



EUROPEAN  
BUTTERFLIES  
GROUP

# eNewsletter

## CONTENTS

Notices and News .....	2
New Germany Atlas .....	3
News from France .....	4
Working in Europe during pandemic .....	6
N Britain and Aquitaine .....	10
Switzerland .....	15
Yellow-banded Ringlet .....	18
Special species of Bulgaria .....	21
Cyprus .....	25
Nothing in France .....	31

Well the world moves on and at the time of writing (early October) we are more worried about filling our cars with petrol and getting the Christmas turkey than about catching Covid. Covid restrictions however have made it a difficult year for travelling very far in search of butterflies and this is reflected in the articles in this issue. There is an article by myself in which I report on how I brushed up on butterflies of Britain and nearby France. Other writers did get further afield in mid-summer and there are articles by Robert Godden on his trip to Switzerland and Paul Selby on a trip to Cyprus. I am also grateful to committee members Marian Thomas and Nick Greatorex-Davies for contributing pieces on Yellow-banded Ringlet in Switzerland and some special species of Bulgaria. The newsletter finishes with a short article by me on nothing in France.

In September I finally made it back to the Natural History Museum in South Kensington, where I have volunteered once a week in the butterfly collection for over ten years. Here I am on my first day



back, flanked by fellow volunteers Bob Worthy on the left and Clive Huggins on the right. A drawer of **Clouded Yellows** (*Colias croceus*) and curator Blanca Huertas are in the foreground.

I have now edited 15 issues of the Newsletter, ably assisted by designer Trish Connolly-Morgan. I aim to promote European butterflies to a Butterfly Conservation audience and I hope you enjoy browsing through it.

Nigel Peace, Newsletter Editor, November 2021

# Notices and News

## Contact details

### Chairman:

Mike Prentice

Email: [mikeprentice7@gmail.com](mailto:mikeprentice7@gmail.com)

Tel No: 07831 280259

### Secretary: Simon Spencer

Email: [cerisyi@btinternet.com](mailto:cerisyi@btinternet.com)

Tel No: 01691 648339

### Membership Secretary:

Anne Spencer

Email: [Rhoslan.anne@gmail.com](mailto:Rhoslan.anne@gmail.com)

Tel No: 01691 648339

### Treasurer: David Moore

Email: [dcmoore67@hotmail.com](mailto:dcmoore67@hotmail.com)

### Newsletter Editor: Nigel Peace

Email: [liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk)

Tel No: 01420 85496

### Other Committee Members:

Martin Davies

Email: [mdavies854@btinternet.com](mailto:mdavies854@btinternet.com)

Nick Greatorex-Davies

Email: [nickgdlpman@googlemail.com](mailto:nickgdlpman@googlemail.com)

Roger Gibbons

Email: [gibfam@ntlworld.com](mailto:gibfam@ntlworld.com)

Dudley Cheesman

Email: [dudleycheesman@icloud.com](mailto:dudleycheesman@icloud.com)

Dave Plowman

Email: [suedaveplowman@btinternet.com](mailto:suedaveplowman@btinternet.com)

Marian Thomas

Email: [bc.brd-nlc-824181@virginmedia.com](mailto:bc.brd-nlc-824181@virginmedia.com)

Bernard Watts

Email: [br.watts@btinternet.com](mailto:br.watts@btinternet.com)

Mike Williams

Email: [wmbutterflies@gmail.com](mailto:wmbutterflies@gmail.com)

### BC International Director and EBG liaison:

Sam Ellis

Email: [sellis@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:sellis@butterfly-conservation.org)

Tel No: 01929 406039

### EBG WEBSITE:

[www.european-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.european-butterflies.org.uk)

Website content: Jude Lock

Email: [lock.jude@gmail.com](mailto:lock.jude@gmail.com)

Website Manager: Mike Haigh

Email: [webm@european-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:webm@european-butterflies.org.uk)

### EBG Facebook Page:

[www.facebook.com/ButterflyConservations](https://www.facebook.com/ButterflyConservations)

EuropeanButterflyGroup/

## Updated Greece Country Pages

The country pages for Greece on the EBG website have been updated and expanded– see <http://european-butterflies.org.uk/downloads/EBGreece.pdf>.

Greece has about 234 species of butterflies and one of the richest butterfly faunas of any country in Europe with its own endemic species and many species with their European distribution largely restricted to Greece. The Greek mainland, particularly the mountains, is of greatest interest for butterflies though there are specialized endemic species on many of the Islands. Crete, for example, has four endemic species including the **Cretan Festoon** (*Zerynthia cretica*) and the **Cretan Small Heath** (*Coenonympha thyraxis*).



**Cretan Festoon** (*Zerynthia cretica*)



**Cretan Small Heath** (*Coenonympha thyraxis*)

The updated country pages summarise eight of the most visited areas in Greece and comment on the species of particular interest in each area. The pages also note the ranges of several scarce and elusive **Graylings** which are found in Greece such as the **Dils' Grayling** (*Pseudochazara orestes*) shown below.



**Dils' Grayling**  
(*Pseudochazara orestes*)

The pages draw attention to the book *The Butterflies of Greece* by Lazaros Pamperis. Lazaros is the foremost authority on Greek butterflies, having spent a lifetime both recording all over Greece and also collating the records. His *Butterflies of Greece* is the seminal work on the subject and is available in both Greek and English. It is also available as a free download for smartphones on Playstore.

(Photos by the editor)

## 2022 EBG Calendar

The 2022 Calendar will be available in early November at the usual price of £8 for one or £15 for two, plus P&P. For more details, or to order your copy, please email Anne Spencer at [rhoslan.anne@gmail.com](mailto:rhoslan.anne@gmail.com).





## EBG Newsletter 1-29 Index

Graham Revill has updated his index of EBG Newsletters and it now covers all issues apart from the present one. It is on the website at <http://www.european-butterflies.org.uk/downloads/EBG%20newsletter%20index%201%20to%2029.pdf>. There is a huge amount of information about European butterflies in the newsletters as a whole and with Graham's index they are easy to search.



## A new atlas of the butterflies and burnet moths of Germany: Verbreitungsatlas der Tagfalter und Widderchen Deutschlands.

**Authors:** R. Reinhardt, A. Harpke, S. Caspari, M. Dolek, E. Kühn, M. Musche, R. Trusch, M. Wiemers, J. Settele (2020). 432 pages. ISBN 978-3-8186-0557-5.

Recently I came across an advert for this butterfly and burnet moth atlas while browsing internet sources on my Ipad. The discovery couldn't have come at a better time. We are gradually coming out of lockdown here in Germany (end-June 2021) and able to travel around the country to see butterflies once more. To do so, however, knowledge of where to find different species is necessary. Within 24 hours of ordering a copy from a bookshop in Düsseldorf I had excitedly collected my copy, and I've had my nose in it ever since.

It took ten years to compile and is beautifully produced. It is the first all-German distribution atlas of butterflies and burnet moths. Unlike the southern European countries Germany is not noted for its butterflies but it has 184 species. Even in the northwest where I live there are about 90 species.

The introductory pages include a brief history of German butterfly faunistics, explanations of how the maps were produced, and monitoring. There is a double page spread on each species including a full-page distribution map. Superb photos of upper and underside of each species together with young stages are accompanied by sections on:

- Distribution and occurrence (habitat type)
- Biology and ecology (flight times, larval food sources etc)
- Potential threats (e.g. changes in land management)
- Protection

This is a hardback reference book designed for anyone who would like to know where to look for species anywhere in Germany. The text is in German but little is needed to interpret the maps which are the main purpose of the book. It was published in April 2020 and can be obtained through <https://www.ulmer.de/usd-6281101/verbreitungsatlas-der-tagfalter-und-widderchen-deutschlands-.html> The price is 49.95€ (+p&p). On the website, you can view a selection of pages from the book.

**Hilary Raeburn**

[hilaryraeburn@gmail.com](mailto:hilaryraeburn@gmail.com)  
Mettmann, Germany

## News from France Autumn 2021

Contributed by Jude Lock ([lock.jude@gmail.com](mailto:lock.jude@gmail.com))



### Guide photographique des papillons de jour et zygènes de France. Photographic guide to the butterflies and burnet moths of France.

**Jean-Laurent Hentz, Jean-Pierre D'Hondt & Philippe Dauguet. Published by Gard Nature.**

Following more than 6 years of research and study, and aided by the participation of over 100 specialists and enthusiasts, the "Guide photographique des papillons de jour et zygènes de France" is due for publication during December 2021.

The aim of this book is to enable the identification of all the butterflies and burnet moths to be found in mainland France. Approximately 300 species are carefully illustrated, with images of both upper and underside of all male and female species.



The book contains 3 types of identification key. The first is a classic presentation showing the upper and underside of the species. The second key shows uppersides only, to see how far you can achieve an identification with purely an image of the butterfly with its wings open, and the third key likewise shows only undersides, to see how far you can achieve a species identification with purely an image of the underside.

Over 2,000 images. Format 15 x 21 cm, 500 pages. Price 35€ plus p+p.

