



eNewsletter

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EIG has been on a recruitment drive recently and I hope a lot of new members will be reading this Newsletter. Welcome!

There is a strong French focus this time, with an article about two Hairstreaks that are tricky to separate in the south of France, another about an improbably-named pioneer of butterfly observation in the Pyrenees, and reports of visits to the Auvergne and Le Queyras. If your appetite is whetted, Jude Lock is advertising a week in the Pyrenees in early July during which she will show you the special butterflies of the area.

A great deal of information has been published in EIG Newsletters over the last few years and at the end of this edition you will find an index for Newsletters 1 to 16. Newsletters 1 to 13 are on the EIG website and more recent Newsletters will be added in due course.





From the EIG Chairman Simon Spencer

There must be something about the British and butterflies. The UK butterfly database compiled by Butterfly Conservation and now standing at over 10 million records completely dwarfs similar data sets for other countries in Europe. The 1223 butterfly transects walked every week of the summer in the UK now give us very detailed documentation of the decline of British butterflies over the years.

From this data we know that species like the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (*Boloria euphrosyne*) have declined by more than 90%. There are some bits of good news such as the northward advance of some common species but is it good news if it is just good evidence of global warming? However the recent recovery of the **Silver-spotted Skipper** (*Hesperia comma*) in southern England is good news and largely the result of conservation effort.

This data goes back to the days when **Ernie Pollard** first started Pollard walks 40 years ago. Apart from perhaps Holland most European countries do not have that sort of data. Perhaps it is because of our relatively limited butterfly fauna that people can get to grips with butterfly identification quite easily. We have 57 species and France has 250. All but a handful of species are easy to recognise. Confronted with a much more diverse butterfly fauna in southern Europe, accurate separation of species is actually very difficult. Groups like the **Pyrgus Skippers**, small **Fritillaries** (*Melitaea* species) and **Blues** can be a challenge to people with years of experience. Thanks to the work of Kudrna and others for most of Europe there is good data on distribution of butterflies but on a fairly coarse scale. The historical data from collections has been useful here. For assessing population trends one needs to have quantitative data over a long period of time and using a standardized methodology. For assessing changes in range then looking at the data at the 50km square level gives a very different perspective to the 1km square level. At the 50km square level one population is still a dot even if the species has been lost from 2499 1km squares. The UK Millennium Atlas of Butterflies records at the 10km square level but even this can mask decreasing range. Large data sets give a better idea of changes in range. Large data sets require lots of records from lots of people.



Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell
(*Nymphalis xanthomelas*)

Might this be our 58th species?
Photo by Tony Hoare.

Monitoring schemes in Europe

Butterfly Conservation Europe is trying to promote regular monitoring transects in Europe so that a quantitative view of changes in butterfly populations is available. The results may be depressing but good evidence is more difficult for policy makers to ignore. Grassland butterflies in Europe have declined by more than 50% in the two decades before 2011. The number of transects and participating countries is growing. I strongly recommend to all EIG members who live abroad or who spend a lot of their time at a place in Europe that they participate in the local national butterfly monitoring scheme. This is usually less arduous than the UK weekly transect and provides very useful data.



From the EIG Chairman Simon Spencer cont.

► EIG recording forms

For those of us that visit Europe looking at butterflies we are trying to facilitate the sending of records to recording schemes in Europe. There is no doubt that this data will be appreciated by local atlas projects. For example EIG is the biggest contributor to the Atlas of the Midi Pyrénées. In the same way as we submit UK data to our local county recorders we want EIG members and others to send their holiday data to local atlas projects or national schemes. There are now recording forms on the EIG website (www.bc-eig.org.uk) that you can download. They are in the form of Excel spreadsheets and they provide you with several things that you might find useful.

There are now
recording forms
on the EIG website
that you can
download

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Please email content and any thoughts
or ideas to Simon Spencer

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Firstly there are country lists of butterfly species which you can print and use in the field as a recording form. They will soon cover every country in Europe. They are designed to be printed on one sheet of A4 on both sides of the paper giving both English and scientific names. For those who want something smaller we do an A5 single sheet with just scientific names using a single letter for the genus – see example for Greece below. Species are in taxonomic order. At the head of each column you can enter site and date information and GPS readings as well as weather etc.

You use one column per site per day. For each column you enter something for every species seen at that site leaving all other cells blank. You can put an A-D code for abundance or a '+' sign for present or whatever you like. You get a running total of sites for a species and total number of species. You are restricted to 42 columns which is usually enough for a week's holiday. The clever bit, provided by **Mike Haigh** our webmaster, is a little program in the form of an excel macro which takes every cell in the table where you have entered a record and adds a row with all the column headings together with the species name etc. You can combine records from several spreadsheets to create your own database. You can also send a copy to the local recording scheme in a form they can readily import into their database. With the British passion for recording and our growing EIG membership (362) we could make quite a difference.

E.tages	E.marlyii	Cakeae	Clavatherae	C.flocciferus	Corientalis	C.stauderi	S.phlomis	S.orbifer	M.proto
M.tessellum	P.arthami	P.sidae	P.malvae	P.serratae	P.cinarae	P.armorianus	P.alveus	C.palaemon	T.jineola
T.sylvestris	T.aetion	T.hyrax	H.amma	O.sylvanus	G.pumilio	G.nostrodamus	P.thrax	Z.polyxena	Z.cerisy
Z.aetia	A.apollinus	P.mnemosyne	P.apollo	I.podalius	P.machaon	P.alexand	L.sinapis complex	L.sinapis	L.duponcheli
A.cardamines	A.adamane	A.gruneri	E.ausonia	E.penia	A.cataegi	P.brassicae	P.krueperi	P.manni	P.papae
Pergane	P.napi	P.bakana	P.edusa	P.chloridike	C.erate	C.crocea	C.auroreia	C.caucasica	C.alfaciensis
G.rhamni	G.farinosa	G.deopatra	H.judica	L.phlaeas	L.dispar	L.virgaureae	L.ottomana	L.tityrus	L.lakiphron
L.candens	L.thersamon	L.thetis	T.betulae	F.querus	C.rubi	S.w-album	S.pruni	S.spini	S.jilis
S.cacidae	S.jedereri	L.boetius	L.pirithous	T.balkanicus	Z.karsandra	C.minimus	Cosiris	Cargiades	C.decostratus
Caketas	Cargiolus	P.vicrama	P.bavius	S.orion	G.alex's	L.olis	P.parion	P.pakon	T.taygetica
C.trochylus	P.pybaon	P.sephirus	P.argus	Pidas	P.aryragnomon	P.loeii	P.eurypilus	P.psyloritus	P.dardanus
A.eumedon	A.agesis	A.artaxerxes	A.anteros	C.semiargus	C.hele	P.coelestinus	P.scheri	P.dorylas	P.amandus
P.thersites	P.karus	P.karus andronia	P.eroseroides	P.eros menelos	P.daphnis	P.bellargus	P.coridon	P.coridon philopi	P.admetus
P.riparia	P.araeniensis	P.nephophiptame	P.porphicus	P.peleniae	P.phigenia	P.damon	L.celtis	A.paphia	A.pandora
A.aglaji	A.adippe	A.niobe	U.athonia	B.daphne	B.hecate	B.euphrasyne	B.selenae	Bidia	B.graeca
V.atalanta	V.cardui	A.aj	A.urticae	P.c-album	P.gea	A.levana	N.antiopa	N.polychloros	N.xanthomelas
E.aurina	M.chixia	M.phoebe	M.arduina	M.trivia	M.morta	M.didyma	M.aurelia	M.athalia	M.syracae
L.populi	L.camilla	L.reducta	N.sappho	N.rivularis	C.jasius	A.metis	A.jila	A.jris	K.roxelana
K.kimene	P.aegeria	L.megera	L.petroplitana	L.maera	Y.asterope	C.rhodopensis	C.ariania	C.glycerion	C.leander
Corientalis	C.pamphilus	C.thyris	P.ithonus	P.celia	A.hyperantus	M.telmessia	M.halkarassus	M.chia	M.jurtina
M.megala	H.lycaon	H.lupina	P.afer	E.ligea	E.euryale	E.euphron	E.aethiops	E.medusa	E.rhodopensis
E.ottomana	E.cassioidea	E.melas	E.oeme	M.russica	M.galatheia	M.larissa	S.ferula	M.dryas	A.montensis
H.fagi	H.syracae	H.aetia	H.mersina	H.volgensis	H.pellada	H.statilinus	H.fatua	A.aethusa	A.aethusa
B.arae	C.brisis	P.geyeri	P.mniscehi	P.graeca	P.mymone	P.arestes	P.anthelea	D.chrysippus	

