



EUROPEAN
BUTTERFLIES
GROUP



eNewsletter

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Welcome to another packed issue of the European Butterflies Group newsletter. In it you will find pieces on conservation priorities (both of EBG and Butterfly Conservation Europe), on winter sun destinations for butterflies (Gran Canaria, Fuerteventura, and Oman), on a sap run in Brittany, and on the butterfly delights of North Greece. There is also an article encouraging us to consider travelling by train to destinations on the European mainland rather than by plane. Thanks as always to the contributors, and to our hard-working graphic designer Trish Connolly Morgan (<https://morgancreative.carbonmade.com/>).

Please note for your diaries that the **EBG Members Day and AGM** will be held at the Ibis Hotel in Birmingham on Saturday 26 October 2024, from 14.00 to 17.00. The hotel is known as the Birmingham New Street Ibis. Further details will be circulated to members nearer the time, and will be placed on the website.

For those considering submitting photographs for the **2025 calendar competition**, please note that entries should be sent to Anne Spencer by 1st September 2024. The correct email for entries is rhoslan.anne@gmail.com. There is a maximum of 3 photos per entry. The size of each photo must be 1 MB or more. The English common name of the butterfly should be included with each photo, and details of where the photo was taken.

Nigel Peace, Newsletter Editor, May 2024
liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk



Notices and News

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News from France (and the EBG website), Spring 2024

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

Atlas des papillons de jour du département de la Loire, France.

Co-authors Christian Bellut, Claude Colomb, Patrick Subit, André Ulmer et Mickaël Villemagne.

The Atlas of the butterflies of the Loire Department was published by the Société de Sciences Naturelles Loire Forez (Loire Forez Natural Sciences Society) in October 2023. A 296-page work, it comprises the society's own data and observations, enriched with those of its partners the Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux Loire (LPO Loire) and France Nature Environment Loire (FNE Loire). In total the atlas puts together almost 100,000 records including more than 60,000 records from LPO Loire.



This atlas presents the diverse natural environments of the département, a history of the local entomology for over a century, and monographs of the 153 species that can be found there (134 butterflies and 19 burnets).

The price is 30€. See here to order a copy of the atlas:

<https://www.helloasso.com/associations/societe-de-sciences-naturelles-loire-forez/boutiques/atlas-rhopaloceres>



La vie des papillons d'Europe.

Authors Denis Richard and Pierre-Olivier Maquart.

The authors state that this book is dedicated to the biology of lepidoptera and the discovery of the life and habits of the butterflies that surround us.

Published by Delachaux et Niestlé, with the support of the Société entomologique de France and the Office pour les insectes et leur environnement (OPIE), January 2023, format 15.6 x 21.8 cm, 240 pages, 254 photos, price 29,90€, text in French.

See here for example pages:

https://ref.lamartinieregroupe.com/media/9782603028148/147516_extrait_Extrait_0.pdf

There is a comprehensive review of the book (in French) in oreina n° 61 - November 2023, by our colleague Eric Drouet, which you can read here:

<https://oreina.org/artemisiae/biblio/docpdf/Drouet2023-24522.pdf>





(From the website)

A Field Guide to the Butterflies of Romania.

Author László Rákosy.

As the publisher states, Romania has managed to sustain an enormously rich biodiversity through its geographical position, varied topography, particular climate and complex cultural history. Traditional practices, which have survived longer than in most other parts of Europe, have allowed the preservation of large areas of natural habitat, little altered by human activity. All this is reflected in the breadth of lepidoptera encountered in the country.



This book covers in detail all 202 known species of butterflies found in Romania. An expansive introduction covers the various life stages (ovum, larva, pupa and imago), biology and ecology, as well as protection and conservation, and butterfly research. The following section identifies the 14 most important habitat types frequented by butterflies in Romania.

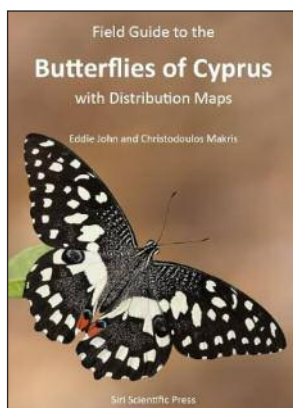
The author László Rákosy was a recipient of the Marsh European Lepidoptera Award in 2017.

Published by Pelagic Publishing, price £30, paperback, 376 pages. The publication date is given as 4 June 2024. See here to pre-order:

<https://pelagicpublishing.com/products/a-field-guide-to-the-butterflies-of-romania>

Field Guide to the Butterflies of Cyprus with Distribution Maps.

Authors Eddie John and Christodoulos Makris.



This is an abridged version of the 2022 book, Butterflies of Cyprus, by the same authors.

Each of the 57 butterfly species recorded in Cyprus has two full pages, including photographs of adults, with fully updated detailed distribution maps. The family sections are introduced by a page on which undersides of all Cyprus representatives of the family are grouped, enabling easy identification.

Format 210 x 148 mm, 160 pages, 261 colour photos and illustrations, £19.99. Available from the usual specialist booksellers or the publisher, Siri Scientific Press.

For more information : <https://siriscientificpress.co.uk/products/field-guide-to-the-butterflies-of-cyprus-with-distribution-maps>

To visit Eddie's website, see here: <http://www.cyprusbutterflies.co.uk/index.html>

ID Guide to the Blues


New Identification Guide to the 'Blues' and 'Arguses' in Europe
by Bill Raymond

The latest guide in the EBG series aims to provide a comprehensive coverage of the Polyommatae group of Blues and Arguses in Europe which consists of about 90 species.

Idas Blue (*Plebejus idas*)

Idas can be difficult to separate from Reverdin's and Silver-studded Blue. The points below should help identify. Idas displays considerable variation with many regional forms across its wide range. In the Central Alps Idas has a fairly consistent appearance and so this race might be considered as the 'standard' form. This race is illustrated below.

Upperside MALE




Hind-wing submarginal marks: varying from completely absent to:

- noticeable triangular shaped marks
- merging and creating thicker border

Wing border: Usually a narrow dark border which can help to differentiate from Silver-studded Blue

Upperside FEMALE



Submarginal marks: arch shaped orange marks containing a dark spot, typically a complete row on hind-wing and incomplete/faint on fore-wing

Colour: various shades of brown with blue scaling varying from none to extensive

Key Identification Feature

Blue/silver scales in underside hind-wing submarginal marks:

These 'blue/silver studs' are usually present in ONE or more of the hind-wing submarginal marks. Sometimes they are NOT VISIBLE depending on the angle of viewing/lighting.


The other species in this guide with this feature which can confuse are Reverdin's and Silver-studded. For a detailed comparison with Reverdin's [click here](#) or see below for Silver-studded.

Cranberry also has 'silver studs' but is easily identified.


Idas v Silver-studded

Idas MALE upperside:

- typically has a narrower wing border
- is generally a brighter blue
- usually without prominent dark veins
- has more blue in hind-wing area shown below:



Idas



Silver-studded

Idas usually has noticeable blue scaling in the area bounded yellow and green especially in the lower section towards the green line. Silver-studded is generally darker overall in this area with no blue scaling in upper section and some blue patches near the green line.

Idas MALE & FEMALE underside:


- ground colour is pale brown compared to shiny pale grey of Silver-studded

Idas MALE & FEMALE underside hind-wing:

- has noticeably less blue scaling
- has bigger dark vein end marks on border.

N.B. Due to variation, all the above features are best used in conjunction to assess the probability of identity. Taken singly they are not reliable.

Underside MALE and FEMALE Male and female are similar but female is usually somewhat browner




Colour: ground colour pale brownish. This can distinguish from shiny pale grey of Silver-studded Blue.

Both sexes have less blue scaling on hind-wing than Silver-studded Blue

Bigger dark vein end marks on hind-wing border than Silver-studded Blue


Blue/silver scales: are usually present in ONE or more of the hind-wing submarginal marks

Subspecies *nevadensis*



Nevadensis flies in Sierra Nevada, southern Spain. It has stronger underside markings with numerous blue/silver scales. Male uppersides are a deeper blue with wider dark wing borders.

Subspecies *bellieri*



Bellieri has very bold underside markings and is found on Corsica and Sardinia. Male uppersides are a dusky blue with very broad dark wing borders.

Form *calliopis*

Calliopis occurs in the Alps of southeastern France, usually below 1000m and with a particular habitat requirement; hot, dry locations close to its foodplant Sea Buckthorn [*Hippophae rhamnoides*]. It is larger and typically has smaller underside spots.

To allow the creation of a workable identification key, the group is split into two sections: Part 1 covering the Commoner Species, ie those which are relatively widespread and most likely to be encountered, and Part 2 covering the Local Species which have a restricted distribution. Part 1 is now available for free download on the EBG website. It includes 45 Commoner Species together with useful information about the Local Species which might cause confusion. Part 2 is in course of preparation and once this is published then a complete guide bringing the two sets of species together will also be made available.

