

The 2023 NFBTG Season

2023 was a record year in terms of overall numbers recorded. 68,948 exceeded the 67,567 recorded in 2019, although the density was higher in 2019 as less transects were walked. This represents a 40% increase over 2022. Much of the increase is down to a very warm dry June which resulted in large numbers of summer browns. It also meant that less common summer species such as White Admiral had a spectacular year. We also recorded our first Purple Emperors since 2002. Record numbers of Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper made up nearly 50% of the total and both Small/Essex and Large Skippers had record years. Brimstone, Peacock did well in spite of a cool spring. and Brown Argus and Small Copper also thrived after a poor 2022. Red Admiral were the most common butterfly of from September onwards. On the down side Small Tortoiseshell, Common Blue and Grayling had poor years partly due to a cool wet late summer. Most surprising was that Ringlet were 36% down on average and we barely recorded 50% of the 2022 total.

All but two of our transects showed an increase over 2022. Cloven Hill (actually in Wiltshire) was also down but this was not walked for half of the year due to pylon works. A number of transects doubled their 2022 count. Badminton, Broadley, Brockishill, Fields Heath, Great Linford and Vales Moor being the main ones. In general this was attributable to the abundance of Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and Holly Blue, however Vales Moor was in a large part due to a welcome recovery in Silver-studded Blue and in Broadley Ringlet bucked the trend by more than doubling their 2022 total. Broomy Plain and Dur Hill figures also doubled their total count but the figures are skewed as surveys are impacted by restrictions for ground-nesting birds.