

**DRAFT Butterflies 2025**

*Keith Balmer*

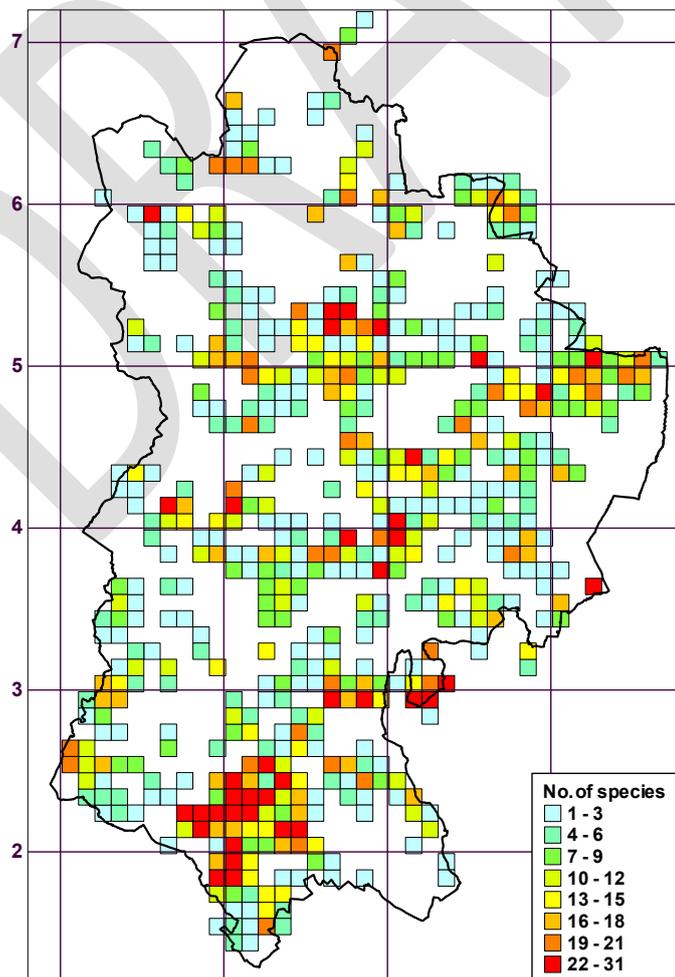
Hopes for a better year than 2024 were largely met through favourable weather leading to most species doing quite well. The most noticeable feature of this season was how early each species was to start its flight period, on average ten days ahead of usual, with only Speckled Wood and Holly Blue slightly late for some reason.

The highlight of the year was the rediscovery of Black Hairstreak in Holcot Wood after two-and-a-half decades' absence of reports, and the discovery of a previously unknown population in the north of the county at Strawberry Hill, Knotting. These will hopefully encourage surveying of surrounding areas to establish the extent of the populations.

The 'June dip' is a well-known feature of the butterfly season when spring species and first broods give way to those of summer, but this year we also had a 'summer-dip' during the second half of July and the first week of August. This resulted in the illusion of an extra brood in early August, around about week 32 (6th-12th August), when counts rose again for several abundant species such as Small White, Meadow Brown, Peacock, Holly Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, and Chalkhill Blue, when in reality recording had simply revived. Slightly cloudier and cooler weather is the most likely explanation for this phenomenon.

Although there were some concerns about successive heatwaves from June to August causing drought there was probably enough moisture to allow larval food plants to survive without too much knock-on effect for 2026, though, as I write, the year has started wet like 2024 which is a bit ominous.

Recording levels this year were generally high, with more records submitted than for any previous year, though the increasing use of Apps to record individual butterflies as we go along, rather than as a single count at the end of a visit, is inflating the quantity and the verification workload somewhat, without necessarily reporting on more butterflies. That said, we did record 99,629 butterflies, exceeding the previous high of 87,647 in 2023, so thank you for contributing so much data. The number of 1km squares visited however has plateaued, with familiar white spaces showing on the map each year, so please see if you can visit somewhere new and discover what we have been missing.

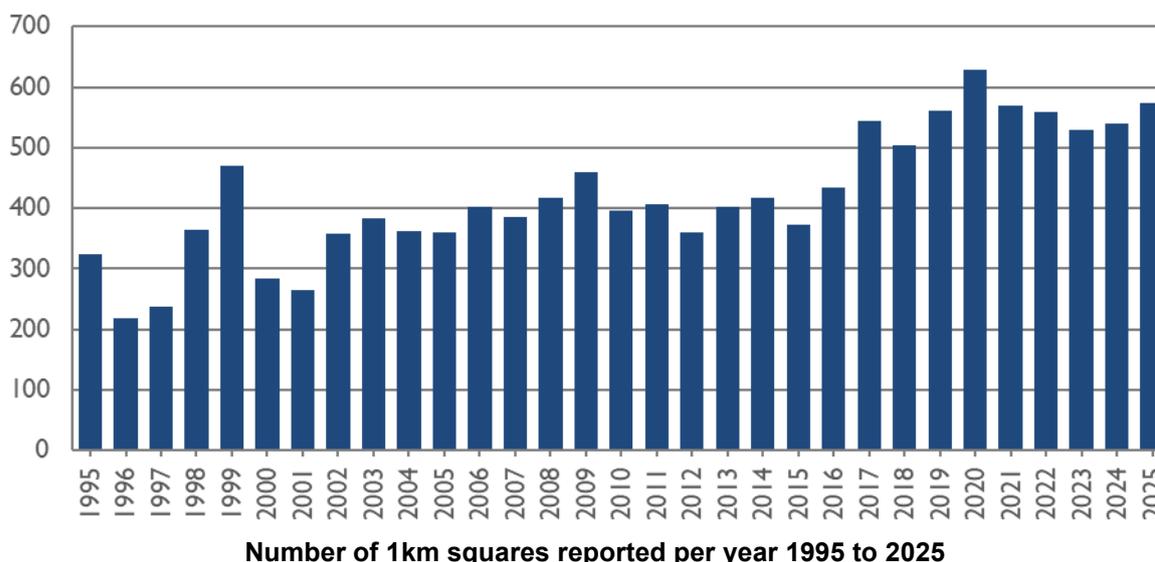
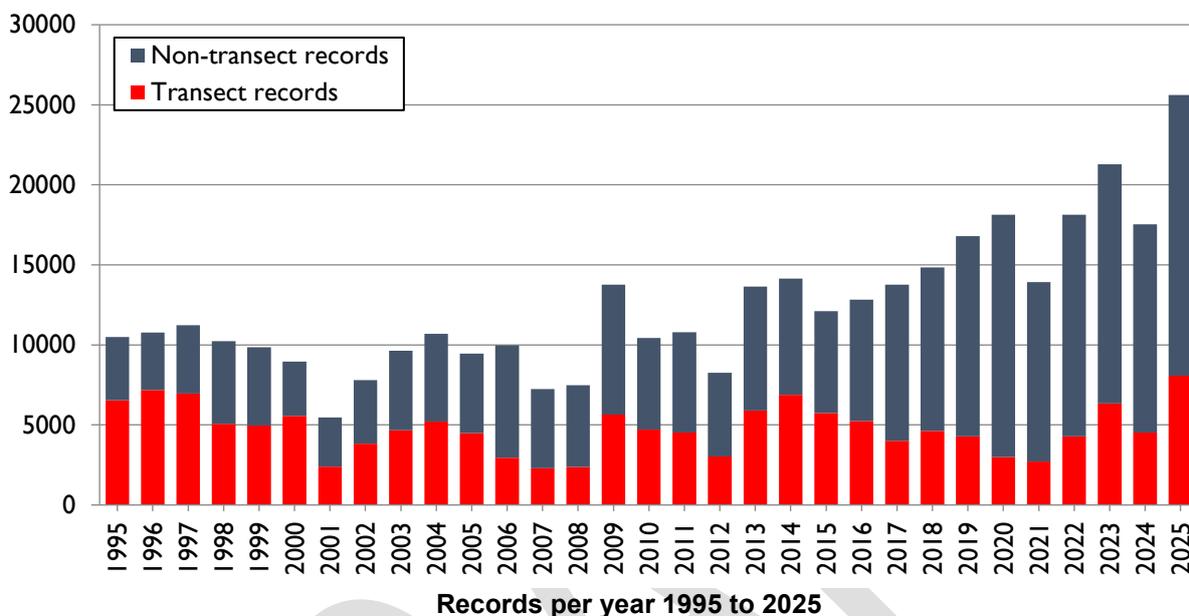


