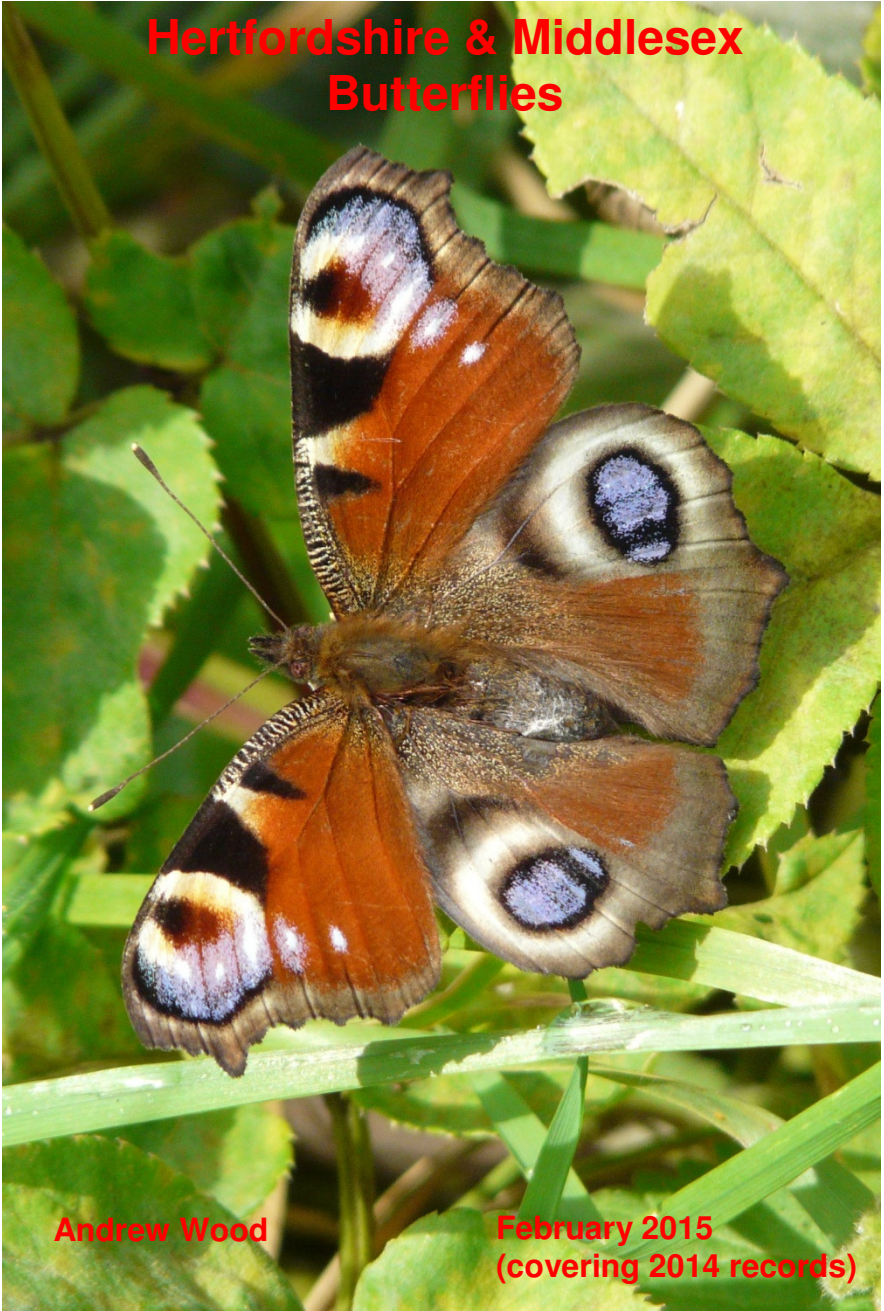




**Butterfly  
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

## **Hertfordshire & Middlesex Butterflies**



**Andrew Wood**

**February 2015  
(covering 2014 records)**

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*Cover Photo: Peacock at Fir & Pond Woods, Andrew Wood*

## INTRODUCTION

2014 was one of the mildest years on record in southern England. The winter was mild, leading to a good number of early sightings. As in 2013 July was a warm dry month but the final three weeks of August were cooler and duller than usual and this seemed to affect many species with noticeably lower numbers of butterflies in the autumn as late broods were affected and some overwintering adults quickly went into hibernation. We received 31786 compared to 27182 records compared in 2013. Some of this increase is because this is the first year in which data from BTO's Garden Birdwatch scheme has been available to us. Several species had exceptional years and few repeated the declines seen in 2012.

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

Please read and use this booklet and, if you are not already a contributor, send in your sightings on paper or by email to the branch record collator by November 9<sup>th</sup> 2015.

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.

<b>Branch Contacts</b>	
<b>Branch Chairman &amp; Records Collator:</b> Andrew Wood, 93 Bengoe Street, Hertford SG14 3EZ Tel: 01992 503571 zoothorn@ntlworld.com	<b>Branch Organiser/Secretary:</b> Liz Goodyear, 7 Chestnut Avenue, Ware. SG12 7JE Tel: 01920 487066 elizabethgoodyear@talk21.com

### ***Species not included in the main section***

#### **Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera***

After 2013's reports from Phil MacMurdie there was evidence of breeding in his accidentally introduced colony. "We saw Wall again this year, in September, managed to photograph a single male with very prominent scent bands. We also saw 3 females on the footpath across the field in front of our house. So hopefully they may have become established. We also found a caterpillar in the orchard, I thought it was a late meadow brown, as I'd never seen one fully grown before, but when it pupated it became obvious what it was. It did hatch, but I never got to see what the adult was. One thing I don't know is whether there were any during late July/early Aug as I was away."



Photo:Phil MacMurdie



Photo:Geoff Owen

#### **Chocolate Pansy *Junonia iphita***

Geoff Owen sent this report on 24<sup>th</sup> June "In Middlesex [Ruislip Woods] today and photographed this while on a walk, both on the way and on the way back. Thought at first it was an aberration of some sort but on getting home it looks to me like a Chocolate Pansy Butterfly This is one of several exotic species reported from this area this year.

#### **Large Tortoiseshell *Nymphalis polychloros***

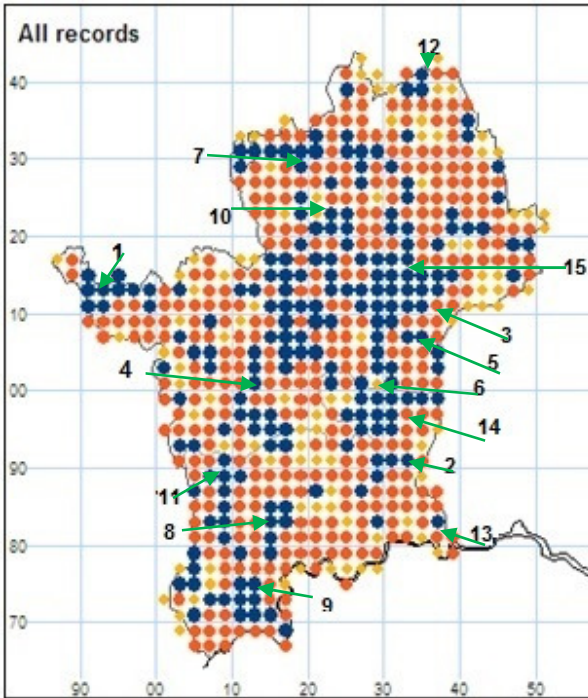
Clive Burrows reported "While playing golf yesterday evening (20 Sept) at Abbey View golf course [St Albans] in heavy overcast humid conditions a Large Tortoiseshell took flight from some trees a flew rapidly around for a couple of minutes before disappearing over some buildings". We suspect that this may have been a release for a wedding as the day was extremely damp and overcast and there is a wedding venue close by.

## **SOME GOOD BUTTERFLY SITES IN HERTFORDSHIRE & MIDDLESEX**

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

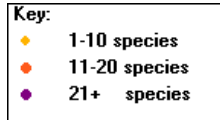
<b>Map</b>	<b>Site, Grid Reference, Brief details</b>	<b>Good site (rare or high numbers) - Date included if one year only</b>
1	<b>Aldbury Nowers</b> (SP 951129) Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) reserve north west of Tring	Chalkhill Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Dingy Skipper, Green Hairstreak, Grizzled Skipper, Small Blue
2	<b>Alexandra Park</b> TL296901 Park around Alexandra Palace in LB Haringey	Common Blue, Purple Hairstreak
3	<b>Balls Wood</b> TL 348106 At Hertford Heath 2 miles south of Hertford	Purple Hairstreak, Purple Emperor, Silver-washed Fritillary, White Admiral
4	<b>Bricket Wood Common</b> TL131017 North east of Watford	Purple Emperor, Ringlet, Silver- washed Fritillary, White Admiral
5	<b>Broxbourne Woods</b> 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	<b>Fir &amp; Pond Woods</b> TL277012 HMWT reserve 2 miles east of Potters Bar	Purple Emperor, Ringlet, Silver- washed Fritillary, White Admiral
7	<b>Hexton Chalk Pit</b> TL 107299 South of Hexton, turning off B655	Chalkhill Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Dingy Skipper, Green Hairstreak,
8	<b>Horsenden Hill</b> TQ 161845 Bisected by Horsenden Lane North between Perivale and Sudbury in LB Ealing.	Meadow Brown, Small Copper, White-letter Hairstreak
9	<b>Hounslow Heath</b> TQ141748 Off Staines Road, Hounslow	Green Hairstreak, Meadow Brown, Purple Hairstreak
10	<b>Norton Green</b> (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	<b>Ruislip Woods</b> TL080896 A complex of woods north of Ruislip along Ducks Hill Lane in LB Hillingdon	Purple Emperor, Ringlet, Silver- washed Fritillary, White Admiral
12	<b>Therfield Heath</b> TL347404 Downland west of Royston by A505	Chalkhill Blue, Marbled White, Dark Green Fritillary
13	<b>Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park</b> TL367823 Southern Grove E3 nr Mile End Central Line station	Silver-washed Fritillary, Small Blue 2012
14	<b>Trent Park</b> TL280969 Near Cockfosters Piccadilly line tube station	Purple Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Heath
15	<b>Waterford Heath</b> TL 318150 HMWT reserve North of Hertford, accessed from Sacombe Road not via Waterford	Brown Argus, Grizzled Skipper, Small Heath, Marbled White

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

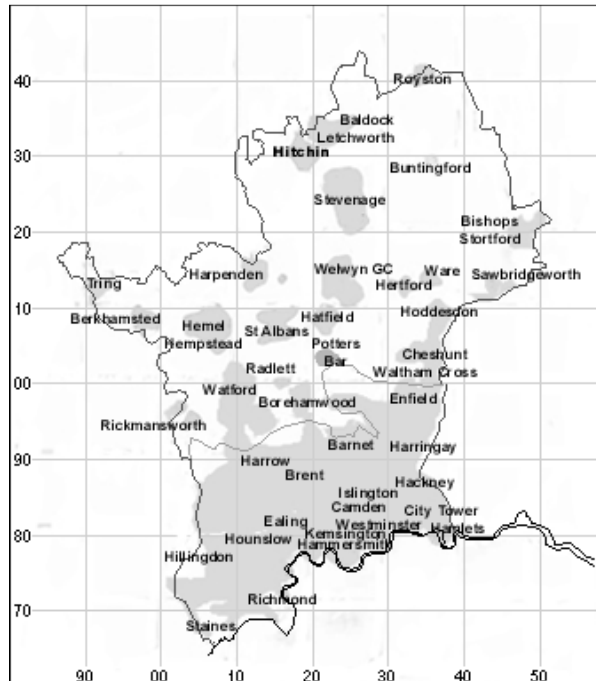
2 kilometre squares (tetrads) for which records were received in 2013



We have records from 558 out of 645 full or part squares in our area for 2014. 637 have been visited in 2010-2014.