For more information, sample pages and to order a copy of the book, please see here: [http://gard-nature.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2021\\_souscription\\_papillons\\_de\\_france2.pdf](http://gard-nature.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2021_souscription_papillons_de_france2.pdf)



### Atlas des Papillons de Jour d'Aquitaine. Butterfly Atlas for the Aquitaine, France. Coordinated by Pierre-Yves Gourvil (CEN Aquitaine) & Mathieu Sannier (LPO).

This Atlas follows on from the pre-Atlas of 2015 and was previewed in the News from France section of the last EBG newsletter (EBG 29 pages 4-5). The EBG has contributed sponsorship to the project of €500.

To ensure that the Atlas is as up to date as possible, 2021 butterfly data will be included and the publication date is now expected to be early 2022. ▼



In French. Publisher, Biotope Editions, edited in conjunction with the MNHN, approximately 400 pages, 16 x 24cm, price 35€ plus p+p, available in due course from: <https://leclub-biotope.com/en/>



### A simplified identification key of the Butterflies of Aquitaine, France

This useful identification guide for butterflies of the Aquitaine was produced in 2017. It was originally written in French by Mathieu Sannier from the Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux, Aquitaine, and translated into English by David Simpson (European Butterflies Group, Dordogne). It covers approximately 159 species that can be seen in the Aquitaine.



The key has been adapted for the Aquitaine context from Lafranchis T. (2014) *Papillons de France, Guide de détermination des papillons diurnes*, and Lafranchis T., Jutzeler D., Guillosse J.-Y., Kan, P. & B. (2015) *La Vie des Papillons, Ecologie, Biologie et Comportement des Rhopalocères de France*.

The key in English is available as a free resource in PDF and can be downloaded from the EBG website (<http://www.european-butterflies.org.uk/downloads/keyofbutterflies270417.pdf>) David also has a few copies of the guide in paper format - please contact David ([audave2505@yahoo.fr](mailto:audave2505@yahoo.fr)) directly to request a copy.

### Papillons de France, Guide de détermination des papillons diurnes by Tristan Lafranchis (2014)

This popular guide is currently out of print but as explained on the website <http://diatheo.weebly.com/papillons-de-france1.html> it can be obtained as a free download (in French). Just email the author at [lafranchis@yahoo.fr](mailto:lafranchis@yahoo.fr) with PAPILLONS-DEFRANCEPDF2021 in the title and request a link to download the book as a PDF.

Jude Lock





# Working in Europe

## Working in Europe during the Covid-19 Pandemic

by Sam Ellis

The Covid-19 pandemic has inevitably severely limited opportunities for EBG members' ambitions to study and record European butterflies in both 2020 and 2021. The same applies to me but as Butterfly Conservation's (BC) International Director I had to think how I could use my time as effectively as possible without straying too far from my desk. This article summarises some of the projects that I, working with Butterfly Conservation Europe (BCE) and EBG colleagues, have been able to develop during the last 18 months or so.

### *European Red List of Moths*

Apart from the moths, just about every other taxa has a European Red List. In 2021, thanks to EU funding, an opportunity arose to rectify this omission. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) led a successful bid for the tender, partnering with BCE, de Vlinderstichting (Dutch Butterfly Conservation) as well as BC. The project aims to produce a Red List for European macro-moths by March 2024 and BC's contribution will be led by two key moth experts, Mark Parsons and Phil Sterling. Much more distribution data (and some abundance data) for European macro-moths (less so for micros) are now available for analysis allowing estimates to be made for the degree of threat based on internationally agreed criteria.

There will inevitably be data gaps and so a key part of the assessment will be to seek the opinion of moth experts from each European country, bringing them together for online workshops to discuss those species where there is some debate over their threat status. Altogether around 3,000 species will be classified into one of nine categories, at both the pan-European and EU level, with those under the most threat identified as Vulnerable (VU), Endangered (EN) or Critically Endangered (CR). The assessment will be publicly available (as a report and website) and will identify the major threats and propose mitigating measures and conservation actions to address them.

### *European Red List of Butterflies Revision*

The threat status of European butterflies (<https://www.vlinderstichting.nl/butterfly-conservation-europe/projects/iucn-red-list-butterflies>) was last revised in 2010, when 9% of species were assessed as threatened (either VU, EN or CR) and a further 10% considered Near Threatened (NR). One of the conservation actions that results from such assessments is to undertake further surveys for the most threatened butterflies to better understand their distribution and abundance. This is where EBG members can and do make a vital ▼



contribution. A decade later the EU has decided a reassessment of threat status is needed for European butterflies, as well as for ten other taxa with 'old' Red Lists. This revision will also be led by the IUCN and the butterfly element undertaken in partnership with BCE, de Vlinderstichting and BC and will also be completed in March 2024.

Thanks to occurrence data submitted to both national and international recording platforms (e.g. Observation.org, iNaturalist) and to the expansion of the European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, there is much more distribution and abundance data available to contribute to the assessment. It could well be that species are added to the threatened categories but some may be removed. Whatever the outcome, the new butterfly Red List will definitely help inform the EBG committee where best to target butterfly surveys over the next decade.

### ***Expanding the European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme***

In the UK we may be in the fifth decade of walking transects to assess changing abundance of butterflies, but similar monitoring schemes elsewhere in Europe are often in their infancy. In 2014 BCE established the European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (eBMS) (<https://butterfly-monitoring.net/>) to collate data from the established and emerging schemes and produce indicators which could inform policy decisions. Thanks to a recently completed EU funded project, Assessing Butterflies in Europe (ABLE), the network of butterfly monitoring schemes has been expanded, with ten more countries joining between 2018 and 2020. Cristina Sevilleja and Martin Warren describe the ABLE project in more detail in the Autumn 2020 issue of *Butterfly* and you can read more about it on the BCE (<https://www.vlinderstichting.nl/butterfly-conservation-europe/projects/able-project>) or eBMS websites.

Despite these successes gaps in the network remain, especially in eastern and south-eastern Europe. Fortunately, another EU funded project, Strengthening Pollinator Recovery through Indicators and monitoring (SPRING), aims to fill them. This is an ambitious project which will establish European monitoring schemes for other pollinators, but a key component will be to continue to build the butterfly monitoring network. As well as establishing schemes in Denmark, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia, the project will offer further support to fledgling schemes initiated under ABLE. The project runs until Dec 2023 and if successful will mean butterfly monitoring will have been established in all EU countries, a remarkable achievement. Of course, then the really difficult challenge begins of building and sustaining them over the coming decades and BCE is already exploring how this might be achieved.

### ***Conserving Madeira's Threatened Endemic Butterflies***

For the purposes of Red Lists, the Macaronesian Islands are considered part of Europe and whilst they support relatively few species, several of these are endemics and amongst the most threatened butterflies on the continent. Only 18 butterfly species occur on Madeira but three endemics are considered to be highly threatened: **Madeiran Brimstone** (*Gonepteryx maderensis*), the **Madeiran Speckled Wood** (*Pararge xiphia*) and the **Madeiran Large White** (*Pieris wollastoni*). The first two are classed as Endangered but the ▼



**Madeiran Large White** is Critically Endangered and may well be already extinct, being last recorded in 1986. The **Madeiran Speckled Wood** continues to decline as numbers of the invasive **Speckled Wood** (*Pararge aegeria*) increase, but loss of the pristine laurel forests is also a key driver of change.



**Madeiran Speckled Wood** (*Pararge xiphia*) and **Madeiran Brimstone** (*Gonepteryx maderensis*) are two of Europe's most threatened butterflies. Both are identified as Endangered in the European Red List of Butterflies. The threat to *P. xiphia* has been exacerbated by the arrival of the **Speckled Wood** (*Pararge aegeria*) on the island. A recent study showed the proportion of *xiphia* individuals amongst all *Pararge* butterflies on Madeira declined from 78% to 25% between 1986 and 2018 with the colonist now much more abundant. (Photos by Sam Ellis and Chris van Swaay.)

Thanks to EU LIFE4BEST funding, BCE in partnership with Madeira Flora and Fauna (MF&F) will be running a project on the island from July 2021 to August 2022. Intensive surveys sampling the pristine laurel forests and other habitats took place in late summer and early autumn to improve our understanding of the target species' distributions. As well as field ecologists undertaking large numbers of 15-minute counts, surveys of some of the more inaccessible parts of the island were undertaken using drones. Mike Prentice and I were fortunate to be able to participate in the surveys alongside BCE colleagues. We will report on our trip in the next EBG newsletter

Other project objectives include establishing a Madeira Butterfly Monitoring Scheme with MF&F running a series of workshops for local stakeholders such as conservation agency staff, but also for local people and visiting tourists. Monitoring data will be uploaded to the eBMS, enabling abundance trends to be calculated for these threatened species for the first time. An important output of the project will be the production of Species Action Plans for each threatened endemic, which will summarise the project's findings and outline the conservation actions needed to halt and reverse their declines.

