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UK butterfly species down to 56



Only 56 butterfly species now remain in Britain as others have fallen victim to disappearing habitat, a charity says.

The Butterfly Conservation charity said urban sprawl, modern farming techniques and lack of woodland management had all played their part in habitat loss.

Hertfordshire has lost the most species - 17 - in the past century, with Bedfordshire, Suffolk and Lincolnshire having lost 15 each.

The list has been published ahead of the first Save Our Butterflies week.

Cambridgeshire comes fifth on the "extinction" list, having lost 12 species, followed by Essex which has lost 11.

"Where butterflies are disappearing, nature generally is in trouble"

Martin Warren

Butterfly Conservation

Conservationist Dr Martin Warren, from the charity, said: "Butterfly species are becoming extinct county by county. It is deeply worrying.

"Butterflies in profusion tell us that nature is in balance. Where butterflies are disappearing, nature generally is in trouble."

He added: "These extinctions are the result of habitat loss. That's the result of either urban spread, lack of woodland management or intensive farming practices."

Lack of hills

Warwickshire comes in at seventh in the table with nine species lost, making it the highest placed county outside of the East of England.

Dr Warren said: "Sadly, these counties in the East of England lack any serious hills which could have provided a refuge from the plough."

The species that has suffered most county extinctions is the High

Brown Fritillary.

It is found at only a fifth of the locations it was 40 years ago and is now seen in only eight British counties.

Butterfly Conservation's report draws on findings in two major reports on butterfly declines published earlier this year.

Save Our Butterflies Week will see Butterfly Conservation branches across the UK organising field trips and other events to highlight butterfly declines.