

## Suffolk Butterflies 2020

Dear Butterfly Recorder,

March 2020

Firstly, I'd like to begin by thanking you all for your continued support and for sending in your butterfly records for the 2019 season. The year saw well over **40,000** records added to the database and this represents the best ever year of recording in the county.

Many more records were received via iRecord and it is clear that the use of this and other online recording platforms are being increasingly used. 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 by several individuals who went "above and beyond".

The "Sightings" page of BC Suffolk's website again proved incredibly popular in 2019 to send in records and let others know what butterflies were being seen. Please continue to support this in 2020 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 and tenacity.

### **2019 Brief Overview**

For me, 2019 felt like a rather average butterfly year but I was very interested to read the annual report from the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) which identified 2019 as the 8<sup>th</sup> best year out of the UKBMS recording series covering 44 years. It was also the best year in this series since 1997, with just over half of species (53%) showing a higher population index compared to 2018. The report is available in different formats through this link [UKBMS 2019](#)

The year promised a Painted Lady invasion and although it was a good year for this species it wasn't a great year and certainly fell short of what we experienced in 2009. That said, Painted Lady was the fifth most abundant butterfly in Suffolk for the year behind Peacock (4<sup>th</sup>), Large White (3<sup>rd</sup>), Red Admiral (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Small White (1<sup>st</sup>).

Garden favourites Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell both enjoyed year increases from 2018. Of note, numbers of these species recorded from Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count increased considerably with Small Tortoiseshell up 167% and Peacock up 235% on 2018 results. Both species also recorded their highest number of records since the Count commenced in its current form in 2010. In Suffolk, to me Small Tortoiseshell remained scarce and disappeared early to hibernation. A really interesting paper [HERE](#) is available to read on this behaviour, written by Malcolm Hull from the Herts & Middx BC Branch.

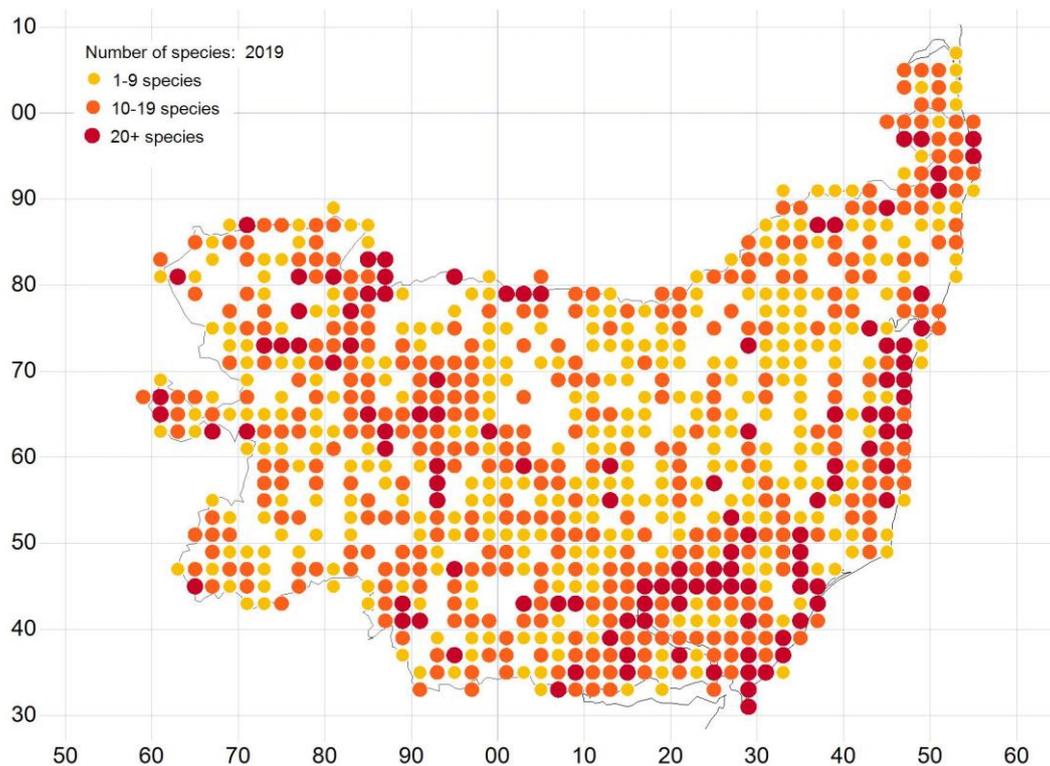
The warm weather experienced early on in the year certainly helped a number of spring species with Brimstone doing particularly well in Suffolk. Nationally, according to the UKBMS report Brimstone enjoyed a "statistically significant positive 10-year UK trend, of 108%".

