

2025 BUTTERFLY SURVEY REPORT

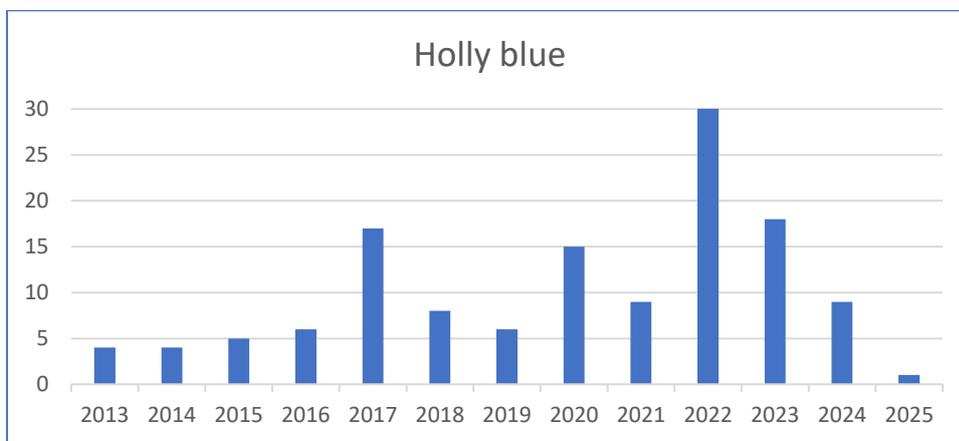
for Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common

This year saw a couple of new recruits to help with the survey work – Tom and Ali. Unfortunately, as it turned out, Tom found it difficult to find the time to do much, but Ali proved herself adept at spotting both Green Hairstreaks and Chalk Hill Blues!

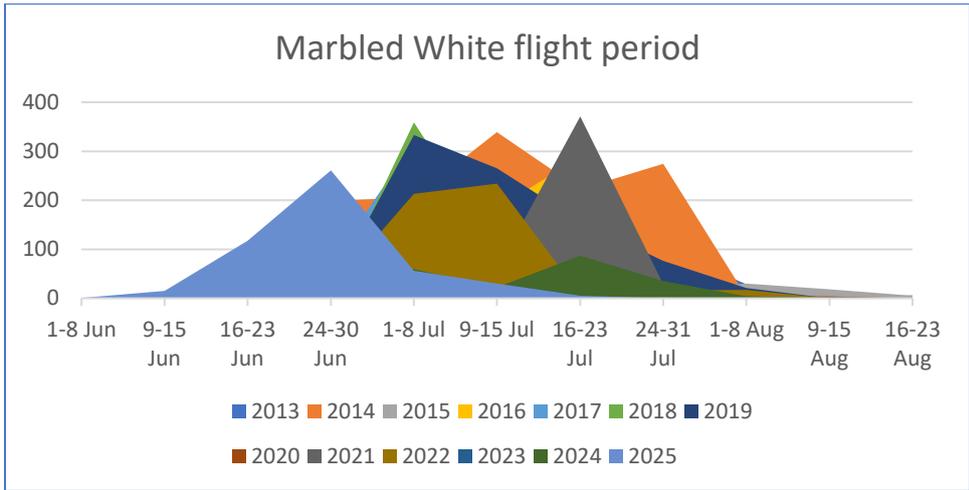
Fifty-three surveys were completed (varying from 7 to 18 in each section). This was up from the sixty-four completed in 2024, and resulted in a total of 3,516 butterflies counted (also up from the 2,121 in 2024), and consisting of 29 species. Given the far better summer weather in 2025, it came as no surprise that butterfly numbers rebounded from the dismal showing in 2024. However, that is not to say that it was an exceptional year when compared with the long-term average. All but three species were more abundant in 2025 than 2024, but only nine exceeded the ten-year average, this being the period from when the Hopkins fields were included in the survey.

For the first time, Small Copper were seen in double figures and clearly benefitted from the hot dry summer with the second generation in August doing particularly well. Indeed there seems to have been a third generation on some sites, as one was seen during a habitat work party on Longwood Common (Nottingham Hill) on 8th November. Other winners were Dingy Skipper, Large White, Speckled Wood and Gatekeeper.

