

Suffolk Butterflies 2019

Dear Butterfly Recorder,

March 2019

Firstly, I'd like to begin by thanking you all for your continued support and for sending in your butterfly records for the 2018 season. The year saw well over **33,000** 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. 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 2018 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 2019 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.

2018 Brief Overview

The year 2018 will be remembered for the significant episodes of extreme weather. It started with the "false spring" which led to hibernating species such as Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Brimstone and Comma emerging from hibernation early in February & March. Immediately after, there was the protracted cold spell named by the media as the "beast from the east". This effectively meant that many of those butterflies which had emerged early died with a resulting negative impact on their attempts to breed and the next generation was significantly reduced as less eggs were laid than normal. This was particularly noted with Small Tortoiseshell which for some was almost a rarity (!) in 2018. Based on records received this species was only seen in 45% of the surveyed tetrads whereas in 2017 it was seen in 61.5% of surveyed tetrads. It is a species in serious decline and has lost three-quarters of its UK population since the 1970s. Its absence was most noticed during the Big Butterfly Count (England) where it suffered its worst count on record being down by 40% on 2017.

However, later emerging Spring species such as Common Blue, Brown Argus, Small Copper, Small Heath and the whites all appear to have benefitted with adults emerging into the warm spring and with access to nectar sources and their larval food plants. This generated strong first broods and helped with later broods. However, as the year moved on the prolonged sun and warm temperatures started to have a negative effect on some species with numbers of very small individuals noted. This has been particularly evident with Common Blue, Small Copper, Small Heath, Holly Blue and Green-veined White. This is the consequence of both poor development and growth as a caterpillar due to parched food plants and the impact of hot temperatures on pupation. This negative phenomenon may also account for slight dips in numbers seen grassland species such as Essex Skipper, Small Skipper and particularly Large Skipper along with Ringlet, Gatekeeper and Meadow Brown.

On a positive note, "woodland" species all appear to have done reasonably well and from records received seem to be more widely distributed. This position seems to have been possible due to the settled late spring and the slow warm up into the summer coinciding positively at key points of life cycles. In particular, both Purple and White-letter Hairstreak were seen in almost twice as many tetrads as in 2017 which reflects recorders comments of seeing these species in a variety of habitats and in large numbers than in

previous years. Silver-washed Fritillary continues its slow colonisation of the county increasing its tetrad count by 9 on 2017. Of note, however, is the increase in numbers of Purple Emperor seen with this species being seen in an additional 11 tetrads on 2017 levels.

The most abundant species seen were Red Admiral at 5th position this despite a significant fall in numbers on 2017 totals, Gatekeeper at 4th, Meadow Brown at 3rd, Large White at 2nd and the Small White in 1st position. Of note, Large and Small White were seen in 75% of the tetrads surveyed.

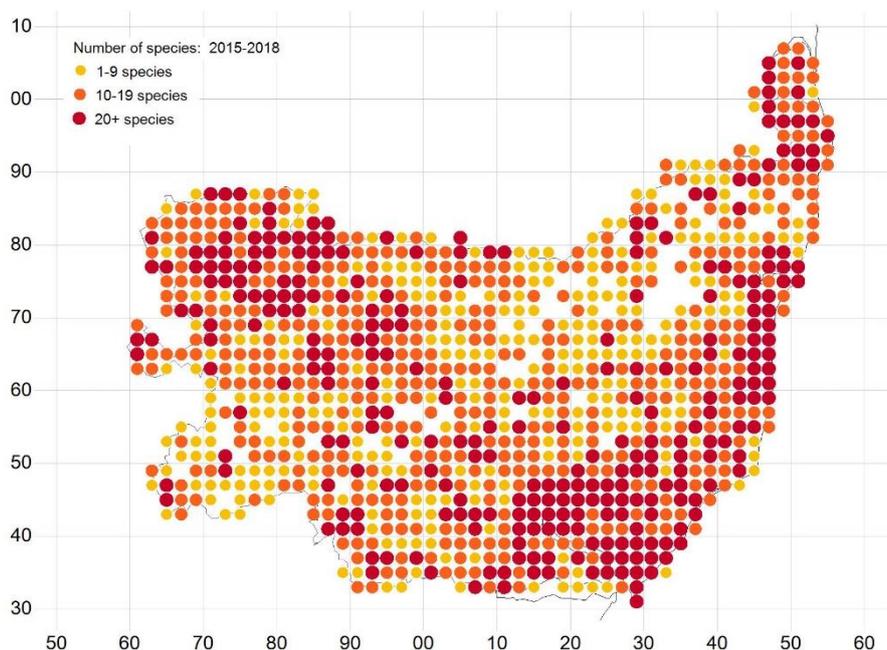
Summary of Butterflies for the New Millennium in Suffolk 2018

