



Press release

Statistics Netherlands

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Slight improvement among day butterflies

This year slightly more butterflies were observed in the Netherlands than in 1999. Several common species are showing a slight improvement in numbers during 2000, after their steep decline in the mid-nineties. The species that did well included the Meadow Brown and the Small Copper. Butterflies frequently seen in gardens, such as the Peacock Butterfly the Comma Butterfly and the Small Tortoiseshell were conspicuous in their absence. They may have suffered greatly from the cool July weather. The new results produced by Statistics Netherlands and the De Vlinderstichting further show the situation for the rarest butterfly species is still grim.

More common butterflies

It was a good year for the common butterfly species, in particular for the Meadow Brown and the Hedge Brown. In the spring the Small White and the Green-veined White were often seen. The number of butterflies seems to be improving after a three year low. It remains to be seen whether this improvement is permanent. Things are still bleak for nearly half of the common butterfly species. These include the garden butterflies such as the Peacock Butterfly, the Small Tortoiseshell, the Comma Butterfly and the European Map. Compared to 1990 30% of the common species has now decreased in number.

Rare butterfly species

The environmental policy by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries focuses primarily on threatened species such as the Small Pearl-Bordered Fritil and the Grayling. These species require extra protective measures. For the third year in a row there is no improvement among these species. Certain species, such as the Silver-Spotted Skipper and the Grizzled Skipper seem to have greater numbers this year than last. However, compared to 1990, the base year, their numbers are still so low that there is no improvement on balance. In the year 2000 almost half of these rare species declined compared to 1990. The only species that improved for the second year in a row was the Sooty Copper.

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Measures

The warm weather in the late summer of 1999 and the good May and June weather this year certainly contributed to the greater number of butterflies that could be observed. Still the butterfly population is dramatically down and certain species are close to extinction. Given this situation, there are some measures being taken focusing on species and on habitat. There is a specific policy in the making to improve the butterfly population in nature areas. The most threatened species, such as the Large Copper, are included in a special environmental protection plan by the government. However, the Vlinderbalans (Butterfly Balance) shows that protective measures are also required for the common species.

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Butterfly balance Increases and decreases in percentages

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000*
Alle soorten/all species (39)	0	0	13	-28	-46	-21	-41	-46	-46	-49	-38
Specially protected/Aandachtssoorten (17)	0	6	-12	-35	-47	-24	-47	-29	-47	-47	-47
Common species/Algemene soorten (22)	0	-5	32	-23	-45	-18	-36	-59	-45	-50	-32

Bron: CBS / De Vlinderstichting