

Butterfly Camp; Órség National Park, Western Hungary

21st – 26th May 2011

Following a fantastic EuCAN trip to the geological wonder that is the Aggtelek National Park in North-Eastern Hungary back in March 2010, it was a welcome opportunity to be invited back the following summer to the Órség National Park. For the first time ever, the Hungarian National Heritage Trust organised an international butterfly and moth conservation camp for young people interested in getting involved in the conservation of Lepidoptera across Europe.

16 participants from all across Europe spent a week in the beautiful wild-flower meadows and woodlands of the Park, practising survey methods, practical habitat management, identification skills and population mapping of priority species including the Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) and Clouded Apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*). Experts, including many of the leading members of Butterfly Conservation Europe (BCE), provided their invaluable up-to-date knowledge through presentations, posters and general interaction throughout the camp. Presentation topics ranged from butterfly-ant mutualism: the role of *Myrmica* ants; to European butterflies as indicators; threats and conservation of grassland butterflies in Slovakia; to direct conservation research – the effects of mowing on *Maculinea teleius*: a habitat management experiment.

It was a fantastic opportunity to interact with like-minded individuals from across Europe and to really get involved with butterfly conservation – indeed for me as a UK participant, it was an opportunity to see a vast number of species which do not even exist on our island! Everyone had a brilliant experience, learning about the biology and conservation of butterflies and moths, taking part in active management, ‘sampling’ the local palinka and goulash, making hay, admiring the storks, picking wild strawberries and trying to find the missing Racka sheep... we did not. Indeed the week was such a success, most of us have already signed up to return in July 2012 ready to take part in a metapopulation study of the *Maculinea* species – watch this space...



Entrance sign to the Órség National Park



The localised Hungarian Glider *Neptis rivularis*
and Large Copper *Lycaena dispar*

Swallowtail *Papilio machaon* caterpillar



Mark-Release-Recapture of Clouded Apollo *Parnassius mnemosyne* – number 31



Top left – Natascha and Gabor search for the Camberwell Beauty *Nymphalis antiopa*
"just there on that little green leaf – why can't you see it?!"

Top Right – Jess and Natascha with their butterfly nets



Left – Traditional wild boar goulash – note: Hungarians will not take kindly to the inclusion of vegetables in their goulash!



Gabor strims the scrub



Left: Kirstie and Natascha make hay while the sun shines



Right: Wildflower meadow in the National Park