

BBI-Matra/2008/015

Kaçkar Butterfly Camp Report

18-25 July 2009 / Artvin



Photo: ©Şemsettin Turga

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Back row:

Elif Öztürk, Irma Wynhoff, Bosse van Swaay, Chris van Swaay

Middle row:

Şenol Şahin (*driver*), Emre Kaytan, İsmail Aykut (*driver*),
Gülhanım Çakmak, Rasim Çakmak, Neriman Temel, Ebru Kaytan,
Ezgi Akdeşir, Halil Fırat, Dirk Maes, Ümit Durdu, Oktay Subaşı

Front row:

Hilary Welch, Evrim Karaçetin, Bülent Altınbaş, Asuman Gem,
Seda Emel Tek, Paul Severns, Şemsettin Turga, Deniz Biriken

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**agriculture, nature
and food quality**

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KAÇKAR BUTTERFLY CAMP



Polyommatus amandus, *Plebeius pylaon* & *P. idas* © Hilary & Geoff Welch/DKM archive



Butterfly watching at Olgunlar
© Oktay Subaşı



Büyükçay Valley, Yaylalar
© Hilary & Geoff Welch / DKM archive

The Nature Conservation Centre (DKM) organised a 'Kaçkar Butterfly Camp' in Artvin between 18-25 July 2009 as a part of a project to develop a basis for the active conservation of Turkey's butterflies, supported by the Netherlands' Agriculture and Food Ministry's BBI-Matra programme. A mix of nineteen foreign and Turkish participants joined the week-long butterfly watching activities.

The camp had two main objectives. The first was to bring together butterfly watchers and conservation experts to see and enjoy the rich diversity of butterflies in the Kaçkar mountains at Yusufeli, a nationally and internationally recognised biodiversity hotspot. The second was to act as an example of responsible nature-based tourism, demonstrating to the local people the potential this has as a source of additional income.

Turkish butterfly watchers participated from Ankara, Bursa, Çanakkale, İstanbul, Kars, Kayseri, Bitlis and Diyarbakır, and foreign experts joined from the USA, Belgium, the Netherlands and England. The cost of local travel, accommodation and food were paid by the project for the Turkish participants, but the foreign experts covered their own expenses and were keen to support the project and the sustainable use initiatives in the area. During the camp, daytime activities revolved around butterfly watching, photography, species identification and habitat-species relationships. In the evenings there was time for data entry, butterfly identification workshops and butterfly conservation presentations, the latter largely given by the foreign experts. All were enthusiastically attended by the participants, and understanding and communication were greatly facilitated by Ezgi Akdeşir, a PhD Veterinary student from Uludağ University, who translated the formal presentations. The talks provoked much discussion about data sharing, the threats to the Kaçkars and what butterfly watchers could do to contribute to butterfly conservation.

The Butterfly Camp's aim of acting as an example of nature-based tourism fitted well with the objectives of two major projects active in the area: the 'Kaçkar Mountains sustainable forest use and conservation project' being implemented by TEMA and DKM and funded by the EU; and 'Tourism Development in Eastern Anatolia' – the 'DATUR' project funded by UNDP. Ecotourism is a major aim of both these projects and the DKM team liaised and communicated with TEMA and DATUR project members before and during the camp in order to support this. Through Mehmet Turan, local project officer for the TEMA Kaçkar project, the Camp organisers were put in contact with Rasim Çakar, an Öğdem local who is keen to establish local pensions in village houses. Additionally, when in Erzurum, before the camp started, the team made contact with the DATUR project coordinator, Egemen Çakır, and through him Bülent Altınbaş agreed to join the Camp to help with logistics and communicating with the local people.

During the Camp the participants were encouraged to be aware of and seek to understand the differences in the habitats and butterflies they saw at each location, as well as trying to observe and identify as many species of butterflies as possible.



Öğdem

© Hilary & Geoff Welch / DKM archive

With this in mind two very different locations were selected for the Camp's main bases, with three nights spent at each. Hilary Welch and Evrim Karaçetin both have extensive knowledge of this part of the Kaçkars (due to their involvement in butterfly survey work here in 2008 for the TEMA-DKM project), so they were able to select appropriate locations not only with varied butterfly communities but also with the capacity to accommodate a group of 18+ people sustainably. Thus Öğdem was selected as one of the two centres because, through contacts in the TEMA-DKM project, it was possible to arrange to stay in local houses and thus demonstrate the possibilities of nature-based tourism in an area of very low population where the opportunities for income generation are few. This area is also unique in the Kaçkars as the climate, influenced by the Çoruh River valley, supports a Mediterranean type vegetation and very different butterfly communities. During the week the group visited three locations in this unique region, at Öğdem, Havuzlu and Bahçeli.

