

Merbach Common Butterfly Transect Walks – 2007

The butterfly recording period lasts from 1st April to 29th September divided into 26 weeks. This year five volunteers were involved:

Philip Bauer, Ray Harberd, Alan Maddison and Sarah & Dave Morgan
Sometimes all five were involved but there was an average of three persons involved on each transect walk on the twenty weeks in which a walk took place, an estimated total of 120 hours volunteer work. Unfortunately six weeks were not possible due to continued bad weather in which butterflies were not flying.

The year started well with warmer than average weather, but rapidly degenerated into cooler very wet conditions not at all conducive to large butterfly populations. Early in the spring a fire devastated much of the common in the area of the transect, which obviously had bad effects on butterfly populations particularly grass feeding butterflies that would have been in the larval state at this time of year.

It had been estimated that there are 37 species of butterfly that could possibly be seen on the common, however some of these are very unlikely particularly as the common is at a fairly high altitude, straddling the 300 metre contour and mostly very exposed. However, in spite of these conditions 252 butterflies of 18 species were seen during the transect walks (see Table below). Meadow Browns were the most numerous, followed by Gatekeepers. These two species occurred only in the second half of the period, as did Ringlets. Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks were relatively numerous and were present on and off from April to September, 2007.

This is our baseline survey, and it will be interesting to see how the populations and species change over the years as the measures to improve plant diversity on the common take effect over the coming years. Anyone interested in joining us should phone Ray Harberd on 01981 500020, no previous experience is necessary.

Butterfly Transect Walks – Merbach Common (East) 2007

Week 1 – April 1 to 7; Week 26 – September 23-29

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	Total	
Mean Temp. C°	14	15	15	15	19			16	16	20	19		16	21		20	16	16	21	19	20	21	19	18				
Mean Sun %	40	50	95	35	90			60	100	50	65		75	95		90	0	5	95	95	100	100	100	85				
Wind Speed (Beau.)	1	2	1	2	2			1	3	1	2		3	2		1	0	1	1	2	2	1	1	1				
Small Skipper																1			1									2
Brimstone					1																							1
Large White																			2			1						3
Small White														1		1			3	5		1						11
Green-Veined White								5																				5
Orange Tip			1																									1
Holly Blue																						1						1
Red Admiral									1							5	1											7
Painted Lady																		1		2	3							6
Small Tortoiseshell	1	4	1		1			1			2		1	1		3					3	1	8	3				30
Peacock		1			1			2		1							4	8	8	2	1	1		1				30
Comma																	1											1
Speckled Wood					1								1											1				3
Marbled White														1														1
Gatekeeper																				15	13	3	12	2	1			46
Meadow Brown													1	12		4	13	2	19	6	8	1	8	1				75
Ringlet														1		15	2		2	3								23
Small Heath								4	1		1																	6
Total	1	5	2	0	4			12	2	1	3		3	16		29	21	11	50	31	18	18	18	7			252	

No transect walk was undertaken in shaded weeks due to inclement weather – no butterflies flying.