

The Societas Europaea Lepidopterologica celebrates its 30th Anniversary

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1. Founder's note on the origin of the Societas Europaea Lepidopterologica

In September 2007 the Societas Europaea Lepidopterologica (SEL) celebrates 30 years of its existence. Perhaps only I know how the idea of establishing a European lepidopterological society came about in the mid-seventies. In co-operation with the (American) Lepidopterists' Society I attempted at that time to set-up a small team to publish a "European Season's Summary" every year in the Lepidopterists' Society's *News*; the Season's Summary is a project well known and acknowledged in North America. The 'Season's Summary' could have been useful in obtaining information on the status of rare and threatened European butterflies. I felt the need for a European lepidopterological forum, too. At about the same time, the late H. Epstein, a German born naturalized U.S.A. citizen living in Switzerland approached the (American) Lepidopterist's Society requesting the setting-up of a European Branch of that Society financed by the Society's Council. So far as I am aware, the Council then generally welcomed the idea, but was not willing to finance it either at all, or at least not to the amount H. Epstein requested. Thereupon, H. Epstein gave-up, whereas I, a thoroughly convinced European without any commercial aims, realized the need for a new pan-European lepidopterological society and started thinking about how to establish it. The running costs of the society in 'status nascendi' were at that stage small and I paid them from my moderate income.

The foundation of a European lepidopterological society, for which I coined the 'neutral' name of Societas Europaea Lepidopterologica (SEL), was my original idea. Soon, almost 100 European lepidopterists accepted my invitation to join a new European lepidopterological society being formed. In the course of my initiative I worked out the concept for the new society, including the composition of its first Council (and later on the choice and recruiting of the Council members), with all its Committees and with the Congresses of European Lepidopterology scheduled to take place every two years. I also co-organised the Inaugural Assembly. At about the same time, I proposed the contents-related titles for the forming Society's future serial publications: *Nota Lepidopterologica* (news, information, book reviews, reports, biography, bibliography, observations, members' addresses, short communications, proceedings etc.; to be published quarterly), *Acta Lepidopterologica* (original papers; one issue p.a.) and *Opera Lepidopterologica* (monographs, major revisions etc., to be published irregularly). Thanks to the kindness and talent of the late Kiki Larsen, it was possible to present the titles of the journals and the SEL logo (*Zerynthia polyxena*, chosen by myself) as camera-ready copies.

The SEL Inaugural Meeting took place at the Zoological Museum A. Koenig in Bonn (D), 16-18 September 1976. Twenty founding members attended the meeting: H.E. Back (D), G. Bernardi (F), C. Dufay (F), G. Ebert (D), W.L. Blom (NL), J. Heath (GB), G. Hesselbarth (D), R. de Jong (NL), F. Kasy (A), Z. Lorkovic (YU), C.F. Lühr (N), H. van Oorschot (NL), M. Opheim (N), E. Schmidt-Nielsen (DK), H. Schreiber (D), K.G. Schurian (D), N. Thi-Hong (F), R.I. Vane-Wright (GB), S. Wagener (D) and myself.

What role was played by R. de Jong and J. Heath? The former accepted my invitation to join the forming SEL at an early stage, was very helpful and won several new members for SEL from among his friends; following my proposal he was subsequently elected the first SEL president at the SEL Inaugural Meeting in Bonn. The latter also indicated his interest in SEL at an early stage, but remained inactive until he was elected the first Vice-President at the above meeting, on my proposal and following R.F. Bretherton's previous decline to join the first SEL Council on account of his advancing age and failing health.

To keep the first potential and early members informed, I issued a few simple newsletters. The Council rightly resolved on my suggestion to discontinue the provisional newsletter as from the appearance of the first issue of *Nota lepidopterologica*. It is a great pity that certain Council members ignored Council's decisions and that this was tolerated. Thus the SEL now has a (pseudo)journal *News*, and the contents of *Nota Lepidopterologica* do not correspond with either the name or purpose; sadly, the other two journals have never been realised.

I must admit that in the course of the above activities, I committed a few regrettable errors of judgement. For instance, I ignored the advice of the late W. Forster and that of my late friend R.F. Bretherton; these failures influenced negatively the composition of the first Council. Later I have realized that my worst mistake was my own joining the first Council. Nonetheless, the concept of the new Society, as conceived by myself, proved sound and was subsequently adopted as a model for the Societas Europaea Herpetologica (SEH) by its founder, W. Böhme.

Some six years ago a biased official account of the setting-up of the Society, written by R. de Jong was published in the SEL *News* of 27.07.2001. R.L.H. Dennis, one of the first English SEL members, aware of my contribution to the foundation of SEL, called the inaccurate and incomplete article to my attention. Later a photocopy of the article in the *News* of 27.07.2001 was sent to me on my special request. All members are entitled to receive the *News* and have apparently received it. Most curiously, I have never received the above cited issue of the *News* as such.

