

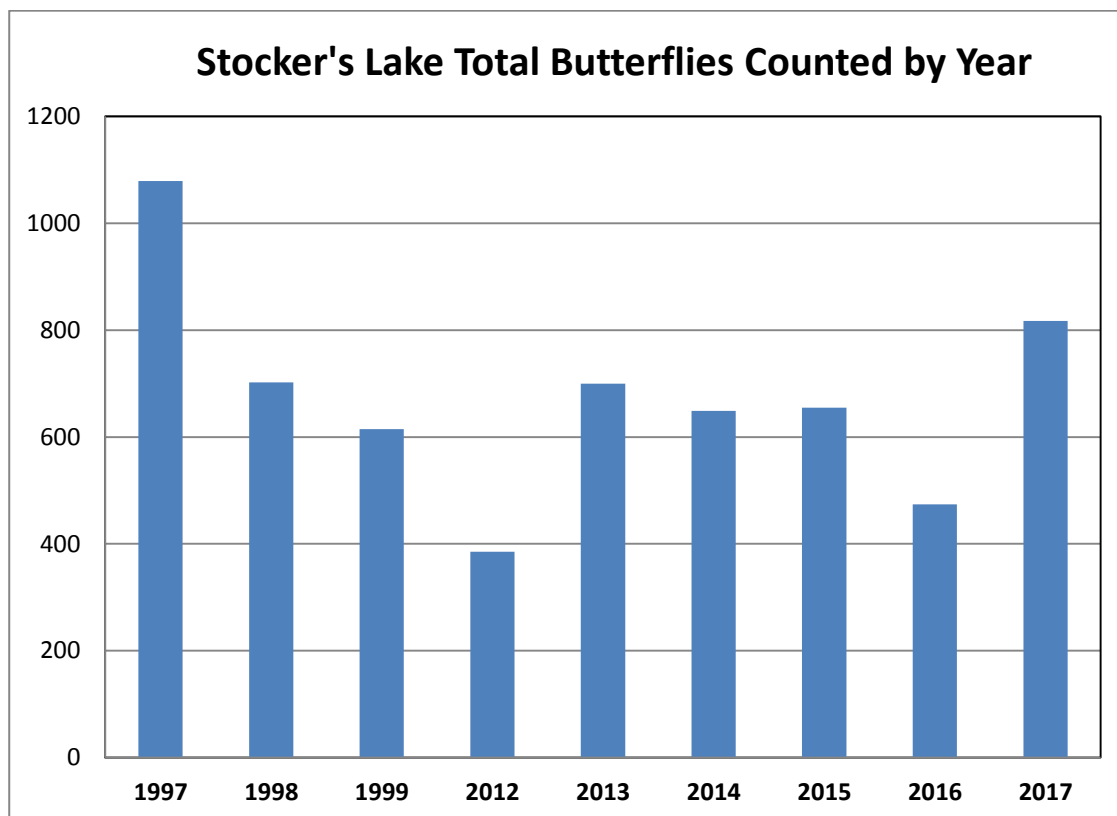
Butterflies at Stocker's Lake 2017

The recording scheme

Once again a dedicated band of enthusiasts under the leadership of Barbara James recorded the number of butterflies seen in 12 transects around the lake each week between April and September. The recorders enter their results directly onto the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme database, one of the world's largest butterfly and moth recording schemes with records countrywide.

Total butterflies counted by year

Butterfly counts at Stocker's Lake are available for 9 years in 2 periods, 1997-1999 and 2012-2017, so we are increasingly able to compare numbers counted and ascertain trends. 2017 was a good year around the lake with 817 butterflies counted, 72% up on 2016, and the second highest total recorded. The distribution of sightings over the recording period confirms that this was heavily influenced by the unusual weather patterns (see below).

