

Suffolk Butterflies 2018

Dear Butterfly Recorder,

April 2018

Firstly, I'd like to begin by thanking you all for your continued support and for sending in your butterfly records for the 2017 season. The year saw well over **37,000** records added to the database and this represents another year of solid and determined recording in the county. It was good to see many of you on field trips and supporting Butterfly Conservation (BC) Suffolk activities. Included in the records submitted were many from gardens and which had utilised the BC online garden recording scheme. Some very good records were received as part of the Big Butterfly Count and it was great to see some additional county coverage being achieved. It was great to hear from you about your own butterfly sightings and exploits during the year and I am grateful for all your emails, letters and telephone calls.

The "Sightings" page of BC Suffolk's website again proved incredibly popular in 2017 to send in records and let others know what butterflies were being seen. A number of visitors to the county made specific reference to this resource and commented how useful it was. Please continue to support this in 2018 if you can. Richard Perryman is the "Website Master" and he does a great job keeping this up to date and my thanks go to him for undertaking this important role with such professionalism.

My own time in the field in 2017 was restricted by a busy work year resulting in me working away from home again, often coinciding with peak butterfly watching weather! However, my European and East African butterfly list did increase slightly!

2017 Brief Overview

The 2017 butterfly season in Suffolk was a very mixed one again. As usual the weather had a big part to play and is perhaps one of the most significant factors, alongside habitat loss and use of agricultural chemicals, in deciding whether butterflies will succeed or fail. A mild winter and warm spring meant some of our species emerged earlier than normal resulting in Orange-tip, Brimstone and Comma being seen in good numbers. Green Hairstreak also seemed to do well when compared to a poor 2016. The warm spring also helped some of our multi-generation species by delivering a strong first brood and this resulted in a slight but pleasing upturn in records received for Common Blue, Small Copper and Small Heath. A reasonable early summer allowed several species such as Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and Ringlet to gain a foothold before the wet summer and strong winds arrived, this perhaps being the reason that Grayling numbers were down. This weather then impacted negatively on our summer fliers and it seems that the flight season was cut short for many.

The whites are always an indicator on how well the season went and for Suffolk, 2017 records of Green-veined White and Small White were lower compared to 2016. Large White was seen in similar numbers to 2016. This snap shot of "white" butterfly populations was worryingly replicated in a number of the national recording schemes such as the Big Butterfly Count where sightings of Green-veined White and Large White were down 38% and the Small White down 37%. In respect of this, one question that was asked of me several times during the 2017 season, was "do I really need to record every butterfly I see, especially if it's a white one". I think the figures quoted speak for themselves and underline how important the recording of all butterflies seen is. I will now be spending time reviewing our records over the next few weeks in preparation of writing the annual Suffolk Butterfly Report. It will be interesting to see how Suffolk compared with neighbouring counties, national trends and findings from the key monitoring surveys.

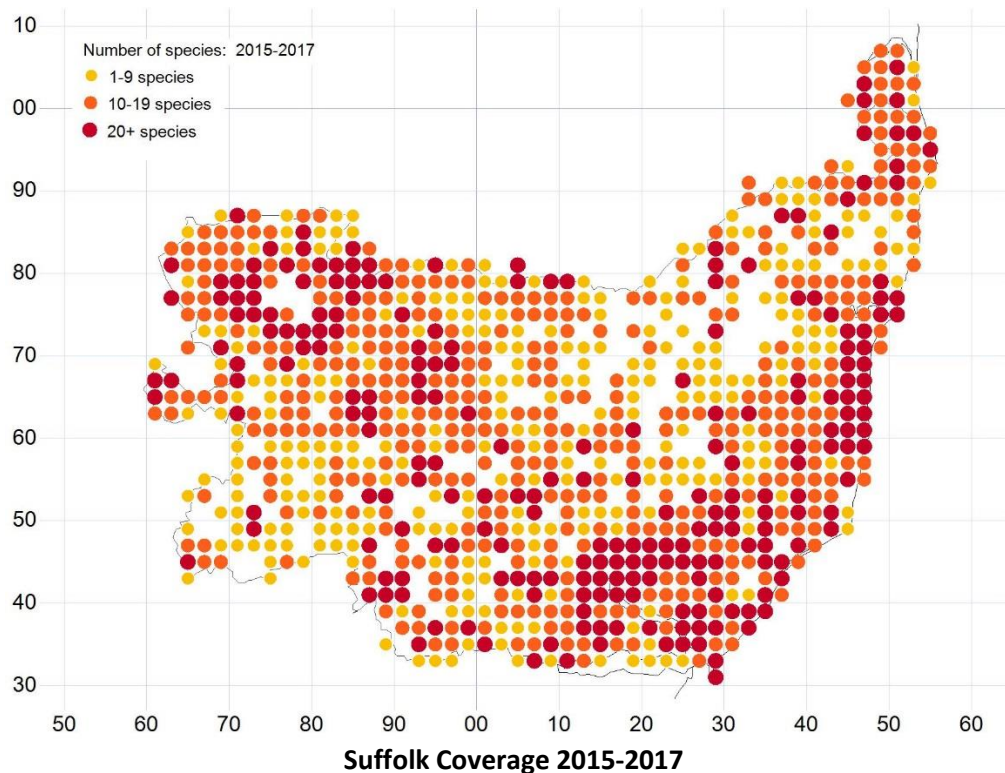
Summary of Butterflies for the New Millennium in Suffolk 2017.

