

Colourful Diversity: Butterflies in my garden

An attentive driver has long since realised that they need to clean their windshield less often than 20 years ago. During a spin on a sunny summer's day, rarely does a fly, bee or a butterfly hit the windshield. Last year, research undertaken by the Entomological Society Krefeld uncovered the numbers behind this phenomenon: a reduction of more than 76%¹ of the flying insect biomass in the last 27 years.

The recording of insects is a difficult venture due to their diversity and the lack of experts. Therefore, one group of flying insects is often used as an indicator for other species. As butterflies are well studied, they are often used. They are more charismatic than other insects, such as flies, and with only about 80 species in Luxembourg, easier to recognise.

In his childhood, Prof. Dr. Josef Reichholf started to count grassland butterflies in his homeland, Lower Bavaria. After 40 years, the sobering truth is a decline of 73%². The reasons for the loss are homelessness (decline in suitable habitats), hunger (decline of flowering plants) and poisoning (pesticides).

What can I do to help? Insects require nectar and pollen. When I renounce pesticides (including herbicides and fungicides) in my garden, I not only protect pollinators, but also my health. The website of the campaign "Ouni Pestiziden" (www.ounipestiziden.lu) has valuable advice for everyone. Small wilderness corners, in which thistles or nettles can develop, harbour species such as the small tortoiseshell, peacock and the map butterflies. When at least a small part of the grass is not fertilised and mown less frequently, native plants can grow and serve as food plants for the butterflies, such as bird's foot trefoil for the blues.

A better understanding of species and their needs increases the motivation to protect them. I can observe butterflies in their development from caterpillar to butterfly in my natural garden and learn which species like which flower. I can share my knowledge gained and help to increase the data collected in Luxembourg.

With this in mind, the biological station SIAS organises, in collaboration with Bee Together and LIST, the following events (inscription required):

Was	Wann	Wo	Sprache
Butterfly identification Part 1	12 th May	Niederanven	English
Butterfly identification Part 2	14 th July	Weiler-la-Tour	English
Butterfly walk	3 rd August	Aspelt	Luxembourgish

If you have further questions on pollinators and butterflies, contact

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¹ More than 75 percent decline over 27 years in total flying insect biomass in protected areas (Hallmann et al. 2017); <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0185809>

² Das Verschwinden der Schmetterlinge Statusbericht des renommierten Biologen Professor Dr. rer. nat. Josef H. Reichholf (Deutsche Wildtier Stiftung, 2018); <https://www.presseportal.de/pm/37587/3713915>