

BUTTERFLY REPORT FOR 1999

(Medina Valley Centre Nature Reserve)

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The butterfly index for 1999 is given in figure 1, together with the previous years' records for comparison. The transect was walked in all of the 26 weeks of the recording season. Butterflies were seen on all but 3 of these walks, and in 21 of these weeks, the conditions were suitable for butterfly recording (ITE, 1981).

The 1999 season gave a total species count of 20, which is in line with that observed in recent years, although somewhat lower than last year. The absence of *clouded yellows*, *grizzled skippers*, *painted ladies*, and *small heaths* accounted for this. In fact, numbers were generally down with only three species showing a notable increase - the *common blue*, *small copper* and *wall brown*.

April was quite wet, and there were still a few frosty nights, but on the whole temperatures were above average. Only two species were recorded this month - the *small tortoiseshell* and *speckled wood*. May fared better with six species on the wing, although sunshine was still below average, and a wet June followed.

The beginning of July saw great improvements in the weather, causing many species to emerge and reach their peak populations rapidly. The highest number of different species seen on a transect walk was 13 on 23rd July and that day also gave the highest total number of butterflies recorded on a transect walk with 114 individuals. Although seen in large numbers, *meadow browns* and *gatekeepers* were well down on last year, as were *large whites*, *marbled whites*, *small whites*, *peacocks* and *red admirals*. The second week in August was cooler and cloudier when the skippers and most of the browns disappeared.

September produced higher temperatures and more sunshine than average, but also a well above average rainfall. Only six species were recorded but 47 individuals were seen, a considerable increase on last year. In particular, the numbers of *small coppers* were much higher with nearly 70% of their total seen during this month.

Overall, it was quite a disappointing year for butterflies, with the failure of the buddleia causing a slow start and variable weather, particularly in June, creating difficulties for many species.

Figure 1. Butterfly species list and sightings at Medina Valley Centre (SZ503909) for 1998 and 1999.

Species	1998	1999
Brown Argus	-	-
Brimstone	1	*
Clouded Yellow	2	-
Comma	8	7
Common Blue	11	20
Dingy Skipper	-	-
Gatekeeper	210	150
Green Hairstreak	*	-
Green-veined White	6	2
Grizzled Skipper	1	-
Holly Blue	14	3
Large Skipper	14	14
Large White	47	10
Marbled White	129	41
Meadow Brown	227	130
Orange Tip	1	2
Painted Lady	1	-
Peacock	17	2
Purple Hairstreak	1	1
Red Admiral	17	2
Ringlet	-	-
Silver-washed Fritillary	-	-
Small Copper	6	32
Small Heath	1	-
Small Skipper	36	12
Small Tortoiseshell	8	3
Small White	52	23
Speckled Wood	31	34
Wall Brown	1	8
Number of species recorded	25	20

* indicates that the species was seen during the year, but not during a transect walk.

- indicates that the species has been recorded on the reserve, but not seen this year.

Reference

Institute of Terrestrial Ecology 1981 *Butterfly Monitoring Scheme*