



Activity report for 2007

Introduction

Welcome to the second activity report of Butterfly Conservation Europe, which covers the third year since the organisation was formed in late 2004. A key achievement this year has been the formation of a genuinely pan-European Network of organisations who have agreed to work under the umbrella of BC Europe to achieve the common aim of conserving butterflies, moths and their habitats. The highlight has been the Inaugural Meeting that we held with BC Europe partners in Germany in October, which was attended by over 50 delegates from 31 countries. The Network has attracted a vast wealth of experience and expertise that will provide a solid base from which our new organisation can grow.

The Inaugural Meeting heard that the decline of butterflies has reached crisis points in many countries. The Red Data Book of European butterflies revealed that 12% of our 576 species are seriously threatened and many more are threatened at a country level. At least 13 countries have more than 50% of their species either extinct or undergoing a significant decline. Moths are less well known than butterflies, but serious declines have been reported in many countries. In Britain, two-thirds of common moth species have declined over the last 30 years and overall numbers of individuals are down by one-third.

The loss of butterflies has serious implications for the conservation of biodiversity. There is growing evidence that butterflies are declining faster than other well known taxa such as birds and plants. They are thus valuable early warning indicators of changes that are affecting biodiversity in general. Moreover, if we can tackle the problems facing butterflies and moths, this will go a long way to helping other animals and plants and thus make a major contribution to the conservation of our overall biodiversity.

Several studies have been published recently showing that butterflies are spreading north while others are moving to more northerly altitudes and contracting their southern range margins. Habitat fragmentation is also being highlighted as a major problem that is preventing the response of species to adapt to climate change, emphasising the urgent need for landscape scale conservation to maintain and re-connect habitats across the continent.

Butterfly Conservation Europe has also become increasingly active at the EU policy level and have been working both on a butterfly indicator and an online recording system for butterflies and moths. These will create a powerful pan-European database to identify conservation priorities and to assess future environmental change. They will also provide a valuable resource from which we can assess the growing threat of climate change.

The new organisation would like to thank everyone for their help and support in the early stages. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Dr Martin Warren
Chairman, Butterfly Conservation Europe

Aims and constitution

Butterfly Conservation Europe was formed in November 2004 as an umbrella body to help stem and reverse the rapid decline of butterflies, moths and their habitats across Europe. It also aims to promote all activities and initiatives to conserve butterflies, moths and their habitats, including increasing the resilience of ecosystems across Europe through adaptation of land uses to sustain biodiversity in the face of climate change.

A clear focus of the organisation will be to work with a wide range of partners in Europe, both governmental and non-governmental, to implement the Conservation on Biological Diversity with respect to butterflies and moths and their habitats, and to contribute to achieving the EU target of halting biodiversity loss by 2010.

The geographical scope of BC Europe comprises all countries that are members of the Council of Europe and includes the Azores, Madeira, the Canary Islands, Russia to the Ural Mountains and the whole of Turkey. The organisation is registered as Stichting Butterfly Conservation Europe in Wageningen, The Netherlands, number 09146603.

Governance

BC Europe is run by a small governing board comprising: Dr Martin Warren (Chairman), Dr Theo Verstrael (Secretary), Dr Dirk Maes (Treasurer), Dr Josef Settele, Martina Sasic, Dr Rudi Verovnik. The Board has appointed three advisers: Chris van Swaay (General adviser) Irma Wynhoff (General adviser) and Sue Collins (European Policy Adviser). The Board meets at least twice a year and corresponds regularly between meetings by emails and phone calls.

Our Patron is Sir David Attenborough.

Network Partners and Associates

Over the year we have continued to encourage organisations from additional countries to join our Network. So far 35 organisations have agreed to become Network Partners, representing 32 countries. Partners have agreed to work together under a set of Operating Principles. We also have contact points in several other countries where there is not yet an obvious lead organisation.