### **Corfu Butterfly Conservation**

Dr Dan Danahar of BC's Sussex Branch and EBG has been visiting Corfu for many years and has gradually built up a large Facebook group of residents and visiting naturalists, who record the butterflies of the island. Dan has an ambition to establish a more permanent presence on the island as Corfu Butterfly ▼





Conservation which aims to produce a Corfu butterfly atlas once sufficient data has been collated and analysed. BC has worked with Dan to help raise funds to make the project a reality. A Corfu Butterfly Conservation website (<https://corfubutterflyconservation.org/>) has been established, an identification guide to, and poster of, the island's 75 known butterfly species (there may well be more) have been produced for distribution in 2022. We hope to report on project progress in a future EBG Newsletter.



The **Grecian Copper** (*Lycaena ottomana*), one of the species whose distribution Corfu Butterfly Conservation plans to record and map prior to producing a Corfu butterfly atlas in 2026. (Photo by Dan Danahar.)

### ***Beyond Europe***

Much of our work beyond Europe has been opportunistic with projects developed in Armenia and Georgia to establish a Caucasus Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, and in Nagaland, India, for a butterfly recording and education scheme. Unfortunately, funding applications to date have been unsuccessful but we continue to look for other opportunities.

We also have a long-term ambition to help establish a global butterfly monitoring scheme, bringing together abundance data from all the continents and collected using different methods (e.g. fruit bait traps). The project is in the early stages of development in partnership with the IUCN Butterfly Specialist Group, BCE, de Vlinderstichting, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and the Zoological Society of London. If it can be funded we can look forward to developing a Global Butterfly Index, enabling invertebrate data to be included in the Living Planet Index for the first time.

### ***Beyond Covid-19***

I hope you agree that despite Covid-19 a good deal of action to conserve Europe's butterflies (and moths) has been taking place. However, none of the projects would progress very far without the bedrock of distribution and abundance data collected every year by EBG members and our European colleagues. So when we can all finally get back to enjoying Europe's butterflies and moths, why not make a commitment to ensure you turn your observations and photographs into vital records? A new guide to European butterfly recording and monitoring (<http://www.european-butterflies.org.uk/species.html>) can be found on the EBG website, including advice on how to submit those equally important historical records sitting in your old notebooks. So this winter why not dig out your old records and make sure they get to where they are most needed? •

**Sam Ellis**

[sellis@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:sellis@butterfly-conservation.org)

# Northern Britain and Aquitaine 2021

## Making the best of difficult circumstances

by Nigel Peace

My planned trips for 2021 were not particularly ambitious, but travel restrictions were slow to ease and one by one my plans for travelling abroad in the first half of the year had to be abandoned.



**Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (*Boloria euphrosyne*),  
New Forest, 12 May 2021



**Glanville Fritillary** (*Melitaea cinxia*),  
Isle of Wight, 27 May 2021

I therefore decided to continue what had kept me occupied in 2020, attempting better pictures of British butterflies. I live in Alton in North East Hampshire, and in 2020 I succeeded in photographing the 45 species which occur in the county, plus a few more from adjacent counties. The most irritating omission was **Glanville Fritillary** (*Melitaea cinxia*), as I was unable to cross the Solent to the Isle of Wight during the butterfly's flight period. **Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** (*Boloria euphrosyne*) were also very worn by the time I got to see them in the west of the county.

### Initial forays

So in spring 2021, when I could at least drive around southern England, my first targets were these two Fritillaries. May was generally a cold month and my outings were planned with a careful eye to the weather forecast, but I found **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** in the New Forest and enjoyed a lovely day trip to the Isle of Wight at the end of the month. On the latter excursion we found fresh **Glanville Fritillaries** at both Compton Chine and Mottistone Down Chalk Pits and they were easy to photograph.

### June excursions

By June I was more confident about travelling around the country and made short expeditions for **Swallowtail** (*Papilio machaon*) in Norfolk, **High Brown Fritillary** (*Fabriciana adippe*) on Dartmoor, and **Large Heath** (*Coenonympha tullia*) at Whixall Moss in Shropshire.



**Swallowtail** (*Papilio machaon britannicus*), Norfolk, 9 June 2021

I was fortunate with **Swallowtail** at Strumpshaw Fen in Norfolk, as other visitors had found this obliging insect and it posed nicely for photographs.

In contrast I managed only quick snaps of **High Brown Fritillary** on Dartmoor and my efforts are not reproduced here. I made a start on photographing **Large Heath** at Whixall Moss but the day was hard going – there was no sign of any insects until the sun came out in the afternoon, and then they were disinclined to settle for photographs. I obtained better shots at Meathop Moss subsequently. ▼



### Northern UK species

Into July and my focus was now on 'northern' species. Those of particular interest from my southern perspective are **Chequered Skipper** (*Carterocephalus palaemon*), **Northern Brown Argus** (*Aricia artaxerxes*), **Large Heath**, **Mountain Ringlet** (*Erebia epiphron*), and **Scotch Argus** (*Erebia aethiops*). July was too late for **Chequered Skipper** and in any case I had photographed it successfully on a trip to Glasdrum Wood NNR in the West Highlands in May 2013.

**Northern Brown Argus** (*Aricia artaxerxes artaxerxes*), Grantown-on-Spey, Highland, 5 July 2021



However I hoped that **Northern Brown Argus**, **Large Heath** and **Mountain Ringlet** would all be flying in early July and my wife and I booked a week accordingly at the Grantown Arms Hotel in Grantown-on-Spey.

### Northern Brown Argus

Taking these three species in turn, on the drive north I looked for the *salmacis* form of **Northern Brown Argus** at Latterbarrow in Cumbria. I found a couple but they were past their best. However the nominate form was out in force at a site close to the hotel in Grantown-on-Spey and many were in good condition.



**Large Heath** (*Coenonympha tullia davus*), Meathop Moss, Cumbria, 2 July 2021



**Large Heath** (*Coenonympha tullia scotica*), Ben Lawers, Perth & Kinross, 4 July 2021

### Large Heath

There are at least two subspecies of **Large Heath** in Britain, according to taxonomic taste, with more or less well-marked spots on the underside. The subspecies with the boldest spots is *davus*, and I managed this shot of a newly-emerged female at Meathop Moss on the drive north. Within a minute or two a male had found her.

In northern Scotland I spent a lot of time looking for the subspecies *scotica*, which is poorly marked on the underside. I came across it at a couple of sites but it invariably settled in the grass and this was the best shot I managed.



### *Mountain Ringlet*

Sadly I failed to get any pictures of **Mountain Ringlet**. The English subspecies *mnemon* was widely reported at Irton Fell in the Lake District in June but I didn't go to look for it and I missed the opportunity. I searched for the Scottish subspecies *scotica* at two sites in early July but apart from a flight view of one that I disturbed by the reservoir at Ben Lawers on 11 July I failed to find it. Maybe my timing was wrong.



**Scotch Argus** (*Erebia aethiops*),  
male, Arnside Knott, Cumbria,  
4 August 2021

### *Scotch Argus*

This was my last 'northern' target and it is one of the last UK species to emerge. I made a special trip to Arnside Knott in Cumbria, a well-known site for the species, at the beginning of August and found a few flying at the top of the hill. This was my best shot.

### *France!*

At the end of July my wife and I committed to going ahead with a week in France, from 7 to 14 August, despite the possibility that we might have to quarantine on return home (in the event, the quarantine requirement was dropped before we got back). We stayed at the gîte Le Moulin de Pensol, which was featured in the May 2020 newsletter EBG 27 (<https://www.lemoulindepensol.com/>).

Pensol is a village in the French department of Haute-Vienne, in the region Nouvelle-Aquitaine. (Looking at a map of France, it is about two-thirds of the way down, and somewhat on the left-hand side.) It is far enough south to have a good selection of butterfly species that do not occur in the UK. None were new species for me, but my objective was to get some better photographs. I also wanted to run my moth trap, and I have written this aspect up in a separate article on p.31.

The week was a big success. It was great to get abroad at last, experience French cuisine and do some historic sites (the Richard the Lionheart Route runs through the area). On top of this our hosts Heidi and Nik Smith were enormously enthusiastic about the wildlife on their extensive property and they manage it specifically for butterflies and other insects. We were greeted by **Beautiful Demoiselles** (*Calopteryx virgo*) as we parked the car and were distracted by a **Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth** (*Hemaris fuciformis*) in the middle of a cloud of **Silver-washed Fritillaries** (*Argynnis paphia*) on buddleia as we entered the front door. Butterflies really were all around us all week and although many were familiar from home, a good number were not. ▼





**Meadow Fritillary** (*Melitaea parthenoides*), male, Pensol, Haute-Vienne, France, 8 & 9 August 2021

I was particularly pleased to see **Meadow Fritillary** (*Melitaea parthenoides*). This can be a hard species to separate from other members of the **Heath Fritillary** group, but in this part of France the only ones occurring apart from **Meadow Fritillary** are **Heath Fritillary** (*M. athalia*) and **False Heath Fritillary** (*M. diamina*), so the identification challenge is considerably reduced. In fact the timing of our visit was just right for the emergence of second-brood **Meadow Fritillaries** and I was able to photograph some nice fresh specimens.