For a definitive identification of many Blues it is usually necessary to have a view of both upper and underside, especially the latter. Due to the variation in most species and the colour rendition of photographs, a definitive identification by upperside only is not possible in many cases. The guide therefore takes a new approach, containing two keys: (i) an UNDERSIDE KEY, which is the Master Key as in most cases the underside has the important identifying features, and (ii) an UPPERSIDE KEY, which, although of necessity imprecise, can be useful when employed in conjunction with the Underside Key. Hopefully the keys will reduce the possibilities and lead you to one of the detailed Species Profiles where you can make a comparison to confirm identification.

Initial comments from reviewers have been very favourable so hopefully the new guide will improve your skill at identification. •

To download the new guide, and others in the series, please go to <http://www.european-butterflies.org.uk/species.html>

Bill Raymond
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Conservation Priorities

Conservation Priorities for EBG

by Mike Prentice, EBG Chairman

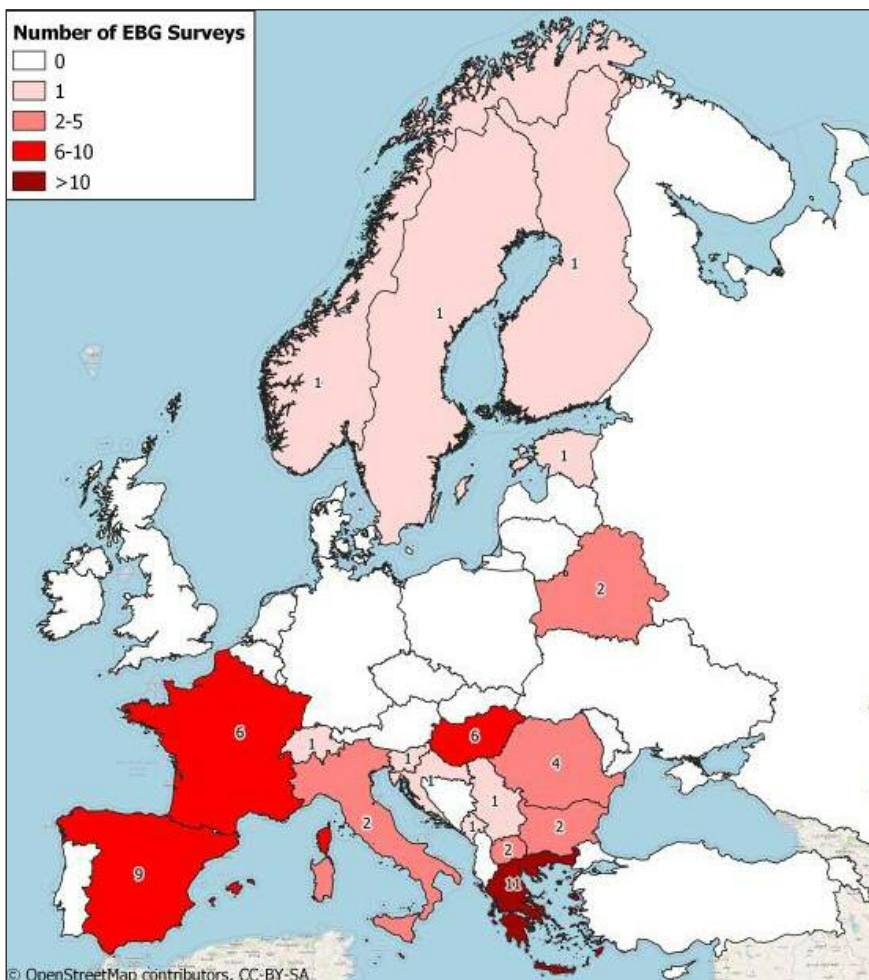
As many of you will know, European Butterflies Group was founded in 2006 (although at the time it was known as the European Interests Group) for those Butterfly Conservation members with a particular interest in European species. For many years we have carried out surveys, mostly in cooperation with Butterfly Conservation Europe and their in-country partners, on a range of butterfly species and projects. The map below shows the projects undertaken between 2007 and 2019, when COVID temporarily interrupted our efforts. Since COVID there have been two further surveys in Romania and one in Spain.

Over the past 9 years, we have also offered Research Bursaries principally, but not wholly, aimed at younger researchers who have come forward with projects of their choosing in countries as far afield as Northern Ireland, Hungary, and central Spain.

A new European Butterfly Red List is currently in preparation by Butterfly Conservation Europe, de Vlinderstichting, Butterfly Conservation and IUCN on behalf of the European Union. In anticipation of its publication, the EBG

Committee has decided that we should henceforth concentrate our efforts and funds on those species which are assessed as being in the three threatened IUCN categories: Vulnerable, Endangered and Critically Endangered.

In many ways this is not a dramatic change of policy as we have generally concentrated our efforts previously on various highly threatened species such as **Danube Clouded Yellow** (*Colias myrmidone*), **Dil's Grayling** (*Pseudochazara orestes*) and **Spanish Greenish Black-tip** (*Euchloe bazae*). Where it will make the biggest difference in particular is in our Research Bursaries where, as well as responding to requests for a project on a subject chosen by the researcher, we will both propose projects which are needed and see if we can find appropriate people to carry them out but also invite applications that are focussed on these most threatened species. ▼





The list of species/projects currently under consideration include:-

- Further work on **Danube Clouded Yellow** (*Colias myrmidone*) – see report in EBG Newsletter 34, and we are undertaking 2 visits to Romania in 2024.
- Further work on **Nevada Grayling** (*Pseudochazara williamsi*) – see report in EBG Newsletter 34, with more surveys planned in July 2024 .
- **Southern Hermit** (*Chazara prieuri*). This species appears to have undergone a recent rapid decline in numbers. We have identified an MSc student based in Spain who will carry out a survey and we have 2 or 3 EBG members who will also look for *prieuri* whilst in central Spain.
- **La Palma Grayling** (*Hipparchia tilosi*). This species appears to be particularly vulnerable to the wildfires which have afflicted the island and it may also be threatened by an invasive grass crowding out its larval foodplant. We are hoping that an experienced lepidopterist who lives on La Palma will carry out surveys and at least one EBG member will also survey for the species.
- **Dil's Grayling** (*Pseudochazara orestes*). Recent EBG surveys have failed to find any individuals in its known habitat and very localised range which seems to be undergoing a significant change with increased quarrying and changes to grazing regimes. We have approached a university in Greece and also an experienced local lepidopterist asking them to undertake surveys across the range of the butterfly's flight period.

These priorities have been identified in advance of the publication of the new Red List (scheduled for later this year) and it may well be that further additional species will be highlighted that are also worthy of our attention in future.

Our strength has always been in carrying out survey work, rather than undertaking practical habitat enhancement work which is best left to locals. Equally there will be species in the three most threatened categories where surveys will not help with species conservation, and other actions may be required.

Our new policy direction is an evolution rather than revolution but, with more European species than ever moving into the three most threatened IUCN categories, it seems appropriate to concentrate our funds and efforts even more so than previously where they can do the most good. •

Mike Prentice (EBG Chairman)
mikeprentice7@gmail.com

Butterfly Conservation Europe

By way of a postscript to this article, I should add that the EBG continues to work closely with Butterfly Conservation Europe (BCE). BCE is the umbrella organisation which promotes and coordinates the conservation of butterflies and moths across the continent. It runs its own pan-European conservation projects and works through partner organisations in countries throughout Europe (including Butterfly Conservation in the UK).

At the end of this Newsletter is an article by Martin Warren, Head of Development at BCE, summarising the significant progress that has been made in recent years in a number of important areas, and highlighting the need for future funding.

Martin Warren's article was written after the European Parliament had approved the Nature Restoration Law but tragically this has now stalled as not enough Environment Ministers have supported it. We hope that the Law will still be passed.

Mike Prentice



Brittany

Butterflies and Moths attracted to a Sap Run in Brittany

by Philip Horton (text) with photos by Jean Ogston



The dry bark of an English Oak (*Quercus robur*) usually gives no clue as to what is going on just beneath it, yet this wooden layer includes two vital sets of pipes, the xylem and the phloem. The xylem carries water up the tree which in spring includes the starches and sugars necessary for the growth of the leaves. The phloem carries the sugars created in those leaves for storage in the tree's roots. Occasionally, damage to the tree, such as a lightning strike, may disrupt this process allowing sugary sap to trickle down the outside of the trunk. To the naturalist these 'sap runs' are worth a second glance as they attract all manner of invertebrates. I was first shown one many years ago in Fermyn Wood, Northants, where a **Purple Emperor** (*Apatura iris*) and several **Comma** (*Polygonia c-album*) butterflies were feeding.

