



EUROPEAN
BUTTERFLIES
GROUP

eNewsletter

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I was depressed in late summer, not just because my butterfly trip to Far East Russia a few weeks earlier had been badly affected by poor weather, but because I had virtually no material for this newsletter. However that all changed when Anne Spencer's e-mail seeking contributions received a brilliant response. I am delighted to present articles by several new contributors, as well as some regulars, covering destinations all across Europe from the Pyrenees to the Kaçkar mountains in NE Turkey.



Poplar Admiral (*Limenitis populi*)
photographed during a break in the
weather near Vladivostok in FE
Russia. The species is found from
N France across Europe and
temperate Asia to Japan.

Special thanks are due to the design team of Trish Connolly Morgan and her husband Andrew Morgan for their skilful work in putting this issue together despite some difficult circumstances.

Nigel Peace, Newsletter Editor, November 2019

News from France

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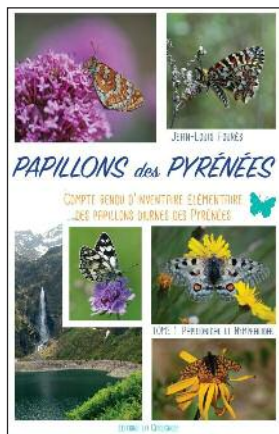
EBG Facebook Page:

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News from France Autumn 2019

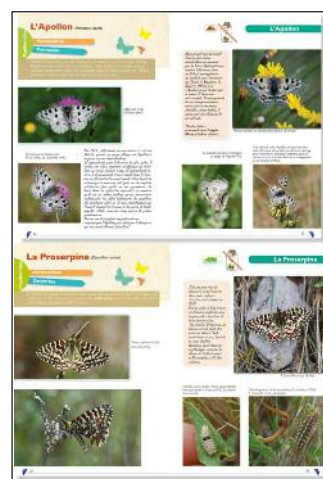
Contributed by Jude Lock (lock.jude@gmail.com)



Papillons des Pyrénées (Butterflies of the Pyrénées)

Compte-rendu d'inventaire élémentaire
des papillons diurnes des
Pyrénées: volume 1
Papilionidae and
Nymphalidae, volume 2
Pieridae, Lycaenidae and
Hesperiidae by Jean-Louis
Fourès.

Paperback format 16 x 24 cm,
320 pages, text in French. These delightful books are
available from the author at jeanlouis.foures@orange.fr
price 34,50 € for 1 volume, or 65 € for both volumes, plus
5,60 € postage to the UK (for either 1 or 2 books).



Liste rouge des Lépidoptères Rhopalocères et Zygènes d'Occitanie (Regional Red List of the Butterflies and Zygaenidae of Occitanie)

The Regional Red List for Occitanie (previously the Languedoc
Roussillon and the Midi-Pyrénées regions) was submitted to
the IUCN in September. The list has been coordinated by the
CEN LR (Conservatoire d'espaces naturels de Languedoc
Roussillon) in collaboration with the OPIE (Office pour les
insectes et leur environnement) and the CEN MP (Conserva-
toire d'espaces naturels Midi-Pyrénées).

Atlas des papillons de jour et zygènes de Provence- Alpes-Côte d'Azur (Butterfly atlas for the region Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur)

This Atlas coordinated by the Conservatoire d'espaces
naturels Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur is due for publication at
the end of the year.

The region hosts an exceptional biodiversity of species. The
atlas will comprise 680,000 records, covering 259 species
(87% of species in France) for the period 1834 – 2019.



Copies (550 pages, in French) will be available from Naturographe, editions@lenaturographe.fr, at a price of 49€. Further information of how to order the Atlas will be placed
on the "News" page of the European Butterflies Group website when available.



Recording of butterfly sites

Butterfly sites: remembering and sharing

by Simon Spencer

GPS mapping

A long time ago I used to take my old Etrex GPS with me when looking for butterflies. When surveying in Wales I would waymark every sighting of a **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (*Boloria euphrosyne*) and then download the file using a GPS utility and overlay it in a GIS program to give a star for every sighting on a map. This helped plot flight areas and identify the areas of optimum habitat.

You can now do this on your smartphone. My old Etrex is in the drawer at home and I now use the GPS on my phone. It works anywhere and is accurate enough for my purposes. Google maps allows you to 'drop a pin' or bookmark a place. The main trouble with Google maps is that it really needs a 4G signal or internet access to work properly. I prefer Maps.me, a free app available from Google play, as you can download maps of the area you are using and work entirely offline. In Wales a 4G signal in the countryside is rare. It is better in countries like France and Greece but even so you are likely to encounter Not Spots.

Maps.me

As I have said, with Maps.me you can download maps of the area you are interested in and work offline. You can bookmark a place and give it a name and a description by editing the bookmark. The description can include a list of significant butterflies. When you click SAVE it defaults to the last .kmz file you used but you can save it to any of the open .kmz files including the default MyPlaces. I usually create a new list for each trip so for 2019 it is "2019places". Like everything else in life it probably helps to be tidy and organised. I wish I had been consistent over the colour of the dropped pins.

For every butterfly site visited my first job is to waymark it but if you forget you can do it later just by tapping the screen where you were on the map. The coordinates in decimal look like 49.33787, -0.479334 the first being the Northing and the second the Easting or 49°20'16.33"N, 00°28'45.6"W in degrees and minutes (it is a campsite on the French coast not a secret location for a rare butterfly). Press and hold on the GPS reading of your bookmark in Maps.me and you can copy it to the clipboard in either format. Having waymarked the site you now have the GPS coordinates.

Additional requirements

I have three. My first is to get the GPS coordinates into the excel spreadsheet I use for recording butterflies. There is one for most countries in Europe on the EBG website. For recording these actually work quite well in google sheets on the phone. There is a way to get the coordinates from the phone to the spreadsheet but it is a bit technical. GPS coordinates manually transposed (i.e. read and re-entered) are notorious for mistakes. ▼



My second requirement is to remember the sites. If you are back in the area 10 years later you can easily find them again. I have imported the site GPS coordinates from my old GPS files into the phone so I can see where I have been in the past.

My third is to be able to share site information with colleagues. You can also do this in google maps. Sites are stored as .kmz files in maps.me. Beside each file is a menu which includes an export function so if you want to send a list of sites to a pal you can follow the sharing options and email them in Outlook. Your pal can import them into maps.me. As a community that partly exists to share sensitive information this makes the process much easier. You can also import them into Google Earth. It appears that .kmz files are compressed or zipped versions of .kml files. Google Earth can do 'save as' and convert one to the other which can be useful.

In conversation you can get out your phone to open up a map in Maps.me, find the place your colleague is telling you about, and waymark it there and then for future use. It helps to have the downloaded maps there already of course. You can also share a location by text or email. It would look like "Hey, check out my current location in MAPS.ME! [ge0://otX1MynKC8](https://maps.me/ge0?latlonzoom=otX1MynKC8), or <https://maps.me/ge0?latlonzoom=otX1MynKC8>. Don't have offline maps? Download here: <https://maps.me> "

A future seminar?

I have thought of doing a seminar on this sometime for EBG members and would welcome the participation of other technophiles. There is always a lot more to learn and discover. •

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Rewilding in France

Hummingbird Hawk-moths and a dragonfly mystery on accidentally rewilded French land

by Emily Waterfield

I had visions of a rainbow garden, filled with **Scarce Swallowtails**, **Holly Blues**, **Short-tailed Blues**, **Orange-tips**, **Commas**, **Marbled Fritillaries** and **Silver-washed Fritillaries**, when we came back to our French holiday home after a four-month absence. But at first glance, there was nothing to see except nettles.

Even though all the above-listed butterflies have been regulars on our acre of very rural land, only the more prosaic **Green-veined White** and **Hedge Brown** seemed to have made much of the space this summer. Some careful clearing, and a week of glorious sunshine, brought variety back, although I realised that rewilding for butterflies takes more than neglect.

The **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** was the first to make its special presence felt. I really thought this was a hummingbird when I first saw one on a school holiday in Brittany many years ago. By the time we had a “flutter” of them on our herb garden in the Pays de la Loire early this decade, I knew there were no hummingbirds in northern France. But it is sometimes still hard to believe the little creature is a moth, and not a bird. This year there was no flutter of hummingbird moths. Just a cheerfully solitary visitor on the buddleia and then on a newly cleared lavender patch. ▼



Hummingbird Hawk-moth (*Macroglossum stellatarum*)



Hedge Brown or Gatekeeper (*Pyronia tithonus*)



Rewilding in France cont.

