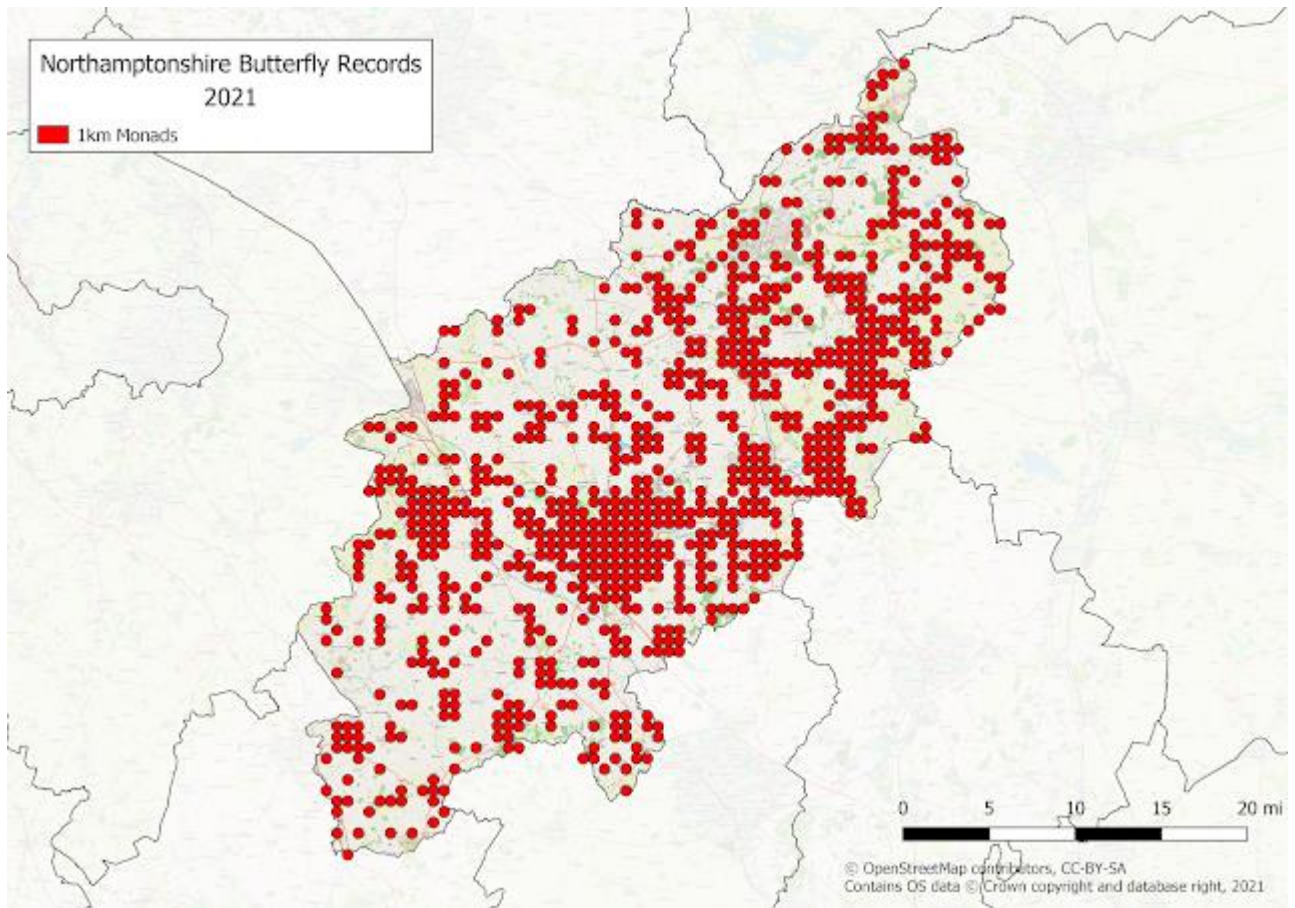


The Butterflies Of Northamptonshire in 2021

Butterfly recording proved to be rather a challenge during 2021 as the seemingly endless run of unsettled weather continued throughout the year. Spring was changeable and although there was some occasional fine weather it was chiefly dominated by unsettled conditions. Summer started well but by mid July it had turned cooler with a thundery breakdown and what followed was weeks of cloudy days with limited sunshine which pretty much lasted for the rest of the year. However, despite this we still managed to receive 19,906 records detailing the distribution of 64,446 individual butterflies which is a remarkable achievement. The below accounts of course could not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the local butterfly recorders out there so many thanks for all of your records. An extra special thank you has to go to the transect walkers who took the time to walk their chosen routes each week despite the prolonged gloomy weather making the effort at times seem pointless. Of course there is no such thing as a wasted day recording and it is just as important, in many respects more so, to record during the poorer seasons as it is the good ones. The data below is compiled from UKBMS transect walks, WCBS survey squares, the Big Butterfly Count and casual records sent to me directly or added to iRecord. The use of the excellent iRecord recording platform has been steadily increasing each year and remains the favourite way of submitting records. At the time of writing I am still waiting for the Garden Butterfly Survey and Migrant Watch records but these will be added to the annual dataset in due course. It is also worth mentioning that we received a lot more records in 2020 than we did in 2021 so this needs to be taken into consideration when comparing butterflies on an annual basis so each species will also be compared to the 5 year average. Looking forward to 2022 I am pleased to say that spring and summer events put on by the local Beds and Northants branch of Butterfly Conservation are now already in the pipeline. These walks and open days are well worth attending and are a great way of receiving expert guidance at some of our key butterfly sites. Winter work parties have also already started so a big thank you to those dedicated folk who regularly roll their sleeves up and get stuck into some practical conservation work. For more information about work parties and future butterfly walks and open days check out the events page on the Beds and Northants Butterfly Conservation branch website. Lastly don't let the below species accounts make you too downhearted. Not every year can be a good one and the poorer years reinforce just how special the better years really are. Let us hope that 2022 brings better weather, many more butterflies and more opportunities to go and record them!

Dave James - Northamptonshire Butterfly Recorder



2021 Monad Coverage

Chequered Skipper

Chequered Skippers were once again recorded in the release area of Rockingham Forest. For more information keep an eye on the Butterfly Conservation webpage as further news is announced.



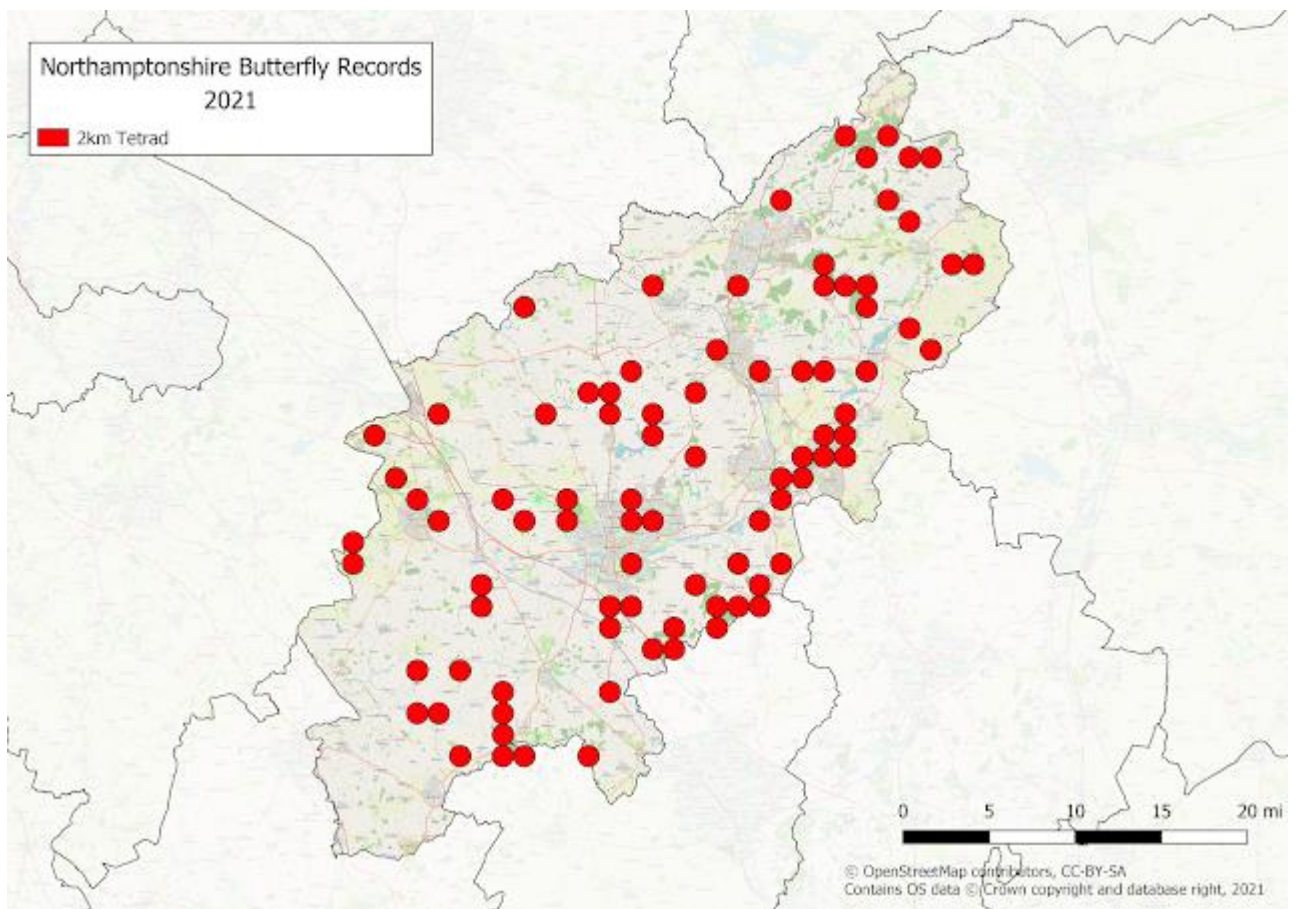
Chequered Skipper, Rockingham Forest, 2021

Small Skipper, Essex and Large Skipper

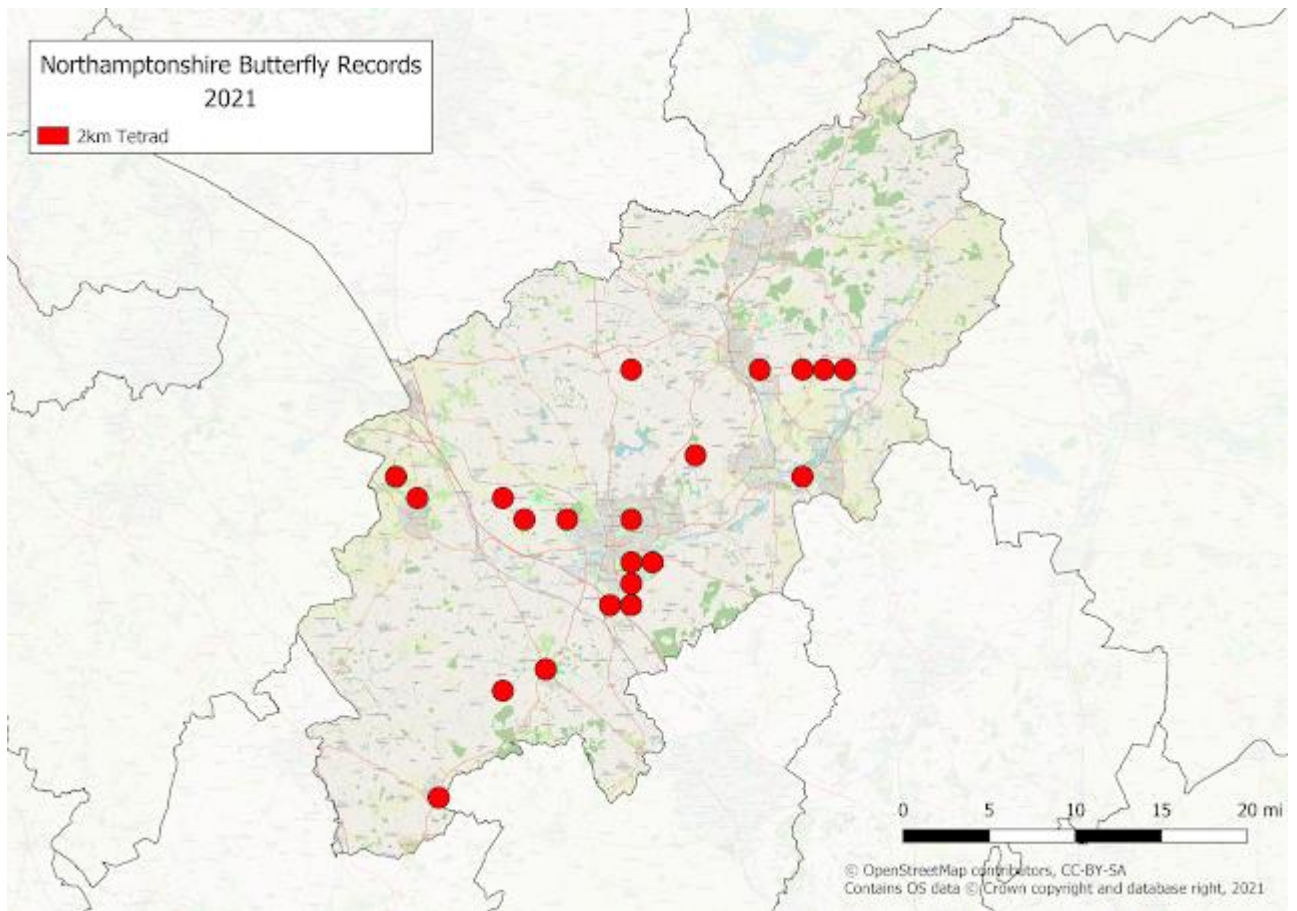
All three of our golden Skippers were down from the previous year with the Essex Skipper showing a significant downward drop. The Small Skipper was 24% down from 2020 and 38% down from the five year average, the Essex Skipper was 66% down from the previous year which is 86% down from the five year average and the Large Skipper was 48% down from the previous year which is 37% down from the five year average. These grassland butterflies could be seen anywhere where there is suitable habitat but the best sites were Irchester County Park, the Nene Wetlands and Twywell Hills and Dales. The first Small Skipper was seen on the 15th of June at the Nene Wetlands and the last was seen on the 22nd of August at Titchmarsh. The first Essex Skipper was seen on the 23rd of June at Bradlaugh Fields and the last was seen on the 24th of August near Great Brington. The first Large Skipper was seen on the 8th of August in Fineshade Wood and the last was seen on the 8th of September also in Fineshade Wood.