In 2020 we moved to Brittany and readers of this Newsletter will have read my accounts of moth trapping here in the autumn Newsletters for 2022 and 2023. In early July 2023 my wife and I visited another Brittany-based English naturalist/photographer, Jean Ogston. She ▼

The Oak tree (*Quercus robur*) from which the sap oozes in spring and summer, pictured in the autumn of 2023



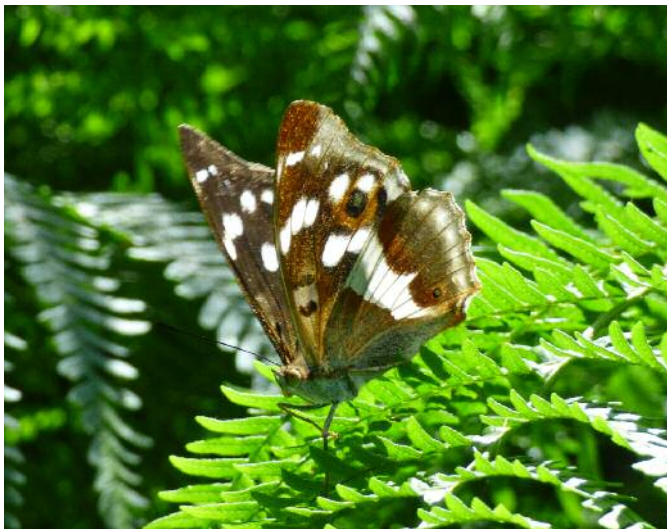
Large Tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis polychloros*) at the sap run on 17 June 2022



Brittany cont.



Purple Emperor (*Apatura iris*) male, briefly sunning itself on the tree trunk on 18 June 2022



Purple Emperor (*Apatura iris*) female, on bracken near to the sap run on 6 July 2023



Dark Crimson Underwing (*Catocala sponsa*) at the sap run on 14 July 2023

had earlier described to me a local Oak tree (pictured), near to the village of Guern, which has numerous sap runs down its trunk. This was attracting many butterflies including **Large Tortoiseshells** (*Nymphalis polychloros*) and also **Purple Emperors**. The sap runs are towards the base of the tree so that Jean had been able to take many photographs of the butterflies. I was therefore keen to visit them with her. The weather was poor on the day but there were still plenty of **Red Admirals** (*Vanessa atalanta*) and **Large Tortoiseshells** (both species were particularly numerous in Brittany during the summer of 2023) but no Purple Emperors.

Moths too

It was only later that I realised that where there were butterflies during the day, at night there should also be moths! I therefore suggested that Jean visit the tree after dusk to see what moths, if any, were feeding on the oozing sap. This she did and was able to photograph a range of interesting species. These included three different species of 'red-underwing': **Light Crimson Underwing** (*Catocala promissa*) on 13 July and **Dark Crimson Underwing** (*Catocala sponsa*) on the



Light Crimson Underwing (*Catocala promissa*) at the sap run on 13 July 2023



Brittany cont.



Rosy Underwing (*Catocala electa*) at the sap run on 8 August 2023



Orache Moth (*Trachea atriplicis*) at the sap run on 17 July 2023

following night. On 17 July an **Orache Moth** (*Trachea atriplicis*) appeared and finally, on 8 August, a **Rosy Underwing** (*Catocala electa*). In the UK the Dark and Light Crimson Underwings are restricted to the New Forest and adjacent areas while the Orache now breeds only in the Channel Islands. Both are otherwise rare migrants. Rosy Underwing has been recorded as an immigrant in the UK on less than twenty occasions since recording began (Randle et al. 2019).

Other creatures

Besides Lepidoptera, the sap run attracts many other creatures including slugs, stag beetles and both European and, in recent years, **Asian Hornets** (*Vespa crabro* and *V. velutina*). The Hornets enjoy both the sweet sap and also feeding on the Lepidoptera if they can catch any. Bats, thought to be **Greater Horseshoe** (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*), are also attracted to the feast of moths.

As the summer of 2023 progressed the sap run began to diminish and the insects disappeared. Fortunately, the tree survived the great storm of November 2023 so what may it attract when the sap run starts again in spring 2024? •

Philip Horton (philhorton@home.co.uk)

December 2023

All photos by Jean Ogston



Ref: Randle, Evans-Hill, Parsons, Tyner, Bourn, Davis, Dennis, O'Donnell, Prescott, Tordoff & Fox, *Atlas of Britain & Ireland's Larger Moths*, Pisces publications, 2019.

Here a **European Hornet** (*Vespa crabro*) has caught and is eating a **Large Tortoiseshell** (*Nymphalis polychloros*), on 22 June 2021

North Greece

Early Summer in North Greece

by David Moore

As someone who tends to concentrate on western European butterflies, it's always nice to head further east on the continent to meet up with some unfamiliar and sometimes new species.



Woodland Ringlet (*Erebia medusa*)



Mountain Small White (*Pieris ergane*), female



Blue Argus (*Aricia anteros*)

The Lake Kerkini region

The area of northern Greece close to Lake Kerkini, little more than an hour from Thessaloniki airport, is a spectacularly good part of the country for butterflies, with a variety of locations at varying levels of altitude which combine to provide a glorious suite of rarities and commoner species too.

It helps that the scenery is pleasing to the eye, with the vast lake surrounded by vegetation-clad mountains and small but pretty villages dotted around the landscape.

One can stop at practically any likely-looking place and find an array of butterflies, but there are several tried and trusted locations that maximise the species return.

Lailias ski centre

At 1,600m, the Lailias ski centre is probably the best higher-altitude site in the area, with the added benefit of the near absence of visitors once the resort has closed for the season.

Here, **Woodland Ringlet** (*Erebia medusa*) is quite common, and flies alongside **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (*Boloria euphrosyne*), **Sooty Copper** (*Lycaena tityrus*), and the occasional passing **Mountain Small White** (*Pieris ergane*).

If one ventures off piste into the woodland clearings nearby, both **Geranium Argus** (*Eumedonia eumedon*) and the beautiful **Blue Argus** (*Aricia anteros*) can reliably be found in small numbers.

Around Serres

Descending back towards the city of Serres, there are tracks and meadows which contain other interesting species, such as **Scarce Copper** (*Lycaena virgaureae*), **Balkan Grayling** (*Hipparchia senthes*), **False Eros Blue** (*Polyommatus eros eroides*), **Oriental Meadow Brown** (*Hyponephele lupina*), and **Large Blue** (*Phengaris arion*).

The views are spectacular, although negotiating the labyrinthine streets of Serres can be frustrating. ▼



North Greece cont.



Freyer's Purple Emperor (*Apatura metis*). Photo by Jon Dunn

Woodland near Bulgarian border

Undoubtedly, one of the best sites in the region is a series of grassy meadows within mature, deciduous woodland close to the border with Bulgaria. In fact, walking along some of the rides can take you over the border, though there are no customs posts in this woody wilderness.

There is a huge range of fantastic butterflies inhabiting these woods, chief of which is the seldom seen **Freyer's Purple Emperor** (*Apatura metis*).

Common Glider (*Neptis sappho*) flies along these rides, where **Map** (*Araschnia levana*), **White-letter Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium w-album*), and numerous **Silver-washed Fritillaries** (*Argynnis paphia*) compete for air space.



Iolas Blue (*Iolana iolas*)



Large Copper (*Lycaena dispar*), male

When we visited in 2023, there had been rain in the days leading up to our trip, and the damp area on the track saw a beautifully fresh male **Iolas Blue** (*Iolana iolas*) taking fluids and behaving in a highly approachable manner. Nearby, there was a surprise sighting of a **Pigmy Skipper** (*Gegenes pumilio*), along with a late female **Eastern Festoon** (*Zerynthia cerisy*).

Part of the main meadow is damp and has Water Dock growing in it. Here, we found a colony of **Large Coppers** (*Lycaena dispar*), which spent time battling with other small insects that invaded their territory.

It is easy to get lost in the long series of interconnected meadows, which provide some of the best habitat I have ever seen. If one looks hard enough there are two ▼



North Greece cont.



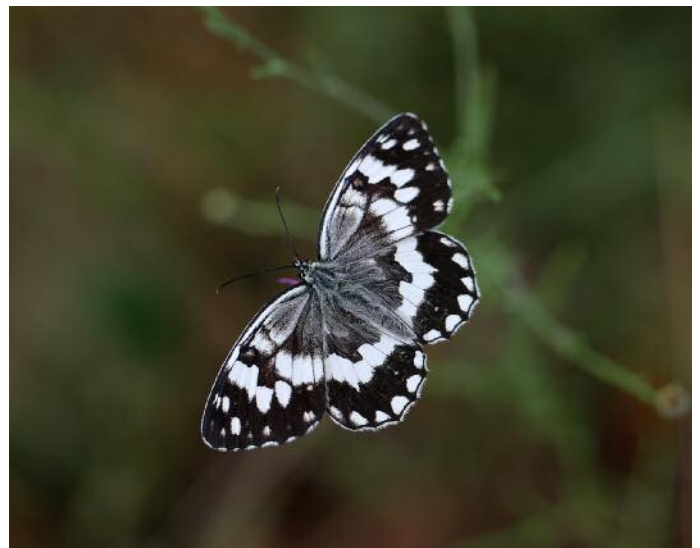
Sandy Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus cinarae*)

Hesperiids of great interest, the best being **Sandy Grizzled Skipper** (*Pyrgus cinarae*), although **Yellow-Banded Skipper** (*Pyrgus sidae*), certainly has the edge as far as underside pattern is concerned, even if it is not quite as imposing.

Near the border with North Macedonia

To the west of Lake Kerkini, close to the North Macedonian border, there is another site where some highly desirable butterflies can be found.

