

Long Meadow Butterflies 2015

Small skipper	1/7, 9/7(4),
Essex skipper	9/7(4), 16/7(3), 23/7(4), 30/7(3), 6/8,
Small/Essex skip	1/7, 9/7(10), 16/7(2), 30/7,
Large skipper	11/6, 16/6, 24/6(4), 9/7,
Brimstone	6/4(3), 26/5,
Large white	7/5, 13/5, 26/5(2), 16/7, 23/7, 30/7(3), 6/8,
Small white	7/5, 13/5, 26/5(5), 9/7(2), 16/7(7), 23/7,
Green-veined	29/4, 7/5(2), 20/5, 26/5, 1/7(2), 9/7(3), 16/7, 30/7(5), 6/8(3), 12/8(3),
Whites	29/4, 7/5(2), 13/5(7), 26/5(2), 4/6, 16/6, 1/7(2), 9/7(8), 23/7(8), 30/7(10), 6/8(8), 12/8, 19/8, 28/8(7), 2/9(4), 10/9(3)
Orange tip	29/4, 7/5(3), 13/5(3), 20/5,
Small copper	29/4, 13/5(2), 4/6(2), 9/7, 23/7(2), 30/7(2), 6/8, 12/8, 28/8
Brown argus	23/7(2), 30/7(3), 6/8(2), 12/8,
Common blue	20/5, 11/6, 24/6, 16/7, 23/7(3), 30/7(12), 6/8(11),
Holly blue	7/5, 13/5, 26/5, 11/6, 7/9(4), 23/7, 30/7(15), 6/8(5), 12/8, 19/8, 28/8
Red admiral	1/7, 9/7, 30/7(3), 10/9
Small tortoiseshell	10/4(3), 24/6,
Peacock	12/3, 6/4(7), 13/5(2),
Comma	10/4, 9/7, 16/7(2), 30/7(3),
Speckled wood	22/4, 7/5, 20/5(2), 26/5, 4/6(2), 11/6, 16/6(4), 24/6(5), 1/7(3), 9/7(2), 23/7(3), 30/7(10), 6/8(11), 12/8(20), 19/8(7), 28/8(21), 2/9(14), 10/9(17)
Marbled white	1/7(3),
Gatekeeper	9/7(7), 16/7(12), 23/7(38), 30/7(26), 6/8(14), 12/8(10), 19/8(7),
Meadow brown	11/6/(2), 16/6(20), 24/6(39), 1/7(33), 9/7(43), 16/7(32), 23/7(15), 30/7(14), 6/8(10), 12/8(2),
Ringlet	1/7(3), 9/7(26), 16/7(11), 23/7(8), 30/7(2),

If no number then only one seen

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Species (20)	First date	Peak count	Peak date	Last date	Total	Status and Habitat	Larval food plant
Small skipper	1/7	4	9/7	9/7	5	Resident in grassland	grasses
Essex skipper	9/7	4	23/7	6/8	15	Resident in grassland	grasses
Small/essex skipper	1/7	10	9/7	30/7	14	Resident in grassland	grasses
Large skipper	11/6	4	24/6	9/7	7	Resident of woodland edge	grasses
Brimstone	6/4	3	6/4	26/5	4	Mobile in woodland & grassland	buckthorn
Large white	7/5	3	30/7	6/8	10	Mobile & widespread	crucifers
Small white	7/5	7	16/7	23/7	17	Mobile & widespread	crucifers
Green-veined white	29/4	5	30/7	12/8	22	Mobile & widespread	crucifers
Whites	29/4	10	30/7	10/9	66	Mobile & widespread	crucifers
Orange tip	29/4	3	7/5	20/5	8	Mobile & widespread	crucifers
Small copper	29/4	2	--	28/8	13	Resident in grassland	sorrel/dock
Brown argus	23/7	3	30/7	12/8	8	Resident in grassland	rockrose
Common blue	20/5	12	30/7	6/8	30	Resident in grassland	birdsfoot trefoil
Holly blue	7/5	15	30/7	28/8	32	Mobile & widespread	holly/ivy
Red admiral	1/7	3	30/7	10/9	6	Mobile & widespread	nettles
Small tortoiseshell	10/4	3	10/4	24/6	4	Mobile & widespread	nettles
Peacock	12/3	7	6/4	13/5	10	Mobile & widespread	nettles
Comma	10/4	3	30/7	30/7	7	Mobile & widespread	nettles
Speckled wood	22/4	21	28/8	10/9	125	Resident of woodland edge	grasses
Gatekeeper	9/7	38	23/7	19/8	114	Resident of woodland edge	grasses
Meadow brown	11/6	43	9/7	12/8	210	Resident in grassland	grasses
Ringlet	1/7	26	9/7	30/7	50	Resident in damper grassland	grasses