### 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 and Middlesex.

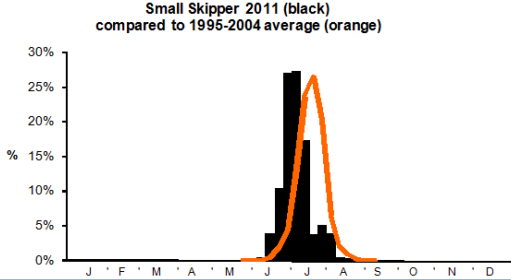


# SPECIES PAGES – What each section means

Brief status for species

## Common Name *Scientific name*

Widespread but declining



A photo of this species taken by one of our members

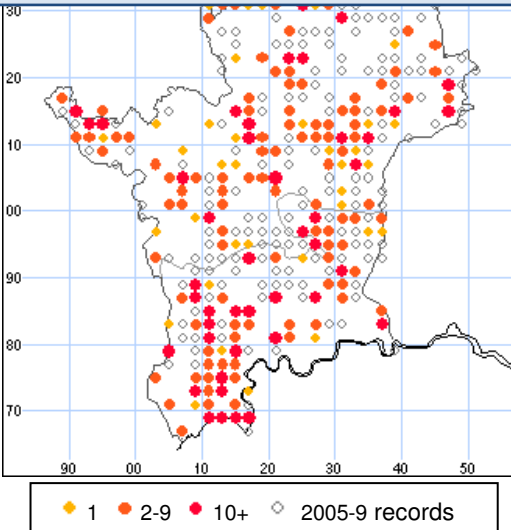
The flight period showing proportion of species flying in any week compared with the 1995-2004 average

**First:** 16 June

**Last:** 16 Aug

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

Map showing 2 km squares where a species has been recorded in 2010-2014 split into 1, 2-9 or 10 or more recorded on a single occasion and the recent historical range.



### Distribution % squares

2013	28% (155)
------	-----------

2012	25% (87)
------	----------

2005-9 mean	27%
-------------	-----

### Abundance (transects)

2013	27
------	----

2012	32
------	----

2005-9 mean	42
-------------	----

### Distribution change

Up 3% compared with 2005-2009

### Abundance change

Down 36% compared with 2005-2009

Never as widespread as the Small Skipper the species has experienced a greater decline in distribution. Some caution is needed when recording these two species as an aggregate due to the noticeable gap in central Herts for this species in

Notes on the species during the year

**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

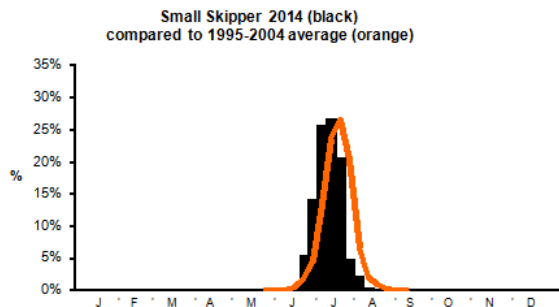
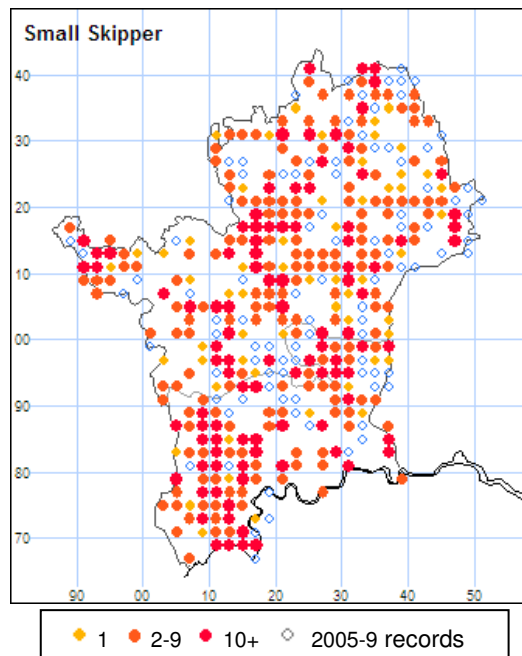


Photo Andrew Wood

**First:** 8 June

**Last:** 7 Aug

**Peak week:** 9-15 July



Distribution % squares	
2014	25% (138)
2013	26% (140)
2005-9 mean	27%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	29
2013	16
2005-9 mean	42

Distribution change	
Down 7% compared with 2005-2009	

Abundance change	
Down 25% compared with 2005-2009	

Small Skipper abundance was still below its longer term average but there was something of a bounce back compared to 2013. The distribution dropped slightly and this is part of a longer term trend. In 1996 this species was recorded in half of all tetrad squares, now it is only a quarter. The grasses the larvae feed on are still widespread so it is not clear what is causing this decline. Interestingly the western half of London has many consistently strong populations as much of more rural Hertfordshire which suggest that agricultural practice may have something to do with this decline. The warm spring meant an early start to the flight period and the peak week was also earlier than average. The poor August weather seems to have brought their flight to an abrupt end but with it being an early season this should not be significant to their presence next year.

# Essex Skipper *Thymelicus lineola*

Widespread but declining

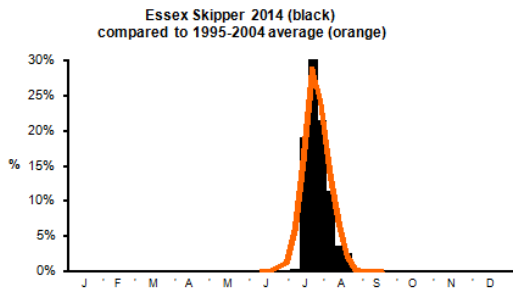
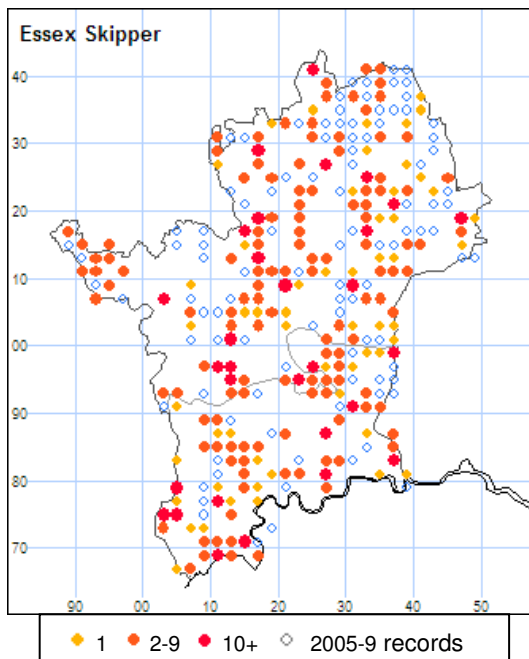


Photo Dave Miller



**First:** 11 Jun

**Last:** 10 Aug

**Peak week:** 16-22 July

Distribution % squares	
2014	13% (73)
2013	16% (86)
2005-9 mean	17%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	10
2013	7
2005-9 mean	46

Distribution change
Down 23% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 75% compared with 2005-2009

Interestingly this species did not fly earlier than average, unlike the Small Skipper, indeed despite a few early records, the flight only really got going slightly later than usual. The likely explanation being that Essex Skipper overwinters as an egg whereas the Small Skipper overwinters as a larva, giving the Essex Skipper less time to develop to adult stage and thus a smaller opportunity to emerge especially early. Abundance actually increased over 2013 but it is still a long way below the longer term average. As with the Small Skipper the distribution is slowly declining. In 1996 it was found in 34% of recorded tetrad squares so we have a loss of half of its distribution in just under 20 years. Interestingly the west London concentration of the Small Skipper is not seen in this species.



# Large Skipper *Ochlodes faunus*

Widespread & common

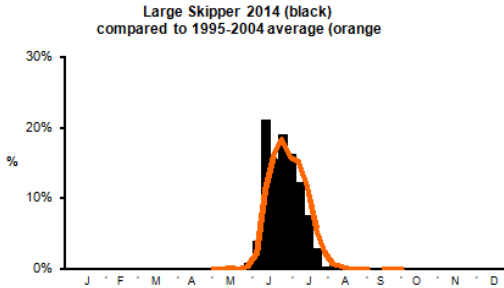
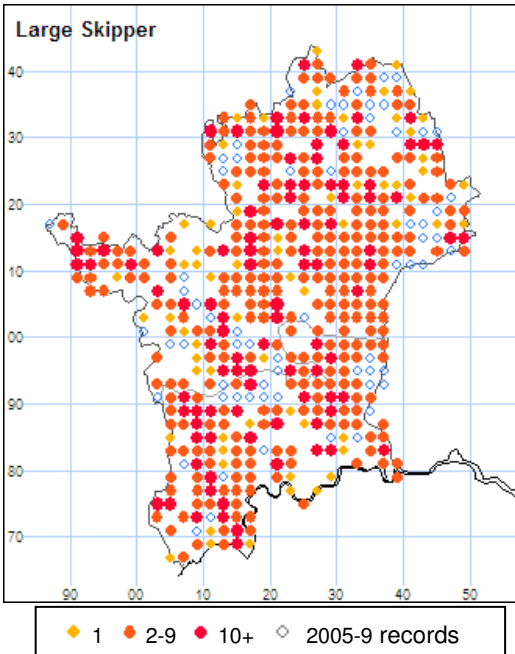


Photo Dave Miller

**First:** 14 May

**Last:** 14 Aug

**Peak week:** 11-17 Jun



Distribution % squares	
2014	41% (226)
2013	44% (241)
2005-9 mean	28%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	27
2013	25
2005-9 mean	20

Distribution change
Up 46% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 35% compared with 2005-2009

The Large Skipper continues to be a common species with its abundance up over both 2013 and the longer term average. Its flight was three weeks ahead of 2013 and very much back to what would be expected. The poor August also seemed to stop it in its tracks as there were no records after the middle of the month whereas stragglers can normally be seen into early September. In the mid 1990s this species actually had a more restricted distribution than the Small and Essex Skippers, a position that has drastically reversed. The ability of this species to occupy more shady situations e.g. woodlands than the Small and Essex Skippers has probably contributed to its relative success.

# Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages*

Restricted and rare

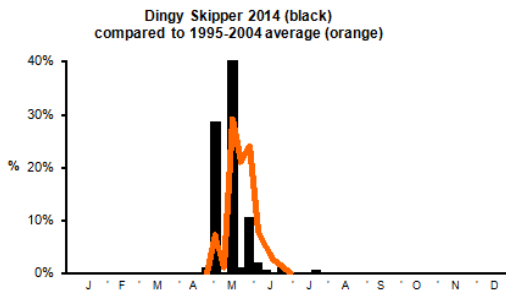
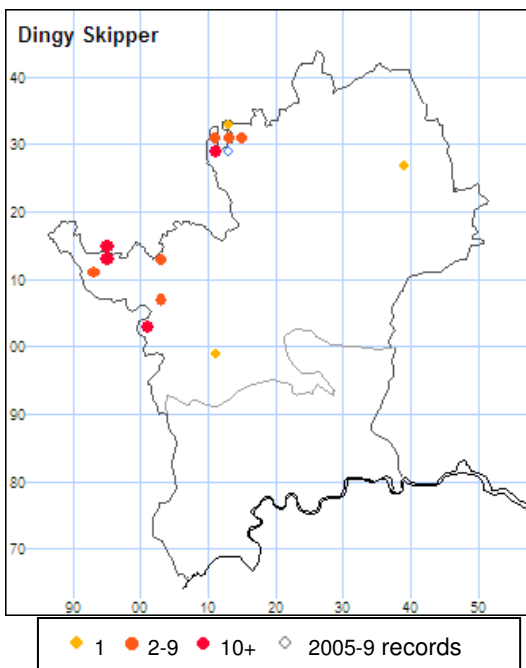


Photo Andrew Wood

**First:** 6 May

**Last:** 8 Jul

**Peak week:** 14-20 May



Distribution % squares	
2014	2% (11)
2013	1% (6)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	6
2013	7
2005-9 mean	11

Distribution change	
Up 100% compared with 2005-2009	

Abundance change	
Down 45% compared with 2005-2009	

An interesting year for this species as there is evidence of a spread in distribution or possibly recorders looking in previously under recorded areas. It continues to present at Aldbury Nowers, Hexton Chalk Pit, Shrubhill Common and Bovingdon Brick Pit. The drop in the abundance figure is more due to it being an average of two transects since 2013 rather than one. Site counts were particularly high at Hexton with 30 or more recorded on several occasions (these are the reason for the rather unusual set of peaks in the flight period chart). It was again present at 2013's new site near Hoo Wood. Singles were recorded in a conservation field margin north of Pirton on 25<sup>th</sup> June (Andrew Wood) and on a chalk track near Hay Street in eastern Hertfordshire on 26<sup>th</sup> June (Phil MacMurdie).

# Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*

Restricted & rare

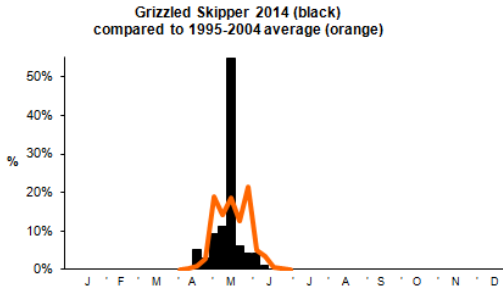
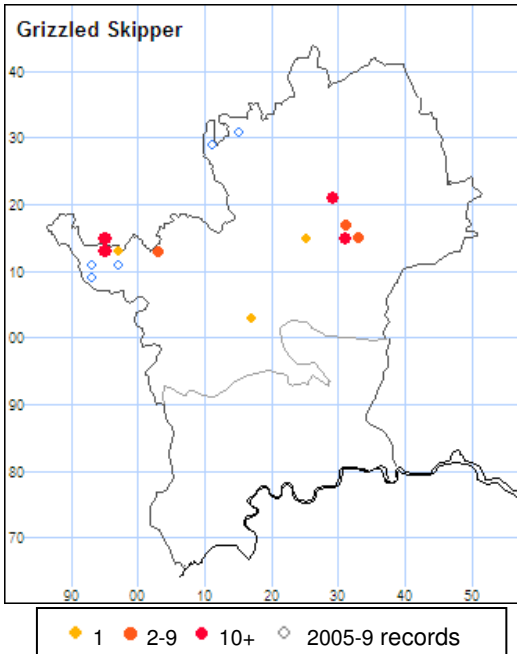


Photo Sharon Monahan

**First:** 15 Apr

**Last:** 14 Jun

**Peak week:** 14-20 May



Distribution % squares	
2014	1% (5)
2013	1% (7)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	9
2013	12
2005-9 mean	12

Distribution change	
No change	

Abundance change	
Down 25% compared with 2005-2009	

The Grizzled Skipper’s flight season was slightly ahead of the longer term average. The rather odd peak in late May is due to a high roost count by Andrew Middleton and Liz Goodyear at Waterford Heath North Pit on the 20<sup>th</sup> May. Otherwise the counts at Waterford Heath during 2014 were rather poor as can be seen by the drop in the abundance figure. However this butterfly is also present over the road at Rickneys Quarry and in some other nearby areas and it maybe that its colonies grow and die and move as minor changes in environment occur. An example of this is that the main areas on Waterford Heath South Pit in the late 1990s are now unoccupied as the butterfly has moved to more suitable spaces.

# Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus*

Less common migrant

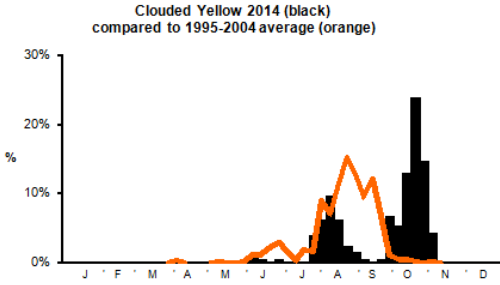
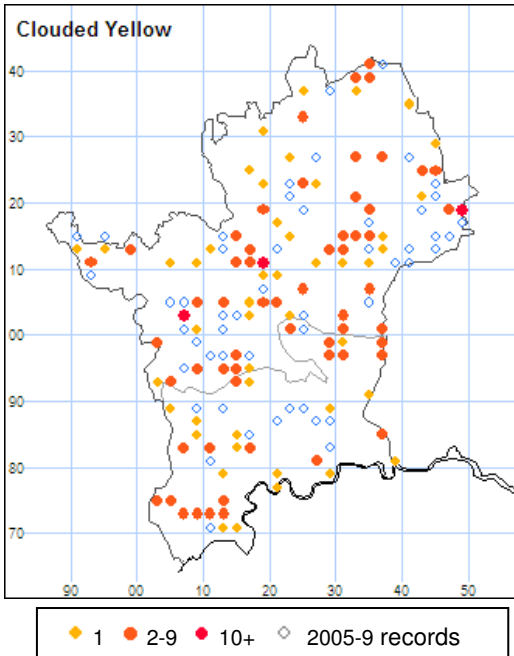


Photo Robin Pearson



**First:** 8 Jun  
**Last:** 1 Nov  
**Peak week:** 15-21 Oct

Distribution % squares	
2014	11% (59)
2013	11% (61)
2005-9 mean	5%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	1
2013	2
2005-9 mean	2

Distribution change	
Up 220% compared with 2005-2009	

Abundance change	
Down 50% compared with 2005-2009	

2014 was not a great migrant year but there is evidence of three separate flight periods ranging from a tiny influx in June, a larger second brood in late July/early August and a huge Autumn brood well past the expected flight pattern. However this needs some explanation as the Autumn figures are almost all based on one site, just south of Symondshyde Wood. It started on 3<sup>rd</sup> October when Robin Pearson reported, "At Sutton's Farm pits I had at least 12 sightings of males and females with up to four on view together at one time. Not surprisingly others visited e.g. on 14<sup>th</sup> Oct Chris Holtby saw 20 and Lee Evans 32 On 17<sup>th</sup> Oct Andrew Wood and Paul Why separately counted 10, on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct and 1st Nov Roger Millard counted 8 (including an egg laying female). It seems likely that they had bred on the abundant Birds foot Trefoil on the site

# Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*

Widespread

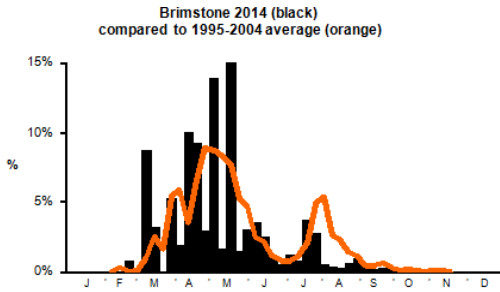
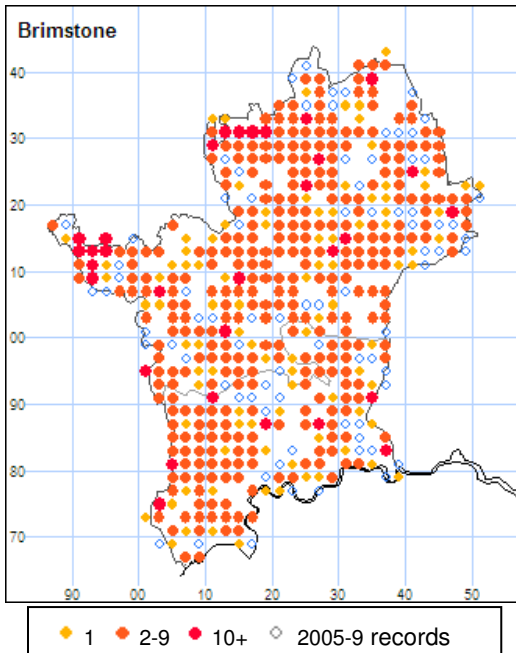


Photo David Miller

**First:** 22 Feb

**Last:** 31 Oct

**Peak week:** 14-20 May



Distribution % squares	
2014	49% (275)
2013	46% (254)
2005-9 mean	37%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	19
2013	19
2005-9 mean	20

Distribution change
Up 31% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 5% compared with 2005-2009

The Brimstone is one of our most consistent species and as usual there were many more records in the spring than the autumn. These are the same brood of adult butterflies but the spring flight is much longer and as an early flying species they seem to be very well reported each spring as there is not much else flying early on. The warm winter can be seen in the high numbers about in early March and the consequent early emergence in July. The sudden drop off in numbers can be explained by the poor August weather causing an early hibernation for many individuals, though small numbers were seen during the August to October period.

# Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Widespread & common

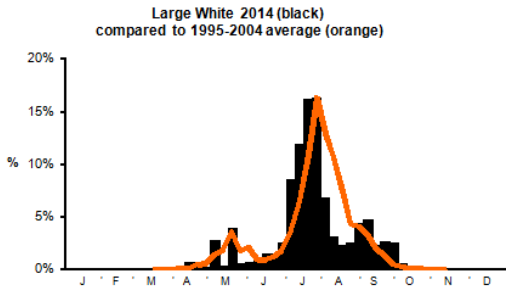
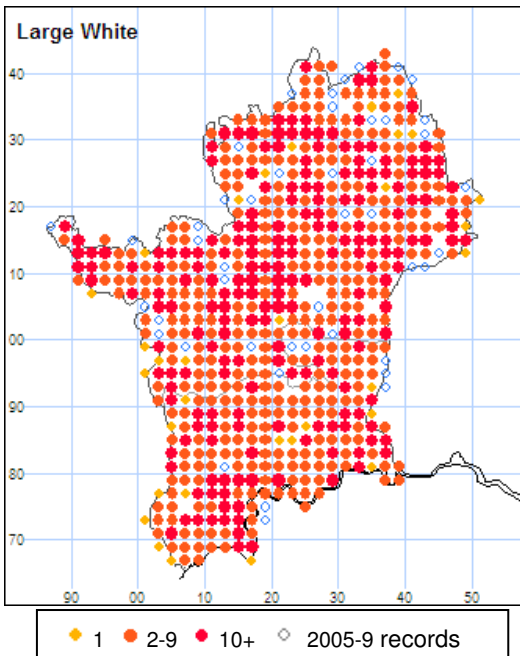


Photo Andrew Wood

**First:** 2 Apr  
**Last:** 31 Oct  
**Peak week:** 23-29 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2014	69% (387)
2013	82% (451)
2005-9 mean	58%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	18
2013	74
2005-9 mean	54

Distribution change
Up 17% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 70% compared with 2005-2009

The Large White suffered a huge drop in abundance in 2014 compared to 2013 but before alarm bells sound it must be noted that the 2012 abundance was only 17. The distribution also dropped but it is still well above the longer term trend. Indeed this is a species that seems to be well able to cope with vagaries of weather and also a large amount of parasitism which affects the population very quickly so it thrives in good weather which encourages high levels of breeding and thus plenty of targets for parasitic wasps. The apparent two generations in late summer can be attributed to the lack of records during the sub standard August weather

# Small White *Pieris rapae*

Widespread & common

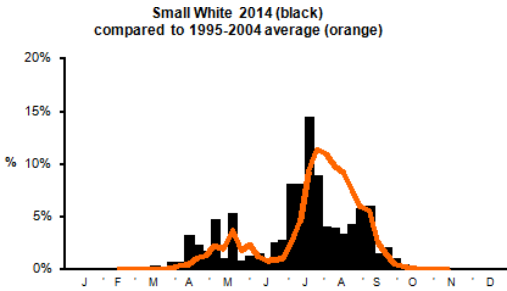
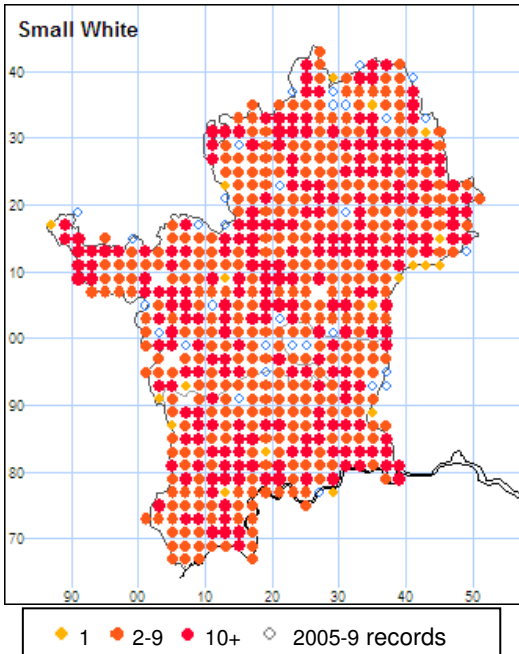


Photo Dave Miller

**First:** 6 Mar

**Last:** 25 Oct

**Peak week:** 16-22 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2014	73% (405)
2013	87% (480)
2005-9 mean	58%

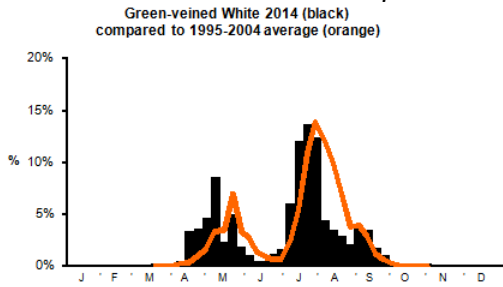
Abundance (transects)	
2014	27
2013	95
2005-9 mean	67

Distribution change
Up 23% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 60% compared with 2005-2009

The comments on the Large White apply very much to the Small White during the 2014 season. The extent of parasitism is harder to ascertain as the caterpillars are solitary and internal feeders compared to the colonial open feeding of the Large White. However looking back over the last two decades the Small White has been as common in the last two years as it has ever been in this period.