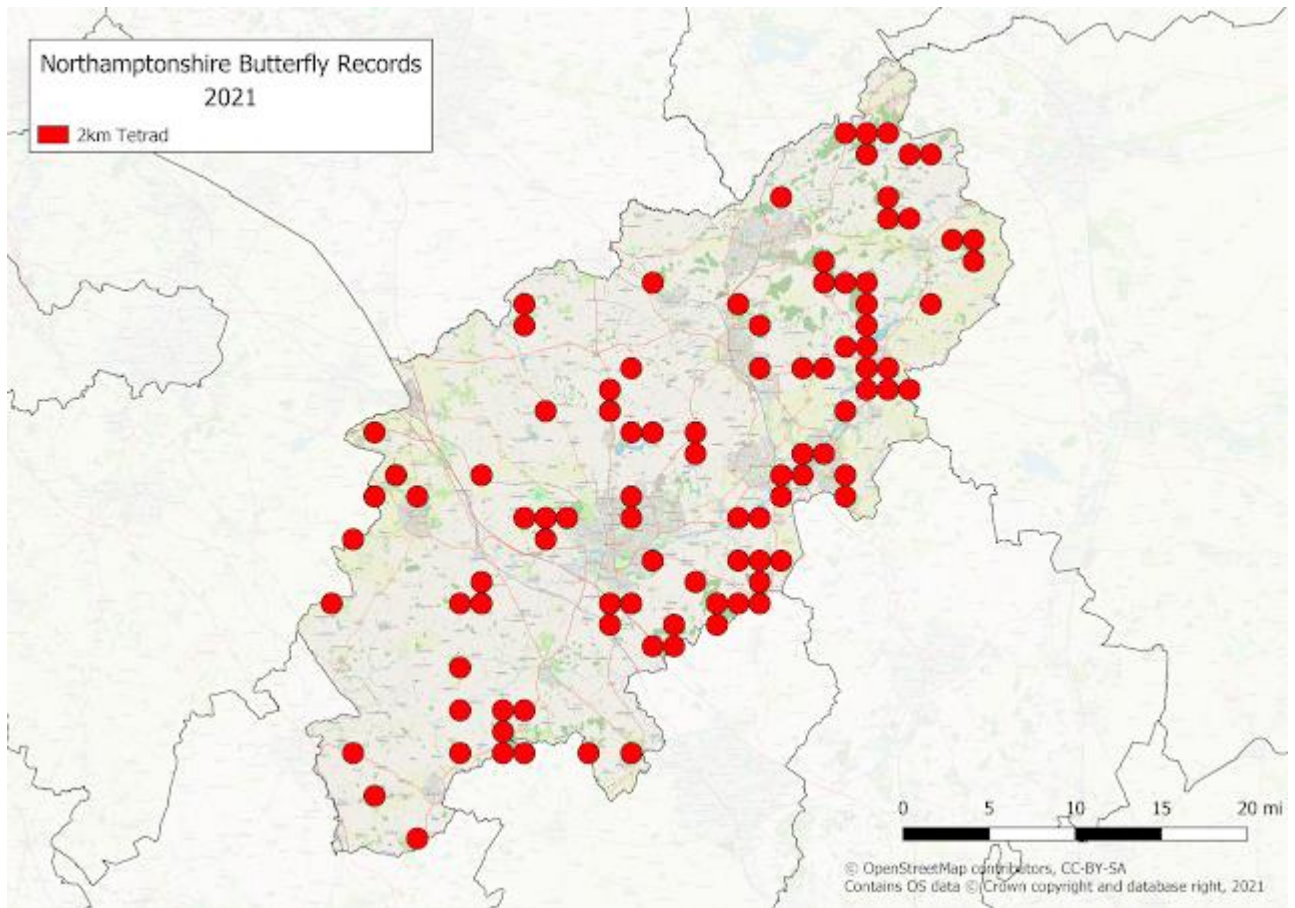
Small Skipper, Wootton, 2021



Small Skipper Distribution



Essex Skipper Distribution



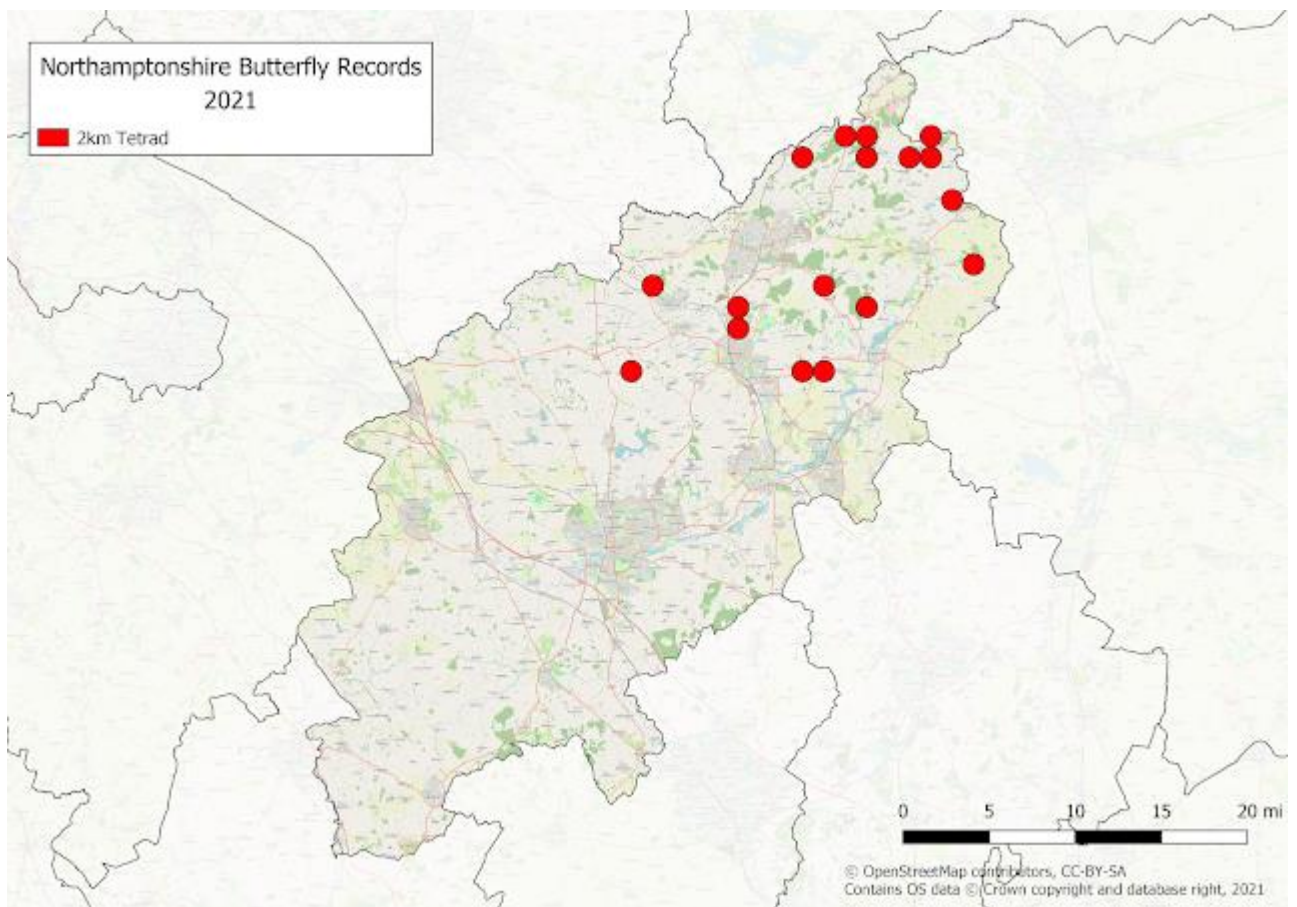
Large Skipper Distribution

Dingy Skipper

The Dingy Skipper was recorded in almost identical numbers to the previous year which puts it 19% down from the five year average. A new location for this species was discovered on the 5th of June when one was seen at Fotheringhay Castle. The best sites to see this grassland butterfly were Fermyn Woods Country Park, Harrington Airfield, Old Sulehey, Polebrook Airfield and Twywell Hills and Dales. The first of the year was recorded on the 27th of April at Twywell Hills and Dales and the last of the year was seen on the 22nd of June also at Twywell Hills and Dales.



Dingy Skipper, Fermyn Country Park, 2021



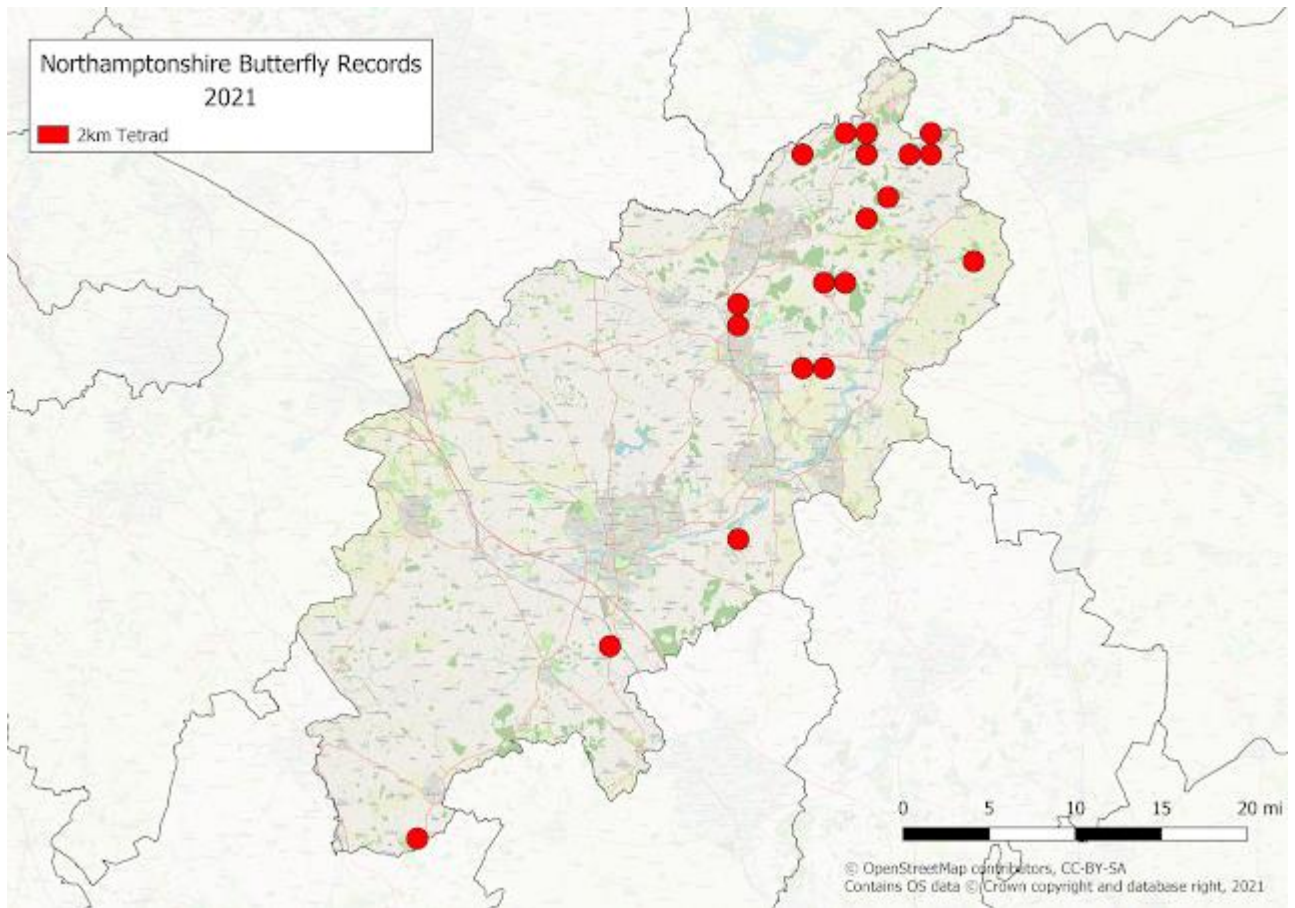
Dingy Skipper Distribution

Grizzled Skipper

Similarly, to the Dingy Skipper the Grizzled Skipper was recorded in almost identical numbers to the previous year which places it 12% below the five year average. Two new locations were discovered for this spring butterfly with a sizeable colony being found along a footpath north of Southwick Wood and also a few being recorded at Quarry Walk which is south of the river Nene near Grendon. The best places in the county to see this species were Fermyn Country Park, Old Sulehey, Polebrook Airfield and Twywell Hills and Dales. The first Grizzled Skipper of the year was seen on the 19th of April at Twywell Hills and Dales and the last of the year was seen on the 22nd of June also at Twywell Hills and Dales.



Grizzled Skipper, Fermyn Country Park, 2021



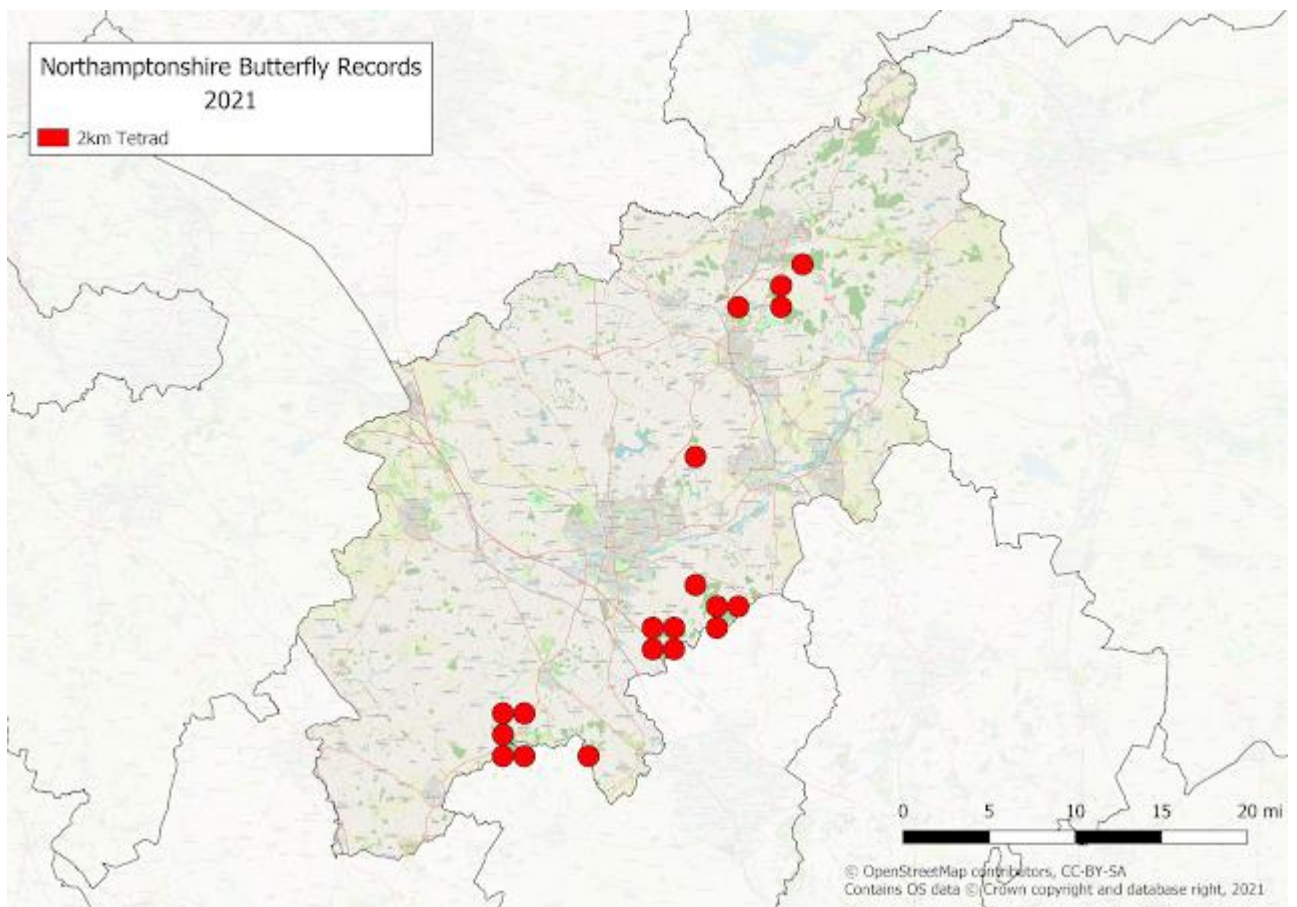
Grizzled Skipper Distribution

Wood White

The Wood White shows a 40% drop in records from the previous year which puts it 26% below the five year average. The recently discovered Geddington Chase colony remains strong with records again being received in nearby Harry's Park Wood. It is surely only a matter of time before butterflies from this private site colonise the Fermyn Wood complex! The best sites to see this woodland butterfly were Bucknell Wood, Hazelborough Forest, Hazelborough Wood and Salcey Forest. The first was seen on the 16th of May in Hazelborough Forest and the last was seen on the 12th of August in Yardley Chase.



Wood White, Salcey Forest, 2021



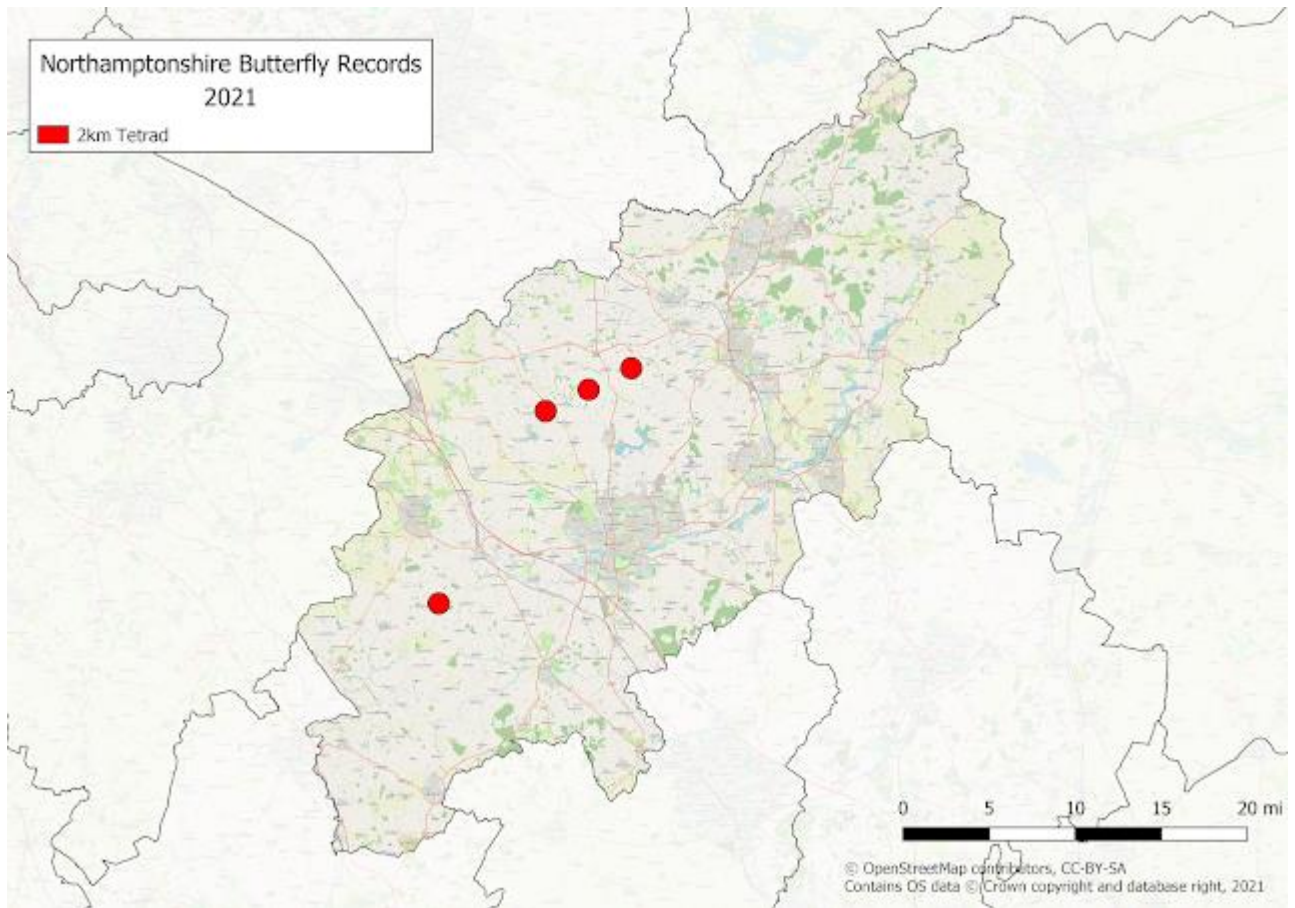
Wood White Distribution

Clouded Yellow

The migrant Clouded Yellow had a very poor showing in 2021 and shows a 94% drop in records from the five year average. Single Clouded Yellows were recorded at Everdon on the 19th of July, Hanging Houghton on the 22nd of July, between Cottersbrooke and Blueberry Farm on the 5th of August, Hollowell on the 11th of August and Harrington Airfield on the 18th of August.



Clouded Yellow



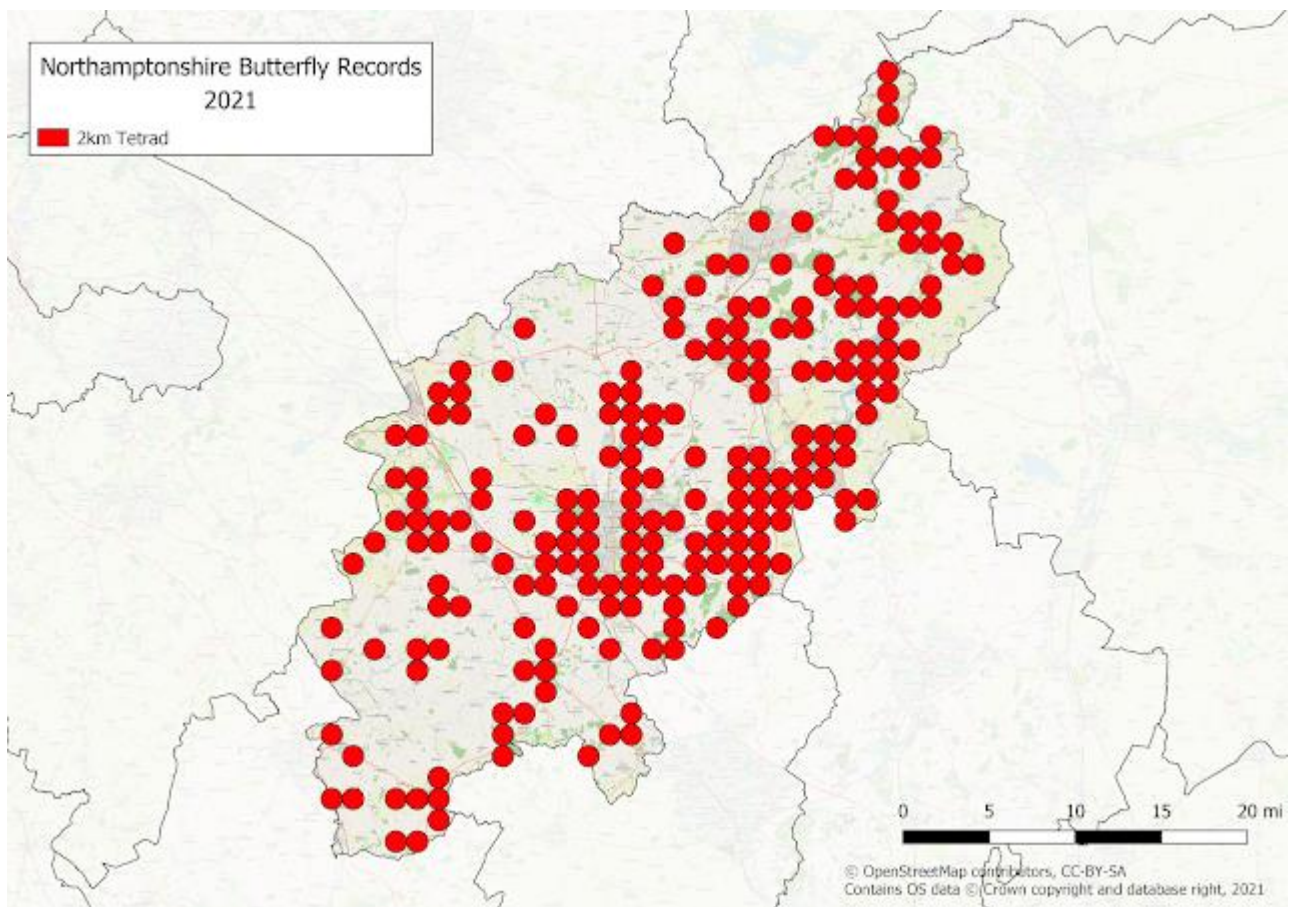
Clouded Yellow Distribution

Brimstone

The Brimstone had an average year in 2021 and while it shows a 14% drop in records from the previous year that puts it just 2.5% below the five year average. Being a butterfly that overwinters as an adult it is one of the first to be seen each year and the sight of Brimstones flying along the hedgerows on the first sunny days of the year is certainly a welcome one. This butterfly can be encountered anywhere and is a frequent visitor to parks, gardens and cemeteries as well as the wider countryside. The first Brimstones of the year were recorded on the 22nd of January at Desborough, Summer Leys Nature Reserve and Raunds, the last of the year was seen on the 12th of December in a Cogenhoe garden.



