



FRIENDS OF MARKSTAKES COMMON

ANNUAL REPORT 2016 - 17

Eighth Annual Report

Chairman – Rupert Hall

Treasurer/Membership – William Coleman

Secretary – Jacqui Hutson

Lewes D.C. Ranger – Thyone Outram

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Chairman's Summary

Having created significant open areas since commencing operations, the volunteers are not clearing further open areas on the Common for the time being. The focus of activity has moved to maintaining the current glades and open areas. With the increased number of volunteers on Monday mornings we are just about managing although inevitably some corners can remain overgrown for a while before we can return. The benefit of the maintenance over the long term is clear with both the Heather Glade and the Corner Glade showing fine stands of heather.

Grass cover is well established on the northern bracken field and the bracken cover is getting progressively weaker with each year. Birch seedlings are a perennial problem but we now have two excellent tools for dealing with the larger saplings. The challenge is not to be too tidy when tackling the invasive species as some variety in ground cover is beneficial for the wildlife.

We work closely with Lewes District Council and they provide invaluable support in maintaining the Common. They are responsible for maintaining the safety of the site and if overhanging branches or fallen trees present a hazard they will take appropriate action. The Community Ranger Dan Fagan left for pastures new and I am glad to report that Thyone Outram, who has been involved with the Common as Assistant Community Ranger for several years, has stepped into the role of Community Ranger. Jasmine Owen has recently been appointed as Assistant Community Ranger. It is great to have the continuity in the staff involved with the Common and I would like to thank the Council for their continued support.

Survey work in 2016 continued with Butterflies, Birds and Reptiles all being surveyed. Bird species numbers are down slightly but overall the populations of woodland birds still seem to be healthy. Numbers of butterflies recorded were down significantly which was in line with national trends driven by a cold spring (see Ian Seccombe's report for further details.) Hopefully the warm spring of 2017 will continue and we shall see a recovery during the year. The reptile survey confirmed that despite ad hoc sightings being reduced there are still Adders on the site although in reduced numbers. Surveying of reptiles will be continuing during 2017. I would like to thank Ian Seccombe, Ian Woolsey and Dan Rolt for their survey work last year.

Rupert Hall

Treasurer's Summary

Our major expenditure in 2016 was on a new piece of equipment to help us with the removal of small trees, principally the Birch. It is known as a 'Tree Popper' and has been introduced from Australia, where they were invented, by the company Nature

Conservancy Services. We had a demonstration on site and the effectiveness was immediately obvious. By gripping the stem of a plant between the main arms of the tool, the tree is readily extracted by a simple downward lever action. It has already proved to be an excellent purchase. Although quite heavy, this contributes to the gripping action.

Other expenses are for small tools, except for an exceptional item of £16 bank charges introduced by the Unity Trust Bank. We have now moved the account to the Santander Bank where it runs free of charge. Income is from Subscriptions and donations for which we are grateful.

Thank you to all our Friends and others for their continued support.

FRIENDS OF MARKSTAKES COMMON

Year 01/03/16 to 28/02/17

<u>INCOME & EXPENDITURE</u>			
<u>INCOME</u>		<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
Subscriptions	22.00	TOOLS	330.92
Donations	8.00	PRINTING	0.00
Grants	0.00	POSTAGES	0.00
Other	0.00	Other	18.00
Total	30.00	Total	348.92
		Expenditure over Income	318.92

BANK RECONCILIATION			
Opening Bank Balance 01.03.16	502.89	Expenditure over Income	-318.92
		Closing Balance	
		28.02.17	183.97

<u>BALANCE SHEET</u>		
ASSETS		
	BANK BALANCES	183.97
	OTHER ASSETS	
TOTAL ASSETS		183.97
LIABILITIES		
	CREDITORS	
	OTHER LIABILITIES	
TOTAL LIABILITIES		0.00
NET ASSETS(LIABILITIES)		183.97

Ranger's Report

Markstakes Common is looking beautiful as it always does in spring around the AGM with carpets of wood anemones and bluebells flowering.



