EUROPEAN INTERESTS GROUP

Butterfly Conservation
Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats

NEWSLETTER

Issue 1
April 2007

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FIRST NEWSLETTER OF EIG

This is the first newsletter of the newly formed European Interest Group of Butterfly Conservation, which already has 46 members. Contributions to future newsletters are particularly welcome. Articles for next newsletter to be received by 30th September 07.

Two-tailed Pasha (*Charaxes jasius*)
Photo: *Neil Thompson*

WELCOME

"I am delighted to welcome the formation of the European Interests Group and this first newsletter which is packed with interesting and informative articles. The formation of the group is an important step to promote better collaboration with our European partners, and I am pleased to see so many projects starting so soon. There is a huge need for conservation action for butterflies and moths across Europe so I wish all EIG members every success in coming years. I look forward to working with you both within Butterfly Conservation (UK) and Butterfly Conservation Europe"

Dr Martin Warren - Chief Executive of Butterfly Conservation and Chair, Butterfly Conservation Europe

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Dates for your Diary

10-17th July 2007
EIG Field trip to Ecrins National Park France - Contact Simon Spencer

17th November 2007
Warwickshire. EIG AGM at same date and venue as the Butterfly Conservation AGM. Details to follow.

17-19th April 2008
International Symposium Future of Butterflies in Europe II (Wageningen)
http://vlinderstichting.bureaupost.nl/

June 2008
Proposed EIG Field Trip to Peloponese (Greece) - Contact Simon Spencer

The EIG Website

As the EIG communicates exclusively electronically, it was felt important that the EIG had a web presence as soon as possible. The initial EIG website (www.bc-eig.org.uk) therefore went live on 31st January, but the short timescales involved meant that the content was limited.

The long term aim is that the EIG website will be the prime information resource for EIG members and other individuals and organisations who are interested in what we do. But what do people think? The next step in the development of the EIG website is now being planned and the following ideas are being considered:

- A members' login service, allowing access to information not available to the general public.
- A photo ID service – we are looking for volunteers to provide this service, on a per country basis, and we already have a few.
- Downloadable copies of past newsletters, trip reports, etc.
- Country specific pages providing information on local recording schemes, downloadable species lists, etc.
- An introductory page in as many European languages as possible, to try and encourage as many people as possible to contact us.
- And of course a more professional looking website!

But please, tell us what you want the website to provide for you – it's your website. Please email any thoughts, ideas, or whatever you have, to webmaster@bc-eig.org.uk. Thank you.

Thanks

The EIG Committee would like to thank John Reeve of Solihull for doing such an excellent job on the EIG Logo.

Supporting Butterfly Conservation in Europe

Presentation of report to representative from Aggletek National Park. Photo: unknown

One of the key aims of the European Interests Group is to provide opportunities for its members to support the conservation of butterflies and moths through practical volunteering in other European countries. In 2006, members of Butterfly Conservation's West Midlands branch went to Hungary and, in partnership with the Hungarian Lepidopterological Society (HLS), carried out a survey and monitoring project in the Aggtelek and Orseg national parks. The Hungarian based tour operator Ecotours who facilitated a lot of the initial contact with national parks and arranged our transport and accommodation provided organisational support. The project was designed by Safian Szabolcs from the HLS, in association with rangers and other researchers from the two national parks, and reflected their particular needs for specialist knowledge and information about various butterfly species. Knowledge that was not easily accessible within Hungary itself but within the capabilities of many ordinary BC members from the UK. Volunteers spent a fortnight in Hungary in July and August last year and produced two reports, which were presented in each case to the National Park Directorate. (Copies of the reports can be accessed via www.bc-eig.org.uk/trips.htm)

The project was a great success on a number of levels. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, the project was successful in producing very useful data that otherwise would not have been available. Compared to birds and plants, information on butterflies and other insects in many parts of Europe is often incomplete with the result that sometimes exceptional butterfly faunas are undervalued and not given the priority they deserve in habitat management. The data collected last year has already been used to make the case for a new area of land with high butterfly diversity to be included within the Aggtelek national park boundaries and we hope at Orseg will eventually help the national park authorities there realise the high conservation value of the land they manage for Maculinea species in particular. Secondly, some good links were made with Hungarian lepidopterists and with national park staff which have already led to the development of further areas of co-operation. For example, a group of Stourbridge College and Wolverhampton University students from the West Midlands are planning to return to Hungary in July, this time to work primarily in the Bukk Hills national park. As well as undertaking further survey and monitoring work, they will be supporting a local Hungarian NGO in carrying out some practical conservation management tasks. Finally, the project provided a powerful example to the national park of the potential benefits of eco-tourism. The fact that people came all the way from the UK to volunteer was in itself proof that conserving biodiversity could provide economic benefits to the local area. By working with a Hungarian tour operator and by using locally owned accommodation, all the income derived from the visit stayed within the local community. National Park budgets in Hungary are under extreme pressure so our presence could be used to argue the case that biodiversity is worth investing in.

