BALLARD WATER MEADOWS
TRANSECT REPORT
2025

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Contents:

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to the transect team, listed above, for their dedication in undertaking walks and identifying and recording the butterflies and moths seen throughout this year's monitoring period.

Many thanks also to those listed below for allowing walks to take place and for their support in producing this report.

Transect History:	John French
Report Preparation:	John French
Report Narrative:	Ann Gorman
Image manager:	Trevor Bumfrey
Moths Summary:	Jacky Adams
Transect Map:	Neil Smith
UKBMS Database Entry:	Ann Gorman

Section 1 – Introduction and Transect Background

This report summarises the findings of the weekly butterfly transects undertaken at Ballard Water Meadows in 2025, providing comparison with previous years' walks where possible. It is designed to provide feedback to the landowner and land managers who have allowed this transect walk to take place and to the volunteers who have carried it out. The meadow is owned by New Milton Town Council and maintained by the Friends of Ballard Water Meadow, following advice provided by the New Forest National Park Land Advice Service and Natural England.

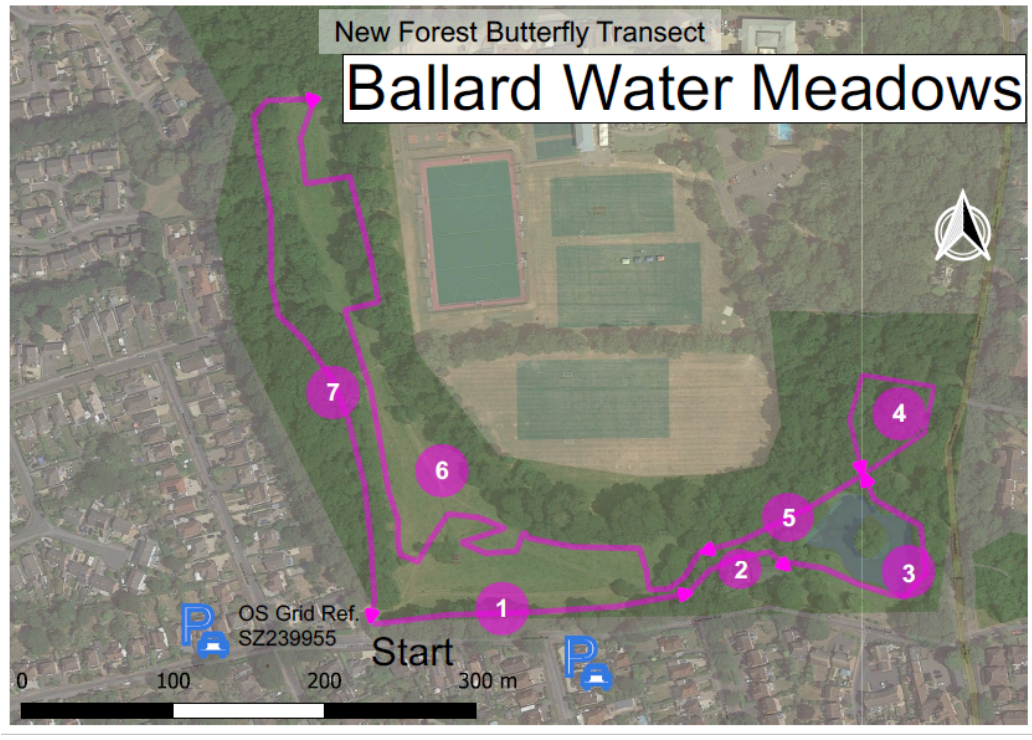
Monitoring walks have been carried out using the Fixed-route (Pollard Walk) transect methodology as promoted through the United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS). This involves walking a fixed route each week during the recording season which runs for 26 weeks from 1st April to 30th September, recording all butterflies within a 5m cube ahead of the walker. This produces an index for the numbers of each butterfly species seen, which may also be referred to in the report by various terms, such as 'count' or 'record'. Adopting this methodology means that it is possible to make a meaningful comparison of species indices and, over time, identify trends in their abundance. A more detailed analysis, together with the raw data, is available to Group Members and Landowners on request.

Transect walkers are also encouraged to record any moths seen on transect that they are able to identify in the field, in the same way as they do for butterflies. They may also record any other sightings of note which can be entered into UKBMS and are passed to the relevant conservation body.

