



# **NEWSLETTER**

## **Issue 6**

### **October 2009**

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## **Editorial**

It has been a busy year and there is a lot happening in the world of butterflies. The Butterfly Conservation Europe (BCE) project to produce a new red list of European butterflies using the new IUCN red list criteria is almost finished. We hope to have more about this in the next issue because the process is not yet complete. But you may soon be able to find it by following links from (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/>) but not yet. Some people will find the taxonomic changes a little challenging for example we are all used to the Large Blue as *Maculinea arion* so the genus name *Phengaris* which replaces *Maculinea* will come as a novelty. The criteria are different too so the new list and the old list will be different. As I said in the last newsletter having participated in the process I was struck by the variation in the quality of information available to BCE from different parts of Europe with good quantitative information on trends and changes in distribution in the UK and Holland and a few other places to very limited data and no quantitative data from for example Greece. Even France was in the second league in terms of accurate up to date data, particularly quantitative data and I often joke with my French friends that EIG is thinking of setting up an ex pat English butterfly organisation in France in the hope

that they might form a French NGO to conserve and monitor butterflies. There are so many butterfly enthusiasts from the UK who are fed up both with our weather but also the lack of butterflies and have either moved to France or spend a lot of time in France. We should get them all doing transects.

The EIG has had a long history of involvement with Hungary and this newsletter includes a report of our latest visit to the Orseg National Park this summer plus some exciting details of a new butterfly conservation initiative, which is looking to EIG members for support. Since the visit by Butterfly Conservation members to the Orseg in 2006, when a report was produced drawing attention to the importance of the national park for a range of threatened butterflies including four species of *Maculinea* (<http://www.bc-eig.org.uk/Butterfly%20Conservation%20Europe%20ONP.pdf>) , huge strides forward have been taken with the adoption of Dusky Large Blue as the official logo of the national park (replacing the Capercaillie which had been extinct for 30 years!) and the development of the Hungarian National Heritage Trust, which has already succeeded in acquiring 18 hectares of damp meadow habitat for Scarce and Dusky Large Blue. This progress is largely down to the hard work of Szabolcs Safian and colleagues, but it is good to know that the EIG has also played a small part in this turnaround. The EIG strongly supports the plans for the new Conservation Centre in the Orseg and hopes the appeal for funds described in Peter Davey's article **see pages 15-18** will be successful. Our Vice-chair Mike Williams is planning a fundraising tour to Slovenia next summer in support of the Orseg appeal and taking part in this will be another good way of supporting the excellent work taking place. **See page 6**

The EIG website ( [www.bc-eig.org.uk](http://www.bc-eig.org.uk) ) has now got country pages for Cyprus, Greece, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland and promises for several other countries including Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy and Germany. I would like the list to be much longer by the end of the winter. We are short of contributors for most Scandinavian countries and I am struggling with France because it is so big and so rich in butterflies. If you can fill in a gap let me know. For most countries we only need information on half a dozen good regions or sites with a brief description of the most exciting things to find there and a brief bibliography and links to useful websites.

We will be developing a certificate for signatories to the EIG code of practice this winter. After the experience of some of you in Turkey (See A Butterfly Tour in Turkey on page XX) it could be a useful thing to carry in your back pocket when arrested for using a net. I could do with assistance from a Graphic Designer or similar.

Butterfly Conservation is holding a symposium at Reading University from March 25<sup>th</sup> to March 28<sup>th</sup> next year. Further information and a booking form can be found on [www.butterfly-conservation.org/symposium](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/symposium) . EIG will be hosting an evening reception at the Symposium which will be a good opportunity for us to get together. EIG will also have a stand at the Symposium. EIG will also be contributing to the expenses of Szabolcs Safian (Safi) so that he can attend the conference. Safi has been a good friend of EIG and his dedication and energy in the study of butterflies is an inspiration to many of us.

## **EIG AGM**

In line with previous practice EIG will hold its AGM after the BC AGM in Winchester on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> November. Details should shortly be available on the BC website <http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/>

You will be glad to know that Dudley Cheesman former BC chairman and a huge supporter of EIG has now joined the EIG committee.

Simon Spencer  
[cerisyi@btinternet.com](mailto:cerisyi@btinternet.com)

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# European Butterflies



## 2010 Calendar

## ***EIG 2010 Calendar***

Butterfly Conservation European Interests Group has once again produced a calendar of European Butterflies for 2010 – see butterflies included below. EIG ran a photograph competition this year for photos to be included in the calendar. There were a lot of entries and it was hard to decide from the varied collection of photos which ones to use.

The cost of the calendar is £ 7.50p each or £14 for 2 + pp £1 for either 1 or 2 calendars.

The calendars will be on sale at the BC AGM being held in Winchester on November 21<sup>st</sup> 09 or by post from: Anne Spencer, Rhoslan, Brithdir, Llanfyllin, Powys. SY22 5HB

Email: [apatura.metis@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:apatura.metis@yahoo.co.uk) - Tel: 01691 648339. (**Please make cheques payable to Butterfly Conservation**)

**Orders are being taken prior to printing on 1<sup>st</sup> November 09 – order promptly.**

### ***Butterflies included in the Calendar***



**January**  
Camberwell  
Beauty



**February**  
Large Copper



**March**  
Bosnian Blue



**April**  
Swallowtail



**May**  
Eastern  
Orange Tip



**June**  
Green  
underside  
Blue



**July**  
Safflower  
Skipper



**August**  
Map Butterfly



**September**  
Black-Veined  
White



**October**  
Scarce Large  
Blue



**November**  
Lesser Fiery  
Copper



**December**  
Western  
Marbled  
White

## **2010 EIG Activities**

### **Visit to National History Museum**

EIG Trip to the Natural History Museum in South Kensington to look at the European Butterfly collections. A good chance to really find out how to distinguish some species. Provisional date March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010. Leader Nigel Peace ([liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk)) to whom expressions of interest should be sent. Meet mid morning and have lunch at a local restaurant returning in the afternoon.

### **Switzerland**

We shall be undertaking a recording and monitoring project on the Sudeten Ringlet (*Erebia sudetica*) in the Bernese Alps from 17-24 July. We shall be based at Grindelwald in the Bernese Alps where we will be renting an apartment. The project will run in association with Pro Natura, the leading Swiss NGO for Nature Conservation and will support the work of Peter Somnderegger, Switzerland's leading *Erebia* specialist. Agneta Heuman and Mike Williams will act as co-leaders. Further details from Mike Williams - Email: [mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk)

### **Slovenia**

The Slovenia fundraising tour will be 31 July - 7 Aug splitting our time between the Julian Alps and the karst limestone of Mt. Nanos. We should see a good range of Alpine species including Apollos, many different Fritillaries and *Erebias* including very local species like Lorkovic's Brassy Ringlet, Styrian & Stygian Ringlet. The tour will be run in conjunction with Greeneye Ecotours who have offered to organise the tour on a non-profit basis. The cost of taking part will include a contribution towards the work of the Hungarian Heritage Trust in the Orseg National Park (**see article pages 15-18**). Again further details from Mike Williams ([mike williams \[mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk\]](mailto:mikewilliams@mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk))

### **Greece & Romania**

Simon Spencer is possibly taking a small EIG group to northern Greece (Mt Phalakron) departing on approximately 25<sup>th</sup> July for approximately a week. Expressions of interest to Simon Spencer [cerisyi@btinternet.com](mailto:cerisyi@btinternet.com). A repeat of the trip to Romania is possible in late May. Again contact Simon.

### **Slovakia**

Possible EIG trip to Slovakia to be led by Neil Thompson ([webmaster@bc-eig.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@bc-eig.org.uk)) and facilitated by Ecotours to look for Danube Clouded Yellow (*Colias myrmidone*) late July or early August 2010

## ***EIG Trip to Hungary - A week of Dryads, Heath Fritillaries and Large Chequered Skippers***

Nowhere else have I experienced motivation so great as in the group of British butterfly enthusiasts in the Orseg National Park. No wonder did I – as a Swiss companion – relish the entire week like a firework. Where to start?

