

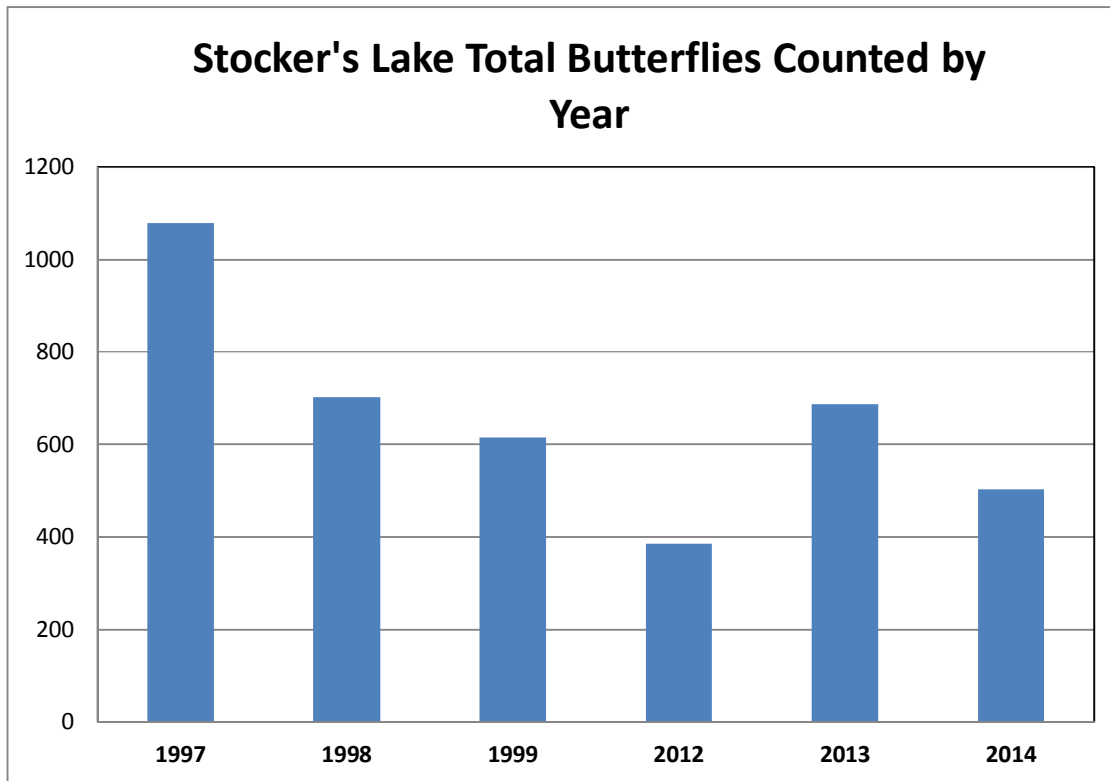
Butterflies at Stocker's Lake 2014

The recording scheme

As in previous years, a small but dedicated band of enthusiasts have been recording butterfly sightings. Each week, a recorder walks around the Lake recording all butterflies seen. The walk is divided into 12 sections, or transects, and where and how many of each species seen is noted down. This year, for the first time, the recorders entered their results directly onto the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme database, one of the world's largest butterfly and moth recording schemes with records countrywide. Thanks to our excellent team of butterfly recorders, Carol and Dick Beeden, Cliff and Jacky Buckton, Carrol Scott, and leader Barbara James, we have some interesting results.

Total butterflies counted by year

The results showed that the total number of individual butterflies seen had declined from 687 in 2013 to 497 this year but this is an increase on 2012. However, the total number recorded in 1997 was 1079!



