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In view of the all too well-known difficulties of travel last summer I was uncertain whether I would have enough material for this edition of the newsletter to be viable. I am pleased to say however that members of the Management Committee have rallied round and provided a great set of articles on the subject of their favourite destination in Europe, or particularly memorable trip. They cover the French Pyrenees, French and Italian Alps, Crete and elsewhere, and they are a great source for ideas about where to go next, if only we could!

On a serious note there is a summary of a paper by Martin Warren and others on butterfly declines in Europe, and, on page 3, I am sad to record the passing of my good friend and butterfly stalwart Tony Hoare.

For confirmation that the EBG remains in good heart I draw your attention to the summary of the Chairman's report to the recent AGM, which was held by Zoom. In the News from France section, you may be tempted by two exciting new publications which are previewed there — the Butterfly Atlas, and a guide to the Butterflies and Burnets of the French Pyrenees. Both projects have been sponsored by the EBG. And finally I can confirm that the annual calendar competition will be held as normal — entries please by 1 September. Full details are on the website.

Nigel Peace, Newsletter Editor, May 2021





Contact details

Chairman:

Mike Prentice Email: mikeprentice7@gmail.com Tel No: 07831 280259

> Secretary: Simon Spencer Email: cerisyi@btinternet.com Tel No: 01691 860253

Membership Secretary:

Anne Spencer Email: Rhoslan.anne@gmail.com Tel No: 01691 860253

Treasurer: David Moore **Email:** dcmoore67@hotmail.com

Newsletter Editor: Nigel Peace Email: liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk Tel No: 01420 85496

Other Committee Members:

Martin Davies
Email: mdavies854@btinternet.com
Nick Greatorex-Davies
Email: nickgdlepman@googlemail.com
Roger Gibbons
Email: gibfam@ntlworld.com
Dudley Cheesman

Email: dudleycheesman@icloud.com Dave Plowman Email: suedaveplowman@btinternet.com

Marian Thomas Email: bc.brd-nlc-824181@virginmedia.com Bernard Watts

> Email:br.watts@btinternet.com Mike Williams Email: wmbutterflies@gmail.com

> > BC International Director

and EBG liaison: Sam Ellis

Email: sellis@butterfly-conservation.org Tel No: 01929 406039

EBG WEBSITE:

www.european-butterflies.org.uk

Website content: Jude Lock
Email: lock.jude@gmail.com
Website Manager: Mike Haigh
Email: webm@european-butterflies.org.uk

EBG Facebook Page:

www.facebook.com/ButterflyConservations EuropeanButterflyGroup/

2020 AGM - Chairman's report

The 2020 AGM of the European Butterflies Group was held by Zoom Videoconference on 10 April 2021. 24 members joined the meeting to hear the Chairman's report, approve the accounts (now on the website), and re-elect those Committee members whose terms had expired.

In his report the Chairman (Mike Prentice) said that the pandemic unsurprisingly had had a significant effect on the Group in 2020: membership (at 700 members) and subscription income were relatively unaffected but activities had been severely curtailed. Plans to offer overseas membership from April 2021 had had to be postponed due to the impact of the virus on Butterfly Conservation Head Office.

Support for role of BC's International Director

Early in the pandemic Butterfly Conservation had asked branches who were holding significant cash balances to consider making donations to Head Office to help the society to cope with the pandemic. At that time the Committee had not made a contribution but more recently in view of EBG's healthy financial position the Committee had decided to make a donation of £5000 to BC to help fund Sam Ellis's role of International Director. Sam's recent involvement had included a project on the butterflies of Madeira, supporting the Corfu Butterfly Conservation project, and supporting the ABLE project which was encouraging the monitoring of butterflies throughout Europe; his future work would include new Red Lists for both butterflies and moths. Sam had also taken on the role of Chair of Butterfly Conservation Europe.

Overseas activities

All overseas activities in 2020 had had to be postponed. These included a visit to northern Spain for the third time to survey for **Spanish Greenish Blacktip** (*Euchloe bazae*), running training courses for Greek National Park staff, and surveys for **Dil's Grayling** (*Pseudochazara orestes*) and further work in Romania on **Danube Clouded Yellow** (*Colias myrmidone*). Sadly some had already been postponed again for 2021.

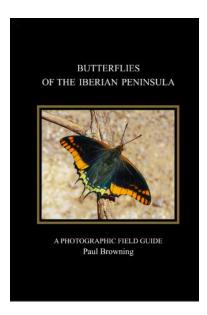
On a more positive note EBG had offered a research bursary to a Spanish student Juan Pablo Cancela who was studying the butterflies of the Sistema Iberico. Although his fieldwork was interrupted by the pandemic he was hoping to complete the fieldwork in 2021.

New EBG downloads

Whilst overseas work was postponed EBG did undertake several initiatives from home. Bill Raymond had produced the final part of his ID guide to the Melitaea fritillaries and had published all sections as a compendium. He had also just published a guide to the Pyrgus skippers which he had produced with the help of Roger Gibbons and was now available as a free download on the EBG website. \checkmark







In 2020 Paul Browning had completely revised and updated his book The Butterflies of the Iberian Peninsula and generously offered it to EBG as a free download. It had been posted on the website and had been downloaded over 2000 times.

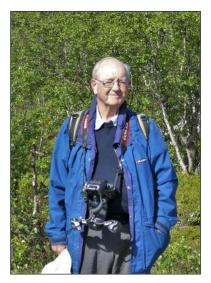
Recording

Continuing, Mike Prentice said that he and Sam Ellis had written to members in November 2021 on the subject of recording to give advice on where to send butterfly records to greatest effect. A new section on the website would shortly be produced to cover butterfly and moth recording. Those recording butterflies in Europe could use the Butterfly Count app which was developed as part of the ABLE project although in the UK the IRecord app (which was about to be modified and updated) should continue to be used.

Concluding remarks

More generally the EBG website contained a wealth of material and was diligently updated by Jude Lock and Mike Haigh. The annual photographic competition for the EBG calendar had again been very successful and all copies were quickly sold. Thanks were due to Anne Spencer and the judges.

Mike concluded that the Group would be unable to undertake any further project work until foreign travel was possible once more. All hoped that this would be soon.



Tony in the Arctic, July 2018

Tony Hoare remembered by Nigel Peace

With great sadness I have to report that Tony Hoare passed away on 14 March 2021, at the age of 75. He died suddenly at his home in Leatherhead.

Tony was a regular contributor to this newsletter and participant in EBG activities. Recent contributions were articles on Estonia and Arctic Scandinavia and in the last issue he introduced us to the moths of the Corrèze department in central France. I particularly appreciated his offerings to the newsletter as they never required much editing!

Tony played an important role in establishing Butterfly Conservation and he was Chair of BC London Branch from 1989 to 1994. However I did not get to know him myself until 2009, when I met him for the first time as a fellow volunteer in the butterfly collection at the Natural History Museum.