Scarce Large Blue (*Maculinea telejus*)
Photo: *Mike Williams*

This experience, as well as leading directly to the formation of the EIG, has also helped us shape our policy towards the way we might develop our overseas work programme in the future. Not all EIG trips will necessarily have all the same features as the Hungarian project but they are likely to have at least some of the following ingredients:

- *An element of partnership with a locally based organisation or individual within the host country.* This may be another NGO, a National Park, or perhaps a local Lepidopterist who will have a major stake in the project undertaken and ideally will have identified the need for the work to take place. Although in some cases EIG members will be working on their own, we will look for opportunities where possible to work together in the field with local entomologists or nature conservation staff and to maximise sharing of skills and experience.
- *A strong conservation focus.* EIG trips are not butterfly holidays although hopefully participants will have a good time taking part. The aim will be to assist in the achievement of conservation objectives set locally. This could be, for example, to assist in surveying and monitoring for key species, help with the development of a management plan, assist with ecological research, provide training of local rangers in identification or habitat assessment or help with practical management of sites. Participants will be expected to be prepared in some cases to undertake repetitive tasks and spend long hours in the field.
- *Potential for longer term relationship.* We will explore possibilities for taking forward co-operation and joint working into the future. This could potentially in the longer term include twinning arrangements between BC branches in the UK and embryonic BC organisations elsewhere in Europe, invitations to key individuals to visit Britain, organisation of training workshops or support to international conferences. Although the EIG will undertake one-off projects, if these are successful it will look to provide further assistance in future years.
- *Support for local economy and eco-tourism.* Where possible, EIG will make travel and accommodation arrangements in a way that will support host country businesses and employ local people able to provide catering and/or accommodation. The EIG recognise that, with the breakdown of traditional rural economies, important habitats for Lepidoptera will become increasingly reliant on alternative sources of income and that eco-tourism has a part to play in this.

All official EIG projects will need to be endorsed by the Committee but we welcome suggested projects from our members and particularly offers to lead and organise trips. In the first instance if you have an idea contact myself (mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk).

For 2007, we are organising two main projects: Simon's visit to the Ecrins national park in France (see elsewhere for full details) and a recording project in Turkey. This latter project has arisen from a request by an Ankara-based NGO in Turkey who need help to produce a biodiversity plan covering an area of more than 8 million hectares! We have now recruited 10 BC members from the UK to form four groups of volunteers who will undertake the necessary fieldwork throughout the summer over a period of several months. The aim will be to record rare, endemic or threatened butterfly species at a decad level and plot our findings. This is a very exciting initiative and will be the first time that any work of this nature has been undertaken in Turkey. The first group goes out in early May, followed by a second group at the end of June and the final two groups in July and August. A full report on the project will appear in the next issue of this newsletter.

Mike Williams

EIG Trip to Ecrins National Park, France to survey for Balkan Fritillary (*Boloria graeca)* 10-17 July 2007.

Balkan Fritillary (*Boloria graeca)* Photo: *Tristan Lafranchis*

Following a successful trip to the Ecrins National Park last June when I invited friends who were interested in butterflies to join us we are returning in July 2007 to the same valley to undertake a survey for Balkan Fritillary (*Boloria graeca*) and will present our data, as before, to the National Park Authorities. We would like to ask members of EIG to join us. We had a good week in 2006 with 93 species in all including such highlights as Poplar Admiral (*Limenitis populi*) and Alpine Grayling (*Oenis glacialis*).

We stay in a campsite – Camping les Faures near Valjouffrey in a lovely valley that runs from La Mure, south of Grenoble east to a dead end in le Desert deep in the national park. The fact that the road doesn't go anywhere means it is quiet and motorbikes are thankfully scarce. The campsite is cheap, simple but has a bar and evening pizzeria and last year had a fridge. Better still it is set in open country and many species can be found in or around the campsite including Apollos (*Parnassos Apollo*), Large Blue (*Maculinea arion*), Scarce (*Lycaena virgaureae*) and Purple Edged Copper (*Lycaena hippothoe*). Some of the fields are cut for hay in June.

View from Campsite, Valjouffrey Photo: *Anne Spencer*

We take our campervan but camping is the easiest alternative though there is some accommodation in the valley, which friends used last year. This year I have booked in for 10-17th July and I have said I will tell them if we are more than 20 people so you will need to let me know if you are coming. You will need your own transport and despite the pizzeria you need to be able provide your own meals. You don't need to come for the whole week. Last year I arranged beforehand for several of us to get permits to use nets in the National Park, which is almost essential for identifying *Pyrgus* & *Mellicta* species. Working as a group it is easier to learn and gain confidence over identifying difficult species but it does help if you can get a consensus view. You also see more. Contact me if you need a permit and give me the dates you will be there.

We will be looking specifically for Balkan Fritillary *Boloria graeca*, which has been recorded in the national park but not very often. It is found in the western Alps as well as the Balkans. It is a scarce Red Data Book species that occurs at high altitude (1200-2600m) so we will be doing a lot of walking. Where possible we will walk in small groups on well marked tracks and attempt to leave a car at the destination point. Mountain walking kit including emergency equipment is strongly recommended for the high altitude walks but is not essential in the campsite area itself. It is a condition of participation in the trip that people have their own travel insurance. Personal accident and public liability will be covered by BC insurance. If people don't fancy driving all the way it is possible to fly to Grenoble, Lyon or Geneva and pick up a hire car.

Simon and Anne Spencer: Email cerisyi@btinternet.com - Telephone 01691 648339

UBIQUITOUS SWALLOWTAILS

Mount Ventoux, in the south of France, provides one of the hill-climbing stages of the Tour de France. Once a year it is the focus of media attention during the famous cycle race. And every day in summer, a steady stream of cyclists test their stamina by pedalling arduously to its 1,911 metre summit. Almost twice the height of Snowdon, for many months the summit is snow-capped. When the snows melt, its stony surface supports only occasional Alpine plants. Why, therefore, should Mt Ventoux find favour with Swallowtail butterflies?

