

Howardian Butterflies 2011

With one exception, 2011 turned out to be a good year for butterflies on the Howardian. The following all increased compared with 2010:

The Gatekeeper and Meadow Brown numbers were up quite substantially.

The **Gatekeeper** was out over more weeks, up from 5 weeks to 7, the greatest number seen on one visit up from 12 to 21, and the total number seen up from 30 to 49.

Meadow Browns were about later this year but for the same number of weeks. The greatest number seen on one visit was up from 3 to 18 and the total number recorded up from 13 to 68. (The late hay cut helped)

The **Speckled Wood** was out and about up from 22 weeks to 24; the greatest number seen on one visit was up from 8 to 11, and the total recorded up from 82 to 144.

The **Brimstone** was out and about up from 3 weeks to 6 (including August) and the total number recorded rose from 5 to 8.

The **Red Admiral** was out more often, up from 3 weeks to 9 weeks, and the total number recorded was up from 4 to 11.

The only butterfly whose numbers dropped dramatically was the **Common Blue**. It was recorded during 8 weeks, up from 7 weeks last year, but the greatest number seen at one time dropped from 28 in 2010 down to 4 this year and the total recorded went down from 75 to 15. Apparently Common Blue numbers do fluctuate.

These results are in line with **Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count** for 2011. They reported Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral and Large Skipper as all doing comparatively well. Among the widespread butterflies they said all the blues and whites did badly, particularly the Common Blue. They reported an average drop of 11% in the number of individuals seen per count.

On the Howardian the total number of butterflies recorded was up from 433 to 516. The difference might be due to the Big Butterfly Count taking place in poor weather in July while Howardian numbers were up in the good weather in April/May and then again in August, either side of the 'Count'. The Howardian is a lovely place to be on a warm sunny day at these times!

Michele Wood, October 23rd, 2011