Issue 19 | May 2016

EUROPEAN INTERESTS GROUP

eNewsletter

CONTENTS

Butterfly Conservation

You hear this from every newsletter editor, but contributions to the EIG Newsletter are very welcome. Being an un-pushy sort of chap, I don't like to press for them. I LOVE contributions that turn up out of the blue. I don't mind whether they are pitched at experienced butterfliers or at beginners – this is a members' newsletter and I like it to cover a range of material so that every reader finds something in it for them. Do please consider if there is something you could write.

EIG members met in London recently to gossip, exchange information, and enjoy a pub lunch. From left to right: Malcolm Hull, John Maddocks, Kevin Tolhurst, Mike Prentice, Bernard Watts, Chris Frost, Maurice Avent, Greg Herbert and Nigel Peace. (Photo by Tony Hoare)

Nigel Peace, Newsletter Editor, May 2016

Personal View

Butterfly collecting the photographic way.
By Nigel Peace

After writing the introduction to 18 newsletters, Simon Spencer is taking a break with this issue and I am filling the void by offering you a personal view, on the subject of butterfly collecting.

I understand the urge to collect. Indeed I have always been a collector. I started with football programmes. I graduated to stamps and then to listing birds. In the last fifteen years or so I have become more interested in butterflies and they are now – through photography - my main collecting focus.

I volunteer in the butterfly section of the Natural History Museum and every week I have the opportunity to admire the collections of naturalists of previous generations. I love to see drawers of well-set specimens, meticulously labelled and presented, the results of a lifetime's collecting endeavour. I particularly like to see good series of specimens which are so much better for appreciating species than a few illustrations in a field guide.

Presenting butterflies the traditional way. The NHM has just received a fine collection of neotropical Morpho butterflies from JA McArthur. This drawer contains *Morpho rhetenor* from Guyana and Venezuela.

Had I lived in earlier times I would probably have collected set specimens. I might not have been very good at it – having tried it, I can tell you that it takes some dexterity to set butterflies. Perhaps I would have found someone with nimbler fingers to do it for me.

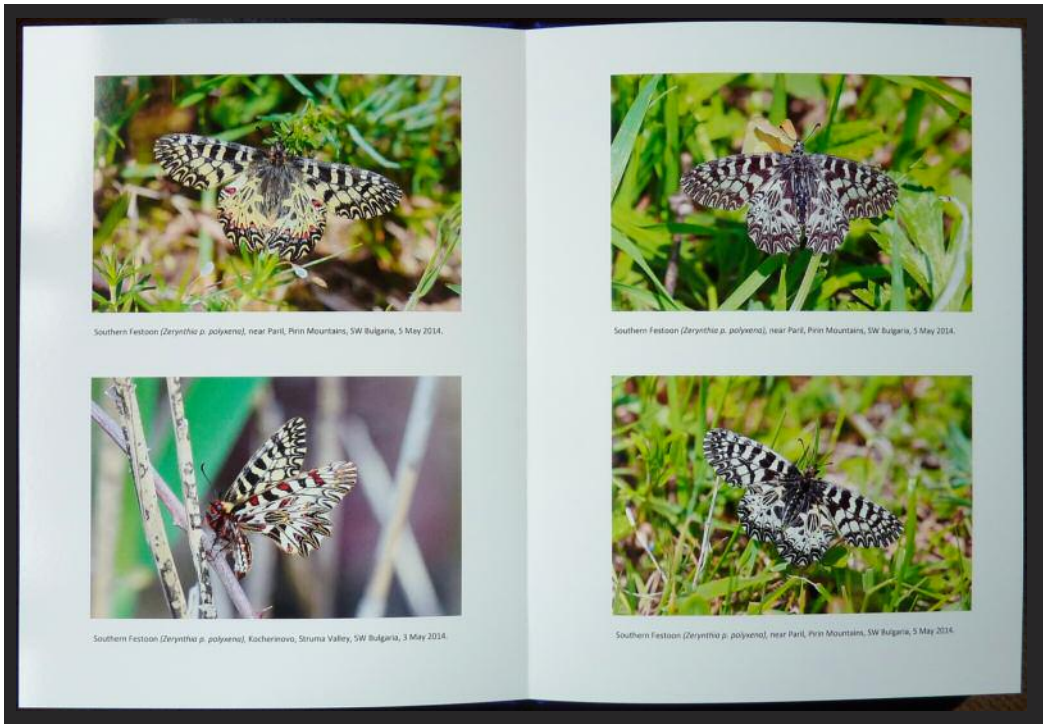
Net versus camera

However I would have had to kill the butterflies that I caught and that is something I don't want to do. I also don't like carrying a net. Nets are fine for serious science but I am a recreational butterflier, not a serious scientist. I do not have enough arms for both net and camera. I cannot manage both, efficiently at least. My camera requires both my arms and I do not have one left over for a net. So having decided that the benefits of my camera outweigh those of my net, I have abandoned the latter.

The benefits of the camera have of course exploded with the advent of digital photography. I find that, with patience and perseverance, I can get shots of most species that I encounter. It has also become second nature to try to secure shots of both upperside and underside. This is not possible for every species of course, and sometimes the photographs of one surface are very much better than those of the other. However even awful photographs of a second surface can be immensely helpful for identification (and photographs are very much easier to study than insects fluttering in a pot).

Photographs steadily accumulate...

So I have steadily built up a collection of photographs of butterflies I have encountered. I don't pretend that my shots are of top quality but they are good enough for my collecting purpose. I can usually manage a good image of one surface; it is very satisfying when I have good images of both surfaces, of male and female, of specimens from different parts of the range, and so forth. I am trying to photograph as many European species as possible and to fill in the gaps; I have started to do the same for other parts of the world, especially the Indian Subcontinent (for which there is an excellent website, ifoundbutterflies.org).



Presenting butterflies a new way. These two photobook pages show **Southern Festoon** (***Zerynthia polyxena***), photographed in Bulgaria.

Photobooks

My problem has been that a collection needs to be nicely presented and it is here that I have struggled, until recently. One route is to build a collection of digital images, and perhaps a website to share them more widely. However my own strong preference is for hard copy images and the route I have explored recently is photobooks.

Photobooks as the word suggests are books of photographs, properly bound and printed on good quality paper. I have used the service of the photo printing company Bonusprint, although other companies doubtless offer a similar product. The process is fairly straightforward. The first step is to download the company's software, and then to design a page format. I found this a bit fiddly, but once it is done, it is then easy to drag your photographs into position, and to type a caption. The final step is to send the product off (electronically) and to pay. It is not cheap at full rate but 'special offers' seem to abound.

I have found that the two time-consuming aspects are selecting which photographs to download (my own favoured format is geared to spreads of four); and double-checking the captions. It is so easy to overlook spelling mistakes, cut and paste errors, etc – and they are very irritating when the finished book comes back!

The result is that I am building up a neat set of volumes on my bookshelf which does not take a huge amount of space. The photographs are sorted and organised, accurately identified and captioned (I hope), printed to a good standard, and nicely presented. A good result, I think. •

Nigel Peace
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Notices and News

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EIG Committee

We are pleased to welcome two new members to the EIG Committee. One is **Marian Thomas**, who has helped EIG on legal issues in the past and recently contributed the Germany country pages to the EIG website. The other is **Bernard Watts**, who has huge expertise in the identification of European butterflies and is the author of 'European Butterflies – a Portrait in Photographs'. This is work in progress and there is a foretaste of Bernard's next chapters, which will unravel the mysteries of identifying Fritillaries in the Argynnini tribe, on pages 10 to 12 below.

More Committee members are wanted, particularly for membership-focussed tasks such as supervising the Facebook page (see next item) and organising Members Days. If you are interested, please contact **Simon Spencer** whose email is cerisyi@btinternet.com. •

More Committee members wanted

EIG Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/BC.EuropeanInterestsGroup

The EIG Facebook page has attracted a lot of interest with over 1000 likes and great appreciation of the photographs. It is managed by a very busy **Matt Berry** and it would be greatly appreciated if someone else were to get involved. Social media seems to be a great way of engaging with a different audience but it needs to be refreshed frequently to keep people's attention. The EIG membership take some stunning photographs of butterflies and it would be nice to see more and more of them on the EIG Facebook page. To repeat, please contact **Simon Spencer** at cerisyi@btinternet.com if you can help. •

Social Media help needed please

EIG Website: www.bc-eig.org.uk

If you have information that you think would be useful or interesting, please consider sharing it by placing it on the EIG website. In the first instance please contact **Jude Lock**, who now manages our Website content, or **Simon Spencer**. Jude's email for website content is lock.jude@gmail.com.

Those of you who have visited the website recently will have noticed some significant improvement in content.

Links to butterfly websites

First, there is now a comprehensive list of butterfly websites complete with links – see the Contacts & Links section of the EIG website. Thanks are due to **Nick Greatorex-Davies**, **Roger Gibbons** and **Jude Lock** for undertaking this exercise. Jude Lock is in the process of asking for reciprocal links to the EIG website. If we have missed a useful website please contact Jude at: links@bc-eig.org.uk.

