



EUROPEAN
BUTTERFLIES
GROUP



eNewsletter

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Welcome to the newsletter, and thank you as always to contributors for their articles. I think they are a good reflection of the year we have had. They include an article on Tenerife, where an early spring holiday going well fizzled out when lockdown restrictions were introduced. There is an article about a mid-summer holiday in Andalusia, booked pre-Covid and just able to go ahead when restrictions were eased. There are two articles about France: one contains reminiscences on a lockdown year in Lot, unbroken by the usual return visits to the UK; the other reports on a mid-August visit to Corrèze during which some decent moths were caught. There is also a note on the perils of butterfly photography at a motorway service station in Germany.

My own year has followed the same sort of pattern: an exciting trip to Indonesia in January which seems a lifetime away now; then most of the year spent in the UK broken only by a short trip to France in August (which cost me two weeks quarantine). On the positive side however I have greatly enjoyed running a moth trap again after a break of six or seven years; and I succeeded in photographing all 45 species of butterfly which regularly occur in my home county of Hampshire (although I had to cross the border to West Sussex for Clouded Yellow and Wall Brown).

I make no predictions on what 2021 will bring, but I hope this newsletter gives you some ideas of what to do if circumstances allow!

Nigel Peace, Newsletter Editor, November 2020





Notices and News

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A note from the Chairman

You will know that we have deferred the AGM which was due to take place in October. Details of the revised date for the AGM in spring 2021 (whether in person or by video conference) will appear on the website in due course.

With winter approaching and many of you confined to home by travel restrictions this is a good time to submit your butterfly records. Sam Ellis (Chairman of Butterfly Conservation Europe) and I will be writing to you shortly with details of where to send your records and how they can help conservation efforts.

There has been a good response from members ordering the EBG 2021 calendar. If you haven't done so yet please email Anne Spencer (rhoslan.anne@gmail.com) to order. Calendars will cost £8 plus p&p. •

Mike Prentice

News from France

Various projects are in progress but there is no hard news to report on this occasion. Please check the website from time to time for any snippets of information. The link is <http://www.european-butterflies.org.uk/news.html> •

Jude Lock

Correction to the last newsletter

The last newsletter contained an article by Heidi Smith on the butterflies to be found at her gîte in Haute-Vienne, west-central France (EBG 27 pages 24-27). The email address at the end of the article was out of date. The correct email is heidi@lemoulindependensol.com and the website address is www.lemoulindependensol.com. •

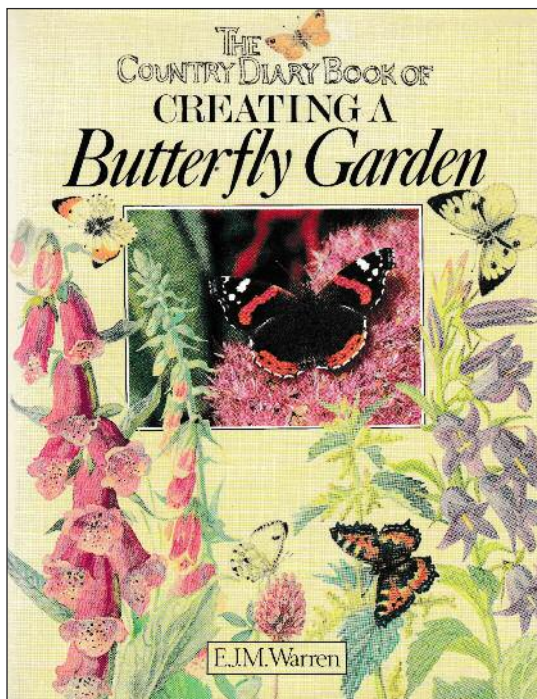
THE COUNTRY DIARY BOOK OF

Obituary: Elizabeth (EJM) Warren

Elizabeth Joan Mary Warren, 22 June 1929 - 17 March 2020

It is with great sadness that we learn of the passing of our friend and colleague Elizabeth on 17 March in Folkestone, Kent at the age of 90 years. Elizabeth was the most senior member of European Butterflies Group and a longstanding member of Butterfly Conservation.

Elizabeth was the only child and daughter of the renowned entomologist Brisbane Charles Sommerville (BCS) Warren (1887-1979). Brisbane was born in the south of Ireland, the son of the Dean of Cork, and Elizabeth died on St Patrick's Day.



As a child, Elizabeth lived with her parents in the Lausanne region of Switzerland, and subsequently accompanied them on many butterfly trips to the Alps. Her father's famous 'Monograph of the genus *Erebia*' was written in Switzerland during the years 1930-1934.

The family settled permanently in Folkestone in 1934, where Elizabeth worked as a teacher for many years. She was a keen gardener and photographer, and was the author of '*The Country Diary Book of Creating a Butterfly Garden*' published in 1988 by Webb and Bower.

Elizabeth also contributed articles to specialist magazines. Her 'note on *Pyrgus warrenensis* VERITY its history and distribution (Hesperiidae)' published in 1983 (Nota lepid. 6 (1): 61-64; 31. III. 1983) was an attempt to elucidate the position of **Warren's Skipper (*Pyrgus warrenensis*)** in the light of the many misconceptions and misunderstandings which surrounded it. This followed four years after the publication of an obituary of her father in the same journal (Nota lepid. 2:119-120, 2. X1. 1979). Other publications were

'A note on the hybrid *Erebia sinaica* POPESCU-GORJ' in 1981 (Entomologist's Gaz. 32:243-244), and 'The history of the name *Erebia cassioides* (Hohenwarth, 1792, in Reiner & Hohenwarth) and the fifty-year-old muddle over which species it represents' in 2007 (Entomologist's Gaz. 58:173-177).

Elizabeth shared her love of butterflies and in particular those that populate the Swiss mountains with enthusiasts and assisted them in their search to find species such as **Sudeten Ringlet (*Erebia sudetica*)** and **De Lesse's Brassy Ringlet (*E. nivalis*)**. She had a generous and kindly nature, and a lively sense of humour. All those that knew her will miss her dearly and regret the loss of a good friend.

With thanks to Dr. Otakar Kudrna. •

Jude Lock



EBG Identification Guides

Designing a new ID tool

by Bill Raymond

Following an appeal in this Newsletter I volunteered two years ago to have a go at designing butterfly identification guides for EBG. Little did I realise how difficult but rewarding the task would be and how it would monopolise my spare time. As an inexpert amateur my experience of using a 'yes/no' key was usually to throw in the towel at an early stage when I could not see the required characteristic on my specimen. Alternatively, I would end up flicking through the pages of a guide trying to find my butterfly. I therefore set out to produce guides based on the premise that if I could use it successfully, then anyone could!

The objective

The brief was to create easy to understand, as comprehensive as possible, photographic identification guides in pdf format for phone/tablet. All the difficult forms and subspecies would be covered including detailed comparisons of very similar species which traditionally cause problems. The guides are now freely available and hopefully will be useful in a variety of ways in conservation work across Europe. I would like to think they can be of assistance to everyone involved, from the expert lepidopterist to the beginner.

I aimed to create a process of identification which avoided the dichotomous type of key and would hopefully lead you through the maze of possibilities to your butterfly. Ensuring user friendliness also meant that scientific terms should be avoided whenever possible. To achieve this I have tried to design a compromise between a yes/no key and a descriptive list of species using a process of comparison and elimination. When describing species features many books can give the impression that these are present on all individuals, which can be misleading. I have therefore attempted to concentrate on the characteristics that are diagnostic and limit the information on other features to what might be useful for identification.

Test run: Gonepteryx and Pieris

As the final version has to be of a reasonable size for easy use on a phone/tablet it was clear at the outset that each guide would have to cover a restricted group of butterflies. I started with a test run on *Gonepteryx* followed by *Pieris*. Covering seven species, *Pieris* was ideal for establishing some form of methodology. First, it was obvious that the guide had to begin with a section on how to distinguish *Pieris*. Next, it seemed best to determine if your butterfly was one of the widespread species most likely to be encountered in the field, then if uncertain go on from there to look at the more local species.





Identification Guide: Pieris

Firstly, use these diagnostic features to determine if it is a Pieris. Page 3 shows similar species and second broods which may confuse.

FEMALE Pieris fore-wing upperside



All females usually have dark wing-tips and two black-grey spots on the fore-wing.
[Note: Krueper's Small White has only one spot]

MALE Pieris fore-wing upperside



All males usually have dark wing-tips and one or no black-grey spots on fore-wing

MALE & FEMALE Pieris underside



Fore-wings usually have yellowish wing-tips
Hind-wings are creamy-white or have streaks/ blotches of greenish grey.