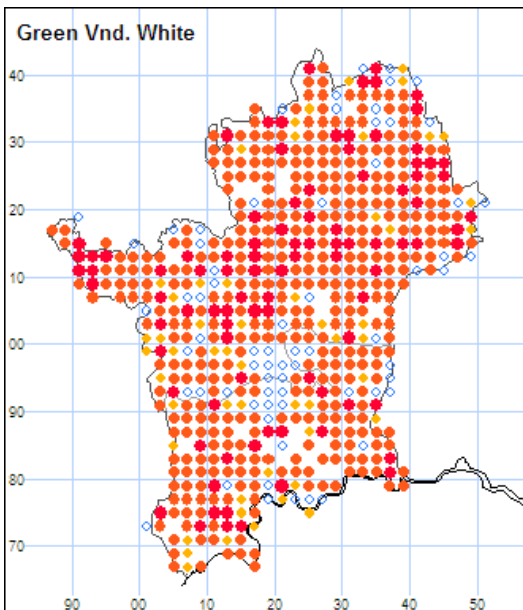
## Green-veined White *Pieris napi*



Widespread & common



Photo Steve Iane



First: 16 Mar

Last: 28 Oct

Peak week: 17-23 Jul

### Distribution % squares

2014	54% (302)
2013	63% (345)
2005-9 mean	47%

### Abundance (transects)

2014	29
2013	51
2005-9 mean	54

### Distribution change

Up 15% compared with  
2005-2009

### Abundance change

Down 46% compared with  
2005-2009

Many of the comments for the Large and Small White also apply to the Green-veined White. This species generally has a proportionally larger first brood than the other two and this was the case in 2014. The mild spring gave us a very early first brood and not surprisingly this early flight and the mild early summer meant that the second brood was also early, though there was a steep fall off in early August as the summer weather abruptly ended. The distribution of this species over the last 20 years has varied considerably from 37% to 86% of squares so its current level is pretty average and there is no reason to think that this species is in any danger.



# Orange Tip *Anthocharis cardamines*

Widespread & Common

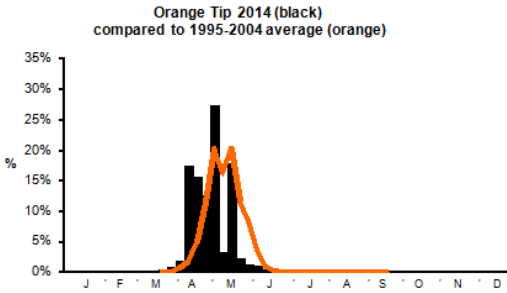
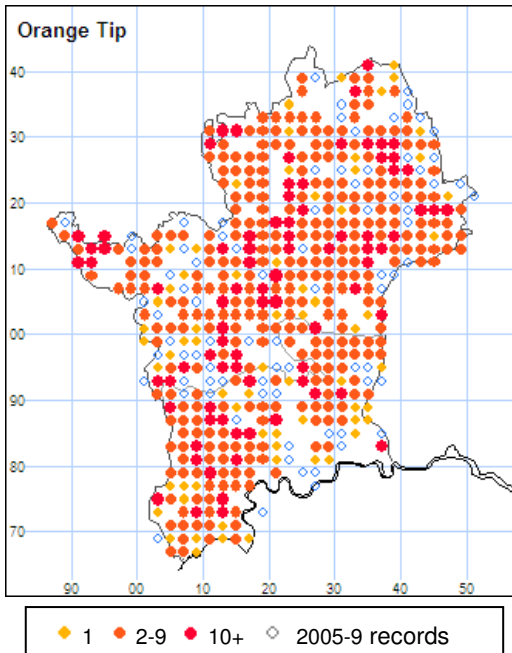


Photo Sharon Monahan



**First:** 21 Mar

**Last:** 13 Jun

**Peak week:** 30 Apr- 6 May

Distribution % squares	
2014	46% (254)
2013	37% (201)
2005-9 mean	43%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	16
2013	16
2005-9 mean	14

Distribution change	
Up 7% compared with 2005-2009	

Abundance change	
Up 14% compared with 2005-2009	

An early emergence in a warm spring for this species with the peak right at the start of May. It remained a common sight across our area, though, perhaps, not surprisingly, there were no exceptionally late sightings in 2014. It is perhaps worth noting that during 1990s it was recorded in just over 50% of squares so there has been a slight decline in distribution during the current century, particularly in the west of area. However it remains a familiar butterfly and one of the highlights of the Spring.

# Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*

Very rare & restricted

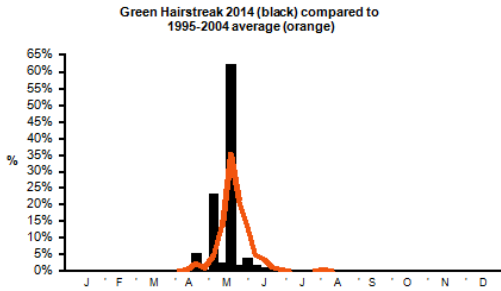
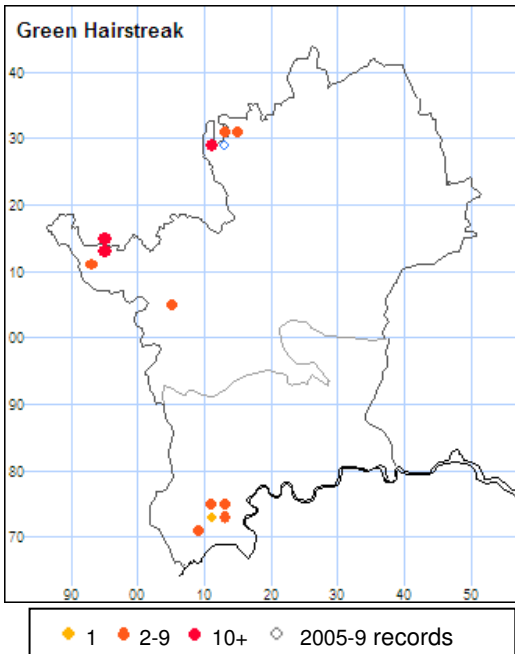


Photo Sharon Monahan

**First:** 1 May

**Last:** 6 Jun

**Peak week:** 14-20 May



Distribution % squares	
2014	2% (9)
2013	1% (5)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	8
2013	4
2005-9 mean	4

Distribution change
Up 200% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Too little data to calculate

Green Hairstreaks had a good year with abundance well up on 2013 and the longer term mean. Distribution also improved with records from several sites - Roughdown Common on the edge of Hemel Hempstead where Malcolm Hull notes, “the closest I have ever seen them two my home & an encouraging sign that this species may be spreading”, the brownfield site of Feltham Marshalling yards not far from Hounslow Heath and further records from the Crane Meads area of Hounslow Heath. Records were also received from Bedfont Lakes making the south west area of the London Borough of Hounslow something of a stronghold for this beautiful but elusive butterfly. The established chalk land colonies at Hexton Chalkpit and Telegraph Hill (and across the hillside at Hoo Bit) were also well in evidence.

# Purple Hairstreak *Neozephyrus quercus*

Common around oaks

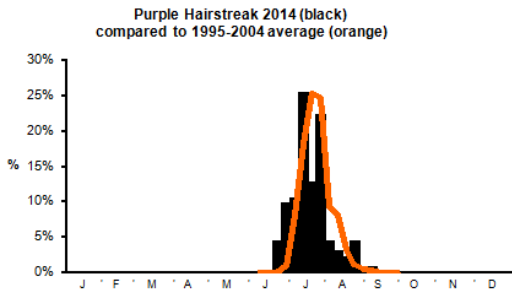
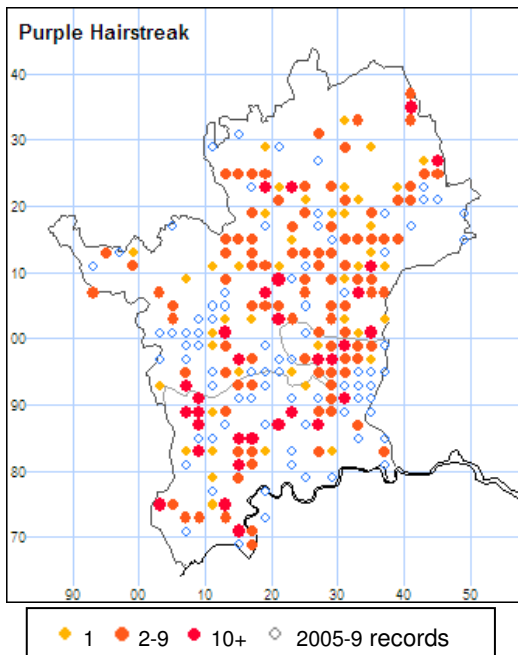


Photo Adrian Buckel

**First:** 21 Jun

**Last:** 7 Sep

**Peak week:** 9-15 July



Distribution % squares	
2014	7% (37)
2013	12% (66)
2005-9 mean	16%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	5
2013	10
2005-9 mean	10

Distribution change	
Down 54% compared with 2005-2009	

Abundance change	
Down 50% compared with 2005-2009	

Abundance was well down on recent years, but as that data is based on Transect walks which are not best designed for recording a tree top butterfly this has to be treated with caution, although there were no high numbers recorded at any site. Worryingly the distribution data is also well down both on last year and over the longer term. From personal observation there were some usually reliable trees where I saw no activity in 2014. However they can sometimes come down low as Roger Thornhill found in Harpenden, "I had a purple hairstreak settled on flowering lobelia – a first for my garden," The flight period was slightly advanced compared to the mean but nothing out of the ordinary given the warm spring.

# White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrrium w-album*

Common around elm

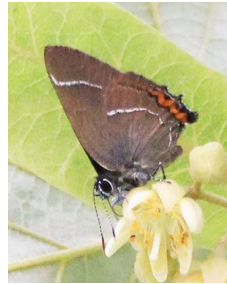
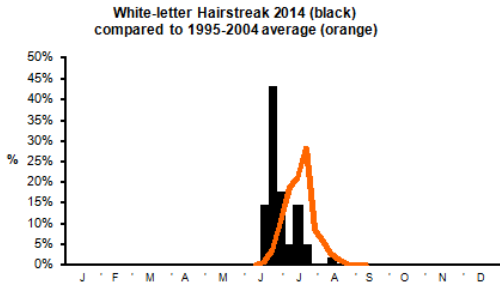
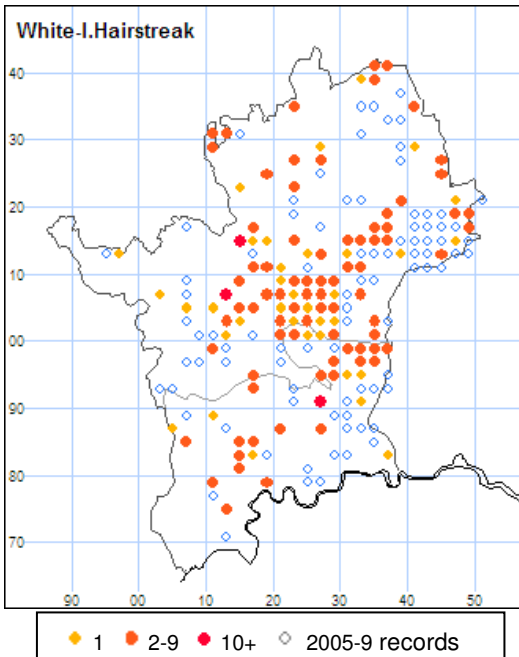


Photo Adrian Buckel



**First:** 17 Jun

**Last:** 9 Aug

**Peak week:** 18-24 Jun

Distribution % squares	
2014	5% (25)
2013	5% (27)
2005-9 mean	10%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	1
2013	4
2005-9 mean	5

Distribution change
Down 50% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 80% compared with 2005-2009

The comments about abundance made for the Purple Hairstreak can also apply to this species but the large fall in abundance and small number of records received generally suggest 2014 was not a good year for this butterfly. The distribution changed little from 2014 but is well down from the longer term average, though looking back into the 1990s it is not far from the distribution at this time. An example of recording difficulties is given by Peter Clarke, “ I noticed a worn White-letter Hairstreak on the front windscreen and it was with me all the way home crossing 2 tetrads in the process!” It would be well worth identifying elms during the Spring and observing them closely in late June/early July as this may well produce new records during 2015.

# Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

Widespread & common

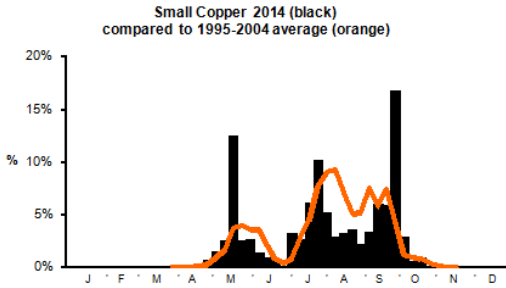
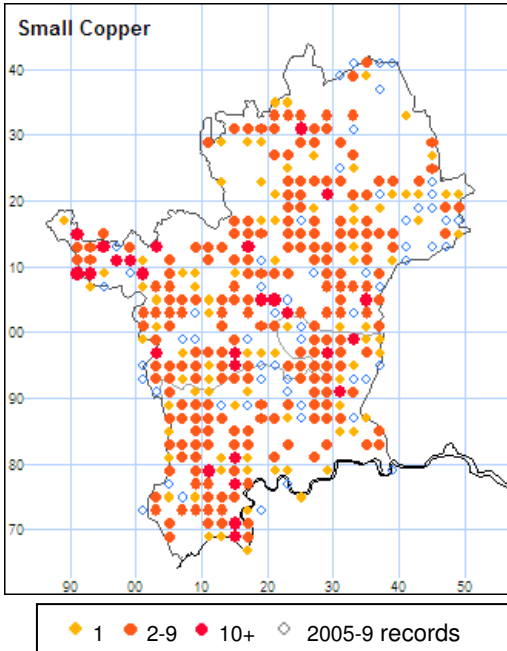


Photo Dave Miller



**First:** 13 Apr

**Last:** 31 Oct

**Peak week:** 24-30 Sep

Distribution % squares	
2014	27% (150)
2013	29% (160)
2005-9 mean	21%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	7
2013	6
2005-9 mean	11

Distribution change
Up 32% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 36% compared with 2005-2009

There were again three strong broods in 2014 with it being most in evidence during the Autumn with records all through October. Abundance increased a little after 2013 but it is still below the longer term average. Its distribution has changed only a little in the last 20 years with some losses in rural areas countered by increases in more suburban areas. Pete Gore observed behaviour at Hounslow Heath on 21 April, “discovered mating Small Coppers. The female climbed up a dead grass stalk towing the male behind then down again using the under-side of the stalk to get past the still attached male”.

# Small Blue *Cupido minimus*

Very rare & restricted

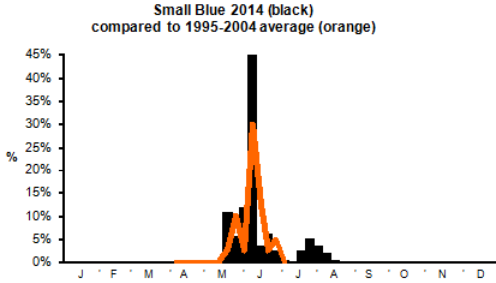
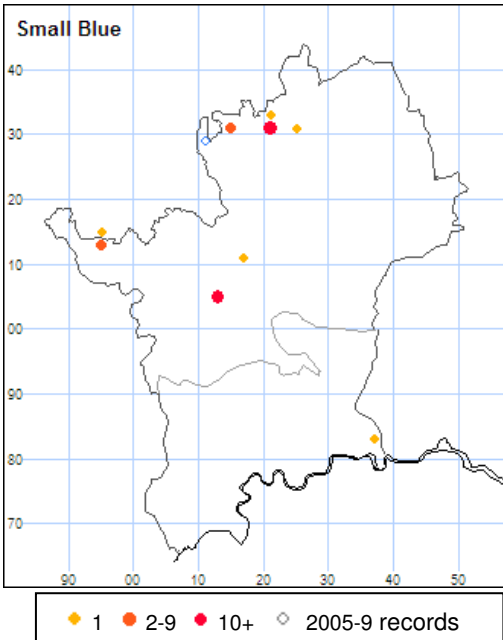


Photo Ashley Cox



**First:** 18 May

**Last:** 13 Aug

**Peak week:** 4-10 Jun

Distribution % squares	
2014	1% (6)
2013	>1% (3)
2005-9 mean	0%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	27
2013	77
2005-9 mean	0

Distribution change	
Too little data to calculate	

Abundance change	
Too little data to calculate	

Good numbers were again noted at Butterfly World and Malcolm Huill, noted, "For the first time the Spring brood produced greater numbers than in the Summer. This is probably due to the poor weather in August leading to a cooler microclimate in the breeding areas. The site is being well managed & the Kidney Vetch is thriving." It is also still present in small numbers at Aldbury Nowers. It was also reported from Wood Lane, Pirton where a small area of Kidney Vetch grows alongside the track. The big surprise was a report from Roger Millard of 30 at land behind Hillbrow on the edge of Letchworth Garden City. Andrew Wood visited and confirmed three distinct areas with colonies on plentiful Kidney Vetch. This area is owned by Letchworth Garden City Preservation Trust and we are working with them to preserve and enhance these sites.

# Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*

Widely distributed

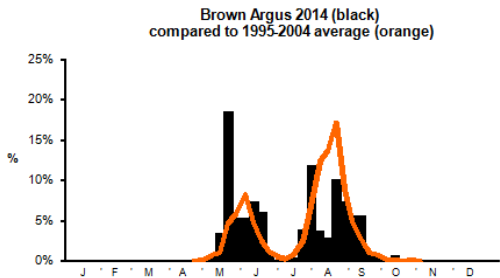
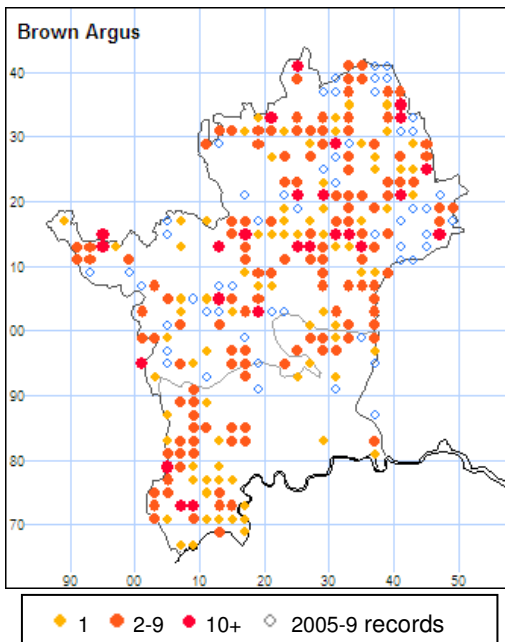


Photo Sharon Monahan



**First:** 6 May

**Last:** 5 Oct

**Peak week:** 14-20 May

Distribution % squares	
2014	15% (83)
2013	13% (69)
2005-9 mean	11%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	10
2013	13
2005-9 mean	15

Distribution change
Up 36% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 33% compared with 2005-2009

The distribution of the Brown Argus slipped a little after 2013's big improvement but it was still a well distributed species with a noticeable increase in tetrad squares occupied. This is very much a rural and outer suburban species as the big white space in central and north London shows. As with a number of other species there has been a growth of distribution in west London and south east Hertfordshire which has offset losses in rural Hertfordshire. The flight times corresponded well with the average with the poor August causing a not surprising dip in numbers.

# Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*

Widespread & common

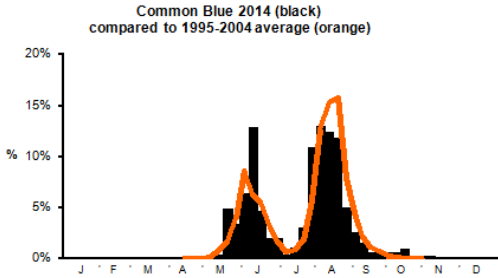
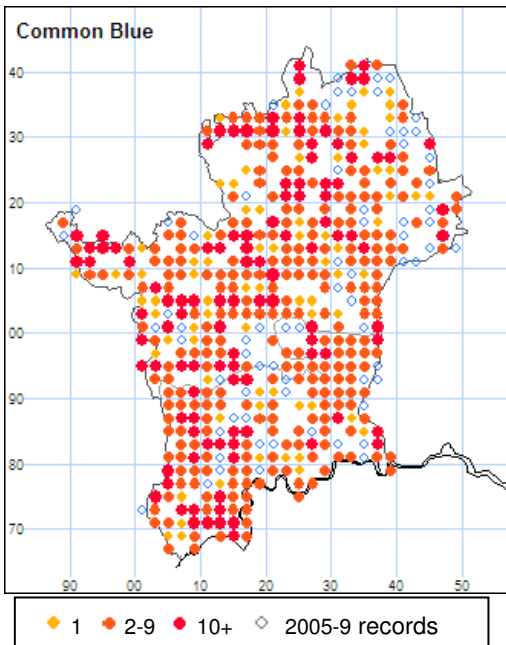


Photo Dave Miller

**First:** 1 May

**Last:** 1 Nov

**Peak week:** 30 Jul – 5 Aug



Distribution % squares	
2014	46% (258)
2013	40% (221)
2005-9 mean	31%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	42
2013	43
2005-9 mean	30

Distribution change
Up 48% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 40% compared with 2005-2009

Common Blue maintained 2013’s improvement and its flight times were well in line with longer term trends. The number of occupied squares is well up over recent times as right up to 2009 the percentage was around 30%. As with the Brown Argus, gains in London have offset losses in Hertfordshire. However unlike the Brown Argus much of London is within its range. This probably reflects the wider distribution and encouragement of Birds Foot Trefoil in parks and gardens where it will grow readily in less manicured lawns.



# Chalkhill Blue *Lysandra coridon*

Common at known chalk sites

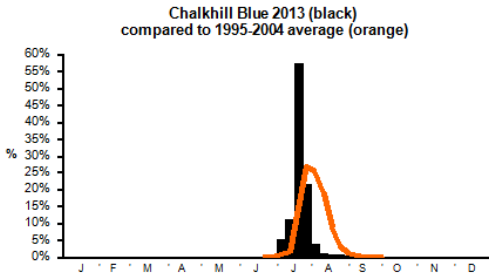
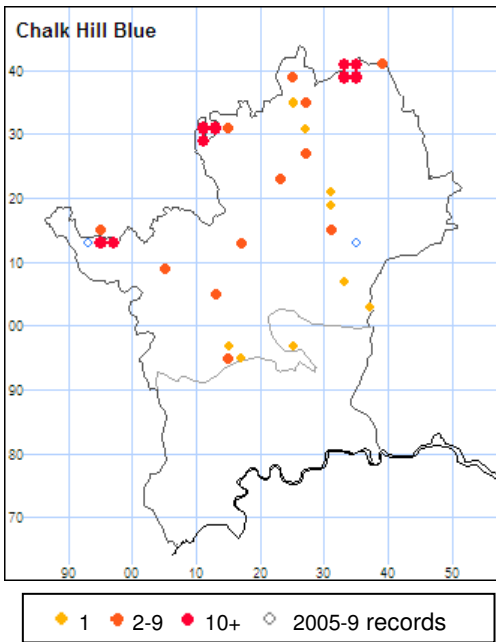


Photo Andrew Wood

**First:** 26 Jun  
**Last:** 15 Sep  
**Peak week:** 16-22 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2014	3% (16)
2013	4% (23)
2005-9 mean	1%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	584
2013	949
2005-9 mean	96

Distribution change	
See text below	

Abundance change	
Up 508% compared with 2005-2009	

Chalkhill Blue numbers were down compared to 2013 but that is comparing with an exceptional year and it was still a very common butterfly at all its strongholds. For instance at Therfield Heath Patricia Clegg noted, “a swarm of 50-60 individuals.. all flying and landing at the same time”. Being one of the latest species to emerge it is not unsurprising that after a mild year its emergence was advanced into the last week of June and equally it peaked quickly and declined as the August weather was so poor. There was evidence of breeding, as hoped at Ashwell quarry, but less dispersal due to both lower numbers and the poor August. It was however recorded at Baldock, Great Ashby, Monken Hadley and Butterfly World away from its strongholds.

# Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*

Widespread & common

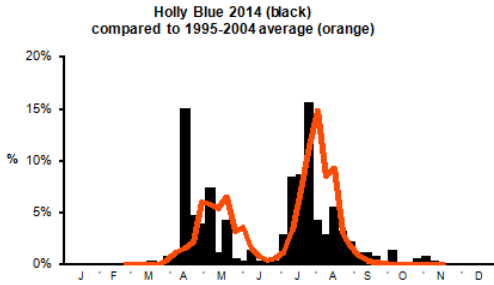
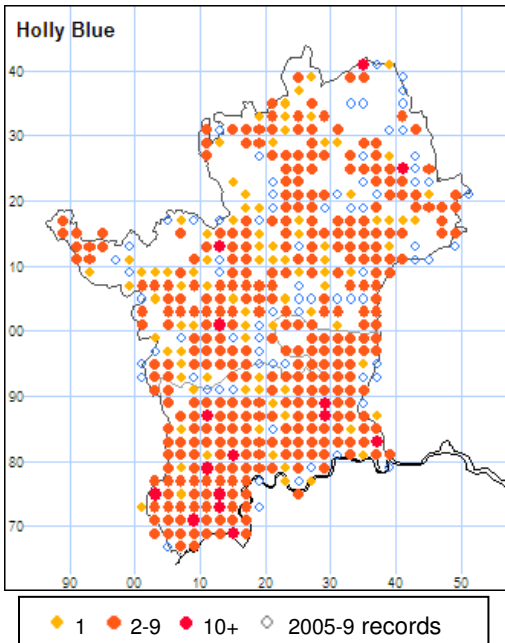


Photo Dave Miller

**First:** 16 Mar

**Last:** 9 Nov

**Peak week:** 23-29 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2014	32% (179)
2013	39% (215)
2005-9 mean	41%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	4
2013	8
2005-9 mean	12

Distribution change
Down 22% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 67% compared with 2005-2009

Last year I wrote, “2014 will not be a good year for this species.” And I was not wrong as the abundance figure above shows. The spring and summer broods were both advanced in time and because of this, unlike 2013, there was time for a small third partial brood with adults noted between 28<sup>th</sup> September and 9<sup>th</sup> November. We have noted before the fact that this is a London butterfly and this is graphically shown on the map above with hardly any empty squares in the London boroughs but many in Hertfordshire, particularly in the intensively farmed areas of the north and east. Holly and Ivy are, of course, likely to be eradicated in heavily farmed areas while they grow commonly in urban parks and gardens.

