

**Butterfly Conservation Europe  
Activity report 2025**



**Butterfly**  
**CONSERVATION EUROPE**

# Butterfly Conservation Europe Activity Report 2025



Photo: Chris van Swaay

## BCE on 1 January 2026

**Board:** Nigel Bourn (chair), Chris van Swaay (secretary), Anu Tiitsaar (treasurer), Simona Bonelli, Sam Ellis, Evrim Karaçetin, Constanti Stefanescu, and Lars Pettersson.

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February 2026



**BCE board and advisors in December 2025.** From left to right in front: Albert Vliegenthart, Lars Pettersson, Nigel Bourn, Irma Wynhoff, Cristina Sevilleja, Evrim Karaçetin, Anu Tiitsaar, Chris van Swaay; Above from left to right ascending: Simona Bonelli, Martin Warren, Martina Šašić + Miguel Munguira, Jurriën van Deijk, Dirk Maes + Aidan Whitfield, Constanti Stefanescu + Juan-Pablo Cancela, Martin Wiemers, Sam Ellis, Josef Settele. Not in the photo: Mike Prentice, Sue Collins and Rudi Verovnik.

## Contents

Introduction.....	3
EMBRACE (eBMS) .....	4
EPIC – European Pollinator Identification Courses .....	5
PollHab .....	7
European Butterfly Red List.....	10
Moth Red List update.....	11
Influencing European policies .....	12
European Butterflies Group .....	13
Social Media .....	14
Website .....	15
Acknowledgements .....	15

## Introduction

*By Nigel Bourn, Chair, BC Europe*

Welcome to this Butterfly Conservation Europe Activity Report for 2025. I am pleased to have been chair for almost two years, first as the Butterfly Conservation (UK) representative on the board and more recently as a private individual having left BC in March last year. It is with some sadness that I report that BC (UK) have chosen not to take up their permanent seat on the board, however, should their position change, we would be delighted to welcome them back.

2025 has been a very busy and successful year for BC Europe, as mentioned in the 2024 activity report three new projects were funded. The projects are EMBRACE, which ensures the central support we need to maintain and support the network of national BMS co-ordinators; EPIC, developing and delivering training programmes to build capacity in Member States for butterfly monitoring; and POLLHAB, a project working on pollinators typical of habitats protected under the EU Habitats Directive. The delivery of these projects by Cristina Sevilleja and Chris van Swaay (EMBRACE); Cristina Sevilleja, Juan-Pablo Cancela and Martin Warren (EPIC); and Sam Ellis and Aidan Whitfield (POLLHAB) is described in more detail below. Many thanks to these colleagues who do incredible work on behalf of BCE.

Sue Collins and Aidan Whitfield have continued their vital Policy work. The Nature Restoration Law and its implementation continue to be a major area of work. Details can be found in the policy section, which highlights the opportunities offered by the Nature Restoration Plans that's EU Member States are preparing.

2025 was the 21st anniversary of BCE and in December we were able to celebrate with around 50 friends and colleagues in Laufen, Germany. Co-ordinated by Martin Warren and Cristina Sevilleja we all worked and played hard for 3 incredibly rewarding days. Thank you to them and all of you that were able to attend and contributed your invaluable expertise and knowledge.

One new topic at the Symposium was how we can expand our monitoring and conservation work on moths. We are pleased to have the expertise of Jurriën van Deijk, as a new advisor to the BCE Board and we are discussing how we can build on the network he created to produce the forthcoming European Red List on moths. We are all keen to do more on moths and take advantage of the requirement of EU Member States to monitor moths as part of the new EU Pollinator Monitoring Scheme. We look forward to reporting more on this activity in coming years.

BCE relies on the expertise of its Board Members, Advisors and Network Partners. Everyone has contributed this year to a whole series of consultations and projects. We are very grateful for all those who gave up their time to ensure we made the case for conserving butterflies and moths.

