

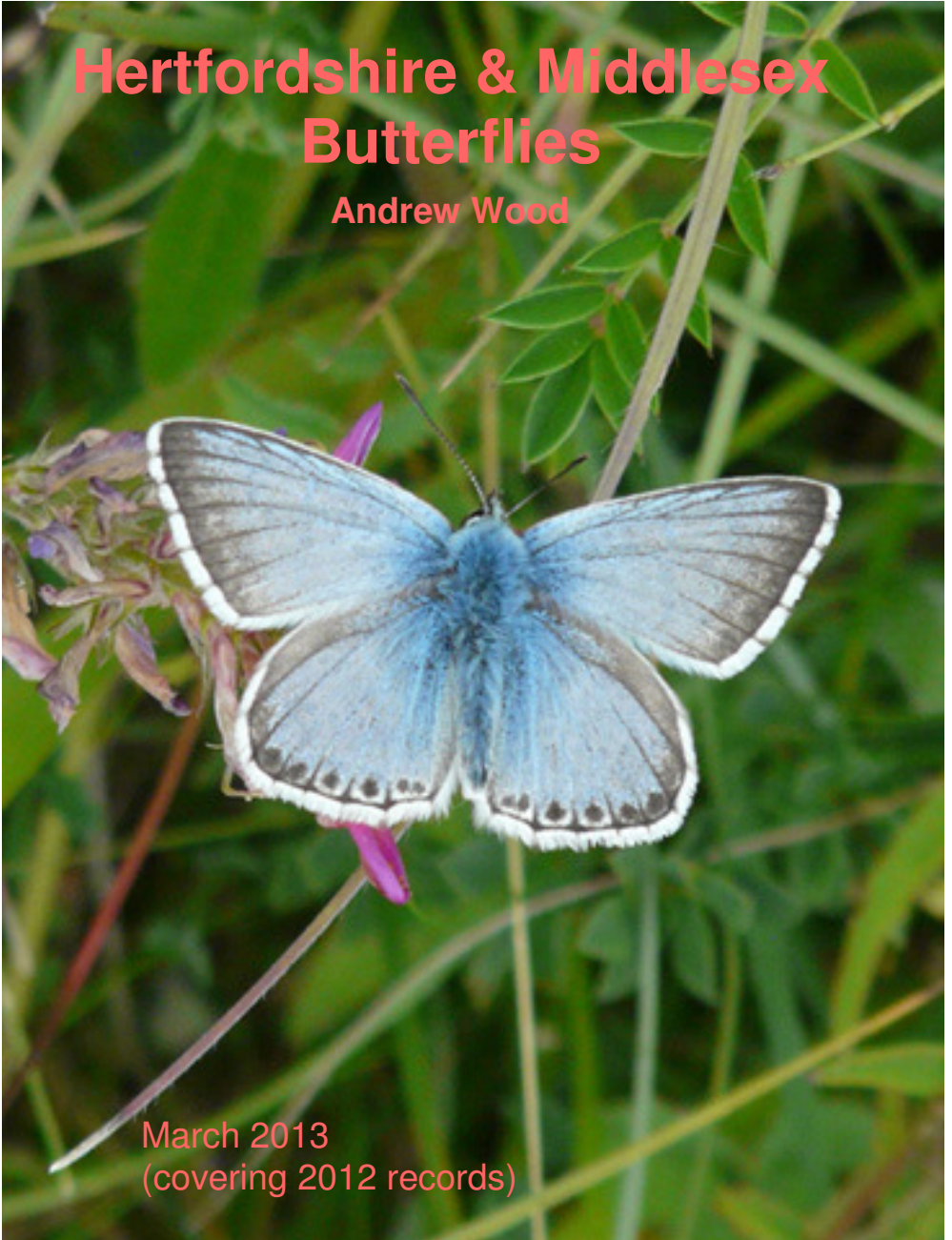


**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

Hertfordshire & Middlesex Butterflies

Andrew Wood



March 2013
(covering 2012 records)

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INTRODUCTION

In England 2012 was the wettest year in living memory and the butterfly season certainly reflected that. With very few exceptions numbers and distribution were down on recent years. Butterflies had been flying earlier in recent years but in 2012 they were up to three weeks later than expected. Yet the mild second half of March meant that there were also many early records for the spring species, but this quickly changed during April. Expanding or recovering species such as Brown Argus and Small Tortoiseshell slipped back. The only unequivocal success was our cover star the Chalkhill Blue.

Unsurprisingly we have had fewer records than for 2011 (15900 v 23000) but many thanks to the 770 people who contributed sightings, everyone should be listed at the back of the booklet.

Please read and use this booklet and send in your sightings electronically or on paper to the branch record collator (details on back cover) by November 9th 2013.

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

Species not included in the main section

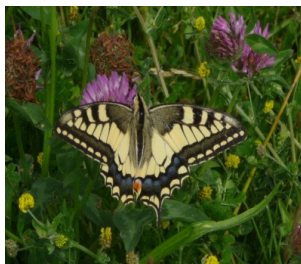


Photo: John Eborall

Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*

John Eborall on 19th June. "A remarkable sighting of a Swallowtail at Oak Avenue LNR, Hampton. Apart from one missing tail, it looked in excellent condition. Presumably an escape." Robert Stroud on 24th May, "a Swallowtail visited my garden in Bishop's Stortford. It was in pristine condition and stayed nectaring on a garden version of Hemp Agrimony for many minutes".

Long Tailed Blue *Lampides boeticus*

On Friday 10th August, John Archer the Biodiversity Officer at Tower Hamlets Council found a male Long-tailed Blue butterfly at the East India Dock Basin Nature Reserve. This is the first record in our area since a short lived colony at Gillespie Park, Islington in the early 1990s.



Photo John Archer

Brown Hairstreak *Thecla betulae*

There have been several intriguing reports of possible Brown Hairstreaks flying around ash trees in close vicinity to the larval foodplant Blackthorn from Blackthorn and Rolls Wood in Panshanger, Welwyn Garden City and Norton Green just west of Stevenage. Several frustrating visits by a number of observers to both sites have seen insects that may be Brown Hairstreaks but nothing that could be 100% confirmed.

Camberwell Beauty *Aglais antiopa*

There were two records for this rare migrant, last seen in 2009. The first was seen by Malgorzata Kukielka on the Hounslow Heath Transect on 1st April, the second came from Andrew Sapsford Warden of Sawbridgeworth Marsh NR, "Camberwell Beauty seen at 4.15pm in Pishiobury Park, Sawbridgeworth - Saturday 11th August 2012. Flew past rapidly, aided by strong wind just east of car park. I followed it to where I thought I saw it land, but could not locate it again. Also seen by three other people that I was with."

Two Tailed Pasha *Charaxes jasius*

This species has never been recorded as a genuinely wild species in the UK. However a photo was published in the Hertfordshire Mercury on 11th October. It was taken by John Gilkes who was unaware of its UK status. The location was by one of the gravel pits in Cheshunt in the Lee Valley in south east Hertfordshire during early September.

Wall Brown *Lasioommata megera*

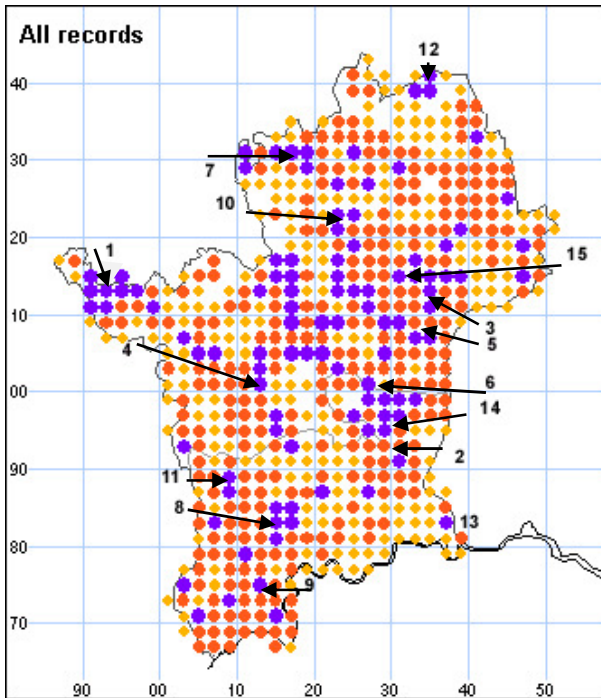
Not reliably recorded since 2006 we received an intriguing record, just before going to print, of a clear sighting on the ground. It was seen by Ian Shephard on the Hampstead Heath Transect walk on 29th August.

SOME GOOD BUTTERFLY SITES IN HERTFORDSHIRE & MIDDLESEX

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

Map	Site, Grid Reference, Brief details	Good site (rare or high numbers) - Date included if singles only
1	Aldbury Nowers (SP 951129) Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) reserve north west of Tring	Brimstone, Dark Green Fritillary, Dingy Skipper, Green Hairstreak, Grizzled Skipper, Small Blue
2	Alexandra Park TL296901 Park around Alexandra Palace in LB Haringey	Common Blue, Purple Hairstreak
3	Balls Wood TL 348106 At Hertford Heath 2 miles south of Hertford	Purple Hairstreak, Ringlet, Silver- washed Fritillary, White Admiral
4	Bricket Wood Common TL131017 North east of Watford	Purple Emperor, Ringlet, Silver- washed Fritillary, White Admiral
5	Broxbourne Woods TL323070 A large complex of woods west of Hoddesdon and south of Hertford. Grid ref above is for Broxbourne Wood west car park	Purple Emperor, Silver-washed Fritillary, White Admiral
6	Fir & Pond Woods TL277012 HMWT reserve 2 miles east of Potters Bar	Purple Emperor, Ringlet, Silver- washed Fritillary, White Admiral
7	Hexton Chalk Pit TL 107299 South of Hexton, turning off B655	Chalkhill Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Dingy Skipper, Green Hairstreak,
8	Horsenden Hill TQ 161845 Bisected by Horsenden Lane North between Perivale and Sudbury in LB Ealing.	Meadow Brown, Small Copper, White-letter hairstreak
9	Hounslow Heath TQ141748 Off Staines Road, Hounslow	Green Hairstreak 2011, Meadow Brown, Purple Hairstreak
10	Norton Green (Cannocks Wood/Watery Grove) TL229231 West of A1M at Stevenage. Accessed from byways south of Norton Green	Marbled White, Purple Emperor, Purple Hairstreak, Ringlet, Silver- washed Fritillary, White Admiral
11	Ruislip Woods TL080896 A complex of woods north of Ruislip along Ducks Hill Lane in LB Hillingdon	Purple Emperor, Ringlet, Silver- washed Fritillary, White Admiral
12	Therfield Heath TL347404 Downland west of Royston by A505	Chalkhill Blue, Marbled White, Small Skipper, Dark Green Fritillary
13	Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park TL367823 Southern Grove E3 nr Mile End Central Line station	Silver-washed Fritillary, Small Blue 2011
14	Trent Park TL280969 Near Cockfosters Piccadilly line tube station	Purple Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Heath
15	Waterford Heath TL 318150 HMWT reserve North of Hertford, accessed from Sacombe Road not via Waterford	Brown Argus, Grizzled Skipper, Small Heath

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



Squares Recorded and Key Sites

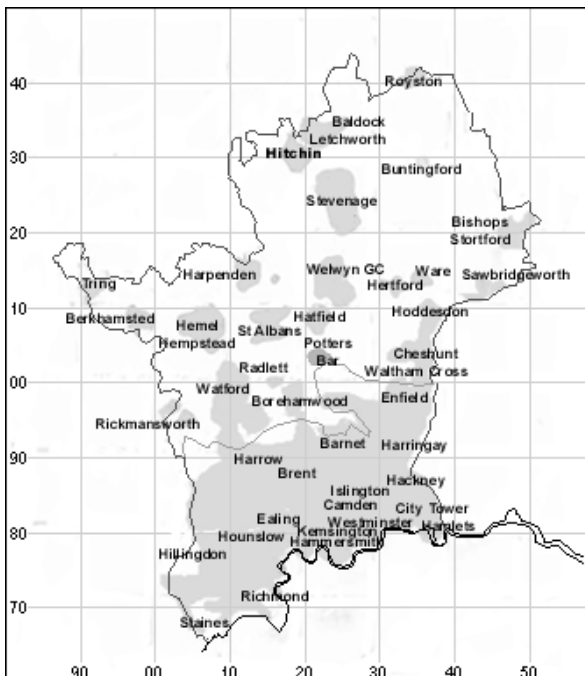
2 kilometre squares (tetrads) for which records were received in 2012

Key:	
●	1-10 species
●	11-20 species
●	21+ species

We have records from 499 out of 686 full or part squares in our area for 2012. 617 have been visited in 2010-2012. As you can see there are still some unrecorded squares in south east Middlesex and west and north east Hertfordshire.

