

European Butterflies

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01962 733051
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Naturetrek, Mingledown Barn, Wolf's Lane, Chawton, Hampshire GU34 3HJ

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Publishers Address:

Charaxes Publications
17 Muirfield Park
Kingston-upon-Hull
East Yorkshire
England

www.jasonsargerson.uk

Contributors:

Matt Berry: Greenwings
matt@greenwings.co.uk

David Moore: Greenwings
david@ukbutterflies.co.uk

Dave Maertens: France
Dave.maertens@gmail.com

Robin Fox: Italy
Robinnigel.fox@gmail.com

Paul Wetton and Helen Charlesworth:
Spain
paulosw@ntlworld.com

Tony Payne: Spain
Anthony.payne@glasgow.ac.uk

David and Sally Irven: Switzerland
dgirven@tiscali.co.uk

Jason Sargerson: Switzerland
Jasonsargerson88@gmail.com

Please direct advertising enquires to:
Jason Sargerson

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Main Cover: **Cynthia's Fritillary**,
Fuorcla Champagna, Graubünden,
17.07.17 by David Irven

Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of European Butterflies. I would particularly like to thank the contributors to this initial magazine for their articles and photographs. This magazine has been written by enthusiasts for enthusiasts but also the general reader. The aim is to include articles about Conservation, Photography, Life Cycle, Field Trips, Butterfly Sites, and particular butterfly species or groups from across Europe, written by local experts as well as by visitors.

If you are reading this for the first time and would like to contribute to the magazine in the future, please contact me by September 30th 2018. I would like to encourage contributions from individuals and societies as well as organisations with a commercial interest.

Although there is a significant amount of conservation work being undertaken across Europe it appears to me that a step change is needed. Conservation tends to concentrate on specific sites, this has to be extended to joined up sites and areas. Nature conservation organisations have to combine their efforts not just for butterflies but for all wildlife. For butterflies, a breeding programme of butterflies is required, so that sites can have their populations supplemented, not only with current species, but also with new species. We can no longer wait for nature to take its course.

Jason Sargerson



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Baton Blue male, Signes, 05.04.17 (OH)



Cuers, Biotope Provence Hairstreak, 05.04.17 (OH)



Violet Fritillary, Plan-d'Aups, 06.04.17 (DM)



Southern Grizzled Skipper, Plan-d'Aups, 06.04.17 (DM)

Butterflies in South-East France (PACA)

Three friends of the Belgian workgroup butterflies from the Flemish Entomological Society made a butterfly trip in the spring of 2017 to South Eastern France, in particular the PACA region. Unlike in Belgium, a good number of butterfly species can be found in southern neighboring countries from mid-March. During the journey we are fortunate to find optimal weather conditions almost continuously. Temperatures up to 24° C are no exception. The main goal of this trip is to find the **Provence Hairstreak**, (*Tomares ballus*) and the **Spring Ringlet**, (*Erebia epistygne*) and their biotopes, with of course also attention for other species, both overwintering and interesting spring species. PACA (Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur) is a region in south-eastern France and consists of 6 departments (Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, Hautes-Alpes, Alpes-Maritimes, Bouches-du-Rhône, Var and Vaucluse). Total area of this region is 31,400 km² and it has 5 million inhabitants.

Tuesday, April 4, 2017 - First fleeting Spring Ringlet

On the first day we head for the area between Cuges-les-Pins and Plan-d'Aups-Sainte-Baume. A beautiful walk on the southern flank of the Pic de Bertagne already yields a first fleeting encounter with one of our target species, **Spring Ringlet**, at an altitude of 915 metres. Confidence is growing that the timing of the journey is well co-ordinated with the flight time of at least one of our target species.

Several examples of the following species are observed: **Green Hairstreak**, **Provence Orange-tip**, **Baton Blue**, **Western Dappled White**, **Black-eyed Blue**, **Speckled Wood**, **Wall Brown**, **Large Tortoiseshell**, **Réal's Wood White** or **Cryptic Wood White**.

Wednesday, April 5, 2017 - First observation of the Provence Hairstreak

In the morning a biotope north of Signes is chosen. **Green Hairstreak** and **Baton Blue**, fly in large numbers. We are witnessing oviposition of a female **Orange-tip**. For the first time on this trip we see **Southern Grizzled Skipper** and **Violet Fritillary**. In the afternoon a first biotope near Cuers is visited to find our second target species, the Provence Hairstreak. On Ribwort Plantain, (*Plantago lanceolata*), we find a number of caterpillars of the **Glanville Fritillary**. In addition to the first observation of a **Brown Argus**, there is already a first encounter with a single **Provence Hairstreak** that is abruptly ended by the only rain shower of our trip.

Thursday, April 6, 2017 - Looking for other sites of the Provence Hairstreak

In Saint-Cyr-sur-Mer and Bandol we look for the **Provence Hairstreak**. A number of the historically known locations of this rare butterfly border on habitation. We fear for the existence of these vulnerable populations. In Saint-Cyr-sur-Mer we manage to find, on a small grassland, a single **Provence Hairstreak**. During the entire journey we consistently capture all Marbled Whites in the hope of spotting Portuguese Dappled White. All specimens (not only here) appear to be **Western Dappled Whites**. At both locations we see Candytuft (*Iberis spec.*) blooming

exuberantly. All Whites are checked and are almost all **Southern Small White**. We also see numerous **Wall Brown**, **Green hairstreak**, **Scarce Swallowtail**, and **Swallowtail**. Both **Brimstone** and **Cleopatra** are observed.

In the area of Bandol we also see the typical southern species **Geranium Bronze**, **Long-tailed Blue** and we observe oviposition of **Large White**. In the afternoon we head for Plan-d'Aups-Sainte-Baume. There is not enough time to visit the suitable biotopes for Spring Ringlet, but a walk on the north side of the Pic de Bertagne yields a number of beautiful species including large numbers of **Large Tortoiseshell**, **Small Tiger Blue**, a very photogenic **Violet Fritillary**, and four **Southern Grizzled Skippers**, forma *taras*, characterized by the extensive white spots on the upper side of the forewings.

Friday, April 7, 2017 - The epistygne heaven

From the Hôtel Lou Pèbre D'aï we take a steep walk up on the Pic de Bertagne. Atop, we immediately find masses of **Spring Ringlets**, which, to our great annoyance, are very difficult to photograph in nature. A second highlight is the observation of a worn female **Large Tortoiseshell**, of which we can enthusiastically witness oviposition of 106 eggs in one packet on *Sorbus* species. We drive to Tourves for a first exploration. We will once again encounter the ubiquitous **Southern Grizzled Skipper**, a number of **Baton Blues** and a number of **Small Heaths**.

Saturday, April 8, 2017 - "ballus-day"

In Mazaugues we take a walk in 'Les gorges du Camary' near a shooting range in an old quarry. On the way back there is a first encounter with a **Camberwell Beauty**, and a **Spanish Festoon**. Also a **Wood White** crosses our path.

In the afternoon we will explore the surroundings of Cuers again. The **Provence Hairstreak** appears to be present everywhere in small numbers, with a clear preference for old, obsolete vine and olive tree terraces. However, if there is spontaneous forestation, the biotopes become less suitable. In a still used terrace with various olive and fruit trees we find a superb location with at least 25 **Provence Hairstreaks** that have a clear preference for spots with short vegetation. We even observe oviposition of the **Provence Hairstreak**. A **Southern Festoon** as well as a nice number of **Green-underside Blues** are observed.

Sunday, April 9, 2017 - Camberwell Beauty show

Starting from Hôtel les Mimosas in Bormes-les-Mimosas we walk to find the **Chapman's Green Hairstreak**. The host plant of this butterfly is the Strawberry-tree (*Arbutus unedo*), abundant in the immediate vicinity of the hotel. We very quickly spot some **Common Blues**, some **Green-underside Blues**, one **Lang's short-tailed Blue**, a **Small Copper**, and some **Green Hairstreaks**. Among all the hairstreaks we also quickly find a number of specimens with red-brown eye rims and a very clear white continuous line on the underside of the front wings: **Chapman's Green Hairstreaks**! An early **Southern White Admiral** gracefully flies by. In a damp valley with a babbling brook, Jurgen notices a large butterfly. It is the start of a one-hour spectacle with no less than 6 **Camberwell Beauties** in the leading role.



Sainte-Baume, Biotope Spring Ringlet, 07.04.17 (OH)



Large Tortoiseshell eggs, Cuges-les-Pins, 07.04.17 (DM)



Provence Hairstreak male, Cuers, 08.04.17 (DM)



Southern Festoon female, Cuers, 08.04.17 (DM)



Chapman's Green Hairstreak, Bormes, 11.04.17 (OH)



Nettle-tree Butterfly, Castillon-du-Gard, 11.04.17 (DM)



Southern White Admiral, Castillon-du-Gard, 11.04.17 (DM)



Portugese Dappled White, Estezargues, 11.04.17 (DM)

The end of the walk brings us to a top of a hill where **Scarce Swallowtails**, **Swallowtails**, **Wall Brown** and even more **Camberwell Beauties** exhibit hill topping behavior.