Butterflies for the New Millennium(BNM) remains the key recording scheme for general distribution and numbers of butterflies. The BNM aims to achieve comprehensive national coverage in successive five-year recording periods.

As such, 2017 was the third year in the current five year (2015- 2019) recording period. Looking at the **37,000** records received for 2017 shows that butterflies were recorded from **728** tetrads (2km x 2km squares). Given that there are 1089 tetrads in Suffolk it means that butterflies were recorded in approximately **68%** of Suffolk during the year. However, as this was the third year of the current five-year period it is worth noting the extent of coverage achieved over the longer term of three years.

Combining the data from 2015, 2016 and 2017 shows that almost 100,000 records have been received with butterflies being seen from **924** county tetrads. This gives us an incredible **84%** county coverage which is a brilliant position to be in at the end of year three and places us in a very strong position going forward into the last two years.

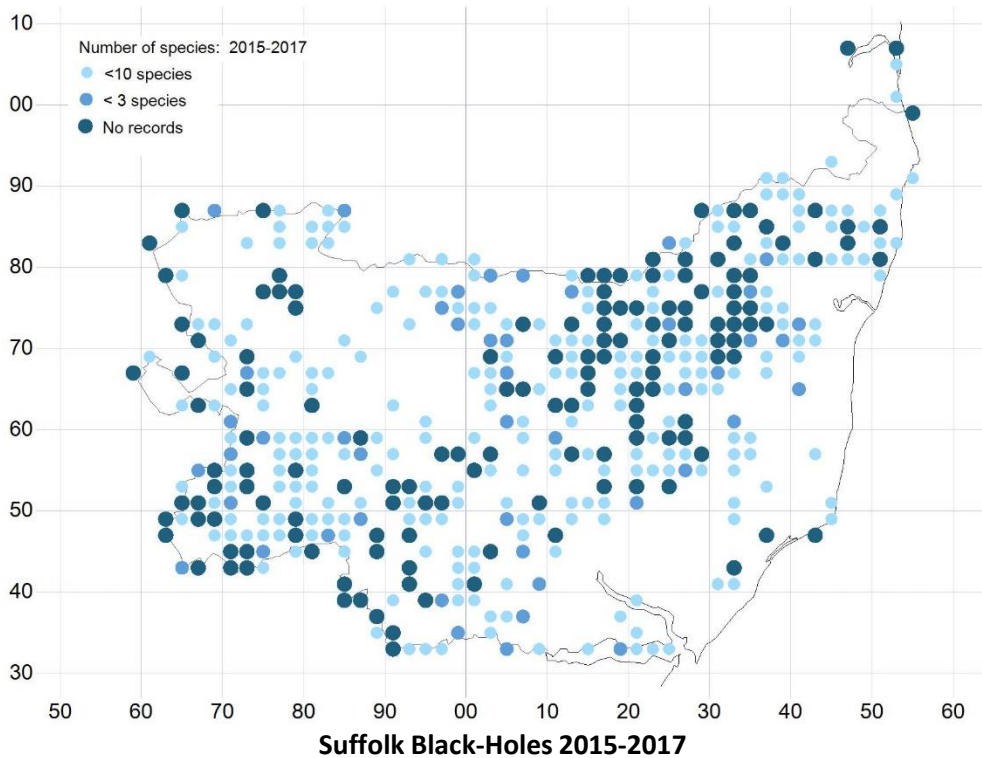
The **Suffolk coverage map for 2015-2017** is shown below:



Suffolk Butterfly Recording for 2018

In 2018, please continue to record as many butterflies as you can, wherever you are. If possible, please try and get out and about as much as you can to new areas particularly our western borders with Cambridgeshire and Essex.