Tour companies offering butterfly holidays

Secondly, **Martin Davies** has contacted the tour companies known to us that ▾

▸ offer European butterfly tours and holidays, and has drawn up a fully-revised Holidays section of the EIG website.

We hope that this will be a useful service to members and others. As the website says, EIG is delighted that a growing number of wildlife tour companies offer specialised butterfly watching holidays in Europe and we believe that many of our members and others are interested in going on such trips. We will continue to offer a regularly updated free advert on the EIG website for each of the companies offering such butterfly tours in Europe. If you go on one of the holidays, please say that you saw their ad on the EIG website.

Such holidays are not only great fun, but encourage interest in butterflies, provide valuable identification training and also often produce some very interesting records. We encourage all tour companies undertaking such butterfly tours to submit their records to the appropriate national/local butterfly recording scheme in each country. Some companies, notably Naturetrek and Greenwings, use these holidays to raise funds and then make a welcome donation to support Butterfly Conservation.

We are keen to make the listing as comprehensive as possible but we realise that it may not be complete. Please contact **Martin Davies** at hols@bc-eig.org.uk if you know of other companies that offer butterfly holidays, or if you are such a company and would like your advert to be considered. (We reserve the right not to advertise or to withdraw any adverts at our discretion.) •

Who goes where? European Butterfly Holidays		Fixed Date Departures (FDD)							Tailor-made	
	Total tours/ countries (FDD)	British-Bulgarian Society	Greenwings Wildlife Holidays	Limosa	Naturetrek	Pandion Wild Tours	Spatia Wildlife (Wild Echo)	Wildlife Travel	Borderline Holidays	Neophron Tours
Bulgaria	13	4				2	6	1		x
France	11		4	2	5				x	
Greece	8	1	3		1		3			
Spain	5		1	1	3					
Turkey	2		1				1			
Hungary	2		1		1					
Switzerland	2			1	1					
Sweden	2			1	1					
Italy	2				2					
Macedonia	2						2			
Serbia	2	1					1			
Estonia	1		1							
Croatia	1				1					
Armenia	1				1					
Slovakia	1							1		
Total tours/countries per company		6	11	5	16	2	13	2	1	1

Who goes when? European Butterfly Holidays		Fixed Date Departures (FDD)						
	Total countries per month	British-Bulgarian Society	Greenwings Wildlife Holidays	Limosa	Naturetrek	Pandion Wild Tours	Spatia Wildlife (Wild Echo)	Wildlife Travel
May	4	Bulgaria Greece	France		France		Bulgaria Greece	Slovakia
June	11	Bulgaria Serbia	France Greece Hungary	France Spain Switzerland Sweden	Croatia Hungary France Spain Greece Sweden Armenia	Bulgaria	Bulgaria Serbia	Bulgaria
July	9	Bulgaria	France Greece Estonia		France Switzerland Spain Italy	Bulgaria	Macedonia Greece Turkey	
August	1						Greece	
September	1		Spain		Spain			

Tables from the website

Disclaimer: please note that the information included in these listings comprises advertisements by the travel companies concerned. Each of these companies is separately and solely responsible for delivering the travel services they offer. Butterfly Conservation and EIG are not travel operators and can neither warrant nor endorse in any way the information, services or products listed here. The information is provided solely as a resource for EIG members and others to use at their own discretion.

Gavarnie Blue (*Agriades pyrenaicus*)

Activities in 2016

EIG survey & training trip to the French Pyrenees, 24 June to 1 July 2016

Spaces are available on this trip, which will involve a week of butterflying in the Hautes Pyrénées led by **Simon Spencer** and supported by **Jude Lock**. Records will be incorporated into the Butterfly Atlas of the Midi-Pyrénées, inventories for the Parc National des Pyrénées, and the National Erebia Inventory. For details, see the Events section of the EIG website: www.bc-eig.org.uk/events.html#trips. • ▾

▸ Austria

The EIG fund-raising tour to Austria on 23 to 30 July 2016 is now fully booked. •

2016 AGM

This year's EIG AGM and Members' Day will be held jointly with Upper Thames Branch on 29 October 2016 at Benson Parish Hall, Benson, southern Oxfordshire (about 1.5 miles north of Wallingford). The meeting is likely to start at 1030. Full details will be posted on the EIG website soon. •

Activities in 2017

Greece

Simon Spencer is planning a big project in Greece in 2017 in conjunction with **Lazaros Pamperis**, author of the Butterflies of Greece. Lazaros has worked with EIG on several projects, most recently in the Tsoumerka National Park. We want to build on our work in Greece by visiting several National Parks and seeing if National Park staff and volunteers can be encouraged to monitor and record butterflies. Simon would very much like to hear from EIG members with connections in Greece or who visit it frequently. Simon and Anne will take their campervan and would welcome interest from any EIG members who would like to visit Greece at any time between April and August 2017 to help with butterfly surveys. •

2017 EIG Calendar

The annual photo competition for the EIG Calendar will be run once again this year by **Anne Spencer** and entries are required by 1st September 2016. For details of how to enter and technical requirements please go to www.bc-eig.org.uk/events.html#photo. •

EIG Polo Shirts

A reminder from **Anne Spencer** that some EIG polo shirts are still available, at a cost of £15 each. Please email Anne to check availability of sizes: rhoslan.anne@gmail.com. •

European Marsh Award 2015 to Miguel Munguira

The 2015 Marsh Award for the conservation of European lepidoptera was won by **Professor Miguel Munguira** from the Universidad Autonoma de Madrid. The presentation was made at the Butterfly Conservation Members Day on 14 November 2015.

Miguel is widely acknowledged as the expert on Spanish Lycaenids and some details of his career are as follows. His PhD (on Spanish Lycaenids) included pioneering work on the lifecycles of species such as **Zullich's Blue** (***Agriades zullichi***). Following his PhD, he worked for a year under **Jeremy Thomas** at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology in Wareham. On return to Spain his activities have included pan-Iberian research on all known populations of **Spanish Argus** (***Aricia morronensis***), and an analysis of the Spanish Anomalous Blue species complex. More recently he has done further work on the population dynamics of and threats to a number of threatened butterflies of Southern Spain. Among his extensive published output he has written about Lycaenid conservation in several ▾

▸ butterfly atlases and Red Data books and remains extremely active in this area. From 2011 until March 2016 he was chairman of Butterfly Conservation Europe. •

EIG 18: feedback on Purple Emperor photos

On page 8 of the last Newsletter two photographs were published of a **Purple Emperor** (***Apatura iris***) with a near-identical extra mark on each forewing. Readers were invited to suggest how they had occurred. Thanks are due to our colleague David Soulet for responding to say that his view, the marks are undoubtedly artificial, not an aberration. He comments that they look like silver pen marking or paint, and that it can be seen on the right mark that the wing's scales are erased by ink. He suggests that this individual, as often for Emperors, went by a garage or a barn, eventually attracted by solvents, and received accidentally a drop; the symmetrical mark was made when butterfly closed his wings. An alternative possibility is that someone (not necessary a scientist) marked the butterfly, for unknown reasons. •

EIG 18: corrections

It is seriously easy to apply the wrong captions to photographs. The Heath species on page 27 of EIG 18 was of course a **Dusky Heath** (***Coenonympha dorus***), not a **Pearly Heath** (***C. arcania***). There was also a slip on page 8 where the photographs of **Purple Emperor** were given the wrong scientific name – the correct name is ***Apatura iris***. Apologies for these errors. •

News From France

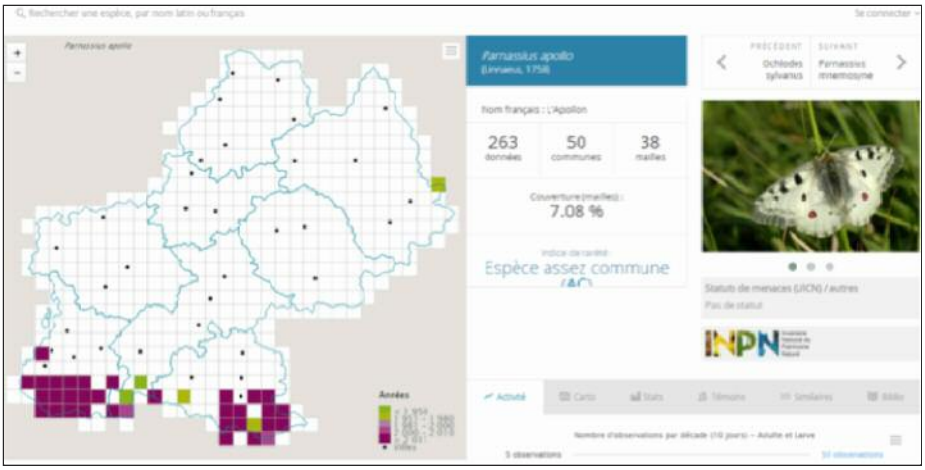
Contributed by Jude Lock lock.jude@gmail.com.

