



Group photo, 13.08.20



Aberrant Brown Argus, 08.08.20



Krueper's Small White, 04.08.20



Sage Skipper, 07.08.14

## Corfu Butterfly Conservation and the Covid crisis of 2020.

As outlined in the spring 2020 edition of *European Butterflies*, Corfu Butterfly Conservation (CBC) has its origins in a Facebook page that was created in April 2014. The membership of this group has now grown to 537 individuals – 149 (28%) of which are Corfiot or Greek citizens. Over the last six and a half years this community of butterfly enthusiasts has enhanced our understanding of the Corfiot butterfly fauna and has vocalised growing concerns for the current status of Corfu's butterflies and their natural habitats.

Our goal is to further stimulate informed interest and produce robust scientific data that can be used to influence policy and protect habitat for the benefit of Corfu's butterflies and the wider natural environment, on which we all depend. Our immediate aim is to record the distribution of butterflies on the island and ultimately, we intend to publish an atlas of Corfu Butterflies based on this information, allowing conservation organisations to address the requirements of the 75+ species inhabiting Corfu.

### The survey and website

We launched the Corfu Butterfly Survey (CBS) on the 7th Jan 2020 (which would have been Gerald Durrell's 95th birthday). Unfortunately, the advent of the Covid 19 pandemic had two negative impacts: firstly, the Greek lockdown made it difficult for residents of Corfu to go out to survey butterflies and secondly, there was a significant reduction in the number of visitors to Corfu, again leading to a decrease in the recording effort from this group of enthusiasts.

Therefore, we came to the conclusion that 2020 should be considered a 'null' year for data collection, viewing it instead as a pilot year for the survey. However, we did use this time productively to upgrade our Corfu Butterfly Conservation website - [corfubutterflyconservation.org](http://corfubutterflyconservation.org), helped by a generous grant from the *Royal Entomological Society's - Goldman Award*.

We hopefully plan to restart the CBS on the 1st of January 2021, along with a relaunch of the new website on the same date. The survey will run until the 31st December 2025 (the centenary year of Gerald Durrell's birth).

### Public participation

The CBS is intended to be a Citizen Science project. The number of individuals who have expressed an interest in participating and providing records for the survey (which will be validated by site moderators) has convinced us that the survey will culminate in the most comprehensive picture to date of the status and distribution of Corfu butterflies. As mentioned above, over a quarter of these individuals are Corfiot/Greek and we anticipate this number to further increase as the project is more widely publicised.

To assist this process, we are working on the production of 10,000 A2 colour identification posters showing all the species we have recorded on Corfu so far. This poster will be in both Greek and English and will bear the logos of our partner organisations. We have made an application to an Ionian environmental charity for a grant to fund this objective. These posters will be distributed to interested parties across the island; 4,000 in the first year and the surplus of 6,000 will be distributed over the remaining four years of the project.



We are also in the process of a funding application to a British ecological charity for an outreach grant to produce 5,000 laminated identification guides to encourage volunteers to identify and record butterflies in the field. Central to our efforts are the hopes for an outreach element to the project, which will allow educational and volunteer training events to take place in Corfu. These will seek to engage Corfiots in butterfly recording and raise awareness of the value and fragility of butterfly populations and their habitats on the island. A funding application to cover the costings of this work has been made to a charity interested in Greek environmental work.

The Citizen Science approach has been shown to be very effective where it has been applied in a well-coordinated manner with an appropriate level of verification. However, certain species, particularly those whose distribution and ecology is poorly understood remain problematical and are unlikely to be observed by volunteers. I am therefore delighted to have been awarded a small personal grant from the *Percy Sladen Memorial Fund*, administered by the *Linnean Society*, to help me with travel and subsistence whilst gathering data on these species.

### Partnership

It is important to us that there is effective engagement with Corfiot/Greek society in order to establish a productive and mutually beneficial partnership. We firmly believe that this is the key to the success of CBC eventually becoming an independent organisation and we are keen to establish a good relationship with a range of Hellenic environmental organisations. Our first partnership was formed during the summer of 2020, with the Ionian University. We hope that this collaboration will provide opportunities for joint academic publications and we anticipate that our shared goal of providing scientific information may lead to the successful conservation of the butterfly fauna of Corfu and possibly Corfu's broader natural heritage.

### Work in the field

Whilst some members of the CBC team tried to put to good use time lost in the field, because of the pandemic, other members (mostly residents of Corfu) were luckily still able to continue to record sightings. Fortunately, I managed to visit Corfu in August 2020, a time that I wouldn't ordinarily choose because the intense heat generally leads to a reduction in butterfly species. However, this trip turned out to be serendipitous because I undertook a series of butterfly walks with an ever-increasing number of participants. We were also able to confirm the existence of the *Tree Grayling* (*Hipparchia statilinus*) and I made my first observations of *Krueper's Small White* (*Pieris krueperi*).

### Can you help CBC?

We frequently have groups of volunteers visiting the island to help us survey its butterflies, if you are interested in joining us, we would be pleased to hear from you. Of course, all projects of this nature require funding and so if you feel you are in a position to make a donation towards CBC's aims please contact me: dan@corfubutterflyconservation.org. Finally, if you live in Corfu or intend to visit the island please record your butterfly sightings on our website: [www.corfubutterflyconservation.org](http://www.corfubutterflyconservation.org). Thank you



**Dan Danahar**  
Photographs: Dan Danahar



Dan Danahar photographing Brown Argus, 08.08.20



Southern Comma, 07.08.14



Southern White Admiral, 07.08.14



Tree Grayling, 08.08.20