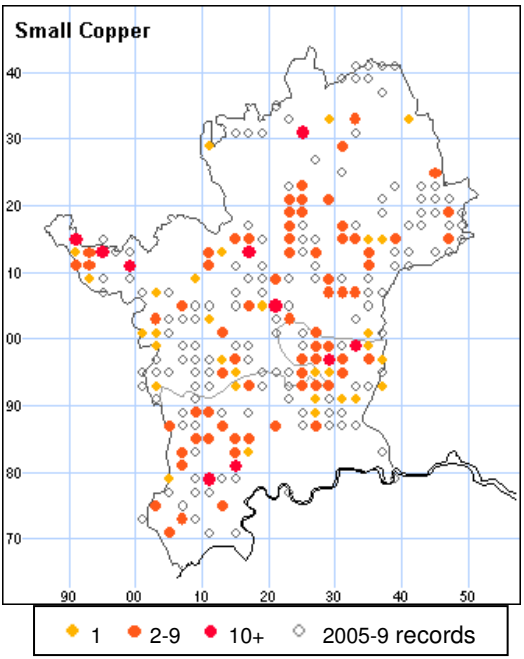


Photo Darin Stanley



First: 27 Apr
Last: 3 Nov
Peak week: 30 Jul-5 Aug

Distribution % squares	
2010	32% (111)
2009	23% (104)
2005-9 mean	21%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	17
2009	13
2005-9 mean	11

Distribution change
Up 54% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 52% compared with 2005-2009

Another of the lycaenid species to have experienced a bumper 2010. Transects at Danesbury, Kenwood, Knebworth and Stevenage all recorded large numbers. At Kenwood transect Mike Taylor commented, " our Small Copper population has revived…..26 equals our previous best in 2006". Diane Andrews noted the form *caeruleopunctata* with an attractive row of blue spots on the hindwing on several dates in September at Hadley Wood. On the Stevenage transect Peter Clarke noted "one seen was significantly smaller than the other sightings", the first time he has seen such a variant.

Small Blue *Cupido minimus*

Very rare & restricted

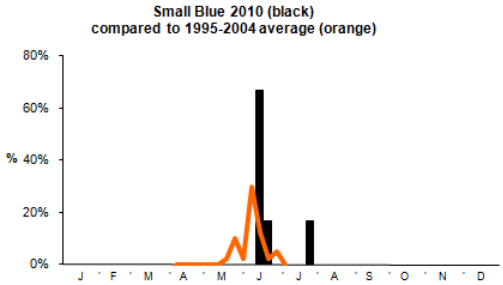
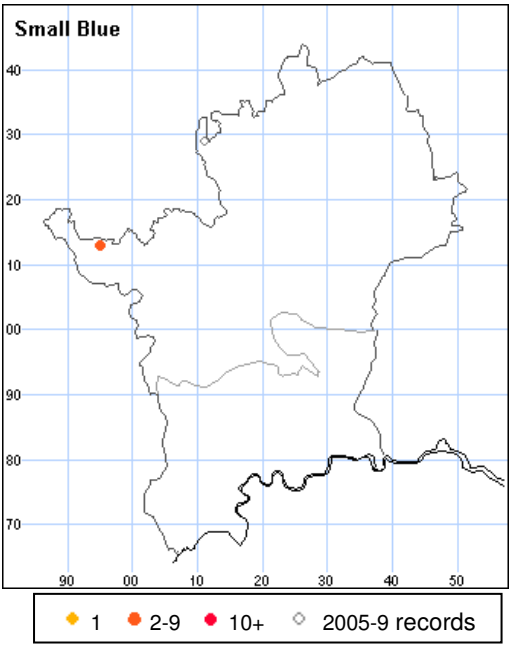


Photo Paul Thrush



First: 13 June
Last: 26 Jul
Peak week: 9-15 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	1% (1)
2009	1% (1)
2005-9 mean	0%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	3
2009	0
2005-9 mean	0

Distribution change
To little data to calculate

Abundance change
To little data to calculate

5 were recorded on 4 different occasions by 3 separate observers at Aldbury Nowers in the west of Hertfordshire. One was seen on 13 June by Steve Kiln, 3 on 17 June by Martin Hicks and one on both 21 June and 26 July by Paul Thrush, on the latter sighting Paul reported, ”I also saw a pristine small blue in the southern part of the reserve, along the field margin. It settled long enough to get a positive identification, but it didn't settle after this and was very purposeful in its flight.... Would this be a second brood individual?” There is no evidence of breeding but if these individuals spread from nearby Buckinghamshire sites it is to be hoped that with the major work that has been done here that it is now in a suitable state for a colony to be established.

Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*

Widely distributed

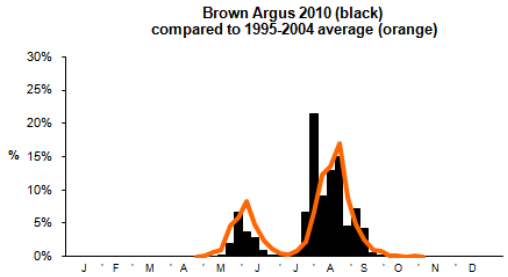
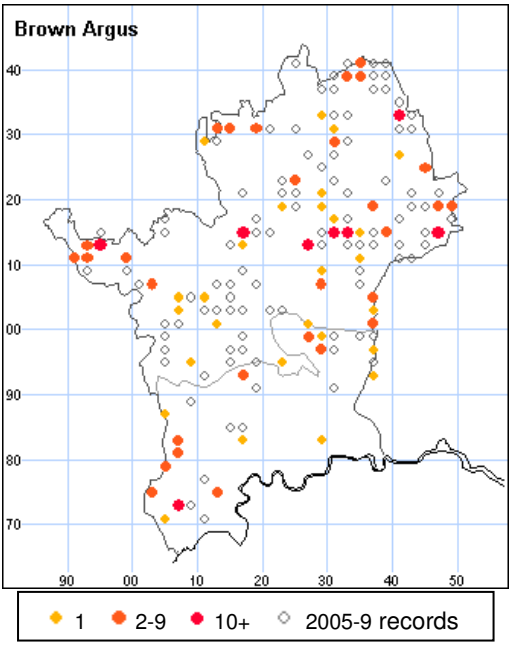


Photo Dave Miller



First: 8 May
Last: 22 Sep
Peak week: 23-29 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	18% (64)
2009	13% (57)
2005-9 mean	11%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	18
2009	14
2005-9 mean	15

Distribution change
Up 57% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 17% compared with 2005-2009

A good year for this species with gains in distribution and numbers. In many ways it has followed the pattern of the common Blue and Small Copper. It appeared for the first time on the Bronzefield and Wood Lane Pirton transects and was said to have “done very well” at Bishops Stortford Southern Country Park. At Bedfont Lakes in south west Middlesex Richard Featherstone notes, “one of the most pleasing increases was the number of Brown Argus……a great rise of 53 on the previous year”. They have also been found in North east Middlesex in small numbers at sites such as Totteridge Fields and Trent Park.

