



## Switzerland

---

European Butterflies Group Contact	Matt Rowlings [matt@eurobutterflies.com]
Local Contact	Matt Rowlings [matt@eurobutterflies.com]
Butterfly Conservation Europe Partner	Swiss Butterfly Conservation, Tagfalterschutz Schweiz, Case postale 90, CH - 2002 Neuchâtel 2, Switzerland Tel: 0041 32 721 46 29 0041 32 721 46 29
Local Recording Scheme	Yannick Chittaro at Le Centre Suisse de la cartographie de la faune ( <a href="http://www.cscf.ch/page10294_en.html">http://www.cscf.ch/page10294_en.html</a> ) Yannick is also responsible for the planning and organisation for the red data book of Swiss fauna.
Butterfly List	Distribution maps are provided on line by Le Centre Suisse de la cartographie de la faune at <a href="http://lepus.unine.ch/cartto/">http://lepus.unine.ch/cartto/</a> . On the home page, click on "Public Access", click on the list to select the taxonomic group, choose "Rhopalocera" and click on "Next", then select genus and finally species to generate the map.

## Books

**Les papillons de jour et leurs biotopes vol 1** - "the butterflies and their biotopes vol 1", published 1987; **Les papillons et leurs biotopes vol 2** - "the butterflies and moths and their biotopes vol 2", published 1999: by Ligue Suisse pour la Protection de la Nature. In French and German only. Available through the online shop at the ProNatura website: [www.ProNatura.ch](http://www.ProNatura.ch). Excellent books with good detail on identification and ecology, including all stages of the life cycle. Distribution maps available for most species but are a little dated. Vol 1 contains all the butterflies; Vol 2 contains the Skippers (*Hesperiidae*) (approx. 100 of the 650 pages) with the rest covering various



moth families. Both books are A4 format and of substantial weight - not field guides.

The butterflies of Switzerland are generally well described in the two excellent general works on European butterflies: **Butterflies of Britain & Europe** by Tolman 1997, Collins. **Butterflies of Europe** by Lafranchis, published by Diatheo. 1st edition in 2004 in English and 2nd edition with minor additions/updates in 2007 only in French.

## Websites

A dedicated resource for the butterflies of Switzerland can be found at: [www.schmetterlinge.ch](http://www.schmetterlinge.ch) (in German) and partly translated into French at [www.papillons.ch](http://www.papillons.ch)

Several amateurs based in Switzerland maintain butterfly websites although not dedicated to Swiss butterflies:

Matt's European Butterflies - [www.eurobutterflies.com](http://www.eurobutterflies.com)

Guy Padfield's European Butterfly Page - [www.guypadfield.com](http://www.guypadfield.com)

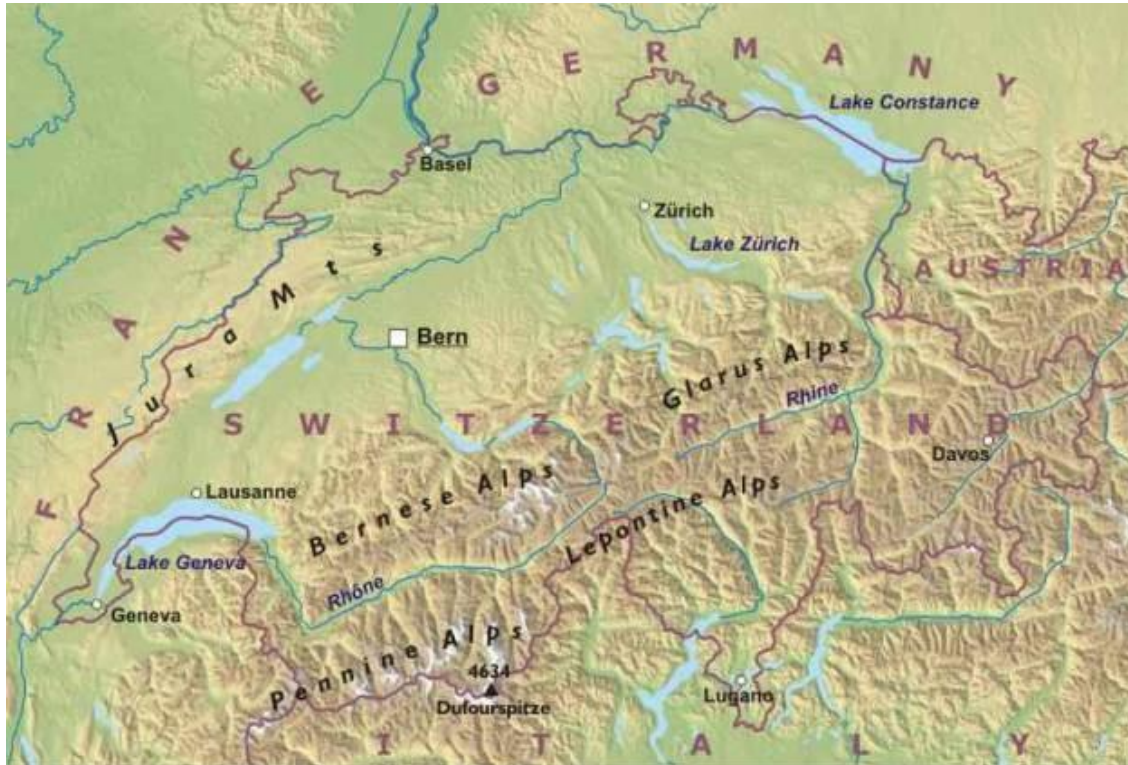
Heiner Ziegler - [www.euroleps.ch/index.html](http://www.euroleps.ch/index.html)

Captain's European Butterfly Guide [www.butterfly-guide.co.uk](http://www.butterfly-guide.co.uk) includes a trip report from Valais

## Holidays

There are many hotels in Switzerland, often at reasonable prices. But in the mountains in high summer (July and August) popular areas can become booked up quickly so booking in advance is recommended. The air is thin at high altitudes but this only becomes a consideration if ambitious long range trekking is foreseen - something extremely rewarding but by no means necessary to enjoy the butterflies and other wildlife.