**Sooty Copper** (*Lycaena tityrus tityrus*),  
male, Pensol, Haute-Vienne, France,  
9 & 10 August 2021

Another species in fresh condition during our stay was **Sooty Copper** (*Lycaena tityrus*). Checking my old photographs I found that I had only photographed the Alpine subspecies (*subalpinus*) in France before, so I took the opportunity to add the nominate subspecies to my French collection. ▼







**Berger's Clouded Yellow** (*Colias alfacariensis*), Charente, France, 13 August 2021

Other non-British species that I photographed at Pensol were **Southern White Admiral** (*Limenitis reducta*), **Queen of Spain Fritillary** (*Issoria lathonia*), **Knapweed Fritillary** (*Melitaea phoebe*), and **Spotted Fritillary** (*Melitaea didyma*). One morning we drove west to some calcareous habitat in the neighbouring department of Charente and we added **Berger's Clouded Yellow** (*Colias alfacariensis*) and **Dryad** (*Minois dryas*) to this list.



**Dryad** (*Minois dryas*), male (left) & female (right), Charente, France, 13 August 2021



**Brown Hairstreak** (*Thecla betulae*), female, 24 August 2021



**Adonis Blue** (*Lysandra bellargus*), female, 3 September 2021

#### *Back home*

Back in the UK at the end of August, I finished the butterfly season with a nice **Brown Hairstreak** (*Thecla betulae*), photographed at Noar Hill near home, and with **Adonis Blue** (*Lysandra bellargus*) photographed at Martin Down on the Hampshire/Dorset border. I must admit that I have never paid much attention to female **Adonis Blues** in the past, but it is really quite a striking insect in fresh condition.

I'm hoping to get further afield in 2022, but there will certainly be plenty to keep me interested in nearby Europe if travel continues to be difficult. •

**Nigel Peace**

[liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk)



# Switzerland

Switzerland, 30 July to 10 August 2021

by Robert Godden

An invitation to my niece's wedding in Neuchâtel, Switzerland gave me the excuse for a long overdue visit to this country and also the motivation to navigate the regulations surrounding foreign travel. Switzerland held many butterfly species that I was keen to see so I devised an itinerary that took me to some of the more mountainous regions following the wedding celebrations.

## *Grindelwald, Bernese Alps*

I chose the first destination, Grindelwald in the Bernese Alps, as it is the only Swiss location for **Sudeten Ringlet** (*Erebia sudetica*) and **De Lesse's Brassy Ringlet** (*E. nivalis*), but the weather forecast didn't offer much hope of success during my two days there.

**Common Brassy Ringlet**  
(*Erebia cassioides*)



The first day was the better with a few sunny spells predicted for the afternoon, so I took the cable car from my hotel at Bort (at the mid-way stage of the cable car run) to the top station at First at 2167m. The low cloud resulted in no butterfly sightings at all for the first five hours, just tantalising views of some impressive mountain peaks such as the Mönch and the Eiger through fleeting gaps in the murk, but the sun did appear briefly eventually, producing **Mazarine Blue** (*Cyaniris semiargus*), **Alpine Heath** (*Coenonympha gardetta*) and two **brassy ringlets** – one of these tried to bury itself in the grass as the sun disappeared, but I managed a few quick photos. The orange extending towards the cell at first suggested that I had found my target, **De Lesse's Brassy Ringlet**, but the straight edge of the outer margin of the forewing pointed to **Common Brassy Ringlet** (*E. cassioides*). Later at Bort with the temperature falling I encountered a few butterflies at roost, including several **Weaver's Fritillaries** (*Boloria dia*) perched prominently on scabious flowers.

I had hoped to spend my second day at Grindelwald searching for **Sudeten Ringlets** at the lower altitudes at Bort, but heavy rain all day spoilt that plan.

## *Side valleys of the Rhône Valley, Valais*

My next base was in the canton of Valais at Visp in the Rhône Valley, offering quick travel along the main valley to the various side valleys that would take me to higher altitudes but again bad weather limited what I was able to do. One productive day was spent in the Täsch valley where **Lesser Mountain Ringlet** (*E. melampus*), **Swiss Brassy Ringlet** (*E. tyndarus*) and **Scarce Copper** (*Lycaena virgaureae*) were all common, while smaller numbers of **Apollo** (*Parnassius apollo*), **Mountain Argus** (*Aricia artaxerxes*), **Geranium Argus** (*Eumedonia eumedon*) and **False Heath Fritillaries** (*Melitaea diamina*) were present. Just below the community of Ottafe a small colony of **Silvery Argus** (*A. nicias*) was found, and later on the way down a different ringlet settled by the road – it didn't reveal its underside but **Marbled Ringlet** (*E. montana*) was suspected.





Switzerland cont.



Silvery Argus (*Aricia nicias*)



Marbled Ringlet (*Erebia montana*)

Swiss Brassy Ringlet  
(*Erebia tyndarus*)



Sooty Copper (*Lycaena tityrus subalpinus*)

On another day I headed for Arolla, a village at the end of the Val d'Hérens south of Sion. A stop en route by a bus stop above Les Haudères produced five **Damon Blues** (*Polyommatus damon*). The riverside path south of Arolla at first passed through light woodland with more **Lesser Mountain Ringlets**, **Swiss Brassy Ringlet** and **False Heath Fritillaries**, and also **Niobe Fritillary** (*Argynnis niobe*), **Olive Skipper** (*Pyrgus serratulae*) and **Almond-eyed Ringlet** (*E. alberganus*). Further south, the path emerged from the trees and started to climb the lower slopes of Mt Collon. Butterflies were less common here but between the passing squalls two **Peak White** (*Pontia callidice*), a **Mnestra's Ringlet** (*E. mnestra*), a few **Mazarine Blues** and many **Swiss Brassy Ringlets** were seen.

The other valley that I visited was the Val d'Anniviers culminating in the village of Zinal, a potential site for **Asian Fritillary** (*Euphydryas intermedia*); my first visit there coincided with heavy rain with a roosting **Geranium Argus** the only species seen. The weather was better for my next visit and I encountered a single **Silvery Argus**, **Turquoise Blue** (*P. dorylas*), **Apollo**, and a few **Osiris Blue** (*Cupido osiris*), **Large Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata maera*) and **Large Ringlet** (*E. euryale*), but no **Asian Fritillary**. Perhaps the most interesting finds were several **Sooty Coppers** (*L. tityrus*) of the high-altitude form *subalpinus* which has much reduced orange markings.

#### Simplon Pass

I saved the day with the most promising weather forecast for exploring the Simplon Pass, and although some interesting species were to be found more easily across the border in Italy, I limited myself to the Swiss side. Along a side turning near Rosswald, a steep bank offered **Grayling** (*Hipparchia semele*), **'Swiss' Grayling** (*H. [hermione] genava*), **Great Sooty** ▼





Switzerland cont.



**Alpine Zephyr Blue**  
(*Kretania trappi*)

**Satyr** (*Satyrus ferula*), **Turquoise Blue**, **Escher's Blue** (*P. escheri*) and **Dusky Meadow Brown** (*Hyponephele lycaon*). This was a known site for **Alpine Zephyr Blue** (*Kretania trappi*), and having failed to see it there in the morning, I stopped by later on my return and found one settling down for the night, and also a **Grisons Fritillary** (*M. varia*).

The high point was passed some distance before the border with Italy, so a search along a track near the border produced species more typical of low altitudes such as **Pearly Heath** (*C. arcania*), **Wood White** (*Leptidea sinapis*) and **White-letter Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium w-album*). I tried several

side turnings on my way back, including one which rose very steeply from the main road and had produced sightings of the rare **Rätzer's Ringlet** (*E. christi*) in the past. I could only find **Turquoise Blues** and **Apollo**s, so when I saw a man approaching up the hill with a butterfly net, I decided to engage in my best foreign, "Erebia christi?", to which he replied "Sorry, I don't speak English"!!

#### *Aigle, Vaud Alps*

I found **Arran Brown** (*E. ligea*), **Yellow-spotted Ringlet** (*E. manto*) and **Purple-edged Copper** (*L. hippothoe*) at Col de la Forclaz near Martigny en route to my final base for the next two days in Aigle, a small town further down the Rhône valley. In the Vaud Alps I hoped to see the two rarer **large blues** (*Phengaris spp.*) but I was probably just too late. There was plenty of evidence of the foodplant *Sanguisorba officinalis* in the field margins but virtually all the meadows had been cut. I tried some of the roads that took me to high altitude such as Col de la Croix where **Large Ringlets** were common and a **Blind Ringlet** (*E. pharte*) was seen. A single tatty **Titania's Fritillary** (*B. titania*) was seen at Lac des Chavonnes near Les Diablerets.

