

3rd International Butterfly and Moth Conservation Camp for Students, Young Scientists, and Enthusiasts

Place: Kercaszomor, Órség National Park (Western Hungary)

Date: 20th July – 26th July 2015 (From Monday to Sunday)

Focal species 2015: ALL FOUR EUROPEAN LARGE BLUES (*Maculinea-Phengaris* spp.)

Organizer: Hungarian Natural Heritage Trust, Kercaszomor, Hungary

INTRODUCTION:

In May 2011 the first butterfly and moth conservation camp was initiated by the Hungarian Natural Heritage Trust in Western Hungary with great success. Two butterfly species of community importance, viz. Clouded Apollo (*Par-nassius mnemosyne*) and Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*), were in the focus of conducting practical scientific methods. Mark-release-recaptures were performed by camp-participants to evaluate e.g. size and behaviour of the local populations. As a result of several positive feedbacks we decided to continue in 2012 with the second conservation camp, but this time at a different time of the butterfly season and with other focal species. Participants had e.g. the opportunity to investigate egg-placement patterns of the Alcon Blue (*Maculinea alcon*) on the Trust's meadows by counting eggs on Marsh Gentian (*Gentiana pneumonanthe*) shoots. Hundreds of eggs were counted and host plant preferences by egg-laying females were analysed. Conservation management often is hard work but essential for supporting Lepidoptera, and everybody did a great job in this category in both years, indeed. After a hard day's work local, traditional Hungarian dishes were served followed by relaxing and attraction of moths to light in the evening. For further information and impressions of 2011s and 2012s camp please visit:

http://www.eucan.org.uk/docs/news/Butterfly_Camp_Jess_article_lores.pdf

After a two years break we are happy to inform you that we decided to continue to organize this semi-formal practical-training-holiday in 2015, offering a great opportunity for people interested in Lepidoptera and their conservation, to gain insight into butterfly ecology, practice methods of survey, and to actively help with conservation management of land managed by the trust.

ECOLOGICAL SURVEYS:

In the area of the National Park all four European Large Blues are present and from mid-July they are on the wing simultaneously. The wet hay meadows of the Trust harbour substantial populations of the Dusky Large Blue (*Maculinea nausithous*), the Scarce Large Blue (*Maculinea teleius*) and the Alcon Blue (*Maculinea alcon*). Within the practical, ecological survey methods we will primarily work on these three Large Blue species. Firstly, we intend to carry out mark-release-recapture studies on the first two of the mentioned Large Blue species, both of them being of high conservation relevance (NATURA 2000 species), to have an estimation of the population size on the Trust's meadows and to have an idea of the movement of individuals between habitat patches. The third species, the Alcon Blue (*Maculinea alcon*), is less abundant than the former two species. Its foodplant (*Gentiana pneumonanthe*) grows on the land of the trust and the Alcon Blues use these plant individuals regularly for egg deposition. The white eggs are easy to locate on the flowering plants and even after hatching the empty egg-cases remain for several weeks on the shoots. Thus we want to perform egg counts and measure plant characteristics (and other environmental parameters) to elucidate host plant selection by ovipositing females.

LECTURES:

We plan to invite butterfly and moth conservation experts and landscape ecologists for short scientific presentations in the evenings. A representative from the Órség National Park will give an introductory lecture about the essentials of the Park.

BUTTERFLY & MOTH DIVERSITY:

Altogether 104 butterfly species can be observed in the National Park area, of which several are of high conservation priority. Supplementary to the studies on Large Blue butterflies we want to give all participants the possibility to visit different habitats types, to see other butterfly rarities and to practice identification skills. Some examples of species we expect to see in mid-July: Large Copper – *Lycaena dispar*, Eastern Baton Blue (*Pseudophilotes vicrama*) Large Chequered Skipper – *Heteropterus morpheus*, Tufted Marbled Skipper – *Carcharodus flocciferus* Purple Emperor – *Apatura iris*, Lesser Purple Emperor – *A. ilia*, Common Glider – *Neptis sappho*.

The National Park is home of a highly diverse moth fauna, which we will make accessible to you by setting up light sources for their attraction. The moth diversity in general is more than ten times higher than that of butterflies, accordingly they play a very important role in intact ecosystems. During the evenings you will have the opportunity to experience how fascinating and manifold moths are and practice determination on species level.



PRACTICAL CONSERVATION WORK:

Since 2011 the Hungarian Natural Heritage Trust continuously cleared naturally forested areas, which were previously managed as hay meadows. With the clearance of wood and shrub land we expand suitable habitats of endangered grassland butterflies and link up formerly isolated grassland fragments to form a healthy mosaic-type habitat structure in the Kerca Valley. It is obvious, that without management these newly created open habitats will turn back into scrub, so during the camp, participants will be actively involved in cutting and removing tall turf weed and coppices of shrubs from the “new meadows”. Besides the work, the camp participants can look into practical management of high nature value areas and learn about dynamism and succession of vegetation and the butterfly fauna.

ACCOMODATION:

There will be three different types of accommodation available for Camp participants:

1. Local guesthouse apartments. Two or three people would normally share the rooms and bathrooms of the guesthouse. A maximum of thirty individuals can be hosted in this way.
2. The youth guesthouse. This facility can host eight persons in four-bedded rooms (bathroom in each room). A maximum of eight individuals can be accommodated.
3. The cheapest accommodation is camping where only a basic fee will apply. The participants who wish to camp are required to bring their own equipment. Indoor toilets and shower baths are available for free at the camp site.

FEES:

Two types of fee apply to the Camp; one is for guesthouse accommodation, the other is for campers. Registration and food fee will be applied for both. The fee also includes equipment for the survey activities and transportation during your stay (Important: Free pickups are only included from close stations; i.e. max. 20-30 km from Kercaszomor). Meals include breakfast and dinner; for lunch in the field you might prepare sandwiches (also included in the price).

Guesthouse Accommodation

Registration:50 €
Accommodation:150 €
Meals & Transport:170 €
Total:370 €

Campers

Registration:50 €
Accommodation:70 €
Meals & Transport:170 €
Total:290 €

DONATE, VOLUNTEERING & CONTACT:

The Hungarian Natural Heritage Trust welcomes any additional support from donors or spending organisations as this camp would be feasible only if we would increase the price seriously. The Hungarian Natural Heritage Trust is also looking for one or more of young people, who would like to spend more time in Kercaszomor village helping our activities. We need someone, who can work hard with habitat management (including brush-cutter, fork etc.) but will be able to help us organising the camp and/or work on mark-release-recapture of *Maculinea*. Volunteers can join us from April to the end of August at least for two weeks. Volunteers are expected to cover their costs, accommodation will be provided at a low cost (approx. 100 euro/month).

If you are interested in participating, please, do not hesitate to contact us:

safian@bcghana.org
matronula@gmail.com

Further information will also be published on the Facebook page of the event:
<https://www.facebook.com/events/764437633617130/?fref=ts>