

## Butterflies of Hungary

### Greenwings Holiday Report 23-30 June 2016

Led by Gabor Orban and Andrea Katona



Scarce Copper by Dr. James Black



Safflower Skipper by Robert Chubb

#### Introduction

This tour was Greenwing's second Hungary Butterfly tour and as during the first one we concentrated again on 2 main areas, Aggtelek and Bükk National Parks of north-east Hungary. Each protected areas are famous for a long list of butterfly species, several bird species and other wildlife as well. Aggtelek National Park was founded in 1985 both to protect the landscape and species, but also the underground world of the largest stalactite cave in Europe between the villages of Aggtelek and Jósvalő. The most famous part of the cave system is the Baradla cave which is 26 km long, part of it is in Slovakia. The whole cave system and the surface is a World Heritage Site. The Bükk National Park is almost a decade older and protects the largest surface in Hungary with its more than 40,000 hectares.

Bükk Hills are about 2-3 hours drive North-West of Budapest and are the middle part of the Northern Hungarian mountain range, while Aggtelek region is a bit further North providing a bordering range with Slovakia. Both areas built up by limestone. Bükk is higher, with characteristic rocky outcrops, but more covered by dense woods, especially Beech, which is in Hungarian Bükk, but also Oak forests with scattered Birch and Sallow. Aggtelek region is not so high and not as much covered by dense woods. Both hilly regions are mainly built up from mezozoic limestone, thus they are very rich in different karst formations from dolinas through sinkholes till hundreds of caves. Some of these caves were used by prehistoric people; several famous archeological findings were discovered in the region.

Our small group spent a bit more than a week in this unique area looking for mainly butterflies, resulting an even better species list than last year, ending up with 87 species of butterflies, most of them photographed as well. On our very first full day of butterflying we had 48 new species for the tour in the Aggtelek National Park. Every full day except one we had seen more than between 42 and 52 species daily. Of course we had plenty of birds and other wildlife around as well.

Carolyn, Rob, Jillian, Andre and Jim were our guests led by Gabor Orban, a professional zoologist guide and his wife, Andrea Katona who is also a licenced nationwide guide, so the good client and guide ratio was guaranteed throughout the holiday.



**Spotted Fritillary by Dr. James Black**

**Photographing butterflies in the Aggtelek by Gabor Orban**

This trip report will first outline the 8-day-long programme, then describes the daily diary, followed by a gallery and species list.

Day 1, Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June: Arrival in Budapest and transfer to Aggtelek National Park

Day 2, Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June: Northern part of Aggtelek National Park.

Day 3, Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June: North-Eastern part of Aggtelek NP

Day 4, Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June: Aggtelek & Upponyi Hills

Day 5, Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June: Bükk

Day 6, Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June: Hor Valley, lower Bükk

Day 7, Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> June: Western & Central Bükk

Day 8, Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June: Return to UK

Day 1, Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June. Arrival in Budapest and transfer to Aggtelek National Park.

The group arrived at Budapest airport around lunchtime, except Jillian who was ahead with a couple of hours; Andrea waited everybody with a Greentours sign and helped the group to find Gabor with the minivan. Soon we were travelling to East on a highway towards Aggtelek National Park in the north of the country, bordering Slovakia. During the travel everybody introduced herself or himself, so we started to know each other and we were also getting an idea who had what type of expectations of the tour in Hungary, what are the main interests and so on. Weather was quite warm and sunny.

We made our first stop about an hour drive away from the airport at a roadside service station. This was not just to break the journey and have a picnic with some fresh pastries, coffee, tea and some cookies, but also gave the first chance to look for butterflies and birds. Of course one of the first species we saw was a Large White, but we also saw a Scarce Swallowtail, Holly Blue, Meadow Brown, Red Admiral and Painted

Lady. Gabor pointed out a distant Imperial Eagle, and everybody could observe much closer views of Crested Larks, Yellow and White Wagtails. We also saw Sand Martin, Kestrel, Common Buzzard and Marsh Harrier.

During the drive and upon our arrival to our hotel in Aggtelek National Park in the late afternoon we added a few more birds such as White Stork, Black-winged Stilt, Lapwing, Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Stock Dove, House Martin, Swallow, Black Redstart, Jay, Hooded Crow, Raven, Starling, both House and Tree Sparrow and Chaffinch.

This was the only day when birds outnumbered butterflies. The total number of butterflies were found during the holiday was 87, while we had 75 bird species.