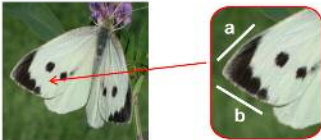
Next, establish if it is one of the three very common species of Pieris below which are found THROUGHOUT MAINLAND EUROPE. If unsure, then follow notes to the numbered species on the next page which are mainly found LOCALLY IN SOUTHERN EUROPE.

1. Large White [Pieris brassicae]



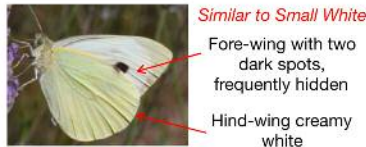
Size is main indicator, usually significantly larger than all other species of Pieris

MALE & FEMALE upperside



Wing-tip marking of roughly equal length along edges [a] and [b]. The marking is usually more extensive and blacker than other species of Pieris. Compare with Small White

MALE & FEMALE underside



Similar to Small White
Fore-wing with two dark spots, frequently hidden
Hind-wing creamy white

2. Small White [Pieris rapae]



Usually significantly smaller than Large White

MALE & FEMALE upperside



This spot is rounded Compare with 4

Wing-tip marking fainter than Large White. Usually ends around here, well above the vein marked [a] If mark goes further down, compare with 4

If wing-tip marking has black triangles like this go to 6



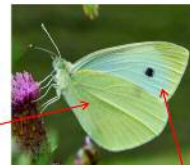
MALE & FEMALE underside

Dense grey dusting below this vein is distinctive

If dusting appears equally dense above and below compare with 4



If hind-wings have greenish marks like these, go to 6



Fore-wing with one or two dark spots, often hidden If no dark spots, go to 5

3. Green-veined White [Pieris napi]



Similar in size to Small White

MALE & FEMALE upperside

Wing-tip markings variable but veins usually lined greyish unlike Small and Large White.



[Note: Around the Arctic Circle females may be much darker, similar to 7]

MALE & FEMALE underside



Prominent greenish grey veins on hind-wing are distinctive and easily distinguished from Small and Large White



[Note: In southern Europe the grey veins can be very faint causing confusion with Small White]

If you are in the Alps, Jura Mountains or the Carpathians, compare with 7

This approach was well received and seemed to be working, so it was time to move onto a larger group which can cause everyone difficulty, the Fritillaries.

Fritillaries

The Fritillaries were divided into four separate guides: Large and Medium-sized (*Argynnis*, *Brenthis*, *Fabriciana*, *Issoria*, *Speyeria*), *Boloria*, *Euphydryas*, and *Melitaea*. The same method as before was employed making greater use of filters like wing patterns, location, and distribution overlaps to narrow down the possibilities. The final Fritillary guide, *Melitaea*, should be on the EBG website in November and as many of this family can only be confidently separated by genitalia we are putting together a supplementary 'Guide to *Melitaea Genitalia*' later this year. To round off the series, an 'Introduction' to help point users to the correct family of Fritillaries is also planned. We should hopefully then have 'A Complete Guide to Identifying European Fritillaries'.

Sources

Bernard Watts's impressive publication 'European Butterflies: A Portrait in Photographs' has been the foundation on which I have constructed the guides. I am indebted to him for his cooperation in allowing us to make use of his knowledgeable insights and observations. Bernard's detailed species

To simplify the identification process the fifteen fritillaries in this guide are divided into four groups: A B C D, according to their distribution, as shown below. Identification proceeds by looking at each group in turn until you find your butterfly.

Distribution See maps on page 6 Altitude	A 1. Pearl-bordered 2. Small Pearl-bordered 3. Weaver's Reasonably common and widespread in Europe Sea level to 1500-2200m	B 4. Titania's 5. Cranberry 6. Bog Scattered colonies across Europe Sea level to 2000m	C 7. Mountain 8. Shepherd's 9. Thor's 10. Balkan Scattered colonies in European mountains 800-3000m	D 11. Freija's 12. Frigga's 13. Arctic 14. Polar 15. Dusky-winged Fennoscandia and Baltic States only
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Group A First, check if your butterfly is in this group. If you can see **prominent black spots here** then it is either one of the three widespread species below or Titania's Fritillary on next page. Continue to Group B if you cannot identify your butterfly in this group.



1, 2, 3, and 4 are the only species in this guide on which these spots are usually clearly visible.

1. Pearl-bordered Fritillary [*Boloria euphrosyne*] **2. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary [*Boloria selene*]**

The MALE & FEMALE uppersides of both species have similar markings which are variable. Differentiate by:

- Shape of these markings bordering all wings. Best seen on the hind-wings.
 - flat edges
 - inward pointing edges

Note: Some females can have paler coloured markings at the wing edges. Occasionally, almost white.

MALE & FEMALE underside hind-wing displays the main diagnostic features of these two species. Differentiate by:

- Number of white marks in this area of wing
 - Two marks
 - Several marks
- Colour of spots in curved row from a to b
 - Usually reddish with at least one spot having a pale centre
 - Usually solid black

A white patch here distinguishes *selene* from *euphrosyne*.

Note: In northern areas both species have darker upperside markings and duller undersides.

3. Weaver's Fritillary [*Boloria dia*]

Upperside markings noticeably bold, especially bigger and rounder spots here on the hindwing.

Male and female markings variable but usually darker than 1 and 2.

MALE & FEMALE underside hind-wing displays main diagnostic features

- Apex of hind-wing is usually sharply angled
 - Compare 1 and 2
- Violet colouring in this area
 - Compare 1, 2
- Shape of this white mark is distinctive and unique.
 - Compare 1 and 2

This spot is pale centred

- Compare 1 and 2

characteristics are compared with the standard guides such as Tolman & Lewington, Lafranchis etc to create a provisional list of the essential features/information required to identify a species. This list is finalised by subjecting it to my personal criteria for inclusion: Can I clearly see and understand this feature? From looking at lots of photographs, is it consistent? Is it ambiguous? Is it readily illustrated/explained? Some features are difficult to assess on photographs, especially wing shapes, which I usually rule out unless the shape is immediately obvious.

Finding photographs to illustrate the features is the next task. After trawling through numerous images one soon realises that each butterfly is very much a distinct individual due to age, brood, natural variation etc. Also, the colours in the photo may not be completely accurate, as a result of the angle of illumination, exposure, shadows etc when compared to the standard specimen illustration found in respected books. Such illustrations presumably reproduce the colour as seen on an average specimen in average daylight. Some manipulation of photographs is therefore required to clearly illustrate features and hopefully avoid confusion. In addition to my limited collection of photos the following generously allowed me access to their photographs: Roger Gibbons, Matt Rowlings, Nick Greatorex-Davis and Vincent Baudraz.



Completing the jigsaw

Finally there is the challenge of shuffling this mass of material around countless times until all the pieces finally fall into place. Completion is celebrated with a wee dram and a check through my photo library, usually correcting several misidentifications! Perhaps you might like to give the guides a test run by revisiting your own photographs?

Looking ahead

I have been much encouraged by the complimentary remarks the guides have received from knowledgeable members and have yet to decide what colour my computer is going to be filled with in the coming years - Blues, Browns, Yellows? So please let me have your feedback on the usefulness of the guides and your suggestions about what group of butterflies you would like to see covered by the next series. •

Bill Raymond












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To download the guides please go to

<http://www.european-butterflies.org.uk/species.html>

Distribution Maps

● Up to 1950 ● 1951 - 1980 ● After 1980

					
Cardinal	Silver-washed Fritillary	Dark Green Fritillary	High Brown Fritillary	Niobe Fritillary	
					
Queen of Spain Fritillary	Marbled Fritillary	Lesser Marbled Fritillary	Twin-spot Fritillary	Corsican Fritillary	Pallas's Fritillary

The distribution maps are reproduced by kind permission of LepiDiv Projekt. For more information please visit [LepiDiv](http://www.lepidiv.org)



Tenerife

In pursuit of Canary Island endemics on Tenerife (6th – 20th March 2020) – the antidote to the UK winter butterfly-blues!

by Mark and Caroline Searle

With storm systems battering the UK through early February (first Ciera and then Dennis) followed by extensive flooding, the prospect of much butterfly activity in the UK during early March seemed remote. The Canary Islands off the west coast of Africa have an agreeable all-year-round climate with the opportunity to seek out species endemic to the larger isolated islands. The wetter climate on the north side of the island of Tenerife supports jungle-like laurel forests (laurisilva) and generally more lush vegetation along the numerous barrancos carrying the run-off on the northern slopes of Mt. Teide, although much of this habitat is under pressure from extensive deforestation and changes in irrigation practices. In contrast, the south side is cloudless and largely an arid desert-like landscape above 2000m brought to life by seasonal rains, of which there had been little this winter.

