

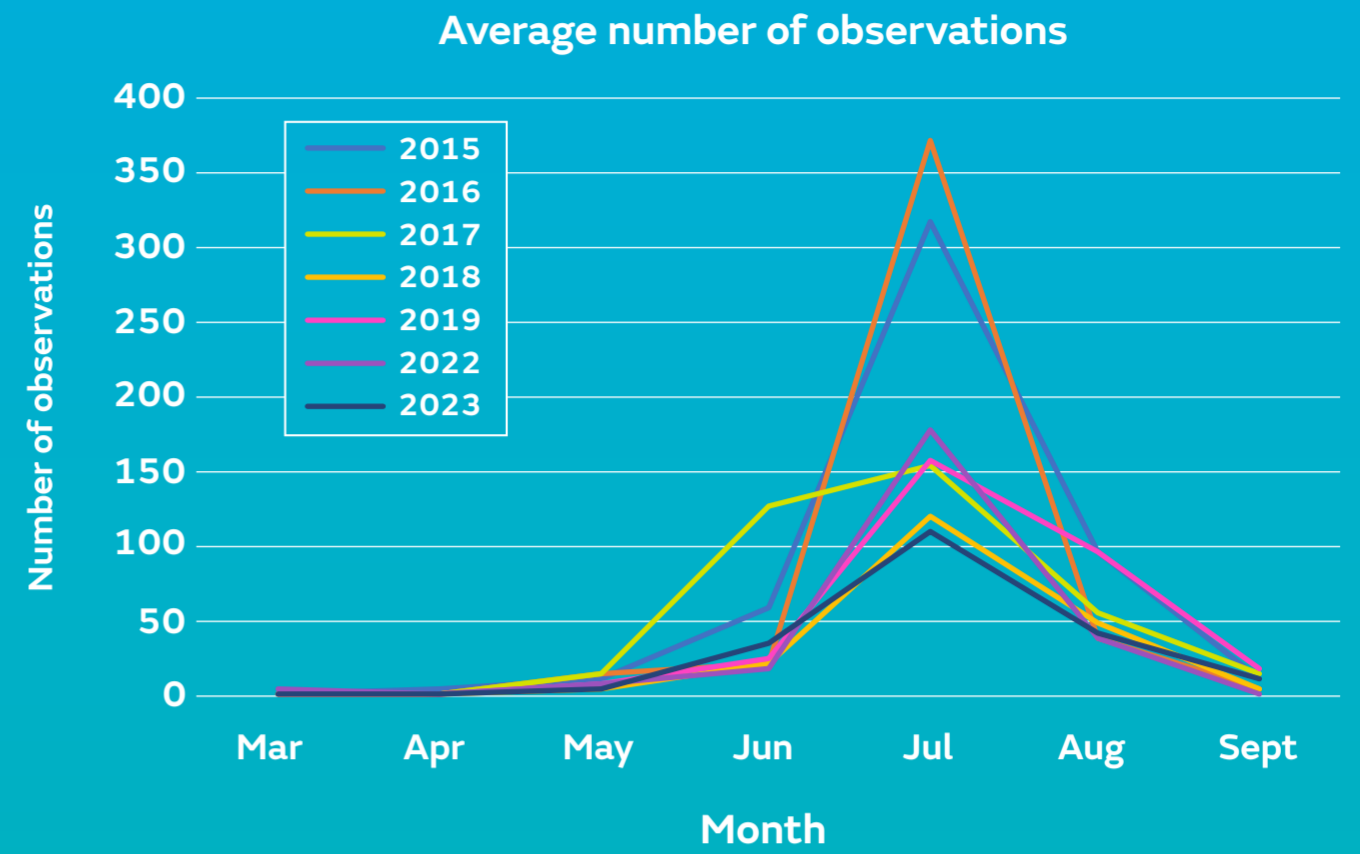
Butterflies at the Met Office

Volunteers from the Met Office began monitoring butterfly diversity in 2013 then with fortnightly surveys and weekly surveys from 2015. 30 transects have been conducted each year from 2015 to 2023, and we can see how butterfly numbers have changed over time. 2020 & 2021 data was impacted by covid due to limited opportunity to carry out surveying and have not been included here.