**Meleager's Blue by Dr. James Black**



**Heath Fritillary by Robert Chubb**

## **Day 2, Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June. Northern part of Aggtelek National Park.**

This day was the first real full day during the holiday and resulted an incredibly long list of species with 52 by the end, out of which 48 was new. Not a bad start!

Some people started with an optional pre-breakfast walk: those who were excited to discover the area ventured out early morning and already find some interesting species such as the first **Heath Fritillary**, **Holly and Common Blue**, **Large White** and so on. Among the Skippers beside Small, Large and Essex Rob has found and photographed one which later on turned out to be a **Safflower Skipper**.

Stop 1. Since yesterday was a long travelling day for most of us Gabor suggested to spend most of the morning after breakfast just walking out from our hotel and discovering the nearby meadow and valley. This was a very good start of a fantastic first full day! We were just steps away from our hotel when we already had our first **Lesser Purple Emperor**, first really low actually on a table tennis board, later on landed higher on a tree. Then a **Great Banded Grayling** literally landed on us, Andrea had it almost like an earring for a while.

This all happened very close to the main entrance of the famous Baradla Cave system. The cave and also the surface above it is a Unesco World Heritage site At one time this was thought to be the longest cave system in the world until the discoveries in the New World as Gabor explained.





**Butterfly Paparazzis & Mamarazzis by Gabor Orban    Black Hairstreak found by Robert Chubb**

Later on we reached a large grassy and flowery meadow where the trail passed limestone outcrops and went between the large open field and a bushy edge which offered a chance to find some Hairstreaks. Everybody had a chance to discover the area in his or her pace, so Carolyn decided to stay closer to the cooler cave exit areas, while Andre was usually far ahead searching anything new while Rob, Jim and Jillian spent more time with photography. Gabor and Andrea were pointing out new and new species, but everybody found something new as well. The list is very long, so we mention just some of the highlights: **Green-veined & Black-veined White, Clouded Yellow, Sloe Hairstreak, Black Hairstreak, Comma, Map, Silver-washed Fritillary, Marbled White, Pearly and Chestnut Heath.** We found a nice set of **Coppers** today as well which included **Small, Large, Scarce and Sooty Copper.** We also photographed the first **Silver-studded Blue, Heath Fritillary, Map Butterfly** here.

A beautiful mint condition of **Scarce Copper** was found and photographed by Jim, followed by others as well.



**Scarce Copper and Silver-studded Blue by Dr. James Black**

Temperature was rising quite steadily and high, so finally we decided to move on to the nearby charming village of Jósvalfö, which has a lovely stream with some picnic tables in the shade, ideal for picnic lunch. This is a perfect place for butterflies as well to come down on the wet surface to sip some water and get some minerals as well during the hottest part of the day.

We had a nice group of butterflies here, including **Essex Skipper, Small Skipper, Swallowtail, Large White, Small White, Brimstone, Holly Blue, Silver-studded Blue** and **Common Blue**.

Later on we ventured further upstream alongside a dirt road. First we stopped at the edge of the village at another bridge where large groups of **Skippers** and **Blues** gathered. After enjoying and photographing this crowd we left the village and entered into the forest, but shortly after the trail opened into a meadow with a little pond which was created by the stream coming out of a cave. Since this was a sunny patch with varied vegetation it looked a good place to find some more butterflies. We also photographed **Beautiful Demoiselles** as well. But the excitement was caused by **Purple Emperor** and **Lesser Purple Emperor**.



After this we shortly crossed a dark forested patch with a little gorge where in the woods we had **White Admiral, Wood White** and **Speckled Wood**. Finally we ended up at a large flowery meadow where everybody happily chased different species.

Finally we walked back in the same way to Josvafo village, refreshed ourselves at one of the crystal clear spring water sources and continued our way back to our hotel where we still had time to look around in the surrounding meadows.

Today we had an amazing range of Fritillaries: **Map Butterfly, Silver-washed Fritillary, High Brown Fritillary, Niobe Fritillary, Queen of Spain Fritillary, Twin-spot Fritillary, Marbled Fritillary, Lesser Marbled Fritillary, Glanville Fritillary, Spotted Fritillary, Heath Fritillary** and **Assmann's Fritillary**. Gabor explained in details how is the best to distinguish the latter species from **Nickerl's Fritillary** and the more common **Heath Fritillary**, each having characteristic signs in Eastern European populations.

