

Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

Garden Butterfly Survey 2020 Results

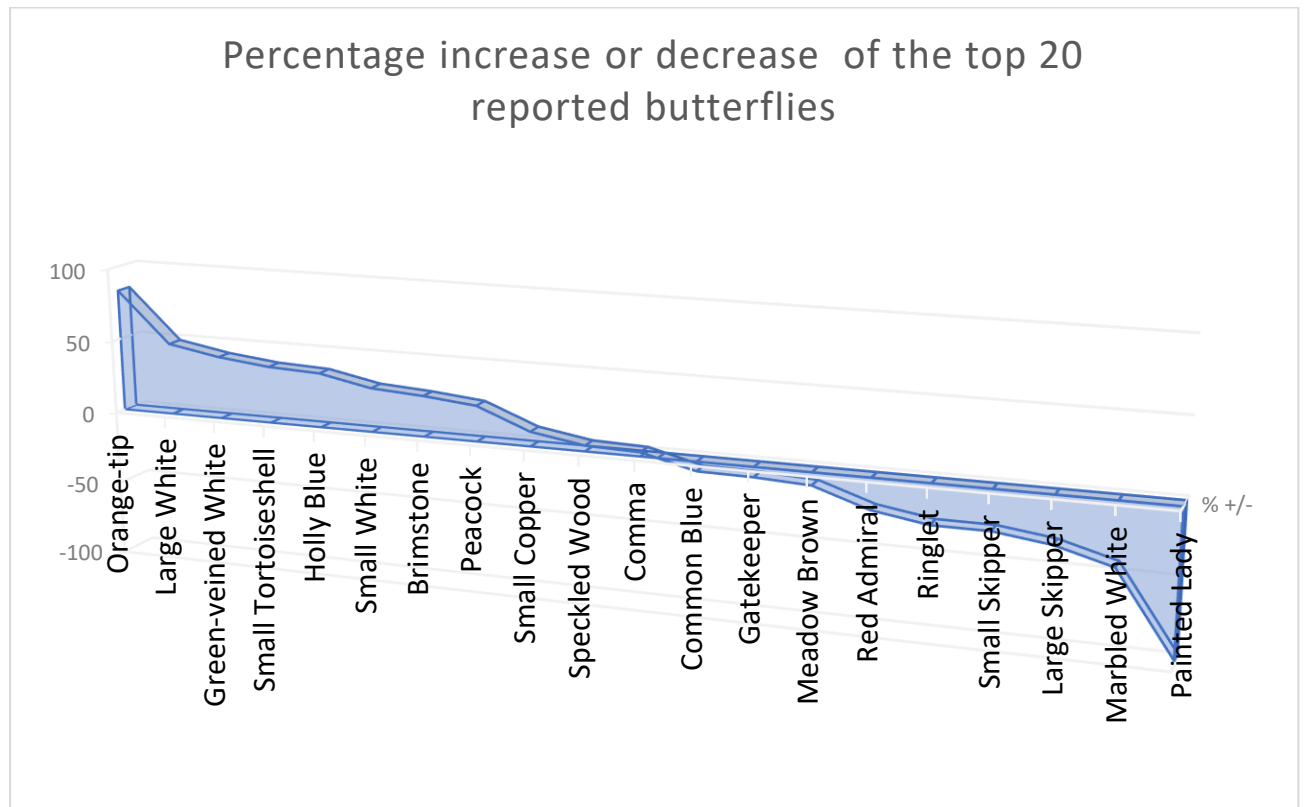
2020 was the best year yet for the Garden Butterfly Survey in terms of the number of records submitted, possibly due to many more people being at home during the Covid-19 lockdowns, spending time in gardens or having a greater connection with wildlife. An incredible 102,370 records were received (representing over 180,000 individual butterflies) from 1118 gardens. However just 38% of gardens reported butterflies in at least six months of the year compared with 45% in 2019. Whether this is due to a real absence of butterflies from gardens in the other months or variation in recording effort is not clear, but we hope that Garden Butterfly Survey participants will record throughout the year to provide the most accurate picture of how our butterflies are faring.

The Garden Butterfly Survey year began with a single butterfly observed on New Year's Day 2020 in Devon and the last sighting was on 20 December in Staffordshire, both Small Tortoiseshell. The warm, dry and sunny spring not only bolstered our spirits during the difficult time of lockdown but also resulted in a massive 84% increase in total count of Orange-tip.

The table below shows the results for the most commonly recorded species, ranked by the proportion of gardens they were recorded in during 2020. Peacock took the top spot this year with last year's leader Red Admiral sitting in 4th place in 66 % of gardens compared with 73 % of gardens in 2019.

Species	Total 2020	% Gardens 2020	% Gardens 2019
Peacock	18554	78	72
Small White	36550	73	71
Large White	22750	68	66
Red Admiral	14735	66	73
Small Tortoiseshell	15635	63	61
Orange-tip	8787	62	56
Holly Blue	11186	60	58
Comma	5092	56	57
Brimstone	5456	56	54
Speckled Wood	5987	47	51
Gatekeeper	9841	46	50
Meadow Brown	12008	45	48
Green-veined White	5750	41	39
Ringlet	2211	25	31
Common Blue	1442	20	24
Painted Lady	587	20	67
Small Copper	934	18	20
Small Skipper	879	15	18
Large Skipper	650	11	12
Marbled White	539	8	12

The plot below shows the percentage increase or decrease in count for the top 20 butterflies reported. Marbled White suffered a 42% decrease in total count compared with the previous year. Also of note was the 97% decrease in Painted Lady sightings; 2020 was a poor year for this migratory butterfly while 2019 was a “Painted Lady year” with a huge arrival of the insects, especially in northern and eastern areas, during late July and early August.



Creativity in your comments

The lift experienced when watching butterflies in the garden is evident through your comments and we really enjoy reading them. This year, we’ve collated some of these evocative snippets into a poem to celebrate the Garden Butterfly Survey 2020. We thank you for all your efforts in the previous years of the survey and we hope you will stay with us and continue to contribute to the revamped Garden Butterfly Count during 2021.

A year of butterflies

Windy, stormy, windy, wet, damp, wind and rain
 Our weather now is just extremes, with not much in between.
 Wind dropped today and clouds parted. Wind has dropped and sun returning,
 What a difference a day makes.

We are now in lockdown

Watched a Brimstone laying eggs on an alder buckthorn that I planted.
 Whites on perennial wallflower feeding. Others overflying
 Warm, sunny, light winds, warm, sunny, calm.
 Another sunny day, White-letter Hairstreak on ox-eye daisies

Where are all the summer butterflies?

Weather dull and windy. Weather overcast,
Still no sign of Gatekeepers, the marjoram out and waiting
Weather lifting after days of rain. A spot of sunshine and a Red Admiral appears
Peacock basking in the sun.
Winter has not come along just yet

What a year for the Small Tortoiseshell
Flying and sunning on sun-warmed slates, after a night of frost
A Comma on the 8th of November, Remembrance Sunday
This is almost certainly my last sighting for the year.

Recording and Monitoring Team