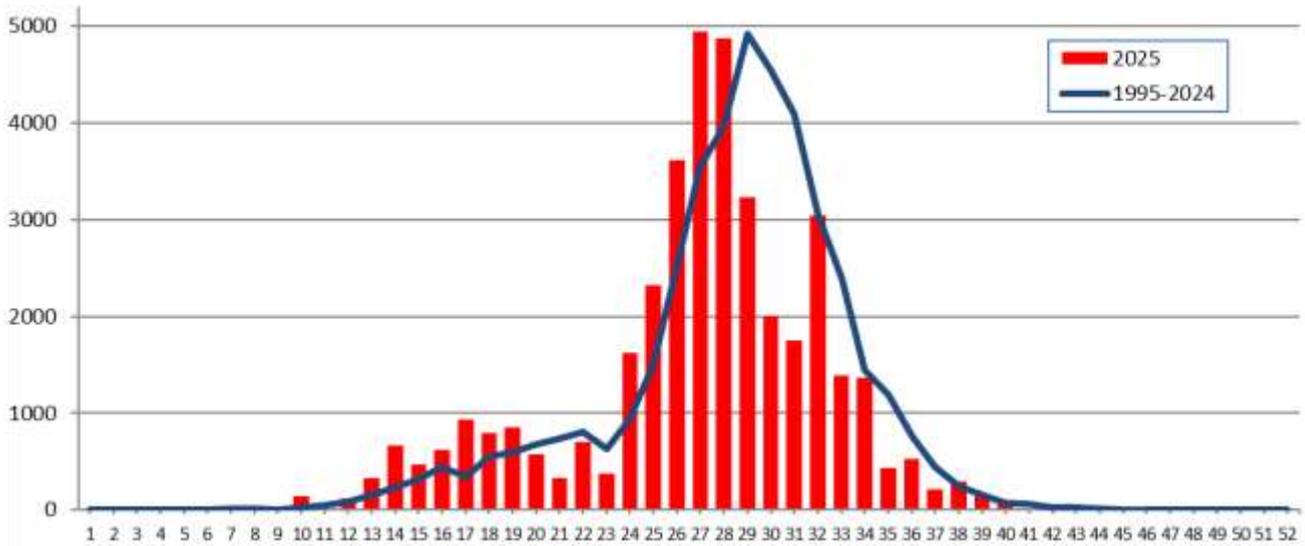
**Number of species per 1km square in 2025's records**

### Analysis of Data

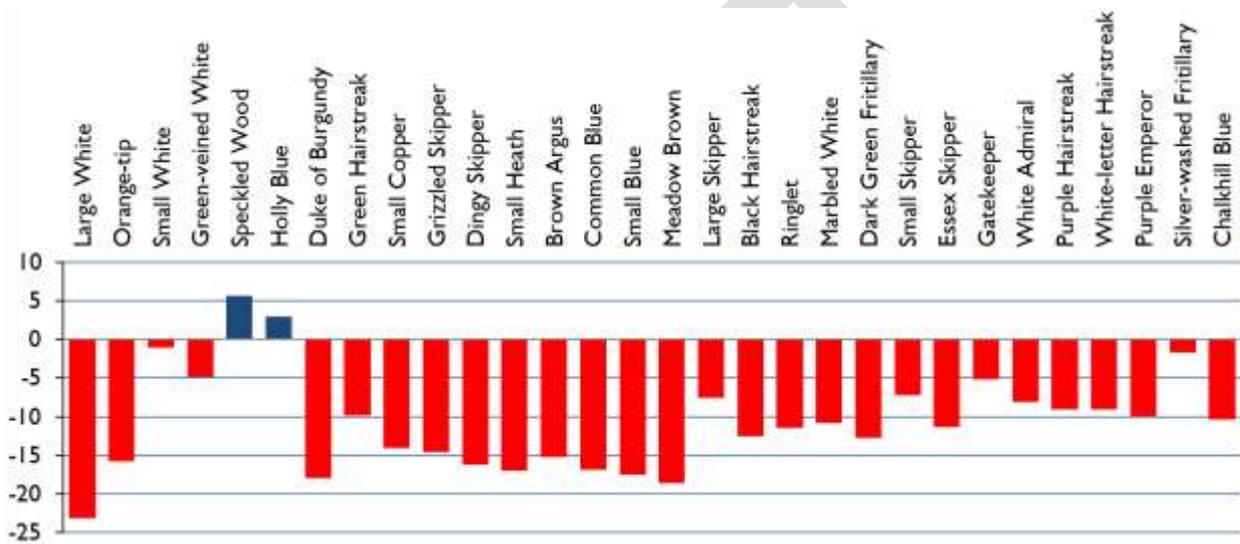
At the time of analysing records for this report (1st February 2026) 25,621 records had been received and computerised, containing reports of 99,629 adults from 574 1km squares. 52 records were of the immature life-stages. Records were analysed at this date and may be subject to minor revision. 8,084 records were from transects and 17,537 records were from other sources, mostly casual recording.

Where an abundance was reported through an App using a letter (i.e. A=1; B=2-9; C=10-29; D=30-99; E=100+) the lowest value of the range has been assumed in the statistics (i.e. B=2; C=10; D=30; E=100) as this is the only abundance of which I can be certain. It is therefore much better to report abundances using digits please.

