

Butterflies at Stocker's Lake 2020

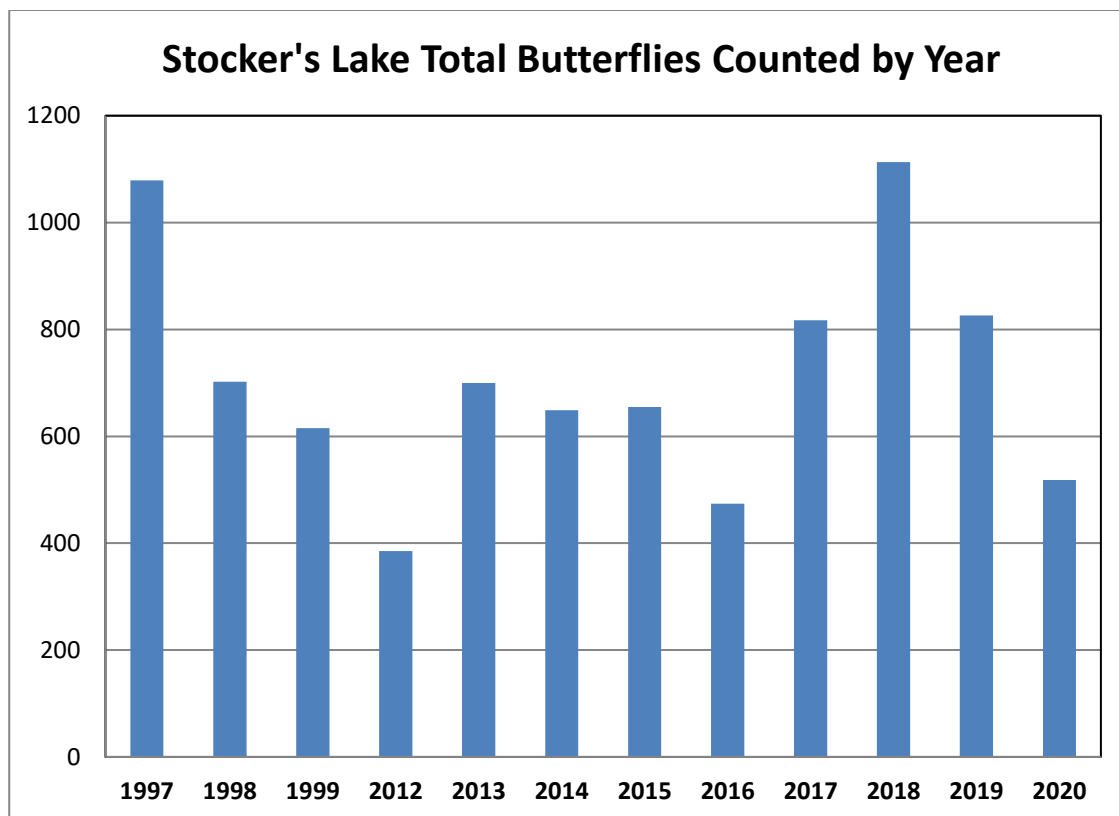
The recording scheme

A dedicated band of enthusiasts under the leadership of Barbara James again carried out weekly counts of butterflies seen in 12 transects around the lake each week entering their results directly onto the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. However, due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, it wasn't possible to commence surveys until mid-May which severely reduces the value of comparing results to previous years, and this will be reflected in the report.

Total butterflies counted by year

Butterfly numbers vary throughout the season with distinct peaks occurring in April and July for different species. This year, Spring was unusually warm, so the April peak was both larger and earlier than usual but due to Covid-19 restrictions was entirely missed in our counts. Summer was disappointingly dull, and this is also reflected in the counts for later in the season.

It is therefore not surprising that this year's total of 518 is below average, but still exceeds the total counts in 2012 and 2016. Had the April peak been included, it is fair to assume that 2020 would have been close to, but slightly below the long-term average, and well down on 2017 – 2019.



The national picture

The report on Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count held each summer notes a worrying 34% reduction compared to 2019. It speculates that this may again be due to the very warm spring which led many species to emerge earlier than usual, causing the Count to only catch the tail end of their flight period.

Butterfly species counted by year

As the April peak is largely dominated by Orange Tip, Brimstone, Large and Small Whites, and Holly Blue, it is not surprising that they all show large falls compared to normal.

