

Sapperton Wilder Butterfly Report 2025

The results are in! While the national results from the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme have not yet been released, Sapperton Wilder's are here. Just in time to get excited for the coming butterfly season.



Clouded Yellow at Sapperton, photo by Andrew Brown



Methods – What did we do?

For in depth methods, see the [butterfly report from 2024](#).

The sections were walked once a week for 26 weeks, from 1 April to end of September.

Table 1: Section Length (in meters) and land management

Section	Length (m)	Field(s)	Management
1	873	Beech, Kite	Wildflower margins, public footpath, grassy corners, herbal leys
2	647	Otter	Wild Bird Food
3	734	Newt	Full Wildflower
4	622	Oak	Fallow
5	998	Badger	Herbal ley with wildflower margin
6	1669	Bishops Walk, Butterfly, Hawthorn, Buzzard	Fallow, messy topping
7	1242	Fox	Herbal ley with wildflower margin
Total	6785		



Results – What did we find?

Highlights in Numbers - 2025

2

Number of Years in the Scheme

6.79

Kilometres walked each week

8

Number of people involved

26

Number of species recorded

1823

Highest Weekly Count (10 July)

7141

Highest species count (Meadow Brown)

11,749

Total butterfly records

In total, **26 species** were observed during the transects, with nearly **12,000 total records**. Compared to last year with 24 species and 6002 total records. All 26 weeks were viably counted.

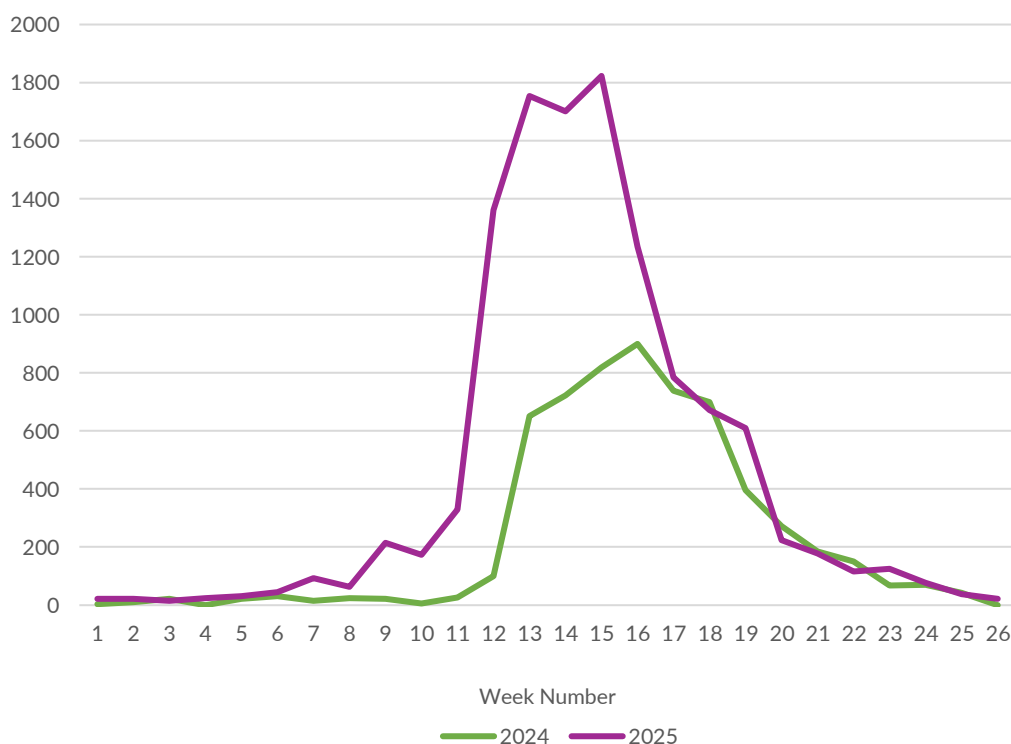
Winners: Common Blue, Brown Argus, Small Heath, Small Copper, Small & Large White

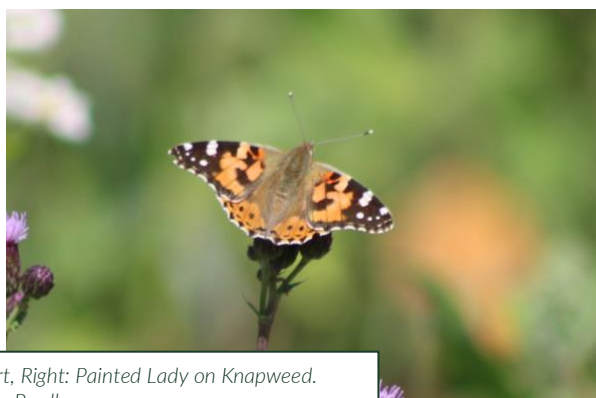
New Species: White-letter Hairstreak, Clouded Yellow