I had visited the butterfly collection, then in temporary accommodation at Wandsworth, on an EIG visit organised by Simon Spencer early in 2009, and began volunteering as soon as the collection moved back to South Kensington in August. I soon got to know Tony, who had been volunteering in the library, and we quickly became firm friends.

Tony and I were inspired by the marvellous Museum collection to travel the world in order to photograph living butterflies in their natural homes. Tony was already doing some trips to South America, and in due course I started to join him on his travels. ▼



We were fortunate to know Adrian Hoskins who puts together butterfly photography trips to far-flung destinations. With Tony and usually Adrian I made about one long-haul trip a year to India, South East Asia, Far East Asia, or South America. Particularly memorable were an adventurous trip to Sichuan & Yunnan in Western China and two trips to Far East Russia. I liked these latter trips because of the palearctic element to the butterfly fauna, but Tony's main love was beautiful South American species. Sadly he never made it to Colombia, the next destination on his long-haul agenda.

Tony and I also did a number of self-organised trips to destinations in Europe, in an attempt to photograph some of the trickier European species. Notable among these was a two-week trip to Arctic Scandinavia in July 2018. Most of the two weeks was spent waiting for the sun to come out but when it did, we found some nice Boloria fritillaries. I also remember a long week with Tony in Austria waiting for the weather to clear, on an EBG trip led by Mike Williams and Safian (Safi) Szabolcs. But most our trips were successful and we photographed many, many beautiful butterflies together.

An important aspect of butterfly photography is etiquette in the field – allowing others to get their shots, not hogging the butterfly for oneself and not frightening it away. Tony always behaved admirably in these respects. And that sums him up - not just an enthusiast, but a gentleman too. He was polite, sensible, easy to talk to, and it was always reassuring to have his presence in the company. He will be sadly missed.

Nigel Peace

liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk

News from France Spring 2021

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



This Atlas follows on from the pre-Atlas of 2015. The CEN Aguitaine and their partners have continued to work on the inventory and mapping of butterflies in the Aquitaine.

With the help of 1,328 observers and 81 organisations, numerous records have been collected of 160 butterfly species during the preparation of the Atlas, including 3 previously unrecorded ▼



species. There is a monograph for each butterfly species including the ecology for each one, their habitat and host plants, distribution data with observations from 2000-2009 and 2010-2019, the number of observations per decade, species conservation status and more.

In French. Publication date end-July 2021, by Biotope Editions, edited in conjunction with the MNHN, approximately 400 pages, 16 x 24cm, price 35€ plus p+p, available in due course from https://leclub-biotope.com/en/. The EBG has contributed sponsorship of €500 to the project.



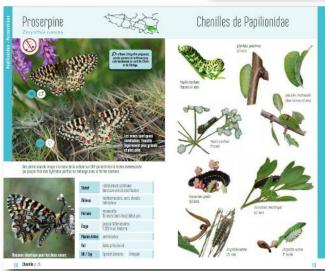
New book: Guide des Papillons de Jour & Zygènes des Pyrénées

Authors: Jean-Louis Fourés, Etienne Urrustoy, Jude Lock, Bruno Serrurier and Philippe Dauguet from the association Natura pyrenaica.

The book covers the French Pyrénées, generally south of a line that runs from Bayonne on the Atlantic coast to Perpignan on the Mediterranean. It also includes the Val d'Aran and Andorra.



194 butterfly species and 30 Burnet & Forester Moths are described, all of which may be encountered in the area. The guide contains almost 600 photos, plus 6 pages of caterpillar images and 6 pages of species identification by size and colour.



The format is a concise pocket paperback, designed for use in the field by the amateur enthusiast. 240 pages, 11cm x 18cm, text in French, species names also in English and Spanish. Price 18€, plus p+p. Publication date is May 2021. For more information and to reserve a copy please contact Natura pyrenaica naturapyrenaica@qmail.com

There is a presentation of the book on YouTube, see here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgVUDJbeVZo

The EBG has contributed sponsorship of €500 to the book.

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PNA Papillons de jour

Online national seminars for the National Action Plan (PNA) for Butterflies, France.

The videos from the national seminars for the PNA butterflies of France on 22nd and 29th January 2021 are available to watch on replay.

The first seminar on the 22nd January for amateur enthusiasts was opened by Bérangère Abba, the secretary of state to the

Minister of Ecological Transition, in charge of biodiversity. Two videos of PNA species were presented, the **Marsh Fritillary** (*Euphydryas aurinia*) and **Woodland Brown** (*Lopinga achine*), as well as presentations and interviews with conservationists.

The second session, for professionals working in conservation, was held on January 29th. Three video presentations of PNA species were shown for **Southern Marbled Skipper** (*Carcharodus baeticus*), Clouded Apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*) and the **Violet Copper** (*Lycaena helle*), as well as presentations and interviews with conservationists.

The first video is 1.49 hours long, the second 2.37 hours. Click on the link to see the summary of each seminar and to watch the videos: http://seminaires.papillons-libel-lules.fr/revivez-le-seminaire-national-du-pna-papillons-de-jour/

You can find all the information related to the National Action Plan for butterflies (PNA) on the dedicated website, see here: https://papillons.pnaopie.fr/accueil/



Demographic and practical study of Large Heath (*Coenonympha tullia*), Franche-Comté, France, June 2021.

The Association des Amis de la Réserve naturelle du Lac de Remoray are looking

for volunteers to participate in a CMR study (a capture and marking study) on the Large Heath (Coenonympha tullia) in the Jura Massif in France. Part of the study will involve following individual specimens already marked and to study their movement within the study site and peripheral habitats, and also to search for individuals in targeted habitats around the study area.

Details of the study can be found (in English) at: http://www.european-butterflies.org.uk/downloads/CMR%20%202021%20v2.pdf

It is appreciated that at the time of writing travel from the UK to France is not possible, but if you are interested or would like additional information, please contact Romain Decoin, Project Manager, Réserve Naturelle Nationale du Lac de Remoray / Life tourbières du Jura. Email: romain.decoin@espaces-naturels.fr



Obituary: Otakar Kudrna

Otakar Kudrna, 1939-2021

Otakar Kudrna dedicated his life to butterflies. He escaped from communist Czechoslovakia and came to the UK to study at the Department of Biological Sciences at Portsmouth Polytechnic, becoming one of Europe's foremost authorities on butterfly taxonomy, an early milestone being 'A Revision of the Genus *Hipparchia* Fabricius' (E.W Classey, Oxon, 1977). He was the founder of Societas Europaea Lepidopterologica, a pan-European society for the study of Lepidoptera. He was the author of over 80 papers and books on the systematics, biogeography, ecology and conservation of butterflies published both in English and in German.