Monday, April 10, 2017 - Col du Landon

In the morning we first take a walk north of Bormes-les-Mimosas. We see our first **Nettle-tree Butterfly**, lots of **Green Hairstreak**, and **Southern Small White**.

In a second place, in the vicinity of the top of the Col du Landon we spot **Western Dappled Whites**, **Small Copper** and a number of **Chapman's Green Hairstreaks**.

In Le Lavandou we find a new species for the trip - 2 **Queen of Spain Fritillaries** are flying, with also a **Southern Festoon**, and a **Mallow Skipper** nearby. Then we set course for Castillon du Gard. We are very warmly welcomed in Maison d'Hôtes Vic. Mr Vic turns out to be a bio vintner with 7ha of vineyards. We take great pleasure in his offer to taste his own wine.

Tuesday, April 11, 2017 - Even more new species

The area around our B&B looks promising. There are some wooded slopes in the area with open spaces and along the edges of the vineyards we see quite a few wild corners. Despite of a lot of wind we immediately see many **Nettle-tree Butterflies**, and some **Southern White Admirals**. Further on the walk we find numerous **Wall Brown**, **Scarce Swallowtail**, **Speckled Wood**, **Baton Blue** and **Holly Blue**.

We can also add 5 more species to our list: **Berger's Clouded Yellow**, **Red-underwing Skipper**, a few **Glanville Fritillaries**, a **Little Blue** and a **Knapweed Fritillary**. We also see a 'white' **Clouded Yellow** forma helice. We continue to search in vain for a first Portuguese Dappled White. We want to make a last attempt to find it. About ten kilometers west of Avignon, we stop at about 5 o'clock. Almost immediately we succeed, we find a **Portuguese Dappled White**! The right angle at the top of the rear wing that is typical for the Western Dappled Whites is missing at the Portuguese Dappled White. We clearly see the nicely rounded shape.

During the next hour we try to photograph the Portuguese Dappled Whites in searching for a place to sleep. This is not easy, because like the **Provence Orange-tips** we also observe, they move a lot because of the strong wind. All possible goals that were pre-set have been achieved!

Wednesday, April 12, 2017 - In search of more Spring Ringlets

We visit the area around Vauvenargues. We walk from the top of the Col des Portes (634m) to the Pic des Mouches (1002m). Everywhere the 'classics' fly that we have already seen in many places: **Baton Blue**, **Black-eyed Blue**, **Green-underside Blues**, **Wall Brown**, **Green Hairstreak**, **Orange-tip**, **Provence Orange-tip**, **Western Dappled White**, and **Scarce Swallowtail**. Although the biotope seems quite suitable, the Spring Ringlet does not fly here, but we do see for the first time **Dingy Skipper**.

In the afternoon we drive towards the "Station de ski de Montagne de Lure" (1850m). The temperatures around 1700h are quite low for butterflies, but the biotope looks suitable for the Spring Ringlet. We descend back or towards Saint-Étienne-les-Orgues. A final stop yields a number of **Dingy Skippers**.

Thursday, April 13, 2017 - All good things come to ...

We start the day with a short exploration of the meadow in front of our Hôtel Saint Clair hotel in Saint-Étienne-les-Orgues. At first it does not seem like a suitable biotope, but if you find a place in Belgium with **Violet Fritillary**, **Small Copper**, **Mallow Skipper**, **Scarce Swallowtail**, **Orange-tip**, **Wall Brown**, and **Glanville Fritillary**, this would be a prime location... A mile further, two **Southern Festoons** flutter across the road. We set course for a biotope suitable for Spring Ringlet, north of Saumane. This time we are more fortunate. We find a dozen individual **Spring Ringlets** spread over a fairly extensive area between 900 and 1200m.

We drive again to the Station de Lure. Despite an extensive search, we do not find any Spring Ringlet at this location. We do find our first and only, strongly fledged, **Small Tortoiseshell**. Our very last stop northwest of Cruis (910m) rewards us with 7 additional individual **Spring Ringlets**. There we also see, among others, **Glanville Fritillary**, **Queen of Spain Fritillary**, **Baton Blue**, **Spanish Festoon**, **Berger's Clouded Yellow**, **Scarce Swallowtail**, **Brown Argus**, **Dingy Skipper** and **Green-underside Blue**.

Conclusion

This early spring trip brought us beautiful weather and no less than fifty (50!) different species. Combined with pleasant company and accompanied by good food and drinks, this made our trip a great experience. South-East France offers a wide variety of butterflies and biotopes that can attract many nature and butterfly lovers.

Acknowledgments

The report of this trip was first published (in Dutch) as a travel report on the website of the workgroup butterflies from the Flemish Entomological Society. (www.phegea.org).

I would like to thank my travel companions Jurgen Cockuyt (JC) and Ortwin Hoffmann (OH) for the wonderful journey and the use of their photos. Many thanks also to Sylvain Cuvelier for the useful tips before and during the trip, as well as for the detailed review of the original report.



Dave Maertens

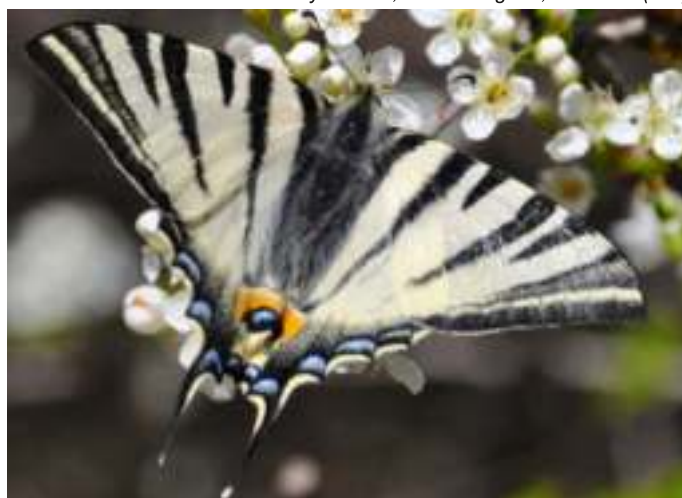
**Photographs: Dave Maertens and
Ortwin Hoffman**



Moroccan Orange Tip, Estezargues, 11.04.17 (DM)



Black-eyed Blue, Vauvenargues, 12.04.17 (DM)



Scarce Swallowtail, St-Etienne, 13.04.17 (OH)



Spring Ringlet female, Saumane, 13.04.17 (DM)



Fuorcla val Champagna, 18.07.17



Between St Moritz and Pontresina, 07.07.17



Fuorcla val Champagna, 18.07.17

Switzerland: Graubünden in July 2017

We returned to St Moritz in early July hoping to see some butterfly specialities we had missed on our previous visit 4 years ago. Using the excellent free Engadine card provided by our hotel we were able to access free transport on local trains, buses, and cable cars, in the surrounding mountains and valleys.

Our first outing was very local, and resulted in seeing a couple of excellent species within walking distance of St. Moritz, numerous **Cranberry Fritillary**, and several **Moorland Clouded Yellow**, which was observed egg laying on *Vaccinium* in light woodland surrounding a nearby lake, with brilliant Emerald dragonflies patrolling the streams and lake.

The next day was fine again, so we decided to visit the Albula pass for another of our targets, the Little fritillary. This involved a train ride to Preda and a long walk via Crap Alv and Albula hospice. Initially we were rewarded with sightings of **Thor's Fritillary** in the woodland above Preda, but by the time we reached the pass the weather had become very windy, resulting in a lengthy search of suitable habitat before we finally tracked down a single **Little Fritillary** hunkered down against the wind.

On another day we took the train to Morteratsch, and were shocked to see how much the glacier had retreated, but were pleased to get good views of an obliging **Peak White** that actually settled. We then walked along the Val da fain and got excellent views of another of our wanted butterflies, the **Small Apollo. Purple-edged Copper, Grisons Fritillary, Swiss Brassy Ringlet**, and **Alpine Heath** were among other species seen.

One of our best days was a trip by bus and cable car to Corvatsch, and a walk via Fuorcla Surlej down Val Roseg and on to Pontresina. On the scree just by the cable car station we saw **Sooty Ringlet**, and further along the track, were the first of many superb **Cynthia's Fritillary**, always a special butterfly. Other species of note were **Grisons Fritillary**, **Alpine**, and **Cranberry Blues**, **Silvery Argus**, and **Titania's Fritillary**.