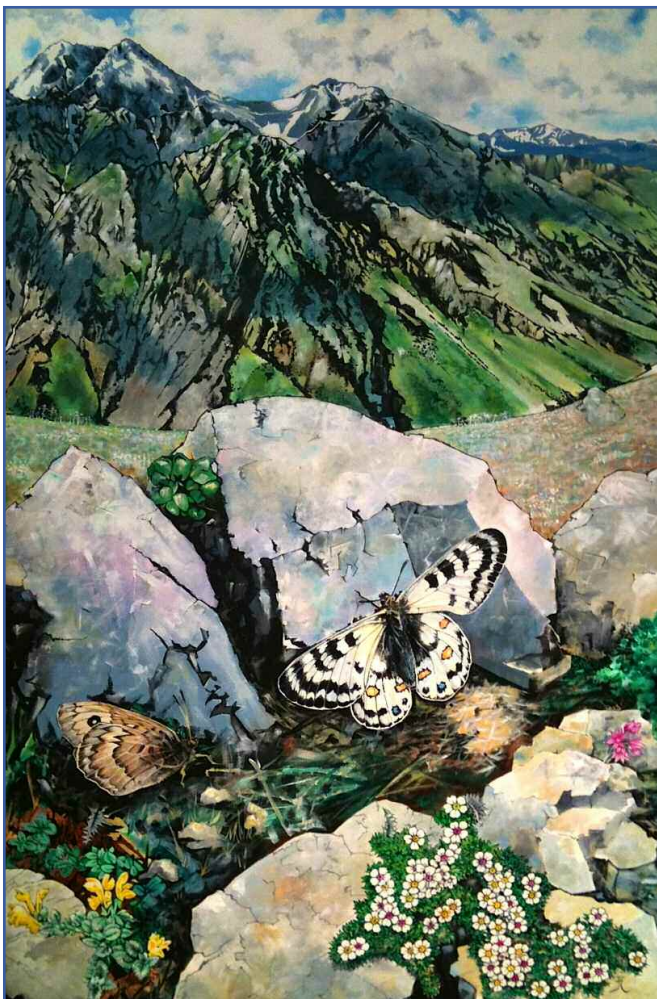
The A5 recording sheet for Greece.

► *Where to send the data*

For some countries in Europe we have successfully researched who to send the data to. For France, where there are a number of local regional recording schemes, Jude Lock, our EIG representative in France, has produced a list of schemes and their contact details. We believe that sending the data to the local scheme provides the best opportunity for validating the data. For other countries that don't yet have either national or regional recording schemes, these will be added in the future. We also suggest that records should be passed on to the Butterfly Conservation Europe recording scheme based in the UFZ in Germany for future European atlases.

There is no doubt that butterflies are declining in many parts of Europe as intensification of agriculture or land abandonment takes its toll as it has done in the UK. For rare species accurate knowledge of their distribution can hopefully guide conservation effort. We are lucky in the UK to have a baseline for the year 2000 thanks to the Millennium Atlas when virtually every 10km square had recording effort. Future changes can be measured against that. If the **Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell** (*Nymphalis xanthomelas*) that turned up in Eastern England in 2014 stays around then we will have 58 species in the UK. •

Simon Spencer, Chairman EIG.



John Reeve

As this Newsletter was going to press we heard the sad news of the passing of John Reeve. John was a long standing member of the West Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation and took part in several of the overseas butterfly trips organised on behalf of the Branch and more recently the EIG. Many will remember his larger-than-life character and his great sense of humour.

John was an enthusiastic photographer but also an extremely talented artist and graphic designer and it was this latter talent that resulted in John designing the EIG logo which adorns the front page of all our Newsletters and other publications.

He will be greatly missed by all of us who knew him but his legacy lives on through our logo and the many other pieces of art he has left behind. The watercolour alongside was painted by John after a trip to Kazakhstan and was exhibited recently at the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists. It depicts **Parnassius maximinus** - a species of **Apollo** with blue spots on the hindwing.



Notices and News

EIG AGM – 28 November 2015

This year's AGM will take place on 28 November 2015 at the NFU site in Stratford-upon-Avon. The AGM itself will begin at 1400 and will be followed by a programme of talks including presentations by **Martin Davies** on Mediterranean Butterflies and **Simon Spencer** on Farming and Butterflies. There will be plenty of opportunity to meet and chat to fellow members, and lunch will be organised in a local pub beforehand for those that wish to partake. We hope lots of members will come along, new and long-standing! Please see the EIG website nearer the time for full details •

EIG and Butterfly Conservation Branches in the UK

In February 2015 **Simon Spencer** wrote as EIG Chairman to all BC Branch Chairmen to say that EIG was trying to raise awareness and expand its membership and to this end was leafleting the entire BC membership in the Spring edition of Butterfly, and was hoping to establish an EIG rep or link person in each Branch.