Transect Description

Ballard Water Meadows are located to the south of the New Forest in the town of New Milton. The Ballard transect is in three main parts. An ancient L-shaped wet meadow with a stream which tends to dry up in the summer running along the eastern boundary and two drainage ditches. A strip of woodland to the west, which is mainly oak interplanted with hazel which is being coppiced on a rotational basis. There are two small glades and a hoggin path running north/south and an area around Ballard lake which is surrounded on three sides by trees but is open to the south.

Transect Route



Section 2 – Season Overview

Weather Summary

The winter was milder than average with below average rainfall, although we did experience some storms which brought high winds and gales. Spring (March, April and May) was mainly dry and settled with temperatures and sunshine above average and provisionally the sunniest spring on record. Summer (June, July and August) was the warmest UK summer on record with a mean temperature 1.5C above the 30-year average. Sunshine hours were above average in contrast to rainfall which was below average. September brought an end to the period of warmer and drier than average months with some periods of heavy rain and winds. There were some reports of funnel clouds around Bournemouth and the Isle of Wight.

Further detail can be found at:
https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/summaries/index

The NFBTG Season

A much better season than 2024 with a strong early season but a prolonged dry spell significantly curtailed numbers from the end of July. The total number of butterflies recorded across 54 transects was 57,066 at a density (butterflies per kilometre walked) of 16.88. The density was slightly below average, but building on from the very poor 2024 it was a successful season. Exactly half our transects improved on their average total. Generally, heathland transects performed above average, boosted by Grayling and Silver-studded Blue but inclosures underperformed compared to the average taking the bottom eight places. Like the transects roughly half the species performed above average (2021-2025 comparison only) but the grassland species suffered from the dry summer; with Meadow Brown, Large Skipper, Small Copper and Brown Argus all down on 2024 as was the Orange-tip more surprisingly. There were a lot of Whites around later in the season, and all three species had a record season as did Clouded Yellow and Purple Hairstreak. Both Silver-washed and Dark-green Fritillary recovered somewhat but neither to their long-term average. Of the three focus species both Grayling and Silver-studded Blue were around 30% above average but Pearl-bordered Fritillary failed to recover from its very poor 2024. Finally, we had a confirmed sighting of a Purple Emperor after probable sightings in 2023.

Transect Summary

Work on Ballard Lake and surrounding areas meant we were not able to access sections 2 and 3 for several weeks. However, this did not seem to impact greatly on our butterfly sightings.

The temperature at the beginning of April was quite cold but improved fairly quickly and our sightings early on were better than 2024 which was so wet. The numbers died away as the weather became hotter and drier.

A brown argus was a confirmed sighting and a clouded yellow was seen although not on transect. There was also a possible sighting of a silver washed fritillary. Hopefully we will be seeing more of these next year.