Having been thwarted by the weather, (very localised cloud on an otherwise sunny day), on a return visit to the Albula pass, we decided to visit a neighbouring high valley, to look for Little Fritillary again. When we arrived at the upper cable car station things did not look promising, as cloud had arrived on the tops with the likelihood of very limited sunny intervals. We pressed on over the pass and down into the next valley, and soon found some likely looking areas, where in the odd sunny spell, the worn **Marsh Fritillaries (debilis)** needed close inspection to check they weren't our target. Fortunately, during a cloudy spell, we checked the asters in flower on a rocky knoll for roosting butterflies, and were delighted to find a pristine **Little Fritillary**, wings firmly closed against the wind. Deciding to wait for an improvement in the weather, we were rewarded 15 minutes later, when the scene was transformed by the sun and the fritillary began to take nectar, affording good photo opportunities, followed by the discovery of 3 more **Little Fritillaries**, and lower down the valley, along the stream, numerous **Small Apollo**, and **Mountain Fritillaries**.

A visit to the National Park, with a walk to Alp Trupchun, gave us clouds of **Damon Blue** with lesser numbers of **Marbled Ringlet**, **Chequered Skipper**, **Large Blue**, **Wood White**, and **Blind Ringlet**, along with a supporting cast of Ibex, Red deer, and Chamois.

Finally we used train and funicular to get to Muottas Muragl, enabling us to walk over Fuorcla Champagna, and down Val Champagna, a beautiful quiet valley. On the way up we saw lots of **Cynthia's** and **Grisons Fritillaries**, and a Golden eagle circling low overhead, with **Sooty Ringlets** on the scree at the pass. At the pass we saw a large raptor glide down the valley, and perch on a rock, and as we got lower it flew off, revealing itself to be a young Lammergeier. Noting the spot, we made our way to the rock, and soon found the reason for the birds presence, an old Ibex carcass, and as we continued down, more Cynthia's showed themselves, and further on large numbers of fresh **Niobe Fritillaries**. All in all, a very successful trip in the glorious summer weather the Engadine is renowned for.



David & Sally Irven
Photographs by David and Sally
Irven



Alpine Blue, Val Roseg, 12.07.17



Cranberry Fritillary, Pontresina, 07.07.17



Cynthia's Fritillary female, Fuorcla Surlej, 12.07.17



Cynthia's Fritillary male, Fuorcla Surlej, 12.07.17



Grison's Fritillary, Val da Fain, 11.07.17



Little Fritillary, Albula Pass, 14.07.17



Little Fritillary, Albula Pass, 14.07.17



Moorland Clouded Yellow, Pontresina, 07.07.17



Silvery Argus, Val Roseg, 12.07.17



Sooty Ringlet, Val Champagna, 18.07.17



Small Apollo, Val da Fain, 11.07.17



Thor's Fritillary, Albula Pass, 17.07.17

Spain: Visit the Black Madonna – see the Hairstreaks

A very popular day trip to the northwest of Barcelona is a visit to Monistrol de Montserrat, a small town dominated by the Benedictine Monastery and set against a stunning backdrop of rocky cliff faces of pink conglomerate. The site may have been a religious centre for more than a thousand years and the Monastery itself was burned by Napoleon's troops and restored in 1844. It is surrounded by chapels and hermits' caves and both the monastery and its fabulous setting are picturesque. Christopher Columbus named the Caribbean island of Montserrat after the area.

The Monastery is home to the 12th century wooden statue of the Virgin of Montserrat (La Morenata), one of a number of so-called Black Madonnas scattered throughout Europe, and now considered the patroness of Catalonia. Long queues can often be expected for those who want to touch the statue itself, and many visitors decide instead to wander along the paths than radiate out from the town and monastery, most of which end in spectacular viewpoints over the Llobregat valley.

We walked along one of these in early June, 2016 and encountered many small butterflies skimming along at ankle height and occasionally stopping to sun themselves on rocks or flowers. It was virtually impossible to identify them in situ, but analysis of the photos afterwards showed that these were **Ilex Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium ilicis*) and **Blue Spot Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium spini*). A number of other species were seen including **Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata magera*) and the colourful **Moroccan Orange-tip** (*Anthocharis euphenoides*).

The **Ilex Hairstreak** is near-identical to the **False Ilex Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium esculi*) and the Pyrenees are often cited as a good area to see the latter. Although Montserrat is not in the Pyrenees themselves, but in the Catalan Coastal Range, the ID of the **Ilex hairstreak** needs some explanation.



Adonis Blue, 14.06.16



Blue-spot Hairstreak, 11.06.16



Ilex Hairstreak, 11.06.16



Moroccan Orange Tip, 11.06.16



Wall Brown, 11.06.16



Spanish Marbled White, 12.04.16

The typical hind-wing underside differences are given as

i) The orange-red dots in Ilex have black edges both in front and behind, while those in the False Ilex only have them in front.

ii) The white line in front of the red dots is split up into segments by the wing veins in Ilex and, in some individuals (but by no means all) they can be chevron-shaped.

iii) The white line behind the red dots is obvious in Ilex but less so in False Ilex.

The **Ilex Hairstreak** is in strong decline in many European countries (van Swaay et al., 2011). It is an “ecotone species” (Maes et al, 2014) i.e. a species which occupies a junctional zone between two more obvious biotopes – in this case the gradient from open grass and heath to closed woodland; this is also the zone occupied by the Brown Hairstreak (Merckx & Berwaerts, 2011). For egg-laying, the female Ilex seems to need small oaks and buckthorn, and buckthorn is also required by the **Blue spot Hairstreak** (Helbing et al, 2015).

F. Helbing et al (2015) J. Insect Conservation 19, 457-464.

D. Maes et al (2014) J. Insect Conservation 18, 939-950.

T. Merckx and H. Berwaerts (2011) Insect Conservation & Diversity 3, 194-204.

C.A.M. van Swaay et al (2011) Biol. Conserv. 144, 470-478.



Tony Payne
Photographs:
Tony Payne



Val Rabbi from Malga Stablisolo, 26.06.15



Saent Waterfalls, Val Rabbi, 26.06.15



Purple-edged Copper, Rabbi Stelvio, 01.07.12



Thor's Fritillary, Val Rabbi, 26.06.16

Italy: A Butterfly Enthusiast's Paradise – the Val di Rabbi.

One of my favourite places for both walking and photographing butterflies in summer is the beautiful Val di Rabbi, a lateral valley off the more famous Val di Sole, situated in Trentino in the north of Italy and which is part of the Stelvio National Park. The valley is a closed valley, not spoiled by any busy roads or ski-areas, and runs northwards from its entrance between the villages of Terzolas and Male' from a height of about 770m a.s.l. up to and beyond the Rifugio Silvio Dorigoni at 2,421m a.s.l. with surrounding mountain peaks at well over 3000m. I have so far found a greater variety of butterfly species in this valley than in any other valley I have explored, which is the main reason I have chosen to write about it here, and every year brings new discoveries.

A good place to start walking is about 8 km into the valley either at the camper site Al Plan at 1,252m a.s.l. just beyond the spa resort of Rabbi Fonti or a little further up the valley at the car park in Coler (at 1,360m a.s.l.). The most direct route along the valley is on footpath number 106 which takes you along the valley bottom, but there are various alternatives, which I will mention later.

During the first week of July, at various places alongside the Rabbies stream, which the track follows, you will probably see plenty of **Purple-edged Coppers** and, usually just a week or so later, some **Scarce Coppers** too. **Thor's Fritillaries**, **Alpine Heaths**, **Large Blues** and **Apollos** are not uncommon on this first part of the walk either.

The track climbs a bit as it goes past Malga Stablasolo and the Stabiet Visitors' centre, becoming a zig-zag footpath with steps leading up to the impressive Saent Waterfalls (1,799m) (photo on left). I always like to arrive at the little picnic area just 100m to the west of the falls just as the early morning sunshine first reaches the spot. I have usually been welcomed at that time by numerous butterflies resting on the surrounding vegetation with their wings open to absorb the sun's warmth: **Titania's Fritillaries**, **Thor's Fritillaries**, **Almond-eyed Ringlets**, **Lesser Mountain Ringlets**, **Arran Browns** and **Apollos** to name just a few.

Leaving the waterfalls behind, the path goes into, what I usually refer to as, the middle part of the walk, and crosses some boggy meadows, where butterflies abound. **Purple-edged**, **Scarce**, and **Sooty Coppers** seem to be particularly common in this area, as well as **Dark Green Fritillaries**, **Niobe Fritillaries** and **Mountain Ringlets**. The path here is flat and well exposed to the sun. Passing Malga Pra di Saent, there is another climb through trees and rocks, followed by more, boggy but slightly rockier, grassland. It was here that in 2017 I was very pleased to come across my first **Asian Fritillary** – the only disappointment being that it seemed to be the only one on the wing in the entire valley!

