

PRESS RELEASE BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION (HERTFORDSHIRE AND MIDDLESEX)

A newly-published report reveals in detail how our most beautiful insects are coping with the modern world across Hertfordshire and north London.

Butterfly Conservation (Hertfordshire and Middlesex) has analysed thousands of records from enthusiasts across its branch area to probe the fortunes of 38 species throughout 2022.

Branch recorder Andrew Woods, who compiled it, said: "The warm and dry spring and summer of 2022 meant we received over 50,000 butterfly records which means that we can get a very good idea of the status of Hertfordshire and north London's butterflies. This is important as butterflies are early indicators of climate and environmental changes."

The report reveals how some species did very well last year, while others, such as the exquisite Duke of Burgundy, seen just once near Tring, struggled to maintain populations. Andrew added: "Numbers of the rare Chalkhill Blue continued to increase this year at most of its sites and there is little to surpass the excitement of seeing clouds of the pale blue males fluttering low across the grass, searching for the more secretive brown females at places like Therfield Heath (near Royston) and Hexton Chalk Pit (north-west of Hitchin) in high summer.

"The magnificent Purple Emperor continued to do well and one of the best sites for the public to see it, albeit sometimes high up in trees, is the Woodland Trust's recently established Heartwood Forest north of St Albans.

"The nationally declining White Admiral, a butterfly found in sunny rides in shady woods, had a good year with it being seen in several woodland areas where it was not seen in 2021."

Not surprisingly, most butterfly records were made in the spring and summer, but the spread of the scarce Brown Hairstreak across north London was revealed only by diligent winter searches for miniscule eggs.

The illustrated report has been sent to branch members, but interested members of the public can request a copy by emailing Andrew at zoothorn@ntlworld.com

Contact press officer Alex Lewis 07480-258660 lemsfordalex@gmail.com