#### *In conclusion*

I didn't have any leeway with the timing of the trip as they wouldn't change the date of the wedding for me, but it was perhaps only a week or so later than the ideal time. The poor weather reduced the number of usable days by a half, but I was pleased with my eventual list of around 80 species. I'm grateful to Mike Prentice for providing me with some helpful site information and the three young lepidopterists who I met on the slopes above Grindelwald for similar assistance. •

**Robert Godden**

[godden\\_robert@yahoo.com](mailto:godden_robert@yahoo.com)

All photos by the author.





# Yellow-banded Ringlet

## The Yellow-banded Ringlet (*Erebia flavofasciata*) - seeking a distinctive Alpine endemic

by Marian Thomas

The **Yellow-banded Ringlet** (*Erebia flavofasciata*) is endemic to a small region of the Alps. Its range is centred on south-east Switzerland (in the north of Ticino and the south-east of Graubünden cantons), and extends westwards from Ticino into the neighbouring high valleys of northern Italy. Its eastern range continues just over the Graubünden border into a small area of Austria's north-west Tirol. It is very much a high-altitude specialist, flying exclusively above the treeline from 1840m, with most locations lying above 2000m and the highest at 2620m.

The closest genetic relatives of the species are hypothesised to be the **Silky Ringlet** (*Erebia gorge*) and the **Sooty Ringlet** (*Erebia pluto*), with the split from the lineage of those two species fairly distant in time, around some 7.5 million years ago (Wiemers et al. 2020). That would indicate it is the sole modern representative of a distinct genetic lineage going back to before the Ice Ages.

### Life cycle

Like various other butterflies which make a living out of enduring long cold winters and rather brief summers, the **Yellow-banded Ringlet's** development proceeds in unhurried fashion, over a two-year cycle. Emerging from the egg in late summer, the larva overwinters in its first instar, recommences feeding in the alpine spring, and shortly after that undergoes its first moult. Following a further moult, usually in July, it hibernates through a second winter, in its third instar, then enters its fourth and final instar on emergence the following spring (Sonderegger, 2005). Pupation takes place shortly after that, in May to June, with the main adult flight period occurring from the end of June and through most of July.

Unsurprisingly given its habitat, the **Yellow-banded Ringlet** favours south/ south-east/ south-west facing slopes. It requires a long sward, with dense clumps of its larval food-plants, sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*) and other fescues.

The remote locations which the ringlet favours remain pretty safe from the pressures of development and intensive agriculture, but it faces other challenges. Collection and trading (notwithstanding legal protection) has been identified as a problem, whilst the isolation of some populations makes them more vulnerable to extinction. This is also a butterfly whose future may be threatened by climate change. A species which is so exquisitely adapted to a very particular climate and habitat may not easily tolerate disruption. As the high alpine habitat on which it depends is pushed upwards, and into a diminishing area, the concern must be that eventually there will be nowhere for the **Yellow-banded Ringlet** to go.

### A quest for the yellow band

The distinctive appearance and restricted range of the **Yellow-banded Ringlet** had long given me a fascination for the species, but seeing it required a little more effort than for some other Alps endemics.





Yellow-banded Ringlet cont.

In 2006 our first efforts drew a blank. Had I then been better informed, I would have realised that an even-numbered year is not a good one to go looking for it at the Passo San Bernadino, since although the butterfly is generally to be seen each year (notwithstanding the two-year life cycle for each individual), at that particular location it flies in odd-numbered years only. Likewise I would have known that, although the lower limit of the butterfly's altitudinal range is cited as 1800m or 1840m, you have to go decidedly higher than that to have a chance of seeing it in Val Roseg.

Contemplating a further hunt in 2007, we decided to head for the Passo Campolungo (alt. 2318m.) in northern Ticino, incidentally the type location for the species. From the map it looked like a bit of a trek, so (on 16 July) we made quite an early start,



Above Lago Tremorgio



Towards Passo Campolungo, with rocky route to right



View from the pass

taking the cablecar from Rodi up to Lago Tremorgio in the company of hikers clearly intent on some serious walking. We joined (and rapidly fell behind) them on the slog up the zig-zagging path through the subalpine area. This was still in shade, and no butterflies were to be seen.

Eventually, the path levelled out onto sunlit alpine meadows. We couldn't delay long here, though, as it was still some distance to the pass. Some way ahead, where the terrain rose up steeply again, an expanse of bare white rock scarred the mountainside, and along this tiny figures made their way up a rather challenging-looking path carved out of the rock. I viewed this with some trepidation. Then the path divided, with a waymarker showing both a short route and a long route to the pass. The short path headed towards the bare rock. We took the long one.

The pass itself seemed to be a place where people didn't hang around. A battered wooden refuge hut was uncompromisingly closed. No sound except the whistle of a stiff breeze and some alpinists calling to each other as they scaled a rocky summit opposite. A period of searching disclosed no lepidoptera, ringlet or other.

Rather disconsolately, we meandered down to the far side of the pass. The balmy shores of Lake Maggiore, where the path would eventually lead, were another universe. Then we spotted a brown butterfly fluttering in amongst the tangled sward. Closer examination suggested a promising-looking upperside, with many of the orange submarginal spots almost circular in shape, and the rather prominent blind black ocelli placed centrally within them. It took some contortion to get a view of the hindwing underside, with its diagnostic yellow band, but there it was. (We were now on the south/ south-west side of the pass, corresponding to what I now believe is, indeed, the exact type location, namely Passo Campolungo *south side*.) ▼





Yellow-banded Ringlet cont.

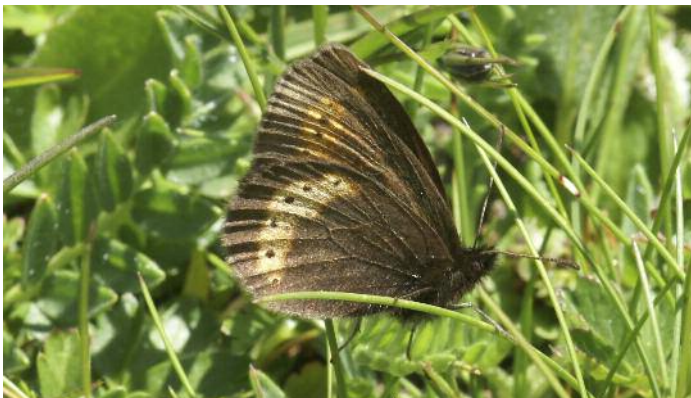
Although our butterfly was a somewhat battered individual and very reluctant to leave the shelter of the grass, we took a liberal number of hit-and-hope photos, conscious that it might be the only one we found. But a search down into the slightly more sheltered grassy gully beside the path produced more ringlets, together with other more familiar species, charging around and intermittently stopping to nectar briefly on the arnica flowers as they oscillated in the breeze. The sun warmed the slopes, and from across the valley the alpinists celebrated reaching their summit with a decidedly Italianate-sounding chorus. The historic location seemed an altogether friendlier place now as we basked in the glow of our own, more modest, success.



Yellow-banded Ringlet (*Erebia flavofasciata*) – first sighting in the grass

The windy conditions, with the butterflies mostly nestling down in the grass, militated against photographs of any technical merit, but we were happy enough with whatever we could get.

The return walk seemed like a stroll, and the flowery subalpine slopes approaching the cablecar station were now bathed in late afternoon sunlight. An unexpected bonus here was **Thor's Fritillary** (*Boloria thore*), though it refused to settle long enough for a photo. And so the next day the cablecar office made an extra couple of rather expensive return ticket sales, and we (eventually) got our photos.



Yellow-banded Ringlet (*Erebia flavofasciata*) - underside

#### List of species noted

**Subalpine zone:** Mountain Green-veined White (*Pieris bryoniae*); Mountain Clouded Yellow (*Colias phicomone*); Small Blue (*Cupido minimus*); Geranium Argus (*Eumedonia eumedon*); Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Boloria euphrosyne*); Titania's Fritillary (*Boloria titania*); Thor's Fritillary (*Boloria thore*); Chequered Skipper (*Carterocephalus palaemon*); Olive Skipper (*Pyrgus serratulae*).

**Alpine zone:** Mountain Green-veined White; Mountain Clouded Yellow; Small Blue; Idas Blue (*Plebejus idas*); Eros Blue (*Polyommatus eros*); Shepherd's Fritillary (*Boloria pales*); Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia debilis*); Darwin's [Pearly] Heath (*Coenonympha arcania darwiniana*); Lesser Mountain Ringlet (*Erebia melampus*); Mnestra's Ringlet (*Erebia mnestra*); Mountain Ringlet (*Erebia epiphron*); Silky Ringlet (*Erebia gorge*); Dewy Ringlet (*Erebia pandrose*); Swiss Brassy Ringlet (*Erebia tyndarus*); Yellow-banded Ringlet (*Erebia flavofasciata*); Dusky Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus cacaliae*). •



Yellow-banded Ringlet (*Erebia flavofasciata*)  
– swaying in the breeze

#### Marian Thomas

All photos by the author, except underside image by Stephen Reisbach.