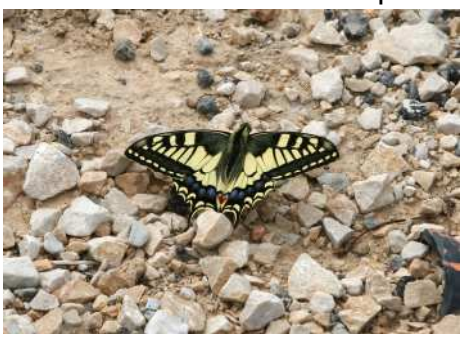
Cyclists at the summit of Mount Ventoux *Photo: David Newland*

Pausing at the summit (in a car) while on holiday in Provence last summer, I was fascinated to see two Swallowtails (*Papilio machaon*) flying round Mt Ventoux's Observatory. They settled periodically on the ground with their wings open, rested for a few seconds, and then flew up and away into the stiff breeze that blows every day, before returning to settle again nearby. Lower down the mountain, it is sheltered and warm. But typically the summit is 10℃ cooler than lower down, and the mountain's name is well chosen (*vent*, French for wind).

In Britain, we are used to finding Swallowtails only on the Norfolk Broads. I have been several times to see them there. On a fine day, they are visible from a long distance, cruising over the flat reed-beds. The sight of a fast-moving Swallowtail rushing towards you, landing on yellow flag iris in the reed-bed, taking nectar as its wings continue to flutter, before racing on to a new nectaring station, is one of the most exciting butterfly sights I know.

But what a difference on Mt Ventoux, where they settle and remain still on stony ground with their wings open. Curiously, this behaviour copies the Wall Brown butterfly, and I was interested to see a Wall and two Painted Lady butterflies behaving in a similar fashion on the top of the mountain. I did not see any attempt by any of them to take nectar, of which there was very little available anyway.

It is one of the acknowledged curiosities of entomology that the British race of Swallowtails (*P. m. britannicus*) behaves differently from the Continental race (*P. m. gorganus*). The most important difference is their preference for different foodplants, but the hill-topping interest of Continental Swallowtails is also well-known. Can anyone explain why Swallowtails (and, for that matter, any butterfly) should seek the highest point of a windswept, inhospitable mountain to bask on cold ground before battling again against a strong wind with apparently the only objective of seeking a similar resting place. Living creatures generally do things for a purpose, but what is the objective here?



Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*) Photo: *David Newland*

It is known that there are slight genetic differences between the different races of Swallowtails. In North America, there are at least five more races of *P. Machaon* and research has shown that their different egg-laying preferences can be correlated with slight chromosome differences between the races. If we knew how and why these genetic differences had occurred, we might be able to understand why British Swallowtails are so unadventurous when

Compared with their Continental cousins. And then we might also learn why British Swallowtails have retreated to a much more restricted habitat than was apparently the case in England in previous centuries, when they are reported to have ranged more widely across the country. In his 1906 book, *Butterflies of the British Isles*, South says that Swallowtails had been seen on the wing in southern England and the Midlands in the preceding 40 years and that they were abundant in Kent and near London in the early 1800s.

Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*) Photo: *David Newland*

Where is it?

Mt Ventoux is in northern Provence, in the south of France, at 44°10'N 5°17'E. The nearest town, about 30 km south-west, is Carpentras, while the major centre of Avignon is about 65 km away, also to the south-west. Mt Ventoux is a prominent, high mountain overlooking the Rhône valley and visible from many miles away. Provence has a wealth of places to stay, suitable for all tastes and budgets. I found helpful *The Rough Guide to French Hotels and Restaurants* (www.roughguides.com) and *Alastair Sawday's Special Places to Stay: French Hotels* (www.specialplacestostay.com) and of course the appropriate Michelin Guides give a huge amount of background information (www.michelintravel.com and www.ViaMichelin.com).

How do you get there?

There are airports at Avignon (65 km), Nimes (120 km), Marseille (140 km) and Montpellier (190 km), with frequent flights from the UK. Regular trains run to Avignon. Whether you go by plane or train, you will need local transport and the easy way is to hire a car. You can join the regular stream of cyclists, but to describe cycling up Mt Ventoux as strenuous is quite definitely an under-statement. Don't, unless you are very fit. Going anywhere generates a carbon debt, but the most practical way is to drive. However it is a long drive from the UK.

What else is there to see?

There are many parking places to stop along the roads to the summit and a lot of species to see on and near Mt Ventoux. For me the most interesting species is the Black-veined White (*Aporia crataegi*). It was included in South's 1906 book, although by then it was very rarely seen in Britain. Winston Churchill tried to support its re-establishment by breeding it in his garden at Chartwell but without success. Sadly, it is of course no longer a British species. You will find Black-veined Whites in plenty on Mt Ventoux. They are unmissable there. And, as well as Swallowtails, you can expect some Scarce Swallowtails (*Iphiclides podalirius)* and Apollos (*Parnassius apollo*) and also you may see the lovely black Great Sooty Satyr (*Satyrus ferula*).

When should I go?

