

Long Meadow Butterflies 2016

Small skipper	6/7, 13/7, 18/7(3)
Essex skipper	18/7
Small/Essex skipper	
Large skipper	15/6, 6/7(3), 13/7(2), 26/7
Brimstone	13/4, 20/4(4), 4/5
Large white	13/5(2), 17/5, 18/7(6), 26/7, 3/8, 11/8(2)
Small white	24/5(2), 9/6, 28/6, 18/7(6), 26/7, 3/8
Green-veined	20/4, 4/5(2), 13/5(2), 15/6, 13/7(2), 18/7(4), 26/7(2), 3/8(3), 11/8, 17/8(2)
Whites	13/5(8), 17/5(4), 24/5(2), 9/6(2), 15/6(3), 6/7(3), 18/7(4), 26/7(8), 3/8(9), 11/8(6), 17/8(12), 24/8(2), 31/8
Orange tip	4/5(4), 13/5(6), 17/5(4), 24/5
Small copper	8/9(3)
Brown argus	11/8(2)
Common blue	8/9
Holly blue	4/5, 13/5(3), 15/6, 18/7, 24/8(2)
Red admiral	9/6, 18/7(2)
Small tortoiseshell	13/4
Peacock	20/4(3), 9/6
Comma	20/4, 6/7, 3/8(3), 11/8, 17/8
Speckled wood	13/5, 24/5, 9/6(7), 28/6(3), 6/7(3), 18/7(7), 26/7(7), 3/8(5), 11/8(7), 17/8(6), 24/8(5), 31/8(15)
Gatekeeper	18/7(11), 26/7(15), 3/8(9), 11/8(9), 17/8
Meadow brown	15/6(4), 28/6(37), 6/7(37), 13/7(11), 18/7(34), 26/7(5), 3/8(7), 11/8(5)
Ringlet	28/6(2), 6/7(3), 13/7, 18/7(4), 26/7(3)

If no number then only one seen

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Species (20)	First date	Peak count	Peak date	Last date	Total	Status and Habitat	Larval food plant
Small skipper	6/7	3	18/7	18/7	5	Resident in grassland	grasses
Essex skipper	18/7	1	18/7	18/7	1	Resident in grassland	grasses
Small/essex skipper					0	Resident in grassland	grasses
Large skipper	15/6	3	6/7	26/7	7	Resident of woodland edge	grasses
Brimstone	13/4	4	20/4	4/5	6	Mobile in woodland & grassland	buckthorn
Large white	13/5	6	18/7	11/8	13	Mobile & widespread	crucifers
Small white	24/5	6	18/7	3/8	12	Mobile & widespread	crucifers
Green-veined white	20/4	4	18/7	17/8	20	Mobile & widespread	crucifers
Whites	13/5	12	17/8	31/8	64	Mobile & widespread	crucifers
Orange tip	4/5	6	13/5	24/5	15	Mobile & widespread	crucifers
Small copper	8/9	3	8/9	8/9	3	Resident in grassland	sorrel/dock
Brown argus	11/8	2	11/8	11/8	2	Resident in grassland	rockrose
Common blue	8/9	1	8/9	8/9	1	Resident in grassland	birdsfoot trefoil
Holly blue	4/5	3	13/5	24/8	8	Mobile & widespread	holly/ivy
Red admiral	9/6	2	18/7	18/7	3	Mobile & widespread	nettles
Small tortoiseshell	13/4	1	13/4	13/4	1	Mobile & widespread	nettles
Peacock	20/4	3	20/4	9/6	4	Mobile & widespread	nettles
Comma	20/4	3	3/8	17/8	7	Mobile & widespread	nettles
Speckled wood	13/5	15	31/8	31/8	67	Resident of woodland edge	grasses
Gatekeeper	18/7	15	26/7	17/8	45	Resident of woodland edge	grasses
Meadow brown	15/6	37	28/6,6/7	11/8	140	Resident in grassland	grasses
Ringlet	28/6	4	18/7	26/7	13	Resident in damper grassland	grasses

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Section	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Total
Small skipper	x										x	x				3
Essex skipper														x		1
Small/essex skipper																0
Large skipper			x		x						x	x	x	x		6
Brimstone								x	x	x			x	x	x	6
Large white			x			x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	9
Small white		x							x	x	x		x	x		6
Green-veined white	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		12
Whites		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	13
Orange tip		x				x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	9
Small copper												x				1
Brown argus														x		1
Common blue												x				1
Holly blue	x				x			x								3
Red admiral						x							x	x		3
Painted lady																0
Small tortoiseshell											x					1
Peacock			x								x		x			3
Comma		x				x	x		x			x		x		6
Speckled wood	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
Gatekeeper						x					x	x	x	x		5
Meadow brown	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	13
Ringlet							x	x			x	x	x	x	x	7
Species per section	5	5	6	3	6	9	5	9	8	7	13	12	13	15	7	

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Summary and Management Plans

Compared to 2015 which was the best year so far for butterflies, 2016 has been a poor year for them with big declines in the numbers of most of the species using the meadow. This may be in part due to the cold April weather which adversely affected the various stages (eggs, caterpillars, pupae) in the lifecycles of the different species reducing the numbers that emerged as adults.

Many species emerged later, most peak counts were lower and the peak count dates later than in 2015. Last dates were similar to 2015.

Small skippers were present in small numbers as last year but essex skipper numbers crashed to near zero. The more widespread large skipper which prefers the woodland edge maintained its numbers.

The three species of whites, widespread throughout the meadow, were flying from April to August with peak counts in July/August and maintained their numbers. Orange tips were present in greater numbers. Brimstone maintained its numbers and its caterpillars were again found on the alder buckthorn shrubs (the caterpillar food plant) that had been planted at the end of 2014 to try to increase its numbers.

Small copper, brown argus and common blue all showed big declines in numbers.

The holly blue, a butterfly of the woodland edge, showed a large decline in numbers.

The nymphalids, red admiral, small tortoiseshell, peacock were seen in lower numbers but the number of commas seen was the same as in 2015.

Speckled wood was widespread and common around the woodland edge from May to August with the highest counts in late summer but showed a large decline in numbers.

Gatekeeper, meadow brown and ringlet all showed a big decline in numbers. Of these three brown butterflies only meadow brown was widespread in the meadow.

The most butterfly rich areas were sections 11-14 on the warmer sunnier side of the meadow where the grasses are finer and shorter and there are more flowering plants to provide nectar.

Some 5-10 years of data will be required to be confident of any meaningful changes in numbers, flight periods and distributions. Butterfly populations can fluctuate widely from one year to the next due to environmental variations so trends only emerge over many years.

Management work to prevent scrub encroachment into the grassland will be carried out during the autumn and winter. Additionally some tree thinning to reduce shading and allow more sunlight and warmth to reach the grassland will be undertaken. This work maintains a balance between grassland and woodland edge both of which are key habitats for the butterfly species that live in and visit this site.