It has been another year of continuing the management of the Common in a similar way to last year. Lewes District Council's continuing thanks go to the Friends for all the work that has been done, They have been helped this year by contractors have been brought in for the larger tree works and Brighton Conservation Volunteers who once again helped with clearing vegetation from the pond.

The night time torch survey of the High Pond once again showed that Great Crested Newts are using the high pond. We never see high numbers at the survey, usually between 5 and 10 individuals but there is evidence that they are breeding in the pond. There are large numbers of the more common palmate newts recorded here every year.

Slow worms, grass snakes and at least one adder bred this year since newborns (neonates) of all these species were found on site which is very good news. The chairman's report gives more on the reptile survey.

A change of structure at Lewes District Council with the start of the process of sharing services with Eastbourne Borough Council, meant an opportunity to show round the new Chief Executive and the Director of Service Delivery who were both very impressed with the Common and the work of the Friends.

Dan Fagan our Community Ranger left in December for a job at Natural England. We were joined this month by a new Assistant Community Ranger, Jasmine Owen



Thyone Outram
Lewes District Council
Community Ranger

Survey Reports and Results

Bryophytes

Records update

In the Spring 2016 newsletter I gave an account of the mosses and liverworts recorded up to that date - a total of 59. In February this year I did some further searching and added six new species to the list, bringing the total to 65. With such tiny plants it is likely that there are many more species to be discovered so maybe the list will continue to increase as more searches are done.

Most bryophytes do not have common or English names, unlike most of our flowering plants. However, The Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, requires that such names are given for protected species of plants and animals. The names also feature in Biological Action Plans. So English names have been assigned but they have no botanical nomenclatural basis and are meaningless to bryologists abroad.

The Grid References are given to the first example found of each species on the Common. Most of the species are widespread and common, although some are rare on the site.

Bryophytes on Markstakes Common (2011-2017)			
Scientific name	English name	Substrate	Grid Reference
Amblystegium serpens	Creeping Feather-moss	Tree bases and soil	TQ396179
Atrichum undulatum	Common Smoothcap	Soil	TQ397180
Aulacomnium androgynum	Bud-headed Groove-moss	Rotting tree stump	TQ397178
Brachythecium rutabulum	Rough-stalked Feather-moss	Tree bases, soil, logs	TQ397178
Brachythecium velutinum,	Velvet Feather-moss	On elders	TQ397178
Bryum capillare	Capillary Thread-moss	On trees and walls	TQ398183
Calliergonella cuspidata	Pointed Spear-moss	In grass	TQ398178
Calypogeia arguta	Notched Pouchwort	Sides of ditches	TQ397182
Calypogeia fissa	Common Pouchwort	On rotten logs	TQ396179
Campylopus introflexus	Heath Star Moss	On soil	TQ398179
Ceratodon purpureus	Redshank	Bonfire site	TQ397179
Cololejeunea minutissima	Minute Pouncewort	On ash	TQ399183