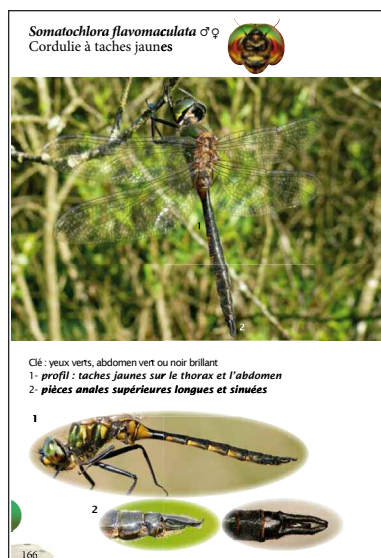
The idea of an EIG branch contact person was suggested at our last AGM. It would facilitate communication between EIG and other BC branches for mutual benefit. A number of contacts have been put forward in response to Simon's letter – for Dorset (**Adrian Neil**), Hants and IOW (**Lynn Fomison**), N Ireland (**Siobhán Porter**), Norfolk (**Bernard Watts**), Somerset (**Gillian Coles**), Sussex (**Dan Danahar** and **Richard Roebuck**), and Wilts (**Hugo Brooke**). We would like more contacts – if you would like to volunteer yourself then please send an email to Simon – all volunteers will be gratefully received. This network of contacts will become an email list for occasional use.



Could you
be an EIG
branch contact
person?

Among the ways EIG can co-operate with Branches are the following:

- We can syndicate articles from the EIG Newsletter if Branch newsletter editors are looking for material.
- We can provide speakers for BC branch events that can speak on a number of European butterfly subjects with presentations that include many attractive butterfly photos but also feature conservation concerns – the problems of loss of habitat either from agricultural intensification or land abandonment being much the same in mainland Europe as in the UK.
- We can offer a shared AGM/members day for mutual benefit. This started in 2014 – the EIG AGM was shared with Hants and IOW Branch and the costs were shared. The respective AGMs were held simultaneously in different rooms and then everyone joined together for talks, photo competition etc. We have been unable to organise a shared AGM in 2015 – dates need to be sorted out and halls booked a long time in advance – but we hope to run a shared event with Upper Thames Branch in 2016. The provisional date is 29 October 2016. • ▼



News from France

Photographic guide to the Butterflies of France

The association Gard Nature (Languedoc-Roussillon) is working on a project to produce a pocket photographic guide to the Butterflies of France for the general public. They are looking for good quality photos, taken within metropolitan France, and welcome participation from EIG members. If you wish to assist please send photos by WeTransfer (<https://www.wetransfer.com/>) to the authors and co-ordinators, **Jean-Laurent Hentz** and **Jean-Pierre D'Hondt** at papillons@gard-nature.com. All photographs will be credited to the photographer in a section at the end of the book. Further information can be found (in French) at http://gard-nature.com/transfert/2014_presentation_papillons.pdf

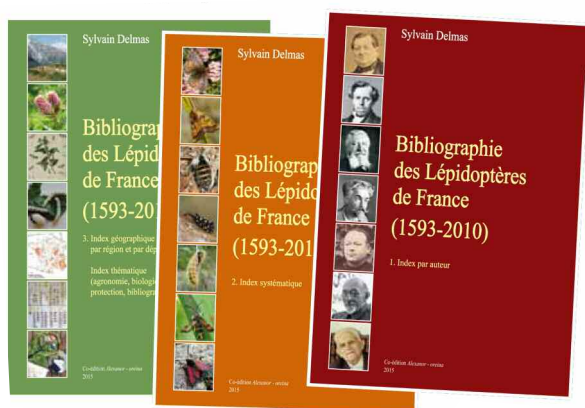
The presentation of the guide will be on the same lines as Gard Nature's book on the dragonflies of France, a page of which is reproduced here. •

Papillons du Loiret (Centre)

This departmental atlas is scheduled to be published at the end of 2015. The fruit of eight years work, illustrated with numerous photos and 60 original watercolours by **Frédéric Archaux**. The price will be 38€. Details and extract here: http://www.cen-centre.org/images/fichiers/files/Valorisation/Bon_de_souscription_Papillons_Loiret.pdf •

La Vie des Papillons by Tristan Lafranchis

Information on **Tristan Lafranchis's** new book can be found on his website <http://diatheo.weebly.com/la-vie-des-papillons.html>. There is a section in English to say that the book can be ordered directly from him at the price of €100 plus postage of €16.50. Payment should be made by bank transfer or PayPal. A review of the book will follow in the next Newsletter. •



Bibliography of the Lepidoptera of France (1593-2010) by Sylvain Delmas

This work analyzes all bibliographical references (over 18,000) in connection with the Lepidoptera of France from 1593 to 2010, and is published jointly by the journals *Alexanor* and *Oreina*, with the support of the Natural History Society Alcide-d'Orbigny and the Entomological Society of Limousin. References include articles from French and foreign journals, books, study reports, theses etc.

There are three volumes. Volume I: Index by author. Volume II: Systematic index. Volume III: Geographic and thematic index.

The price of the three volumes is 36 euros, excluding postage, from *Oreina*, 29 rue de Flagy, 77940, Thoury-Férottes, France.
email: administrationoreina.org. •



Apollo (*Parnassius apollo*)

Please contact Jude with any questions and to book, email: jude.lock@orange.fr

Trips

EIG trip to the French Pyrenees, 3rd - 11th July 2015 (to coincide with Ryanair flights from London Stansted to Lourdes)

Jude Lock, EIG's representative in France, is organising a friendly and informal week for members to get together, to observe and photograph some of the special local species such as the **Apollo** (*Parnassius apollo*), **Gavarnie Ringlet** (*Erebia gorgone*), and **Gavarnie Blue** (*Plebejus pyrenaicus*). It is not too late to sign up if you are interested. During the week Jude will take participants to her favourite sites, some within the Parc National des Pyrénées, to enjoy a variety of habitats - rocky mountain outcrops, flower-filled hay meadows, high-mountain pastures etc.

The cost of the trip including accommodation on a half-board basis in the lovely three star Hotel Central in Barèges and 5 days guiding, transport included, will be approximately £490 per person (based on two sharing). Self-catering is also available. Flights and personal expenses are not included. For more information about butterflies in the area see here: <http://borderlinehols.com/about/borderline/wildlife/butterfly-conservation/> •

2016 EIG Calendar Competition

The photo competition that we have run for quite a few years now continues to attract plenty of entries and the Calendar continues to be popular - all copies of the 2015 Calendar were sold.

A big thank you to all who submit photographs. **Anne Spencer** is organising another competition for the 2016 Calendar and requests entries by September 1st 2015. **Please do not send more than 3 photos per individual.** Photos should of course be sharp. They should also be JPEG files only, with a minimum of 1500 pixels on the long edge. We would like a bit of blurb about the butterflies – English and scientific names, where/when they were photographed, and any other relevant information. •

Enter
our Calendar
Competition
for a chance to
see your photo
in print

Entries please
to Anne at
rhoslan.anne@gmail.com
by September 1st 2015

EIG Polo Shirts

Some EIG polos shirts remain: we have 8 size L, 1 size XL, and 1 size XXXL. The cost is £15 each - email to **Anne Spencer** rhoslan.anne@gmail.com to order. •



EIG on Facebook

And finally, a reminder that EIG has a Facebook page – www.facebook.com/BC.EuropeanInterestsGroup. Take a look – it is becoming busier. •



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Registered office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP.
Email: info@butterfly-conservation.org Website: www.butterfly-conservation.org



Identification feature

Differentiating Ilex Hairstreak (*Satyrrium ilicis*) and False Ilex Hairstreak (*Satyrrium esculi*)

In Western Europe there are a number of Hairstreaks of the *Satyrrium* genus, all of which occur in France. These are **Sloe** (*S. acaciae*), **White-letter** (*S. w-album*), **Black** (*S. pruni*), **Ilex** (*S. ilicis*), **False Ilex** (*S. esculi*) and **Blue-spot** (*S. spini*).

