

European Butterflies Group - Chairman's Report

2020 was a difficult year for us all and whilst progress with vaccinations has been astonishingly good, the prospects for overseas travel in 2021 are still unclear. Like many of you I would love to travel again – but obviously safety of ourselves and others is paramount.

Unsurprisingly the pandemic had a significant effect on the European Butterflies Group : our membership and subscription income were relatively unaffected but our activities were severely curtailed. Membership stands at 700 members and although we had hoped to be able to offer overseas membership from April this has had to be postponed due to the impact of the virus on Butterfly Conservation Head Office.

As you may know most BC staff worked from home, despite which several staff members contracted the virus, and BC also had to reduce costs to cope with the pandemic which sadly led to a number of staff redundancies. Early in the pandemic BC asked branches who were holding significant cash balances to consider making donations to Head Office to help the society to cope with the pandemic. At that time the Committee decided not to make a contribution. However more recently in view of the healthy state of our financial position and the significant contribution which Sam Ellis has been making to European (and indeed global) butterfly initiatives the Committee decided to make a donation of £5000 to Butterfly Conservation to help fund his role of International Director. Sam has been involved in a whole variety of tasks including a project on the butterflies of Madeira, supporting the Corfu Butterfly Conservation project, supporting the ABLE project which is encouraging the monitoring of butterflies throughout Europe and he will be busy in the future as there will be new Red Lists for both butterflies and moths in the next year or two. Sam was also planning to join us for the surveys in Greece for *Pseudochazara orestes* (Dil's Grayling) and in Romania for *Colias myrmidone* Danube Clouded Yellow but these are still unfortunately uncertain at the present time. In the past year Sam has also taken on the role of Chair of Butterfly Conservation Europe.

As I said earlier we had to postpone all of our overseas activities in 2020. We were due to visit northern Spain for the third time to survey for *Euchloe bazae* (Spanish Greenish Blacktip), we were due to run training courses for Greek

National Park staff, we had planned surveys for *Pseudochazara orestes* (Dil's Grayling) and further work in Romania on *Colias myrmidone* (Danube Clouded Yellow). All of these activities were postponed in 2020 and sadly some have already been postponed again.

On a more positive note we did offer a research bursary to a Spanish student Juan Pablo Cancela who is studying the butterflies of the Sistema Iberico. Although his fieldwork was interrupted by the pandemic he is hoping to complete the fieldwork this year.

Whilst our overseas work was postponed we did undertake several initiatives from home. Bill Raymond produced the final part of his ID guide to the *Melitaea fritillaries* and then published all sections as a compendium and he is about to publish a guide to the *Pyrgus* skippers which he has produced with the help of Roger Gibbons. For those of us who have puzzled over a grizzled skipper in the field this guide will be invaluable. As with all of Bill's guides this will be available as a free download on the EBG website. Thank you Bill and Roger for all of your hard work.

In 2020 Paul Browning completely revised and updated his book *The Butterflies of the Iberian Peninsula* and generously offered it to EBG as a free download. It has been posted on the website and has been downloaded over 2000 times. If you are interested in Iberian butterflies I recommend that you visit the website and download the book. Thank you once again Paul for your great generosity.

Sam Ellis and I wrote to you all back in November on the subject of recording to give advice on where you could send your butterfly records to greatest effect. At that time we also updated the country butterfly lists on our website to accord with the latest taxonomy and updated the contacts for where you can send your records. So for those countries which have a country page you can download a species list for that country and a recording form. We will be shortly producing a new section on the website to cover butterfly and moth recording. If you are recording butterflies in Europe you can use the Butterfly Count app which was developed as part of the ABLE project although in the UK you should continue to use the IRecord app which is about to be modified and updated.

I do hope that you visit the European Butterflies Group website which contains a wealth of material and is diligently updated by Jude Lock and Mike Haigh to whom we are very grateful for their hard work.

Earlier I mentioned the Corfu Butterfly Conservation which is an initiative to record the island's butterflies started by one of our members Dan Danaher. I am sure that many of you may have visited Corfu and I would encourage you to submit any records you may have to their website. Dan has prepared a short film on their plans and I will include a link to the film in this report which will be posted on our website shortly. His film can be found at (<https://youtu.be/rJeeoTboqE4>).

Once again we have run a very successful photographic competition for our calendar. I would like to record to my thanks to Anne Spencer and to the judges for their efforts. We ordered 160 copies all of which sold very quickly with, as ever, some fantastic photos to lift the spirits when we are unable to travel.

Looking back at 2020 it was a year when many of the projects we had planned were frustrated by the pandemic. We used the time to make some improvements to our website which will I hope bear fruit in the longer term but we will be unable to undertake any further project work until foreign travel is possible once more. Let's keep our fingers crossed that this will be soon.

That ends the report of the Chairman and I will now ask David Moore to present the Treasurer's Report.

In accordance with BC rules one third of Branch Committee members are required to retire by seniority and be eligible for re-election. In addition any members co-opted onto the Committee shall offer themselves for election at the following AGM. Accordingly Roger Gibbons, Bernard Watts and Nigel Peace and Simon Spencer stand down by rotation and all seek re-election. Also David Moore was coopted onto the Committee and seeks election to the Committee. Martin Davies has proposed their election may I have a seconder please ? Thank you Dudley. All those in favour ? Thank you.

We have a little time for questions. If you have a question please raise your hand.

This concludes the business of the AGM – thank you for your attendance. I hope that we can all meet in person soon.