Puerto de la Cruz

We based ourselves on the north side of the Island in Puerto de la Cruz for the first week and experienced generally fine sunny weather most days (20-22C), with some early cloud and mist rapidly dispersing by mid-morning. Guided by Martin Wiemers' 1995 papers on the butterfly fauna of the Canaries (*Linneana Belgica*, Pars XV, part 1 June 1995, pp 63-84 and part 2 October 1995, pp 87-118) and a few more recent EIG/EBG Newsletter articles, and a few other tips, we planned our excursions to explore the variety of habitats.

We restricted our first full day in Puerto de la Cruz to a local walk on the eastern fringes of the town down through the banana plantations on to a short stretch of coastal path. In an open rough, grassy area we spotted a small population of **Southern Brown Argus** (*Aricia cramera*) with the Canary subspecies (*A. c. canariensis*) showing extremely well-developed orange banding on the forewing and bold underwing spots. ▼



Southern Brown Argus (*Aricia cramera canariensis*)



A **Small Copper** (*Lycaena phlaeas*), numerous **Small Whites** (*Pieris rapae*), the most common species on the island, and the 'common' **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*) were also on the wing. On the coastal path in a sheltered plot next to cultivated land we saw the first and only two (male) **African Grass Blues** (*Zizeeria knysna*) of the trip flitting around a damp patch of ground. Our route took us back round to the Botanical Gardens where we spotted two **Monarchs** (*Danaus plexippus*) the only sightings of the trip, and the first of the endemic species, a rather tatty **Canary Red Admiral** (*Vanessa vulcania*) and a number of **Canary Speckled Woods** (*Pararge xiphioides*) with the much brighter orange base colouration and a distinct under-hindwing white band; this species proved to be common and widespread in wooded areas across the Island.



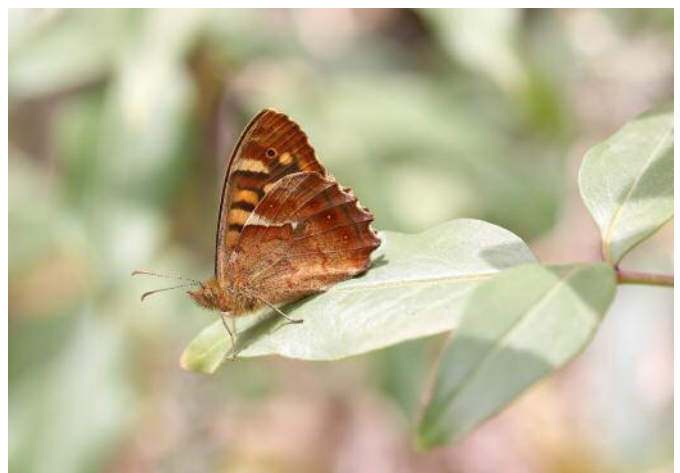
African Grass Blue (*Zizeeria knysna*)



Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)



Canary Speckled Wood (*Pararge xiphioides*)



The many well irrigated and cultivated domestic gardens have been shown as recently as 2012 (EIG Newsletter Issue 12, October 2012, pp 9-15) to support good numbers of **Canary Island Large Whites** (*Pieris cheiranthi*). During our week in the town we looked hard for this species, but did not see it until we ventured further afield, perhaps reflecting changes in the tastes of town gardeners for cultivated nasturtiums (*Tropaeolum majus*), previously identified as a non-natural food plant! ▼



Tenerife cont.

Laurisilva forest

With the weather set fair, we headed up in to the laurisilva forests around Aguamansa (1200m) up in the Oratava Valley. We parked at La Caldera and hiked through forest and open hillside scrub where the more common **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*) was seen in good numbers, along with several **Long-tailed Blues** (*Lampides boeticus*), a **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui*), **Canary Speckled Woods** on the woodland margins, but only a few **Canary Red Admiral** which generally seemed to be considerably out-numbered by its migrant cousin.



Long-tailed Blue (*Lampides boeticus*)



Canary Red Admiral (*Vanessa vulcania*)



Tenerife Green-striped White (*Euchloe eversi*)



Canary Island Brimstone (*Gonepteryx cleobule*)

Erjos, NW Tenerife

For our first exploration to the north west of the island, we headed to the village of Erjos a few miles north of Santiago del Teide (TF82) on the edge of the Teno Mountain range, and explored a small lake and disused quarrying area, with patches of laurisilva woodland. We parked close to the Eco Museo (on the TF373) at an altitude of about 1100 m. Here, the landscape is more open and the flower meadow adjacent to the Museum yielded the first and only **Clouded Yellows** (*Colias croceus*) of the trip, and the first **Tenerife Green-striped White** (*Euchloe eversi*), one of three species of *Euchloe* from the Canary Islands given specific status. This species is typically found in open areas at and above the tree-line where the yellow flowered larval food plant *Descurainia bourgaeana* is widespread and common. The green striped markings of *E. eversi* are typically more diffuse. Here we also spotted a very fresh **Geranium Bronze** (*Cacyreus marshalli*) close to some cultivated flowers. The grassland supported some stunning boldly-marked examples of the **Southern Brown Argus** and also the first **Canary Island Brimstone** (*Gonepteryx cleobule*) of the trip, which when back-lit shows off the distinct orange flush on the forewing. ▼



Tenerife cont.

The open scrubby landscape also supported large numbers of **Long-tailed Blues**, **Small Coppers**, **Painted Ladies** and amongst them the first sighting of a rather tatty **Canary Blue** (*Cyclurius webbianus*). The latter proved to be rather an elusive rarity on this trip; despite the expectation of this being a common, widespread and year-long species, we struggled to see a total of five all week, most in poor condition. Nonetheless, this area around Erjos in the north west proved to be one of the most productive locations in terms of species variety. So much so that we returned a few days later walking south from the town of Santiago del Teide across a very arid sun-baked hillside with very sparse vegetation, which contrasted with the lush area around Erjos a few miles north. Along a hot, dry, grassy track adjacent to the town, and close to a small drainage area, we spotted **Bath White** (*Pontia daplidice*), more **Southern Brown Argus**, **Small Copper** and a few **Canary Red Admirals**. However, the highlight of the day was a couple of mint condition male **Canary Skippers** (*Thymelicus christi*), the only golden skipper on the Islands. Previously considered a subspecies of the Lulworth Skipper, with its characteristic fan-shaped sunray wing markings, it is now recognised as a distinct Canary Island endemic. ▼



Canary Skipper (*Thymelicus christi*)



Bath White (*Pontia daplidice*)



Canary Island Large White

With our list of species endemic to Tenerife now looking quite respectable, we returned to the iconic butterfly of these islands. We explored an area mentioned in Martin Wiemers's papers around Icod El Alto only a few miles west of Puerto de la Cruz. We parked at El Lance on the main highway (TF342) with a view to



exploring the steep hillside and terraces above. A chance glance over the side of the road bridge at El Lance, down in to the Barranco some metres below, gave us our first sighting of a beautiful female **Canary Island Large White** (*Pieris cheiranthi*) floating around on the edge of a small garden. A very promising sign! We headed up the steep hillside along narrow roads and tracks in to an area of cultivated terraces (above 1000m), initially appearing rather unpromising. Fortunately, a few plots were left to grow wild and nasturtiums thrived in large patches along with a variety of other nectar sources. It was not long before first a female and then male *Pieris cheiranthi* appeared from amongst the flowers, only to rapidly disperse. However, the male subsequently returned briefly on two occasions.

Canary Island Large White (*Pieris cheiranthi*), male

Las Canadas, Mt Teide

We completed our week from our base in Puerto de la Cruz at higher altitude (about 2000m) up on the Las Canadas crater below Mt. Teide in an area west of El Portillo, walking in a circuit from the visitor centre carpark. With little winter rain, this was a parched, largely lifeless moonscape with minimal evidence of any seasonal regeneration of vegetation, which typically starts with Spring rains in May. We were, therefore, surprised to see two **Tenerife Green-striped Whites** (*E. eversi*) passing through at speed in rapid succession, one obligingly pausing momentarily to permit identification.



NE Tenerife

The final phase of the trip started well, heading north east to our second base in the coastal village of Taganama in the rugged Anaga Range. We stopped en route near Las Mercedes in the small village of Jardina at the head of the south-facing Valle de Tahodio, which looked like a good area to explore. We headed out past well-irrigated village gardens and then down a steep dry hillside track in the direction of the distant coastline - see the image on the left. ▼



At last we managed to see a decent handful of **Canary Blues** in the track-side shrubbery, and two further **Geranium Bronze** close to a road side drainage channel, along with a few more of the ubiquitous **Long-tailed Blue**. As we descended, we spotted our second pair of male **Canary Skippers** of the trip, quickly followed by a **Meadow Brown** on a grassy bank around the next bend in the track, and a handful of **Small Coppers**.