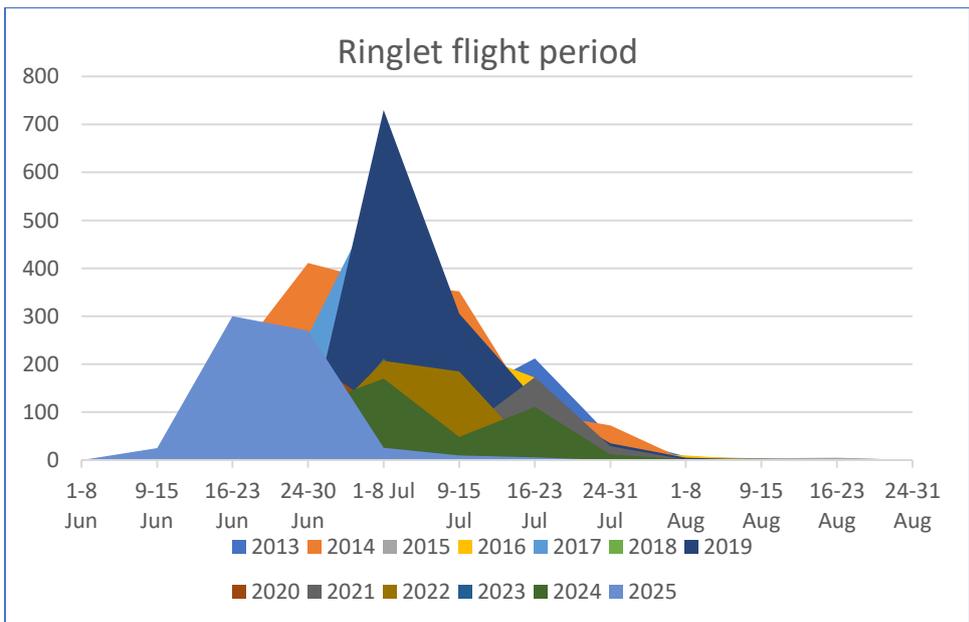
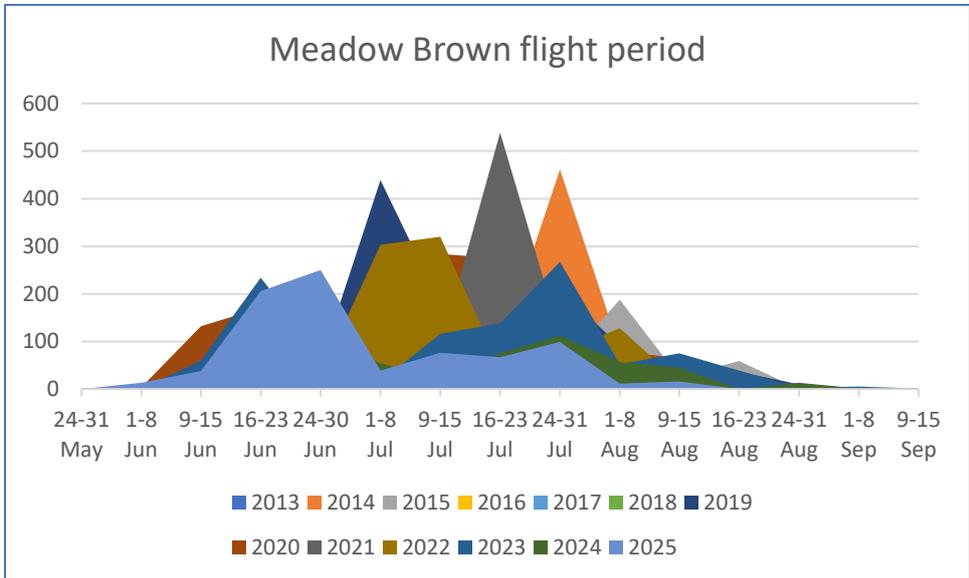
Small Tortoiseshell continues to be of concern with just 4 sighted (13 year average 78). Silver-washed (2) and Dark Green (10) Fritillaries both had a relatively poor showing, down from highs of 40 in 2019 and 50 in 2022 respectively. Holly Blue only showed itself once during the first generation flight period and none were seen later in the year. This reflects records from other sites and hopefully is just a result of its fairly regular periodic fluctuation in numbers due to parasitisation.