A small, lightly wooded area close to a series of arable fields is the chosen *des res* for the behemoth Hesperiid, **Tessellated Skipper** (*Muschampia tessellum*). When seeing this insect for the first time it is quite some experience given its sheer size for this family, much larger than any of the *Pyrgus* group. Thankfully, it is extremely keen on nectaring from flowers (particularly knapweed and scabious) and is tolerant of human approaches.



Tessellated Skipper (*Muschampia tessellum*) & Balkan Marbled White (*Melanargia larissa*). Photos by Jon Dunn



Lesser Purple Emperor (*Apatura ilia* f. *clytie*).
Photo by Jon Dunn

Sharing this habitat is another wonderful species, **Balkan Marbled White** (*Melanargia larissa*). Again, this is a sizeable insect for its genus, and beautifully marked with broad black bands on both the upperside forewings and hindwings. Like others in its family, it seems rather fussy about its habitat preferences, often being very common in areas to its liking, whilst being totally absent from similar-looking habitat nearby.

Another desirable species to be found in this location is the *clytie* form of **Lesser Purple Emperor** (*Apatura ilia*). Like others in its group, it is fond of descending to the tracks to take fluids from anything putrid which happens to be there.

The edges of arable fields are often where one finds Coppers, and indeed there is a charming member of this group that ▼



North Greece cont.



Lesser Fiery Copper (*Lycaena thersamon*). Photo by Jon Dunn

can be found patrolling these areas – **Lesser Fiery Copper** (*Lycaena thersamon*). Brambles and asters seem to be the preferred choice of flower and their territorial behaviour makes them easy to study.

Lake Kerkini itself

The immediate environs of Lake Kerkini are also highly productive. At the rear of the hotel we stayed in, there is a series of fields surrounded by trees and hedgerows. Probably the most striking of the denizens of this habitat is **Lattice Brown** (*Kirinia roxelana*). This butterfly has an obsession with shady areas, retreating to the shadows within trees and shrubs on warm, sunny days. However, we soon learned that early in the mornings, between 7 and 8 o'clock, it was possible to catch them sunning themselves contentedly, even opening their wings on occasions.



Lattice Brown (*Kirinia roxelana*), male (upperside) and female (underside)

Another interesting species found here is the diminutive but strikingly beautiful **Little Tiger Blue** (*Tarucus balkanicus*). It is most often seen puddling on moist tracks, although with luck it can occasionally be seen nectaring from flowers. A close approach is needed because this is a tiny butterfly, although thankfully not too skittish.

Of the commoner species, **Small Copper** (*Lycaena phlaeas*) is of interest, as while some specimens resemble the ones seen in the UK in appearance, the bulk of them are extremely dark.

Nettle-tree Butterfly (*Libythea celtis*) is extremely common in places, almost approaching pestilent levels with multi-dozens sometimes seen taking minerals from damp tracks, often those you need to drive upon, which can be rather inconvenient.

Ilex Hairstreak (*Satyrium ilicis*) is another species which can turn up in huge numbers, with the umbellifers at a roadside location close to the Bulgarian border absolutely laden with them. The few **Osiris Blues** (*Cupido osiris*) that were nectaring amongst this maelstrom were very easy to pick out!





North Greece cont.



Little Tiger Blue (*Tarucus balkanicus*). Photo by Jon Dunn



Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*), dark specimen

Another butterfly to watch out for on umbellifers (particularly Danewort) is **Southern Comma** (*Polygonia egea*). There are a handful of reliable places where this species can be found in the area, all being in villages on the lower slopes of the mountains to the north of Lake Kerkini.

Other diversions

Of course, there are plenty of other butterflies around to keep everyone entertained, and the wetlands around the lake and the body of the lake itself are superb for those who enjoy their birds, with Kerkini being home to one of the largest populations of the Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*).

Another regular sight is that of wild tortoises, which sometimes appear on the road whilst one drives from one place to another. Golden Jackals (*Canis aureus*) can be heard as night falls in the hills near to the lake and dragonflies abound in the area due to the abundance of water.

The area is not densely populated, and there is little of the intensive agriculture that one sees elsewhere in Greece, although one can come across herds of browsing water buffalo in the vicinity of the lake, which happened to us one day when we were searching for Large Copper.

In conclusion

Around 90 different butterfly species were recorded during our week in early June, and that was in spite of several days that were less than ideal for butterfly-watching, with accumulations of cloud and occasional rain putting a dampener on proceedings.

As ever, the standard of service in the hotels and restaurants was superb in a country which relies on tourism for a significant percentage of its GDP. We ate each night in a wonderful place beside a railway track which specialises in buffalo. The meze-style offerings made meal times something to really look forward to.

Compared to most of western Europe, Greece is fairly cheap too, although having to stop on the motorway to pay tolls of less than 1 Euro did rather seem to be taking things a little too far!

This area of Greece has something for everyone, and if you are a connoisseur of butterflies then your glass will be overflowing. •

David Moore

<https://www.mariposanature.com/>

All our butterfly tours provide a donation to further the work of EBG.

Photos by David Moore, except by Jon Dunn where indicated.



Gran Canaria

Winter Butterflies of Gran Canaria

by Mark and Caroline Searle

Gran Canaria is a year-round holiday destination, offering sun, sand and sea for those who want it, mainly in the beach resorts in the arid south. However, for walkers and naturalists, its true gems lie in the greener interior of the island where the rising rock towers, an abundance of well-marked mountain trails and panoramic vistas offer the prospect of a perfect winter break. The rugged, volcanic landscape presents a rich variety of micro-climates offering excellent habitat for butterflies. The weather pattern during December to March can be unstable, but anything has to be an improvement on the damp, dreary winter weather across the UK during January. So, on a grey New Year's Eve, we grasped the nettle and booked our flights for a fortnight on Gran Canaria (25th Jan – 8th Feb 2024), leaving in just a few weeks.

With a view to exploring the more verdant barrancos and ridges at the north end of the island, with easy access to the interior, we stayed up in the hills to the south of Arucas (just west of Las Palmas) within a few miles of the mountain town of Teror. As it turned out, the Canary Islands had experienced an unusually dry winter, so our stay coincided with two weeks of wall-to-wall sunshine with temperatures in the low to mid-twenties!

The 'iNaturalist' website suggests that around 21 species can be found on Gran Canaria, with half a dozen additional rare migrants also possible. The website also provided some recent sightings data and useful seasonal distribution profiles to help hone our searches. Lying to the east of the Canary Island group, Gran Canaria doesn't support endemics such as the **Canary Island Large White** (*Pieris cheiranthi*) or **Canary Brimstone** (*Gonepteryx cleobule*) (both found on Tenerife and La Palma), but lying closer to the African coastline plays host to several desert specialists (also found on Fuerteventura and Lanzarote), which we were keen to find.

Jardin Botanico near Tafira Alta

Arriving from the East Midlands just after lunch on 25th Jan, we picked up our hire car for the fortnight and wasted no time heading north along the GC-1 towards Las Palmas, making an early pit-stop just half an hour up the road at the Jardin Botanico near Tafira Alta. At 27 hectares, this is claimed to be Spain's largest Botanical Gardens and supports a rich palette of Canarian flora.

Needless to say, on a warm sunny afternoon, the spot was a superb introduction to the butterflies of Gran Canaria! Within three hours of arrival on the island we had spotted 12 species, including **Monarch** (*Danaus plexippus*), **Long-tailed Blue** (*Lampides boeticus*), **African Grass Blue** (*Zizeeria knysna*) and the endemic **Canary Red Admiral** (*Vanessa vulcania*). Others included **Canary Speckled Wood** (*Pararge xiphioides*), **Lang's Short-tailed Blue** (*Leptotes pirithous*), a **Geranium Bronze** (*Cacyreus marshalli*), a handful of **Small Coppers** (*Lycaena phlaeas*), **Small Whites** (*Pieris rapae*) and the only **Clouded** ▼



Gran Canaria cont.



African Grass Blue (*Zizeeria knysna*)



Canary Red Admiral (*Vanessa vulcania*) and Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*)



Greenish Black-tip (*Euchloe charlonia*)

Yellow (*Colias croceus*) of the entire trip! A **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui*) and **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*) also put in an appearance. Not having seen a butterfly of any description for months, this was a spectacular start.

First target – Greenish Black-tip
Following a successful trip in March 2023 to the Hoya de Baza in search of the **Spanish Greenish Black-tip** (*Euchloe bazeae*) (see EBG Newsletter 34, Oct 2023), a key target for this trip was its close cousin the **Greenish Black-tip** (*Euchloe charlonia*) which is a rarity to be found in the arid eastern part of the island in the areas north and west of the airport. It is also to be found on the other parched eastern Islands of the group (Fuerteventura and Lanzarote).

Guided by a few sightings reported on the 'iNaturalist' site, and some familiarity with the habitat requirements of this species, we explored the arid, rocky slopes a few kms west of El Goro. There was generally very little flowering vegetation, but we eventually found small amounts of flowering herbs, and promptly spotted a couple of

Greenish Black-tips 'hill-topping' on a small ridge, very active and difficult to approach, but a triumphant discovery nonetheless! After several hours scouring the same rocky hillside we spotted perhaps half a dozen of these stunning beauties. A return visit a week later in sunny but more windy conditions produced only one specimen from many hours of searching. This arid landscape also produced a few **Bath Whites** (*Pontia daplidice*), **Small Coppers** and **Small Whites**, but was generally unyielding following the winter drought.