# Bulgaria

## Some scarce European butterflies readily found in Bulgaria

by Nick Greated-Davies

Bulgaria lies in the far south-east of Europe. Its eastern border is along the Black Sea Coast. The Danube River and Romania demarcate the northern border. Greece and Turkey are to the south and Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia to the west. With a land area of approximately 110,000 square kilometres, it is smaller than England (approx. 130,000 sq km) but larger than Scotland (approx. 78,000 sq km).

### Bulgaria's butterfly fauna

Bulgaria is one of Europe's butterfly hotspots. Currently 213 species are resident or can be seen in Bulgaria (210 breeding species). Bulgaria's topography, geology, varied climate and geographic position all make a contribution to its rich butterfly fauna. It has virtually all the species that occur in Britain and Ireland (the only one not is the **Mountain Ringlet** (*Erebia epiphron*), which is replaced by the **Bulgarian Ringlet** (*E. orientalis*)). There are species normally associated with the Mediterranean, and others that have a more eastern and Asian global distribution, as well as others that have a more general European distribution. Altitudes go from sea level to nearly 3,000m, the Rila and Pirin Mountains in south-west Bulgaria having the highest peaks in the Balkan Peninsula.

From 2003 until 2019 (and the start of COVID 19) I have had the enormous privilege of visiting Bulgaria almost annually, and leading butterfly and moth (primarily) tours for the British-Bulgaria Society, averaging nearly two tours a year, as well as three survey trips over the period (two on behalf of the EBG). During that time I have travelled the length and breadth of Bulgaria in search of butterflies, organising tour itineraries to include areas where we might see some of Bulgaria's more local and rare butterflies. We regularly see well over 100 butterfly species per tour, often 130 or more. So far I have personally seen 203 of the 213 species in Bulgaria or in immediately adjacent northern Greece and eastern Serbia (4 species). Just a few to go!

Map of Bulgaria showing very roughly the areas where the three species occur. All are generally widespread, but appear to be at least largely restricted in Bulgaria to these areas.



### Three rarer species

The purpose of this article is to highlight just three of the rarer species for which Bulgaria still holds strong populations, and which are easy (or relatively easy) to find in the right place at the right time of year. These are **Spinose Skipper** (*Muschampia cribrillum*), **Scarce Fritillary** (*Euphydryas maturna*) and **Freyer's Fritillary** (*Melitaea arduinna*). Generally I will not be site specific as to where to find these species because of the general scarcity of the species and because in some cases I have been shown the sites in some degree of confidence. However they can all be found without too much difficulty, and a bit of determination, with the information I have given. ▼





Bulgaria cont.



Karst habitat of Spinose Skipper near Dragoman, NW Bulgaria.



**Spinose Skipper** (*Muschampia cribrellum*) male, on karst foothills of the Western Stara Planina, NW Bulgaria, 11 June 2019.

### *Spinose Skipper (Muschampia cribrellum)*

The **Spinose Skipper** has a few remaining relict populations in Europe, occurring mainly in Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria. In Bulgaria it occurs over quite a wide area on rocky calcareous hills mainly north-west of Sofia (the capital city), up into the foothills of the Western Stara Planina. Colonies can also be found on adjoining similar habitat over the border into Serbia. It flies from mid-May to July. It occurs at normally low densities on calcareous hillsides where

there is usually plenty of bare rocky ground. Many apparently suitable hillsides in the area have yet to be properly explored for this species, however from the records we have, it is evidently widespread in the area and likely occurs on many if not most of these hillsides. Until recently the foodplant has been unknown, but suspected to be herbs of the rosaceae, like many in the genus *Pyrgus*. Zdravko Kolev's forthcoming book (Butterflies of Bulgaria) will have more formation on this.

I have seen the butterfly during the first two weeks of June, on a number of occasions flying fast and low over the rocky ground of its habitat. But it is easiest to find on hot sunny days puddling on damp ground with other butterflies. The hills in the vicinity of Dragoman are a well-known site for the species.

### *Scarce Fritillary (Euphydryas maturna)*

The **Scarce Fritillary** occurs across central Europe but has much declined in the more western part of its distribution. Its IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) category is vulnerable (VU). Bulgaria holds a very localised but apparently strong population of the species. It occurs in north-east Bulgaria in the general area known as the Ludogorie, roughly bounded by Dobrich in the south-east, Silistra (on the banks of the Danube) in the north, and Ispereh in the west. It is widespread in the area and can be locally common. It seems to be mainly associated with the many now dry river valleys in the area that lead up to the River Danube, where due to ▼



**Scarce Fritillary** (*Euphydryas maturna*), male, NE Bulgaria, 3 June 2015. (Photo by David Alred.)



**Scarce Fritillary** (*Euphydryas maturna*), female underside, NE Bulgaria, 12 June 2018.





Bulgaria cont.



Example of dry river valley habitat for the Scarce Fritillary in the Ludogorie region of NE Bulgaria.

the terrain and steep sides of the valleys agricultural opportunities are limited. Here there are unimproved meadows in the valleys and on some of their sides, and open (and in some cases dense) woodland on the valley sides. This seems to provide ideal habitat for the **Scarce Fritillary**.

According to the literature, pre-hibernation larvae feed on young Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Aspen (*Populus tremula*) is also mentioned as a foodplant. After hibernation larvae feed on various herbs in the adjoining grassland. I have only seen the species on one tour. It was mid-June in 2018, and that year we hit the end of their flight period and we only saw the butterfly in ones and twos at four sites. Their flight period in Bulgaria is mainly from mid-May to

mid-June. Suitable dry river valleys are often adjacent to, or not far from, roads and in reasonable walking distance.

#### **Freyer's Fritillary (*Melitaea arduinna*)**

The third butterfly is the **Freyer's Fritillary**, a very local species in south-eastern Europe, occurring in Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece. It is quite a large fritillary of a similar size to the **Knapweed Fritillary (*Melitaea phoebe*)**. However it is much more similar in markings to the **Glanville Fritillary (*Melitaea cinxia*)**, with which it shares the row of sub-marginal black spots towards the edge of both upper and underside of the hindwing. However, apart from other differences, it can quickly be separated from that species on the underside as the inner black border of the orange area that encompasses each black dot is curved outwards, mirroring the outer black border of the same orange area. The upperside ground colour of the males is a rich bright orange, but the females have two forms (as do **Spotted Fritillary (*Melitaea didyma*)** females). Some are dark, as in the photograph, others orange like the males. Some specimens are particularly stunning in appearance. It flies from late May to mid-July in Bulgaria. Larvae feed on knapweeds (*Centaurea spp.*). ▼



**Freyer's Fritillary (*Melitaea arduinna*)**, male, NW Bulgaria, 10 June 2019.



**Freyer's Fritillary (*Melitaea arduinna*)**, female dark form, NW Bulgaria, 6 June 2016.



Bulgaria cont.



Freyer's Fritillary habitat  
near Krachimir, near  
Serbian border.

In Bulgaria the Freyer's Fritillary occurs mainly in the north-west. It is widespread north of the Western Stara Planina and also over the border into Serbia. In June 2016 it was the commonest fritillary we saw, and there were plenty of other fritillaries! It occurs in flowery meadows, from the lowlands up to moderate altitudes. It occurs less frequently south of the Western Stara Planina, where we have found it at several sites including near Dragoman and even further south. It also occurs along the Black Sea coast south of Burgas, but though we have searched on tours we have yet to find it there. It does still occur there however, though in much lower densities than in NW Bulgaria (Zdravko Kolev pers. comm.).

### *Other highlights*

There are of course many other butterfly species to see in Bulgaria which are rare, scarce or have a restricted range in Europe. They range from the more spectacular species such as **Freyer's Purple Emperor** (*Apatura metis*) (widespread in river valleys in Bulgaria, and seems to be the commonest of three Emperor species that occur there), to the rare and very local **Bosnian Blue** (*Agriades dardanus*), first discovered in Bulgaria in the southern Pirin Mountains in 1999 on marble limestone at about 2000m.

Bulgaria is a beautiful place to visit and there is still much largely unspoilt semi-natural habitat to explore, and probably still some butterfly discoveries to be made. After leading butterfly tours, and several survey trips to Bulgaria since 2003, I have certainly not tired of visiting the country and I look forward with optimism to a visit in 2022!

A full list of butterfly species that occur in Bulgaria can be found in the country pages for Bulgaria on the EBG website. •

**Nick Greated-Davies**

[nickgdleppman@googlemail.com](mailto:nickgdleppman@googlemail.com)

All photos by the author except where indicated.





# Cyprus

## In search of the Levantine Leopard (*Cigaritis acamas*)

by Paul Selby

Given the ongoing pandemic, all five European butterfly holidays I had planned in 2021 were cancelled. Firstly, a trip under my own steam to La Palma (Canary Islands) in January. Then two Greenwings holidays to the Spanish Pyrenees and Spanish Sierra Nevada in May. Then my Greenwings holiday to Cyprus in June. And finally, for the second year, my Wild Echo holiday to Bulgaria, Greece and North Macedonia.

I even had a backup option of driving to Switzerland in early July thwarted. But I don't give up easily!

