



EUROPEAN
BUTTERFLIES
GROUP



eNewsletter

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I was initially short of material for this Newsletter, but a request for articles elicited a good response and I am pleased to present a full issue. There are two articles on surveys by EBG members for threatened species (**Nevada Grayling *Pseudochazara williamsi***, and **Danube Clouded Yellow *Colias myrmidone***), three articles on butterfly trips to Spain and Italy, an article on moth trapping in Brittany, and the usual round-up of recent or forthcoming publications by Jude Lock. As always, I am grateful to contributors.

My own butterfly year has had mixed results. Trips to Spain, central France, central Sweden and Slovenia between mid-April and the end of June were all quite slow although all had the occasional success. This same tone comes across in the articles in the Newsletter reporting on the two surveys and on the Italy trip – not disastrous, but not brilliant either. One can speculate why things were not better – last year’s drought, this year’s cold spring and then the very hot weather in southern Europe. Against this somewhat disheartening background, I was cheered to end the summer on a relative high, finding good numbers of butterflies in central Italy in mid-August and in central France at the end of September. Two of the more interesting species are shown here.



Autumn Ringlet (*Erebia neoridas*),
Mti Sibillini, Italy, 19 August.



Map (*Araschnia levana*),
Haute-Vienne, France, 23 September.



Notices and News

Contact details

Chairman:

Mike Prentice

Email: mikeprentice7@gmail.com

Tel No: 07831 280259

Secretary:

Simon Spencer

Email: cerisyi@btinternet.com

Tel No: 07866 428875

Membership Secretary:

Anne Spencer

Email: Rhoslan.anne@gmail.com

Tel No: 01691 649615

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: nickgdlpman@googlemail.com

Roger Gibbons

Email: gibfam@ntlworld.com

Dudley Cheesman

Email: dudleycheesman@icloud.com

Sam Ellis

Email: sam.ellis@bc-europe.eu

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

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/](https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanButterflyGroup/)

News from France (and the EBG website), Autumn 2023

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

Atlas des rhopalocères et zygènes d'altitude d'Ariège (France) - Atlas of Butterfly and Burnet Moth mountain species of the Ariège, France.

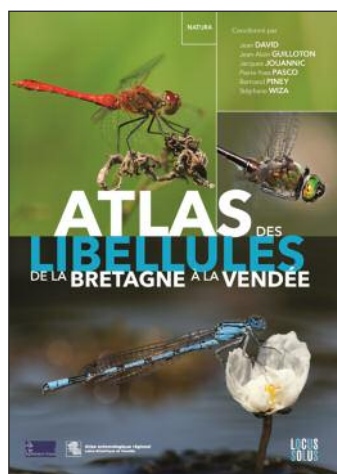
ANA-CEN (Conservatoire d'espaces naturels) Ariège has been working for several years on a citizen science project to produce an atlas of butterflies that can be found at altitude.

A list of 45 targeted species has been placed on the website, together with a volunteers' handbook, detailed species pages, flight periods, interactive map, information on how to install the application ODK Collect to record sightings, and lots of other useful information. To participate, please send an email to atlas-pa-pillons09@ariegenature.fr

The website reference is:

<https://ariegenature.fr/sciences-participatives/atlas-des-rhopaloceres-et-zygenes-daltitude-dariege/>

but please note that at the time of writing the website did not allow access to these pages.



Atlas des libellules de la Bretagne à la Vendée (France) - Dragonfly Atlas from Brittany to the Vendée (France)

This atlas is a result of the collective work of 29 authors. It compiles the current knowledge on dragonflies from the six departments of the study. From 2000 to 2020, nearly 2,000 observers were mobilised, more than 165,000 records were collected, to which 25,000 historical observations were added.

Each of the 68 species of the territory is presented in a detailed monograph which includes the species general distribution, history and biology in the study area, status and abundance, survey results etc. Publication date October 2023, 324 pages, price 35€ plus p+p.

Sample pages can be consulted here

https://mcusercontent.com/01a2c46ba475e885c6d04b5b5/files/64cc7bfc-f427-c1ca-7dea-9468b227ae76/Bonnes_feuilles_Atlas_des_libellules_de_la_Bretagne_%C3%A0_la_Vend%C3%A9e.02.pdf



(From the website)

Papillons de France, by Tristan Lafranchis

Tristan Lafranchis' website <http://diatheo.weebly.com> contains full information about his books on the Butterflies of France, including how to obtain the books, consult the latest updates, and obtain free downloads.

The species distribution maps and bibliographies were updated in June 2023. The latter, where available, can be downloaded as a free resource.

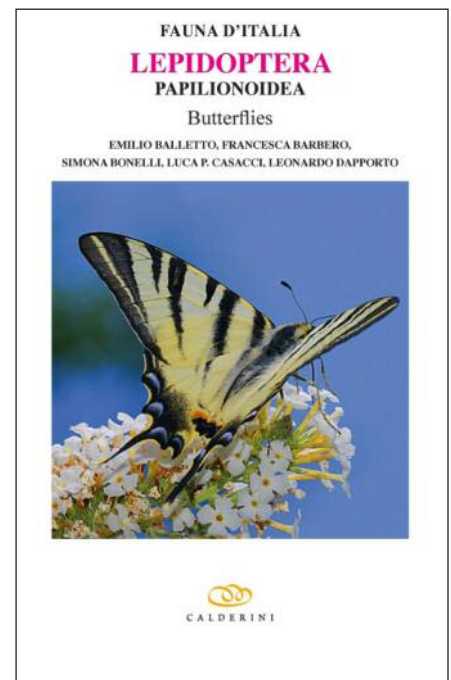
See here: <http://diatheo.weebly.com/cartes-et-bibliographies-avec-mises-a-jour.html>

Click on the species and then "Bibliographie illustrée" to download the pdf.

Lepidoptera: Papilionoidea - Butterflies (Fauna d'Italia 54) - 2023

By Emilio Balletto, Francesca Barbero, Simona Bonelli, Luca P Casacci, Leonardo Dapporto.

This publication illustrates the current state of knowledge on Italian butterflies, providing detailed information on their morphology, biology, ecology, ethology, genetics, distribution and state of conservation. This first of four volumes includes a thorough general introduction and is dedicated to the Papilionidae, Hesperidae and Pieridae. The book includes analytical keys for the identification of adults (in English and Italian) and preimaginal stages, illustrated with colour plates and drawings. The text is in English, 853 pages.



Published by Calderini and available from Pemberley Natural History Books, price £165, and NHBS.

Field Guides for three Natural Parks in Galicia, Spain.

Butterfly identification guides that have been designed to help implementation of the eBMS (European Butterfly Monitoring Scheme) in the Natural Parks of Galicia are available to download as a free resource. The field guides are in Spanish and Galician with species names in Latin.

For the Parque Natural Monte Aloia see here

https://patrimonionatural.xunta.gal/sites/default/files/parques/mariposas-MonteAloia-Galicia_altaResolucion-25112022_permission.pdf?



For the Parque Natural Baixa Limia-Serra do Xurés see here
https://patrimoniounatural.xunta.gal/sites/default/files/parques/mariposas-Xures-Galicia_final-altaResolucion-28112022_permission.pdf?

For the Parque Natural Complexo Dunar de Corrubedo e Lagoas de Carregal e Vixán: see here
https://patrimoniounatural.xunta.gal/sites/default/files/parques/mariposas-Corrubedo-altaResolucion-25112022_permission.pdf?