<i>Cryphaea heteromalla</i>	Lateral <i>Cryphaea</i>	On trees	TQ398178
<i>Dicranella heteromalla</i>	Silky Forklet-moss	On soil and stumps	TQ398178
<i>Dicranoweisia cirrata</i>	Common Pincushion	On trees	TQ399180
<i>Dicranum scoparium</i>	Broom Fork-mos	On trees	TQ397182
<i>Didymodon insulanus</i>	Cylindric Beard-moss	Soil by stream	TQ397182
<i>Eurhynchium striatum</i>	Common Striated Feather-moss	On soil	TQ396176
<i>Fissidens bryoides</i>	Lesser Pocket-moss	On bank of pond	TQ396180
<i>Fissidens taxifolius</i>	Common Pocket-moss	Edge of ditch	TQ396176
<i>Frullania dilatata</i>	Dilated Scalewort	On trees	TQ397180
<i>Funaria hygrometrica</i>	Common Cord-moss	Bonfire site	TQ397179
<i>Homalothecium sericeum</i>	Silky Wall Feather-moss	Flint wall	TQ398183
<i>Hypnum andoi</i>	Mammilate Plait-moss	On trees	TQ398181
<i>Hypnum cupressiforme</i>	Cypress-leaved Plait-moss	On trees	TQ397180
<i>Hypnum jutlandicum</i>	Heath Plait-moss	On soil	TQ397179
<i>Hypnum resupinatum</i>	Supine Plait-moss	On trees	TQ399183
<i>Isothecium myosuroides</i>	Slender Mouse-tail Moss	On tree bases	TQ397180
<i>Kindbergia praelonga</i>	Common Feather-moss	On tree bases	TQ397178
<i>Lophocolea bidentata</i>	Bifid Crestwort	On logs	TQ398179
<i>Lophocolea heterophylla</i>	Variable-leaved crestwort	On logs	TQ398179
<i>Metzgeria fruticulosa</i>	Bluish Veilwort	On trees	TQ397177
<i>Metzgeria furcata</i>	Forked Veilwort	On trees	TQ397180
<i>Metzgeria temperata</i>	Whiskered Veilwort	On trees	TQ397177
<i>Mnium hornum</i>	Swan's-neck Thyme-moss	On soil	TQ398181
<i>Neckera complanata</i>	Flat Neckera	On flint wall	TQ392178
<i>Orthotrichum affine</i>	Wood Bristle-moss	On trees	TQ399183
<i>Orthotrichum diaphanum</i>	White-tipped Bristle-moss	On trees	TQ397178
<i>Orthotrichum lyellii</i>	Lyell's Bristle-moss	On trees	TQ396176
<i>Pellia epiphylla</i>	Overleaf Pellia	On stream bank	TQ397182
<i>Plagiochila asplenioides</i>	Greater Featherwort	On bank	TQ399180
<i>Plagiomnium undulatum</i>	Hart's-tongue Thyme-moss	On soil	TQ396176

Plagiothecium curvifolium	Curved Silk-moss	On rotting log	TQ399178
Plagiothecium nemorale	Woodsy Silk-moss	On bank of pond	TQ396180
Plagiothecium succulentum	Juicy Silk-moss	On soil	TQ398178
Pohlia nutans	Nodding Thread-moss	On soil	TQ398178
Polytrichastrum formosum	Bank Haircap	On soil	TQ396182
Polytrichum juniperinum	Juniper Haircap	On soil	TQ397179
Polytrichum strictum	Strict Haircap	On soil	TQ397179
Pseudoscleropodium purum	Neat Feather-moss	On soil	TQ398178
Pseudotaxiphyllum elegans	Elegant Silk-moss	On soil	TQ399177
Radula complanata	Even Scalewort	On trees	TQ398183
Rhynchostegium confertum	Clustered Feather-moss	On wall	TQ397183
Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus	Springy Turf-moss	On soil	TQ398178
Sphagnum denticulatum	Cow-horn Bog-moss	On soil	TQ397177
Sphagnum fallax	Flat-topped Bog-moss	On soil	TQ399182
Sphagnum fimbriatum	Fringed Bog-moss	On soil	TQ398178
Tetraphis pellucida	Pellucid Four-tooth Moss	On stump	TQ397178
Thuidium tamariscinum	Common Tamarisk-moss	On soil	TQ398178
Tortula muralis	Wall Screw-moss	On flint wall	TQ398183
Trichodon cylindricus	Cylindric Ditrichum	On soil	TQ398178
Ulota bruchii	Bruch's Pincushion	On trees	TQ397178
Ulota crispa	Crisped Pincushion	On trees	TQ398179
Zygodon conoideus	Lesser Yoke-moss	On trees	TQ399180
Zygodon viridissimus	Green Yoke-moss	On wall top	TQ397183

Jacqui Hutson

Butterflies

Butterfly Transect at Markstakes Common: 2016 Summary



Photo: White Admiral by Ian Seccombe

Introduction

The Markstakes butterfly transect was walked on 24 of the 26 weeks specified by the United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) between the beginning of April and the end of September 2016. The recorders are Rupert Hall, Ian Seccombe and Ian Woolsey. Sightings of butterflies occurred on 23 transect walks. This is the fifth consecutive year of recording on this transect. Data have been submitted to UKBMS using Transect Walker.