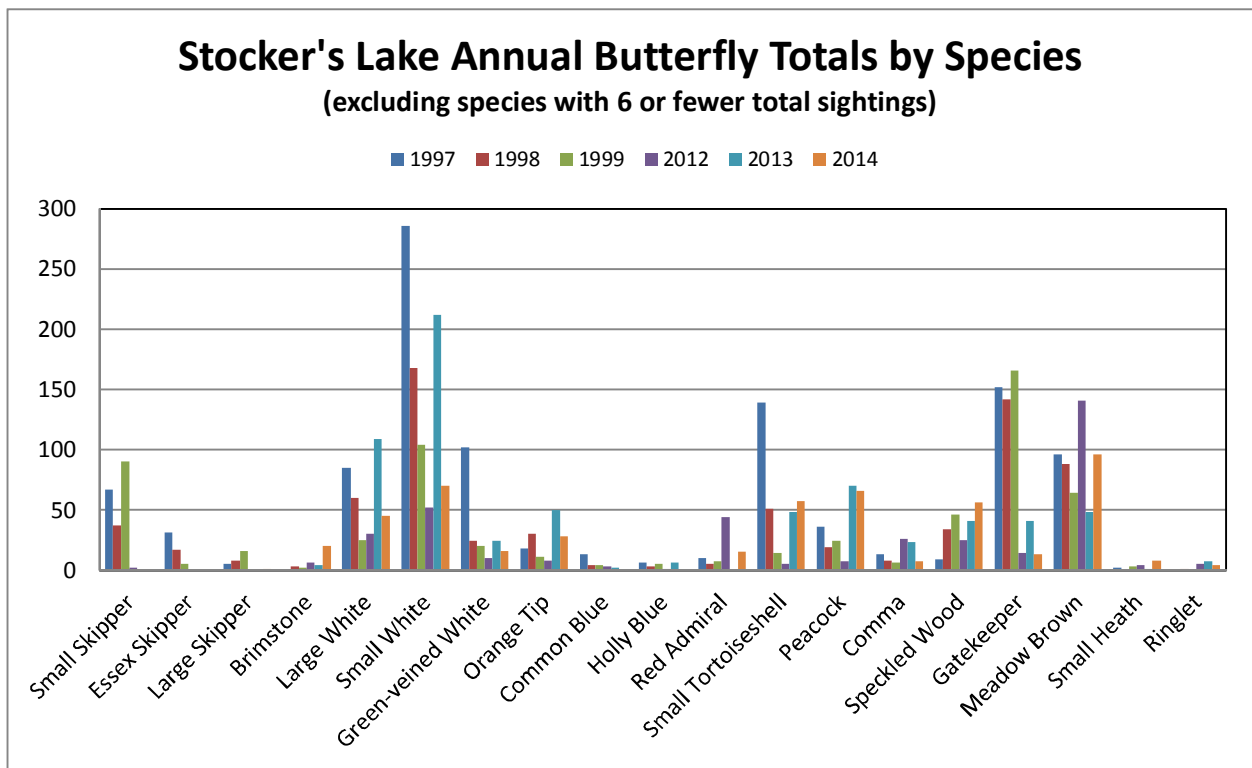
The national picture

Stocker's Lake results generally follow the national pattern. Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count held each summer states that in 2014 'The average number of individual butterflies seen per-count dropped from 23 in 2013 to 15 in 2014. In all, 15 out of 21 of the target species decreased compared to 2013...'

2013 was a bumper year for butterflies, although numbers have generally declined since the 1990s. Reasons for the decline in 2014 have been given as a colder August this year (despite a warm and sunny July) with temperatures that shortened flight periods and also pushed some species into early hibernation.