The long hot summer of 2019 seemed to pay some dividends with many grass loving butterflies enjoying a good year. The three golden skipper species (Essex, Small and Large) all held their own and Meadow Brown and Ringlet showed small increases on 2018. However, despite having a great year in 2018, summer woodland fliers seemed to struggle and both Purple Hairstreak and White-letter Hairstreak saw numbers fall along with those of White Admiral. Both Purple Emperor and Silver-washed Fritillary remained at a similar level to 2018.

Sadly, 2019 was not a great year for some species with Common Blue, Silver-studded Blue and Grayling (see below) all struggling in Suffolk. Disappointingly, these three species also struggled at a national level

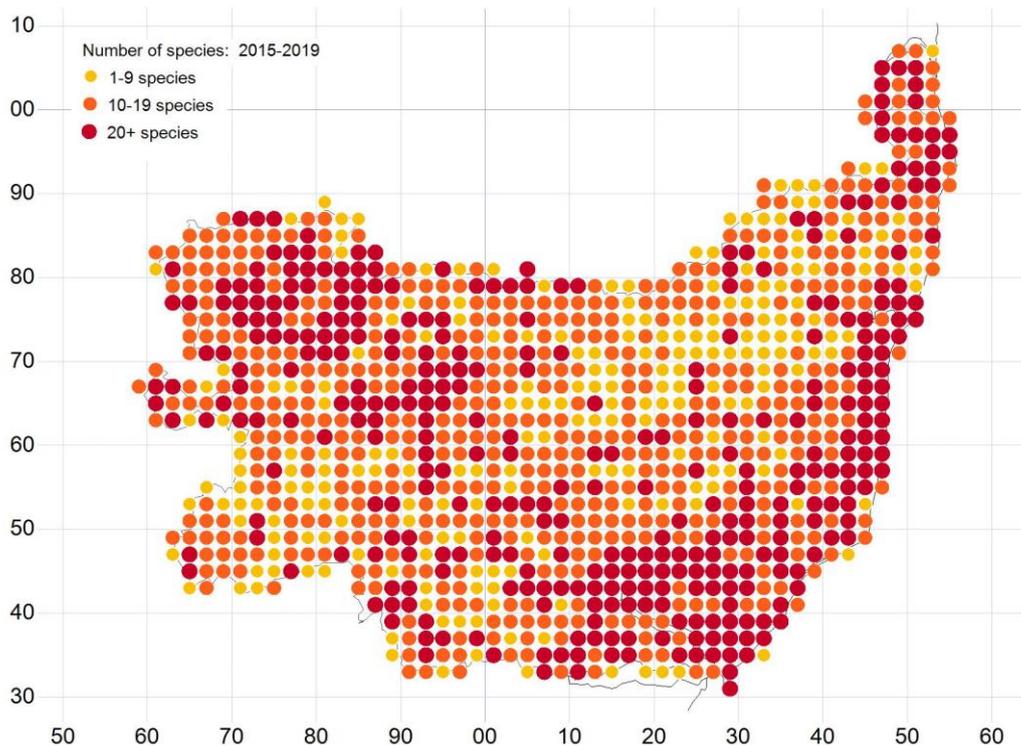
### Summary of the recording scheme, Butterflies for the New Millennium in Suffolk 2019

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. 2019 was the final year in the current five-year (2015-2019) recording period. Nearly, **41,000** records were received for 2019 and butterflies were recorded in **827** county tetrads (2km x 2km squares). The **Suffolk coverage map for 2019** is shown below.