# White Admiral *Limenitis camilla*

Local in woodland

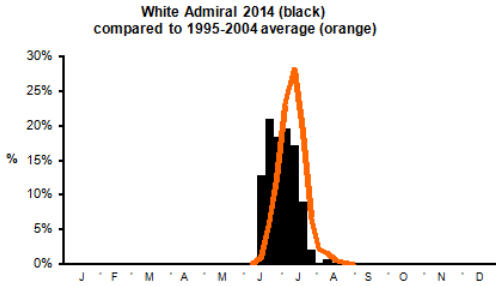
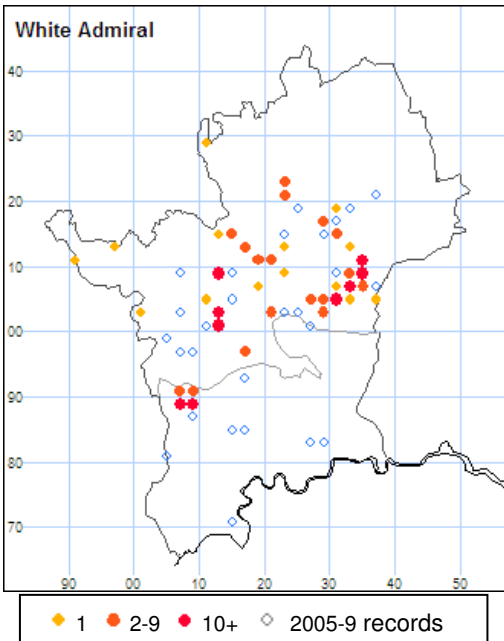


Photo Andrew Wood



**First:** 13 Jun  
**Last:** 9 Aug  
**Peak week:** 18-24 Jun

Distribution % squares	
2014	3% (16)
2013	4% (21)
2005-9 mean	4%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	9
2013	14
2005-9 mean	11

Distribution change
Down 25% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 22% compared with 2005-2009

The White Admiral fell back after 2013 and it was certainly not as often observed as in several recent years. It emerged early and peaked before the end of June which is unusual. It was only at Bricketwood Common that it was recorded in double figures. For 2014 there were several tetrad squares in Ruislip Woods and the Broxbourne Woods areas where there were no records. This is a species that we need to keep an eye on, especially as there has been much work over recent years to open out South Hertfordshire woods to benefit butterflies. Has this work cleared too much shaded straggly honeysuckle, the favoured larval food plant, or is there something happening more widely?

# Purple Emperor *Apatura iris*

Local in woodland

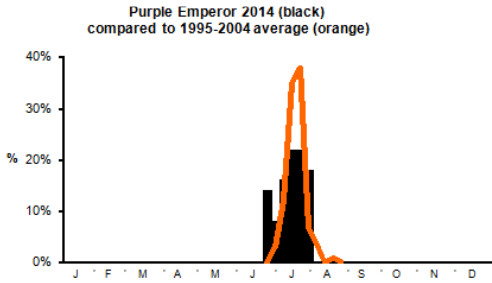
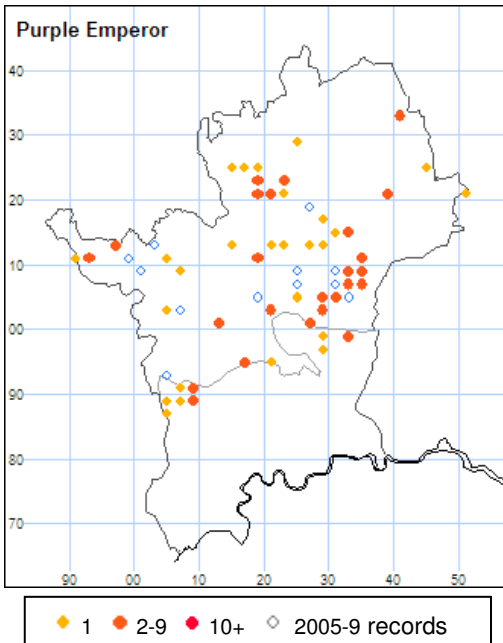


Photo Andrew Wood

**First:** 21 Jun

**Last:** 27 Jul

**Peak week:** 9-15 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2014	4% (23)
2013	4% (24)
2005-9 mean	3%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	1
2013	2
2005-9 mean	2

Distribution change
Up 33% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Too little data to calculate

Like the hairstreaks measuring its abundance on transects is not as useful as for lower flying species. There were again many reports from across our area and new sites included Panshanger Park and Bardon Clumps on the western and northern sides respectively of Hertford, Trent Park and Bishops Stortford. On this latter one Bob Stroud reported, " It settled on the ground close to the chicken run and stayed for several minutes, it then settled on my wife's jumper before flying off. Looking back into the 1990s when it was widely regarded as well nigh extinct in our area it is in some ways amazing to see that it is now found in more areas than the White Admiral.

# Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Common migrant

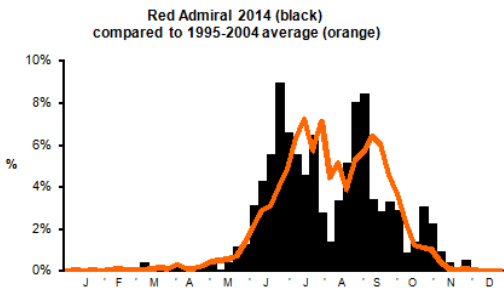
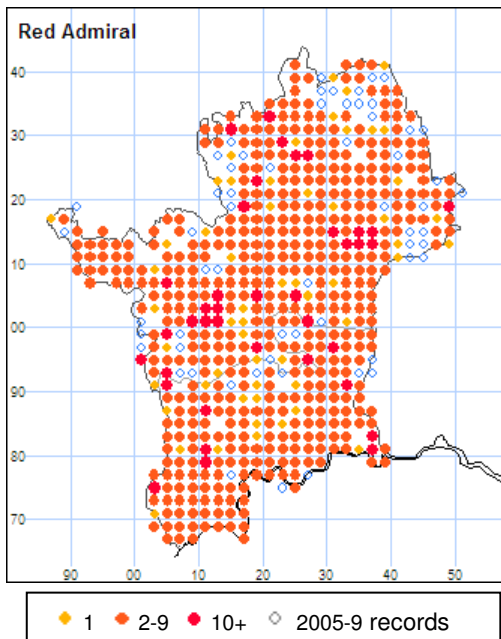


Photo Dave Miller

**First:** 2 Jan  
**Last:** 20 Dec  
**Peak week:** 25 Jun -1 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2014	66% (369)
2013	46% (254)
2005-9 mean	51%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	8
2013	5
2005-9 mean	10

Distribution change
Up 29% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 20% compared with 2005-2009

There were certainly more Red Admirals around this year, although numbers are still lower than a few years ago, but as a species largely reliant on Migration this is not necessarily a conservation concern. The flight data shows three distinct peaks, the first in June probably due to migration. The second coincides with the poor August weather which affected most native species so that may also include some migration but it seems likely that the third peak in the autumn are those butterflies’ offspring. Early and late records show how this species does not go into deep hibernation like its close relatives but is tempted into flight by any spell of milder weather. Peter Clarke noticed one with a white spot in the red band on the forewing at Norton Green on 31 Aug.

# Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

Variable migrant

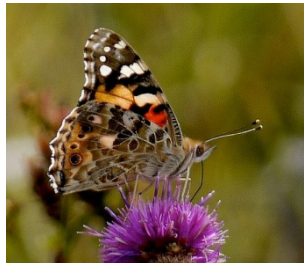
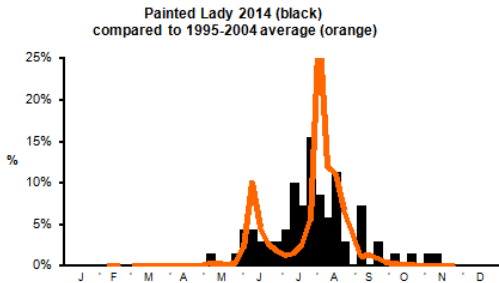
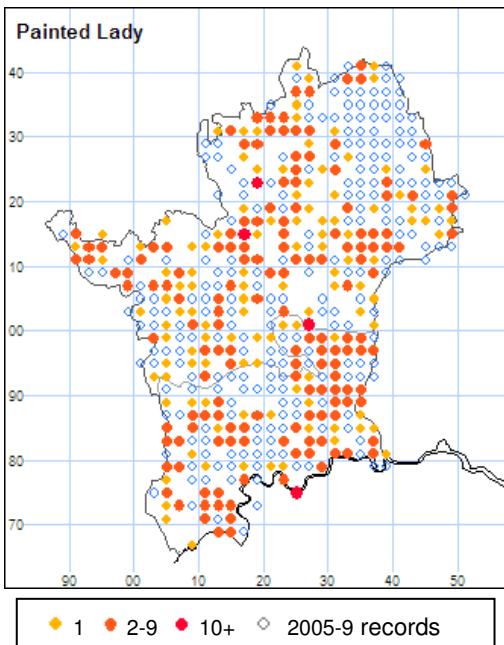


Photo Sharon Monahan

**First:** 1 May

**Last:** 10 Nov

**Peak week:** 23-29 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2014	25% (141)
2013	24% (131)
2005-9 mean	33%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	1
2013	6
2005-9 mean	0

Distribution change	
Down 24% compared with 2005-2009	

Abundance change	
Too little data to calculate	

Painted Ladies were present from May to November but never in large numbers. Indeed all our records, bar two, are of single individuals and the others are of 2 seen together. As this is a migrant species its occurrence at any point is quite random and there are no particular conclusions that can be drawn about its success or otherwise. The map above shows many unoccupied squares compared to 2005-2009 because of the huge eruption in numbers of May 2009.

# Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*

Common & Widespread

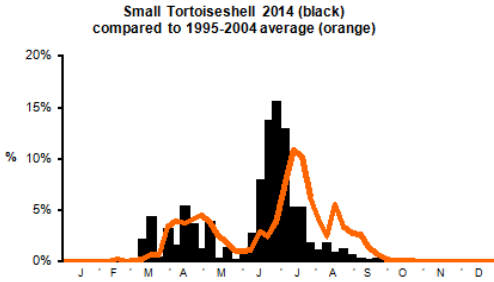
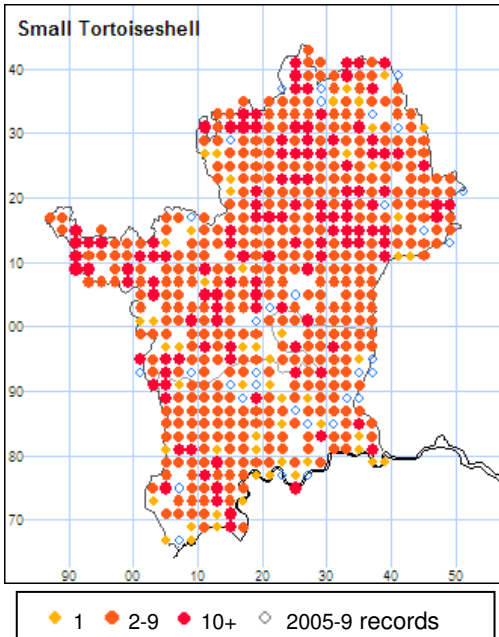


Photo Sharon Monahan

**First:** 13 Feb

**Last:** 31 Oct

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



Distribution % squares	
2014	75% (421)
2013	75% (409)
2005-9 mean	37%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	47
2013	28
2005-9 mean	10

Distribution change
Up 203% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 370% compared with 2005-2009

The recovery of the Small Tortoiseshell continues to be one of the success stories of recent years. The over wintering butterflies were able to produce a huge and early summer brood which looks to have gone early into hibernation as August’s weather deteriorated. Paul Busby reported , “at least 30 Small Tortoiseshells and 7 Peacocks along a 0.5km path at Dews farm Sandpits, South Harefield, Middx on 11 April. And Len Crouch noted, “in a meadow alongside the Stort 26 crisscrossing the local bowling green and at 19:30 chasing each other in groups of 3 or 4 over Thornbera Allotments on 22 June. There is no evidence of an early autumn migration into our area of the UK in 2014