In order to assist with any days out you may plan the **map below** gives a general overview of the **under-recorded** areas based on records received for the period 2015-2017. The **darker spots** represent recording "**black-holes**" which would welcome recording activity.

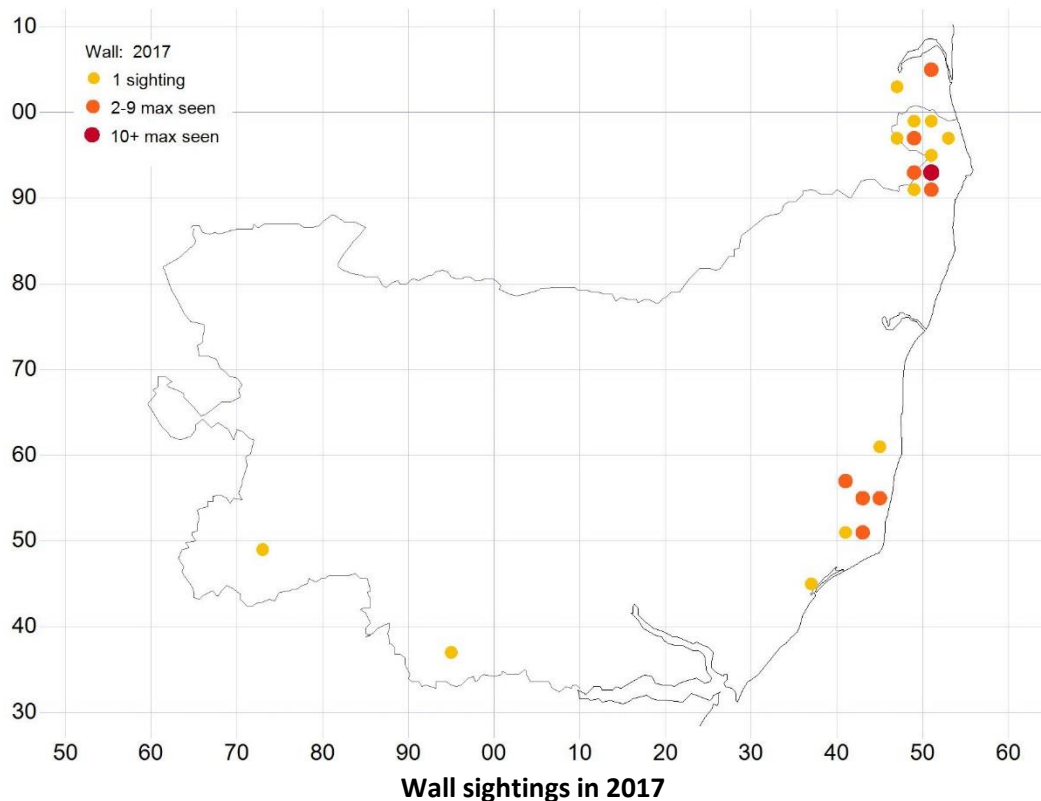


I will look to publish a list of the tetrads in the next month that require visiting this year based on the above map. Although indications are that these will be similar to those targeted in 2017. Please try and visit as many of them as you can. I will do the same for 2019 once the results for 2018 have been received and will repeat the process to allow targeted and focussed recording to seek maximum county coverage by the end of 2019.

2018 Target Species- Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species

In Suffolk, 7 species of butterfly fall under the BAP. Please actively look for **Dingy Skipper, Grayling, Silver-studded Blue, Small Heath, Wall, White Admiral** and **White-letter Hairstreak** and submit all records made. Records received will allow close monitoring to be undertaken and changes in both populations and range to be identified and addressed.