Geranium Bronze (*Cacyreus marshalli*)

After a satisfying afternoon, we headed onwards to our coastal retreat at Taganama, which sadly marked the end of our activities for this trip. The following morning the weather pattern had changed to cool, cloudy and windy as if to match our changing mood as a complete Island-wide lock-down was announced by the Spanish Government. For our last five days we were confined to our hillside accommodation with short forays to the local shop for provisions and a life-saving bottle or two of the local *Vino Tinto*! A short stretch of isolated coastal track close-by provided some welcome opportunity for fresh air and exercise, but the prevailing weather conditions limited further observations to a few **Small Coppers**, **Canary Speckled Woods** and **Small Whites** all covering in sheltered corners. The tail end of the trip unfortunately fizzled out but, on a positive note, has left some opportunities for future visits. The saving grace was the fantastic weather we experienced during the first week which enabled us to visit all of our planned locations, and observe well over 300 butterflies of 19 species, 7 of which are endemic to these remote Islands. •

Mark Searle

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All photographs by the author.



Portugal

Butterflies in Portugal

by Steve Andrews

Portugal is a wonderful place for butterflies - including the **Black-veined White** (*Aporia crataegi*), which became extinct in the UK. Although a large number of butterfly species live in the country, many are only found in the north or the south, and I am going to focus on those that live in my area which is in between. I have been a resident of Quinta do Conde for five years, and it is a town situated inland between Lisbon and Setubal and Sesimbra.



The countryside in spring

In spring the range of species and numbers that can be seen flying is incredible, but if I was doing a Butterfly Count in July or August it would be possible to conclude that Portugal is almost devoid of butterflies. For example, on a recent 45-minute walk here in August, all I encountered was one **Large White** (*Pieris brassicae*). This is because as the summer advances, due to the Climate Crisis, the countryside dries up in the heat and droughts that have become the 'new normal.' It is hard to find any wildflowers still in bloom, so if any butterflies were flying they would have a problem finding food for themselves, and also finding the food-plants needed for their larvae. Most vegetation is brown, shrivelled and dead in the Mediterranean summer's heat.

Spring Butterflies

But go back to February, March and April, and the countryside is a picture with so many wildflowers in bloom and all plant life growing lush and green. In these months if I was doing a butterfly count, I could get

fantastic results. In 10 minutes, in a walk in scrubland and forest in spring, I could expect to see perhaps 10 **Speckled Woods** (*Pararge aegeria*), the same number or more of **Large Whites** and **Small Whites** (*P. rapae*), five **Clouded Yellows** (*Colias crocea*), six **Spanish Festoons** (*Zerynthia rumina*), two **Swallowtails** (*Papilio machaon*), one **Iberian Scarce Swallowtail** (*Iphiclides feisthamelii*), four **Green Hairstreaks** (*Callophrys rubi*), a couple of **Small Coppers** (*Lycaena phlaeas*), a **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*) and a **Painted Lady** (*V. cardui*). The **Speckled Wood** (*P. aegeria aegeria*) here, by the way, is very different to the British variety, with far more rusty-orange on the wings.

In May, there are large numbers of the **Meadow Brown** (*Maniola jurtina*), as well as the **Southern Gatekeeper** (*Pyronia cecilia*) in smaller numbers in late ▼



Portugal cont.

May/early June. I always wonder how these 'Browns' make it through the very hot and dry spell when all the grasses they need for their caterpillars, become brown and dead. I have also seen **Meadow Brown** butterflies taking shelter in the shade of trees.



Round-leaved Birthwort (*Aristolochia rotunda*)

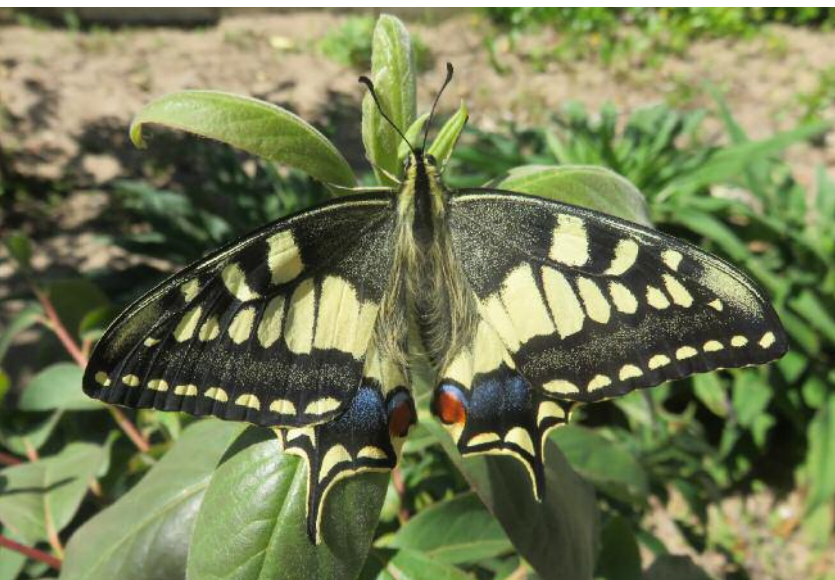


Spanish Festoon (*Zerynthia rumina*) larva

The Spanish Festoon

The Spanish Festoon is common in a stretch of woodland near where I live but it took me all of five years to find the food-plant it is using. The female butterflies make a far better job of finding the Round-leaved Birthwort (*Aristolochia rotunda*) growing here than I do, but this year I located some of it at the top of an overgrown bank and another clump straggling its way through some bushy Rockrose species. It is worth noting here, that if you find a colony of a butterfly living somewhere then you know whatever food-plant it needs for its larvae will also be present. The distribution and survival of butterflies is very much linked to the availability or not of the plants they depend on.

Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*)



The Swallowtail

Speaking of food-plants that butterflies need, I have noticed that the **Swallowtail** caterpillars where I live are mostly found on Rue (*Ruta graveolens*) growing in gardens of the town. I am told that in Portugal, Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) is a commonly used food-plant too, but caterpillars I have tried feeding it with have refused it after being started on Rue. Also, in the Quinta do Conde area, for most of the year the Fennel growing wild is in a terrible state with no green foliage available. It makes good sense for **Swallowtails** here to be using the Rue plants, which are commonly grown, and I am told this is due to the Portuguese superstition that growing these plants will protect against witches.



Portugal cont.

Swallowtails are continuously brooded here and can be seen throughout the year with a gap in December and/or January when it is simply too cold. This is a species that does well in an urban setting because not only are plants its larvae can feed on available in gardens, but also there will be plenty of flowers in bloom that the adults can get nectar from.

The **Iberian Scarce Swallowtail** (*Iphiclides feisthamelii*) can be seen in gardens too where it finds plenty of Plum, Almond and Peach trees (*Prunus species*) that its eggs can be laid on. This species can also be found in country areas where Blackthorn can be found growing.



Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)

The Monarch

The **Monarch** (*Danaus plexippus*) is a well-known butterfly I have had a long association with. I lived in Tenerife for nine years and used to help these butterflies there by growing Tropical Milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) and rearing the caterpillars on it. I became very aware of the fact that these butterflies were only found in locations where this plant was found in gardens, parks and public spaces. The **Monarch** depends on milkweed being cultivated on the island. It is of interest too that the **Monarchs** in the Canary Islands are non-migratory and breed all year round. In winter it is still warm enough for them in coastal areas.

Portugal has a similar situation, but here the main food-plant is the Balloon Plant or Bristly-fruited Silk-

weed (*Gomphocarpus fruticosus*), which has become naturalised in some places. The **Monarch** is mainly found in the south, in the Algarve. The distribution map in *As Borboletas De Portugal* (The Butterflies of Portugal) shows it in the Algarve coastal region and also in the north in Aveiro. I have wondered about this because I know of a small butterfly farm there, and the owner has told me he gets eggs sent up from the south. I have bought ova and larvae from him and have been able to rear three generations of **Monarchs** on plants grown in the garden where I live. I keep the larvae indoors because wasps are a serious predator outside and will clear a plant of caterpillars. I find that a small proportion of released females return and lay eggs on plants I am growing. This was the case in Tenerife too, and in both places I have noted that most of the butterflies disperse. This butterfly is also aptly called "The Wanderer". •

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All photos by the author.

Andalusia

Andalusia, Spain, July 2020

by Owen Beckett

At the beginning of the year I was very much looking forward to the prospect of travelling abroad to search for butterflies upon the conclusion of my degree, but by the middle of the spring I was thinking that I would be lucky to get away at all. Fortunately, a pre-booked trip to southern Spain was to go ahead as planned, albeit with the addition of masks and plenty of hand sanitizer!

I arrived during the second week of July and made my way to the coastal town of Nerja, about 50km east of Malaga. This whitewashed town is the gateway to the Sierra de Almirajara, a limestone mountain range which would be the focus of my 'butterflying' and with wall-to-wall sunshine on the cards for the duration of my stay, I was able to set out early the next morning and see what the area had to offer.

