

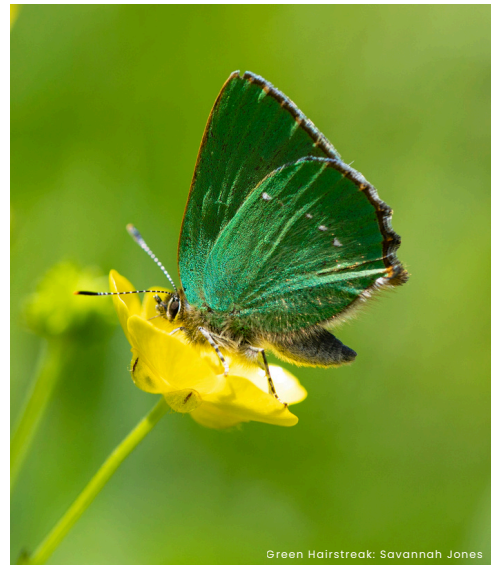


UKBMS eNewsletter Summer 2026

Welcome to the Summer 2026 UKBMS eNewsletter. We're now well into the survey season, and I'd like to start by saying a huge thank you to everyone who has already been out recording butterflies and contributing valuable data.

Despite a mixed start to the season, your commitment and enthusiasm continue to provide the long-term monitoring that underpins butterfly conservation across the UK.

In this edition, we look back at the recently published 2025 results, share important survey updates and opportunities to get involved, and answer some frequently asked questions. As we move into the peak butterfly months, we look forward to hearing more about your sightings and wish you all a successful and enjoyable remainder of the survey season.



Green Hairstreak: Savannah Jones

Staying safe on your surveys

It's important to stay safe whilst out doing your surveys and to follow the information in our [Health and Safety Guidance](#) and [Risk Assessment](#). As we head into the warmer months, there's also a few extra points to bear in mind.



Brown Hairstreak with onlookers: Martin Warren

- **High temperatures:** Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids, use sun protection, wear lightweight clothing and a sunhat and avoid surveying when temperatures are excessive.
- **Be Tick aware:** It's now tick season so take measures to avoid being bitten: cover up with long sleeves and trousers, consider using insect repellent, check for ticks after fieldwork and make sure you know what to do if you find one – more info [here](#).
- **Follow the signage:** Always follow on-site signs, notices, and access restrictions – even if you're familiar with the area. Avoid areas marked as restricted or closed, even if they appear safe. If you're unsure, pause your survey and check with the site manager or landowner.

The UKBMS at 50: Winners, Losers and Shifting Seasons

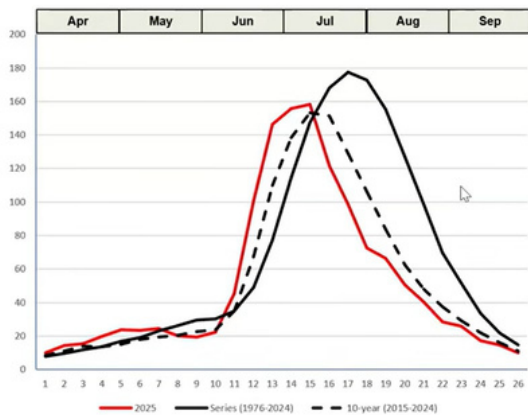
The latest UKBMS results were published in April and revealed widespread recovery from a poor 2024 season, but long-term trends continue to show significant declines across many species.

The 2025 UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) results were released in April, marking 50 years of butterfly monitoring and another record-breaking year for participation, with more sites monitored than ever before. The results and the wider 50 year analysis were presented by Dr Marc Botham (UKCEH) at the UK Butterfly Recorders' Meeting on 28 March, which is available to [watch here](#). The UKBMS data is used to produce the official UK Government butterfly abundance statistics which can be viewed [here](#). The Annual Newsletter for the Wider Countryside Butterfly Scheme has also recently been published and can be read [here](#).

