

## **Butterfly Report for Holme Park Quarry LNR Management Committee 2014**

The overall count of 572 for 2014 was almost as high as last year, mainly due to even more Ringlets (258). Without them the count would again be below average, in spite of good weather from the start. Unsuitable conditions resulted in only 2 weeks without any records.

The sunny Spring attracted over 70 butterflies compared with 4 last year, in the first seven weeks. Most were Peacocks(45) which had their best year ever, conditions being favourable as they emerged from hibernation in the woods.

Of the five UKBAP priority species, the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary(13) again had the best count, but fewer than last year. High Brown(2) and Dark Green (6) fritillaries slipped back to the lowest numbers since the count began, in contrast with last year's recovery.

Other priority species are Grayling(3), which fell again for the fourth successive year, Dingy Skipper(2) and Wall(0).

Speckled Wood(98) increased to above average. Small Heath(25) and Small Skipper(7) had their highest ever counts. Also above average were Green-veined White (33), Brimstone (3) and Holly Blue (2).

Below average were Meadow Brown(53), Red Admiral(2), Small White(3), Large White(1), Comma(3), Common Blue(7) and Large Skipper(6).

Five other species recorded occasionally in the past, but not this year, were Painted Lady, Orange-tip, Gatekeeper and Small Copper. Small Tortoiseshell has recovered well in the countryside, but was not recorded here.

The mixed fortunes of our rarer butterflies makes it difficult to draw conclusions. However, the marked change of habitat on the bund is a factor. In a positive way it is providing good shelter from the North, but it is having negative effects too. Firstly, it is a barrier to the movement of butterflies. We no longer see them flying in and out of the quarry, through the fence. Secondly, it has shaded out most of the thistles and Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil. Large fritillaries were frequently seen feeding on thistles. Large Skippers and Common Blue were attracted by the Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil.

Part of this change in the habitat has been the spread of brambles. These are a good food source for several species including the fritillaries, but they also shade out other flowers and increase the density of the barrier.

On a positive note, the reserve remains a special place for butterflies, 20 of the 26 species again being recorded. Full details are shown on the Weekly Transect Records 2014 and All Years files attached.

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20th October 2014