His major achievement was as the coordinator and instigator of the Mapping European Butterflies program (MEB) which published 'The Distribution Atlas of European Butterflies' in 2002, based on the observations of more than 250 collaborators all over Europe. The difficulties of European Butterfly taxonomy and identification were overcome by rigorous validation of the data and the checking of voucher specimens. The data were collected for nearly ten thousand reference localities from Portugal to Russia, with a total of 228,931 records and maps for 451 species. Most distribution maps that appear in butterfly books on European butterflies are based on this atlas or its successors. The work is now being used by researchers to investigate the effects of climate and other environmental changes as it provides a baseline from which changes in ranges and distributions can be compared. The keystone work, 'Climatic Risk Atlas of European butterflies', by Josef Settele, Otakar Kudrna and many others was published in 2009. His final work, the 'Distribution of Butterflies and Skippers in Europe', was the culmination of the MEB project and published in 2019. As one of the best documented and most sensitive zoological data sets it provides a unique opportunity to monitor anthropogenic effects on natural organisms. It will be interesting to see how close actual range changes follow those predicted from climate change models as documented in the Climatic Risk Atlas.

Otakar, a British citizen, lived in Germany and was as active as ever in retirement. I met him first in 1993 at the first BC conference at Keele. We met when he was in London and I visited him in Germany and where his collection is stored in Bolzano. He did have a reputation for falling out with people but we always remained friends and were in regular communication until just before his death from a lung infection but not Covid19. In 2009 Otakar Kudrna was awarded the *European Marsh Award* for lifelong contribution to Lepidoptera research and conservation in Europe by Butterfly Conservation. That he was the first recipient says a lot about his contribution to our knowledge of butterflies. •

Simon Spencer cerisyi@btinternet.com

Butterfly declines in Europe

The Decline of Butterflies in Europe: Problems, Significance and Possible Solutions

by Sam Ellis and Martin Warren

The prestigious American journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences recently published a special issue which provided an overview of the mounting evidence for insect declines across the globe. One of those papers addressed butterfly declines in Europe, assessing their extent, examining the drivers of change and outlining some of the possible solutions. Although the lead author was BC Europe's Martin Warren, co-authors contributed evidence from the Netherlands (Chris van Swaay, Irma Wynhoff), Belgium (Dirk Maes, Hans Van Dyck, Philippe Goffart) as well as the UK (Nigel Bourn, Dan Hoare, Sam Ellis).

Declines in mid-west Europe

The UK, the Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders) all have long-running monitoring schemes giving them the best-studied butterfly faunas in the world. Whilst the UK has lost 5 species (8% of the total) and abundance has dropped by a half since 1976, the situation is even worse in the Netherlands where 15 species (20% of the total) have become extinct and abundance has declined by a half since 1990. Worse still is Flanders which has lost 20 species (29% of the total) and overall numbers have declined by 30% in just 15 years.

Declining butterfly abundance does not appear to be just a recent phenomenon either as a study of Netherland's historical records suggested an 80% decline in the fifty years between 1890 and 1940. Our modern monitoring schemes are thus picking up just the tail end of a very long period of decline.

The complication of climate change

This general pattern of loss is complicated by the fact that many butterflies have expanded their ranges substantially in recent decades because of climate change. In the UK, around 30% of species have expanded their range while in the Netherlands and Flanders around half of all species are increasing in numbers. In the UK, just one species has colonised (**Red Admiral** (**Vanessa atalanta**) which is now considered to be a resident rather than migrant), but in the Netherlands and Belgium (where there is no barrier like the English Channel) several species have colonised as they have spread north through Europe, including **Southern Small White** (**Pieris mannii**), **Short-tailed Blue** (**Cupido argiades**) and **Marbled Fritillary** (**Brenthis daphne**).

Elsewhere in Europe

Elsewhere in Europe runs of monitoring data are relatively short but most have Red Lists. These show the proportion of threatened species is highest in mid-west-ern and central Europe (e.g. Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark) and decreasing more or less concentrically toward southern and eastern Europe, and towards the Mediterranean region (e.g. Spain, France, and Italy). It is tempting to assume that the latter countries have not experienced such a severe decline, but this may \checkmark



be masked to some extent by a lack of accurate trend data. A major role of BC Europe is to expand the monitoring network so that better data is available in future (https://butterfly-monitoring.net/).

The main causes of decline

The paper goes on to describe the main causes of butterfly declines, most of which are well-known (habitat loss, changing habitat quality, fragmentation and isolation of habitat destruction, chemical pollution), but added to these are more recent threats, such as nitrogen deposition and climate change. The latter has a complicated effect on butterflies that are only just being teased apart. Some species clearly benefit if their habitats are still widespread and they can colonise new areas, but many others are suffering because of extreme weather effects (droughts or floods), or because their microclimates are changing. Some of the effects are counter-intuitive, where a warming climate leads to cooler conditions due to increased grass growth and could explain the declines of the **Wall** (*Lasiommata megera*) and **High Brown Fritillary** (*Fabriciana adippe*) in the UK.

Pioneering conservation projects

Against this backdrop of declines the paper goes on to describe several conservation success stories, largely based on the landscape-scale approach pioneered by Butterfly Conservation, where multiple sites, both occupied and unoccupied, are targeted with recovery land management (https://butterfly-conservation.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/bc_2025_conservation_strategy.pdf). The UK example focusses on the **Duke of Burgundy** (*Hamearis lucina*) where this approach has been adopted in nearly all occupied landscapes and whose abundance across the country increased by 90% between 2007 and 2016.

A great success story from southern Belgium is also highlighted, where an EU funded LIFE+ project restored over 600 ha of habitat between 2009 and 2014 (www.life-papillons.eu). The target species were Marsh Fritillary (Euphydryas aurinia), Large Copper (Lycaena dispar) and Violet Copper (Lycaena helle), all of which breed in damp forests and wetlands. Rides and glades were enlarged and humid grasslands restored or created to increase the area of suitable habitat and the abundance of larval hostplants. After just three to four years, numbers of the target species had increased strongly and several other threatened butterflies have either colonised or increased, including Pearl-bordered Fritillary (Boloria euphrosyne), Heath Fritillary (Melitaea athalia), Dark Green Fritillary (Speyeria aglaja) and Purple-edged Copper (Lycaena hippothoe).

Looking to the future

The authors conclude that butterflies provide a valuable insight into insect declines, many of which have not been researched or monitored to anywhere near the same extent. Butterflies provide crucial lessons about both the causes of decline and possible solutions and the authors hope that the paper, along with others in the special issue, provide a sound scientific basis for making good conservation decisions for insects in the future. •

Local species of the French Alps

2020 – A year we won't forget (for all the wrong reasons) by Roger Gibbons

In a normal year, I would be heading to southern France in April, but 2020 was far from a normal year (will 2021 be any better?) and lockdown/quarantine necessitated a change of plan.



Duke of Burgundy (Hamearis lucina), female



Black Hairstreak (Satyrium pruni)

It did offer the opportunity to make a couple of visits in England to places I hadn't been to for many years, to Whipsnade Downs and Glapthorne Cow Pastures in Northants on dates on which travel was permitted in line with lockdown rules. The trip to Whipsnade on 18 May was for **Duke of Burgundy** (*Hamearis lucina*) and it was a pleasure to see them still thriving. This one female was battling against the windy conditions.