During the day we had plenty of other new species as well, including **Green Hairstreak, Meleager's Blue, Adonis Blue, Common Glider, Large Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Comma, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Large Heath, Small Heath, Pearly Heath** and **Chestnut Heath**. The only **Black-veined White** of the tour was found today as well.

After a long and quite hot day we surely had to fill up ourselves with some liquid in the bar, discuss the long species list and the highlights of the day.

Finally we had a nice dinner to finish the day.



Pictures by Robert Chubb

### Day 3, Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June. Eastern part of Aggtelek National Park

Today after another great full buffet breakfast we set out around 9 o'clock. This time with a short drive first we checked out an area in the hope of finding a Poplar Admiral. Once we met with the local ranger who mentioned that he saw one just hiking up from this point. So later on during the holiday we repeated this checking regularly, whenever we passed this area.

We passed Josvafo village with some White Stork nests and travelled to the North East corner of the National Park. We passed a huge, iconic Fire Salamander which has been carved into the hills. After leaving a small local village we continued on a dirt road where we stopped a few times to check out the butterflies around. We had seen **Peacock, Red Admiral, Comma, Map Butterfly, Heath Fritillary, Queen of Spain Fritillary**. On the road and later on at our parking spot **Purple Emperor** and **Lesser Purple Emperor** caused a big excitement; by the end of the day everybody has managed to see both species, actually the Lesser Purple Emperor's more orange **clythie form** as well.

The trail started here, Gabor explained again distances, timing and what habitat we expect to see. It was already quite warm, so Carolyn decided to stay in the shade, admiring some more Emperors from a comfortable place. Andrea told a story about the Austro Hungarian times when the Austrians blow up the local fortress which was on top of the hill from where we started our walk.



Pictures by Dr. James Black



First we passed a forested area with bushes alongside the road which we checked for hairstreaks. Not much luck with those today, but we had **White Admiral, Marbled White, Great Banded Grayling, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Essex Skipper, Small Skipper, Swallowtail, Scarce Swallowtail.**

Later we reached a large meadow, some parts drier, but mainly quite wet. Surely it was full with a great variety of wildflowers and thus several species of butterflies including **High Brown Fritillary, Marbled Fritillary, Lesser Marbled Fritillary, Spotted Fritillary, Small Heath, Pearly Heath, Chestnut Heath.** Beside **Large White** and **Small White** we also found **Green-veined White.**

The only **Eastern Pale Clouded Yellow** of the tour was seen today and this was the last time we saw **Adonis Blue** and **Lesser Marbled Fritillary** as well.

We made our way all the way through a shady forest till a more open area with a small fishpond from where some of us turned back, but the boys heard Andre shouting and advising to follow him a bit further. He found a very nice collection of **Fritillaries**, mainly **Silver-washed** sipping minerals from a sunny soil patch. It was a perfect occasion to make not just photos, but even videos.

Later on we went back to the parking lot, joined to Carolyn and had our picnic lunch in the shade, enjoying coffees, teas and other drinks.

After some rest we started our short drive back, but before returning to Aggtelek we made another detour, this time up on a steep road, through a forest to a huge karstic meadow surrounded by dense forest. At the edge of the forest at some bushes we tried to find **Hungarian Glider.** For a while it seemed we will not be successful, but our persistence was worthwhile: finally we had a view of a butterfly gliding majestically and it was bigger than a previously seen **Common Glider**, also with different markings.



**Pictures by Robert Chubb & Dr. James Black**

This afternoon Robert made a good picture of a **Safflower Skipper.** We also had **Wood White, Scarce Copper, Holly Blue, Meleager's Blue** and **Common Blue.**

Today was a very good day for Woodpeckers: we had seen **Green, Great** and **Middle-spotted Woodpecker, White-backed Woodpecker** and heard **Grey-headed Woodpecker** as well.

Other notable birds were **Marsh Harrier, Sparrowhawk, Turtle Dove, Common Swift, Red-backed Shrike, Crested Lark, Grey Wagtail, Stonechat, Common Redstart.**

We also heard **Eurasian Golden Oriole**, **Grasshopper Warbler** from the big wet meadow and **Wood Warbler** in the forest.



