



# FRIENDS OF MARKSTAKES COMMON

ANNUAL REPORT 2013 - 14

# Fifth Annual Report

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**Chairman – Rupert Hall**

**Treasurer/Membership – William Coleman**

**Secretary – Jacqui Hutson**

**Lewes D.C. Rangers – Dan Fagan and Thyone Outram**

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## *Chairman's Summary*

This last year has struck me as a continuation of the efforts of prior years rather than an expansion in new directions. There is broad agreement between the Friends and the Council on the overall strategy for the site which is to re-establish open areas to recreate the mosaic of habitats that were there originally.

The Monday morning group has continued their work expanding the Ride, the Heather glade and the Corner glade. These new areas still look rather raw but our experience in other glades makes me confident that they will be colonized in due course by grass, heather and other flowers. The Heather glade in particular has benefited from the cages put up to prevent winter grazing and we now have well established patches of mature heather. Much of the summer work is taken up with maintenance of the newly cleared sites and my subjective impression is that although birch seedlings continue to appear in large numbers

bracken and bramble have weakened to an extent that makes their control easier.

The Higher Level Stewardship grant has funded continued work by contractors and this has led to the long planned creation of an area of coppiced woodland. This is necessarily disruptive in the initial stages but we are hopeful that it will add another distinct habitat to the site. The expectation is for a significant amount of brambles to colonise the area but given the open character of the site this should lead to flowering and fruit which should be beneficial for butterflies and Dormice.

The mapping work to identify the various sectors of the site was completed in 2013 and the Council has kindly lent their expert in Geographic Information systems to produce a detailed map. Unfortunately the GIS expert has had a lot of calls on his time which meant that the issuance of the map itself was somewhat delayed but is now available. This provides a very useful record of the various habitats on the site together with locations of bat boxes, dormice boxes and veteran trees.

There has been less survey work undertaken in the last year. The reptile survey work was concluded last year and the results were the basis of an independent report prepared for the council confirming that the site is very important, especially for slow worms. The bird survey and the butterfly surveys continue and these are discussed later. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to those whose continued efforts give us an invaluable record of what is on the site.

It is now a little over five years since the Friends of Markstakes Common commenced operations with the support of the Council. We have over that time made great strides both in restoring the site and improving our understanding of what can be found there.

Rupert Hall

### *Treasurer's Summary*

The 'Friends of Markstakes' have supported us again this year with their subscriptions and we also acknowledge the help and support of the Lewes District Council through their services and provision of tools and advice.

Our expenses have been minimal and our funds will be used, as appropriate, to support our work on the common as we proceed with our surveys and building of our knowledge of this valuable site.

**FRIENDS OF MARKSTAKES COMMON**

**Year 01/03/13 to 28/02/14**

<b><u>INCOME &amp; EXPENDITURE</u></b>			
<b>Year 01/03/13 to 28/02/14</b>			
<b><u>INCOME</u></b>		<b><u>EXPENDITURE</u></b>	
<b>Subscriptions</b>	42.00	<b>TOOLS</b>	0.00
<b>Donations</b>	29.00	<b>PRINTING</b>	0.00
<b>Grants</b>	0.00	<b>POSTAGES</b>	0.00
<b>Other</b>	0.00	<b>Other</b>	10.00
<b>Total</b>	71.00	<b>Total</b>	10.00
		Income over Expenditure	61.00
	<u>71.00</u>		<u>71.00</u>

<b>BANK RECONCILIATION</b>			
Opening Bank Balance 01.03.13	402.57	Income over Expenditure	61.00
	<u>402.57</u>	Closing Balance	
		28.02.14	<u>463.57</u>

<b><u>BALANCE SHEET</u></b>		
<b>ASSETS</b>		
BANK BALANCES		463.57
OTHER ASSETS		
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		463.57
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
CREDITORS		
OTHER LIABILITIES		
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		0.00
<b>NET ASSETS(LIABILITIES)</b>		463.57

William Coleman

## *Ranger's Report*

2013 brought out the best in the Markstakes Management since the glades and cleared bracken areas have benefitted insects of all kinds. 2013 was an exceptional year for insects – the late hot summer meant that many butterflies had one more breeding cycle in the year than in an average summer. The result was glades full of insects –see the butterfly records for the year.