Second target - Desert Babul Blue

Our second target desert specialist, the **Desert Babul Blue** (*Azanus ubaldus*), more typically found in India, the Middle East and Africa, has historically been reported from the hot, dry south of Gran Canaria in the area of the Maspalomas ▼



Gran Canaria cont.

Dunes, where it is strongly associated with Acacia bushes. It is also occasionally reported from Fuerteventura, and indeed, we spotted an individual on the southern coast of La Gomera in March 2016. Much of the dunes area of the Gran Canaria 'Sahara' is protected as a nature reserve and inaccessible, but we spotted a clump of flowering Acacia trees of different species on the western edge of the dunes.



Acacia bushes, Maspalomas Dunes

After much circling around this impenetrable thorny mass, our first **Desert Babul Blue** was spotted moving at high speed amongst the lower branches, and within a few minutes half a dozen others appeared. Their tiny size and frenetic activity in the sunshine made them a real challenge to follow, but eventually a few paused to take nectar – a highlight of the trip! We explored the area further, as far as was accessible, but no other Acacias could be identified.



Desert Babul Blue (*Azanus ubaldus*)

We decided to move inland a few miles north of the GC-1 motorway to see if we could find some suitable habitat on the 'outback' minor roads. We stopped at a few promising spots north of El Lomo where Acacia was evident at the roadside. Second-time-lucky we found an isolated flowering bush in a dry river bed and spotted a pristine mating pair of **Desert Babul Blues** sitting only a foot off the ground, briefly pestered by an inquisitive second male. An area worthy of further exploration on a future visit!



Desert Babul Blues (*Azanus ubaldus*)

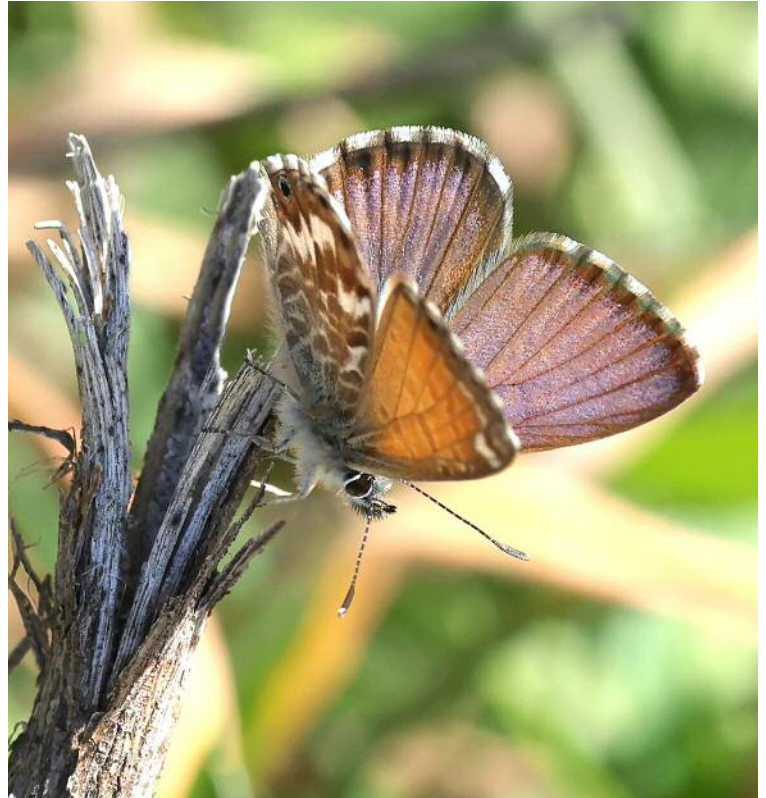
Walking the higher slopes

With the weather set warm and sunny, after a generally cool start to the mornings, we headed inland to the high ground around the Cruz de Tejada (1509 m). Our 'Rothers Walking Guide' gave us some ideas for mountain walks, and taking note to ensure some sheltered, south-facing aspects, we spent the next week exploring these higher slopes along well-marked trails, some of them former pilgrimage routes, passing through patches of reforested pine wood and open terraces rich in a variety of flora (1400-1700 m). ▼



Gran Canaria cont.

This area proved to be highly productive for butterflies. On Tenerife in March 2019 we had struggled to find the endemic **Canary Blue** (*Cyclrius webbianus*), but here on the higher trails there were good numbers, many very fresh, particularly on the terrace heading towards La Cruz Chica.



Canary Blue (*Cyclrius webbianus*)



Gran Canaria Green-striped White (*Euchloe grancanariensis*)

We soon spotted a handful of the boldly-marked **Southern Brown Argus** (*Aricia cramera* syn. *canariensis*) also in mint condition, and our first fleeting glimpses of the **Gran Canaria Green-striped White** (*Euchloe grancanariensis*), large numbers of **Small Coppers**, and a handful of **Bath Whites**, **Painted Ladies** and **Canary Red Admirals** basking in sheltered spots.

The following day we walked in a south easterly direction along the wooded flanks of the Caldera in the hope of spotting a few more **Gran Canaria Green-striped Whites**. This is one of three *Euchloe* species from the Canary Islands (also found on Tenerife and Fuerteventura) recently given specific status and considered genetically distinct from *E. belemia* from the African and Spanish mainlands. We were not disappointed and, although relatively scarce, managed to observe a few riding the updrafts on the exposed ridges. Starting further down the valley in the village of Tejeda (1049 m) we followed the trails up to the Cruz de Timagada (1320 m) which again provided excellent habitat for the 'hill-topping' Green-striped Whites, occasionally pausing



Gran Canaria cont.



Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*)



Canary Skipper (*Thymelicus christi*)

to sample the endemic Canarian lavender growing in small patches along the ridge.

The coast around Agaete

Away from the centre of the island, we took a few days to explore the coast around Agaete to the north west and up in to the San Pedro Valley. The lush barranco vegetation and adjacent cultivated plots attracted good numbers of **Monarch**, **African Grass Blue**, **Canary Speckled Wood**, and a few **Geranium Bronze** amongst other species already mentioned. Along a stretch of arid, rocky, largely flora-less coastline, we made a steep descent on a hot day to the beach at Guayedra, where some stunning fresh, pink **Painted Ladies** were reasonably abundant, **Small Whites** and a few **Lang's Short-tailed Blues** and **Bath Whites** completing an otherwise disappointing species count of only 4 for the day.

Back to the mountains

With only a few days of the trip left, we returned to the more productive mountain trails and explored a new route north west from Cruz de Tejada along the northern flank of the central volcanic crater (Cumbre) towards Artenara. The views from the mountain terraces in this area are stunning, including the spectacle of Mt. Teide rising out of the ocean far off on Tenerife. Our one remaining target species is reportedly in low abundance on

the Island during the winter months (October to January), only starting to re-emerge in early February at lower levels. Expectations were low, but chance favours the prepared, and a tell-tale flash of orange late afternoon on a sunny, flower-rich slope (1705 m) gave us our twentieth species of the trip as a mint-fresh **Canary Skipper** (*Thymelicus christi*) paused to bask in full view, albeit for the briefest of moments! Closely related to the **Lulworth Skipper** (*Thymelicus acteon*), this is the only member of the HesperIIDae family on the Islands. Despite a few further hours of searching, no others came to light, but a highlight to end the trip.

Overall, two weeks of uninterrupted, and unexpected, warm and sunny weather, stunning mountain scenery and walks, some excellent habitat and the discovery of many of the Islands' resident butterfly species had combined to make this a memorable winter break! •

Mark & Caroline Searle

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Fuerteventura

Butterflies of Fuerteventura, 21 to 28 February 2024

by Dave Plowman

My wife and I travelled to Fuerteventura from Birmingham and we arrived mid-afternoon. It was too late for butterflies, but we had a quick walk along the coast and we came across chipmunks that had apparently been brought over as pets but escaped in 1965, bred like rabbits, and completely colonized the island.

A coastal scene

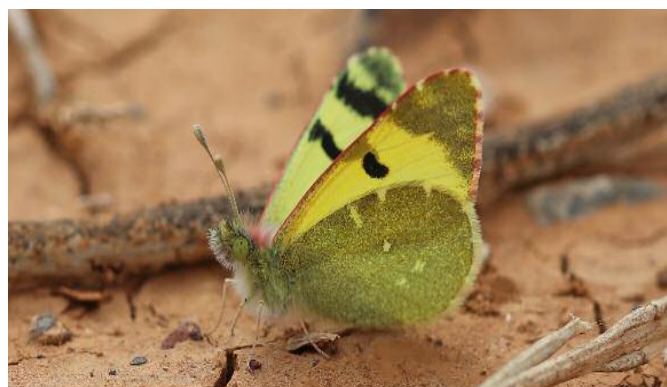


The two main targets

We set off early next morning in our hire car, hoping to photograph our two main species, namely the **Fuerteventura Green-striped White** (*Euchloe hesperidum*) and **Greenish Black-tip** (*Euchloe charlonia*). From my research, I had various locations via i-Naturalist and Observation.org. I also had a site given to me by a friend who had visited the island in March 2022. The route to my friend's site passed by many of the locations I had worked out via the two websites, but they were of single butterfly sightings over a number of years and it was obvious that they were no longer valid.