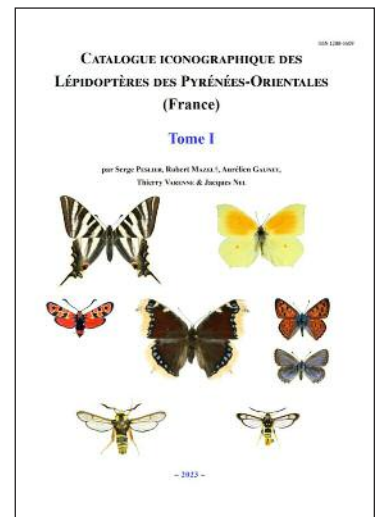
Catalogue iconographique des Lépidoptères des Pyrénées-Orientales (France). Tome I (Superfamilles dont la majorité des espèces sont diurnes)

by Peslier, S.; Mazel, R.; Gaunet, A.; Varenne, T.; Nel, J.

Published by the Association Roussillonnaise d'Entomologie.

This is the first of a three-volume series which was published in September. This first volume includes 304 species, the majority of which are day-flying (including butterflies, burnet moths and clearwings).

Hardback, text in French, 148 pages, with 988 photos and 217 maps, price 60€ from the Association Roussillonnaise d'Entomologie: <https://r-a-r-e.fr/>. It is also available from Pemberley Books.





Andalusia

Spring in Andalusia - butterflies of the Hoya de Baza and the Sierra del Cabo de Gata

by Mark and Caroline Searle

Spring arrives early in Southern Spain, and whilst the UK's winter hibernators are barely stirring in early February, it is possible to see 25+ species in Andalusia, as our trip to the Sierras de Tejeda y Almijara (La Axarquia) near Nerja showed in February 2020. For Spring 2023, we planned to focus on a few early season Spanish rarities and booked our flights from the East Midlands to Alicante for a two week visit between 22nd March and 5th April.

Hoya de Baza

Arriving in Spain early afternoon, we wasted no time in picking up our hire car and headed a few hours due west in the direction of Granada along the A92-N, arriving early evening at our base for the first week near Baza. We stayed a few miles out of town in the region of Altiplano in one of the picturesque hamlets of the Cuevas del Campo, very comfortable cave dwellings cut out of the limestone hillside. From here we explored the moon-like landscape and 'badlands' of the Hoya de Baza. Surrounded by mountain ranges, this relatively flat semi-arid basin is cut by gullies and dry river channels and supports a variety of unique fauna and flora, but is increasingly being turned to agricultural use! Despite previous reports of seasonally inclement weather in March, we experienced relentless sunshine for the entire two weeks, with temperatures in the mid to high-20s, a prelude to the summer heatwaves to come across most of southern Europe. ▼



Hoya de Baza



Andalusia cont.



Spanish Greenish Black-tip (*Euchloe bazae*)

With some very useful directions from Nigel Peace (notes from 2015), and trip notes from Peter Bygate (2017), we headed off on-foot into the Hoya de Baza north of the A92-N. It didn't take long before we had our first fly-past from an unmistakable **Spanish Greenish Black-tip** (*Euchloe bazae*), a key target species for the trip and a speciality of this region. We sat aloft on the highest spot on this barren landscape surrounded by hill-topping Black-tips, **Western Dappled Whites** (*Euchloe crameri*), **Portuguese Dappled Whites** (*Euchloe tagis*), **Green-striped Whites** (*Euchloe belemia*) with a few **Iberian Scarce Swallowtails** (*Iphiclides feisthamelii*) added for good measure – all restless in the warm sunshine, presenting an exhausting challenge to photograph. We returned a few days later in a further attempt to do them justice! Other noteworthy species in sheltered gullies close-by included **Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata megera*), **Green Hairstreak** (*Callophrys rubi*) and **Bath White** (*Pontia daplidice*). ▾



Portuguese Dappled White (*Euchloe tagis*)



Western Dappled White (*Euchloe crameri*)



Bath Whites (*Pontia daplidice*)



Iberian Scarce Swallowtail (*Iphiclides feisthamelii*)



Andalusia cont.



Black-eyed Blue (*Glaucopsyche melanops*), upperside and underside

Over the following few days, we explored other local spots on the western and northern edges of the Hoya de Baza, adding **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui*), **Southern Brown Argus** (*Aricia cramera*), **Black-eyed Blue** (*Glaucopsyche melanops*) and **Small White** (*Pieris rapae*) to our list.

Prado Negro

An hour further west, and closer to Granada, the hills climb above 5000 ft in the Sierra de Huetor, where we headed up to the tree line in the area around Prado Negro. The hillside tracks, meadows and sheltered gullies yielded a wealth of new species including **Small Copper** (*Lycaena phlaeas*), **Spanish Festoon** (*Zerynthia rumina*), **Cleopatra** (*Gonepteryx cleopatra*), **Clouded Yellow** (*Colias crocea*), **Large Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata maera*), a **Mallow Skipper** (*Carcharodus alceae*), plenty of fresh **Large Tortoiseshells** (*Nymphalis polychloros*), and dozens of **Small Heaths** (*Coenonympha pamphilus*) and **Green Hairstreaks**. Blues proved to be thin on the ground, but **Holly Blue** (*Celastrina argiolus*), **Common Blue** (*Polyommatus icarus*) and **Panoptes Blue** (*Pseudophilotes panoptes*) were spotted in small numbers, alongside **Orange-tip** (*Anthocharis cardamines*) and its distinctive cousin, the colourful **Provence Orange-tip** (*Anthocharis euphenoides*). ▼



Spanish Festoons (*Zerynthia rumina*)



Mallow Skipper (*Carcharodus alceae*)



Andalusia cont.

While exploring a sheltered section of a hillside track quite close to the village, a short stretch of small bushes and scrub yielded dozens of fresh **Green Hairstreaks**. However, upon closer inspection, a handful of these had the very distinctive 'brown mascara' eye-line characteristic of **Chapman's Green Hairstreak (*Callophrys avis*)** - a very satisfying and unexpected discovery! Back in a stony meadow just below the village we finally came upon a handful of another key target species, the **Provence Hairstreak (*Tomares ballus*)**, settling for just long enough on the warm ground for a close approach. After such a successful day in this area we returned a few days later to explore further up the hillside! ▼



Provence Orange-tip (*Anthocharis euphenoides*)



Chapman's Green Hairstreak (*Callophrys avis*)



Provence Hairstreak (*Tomares ballus*)



C. rubi



C. avis

Green Hairstreak (*C. rubi*) on left and Chapman's Green Hairstreak (*C. avis*) on right



Andalusia cont.

Almeria

For the second week, we drove south-east towards Almeria, skirting the eastern end of the Sierra Nevada, heading towards the coast to explore the stunning and rugged landscape of the Sierra del Cabo de Gata. However, a first stop in transit was to visit the arid coastal scrub to the south east of Almeria near the town of Cabo de Gata, guided by directions from Nigel and Peter. A few dry river beds, large patches of flowering thyme and the spiny Ziziphus lotus provided the ideal habitat for the **Common Tiger Blue** (*Tarucus theophrastus*). We were not disappointed. Our first short visit on 28th March yielded only two sightings, but a return visit a few days later for a wider, more extensive exploration yielded 30+ of this tiny butterfly – a real highlight of the trip.



Common Tiger Blue (*Tarucus theophrastus*), upperside and underside

Cabo de Gata

Heavy winter rain in this region during late February, and now a period of extended warm weather in March, had transformed the normally desert-like landscape of the Cabo de Gata. Based in the small resort town of Las Negras (some 30 miles further up the coast, and still tourist-free in early April), we planned to explore the rocky coastline and flower-rich hillsides and meadows. ▼



Sierra del Cabo de Gata



Andalusia cont.