Sadly the dormice do not seem to have returned to Markstakes Common after the drop in numbers with the cold spring and very wet early summer in 2012. The Common is part of the National Dormouse monitoring project and Jon Wood , Rupert Hall and I monitored the dormouse boxes in 2013. The monitoring will continue in 2014.

In December we welcomed a new Community Ranger, Dan Fagan, to Lewes District Council. Dan Ross gained a job with Lewes District Council as the Assistant Parks Manager. He misses the hands-on work on the reserves, especially Markstakes Common, but he is still in the department – just a little higher up the hierarchy. So Dan replaces Dan (is it a Council policy to only employ Rangers called Dan?). Dan Fagan was working for Kent wildlife Trust managing reserves and brings a good deal of knowledge with him and has already fallen under the spell of the Common.

Once again, we were joined by Brighton Conservation Volunteers and the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service during the year who worked at, pulling bracken, clearing dangerous branches and clearing vegetation and silt from the High pond. Lewes District Council would like to thank them and also a group from Lloyds Bank who spent the day working on the coppice area.

Especially, of course, the Council would like to thank the Friends of Markstakes Common for all their hard work over the last year – practical work, surveying, organisational work, reporting incidents and all the energy and commitment that the group put in the management of the Common.

Thyone Outram

## *Survey Reports and Results*

### *Birds*

Our survey for 2013 showed some 46 species which was 1 down on the 47 seen on the last survey in 2012. Given the fact that, again, several species that are often seen, were not seen this year, the potential is there for the total species seen to exceed 50. This year we carried out a similar number of surveys, 10 in total, starting in January and ending in December.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Distribution</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<i>Anser Anser</i>	Greylag Geese	Not seen this year	O(3)	NS	NS
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Mallard	Seen on both ponds	P	P	P
<i>Ardea Cinerea</i>	Grey Heron	Not seen this year	NS	NS	NS
<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Peregrine Falcon	Not seen	NS	NS	NS
<i>Milvus milvus</i>	Red Kite			O(1)	NS
<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Buzzard	Regularly seen overhead	O(2)	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>Larus Ridibundus</i>	Black Headed Gull	Not seen this year	O(3)	NS)	NS
<i>Larus Fuscus</i>	Lesser Black Backed Gull	Not seen this year	NS	O(1)	NS
<i>Larus Canus</i>	Common Gull	Group seen overflying	O(5)	O(3)	O(3)
<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Herring Gull	Group seen overflying	O(3)	O(9)	O(8)
<i>Columba Oenas</i>	Stock Dove	Male heard calling several times	NS	P	P
<i>Columba Livia</i>	Feral Pigeon	Not seen this year	O(2)	NS	NS

<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Wood Pigeon	At least 8 breeding territories	6	7	8
<i>Streptopelia decacto</i>	Collared Dove	Not seen this year	NS	NS	NS
<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Cuckoo	Neither heard or seen	NS	NS	NS
<i>Strix Aluco</i>	Tawny Owl	Two birds heard calling	NS	P	P
<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	Nightjar	Not seen or heard	NS	NS	NS
<i>Apus apus</i>	Swift	Group overflying on migration	NS	O(9)	O(4)
<i>Picus Viridis</i>	Green Woodpecker	Occasionally seen or heard	P	P	P
<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Greater Spotted Woodpecker	1 confirmed breeding territory possibly 2	2	2	2
<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Swallow	Seen overflying	O(5)	O(5)	O(4)
<i>Delichon urbica</i>	House Martin	Occasionally seen overhead	O(6)	O(6)	O(4)
<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Grey Wagtail	Not seen this year	NS	NS	NS
<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Pied Wagtail	Not seen this year	P	NS	P
<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Wren	At least 8 breeding territories	10	10	8
<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Dunnock	At least 1 breeding territories	1	1	1
<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Robin	At least 9 breeding territories	9	10	9
<i>Turdus merula</i>	Blackbird	At least 9 breeding territories	9	8	9
<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Fieldfare	Migrant group seen	O(22)	O(3)	O(5)
<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Song Thrush	At least 4 breeding territories	4	5	4
<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Redwing	Migrant group seen feeding	O(24)	O(11)	O(17)
<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Mistle Thrush	Seen several times	NS	P	P
<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Whitethroat	2 possible breeding territory	1	1	2
<i>Sylvia borin</i>	Garden Warbler	Not seen this year	1	1	NS
<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Blackcap	At least 3 breeding territories	4	3	3
<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Chiffchaff	At least 8 breeding territories	6	7	8
<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Willow Warbler	Passing migrant	1	NS	1
<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Goldcrest	2 possible breeding pairs	2	2	2
<i>Muscicapa Striata</i>	Spotted Flycatcher	Not seen	NS	P	NS