Although all the above listed species are of paramount importance the butterfly which continues to be of concern is the **Wall (Brown)**. Over the last few years we have seen the range of this beautiful butterfly diminish significantly in the county. It has continued its slide eastwards towards the coast and is now only recorded in two key locations; the area comprising of Orford/ Sudbourne and various sites throughout the Waveney Valley. In 2017, the Wall was seen in only 21 tetrads with the vast majority of records coming from the Waveney Valley area. However, and of some significance, some sightings were also made by experienced recorders in the south-west of the county. This may suggest that small, remote populations still exist in suitable habitat or are indicative of wandering individuals. The map below highlights the accepted records received in 2017:



Specific surveys are undertaken for the following two species both of which are extremely localised in their range:

Dingy Skipper: Focussed recording effort will take place in May. The weather is a significant factor for this species and can impact heavily on when the flight season starts and finishes. Please see the BC Suffolk Events Card and especially the BC Suffolk Website for details and last-minute survey opportunities. 2017 proved to be a reasonable year for this species although an early flight season combined with difficult weather conditions restricted recording activity. It is hoped that 2018 will show the species maintaining its hold in the county. Please try and spend some time in late May/ early June in the Kings Forest and along the Suffolk/ Norfolk border in the Elveden and Barnham areas. Please get in touch if you would like to explore one of these areas.

Silver-studded Blue: The habitat restoration at Purdis Heath near Ipswich continued in 2017 with further work being undertaken by some very dedicated volunteers. Significant progress is being made despite local difficulties but the efforts continue to support the continued survival of this species on this site. Elsewhere, organised counts will be undertaken at various sites in the Suffolk Sandlings during July particularly in the RSPB Minsmere and Dunwich areas. As with Dingy Skipper, the weather can impact on the flight season and effect planned surveys so please keep up to date via the BC Suffolk Website. If you want to participate in the counts, please contact Helen Saunders without delay: helens919@gmail.com.

2018 Target Species- General Interest

Silver-washed Fritillary: 2017 demonstrated that this species increased again in coverage within the county after a small dip last year. The butterfly was recorded in 47 tetrads in 2018 as opposed to 30 tetrads in 2017. Of particular interest was that a good number of records were received from gardens where the butterfly was seen nectaring on buddleja. It goes to show how versatile and adaptable this species is when it comes

to habitats. Please search, in July and August, any woodland with sunny rides and glades especially if the food plant Common Dog-violet is present.

Chalkhill Blue: This species was again found flying at the west Suffolk site at the end of July and well into September. It's possible that other un-discovered sites exist in the west of the county. Please look for it from late July to mid-August in suitable areas of chalky grassland in the west of the county where the food plant Horseshoe Vetch can be found. Should you locate any Chalkhill Blue sites then please let me know as soon as possible.

Purple Emperor: It is entirely feasible that the Purple Emperor can be found in any suitable mature woodland within Suffolk and evidence continues to be seen to show that this species is expanding its range eastwards within East Anglia. A number of you continued to spend time in 2017 looking for this incredible butterfly and were rewarded with sightings from new woodlands and landscapes. Key habitat requirements are broadleaved woodland or clusters of smaller woods with a good supply of willow for the caterpillars. Remember that as this butterfly spends its day in the tree tops feeding on aphid honeydew and tree sap you may need to spend a lot of time scanning for it. Expect a sore neck and don't forget to record other canopy dwellers such as Purple Hairstreak, White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary.

Marbled White- In 2017 in west Suffolk, several Marbled White were reported. These butterflies appear to reflect the successful breeding season in nearby Cambridgeshire, particularly along the Devils Dyke and may be wanderers from here. However, it is entirely feasible that small colonies may exist along the Suffolk/ Cambridgeshire borders. Any nectar rich flower meadows in July may be worth an inspection.

Records for any of the above species are incredibly valuable, particularly if they come from previously unknown locations. Please include precise location, dates and numbers seen along with any photos or video.

General recording points

With any sightings made please try and include a grid reference or postcode with your sightings as this saves me a lot of time when all the records are entered into the database.

I would also ask that you try and avoid duplicating submission of your records across the different recording schemes. A great bulk of my time at the end of each season is spent eliminating duplicated records which could distort records and interpretation.

In respect of your own records, please use the recording sheets supplied with this letter. It might help to keep one sheet for your garden or most regularly visited site and a separate sheet for your visits to other Suffolk sites, especially the black holes. If you are likely to make a bulk record submission then a recording spreadsheet can be provided, just get in touch. Or, you can use an online portal such as iRecord or the BC recording app.

Have a great 2018 watching and recording butterflies!

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Annex 1.

General Notes for Butterfly Recorders

All our butterfly records of naturally occurring species are sent off annually to Butterfly Conservation for absorption into the National Database. Our annual butterfly report is published a year in arrears in Suffolk Natural History, "The Transactions of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society". The branch newsletter the "Suffolk Argus" invariably publishes a shortened version much sooner than that along with other recording news and trends.