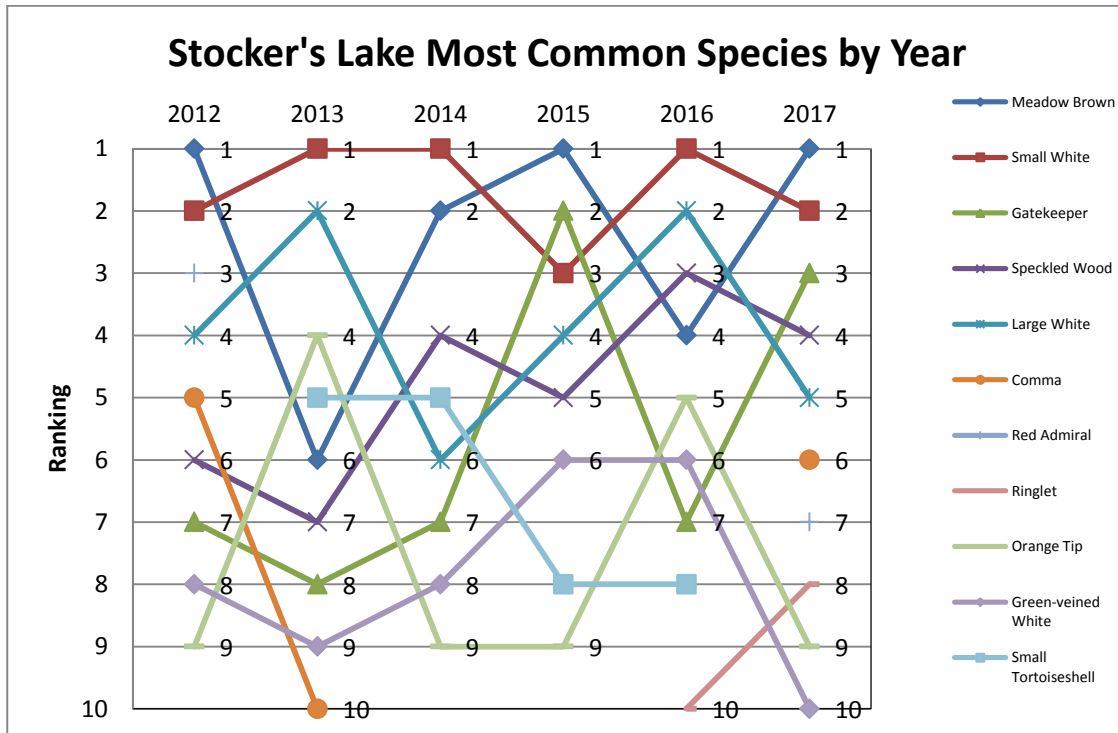


The national picture

The report on Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count held each summer states that January – June 2017 had above average temperatures which encouraged early emergence but July and August were dominated by unsettled weather and above average rainfall. Numbers of Red Admirals counted increased by 75% on 2016, and 300% on 2015, while Comma, Common Blue, Small Copper and Gatekeeper increased by 90%, 109%, 62% and 24% respectively on 2016. By contrast, Green-veined White, Large White and Small White all

fell by around 38% but this was largely because of their early emergence, largely before the count took place. Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock showed no signs of recovery from their very low counts in 2016.

