



Press release

Statistics Netherlands

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Butterflies still in danger

There are more butterflies in the Netherlands this year. This is due to the good weather conditions during this summer. A few species are recovering somewhat after the decline in recent years. The recovery is mostly among the common butterflies, such as the Large White and the Holly Blue. The new results from observations by Statistics Netherlands and the Vlinderstichting, however, show that the rare species did not increase in number.

Slight recovery in common species

The slight increase in the number of butterflies is due to the recovery of some common species. 1999 was a good year for the Large White, the Holly Blue, and the Green Hairstreak. It was the second year in a row in which the common species recovered somewhat. Still over half of the 22 species is worse off than in 1990. The Vlinderbalans [butterfly balance] is a new way of showing the current situation in butterfly levels. It shows that on balance over a third of the common species are declining.

Rare species remain rare

The environmental policy by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries focuses on a group of species requiring 'special attention', such as the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and the Grayling. These are endangered species requiring extra protection. These species have been doing poorly for years. On balance almost half of the rare species has declined in number since 1990: and there is no improvement in this in 1999.

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Rare butterfly species vulnerable in small nature areas

Many rare species only live in very small nature areas at a great distance from one another. Such small populations are very vulnerable: a few bad seasons may mean the end of their population. This happened in recent years with the Small Pink-bordered Fritillary in the Bruuk area near Groesbeek and with the Large Chequered Skipper on the heathlands of the Tondensche and Empesche hei. It is virtually impossible for these populations to recover on their own.

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Butterfly balance/ Vlinderbalans

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999*
	%									
All species/Alle soorten (39)	0	0	13	-28	-46	-21	-41	-46	-46	-41
Species requiring special attention/ Aandachtsoorten (17)	0	6	-12	-35	-47	-24	-47	-29	-47	-47
Common species/ Algemene soorten (22)	0	-5	32	-23	-45	-18	-36	-59	-45	-36

Source/ Bron: CBS / De Vlinderstichting