<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Long tailed Tit	At least 2 family parties seen	2	2	2
<i>Parus ater</i>	Coal Tit	Occasional sightings of 2 pairs	2	2	2
<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	Blue Tit	At least 29 breeding territories	30	27	29
<i>Parus major</i>	Great Tit	At least 9 breeding territories	9	8	9
<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	1	1
<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Jackdaw	At least 2 breeding territories	2	2	2
<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Rook	Seen overflying	NS	O(7)	O(11)
<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(16)	O(9)	O(14)
<i>Passer Domesticus</i>	House Sparrow	Small group near stables	P	P	P
<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Chaffinch	At least 4 breeding territories	4	4	4
<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Greenfinch	Seen in mire	NS	NS	O(3)
<i>Carduelis Carduelis</i>	Goldfinch	Seen feeding on grasses in mire	O(7)	O(4)	O(5)
<i>Carduelis Cannabina</i>	Linnet	Seen in mire area	O(2)	NS	O(4)
<i>Carduelis cabaret</i>	Lesser Redpoll	Not seen this year	O(15)	O(20)	NS
<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Bullfinch	Only 1 pair seen several times	2	1	1
<b>Totals =</b>			46	47	46
<b>Recorders</b>			RH/IW	RH/IW	RH/IW
<b>Number = breeding pairs; P = Present; O = Overflying (no.); NS = Not seen</b>					

Recorders were Rupert Hall and Ian Woolsey in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013.

Amongst the more notable breeding successes this year were the **Blue Tits** with at least twenty nine breeding territories, **Blackbirds**, **Great Tits** and **Robins** with at least nine breeding territories each, **Chiffchaffs** and **Wrens** had at least eight territories each. **Chaffinches** were only four. Again several pairs of **Greater Spotted Woodpeckers**, **Nuthatches** and **Tree Creepers** appeared to



have been successful. The cool weather in late April / May caused some birds to nest a little later but overall they were still successful.

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:-

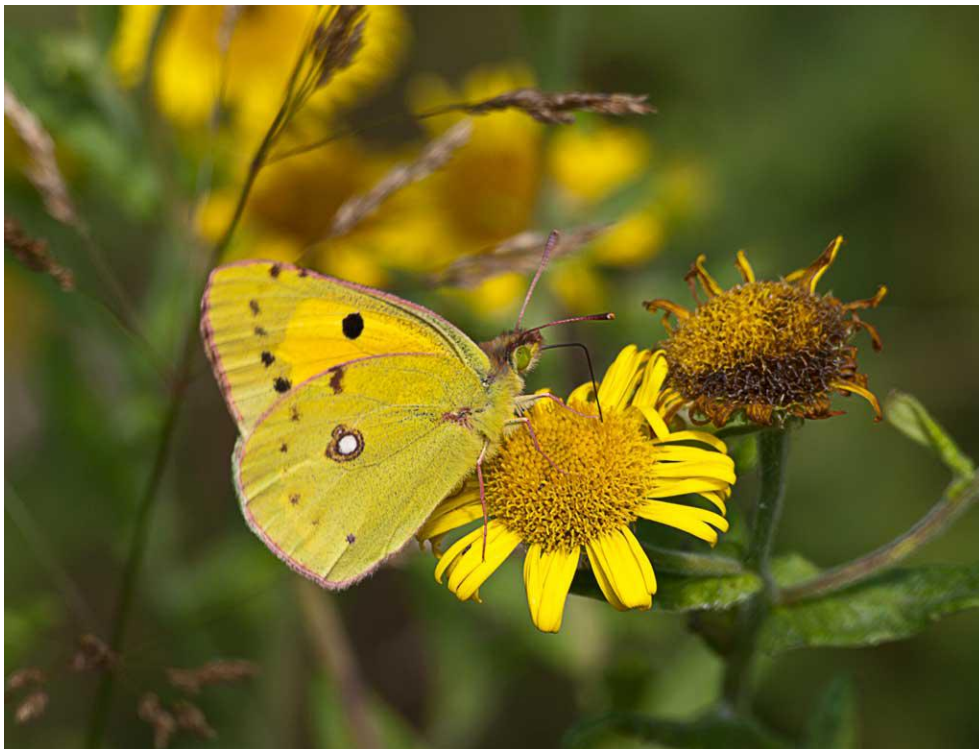
Total species seen over last 7 surveys:-

2004	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
26	30	35	45	46	47	46

Ian Woolsey

## *Butterflies*

### **Butterfly Transect at Markstakes Common: 2013 Summary**



The Markstake 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 2013. Sightings of butterflies occurred on 22 of the 24 transect walks. Data have been submitted to UKBMS using the new online Transect Walker system.