From Las Negras we walked south along the coast to the remains of the fortification at Castillo de San Ramon, with **Black-eyed Blues** extremely abundant on the trackside, and small numbers of **Lang's Short-tailed Blue** (*Leptotes pirithous*) flitting around the bushes in sheltered spots. The grasslands of the Rodalquilar Valley supported plenty of very fresh **Spanish Marbled Whites** (*Melanargia ines*), **Spanish Gatekeepers** (*Pyronia bathseba*) and a few **Clouded Yellows**, with large numbers of **Western Dappled Whites** on the drier slopes, all of which proved to be infuriatingly difficult to approach in the warm sunshine! Exploring a small dry river bed, we stumbled across a solitary *Ziziphus lotus* bush, and within a few minutes had spotted about half a dozen **Common Tiger Blues**, along with a few ova dotted amongst those vicious thorns! The afternoon ended with a tantalising glimpse of what looked like a 'golden skipper' further along the same dry river bed, with the subsequent search uncovering a small colony of very freshly emerged **Lulworth Skippers** (*Thymelicus acteon*).



Spanish Marbled White (*Melanargia ines*)



Lulworth Skipper (*Thymelicus acteon*)

A day later, taking the steep coastal path north to Cala de San Pedro (on a very hot day!), **Long-tailed Blues** (*Lampides boeticus*), **Speckled Wood** (*Pararge aegeria*), good numbers of **Spanish Festoons** and a couple of **Geranium Bronze** (*Cacyreus marshalli*) were spotted in a few sheltered gullies.

Somewhat reluctantly, we packed up the following morning and headed back along the coast to Alicante for our flight home the following lunchtime. The weather had turned out to be unseasonably warm, particularly away from the coast, with the added bonus that fellow tourists were thin on the ground! The landscapes were stunning, the roads quiet and the butterflies exceeded our expectations, with a species list for the fortnight of 40! A big thanks to Nigel and Peter for providing such helpful advice and for steering us in the right direction. •

Mark and Caroline Searle

Email contact: marksearle1959@outlook.com

Flickr European butterflies album 2023: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/135189540@N07>

All photos by the author



Nevada Grayling

**Nevada Grayling (*Pseudochazara williamsi*) Survey, Andalusia,
10th July to 18th July 2023**

Report by David Plowman

Participants: Mike Bailey, Andrew Lipczynski, Kevin Tolhurst, Keith and Walter Woonton, Harry Clarke, David Wright, and David Plowman.

Spanish Colleagues: Jose Miguel Barea Azcon and Javier Olivares.

Spanish Students: Maria Luisa Campon Amado and Elsa Sandra Felipe.

Spanish Researchers: Enrique Le Desmond Ruiz and Sara Castro Cobo.

Sam Ellis organised member participation, hotels and mountainous areas to be surveyed with help from Jose Miguel and Javier. A lot of work was put in by Sam but unfortunately due to family circumstances he was unable to attend. I would like to thank Sam for this work as it made my daily organising much easier than anticipated.



The Hermit (*Chazara briseis*) photo D Plowman



Nevada Blue (*Polyommatus golgus sagratrox*)
photo D Plowman

Day 1. Location: Sierra Seca

Section 1

Two 15-minute timed counts. Fenced off areas checked for food plants and two transects completed.

Result: *Pseudochazara williamsi* - not recorded.

Notable butterflies: **The Hermit (*Chazara briseis*)**.

Section 2

This area was just a general survey of a very rocky area where a few butterflies were hilltopping.

Result: *P. williamsi* - not recorded.

Notable butterflies: **Nevada Blue (*Polyommatus golgus sagratrox*)**.

Section 3

Two 15-minute timed counts. Checked for food plants and two transects completed.

Result: *P. williamsi* - not recorded.

Notable butterflies: none (very disappointing for butterflies).

After a picnic lunch, we stopped during our ascent and checked for **Andalusian Anomalous Blue (*Polyommatus violetae*)** at a mud puddling site. None were found as we were probably too early. During our return journey to our hotels, we stopped at another potential *violetae* site, but none were found. ▼



Nevada Grayling cont.



Nevada Blue (*Polyommatus g. golgus*) photo D Plowman

Day 2. Location: Sierra Nevada Veleta

The group were given good locations for **Nevada Blue** (*Polyommatus g. golgus*) and **Zulich's Blue** (*Agriades zullichi*) and left to find and photograph these endemic species. Although the temperature was fine it was very windy. While the main group were doing this, Jose Miguel, Enrique, Sara and I went higher to look for *williamsi*. We surveyed a two mile area and *williamsi* was not seen. Very few butterflies were flying at this higher elevation.

Result: *P. williamsi* - not recorded.

Notable butterflies: **Nevada Blue** (*Polyommatus g. golgus*), **Zulich's Blue** (*Agriades zullichi*) and **Spanish Argus** (*Aricia morronensis*)



Nevada Grayling (*Pseudochazara williamsi*) photo D Wright

Location: Genil Valley

We met the main group for lunch and it was decided that the group would go down to the Genil Valley. This was a very big disappointment. The track between the top and lower car parks was now not negotiable due to it being overgrown. More disappointment followed as the lower track was only 100 metres long as the lower area was now not passable at all. The group as a whole saw 32 species in this area, but the last time I visited (2015) I saw a minimum of 50.

Day 3. Location: El Buitre

This was our most hopeful site for *williamsi*. We drove for approximately one hour within the forest and stopped at a plateau. Within minutes of getting out of the car, *williamsi* was located and photographed. The next 2 hours consisted of 15-minute timed counts, counting food plants within a 10 metre square, and doing various transects. This was an extremely pleasing result for the survey team and *williamsi* seemed to be in very good numbers.

Following our success of locating *williamsi*, Jose Miguel suggested we try and locate *violetae*. We drove to the location lower down in the valley and while we left the main group Jose Miguel and I had a quick look at the site where we had good fortune and found at least 2 *violetae* flying. We went back to the cars and got the main group to locate and photograph *violetae* which rounded off a superb day.

Result: *P. williamsi* and *P. violetae* recorded.

Notable butterflies: **Nevada Blue** (*Polyommatus g. golgus*), **Zulich's Blue** (*Agriades zullichi*) and **Spanish Argus** (*Aricia morronensis*). ▼



Andalusian Anomalous Blue (*Polyommatus violetae*)
photo K Woonton



Nevada Grayling cont.



Black Satyr (*Satyrus actaea*)
photo K Woonton



Nevada Blue (*Polyommatus golgus sagratrox*)
photo M Bailey



Mother-of-Pearl Blue (*Polyommatus nivescens*)
photo K Tolhurst



Spanish Chalkhill Blue (*Lysandra albicans*)
photo K Tolhurst

Day 4. Location: Sierra de Orce and Sierra de Maria

The team split into two groups. I led group 1 to Sierra de Orce and Javier led group 2 to Sierra de Maria. Each walk took about 2 hours, with the following results. The food plant for *williamsi* was burnt out and there was evidence of severe over-grazing.

Result: *P. williamsi* - not recorded.

Notable butterflies: **Black Satyr** (*Satyrus actaea*)

Day 5: Location: Sierra de la Sagra

This was without doubt the longest walk of the survey. We arrived at the site and started the long walk to the peak. We calculated that it would take 3 hours to the peak. Only 5 members of the team continued to the top – well done Mike, Harry, Sara, Enrique and Javier! The top was excellent habitat for *williamsi* but no adults were found – perhaps we may have been too early, and it was decided that a further survey a week later would be the way forward. The members who did not continue to the top were kept busy at locations at the lower levels and there were enough different species available to photograph to keep them busy.

Result: *P. williamsi* - not recorded

Notable butterflies: **Nevada Blue** (*Polyommatus golgus sagratrox*), **Mother-of-Pearl Blue** (*Polyommatus nivescens*) and **Spanish Chalkhill Blue** (*Lysandra albicans*)



Nevada Grayling cont.



