

A select group of four: Bruce, Dave, Sue and myself, plus Sue's two dogs, set off for Top Field on a not particularly sunny day to count how many butterfly species we could find and the number of each. I had very limited butterfly know-how but Bruce and Sue were there to fill in the gaps. To make myself useful I volunteered to carry the clipboard and do the recording. Dave was in charge of the net.

The site had been divided into five sectors for surveying purposes and once we were out of the wooded area, where a few shade-loving Speckled Woods were spotted, the tally increased. We saw a fair number of pretty brown and orange Gatekeepers (which gets its name because it likes to live in hedgerows so is often spotted around gates); Ringlets were in abundance as were Meadow Browns, and Large and Small Whites. A female Brimstone fluttered past; she is not yellow like the male but almost white and so can be confused with the Large White.



Some of the species spotted – clockwise from top left: Comma, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Ivy Blue, Common Blue, Small Skipper, Marbled White

Identifying your butterfly can be a tricky process; it's a bit like a game of spot the difference. We spent ages staring at one which accommodatingly stayed still as we diligently counted spots and dots and examined the markings and agreed it must be a Common Blue, until Sue pointed out an illustration of an almost identical one (the Brown Argus) save for one tiny splotch... Meanwhile Dave had gently caught a Marbled White and we marvelled at the delicate black and white chequered markings. Bruce was determined to see a Comma (although he insisted on calling it a coma, as in deep sleep, as he said 'it simply knocks you out with its very distinctive scalloped wings and colourful marking') and was rewarded as we all were with one bright orange sighting. This butterfly is so named because of the white comma shaped marking on the underside of its wing.

Holly Blues were not much in abundance but we did manage to see one or two, and a few Small Skippers were spotted in the long grass, so small and moth-like that they are easy not to notice.

It's sadly not been a good year for butterflies. But for me an enjoyable and informative experience.

Weather: sunny & cloudy, not very warm for July, 19°C.

Gail Alexander

Survey Summary

A total of twelve butterfly species were recorded: Comma, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Large White, Small White, Small Skipper, Brimstone, Common Blue and Holly Blue. Full results can be seen on our website. Other species seen this year on Top Field are: Orange Tip, Peacock and Red Admiral.

Full Results