Of these, *spini* is easily identifiable by its larger size, greyer colouring, strong white line and the famed blue spot. *W-album* and *pruni*, the only two species to occur in the UK, have clear and constant markings that makes them identifiable with certainty.

Of the remaining three, *acaciae* and *ilicis* occur together across most of France, whereas *esculi* is principally an Iberian species with the distribution “spilling” into the far south of France. *Acaciae* tends to be the smaller of the three and rather rounder, and less angular than the other two. It also has definitive marginal markings which, on close inspection, make it unmistakable. *Ilicis* and *esculi* are confusingly similar and they often fly together. The purpose of this article is to address the key differences between these two species which, although subject to some variation, are constant and reliable.

Blue-spot Hairstreak
(*Satyrrium spini*)



Sloe Hairstreak
(*Satyrrium acaciae*)



Satyrrium species in south of France

In June in the southern département (county) of Var in the far south of France, the *Satyrrium* species emerge in huge numbers. *Esculi* is perhaps the most common, far outnumbering *ilicis*, although *spini* can often be extremely common. *Acaciae* can be seen in good numbers, although *w-album* tends to be quite scarce, and *pruni* does not occur there. They are quite sedentary and can easily be missed, but once seen, it is often apparent that they're everywhere, with three or four individuals sitting on almost every flower head, especially on the yellow flowers of *Helichrysum* species, abundant in southern Var in June.

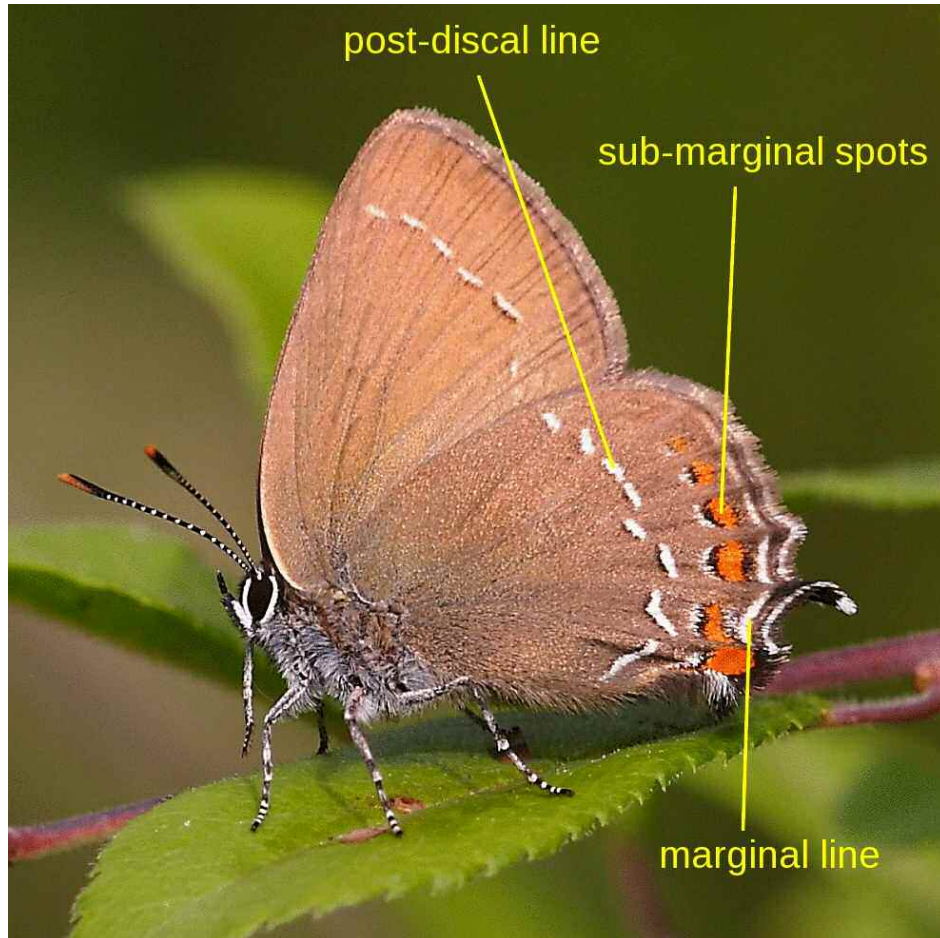
The larval hostplant of *ilicis* is Downy Oak (*Quercus pubescens*) while *esculi* generally uses Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*). Holm Oak is very common in the maquis that covers much of Var. They are both essentially lowland species, *ilicis* said to be up to 1800m, *esculi* up to 1200m. In the Midi, in the far south of France, the upperside forewing of *ilicis* can have an extensive orange patch, which can sometimes be seen in flight; this form is known as *cerri*. Similarly, *esculi* can also have an orange patch and this form is known as *illicioides* but it is not believed to occur in France. The features described in this article are based on observations made principally in southern France; other populations may vary but, as previously noted, only to a limited extent.

Key differentiators between *ilicis* and *esculi*

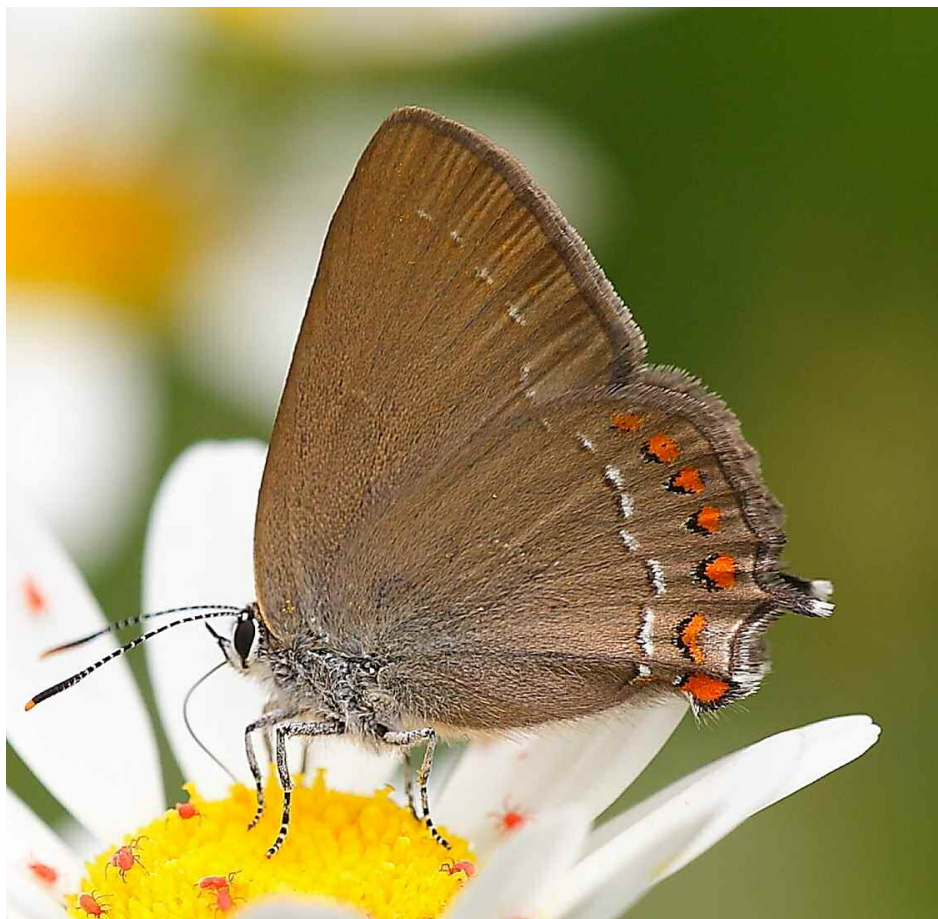
There are several key differentiators between *ilicis* and *esculi*: the photo of *ilicis* on the next page has lines indicating the key features. They never rest with open wings, so all the features are confined to the undersides.