### **A guide with fast legs...**

Well first things first: we were lucky to have the excellent guide Safi Szabolcs with us. Impressive is his knowledge, impressive his speed when a somehow special butterfly passes and his success rate in getting the creatures into the net is very very close to 100%. Safi was our guide during the entire week and took us to a multitude of sites within the Orseg National Park. This park, at the very western corner of Hungary, comprises a mosaic of rolling hills, forests of beech, oak and pine, dry and marshy meadows as well as wet hayfields. Agriculture has had a long history here and an important part of the land is still worked rather extensively, making the land rich in butterfly and other species. But what looks so idyllic today is actually threatened; in certain areas, agriculture is becoming increasingly intensive and more and more monocultures of maize are finding their way into the diverse meadows. In other areas, it's the reverse. Here, species diversity is prone to decrease because animal husbandry is showing a downward trend. The result: more and more of the open land is slowly but surely being overgrown by thickets and bushes and the invasive goldenrod (*Solidago gigantea*). What may once have been an open meadow full of Burnet (*Sanguisorba sp.*) today may be a sea of goldenrods and thickets tomorrow ...

Happily enough, we still had the chance to visit several Burnet fields and to find a lot of butterflies. Our base for the butterfly mission was Kercaszomor, nestling in the valley of Kerca Brook and just a bike ride away from the Slovenian border. It is said that from this rural village with its beautiful little orchards and gardens and friendly inhabitants, some people would even invade Slovenia by bike...! True or not, it was from here that we ventured into different habitats of the Orseg National park.

### **Starting off with moths**

How then did a 'normal' exploration and recording day look like? Well, a glorious start to the day was made by the moths. The walls around the light bulb placed outside our accommodation were decorated with all sorts of them, among others Spurge and other hawkmoths and the Japanese Silkmoth which has been introduced to this part of Hungary. Of course, these beauties did not only attract just us but also hungry spiders that quickly found out how to profit from the gathering of moths around the light. One morning, we observed a spider that - with incredible speed - packed up a pitiful moth in a robe of silk. How fast a moth's life can end. After admiration of the moths and their predators, we had a hearty breakfast under thatched roofs and were happy air temperatures still were bearable.

### **Work has to be done**

Soon after, complete with butterfly nets and bottles of water, our white bus would swerve down the gravel road onto the tarmac road out of Kercaszomor and take us to our site of investigation. Safi had selected several sites within the Orseg National Park where either data on butterfly species did not exist or where our job was to add this year's species list to that of earlier years. This data is crucial as it helps to decide how to manage the land so as to maintain and enhance the butterfly diversity in the Orseg, one of if not it's largest treasures. Fortunately enough, the National Park Directorate is strongly interested in adapting the land use management to the needs of the butterflies and in taking over a key role in maintaining a high level of species diversity.

Often we split up into groups to cover different parts of a site. At least one person acted as the 'secretary' and wrote down the observed species while the others started yelling species names through the air or frantically running through the high grass with nets high above the head. What a sight this must be for the non-butterfly enthusiast! By the time we were in the middle of recording, the air was hot if not very hot. Undeniably, sweat started to pour down, and the leaps through the meadows became less impressive and acrobatic. But our enthusiasm never wavered. We carefully searched every single corner of the site, and again and again people delved into the vegetation in search for butterfly larvae or eggs. Indeed, several times, we found larvae of the Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) on Devils bit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), and flower heads of gentians (*Gentiana pneumonanthe* and *G. asclepiadea*) dotted with tiny white eggs of the Alcon blue (*Maculinea alcon*).

### **Special attention for two blues**

Two other blues attracted special attention from us during the week. These were the Scarce Large Blue (*Maculinea teleius*) and its smaller and darker brother, the Dusky Large Blue (*M. nausithous*). Since 2002, a study has been run in the Orseg National Park on these two species. Comparing the frequency of the Scarce Large Blue and the Dusky Large Blue in differently managed plots of agricultural land, the study aims to find out which management of the land is best for the two blues. So besides taking data on species diversity, all of us had the chance to accompany the student Balint on his fieldwork and unravel some of the secrets of these two species. We visited several study sites and helped doing the transects. Of course, it'll be very exciting to see the results of the study and the implementation of blue-friendly land use practices.

Recording work went on into the afternoon, with the only difference that the heat was almost unbearable (at least I thought so). After return to our accommodation, a refreshing shower and maybe a cup of coffee or tea or a glass of beer, the white bus left a last time to bring us to the restaurant where we were happy to try a variety of Hungarian dishes. The daily mission completed, we dropped happily, tired and a little less sweaty into bed.

### **Highlights between highlights**

It was a special day was when we visited a former military site. It comprised of a rather flat area with dry ground and just a few clusters of trees but otherwise open and dry and sunny. Here, the eager eyes of our group amongst others found Turquoise Blue (*Polyommatus dorylas*), Meleager's Blue (*Meleageria daphnis*) and Chalkhill Blue (*Lysandra coridon*). Another highlight between the highlights was the day trip to an area at Nyirad close to Balaton. In this also flat area, the oak trees were impressively large, and in between them, on the dry land, flew Purple-shot Coppers (*Lycaena hippothoe*), Purple Hairstreaks (*Quercusia quercusa*) and others. We also found more Marsh Fritillary larvae here on a white-flowered scabious which we believe was *Scabiosa ochroleuca*. The successful day in the heat of the Balaton area was ended tasting fine white and red wine at a restaurant with a splendid view over the Balaton Lake.

### **The place to visit**

During our week in Hungary, we recorded a total of 79 butterfly species. The many still intact habitats to be found, the friendliness of the locals, the comfort of our accommodation and above all the impressive diversity of butterfly species and the number of individuals to be found makes the Orseg National Park a prime spot for butterfly enthusiast to visit. If you ever have the time and chance to go there, do not hesitate a single second but pack your net and go. By visiting the area, you will help the local tourism and help make people understand how incredibly rich their surroundings still are.

For further information, on the Orseg National Park go to <http://onp.nemzetipark.gov.hu>

**Agneta Heuman**

## ***EIG Trip to Romania 20-28<sup>th</sup> August 2009***

At an ungodly hour of the morning six of us gathered at Luton airport for the Wizzair flight to Cluj Napoca in the Transylvanian part of Romania. As budget airlines go Wizzair was no worse than the others but the whole experience of airport checkins and security is fairly bruising. We were going to see if *Colias myrmidone* the Danube Clouded Yellow could still be found in Romania as it is now extinct in so many countries such as Germany, Austria, Slovenia and probably Hungary. It was not only the butterfly itself we wanted to see but also the habitat and foodplant (*Cytisus* sp.) a type of broom. Our aim was to explore the possibility of EIG working with Romanian and other partners to survey for this butterfly and perhaps reverse its fortunes over a longer period.

Our host Sergiu Mihut met us at the airport and we stopped at a very promising butterfly site where we found *Cytisus* on the way to his village of Badeni. Sergiu did his PhD on Lepidoptera and has his own environmental consultancy business. He has now branched out into ecotourism and added an attractive accommodation block with en suite facilities to the family home. It had not long been finished and though the village's water supply was not always completely reliable it was very comfortable. The dogs, including an enormous but completely sappy Doberman named 'Satan', greeted us on arrival. We returned to the good butterfly site for a proper look the next day and had 25 species and even found butterfly eggs on the *Cytisus*.

Over the week Sergiu took us to several sites over a wide area to search for *Cytisus* and though we caught a number of Clouded Yellows (*Colias* spp.) they were all *C. croceus* the common Clouded Yellow though we did find both of the Pale Clouded Yellows (*C. hyale* and *C. alfajariensis*). Walking from our accommodation we found lots of butterflies in the semi abandoned orchards and pasture at the edge of the village. The Common Glider (*Neptis sappho*) was frequent as was Map Butterfly (*Araschnia levana*) and Weaver's Fritillary (*Boloria dia*). Earlier in the year they get Scarce Fritillary (*Euphydryas maturna*) and Hungarian Glider (*Neptis rivularius*). It was the sheer abundance and diversity of butterflies in this un-wrecked habitat that was most impressive. How long before the peasant farmers that grow a lot of their own produce and drive through the village on horse drawn carts will be replaced by 'modern' 'industrial' maize producers? The EU is not very good at protecting and supporting this 'High Nature Value' farmland that still supports masses of butterflies. We sampled a lot of the local produce including interesting cheeses and excellent local wine as Juliana, Sergiu's wife produced very traditional Romania food for us which was a treat in itself. In all we saw 70 species, which is good for the time of year with Lesser Fiery Copper (*Lycaena thersamon*) and Camberwell Beauty (*Nymphalis antiopa*) perhaps the most memorable. The disappointment was the absence of *Colias myrmidone* and the scarcity of *Cytisus*. Even where we did find it the plant was not abundant. I am exploring the possibility of taking another trip next year perhaps to catch an earlier brood of *myrmidone*. In the meantime Sergiu & Juliana welcome small groups of butterfly enthusiasts and can provide a complete service. Contact Sergiu by email [smihut2000@yahoo.com](mailto:smihut2000@yahoo.com)

**Simon Spencer**

## ***DNA analysis in butterflies – a case for the butterfly enthusiast?***

DNA analyses have become commonplace in many fields – not only in the biological sciences but also in society, e.g. in paternity tests or murder trials.