Web'Obs: a new website created by CEN-Midi-Pyrénées

There is a new regional website for the Midi-Pyrénées, comprising records from three databases – Nature Midi-Pyrénées, the Association of Naturalists of the Ariege, and the Conservatoire d'espaces naturels Midi-Pyrénées.

This is part of the programme for putting online the Regional Atlas of butterflies and day-flying moths of the Midi-Pyrénées (2008-2014). The site is not quite complete, but can be consulted here: http://www.webobs.cen-mp.org/

Also included on the database are dragonflies, sawflies, spiders, grasshoppers and crickets, bats, amphibians and reptiles. •



The Apollo (*Parnassius apollo*) page from the Web'Obs website.

Notices and News cont.

▸ Request for help with butterfly records for Normandy, France.

Our colleague **Claire Mouquet** is seeking help with butterfly records for Normandy, France.

The GRETIA (Groupe d'Etude des Invertébrés Armoricains) has been working on a synthesis of data on butterflies in Basse-Normandie (Lower Normandy) since 2015, in partnership with DREAL (the Regional Department of the Environment). The aim is to collect existing records, to update regional knowledge, review species status, and produce a departmental species list, online mapping, and a ZNIEFF ('natural zone of ecological interest, fauna and fauna') inventory.

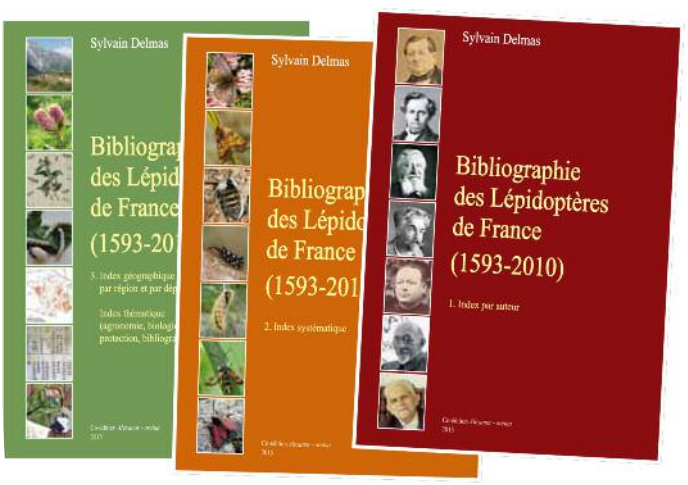
Please send records using the EIG recording form to: c.coubard@gretia.org. Additional information on habitat, geographic location etc. is also welcome.

Please also complete the form to authorise use of your records. The form can be scanned and returned by email: http://gretia.org/dossiers_liens/nosact/donnees_naturalistes/Autorisation.pdf. •

Request for information on articles, reports and theses for an update to the "Bibliographie des Lépidoptères de France"

The "Bibliography of the Lepidoptera of France" by **Sylvain Delmas** was published in 2015.

The period covered in the first three volumes was 1593 to 2010. An update is planned for publication in 2016 and will include the years 2011 to 2015.



The author is looking for references dealing with the Lepidoptera of France for the period 2011-2015 published in French and foreign journals but also documents such as books, study reports, theses, inventory reports, etc. Please note that entomological journals and natural history reviews are referenced regularly and that articles in conventional journals including Alexanor, oreina, and The Entomologist are already incorporated.

Please send details by email to sylvaindelmas@cegetel.net. The edition will be published jointly by Alexanor and oreina. A digital version is also being developed. •

False Ringlet (*Coenonympha oedippus*), one of 18 priority species for the Aquitaine Atlas. (Photo by David Soulet)

Request for help with surveying butterflies in Aquitaine

The last EIG Newsletter drew attention to the Atlas of Butterflies and Burnet Moths for the Aquitaine, which is co-ordinated by our colleague **David Soulet**. The project is ongoing and the assistance of EIG members is welcomed. Details are on the EIG website at www.bc-eig.org.uk/requests.html. •

▸ Request for butterfly records from Corsica

The last EIG Newsletter also drew attention to a request for butterfly records from Corsica. Details can be found on the EIG website at www.bc-eig.org.uk/requests.html. •

White-letter Hairstreak (*Satyrium w-album*), (Photo by P Cuss)

Request for seeds of European White Elm (*Ulmus laevis*)

The Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation is running a project to conserve the **White-letter Hairstreak** (***Satyrium w-album***). Many colonies are still being lost as their host trees succumb to Dutch Elm Disease and part of the project is to address this by planting disease-resistant elm close to known colonies. One species of elm which the project is keen to use is European White Elm (*Ulmus laevis*) – see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulmus_laevis. The species is expensive in UK nurseries, and the project team is hoping to find a volunteer in France (where the species is believed to grow widely in lowland areas), or elsewhere in Europe, who would be kind enough to collect seed from *laevis* and post it to the team for growing in UK. Postage costs would be reimbursed.

For more information please contact **Peter Cuss** at pj.cuss@gmail.com or visit http://upperthames-butterflies.org.uk/Reports/WhiteLetterHairstreak_Project_2016_PCuss.html. •

Butterflies of the Ardennes

We have just learned of a new book on the Butterflies of the Ardennes (French title 'Les papillons de jour des Ardennes'). The book treats almost 110 species, of 6 families, and includes the distribution of each species within Europe, France and the Ardennes, national and departmental species status, ecology, and habitat. The format is A4, with about 400 photos, and 263 pages.

The price is €20 plus P&P. More details can be obtained from the REgroupement des Naturalistes ARDennais (Association Renard), 3 Rue Choisy, 08130 Coulommes et Marqueny (tel 03 24 33 54 23, email bureau.renard@orange.fr, website www.renard-asso.org). •

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Email: info@butterfly-conservation.org Website: www.butterfly-conservation.org

Pearl-bordered and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries

A Comparison of Wing-patterns:
***Boloria euphrosyne* (Pearl-bordered Fritillary) and**
***B. selene* (Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary)**
based on *European Butterflies: A Portrait In Photographs*
By Bernard Watts

The normal forms of both species fly throughout most of Europe south of the Baltic Sea, where their wing-patterns have a consistent appearance except for some variation in size of ups dark markings, but not enough to invalidate the various distinctive characters described below. In Fennoscandia there is more variation, as described later. The following observations will only include wing-pattern details visible in photographs. The notation used is defined only as far as necessary in the present restricted context.

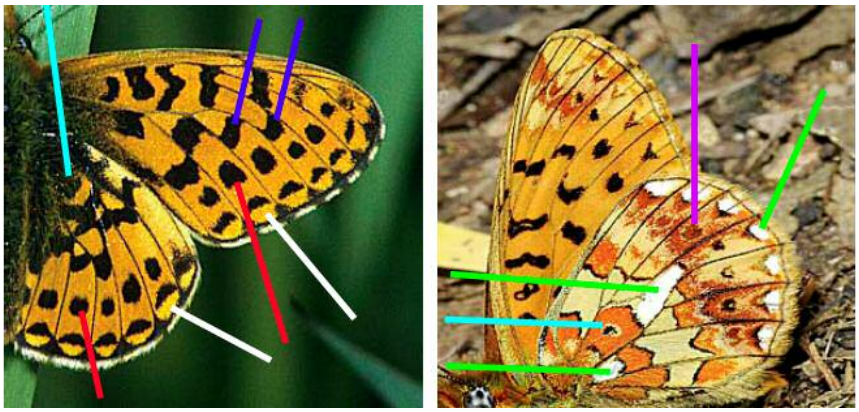
Normal Wing-patterns

The **unhw pale markings** are either yellow-buff or white on both species. There are two important differences.

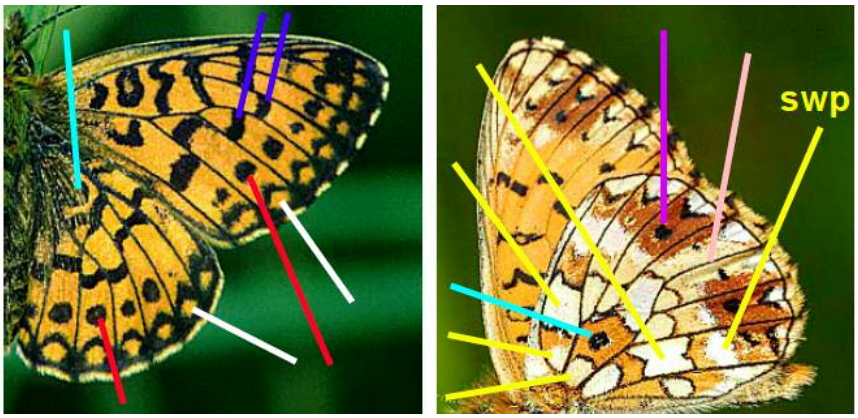
(1) *B. selene* has more unhw white elements.

On *B. euphrosyne*, the white elements are: one basal pale element, ba3; one elongated element in the innerdiscal band, aid6; and the whole row of submarginal pale marks. On *B. selene*, the *additional* white elements are: in the basal region, ba4 and ba5; and in the innerdiscal band, id3 and id9.