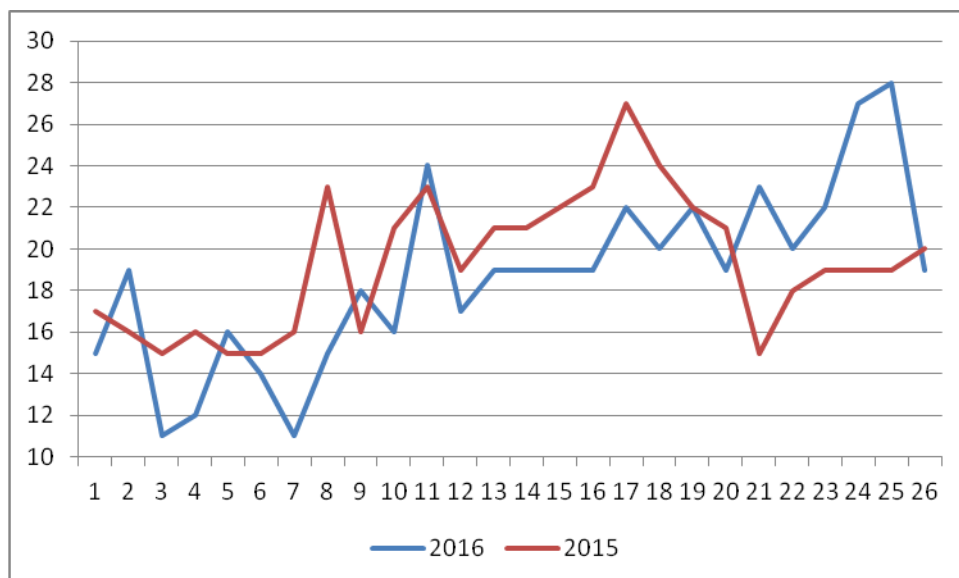
In the 23 weeks when recordings were made 344 butterflies were recorded. The UKBMS algorithm provides estimates for the missing weeks which gives a total *estimated* abundance of 356. Compared with recent years (530 in 2015, 602 in 2014 and 591 in 2013), 2016 was a very poor year for butterflies at Markstakes. Overall numbers have dropped by 35% compared with 2015 - itself a comparatively poor year - and by 43% compared with 2014, the best year. The number of species present has also dropped, from 25 in 2015 to 21 in 2016.

Of the 21 species present, eleven were represented by five or fewer individual butterflies, including six species for which we only had one record. Perhaps the most notable feature this year, apart from the large decline in overall numbers, was the disappearance of Small White, Green Veined White and Common Blue.

Overall, these results fit with the widespread view that 2016 was likely to be the worst year on record for British butterflies.¹ This was due, in part, to a mild winter followed by a cool spring. Chart 1 compares the temperature record for Markstakes in 2014 and 2016, illustrating that there was both a cooler spring and early summer. The cloud cover records also show that it was less sunny.

Chart 1 Temperature profile for Markstakes, 2014 and 2016*

* Values for missing weeks are interpolated



¹ See for example Patrick Barkham in the Guardian 15 July 2016 "2016 could be worst year on record for British butterflies"

Trends

With a few notable exceptions most species were present in smaller numbers compared with 2015. Numerically the largest declines were amongst Small Skippers (-23), Brimstones (-18), Gatekeeper (-32), Small Heath (-11) and Meadow Brown (-76). Meadow Brown continues to be the most abundant butterfly in Markstakes but this year's recording of 102 individuals is the third consecutive year of decline from a peak recording of 225 in 2013. Large White and Silver- Washed Fritillary have also experienced three consecutive years of decline. Comma (7), Small Copper (5), Holly Blue (4), White Admiral (4), Red Admiral (5), Orange Tip (3), Small Tortoiseshell (1), Small Heath (1) and Ringlet (1) all had very poor years again. In contrast Speckled Wood (32) had a better year and was one of the few species to record an increase.

