



**big butterfly count**  
14th July - 6th August

Waitrose

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## **Attenborough: 'A critical summer for butterflies'**

Sir David Attenborough has warned that UK butterflies face a critical summer after a string of poor years has seen the numbers of many common species decline.

Last year was the fourth worst on record for butterflies and Sir David is urging people across the Upper Thames region to take part in the Big Butterfly Count survey to help reveal how widespread species are faring this summer.

Common species such as the Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper experienced declines in 2016, but the warm, dry spring and early summer experienced over much of the UK so far this year could offer butterflies some respite if the good weather continues.

The Big Butterfly Count is the world's largest butterfly survey, which encourages people to spot and record 18 species of common butterflies and two day-flying moths during three weeks of high summer.

Families are being invited to take part in their own garden or by attending one of the free butterfly walks or events happening across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire during the Big Butterfly Count period, which runs from Friday 14 July until Sunday 6 August.

There will also be a chance to do a Count at this year's Countryfile Live event in the grounds of Oxfordshire's Blenheim Palace. Volunteers from Butterfly Conservation will be handing out Butterfly ID charts at their stall every day from 3 – 6 August. Information on all of these events can be found at [www.butterfly-conservation.org/UpperThamesBBC](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/UpperThamesBBC).

Butterfly Conservation President Sir David said: "The next few weeks are a vital period for our butterflies. They need to make the most of this chance to feed and breed.

"Last year, despite a warm summer, butterflies like the Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper saw their numbers fall as a warm winter and cold spring earlier in the year led to problems that affected their numbers later on.

"Worryingly, we are now seeing the fortunes of some of our once common butterflies mirror those of our rarest species and they too are now also suffering significant declines with butterflies declining more rapidly in urban areas than in the countryside.

"In the last decade our butterflies have experienced several poor years and although resilient, they simply cannot sustain repeated losses, especially if the habitats they need in order to rebuild their populations are also under threat."

More than three-quarters of the UK's butterflies have declined in the last 40 years with some common species, such as the Small Tortoiseshell, suffering significant slumps.

This year's Count follows new findings that butterflies are declining more rapidly in urban areas than in the countryside.

As many Big Butterfly Counts take place in gardens, parks and urban green space, this year's results from these habitats will help inform conservationists on how to make our urban landscapes more butterfly-friendly.

Richard Fox, Butterfly Conservation Head of Recording said: “With increasing numbers of our common and widespread butterflies in long-term decline, Big Butterfly Count is more important than ever. Simply taking 15 minutes out of your normal day to enjoy the sunshine and count butterflies can help us monitor their populations. It’s a win-win for wildlife.”

Sir David added: “Taking part in the Big Butterfly Count is good for butterflies and it is also good for us all. The Count is good for butterflies because your sightings will tell us which species need help and in which areas we need to help them.

“But the Big Butterfly Count is also good for you because 15 minutes spent watching butterflies in the summer sunshine is priceless; spending time with butterflies lifts the spirits and reinvigorates that sense of wonder in the natural world.”

The Big Butterfly Count is sponsored by Waitrose. Tor Harris, Waitrose Head of Sustainability and Responsible Sourcing, said: “We recognise the fundamental role pollinators play in the production of food and are committed to supporting their future which is why we’re delighted to be sponsoring the Big Butterfly Count for the second year and helping grow this important event.”

The Count runs from 14 July to 6 August. Taking part in the Count is easy - find a sunny spot and spend 15 minutes counting the butterflies you see and then submit sightings online at [www.bigbutterflycount.org](http://www.bigbutterflycount.org) or via the free Big Butterfly Count app.

The Big Butterfly Count is being launched at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) London Wetland Centre.

WWT Chief Executive Martin Spray CBE said: “Butterfly spotting brings great immediate rewards. You get to see beautiful little animals, and by counting butterflies you can help them too. It’s a great activity for families getting outside on a summer’s day. That’s why we’re giving out spotter sheets at all our wetland centres across the UK.”

## **Contacts**

For pictures, interviews and broadcast quality species footage contact the Butterfly Conservation Press Office [news@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:news@butterfly-conservation.org) 01929 406005

**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 programmes for more than 100 threatened species and we are involved in conserving hundreds of sites and reserves. [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)

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**The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT)** works globally to safeguard and improve wetlands for wildlife and people. Wetland conservation work is complemented with a network of nine UK visitor centres where people can have close encounters with awe-inspiring nature – wildlife clusters near water so there is always something to see at a Wetland Centre. As well as hundreds of species of birds, you can also see other wetland creatures like butterflies, dragonflies, otters and water voles in their natural environment. [www.wwt.org.uk](http://www.wwt.org.uk)