

Wyre Forest Butterfly Group 2013

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Some of the areas where butterfly survey and monitoring work was carried in 2013 are as follows:

Postensplain

On 6 sites where the highlights were - good counts of Pearl-bordered Fritillary at long established and at new sites (e.g. 45 at Roxel and 16 at Blackgraves Copse), the presence of Grizzled Skipper on at least two sites (e.g. Roxel Boundary), and signs of Wood White extending out of their core area. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Silver-washed Fritillary and Essex Skipper were also recorded on the Powerline but the biggest surprise here was 6 Marbled White which have not been recorded in this part of the forest before.



Longdon

On 14 sites where the highlights were - good counts of Pearl-bordered Fritillary at long established sites (e.g. 26 at Longdon Orchard) and in areas of coppice (the maximum being 58 on one site). It was also very encouraging to receive the first Grizzled Skipper records on the Pipeline for several years (2 seen).

Chamberline

On 5 sites in the Withybed Wood area where Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were in both the recently felled areas as well as along the wide rides which are obviously acting as effective corridors (maximum count of 38 along one of these rides).

Wimperhill and Brand Wood

On 4 sites which form another key area for Pearl-bordered Fritillary with a maximum count of 32 (at Brand Wood). This is also an important area for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (with 15 being recorded on one site) with Dingy Skipper currently appearing to be fairly widespread both here and in the Longdon area (at least 6 site records in 2013).

New Parks

An area where Pearl-bordered Fritillary appears to have been spreading north over the past 2-3 years and where it is mainly occupying small regen coupes (records from

11 of these sites since 2012). The Railway Line continues to be a key area (Pearl-bordered Fritillary count on the Forestry Commission section was 38) and the meadows are important areas for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (15 recorded on the Great Bog) and Chimney Sweeper moths (13 recorded at Park House).

In addition to the recording in these specific areas, sites were monitored at Cleobury Wood, Cleobury Coppice and Lem Hill, and Cleobury Golf Course was included in the monitoring programme for the first time. More distant sites recently colonized by the Pearl-bordered Fritillary (at Huntsfield and Ribbesford) were revisited but sadly this butterfly was only recorded on one of these 3 sites in 2013 - Ribbesford.

There were also counts undertaken on 9 meadows around Lodge Hill Farm on 3 occasions. The huge significance of these meadows for fritillary butterflies became very clear in 2013. In May, 28 Pearl-bordered Fritillary were recorded in the meadows, in June, 47 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, and finally in July, 32 Dark Green Fritillary and 91 Silver-washed Fritillary. This is the first time that Dark Green Fritillary has clearly been identified in the Wyre Forest for some time and therefore it will be really interesting to see what happens to this butterfly over the next few years.

In addition to the survey and monitoring described above, four Wyre Forest transects continued to be undertaken. This again involves huge volunteer effort with the Wyre Forest East, Wyre Forest West and Pound Green Coppice transects all receiving 26 monitoring visits between 1st April and 30th September. The Hurst Coppice transect is mainly targeted at monitoring Wood Whites but has also highlighted the importance of this part of the Forest for fritillaries, Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak.

This level of monitoring could not have been achieved without the support of the 32 volunteers involved in this programme during 2013. Their efforts are certainly helping us to increase our knowledge of the abundance and distribution of a much wider range of butterflies in the Forest. The final results are not yet fully complete but the total number of survey and monitoring visits for the year is already above 160 and may well reach 170 which would be a new record. We are always keen to hear from further volunteers who are interested in becoming involved and full training can be given.

Co-ordinating this survey and monitoring work has been part of Butterfly Conservation's 'Reconnecting the Wyre' Project funded by SITA Trust with the West Midlands Branch playing a key role.