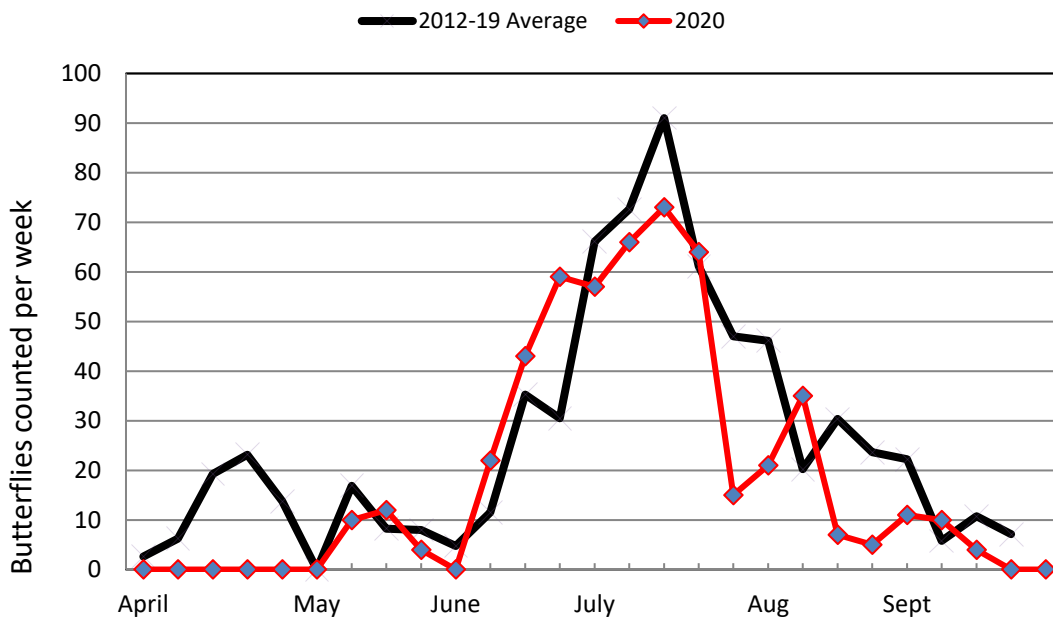
Perhaps the biggest positive news is the increase in Marbled Whites which for many years were very scarce but are much more common now on the meadows in June/July.

	1997	1998	1999	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Small Skipper	67	37	90	2	0	6	3	7	7	5	22	10
Essex Skipper	31	17	5	0	0	3	0	0	0	4	11	0
Large Skipper	5	8	16	0	0	2	2	3	0	1	7	2
Clouded Yellow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brimstone	0	3	2	6	4	19	22	9	10	18	35	2
Large White	85	60	25	30	111	48	67	58	60	136	103	50
Small White	286	168	104	52	218	118	94	86	109	358	170	115
Green-veined White	102	24	20	10	25	29	47	34	21	69	13	43
Orange Tip	18	30	11	8	52	28	24	38	38	47	58	6
Small Copper	3	0	2	0	1	2	1	2	2	1	0	1
Common Blue	13	4	4	3	2	2	9	1	4	18	17	5
Holly Blue	6	3	5	1	7	0	8	12	8	27	22	5
Red Admiral	10	5	7	44	0	15	8	17	50	16	35	30
Painted Lady	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	10	0
Small Tortoiseshell	139	51	14	5	49	57	31	20	15	5	4	5
Peacock	36	19	24	7	70	76	37	19	13	23	16	25
Comma	13	8	6	26	23	10	14	17	52	24	28	19
Speckled Wood	9	34	46	25	41	66	49	55	64	123	68	29
Gatekeeper	152	142	166	14	41	46	92	27	66	39	57	30
Meadow Brown	96	88	64	141	48	113	137	49	235	154	126	115
Small Heath	2	0	3	4	1	5	0	0	0	4	3	0
Ringlet	0	1	0	5	7	4	4	18	49	36	19	7
Marbled white	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	2	12	5	2	19