Pictures by Dr. James Black

**Day 4, Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June. Eastern part of Aggtelek National Park.**

Those who started the day early could find again several butterflies and birds just around the meadows surrounding our hotel. Without a full list we mention **Fieldfare**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Golden Oriole**, **Turtle Dove**, **Tree Sparrow** and **Black Redstart** from the avifauna, while Lepidoptera were represented by **Heath Fritillary**, **Map Butterfly**, **Red Admiral** and a beautifully posing day-flying Burnet species, **Eastern Burnet** *Zygaena carniolica*, photographed by Jim.



Pictures by Robert Chubb

After again a substantial breakfast we loaded the van and travelled towards Bukk Hills, but in a different way than last year. This time we ventured into some hidden valleys of the Uppony Hills. We crossed some rolling hills and in a small, isolated village we searched a small dirt road which took us to a flower rich large meadow with plenty muddy patches, so it was ideal for several butterfly species with loads of nectar and mineral sources around.

Later on we went further on the dirt-road. Gabor forced the van through a stream and further on some major puddles and mud. He was checking continuously our fitness in case a push were needed, but



everything went smoothly. Our next stop produced a very cooperative **Purple Emperor** which everybody could photograph well.

We literally went till it was possible. We turned back just when it would have been a challenge to continue even with a tractor. :) On the way back we stopped again at some favourite spots.



**Pictures by Robert Chubb and Dr. James Black**

This area was excellent for Hairstreaks. Rob found and photographed an **Ilex Hairstreak**. We also found **White-letter Hairstreak**. Both species were first ones for the tour and we have not seen them on the following days. We also had **Green** and **Sloe Hairstreaks**, but we had seen those during the previous days.

But there was another nice finding which was a new species for the tour, a **Mallow Skipper**, which we have not seen later during the tour.

There was a long list of butterflies we have found at the different stops described above, which included **Essex Skipper, Large Skipper, Swallowtail, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Brimstone, Wood White**.

Also we had **Small Copper, Scarce Copper, Holly Blue, Silver-studded Blue, Meleager's Blue** and **Common Blue**. But we had some new Blue species as well: **Short-tailed Blue** and **Chequered Blue**, both with very characteristic markings.

Carolyn, Jillian and Andrea spent a lot of time with photographing both **Purple Emperor & Lesser Purple Emperor**, but a **Large Tortoiseshell** was very popular as well.

We chased a bit a **Common Glider** and a **Great Banded Grayling**, but started to get used to the good number of **Peacock, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Comma, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Small Heath, Pearly Heath, Chestnut Heath** and **Map Butterflies** around.



**Pictures by Robert Chubb and Dr. James Black**

Out of the 10 different species of Fritillaries what we found in this very productive region we had seen before during the tour **Silver-washed Fritillary, High Brown Fritillary, Niobe Fritillary, Queen of Spain Fritillary, Twin-spot Fritillary, Marbled Fritillary, Spotted Fritillary** and **Heath Fritillary**. But we have managed to add two new Fritillary species to the trip list too: **Weaver's Fritillary** and **False-heath Fritillary**, both quite rare and localized.

Coming back to the main road we also tried to check out a side road which theoretically connects with the one which we previously used. Theoretically, because although this road was a small tarmac road in much better conditions, traffic was closed by a new gate unfortunately.

Later on we travelled further South and just before we would reach Eger, the local capital of the county, we turned East up on the only main road which crosses the Bukk Hills. We gradually climbed up through dense forests, beautiful beech wood and had a few panoramic views of the Southern Bukk Hills before we turned and drove down to the beginning of a valley where our local guesthouse situated in a tiny village.

Alongside the stream we heard both River Warbler and Grasshopper Warbler. Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Treecreeper were also around. At the bushy meadows we had plenty of Red-backed Shrikes everywhere and it was good to see that in this part of Europe Tree Sparrows were still abundant as well. A Common Buzzard was very loud at a big open meadow, while a Sparrowhawk went through really silently.

We had a very nice day with close to 50 species of butterflies seen out of which 7 was new one for the tour, so we were above 60 as total by the end of the day.

We had a good dinner and a few drinks before we turned into bed with the hope of a good night sleep to start the next day fresh.



**Pictures by Robert Chubb and Dr. James Black**

**Day 5, Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June Hór Valley & Tebe puszta & Lower Bükk.**

Well, during the night it turned out that our hopes were too optimistic: the local youngsters watched the soccer championship till late night over more and more pints. Gabor and Andrea went down and talked to our hosts and asked them to close the bar since it was way over the official opening time. They also asked politely the youngsters to leave. Although they closed the bar people did not go home, but set out right below our windows and tried to discuss the event even further, very loud.