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*

Widespread & common

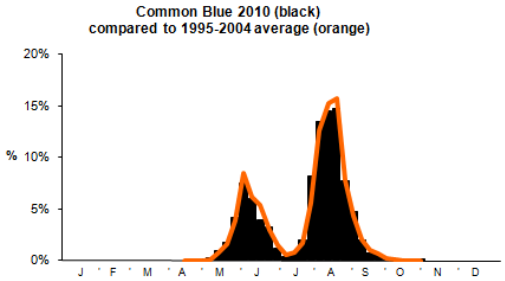
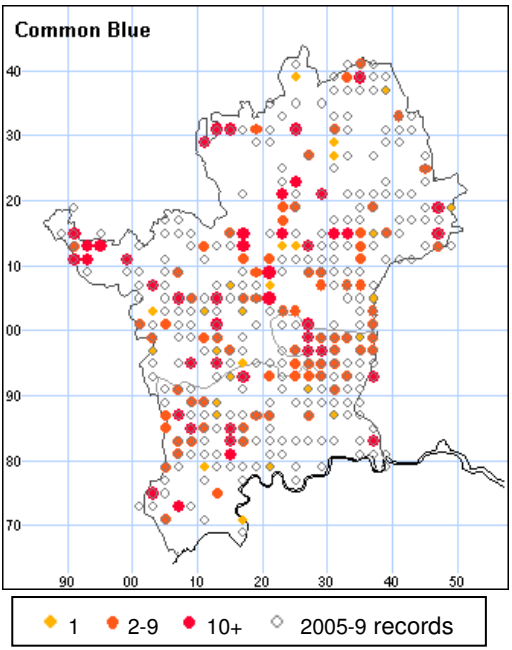


Photo Paul Thrush



First: 1 May
Last: 7 Oct
Peak week: 9-15 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	42% (146)
2009	33% (152)
2005-9 mean	31%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	83
2009	39
2005-9 mean	30

Distribution change
Up 36% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 174% compared with 2005-2009

Like many other of the blue and hairstreak group of butterflies the Common Blue has had a very good 2010. It reappeared in numbers at sites where it had virtually disappeared such as Balls Wood, it was seen in significantly larger numbers at many transects, for instance Danesbury, Kenwood, Knebworth, Shrubhill Common, Stevenage and Templewood Vale. It was the highest ever total at Bricket Wood and at Butterfly World made up 60% of the butterflies recorded. The flight period was almost exactly on the long term pattern for this species. It may be that the cold winter followed by the hot summer gave the ideal conditions for this species.

Chalkhill Blue *Lysandra coridon*

Common at known chalk sites

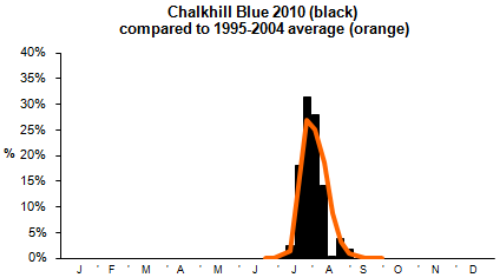
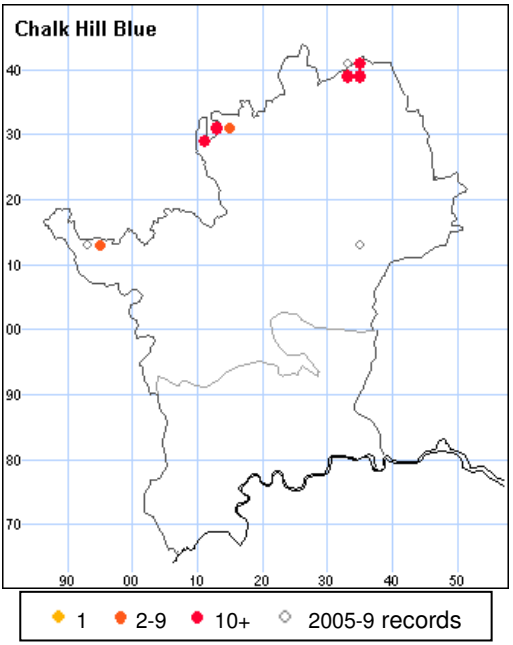


Photo David Gower



First: 3 Jul
Last: 15 Sep
Peak week: 23-29 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2010	2% (7)
2009	1% (6)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	284
2009	57
2005-9 mean	96

Distribution change
To little data to calculate

Abundance change
Up 195% compared with 2005-2009

Inextricably linked with downland as its name suggests, we have a few strong sites for this species, Hexton Chalk Pit, Telegraph Hill and the historically important site at Therfield heath on the edge of Royston. The numbers at Therfield Heath were very high in 2010, exceeding the poor year of 2009 over five fold and way above the longer term average, indeed Alan Beale the walker notes numbers are up to 2000 levels. Further good news was its reappearance at the other chalk grassland reserve of Aldbury Nowers for the first time since 2006. It is worth keeping an eye out at any chalky site in northern Hertfordshire.

Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*

Widespread & common

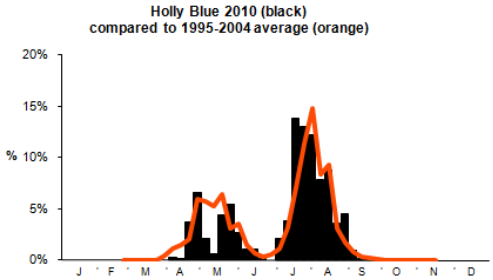
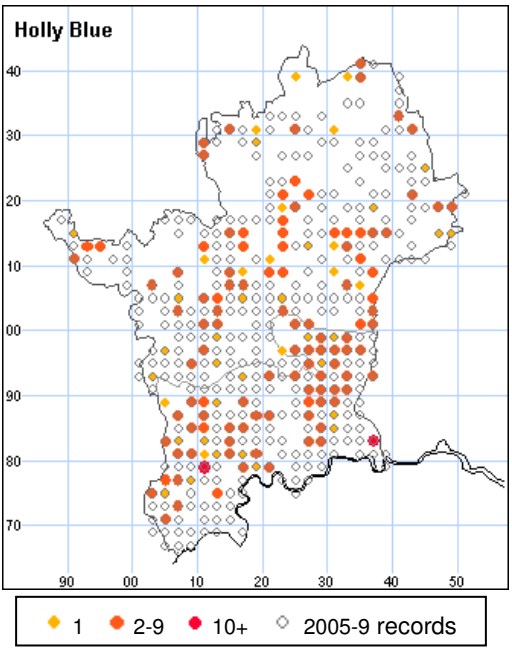


Photo Allesandro Giusti



First: 8 Apr
Last: 7 Oct
Peak week: 16-22 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	43% (151)
2009	31% (143)
2005-9 mean	41%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	9
2009	6
2005-9 mean	12

Distribution change
Up 5% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 27% compared with 2005-2009

Holly Blue is a species whose numbers are controlled by a parasite so it tends to have a series of good years followed by a series of poor years. We would appear to be on the upward curve compared to 2009 and for such a species this is perhaps a more meaningful comparison than with longer term data. It is also an urban butterfly and as the map shows it is as likely to be seen in London as in the countryside. As in many previous years there is evidence of a partial third brood with a record on 7 October over 3 weeks later than the next latest. An interesting record of egg laying on Pyracanthus was reported seen by Kit Jones on 22nd May.