# Peacock *Inachis io*

Common & Widespread

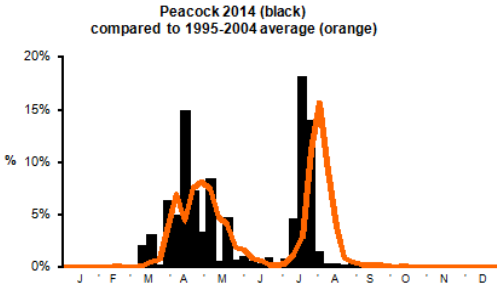
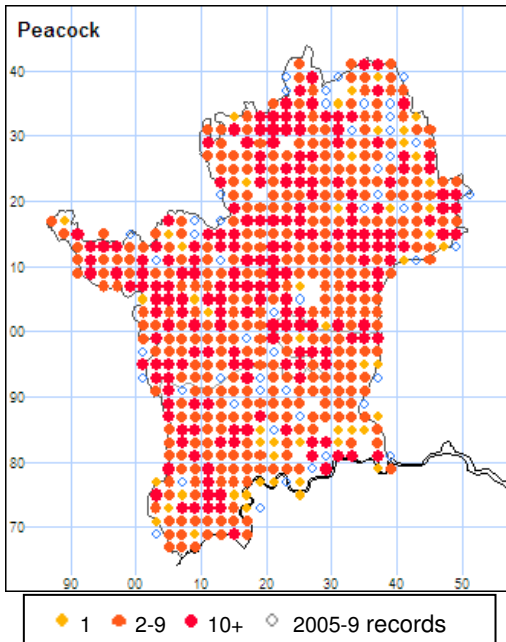


Photo Dave Miller

**First:** 3 Jan

**Last:** 23 Dec

**Peak week:** 16-22 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2014	75% (421)
2013	77% (425)
2005-9 mean	57%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	43
2013	36
2005-9 mean	31

Distribution change
Up 30% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 39% compared with 2005-2009

Like the Small Tortoiseshell the Peacock’s bad days seem to be behind it with a continued growth in numbers. Len Crouch counted, “30 Peacocks nectaring on teasel in about 12 minutes” at Thorley Wash. It tied with the Small Tortoiseshell as the most widely distributed species of 2014. The overwintering insects were strongly in evidence, with many reports of larval nests such as Diane Andrews commenting on several North London sites in June, “ main thing seems to be clusters of Peacock caterpillars” and Simon Knott noting, “1000+ Peacock caterpillars on the nettles at Kings Meads”. These larvae produced a brood peaking early in mid July but virtually disappearing into hibernation two weeks later as August’s poor weather took over.



# Comma *Polygona c-album*

Common & widespread

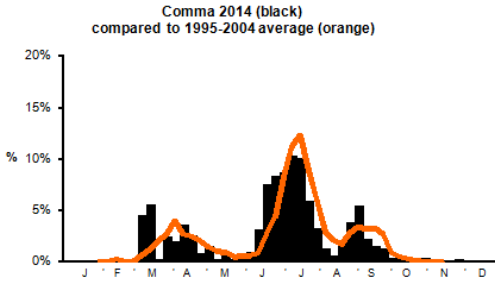
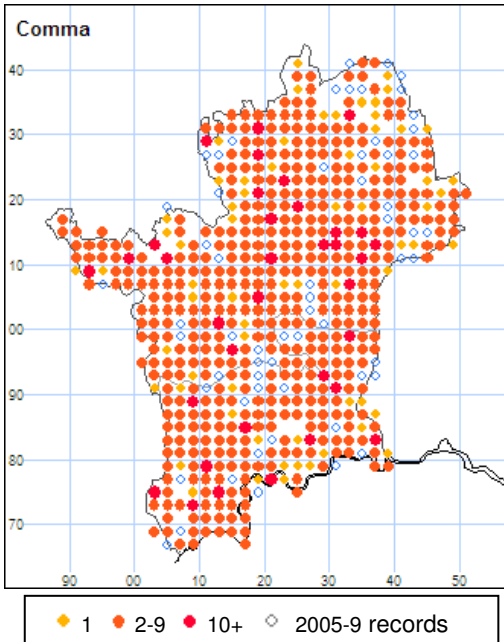


Photo Dave Miller

**First:** 24 Feb

**Last:** 16 Oct

**Peak week:** 9-15 July



Distribution % squares	
2014	63% (350)
2013	70% (385)
2005-9 mean	50%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	15
2013	18
2005-9 mean	28

Distribution change
Up 26% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 46% compared with 2005-2009

Commas woke early from hibernation, produced a large and early summer brood some of which bred to produce an early peaking autumn brood. Abundance was down again for the third year running and occupied squares also declined in contrast to the Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell, its close relatives. However it is still to be found all over our area, the only area where it is rarer is in the far north east of Hertfordshire where arable agriculture is at its most intensive.

# Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*

Rare but increasing

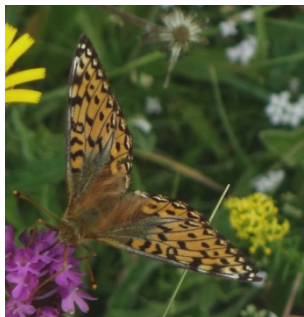
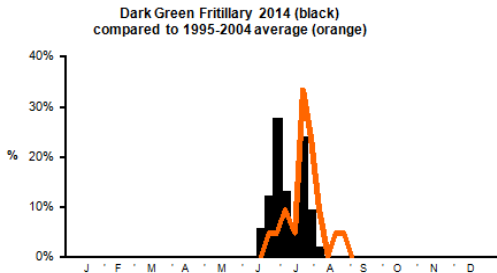
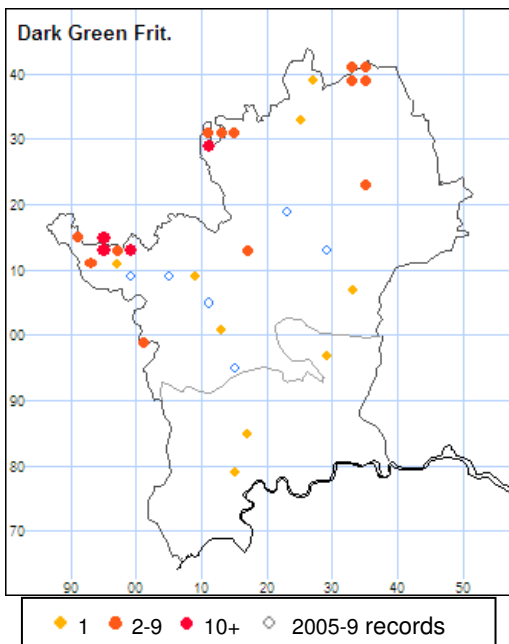


Photo Andrew Wood

**First:** 11 Jun

**Last:** 4 Aug

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



Distribution % squares	
2014	2% (11)
2013	2% (13)
2005-9 mean	0.7%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	10
2013	16
2005-9 mean	3

Distribution change
Up 285% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 330% compared with 2005-2009

Dark Green Fritillary is still doing pretty well in our area, it peaked in late June and was gone by the time the weather changed in August. It is still established at its main chalk sites but was also noted near Latimer, just on our side of the Buckinghamshire border and at Trent Park and Bricket Wood Common where Malcolm Hull commented, "A female Dark-Green Fritillary on July 12th is likely to have resulted from last years dispersal of this species". It is currently as widely distributed in Hertfordshire as at any time in the last 20 years. Unlike the Silver-washed Fritillary it is unlikely to spread a great deal more as uncultivated open grassland areas are at a premium compared to the woodland favoured by its close relative.

# Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia*

Locally common in woodland

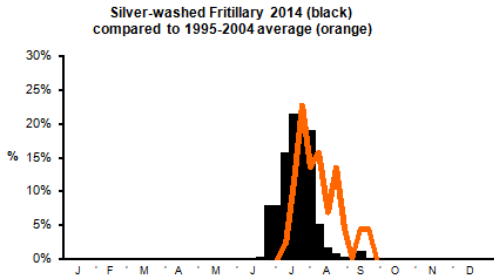
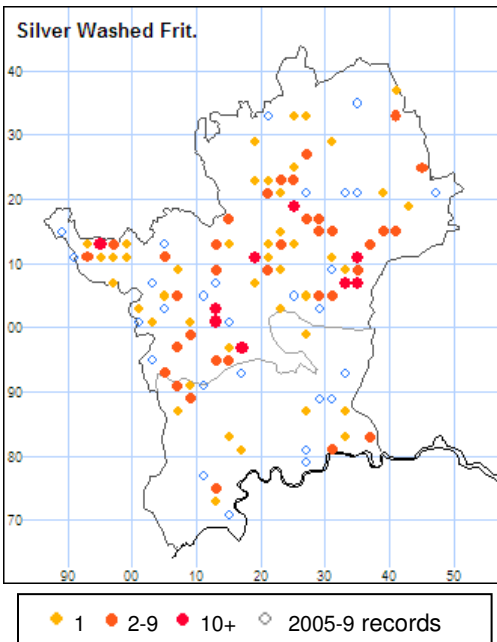


Photo Andrew Wood

**First:** 17 Jun

**Last:** 2 Sept

**Peak week:** 9-15 July



Distribution % squares	
2014	6% (32)
2013	6% (31)
2005-9 mean	4%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	19
2013	10
2005-9 mean	3

Distribution change
Up 50% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 530% compared with 2005-2009

Silver-washed Fritillary again did well, its emergence was early, although its peak was right on the longer term trends, as with so many species August saw the adults disappear very quickly as the weather changed. In addition to its normal woodland haunts examples were seen near Hanworth in south west London, a garden near Ealing Broadway on 22<sup>nd</sup> June and Bovingdon Brickworks in west Hertfordshire. This ability to roam widely has aided its relatively rapid recolonisation of Hertfordshire, and a to a much lesser extent Middlesex. It was only in 2006 that it achieved coverage of more than 10 squares and it was as low as 3 in 2003 and 0 in 1999.

# Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

Widespread & common

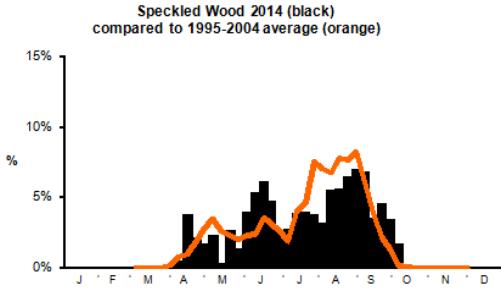
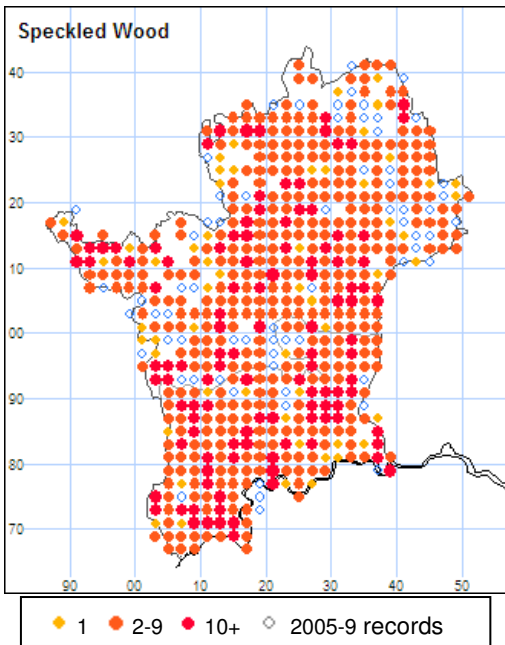


Photo Dave Miller

**First:** 29 Mar

**Last:** 31 Oct

**Peak week:** 27 Aug – 2 Sep



Distribution % squares	
2014	63% (352)
2013	60% (330)
2005-9 mean	58%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	45
2013	43
2005-9 mean	74

Distribution change
Up 9% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 39% compared with 2005-2009

One of the species not affected by the cool, dull weather of August, although the peak was slightly later than normal right at the end of August/early September. Abundance was little changed from 2013, but the effect of opening up of woodland rides for this species can be seen at Balls Wood where a major widening of a ride where they were abundant resulted in a year total of 84 compared to 197 in 2013. Peter Gore reported an unusual sight at Feltham Marshalling Yards on 27<sup>th</sup> Sept, “a diminutive brown and white butterfly flew past me on the Heath but when it settled this turned out to be a Speckled Wood about half the size of the smallest I've seen before.

