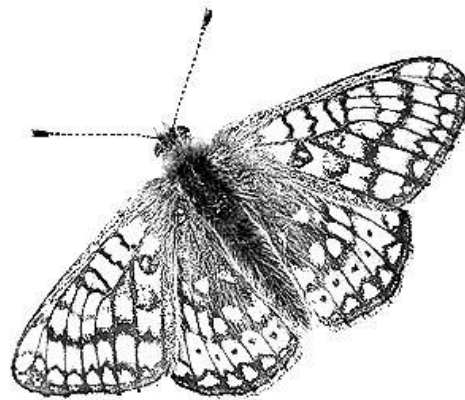



Population Ecology and Genetics of the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia*.



Submitted by Melanie Rose Smee to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Biological Sciences in June 2011.

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ABSTRACT

The past two decades have witnessed an unprecedented decline in Lepidopteran species, with more than a third of the UK's butterflies now either considered threatened, or already lost from the country. The vulnerable marsh fritillary, *Euphydryas aurinia*, after a long term loss in the UK of 73% in abundance, has become an almost iconic species as the target of many well-funded conservation projects across the UK. Despite extensive ecological studies, populations of *E. aurinia* are shown in Chapter 2 to still be declining in south-west UK even after recommended management strategies have been implemented. This necessitates the need for prompt research beyond that of management requirements and butterfly habitat preferences.

In Chapter 3, microsatellite markers (EST-SSRs) were developed for *E. aurinia* and using these markers in Chapter 4, it is shown that *E. aurinia* populations in southern UK and Catalonia, Spain, are severely genetically differentiated at all geographical scales, and genetically depauperate, causing huge concerns for the conservation of this enigmatic and ecologically important species.

Dispersal is fundamental to metapopulation existence and survival. Phosphoglucose isomerase (PGI – an enzyme in the glycolysis pathway) is a well-endorsed candidate gene for dispersal, extensively studied in the Glanville fritillary (*Melitaea cinxia*) and Orange Sulphur (*Colias eurytheme*). In Chapter 5, an analysis across 27 sites in the UK discovered six non-synonymous SNPs (single nucleotide polymorphisms) within PGI. A single charge-changing SNP of interest showed no evidence of balancing selection, contrary to findings in *M. cinxia*, instead appearing to be neutral when analysed alongside microsatellite markers developed in Chapter 3. No link was found between genotype and flight, morphology or population trend. These findings challenge the emerging perspective that PGI could be used as an adaptive molecular marker for arthropods.

Wolbachia are endosymbiotic bacteria capable of dramatically altering the reproductive system of their host. In Chapter 6, a PCR-based diagnostic in conjunction with MLST (multi-locus sequence typing) identified 100% prevalence of a single strain of *Wolbachia* across all sampled *E. aurinia* populations in the UK. Total prevalence suggests that *Wolbachia* probably has little phenotypic impact on its host, but the

potential impacts of this endosymbiont on uninfected populations should be considered during any management plans for the conservation of *E. aurinia*.

Current management plans will need to incorporate all areas of research, from basic ecological requirements to molecular adaptation and unseen manipulators of host biology, to be able to fully and effectively conserve declining fragmented species.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a small number of people I couldn't have done this without, and a large number of people I wouldn't have wanted to do it without.

I will be forever grateful to my supervisors, Dave Hodgson (a.k.a. 'Hodgy') and Richard French-Constant, for giving me the opportunity to do this PhD in the first place, fresh out of my Undergrad. The most humungous thanks go to Hodgy, for making me feel special, I quote "there's only one Mel Smee", but capable; for the door that was always open (and I had to creep past to avoid detection); and for letting me "fly away", knowing I would come back. Thanks also to Richard, for his constant humour and updates on my grandmother (!). And to Caroline Bulman, my supervisor at Butterfly Conservation, for always being encouraging and having a few spare minutes for me even when pregnant.

