

Chard Junction butterfly report 2014

The recording we do is aimed at producing counts of butterflies that are comparable from year to year, so that we can detect real trends rather than just variations in the amount of recording. Thus, we comment on total numbers, commonest and rarest species. In addition, changes from year to year and values for the current year compared to the average of all years indicate trends. They mostly reflect weather patterns, but may also reflect changes in management.

In 2014 the season started slowly at Chard Junction. The records by the half-way mark (week 13) only amounted to 16% of the final total. Then, as in 2013, things improved with the good weather and the final total was the second highest ever (1430), only being exceeded by the first year (2010) when 1581 butterflies were recorded. This is clearly much better than the last two years with 1121 (2013) and 789 (2012). Diversity remained at 22 species, although we did record the form *valezina* of the silver-washed fritillary for the first time. Absences were the clouded yellow, seen for the first time in 2013, and the green hairstreak. These were compensated for by the reappearance of the brown argus and holly blue, both of which have been seen only once before, in 2010 and 2011, respectively.



Ringlet showing the characteristic rings.

In 2014 the commonest species were: ringlet (265), gatekeeper (261), speckled wood (235), small skipper (151), common blue (150), and meadow brown (130). This is an improvement on in 2013 when only four species exceeded 100 records and only the ringlet 200 records. Species more than 50 % up on in 2013 were: small and large skipper, red admiral, small tortoiseshell, speckled wood and meadow brown. For the second year running the small skipper had its highest ever count, but this time more than doubling the previous high. Small tortoiseshell, peacock and speckled wood also had their highest ever counts.



Small skipper with typical position of the wings.

The rarest species were: small copper (1), holly blue (1), brimstone (2), large white (4) and comma (4). Dingy skipper, large and small whites were less than 50% of 2013's totals and the green-veined white and silver-washed fritillary were exactly half 2013's totals. This is not surprising as all three whites had their highest ever numbers in 2013.



Small coppers feeding on Sedum

Significant increases (greater than 50 %) over average numbers were recorded for red admiral, large skipper, small skipper, small tortoiseshell, speckled wood and meadow brown. In contrast, dingy skipper, large white and small copper were down significantly on both in 2013 and the average. Significant decreases (less than 50 %) compared with the average were also recorded for the orange tip and marbled white.

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