Notes: The lines indicate the following characters mentioned in the text: white, ups submarginal pale marks, one example on each wing; red, ups postdiscal marks, one example on each wing; dark blue, upfw discal marks dd5 and dd6; pale blue, uphw and unhw round cell spots; green, the bright white unhw pale elements on *B. euphrosyne*; yellow, the extra whitish unhw pale elements on *B. selene*, including the selene white patch(s), **swp**; purple, unhw postdiscal spots, one example; and pink, the unhw postdiscal gap.



***B. euphrosyne* (Pearl-bordered Fritillary)**



***B. selene* (Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary)**

(2) *B. selene* usually has several (*always* at least one) discal white markings. They lie between the innerdiscal band and the row of postdiscal spots, in space 3 and adjacent spaces to varying degrees. These selene white patches are absent on *B. euphrosyne*. Thus, their presence or absence is an important, definable difference between the species. It is not mentioned in field guides. Occasionally, on *B. euphrosyne,* faint yellowish, never *white*, markings exist in place of the selene white patches.

(3) The **unhw postdiscal spots** are distinguishable.

On *B. euphrosyne* they are reddish brown or darker, some with pale pupils, but on *B. selene* they are black without pale pupils. This difference is reliable, but subject to the caveat that on *B. euphrosyne* some of the spots may be black or the pupils may be vestigial.

Pearl-bordered and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries cont.

▸ A number of **unhw qualitative** differences also contribute to their overall different-looking appearances.
(4) The redder colour of the dark patches of *B. euphrosyne*, especially in the outer zone of the unhw.
(5) The more obvious postdiscal pale gap around peripheral vein p5 on *B. selene*.
(6) An overall whiter look to the unhw of *B. selene*. Though some white elements may be less bright on *B. selene*, being better described as off-white, usually they do produce a distinctively whiter-looking unhw, sufficient to distinguish the species at a glance.

Certain **qualifications** apply to the foregoing comments about the unhws: the contrast between white and yellow-buff elements in the innerdiscal band is often reduced in Fennoscandia (see below) and elsewhere, sometimes; and on *B. euphrosyne*, elements other than aid6 may approximate to white. The presence of at least one selene white patch is, however, constant on *B. selene*, as mentioned before.

The **ups dark markings** have certain differences, which are slightly less definable than (1) to (3) above.
(7) The inner (proximal) edges of the submarginal pale marks are flat, or nearly so, on *B. euphrosyne*, especially on the uphw, and are inward-pointing on *B. selene*.
This distinction is usually clear and distinctive on normally marked individuals, but may be obscured in Fennoscandia (see below).
(8) The postdiscal marks on *B. selene* lie closer to the submarginal dark markings than they do on *B. euphrosyne*, especially on the upfw.
(9) Upfw discal mark dd6 lies farther from the wing-root than dd5 by a distinctly greater amount on *B. euphrosyne* than it does on *B. selene*.
Differences (8) and (9) are usually recognisable qualitatively without making a measurement, but are not perfectly reliable, being about 80% and 70% reliable, respectively, throughout Europe. Distinctions (7) to (9) are rarely, if ever, mentioned in the literature.

There are a few **ups average qualitative differences**.
(10) The submarginal pale marks on *B. euphrosyne* are less enclosed than on *B. selene*, especially on male upfws.
(11) On female *B. selene*, the submarginal pale marks are often strikingly paler than the ground-colour elsewhere.

Certain unreliable differences are sometimes cited.
On *B. selene*, the unhw submarginal white marks bordered inwardly by black are larger and more sagittate.
On *B. selene*, the prominent black round cell-spots on the unhw and the uphw are larger.
Neither is reliable for identifying individuals.

Fennoscandia
North of the Baltic Sea, there is a prevailing tendency for both species to have dark-looking uppersides, i.e. larger dark markings and a dark suffusion on the ground colour, especially females. Though these darker forms, referred to here as *B. euphrosyne* f. *fingal* and *B. selene* f. *hela* are commoner in the far-north, the trend is by no means even, with normal looking individuals found much farther north than some dark ▾

▸ individuals. In addition to latitude, dark forms are often associated with bog habitat.

The pictures of dark females from Sweden illustrate how the differences in the shapes of the submarginal pale marks, easily seen on normal individuals, have become suppressed by the heavy submarginal dark marks. However, the different positions of the rows of postdiscal dark marks, point (8) above, and the relative positions of dd4 and dd5, point (9) above, remain clear. But, as mentioned, these latter differences are not invariable.

female *B. selene* f. *hela*

female *B. euphrosyne* f. *fingal*

In general, the uns characters in Fennoscandia are similar to those south of the Baltic Sea, except that there is a tendency for less contrast to exist between the white and the yellow-buff elements on the unhws of both normal and dark forms of both species, as illustrated by the example of *B. euphrosyne*.

Other Species

There is a general similarity between all *Boloria* species, but almost always there is some specific character to identify each of them.

Caveat

Very occasionally, less than say 1 insect in a 100, has conflicting diagnostic characteristics. These problems and other species, of course, are discussed in some detail in *European Butterflies: A Portrait In Photographs.*

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Bernard Watts
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The editor has kindly invited me to advertise that the next batch of chapters in *European Butterflies: A Portrait In Photographs*, which include the Argynnini Fritillaries, will be issued in the autumn. They were promised for earlier this year - my apologies.

Southern Spain in October

Out of Africa - a quest for Zeller's Skipper (*Borbo borbonica*) and other "African" butterflies in southern Spain - October 2015.
By Martin Davies

Few species can have such a tenuous hold on being on the European list as **Zeller's Skipper** (*Borbo borbonica*). This strikingly large dark skipper with prominent silver-white spotting is widespread in Africa but in Europe is known only from a small area in the southernmost part of Andalucia. Interestingly, there is also a small group of other African butterfly species which similarly have a northern extension of their range into various parts of southern Spain. We decided to make these the focus of an autumn trip in 2015.

From our enquiries, we had discovered that early to mid-October was apparently a good time to find Zeller's Skipper, so from 8th to 15th October **Bernard Watts**, **Mike Prentice** and I headed for the region between Cádiz and Tarifa to the NW of Gibraltar. We also planned to explore the coast eastwards to Almeria and up into the edges of the Sierra Nevada.

Previous records

Soon after **Gibbs** first discovered ***Borbo borbonica*** in Spain in 1913 (Gibbs 1913), the species was recorded by others sporadically in the area around Algeciras. In the 1970s it was also found in the Ebro Delta and two sites in Cataluña (but may now have disappeared again from these areas). In 2011 **Teresa Farino** discovered the species at new sites in Cádiz Province, near Benalup and Barbate (pers. comm. and Farino 2011). Recent fieldwork by **Sylvain Cuvelier**, **Matt Rowlings** and others (Cuvelier and Rowlings 2015) has established that the species continues to be present locally in various parts of Cádiz Province in southern Andalucía, and even extends eastwards into Málaga Province.

Zeller's Skipper (*Borbo borbonica*)

Barbate Valley

We flew to Málaga, and immediately drove west to Algeciras and then NW into the hills towards Benalup, which is a small village overlooking the Barbate valley, inland from Barbate and Vejer de la Frontera. This late in the season, butterflies are understandably becoming rather thin on the ground, but to our delight almost the very first species we saw were several **Zeller's Skippers** on the banks of the Rio Barbate! They were perching up sunning themselves on the riverside vegetation and on nearby tall stands of *Opuntia* cactus. Over the next few days, we found Zeller's Skipper to be abundant along this stretch of the Barbate valley, with some 50-100 seen each day. Such is the value of having some good ▾

▸advance locality information! We also later found more Zeller's Skippers near Barca de Vejer and also a site south of Barbate (which may be a new locality).

Perhaps the most obvious potential confusion species with Zeller's Skipper is **Mediterranean Skipper** (***Gegenes nostrodamus***). When we eventually tracked down a few *nostrodamus* a few days later in a nearby area along the Barbate River, we noted how much slighter in build they looked and with only a few dull white spots in the forewing and plainer mouse-brown underwing colouration. In contrast, most of the *borbonica* we saw had a gingery colour to the underwing when fresh, marked by 2-3 small but noticeable dark-rimmed white dots in the centre of the under-hindwing. In this same area alongside the Rio Barbate, we found plenty of the tiny but attractive **African Grass Blue** (***Zizeeria knysna***) and a few **Southern Marbled Skippers** (***Carcharodus baeticus***).

By good fortune that first evening we met up with Teresa Farino, who was leading a butterfly tour and staying with her guests at the same hotel, so were able to exchange some further locality information. Next morning, we even found a few Zeller's Skippers nectaring at Bourgainvillea flowers in the garden of our hotel and some of the assisted South African colonist, the **Geranium Bronze** (***Cacyreus marshalli***), around the Pelargoniums.

