

Country Notes for August 2019

If I am completely honest I was not optimistic that this summer would be very good for butterflies. Last year many butterflies found the food plants for their caterpillars dried up and I had worried that there might be a knock on effect this year. I still felt this until recently, when walking around our fields and meadows there seemed to be very few early summer butterflies. However in the last few weeks the meadows have become alive with meadow browns and ringlets - although it has to be said that I have still seen very few blue butterflies, apart from holly blues which appear much earlier. There are now quite a few small skippers around and I have seen lots of marbled whites, not only in their customary haunts on the chalk downs but also lower down on the Hollingbourne Meadows Trust - and even in my garden! There were certainly lots on the Hucking Estate. Marbled whites really are one of my favourite butterflies!

There have been reasonable numbers of peacocks and small tortoiseshells and just recently when the wind turned to the south, bringing hot weather for a few days, there were clear signs of a good migration of painted ladies coming up from southern Spain and North Africa.

The butterfly of the year so far however, has been the discovery of a white admiral in the home of a Hollingbourne resident. There was even photographic evidence! This prompted me to go on a search in our villages to see if I could find more. They favour woodland glades with trees on either side, dappled sunlight and brambles lower down. To my delight I found at least five of these illusive and quite rare butterflies. This was the first time I had ever seen them in our parishes and I am still excited about it! Bracken, my spaniel, was less excited as he could not work out why I kept stopping for long periods of time on what for him was just a lovely walk!

Hopefully August will bring more blue butterflies, together with lots of red admirals and even more painted ladies. Gatekeepers should also start to take over from meadow browns in our meadows.

I can't wait!

Andrew G Snowdon