Swallowtails are on the wing from May to September and may have two or three broods; Black-veined Whites fly from May to July in a single brood; Apollos from May to August, usually with one brood. So any of the summer months will be good, but I recommend going in the second half of June if you can. You won't be disappointed!

David Newland
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Butterfly (and other) recording in Cyprus

Members may be interested to learn that the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO) has responded favourably to a request by Eddie John (who organises the Butterfly Recording Scheme for Cyprus) to produce a readily available tourist-style map based on 10 km UTM grids (WGS84). The map, which will greatly assist with recording of wildlife, is now available free-of-charge to Butterfly Conservation EIG members within the UK, from the CTO office in London: Tel: 0207 569 8800. E-mail: informationcto@btconnect.com

CTO Head Office in Nicosia have confirmed that stocks of the new map have also been sent to all CTO offices throughout the world, so overseas members should contact their local CTO office. Copies may also be obtained from CTO offices throughout Cyprus.

When requesting a copy, please ensure you specify that you require the overprinted (gridded) June 2006 version of 'A Visitor's Map of Cyprus', as this is a reprint of a map, which has been in use for many years.

Eddie would be pleased to hear from anyone with records of butterfly sightings from Cyprus. If you would like information prior to a proposed visit, please contact:
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E-mail: eddie@grayling.dircon.co.uk
Website: http://www.grayling.dircon.co.uk/index.html

The Rare Lycaenids of the Peloponnese

Eastern Brown Argus (*Kretania euripylus*
Photo: *Tristan Lafranchis*

The Peloponnese, the large peninsula of southern Greece is actually an island as the Corinth canal, joining the Ionian Sea to the Gulf of Corinth, separates it from the rest of Greece. It has a high diversity for butterflies and along with the Alps and the Pyrenees was identified by Kudrna (2002)[1] as one of the areas of Europe with the highest species diversity. For example no less than 109 species of butterflies have been recorded above 1500 m on Mount Chelmos and sites with more than 80 species are found in many areas in the Peloponnese, both in low valleys and high up in the mountains. It is particularly notable for its Lycaenids (33 or 34 species) and though with the exception of the Taygetos Blue (*Polyommatus menelaos*), these are not endemic being found usually further east in Turkey; several species have their European range mostly confined to the Peloponnese. These include the Chelmos Blue (*Agrodiaetus iphigenia*), the Pontic Blue (*Neolysandra coelestina*) which is also found in Attica, the Fiery Copper (*Lycaena thetis*) and the Odd Spot Blue (*Turanana endymion*). The Greek Mazarine Blue (*Cyaniris semiargus helena*), which has bright orange submarginal lunules on both sides of the hind wing is a Peloponnese endemic if it is, as some authorities suggest, a separate species. The Eastern Brown Argus (*Kretania eurypilus*) another Asiatic species is also found in its most westerly site on Mount Taygetos in the south of the Peloponnese, but also occurs on Samos.

Greek Mazarine Blue (*Cyaniris semiargus helena*)
Photo: Simon Spencer

At high altitude on the mountains of Mount Chelmos and Mount Taygetos there is an unusual habitat of *Acantholimon androsaceum* which grows in dwarf cushions amongst the rocks. Its habit allows it to withstand extreme desiccation and high winds as well as browsing goats. This is the larval food-plant of both Fiery Copper and Odd Spot Blue, which occur together in the few hectares of this habitat found on those mountains. Fiery Copper also occurs on Mount Parnassos and elsewhere on the other side of the Gulf of Corinth in the small areas of *Acantholimon* found on the mountains. These species are two of the few European species vulnerable to collectors as neither the sites nor the species have any real protection and are regularly visited. Mount Chelmos is a Natura 2000 site (GR 2320002) but in Greece as in other countries this does not stop collecting if the species are not protected by law. Neither are Red Data Book[2] species due to their distribution in Turkey and elsewhere. The local and scarce Bavius Blue (*Pseudophilotes bavius*), a red data book species, found also in Turkey, Macedonia and elsewhere is another favourite target of collectors visiting the Peloponnese. It is known from two areas, on the foothills of Mount Menalon and Mount Chelmos. In the Chelmos site, two visits during the flight period in May 2006 to look for it proved unsuccessful and neither butterflies nor eggs could be found. Apparently a German collector frequently stayed there in the previous years to collect all the butterflies and eggs he could find.

Odd-spot Blue (*Turanana endymion)*
Photo: Simon Spencer

Fiery Copper (*Lycaena thetis)*
Photo: Tristan Lafranchis

[1] Kudrna, O. Distribution of European Butterflies, Oedippus 20, 2002
[2] van Swaay, C. & Warren, M.S. (1999). Red Data Book of European butterflies (Rhopalocers). Council of Europe, Strasbourg (Nature and Environment Series No. 99)

The Aroanian mountains of which Mount Chelmos is part only feature in the Prime Butterfly Areas[3] because of the presence of another Lycaenid *Lycaena ottomana* the Grecian Copper a widespread but local species in Greece that also occurs in Turkey and the southern Balkans. It is however a red data book species though not endangered in Greece.

