

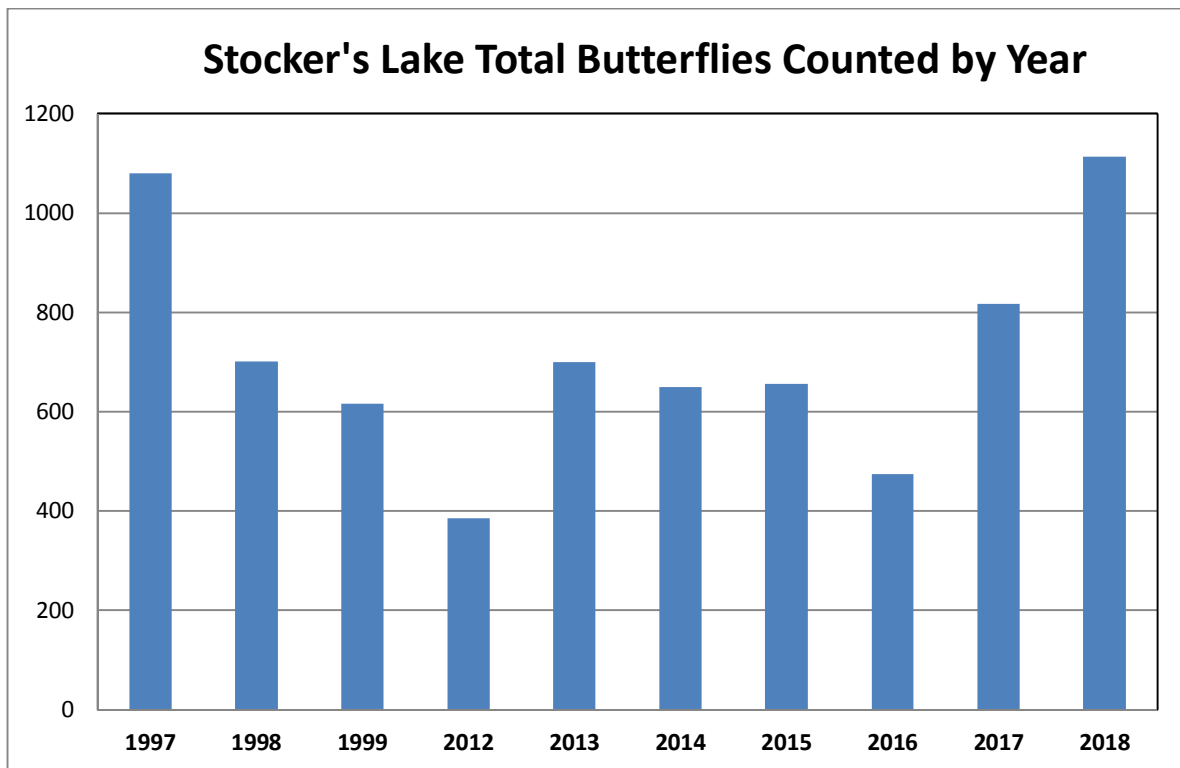
## Butterflies at Stocker's Lake 2018

### *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, entering their results directly onto the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme.

### *Total butterflies counted by year*

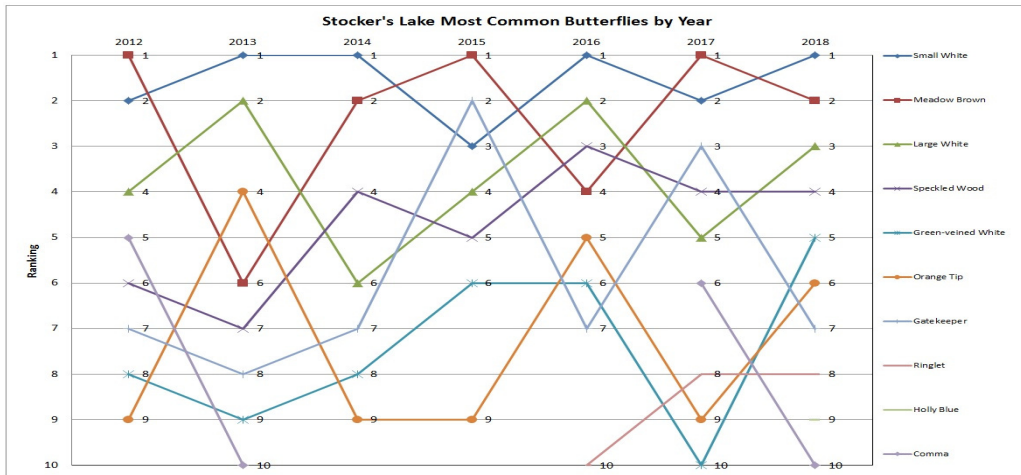
Butterfly counts at Stocker's Lake are now available for 10 years in 2 periods, 1997-1999 and 2012-2018, so we are increasingly able to compare numbers counted and ascertain trends. 2018 was a record year around the lake with 1,113 butterflies counted, 36% up on 2017, and 3% higher than the previous record in 1997. The distribution of sightings over the recording period confirms that this was once again heavily influenced by the weather. The hot, dry spell from the end of June to mid-August when the maximum temperature regularly exceeded 30 degrees helped to make the summer of 2018 the joint hottest on record.