Glapthorne is well known as a site for **Black Hairstreak** (**Satyrium pruni**), a species that is highly elusive at the best of times. This was an early year and so we took advice from one of the locals and went there on 2 June. Well, there aren't many upsides to Covid, but facilitating this trip was certainly one of them, with large numbers – we estimated at least fifty – active in the morning. They tend to stay out of camera range, but I was fortunate to be able to snap this (I believe) female that appeared to be taking honeydew or some similar secretion from a leaf at head height.

Mon voyage annuel

In normal times pre-Covid, I get to make a trip of several weeks around the Alps or Pyrenees in July for the endemic high altitude species. It is broadly a meander from south to north (I would normally be in Var at the start), finishing at Calais. Many of the altitude species are widespread across this area but others are endemic to specific regions, or even specific mountains. A lot of research and planning (almost as much fun as the trip itself) goes into the trip in the winter months, in an effort to be in the right places at the right times for certain species. However, the quarantine regulations changed everything, quite sensibly, although my target areas in the southern French Alps had very few cases

of Covid and the remote regions I was aiming for, even less. When the incidence of Covid dipped and the government withdrew its advice against travelling to France, a hastily revised itinerary was put together for a trip from north to south, and I left leafy Hatfield on 4 July.

I had a few misgivings about the wisdom of travel, but I have to say that I was •



very impressed with the level of seriousness regarding Covid everywhere I went. Masks everywhere, distancing, cleaning, with sanitisers everywhere, it was clear that the French took the risk very seriously indeed. No laissez-faire here.



Asian Fritillary (Euphydryas intermedia), male



Grizzled Skipper sp (*Pyrgus malvae* or *malvoides*), aberration *taras* on right



Sooty Ringlet (*Erebia pluto*), male and female

Sites in Savoie

My first major stop was at a site adjacent to a dam at 2200m altitude in Savoie for the rare and very localised (at least in France) **Asian Fritillary** (*Euphydryas intermedia*), which seemed restricted to a patch of Alpenrose, even though that is not the larval hostplant. They were visible in the morning, settling with open wings to warm up, as the male in the image, but were almost nowhere to be seen later in the day. They seemed to buck the 2020 trend in that, even in this allegedly late year, they were showing signs of wear even on 9 July.

In the same region, a visit to a site where two years ago I counted 52 different species within a 100m radius, I "only" managed to see 36 species this year, but the highlight was a common species – a (Southern) Grizzled Skipper (either *Pyrgus malvae* or *malvoides*), but the uncommon aberration *taras*. It was only the third time I have ever seen *taras*. This species has been split into *malvae* and *malvoides* by the taxonomists but it is not clear where the dividing line occurs, and there may well be an area of overlap. It is also not clear whether the aberration *taras* occurs only in *malvae* or whether it can occur in *malvoides* as well. It was not as explicitly marked as other extreme examples of *taras*, but here is a convenient photo of *taras* on the right as compared to the normal form on the left.

Col de la Bonette

Some species are happy to fly at 2000m altitude or thereabouts, but for others it has to be higher. Possibly the highest (or equal highest) flying species is the **Sooty Ringlet** (**Erebia pluto**) which is generally 2500m or above. The nominate form of male pluto is completely black, no markings at all on either the upperside or underside. I think it shares this plain black upperside only with the Pyrenean form of the **Yellow-spotted Ringlet** (**E. manto constans**) which is decidedly devoid of spots, yellow or otherwise. Not only does pluto fly at high altitude, it also just flies up and down rocky scree, so seeing it is tricky and getting a photo even more so.

My favourite spot to see *pluto* is near the summit of the Col de la Bonette at 2700m. However, the scree at this spot

isn't above, it is below. So peering over the edge of an almost vertical scree with a drop of several hundred metres isn't recommended in the health and safety manual. However, with patience, a lot of patience, they do occasionally come over the •



top of the scree. And so it was, after 90 minutes of waiting, a couple engaged in courtship came over the top and settled briefly on the roadside for a few seconds and they may have stayed longer if it had not been for passing motorbikes that plague this part of the world. Reacting quickly, I did manage to get this photo, this is the male, with the female just beyond it. OK, it is only a black smudge, but it's the best black smudge I have ever got.



Southern Swallowtail (Papilio alexanor)



Southern Comma (Polygonia egea)



Meleager's Blue (Polyommatus daphnis), male

The weather in the Alps can be very capricious - often the morning starts brightly but clouds over at lunchtime and frequently develops into a storm. This was the case at Bonette, so I dropped down the south side to a village at around 1500m which I have been to many times, where the weather was more conducive to butterflies being on the wing. I decided to walk along a track adjacent to the Tinée river leading towards Bonette and was surprised and delighted to spot a **Southern Swallowtail** (*Papilio alexanor*) just at the edge of the river valley, the river being some 30m below. It was clearly at the end of its flight period, having lost one section of hindwing. Of the three species of Swallowtail in France, this is the rarest by a great margin, being very localised. It also has the distinction of being (I think) the only species to roost with open wings, as this one was. The Tinée valley was a traditional stronghold of alexanor in the long distant past and I had understood that it no longer flew there, so this experience was very satisfying for more than one reason.

Mercantour NP

We continued south to the Mercantour, about one hour north of Nice. It is exceptionally verdant and rich in species here, not least because there is a rainstorm most afternoons. At a favourite spot at 1000m altitude (not unknown to many EBG members) there is a zig-zag track of about 1km on a hillside, where I have visited every year for the past twenty years and have personally recorded 111 species there. But in July, there is a chance to see the rather rare and highly localised **Southern Comma** (*Polygonia egea*), usually only one at most, and this year I got lucky. It is very similar to its much more common cousin, the **Comma** (*Polygonia c-album*), on both upperside and underside, and here is the underside as it nectared on a flailing Lavender bush on a windy day. I think its underside camouflage is even more convincing than *c-album*.

At the same site was the iconic species of blue, **Meleager's Blue** (*Polyommatus daphnis*), famed for its slightly serrated hindwing which is clear in this male, although the serrations are more pronounced in the female. It is rarely seen in more than ones and twos and sadly its iconic status makes it a target for collectors who do still occur in France, albeit their numbers diminishing and latterly the conservation bodies •



are becoming more active in stamping out collecting. I have encountered collectors on two occasions and I take photos of them and their cars (my wife reminds me that I am not legally allowed to kill them) and send this information to the relevant groups who have followed up by identifying them and contacting them.





Scarce Copper (Lycaena virgaureae), female

In the same area, several species of Copper are reasonably common. The so-called **Scarce Copper** (*Lycaena virgaureae*) was originally named, presumably, by an English lepidopterist, on the grounds that it may have been scarce compared to (perhaps) the **Purple-edged Copper** (*L. hippothoe*), but it really isn't scarce at all. The male is a fiery orange-red across the whole of the upperside, framed by a strong black border, but my vote goes to the female of this species. The strong black markings on the orange-red background make it one of the most appealing of the Coppers. I also think that the underside is sublimely subtle in its colouring.