The Camp's second base was in the traditionally managed subalpine meadows of the Kaçkars at Olgunlar-Yaylalar. In addition, on the day spent travelling from Öğdem to Olgunlar, a prolonged lunch stop in meadows near Altıparmak enabled the group to explore the wooded riparian habitats along the Barhal river and add four species to the week's list.

In an effort to reduce the group's environmental footprint in this remote area where basic services are few, DKM provided plastic sacks and all participants took part in collecting all the rubbish generated by the group during the week. At the end the rubbish was transported back to Erzurum for disposal. This was a simple and effective contribution to conserving the natural beauty of the area.

The Kaçkar Butterfly Camp was made possible by the participation and support of many people. DKM was particularly grateful for the enthusiastic support of Mevlüt Özmen, Mayor of Yusufeli, who stressed the value of this Camp and similar activities based on the region's natural values for the local economy. Also greatly valued was the interest and support of Murat Can, Chief of the Yusufeli National Parks Office, who not only supported the aims of the Camp and joined briefly with the first butterfly watching activities, but also ensured that the local jandarma and villages were kept informed of the Camp's activities.

The DKM team hopes that this Camp has provided a useful example of sensitive, low-impact butterfly tourism and that it may lead to an increase in such activities. This type of nature-based tourism can be an important tool for both supporting the local economy and protecting the region's rich biodiversity.



Olgunlar and the Düpedüz Valley

© Hilary & Geoff Welch / DKM archive

CAMP DIARY

17 July, Friday – Gathering in Erzurum



Coenonympha symphyta
© Hilary & Geoff Welch / DKM archive

Project assistant Asuman Gem arrived in Erzurum to meet the foreign participants: Chris van Swaay, Irma Wynhoff and their son Bosse (Netherlands), Dirk Maes (Belgium) and Paul Severns (USA). In the evening they all met up with Didem Ambarlı, Hilary Welch, Ümit Durdu, Szabolcs Sáfián (Hungary) and Evrim Karaçetin who were already in Erzurum.

18 July, Saturday – Visit to Palandöken Mountains



Ski slope developments, Palandöken
© Hilary & Geoff Welch / DKM archive

Two teams assessed:

- a) the impact of the ski resort developments for the 2011 University Olympics on biological diversity and butterflies, and
- b) the quality of less disturbed habitats away from the ski resort area.

The team investigating the impact of the ski resort developments considered the greatest concern was the number and location of new roads being built to provide access for the large machinery. Discussions were held with the site foreman and it was clear that the construction team was not insensitive to their effects on the environment and seemed open to the recommendation of rehabilitating the grassland with local seed sources and through natural regeneration.

The second team visited some of Palandöken's more remote alpine-subalpine grasslands and found they were being overgrazed by large flocks of sheep whose owners come mostly from Elazığ and surrounding cities. Conversations with the local cattle owners indicated that they were unhappy about these big flocks which they said were leading to a decline in grass quantity and quality. One shepherd stated that nomadic people dig up *Astragalus* for fuel and that this increases soil erosion. Very few butterfly species (22 in total) were recorded by the team though this might in part have been due to the high altitude (2700m) and relatively cool temperatures. Two of the most common species were *Aglais urticae* and *Vanessa cardui*, both of which were showing migratory behaviour. The migration of *Vanessa cardui* was spectacular with a maximum of 57 individuals per minute recorded flying to the south-west.

