

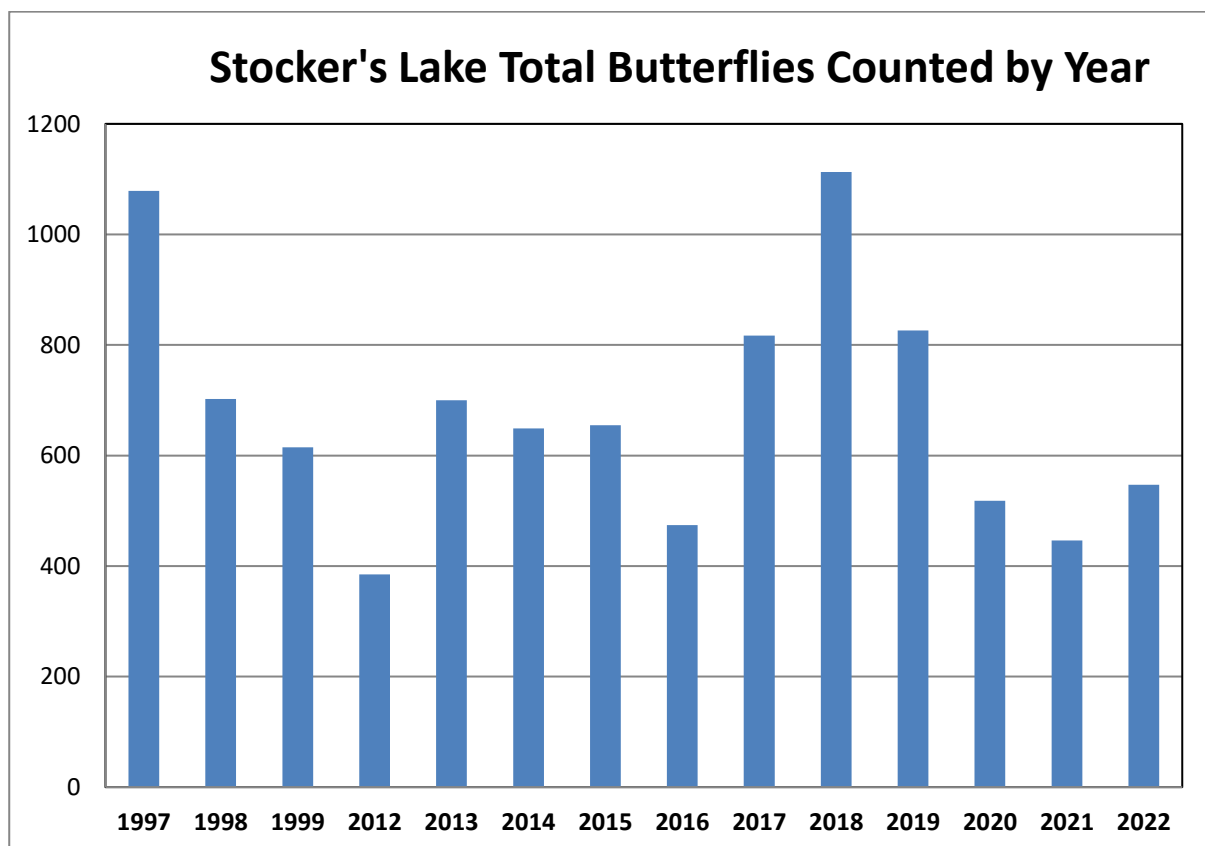
Butterflies at Stocker's Lake 2022

The recording scheme

Weekly counts of butterflies seen in 12 transects around the lake each week continued in 2022 with results entered into the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. This year we welcomed new participants Carole Holton and Simon Jones to join Barbara James and Cliff & Jacky Buckton but we missed Carrol Scott who sadly lost her battle with cancer.

Total butterflies counted by year

Given the hot, dry weather during the summer, which would normally be expected to be good for butterflies, 2022 must be classed as another disappointing year even though the total number recorded (547) was better than 2021 (446) and covid curtailed 2020 (518). Numbers were above average up to mid-June but then suddenly dropped below average for the remainder of the season leaving the final count below the medium-term average. Perhaps the drought and heatwave were too severe for butterflies and their food sources.



The national picture

The report on Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count held each summer notes a continuation of the worrying decline in the number of butterflies and moths across the UK, with the overall number of butterflies recorded per count again at its lowest level since the

Count began 13 years ago. There were some encouraging results for Gatekeeper, Common Blue, Holly Blue and Comma which all saw large increases compared to last year.