Ilex Hairstreak
(*Satyrion ilicis*)



False Ilex Hairstreak
(*Satyrion esculi*)





► ***Ilicis*** is generally slightly larger, darker and a little rounder than *esculi* (although females generally tend to be rounder than males).

1 post-discal line: in ***esculi*** this is almost straight and continuous. These terms are comparative to ***ilicis***; the line is not entirely straight or continuous in the same way as, for example, ***spini***. It extends across the hindwing but is faint on the forewing and may not reach the costa. There is usually an internal black edging, which is rarely strong and can be quite weak (although the ***esculi*** example here is unusually strongly black-edged). The ***ilicis*** line is irregular and therefore often discontinuous. It usually reaches the forewing costa. The internal black edging is usually stronger than that of ***esculi***, producing a marked contrast. The ***ilicis*** line at hindwing s1b (and sometimes s2) can be quite sagittate or V-shaped, although in Var this V-shape is usually quite shallow. Examples of more extreme V-shapes can be seen on the ***ilicis*** page www.eurobutterflies.com/sp/ilicis.php of Matt Rowlings' excellent site.

2 the hindwing sub-marginal spots (or lunules as they are commonly described): the ***ilicis*** lunules are more orange-red than red, and appear rather duller or paler compared to ***esculi***. In ***esculi*** the hindwing lunules are a brighter, deeper red, albeit still slightly orange. ***Esculi*** usually has a (reduced) lunule in s6 adjacent to the costa, whereas in ***ilicis*** s6 is generally clear.

3 lunule edging: ***ilicis*** has clear black internal edging and sometimes a slight white internal edging as well, and usually some black external edging, especially in s1 and s2. ***Esculi*** has slightly thinner black internal edging but – most significantly – no black external edging; if there is internal white edging, it is vestigial.

4 lunule width: the ***esculi*** lunules are usually narrower than ***ilicis***.

5 marginal line: the hindwing marginal white line is significantly stronger in ***ilicis***, strongest at the base, while for ***esculi*** it is weaker and may not extend past s3 or s4.

I would like to
thank Bernard
Watts for his
comments on an
earlier version of
this article.

These features are naturally subject to some slight variation although for the most part remaining constant as the ***Satyrion*** species are less subject to variation than many other groups. Ageing has some effect, as fresh ***ilicis*** usually appear dark, but become paler upon ageing.

Roger Gibbons

<http://www.butterfliesoffrance.com/>

(All photographs by Roger Gibbons)



Vera Molesworth Muspratt

An early pioneer of butterfly observation in the Pyrénées

I was intrigued to learn that a British entomologist by the name of **Vera Molesworth Muspratt** was buried alongside many famous mountaineers ("Pyrénéistes") in the cemetery of the church in the village of Gavarnie, near my own home of Barèges. Vera wrote numerous articles based on her observations of butterflies and of their migration in the Pyrénées, including one article published in *The Entomologist*, entitled 'Autumn migration of butterflies above Gavarnie, Hautes Pyrénées, 1952'. Naturally I was keen to find out more about her exploits....

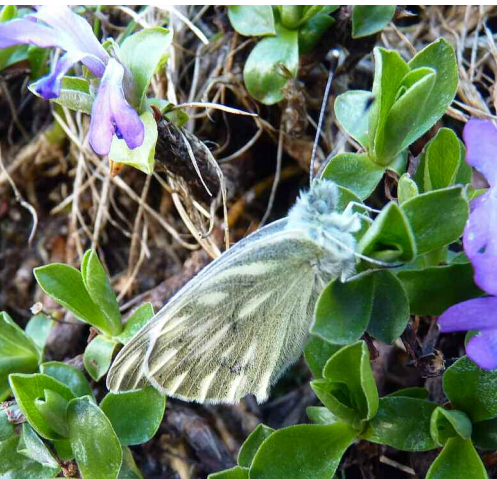
Vera Molesworth Muspratt (1887 – 1962) served in the French Red Cross during World War 1. She received two decorations from the "Ministère de la Guerre", awarded to nurses who had particularly distinguished themselves during the conflict. She was the curator of the Natural History Museum at Bayonne for seven years, and for her remarkable work there was made an "Officier d'Académie". Her son **Colonel Richard Heslop** was one of Britain's greatest special operations agents in France, organising resistance groups to sabotage German operations from late 1942 through to D-Day.

Observations in the 1930s

Peak White (*Pontia callidice*)
Midi-Pyrénées
Photo © Mathieu Menand

Vera was particularly interested in the butterflies of SW France and the Pyrénées and published many articles, especially on the migration of butterflies. "Pyrénées et papillons" was published in 1934 and "Pour marquer les papillons migrateur" in 1937 in the review "L'amateur de papillons". In her article "Butterflies on Hilltops" from the *Lepidopterist's News* she says that on the 10th of July in 1936 or 1937 she climbed Pic Long, a very difficult 3129 meter (10263 ft) summit in the Néouvielle Nature Reserve, Hautes Pyrénées. There had been a lot of snow during the preceding winter and the rocky peak was completely covered in snow. Whilst resting on an uncovered rock half way up the northern glacier, a **Peak White (*Pontia callidice*)** perched itself on Vera's knee. 15 to 20 **Peak Whites (*P. callidice*)** were subsequently counted flying around the summit. Vera described their behaviour as pure "joie de vivre". The first ever ▼





Peak White (*Pontia callidice*)
Midi-Pyrénées
Photo © Mathieu Menand

► ascent of Pic Long was made in 1890 by **Henri Brulle**, **Célestin Passet** and **François Bernat-Salles**, the latter two being renowned mountain guides from the village of Gavarnie.