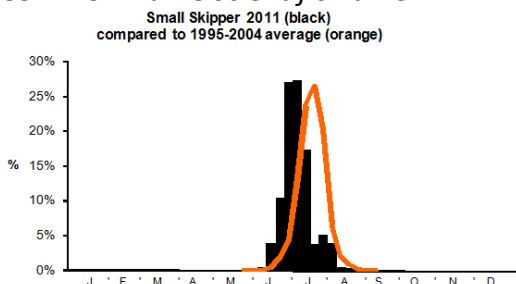
Major urban areas

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



KEY TO THE SPECIES ACCOUNTS

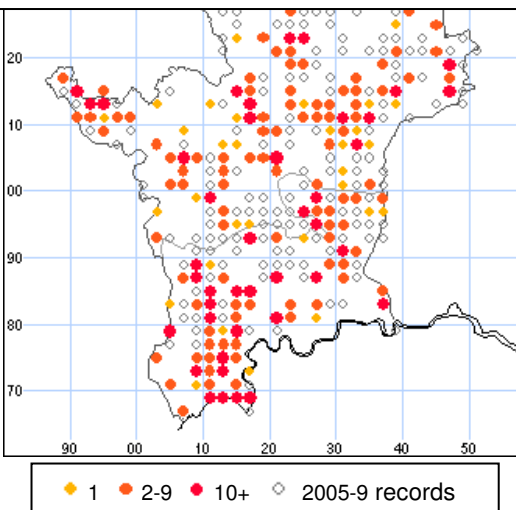
Common Name *Scientific name*



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

Small Skipper

Map showing 2 km squares where a species has been recorded in 2010-2011 split into 1, 2-9 or 10 or more recorded on a single occasion and the recent historical range.

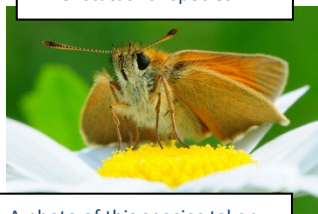


Notes on the species during the year

per the Ess
greater decline in distribution. Some caution is ne
record these two species as an aggregate due to
noticeable gap in central Herts for this species in

Widespread but declining

Brief status for species



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

2012	28% (155)
2011	25% (87)
2005-9 mean	27%

Abundance (transects)

2012	27
2011	32
2005-9 mean	42

Distribution change

Up 3% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change

Down 36% compared with 2005-2009

First sighting

Last sighting

Peak Week when most seen

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

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

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

Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris*

Widespread but declining

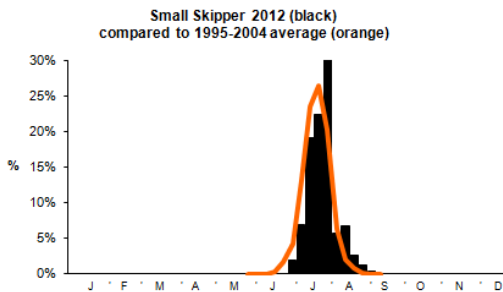
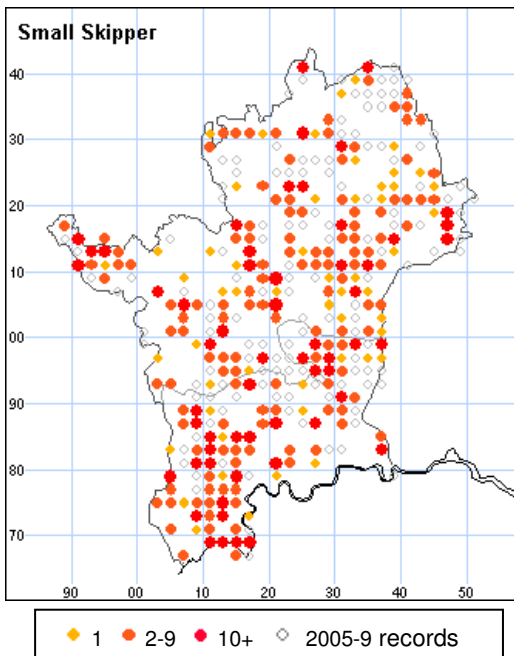


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 27 June

Last: 2 Sep

Peak week: 23 - 29 July



Distribution % squares	
2012	22% (110)
2011	28% (155)
2005-9 mean	27%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	17
2011	27
2005-9 mean	42

Distribution change
Down 22% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 60% compared with 2005-2009

2012 was not a good year for Small Skippers. The distribution drop might be explained by the poor weather conditions restricting observation during the flight period, but the abundance drop suggests a real decline both against 2011 and the longer term trends. The map shows it is still widely spread but particularly in Hertfordshire there are gaps against the previous five year period. The poor weather accounts for a flight period slightly behind the long term average after several years where it was well advanced. The whole flight period was about three weeks later than 2011.

Essex Skipper *Thymelicus lineola*

Widespread but declining

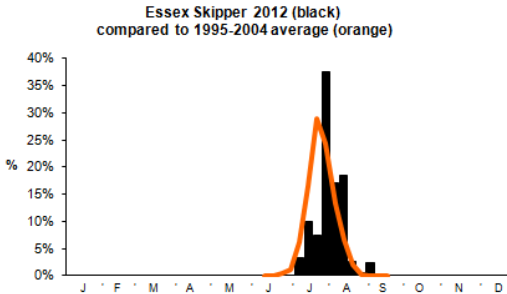
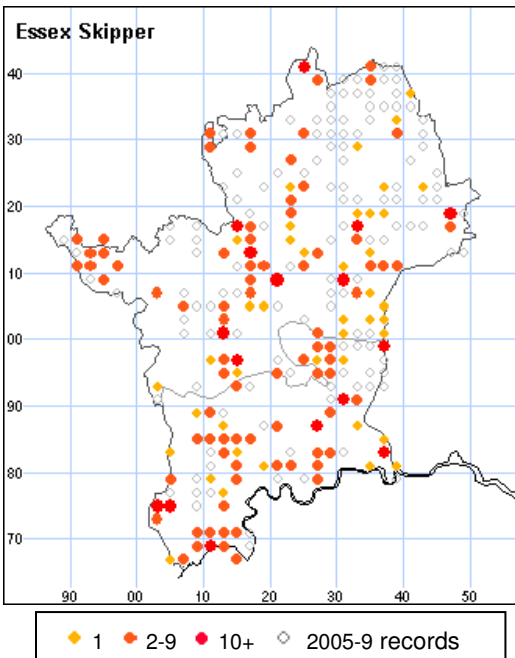


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 7 Jul
Last: 28 Aug
Peak week: 23-29 July

Distribution % squares	
2012	12% (61)
2011	16% (86)
2005-9 mean	17%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	12
2011	17
2005-9 mean	46

Distribution change
Down 29% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 74% compared with 2005-2009

The comments for the Small Skipper, perhaps not surprisingly also apply to this species. Last year the trends for this species led to it “gaining” an amber status for our area indicating concern for its decline and 2012 did nothing to improve this. It is now a rare species in North Hertfordshire but it does seem to be doing reasonably in some areas as Dave Miller notes, “Stanwell Moor, ... Essex Skippers are doing well – many seen (none scrutinised turned out to be Small Skippers)”. Of all the reports of this species only 6 were of numbers in double figures. As with many other species the 2012 flight period was two weeks behind 2011 and slightly later than the longer term average.

Large Skipper *Ochlodes faunus*

Widespread & common

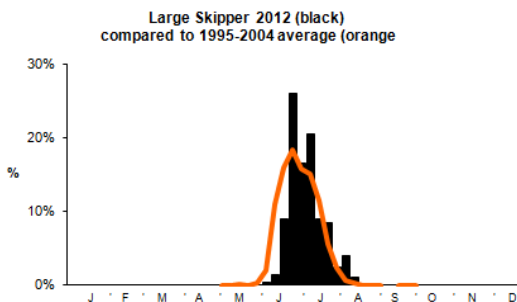
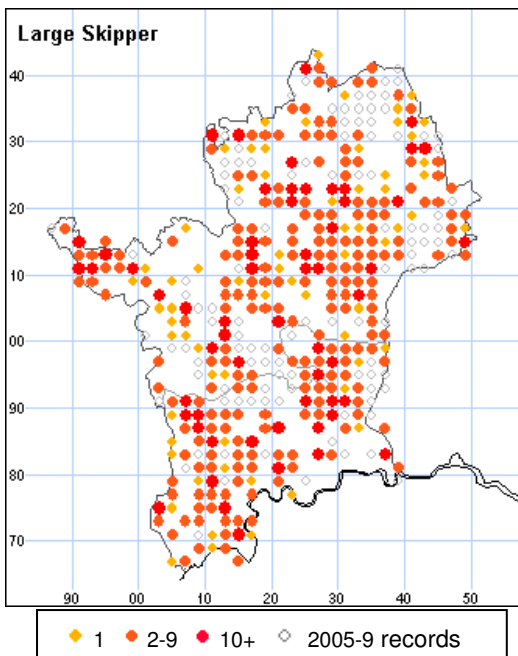


Photo Sharon Monahan



First: 6 Jun
Last: 31 Aug
Peak week: 25 Jun – 1 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2012	35% (175)
2011	42% (231)
2005-9 mean	28%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	18
2011	34
2005-9 mean	20

Distribution change
Up 25% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 10% compared with 2005-2009

Much more common than the previous two “golden” skippers and despite falls since last year, which might well be weather related, there is no real cause for concern. The flight period was pushed back compared to the long term average again showing the effect of a predominantly cold and wet spring on larval and pupal development. Interestingly of the eight largest counts seven were either at Heartwood Forest or Balls Wood, the former a wood being created and the latter a wood that has experienced a large amount of thinning in recent years. This reflects the ability of this species to thrive in shadier conditions than its cousins the Small and Essex Skippers.

Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages*

Restricted but stable

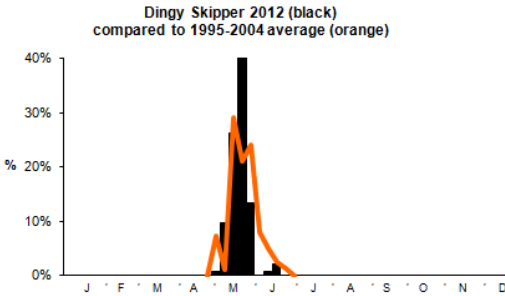
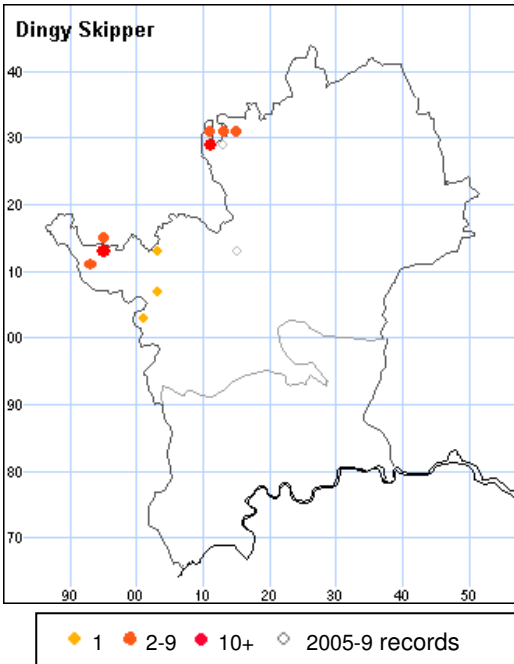


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 6 May

Last: 20 Jun

Peak week: 21 - 27 May



Distribution % squares	
2012	1% (4)
2011	2% (10)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	17
2011	7
2005-9 mean	11

Distribution change
No change

Abundance change
Too little data to calculate

There were no records from the new outlying sites found in 2011, but at its strongholds of Aldbury Nowers and Hexton Chalk Pit it did rather well with abundance way above the long term figure and last year. The largest counts were all at Hexton a site that had excellent records for several of our rare chalk grassland species. The flight period was back to matching the long term trends and there was no repeat of 2011's second brood. It will be interesting in 2013, weather permitting, to resurvey the marginal sites in case visits were made too early being based on 2011's flight period as this species does seem to have got through 2012 very well.

Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*

Restricted & rare

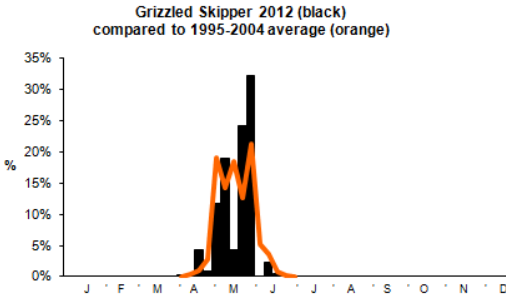
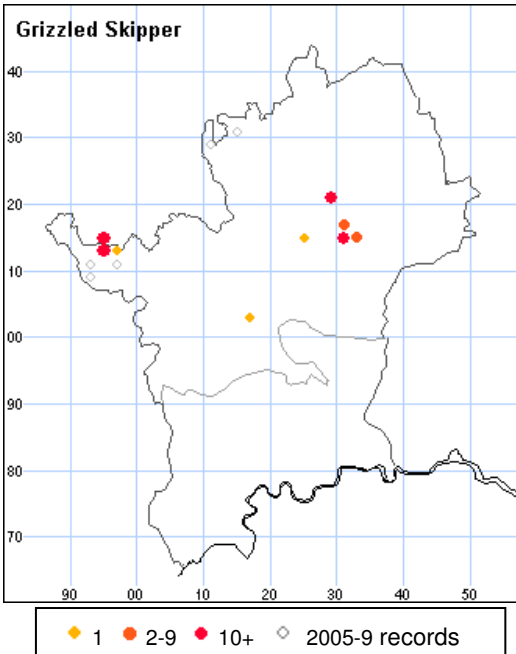


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 4 Apr

Last: 28 Jun

Peak week: 28 May - 3 Jun

Distribution % squares	
2012	1% (8)
2011	1% (6)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	24
2011	17
2005-9 mean	12

Distribution change	
No change	

Abundance change	
Too little data to calculate	

The other spring flying Skipper also had a good year, appearing at all its known sites and being “rediscovered” above Welwyn Tunnels, an old site from which there were anecdotal but not formally reported recent records. The flight period was about on the long term average, the odd dip in mid May coinciding with poor weather conditions. The abundance on transect sites continues to rise satisfactorily as well. It would seem that the warm late March aided the development of good numbers of both this and the Dingy Skipper with the 4th April being the earliest flight date in Hertfordshire. How well they bred in the colder conditions will be seen in 2013, though the wetter weather meant good growth by larval food plants.

Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus*

Less common migrant

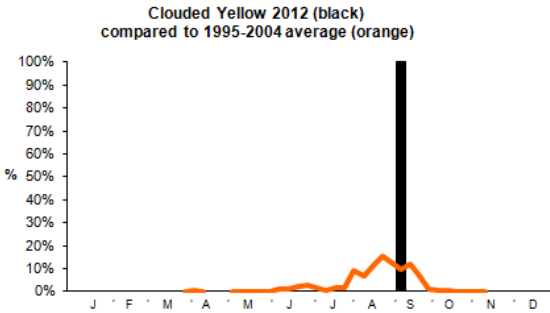
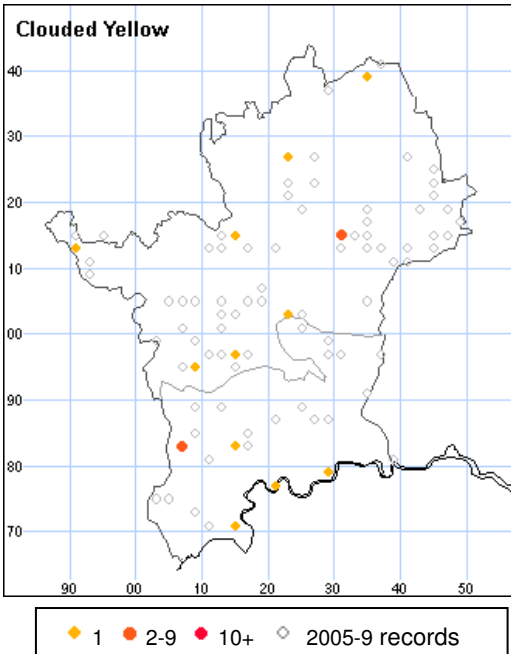


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 4 Sept
Last: 4 Sept
Peak week: 3 – 9 Sept

Distribution % squares	
2012	>1% (1)
2011	1% (6)
2005-9 mean	5%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	0
2011	3
2005-9 mean	2

Distribution change
Too little data to calculate

Abundance change
Too little data to calculate

Last year's sightings in just 6 squares were very low but 2012 created a record for this rarely common species – only one recorded in our area. This is the first time this has ever happened. As a comparison here are the numbers of squares where it was recorded over the last 10 years:

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
122	2	21	22	23	9	56	15	2	22	6	6

As can be seen its appearance is very variable and it has to be remembered that this is of no conservation significance in Britain.

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*

Widespread

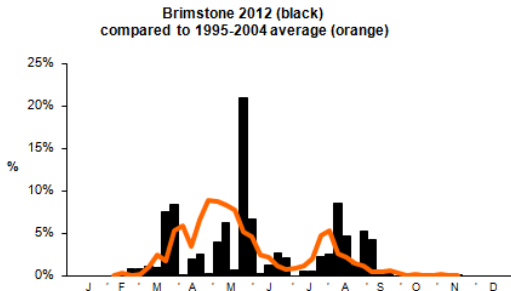
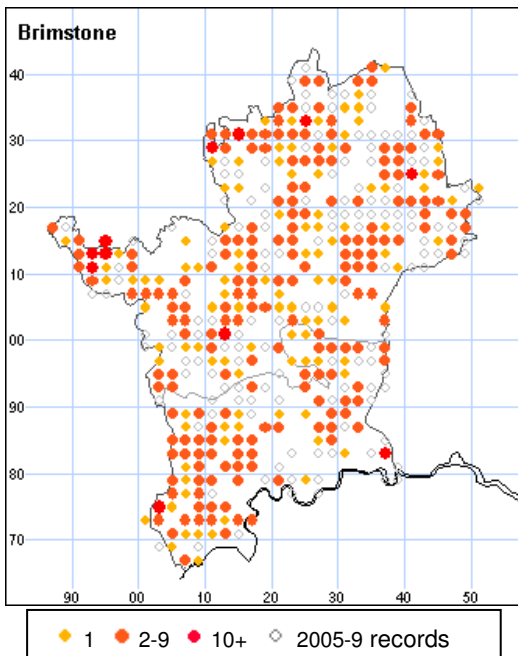


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 8 Feb

Last: 28 Oct

Peak week: 21-27 May



Distribution % squares	
2012	29% (146)
2011	36% (202)
2005-9 mean	37%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	12
2011	27
2005-9 mean	20

Distribution change
Down 25% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 40% compared with 2005-2009

The flight chart above shows a rather disjointed flight period, doubtless caused by the poor weather. The peak at the end of May reflects a brief week of warm dry weather good for both butterflies and observers!. This is one of our more consistent species and it is probably not worth reading a great deal into the declines shown above. However close observers were disappointed, “No Brimstone laying eggs on our alder buckthorn this year” – Diane Andrews. Although this is a widespread species it is most abundant at chalkland sites such as Hexton Chalk Pit and Aldbury Nowers where its buckthorn species larval food plants thrive.

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Widespread & common

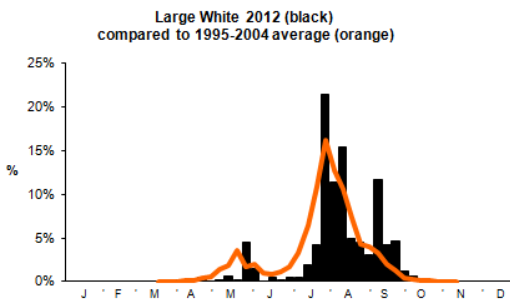
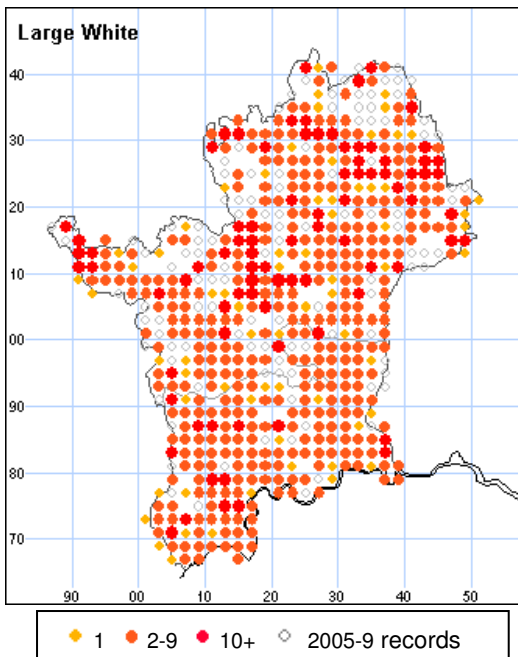


Photo Helen George

First: 27 Mar

Last: 10 Oct

Peak week: 23 - 29 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2012	57% (283)
2011	73% (403)
2005-9 mean	58%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	17
2011	27
2005-9 mean	54

Distribution change
Down 2% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 68% compared with 2005-2009

The summer emergence always exceeds the spring flight of overwintered pupae and in 2012 this was particularly the case and yet again weather related. It may have been exacerbated by the fact that those emerging in late March would have had little chance to mate before the poor weather in April and those emerging in April would have had even less chance. The late March first flight date was the earliest this millennium. On a year on year basis the distribution declined considerably and this may have been caused by a start in the rebalancing of the butterfly/parasite relationship mentioned last year.

Small White *Pieris rapae*

Widespread & common

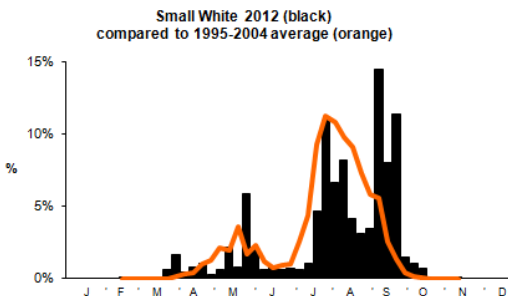
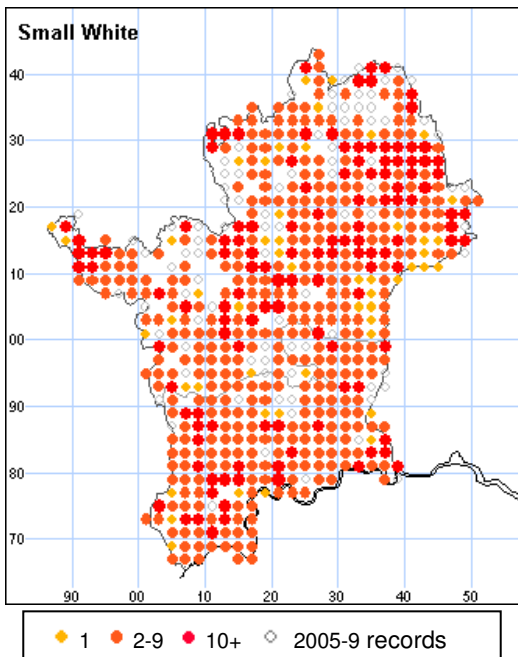


Photo Dave Miller



First: 18 Feb
Last: 10 Nov
Peak week: 3 – 9 Sep

Distribution % squares	
2012	66% (325)
2011	80% (443)
2005-9 mean	58%

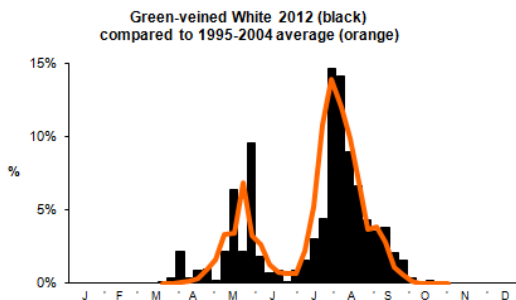
Abundance (transects)	
2012	36
2011	84
2005-9 mean	67

Distribution change
Up 11% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 46% compared with 2005-2009

Small White parallels the Large with a big drop from an outstanding 2011. An improvement in the weather in the later summer together with plenty of juicy food plants may be the reason for the very late and large final brood. The relationship between this species and its traditional cabbage food plant is shown in that the only three counts of over 20 individuals were in a garden and at two separate allotments sites. An overall flight period from mid February to early November is eight weeks longer than 2011 and established both record early and late dates! A reminder of the difficulties of telling the white species apart came from Dave Miller, “A three-way tussle of whites resolved itself into a female Large White and males of the other two species. ... female Orange Tips around too, it really does become hard to distinguish them all without close scrutiny

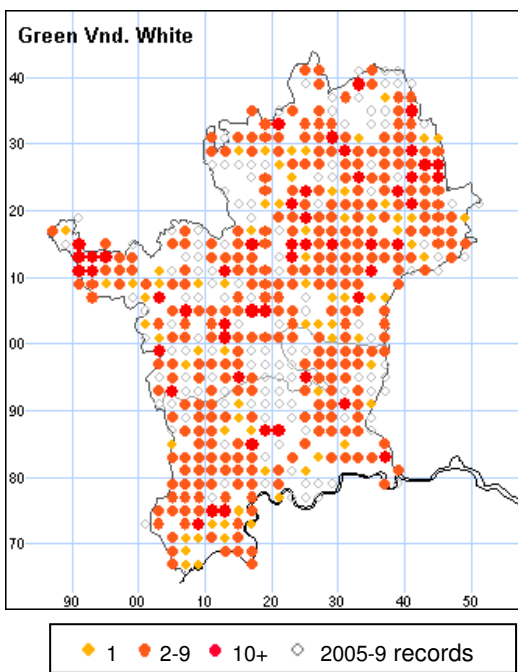
Green-veined White *Pieris napi*



Widespread & Common



Photo Dave Miller



First: 15 Mar

Last: 14 Oct

Peak week: 24 - 30 July

Distribution % squares

2012	35% (173)
2011	61% (337))
2005-9 mean	47%

Abundance (transects)

2012	30
2011	76
2005-9 mean	54

Distribution change

Down 28% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change

Down 44% compared with 2005-2009

Not a good year here, although the big gap in the spring flight reflects the weather rather than an actual gap in butterflies. The proportion between the two broods was pretty normal but the flight times were about two weeks later than 2011 and back to the longer term average. Unlike the Small White the overall flight period was shorter by almost seven weeks. It may not be significant but many of the largest counts were from a variety of recorders and sites in the west London Borough of Hounslow. There are some large gaps in the current period's distribution such as central North London and South Herts and parts of North West and North East Herts. It would be good if observers could get to these squares to see if this species is really absent.