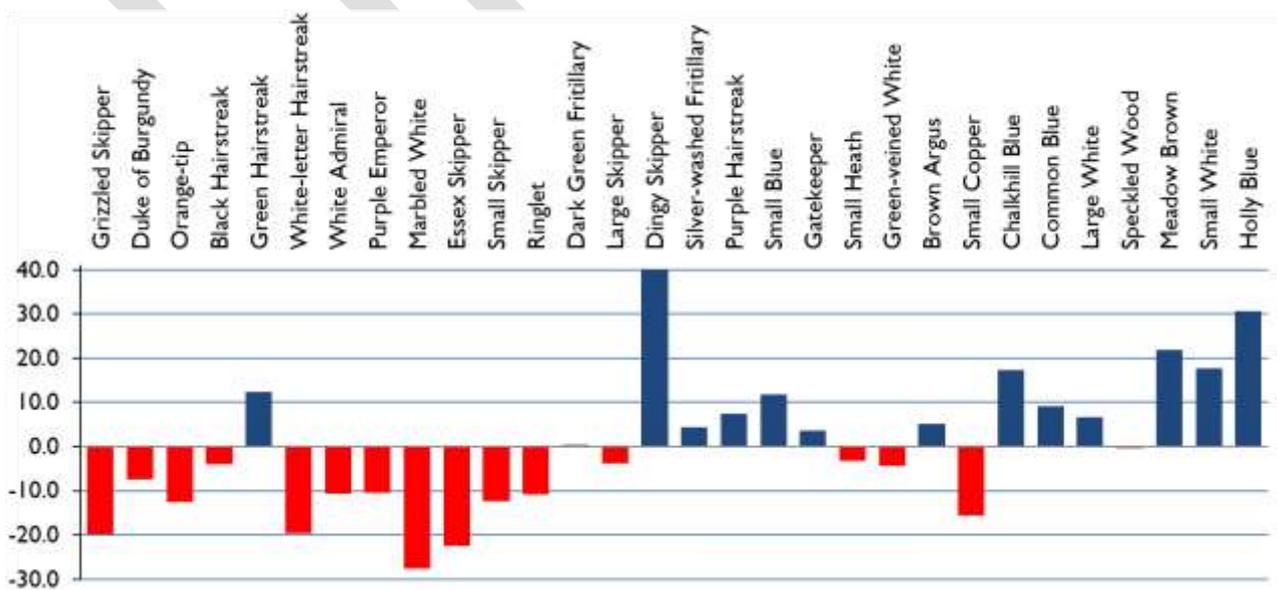




2025 versus 1995-2024: Adults per week per 10,000 records per year



2025's first sightings: days earlier (red) or later (blue) than their ten-year average, ordered by emergence. (Hibernators and migrants omitted)



2025's last sightings: days earlier (red) or later (blue) than their ten-year average, ordered by disappearance. (Hibernators and migrants omitted)

## Transects

The total number of adults, numbers of species ( ), and number of weekly walks out of the theoretically possible 26 [ ] for the recent transects are shown in the table below. My thanks again go to those who attempt to systematically walk and record these transects once per week every year, between 1st April and 30th September, allowing year-on-year comparisons to be made. These data are also combined at the national level with data from other transects as part of the United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS).

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Biddenham	*	*	*	433 (18) [7]	1932 (23) [25]
Dunstable Downs	2816 (30) [17]	2701 (29) [19]	2764 (31) [21]	2310 (28) [21]	3544 (30) [21]
Harrold Odell CP	158 (15) [9]	*	*	*	*
Hill Rise	*	222 (15) [21]	241 (15) [22]	121 (14) [15]	318 (14) [21]
Knocking Hoe	2083 (23) [23]	1663 (24) [24]	1535 (21) [24]	1362 (17) [20]	1435 (23) [22]
MCP Callow Mounds	*	*	256 (23) [22]	152 (17) [14]	292 (21) [18]
MCP Marston Meadow	*	*	410 (19) [22]	242 (17) [14]	514 (19) [16]
Mowsbury Hill	1071 (18) [17]	901 (22) [13]	1795 (21) [14]	683 (18) [13]	2166 (22) [23]
Old Warden Tunnel	715 (22) [23]	700 (21) [23]	411 (21) [16]	516 (19) [25]	619 (22) [24]
Pegsdon Hills	2991 (25) [25]	2419 (24) [25]	2379 (25) [25]	1975 (25) [22]	2153 (26) [23]
Potton Wood	*	1851 (22) [19]	2492 (18) [24]	1196 (18) [21]	1365 (18) [21]
Priory CP	1182 (20) [23]	1277 (21) [20]	1200 (21) [20]	703 (16) [17]	1144 (19) [14]
Rectory Wood	*	*	835 (26) [26]	695 (20) [21]	699 (21) [26]
Ridgeway Wood	*	*	799 (23) [17]	365 (13) [16]	406 (19) [19]
Sharpenhoe Clappers	80 (16) [2]	6079 (25) [18]	3160 (28) [13]	2593 (27) [14]	2484 (25) [13]
Shocott Spring	*	*	1241 (20) [24]	773 (20) [20]	1069 (20) [21]
Strawberry Hill Mk I	*	*	2574 (25) [22]	*	*
Strawberry Hill Mk II	*	*	*	*	2896 (22) [26]
The Lodge NR	*	474 (23) [16]	619 (22) [25]	825 (20) [17]	1172 (21) [22]
Totternhoe Quarry	1843 (25) [19]	*	*	134 (8) [3]	2242 (27) [25]
Whipsnade Downs	*	270 (22) [6]	1089 (28) [11]	1196 (23) [19]	2105 (30) [16]
White's Wood, Bromham	*	*	*	*	603 (15) [14]

\* The transect was not walked this year.

## Species Reports

In the following species reports "10ya" is an abbreviation for "10-year average". Analyses look back to 1995 unless stated otherwise.

### Hesperiidae (Skippers)

#### Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages tages*

Dingy Skipper's first brood was advanced about two weeks relative to the 10ya, and seen from 12th April (the earliest-ever record by eight days) to the first week of June, peaking in week 18 (30th April - 6th May) when 201 were reported. A partial, but notable, second brood followed from 2nd July until 25th August, with a peak of 31 in week 32 (6th-12th August). Largest site counts were: Barton Bypass (1), Barton Hills (23), Brogborough landfill (7), Dog Kennel Down (11), Dunstable Downs (4), Houghton Regis Quarry (27), Kensworth Quarry (5), Knocking Hoe (1), Lidlington Pit (20), MVMCP (15), Pegsdon Hills (11), Rectory Wood (4), Rookery Pit (1), Sandy Smith NR (3), Sharpenhoe Clappers (6), Shocott Spring (2), Studham (2), Sundon Quarry (3), Totternhoe (23), Whipsnade Downs (14). All these were previously-known sites, but one adult was also reported at Stondon, a new location. 39 1km squares were reported (10ya 30). Local abundance seemed quite good and the total of 783 adults was second only to 2015's 818.

#### Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*

Grizzled Skipper's season comprised a single brood, seen between 11th April and 31st May, 15 and 20 days earlier than their respective 10ya dates. Its early peak was in week 17 (23rd-29th April) when 52 were reported. Maximum site counts were: Dog Kennel Down (2), Dunstable Downs (9), Kempston Hardwick (2), Kensworth Quarry (1), Lidlington Pit (2), MVMCP (2), Rectory Wood (1), Rookery Pit (4), Sewell Cutting (1), Totternhoe Knolls and Quarry (10), Whipsnade Downs (13), Willington Gravel Pits (2). A female was noted laying on Creeping Cinquefoil at Lidlington Pit. The Dunstable Downs transect count of 7 was slightly below those of recent years and well down on those from around 12-15 years ago which averaged over 60. The long-term decline on the Whipsnade Downs transect is similar, but at least its 15 this year was an improvement on recent years. It would be helpful to revisit historical sites to see if recent geographical reporting, largely restricted to the Marston vale and the south-west chalk sites, is just a symptom of recording habits, or if there has been widespread loss of more-scattered sites.

