

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Grizzled Skipper Report 2015

David Hastings



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The Grizzled Skipper is a very localised and declining butterfly in Britain; its stronghold is in central southern England. It occurs in discrete colonies in open, sunny but sheltered, unfertilised grassland, woodland rides and glades, and abandoned industrial sites, breeding where the vegetation is sparse and there are patches of bare ground. The best sites occur where there is a mosaic of short and long vegetation. The longer vegetation is for the adults to roost overnight, and the shorter turf is where the larvae feed on rosaceous plants such as Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*) and Bramble (*Rubus* sp.). Other known foodplants are Agrimony, Tormentil, Barren Strawberry, Wood Avens, Salad Burnet and Dog Rose. There is one generation per year, with adults usually being on the wing from the middle of April to the middle of June. Peak emergence is in mid-May.

The Grizzled Skipper had a flight period of 80 days in the Upper Thames area in 2015. The earliest record was from Ardley Quarry, Oxon on April 15th, and the last from Water End, near Stokenchurch, Oxon, on July 3rd.

Ninety-three reports were received during the season from 45 observers at 41 sites. Most sightings were in the low single figures, but Andy Bolton recorded 19 at Ufton Nurvet on May 23rd, and Mark and Caroline Searle had 23 at Ivinghoe Beacon/Incombe Hole on May 10th.

There were three sightings from unexpected places. One was a garden sighting in Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxon on May 8th (per Alison Myres), the second was from a garden in Princes Risborough, Bucks on 13th May (per Martin Walters), and the third was from the Radley Lakes area in Abingdon, Oxon on April 30th (per David Guyoncourt).

Flight Periods

2002 : 21st April to 25th June (66 days) **2009** : 13th April to 28th June (77 days)
2003 : 12th April to 21st June (71 days) **2010** : 17th April to 11th July (86 days)
2004 : 27th April to 20th June (55 days) **2011** : 3rd April to 26th June (85 days)
2005 : 29th April to 27th June (60 days) **2012** : 25th March to 28th June (96 days)
2006 : 27th April to 21st June (56 days) **2013** : 30th April to 30th June (61 days)
2007 : 14th April to 14th June (62 days) **2014** : 10th April to 24th June (76 days)
2008 : 3rd May to 17th June (46 days) **2015** : 15th April to 3rd July (80 days)

The Grizzled Skipper is quite widely distributed in the Upper Thames region, with sightings reported from Ardley Quarry and Calvert Jubilee in the north, Greenham Common and Upton Nurvet in the south, and the Ivinghoe Beacon complex in the east.

The Chilterns north and west of High Wycombe and the Aston Upthorpe/Lardon Chase/Hartslock region on the Berkshire Downs are currently the main sites in the Upper Thames region. It is also thinly but widely spread in the wooded complex between Calvert and Quainton in Buckinghamshire, and the various railway lines that permeate this area. It did reasonably well at Ivinghoe Beacon in 2015.

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