White Admiral *Limenitis camilla*

Increasing in woodland areas

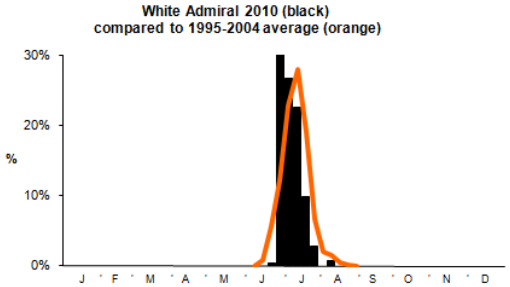
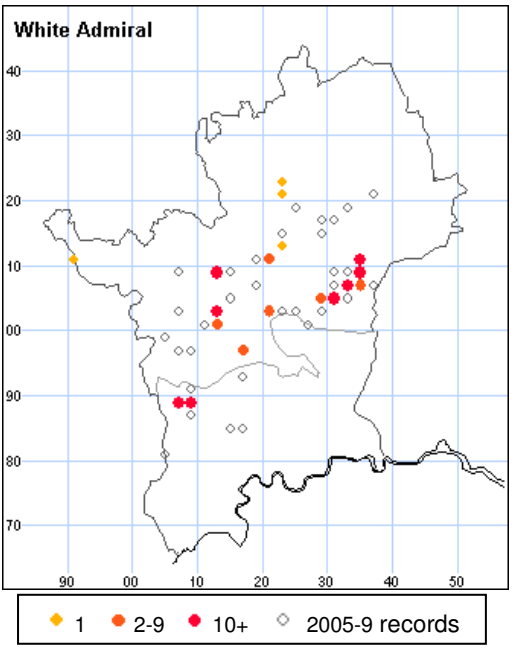


Photo Robin Pearson



First: 22 June
Last: 9 Aug
Peak week: 25 Jun -1 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2010	5% (18)
2009	4% (19)
2005-9 mean	4%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	16
2009	14
2005-9 mean	11

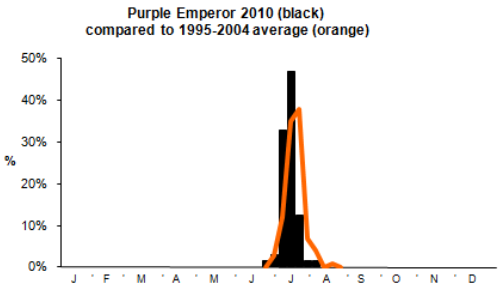
Distribution change
Up 16% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 37% compared with 2005-2009

The distribution of this species closely mirrors that of our other large woodland species the Purple Emperor and Silver-washed Fritillary and in many cases all three can be seen at the same location. The colder winter meant there were no records for first flight but once they emerged they peaked early but also flew into August, something less common in recent years. On the 9th July Colin Everett observed the variety *obliteriae* (lacking a clear white band) at Bricket Wood. Occasionally they stray from woodland - Nick Bowles found in his Tring garden on 8th August, "a first time visitor after 17 years at this address".

Purple Emperor *Apatura iris*

Local but increasing



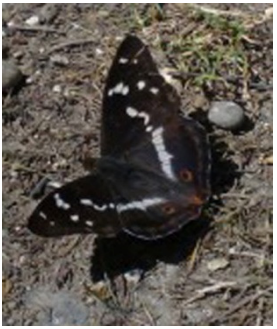
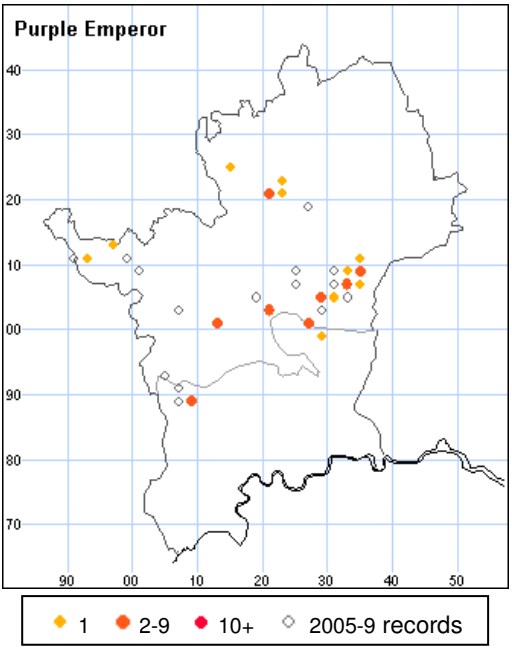


Photo Lawrence Drummond



First: 24 June
Last: 5 Aug
Peak week: 9-15 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	5% (18)
2009	2% (8)
2005-9 mean	3%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	2
2009	1
2005-9 mean	2

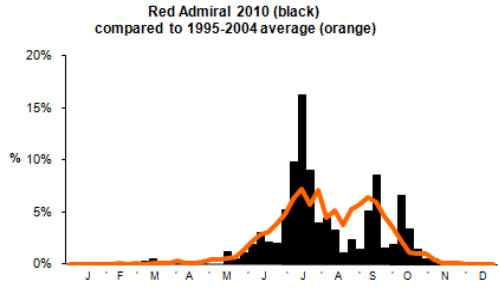
Distribution change
Too little data to calculate

Abundance change
Too little data to calculate

This species continues to exercise a real hold over observers and as before many detailed reports have been received for it from strongholds such as Broxbourne Woods and Park Wood Ruislip. The relative lack of empty circles on the map also shows how it continues to be thriving in the woods of Southern Hertfordshire and North West Middlesex. Significant reports in 2010 were those from Bricket Wood and the north of Hertfordshire. North Hertfordshire is an historic area and it is very exciting to note that the species is still present in this important area where many of the early documented records came from.

