

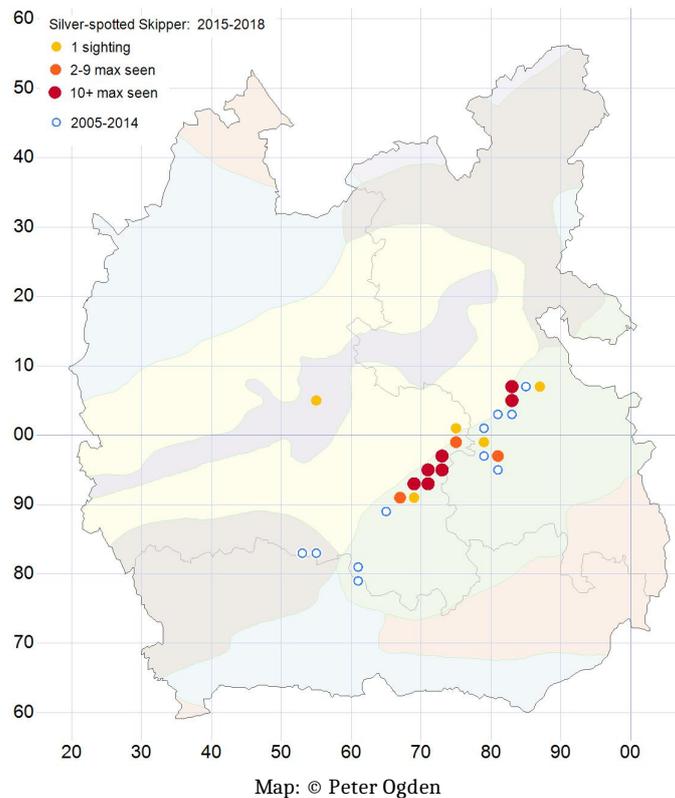
BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION UPPER THAMES BRANCH

Silver-spotted Skipper report, 2016 - 2019



Photo © Tony Gillie

The core of the SSS distribution has remained strong, particularly in their strongholds of Watlington Hill, Shirburn Hill and all parts of the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve - see map below. (Note that 2019 records will not be fully available until early 2020).

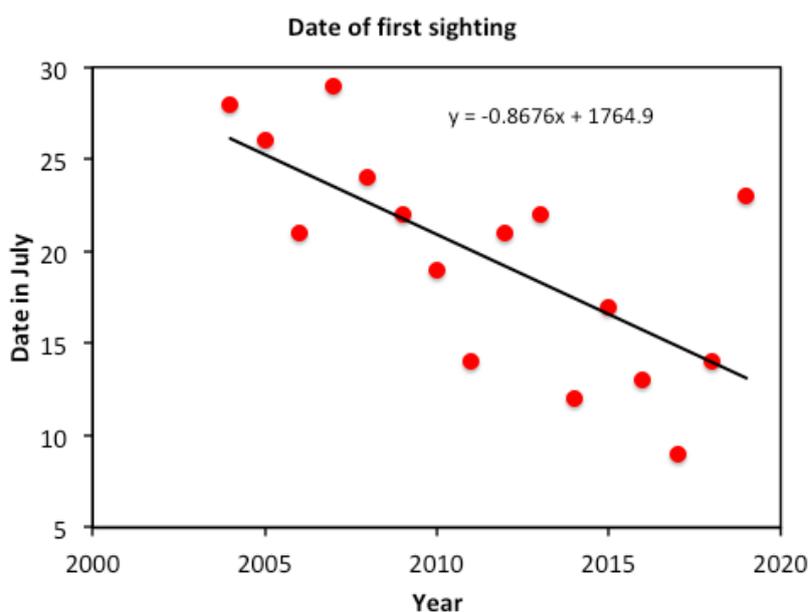


The map shows a retraction of range in the south since the period 2005 - 2014 (open blue circles). All colonies on the Berkshire Downs have been lost, with the last recorded sighting being in 2009. Outlying colonies scattered either side of the "00" northings line have also been lost.

However, the northern part of the range is strengthening overall, with multiple sightings at Beacon Hill, Ellesborough (the northernmost strong colony in the UK) and increasing numbers at the Grangelands reserve. A sighting at Bacombe Warren in 2018 was the first there for many years, and a sighting at Yoesden Bank in 2017 was the first since 2010. But the colony at Buttlers Hangings has dwindled, with low numbers over the last seven years, and none seen in 2019.

There have been some notable sightings at new locations in recent years. These include two long-range vagrant sightings: one in Tring, and one on the eastern outskirts of Oxford. These are respectively 9.5 km and 19 km away from the nearest known colonies. Both of these sightings were in unsuitable habitats, so we don't expect new colonies to develop there, but the sightings do demonstrate that SSS can disperse over longer distances than had previously been thought. New sightings have also been made at Chinnor Quarry, with individual females seen there in 2018 and 2019, and this site might possibly be suitable for a future viable population.

Over the years the date of first sighting has become progressively earlier, as seen below, based on data taken from the 'First sightings' page of the UTB website, with the date of first sighting advancing at an average rate of 8.7 days per decade.



Thank you to everyone who reported their sightings by email, via the website, or as records for the Levana database. If you have not already done so, please submit all records of Silver-spotted Skipper to Jim Asher, ideally using the Butterfly Records Excel Spreadsheet downloadable from the Conservation/Your Records section of the UTB website, or via iRecord.

Richard Soulsby

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