The herb garden and buddleia were as ever the favourite spots for butterfly visitors to our neglected garden. The Hedge Brown, with its more romantic name of Gatekeeper, was an almost permanent feature of the flowering oregano. Anyone looking for tips on what to grow for butterflies on land that won't get much attention would be well advised to plant as much buddleia and as many kitchen herbs as space allows! Along with fruit trees and roses, buddleia and herbs have kept our garden low-maintenance – although this year's work-induced four-month break was a bit too much for any space.

I thought I might start to interest my two-year-old daughter in butterflies this summer, but she was mostly interested in jumping on plums when they fell from the tree. This squashed fruit did attract the occasional **Red Admiral** but was mostly a draw for wasps and hornets.

A mystery dragonfly

Of more interest to the toddler, perhaps because we had fewer colourful butterflies than in the past, were this year's incredible dragonflies. One spectacular, huge yellow and black creature with iridescent wings I've been able to identify fairly confidently as a newly emerged **Golden-ringed Dragonfly**. But two-year-old Marianne spotted an amazing blue dragonfly down by the spring, which has completely baffled me. There are plenty of European dragonflies with a long blue body, but our visitor also had bright, opaque blue wings. The only similar species I've been able to find online is an American *Zenithoptera*, which is clearly not a candidate for our part of the world! If any readers have any idea what Marianne might have shown us, I'd be extremely grateful to hear from them. •

Emily Waterfield

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Another garden butterfly from France



Grayling (*Hipparchia semele*), by Melita Frost, Lot, SW France



Swiss Bank Account

Swiss Bank Account - Reopened by Richard Harrington

This is an account of a Swiss bank: “reopened” because I first wrote about it ten years ago in the Royal Entomological Society’s bulletin *Antenna* (*Antenna* 33 (4) 170 - 174, 2009). It’s a bank that has an excellent night safe, and I visit it to check my valuables almost every evening and morning during the fortnight my wife and I spend each year in the Jungfrau Region of the Bernese Oberland.



The bank

The bank in question is about 100 metres long and adjacent to the glorious little mountain railway linking Grütschalp, high above the Lauterbrunnen Valley, to the charming village of Mürren, where we have holidayed for 25 years. Why so many butterflies choose to roost here for the night in preference to other sections alongside the railway, I have never fathomed. In fairness, I have recently discovered that an upper, parallel path, is lined by an equally productive bank but here I report just on the longer-observed lower bank. It is east-facing and florally diverse (grasses, umbels, asters, *Astrantia*, bladder campion, and much more), but so is

much of the trackside. It slopes at, I should think, around 30 degrees – reasonably easy to descend without risking falling onto the track and easy enough to ascend quickly so as not to be spotted when a train approaches.

Although facing the morning sun, it is not in a position such that it lights up before other sections of the track. It is thus not for early sun that they choose it nor, being east-facing, for late sun. Indeed, I watch from our room as the sun rises to the left of the Eiger, then saunter the 20 minutes to the bank and watch it rise again. This is around 07.00 during our visits in the first half of July. Thereafter, the wings of butterflies which I spotted the previous evening, and often many which I missed, ping open and beg to be photographed. Then it’s back to the hotel for breakfast.

This wonderful spot means that, no matter how bad a butterfly day it has been (e.g. chucking it down from dawn to dusk), I am guaranteed my fix for the price of a pair of wet knees. Sometimes I’ll find a well-positioned specimen, wings closed, in the evening and return next morning to catch it wings akimbo. The **Swallowtail** (*Papilio machaon*) is an example. ▼



Swiss Bank Account cont.



Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*) in the evening and on the following morning

Finding nothing at all is an extremely rare occurrence and the maximum number of individuals in a single session is probably around 50, comprising up to 15 species. Let's say the average for a visit is 15 individuals comprising 6 or so species, usually with **False Heath Fritillary** (*Melitaea diamina*) dominating. I've found at least 44 species on this short stretch (Table 1), roughly half the total number of species I've seen in the Jungfrau Region. There is year to year variation in abundance and species composition, presumably relating to the point in the butterfly season at which I show up. There are also some trends. For example, **Yellow-spotted Ringlet** (*Erebia manto*) used to be the commonest species but gradually dwindled and now I rarely see it. It's possible that, with the warming climate, its phenology has advanced and its flight period is now over before I arrive, but this is pure speculation.

Having been visiting the Jungfrau Region for a quarter of a century, I no longer expect to find lifers, but there is always the chance. This year I did and, lo and behold, it was on the lower bank. It was the last day of our holiday and we had time to walk from Mürren to Winteregg as the first stage of our homeward journey. My eyes were downward-looking, as usual. I saw what I first thought was **Titania's Fritillary** (*Boloria titania*), which is very common in the area, but something wasn't right. The whole butterfly looked darker than Titania's and closer inspection found no chevrons on the hindwing upper-side margin. My Collins Guide was in my luggage, heading home independently by flyrail, so it wasn't until back home that I discovered that I had found my first **Thor's Fritillary** (*Boloria thore*). ▼



Thor's Fritillary (*Boloria thore*)



False Heath Fritillary (*Melitaea diamina*) & Titania's Fritillary (*Boloria titania*)



Swiss Bank Account cont.

I realise that it is over a long period, but can anybody claim a 100-metre stretch boasting more than 44 species, make any suggestions as to why this stretch might be so diverse or why several individuals (not always of the same species) choose to share the same plant?

Here are some more of my favourite bank deposits.



Apollo (*Parnassius apollo*)



Dark Green Fritillary (*Speyeria aglaja*)



False Heath Fritillary (*Melitaea diamina*)



Yellow-spotted Ringlet (*Erebia manto*)



Black-veined White (*Aporia crataegi*)



Geranium Argus (*Eumedonia eumedon*)

Richard (Rikki) Harrington
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Table 1
Butterflies found on the bank (1994, 1999, 2001 to 2019)

Apollo	<i>Parnassius apollo</i>
Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>
Black-veined White	<i>Aporia crataegi</i>
Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>
Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>
Moorland Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias palaeno</i>
Wood White	<i>Leptidea sinapis</i>
Purple-edged Copper	<i>Lycaena hippothoe</i> (incl. <i>L. h. eurydame</i>)
Sooty Copper	<i>Lycaena tityrus</i> (incl. <i>L. t. subalpinus</i>)
Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>
Chalkhill Blue	<i>Lysandra coridon</i>
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>
Geranium Argus	<i>Eumedonia eumedon</i>
Idas Blue or Silver-studded Blue	<i>Plebejus idas</i> or <i>Plebejus argus</i>
Mazarine Blue	<i>Cyaniris semiargus</i>
Small Blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>
Silver-washed Fritillary	<i>Argynnis paphia</i>
Dark Green Fritillary	<i>Speyeria aglaja</i>
Niobe Fritillary	<i>Fabriciana niobe</i>
False Heath Fritillary	<i>Melitaea diamina</i>
Heath Fritillary	<i>Melitaea athalia</i>
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>
Thor's Fritillary	<i>Boloria thore</i>
Titania's Fritillary	<i>Boloria titania</i>
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
Alpine Heath	<i>Coenonympha gardetta</i>
Arran Brown	<i>Erebia ligea</i>
Blind Ringlet	<i>Erebia pharte</i>
Bright-eyed Ringlet	<i>Erebia oeme</i> (incl. <i>E. o. lugens</i>)
Large Ringlet	<i>Erebia euryale</i>
Mountain Ringlet	<i>Erebia epiphron</i>
Yellow-spotted Ringlet	<i>Erebia manto</i> (incl. <i>f. pyrrhula</i>)
Large Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata maera</i>
Northern Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata petropolitana</i>
Marbled White	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>
Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>
Chequered Skipper	<i>Carterocephalus palaemon</i>
Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>
Large Skipper	<i>Ochlodes venatus</i>
Essex Skipper	<i>Thymelicus lineola</i>
Small Skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>

(Plus an unidentified *Pyrgus* sp.)



Romania and French Pyrenees

Romania and the French Pyrenees 2019

by Owen Beckett

This year I had the opportunity to travel to two of Europe's premier butterflying destinations: Transylvania and the French Pyrenees. Having been to neither before, I was keen to get out into the field and see what each of them had to offer.

Romania, May-June

Transylvania had been on my 'to do' list for some time and I was delighted when I got the opportunity to travel there in late May. It is an area famous for its dramatic scenery and rich unspoilt landscape, as well as some localised butterflies. For most of my trip I was based in the Apuseni Mountains in the northwest of the country followed by a few days in Cluj-Napoca. Being in the mountains, the weather was a little inconsistent with frequent thunderstorms interrupting the spells of warm sunshine, not to mention my butterflying! Nevertheless, the tremendously rich meadows which Romania is famous for supported a wide variety of both familiar and unfamiliar species.