For the full list of species recorded, and their abundance, over the five years see Annex.

As in previous years, a few species account for the majority of all the sightings. This year four species account for two-thirds (66%) of the total:

Meadow Brown	102
Peacock	48
Gatekeeper	45
Speckled Wood	32

Distribution

The records show a very uneven distribution of butterflies across Markstakes. Section G (the Mire) had 12 of the 21 species present and 38% (132) of all recordings. Section 5 (which includes the butterfly glades) had 13 species and nearly 15% of recordings. In contrast sections C, I and J had only two or three species and less than five records each.

Table 2 shows the number of species and butterflies in each section of the transect in 2016. This distribution appears to be getting more concentrated over time. In 2016 almost two thirds (64%) of all butterflies were seen in just three sections (sections E, F and G). This compares with 57% in 2014 and 56% in 2015.

Table 2 Number and distribution of species by transect section, 2016

Section	No. of species	No. of butterflies	% total
A	6	8	2.3
B	7	13	3.8
C	3	4	1.2
D	10	31	9.0
E	13	51	14.8
F	10	37	10.8
G	12	132	38.4
H	8	21	6.1
I	2	2	0.6
J	2	3	0.9
K	9	27	7.8
L	6	15	4.4
Total		344	100.0

Large White, Meadow Brown and Peacock are the most widespread species. Large White was recorded in 11 of the 12 sections while Meadow Brown and Peacock appeared in 10 and nine sections respectively.

Chart 2 below shows how the number of butterflies recorded in each section has varied from year to year over the past four years demonstrating the year-on-year decline in butterfly numbers in sections F and G (the Mire). Numerically the largest decline in 2016 was in sections H, L and E (the butterfly glades).

Chart 2 Abundance by transect section, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016