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, 2018 was the fourth year in the current five year (2015- 2019) recording period. Looking at the **33,000** records received for 2018 shows that butterflies were recorded from **782** tetrads (2km x 2km squares). Given that there are 1089 tetrads in Suffolk it means that butterflies were recorded in approximately **71%** of Suffolk during the year.

However, as this was the fourth year of the current five-year period it is worth noting the extent of coverage achieved over the longer term of four years. Combining the data from 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 shows that over **130,000** records have been received with butterflies being seen from **1005** county tetrads. This gives us an incredible **92%** county coverage which is a brilliant position to be in at the end of year four and places us in a very strong position going forward into the last year.

The **Suffolk coverage map for 2015-2018** is shown below:

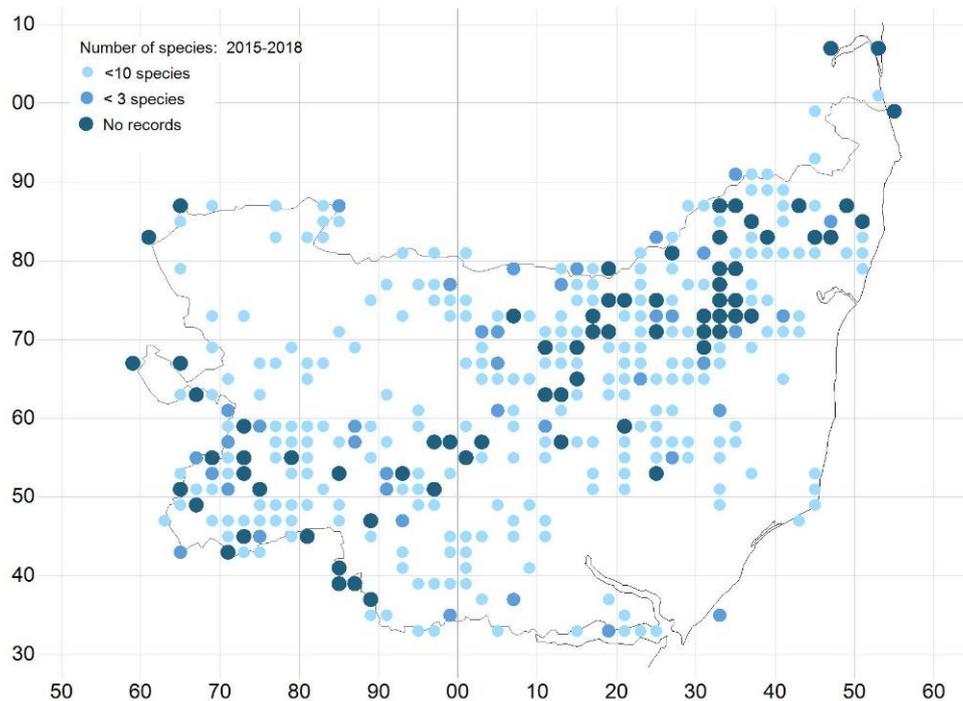


Suffolk Coverage 2015-2018

Suffolk Butterfly Recording for 2019

In 2019, 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 2015-2018. The **dark-blue spots** represent recording "**black-holes**" which are desperate for recording activity.