This meadow leads to the steepest part of the walk, where the path zig-zags its way up an escarpment, never very far from the Rabbies stream. As this hill-side is covered in rich varied vegetation with many colourful flowers and is well-exposed to the sun for most of the day, you can see many butterflies gliding around on the currents of warm air – **Apollos** and **Small Apollos** being some of the most spectacular species. Climbing the remaining metres of the hillside, you can reward yourself with a little rest and a wonderful view of the valley on a conveniently-placed bench-table at a spot near “La Palina”, a wooden post with the altitude of 2165m written on it.

At this point “the top part” of path 106 follows the stream at a gentle gradient all the way up to a wide area of boggy grassland, just beyond which the Dorigoni Mountain Refuge sits majestically on a rocky outcrop. As you will understand from the photo looking back from the refuge showing the marshy land and the many small streams, the Val di Rabbi does not lack water. I have always found this part of the valley fascinating, but have rarely had much luck with the weather, being caught in heavy rain and cold winds before I could reach shelter on more than one occasion! However, the whole habitat is ideal for many species not found elsewhere.

Interesting sightings at this higher altitude have included **Swiss Brassy Ringlets**, **Cranberry Blues**, **Moorland Clouded Yellows** (surprisingly I have always found them on cool, cloudy days), **Alpine Graylings**, **Dusky Grizzled Skippers**, **Silver-spotted Skippers**, hundreds of **Shepherd's Fritillaries**, **Grison's Fritillaries**, one single **Silky Ringlet** and one single **Peak White**. The last three of these were, in fact, spotted nearby at the beginning of an alternative route down; namely footpath 128, which skirts the higher part of the mountain side for a few kilometres, before offering steeper descents to the points of departure.

I should say that footpath 128 requires the crossing of two or three mountain streams on bridges made of a plank of wood with (or sometimes without) a hand rail, so you need to have a spirit of adventure in you (and a waterproof camera case), especially in the early spring or after heavy rain when the water is raging a short distance beneath you and the spray is soaking you.

I also ought to give you some idea of the probable time involved in the walk just described. From the Coler car park straight up to Rifugio Dorigoni and straight down again is possible in less than six hours. Returning along footpath 128 may take an hour or so longer. However, as a butterfly enthusiast, leaving the path whenever I spot anything interesting, waiting for butterflies when they fly off and going back on my tracks if necessary, I usually cover at least twice the distance and take twice as long, if not more!



Malga Pra Di Saent, Val Rabbi, 26.06.15



Titania's Fritillary, Val Rabbi, 28.07.14



Almond-eyed Ringlet, Val Rabbi, 25.06.15



View from La Palina, 26.06.15



View from Rifugio Dorigoni, Val Rabbi, 26.06.15



Swiss Brassy Ringlet, Val Rabbi, 04.07.17



Silky Ringlet, Val Rabbi, 04.07.17



Higher part of Rabbies Stream, 04.07.17

As I mentioned earlier, there are many other walks you can do in the valley. My second favourite footpath is one that starts from the village of Rabbi Fonti and skirts the camper site, gradually making its way up the west side of the mountain and taking you around the Val Maleda. It passes through the pinewoods near Malga Fratte Bassa, the meadows and Ragaiolo mountain stream between Malga Stablaz Bassa and Malga Stablaz Alta (2,034m), before reaching a wonderful viewpoint at a little hut called Forborida at 2,124m. The ferns among the pine trees are ideal roosting places for **Thor's Fritillaries**, **Lesser Mountain Ringlets** and **Chequered Skippers** and the higher meadows a favourite spot for **Mountain Fritillaries**, **Titania's Fritillaries**, and **Swiss Brassy Ringlets**. Don't be frightened by the loud warning whistles of the marmots that live nearby!

You can continue on this footpath (number 128) along the mountain towards Malga Campisol, linking up with the return route from Rifugio Dorigoni or take one of the two steep footpaths down to the main valley bottom. I have found many of the species listed earlier in this article when taking this second route, including several others which, strangely I haven't seen elsewhere, the **Alpine Blue** being one of them and the **Large Grizzled Skipper** another.

Other excursions in the valley can include a walk on footpath 108 up to Lago Corvo on the eastern side of the valley or a walk towards Passo Cercen on the western side with its many farms and pasture land.

I hope that this description, along with the accompanying photos, has given you an idea of what the Val di Rabbi has to offer, both in terms of the marvellous mountain scenery to be enjoyed there and also the wide variety of butterfly species that inhabit the area.



Robin Fox
Photographs: Robin Fox



Cranberry Blue, Val Rabbi, 04.07.17



Top of Val Rabbi, 26.06.15



Alpine Blue, Val Rabbi, 26.06.15



Apollo, Val Rabbi, 04.07.17



Arran Brown, Val Rabbi, 26.06.15



Asian Fritillary, Val Rabbi, 04.07.17



Moorland Clouded Yellow, Val Rabbi, 04.07.17



Small Apollo, Val Rabbi, 28.07.14



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Val Rabbi, 26.06.15



Chatelard Frontiere, Aiguille Mesure 2812m, 08.06.17



Poplar Admiral, 13.06.17



Poplar Admiral, 13.06.17

Switzerland/France: Poplar Admirals at Chatelard Frontiere

Chatelard Frontiere is on the border of Switzerland and France in the canton of Valais. This is a mountain site, with an altitude of 1116m. It is my top site in Switzerland, I have seen over 50 species here in visits in May, June and July. I visit here anticipating seeing **Camberwell Beauty**, but there is a larger occasional visitor – the **Poplar Admiral**. As I got off the train in June this year (2017) something large swooped over the train and away into the woods. I walked up to my preferred site hoping to see something unusual and there on the path taking up salts was a male **Poplar Admiral**. I have seen one here before in 2014, but that was about three weeks later in the season. I managed to get some photos on the path and then because I had disturbed it, the butterfly flew up into the Silver Birch.

Poplar Admirals are reputed to have a short flight season – maybe only two weeks. So if emergence is spoiled by bad weather, they are likely to be missed. The males emerge first and wait for the females at the colony site. After mating, there is a dispersal of the males and possibly the females. So my Poplar Admirals at Chatelard Frontiere are probably already dispersed from the colony site in France.

Other species found at Chatelard Frontiere in June include: **Apollo**, **Black-veined White**, **Clouded Yellow**, **Heath Fritillary**, **False Heath Fritillary**, **Niobe Fritillary**, **Green-underside Blue**, **Red-underwing Skipper**, **Common Blue**, **Mazarine Blue**, **Large Wall Brown**, **Scarce Copper**, **Piedmont Ringlet**, **Wood White** and **Swallowtail**,



Jason Sargerson



**Photographs:
Jason Sargerson**



Poplar Admiral, 06.07.14



Poplar Admiral, 13.06.17



Black-veined White, 05.07.16



Green-underside Blue, 07.06.16



Niobe Fritillary, 13.06.17



Piedmont Ringlet, 13.06.17



Red-underwing Skipper, 08.06.17



Swallowtail, 08.06.17



Fuente De, 04.07.17



Above Arguebanes, 02.07.17



Hermida Gorge, 06.07.17



Las Tuerces, 05.07.17

Spain: Picos de Europa – July 2017

At the beginning of July 2017 I visited the Picos de Europa with Helen and my family. On the 1st July we found ourselves heading towards the Picos de Europa Mountains, along the winding narrow road through the spectacular Hermida Gorge. On reaching the exit of the gorge the dramatic scenery of the mountains was revealed as we continued towards Potes and our cottage, El Empedrado, situated in the centre of the tiny mountainside village of Arguebanes.

I have divided this report to show the five main routes we travelled as follows:

1. Route 1 - Walks above Arguebanes – Two tracks above the village on our first full day in the Picos de Europa.
2. Route 2 – Over The San Glorio Pass – Driving out of Potes along the N621 over the San Glorio Pass before the LE215 to the Reservoir at Besande.
3. Route 3 – The Hermida Gorge – North out of Potes and into the Hermida Gorge. Walking a track towards the village of Cicera and driving the minor roads on either side of the gorge.
4. Route 4 – Over The Piedrasluengas Pass – The longest route, leaving Potes along the CA184 over The Piedrasluengas Pass and past the Requejada Reservoir to Cervera. Here we took the CL626 to Aguilar de Campoo and to Las Tuerces.
5. Route 5 – Fuente De – A short drive from our accommodation to the cable car at Fuente De into the high mountains of the Picos de Europa.