Inaugural meeting of partners

We held our Inaugural Meeting of BC Europe partners and prospective partners at Laufen in southern Germany from 29-31 October 2007. The meeting was a great success and was attended by over 50 delegates from 31 countries. We were also privileged to hear keynote presentations from Ladislav Miko, Director of Nature Conservation at DG Environment in Brussels, Tamas Marghescu, Director of IUCN Countdown 2010 initiative, and Claire Popazoglou, Head of European Division, Birdlife International.

The aims of the meeting were:

- 1) To identify BC Europe's priorities for reversing the decline of butterflies and moths in Europe and contributing to the 2010 target of halting biodiversity loss
- 2) To identify ways of working together to achieve our goals of a countryside rich in butterflies and moths
- 3) To provide an opportunity for networking amongst Partners and Board members

The meeting included two detailed workshops where delegates contributed a vast wealth of expertise and experience to our discussions. Many are the national experts on Lepidoptera in their own countries and have immense knowledge of the species and issues affecting their survival. The workshops enabled us to agree a consensus on the priorities of our new partnership and identified ways in which we can best work together.

Delegates agreed a conference resolution to work together to halt the loss of butterflies and moths across Europe, and thereby create a more healthy world in which we all can live.

Butterflies for a healthy environment

The conference of experts from 31 countries has rung alarm bells about the serious decline of butterflies and moths across Europe.

The conference believes that butterflies are important flagships of Europe's wildlife. They are valuable indicators of the health of Europe's environment and action to save them will contribute to the wellbeing of all citizens.

The conference calls on Governments at European, National and Regional levels to take more determined action to stop this serious loss of biodiversity.

The conference delegates commit to work together under the umbrella of Butterfly Conservation Europe to halt the loss of butterflies, moths and biodiversity.



Delegates at BC Europe Inaugural Meeting in Laufen, 29-31 October 2007

A full account of the meeting and the post conference action plan can be found on our website www.bc-europe.org

We are extremely grateful to ANL, the Bayerische Akademie für Naturschutz und Landschaftspflege for hosting and funding the meeting. This funding was essential to allow wide participation, especially from delegates from eastern Europe. The Board is especially grateful to Christian Stettmer and Jochen Siegrist of ANL for their help in organising and running this meeting.

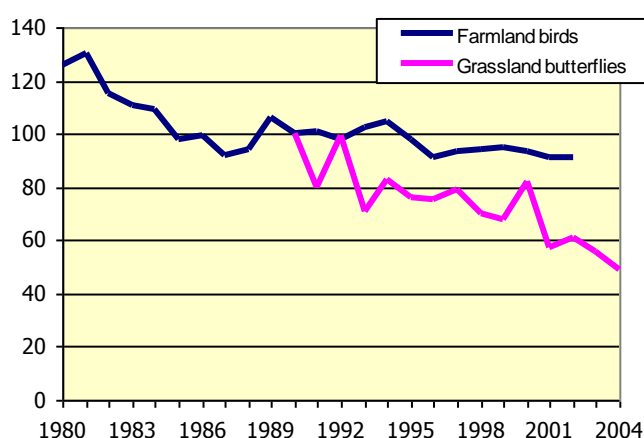
Projects

Numerous projects have been started under the BC Europe umbrella or involve the organisation in an advisory capacity:

Developing a European Butterfly Indicator

Chris van Swaay has continued to represent BC Europe on the Streamlining European Biodiversity Indicators (SEBI 2010) group run by the EU Topic Centre on Nature Conservation. The aim is to develop a suite of indicators that will assess progress towards the EU target of halting biodiversity loss by 2010. During 2006, we successfully developed a provisional index of trends in grassland species, drawing data from 2000 sites in 11 national monitoring schemes, all using the standardised transect monitoring protocols (European Environment Agency, 2007; Swaay, 2007). The schemes involve over 2000 volunteers who walk the equivalent of the circumference of the earth each year recording butterflies! This is equivalent to around €3 million of volunteer effort (based on €90/day volunteer rate).