East of Lyon

Heading northwards through eastern France and the damp region to the east of Lyon, we revisited a site where last year we had chanced upon **Alcon Blue** (**Phengaris alcon alcon**) when we were looking for something else. As **v**





Alcon Blue (Phengaris alcon alcon), female



sometimes happens, the second prize turns out to be better than the first prize, as *alcon* is a rather rare and localised species. Last year we saw one male and one female, but this year there were three females peppering the Marsh Gentian (*Gentiana pneumonanthe*) with eggs. Curiously, even within this limited spot, we did not see more than one female at any one time and it was only after studying the photos that we realised there were actually three. This is a female underside and a rare glimpse of the upperside as it opened up momentarily.



Cranberry Fritillary (*Boloria aquilonaris*)

Plateau des Glières

On the route further north, we made a stop at the rather bizarre Plateau des Glières, a high flat plateau at 1400m altitude. I had been there before, in 2009, and found relatively little in terms of localised species, but I had been given information about a particular spot on the Plateau that was good for **Cranberry Fritillary** (**Boloria aquilonaris**), one of few remaining French life-ticks for me. Not that I'm obsessed with the species I have yet to see. Of course not.

My informant said to get there before 08.00 as, after that, they fly incessantly. So I got up at 06.00, had breakfast and drove the 45

minutes to get there at 07.45. It was clouded over and the sign at the location said it featured four different types of *Vaccinium* including *oxycoccos*, so it was looking good, although nothing was flying. And so it stayed for the next four hours. Eventually a few weak rays of sunshine broke through and the whole area came alive. After several false alarms created by **Titania's Fritillaries** (*Boloria titania*) and **Lesser Marbled Fritillaries** (*Brenthis ino*), something that looked more promising flitted by and landed some distance away in the grass. Having learnt from past mistakes, the first task was to get a photo, even from a distance. So here's the photo. And that was it. I never saw it again and it was the only one, probably I was there right at the start of the flight period in this late year. But life ticks are not to be sniffed at, even grass-obscured ones.

A fortunate trip

And back to the UK. The total number of species seen on the trip was 140. I appreciate that I was very lucky to have been able to make a trip that would not have been possible for most people in 2020. There are some advantages to being retired and able to head off at very short notice. Hopefully this year things will return to normal, or at least a degree of normality that enables us to get out in the wide open spaces. •

Roger Gibbons

gibfam@ntlworld.com
All photos by the author.



Source du Var, Estenc, Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, France by David Moore

What type of single site is optimal for the greatest range of species in Europe? Elevation is important – sites beneath 1,000m have limited value whilst above 2,200m there is a tendency for mid-range species to vanish even though there can be an impressive selection of altitude specialists present.

The lake at Estenc



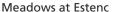
Getting it just right

There is undoubtedly a 'Goldilocks zone', which I would suggest lies somewhere between 1,700m and 2,000m, depending on latitude, aspect, vegetation, geology and other factors.

One prime example is at the source of the Var river, at 1,800m, just north of the hamlet of Estenc in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence. This feeds into an artificial lake in a basin of land surrounded on three sides by high Alpine peaks, with the slopes dropping away towards the south.

Much of the terrain here is damp, and this gives rise to a huge array of flowering plants, many of them butterfly larval host plants. The meadows extend for about 1km to the north, and on the eastern side of these is light pine forest, offering further protection and variety of habitat.







Another view of the lake



There are many vetches growing here, and sainfoin (one of the best plant species for Lycaenids) is everywhere, giving the meadows a salmon-pink hue at the right time of year.

On one visit in early July 2016, we recorded 72 different butterfly species here with overall numbers easily into four figures.

It is easy to see why this location is home to such a diversity of butterflies from the moment one steps on to the wooden boardwalk that leads from the car park to the lake. At the side of the boardwalk there can be phenomenal numbers of puddling butterflies on the moist ground, including **Blues**, **Whites**, **Ringlets**, **Skippers** and **Fritillaries**.

Between the eastern side of the lake and the river is another verdant tract of land and this leads to the northern end where the meadows stretch away into the distance.



Lesser Marbled Fritillary (Brenthis ino)



Almond-eyed Ringlet (Erebia alberganus)

Butterfly highlights

At all points there are butterflies aplenty. **Apollos** (*Parnassius apollo*) visit the meadows to nectar on the thistles and scabious, **Lesser Marbled Fritillaries** (*Brenthis ino*) are common in the more sheltered areas and **Almond-eyed Ringlets** (*Erebia alberganus*) and **Large Ringlets** (*E. euryale*) can be counted in the hundreds.

What makes this site so special is that high altitude species will often drop down to join a huge cast of medium altitude species, drawn in by the availability of nectar sources and the fabulous range of foodplants.

Along with the above-named species, some of the other highlights within that total of 72 were **Swallowtail** (*Papilio machaon*), **Mountain Green-veined** •







Silvery Argus (Aricia nicias)

Alpine Blue (Agriades orbitulus)

White (Pieris bryoniae), Mountain Clouded Yellow (Colias phicomone), Scarce Copper (Lycaena virgaureae), Purple-edged Copper (L. hippothoe), Silvery Argus (Aricia nicias), Alpine Blue (Agriades orbitulus), Osiris Blue (Cupido osiris), Idas Blue (Plebejus idas), Geranium Argus (Eumedonia eumedon), Grisons Fritillary (Melitaea varia), Titania's Fritillary (Boloria titania), Darwin's Heath (Coenonympha gardetta darwiniana), and Tufted Marbled Skipper (Carcharodus flocciferus).

The Col at 2,360m

If that total isn't enough, then a trip to the nearby 2,360m col will boost species numbers still further, with Small Apollo (*Parnassius phoebus*), Large Blue (*Phengaris arion*), False Mnestra Ringlet (*Erebia aethiopella*), Shepherd's Fritillary (*Boloria pales*), Mountain Fritillary (*B. napaea*) & Cynthia's Fritillary (*Euphydryas cynthia*).

Lower down the valley

On the way down the valley beyond Entraunes, lower altitude species such as White-letter Hairstreak (*Satyrium w-album*), Southern White Admiral (*Limenitis reducta*), Woodland Grayling (*Hipparchia fagi*) and Pearly Heath (*Coenonympha arcania*) could well take you into three figures in a single day, a testimony to the richness of butterfly fauna in this beautiful and largely unspoiled part of France. •

David Moore dcmoore67@hotmail.com All photos by the author.

Ariège, France

A visit to the Ariège, Occitanie, France, 5th - 12th July 2019 by Dudley Cheesman

The department of Ariège (09), which contains some rich and important butterfly habitats, was studied by Nabokov in the last century and, more recently, by Graham Hart, an English vet based in Tarascon. It was Graham who first made me aware of this area about 20 years ago, and who, in 2011, guided a small team of BC-EBG/EIG members to some of the key sites.