Zeller's Skipper (*Borbo borbonica*)

Mediterranean Skipper (*Gegenes nostrodamus*)

The Rio Barbate, habitat of Zeller's Skipper (*Borbo borbonica*)

Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)

North of Tarifa

Heading into the hills and valleys north of Tarifa near Facinas following a tip-off, we enjoyed watching a colony of more than 50 **Monarchs** (***Danaus plexippus***), which had apparently just emerged and were in very fresh condition. We found larval cases and a large strikingly coloured caterpillar feeding on *Gomphocarpus fruticosus* (an introduced Asclepiadaceae milkweed species, now also well-established here in the damp riverine woodland). This beautiful North American butterfly has successfully colonised parts of southern Spain where such larval host plants have become naturalised. Whether these butterflies originated from trans-Atlantic vagrants or wanderers from the Canary Islands or Madeira where they have been long-established is not known. ▾

Southern Spain in October cont.

▸ *Castell del Ferro*

After a brief morning visit to the Alcorncales National Park, we decided to head off east along the main coast road, past the resorts of Fuengirola, Torremolinos and Malaga itself and on towards Motril. By mid-afternoon we reached our target, a small rocky cliff on the east side of Castell del Ferro. We had hardly emerged from the car, when we spotted our quarry species, some beautiful **Desert Orange-tips** (***Colotis evagore***) flying low over the coastal scrub. Amongst the caper bushes (*Capparis spinosa*) – the larval host plant - and other dry vegetation here, we watched and photographed more than 70 of these unusual butterflies, which are quite unlike the more familiar *Anthocharis* **Orange-tips** of Europe. *Colotis* species are widespread in sub-Saharan Africa and several species extend north into the Middle East and Maghreb countries but this is the only one that reaches Europe proper. In the coastal scrub and municipal flower borders at Castell del Ferro we also found more African Grass Blues, Geranium Bronzes and **Lang's Short-tailed Blues** (***Leptotes pirithous***) and to our great surprise a very smart **Spanish Festoon** (***Zerynthia rumina***), clearly one of the scarce second brood.

Common Tiger Blue (***Tarucus theophrastus***)

Almeria Airport

Later that afternoon, we continued east to Almeria but by the time we arrived in the area the heat had already gone out of the sun and a strong cool breeze made butterflies difficult - we were clearly too late in the day. We stayed overnight in Cabo de Gata and next morning returned to the areas of semi-desert scrub at El Alquian east of Almeria Airport that we had visited the previous evening. Here amongst the incredibly spiny bushes of *Ziziphus lotus*, the larval host plant, we located at least four beautiful **Common Tiger Blues** (***Tarucus theophrastus***) and managed to get some photos of their amazing underwing pattern.

Gor

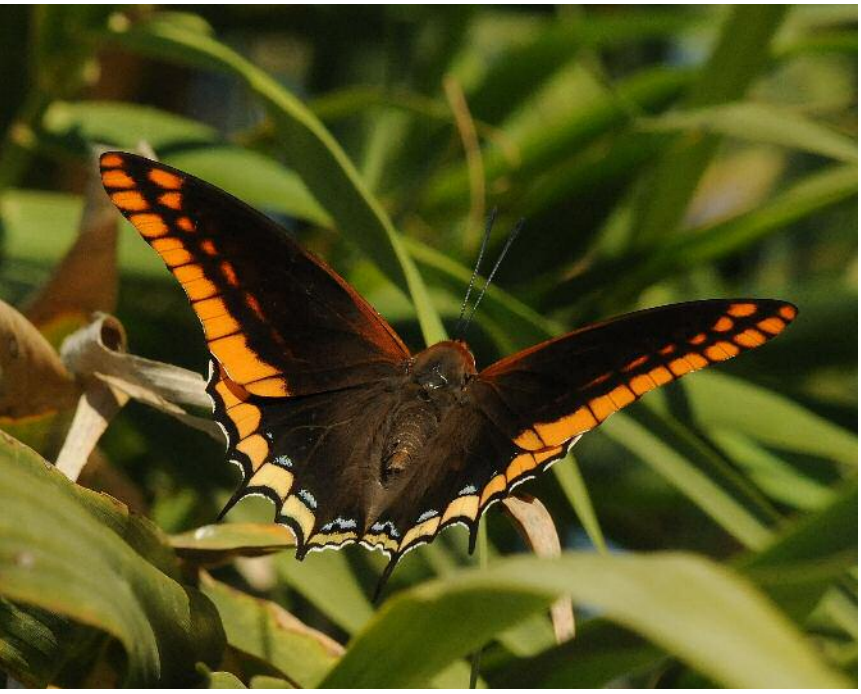
Buoyed by this success, we decided to head for the hills and check out a locality where Bernard had seen some **Desert Orange-tips** some years previously. We drove north through the weird desert-like landscape beloved of so many Spaghetti (or should that be Paella?) Western films, rounded the eastern end of the Sierra ▾

Desert Orange-tip (***Colotis evagore***) female.

Desert Orange-tip (***Colotis evagore***) female.

Southern Spain in October cont.

▸Nevada and so on west to Gor, near the edge of the desert steppe landscape of the Guadix depression. Here, sure enough, on the roadside verge and caper bushes they had occupied years before, we found four stunning Desert Orange-tips, which posed obligingly for their portrait.



Two-tailed Pasha (*Charaxes jasius*)

Motril area

We headed back south to the coast and before checking into our hotel in Motril, we checked the edges of a small wetland reserve, the Charca de Suarez. The reserve itself was closed but in some nearby scrub and gardens we found stands of another species of Asclepiadaceae (*Gomphocarpus sp?*) and on this we found several Monarch caterpillars and saw four adults still flying at 18.35 in the evening. The grass verges and scrub behind the beach also contained good numbers of African Grass Blue. Although the reserve was still shut next morning, we discovered that we could see into it from our hotel balcony and amongst many water birds managed to pick out a **Purple Gallinule** (***Porphyrio porphyrio***) hiding in the rushes.

Following up on some locality information from Spanish contacts, we set out to explore the unlikely-looking habitat of a custard apple (probably *Annona sp*) orchard north of Motril near the village of Lobres. After some hunting, we were eventually treated to wonderful views of several **Two-tailed Pashas** (***Charaxes jasius)*** resting on the leaves and on the ground in amongst the custard apple trees. Although this butterfly species is more typically associated with its larval host plant Strawberry Tree (*Arbutus unedo*), apparently it now can also be found utilising custard apple in some parts of its Mediterranean range. This spectacular butterfly is the only *Charaxes* that occurs in the Western Palaearctic but this classic African genus shows an amazing diversity and beauty in sub-Saharan Africa and *Charaxes jasius* itself has a huge range that extends south to South Africa. Completing the African feel to these orchards were abundant African Grass Blues together with several more autumn-brood Spanish Festoons.

Two-tailed Pasha (*Charaxes jasius*)

We returned to Motril and the scrubby edges of the Charca de Suarez reserve where more African Grass Blues and Monarchs graced the vegetation. After much searching we eventually also found two stunning **Plain Tiger** butterflies (***Danaus chrysippus***) (or **African Monarch** as it used to be called), here flying alongside their larger American cousins. Quite why these are called Plain Tigers is beyond me as they are simply glorious in their colour and patterning - another touch of Africa in Europe. ▾

Southern Spain in October cont.

Plain Tiger
(***Danaus chrysippus***)

Tarifa

We headed back towards Tarifa and Benalup for one last fill of Zeller's Skippers before returning home to the UK. As well as their usual haunts along the Rio Barbate we were also interested to find Zeller's Skippers quite abundant in the saltmarshes south of Barbate town and even one just on the northern edge of Tarifa itself in some rough ground and dry scrub. It was here that we finally connected with our last target species of the trip, in getting great views and photos of **False Mallow Skipper** (***Carcharodus tripolinus***), a real southern Andalucian speciality in Europe.

False Mallow Skipper
(***Carcharodus tripolinus***)

An indicator group of species?

Almost all these butterfly species have ranges that, although widespread in Africa, in Europe are largely restricted to the southern part of the Iberian Peninsula. It will be interesting to see whether the northern limit of their ranges starts to shift even further north as the effects of climate change take effect over the coming years. These species might well prove to be a useful indicator group if, as is predicted, the southern parts of Europe are subject to increasing desertification.

Twenty six species of butterfly in eight days will not break any records but is perhaps not a bad total in Europe for the middle of October. What it may have lacked in quantity, this trip undoubtedly made up for in quality - a real touch of Africa in Europe which left us with some great butterfly memories to warm those long northern winter evenings. •

References:

Cuvelier S & Rowlings M 2015. Notes and recent observations concerning *Borbo borbonica* (Lepidoptera: Hesperiidae) in Andalucía (Spain). *Phegea* 43: 01.ix.2015: 64-69.

Farino, T 2011. *Borbo borbonica*. Biodiversidadvirtual.org. – http://www.biodiversidadvirtual.org/insectarium/ (quoted in Cuvelier and Rowlings 2015).

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(All photographs by Martin Davies)

Cretan Grayling

Does the Cretan Grayling (*Hipparchia cretica*) aestivate?

