Issue 18 | Nov 2015

EUROPEAN INTERESTS GROUP

eNewsletter

CONTENTS

Butterfly Conservation

When Simon Spencer passed the editorship of the Newsletter to me, he commented that the autumn issues were always easier to fill than the spring ones, because people were 'keen' (or at least persuadable, with a bit of arm-twisting) to report on their activities during the summer.

That is certainly the case this year, with several articles reporting on what members have been up to – researching the habitat requirements of Violet Copper and Danube Clouded Yellow, taking part in a fund-raising trip to the Republic of Macedonia, and carrying out a follow-up survey of the Tzoumerka National Park in NW Greece. There is also a historical perspective supplied by Jude Lock who gives a flavour of what butterfly people got up to in Europe in the Edwardian era. Special thanks are due to EIG member Elizabeth Warren, daughter of BCS Warren of Warren's Skipper fame, for stimulating Jude's article.

Nigel Peace, Newsletter Editor, November 2015

From the EIG Chairman Simon Spencer

The Blessings of New Technology

When I look for butterflies either in the UK where I do surveys for my local wildlife trust or in Europe, I wear a sleeveless jacket with lots of pockets in which I carry all the things I use regularly in the field. These include a light raincoat, water bottle, folding butterfly net with handle, pots for examining butterflies, notebook, camera, gps, field guide, maps and mobile phone. The principle is that everything is available and accessible while gently holding a butterfly in the other hand.

The Chairman in full uniform. Mike Prentice looks on.

My jacket has just got a lot lighter. For a start the well-worn copy of **Tristan Lafranchis'** *Butterflies of Europe*, which is no longer in print, can now be downloaded for the sum of 15 EUR (payment by paypal) as a pdf file. The website address for further details is http://diatheo.weebly.com/butterflies-of-europe.html. I keep a copy on my phone. Those with an iPhone can also use Lepidapp although it is unfortunately not available for the Android operating system (see footnote). I very rarely photograph butterflies but I take the odd record shot and site photos. The camera on my Samsung phone is good enough for these and I no longer need a separate small camera.

I am determined to get to grips with the GPS facilities and apps on my new phone. I have discovered I can track my path and create waypoints for any scarce butterflies and store it all in on my phone. I can use this later with Google Earth or Google Maps as a record to be kept for future reference or included in a report. The export facilities are easier than my old Etrex GPS that needed a serial cable for downloads. Google Earth or Google Maps are extremely useful for identifying and navigating to butterfly sites and sharing them with other people but they really need WiFi or download map tiles. The bird apps allow you to play the call of any bird at sufficient volume as to get it to respond in the field. A bit naughty but it works. There are plant apps such as Plantnet with a full list of European plants with photos. We may regret the obsession of the younger generation with smart phones and texting but they are unbelievably useful. We can text our colleagues in the field and draw their urgent attention to an interesting find. We have been able to do this for years but having the extra facilities on the same device is a huge help. Though it should not be a substitute for safe practice the mobile phone is the best safety device ever invented. Take care - there are 'notspots' in Europe and plenty in rural Wales.

More offerings in future

I very much welcome this new technology. Butterfly Conservation has an app for recording UK butterflies and another for the big butterfly count and I expect more offerings in this line in future. If a biological record is 'what, where, when and by whom' then the phone can do the 'where' and 'when' for you. You only need to do the 'by whom' once and the 'what' and how many is relatively easy. I would ▾

From the EIG Chairman Simon Spencer cont.

▸ hope that responsible organisations will provide free apps for this sort of thing rather than see the market and the subsequent data move elsewhere. The EIG principle is always to provide the data to the equivalent of the county recorder as the smaller the geographical unit the more likely that the validation of the data is accurate. My county moth recorder demands a photo for rare or difficult species. This is now so easy to do from the smartphone by email that it is not a problem. We are almost at the point that you can get an instant ID just by submitting a photo. If you can do it with wine labels, why not butterflies?

Danube Clouded Yellow (Colias myrmidone)

We have had an EIG project this year to survey for ***Colias mymidone*** in Romania led by **Mike Prentice** and **Martin Davies**. It was very successful with plenty of ***myrmidone*** seen in two areas of the Apuseni and several sites in a 40 sq km area near Ghorgheni. This butterfly is one believed to be at most risk in Europe having been lost from a whole string of countries in eastern Europe. It is one of the Red List's few Endangered species and the only one with an EU action plan. In a country where they still cut hay with scythes and carry it home loose with a horse and cart one can easily expect rapid changes in agriculture. The species will soon be lost if farming systems catch up with modern methods of intensive grazing, fertiliser use and modern machinery. It is found on the steeper slopes and other places where the grazing pressure is lower. It will also be lost if the land is abandoned by farmers and reverts to dense scrub or gets planted with conifers as some sites already have been. Our dairy farmers are being paid less than the cost of production so abandonment is a real possibility on poor soils.

Danube Clouded Yellow (Colias myrmidone) This butterfly is one believed to be at most risk in Europe

We had nearly 500 ***myrmidone*** butterflies, observed egg laying on the food-plant – a type of broom – and also found over 40 eggs. GPS and Google Earth were very useful (although less so for distinguishing tracks that are passable in a 4x4 with those that are not passable.....). When we welcome technological change on the one hand we cannot really expect Romanian peasants to continue to use the scythe and horse and cart on the other. Finding a solution that saves ***myrmidone*** from extinction in a rapidly changing Romania will be difficult. It is a fabulous butterfly and for those who intend to see all the European list in their lifetime don't leave it too long. •

Simon Spencer, Chairman EIG.

Lepidapp (http://www.lepidapp.co.uk) has published an app for the iPhone, iPad and iPod. It's ideal for use as an aid abroad where roaming charges for an internet connection are extremely high and also in the field in mountains or remote areas where all too frequently there is no network. The work is the result of close collaboration by **Chris Manley**, **Guy Padfield**, **Peter Eeles** and **Matt Rowlings**. There are no plans for an Android version.

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Notices and News

EIG AGM & Members Day – 28 November 2015

AGM
28 November 2015
at the NFU Mutual
site on the south side
of Tiddington Road,
Stratford-upon-Avon,
CV37 7BJ.

We hope to see many of you at this year's AGM, which will take place on 28 November 2015 at the NFU Mutual site on the south side of Tiddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 7BJ. Tiddington Road runs along the south side of the river from Stratford towards Wellesbourne.

The AGM itself will begin at 14.00 and will be followed by a programme of talks including presentations by **Martin Davies** on Mediterranean Butterflies and **Simon Spencer** on Farming and Butterflies. There will be a break in the middle which will provide an opportunity to meet and chat to fellow members.

Please let Anne Spencer know in advance if you would like to join the lunch so that she can reserve an appropriate number of tables – her email is rhoslan.anne@gmail.com

Lunch is being organised in a local pub beforehand for those that wish to partake. The pub is The Bear, Bridgefoot, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 7LT. It is just south of the town's main bridge and at the junction of Banbury Road and Tiddington Road. Suggested arrival time is 12.00 onwards. •

Request for new Committee members

The EIG continues to grow – we now have around 400 members – and so does the workload involved in running it. We would dearly like to recruit some new blood to the Management Committee. We meet three times a year on the outskirts of Worcester. Might you be interested? You do NOT have to know a lot about European butterflies. We would particularly like to find one or two members who would be interested in doing membership-focussed tasks such as supervising the Facebook page and organising Members Days. •

If you are interested, please contact Simon Spencer whose email is cerisyi@btinternet.com

New – EIG Bursaries

We are pleased to announce annual EIG research bursaries to promote the study of European butterflies. They will normally be of £500 and are intended to assist with travel and other expenses. Applicants are asked to submit a short project proposal and an estimate of overall cost in a maximum of 1000 words and send it by email to info@bc-eig.org.uk together with the email addresses of two referees. Payments will normally be made against a standard BC travel claim form with receipts. In some circumstances part payment may be made in advance. Applicants must agree in advance to produce a report of their findings.

Who is eligible?

The bursaries are particularly suited to surveys of rare or threatened species (ie those with a Red List classification and a restricted range). These are listed on the EIG website (bc-eig.org.uk). Although there is no upper age limit for applicants, the scheme has been drawn up with younger candidates in mind.

Collaborative projects with partners in Europe will be welcome. Only projects within Europe (as defined by the Council of Europe) will be eligible. The EIG Management ▾

▸ Committee will review submissions and select one or more successful applicants. As noted above, we expect a short report of findings including records of all butterflies seen. We also expect acknowledgement of the bursary in any publications, including specific mention of both EIG and Butterfly Conservation. The report will be circulated to relevant partners within Butterfly Conservation Europe.

