



**Chasewater Wildlife Group**

# **Chasewater's Butterflies**



**2003**

### 2003 Records

	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N
Small Skipper				X	X	X			
Large Skipper				X	X	X			
Dingy Skipper			X						
Clouded Yellow						1		1	
Brimstone		1							
Large White			X	X	X	X	X	X	
Small White			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Green-veined White			X	X	X	X	X	X	
Orange Tip			X	X	X				
Green Hairstreak		4	X	X	X				
Purple Hairstreak						5	2		
Small Copper									
Common Blue				4	50	X		10	
Holly Blue		1	1						
Red Admiral						2	1	X	2
Painted Lady			1		8	1		6	3
Small Tortoiseshell				X	X	10	X	X	5
Peacock		X	X	X	X			X	
Comma						1			
Speckled Wood		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Wall Brown									
Gatekeeper						X	X	X	X
Meadow Brown					6	X	X	X	X
Small Heath					X	X	X	X	
Ringlet						X			

The butterfly populations have shown themselves to be quite dynamic in recent years; partly because of habitat changes but also reflecting more regional and less easily understood fluctuations.

#### **Small Skipper** *Thymelicus sylvestris*

*A common butterfly of the grassland areas, the principal food-plant being Yorkshire Fog (Holcus lanatus). The main flight period is during July and early August.*

#### **Large Skipper** *Ochlodes venata*

*Usually first seen slightly before the Small Skipper but in similar grassy habitats. Few are left by early August.*

#### **Dingy Skipper** *Erynnis tages*

*One of the area's specialities but much of its favoured habitat of trefoil covered pit waste has been lost in recent years. Best looked for in late May and June where areas of birds-foot trefoil still survive.*

On May 28<sup>th</sup> one was at the north end of the Raceway Heath and one at Cotton Bog on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Clouded Yellow** *Colias croceus*

*Several were seen in August 1983, when there was a large immigration from southern Europe. Since then there was one in August 1994. In 1996 there was one on June 15<sup>th</sup> and up to three in August. In 1998, a female of the white form 'helice' was seen on July 28<sup>th</sup> and singles were noted on September 1<sup>st</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. In 2000 there was one on June 17<sup>th</sup> and up to two in September.*

One was at Cuckoo Bank in early August and one on the south shore on October 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Brimstone** *Gonepteryx rhamni*

*A relative newcomer, Chasewater's first record was in August 1992. The larval food plants are the two buckthorns, both of which are very scarce in the area. However having come out of hibernation, individuals will travel long distances in search of buckthorn and the following summer brood roam through the countryside before hibernating.*

One was noted on April 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Large White** *Pieris brassicae*

*Usually seen from May to early October but no real assessment of its abundance has been made.*

**Small White** *Pieris rapae*

*Another rather neglected species that occurs from mid April to early October.*

**Green-veined White** *Pieris napi*

*Usually seen from mid April to mid September but the second brood is often overlooked due to its more subdued markings on the underwings.*

**Orange Tip** *Anthocharis cardamines*

*Present from mid April to the end of June in the damper areas where the larval food plant, Lady's Smock (*Cardamine pratensis*) occurs.*

**Green Hairstreak** *Callophrys rubi*

*A heathland speciality that appears to have at least two discrete colonies at Chasewater. It is best looked for in May and June but it can emerge as early as mid-April.*

First recorded in the Anglesey Basin on April 15<sup>th</sup> but there were no records after mid-June.

**Purple Hairstreak** *Quercusia quercus*

*Another recent coloniser of our local oak woodlands. First recorded in 1993, when two or three were found in Jacks Wood and many others were seen in the Brownhills area. Not recorded regularly in recent years.*

*Up to five in Jack's Wood on July 8<sup>th</sup> was the first record since August 1998.*

**Small Copper** *Lycaena phlaeas*

*Usually seen in ones and twos from June to September.*

No records this year.

**Common Blue** *Polyommatus icarus*

*Scarcer than it used to be but still a feature of the trefoil covered pit waste areas. It is unlikely that the count of 1321 on June 10<sup>th</sup> 1984 will ever be surpassed.*

Good numbers present in June.

