

## 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.



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