To Yannick Pauchet I owe so much – there isn't a big enough thank you for it. For always being there and supporting and encouraging me – picking me up when I was low, and bringing me back down to earth when my head was in the clouds. For nurturing my metamorphosis from an ecologist into a molecular ecologist, and so much more.

Two of the chapters of this thesis wouldn't have been possible without the amazing generosity and willingness of Mike Singer and Sasha Mikheyev – I am hugely indebted to both for the opportunity given to me to visit Okinawa, and the chance to meet some wonderful people; Tanya, Yutaka, Hitomi, Pascal, Roxy, Laurent, Émile, Yoko & more.

There is no way I would have kept my sanity through these few years if it wasn't for Julia Reger. Despite being a few hundred miles away, I am so thankful to Ju, just for always being there for me, and the constant emails preventing me from going completely crazy. It could never compare with sitting down with a cup of tea and biscuits and putting the world to rights, but it was damn close.

However, Kate Plummer and I did put the world to rights with endless cups of tea, giggles and chatting, and even tears. I am incredibly grateful for Kate's friendship over the past few years, even from the other side of the globe. I couldn't have asked to share a house for 3 years with better people than Kate and Xav Harrison, who provided much banter and makes the best chocolate cake in the world! A special thanks also goes to

Laura Bailey, for being so understanding over these years, and for just being you and always putting a smile on my face; and to Ceri Simmons, who also gave me many reasons to smile over these past few years, including her friendship and the chance to escape and be around horses whenever a spare minute allowed it. And to Pip and the Dorset crowd, my pseudo-family – I just love you loads!

There are endless lists of people who have made the past 3 or so years such brilliant fun. I would like to thank Andy – for my grey hairs. I attribute half to you and half to the PhD itself. Fieldwork would have been a much more tiresome task if it had not been for many helpers in the field: R. Hobson; M. Davey; M. Easter; M. Tunmore; the folk on the Lizard NNR Natural England team (for tea and giggles); Phil Harris for endless enthusiasm; MSc student Sian Rowland; and Nat Cumber, (Brown) Patch and Helen - for making life totally full to the brim of laughs (and Chelsea buns). Thanks also to NE, BC, CWT, DWT and all landowners allowing access to land, as well as all the voluntary collectors in Wales (CCW) and Scotland (SNH), especially Adrian Fowles and Tom Prescott, for all their help. To Blount and Hosken, for ‘corridor banter’ in the form of abusive shouts of ‘Smelly’ and ‘Smeeple’ down the hall way; to the ‘one month post-doc’ Sam – amazing how quickly you can form a firm friendship with someone; to Debbie Mason, the conservationist extraordinaire (marsh frits would be extinct now if you weren’t around to save them); to Casper Breuker, Chris Wheat, Paul Wilkinson, Michelle Hares, Nina Wedell, Zen Lewis, Anna Leonard and many more I’m sure – for help and advice freely given; and of course to all the past and present occupiers of the PhD office – it’s the people that make the experience, and mine has been a fantastic one at Tremough – Devi, Iain, Caro, Ruth, Cheryl, Damo, Lucy, Nic Chamberlain, Erika, Ross, Josie, Jan, Joe and Corrina, Sahran, Fran, Will, Stuart Hinchliffe, Andrea, Si Pickett, Dom & Dom, Ritika, Iva and many more.... A big thank you also goes to all the friends at home in Portsmouth, in Australia, and those made throughout my Undergrad who have stayed in touch and in some way or another helped me through the PhD.

And finally, huge thanks to my Mum, for knowing that ‘no phone call is a good sign’ and always understanding and supporting me; and to Dad and Alice – for constant encouragement and perspective. And finally to my brother Joe – for not leaving the planet entirely and coming back when I needed you most. I love you all very much.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This thesis was made possible by funding from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) in conjunction with a CASE partnership from Butterfly Conservation (BC). All of the chapters presented in this thesis were written by M. R. Smee, with additional editing by D. J. Hodgson. Individual contributions to each chapter are listed below.

