

Interview to Lola Chaves – Dehesa de Dúrcal Sierra Nevada (Spain)



1. When did you start your transect?

I started my transect four years ago (in 2014) in the Dehesa de Dúrcal (within the Sierra Nevada National Park in the South of Spain). This transect is included in the Sierra Nevada BMS that began its journey in 2008 and which is part of the Sierra Nevada Global Change Observatory. I have been going up to the Dehesa de Dúrcal, located at almost **2000 meters above sea level**, twice a month from March to the end of September every year.



2. What was the reason for making a butterfly transect?

The main reason was, and continues to be, to learn about the butterflies that live near to me, to get a little closer to the insect world, and to understand better the environment around me. I am an Environmental Educator and consider **butterflies as a great educational resource and, of course, as indicators showing rapid changes in the environment**. Also, bringing these Sierra Nevada treasures closer to others and convey their importance is something that fulfils me on both a professional and personal level.



3. How did you discover BMS?

I discovered this citizen science program through another volunteer program to which I have long belonged – the Environmental Voluntary Network Association Sierra Nevada National and Natural Park. The Sierra Nevada Butterfly Monitoring Network was initially nourished by volunteers from that Association. They were looking for people interested in being part of a long-term monitoring network in the Sierra Nevada natural space with butterflies as protagonists. I signed up to find out about this initiative, **I loved it!**

4. Why do you like butterflies? Have you always liked insects?

From a very young age, I really liked nature. My childhood was closely linked to animals, the countryside and the mountains; my grandfather was a shepherd and I used to accompany him to the mountains with his cattle. I spent many hours of my childhood observing all living beings with enormous curiosity and thinking that when I grew up I wanted to dedicate myself to studying or healing animals.

I have always liked insects and especially butterflies, not only because they embellish the landscape, but also for the important functions they carry out in nature.

5. What do you learn by counting butterflies?

I learnt about all the species near the place where I live, their habitats, behaviours and food-plants. At the same time, I am discovering other species of fauna and flora observed in the area where I carry out my transect.



On the other hand, after a few years of data collection in an area so rich in butterflies, thousands of records are accumulating. Learning to manage that information and get the most out of it has also been a challenge of which I am especially proud. Every season I check my progress and I also see how my knowledge increases in a quick and enjoyable way.

Finally, something very important for me is that, **while I carry out my transect, I connect with nature and disconnect from daily work**, and all this brings me well-being, peace and wisdom.

6. Do you think that the effort you make in your transect is important?

Of course, I think it is very important for a multitude of reasons. My transect is located in a very inaccessible area, but at the same time extremely interesting ([the list of butterfly species in the Dehesa de Dúrcal is close to a hundred](#)). The data collected there is of great value and is providing essential information in the context of Sierra Nevada.

It is a place with difficult access that requires a great effort to complete my transect. I usually manage to get a ride with someone, but I often have to walk home through a river canyon for almost **four hours of walking**. All of this makes my altruistic collaboration so special and valuable.

7. How do you feel about being part of a large European community of volunteers?

I am proud to be part of this human team and initiative that is generating such important information. It is a great step for us to come together to move forward and gather all the information possible in the face of the rapid climate change. Sierra Nevada is an absolutely key site to study the phenomena of global change. We already **have twenty transects that cover most of the ecosystems of Sierra Nevada**. Encompassing and carrying out one of the most important transects gives me great responsibility and also enormous pride.



Iphiclides feisthamelii
@Lola Chaves

Interview with Edina Morvai – Hungary

1. What was the reason for making a butterfly transect?

I started my transect in 2016 as a student of Nature Conservation Engineering. The subject of my thesis was surveying butterflies by transect counts on the protected open Pannonian sand steppes around Lake Kolon.

2. How did you discover the Hungarian BMS?

My mentor, **András Szabadfalvi** (National Coordinator of BMS Hungary) introduced me to the BMS. He helped me to establish my transect and later, joined in some visits, for example when I had species identification difficulties.



Picture: one of the habitats of the Edina's transect

3. Why do you like butterflies? Have you always liked insects?

During my years at the university, I discovered the insect world and I really got to know it. The diversity of butterflies and their beauty is really interesting for me. I also found the life cycle of butterflies, such as that of the Large Blues, very exciting. Besides, I really enjoy spending time in nature during my transect walks.

4. What do you learn by counting butterflies?

Firstly, I gained hands-on experience in species identification. Secondly, walking the transect, I learn about many species and their habitat preferences. Also, I was able to observe butterfly species helping in the pollination, which was very interesting.



