

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Grizzled Skipper Report 2016

David Hastings



(Photo © Judith Barnard)



(Photo © David Hastings)

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.). 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 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 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.

Eight-six reports were received during the season from 45 observers at 31 sites. Most sightings were in the low single figures, but Neil Holman recorded at least 20 at Incombe Hole on May 5th, Charlie Jackson had 20 at Pitstone quarry on May 7th, and Jan Haseler recorded ten at Upton Nerveet on May 24th.

The Grizzled Skipper had a flight period of 66 days in the Upper Thames region in 2016. This was the shortest flight period since 2013 (and fourteen days shorter than 2015). Emergence was held up in April because the weather was cold, and the season was truncated in June by excessive rain.

The earliest record was from Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks on April 20th, and the last from Calvert Jubilee, Bucks, on June 20th

Flight Periods

2002	21st April to 25th June	(66 days)	2010	17th April to 11th July	(86 days)
2003	12th April to 21st June	(71 days)	2011	3rd April to 26th June	(85 days)
2004	27th April to 20th June	(55 days)	2012	25th March to 28th June	(96 days)
2005	29th April to 27th June	(60 days)	2013	30th April to 30th June	(61 days)
2006	27th April to 21st June	(56 days)	2014	10th April to 24th June	(76 days)
2007	14th April to 14th June	(62 days)	2015	15th April to 3rd July	(80 days)
2008	3rd May to 17th June	(46 days)	2016	20 th April to 24 th June	(66 days)
2009	13th April to 28th June	(77 days)			

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