

Butterfly Transect Report to Holme Park Quarry LNR Management Committee – 12th October 2011

Compared with last year the overall count for 2011 was poor, but last year was exceptional. This year was in fact better than average.

Small Pearl-bordered and Small Heath numbers were much higher than in previous years and the Meadow Brown count was also the highest recorded. Ringlet appeared again following last year's first sighting.

The most notable fall in numbers was the large fritillaries. High Brown and Dark Green combined slipped back almost to 2003 numbers. This was in keeping with reports from elsewhere in South Cumbria. It has been suggested that the poor weather during egg-laying last year was the reason, but I hope that BC will be able to offer an explanation. The weather in late June and early July this year was not too bad, and higher numbers would normally be expected for the recording conditions encountered.

Other species well above average in numbers were Grayling and Large Skipper.

Around average were Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Green-veined White, Comma, Common Blue, Peacock, Small Skipper, Orange-tip, Dingy Skipper and Small Copper.

Well below average were Small White and Large White.

Five species recorded previously, but not this year, were Wall, Painted Lady, Brimstone, Holly Blue and Gatekeeper.

In total, the 2011 count of 412 was the fourth highest out of nine years recording. Full details are shown on the Weekly and All Years record sheets.

Work carried out to control brambles and gorse on Bund West and to make 3 to 4 metre wide rides in the denser bracken should help to improve plant diversity. The latter will also increase the length of bracken "edge" which should benefit fritillaries in general.

A visit by members of the Holme and District Photographic Society introduced several local people to the reserve for the first time. Our 10th anniversary photo competition being judged for next weekend's exhibition in Burton Memorial Hall will also draw attention to the reserve.

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 continue annual cutting of scrub along the lower slope.
3. Review annually cutting and bruising of bracken in the denser areas to maintain a thin canopy of bracken with rides through it.

Reg Hesketh