



PAPILIO!

SBBT E-Newsletter

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Milk Parsley wilt - Will Fitch & Kevin Radley



Swallowtail *Papilio machaon britannicus* - Mark Collins

British swallowtail faces threat from foodplant disease

Both the British Swallowtail and its foodplant, Milk-Parsley are under threat in the British landscape, dependent as they are on a narrowly defined wetland habitat – the Norfolk Broads. Very recently the status of the subspecies has been regraded to Vulnerable. Nearly all the Swallowtail's breeding sites are at risk from rising water levels in these marsh and fen landscapes, but the situation has been complicated by the discovery of a fungal wilt disease that devastated Milk-Parsley in the last growing season. At Wheatfen Reserve in the Norfolk Broads, work is underway to identify the origin of the fungus and to explore ways to stop it before the situation worsens. Genetic analysis to aid identification of the fungus is being undertaken by Kew Gardens and the Norfolk Fungus Study Group., in cooperation with Wheatfen.



Climate change, habitat loss and the Parnassiinae

Following the success of the SBBT online conference *Saving Swallowtails*, which attracted participants from right around the world, SBBT is planning a conference focussed specifically on the papilionid subfamily Parnassiinae.

We would like to hear from anyone who has expertise in the genera *Hypermnestra*, *Parnassius*, *Archon*, *Sericinus*, *Bhutanitis*, *Zerynthia*, *Allancastris* and *Luehdorfia*. We are also planning to include consideration of the monospecific subfamily Baroniinae.

Many parnassiines, such as the Apollo butterflies, live in montane habitats that are gradually reducing in size as climate warming creeps up their hillsides. Others enjoy more tropical climates and are at risk from drier conditions. We would like to characterise and publicise the overall picture of risk to this important and beautiful group – please help us to build a network of experts who can reach out through the medium of an online conference.

If you have a research programme, some relevant publications, or you know of some good contacts, please get in touch with us as soon as possible at info@sbbt.org.uk



Update on Fiji's *Papilio natewa* project

Clive Huggins

Following the discovery and description of the endemic Natewa swallowtail in Fiji, SBBT has supported local efforts to characterise the early life stages and the foodplant. The Natewa Butterfly House and Tree Nursery, built by the local community on the coast of the Natewa Peninsula, in Vanua Levu, have been well cared for by the local community during recent months of COVID restrictions, with only occasional maintenance visits possible by key supporters from the staff of local private sector supporters Kokomana and Ocean Ventures.

Butterfly Project was shown by an illustrated article appearing in the *Fiji Times* explaining how the Vusaratu Visitors Centre, Butterfly House and Tree Nursery will benefit the local community and how they have been responsible for its maintenance during the COVID lockdown. One of the early visitors has been the British High Commissioner.

Butterfly house nectar sources and larval foodplant growth is well established compared with a few months ago. A challenge has been recreating the forest environment on the coastal village site.



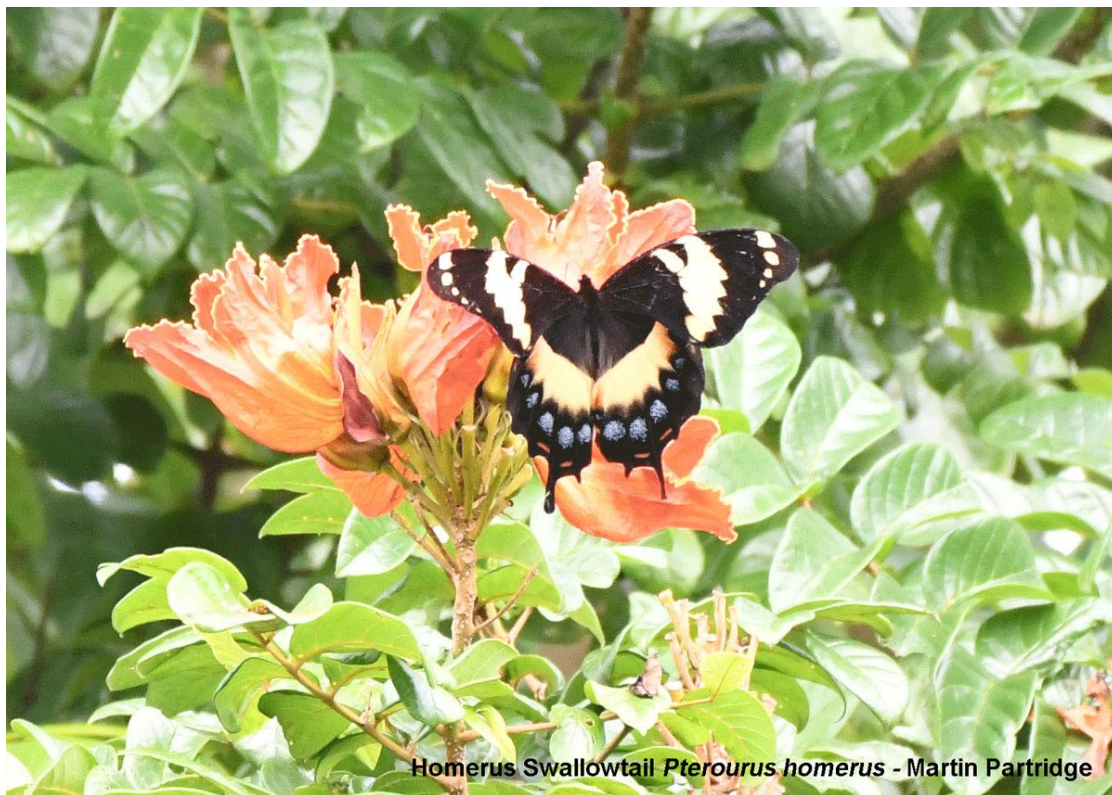
Natewa Swallowtail *Papilio natewa* - Gregg Kerr

An introduction of some common Fijian butterfly species is now to be tested. When that proves good it is planned to try breeding both of the endemic Fijian Swallowtails *Papilio schmeltzi* and *Papilio natewa*, about whose conservation we are especially concerned.

Starting this month a Conservation Leadership Programme will run exchange visits of young people from communities across Vanua Levu to learn about nature-based eco-tourism at this site with input from Richard Markham (Kokomana) and Ocean Ventures.

Trouble with Kava

Kava, previously grown alongside villages for traditional community use, is now seen as a lucrative cash crop for export, unfortunately using highly damaging and unsustainable production methods. Prices have risen rapidly, driving increased production. Producers have been tempted to clear many more patches of forest in search of fertile land. This trend, if not controlled, could affect Fiji's unique biodiversity as well as across a number of other Pacific nations. The Covid pandemic and recent extreme weather events have made matters worse as communities see this as a lucrative alternative income to collapsed tourism.



Homerus Swallowtail *Pterourus homerus* - Martin Partridge

The Homerus Swallowtail in Jamaica

Jamaica has found itself in a severe lockdown with very heavy fines for transgression and limited opportunities for either vaccinations or fieldwork. Nevertheless, local lepidopterist Dr Eric Garraway has used this time to plan and promote a visit in 2023 by genetic expert Fabien Condamine of France. Fabien plans to visit Jamaica to collect fresh samples from the two isolated populations of the Homerus swallowtail to add to the material already available from an SBBT-funded project carried out in 2019. DNA analysis will enable the team to double-check that the two populations are of the same stock. A plan of action for the 2023 season is being prepared, to cover the complete project including collecting and analytical methods, permit and travel requirements, and approximate costs. Amongst other things, a CITES permit will be needed for the work.

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