On the way back to Erzurum the second team came across a tour bus with four Japanese men collecting butterflies in a deep narrow valley by the road. Evrim Karaçetin called the Jandarma (who are responsible for local security) but unfortunately the bus left the area before legal procedures could be started. Later the same day Evrim Karaçetin visited the local Jandarma to inform them about the law relating to the collection of butterflies and of the importance of the Palandöken Mountains for butterflies and biodiversity. From this conversation it was clear that the Jandarma was not aware that butterfly collecting is illegal and can have a severe detrimental affect on local polulations. On her return to Ankara a few days later, Didem Ambarlı thus sent a fax



Nomad herds, Palandöken
© Bosse van Swaay



Butterfly collectors, Palandöken
© DKM archive

to the Jandarma Office providing information on the regulations relating to trade in butterflies and their collection from the wild. On 15th of August, the Jandarma's provincial Environment Team leader called her with the news that they were trying to catch another group of foreigners collecting butterflies. In order to be successful they were seeking detailed information about the legal procedure to be followed. The DKM team was able to help by putting the Jandarma in contact with the CITES expert at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. It was gratifying in the end to have a positive outcome and to have raised awareness with the Jandarma in a Prime Butterfly Area as a result of one visit, distribution of DKM's butterfly project brochure and a fax providing more information.

Meanwhile all the remaining participants of the Kaçkar Butterfly Camp had gathered in Erzurum. In the evening Szabolcs Sáfián ('Safi') gave a presentation on the biogeography, ecology and butterflies of the Yusufeli-Kaçkar area. Safi knows this area well as he took part in three weeks of butterfly fieldwork for the TEMA Kaçkar project in 2008. Together with BIYOTEMATUR he had also led the first foreign butterfly tour here in the two weeks immediately before the Camp.

19 July, Sunday – Travelling to Öğdem



Öğdem road
© Hilary & Geoff Welch / DKM archive

The group travelled from Erzurum to Öğdem in two minibuses, stopping in Yusufeli for lunch and a shopping break. From Yusufeli to Öğdem, the Head of the Yusufeli Directorate of National Parks, Murat Can, joined the group with the aim of passing on his support for the Camp to the local village chief. Reaching Öğdem mid afternoon, the group immediately started watching butterflies around the houses and on the edge of the meadow in the centre of the village.

In the evening, after an excellent home-cooked dinner, Dirk Maes gave a talk in the open air on data recording and butterfly conservation, with examples from Belgium.

20 July, Monday – Öğdem and Havuzlu



Havuzlu meadows
© Hilary & Geoff Welch / DKM archive

Today the group divided into two teams, one staying in Öğdem and the other going to Havuzlu, a journey of almost two hours. The aim today was to record butterflies from discrete habitats and to start to understand which species are related with which habitat.

In the evening, all records were entered to computer by the team members and Evrim Karaçetin led a butterfly identification discussion. This was followed by Irma Wynhoff giving a presentation on the ecology and conservation of *Maculinea* butterflies in the Netherlands.

21 July, Tuesday – Öğdem and Havuzlu

The previous day's activities were repeated but the groups changed locations. In the evening Paul Severns gave a talk on the butterflies of Oregon.

22 July, Wednesday – Öğdem to Olgunlar



Polyommatus corydonius, a species near endemic to Turkey ©Szabolcs Sáfián

The group left Öğdem and travelled along the Altıparmak River towards Olgunlar, stopping at some meadows just before Barhal for lunch and a butterfly watching break. The habitat here was riverine vegetation with many *Ulmus* trees. Although the group was not able to see the species hoped for (*Nymphalis xanthomelas* and *Satyrrium w-album*) it recorded many new species and four that weren't seen anywhere else during the week – *Colias caucasica*, *Brenthis daphne*, *Esperarge climene* and *Pararge aegeria*.

Late in the afternoon the group arrived in Olgunlar, at the Kaçkar Pension.

In the evening Chris van Swaay gave a presentation on butterfly recording entitled 'Not observed or not present?'

23 July, Thursday – Olgunlar



Paul, above Olgunlar
© Hilary & Geoff Welch / DKM archive

Yaylalar and Olgunlar villages are surrounded by managed subalpine and alpine meadows. Despite the apparent lack of diversity of habitats the area provides a range of micro habitats – due to the cutting for hay and grazing with cows combined with the variety of aspects and altitude – and these support a high number of butterfly species. For butterfly watching the group divided into four teams, each going in different directions: NE along the road towards Yaylalar, SW up the Büyükçay Valley, NW up Düpedüz Valley and SE up the mountainside behind Olgunlar.

Although most groups were plagued by rain for much of the day, there were no complaints. By searching for sheltering butterflies it was easy to find new species and take good photographs. In addition, the very heavy rain at the end of the day provided an opportunity for people to sit together in the pension and discuss the new and difficult species.