*Nigel Bourn (right) with  
Andreas Gumbert in Laufen*



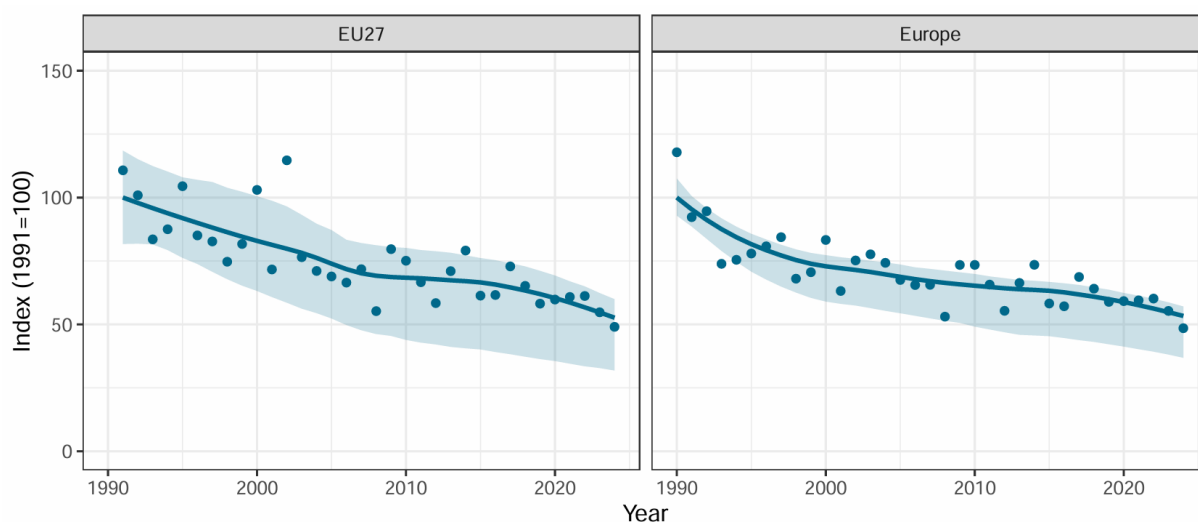


## EMBRACE (eBMS)

*By Cristina Sevilleja and Chris van Swaay*

This year we started a major new project to expand the eBMS and provide updates to the European Grassland Butterfly Index. The project is called EMBRACE (Expanding Monitoring of Butterflies for Restoration And Conservation across Europe 2021-2026) and is led by De Vlinderstichting, with partners at UK-CEH, BC Europe and BC-UK. It also involves the whole eBMS partnership which now spreads across Europe. It is funded by the EU and will run for 2 years. Overall objectives are to update the European Grassland Butterfly Index for the period 2021-2025 and build capacity to help achieve a more sustainable network of national citizen science-based butterfly monitoring schemes in all EU MS to underpin the calculation of butterfly abundance indicators.

Good progress has been made, and data has been gathered from all contributing partners up to and including 2024. Two updates have been made of the GBI (van Swaay et al. 2025 & 2026). The last update shows that **grassland butterflies have declined by almost 50%** in both the EU and Europe since 1990. We are now working on a document to show how Member States can ‘bend the curve’ and put populations of butterflies and other pollinators on an upward trend. The project also supported a BCE meeting in Laufen in December – see report below.



With the help of DG Environment we ran two online webinars to explain the GBI to Member State authorities. The aim is to give them information that will encourage them to support the BMS in their country and use the GBI as a measure of progress in restoring agro-ecosystems within the Nature Restoration Regulation (see Policy section below). The webinar in March 2025 had 30 participants and the one in October 2025 had 80 participants, showing a growing interest in our work and the pressing need for Member States to consider how they will run the EU PoMS.