Brimstone, Brackmills Wood, 2021



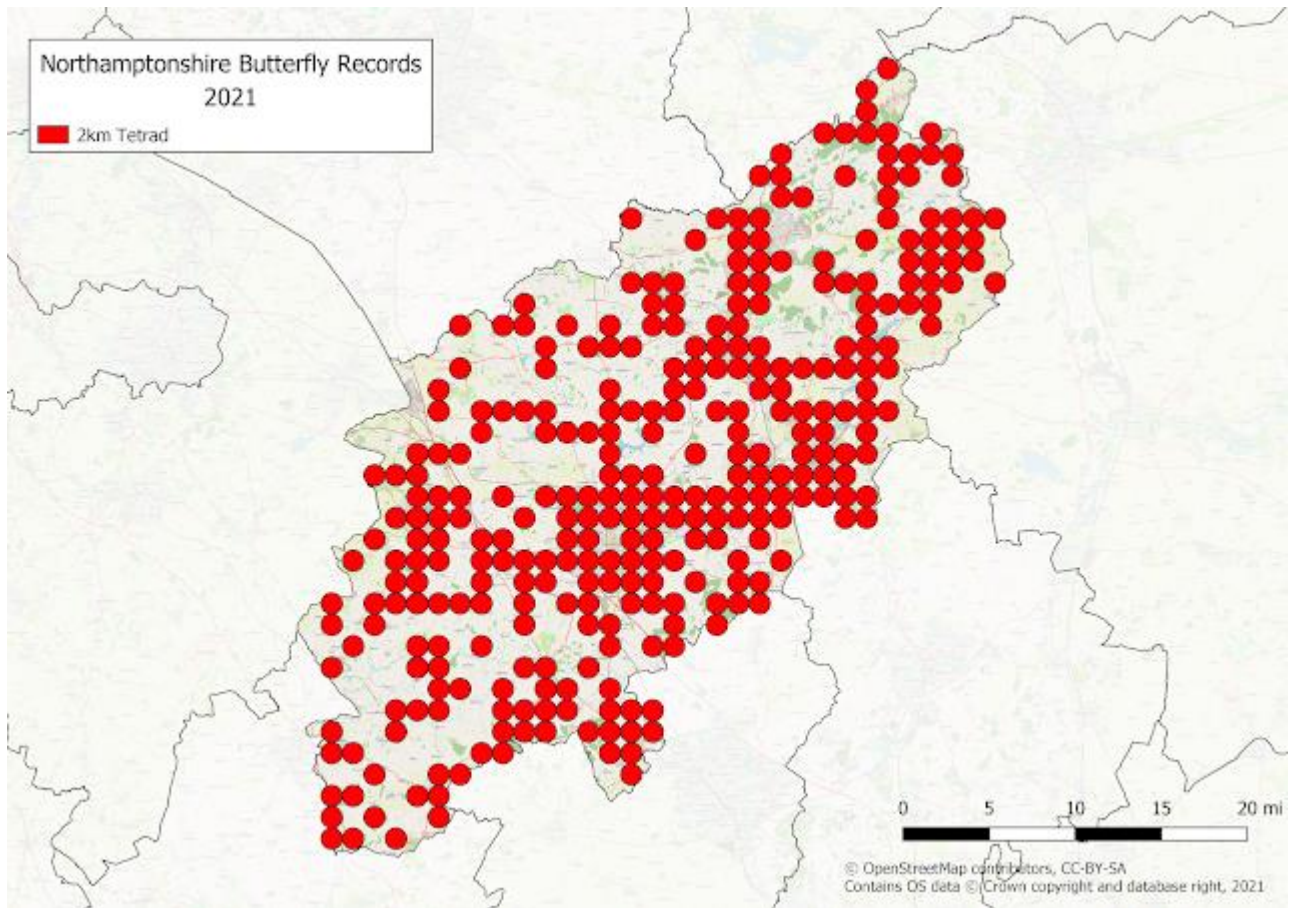
Brimstone Distribution

Large, Small and Green-veined White

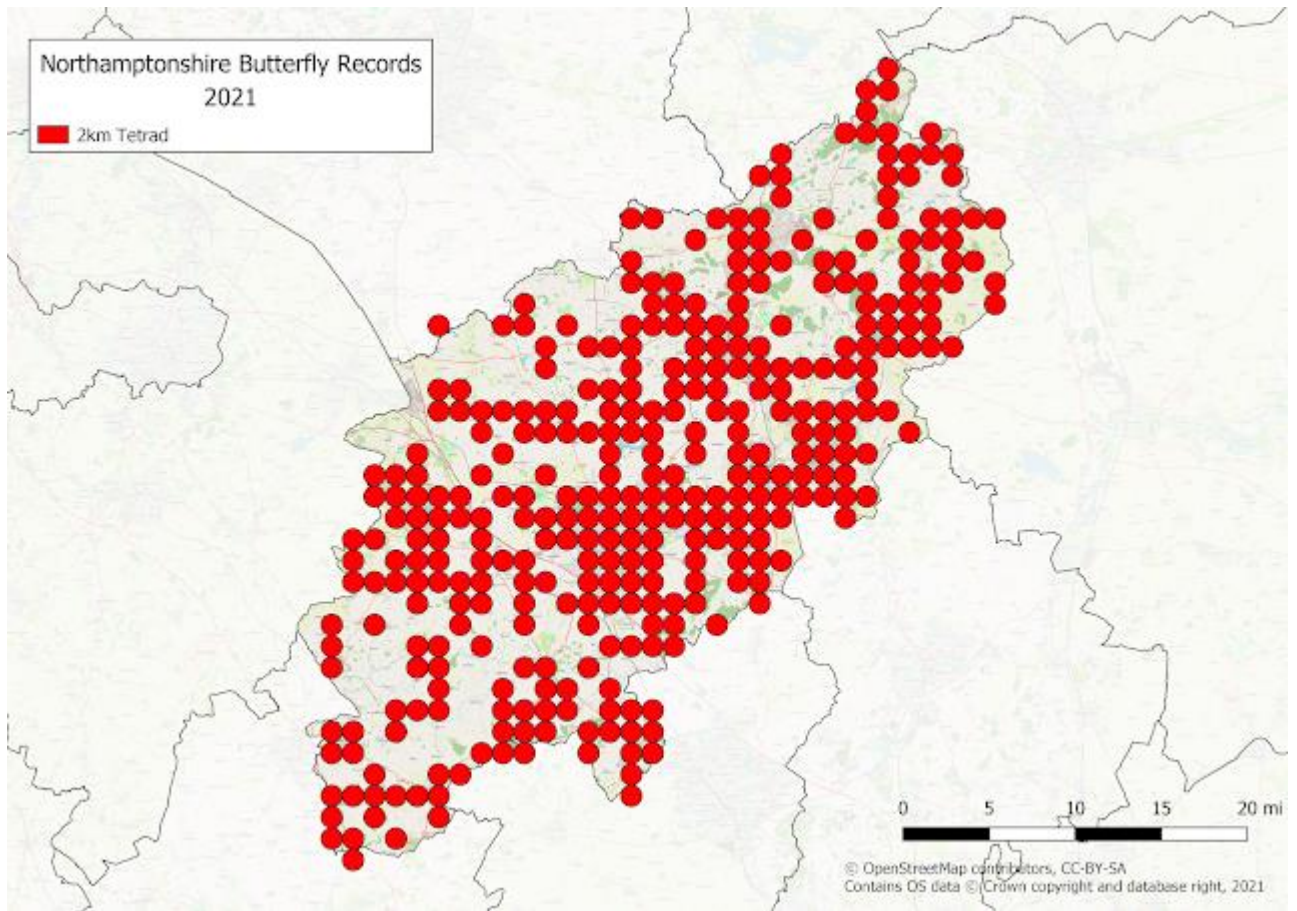
The Large and Small Whites had a very slightly below average year and were down by 1% and 4% respectively from the five year average. The Green-veined White had a slightly poorer showing and shows a 14% drop in records from the five year average. All three butterflies can be encountered anywhere where there is suitable habitat. The first Large White was seen on the 31st of March at Farthinghoe Reserve and the last was seen on the 26th of September near Braunston. The first Small White of the year was seen on the 24th of March in a Rushden garden and the last was seen on the 2nd of November near Whiston Lock. The first Green-veined White was seen on the 4th of April at the Ise Brook in Kettering and the last was seen on the 6th of October in Islip.



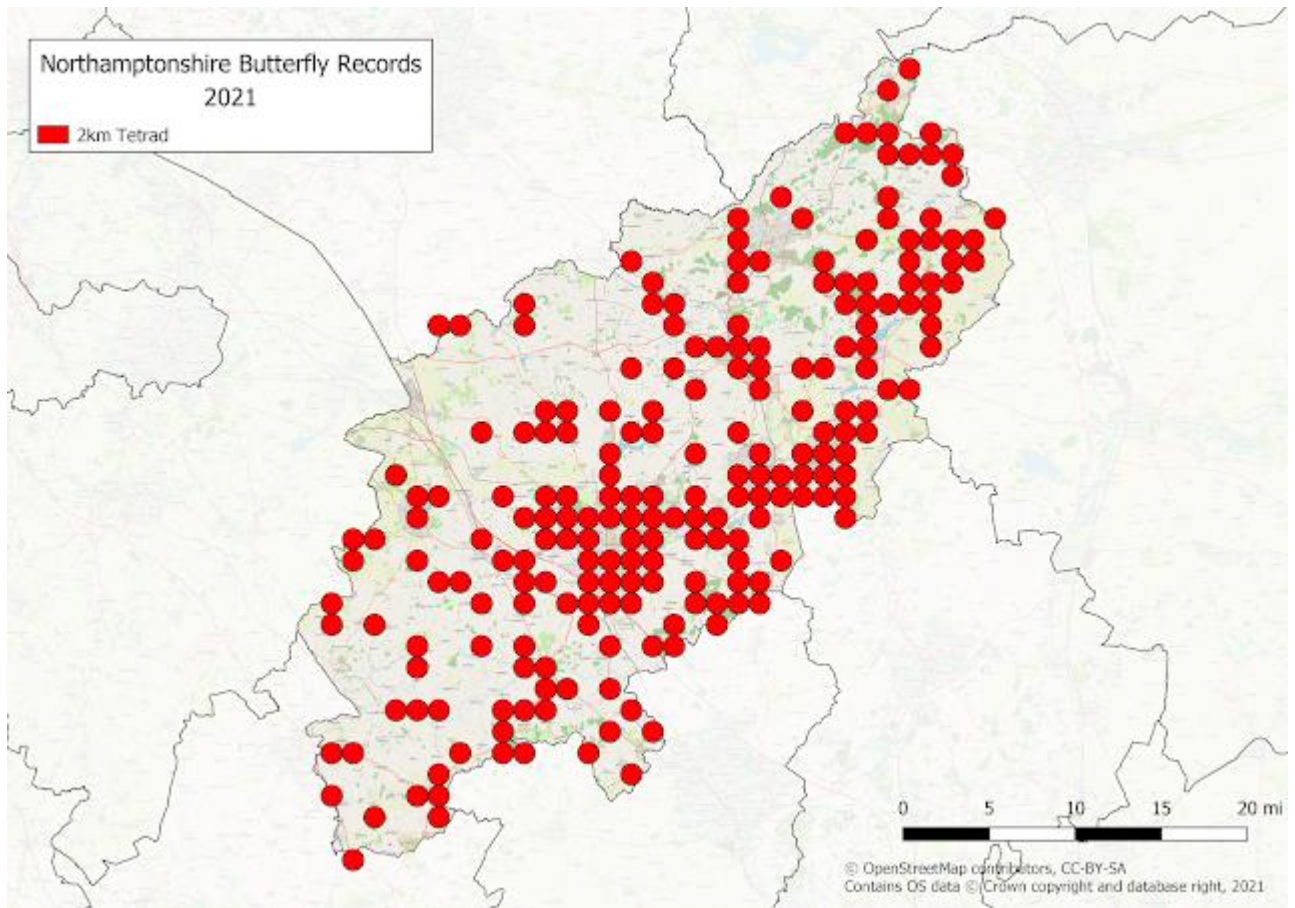
Small White, Wootton, 2021



Large White Distribution



Small White Distribution



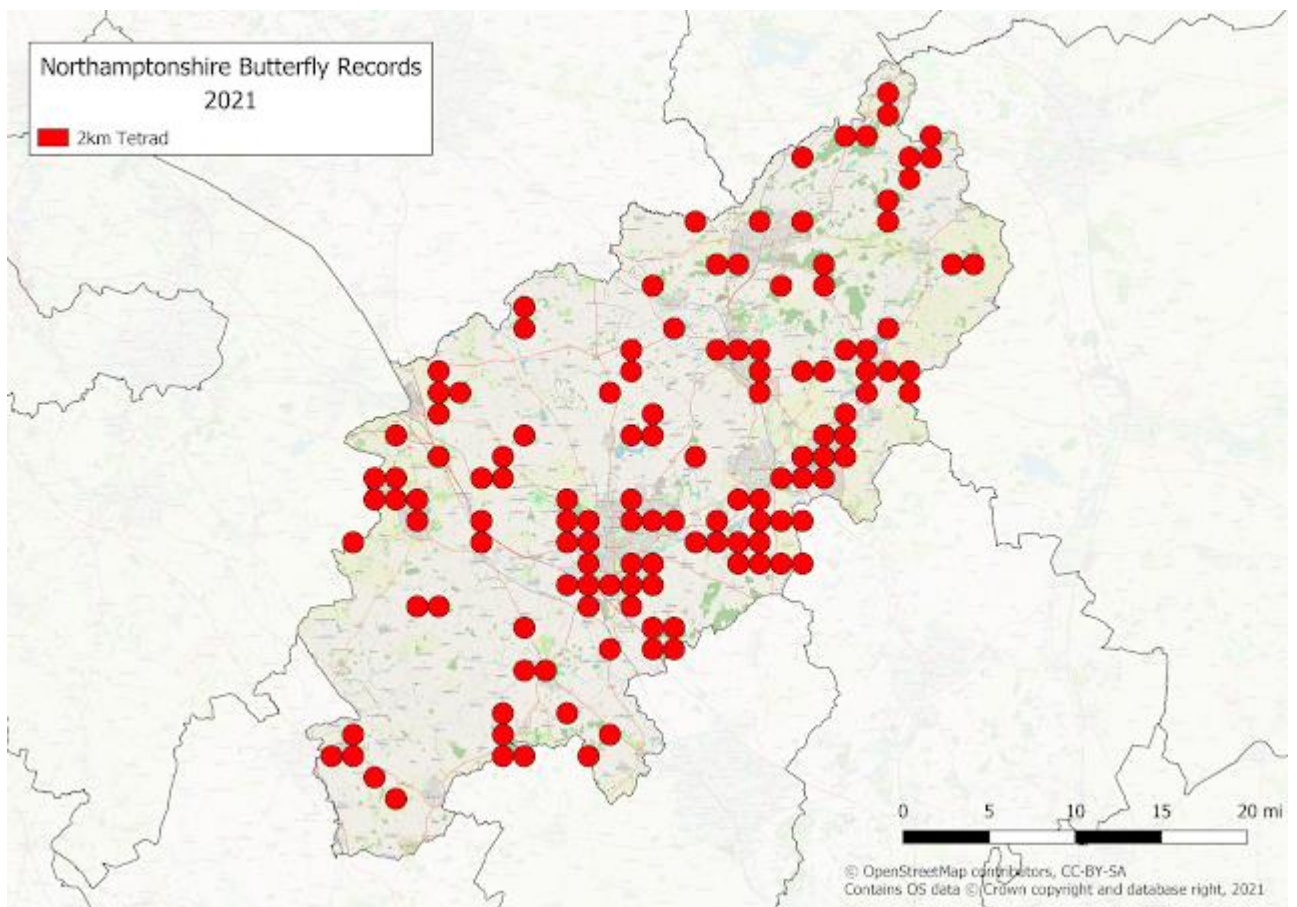
Green-veined White Distribution

Orange-tip

The Orange-tip showed a 40% reduction in records from the previous year which places it 20% below the five year average. This is a common butterfly which can be seen in a variety of habitats where it's larval foodplants grow. The first one was seen on the 29th of March in Woodford and the last of the year was seen on the 7th of July in Salcey Forest.