Taygetos Blue
(*Polyommatus menelaos)*
Photo: Tristan Lafranchis

The endemic Taygetos Blue also is not a Red Data Book species as though restricted to Mount Taygetos it is not currently threatened. It is in fact quite common and can be abundant on wet patches where it sucks moisture from mud on hot afternoons. Its larval food-plant *Astralagus taygeteus* is also endemic to the same mountain and like many Lycaenidae the larva is attended by ants. By contrast the Chelmos Blue is difficult to find on Mount Chelmos and feeds as a larva on Sainfoin (*Onobrychis alba*), a plant that is much loved by sheep and goats. Many authors (e.g. Tolman 1997) in the past have commented on the overgrazing of Mount Chelmos by goats and the threat this poses to this species. The Sainfoin uses the protection of the spiny plants such as *Astralagus thracicus ssp. parnassi* to survive and must have coexisted with sheep and goats throughout history. On many Greek mountains grazing pressure has reduced dramatically in the last twenty years as the old shepherds die off. Very few young Greeks wish to be shepherds and although some Greek families employ Albanians shepherds to look after their flocks, even these are now no longer willing to spend all day every day with their flocks for very little money. On Chelmos there are now cattle as well as sheep and goats, a rarity in the past, as in summer there is water and the grazing is good. Cattle don't need to be watched all day long so they are easier and cheaper to manage and for the last few years have been well subsidized. A reduction in grazing or abandonment would bring some hope for the survival of the Chelmos Blue as the Sainfoin would tend to recover but there is little sign of this yet on Mount Chelmos. The dynamic of the grazing resistant plants such as the abundant endemic *Crataegus pycnoloba* and the huge *Abies borisii-regis* firs has consequences for the ecological future of Chelmos. These firs often germinate and develop in the shelter of the *Crataegus* bushes without whose protection they would be destroyed. Reduce the grazing pressure and more firs survive and reach a goat proof size. Pontic Blue *N. coelestina* feeds on a vetch *Vicia tenuifolia* growing within and around these *Crataegus* bushes which are often almost prostrate in form due to grazing or browsing. Open grazed woodland is often very rich in butterflies but when the canopy closes over the butterflies are lost. Forestry operations utilizing the trees are another essential component. The whole ecosystem of extensive summer grazing by transhumant shepherds using a common unfenced resource was until recently almost unchanged since Homeric times. The seasonal pattern of grazing the lower wooded slopes in early summer and above the tree line later on probably also has not changed. The Feta cheese and Greek yoghurt produced in this herb rich environment are rightly recognized by the EU as special but even so its production is not sufficiently profitable to ensure its survival.

Pontic Blue
(*Neolysandra coelestina*)
Photo: Tristan Lanfranchis

These Peloponnese Mountains are very rich in wildlife and are changing rapidly. Not only are they being abandoned by shepherds after thousands of years but they are now a playground for rich Athenians. Without any protected status they are easy

[3] van Swaay, C.A.M. and Warren. M.S. (2003) (Eds). Prime butterfly areas of Europe: Priority sites for conservation. National Reference Centre for Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Fisheries, The Netherlands.

places for Greeks to build villas where they can escape the summer heat. Anyone who has been to Athens in August will know what I mean. They are a few hours drive from the capital. The EU subsidized roads make them even more accessible and on many mountains large numbers of villas are being built. These not only make it more difficult for shepherds to operate but provide alternative employment for local people.

Chelmos Blue *(Agrodiaetus iphigenia*)
Photo: Tristan Lanfranchis

Simon Spencer hopes to lead an EIG group to the Peloponnese in June 2008 with a view to mapping the distribution of Chelmos Blue on Mount Chelmos and preparing a request to the Greek Government that these mountains are given a higher conservation designation and protection. We might also establish a presence on the *Acantholimon* area to discourage collecting and map both the extent of the habitat and the butterflies associated with them. Tristan Lafranchis runs regular tours to the Peloponnese for Greentours.

Simon Spencer and Tristan Lafranchis

Butterflies of Hungary

Hungary, justly famous for the variety of its bird life, also has a very rich and exciting butterfly fauna. This is the first of a series of two articles introducing this diversity and associated threats.

Where East meets West

After the last ice-ages, butterflies from several (zoogeographical) regions dispersed into the Carpathian Basin. The expansion of butterflies into Hungary has been facilitated by a various climate, with both continental, boreal and Mediterranean influences. As a result, a broad spectrum of familiar and (from a British point of view) more unknown species occupied the country.

More recently, we have witnessed expansive behaviour of three exciting Hungarian butterflies. Rather then just summing up Hungarian species we would like to report these intriguing phenomena. It concerns two true oriental and a Mediterranean species.

Dispersal of butterflies usually is associated with extreme weather. All over Europe, 2003 was a year with good prevailing conditions for butterflies. In July, both the Pallas's Fritillary (a continental sp.) and the Cardinal (a Mediterranean sp.) were on the move in Hungary, the Pallas's westward and the Cardinal to the North. Both species were observed outside suitable habitat and far from their previous occurrence. Despite a few cold and wet springs in the subsequent years, they have established several populations beyond their original borders.

Pallas' Fritillary (*Argyronome laodice)*
Photo: Rob de Jong

A population of each species settled in a valley in the South-east verges of the Bükk hills in NE Hungary. The valley has a good population of Corncrakes and is being managed in a way that the birds are not disturbed during the breeding season. This management, delaying mowing till late summer, is beneficial for butterflies as well. A survey in this damp stream-valley, on July 31 in 2006, produced an incredible number of 68 butterfly species. Striking was the amount of 16 Fritillaries. There were Dark Green, High Brown, Silver-washed and Marbled Fritillaries. In addition, we observed Camberwell Beauty, Lesser Purple and Purple Emperor, Large Tortoiseshell and Common Glider. Scarce Fritillary, Clouded Apollo, Chequered Skipper and seven other species were observed here earlier in the season. As a result of the stimulating weather conditions in the summer of 2003, the valley is now even enriched by Pallas's and Cardinal.

