

Prestwood Nature butterfly transect Annual Report 2021

Prestwood Nature has taken part in Butterfly Conservation's [UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme](#) since 2006. A defined transect is walked one day every week from the beginning of April to the end of September.

The transect was walked every week except for four occasions in spring when the weather did not meet the minimum criteria laid down in the UKBMS guidelines. Despite the cold start a total of 2037 butterflies were recorded on the transect in the season. This compares to an average of 2138 butterflies per year in the last 10 years. The top ten ranked butterflies reported in 2021 are shown in the table below, again compared to the average of the previous 10 years recorded for the transect. Once again, the most numerous butterfly species seen on the transect was the Meadow Brown.



Meadow Brown

Top ten butterflies recorded on the Prestwood Nature transect in 2021 compared to numbers from previous years

	2021	Average from 2011-2020
Meadow Brown	933	885
Ringlet	193	262
Marbled White	191	186
Gatekeeper	146	128
Large White	80	123
Speckled Wood	78	62
Small White	63	111
Peacock	51	33
Brimstone	48	43
Common Blue	36	111

Twenty-six butterfly species were observed in total on the transect, although it must be noted that the data may not include all species observed in the year. For example, a Green Hairstreak was not recorded on a transect walk in 2021 but was seen by different observers on separate days at the Prestwood Local Nature Reserve on the transect route.

The Common Blue had a disappointing year, only ranking 10th in total numbers compared to an average ranking of 6th in the previous 10 years. Interestingly, Butterfly Conservation’s Big Butterfly Count, which was conducted over a three-week period (16 July – 8 August) reported that the exceptionally cold and wet spring impacted the emergence of a number of summer broods. Generally, double-brooded species fared poorly, with Green-veined White, Comma, Common Blue and Holly Blue experiencing their worst summer since the start of the Big Butterfly Count in 2010. It is thought that the poor spring weather affected these species by hampering the feeding, breeding and then survival of the immature stages of the first brood, leading to a reduced second generation in the summer. Prestwood Nature results for the Common Blue are in line with those findings (see chart below).

