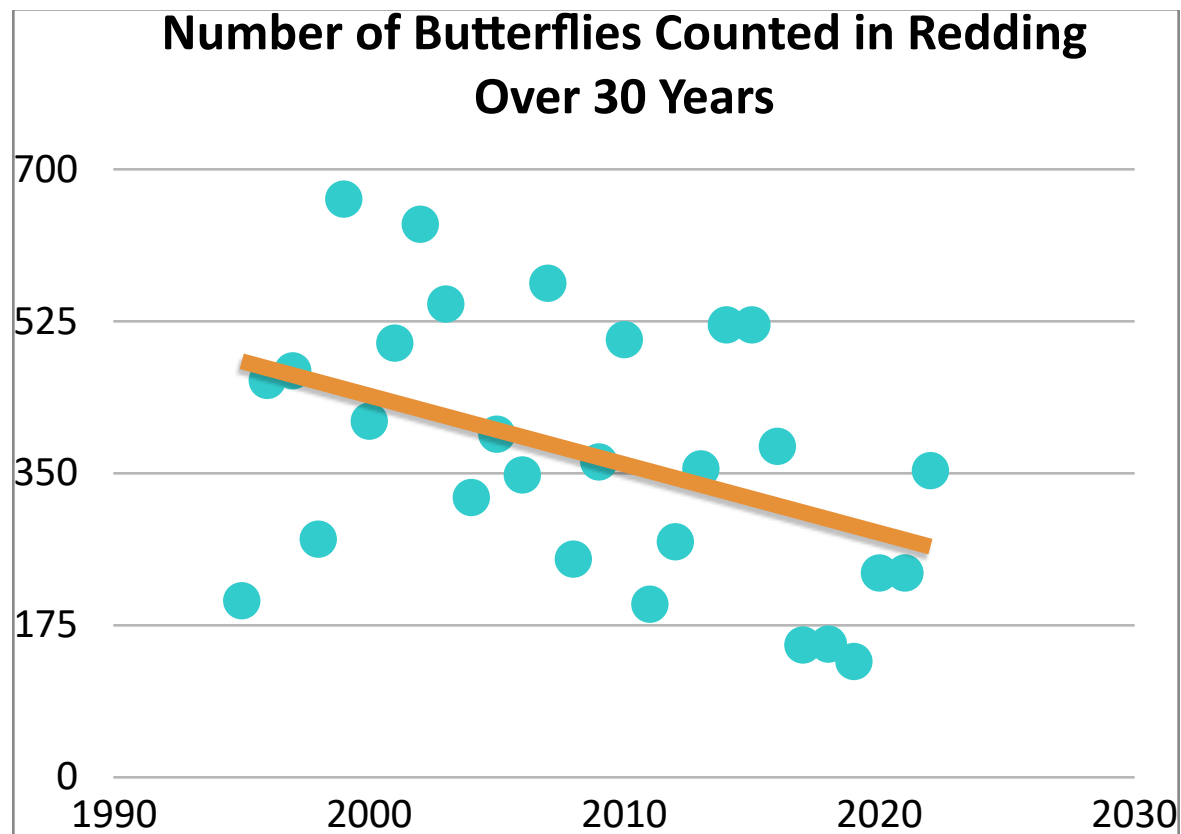


How many butterflies are in our backyards?

By Victor DeMasi, Summer 2024

Annual counting with graph of declines

The trend line (dark straight line) indicates the number of individual butterflies of all species counted over 30 years in Redding. We are definitely seeing fewer butterflies nowadays than we used to see. Like maybe half.



Every year close to the 4th of July, Community Scientists across the country hit the meadows, swamps and forests to count our beautiful butterflies. Sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association (NABA), the July butterfly count has taken place collecting data (published and available for a fee at www.naba.org) for fifty years.

Redding has some of the best remaining Meadows in Fairfield County. Fred Schroeder and I started counting the Aurelian's that live there 30 years ago just for fun. Good excuse to get out. That data we gathered is now an important metric to measure our butterflies. The long trend is that we are counting roughly half the number of butterflies than when we started. Some species like the Northern Cloudywing have said goodbye as well. What started as weekend enjoyment has inadvertently documented a disturbing trend. This is Community Scientist in action! But there are still butterflies 430 in 2024 to be exact with wood nymphs being the biggest number (131) exceeding most other year tallies by two times. Monarchs (10) are still around not in spectacular numbers but still there.

Victor DeMasi is a Community Scientist in Redding Connecticut. He is a curatorial affiliate at the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale. He spends his warm days chasing butterflies and pollinating insects. He helps his spouse Roanna preserve their rich meadow for the Pollinator Pathway.