'Losers': Small Tortoiseshell, Orange Tip

Best Week: Week 15 with 1823, compared to last year's Week 16 with 900

Figure 1: Sapperton Wilder UKBMS Weekly Totals 2025





Left: White-letter Hairstreak on Ragwort, Right: Painted Lady on Knapweed.
Photos by Chenie Prudhomme

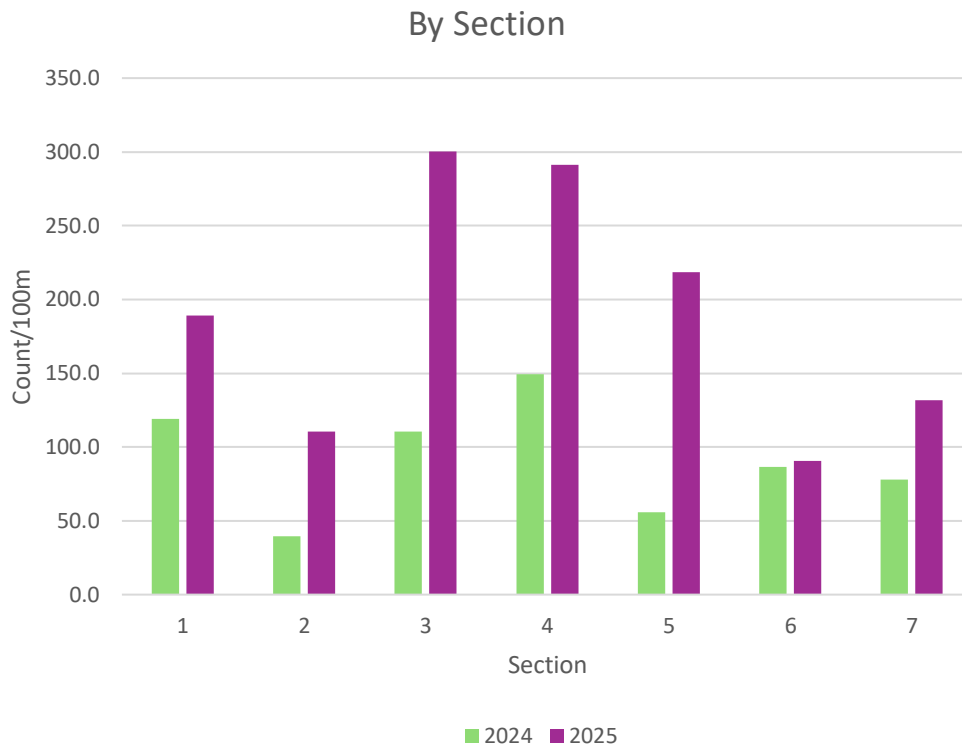
Table 2: Total records by species by year

Species	2024	2025	Trend
Brimstone	13	22	↑
Brown Argus	74	283	↑
Clouded Yellow	0	6	↑
Comma	3	18	↑
Common Blue	213	1041	↑
Dingy Skipper	9	15	↑
Gatekeeper	360	676	↑
Green-veined White	42	41	↓
Holly Blue	4	3	↓
Large Skipper	50	89	↑
Large White	55	304	↑
Marbled White	517	575	↑
Meadow Brown	3639	7141	↑
Orange Tip	37	24	↓
Painted Lady	17	11	↓
Peacock	37	93	↑
Red Admiral	37	29	↓
Ringlet	376	353	↓
Small Tortoiseshell	2	4	↑
Small/Essex Skipper	417	438	↑
Silver-washed Fritillary	3	8	↑
Small Copper	3	52	↑
Small Heath	9	162	↑
Small White	73	347	↑
Speckled Wood	12	14	↑
White-letter Hairstreak	0	2	↑



By Section

As sections were different lengths (Table 1), butterfly counts needed to be standardised by distance to be able to compare them.



Single Species Count – Marbled Whites

A total of 595 marbled whites were recorded by volunteers over 7 weeks, compared to 294 in 2024. Numbers peaked late June, much earlier than the peak in 2024. This earlier peak was likely due to a warm and dry Spring and early Summer, which saw these butterflies having a stable but very short season. Their larvae feed on fine grasses like Fescues and Cocksfoot.

Discussion – What does it mean?

Butterflies are particularly impacted by weather, as they need sunshine and dry weather to fly, feed, and find mates. The drought and heat of 2025 was likely the biggest contributor to the increase of abundance. Over 75% of species saw an increase in numbers in our surveys. The few species that saw a decline could have been because of the heat; they likely moved to shadier parts of the landscape and therefore weren't seen on our weekly walks. It is still



only the second year of monitoring, so it is difficult to draw early conclusions. We can only hope that our changes in land management are helping to support higher numbers and more species of butterflies.