CHAPTER 2 – published in *Journal of Insect Conservation*.

An initial 5 year partnership project was undertaken by Natural England; Cornwall Wildlife Trust; Butterfly Conservation; The Environment Agency and The Highways Agency, across central Cornwall as part of the Natura 2000 series of sites - sites of European importance for nature conservation. W. Smyth (Natural England) and M. Tunmore (Cornwall Environmental Consultants) were involved in this initial project. M. R. Smee continued the project for another year, analysed the 6-year dataset and wrote the manuscript. D. J. Hodgson assisted with statistical issues and reviewed the manuscript. W. Smyth and M. Tunmore reviewed the manuscript before it was sent for publication.

CHAPTER 3

M. C. Singer (University of Texas) was instrumental in making this study possible, and also provided samples of *E. aurinia* from European populations, as did B. Wee (National Ecological Observatory Network, USA). R. ffrench-Constant provided funding for the transcriptome of *E. aurinia* to be gained from 454-pyrosequencing and Y. Pauchet extracted RNA with M. R. Smee and prepared the normalized library. P. Wilkinson assembled the 454 data and ran the query script for perfect microsatellite repeats. A. S. Mikheyev (Okinawa Institute for Science and Technology) hosted M. R. Smee whilst the lab work was carried out and provided the funding for all lab consumables, travel and accommodation for the two month duration, as well as advice on microsatellite marker choice and analysis. Initial draft prepared by M. R. Smee and improved by Y. Pauchet and D. J. Hodgson.

CHAPTER 4

Contributions as for Chapter 3. X. Harrison provided initial training in the use of STRUCTURE, and R. ffrench-Constant provided useful comments on the initial draft.

CHAPTER 5

Initial idea to study PGI in *Euphydryas aurinia* suggested by R. ffrench-Constant, who also provided funding for lab consumables and sequencing throughout the project. Y. Pauchet provided M. R. Smee with training in molecular techniques, both in the laboratory and on computer programmes, from PCR and primer design to sequence alignment. P. Wilkinson did the sequencing and D. Smith carried out some final PCRs to complete the dataset for analysis. M. R. Smee carried out statistical analyses and wrote the initial draft, both of which were improved upon by D. J. Hodgson.

CHAPTER 6

Initial concept by M. R. Smee and Y. Pauchet. Sequencing by P. Wilkinson, with all other lab work, analysis and writing of draft by M. R. Smee. D. J. Hodgson, R. ffrench-Constant, Y. Pauchet and Z. Lewis commented on and improved initial draft.

DEFINITIONS & ABBREVIATIONS

454 pyrosequencing	One method of next-generation sequencing (NGS), originating from a company called 454 Life Sciences but now owned by Roche Diagnostics, which uses a "sequencing by synthesis" approach - relying on the detection of pyrophosphate release on nucleotide incorporation rather than chain termination as in Sanger sequencing. See NGS definition for more general information.
AFLP	<u>A</u> mplified <u>f</u> ragment <u>l</u> ength <u>p</u> olymorphism PCR uses primers for known regions of the genome to amplify genomic DNA, which is then digested by restriction enzymes and run on polyacrylamide gels to visualise differences in fragment lengths.
bp	<u>b</u> ase <u>p</u> airs of DNA.
cDNA	Complementary DNA synthesized from an mRNA template.
Co-dominant markers	Molecular markers in which both the alleles present at a locus contribute to the expressed phenotype and heterozygotes can be distinguished from homozygotes.
Contig	Often used to determine the original DNA sequence of the source material, contigs are sets of overlapping segments of DNA from a single genetic source.
Endosymbiont	An organism living in close contact – symbiosis – with another organism for the majority of its life.
EST	<u>E</u> xpressed <u>s</u> equences <u>t</u> ag: a short sub-sequence of a cDNA sequence.
HWE	<u>H</u> ardy- <u>W</u> einberg <u>e</u> quilibrium: allele and genotype frequencies in a population are in equilibrium, or remain constant, from generation to generation.
LIFE and Natura2000	LIFE (the Financial Instrument for the Environment), is one of the spearheads of the European Union's environmental policy and was introduced in 1992. It co-finances projects in three areas: LIFE-Nature, LIFE-Environment and LIFE-Third Countries. The LIFE-Nature fund supports the positive management and enhancement of sites of European importance for nature conservation, collectively known as the Natura 2000 series of sites - SPAs and SCIs (Site of Community Importance).

