



## **COLD WET SUMMER HITS SCOTLAND'S BUTTERFLIES**

Scotland's butterflies have suffered following one of the coolest and wettest summers in recent times, the world's biggest butterfly count has revealed. Nearly 1000 'Big Butterfly Counts' were made in Scotland this year, while in the rest of the UK more than 33,000 people took part, seeing in excess of 320,000 butterflies and day-flying moths. The survey, by wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation, found that the average number of individual butterflies seen per count was down by 11% compared with last year's figures.

Hopes had been high for a bumper butterfly summer after parts of the UK basked in a record-breaking warm, dry spring. But, while in north western Scotland the good weather continued, giving one of the sunniest Julys since 1929, over most of the country the balmy conditions gave way to chilly temperatures and prolonged spells of rain. Eastern Scotland was particularly wet in July and August, with over twice the normal amount of rain recorded each month. Butterfly activity is impaired by low temperatures and heavy rain so they are unable to fly, feed, find mates or lay eggs during bad weather.

Richard Fox, Butterfly Conservation Surveys Manager said: "Despite the poor weather the fantastic response of the Scottish public to Big Butterfly Count 2011 has given us a detailed snapshot of how butterflies fared this summer. Twice as many counts were carried out this year as in 2010, and there are some fascinating differences to the results south of the border".

The Small Tortoiseshell was the top ranking butterfly in Scotland this year, and was relatively much more common than in the rest of the UK, where it has recently suffered huge declines. So it seems that as well as some of the UK's rarest butterflies such as the Marsh Fritillary appearing to have a safe haven in Scotland, even once common garden species like the Small Tortoiseshell that have declined in England are now finding a refuge here.

Two other species that did very well in Scotland compared to England were the Ringlet and Common Blue, although this could be a result of different flight periods, the Big Butterfly Count (which takes place in late July) missing the main flight periods of these two species down south.

Richard continued: "Unfortunately, the results show that overall it was a very poor summer for butterflies. The dismal summer weather is undoubtedly to blame, although many butterflies have suffered long-term declines as a result of destruction of their habitats by human activities. In bad summers, butterflies need all the help they can get from people."

Butterflies are key indicators of the health of our environment and the Count results could help provide vital information to help secure their long-term survival.

For the second year running, the Big Butterfly Count took place in partnership with Marks & Spencer as part of its Plan A commitment to be the world's most sustainable major retailer by 2015.

Richard Gillies, M&S Director of Plan A said: "We'd like to thank all of our customers and employees for taking part in this year's Big Butterfly Count, it's great to see that twice as many people took part compared to last year.

"We hope the results and the Count will help to raise awareness about how important butterflies are to the environment."

## **BIG BUTTERFLY COUNT 2011 - TOP 10 SCOTTISH SPECIES (with UK ranking in brackets)**

1	Small Tortoiseshell (9)
2	Small White (2)
3	Ringlet (11)
4	Meadow Brown (4)
5	Green-veined White (8)
6	Large White (3)
7	Common Blue (12)
8	Six-spot Burnet 10)
9	Red Admiral (5)
10	Speckled Wood (7)

### **CONTACTS**

For images, further breakdown of figures and interviews call the Butterfly Conservation Press Office on 01929 406005 or email [news@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:news@butterfly-conservation.org)

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

Butterflies are one of the most threatened wildlife groups in the UK. The last four years have seen butterfly numbers plummet to an all-time low. Almost half of British species are now under threat.

To help bring an end to this, Marks & Spencer and Butterfly Conservation last year formed the partnership 'Making Butterflies Count', to take action and conserve these vital species.

Butterflies and moths are very sensitive to environmental change, which makes them vital indicators of the health of our countryside. They are important for the pollination of plants and declines of butterflies and moths impact on the rest of UK wildlife.

There are 59 species of butterfly in the UK. Four species of butterfly became extinct in the UK in the last century and the situation for moths is even worse with more than 60 species gone.

**Plan A:** Launched in 2007, Plan A is M&S's five-year eco-plan to tackle the biggest challenges facing its business and the world through five pillars: climate change, waste, sustainable raw materials, fair partner and health. Earlier this year, M&S launched Plan A version 2 and set the objective to be the world's most sustainable retailer by 2015 along with 80 major new commitments.

The new commitments will mean we ensure all M&S products become 'Plan A products' with at least one sustainable quality, enable our 2,000 suppliers to adopt Plan A best practice and encourage M&S customers and employees to live 'greener' lifestyles. For further information on M&S' Plan A, go to: [www.marksandspencer.com/PlanA](http://www.marksandspencer.com/PlanA)

**Butterfly Conservation** is the largest charity of its type in the world. Its aim is the conservation of butterflies, moths and their habitats. The organisation runs conservation programmes on over 100 threatened species of butterfly and moth and manages over 30 nature reserves. [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)

**Weather information** from the Met Office

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/2011/summer.html>