



PRESS RELEASE - 7th October 2021

Big Butterfly Count 2021 sees lowest ever number of butterflies recorded in Wales

Wildlife charity warns that we must act now if we are to save Wales' butterflies and moths for future generations.

Butterfly Conservation has today released data on the number of butterflies and day-flying moths counted across the UK in this year's Big Butterfly Count, which ran from 16th July – 8th August.

Worryingly, the decline in the number of butterflies and moths across the UK is continuing, with the overall number of butterflies recorded per count at its lowest level since the Big Butterfly Count began 12 years ago.

The nation's love of butterflies isn't diminishing. Despite the low butterfly numbers, and relatively poor weather, more butterfly counts were submitted than ever before. 5,911 butterfly counts were submitted in Wales – a 36% increase on 2020 and representing almost 15,000 hours of butterfly counting in gardens, parks and the countryside.

Dr Zoë Randle, Senior Surveys Officer at Butterfly Conservation said: "This year's results show that the average number of butterflies and moths per count is the lowest we've recorded so far. The average number of butterflies and moths per count in Wales was down by 6% on 2020 figures. More counts are undertaken and submitted year on year, but it seems that there are fewer butterflies and moths around to be counted."

Some of Wales' most-loved species including the Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock butterflies dropped in numbers this summer. This was a situation repeated across the UK, with the iconic Peacock butterfly suffering its lowest numbers since 2012. The Small Tortoiseshell, once a frequent visitor to gardens in the UK, had its third worst summer in the history of the Big Butterfly Count and shows a significant long-term decline in Britain.

It wasn't bad news for all species, with some, including the Ringlet, appearing to bounce back from their low numbers during last year's Big Butterfly Count. However, scientists at Butterfly Conservation warn that last year's unusually sunny spring allowed them to emerge earlier, and that 2021's results are therefore more typical for these species.

This year's weather has had a significant impact on butterfly and moth species, and with more climate change related extreme weather events likely, the impact on some of the UK's most loved insects could be devastating.

Dr Randle explains: "Some of the UK's butterflies have more than one generation per year, meaning we would see adult butterflies in spring and summer. The majority of these double-brooded species experienced their worst year since the start of the Big Butterfly Count in

2010. Weather changes are likely to be the cause of this. March 2021 was warmer than average which would have stimulated butterfly activity. However, May was very wet which will have hampered butterfly feeding and breeding. These combined weather effects are likely to have reduced the spring generation which has knock-on effects for the second generation in the summer.”

Butterflies and moths are important indicators of the health of the environment, and a decline in abundance is a serious cause for concern.

Butterfly Conservation has launched an ambitious strategy to help address the problems for butterflies and moths and be part of nature’s recovery.

Julie Williams, CEO of Butterfly Conservation, says: “The facts are clear. Nature is in crisis and we need urgent action, not just to prevent further species losses but to rebuild biodiversity.

“Since 1976, 76% of butterflies have declined in abundance or distribution, and the downward trend continues. We have come to accept that encounters with butterflies, moths and other wildlife are unusual, delightful but infrequent. It doesn’t have to be this way and through our new strategy Butterfly Conservation is pledging to halve the number of threatened butterfly and moth species in the UK, double our impact on landscape restoration, and galvanise thousands of people to create new wild spaces for nature.

“We can’t do this alone though and are urging people to join us to create a world where butterflies and moths thrive and can be enjoyed by everyone, everywhere.”

To find out more visit www.butterfly-conservation.org

SPECIES RESULTS IN WALES – BIG BUTTERFLY COUNT 2021

	Big Butterfly Count 2021 WALES	Abundance	Ave per count	% change from 2020
1	Meadow Brown	9,818	1.89	23%
2	Large White	7,379	1.42	-18%
3	Gatekeeper	7,340	1.41	17%
4	Small White	7,100	1.37	-12%
5	Ringlet	3,408	0.66	119%
6	Red Admiral	2,073	0.40	-20%
7	Small Tortoiseshell	1,440	0.28	-36%
8	Six-spot Burnet	1,350	0.26	37%
9	Speckled Wood	1,311	0.25	-34%
10	Common Blue	1,149	0.22	-24%
11	Small Copper	981	0.19	57%
12	Peacock	938	0.18	-76%
13	Green-veined White	892	0.17	-22%
14	Comma	802	0.15	-19%
15	Painted Lady	470	0.09	29%
16	Holly Blue	415	0.08	-43%
17	Silver Y	213	0.04	-43%
18	Marbled White	131	0.03	26%
19	Brimstone	83	0.02	-47%
20	Jersey Tiger	32	0.01	n/a
	TOTAL	47,325	9.1	-6%