### *The national picture*

The report on Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count held each summer notes that the hot, dry weather should have benefitted most butterflies but several species still experienced a slump. Numbers of Red Admiral, Comma and Small Tortoiseshell decreased by 73%, 40% and 32% respectively compared to 2017, which was also a bad year for them. By contrast, the Whites had a bumper year with increases of 161%, 104% and 78% respectively for Small, Large, and Green-veined Whites, making up more than half of total sightings.

*Butterfly species counted by year*

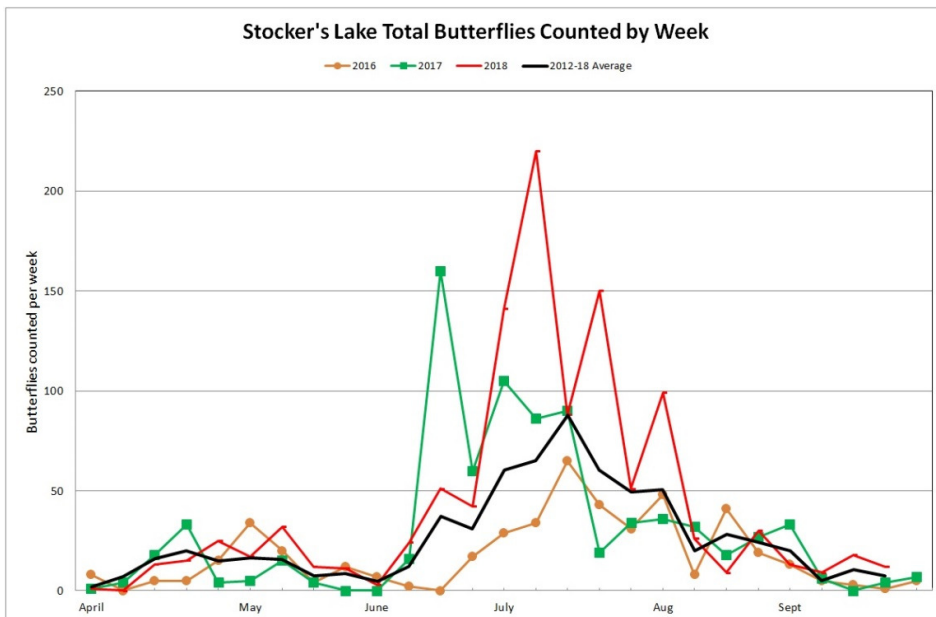


This trend is reflected at Stocker's Lake, as shown in the above chart which shows the top 10 butterfly species counted in 2018, and how their ranking has changed since 2012. The Whites occupy 3 of the top 5 places and make up just over 50% of total sightings, while Holly Blue and Ringlet also increased. Red Admiral has fallen from 3<sup>rd</sup> place in 2012, to 7<sup>th</sup> in 2017, and 14<sup>th</sup> in 2018, and Small Tortoiseshell has suffered a similar fall in ranking but an even larger decline in numbers counted, from 139 back in 1997 to only 5 in 2018.