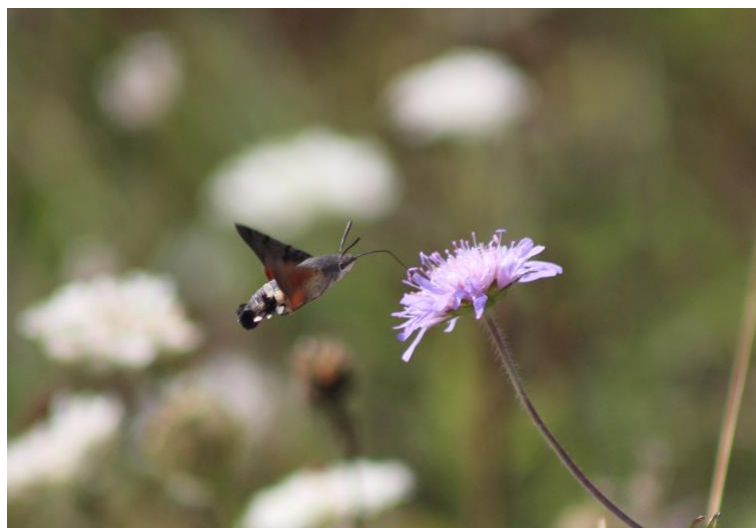
Two new species were observed in the transect this year – the **White-letter Hairstreak** and the **Clouded Yellow**. The White-letter Hairstreak typically flies around the tops of trees, particularly Elms which are their caterpillar's food plant (Butterfly Conservation). They will occasionally be seen down at ground level to nectar on flowers in the morning. In this case, 2 were seen feeding on Ragwort during an early started transect (to avoid the hottest part of the day).

Clouded Yellow were seen across the site in August and September. They are a migratory species, visiting from mainland Europe. Their caterpillar foodplants include clovers, lucerne and common bird's-foot-trefoil, so they were able to find plenty of these plants on site on which to lay their eggs.

Future species to watch for:

- ◇ Dark Green Fritillary – requires hairy violet
- ◇ Grizzled Skipper – requires wild strawberry and agrimony
- ◇ Chalkhill Blue – requires horseshoe vetch
- ◇ Small Blue = requires kidney vetch
- ◇ Green Hairstreak – requires common rock rose and common bird's-foot trefoil
- ◇ Brown Hairstreak – requires young blackthorn growth

A highlight was multiple sightings of the hummingbird hawk-moth on site, which are always a joy to see. The greater diversity of plant life will draw in a greater diversity of pollinators.



Hummingbird hawk-moth on a Scabious flower, photo by Chenie Prudhomme



Acknowledgements

A massive thank you to **Mark Taylor** for joining on all 26 weeks of transects! Your dedication, enthusiasm, and flexibility is so appreciated and looking forward to another season with you.

Also thank you to **Matthew Oates** for helping to interpret the year's data, advise on land management, look for Brown Hairstreak eggs and in general support of the project. Stay tuned on Purple Emperor updates: <https://apaturairis.blogspot.com/>

And a huge thank you to all of those who helped with transects and the single species counts:

Fergus Dignan

Frankie Shaw

Mally Findlater

Mick Peasey

Resources

UKBMS Methods

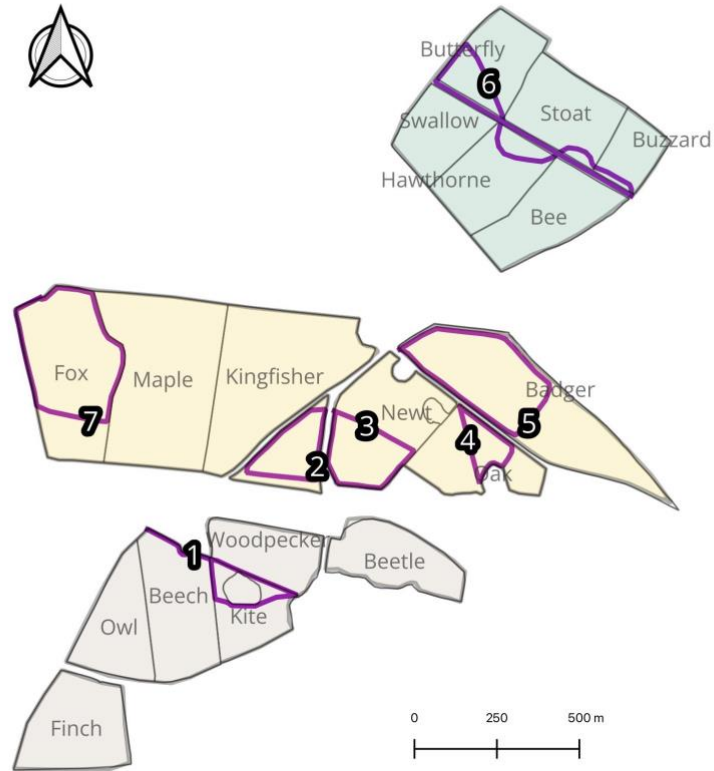
<https://ukbms.org/methods>

UK Butterflies

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/white-letter-hairstreak>



Appendix I: Map of Transect Sections



Legend

- Northern Block
- Middle Block
- Southern Block
- UKBMS Transects

