

Wadhurst Park (Batt's Wood and Rolf's Farm East) notes on the butterfly transects 2025.

Winter 2024/25 passed generally without any weather extremes. There were no hard frosts and no torrential rain. February was dry and cold with occasional light frost and persistent northwest winds. March began sunny and sun and cloud continued throughout the month, with some warm days. April temperatures then reached 23 degrees at times, and there was no rain through to mid-month. The end of the month saw regular temperatures into the mid to high 20s. May saw a north wind through to mid-month, with mostly cold mornings. The weather then moved into an extremely dry and very warm period into the summer months, with occasional heatwaves reaching the low 30s. This meant walking the summer transects a little earlier than usual, which should be taken into account when considering the results.

Batt's Wood Early – 10th May:

Although butterfly numbers remained low in Batt's Wood, there was a slight increase on last year's totals with 34 butterflies of seven species this year compared to 23 of 4 species in 2024. **Speckled wood** was probably in its lowest numbers since recording began with just 8 seen along the transects.

As in the wider countryside, **white sp.** showed an increase in the wood with a total of 24 compared to just three in 2024. Six of these were **orange tip**.

Late – 3rd July:

Skipper species were at an all-time low in Batt's Wood this year with just 22 individuals recorded. This is a worrying trend as there were only 39 in 2024. **Speckled wood** showed an increase on last year but still only numbered 11 in total. **Meadow brown** had decreased once more to 152 individuals (200 in 2024), whereas **ringlelet** had increased from 23 last year to 90 this season, and there were four **gatekeepers**. One significant increase was seen in **white sps.** - from no sightings in 2024, numbers this year totalled 54.

Silver-washed fritillary was in encouraging numbers at 18 against just four last year, and a single **white admiral** was photographed by Brad, giving an optimistic hope that their population may recover. This was the first transect record in four years. 3 **marbled whites** were recorded in the wetland, which I believe is the first record for them in Batt's Wood?

Rolf's Farm East Early – 16th May

White butterflies were virtually absent as in last year with just three sightings – one each of **brimstone**, **large white** and **white sp.** The **speckled wood** population remained static at 9 individuals.

Dingy skippers had dropped from 12 last year to only three this season, and no **grizzled skippers** were encountered. It is possible that the insects had peaked earlier due to the very warm and dry weather. **Small heath** numbered 24 butterflies this season, lower than in 2024 (44), but higher than 2023 (5). **Common blue** had a good season with 27 counted.

Late – 30th June

Hay cutting had taken place early this season due to the prevailing hot weather. This was on sections 1, 2, 3 and 10, meaning fewer butterflies were recorded from those fields and that should be taken into account when considering this year's results, particularly with 'brown' species.

Normally, a selection of skippers is sampled for small and Essex. This was not done this season as the weather was very hot during the transect and sampling would have meant spending considerably longer in the field during the heat of the day.

Bearing the fact of the early hay cutting in mind, records of **meadow brown** were at their lowest this season, partly no doubt due to the loss of habitat on the affected fields. In contrast, **ringlet** showed a significant increase with 119 individuals, the highest count for three years. This species prefers the more shaded field edges along the hedgerows, which had mostly been retained. It should be noted that similar results were seen in Batt's Wood, above, for these two species. **Gatekeeper** numbers were the lowest on record, akin to 2019. As the count this year was a week earlier than usual, perhaps the butterflies were still to emerge, being the latest of the browns to appear. Last year's very high count was from late July, reflecting later emergence.

Small and Essex skippers had increased a little on last year's count with 119 counted compared to 67 in 2024. The population of these two species tends to fluctuate quite widely from year to year.

The major success this season must be the number of **marbled whites**, with 140 butterflies seen across fifteen transect sections. This is the by far the highest total on record from the transect route, along with the most widespread distribution.

White sps. were in higher numbers compared to recent years with a total of 28 recorded. There was a single **silver-washed fritillary**, and just two **speckled woods**.

Rolf's Farm late transect selected butterfly totals

Species	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Skipper sp.	52	205	178	488	110	424	67	119
Meadow Brown	837	1309	577	1485	569	1273	638	440
Ringlet	194	208	52	208	122	22	5	119
Gatekeeper	19	6	16	18	76	32	184	5
Marbled White (Brackets show number of transect sections with records)	5 (2)	18 (5)	22 (6)	62 (9)	14 (7)	45 (11)	5 (5)	140 (15)

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