



In order to obtain data about butterflies in Abbey Fields, Reduce Method Site Monitoring was started in 2020. This aims to give a quick indication of how biodiversity-rich an environment is and may demonstrate if a conservation management scheme is having the desired effect. A route was devised with advice from Butterfly Conservation and Warwick District Council. A walk is undertaken during one week each month between May and August on a fixed route, between 10.45 and 15.45 in warm, dry weather with a maximum temperature of 17 degrees and at least 60% sun. Detailed data is submitted to the County Recorder and Butterfly Conservation.

The Abbey Fields route is divided into five sections:

Section 1 begins at the wooden footbridge located at the Bridge Street end of the south side of the brook. It follows the brook along to the main path leading from the swimming pool to the town centre.

Section 2 starts at the top of the hill near the war memorial and crosses the grassland on the mown path towards the swimming pool.

Section 3 follows the brook/lakeside path towards the castle and finishes at the end of the lake.

Section 4 diverts across the meadow alongside the western end of the lake.

Section 5 enters and crosses the small enclosed meadow on Castle Road.

Throughout the spring/summer of 2021 the weather was particularly unpredictable. Transect walkers reported difficulties planning surveys as weather forecasts proved quite unreliable. A cold, wet spring impacted on butterflies and was likely to have affected broods later in the summer. May was a wet month with rainfall above average and no butterflies were seen on the Abbey Fields transect walk even though it was on a sunny day. In June during the survey, again in good conditions, only 6 butterflies were seen (all in the meadow). Fortunately numbers improved in July on every section, 110 butterflies, showing an improvement from 2020 when 75 were recorded. August brought mostly dull weather and on a sunny transect walk only 9 butterflies were seen.

Section 1 produced a variety of butterflies, 32 in total (compared to 36 in 2020) including large, small, and green veined whites, meadow brown, ringlet, gatekeeper, speckled wood, and small copper. These were seen during the July and August walks.

Section 2 brought sightings of 10 butterflies (compared to 6 in 2020 when it was thought excessive use of the area during the lockdown in hot weather may have been a factor). Large and small whites, meadow brown and ringlet were recorded, all in July.

Section 3 gave sightings of 12 butterflies (an increase from 8 in 2020 when again excessive use of the path may have been an issue). Small skipper, large, small, marbled and green-veined whites, red admiral, small tortoiseshell, meadow brown, and ringlet were recorded. A scarlet tiger moth was also recorded. These were all seen during the July walk.

Section 4 also produced small skipper, large, small and green-veined whites, gatekeeper, meadow brown and ringlet, seen on the July walks and totalling 21 butterflies (a reduction from 58 in 2020).

Section 5 brought sightings of small and large skippers, large, marbled and green-veined whites, small copper, gatekeeper, meadow brown, small tortoiseshell, red admiral and ringlet during the June, July and August surveys. A total of 49 butterflies were recorded (compared to 71 in 2020). 5 chimney sweeper moths were also seen during the June survey.

The decline in numbers is worrying and reflects data released by Butterfly Conservation. The Abbey Fields total was 130 (including the day-flying moths also recorded) compared to 179 in 2020. Peacock, orange tip and comma butterflies were not recorded and numbers for several of the species were reduced. On a more positive note meadow brown, small tortoiseshell and gatekeeper numbers were maintained and speckled wood was added to the species list.

The count of the different varieties is tabulated below:

ABBEY FIELDS BUTTERFLY MONITORING 2021

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	2021	(2020)
Large White	0	0	14	5	19	(32)
Small White	0	0	8	1	9	(32)
GV White	0	0	5	0	5	(5)
Orange Tip	0	0	0	0	0	(3)
Peacock	0	0	0	0	0	(2)
Small Skipper	0	0	5	0	5	(13)
Large Skipper	0	0	3	0	3	(7)
S Tortoiseshell	0	1	2	1	4	(4)
Marbled White	0	0	3	0	3	(6)
Meadow Brown	0	2	33	0	35	(36)
Ringlet	0	2	17	0	19	(32)
Small Copper	0	0	6	0	6	(1)
Red Admiral	0	1	1	0	2	(2)
Comma	0	0	0	0	0	(1)
Gatekeeper	0	0	12	0	12	(12)
Speckled Wood	0	0	0	2	2	(0)
Sightings of Day Flying Moths:						
Chimney Sweeper Moth		5			5	(0)
Scarlet Tiger Moth			1		1	(0)
Totals:	0	11	110	9	130	(179)