By Keith Heaven

(A question that had not even remotely occurred to me until a week's holiday in Crete with my daughter last September.)

Cretan Grayling (*Hipparchia cretica*)

I didn't expect many really exciting butterflies to still be on the wing in September. Prior to the trip, I consulted one or two guides for possibilities but then contented myself with the thought that I might spot a Swallowtail or two, and that would be a sufficient thrill in itself.

Given weight restrictions on the aircraft, I did not even carry any bird or butterfly guides but, as well as my inevitable camera and binoculars, I stuffed in some tired, old snorkelling gear. Such were my priorities!

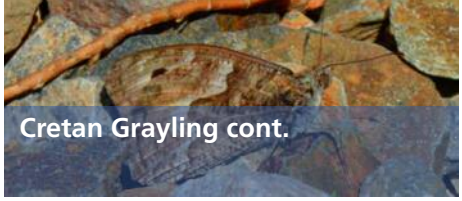
The north west coast – a few butterflies

We stayed near the beach, north of Chania. The weather was mostly sunny and warm but with regular fierce, torrential rainstorms. The temperatures would drop markedly during the cloudbursts.

On the first full day (21st Sept), we drove inland to the freshwater lake at Kournas. The walk round the lake confirmed my low expectations as few butterflies appeared, though there was a single **Eastern Bath White** (***Pontia edusa***) as well as a scattering of **Speckled Woods** (***Pararge aegeria***), showing the bright orange markings of the Mediterranean nominate race.

Speckled Wood (***Pararge aegeria***), Lake Kournas.

Eastern Bath White (***Pontia edusa***), Lake Kournas.



Cretan Grayling cont.

▸ Then, in a rocky clearing in mixed oak woodland and scrub, a butterfly alighted on a boulder and allowed a close enough approach for a few photos. It was obviously a Grayling and the habitat reminded me of my observations of the common **Grayling** (***Hipparchia semele***) in similar woodland clearings on the lower slopes in the south Shropshire hills. At this stage, I was just pleased to have the sighting, though I struggled to recall if any Grayling was supposed to be flying at this time, and I was also unaware of how many Grayling species are to be found on Crete. Previous holidays on Samos and Cyprus had involved a number of Grayling species and I had had to pore over my photos later, comparing them to a variety of species to get an accurate identification. I expected the same challenge this time, once I got back home.

Next day, another Grayling appeared, flying around the sun-baked gravel of a car-park, well up in the mountains near the monastery at Moni Gouvernetou on the Akrotiri peninsula.

On the 23rd, during a very early walk as the sun was rising, I found yet another, single, Grayling in rocky scrub next to an olive grove beside the coast. Whatever species this was, it appeared to be fairly rare in September.

The mountains inland – butterflies galore

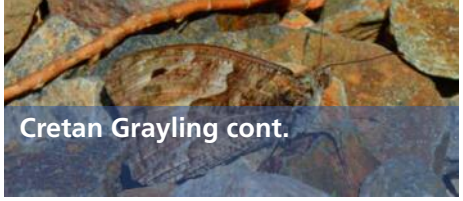
The situation changed radically on 25th, when we drove south across the island from Chania to the beautiful but overcrowded beach at Elaphonisi. The route took us through the mountains, at well over 1000 metres, often following narrow roads through spectacular gorges.

The gorges were noticeably greener and more vegetated than both the bare mountains above and the dried-out coastal lowlands. We passed through small villages that lined the sides of the roads with gardens, patches of cultivation and small orchards.

A mountain village overlooking a gorge in western Crete.

We quickly began to notice butterflies beside us as we drove. Quite large, brown butterflies that crossed the road ahead or raced beside us. There was a hint of colour or pattern about them but little to aid identification apart from the sheer numbers and ubiquity. Unfortunately, as the roads were so narrow, with rocks climbing steeply to one side, or dropping sharply on another, we dared not stop as traffic was fairly frequent. In any case, the butterflies seemed too fast and busy to make stopping worthwhile.

Eventually, we tired of exclaiming, "There's another one! What ARE they!?" ▾



▸ *Vultures too*

I was also watching the skies for my first ever **Griffon Vultures** (***Gyps fulvus***) (whilst maintaining appropriate attention to the road ahead, of course).

I began to notice gathering numbers of **Ravens** (***Corvus corax***) in the skies above, until, near the village of Kefali, there were nearly 20 of them, trying to drive away a group of four Griffon Vultures. By good luck, a large layby appeared and I pulled in.

We were able to enjoy good views of this new bird species until they drifted off above the mountains and out of sight. At this point, one of the mystery butterflies appeared, circling the dust and gravel of the layby until settling on the stones in full sun.

A few miles further on, this time on the road along the west coast of the island, there were 11 Griffon Vultures, another layby, and more Graylings, again choosing to land on stones in full sun.

After that, though we travelled around, we did not go up into the mountains at all, and saw no more Graylings.

Cretan Grayling (***Hipparchia cretica***), well camouflaged on bare rocks.

Research back home

On my return home, I quickly discovered several facts, notably that there is only one Grayling species found on the island, the **Cretan Grayling** (***Hipparchia cretica***), extremely useful for ID purposes. But some sources suggested that this species is only found in May and June, causing me some confusion. Other sources indicate a longer flight-time, well into the autumn. But that then caused me to wonder if the species has two or more broods all summer long. Though this still did not explain why it was barely present at low levels in September while the numbers in the mountains exceeded the total number of all the other observed species put together.

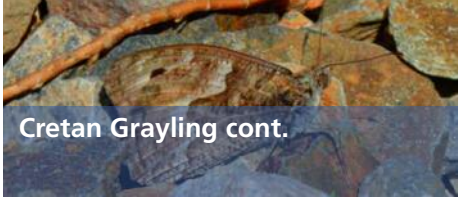
Comparison with Cyprus Grayling (Hipparchia cypriensis)

I emailed **Matt Rowlings** at the Eurobutterflies website as I was using this site to investigate a number of species seen on the island. He suggested a possible comparison with the **Cyprus Grayling** (***Hipparchia cypriensis***) which is recorded as flying in spring, then flying up to the mountains to avoid the dry heat in the lowlands which presumably desiccates all the vegetation. In autumn, the females descend again (possibly to oviposit on the new greenery which has been stimulated by the return of the rain?) But this had not been confirmed for *cretica*.

Following my emails to EIG about this, **Lazaros Pamperis**, author of "Butterflies of Greece", referred me to articles by **Eddie John** who runs the Cyprus Butterflies website. I had used this website to help me following my visit to that island some years ago.

The Cyprus website refers to *Hipparchia cypriensis* "emerging in April but dispersing to higher altitudes by early summer. Large numbers congregate in the mountains during the summer months, returning to coastal regions in the autumn." The butterfly is also described as roosting amongst trees in large numbers to avoid the heat.

My local library was only able to provide a copy of a first edition (1997) of "Butterflies of Greece" by Lazaros Pamperis. No more recent version was obtainable in the whole country, presumably another example of austerity ▾



Cretan Grayling (***Hipparchia cretica***), enjoying the sunshine between showers.

cut-backs etc. This original version refers to *cretica* as only occurring in May and June, from sea level to 1400 metres. However I understand that the later edition does include records for the autumn as well [confirmed – Ed].

Lazaros Pamperis notes that some of the highest mean annual temperatures in Greece are recorded from the Chania area and some of the greatest amounts of sunshine from Crete as a whole. So if aestivation is a reaction to these factors, Cretan species must be some of the most likely candidates for this behaviour.

I note that both Cyprus and Crete are large Mediterranean islands with similar climates and consisting of a narrow strip of coastal lowland surrounding a mountainous core. Both have Graylings which are regarded as endemic to their particular island, though Cyprus has a number of other Grayling species as well, possibly because of its closer proximity to the larger landmasses of Europe and Asia.

Aestivation by both species?

So, it seems reasonable to assume that the two endemic Graylings have similar behaviour and survival strategies, suggesting that aestivation is displayed by *cretica* as well as *cypriensis*.

I wonder if I had observed *Hipparchia cretica* at a very specific point in the process. In mid/late September, nearly all of this species were absent from the coastal lowlands and were still up in the mountains. But they were not all actually roosting/aestivating in the shade of trees. Due to the very recent, and ongoing, rainstorms, and associated lower temperatures, they had begun to emerge, but had not yet made any significant descent back to the coast.

Impressionistic weather reports for earlier in the month of September 2015 suggest that the rain storms did not hit the island until our arrival on 20th (isn't that always the way!). So, it may be that the aestivating butterflies had yet to experience the full "autumn" effect. It would be interesting to discover at what point they all arrived back on the coast and exactly the weather conditions that triggered the move. •

Further questions

Assuming that the Cretan Grayling aestivates, there are new questions to ponder.

