

We were a slightly more informal and larger group of people and children than in previous surveys. We mainly observed the butterflies in Top Field with the party splitting into little groups to undertake their own observations. The numbers and pie chart below is not an exhaustive tally, but gives a general picture of the proportion of butterfly species by my group.

It's interesting to see the changes from year to year. The marbled whites, which resemble a small piece of flying marble, were out and about in higher numbers this year, but the painted ladies, in such colourful, fluttering abundance two years ago, were far more elusive. There seemed to be more gatekeepers and meadow browns around – both quite similar in appearance but the gatekeeper like a more orangey, dressed up version of the meadow brown.

As a group of enthusiasts, rather than experts, we were not always able to tell our large from our small whites. We spotted a number of blues, part of the *Lycaenidae* family, but whether they were holly blues or common blues was not easy. We opted for the common variety, which as its name suggests, are the commonest blue found in the British Isles. The male has bright blue uppersides, the female is primarily brown, with a highly variable amount of blue. However, the annual Big Butterfly Count found a large drop in the numbers of common blues spotted. Experts from the Butterfly Conservation had expected record sightings of the winged insects after a hot, dry spring but the cold summer with prolonged spells of rain hindered most species in flying, feeding and mating.



Brimstone

No brimstones were spotted this year as in the past, but one was waiting for me in the garden feeding off the buddleia when I got home (photo).

The task this month was to create a new clearing and vista on the northern section of the path beyond Worthy Down Halt. A suitable spot was chosen facing west towards the water tower at the A34. Six volunteers joined the work party.

Weather: dry but overcast.

*Gail Alexander, Butterfly Recorder*