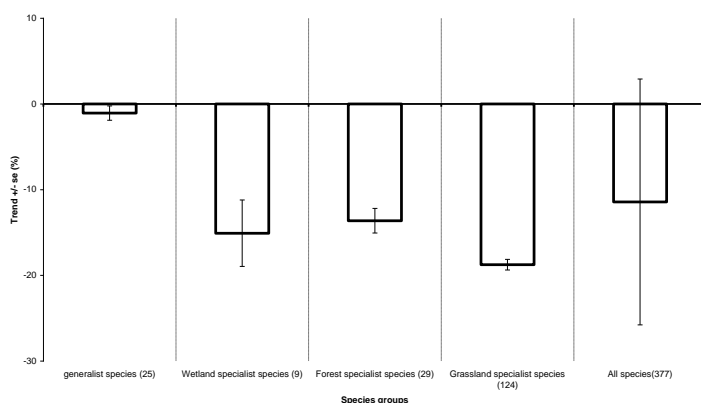
The results show that populations of these 17 characteristic grassland species have declined by almost 50% in 15 years compared to a 9% decline in farmland birds.



European trends in grassland butterflies (n=17) compared to farmland birds (n=23).

Sources: Butterfly Conservation Europe and European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme

Funds were raised to hold a seminar for staff from the contributing schemes in Wageningen in February 2007, with the aim of simplifying co-ordination and planning appropriate methods. Following the meeting a best practice guide was produced on how to establish and run European butterfly monitoring networks, in order to standardise methods and data. The guide is available from our website www.bc-europe.org. A paper was also published using the distribution trend data from the Red Data Book of European butterflies to produce trends in different habitats (Swaay *et al.* 2006). Contact: chris.vanswaay@vlinderstichting.nl



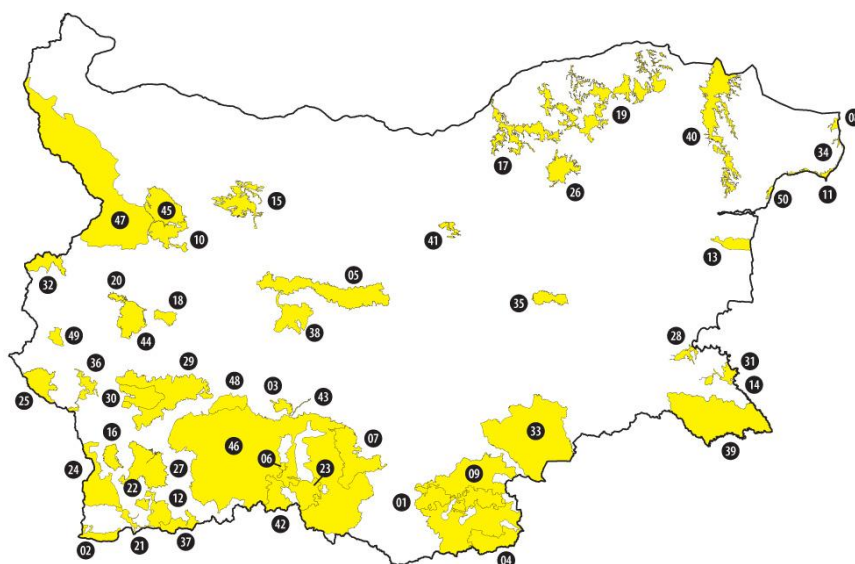
European distribution trends of butterflies in different habitat types (1970-1995) (from Swaay *et al.*, 2006)

Prime Butterfly Areas of Bulgaria.