Apollo (*Parnassius apollo*)
photo A Lipczynski



Rock Grayling (*Hipparchia hermione*)
photo H Clarke



Nevada Grayling (*Pseudochazara williamsi*)
photo W Woonton



Spanish Brassy Ringlet (*Erebia hispania*) photo K Woonton

Day 6. Location: Sierra de Baza

This site was where Javier was hoping to see *williamsi*. We arrived in good time and started the climb to the ridge. It took the survey team about an hour to climb to the plateau. The target was not found straight away, but within 15 minutes the first *williamsi* was found. During the next 2 hours more adults were found in a small area located on the plateau. The odd male and female were seen away from the main group. This colony seemed more contained than the colony found at El Buitre. Everything seemed in good order: there was plenty of food plant in evidence and no evidence of any grazing found.

Result: *P. williamsi* - recorded in fairly good numbers.

Notable butterflies: **Apollo** (*Parnassius apollo*), **Black Satyr** (*Satyrus actaea*), **Rock Grayling** (*Hipparchia hermione*), **Spanish Brassy Ringlet** (*Erebia hispania*).



Nevada Blue (*Polyommatus g. gulgus*) photo D Wright

Day 7. Location: Sierra Nevada El Chullo

We were given two peaks to survey.

Peak 1. As we walked to the first peak it was quite noticeable that many butterflies were on the wing, and we also noted that the food plant for *williamsi* was in very good condition at this higher level. Although *williamsi* was not recorded, it was hoped that we were too early for it.

Result: *P. williamsi* - not recorded

Notable butterflies: **Nevada Blue** (*Polyommatus g. gulgus*), **Spanish Argus** (*Aricia morronensis*), and **Apollo** (*Parnassius apollo*).

Peak 2. As Peak 1, but **Zulich's Blue** (*Agriades zullichi*) was located at this peak.



Spanish Argus (*Aricia morronensis*) photo D Wright

Day 8. Location: Loma de Papeles

We set off to the site with the intention of doing 3 surveys. Unfortunately, the wind got worse as we climbed higher and we decided to do just 2 surveys.

Higher Survey. The wind seemed to be more severe as the surveyors walked the ridge and it was virtually impossible to locate any butterflies of note, although there were a few flying.

Result: *P. williamsi* - not recorded

Notable butterflies: **Black Satyr** (*Satyrus actaea*). ▾



Nevada Grayling cont.



Zullich's Blue (*Agriades zulichii*) photo D Wright



Western Marbled White (*Melanargia occitanica*) photo A Lipczynski

Lower Survey. Results as above but with the addition of **Western Marbled White** (*Melanargia occitanica*). We decided to return to the valley, but as we arrived, although it was not so windy, the temperature was 42 degrees. The group decided that it was far too hot to look for butterflies and thought that a beer was the best option.

In conclusion

This was a very enjoyable survey and everybody gave 100% in their commitment. You certainly needed to be fit to do the survey. The weather was kind and although we did find *williamsi* we will have to see the final results when they are collated. Sam Ellis will write a species action plan which will follow later. The choices of hotels were very good and the locations to the survey areas were also well thought out. I would like to personally thank the survey team for their patience and good humour and dedication towards the survey. Hopefully I will see you all soon on our next adventure. •

Dave Plowman

suedaveplowman@btinternet.com



The Team



Northern Spain

Northern Spain – the Pyrenees and the Picos de Europa

by Paul Selby

I thought EBG members might be interested in my write-up of two visits to Spain, separated by six years, both of which were fantastic trips that are high up there in my list of European butterflying favourites.

Spanish Pyrenees, July 2017

The first report concerns a week in the Spanish Pyrenees in early July 2017. Based in the pretty village of Berdun, most days involved going up a different valley, each with its own microclimate, habitat, and range of butterfly species.

Around Berdun

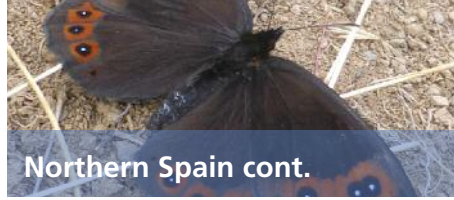
At lower altitudes, near the village of Berdun itself, the habitat is quite dry, except by the two rivers. One of the highlights is the endemic **Forster's Furry Blue** (*Polyommatus fulgens*). When I saw it in 2017, I had no idea how special this species was, and I have not seen it subsequently anywhere else. All three species of Gatekeeper can also be seen, namely **Gatekeeper** (*Pyronia tithonus*), **Spanish Gatekeeper** (*P. bathseba*) and **Southern Gatekeeper** (*P. cecilia*). **Spanish Purple Hairstreak** (*Laeosopsis roboris*) was also a lovely species to see, as was **Spanish Chalkhill Blue** (*Lysandra albicans*) and a number of Fritillary species, including **Silver-washed** (*Argynnis paphia*), **Glanville** (*Melitaea cinxia*), **Knapweed** (*M. phoebe*), **Queen of Spain** (*Issoria lathonia*) and **Marbled** (*Brenthis daphne*).

Five valleys

Up the Roncal valley, there is the potential for **Two-tailed Pasha** (*Charaxes jasius*) on the strawberry trees. I didn't see one in 2017, but they are there! **Green-under-side Blue** (*Glaucopsyche alexis*) was seen however, in one of the lower meadows, this spring species still flying in early July. Higher up the valley is Erebia territory. I saw four different species, specifically **Lefebvre's Ringlet** (*Erebia lefebvrei*), **de Prunner's Ringlet** (*E. triaria*), **Piedmont Ringlet** (*E. meolans*) and **Pyrenees Brassy Ringlet** (*E. rondoui*). Also seen was **Mountain Clouded Yellow** (*Colias phicomone*).

The Fago and Anso valleys can be done in one day, and have an amazing variety of habitats within them. As well as a large variety of Fritillaries and more common Blues, also seen were **Bath White** (*Pontia daplidice*), **False Ilex Hairstreak** (*Satyrium esculi*), **Ripart's Anomalous Blue** (*Polyommatus ripartii*), **Rock Grayling** (*Hipparchia hermione*), **Striped Grayling** (*Hipparchia fidia*), **Black Satyr** (*Satyrus actaea*), **Dusky Meadow Brown** (*Hyponephele lycaon*) and **Dusky Heath** (*Coenonympha dorus*).

The Hecho valley is narrower, cooler and damper. Here we saw **Purple Emperor** (*Apatura iris*) and **Alcon Blue** (*Phengaris alcon*), as well as **Southern White Admiral** (*Limenitis reducta*). Wallcreeper can potentially be seen in this valley, although we had no luck in 2017. We did, however, see a Lammergeier. ▼



Northern Spain cont.



Aisa valley



Puddling Blues

The prettiest of the valleys is, in my view, the Aisa valley. Again, the range of species and habitats as you move up it to the highest point is excellent. As well as **Apollo** (*Parnassius apollo*), **Scarse Copper** (*Lycaena virgaureae*), **Niobe Fritillary** (*Fabriciana niobe*) and **Weaver's Fritillary** (*Boloria dia*), the number of puddling Blues in the late afternoon heat was quite special.

Up to the French border

The one disappointing day of the trip in 2017 was our visit to the French border at Portalet. The weather was cool, cloudy, and wet, which meant we never had the chance to see the target species of **Gavarnie Ringlet** (*Erebia gorgone*) and **Gavarnie Blue** (*Agriades pyrenaicus*), nor some of the other high-altitude species such as **Peak White** (*Pontia callidice*) or **Mountain Dappled White** (*Euchloe simplonia*). The disappointments always make you want to go back for more!

In total, over the course of 8 days, the group I was with saw a grand total of 111 species, a fantastic total given a rained off day at high altitude.

Picos de Europa, July 2023

The second trip to report on was a week in the Picos de Europa mountains in North West Spain, in early July 2023. This trip was based in the village of Boca de Hurgano.