Another example of what a weather boost can cause is displayed by an invasion of the Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell. In the third week of June 2006 we had a strong warm wind from the North-east. On this wind, incredible numbers of this illustrious butterfly reached Hungary. The authors saw hundreds of animals in the Zemplen hills and several on the dry plains of Hortobagy, a well known paradise among birdwatchers. This continental species was thought to be extinct from Hungary, but recent findings of caterpillars and pupae prove that there is reproduction here.

Threats

Unfortunately, expansion of such exciting butterflies is mirrored by the decline of others. The strongest threat concerns abandonment of traditional pastures, hayfields and forest-steppe.

Forest-steppes once were home to the Danube Clouded Yellow (Colias myrmidone), a species which is on the verge of extinction, not just in Hungary but globally. Mainly because of cessation of coppice management and forest pasture, it is an extreme rarity now. Repeated searches in historical localities in West-Hungary have proved nothing but its absence during the last years.

Problems in hayfields can be illustrated by declining numbers of several other European protégées. Dusky and Scarce Large Blues, Marsh Fritillaries and Large Coppers are not rare yet, because of the commonness of the habitat, but traditional management disappeared from most of the localities.

Some rare Hungarian species inhabit dry meadows. The Anomalous Blue and Osiris Blue are species that originate from the Balkans. They need large populations of the hostplant: Sanfoin, which occurs on dry, unproductive sites. Afforestation and cessation of grazing are the most important threats.

Opportunities

There is a growing interest in Hungary and neighbouring countries as a destination for butterfly holidays. The decline of diversity in the West pushes eco tourists to the East. This is a sad but also a hopeful development, because eco-tourism can be an eye-opener for local authorities to develop an infrastructure for eco-tourists and maintain the local natural values.

Eco-volunteer projects could be another tool to emphasize the local natural values and a very stimulating form of co-operation between East and West. An article in the recent issue of “Butterfly” reported the project performed by a British group in two of the mentioned habitat types, which are under severe threats.

Nevertheless, regarding the political and economical conditions and the recent adoption in the EU with its tendency towards (intensive) cultivation of ‘waste’ land, there is a rapidly growing danger for the destruction of butterfly habitats in Hungary. In summary, we emphasize the greater then ever necessity for a European minded approach of Butterfly Conservation. Not only in a biogeographical sense the West meets East in Hungary, but we hope that also in terms of butterfly conservation the West and East will share the same niche.

Rob de Jong and Safian Szabolcs

A tendency to Pessimism: The Probable extinction of Danube Clouded Yellow from Hungary and Central Europe in the near future

One of the last Danube Clouded Yellows (Colias myrmidone) in Bavaria, Germany. Photo: Mario Maier

The Danube Clouded Yellow – *Colias myrmidone* is one of the most endangered butterflies in Europe. The Red Data Book of European Butterflies[4] treats it as SPEC1, as the distribution of the species is concentrated in Europe (although it is not certain whether the Asian population belongs to a distinct subspecies). It recently has become extinct in some countries in Western Europe, and is in strong decline within its entire range, except some populations in Romania. The status in Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and the European part of Russia is unknown.

It was once common and relatively widespread in all Central Europe and just penetrated Western Europe along the River Danube (hence the name). It inhabited large warm grasslands, forest-steppes, open meadows on calceorous hillsides and sand-dunes where both the foodplants of the caterpillars (several Broom species – *Cytisus* spp.) and also flowery meadows, were present.

The imago, like other Clouded Yellows, requires large areas, as both males and females can fly several kilometres at a furious speed without stopping for nectaring or to rest on the low vegetation. The egglaying behaviour also requires dense patches of foodplant, within the flying range of the females, and they have a special preference for tall, sun exposed flowering shoots, as have the caterpillars.

Danube Clouded Yellow was once common on the huge Sand-dunes of the Great Hungarian Plain. This forest-steppe mosaic habitat complex was once ideal for several very rare butterflies such as False Ringlet – *Coenonympha oedippus*, which inhabited the wet meadow system between the dunes and the flood-plain forests near the Danube. Alcon Blue – *Maculinea alcon* and Scarce Large Blue – *Maculinea telejus* are among the species, which have survived the habitat reduction caused by the drainage and intensive agriculture. However there are other examples where the butterflies were not so lucky. Nathaniel Charles Rothschild once studied the ecology of Esper's Marbled White – *Melanargia russae* in the same habitat complex, but the species became extinct long ago in Hungary since its original habitats, the oligotrophic grasslands and clearings in the Peszér Forest have been drained dry and afforested with False Acacia – *Robinia pseudoacacia* or turned into arable crops. Something similar has happened to the habitats of Danube Clouded Yellow. Large open areas can still be found where some would expect the presence of this beautiful butterfly, but if you try to find the food plant, very few can be found on the sand-dunes or the forest edges. The livestock, which once swarmed these meadows, have disappeared as traditional agriculture has been replaced by intensive meat and milk production in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The soil structure has changed, succession has taken place, the open sandy grasslands gradually growing higher and the pioneer habitat suitable for *Cytisus* slowly vanishing.