**Holly Blue** *Celastrina argiolus*

*First recorded at Chasewater in August 1990, with further sightings in most years since.*

One was noted on April 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Red Admiral** *Vanessa atalanta*

*A migrant species usually recorded between July and October in variable numbers.*

Two noted on June 22<sup>nd</sup> followed by numerous sightings to the end of October.

**Painted Lady** *Cynthia cardui*

*Another migrant, sometimes seen in June but mainly during August and September. Huge numbers were recorded in 1996.*

One flew east along the canal on April 16<sup>th</sup>. Eight counted on June 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Small Tortoiseshell** *Aglais urticae*

*This and the Peacock depend upon there being areas of the larval foodplant, Stinging Nettle (Urtica dioica). The adults will feed from a range of, usually pink or purple, flowers including thistles and Water Mint (Mentha aquatica).*

Several present in mid June.

**Peacock** *Inachis io*

*Like the Small Tortoiseshell this is a hibernating species and therefore can sometimes be seen on the wing on mild days in winter. Over 300 were below the dam on August 17<sup>th</sup> 1996.*

Less common this year.

**Comma** *Polygonia c-album*

*Less common than the previous two species.*

One near the Rugby Club on June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Speckled Wood** *Pararge aegeria*

*It is hard to believe that this species has only recently colonised the local area. It is now a common sight in wooded areas from late April to early October.*

**Wall Brown** *Lasiommata megera*

*In contrast to many other species it appears that the Wall Brown is in decline, although it is still frequently seen between May and September.*

No records this year.

**Gatekeeper** *Pyronia tithonus*

*First recorded at Chasewater in August 1992 but has become widespread and can be the most abundant butterfly from mid-July to the end of August.*

**Meadow Brown** *Maniola jurtina*

*This species can be abundant during July and August over the grassland areas. It spends most of its life as a caterpillar which hibernates through the winter.*

First noted on June 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Small Heath** *Coenonympha pamphilus*

*A common grassland and heathland species most abundant from June to mid-September.*

**Ringlet** *Aphantopus hyperantus*

*First recorded in July 1998, a strong colony has grown to the north-west of Fly Pool.*

The main colony probably needs management since it is becoming increasingly overgrown with hawthorn which also threatens a strong colony of Adder's-tongue Fern. One was below the dam on July 9<sup>th</sup> and two were just south of the A5, on Brownhills Common, on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

## National Population Trends

Warren *et al* (1997) list 37 butterflies that have declined in range nationally between the two periods 1940-1969 & 1970-1982.

**Table 1: % declines in national range of threatened butterflies**

<i>Species</i>	<i>% decline in U.K. range</i>
<b>Dingy Skipper</b> <i>Erynnis tages</i>	26%
<b>Grizzled Skipper</b> <i>Pyrgus malvae</i>	31%
<b>Green Hairstreak</b> <i>Callophrys rubi</i>	25%
<b>Brown Hairstreak</b> <i>Thecla betulae</i>	31%
<b>White-letter Hairstreak</b> <i>Satyrrium w-album</i>	22%
<b>Small Blue</b> <i>Cupido minimus</i>	25%
<b>Brown Argus</b> <i>Aricia agestis</i>	27%
<b>Chalkhill Blue</b> <i>Lysandra corydon</i>	17%
<b>Duke of Burgundy</b> <i>Hamearis lucina</i>	26%
<b>White Admiral</b> <i>Limenitis camilla</i>	34%
<b>Purple Emperor</b> <i>Apatura iris</i>	38%
<b>Pearl-bordered Fritillary</b> <i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>	38%
<b>Dark Green Fritillary</b> <i>Argynnis aglaja</i>	29%
<b>Silver-washed Fritillary</b> <i>Argynnis paphia</i>	30%
<b>Marbled White</b> <i>Melanargia galathea</i>	20%

Since the above data are based on a survey of British butterflies completed in 1982 (Heath *et al* 1984) they are obviously dated. Some species have continued to decline at these alarming rates, others' decline appears to have been arrested, and some have recently expanded their range.

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