Shifting seasons

Overall butterfly abundance in 2025 was close to the long-term average. However, changes in phenology continue to be evident. Across the fifty year UKBMS dataset, peak butterfly abundance occurs in late July (shown on the chart below in black), but analysis of the last decade shows this peak shifting to mid-July (dashed line). In 2025 (red line), peak abundance occurred even sooner, in early July. Second and even third generations were recorded for several species. Notably, Dingy Skipper produced additional broods not only in southern England but also further north into the Midlands.

Weekly average butterfly abundance



2025 - A surprisingly average year

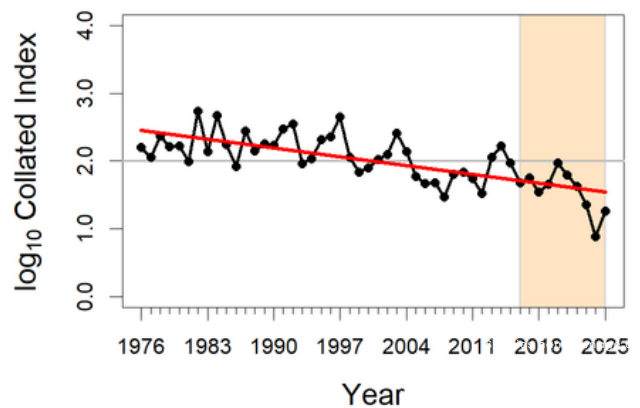
Butterfly emergence was notably early in 2025, but despite being the warmest and sunniest year on record, overall butterfly abundance was close to average, ranking 20th out of the last 50 years.

Compared with the exceptionally poor season of 2024, fifty one species increased in abundance while only seven declined.

Several species showed substantial recoveries from the very low numbers recorded in 2024. Including Dingy Skipper, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Wood White and Small Tortoiseshell.

While these increases are encouraging, long-term trends remain concerning, with all of these species still showing significant declines in abundance over the full fifty year monitoring period.

Small Tortoiseshell population trend



Species highlights

The three common white species (Large, Small and Green-veined) performed well across the UK, with Large White recording its fourth best year on record. Wood White had its best year since 1985 and was recorded for the first time on a butterfly transect in Wales.

Once again, the Meadow Brown was the most frequently recorded species, although its' abundance only increased by 2% compared with 2024.

Purple Emperor recorded its second best year on record and continues to show a positive long-term trend, an encouraging result for a species that can be difficult to detect on transects due to its largely arboreal habits.

Counting in the canopy

Evening point counts of Purple Hairstreak in the tree canopy are helping to reveal a clearer picture of their population abundance. Can you help out?



The Purple Hairstreak, like many hairstreak species, spends much of its time high in the tree canopy. As an arboreal butterfly that is more active in the evening, it can be difficult to detect through standard transect monitoring and is often recorded only in low numbers on transects.

To improve our understanding of its population trends, a dedicated evening point count method was introduced in 2023. This involves observing from fixed points with a view of the tree canopy and counting butterflies seen.

In 2025, evening point counts accounted for 68% of all observations where 20 or more individuals were recorded. This highlights the value of this additional monitoring method in providing a more accurate

representation of population size. In total, 25 sites used the evening point count method in 2025, and we would love to see more sites take part.

We are keen to encourage more people to get involved in Purple Hairstreak monitoring. As well as helping to improve the dataset, it offers a chance to observe a fascinating and often overlooked species and be out at a different time of day. It is also a great option for recorders who are unable to commit to a regular weekly transect.

There's information on the UKBMS website about the method and how to get set up - [Purple Hairstreak Monitoring](#).

Can I change the route of my survey?

Standard Transects

To ensure that data remain comparable between years, it is important that the route of a standard transect stays consistent.

If a route needs to be materially altered, a new transect should be established rather than modifying the existing one. The main exceptions are:

- Re-routing an affected section where the overall route length, habitat, and expected butterfly assemblage remain very similar.
- Omitting a section that has become so unsuitable for butterflies that observations there would be negligible, and overall counts are unlikely to be affected.

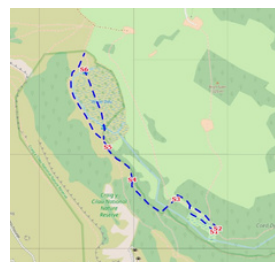
If you need any help with this please get in touch or contact your Regional Transect Coordinator.