In the summer of 2019 we visited France with friends for a week in the Hautes-Pyrénées with Jude Lock and colleagues from BC-EBG before travelling across to a hotel in Ax-les-Thermes in Ariège that was to be our base; the combination of these two areas of the Pyrénées provides excellent opportunities to find well over 100 species in July.



Apollo (Parnassius apollo)



Looking down into the Gorges de la Frau from the Pas de l'Ours

Gorges de la Frau (6th July)

Access is from the north via Bélesta and Fougax-et-Barrineuf; limited parking and a no-through road. The walk from the first and best parking area, with picnic bench, up to the defile (end of road) through the Gorges is about 2km. We spent most of the day here photographing **Apollo** (*Parnassius apollo*) and

Swallowtail (Papilio machaon), six Skippers including Marbled (Carcharodus lavatherae) and Tufted Marbled (C. flocciferus), Whites including Cleopatra (Gonepteryx cleopatra), Brimstone (G. rhamni) and Orange-tip (Anthocharis cardamines), Large Blue (Phengaris arion), Duke of Burgundy (Hamearis lucina), Purple Emperor (Apatura iris) and Lesser Purple Emperor (A. ilia), both White Admirals, Fritillaries and Browns, including Woodland Brown (Lopinga achine), plus Piedmont Ringlet (Erebia meolans) and Bright-eyed Ringlet (E. oeme). An excellent day of almost 50 species, in perfect conditions.



Escher's Blue (Polyommatus escheri)



Caussou track looking back towards village

Caussou Track, beyond village, leading to Col de Marmare (7th July)

Park in the village. This is another lovely walk, west to east, but with a steady incline and about 3kms in length before returning to the village. **Escher's Blue** (**Polyommatus escheri**)

was prominent, a Large Tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis polychloros*) showed well, and we enjoyed Purple Emperor and a range of Fritillaries, Amanda's Blue (*P. amandus*) and Turquoise Blue (*P. dorylas*), plus our first sighting of Mountain Alcon Blue (*Phengaris alcon rebeli*); Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*) and Sloe Hairstreak (*Satyrium acaciae*) were also recorded. The pleasure of this walk is also in the flora with Marsh and Dark Red Helleborines, and Fragrant Orchid along the track. In the afternoon we moved on to an area above Axiat but without finding new species.



Safflower Skippers (Pyrgus carthami)



Orlu Reserve with the Dent d'Orlu

Orlu Reserve (8th July)

The reserve is south-east of Ax, with parking. We did a short circular walk in very unsettled weather. Our

expectations were not high, but we did find a dead **Camberwell Beauty** (*Nymphalis antiopa*) (the only sighting of this species during the week!), and added **Safflower Skipper** (*Pyrgus carthami*) (confirmed by Roger Gibbons), **Niobe Fritillary** (*Fabriciana niobe*) and **Queen of Spain Fritillary** (*Issoria* ▼



lathonia); a **Geranium Bronze** (*Cacyreus marshalli*) was photographed outside the restaurant on our return.

Col de Marmare (9th July)

We visited after a storm and in unsettled conditions. At this elevation, 1361m, temperatures were much lower but we did find **Mountain Alcon Blue** egglaying on the Cross Gentian. Conditions appeared to be improving by afternoon and we moved on to a location above Verdun and walked a track and road to find a fresh **Gatekeeper** (*Pyronia tithonus*) and **Weaver's Fritillary** (*Boloria dia*) to add to our list; we saw no Blues here, but a reasonable mix of species.

Génat - through the grasslands





Chemin des Bonshommes going east from Prades

Génat (10th July)

Car park; 'fitness circuit' of about 7kms. Génat sits at an elevation of about 1000m above the Niaux Caves, south-west of Tarascon. The weather was fine and on this occasion we chose to concentrate on the best butterfly areas rather than do the complete circuit. I did go off alone to look for Hairstreaks and Woodland Brown in the wood edge along the descending track and found Blue-spot (Satyrium spini), Ilex (S. ilicis) and Sloe, plus Large Blue and a good many species but not Woodland Brown. On return my wife and friends thought it great fun to tease me with photos of Woodland Brown (I did see the butterfly later). Large Chequered Skipper (Heteropterus morpheus) and Red Underwing Skipper (Spialia sertorius) were seen, but not Chequered Skipper (Carterocephalus palaemon) on this occasion; Short-tailed Blue (Cupido argiades), Silver-studded Blue (Plebejus argus) and Chalk-hill Blue (Lysandra coridon), both Emperors, Large Tortoiseshell and Southern White Admiral (Limenitis reducta), and both High Brown (Fabriciana adippe) and Niobe Fritillaries were amongst a list of over 50 species seen on a memorable day.

Chemin des Bonshommes (11th July)

Access from Prades, north of Ax; park in the village. This is a favourite walk, part of the

GR7B-GR107 Cathare route, that runs across to Comus then up to the Gorges de la Frau. The walk is usually accompanied by a constant calling of Quail from the meadows below and sightings of raptors above the escarpment to the NW, but the meadows had been cut and grazed early, and calls were infrequent. Good sightings of Mountain Alcon, Large, Turquoise and Amanda's v



Blues, plus a mix of Skippers, Whites, Vanessids, Fritillaries and Browns, but we cut our time here to allow us to revisit the Col de Marmare in the fine weather. I wanted to check on the fragrant form of Bug Orchid that grows beside the track. Unfortunately, the track had been resurfaced, damaging and limiting the colony to just a few plants. However, we were not disappointed with the butterflies: a generous showing of many species, including Apollo, Blues including Mazarine (Cyaniris semiargus), and numerous Fritillaries including Lesser Marbled (Brenthis ino), giving an enjoyable end to our butterflying week in the Ariège.

There are many other really good sites in the area. Worth visiting include Plateau de Beille; Barry d'en Haut up to the Col; above Albiès; the track east from Col du Chioula; and Pas de l'Ours. The Col de Puymorens and sites in Andorra are also easily accessible from Ax. •

Dudley Cheesman dudleycheesman@icloud.com All photos by the author.



Mountain Alcon Blue (Phengaris alcon rebeli)



Lesser Marbled Fritillary (Brenthis ino)

Gran Paradiso NP, Italy

Gran Paradiso National Park, Italy by Mike Prentice

One of my favourite places to visit is Gran Paradiso in northern Italy, a few kilometres south of the Mont Blanc tunnel and just over the border from the French Vanoise NP. The Gran Paradiso National Park (Italy's first) was established in 1922 and covers an area of 703 square kilometres with the eponymous mountain at its heart. The Park was set up to preserve the ibex (so the King could shoot them!) and both ibex and chamois are now abundant in the park and can easily be seen even by the roadside – particularly in the early morning.