In the 22 weeks when recordings were made 591 butterflies were identified in 25 species. This compares with 18 species and 277 individuals in 2012. Over 60% of the increase is due to two species- Meadow Brown and Large White – which both saw a huge increase in numbers. Meadow Brown rose from 83 in 2012 to 225 in 2013 while Large White increased from 22 to 73.

The seven additional species recorded in 2013 were: Clouded Yellow, Wood White, Common Blue, Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady, Marbled White and Ringlet. With a few notable exceptions all other species were present in the same or, more typically, increased numbers compared with 2012. The exceptions were Orange Tip and Red Admiral, which both had fewer recordings.

The five most numerous species were the same as last year and these five account for 72% of all the records:

Meadow Brown	225
Speckled Wood	55
Gatekeeper	44
Large White	73
Silver-washed fritillary	35

For full list see table 1 below. Species highlighted in yellow are those which were not recorded in 2012.

**Table 1 Species recorded in 2012 and 2013**

<b>Family and Species</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Count 2012</b>	<b>Count 2013</b>
<b>HESPERIIDAE</b>			
Thymelicus sylvestris	Small Skipper	2	6
Ochlodes venata	Large Skipper	4	4
<b>PIERIDAE</b>			
Gonepteryx rhamni	Brimstone	8	29
Pieris brassicae	Large White	22	73
Pieris rapae	Small White	3	4
Pieris napi	Green-veined White	6	16
Anthocharis cardamines	Orange Tip	10	5
Colias croceus	Clouded Yellow		2
Leptidea sinapis	Wood White		1
<b>LYCAENIDAE</b>			
Lycaena phlaeas	Small Copper	1	8
Celastrina argiolus	Holly Blue	1	1
Polyommatus icarus	Common Blue		15
<b>NYMPHALIDAE</b>			
Limenitis camilla	White Admiral	9	10
Vanessa atalanta	Red Admiral	5	3
Inachis io	Peacock	8	20
Polygonia c-album	Comma	4	10
Argynnis paphia	Silver Washed Fritillary	14	35
Aglais urticae	Small Tortoiseshell		3
Vanessa cardui	Painted Lady		1
Melanargia galathea	Marbled White		6
<b>SATYRIDAE</b>			
Pararge aegeria	Speckled Wood	54	55
Pyronia tithonus	Gatekeeper	36	44
Maniola jurtina	Meadow Brown	83	225
Coenonympha pamphilus	Small Heath	7	12
Aphantopus hyperantus	Ringlet		3

The records show a very uneven distribution of butterflies across Markstakes. Section 7 (the mire) had 20 of the 25 species and 41% (242) of all recordings. Section 6 was also well populated with 14 species and 13% (76) of recordings. Similarly, section 5 (which includes the butterfly glades) had 11 species and about 11 per cent of recordings. In contrast section 3, 9 and 10 each fewer than 5 species and very low numbers. Table 2 shows the number of species and number of butterflies in each section of the transect. The distribution is very similar to 2012 although the mire (7) had a larger proportion of the total and section 2 a significantly smaller proportion.