The graph to the right shows the average number of butterflies and day-flying moths counted on a survey each month.

Every year there has been a peak abundance in July and the record number of butterflies seen was 669 in 2016. The large counts in July 2015 and 2016 were due to exceptional numbers of day-flying six-spot burnet moths in those years.

The number of different species counted each year is fairly constant, usually varying between 23 and 25. Two new species to the site were spotted in 2023, the Purple Hairstreak and the Burnet Companion, an attractive day flying moth.



Indicator species

Our **Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)** aims to increase the biodiversity of flower-rich meadows to support identified 'Species of Principal Importance in England'. One method was to use a biennial cutting regime to support over-wintering larvae of butterflies such as **Marbled White** and **Skippers**.



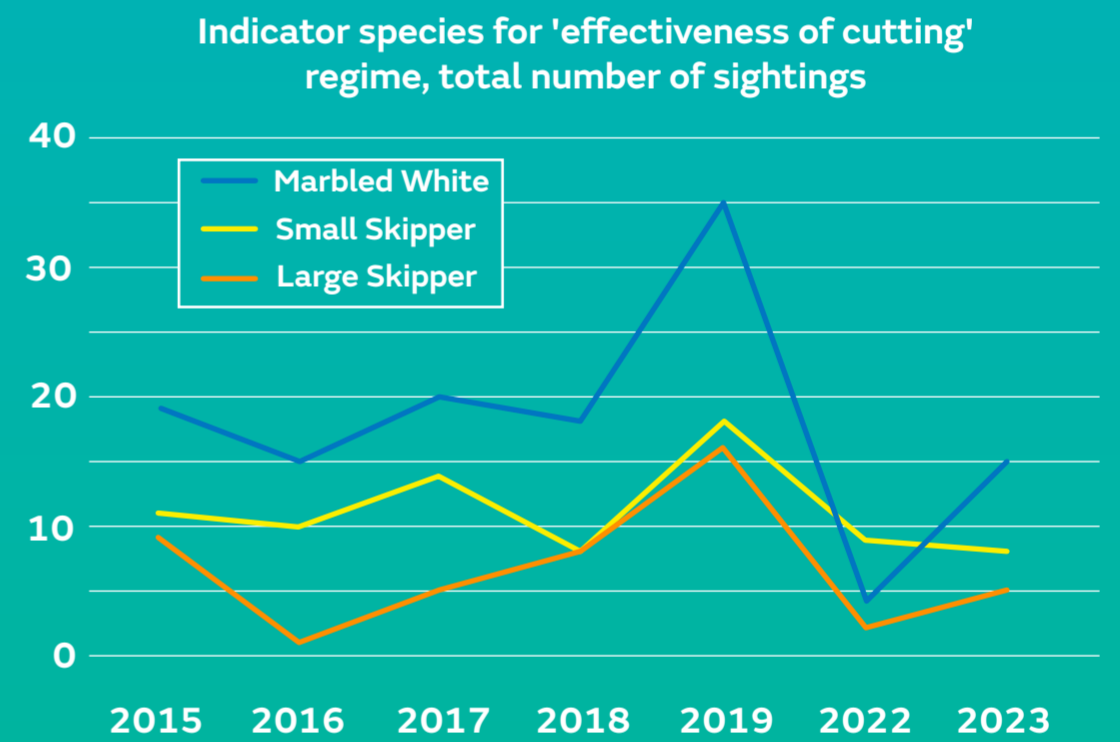
Marbled White, a Devon BAP indicator species for flower rich meadows-number of sightings increased from 19 (2015) to a high of 35 (2019). There were only 4 sightings in 2022, but sightings rose again to 15 in 2023.