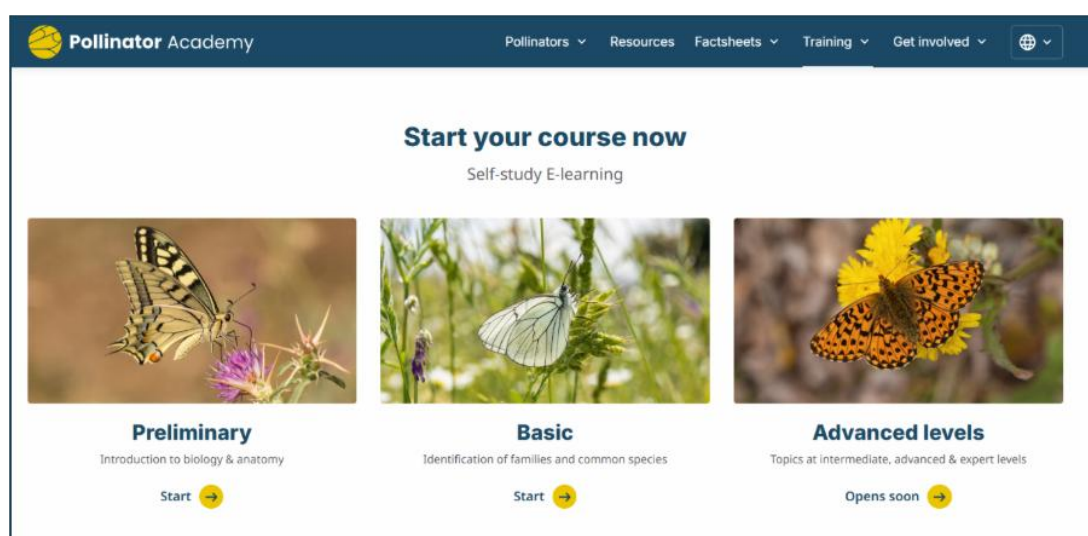


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## EPIC – European Pollinator Identification Courses

*By Cristina Sevilleja, Juan-Pablo Cancela and Martin Warren*

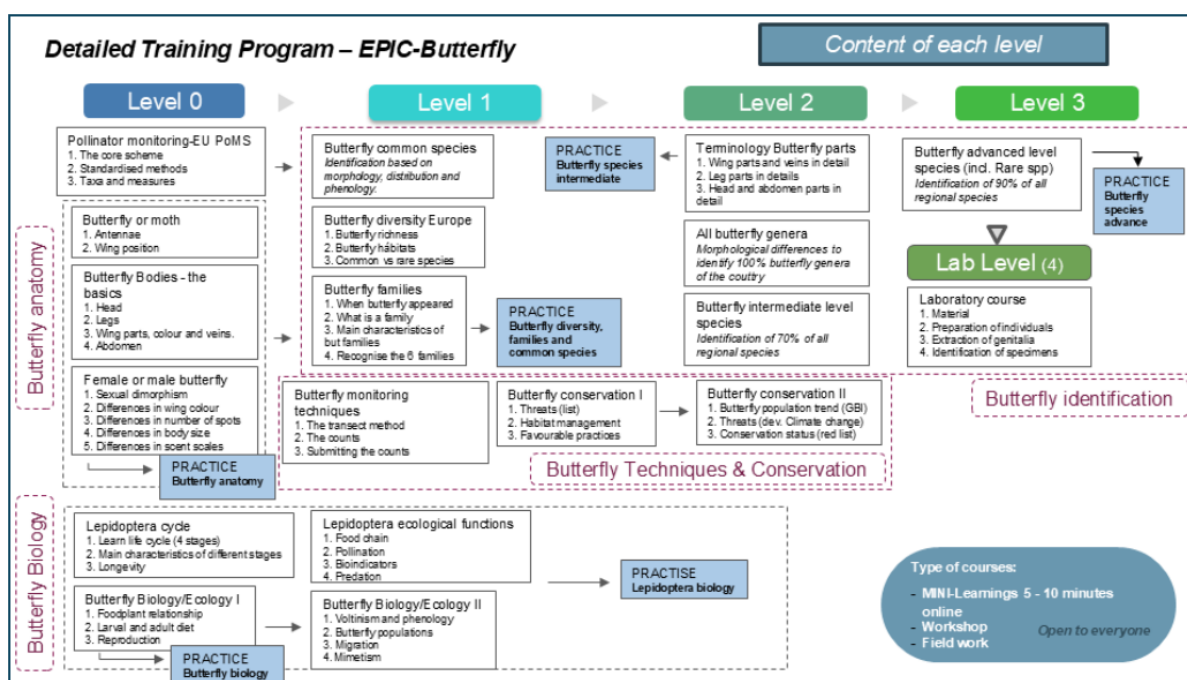
We started this new project to run training courses aimed at strengthening the para-taxonomic capacity of butterflies in EU Member States in order to support preparation for the implementation of the EU Pollinator Monitoring Scheme. The project is funded by the EU and led by the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and involves two major partners: BC Europe and the Office Pour les Insectes et leur Environnement (OPIE). Throughout the project we are working closely with two other major elements of the EPIC project: Lot 1 training in wild bees (EPIC-Bee) which will be led by and Lot 2 training in hoverflies (EPIC-Fly). These are led by the University of Mons and the University of Alicante respectively. The project was initially due to run for two years but has been extended for a year and will now end in December 2027.