Orange-tip, Salcey Forest, 2021



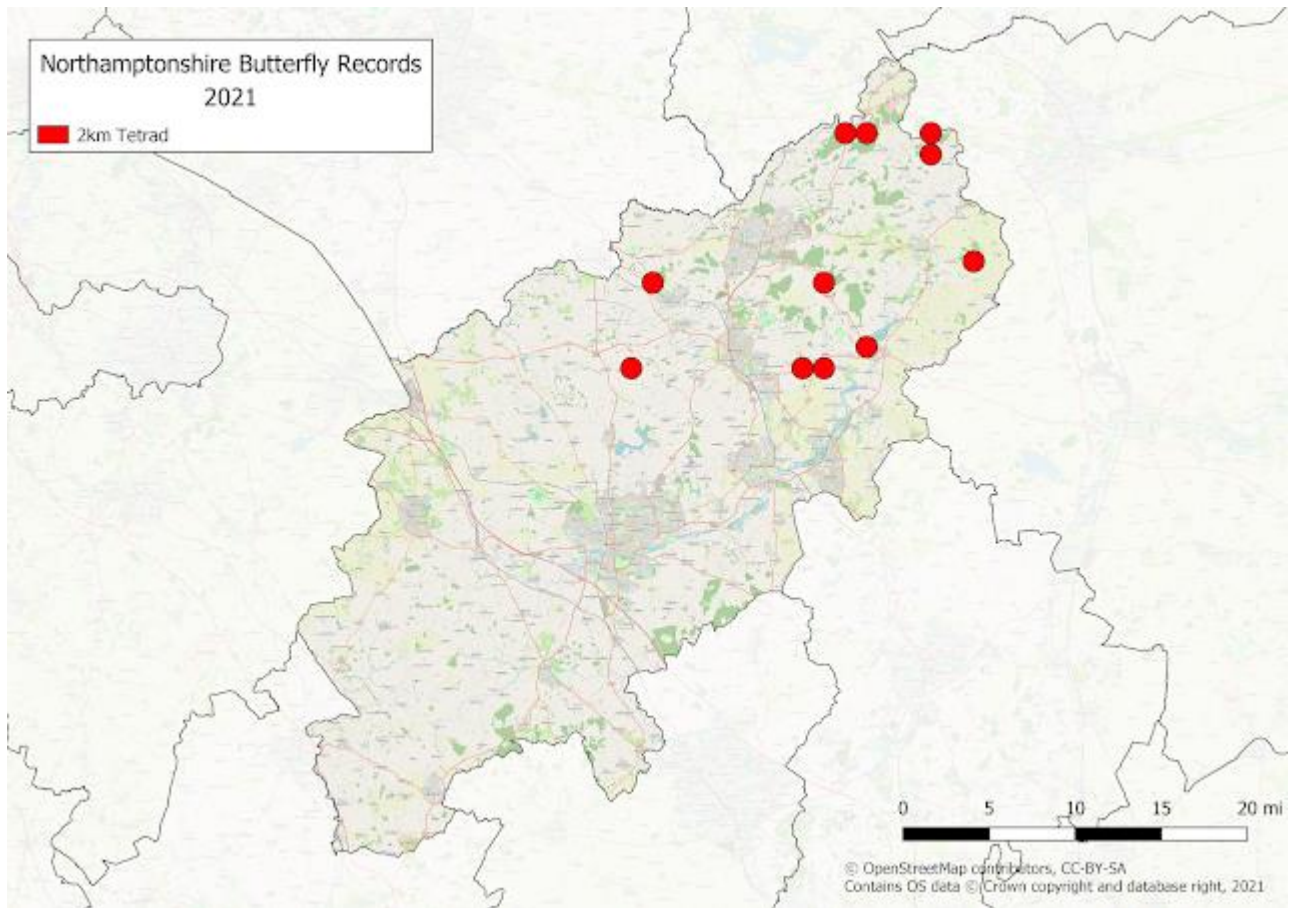
Orange-tip Distribution

Green Hairstreak

The Green Hairstreak had a poor showing in 2021 and the records show it to be 51% down from the previous year and 62% down from the five year average. The best sites to see this grassland species were Fermyn Country Park, Harrington Airfield, Old Sulehey, Polebrook Airfield and Twywell Hills and Dales. The first of the year was seen on the 20th of April at Twywell Hills and Dales and the last one was recorded on the 1st of July in Islip.



Green Hairstreak, Fineshade Wood, 2021



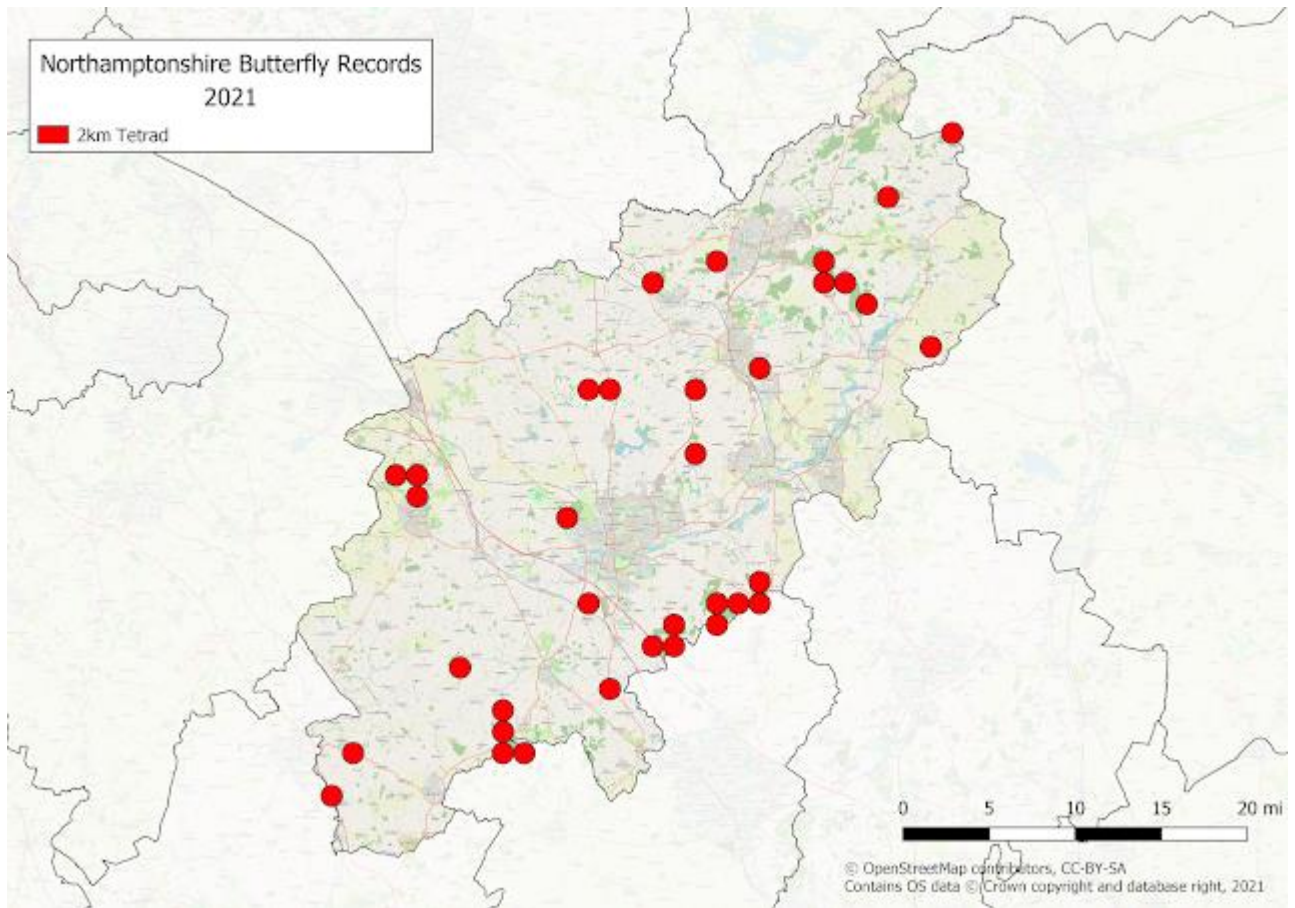
Green Hairstreak Distribution

Purple Hairstreak

The Purple Hairstreak was 35% down from the previous year's records which places it 29% below the five year average. This best sites to see this woodland butterfly were Brampton Ash, Bucknell Wood, Hazelborough Forest, Hazelborough Wood, the Fermyn Wood complex and Salcey Forest. The first of the year was seen on the 1st of July in Fermyn Woods and the last of the year was recorded on the 11th of September in Salcey Forest.



Purple Hairstreak



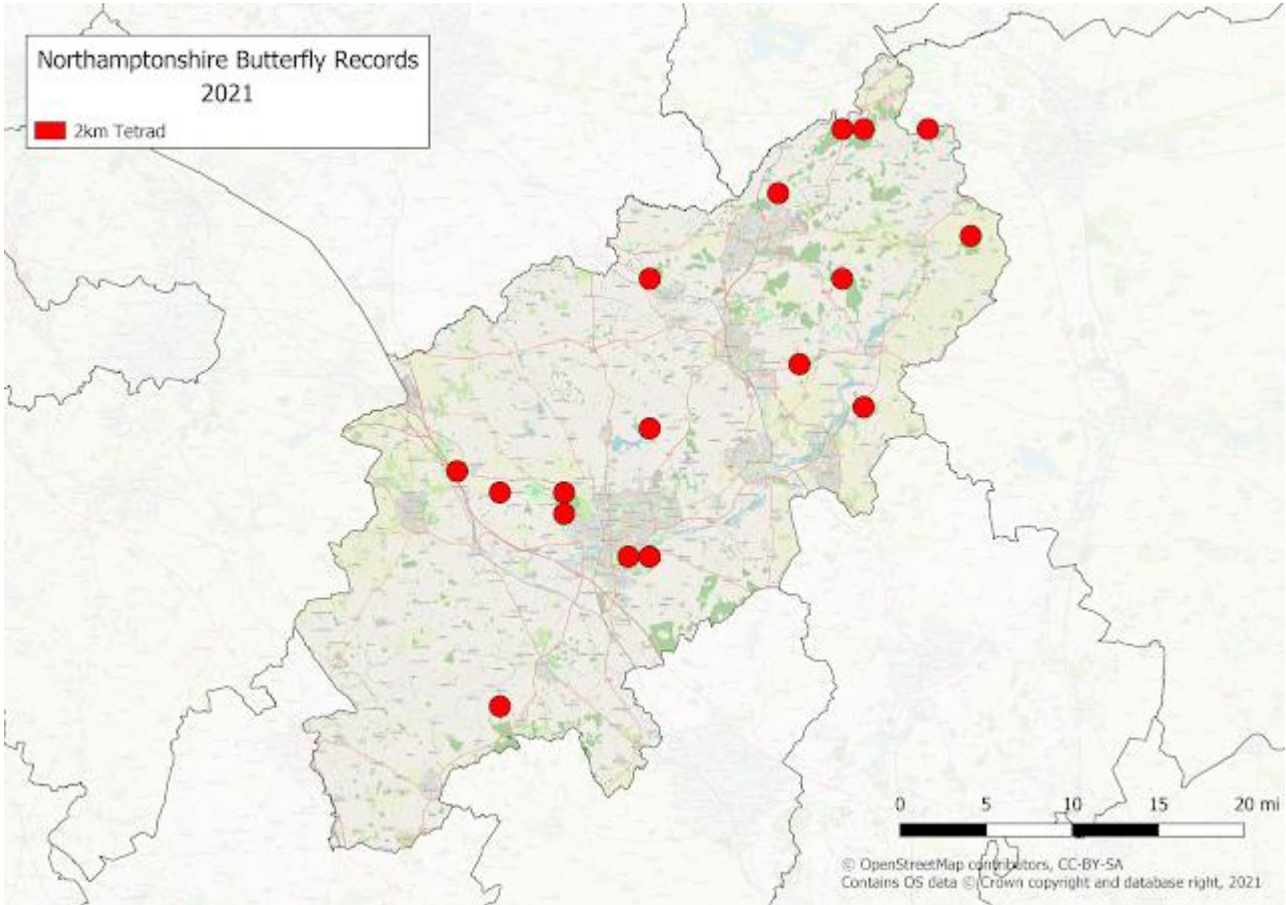
Purple Hairstreak Distribution

White-letter Hairstreak

The White-letter Hairstreak was 28% down from the previous year and 48% down from the five year average. The best places to see this butterfly were the Brackmills Industrial Estate, the Fermyn Wood complex, Fineshade Wood and Hermitage Wood. The first of the year was seen on the 24th of June in Harlestone Firs and the last was seen on the 17th of August in a Raunds garden.



White-letter Hairstreak



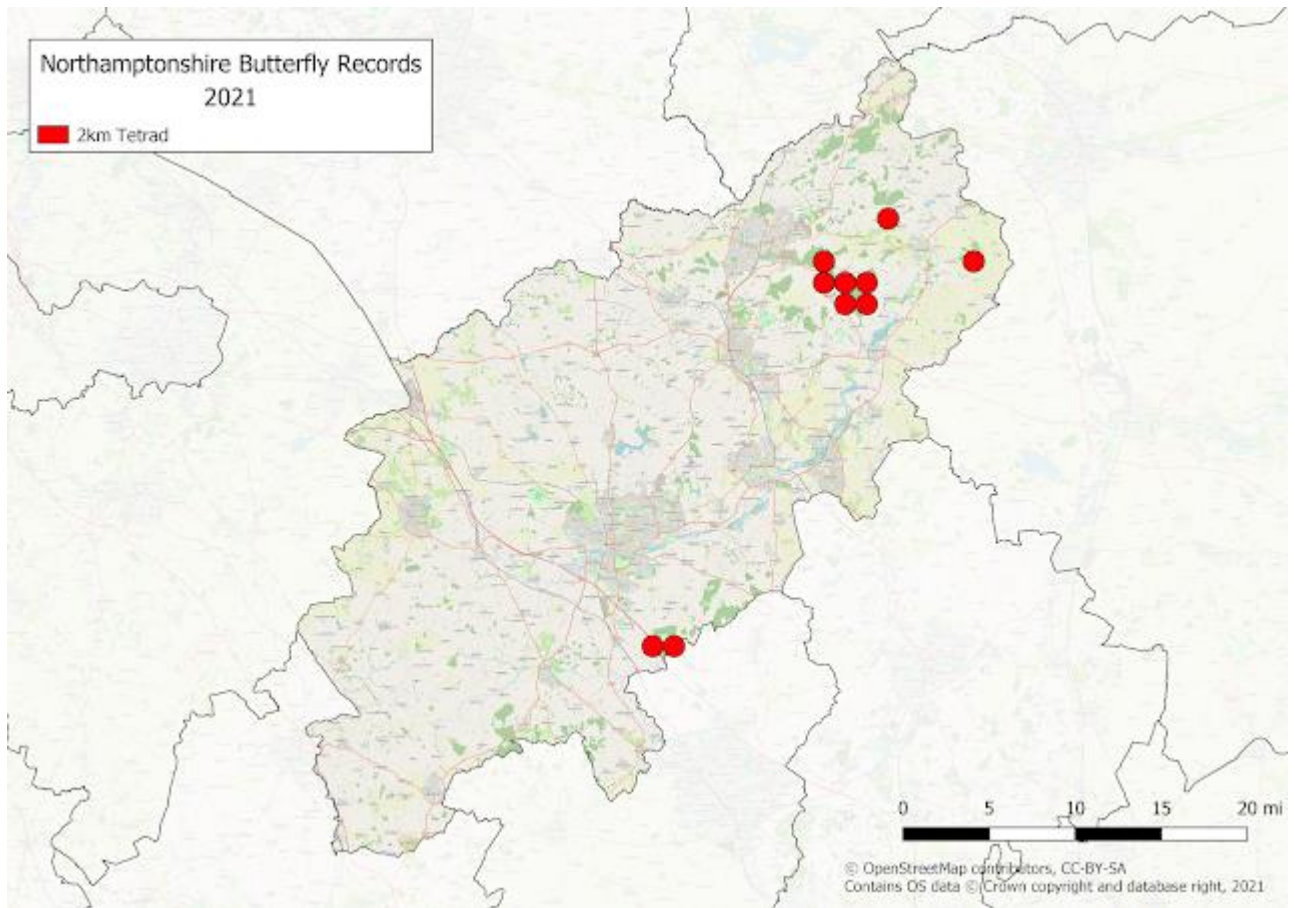
White-letter Hairstreak Distribution

Black Hairstreak

The Black Hairstreak had a poor year in the county and it's late emergence in mid June was immediately impacted by a spell of cold and unsettled weather. The records show show it to be 50% down from the previous year and 75% down from the five year average. The best places to see this butterfly were Fermyn Country Park, Fermyn Wood, Glapthorn Cow Pastures, Polebrook Airfield and Salcey Forest. Salcey Forest is now becoming one of the best sites (along with Glapthorn Cow Pastures) to see Black Hairstreaks and are best viewed from the ride south of the Horsebox car park and also the large Blackthorn hedge in the meadow by the M1. The first of the year was seen on the 16th of June in Glapthorn Cow Pastures and the last of the year was seen on the 20th of July in Harry's Park Wood.



Black Hairstreak, Glapthorn Cow Pastures, 2021



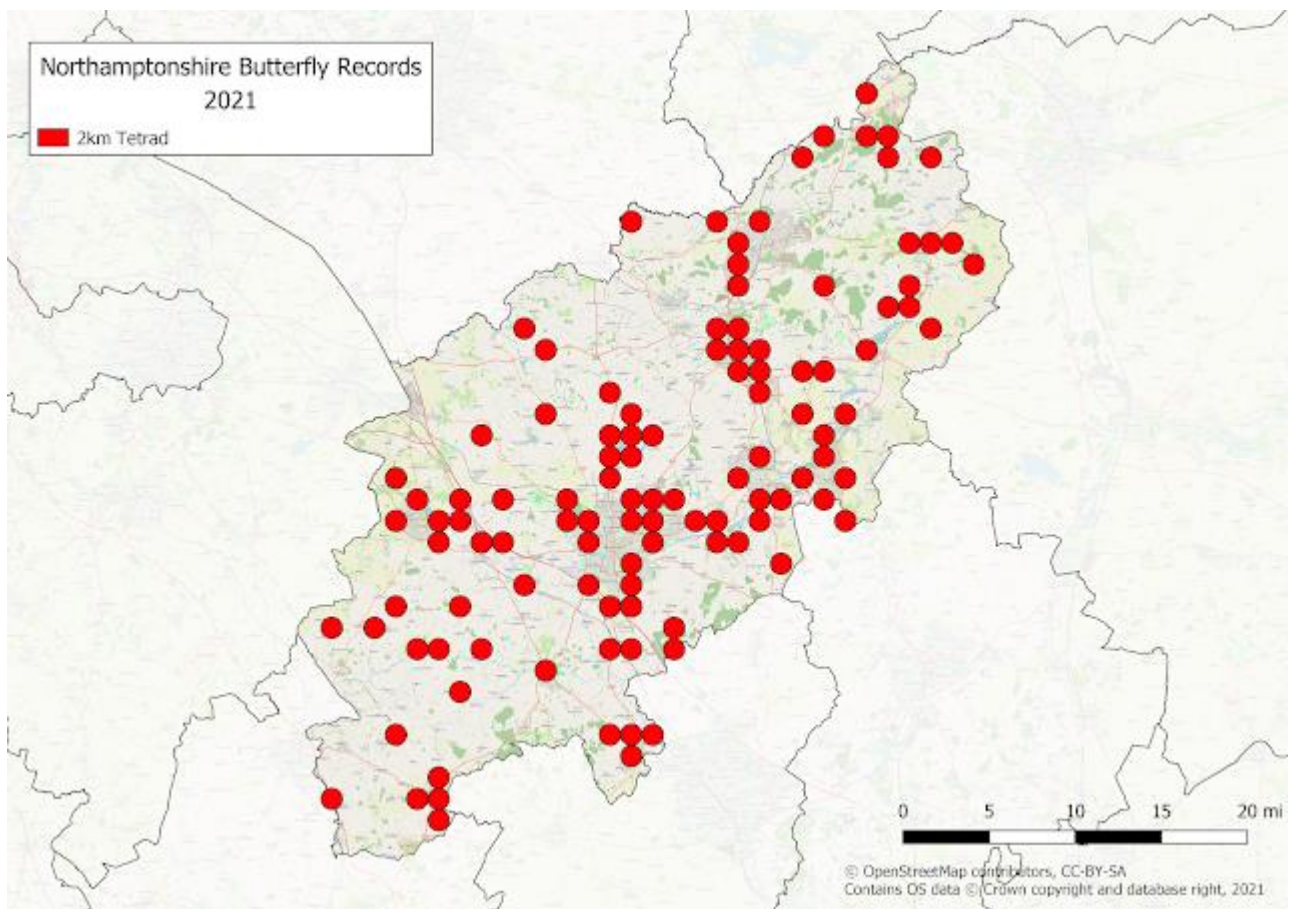
Black Hairstreak Distribution

Small Copper

The Small Copper shows a drop of 44% in the records from the previous year which is a 35% drop from the five year average. This is a widespread grassland butterfly which can be found anywhere where its larval foodplant of Sorrel grows. The best sites to see them were Borough Hill in Daventry, Bradlaugh Fields, Harlestone Firs, the Nene Wetlands and Twywell Hills and Dales. The first ones of the year were seen on the 16th of May at Summer Leys Nature Reserve and Twywell Hills and Dales and the last ones were recorded on the 10th of October in Harlestone, New Duston and Summer Leys Nature Reserve.