Route 1 – Walks above Arguebanes

After breakfast on the 2nd July we walked into the hillside directly above the village into the dry arid Oak scrub, an excellent habitat for numerous butterfly species. The first and commonest butterflies encountered along the track in the morning were **False Ilex Hairstreaks**. The next species discovered was a Heath type Fritillary which has since been identified as an **Iberian Heath Fritillary (*Melitaea nevadensis*)**. Other species seen along this walk were **Ilex Hairstreak**, **False Ilex Hairstreak**, **Purple Hairstreak**, **Lang's Short-tailed Blue**, **Clouded Yellow**, **Wall Brown**, **Grayling**, **Meadow Brown** and a Large Pincertail Dragonfly. At lunchtime we headed back into the village where a worn female **Common Blue** was sighted along with nectaring **Wood White** and a **Holly Blue**. The afternoon walk took us from the local stream where a male **Adonis Blue** mud puddled beside Beautiful Demoiselle damselflies, up through birch woods into more open fields. Here we found butterflies that included **Common Blue**, **Adonis Blue**, **Short-tailed Blue**, **Southern Mountain Argus**, **Silver-washed Fritillary**, many **Iberian Heath Fritillaries**, **False Heath Fritillary**, **Dark Green Fritillary**, **Comma** and **Sooty Copper**. Higher up in some woodland were **Dingy Skipper** and **White Admiral** coming down to a small stream that crossed the path and in the woodland were our first **Pearly Heaths** and **Weaver's Fritillaries**.

Route 2 – Over the San Glorio Pass

Our first trip along this route was with Teresa Farino a local wildlife expert who can be hired and is highly recommended. <http://www.iberianwildlife.com/teresa-farino.htm>.

Our first stop was in a long grassy meadow near the top of the pass where we found our first **Chapman's Ringlet** which was a huge female with a fair amount of marbling on the underside of her hindwing. These are the largest Ringlets to be found in Europe. Other species found here were the only **Marbled Fritillary** of the trip alongside many **Lesser-marbled Fritillaries** plus **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**, **Marbled White**, **Meadow Brown**, **Purple-edged Coppers** and brighter looking **Scarce Coppers**.

The second stop along this route was an area of wet meadow and bog beside a small river, known by Teresa for **Bog Fritillary**. We visited this spot on at least three occasions but found no Bog Fritillaries. I think they may have been out earlier in the year and we had unfortunately missed them. The area held plenty of **Lesser-marbled** and **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** plus **Purple-edged** and **Scarce Coppers**. **Knapweed Fritillary** was also fairly common at this site. Other species seen were **Peacock**, **Small** and **Essex Skipper**, **Provencal** and **Meadow Fritillary**, both male and female **Chapman's Ringlets** plus a single **Western Brassy Ringlet**. Mud puddling Skippers included one or two **Red-underwing Skippers** or **Spanish Red-underwing Skipper**. The two species are impossible to separate as adults in the field. Another new species found at this site was the **Iberian Marbled White** which was actually flying along the roadside.

The penultimate stop with Teresa was a field known to Teresa for the **Dusky Large Blue**. These were found sitting atop of their food plant the Large Burnet.

Our final stop with Teresa was the Arroyo de Mostajal which is an area alongside a small river containing boggy fields, rocky arid ground and broom scrub. Here we found mud puddling skippers on our first visit. The skippers were mainly very attractive **Marbled Skippers** but included one or two **Oberthur's Grizzled Skippers**. Other species around the damp parking area were **Silver-studded Blue** and lesser numbers of **Idas Blues**. Again **Chapman's Ringlets** were found nectaring on wild roses. Other butterflies included a single **Glanville Fritillary**, a pair of **Pearl-bordered Fritillaries**, a freshly emerged **High Brown Fritillary** and a **De Prunner's Ringlet** partially hidden in the grass. On the path **Turquoise Blues** had set up territories alongside **Southern Mountain Argus** and **Chalkhill Blue**. We continued along this route on two separate occasions to the Besande Reservoir where we concentrated on some dry scrubby ground amongst broom bushes where we found new butterflies for the trip including **Mallow Skipper**, **Safflower Skipper**, **Esper's Marbled White**, **Dusky Meadow Brown**, **Gatekeeper**, **Spanish Swallowtail**, **Apollo**, **Berger's Clouded Yellow** and **Spanish Chalkhill Blue**.



Iberian Heath Fritillary, Above Arguebanes, 02.07.17



Meadow Fritillary, San Glorio Pass, 03.07.17



Chapman's Ringlet, San Glorio Pass, 03.07.17



Dusky Large Blue, Picos de Europa, 03.07.17



Spanish Chalkhill Blue, Leon, 07.07.17



Spanish Purple Hairstreak, Hermida Gorge, 06.07.17



Iberian Marbled White, Palencia, 13.07.17



Spanish Gatekeeper, Las Tuerces, 05.07.17

Route 3 – The Hermida Gorge

The main area of interest for me from the Hermida Gorge was the track to the village of Cicera which is described in Teresa's book of walks in the region. The sides of the track were very steep and covered in flowers which fed butterflies such as **Provencal** and **Spotted Fritillary**, **Cleopatra** and **Brimstone** plus a multitude of Hairstreaks. There were **Ilex** and **False Ilex Hairstreaks**, some extremely fresh colourful **Blue-spot Hairstreaks** and to our delight several **Spanish Hairstreaks** including one worn male and up to 20 females some in great condition.

The butterfly that attracted me to this spot was the **Large Chequered Skipper** which, on a second visit early in the morning in cool conditions was discovered nectaring on Viper's Bugloss along the path and perched on the steep hillside below the path.

Route 4 – Over the Piedrasluengas Pass to Las Tuerces

This was the longest route of our holiday ending in Palencia. We began as always in Potes heading towards the Piedrasluengas Pass along the CA184 continuing up to the Mirador that looks over the top of the Piedrasluengas Pass back towards the Liebana Valley and the peaks of the Picos de Europa. On a single occasion we walked into the surrounding hills. The area had been heavily grazed and flowering plants were scarce limiting the numbers of butterflies to be found. We did however; see quite a few suspected **Mountain Clouded Yellows** plus **Chalkhill Blue**, **Small Copper**, **Southern Mountain Argus**, **Mallow Skipper** and **Painted Lady**.

The route continues past the Requejada Reservoir where we spent an afternoon walking along a path in the Carrionas Fuentes Natural Park. Here we found a **Piedmont Ringlet** plus new species for the holiday which were **Sloe Hairstreak** and a beautiful **Southern White Admiral**. The final destination of this route was my second favourite holiday site of Las Tuerces. Two visits were made here where we explored two different areas; one at the edge of some pine woods where huge numbers of knapweeds were in flower and one along the edge of some farmland where many Scabious and Alfalfa were in bloom. These sites attracted masses of butterflies with new species for the holiday being found at both.

The knapweeds and brambles along the woodland path attracted **Spanish Gatekeepers**, Fritillaries including **Dark Green**, **Queen of Spain**, **Lesser Marbled**, **Cardinal** and **Twin-spot** (very worn) plus **Rock Grayling**, **Iberian** and **Esper's Marbled Whites**, **Painted Lady**, **Small Copper**, **Spanish Heath**, Hairstreaks, **Clouded Yellows** and **Berger's Clouded Yellows**. Around the farmland we found many Hairstreaks, a **Small White**, **Red-underwing Skippers**, **Chalkhill**, **Common**, **Short-tailed**, **Long-tailed**, **Chapman's**, **Meleager's** and **Adonis Blues** plus much rarer, **Ripart's Anomalous Blue**, **Damon Blue** and **Forster's Furry Blue**.

Route 5 – Fuente De

This short trip to the cable car station and up into the mountains was definitely my favourite route of the holiday and was travelled three times. The mountain birds were excellent with Alpine Accentors chattering around the sides of the paths and Alpine Choughs scavenging packed lunches from the many tourists wandering around the mountain tops. White-winged Snowfinch and Wallcreeper were much more difficult to find. The Wallcreepers were found at a renowned spot where the best views were of a bird dust bathing on a scree slope.

On the first visit in the heat butterflies were mostly in flight and included a single **Gavarnie Blue** female and several **Lefebvre's Ringlets** beside the main path but most just sped past us preventing identification. On the second trip up the mountain in the clouds very few butterflies were even seen. A single **Chalkhill Blue** was found by Helen covered in dew on a Pyrenean Eryngo and I managed to find two **Western Brassy Ringlets** hiding on the ground amongst the rocks where they were extremely well camouflaged. On this second trip we ended up heading back down the mountain and into the village of Espinama where the displays of plants in window boxes were attracting the **Geranium Bronze**.

On the third trip we headed over to the far side of the plateau at the top, where we scrambled down a rocky mountainside below a scree slope. The first species we found were **Western Brassy Ringlet**, **Piedmont Ringlet**, **Small Tortoiseshell** and a **Large Grizzled Skipper**, possibly of the form *accretus*. At the bottom of the slope were many female **Piedmont Ringlets**. The next butterfly to be found was an egg laying female **Gavarnie Blue** with territorial males perched on rocks along the path. An **Apollo** alighted on Pyrenean Eryngo to feed and other species seen were **Common Blue**, **Mazarine Blue**, **Little Blue** and rather surprisingly a female **Brown Hairstreak**.