1. Are all the autumn Graylings found by the coast females?
2. Is the autumn re-emergence a consequence of rain, or cloud, or lower temperatures, and if so, is it possible to actually measure the point at which the main descent begins?
3. How widespread is this survival strategy? After all, I only visited one small part of the far west of Crete. Perhaps the species exhibits different strategies elsewhere on the large island.
4. And why does it always rain when I go on holiday?

References:

Pamperis, L "Butterflies of Greece" (First edition 1997, Athens, Bastas-Plessas Editions).

Eddie John's website: www.cyprusbutterflies.co.uk

Matt Rowlings' website: www.eurobutterflies.com

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Butterfly Holidays in Greece

A butterfly holiday your partner will enjoy.

By Simon Spencer

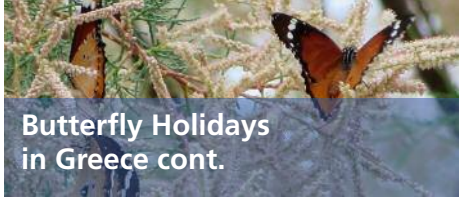
I am very lucky that my wife loves looking at butterflies and really appreciates the great places that it takes us in Europe. Not everyone is quite so lucky and I suspect that there are also female butterfly watchers whose husbands are not that keen on walking up mountains but it is usually the other way round. Most British holiday makers head for the coast and are after sun and sea and a bit of relaxation.

If a compromise is to be had and a butterfly holiday is also to be enjoyed by the other half then with a little thought it can be arranged. Greece is a popular tourist destination and has some wonderful beaches but most tourists go to the islands or Crete where the butterfly fauna is limited. Crete only has 60 species but does have 4 endemics. Mainland Greece has a few resorts in the tourist brochures and has many more butterflies. There is Parga in the north west, Stoupa in the south of the Peloponnese and Pelion and Halkidiki in the north. One of our favourite resorts is Olympiada about an hour's drive east of Thessaloniki but it has very few Brits.

Timing

Timing is also very important. I favour September when the magnificent **Two-tailed Pasha** (***Charaxes jasius***) has its second flight period (the other one is in May). This is one of Europe's most spectacular butterflies and is a coastal specialist feeding as a larva on Strawberry trees (*Arbutus sp*). It is the only European example of the family *Charaxes* which is common in the tropics. September is also a good time to see another beautiful butterfly the **Plain Tiger** (***Danaus chrysippus***). This species is markedly coastal and does not tolerate cold or frost. It is a continuous breeder and we were amazed to see about 300 fresh specimens nectaring on some Tamarisk trees near Stoupa in September last year.

Plain Tigers (*Danaus chrysippus*), Stoupa, 25 Sept 2015. (Photo by Anne Spencer)



Butterfly Holidays in Greece cont.

▸ *Eastern Aegean*

With the current troubles in the Eastern Aegean one might think twice about going to Lesbos and Samos. The migrant crisis has probably ruined them as a tourist destination but they do have some good butterflies. Samos has its own **Samos Grayling** (***Hipparchia mersina***) and the **Orange-banded Hairstreak** (***Satyrium ledereri***) which is a bit of a climb as well as **Eastern Brown Argus** (***Kretania euripilus***). It is also a good place to see **Southern Swallowtail** (***Papilio alexanor***).

Southern Swallowtail (***Papilio alexanor***), on Samos. (Photo by Nigel Peace)

Mainland Greece

You will see a lot of the common Greek butterflies on or near the Greek coast. **The Southern Comma** (***Polygonia egea***) is usually common and the **Southern White Admiral** (***Limenitis reducta***) with its single row of dots flies until September. Two skippers are decidedly coastal – **Pygmy Skipper** (***Gegenes pumilio***) and **Mediterranean Skipper** (***Gegenes nostrodamus***) but can also be found inland. **Pygmy Skipper** is more common and likes dry rocky places like dry river beds and beaches.

From the coast of the mainland you can take a trip inland quite quickly and visit some of the more mountainous areas for the day. Depending on the time of year you will have a chance to see some of Greece's 230 species. In July and August it makes a welcome change from the 40°C or more on the coast. Archaeological sites are often good for butterflies and often have **Tree Grayling** (***Hipparchia statilinus***). Roadside springs with their excellent drinking water often are good places to stop to see mud-puddling blues. A good lunch in a taverna will give you the opportunity to spot **Geranium Bronze** (***Cacyreus marshalli***) on the potted geraniums and watch the **Scarce Swallowtail** (***Iphiclides podalirius***) drifting by.

The widespread **Southern White Admiral** (***Limenitis reducta***). The underside shows a single row of black dots. (Photo by Nigel Peace)

Records

If you do go to Greece we have a useful recording form for Greece as an Excel spreadsheet on the www.bc-eig.org.uk website under 'countries' and **Lazaros Pamperis** our colleague in Greece will be glad of your records. For those that visit Greece regularly or live there part of the year Lazaros and I are planning an EIG initiative for butterfly monitoring in Greece in 2017 and we wish to engage with expatriate communities there to encourage people to record butterflies. I can be contacted by email:

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Butterfly Travels

Tracking down some localised species – my butterfly travels in 2015.

By Nigel Peace

Last year I decided to spend as much of the summer as I could tracking down European butterfly species that I hadn't seen before. Here is an account of my travels. I hope it may inspire you to investigate some new destinations!

Spanish Greenish Black-tip (***Euchloe bazae***), 28 March 2015.

Southern Spain, 24 – 31 March 2015

My first trip was an early spring visit to Granada Province in Southern Spain, with friends Tony Hoare and Graham Revill. We particularly wanted to see Spanish **Greenish Black-tip** (***Euchloe bazae***) and other *Euchloe* species. We allowed a week for the trip, in case of bad weather, which proved a good decision as the weather for the first three days was poor. However it then rapidly improved and we were delighted to find about 10 **Spanish Greenish Black-tips** (***Euchloe bazae***) and numerous **Portuguese Dappled Whites** (***Euchloe tagis***) hill-topping in the Hoya de Baza. It was an excellent trip for Pierids generally as we also found **Green-striped White** (***Euchloe belemia***), **Western Dappled White** (***Euchloe crameri***), a splendid fresh male **Provence Orange-tip** (***Anthocharis euphenoides***), and (on the coast) **Desert Orange-tip** (***Colotis evagore***).

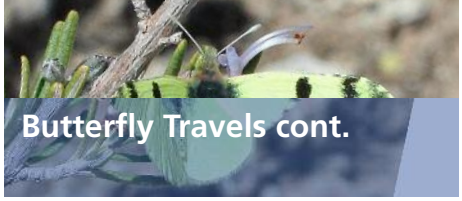
Apart from Pierids, highlights included **Provence Hairstreak** (***Tomares ballus***), which was found at several sites, and **Black-eyed Blue** (***Glaucopsyche melanops***), seen at just two. We failed to locate **Common Tiger Blue** (***Tarucus theophrastus***) and **False Baton Blue** (***Pseudophilotes abencerragus***), for which we were probably too early. Generally we followed the itinerary of Martin Davies and Mike Prentice reported in EIG 13.

Portuguese Dappled White (***Euchloe tagis***), 27 March 2015.

Provence Orange-tip (***Anthocharis euphenoides***), male, 31 March 2015.

Crete, 17 – 24 June 2015

Next was a visit to Crete with my wife Liz and Simon & Anne Spencer, in search of Cretan endemics. We departed in slight trepidation that the Greek financial system would melt down during our trip. However Greece continued to function and apart from a short air traffic control delay occasioned by a reduction in manning ▼



Butterfly Travels cont.

we encountered no symptoms of the unfolding crisis. As for the endemics, **Cretan Small Heath** (***Coenonympha thyrsis***) was abundant and widespread, and **Cretan Argus** (***Plebejus psyloritus***) was easily found by the top of the road up Mt Psyloritis from the small town of Anogia, where we stayed. Also on Mt Psyloritis we were fortunate to find a single female **Cretan Festoon** (***Zerynthia cretica***) at the very end of the flight period of the species. We initially struggled to find **Cretan Grayling** (***Hipparchia cretica***), but my wife Liz found one by the church in Anogia whilst shopping on the 20th, and we subsequently found a few more. All appeared to be freshly emerged.

Cretan Grayling
(***Hipparchia cretica***),
20 June 2015.

Cretan Small Heath
(***Coenonympha thyrsis***),
22 June 2015.

Cretan Argus
(***Plebejus psyloritus***),
18 June 2015.

Moorland Clouded Yellow
(***Colias palaeno***),
2 July 2015.

Switzerland, 1 – 8 July 2015

Next was a week in Valais in SW Switzerland to look for high-altitude Alpine species, accompanied by Liz for some of the time. We concentrated on 4 sites, all at about 2,000m – Arolla, Moiry Dam, Mattmark Dam, and the Simplon Pass. The weather was hot and sunny all week and butterflies were disinclined to settle. Also many species were only just emerging and so not very numerous. Thus perseverance was required, but in the end I managed to photograph a good range of interesting species, all in fresh condition.