## Sites & Species



Map © [www.freeworldmaps.net](http://www.freeworldmaps.net)

Switzerland is one of the biodiversity hot spots of Europe being blessed with roughly 208 species in an area of just 41,000 km<sup>2</sup> (c.f. 60 species in the UK, 245,000 km<sup>2</sup> and 250 species in France, 550,000 km<sup>2</sup>). A large percentage of the surface area of Switzerland is dominated by high mountains and its fauna is greatly enriched by its Alpine representatives. It also benefits from some Mediterranean influences around in the S and SW. It has no endemic species although is home to several extremely local and restricted species shared with neighbouring Italy and/or Austria. There are several endemic subspecies, particularly amongst the Alpine fauna. Some of Europe's central European species are represented at low to mid altitudes, including some of the wetland specialists.





Violet Copper, *Lycaena helle*



Eriphyle Ringlet, *Erebia eriphyle*



Small Apollo, *Parnassius phoebus*



Raetzer's Ringlet, *Erebia christi*

Photos © Matt Rowlings <http://www.eurobutterflies.com>

The butterfly season varies in length, being particularly variable at the beginning of the season. In 2007 butterflies were flying in February in low, hot places such as the Valais (Wallis) but more usually April brings forth the first butterflies. By mid-June, the season is relatively repeatable and July to mid-August is consistently the principle season for the high altitude butterflies. September sees the tail end of most butterflies.

Low levels in Switzerland, the "plateau" running from Geneva to Zurich, have been largely taken over by human activities, leaving only small isolated pockets of natural diversity. It is only in the mountains that butterflies are found commonly where steep slopes prohibit building or farming. Nevertheless, viticulture plays its destructive role at lower levels even in mountainous

regions and continues to puts some species - that said, it also provides clearings and forest edges that are good for butterflies.

At higher levels in the mountains, nature remains at large and above the tree line it is mostly untouched, apart from walkers and some high level pastures - the latter is generally done at low intensity to reduce impact on the natural environment. Skiing does play a role and it is noted by some local experts that skied slopes are poorer in diversity.

The butterfly watcher who visits Switzerland is therefore greatly rewarded when visiting the mountainous regions of the centre, south and east.



Peak White, *Pontia callidice*



Cranberry Fritillary, *Boloria aquilonaris*



Darwin's Heath, *Coenonympha darwiniana*



Alpine Grayling, *Oeneis glacialis*

Photos © Matt Rowlings <http://www.eurobutterflies.com>



The principal butterfly regions of Switzerland can be summarised as follows:

### Pennine Alps

The Valais (or Wallis) canton is exceptionally rich in species all along the Rhone Valley. The altitudinal range provides huge diversity ranging from 500m to over 4000m. At low levels species such as the Iolas Blue (*Iolana iolas*), Zephyr Blue (*Plebejus pylaon trappi*) and the endemic "Swiss" Provencal Fritillary (*Mellicta deione berisalli*) can be found. At higher levels a huge range of Alpine species are present, of particular note are Darwin's Heath (*Coenonympha darwiniana*) and the extremely rare Raetzer's Ringlet (*Erebia christi*).

### Bernese Alps

This region of high mountains is home to some outlying populations of mountain specialists such as the Sudeten and the de Lesse's Brassy Ringlets (*Erebia sudetica*, *E. nivalis*). It is somewhat damper than the Pennine Alps and the Dusky and Scarce Large Blues (*Maculinea nausithous*, *M. telejus*), and Cranberry Fritillary (*Clossiana aquilonaris*) may be found at low to medium altitudes.

### The Engadin

The mountains of E Switzerland are also of high diversity. Centred around Davos and St. Moritz the whole area is of interest at all levels, but particularly the mountain passes. Species such as the Little Fritillary (*Mellicta asteria*), Yellow Banded Ringlet (*Erebia flavofasciata*) and Warren's Skipper (*Pyrgus warrenensis*) are found throughout but very locally.

### Geneva

One of the lowest points in Switzerland several Mediterranean species touch Swiss territory here. Species such as Reverdin's Blue (*Plebejus argyrognomon*) and Sloe Hairstreak (*Satyrrium acaciae*) can be found in hot meadows with scrub.





Ticino (Lugano and north)

Another low, hot area with species such as Stygian Ringlet (*Erebia styx*), Hungarian Glider (*Neptis rivularis*) and Large Chequered Skipper (*Heteropterus morpheus*). The high mountains are extremely rich.



Warren's Skipper, *Pyrgus warrenensis*

"Swiss" Zephyr Blue, *Plebejus pylaon trappi*

Photos © Matt Rowlings [www.eurobutterflies.com](http://www.eurobutterflies.com)