

## Country Notes for June 2023

Despite the fact that so far, at the time of writing, it has been a fairly cold spring there have been a few sunny days and even on occasions some warmth in the sun. On these days there have been some butterflies around including small tortoiseshells and red admirals.

However, those most in evidence have been the orange tips and the yellow brimstones.

These always appear early in the year, laying their eggs and starting the new cycle again. I believe that we have seen reasonable numbers of these two species because they completed their life cycle before the intense heat of last summer.

What will be interesting to see is how many of the species which appear later, and therefore breed later, we see in their months of July and August. Species of particular concern are meadow browns and gatekeepers, whose numbers already seemed lower than usual last year and who not only had to contend with the heat but whose caterpillars feed on grass. In many cases the grass, by the time they bred, was brittle and dry and unsuitable as food for their offspring. These two species of brown butterfly are normally much in evidence in our meadows and fields. Numbers of marbled whites also seemed much lower last year, although their appearance was mainly prior to the real build up of heat. Their caterpillars, however, may well still have been affected. In the case of the marbled whites it would be all the worse as their numbers had seemed to be increasing in previous years in many localities in our villages, including the Hollingbourne Meadows Trust and the Hucking Estate.

I very much hope that my worst fears are not realised. We shall know in a few months time.

Andrew G Snowden