With thanks to Matt Berry at Greenwings, I was lucky enough to go on an exploratory holiday to Mallnitz in Austria in July 2020, with the guide Yiannis Christophides. Yiannis and I have kept in touch subsequently, and given that all of his guiding trips have also been cancelled for the second year running, he kindly invited me over to visit him in Cyprus in July.



### Outward Flight

Given the need to satisfy various vaccination and test requirements, it was with great nervousness that I booked my flights out to Cyprus for the 10th July, the precise date I reached 14 days after my 2nd Covid jab. With the Delta variant so prevalent and infectious, I was worried that I may contract it in the UK before I left. And with cases surging in Cyprus, I feared that either the UK would turn the country Red, or the flights would be cancelled.

Thankfully not, however. The picture shows me on the plane just before I set off, rain on the plane window, wearing the best possible protection I could, given that any of my fellow passengers on the 75% full plane could be infectious!

The flight thankfully went pretty smoothly, as did the additional paperwork checks at Paphos airport. It was lovely to be greeted by Yiannis for the first time in 12 months, and have a late dinner at his house that evening, catching up on all that had happened this last 12 months.

For the love of European butterflies, I clearly go to some extremes!

The temperature that evening was a "cool" 29C in the house, similar outside, the coolest temperatures at that elevation that we would experience all week....

### Day 2

We set off early, to make the most of the "cooler" morning temperatures. Our first stop was just west of Trozena Bridge. Straight away we saw the Cypriot subspecies of the **Eastern Rock Grayling** (*Hipparchia syriaca cypriaca*). **Lattice Brown** (*Kirinia roxelana*) was also seen, true to form, resting on the trunk of an old tree, in relatively deep shade. Interestingly, we also saw a lone **Purple Hairstreak** (*Favonius quercus*) in an old evergreen oak. ▼



**Levantine Leopard** (*Cigaritis acamas*) – image by Y. Christophides

We moved on westwards, not far, to an area called Prastio. This was a prime site for the main target species of the holiday, the **Levantine Leopard** (*Cigaritis acamas*). The **Levantine Leopard** is only found in Cyprus within Europe and has no known larval host plant, relying entirely on ants for the whole life cycle. It appears to be relatively widespread on Cyprus, at least in the inland west of the island, albeit local. And given it flies between late-June and late-September, not many people go searching for it in the searing heat of the Cyprus summer.

So, it may be in many places. Certainly, its habitat is common, an example which can be seen in the picture at bottom left. This habitat is baked dry stony hillsides covered in the browned remains of a spiny low bush called *Sarcopoterium spinosum*. The butterfly rests on top of these bushes, and rarely moves unless disturbed by extremely close presence, flying just a very short distance to the next bush.

In all my butterflying years, I've never seen such unpromising and unforgiving habitat. There are generally no nectaring plants in flower, or even alive! But this is the Levantine Leopard's habitat, and so this is what we needed to search to find it. We spent an hour in the scorching hot late morning temperatures of around 35C, tramping through the spiny low bushes, sweeping nearby bushes with a stick, trying to disturb one to move. No luck at all sadly, and other than a few **Common Blues** (*Polyommatus icarus*) and a **Brown Argus** (*Aricia agestis*), nothing else either.

Not to worry, many more potential sites and days to go. So we moved on to another potential Levantine Leopard habitat, near Ayios Ioannis. By the time we arrived it was midday, and the temperatures had risen even further to around 37C in the shade! We began a similar search, but it was simply too hot and we soon gave up. We moved on to the relative shade of Paphos Forest nearby, stopping at Tzelefos Bridge. Amazingly, despite no rain for over three months, some of the rivers still flowed. Not full, clearly, but not a trickle either, as can be seen in the picture below.

Yiannis then drove the very short distance from the bridge to the last known previous location for the **Small Bath White** (*Pontia chloridice*) in Cyprus. Sadly, it appears the species is now extinct, with it not having been seen for a number of ▼



Levantine Leopard habitat



Tzelefos Bridge





Cyprus cont.

years now. We found its larval host plant, itself now pretty rare on Cyprus, but there was no evidence of larval feeding damage.

After an ice cream, we drove back to Yiannis' house, arriving back at 3pm, defeated for the day. In total we saw 12 species. Depending on how you view certain historic records, Cyprus has between 49 and 53 species, so 12 isn't actually too bad in that context. Though it is low compared to other parts of Europe, clearly! But it isn't for the number of species you come to Cyprus, it is for the speciality species.



Lang's Short-tailed Blue (*Leptotes pirithous*)

### Day 3

Today was spent in the coastal lowlands, mainly near Larnaca and Limassol. The first stop was a field just inland from Melanda Beach. We searched unsuccessfully for **Small Desert Blue** (*Chilades galba*), but there was a profusion of **Lang's Short-tailed Blues** (*Leptotes pirithous*), and despite their hyperactivity, I was able to take my best ever photo of one.

We moved on to Larnaca, to another **Small Desert Blue** site, just outside the Hala Sultan Tekke mosque, which overlooks the wide-open expanse of the salt flats. Pleasingly, the **Small Desert Blue** was in profusion here, perhaps 100+.



Small Desert Blue (*Chilades galba*)

Also seen here, in low numbers, was **Dark Grass Blue** (*Zizeeria karsandra*). In some guides this butterfly is known as **African Grass Blue**, which can also be seen on some of the Canary Islands, southern Spain and Portugal, Sicily and Malta. However, **African Grass Blue** has been split into two, with the new **African Grass Blue** (*Zizeeria knysna*) in the Canary Islands, and **Dark Grass Blue** (*Zizeeria karsandra*) seen in Cyprus and on the Greek islands of Crete and Rhodes.

We took the coastal road to the Akrotiri peninsula, and the salt lake there. As well as wild Greater Flamingos and some other interesting bird species, there were much larger numbers of **African Grass Blue** here. Also, a surprise, **Millet Skipper** (*Pelopidas thrax*).



Dark Grass Blue (*Zizeeria karsandra*)

Before arriving home, we stopped off in the grounds of an old church just to the south of Yiannis' village, a known spot for the tiny **Grass Jewel** (*Freyeria trochylus*), Europe's smallest butterfly. This species has evaded me at least once before, but I was in luck today, with a thriving colony giving me superb and obliging views.

### Day 4

A very early start today. The day before, I'd seen on social media that my Italian guide from a 2016 Naturetrek Dolomites trip, Luca Sattin, had seen **Levantine Leopard**. I had had no idea he was also in Cyprus, and when I messaged him, he replied to say he ▼





More Levantine Leopard habitat



**The Hermit**  
(*Chazara briseis larnacana*)

#### Day 5

This was also a relatively early start, with a return trip to the “reliable” **Levantine Leopard** site near Prastio. On the way we stopped off briefly at a flowery roadside and again saw **The Hermit**. We arrived early at Prastio, and spent another hour extensively searching the spiny scrub for Levantine Leopard. No luck again, sadly.

Before returning to Yiannis’ house, we stopped at a roadside with extensive patches of flowering thyme, to the east of Saliou. This turned into the best decision of the whole holiday. The idea was that it looked like good Levantine Leopard habitat, but with the advantage of having nectaring plants too. We got off to a good start. As well as a good number of **Long-tailed Blues**, we saw our first **Eastern Bath White** (*Pontia edusa*).



**African Ringlet** (*Ypthima asterope*)

Then I disturbed something that looked like a potential **Meadow Brown** species, small and grey, albeit acting quite differently, as it dove for cover under a bush. It was very camouflaged, but I was able to get in close to take this photo.

Completely unexpectedly, it was an **African Ringlet** (*Ypthima asterope*). I really hadn’t expected to see this species at all, with the books saying they could be seen in two periods, between March and April, and later in the season between September and October.

It turns out that Luca had also seen two individual African Ringlets in the hills to the east of Peyia the week previously. Yiannis subsequently contacted his friends and local butterfly experts and it appears that there is still a lot to be understood about this butterfly and its ▼





Cyprus cont.

lifecycle. There are scattered old records of it being seen in the summer months. This has led to the general view that the butterfly has two to three broods. However, the alternative view is that it has only one brood, in the spring, which then subsequently aestivates throughout the summer months, only to re-emerge and lay eggs in the late autumn.

My own personal view is the latter one, given the behaviour of the butterfly I saw, and the near complete lack of rain in Cyprus between late March and mid-October, leaving no live grass, its larval host plant.

I think the answer will remain definitively unanswered for many years yet, though. One of the reasons why there are so few sightings of the **African Ringlet** (and indeed most other butterflies) in Cyprus in July and August, is because the local experts think it is complete madness to be searching for butterflies in such high temperatures.....! Indeed!