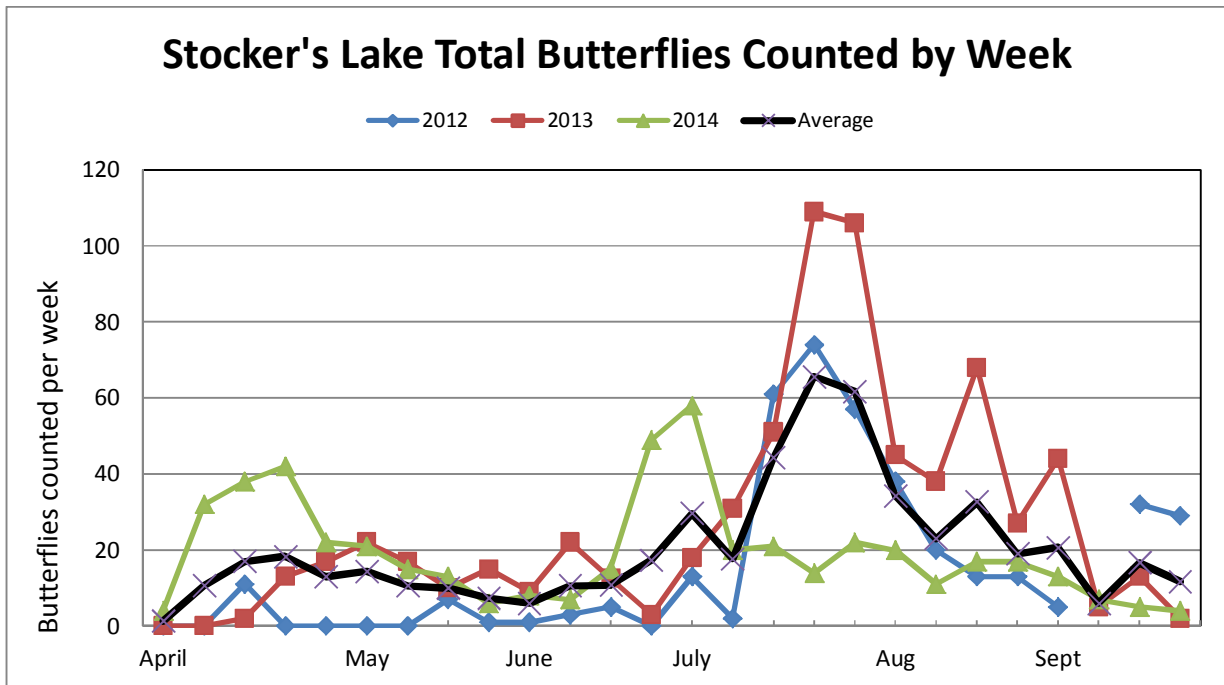
Butterfly species counted by year

Between 2013 and 2014, some species such as the Large White, Small White and Green-veined White have decreased more dramatically than others. On the plus side, several species saw an increase especially Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Speckled Wood and Meadow Brown. Compared to the results from 1997-99, Skipper species have virtually disappeared, and Gatekeeper is also much reduced.