An example might be (in summary) "I want to go and help the local recorder survey some wetland habitats in X for **Scarce Heath** (***Coeononympha oedipus***), one of Europe's most threatened butterflies. I will drive to X and camp for a week in July. The sites were surveyed in 1995 but most have not been surveyed since. I will record the location of all butterflies seen using a GPS and will submit a short report. Petrol, ferries and camp site fees will be about £700. I am looking for a job in conservation but currently work in a local supermarket. I do voluntary work for a local wildlife organisation. I am 23."

Applications for bursaries for projects in 2016 must be received by Friday 15 April 2016, so that they can be considered at the EIG committee meeting the following week. •.

Application Deadline Friday 15 April 2016

2016 Trips

Gavarnie Blue
(***Agriades pyrenaicus***)

EIG survey and training trip to the French Pyrenees, led by Simon Spencer, assisted by Jude Lock – 24th June to 1st July 2016 (to coincide with Ryanair flights)

Enjoy a week of butterflying in the Hautes Pyrénées. The remarkable diversity of habitats and the geology, combined with a wide range of climatic conditions and a rich plant life, provide home for a large number of butterfly species. You will see spectacular scenery, high peaks, rushing streams, flower-filled hay meadows, high mountain pastures, and an exceptional bird life. Records will be incorporated into the Butterfly Atlas of the Midi-Pyrénées, inventories for the Parc National des Pyrénées, including the ABC scheme (Village Biodiversity Atlas), and the National Erebia Inventory.

Accommodation: Hotel Central in Barèges (an excellent 3 star hotel with easy access to the local footpaths). Alternatively please contact Jude Lock for details of self-catering or camping options.

Cost: 7 nights half-board hotel accommodation, based on two people sharing, airport transfers (Ryanair Lourdes), local transport and guiding: 760€ per person (approx £550). Flights are not included.

Travel: Please make your own booking. Ryanair operate services from Stansted into our local airport of Lourdes on Fridays.There are also TGV trains to Lourdes.

For more information about the local area, and butterfly gallery, see http://borderlinehols.com/holidays/butterflies/ •

Please contact Jude Lock with any questions and to book: jude.lock@orange.fr

EIG Fund-raising tour 2016: Austria

The plan for next year's EIG fundraising tour is to go to Austria, targeting **Ringlets** (***Erebias***) and other montane species. Provisional dates are 23 – 30 July 2016, flying to Vienna and visiting the Sopron area of NW Hungary and Lake Neuseidl before then exploring the mountains of eastern Austria. •

Full details should be available at the EIG AGM and all expressions of interest should be sent to Mike Williams mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk

2016 Trips continued

Belarus

Mike Williams is also planning an exploratory visit to Belarus from 11 - 18 June 2016. The butterfly fauna of Belarus is not well known and Mike is looking for a group to accompany him probably visiting three main areas including the Bialowieza national park which is shared with Poland. If anyone is interested please contact Mike for details – mike@stagborough.fsnet.co.uk •

2016 EIG Calendar

The 2016 EIG Calendar is now available at the cost of £8 for one or £15 for two, plus P&P as appropriate. For more details or to order your copy please email **Anne Spencer** rhoslan.anne@gmail.com. Copies can be posted, or picked up at the Butterfly Conservation AGM on 14 November or the EIG AGM on 28 November. •

Future 4 Butterflies in Europe

Dutch Butterfly Conservation (De Vlinderstichting) is organising the 4th international symposium on the Future of Butterflies in Europe, to be held in Wageningen, the Netherlands, from 31 March to 2 April 2016. For more information, please visit the symposium website www.futureofbutterflies.nl. •

News from France

Contributed by Jude Lock jude.lock@orange.fr

Invitation to assist with the Red List for the Lepidoptera of Corsica

We have been contacted by our colleague Marie-Cécile Ruiz from the Corsican Environment Office and EIG/MNHN (National Museum of Natural History) partner in Corsica.

The OEC-OCIC (the Observatoire for the Insects of Corsica of the Corsican Environmental Office) is working towards a Red List of the Lepidoptera of Corsica. This comprises all butterflies, and several macro-moth groups (including ***Zygaenidae*** and ***Sphingidae***, depending on data available). In the initial stages, they are looking for information and records on the distribution of Corsican Lepidoptera, particularly after 2004, in order to centralise existing records. The records will be rigorously evaluated and used to establish a working list of the distribution of butterflies, population sizes, eventual threats etc. They hope to obtain IUCN status for this list. •

Please send records to Marie-Cécile, using the EIG recording form: Marie-cecile.Ruiz@oec.fr

Invitation to participate in the Atlas of Butterflies and Burnet Moths for the Aquitaine

The Aquitaine comprises 5 departments: the Dordogne, Lot and Garonne, Pyrénées-Atlantique, Landes and the Gironde.

Notices and News cont.

▸ We have been contacted by **David Soulet**, our colleague and EIG/MNHN partner from the Conservatoire d'espaces naturels Aquitaine (CEN Aquitaine) who is coordinating the Butterfly Atlas project. David will be assisted by **Pierre-Yves Gourvil**, a lepidopterist colleague from CEN Aquitaine. Together with the Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO Aquitaine) the CEN are working on a preliminary synthesis of the status of the butterflies and burnet moths of the Aquitaine, which will serve as a framework from which regional surveys can be implemented.

The CEN welcomes the assistance of EIG on specific surveys during 2016/2017. In the meantime please send records using the EIG recording form to David at d.soulet@cen-aquitaine.fr with a copy to **Thomas Gachet** at t.gachet@cen-aquitaine.fr

The records will be incorporated into a database for the atlas, and also the PNA (national plan of action) for ***Maculinea*** (***Phengaris***) and threatened wetland species. See http://www.cen-aquitaine.fr/Relepa/Relepa.html

David Simpson (of Wild Dorgogne) is the EIG contact in the Dordogne and a local recorder for Faune-Aquitaine (LPO) audave2505@yahoo.fr

Please contact me (Jude) if you would like assistance with the transfer of records, or would like additional information. •

Butterfly Atlas for the Midi-Pyrénées and Languedoc-Roussillon

At the "Colloque Invertébrés" (Invertebrates Conference) which took place in Toulouse in May 2015, the Conservatoires d'espaces naturels de Midi-Pyrénées and Languedoc-Roussillon announced they would be working together to produce an Atlas for the two regions. There is an expected initial timescale of two years. The transcripts from the conference will be available in 2016. •

Butterfly Atlas for Bretagne

The Atlas is being drafted and should be published during 2016. It contains almost 100,000 records. •

Zygaenidae mini site – Midi-Pyrénées and Languedoc-Roussillon

In France, the butterfly atlas programmes include Zygaenidae (Burnet and Forester moths). To assist recording, the Conservatoire d'espaces naturels de Midi-Pyrénées produced a booklet "Les Zygènes en Midi-Pyrénées et Languedoc-Roussillon", which is a brief guide to the Zygaenidae family and a step by step aid to identification. An online version of the guide is available on the Zygaenidae mini site. The site has been revised, with a new link, and it is now both in English and French: http://zygenes-mplr.eu •

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Purple Emperor

An unusually marked Purple Emperor

Bill Raymond has sent me these photographs of an unusually marked **Purple Emperor** (***Apatura iris***) which he took in the Pyrenees this summer. He comments that it seems unlikely that it is an aberration or research marking but how the near-identical extra marks on each forewing were created is open for debate. If any reader has the solution and wishes to send me a short email I will be pleased to publish it in the next Newsletter. •

Nigel Peace
liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk

Purple Emperor (***Apatura iris***), Pyrenees, July 2015.

High Pyrenees 1911

Three Weeks in the High Pyrenees, July 1911: B.C.S. Warren and La Belle Epoque.

Following my article in EIG No 17, "Vera Molesworth Muspratt, an early pioneer of butterfly observation in the Pyrénées", I am delighted to have been in contact with **Elizabeth Warren**, EIG member and daughter of **B.C.S. Warren**.