For a complete trip report including further photographs please take a look at www.ibirdz.co.uk or for information about a film that includes 94 species of butterflies seen on the trip plus some of the other wildlife encountered please take a look at www.wildlife-films.com.



Paul Wetton
Photographs:
Helen Charlesworth



Large Chequered Skipper, Hermida Gorge, 06.07.17



Forster's Furry Blue, Palencia, 13.07.17



Western Brassy Ringlet, Fuente De, 10.07.17



Apollo, Fuente De, 11.07.17



Gavarnie Blue, Picos de Europa, 11.07.17



Violet Copper male, Doubs, 16.06.13



Violet Copper male, Doubs, 15.06.13



Violet Copper female, Doubs, 31.05.10



Violet Copper female, Doubs, 15.06.13

Violet Copper in France

The month of May in the Pyrénées-Orientales can be an unpredictable affair. Whilst the lower eastern plain towards the coast is usually enjoying warmth and sunshine that we British may not see all summer back at home, higher up, one can be forgiven for thinking March is hanging on, with extensive snow cover above 2,000m and carpets of wild narcissi making many of the fields appear unseasonably snowbound. The further one ventures into the massif and the higher one climbs, the more the landscape retains that austere early spring aura and one could be forgiven for thinking that searching for butterflies would be best left till July. Factor in a boggy landscape where few flowering plants appear to grow, and one would rightly question why anybody would be on the lookout for a particularly rare and beautiful little butterfly in this kind of place. However, the natural world is full of surprises for this is just the type of habitat essential to the pugnacious and stunning little jewel called **Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*)**. It has a curious distribution in France. Isolated pockets of the eastern Pyrenees, the Massif Central, the Jura, the Ardennes and the Vosges, with huge swathes of terrain within which it is absent in between. It can rightly be described as a glacial relic. In its more northern habitat, it can be found at altitudes between 400m and 900m, but in the Pyrenees it is more usually found above 1,200m.

The butterfly prefers marshy areas with light woodland and streams nearby, which of course provide the conditions for its larval host plant, bistort, to flourish. Once found, like most Coppers, it is easy to observe, with males exhibiting classic territorial behaviour and often returning to the same perch after a brief sortie to repel any other small passing insect, with Green Hairstreaks appearing to be particularly disliked. The butterflies will often take nectar from the bistort flowers, and they also appear to have a weakness for rowan blossom, in much the same way Black Hairstreaks have for wild privet. Whilst the males have a greater suffusion of iridescent violet overlaying the copper ground colour, in many ways it is the female that possesses the more bewitching looks. She is larger and has a noticeable row of violet submarginal spots on both forewing and hindwing. She too is fairly easy to observe, flying low above the vegetation searching for prime egg-laying spots, as well as doing her best to avoid the pugilistic males.

Sadly, this species is greatly threatened, with draining of its habitat and encroachment of uncontrolled scrub and light woodland being its main enemies. Overgrazing and cutting also represent dangers, given that destruction of the larval host plant will inevitably prevent the insect from completing its life cycle. Whilst all this serves to remind us how fragile are the hopes of many habitat specialists, the eastern Pyrenees nonetheless provides several sites where this butterfly is still able to thrive, much to the delight of those who are lucky enough to see this true gem of a butterfly.



David Moore

Photographs: Roger Gibbons

Greenwings Holidays

Greenwings was born almost eight years ago, from an idea conceived by myself and a small group of friends. We are all experienced and passionate conservationists, with a particular leaning towards all things Lepidoptera. This, I hope, is evident in our name and logo – designed to signify our interest in butterflies and travel and is also a graphical representation of one of my favourite species, the Green Hairstreak. As butterfly addicts we began our journey by hosting a local tour in Norfolk to watch Swallowtails during a sunny weekend in June 2010. We instantly enjoyed the experience of sharing the joy of butterflies with others and seeing the thrill in the eyes of people seeing something special like a Swallowtail for the very first time. Since then, like the hungry caterpillar, we have expanded rapidly and have metamorphosed to become recognised and established as the leading UK company for butterfly and moth watching holidays throughout Europe and beyond.

So from our humble but happy beginning in Norfolk we now offer expertly led small group holidays around the globe. Our full calendar of scheduled holidays can be viewed on our website, or you can contact us to request information or to discuss a bespoke trip which we can tailor make to fit your requirements. Butterflies remain at the heart of Greenwings and will continue to be the fluttering heart of the company, but we also now offer holidays with several additional complementary themes - botany, birds, general wildlife, British Wildlife & photography. As Greenwings has grown so has our team of guides for leading our holidays. We are proud to work with many of the very best butterfly experts and enthusiasts. They include Martin Warren, Tristan Lafranchis, Richard Lewington, Patrick Barkham, Adrian Hoskins, Simon Spencer and Steve Woodhall (South Africa).

Some general information about our holidays

We believe in small group sizes for our holidays, typically between 6-12 guests and 1-2 guides. We design itineraries that provide our guests a relaxed pace but are wildlife packed at the same time. Although we record species and are successful at finding the target number we advertise, we don't see it as the most important factor. We prefer to focus on the quality of wildlife experiences instead, along with immersing ourselves in the places we visit to get a true flavour of the wildlife, culture and history. Our guides are all fine naturalists, often leaders in their chosen field, with a wealth of knowledge and experience and a high degree of professionalism. Of equal importance are their easy-going, friendly manner and a practical and flexible approach. Their goal is to make your holiday experience as enjoyable and rewarding as possible. We also, where possible, work with local experts. Their up to date intimate knowledge of can be invaluable.

Matt Berry

Photographs: Greenwings



Swallowtail



Holiday Group, Tristan Lafranchis, France



Nickerl's Fritillary



Typical French Alps



Fagaras Mountains, Romania, July 2017



Camberwell Beauty, Romania, July 2017



Lesser Purple Emperor, Romania, July 2017



Turda Gorge, Romania, July 2017

Holiday Feature: Butterflies of Romania with Patrick Barkham, 15 – 22 July 2018

Patrick is natural history writer for the Guardian, as well as the author of several notable books, including *The Butterfly Isles*, *Badgerlands* and *Islander*. His love and fascination of butterflies, nature and travel make him the perfect host for this Transylvanian tour! Romania is one of the largest Eastern European countries and within it Transylvania is a well-defined region both in a geographical and historical sense. It is surrounded by the spectacular Eastern and Southern Carpathian Mountain ranges. It has always been renowned for a wealth of folklore & culture, but increasingly it is being recognised for its plentiful natural treasures, including butterflies.

Many areas are still managed by traditional agricultural methods and the hand-mown fields and flower rich meadows play a significant role in helping many butterflies survive which are struggling or have already disappeared from other parts of Europe. And with close to 200 butterfly species including many sought after ones, superb landscapes, medieval castles, fortresses and churches and excellent local food, Romania is definitely a prime destination! The Carpathian Mountains host many attractive mountain species while within the huge Transylvanian Basin you can find an amazing variety of different habitats ranging from wet meadows, alkaline marshes, steppes through to extensive oak, beech, evergreen woods, limestone slopes and volcanic hills. We will visit many protected and special areas: **Fagaras Mountain** in the Southern Carpathian Mountain Range, **Hargitha Hill** and other parts of the **Eastern Carpathian Mountain Range, Transylvanian Basin and Turda Gorge**, all very different, beautiful and wildlife rich places.

Our journey begins at one of the most attractive parts of the Southern Carpathian Mountain system, the Fagaras Mountains – highest in Romania and nicknamed the Transylvanian Alps. This is surely one of the most spectacular towering masses of mountain chains in the region with splendid views of rocky slopes, dotted with small, crystal-clear alpine lakes with fine subalpine and alpine meadows all around.

We'll explore this fairytale location, checking out meadows between 1000 – 2100m. There should be several different *Erebia* species around the flowering Alpine Buttercup, Transylvanian Columbine, Alpine Avens, Alpine Cinquefoil & Alpine Bellflower. At higher elevations **Mountain Ringlet** should be the most common species. Close to the pine forest zone in grasslands it is quite common to find **Large Ringlet** whereas lower down the very similar **Arran Brown** is more common. There is an outside chance for an early **Sudetan Ringlet** and **Yellow-spotted Ringlet** as well between 1300 and 1900 metres. We might add **Alpine Grizzled Skipper** as well. At lower altitudes we should find **Large Copper**, **Chestnut Heath**, **Dryad** and **Duke of Burgundy**. Other nearby locations might also provide us with **Sooty Copper**, **Large Blue** and **Scarce Large Blue**. **Common Glider** should be really common, but the **Hungarian Glider** will be much harder to find. We will pay close attention to all the **High Brown Fritillaries** we see here because there is a good chance to find the *cleodoxa* form with its overall sandy underside, which also lacks reflective spots. Some other large fritillaries dwell here too, such as **Silver-washed Fritillary** and the delicately marked **Pallas's Fritillary**.