Orange Tip *Anthocharis cardamines*

Widespread & Common

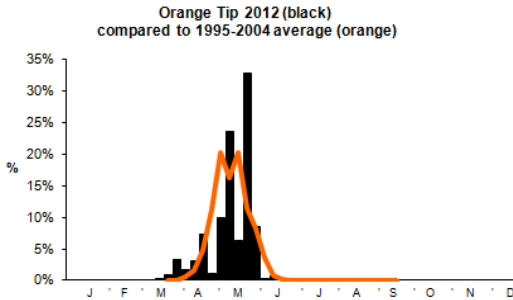
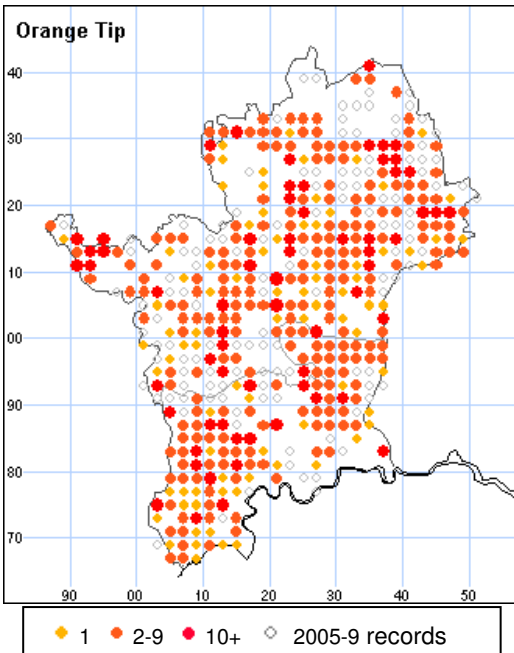


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 14 Mar

Last: 20 Jun

Peak week: 21 - 27 May



Distribution % squares	
2012	38% (186)
2011	42% (232)
2005-9 mean	43%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	18
2011	31
2005-9 mean	14

Distribution change
Down 14% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 28% compared with 2005-2009

The Orange Tip's flight is a perfect reflection of spring 2012's weather. An early flight in the second half of March with unseasonably warm weather (14th March beats 2011's previous record by nine days), followed by virtually nothing in a cold and wet April and a very late peak at the end of the flight period coinciding with a week of summer weather at the end of May. However allowing for the weather the long term trend for this species are still looking good. Lush food plant growth may possibly mean a bumper 2013.

Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*

Very rare & restricted

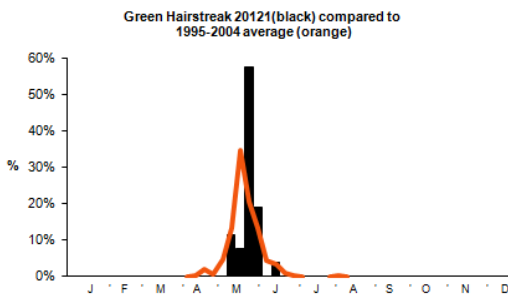
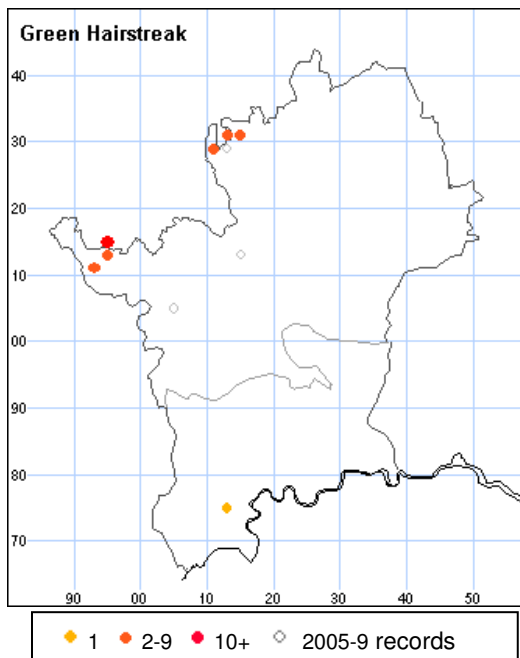


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 12 May

Last: 14 Jun

Peak week: 21 -27 May



Distribution % squares	
2012	1% (5)
2011	1% (7)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	3
2011	8
2005-9 mean	4

Distribution change
Too little data to calculate

Abundance change
Too little data to calculate

There was no repeat of a Middlesex record in 2012 but it was present at the key sites of Aldbury Nowers and Hexton Chalk Pit. It was also seen at Telegraph Hill relatively close to but well separated from Hexton. The best news was from Brian Jessop who on the 25th May reported, “Tring Park, recorded a female Green Hairstreak, egg laying in compartment 2 of my old transect walk. First one I have seen there for 3 or 4 years, so they are still around.”

Purple Hairstreak *Neozephyrus quercus*

Common around oaks

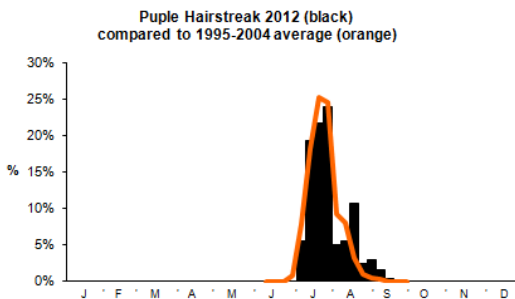
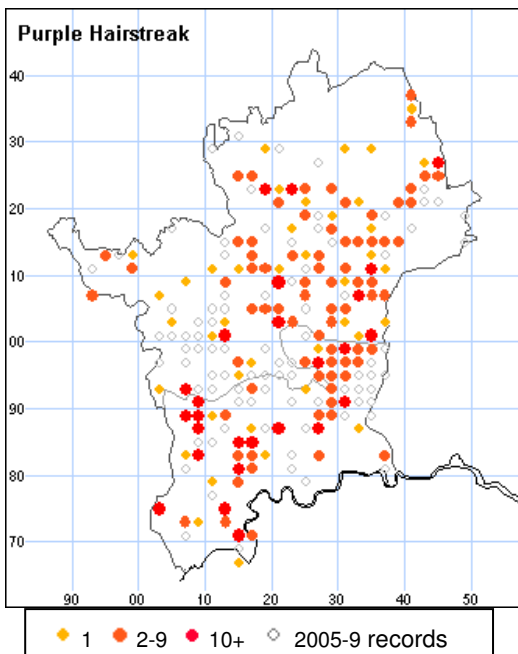


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 4 Jul
Last: 15 Sep
Peak week: 23 - 29 July

Distribution % squares	
2012	9% (46)
2011	16% (91)
2005-9 mean	16%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	7
2011	11
2005-9 mean	10

Distribution change
Down 43% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 30% compared with 2005-2009

Numbers and sightings were well down after a slightly above average 2011. However there were some encouraging comments. "Just to let you know that I ran a "Beginners Guide to Butterflies" workshop at Minet Country Park in Hayes, Middx on Saturday (14th July) and we got a fantastic view of a Purple Hairstreak sitting on and flying around bramble scrub (both wings closed and wings open). I noticed that there isn't a recent record of Purple Hairstreaks in that area on NBN (most recent is 1984 I believe!) so well worth an update! Jennifer Gilbert. The one pictured above was also low down on a hogweed below a large oak and seemingly freshly emerged.

White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrrium w-album*

Common around elm

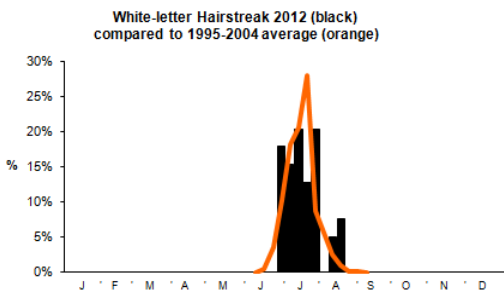
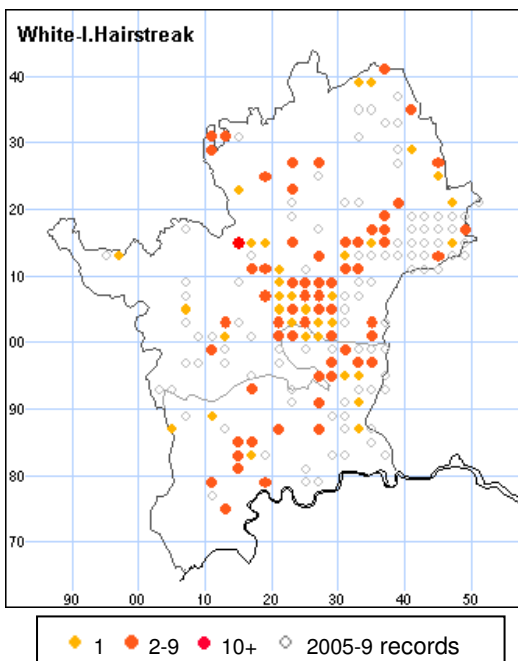


Photo Steve lane



First: 26 Jun
Last: 19 Aug
Peak week: 9 – 15 Jul

Distribution % squares	
2012	3% (15)
2011	11% (63)
2005-9 mean	10%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	1
2011	1
2005-9 mean	5

Distribution change
Down 70% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 80% compared with 2005-2009

In some ways the distribution drop may not be real as 2011 included the intensive survey of TL20. However there is no doubt that 2012 was not an auspicious year for the White-letter Hairstreak. As with many other species the flight period was back to the long term average. However in the right place this butterfly can be seen in numbers, “there were at least 8 White-letter Hairstreaks at Horsenden Hill on Sunday 1st July. Six were around one favoured elm between the canal bridge end of the cycle path and the rear gate of the farm” – Andy Culshaw and Liz Goodyear and Andrew Middleton reporting on the field trip at Cheshunt Park Golf Club elms, “At 9 o'clock it was raining and windy, however on the horizon was some blue sky and during about 10 minutes of good sun at 9.15, at least 5 active males were observed on the sheltered and sunny side of the trees”.

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

Widespread & common

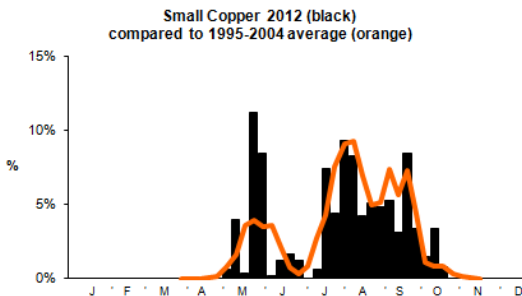
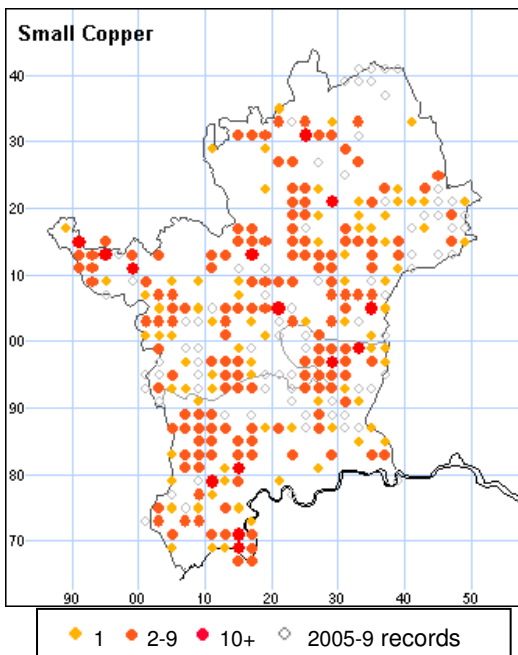


Photo Dave Miller

First: 30 Apr

Last: 30 Oct

Peak week: 21 - 27 May



Distribution % squares	
2012	20% (99)
2011	30% (167)
2005-9 mean	21%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	6
2011	10
2005-9 mean	11

Distribution change
Down 5% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 45% compared with 2005-2009

The brood balance is very similar to 2011 but peaking three weeks later. The late flight period is shown by this comment, "shiny new Small Copper. Amazingly, this is the first one I have seen locally this year - mid-October is an unusual date for a first sighting!" Dave Miller. But they could still be seen in numbers, "Nomansland Common - 33 - I walked the same route ...as last weekend. Weather conditions, temperature and time of day were similar - but I saw 4-5 times the number of Small Coppers! There may have been some emerging during the week, but a good number of the butterflies seen did not look fresh. The main difference this week was that three quarters of the Coppers were nectaring on Ragwort - last week there were none. Possibly the heavy rain during the week has caused a new flow of nectar?" - Malcolm Hull 6th Oct.

