

ABLE Project Outline and future plans

ABLE project

The main aims of the ABLE project are to create a representative butterfly monitoring network across Europe and produce a suite of butterfly indicators to help improvement of the targeting and efficiency of conservation measures. It also aims to assess the biodiversity impact of European Union sectoral and land use policies. Butterflies are accurate indicators of biodiversity loss or increase because their sensitivity makes them quick to react to environmental change. Here you can read an outline of the project and our future plans.

The specific tasks are:

1. to produce policy-relevant butterfly indicators for a range of habitats, analyse results and disseminate findings to policy makers and the public;
2. to support and develop a unified, sustainable and cost-effective European butterfly monitoring network based on trained volunteer recorders, supported by new coordinators, together with local access to an on-line data recording system;
3. to construct a unified, high-quality butterfly database and automated data entry system for the indicators;



To achieve this we will continue to work closely with volunteers, partner organisations and member states to engender their support for butterfly monitoring. The project is run by a consortium involving Butterfly Conservation Europe, the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UK), the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (Germany), Dutch Butterfly Conservation (The Netherlands) and Butterfly Conservation (UK). It is being funded by the EU for an initial period of two years.

Butterflies factfile

- Butterflies are accurate indicators of biodiversity loss or increase because their sensitivity makes them quick to react to environmental change. They are widely used by ecologists as model organisms to study the impact of habitat loss and fragmentation, plus climate change.
- Areas rich in butterflies also have a wide range of other invertebrates, so are indicators of a healthy environment and ecosystems.
- Butterflies form a key part of the food chain, being prey for birds and bats.
- Butterflies pollinate a large range of flowering plants, travelling longer distances than many other insects.
- There are almost 500 species of butterflies in Europe as a whole.
- Butterfly Conservation Europe reports serious declines in butterflies in most countries of Europe.

Future Plans

Monitoring meeting in Laufen

A meeting to discuss the ABLÉ project will be held at Laufen in Germany from **2-4 December**, in association with our partner in Bavaria – ANL. Most of the people co-ordinating schemes are attending and we will run workshop sessions to share information and explain latest techniques in data analysis. Colleagues from the EU will explain their need for butterfly monitoring as well as how it could help the new EU Pollinator Initiative. A summary will be posted on the eBMS website in due course.



Spreading the message

An important aspect of the project is to engage with a wide range of stakeholders and institutions who have an interest in butterfly monitoring and its findings. Key groups identified in our Dissemination Plan include the European Commission, MEPs, the European Environment Agency, and JRC as well as pan-European co-ordinating groups such as the European Habitats Forum (EHF, with 23 nature NGO networks, including Birdlife International, WWF and IUCN), European Landowners Association (ELO), Europarc and the European Citizen Science Association (ECSA)

We are establishing a **Technical Advisory Group** made up of experts from the academic community, monitoring Scheme co-ordinators, and other monitoring practitioners; and are keeping in touch with the Stakeholder groups highlighted above to help ensure ABLÉ results are meeting their needs and are used to help evaluate policy development and implementation. The project team is also working closely with the EU Expert Group on Pollinators to share our expertise and provide evidence on butterflies.

We have given a number of Presentations to stakeholders and to workshops in new Scheme countries. Copies of these can be made available for information and further dissemination

Future plans of ABLÉ project

Our main priorities for the coming year are to continue adding data into the eBMS for more countries and produce a suite of **policy-relevant indicators** for a range of butterfly habitats as well as assessing climate change impacts. We will broaden monitoring coverage through encouraging take-up of the mobile phone app to widen the coverage through **15 minutes counts**. We will also work with partners to develop schemes in new countries and continue to provide support and materials for all countries with schemes. A final priority is to apply for funds to continue the project beyond 2020 to ensure we have a robust and sustainable system of gathering butterfly monitoring data in the long term.