### **Essex Skipper** *Thymelicus lineola*

Sharing similar habitats with Small Skipper, and of similar appearance, distinguishing the two species is best achieved with a face-on view of the antennal tips, which are black in Essex Skipper. This species was recorded in 8.2% of visited 1km squares, a near-normal proportion, but with increased recording efforts in recent years this has risen to cover 47 widely spread 1km squares. Its season was observed between 13th June and 23rd July, 11 and 23 days before their respective 10ya dates, with a peak in week 27 (2nd-8th July). Abundance on transects was low, Totternhoe Quarry producing the largest total of 10, and in casual recording the largest count was of only nine, also at Totternhoe. When individuals cannot be identified to species it is better to record them as Small/Essex Skipper, and 1,973 adults were thus reported, compared with 155 for Essex Skipper and 890 for Small Skipper, so one, or both, skipper species will have been significantly under-recorded.

### **Small Skipper** *Thymelicus sylvestris*

Small Skipper, a summer species of unimproved grassland, was seen between 8th June and 8th August, seven and 12 days before their respective 10ya dates, with a peak in week 25 (18th-24th June). Distribution was county-wide, seen in 107 1km squares, 18.6% of those visited, a typical proportion. Abundance however was generally low, both in casual recording and on the transects, except at Pegsdon Hills where the annual total of 31 was above all counts since 2016. Only 19 double-digit records were received, the largest of 50 was at Clophill Lakes on 22nd June. The second-highest count of 37, made on the same day, was from the Woodside link near the River Lea when cloudy conditions allowed easier observation of those at rest – a useful tip for surveying.

### **Large Skipper** *Ochlodes sylvanus*

Large Skipper is the first of our three “golden” skippers to be seen each year, with largest counts coming from woodland rides and scrubby grassland sites. Its season this year was about a week early, between 21st May and 14th August, and peaked in week 26 (25th June - 1st July) when 336 were reported. The largest counts were made over the four 1km squares of King’s Wood Heath and Reach on 21st June, totalling 121. Reported from 126 county-wide 1km squares, 22% of visited squares, near to normal. Transect counts were up slightly at Knocking Hoe, Old Warden Tunnel, Pegsdon Hills and Totternhoe Quarry, but down at Potton Wood, with other sites near to normal.

### **Pieridae (Whites, Yellows)**

#### **Orange-tip** *Anthocharis cardamines britannica*

As a herald of spring male Orange-tips are reported 5x more than females (306 vs 57 this year), females blending in with the other whites and thus under-recorded. Casual records suggest a slightly poor year relative to other species, and transects show a mixed picture - high counts at Dunstable Downs and Mowsbury Hill, low at Knocking Hoe, and others somewhere between. The first report was of a male on 15th March in Studham, rather jumping the gun as the next wasn’t seen until 30th March when daily reports began. Reported from a typical 37% of visited 1km squares from across the county, the season was about two weeks advanced of the 10ya and peaked in week 17 (23rd-29th April) with 286 adults. Eggs were reported between 27th April and 14th May, larvae between 1st May and 9th June, and a pupa on 15th June. Cuckooflower and Garlic Mustard being the reported larval food plants.

#### **Large White** *Pieris brassicae*

The first report of Large White on 8th March pre-dated the next by 12 days, then first-brood records began flowing from the 26th. These continued until the first week of June, peaking near the end of April. A very strong second brood then took over (possibly bolstered by migrants) 10.3x the abundance of the first brood. The peak was in week 28 (9th-15th July) when 1,189 were reported. A long tail-off followed which extend the season into late October. Reported from 49.4% of visited 1km squares (10ya 39.8%) the total of 284 squares was a new record high (vs. 240 in 2020), as was the total of 6,399 adults (vs. 5,052 in 2013). Most transects returned counts higher than in recent years, and the 283 at Priory CP far exceeded the 101 of 2013. Despite the large abundance only one egg, one pupal, and four larval records were received, with Garlic Mustard and *Nasturtium* as food-plants, and no reports from vegetable growers.

#### **Small White** *Pieris rapae*

Small White’s first brood started on 21st March, one day before the 10ya, peaked in week 18 (30th April - 6th May) and ended in the first week of June. The second brood then took over and contained two peaks, in weeks 27 and 34 (2nd-8th July and 20th-26th August), cooler weather having caused a recording dip in the intervening weeks, before the long tail-off into autumn, ending on 13th November. The second brood abundance was 6.6x that of the first, possibly boosted by migrants. Transect counts were generally near normal. Distribution was very good, the 307 1km squares reported second only to 2020’s 332, and reported from 53.5% of visited 1km squares (10ya 44.9%), second only to Peacock this year. Four records of laying females, and two more of eggs, were the only breeding records received, Garlic Mustard being the noted food-plant of choice.

### **Green-veined White *Pieris napi sabellicae***

Green-veined White seems to have had quite a good year, returning above-average counts on many of the transects, and reported from 44% of visited 1km squares (10ya 36.8%) the largest proportion since 2013 (46.1%). Its first brood began on 26th March, five days before the 10ya, peaked in week 16 (16th-22nd April) with 172, and ended at the start of June when the second brood took over. As usual this was the larger, with 2.6x the abundance. Its peak was in week 27 (2nd-8th July) when 363 were reported, before a slow decline concluded on 6th October, four days before the 10ya. The largest record was of 'D' in TL1948 at The Lodge NR, early in the season on 2nd April. 28 were counted in Odell Great Wood on 9th July. When Small White and Green-veined White cannot be distinguished (especially difficult when in flight) it is better to record them as Small/Green-veined White, and 1,644 adults were thus reported compared with 5,212 for Small White and 3,348 for Green-veined White, so both species will have been somewhat under-recorded.

### **Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus***

A single Clouded Yellow in Sewell Cutting on 17th April was the only sighting until 12th July. This started a wave of reports which peaked in mid-August and ended in early-September. Clover fields near Haynes contributed counts of 20+ suggesting local breeding success, but reports of ones, twos and threes were widely spread across the county. After a brief hiatus, a second wave of reports, totalling 26 adults, started in mid-September and lasted until 4th November, the final report. The largest count in this wave was of only three, and records were widely spaced. Overall, the species was reported from 42 1km squares, second only to 2000's 58, and the adult count of 133 was beaten only by 1996 (219) and 2000 (203), indicating a good year to observe this migrant species. The pale female *helice* form was noted from Haynes, Waterloo Thorns and Houghton Regis quarry.

### **Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni rhamni***

Brimstone's post-hibernation season begin in earnest in the last week of February and lasted until around the first week of June, the peak being in week 17 (23rd-29th April) when 450 were reported. The new brood followed on seamlessly, mostly entering hibernation before the end of August, but 52 more were reported in the following months up to 20th December, when one was disturbed in Shillington. The species continues to do well, with abundance and distribution statistics almost at record levels. Transect counts were generally near average, but several did very well such as Dunstable Downs where the total of 250 eclipsed 2023's 167. Reported from 53.1% of visited 1km squares (10ya 48.8%) Brimstone took third place for reported distribution this year. A handful of egg, larvae and pupae records were also reported, developing on Buckthorn.

### **Nymphalidae (Browns, Fritillaries, Aristocrats)**

#### **Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria tircis***

Despite being first seen six days later than the 10ya date, on 31st March, Speckled Wood went on to have a reasonable year, being widely reported from 49.5% of visited 1km squares (10ya 39.8%) and with overall abundance near normal. The ability of this species to overwinter as a pupa or a larva spreads out emergences and muddies the distinction between broods so that they overlap. There were however peaks of similar abundance in late April, early June, early July and mid-August, before the tail-off towards the season's end on 24th October, at the 10ya date. Transect counts were variable, both above and below normal. Records came from woodlands and shrubby habitats county-wide, with the largest count of 22 at Yelnow New Wood on 27th June.

