

European Butterflies Group - Chair's Report for AGM 2024

Once again we have had a busy year - our membership remains steady at about 700, we have a healthy bank balance to devote to the conservation of European butterflies and we have run a number of surveys for species which are threatened. I reported in an article in the Newsletter that we were going to concentrate our efforts on species that were identified in the Red List but, as you will hear later this afternoon, that has not yet been finalised. However, we already have a good idea on which species are most threatened – and we have acted accordingly.

Last year I mentioned that we had decided to concentrate our survey efforts on a number of those threatened species Dils' Grayling *Pseudochazara orestes*, Danube Clouded Yellow *Colias myrmidone*, Nevada Grayling *Pseudochazara williamsi*, Southern Hermit *Chazara priouri* and La Palma Grayling *Hipparchia tilosi*. I will give you a brief update on our efforts on each of these species.

Dil's Grayling seems to have eluded our past efforts by our volunteers and so we reached out to a local naturalist and asked him if he would undertake some surveys for us. He agreed to visit in the flight-period but disappointingly was then unfortunately unable to do so. We will need a rethink for 2025.

On Danube Clouded Yellow I reported last year that we had returned to Romania after quite a long absence. We ran 2 trips in 2023 and did the same again this year with trips in May and August. On our May trip we found 61 adults and a few freshly laid eggs. On our August trip we missed peak emergence of the second brood which seemed to have emerged exceptionally early but we consolidated the information about an important area for the species which we had found in 2023 where we also found Alcon Blue *Phengaris alcon* and Scarce Large Blue *P. telejus* and as well as Large Copper. We are hopeful that Professor Laszlo Rakosy who was with us in the field in August will schedule this site as a Natura 2000 site.

In July once again EBG members joined up with colleagues in Spain to look for Nevada Grayling *Pseudochazara williamsi* a species which seems to be in trouble. Whilst the species was found on its well-known sites numbers and locations where it flies seem to have suffered a worrying decline.

We had also been concerned about the plight of Southern Hermit *Chazara prieuri*. David Moore had noticed a worrying decline over the past 7 or 8 years when he had been visiting the Albarracin area. We decided that rather than rely upon volunteers we should see if we could find someone local to make a more concentrated search than volunteers would be able to undertake. We found an MSc student who carried out 143 15-minute counts in June and July. Unfortunately, despite intensive searching only 17 adults were found in only 7 localities. This seems to confirm our fears that the species is suffering a severe decline – although it is hard to pinpoint a reason for the decline. The report will shortly be available on our website.

Next species is La Palma Grayling. Dave Plowman visited La Palma to see what he could find about the status of this species. Fears had been expressed that it had been badly affected by wildfires. Fortunately, this seems not to have been the case and in a short visit Dave managed to see adults in various locations on the island. Many island populations in southern Europe are threatened with increased instances of wildfires but so far La Palma Grayling seems to be surviving.

Away from species surveys there is always other important work to be done. For the past 20 editions of our Newsletter Nigel Peace has been the editor and he has done an amazing job. Nigel has decided that he cannot continue and so we will be looking for someone to fill his shoes. I would like to express my sincere thanks and I am sure the thanks of all members to Nigel for his efforts over the past 10 years. I will shortly write to all members with a short questionnaire about the future of the Newsletter and its content and seeking a new editor.

Once again we have run a very successful photographic competition for our calendar. I would like to record to my thanks to Anne Spencer who does the hard work on this and to the judges for their efforts. Last year we sold 150 calendars and I am hoping to sell similar numbers this year. The standard of photographs is amazing – well done to all who submitted whether or not you made the final cut. Copies of the calendar are available in the interval.

Jude Lock and Mike Haigh do a fantastic job on our website - Jude on content and Mike on the technical aspects. There is an amazing wealth of content and I really recommend that you explore it.

One of the additions to the website in the past year has been Bill Raymond's latest identification guide – Part 1 of the Blues and Arguses – the commoner species. It is a detailed and incredibly useful piece of work – sincere thanks to Bill Raymond.

One change which has been effected this year is that we have increased our profile and reach on social media thanks to the efforts of Jon Dunn. Our Facebook page has had more content than in previous years and I would encourage all members to submit photos or relevant news items to Jon (dunnjon@hotmail.co.uk).

We continue to work closely with Butterfly Conservation Europe. As part of their ABLE project to promote butterfly monitoring they have produced numerous field guides for various parts of Europe - you can find these guides on our website or Butterfly Conservation Europe's website.

Planned or proposed activities for 2025 include further work on our priority species – to remind you they are Danube Clouded Yellow *Colias myrmidone* in Romania, Nevada Grayling *Pseudochazara williamsi* and Southern Hermit *Chazara prieuri* in Spain, hopefully on Dils' Grayling *Pseudochazara orestes* in Greece and probably on an additional species Sardinian Blue *Pseudophilotes barbagiae*.

This concludes the Chair's report and I will pass over to David Moore our Treasurer.