The project involves the production of training materials and resources to identify and monitor butterflies according to standard EU-PoMS protocols. We have produced online training courses for Levels 0 (beginners) and Level 1 (basic butterfly identification) which are available on the [Pollinator Academy website](#). Level 2 courses (intermediate level identification) have been prepared and will be available shortly.



A core part of EPIC is to run a series of face-to-face training courses focussing resources on 11 target countries where para-taxonomic capacity is relatively low. During 2025 we ran 8 field courses in 6 countries: Slovenia, Czechia/ Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania. We are planning 9 more field courses in 2026, including courses in additional countries of Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. In the coming year, we are also planning a series of online Masterclasses, where experts will give presentations on how to identify difficult species in certain regions, such as the Alps, the Balkans, the Arctic-Alpine region of Scandinavia, the Atlantic region, and the Macaronesian Islands. Finally, we are beginning to plan courses in these same 11 countries during 2027, which will concentrate on Level 3.



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## PollHab

*By Sam Ellis and Aidan Whitfield*

We started this important 2-year project in December 2024 to identify “Pollinators typical of Habitats Protected under the Habitats Directive”. BC Europe is part of a consortium comprising: University of Padova as the lead contractor; Subcontractors: University of Mons (Belgium, covering wild bees), University of Novi Sad (Serbia, covering hoverflies), de Vlinderstichting (Netherlands, covering moths), INBO (Belgium, covering butterflies), BCE, ATECMA (Spain, covering habitats) and IEEP (Belgium and UK, covering relations with EU MSs).

The main tasks are to:

1. Develop a set of general criteria to characterise typical pollinator species (including characteristic species, indicators of good habitat quality, species that can be monitored easily)
2. Identify the typical pollinator species (including clustering of habitats based on co-occurrence, floristic and microhabitat similarity; distribution of pollinators and their indicator value) from four taxonomic group: butterflies, moths, wild bees and hoverflies.
3. Develop management and monitoring recommendations for the typical pollinator species
4. Coordinate with Member States authorities and other stakeholders

The first task was successfully completed in the early part of 2025 with candidate butterfly typical species required to meet the following criteria:

**A:** the species should occur regularly or at a high constancy within the habitat concerned; they should have a functional link with plants that occurred in the habitat - larval hostplants in the case of butterflies; and they should use specific microhabitats during the larval stage.

**B:** they should be good indicators of favourable habitat quality or be good indicators for a wider group of non-pollinator species with specific habitat requirements.

**C:** they should be relatively easily monitored by non-destructive and/or inexpensive methods.

Subsequently a web tool was developed which allowed butterfly experts to complete an assessment (i. e. identifying the candidate typical species and scoring the criteria) for each Protected Habitat in each biogeographical region in which that habitat occurred. In total this meant a minimum of 745 unique assessments needed to be completed.

By December 2025, all four taxonomic groups had completed more than half the required unique assessments, with the aim of undertaking remaining assessments before the 2026 field season. By January 2026, 464 (62%) unique butterfly assessments had been completed. However, since some habitats have a wide distribution within a biogeographical region, it was considered beneficial in these cases to have more than one assessment by experts from several countries, so the total number of assessments for butterflies actually exceeds 1,600.

Once all assessments have been completed, the data will be analysed to rank pollinators in terms of their suitability as typical species, with the aim of selecting a minimum of 10 per habitat in each biogeographical region. Thereafter, management and monitoring recommendations will be developed for the selected typical species. The project has worked closely with Member States and other stakeholders throughout and we anticipate it will lead to both improved monitoring and management for pollinators on Protected Areas.



**Funded by  
the European Union**

## Laufen Partner meeting, December 2025

*By Martin Warren and Cristina Sevilleja*

As part of the EMBRACE project we ran a partner meeting in Laufen, attended by over 50 people and several more online. We also had a dedicated day on the PollHab project, getting experts to make assessments for habitats in their regions. At the meeting we were delighted to welcome Andreas Gumbert from the Biodiversity Unit in DG Environment who has identified the strategic importance of supporting our work. We are working with him to make the case for countries to support their Butterfly Monitoring Scheme and make use of the rich data it can provide.

