



Press release

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Butterfly population drops again

In 2001, the butterfly population fell again substantially to reach the lowest level of the last decade, a drop by more than 60 percent compared to 1992. Particularly rare and threatened species are jeopardised as their numbers fell by 80 percent. More common species are also under threat as a reduction by more than 40 percent shows. New figures by Statistics Netherlands further indicate that all biotopes are affected. Loss and disintegration of their natural habitat is assumed to be the main cause for the decline.

Substantial decrease threatened species

Of all butterflies the rare and threatened species decrease most strongly, a process which has been going on for years now. They can only be found in a few small nature reserves, more often than not far apart. This makes the populations especially vulnerable. In ten years time their numbers were reduced by 80 percent.

Common species also in decline

Common species are not doing very well either. The green hairstreak, the silver-spotted skipper and the purple hairstreak but also previously more common varieties such as the brimstone, the peacock and the small tortoiseshell are less frequently seen these days. These butterflies are not so particular and often recover somewhat during nice summers. The overall trend is, however, downward. Parched ground, an increase of nutrients in the environment and land management detrimental to butterflies contribute to the downward trend. The only variety to thrive is the speckled wood, most commonly found in forests and forest edges. The comma butterfly seems to benefit from the warm summers of recent years and is spreading northwards.

All biotopes shrink

Butterflies are on the decline throughout the country. Most butterflies, compared to the base year 1992, are found in the dunes, namely 70 percent, only 30 percent is found on the heath.

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