

## FRYENT COUNTRY PARK AND BEANE HILL BUTTERFLY SUMMARY 2015

Two butterfly transects are walked at Fryent Country Park. These enable changes in the presence and abundance of butterfly species to be monitored. The data is compared from one year to another and can be analysed to look at changes for particular habitats of the Country Park. The results also contribute to London-wide and national indices for species that are published annually. Results for the most recent years, including 2015, are available on the UKBMS website.

Sixteen species were recorded on each of the Fryent Country Park and Beane Hill transects in 2015. These were the Small/Essex Skippers (both possibly present but not differentiated when in flight), Small Skipper (separately identified on the Fryent Country Park transect), Large Skipper, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Orange Tip, Common Blue, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper (also known as the Hedge Brown) and the Meadow Brown.

Two further species were identified away elsewhere in the Park: the Small Copper at Masons Field and a Ringlet at Hill Farm.

Beane Hill has a network of paths and glades through woodland habitats. Speckled Wood, a relatively shade-tolerant species was more common here; as was the Comma (a woodland-edge and hedgerow species) and the Holly Blue whose larval food-plants include Holly and Ivy.

The Brimstone was recorded in the highest numbers of any year to date, on both transects. It was however more frequent on the Beane Hill transect, probably reflecting the higher density and longer established Alder Buckthorn trees. This is one of the two larval food-plants on which the Brimstone lays eggs. Prior to the planting of the Alder Buckthorns, there had been no records of the Brimstone from the Country Park – and almost no records from the Brent area.

The Small Skipper (and Essex Skipper?) had a relatively good year compared with recent years, as did the Holly Blue, and the Small Tortoiseshell which appears to continue to recover following a dramatic decline in south-east England earlier this century.

The Gatekeeper was recorded in the highest numbers to date on both the Fryent Country Park and the Beane Hill transect. Meadow Browns however declined compared with 2014; this could possibly be a result of problems with the hay meadow management during recent years and the lack of a harvest in 2014.

During 2015 efforts were made to improve the hay meadow management. The hay was harvested and an aftermath cut and harvest of haylage was also achieved. In future years it should now be possible to start the harvest earlier in the season, thus reducing the risk of missed harvests. An earlier cut would also benefit the finer-leaved grasses used as the larval food-plants by the Meadow Brown.

Several projects that Barn Hill Conservation Group are currently working on could improve habitat for butterflies. Scalping of hedgerows should provide shelter; and food-plants for both the larval stages and nectar for adult butterflies. Hedge-laying at Bush Farm Orchard and restoration of acid grassland on Barn Hill, provide opportunities for herbaceous and grassland plants. Increasing the area of the draw-down zone on ponds could provide habitat for the Orange Tip. Planting of Alder Buckthorns will benefit the Brimstone. And improving the diversity of trees in hedgerows could potentially benefit Hairstreaks and several other species.

With thanks to the team of transect walkers: Simon Mercer, Michael Berthoud, Carol Parker and Leslie Williams. Additional records were made by David McClements at Bush Farm Orchard; and by John Barrington who recorded a Ringlet.

Briefing can be provided for anyone you would like to participate.

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