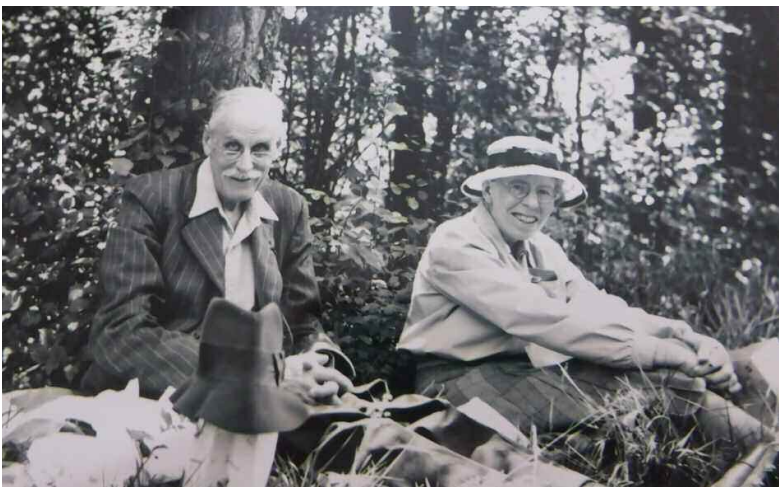
Elizabeth told me that sometime in the 1950s, her father had been in London researching records at the library of the Entomological Society where he had run into Vera. Following this encounter they remained in contact for many years, Warren sending her copies of his articles and Vera sending him reports of her sightings in the Pyrenees from her home in St Jean de Luz, France. Elizabeth also told me about her father's trip to the Pyrenees with Henry Rowland-Brown in 1911. It was on this trip that he met up with the renowned Charles Oberthür and local entomologist Jean Pierre Rondou.

B.C.S. Warren (1887 – 1979)

Brisbane Charles Somerville Warren was born in Fermoy, Ireland, the son of the Dean of Cork. On the death of his father in 1894 he went to live in Freiburg, Germany at just 7 years of age.

Warren became a fellow of the (then) Entomological Society of London in 1908 and it was to the Transactions of that Society that he contributed some of his most important papers. He attended meetings where he met Henry Rowland-Brown, the Secretary of the Society who had begun travelling in Europe. At this time most British entomologists were studying British butterflies and their aberrations.

Warren accompanied Rowland-Brown to Digne in 1910 and Gavarnie in 1911. There is a report of the trip to Gavarnie in The Entomologist of February 1912 by Rowland-Brown, entitled 'Three Weeks in the High Pyrenees'. It is a lively account written in true Edwardian style.



B.C.S. Warren and his wife Joan enjoy a picnic lunch in Switzerland, 3 August 1959 (photo by Elizabeth Warren).

Rowland-Brown and Warren lodged at the Hôtel des Voyageurs in Gavarnie (of which more below). Here they met with Charles Oberthür, the renowned French entomologist, and were later joined by J. P. Rondou, a local entomologist from Gèdre.

In the article Rowland-Brown reports that "the mule-path was as rough and broken as ever" and "whereas the preliminary slopes swarmed with butterflies in 1905, with the exception of one or two species nothing was now really abundant". Nevertheless, they found numerous species of interest including **Gavarnie Blue** (***Agriades pyrenaicus***), **Clouded Apollo** (***Parnassius mnemosyne***), **Gavarnie Ringlet** (***Erebia gorgone***), **Lefebvre's** ▾

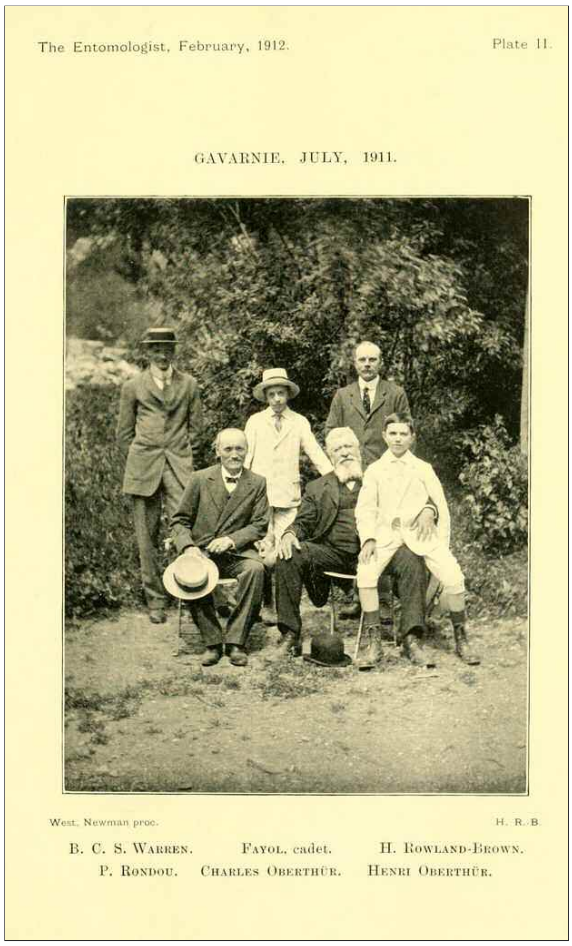
▸ **Ringlet** (***Erebia lefebvrei***) and **Yellow-spotted Ringlet** (***Erebia manto ssp constans***), with **Silver-studded Blues** (***Plebejus argus***) flying in the hundreds. A total of 59 species were observed at Gavarnie between 14th and 30th July 1911.

One day they found a roadside birch tree not far from Gèdre with numerous larvae of **Camberwell Beauty** (***Nymphalis antiopa***) which were "taking a shower bath, and apparently enjoying themselves vastly". Warren commandeered a large tin box from **Madame Vergez-Bellou's** kitchen and returned the following day to collect and in due course take the larvae back to over-winter in the UK.

I am very pleased and somewhat relieved to report that the species mentioned in the article can (in 2015) be observed in the same areas, and the Silver-studded Blues can still be seen in their hundreds.

This group photograph shown alongside was taken at Gavarnie in 1911 and is reproduced from the article. The distinguished gathering comprises B.C.S. Warren, H. Rowland-Brown, J.P. Rondou, Charles Oberthür, Henri Oberthür, and a young assistant.

Three European species of butterfly (illustrated at the end of this article) carry the names of people in the photo:


The Entomologist, February, 1912. Plate II.

GAVARNIE, JULY, 1911.

West, Newman proc. H. R.-B.

B. C. S. Warren. Fayol, cadet. H. Rowland-Brown.
P. Rondou. Charles Oberthür. Henri Oberthür.

Credit: Biodiversity Heritage Library (contributed by Smithsonian Libraries)

Pyrenees Brassy Ringlet (***Erebia rondoui***) – described by Oberthür in 1908 and named in honour of Rondou.

Oberthür's Grizzled Skipper (***Pyrgus armoricanus***) – described by Oberthür in 1910.

Warren's Skipper (***Pyrgus warrenensis***) – described by Verity in 1928. ▾

BCS Warren's microscopic camera – photograph by Elizabeth Warren.

▸In 1922 Warren moved to Lausanne, where he wrote Monographs on the tribe ***Hesperiidi*** and the genus ***Erebia***. Of his many scientific papers, he is probably best known for the latter, which was published by the British Museum in 1936. The photos for the plates were all taken with a half-plate Sanderson camera with a triple extension which enabled him to get the photographs of the butterflies exactly life size. They were taken on panchromatic plates with a filter.

For photographs of microscopic slides Warren designed his own microscopic camera, shown in this previously unpublished photograph supplied by Elizabeth Warren. In the photograph a four-legged mahogany stool (made with the help of a carpenter) stands over a microscope. There is a hole in the middle of the stool above the eyepiece, and a three-foot high open-ended mahogany box rests on top. The ground-glass focusing viewfinder from the back of the camera is slid on to the top of the box, the height of which allows the correct focus to be obtained. Once focused, the ground glass slides off and is replaced by the mahogany plate holder for the photograph to be taken. No other camera like this exists!

Further notes: Oberthür and Rondou

Charles Oberthür (1845 – 1924) together with his brother **René**, who specialised in Coleoptera, acquired almost all the large collections up for sale during their lifetime. This resulted in an immense collection of 5 million specimens, including those acquired from **Jean Baptiste Boisduval**, another renowned French lepidopterist, and comprised the second largest private collection in the world.

Jean Pierre Rondou (1860 – 1934) was a Pyreneen entomologist, born in Gèdre, Hautes Pyrénées. His family served as mountain guides over three generations.

Rondou, often referred to as 'l'homme aux papillons", was a member of the Société Ramond, the Société Linéenne, and the author of many works. The most highly acclaimed were 4 volumes of manuscripts 1900-1934, "*La monographie de la Vallée de Barèges*" and the "*Catalogue des Lépidoptères des Pyrénées*". Rondou was awarded the Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur in 1931, for his work as an entomologist. On his death, Rondou bequeathed his collection of 100,000 insect specimens, including 40,000 butterflies, to the Pyrénées Museum in Lourdes.