The Cogne Valley

There are four principal valleys leading into the Park but my favourite route is to travel up the road from Aymavilles to Cogne where the main valley splits into two and you can then choose between roads to either Lillaz or Valnontey. However before starting the ascent to Cogne the first place to stop is Pont d'Aël (also spelled Pondel) which has a 3rd century BC Roman bridge and aqueduct and is the site for **Piedmont Anomalous Blue** (**Agrodiaetus humedasae**). This butterfly has a very restricted range but is quite abundant on the valley side once you walk across the bridge. Other species found

on the site include Apollo (Parnassius apollo), Damon Blue (Polyommatus damon), Great Sooty Satyr (Satyrus ferula) and Marbled Fritillary

Above Valnontey

(Brenthis daphne).

Above the lovely mountain town of Cogne I favour the valley leading south from the hamlet of Valnontey which is situated at 5500 ft above sea level. On one visit in mid-July 2008 I spent several days in the area and a gentle walk up the valley from Valnontey yielded 45 species in only a few hours ranging from my first ever sighting of Alpine Grayling (Oeneis **glacialis**) to 13 species of Lycaenid including **Baton Blue** (Pseudophilotes **Turquoise** Blue baton), (Polyommatus dorylas) and (Aricia 🔻 Silvery Argus



The Cogne Valley



nicias). There was a good range of Fritillaries on the wing including Titania's (Boloria titania), Grisons (Melitaea varia) and Meadow (M. parthenoides) as well as such delights as Small Apollo (Parnassius phoebus). Unsurprisingly at this altitude there also numerous Ringlets including Large (Erebia euryale), Almond-eyed (E. alberganus) and both Mountain (E. epiphron) and Lesser Mountain (E. melampus).

A perfect holiday destination

Gran Paradiso is a fantastic place for a quick visit or for a longer holiday. There are plenty of hotels in Cogne and the smaller villages of Lillaz and Valnontey both have hotels and campsites. There is plenty of good walking in the area and if you tire of this side of the Aosta valley you can cross to the northern side to Breuil-Cervinia and the Matterhorn or up to Mont Blanc. On my trip in 2008 I spent 6 days in the area and saw more than 80 species of butterfly, numerous ibex, chamois and marmots, and bird species included Raven, Alpine Chough, Golden Eagle and Crag Martin. Oh, and did I mention the fabulous Italian food and wine? No wonder I have returned several times!

Mike Prentice mikeprentice7@gmail.com All photos by the author.





Piedmont Anomalous Blue (Agrodiaetus humedasae)

Some European highlights

Some highlights of my European travels, 2008 - 2019 by Dave Plowman

Whilst we were in lockdown brought about by COVID-19, I spent some of my enforced leisure time going through all the photos of butterflies I had taken over the previous 10 years. It reminded me of all the enjoyable moments I had taking these photographs and the marvellous places I had visited. Most of my trips have been solo, with the occasional hour or so away during family holidays.

Swallowtail (Papilio machaon britannicus)



Most of my trips were based on known areas within Europe from 2008 - 2019, either given to me by individuals or worked out by myself. The following are photographs taken in the country that I have visited. I have tried to show a few species that I hope some of you have not seen.

United Kingdom

This photograph was taken at How Hill in Norfolk in June 2008. I managed to take all UK species by September 2009 – 18 months after taking my first photograph of a Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*).

Switzerland

I travelled by car to Switzerland arriving at Nendaz in August 2009 - a magnificent area; Tortin was my personal favourite.

Butterflies were pretty much everywhere the first two weeks ... and then the farmers cut the meadows. This did not affect anywhere in the higher altitudes but in the valleys it certainly did. Whilst walking around the village, I spotted a garden that had not been tended for a few months and it was full of butterflies. When I asked permission to explore, I discovered that it was owned by an English couple that mainly used it as a holiday home. I counted 24 species in this garden, and 20 of them could have been photographed in the UK. I reminisced with them as I had just travelled the length and breadth of the UK photographing the UK species and I was now hooked on Europe.





Queen of Spain Fritillary (Issoria lathonia)







Pallas' Fritillary (Argynnis laodice)



Dusky Large Blue (Phengaris nausithous)

Hungary

This was a three-week holiday to Aggtelek in Hungary in July to August 2012. We drove 3500 miles and allowed six days for travel. Mike Williams went the year before and gave me a few places to explore. Without doubt, this was the cheapest place in Europe I have been to - lunch was typically £3 including a drink, and ice cream was 30p (an afternoon treat). Evening meals cost about £5 including a drink as well. We were very lucky with the weather – there were blue skies every day.

Butterflies were everywhere. My first sighting in Hungary was Pallas' Fritillary (Argynnis laodice) nectaring on large thistles spotted whilst driving to my accommodation. During the next two weeks I photographed 86 species. Scarce Large Blue (Phengaris teleius) was another highlight. There were also sightings of Eastern Pale Clouded Yellow (Colias erate) and Lesser Purple Emperor (Apatura ilia).

Germany

Returning home from Hungary, and during a refreshment break, I had a walk around the perimeter of a service station and found a colony of about twenty or so **Dusky Large Blues** (*Phengaris nausithous*). The food plant was common in the grounds of this service station and probably lucky for me the grass had not been cut for a while. This is one of my rarest finds at a service station to date!

Greece

I have now travelled to Greece on six occasions and have never really been disappointed. The weather has been a problem on a few occasions, though, especially when looking for **Dils Grayling** (*Pseudochazara orestes*) local to Mount Phalakron in June 2018. I never saw the mountain top on this trip but even in dull, damp conditions there was always something of interest flying. I still observed 80+ species. I did see Dils, but I could not get close enough to take a photograph. It is one of those butterflies that you need a team of three or four to observe and photograph in my opinion.









Mazarine Blue (Cyaniris semiargus helena), male

I have chosen the **Pontic Blue** (**Neolysandra coelestina**) taken on a trip to Mount Chelmos in May 2013. I found three separate colonies, only small in numbers but all very fresh, and they were also flying in company with Mazarine Blue (Cyaniris semiargus helena).

Eastern Wood White (Leptidea duponcheli)



Meleager's Blue (Polyommatus daphnis), female

Bulgaria

I have been to Bulgaria three times now, my first visit during July 2013. If you love butterflies you must go. I have managed to locate over 110 species each trip.

It was difficult to share a typical species from this country, but I finally chose the Eastern Wood White (Leptidea duponcheli) - a tricky species to identify. The underside cell has a small white rectangular spot extending from the basal area. The rest of the markings are solid green or greyish green. This individual was

taken in May (1st brood).

I have also added Meleager's Blue (Polyommatus daphnis). I spotted this the day before and went back early in the morning to get the upperside shot – it did not disappoint. This individual was taken in



Macedonia

The trip to Macedonia in July 2014 was specifically for the Macedonian Grayling (Pseudochazara cingovskii), but also anything that I had not seen before. I had ten target species and I located six on that trip. Russian Heath (Coenonympha v





Freyer's Fritillary (Melitaea arduinna), female

leander) and Balkan Marbled White (*Melanargia larissa*) were among the 135 species I found there. Freyer's Fritillary (*Melitaea arduinna*) must be up there with the best for its beautiful markings - this female was stunning.