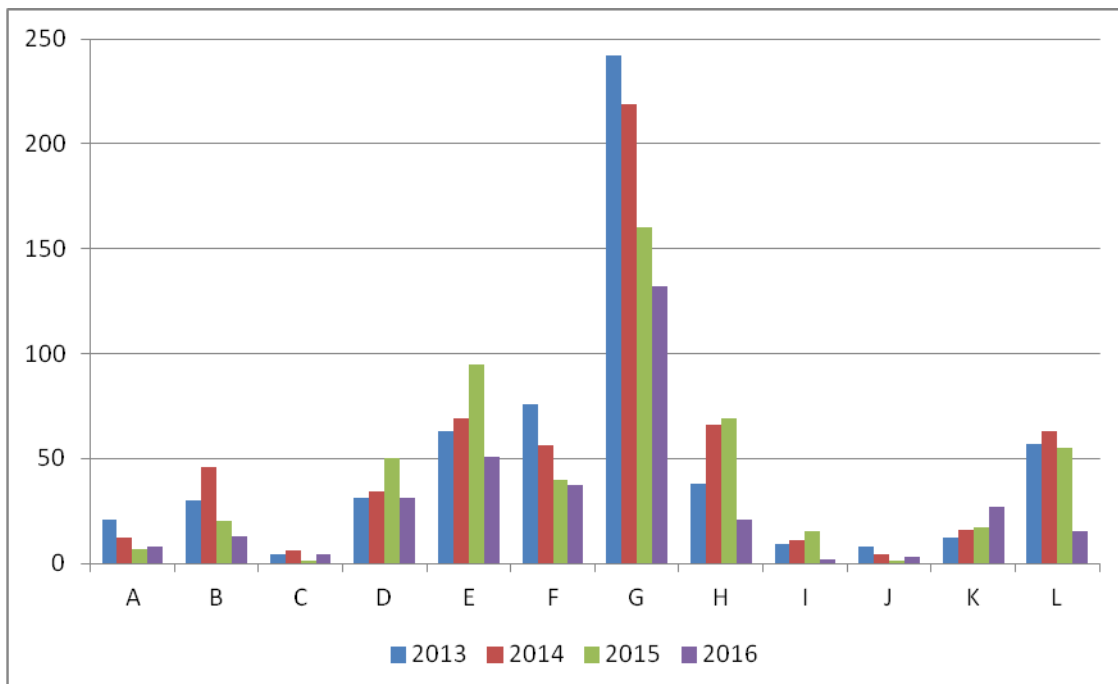
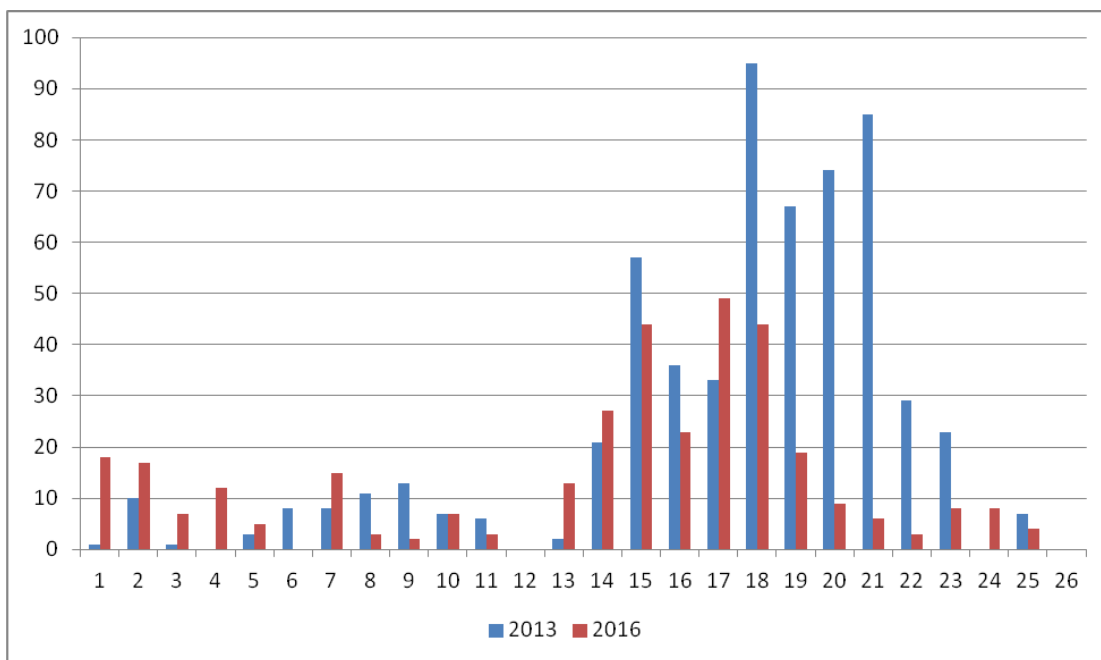


Chart 3 below compares the number of butterflies recorded each week in 2013 and 2016. It shows that, while the early season was better than in 2013, the low overall numbers are mainly due to a poor showing in the second half of the season. Recordings in April (54) were similar to recent years but May (23) and June (12) were particularly poor. Indeed, fewer butterflies were recorded in the whole of June than in any single week of April. Numbers again peaked in July, which accounted for nearly half the total records. Numbers dropped off rapidly from mid August. Only 23 butterflies were recorded over the last month of the period, fewer than in the first two weeks of April.

Chart 3 Number of butterflies by week, 2013 and 2016



Birds

Our survey for 2016 showed some 42 species which was 1 down on the 43 seen on the last survey in 2015. This year I carried out a similar number of surveys, 10 in total, starting in January and ending in December.