Small Blue *Cupido minimus*

Very rare & restricted

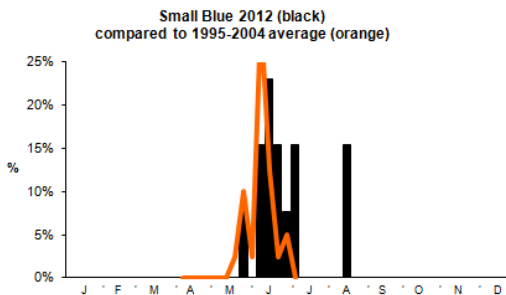
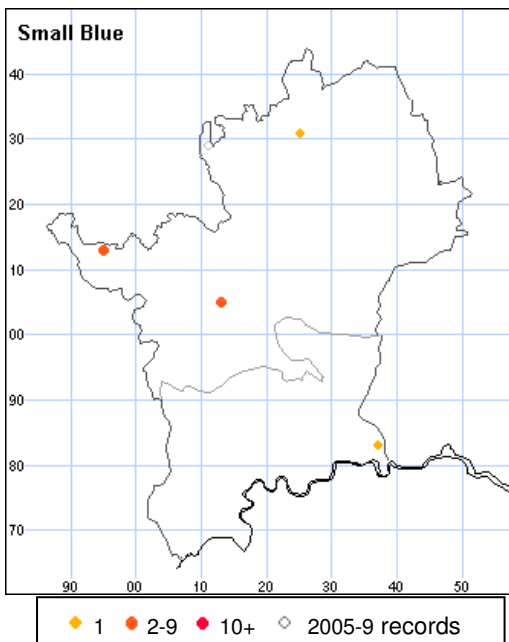


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 26 May

Last: 19 Aug

Peak week: 11 - 17 Jun

Distribution % squares	
2012	>1% (2)
2011	>1% (4)
2005-9 mean	0%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	9
2011	8
2005-9 mean	0

Distribution change	
Too little data to calculate	

Abundance change	
Too little data to calculate	

The Small Blue is breeding at two sites – Aldbury Nowers and Butterfly World. Numbers are low but we do have evidence of both broods. There is also some evidence of movement at Aldbury with Andrew Wood noting on 17th June, “Small Blue was at the bottom of the area in the north section where there is considerable regrowth just by the path and the stile into the scraped area where the [kidney vetch plants] fenced off areas are. On the same day at Butterfly World Malcolm Hull noted behaviour,” - Three Small Blues (all in the dip between the two antennae) this morning. One aggressively chased a male Common Blue (twice the size) which strayed into its territory. Diane Andrews also at Aldbury Nowers noted, “ watched it fluttering about choosing suitable flowers of kidney vetch for egg laying and managed to locate three eggs deep in blossom segments.”

Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*

Widely distributed

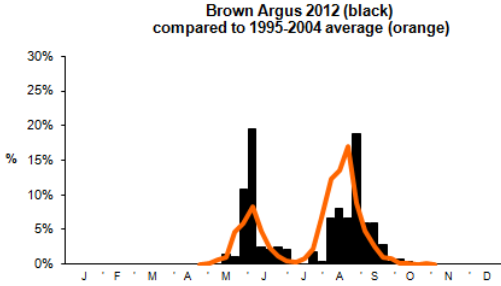
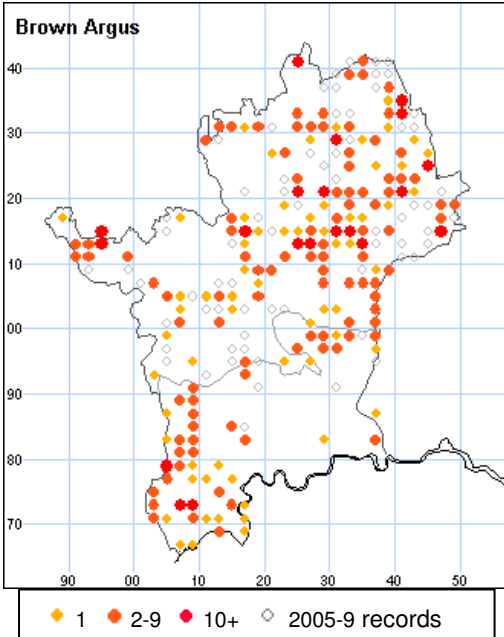


Photo Dave Miller



First: 8 May

Last: 4 Oct

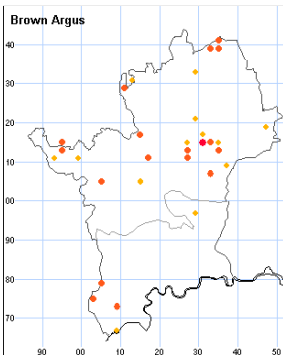
Peak week: 28 May – 3 Jun

Distribution % squares	
2012	7% (34)
2011	26% (142)
2005-9 mean	11%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	5
2011	19
2005-9 mean	15

Distribution change
Down 36% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 67% compared with 2005-2009



Last year I wrote “A superb year. Over the last 20 years this species has advanced, dropped back and then advanced again and it is now widely distributed in less built up areas”. This year saw a massive retrenchment in distribution and numbers showing just how vulnerable this species can be to poor weather as the 2012 only distribution map shows (left). Most counts were in low single figures.

Common Blue *Polymmatius icarus*

Widespread & common

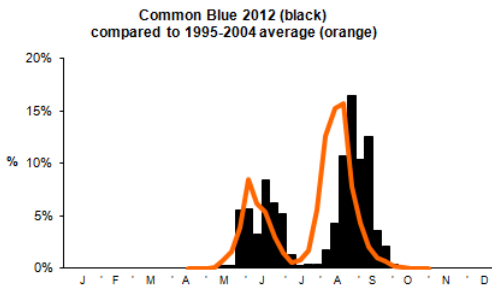
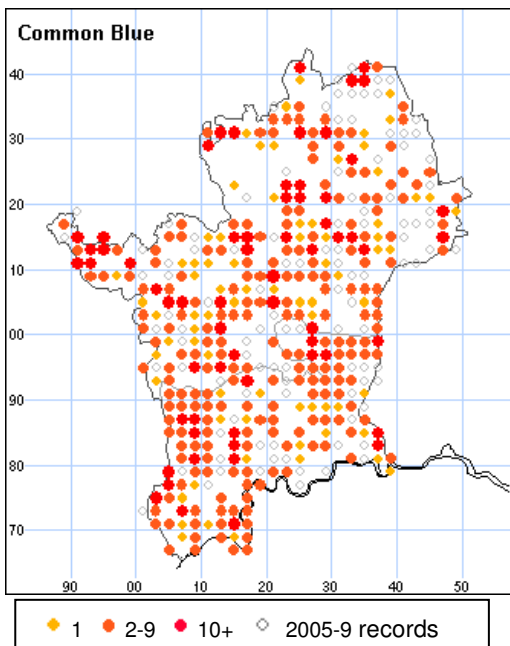


Photo Dave Miller

First: 9 May

Last: 4 Oct

Peak week: 20 Aug–26 Aug



Distribution % squares	
2012	27% (135)
2011	44% (243)
2005-9 mean	31%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	13
2011	19
2005-9 mean	30

Distribution change	
Down 14% compared with 2005-2009	

Abundance change	
Down 57% compared with 2005-2009	

The Common Blue’s first flight period in May coincided with cool damp weather and this explains the low numbers recorded then. This in turn led to delayed breeding resulting in a second brood flying well behind the long term average times. Perhaps not surprisingly both abundance and distribution were well down. By far the largest count was 79 by Liz Goodyear and Andrew Middleton at Rickney’s Quarry near Hertford this compares to 12 records of over 100 individuals in 2010.

Chalkhill Blue *Lysandra coridon*

Common at known chalk sites

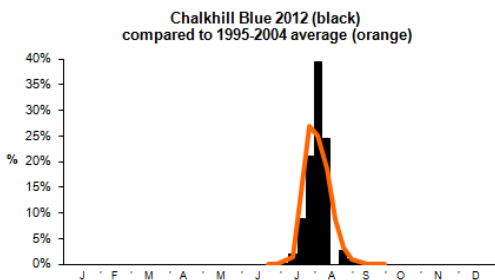
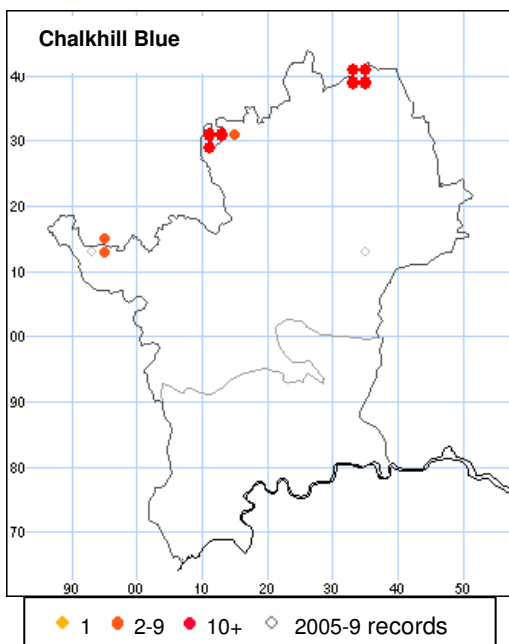


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 5 Jul
Last: 18 Sep
Peak week: 30 Jul – 5 Aug



Distribution % squares	
2012	2% (7)
2011	2% (7)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	578
2011	290
2005-9 mean	96

Distribution change	
Too little data to calculate	

Abundance change	
Up 520% compared with 2005-2009	

One of the unequivocal successes of 2012, the numbers seen at its few suitable sites were up yet again after two successful years. At Therfield Heath Alan Beale the transect walker noted, “Chalkhill blues were up by 40% on last year”. At Hexton Chalk Pit a typical report was this from Andrew Wood, “9th August 2012 - counted 300 Chalkhill Blues walking from one end to the other in ten minutes. I reckon that makes about 1500 on the site yesterday. They were everywhere, a magnificent site. Some males have spilled over into the field margins and woodland of Lion Hill and Moor Hill on the other side of the road, strange to see Chalkhill Blue and Ringlets flying in a woodland ride! “

Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*

Widespread & common

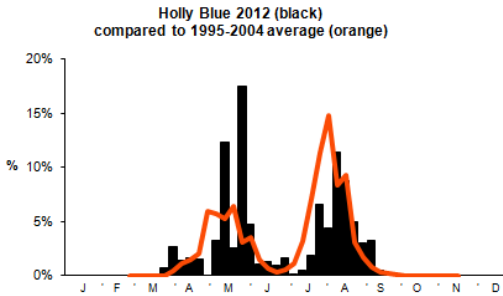
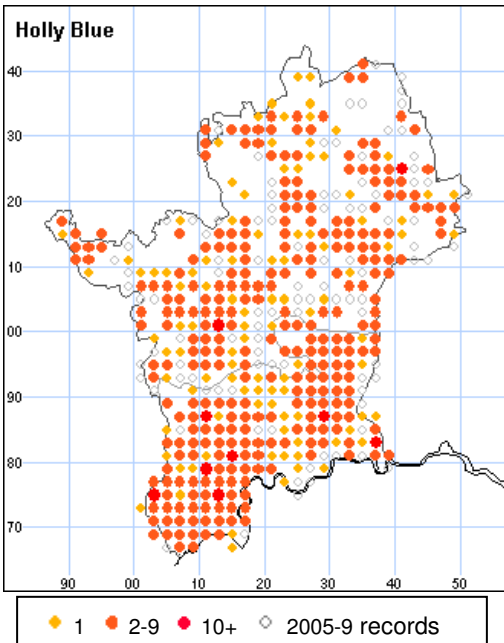


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 9 Mar

Last: 24 Oct

Peak week: 21 – 27 May



Distribution % squares	
2012	43% (214)
2011	53% (292)
2005-9 mean	41%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	10
2011	16
2005-9 mean	12

Distribution change
Up 5% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 16% compared with 2005-2009

Compared to the other double brooded blue species the Holly Blue fared reasonably well, possibly due to its different habitat and foodplant needs and also its cyclical relationship with parasites. Perhaps surprisingly given the weather the peak flight time was during the spring brood. Unlike many species many of the higher counts came from gardens rather than the wider countryside. There was only one October record making this the smallest third generation for several years which reflects the later than average flight times for the two main generations.