Apuseni Mountains

My first walk in one such meadow took me down a steep-sided valley near the village of Răchițele where I found species such as **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (*Boloria selene*), **Heath Fritillary** (*Melitaea athalia*), **Dingy Skipper** (*Erynnis tages*), **Short-tailed Blue** (*Cupido argiades*) and **Wood White** (*Leptidea sinapis*). Over the next few days I walked in the same general area and was able to add several other species to the list including some fresh **Sooty Coppers** (*Lycaena tityrus*). There were a handful of rather territorial males in flight, followed by one female busy egg-laying on Sorrel plants away from all the fussing males! The same spot also yielded several fresh **Woodland Ringlets** (*Erebia medusa*).



Sooty Copper (*Lycaena tityrus*)

I was also able to explore some of the nearby patches of woodland where I hoped to find a different range of species. The familiar **Speckled Wood** (*Pararge aegeria*) was abundant here and I didn't have to search for long before finding a splendid **Camberwell Beauty** (*Nymphalis antiopa*) characteristically patrolling a nearby river. I followed this river before noticing a small clearing where along with **Green-veined Whites** (*Pieris napi*) and an **Orange-tip** (*Anthocharis cardamines*) a **Fenton's Wood White** (*Leptidea morsei*) was observed, much to my delight.

On day 6 I decided to explore a drier-looking meadow further up the hillside. Initially butterflies weren't particularly numerous with only a few **Green** ▼

Hairstreaks (*Callophrys rubi*) and a solitary **Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata megaris*) being observed. Further exploration did however produce an **Eastern Baton Blue** (*Pseudophilotes vicrama*) and a **Grizzled Skipper** (*Pyrgus malvae*).

Cluj-Napoca

I stayed in Cluj for two days with the intention of exploring the outskirts of the city, which are tremendously rich and home to over 100 species. I set out early in the morning and headed towards the reserve Fânașele Clujului just north of the city via Bogomia Hill. About half way up the hill I managed to snap a few **Silver-studded** (*Plebejus argus*) and **Idas Blues** (*P. idas*) that were roosting in the grass, accompanied by several **Chestnut Heaths** (*Coenonympha glycerion*), **Chapman's Blues** (*Polyommatus thersites*) and a probable **Nickerl's Fritillary** (*Melitaea aurelia*); not a bad start to the day! The path then led to a sheltered meadow where I was able to add both the **Glanville** (*Melitaea cinxia*) and **Knapweed Fritillaries** (*Melitaea phoebe*) to the list. Shortly after, I reached the top of the hill where I caught sight of a small orange butterfly which turned out to be a **Lesser Fiery Copper** (*Lycaena thersamon*), a local species in Romania more commonly found further south.



Lesser Fiery Copper (*Lycaena thersamon*)



Assmann's Fritillary (*Melitaea britomartis*)

Not long afterwards I spotted a larger orange butterfly flitting amongst a patch of Great Water Dock which upon resting briefly I was able to identify as a female **Large Copper** (*Lycaena dispar*)! Unfortunately, it flew off before I was able to photograph it but my disappointment soon subsided as I spotted some wonderfully rich meadows where I saw a **Geranium Argus** (*Aricia eumedon*), another fairly local species in Romania. Further along the path I saw my first ever **Assmann's Fritillary** (*Melitaea britomartis*), tricky to separate from both Heath Fritillary (*M. athalia*) and Nickerl's Fritillary (*M. aurelia*) but upon consultation with several butterfly experts afterwards I was able to get a conclusive ID.

Upon entering the reserve, I was blown away by the sheer abundance of butterflies, particularly **Silver-studded Blues** which were basking all over the short turf near the entrance amongst **Osiris Blues** (*Cupido osiris*), a **Black Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium pruni*) and **Black-veined Whites** (*Aporia cartagii*). I had really been hoping to see both **Spinose Skipper** (*Muschampia* ▼



Romania and French Pyrenees
cont.

cribrellum) and **Tessellated Skipper** (*M. tessellum*), two local species scattered in SE Europe which are found at this reserve. Whilst I was ultimately

unsuccessful to that end, I did see several **Safflower** (*Pyrgus carthami*) and **Oberthür's Grizzled Skippers** (*P. armoricanus*). The real prize however was a female **Eastern Short-tailed Blue** (*Cupido decoloratus*) ovipositing on Black Medick.



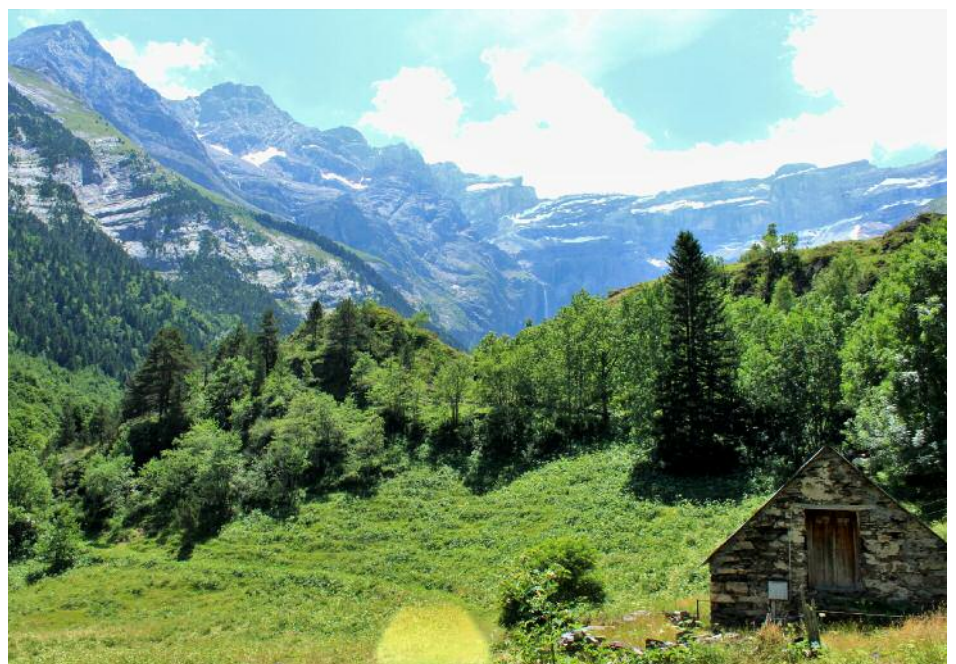
On my way back to the hotel another scarce species in the form of an **Eastern Pale Clouded Yellow** (*Colias erate*) was spotted feeding on Lucerne flowers. A final dander in a field near the hotel produced a beautiful male **Provençal Short-tailed Blue** (*Cupido alcetas*), a fine way to cap off a very productive trip.

Provençal Short-tailed Blue (*Cupido alcetas*)

Gavarnie, French Pyrenees, mid-July

In mid-July my girlfriend Anna and I travelled to the village of Gavarnie in the French Pyrenees and with the help of Matt Rowlings and Jude Lock, I obtained some valuable information about sites and species which ultimately paid dividends.

We stayed in a B&B near the village which was surrounded by rich meadows and it didn't take much exploring before I found many **Marbled Whites** (*Melanargia galathea*) flying alongside **Pearly Heath** (*Coenonympha arcania*), **Large Blue** (*Phengaris arion*), **Purple-edged Copper** (*Lycaena hippothoe*) and **Mountain Argus** (*Aricia artaxerxes*). The meadows along the pathway towards the impressive Cirque de Gavarnie were spectacularly rich, with over 35 species recorded including **Swallowtail** (*Papilio machaon*), **Scarce Copper** (*Lycaena virgaureae*), **Mazarine Blue** (*Polyommatus semiargus*), **Turquoise Blue** (*Polyommatus dorylas*), **Niobe Fritillary** (*Fabriciana niobe*), **False Heath Fritillary** (*Melitaea diamina*) and **Piedmont Ringlet** (*Erebia meolans*). ▼



Gavarnie



Romania and French Pyrenees
cont.



Turquoise Blue (*Polyommatus dorylas*)



Niobe Fritillary (*Fabriciana niobe*)



Piedmont Ringlet (*Erebia meolans*)



Scarce Copper (*Lycaena virgaureae*)

The path ascended through a patch of woodland which was home to species such as **Large Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata maera*) before opening up to sub-alpine grassland and scree near the foot of the Grande Cascade, France's highest waterfall. Here we were a bit unlucky with the weather but still managed to see a **Southern Grizzled Skipper** (*Pyrgus malvoides*) and a few hardy **Mountain Ringlets** (*Erebia epiphron*) and **Yellow-spotted Ringlets** (*Erebia manto*). The general wildlife observed along this path was very impressive, with birds such as the Alpine Chough and Citril Finch, mammals like the Alpine Marmot and wildflowers including Edelweiss, Pyrenean Saxifrage and St Bruno's Lily, all making for a truly splendid walk.