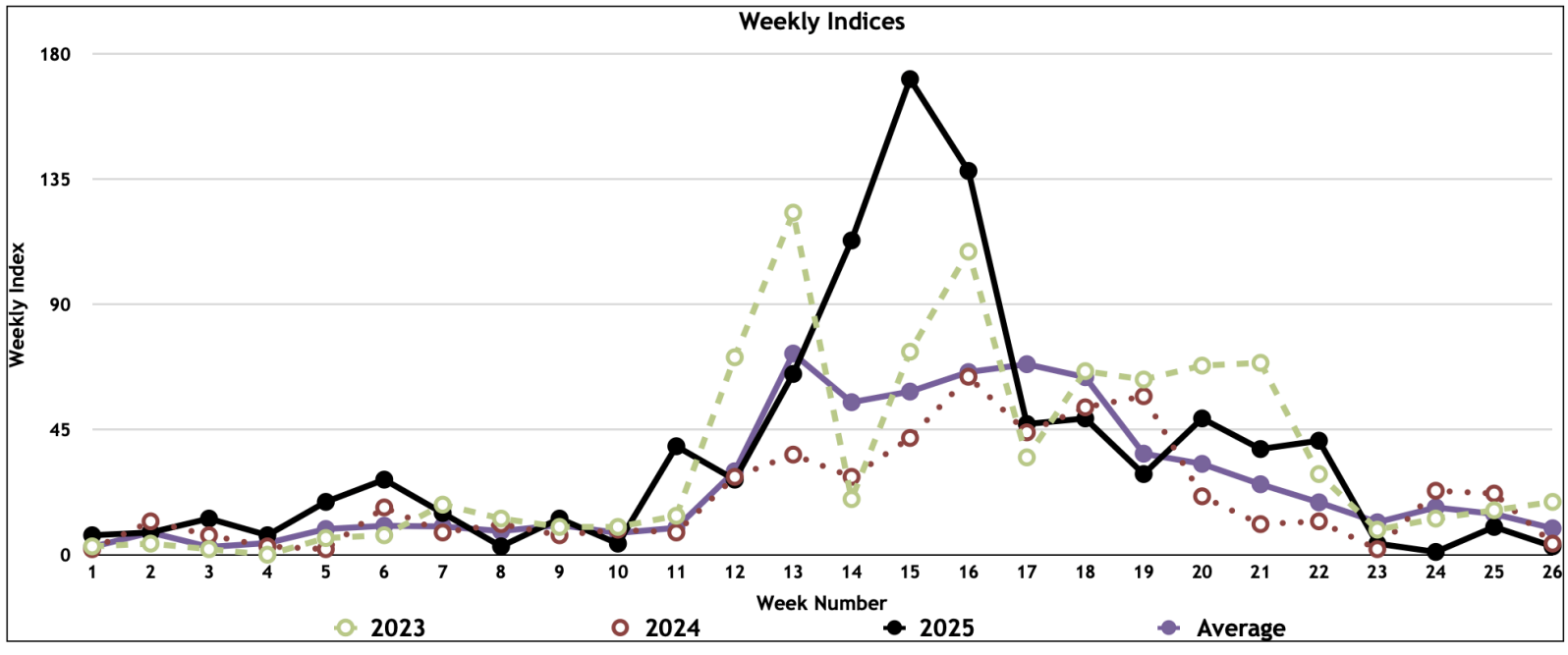
Section 3 – Weekly Flight Periods and Indices

Flight periods are based on New Forest Transect Group historic data supplemented by Alan Thornbury's Hampshire Flight Chart.

2025	Weekly Records																											
Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	TOTAL	Weeks Recorded
Sun (%)	100	100	100	63	100	100	100	75	74	44	94	40	100	100	100	100	74	90	100	100	100	100	6	63	100	100		
Temp (°C)	16	15	15	14	23	20	22	19	19	17	18	22	22	21	25	24	23	24	20	23	20	23	21	17	21	19		
Essex Skipper															1												1	1
Small/Essex Skipper													9	43	39	23		1									115	5
Orange-tip					6	7	3																				16	3
Large White		2	1		1	9	1				2		6	6	15	20	2	5	5	13	15	18			1		122	17
Small White	1		1	5	2	4					3		2				10	4	6	28	9	18			1	1	95	15
Green-veined White								1	2				2	8	16	10		6			2		1				48	9
Brimstone	4	2												2		1											9	4
Speckled Wood		4	7	2	10	3	9		6		1		2	9	18	7	5	6	7	5	4	1	1		3	2	112	21
Meadow Brown										2	33	27	38	21	14	5	19	6	5								170	10
Gatekeeper														8	22	49	8	11	3								101	6
Marbled White													1	8	1												10	3
Silver-washed Fritillary																				1							1	1
Red Admiral			1						1	2				1	2	3		1	1						3		15	9
Painted Lady						1																					1	1
Peacock	2		1						1												1						5	4
Comma														1		2	1	1									5	4
Small Copper																1					2	1			1		5	4
Holly Blue			2												2				1								5	3
Brown Argus																								1			1	1
Common Blue						3	2	2	3				5	6	41	17	2	8	1	2	5	3	2		1		103	16
TOTAL	7	8	13	7	19	27	15	3	13	4	39	27	65	113	171	138	47	49	29	49	38	41	4	1	10	3	940	
Weekly Species	3	3	6	2	4	6	4	2	5	2	4	1	8	11	10	11	7	10	8	5	7	5	3	1	6	2	19	
Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26		
	Normal flight Period †					Inside Normal Peak Flight Period							Outside Normal Peak flight period							Outside Normal Flight Period								

