See the world through a butterfly’s eyes

Butterflies are all around us. Even in the busiest towns and cities we can see the thrilling flashes of colour as they flutter from flower to flower. Nature can be on our very own doorsteps, if we take the time to experience it. Parks, gardens, allotments and other urban greenspaces can be real havens for butterflies. We need your help to discover which species are using these places so we can plan conservation work to help the species that are struggling.

It is easier than ever to get involved and only takes a few hours over the spring and summer: you could even do it on your lunch break! As the seasons progress and the various species appear to feed on flowers, you’ll become attuned the rhythms of nature and begin to see the world through a butterfly’s eyes.

Use the guide here to identify the species you see. Then let us know what you’ve found by using the iRecord Butterfly app or sending us your observations.

Now, pack a picnic and get recording!

Images not to scale
Why record butterflies?

Recording butterflies is an enjoyable way to spend a sunny day and contributes to protecting our butterflies.

The state of our butterflies

There are 59 species of butterfly in the UK. Five species have become extinct in the past 150 years, and populations of at least three quarters of species have declined in the past four decades. Butterfly recording creates a picture of how different species are faring. This information influences conservation action.

Already in Scotland we have seen the expansion of several species, which may be because of climate change. Having more records from volunteers means we can track changes in butterfly populations more accurately.

Taking nature’s pulse

Butterflies are sensitive to changes in the environment. By looking at them closely, we can better understand what is happening in the wider environment and the pressures that may be faced by other wildlife too.

Begin with butterflies

Taking an hour out to look at nature just feels good. Immersing yourself in the world of butterflies can give you a deeper appreciation of the richness and beauty of the wildlife around you. Begin with butterflies, and you’ll soon become aware of all of the wildflowers, bees and other pollinating insects that make their home in your neighbourhood.

How to record butterflies

You can record butterflies in any place at any time. This project is most interested in records from urban greenspaces, but we gratefully receive all records.

Because different species are active at different times of year, we recommend recording at the same place at least three times between May and September, with at least a month between recording trips. But you can record as little or as often as you like - the more records the better!

visit www.butterfly-conservation.org/urbanbutterflies

Did you know?

Painted Lady Butterflies make migrations of up to 9,000 miles, all the way from North Africa to the UK and beyond to the Arctic Circle. They come here to find food, but have to go south again as our winters are too cold for them.

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Scotland Office
Butterfly Conservation Scotland Balallan House 24 Allan Park, Stirling, FK8 2QG
Email: scotland@butterfly-conservation.org Tel: 01786 447753
www.butterfly-conservation.org/Scotland

APP:
Download the free iRecord Butterflies app (available for Android and Apple devices) to record on the go. Please let us know if you are using the app so your records are assigned to the Urban Butterflies Project.

PAPER:
We realise that not everyone can access the internet so, if preferred, you can submit records to us on paper forms. Write or phone using the details below, and we’ll send more information.

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Your guide to the butterflies of Scotland’s towns and cities