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Common migrant



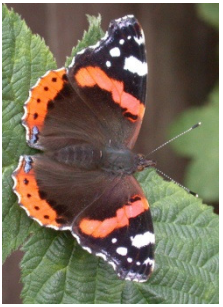
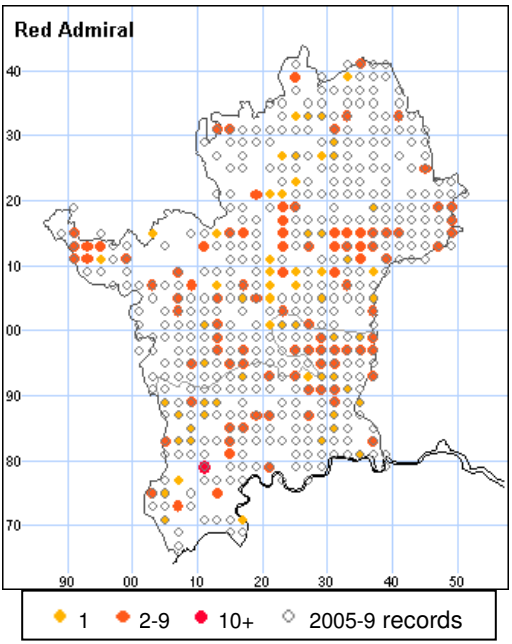


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 2 Mar
Last: 2 Dec
Peak week: 16-22 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	45% (156)
2009	36% (164)
2005-9 mean	51%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	5
2009	6
2005-9 mean	10

Distribution change
Down 12% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 55% compared with 2005-2009

As a migrant, for the most part the Red Admiral's presence is dependent on factors outside Britain but it was another quiet year after 2009. Particularly noticeable is the drop in numbers seen on transects. However the 2005-2009 data includes 2006 which was a very good year for this species and it is worth noting that the distribution figure for 1995-2004 was 45%. However in recent years the species has been very noticeable around ivy blossom and rotting fruit in September/October and very few were reported in 2010 compared to previous years.

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

Variable migrant

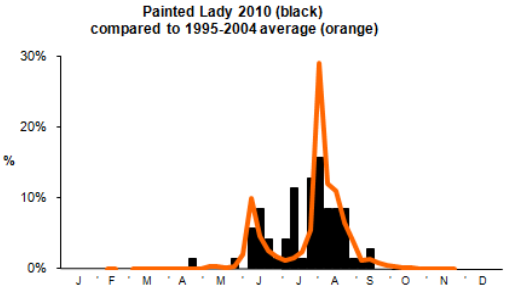
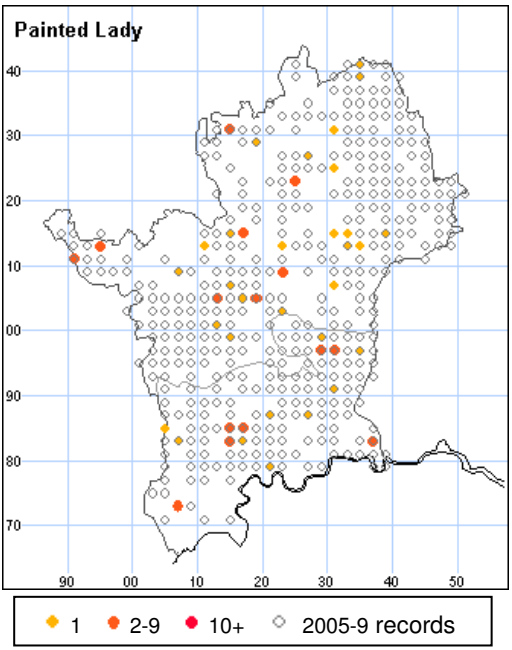


Photo Nick Bowles



First: 20 Apr
Last: 16 Sep
Peak week: 9-15 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	13% (45)
2009	70% (318)
2005-9 mean	33%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	7
2009	31
2005-9 mean	0

Distribution change
Down 60% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 42% compared with 2005-2009

After 2009's amazing invasion things were much quieter on the Painted Lady front. Odd ones were seen across both counties throughout the summer and it is difficult to discern any pattern of migration and breeding from the flight chart. A first sighting of 20th April followed by no more sightings until 21st May suggests that there was a possibility of an over winter survival but this has to be pure speculation. Intriguingly the largest counts of 4 and 6 were both on the Butterfly World transect in late July and early August. It is worth remembering that our population depends on conditions in the north African winter and that the huge decline shown above has no real conservation significance locally.

Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*

Widespread but declining

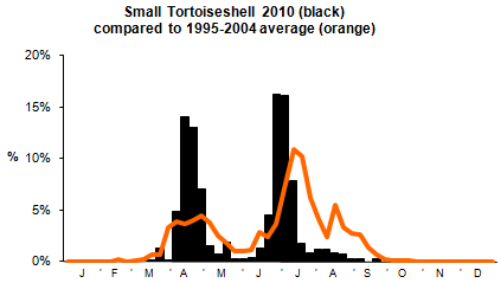
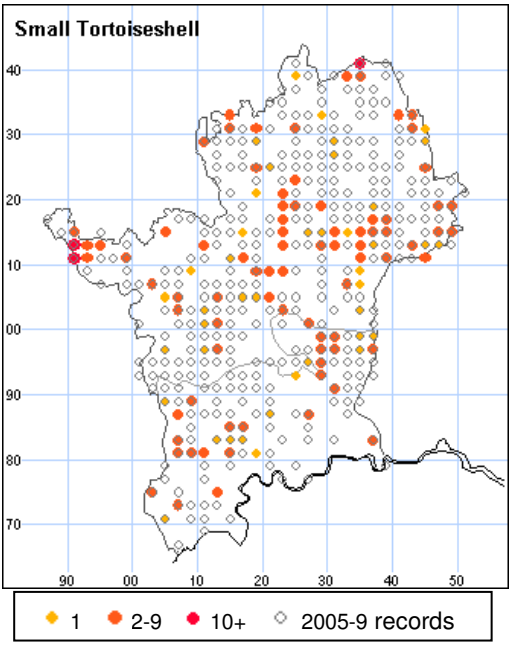


Photo Clive Burrows



First: 2 Mar
Last: 11 Oct
Peak week: 9-15 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	36% (124)
2009	36% (166)
2005-9 mean	37%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	8
2009	12
2005-9 mean	10

Distribution change
Down 3% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 15% compared with 2005-2009

2009 saw a mini recovery in this species that seems to be suffering from strong parasitic attacks, but this was not sustained in 2010. Although it is still found widely numbers dropped compared to not just 2009 but also the more recent average. There was one outstanding record in the far west of at least 60 at Wilstone Reservoir on 29th June, otherwise no more than 15 were recorded on any one occasion. Worryingly there were very few seen after mid July and they were virtually absent in the autumn, in common with the Peacock, a worrying trend for early 2011.