**Map 1: Suffolk recording coverage 2019**

However, as this was the last year of the current five-year period it is appropriate to consider the extent of overall coverage achieved. Combining the data from **2015, 2016, 2017, 2018** and **2019** shows that over **175,000** records were received with butterflies being seen from **1075** county tetrads. This gave us an incredible **98.7%** county coverage which is a brilliant position to be in. The **Suffolk coverage map for 2015-2019** is shown below.



**Map 2: Suffolk Coverage 2015-2019**

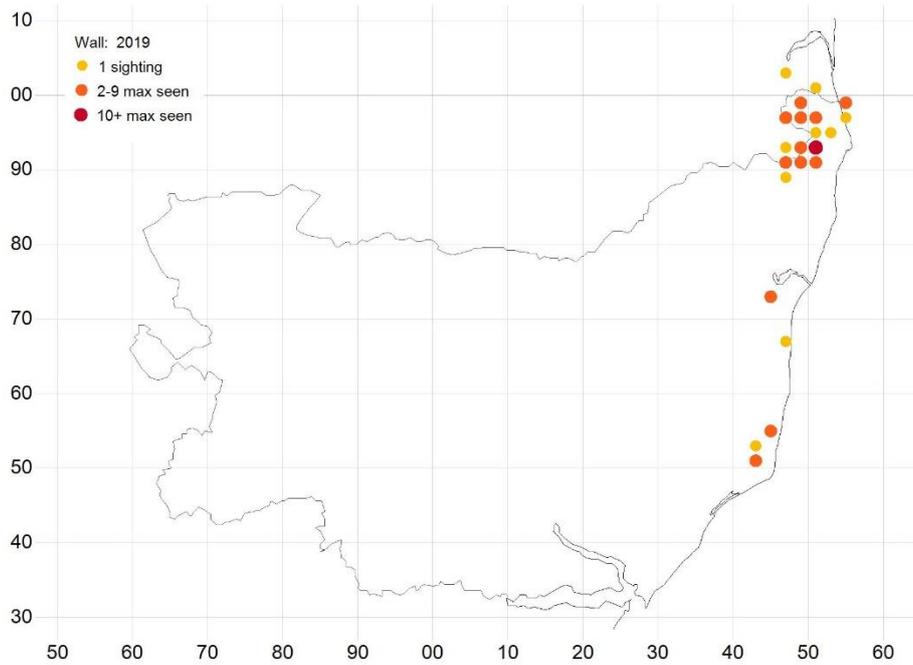
### Suffolk Butterfly Recording for 2020- Overview

In 2020, 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 areas along our western borders with Cambridgeshire and Essex and the north of Suffolk, particularly east and west of the A140 towards the Norfolk border. It was clear from the 2015-2019 maps that these areas are still under recorded but they offer some really interesting walking and exploring opportunities. Some areas will, undoubtedly, hold hidden colonies of butterflies and these can be incredibly exciting to find.