Suffolk Black-Holes 2015-2018

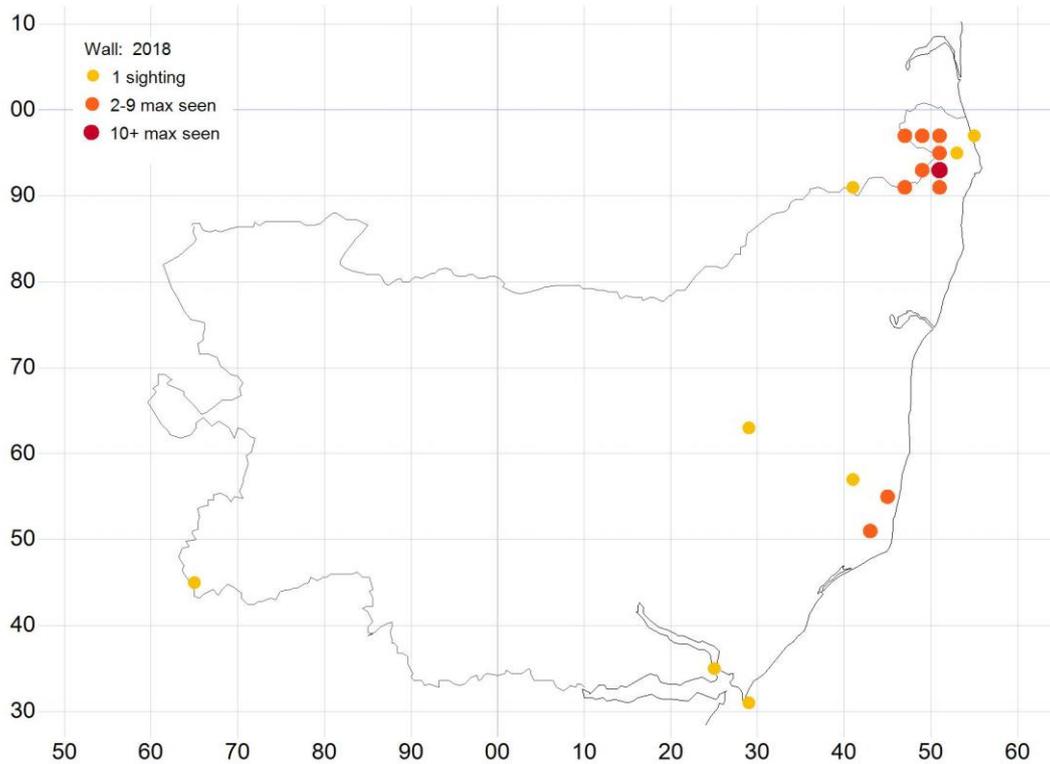
I will look to publish a list of the tetrads in the next month that require visiting this year based on the above map. Although indications are that these will be similar to those targeted in 2018. Please try and visit as many of them as you can to allow targeted and focussed recording to seek maximum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

2019 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.

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, particularly SWT Carlton Marshes. In 2018, the Wall was seen in only **18** tetrads, down three tetrads on 2017.

As in recent years the vast majority of records are from the Waveney Valley area. The map below highlights the accepted records received in 2018:



Wall sightings in 2018

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

Dingy Skipper: Focussed recording effort will again 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. 2018 proved to be another reasonable year for this species although an early flight season combined with difficult weather conditions restricted recording activity. It is hoped that 2019 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: 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.

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.

The 2019 season is likely to be too early to measure the real impact of the extreme weather events in 2018 and it will probably be 2020 before the real impact is understood here in Suffolk and the wider UK. So, it remains as important as ever to accurately record and report the butterflies you do see.

Have a great 2019 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 2019; 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 5,000 records of mainly common species flying during July and August 2018. 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 2019, the BBC runs from 19 July - 11 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.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

By submitting information regarding butterfly sightings, you agree that it may be collated and disseminated manually or electronically, including via the Internet, for conservation, environmental decision-making, education, research and other public benefit uses in accordance with Butterfly Conservation's data access policy.

Names and contact details of recorders will be used for administration and verification purposes only. Your contact details will not be passed to other parties without your consent, whilst your name will form part of the record that is collated and disseminated in accordance with Butterfly Conservation's privacy policy.