On our journey up towards the backbone of the Eastern Carpathians we will stop at different habitats. We should find **Scotch Argus**, **Mountain Ringlet**, **Lesser Marbled Fritillary** and hopefully **Camberwell Beauty** too. **Pale Clouded Yellow** should be a common sight, but we also know a place where with some luck we might find **Danube Clouded Yellow** as well. This species has suffered a serious decline in recent decades but Romania remains a something of a stronghold. The males have a rich orange upperside, distinctive even in flight. The females have distinctive lemon yellow submarginal spots on the upper hindwing. We will visit different upland dry and wet meadows in the Eastern Carpathians. Also we will look around at the slopes and forest edges of Mt. Hargita, the sacred mountain of the local ethnic Hungarian Szekler population. We should find **Pearl Bordered Fritillary**, **Niobe Fritillary** and large numbers of **Marbled Whites**. We will also look for **Lesser Purple Emperor** and there's a good chance to see the orange-coloured *clythie* form of this stunning butterfly.

After we leave the Eastern Carpathians we cross the Transylvanian Basin and head West towards the **Apuseni Mountain** and **Szekelyko**. Here **Chestnut Heath** should be common and **Pearly Heath** as well. **Short-tailed** and **Eastern Short-tailed Blues** can offer a nice side by side comparison and we usually see **Grizzled Skipper**, **Knapweed Fritillary**, **Geranium Argus**, **Green-underside Blue** and **Eastern Baton Blue** here too. **Szekelyko** is a huge limestone rock above the village of Torocko/Rimetea and we'll explore its slopes and meadows, generally between 600-1200m. It is a very rich area for several different blues. The beautiful **Meleager's Blue** should be relatively common & with luck we'll find **Osiris Blue**. Fritillaries should be represented by **Twin-spot**, **Pearl-bordered**, **Lesser-spotted** and **High Brown**. It should be easy to find **Great Banded Grayling** and if we find Hairstreak at this time of the year at this location it is usually **Blue-spot Hairstreak**. Sometimes **Hungarian Glider** is here too, but the real rarity is **Black Ringlet** which has a small population of the *runcensis* form here. We will look for small groups of Gentians too and if we find some then we stand a really good chance of **Large** and **Alcon Blue** as well.

Our final destination for the tour is the famous 300m deep **Turda Gorge**. Most visitors do not know that this area is considered as one of the richest nature reserves in the country with a long list of endemic plant species, rare insects and excellent birdlife. We should be able to find dozens of butterfly species. **Southern White Admiral**, **Bath White**, **Lesser Clouded Yellow** and **Swallowtail** should all be present. Beside the common Fritillaries we will look for **Nickerl's Fritillary**, **Niobe Fritillary** and **Lesser Spotted Fritillary**. On the huge limestone slabs we should regularly encounter **Wall Butterfly**. We might find **Rock Grayling**, **Hermit** and **Woodland Grayling** as well. The most exciting potential Hesperidae here are **Oberthur's Skipper**, **Safflower Skipper** and **Silver-spotted Skipper**. **Scarce Swallowtail** should common and in the flower rich meadows we should find **Lesser Fiery Copper** as well. Some of the possible interesting Blue species of this location are **Meleager's Blue**, **Turquoise Blue**, **Long-tailed**, **Chapman's**, **Osiris** and **Eastern Baton Blue**.



Matt Berry
Photographs: Greenwings



Large Copper, Romania, July 2017



Meleager's Blue, Romania, July 2017



False Comma, Romania, July 2017



Hay Meadow, Romania, July 2017



Allondon Reserve Lake, 06.06.16



River Rhone, Allondon, 06.06.16



Allondon Stream, Allondon, 06.06.16

Switzerland: Geneva Russin and Allondon

If you have a free day in Geneva a good place to visit is the Allondon and Russin area west of the city. It is an easy train ride from Geneva Cornavin station, taking 13 minutes to Russin and a further 2 minutes to La Plaine.

Where the Allondon stream flows into the River Rhone the habitat is mature deciduous woodland. But, because of the creation of several lakes in the woodland, this area also has wetland features. Surrounding the woodland are vineyards and areas of heathland, thus contributing another type of habitat.

This region can be visited from April to September, as it has a warm climate with spring temperatures of 20°C and summer temperatures of 25°C. The valley has annual rainfall of 90cm (36 inches) and 1800 hours of sunshine per year.

In the spring there are up to 20 species to be found in the woodland and surrounding meadows. In the woodland the whites include **Green-veined White**, **Wood White**, **Small White** and **Orange Tip**. There are **Brimstones** flying through along with **Swallowtail** and **Scarce Swallowtail**. **Violet Fritillaries**, **Red Admiral**, **Speckled Wood**, **Provencal Short-tailed Blue**, **Small Blue** and **Comma** are also found in the woodland.

In the heathland, typical butterflies include **Small Heath**, **Glanville Fritillary**, **Queen of Spain Fritillary**, **Brown Argus**, **Chapman's Blue**, **Berger's Clouded Yellow** and **Dingy Skipper**.

The species list is extended to over 50 species in the summer. The Cuckoo and Nightingale sing in the woodland and Black Kites fly over regularly. The common butterflies seen in the spring are joined by specialist Hairstreaks, Emperors and Blues.

In the summer explore the heathland area at Russin to find more species. It is good to hear the Nightingale sing in the bushes beside the path. From the station, take the path across the fields and instead of going into the woodland, take the higher path into the heathland. Here there is an unfenced lake and surrounding meadows. Butterflies found here include **Sooty Copper**, **Silver-studded Blue**, **Heath Fritillary** and **Great-banded Grayling**. Common butterflies include **Small Tortoiseshell**, **Peacock**, **Common Blue**, **Adonis Blue**, **Clouded Yellow**, **Meadow Brown** and **Marbled White**. Rarer butterflies in the meadows include **Reverdin's Blue**, **Green-underside Blue** and **Meadow Fritillary**.

The wetland in the Allondon Reserve is protected by a fence. There are three lakes, all with bird watching hides. Walking around the wetland means there is a limited chance of finding wetland species such as the rare **Large Copper** and **Marsh Fritillaries**. If you are fortunate these species may have perched in the meadows outside the reserve.

The woodland in summer is home to **White Admiral**, **Marbled Fritillary**, **Short-tailed Blue**, **Small Skipper** and high up in the trees **Brown Hairstreak**, **Purple Hairstreak** and **White-letter Hairstreak**. The rarer butterflies include **Purple Emperor**, **Lesser Purple Emperor**, **Map**, **Gatekeeper**, **Cryptic Wood White**, **Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper**, **Pearly Heath**, **Woodland Ringlet** and **Woodland Brown**. **Poplar Admirals** have been recorded here, but they are probably just passing through.

This is an excellent site to visit, with a wide range of habitat ensuring that there are a superb range of species throughout the year. From the heathland area at Russin it is possible to enter the woodland and walk around all three reserve lakes and exit the woodland, crossing the Allondon stream under the railway bridge and returning to La Plaine station. Alternatively, leave La Plaine station and walk back along the railway, take the underpass and walk through the vineyards to the woodland.



Jason Sargerson
Photographs: Jason Sargerson



Brown Argus, Allondon, 06.06.16



Great-banded Grayling, Russin, 10.06.17



Glanville Fritillary, Allondon, 21.04.15



Heath Fritillary, Russin, 10.06.17



Large Copper, Allondon, 06.06.16



Large Copper, Allondon, 06.06.16



Marbled Fritillary, Allondon, 30.06.11



Marbled White, Russin, 10.06.17



Provencal Short-tailed Blue, Allondon, 21.04.15



Silver-studded Blue, Russin, 06.06.16



Small Tortoiseshell, Russin, 10.06.17



Sooty Copper, Russin, 06.06.16



White Admiral, Allondon, 10.06.17

Some Photography Ideas

My butterfly photography has evolved over the years. Gone are the days when I carried a heavy camera and a heavy zoom lens. My first digital camera produced some good photos but many were not sharp enough. My current camera is a compact camera and easy to carry. On the zoom I can take photos of butterflies some distance away.

I was amazed when on an excursion with Guy Padfield, how close he put the camera to the butterfly. I have tried to use this method recently when possible. My usual method is to take some photos on the zoom and then wait to see if I can get in close with the camera. The big problem for me is bending over and putting too much strain on my back or knees.

At Camedo in Ticino, Switzerland in 2017, I found some very attractive **Purple-shot Coppers** (*Lycaena alciphron gordius*). They love perching and feeding on Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), but they fly off quickly and don't return to exactly the same perch. I got some good photos using the zoom, but as you can see, the butterfly is not quite sharp. So, moving in close, using no zoom, I managed to get one photo – as you can see the butterfly appears quite far away still. However, if this is enlarged, the butterfly is sharp and a better photo than the zoom photo.

