



Drylands

Restoration of dry-acidic Continental grasslands and heathlands in Natura2000 sites in Piemonte and Lombardia.

Coenonympha oedippus

Habitat 4030

A SMALL EYE IN THE HEATHER

NAME: *Coenonympha oedippus* (Fabricius, 1787)

Common name: False ringlet

Habitat: H4030 - European drylands.

Distribution: in Italy it can be found in most northern regions, with particularly numerous populations present in the Po Valley and in the lower Alps north of the Po river.

Identification: a medium-sized butterfly (forewing 18-22 mm long) with brown colouring on the dorsal side of the wings and paler colours (from light brown to yellowish-brown) on the ventral side; a row of big black yellow-rimmed eyespots with a white inner spot on the ventral side of the hindwing in both sexes, though females also have a row of eyespots on the dorsal side of the wings. The ventral side of their wings is bordered with a narrow silvery line. It can be mistaken for some congenus species (*C. glycerion*, *C. hero*) and with *Aphantopus hyperanthus*, though it can be distinguished from the latter by small differences in colouration and by geographical distribution.

Mutual species the larvae mainly feed on *Molinia caerulea*/*Molinia arundinacea*; however, they are also known to feed on *Carex panicea*, *Carex humilis*, *Poa annua* and *Poa pratensis*. In the Baragge area, eggs have also been found on *Calluna vulgaris*, though the larvae do not feed on it, moving to one of the species mentioned above shortly after hatching.

Did you know? The species is protected under the Habitats Directive (Directive 43/92/ EEC), Annexes II and IV.

Facts

- > The False ringlet is a rare species, increasingly in decline throughout Europe. Although it is less rare in Italy than in the rest of the continent, populations are still affected by environmental alteration, especially habitat loss.
- > These reasons are why it is important to protect the species, especially bearing in mind that Italy has the largest number of populations in Europe, and therefore the most responsibility internationally for its conservation.
- > Its rarity and its peculiar colouration make it a species sought after by wildlife photographers and butterfly watchers.
- > Following the distribution of the plants it feeds from, it can be found both in dry environments, like the moors of Habitat 4030; and in damper environments, like the moor grass (*molinia*) meadows of Habitat 6510.

Conservation status

- > In Europe, in the continental biogeographical region: bad (III Report ex-Art. 17).
- > In Italy, in the continental biogeographical region: generally inadequate (III Report ex-Art. 17) with a stable trend.
- > In the Italian list it is classified as of least concern, whereas in the European list it is classified as endangered.
- > In Italy the species is neither at risk of extinction nor in decline. However, it must be remembered that populations are strongly impacted by loss of habitat, which has already led extinction of this butterfly in many areas in Europe.

Intervention sites: ZSC IT 1120004 Baraggia di Rovasenda (Lenta, VC)

> > Type of intervention: the Life Drylands interventions to improve the status of Habitat 4030 certainly will be of benefit to this species, since heathland is one of its preferred habitats.

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