

TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMON

BUTTERFLY RECORDS 2025

This year was a much better year for the butterflies of Tunbridge Wells Common than 2024, with almost all species showing an increase in numbers.

I recorded 21 species over the year, which is essentially the same species count as the last two years. Species occurring on the common may be split into the widespread butterflies to be seen anywhere and more specialist species that favour woodland or grassland (marked W and G in the list below).

Maximum counts in the list refer to the largest number seen on any one walk of 30 – 40 minutes.

LARGE WHITE

Max 10. 13/4 – 1/10. Seen on many visits. Common from April to September.

SMALL WHITE

Max 12. 3/4 - 5/10. Seen on most visits. The maximum count is more than double the previous two years

GREEN VEINED WHITE

Max 1. 13/4 -10/7. Almost certainly under recorded as difficult to separate from small white unless a good view of the underwing is obtained.

BRIMSTONE

Max 7. 5/3 – 10/7. Compares with a maximum of 3 in 2023 and 5 in 2024

ORANGE TIP

Max 2. Recorded on 3 visits 13/4 – 30/4. One species that seemed not to have a particularly good year.

SMALL COPPER (G)

Max 2. Recorded on 5 visits between 11/7 and 28/8. Only 2 sightings in 2023 and 1 in 2024. I was beginning to think that this species might be disappearing.

COMMON BLUE (G)

Max 4. 27/7. Recorded on 4 visits between 11/7 and 13/8. Again this was encouraging as I had only seen one individual in 2023 and 2024

HOLLY BLUE

Max 8. Seen on many visits between 3/4 and 20/9. An average year, not as high numbers as in 2023, but this butterfly regularly goes through a boom to bust cycle.

RED ADMIRAL

Max 2. Recorded on 4 occasions between 15/6 and 13/8. A fairly poor year, but numbers depend on inward migration from the continent.

PEACOCK

Max 2. Recorded on 4 visits between 16/3 and 20/8.

COMMA

Max 8. Records from 19/3 – 11/7. Compares with a maximum of 1 in 2024 and 4 in 2023.

PAINTED LADY

Max 1. The only record was one on 25/6. No significant migration from the continent.

SILVER WASHED FRITILLARY (W)

Max 2. Seen on 4 occasions between 15/6 and 11/7. Encouraging that this species is still around as I only saw 1 in 2023 and 1 in 2024.

SPECKLED WOOD (W)

Max 4. Seen on most visits from 13/4 to early October. An average year

GATEKEEPER (G)

Max 50+. Recorded on all visits between 4/7 and 16/8. This species again did well with counts which must have exceeded 100 across the whole of the common. Present in all grassland areas.

MEADOW BROWN (G)

Max 50+. Recorded on all visits between 15/6 and 18/8. Widespread across all grassland areas.

RINGLET (G)

Max 4. Recorded between 26/6 and 11/8. One of the few species that I recorded in lower numbers than in the last two years, but this butterfly has a short flight period and can be tricky to separate from Meadow Brown in flight,

SMALL HEATH (G)

Max 1. Again, only one record on 13/8 near the cricket field. This butterfly seems to be just about hanging on.

LARGE SKIPPER (G)

Max 4. Recorded on 17/6 – 5/7. Higher than the 1 or 2 maxima of the previous two years.

SMALL/ESSEX SKIPPER (G)

Max 12. Recorded on 5 visits between 17/6 and 10/7. In similar locations to Large Skipper. This total compares with 8 in 2023 and 4 in 2024. Both of these species probably occur, but they are difficult to separate when low to the ground as the underside of the antenna has to be seen clearly!

PURPLE HAIRSTREAK

Max 2. Seen on 20/7. This butterfly is a bit of an enigma as it is probably common, but as it spends nearly all its life in the top of oak trees it is difficult to assess. It is also difficult to separate from Holly Blue when seen at distance in flight.