This important 2-year project was completed in 2007 with the production of a final report on the Prime Butterfly Areas of Bulgaria, written by Stanislav Abdejev and Stoyan Beshkov. A total of 50 areas have been identified covering 2.2 million ha (20% of the land area of Bulgaria). A detailed website has also been produced showing distribution maps of target species as well as information on each PBA. The project was funded by the BBI- MATRA programme of the Dutch Ministry for the Environment and was run with the Natural History Museum of Bulgaria: www.netempire.biz/butterfly_areas_bg

A presentation on the project was also given by Stoyan Beshkov at the Inaugural Meeting of BC Europe in Laufen. This highlighted the damage to several key sites from tourist developments and wind farms, often despite protection as nature reserves or as candidate Natura 200 sites. Many more crucial sites are threatened from development due to lack of effective planning controls and proper legislation to protect important wildlife sites.

The project has been used to assess the inadequacy of the list of Natura 2000 sites that was put forward by Bulgaria in 2006. This list omitted many key sites that contain important and well documented populations of Annex 2 species. A dossier listing sites that should be included in the Natura 2000 series for Bulgaria was submitted to DG Environment in May. This was followed by a presentation of the case to the Director of Nature Conservation and the Bulgarian case officer in November at the Brussels headquarters.



Map showing the 50 Prime Butterfly Areas identified in Bulgaria

Prime Butterfly Areas of Serbia.

This project was started in January 2006 and will run for 2 years. The aims are to identify and describe the most important sites for butterflies (Prime Butterfly Areas) in Serbia and identify threats and conservation measures needed. The project is funded by the BBI- MATRA programme of the Dutch Ministry for the Environment and is run with HabiProt, a newly formed NGO whose remit is habitat protection and sustainable development. The main contact is Predrag Jaksic pjaksic@eunet.yu

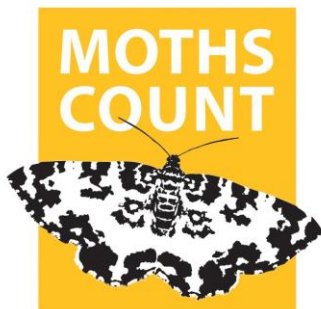
Butterfly Conservation (UK) volunteers

The European Interest Group of Butterfly Conservation (UK) was established in 2006 to co-ordinate the activities of BC Members in Europe and support the work of BC Europe. During 2007, a study trip was organised to the Ecrins National Park and trips are planned for 2008 include Mount Chelmos in the Peloponnese and Aggtelek and Bukk National Parks in Hungary. The main contact is Simon Spencer cerisyi@btinternet.com. Full details are given on: www.bc-eig.org.uk

Outreach and citizen science projects

Several Network Partners ran such projects during 2007 to raise awareness of butterflies and moths, to help educate the public, and broaden public participation in biological recording. Many Partners supported European Moth Night, which ran from 11-15 October 2007. The event involves several hundred recorders in over 20 countries. Other examples are given below.

In the UK, Butterfly Conservation launched Moths Count project with their President Sir David Attenborough. This was reported in all the main newspapers and on the main BBC television news and radio stations. The project is funded by the national Lottery and included a series of over 30 public events and a popular recording scheme known as Garden Moths Count.



The Moths Count project will gather data from thousands of moth recorders in the UK and is expected soon to contain over 15 million records. A Garden Moths Count aimed at public participation was run in 2007 and will be repeated in 2008 from 21st June to 27th July. Full details are available on www.mothscount.org



Sir David Attenborough at the launch of Moths Count in London, May 2007

Butterfly Conservation (UK) also runs a popular recording scheme called Butterflies for the New Millennium that gathers c. 340,000 records p.a. from over 10,000 recorders. Details are made public through the National Biodiversity Network Gateway www.searchnbn.net. It also co-ordinates the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme which gathers data from over 800 sites using 1,000 recorders. Full details are on www.ukbms.org.uk

In the Netherlands, Dutch Butterfly Conservation (De Vlinderstichting) collected more than 150,000 records of butterflies and moths, and held a Dutch Butterfly Day on 24 March 2007, attended by over 500 people. They also run the Dutch Butterfly Monitoring Scheme at 700 locations, involving 800 recorders and gathering 100,000 records pa. They also ran a National Moth Night on 7 September 2007 at more than 100 sites open to the public.