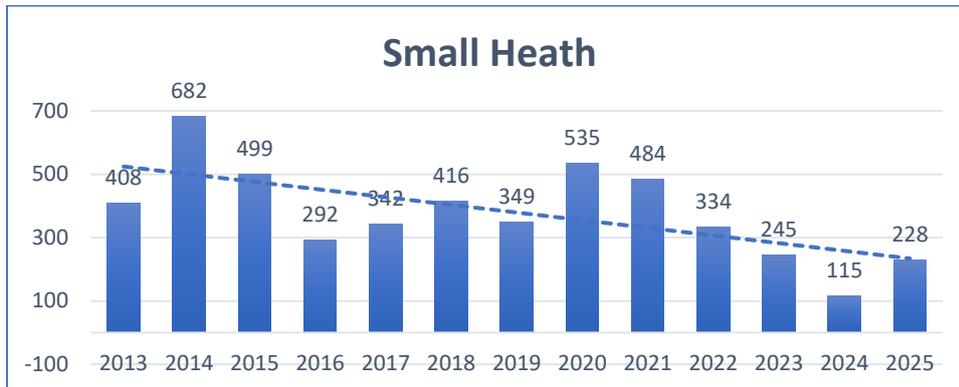
A few species emerged a week or so earlier than usual, but the main outcome of the hot weather was a more rapid decline in numbers of high summer butterflies. Marbled Whites are usually still on the wing until the second or third week in August but in 2025, none were recorded after the third week in July, and this butterfly had reached peak numbers well in advance of all other years.



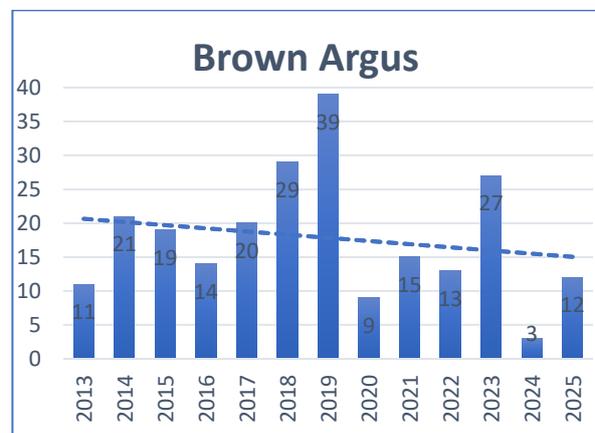
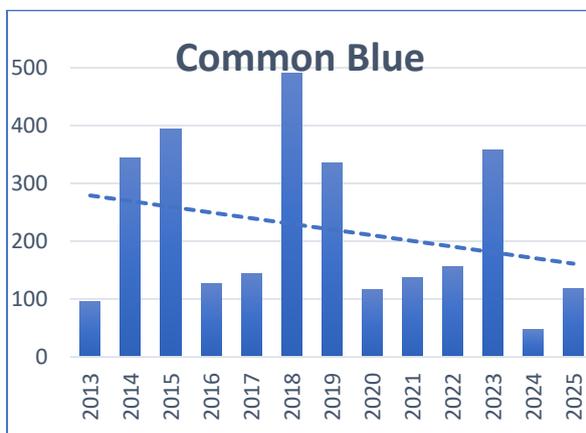
A similar trend was observed for Gatekeepers, Ringlets and Meadow Browns, all of which seemed to have shortened their flight periods by about 3 weeks.



Small Heath numbers were well below their average of 379 and still seem to be on a downward trajectory when looking at the trendline. This is concerning as on other Cotswold sites, the populations appear to be reasonably stable.