[4] van Swaay, C. & Warren, M.S. (1999). Red Data Book of European butterflies (Rhopalocers). Council of Europe, Strasbourg (Nature and Environment Series No. 99)

The Danube Clouded Yellow became rare in the 1970s in several locations where it was recorded as common earlier, and it probably became extinct from locations where it was not even recorded although probably occurred. For example the habitat of the Bakony Hills (Transdanubia) has transformed over time from forest-steppe landscape into closed forest and the butterfly has disappeared completely. At the end of the 1980s, there only remained a few areas where it was recorded regularly: the Őrség and Vendvidék near the Austrian and Slovenian borders but it became extremely rare by the end of the 1990s.

Typical C.Myrmidone habitat Photo: unknown

The trend seems to be the same in all other Central European countries. It has completely disappeared from southern Germany, where there were once rich populations inhabiting the warm slopes of the hills near Regensburg. None were recorded from Austria in the last 20 years and last record from Slovenia was in 1993. Only very few specimens were recorded in Hungary between 2000-2006 despite the intensive monitoring of the species, and also very few were seen in the White Carpathians in Slovakia and Czech Republic.
The reasons for this decrease is not fully understood, but one thing is clear, the change from traditional land use strengthened the process: firstly abandonment of large pasture fields and meadows helped the vegetation to grow high, and the pioneer-like Broom cannot stand the competition. Secondly after radical decreases in livestock keeping, large areas were no longer needed as source of hay, therefore they have been turned into arable crop fields. This not only destroyed large areas suitable for *C. myrmidone*, but also fragmented the habitat that was left. Thirdly the Central-European populations of Danube Clouded Yellow became completely isolated by large agricultural deserts from the Eastern-European ones. The migration between colonies has become almost impossible, which may have hastened the extinction of local colonies such as those in Bavaria.

An investigation of the present day habitats in Hungary came to the conclusion that *C. myrmidone* cannot survive the changes in the habitat size, structure and loss of food plant together. The recognition of these problems means that all the efforts to protect the butterfly have come too late to save the species in Central Europe. The last inhabited regions in the Őrség and Vendvidék cannot now be restored into their original pasture fields and structure without an international conservation project and huge investment of both work and money. The abundance of *C. myrmidone* is now extremely low, therefore the population needs more individuals to be introduced from another viable population, even if a complete landscape scale habitat restoration could be arranged.

To examine the possibilities of saving Danube Clouded Yellow in Central Europe, a small group of experts was formed in early September 2006. They call themselves “Myrmidone Friends” and now they’re gathering information about the species from all available sources. They plan to visit different areas where *C. myrmidone* had once occurred and others where they still live happily with the traditional management of the land. One of the richest populations remaining in Europe is situated in Transylvania, Romania, which may be a future source of specimens for re-introduction of the species into Central Europe

“Myrmidone Friends” in action
Slovenian-Hungarian group is trying to find Danube Clouded Yellow in the Goricko National Park in Slovenia and Őrség National Park in Hungary (from the left: Matjaž Jež, Rudi Verovnik, Kristjan Malačič, Attila Mesterházy, Szabolcs Sáfián) Photo: István Szentirmai

Sáfián Szabolcs

Conservation Visit to La Brenne February 2007

Nigel Spring and Kathy Henderson from the Dorset branch of BC led a group of nine volunteers to La Brenne in central France as the first stage in the establishment of an exchange of conservation volunteers between Dorset and several areas in the EU.

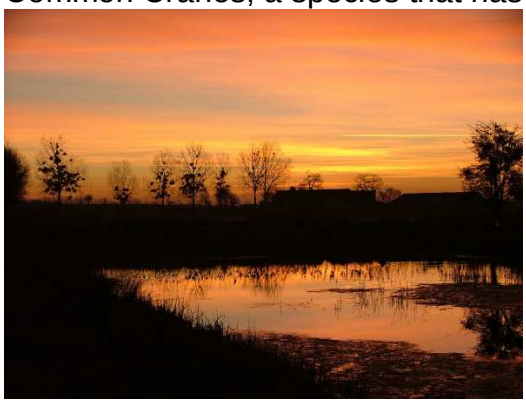
Maison de la Nature - La Cherine reserve
Photo: *Nigel Spring*

It was a huge relief when our group of nine arrived at the centre in La Brenne called La Maison Blanche on the afternoon of February 17th this year. This conservation visit had taken a long time to prepare and had had at least one false start – last year when we had to call it off for a variety of reasons including the outbreak of bird flu in France. We certainly were not sure what to expect at the centre, but one of the staff called Guy was there to welcome us and show us round, we had the place to ourselves, the weather was set fine and the supper was in the fridge!

Beyond the gardens and polytunnels and barns with the bleating Suffolk ewes and their lambs, were two of La Brenne's lakes, surrounded by fields and a large area of reedbed, and everywhere the sounds of coots, ducks, grebes and the animal that we came to name the 'creaking shoe frog' (aka the Parsley Frog – we never saw one but heard its distinctive call from several of the places we visited).