Peacock *Inachis io*

Widespread & common

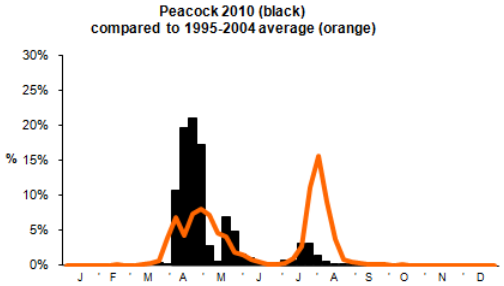
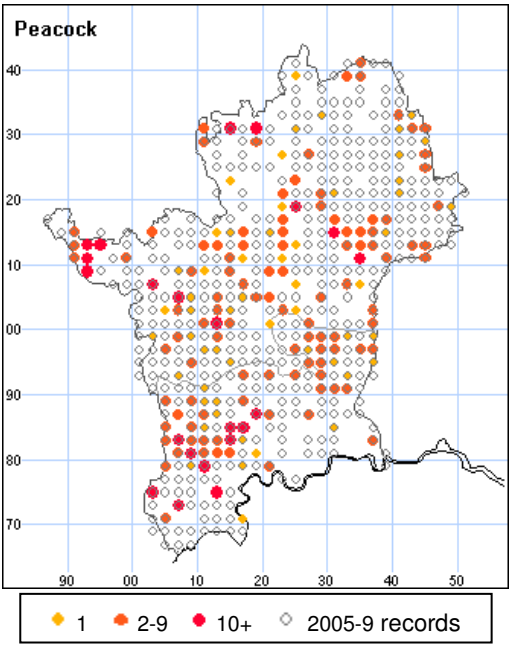


Photo Dave Miller



First: 18 Mar
Last: 6 Nov
Peak week: 16-24 Apr

Distribution % squares	
2010	52% (180)
2009	68% (309)
2005-9 mean	57%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	36
2009	44
2005-9 mean	31

Distribution change
Down 11% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 15% compared with 2005-2009

The flight diagram clearly shows the collapse in the summer emergence of this species. In 2009 there was a very strong emergence and this is reflected in the strong spring flight which accounted for 88% of the butterflies seen in 2010. Those that did emerge seemed to quickly go into hibernation as only 27 out of 2362 individuals were recorded after 15 Aug. On the Stevenage transect Peter Clarke reported “One of the most worrying trends is the decline of the Peacock – I saw only one in late summer”. The spring numbers in 2011 will be very interesting, and quite possibly worrying to see. What has caused this sudden decline?

Comma *Polygonia c-album*

Common & widespread

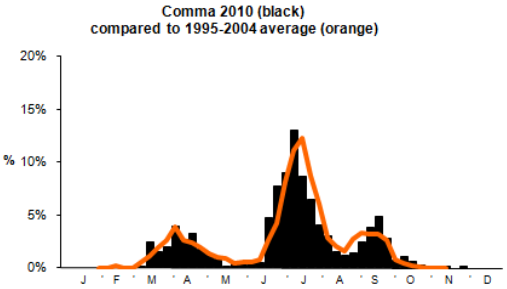
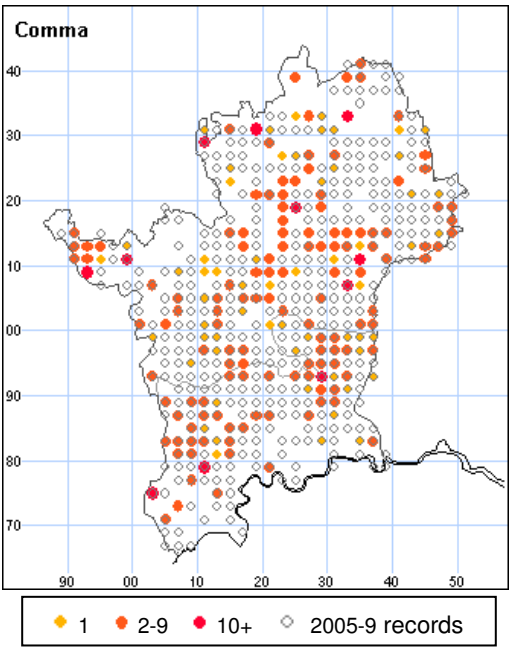


Photo Clive Burrows



First: 2 Mar
Last: 4 Nov
Peak week: 16-22 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	57% (198)
2009	57% (261)
2005-9 mean	50%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	22
2009	27
2005-9 mean	28

Distribution change
Up 14% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 21% compared with 2005-2009

Seemingly showing much greater resilience than the Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell the Comma continues to be well distributed across both counties both in urban areas and the wider countryside. The flight pattern was almost text book in following the long term average. Its ubiquity is shown by the fact that of the 14 occasions where 10 or more individuals were seen these are spread over 9 different sites across both counties. These sites include chalk downland, damp woodland and urban parks.

Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*

Rare but increasing

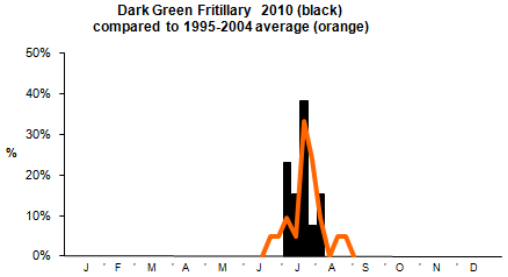
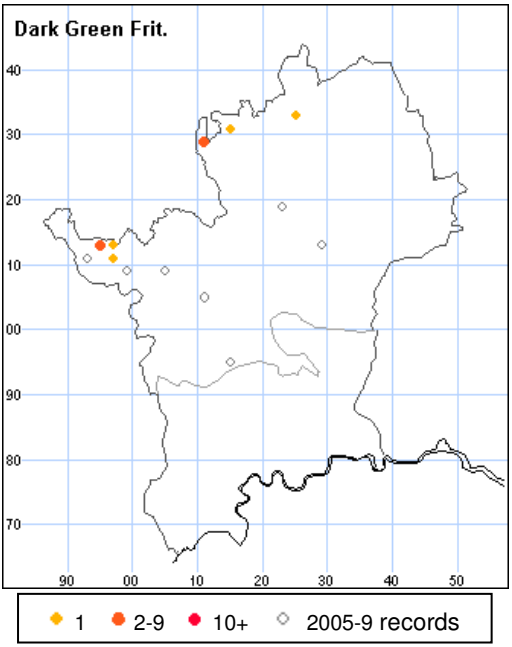


Photo Paul Thrush



First: 3 Jul
Last: 3 Aug
Peak week: 16-22 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	2% (6)
2009	0.2% (1)
2005-9 mean	0.7%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	3
2009	n/a
2005-9 mean	3

Distribution change
No change

Abundance change
To little data to calculate

Nothing like as widespread as the Silver-washed Fritillary but there are encouraging signs of this species spreading in from the west. A species of open grassy hillsides it has fewer opportunities in our area. But it was regularly recorded at Aldbury Nowers and also in Hexton Chalk Pit. At Aldbury Nowers a particularly encouraging report came from Phil Woodward, "..saw at least 2-3 Dark Green Fritillaries flying on the slopes where a lot of management work has been done". A sighting by Andrew Wood by the Baldock bypass through the Weston Hills was a new 10km square record, though it was the only one recorded there.

Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia* Increasing

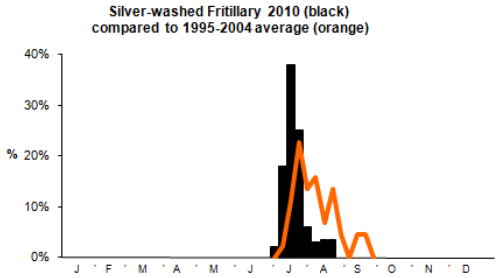
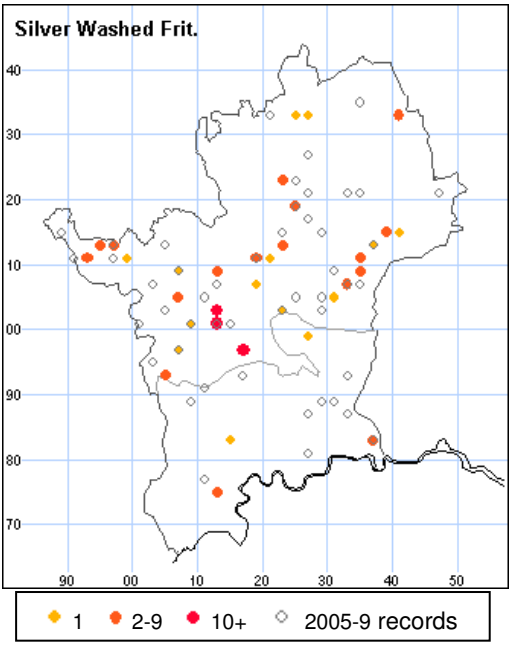


Photo Alessando Giusti



First: 30 June
Last: 17 Aug
Peak week: 9-15 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	10% (34)
2009	3% (14)
2005-9 mean	4%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	10
2009	7
2005-9 mean	3

Distribution change
Up 150% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 315% compared with 2005-2009

This is undoubtedly the success story of recent years. Its distinctive gliding flight can now be readily observed in most large woodlands such as Symondshyde, Broxbourne, Balls and Bricket Wood. This magnificent woodland butterfly has spread east from its first footholds in Bricket Wood and is now well distributed across south Herts with a few records in the north of the county and in Middlesex. On 10 July Colin Everett observed egg laying in Bricket wood on a fence and probably a birch rather than the traditional oak trunk, but in an area with plenty of violets for the hatched larvae to climb down to. It has also been seen in gardens and parks in areas as diverse as Greenford and Tower Hamlets in Middlesex and Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire.

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

Widespread & common

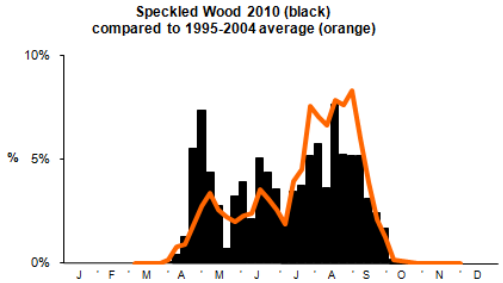
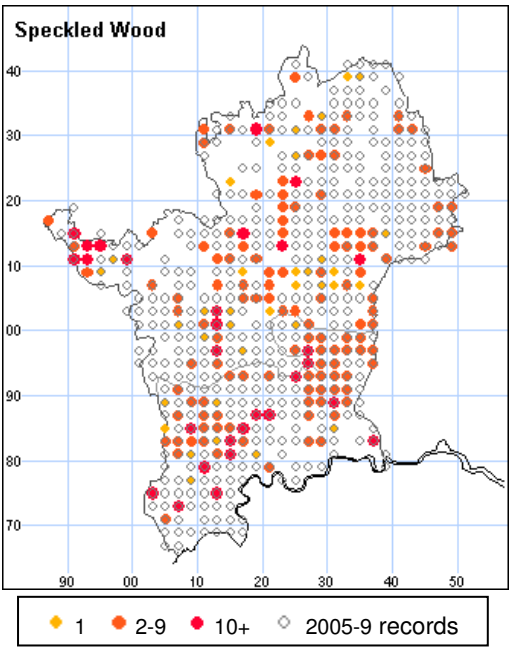


Photo Brian Knight



First: 9 Apr
Last: 30 Oct
Peak week: 13-19 Aug

Distribution % squares	
2010	54% (188)
2009	70% (318)
2005-9 mean	58%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	67
2009	104
2005-9 mean	74

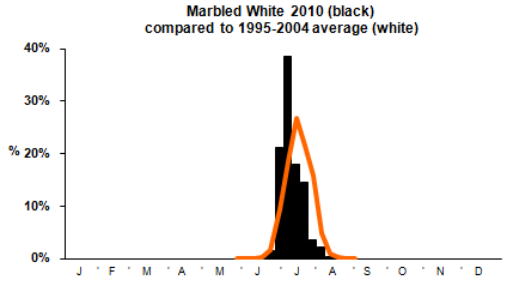
Distribution change
Down 7% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 11% compared with 2005-2009

Something of a decline for this common species in 2010 after a bumper 2009, though the changes are much less drastic compared to the longer term average. What is unusual is the flight pattern with the warm dry spring contrasting with a cool damp late summer. Generally there is a distinct peak in late August but it was much less apparent than in previous years, there was also a distinct gap between the early spring butterflies that probably over wintered as chrysalises and the later spring ones that spent the winter as caterpillars and whose early feeding was retarded by the cold weather early in 2010.

Marbled White *Melanargia galathea*

Widespread



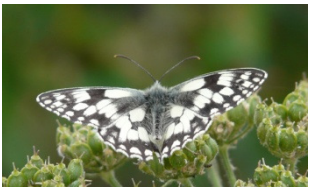
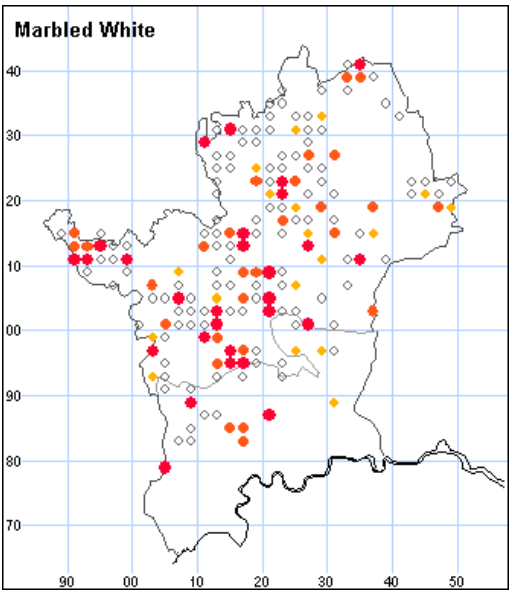


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 17 June
Last: 4 Aug
Peak week: 2-8 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	21% (74)
2009	17% (79)
2005-9 mean	16%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	49
2009	42
2005-9 mean	61

Distribution change
Up 33% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 20% compared with 2005-2009

On the face of it the data for Marbled White do not look good, but 2005-2009 was a period of rapid expansion and perhaps we are beginning to see consolidation. There are now sites across Hertfordshire where once it was very much a western species, and some colonies in Middlesex too. Bob Clift at Bishop Stortford Southern County Park notes “I had the best year ever for Marbled Whites, which have now properly colonised the Park”. It is also turning up, though not as a breeding species at more unusual sites such as 3 years running in Balls Wood.

Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

Widespread

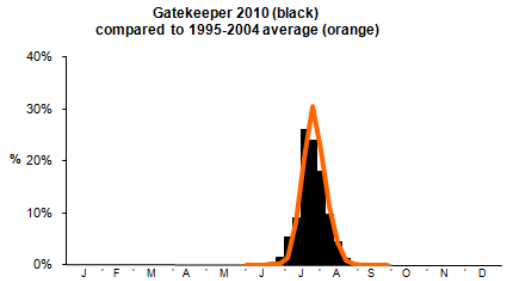
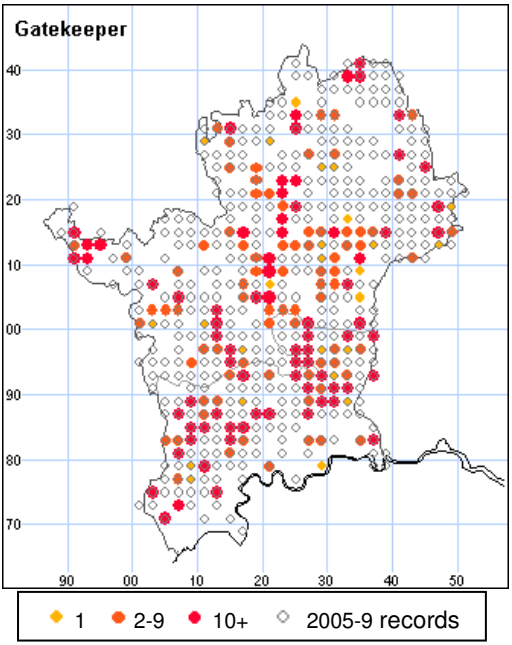


Photo Alessando Giusti



First: 23 June
Last: 19 Sep
Peak week: 16-22 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	52% (180)
2009	45% (205)
2005-9 mean	49%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	99
2009	93
2005-9 mean	123

Distribution change
Up 6% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 19% compared with 2005-2009

The Gatekeeper's distribution is very similar to the Meadow Brown and is similarly stable. However numbers are only slightly above 2009's and continue to be well below recent averages. However Andrew Wood on the Balls Wood transect noted, "the warm July conditions almost doubled the numbers seen back to 1996 levels following three very similar years" and at Kenwood transect Mike Taylor recorded "an unprecedentedly high number of 180". The flight period was more typical than the Meadow Brown's. Strangely there was a noticeable cluster of records from across the area in the last days of August/first days of September.

Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

Widespread & Common

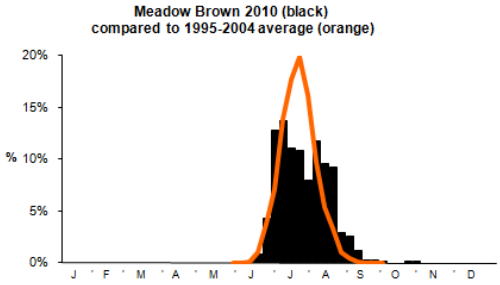
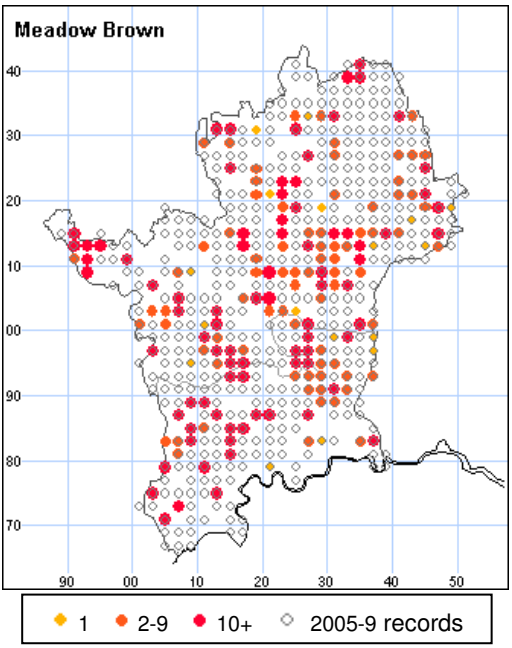


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 3 June
Last: 25 Oct
Peak week: 2-8 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	51% (178)
2009	52% (238)
2005-9 mean	56%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	173
2009	208
2005-9 mean	273

Distribution change
Down 9% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 58% compared with 2005-2009

The Meadow Brown remains very common except in the very urban areas of Middlesex and the intensive arable areas of east Hertfordshire where there is a lack of the wild grasses the larvae need. What is notable is the length of the flight period this year, lacking the traditional peak but with many records into the autumn. It looks as if the cool, damp late summer caused an extended emergence which is more common on downland sites in southern England. Indeed many of the September and October records were from chalk areas such as Aldbury Nowers, Tring and Therfield Heath.

Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*

Increasing

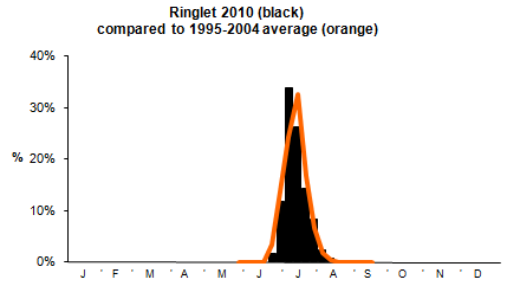
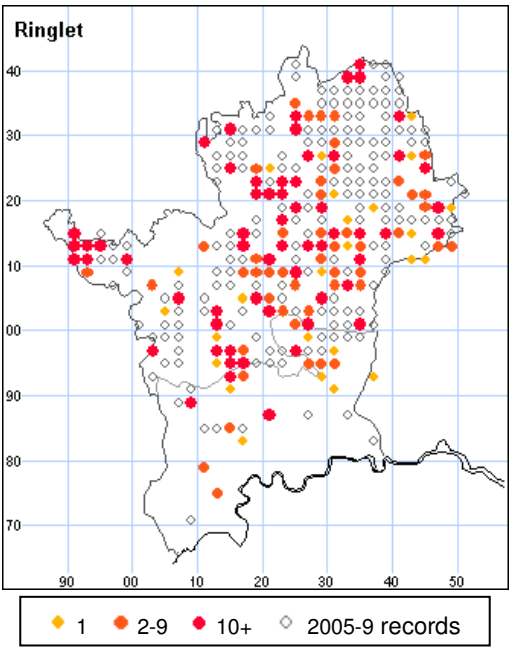


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 21 June
Last: 25 Aug
Peak week: 2-8 July

Distribution % squares	
2010	38% (133)
2009	30% (135)
2005-9 mean	25%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	130
2009	133
2005-9 mean	103

Distribution change
Up 52% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 26% compared with 2005-2009

Damp woodland remains the stronghold of the Ringlet. For instance there were 807 recorded on the Balls Wood transect and 567 on the Bricket Wood transect, though there are good populations on dry chalk land sites too. Never common in Middlesex there is evidence of a spread into the east and west of the county where the most rural areas remain. Recent numbers are well above the recent average and this species seem to have been little affected by the cold winter and warm early summer. Most of its flight period was during the very hot dry weather of July and this doubtless encouraged the high counts at many sites.