Butterfly species counted by year

The above increases were not reflected in our surveys, with Gatekeeper suffering a big decline while the Blues increased but only to smaller totals than in the recent past. The only species showing a steady increase is Marbled White, followed by Speckled Wood. It is also possible that Orange Tip and Brimstone are being under-recorded as they start to emerge prior to commencement of our counts.

The individual highlight of the year was a definite sighting of Purple Hairstreak by Simon Jones, a first since our recording began.

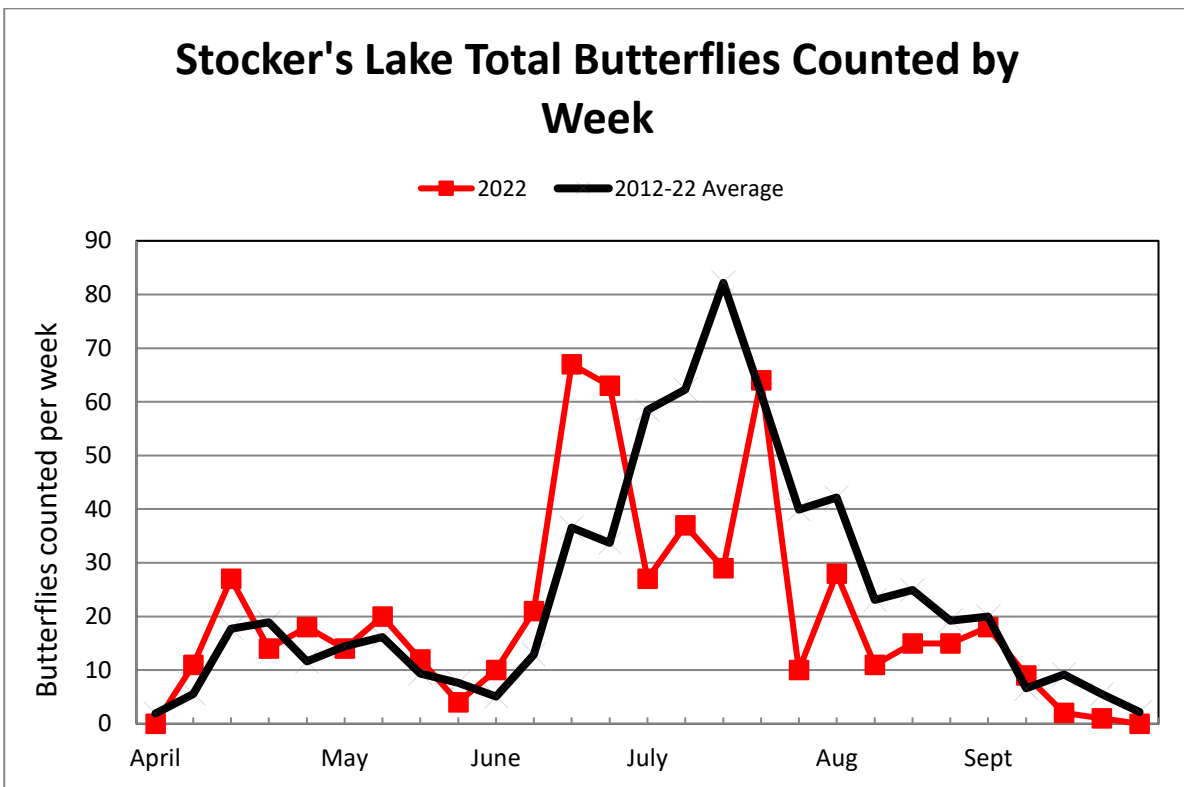
It will be interesting to see how the active management of land around the reserve affects future butterfly numbers and diversity. Currently, butterflies are not considered in the management plan but it is hoped that they will benefit, particularly if the cattle grazing results in improved diversity of flora in the meadows.

