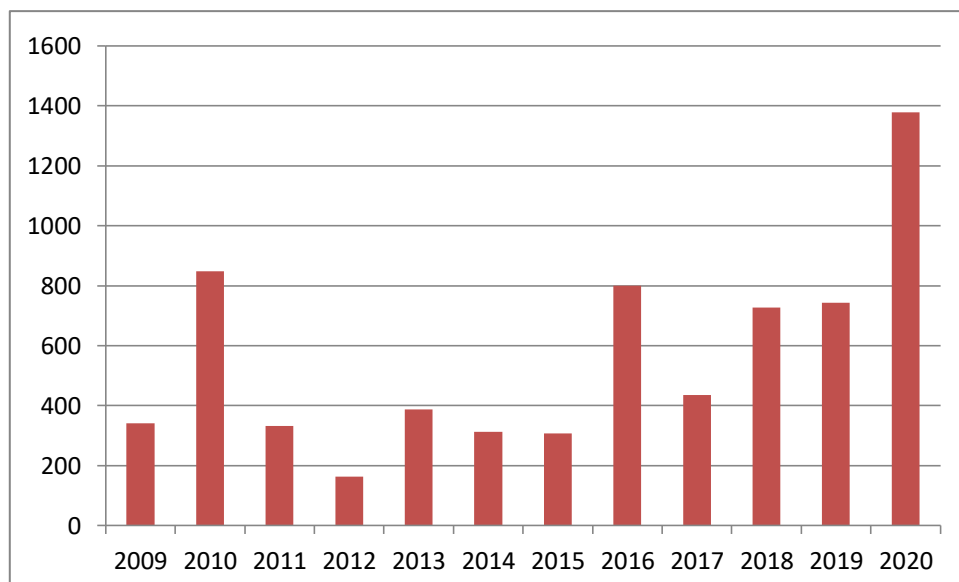


Prees Heath Report – August & September 2020

In the June & July report I included three charts showing the increase in Silver-studded Blue numbers counted on the transect from 2009 to 2020 on each of the former arable areas which have been restored to heath. Below is a chart showing the numbers of Silver-studded Blues counted in the transect across the whole reserve. You can see that this year was a record year. Why? The progress of the heathland restoration may be one factor but there are bound to be others, such as weather, climate, the life cycles of other creatures that predate or parasitize the butterfly, the life cycle of the Heather Beetle that damages the heather, which is its main caterpillar food plant, or other factors unknown. Usually the flight season of the Silver-studded Blue lasts for 8 weeks, but this year it lasted for 10 weeks, which is another indicator that some things were different this year.



It has been a quiet couple of months on the reserve, with nothing much to report. Our volunteer work parties are continuing on a socially distanced basis with no more than 6 volunteers at a time. Last week they cleared some brambles from part of the western side of the reserve to prevent the brambles from encroaching into a botanically special area of grassland. This area contains Heath Dog-violet, and Prees Heath is the only confirmed site for this species in Shropshire, so it must be conserved. The good news is that it is spreading on the reserve. It has more pointed leaves than other violets and its flowers are of a paler blue than Common Dog-violets. It flowers in the spring. I am aware that birds, people and other creatures enjoy picking and eating the blackberries, and there are plenty of brambles on the reserve, but the brambles will continue to be cut as and where they are found to be encroaching in certain areas.



Heath Dog-violet, *Viola canina*



Volunteers clearing brambles

Lastly, a word about this website. Some changes will be taking place for technical reasons in the near future and it will have a completely different look, although the website name www.preesheathcommonreserve.co.uk will remain the same. Nevertheless I hope it will continue to provide everyone who uses it with as much information about the reserve as they need.

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