Small Copper



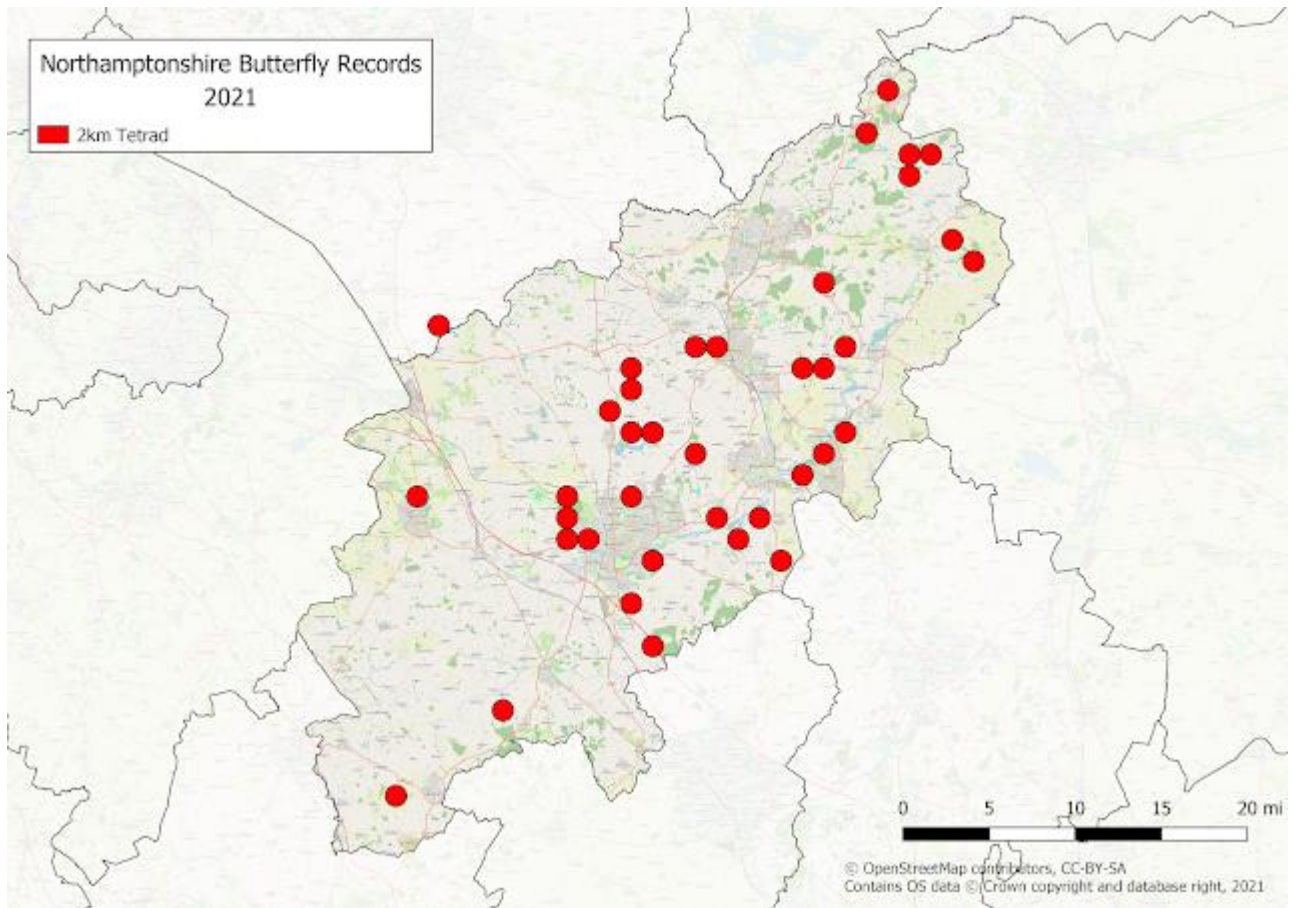
Small Copper Distribution

Brown Argus

The Brown Argus had a poor year with a 40% drop in records from 2020 and a 68% drop from the five year average. The grassland butterfly could be found anywhere where there is suitable habitat but the best sites to see them were Collyweston Deeps, Bradlaugh Fields, Harrington Airfield, Great Morton Sale, the Nene Wetlands and Twywell Hills and Dales. The first of the year was seen on the 29th of May at Twywell Hills and Dales and the last of the year was seen on the 6th of October at Summer Leys Nature Reserve.



Brown Argus



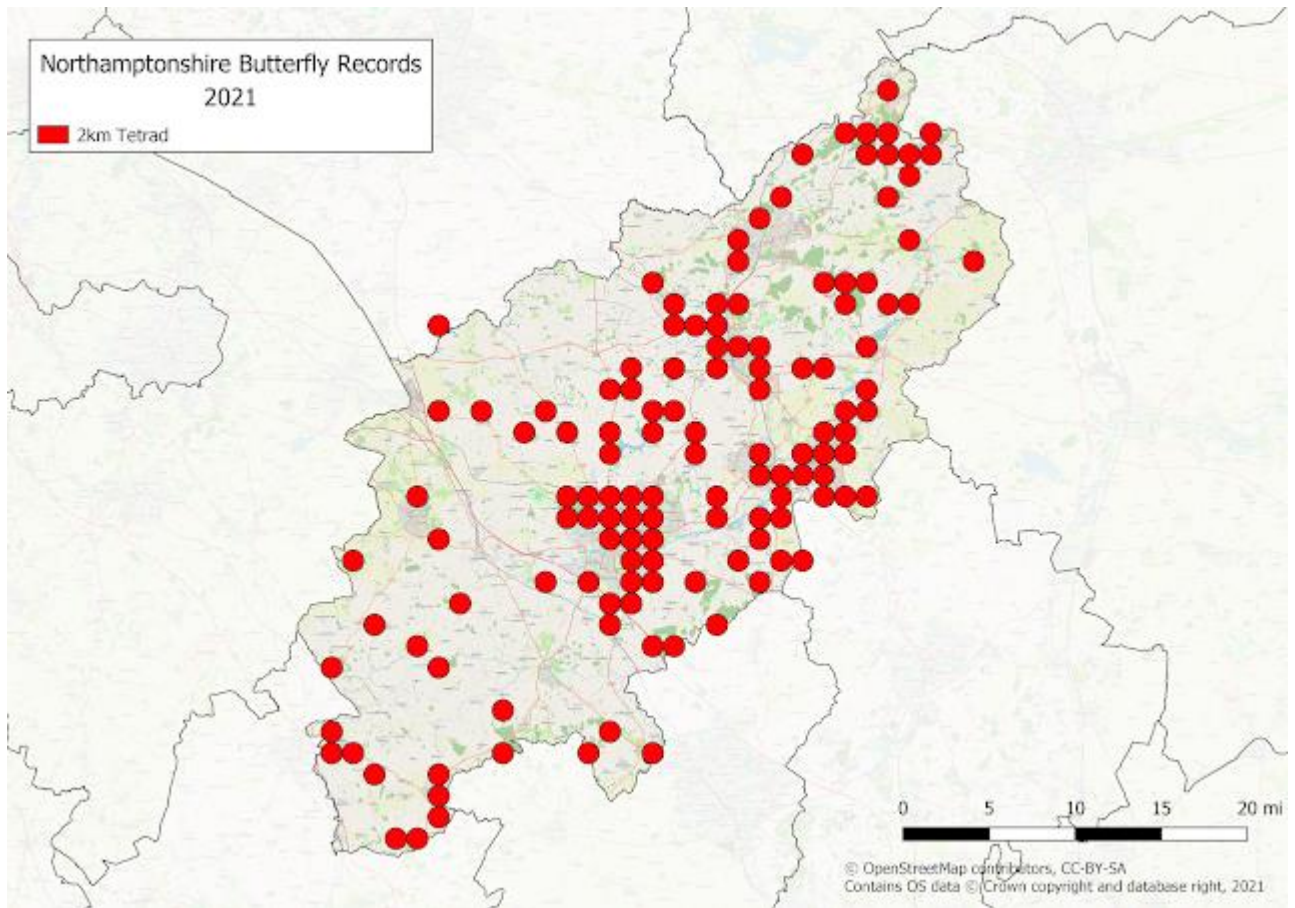
Brown Argus Distribution

Common Blue

Like the Brown Argus the Common Blue also had a poor year in the county with a 30% drop in records from the previous year which is a 58% drop from the five year average. This is a common grassland butterfly which can be found anywhere with suitable habitat but the best sites to see them were Collyweston Deeps, Great Morton Sale, Harrington Airfield, Lyveden New Bield, the Nene Wetlands, Ring Haw and Twywell Hills and Dales. The first ones of the year were seen on the 18th of May at Brackmills and Potterspury and the last of the year was seen on the 6th of October at Summer Leys Nature Reserve.



Common Blue



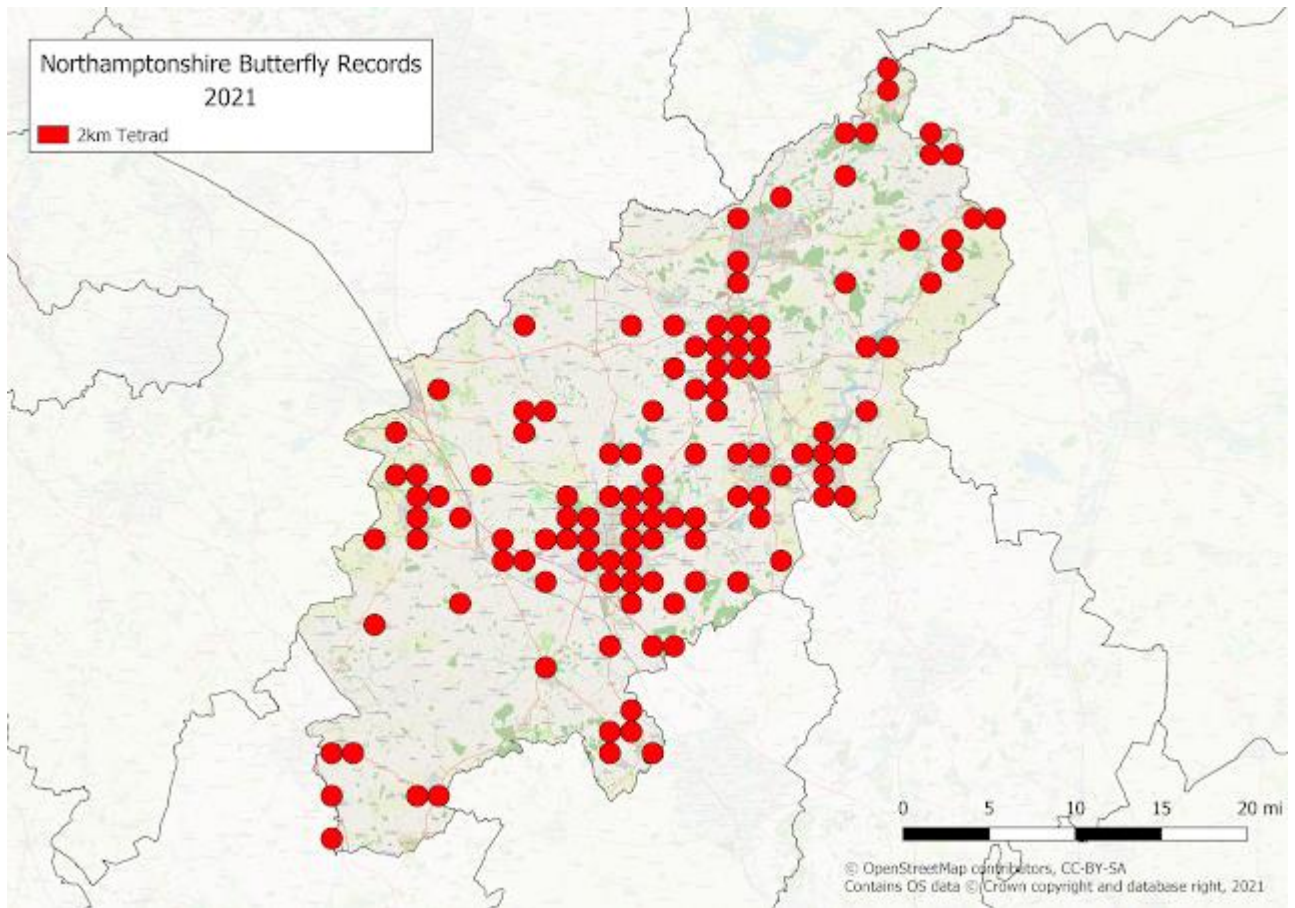
Common Blue Distribution

Holly Blue

The Holly Blue shows a 29% drop in the records from the previous year which is a 30% drop from the five year average. This is a common hedgerow butterfly which frequents parks and gardens as well as the wider countryside. The best sites to see them were Abington Park, Brackmills, Eastfield Park in Northampton and Finedon Pocket Park. The first of the year was seen on the 30th of March in Norton and the last of the year was seen on the 30th of October in Polebrook.



Holly Blue



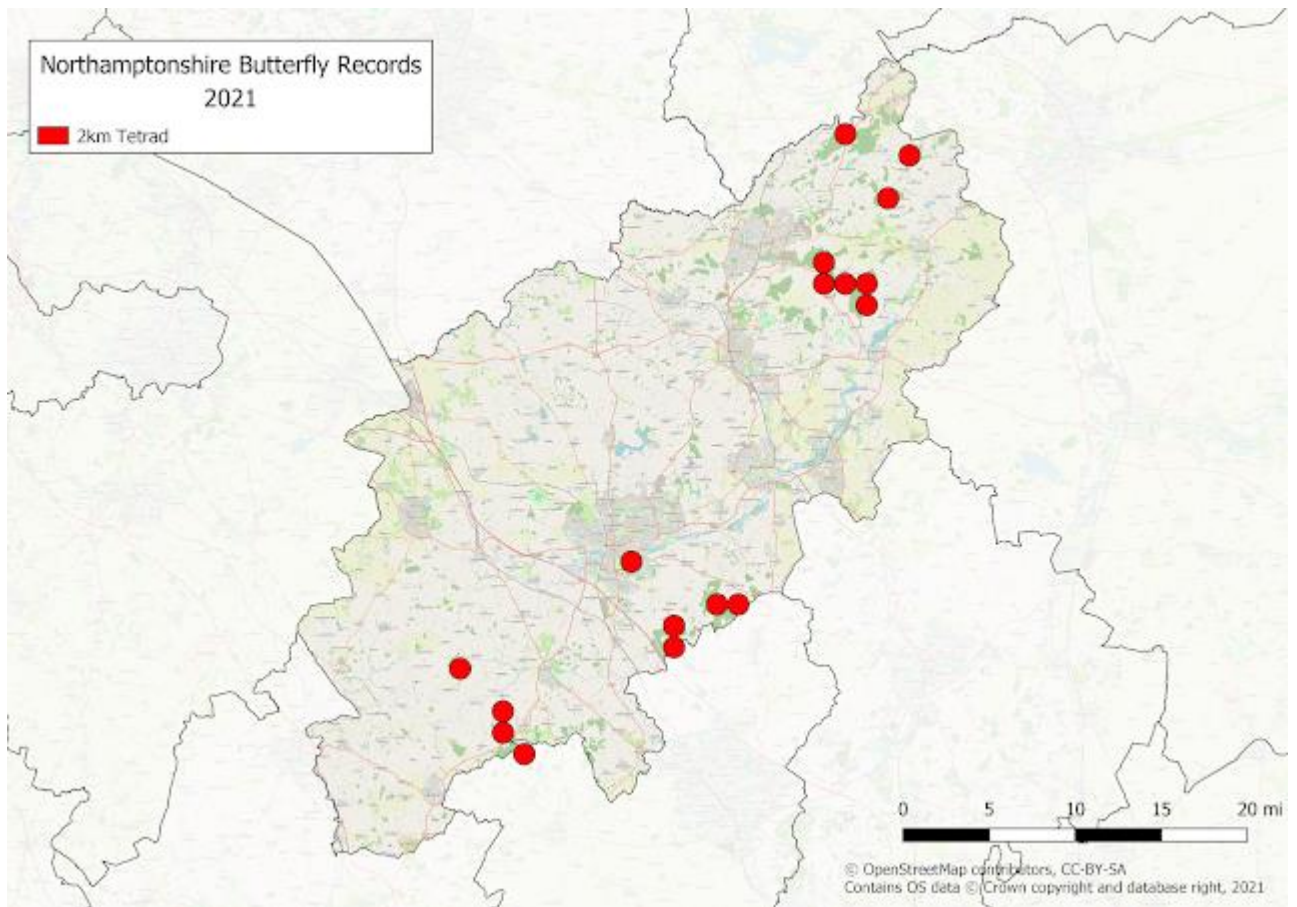
Holly Blue Distribution

White Admiral

Anyone who frequented the woodlands of Northamptonshire during the summer of 2021 will have noticed that the White Admiral was being seen in much fewer numbers than previous years. It is thought a number of factors could be responsible for this drop with the poor weather and the large amount of forestry that occurred in its strongholds during the previous winter being chief among them. The records show an 80% reduction from 2020 which is a 73% drop in numbers from the five year average. The best sites to see this woodland butterfly were Bucknell Wood, Hazelborough Forest, Hazelborough Wood, the Fermyn Wood complex, Salcey Forest and Wakerley Wood. The first of the year was seen on the 1st of July in Plumpton Wood and the last ones of the year were seen on the 12th of August in Wakerley Wood and Yardley Chase.



