

**Butterfly Conservation Europe
Activity report 2019**



Butterfly
CONSERVATION EUROPE

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Photo: Chris van Swaay

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BCE on 31 December 2019

Board: Chris van Swaay (chair), Sam Ellis (secretary), Martin Wiemers (treasurer), Miguel López Munguira, Simona Bonelli and Lars Pettersson.

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Production

Butterfly Conservation Europe, www.bc-europe.eu

P.O. Box 506, NL-6700 AM Wageningen, Netherlands

Preferred citation

Van Swaay, C.A.M., Ellis, S., Wiemers, M., Munguira, M., Pettersson, L.B, Bonelli, S., Collins, S., Wynhoff, I., Settele, J., Maes, D., Verovnik, R., Šašić, M. & Warren, M.S. (2020). Butterfly Conservation Europe. Activity Report 2019. Report VS2020.010, Butterfly Conservation Europe & De Vlinderstichting/Dutch Butterfly Conservation, Wageningen.

February 2019



BCE board and advisors, Brussels (B), March 2020. From left to right: Dirk Maes, Simona Bonelli, Sam Ellis, Sue Collins, Martin Warren, Martin Wiemers, Cristina Sevilleja, Rudi Verovnik, Irma Wynhoff, Miguel Munguira, Martina Šašić, Chris van Swaay. Not on the photo: Lars Pettersson and Josef Settele

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Introduction

By Chris van Swaay, Chair, BC Europe

A warm welcome to our annual report on the activities of BC Europe for 2019.

Our work this year has been dominated by the ABLE project funded under an EU contract (see below). This is by far the largest project that BCE has taken on but we are well supported by our partners at the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Dutch BC, BC (UK), and the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ).

The Board met twice during the year: in Brussels in March and in Laufen in December, ahead of our monitoring meeting (see report below). At the start of the year Paul Kirkland, Martina Šašić and Rudi Verovnik stood down from the Board. We would like to thank them for their valuable work over many years. To replace them we welcomed Simona Bonelli from Turin University, Italy, and Sam Ellis, the new International Director at BC(UK).

We were extremely pleased with how many people attended the meeting at Laufen in December to discuss the ABLE project and how enthusiastic everyone was to take part. We are now creating a truly pan-European butterfly monitoring network that will yield invaluable data in years to come.

I would like to thank all the BCE Board members and advisors for their hard work and support during the year. The next year, 2020 will be a critical one for conserving Lepidoptera and other insects. We look forward to playing our part in meeting this challenge.



Welcome to new Greek partner

We are pleased to welcome a new partner for Greece, the Biodiversity Laboratory at the University of Ioannina. Under the leadership of Vassiliki Kati, their team conducts research on butterflies as well as monitoring of Natura 2000 species. They are also beginning a pilot volunteer monitoring programme on butterflies. We wish them great success in studying the rich butterfly fauna of Greece.



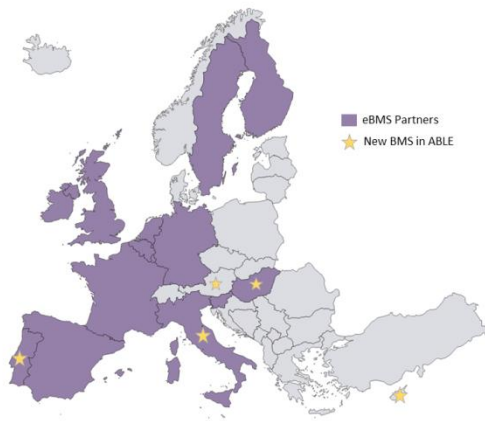
Greece holds fantastic landscapes full of butterflies (upper photo), as well as many species listed on the Habitats Directive, as this Pseudophilotes bavius (bottom).

ABLE project

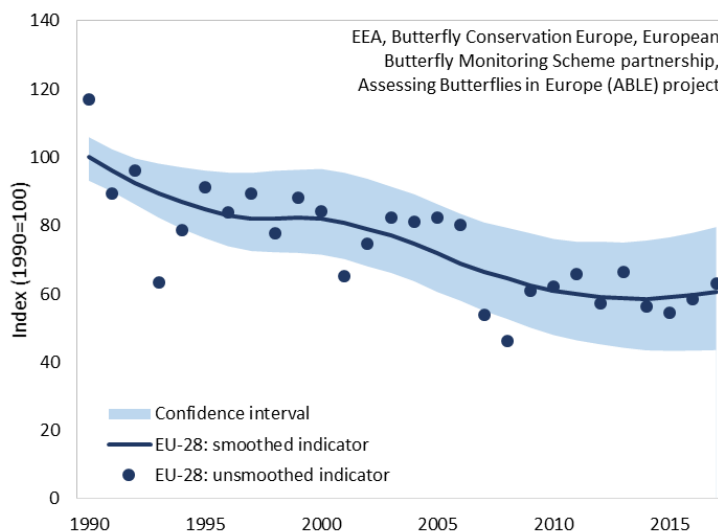
By Martin Warren, Head of Development, and Cristina Sevilleja, Dutch BC.