5. Do you think that the effort you make in your transect is important?

I think it is very important because I am monitoring an area which has received little research. As a result, for instance, two protected butterfly species have been detected which had not been known here before: the Tree Grayling (*Hipparchia statilinus*) and the Oriental Meadow Brown (*Hyponephele lupina*). **The data I collect contributes to the conservation and management of the site and these rare species.**



6. How do you feel about being part of a large European community of volunteers?

Of course, **it feels good to be part of a team that has a common interest.** I really enjoy attending conferences and gatherings where I can meet other butterfly friends from whom I always learn a lot.

Interview to Marcel Hellersk - Luxembourg

Marcel Hellersk is one of the volunteers counting butterflies in Luxembourg, part of the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme of his country. For the last four years he has been counting butterflies in several transects and loading the data onto eBMS website.

1. What was the reason for doing butterfly transects?

Luxembourg is a small country and there are only very few entomologists. Before I met **Xavier Mestdagh** (National Coordinator of BMS Luxembourg), I thought I was the only person working on butterflies and moths in Luxembourg. So I was very glad to meet some people who were also interested in these insects, and it is a pleasure doing work together. I also understood that I would do something very useful by counting butterflies, which enables me to help them.



An area where Marcel counts butterflies every year

2. How did you discover the BMS?

By Xavier who asked me to enter my observations to the *European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (eBMS)* website by myself.

3. Why do you like butterflies? Have you always liked insects?

I started liking insects at the age of 16. I especially like butterflies because of their bright colours, but also because of their sometimes mysterious way of life. It is also a challenge for me to discover a rare species and observe them. This gives me great satisfaction.



4. What do you learn by counting butterflies?

Some species do need not a lot of space, just the right flowers and food plants to survive. Counting butterflies in the same place every week, I have learnt exactly where I find each species on the transect. I often wonder **how butterfly manage to subsist in our intensive agricultural world.**

5. Do you think it is important to be part of a European community like eBMS?

Working together makes us stronger. It is important that there are people from each European country showing the butterfly (and insects) decline to politicians. The eBMS seems to me to be a superb tool for this.

***“Working together
makes us stronger”***

Interview to Raquel Eiró – Serra da Carregueira Transect (Portugal)

1. When did you start your transect?

I started in May 2019, just a few days after the first Portuguese ABLE Workshop which I attended in Almada, on the 4th of May last year.

2. What was the reason for making a butterfly transect?

I really enjoy observing and photographing insects, but I am a little bit lazy, so having the obligation to go out regularly to count butterflies gives me the opportunity to also photograph butterflies and other insects.



3. How did you discover BMS?

Eva Monteiro, the National Coordinator of BMS Portugal and Vice-president of Tagis (Butterfly Conservation Portugal), told me about it and invited me to attend the ABLE Workshop where I got most of the information about the BMS.



Serra da Carregueira Transect. Left picture: Section II - Portuguese Oak open forest; right picture: Section III Shrubland

4. Why do you like butterflies? Have you always liked insects?

I like the diversity of forms and colours of butterflies. They are very attractive! I also like discovering new species, and adding them to my photographic collection. The same with other insects. The first time I noticed them was in 2011 when I was walking my dogs in a little wood near my house. After that I started taking my camera with me every time I went for a walk with my dogs.

I photographed every insect: ants, dragonflies, beetles, wasps, butterflies, then when I arrived home, I would try to identify them using several Facebook groups.

5. What do you learn by counting butterflies?

Most exciting was finding a butterfly that I had never seen before: *Melanargia occitanica*! I also learned the methodology of fixed transects. I had no clue that this was the method to count butterflies. I started to notice the different seasons and the butterfly flight periods, when each species would start and stop flying. May is a wonderful time of the year to count butterflies on my transect. **I am looking forward for the beginning of the spring, this year, to see what new species are there!**

6. Do you think that the effort you make in your transect is important?

Definitely! With my data I hope to contribute to the knowledge of the state of Portuguese butterfly populations and to the understanding of the impacts that climate change, pollution and habitat modifications have on them.



Melanargia occitanica @Albano Soares

7. How do you feel about being part of a large European community of volunteers?

It is always good to be part of something bigger than yourself and to contribute for the great goal of butterfly conservation in Portugal and in Europe. Even better when you can do that while enjoying nature and taking photos, one of my biggest pleasures in life!