Near to the hotel are a number of medium altitude valleys, full of stunning wildflower meadows and a large range of butterfly species. **Spanish Purple Hairstreaks** were abundant, as were **Cardinal** (*Argynnis pandora*), **Scarse Copper**, and **Spanish Chestnut Heath** (*Coenonympha glycerion iphioides*).

Probably the prettiest of the valleys is near the village of Argovejo. It is full of a range of different species. In addition to the aforementioned species, also here were ▼



Spanish Chestnut Heath (*Coenonympha glycerion iphioides*)



Northern Spain cont.



Large Tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis polychloros*)



Dusky Large Blue (*Phengaris nausithous*)



Chapman's Ringlet (*Erebia palarica*)

Dusky Heath, Spanish Chalkhill Blue, Escher's Blue (*Polyommatus escheri*), Silver-washed Fritillary, Niobe Fritillary, and a bright orange freshly-emerged **Large Tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis polychloros*).**

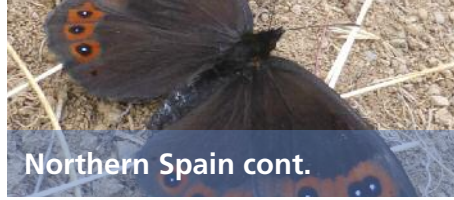
Target species

Within a 30-minute drive were some very special wild boggy areas, host to some of the last remaining colonies of **Dusky Large Blue (*Phengaris nausithous*)** in Spain. This wonderful species is quite confiding when feeding on its larval host plant. Also seen in these areas were **Purple-edged Copper (*Lycaena hippothoe*), Spotted Fritillary (*Melitaea didyma*), Lesser Spotted Fritillary (*M. trivia*),** and both **Iberian Marbled White (*Melanargia lachesis*)** and **Esper's Marbled White (*M. russiae*)** flying together, giving a chance to test those identification skills!

One of the main target species on this trip is the endemic **Chapman's Ringlet (*Erebia palarica*)**. In the Picos area, it isn't particularly rare, but it can only be found in and around the Picos. They can be surprisingly easy to photograph, if it ever clouds over.

On another of the days, we visited a highly sensitive site, known to hold a colony of **Woodland Brown (*Lopinga achine*)**. The habitat was a patchwork of dappled clearings, full of wildflowers. While I have seen flowery meadows in woodland before, I've never come across a woodland with so many butterflies of so many different species. The species included **Sooty Copper (*Lycaena tityrus*), Long-tailed Blue (*Lampides boeticus*), Short-tailed Blue (*Cupido argiades*), Turquoise Blue (*Polyommatus dorylas*)** and many of the more common species.

If I'm honest, having not seen Woodland Brown before, I wasn't 100% clear what I was looking out for. After 20 minutes of searching, I suddenly saw the movement of a large grey butterfly, fluttering away from me, disturbed by my movement. It landed out of view, so I approached carefully, only for it to flutter away from me again, and disappear! I really wasn't sure what I'd seen, and it was only later that evening, having watched some YouTube videos of the species, that I was able to confirm it was indeed Woodland Brown that I'd seen. Albeit not well, and with no photographs sadly. ▼



Northern Spain cont.



Fuente De – Wallcreeper and Lefebvre's Ringlet territory

Fuente De

Arguably the highlight of the trip was the day spent up Fuente De, the highest altitude location visited. The high plateau is reached via a 5 minute near-vertical cable car ride, which gives fantastic views. At the top we saw **Gavarnie Blue**, **Mountain Dappled White**, **Lefebvre's Ringlet**, **Piedmont Ringlet** and **Mountain Clouded Yellow**. But the highlight for me was extremely close views of Wallcreeper, one of the most highly prized European bird species to see.



Gavarnie Blue (*Agriades pyrenaicus*)

Of the course of 7 days, the group I was with saw a grand total of 115 species, reflecting the huge variety of habitats visited in this nearly unspoiled and special part of Spain.

I enjoyed both destinations so much that I am re-visiting both in July 2024. In each case I will be a co-guide for Mariposa Nature Tours (www.mariposanature.com).

On both trips, there are still target species to find, that are known to have been seen in the areas before - for example, in the Pyrenees, the rare near-endemic **False Dewy Ringlet** (*Erebia sthenyo*), and **Ghost Orchid** (*Epipogium aphyllum*). I'm not normally an Orchid enthusiast, but the near mythical status of this rare species, and the fact that it has been seen near Berdun in three of the last five years, is an exciting potential find! In the Picos, **Bog Fritillary** (*Boloria eunomia*), **Dryad** (*Minois dryas*) and **Large Chequered Skipper** (*Heteropterus morpheus*) are possibilities.



Typical scenery in the Picos

Spain is a wonderful country, still blessed with wild areas, fantastic wildflower meadows, and the resulting diversity of butterfly species. If you've not been before, I'd highly recommend trips to both parts of Spain. Maybe see you there in July 2024? •

Paul Selby

selbypaul@hotmail.com

All photos by the author



Val d'Aosta

Val d'Aosta, Gran Paradiso, Italian Alps, 10 - 17 July 2023

by Peter Bygate



Piedmont Anomalous Blue
(Polyommatus humedasaе)

Monday 10 July

The snow-capped Alps looked fantastic on the approach to Turin, a fine day and 32° awaiting, as my long-time travelling companion Alan and I negotiated the A5 autostrada easily enough, heading north initially before following the road sharply west towards Aosta. The Cogne signage was poor upon leaving the autostrada, and confusing, but somehow no wrong turns were made as we looked for the 'sensitive' site which Mike Prentice had kindly told us about, a lovely spot, but the stiff breeze blowing up the valley made photography difficult – however, the rare endemic **Piedmont Anomalous Blue** (*Polyommatus humedasaе*) was there, as hoped, a great way to start our trip even before we'd reached our first hotel! Other species included an **Apollo** (*Parnassius apollo*) and **Marbled Fritillary** (*Brenthis daphne*). A Dutch couple turned up telling us that Valsavarenche in the next valley to the west was by far the best place (also tipped by Mike), and that they had found **Cynthia's Fritillary** (*Euphydryas cynthia*) from Pont, ascending 500m vertical height to a marshy area.



Torrente Valnontey valley

The hotel we'd chosen sat with a majestic mountain view up the Torrente Valnontey valley, Valnontey itself being a small gathering of hotels and cafés at the dead-end of the road running south-west through cobbled Cogne.

Tuesday 11 July

It was sunny and warm as we walked from the hotel up the valley, staying local today after yesterday's travel, but with lots of people around, walkers, mountain bikers, and lots of butterflies too, although the number of species was modest. Many of the riverside meadows had been cut recently, and that was a shame. Highlights were **Titania's Fritillary** (*Boloria titania*) once we'd convinced ourselves we weren't looking at **Weaver's Fritillary** (*Boloria dia*); it was good to see a **Swallowtail** (*Papilio machaon*) at 2,200m and **Geranium Argus** (*Eumedonia eumedon*) also. Male **Oak Eggars** (*Lasiocampa quercus*) flew mostly in the pine-wooded areas, where a fine Chamois kept its distance. At one point, where a bridge crossed the torrent, an infestation of day-flying **White Satin Moths** (*Leucoma salicis*) had stripped several trees in the larval stage. ▼



Titania's Fritillary (*Boloria titania*)



White Satin Moths (*Leucoma salicis*)



Val d'Aosta cont.