**Table 2 Number and distribution of species by transect section**

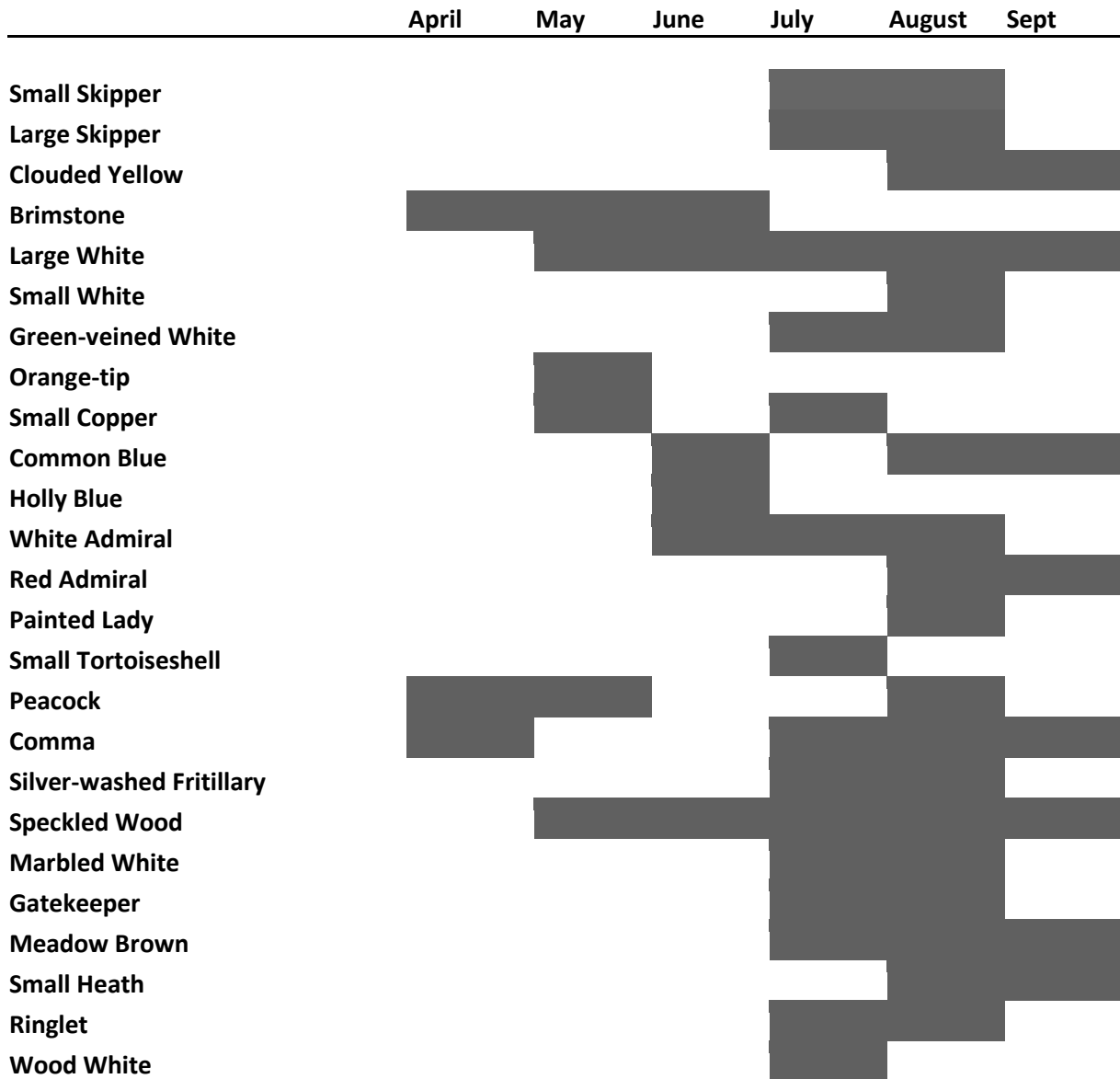
<b>Section</b>	<b>No. of species</b>	<b>No. of butterflies</b>	<b>% total</b>
1	7	21	3.6
2	12	30	5.1
3	3	4	0.7
4	9	31	5.2
5	11	63	10.7
6	14	76	12.9
7	20	242	40.9
8	11	38	6.4
9	4	9	1.5
10	3	8	1.4
11	6	12	2.0
12	13	57	9.6
<b>Total</b>		<b>591</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Speckled Wood and Large White were recorded in 11 of the 12 sections. Meadow Brown was also widely distributed, being found in 9 sections. Silver washed fritillary (8 sections), Gatekeeper (8) and Brimstone (8) were also fairly widely distributed.

For several species we only recorded one individual or a very small number (less than 5) of butterflies: Clouded Yellow, Wood White, Holly Blue, Large Skipper, Small White, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Ringlet.

Chart 1 below shows the flight times ie months when each species were recorded. The first three weeks of August accounted for over 45% of the sightings and the first week of August had more sightings than the whole of April, May and June combined.

## Chart 1 Species flight times April to September 2013



Ian Seccombe, Ian Woolsey and Rupert Hall