	1997	1998	1999	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Small White	286	168	104	52	218	118	94	86	109	358	170	115	81	107
Meadow Brown	96	88	64	141	48	113	137	49	235	154	126	115	66	94
Speckled Wood	9	34	46	25	41	66	49	55	64	123	68	29	43	85
Orange Tip	18	30	11	8	52	28	24	38	38	47	58	6	33	42
Large White	85	60	25	30	111	48	67	58	60	136	103	50	49	34
Green-veined White	102	24	20	10	25	29	47	34	21	69	13	43	25	32
Marbled white	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	2	12	5	2	19	13	28
Red Admiral	10	5	7	44	0	15	8	17	50	16	35	30	22	20
Peacock	36	19	24	7	70	76	37	19	13	23	16	25	22	19
Brimstone	0	3	2	6	4	19	22	9	10	18	35	2	17	18
Comma	13	8	6	26	23	10	14	17	52	24	28	19	12	14
Small Skipper	67	37	90	2	0	6	3	7	7	5	22	10	13	11
Gatekeeper	152	142	166	14	41	46	92	27	66	39	57	30	33	11
Small Tortoiseshell	139	51	14	5	49	57	31	20	15	5	4	5	6	7
Essex Skipper	31	17	5	0	0	3	0	0	0	4	11	0	0	6
Holly Blue	6	3	5	1	7	0	8	12	8	27	22	5	2	6
Common Blue	13	4	4	3	2	2	9	1	4	18	17	5	3	5
Ringlet	0	1	0	5	7	4	4	18	49	36	19	7	4	3
Large Skipper	5	8	16	0	0	2	2	3	0	1	7	2	0	2
Painted Lady	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	10	0	2	1
Small Heath	2	0	3	4	1	5	0	0	0	4	3	0	0	1
Purple Hairstreak	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

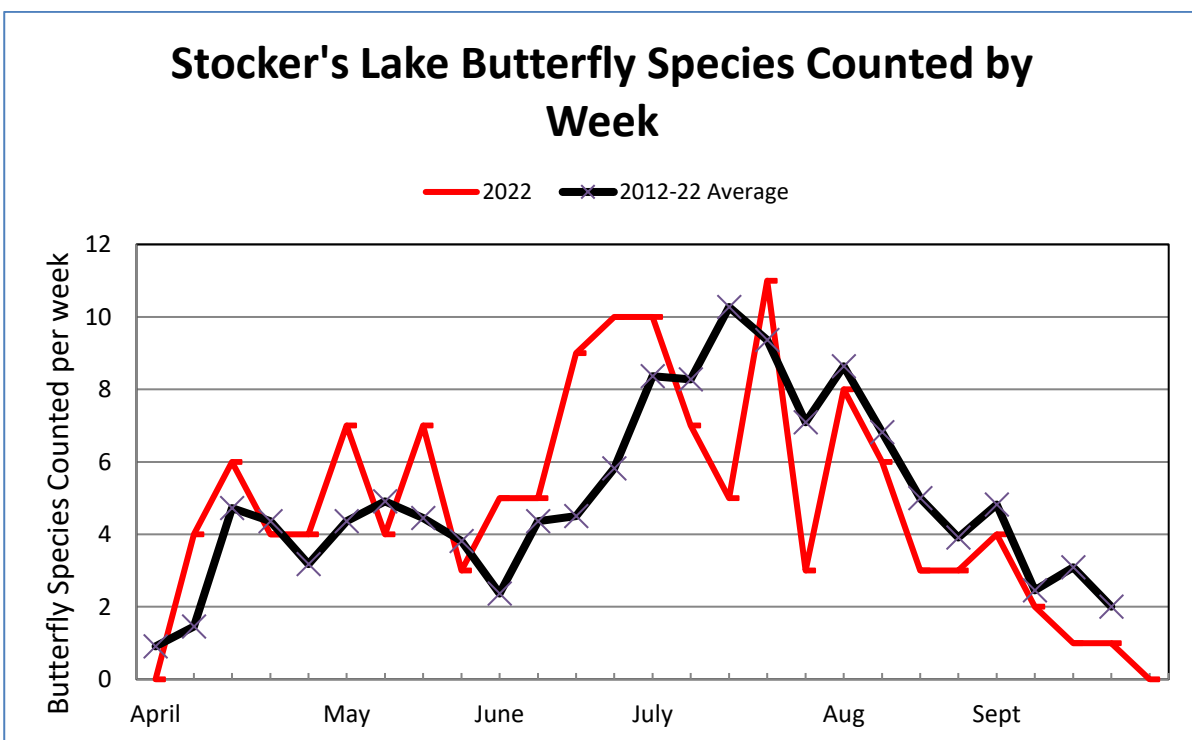
2012-22 weekly data

The chart below shows the total number of butterflies counted each week between April and September in 2022 and the average for 2012-22. It demonstrates that the season started well