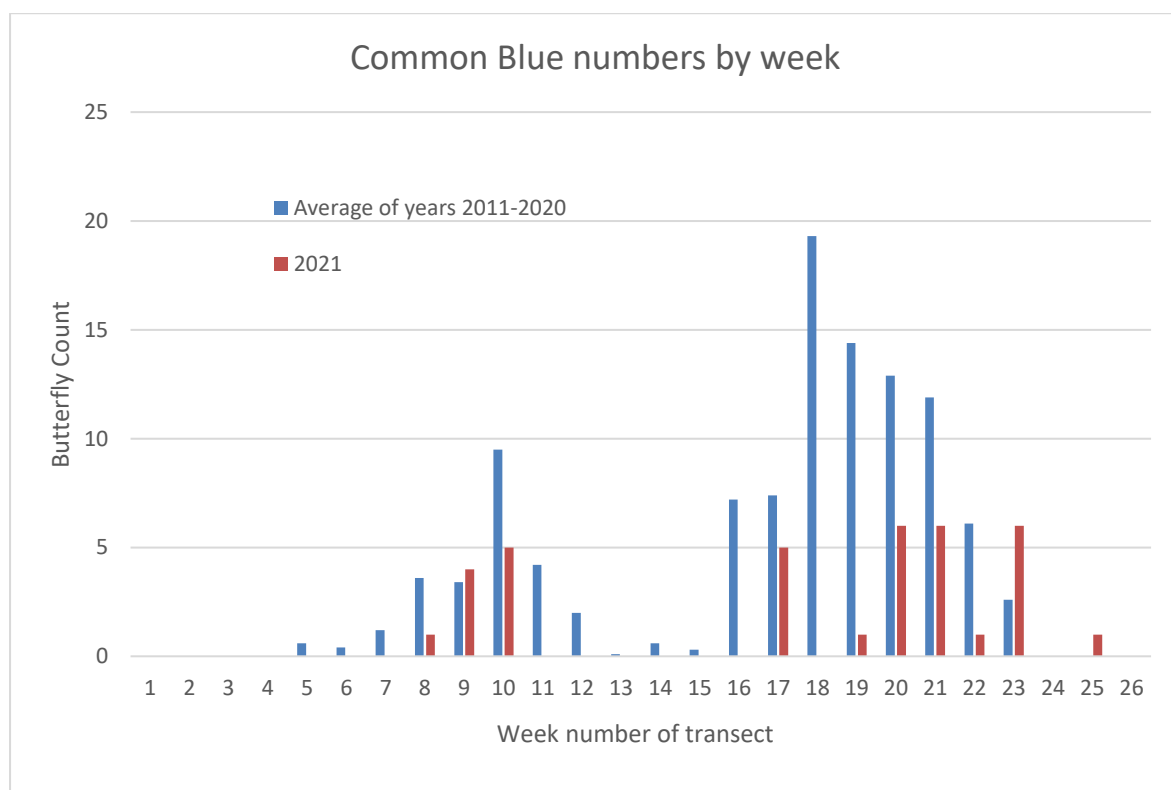


Chart showing total number of Common Blue butterflies reported each week in 2021 on the Prestwood Nature transect compared to the average of the previous 10 years.

Notwithstanding the weather, a record number of Dingy Skippers (12) were recorded in 2021 compared to an average of 4 in the previous 10 years. The relative success of the Dingy Skipper was also noted across the Upper Thames Valley region and the South East in general where Butterfly Conservation's Conservation Manager for SE England reported that their distribution was increasing.



Dingy Skipper

Another species that seems to be on the increase in our area is the Silver-washed Fritillary, with 12 records in total, from 6 walkers (cf average of 2 in previous 10 years). A Dark Green Fritillary, which has only been recorded once previously on the transect, was also reported.

A full breakdown of the transect results is shown in the Appendix below.

Appendix: Prestwood Nature Butterfly Transect results 2021

Week Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26		
% Sun			100	90		50		20	100	60	90	97	33	30	100	85	15	15	40	50	75	5	90	50	70	90		
Average temp °C			14	13		16		18	19	18	20	18	18	20	23	23	22	16	20	21	22	16	24	17	20	15		
Small/Essex Skipper	-	-			-		-							5	4	24	3	14										50
Large Skipper	-	-			-		-						5				2	1	1									9
Dingy Skipper	-	-			-	2	-	8		2																		12
Brimstone	-	-	11		-	7	-	4	4	7			1						4	4	5				1		48	
Large White	-	-			-		-		1				1	2	6	35	8	8	7	5	6		1					80
Small White or Green-veined White	-	-			-	3	-		1					1	1	18	5	19	10	7	4	2	10	1	2			84
Orange Tip	-	-	3	6	-	3	-	6	11	6																		35
Small Copper	-	-			-		-			1										1								2
Brown Argus	-	-			-		-																		1			1
Common Blue	-	-			-		-	1	4	5							5		1	6	6	1	6		1			36
Holly Blue	-	-			-		-			2									1		1							4
Red Admiral	-	-			-		-				1		2	2		2	3			1			2	1	4	1		19
Painted Lady	-	-			-		-								2					1								3
Small Tortoiseshell	-	-			-		-						4										2		1			7
Peacock	-	-	21	6	-		-	2	3							1		2	4	5				6	1			51
Comma	-	-			-		-	1						1	1	3	3								1			10
Speckled Wood	-	-		2	-		-			4	1		3	1	1	10	1	1	4	3	8	4	18	4	13			78
Marbled White	-	-			-		-						5	13	52	88	14	13	4				2					191
Gatekeeper	-	-			-		-								13	10	12	59	34	7	11							146
Meadow Brown	-	-			-		-		3	1	9	24	53	32	136	219	128	116	31	27	45	22	57		29	1		933
Ringlet	-	-			-		-					1	9	31	10	124	1	15		2								193
Small Heath	-	-			-		-	3		4			3	3	2	7	1		1	4								28
Silver-washed Fritillary	-	-			-		-								1	2	1	3	4		1							12
Dark Green Fritillary	-	-			-		-											1										1
Unidentified	-	-			-		-															3	1					4
Totals	-	-	35	14	-	15	-	25	27	32	11	25	86	91	229	543	187	252	106	73	87	32	99	12	54	2	2037	

- Transect not walked in this week