Wednesday 12 July

Valsavarenche was the destination today with our #1 target for the whole trip being **Cynthia's Fritillary**. The destination valley was disappointing being largely agricultural with recent haymaking having taken place but a couple of short stops were made before reaching Pont. At the first, several **Apollo**s were flying and at the second, **Large Blues** (*Phengaris arion*), but the breeze was troublesome. We pushed on to the car park at Pont, crossed over the Torrente Savara footbridge, the goal now being to find **Cynthia's Fritillary**. The ascent was strenuous, relentless zig-zagging up through the pines emerging above the tree-line, but we failed in our quest, not able to find the 'marshy area' we'd been told about. A **Cranberry Blue** (*Agriades optilete*) was our only consolation. This was not a trek we'd have the energy to undertake again!



Large Blue (*Phengaris arion*)



Cranberry Blue (*Agriades optilete*)



Cranberry Blue (*Agriades optilete*)

Thursday 13 July

Lillaz, just to the east of Cogne, was today's location, its lovely flowery meadows disappointingly quiet due to the overcast sky, but new species for the trip included **Damon Blue** (*Polyommatus damon*), **Turquoise Blue** (*Polyommatus dorylas*), and **Queen of Spain Fritillary** (*Issoria lathonia*). A short detour to the popular Cascades de Lillaz was notable for a **False Heath Fritillary** (*Melitaea diamina*) juxtaposed with

an 'ordinary' **Heath Fritillary** (*Melitaea athalia*). Later, after another rain-interrupted and generally anti-climactic day, we found our way to the un-signposted Alpine Botanical Garden across the river from our hotel in Valnontey, a very well laid out and maintained venture – we learned the reason for the complete absence of visitor signage is because the local council want too much money for the privilege!

Friday 14 July

Today we'd transit east to our second hotel in St Vincent, picking up the road that runs parallel to the south of the autostrada and Aosta river. A right turn at Brissogne took us into an area of slightly wilder vegetation and a **Southern White Admiral** (*Limenitis reducta*) greeted our first pull-in. The first **Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata megera*) of the trip also showed up here. The winding country lanes emerged at Grand Brissogne from where we intended to descend to Neyran before crossing the river and autostrada onto the 'old road' to Nus. A hairpin en route, where a stream also crossed under the road, looked promising even on the map, given our experience of these kind of habitats. And we weren't to be disappointed! **White-letter Hairstreak** (*Satyrium w-album*), **High Brown Fritillary** (*Fabriciana adippe*), **Woodland Grayling** (*Hipparchia fagi*) (assumed), **Purple-edged Copper** (*Lycaena hippothoe*) and **Purple-shot Copper** (*Lycaena alciphron*) were all here. A solitary **Marbled Skipper** (*Carcharodus lavatherae*) even came into the car, as **Pearly Heath** (*Coenonympha arcania*), and others, also put in an appearance. You can't beat serendipity!

Saturday 15 July

The plan today was to explore the long valley leading north to the ski station at Breuil-Cervinia but the experience was disappointing, the meadows already cut all the ▼



Val d'Aosta cont.

way up with no obvious pull-offs. The first stop was taken about 2km from the town and even though we found some uncut hillsides, the butterflies weren't abundant. **Large Ringlet** (*Erebia euryale*), possible **Eros Blue** (*Polyommatus eros*) and a definite **Green-veined White** (*Pieris napi*), plus the usual confusion about **Titania's** and **Weaver's Fritillaries**, occupied our time. On the return leg, we took a diversion off the main road to the left just after di Sotto to a road running parallel down to St Vincent. This turned out to be a very quiet wooded lane and we stopped by the Pemana junction. Immediately, **Great-banded Grayling** (*Brintesia circe*) and **Woodland Graylings** were charging around, sitting conspicuously on tree trunks. A **Bath White** (*Pontia daplidice*) visited Scabious flowers, and a weary **Peacock** (*Aglais io*) sat forlornly on the road.



Escher's Blue
(*Polyommatus escheri*)

Sunday 16 July

One of the hotel's breakfast staff suggested we should stay local today, partly to dodge the potential showers that were forecast, and take the 'panoramic route' north of the town. We took her advice. Having eventually puzzled-out the spaghetti of narrow lanes up the mountainside, the left fork to Nissad was taken and most of the morning spent there where the tarmac ended. **Escher's Blue** (*Polyommatus escheri*) and **Red-underwing Skipper** (*Spialia sertorius*) were new for the trip and I was pretty sure a **Mazarine Blue** (*Cyaniris semiargus*) was there too. **Great Sooty Satyrs** (*Satyrus ferula*) and **Marbled Whites** (*Melanargia galathea*) were 'everywhere', as usual on this trip, and **Large Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata maera*) was also seen every day.



Great Sooty Satyr (*Satyrus ferula*)



Woodland Grayling gp (*Hipparchia sp*)

Monday 17 July

Today's forecast was for 34° for our last full day, another ski location at St Jacques in the next valley to the east, the valley replicating the disappointing agricultural nature of the Cervinia route of two days ago. We didn't stop until the road ran out in the packed car park at St Jacques. Our last day was largely spent checking-out **Large Ringlets** (*Erebia euryale*) in the pine

forest in the vain hope that something else might be flying with them. Finally, cutting across from Brusson to St Vincent over the Col le di Joux, where we made our final stop, a **Grayling** (*Hipparchia semele*) immediately welcomed us and played 'hide and seek' on the pine tree trunks and stumps. •

You can see a fuller set of photographs from this trip on <https://www.lepidigi.net/>

Peter Bygate

peter.bygate@btopenworld.com

All photos by the author



Romania

Romania – surveying for Danube Clouded Yellow (*Colias myrmidone*) by Mike Prentice

One of European Butterfly Group's priorities over the past few years has been to help with the conservation of the **Danube Clouded Yellow (*Colias myrmidone*)**, a butterfly whose range in Europe has been contracting severely. Once a widespread species found from Germany eastwards throughout much of central and eastern Europe, it is now restricted to a small population in Poland and what appears to be a viable population in a few areas in Romania. Working in collaboration with partners in Germany and Romania we have found three areas which are strongholds of the species which, as a result of our surveys, have been scheduled as Sites of Community Interest by the Romanian government.

Our latest task has been to see if we can find further populations of the species armed with maps created by our German partners from a model based on land use, vegetation and climatic variables and historical presence of *myrmidone*. These maps indicated that up to 80 sites in Romania might be suitable for *myrmidone*, and we (as well as groups from Belgium and Czechia) undertook to survey a number of these sites to see if we could find the butterfly in them and so field-test the model.

Romania has changed dramatically since my first visit in 2006, particularly after accession to the EU, but still has many areas where agriculture is practiced extensively with haystacks rather than bales, horses and carts on the roads and even still occasionally horse-drawn ploughs. With a diverse landscape and several mountainous areas including the Carpathians, the country is host to approximately 190 species of butterfly.

Traditional haystacks
– photo K Tolhurst



It was agreed that EBG would survey the potential sites to the west and south of Cluj-Napoca, an area that I knew well from previous visits to Romania. *Colias myrmidone*

flies in May/June and in an extended and more numerous second brood from mid-July through to the end of September. We made 2 visits ; the first for 12 days from 26 May and the second for 9 days from 27 August.

First survey, 26 May to 6 June 2023

The May survey party comprised Keith and Walter Woonton, Sam Ellis (who arrived a few days later than the rest), Dave Plowman and myself and we based ourselves in a hotel I knew in the western outskirts of Cluj. I had prepared maps of 24 sites for us to survey but the trip would not be solely devoted to *myrmidone* and on the first afternoon (since the airport is to the east of Cluj) we explored a site further to the east looking for and ▼



Romania cont.



Danube Clouded Yellow (*Colias myrmidone*)
– photo K Woonton

finding **Spinose Skipper** (*Muschampia cribrellum*) as well as **Assmann's Fritillary** (*Melitaea britomartis*), **Heath Fritillary** (*Melitaea athalia*), **Black-veined White** (*Aporia crataegi*) and **Woodland Ringlet** (*Erebia medusa*).