Vallée d'Ossoue

The other locality we travelled to on the penultimate and final days of our trip was the nearby Vallée d'Ossoue, a meandering valley leading to the peak of Vignemale, the highest of the French Pyrenees. The road led through a patch ▼



Romania and French Pyrenees cont.

of woodland surrounded by meadows where we saw species such as the **Chalkhill Blue** (*Lysandra coridon*), **Southern White Admiral** (*Limenitis reducta*), **Silver-washed Fritillary** (*Argynnis paphia*), and **Marbled Skipper** (*Carcharodus lavatherae*). The woodland soon gave way to rockier meadows where we saw the first few **Apollo**s (*Parnassius apollo*) of the day, accompanied by **Silver-studded Blues** (*Plebejus argus*), an **Amanda's Blue** (*Polyommatus amandus*), a **Purple-shot Copper** (*Lycaena alciphron gordius*) as well as **Lesser Marbled** (*Brenthis ino*), **Meadow** (*Melitaea parthenoides*) and **Spotted Fritillaries** (*Melitaea didyma*).



Nearing the boundary of the National Park we noted a soaring Lammergeier before finding a small bridge above the Gave d'Ossoue and had a late lunch there on the grass in the company of **Western Brassy Ringlets** (*Erebia arvernensis*), not to mention a few wary Marmots! After lunch we investigated the damp stony ground adjacent to the river which was covered in mudpuddling butterflies such as the **Escher's Blue** (*Polyommatus escheri*) and **Silver-spotted Skipper** (*Hesperia comma*).

On our final day before heading to the airport we decided to hitchhike to the Barrage d'Ossoue located further along the same valley. We were dropped off about 3km before the lake which allowed us to explore the alpine

Gavarnie Blue (*Agriades pyrenaicus*) meadows on our way up. The mountain runoff created some damp stony patches which attracted a myriad of Blues, Fritillaries and Skippers including **Glandon Blue** (*Agriades glandon*). On one patch I was delighted to find a few beautiful **Gavarnie Blues** (*Agriades pyrenaicus*), which were the highlight of the day. Upon reaching the lake we had our lunch and were able to add **Large Grizzled Skipper** (*Pyrgus alveus*), **Shepherd's Fritillary** (*Boloria pales*) and **Lefebvre's Ringlet** (*Erebia lefebvrei*) which rounded off a very impressive list. With stunning scenery and a wealth of not only butterflies but birds, plants and animals I'd say it won't be long before I'm back here! •

Owen Beckett

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Bulgaria (Part 1)

Bulgaria, 1 – 12 June 2019

by Barrie Staley

My wife, Anita and I had visited Bulgaria on three private butterfly trips in the past. This tour to the western side of the country, run by the British-Bulgarian Society, offered us the opportunity to explore some new areas and the chance to see a good number of Eastern European specialities. Leading the tour was EBG committee member, Nick Greateorex-Davies, and Zdravko Kolev, one of Bulgaria's leading lepidopterists. There were ten other members of the party who were all wonderful company and contributed greatly to the success of the tour.



Kresna Gorge

The tour was based in three main areas on the western side of Bulgaria. The first four nights were spent in the south west corner close to the Greek border, in the River Struma valley area, based in Melnik. We then travelled north via Kresna Gorge to west Bulgaria close to the border with Northern Macedonia, where we stayed for three nights in Kyustendil and explored the Zemen Gorge area. Finally, we travelled further north to the karst limestone foothills of the Western Stara Planina, close to the border with Serbia, staying at Dragoman for three nights. Our final night was spent in Sofia, from where we were ideally placed to visit the Iskar Valley before returning to the airport.

The weather during the tour was mixed, and the butterfly season was probably about two weeks late. In addition to our daily butterfly excursions, a moth trap was run by Nick during several nights and a group of us were out birding most mornings before breakfast.

The South West

1 June - The Drive to Melnik

On arrival in Sofia we met up with Zdravko and Mario, our driver, and headed south on the A3 and E79 towards Melnik, a journey of 180km. We made one brief stop in the famous Kresna Gorge where we were immediately introduced to a few eastern specialities, as by the bus were **Nettle-tree Butterflies** (*Libythea celtis*) and an **Eastern Baton Blue** (*Pseudophilotes vicrama*). Alongside the River Struma were **Eastern Dappled White** (*Euchloe ausonia*), **Eastern Festoon** (*Zerynthia cerisy*), **Southern White Admiral** (*Limenitis reducta*), **Mallow Skipper** (*Carcharodus alceae*), **Eastern Knapweed Fritillary** (*Melitaea ornata*), ▼



Bulgaria (Part 1) cont.

Lesser Spotted Fritillary (*Melitaea trivia*) and **Yellow-banded Skipper** (*Pyrgus sidae*). Walking back to the bus a **Southern Festoon** (*Zerynthia polyxena*) caterpillar was crossing the path, and even in this late season it suggested we would not be seeing a butterfly of this species. We arrived in Melnik early evening where we were staying at the rustic Hotel Uzunova Kashta, a former Turkish prison.



Eastern Dappled White (*Euchloe ausonia*)



Yellow-banded Skipper (*Pyrgus sidae*)

2 June - Marble Quarry near Petrovo and Chuchuligovo

Our first day was spent at sites south of Melnik. The morning was cool, misty and poor for butterflies when we arrived at the marble quarry so we searched the surrounding meadows for day-flying moths and sightings included **Tau Emperor** (*Agria tau*), **Sussex Emerald** (*Thalera fimbrialis*) and **Small Elephant Hawk-moth** (*Deilephila porcellus*). Eventually the sun came out and we started to see butterflies with **Silver-studded Blue** (*Plebejus argus*) being abundant, while interesting species were **Mountain Small White** (*Pieris ergane*), **Large Tortoise-shell** (*Nymphalis polychloros*), **Sooty Copper** (*Lycaena tityrus*) and **Knapweed Fritillary** (*Melitaea phoebe*).

In the afternoon we visited an area of scrub and meadows near Chuchuligovo, very close to the Greek border, where Bulgaria's first **Grass Jewel** (*Freyeria trochylus*) was found in 2012. By the time we arrived the skies were very dark and we were fortunate to find a **Mediterranean Skipper** (*Gegenes nostrodamus*) on the path, but there was no sign of any Grass Jewels. A roosting **Cardinal** (*Argynnis pandora*) and **Great Banded Graylings** (*Brintesia circe*) were seen, then heavy rain and thunder forced us into a bar for ice creams and beers before we returned to our hotel. Surprisingly, a **Chequered Blue** (*Scolitantides orion*) awaited us in the hotel car park, basking in the now late afternoon sun. ▼



Chequered Blue (*Scolitantides orion*)



Mediterranean Skipper (*Gegenes nostrodamus*)



Bulgaria (Part 1) cont.



Lesser Spotted Fritillary
(*Melitaea trivia*)

3 June - Rupite/Kozhukh Hill and Chuchuligovo

On a glorious sunny morning we drove west from Melnik, crossing the River Struma and headed towards Rupite, where we explored the area north-east of the town, including the volcanic ridge known as Kozhukh Hill (a snake paradise). Several eastern specialities were possible in the area, and we spent most of the day here. We soon found **Spotted Fritillaries** (*Melitaea didyma*) and **Lesser Spotted Fritillaries** (*Melitaea trivia*), **Ilex Hairstreak** (*Satyrium ilicis*), **Sloe Hairstreak** (*S. aca-ciae*), the first of several Large Tortoiseshells and an **Oriental Marbled Skipper** (*Carcharodus orientalis*). We admired an **Eastern Baton Blue** and **Little Tiger Blues** (*Tarucus balkanicus*).

We continued towards the hill finding **Eastern Festoon**, **Southern White Admirals**, **Great Banded Grayling**, **Hungarian Skipper** (*Spialia orbifer*) and many **Blue-spot Hairstreaks** (*Satyrium spini*). We saw several **Iolas Blues** (*Iolana iolas*) as we passed patches of their food plant, Bladder Senna (*Colutea arborescens*), just before 'the hill' appeared in view. Scrambling the steep, rocky slope to the summit at 280m in the heat was quite a challenge and on the ascent a **Balkan Grayling** (*Hipparchia senthes*) was identified by Zdravko.