WCBS Squares

For WCBS surveys you can change the route of the transects if needed. This is because this survey is designed to sample the entire landscape.

If a change of route makes it more likely that the square can continue to be monitored, then it is fine to change the route.

To re-map an existing WCBS route, please contact your local WCBS Champion or survey@butterfly-conservation.org.



A standard transect route: cannot be changed



A WCBS Square route: can be changed



Large Heath on a form: Georgina Paul

Forestry England works in partnership with Butterfly Conservation to support butterfly monitoring on their forest estate. In 2026 they will be introducing ANPR car parking charges at many of their sites across the UK. UKBMS volunteers who are registered on Assemble and carrying out UKBMS or WCBS surveys at these sites can continue to park for free between 1 April and 30 September 2026, for their survey visit.

All UKBMS volunteers who are registered on Assemble have been contacted to inform them of this change and to gather the required information needed.

If you have not yet registered on Assemble, please register via the links provided at the end of this newsletter.

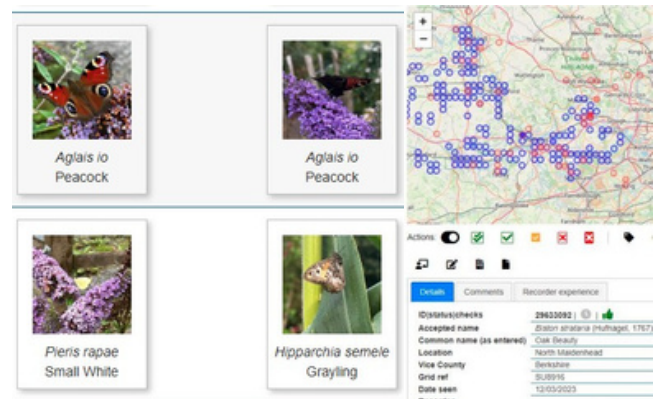
Join the verification network

Join the verification team as a County Recorder or Verification Assistant, help us to verify butterfly records across the UK and build your understanding of butterfly populations locally.

As Transect walkers and coordinators, you are undoubtedly aware of the Butterflies for the New Millennium (BNM) scheme run by Butterfly Conservation. Since 1995, and we have amassed over 12 million butterfly records, and the data are used at the local scale for conservation and at the national and international scales e.g. for setting government conservation priorities or conducting research into the impacts of climate change. The backbone of the BNM project from the beginning has been the network of local co-ordinators, whose role is to act as the focal point for butterfly recording in the county or other area for which they are responsible. They receive records, use their local knowledge of butterflies, sites and recorders to verify the sightings and then enter them onto their computer.

We are looking for volunteers within our current network of UKBMS volunteers who may be interested in taking on a County Recorder or Verification Assistant role as there are some vacancies across the country. We would encourage the set up of verification teams whereby the responsibilities of the county recorder role can be spread out across multiple people. This approach has worked very successfully in Surrey and SW London, Lincolnshire and within our moth community – Derbyshire Moth Group a notable example. Furthermore, a collaborative approach between a County Recorder and Verification Assistant is an excellent way to divide up clear roles and even the workload.

Please see the vacancy list below, and if you would like to volunteer for one of these roles or would like further information, please contact me at raustin@butterfly-conservation.org



Current vacancies

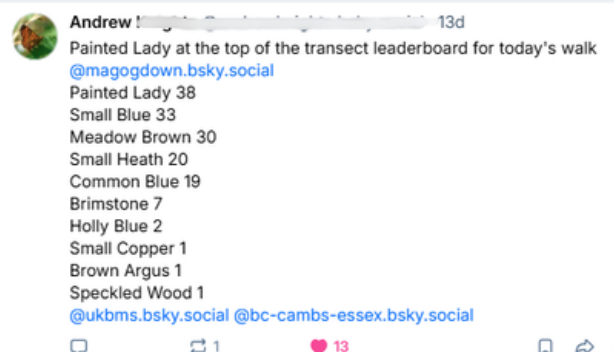
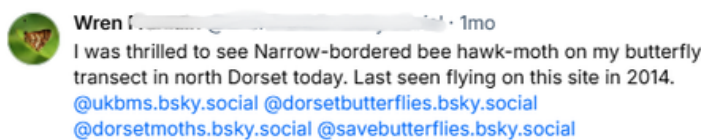
England