#### **Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus pamphilus***

Small Heath's first brood began 17 days before the 10ya on 16th April, peaked at the end of May and finished at the start of July when the second brood began. This would normally have lower abundance than the first, but it was strongly recorded during August, week 32 (6th-12th August) producing the largest weekly total of the year (487), and the largest single record of 78 came from the Renhold area on the 11th, but large counts were made in several places. Records ended on 27th September close to the 10ya. Transects show interesting fluctuations for this species within a site from year to year, and between sites in the same year. Several transects had good counts this year, especially at Dunstable and Whipsnade Downs, but at Pegsdon Hills the low count of 95 was after six years of steady decline from 380 in 2019. Overall, the species was reported from 31.4% of visited 1km squares (10ya 22.5%) second only to 2020's 32.4%, and with a slightly above average abundance.

#### **Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus***

Ringlet is somewhat more colonial than some other species, favouring sites with long grass often with a bit of shade, and therefore was reported from only 30% of visited 1km squares (10ya 32%) and in 14th place for 1km distribution. Populations however can be large making it the fifth-most abundant species this year. Its season is also quite short, so counts rise quickly, peak for about two weeks, this year during weeks 26 & 27 (25th June - 8th July), then drop off quickly. The 68-day season between 1st June and 8th August started and ended about 12 days before each 10ya. 159 double-digit counts were received, mostly from woodlands and scrubby sites, but the largest count of 161 was from Totternhoe on 27th June. Transect counts vary

greatly from year to year, and between sites, the 297 at Totternhoe was high, but the eight at Priory CP was low, each site following its own rhythm.

#### **Meadow Brown** *Maniola jurtina jurtina*

Meadow Brown's season started on 14th May, 19 days before the 10ya and abundance rose to a peak in weeks 27 and 28 (2nd-15th July). Unusually, counts then dropped by about half through weeks 29 to 31 (16th July-5th August) which coincided with slightly cooler and cloudier weather, probably affecting recording. A new peak then followed, the largest of the year, in week 32 (6th-12th August) when 1,685 were reported. A long tail-off then ensued to the final record on 28th October, 22 days later than the 10ya. Meadow Brown remained the most-reported species in terms of adults, though Gatekeeper came a close second. In terms of number of records both Small White and Large White received more. And for distribution, it came 4th, recorded in 51.1% of visited 1km squares, but ahead of its 10ya (46.6%). Abundance on the transects was generally a little below normal, but with much variation. Relative to other species it fared rather poorly this year, the adults/all-species-adults percentage (13.93%) being the worst for 27 years. Despite this it remains an abundant species in unimproved grassland all over the county.

#### **Gatekeeper** *Pyronia tithonus tithonus*

Gatekeeper had a very good year, with high counts on many transects, and took second place for the number of adults reported, just behind Meadow Brown. Its proportion of adults of all species (12.80%) was its third-highest in the last 31 years, beaten only by 1996 (13.07%) and 2004 (14.14%), showing that it fared better than most species this year. Distribution was also good, reported from unimproved grassland in 45.5% of visited 1km squares, well above its 35.1% 10ya. The season started on 15th June, five days before the 10ya, peaked in week 28 (9th-15th July) when 3,081 were reported, then declined to end on 14th September, four days after the 10ya. Six records of over 100 were received, the largest of 200+ on Whipsnade Downs on 13th July.

#### **Marbled White** *Melanargia galathea serena*

Transects at Dunstable Downs, Pegsdon Hills and Mowsbury Hill returned high counts for Marbled White. They were near-average at Knocking Hoe and Totternhoe Quarry. Others were below normal. Only 3.46% of all adult butterflies reported were of this species, the smallest proportion for 29 years, suggesting it fared worse than many species this year. (Its best year was 9.12% in 2000). It was seen in 26.8% of visited 1km squares, close to the 10ya (25.3%) and the 154 1km squares reported was its third-best year, so distribution hasn't dropped. Its early season started on 1st June, 11 days before the 10ya, peaked in week 26 (25th June - 1st July) and ended very early on 19th July, 28 days before the 10ya, the most-premature finish to any species this year. Records came from unimproved grassland in many parts of the county, but the largest counts were generally from the chalk. Clophill Lakes however was an exception with 103 on 22nd June, the largest single record.

#### **Silver-washed Fritillary** *Argynnis paphia*

Silver-washed Fritillary's season started on 21st June and ended on 25th August, both dates near their 10ya. The peak of 97 in week 26 (25th June - 1st July) was rather early however, with only 48 the following week, leading to below average abundance for the year. The largest count was of 'C' in King's Wood Heath and Reach on 28th June. Other largest counts included Chicksands Wood (8), Maulden Wood (6), Odell Great Wood (9), and Salem Thrift (9). A *valezina* was reported from West Wood. Distribution remained good, reported from 8.2% of visited 1km squares (10ya 6.7%) mostly corresponding with larger woodlands, though scattered records came from elsewhere, including of an egg laid on a garage bargeboard in Renhold. Egg-laying was also observed on 29th June in King's Wood Heath and Reach, at the bottom of dead tree in a dyke, covered in moss and fungi.

#### **Dark Green Fritillary** *Speyeria aglaja aglaja*

All Dark Green Fritillary records came from sites on the chalk, the largest counts being Barton Bypass (1), Barton Hills (2), Cowslip Meadow (1), Dunstable Downs transect (12), Houghton Regis quarry (1), Knocking Hoe (3), Pegsdon Hills transect (6), Sharpenhoe Clappers/Moleskin (100), Sundon quarry (1), Totternhoe (3), Whipsnade Downs transect (5). Interestingly, the annual transect count of 22 on Pegsdon Hills was just behind 2022's high of 24, but at nearby Knocking Hoe none were recorded this year where 25 had been counted in 2022 (and 41 in 2018), so changing fortunes over a short distance. Distribution remains consistent, the 21 1km squares reported was only just below the record of 23 in 2020. The season started on 1st June, 13 days before the 10ya, peaked in week 27 (2nd-8th July) and ended on 11th August at the 10ya.

#### **White Admiral** *Limenitis camilla*

A graceful butterfly that develops on honeysuckle and persists in low numbers in a handful of larger woodlands. This year's maximum counts were Chicksands Wood (4), King's Wood Heath and Reach (4), Marston Thrift (1), Maulden Wood (3), West Wood (4). One was also reported from Odell Great Wood where it was last recorded in 2008. Another was seen flying in Knotting Green, probably having wandered from nearby West Wood. The flight season, from 16th June to 14th July, was about ten days ahead of usual, and the total of 44 adults over ten 1km squares was typical.

### **Purple Emperor *Apatura iris***

It was encouraging to see some recovery in numbers of Purple Emperor after two poor years. Largest woodland counts were Chicksands Wood (1), King's Wood Heath and Reach (2), Maulden Wood (3), and West Wood (1). Sightings were again made near Brogborough, and also near Stanner's Wood on Blow's Down, a new location, possibly a wanderer. Overall, it was reported from nine 1km squares, up from three and two in 2023 and 2024, but still down on the peak of 18 in 2018. The start and end dates of sightings, 19th June and 14th July, were both ten days before their 10ya.