Eastern Knapweed Fritillary
(*Melitaea ornata*)

The ridge is sometimes used by hill-topping butterflies, but today **Swallowtail** (*Papilio machaon*), **Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata megera*) and **Nettle-tree Butterfly** were all that was present. As we descended we had great views of two Eleonora's Falcons (*Falco eleonora*) and four White Pelicans (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) flying up the Struma valley. Finally, we came across both **Knapweed** and **Eastern Knapweed Fritillaries** (*Melitaea phoebe* and *M. ornata*) and Zdravko explained the subtle ID features of these two very similar species.

It was mid-afternoon when we left and returned to Chuchuligovo for the remainder of the day. Black skies greeted us on arrival and highlights before the rains were **Little Tiger Blue**, **Eastern Festoon**, **Chapman's Blue** (*Polyommatus thersites*), **Eastern Wood White** (*Leptidea duponcheli*) and **Lesser Fiery Copper** (*Lycaena thersamon*).

4 June – Near Melnik, Ilindentsi and Stara Kresna

Over breakfast Nick advised us 'we are going to try to find a very special moth this morning'. We learnt that its whereabouts was lost following the death of the lepidopterist who held all the records of the species. However, it had been found by a friend of Zdravko two days before our trip at a site south of the Kresna Gorge. ▼



Eastern Festoon (*Zerynthia cerisy*)



Little Tiger Blue (*Tarucus balkanicus*)



Bulgaria (Part 1) cont.



Janthinea friwaldszkii

We arrived at a small piece of nondescript wasteland near Melnik where its food plant occurred and we began to search. After some ten minutes up went the shout from Nick 'I've got one!' and we all rushed over to see ***Janthinea friwaldszkii***, a really beautiful little moth.

Late morning we moved to a site near Ilindentsi, in the foothills of the Pirin mountains, where we explored the steep grassy slopes below a series of small cliffs. The site was good for **Mallow Skipper** and **Silver-studded Blue** and other species included **Cardinal**, **Queen of Spain Fritillary** (*Issoria lathonia*), **Chapman's Blue** and **Blue-spot Hairstreak**. This was a particularly good birding site with Short-toed Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*), Rock Partridge (*Alectoris graeca*), Orphean and Subalpine Warbler (*Sylvia hortensis* and *S. cantillans*) all being recorded. Our final stop was at a plateau above the Kresna Gorge near Stara Kresna, but the heavens opened and ended our day.

West Bulgaria

5 June - Transfer Melnik to Kyustendil

After breakfast we left Melnik and drove north towards Kresna Gorge in bright sunshine returning to Stara Kresna. New species seen were **Balkan Marbled White** (*Melanargia larissa*) and **Marbled Skipper** (*Carcharodus lavatherae*) and this was a good site for **Eastern Baton Blue** and **Lesser Spotted Fritillary**.



Balkan Marbled White (*Melanargia larissa*)



Russian Heath (*Coenonympha leander*)

Once again we were rained off so we continued on our journey to Kyustendil. Suddenly the sun shone and we made an ad hoc stop off Road 62 some 20km east of Kyustendil. A small roadside meadow here was full of butterflies and we saw several new species for the tour: - **Zephyr Blue** (*Kretania sephirus*), **Reverdin's Blue** (*Plebejus argyrognomon*), **Purple-shot Copper** (*Lycaena alciphron*), **Amanda's Blue** (*Polyommatus amandus*), **Pearly Heath** (*Coenonympha arcania*), **Russian Heath** (*C. leander*) and **Woodland Ringlet** (*Erebia medusa*). Our hotel in Kyustendil was the very modern and excellent Park Hotel, situated close to the town centre and next to a large wood that looked ideal for early morning birding.

Giant Peacock Moth
(*Saturnia pyri*)



6/7 June - Zemen Gorge area

In Nick's moth trap on the first morning here was Europe's largest moth, the huge **Giant Peacock Moth** (*Saturnia pyri*) - what a beast. ▼



Bulgaria (Part 1) cont.

We spent two full days exploring the Zemen Gorge area just north of Kyustendil. This is a long limestone gorge formed by the River Struma, which starts at Zemen and finishes north of Razhdavitsa village, just 10km north of Kyustendil. The whole limestone area is good for butterflies. We parked near Razhdavitsa, and in glorious sunshine took the track for about 1.5km towards to the start of an offshoot valley. Amongst the first butterflies we saw were **White-letter Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium w-album*), **Yellow-banded Skipper**, **Heath Fritillary** (*Melitaea athalia*), **Queen of Spain Fritillary**, and **Eastern Short-tailed Blue** (*Cupido decoloratus*).



Iolas Blue (*Iolana iolas*)



Marbled Fritillary (*Brenthis daphne*)

At a cross tracks many butterflies were puddling on the damp track, including **Zephyr Blue**, **Iolas Blue**, **Mazarine Blue** (*Cyaniris semiargus*), **Turquoise Blue** (*Polyommatus dorylas*), **Adonis Blue** (*Lysandra bellargus*), **Blue Argus** (*Aricia anteros*), **Small Blue** (*Cupido minimus*) and **Safflower Skipper** (*Pyrgus carthami*). **Yellow-banded Skipper**, **Scarce Swallowtail** (*Iphiclides podalirius*) and **Marbled Fritillary** (*Brenthis daphne*) were also present.



Persian Skipper
(*Spialia phlomidis*)



Eastern Wood White
(*Leptidea duponcheli*)

From the cross tracks we walked into the beginning of a gorge seeing **Clouded Apollo** (*Parnassius mnemosyne*), **Reverdin's Blue**, **Osiris Blue** (*Cupido osiris*) and the open areas along side of the path were good for **Russian** and **Pearly Heath**. After lunch and some heavy rain we walked towards the River Struma and into a large meadow. In spite of some concern over a few cows and their accompanying dogs, we saw several new or scarce species. In one corner of the meadow were territorial **Sooty Copper** and **Purple-shot Copper** (*Lycaena alciphron*), and with 14 pairs of eyes searching we found a very late **Southern Festoon**, **Olive Skipper** (*Pyrgus serratulae*) and a **Persian Skipper** (*Spialia phlomidis*), undoubtedly one of the best finds of the tour. Finally, walking back to the bus we saw two **Common Gliders** (*Neptis sappho*).

The following day we travelled a further 3km north west to explore around Polska Skakavitsa. Species were similar to the previous day, although some new ones were found including **Cardinal**, **Eastern Wood White**, and **Marsh Fritillary** (*Euphydryas aurinia*). •

Barrie Staley

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Part 2, covering north western Bulgaria, will appear in the next issue.

NW Greece and Corfu

During the last 10 days of May 2019

by Peter Bygate

Having been greatly aided in our pre-trip research by Simon Spencer, Tristan Lafranchis, Neil Thompson, Dave Plowman, and Dr Dan Danahar, David Dennis and I designed a three-centre journey from Thessaloniki westwards across the Provinces of Macedonia, Epirus and over to the isle of Corfu. We would be based near Kozani at Siatista, in Konitsa and finally in Paleokastritsa.

The superb motorway from Istanbul to Igoumenitsa led us past Kozani to the right turn for Siatista and our hotel for the next four nights.

Various Blues and Skippers on
an animal skin



Kozani

Our first site was fairly close by at Skiti, a location given to us by Tristan and others, which we found easily enough. It had clearly deteriorated recently and a pretty disgusting tip dominated by animal body parts – skins, cattle skulls and large bones – welcomed us but it was encouraging for butterflies! A tired **Bavius Blue** (*Pseudophilotes bavius*) was eagerly pursued and later on a pair of **Black-veined Whites** (*Aporia crataegi*) and a **Yellow-banded Skipper** (*Pyrgus sidae*) were the highlights on a hot and sunny morning notable also for the non-stop flight of several unidentifiable **Orange-tips** (*Anthocharis sp.*). ▼

Yellow-banded Skipper
(*Pyrgus sidae*)





A short distance further to the east was another recommended site at Lygheri, also with a tip at its entrance but lacking the unpleasant rendering element. Lunch was our first priority despite being distracted by a lot of butterfly activity. This was the much-preferred location of the two and during the hot afternoon we photographed more **Bavius Blues**, **Chequered Blue** (*Scolitantides orion*), a sole tired **Dalmatian Ringlet** (*Proterebia phegea*), **Eastern Wood White** (*Leptidea duponcheli*), **Lesser Spotted Fritillary** (*Melitaea trivia*) and several other species.



Eastern Wood White (*Leptidea duponcheli*)



Bavius Blue (*Pseudophilotes bavius*)

On a cool and overcast morning we returned to Lygheri the next day arriving around 9am. *Paliurus spina-christi* covers the hillsides here, and elsewhere, but first brood **Little Tiger Blues** (*Tarucus balkanicus*) were not seen. The dull conditions were good for photography and more **Bavius Blues**, several in good condition, entered the camera.