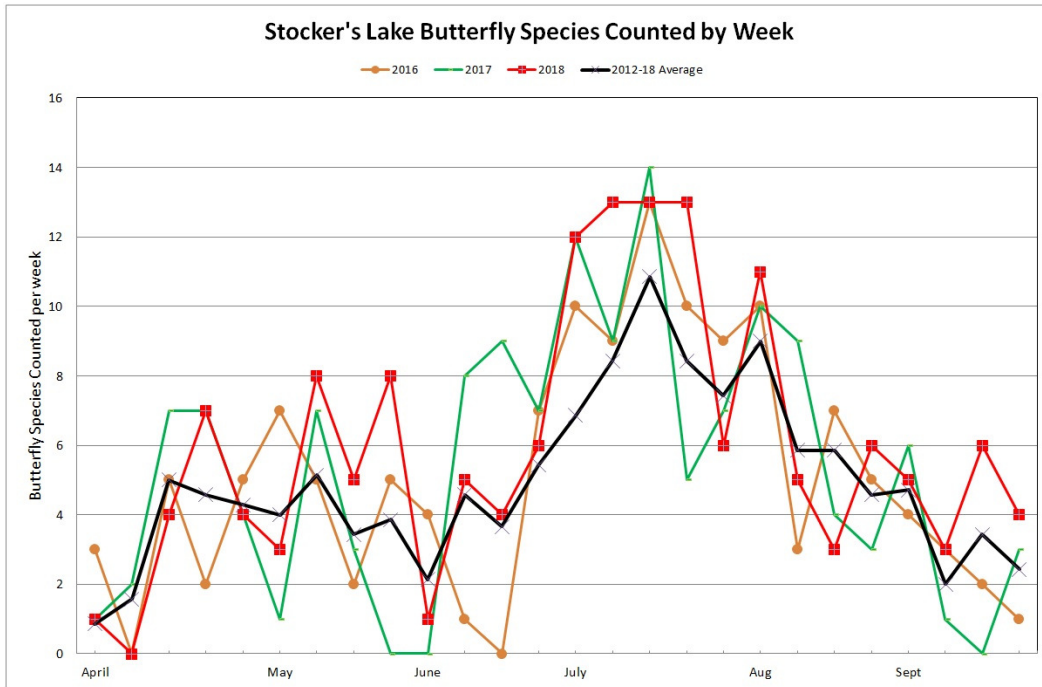
*2012-18 weekly data*

As organised weekly counts have now been ongoing for 7 years, our data bank is steadily improving. The chart below shows the total number of butterflies counted each week between April and September for 2016-18 as well as the average for the whole period.

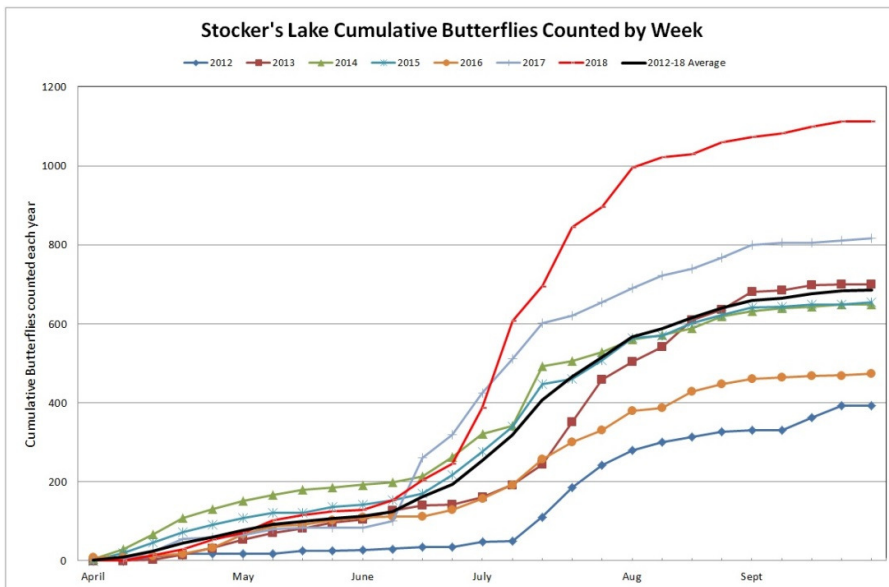
This shows that the counts for July and August are significantly above average.



The number of different species recorded each week was also above average.



The cumulative sightings chart below shows that sightings were only slightly above average to the end of June but increased hugely during July and August resulting in a bumper year. To put this in perspective, 2018's total was more than double 2016's and almost treble that of 2012.



We will be continuing our weekly counts again in 2019, and hoping for a repeat performance.