Gavarnie

Gavarnie, where Vera made many of her observations, is the home of Pyrenean mountaineering and the village is the birthplace of many famous mountaineers, the most celebrated being the **Passet** and **Bernat-Salles** families. Perhaps Gavarnie's most famous resident was **Count Henry Russell**. **Russell**, born in Toulouse of an Irish father and French mother had travelled extensively from an early age, making forty plus first ascents of mountains all over the world. He climbed the Vignemale for the first time in 1861 with the guide **Laurent Passet** from Gavarnie, and became obsessed with the mountain, going on to make thirty three ascents. He constructed a series of high altitude caves where he spent considerable time, even throwing elaborate dinner parties and entertaining royalty! **Russell** was subsequently granted a lease on the Vignemale for a 99 year period from 1889.

Butterfly Migration through the Col de Boucharo

It was **D. and E. Lack's** observations at Gavarnie of large numbers of migrating insects including **Clouded Yellow (*Colias crocea*)**, **Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*)** and **Bath White (*Pontia daplidice*)** passing through the Port de Gavarnie (Col de Boucharo, 2270 m) in September and October 1950 that encouraged attention to be focused on the area. The Col de Boucharo, or Puerto de Bujaruelo as it is known in Spanish, forms a natural high-level pass through which easy access can be made between France and Spain.

Looking towards Col de Boucharo
and the Spanish border from
Col de Tentes, October 2014.



Early history of the Col

A "faceria" or treaty between the valleys on both sides of the Pyrénées governed the joint use of pastureland along the French and Spanish border in the area, thus allowing the pastures to be used by herds from the Aragonese valley of Broto. It was originally an oral agreement and was first formalised in writing in the 14th century. The treaty also included measures to facilitate cross-border trade and guaranteed that there would be no aggression between the valleys at times of conflict between France and Spain.

During the time of the French Revolution (1787-1799) the Boucharo pass was subject to special supervision on the French side. According to observations by the botanist **Ramond de Charbonnières** during his trip to Mont Perdu in 1794, a camp of soldiers with tents was pitched on the pass ▼

► by the border guards during the Revolution. Later, in 1808, encampments were made by soldiers during the war with Spain at Col de Tentes. Only a few stones of the walls remain. The hut located at 1954 meters in the Pouey Aspé valley was subsequently renamed "cabane des soldats".

Twentieth century history

Twenty months prior to the liberation of the south of France in the second World War several thousands of patriots voluntarily left the country at the peril of their lives, using the local men of the Pays Toy (the valleys of Barèges and Gavarnie) as their guides over the difficult and dangerous high mountain paths in to Spain. One of these routes was from Gavarnie and through the Col du Boucharo. At this time there was no road access into the mountains.

The departmental road that links Gavarnie village (1375 m) to the Col de Boucharo (2270 m) was partially achieved in 1969 and only finally completed in 1973, a distance of 11.5km, the objective being to create a road liaison between France and Spain. However, with the inscription of Mont Perdu as an UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997, the section of the road between the Col de Tentes and the Col de Boucharo was abandoned.

Observations in the 1950s

In 1952 Vera camped just below the Port de Gavarnie (Col de Boucharo) from the 25th September to 5th October and saw evidence of migration on five days.

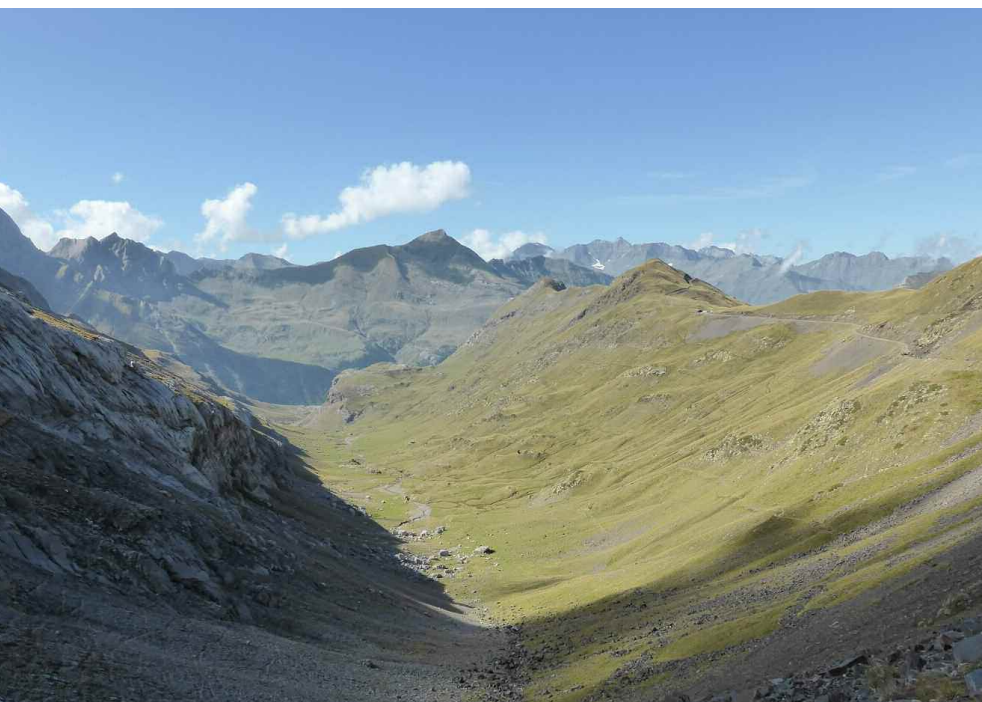
It is with no surprise that Vera formed part of a group with the renowned **C.B. Williams** (1889 – 1981) to assist with his research on butterfly migration at Gavarnie. For C.B. Williams, the study of the migration of insects was a lifelong passion. By collecting existing published observations, recruiting friends to make careful new observations and analysing the results in a long series of publications, he became the authority on the subject.

As there had been observations over three successive years at four different passes across the Pyrénées, C. B. Williams led a trip in September and October of 1953 to the Pyrénées. The sites were at Argeles sur Mer, Puymorens, Hospitalet and Gavarnie, being the site at the highest altitude.

Observations at Gavarnie were recorded from 18th September – 15th October by C.B. Williams, with his wife E.M. Williams, R. A. French and Vera. Most of the observations were taken in or around the Pouey Aspé valley or the Col de Boucharo but also at Col de Tentes, the Vallée des Espécières, Plateau de Bellevue and along the valley bottom.

During this time Vera camped in the Pouey Aspé valley, the valley leading W.S.W. up to the Col de Boucharo. Here she found that her tent required protection from sheep and horses, so posts were erected to which barbed wire was secured, this extra ▼

Pouey Aspé valley, where Vera camped in the 1950s at almost 6000ft. Photo October 2014.



► equipment all needing to be transported by donkeys.

According to the report of their observations, out of the 28 days, migration was observed and recorded on 14 days. On the days where no migration occurred, the weather was cold, wet and sunless. On good weather days migrations were very extensive. Over all the sites the most commonly observed migrants were **Small White** (*Pieris rapae*) and **Clouded Yellow** (*Colias crocea*), then **Bath White** (*Pontia daplidice*), **Long-tailed Blue** (*Lampides boeticus*), **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*), and the **Queen of Spain Fritillary** (*Issoria lathonia*). **Large White** (*Pieris brassicae*), **Small Tortoiseshell** (*Aglais urticae*) and **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui*) were more scarce but moving through.