Our surveys started on the following day but were preceded by a visit to a well-known *myrmidone* site to allow the participants to see and recognise the butterfly and its food-plant. With sightings of 10 *myrmidone* under our belt we visited several of the sites over the next few days but without seeing any more *myrmidone* although we found food-plant on several of the sites. We also combined a visit to some of the more southerly survey sites with a trip to the Runc valley where we saw **Fenton's Wood White** (*Leptidea morsei*), **Chequered Skipper** (*Carterocephalus palaemon*), and **Safflower Skipper** (*Pyrgus carthami*) as well as numerous blues.



Spinose Skipper
(*Muschampia cribrellum*)
– photo K Woonton

Weather issues

One problem which beset us on the trip was the weather. Although we had some sunny days, we also had rain on most days particularly thunder storms (some torrential) late in the afternoon and not only did this mean that butterflies weren't active but also made some of the tracks we had intended to use impassable. *Myrmidone* generally only fly when the sun is shining so even lightly overcast skies mean that surveys for the presence of *myrmidone* are inconclusive and some sites needed to be visited several times before we could know with any certainty whether any were present.

Over the 12 days of the trip, we managed to survey 21 sites (some more than once) and found two new sites and three potential sites i.e. sites with food-plant and which looked as if they could host *myrmidone* but where less than perfect weather meant we could not be certain. On one of the new sites we found 45 *myrmidone* flying which was a significant find – particularly as the first brood is usually less numerous.

We duly reported our findings for each site to our contacts in Germany with GPS coordinates of *myrmidone* and food-plants seen, details of grazing animals, degree of grazing, vegetation types and other butterfly species seen. This would enable them to refine their model and to modify the sites we would visit in August.



Fenton's Wood White
(*Leptidea morsei*)
– photo D Plowman

Second survey, 27 August to 4 September 2023

The group for the second trip comprised Keith Woonton and Dave Plowman again plus Kevin Tolhurst and myself. For the first half of the 9 day trip we stayed near Cluj and surveyed some new sites and also revisited some of the sites where weather had defeated us on the May trip. Once again weather played a part; for the first couple of days Romania experienced the high temperatures that affected southern Europe this summer and surveying was hard work and not particularly fruitful and then we suffered from thunderstorms and torrential rain which was even worse! However, despite the weather we once again found 2 previously undiscovered sites with populations of *myrmidone* and I believe we would have found more if the weather had been better. ▼



Romania cont.



Pallas's Fritillary
(*Argynnis laodice*)
– photo K Woonton

After the surveys were over, I had promised the group a few days further south to see some of Romania's other butterfly species. Our trip was at the very end of August / beginning of September which was a little later than ideal but was the only time I was free to travel. Despite this, we managed to see most of the target species.

Other target species

We revisited Runc and managed to see an endemic sub-species of **Black Ringlet** (*Erebia melas runcensis*) and **Balkan Green-veined White** (*Pieris balcana*) before heading further south to look for **Pallas's Fritillary** (*Argynnis laodice*). We duly found 3 individuals of *laodice* one of which posed well for the photographers.

We went to look for **Water Ringlet** (*Erebia pronoe*) in the only area in which it flies in Romania and although the site we visited looked extremely promising the weather was dull and overcast with drizzle so we had to admit defeat despite an extensive search.

Trans-Fagarasan highway

Our final venture in the south was a journey up the Trans-Fagarasan highway, a high road across the southern part of the Carpathians reaching an altitude of 2042 metres. On a previous visit we had been subjected to a 4 hour delay as the road was closed for a Ferrari to attempt a speed record and this year when we reached the tunnel close to the summit we discovered that the road was closed for a cycle race! Fortunately, I had allowed 2 days in the area and we returned on the following day to search for our targets - **Sudeten Ringlet** (*Erebia sudetica*) and **Yellow-spotted Ringlet** (*Erebia manto*). Both of these species fly on the slopes to the south of the tunnel and we found **Sudeten Ringlet** and another Ringlet which initially looked like *manto* but on closer examination proved to be a sub-species of **Mountain Ringlet** (*Erebia epiphron transsilvanica*). I believe that we would have been more successful if we could have made the visit earlier in August. Although the day started with bright sunshine clouds soon rolled in stopping *Erebias* from flying and then later gave way to rain which forced us to retreat.

Trans-Fagarasan highway
– photo D Plowman



In conclusion

Our two trips both yielded previously undiscovered sites for *myrmidone* in surprisingly high numbers of individuals. This reinforces the importance of the area to the west of Cluj for the species which is classified as Vulnerable in the provisional new European Red List. We will be liaising with our German partners to work out next steps for the species in Romania.

As well as the important survey work we all enjoyed the Romanian culture, landscape and butterflies (and beer and palinka – a spirit usually made from plums). I would like to thank all of the team members for their hard work and companionship. •

Mike Prentice
mikeprentice7@gmail.com

Brittany Moths

Nothing in Brittany 2023: more tales of the unexpected

by Philip Horton

In the Winter Newsletter for 2022 (EBG 32 p.13-16) I described my experiences of running a moth trap in central Brittany. Trapping had started in September 2015 when my daughter and her family moved there. It intensified after December 2020 when my wife and I bought our own house not far away from hers. It quickly became apparent that Brittany was the place to see 'unexpected' species which only occasionally occur in the UK and then only in the southern coastal counties or the Channel Islands. I refer to these species as 'UK rarities'. They include many species that years of light trapping in South Lincolnshire had failed to produce. Examples included **Portland Ribbon Wave** (*Idea degeneraria*), **Willowherb Hawk-moth** (*Proserpinus proserpina*) and **L-album Wainscot** (*Mythimna l-album*).



Kentish Glory (*Endromis versicolora*), 10 April



Tau Emperor (*Aglia tau*), male, 1 May

Spring

This article describes the results of my trapping during 2023. We returned to Brittany from the UK at the end of January, but it was not until the night of 16/17 March that I considered it 'warm' enough to run my trap. In the morning I found only four species but one of these was decidedly unexpected: a male **Kentish Glory** (*Endromis versicolora*). I was already aware that the species is present in the area as in 2021 one of my daughter's local Facebook friends had posted a photo of one in her garden and was hoping that someone could identify it. As a result, Tom Prescott of Butterfly Conservation Scotland had sent me a pheromone lure which I had used in the spring of 2022 without success (a donation to BC was made to cover the cost). The lure was however still in my deep freeze waiting to be used in 2023. After one appeared in my trap, I placed the lure in a basement room outside of which was my moth trap, with the window open. Another male appeared in my trap on 10 April. Was it a coincidence or was it attracted by the lure?

Despite the excitement of the Kentish Glory, the weather remained cold and between my first night's trapping and the night of 30 April/1 May I recorded only twenty different species. Only one other was new to me: a **Yellow Horned** (*Achlya flavicornis*). The remaining moths were mainly 'Quakers' including many **Hebrew Characters** (*Orthosia gothica*).

The night of 30 April/1 May produced another nice, but not altogether unexpected species, a male **Tau Emperor** (*Aglia tau*). My 2022 article described how I trapped a female of this species in 2021 and successfully reared several adults which emerged in the spring of 2022. All were female and, although I used them to attract a male, this was my first opportunity to photograph one. ▼



Brittany Moths cont.



Dark Tussock
(*Dicallomera fascelina*), 22 June

Summer

Parts of May and June were spent in the UK, and I thus missed many of the interesting species, including the several species of Hawk-moth, described during this period in my 2022 article. I started trapping in Brittany again on the night of 19/20 June and immediately started to record many new species as in previous years I had been in the UK. Several of these are relatively widespread in the UK but were new to me. These included a **Dark Tussock** (*Dicallomera fascelina*).