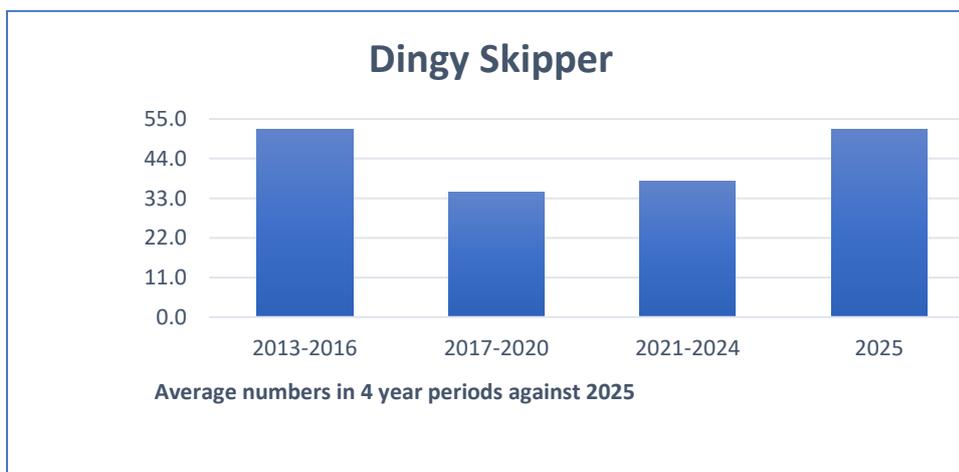


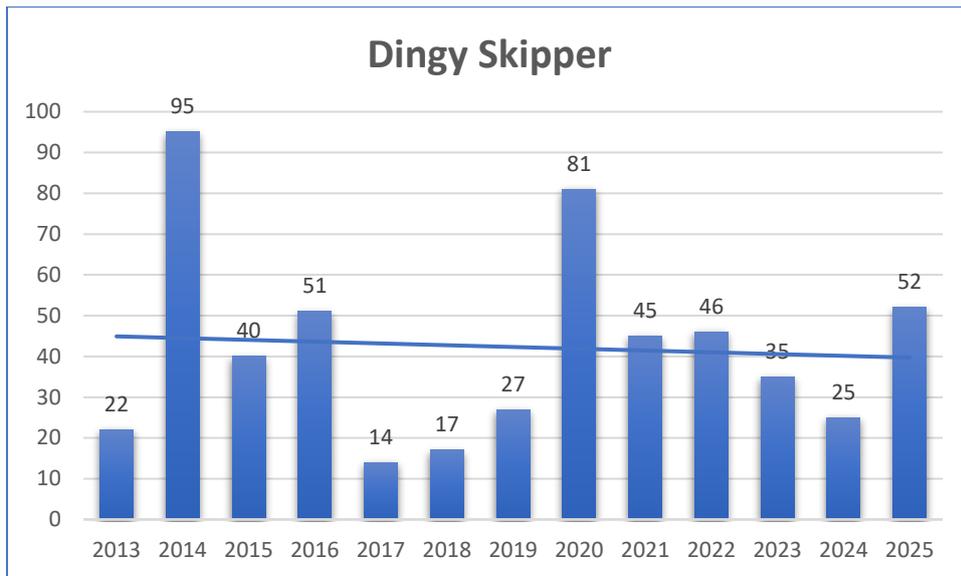
Last year I expressed concern in the decline of the Common Blue and Brown Argus. Whilst both fared better this year, the overall trend is still downwards



The Chalk Hill Blue is hanging on. So there is still hope that they will continue to survive on the slopes above Hartley Lane.

By contrast, Dingy Skipper, after a few poor years, are hopefully beginning to recover, both when looking at four-year averages and the year-by-year numbers when looking at the trendline.





Duke of Burgundy continue to be recorded in reasonable numbers on the lower slopes of Charlton Kings Common, though most are seen off the designated survey route and are therefore counted under a separate recording scheme. For the second year running, none were sighted in the Cowslip Meadow, despite habitat management work undertaken a couple of years ago aimed at linking this field to the main site.

Finally, I am grateful to the four principal surveyors, Peter Sands, Fiona Knee, Andrew Bishop who have continued to walk the hill to count the butterflies, as well as Ali White who joined their ranks this year. My thanks go to them all for their time and efforts.

If anyone else fancies having a perfect excuse for a walk in the sunshine, please do get in touch. Extra help is always useful and appreciated as I hope to continue to continue running this survey for the next couple of years at least.

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