There were two full days of the meeting dedicated to the eBMS and how we can maximise opportunities presented by the EU Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR). The agenda and all the presentations are available on the [BCE website](#). On day 1, Chris van Swaay and Reto Schmucki gave updates on the project and the new GBI calculations, and Martha Henson and Simon Rolph presented the results of their feedback survey and how they aim to improve feedback in future. Aidan Whitfield then led a discussion on the NRR and the challenges presented by the EU PoMS. Albert Vliegenthart from Dutch BC then explained how we might obtain funds for our conservation work from industry, requiring a different style of communication, and Martin led a discussion on how we can make the case for funding BMS, with experience from Catalonia (Constanti Stefanescu); Sweden (Lars Pettersson); Italy (Simona Bonelli) and Portugal (Eva Monteiro).

On day 2, Cristina Sevilleja then led a session on the eBMS network and tools, with experience from several recent schemes: Romania (László Rákossy); Hungary (Andras Szabadfalvi) ; Denmark (Anne Eskildsen), and Austria (Daniel Lehner). This was followed with a presentation on the EPIC project by Juan Pablo Cancela and a session on moth recording led by Jurrien van Deijk, Dutch BC. He started with an update on the Moth Red List project, which would be published later in 2026. Cristina Sevilleja then gave a talk on Moth monitoring in EUPOMS and how this was a big opportunity to raise the importance of moths and their recording. Helder Cardoso shared his experience in running the excellent Portugal Moth Monitoring Scheme and Nigel Bourn explained the development of the UK's Priority Moth Monitoring Scheme.



*Delegates during the sessions in Laufen (left); celebrating 21 years of BCE in Laufen (right).*

The afternoon session started with an update on GBI progress, with an overview by Chris van Swaay and updates on the German GBI (Elisabeth Kühn) and Luxembourg (Xavier Mestdagh). This was followed by a session on Rare species monitoring including an introduction to rare species monitoring in the NRR (Aidan Whitfield); and update on eBMS 15min counts (Emily Dennis); the contribution of BMS transects and 15-min Counts to the Spanish Butterfly Atlas (Miguel Munguira); and rare species monitoring in Switzerland (Goran Dusej). Sue Collins finished by giving a summary of the meeting and issues for the future.

Day 3 was dedicated to PollHab, starting with an update on the project from Sam Ellis and Dirk Maes. We then split into groups to do assessments for specific regions that were not so well covered (Mediterranean, Continental). The meeting ended with a celebration of BC Europe's 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday. We all raised a glass to the health of BC Europe and Martin Wearren gave a summary of the many achievements that the partnership had made in its first 21 years. He explained that we had achieved a lot by working together and sharing our experiences, and looked forward to more successes and collaboration in the years ahead.



*Delegates to the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of BC Europe partners, held at Laufen, December 2025*



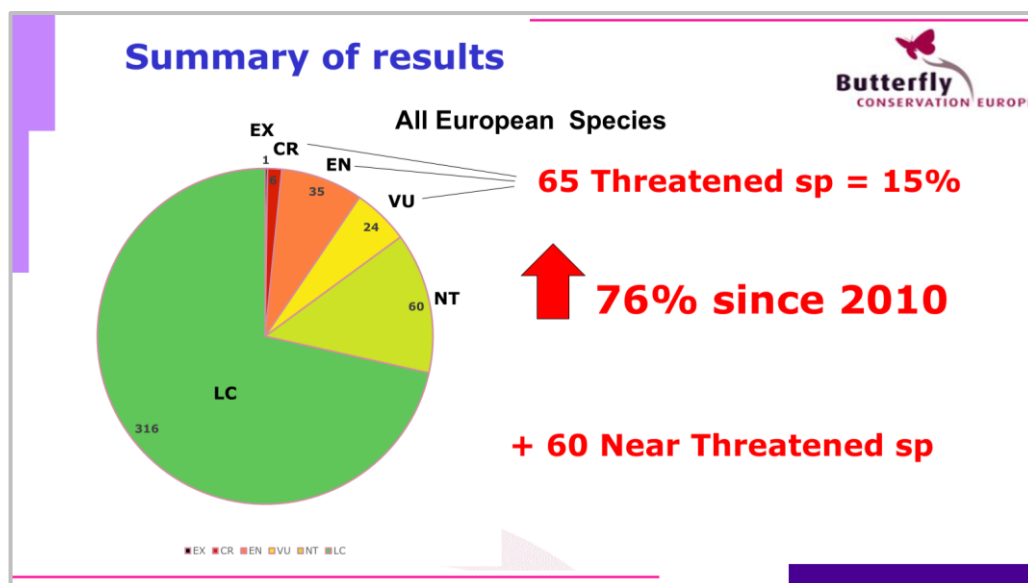
## European Butterfly Red List

By Chris van Swaay, Sam Ellis and Martin Warren

The Red List was finally published in late 2025 and can be downloaded on our [website](#). The following is a summary of the key findings.

