

*Butterfly & moth recording in Aggtelek National Park, Hungary:
A photographic summary*



Kelly Thomas (2008)

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Some typical views in and around Aggtelek National Park, Hungary

In Aggtelek National Park, Hungary, we were surrounded by a wealth of natural beauty and abundant wildlife. Just a short walk from any village and you could find yourself in a grassland rich in flora and teeming with insect activity. Incredibly in just two weeks (June 29th – July 17th) we saw 90 species, over half the Hungarian butterfly fauna. Even for those of us familiar with British butterfly fauna the trip proved to be a steep learning curve!



Some butterflies were more co-operative than others!
*Marbled White *Melanargia galathea* (left), Baton Blue *Pseudopylotes baton* (right)*



*Blue Spot Hairstreak *Satyrium spini* White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrium w-album**



Scarce Swallowtail *Iphiclidides podalirius* adult (left), caterpillar (right)



Spotted Fritillary *Melitaea didyma*



Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia*



Hungarian Glider *Neptis rivularis*



Marbled White *Melanargia galathea*

Day-flying moths and moth caterpillars were also encountered during our survey work.



Zygæna carniolica



Nine-spotted
Syntomis phegea



Hummingbird Hawk-moth
Macroglossum stellatarum



Gypsy moth
Lymantria dispar

In the evenings moth traps were run in the gardens of Salamander House. One of my favourite moths caught was the Oak Hawk-moth *Marumba quercus*. Sussex Emerald *Thalera fimbrialis* is a protected species in Britain because it is so rare, we recorded several in Hungary. Many species already familiar from Britain were also seen such as Peach Blossom *Thyatira batis*, Peppered Moth *Biston betularia* and Pale Prominent *Pterostoma palpina*. Over 175 moth species were recorded.



Oak Hawk-moth
Marumba quercus

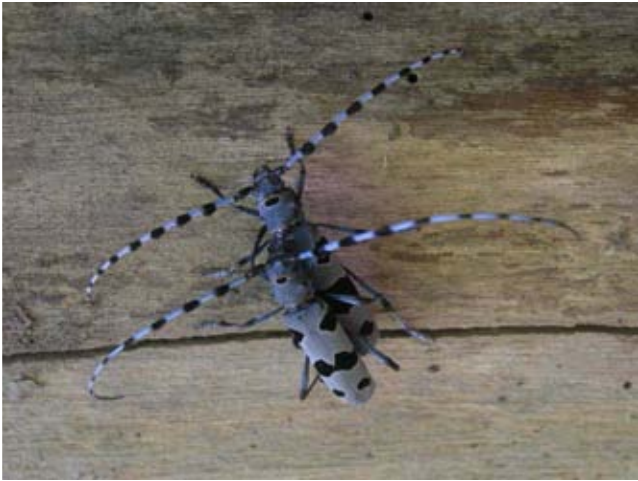


Moth tray (left), Pale Prominent *Pterostoma palpina* (right)



Sussex Emerald
Thalera fimbrialis

Other invertebrates: Numerous other invertebrate species were recorded.



Rosalia alpine: this rare species was observed during a day trip to Slovakia (left), European Praying Mantis *Mantis religiosa* (right)



Predators: *Saga pedo* (left), *Thomisus onustus* attacking a Marbled White *Melanargia galathea* (right)



European Stag Beetle *Lucanus cervus* (left), Roman Snail *Helix pomatia* (right)

Birds: Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* were frequently seen, we also saw European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster*, Hoopoe *Upupa epops* and a distant Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*. The highlight for me was seeing the White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* nests on the pylons in many of the villages. We also saw the rarer Black Storks *Ciconia nigra*.



White Stork nest: these birds are nestlings!

Mammals: Despite their elusive nature there were several mammal sightings. At our on-route camp in Germany I had a close view of a Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* and in Hungary I had a fleeting glimpse of a marten sp *Martes spp.* darting across the road. The whole group had the opportunity to closely examine the Wildcat hybrid *Felis silvestris hybrid* roadkill when Nigel stopped the minibus for a closer look. My favourite mammal experience of the trip was undoubtedly the bats. We were privileged to observe the emergence of a colony of Mediterranean Horseshoe bats *Rhinolophus Euryale*. A few of us were also lucky enough to see the Lesser Horseshoe bats *Rhinolophus hipposideros* which were roosting in the attic of Salamander House.

Reptiles & Amphibians: Species included Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis*, Green Lizard *Lacerta viridis*, Agile Frog *Rana dalmatina* and the spectacular Fire Salamander *Salamandra salamandra*.



Agile Frog *Rana dalmatina* (left), Green Lizard *Lacerta viridis* (right)

Photos: The photo of the Marbled White on my hand and the group photo were kindly supplied by Richard Belding. All other images were taken by me and have been compressed to put in this report. If you would like copies of any images at the original resolution please email me (Shorelinekelly@aol.com).



The official group photo (János is missing)

Summary & Acknowledgements: During the visit not only did we learn about the butterflies and moths of Aggtelek National Park, but a wealth of information about the flora and fauna, and the culture of this region. We visited the spectacular cave systems, local villages and just to be polite sampled the local pálinka (even at 10am immediately before doing a butterfly survey!). Thanks to everyone who made this trip the great experience it was, it will always have a special place in my memories.

Kelly Thomas
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