SPECIES RESULTS IN THE UK – BIG BUTTERFLY COUNT 2021

	Big Butterfly Count 2021 UK	Abundance	Ave per count	% change from 2020
1	Small White	252,151	1.88	-5%
2	Large White	229,218	1.71	-16%
3	Meadow Brown	197,060	1.47	33%
4	Gatekeeper	133,726	0.99	-30%
5	Red Admiral	75,394	0.56	-10%
6	Ringlet	63,311	0.47	81%
7	Peacock	61,668	0.46	-63%
8	Small Tortoiseshell	38,543	0.29	-32%
9	Marbled White	28,704	0.21	213%
10	Green-veined White	27,784	0.21	-9%
11	Small Copper	22,897	0.17	11%
12	Comma	21,320	0.16	-32%
13	Speckled Wood	18,086	0.13	-41%
14	Six-spot Burnet	15,964	0.12	42%
15	Common Blue	14,376	0.11	-59%
16	Painted Lady	12,180	0.09	44%
17	Holly Blue	10,018	0.07	-58%
18	Brimstone	7,984	0.06	-33%
19	Silver Y	3,661	0.03	53%
20	Scotch Argus	2,326	0.02	n/a
21	Jersey Tiger	2,034	0.02	n/a
	TOTAL	1,238,405	9.21	-14%

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

[Full UK and Country-specific results from the Big Butterfly Count can be accessed here, along with a copy of Butterfly Conservation's new Strategy document and images for use with this story.](#)

For further information or interviews, please contact the Butterfly Conservation Press Office on 01929 406005 or email news@butterfly-conservation.org

Butterfly Conservation is the UK charity dedicated to saving butterflies, moths and our environment. Our research provides advice on how to conserve and restore habitats. We run projects to protect more than 100 threatened species and we are involved in conserving hundreds of sites and reserves.

www.butterfly-conservation.org

@savebutterflies

The Big Butterfly Count is a UK-wide survey, run by Butterfly Conservation, aimed at helping us assess the health of our environment simply by counting the amount and type of butterflies (and some day-flying moths) we see. It's so easy to do and is a fantastic activity

for people of all ages. All you have to do is spend 15 minutes in an outdoor space during dry conditions and count the types and amounts of butterflies you see. To find out more go to www.bigbutterflycount.org

The Big Butterfly Count 2021 was sponsored by garden wildlife specialist Vivara and the DFN Foundation, a commissioning charity focusing on influencing sustainable change in special needs education.

Vivara is the latest evolution from 35 years of development by CJ WildBird Foods Ltd. Providing a solutions focus for biodiverse wildlife gardens, vivara.co.uk is a one-stop specialist of quality products and plants to support wildlife-friendly gardens and care for garden wildlife. Vivara is also a hub of information and a 'go-to' reference for advice and knowledge, helping all, from the experienced wildlife supporter, to those starting out on their nature journey. The holding company works with over 20 wildlife charities and organisations across Europe to support conservation projects, raise awareness and develop innovative new products to best suit the needs of wildlife. www.vivara.co.uk

The DFN Foundation is a commissioning charity established in 2014 to make a positive difference to the lives of young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Today, its reach has grown to influencing policy and funding developments in special needs education, employability, healthcare and conservation.

The vision of DFN Foundation is to transform life outcomes for people throughout the country, bringing positive and lasting change that unlocks natural potential and builds a more inclusive and environmentally conscious society. Its delivery partners are focused on influencing sustainable change in special needs education, supported employment, healthcare and conservation.

For more information please go to www.dfnfoundation.org