† Normal Flight Period is derived from actual New Forest sightings from 2011 to 2018 and Hants Flight Periods by Alan Thornbury

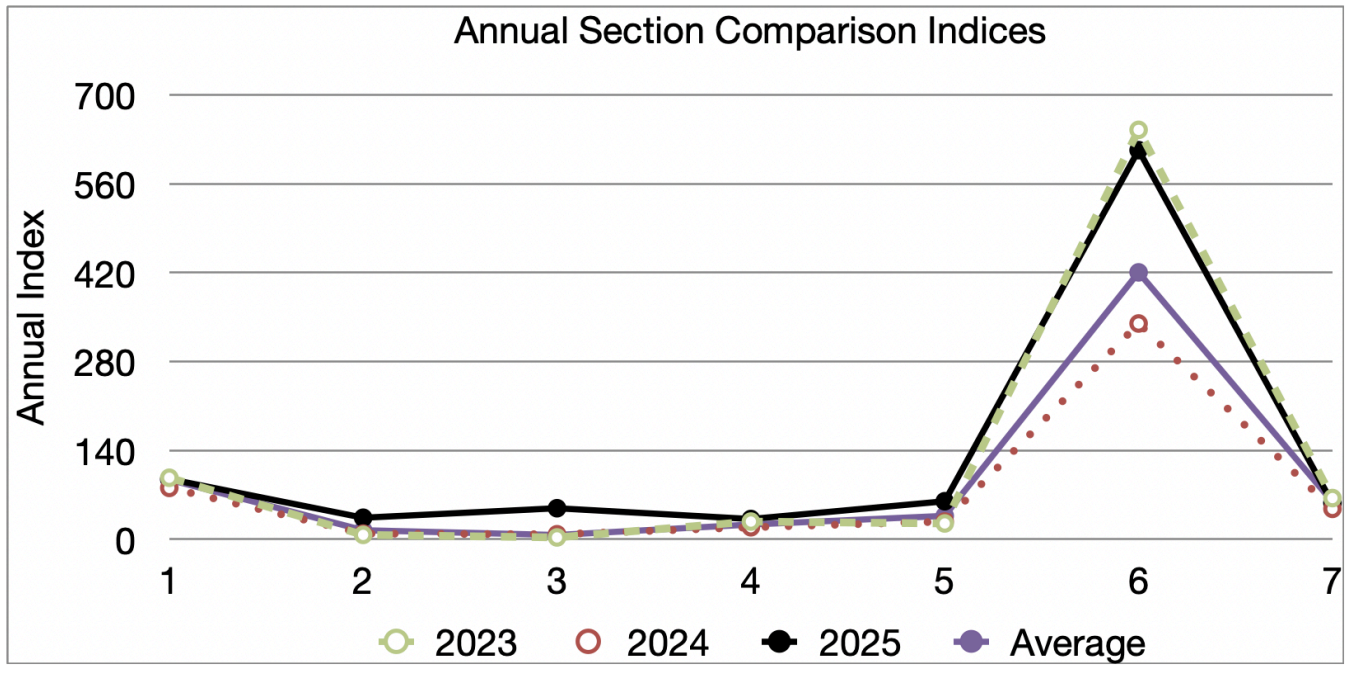
FAMILIES
Hesperiidae
Pieridae
Nymphalidae 'Browns'
Nymphalidae 'Aristocrats'
Lycaenidae



Summary of Transect Indices by Week																								Highest Index			
Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	Totals
2019	4	11	1	5	7	6	1	3	9	11	1	11	73	**117**	50	63	71	105	16	47	34	33	5	20	16	19	739
2020							13	10	22	11	14	27	**134**	60	58	55	77	48	29	16	16	16	12	15	10	3	646
2021	3		1	3		4	3	4	4	6	7	26	8	50	80	54	**107**	93	46	21	13	18	38	15	23	11	638
2022	2	5	3	10	22	18	18	10	12	0	14	17	60	54	49	49	**77**	18	7	23	9	5	4	16	1	1	504
2023	3	4	2	0	6	7	18	13	10	10	14	71	**123**	20	73	109	35	66	63	68	69	29	9	13	16	19	870
2024	2	12	7	3	2	17	8	11	7	9	8	28	36	28	42	**64**	44	53	57	21	11	12	2	23	22	4	533
2025	7	8	13	7	19	27	15	3	13	4	39	27	65	113	**171**	138	47	49	29	49	38	41	4	1	10	3	940
Average	3	8	3	4	9	10	10	9	11	8	10	30	72	55	59	66	69	64	36	33	25	19	12	17	15	10	655