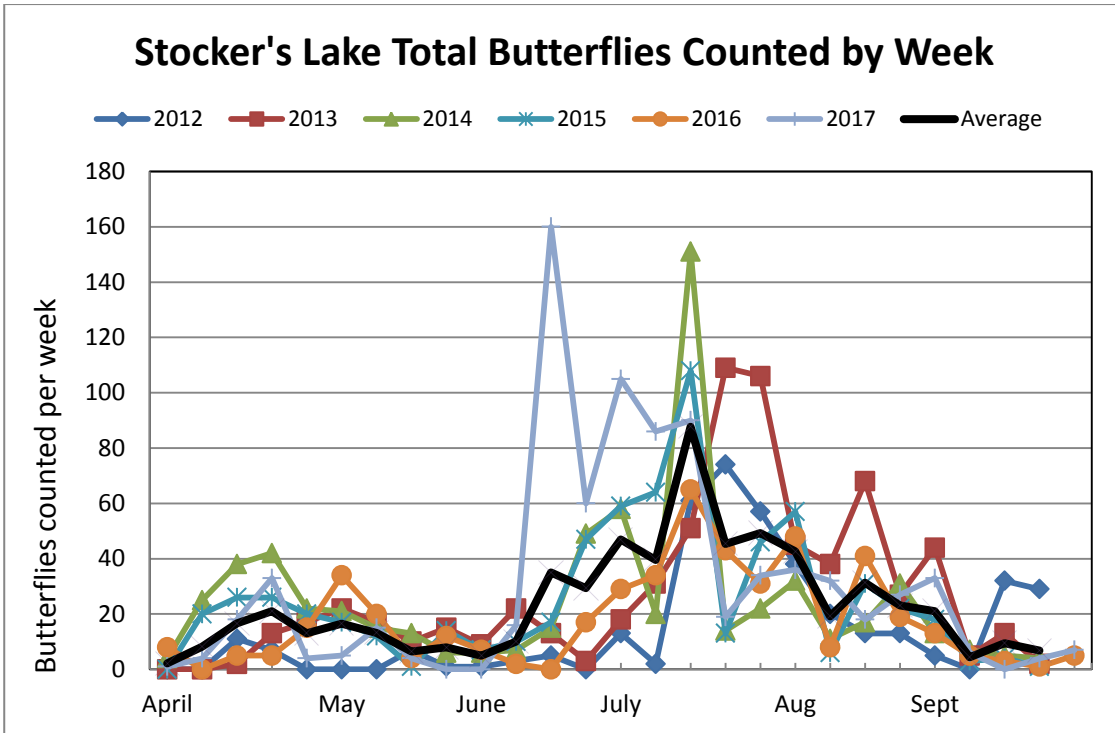
Butterfly species counted by year



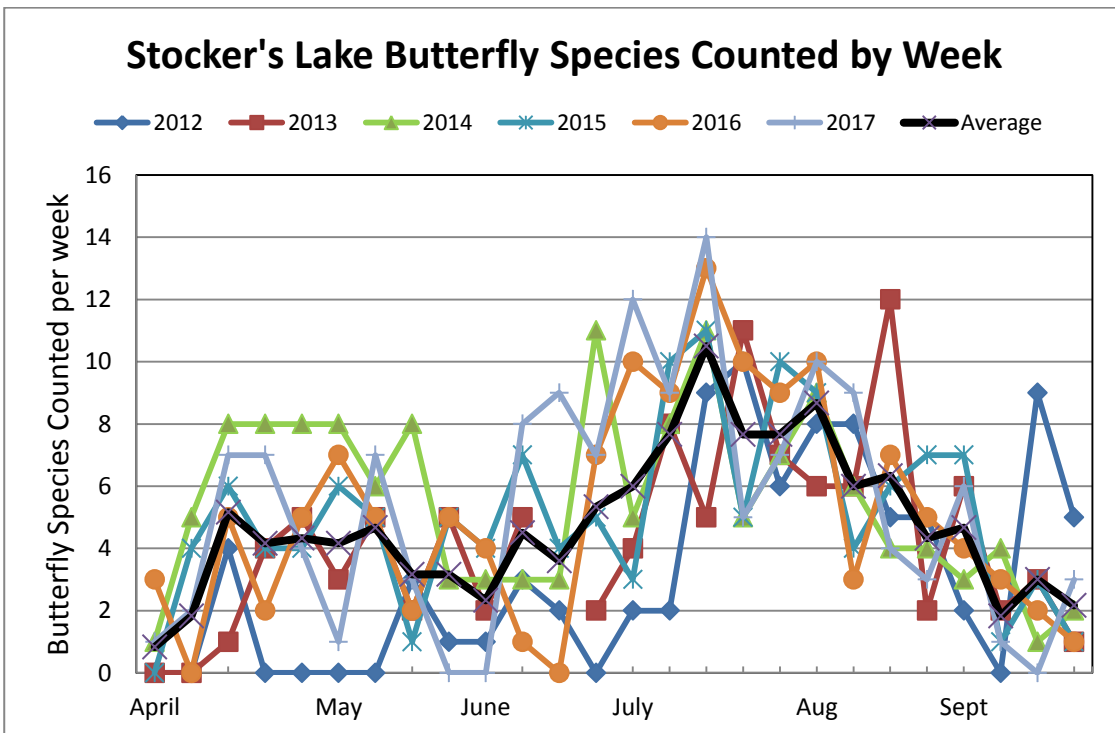
The above chart shows the top 10 butterfly species counted at Stocker’s Lake in 2017, and how their ranking has changed since 2012. Comma and Red Admiral reflected the national trend entering the list at 6th and 7th place for the first time since 2013. However, the grassland species Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper again dominated along with the Whites.