Some five years have passed since in my letter of 08.05.2002 I approached the SEL President for the first time, requesting the Council to publish a correction of R. de Jong's inaccurate and incomplete account of 27.07.2001; sadly, my request was disregarded in spite my reminders. This 'founder's note' corrects and completes R. de Jong's biased account.

It is a pity, that the SEL, although older, has not yet progressed as far as the younger European herpetological society (SEH). Probably all successive SEL Councils have been responsible for the numerous opportunities missed and for the failures 'achieved'. Let us hope, that the next Council will be in every way much better than the past ones, and that its members will exhibit European vision and drive. The 15th European Congress of Lepidopterology (in September 2007) marks the end of the first 30 years history of the Society, not the end of the SEL as such. Be that as it may, I believe that my – now more than 30 years old! – vision of founding a European lepidopterological Society was right then and is right now.

2. On the Kolev's review of *The Distribution Atlas of European Butterflies*

In the *Nota Lepidopterologica* **25**(2002):280-283 of 16.VI.2003 a book review written by Z. Kolev denigrates *The Distribution Atlas of European Butterflies*. I would prefer to ignore this grossly unfair review. Nonetheless, the success of Mapping European Butterflies (MEB) has been made possible by the co-operation of recorders, project bearers and sponsors. To them and only to them I owe a short statement concerning this review. Since I do not want to enter into a dialogue with any detractor, my statement concentrates on the most important points only. It is strange, that the editors of *Nota Lepidopterologica* were happy enough to publish Kolev's unusually long denigrating 'book review' of the *Atlas* on the one hand and rejected my right of reply in a form of a short rejoinder on the other.

The following two examples are sufficient to disclose the way Kolev works and distorts facts. I wrote (p. 31): "*Coenonympha glycerion* and *C. iphioides* are taxonomically distinct but very closely related and some forms appear to be transitional; they may prove to be conspecific." and (p. 29): "*Hipparchia amymone* reported on at least two occasions from a single locality in Greece is provisionally considered to be a very rare natural hybrid and not a distinct species." Yet, Kolev claims that I have recognized *C. iphioides* and *H. amymone* as 'bona species' [sic] and criticizes me for doing so. Generally speaking, the recognition of 'minor species' can be useful in many cases (v. Atlas, p. 17, 3rd paragraph). It is impossible, however, to recognize taxa not recognized by major

data banks and/or by the majority of recorders concerned. I have consulted specialists in critical cases, and followed and acknowledged their advice. Gorbunov's (2001) book, the omission of which was criticized by Kolev, could not have been followed or cited because it was not available at the time; P. Gorbunov himself contributed significantly to MEB as a recorder and co-ordinator (Russia: G06). By the way, trained taxonomists use the term 'distinct species' and avoid Kolev's confusing term "bona species".

Kolev is right in pointing out the shift by one basic recording field (BRF) of a dot indicating the distribution of 17 species, mostly *Erebia* spp., in the Pyrenees. Kolev's long-winded and speculative explanation of this regrettable error is sheer nonsense. The reason for this error was the poor quality and inadequate quantity of French data and the (extremely difficult!) conversion of imprecise distribution maps (Delmas & Maechler 1999), the only ones available at the time. I am sorry for this error. I have checked all the maps more than once; to discover such a shift, especially if the same error appears a few times on the maps of similar species, but it is an almost impossible task. It should be borne in mind, that Kolev criticized the Atlas for 17 errors among 228 931 data records; thus on every error so drastically condemned by Kolev, there are 13 466 apparently correct records ($228\ 931 - 17 = 228\ 914 : 17 = 13\ 466$). I strongly suspect, that the shift of one BRF was not discovered by Kolev himself. The Atlas contains some real errors and I offer my apology for these to the readers. It is notable that Kolev found none of them. These errors will be corrected in due course in the future second edition of the Atlas. Nonetheless, I have never seen a perfect scientific work; not even the in the UK so highly celebrated *Millennium Atlas of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland*, will be free of error. I therefore fear that there could be some errors even in the second edition. I also apologize for having misspelled *Erebia arvernensis* – as was in this case correctly pointed out by Kolev.

Contrary to Kolev's opinion, the Caucasus is in Asia, a standard definition of Europe being followed (cf. e.g. *Webster's Geographical Dictionary*). Contrary to Kolev's opinion, Bulgaria is adequately represented; the Times Atlas map of Bulgaria (1:2 500 000) is not as detailed as the map of Greece (1:1 000 000), a country with a very complex relief and rich in islands, therefore requiring more reference localities. Kolev was duly invited to contribute to MEB; however, no potential MEB recorder can dictate the methods to be utilized.

