

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Small Blue Report 2013

Dave Turnbull



Photo © Mike Flemming



Photo © Andy Hoskins

The first Upper Thames Region Small Blue was seen at Pitstone on May 16th 2013, a similar date to last year (May 13th 2012). Nationally it was much earlier, at Glamorgan on May 6th.

Again the Spring was cold with March being the coldest for many years and in early April easterly winds kept the temperatures down. By mid April temperatures were in the upper teens but plants were late developing with Kidney Vetch at Pitstone still in its early stages.

On the 16th May when the Small blues were emerging at Pitstone I noted that the season seemed about two weeks behind an average year. Even by the end of June Small Blues were still well below average numbers at Pitstone and the Kidney Vetch was poor in spite of the now very warm weather.

Reports, however, were plentiful throughout the Upper Thames Region with a definite peak in the first week of June. Yoesden, Hagbourne & Pitstone provided the highest numbers but these sites are continually visited increasing the chance of a visit during peak numbers.

From the records I received the first brood lasted about 8 weeks and the second brood about 5 but the second brood numbers were poor this year even at Pitstone. Second brood sightings came from Upton, Hagbourne, Oven Bottom SSSI, Swyncombe and Pitstone.

Historically I have noted the first brood lasting between 5-8 weeks and the second 4-5 so they have quite a long flight period when you also add the two weeks gap between broods.

At Pitstone I usually reckon that the second brood numbers are about 10% of the first. This year because of the favourable late season weather, their flight period was longer than normal with unusually late sightings at Pitstone and Drayton Beauchamp both on September 5th. This gave a first to last sighting period of 16 weeks which in spite of the late sighting, is well short of the exceptional year of 2011 when it was 22 weeks with our latest ever sighting on September 28th.

After last year's poor season for butterflies in general, the Small Blue, also, is still recovering.

My thanks to everyone who sent in their sightings.

Dave Turnbull
March 2013