



EUROPEAN BUTTERFLY RECORDING AND MONITORING



Here is some detailed information on butterfly recording and monitoring in Europe, compiled for EBG by Sam Ellis, International Director Butterfly Conservation and Chair Butterfly Conservation Europe.

To conserve butterflies effectively we need good information on species distributions and trends in abundance, but outside parts of western and north-western Europe such data may be sparse.

You can help EBG gather better data from across Europe by either making casual observations, conducting 15-minute counts or walking a butterfly transect.

CASUAL OBSERVATIONS

To submit European butterfly records, you have two options, either send data directly to an existing recording scheme or use one of the international platforms which accept records from anywhere in the world.

National recording schemes

Only around half of European countries have butterfly recording schemes. EBG has developed links with ten such schemes. Downloadable spreadsheets with country-specific species lists and a named EBG contact to whom you can submit your data are available for: [Bulgaria](#), [Cyprus](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Greece](#), [Hungary](#), [Italy](#), [Portugal](#), [Spain](#) and [Sweden](#). **Where these exist, we encourage everyone to use EBG country-specific spreadsheets to submit their European butterfly records.**

International recording platforms

Observation.org and iNaturalist are the two best known international recording platforms. You can enter your data in the field using a smartphone app or back at home through a website portal. Once verified, all data is or will eventually be gathered at the [Global Biodiversity Information Facility](#). If you are worried about privacy or sensitive records, there are settings to control this. You can hide your observations from all other recorders or make them open. However, observations of very rare or highly threatened species are often hidden and can only be viewed by scheme administrators. All such data gathered through these schemes becomes available to researchers, our partners and country recording schemes. [Butterfly Conservation Europe](#) has developed European butterfly recording projects in both [Observation.org](#) and [iNaturalist](#). **For countries without EBG spreadsheets, we encourage everyone to use Observation.org or iNaturalist to submit their European butterfly records.**

Our [Guide to International Recording Platforms](#) provides a comparison of Observation.org and iNaturalist to help you decide which is best for you, as well as simple instructions of how to use each platform.

Historical records

You can also upload 'old' records through the web portals of either international recording platform. However, if you have a large European dataset comprising 100s or 1,000s of observations then it is best to upload these to Observation.org especially if these originate from several countries or for countries with no recording scheme. Our [Guide to Uploading Historical Records to Observation.org](#) explains how to do this using our [Observation.org European Butterfly Recording Form](#) spreadsheet.

If your 'old' observations have previously been submitted to other recording schemes, please do not import them as the scheme verifiers will have to spend time checking them again and duplications may result. Records from different countries can be included in the same file.

Once your observations have been uploaded you can log in to check, edit or add photos to your records. Our [Understanding your Observation.org Records](#) guidance explains what happens to your records after submission, how they are verified and how you can help the verification process.

15-MINUTE COUNTS

Monitoring differs from casual recording in that repeat visits are made to the same site so butterfly abundance can be compared over several years. Most butterfly monitoring is undertaken by transects along fixed routes, so you need to live nearby in order to make weekly visits. However, EBG members can now contribute to butterfly monitoring anywhere in Europe by counting butterflies for a fixed period of time, using the [ButterflyCount](#) smartphone app developed by the [European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme](#) (eBMS).

The app allows you to count butterflies for 15 minutes, pausing the timer to identify a species, take photographs or add comments. As with transects, recording should be restricted to an imaginary box of 5m x 5m x 5m. You can record at a fixed spot, as you walk around a site or follow a fixed route such as a path. Providing your phone's GPS is enabled your route is plotted (alternatively you can make the area surveyed on the map) as is the location of each butterfly you record. This means that 15-minute Count data can contribute both abundance data for monitoring but also distributional data to recording schemes. Completed counts need to be uploaded to the eBMS website where they can be reviewed and edited as necessary.

15-minute Counts are ideal for remote locations (e.g. mountain tops) or for species not easily monitored by transects, but they can be done absolutely anywhere providing weather conditions are suitable for butterflies to be active (i.e. sunny and warm, with no rain and not too windy). For these reasons **we encourage EBG members to consider using the ButterflyCount app when visiting Europe.**

The app can be downloaded for both [android](#) or [apple](#) phones. The eBMS website provides a [Guide to the Butterfly Count App](#), explaining how to set up an eBMS account if you don't already have one, how to use the app in the field as well as how to upload and review your data.

In the UK, please remember if you are participating in [Big Butterfly Count](#) there is a different website and app for that scheme.

BUTTERFLY TRANSECTS

Butterfly transects provide the highest quality of abundance data and have been running in the UK since 1976. Since then, many other European countries have established their own Butterfly Monitoring Schemes (BMS), but there are still gaps and coverage in countries with established schemes can be patchy. For these reasons, **if you live in or spend the summer months in a European country then we encourage EBG members to consider setting up a transect.**

The method is simple, design a transect route of approximately 1 kilometre. Then count the butterflies in an imaginary 5m x 5m box along the route each week of the flight season under good weather conditions. It does not matter if you miss a week or two, an estimate of the numbers can still be made. The [Butterfly Transect Counts: Manual to Monitor Butterflies](#) explains the method in more detail.

If you live in a country with an existing BMS then the [European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme](#) (eBMS) will give you an overview of who to contact. If you live in one of the other European countries without a BMS, you can record your own transect directly on the eBMS website using the [Guide to the Online Transect Input System for Butterfly Monitoring](#). Alternatively, if your transect is registered on the eBMS website, then there is an option to use the [ButterflyCount](#) app to record your transect counts in the field.

Remember if you walk a transect or participate in the Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey in the UK please continue recording your counts through the [UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme](#) website.