### **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta***

Most transect counts for Red Admiral were slightly below average this year, only holding up at Old Warden Tunnel and Totternhoe Quarry, but casual records were near normal. Distribution was good, reported from 48.8% of visited 1km squares (10ya 42.2%) and from all parts of the county. Overwintering adults were seen from 24th January and the species was reported in most weeks until 11th December. During this time there were three peaks - at the start of May, the first half of July, and mid-September. 277 were reported during week 27 (2nd-8th July), probably a mixture of migrants and home-grown individuals. The largest record was of 21 in Stotfold on 12th July.

### **Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui***

Painted Lady was reported from 17% of visited 1km squares, equal to the 10ya, and nearly all records were of individuals, suggesting an unremarkable year for this migrant species. The highest count was of four. Seen in most weeks between 13th April and 1st November, the season peaked when 26 were reported in week 28 (9th-15th July). Records came from all over the county, but with slightly more from the Bedford and Dunstable areas.

### **Peacock *Aglais io***

Peacock's post-hibernation emergence started in the first week of March and peaked in week 14 (2nd-8th April) when 714 were reported. These continued flying until early June. The new brood started to emerge from mid-June and prematurely peaked at 695 in week 28 (9th-15th July) a likely victim of the summer 'dip', most going into hibernation by early August. A few however continued to be reported throughout autumn, with a small peak of 32 in week 38 (17th-23rd September) suggesting the possibility of a small second brood, supported by the sighting of a larva at Clophill Lakes on 18th August. There were 15 records of larvae on nettles during the usual timeframe of 22nd May to 23rd June. Overall, abundance seemed near normal and distribution was good, reported from 53.7% of visited 1km squares (10ya 47.8%), the most for any species this year as it could be encountered almost anywhere across the county.

### **Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae***

Only 102 over-wintered Small Tortoiseshells had been recorded by the time they had finished in mid-May, even fewer than the 181 in the very poor 2024. First brood emergences started around 20th May and peaked at 55 in week 24 (11th-17th June), the reported total for the whole brood was about 188, rather better than 2024's 49, suggesting a slight recovery this year. Once again there was little evidence of a second brood, just six were reported at the end of August which should have seen its peak, but a single larva was seen crossing a road in Toddington on 8th July and moved to safety. Distribution was still poor, reported from 20.9% of visited 1km squares versus the 16.1% in 2024 and the 10ya of 38.2%, and well below the 56% as recently as 2014.

### **Comma *Polygonia c-album***

Comma continues to do well and was reported from 45.8% of visited 1km squares, its largest ever proportion. (10ya 35.4%). 2.21% of all adult butterflies reported were of this species (10ya 1.85%), among its best years. Post-hibernation emergence began in the first week of March and peaked in week 13 (26th March-1st April) when 173 were reported. These flew until late May when the new brood emergence began. Numbers built quickly to 331 in week 27 (2nd-8th July), then declined as most went into hibernation, the majority by the end of August. Some of the largest site counts were Biggleswade (11), Chicksands Wood (14), Home Wood Northill (18), Houghton Regis (10), Maulden Wood (20+), Sandcast Wood (14), Stotfold (12), and West Wood (15), all made during late June and early July. Records came from all parts of the county. A few adults went on to produce a small second brood, with egg laying observed on hop on 24th June and on nettles on the 25th. This brood however was barely perceptible, its peak week in mid-September was of just 18. The final record on 13th November was at the 10ya date.

### **Riodinidae (Metalmarks)**

#### **Duke of Burgundy *Hamearis lucina***

The season for Duke of Burgundy started extremely early on 7th April, eight days earlier than the prior record (15th April 2022) and continued until 1st June, eight days before the 10ya. Records peaked in week 17 (23rd-29th April), but counts remained quite high during the following three weeks. The largest site reports were: Dunstable Downs transect (16), Houghton Regis quarry (2), Kensworth quarry (4), Totternhoe quarry (15), Whipsnade Downs transect (41). The annual total for the Dunstable Downs transect was 59, far exceeding 2024's record of 33. Whipsnade Downs' transect total of 101 was also high, just a little below 2024's 116.

The annual total on the Totternhoe quarry transect was 16, slightly below long-term counts. It was good to receive records from Kensworth and Houghton Regis quarries again, two recently discovered populations.

### **Lycaenidae (Coppers, Hairstreaks, Blues)**

#### **Small Copper** *Lycaena phlaeas phlaeas*

Small Copper's season started 14 days before the 10ya on 8th April and ended 16 days before the 10ya on 12th October. It contained three peaks, one per brood, in the first half of May, in mid-July, and at the end of August. Transect counts at Mowsbury Hill (7) and Priory CP (6) were above average, but at The Lodge NR, a stronghold for the species, it was 88, a good total but half of 2024's 167. The largest record from elsewhere was from Whipsnade Downs (8). Distribution for this species often increases in hot seasons and therefore this year it was reported from 19.7% of visited 1km squares, double 2024's 9.5% and above the 10ya of 11.4%. The total of 113 1km squares reported was a new high, beating 2023's 102, and the number of adults, 651, was also a new record beating 2024's 521, though increased recording efforts will account for some of this success. Quite a range of habitats were covered by the records including chalk grassland, heathland, brownfields, gardens, and woodlands where sorrels and dock may be found for larval development.

#### **Purple Hairstreak** *Favonius quercus*

Purple Hairstreak depends on mature oak trees for its existence, so potentially can be found over much of the county. In 2025 however most reports came from along the Greensand ridge; around north-east Bedford; and scatterings in the far north-west and the Dunstable areas. It was seen in 8.2% of visited 1km squares, double the 10ya (4.2%), and the 47 1km squares reported was the largest ever (42 in 2018). The season was long, from 16th June to 25th August, nine days before the 10ya, and eight days after the 10ya. The largest count of 80 was from Putnoe Wood on 20th June. Four eggs were reported from King's Wood Heath and Reach on 29th June, and one from Clophill Lakes on 22nd October. The species spends most of its life, from summer to spring, in this life-stage, so eggs can be sought on bare trees in winter.

#### **Green Hairstreak** *Callophrys rubi*

With the exception of four records from the callows near Stewartby Lake (2), one from Rectory Wood (1) and one from Rushmere CP (1), all other reports of Green Hairstreak came from sites along the chalk (with highest counts): Barton Hills (8), Dog Kennel Down (4), Dunstable Downs transect (5), Houghton Regis quarry (12), Kensworth quarry (2), Pegsdon Hills transect (3), Sewell Cutting (1), Sharpenhoe Clappers transect (3), Sundon quarry (1), Totternhoe (3), and Whipsnade Downs (16). The main flight period was from 7th April to 1st June, about ten days advanced of the 10ya, but three adults were unexpectedly seen at Totternhoe on 27th June, two seemingly in good condition. The total of 18 on the Dunstable Downs transect was the largest since 2019 (19), but elsewhere abundance seemed a little below average. The 23 1km squares reported was second only to 2024's 25.

#### **White-letter Hairstreak** *Satyrrium w-album*

This localised species is found in association with elms at widely scattered locations across the county, this year reported from a typical 2.6% of visited 1km squares. Reported sites were in Biggleswade, Chicksands Wood, Home Wood Northill, Houghton Regis, Kempston Church End, King's Wood Heath and Reach, Maulden Wood, Turvey, and Waterloo Thorns. Clustered reports also came from around north-east Bedford, from Clapham Park, Putnoe Wood, the Norse Road area and Renhold. The largest count of 17 on 16th June, in the green lane adjacent to Putnoe Wood, was actually the first report, suggesting that we missed the start of the flight period. The last report was on 12th July nearly three weeks before the 10ya.