Some other things to consider when taking photos include the settings for shutter speed and the size of the photograph. I set my camera to shutter priority at 1/250th second – the camera sets the stop at f/8 in good light. I feel this works better than setting the camera to automatic, when the camera can still set a slow speed, thus blurring the image. Photo size does not have to be set at professional standard (say above 4000 by 3000 pixels) unless you are reproducing at canvas size. I often edit my photos down to nearer 2000 by 1500 pixels and this is usually fine.

What makes a good photograph? My idea is that butterfly photographs should have life and context. It is important to see that the butterfly is alive (say feeding) and that it is on a characteristic food plant or source. This favourite photograph of a Brimstone feeding on Cabbage Thistle (*Cirsium oleraceum*) illustrates how similar the plant and the butterfly are.



Jason Sargerson
Photographs: Jason Sargerson



Purple-shot Copper, Camedo, 12.06.17



Purple-shot Copper, Camedo, 12.06.17

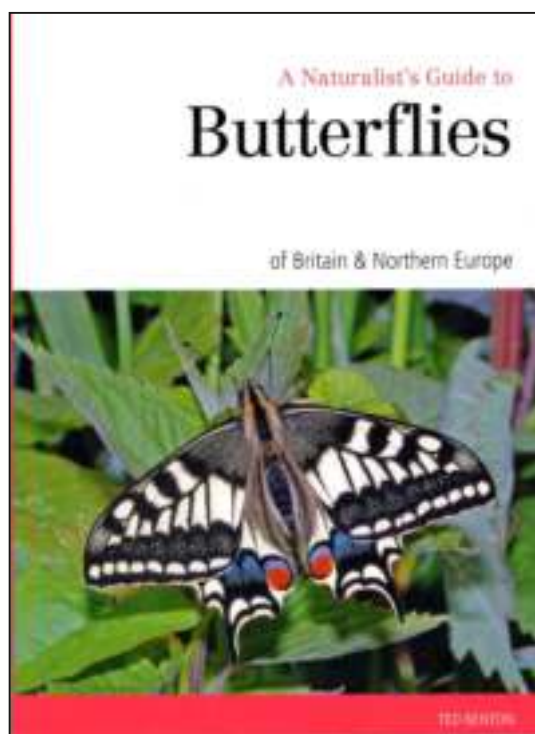


Purple-shot Copper, Camedo, 12.06.17



Brimstone, Biberbrugg, SZ, 06.08.13

Reviews



Butterflies of Britain and Northern Europe by Ted Benton

This is a very attractive book with a uniformly excellent set of photographs. I am particularly pleased to see that the skippers and other small species are presented with larger than life photographs as the trend to life size illustrations or photographs means there is little benefit to the reader.

However, I feel the bar must be raised now on this type of book. My comments could apply to other similar books published recently. Regarding photographs, with the advent of digital photography, it must be a requirement now to have all photographs dated and state where the photograph was taken.

Designers of books appear to either follow a free design or a regular format. For this book I would have expected a regular design of one page per butterfly, but this is not the case and butterflies such as the White Admiral and some Hairstreaks, Skippers and Graylings receive only half a page. This variation in design is rather disappointing.

Another key issue is the frequency and distribution of the butterflies. The author has decided to include the full European distribution. For example the Chequered Blue reads: Widely distributed across Southern and Central Europe. Occurs again in Southern Finland with a few localities in Southern Sweden and Norway, but absent from intermediate latitudes and from Britain and Ireland. This should read: The Chequered Blue is a rare butterfly in Northern Europe and is found in only a few isolated colonies in Southern Finland, Sweden and Norway. Descriptions that do not indicate how rare a butterfly is do a disservice to the conservationists (they are likely to concentrate on other species) and to enthusiasts (they are

unlikely to find these species). I counted, in this book, at least 60 species that should have been recorded as rare – according to the description given.

To sum up: the photographs are superb, the description of the butterflies and habitats are fine. The distributions have to be interpreted carefully.



Butterflies in Europe

This is the 10th anniversary special magazine issue of the European Interests Group of Butterfly Conservation – now known as the European Butterflies Group.

This part of Butterfly Conservation has significant links with conservation groups across Europe. The aim of the group is to provide information about the best places to visit to find butterflies and also to promote the conservation effort with work on particular local projects. The magazine reflects ten years of articles, usually published as an electronic newsletter to members. It has excellent photographs and is very informative about selected areas in Europe. My comment from a design point of view is that I would not have photographs across two pages – I think this detracts from the photograph – fortunately this only occurs on a few pages. Some very important conservation work in Romania (Danube Clouded Yellow) and Spain (Nevada Blue and others) is described.

One very useful part of the magazine is the updated Checklist of European Species (454 species) for 2017. Members of Butterfly Conservation can join the European Butterflies Group via Butterfly Conservation and European residents can join directly. I hope they don't wait another ten years before publishing such an excellent magazine again.

Jason Sargerson

Contributors Notes

Matt Berry

Matt Berry is the founder of Greenwings Wildlife Holidays. He has also worked for 20 years in nature conservation in England. He is an active Butterfly Conservation branch committee member in Suffolk. More recently he has focused his time on European butterflies and their conservation and is involved with the BC European Butterflies Group. The website is www.greenwings.co.uk

Robin Fox

Born in England, Robin Fox now lives in north Italy and is a teacher of English in a local secondary school. He has been interested in butterflies since childhood, but has only fairly recently taken up his hobby again on an entirely amateur basis. In his free time he enjoys walking in the local mountains and taking photographs of the butterfly species he finds. You can see over 3000 butterfly photos, along with excursion notes and year lists, on his website: www.butterfliesinitaly.com

David and Sally Irven

David and Sally Irven are active members of Butterfly Conservation helping with winter projects. They have visited Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, France, Spain and Switzerland, combining their enthusiasm for walking with searching for butterflies.



Dave Maertens

Dave Maertens (dave@lifetrail.be) is a Security and ICT project manager. As a butterfly enthusiast, he is a core member of the workgroup butterflies from the Flemish Entomological Society. (www.phegea.org). He is actively involved in a number of citizen science projects in Belgium for which he developed an online application platform. (<http://butterfly.lifetrail.be>)

David Moore

David Moore is a member of the UK Butterflies and Greenwings teams. His profile is on www.ukbutterflies.co.uk

Tony Payne

Tony Payne is a retired Professor of Anatomy and has been interested in butterflies and moths for many years. He is currently Vice President of the Glasgow Natural History Society and Book Review Editor for *The Glasgow Naturalist* journal. He has visited several countries searching for butterflies including Austria and Spain.



Jason Sargerson

Jason Sargerson is a retired Industrial Chemist. He has been interested in butterflies for over 50 years. His butterfly interests have taken him to the Western United States, Corfu, Gibraltar and Switzerland. He is the author of *Swiss Butterflies* (2016) and *Swiss Butterflies Site Guide* (2016) and has started a DVD series with *Swiss Butterflies: East* (2017). He has his own website www.jasonsargerson.uk.

Paul Wetton

Paul Wetton has been interested in nature since an early age when he began bird watching with his father. His interest progressed to Butterflies and Odonata when he began travelling to Europe and he now spends much of his spare time filming and photographing British and European wildlife. He has produced the renowned "Butterfly Year", a DVD including all 58 species of mainland breeding butterflies of Britain that were all filmed in one year. Paul has also filmed the butterflies of South Western Switzerland, Southern Bulgaria and Northern Spain whilst on holiday in these areas. All of these films can be found at www.wildlife-films.com

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BUTTERFLY & MOTH HOLIDAYS 2018



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Come with us for an exclusive weekend in the Norfolk Broads this June to seek out the iconic Swallowtail with highly respected natural history writer and author Patrick Barkham.

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The Broads is the only place to see the rare and beautiful British Swallowtail and we'll dedicate significant time to it during our stay. The wildlife watching won't stop there of course! Another fairly iconic

species that we'll want to show you is the Norfolk Hawker dragonfly with its distinctive green eyes.

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ROMANIA WITH AUTHOR OF 'THE BUTTERFLY ISLES' PATRICK BARKHAM

Romania is one of the largest Eastern European countries and within it Transylvania is a well-defined region both geographically and historically. It is surrounded by the spectacular Eastern and Southern Carpathian Mountain ranges and for a thousand years it was either a separate country or a dukedom of Hungary. It is renowned for a wealth of folklore & culture, but also natural habitats and associated wildlife, including butterflies!

Many areas are still managed by traditional agricultural methods and the hand-mown fields and flowery meadows help butterflies to survive whereas they are struggling or have already disappeared in other parts of Europe.

There are close to 200 butterfly species present and we should see around 100 as we explore some of the best butterfly regions in Transylvania. Highlights will include many interesting and sought after butterflies such as Danube Clouded Yellow, Large Copper, Lesser Purple Emperor, Camberwell Beauty, False Comma, Hungarian & Common Glider.



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