

FRYENT COUNTRY PARK AND BEANE HILL BUTTERFLY SUMMARY 2013

Transect results from the Fryent Country Park and Beane Hill transects have been inputted into the new online national UKBMS (UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme) database. Previous years' data are in the database, but will, I understand, be put online by UKBMS in the future, which should provide more opportunities for comparison.

Most of the typical species of the Country Park were present in higher numbers in 2013 than during 2012 – and on both transects. The Brimstone had one of their best years to date. Their population at the Park could improve in the future as more of the Alder Buckthorns grow and mature.

Small Tortoiseshell numbers increased, albeit to 1 on the Beane Hill transect – the highest count since 2009 to illustrate how uncommon this species had become. But a count of 8 on the main FCP transect is the best since 2004. Numbers appear to have increased at some other transects in London, though they are still low.

Meadow Browns, one of the few species to do moderately well in 2012, declined on the main transect in 2013, though increased at Beane Hill. That could be partly due to the difficulty harvesting the hay in 2012 which would have affected the survival of the young stages for the 2013 flight.

The one Marbled White was possibly flying through but the Park's habitat should be suitable for this species if it were to colonise (or recolonise).

While 2012 had exceptional weather patterns (the winter drought followed by the summer wet weather – to an extent not previously recorded by UK weather records); 2013 had some unusual patterns too, as noted in the Meteorological Office summary that Helga has received. Remember that the winter of 2012/2013 continued well into the spring: March was the coldest month of the winter – and probably of the year, while winter weather continued into April. March was the coldest since 1962. There was significant snow in many areas in late March. Conversely the summer, while not being in any way exceptionally hot, did follow below average summers in each of the years 2007 to 2012; and officially we even had a heat wave between 13-19 July – the most significant since 2006.

The storm of 28 October 2013, was only within the top ten autumn storms of the past 40 years. However, Fryent Country Park lost a number of mature trees – results will be available when the hedgerow survey is completed.

On the positive side, Barn Hill Conservation Group's work is encouraging a larger number of potential new standard trees in hedgerows; all but two of the hay meadows received good management in 2013; and there is progress on the hedgerows, woodlands, fruit trees and orchards, ponds, and the acid grassland.

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