### 2020 Target Species- Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species

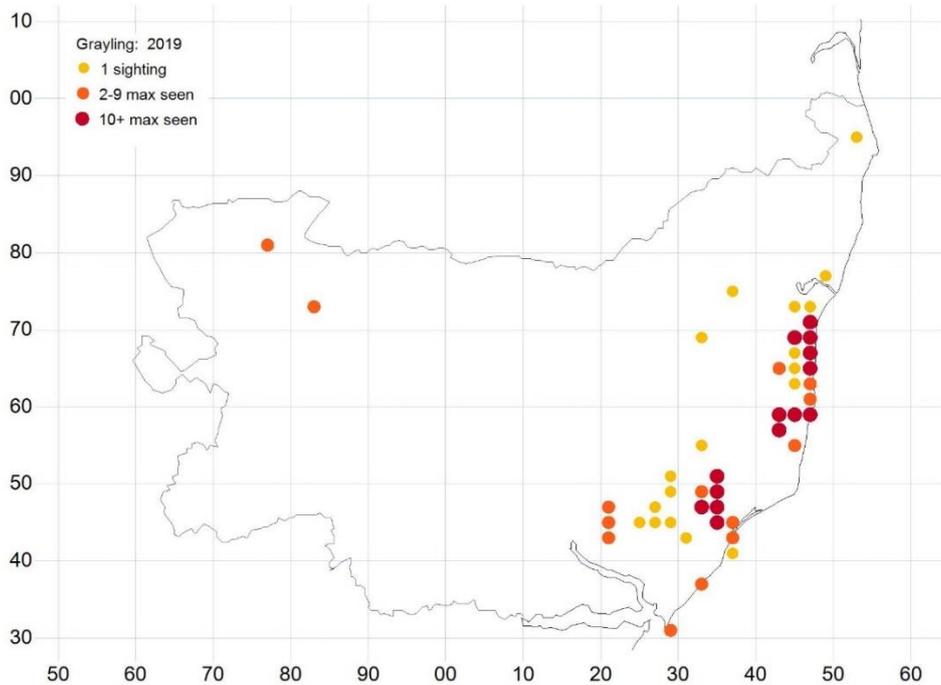
In Suffolk, 7 species of butterfly fall under the BAP. Please actively look for **Dingy Skipper, Grayling, Silver-studded Blue, Small Heath, Wall, White Admiral** and **White-letter Hairstreak** and submit all records made. Records received will allow close monitoring to be undertaken and changes in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

**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; a small area around Orford/Sudbourne and various sites throughout the Waveney Valley, particularly SWT Carlton Marshes. In 2019, the Wall was seen in 22 tetrads, pleasingly up 4 tetrads on 2018. However, this good news is slightly tempered by the fact that maximum counts were in the main lower and most records of this species were of singletons. As in recent years the vast majority of records are from the Waveney Valley area. The map below highlights the accepted records received in 2019:



**Map 3: Wall in 2019**

**Grayling:** This species is now struggling in the county and appears to be losing its foothold in the west. Loss of habitat and intensification of farming methods along with misuse of pesticides have no doubt had a major impact on this specialist of heathland. In 2019, despite an increase in recording coverage the Grayling was only seen in 46 tetrads, 8 less than in 2018. The map below shows how restricted this species has become and that some focussed Grayling surveys will be required in the west of the county.



**Map 4: Grayling in 2019**

## 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.

As mentioned above the 2020 season is the start of the new five-year Butterflies for the Millennium survey period. As with all five-year recording periods it is incredibly helpful to have a strong first year with good coverage throughout the county. So, it remains as important as ever to accurately record and report the butterflies you do see.

## Suffolk Butterfly Recording for 2020- Covid-19

This letter comes from me whilst I am "staying at home". Covid-19 has impacted upon all our lives and will continue to change how we live, work and what we can outdoors. Currently, the butterfly official recording season is on hold for transect walking and other formal surveys. This will invariably affect the number of early season records received but also where the records come from. Interestingly, local exercise walks are opening up areas to many of you which have previously been over looked or visited occasionally. Already, I am receiving a steady flow of garden records and at the time of writing 12 species have been reported. You may wish to consider joining Butterfly Conservation's **Garden Butterfly survey** to report your sightings, details of this scheme are given below.

I really hope that you and your families can stay Covid-19 free and that we can all return to "normality" in the near future. Regardless of Covid-19, please try and have a great 2020 watching and recording butterflies!

**Bill Stone, Suffolk Butterfly Recorder,  
20, Langstons,  
Trimley St Mary,  
Suffolk IP11 0XL**

**Tel: 07906 888603**

**Email: [billbutterfly68@yahoo.com](mailto:billbutterfly68@yahoo.com)**

## **Annex 1. General Notes for Butterfly Recorders**

### **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.

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.

"When" – date

"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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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 2020, the BBC runs from 17th July – 9th 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.