The UTM grid is in no way better, or less prone to errors, than my Reference Locality System (RLS) conceived specifically for Mapping European Butterflies. UTM is impractical and difficult to use, whereas meridians and parallels, utilized by my Reference Locality System, are standard tools in cartography. Furthermore, there are very few maps containing the UTM grid and the grid does not consist of squares alone; since the Earth is not flat, there must be numerous compensating triangles. The UTM is not a standard system. The substitution of the very exact co-ordinates of butterfly sites for Reference Localities would fail because of the sheer amount of extra work alone, and for other methodical and practical reasons. Kolev's claim that the size of the basic recording field (BRF) is fixed is his own fabrication. The size of the BRF can be varied and depends for instance on such simple conditions like the size of paper (e.g. A4 or A3) on which the map is printed. Moreover, the DMAP program can produce grid-less distribution maps, if desired and facilitated by the size of paper; however, such maps are generally difficult both to read and to interpret owing to clusters of overlapping dots. A discussion of the grid and the Reference Locality System can be read in more detail in the Atlas (v. Methods, pp. 8-12.).

I had to keep the gross postal weight of the book (i.e. including bag) below 1 kg, otherwise the small budget would not have allowed for the postage of more than 300 complimentary copies to recorders and sponsors. The number of pages was limited by the weight of the book; a synonymic catalogue and extensive taxonomic notes had to be left out. To keep the weight down, the Atlas is printed on a special paper. It combines the volume of a strong 110 g paper with the weight of a light 80 g paper, making the book light and the binding adequately robust.

The caustic nature of Kolev's 'review' would suggest that a primary aim was to drive a wedge between the recorders, project bearers and sponsors on the one hand and myself on the other in order to break-up the MEB team and make the continuation of the project – MEB 2 – impossible. Is this why the last (speculative) paragraph of Kolev's review, viciously condemning Mapping European Butterflies and the methods utilized (Kolev wrongly calls methods 'methodology'), has been written and published? Is Kolev aware that the 17 errors he discovered (probably not) by himself amount to less than 1 per thousand of the nearly a quarter of a million (228 931) data records? That for every error pointed out by Kolev there are 13 466 apparently correct records? It is deeply unfortunate that the editors of *Nota Lepidopterologica* published Kolev's denigrating "review" of a work contributed to by so many recorders from all over Europe, many of them SEL members. It is very strange, that the editors of *Nota Lepidopterologica* rejected my right to reply with a rejoinder.

According to M. Nuss (pers. comm. of 05.03.2007), K. Fiedler, the then Editor-in-Chief, "supervised" Kolev's review. Was Kolev's review invited? Did the SEL Council share and support such initiative? Did the SEL editors not know that the late C.M. Naumann, a SEL Honorary Member, praised *The Distribution Atlas of European Butterflies* in his book review (*Entomologische Zeitschrift* 112:340, 2002) as a milestone in the history of European lepidopterology?

3. Nothing but injustice

Nothing is easier than to injure someone's feelings by an unfortunate remark or a similar mishap. A prompt, sincere apology as soon as the injurious statement comes to light should be the obvious reaction. Naturally, a published statement can only be put right by a published correction. Differences can thus be settled amicably and all be forgiven. I have never received an apology for the biased account of SEL's origin. Instead, Kolev's "review", a full frontal attack, followed. I have now been waiting patiently some six and four years respectively for any kind of correction of the unfair, injurious, derogatory statements. And finally, I have been denied the right of defence.

The last stage of this sad story opened in October 2006. G. Tarmann, the SEL Vice-President, asked me to write an account of the foundation of the SEL. After a lengthy discussion I agreed to do it while he in turn promised to see, that my account would be published in the *Nota Lepidopterologica*. I have fulfilled my promise using the early drafts of my rejoinders as a base, the present slightly expanded and rewritten account being the result of our agreement.

The injustice bears the following names:

R. de Jong, who knows the SEL history well enough to avoid its biased, unfair interpretation;
N.P. Kristensen, the present SEL President, whom I approached a few times seeking justice;
K. Fiedler, the former Council Member and Editor-in-Chief, who supervised Kolev's "review";
M. Nuss, who in the last instance categorically rejected my rejoinders submitted for publication.

Having exhausted all ways of achieving justice in the form of the publication of corrections to the injurious statements by the SEL – I had given-up any hope of receiving an apology a few years ago – and to protect myself, I am now taking the liberty of publishing my up-dated rejoinders on the internet, as a flyer and subsequently in the *Oedippus* 25. Disappointed and seeing no other option, I resign my SEL membership as my answer to the injustice I have suffered from the present Council; I have indicated this intention to the SEL President in my letter of 12.09.2005. It is very sad when the founder quits 'his' Society, it is in a way an analogy of disclaiming ones child. Be that as it may, the present SEL Council probably needs another 30 years to appreciate that there would be no SEL, had I not had the idea to create it about 30 years ago. Meanwhile, the present account should help to avert any further distortion of SEL's history.

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