Butterfly Transect

Prestwood Nature has taken part in the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme organized by Butterfly Conservation since 2006. The standardized 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, 16 people, including two new volunteers, walked the transect. All weeks were walked with the exception of two where the weather conditions did not meet the minimum criteria.

No problems were reported by transect walkers except for particularly lush growth blocking the footpath in section 8 which required an emergency work party to clear the way.

In total, 2532 butterflies were recorded on the transect in 2024, although over half of these were Meadow Browns. This compares to an average of 2395 butterflies per year in the last 10 years. Twenty-five different butterfly species were recorded.



Common Blue

Butterfly Conservation has recently declared this year a national 'Butterfly Emergency', with results of their Big Butterfly Count showing a marked and hugely concerning decline in numbers, with the worst summer in the Count's history for Common Blue, Holly Blue, Green-veined White, Small White, Small Tortoiseshell and Painted Lady.

Although the total number of butterflies recorded in the Prestwood Nature transect this year approximated to the average count for the previous 10 years, counts in the spring and early summer were much lower than average, probably due in part to the unusually wet conditions. Counts did improve for the second half of the transect year, but the majority of butterflies recorded belonged to the subfamily of 'Browns' as evidenced by the top five shown in the table below. Note that, despite the name, the Marbled White is a member of the 'browns' (the Satyrinae) rather than the 'whites' (the Pieridae). However, counts for Common Blue (27 vs 10 yr avg 112), Small Tortoiseshell (2 vs 10 yr avg 23) and Small Copper (1 vs 10 yr avg 6) in particular were much lower than usual.

Species	2024	Average from 2014-2023
Meadow Brown	1329	1017
Marbled White	318	253
Gatekeeper	208	158
Ringlet	157	277
Speckled Wood	78	79

Prestwood Nature Butterfly Transect 2024

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	
Small/Essex Skipper			-	-									4	7			15	15									**41**
Large Skipper			-	-								1			1	3		1			3						**9**
Dingy Skipper			-	-			4			2		1															**7**
Brimstone	2	12	-	-	5	8	4	3	2	2		2					4	2			6						**52**
Large White			-	-	3	6	2	2	8		1					7	2	6	6		6	5	10	3	1		**68**
Small White		2	-	-		16		1		2							5	8	2		3		10	8	3	1	**61**
Green-veined White			-	-	1					1							1	3	1		1		3		1		**12**
Orange Tip		2	-	-	5	7	1	1	1	1																	**18**
Green Hairstreak			-	-		2	1																				**3**
Small Copper			-	-																						1	**1**
Common Blue			-	-		1		8	1			1							3		7	1	5				**27**
Holly Blue			-	-		4			1											2							**7**
Red Admiral		1	-	-		2							1				1	1	1		1		1	7	1	1	**18**
Painted Lady			-	-				6																			**6**
Small Tortoiseshell		1	-	-		1																					**2**
Peacock	1	15	-	-	4	5			1		1							4	1		1		1				**34**
Comma			-	-													3	5			2				1		**11**
Speckled Wood		1	-	-	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	2	5	1	2	1	3	9	1	1	15	6	11	4	4	2	**78**
Marbled White			-	-							1	2	142	95	25	27	20	4	2								**318**
Gatekeeper			-	-											3	23	73	71	24		7				7		**208**
Meadow Brown			-	-					9	13	21	47	266	96	65	141	168	182	109	41	62	28	53	20	2	6	**1329**
Ringlet			-	-							1		27	25	59	5	5	7			27		1				**157**
Small Heath			-	-				11	3	2	3	8	13	4	4	6					3	1	5		1		**64**
Silver-washed Fritillary			-	-																	1						**1**
Totals	**3**	**34**	**-**	**-**	**19**	**53**	**13**	**35**	**27**	**24**	**30**	**64**	**458**	**228**	**159**	**213**	**300**	**318**	**150**	**44**	**145**	**41**	**100**	**42**	**21**	**11**	**2532**