An image of Rondou on his gravestone in Gèdre, showing him in his library, holding one of his specimen cases (J Lock).

Rondou exchanged knowledge of discoveries at the time with **Count Henry Russell**, **Jean Daniel François Schrader** (1844 – 1924) and **Lucien Henri César Briet** (1860 – 1921). **Franz Schrader** was another of the great pyrénéistes. To facilitate cartographical work in rugged terrain, Schrader developed the orographe in 1873. His first great cartographical work, in 1874, comprised the map of the massif of Gavarnie-Mont-Perdu. Rondou became great friends with the photographer Briet, who accompanied Rondou on many of his excursions. Some photographs of Rondou taken by Briet can be seen in the small museum "Millaris", in Gèdre.

High Pyrenees cont.

▸ *L'Hôtel des Voyageurs, Gavarnie, and the Société Ramond*

The hotel was founded in the 17th century. It was here that Emilien Frossard, Charles Packe and Henry Russell gathered in 1864, and where they talked of creating the Société Ramond. The Society is devoted to the scientific study of the Pyrénées and to the dissemination of knowledge. It is named in honour of Ramond de Carbonnières (1755-1827), the father of Pyrénéism. Ramond was elected as a deputy in Paris in 1791, but in fear of his life fled Paris and took refuge in Barèges in the Pyrénées. The Society celebrated 150 years of studies in 2015.

During his exile, Ramond wrote two personal notebooks. These precious "carnets intimes" are preserved at the Pyrénées Museum in Lourdes. The notebooks became the first "guide books" to the discovery of the Pyrenean range, its landscapes, plants, lifestyle and the farming traditions of its inhabitants.

My heartfelt thanks go to Elizabeth Warren for her knowledge, for sharing her memories and humour, and for her photographs. •

Jude Lock
jude.lock@orange.fr

Further reading:

Three Weeks in the High Pyrenees (1911) by H. Rowland-Brown, M.A., F.E.S. The Entomologist, February 1912.
http://biodiversitylibrary.org/page/10022187

Autobibliography with an autobiographical note. Brisbane C.S. Warren 1978. Nota lepid. 1 (2): 77-81 (ISSN 0342-7536)

B.C.S. Warren's bibliography: an additional note. E.J.M. Warren 1986. Nota lepid. 9 (1-2): 143-144 (ISSN 0342-7536)

A note on *Pyrgus warrenensis* Verity, its history and distribution (*Hesperiidae*). E.J.M. Warren 1983. Nota lepid. 6 (1): 61-64 (ISSN 0342-7536)

Warren's Skipper
(***Pyrgus warrenensis***)
Valais, Switzerland, July 2006.
(Photo reproduced with permission from Matt Rowlings site www.eurobutterflies.com which has details of identification, distribution, etc.).

Oberthür's Grizzled Skipper
(***Pyrgus armoricanus***)
male, Var, 27 May 2014
(Roger Gibbons).

Pyrenees Brassy Ringlet
(***Erebia rondoui***)
female, Barèges, Hautes Pyrénées, 25 August 2014 (Jude Lock).

Violet Copper

Will the Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*) survive in the Ariège department of the French Pyrenees?

In 1995 and 1996, **Graham Hart** spent his summers conducting field studies on the abundance and distribution of the endangered **Violet Copper** (*Lycaena helle*) in the Ariège (unpublished MSc thesis, Hart, 1997). He found a large and regionally important population. In fact, its size made it significant on a European scale.

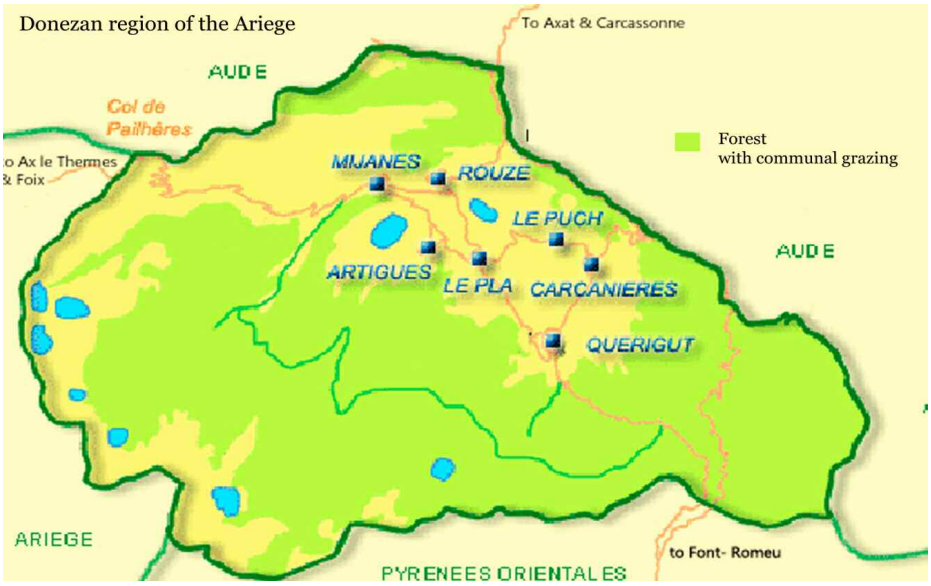
By 2010, the Violet Copper still seemed to have strong colonies in the adjacent Pyrénées-Orientales department (P-O), but anecdotal reports of falling population size and of the loss of species from some of the original Ariège survey sites worried Graham.

Female Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*) on Bistort flower.

Even so, he was unable to take sufficient time from work to conduct the in-depth survey required. So, in June 2012 with a month's leave of absence from my own work, I made a small study of these same Ariège sites and some of those in the P-O. I found a 90% reduction in the population size at some previously core sites, and confirmed the apparent loss of some former colonies within the Ariège. Those colonies surveyed within the P-O seemed larger and more robust but I came away knowing that it needed a far more detailed study to point to effective conservation measures.

2015 Study

So, in late May 2015 a small group of British enthusiasts gathered in the Donezan region to conduct that more detailed field study. It would compare the current abundance and distribution of the endangered **Violet Copper** (***Lycaena helle***) in the Ariège and Pyrénées-Orientales departments of France, with that measured ▾



The Donezan region of the Ariège. The team were based at Quèrigut.

The various lakes and the forested area between them were the subject of most of the studies. Additional work was conducted just south east of the boundary of this map in the P-O around Puyvalador and Porté-Puymorens.

previously by Bowles and Hart; and try to assess the outcomes of some extensive restoration work undertaken by the local wildlife group, the Association des Naturalistes de l'Ariège (ANA) (http://www.ariegenature.fr/) at sites which previously held large numbers of the butterfly.

The group comprised **Marc Botham**, **Clive Eastwood**, **Ched George**, **Paul Huckle**, **Julia Ledger**, **Sophie Ledger**, **Caroline Price** and myself, with **Graham Hart** joining us on two days. This hardworking bunch stoically tackled the very challenging task in blistering sun, ankle deep water and thick mud, with an additional and ever present threat of being tipped from the tops of dry tussocks into the expectant marsh. In late May and June 2015 we spent just under four weeks replicating the techniques of the earlier studies at all of the previously surveyed sites and at several more sites within both the Ariège and the Pyrénées-Orientales.

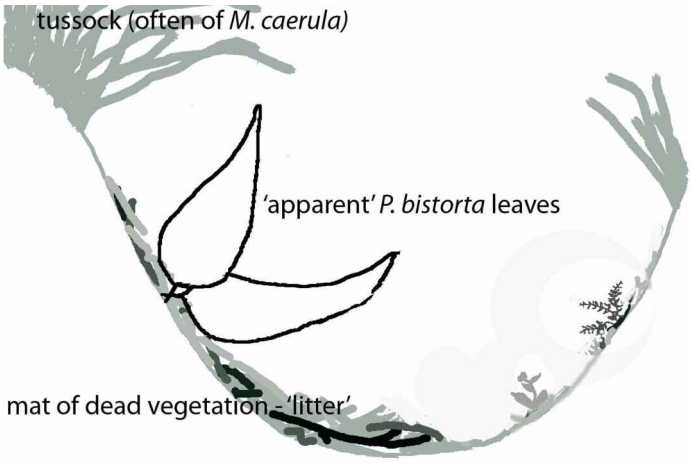
The locations and numbers of adults and eggs (on Bistort *Polygonum bistorta*) were systematically noted, as were the features of the habitat immediately surrounding them. Once again, studies within the Ariège were hampered by low population sizes of *L. helle* but the thousands of plants inspected (for eggs) gave reliable data on the current situation.