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Section	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Total
Small skipper		x												x		2
Essex skipper			x							x	x	x	x	x	x	7
Small/essex skipper			x		x				x		x	x	x	x		7
Large skipper										x		x	x	x		4
Brimstone					x			x			x					3
Large white								x	x	x	x	x		x		6
Small white			x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x			9
Green-veined white	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		11
Whites	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	13
Orange tip						x				x	x	x	x	x		6
Small copper		x									x	x		x		4
Brown argus											x	x	x	x		4
Common blue		x	x								x	x	x	x		6
Holly blue		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	13
Red admiral					x		x	x	x						x	5
Painted lady																0
Small tortoiseshell		x						x					x			3
Peacock	x		x				x						x	x	x	6
Comma			x	x		x		x								4
Speckled wood	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		13
Gatekeeper		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
Meadow brown		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
Ringlet		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	13
Species per section	4	10	12	5	11	10	8	13	11	11	15	16	16	17	8	

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Summary and Management Plans

From the data from the 2013, 2014 and 2015 surveys a few interesting points are beginning to emerge.

Small and essex skippers, which occur in the sunnier warmer grassland areas from early July to early August, showed a small increase in essex skippers but a small decrease in small skippers with essex skippers peaking 2-3 weeks later than small skippers. The more widespread large skipper which prefers the woodland edge was on the wing 3 weeks earlier in 2014 and 2015 than 2013 but showed a decrease in 2015.

The three species of whites, widespread throughout the meadow, were flying from April to September with peak counts in July/August. Orange tips declined in 2015. Brimstone was only seen in very low numbers but in 2015 its caterpillars were found on one of the alder buckthorn shrubs (the caterpillar food plant) that had been planted at the end of 2014 to try to increase its numbers.

Small copper, brown argus and common blue all showed increases in 2015 with small copper and common blue being seen in spring for the first time. All three were mainly seen in the sunnier warmer western half of the meadow during July and August.

The widespread holly blue, a butterfly of the woodland edge, was present in bigger numbers during 2015 in both spring and summer – a marked contrast to 2014 when numbers were very low and no spring generation was seen.

The nymphalids, red admiral, small tortoiseshell, peacock, comma and painted lady were seen in low numbers sporadically during the three years with comma being seen in greater numbers than the others.

Speckled wood was widespread and common around the woodland edge from April to September with the highest counts in late summer but showed a small decline in 2015.

Gatekeeper showed an increase over the three years flying in July and August and peaking in July week three. Meadow brown also showed an increase over the three years flying in June, July and August and peaking in mid July. Ringlet likewise showed an increase flying mainly in July with the peak count in mid July. These three brown butterflies were all widespread in the meadow.

The most butterfly rich areas were sections 11-15 on the warmer sunnier side of the meadow where the grasses are finer and shorter and there are more flowering plants to provide nectar. In 2015 there were more species in more sections – the best year so far for butterflies.

Some 5-10 years of data will be required to be confident of any meaningful changes in numbers, flight periods and distributions. Butterfly populations can fluctuate widely from one year to the next due to environmental variations so trends only emerge over many years.

Management work to prevent scrub encroachment into the grassland will be carried out during the autumn and winter. Additionally some tree thinning to reduce shading and allow more sunlight and warmth to reach the grassland will be undertaken. This work maintains a balance between grassland and woodland edge both of which are key habitats for the butterfly species that live in and visit this site.