#### **Black Hairstreak** *Satyrrium pruni*

In addition to being seen in Marston Thrift as usual, Black Hairstreak was also rediscovered (DT) at several places in Holcot Wood where it was last recorded in 1998, and also at several locations along Route 51 between the two woods (DT). A new site for the species was discovered (LB) at Strawberry Hill (Knotting), about 4km west of Keysoepark Wood, where it was last seen in 2001, leading to speculation that the species may have persisted in the area and spread unnoticed. The species was reported from a record six 1km squares and observed between 30th May and 17th June, 13 days and four days earlier than their respective 10ya dates. The total of 19 records and 38 adults reported was similar to the strong showing in 2006 (19 records and 44 adults).

#### **Small Blue** *Cupido minimus*

Apart from one record of three adults at the Brogborough landfill site on 30th May, all other Small Blue records came from along the chalk, the normal area to find its larval foodplant Kidney Vetch. The first brood started 18 days before the 10ya on 26th April and abundance rose steadily to peak at 393 in week 24 (11th-17th June) before rapidly dropping off to a finish at the end of June. A relatively strong second brood followed, peaked at 151 in week 29 (16th-22nd July) and lasted until 5th September, 12 days beyond the 10ya. The 36 1km squares covered by records was a new high, beating 2023's 28, boosted by the discovery (DT) of small populations around Houghton Regis away from traditional sites, such as near Ouzel Brook and Woodside Link. The largest record of 106 was from Sewell, Maidenbower and Green Lanes on 12th June.

The annual total of 14 on the Dunstable Downs was the largest since 2016 (16), and the 17 on the Totternhoe Quarry transect was a respectable amount. Overall, Small Blue seems to have had a good year.

### **Holly Blue** *Celastrina argiolus britanna*

Unlike most other species, Holly Blue's first brood started late, three days behind the 10ya and lasted until early June with an early transition into the 'summer-dip'-affected second brood which ended in the first week of September. Totals in the first and second broods were similar (394 & 353), up significantly from 2024's second brood total of 145, but still below its first brood of 804, so recovery is still underway. Records totalling 13 adults between 25th September and 13th November suggest another small partial third brood occurred, as in recent years, the final report was of one feeding on *Mahonia* in Bedford. Reported from 27% of visited 1km squares, a typical proportion, these were spread county-wide but, as usual, quite a few came from urban areas and gardens, where a wide range of larval food plants are available to this polyphagous species. That said, there were no records of the immature stages this year.

### **Brown Argus** *Aricia agestis*

Brown Argus' first brood reports started 15 days before the 10ya on 22nd April and totals rose quickly to peak at 107 in week 19 (7th-13th May) before dropping rapidly two weeks later, then stayed low until the much larger second brood started at the end of June and continued until 6th October, five days later than the 10ya. This brood actually had two peaks, in weeks 28 and 32, separated by the unusual 'summer-dip' when the true peak should have been. The peak in week 32 (6th-12th August) was 233. Reports came from 18.8% of visited 1km squares, more than the 10ya (13.0%), mostly from the chalk, the Greensand ridge, Marston vale, and sites around and north of Bedford. Local abundance could be quite high, such as at Odell Great Wood (21), Ouzel Brook A5 Link (35), Totternhoe Knolls (52), and Whipsnade Downs (51). Overall abundance was near normal, but the annual total of 96 on the Mowsbury Hill transect was exceptionally high where the annual average was about two.

### **Common Blue** *Polyommatus icarus icarus*

Common Blue's first brood was seen from 22nd April, 17 days before the 10ya, peaked in mid-May and ended in mid-June. The larger second brood followed on closely, and once the "week 29-31 dip" was over peaked at 1,020 in week 32 (6th-12th August) then declined, ending 15th October, nine days later than the 10ya. Reported from unimproved grasslands in 35.7% of visited 1km squares, the largest proportion since 1997, the total of 205 1km squares far exceeding 2019's 163. Counts on transects were largely undistinguished except at Mowsbury Hill where a new high of 282 was reached, the largest for any transect this year. Large counts were widely reported, with 158 double-digit records received, the largest count of 67 was from Houghton Regis quarry on 18th May.

### **Chalkhill Blue** *Polyommatus coridon*

Chalkhill Blue's 109-day season was 28 days longer than usual, and started ten days earlier than the 10ya on 25th June. As usual, this chalk-restricted species had large local abundance with 23 triple-digit counts reported, the largest of 600+ from Houghton Regis quarry on 19th July. Restricted by the presence of its larval food-plant, Horseshoe Vetch, there isn't much room for range expansion, but due to thorough recording the total of 33 1km square reported was a new record, beating 26 in 2013 and 2024. Defying the "week 29-31 dip" the peak was in week 29 (16th-22nd July) when 2,033 were reported, but numbers did drop for the following two weeks. The annual total of 8,854 adult was third-highest, behind Gatekeeper and Meadow Brown.

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Map produced using DMAP.

*Keith Balmer is the Society's honorary butterfly recorder, a position he has held since 2003, jointly with Peter Glenister throughout this period until the autumn of 2019 when Peter retired from the role.*

Data tables continue on the following pages...

### Flight periods and peak abundances in 2025

Species	Earliest Date	Latest Date	Peak Date	Peak Abundance
Dingy Skipper	12/04/2025	25/08/2025	07/05/2025	27
Grizzled Skipper	11/04/2025	31/05/2025	27/04/2025	9
Essex Skipper	13/06/2025	23/07/2025	04/07/2025	6
Small Skipper	08/06/2025	08/08/2025	22/06/2025	50
Large Skipper	21/05/2025	14/08/2025	21/06/2025	43
Orange-tip	15/03/2025	09/06/2025	27/04/2025	26
Large White	08/03/2025	22/10/2025	13/07/2025	86
Small White	21/03/2025	13/11/2025	30/04/2025	50
Green-veined White	26/03/2025	06/10/2025	02/04/2025	30
Clouded Yellow	17/04/2025	04/11/2025	08/08/2025	20+
Brimstone	05/02/2025	20/12/2025	01/05/2025	25
Speckled Wood	31/03/2025	24/10/2025	27/06/2025	22
Small Heath	16/04/2025	27/09/2025	11/08/2025	78
Ringlet	01/06/2025	08/08/2025	27/06/2025	161
Meadow Brown	14/05/2025	28/10/2025	03/07/2025	100+
Gatekeeper	15/06/2025	14/09/2025	13/07/2025	200+
Marbled White	01/06/2025	19/07/2025	22/06/2025	103
Silver-washed Fritillary	21/06/2025	25/08/2025	28/06/2025	10
Dark Green Fritillary	01/06/2025	11/08/2025	04/07/2025	100
White Admiral	16/06/2025	14/07/2025	16/06/2025	4
Purple Emperor	19/06/2025	14/07/2025	27/06/2025	3
Red Admiral	24/01/2025	11/12/2025	12/07/2025	21
Painted Lady	13/04/2025	01/11/2025	09/07/2025	4
Peacock	21/02/2025	30/12/2025	09/07/2025	40
Small Tortoiseshell	06/03/2025	29/09/2025	15/06/2025	6
Comma	30/01/2025	13/11/2025	22/06/2025	20+
Duke of Burgundy	07/04/2025	01/06/2025	14/05/2025	20
Small Copper	08/04/2025	12/10/2025	17/05/2025	22
Purple Hairstreak	16/06/2025	25/08/2025	20/06/2025	80
Green Hairstreak	07/04/2025	27/06/2025	27/04/2025	12
White-letter Hairstreak	16/06/2025	12/07/2025	16/06/2025	17
Black Hairstreak	30/05/2025	17/06/2025	30/05/2025	7
Small Blue	26/04/2025	05/09/2025	12/06/2025	106
Holly Blue	03/04/2025	13/11/2025	30/04/2025	6
Brown Argus	22/04/2025	06/10/2025	29/08/2025	52
Common Blue	22/04/2025	15/10/2025	18/05/2025	67
Chalkhill Blue	25/06/2025	12/10/2025	19/07/2025	600+

