



Czech Butterfly Conservation Society (SOM)
Press release: New book
Twenty four years Mapping European Butterflies (1995 – 2019)
Distribution of Butterflies and Skippers in Europe
by Otakar Kudrna



Twenty four years have passed since the announcement and beginning of the project **Mapping European Butterflies** (MEB) back in 1995. The first results of the project were published in 2002 as the first Atlas (MEB-1). The late Prof. Dr. C. M. Naumann praised the Atlas as “a milestone in the history of European lepidopterology” – a commendation to be proud of. It was the first computer-aided distribution atlas of butterflies of any continent ever published. MEB was made possible thanks to an original recording method devised by the author. The second Atlas appeared in 2011 (MEB-2) and was sold out within about one year. The third Atlas was published in 2015 (MEB-3). The present “Distribution of Butterflies and Skippers in Europe” (MEB-4) completes the fourth phase and for me owing to my age the “end of the line”. Nonetheless I wish and trust that MEB will go on under a new leadership. The MEB data bank is unique.

The Atlas is based upon the MEB data bank. It contained a quarter of a million data records in 2002 (MEB-1), over 650.000 data records in 2011 (MEB-2) and contains over one million primary data records now, aggregated for efficiency down to nearly 400.000 working data records. The Atlas contains distribution maps and tables of the 445 species of European butterflies and skippers (day-flying moths of the family Hesperidae) as well as coincidence maps evaluating the distribution patterns from various points of view including zoogeography and conservation biology. The data contributed by nearly 300 recorders and country coordinators from all over Europe cover over 90 % of the territory; more than satisfactory. I hasten to add: all voluntary work. Of the total of 445 species, 43 species are rare endemics each of which inhabits less than 0.269 % of Europe.

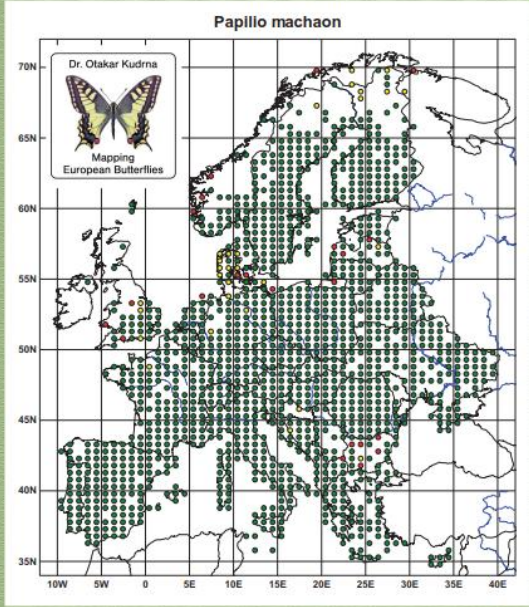
The highlights and new features of the Atlas can be summarised as follows:

- The Atlas has grown-up to the present 364 pages of A4 size.
- It contains over 400 new distribution and coincidence maps based on a revised up-dated data bank.
- There are new detailed distribution tables for butterflies inhabiting the Macaronesian islands.
- The classification reflects the latest results including the new molecular research.
- The species accounts are up-dated and mostly re-written: 10 % butterflies are rare endemic species.
- The chapters on taxonomy and zoogeography are re-written and expanded.
- Annotated synonymic checklists of species and genus group names contain over 1000 entries.
- Glossary is enlarged and partly re-written, it contains over 300 entries.
- Bibliography includes over 300 references.
- Results and conclusions, analysed and discussed, enable recommendations for conservation.
- Present conservation priorities: Securing the habitats of rare endemic species, saving threatened species, restoring lost habitats of once common widespread species.

The significance of distribution data and maps is manifold. Butterflies are the ecologically dominating group of indicator organisms the habitats of which are shared by thousands of insect species. The significance of butterflies for the conservation of nature on the whole is therefore immense and enhanced by their exceptional beauty. The loss of butterflies indicates the loss of inconspicuous insects. Butterflies can only be saved where they live. Thus knowledge of butterfly distribution is the first precondition for successful conservation. In spite of this, until the appearance of the first Atlas in 2002 there was neither a European data bank nor adequate distribution maps enabling an assessment their spatial status and the first marker of threat.

Talking of the so called climate change, in fact a Holocene warming is now fashionable; politicians of all colours do not hesitate to utilise it for the aims of their political party or movement. Climate change is a natural phenomenon taking place ever since the birth of planet Earth some 4.6 milliards years ago. The present phase of climate change is the Holocene climate warming which started some 10 or 12 thousands years, depending of the arbitrarily determined break Pleistocene/Holocene. During the first postglacial climatic optimum it was 2–3 °C warmer and more humid than now. During the medieval climatic optimum the best white wines were grown in S. England and the Alps were free of snow and ice for most of the year. Also our continent has changed substantially since the break of Holocene. The English Channel separated Britain from Europe. Mediterranean Sea coastlines changed completely, a small shallow freshwater lake changed to the present Black Sea. The year 1850 is regarded as the end of the cold spell called “little ice age” (LIA) which dominated Europe for more than 200 years. Predicting future is a flourishing business now and was at any age in human history. It helps if gloomy prophecies are combined with proposals promising mitigation of the fatal consequences prophesied – it makes a fully comprehensive business deal. It is embarrassing if *Charaxes jasius* (LINNAEUS, 1758), widespread on the Mediterranean coasts and on the Atlantic coast of Portugal,

a widespread Afro-tropical species with HQ in E.-C. Africa is according to the computer aided prophecy pronounced extremely highly threatened (HHHR) by climate warming (SETTELE et al. 2008). In fact it was the Holocene climate warming that enabled the northwards expansion of *Charaxes jasius* from Africa as far as the Mediterranean basin. There is no better example showing the worthlessness of long term predictions published by SETTELE et al. (2008). Nonetheless long term prophecies are a good business. Only experts recognize in time that the prophets may be anything except being experts. In twenty or fifty years the prophecies will be forgotten and their prophets too (cf. KUDRNA 2013, 2015).



Papilio machaon

Dr. Otakar Kudrna
Mapping European Butterflies


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Twenty four years have passed since the announcement of Map-ping European Butterflies (MEB) in the autumn of 1995. The first Distribution Atlas of European Butterflies was published seven years later in 2002. It was then the first computer aided distribution atlas of butterflies of any continent ever published. MEB was supported by more than 300 contributors during the past 24 years. The present publication is the final 24 years report closing this research project for the time being. MEB is to be continued.

The book can be ordered directly from the publisher

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Společnost pro Ochranu Motýlů (Czech Butterfly Conservation Society, SOM) is a non-governmental and non profit-making organization serving the conservation of butterflies and moths and their habitats, focused mainly on the territory of Czechia. SOM members carry out studies and collate data on butterflies and moths of Czechia for conservation purposes and make them available to institutions and organisations concerned. The Society organizes meetings, promotes butterfly/moth conservation and issues various informative materials serving the popularization of butterfly and moth conservation. SOM cooperates internationally in the field of insect research and conservation, for example as a joint member of the Slovak Entomological Society. Above all, SOM members carry out their own projects aiming at research and management of selected localities. Results of butterfly mapping in Czechia co-organized by SOM were published in an extensive two volume book "Butterflies of the Czech Republic: Distribution and conservation" (2002) in Czech language with an English summary. The Society has at present 58 ordinary members and one honorary member. Membership meetings take place twice a year.