Fuerteventura Green-striped White (*Euchloe hesperidum*)



Greenish Black-tip (*Euchloe charlonia*)

We made our way to my friend's site, and as we approached we were lucky enough to observe *charlonia* flying by the roadside. We quickly parked the car and I ran across the road into a nearby garden. The man watering that garden was somewhat surprised but smiled and waved me on. This proved to be a fruitless exercise as it was a hot sunny day and this individual quickly disappeared.

We went back to the area we had parked the car and spent the next two or three hours searching for the butterflies. Both *charlonia* and *hesperidum* were sighted and photographs were taken. As the day was very hot and windy, we decided to go back the following day when 50% cloud cover was forecast and we thought this would be the best course of action. We duly returned the next day and found both species and took fairly good shots of both. The only other species flying were **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui*) and **Small White** (*Pieris rapae*). ▼



Fuerteventura cont.



African Migrant (*Catopsilia florella*)



Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)



Plain Tiger (*Danaus chrysippus*) and larva

Exploring the island for other species

With both target species found and photographed, we explored the island from top to bottom, stopping at various points and always keeping a keen eye out for any other butterflies which might be available.

We were very fortunate to come across **African Migrant** (*Catopsilia florella*) along with the highly distinctive larval food plant *Cassia* with females egg-laying. We also came across **Monarch** (*Danaus plexippus*) along with the larval food plant Milkweed again in abundance.



African Grass Blue (*Zizeeria knysna*)

On our final day, we were lucky enough to find a small colony of **Plain Tigers** (*Danaus chrysippus*). Again, the larval food plant Strangewort was in evidence and I would estimate there were 20+ individuals flying. I also noticed a small blue butterfly flying which turned out to be **African Grass Blue** (*Zizeeria knysna*). There must also have been 20+ of these individuals flying. Amongst them there seemed to be another blue flying which had a brighter appearance, and this turned out to be **Desert** (or **Bright**) **Babul Blue** (*Azanus ubaldus*). I knew from records that this species migrated to Fuerteventura on occasions, but to actually locate and photograph it is something everybody would dream of.



Desert Babul Blue (*Azanus ubaldus*)

A final species that we found flying was **Lang's Short-tailed Blue** (*Leptotes pirithous*).

The weather was very kind during our week in Fuerteventura. I would fully recommend hiring a car and driving on the fantastic roads, with hardly a pothole or blemish in sight. We only went for two species, but ended up seeing four which we had not seen before. A good start to 2024 (with thanks to Keith W.). •

Dave Plowman

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All photos by the author



Oman

Winter Sun Butterflies: Oman, 16 to 26 February 2024

by Nigel Peace

There are not many places to go for butterflies in Europe in the winter. The most obvious destination is the Canary Islands. Mark Searle's article on pages 15 to 19 reports on a successful visit to Gran Canaria commencing on 25 January, and on pages 20 to 21 Dave Plowman reports on a similarly successful trip to Fuerteventura a few weeks later. Mark Searle previously enjoyed a good winter visit to Tenerife in 2020, written up in EBG 28.

Oman

On the theme of winter sun destinations, it seems appropriate to report on my own visit to Oman from 16 to 26 February 2024. Clearly Oman is not in Europe, but many of the butterflies which fly there are on the European list, or at least belong to Western Palearctic families. To assist with identification, there are a couple of excellent butterfly books – Butterflies of Oman by Torben Larsen (1980), which must be obtained second hand, and Butterflies of the United Arab Emirates including Northern Oman by Feulner et al (2021).

Desert White (*Pontia glauconome*), Muscat region

My visit to Oman was primarily a birding trip. As such, I did not expect to see a lot of butterflies, but I found enough to compile this report. Our itinerary took us by 4WD from Muscat, the capital of Oman in the north of the country, to the

Dhofar region in the far south. In the course of our journey, we visited many desert wadis and oases, and there was usually some scrubby vegetation to explore. Butterflies were not numerous, but occasionally a few would be found flying round a particular tree or shrub. The temperature was pleasant, typically reaching an afternoon maximum of about 30 degrees C. We had sunny weather throughout, but there had been heavy storms shortly before our arrival which may have freshened things up a little.

Pieridae

This was the easiest family to observe. The first image shows a **Desert White** (*Pontia glauconome*), which is very similar to **Bath** & **Eastern Bath Whites** (*Pontia daplidice* & *edusa*) which are common in Europe, but has more strongly marked yellow veins on the underside hind wing. ▼





Oman cont.



Caper White (*Belenois aurota*), Dhofar



African Migrant (*Catopsilia florella*), Muscat region

The next two species shown, **Caper White** (*Belenois aurota*) and **African Migrant** (*Catopsilia florella*), are both widespread butterflies. The former is found in Africa and India, and the latter in Africa as well as the Canary Islands.

At least 11 species of *Colotis* occur in Oman and we recorded four of them. The family is represented in Europe by **Desert Orange-tip** (*Colotis evagore*), which can be found in coastal areas of southern Spain. Three species from Oman are shown here.



Small Salmon Arab (*Colotis calais*), Dhofar



Scarlet-tip (*Colotis danae*), Dhofar



Sulphur Orange-tip (*Colotis aurora*), Dhofar





Oman cont.



Levantine Leopard (*Apharitis acamas*), central Oman



Tiger Blue sp (*Tarucus balkanicus* or *T. rosaceus*), Muscat



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

Lycaenidae

Small, flitty and hard to follow in the desert sun, we nevertheless recorded five Lycaenids. The highlight was **Levantine Leopard** (*Apharitis acamas*), also known as Tawny Silverline. In Europe, it occurs in Cyprus and is a highly desirable species to find there.

There are three look-alike Tiger Blues in Oman and the butterfly in the image was not identified to species, but it may be **Little Tiger Blue** (*Tarucus balkanicus*) which occurs in southern Europe

Lang's Short-tailed Blue (*Leptotes pirithous*), the next image, occurs widely in Europe and Africa and I have seen it as close to Britain as central France.



Plain Tiger (*Danaus chrysippus*), Muscat region

Nymphalidae

Plain Tiger (*Danaus chrysippus*) was probably the butterfly we saw most often, frequenting all types of habitats including watered parks and gardens. Other Nymphalidae included **Blue Pansy** (*Junonia orithya*) and **Yellow Pansy** (*J. hierta*), relatively conspicuous butterflies which are widespread in Africa and India.

Hesperiidae

We only saw one species of Skipper, the spectacular **Giant Skipper** (*Pyrrhades anchises*). It also occurs widely in Africa where it is known as the One-pip Policeman, but the Arabian form is a separate subspecies, *jucunda*.

Other possible 'winter sun' destinations

North Africa may be a possibility although I have no personal experience. Browsing reports of trips to Morocco and Tunisia, I do see mention of a few interesting early- or late-flying species such as **Desert Swallowtail** (*Papilio saharae*), **Spotted Adonis Blue** (*Lysandra punctifera*), and **Austaut's Grayling** (*Hipparchia hansii*). A good subject for a future report in this newsletter, perhaps? •



Giant Skipper (*Pyrrhades anchises jucunda*), Muscat region

Nigel Peace (Newsletter Editor)

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Using low emission, high-speed trains to reach continental European butterfly sites

by Bob Whitmarsh

A recent article in the EBG newsletter of October 2023 by Neil Thompson raised the environmental impact of flying to destinations on the continent where butterflies are sought and this struck a chord with me. Flying has a much greater impact on global heating, also known as climate change, than any other normal form of transport. To keep our carbon emissions as low as reasonably possible, my wife and I have used high-speed trains on the continent since 2005 to reach places as far apart as Stockholm, Budapest, Granada and Ancona. Here I offer information on the practicality of taking high-speed trains to popular mainland butterfly destinations, mostly in southern and eastern Europe.



A German InterCity Train awaiting departure from Munich Hbf (main station)

There is no doubt that ditching the plane and letting the train take the strain is better for the environment. For example, Eurostar says that their emissions per passenger from London to Paris are 14 times less than they are from flying. Other high-speed trains in Europe, travelling at up to 198 mph (320 kph), are electrified and therefore also have low carbon footprints. The ready availability of high-speed trains and sleeper trains, which provide a city centre to city centre service across almost all of continental Europe, means that this is a practical mode of transport for getting to the country of your butterflies of interest.

Planning your route

Planning a trip by train can seem daunting at first but there is a lot of online help available. The Man in Seat 61 <https://www.seat61.com/> is invaluable for suggesting routes and the German Railway site (in English) <https://int.bahn.de/en> provides accurate and up to date timetable information. Generally, rail companies open their bookings around 2-6 months in advance of travel, but don't always stick precisely to these dates, so it is worth checking regularly because cheaper fares may be bought up first. A site such as Rail Europe <https://www.raileurope.com/> allows you to buy tickets from across the network; you don't have to deal with individual rail companies. Seat reservations are usually worth it even if not obligatory.

