

# BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

## Grizzled Skipper Report 2020



*Mud-puddling Grizzlies at Aston Upthorpe Downs, 23rd April 2020 (© 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 but thinly 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 the primary sites in the region. It is also found in the wooded complex between Calvert and Quanton in Buckinghamshire, and the various railway lines that permeate this area.

The Grizzled Skipper flight period started on time in 2020, with the first sighting being reported at Ivinghoe Beacon on April 15<sup>th</sup>. The good weather in April and May was very beneficial. This probably led to a higher number of double-figure counts than usual:

- ◆ 19<sup>th</sup> April : 12 at Hartslock
- ◆ 23<sup>rd</sup> April : 12 at Aston Upthorpe Downs
- ◆ 24<sup>th</sup> April : 11 at Incombe Hole

- ◆ 26<sup>th</sup> April : 20 at Calvert Jubilee and 12 at Incombe Hole
- ◆ 6<sup>th</sup> May : 14 at Ivinghoe and 21 at Aston Upthorpe Downs
- ◆ 8<sup>th</sup> May : 10 at Bradenham
- ◆ 15<sup>th</sup> May : 10 at Ivinghoe
- ◆ 25<sup>th</sup> May : 15 at Arcott/St George's Barracks
- ◆ 27<sup>th</sup> May : 11 at Paices Wood

The last reported sighting was at Incombe Hole on June 25<sup>th</sup>. The flight period lasted 67 days, which is just about the average since 2002.

There were six records in 2km squares which hadn't recorded sightings before.

Personal highlights were finding Grizzlies at Radley Lakes, Oxfordshire on April 15<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. I'd always suspected it was present there, but hadn't had the time to look in previous years.

On April 23<sup>rd</sup> I found five Grizzlies mud-puddling on the track leading up to Juniper Valley at Aston Upthorpe Downs, Oxfordshire. I had never seen this species exhibiting this behaviour before.

On June 9<sup>th</sup> I found a female at Bernwood Forest, Bucks - the first Grizzly I'd seen there.

Thanks to all those who submitted their records.

#### **Flight Periods**

<b>2002</b>	21st April to 25th June	(66 days)	<b>2012</b>	25th March to 28th June	(96 days)
<b>2003</b>	12th April to 21st June	(71 days)	<b>2013</b>	30th April to 30th June	(61 days)
<b>2004</b>	27th April to 20th June	(55 days)	<b>2014</b>	10th April to 24th June	(76 days)
<b>2005</b>	29th April to 27th June	(60 days)	<b>2015</b>	15th April to 3rd July	(80 days)
<b>2006</b>	27th April to 21st June	(56 days)	<b>2016</b>	20th April to 24th June	(66 days)
<b>2007</b>	14th April to 14th June	(62 days)	<b>2017</b>	8th April to 7th June	(60 days)
<b>2008</b>	3rd May to 17th June	(46 days)	<b>2018</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> May to 15 <sup>th</sup> June	(44 days)
<b>2009</b>	13th April to 28th June	(77 days)	<b>2019</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> April to 7 <sup>th</sup> July	(80 days)
<b>2010</b>	17th April to 11th July	(86 days)	<b>2020</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> April to 25 <sup>th</sup> June	(67 days)
<b>2011</b>	3rd April to 26th June	(85 days)			

**David Hastings**

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