White Admiral *Limenitis camilla*

Local in woodland

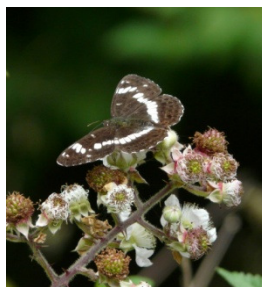
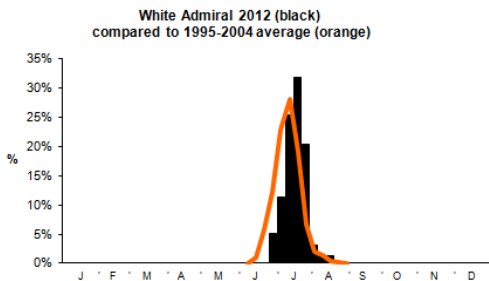
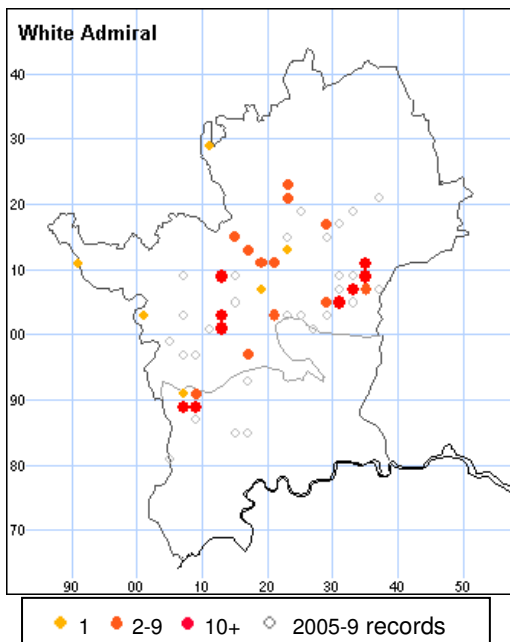


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 28 June

Last: 14 Aug

Peak week: 16 -22 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2012	2% (11)
2011	3% (17)
2005-9 mean	4%

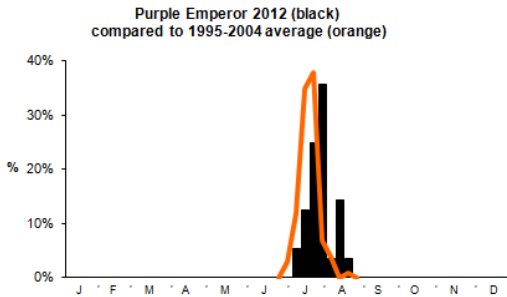
Abundance (transects)	
2012	12
2011	18
2005-9 mean	11

Distribution change
Down 50% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 9% compared with 2005-2009

Not a great year for this woodland species. Numbers are stable but the majority have become confined to the key South Herts/North West Middlesex sites . However they can sometimes turn up at new sites, “The only interesting record was the White Admiral that I saw at Bovingdon Brick Pits on 24th July. This came gliding over my shoulder before veering off behind a tree, showing off the broad white band across its black wings. I don’t know where it originated. Possibly it came over the nearby Buckinghamshire border, but I don’t know if there are any nearby colonies in that county”. Roger Prue.

Purple Emperor *Apatura iris*



Local in woodland

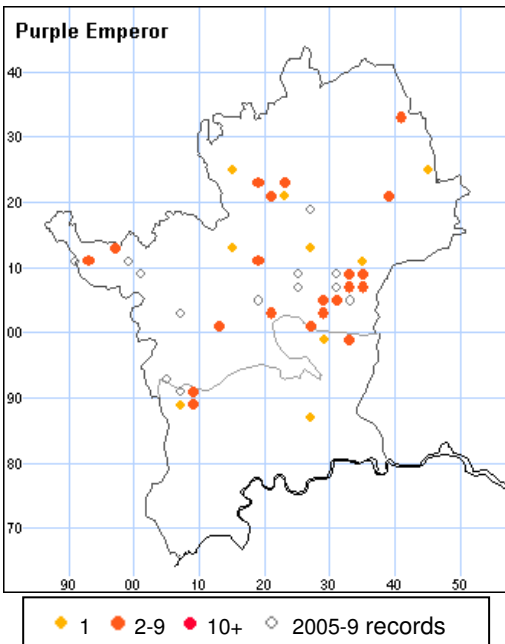


Photo Laurence Drummond

First: 4 Jul

Last: 23 Aug

Peak week: 23 - 29 July



Distribution % squares	
2012	3% (13)
2011	4% (22)
2005-9 mean	3%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	0
2011	1
2005-9 mean	2

Distribution change	
Too little data to calculate	

Abundance change	
Too little data to calculate	

A delayed emergence and a very late last date but where seen they did not disappoint as this report from Liz Goodyear, Andrew Middleton and Laurence Drummond shows. "Northaw Purple Emperor Assembly area - we arrived at 1.30 just after a short deluge. Within seconds of looking what appeared to be a very frail old man turned up, who did a few twirls and flew off. Returned again only to be accompanied by a very smart young man but the frail old man was in hot pursuit and not vice versa! They did a few big twirls and then the larger Emperor took over. Only for a short while later for the smaller Emperor to return. When viewed through the binoculars he wasn't frail just very small and still appeared to be perfectly formed! Purple Emperor was also recorded at an assembly area in Whitewebbs Wood, north Enfield. It has taken over 100 years of occasional records to confirm a territorial presence!

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Common migrant

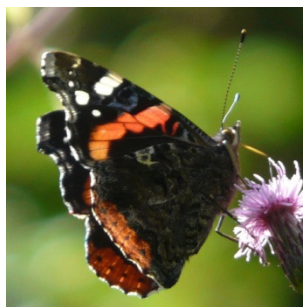
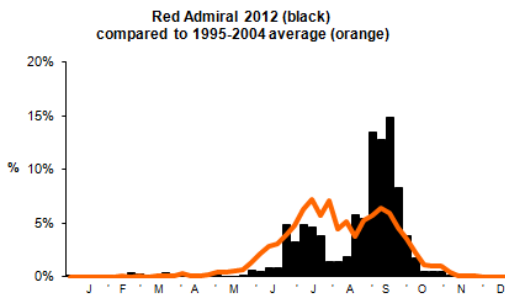
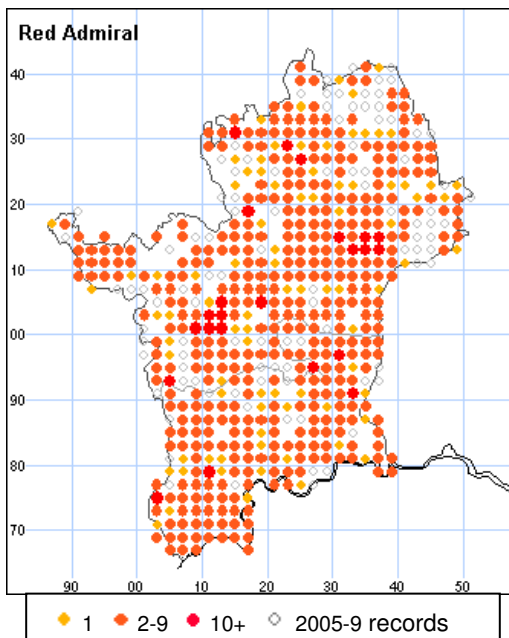


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 2 Jan
Last: 3 Dec
Peak week: 17 - 23 Sep



Distribution % squares	
2012	65% (323)
2011	74% (409)
2005-9 mean	51%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	17
2011	14
2005-9 mean	10

Distribution change
Up 30% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 70% compared with 2005-2009

After last year's success the Red Admiral stayed in good form, but this year it reversed its flight period with a small summer brood but a huge autumn one. Were the autumn ones all home bred or reinforced by further migration? "I had a call from Diana Furley in Barnet. From 15th Sept for last three weeks when it is sunny she has had up to 10 Red Admirals nectaring on the Ivy flowers in her neighbour's garden. She had never seen anything like it", - Steve Kiln. Bricket Wood - Red Admirals (24) some nectaring on Ivy, but most just basking - no sign that any yet thinking of a return migration", Malcolm Hull 22nd September. "On the 'buddleia' walk next to the Grand Union Canal at Croxley, Herts. we saw upwards of 30 Red Admirals on 8th September" - John Hollingdale

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

Variable migrant

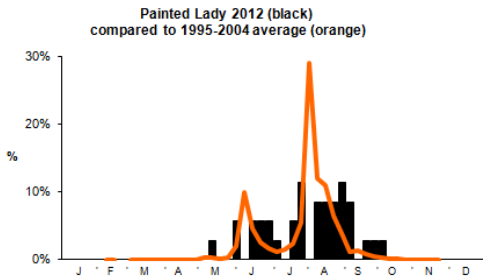
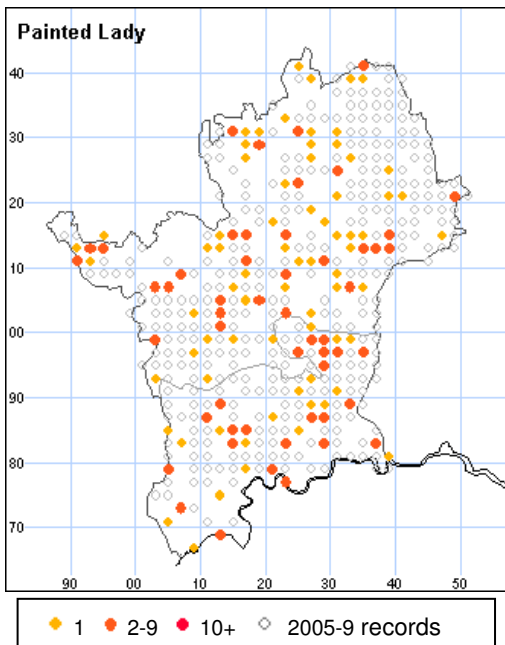


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 9 May
Last: 2 Oct
Peak weeks: 23 - 29 July,
 27 Aug – 2 Sep

Distribution % squares	
2012	10% (48)
2011	12% (65)
2005-9 mean	33%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	2
2011	1
2005-9 mean	0

Distribution change
Down 69% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Too little data to calculate

The Painted Lady continued to be a rather scarce insect with only scattered reports of odd ones throughout the summer and autumn. It should be noted that the longer term data is distorted by occasional bumper years and that in reality 2012 was a pretty typical year for this species. The first date in May suggest that from 2011 that tried to hibernate did not survive the very cold February of 2012. The table below shows the number of squares for the last 10 years and you can see that 2012 was a pretty standard year.

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
245	104	40	205	95	36	335	48	65	47

Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*

Widespread

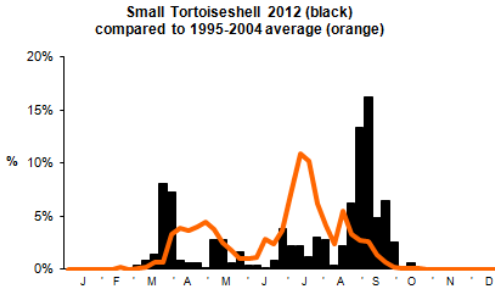
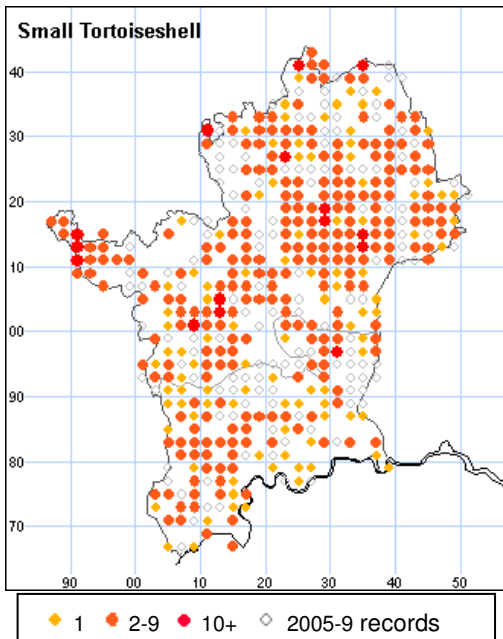


Photo Dave Miller

First: 9 Jan

Last: 16 Dec

Peak week: 3 – 9 Sep



Distribution % squares

2012	33% (166)
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2011	47% (262)
------	-----------

2005-9 mean	37%
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Abundance (transects)

2012	6
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2011	9
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2005-9 mean	10
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Distribution change

Down 13% compared with
2005-2009

Abundance change

Down 40% compared with
2005-2009

Unlike much of the UK the Small Tortoiseshell seemed to be recovering in our area but weather of 2012 has not helped it. A good number of early reports showed the emergence of the hibernated adults but then numbers were sporadic until the autumn when it became reasonably common. I am unaware of reports of migration but an influx in early September is not unknown and this would coincide with a similar big increase in Red Admirals. A typical report is this from Clive Burrows, "Best showing of Small Tortoiseshells on buddleia for some years, in Abbots Langley, 8 on 31st August". There was activity in mild weather to the close of the year, "Sunday 16th Dec. a Small Tortoiseshell flew past me at Bush Wood nr Much Hadham. It alighted in leaf litter before heading off north. Latest I have ever seen this species". Jonathan Forgham

Peacock *Inachis io*

Widespread but declining?