The ABLE project (Assessing ButterfLies in Europe) started in December 2018 and rapid progress was made during 2019. A short summary of achievements is given below. A full report can be found in our Newsletter which can be read [here](#).

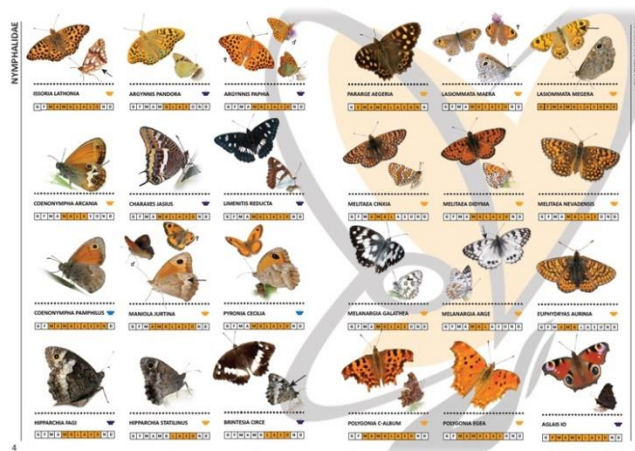
1. Expanded the eBMS with data from 19 countries.
2. Supported the start of new monitoring programmes in several countries including Italy, Portugal, Austria, Cyprus and Hungary.



3. Updated the European Grassland Butterfly Indicator using data from 16 countries over 29 years. It shows that butterfly numbers have declined significantly, by 39%. The full report can be found [here](#).



4. Produced a new transect manual, eBMS leaflet and a series of regional field guides to help identification.



5. Developed a new app to enable easy butterfly monitoring in the field. It will enable recorders to conduct 15 minute counts or transects, as well as casual records. It can be downloaded at app stores under *ButterflyCount*.
6. Ran a successful conference in Laufen, Germany in December attended by 59 people from 29 countries (see report below)
7. Our main priorities for 2020 are
 - continue adding data into the eBMS for more countries
 - produce a suite of policy-relevant indicators for a range of butterfly habitats as well as assessing climate change impacts
 - broaden coverage through encouraging take-up of the mobile phone app and 15 min counts
 - work with partners to develop schemes in new countries
 - continue to provide support and materials for all countries with schemes
 - apply for funds to continue the project beyond 2020 to ensure we have a robust and sustainable system of gathering butterfly monitoring data in the long term.

Please get in contact with Cristina if you want to get involved. She can be contacted at cristina.sevilleja@vlinderstichting.nl

Summary of monitoring meeting held in Laufen 3-5 December 2019

By Martin Warren, Head of Development, BC Europe

This was the first meeting of the partners in the Assessing Butterflies in Europe (ABLE) project. It was held at the beautiful conference centre in Laufen, courtesy of ANL (Bavarian Institute of Landscape and Conservation). Fifty-nine people attend from twenty-nine countries. Copies of the presentations can be found on the ABLE website here (<https://www.vlinderstichting.nl/butterfly-conservation-europe/about-bce/partner-meetings/laufen-2019>).



The meeting was opened by Chris van Swaay, Chair of BCE, who explained that this was an important moment, half way through the ABLE contract with the EU. The aims of the meeting were to update partners on progress; to get feedback on tools available and in development; and to share best practice in developing schemes. Sue Collins then explained the origins of the project and its relevance to developing EU policies to protect the environment and improve the sustainability of agriculture.

Vujadin Kovacevic from DG Environment, then outlined the EU Pollinators Initiative and the relevance of butterfly monitoring to EU policy making. He outlined the Initiative, which was adopted by the EU in June 2018. In addition to direct actions to conserve pollinators, they will be developing a Pollinator Monitoring programme in the next few years. The opening session was completed by a review of progress with ABLE from David Roy and Sue Collins.

The main day of the meeting was concerned with a series of presentations on the European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (eBMS) and the tools being made available to contributing schemes. David Roy explained the eBMS data entry website, and Xavier Mustagh from the Luxembourg BMS described their experience of using it. Karolis Kazlauskis from CEH explained the new mobile app for monitoring butterflies and Reto Schmucki explained how the eBMS database is constructed and its current coverage. As of 2017 it contained data from 7,308 transects in 15 countries, and 56,000 km of transect were walked.

