

BUTTERFLY REPORT FOR 2002

(Medina Valley Centre Nature Reserve)

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The butterfly index for 2002 is given in figure 1, together with the previous years' records for comparison. The transect was walked on all 29 weeks of the recording season. No butterflies were seen on 4 of the walks – on each occasion either the temperature or the percentage sunshine was too low.

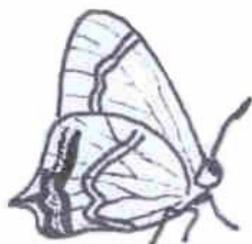
The 2002 season gave a total species count of 23, which is a slight increase on previous years, while the total number of individuals was 660 – again an increase on the last few years.

April was exceptionally mild and unusually sunny, accounting for some early sightings of *red admiral*, *peacock*, *speckled wood* and *holly blue*. Although mean temperatures in May and June were below average, there were still plenty of warm and sunny days. Many species were sighted a week or two earlier than last year, including *orange tip*, *large skipper* and *meadow brown*.

July and August had around average temperatures and slightly less than average sunshine hours, but almost every species saw an increase in numbers of individuals on last year's figures, most likely due to the continuing warm weather. There were more than twice as many sightings of *common blue*, *holly blue*, *large skipper* and *small tortoiseshell*. The only species that saw a significant decline from last year were the *small copper* (which had an exceptionally good 2001) and the *wall brown*, a species that appears to be declining nationally (Bowles, 2001).

Meadow browns were able to extend their season until the end of September, with the warm and sunny conditions continuing throughout the month.

The greatest number of individuals seen on one walk was 98 on 13th August, spread between a huge thirteen different species, not including two other species seen during this week.



There were some exciting sightings during the year, the most notable of which was a *white-letter hairstreak* – a new record for the MVC reserve. It put in an appearance on 25th July on the lawn below a line of young elms, and was seen again on 5th August on hemp agrimony in an unimproved grassland area. A *green hairstreak* was seen on 9th May on dyers greenweed in unimproved grassland and a *grizzled skipper* appeared in the same area on 8th and 12th June. Both these species have been seen on the reserve before but not for several years. *Clouded yellows* were also seen on the reserve on 29th July and 13th September.

In summary, this year saw an almost universal improvement on the previous three years due, at least in part, to the “kick start” given by the warm and sunny spring. Let us hope that the upward trend in numbers and species continues in 2003.

Figure 1. Butterfly species list and sightings at Medina Valley Centre (SZ503909) for 2001 and 2002.

Species	2001	2002
Brown Argus	-	-
Brimstone	*	-
Clouded Yellow	-	*
Comma	13	23
Common Blue	17	36
Dingy Skipper	-	-
Gatekeeper	163	178
Green Hairstreak	-	*
Green-veined White	1	3
Grizzled Skipper	-	*
Holly Blue	3	15
Large Skipper	14	40
Large White	23	30
Marbled White	23	32
Meadow Brown	120	138
Orange Tip	6	5
Painted Lady	3	3
Peacock	5	4
Purple Hairstreak	2	-
Red Admiral	7	16
Ringlet	-	-
Silver-washed Fritillary	-	-
Small Copper	44	16
Small Heath	-	-
Small Skipper	5	16
Small Tortoiseshell	2	15
Small White	60	65
Speckled Wood	8	23
Wall Brown	9	1
White Admiral	-	-
White-letter Hairstreak	-	1
Number of species recorded	21	23

* 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.

References:

- Institute of Terrestrial Ecology (1981) *Butterfly Monitoring Scheme*
 Bowles, N. (2001) Butterfly report in *British Wildlife*, Vol. 13.2