

Monitoring of Habitats directive butterfly species in Slovenia - ten years after

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Following the Habitats directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) the EU member states are required to monitor the status of threatened species listed in the Annex II and IV of the Directive. In Slovenia we have designed three level of monitoring with different monitoring frequency depending on known habitat requirements and known trends of surveyed species:

- monitoring of population size (selected populations);
- monitoring of selected core areas (patch occupancy, abundance);
- monitoring of isolated populations (presence of the species).

In general, we detected negative trends for majority of species where sufficient data are available at different, but not all levels of monitoring. The Southern Festoon (*Zerynthia polyxena*) has been the only noteworthy exception with stable distribution and patch occupancy. The most dramatic loss was detected for Large Blue (*Phengaris arion*) with 79% decline in patch occupancy and 43% range contraction. The Scarce Large Blue (*P. teleius*) and Dusky Large Blue (*P. nausithous*) have had mixed fortunes with population and patch occupancy declines at majority of sites coupled with range contractions with loss of several isolated sites in different regions in Slovenia. The False Ringlet (*C. oedippus*) has been almost wiped out from central Slovenia, being present just at one small blanket bog, but it is still stable in patch occupancy in south western Slovenia with even increasing population size at the monitoring site in Kras region. Majority of habitat loss that caused such severe declines could be attributed to recent changes in farming practices with small scale farming being abandoned, resulting in overgrowing of grasslands, or converted to large scale intensive farming as favored by EU agriculture policy. Despite availability of butterfly conservation targeted agro-environmental schemes these are not sufficiently attractive for farmers and habitat loss continues even in Natura 2000 sites.