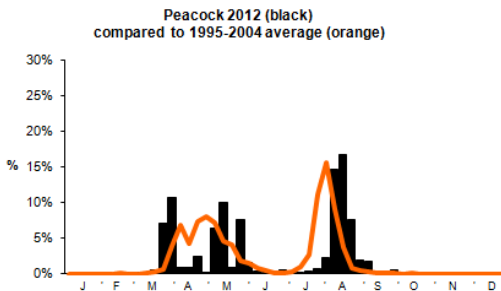
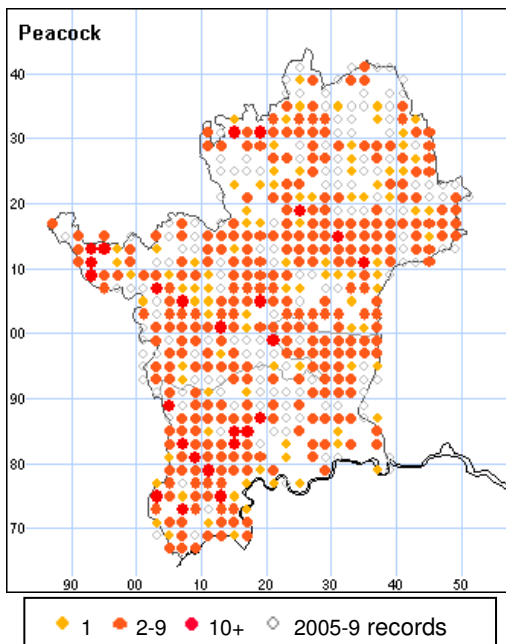


Photo Helen George

First: 24 Feb

Last: 21 Dec

Peak week: 13 – 19 Aug



Distribution % squares	
2012	47% (234)
2011	55% (320)
2005-9 mean	57%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	9
2011	10
2005-9 mean	31

Distribution change	
Down 19% compared with 2005-2009	

Abundance change	
Down 71% compared with 2005-2009	

The mild second half of March saw a good flight before, as with the Small Tortoiseshell, numbers struggled against the dreadful weather. Dave Miller at Stanwell Moor on 13th May reported, “Peacocks were back out in force (I saw six), showing how they seem to be able to endure repeated bouts of inactivity in poor weather between short bursts of warmth”. The summer emergence slipped from early July to near the end of the month. Overall it looks as if this species is still in some trouble especially as transect abundance data dropped further. As is usual they went into hibernation very quickly yet there were still odd late reports possibly of disturbed hibernators”, “Rather remarkably a Peacock flew over my house during a mild spell on Friday 21st December” - .Robin Pearson

Comma *Polygona c-album*

Common & widespread

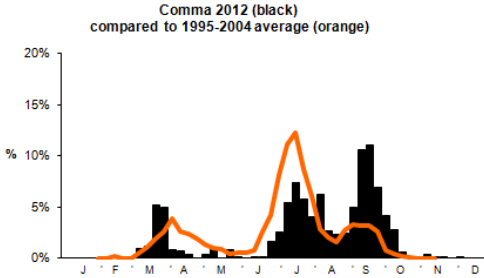
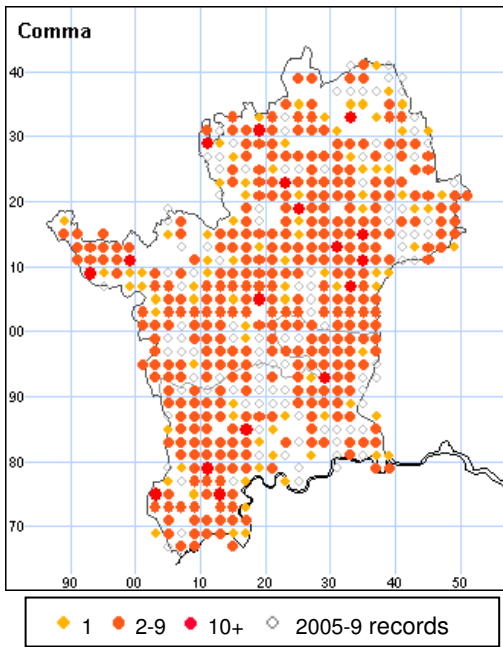


Photo Dave Miller

First: 26 Feb

Last: 3 Dec

Peak week: 17 - 23 Sep



Distribution % squares	
2012	57% (285)
2011	58% (320)
2005-9 mean	50%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	12
2011	15
2005-9 mean	28

Distribution change
Up 14% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 56% compared with 2005-2009

The Comma continues to have the best fortunes of our native nymphalid butterflies. Predictably the spring flight was depressed by the weather but the mid summer and late summer broods were solid with an large autumn peak which augers well for a large number of hibernating adults. This is rather different to the historic pattern. There was some unusual behaviour noted by Andrew Wood, "Near Rickneys Quarry, north of Hertford a Comma and Small Tortoiseshell chased each other to some brambles and then behaved exactly as I have seen pairs of Peacocks or Small Tortoiseshells engaged in courtship displays. After a minute or so they spiralled off into the elms in the hedge. "

Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*

Rare but increasing

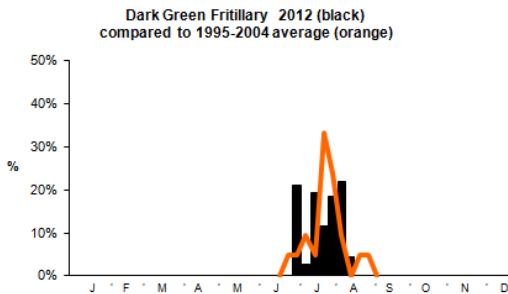
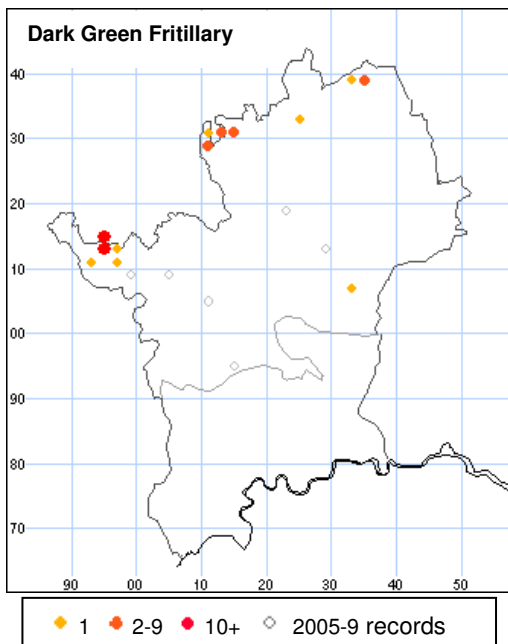


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 25 Jun

Last: 12 Aug

Peak week: 30 Jul – 5 Aug



Distribution % squares

2012	1% (5)
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2011	2% (8)
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2005-9 mean	0.7%
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Abundance (transects)

2012	29
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2011	8
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2005-9 mean	3
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Distribution change

No change

Abundance change

Too little data to calculate

A big surprise was the spread of this insect to Therfield Heath in north east Herts. Several were seen, one on the transect as Alan Beale reported, "Had a brief appearance of Dark Green Fritillary on the rifle range. In 16 years or recording I hadn't seen any before!. Brian Sawford's "The Butterflies of Hertfordshire" mentions them being sighted up to 1978 and in the 80s on Greys Farm which is adjacent to the Heath". Numbers grow at Aldbury Nowers, "Highlights were 9 Dark Green Fritillary throughout, with 2 groups of 3 seen together and one freshly emerged individual whose wings were still drying out", Paul Thrush on his 28th June transect walk. They were also seen at both Hexton Chalk Pit and Telegraph Hill.

Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia*

Local in woodland

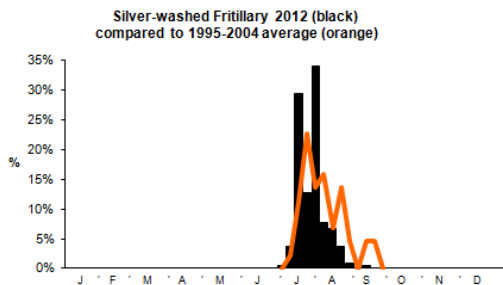
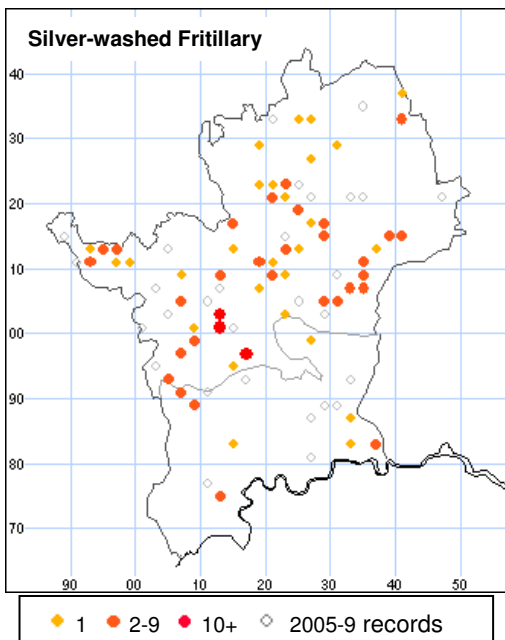


Photo Peter Walker

First: 1 Jul

Last: 9 Sep

Peak week: 23 -29 July



Distribution % squares	
2012	4% (22)
2011	6% (30)
2005-9 mean	4%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	11
2011	12
2005-9 mean	3

Distribution change	
No change	

Abundance change	
Up 267% compared with 2005-2009	

Not a bad year, with observers noting that it was often easier to find than White Admiral in our woodlands. There were new sites, "We saw 3 Silver-washed Fritillaries in Bishops Wood [NW Middlesex], on 28 July." Sue & Steve Place. Breeding behaviour was observed on several occasions such as, "The Silver-washed Fritillary seen in Balls Wood on 24th July is marked as a female because I believe she was egg-laying as she was flying around in a fairly small area and kept landing on the ground and on the trunks of trees" Nicky Parish, and on 5th August 2012, "Broxbourne Woods.. 3 Silver-washed Fritillaries, including 2 egg laying. The first on a pine tree trunk, on the main ride from the car park. The fresh female evaded all attempts at a photograph, but laid approx 6 eggs all about 3 ft up the tree trunk, despite a comprehensive search we still couldn't find any." Phil Macmurdie

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

Widespread & common

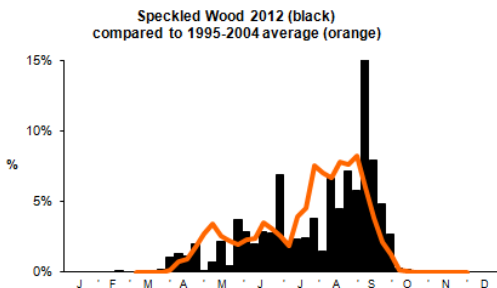
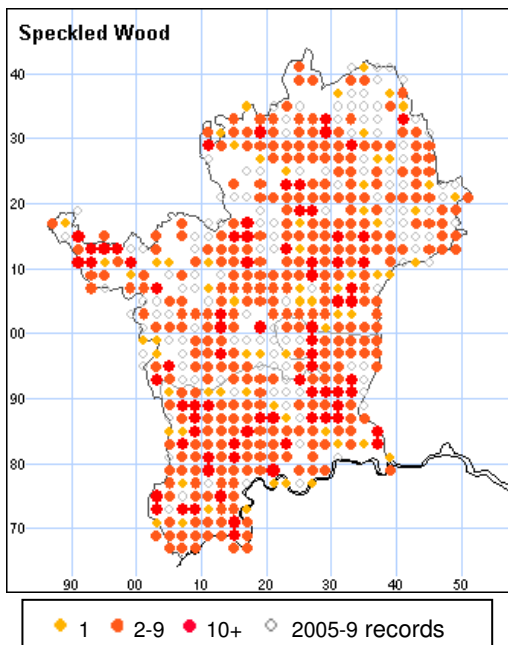


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 18 Feb

Last: 31 Oct

Peak week: 3 – 9 Sep



Distribution % squares

2012	52% (258)
2011	67% (373)
2005-9 mean	58%

Abundance (transects)

2012	50
2011	87
2005-9 mean	74

Distribution change

Down 10% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change

Down 32% compared with 2005-2009

Slipping back compared with last year but the weather greatly affected its spring appearances, though it did include a very early February record. The only earlier record for this species was for an individual indoors so the 18th February represents our earliest free flying record. The peak was almost at the end of the flight period. Speckled Wood is not normally thought of as an urban species but they can turn up in less likely places for instance, “Saw a Speckled Wood settled on a cardboard box outside the 'Food Centre' Chase- side, N14, next to the busy street, 22nd June” - Robert Callf and” I was enjoying a coffee in the open air forecourt part of Euston Station at midday 14th August, when a Speckled Wood flew past.” Dave Miller

Marbled White *Melanargia galathea*

Widespread in Herts

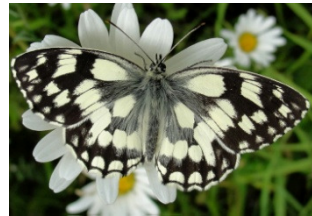
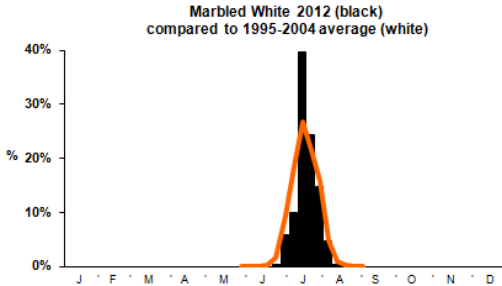
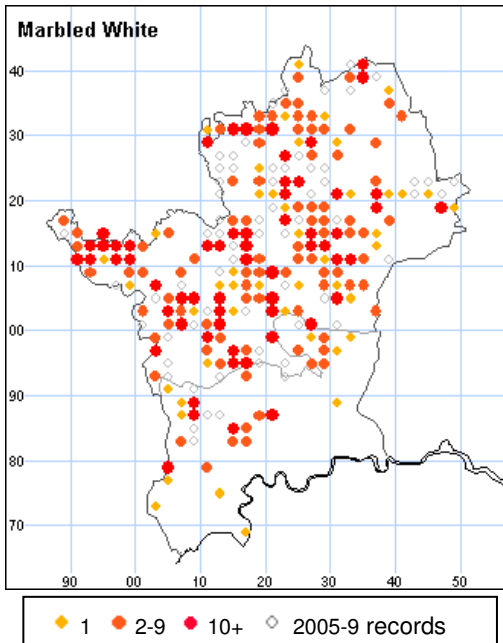


Photo Dave Miller



First: 18 June

Last: 19 Aug

Peak week: 9 - 15 July

Distribution % squares	
2012	26% (130)
2011	22% (119)
2005-9 mean	16%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	81
2011	71
2005-9 mean	61

Distribution change
Up 63% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 31% compared with 2005-2009

The weather conditions in 2012 seemed to have had little adverse effect on the Marbled White, as was the case for many other single brooded butterflies. Presumably being a larva during the cool wet weather was an advantage as there was plenty of fresh food to eat and by mid summer conditions were relatively good during its flight period. A number of new squares were added in North and East Herts showing that it continues to expand across the county. The same applies further south, "East Barnet. 5/7/12----Newly emerged Marbled White---first absolute proof they now breed on this site and are not just transients" - Kit Jones.

Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

Widespread & common

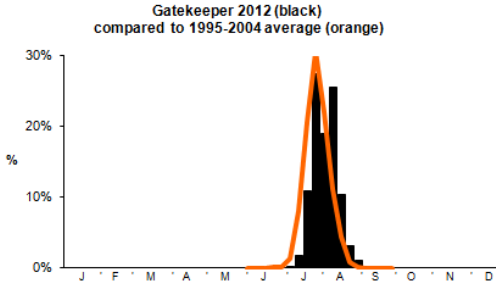
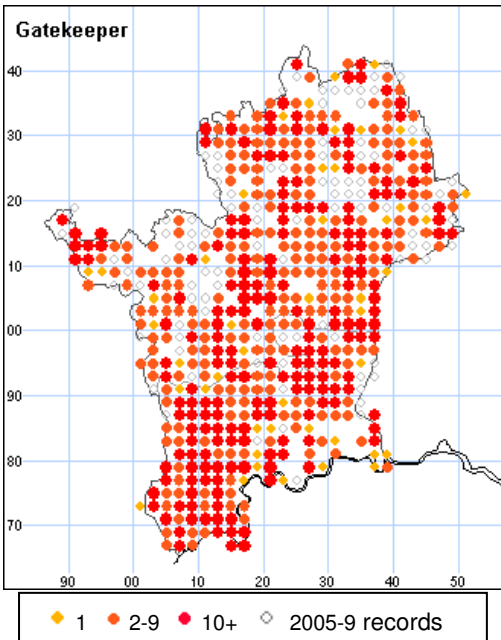


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 23 June

Last: 15 Sep

Peak week: 23 – 29 Jul

Distribution % squares

2012	62% (308)
2011	70% (386)
2005-9 mean	49%

Abundance (transects)

2012	79
2011	99
2005-9 mean	123

Distribution change

Up 27% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change

Down 36% compared with 2005-2009

Still doing well, despite a fall in actual number seen. Surprisingly the peak week was actually a week earlier than 2011 despite a much later first date and a much earlier last date. However overall the flight period was slightly later than the longer term average. Good news came from Diane Andrews, “cheerful note – 6 gatekeepers in our garden [North London] in the last few days, which is a record number for us.”

Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

Widespread & Common

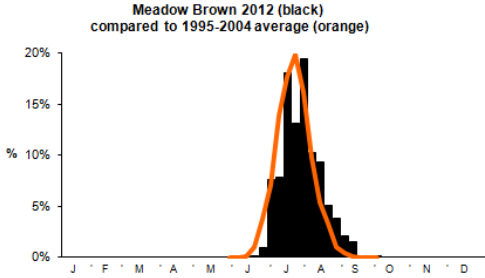
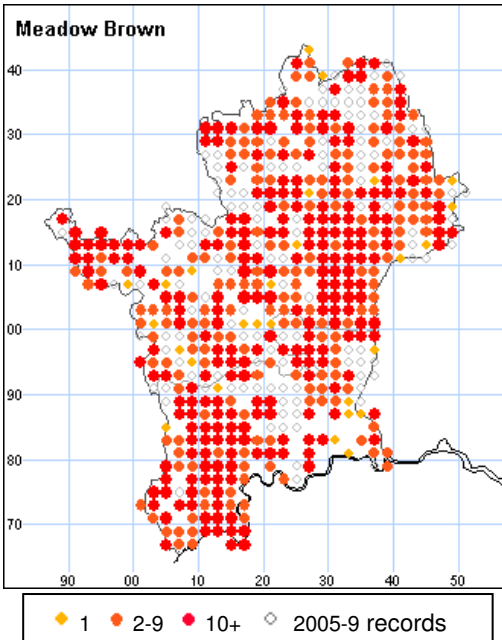


Photo Andrew Wood

First: 10 Jun
Last: 29 Sep
Peak week: 23 – 29 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2012	62% (309)
2011	64% (355)
2005-9 mean	56%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	289
2011	216
2005-9 mean	273

Distribution change
Up 11% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 5% compared with 2005-2009

Like Marbled White and Gatekeeper the Meadow Brown had a reasonable year, albeit with a flight season three weeks behind 2011. Indeed the transect abundance showed an increase on last year, a rare occurrence in 2012. At Beane Hill in North West Middlesex Leslie Williams noted, "A wet year on the transect but Meadow Browns did well." Similar increases were reported on many transect routes and this would seem to reflect the abundance of lush grass during May and June as the rains came and the larvae were feeding.

Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*

Increasing

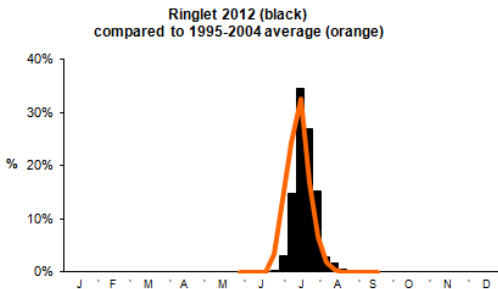
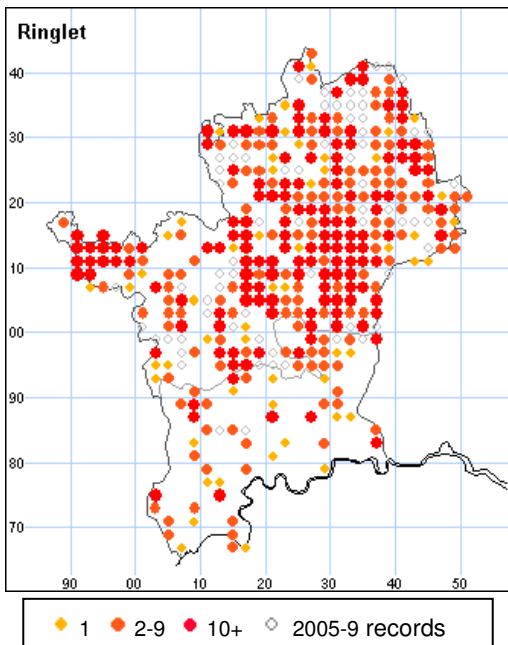


Photo Andrew Wood



First: 19 June

Last: 6 Sep

Peak week: 9 - 15 July

Distribution % squares	
2012	43% (214)
2011	41% (227)
2005-9 mean	25%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	89
2011	128
2005-9 mean	103

Distribution change
Up 72% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 16% compared with 2005-2009

Ringlet continued to prosper like its other single brooded brown cousins. The flight period was about two weeks later than 2011 and slightly behind the longer term pattern. Although not widespread in London it was recorded for a second year running in Westminster in central London (this record was missed off the 2011 map). This shows that it can colonise suitable habitat even in densely built up areas. As is often the case this lover of damp grassland was found in highest numbers in the grassy woodland areas at Balls Wood and Bricketwood Common rather than in open countryside. These two sites accounted for most of the 9 counts of over 100 individuals. The 6th September record at Fir & Pond Woods was our latest ever and the first in September.

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Widespread

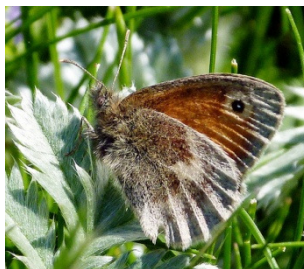
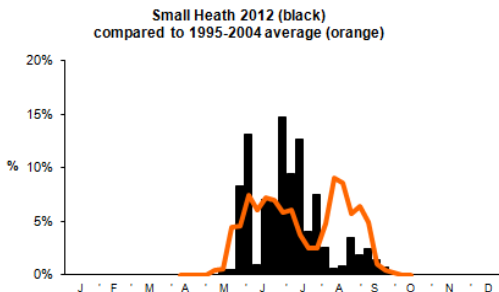
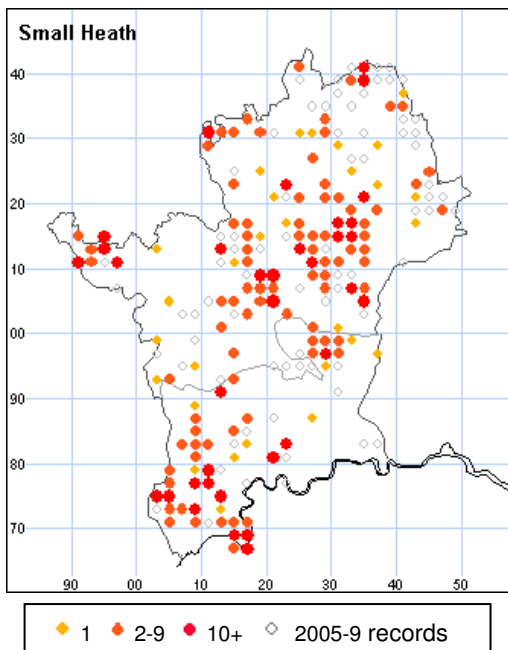


Photo Helen George

First: 11 May

Last: 27 Sep

Peak week: 25 Jun – 1 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2012	18% (88)
2011	19% (103)
2005-9 mean	14%

Abundance (transects)	
2012	35
2011	58
2005-9 mean	36

Distribution change
Up 28% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 3% compared with 2005-2009

Not single brooded unlike many of its relatives but this seems not to have greatly affected this brown butterfly. Possibly a concern though is the small relative size of the late summer brood and what this may mean for breeding opportunities to produce the spring 2013 emergence. Diane Andrew's comments are pertinent here, "I have seen very few Small Heath at Trent Park this year viz. 8 on 15th June, a solitary specimen on 11 Aug and 3 on 31st August. Result of poor summer weather?" Its fortunes on transect walks varied it reappeared at Balls Wood, was one of the few species to increase at Bishops Stortford Southern Country Park and halved its numbers at The Warren.

RECORDERS – Many thanks to everyone who submitted records in 2012:

Ray Abel; Ray Acreman; Zara Adu; **Nigel Agar**; G-Fatimah Ali; Neil Anderson; Sue Anderson; Diane Andrews; Jacqueline Angell; Alastair Angus; John Archer; Sheila Ashman; Natasha Askew; Miles Attenborough; Steve Austin; Janine Avison; Justine Aw; Lynda Ayre; Bharat Azad; Ian B; **Peter Bailey**; David Baker; Helen Baker; David Bance; Celia Bangham; Doris Banks; Helen Bantock; Sophie Barber; Fiona Barclay; Andrew Barfoot; Christina Barham; Chris Barker; John Barrington; Laurence Barwell; Jeff Barwick; **Alan Beale**; Verena Beane; Pamela Beare; Richard Beasley; Roy Beddard; Isabella Bedlington; Hillee Bee; **Carol Beeden**; Juliet Beentje; Jef. 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Recorders in bold undertook one or more transect walks during the year. Detailed results from our 50+ regularly walked Butterfly Transects can be found at our branch website or are available in print from Andrew Wood (details below)

Our branch website <http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk> has a very active sightings page and we welcome all submissions to it.

Now you can also check our latest sightings news in the field by using this page:

http://www.hertsmiddx-butterflies.org.uk/mobile_sightings.html.

We are also on Facebook (no facebook account needed to read it) at:

<http://www.facebook.com/ButterflyConservationHertsMiddlesex>

Visit our Reserve at Millhoppers Pasture

Millhoppers Pasture is approximately 3 acres and can be found between the villages of Wilstone and Long Marston near Tring. The reserve consists predominantly of open grassland, blackthorn scrub and several rare mature Black Poplar trees. There is also a stream that runs through the reserve. Butterfly species found at the reserve include Common Blue, Ringlet, Marbled White and Gatekeeper along with other wildlife including Red Kites, Pyramidal Orchid and Marsh Marigold.

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.

Branch Contacts	
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