In Slovenia, the Society for conservation and study of Lepidoptera has been busy organising butterfly surveys and workshops for the forthcoming atlas as well as running field trips to least studied areas and conducting rare species surveys. They have also started a new national monitoring scheme for butterflies, which now has 16 transects, and run many events for National Moth Night.

In Germany, the national butterfly recording scheme was started in 2005 under the umbrella of BC Europe and has so far reached more than 400 active transect walkers with another 300 considering joining. The monitoring was launched through a media campaign, which included nationwide German TV with 2.6 million viewers on primetime television. In 2005 a field guide on the butterflies of Germany was published in association with BC Europe (Settele *et al.*, 2005). Around 6000 copies of the guide have been sold by 2007. In December 2005 the final conference of the EU FP 5 project MacMan (www.macman-project.de), where BC Europe was an associated partner and co-organiser. Two volumes have been produced on the Proceedings (Kuhn *et al.*, 2005). During 2007 the nationwide scheme for atlas recording of German Butterflies and Moths was launched under the BC Europe umbrella.

Bioscore

This project runs from 2006-9. Its aim is to develop a tool for monitoring progress in achieving the EU target to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and for linking pressures from policy sectors to the (change in the) state of biodiversity as measured by the presence and abundance of individual species. The tool will be made freely accessible on the Internet. BC Europe is an associate partner in the project. The main contact is Dirk Maes dirk.maes@inbo.be. Website: www.ecnc.nl/StateOfEuropeanNatur/Bioscore

Alarm

This project runs from 2004-9. Its aims are to develop an integrated large-scale risk assessment for biodiversity as well as terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems as a part of environmental risk assessment, linking these with factors such as climate change and socio-economic risk indicators to derive outcome-oriented policy measures in the field of biodiversity preservation. BC Europe is an associate partner in the project and in charge of the butterfly elements of the projects Focal Site Network, where standard butterfly transects are conducted. The main BCE contact and overall project coordinator is Josef Settele Josef.Settele@ufz.de website: www.alarmproject.net/alarm

Policy work

BC Europe has greatly expanded its activity on the EU policy front thanks to the voluntary work of Sue Collins, European Policy Officer: IColl49@aol.com. We have contributed knowledge and advice about butterflies and moths to inform policy development and implementation at EU level, both directly to EU officials and in collaboration with European Networks such as the European Habitats Forum. We have input into the vision for biodiversity beyond 2010, submitted evidence of failure to comply with Habitats Directive in Bulgaria, participated in the Countdown 2010 initiative, and contributed to the EU Presidency debate on Business and Biodiversity in Lisbon. We also made inputs to the Biodiversity Expert Group (BEG) to improve the implementation of the Biodiversity Communication and Action Plan. Another key area of work has been to promote the importance of butterflies as indicators and press for their adoption as a test of sustainable development and effectiveness of agricultural policy integration. We are now working with Birdlife International to help the integration of butterflies and moths into the reform of Common Agriculture Policy.

Funding

We still have limited funding to run the organisation and most costs have so far been borne by the Board member organisations. Now we have formed a solid network, it is critical that we secure funds to expand our core activities and support our partners.

In the early part of the year, and at very short notice, we applied for core funding from the EU under their call for proposals to NGOs active in nature protection under LIFE+. Unfortunately this bid was unsuccessful but we are determined to improve our chances for future applications.

In addition to the funds raised for the Laufen meeting, we have successfully raised funds for two major country-based projects: the Prime Butterfly Areas projects in Bulgaria and Serbia, funded under the BBI-Matra programme of the Dutch Ministry for the Environment. We are now working on an application for a similar project in Turkey. We also have secured some contributions to develop the online recording programme.

A selection of references to publications by Butterfly Conservation Europe and its partners.

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Report compiled by
Dr Martin Warren

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www.bc-europe.org