Sierras de Tejeda, Almirajara y Alhama National Park

I walked along a valley heading into this National Park which consisted primarily of pine woodland with several small clearings at the initial stages. The first butterflies of the day were a few sleepy **Dusky Heaths** (*Coenonympha dorus*) and a single **Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata megara*) which were seen basking in the early morning sun. Further on I caught sight of a small pale lycaenid, which I was hoping was a Mother-of-Pearl Blue, but upon closer inspection turned out to be a male **Southern Blue** (*Polyommatus celina*). A larger, darker lycaenid was flying rapidly nearby and after waiting for a minute or so for it to land, I was able to identify it as a **Blue-spot Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium spini*). Other butterflies flying in this area were a solitary **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui*) feeding on the abundant Mediterranean Thyme and several **Striped Graylings** (*Hipparchia fidia*). ▼



Dusky Heath (*Coenonympha dorus*)



Blue-spot Hairstreak (*Satyrrium spini*)



The path led me to a dry dusty riverbed where I was able to add a further three species to my list, all of which were skippers. A **Red-underwing Skipper** (*Spialia sertorius*) was seen basking on the stony riverbank alongside a **Sage Skipper** (*Muschampia proto*). The third species was a new find for me, the **Southern Marbled Skipper** (*Carcharodus baeticus*), an Iberian endemic which was resting among the Cistus bushes.

Further exploration higher into the mountains did not yield any further species, but on my return journey back through the lightly-wooded area near the start of the trail I was able to add a **Small White** (*Pieris rapae*), **Southern Brown Argus** (*Aricia cramera*) and **Bath White** (*Pontia daplidice*), all enjoying the masses of Mediterranean Thyme growing along the edges of the path. I walked this same route several times over the next few days, when I managed to add the **Long-tailed Blue** (*Lampides boeticus*), **Lulworth Skipper** (*Thymelicus acteon*) and **Small Copper** (*Lycaena phlaeas*) to the list.



Mediterranean Skipper (*Gegenes nostradamus*)

Nerja

Close by my accommodation outside Nerja were several brownfield sites and patches of scrub which I thought looked promising and among the commoner species there were several standouts. I saw the first **Swallowtails** (*Papilio machaon*) of the trip here as well as a surprise **Holly Blue** (*Celastrina argiolus*). The real highlights however were the **Monarch** (*Danaus plexippus*) which although quite faded, was still a magnificent sight, and the inconspicuous yet wary **Mediterranean Skipper** (*Gegenes nostradamus*).

Maro

Just east of the nearby village of Maro there were several beaches with adjacent steep cliff faces, which although they looked far from what I would consider to be prime butterfly habitat, were home to a real Andalusian speciality, the **Desert Orange Tip** (*Colotis evagore*). A nice male basked on a hot dirt track, whilst nearby several **Small Whites**, common **Swallowtails** and a single **Bath White** were feeding on small crucifers.



Desert Orange Tip (*Colotis evagore*)

Sierra de Almirajara – higher slopes

The best day of the trip was when I travelled inland to Canillas de Albaida and ascended to 1400m to explore the higher slopes of the Sierra de Almirajara. **Wall Browns** and **Dusky Heaths** were among the more abundant species initially, with a few **Tree Graylings** (*Hipparchia statilinus*) and **Blue-spot Hairstreaks** joining them too. Field Eryngo flowers attracted lots of **Small Coppers**, whilst small numbers of **Southern Gatekeepers** (*Pyronia cecilia*), **Long-tailed Blues** and a sole **False Ilex Hairstreak** (*Satyrium esculi*) were also present.



Andalusia cont.



Andalusian Anomalous Blue
(*Polyommatus violetae*)



Niobe Fritillary (*Fabriciana niobe*)



Sage Skipper (*Muschampia proto*)

As I climbed higher, **Bath Whites** became more numerous as did **Iberian Marbled Whites** (*Melanargia lachesis*) and a few **Clouded Yellows** (*Colias croceus*), feeding avidly on the large purple thistles that grew in the area. Upon reaching 1400m I spotted a small brown lycaenid which I photographed and later identified as the Iberian form of the **Mountain Argus** (*Aricia montensis*), although its sighting was somewhat eclipsed by the sighting of a lovely fresh male **Andalusian Anomalous Blue** (*Polyommatus violetae*) nearby. This was my main target and the highlight of the trip by far. Result!

I was able to add to the success of the outing by spotting a few more species on my descent. A single **Niobe Fritillary** (*Fabriciana niobe*) was seen feeding on thistle (my only fritillary of the whole trip) and about 200m further down, a **Dusky Meadow Brown** (*Hyponephele lycaon*) was seen basking on some of the exposed rocks along the path, followed by a **Spanish Gatekeeper** (*Pyronia bathseba*) skulking in the shade. Close to where I began my walk, a small river attracted mudpuddling **Holly Blues**, **Lang's Short-tailed Blues** (*Leptotes pirithous*), **Southern Blues**, **Clouded Yellows**, an **Iberian Scarce Swallowtail** (*Iphiclides feisthamelii*) and **Southern Marbled Skippers**.

Frigiliana

On my final day I managed to find time to visit the hilltop town of Frigiliana and explore the adjacent hillsides. **Sage Skippers** and **Small Whites** were numerous along the lush spring-fed hedgerows whilst the rockier slopes attracted both the rather numerous **Wall Brown** and its slightly scarcer cousin, the **Large Wall Brown** (*Lasiomata maera*) of which the latter was a nice addition to my list. I climbed to the top of a small hill where I found four **Two-tailed Pashas** (*Charaxes jasius*) and three common **Swallowtails** engaged in fierce aerial pursuits with each other. Amidst these dogfights I managed to find more **Southern Marbled Skippers**, a nice way to round off a very successful trip.

As always, a few 'hoped-for' species like the **Mother-of-Pearl** and **Spanish Chalkhill Blues** were missed, but a few surprises were found too so overall it was a great trip. Hopefully I'll get the chance to travel to this beautiful region again someday! •

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All photos by the author.



Lockdown in Lot

Lockdown 2020: reminiscences from South West France

by Melita Frost

I begin these jottings on Tuesday 1st September 2020, a significant day in France as it marks La Rentrée, the day the children return to school. Our neighbours' children, aged four and eight, were excited yesterday at the prospect of being with their friends, but on this sunny morning my reflections are tinged with sadness. July is high summer in the south-west and a wetter, cooler late August already felt autumnal despite a very hot, dry start. Trees are turning colour, the cicadas are silent, we no longer wake to the purring of Turtle Doves and there are fewer species of butterfly. But September starts full of promise, cooler nights but golden days; figs and grapes ripe for picking.

Our French home is in Lot, Department 46: a rugged terrain of limestone ridges known as 'Causses', intersected by deep valleys. Soil is generally poor away from the fertile plains bordering the River Lot which gives the department its name. Our house is on such a ridge. Areas were levelled to construct the house and terrace. Here we have flowering plants and a potager. We have mostly limited planting to insect-friendly local species which thrive in this climate of occasional harsh winters, wet springtimes, summer heatwave and drought. Two lavender hedges are a main attraction for butterflies and bees. By luck rather than design, the second hedge comes into flower as the first is finishing thus providing continuity. The remainder of our 'garden' is sloping limestone garrigue, a land of Downy Oak (*Quercus pubescens*) and Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*), maple and juniper, wild thyme, oregano and the honeysuckle beloved of White Admirals. On wet spring mornings the scent of the aromatics is stunning, though occasionally overlaid with the aroma of diesel!

My thoughts turn to 17 March, the day the French government imposed a decisive and strictly enforced lockdown. Like most people we have ongoing worries, and have missed family occasions with our children and grandchildren in the UK, but that is outside the remit of this article. Lockdown here entailed completing a form each time we went out. Leaving home without the correct box ticked could result in an immediate hefty fine if intercepted by gendarmes. Only essential trips and 'exercise' were permitted. 'Exercise' had to be for no more than one hour and within one kilometre of home.

This turned out to be a wonderful opportunity for exploring tracks and paths directly accessible from our door. Our house is on the Camino, the pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostela. But this spring there were no pilgrims or walkers. I did however photograph my first butterfly on 25 March, the [Scarce Swallowtail](#), in French 'Le Flambé'.

A second 'benefit' of lockdown and the continued restrictions was that, for the first time in the five years we have had this house, we spent late winter, spring, summer and early autumn here, unbroken by visits back to the UK, a great opportunity to observe the changes each season brings. ▼



Lockdown in Lot cont.

April and May are full of expectation; fresh flora and fauna emerge each day, and an abundance of several butterflies including **Scarce Swallowtails** and more **Black-veined Whites** and **Southern White Admirals** than I had ever seen before. The plants we try in our garden either grow rapidly or decline and die (or get eaten by slugs and deer according to season). One success has been a philadelphus. During May and early June its beautiful scented white flowers attracted large numbers of

Black-veined Whites and Southern White Admirals. The Southern White Admirals are delightful, a glorious blue/black without the brown tinge of their UK cousins. They are often friendly creatures not averse to settling upon a human hand or arm.