- Hampshire and Isle of Wight – [Verification Assistant](#)
- Lincolnshire – [County Recorder](#) (John Davison stepping down)
- Herefordshire – [County Recorder & Verification Assistant](#)
- Worcestershire – [County Recorder & Verification Assistant](#)
- Staffordshire – [County Recorder & Verification Assistant](#)

Scotland

- East Sutherland – [County Recorder](#) (Tony Mainwood stepping down)

We love hearing your stories and seeing your photos from monitoring butterflies. Here are some snippets we enjoyed from the UKBMS social feeds. Have you got something to share? Tag us in your post or send us your snippets to transect@butterfly-conservation.org.

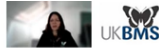


There are lots of resources available on the [UKBMS website](#) to help with your surveys. There are written instructions and video demos for most tasks. Find some of the most handy resources linked below.



What to record and how

- Count only those butterflies you see inside the survey 'box'
- Keep a tally and complete the total at the end of each section if numbers are high
- Any butterfly species of interest outside of the survey box can be noted and submitted to another recording scheme
- You can record moths, dragonflies and other wildlife and submit online at the UKBMS
- **Keep focused on the transect survey**



Transect Resources

- **Method** – Find written instructions [here](#), or a video walk through [here](#).
- **Forms** – Weekly recording forms are [here](#). There are also [regional adaptations](#) forms and [Transect Details](#) forms.
- **FAQ's** – Got a question? Check out the [FAQ's](#) to find the answer, or contact your [Regional Coordinator](#) for more help.

WCBS Resources

- **Method** – Find written instructions [here](#), or a video walk through [here](#).
- **Forms** – The WCBS Recording form is [here](#), along with a [landowner letter](#) to use when sorting out permissions.
- **FAQ's** – Got a question? Check out the [FAQ's](#) to find the answer, or contact your [WCBS Champion](#) for more help.

WCBS (Methodology) Training

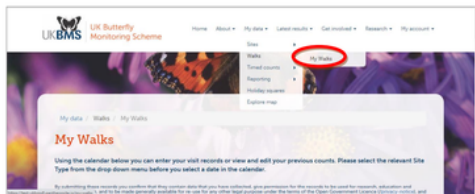
The survey

- The WCBS is broadly based on the BTO's Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)
- Conducted at randomly generated 1- km squares
- Two parallel 1-km long transects subdivided into 10 sections,
- The core recording period is in July and August.
- Results must be submitted before 31st October



Entering the results of a transect walk

1. Go to 'My Walks' to see a calendar, showing all the walks that you have entered so far. You can find 'My Walks' by going to the main drop-down menu of 'My data' and expanding 'Walks' as shown below.



2. If your sites include WCBS squares, you will need to select the relevant option from the 'Site Type' drop-down menu to see or enter walks for these squares.

Using the UKBMS website

- **Data entry** – You can use the written Instructions [here](#), or find a video demo [here](#).
- **View your data** – You can view [all the data](#) for you site along with some [handy charts](#).
- **Map your site** – When you set up a new transect or WCBS square, you'll need to map your route. To help, we have [written instructions](#) and a [video demo](#).

Your Regional Coordinator

- **Transect Coordinators** – These volunteers help oversee the transects in their region. They are great contacts for any help, find your local one [here](#).
- **WCBS Champions** – These volunteers support the WCBS Recorders in their area. Find how to contact your local Champion [here](#).

Assemble Registration

Assemble is the portal we use to manage our volunteers. Registration is required to take part in the UKBMS and ensures you are covered by our insurance. Please use the link below to register:

- [Transect Surveyors Assemble registration](#)
- [WCBS Recorders Assemble registration](#)

More info can be found on Assemble [here](#). Got questions about Assemble? Please contact volunteering@butterfly-conservation.org

The UKBMS is a partnership organised and funded by Butterfly Conservation, the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, British Trust for Ornithology and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.