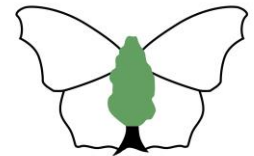


Butterflies for the New Millennium



Butterfly Conservation
in association with the
Biological Records Centre

Winter Newsletter 2016

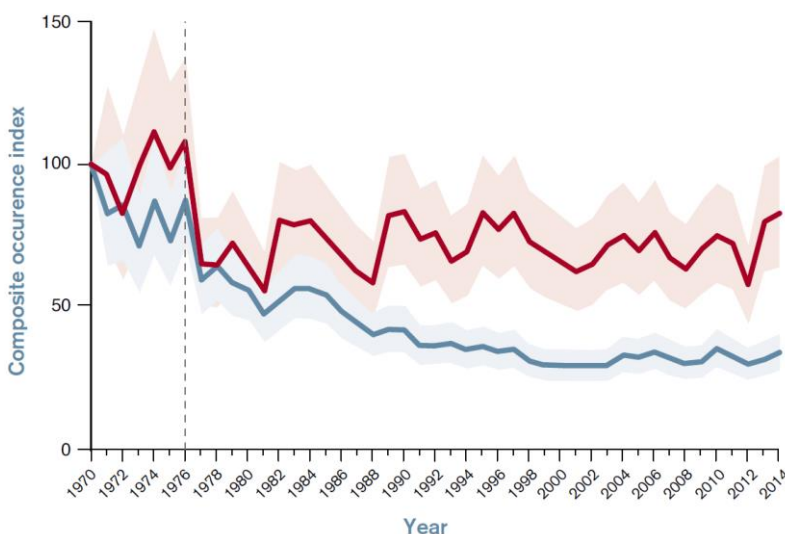
Introduction

Apologies for the long wait since the last newsletter. Rest assured that the delay was not due to any reduction in Butterfly Conservation's recording work, rather the opposite; the second half of 2015 was incredibly busy with a record-breaking Big Butterfly Count followed by the production of the new 'State of report (see below), as well as the publication of several scientific papers.

The State of the UK's Butterflies 2015

Every five years, Butterfly Conservation, together with the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, takes stock of the UK's butterflies, providing up-to-date trends from the Butterflies for the New Millennium (BNM) recording scheme and UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS). We can only do this thanks to the skill and dedication of the Branch Recorders/Co-ordinators and the many thousands of volunteer recorders. It is an amazing effort! During the last five-year BNM survey (2010-2014) almost 3 million butterfly sightings were collated from all corners of the UK, providing a robust evidence base to underpin trends, conservation action and ecological research.

The BNM distribution trends calculated for the report are a significant advance over previous analyses. We used occupancy modelling, a cutting-edge statistical approach that accounts for variation in recording effort, to produce trends at 1km square resolution, rather than at the traditional 10km square scale. In addition to the greatly improved spatial accuracy, the new technique also enabled us to construct the first multi-species butterfly indicators from BNM distribution data (see plot below).



The combined indices of occurrence (with confidence intervals) for habitat specialists (blue line) and wider countryside species (red line) show a clear long-term decrease for both groups in the UK (62% and 24% decreases since 1976 respectively).

The new report paints a familiar picture of long-term decline. 70% of species decreased in distribution since 1976 and 57% of species decreased in abundance. Overall, 76% of the UK's resident and regular migrant butterfly species declined in either abundance or distribution (or both) over the past four decades.

In contrast to the long-term picture, butterfly trends over the past decade (2005-2014) provide some glimmers of hope. The most-welcome news is that the long-term declines of several threatened species appear to have been halted. The distribution trends for both the Duke of Burgundy and Pearl-bordered Fritillary were stable, suggesting no net loss of colonies, and their population levels at monitored sites increased. Others showed improvements too: the distribution of Dingy Skipper was up 21% and that of the Silver-studded Blue by 19% over the decade. These findings provide firm evidence that landscape-scale conservation projects run by Butterfly Conservation and many other partners are turning these species around.

Nevertheless, the declines of some threatened species show little sign of abating and, worryingly, many widespread species also now appear to be in decline. The conservation of the UK's butterflies remains an enormous challenge but Butterfly Conservation is determined to increase its own efforts and will be working closely with other organisations to take more concerted action in the coming years. The records gathered through the BNM recording scheme will continue to play a vital part in guiding conservation action and assessing the progress made.

The full *State of the UK's Butterflies 2015* report can be found at <http://butrfli.es/StateofButterflies>

UK Butterfly Recorders' Meeting Saturday 19 March 2016

This enjoyable and friendly annual meeting organised by Butterfly Conservation is open to anyone interested in the recording, monitoring and conservation of butterflies. It takes place at the Birmingham and Midland Institute in central Birmingham, a short walk from New Street Station.

There is a very exciting [programme of talks](#) for the day, from amateur experts to internationally acclaimed scientists, and plenty of time to mingle and chat with fellow enthusiasts. We are honoured that Professor Camille Parmesan (picture right), a world authority on butterflies and climate change has agreed to give a talk this year. She contributed to the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. In addition, there will be the latest research on the decline of the Wall, news on the spread of the Purple Emperor and insights into the secret lives of butterflies. What's more you'll get the first view of the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme results for 2015.



It promises to be a great day and costs just £7.50 per person (payable on the door), including lunch and refreshments. Places **must be booked in advance** via 01929 400209 or info@butterfly-conservation.org. As usual, there will be a special meeting of County Butterfly Recorders / BNM Local Co-ordinators at 10.00 before the main programme starts at 11.00.

The **Scottish Recorders' Gathering 2016** takes place on the same day at Battleby near Perth. More information can be found [here](#) and places can be booked via sgreig@butterfly-conservation.org.

Important dates for your diary

- **19 March 2016 UK Butterfly Recorders' Meeting** Birmingham and Midland Institute, Birmingham
- **19 March 2016 Scottish Recorders' Gathering** Scottish Natural Heritage, Battleby
- **31 March 2016 Data deadline** for verified county datasets to be submitted by BNM Co-ordinators

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We are very grateful to Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, RSPB and Scottish Natural Heritage who are helping to fund the BNM project at present. Feel free to pass copies of this newsletter on to others, post it online or to incorporate the information into your own newsletters. Please contact me if you want to be added to or taken off the mailing list.

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