Chris van Swaay then described the new butterfly indicators that are being produced from the eBMS dataset. They include the updated Grassland Indicator but new indicators for all species, as well as

indicators for woodland and wetland habitats, and a climate change indicator. These will be published in 2020. Reto Schmucki then described the potential for an additional set of indicators looking at butterfly phenology across the biogeographical regions of Europe, and using by spatial datasets to assess butterfly density and diversity in different habitats.

After lunch there were two workshop sessions. The first was led by Cristina Sevilleja on progress with developing new monitoring networks. There were inspiring talks from Italy, Portugal, Austria and Hungary. The second workshop was led by David Roy and Emily Dennis on technical aspects of how to analyse monitoring data. The meeting was concluded by a fascinating talk from Alena Klvaňová who described the development of the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme (PECBMS), which had extraordinary parallels with the development of the eBMS. Matthias Dolek and Adam Korozi then described new monitoring systems in Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, and the meeting was concluded by Sue Collins and David Roy who described the next steps for ABLE and the eBMS.

In conclusion it was a very positive meeting with great enthusiasm from participants. Everyone was very keen to get involved to make the eBMS a success. The data that the scheme will generate will be of utmost importance to assess the impact of our rapidly changing world on biodiversity and insects in particular, as well as helping to design more effective conservation programmes.



Lively discussions during the ABLE meeting in Laufen in December 2019.

Influencing European policies

By Sue Collins, European Environmental Policy Advisor, BC Europe

1. One of BCE's top priorities is to advocate better European policies for Lepidoptera and to create a healthier environment. I have continued our policy advocacy in Brussels and EU Member States, on behalf of BCE and in cooperation with the European Habitats Forum (EHF). I continued as Vice Chair of this Forum, which has 23 Members who represent European NGO networks with a mission to save biodiversity and promote the health of ecosystems and their services. Meetings attended have included the EU Coordinating Group on Biodiversity and Nature; an informal meeting of EU Nature Directors during the Presidency of Finland; and a meeting of EHF and with DG Environment. At these meetings we reviewed developments in negotiations on the future Finances of the EU; plans for CAP 2030; the impact assessment on Biodiversity and CAP, being led by IEEP and the review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.
2. In my advocacy work, I have highlighted the importance of Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) reform increasing the contribution of agriculture to sustaining and enhancing butterfly abundance; improving habitat quality and preventing extinctions of butterflies and moths. The results of butterfly monitoring have been vital to champion the use of the EU Grassland Butterfly Indicator for evaluation of EU policy and implementation effectiveness.



Flower- and butterfly-rich hay meadows in the Italian Alps need regular management, and have a High Nature Value.

3. Following participation in the EU Round Table meeting on a new Green Architecture of the CAP, in Brussels in December 2019, I attended the EU Civil Dialogue Group (CDG) meeting on 25 February with about 50 other Stakeholders. The meeting was jointly chaired by the DGs of DG Agri, DG Env and DG Clima, to discuss biodiversity and the future CAP. I pressed for the involvement of the Environmental Authorities in MSs in developing CAP Strategic Plans; advocated support for new CAP Pillar 1 Eco Schemes in MSs, fully funded by the EU budget,

to support farmers to secure recovery of grassland biodiversity, especially butterflies and other pollinators and their services. Also, the importance of ecological knowledge transfer through free, independent Farm Advisory Services, accessible to all farmers; and that restoration of biodiversity on abandoned grassland was important for biodiversity, especially butterflies, and for rural communities.