In systematics and phylogenetics, molecular methods have already been used for several decades. Techniques like allozyme electrophoresis were already invented in the 1950s and are still important. Direct DNA sequencing, however, only became important after the discovery of the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) in 1985 and is now the most widely used molecular method in this field.

Butterflies have been important model systems in such studies which have provided new insights e.g. into their population genetics, hybridization processes in contact zones, and phylogenetic relationships.

Most recently, in 2003, DNA barcoding has been proposed as a new method for the rapid identification, discovery and even delimitation of species, and the resulting barcoding campaign has already amassed 700,000 barcodes of more than 60,000 species for a profile database, more than half of them from the Lepidoptera.

Here, I want to answer some questions you might have about this method and its usefulness for the amateur entomologist.

*What is new about DNA barcoding?* – Mainly the standardized use of a single gene fragment of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), 650 base pairs of cytochrome c oxidase subunit I (COI), which is then compared to sequences in the profile database.

*Why is mitochondrial DNA used instead of nuclear DNA?* – MtDNA has several advantages compared to nuclear DNA. It is easier to sequence, less susceptible to hybridization due to its maternal inheritance pattern without recombination, and it is more variable due to its rapid rate of evolution.

*How accurate is the identification?* – The term “barcode” implies that each species has a singular barcode sequence different from other species like items in a supermarket. Unfortunately this is not the case because there is intraspecific sequence variation between individuals and populations. Usually interspecific sequence variation exceeds intraspecific variation, but there are exceptions e.g. due to hybridization or recent speciation. Background information on the pattern of mtDNA variation in the focal species is therefore very important for accurate identifications. In critical cases barcodes need to be supplemented with other data, e.g. from nuclear sequences.

*Why is DNA barcoding useful?* – Barcoding can help to identify specimens lacking morphological features for identification, e.g. parts of specimens, worn butterflies or cryptic species, it can be used to identify larvae, even those that are parasitized, and it can match males to females which can be especially helpful in poorly known tropical faunas. Barcodes can also be used to identify the origin of migrants or invasive species. Research into the taxonomy of closely related species complexes can also benefit from barcode data. Phylogenetic analyses, however, usually require additional data from other genes, including those from the nuclear genome.

*Is it expensive?* – Sequencing costs are decreasing and automatic procedures can further reduce costs. Currently the costs for a barcode are about €5-10.

*How much material is needed?* – This depends on the size and condition of the specimen. For butterflies a leg or two are usually sufficient, but DNA can also be extracted from a piece of abdomen or thorax. In large species like *Parnassius* DNA has even been successfully extracted from a small wing piece which allowed sampling without harming the individual.

*How do I have to collect and prepare a sample?* – In contrast e.g. to allozyme electrophoresis which requires fresh or frozen samples, DNA can also be extracted from samples placed in absolute ethanol or even dried samples. The usual relaxing of dried butterflies for setting purposes, however, is highly detrimental to the quality of DNA. If such a treatment can not be avoided, some legs should be removed beforehand and placed in vials with 99% ethanol, which have to be labelled with corresponding voucher codes. Otherwise, specimens should be dried quickly and always kept in a dry environment. Good quality of DNA is especially important, if nuclear genes need to be analyzed. The killing method itself does not seem to be very important, although some chemicals like acetic acid might cause problems. Pinching, freezing and the use of cyanide are preferable killing methods.

*How old can the sample be?* – DNA degrades quite rapidly with age. Although some older samples can still yield usable DNA (we have had success with a 50 years old specimen of an extinct butterfly species) the highest success rate is with samples up to 5 years of age. 5-15 years old samples already have a high failure rate and the efforts required to analyze even older samples are usually so high, that this would only be done if more recent material can not be obtained any more (e.g. in case of extinct populations).

*How important is my collection?* – Voucher specimens from your collection might be important for scientific studies, because they are from species or populations which are difficult to collect, are from remote places, or have even become extinct in the meantime. Your specimens will be much more valuable for study, if they contain usable DNA.

*I only have a photographic collection, because I do not want to kill butterflies!* – Well, unfortunately there is no way to extract DNA from photographs – specimens are still needed. For most purposes, a single male per population is sufficient, because barcodes do not usually vary much within a population. You might reconsider collecting single voucher specimens of interesting species or populations. This will never be detrimental to any butterfly population, but may help to their study and therefore also to their conservation.

An example for the use of barcodes is the Bath White complex, which includes the Bath White (*Pontia daplidice*) and the Eastern Bath White (*Pontia edusa*). These two species have been discriminated based on allozyme differences; they do not appear to differ in any morphological character. The distribution of both taxa is still not well known, because it is difficult to acquire frozen material from remote places and because there are no permanent populations in Northwest Europe. DNA analyses have now helped us to better delineate the range of both taxa and to clarify the origin of migrants in Central Europe. The origin of the very irregular British immigrants, however, is still unsolved. Are these immigrants Bath Whites originating from SW Europe, or Eastern Bath Whites coming from the East, or are both routes possible? With your help we might now be able to answer this question. Please, let us know if you have a British specimen in your collection or know somebody who has and would be willing to spare a leg for DNA analysis!

**Dr. Martin Wiemers, Department of Population Ecology, University of Vienna, Rennweg 14, 1030 Wien, Austria, email: [martin.wiemers@univie.ac.at](mailto:martin.wiemers@univie.ac.at)**

### **Editor's note**

This technique can provide very useful information and a much needed tool to help sort out the confused Taxonomy of European Lepidoptera. Note that old specimens from collections are not of much use. I would like to hear member's views on whether the EIG code of practice, which precludes ALL collecting, should make an exception for the collection of single male specimens for the purpose of providing material for DNA barcoding. I think Martin is right in that the impact on the population would be minimal. I know that material is being sought for barcoding of the genus *Hipparchia* (Graylings) a particularly difficult group.

## **2009 The Butterfly Year**

We are introducing a new section into EIG newsletters to record the significant butterfly events from around Europe for the year. The great event for 2009 was the mass migration of Painted Ladies (*Vanessa cardui*)

### **Var, France - Roger Gibbons The butterfly year 2009**

Localised species such as Hermit (*Chazara briseis*), Provence Hairstreak (*Tomares ballus*) and Spanish Purple Hairstreak (*Laeosopis evippus*) have fared better than in recent years. At least one new locality for Twin-spot Fritillary (*Brenthis daphne*) has been found, and a small colony of Ripart's Anomalous Blue (*Agrodiaetus ripartii*) was located.

The butterfly season was not so good toward the latter part of the summer as a result of the total lack of rainfall between mid-May and mid-September.

Being near to the south coast we were able to witness the huge influx of Painted Ladies (*Vanessa cardui*) heading north, one every few seconds for hours on end.

### **Switzerland - Matt Rowlings**

The staggeringly numerous *V. cardui* was the butterfly highlight of 2009. And the migration front was enormously wide. I have reports from the Ukraine of vast numbers travelling north. Personally I timed the time for 100 butterflies to pass through a line about 30m perpendicular to the dominant trajectory of the northward migration. Near Cluj in Romania this was 6 minutes at the end of May and in Switzerland it was 3 minutes in early June. During July there was a small but distinct return migration, but this was roughly 100 butterflies in one hour for a week or so in Switzerland.

### **Channel Islands - Ian Everson**

I live in Jersey (Channel Islands) and would comment in relation to Painted Ladies that they were abundant here from May onwards with a new generation from larva mostly on thistles and nettles following which are here now. Some have given it a try with varying degrees of success on other plants such as runner beans which is an unusual target in my experience.