So Gabor and Andrea went down again, had some stronger words with the drunken people and insisted they should live right away. Reluctantly and loudly they went and finally we could have a shorter than usual sleep. Still next day we had an amazingly successful although somehow long day. We had again close to 50 species of butterflies during the day and what is more, we have managed to ID a dozen of new ones, so by the end of the day we had a total of 75 species!



**Pictures by Robert Chubb**

After breakfast we had a very short drive to the edge of the small village. Here we filled out our water bottles with crystal clear water which was pumped up from deep layer water filtered through thick limestone layers. Gabor explained that Hungary should be very proud having this system more than 150 years by now all over the country.



From this point we started our descent in a valley through beautiful old woods stopping once or twice, before we reached a huge open meadow carpeted with wildflowers. This seemed an ideal butterfly habitat and indeed we spent several hours here finding more and more species, busily photographing and admiring them.



**Pictures by Robert Chubb and Dr. James Black**

Probably the biggest star was a just emerged **Swallowtail**, really mint conditions. Jillian, Carolyn, Andrea and even all the boys were gathering around it slowly allowing each other to take excellent shots. Perhaps the most artistic one was made by Jim.

Later on we drove a bit further to a beautiful karstic meadow where according to Gabor during birding tours they usually search and regularly find Ural Owl.

We had our picnic lunch here, some of us, like Andre, Rob or Jim almost without even sitting down.

As a result, at the morning area and here altogether we ended up with a really long list which included 5 **Skipper species (Essex, Small & Large, plus 2 new ones: Grizzled Skipper and Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper.**

We also had 3 **Whites (Green-veined, Large & Small), Brimstone, Wood White. Orange Tip** was new for the tour and also a beautiful **Purple-shot Copper**. Other previously seen Coppers were **Large** and also **Scarce Copper**.

This was a very good day for finding new Blue butterfly species such as **Little Blue, Green-underside Blue, Geranium Argus & Mazarine Blue**, beside the ever common **Holly Blue & Common Blue**.

We were not missing the large and colourful species today either, so we had **Lesser Purple Emperor** and we could compare again **White Admiral** with **Common Glider**. We also had **Peacock, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Comma** and **Map Butterfly**.

Despite all the great list of butterflies mentioned before still we felt this day should be called a **Big Fritillary Day**, since we had seen 13 species out of which 4 were new! The previously seen ones included **Silver-washed Fritillary, Niobe Fritillary, Queen of Spain Fritillary, Twin-spot Fritillary, Marbled Fritillary, Lesser Marbled Fritillary, Glanville Fritillary, Spotted Fritillary, Heath Fritillary**, while the new ones were **Pearl-bordered & Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Knapweed Fritillary & Nickerl's Fritillary**.

Of course we had as usual **Marbled White, Great Banded Grayling, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Small Heath, Pearly Heath & Chestnut Heath** as well.

There were so many butterflies around during the day that we did not pay too much attention to the birds, but still it worth to mention that we heard **Black Woodpecker** and again a **River Warbler**. **Whitethroat, Spotted Flycatcher, Marsh Tit, Wren** and **Hawfinch** was also seen.



**Pictures by Dr. James Black**

Originally the plan was that later in the afternoon we drive all the way down on the dirt road through the valley stopping at some other butterfly hotspots, but we bumped into such a sudden storm that Gabor decided not to risk to stuck, so he went down just till a point where he knew a turn from where we could continue on a small forestry tarmac road. Even on that one it was difficult to climb up to the main road. Since it was still rainy and no hope for being on the fields, Andrea and Gabor suggested to make a detour to go to the town of Eger, which is a charming capitol of the county with much more than 1000 years of history. Gabor parked at a great lookout point from where they could explain the fascinating history of the town which is famous for having plenty of mediaeval buildings, a huge catholic cathedral, but also the Northernmost original 16<sup>th</sup> century minaret, left behind by the occupying Turkish forces. "The fall of the crescent Moon" is the title of the novel written by Geza Gardonyi which was translated into more than 100 languages and describes the heroic battle of Eger in such a way that you can imagine like a movie.

After this interesting sightseeing we crossed part of the Bukk Hills again and ended up at our accommodation in the mountain village.

After dinner we went back to our rooms with the hope that the yesterday's disturbance will not happen again. Gabor and Andrea made it clear for the hosts that they will never bring a group again if our peace in our rooms were not secured.

