



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

A Code of Practice for Butterfly Recording and Photography in Europe

Introduction

Butterfly Conservation has a code of practice on collecting, breeding and photography, which is focussed on the UK. It was also represented on the joint Committee for the Conservation of British Invertebrates that published a 'Code of Conduct for Collecting Insects and other Invertebrates' in 2002. This code recognises that collecting for scientific purposes is a legitimate scientific activity and that for some groups as it is difficult to determine the live insect. Butterfly Conservation's European Butterflies Group (EBG) does not have a problem with the collection of butterflies for genuine scientific research (Genitalia/DNA/Chromosome studies) but for all but common species there needs to be a very good reason and the appropriate permissions. Nearly all EBG members NEVER collect. In almost all circumstances in Europe butterflies can be identified in the field without collecting. The main exception is the genus *Leptidea* which cannot be handled for the purpose of examining the genitalia without severe risk to the insect. Taking of eggs and larvae from the wild also needs to be for a genuine scientific reason. EBG recognizes that inappropriate collecting occurs, that it may be detrimental to very rare or local species and it should be strongly discouraged. Collecting for profit or just for the sake of collecting is not appropriate.

Members of Butterfly Conservation's European Butterflies Group may wish to adopt a stronger code of conduct that precludes 'collecting' in order to assure National Park and other Authorities in Europe that their activities will not be detrimental to populations of butterflies. Their purpose is to give those authorities sufficient assurances so that they can obtain permission to use nets in order to correctly identify butterfly species. Participants in EBG trips would be expected to sign up to this code. This code of conduct not only regulates activities in the field but also the publication of information on the precise location of rare butterfly species and the dissemination of information to others which in the hands of unscrupulous collectors could damage populations of rare butterflies. There are many parts of Europe where the use of nets is prohibited. Signing up to this protocol does not mean that the individual does not need to comply with local laws. The idea is to facilitate permission to use nets and to allay the suspicions of authorities where nets are being used without permission.

Signatories to the EBG Code of practice will therefore: -

1. Capture and release butterflies in the field unharmed where they are found.
2. Only handle butterflies for the purpose of identification, which may include the examination of the genitalia with a hand lens.
3. Only retain insects in tubes, jars or boxes for the minimum of time ensuring that these are kept cool and in the shade. This may be necessary for the identification to be checked by a colleague. Cooling specimens for photographic purposes must not harm the butterfly, which must be released where it was caught.
4. Use close focus binoculars where capture with a net is not necessary
5. Make minimal impact on the habitat by way of trampling
6. Where collections are retained by individuals who have collected butterflies in the past the individual undertakes not to add to that collection except by receipt of donated collected material that would otherwise be neglected.
7. Submit records to any authority that issues a licence to use nets and endeavour to make the records available to the partners of Butterfly Conservation Europe.
8. Butterfly eggs or larvae should only be removed from the environment for a specific scientific purpose and any subsequent adults that emerge should be released where they were found. For UK visitors to Europe this will mean that eggs and larvae will not be removed from the wild.

Vulnerable and very local species

EBG does not have a problem with nets when butterflies are released where found but for a select list of very local species (List A) nets are not normally used where they occur as they would interfere with the deterrence of collectors. This is particularly important where collecting is known to be a problem and this stricter protocol will apply unless part of a fully authorised scientific study or for participants of an EBG trip at the discretion of the leader.

1. No nets will be used in order that there is no confusion over the complete prohibition of using nets in the colony area **EVEN IF A PERMIT HAS BEEN OBTAINED.**
2. The species will not be handled
3. The exact location of the site will not be published on the internet or in scientific literature (though its occurrence at the 10k square level may be published) except as part of a **CONFIDENTIAL** report for which a non disclosure agreement must be signed for.
4. The exact location of the site will only be passed verbally or by email to signatories of this code of conduct or persons of similar integrity.

List A – Vulnerable and very local species

Borbo borbonica
Euchloe bazae
Turanana taygetica (in Europe)
Lycaena thetis (in Europe)
Polyommatus humedasmae
Polyommatus iphigenia
Polyommatus violetae
Polyommatus orephicus
Pseudophilotes bavius
Agriades zullichi
Cupido carswelli
Boloria improba
Melitaea aetherie
Coenonympha oedippus
Coenonympha hero
Erebia Christi
Pseudochazara amymone
Pseudochazara cingowski
Pseudochazara orestes
Colias myrmidone
Pieris cheiranthi
Euphydryas maturna (in western Europe)
Muschampia cribrellum
Muschampia tessellum

Participants of EBG trips would be expected to adhere to this protocol. We are working on the suggestion is that members of EBG who sign up to this protocol can obtain from EBG an email of recommendation to third parties such as National Parks or BCE partners. Such certification would only be issued to people known to us or on recommendation of a BC branch official. We might also ask Tour operators to sign up to the code of practice.

Simon Spencer