In the evening, Chris van Swaay gave a presentation entitled 'Sharing and using data for conservation' and Hilary Welch presented the threats that butterflies face in Turkey and the Kaçkar region. This was followed by an interesting debate about what individuals could usefully do to contribute to butterfly conservation in Turkey, and where conservation action should be targeted.

24 July, Friday – Olgunlar



Lycaena candens
© Hilary & Geoff Welch / DKM Archive

This was the last full day and everyone made their own plan, learning from the observations of the previous day's groups and visiting the places where others had seen species of interest.

In the evening Oktay Subaşı showed us photographs of the Butterflies of Tatvan.

25 July, Saturday – Olgunlar-Yusufeli-Erzurum



Hipparchia parisatis
© Hilary & Geoff Welch / DKM archive

Today the group drove back to Erzurum. Due to heavy rain the previous evening the road east of Yaylalar was closed. However, after only an hour's wait the road was opened and the group headed for Bahçeli, a village less than 10km north of Yusufeli and lying in the Mediterranean enclave. Bahçeli lies in a deep, hot and dry rocky valley with large fruit trees and small patches of cultivation. Above, the hillsides are steep and sparsely covered with shrubs. Here a selection of species specific to this habitat were recorded, including *Hipparchia parisatis*, *Polyommatus hoppferi* and *Polyommatus merhaba*.

On the drive from Bahçeli to Yusufeli a female wild goat with two kids was spotted near the road and the group stopped to watch them. It was good to be reminded that this amazing region is very important for a whole range of wildlife.

After lunch in Yusufeli the group continued to Erzurum, stopping only for a brief touristic visit to Tortum Waterfall.

Species Recorded (18 July records from Palandöken not included)