**White-banded Grayling**  
(*Pseudochazara anthelia*)

#### Day 6

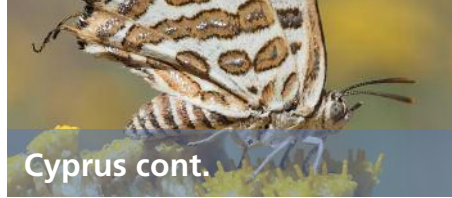
This was our day in the Troodos Mountains, the highest point on the island. However, before that, I needed to take the Covid test required to allow me to fly back to the UK. So that required a drive to Limassol first. The test itself didn't take long, albeit it was a bit of a diversion. The drive from Limassol to the mountains, via Platres, was beautiful, and we made our first stop, on one of the tracks just north of Platres, by roughly 10.30. Straight away, literally as we turned off the main road, we saw one of our main target species for the day, **White-banded Grayling** (*Pseudochazara anthelia*).

We continued down the track and stopped at a spot which, in early June, Yiannis says has the most numbers of individual butterflies he knows on Cyprus. Even in mid-July it was the best site we found all week. There were **Cyprus Meadow Browns** (*Maniola cypricola*), lots of **Clouded Yellow** (*Colias crocea*), a lone **Cleopatra** (*Gonepteryx cleopatra*), and a **Southern White Admiral** (*Limenitis reducta*), amongst a number of more usual species.

Best of all though was a single **Cyprus Grayling** (*Hipparchia cypriensis*), which turned out to be my only sighting of this endemic species in the whole week.

After about an hour on this track, we moved on and took the old road higher, stopping outside the gates of the President's summer residence. A row of lavender plants were full of **Clouded Yellows**, at least a third which were of the form *helice*. Also my only **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui*) of the holiday, and my only **Oriental Meadow Brown** (*Hyponephele lupina*). Being much higher up, the temperatures were much more reasonable, at 28C, even at midday.

On the journey home, we stopped at another site that was known for the foodplant of **Small Bath White** (*Pontia chlorodice*). We found the foodplant in much greater numbers than we had seen in the Paphos Forest, and these were much bigger plants. But there was no larval eating damage on any of the plants. It really does seem like the species is extinct in Cyprus, which is very sad.



Troodos Mountains habitat

Speaking to Yiannis, the larval food plant needs ground disturbance, which has become much less common, as large chunks of former agricultural land have been abandoned. The plants also seem to grow larger with more rain, and given that most years it doesn't now rain at all in Cyprus after March, this seems to limit the growth of the plant. A couple of decades of this climate change and shift away from agricultural disturbance appears to be what has done for this butterfly, which remains on my "To See" list.

#### Day 7

This began with our third and final visit to the "reliable" **Levantine Leopard** site. We arrived by 8am and spent a full two hours, again searching hard, but to no avail. By 10am, temperatures had reached 42C in the shade.

We returned to Yiannis' house by midday, with not a hope of being able to do anything more than aestivate, like the butterflies. It was only then that one of Yiannis' friends and local experts told Yiannis that the Levantine Leopard seems to disappear for a week or two each year in mid-July, before reappearing, perhaps for a second generation. Knowledge is scant, but our determined searching for hours on end would appear to back up this previous observation!

#### Day 8

My final day in Cyprus. After finally getting the negative result proof for my Covid test (a huge thanks to Yiannis for his help with this!) I said goodbye to him at the airport. He had been the perfect host, driving extensively and searching the hills for butterflies with me in the searing heat! I look forward to seeing him again hopefully next year.

So how would I summarise my week in Cyprus? Whilst there, brilliant. Super scenery, great wildlife in general, 8 new butterfly species seen, 34 species of butterfly in total. And all done with the excellent company of Yiannis. Even the extreme hot temperatures were okay, most of the time, you just had to limit your activity to the morning, before around midday.

Yiannis and I had previously agreed that July would be too hot, but the Covid situation forced us in that direction for this year. The best time to visit Cyprus for butterflies, he feels, would be late May. That would maximise the number of species you would see, and would likely add **Paphos Blue** and **Levantine Leopard** to the species I saw.

It was the getting to Cyprus and getting back that was difficult. Lots of nervousness about the potential for cancelled flights, potential positive Covid tests, lost Covid results, large queues in airports, and all the rest.

The Cyprus holiday was great, and I feel immensely privileged to have had two foreign butterfly spotting holidays in 13 months in the middle of a global pandemic. Not many people can say that they have been that lucky. •

**Paul Selby**

[selbypaul@hotmail.com](mailto:selbypaul@hotmail.com)

All photos by the author except where indicated.





# Mothing in France

## Mothing in France

by Nigel Peace

Let me say at the outset that I claim no expertise on this subject. Indeed until this summer I had never taken my moth trap abroad. I have run it on and off for a number of years in and around Alton, Hampshire, but I have rarely ventured with it outside the county. My interest was spurred however by the article written by my late friend Tony Hoare for EBG 28 a year ago, reporting on moths he caught in his brother's garden in the French department of Corrèze. I decided to give it a go myself.

As reported in my other article in this newsletter, my wife and I set off on 6 August 2021 for a week at Le Moulin de Pensol, a gîte in Haute-Vienne, Nouvelle-Aquitaine. We took the overnight ferry from Portsmouth to Caen, with the moth trap on the back seat, and it was an easy day's drive south to Pensol. The owners of the gîte, Heidi and Nik Smith, were more than happy for me to run the trap on their property and there was no problem finding a position where it could be plugged in and the light did not disturb other guests.

### *What would I catch?*

I had no idea what I would find in the trap in the mornings, whether there would be a lot of new species, and whether I would be able to identify them.

The outcome was that over five nights I recorded 77 species of macro-moth. 75 of the species are illustrated in Waring, Townsend & Lewington's Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland, so identification was not really a problem. Of the two species not in the field guide, I knew **Plum Lappet** (*Odonestis pruni*) from Tony Hoare's article. Only **Oak Marbled Brown** (*Drymonia querna*) required a little research on the internet.

Of the 77 species, 63 were familiar to me from Hampshire but 14 were species that I had not caught before. Obviously what I caught was only a snapshot of the moths of the area, and whether they were 'new' or not was particular to me and reflected what I had previously come across at home. The following rough categorisation may however be of interest:

- 2 of the 14 species do not reach the UK (**Plum Lappet** and **Oak Marbled Brown**).
- 4 reach the UK as scarce immigrants – **Dusky Hook-tip** (*Drepana curvatula*), **Pine Processionary** (*Thaumetopoea pityocampa*), **Orache Moth** (*Trachea atriplicis*), and **Dotted Footman** (*Pelosia muscerda*) (the last also being resident in the Norfolk Broads).
- The remaining 8 are established in southern England to greater or lesser extent but have so far eluded me there (**Poplar Lutestring** (*Tetthea or*), **Sharp-angled Carpet** (*Euphyia unangulata*), **Sharp-angled Peacock** (*Macaria alternata*), **Latticed Heath** (*Chiasmia clathrata*), **Barred Umber** (*Plagodis pulveraria*), **Jersey Tiger** (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*), **Small Wainscot** (*Denticucullus pygmina*) and **Dotted Clay** (*Xestia baja*)).

I spent the mornings in Pensol happily photographing the more interesting captures and a gallery of my images follows.



### Books

As previously mentioned, Waring, Townsend & Lewington's Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland appears to cover most of the macro species likely to be caught as far south as Haute-Vienne at least.

Comprehensive coverage of the macro-moths of France can be found in the three-volume work by Patrice Leraut, Moths of Europe. These volumes include distribution maps, but the plates show set specimens rather than images of live insects in their natural resting positions.

I have come across two publications which do show images of live insects in their natural resting positions:

- Atlas des Papillons de nuit de Basse-Normandie et des îles Anglo-Normandes: Les noctuelles (Lepertel & Quinette 2016). This covers 359 species of Noctuid found in Lower Normandy and the Channel Islands.
- Iconographie des Geometridae de la faune de France (oreina supplement 52, December 2020). This has photographs of all 902 species of Geometrid found in France.

I have only just acquired the second of these publications (from Pemberley Books) and it looks a useful identification tool.

### Future articles

I am sure there is plenty of scope for articles about mothing in France and indeed other European countries in this newsletter. Contributions for future issues will be very welcome! •

**Nigel Peace**, Editor  
liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk



**Dusky Hook-tip** (*Drepana curvatula*)



**Peach Blossom** (*Thyatira batis*)



**Poplar Lutestring** (*Tetthea or*)



**Plum Lappet** (*Odonestis pruni*)



**Sharp-angled Carpet** (*Euphyia unangulata*)



**Birch Mocha** (*Cyclophora albipunctata*)





Mothing in France cont.



Sharp-angled Peacock (*Macaria alternata*)



Latticed Heath (*Chiasmia clathrata*)



Barred Umber (*Plagodis pulveraria*)



Pine Processionary (*Thaumetopoea pityocampa*)



Oak Marbled Brown (*Drymonia querna*)



Jersey Tiger (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*)



Dotted Footman (*Pelosia muscerda*)



Orache Moth (*Trachea atriplicis*)



Bulrush Wainscot (*Nonagria typhae*)



Small Wainscot (*Denticucullus pygmina*)



Dotted Clay (*Xestia baja*)



Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth (*Hemaris fuciformis*)