Changing trains is inevitable for most journeys and it is better to allow at least 10, or even 20, minutes to make connections in an unfamiliar station. A longer break gives you time to get a coffee or sandwich too although these are often available on the trains. For longer trips you may want to have an overnight stopover and there is often a wide choice of hotels within walking distance of many main stations which can be booked using sites such as <https://www.booking.com>. However, if you are in more of a hurry and can manage to sleep on a moving train why not take advantage of the growing number of sleeper trains <https://www.thetrainline.com/trains/europe/night-trains> on the continent to countries ▼



Table of travel times by train from London to cities close to popular butterfly destinations (mid-week departures, typical times, May 2024 timetables), plus carbon savings relative to flying.

Country	City	Estimated hours of train travel per day (one-way)	Emissions saving (air v. train) per passenger return trip (kg CO2) +	Station changes en route ++
France	Lyon	5h00m	484	Lille
France	Grenoble	6h40m	407	Lille, Lyon
France	Bordeaux	5h12m	377	Lille
France	Limoges	6h36m	496	Paris/Gare d'Austerlitz
Greece	Athens	11h18m + 7h07m + 16h30m on ferry + 2h55m bus/train	1850	Paris/Gare de Lyon Milan*,**, Bari-Patras ferry*, bus/train to Athens
Hungary	Budapest	8h23m + 7h03m	656	Paris/Gare de l'Est, Munich*
Italy	Florence	13h22m	695	Paris/Gare de Lyon**, Turin
Italy	Milan	11h18m	535	Paris/Gare de Lyon**
Romania	Bucharest	8h23m + 7h03m + 14h56m	840	Paris/Gare de l'Est, Munich*, Budapest, onward by hire car on Day 2 or continue by sleeper train
Slovenia	Ljubljana	8h23m + 6h42m	704	Paris/Gare de l'Est, Munich*
Spain	Barcelona	10h10m	463	Paris/Gare de Lyon
Spain	Cordoba	6h55m + 8h43m	660	Lille, Nîmes*, Madrid
Spain	Madrid	6h55m + 6h44m	433	Lille, Nîmes*
Switzerland	Geneva	7h02m	394	Paris/Gare de Lyon
Switzerland	Zurich	7h06m	409	Paris/Gare de Lyon

+ Data from ecopassenger.org or atmosfair.de/en/offset/flight

++ Recommended routes from Seat61.com

*Overnight stay recommended.

** travel mandated via Switzerland until Summer 2024. Direct line blocked by landslide.

like Austria, Germany, Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia? We once took the sleeper from Vienna to Cologne and it was magical to wake up and be served breakfast while watching the early morning mist over the Rhine as we sped past vineyards and ancient castles.

Other considerations

Of course, people speak languages other than English on the continent but there is really no reason to be concerned at your inability to speak fluent French or German, let alone Slovenian or Hungarian. A lot of information is provided on screens on the trains and many train conductors have a passing knowledge of English too and make announcements in English. Main stations usually have excellent display screens and even posters listing the timetable and platforms used and giving the direction of travel of the train and the location of first and second class carriages.

Butterfly enthusiasts, unless hosted by a local contact, will usually arrive at their final destination needing to drive a hire car out of an unfamiliar city. But this should not be any worse than arriving at an airport and the service can be a lot quicker. Many car hire firms these days offer satellite navigation anyway, if you are not happy relying on your smart phone or tablet, which eases your escape into the countryside. ▼



The author Bob Whitmarsh sitting in Seat 61 in a Eurostar carriage. Bob is a member of the Hampshire/Isle of Wight Branch of Butterfly Conservation, and is an active volunteer and blogger for Winchester Action on the Climate Crisis <https://www.winacc.org.uk/> (WinACC). Go to the renowned website The Man in Seat 61 (<https://www.seat61.com/>) for more inspiration.

Eurostar

There are immigration and baggage X-ray checks on departure from Eurostar terminals in London, Paris, or Brussels but they are usually very quick and seem much speedier than at airports. Once you are in one of the 27 Schengen countries <https://www.schengenvisa.info.com/schengen-visa-countries-list/> you can cross other Schengen borders without further checks. For some people changing stations in Paris is inconvenient if they are not familiar with the Metro. However, for some routes, this can be avoided either by changing trains at Lille, to avoid Paris altogether, or by simply walking for 10-15 minutes from Gare du Nord to Gare de l'Est if that is appropriate. Some destinations can also be reached via the Eurostar terminus in Brussels where only a change of platform is required.

In summary

High-speed trains are a highly practical and environmentally attractive way to travel within continental Europe. Although many places can be reached from London in a day, some more distant destinations require

spending a second day on the train. The table above recommends staying overnight in Nîmes, Munich or Milan where there are choices of convenient hotels. Alternatively using a sleeper train will get you to your destination sooner. While travel by high-speed train may take a bit longer, it is a comfortable, practical, and relaxing way to travel.

The point of this short article is to encourage UK-based lepidopterists to heed their carbon emissions from flying to continental Europe by taking high-speed trains which have very much lower carbon footprints. The table shows that for most destinations, with the exception of the more distant Bucharest (840 kg) and Athens (1850 kg), a return trip by train will save between 377 and 704 kg of carbon dioxide (CO₂) per person compared to flying. This is equivalent to the emissions from an average new car being driven 2,040 to 3,800 miles (3,260 – 6,080 km)! Or, looking at it another way, two people going by train to/from Budapest would save 1,310 kg CO₂, relative to flying, equivalent to driving 7,075 miles (11,320 km).

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Butterfly Conservation Europe

A turning point for European butterflies and moths?

By Dr Martin Warren

Head of Development, Butterfly Conservation Europe

The last year has been quite a momentous one for European wildlife and especially butterflies and moths. Firstly, the EU have passed a new Nature Restoration Law which is by far the most significant piece of legislation affecting biodiversity since the Habitats Directive way back in 1992. Secondly, BC Europe has greatly expanded the European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (eBMS), so that it covers all EU countries and many more. Thirdly, the European Pollinator Initiative is gaining traction with the design of a new Pollinator Monitoring Programme (EUPOMS). And fourthly, the new European Butterfly and Moth Red Lists are nearing completion, giving us a new set of European priorities. In this article, I will explain how BC Europe has been at the heart of these developments and how we plan to go even further in coming years.

The EU Nature Restoration Law

The past year has been dominated by the development of the new **EU Nature Restoration Law (NRL)**. When finally approved, hopefully in April, the NRL will be the main mechanism for implementing the EU's ambitious Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/biodiversity/>

Through our Policy Advisor, Sue Collins, we have worked with NGO colleagues in the European Habitats Forum <https://www.iucn.org/our-work/region/europe/our-work/eu-policy/european-habitats-forum> to ensure this legislation is as robust as possible, despite attempts to get it watered down by various interest groups across Europe. The draft proposal aims to put measures in place to restore at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. It sets specific, legally binding targets and obligations for nature restoration in each of the listed ecosystems — from agricultural land and forests to marine, freshwater and urban ecosystems. There are two provisions of particular interest to BC Europe: Article 8 is a legally binding obligation to restore pollinator populations, reversing pollinator decline by 2030 and improving populations of pollinators thereafter. Article 9 requires Member States to put in place measures to improve biodiversity in agricultural ecosystems by 2030 with butterfly monitoring and the Grassland Butterfly Index (calculated at Member State level), as one of the measures of success they can use.

After considerable debate and opposition the draft Law was approved (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/11/09/nature-restoration-council-and-parliament-reach-agreement-on-new-rules-to-restore-and-protect-degraded-habitats-in-the-eu/>) by the European Parliament, Commission and Council in November and goes for final sign off in April 2024. There were some compromises, but many key elements remain intact, including the EU Grassland Butterfly Index which is one of the indicators used on the EU Biodiversity Strategy Dashboard (<https://dopa.jrc.ec.europa.eu/kcbd/EUBDS2030-dashboard/?version=1>).





The Commission has also been working on a voluntary “Pledges” programme to improve the implementation of the existing Habitats Directive. Member States have been asked to put forward Pledges to carry out specific new measures to extend Protected Areas and improve connectivity, including for “Umbrella” and Red List species; and to improve the conservation status of particular Habitats Directive listed habitats and species, which are in an unfavourable Conservation Status and show a declining trend. Most of the butterflies listed on the Habitats Directive are reported to be in unfavourable condition so this is another chance to put better conservation measures in place. The Commission has organised a series of Biogeographical Region Seminars to promote the pledges process and improve their quality. BC Europe has organised one of our partners to attend each of these seminars so that we get the best possible outcome for butterflies. It’s a slow process but all helps improve management policies on the ground.

Expanding the European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (eBMS)

Great progress has been made with expanding the eBMS thanks to funding from a major EU-funded project on pollinators known as SPRING (see below). The project has allowed us to employ a dedicated European BMS co-ordinator, Cristina Sevilleja, who has worked with many countries with new or recent schemes to provide training into how to run a scheme and make use of the existing data entry systems. We are especially grateful to the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology who have developed the online data entry system now used across Europe, based on the same technology as that used by the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. Details can be found on the website <https://butterfly-monitoring.net/>.