### **Hungary - Rob de Jong**

As well as Painted Lady there was an enormous influx of Cardinal *Argynnis pandora* into Hungary this summer.

### **Wales UK - Simon Spencer**

There were two memorable events for 2009. Firstly the enormous numbers of Painted Ladies that we saw in several places, in Southern Spain in early April and all through France in late May, and in Wales in June. For Wales in particular we also had very large numbers of Large White (*Pieris brassicae*) this year. This unwelcome pest made quite a mess of the garden cabbages but at least with us they were almost all parasitized by the ichneumon wasp *Apanteles glomeratus*. This reduced the damage.

## Rescuing the *Maculinea* in the Órseg NP, Western Hungary

As well as being a Butterfly Conservation member, I work on reserves with the Cambridge Conservation Volunteers (CCV), and have often been on week-long foreign projects with them in the past. This year 8 CCV members, half of whom are also BC members, found ourselves in western Hungary in the Órseg National Park in August to help the newly-formed Hungarian Natural Heritage Trust (Természeti Örökségünk Alapítvány) with their meadow management in the village of Kercaszomor, a project I found through the EIG. We visited just after a week-long monitoring visit had been in the area, which had confirmed that all four *Maculinea* species were present in the area along with many other butterflies.

We arrived on 2nd August and were met at a local railway station by Safi, our wonderful host for the week and mastermind behind the project. Also representing the Trust, Peter & Stephen Davey and Paul & Suzie Butter from Dorset Butterfly Conservation joined us for the week. Over our evening meal, the week's plan unfolded – first a walk around the area, to look at the meadows and the problems, and what work was needed. As night fell, the moth lamps were lit, and we were treated to the spectacle of over 120 species of macro moth, only some of which were already familiar to us. Peter & Paul have vast experience of eastern European moths, and were very helpful to the interested novices amongst us.

Monday dawned hot & sunny, and during our walk, the challenge became clear. Most of the ancient meadows in the village are abandoned, as no-one keeps any livestock, and those which do get cut are often cut in the first half of August, in the peak of the *Maculinea* flight/breeding season! As there is no use for the hay, it is left on the field as a mulch, adding to the problems of reduced flowers in the future and increased growth of unwanted plants. Meadows which are not cut scrub over or are invaded by Goldenrod (*Solidago* species), which propagates by runners so it rapidly spreads through unmanaged grasslands, replacing the native vegetation. There are further pressures on the meadows from development – tourists like to build holiday homes “in a pretty meadow” which they then turn into a short-mown lawn. Also, some landowners plant Christmas trees, and once land has converted to “forest”, it becomes protected as such and the trees which are cut have to be replaced! There is no statutory protection for ancient meadows, even though **Dusky Large Blue** (*Maculinea nausithous*) is the emblem of the Órseg National Park.

Our walk was not all doom and gloom, as the numbers of butterflies seen was very impressive compared with Cambridgeshire! We were treated to good views of several species, including **Dusky Large Blue**, **Large Copper** (*Lycaena dispar*), **Large Chequered Skipper** (*Heteropterus morpheus*) and pristine **Brown Hairstreaks** (*Thecla betulae*). For many of our group, most of the butterflies were completely new, as none of us had ever visited that part of Europe before.



Louise hard at work brush cutting the goldenrod

After a hearty lunch (we were fed extremely well throughout the week), we started work. Our main project was to cut the newly-purchased meadow, which was a mix of quality grassland, thorny scrub and areas of dense goldenrod. Our brief was to cut everywhere except where Wild Thyme (*Thymus*) or Clustered Broom (the food plant for Danube Clouded Yellow, which is probably extinct in Hungary, but you never know.....) was growing. These patches had to be left, and hand-weeded of any golden rod, whilst the rest was mown and vegetation raked into piles.

The other main job was to connect this meadow to the new one being created on a former arable field, through which we walked everyday from our base. Our meadow was otherwise isolated, behind a belt of trees on an old abandoned track. Our initial walk through was in deep shade. By the end of the week, we had a 15m-wide channel, with scattered trees, and

butterflies were passing between the two. Meadow mowing was more of a challenge – we had two brushcutters running, with other members of the group raking up into heaps. We took turns with each part of the work with plenty of visits to shady spots and the water canisters in between! Apart from one 28-hour thunderstorm, it was either hot, or very hot, especially towards the end of the week when we started the essential task of burning the many heaps of cut material! We finished with a fabulous area where, hopefully the **Large Blue** (*Maculinea arion*) can find the thyme more easily now.



The finished product – one meadow ready for the butterflies



The channel through the woods

Our final work day was in a different area of damp meadows near the river, strongholds for the **Alcon Blue** (*Maculinea alcon*), in addition to **Scarce Large Blue** (*Maculinea telejus*) and **Dusky Large Blue**. The larval food plant of the former, Marsh Gentian, was clinging on, under an advancing wall of Goldenrod – the adjacent meadow, with a bit less Goldenrod, had all visible plants of Gentian covered in a good number of eggs, so with a strong population in the area, our work was urgently needed. *Sanguisorba* (Salad Burnet), the foodplant of the other two *Maculinea*, was doing equally badly in these meadows, but were abundant elsewhere. So, the work was.....Brushcutting again, avoiding ALL gentians – not easy with sweat pouring down ones face inside the visor, but with Safi on hand to warn of impending disasters, we got a large area cleared. The gentian areas had to have any golden rod hand-pulled. We were not able to burn our vegetation this time – we tried leaving it for three hours to dry, but it was too wet. Safi has since burnt up all the cut vegetation and apparently the sanguisorba and gentians are looking marvellous.

Our trip was not all work, however. After three days of work, we had a day off, and we all went off in the village minibus to see other parts of the Örség, visiting outdoor “ethnographical museums” showing older ways of life, and also to visit some other good butterfly areas, some managed by the NP, other by private individuals. This latter part of our trip did, unfortunately, highlight the problems – many of the wonderfully flower-rich butterfly havens in private ownership which Safi hoped to show us had been mown. The only stipulation is that they are not mown before 15th July (the farmers receive EU payments for this, to benefit Corncrakes).....A lot of education is needed in the area.

The CCV and BC Cambridgeshire & Essex (Annette, Veronica, Dennis, Will, David, Vince, Louise & Tony) would like to thank the Hungarian Natural Heritage Trust (Safi, Peter, Paul, Stephen and Suzie) for an enjoyable week, and I know that the Trust are especially grateful for our efforts in the restoration of their meadows. For more information on how you can help the project, please contact Peter Davey (See Page XX) .

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## ***A Very Special Place In Hungary***

Szabolcs Sáfián (University of West Hungary, Hungarian Lepidopterological Society and Butterfly Conservation Society, Ghana), Ágnes Horvath, Paul Butter (Chairman of Dorset Butterfly Conservation) and Peter Davey (Dorset County Moth Recorder) have recently registered a Trust that formalises a Lepidoptera conservation enterprise located at Kercaszomor village in the Kerca valley close to the border of Slovenia and Hungary, and lying within the Órség National Park. Our enterprise, the Hungarian National Heritage Trust, is the first such civil initiative in Europe and a brand new collaboration between British and Hungarian conservationists.



Damp meadow at Kercaszomor

photo by Peter Bruce-Jones (Dorset Moth Group)

Kercaszomor hosts internationally important colonies of Dusky Large Blue (*Maculinea nausithous*) and Scarce Large Blue (*Maculinea teleius*). Both species feed on great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*). A third 'big Blue' species, Alcon Blue (*Maculinea alcon*), occurs too and is associated with marsh gentian (*Gentiana pneumonanthe*) growing in the same damp hay meadow habitat. Drier hay meadow on the southern slopes above the village hosts the Large Blue (*Maculinea arion*) on wild thyme (*Thymus pulegioides*). Kercaszomor is unique in Europe to support all four 'Large Blue' species.



