

BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Grizzled Skipper Report 2018



Photo by David Hastings

The Grizzled Skipper is a very localised and declining butterfly in 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. 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.

The Grizzled Skipper flight period started late in 2018 (March and early April were cold), with the first reported sighting at Grangelands, Bucks, on 3rd May (*there was a reported sighting at Ardley Quarry, Oxon, on April 6th, but this has not been verified*).

The delayed emergence generated some quite large numbers at several sites: 13 at Incombe Hole on the 5th, 17 at Aston Upthorpe Downs and 12 at The Holies on the 7th, 15 at Hartslock on the 10th, 12 at Pitstone chalk pit on the 13th, and 34 at Aston Upthorpe Downs on the 20th. The last reported sighting was at Lid's Down, Oxon, on June 15th. The flight period only lasted 44 days, which was the shortest since 2002. There were 193 sightings reported - thanks to all those who sent their records in.

A Grizzled Skipper sighting was reported from a new 10K square. Steve Woolliams had one in his garden in Headington, Oxford on June 8th.

Between 2005 and 2014 there were Grizzled Skipper records from SU35, SU37, SU38 and SP41 in the west, and SU87, SU99, SP81 and SP90 in the east. There have been no records from these 10K squares since. It would be helpful if the appropriate 10K Square champions could make an effort to search their patch for Grizzled Skippers this year.

Flight Periods

2002	21st April to 25th June	(66 days)	2011	3rd April to 26th June	(85 days)
2003	12th April to 21st June	(71 days)	2012	25th March to 28th June	(96 days)
2004	27th April to 20th June	(55 days)	2013	30th April to 30th June	(61 days)
2005	29th April to 27th June	(60 days)	2014	10th April to 24th June	(76 days)
2006	27th April to 21st June	(56 days)	2015	15th April to 3rd July	(80 days)
2007	14th April to 14th June	(62 days)	2016	20th April to 24th June	(66 days)
2008	3rd May to 17th June	(46 days)	2017	8th April to 7th June	(60 days)
2009	13th April to 28th June	(77 days)	2018	3 rd May to 15 th June	(44 days)
2010	17th April to 11th July	(86 days)			