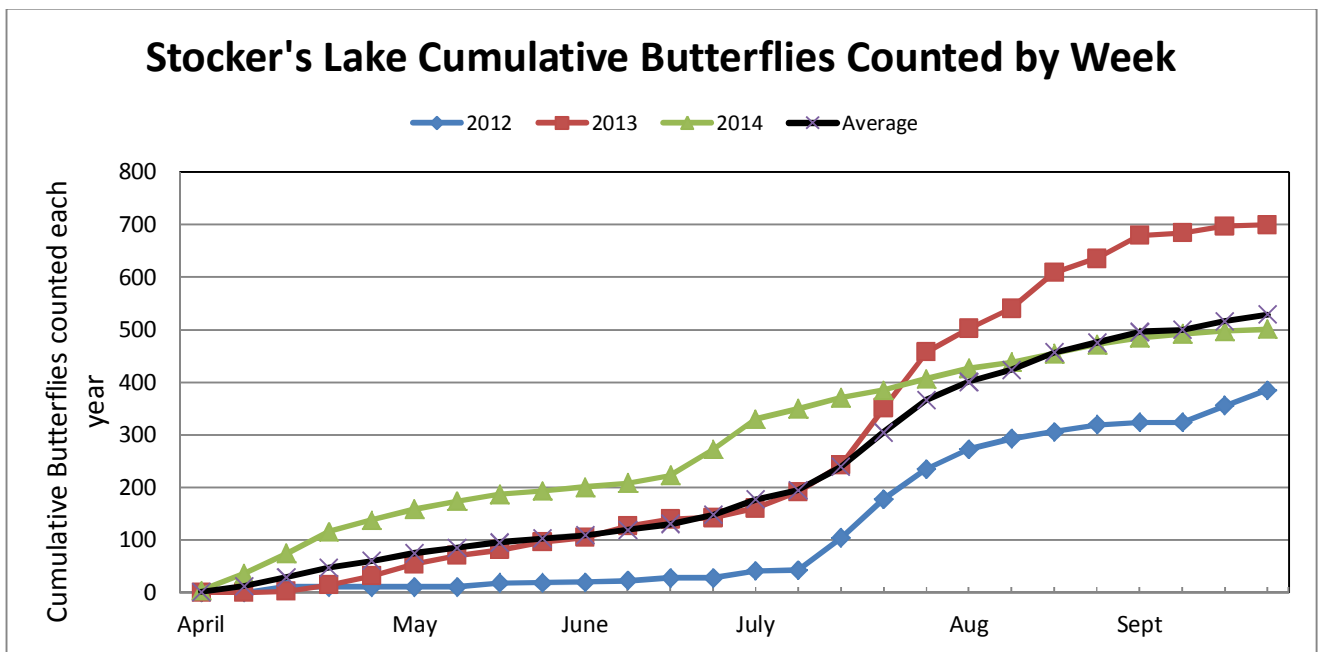


2012-14 weekly data

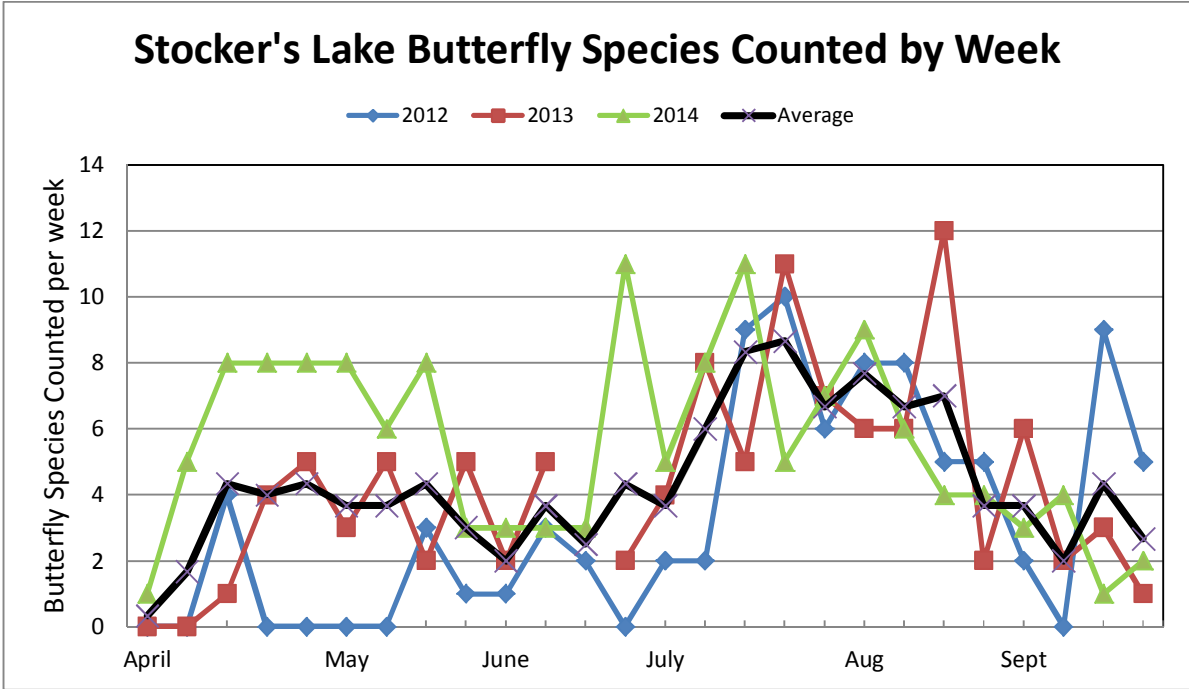
As weekly counts have now been ongoing for the last 3 years, we have much more detailed data for this period than for 1997-99. The chart below shows the total number of butterflies counted each week between April and September for each year as well as the average for the whole period. This shows that the peak month by quite a margin is July, normally followed by August, but with significant variations each year depending upon the weather. In 2013, there were very high numbers counted during July and August after an unexceptional spring whereas 2014 started well with high counts in April followed by an early peak in June but disappointing numbers thereafter.



This can also be presented in a cumulative format that clearly shows 2012 had a very poor spring, that late summer was good in 2013, and that 2014 started off very promisingly but was disappointing from July onwards.



As one would expect, the number of species counted each week follow broadly similar trends, and these show that during the summer peak period it would normally be possible to see between 5 and 11 species during a single walk around the Lake.



We will be continuing our weekly counts again in 2015, and hoping for a bumper year.