The following day we drove in search of some 'Tristan sites' to the east of Kozani, stopping opportunistically a couple of times on the rough road towards Kapnochori taking lunch at a prominent hairpin in lovely habitat but **Eastern Greenish Black-tip** (*Euchloe penia*) couldn't be found. Afterwards we took the A29 to the Kaloneri junction in search of **Iolas Blue** (*Iolana iolas*) on the road to Galatini but failed to find any, and only one *Colutea arborescens* sporting bladders – in fact, we weren't 100% convinced we were looking at the right plant as at least 3 bushy yellow-flowering shrubs competed for our attention, gorse, broom, and bladder senna! Probably around 1km along a rough and stony track running east-west north of Galatini village David found a mating pair of **Gruner's Orange-tips** (*Anthocharis gruneri*) highlighting a small colony and also spotted a solitary **Clouded Apollo** (*Parnassius mnemosyne*) nectaring on thyme, whilst **Dalmatian Ringlets** led us a merry dance across the grassy karst hillside. This gave us a good end to an otherwise disappointing day with several target species' flight periods already over. ▼



Gruner's Orange-tips (*Anthocharis gruneri*)



Clouded Apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*)



NW Greece and Corfu cont.

Konitsa

The transit day eventually had us zig-zagging towards the Voidomatis river bridge and the Vikos Gorge with its wonderful pack-horse bridge. We took the left side upstream footpath joined by many **Speckled Woods** (*Pararge aegeria*), and a few tantalising **Orange-tips** of indeterminate species. The river was bordered by old gnarled plane trees, many of them with hollow hiding-place type trunks and the water ran a turquoise blue indicating its snow-melt origins. We returned to the bridge and explored the flowery meadows, a much better habitat and home to several large tortoises. A **Southern Swallowtail** (*Papilio alexanor*) was pursued relentlessly but without success, these things never stop!

Our hotel, at the river's edge close to the famous pack-horse bridge, was a perfect base for another four-night stay.



Konitsa bridge illuminated



Tortoise sp (*Testudo* sp)

Ano Pedina, south of Konitsa and one of the many Aghios Paraskevi sites accessed through very narrow and tight village streets, became our next destination from where we walked to the chapel at the end of the track through some lovely habitat of evergreen oak, maple and other shrubbery interspersed with flowery strips, well-sheltered from any wind and possibly a remnant of monks' horticulture. An **Eastern Dappled White** (*Euchloe ausonia*), **Amanda's Blue** (*Polyommatus amandus*) and our only, very worn, **Nettle-tree Butterfly** (*Libythea celtis*) were added to the tally even though there wasn't much sun. A small Adder was risking death on the road until it was gently ushered to the verge by my boot.

At Monodendri we parked up just below the village finding the central square very busy, a Sunday café hot-spot, even a bit touristy. The main attraction here is the Moni Aghios Paraskevi chapel perched high above the deep and impressive eastern end of the Vikos Gorge. Several Blues nectared and basked on the flowery bank, notably **Turquoise Blue** (*Polyommatus dorylas*) and **Adonis Blue** (*Lysandra bellargus*).

Corfu (Kerkyra)

Our base here was north-west of Corfu town in the coastal resort of Paleokastritsa where we met Dr Dan Danahar who generously gave up some of his family holiday to lead us expertly up incredibly narrow and twisting roads to a hillside site on Mount Pantokrator.



Balkan Marbled White (*Melanargia larissa*)



Ilex Hairstreak (*Satyrium ilicis*)

Although overcast, this was lovely habitat, and we quickly found **Balkan Marbled White** (*Melanargia larissa*), **Eastern Orange-tip** (*Anthocharis damone*) larvae, a **Southern Swallowtail**, and latterly **Ilex Hairstreak** (*Satyrium ilicis*).

Dan introduced us to the proprietor of Fundana Villas close to Paleokastritsa who kindly agreed to let us wander the private hotel grounds where at once a new species caught our eye, a **Lattice Brown** (*Kirinia roxelana*) in fine condition. We followed the path steadily downwards through rich and beautiful habitat deterred only by a succession of face-high spiders webs. **Cleopatras** (*Gonepteryx cleopatra*) were commonplace, all mint and inactive suggesting a mass emergence, to which were added **Small Copper** (*Lycaena phlaeas*), **Ilex Hairstreaks**, **Clouded Yellows** (*Colias crocea*) and later on a single **Southern White Admiral** (*Limenitis reducta*) in constant flight, similarly a possible **Southern Swallowtail**, **Spotted Fritillary** (*Melitaea didyma*), **Large Skipper** (*Ochlodes sylvanus*) and **Balkan Marbled White**.

In April 2014, Dan set up a Facebook discussion page about the butterflies of Corfu. This has grown into Corfu Butterfly Conservation, a group of individuals who are passionate about the conservation of Corfiot butterflies. They are starting a five-year survey in 2020, which aims to produce an Atlas by the end of this period. For more information, look up Corfu Butterfly Conservation on Facebook.

A total of 68 butterfly species were identified during the trip and could have been greater had the season not been early. Konitsa offered the best scenery, particularly the stunning Vikos Gorge, and the number of species on Corfu was higher than expected.

All the photographs in this report were taken by David Dennis and most of the species seen on the trip can also be viewed on www.lepidigi.net •

Peter Bygate & David Dennis

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False Apollo, NE Greece

A flutter in the drizzle: searching for the False Apollo in North-East Greece, 8-15 April 2019

by Mel Mason

The whistle blew twice and I stopped searching on the higher limestone ridge to run down the steep slope to reach the source. The route was blocked by a maze of Christ's Thorn (*Paliurus spina-christi*), in clumps and impenetrable copses, but I arrived with scratched limbs in time to see Martin Warren, our expert ecologist guide, smiling, pointing and shouting "It's a female!". Our small group soon appeared and were greatly relieved to see the first female **False Apollo** (*Archon apollinus*), posing on the short grassy turf on the third day of searching the same site within the Evros Hills, a remote corner of north-east Greece.

Larval host plants during a cool and cloudy start

The first two days were not wasted despite overcast skies, intervals of fine drizzle and occasional sunny moments at temperatures between 13-17°C – well below the minimum requirements to complete a butterfly transect in the UK - perhaps more reminiscent of northern Britain in spring than the same latitude as Turkey, less than 50km to the east on the edge of the Mediterranean.

Nothing much stirred on the first day so Michael de Courcy Williams, our local expert entomologist, led a search to find the larval host plants of several indigenous butterflies including the **False Apollo**. Commonly known as "Birthwort" the plants are poisonous but apparently still used as a traditional ▼



The group in action



False Apollo (*Archon apollinus*), female.



False Apollo (*Archon apollinus*), male.



False Apollo, NE Greece cont.

aid to birth in some countries. The genus *Aristolochia* covers more than 500 plant species but three were local to the area. Eggs and caterpillars of the **Southern Festoon** (*Zerynthia polyxena*) were soon discovered on the undersides of *Aristolochia pallida*, but none on *A. rotunda* or *A. hirta*. It seemed the season was a little late for the eggs of **Eastern Festoon** (*Zerynthia cerisy*) and **False Apollo**, even though the latter is in flight only in March and April. The low-lying *Aristolochia* plants were growing between or under the many thorny shrubs. Their characteristic smelly flowers appear like miniature saxophones and attract different species of small flies which are temporarily trapped inside, then released the following day with sufficient pollen to transfer to other plants to facilitate fertilisation.

Returning to our hotel on the coast near Alexandroupolis, **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui*) were flying in good numbers right outside our front door even in the drizzle, no doubt some of the millions seen in the preceding weeks over Israel and Cyprus on their spring migration from North Africa.



Green-underside Blue (*Glaucopsyche alexis*)

There are up to 240 butterfly species in Greece compared with 60 in the UK and 40 in the West Midlands, and more butterflies appeared on the second day as the sun shone for an hour or two during our search along a railway embankment in a winding limestone valley used for military training, not far north of Alexandroupolis. A plethora of common species emerged only to be interrupted by a loud explosion that echoed in a terrifying bang around the valley from a distant firing tank cannon. The reverberations intensified during several more explosions but the insects continued to feed and mate before the inevitable drizzle returned.



Eastern Dappled White (*Euchloe ausonia*)

Later in the afternoon at the archaeological site of Makri the sun shone on large patches of tall iris and majestic displays of Asphodel with **Green-underside Blue** (*Glaucopsyche alexis*) posing on the petals. At a nearby site camera fever took hold of the group as a wild tortoise slowly wandered by.

Butterflies when the sun appeared

More False Apollos appeared later on the third day in the limestone valley further north than the railway line, when the temperature almost hit the twenties in full sunshine. They were soon joined by other species including **Eastern Dappled White** (*Euchloe ausonia*), ▼



False Apollo, NE Greece cont.