4. A new framework for reforming the CAP is being finalized, alongside the EU Budget. This will have more devolution to EU Member States, who will draw up strategic plans for all CAP expenditure, based on needs assessments. The current CAP will be extended for a further year to 2021.
5. BCE has supported the full implementation of the EU wild Pollinators Initiative and colleagues have contributed their knowledge to the EU Expert Group on Pollinator Monitoring. BCE submitted a response to the EU Consultation on the EU Eco Label, advocating that the label be extended to pot plants that support pollinators. Irma Wynhoff gave a Presentation to the EU Workshop on Pollinators and Natura 2000. During the CGBN discussion of a paper on Gaps in Biodiversity Information and data, I briefed the meeting on butterfly monitoring results and our ABLE project plans and encouraged support from MSs for butterfly and pollinator monitoring.
6. We expect an EU Pollinator Monitoring Framework to be established in 2020 and used as part of the EU evaluation framework for the CAP. We are pleased that the EU Parliament has agreed a new EU Parliamentary Preparatory Action, (PPA), with a budget of €5m, which builds on our ABLE project and will support implementation of wild pollinator monitoring.
7. I helped develop EHF ideas on post 2020 EU Biodiversity Policy; and BCE signed the agreed EHF Position Paper. I promoted the proposals, on behalf of EHF, in the EU High Level Conference on Biodiversity Strategy in Brussels on 23 May. BCE's partner, Josef Settele, gave a Presentation at this Conference on the hard-hitting conclusions of the IPBES Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, emphasizing the need for transformative changes in economic policy and the urgency of action to reverse degradation and losses of biodiversity. I reviewed progress with implementing Target 1 of the existing EU Biodiversity Strategy and highlighted the poor conservation status of Habitats Directive listed butterflies and grasslands at a Stakeholder Conference in Brussels.
8. BCE submitted a response to the EU Consultation on future priorities for the EU Research and Innovation Programme. Chris van Swaay gave a presentation on butterfly monitoring and results to the EU Expert Group on Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems (MAES).
9. In December 2019 the new EU President, Mrs Van de Leyen, published Political Guidelines for the EU Commission. She promised to strengthen the links between words and deeds; published a new Green Deal including a commitment to put sustainability at the heart of everything Europe does; and promised an EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, early in 2020. BCE will be responding in January 2020 to the EU Consultation on a draft Road Map for this Strategy. The EU President envisages developing new cross cutting biodiversity standards for agriculture, trade, industry and economic policy and leading globally on biodiversity. Positive action at EU level will need to underpin the EU's credibility in next year's global negotiations on biodiversity and on climate change and be commensurate with the scale and the urgency of the problems. Without a strong reform away from business as usual the global community risk an existential ecological and climate crisis within the lifetimes of our children.

European Butterfly Group

By Mike Prentice, Chair, EBG

Membership of European Butterflies Group continues to grow and EBG now has over 750 members (who are all also members of UK's Butterfly Conservation). Later in 2020 we will be able to offer membership to overseas members for a membership cost of €15.

During 2019 we gave further financial support to the project on Danube Clouded Yellow *Colias myrmidone* in Romania and attended the workshop on the species in Romania in May. We continue to research further localities for *C. myrmidone* having found extensive colonies in Belarus and we plan further searches in Romania which is still the European stronghold for the species.

In 2019 the Spanish government gave legal protection to Spanish Greenish Black-tip *Euchloe bazae* and EBG members collated and submitted their records to our colleagues in Spain. In both 2018 and 2019 volunteers visited the Los Monegros area of northern Spain to survey for the northern population of *E. bazae*. The range of this species in the north is very restricted and the volunteers spent time searching for the larval foodplant *Boleum asperum* which also has a restricted range. In 2019 a new area of foodplant was discovered but the weather was too poor to establish whether the butterfly was present. A further visit will be undertaken in 2020 to continue and extend the search.

In 2020 we plan to undertake surveys to help establish the status and range of Dil's Grayling *Pseudochazara orestes* which is one of Europe's most threatened species. We will also hold a training camp for Greek National Park staff to help them identify butterfly species and introduce the concepts of transects or timed counts in the Parks.



***Pseudochazara orestes* (photo: Martin Davies)**

Each year we offer one or two research bursaries particularly, but not exclusively, aimed at younger people to help with travel or accommodation costs associated with a butterfly or moth project. Anyone interested should contact mikeprentice7@gmail.com.

Our Annual General Meeting and Members' day was held in October in Birmingham at which Martin Wiemers gave a talk on the butterflies of Macaronesia and an explanation of how DNA is applied in entomology. Roger Gibbons also delivered a talk on some of the rarer French butterfly species.

In December we attended the ABLE meeting in Laufen at which we also sought ideas on further collaborative projects for forthcoming years. Butterfly Conservation Europe partner organisations suggested projects ranging from Sweden to Armenia and Spain to Moldova which we will be sharing with our members and organising projects.



Social media

Our social media following continues to grow steadily: our Facebook page now has nearly 3,000 followers (www.facebook.com/ButterflyConservationEurope) and our Twitter (@europebutterfly) account has grown to over 1,800 followers. We are very grateful to Chris van Swaay, Dirk Maes, Martin Warren and Sue Collins for running these accounts.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful for the ongoing financial support of Butterfly Conservation (UK) and Dutch Butterfly Conservation (De Vlinderstichting). We would also like to thank the Board and Partners of BC Europe who give their time freely.