All regularly occurring county species are listed on our recording sheet (residents and regular migrants). *Please note that the sheet now reflects the adoption by Butterfly Conservation of the new Checklist of the Lepidoptera of the British Isles. This has led to some significant changes to the order that our butterfly species are now listed in.*

For those not used to submitting records, the basic details needed are the "four Ws", i.e.:

"What" – i.e. species.

"Where" – preferably an Ordnance Survey grid reference*, though an accurate location name or a post code etc., will do.

*See <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/gi/nationalgrid/nationalgrid.pdf>

"When" – self evident!

"by Whom" – name and contact details of recorder.

In addition, a count of minimum numbers seen is useful, with any evidence for breeding (e.g. mating observed, ovipositing females seen or larvae found).

A simple numbers code is useful if you have not been able to keep a precise count:

A	One
B	2-9
C	10-29
D	30-100
E	100+

Records come in from over two hundred regular recorders (BC members and non-members alike) and from a variety of National recording schemes:

Transects. This is the highest standard of input, requiring 26 weekly site visits between April and September and using an established scientific methodology. Some Suffolk transect sites have been running for many years and have contributed significant data to the United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) who oversee this survey. Single-species transects are also used to monitor Silver-studded Blue and Purple Hairstreak in Suffolk.

If you are interested in getting involved in this type of survey or would like to set up a transect site then please contact Suffolk's UKBMS Co-ordinator Twm Wade at: twm.wade@yahoo.com

Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey. The WCBS is organised and analysed at BC Head Office level and uses volunteers from BC and BTO membership. It is targeted at

the same set of randomly selected squares annually, but as these are visited just in July and again in August, some early species get missed (e.g. Orange-tip and Green Hairstreak). Essentially transect-like rules are applied, but the walk is done only twice a year instead of 26 times (optional extra visits are not discouraged though with many squares being monitored from May through to September). Recorders are given a square and they are responsible for recording butterflies and submitting results.

If you would like to join WCBS for 2018; there is still time to enrol with Suffolk's WCBS Co-ordinator Twm Wade at: twm.wade@yahoo.com

Garden Records. Homeowners who send their records annually provide a valuable foundation for most of our common species. Online recording is available so if the majority of your butterfly recording is centred on sightings made in your garden then this scheme may appeal.

Please add your records by visiting- **www.gardenbutterflysurvey.org**.

In order to assist recording activity please do not duplicate the same garden butterfly sightings by adding to this national scheme and then additionally to local recording. At the end of each year Garden Butterfly Survey records are sent to the respective county butterfly recorders for review and inclusion in local data sets.

BTO Garden Birdwatch. Birdwatchers engaged in the British Trust for Ornithology Garden Birdwatch have the option of recording easily-identified butterfly species within their on-line recording scheme.

Casual Sightings or Roving Records. Enthusiastic naturalists and butterfly watchers visit sites of high wildlife value and send in a variety of records – from a single Large White to a detailed specific site survey. Voluntary wardens of SWT reserves often send dependable records for their sites year after year. Many BC members and recorders make the effort to visit the tetrads known to be under-recorded, progressively filling the "black holes" in the county distribution maps. Often visits to the great unknown can be an unexpected delight, sometimes turning up hairstreaks and other valuable records. These types of records form the bulk of the county's butterfly records and it is incredibly important to receive them. Sightings can be submitted by completing record sheets, by email or online via the BC recording "apps" using a mobile device.

Big Butterfly Count (BBC): BC Head Office has put a lot of effort into organizing the Big Butterfly Count as a piece of nationwide citizen science. Lots of novice recorders have taken part, identifying butterflies for 15 minutes in a site of their own choosing. Suffolk harvested over 4,000 records of mainly common species flying during July and August 2017. Although the places visited were mostly within our well recorded areas a few new tetrads were included and therefore, were a positive contribution to addressing Suffolk's recording black holes.

For 2018, the BBC runs from **Fri 20th July to Sun 12th August**.

Migrant Watch: Each year sightings of Painted Lady can be logged with BC via the national website. This allows movements of these well-known long-distance migrants to be monitored and any trends identified. In order to assist recording activity please do not duplicate the same Painted Lady sighting by adding to this national scheme and then additionally to local recording. At the end of each year Migrant Watch records are sent to the respective county butterfly recorders for review and inclusion in local data sets.