Scarce Large Blue female

photo by Szabolcs Sáfián

There are colonies too of Large Copper (*Lycaena dispar*), Poplar Admiral (*Limenitis populi*), Lesser Purple Emperor (*Apatura ilia*), Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) and Clouded Apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*) in the Kerca valley. Orange Eggar (*Eriogaster catax*) an IUCN red list moth species also breeds in the area, as do Willowherb Hawk (*Proserpinus proserpina*), Clifden Nonpareil (*Catocala fraxini*) and Reddish Buff (*Acosmetia caliginosa*). Good stocks of clustered

broom (*Cytisus supinuss*), the foodplant of the Danube Clouded Yellow (*Colias myrmidone*) a butterfly species that has Critically Endangered status in Central Europe and is in strong decline across its entire range, grows along the drier meadow edges and could provide the basis for a re-introduction program for this species within the Órség National Park.



Clouded Apollo

photo by Peter Bruce-Jones  
(Dorset Moth Group)

The Trust's primary aim is to protect and promote rare and endangered Lepidoptera species via management of unimproved hay meadows that are in the process of converting to scrub and invasive giant goldenrod (*Solidago gigantea*) and Canadian goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) due to the decline in animal husbandry. The first step we took to realise this aim was to acquire seventeen hectares of meadow at Kercaszomor; the land was carefully chosen to maximise future expansion of existing colonies of the four *Maculinea* species. A second step is to manage this land, specifically to remove scrub and *Solidago* to increase stocks of host foodplants. A recent visit by thirteen people from the UK, mostly comprising Cambridge Conservation Volunteers, successfully cleared *Solidago* and scrub from roughly three hectares of hay meadow. As a result of their hard work over a period of a week, the risk from a total loss of habitat has evaporated at these sites.



Before and after ... dry hay meadow scrub/*Solidago*  
clearance



photos by Vince Lea  
(Cambridge CV)



Before and after ... damp hay meadow *Solidago* clearance photos by Paul Butter (Dorset BC)

The main issue the Trust has is one of lack of accommodation at Kercaszomor. The Trust needs to purchase a building in the village to host small working groups and researchers throughout the year. A property that would be fit for purpose is currently on sale for £30,000 but will need a further £60,000 spent on it to convert into suitable accommodation. The building comes with one hectare of potential damp hay meadow, and the Trust would manage this too for *Maculinea* species.

*The Trust is hoping to raise £90,000 for the project. They are offering a week's accommodation for donors who give £5,000 or more in the completed accommodation. They are also hoping to purchase more of the prime habitat in the Kerca Valley to manage for Maculinea species. Until 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012 individuals who are not Hungarian nationals cannot purchase agricultural land directly. Land prices are already beginning to rise in anticipation of that date, for example, EU subsidies will make it attractive for the big agricultural multinationals to move into Hungary and convert large tracts of unimproved and 'fallow' grassland into 'pest-free' arable. So little time remains to protect these disappearing habitats and the natural values hosted by them.*

A list of initiatives, past, present and future, relating to Lepidoptera in the Órség, follow:

1. A survey undertaken in Kercaszomor by West Midlands Butterfly Conservation, Ecotours and the Hungarian Lepidopterological Society in 2006 can be viewed online at: <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/njsweb/ButterflyConservationEuropeONP.pdf>
2. A Lepidoptera tour took place on the first May Bank Holiday weekend in 2009 – see: <http://www.dorsetmothgroup.org.uk/Sub%20pages/Documents/Orseq%20trip%20report.pdf>
3. A Marsh Fritillary transect project was awarded by the Órség National Park to the Trust and was completed by mid-May 2009. A report will be issued to the Park at the end of September 2009.
4. The European Interest Group visited Kercaszomor for a butterfly week in July 2009. The tour was organized in collaboration with Ecotours Ltd.
5. The Cambridge Conservation Volunteers carried out conservation work in early-August 2009 across three hectares of hay meadows that are succumbing to invasive giant goldenrod and scrub. A butterfly flight path was created linking two areas of meadow habitat separated by woodland.
6. A moth research weekend has been advertised and will take place during mid-September 2009, targeting rare moth species in the Órség and Balaton regions.

7. A three-year butterfly distribution mapping project of the Órség National Park is planned in collaboration with the Trust, commencing 2010.

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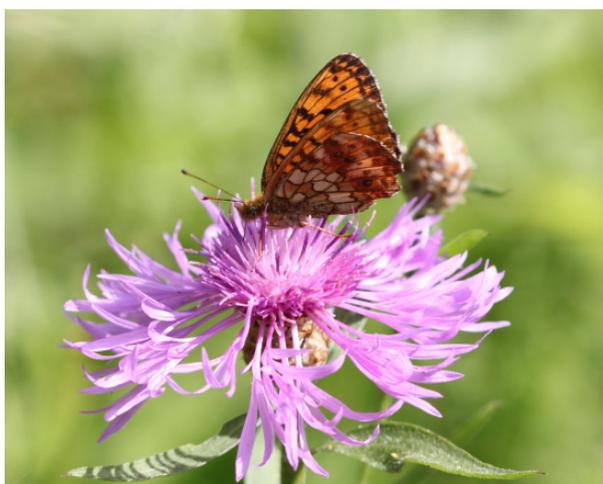
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**Peter Davey**

## Trip to Estonia – July 2009

On 15<sup>th</sup> July, my wife Julia and I flew to Tallinn accompanied by our friends Ian and Isla Woiwod. After a short taxi ride to our hotel in the old town we met up with Ingrid Williams, with whom Ian and I had worked for many years, and who had organised a 12 day trip in Estonia focussing on butterflies, dragonflies, orchids and birds and any other wildlife that crossed our path. Although born in the UK, Ingrid is of Estonian descent and now frequently visits the country, where she has many relatives. We spent a couple of days looking around the city, which is well worth a visit, including a bus ride to explore the Botanic Gardens and adjacent mixed conifer/deciduous wet woodland by the Pirita River. The butterfly fauna was dominated by **Green-veined Whites** (*Pieris napi*), which were abundant throughout the trip. Two notable species seen were **Mazarine Blue** (*Cyaniris semiargus*) and **Map Butterfly** (*Araschnia levana*).



Lesser Marbled Fritillary (*Brenthis ino*) © Wilf Powell

From Tallinn we drove to Lahemaa National Park on the north coast where we stayed for 2 nights in the excellent Merekalda Guest House in Kasmu. Established in 1971, Lahemaa is Estonia's oldest National Park and covers 72,500 ha of land and sea. Much of the land is covered with mixed forest dominated by pine and spruce, including large wet areas of bog or mire. Both **Dark Green** (*Argynnis aglaja*) and **High Brown** (*Argynnis adippe*) **Fritillaries** were seen but by far the most abundant fritillary on the whole trip was the **Lesser Marbled Fritillary** (*Brenthis ino*).

Within the park we visited Viru Bog, which has an extensive board walk. As we lunched amongst the trees we were surrounded by **Silver-studded Blues** (*Plebejus argus*) and amongst them we noticed a few individuals that looked different and these turned out to be the **Cranberry Blue** (*Plebejus optilete*).

From Lahemaa we drove to Matsalu National Park on the east coast, famous for its birdlife. On the way we stopped at two small reserves, Marimetsa and Salma. Notable at the former were **Map Butterfly** (*Araschnia levana*), **Silver-washed Fritillary** (*Argynnis paphia*)



Cranberry Blue (*Plebejus optilete*) © Wilf Powell

**Scarce Copper** (*Lycaena virgaureae*), **Ilex Hairstreak** (*Satyrium ilicis*) and **Heath Fritillary** (*Melictha athalia*), whilst **Silver-studded Blues** were again abundant. At Silma we managed to find **Chestnut Heath** (*Coenonympha glycerion*) and **Woodland Brown** (*Lopinga achine*) before being caught in a torrential downpour. In Matsalu we stayed for 3 nights in the highly-recommended Altmõisa Guest House, on the north side of the bay, whilst we explored the surrounding area, including a visit to the park headquarters at Penijoe. Amongst species added to the trip list were **Wood White** (*Leptidea sinapis*), **Amanda's Blue** (*Ployommatus amandus*), **Mountain Argus**