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Widespread

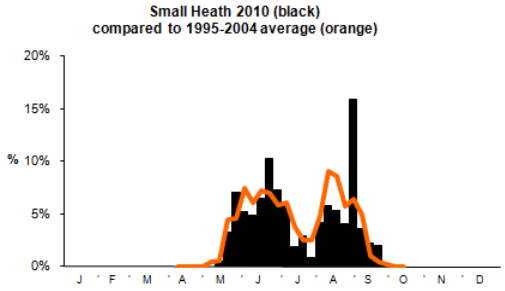
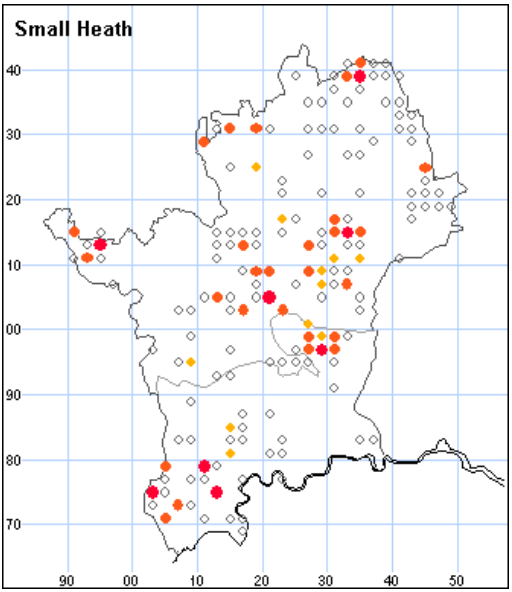


Photo Dave Miller



First: 13 May
Last: 30 Sep
Peak week: 27 Aug – 2 Sep

Distribution % squares	
2010	13% (46)
2009	11% (52)
2005-9 mean	14%

Abundance (transects)	
2010	52
2009	27
2005-9 mean	36

Distribution change
Down 7% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 44% compared with 2005-2009

A good year for this species with numbers well up and a reasonable distribution. However many of the best numbers were recorded in the far south west of Middlesex at Stanwell Moor by Dave Miller. And in the far north east of Middlesex at Trent Park by Diane Andrews. This grassland species is completely absent from urban areas hence its rather split distribution in Middlesex. In Hertfordshire it is well distributed on the chalk grassland along the northern borders, but absent from the intensively farmed areas. The two broods were of equal size as is usual, a very high total at the end of August at one site slightly distorts the second brood flight chart.

Recorders - Many thanks to everyone who submitted records in 2010:
Nigel Agar; David Anderson; Michael Anderson; Diane Andrews; Paul Anness; Toby Austin; Brian Barton; John Bater; Alan Beale; Roy Beddard; Ian Bennell; Luke Berman; Michael Berthoud; A. Biggs; Phil Bishop; Nick Bowles; Tony Bristow; Andy Brown; K. Brown; Peter Brown; Murray Brown; Lee Browne; Lynne Browne; Clive Burrows; Clive Butchins; Robert Callf; Ian Carle; Deborah Chalmers; David Chandler; Violet Chandler; Trevor Chapman; Tony Clancy; Peter Clarke; Mr & Mrs K.J. Clench; Bob Clift; Alan Cockburn; Peter Collins; N.O. Connor; Jeff Corney; Sheila Cottrell; Andrew Culshaw; Simon Cumming; Bev Curtis; Brian Dawton; Elizabeth Debenham; Chris Dee; M. Dominey; Jack Doyle; Laurence Drummond; John Edwards; Graham Elcombe; Colin Everett; Jim Farr; Richard Featherstone; Jane Fielding; Ian Flack; Kim Fleming; Mandy Floyd; Jonathan Forgham; Charlotte Fox; Louis Freeland-Haynes; Val Fullforth; Ian Gamble; Alan Gardiner; Ched George; Helen George; Jacqueline George; Alessando Giusti; A. Goldsmith; David Gompertz; Liz Goodyear; Michael Goodyear; Martin Gore; David Gower; David Green; Peter Groves; Oliver Halford; Michael Hammerson; Jen Hartland; Sue Hazelhurst; Jan Hein van Steenis; Eileen Hewitt; Martin Hicks; Sezar Hikmet; Tim Hill; Audrey Hind; John Hollingdale; Janet Holmes; Neale Holmes-Smith; Andy Holtham; Craig Hornby; D. Housley; David Howdon; Graham Hughes; Margaret Huitson; Tony Hukin; Malcolm Hull; Lee Hurrell; Alan Jackson; Brian Jessop; Martin Johnson; Kit Jones; Steve Kiln; Jon King; Ken King; Michael Kings; Brian Knight; Simon Knott; Zuza Kukielka; Cameron Landels; John Landels; Steve Lane; Ernie Leahy; Phil Macmurdie; John Magee; Guy Manners; Helen Martin; Simon Mercer; Andrew Middleton; Dick Middleton; Robert Millar; Dave Miller; Mark Morgan; Roger Morton; Sylvia Morton; John Moss; Keir Mottram; Tony Moverley; John Murray; Peter Naylor; Roger Newbold; Malcolm Newland; Margaret Noakes; Neil O'Callaghan; S. Ormonroyd; Andrew Palmer; Nicky Parish; Nigel Parsons; Steve Pash; V.W. Patterson; Richard Payne; Gwyneth Pearman- Jenkins; Michael Pearson; Robin Pearson; Eugenio Penalvo; Caroline Phillips; V. Phillpot; Stuart Pittman; Sue Place; Brian Price; Catherine Price; Selene Proctor; Roger Prue; Alan Reynolds; Jason Reynolds; John Richards; Ann Rix; John Rogers; Donald Rooum; Mike Rubin; Mandy Rudd; Mike Russell; Andrew Self; Alison Shipley; Charles Smith; Graham Smith; Martin Smith; Jeremy Soane; Rob Solomon; Mike Spittles; R. Stables; Kevin Standbridge; Sandra Standbridge; Darin Stanley; Andrew Steele; Sue Stephens; Pam Sykes; Mike Taylor; David Thomas; Joan Thompson; Paul Thrush; M. Tisdale; Rebecca Turpin; Chris Tyler-Smith; Paul Unwin; Andrew Verrall; Gavin Vicary; Pat Watt; David Wheatcroft; Paul Why; Leslie Williams; Andrew Wood; Jane Wood; Kate Wood; T. Wood; Jane Worroll; Kris Zymla;

Branch Contacts	
Branch Chairman & Records collator Andrew Wood, 93 Bengeo Street, Hertford SG14 3EZ Tel: 01992 503571 zoothorn@ntlworld.com	**Branch Organiser/Secretary**: Liz Goodyear, 7 Chestnut Avenue, Ware. SG12 7JE Tel: 01920 487066 elizabethgoodyear@talk21.com

With grateful thanks to The Robert Kiln Charitable Trust who have made a grant to aid publication and support of the branch's recording work.