

Wyre Forest East Transect Report 2017 and Summary 2011-2017

Attached are a series of schedules showing the data collected by the team during the summer of 2017. It was a mixed year with the total number of butterflies counted being within 6 of last years. In the meadows the total was 71 more than last year. These numbers hide a large number of variables.

The species that have had their best years in seven are, with the exception of Orange Tips – 122, those which do not appear in large numbers and these are Commas – 52, Red Admirals – 23, Holly Blues – 6 and Marbled Whites – 6. The only section that recorded best in seven was section 7 while 2 & 8 equalled their worst results.

By species: -

Species	Transect			Meadows			7 Year Trend
	2016	2017	Average	2016	2017	Average	
Small Skipper	136	58	93	227	156	175	Level
Essex Skipper	11	22	17	7	19	5	Up (?Better Identifying)
Large Skipper	27	38	39	6	18	21	Level
Brimstone	69	124	91	5	29	24	Level
Large White	72	69	76	40	28	30	Level
Small White	105	24	99	101	5	35	Decline
Green Veined	195	228	258	33	59	48	Level - But see above
Orange Tip	98	122	91	16	17	28	Up
Small Copper	4	7	12	0	1	2	Decline
Common Blue	11	18	25	36	10	19	Decline
Red Admiral	4	23	7	2	8	3	Up 2017 notable
Small Tort.	11	5	20	4	0	9	Severe Decline
Peacock	29	24	93	5	4	10	Severe Decline
Comma	14	52	24	3	25	10	Up
Dark Green Fr.	6	6	12	1	5	11	Difficult to assess
Silver-Washed	163	307	314	56	85	97	Level
Speckled Wood	156	154	149	20	12	20	Level
Gatekeeper	192	140	181	35	7	21	Level
Marbled White	3	6	2	6	8	6	Up
Meadow Brown	383	317	315	230	276	309	Level
Ringlet	1115	1032	1074	1143	1291	1168	Level
Pearl Bordered	20	22	81	16	15	25	Decline
Small Pearl	26	38	44	28	16	23	Level
Others	7	15	32	3	0	1	Inc. Sm / Essex Sk!
TOTAL	2857	2851	3149	2023	2094	2100	

When considering the above it is important to remember that the timing of the Meadow counts affects what is seen. This year we saw Ringlets and Meadow Browns in both June and July while we were too early for Gatekeepers. We might completely miss 2nd brood Common Blues for instance. I believe that the conditions in August curtailed the flight seasons of many species in the forest. The season started early but finished even earlier and abruptly.

I would now like to consider the transect sections, meadow counts and temperature and sunshine figures: -

Analysis by area: -

Transect	2016	2017	Average	Meadow	2016	2017	Average	Overall Comments
Within Valley	1585	1843	2017		711	898	876	Meadows more
Outside Valley	1272	1008	1132		1312	1196	1225	Consistent
TOTAL	2857	2851	3149		2023	2094	2100	
Worcs	1577	1347	1452		1396	1337	1377	than Transects
Shropshire	1280	1504	1697		625	757	724	
TOTAL	2857	2851	3149		2023	2094	2100	

Analysis of Transect Sections and Meadows: -

Transect	2016	2017	Average	Meadow	2016	2017	Average	Overall Comments
Temperature	19.1	18.7	18.35		21	23	21	Warm start Cool later
Sunshine %	65.0	65.2	60.6		53	80	83	Above Average
Minutes				Total	855	820	824	Average!!
1	328	146	221	6	236	270	196	Cattle – on transect!!
2	12	10	19					Always Poor
3	305	339	320	4	86	141	151	Average but part cattle
4	33	53	42	3	45	72	83	Average
5	107	123	169	2	278	337	268	Improving–work parties
6	131	133	161	1	93	72	86	Stable
7	58	63	44					Best Ever
8	4	4	9					Always Poor
9	69	74	90					Work parties this winter
10	51	57	74					Do
11	373	264	333	8	274	203	304	Average with 12
12	271	301	252	7	511	412	365	Average with 11
13	164	152	134	5	291	311	358	Stable
14	716	801	888	11	209	276	288	Slightly disappointing
15	235	331	393					Improving
TOTAL	2857	2851	3149		2023	2094	2100	

With regards to transect counts 2016 was a very poor year in the valley. At least the overall ratio for this year is about the norm. If you consider that we are about 300 under average then about 100 comes from section 1 and, I would argue that, a large proportion of this was due to the early introduction of cattle into this section. We only saw 18 butterflies in this section from week 17 to the end and 10 of those were in one week!! Another 50+ could be put down to me counting week 16 on my own. I mentioned this at the time. We counted less than 150 butterflies in total from weeks 20-26 which is very poor and that was very much the result of difficult weather conditions in August and September. All meadows were counted by this time and before cattle were introduced.

New sightings this year: -

Essex Skipper in Meadows 2 and 7
 Holly Blue in Sections 1 and 15
 Red Admiral in Meadows 1 & 2
 Painted Lady in Section 12
 Comma in Meadow 1
 Marbled White in Sections 1, 5 and 6 and Meadow 6
 Pearl Bordered Fritillary in Meadow 4.

We saw 26 Species on the Transect and 22 in the Meadows. No new species were seen. With regards to the Transect 26 is equal 2nd worst – only 2012 with 25 was poorer and that was a terrible year overall. With regards to the Meadows 22 is equal worst with 2013 but 2013 had 1/3 more butterflies! I believe that the timing of counts could easily have missed species such as Dingy Skipper, White Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell. The last two of these have always been reported in Meadow Counts previously albeit in low numbers and Dingy Skipper in several years.