Cyprus

Another holiday to Paphos in Cyprus in May 2015 gave me a few species I had not encountered before. Eddie John provided some sites for me to explore, and a few of the endemic species were found and photographed thanks to this information. I came across a small colony of **Lesser Fiery Coppers** in a small entrance to the beach quite near to where we were staying. A couple of days later, I spotted my first **Millet Skipper** at the same entrance.



Lesser Fiery Copper (Lycaena thersamon)



Millet Skipper (Pelopidas thrax)

Sweden

I organised a trip to Abisko, Sweden in July 2015. Sunshine greeted me on my arrival at Kiruna airport with a chilly wind. It was too late to look for any butterflies on my arrival, so I just had a wander around and went to my hotel in Kiruna. My first full day was bright but still cold and I spotted several butterflies. The dark form **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (**Boloria euphrosyne** f. **fingal**) was the only one I had not seen before. My journey to Abisko was about two hours, but I took my time and stopped at various likely-looking spots. However, although it was bright it was not very warm, and was totally devoid of butterflies.

For the next six days I must have walked fifty miles and did not find one butterfly. This must be a record. On the seventh day I took a risk and went up on the cable car above Abisko and I finally found my first species, Frejya's Fritillary (Boloria freija). During the few hours I was there, this was the only species I came across. I was followed for the duration of my mountain hike by a Ptarmigan. He was a welcome companion, and every time I stopped, he would hunker down and watch my every move from about 2 meters away.



My companion, the Ptarmigan.



Typical landscape, Abisko National Park.





Danube Clouded Yellow (Colias myrmidone)



The following day was the best weather of my trip – sunny and blue skies all day. Unfortunately, mosquitoes and midges came out in their thousands and although I found ten other species that day it was difficult to focus on any butterfly because of the number of mosquitoes between it and my lens.

I had also planned a trip to Alta, but the weather was probably worse there according to the forecast.

However, do not be put off going - it was a fascinating place and I probably travelled around more than normal which added to the interest. I will certainly return but hope that the weather will be kinder next time.

Romania

I had only one target species in Romania when I travelled there in August 2015 - the **Danube Clouded Yellow (Colias myrmidone**). I allowed two full days in the field and was rewarded on my second day by finding a colony of around twenty or so flying up and down a particular hillside non-stop. Fortunately, one stopped for a photograph, although it did not stop for long. I travelled around taking in all the castles and monasteries on offer, but the





Provence Hairstreak (Tomares ballus)



Alpine Grayling (Oeneis glacialis)

highlight was the Transylvania road. I suggest you hire a car and check it out.

Spain

This shot of **Provence Hairstreak** (*Tomares ballus*) was taken during a long weekend trip to Madrid in March 2017. I was given a site to go to by a friend I met in the Sierra Nevada and I must have seen upwards of 60+ at this site. I also had two or three days in the field and at virtually every site I explored I came across two or three of the species.

France

This photograph of **Foulquier's Grizzled Skipper** (*Pyrgus foulquieri*) was taken in the company of Roger and Ann Gibbons, and I was also introduced to Peter Groenendijk. It was one of the many highlights of a very successful trip to the Alpes-Maritimes in July 2019. **Alpine Grayling** (*Oeneis glacialis*) was another notable species found and photographed with my friend Mike Bailey. •



Foulquier's Grizzled Skipper (Pyrgus foulquieri)

Dave Plowman suedaveplowman@btinternet.com All photos by the author

Eastern Grass Blue

Zizeeria karsandra (Eastern Grass Blue) by Bernard Watts

Zizeeria knysna (African Grass Blue) was considered formerly to have two similar-looking subspecies in the Mediterranean region: Z. k. knysna in the west, particularly Spain, and Z. k. karsandra in the east. Now they are regarded as distinct species.

Wanting to complete photographing all European butterfly species, I consulted a paper by Matt Rowlings and Sylvain Cuvelier to find where *Z. karsandra* flies in Crete (Phegea 46 (4)126-131 (2018)). It allowed me to concentrate a search in the Messara Plain in the south of the island and to base a visit in the coastal village of Matala during the second half of October 2019.

Anticipating either immediate success or complete failure I committed myself to a short trip, flying into Heraklion in the north of the island late on a Friday and returning at midday the next Monday. So, having stayed Friday night near the airport, I drove to the southern coast and arrived by about 1100 on the Saturday morning to start searching.

Knowing that *Z. karsandra* flies on relatively lush grass and that Matt Rowlings said all water courses are dry in the Autumn, I speculated the best chance of finding the species would be to look for irrigated grass in hotel grounds etc. After prowling around by car I discovered a very green, nice-looking lawn with flowering shrubs around it but realised when I checked it out that such well-tended areas are unsuitable for butterflies. Being undeterred, however, I wandered round to the back of the various holiday chalets on the site and found a piece of natural grass which had signs of sporadic watering, and almost immediately found *Z. karsandra* in good numbers there. It was flying exclusively close to the grass where there were extensive patches of an Oxalis species, evidently its foodplant. The other

Habitat near holiday accommodation



abundant species at the time with which it could be confused until one got one's eye in was *Leptotes pirithous* (Lang's Short-tailed Blue), but that species spent almost all its time around the bushes.

The piece of habitat was quite small and lay along the front of a number of chalets where the legitimate visitors, some anyhow, were enjoying doing nothing. Since the butterfly is so small they would have been unaware of its presence, so it must have been a great mystery to them as to why an old man in scruffy clothes was pointing a long lens \checkmark





Zizeeria karsandra (Eastern Grass Blue), male upperside

Zizeeria karsandra (Eastern Grass Blue), underside

at the grass at short-range and apparently taking flash photographs of it – and even more bizarrely, sometimes he was lying prone to do it. I felt obliged to interrupt my pursuit to explain what it was all about, pointing out that where they were sitting was probably next to one of only a very few places in Europe where a certain minute butterfly lived. Most were polite enough to seem impressed, perhaps speculating though that I might be deranged.

Well, that was job done by lunch time on day 1. I did revisit later in the day and on the following morning, but otherwise found little of interest except one extremely late *Hipparchia cretica* (Cretan Grayling) in genuinely natural habitat elsewhere, which undoubtedly was an aestivated female.

My other main entertainment was playing ball with a large, overweight and elderly dog. He always waylaid me by lying across the entrance doorway of my hotel with

Female Z. karsandra with male L. pirithous; the trifoliate Oxalis plant with speckled leaves is the foodplant of Z. karsandra

his ball at the ready. I named him 'Cerberus' after the dog who guarded the entrance to Hades in mythological times. Ironically, he was actually guarding what called itself 'Hotel Paradise'!

Bernard Watts

br.watts@btinternet.com

Photos by the author. (The butterflies in the last image are at 0.4 times the scale of the butterflies in the other two images.)