

# Miss Whalley's Field

## 2020 butterflies and day-flying moths

2020 was an average year for butterflies in the field. Some excellent weather in the spring was followed by very poor weather between mid-June and the end of August, which must have depressed the numbers of butterflies flying.

Despite the bad weather, we had a new species for the field this year: the orange and brown gatekeeper. This butterfly has been colonising the North West in recent years, and has been present in the Lancaster area for a while, so I wondered when it would turn up in the field. 2020 was also a good year for the small tortoiseshell, with some high daily counts. This is encouraging because the small tortoiseshell has declined very significantly across most of the UK and Europe in recent years.

Meadow brown, small skipper and large white all did well, with counts slightly up on 2019.

Species that did less well included holly blue (none seen), large skipper and ringlet (very low counts for both compared to 2019) and common blue. 2019 had been spectacular for painted ladies; 2020 an ordinary year – so no surprise to see just one.

### Day-flying moths

Moths were counted when seen and when I could be confident of identification. In 2020 it was encouraging to see several Narrow-bordered 5-spot Burnet moths, with their black wings marked with bright red spots – none were seen in 2019. The caterpillars of this moth feed on greater bird's-foot trefoil, of which there is plenty in the field, so the moth should do well here.

### Methodology

Timed counts of butterflies were made roughly every week between late March and September. Most counts were made during a 20-30 minute walk around the field. Butterflies and moths were only counted when identification was clear. In the case of small whites, green-veined whites and female orange-tips, positive identification was often only possible if the butterfly was perched with hindwings visible, thus many white butterflies seen in flight were not recorded.

Richard Evans, November 2020

<b>Butterflies</b>	26/3	7/4	16/4	23/4	3/5	14/5	20/5	25/5	2/6	10/6	20/6	26/6	1/7	8/7	16/7	20/7	3/8	13/8	23/8	31/8	17/9	Total	
Small skipper												32	26	29	15	13	1						116
Large skipper									1	2	4	4	1										12
Brimstone	1																						1
Large white				1	1	1	1	2		1		1				1	7	2	2	3			23
Small white				1		3	1	2	1	1	2	1	3	1	2		2	4	2	2	1		29
Green-veined white					2	2		1					1		2	1	1						10
Orange-tip			2	3	2	1	2	2															12
Small copper																				1			1
Common blue						1	2	1	1											1			6
Red admiral													2	1			1						4
Painted lady																	1						1
Small tortoiseshell	27	14	7	3	2				1	2	11	4	9	3		1	1	2			5	3	95
Peacock	7	1	1	3													1	1					14
Comma		1	1													1							3
Speckled wood					2					1							1	1	1	1			7
Meadow brown									2	1	7	28	24	15	10	8	12	9	4	4			124
Ringlet												1	5	2	3	1							12
Gatekeeper																	4	1					5
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>475</b>	

<b>Moths</b>	3/6	20/6	22/6	24/6	26/6	1/7	8/7	20/7	7/8	13/8	23/8	15/9	Total
Cinnabar				1									1
Narrow-bordered 5-spot burnet		3	1	1	2								7
Silver Y	1	1			3	4		1	1	4		1	16
Common Plume											3		3
Celypha lacunana							2						2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	