Among the Blues, highlights were **Large Blue** (***Phengaris arion***), **Mountain Alcon Blue** (***Phengaris alcon rebeli***), **Eros Blue** (***Polyommatus eros***), **Glandon Blue** (***Agriades glandon***), **Alpine Blue** (***Agriades orbitulus***), and **Cranberry Blue** (***Plebejus optilete***). Fritillaries included **Grisons Fritillary** (***Melitaea varia***), **Niobe Fritillary** (***Argynnis niobe***), **Marsh Fritillary** (***Euphydryas aurinia f. debilis***), and a lucky sighting of a single **Asian Fritillary** (***Euphydryas intermedia***). Simplon is a good site for **Moorland Clouded Yellow** (***Colias palaeno***) and I found several there. The only numerous Ringlet was **Mnestra's Ringlet** (***Erebia mnestra***), but a few **Swiss Brassy Ringlets** (***Erebia tyndarus***) were seen towards the end of the week, plus one or two **Lesser Mountain Ringlets** (***Erebia melampus***) and **Blind Ringlets** (***Erebia pharte***) (and **Almond-eyed Ringlets** (***Erebia alberganus***) lower down). Both **Alpine Heath** (***Coenonympha gardetta***) and **Darwin's Heath** (***Coenonympha gardetta darwiniana***) were numerous, and a colony of **Dusky Grizzled Skippers** (***Pyrgus cacaliae***) below Moiry Dam was noteworthy.

Cranberry Blue (***Plebejus optilete***), 2 July 2015.

Asian Fritillary (***Euphydryas intermedia***), 2 July 2015.

Grisons Fritillary (***Mellicta varia***), 6 July 2015.

Republic of Macedonia, 11 – 18 July 2015

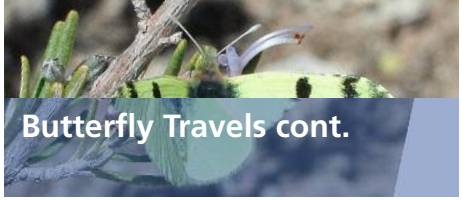
To Macedonia next, on the EIG fund-raising trip reported on separately by Peter Bygate in the last newsletter. Peter selected a number of highlights from the trip. To these I would add two personal highlights – a colony of **Lesser Lattice Browns** (***Kirinia climene***) (sporadic and local in south east Europe) at a previously unknown site; and **Sandy Grizzled Skipper** (***Pyrgus cinarae***), which is likewise very local (and it might be added more safely identified in the company of Safi and his colleagues!).

Lesser Lattice Brown (***Kirinia climene***), 14 July 2015.

Sandy Grizzled Skipper (***Pyrgus cinarae***), 17 July 2015.

Switzerland, 28 July – 1 August 2015

I decided to return to Valais for a second shot at high altitude species, and joined up with Graham Revill who was staying in Leukerbad. It was nice to see Ringlets in much greater numbers than before, although there was a distinct end-of-season feel to the proceedings and many specimens were worn. **Mnestra's Ringlets** (***Erebia mnestra***) seemed to be nearly over but **Lesser Mountain Ringlets** (***Erebia melampus***) and **Swiss Brassy Ringlets** (***Erebia tyndarus***) were plentiful. **Marbled Ringlets** (***Erebia montana***) were in fresh condition on the Simplon Pass and were a new species for me. We also found **Water Ringlet** (***Erebia pronoe***) there and, on the bird front, a fine **Ring Ouzel** (***Turdus torquatus***) of the alpine subspecies ***alpestris***.



Butterfly Travels cont.

▸ On one day we took the cable car from Leukerbad to the Gemmi Pass at 2,320m. Butterfly species were few in number up there but there were plenty of **Shepherd's Fritillaries** (***Boloria pales***) and **Mountain Ringlets** (***Erebia epiphron***) to keep us occupied.

Marbled Ringlet
(***Erebia montana***),
30 July 2015.

Swiss Brassy Ringlet
(***Erebia tyndarus***),
30 July 2015.

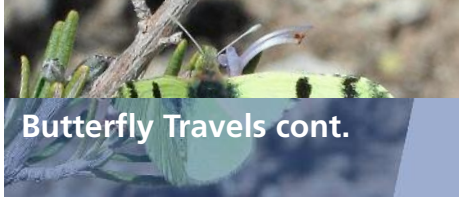
Montes Universales, Spain, 5 – 10 August 2015

This was another 'second shot' at an area which I had visited at an earlier time of the year. On my previous visit (towards the end of June 2014) I had seen a number of targets, but no **Chalkhill Blue** species or **Zapater's Ringlet** (***Erebia zapateri***), which is endemic to this part of Spain. This time, accompanied by my wife Liz, we soon found **Spanish Chalkhill Blue** (***Polyommatus albicans***) around Albarracin (1,200m) and **Azure Chalkhill Blue** (***Polyommatus caelestissimus***) was abundant higher up, for example at the Nacimiento del Rio Tajo picnic area (1,600m). The latter species appears to replace the former altitudinally in this part of Spain. I was delighted to find **Zapater's Ringlet** (***Erebia zapateri***) near the picnic area, although only 1 or 2 – perhaps the species was just emerging.

Dudley Cheesman wrote an excellent account of an EIG visit to the Montes Universales in EIG 14. This is full of useful information about where to look for butterflies. Like Dudley, we stayed in Albarracin which is a beautifully-restored fortified Spanish hill town, well worth a visit in its own right. ▾

Azure Chalkhill Blue
(***Polyommatus caelestissimus***),
8 August 2015.

Zapater's Ringlet
(***Erebia zapateri***),
8 August 2015.



Butterfly Travels cont.

Autumn Ringlet (***Erebia neoridas***), 17 August 2015.

The Marche, Italy, 10-19 August 2015.

My wife and I flew direct from Spain to Italy courtesy of Ryanair. Italy was not a butterfly destination, except for two days at the end when we visited the spectacular Monti Sibillini National Park in the central Apennines. The park is understandably popular with Italians and gets busy, but it is not difficult to find quieter areas. The butterfly highlight was **Autumn Ringlet** (***Erebia neoridas***), which we found on Monte Prata.

Madeira, 27 August – 1 September 2015.

The final leg of my European travels was to Madeira, again with my long-suffering wife Liz. To be honest, my enthusiasm was starting to wane and Madeira is not the greatest butterfly destination unless you are an enthusiast for Speckled Woods. Two species occur on the island, the familiar ***Pararge aegeria*** and the endemic **Madeiran Speckled Wood** (***Pararge xiphia***). The former arrived in Madeira in the 1970s and is now common and widespread, including in the laurel forests which is the habitat of *xiphia*. We had no trouble finding *xiphia*, but it is presumably not benefitting from competition with the new arrival. The two species are most easily separated by a view of the underside hindwing.

Another inhabitant of the laurel forest is **Madeiran Brimstone** (***Gonepteryx maderensis***). We did see a few patrolling the canopy, but none settled for the camera. The species thus has the dubious distinction of being the only one of the 300 plus European species that I have seen that I have not managed to photograph.

Finally I should mention that Liz followed up her Cretan Grayling triumph by finding me a **Madeiran Grayling** (***Hipparchia maderensis***). This occurs higher up than the other two Madeiran endemics – we saw it at 1400m.

Speckled Wood (***Pararge aegeria***), 27 August 2015.

Madeiran Speckled Wood (***Pararge xiphia***), 28 August 2015.

In conclusion, some numbers.

My focus was on photographing new species rather than maximising the number of species that I saw. However I recorded about 170 species in total, of which 31 were photographed for the first time.

Is any reader tempted to have a go at finding as many European species as possible in a single year? I should think that 200 species is quite easily achievable, but 250 might require a lot of commitment. •

Nigel Peace
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(All photographs by Nigel Peace)

Photospot

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

Heaths of France.

The *Coenonympha* family of Heaths is rather under-rated, perhaps because the ubiquitous **Small Heath** (***C. pamphilus***) is considered to be rather dull and is not a rarity. In mainland France, there are nine species in this family and they have very different ecological requirements and often very appealing markings. Several are limited to wetlands, including the inappropriately named **False Ringlet** (***C. oedippus***) which is limited to the far west of France and a few isolated locations in eastern central France. The **Alpine Heath** (***C. gardetta***) is a Heath of high altitudes, usually found between 1800-2000m in the southern Alps and the Massif Central. The **Dusky Heath** (***C. dorus***) is a Heath of medium altitudes from the far south-east of France. The **Chestnut Heath** (***C. glycerion***) is a species occurring mainly in eastern France and the eastern Pyrenees, with a wider tolerance of altitude. The form *bertolis* lacks ocelli; the specimen shown here is an intermediate form. •

Roger Gibbons
www.butterfliesoffrance.com (All photographs by Roger Gibbons)

False Ringlet (***C. oedippus***), Isère, 14 June 2015.

Alpine Heath (***C. gardetta***), Valais, Switzerland, 20 July 2014.

Dusky Heath (***C. dorus***), Bouches-du-Rhône, 4 June 2008.

Chestnut Heath (***C. glycerion***), Alpes-Maritimes, 9 July 2011.