

Comparison of Butterfly Counts on Merbach Common in 2011 and 2012

Species:	2011 Count:	2012 Count:	Increase or Decrease:
Small Skipper	2	2	0
Large Skipper	1	0	-1
Large White	8	3	-5
Small White	10	14	+4
Green –Veined White	46	12	-34
Orange Tip	7	3	-4
Green Hairstreak	0	1	+1
Small Copper	4	0	-4
Common Blue	10	1	-9
Holly Blue	2	0	-2
Red Admiral	13	2	-11
Painted Lady	1	0	-1
Small Tortoiseshell	46	3	-43
Peacock	56	43	-13
Comma	1	0	-1
Speckled Wood	98	40	-58
Wall	10	4	-6
Gatekeeper	73	63	-10
Meadow Brown	36	100	+64
Ringlet	82	85	+3
Small Heath	98	59	-39
Total	604	435	

Notes: The poor butterfly year was clearly noted by the casual observer and our figures would at first glance appear to show that the population of butterflies has dropped considerably. However, it may be noted that only 19 walks were undertaken in 2012 compared with the full complement of 26 in 2011, one would therefore expect a somewhat lower number in 2012. Considering individual species the Red admiral was particularly reduced; in most years this species is greatly increased by immigration from the continent, this is the outcome of overcrowding in good years encouraging an exodus across the channel. This year the weather on the continent has been much less favourable than usual and it seems that the late summer invasion has not occurred. The Meadow Brown has done very well by contrast, and since it doesn't fly till quite late in the season didn't suffer from the dearth of flowers in the early season and probably benefited from the rain during the growing season of the caterpillars, which are grass feeders. One particularly interesting first was the sighting of a green hairstreak by Philip Bauer on the 12th May (confirmed by Ray Harberd). This beautiful little butterfly is not uncommon, but is somewhat elusive, and lives in small colonies, we hope that we see more of them in future years.