1. 442 species were assessed (note that species found in Europe but with most of their range outside Europe were excluded).
2. One species is extinct: *Pieris wollastoni* (the Madeiran Large White), a species that was restricted to the island of Madeira (Portugal) that has not been reported since 1986.
3. Of the 441 extant species, 14.7% (65 species) are considered as threatened at the European level; comprising 1.4% (6 sp.) Critically Endangered, 7.9% (35 species) Endangered, and 5.4% (24 species) Vulnerable. A further 13.6% (60 species) of species are classified as Near Threatened.
4. The situation is even worse when it comes to endemic species for which Europe has a unique responsibility. Of the 148 extant endemic species: 19.6% (29 species) are threatened and 21.6% (32 species) Near Threatened. Thus over 40% of Europe's endemic butterflies are now threatened or close to being so.
5. Over one quarter (28.3% = 125 species) of butterflies are now threatened or Near Threatened at the European level and almost one-third (30.9%) in the EU27.
6. Since the last assessment (Van Swaay et al., 2010), the percentage of species that are now threatened has increased since the last assessment by 73% (from 8.5% to 14.7%). In pure numerical terms this equates to an increase of 76% (from 37 to 65 species). When Near Threatened species are included, the number of species listed has risen by 54.3% (from 81 to 125).

We would like to thank the many experts who contributed their knowledge to this important project which has raised awareness of important issues and will allow better targeting of conservation resources.





## Moth Red List update

*By Jurriën van Deijk, Dutch BC*

The project team of Jurriën van Deijk, Mark Parsons, Phil Sterling and the IUCN with the indispensable help of many moth experts across Europe are about to finish the first European Red List of all 3177 larger moth species plus the only Habitats Directive micro-moth *Glyphipterix loricatella*. In this European Red List, we combined all information from 69 experts from the Macaronesian islands to Russia and Iceland to European Türkiye.

This information is combined with published papers and available data, such as national and personal databases, and global databases like GBIF, to identify which species are threatened based on the IUCN criteria. All 3,178 larger moth species were assessed, and an estimate has been made of the probability that the species will become extinct in Europe in the short term.

All draft assessments have been completed by the project team, and the IUCN is performing all consistency checks. The Red List will be published in the next update of the Red List website, which is scheduled for July 2026.



*Eublemma rosea* - North Macedonia (Photo: Jurriën van Deijk)

## Influencing European policies

*By Aidan Whitfield and Sue Collins*

BC Europe continues to be an active member of the European Habitats Forum which scrutinizes and advises on the development of EU Biodiversity Policies. The year has been dominated by the implementation of the Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR) and the development of the delegated act that will establish the EU Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (EUPoMS). Article 11 (2) of the NRR covers the restoration of agricultural ecosystems and requires Member States to achieve an increasing trend in at least 2 of the 3 indicators:

- (a) grassland butterfly index (GBI)
- (b) stock of organic carbon in cropland mineral soils
- (c) agricultural land with high-diversity landscape features

Member States are currently developing their **Nature Restoration Plans (NRP)** and must carry out a public consultation of their draft NRP then submit the draft to the Commission by 1 September 2026. In their draft NRP they will have to propose which 2 indicators they intend to use. The other key areas of work included:

- Producing a guidance document “The benefits and cost-effectiveness of Butterfly Monitoring Schemes” which has been sent to all eBMS Coordinators and is available on our website.
- As part of the EMBRACE project, BCE has offered to have bilateral meetings with MS to discuss them supporting their BMS. No meetings have happened so far.
- In November, we asked the BMS Coordinators if their Member State intends to use the GBI as one of their indicators and most of the Coordinators have replied. Many Coordinators have had discussions with their Member State but they have not yet decided which to use.
- Aidan met DG Environment officials in October to ask about a database and Apps to support EUPoMS for bees, butterflies, hoverflies and moths, including a sample tracking facility for bees and hoverflies. He offered our experience of running an EU wide database (located at UKCEH) with the Butterfly Count App providing a national and language specific interface. He also discussed the moth monitoring element of the EUPoMS and again offered our expertise and the need for adequate funding both for this and the ongoing eBMS.