(*Aricia artaxerxes*), **Swallowtail** (*Papilio machaon*), **Lesser Purple Emperor** (*Apatura ilia*) and a single **Pallas's Fritillary** (*Argyronome laodice*). We also found a fine specimen of the *valesina* form of the **Silver-washed Fritillary**. We rounded off the trip on Saaremaa, a large island (2,700 km<sup>2</sup>) off the west coast, spending 2 nights at the Rütli Spa Hotel in the main town of Kuressaare and 2 nights in a log cabin at an old Soviet fish farm near Pidula. Saaremaa is an excellent wildlife area and we were able to explore only a fraction of it in the time. On the first evening we visited Viidumäe reserve where the Director, an old friend of Ingrid's, introduced us to the area and gave us a short guided walk, during which we came across another **Woodland Brown** and an **Arran Brown** (*Erebia ligea*). Walks in coastal forest just to the west of Kuressaare unearthed **Large Blue** (*Maculinea arion*), **Purple Hairstreak** (*Neozephyrus quercus*), **Grayling** (*Hipparchia semele*) and one of the highlights of the trip, several individuals of the scarce and declining **Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell** (*Nymphalis xanthomelas*)



Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis xanthomelas*) © Wilf Powell



Woodland Brown (*Lopinga achine*) © Wilf Powell

Our stay on Saaremaa also provided views of **Black-veined White** (*Aporia crataegi*), **Purple Emperor** (*Aptura iris*), **White Admiral** (*Limenitis camilla*), **Queen of Spain Fritillary** (*Issoria lathonia*), **Little Blue** (*Cupido minimus*), **Silver-spotted Skipper** (*Hesperia comma*) and **Dusky Meadow Brown** (*Hyponephele lycaon*).

Estonia has an interesting fauna of about 110 butterfly species and we were pleased with our total of 48 seen during the trip, especially as we did not seek out any particular sites for the rarer or more local ones. In addition, we saw an interesting variety of birds, dragonflies, orchids and other wild flowers, which I haven't had space to mention. Estonia is a small, sparsely populated country with a wealth of natural habitats and wildlife; the driving was easy, the food excellent and the people very friendly. It is easy to fly to Tallinn from Stansted and I would thoroughly recommend it as a destination for butterfly enthusiasts and nature lovers in general, not forgetting a lot to experience on the cultural front.

**Wilf Powell**

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## ***A Campervan Trip to Greece***

It might sound ridiculous in these days of often ludicrously cheap airfares to drive to Greece to look at butterflies but it has a lot of advantages if you take a small campervan. The airline baggage allowance is soon taken up by camera equipment and reference books so to take camping kit as well is pushing your luck. That means with the cost of hotels as well as the expense of the hire car the cheap airfare is only part of the equation.

Our little camper has now made three trips to Greece. We have a VW transporter but if you use one of those big mobile homes to go up mountain roads to look for butterflies you will soon find you have problems getting it off the road and the journey down from the UK is slower and more expensive as the motorway tolls are higher. It takes two days to drive from Calais to Ancona but as the ferry to Greece leaves at about 4.00 pm and you need to be there at least 2 hours before sailing it is sensible to take three days. The 17 hour journey leaves you fresh and relaxed on arrival in Greece! Campervans park on the open sided camper deck where you have access to them all the time, you can sleep in the van making the cost of the return journey only 300 euros. If you are lucky you will get a view of the sunny Adriatic and at worst you will be sandwiched between two lorries in a gale. The ferry stops in Igoumenitsa opposite Corfu and then goes onto Patras.

There is an extraordinary diversity of butterflies in the mountains of Greece and many species restricted to very local areas but there is a slight problem – there are almost no campsites. In France almost every village has its ‘camping municipal’ and Italy has a few usually expensive and overcrowded campsites but in Greece the few campsites that exist are coastal or near archaeological sites. You are going to need to wild camp – find a quiet spot preferably with lots of butterflies and stay for a couple of nights. It is technically illegal but no one seems to mind. Rural Greeks are extraordinarily friendly and welcoming to foreigners and the likelihood of the late night knock on the window and the ‘get off my land’ that you would expect in the UK is very small. Only recently transhumant flocks of sheep and goats would go up into the mountains and the shepherds would camp on route overnight. I have yet to understand land tenure in Greece but most of it is unfenced and in the mountains there are lots of places on uncultivated pastures or in the forests where you can easily pitch camp. You might be an object of curiosity but apart from a friendly wave they will leave you alone. Often you can camp in really good butterfly habitat and use the calmer early mornings and evenings when the winds drop and the butterflies are less active for photography or filming.

No wild campsite has everything: shade, water, wood for fuel, butterflies and a view but there are plenty of places to choose from. Beware of the late afternoon thunderstorm that can turn your route back to the tarmac into slippery mud. Water is easy as every village in the mountains has a spring and there are many excellent and well-used springs on the roads between villages. These are often elaborate relicts of a bygone era with shade and carved stone bowls from which ice cold water flows continuously.



Wild Camping on Mt. Askios, Northern Greece

One essential for a successful trip is that your dearly beloved spouse enjoys the experience. If the en suite bucket or solar shower is unthinkable then it is not for you. I am extraordinarily lucky in this respect. However wild camping in the mountains of Greece is not for the faint hearted and apart from the fairly terrifying thunderstorms the risk assessment includes hazards not found in the UK. We saw bear prints on Mount Orvilos and a dead wolf in Bulgaria. Shepherd's dogs can be very aggressive and are more likely to attack you.

Snakes are quite common and we have found scorpions. The less dangerous but still annoying wildlife can make life miserable – mosquitoes, flies and horse flies. There always seems to be one fly that survives the nightly blitz to settle repeatedly on your nose in the early morning.

The butterflies make it all worth it with some mountains having 120 species as well as species found nowhere else. We had Eastern Festoon (*Zerynthia cerisyi*) a couple of times, Freyer's fritillary (*Melitaea arduinna*), Balkan Copper (*Lycaena candens*), Phalakron blue (*Polyommatus andronicus*), Lesser Lattice Brown (*Kirinia climene*) but the sheer variety and abundance was extraordinary. We failed to find Bosnian Blue (*Agriades dardanus*) in Greece but did find it in Bulgaria and we had to leave before some of the graylings were flying. It was a very late and wet season in northern Greece so there is a lot more to see. I will have to go back and may take an EIG trip to Mount Phalakron either in 2010 or 2011.



Eastern Festoon (*Zerynthia cerisyi*)  
©Simon Spencer



Simon & Lazaros camping near Mt. Orvilos  
Northern Greece

The great Greek butterfly expert Lazaros Pamperis joined us for a few very enjoyable days. This man has dedicated his life to studying the butterflies of Greece and has personally collected thousands of records for his forthcoming 'Butterflies of Greece', which will include distribution maps for nearly all species, by walking most of the country without a net and without a car! Imagine doing the millennium atlas on one's own but for 230 species not 57! The Butterflies of Greece by Lazaros Pamperis will be published in October and further detail is available from

[http://www.pamperis.gr/THE\\_BUTTERFLIES\\_OF\\_GREECE/English.html](http://www.pamperis.gr/THE_BUTTERFLIES_OF_GREECE/English.html). We will publish a review in a later edition.

Our trip home was very productive and we filmed Little Fritillary (*Mellicta asteria*), which had eluded me for years in the Alps. We also stopped at the natural history museum in Bolzano to meet Otakar Kudrna and see some of his and the Museum's extensive butterfly collection. You can't do that on Easyjet.

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## Taygetos Blue

On last year's EIG trip to Mount Chelmos, in the Northern Peloponnese, Greece, we saw several interesting species of Blue, including Chelmos (*Agrodiaetus iphigenia*), Ripart's Anomalous (*A. ripartii pelopi*), Odd-spot (*Turanana endymion*), Pontic (*Neolysandra coelestina*), and Zephyr Blues (*Plebejus pylaon*). This year I returned to the Peloponnese at the end of June to look for another speciality, Taygetos Blue (*Polyommatus menelaos*), which is endemic to the Taygetos range in the Southern Peloponnese.

My wife and I stayed in the tourist village of Mystras, from where it is about a half hour drive on metalled roads to Maganiari car park, situated at 980 meters on the east slope of Taygetos (reached via Anogia village). From the car park there is a well-marked but steep footpath, which leads to the summit, known as Profitis Ilias, at 2400 meters. The first 600 meters of the footpath pass through pine woodland and we had a strenuous two hour climb before emerging at a mountain refuge on the tree line at 1600 meters. (Alternatively we could have attempted the dirt road to the refuge but it appeared to require a more robust vehicle than our hire car.) Continuing up the path above the tree line we were rewarded with spectacular views and, once we reached some grassy areas, Taygetos Blues. We only found a few and they were fresh, so it is possible we were there before the peak emergence.

