

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Silver-spotted Skipper Report 2013

Richard Soulsby



Photo © Dave Miller

After a couple of summers with poor weather, it was a pleasant change to have one with warm, sunny weather in the Silver-spotted Skipper flight season. Thank you to everyone who reported sightings.

The best site in our area for SSS, and the most frequently visited (20 reports), is the northern part of the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve (Beacon Hill). As is often the case, both the earliest (20th July) and latest (5th September) sightings are from this site. These dates are fairly typical of the last ten years in this area (earliest first sighting 14 July 2011, latest last sighting 22 Sept 2007). A further six reports are from other parts of the Aston Rowant NNR (Linkey Down and Bald Hill) which also have strong colonies. Colonies at Watlington Hill and other southern Chiltern sites still appear to be doing well.

Further north, there were no positive reports from Butlers Hangings and Yoesden Bank, both of which have had regular sightings in recent years. On the other hand, the "far north", is doing well: numbers seen at Grangelands (up to 16) were the strongest to date, with nine reports between 1st and 20th Aug. Other neighbouring sites also had good showings. At present the furthest north confirmed sightings are from Beacon Hill, Ellesborough and the colony there seems to have become more firmly established with eight reports and a last sighting as late as 4th September.

On the negative side, no positive reports and several 'zero' reports were received from Aston Upthorpe Downs and Oven Bottom strengthening the view that the Berkshire Downs no longer support SSS.



Likewise, zero reports from Turville (Cobstone Hill), Whiteleaf Cross and Risborough Kop suggest that these marginal sites have been abandoned.

A recently issued report* by Exeter and York Universities on their extensive survey in 2009 of SSS in southern England concluded that in the Chilterns region the central zone was still strong, but there had been retractions since 2000 in the north-east and weakening in the south-west.

Silver-spotted Skipper & egg
Photo © Dave Miller

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* Lawson, C.R, *et al.* (2013). The status and conservation of the Silver-spotted Skipper *Hesperia comma* in South-East England 2000-2009. University of Exeter.