## **Day 6, Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June Eastern Bukk**

Although the previous night was much more peaceful than before, during breakfast Andrea and Gabor explained that they double checked with another hotel (which they know well) whether they happen to have available rooms and they offered to the group if everybody agrees then we would move there. After a short discussion we all agreed to try the other place, so we packed and left. It has not changed at all our itinerary, the places we visited yesterday and today were closer to the first Bukk accommodation; it was actually useful that we ended the day today at a more Southern location from where it was closer to go out to our last day's areas and also we were closer to the airport on the last day.

So first we drove up from the village to the main road which is crossing the Bukk Hills, but this time we ventured further East where we have not been before. After driving through large tracts of healthy beech woods Gabor stopped at the edge of a meadow. He hoped to find one of the *Maculinea/Phengaris* species and not much later we have found the first **Alcon Blue**. Another Blue, **Mountain Argus** was a great find, also new for the tour.

Coppers were represented by **Small & Scarce Copper** and this was the second and last time we have found **Sooty Copper** on the tour and also the second, but not the last time for **Short-tailed Blue**. On the other hand **Holly Blue & Common Blue** were indeed common.

A bit further at another spot Gabor found a mating pair of a **Weaver's Fritillary** in the grass which offered quite good possibility to observe and photograph them.

**Large & Small White** were quite common wherever we went and we had seen a few **Wood Whites, Green-veined Whites** and **Orange Tips** as well.

We had more than 10 different Fritillary species again and most of them in really good numbers, especially **Silver-washed Fritillary, Queen of Spain Fritillary, Spotted Fritillary** and **Heath Fritillary**, but we had **Niobe Fritillary, Marbled Fritillary, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and **Assmann's Fritillary**.

We had our picnic set up at a fork of the forestry road where we were sitting on large tree trunks. Unfortunately the forestry was quite active, cutting nice old, mature beech trees and loading them on huge trucks. With this activity they have managed to block our way for quite a time. Finally when we managed to pass them we could drive till a point which was a large upland meadow.

We had **Essex Skipper, Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Swallowtail** and **Scarce Swallowtail**. Also **Marbled White, Great Banded Grayling, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Small Heath, Pearly Heath, Chestnut Heath** were around.

As usual we had **Peacock, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Comma** and **Map Butterfly** as well.

Other highlights during the day included **Lesser Purple Emperor, White Admiral, Common Glider** and **Large Tortoiseshell**.

When we finally were about to leave this area and drove down a bit further we realized that the road was closed by a metal bar. Gabor examined the possibility of opening it and in the meantime Andre ventured to find a possible alternative sidetrack. After trying a couple of tricks Gabor announced that it seems we were trapped by a gate, but Andre had a good news that he found a bypass. Gabor went to check the quality of the track, but in the meantime a car arrived with a rescue key to open the gate, so we were happy to drive further on paved road.



Gabor suggested a last stop alongside a stream where we walked up on a small mound hoping to find Pallas's Fritillary at a bushy slope. We were not lucky with that, but it was still worse to climb: we had a **High Brown Fritillary**, but what was even better we could compare with a **Dark Green Fritillary** which was a new one on the tour. Coming down we checked again another part of the bushy area alongside of the stream and it was full with butterflies feeding and flying, all the species mentioned before.

Today we heard a **Common Nightingale** and also a **Grey-headed Woodpecker**, the latter one still escaped to be seen despite Gabor imitated its call to lure it closer really well.

Later on we left the Bükk Hills and drove from its South East corner back to the Southern slopes at the foothills of this attractive area and then up to Noszvaj where our new hotel at a nice mountain lakeside waited for us. The group loved the rooms and the surrounding at the first sight and soon everybody enjoyed a drink sitting at the lakeside bar admiring a several hundred years old oak tree.

The dinner and the service was great as well, so we all agreed it was a great change and we looked forward a good night sleep which we really deserved after a full day of butterfly quest.

#### **Day 7, Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> June. Southern Bükk**

Gabor mentioned that the grounds behind the hotel were very good for butterflies and that the hotel garden itself could boast at least 7 of the 10 species of woodpeckers found in Europe.



So after a healthy breakfast we were happily walking out, instead of using the van. Pretty soon we started to see the first butterflies and beside the usual **Peacock**, **Red Admiral**, **Painted Lady**, **Comma**, **Map Butterfly** and **Silver-washed Fritillary**, we had a nice new species as a surprise: **Nettle Tree Butterfly** or some call it **European Beak or Snout**, referring to its special shape. This is a species in its own family in Europe which migrates and turns up at interesting areas.