Metapopulation	Existing at the landscape level and consisting of several (>2) smaller geographically separated subpopulations. The metapopulation as a whole can persist if there is a balance between stochastic extinctions and recolonisations across the fragmented landscape.
Microsatellite, (EST-SSR)	Also known as simple sequence repeats (SSRs) or short tandem repeats (STRs). These are tandem repeating sequences of (perfect or compound) di-, tri- or tetra- (and so on) nucleotide motifs, for example, a tri-nucleotide repeat; CAACAACAACAACA. Microsatellites are co-dominant and typically neutral, hence their use as molecular markers in population genetics. If derived from a transcriptome, as is the case here, they are also referred to as EST-SSRs, which are SSRs derived from ESTs (see above).
MLST	<u>M</u> ulti <u>l</u> ocus <u>s</u> equencing <u>t</u> yping: isolates of bacterial species are characterised using DNA sequences of internal segments of several housekeeping genes (usually five or six). Each loci may have several alleles, and so the combination of alleles across these genes defines the unique allelic profile (or sequence type - ST) of the bacterial strain.
Neutral variation	Variation that has a small selection coefficient relative to the population size, such that $ s < 1/2N_e$, where s is either the selective disadvantage of a detrimental genetic variant or the selective advantage of an adaptive genetic variant and N_e is the effective population size.
NGS	<u>N</u> ext- <u>g</u> eneration <u>s</u> equencing is massively parallel DNA sequencing, where millions of reads (sequences) can be generated over the course of a few hours. Generally, the reads generated are smaller (300 - 500 bp) than when using Sanger sequencing technologies (800 - 1000 bp). Roche 454 FLX Titanium system (454 pyrosequencing) is one of the better known platforms for NGS, along with Illumina's (Solexa) Genome Analyser and ABI's SOLiD.
Null Alleles	allele(s) that fail to amplify within an individual because of mutations at primer annealing sites, and hence cause an individual to appear homozygote for the second allele present at that locus. Null alleles can be a significant problem in studies of population genetics as they skew results towards an excess of homozygotes, where there actually might not be an excess.
PCR	<u>P</u> olymerase <u>c</u> hain <u>r</u> eaction: a technique to amplify thousands to millions of copies of a particular DNA sequence from a single or just a few original copies.

PGI	<u>P</u>hospho<u>g</u>lucose <u>i</u>somerase : an enzyme in the metabolic pathway of glycolysis. PGI catalyses the second step of the pathway in which glucose-6-phosphate is converted to fructose-6-phosphate. High energy molecules of ATP are released during glycolysis, which are used for flight and other essential cellular functions.
SNP	<u>S</u>ingle <u>n</u>ucleotide <u>p</u>olymorphism : a difference of a single nucleotide (A, T, C or G) in the DNA sequence of different individuals.
Subpopulation	One unit of a metapopulation, containing a breeding population of the species.
Thelytoky	Parthenogenesis in which only female offspring are produced.
Univoltine	One generation a year.
UTR	<u>U</u>n<u>t</u>ranslated <u>r</u>egion : the sections either side of the coding region of a gene which are not translated into amino acids.
'vulnerable'	IUCN Red Data List category: species which are classified as 'vulnerable' are likely to become 'endangered' unless trends are reversed. A decline over 10 years of 30 - 49% deems a species as 'vulnerable'.