**Adults reported per month in 2025**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>
Dingy Skipper				323	381	9	21	49				
Grizzled Skipper				85	32							
Essex Skipper						55	100					
Small Skipper						646	241	3				
Small/Essex Skipper						1137	835	1				
Large Skipper					34	890	283	3				
Orange-tip			7	779	363	4						
Large White			6	318	228	819	3660	1136	224	8		
Small White			26	412	233	680	1917	1365	527	48	4	
Green-veined White			8	596	312	596	1141	547	144	4		
Small/G-v. White				293	85	252	517	432	55	9	1	
Clouded Yellow				1			22	83	13	13	1	
Brimstone		8	602	1313	797	211	385	44	30	17	4	1
Speckled Wood			2	637	563	649	817	653	377	21		
Small Heath				83	993	746	352	1296	87			
Ringlet						2927	2742	10				
Meadow Brown					79	4180	5161	4073	382	6		
Gatekeeper						287	10828	1635	5			
Marbled White						2432	1013					
Silver-washed Fritillary						129	119	7				
Dark Green Fritillary						207	272	1				
White Admiral						29	14					
Purple Emperor						17	7					
Red Admiral	2	2	26	51	143	223	961	250	352	85	30	4
Painted Lady				3	36	24	79	35	33	2	1	
Peacock		2	349	1768	320	146	1441	44	77	11	3	2
Small Tortoiseshell			36	60	22	123	48	10	3			
Comma	1		338	267	38	627	748	121	52	9	2	
Duke of Burgundy				207	274	1						
Small Copper				49	137	22	124	180	123	15		
Purple Hairstreak						184	128	6				
Green Hairstreak				87	112	6						
White Letter Hairstreak						52	42					
Black Hairstreak					21	17						
Small Blue				54	513	752	322	118	1			
Holly Blue				176	210	31	210	118	9	4	2	
Brown Argus				31	284	34	532	611	50	3		
Common Blue				115	1102	223	1764	1943	447	38		
Chalkhill Blue						10	5401	3371	69	3		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1400</b>	<b>7708</b>	<b>7312</b>	<b>19377</b>	<b>42247</b>	<b>18145</b>	<b>3060</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>7</b>

### Summary of 2025's records of adults

Species	Records	Adults	Squares		Records (%)	Adults/All-species adults <sup>1</sup> (%)				
			10km	1km		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Dingy Skipper	208	783	10	39	0.81	0.80	0.95	0.59	0.50	0.79
Grizzled Skipper	66	117	8	18	0.26	0.19	0.15	0.09	0.09	0.12
Essex Skipper	89	155	14	47	0.35	0.15	0.31	0.32	0.36	0.16
Small Skipper	257	890	20	107	1.00	0.90	1.08	1.01	1.15	0.89
Small/Essex Skipper	287	1973	14	66	1.12	0.36	4.40	4.09	2.71	1.98
Large Skipper	386	1211	19	126	1.51	1.96	1.91	2.16	1.64	1.22
Orange-tip	626	1154	20	215	2.44	2.32	1.52	1.20	1.59	1.16
Large White	2156	6399	20	284	8.41	3.31	2.91	2.69	3.04	6.42
Small White	2137	5212	20	307	8.34	5.59	3.78	4.62	3.43	5.23
Green-veined White	1372	3348	21	253	5.35	1.79	2.13	1.83	2.65	3.36
Small/G-v. White	394	1644	14	90	1.54	0.33	0.27	0.97	2.53	1.65
Clouded Yellow	65	133	14	42	0.25	0.01	0.14	0.01	0.01	0.13
Brimstone	1578	3413	20	305	6.16	3.99	3.52	4.18	4.11	3.43
Speckled Wood	1599	3720	22	284	6.24	3.24	3.72	3.99	3.45	3.73
Small Heath	1026	3557	20	180	4.00	3.29	2.09	2.81	4.30	3.57
Ringlet	740	5679	21	172	2.89	6.68	8.66	4.78	7.43	5.70
Meadow Brown	2066	13881	21	293	8.06	20.28	14.37	18.80	23.65	13.93
Gatekeeper	1590	12755	20	261	6.21	6.23	5.85	9.56	9.76	12.80
Marbled White	592	3446	21	154	2.31	5.76	6.02	5.33	4.13	3.46
Silver-washed Fritillary	110	256	16	47	0.43	0.67	0.81	0.30	0.18	0.26
Dark Green Fritillary	93	480	7	21	0.36	0.71	1.10	0.34	0.37	0.48
White Admiral	24	44	8	10	0.09	0.09	0.14	0.06	0.10	0.04
Purple Emperor	19	25	6	9	0.07	0.08	0.04	0.01	0.01	0.03
Red Admiral	1285	2130	21	280	5.02	3.80	1.28	6.74	2.68	2.14
Painted Lady	186	213	18	99	0.73	0.51	0.40	0.21	0.16	0.21
Peacock	1640	4164	20	308	6.40	5.70	3.92	4.01	3.96	4.18
Small Tortoiseshell	240	302	18	120	0.94	1.97	2.22	0.57	0.35	0.30
Comma	1166	2204	20	263	4.55	2.08	2.03	2.17	2.27	2.21
Duke of Burgundy	120	482	4	9	0.47	0.33	0.55	0.36	0.59	0.48
Small Copper	319	651	19	113	1.25	0.41	0.37	0.44	0.79	0.65
Purple Hairstreak	73	319	16	47	0.28	0.09	0.46	0.14	0.24	0.32
Green Hairstreak	100	205	8	23	0.39	0.18	0.35	0.11	0.20	0.21
White-letter Hairstreak	23	94	9	15	0.09	0.03	0.09	0.04	0.03	0.09
Black Hairstreak	19	38	2	6	0.07	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.04
Small Blue	219	1760	7	36	0.85	0.16	1.37	1.41	0.76	1.77
Holly Blue	546	760	20	153	2.13	0.99	1.65	2.80	1.43	0.76
Brown Argus	487	1545	19	108	1.90	1.12	1.10	2.50	0.69	1.55
Common Blue	1252	5633	20	205	4.89	2.41	4.24	3.20	2.85	5.65
Chalkhill Blue	414	8854	7	33	1.62	11.48	14.07	5.54	5.82	8.89
Overall	<b>25569</b>	<b>99629</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>574</b>						

<sup>1</sup> These values show the number of adults reported for each species relative to the number of adults reported for all species, allowing crude year-on-year comparisons to be made using data partially acquired by casual recording.