### NRR - Timeline of the development of EUPoMS

- In May 2025, the Commission produced a first draft of the delegated act which was discussed at the 12th meeting of the EU Working Group on Pollinators held on-line on 28th May. Many Member States raised significant objections to the draft text.
- In June 2025, the Commission produced a second draft of the delegated act which was discussed at the 3rd meeting of the EU NRR Expert Group held on-line on 1st July. The text had been amended to accommodate many of the concerns raised by Member States. It was clear that the majority of Member States would accept the second draft.
- From mid-June to mid-July 2025, the Commission ran a public consultation on the second draft. BCE submitted a formal response supporting the Commission proposal. There were just over 4000 responses, and the overwhelming majority of them supported the Commission proposal.
- On 19 September the Commission adopted the delegated act, and it was then subject to a 2 month scrutiny period during which it could have been rejected by the European Parliament.
- On 26 November 2025, the delegated act was published into EU official Journal, and it will automatically come into force 20 days later, on 16 December 2025.

## European Butterflies Group

By Mike Prentice



We continue to focus our efforts on threatened species, In May Sam Ellis and Dave Plowman led a trip to Sardinia to survey for Sardinian Blue (*Pseudophilotes barbagiae*) which is listed as Endangered in the recently published Red List. I am pleased to say that the team found the butterfly on several sites and since the EBG surveys our Italian colleagues have committed to undertake regular monitoring of the species.

Once again we gave a bursary to Mario Alamo in Spain to undertake surveys for Southern Hermit (*Chazara prieuri*) and again he did a fantastic job. His survey results are available on our website. They surveyed 58 sites with two observers at each site. No new sites for *prieuri* were found but the survey did find greater abundance of the species on the known sites which is the first piece of good news about the species for several years. In total Mario and his team saw 48 individuals in 8 localities.

In 2025 we continued our work on Danube Clouded Yellow (*Colias myrmidone*) in Romania. I visited the eastern populations at the very beginning of June but only saw one individual but Romania had an unusually cold and wet Spring which affected emergence. In August we took a group to the western population in the Apuseni where the results were slightly curious – in general numbers seemed lower than normal except on one site where we saw 75 individuals and I concluded that due to the cold Spring we may have missed peak emergence (Laszlo Rakosy saw the species in good numbers a week or so before our trip). The good news is that the best *myrmidone* site which also has two *Phengaris* species – *telejus* and *alcon*, Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) and Large Copper (*Lycaena dispar*) is being designated as a Natura 2000 site.

In June we again assisted Laszlo Rakosy and Lieven Caekerbeke with surveys of Nogels Hairstreak (*Tomares nogelii*). The species was present in good numbers and the range is more extensive than previously known. In view of the news of the possible extinction of Canary Islands Large White (*Pieris cheiranthi cheiranthi*) on Tenerife we will be organising survey trips in 2026 in cooperation with ZERYNTHIA. Finally, following two years of surveying EBG has financed the Species Action Plan for Nevada Grayling *Pseudochazara williamsi* which Jose Miguel Barea has produced in English and Spanish and is available on the BC Europe website.