At one site in 2012, only small clearings remained between encroaching trees. These were choked with large tussocks of *Molinia*, excluding almost all other herbaceous plants. See below.

2015 survey findings

Our survey showed that the decline detected by the 2012 surveys was continuing, albeit at a slower pace; and that underlying factors affecting the Ariège populations (e.g. overgrazing) seemed to be beginning to affect the adjacent colonies in the Pyrénées-Orientales too. However, very encouragingly, there is evidence that the butterfly has persisted (at very low levels) across the range of the previous metapopulation(s) and the work by ANA has begun to show real promise. The **Violet Copper** was redetected at one of those sites which received work to improve their suitability and from which it had been lost at least 5 years previously. Another of the sites where ANA has worked was found to have been visited by at least one female and that site's condition is expected to continue to become more suitable for the **Violet Copper**.

In 2015, ANA's clearing work re-linked the isolated clearings and removed some of the densest tussocks, allowing germination of flowering plants (including Bistort). See left.



Ideal egg laying position

▸*General findings – the preferred habitat of the Violet Copper*

The results of these three surveys show that extensive areas of un-drained land were being used by the species, at varying levels of intensity. These included riparian zones and wet woodlands, where colonies occupied very extensive areas but at a low density; and previously abandoned fields, which held dense populations of **Violet Copper** in the mid 1990s. These fields have now past the optimal successional stage for the butterfly; and it has vanished from most, some because they are now overgrown and others, as they have been taken back into agricultural production.

General findings – the impact of management on the habitat of the Violet Copper

Meadows lightly grazed by horses (and those lightly winter-grazed by cows) can provide suitable habitat (indeed, were found to hold high egg densities in the 1995/6 study) provided the turf has an uneven structure. This could be through an uneven topography, or by clumps of taller plants. Light winter grazing may help check the growth of plants that would otherwise overshadow bistort leaves at the time of egg-laying but sites which are mowed, burned, or heavily grazed at any time of year, are unsuitable. These latter types of management remove both the varied turf structure and the layer of dead litter covering the ground.

Sites where management is abandoned also lose their heterogeneity as the vegetation grows extremely tall and dense, which may exclude Bistort and other flowering plants and removes the depressions in the turf that the **Violet Copper** seeks.

First instar larva surrounded by the 'windows' it eats in the underside of the Bistort leaf. Larvae eventually pupate to overwinter in the leaf litter below the plant and this may account for failure of colonies without litter around Bistort plants.

The future of the Violet Copper in the Ariège

In 2012, ANA secured a bid for €40,000 to fund delivery of habitat restoration of previously occupied sites which had become overgrown. After some consternation that the work was conducted too late, there is now evidence that it may have saved at least some parts of this once large meta-population.

In 2015, ANA were granted funds to employ a Farming Liaison Officer. She will work with farmers to find techniques which combine improved diversity and profitability in this 'difficult-to-farm' mountain area. Simultaneously, ANA and the Donezan's farming co-operative have agreed to consult on the communal summer grazing of the forest areas inhabited by low densities of the butterfly. It has been agreed that small but crucial parts of the forest can be temporarily fenced to reduce summer grazing pressure. The initial agreement is that 3 larger and 1 smaller exclusion zones will be created within the forest; and at a more open site, where cattle previously ranged over a vast area, there is a separate arrangement to fence 2 compartments so that grazing within them can be carefully controlled. ▾

Violet Copper cont.

Male Violet Copper ***(Lycaena helle)***.

▸*Conclusion*

Our survey showed a population under severe stress but also confirmed the **Violet Copper**'s presence throughout the forest (in very small numbers). Ultimately, the beneficial work may have been conducted too late to reverse such a massive decline; but the butterfly seems capable of persisting at low numbers and exploiting opportunities when they present themselves. It makes us optimistic that ANA's work may conserve the **Violet Copper** (and many other species with related needs). •

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Danube Clouded Yellow

Searching for the Danube Clouded Yellow in Romania in 2015

The **Danube Clouded Yellow** (*Colias myrmidone)* once occurred across a range of countries in eastern and central Europe but has everywhere been in rapid decline. It has apparently now disappeared completely from Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia. The only known current or recent records in Europe come from two sites in Poland, a few local areas in Slovakia and - perhaps the only significant populations remaining in Europe - two areas of Romania. However, even in Romania its range has contracted, having apparently recently disappeared from some sites where it had been seen in the last 10 years.

Danube Clouded Yellow (***Colias myrmidone***). Adult male. Note the strong orange colouration of the upper wings is hinted at even from below but the virtual absence of black spotting on the under forewing (cf Clouded Yellow Colias croceus) is also a useful field character.

A European Action Plan to conserve the species was compiled by **Pavel Marhoul** and **Matthias Dolek*** and has now been adopted by the European Union. Working out how to make such a plan effective on the ground is challenging however, and will need a carefully co-ordinated approach.

Establishing a baseline, 2014

EIG decided to support work to gather data on the species' current status in the key Romanian sites to help inform the conservation planning process. In 2014 EIG helped fund a student, **Robert Waltz**, who was supervised by Matthias Dolek and **Safian Szabolcs**, to survey some of the Romanian sites in the Gheorgheni area. This provided an invaluable baseline reference. **Mike Prentice** and I also gathered together published and unpublished data from various sources regarding sightings in the Apuseni and Gheorgheni areas. We were helped in particular by Safian Szabolcs, **Csaba Vizauer**, **Levi Szekely**, **Andrei Crisan**, **Paul Kirkland** and **Vlad Dinca**.

Objectives for 2015

We decided that we would attempt to visit as many known sites as possible in these two areas in 2015. **Danube Clouded Yellow** is bivoltine in Romania; we therefore planned to make two trips - in May and August 2015 - endeavouring to coincide our visits with the flight times of the two broods. In August we were joined by two other EIG members - **Simon Spencer** and **Kevin Tolhurst**. By coincidence, another EIG member **Dave Plowman** also separately visited the Gheorgheni area in August 2015 to search for **Danube Clouded Yellow** and he sent us his sightings. ▼

Danube Clouded Yellow cont.

▸ *2015 results*

Mike and I spent one week in Romania in May, with 3 days in the key areas for **Danube Clouded Yellow**. This enabled us to reconnoitre the sites to help focus more intensive efforts when we returned later in the year. Four of us spent 7 days in these same areas in August. On both visits, we searched the two key areas where the butterfly had been seen in recent years – in the Apuseni mountains west of Cluj and then further east in the hills north of Gheorgheni and Lazarea.

Adult **Danube Clouded Yellows** were seen on both trips, with some 40+ adults noted in 3 days in May but an amazing 485+ on 7 days in these same areas in August. It seems that the second brood is very much more numerous than the first, a feature which has also been previously noted by other observers. We saw plenty of males and females on each trip and in August we observed eggs being laid on shoots of *Chamaecytisus* broom, the larval food plant. We searched for eggs but only found them in August, locating at least 40 (thanks significantly to Kevin's keen egg-finding skills) during our 7 days. We gathered GPS fixes and habitat data for all the locations where we saw adults or found eggs, using data protocols proposed by Matthias Dolek.

Larval food plant. *Chamaecytisus* species (probably *C triflorus*). Flowering shoot in May 2015.

Larval food plant

Most of the eggs we found appeared to be freshly laid (and were still completely white) but a few were beginning to mature and becoming brownish-orange from the base. *Chamaecytisus* species were used for egg-laying in all cases.

The plants in the Gheorgheni area appeared to be *Chamaecytisus triflorus*. However at least two other different species of *Chamaecytisus* were noted but identification to specific level is challenging. There are apparently some 13-15 species in this complex genus recorded for Romania and we are still trying to get definitive identification of precisely which species of broom is (or are) being used by the butterfly. Most of the broom plants were in full flower in May, but were in seed in July/August, with the eggs we found being exclusively laid on the new growth of the year.

Egg. Danube Clouded Yellow lay their eggs only on the younger and re-sprouting shoots of various *Chamaecytisus* broom species, never the older branches. The eggs are usually positioned within 3-10 cms of the tip of the young shoots which unfortunately makes them very susceptible to damage from grazing, usually by cattle.