# Marbled White *Melanargia galathea*

Widespread in Herts

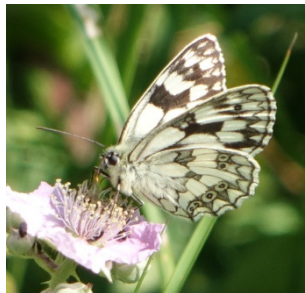
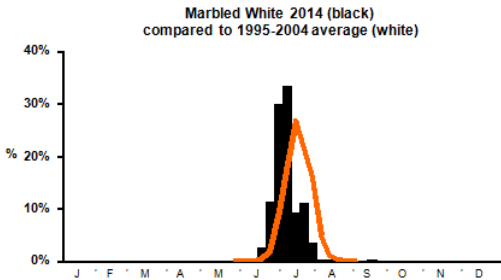
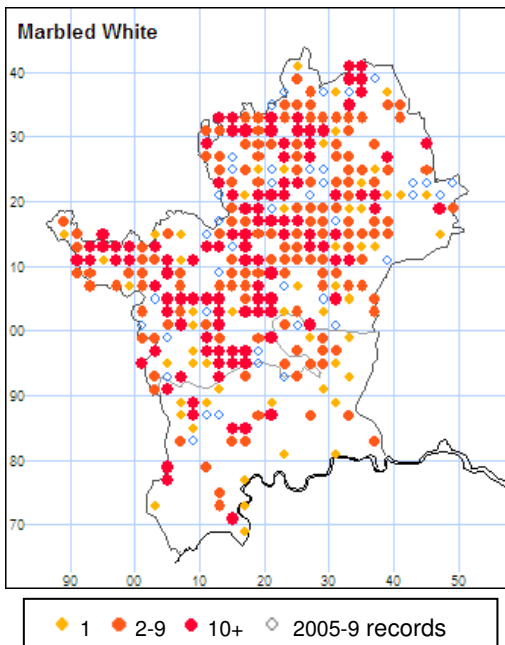


Photo Andrew Wood

**First:** 11 June

**Last:** 12 Sep

**Peak week:** 2-8 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2014	31% (170)
2013	31% (172)
2005-9 mean	16%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	131
2013	76
2005-9 mean	61

Distribution change
Up 94% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 115% compared with 2005-2009

Marbled Whites enjoyed the conditions with an early emergence and peak and had virtually finished flying by the end of July, with only 5 records received for August/September. Numbers that can build up at strong colonies are shown by Martin Johnson’s comment from 26 June, “ At least 300 Marbled Whites (conservative estimate) spread across the [Therfield] Heath with many nectaring on Knapweed that has emerged in the last couple of days”. Steve Kiln noted, “one about half normal size” near Hertingfordbury on 13 July.

# Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

Widespread & common

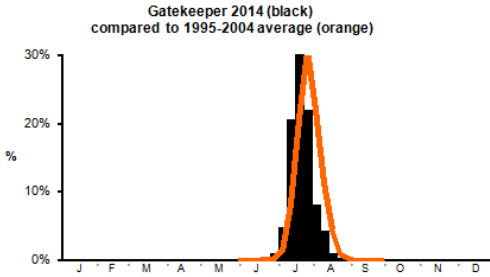
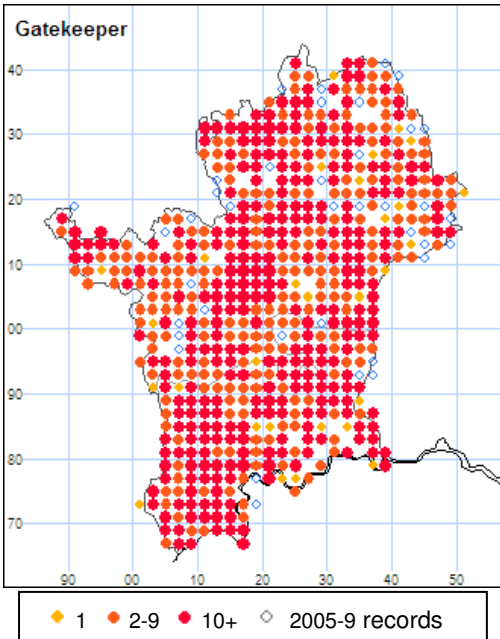


Photo Dave Miller

**First:** 18 June

**Last:** 2 Sep

**Peak week:** 16-22 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2014	66% (380)
2013	71% (391)
2005-9 mean	49%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	83
2013	72
2005-9 mean	123

Distribution change
Up 36% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 32% compared with 2005-2009

The Gatekeeper had an early peak, but the length of the flight period was average with the poor August curtailing any late activity. There was little significant change from 2013 and this species is doing pretty well in our area being found everywhere except the most urban parts of London. Indeed it is more widely distributed than in the mid 1990s and most of this change has been from its spread into London, possibly caused by warming and the greater abundance of un-manicured grasslands in park areas, enabling it to breed in previously inhospitable areas.

# Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

Widespread & Common

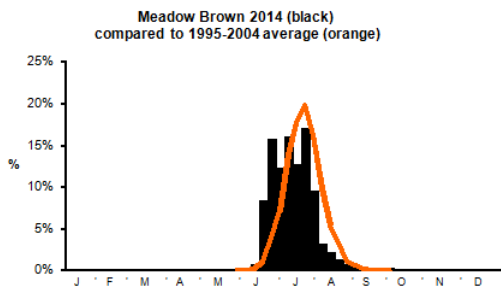
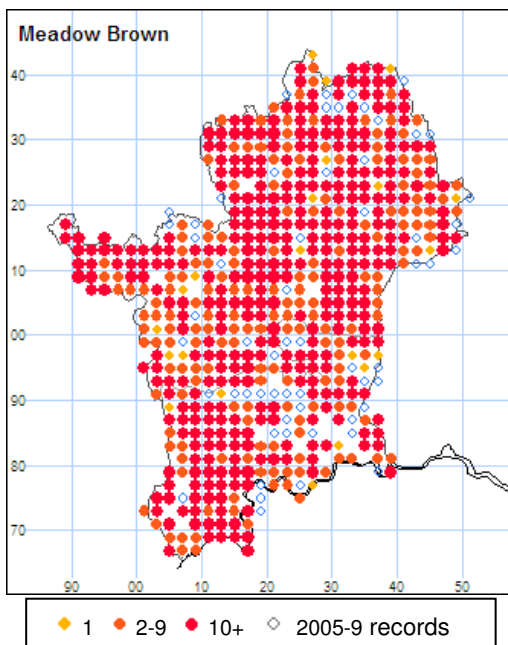


Photo Andrew Wood

**First:** 1 Jun  
**Last:** 28 Sep  
**Peak week:** 16 Jul-22 Jul



Distribution % squares	
2014	64% (359)
2013	72% (395)
2005-9 mean	56%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	254
2013	262
2005-9 mean	273

Distribution change
Up 14% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 7% compared with 2005-2009

Meadow Browns were in evidence right at the start of June and numbers built up quickly. The numbers seen have changed little in recent years and are very close to the longer term average. The numbers declined rapidly in August, although there were small numbers observed right through to the end of September. Overall Meadow Brown is one of our commonest butterflies and can be found almost anywhere, though the map shows gaps in inner London and slightly worryingly some now empty but previously occupied squares in central Middlesex in Harrow and Barnet. It will be interesting to pay attention to those areas in 2015 to see if this is a real retreat or just under recording.

# Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*

Widespread & Common

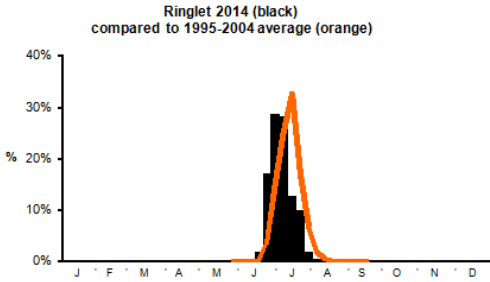
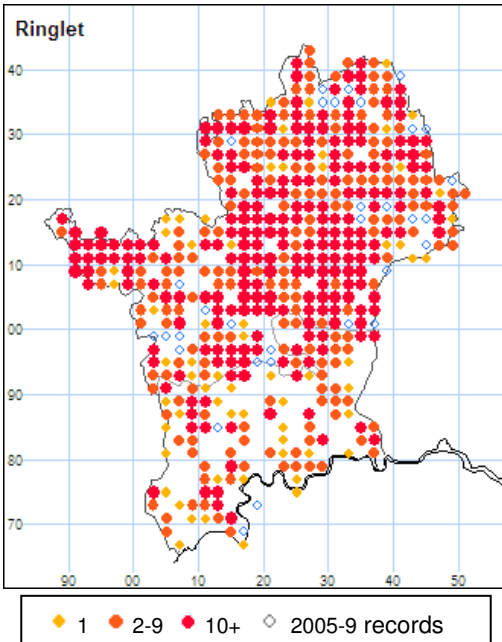


Photo David Gower

**First:** 8 June

**Last:** 27 Aug

**Peak week:** 2-8 July



Distribution % squares	
2014	44% (247)
2013	54% (296)
2005-9 mean	25%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	150
2013	102
2005-9 mean	103

Distribution change
Up 76% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Up 46% compared with 2005-2009

A good summer for the Ringlet, they emerged a week after Meadow Browns and like them well ahead of time. Ringlet is one of our success stories, in the 1990s it was found in under 20% of squares and like several other species it has colonised a good number of areas of Middlesex. Its liking for shadier, damper grassland than the Gatekeeper and Meadow Brown means that it is not found as widely as they are.



# Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Widespread

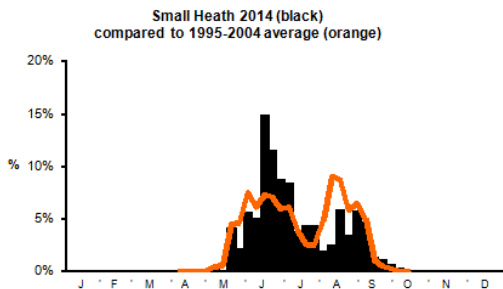
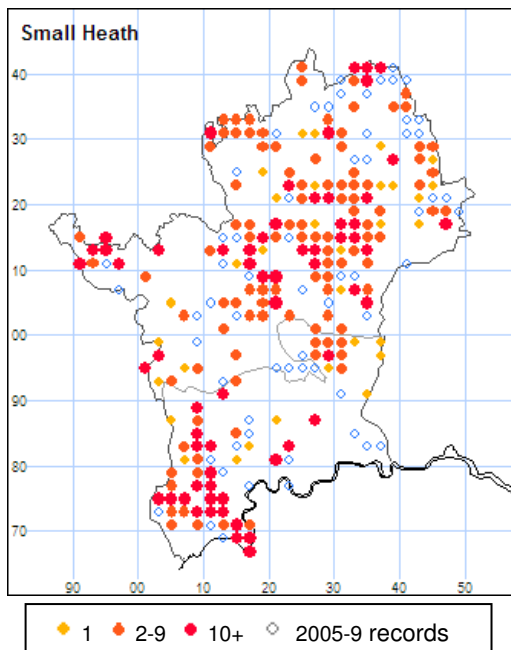


Photo Dave Miller

**First:** 4 May

**Last:** 3 Oct

**Peak week:** 11-17 Jun



Distribution % squares	
2014	16% (87)
2013	19% (106)
2005-9 mean	14%

Abundance (transects)	
2014	23
2013	33
2005-9 mean	36

Distribution change
Up 14% compared with 2005-2009

Abundance change
Down 36% compared with 2005-2009

Despite 2013's small summer brood the spring brood was notably stronger in 2014 than average. It emerged in the spring very much on the long term trends, whereas the summer brood was a little late, presumably due to August's poor weather. Overall there was quite a strong fall in abundance and distribution and the map shows a large number of squares unoccupied in this five year period compared to 2005 to 2009. In both Hertfordshire and Middlesex. As the absolute percentage has actually increased since that time we can conclude that it has colonised new areas such as West Middlesex as it has disappeared from others across Hertfordshire.

**RECORDERS** - Many thanks to all who submitted records in 2014: Russ Abbey;Samantha Abbott;Ray Acreman;Nigel Agar;Colin Alderman;Malcolm Aldridge;Michael Allen;Emma Allen;David Allen;Lisa Allen;Nick Allen;Steven Allen;John Amatt;Neil Anderson;Diane Andrews;Ann Ann;Simon Anonymous;Sarah Ansell;Lulu Antoniou Shepherd;Paul Appleton;John Archer;Bill Ardagh;Abby Armitage;Sandra Armitage;Ann Arnold;Brian Arnold;Briony Arnold;Gill Arnold;Linda Ashken;Jacob Aslan;Paul Atkin;Miles Attenborough;L. 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