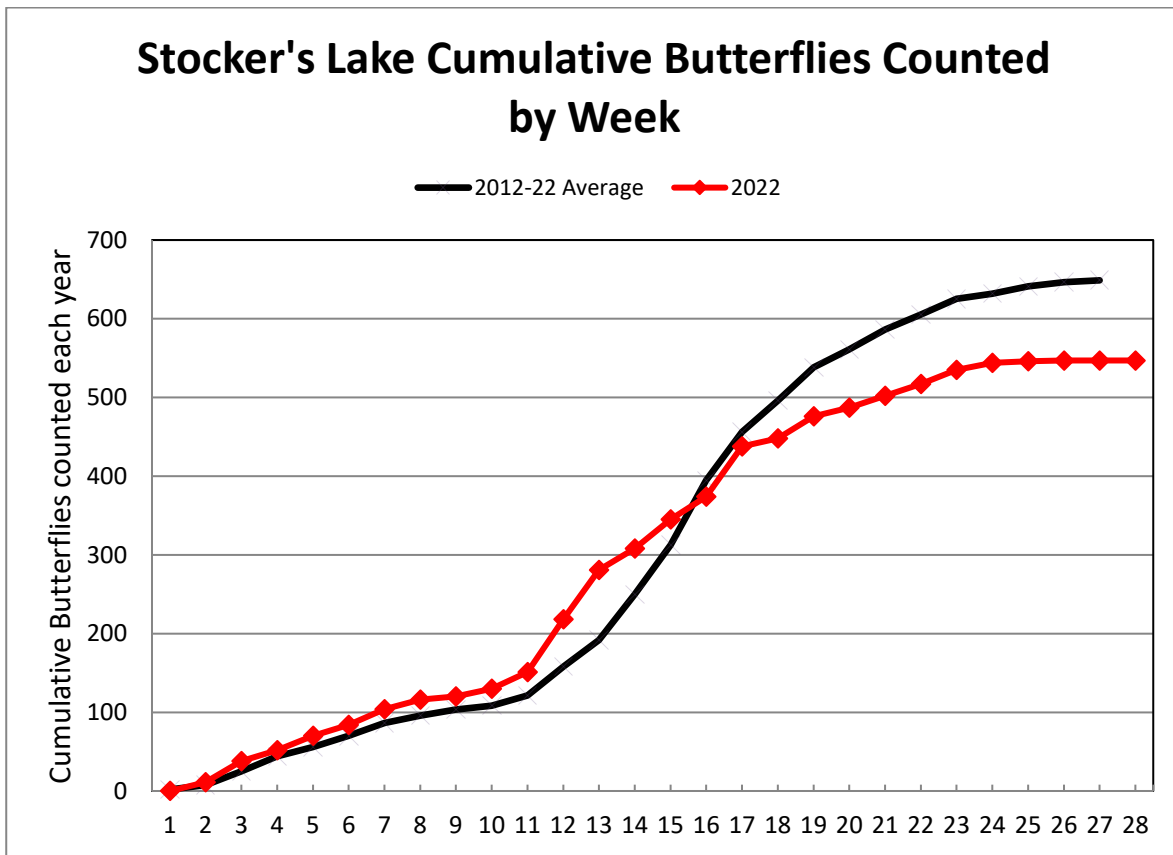
and finished badly compared to the 2012-2021 average, this changeover coinciding with 3 consecutive very low counts in early July which normally marks the annual peak in numbers.



This distribution was mirrored by the number of different species recorded each week as shown below.



As would be expected, the chart for cumulative butterflies counted also confirms the trend described above with an encouraging first half ending in disappointment.



We will be continuing our weekly counts again in 2023.

Some photographs taken at Stocker's Lake in 2022:



Purple Hairstreak (Simon Jones)



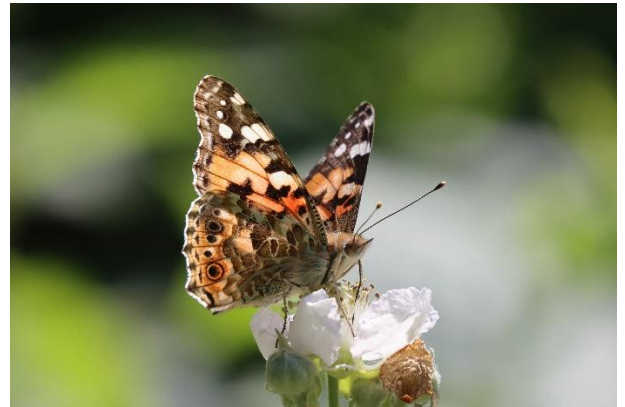
Comma



Speckled Wood



Small Tortoiseshell



Painted Lady



Essex Skipper



Small Heath



Small Skipper



Marbled White