HURSTPIERPOINT & SAYERS COMMON PARISH COUNCIL

Butterfly Survey Results 2025

Summer…. the sun is shining, the air is warm, birds are singing and bees are buzzing – a very evocative picture. And butterflies are an essential ingredient of summer. They are easy to see; their slow flight and bright colours make identifying them fairly straightforward; and they are a really useful indicator of how well nature is doing.

Over the past few years, volunteers have come together to monitor the numbers of butterflies seen in Hurst Meadows over a six-month period, from the beginning of April to the end of September. Walking along one of two pre-set routes (or transects) on a weekly basis, the volunteers record how many of each species of butterfly they see in each section, together with how warm it is, how much sunshine there is and how windy it is. This information not only tells us how well butterflies are doing locally but is also submitted to a UK-wide database, which has been monitoring butterfly numbers for the past 50 years. The data from the two Hurst Meadows transects (one covering Hovel Field, Edgerley and part of Fifteen Acres; the other covering Buckwilly, Bellows Nose and the other part of Fifteen Acres), together with over 2,500 transects across the country, provide a picture of the health of the nation's butterflies, and of nature itself.

2025 results

In 2024 (the fifth worst on record nationally), the number of butterflies dropped by almost 30% from 2,904 in 2023 to 2,079. In 2025, the count was **2,904**, only about 5% down on the 2023 figure. The better Spring weather helped, it was both warmer and dryer, and less windy. But after a good first half of the season, where the 2023 overall figure was on target, the ongoing drought affected the numbers and there was a marked tail-off.

Once again, the top two butterflies seen in Hurst Meadows were the **Meadow Brown** and the **Gatekeeper**, both traditional meadow and grassland species. These two butterflies dominate, accounting for nearly three-quarters of the overall numbers in both 2023 and in 2024, but the declining numbers of Meadow Browns, meant that in 2025, they only represented two-thirds of the total.

TOP 16 BUTTERFLIES - 2023-2025					
BUTTERFLY	2025	+/-	2024	+/-	2023
Meadow brown	925	-9%	1,012	-30%	1,438
Gatekeeper	847	65%	512	-17%	619
Small / Essex skipper	151	42%	106	-62%	281
Marbled white	188	79%	105	-1%	106
Small white	169	397%	34	-39%	56
Common blue	159	489%	27	-51%	55
Small heath	67	-15%	79	-7%	85
Speckled wood	68	13%	60	-17%	72
Large skipper	23	-30%	33	-33%	49
Large white	48	140%	20	-13%	23
Ringlet	17	-66%	50	1567%	3
Red admiral	11	-15%	13	-64%	36

Small copper	25	733%	3	-80%	15
Peacock	8	0%	8	-20%	10
Comma	14	133%	6	100%	3
Holly blue	1	-50%	2	-89%	18
(Other)	29	222%	9	-74%	35
TOTAL	**2,750**	32%	**2,079**	-28%	**2,904**

Meadow Brown

Credits: Pete Withers
Butterfly Conservation

Gatekeeper

Andrew Cooper
Butterfly Conservation

Small Skipper

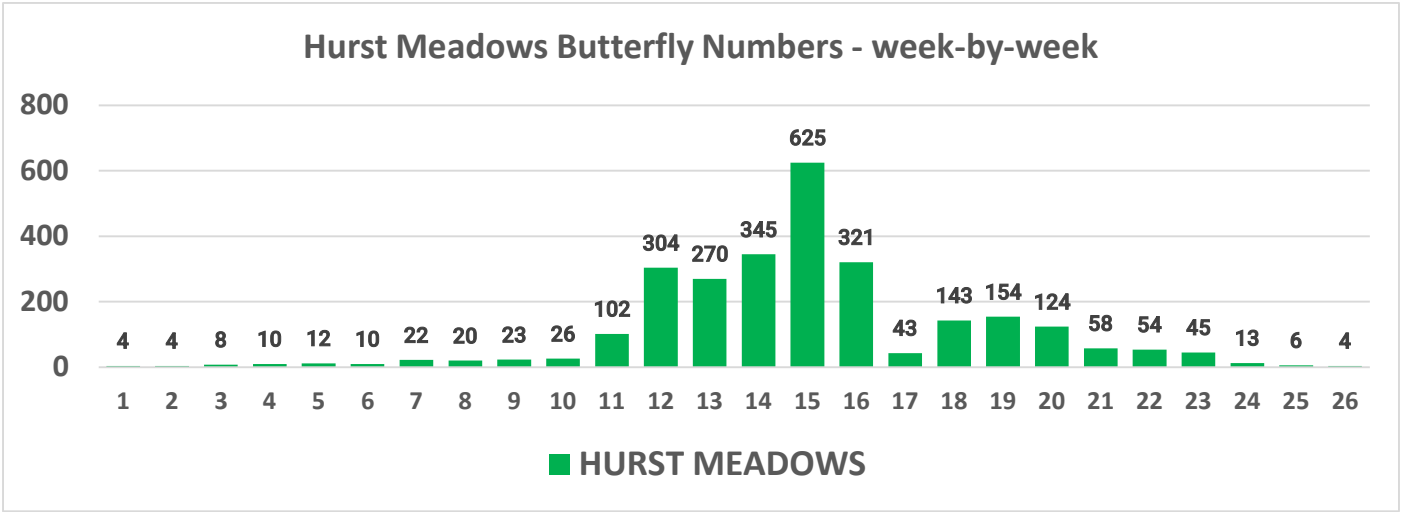
Andrew Cooper
Butterfly Conservation

Marbled White

Iain H Leach
Butterfly Conservation

The butterfly season is relatively short, from early June to the end of August, when over 90% of the total are seen, with the majority on the wing during a four-week period, from mid-June to mid-July. But there are certain species that make either early appearances, such as the **Orange Tip** (in April and early May), or are quite late, like the **Brown Hairstreak** (August). Others, have two broods, such as the **Small Heath**, one in the spring and one in the summer. And some can be seen at any time during the 26-week recording period (**Brimstone** and **Speckled Wood**).

On average, each year, just under half of the 59 resident and regular migrants, are seen in Hurst Meadows. Many of those that are not found have a very restricted range within the UK, or do not find the habitat suitable – there are quite a number that only colonise chalk grassland, woodlands or heathlands. Some, which formerly were quite common, have been forced into more northern and western extremities by climate change. But the opposite may take place over the next few years as, with warmer conditions expected, some continental European species, such as the **Long-tailed blue** and **Swallowtail**, will cross the English Channel, so should start turning up in future counts.



Week number (week beginning)

01-Apr	08-Apr	15-Apr	22-Apr	29-Apr	06-May	13-May	20-May	27-May	03-Jun	10-Jun	17-Jun	24-Jun	01-Jul	08-Jul	15-Jul	22-Jul	29-Jul	05-Aug	12-Aug	19-Aug	26-Aug	02-Sep	09-Sep	16-Sep	23-Sep
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**

The April period is covered by weeks 1-5 approximately, May by weeks 6-9, June by weeks 10-13, July by weeks 14-18, August by weeks 19-22, and September by weeks 23-26

During the peak week (15), beginning 8th July, 429 individual **Gatekeeper** butterflies were counted.

The counts during Week 17 were affected by poor weather; this depressed an expected figure by 150 – 200 individual butterflies.

If you would like to help monitor butterflies in Hurst Meadows, please email the Parish Office. Full training in identification and recording will be given.