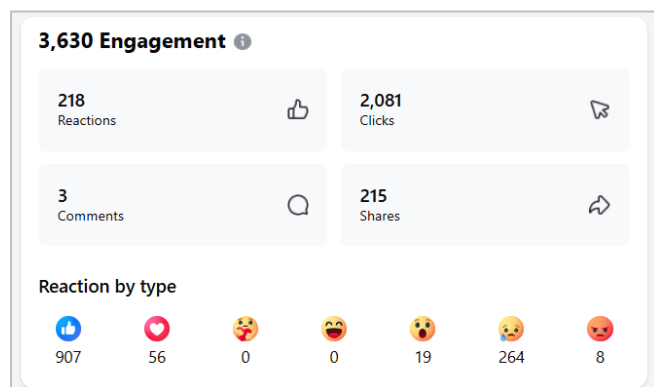
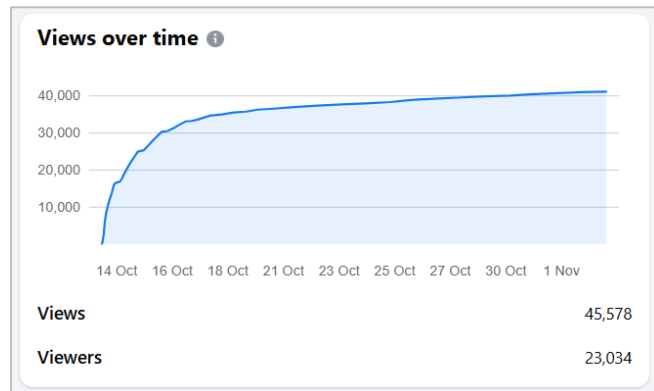
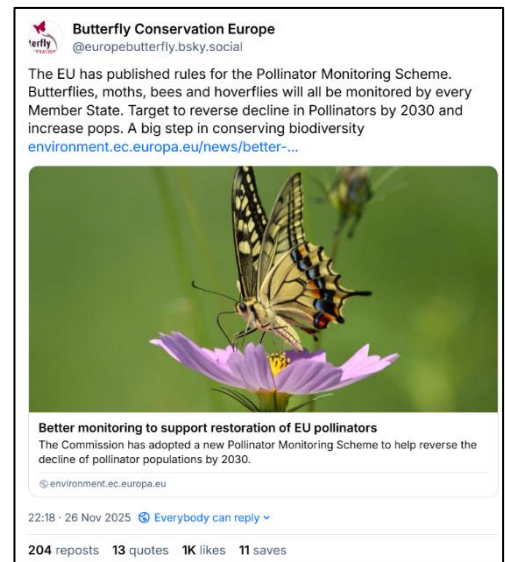
*Pseudochazara williamsi*  
(Nevada Grayling)  
(Photo: Sam Ellis)

## Social Media

By Martin Warren and Cristina Sevilleja

We continue to post regularly on Facebook and Bluesky and now have 4,600 and 2,100 followers respectively. We have found a far better level of engagement since we moved from X to Bluesky and our post in November about the new EUPoMS reached over 1,000 likes.

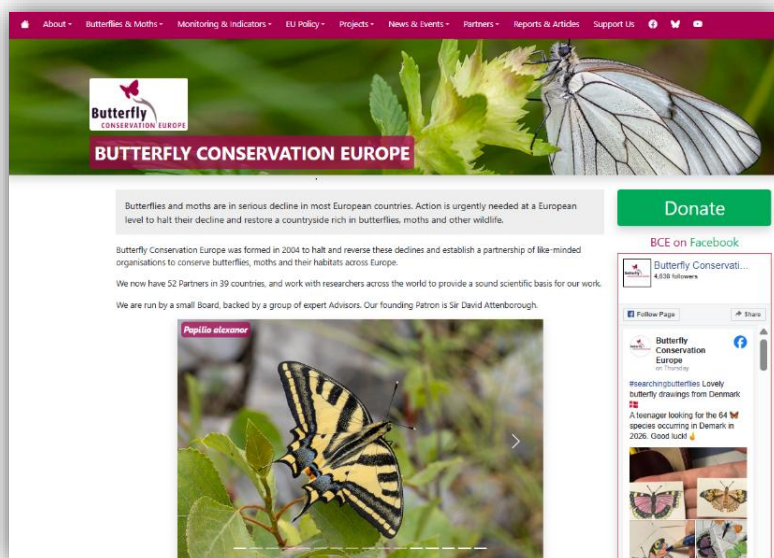
In Facebook, the engagement is rising as well and it depends a lot on the content. In 2025, the post with the publication of the Red List of Butterflies got more than 45,000 views in a few days.





## Website

For the last few years, our website has been hosted by De Vlinderstichting, but as they are moving to a new platform, the time seemed right to move to a stand-alone platform of our own. We are very grateful to have had the help of **Peter Eeles** to facilitate this move, and we launched the **new website in October**. It has a number of new functions including a new species section with downloadable country butterfly lists and links to the new comprehensive list of foodplants produced by Harry Clarke. We also took the opportunity to update many of the sections and add links to more reports.



We would like to invite our partners to make use of the blog section to disseminate their work. We are very grateful for Peter's help and are delighted that he is staying with us as Webmaster.

## Acknowledgements

We are very grateful for the ongoing financial support of Dutch Butterfly Conservation (De Vlinderstichting) as well as Corporate sponsorship from Astrid Vargas from sales of her book, and Greenwings and Mariposa tours. We would also like to thank the Board and Partners of BC Europe who give their time freely.