White Admiral



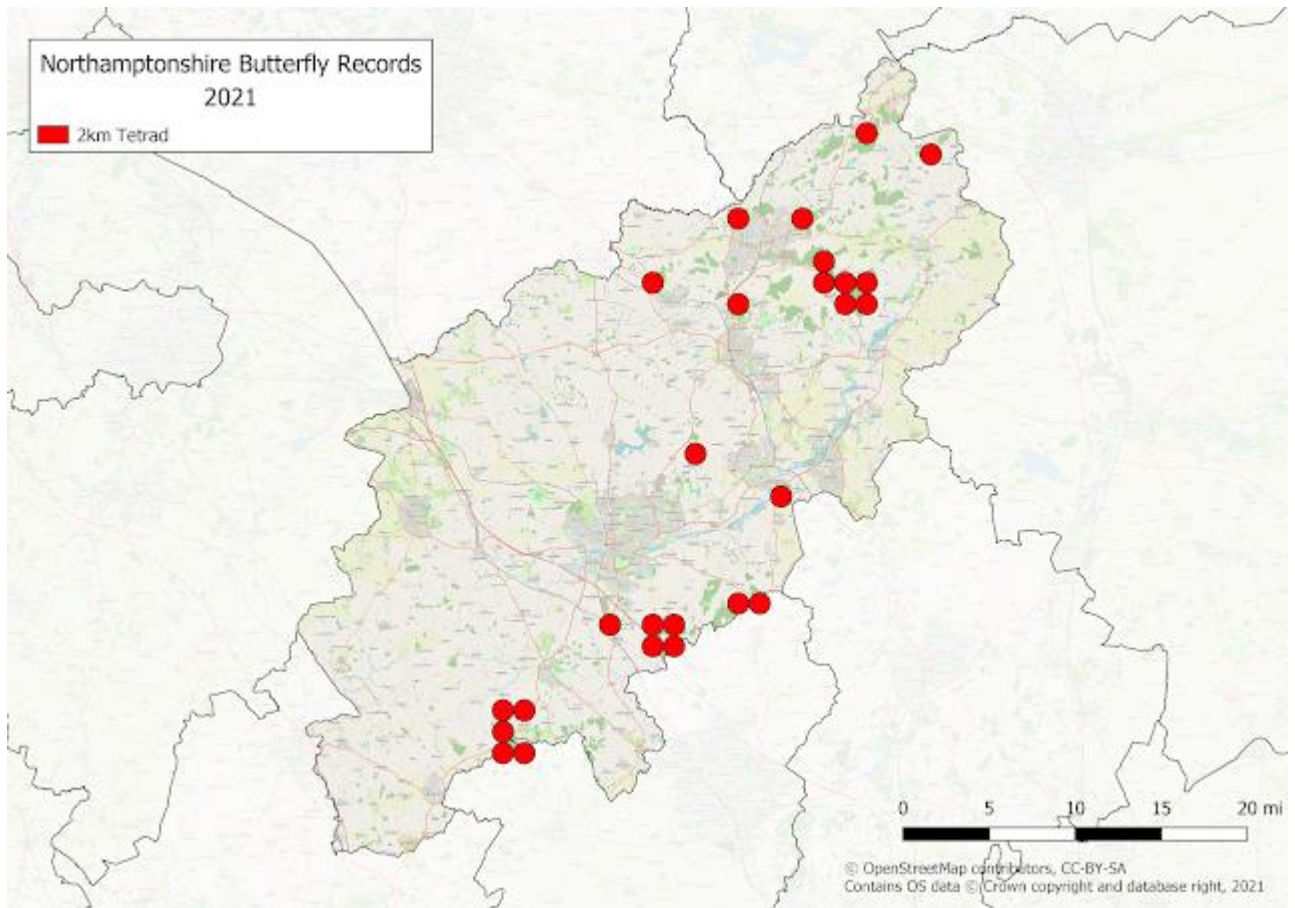
White Admiral Distribution

Purple Emperor

The Purple Emperor had a slightly less than average year in the county but did see an increase in range. Records show it to be 41% up from the previous year's records which places it just 5% under the five year average. It was also recorded in some new sites in 2021 with records being received from Irchester Country Park, Roade Cutting, and the magnificent setting of the grounds of Rockingham Castle. The best places to see this woodland butterfly were Bucknell Wood, the Fermyn Wood complex, Harry's Park Wood and Salcey Forest. The first of the year was seen on the 2nd of July in Hazelborough Forest and the last of the year was seen on the 10th of August in Souther Wood (part of Fermyn Woods).



Purple Emperor, Fermyn Woods, 2021



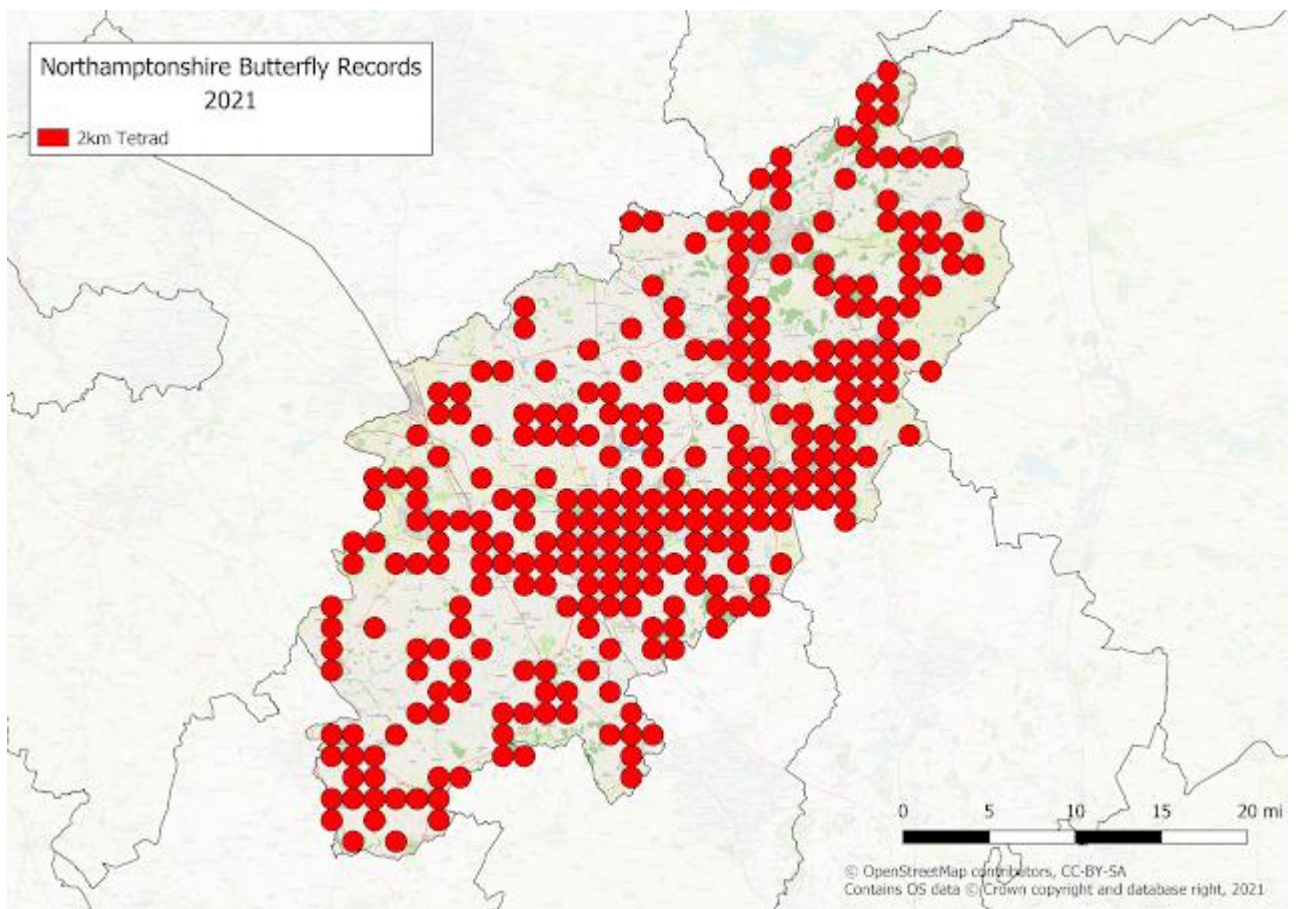
Purple Emperor Distribution

Red Admiral

The Red Admiral had an average year in the county and although the records show a drop of 21% from the previous year it places it just slightly below the 5 year average. This is a common butterfly frequenting gardens and parks as well as the wider countryside and could be found anywhere with suitable habitat. The first of the year was seen on the 22nd of January in Brampton Ash and the last of the year was seen on New Years Eve in Fermyn Wood Country Park.



Red Admiral



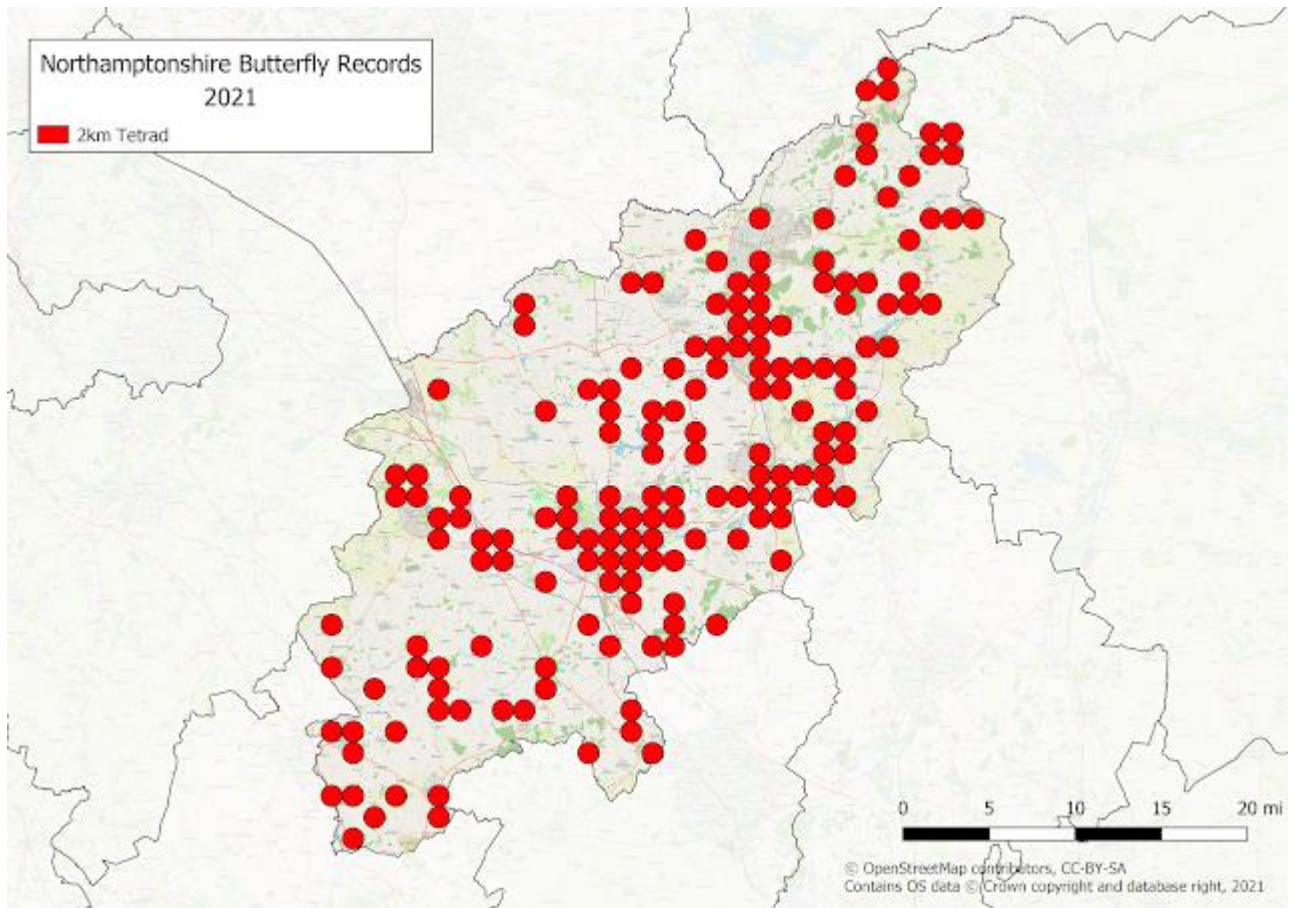
Red Admiral Distribution

Painted Lady

Although the numbers of Painted Ladies were 87% up from the previous year they were still 52% down from the five year average. However, numbers of this migrant butterfly do often fluctuate quite dramatically each year. This butterfly can be encountered anywhere and is very often found in gardens in it's search for nectar. The first of the year was seen on the 13th of April near Little Oakley and the last of the year was seen on the 23rd of November in East Hunsbury in Northampton.



Painted Lady, Wootton, 2021



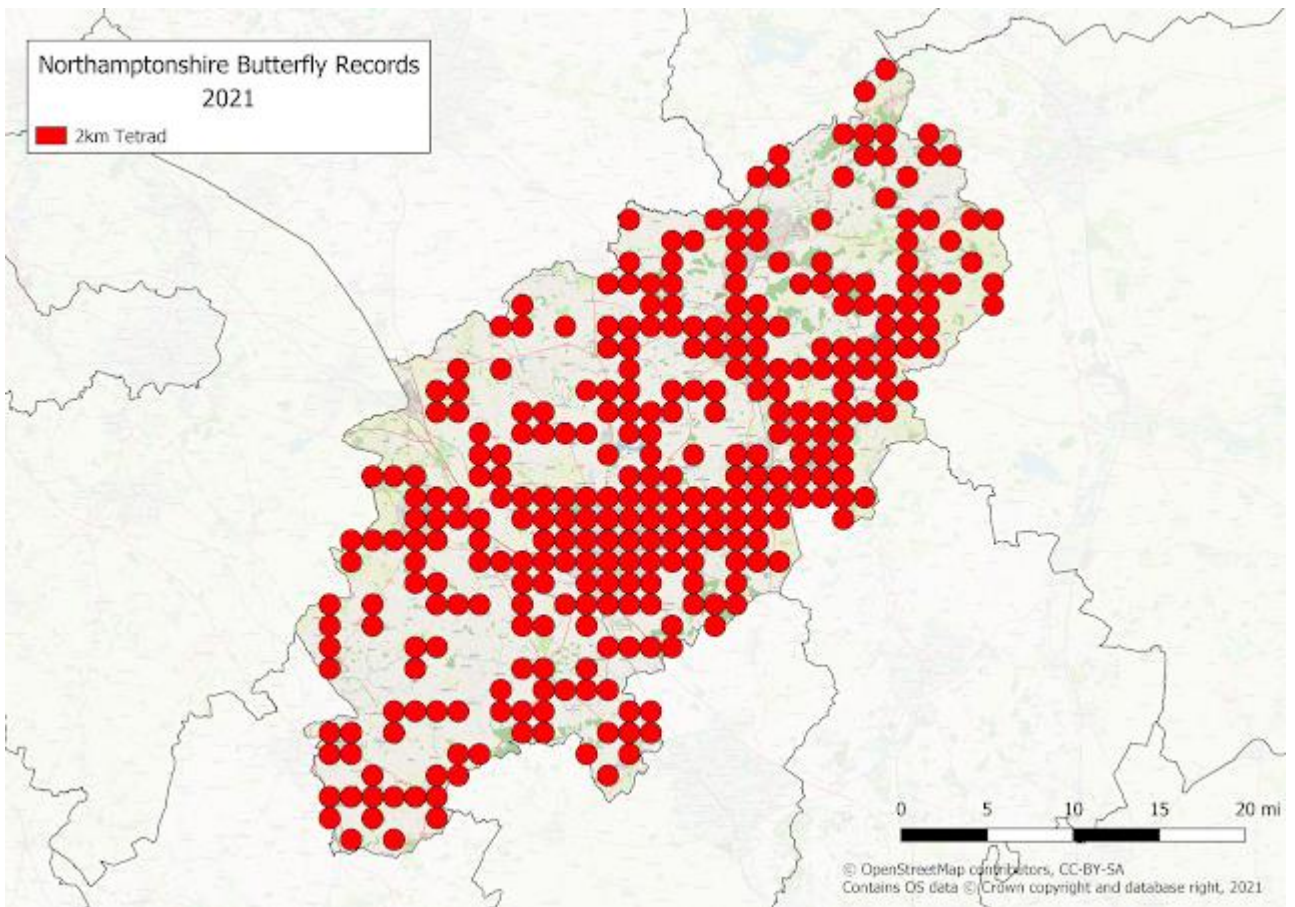
Painted Lady Distribution

Small Tortoiseshell

The Small Tortoiseshell had a good year in the county and although the records are 29% down from the previous year they are 29% above the five year average. This butterfly could be encountered anywhere including parks and gardens and the wider countryside. The first of the year was seen on the 16th of January in a Brackley garden and the last of the year was seen on the 30th of December in Woodford Halse.



Small Tortoiseshell



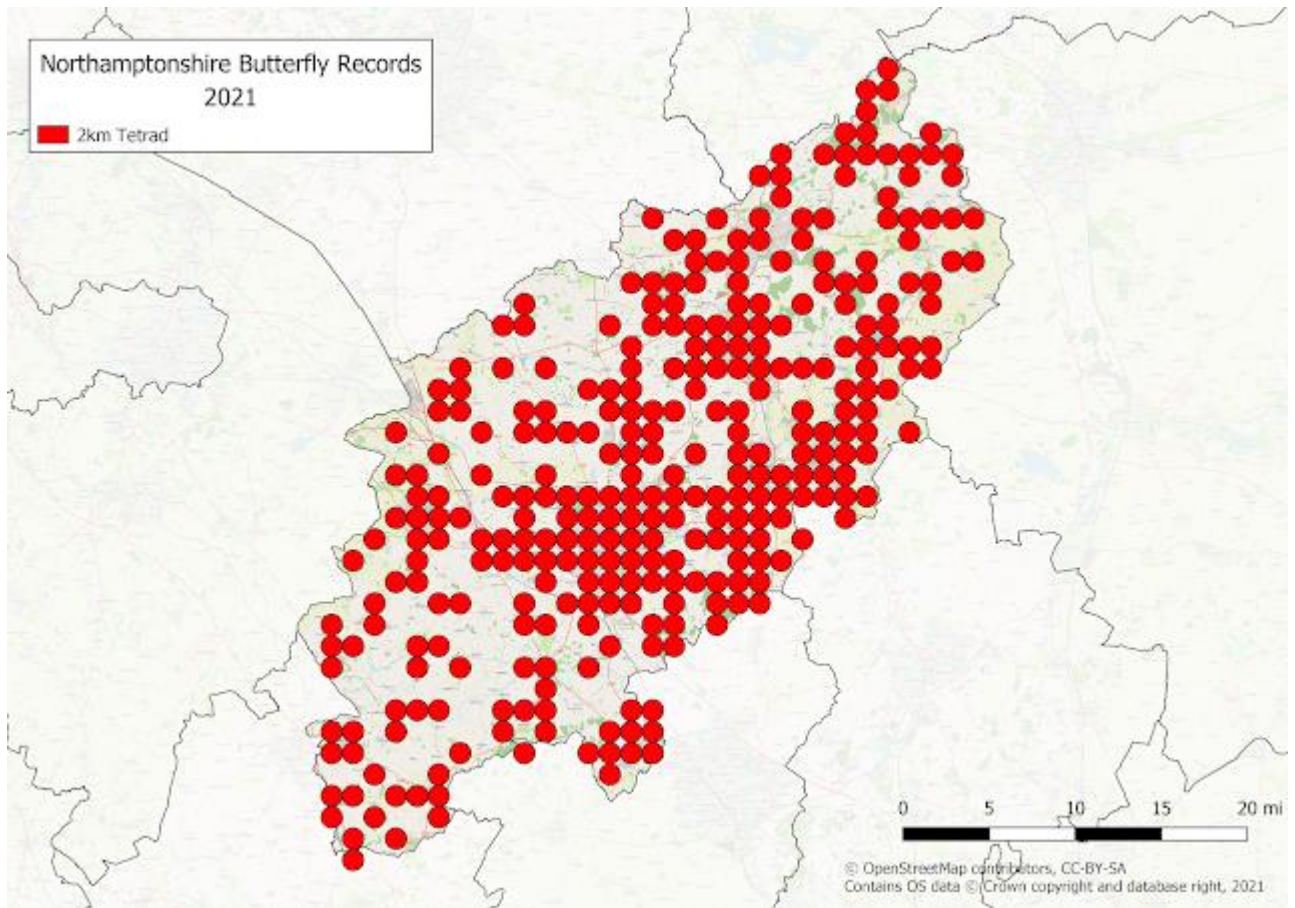
Small Tortoiseshell Distribution

Peacock

Like the Small Tortoiseshell the Peacock also had a good year in the county. Despite the records showing a 44% drop from the previous year they are still 35% above the five year average. This butterfly can be seen anywhere where there is suitable habitat but were recorded in particularly big numbers in Evenley, Farthinghoe Reserve, Harry's Park Wood, the Nene Wetlands, Salcey Forest and Stanwick Lakes. The first of the year was seen on the 10th of January in Cranford and the last of the year was seen on the 8th of November on the Lamport Estate.