As a result of Cristina’s efforts, we now have complete coverage of all 27 EU Member States with new schemes starting in Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Romania and Greece. Most of these are still very small and have little or no funding, but co-ordinators have been appointed and counts have started using volunteers. Many other countries continue to grow their own schemes and feed data into the eBMS. The central database has been growing rapidly as a result and we now have over 13,000 transects across Europe, covering over 19,000km and being walked by over 10,000 volunteers. The database contains 16 million counts as at 2021 and covers 329 species. We are hoping to update these figures during 2024.

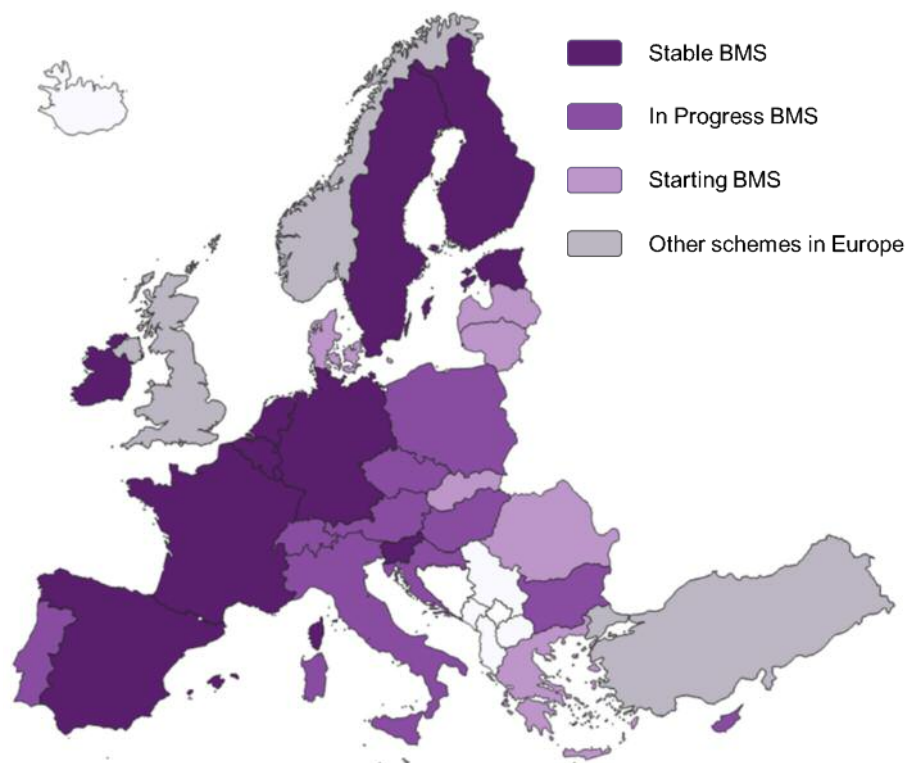
As part of the project we have developed a mobile app (ButterflyCount) which allows recorders to make 15-minute counts anywhere in Europe. The app uses GPS to plot your route as well as the precise location of any records you make on the route. You can pause and restart at any time to check ID. These counts are meant to complement standard transect counts and obtain quantitative data for rare species and in remote areas. The app has been translated into 25 different languages and the settings allow you to fix your country which then customises the drop-down list to show only those species present (thus cutting down on errors). The 15-minute counts have proved very popular with over 23,000 now completed across Europe. We urge any EBG members to run a few counts during their European travels as these will undoubtedly fill some important gaps. ▼



A new moth function was added to the app in 2023 to allow entry of moth records, backed by an image recognition software to aid correct identification. Basically, you can take a photo with your mobile phone and upload it to the app and the image recognition will make an ID for you. The accuracy is very high but the system is not infallible, so an ID guide is also needed to double check. We are looking to add more photos to improve the coverage across Europe and the AI will do the rest, making continual improvements. The app can also be used to enter traditional transect results in the field, provided the transect details have already been entered in the eBMS website.

Thanks to Cristina's work, the eBMS website <https://butterfly-monitoring.net/> has been translated into 23 languages and is now used by countries as far afield as Japan. New identification guides have been produced to help volunteers identify typical species for their region. Guides to difficult species have also been produced in many languages. We are now actively seeking funds to continue supporting the eBMS as the SPRING project funding ended in January 2024. There are moves to create an EU Biodiversity Observation Centre, which might give us an opportunity to continue the work on both butterflies and moths.

EBMS coverage at the end of 2023. All EU27 countries now have schemes.



Action for Pollinators

Another major area of BC's policy work has been around the EU's **New Deal for Pollinators**, a revision, published in January 2023, of the 2018 EU Pollinators Initiative. The New Deal for Pollinators was strongly endorsed by a Resolution of the European Parliament in November. Amongst many other recommendations, the resolution makes specific mention of the decline in grassland butterflies and ▼



under Item 54 it “Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure coordination and the accessibility of all necessary means to maintain and improve the European Butterfly Monitoring Schemes across the EU, including by increasing butterfly transects, monitoring rare and threatened species, using real-time reporting technology, and providing long-term financial assistance to their appointed coordinators; calls on the Commission and the Member States to launch and maintain a public EU database that will be required for the future EU pollinator monitoring scheme.”

The European Environment Agency (EEA) will be drawing up a list of pollinating insects that are typical of Habitats Directive Annex 1 habitats, and Member States will then be expected to prevent the decline of these species. When the list is out for consultation by the EU Pollinator Task Force, we will scrutinise the butterfly and moth species that have been proposed and respond accordingly. Another crucial action is the mapping of **Key Pollinator Areas**, where there is an opportunity for each BC Europe partner to produce lists of Important Butterfly and Moth Areas in their Member State, using the methodology produced by de Vlinderstichting for the Netherlands.

As part of this new initiative, we have been involved in a major EU funded Parliamentary Preparatory Action project known as **SPRING** (**S**trengthening **P**ollinator **R**ecovery through **I**ndicators and monitoring**G**). This two and a half-year project builds on the Parliamentary Pilot Project **ABLE** (**A**ssessing **B**utterf**L**ies in **E**urope) and testing the implementation of the European Pollinator Monitoring Scheme framework (EU-PoMS), in several EU Member States. The project finished at the end of January 2024.

The EU PoMs framework proposes a Minimum Viable Scheme (MVS) for monitoring bees, hoverflies and butterflies through transects and pan-traps; a module for monitoring all insect biodiversity through Malaise traps; plus optional modules for monitoring moths, using LED light traps and Image recognition identification of macro moth species, and monitoring rare and threatened pollinator species. The work was carried out across the EU and is helping to build further capacity among professionals, volunteers, nature agencies, universities, NGOs and policy makers to monitor the status of Europe’s crucial wild insect pollinators. The continued development of the European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (eBMS) is a major part of this wider scheme.

Further details on the SPRING project can be found on the SPRING website: <https://www.ufz.de/spring-pollination/index.php?en=49053>

New Red Lists of European butterflies and moths

With funding from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), BC Europe is also leading work on these two major new Red Lists. The butterflies list is an update of one we completed in 2010 but the moth list is the first ever attempted. The lists have already been drafted and are being checked by IUCN officials to make sure they comply with all the strict criteria that they have developed. The results will be published later in the year and summaries will appear in future editions of the EBG Newsletter.





Future plans

BC Europe has achieved a great deal since it was started 20 years ago. We now have 50 Network Partners in 37 European countries. We have produced two butterfly Red Lists, a review of Prime Butterfly Areas of Europe, a Climatic Risk Atlas and a thriving eBMS. Two new Red Lists on butterflies and moths are due later in the year. We have also helped conduct surveys of several rare and threatened species, which have led to Species Action Plans (e.g. the Spanish endemics of the Sierra Nevada). We have also been delighted to work with Mike Prentice and various colleagues in EBG to help match up survey trips with priorities identified by our various partners. These have been very productive and produced invaluable data on which to base conservation efforts. We hope to do much more of this focussed species work in coming years.

The organisation is run by a small Board of experts from institutes across Europe, supported by a team of advisors. Most of them are unpaid and give their time and expertise freely on top of their paid work. The Board has just completed a new strategy for the next 5 years, which includes actions to maintain our network of partners; advocate better European policies for Lepidoptera; create an eBMS covering the whole of Europe and an effective database on Lepidoptera distributions; take practical action to conserve threatened and widespread species; raise awareness of Lepidoptera and their role in creating a healthy ecosystem; and increase our capacity to raise funds and run projects.

Until now, the only regular funds we have received have been small amounts from two of the founding organisations: BC (UK) and De Vlinderstichting (Dutch BC). From this we have been able to secure major funds from EU funded projects as described above. However, there are usually big gaps between these projects and they only cover specific areas of work. So we are now looking to expand our fundraising efforts through corporate sponsorship and direct donations. Although the threats facing butterflies and moths in Europe have never been as great, we are now far better placed to make a difference and there are some good European policies to lever results on the ground. I hope to report on these in future issues of the EBG Newsletter.

Martin Warren

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