There is good dirt road which runs northwards from Maganiari along the east slope of the Taygetos range towards Mystras, generally at about 1000 meters. We did one section of this road but did not find any Taygetos Blues. We did however find quite a few specimens of another Blue which caused us some confusion until we had found Taygetos Blue and were sure what it looked like. Compared to Taygetos Blue, the males were slightly deeper blue on the upperside and had stronger markings on the underside. We eventually concluded that they were Escher's Blue (*Polyommatus escheri dalmaticus*).



Taygetos Blue (*P. menelaos*)



Taygetos Blue (*P. menelaos*.)



Escher's Blue (*P. escheri dalmaticus*)



Escher's Blue (*P. escheri dalmaticus*)

**Nigel Peace** ([liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk))

## A Butterfly Tour In Turkey

It was very exciting to be part of the first group of butterfly eco-tourists to visit the Kaçkar Mountains in Turkey. The trip was co-led by Mike Williams of the West Midlands branch of Butterfly Conservation and Szabolcs Sáfián of Hungary and organised through TEMA the largest environmental NGO in Turkey. Their representative Egemen Çakir would accompany us as guide and translator during our ten-day trip.

The Kaçkar range is dramatically comprised of granite eroded into fascinating peaks and there are limestone deposits with fossils. Past volcanic activity has created outcrops of extraordinary shapes.

The Çoruh and Barhal rivers are rocky, fast flowing and bursting with energy. Streams edged with flowers in a myriad of colours splash their way over the slopes. Many plants including Saxifrages, Sedums and Bellflowers of varying hues cling to the rocks of the spectacular gorges.

This then was the breathtakingly beautiful backdrop to the purpose of our journeys – the butterflies. Turkey is host to almost 400 species and within the Kaçkar, the Çoruh basin alone contains an incredible 200 species.

The itinerary for our group of nine was to visit sub-alpine grassland, mountain meadows, dry Mediterranean steppe-like grasslands and also forest margins.

Our first three nights were to be spent at Hotel Barcelona in Yusufeli.



**Little Tiger Blue** (*Taracus balkanicus*)  
©Barbara Higginbotham

Heading off expectantly to Bahçeli for our first day in the field, one of the first gems to be revealed was the delightful Little Tiger Blue (*Taracus balkanicus*). Some butterflies like the Ionian Emperor (*Thaleropsis ionia*) chose to be the hunter rather than the hunted. Turkish Fiery Copper (*Lycaena ochimus*), Aedon Blue (*Polyommatus aedon*), Freyer's Fritillary (*Melitaea arduinna*), Yellow-banded Skipper (*Pyrgus sidae*), Loew's Blue (*Plebejus lowei*) and many more followed – a kaleidoscope of butterflies in fact! Out came our field guides, *Butterflies of Turkey* by Ahmet Baytas. Our identification skills were quickly tested as by lunchtime we had recorded an amazing 64 species. Of course Safi was familiar with all the butterflies and the use of nets speeded up the identification process. However this was to cause problems in the future!

Next day on a flowery slope more bright orange fritillaries. "What colour are the veins?" A plethora of Blues, "Hey don't forget the Zephyrs here can have a stud in the anal angle" and "Here's a *Pyrgus* - where's the book? Wow, here's one that's read the book!" Now and then a shout "Colias coming your way" and nets would instinctively be raised.

Moving on to our next stop we were met on the road by Jandarma – Police looking more like soldiers with guns very much in evidence. They insisted on escorting us to the station in Yusufeli where chairs were provided in the garden and we were politely served tea. Egemen was the perfect diplomat dealing with the situation explaining our nets were for identification purposes only – not for collecting. After checking passports and confirming the validity of our permit to be there, the police apologised for keeping us and allowed us to go on our way.

As we arrived at our destination, the farm at Kılıçkaya, it started to rain. The farmers hastily transferred our lunch into a barn and served us a delicious chicken dish with salad. We were beginning to feel the rain inside the barn when raki was issued all round. Optimism was in the air and soon the clouds cleared so we set about finding our target species – the Dusky Large Blue (*Maculinea nausithous*). Orchids and Marsh Helleborines kept some of us busy, then at last the shout “Dusky Large Blue.” Safi advised the farmer how best to conserve the species, and after much hugging all round we returned contentedly to our minibus.

The next day at Taşkiran everyone was pleased to see Nickerl’s Fritillary (*Mellicta aurelia*). Many butterflies including striking Purple-shot Coppers (*Lycaena alciphron*) and Meleager’s Blues (*Meleageria daphnis*) kept us amused until rain stopped play, so we enjoyed our lunch under cover of the minibus. However we were soon out in the field again under a blue sky. Colourful geraniums produced Geranium Argus, pristine Zephyr Blues (*Plebejus pylaon*) and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries (*Boloria euphrosyne*) were abundant.

The following four nights were spent in Barhal or to give it its Turkish name Altıparmak after the Six Fingers mountain. More fabulous scenery, beautiful plants and sites teeming with butterflies. In the Yüksekoba Valley there was great excitement to see the Balkan Clouded Yellow (*Colias caucasica*) (Caucasian Clouded Yellow in the Baytaş field guide) – a bright orange flame dashing through the sky. Eros Blue (*Polyommatus eros*), Hewitson’s Ringlet (*Erebia hewitsonii*), Olive Skipper (*Pyrgus serratulae*) and Eastern Orange Tip (*Anthocharis damone*) were added to the list. Some of us were searching for the Balkan Copper (*Lycaena candens*) but one chose to visit Mike and Safi who were sat chatting quietly by a stream. It was a perfect, pristine specimen, duly potted and admired by all. However it chose not to model for the photographers, and flew off at great speed as soon as it was released.



Apollo (*Parnassus Apollo*)  
©Barbara Higginbotham

At Pişenkaya a *Silene* species covered in clouds of Black-veined Whites lined the road. It also proved to be an irresistible source of nectar for many Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moths (*Hemaris fuciformis*), Lederer’s Heath (*Coenonympha symphita*) was spotted. Walking back to the minibus, admiring the plants on the way we came across Apollos (*Parnassus Apollo*) that were happy to be photographed.

All too soon it was our last drive home alongside the fast flowing Barhal river, passing the colourful flowers adorning the rocks, and the odd cry of ‘Dipper’ keeping us awake! There was just time to stop for a reviving beer and to visit the impressive one thousand year old Georgian church built completely of stone, including the roof.

The following morning, after saying our farewells at the Barhal Pansiyon we headed for Yaylalar – highland settlements in Turkish. It’s an area of traditional farms nestled in a truly spectacularly beautiful landscape. It is also home to the Brown bear. Indeed one of our party was shortly going to be lucky enough to see its furry shape in the distance!

After taking possession of our rooms we drove to Körahmet. It seemed strange to see large numbers of Marsh Fritillaries (*Euphydryas aurinia*) when they are so hard to find in the UK. Pontic Blue (*Neolysandra coelestina*) and Gavarnie Blue (*Agriades pyrenaicus*) were soon picked out amongst the Green-underside (*Glaucopsyche alexis*), Mazarine (*Cyaniris semiargus*), Idas (*Plebejus idas*) and Osiris (*Cupido osiris*) Blues. Unfortunately on seeing our nets some local people feared we might be collectors and we were delayed whilst Egemen dealt with the situation. We were to carry on without our offensive weapons!



Women with Scythes ©Barbara

Further on, spring-water bubbling across the road had attracted scores of butterflies. We were absorbed in identifying them when some local women passed by with their scythes. We were reminded that many of the species we had come to see were surviving there thanks to them and their hard work in traditional farming methods.

We soon had good views of Apollos (*Parnassus apollo*) on the flower-studded slopes. Not to be ignored was the dainty little endemic Bellflower (*Campanula betulifolia*)

The next day we drove to Olgunlar, then set off on foot with the majestic Mt. Kaçkar on the horizon. The pure, unpolluted air was exhilarating as we began our day in the field. Scarlet-headed Rosefinches made an appearance. Some members of the group covered much ground reaching the base-camp for trekkers and

enjoying a cup of çay with them. Others had lunch sat by the river edged with bright orange *Geum coccineum*, *Polygonum bistorta* and *Primula auriculata*. It was a day to appreciate the beautiful scenery. However, mud-puddling blues were hard to resist, as was an Alcon Blue (*Maculinea alcon*) resting on *Sedum pilosum*. A good day was had by all!