Peacock



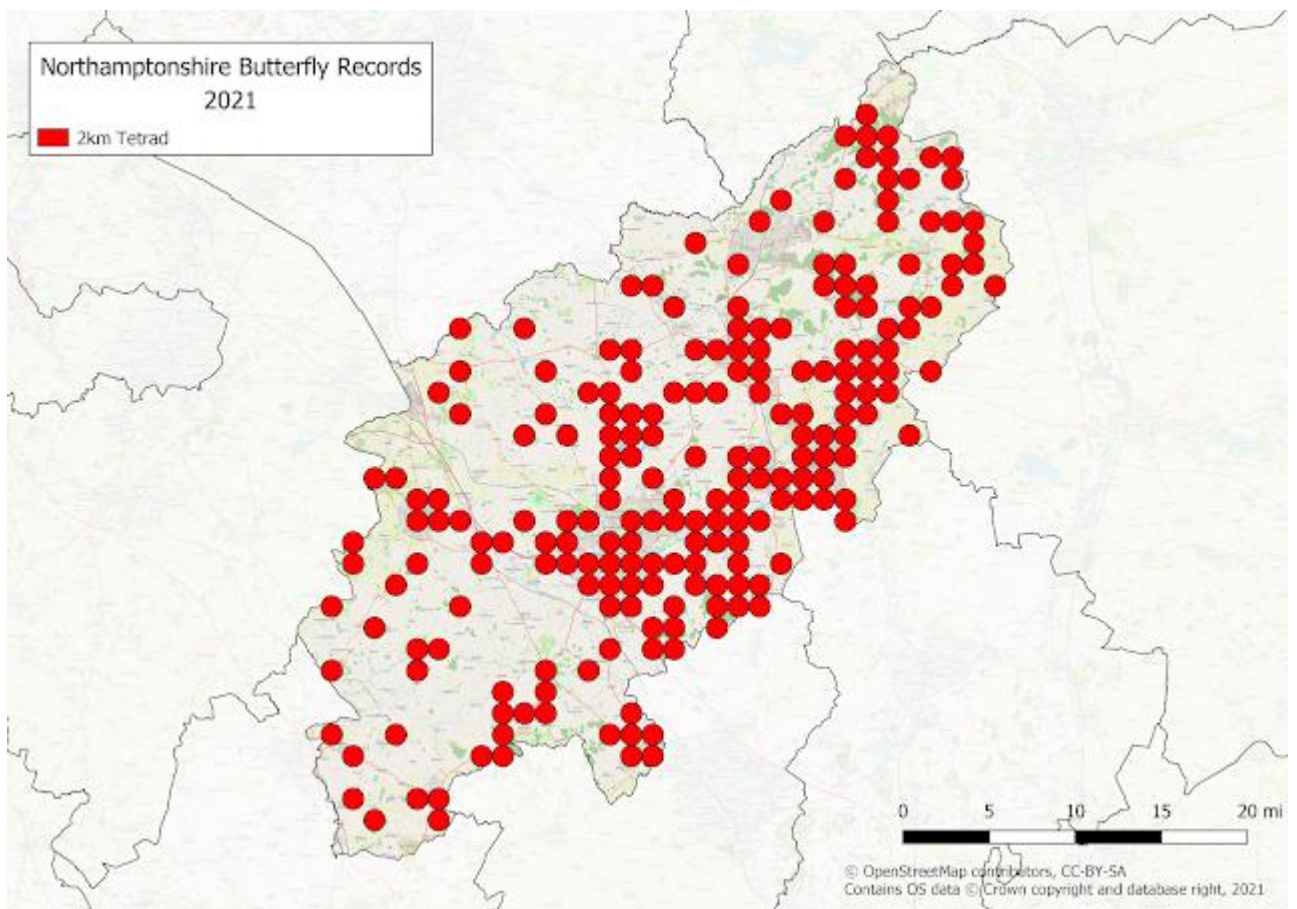
Peacock Distribution

Comma

The Comma shows a 33% drop in numbers below the previous year's figures and was 22% below the five year average. This another common butterfly which can be found anywhere where there is suitable habitat. The first ones of the year were seen on the 24th of February in Great Houghton and Grendon and the last of the year was seen on the 9th of November in Barton Seagrave.



Comma, Salcey Forest, 2021



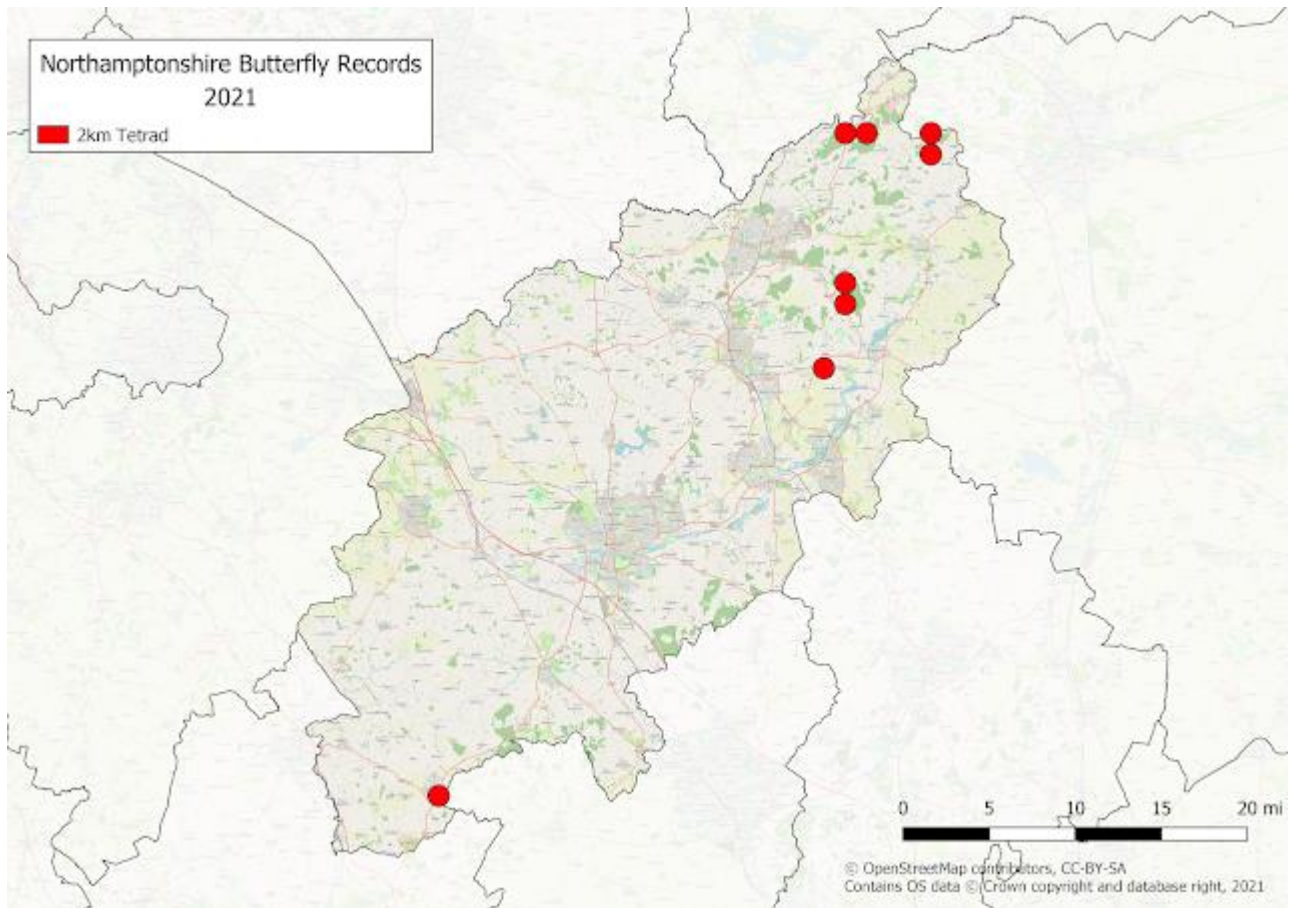
Comma Distribution

Dark Green Fritillary

The Dark Green Fritillary had a slightly less than average year and although the numbers show a 74% decrease from the previous year it is only 18% below the five year average. Although this is chiefly a grassland butterfly they can wander big distances from their normal strongholds. The biggest surprise came on the 21st of July when one was seen in a garden in the middle of Brackley! The best sites to see this species were Old Sulehey, Ring Haw and Wakerley Wood. The first of the year was seen on the 23rd of June in Fineshade Wood and the last of the year was seen on the 12th of August in the Fermyn Wood complex.



Dark Green Fritillary, Fineshade Wood, 2021



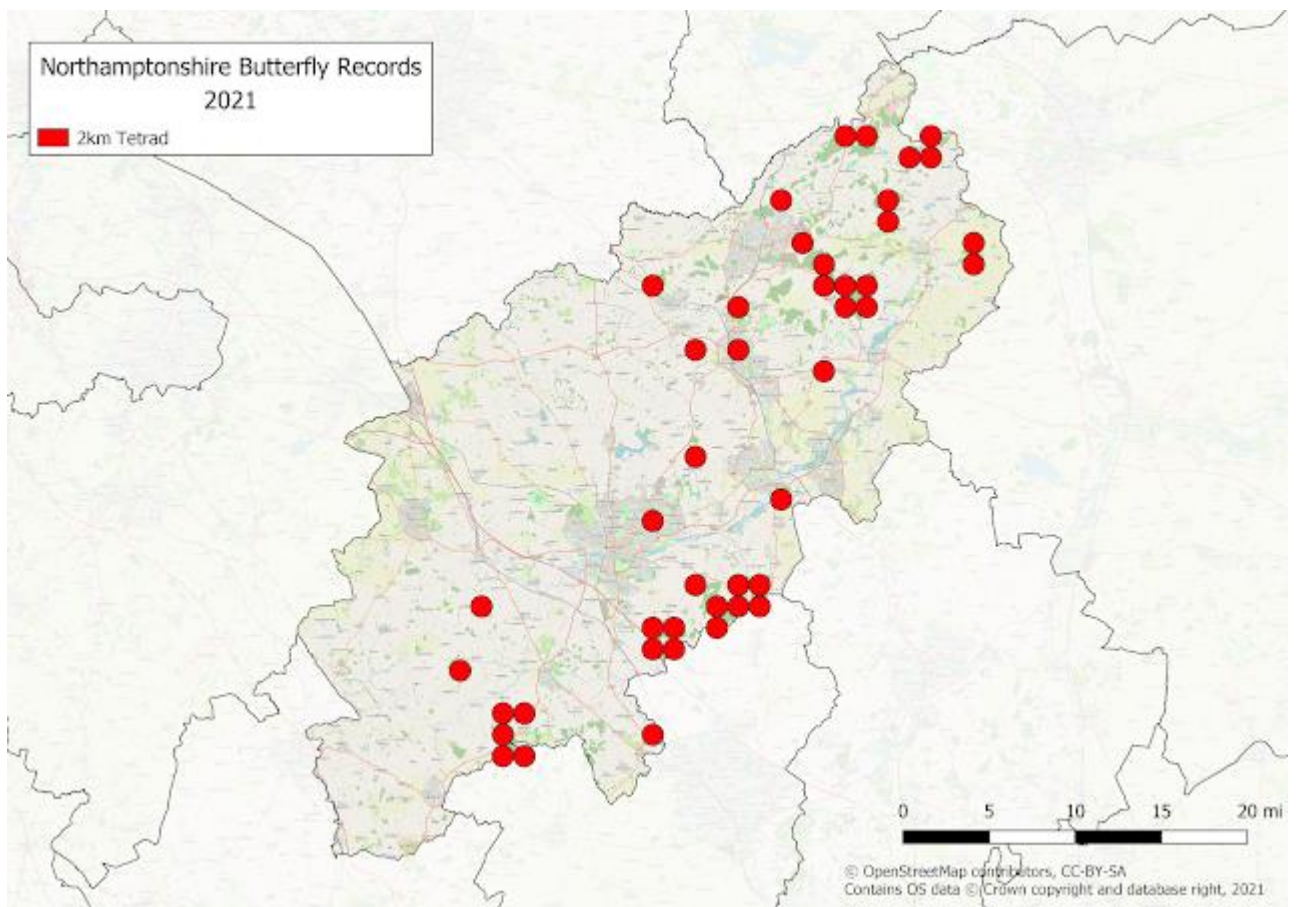
Dark Green Fritillary Distribution

Silver-washed Fritillary

The Silver-washed Fritillary had a poor year in the county with a 43% drop in numbers from the previous year and a 54% drop from the five year average. This woodland butterfly can be found in most of our woodlands with the best sites being Ashton Wold, Bucknell Wood, the Fermyn Wood complex, Great Morton Sale, Hazelborough Forest, Hazelborough Wood and Salcey Forest. The first of the year was seen on the 1st of July in Bucknell Wood and the last ones of the year were seen on the 29th of August in Bucknell Wood and Fineshade Forest.



Silver-washed Fritillary



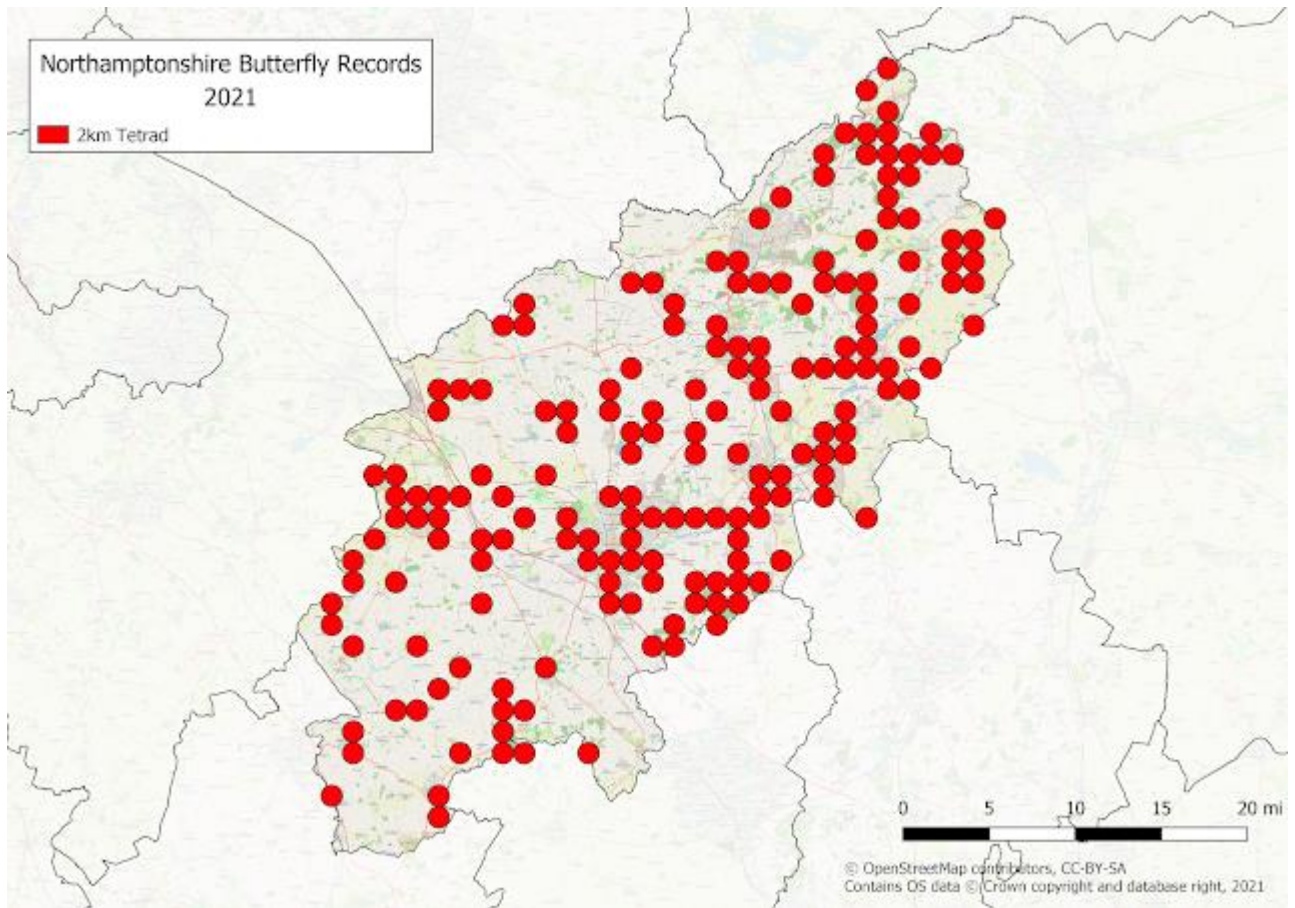
Silver-washed Fritillary Distribution

Speckled Wood

The Speckled Wood shows a 16% drop in records from the previous year and a 22% drop from the five year average. This common woodland butterfly can be found anywhere with suitable habitat. The first of the year was seen on the 13th of April at Fermyn Woods Country Park and the last one of the year was seen on the 20th of October in Thrapston.