Local agricultural systems

The agricultural system in the Apuseni hills is largely low-intensity grazing, with small mixed herds of cattle, goats, horses (and sometimes even a few water buffalo), tended by a few cattle herders. The hayfields are often cut by hand scythe and gathered with hay rakes by the families working together, producing characteristic small domed hay stacks. The *Chamaecytisus* broom is highly susceptible to grazing pressure and mainly now remains only on the steeper slopes, less accessible to the cattle. It also occurs in the edge of the surrounding woodland, growing in amongst the birch and aspen trees and scrub which has a tendency to invade the grassland areas unless kept in check. In part of the Apuseni that we visited in May, the scrub was being cleared by hand with a team of local people cutting the individual small saplings, presumably to maintain the openness of the area for the grazing animals.

However in the Gheorgheni area in particular, some parts were subject to much more intensive sheep or cattle grazing and on the shallower slopes some of the fields appeared to have been re-seeded. Alarmingly, some of the currently best ▾

▸ sites for **Danube Clouded Yellow** in the Gheorgheni area had been planted with young Sitka Spruce saplings across the entire hillside, augmented with Sycamore and Larch saplings in the gullies. Such afforestation was focussed on the steeper slopes of little or no value for grazing, but it is these same areas that are of highest value for the butterfly.

Danube Clouded Yellow habitat – hill-slope with flowering *Chamaecytisus* broom spp. This slope is prime habitat for Danube Clouded Yellow but unfortunately has been completely planted up with Sitka Spruce at 1-3 metre intervals in the last 18 months. The area is now fenced to protect the young trees from grazing. In the short term this will also benefit the broom but it will eventually be shaded out by the Sitka trees once they grow past thicket stage.

Good numbers of **Danube Clouded Yellow** were seen on some of the recently afforested slopes. However, this is false comfort. Whilst the butterfly might seem even to benefit in the short-term through the exclusion of grazing animals to protect the young trees, thus allowing good growth of broom, the broom of course will eventually be shaded out and the area become unsuitable as soon as the Sitka and Sycamore reach thicket stage.

In some situations, it appeared that maybe the broom and the butterfly naturally occur in woodland edge situations as well as in the open grasslands and Matthias Dolek has commented that it should perhaps be considered as a species of light woodland. However, the extent to which the butterfly is able to hang on within small open patches within a more heavily forested landscape is unknown.

Next steps

Going back to search for the species only in the places where others have seen them previously can of course result in these remaining as the only places from which it is known. Romania is a big place. Are there any other priority areas where it might occur and how can we identify them? Using the records we gathered in 2015 combined with remote sensing data and global mapping and topographic data, we are hoping to characterise these locations statistically, to see if we can develop a predictive model of other potentially suitable sites to search. This will not be easy however as the subtle differences in grazing pressure will be impossible to identify directly and we will need to try to identify suitable proxies that may help predict the variation in other ways.

Further fieldwork will be needed in coming years to better determine the distribution of the species and the optimal management to maintain it. In the meantime, the priority areas need to be recognised and ways found to give some form of protection before the butterfly disappears altogether.

We need to gain a much better understanding of how the landscapes are currently owned and farmed, and what the economic drivers are that are either supporting the existing system or bringing pressures for change. This can only come through detailed discussions with our Romanian contacts who are able to fully understand the way in which the local economic, social and agricultural processes operate. Only then can we together hope to come forward with realistic practical strategies to try to safeguard these last few remaining sites for this beautiful yet endangered butterfly in the long-term. •

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*** Footnote:** Matthias Dolek is supported by ANL, the Bavarian Academy for Nature Conservation and Landscape Management

Macedonia

EIG fundraising trip to the Republic of Macedonia, 11-18 July 2015

This was another trip organised by **Mike Williams** partly to raise funds for **Safi's** conservation project in the Orseg (Hungary) and also further protection for the endangered **Danube Clouded Yellow** (*Colias myrmidone)* in Romania.

A group of 18, including **Safi** and our two lepidopterally-inclined and excellent minibus drivers, both named **Martin**, assembled at Skopje airport around midnight on 11 July with chilled beers at the ready. Mike's itinerary would include several outstanding locations offering the chance to see a number of rare butterflies, or peperutka as they're known locally – in fact, by the end of 6 full days in the field a grand total of 133 species had been identified with the 100th occurring at noon on the third day, not to mention many moths, birds, and other wildlife. (Lists are available should any reader wish to request them.)

Starting at Skopje in the north, our journey would take us in a broad clockwise sweep of the country taking in/passing the towns of Veles, Prilep, Bitola and Ohrid in the south-west before the final day's transit back north.

Eastern Greenish Black-tip (***Euchloe penia***).

But rather than produce a travelogue, this report traces our sightings of a few selected species. So, in no particular order let's start with:

Eastern Greenish Black-tip (***Euchloe penia***)

Seen on our first full day in the field around 20km south-west of Skopje, this lovely little butterfly was being wind-assisted up largely west-facing precipitous limestone cliffs at c1,300m overlooking the dramatic landscape towards Kozjak Lake way down in the valley below. Several butterflies could be seen on the wing simultaneously and on reaching the ridge where we were standing would stop momentarily to nectar on a small yellow crucifer shown in the photograph on the left, possibly a member of the genus *Rapistrum*, or similar. The wind would then instantly whisk them away making decent photography difficult.

The second sightings occurred the following day some 50km further south near Prilep on a rocky, though by no means 'precipitous', limestone hillside facing south at a lower altitude of just under 1,000m and it is likely, therefore, that this delightful species is reasonably well distributed throughout the country.

Kozjak Lake.

▸ **Balkan Fritillary** (***Boloria graeca***)

Pelister National Park, established in 1948 and notable for the rare five-needle Molika pine (*Pinus peuce*), is also unusual in Macedonia in being an acidic mountain consisting of granite, dolerite, gabbro and quartz-schist geology. Accessing the higher elevations above the tree-line required the hiring of 4x4 vehicles and our first butterflying stop was taken at nearly 2,000m after some two hours on the rough track. The vegetation here was lush and varied with thyme and heathers prominent. **Balkan Fritillary** was seen along with **Blue Argus** (***Aricia anteros***),**Eastern Large Heath** (***Coenonympha rhodopensis***), **Ottoman Brassy Ringlet** (***Erebia ottomana***) and a very late, and unexpected, male **Orange-tip** (***Anthocharis cardamines***), amongst others.

At the end of the track near the glacial Golem Lake (2,226m) another very worn ***graeca*** specimen was netted by Safi who was initially content to ignore the frantic warning shouts from a local shepherd until a massive sheepdog raised its head above the vegetation. Safi continued to be blasé about such things having encountered sheep dogs many times before but I was certainly relieved when he nevertheless nonchalantly made his way in the opposite direction!

On completely different surface geology, namely the deep limestone (albeit lying on metamorphic rocks) capping the Galicica National Park in the south of the country and supporting a great richness and diversity of plants, we also came across ***graeca*** here at the slightly lower altitude of 1,600m. In both locations, however, this butterfly was uncommon. This location also produced our sole sighting of **Freyer's Fritillary** (***Melitaea arduinna***), a pristine female, difficult to separate from the near-identical **Glanville Fritillary** (***Melitaea cinxia***) which has an overlapping distribution but was not seen on this trip and, as is always the case, it was great to see **Apollos** (***Parnassius apollo***) drifting down the hillsides occasionally stopping to take nectar on white scabious and thistles.

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

Marbled White (***Melanargia***) **species**

Three Marbled White species occurred on this trip, the most widespread being **Marbled White** (***Melanargia galathea***) including many examples of the dark form ***procida*** with **Balkan Marbled White** (***Melanargia larissa***) occurring on the rocky limestone sites at Kozjak, Pletvar and Galicica. **Esper's Marbled White** (***Melanargia russiae***) put in an appearance at two sites, the wonderful monastery meadow at Krusevo and at Galicica. Whilst not uncommon species, ▾

Esper's Marbled White (***Melanargia russiae***).

Monastery meadow near Krusevo.

▸ they are nevertheless very beautiful in their simplicity and relatively easy to tell apart. ***M. russiae*** tends to be larger than ***galathea*** and readily distinguished by the jagged black line through the middle of the forewing cell whilst the cell line in ***larissa*** is further away from the body around $^{2}/_{3}$ of the way across the cell and the wings are also quite heavily dusted.

Macedonian Grayling

Macedonian Grayling (***Pseudochazara cingovskii***)
This Critically Endangered species was found in good numbers on the south-facing rocky hillside of the Pletvar Massif just to the east of Prilep. Quite why a 'critically endangered' species is so well signposted locally baffles me! The roadside sign is superbly illustrated and detailed in Macedonian and English, which from one point of view is great, but as an invitation to collectors seems perverse. Anyway, once we'd made our way through the dry grasses below the rocky slope it didn't take long to spot our first specimen, although a **Hermit** (***Chazara briseis***) and more particularly **Great Sooty Satyrs** (***Satyrus ferula***) caused some initial identification confusion. The butterfly merges perfectly with the grey limestone and pale soils and I didn't manage to catch even a glimpse of the upperside. The scarp continues along the north side of the road all the way to Kavadarci, and beyond, appearing from a distance to be the same habitat on which the butterfly had been seen. The threat to this habitat from marble quarrying appeared overstated based on the current level of activity but future prospects are less certain.