I consulted my boyhood I-Spy Butterflies and Moths book and found I had seen my first **Pale Tussock** (*Calliteara pudibunda*) in 1958, at the age of eleven. It had taken me sixty-five years to see my first 'Dark' example! By coincidence there was also a **Dark Spectacle** (*Abrostola triplasia*) in the same trap. Again, it was not until I started trapping in Brittany that I had first seen this species. Other examples were a **Blotched Emerald** (*Comibaena bajularia*), **Large Emerald** (*Geometra papilionaria*), **Grass Emerald** (*Pseudoterpna pruinata*) and, on the night of 07/08 July a real 'UK rarity', a **Jersey Emerald** (*Pseudoterpna coronillaria*).

Prior to 2023 the only macro-moth I caught in Brittany with no UK records was the **Tau Emperor**. The night of 07/08 July produced two more: an **Oak Marbled Brown** (*Drymonia querna*), a relative of the UK's **Marbled** and **Lunar Marbled Browns** (*D. dodonaea* and *D. ruficornis*) and a **Plum Lappet** (*Odonestis pruni*). This moth reaches the limit of its NW distribution in Central Brittany. Although I photographed it before release, I was unhappy with the photo which showed the moth sitting rather uncomfortably on one of the 'twigs' I use as photographic props. When I caught another one on the night of 11/12 August I photographed it again on one of my twigs before leaving to attend to other things. When I returned I noticed it had taken up a characteristic pose on the twig, appearing to blend with it to form a small bud. The ID of both moths was confirmed by Maël Garrin, my contact at the University of Rennes.



Oak Marbled Brown (*Drymonia querna*), 8 July



Plum Lappet (*Odonestis pruni*), in resting position, 12 August

To return to my August records, on the night of 16/17 August I took my MV trap (the above records are all from my basic 'Heath trap' in our garden) to my daughter's house which, as I described previously, is in a more rural location than my own garden. It was a humid night and I had a record haul of 65 macro-moth species. These ▼



Brittany Moths cont.

included three male **Gypsy Moths** (*Lymantria dispar*) (my first ever record had been on 29/30 July) and four males of the related **Black Arches** (*Lymantria monacha*). Another striking moth recorded that night was a **Latin** (*Callopistria juvenina*) while two other new species of note were a **White-point** (*Mythimna albipuncta*) and two **White-specks** (*M. unipuncta*)



Gypsy Moth (*Lymantria dispar*), 30 July



Black Arches (*Lymantria monacha*), 18 August

Also in the trap were several very similar looking small moths, some very worn. Maël was again able to sort them all out and identified four different species: a **Dusky Marbled Brown** (*Gluphisia crenata*) which does not occur in the UK, and a **Nut-tree Tussock** (*Colocasia coryli*), a species which I had recorded in previous years. The two others were new to me and at the present time are 'UK rarities': a **Pine Processionary** (*Thaumetopoea pityocampa*) and an **Oak Processionary** (*T. processionea*).

As I mentioned in my 2022 article, **Humming-bird Hawk-moths** (*Macroglossum stellatarum*) were numerous on our Buddleia bushes while **Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth** (*Hemaris fuciformis*) was recorded twice. This year *M. stellatarum* were particularly numerous while after a first record on 9 August, *H. fuciformis* was seen almost daily in the garden for the rest of the month.



Latin (*Callopistria juvenina*), 18 August



Dusky Marbled Brown (*Gluphisia crenata*), 18 August



Brittany Moths cont.



Convolvulus Hawk-moth (*Agrius convolvuli*), 17 September



Clifden Nonpareil (*Catocala fraxini*), 21 September

Early autumn

I had spent September 2022 in the UK so I hoped for a few new species in 2023 before the editor's deadline of 30 September. The first half of the month was disappointing with poor weather and low numbers of common moths. Things began to pick up on the night of 9/10 September with my first **Convolvulus Hawk-moth** (*Agrius convolvuli*) of 2023. These then proved to be plentiful with at least one in each subsequent night's trapping. The night of 19/20 September was particularly productive when a visit to my daughter's house with my friends Mary-Anne and John Creedy produced a **Clifden Nonpareil** (*Catocala fraxini*), my third since moving to Brittany. Other 'UK rarities' included a **Scarce Bordered Straw** (*Helicoverpa armigera*), a **Dewick's Plusia** (*Macdunnoughia confusa*) and a **Radford's Flame Shoulder** (*Ochropleura leucogaster*).



Radford's Flame Shoulder (*Ochropleura leucogaster*), 20 September



Southern Brindled Green (*Dryobotodes roboris*), 28 September

On the following night using my own trap in the garden, a small **Southern Brindled Green** (*Dryobotodes roboris*) appeared. A final session at my daughter's on 26/27 September recorded two further **Southern Brindled Greens**, a **Flame Brocade** (*Trigonophora flammea*) and, a nice surprise, my first **Clancy's Rustic** (*Caradrina kadenii*). Hopefully there will be more productive nights' trapping before the end of the year. •

Philip Horton

philhorton@home.co.uk

All photos taken in 2023 by the author



Clancy's Rustic (*Caradrina kadenii*), 27 September



Flame Brocade (*Trigonophora flammea*), 27 September



A Personal View

Are We Killing our Butterflies?

By Neil Thompson

A provocative title, but I think we have to ask the question of ourselves, are we doing enough individually to help combat what I think is almost universal acceptance that climate change is happening and will probably get worse? And that's before we start talking about our individual impact on pollution and habitat destruction.

Millions of people have heard about the extreme weather events that have occurred around the world over the last few years and this is certainly raising awareness. But, despite the pledges from the COP conferences, is anything substantial really changing, either at a personal or governmental level? Does everyone expect someone else to fix the problem, or for "technology" to find a solution?



High Brown Fritillary
(Endromis versicolora),
Malvern Hills, June 2002
(scanned from a
transparency)

Like me, many of you have probably been around for a few decades, we've travelled quite widely and we've always been aware of the natural environment. How many of us can honestly say that we've seen no degradation at all over that time? Local to me, I remember seeing 20+ **High Brown Fritillaries** in little over an hour on the Malvern Hills 21 years ago, but they are now long gone. The likelihood is that the Malverns' **Graylings** have followed them. At the other end of the globe, around 30 years ago, my young son and I remember walking out of Franz Josef village in New Zealand,

almost straight on to the glacier. I was shocked to learn recently that since 2012, the glacier can only be reached by helicopter due to its retreat and the lower reaches being too dangerous.

Although the science tells us that we've seen range expansion of some butterfly species, the general trend of these surveys seems to be pointing in the wrong direction. In Europe, many of us have experienced the wonderful butterfly assemblages in the mountains, such as those of the Alps and Pyrenees. With the dire warnings about the loss of glaciers and snow cover in general around the globe, how long can many of these mountain specialised species survive in a rapidly changing environment?

I now question whether I can justify flying anywhere to see butterflies, or anything else for that matter. This year, I took my first return flights to see butterflies since 2018. Slovenia ▼



A Personal View cont.

had just experienced the very heavy rains that had afflicted Italy, and maybe coupled with last summer's extremely hot weather, this had possibly led to many of the damper habitats we visited being almost devoid of butterflies. Not long after we left, Ljubljana was experiencing 35C heat and later in the summer there were more floods in the north-east. Did I do the right thing in adding to the problem by flying there?

I also question whether I really need to get in my car and drive for several hours to see XYZ butterfly species. Can we really convince ourselves that doing survey work at the same time justifies all this travel? Or are we ignoring the bigger picture, like fencing off the last British Large Blues and then watching them fade away? Are we just trophy hunting with our cameras, the butterfly versions of the Northern White Rhino and the Great Auk?

Neil Thompson

Neilt180775@btinternet.com