Small Skipper
Numbers have fluctuated between 8 (in 2018 and 2023) and 18 (2019).



Large Skipper
Numbers were also at a maximum in 2019 with 16 sightings. On average there are slightly fewer Large Skippers (7) seen than Small Skippers (11)



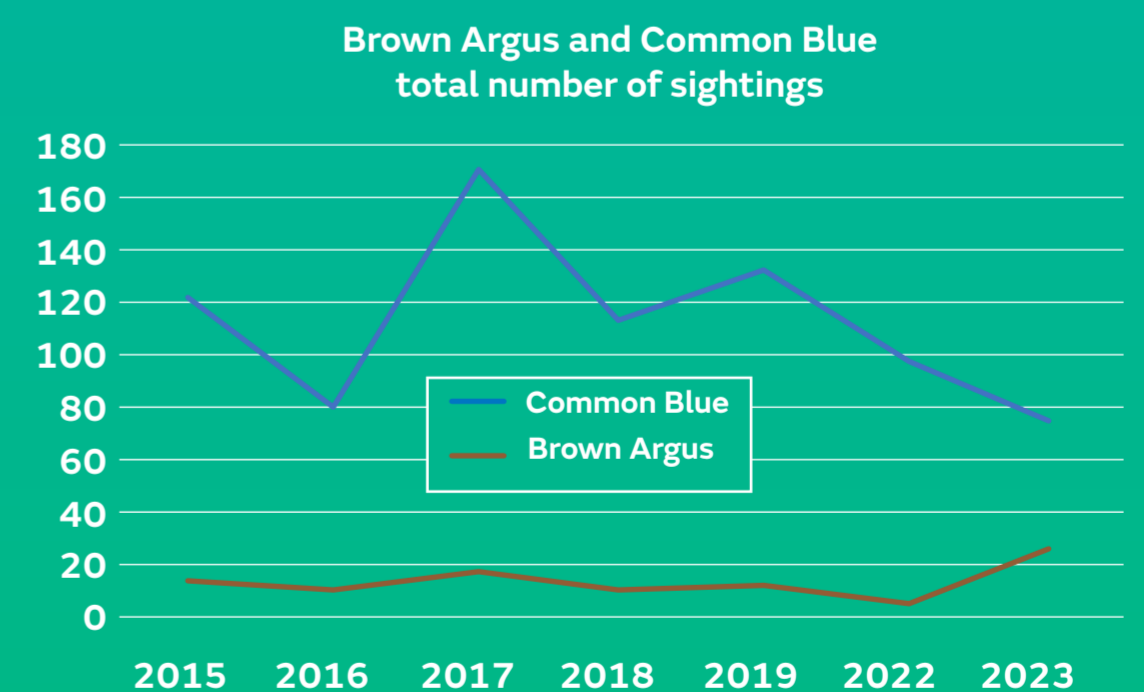
The **Common Blue** is another Devon BAP flower-rich meadow indicator, while the **Brown Argus** also favours meadowland and is somewhat localised to coastal regions in Devon.



The **Common Blue** shows year-to-year variability, with an average 114 sightings for the period 2015 to 2023.



Sightings relatively constant, with an average 14 sightings for the period 2015 to 2023.



Compared to national trends

The UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) issues an annual report outlining butterfly population trends in the UK. - Over the last decade, Large Skipper numbers in England have seen a significant decline, so we will be keeping a close eye on our population. Trends for the other species detailed above indicate no significant change. It is positive to see our meadows supporting a wide variety of species year-on-year.

For England as a whole, the UKBMS Annual Report 2023 shows that the number of sightings of Marbled White, Small Skipper and Large Skipper increased relative to 2022, while numbers of Common Blue decreased. This is broadly in keeping with our own observations, although for us sightings of Small Skipper were similar between these two years. In line with our own site, 2023 was a bumper year for Brown Argus.

References

<https://ukbms.org/official-statistics>

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