2012-20 weekly data

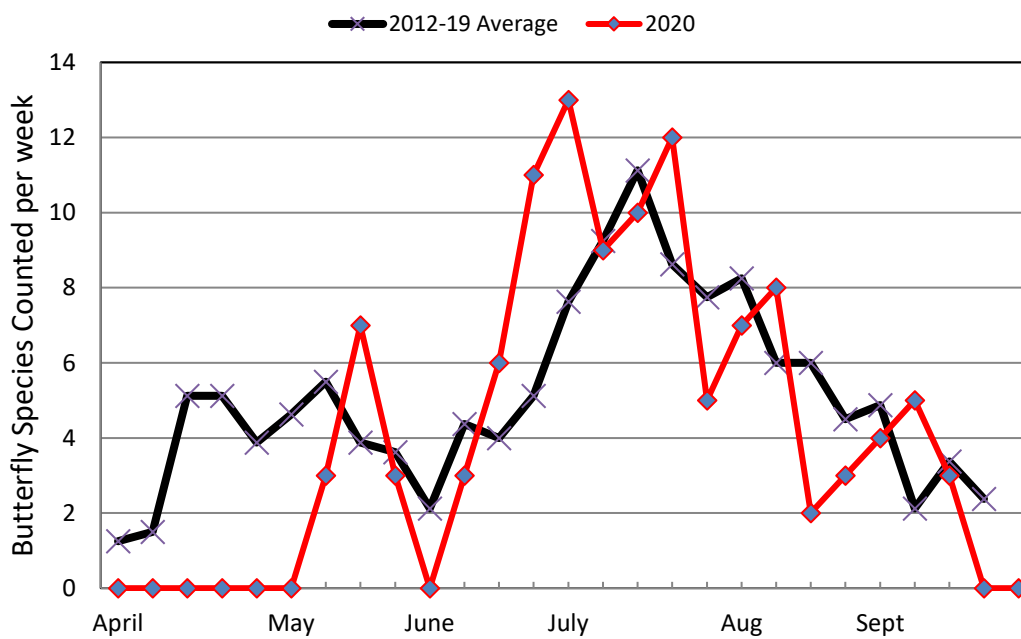
The chart below shows the total number of butterflies counted each week between April and September in 2020 and the average for 2012-19. The April peak missing for 2020 can be clearly seen. June is above average for 2020 but the remainder of the Summer is generally below average.

Stocker's Lake Total Butterflies Counted by Week

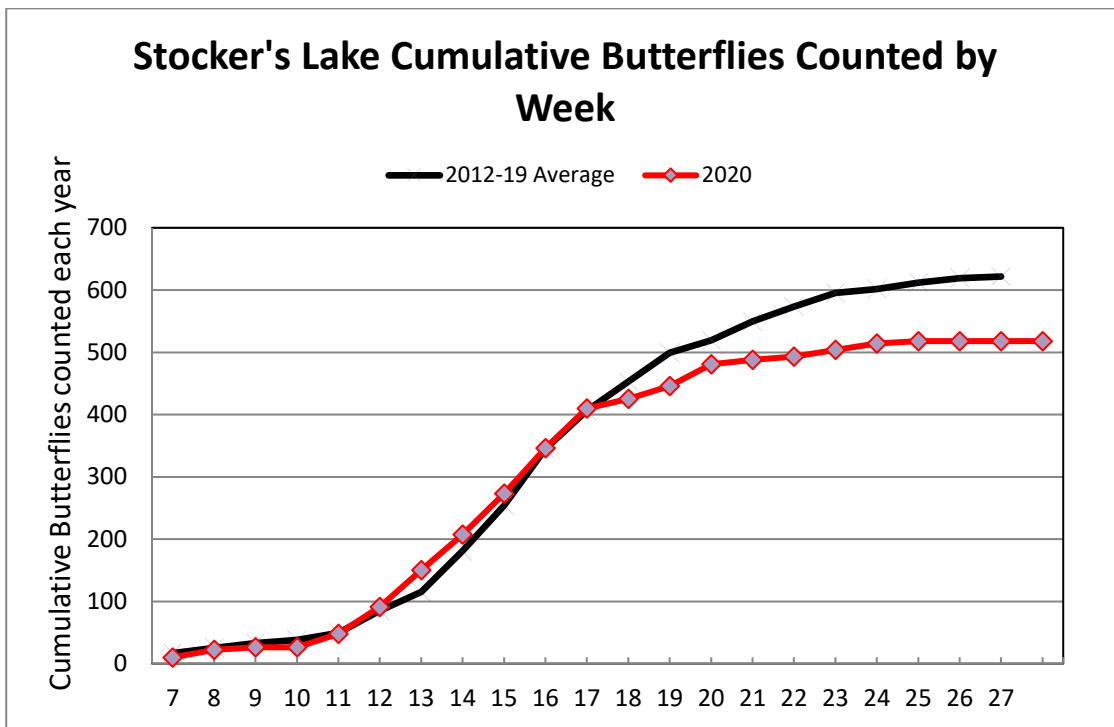


The number of different species recorded each week was average for most of the period. This year, due to the prevailing weather conditions, there was no influx of Summer migrants such as Painted Lady.

Stocker's Lake Butterfly Species Counted by Week



If the first 6 weeks of the count season are ignored for 2012 – 2019 to remove the April peak, it is possible to compare 2020 to the long-term average in the chart below. This again clearly shows that numbers counted were below average for late Summer.



Covid-19 restrictions permitting, we will be continuing our weekly counts again in 2021.