Section 4 – Section Species and Comparison Indices

Species↓ Section→	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	Total	No. Sections
Essex Skipper						1		1	1
Small/Essex Skipper	10					105		115	2
Orange-tip	1					13	2	16	3
Large White	12	9	10		12	68	11	122	6
Small White	7	1	14	2	12	55	4	95	7
Green-veined White	2		8	2	15	14	7	48	6
Brimstone	1		1			6	1	9	4
Speckled Wood	9	22	9	23	14	18	17	112	7
Meadow Brown	35			4		126	5	170	4
Gatekeeper	14	1	2	1	2	78	3	101	7
Marbled White						9	1	10	2
Silver-washed Fritillary						1		1	1
Red Admiral	1		2		2	7	3	15	5
Painted Lady						1		1	1
Peacock		1	1			3		5	3
Comma	1					3	1	5	3
Small Copper			1			4		5	2
Holly Blue			1		1	1	2	5	4
Brown Argus						1		1	1
Common Blue	2				2	99		103	3
Total	95	34	49	32	60	613	57	940	
No. Species	12	5	10	5	8	19	12	19	



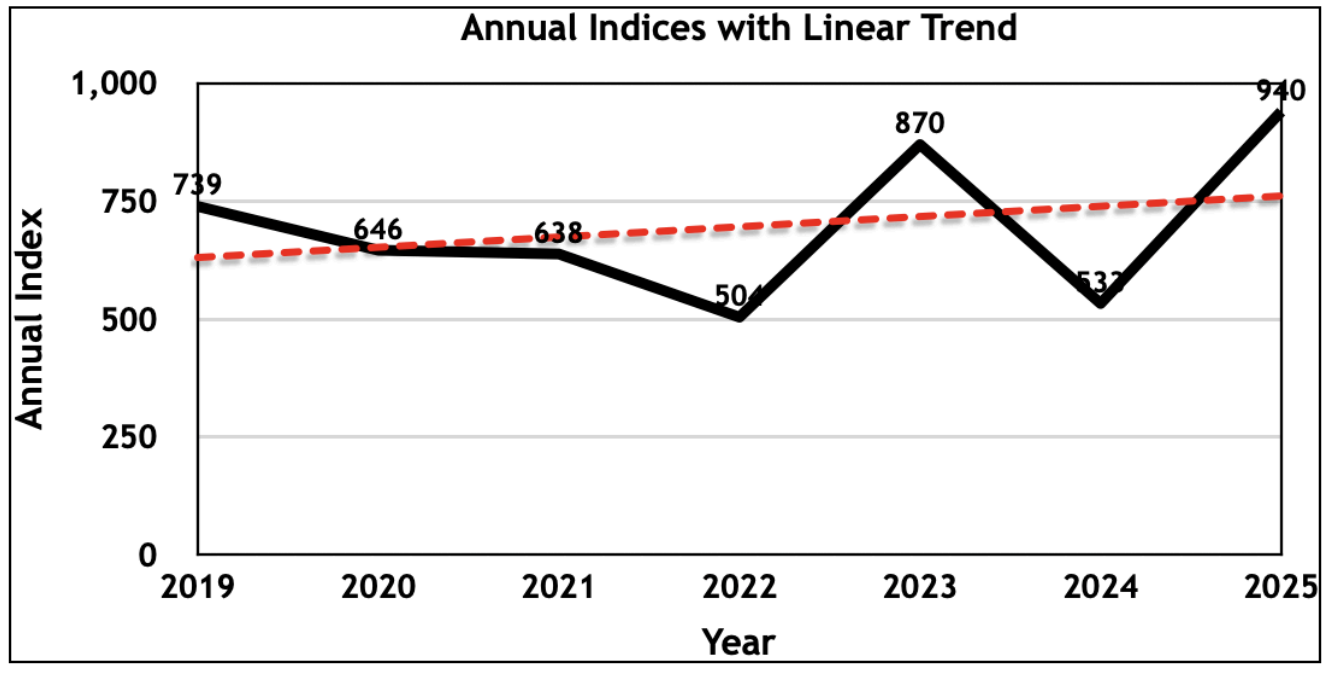
Annual Section Indices

Section↓ Year→	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Average Excl Current Year	Change 2025 v Average	Change 2024 v 2025
1	182	80	66	58	97	81	95	94	1	↑
2	33	25	4	8	7	9	34	14	20	↑
3	13	7	8	2	3	8	49	7	42	↑
4	21	24	18	30	28	19	32	23	9	↑
5	93	43	11	22	25	28	60	37	23	↑
6	343	393	484	318	645	340	613	421	193	↑
7	54	74	47	66	65	48	57	59	-2	↑
Annual Index	739	646	638	504	870	533	940	655	285	↑

Section 5 – Annual Species Variation

Annual Indices										
Species↓ Year→	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Average Excl Current	Change 2025 v Average	Change 2024 v 2025
Essex Skipper						2	1			
Small Skipper	1					1				
Small/Essex Skipper	4	27	34	15	42	37	115			
Small & Essex Skipper Total	5	27	34	15	42	40	**116**	27	89	↑
Large Skipper				1	**8**	6		3	-3	↓
Orange-tip	7	2	5	9	9	4	**16**	6	10	↑
Large White	46	84	61	25	76	39	**122**	55	67	↑
Small White	66	36	92	65	51	41	**95**	59	37	↑
Green-veined White	20	41	8	2	8	4	**48**	14	34	↑
Brimstone	12	2	**13**	4	7	7	9	8	2	↑
Speckled Wood	79	72	46	69	**144**	133	112	91	22	↓
Small Heath					**3**			<1	-1	↔
Ringlet				1	**2**			<1	-1	↔
Meadow Brown	**325**	228	258	168	271	141	170	232	-62	↑
Gatekeeper	93	73	68	74	**142**	65	101	86	15	↑
Marbled White			1	3	1	5	**10**	2	8	↑
Silver-washed Fritillary		**1**					**1**	<1	1	↑