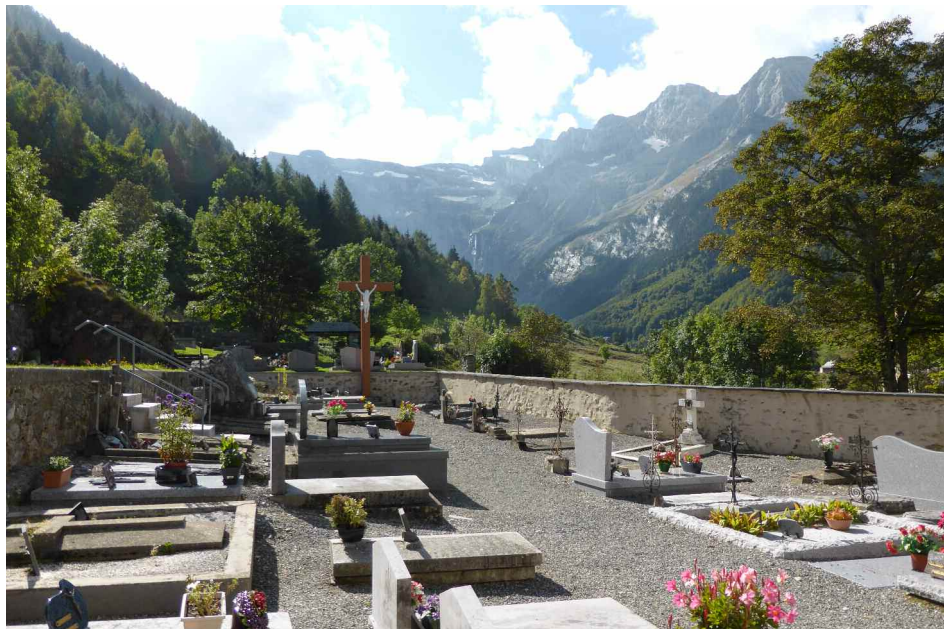
Clouded Yellow
(*Colias crocea*) 2 October 2014.



The present day

On the 2nd and 4th October 2014 I myself drove to the Col de Tentes and walked on through the Col de Boucharo into Spain. Each day started with sunshine before heavy cloud developed. Over a short spell on the 2nd October I recorded 20 male and female **Large Whites** (*Pieris brassicae*), 3 **Red Admirals** (*V. atalanta*), 1 **Small Tortoiseshell** (*A. urticae*), 1 **Bath White** (*P. daplidice*) and 1 **Long-tailed Blue** (*L. boeticus*). On the 4th I recorded 8 **Large Whites** (*P. brassicae*), 6 **Red Admirals** (*V. atalanta*), 4 **Clouded Yellows** (*C. crocea*) and 1 female **Common Brassy Ringlet** (*Erebia cassioides*). I watched as numerous butterflies floated across the border into Spain.

Looking towards the Cirque de Gavarnie from the Eglise de Notre Dame de Bon Port, Gavarnie, October 2014.



Vera's resting place

On Vera's death in 1962 a ceremony was held in the Anglican Church at St. Jean-de-Luz, the Basque town where she had been living, and subsequently at the "Eglise de Notre Dame du Bon Port" in Gavarnie. The local mountain guides, in full dress uniform, bore her to her grave where she had been accorded a resting place in the part of the little cemetery reserved for "Les Pyrénéistes". ▼



- The “Eglise de Notre Dame de Bon Port” is an old hospice chapel dating from the 12th century and being on the Compostella route was a must for pilgrims, travellers, and also bergers, who, during the transhumances sought the protection of the Virgin before making the trek into the high mountains and across into Spain. They asked not only for protection for the difficulties of the route, but also from the risk of isolation, the climatic conditions, which can quickly deteriorate in the high mountains, and protection from bandits and thieves, who were always on the lookout for lone travellers.

Ramond de Carbonnières

A mention should also go to another local hero - **Louis François Elisabeth Ramond, Baron de Carbonnières (1755 – 1827)**, a botanist, geologist and politician and one of the first great explorers of the high Pyrénées and described as a “Pyrénéiste”. Ramond reached the summit of Mont Perdu in 1802. At 3355m it is the highest limestone summit in Europe and the third highest peak in the Pyrénées. It straddles the border between Gavarnie and Spain. Carbonnières was elected as a deputy in Paris in 1791 but in fear of his life fled Paris and took refuge in Barèges in the Pyrénées, where he was arrested in 1794, accused of being an enemy of the Republic, and imprisoned in Tarbes for seven months.

One endemic Pyrenean plant species, *Ramonda pyrenaica*, was dedicated to him by the botanist **Jean Michel Claude Richard**. The Société Ramond (named after Ramond de Carbonnières) was formed in 1865 by Henry Russell, Émilien Frossard, Charles Packe and Farnham Maxwell-Lyte. The society is devoted to the scientific study of the Pyrénées and to the dissemination of knowledge. •

Further reading
Insect Migration,
by C.B. Williams.
Observations on the
migration of insects
in the Pyrénées in the
autumn of 1953, by
C.B. Williams and others.

Jude Lock

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(Photographs by Jude Lock except where indicated)



Auvergne 2013 and 2014

Butterflying in the Auvergne 2013 and 2014

In late August 2013 I spent a week in the northern Auvergne in the village of Pitelet, near Thiers, on the northern borders of the Livradois Forez Regional Park. The area is traditionally farmed with conifer plantations interspersed with natural woodland which is mainly confined to the steep river valleys.

Exploring Pitelet, August 2013

A second brood **Map** (*Araschnia levana*) whizzing round the garden as we arrived was very encouraging - unpacking had to wait until a photo had been secured! However, my first few local walks were disappointing as all the hay meadows had been cut so I ventured further afield. I visited the wet meadows on the plain of Varennes and the dry hillsides near the town of Billom but again there was not much on the wing.

After these unproductive excursions I decided to get off the beaten track and make a detailed investigation of the land closer to home, finally discovering a small flowery meadow on a south facing slope bordered by deciduous woods and a stream. This fragment of isolated, unimproved land, about 250 metres long and 100 metres wide, was occasionally visited by a couple of cows who were reasonably happy to share it with myself and the numerous butterflies. For the remainder of the week I concentrated on this glorious spot finishing with an impressive species count for so late in the season of 24.

Female Sooty Copper

(*Lycaena tityrus*)

20 August 2013.

The steeper slopes were thick with thyme on which large numbers of **Meadow Brown** (*Maniola jurtina*) and **Sooty Copper** (*Lycaena tityrus*) were nectaring.

The Sooty Coppers were magnificent to watch and were the highlight of the meadow with males outnumbering females by at least four to one. Other residents included a collection of skippers: **Mallow Skipper** (*Carcharodus alceae*), **Silver Spotted Skipper** (*Hesperia comma*), some of which were still in good condition, plus one tired **Small Skipper** (*Thymelicus sylvestris*). A single rather worn **Scarce Copper** (*Lycaena virgaureae*) was conspicuous on every visit, its flash of orange clearly visible from a distance. More colour was added to the scene by the Fritillaries: **Silver Washed Fritillary** (*Argynnis paphia*), **Knapweed Fritillary** (*Melitaea phoebe*), and **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (*Boloria selene*). **Great Banded Grayling** (*Brintesia circe*) also appeared one afternoon to nectar alongside several **Maps** (*A. levana*).