Species	Common Name	Distribution	2014	2015	2016
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Mallard	Seen on high pond	P	P	P
<i>Milvus milvus</i>	Red Kite	Not seen this year	NS	NS	NS
<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Buzzard	Regularly seen overhead	O(4)	O(3)	O(3)
<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Sparrow hawk	Not seen this year	P	NS	NS
<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Kestrel	1 male seen several times hunting	P	P	P
<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Pheasant	Occasional birds seen in woods	P	P	P
<i>Scolopax Rusticola</i>	Woodcock	Seen near the Mire	NS	NS	P
<i>Larus Canus</i>	Common Gull	Group seen overflying	O(4)	O(6)	O(3)
<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Herring Gull	Not seen	O(3)	O(3)	NS
<i>Columba Oenas</i>	Stock Dove	Male heard calling several times	P	P	P
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Wood Pigeon	At least 6 breeding territories	7	6	6
<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Cuckoo	Not heard this year	P	NS	NS
<i>Strix Aluco</i>	Tawny Owl	One bird seen	P	P	P
<i>Alcedo Atthis</i>	Kingfisher	Not seen	NS	NS	NS
<i>Apus apus</i>	Swift	Not seen this year	NS	NS	NS
<i>Picus Viridis</i>	Green Woodpecker	Occasionally seen or heard	P	P	P
<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Greater Spotted Woodpecker	2 confirmed breeding territories	2	2	2
<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Swallow	Seen overflying	O(4)	O(7)	O(4)
<i>Delichon urbica</i>	House Martin	Occasionally seen overhead	O(4)	O(2)	O(5)
<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Grey Wagtail	Not seen this year	NS	P	NS
<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Pied Wagtail	Seen this year several times	P	P	P
<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Wren	At least 6 breeding territories	8	8	7
<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Duncock	At least 1 breeding territories	1	1	1
<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Robin	At least 7 breeding territories	9	8	7
<i>Turdus merula</i>	Blackbird	At least 9 breeding territories	9	10	9
<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Fieldfare	Migrant group seen	O(5)	O(7)	O(5)
<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Song Thrush	At least 3 breeding territories	4	4	3
<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Redwing	Migrant group seen feeding	O(10)	O(14)	O(20)
<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Mistle Thrush	Seen several times	P	P	P
<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Whitethroat	2 possible breeding territory	2	2	2
<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Blackcap	At least 2 breeding territories	3	3	2
<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Chiffchaff	At least 7 breeding territories	8	7	7
<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Willow Warbler	Not seen this year	NS	NS	NS
<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Goldcrest	2 possible breeding pairs	2	2	2
<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Long tailed Tit	At least 2 family parties seen	2	3	2
<i>Parus ater</i>	Coal Tit	Occasional sightings of 2 pairs	2	2	2
<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	Blue Tit	At least 23 breeding territories	27	25	23
<i>Parus major</i>	Great Tit	At least 8 breeding territories	9	8	8
<i>Sitta europaea</i>	Nuthatch	At least 3 breeding territories	3	3	3
<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	Treecreeper	At least 2 breeding territories	2	2	2
<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Jay	At least 1 breeding territories	1	1	1
<i>Pica pica</i>	Magpie	1 possible breeding territory	1	P	1
<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Jackdaw	At least 2 breeding territories	2	2	2
<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Rook	Seen overflying	O(5)	O(7)	O(6)

<i>Corvus corone</i>	Carrion Crow	At least 2 breeding territories	2	2	2
<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Starling	Small flocks seen during year	O(7)	O(14)	O(7)
<i>Passer Domesticus</i>	House Sparrow	Small group near stables	P	P	P
<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Chaffinch	At least 3 breeding territories	5	3	3
<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Greenfinch	Not seen	NS	NS	NS
<i>Carduelis Carduelis</i>	Goldfinch	Seen feeding on grasses in mire	O(3)	O(2)	O(3)
<i>Carduelis Cannabina</i>	Linnet	Not seen	O(3)	NS	NS
<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Bullfinch	Only 1 pair seen several times	1	1	1
Totals =			45	43	42
Recorders			RH/IW	IW	IW
Number = breeding pairs; P = Present; O = Overflying (no.); NS = Not seen					