The next morning our plan was to head straight back to Yusufeli and the Öğdem plateau - that was until Safi spotted a couple of Yellow-legged Tortoiseshells (*Nymphalis xanthomelas*). They were not to be missed, but soon we were again on our way. Eventually we made a stop and added Turquoise Blue (*Polyommatus dorylas*) to the list. Nearby was a swathe of bright red *Sedum sempervivoides*. Rain set in and we set off for Hotel Barcelona in Yusufeli. Supper was taken by candlelight as a thunderstorm played havoc with the electricity supply.



Alcon Blue (*Maculinea alcon*)  
©Barbara Higginbotham

We had one last day in the field before our evening flight from Erzurum. Mike's highest number of species seen on a tour of a similar duration was 142. Could we match it? There was one to go. Stopping on the Kılıçkaya road, as we stepped out of the minibus, in the blink of an eye Mike netted a Blue that proved to be *Polyommatus merhaba* - hello in English and so called the Hi Blue. This produced a very happy Hi Five as we had managed 142. A Black Stork did a low celebratory fly-past and even the Golden Orioles singing in the valley below seemed pleased for us. More excitement was to follow in the next hour on finding three more new species, thus making this the '145 Tour'!

At Arosyala the friendly people of Kılıçkaya had prepared a sumptuous meal accompanied by copious amounts of raki. It was just as well we had finished counting! Nearby was a stand of Bug Orchids and also Gentians to add to our pleasure. Soon it was time to board the minibus for the drive to Uzundere where we were served with a beautifully presented tasty meal before travelling on to the airport. The conversation focused on the need for a survey on this side of the Kaçkar as it was so obviously rich in flora and fauna. (Safi saw another 7 species in Erzurum over the next two days.) We also commented on the fact that the whole of the Kaçkar range is ripe for butterfly eco-tourism bearing in mind the extraordinary number of species to be seen. We each had our own special stars of this particular trip and we were also extremely pleased with our experience regarding both accommodation and food.

Egemen and his assistant Bülent had looked after us well – nothing was too much trouble. Mert our driver who drove as skillfully in reverse as in forward gear handled the tortuous, sometimes treacherous terrain with aplomb. It was a privilege to spend time with Safi who has phenomenal knowledge, and moreover is thoughtful and patient in imparting it to others.

To sum up, hospitality with sincerity was ubiquitous making it hard to say goodbye – better to say görüşmek üzere – see you soon. Thanks again Mike – well done!

**Barbara Higginbotham**

## ***Peleponessos - 16-29 April 2009.***

This trip was a walking and sightseeing group holiday staying at four locations. The first, Sparti, was a good base for excursions into the foothills of the Taygetos. The high Taygetos are of course a famous butterfly location and I certainly want to visit them another year in July but at this time of year they are still covered in snow. However, the steep sided gorges running from the Sparti plain and rising quickly to over 1,000 metres are, in contrast to much of the rest of Peleponessos today, truly wild places. Here I got my first sighting of **Southern Festoon** (*Zerynthia polyxena*) and just one of the less spectacular but no less interesting **Kreuper's Small White** (*Pieris kreuperi*).

We then stayed at Gytheon but there were no decent habitats there. Moving on southward we visited the large Gibraltar like rock of Monemvasia which was also poor territory although grasslands just to the south of Yefira proved much more interesting. There I saw several bright new **Eastern Baton Blue** (*Pseudophilotes vicrama*). The black borders on the upperside were so serrated that they were sometimes broken giving them a spectacular appearance offset by the white margin.

We then journeyed to the Lower Mani penninsular and walked to the southernmost tip of the mainland. The Lower Mani is a wild grassy area and could well be interesting habitat but it was overcast, showery and blowing hard that day so nothing was flying.



**Aegean Meadow Brown** (*Maniola telmessia*)?  
©John Walford \*\*

The tiny port of Gerolimnas has high cliffs on its western side although there are paths up them and they proved to be the most interesting places of the trip. **Balkan Grayling** (*Hipparchia senthes*) would be difficult to distinguish from various other *Hipparchia* species but for the location and the fact that few fly this early in the season. This was a first for me but the real find here was **Aegean Meadow Brown** (*Maniola telmessia*). I have seen these before in SW Turkey but none of the books report them being seen as far west as the Greek mainland. Saw 3 males and 3 females all in good condition as you might expect this early in the season.

Our last base was Naupleion and the path out along the shore to the north east eventually reaches reasonable habitat after a couple of kilometres. There I saw **Mediterranean Skipper** (*Gegenes nostradamus*) for the first time in ten years.

The last full day of the trip provided one of the best sightings. Along the ancient road from Prosimni to Mykini I saw a butterfly that looked something in between **Orange Tip** (*Anthocharis cardamines*) and **Eastern Orange Tip** (*Anthocharis damone*) that I had seen previously and I realised that it was a **Gruner's Orange Tip** (*Anthocharis gruneri*). It was easier to recognise than I expected. The ground colour is nothing like the pure white of cardamines and the enlarged discal spot upperside and the simpler pattern on the underside hindwing confirmed the i.d.

On the very last day, I got a couple of hours free while the group was visiting the ruins of ancient Korinthos and saw some interesting blues that I had difficulty identifying. I eventually decided they were **Common Blues** (*Polyommatus icarus*) sub species *icarina*.

I saw 39 different species in total during the fortnight which shows that even this early in the season, Peleponessos can be a rewarding trip.

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**Editors Note:** \*\* The determination of *Maniola* species in Greece is very difficult

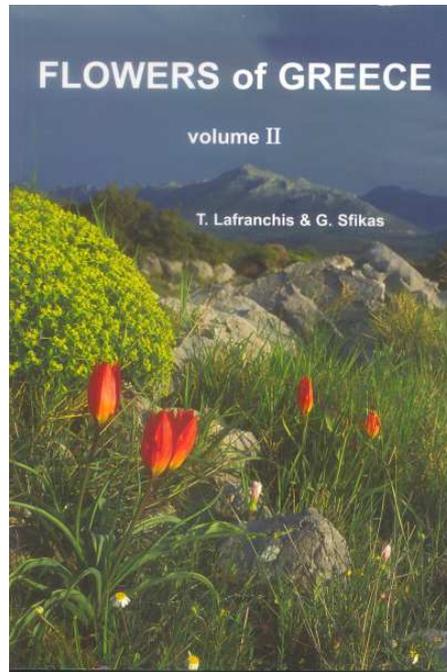
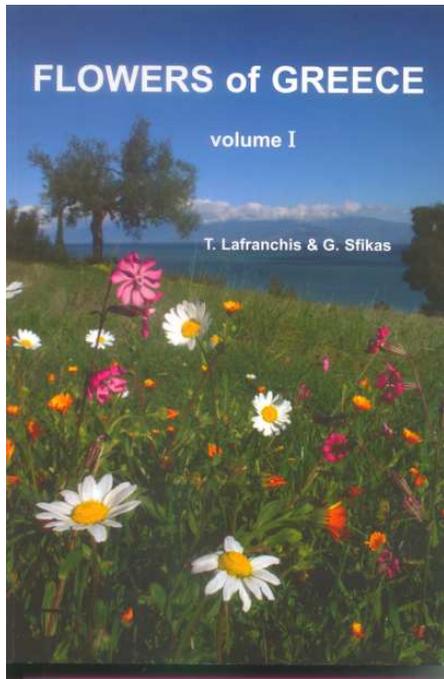
## **Book review**

**Flowers of Greece By Tristan Lafranchis & G. Sfikas**

**ISBN: 978-2-9521620-2-9**

**Cost: £120**

**To order these books or to contact the authors email : [Lafranchis@yahoo.fr](mailto:Lafranchis@yahoo.fr)**



Anyone who uses Tristan's book ' Butterflies of Europe' may well find this 2 volume edition of 'Flowers of Greece' considerably useful when out in the field.

They come with a DVD, which includes more than 13,000 photos.

This is a comprehensive guide to the flowers of Greece – written in conjunction with G. Sfikas.

It is a beautiful book illustrated with many excellent photographs.

**Anne Spencer**

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