**Picture by Dr. James Black**

We walked along a trail till a small pond, created by a spring which provided crystal clear, drinkable water source. We had **Lesser Purple Emperor**, **White Admiral** and **Common Glider** during this walk.

Later we drove through the village of Bogács which is famous for its thermal baths and small family owned wine cellars, carved into the volcanic tuff hillside. Arriving at the base of the beautiful Hor valley we stopped at the new visitor centre of the Bükk National Park where we took the opportunity to have refreshments and use the facilities before setting off up the track.

First we walked a few minutes till a bit more open area where the road was full with paddles, result of the yesterday's storm. Nice selection of butterflies was around here, although not in huge numbers.



**Pictures by Robert Chubb**

Later we continued to a point where Gabor went up on a bit rocky trail with those who felt they had enough energy and interest to look for Rock Bunting. Gabor also pointed out another, much more challenging mountain trail which we happily skipped, although that one went up to a famous cave used much earlier by prehistoric man.

Instead we continued alongside a stream, bordered with flowery bushes and ended up at the bottom of a large former quarry, a warm and habitat for another set of butterflies.

During the day we had **Grizzled** and **Small Skipper**, but **Dingy Skipper** was new. We had a few **Small Copper**, **Swallowtail** and **Scarce Swallowtail**, plus good number of **Large White**, **Small White**, **Green-veined White**, **Brimstone**, **Wood White**.

It was very exciting and inspiring that beside species of Blues we had found before, like **Short-tailed Blue**, **Holly Blue**, **Meleager's Blue** or **Common Blue**, today we have found several new ones as well, including **Zephyr Blue**, **Brown Argus** and **Eastern Short-tailed Blue**. About the latter one Rob made an excellent photo during afternoon.

When we started to feel a bit tired and hungry we went back to the van, sat down at the National Park's center and had a bit of rest, enjoying our picnic, ordering some cold drinks and even icecream went down really well.

Filled up with energy we continued our search of butterflies after driving through some denser parts of the forest and stopping again at a huge meadow with some emud paddles and plenty of nectar sources.

In the morning and during the afternoon we had a really good number of Fritillaries. However we run out of new species by now, it was still good to find again **Dark Green Fritillary**, **High Brown Fritillary**, **Niobe Fritillary**, **Queen of Spain Fritillary**, **Twin-spot Fritillary**, **Marbled Fritillary**, **Spotted Fritillary** and **Heath Fritillary**.

Very good number of **Marbled White**, **Great Banded Grayling**, **Meadow Brown**, **Ringlet**, **Small Heath**, **Pearly Heath** was seen during the day as well.

We were delighted to have again **Hungarian Glider** and **Large Tortoiseshell**, two really attractive species.

Although this was the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the holiday and the last full day spent on the fields we still have managed to find 9 new species for the tour list and ended up with a total of 87 species.

So beside the previously mentioned new ones we added **Berger's Clouded Yellow**, **Blue-spot Hairstreak**, **Woodland Grayling** and **Speckled Wood** today.

We had seen a fair number of birds today out of which we would mention the first really seen **Wood Warbler** and **Grey-headed Woodpecker**; **Long-tailed Tit**, which was the Northern, white-faced form, a just heard **Collared Flycatcher**, **Turtle Dove** and **Grey Wagtail**.

**Day 8, Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June**



On our final day we had to say goodbye to our hosts in the Bukk Hills and leaving the area after having our last breakfast in the terrace, looking at a 300 years old majestic oak tree. We checked out shortly a nearby spot and then started our journey back on the highway. We stopped once at a petrol station with a nearby Imperial Eagle nest, but the birds were not around.

Finally we arrived back to the airport with plenty of time to check in and go through the

security check and even buy some Hungarian delicacy.

## Summary

It had been a wonderful holiday in great company, with 87 different butterfly species seen during the week. Even though this was a butterfly holiday it was obvious that the areas we visited had a very rich wildlife, birds, mammals, dragonflies, wildflowers and many more.

## Acknowledgements

Greenwings would like to thank all their guests on this holiday for their good humour, enthusiasm and help throughout the trip. Each of you added a great colour to the travelling companion and turned this butterfly holiday into a memorable one.