Recorders were Rupert Hall and Ian Woolsey in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and Ian Woolsey in 2014, 2015 and 2016

Amongst the more notable breeding successes this year were the **Blue Tits** with at least twenty three breeding territories, **Blackbirds** with 9, **Great Tits** with 7, **Robins and Wrens** with at least seven breeding territories each, **Chiffchaffs** had at least seven territories but **Chaffinches** were only three. Again several pairs of **Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, Nuthatches** and **Tree Creepers** appeared to have been successful.

Again as a result of the extended survey period, we were again able to pick up winter migrants and the sightings of **Fieldfares and Redwings** helped to increase the number of species seen.

Note:-

Total species seen over last 8 surveys:-

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
35	45	46	47	46	45	43	42

Ian Woolsey

Reptiles

Report on Reptile Survey results in 2016

Introduction

In 2011 and 2012 the reptiles were surveyed which demonstrated that the site was an excellent site for Slow worms and Grass snakes and a good site for Common lizards and Adders. Following a gap of 5 years it was decided to conduct a reptile survey in 2016 to assess trends in reptile populations. This was driven in part by an impression that reptile populations, particularly Adders, had declined.

Methodology

There were 52 refugia the majority of which were roof felt placed in broadly the same locations as had been placed in the previous surveys. These locations had been identified as promising in 2011.

Surveys were conducted approximately every two weeks, a total of 20 times between 16th March and 28th November of which 4 were partial surveys. No reptiles were recorded on the 16th March and there were no reptiles recorded in the three surveys conducted in November. There were 16 surveys between the 4th April and the 19th October of which 4 were partial surveys.

Results

Reptiles were found under 44 of the 52 locations at some point during the season.

A total of 233 reptile sightings were recorded during the year. Excluding Partial surveys an average of 16.3 reptiles were recorded on each survey. The average for Slow worms was 9.62 and the average for Grass snakes was 5.5.

Peak count occurred on the 31st August when 48 reptiles comprising 16 Grass snakes, 25 Slow worms and 7 Adders.

Common lizards were rarely encountered with three sightings over the entire season.

Interpreting the results

The table below formed part of the report prepared by Barry Kemp in 2012 and details the Key Reptile Site Criteria.

	Low Population Score 1	Good Population Score 2	Excellent Population Score 3
Adder	<5	5-10	>10
Grass Snake	<5	5-10	>10
Slow Worm	<5	5-20	>20
Lizard	<5	5-20	>20

Based on the results from this year's survey one could argue that Markstake Common remains an excellent site for Slow Worms and Grass Snakes and a good site for Adders. Based on this year's observations one would struggle to argue for a good population of Common lizards.

Comparisons with 2011 and 2012.

In 2011 there were 43 refugia in the survey and this was increased by a further 17 in 2012. Surveys were conducted weekly between 27th March and 12th Oct in 2012 with a shorter survey period in 2011.

The average number of reptiles observed per survey in 2011 was 23 and the average number of reptiles observed in 2012 was 35. These numbers are considerably higher.

The Table below shows the peak observations for 2011 and 2012 with 2016 included for comparison.

	Date	Peak count	2016
Adders	16 August 2011	6	7
Grass snakes	2 nd August 2012	29	16
Slow worms	9 th August 2012	59	25
Common Lizards	2 nd August 2012	5	1

With the exception of Adders, the peak counts for 2016 are considerably lower than in 2011/2012. The averages are also lower.

Conclusion

There may be factors that have led to lower counts this year. Surveyor experience may be one as one of the surveyors in 2012 was particularly adept at finding reptile in close vicinity. Increased disturbance or adverse weather conditions may also be a factor. It is probably too soon to draw conclusions and the survey work will be repeated during 2017 but we should be mindful of the needs of reptiles when undertaking conservation work on the Common.

Rupert Hall