Speckled Wood



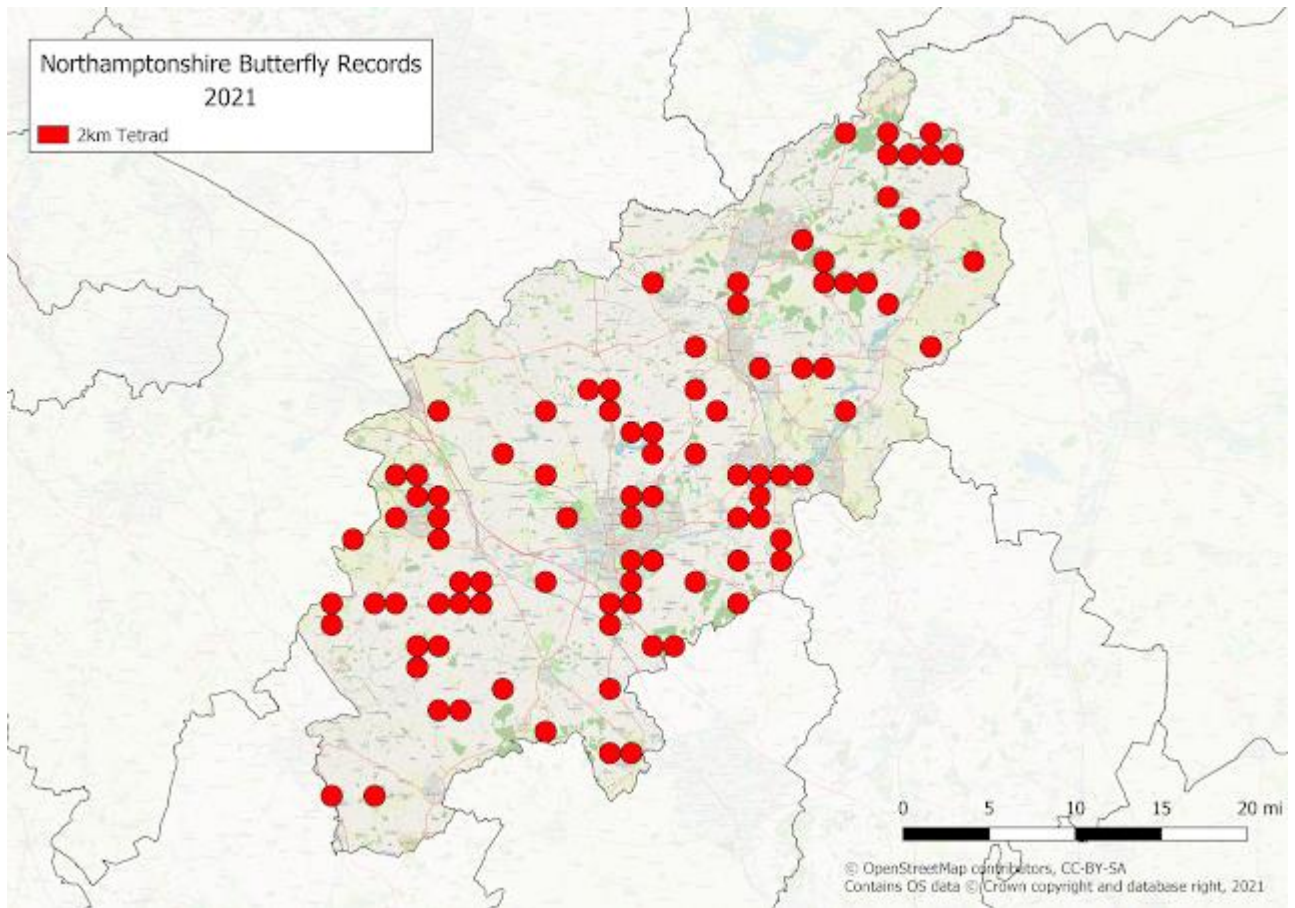
Speckled Wood Distribution

Marbled White

The Marbled White had a poor year in the county with a 49% drop from the previous year and a 52% drop from the five year average. This is a common grassland butterfly which can be seen in abundance at suitable sites. The first ones of the year were seen on the 23rd of June at Althorp, Bradlaugh Fields, Fermyn Woods Country Park and Twywell Hills and Dales and the last one of the year was seen on the 13th of August at Duston Quarry.



Marbled White



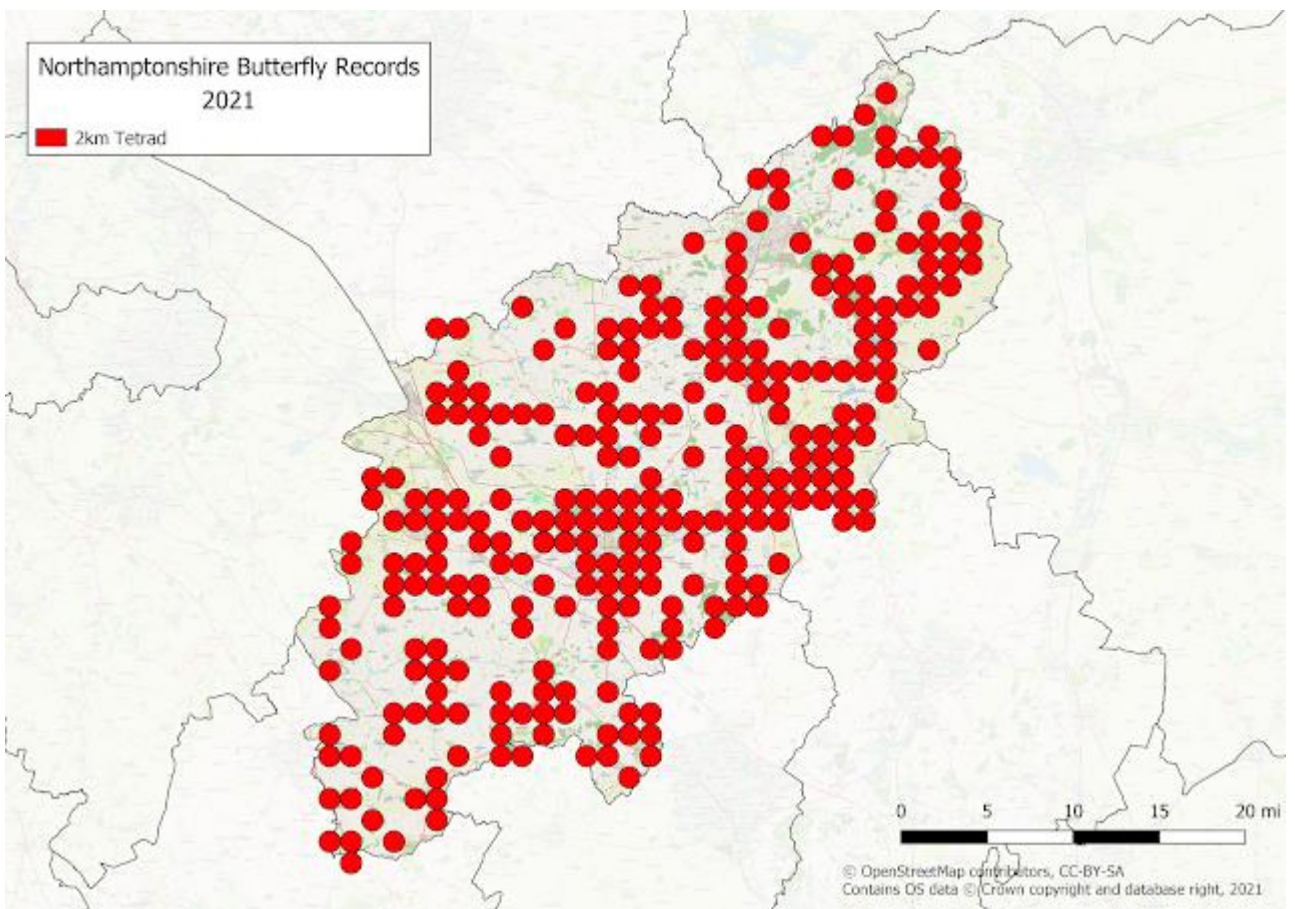
Marbled White Distribution

Gatekeeper

The Gatekeeper had an average year and although 29% down in numbers from the previous year it was just 3% down from the five year average. This is a very common hedgerow butterfly which can be found anywhere with suitable habitat. The first of the year was seen on the 23rd of June in Bradlaugh Fields and the last one of the year was seen on the 26th of September in Salcey Forest.



Gatekeeper



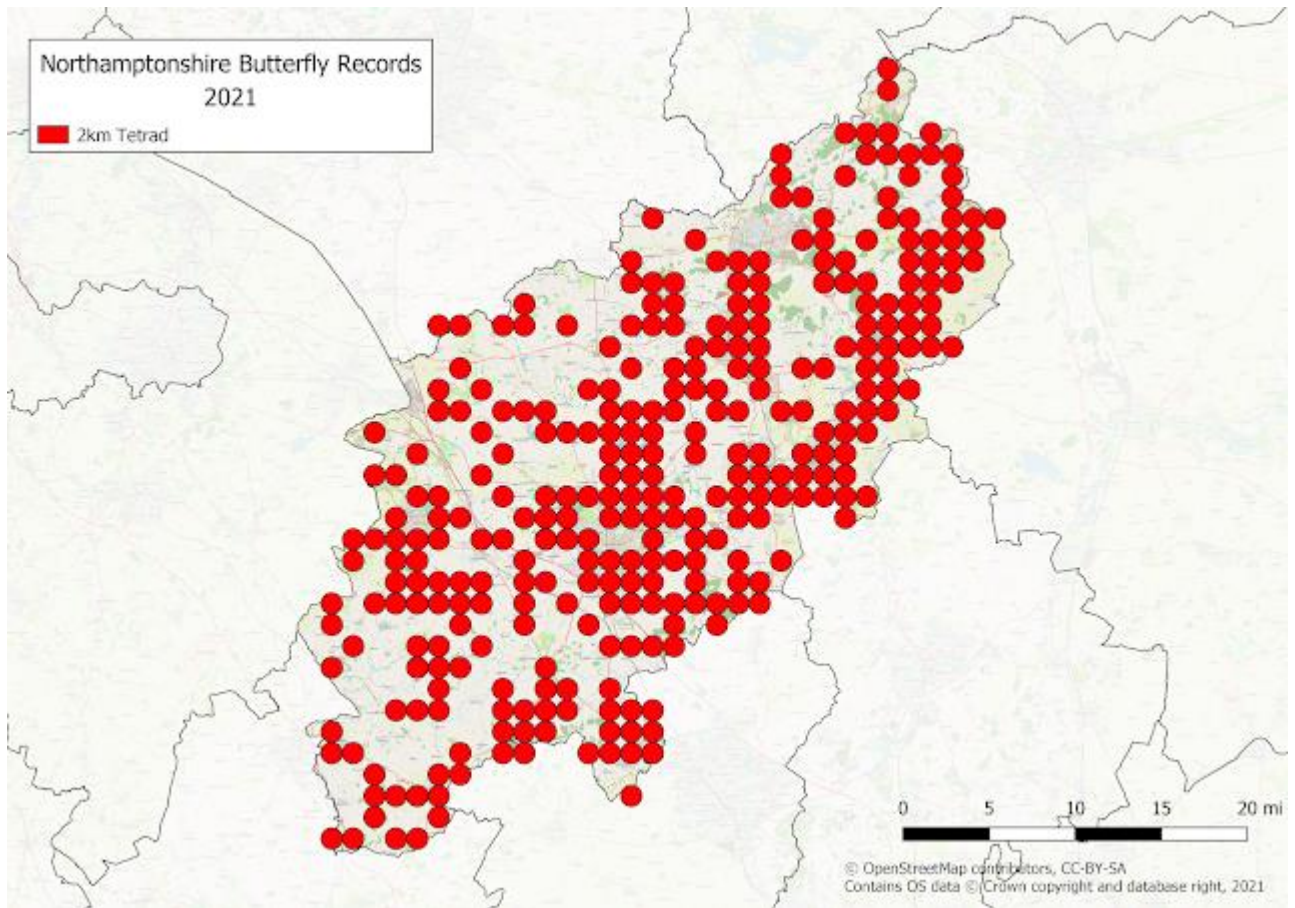
Gatekeeper Distribution

Meadow Brown

Like the Gatekeeper the Meadow Brown also had a slightly less than average year with a 31% drop in numbers from the previous year and a 9% drop in numbers from the five year average. This is a very common grassland butterfly and can be found anywhere with suitable habitat. The first of the year was seen on the 11th of June in Glapthorn Cow Pastures and the last of the year was recorded on the 23rd of September at Ring Haw.



Meadow Brown, Wootton, 2021



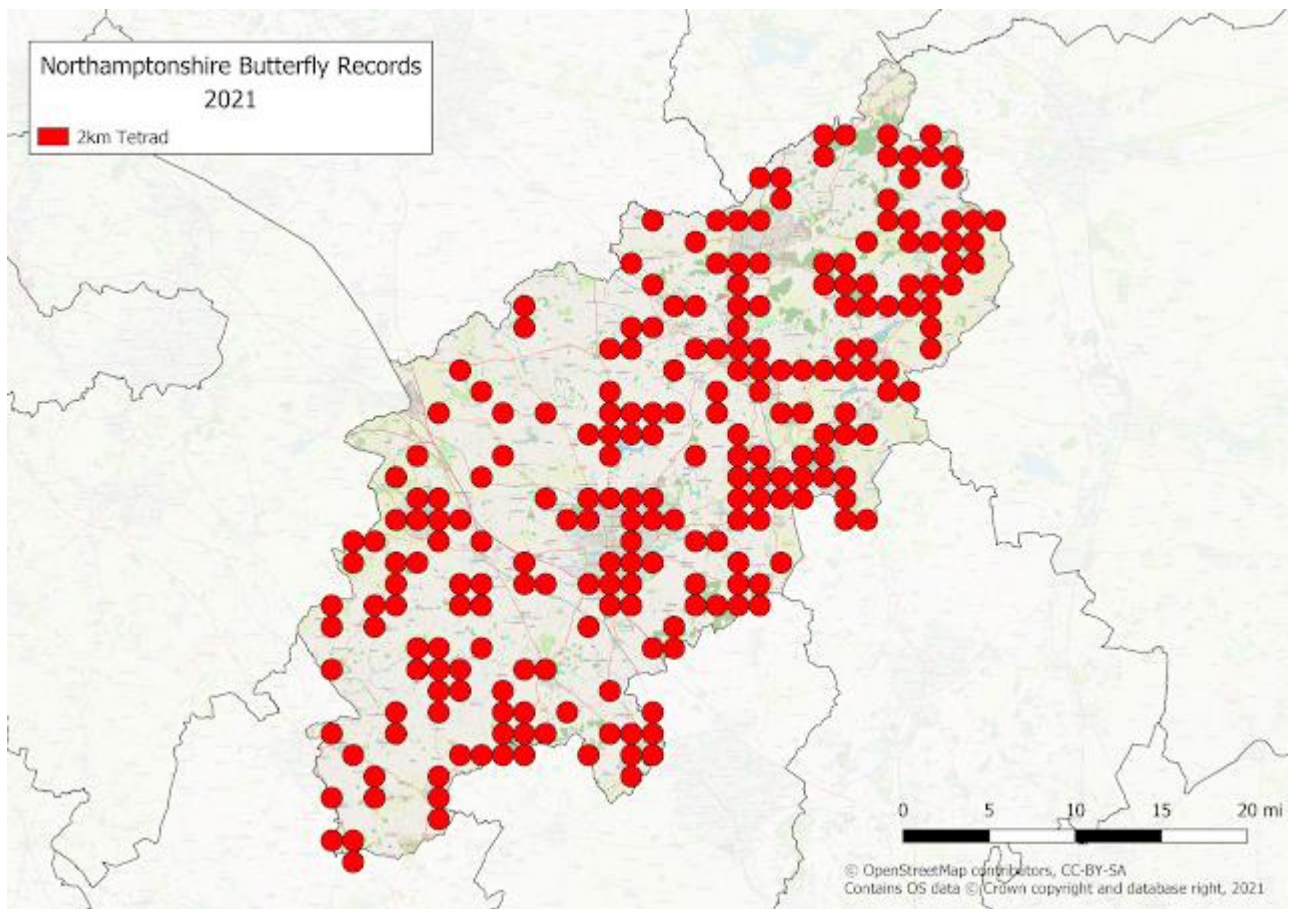
Meadow Brown

Ringlet

The Ringlet shows a 20% drop in records from the previous year and a 35% drop from the five year average. This is another very common butterfly that can be found anywhere with suitable habitat. The first Ringlet of the year was seen on the 20th of June in Sulby Gardens and the last of the year was seen on the 6th of September in Salcey Forest.



Ringlet, Wootton, 2021



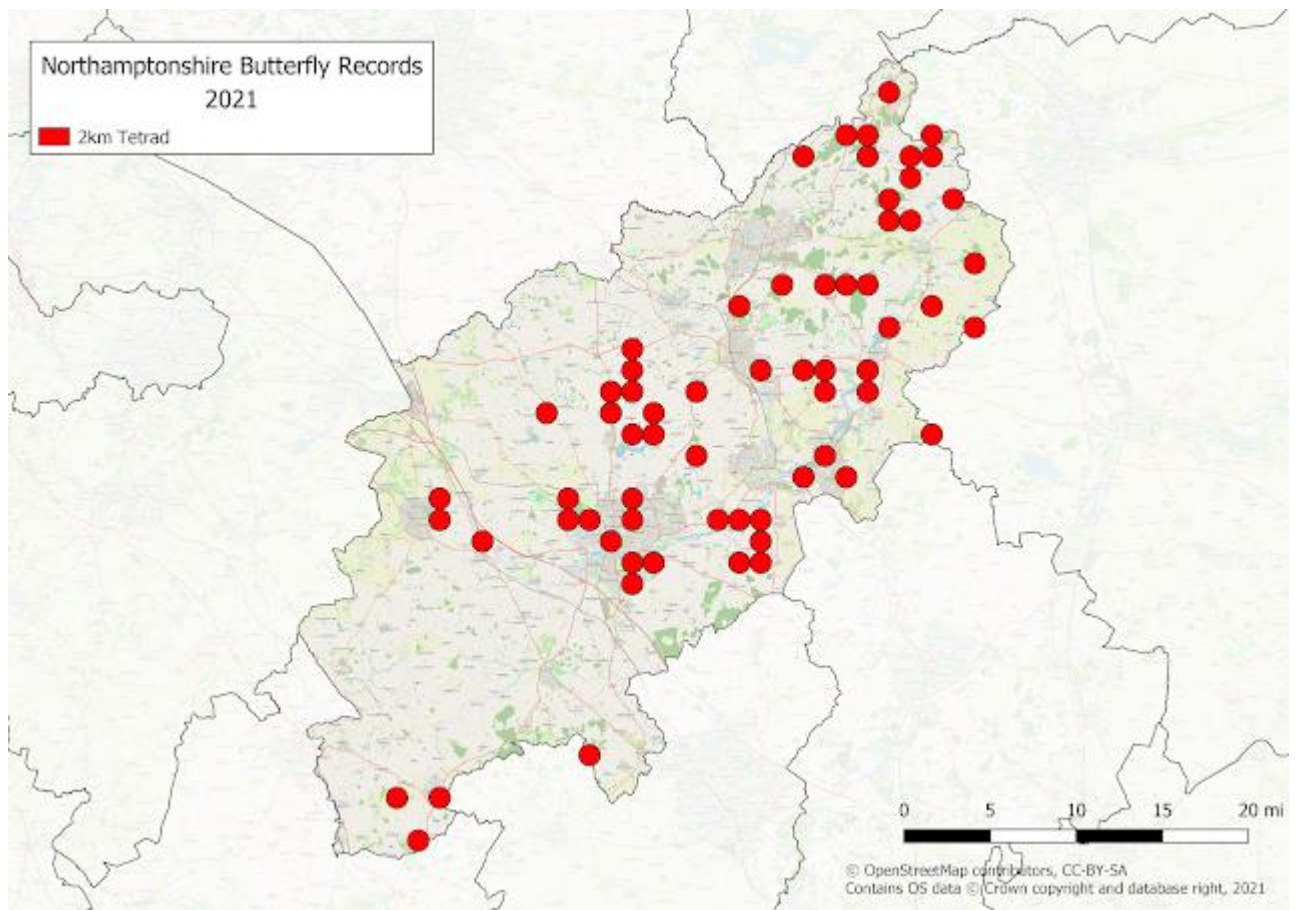
Ringlet Distribution

Small Heath

The Small Heath shows a 33% drop in records from the previous year and a 21% drop in records from the five year average. This grassland butterfly is quite localised but can be seen flying in good numbers at some locations. The best sites to see them in 2021 were Bradlaugh Fields, Fineshade Wood, the Nene Wetlands, Ring Haw, Twywell Hills and Dales and Weekley Hall Wood. The first Small Heath of the year was seen on the 12th of May at Twywell Hills and Dales and the last of the year was seen on the 1st of October also at Twywell Hills and Dales.



Small Heath



Small Heath Distribution