Southern Festoon (*Zerynthia polyxena*)

Southern Festoon, the *helice* form of **Clouded Yellow** (*Colias crocea*), **Sooty Copper** (*Lycaena tityrus*) and **Grecian Copper** (*Lycaena ottomana*), while one of the party caught a glimpse of an **Eastern Festoon** flitting across open ground. **Large Tortoiseshell** (*Nymphalis polychloros*) soon appeared, swooping up into the budding branches of nearby trees looking to lay eggs. Then we filmed a single **Scarce Swallowtail** (*Iphiclidides podalirius*) successfully laying eggs on a thorny *Prunus spinosa* covered in magnificent white blossom and even got a shot of the egg. Nearby, another of the party was in the right place at the right moment to see a **Camberwell Beauty** (*Nymphalis antiopa*) briefly fly back and forth by the side of a nearby stream.



Clouded Yellow (*Colias crocea* f. *helice*)



Sooty Copper (*Lycaena tityrus*)



Grecian Copper (*Lycaena ottomana*)

Uncertain weather returns

On the fourth day we moved further west to our second location in Volakas near Falakro mountain, stopping en route to explore the Nestos valley, unfortunately cut short by a thunderstorm and torrential downpour. On arrival in Volakas, during a dry moment later in the day, we explored the higher slopes by the local marble quarries, but only male and female **Common Heath** (*Ematurga atomaria*) would brave the dull and cold conditions.

The fifth day began cool but sunny and we started with an exploration of a limestone slope by a main ▼



False Apollo, NE Greece cont.

road where we tracked down **Weaver's Fritillary** (*Boloria dia*), **Eastern Baton Blue** (*Pseudophilotes vicrama*), **Queen of Spain Fritillary** (*Issoria lathonia*) and a **Mallo w Skipper** (*Carcharodus alceae*) roosting in the vegetation waiting for the day to warm. We also found an attractive Eastern Green Lizard hiding in the undergrowth. Further afield, along a limestone track by the Despatis River at Potamoi, the sun shone in earnest and the insects emerged in force including **Gruner's Orange-tip** (*Anthocharis gruneri*) and our first **Chequered Blue** (*Scolitantides orion*) and **Green Hairstreak** (*Callophrys rubi*).



Weaver's Fritillary (*Boloria dia*)



Eastern Baton Blue (*Pseudophilotes vicrama*)



Chequered Blue (*Scolitantides orion*)



Gruner's Orange-tip (*Anthocharis gruneri*)



Eastern Wood White (*Leptidea duponcheli*)

The week was more productive than the weather might seem to suggest. Every naturalist recognizes the search can be more rewarding if the species is more difficult to find. During an extended search along the grassy verges higher up the track, I noticed a slight movement in the grasses and discovered a very small **Eastern Wood White** (*Leptidea duponcheli*), identified by characteristic but subtle wing markings in the first brood and lacking any white on its antennae. There is a selfish pleasure in watching and observing the behaviour of hard-to-find species before calling the troops to gather around and spoil the moment – but we were working as a team and sharing the thrill of each new find. ▼



Last two days

The last two days offered just a few intervals of sunshine but enough to catch up on missed opportunities during a revisit to Potamoi including a **Wood White** (*Leptidea sinapis*) egg-laying on low-lying *Lathyrus*-like plants, common in the open spaces. At another site by a reservoir below Orvilos Mountain, a **Lattice Heath** (*Chiasmia clathrata*) moth made a welcome appearance. Blackthorn was abundant creating a wash of white blossom around the shore line and we soon found **Brown Hairstreak** (*Thecla betulae*) eggs in good numbers with evidence of caterpillars recently emerged from many.

In truth, more birds than butterflies were recorded on this trip, in particular an extended view of a Pied Flycatcher, Black-eared Wheatear and Hoopoe. A closer inspection on the plentiful wild flowers revealed many types of small solitary bees, bumble bees, tachinid flies, bee-flies, beetles – especially small hairy *Tropinota hirta* - and an occasional Violet Carpenter Bee jostling for position. Flamboyant Green Tiger Beetles patrolled the paths, Dung Beetles were very active clearing up herbivore droppings, a large Field Cricket lurked in its burrow, and a Praying Mantis egg sac stood prominent on a twig waiting for the warmth of spring.

Perhaps the weather, sightings and excitement is best described by Arkwright in a Greek version of Open All Hours... "It's been a funny old week, what with climate change and drizzle, but we did see a fair amount of flighty customers. Let's hope we get a bit more global warming next week even if it does encourage Granville to get out his net. He's not seventy yet, but I wish he wouldn't get quite so excited every time a female False Apollo flutters by!". •

Mel Mason (West Midlands Butterfly Conservation, Malvern)
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This was a Greenwings holiday ('False Apollo and Spring Butterflies of NE Greece'). Many thanks to the guides and the group (Bernard, Melvyn & Elizabeth, Tony, Helen, David, Mel & Liz, Nick, Peter, Emma & Aidan) for their companionship and remarkable expertise.

Kaçkars, NE Turkey

The Kaçkar Mountains of North-eastern Turkey, 12-21 July 2019

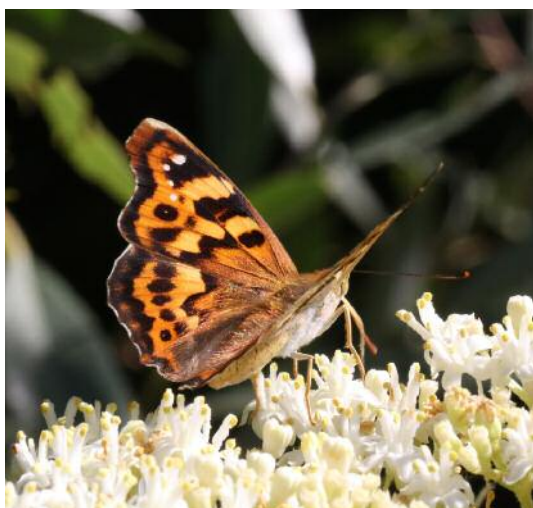
by Tony Hoare

Only a very small part of Turkey lies within Europe but that continent stretches well to the east of the country and the range of very many of the butterflies includes both areas so perhaps it is not inappropriate to have an article about its butterflies in a magazine dedicated to European butterflies.

The Kaçkar mountains are a well-known biological hotspot, renowned especially for its plants. They form an extension of the mountains of the Caucasus and the area is bordered by Armenia to the east and Georgia to the north. Although parts are glaciated with alpine meadows much of the range is composed of deep, steep valleys with rocky sides. The valley bottoms are mostly full of trees with small meadows.



Fiery Copper (*Lycaena thetis*)



Ionian Emperor (*Thaleropsis ionia*)

My visit to the Kaçkars was as a member of a Greenwings tour with eleven others, including your editor, Nigel Peace. We were led by Martin Warren and a botanist, Yiannis Christophides, we had an exceptional local guide, Mert Günal, and were driven by the very patient Refik. Major alterations to Turkish Airlines timetable caused by the withdrawal of the Boeing 737 Max aircraft lost us the first day in the field but added it to the end of the tour and Greenwings picked up the bill for an extra night in Erzurum, much to their credit.

Heading north from Erzurum

After a welcome night's rest in Erzurum we set off towards the Kaçkar mountains stopping on the way at a number of sites identified from previous visits. Our first stop was a little track off the road along a river with a mixture of trees, grasses and small cultivated patches. There were many butterflies, Whites, Blues and Fritillaries, some familiar but also a scattering of Asian species including the fine **Orange Hermit** (*Chazara bischoffii*) with its hindwings a bright orange on the upperside. A low plant in one of the cultivated patches attracted a number of **Blue-spot Hairstreaks** (*Satyrium spini*).

Our next stop was a new one, recommended as being good for the **Fiery Copper** (*Lycaena thetis*), just a short way further on but beside the same stream. It proved to be a splendid location and we not only found the Fiery Copper there but a further four other Copper species, including the **Lesser Fiery Copper** (*Lycaena thesamon*). However the greatest excitement was a sighting of the **Ionian Emperor** (*Thaleropsis ionia*) which posed for quite a while before moving off. ▼

Mid-elevation – Barhal

We spent three nights at the very welcoming Karahan Pansiyon a short distance above the village of Barhal where our luggage was taken from the van to our accommodation by an aerial ropeway. We were all glad that we didn't have to lug it up the many steps to our rooms!

