

G1: MONITORING BUTTERFLY NUMBERS BY THE TRANSECT METHOD - SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR RECORDERS



TRANSECT RECORDING

- Butterfly transects are a way of monitoring the number and variety of butterflies present at a site from year to year.
- Full (all species) transects are labour intensive and require a commitment to carry out weekly recording, throughout the main period in which butterflies fly in the UK (April to September).

ESTABLISHING A TRANSECT

- Transects should take about 45-60 minutes to walk and be about 1-2km in length.
- Identify a route (transect walk) that provides a fair representation of the habitats and other features present at your site. Some thought should be given to how the site might change over time, and the route designed to include areas that are likely to become more suitable for butterflies in future (e.g. through site management).
- This transect is 'fixed', in other words the same route should be followed each year, and the route should be easily re-locatable.
- Split the transect route into sections (5-15) which, ideally, will be of equal length with each section representing a change in habitat or management type.
- The habitat type of each section should be described in detail on a F1 site details form (available from Butterfly Conservation - BC) and where possible classified with reference to the standardised Eunis biotopes project using guidance note G4 (also available from BC).
- Draw the route of the transect walk in black ink on a 1:10 000 or 1:12 500 photocopy of an OS map, and clearly mark the different sections (see example map in guidance note G3). Add habitat details if possible, and produce annual maps showing management change by section as necessary.

RECORDING BASICS AND WHEN TO RECORD

- Recording takes place once a week from April 1st to the end of September. In early springs or 'Indian summers' you may also want to record in late March or early October.
- Week 1 runs from 1st - 7th April, week 2 from 8th – 14th April, and so on, regardless of the day of week.
- Use a separate F2 weekly recording form for each of these 26 recording weeks.
- If you miss a week out, keep going and don't worry! - It is possible to estimate at a later date the numbers seen for the missing week.
- Transect counts should ideally be made between 10:45 and 15:45 hours. Between 10:00 and 17:00 hours is usually allowable, though butterfly activity may drop off rapidly during the late afternoon so later times should be avoided.
- Transect walks should only be carried out in warm (13 °C or more) and at least bright weather. The minimum criteria are 13-17°C with at least 60% sunshine, or over 17°C and not raining.

HOW TO RECORD

- Walk the transect at a slow, steady pace counting all butterflies seen within a fixed distance - 2.5m either side of the transect line and 5m ahead. In some habitats e.g. along sea cliffs or woodland rides, it is acceptable to record at a width of 5m along one side only of the transect line.
- Always follow exactly the same route each time you make a transect walk.
- Do not stop walking and wait at favoured hotspots to improve your count, as this will bias results.
- Record butterfly numbers and % sunshine in each section as you go along.
- Windspeed should be estimated using the Beaufort scale (0 - no wind, 6 - very strong wind).

Further details about how to record are described in Guidance Note G2, available from Butterfly Conservation (✉ transect@butterfly-conservation.org, ☎ 01929 400209, www.butterfly-conservation.org) and the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme website (www.ukbms.org)