Grecian Anomalous Blue (*Polyommatus aroanensis*).

Grecian Anomalous Blue (***Polyommatus aroaniensis***)
A total of four 'anomalous ***Polyommatus*** species' were seen on the trip, namely **Ripart's** (***Polyommatus ripartii***), **Anomalous** (***Polyommatus admetus***), and **Grecian Anomalous** to which I'll also add female **Damon Blue** (***Polyommatus damon***) for good measure. However, it was not until our penultimate afternoon on Galicica that ***aroaniensis*** was discovered being one of 13 ***Lycaenid*** species attracted to a wet patch at the trackside. Identification took some time due to the similarity with ***admetus*** (see pages 723 and 727 in Pamperis, L, 2009, The Butterflies of Greece: Editions Pamperis, for a very detailed comparison) and upon release the butterfly darted away but I was fortunate to relocate it taking a quick breather, firing off three rapid upperside shots before it sped out of sight.

I think it is fair to say that all members of the trip were pleasantly surprised by the overall experience of our visit to Macedonia: the hotels we used were generally comfortable with varied menus and good English was spoken widely, the road infrastructure was very good, and the weather perfect every day. Although still outside the EU, Macedonia conveniently uses the Euro as a parallel currency to its own Denar. It was also very heartening to experience the positive support for their national parks and to pass through extensive areas of naturally forested hillsides. The richness of many flower meadows has already been alluded to. In short, Macedonia is a country which deserves to rank highly on any naturalist's list of places to visit. •

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(All photos by Peter Bygate)

NW Greece survey

Tzoumerka – Peristeri National Park, NW Greece, first week of June 2015

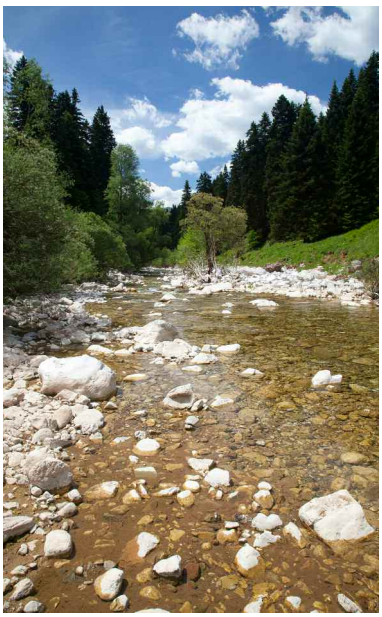
This trip was arranged by Greenwings as a follow up to the EIG **recording visit in July 2014, reported in EIG 16. The participants were Neil Thompson** and **Michael de Courcy Williams** – Michael is an EIG member resident in Alexandroupoli, north eastern Greece. We were ably assisted by **Rika Bisa** from the Tzoumerka National Park, who also helped with the 2014 visit, and our records were scrutinised by **Lazaros Pamperis**.

Mazarine Blues (***Cyaniris semiargus***) with two **Zephyr Blues** (***Plebejus sephirus***) at bottom left, June 2015.

Amanda's Blue (***Polyommatus amandus***) June 2015.

The object of the trip was to carry out further recording in the Tzoumerka National Park and to assess the area for potential Greenwings butterfly watching holidays. A different point in the season was used in 2015 and a number of localities from 2014 were revisited along with some new ones resulting in an overall total for the two trips of 114 species.

Overall the weather during the week was on the cool side, only one day really felt like a June day in Greece, although of course we were usually above 1000m. The spring in Greece had been cooler than normal, even as far south as Athens. As a result both the number of species and individuals recorded were on the low side. Of the 69 species found only a few were seen in double figures even across the whole week. A significant number of species were only recorded as singletons, including such common species as **Eastern Bath White** (***Pontia edusa***) and **Meadow Brown** (***Maniola jurtina***).



Acheloos River near Anthousa.

Highlights

The exception to the rule however was **Mazarine Blue** (***Cyaniris semiargus***), which was prolific at a number of sites including one just outside Syrrako, where we estimated there were maybe 500 individuals. This and another roadside mud puddling site were also exceptions in that there were not only large numbers of butterflies, but also a good number of species present, especially Blues. There is always a feeling of the unexpected in such a varied and mountainous ▾

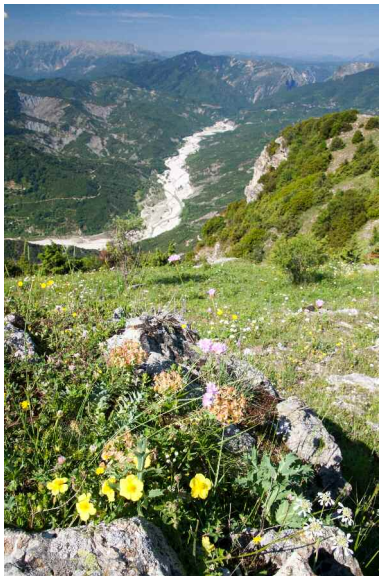
Woodland Ringlet (***Erebia medusa***), June 2015.

▸landscape. Muddy bear footprints on the road and seeing good numbers of the **Eastern Spectre** (***Caliaeschna microstigma***) and **Balkan Goldenring** (***Cordulegaster heros***) dragonflies along the river gorges are two examples. After one day's memorable exploration, stopping at a number of sites of differing altitude and habitat, we recorded maybe only 20 to 30 individual butterflies, but nine of these were new species to the trip and included **Little Tiger Blue** (***Tarucus balkanicus***) and **Cleopatra** (***Gonepteryx cleopatra***). Otherwise our persistence was rewarded at an impromptu roadside stop by a Bladder Senna (*Colutea arborescens*) bush when after 10 minutes a single, worn **Iolas Blue** (***Iolana iolas***) appeared with 2 other individual butterflies, **Lang's Short-tailed Blue** (***Leptotes pirithous***) and **Peacock** (***Aglais io***), the former being the only sighting of it all week.

Syrrako

One other site to mention was a rocky promontory near Syrrako with beautiful views over the thickly-forested valley gorges below. The site was not too heavily grazed and had a very good flora. Our first visit was warm and sunny with little wind and although there weren't huge numbers of butterflies there was a good selection of species. I was a little surprised that there wasn't more hill-topping, but when we revisited the next morning it was somewhat breezier and the number and diversity of species was reduced, but the **Swallowtails** (***Iphiclides podalirius*** and ***Papilio machaon***) were revelling in the flying conditions, chasing each other as far as the eye could see.

Overall the scenery of the Tzoumerka National Park is stunning and there is a great diversity of habitat to explore. It is also an under-recorded area, in fact for many taxa it is virtually unrecorded, so there are opportunities to make new discoveries. Our trip was probably let down by the late Spring, but we can never wholly rely on the weather, especially in the mountains! •



Promontory below Aghios Georgios, just south of Syrrako.

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(All photographs by Neil Thompson)

Greenwings are offering a return trip to Tzoumerka on 2 - 9 July 2016. See their website http://greenwings.co/ for further details or email enquiries@greenwings.co

View from the Katara Pass looking towards Tzoumerka.

Book Reviews

Available from http://diatheo.weebly.com/la-vie-des-papillons.html, price €100 plus postage, or from UK booksellers such as Pemberley Books, price £84.50 plus postage.
ISBN 978-2-9521620-6-7

La Vie des Papillons

By Tristan Lafranchis, David Jutzeler, Jean-Yves Guillosson, Pieter and Brigitte Kan.

Reinforced paperback, 751 pages 16.5 x 24 cm, with over 3000 photos, and CD. Text in French.

La Vie des Papillons covers the ecology, biology and behaviour of the 260 butterfly species to be found in France and is designed to complement butterfly identification guide books. Tristan's team has assembled a wealth of information over many years of research in the field. The book has been produced with the collaboration of family, friends, and colleagues (not only those within France). It focuses particularly on the biology and life cycle, as well as the ecology of all French butterflies. It describes the world in which butterflies live, their adaptation to their changing environment, and their relationships with insects, host ants, parasites, predators and host plants.