La Brenne is a beautiful area of France about 300 miles south of Caen, renowned for its rich mosaic of over 2000 fishponds, artificially created in the poorly drained soil over the last eight centuries. With such a variety of habitats particularly wet pasture, marsh, reedbed and open water, the area boasts and fabulously rich fauna and flora. Not just Dragonflies, water birds and orchids; there are over 90 species of butterflies in the region (the total was 91, but my Duke of Burgundy photo from 2006 made it 92). These include very threatened species such as Large Copper, Alcon Blue, Woodland Brown and Marsh Fritillary. Only a very small part of the Parc Naturel Regional de La Brenne is fully protected and this includes a reserve called La Chérine, managed in part by Tony Williams, an Englishman, who works for the LPO, La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (the French equivalent of the RSPB). Among his responsibilities he includes the butterfly survey work, but it seems he has only one other transect walker!

The group of nine of us spent a week in La Brenne working on three sites in the area and from every point of view the visit was a huge success. The staff at the sites we helped on were amazingly welcoming and very pleased with what we achieved, we were treated to a drinks party with the reserve director, we were interviewed by the local paper and had our photos on the front page (and page 3!), we were rewarded with a case of wine and the leg of a Wild Boar which we roasted on the last evening there (it was delicious!) and we had the satisfaction of seeing significant changes on the sites we worked on. We cleared a large area of blackthorn on an important Alcon Blue site; we cleared bramble, gorse and tree heather from an area of woodland edge which is due to be grazed to encourage butterflies; and we opened up the scrub on a rich grassland site where Marsh Fritillaries are just hanging on. In spite of the time of year, there was plenty of wildlife to enjoy; including Large Tortoiseshells freshly emerged from hibernation (sadly the Camberwell Beauties did not come out until a week later). We watched a giant flock of well over 100,000 starlings coming in to roost in the reeds just outside our centre every evening, we saw Tree Frogs, Agile Frogs and heard Natterjack Toads churring and Marsh frogs laughing. There were Marsh and Hen Harriers, Black, Lesser Spotted and Greyheaded Woodpeckers, Barn Owls at the Centre, and, perhaps the greatest treat of all, a flock of 350 Common Cranes, a species that has recently started wintering in the area.



Evening View - Maison Blanche
Photo: *Nigel Spring*

One fine evening as the sun was setting, we watched them arrive in the marsh where they roost for the night, ever-changing pencil lines of graceful birds approaching in almost slow motion, calling as they flew, that wonderfully evocative trumpeting sound.

We are very grateful to Tony and the other staff in La Brenne for making us feel so welcome. The visit was a very rich experience for everyone involved especially the nine in the group and will we hope set a memorable precedent for many such visits in the future not only to La Brenne but also other areas in the EU and lead to return visits by EU volunteers to our sites. One of Tony Williams' last remarks to us proves the success of the venture: "will you come back in October please, we will try to get some local volunteers to join in too?"

Tony Williams would be very grateful if anyone would like to visit La Brenne this summer to help him with the butterfly survey work. There may be funding available towards rail travel and accommodation so please let me know if you would be interested! We hope to take groups of conservation volunteers to work in the Aggtelek National Park in northern Hungary in September and to La Brenne again in October.

Nigel Spring

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Butterfly Recording Schemes in Europe.

One of the aims of EIG is to promote butterfly recording in Europe and to put EIG members and others in touch with local recording schemes so that the records of British holidaymakers can be used by local atlas projects in countries that are visited.

I have been doing some research on this using the local contacts of BCE and others and the results are very patchy. More importantly the countries where information is eagerly sought are rarely the places where UK based travellers visit and although we might be minded to send records to de Vlinderstichting (Dutch Butterfly Conservation) if travelling in the Netherlands few of us visit Finland where they are very keen to receive our records. (See below). France where many of us go has no real national recording scheme for casual records though regional schemes are springing up and a national monitoring scheme (several visits per year) has been started. Italy or Greece have no scheme though there is now an organisation in Spain. The list of contacts below is very much provisional. These are people who would like butterfly records emailed to them. Date, location, map reference (that's a minefield in itself) and species etc.

This subject is best dealt with in the proposed country pages of the bc-eig.org.uk website. I suspect that we will soon be adding links to online recording systems but most country specific ones, like the Dutch one, will not be in English. I am suspicious of online recording systems (garbage in garbage out) as Butterfly identification in the field is difficult and an experienced moderator is required who can check the queries. Technology is on our side as digital photography makes it easy to confirm unlikely or unusual records, GPS will give us an Easting and a Northing and Altitude ANYWHERE and excel spreadsheets give you a quick and easy way of recording your data. Always use Latin names if sending Data to anyone. They are worth learning because they are universal. We hope to make country lists available from the website.

EIG is keen to promote country/regional based recording and mapping. We would like to encourage these to be set up by individuals and groups throughout Europe. We have no plans for a Europe wide recording system be it Internet based or in any other computer based system. However, such a scheme is actively being discussed by Butterfly Conservation Europe in collaboration with its Network Partners.

Simon Spencer

EUROPE CONTACT ADDRESSES			
Country	**Contact**	**Email Address**	**Website addresses**
Belgium	Dirk Maes	dirk.maes@inbo.be	http://www.inbo.be/content/page.asp?pid=EN_FAU_INS_BUT_start
Cyprus	Eddie John	eddie@grayling.dircon.co.uk	http://www.grayling.dircon.co.uk/index.html
Finland	Kimmo Saarinen	all.env@inst.inet.fi	www.perhostutkijainseura.fi
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