Southern White Admiral (*Limenitis reducta*)



Black-veined White (*Aporia crataegi*)



Large Tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis polychloros*)



Great Banded Grayling (*Brintesia circe*)

Another thrilling spring visitor was the **Large Tortoiseshell**. Previously accustomed to seeing single specimens I believed this to be a somewhat solitary species. Not so this year. There's one particular oak tree which seemingly secretes a resin that attracts many insects including hornets, Capricorn beetles and butterflies, especially

grayling. But on one occasion this year there were four Large Tortoiseshells competing with eight or so **Great Banded Grayling**. The Great Banded Grayling have stayed with us all summer and into September.

The garrigue comes to life during April and is at its best from May to early June. Grassy areas are carpeted with golden dandelion-like flowers and blue ▼



Lockdown in Lot cont.

muscari. We have many varieties of vetch and birdsfoot trefoil, the larval host plant of the **Adonis Blue**. There are wild roses, hellebores, thymes and oregano, and orchids - probably seven or eight different varieties of orchid just in our garden and on every roadside verge. Though intriguing these do not attract butterflies.



Berger's Clouded Yellow
(*Colias alfacariensis*)



Cleopatra (*Gonepteryx cleopatra*)

During April my observations included **Orange-tip**, **Holly Blue** and **Brimstone**; all 'early on the wing' butterflies familiar from the UK. I was thrilled to see **Wood White** and the Brimstone's cousin, **Cleopatra**. This stunning yellow butterfly, the male has spectacular orange flashes on the forewing, remained with us all summer. Southern **Speckled Woods** lingered in sunlit glades but also frequented cultivated areas. Accustomed to the dark brown U.K. Speckled Wood I was slow to recognize the brighter southern version. **Small Blue**, **Glanville Fritillary** and **Berger's Clouded Yellow** all emerged during April. A very special early sighting was of a **Green Hairstreak**.



Queen of Spain Fritillary
(*Issoria lathonia*)



Blue-spot Hairstreak (*Satyrium spini*)

We have planted some creeping thymes which are knitting together to form a thyme lawn. By May these were dense mauve cushions attracting most of the aforementioned species and providing first sightings of **Painted Lady**, **Red Admiral**, **Adonis Blue**, **Meadow Brown**, **Pearly Heath** and some frustratingly unidentifiable fritillaries, possibly the **Meadow Fritillary**. However I did recognise **Dark**

Green, **Silver Washed** and **Queen of Spain Fritillaries**. I was delighted to identify some hairstreaks new to me: the **Ilex Hairstreak** and a few days later the **Blue-spot Hairstreak**.

Early June also saw the emergence of some less welcome visitors. We became aware of small hairy caterpillars, growing larger as days passed, up to 4 centimetres in length. By mid-June they were everywhere, on the terrace, on our clothes, on the road, but especially on the oak trees. The trees were being stripped of their leaves. This army of 'chenilles' became a talking point with neighbours, and even made ▼



Lockdown in Lot cont.



Caterpillar of the Gypsy Moth
(*Lymantria dispar*)

the regional newspaper. But I couldn't make an identification, in appearance and behaviour they did not match, for example, the **Oak Processionary Moth**. Many thanks to Nick Greatorex-Davies of the EBG for identifying the **Gypsy Moth** (*Lymantria dispar*).

One morning I was confronted by a large green lizard upon the branch of a tree, perhaps predated on the caterpillars. We had only seen them on the ground before. By July the caterpillars were pupating and swarms of nondescript brown moths began to appear. The life of the imago is short, up to 48 hours. Lacking a digestive system, its purpose is to mate and lay eggs high in the oak trees ready for the following spring. The Gypsy Moth manifestation apparently occurs every ten years or so and can kill the host trees.

More pleasing in June was the usual abundance of **Marbled Whites**, **Graylings** and **Meadow Bowns**.



Western Green Lizard
(*Lacerta bilineata*)



Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*)

Looking back 2020 provided my best yet experience of butterfly spotting.

I've seen species I never dreamed of such as the **Hairstreaks**, **Chequered Skipper**, a **Great Sooty Satyr**, **Geranium Bronze**, **Long-tailed** and **Provençal Short-tailed Blues**, the **Chimney Sweeper** moth (thanks Nick for another identification) and been thrilled to see **Small Coppers**, the first since my childhood.

Disappointment however at not seeing a **Purple Emperor** or making a 100 percent certain identification of the **Duke of Burgundy**, despite an abundance of oxlips, a larval hostplant.



Marbled White (*Melanargia galathea*)

A couple of weeks into September and we've just experienced exceptionally high daytime temperatures. There are still plenty of **Graylings**, **Meadow Browns**, **Cleopatras** and **Swallowtails** and I'm currently watching **Hummingbird Hawk-moths**, **Adonis Blues** and a trio of third brood **Southern White Admirals** enjoying salvias and flowering sedum.

But perhaps the best thing is the ever-present **Berger's Clouded Yellow**. Nearly five years ago in late October 2015 we viewed our future home for the first time and it was a joy to see these delightful butterflies in the garden. They helped convince me this was the house for us. •

Melita Frost (September 2020)

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All photographs by the author.



Corrèze Moths

Some moths in the Corrèze, August 2020

by Tony Hoare

My elder brother and his wife have lived in a small village in the Corrèze for over 30 years but they have recently retired from running a B&B there and they wanted to move into a nearby town with more convenient facilities. So, when he said that he had sold his house, I thought that it would be nice if my wife Gay and I could say good-bye to their old place and to see the house that they wanted to buy. I knew from having operated a Heath trap there many years ago that he had a good place to operate a moth trap and so this time I took my much more powerful Robinson trap with me in the car.

The department of the Corrèze lies on the upper reaches of the Dordogne river, quite centrally in France and much of it is steeply wooded. The village where my brother lived is in a valley tributary to the Dordogne and the house is on a south-west facing slope beneath a wooded hillside.

Too hot for butterflies

As chance would have it we picked a week of heatwave in the UK to go (the second week of August) and it was even hotter in France with day time temperatures of 38° or 39° so we saw few butterflies, mostly 'Whites' with the odd **Meadow Brown** (*Maniola jurtina*), though their garden was graced by a lovely **Silver-washed Fritillary** (*Argynnis paphia*) and one of the *Satyrium* Hairstreaks.



Oak Eggar (*Lasiocampa quercus*)



Adactylotis contaminaria

But great for moths

However, moth trapping was a rather different story and on the three nights that I ran the trap I caught a nice variety of moths both familiar and unfamiliar. At home I live on chalk and get the moths that inhabit that sort of area but it also means that there are some moths that I never see, notably the Lasiocampidae. So, when I went to open my trap on the first night, I was very pleased to see a fresh **Oak Eggar** (*Lasiocampa quercus*) sitting beside it. It was a splendid moth!

There were many moths that looked like **Willow Beauties** (*Peribatodes rhomboidaria*) but there are many species in that group in France and I decided that I was not going to try to sort all of them out. However, there was one Geometrid similar to a **Maiden's Blush** (*Cyclophora punctaria*) that caught my eye and it turned out to be **Adactylotis contaminaria**, a moth that does ▼



Corrèze Moths cont.



Portland Ribbon Wave (*Idaea degeneraria*)

not reach the UK. Another Geometrid that got my attention was the **Portland Ribbon Wave** (*Idaea degeneraria*), very close to our own familiar **Riband Wave** (*Idaea aversata*). A very fine **Lime Hawk-moth** (*Mimas tiliae*) from the second brood that occurs in southern Europe was a welcome treat.

Some other moths were familiar from home but seemed far more common over there, notably the **Tawny-barred Angle** (*Macaria liturata*) and **Small Angle Shades** (*Euplexia lucipara*). A variety of Scopariinae and Ladybirds added to the crowd.



Lime Hawk-moth (*Mimas tiliae*)

The market at Brive

There are other charms to France apart from the lure of Lepidoptera and we visited the market at Brive, the largest town in the Corrèze, and were pleased to see that, although the wearing of masks was compulsory, the market seemed to be thriving and the range of produce on offer was wonderful, from clothes to small livestock and home-made dishes to exquisite strawberries – a local speciality. We were also treated to a meal at Les Trois Soleils de Montal, a starred restaurant in the area which produced one of the most memorably delicious soups that I have ever had in my life!



