

Survey for Danube Clouded Yellow and other Eastern European specialities in Belarus, 6-13 August 2018 8 days



In 2016 a group of mainly Butterfly Conservation, European Butterflies Group members went to Belarus to search out butterflies. As far as we know, this was the first time a group from the UK had visited Belarus specifically for butterflies and it was a great success with close to 70 species being seen including a number of species generally scarce in western Europe such as **Tufted Marbled Skipper, Moorland Clouded Yellow, Cranberry Blue, Geranium Argus, Northern Brown Argus, Bog Fritillary, Cranberry Fritillary, Scarce Fritillary, False Heath Fritillary, Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell, Poplar Admiral, Hungarian Glider, Northern Wall Brown, Woodland Brown and Baltic Grayling.**

Perhaps the most interesting discovery, however, was to visit a site in the south-east of the country where **Danube Clouded Yellow** is still found. *Colias mymidone* is considered to be one of the most critically endangered species in all of Europe and the European Butterflies Group has been very active in safeguarding populations in Romania with considerable success. Our visit to Belarus in 2016 was very late in the flight season and only a few worn individuals were found. The habitat nevertheless looked very suitable with plenty of *Chamaecytisus*, the butterfly's main larval foodplant, present. Dyer's Greenweed *Genista tinctoria* was also abundant and this may also be a secondary foodplant.

Based on the experience of 2016, we have decided to return to Belarus in 2018, but to time our visit to coincide with when the second generation of **Danube Clouded Yellow** is on the wing and to undertake a thorough survey of known locations. It is thought that there may be still 6-7 locations within south-eastern Belarus where this species still occurs and, if this is still the case, then Belarus may well need to be viewed as one of the last remaining strongholds for this species in all of Europe. We hope that, through our work, we can raise the profile of this species with Belarus authorities and help to assist in the protection and conservation of surviving sites.

We shall stay at a hotel in Retsica with its own bar and restaurant where we will take breakfast and an evening meal. All rooms are en-suite and single rooms are available. At the end of the week, we will return to Berezinsky reserve for the last couple of nights. This area was greatly enjoyed by the 2016 participants and offers bogs, lakeside marshes and pine forests, all with a unique variety of sought-after Eastern species of butterflies.

All travel and accommodation arrangements within Belarus are being undertaken by Ecotours who also assisted with our 2016 visit. Cost will vary a little according to the size of the group but I anticipate in the region of £1,195 + £175 S/S. Participants will

need to make their own flight bookings. To confirm your place contact Mike Williams by email wmbutterflies@gmail.com. A group visa will be arranged covering all participants.