2012-17 weekly data

As organised weekly counts have now been ongoing for 6 years, we have detailed data for this period. 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 demonstrates very well that the narrow peak which normally occurs in late July and early August took place a month earlier in 2017 and extended over a longer period with very high counts from mid-June for 5 consecutive weeks.

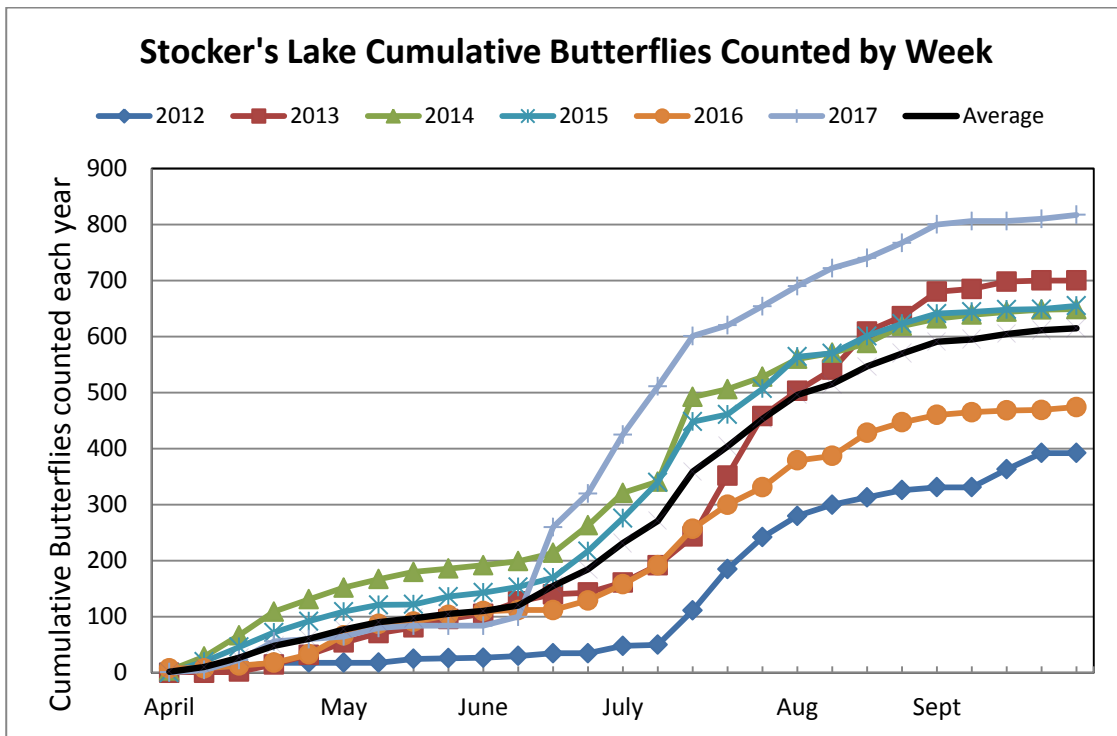


The number of different species recorded each week was consistently above average as would be expected in a good overall year.



The early emergence of many species is also well demonstrated in the cumulative sightings chart below which shows average sightings up to early June followed by a very steep increase from mid-June to mid-July which was entirely responsible for the good overall annual count as the remainder of the season was also close to average. It is also worth noting

that Red Admirals continued to be seen in significant numbers right through October and into November but this is outside our recording calendar.



We will be continuing our weekly counts again in 2018, and hoping for another bumper year.