1	<i>Erynnis tages</i>	49	<i>Lycaena ochimus</i>	97	<i>Brenthis daphne</i>
2	<i>Erynnis marloyi</i>	50	<i>Favonius quercus</i>	98	<i>Brenthis hecate</i>
3	<i>Carcharodus alceae</i>	51	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>	99	<i>Boloria caucasica</i>
4	<i>Carcharodus lavatherae</i>	52	<i>Satyrium spini</i>	100	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>
5	<i>Carcharodus flocciferus</i>	53	<i>Satyrium ilicis</i>	101	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
6	<i>Carcharodus orientalis</i>	54	<i>Satyrium acaciae</i>	102	<i>Aglais urticae</i>
7	<i>Spialia phlomidis</i>	55	<i>Satyrium abdominalis</i>	103	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>
8	<i>Spialia orbifer</i>	56	<i>Lampides boeticus</i>	104	<i>Polygonia egea</i>
9	<i>Pyrgus sidae</i>	57	<i>Tarucus balkanicus</i>	105	<i>Thaleropsis ionia</i>
10	<i>Pyrgus melotis</i>	58	<i>Cupido osiris</i>	106	<i>Limenitis reducta</i>
11	<i>Pyrgus serratulae</i>	59	<i>Cupido argiades</i>	107	<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>
12	<i>Pyrgus cinarae</i>	60	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	108	<i>Melitaea cinxia</i>
13	<i>Pyrgus armoricanus</i>	61	<i>Pseudophilotes vicrama</i>	109	<i>Melitaea phoebe</i>
14	<i>Pyrgus alveus</i>	62	<i>Glaucopteryx alcon</i>	110	<i>Melitaea trivia</i>
15	<i>Thymelicus lineola</i>	63	<i>Turanana endymion</i>	111	<i>Melitaea didyma</i>
16	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>	64	<i>Chilades trochylus</i>	112	<i>Melitaea perseae</i>
17	<i>Thymelicus novus</i>	65	<i>Plebeius pylaon</i>	113	<i>Melitaea interrupta</i>
18	<i>Hesperia comma</i>	66	<i>Plebeius argus</i>	114	<i>Melitaea diamina</i>
19	<i>Ochlodes venatus</i>	67	<i>Plebeius idas</i>	115	<i>Melitaea athalia</i>
20	<i>Parnassius mnemosyne</i>	68	<i>Plebeius loewii</i>	116	<i>Esperarge climene</i>
21	<i>Parnassius apollo</i>	69	<i>Plebeius eurypilus</i>	117	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>
22	<i>Iphiclidides podalirius</i>	70	<i>Plebeius pyrenaicus</i>	118	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>
23	<i>Papilio machaon</i>	71	<i>Plebeius eumedon</i>	119	<i>Lasiommata petropolitana</i>
24	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	72	<i>Plebeius agestis</i>	120	<i>Lasiommata maera</i>
25	<i>Anthocharis damone</i>	73	<i>Plebeius artaxerxes</i>	121	<i>Coenonympha leander</i>
26	<i>Aporia crataegi</i>	74	<i>Plebeius anteros</i>	122	<i>Coenonympha symphyta</i>
27	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	75	<i>Polyommatus semiargus</i>	123	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>
28	<i>Pieris mannii</i>	76	<i>Polyommatus coelestinus</i>	124	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>
29	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	77	<i>Polyommatus dorylas</i>	125	<i>Hyponephele lycaon</i>
30	<i>Pieris ergane</i>	78	<i>Polyommatus amandus</i>	126	<i>Hyponephele lupina</i>
31	<i>Pieris napi</i>	79	<i>Polyommatus thersites</i>	127	<i>Erebia aethiops</i>
32	<i>Pieris bryoniae</i>	80	<i>Polyommatus aedon</i>	128	<i>Erebia medusa</i>
33	<i>Pontia edusa</i>	81	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	129	<i>Erebia hewitsonii</i>
34	<i>Pontia chloridice</i>	82	<i>Polyommatus daphnis</i>	130	<i>Erebia melancholica</i>
35	<i>Colias crocea</i>	83	<i>Polyommatus bellargus</i>	131	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>
36	<i>Colias caucasica</i>	84	<i>Polyommatus corydonius</i>	132	<i>Melanargia larissa</i>
37	<i>Colias alfacariensis</i>	85	<i>Polyommatus ripartii</i>	133	<i>Satyrus amasinus</i>
38	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>	86	<i>Polyommatus admetus</i>	134	<i>Hipparchia syriaca</i>
39	<i>Gonepteryx farinosa</i>	87	<i>Polyommatus hopfferi</i>	135	<i>Hipparchia statilinus</i>
40	<i>Leptidea sinapis</i>	88	<i>Polyommatus merhaba</i>	136	<i>Hipparchia fatua</i>
41	<i>Leptidea duponcheli</i>	89	<i>Polyommatus damon</i>	137	<i>Hipparchia parisatis</i>
42	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	90	<i>Polyommatus iphigenia</i>	138	<i>Arethusana arethusa</i>
43	<i>Lycaena virgaureae</i>	91	<i>Argynnis paphia</i>	139	<i>Brintesia circe</i>
44	<i>Lycaena tityrus</i>	92	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>	140	<i>Chazara briseis</i>
45	<i>Lycaena alciphron</i>	93	<i>Argynnis aglaja</i>	141	<i>Chazara bischoffii</i>
46	<i>Lycaena candens</i>	94	<i>Argynnis adippe</i>	142	<i>Pseudochazara geyeri</i>
47	<i>Lycaena thetis</i>	95	<i>Argynnis niobe</i>	143	<i>Pseudochazara mniszecii</i>
48	<i>Lycaena asabinus</i>	96	<i>Issoria lathonia</i>		

Participants



Halil, Ebru and Deniz in meadows above Olgunlar
©Oktay Subaşı



Evrin and Apollo
©Dirk Maes



Asuman and Ezgi, birdwatching
©Oktay Subaşı



Bülent, Evrim, Deniz and Seda, preparing lunch at Öğdem
©Şemsettin Turga

- Asuman Gem - Ankara
- Bosse van Swaay - Netherlands
- Bülent Altınbaş - Artvin+Istanbul
- Chris van Swaay - Netherlands
- Deniz Biriken - Çanakkale
- Dirk Maes - Belgium
- Ebru Kaytan - Ankara
- Elif Öztürk - Ankara
- Emre Kaytan - Ankara
- Evrin Karaçetin - Kayseri+Ankara
- Ezgi Akdeşir - Bursa
- Halil Fırat - Kayseri
- Hilary Welch - Ankara+England
- Irma Wynhoff - Netherlands
- Oktay Subaşı - Bitlis
- Paul Severns - USA
- Seda Emel Tek - Ankara
- Şemsettin Turga - Diyarbakır
- Ümit Durdu - Kars

OUR SINCERE THANKS TO:



Sleeping blues
©Chris van Swaay

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