

Butterfly Transect Report to Holme Park Quarry LNR Management Committee – 13th October 2010

A new species was recorded, the Ringlet. It is quite common nationally, but was first recorded in South Cumbria within the last 3 years.

Very good weather during the High Brown flight period, late June and July, resulted in a count of 59, compared with the average since 2003 of 26. Previously the adults have fed mainly on thistles, but the flowering brambles were the main attraction this year. Very few brambles were to be found on the reserve in 2003, but they are now spreading vigorously and are an important source of nectar.

This was also a good year for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and exceptionally good for Grayling, two of the other priority species. Grayling were also seen feeding on brambles.

Large Skippers, which prefer the Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil, also had their best year.

In total, the 2010 count of 588 exceeded the previous best of 470 in 2006. Full details are shown on the Weekly and All Years record sheets.

Selective control of brambles and gorse on Bund East has helped to maintain plant diversity.

One High Brown Fritillary was seen in Bracken Clearing compartment, which was linked to the bund last year. Perhaps more will find their way there in future.

Very good numbers of butterflies were noted in the Bund West, which is outside the transect area.

A visit by the AONB Butterfly Group fortunately coincided with the emergence of the large fritillaries and Graylings, providing an impressive display.

Recommendations in keeping with Management Plan Objective 2 for the benefit of butterflies:

1. In Bund East continue to keep brambles, gorse and pine trees in check to reduce shading and encourage a range of flowering plants to develop.
2. In Bund West carry out selective cutting of scrub to increase the area available for flowering plants and butterflies; and make a ride to link with the existing transect.
3. Reduce cutting and bruising of bracken in areas that have been cut or bruised every year, to maintain a thin canopy of bracken which will encourage violets without allowing grasses to take over.

Reg Hesketh