There is a section detailing how butterflies live, their circulatory system, breathing, digestion and nervous system, their sex life, the different courtships rituals of different species and the butterfly life cycle. An example of the fine illustrations in the book is a page with nine photographs showing the gradual emergence of a **Two-tailed Pasha** (***Charaxes jasius***).

Habitats

Following this, there is a comprehensive and illustrated section covering butterfly habitat, with CORINE codes. Take for example COR 61.2 and 61.3. These are the codes for Alpine rocky scree and steep rocky alpine slopes, with a specific flora and fauna where **Peak White** (***Pontia callidice***) can be found on small plant species from the Cress (*Cardamine*) and Rockcress (*Arabis*) families. Also to be found in these habitats are **Ringlet** species such as **Sooty** (***Erebia pluto***), **Silky** (***E.gorge***), **Larche** (***E.scipio***), and **Lefèbvre's** (***E.lefebvrei***), whose caterpillars conduct their biannual cycle on tufts of grass found amongst the rocky scree. The book also contains sections on legal protection, conservation, the impact of collectors on the butterfly populations of France, the regression of certain species, over-grazing and so forth.


Azurés — Lycaenidae Polyommatinae

L'Azuré d'Escher — *Polyommatus escheri* (Hübner, 1823)

Dupont chel avait découvert ce papillon en Lozère dès 1817. Le comte de Saporta en captura ensuite près de la Sainte-Baume (Var) et l'envoya à Heinrich Escher-Zollikofer en les nommant escheri par complaisance. Ce commerçant très fortuné, membre d'une famille influente de Zurich, consacrait son temps libre à une grande collection de Lépidoptères et de Coléoptères échangés ou achetés à de nombreux correspondants. Escher en fit parvenir à Hübner qui figura le mâle en 1823 avec le nom Papilio escheri.

Localisé dans le sud de l'Europe et au Maroc, l'Azuré d'Escher se reproduit sur les pelouses sèches, dans les clairières et les lisières de bois clairs et chauds, prédées en particulier, surtout entre 500 et 1200 m.

L'unique génération vole entre début juin et début août, avec de rares papillons frais jusqu'à la mi-septembre en montagne les années tardives. Le mâle patrouille d'un vol rapide en rase-mottes, ralentissant pour inspecter avec attention les Astragales à la recherche des femelles.

Les œufs sont fixés isolément sur les folioles et la tige de l'Astragale-hôte, parfois sur une autre plante poussant à proximité. La chenille hiberne au 3e stade au pied de l'Astragale. Elle termine sa croissance au printemps et se nymphose à la fin du 5e stade en mai sous un caillou ou à la base de la plante-hôte. Le papillon en sort après un mois environ.

L'Astragale de Montpellier, sa principale plante-hôte partout en Europe, craint la densification du couvert herbacé et se comporte comme une plante pionnière sur les sols écorchés. Elle ne pousse pas au-dessus de 1800 m où l'Astragale toujours vert prend le relais jusqu'à 2400 m dans les Alpes sur les pentes caillouteuses exposées au sud. L'Azuré d'Escher a pu coloniser des sites d'altitude en adoptant cette seconde plante-hôte.

Mâle (à gauche) et femelle (à droite).

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À gauche : site de reproduction dans le sud des Alpes. Au milieu : l'Astragale de Montpellier. À droite : l'Astragale toujours vert.

En haut : œufs sur une foliole d'Astragale de Montpellier. La chenille se nourrit pendant la nuit des folioles d'Astragale. Elle passe la journée cachée parmi les racines ou sous les feuilles étalées au sol de sa plante nourricière, en compagnie de fourmis (*Formica cinerea, Lasius alienus, L. niger, Myrmica specioides* ou *Plagiolepis pygmaea*). À droite : la chrysalide.

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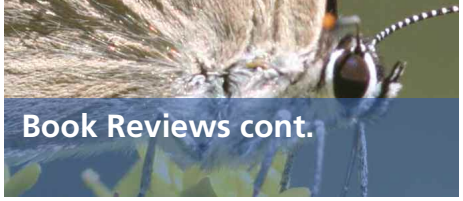
Species pages

There is a nicely illustrated preamble for each family which is followed by two or more detailed pages for each individual species. They are illustrated with photos of adult insects, pictured in the context of their habitat, eggs, first instars and chrysalis of almost every species (including photographs from specimens raised in captivity). There are also photographs of habitat and host plants.

There are feature pages, for example for the **Marsh Fritillary** (***Euphydryas aurinia***) showing six different sub-species, their distribution and host plants. There is also a section on ant associations in butterflies of the ▾ Lycaenidae family.



▸ *An example – the Gavarnie Blue*

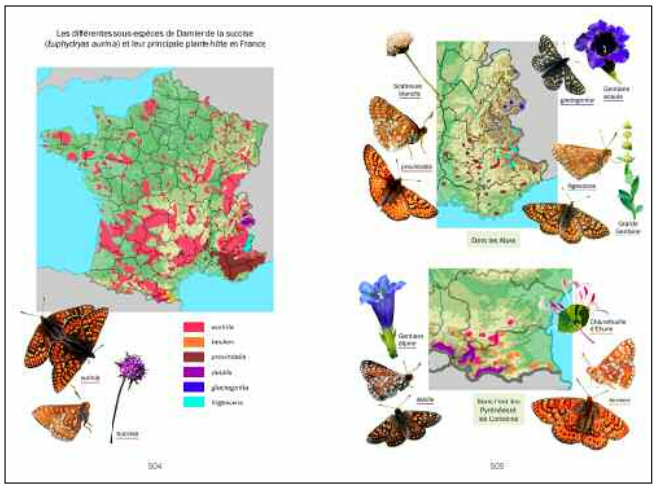
To give you an idea of the detail involved in this book, here is a brief summary for the **Gavarnie Blue** (***Agriades pyrenaicus***).

The text explains that in 1840 Boisduval first described the species as a Pyrenean sub-species of **Glandon Blue** (***A. glandon***). Pierret however in 1848 argued that Gavarnie Blue was a separate species, based on a different comportment, ecology, wing colouration and shape. This was subsequently supported by Oberthür and Lhomme's catalogue in 1923. The book continues with details on the distribution of the species which is the central Pyrenees in France and the Picos d'Europa in Spain. In France the species is confined to the Hautes Pyrénées, particularly around Gavarnie and Gèdre as well as several high valleys in the Pyrénées Atlantiques. It occupies rocky limestone hillsides, where the grass is very short, between 1200 and 1500m in altitude. The reproduction sites are restricted to an area of 500 to 1000 square meters.

The peak abundance of emergence is mid-July. Individual eggs are laid on the tiny leaves in the centre of dense rosettes of Rock Jasmine (*Androsace villosa*). The caterpillar hibernates in the third stage until the snow melts, when it continues to develop during the spring on host plants. It is prone to an Ichneumon wasp parasite, *Meloboris crassicornis*.

Accompanying CD (for Windows only)

There is a menu on the opening page of the CD, from where you can access each butterfly species. Each species is illustrated, and comes with a list and link to pictures of the host plants, distribution information, species bibliography and list of parasites. Each species page also has the English vernacular name.



Distribution maps

For each species the CD contains a general distribution map for Europe and a more detailed distribution map for France. The French distribution maps have been updated using information from Tristan's recent observations, various regional atlases, Natura 2000 and ZINIEFF inventories, and on-line recording schemes. Several regional lepidopterists have helped.

Tristan notes that although many of the maps remain incomplete, he considers that they give a fairly accurate guide to the geographical distribution of the butterflies of France. They are being updated on the Diatheo website and continue to be work in progress as more records are computerised at departmental and regional levels.

Conclusion

La Vie des Papillons is a detailed and comprehensive tome, and it comes with a fairly hefty price tag. However if you are passionate about butterflies, or your ambition is to see all the butterflies of France, then you will definitely find the details, personal observations and fascinating insights in this book useful. Please note that the text is in French. •

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Photospot

Any reader who would like to submit a few photographs to conclude subsequent newsletters is most welcome to do so.

A lavender field in high summer

These photos were taken around a lavender field at about 800m. in the Col de Peyruergue in mid July 2015. The Col is in Drôme département (Rhône-Alpes region) to the north of Mont Ventoux. The butterflies were obviously attracted to this high spot by the lavender and possibly to do a bit of hill topping! Not all were nectaring exclusively on the lavender – some stayed on the fringes and only made occasional forays into the field. •

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Col de Peyruergue.

Scarce Swallowtail (***Iphiclides podalirius***).

Dusky Heath (***Coenonympha dorus***).

Great Sooty Satyr (***Satyrus ferula***).