Immediately below the hotel there was a small field which harboured a nice variety of Blues, including the **Anatolian Blue Argus** (*Aricia crassipunctus*) and **Eastern Baton Blue** (*Pseudophilotes vicrama*), which kept us amused after breakfast and before we set off for the day. On the first day there we walked down the valley to the village of Barhal and then we drove up a side valley which was lined with Dwarf Elder bushes which are a real magnet for butterflies. Both **Sloe Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium acacia*) and **Ilex Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium ilicis*) were abundant as was the **Silver-washed Fritillary** (*Argynnis paphia*) and you had to keep a sharp eye out for puddling butterflies at the side of the roads.



Levantine Skipper (*Thymelicus hyrax*)



Caucasian Spotted Fritillary (*Melitaea interrupta*)



Grey Asian Grayling
(*Pseudochazara geyeri*)

I took a few of shots of what I thought was an ordinary Small Skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*) but, when I examined them later, I discovered that what I had in fact photographed was the **Levantine Skipper** (*Thymelicus hyrax*), distinguished by a break in the sex brand. The wonderfully bright **Caucasian Spotted Fritillaries** (*Melitaea interrupta*) were a constant delight among the more ordinary Fritillaries familiar from home or Western Europe.

On our second full day based at Barhal we began with a treat as our guide Mert had obtained the keys to a Georgian church which was being restored to be used as a mosque. In there he played the Ney (a Turkish flute) for us. After that we investigated another nearby valley where we saw a mating pair of **Large Blues** (*Phengaris arion*) among a wide variety of other Lycaenidae. A sighting of the **Grey Asian Grayling** (*Pseudochazara geyeri*) was a special feature of the day. ▼

High-elevation – Olgunlar

We were sorry to leave Barhal, where our hosts had been so welcoming and attentive, but it was then time to move up the valley to the summer pastures where the road stops. The distance was not great so we had time for a couple of lengthy stops but the weather was quite cloudy and our first stop was not very productive. Our second stop was also a bit slow but there were some very bright **Marsh Fritillaries** (*Euphydryas aurinia*) mud-puddling together with a sprinkling of Lycaenids that were obligingly quiet in the overcast conditions.



Twin-spot Fritillary (*Brenthis hecate*)



Apollo (*Parnassius apollo*)



Lederer's Heath (*Coenonympha symphita*)

After lunch we moved on to our next accommodation, Kaçkar Pansiyon in the summer village of Olgunlar. Most of the inhabitants would move down the valley during the winter when the area is snow covered. After a short interval to get into our rooms we walked through the village to get to the flower-covered slopes above the houses where we found the **Balkan Copper** (*Lycaena candens*) despite the conditions being mostly cloudy and windy.

Butterflies in huge numbers

The village and its surroundings proved to be the highlight of our tour for me at least as butterflies were varied and, in some cases, in enormous numbers. In the village itself White butterflies, including the **Mountain Small White** (*Pieris ergane*), gathered at agricultural run-off. On the road below the village butterflies gathered where the road crossed a stream and in the damp ditch we saw our sole example of the **Bosnian Blue** (*Agriades dardanus*) in that area. But it was in the meadows above the village where the greatest number of butterflies were to be found. Huge numbers of a good variety of Blues, together with a sprinkling of Fritillaries and Skippers, puddled on the track just beyond the village and it was there that, to my great satisfaction, I encountered a "tame" **Twin-spot Fritillary** (*Brenthis hecate*) on only my second-ever sighting.

Not all the tour members were interested solely in the butterflies. One couple walked up to the base camp from which climbers set out to climb Kaçkar Dağı which is the highest peak in the Kaçkar Mountains at a little under 4000 metres. Another member, who had been on the tour before, went up to see if he could find the local higher altitude butterflies and, though successful, was also much alarmed to encounter a Brown Bear!

In addition to the butterflies already mentioned the flowery meadows also had a nice population of **Apollos** (*Parnassius apollo*) and just a few of the Heath butterflies that I like so much, in particular **Russian Heath** (*Coenonympha leander*) and **Lederer's Heath** (*Coenonympha symphita*), the latter new to me. ▼

Homeward bound – Erzurum and the Güngörmez Valley

All too soon we had to leave this butterfly paradise and return to Erzurum. We stopped at a road which had been poor on our way up and this time, as well as finding the target **Little Tiger Blue** (*Tarucus balkanicus*), we found a couple of beautiful **White-bordered Graylings** (*Hipparchia parisatis*) feeding from fallen white mulberries which stuck horribly to our boots. Further stops added a couple more Blues to our tally for the trip. That evening in Erzurum some of us visited a local sight or two after supper.



White-bordered Grayling (*Hipparchia parisatis*)



Odd-spot Blue (*Turanana endymion*)

On the next day, our last one, we followed the itinerary that was to have been a part of the first day and drove to the Güngörmez Valley. The day was hot and sunny and it was tiring walking in the heat but our van followed us down as we walked, offering respite to the weary. Soon Martin found us our first speciality - the **Odd-spot Blue** (*Turanana endymion*), a tiny butterfly whose Greek form is under heavy collecting pressure in its sole known location. Other new butterflies followed giving us a splendid finale to an excellent tour. My personal favourite was **Rebel's Hairstreak** (*Satyrium myrtale*) but my greatest satisfaction was in finding a female **Meleager's Blue** (*Polyommatus daphnis*). We had seen the male in many locations and I find the female, with her heavily indented wings, the more interesting butterfly.

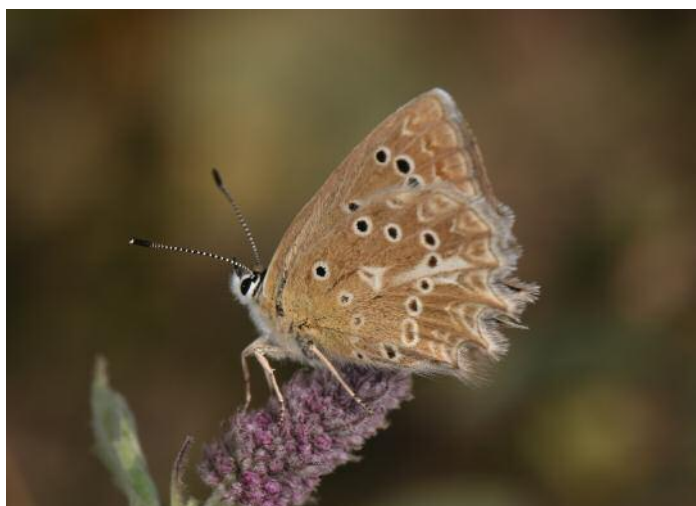
I found the trip deeply satisfying as we encountered warm hospitality in a beautiful area with magnificent flowers that Yiannis ably identified for us. Of 94 species of butterfly that I was able to photograph, no less than 38 were species of Lycaenid and a further 16 were Satyrinae, which shows how rich and complex the area is in these groups. •

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Rebel's Hairstreak (*Satyrium myrtale*)



Meleager's Blue (*Polyommatus daphnis*), female



Sightings never forgotten

Butterfly Sightings Never Forgotten

by Richard Birch

Over many years my two consuming hobbies, lepidoptery and overseas travel, have quite often come together, giving great pleasure. In 1970 whilst in Malaysia, my wife Ivy and I were driving up a road into the Cameron Highlands, when we stopped by a river for a swim and found ourselves in a hot spring area. On a shallow bank we were able to watch dozens of Raja Brooke's Birdwings nectaring at the salty mud. These beautiful four inch wide black and bright green butterflies entranced us for about an hour!

On business in Northern Nigeria, two colleagues and I were driving from Maiduguri to Kano when, out of the Sahara Desert, came a great cloud of small yellow butterflies. We had to stop for about ten minutes until our little friends had passed over heading South.

The following year in Lagos, I had the pleasure of enjoying examining the unique collection of Nigerian butterflies, caught over a period of 30 years by Peter Conyers, Managing Director of Union Locks Nigeria.



Raja Brooke's Birdwing
(*Trogonoptera brookiana*),
photographed by the editor on
the road to the Cameron
Highlands in 2016.

We lived in Biddenden Kent for twenty three years and I shall always remember our first August morning in 1991 sitting on a sunlit terrace, eating our eggs and bacon, with about 35 Painted Ladies for company, attracted by a large Buddleia bush in full flower. In 2011 my wife and I entered a field full of tall buttercups and blessed with dozens of Painted Ladies, nectaring after their long journey from North Africa, or beyond.

My final word picture is of the great Iguazu Falls on the borders of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay in 2006, when we were lucky enough to be subject to a great, simultaneous hatching of thousands of multi-coloured butterflies of many shapes and sizes, settling on and near "we tourists". For me, heaven had arrived and I nearly missed the coach back to the hotel, as the courier had to send out a search party!

Moral:- Always carry a camera! •

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