Red Admiral	19	8	**26**	12	24	12	15	17	-2	↑
Painted Lady	**5**	1		1			1	1	-0	↑
Peacock	4	2	1	3	4	2	**5**	3	2	↑
Small Tortoiseshell				**1**				<1	-0	↔
Comma		3	1	**5**	4	2	**5**	3	3	↑
Small Copper	3	5	10	4	**12**	3	5	6	-1	↑
Holly Blue	1	5		7	**24**	7	5	7	-2	↓
Brown Argus	**4**					1	1	<1	0	↔
Common Blue	50	56	14	35	38	21	**103**	36	67	↑
Total	739	646	638	504	870	533	940	655	285	↑
Different Species	16	17	15	20	19	19	19	18	1	↔
Max. Weekly Species	9	12	10	8	10	10	11	10	1	↑

FAMILIES							
Hesperiidae	5	27	34	16	50	46	116
Pieridae	151	165	179	105	151	95	290
Nymphalidae 'Browns'	497	373	373	315	563	344	393
Nymphalidae 'Aristocrats'	28	15	28	22	32	16	27
Lycaenidae	58	66	24	46	74	32	114



Section 6 – Moths recorded on Transect

Transect walkers are encouraged to record any moths seen within their standard transect 'cube' that are distinctive enough to be identified in the field. The records below provide an insight into moth species that are around during the daytime, including a number that will be missed or under-represented through more traditional methods of moth recording.

Unlike butterflies, this is not a comprehensive record of the moths that are in the area. Many more moth species are likely to be present but either not seen as they are not active during the day or not recognised as they may be too small or not distinctive enough to be identified accurately during a transect walk.

Given that the numbers of moths spotted on individual transects is generally quite low, an overview report, collating data from all NFTG transects, is also produced to give context to sightings and provide sufficient data to identify trends in more common species seen in the daytime. The overview report is available on request.

Ballard Water Meadow - Species Seen

Species	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Rush Veneer							1
Blood-vein					1		
Common Carpet				1			
Common Heath				1			
Straw Dot						1	4
Cinnabar							2
Silver Y			3		2	9	1
Total	**0**	**0**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**10**	**8**
Number of Species	**0**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**4**
Total Species (2019-2025)							**7**