Dewick's Plusia (*Macdunnoughia confusa*)



Four-spotted Footman (*Lithosia quadra*), male

Back to mothing

My second night's mothing was also memorable in that I caught my first ever **Dewick's Plusia** (*Macdunnoughia confusa*), a rare migrant in the UK, some **Four-spotted Footmen** (*Lithosia quadra*), a moth that I have only caught once at home though friends in Dorset seem to see it more frequently, and the **Pine Processionary** (*Thaumetopoea pityocampa*) as well as **Figure of Eighty** (*Tethea ocellaris*) and a **Passenger** (*Dysgonia algira*).



Pine Processionary (*Thaumetopoea pityocampa*)



Figure of Eighty (*Tethea ocellaris*)

Other moths that I have caught at home more regularly were **Jersey Tiger** (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*) and **Gypsy Moth** (*Lymantria dispar*). The Oak Eggar was back and this time, as I was starting to empty the trap, it was found by a wasp which attacked it. The moth fluttered its wings with ▼



Corrèze Moths cont.



Pine-tree Lappet (*Dendrolimus pini*)



Plum Lappet (*Odonestis pruni*)



Orache (*Trachea atriplicis*)



Scarce Silver-lines (*Bena bicolorana*)

great vigour but the wasp hung on to a wing with grim determination until I entered the fray and managed to despatch the wasp without damaging the moth. I had to admire the ambition of the wasp as the moth was several times its size.

A final session

I ran the trap on the last night with keen anticipation. In the morning there were a couple of **Scarce Silver-lines** (*Bena bicolorana*) and a **Maple Prominent** (*Ptilodon cucullina*) that I had never seen at home, a **White Speck** (*Mythimna unipuncta*) and a **Beautiful Yellow Underwing** (*Anarta myrtilli*) as well as some larger moths that I could see on the egg boxes.

I was delighted to find a couple of **Orache** (*Trachea atriplicis*), one of the migratory moths that I had most wanted to see, and two magnificent members of the Lasiocampidae, the **Pine-tree Lappet** (*Dendrolimus pini*) and the **Plum Lappet** (*Odonestis pruni*). What was more, all three species permitted me to take some pictures before I persuaded them to hide themselves from the local marauding wasps and hornets. It was a great way to end my moth trapping in the Corrèze.

My brother's new home is in a much more urban environment and I am not sure whether I will be able to run a trap when we visit him next time, but I will certainly think of doing so as the results were well worth the effort of taking such a large trap with us. We returned home having ticked all the boxes and just one day before we would have had to quarantine ourselves. •

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All photographs by the author.



Bulgaria (Part 2)

Bulgaria, 1 – 12 June 2019

by Barrie Staley

This continues the account of my trip to Bulgaria, the first part of which appeared in EBG 26 pages 16-20.

North Western Bulgaria

8 June - Transfer Kyustendil to Dragoman

Today we transferred to Dragoman, a small town 45km NW of Sofia. We first travelled south east from Kyustendil crossing the main A3 road and made a short stop just east of Rila village where we explored two small meadows next to the River Rilska. In the first were **Scarce Swallowtail** (*Iphiclides podalirius*), **Eastern Festoon** (*Zerynthia cerisy*), **Purple-shot Copper** (*Lycaena alciphron*), **Glanville Fritillary** (*Melitaea cinxia*), **Marbled Fritillary** (*Brenthis daphne*), **Heath Fritillary** (*Melitaea athalia*), **Russian Heath** (*Coenonympha leander*) and **Pearly Heath** (*C. arcania*) and several fresh **Chequered Blues** (*Scolitantides orion*). Moving to a small meadow next to the river we found **Berger's Clouded Yellow** (*Colias alfacariensis*), **Clouded Apollo** (*Parnassius mnemosyne*), **Niobe Fritillary** (*Fabriciana niobe*), **Green-underside Blue** (*Glaucopsyche alexis*), **Zephyr Blue** (*Kretania sephirus*), and an Owlfly (*Libelloides macaronius*).

Zephyr Blue
(*Kretania sephirus*), female



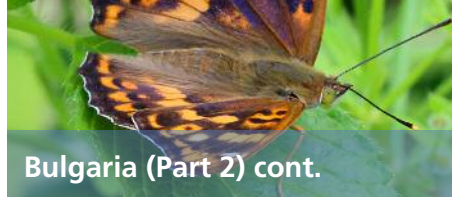
We then travelled north along the A3, stopping east of the road near Staro Selo, 25km SW of Sofia. First impressions of the site weren't good as lots of rubbish had been dumped at the site. After lunch we explored the meadows and tracks finding damp patches on some tracks, which were a magnet for large numbers of puddling blues, including **Zephyr**, **Turquoise** (*Polyommatus dorylas*), **Silver-studded** (*Plebejus argus*), **Mazarine** (*Cyaniris semiargus*) and **Small Blues** (*Cupido minimus*), a lone **Mountain Argus** (*Aricia artaxerxes*), and many **Black-veined Whites** (*Aporia crataegi*) and **Safflower Skippers** (*Pyrgus carthami*).



Spinose Skipper
(*Muschampia cribrellum*)

Exploring further afield we found male **Large Coppers** (*Lycaena dispar*) in the damp areas, and **Black Hairstreaks** (*Satyrium pruni*), **Common Glider** (*Neptis sappho*) and **Niobe, Queen of Spain** (*Issoria lathonia*), **Knapweed** (*Melitaea phoebe*), **Eastern Knapweed** (*M. ornata*), **Glanville, Heath**, and **False Heath Fritillaries** (*Melitaea diamina*), the latter identified retrospectively by Zdravko. Finally, the very localised **Spinose Skipper** (*Muschampia cribrellum*), a new species for many, was found just before we left.

We arrived at our next base, the Dragoman Hotel, early evening having spent an hour at the nearby Aldomirovsti Marsh, where in very strong winds birds came to the fore, including Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) and several Marsh Harriers (*Circus aeruginosus*). ▼



Bulgaria (Part 2) cont.

9 June - Gubesh/Buchin Prohod

We travelled north to visit two sites in the limestone foothills of the Western Stara Planina. The morning was spent 20km north of Dragoman at a site near Gubesh. The area had a mixture of damp and dry meadows, where many blues were seen. These included **Blue Argus** (*Aricia anteros*), **Small, Osiris** (*Cupido osiris*), **Green-underside**, **Mazarine**, **Amanda's** (*Polyommatus amandus*), **Chapman's** (*P. thersites*), **Turquoise**, **Zephyr**, and **Silver-studded Blues** and an **Idas Blue** (*Plebejus idas magnagraeca*) - the latter's upper wings have thicker black borders and are a much deeper blue than those found in western Europe.

Bright-eyed Ringlets (*Erebia oeme*) were common and in one small damp meadow were **Sooty Copper** (*Lycaena tityrus*), **Chequered Skipper** (*Carterocephalus palaemon*) and **Duke of Burgundy** (*Hamearis lucina*). **Yellow-banded** (*Pyrgus sidae*) and **Safflower Skippers** were found as were two **Spinose Skippers**. A surprising find was the second **Southern Festoon** (*Zerynthia polyxena*) of the tour, albeit well-worn. **Glanville Fritillary** was the only fritillary seen in any numbers.



Idas Blue (*Plebejus idas magnagraeca*)



Southern Festoon (*Zerynthia polyxena*)

After lunch we moved south towards Buchin Prohod where we spent most of the afternoon on a large grassy bank next to the busy Road 81. There were hundreds of **Painted Ladies** (*Vanessa cardui*) present, no doubt part of the huge migration that was underway, many **Heaths** - mainly **Small** (*Coenonympha pamphilus*) and **Chestnut** (*C. glycerion*), but smaller numbers of **Russian**. This

was another site where we found **Spinose Skipper**, suggesting they are more widespread than we thought. **Blues** on the site were **Adonis Blue** (*Lysandra bellargus*), **Small, Osiris**, **Silver-studded** and an **Eastern Provencal Blue** (*Cupido decoloratus*). **Fritillaries** were scarce with only **Niobe**, **Queen of Spain** and our first **Twin-spot Fritillary** (*Brenthis hecate*) seen.



Twin-spot Fritillary (*Brenthis hecate*)

On our return to the hotel a few familiar faces met us: Mike Prentice (EBG Chair), Martin Davies, Bernard Watts and Kevin Tolhurst who were on a two week tour of Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece. ▼



Bulgaria (Part 2) cont.

