Prestwood Nature butterfly transect 2023

Prestwood Nature has taken part in the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme organised by Butterfly Conservation since 2006. The standardised methodology enables year on year comparison with walks carried out each week, weather permitting, from 1st April through to the end of September. This year, 19 volunteers were available to walk the transect route.

In total, 3203 butterflies were recorded on the transect in 2023. This compares to an average of 2310 butterflies per year in the last 10 years. Twenty-four different species were recorded.



Red Admiral

Despite variable weather conditions this year, the transect was walked on all 26 weeks of the recording season. Following the high temperatures and drought last year which affected the larval food plants of many butterflies, numbers this year have been amazingly buoyant. The top five butterflies reported in 2023 compared to the previous 10 years are shown in the table below. The Browns have done particularly well with the Meadow Brown once again taking the top spot for numbers overall. Interestingly, most butterfly species were seen in larger numbers than usual, including the Red Admiral (64 sightings compared to an average of 10 in previous years). Butterfly Conservation stated that it is definitely a 'Red Admiral year' with a huge surge in sightings of this migrant species reported in the Big Butterfly Count. Butterflies seen in much lower numbers than the average for the last 10 years in our transect included the Common Blue and the Small Tortoiseshell (none reported).

Species	2023	Average from 2013-2022
Meadow Brown	1390	959
Marbled White	341	227
Gatekeeper	328	142
Ringlet	200	293
Speckled Wood	114	69

Our findings echo the results of the Big Butterfly Count. Butterfly Conservation reported that the effects of last year's drought were not as bad as had been feared. However, while the number of butterflies recorded in the Count was the highest since 2019, the longer-term trends show declines for some of the UK's most common species. Dr Richard Fox, Head of Science at Butterfly Conservation, explained: *"One of the biggest threats butterflies in the UK face is habitat loss. While the weather certainly has an impact on numbers from year to year, butterflies, moths and many other species can generally cope with variable weather. What they can't cope with is habitat destruction. Butterflies need a place to live. If they can feed, breed and shelter, they can thrive. By creating a Wild Space in your outdoor area, you can help to reverse the massive losses of wildlife-friendly habitat and start to turn around the fortunes of our declining butterflies."*

Prestwood Nature Butterfly Transect 2023

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	75	60	70	40	45	80	90	100	100	95	60	80	60	10	60	30	70	70	90	25	50	50	100	15	95	
Average temp °C	13	15	15	12	18	14	16	20	18	21	26	25	28	17	21	20	19	21	22	18	19	18	19	27	22	19	
Small Skipper															6	14			1								**21**
Essex Skipper															20												**20**
Small/Essex Skipper												7	17	32	1	3	3	1					1				**65**
Large Skipper										1	1			13	3												**18**
Dingy Skipper						5	6				1																**12**
Brimstone	6	3	3		6	1	8	1	10	6	1	1		2		13	3	9	9	1				1			**84**
Large White					8		2	1	4	2	1			13	2	6	13	11	2		2	2		2	5		**76**
Small White					2	1	1		9	2		1		14	10	15	15	6	7	8	2			1	2	1	**97**
Green-veined White						1	1		1	2		1		2	1	5	2	11	2	4	3		8	1			**45**
Orange Tip					4	6	6	9	8	1	4																**38**
Green Hairstreak																											**0**
Small Copper						1												2	2					2	1		**8**
Brown Argus											1							1	3	1							**6**
Common Blue								18	9	3	2	1	1					8	3	1	1	3	1	1			**52**
Holly Blue			1		2		1		3	1	1			1	1		4	2	11	4	1						**33**
Red Admiral									2				1	1	3	6	6	7	1		2		2	4	10	19	**64**
Painted Lady								2																		1	**3**
Small Tortoiseshell																											**0**
Peacock	6	6	7	4	14	2	7	9		2	3			2		7	9	10	3		1			1			**93**
Comma	2		1				2						2	11	5	3	2	1						1		3	**33**
Speckled Wood						4		1	2	2	9	6	9	18	1	2	2	7	3	2	5	4	10	19	4	4	**114**
Marbled White												12	77	120	71	40	14	7									**341**
Gatekeeper														18	55	76	57	69	28		21	4					**328**
Meadow Brown								21		1	72	146	174	175	121	115	142	180	85	54	13	35	40	12	2	2	**1390**
Ringlet												7	1	116	37	13	22	4									**200**
Small Heath									7	6	4	13	5	4			3						3	7			**52**
Silver-washed Fritillary														1	3		4		1						1		**10**
Totals	**14**	**9**	**12**	**4**	**36**	**21**	**34**	**62**	**55**	**29**	**100**	**195**	**287**	**543**	**340**	**318**	**301**	**336**	**161**	**75**	**51**	**48**	**65**	**52**	**25**	**30**	**3203**