Timing of Meadow Counts is an art we have yet to master. Our timing is hit and miss. Only by visiting meadows more often than we have time for could we improve. I seem to do better around Lodge Hill where all the Meadows are close together and we visit all but one of them on the transect whereas to look at the valley Meadows is a 2 mile walk and we only enter 2 of 5. Then there are conditions on the chosen day. This year the sudden change to poor weather with the arrival of the school holidays had a noticeable effect on the transect results. (Tongue in cheek - My solution – Do away with school summer holidays or have them all after Sept 30th and before April 1st!!!!????).

I am aware that Alice has plans for Transect sections 9 and 10 and that the clearance work along section 5 is to continue. Jenny Joy has mentioned that bracken clearance in the Meadow that includes sections 11 and 12 is being considered. The cattle seem reluctant to visit section 15 (and I don't blame them with the

narrow gap by the fence around the bank subsidence) so bracken and scrub in there and at the far end of section 14 is becoming a problem. The time might arise where, due to bank erosion, section 15 has to be abandoned. I believe an attack on the blackthorn in Meadow 3 might be beneficial to cows and counters. Maybe the two beasts that did all the tree damage in Meadow 1 would do a good job in there??!

And Finally – Butterflies in order by total and where and when to go for best chance to see: -

Species	Transect		Meadow		Meadows	Months	
	Cum	2017	Sections	Cum			2017
Ringlet	1	1	Not 8	1	1	Any	6-8
Meadow Brown	2	2	Not 2 or 8	2	2	Any	6-9
Silver Washed Fritillary	3	3	Not 2 or 8	4	4	Any	6-8
Green Veined White	4	4	Not 2 or 8	5	5	Any	5-6 & 7-9
Gatekeeper	5	6	Not 2,4 or 8	12	18	2,5 & 8 best	7-8
Speckled Wood	6	5	Any	14	14	Any	4-9
Small White	7	14=	Not 2 or 8	6	19=	Any	4-5 & 7-9
Small Skipper	8=	10	1 & 11-15	3	3	Not 3 or 4	7-early 8
Peacock	8=	14=	Not 2 or 7-9	17	21	2 & 11	4-5 & 6-9
Brimstone	10	7	Not 2,8 or 13	10	6	1,2,3,4 & 11	Any
Orange Tip	11	8	3-7 or 14-15	8	11	1,2,3,4 & 11	4-6
Pearl Bordered	12	17=	5,6,11,12,14,15	9	13	1,2,8 & 11	5-6
Large White	13	9	Not 2 or 8	6	7	Any	5-6 & 7-9
Small Pearl Bordered	14	12=	11,12,14,15	11	12	1,2,8 & 11	Late 5-6
Large Skipper	15	12=	14 or 15	13	10	2 & 11	6-7
Common Blue	16	19	1 & 11-14	15	15	5	6 & 7-9
Comma	17	11	3,5,6,14 & 15	18	8	2 & 11	4-5 & 7-9
Small Tortoiseshell	18	24	1,5,6,13 & 14	19	Nil	5 & 7	4-5 & 7-9
Essex Skipper	19	17=	1 & 11-14	13	9	7	7-8
Small Copper	20	20	1,11,12 & 14	23=	22	5 & 7	6 & 7-9
Dark Green Fritillary	21	21=	14 & 15	16	19=	2 & 11	6-7
Red Admiral	22	16	Not 2 & 8	22	16=	Any	6 onwards
Holly Blue	23	21=	6 by cottage	27	Nil	Rare	4-8
White Admiral	24	26	3,14 & 15	23=	Nil	2,3,8 & 11	7
Marbled White	25	21=	11 & 12	20	16=	2,5,7 & 8	6-8
Painted Lady	26	25	1 by Lodge Hill	26	Nil	Rare	6 onwards
Brown Argus	27	Nil	Rare	Nil	Nil	Rare	Rare
Dingy Skipper	28	Nil	14	25	Nil	2,4 or 7	5
Small Heath	29	Nil	Rare	Nil	Nil	Rare	Rare
Grizzled Skipper	30	Nil	11	Nil	Nil	8	4-5
Clouded Yellow	31=	Nil	Rare	Nil	Nil	Rare	Rare
Green Hairstreak	31=	Nil	Rare	Nil	Nil	Rare	4-6
Purple Hairstreak	31=	Nil	Rare	Nil	Nil	Rare	7-8
Wall Brown	31=	Nil	rare	Nil	Nil	Rare	Rare

April – 4, May – 5, June – 6, July – 7, August – 8, September – 9

A separate report has been submitted re Cattle and their possible effects on counts and counting.

Richard Woolley – Volunteer Member Wyre Forest East Transect Team

List of attached sheets: -

1. Totals by Species by Week - 2017
2. Totals by Section by Week - 2017
3. Sunshine Percentage by Section by Week 2017
4. Transect Summary & Average Data 2011-17 by Section and by Species
5. Average Sunshine, Temperature & Weekly Cumulative Data 2011-17
6. May & June Meadow Counts 2012-17 and Average
7. July & Cumulative Counts 2012-17 plus Area Analysis
8. Meadows 1 & 2 2012-17 and Average
9. Meadows 3 & 4 2012-17 and Average
10. Meadows 5 & 6 2012-17 and Average
11. Meadows 7 & 8 2012-17 and Average
12. Meadow 11 2012-17 and Average
13. Where Seen 2017 Transect & Meadows showing New Sightings
14. Where Seen Cumulative - Transect 2011-17 & Meadows 2012-17