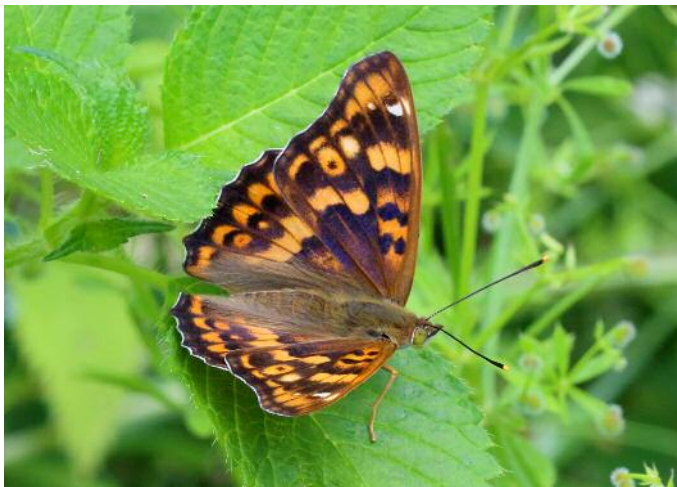
10 June - Komarevo and Zhelezna

The original plan for today was to visit the hills of the Western Stara Planina. However, the weather forecast for the area was poor and Zdravko suggested we travelled north over the mountains to visit two sites in Montana Province where specialities such as **Freyer's Fritillary** (*Melitaea arduinna*) might be flying. This was a long journey of 80km and we crossed the Petrohan Pass in thick fog. However, once we

descended into the next valley we were in glorious sunshine, stopping by the River Barzia near Komarevo. We soon found our first target species, **Freyer's Fritillary**, on the gravel patches by the river, puddling alongside **Swallowtails** (*Papilio machaon*), **Yellow-banded Skippers** and **Wood White** (*Leptidea sinapis*). A little further upstream was our other target, **Freyer's Purple Emperor** (*Apatura metis*). Seven were seen on the ground or on riverside vegetation with a second brood **Map** (*Araschnia levana*). Nearby were **Large Copper** (*Lycaena dispar*), **White Admiral** (*Limenitis camilla*), **Silver-washed** (*Argynnis paphia*), **Marbled, Lesser Spotted** (*Melitaea trivia*) and **Heath Fritillaries** and **Marbled White** (*Melanargia galathea*).



Freyer's Fritillary (*Melitaea arduinna*)



Freyer's Purple Emperor (*Apatura metis*)

After lunch we drove northwest towards the Serbian border stopping to explore more lush meadows near Zhelezna. The site had the same range of species seen in the morning, but **Freyer's Fritillaries** were more numerous here and our second **Twin-spot Fritillary** of the week was seen. New species seen here were **Hungarian Glider** (*Neptis rivularis*) and **Short-tailed Blue** (*Cupido argiades*).

11 June – Dragoman Marsh and Meadows near Ponor

We were transferred to Sofia today, but before leaving the area we spent the morning at Dragoman Marsh, just 5km from the hotel. Most of us went birding around the marsh where highlights included Penduline Tit (*Remiz pendulinus*), Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*), Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*), Barred (*Sylvia nisoria*), Great Reed (*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*) and Savi's Warblers (*Locustella luscinioides*), Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) and many Marsh Harriers and Great White Egrets (*Egretta alba*). Leaving late morning we had lunch at Bezden Lake, just 35km from Sofia where we saw two Wrynecks (*Jynx torquilla*). A few butterflies appeared once the sun came out, including **Large** and **Purple-shot Coppers**, **Black Hairstreak**, and **Niobe** and **Marbled Fritillaries**.



Large Copper (*Lycaena dispar*)

Before driving into Sofia, we made short stops at two roadside meadows alongside Road 82 near Ponor. ▼



Bulgaria (Part 2) cont.

Huge numbers of **Painted Ladies** were present in both, but in the second meadow, known as 'the crossroads meadow', **Woodland Ringlets** (*Erebia medusa*) were common and there were four species of **Heath**, with **Chestnut** and **Russian** being particularly numerous. This was another site where **Spinose Skipper** was found, our fourth of the tour. It was then off to Sofia where we spent our final night at the wonderful Hotel Vega in the city centre - lovely rooms and excellent meals.



Woodland Ringlet (*Erebia medusa*)



Poplar Admiral (*Limenitis populi*)

12 June - Iskar Valley

We left our hotel straight after breakfast and headed south into the Iskar Valley. It was not long before we reached Vedena Bridge, near Kokalyane, only 25km from the city centre. The skies were overcast and except for a lone **Yellow-banded Skipper** there were no butterflies to see. We had noticed a pile of fresh dog excrement in the car park, nectar to flies and some butterflies. As the sun came out and it got warmer a large dark butterfly was spotted approaching the poo. It was a **Poplar Admiral** (*Limenitis populi*) and it tantalised us all for 15 minutes before finally settling on the ground. An unforgettable climax to the tour before we left for the airport.

This had been a wonderful holiday; our two leaders Nick and Zdravko, both experts on Bulgarian butterflies, did their utmost to ensure everyone got the maximum from the tour. The butterfly total was 112 species, an impressive number given that several days were compromised by the weather. In addition, many moths were recorded both from Nick's moth trapping sessions and in the field, and we saw over 130 species of bird.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dave Wright and Nick Greatorex-Davies for their invaluable comments on the first draft of this report. The British-Bulgarian Society currently run three butterfly tours to Bulgaria each year, usually led by Nick and each combining moths or flowers as a second focus. Departures in 2021 are scheduled for April, June and July – for full details visit www.bulgariatours.co.uk. There is a great willingness from the leaders to explore new sites in an effort to increase the database and knowledge of Bulgarian butterflies. I would thoroughly recommend their tours. •



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All photographs by the author.

The group in the
Stara Kresna on 5 June

Endpiece

Germany 2020

by Andrew Harris

We had booked a trip to Südtirol in June for walking and to search for butterflies. **Mazarine Blue**, **Chequered Skipper** and **Black-veined white** had been seen on an earlier trip and I had a list prepared of what I might see and photograph this year. Due to Covid-19 this had to be cancelled. However one of our sons lives in a village called Hegewiese which is north of Frankfurt in a forest just beyond the remains of the frontier of the Roman Empire. To assist with child-minding we were required to travel to his house for ten days in mid-August 2020 as school holidays did not fit in with parental work commitments.



Silver-washed Fritillary
(*Argynnis paphia* f. *valesina*)

We travelled via Harwich and the Hook of Holland by car. While it was a pleasure to see family the weather was mainly thunderstorms! Covid restrictions were much as at home. In the forests near my son's house butterfly sightings were not too exciting. Beyond **Small Whites**, **Meadow Browns**, **Gatekeepers**, **Silver-washed Fritillaries**, **Small Coppers** and a **Wall** I photographed several **Sooty Coppers** for the first time although they were all females and so I missed the very dark male.

I had a big surprise when I went into my son's kitchen on the morning of 19th August and saw what appeared to be a largish greyish butterfly nectaring on a lavender bush immediately outside his kitchen door. I ran for my camera dreaming of a Dryad, which I had never seen, but upon return I knew at once it was a near perfect specimen of a form **valesina Silver-washed Fritillary**! It remained on the bush for nearly two hours together with a normal female Silver-washed that was rather old as evidenced by tears in her wings.

Unwanted attention on the way home

The butterfly shock of the trip came on the way home. By this time the Netherlands had been added to the Government blacklist with the result that we would have had to self-quarantine for 14 days if we had stopped there. We therefore had to drive non-stop from Germany to the port at Hook of Holland. As this meant a long drive we planned the shortest route through Holland and stopped for a break at the last German motorway service station which was at Huenxe between Oberhausen and Arnhem. As we needed a break of at least 30 minutes I took my camera and decided to look at the verges to see what butterflies if any were visible.

The grass close to the car park had been cut short and so I walked towards the road leading out of the service station to the motorway and towards an exit to ▼



the right leading to neighbouring villages. The grass cutting here had been less severe and there were some wild flowers. In about 5-7 minutes I photographed a **Green-veined White** and a **Small Copper**. I also saw various **Small Whites**.



Sooty Copper (*Lycaena tityrus*)

I was looking at the flowers some 10 to 15 yards from the exit lane when I saw a police car travelling very slowly along the exit lane. It stopped about 15 feet from me. A uniformed police woman sitting in the passenger seat asked me in German what I was doing! I walked towards them and said that I was looking at the Schmetterling (butterfly in German). I was told that what I was doing was dangerous and that a number of telephone calls had been made to the police to say that a man was acting suspiciously by the motorway! I was not in any danger as I was some distance from the carriageway and clearly on my own. I was asked what I had seen and I gave them the Latin names for the two species I had photographed. I was asked if I had seen the white butterfly and I said I had told them I had seen **Pieris napi**. I think that by now they were satisfied I was harmless. I was told that for my own safety I should not walk off the car park and as I was certain that nothing more interesting was to be seen I said that I would at once leave as directed. I told them in English that Germany seemed to be a very funny country where police bothered to follow up nosey-parker type of phone calls! I then walked away and we reached the Hook without difficulty.

The police were polite and not unfriendly throughout although I was somewhat shaken by their approach to me. •

Andrew Harris

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A final image from the editor:

Gypsy Moths (*Lymantria dispar*) are mentioned on pages 23 and 25. Here is a photo of an adult caught in my moth trap in Alton, Hampshire, in August 2020.

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