I had hoped that **Purple Emperor** (*Apatura iris*) might be found in the area but no luck until the last day when our hosts showed me some, mainly fuzzy, butterfly photos taken by their young niece. Amongst this collection was an in-focus Purple Emperor posing on the wall of our gite two days before our arrival!





Auvergne cont.



Female Spotted Fritillary
(*Melitaea didyma ssp meridionalis*)
1 August 2014.

Monts du Cantal, 31 July 2014.

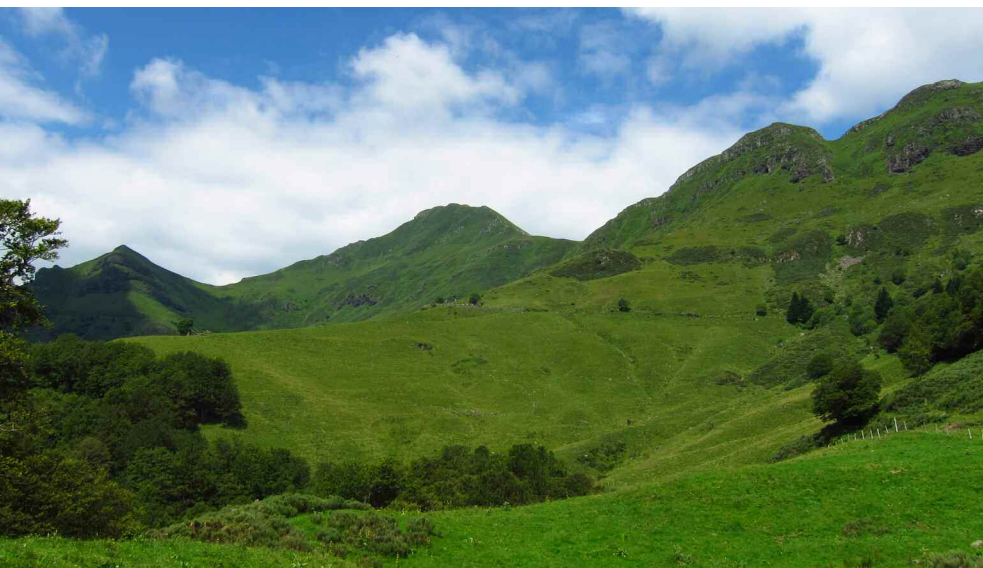
► Vic-sur-Cère, July/August 2014

In 2014 we decided to return to Pitelet in early August spending the week before in the town of Vic-sur-Cère at the southern end of the Cantal valley. This is an excellent base with very friendly and helpful people. The manager of the local Tourist Office delivered her own set of local maps to our hotel for me to use during our stay whilst the natives kept us up into the small hours playing a UK v France international pétanque match under the full moon!

The weather was unsettled with frequent thunderstorms but on the better days I explored the higher ridges above the town. The small road running north east from Col de Curebourse towards La Tuillère proved fruitful with frequent shrubby areas full of flowers interspersed with patches of exposed rock.

Large Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus alveus*) was on the wing along with **Spotted Fritillary** (*Melitaea didyma*), **Dark Green Fritillary** (*Argynnis aglaja*), and **Queen of Spain Fritillary** (*Issoria lathonia*). Whilst pursuing the more photogenic subjects I kept ignoring what I took to be tattered unidentifiable

fritillaries until one landed under my nose for a final bask in the setting sun. On close examination this proved to be my first encounter with female **Spotted Fritillary ssp. meridionalis** (*Melitaea didyma meridionalis*). On a return visit I found specimens varying from almost colourless individuals to beautiful brightly marked examples. Unfortunately, I only managed to photograph the darker variety.



Spectacular Coppers

On the best day of the week I ventured further up the valley to the slopes of the extinct volcanic chain dominated by Le Puy Mary. Alas, this was holiday time and the roads were chaotic. Down to one lane on the route to the summit with every manner of transportation parked or abandoned on either side of the road.

Retreating in haste to the lower slopes I found a quiet spot with a path leading down through a tangled bank of vegetation to a meadow. This bank was home to a colony of **Scarce Coppers** (*Lycaena virgaureae*) who were feasting on a patch of *Arnica* - a spectacularly colourful display with several feeding on the same flowerhead. ▼



Male Scarce Copper
(*Lycaena virgaureae*)
31 July 2014.



Female Scarce Copper
(*Lycaena virgaureae*)
31 July 2014.



Auvergne cont.



Sudeten Ringlet
(*Erebia sudetica*) 31 July 2014.

Larva of Spotted Fritillary
(*Melitaea didyma*)
5 August 2014.



Mazarine Blue
(*Cyaniris semiargus*)
5 August 2014.

Bill Raymond

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(All photographs by Bill Raymond)

► A mystery *Erebia*

Whilst watching the coppers a small darkish moth or butterfly kept darting through the fence bordering the meadow, circling and disappearing back down the slope. Clambering over the fence I set off in pursuit. The meadow had been heavily grazed but on the steeper parts among the shrubs some nectar sources had survived. Here I finally managed to photograph this mystery flier which turned out to be an *Erebia*. Despite it never having been recorded in the Auvergne my amateurish attempts at identification kept leading me to **Blind Ringlet** (*Erebia pharte*). There were no black points in its orange markings whilst all the photographs/illustrations I could source of other possible suspects had some hint of a black spot. After

some correspondence, expert opinion has now decreed it is a **Sudeten Ringlet** (*Erebia sudetica*) which flies in that locality (see photo). Other species of interest encountered in this meadow were **Idas Blue** (*Plebejus idas*) and **Meadow Fritillary** (*Melitaea parthenoides*).

Pitelet, August 2014

We then moved on to Pitelet where the weather had been very mixed. A bit of a blessing as it had prevented some of the higher hay meadows being cut. When the sun came out these were alive with **Dark Green Fritillaries** (*A. aglaja*), **Mallow Skippers** (*C. alceae*), **Sooty Coppers** (*L. tityrus*) and **Scarce Coppers** (*L. virgaureae*). New records on this visit were **Large Blue** (*Phengaris arion*), **Chapman's Blue** (*Polyommatus thersites*), and **Mazarine Blue** (*Cyaniris semiargus*), plus my first sighting of the spectacular larva of the **Spotted Fritillary**. A fairly exhaustive search for **Purple Emperor** (*A. iris*) in suitable locations again proved fruitless but perhaps this is the Auvergne's way of tempting me back.... •



This is a delightful part of France and well worth a visit for its dramatic landscape and friendly people. If your French is up to it and you want a deeper insight into the area's butterflies then try looking at the website of the Société d'Histoire Naturelle Alcide - d'Orbigny (www.shnao.net/index.php). Here you will find a link to an archive of Arvernsis, the Bulletin des Entomologistes d'Auvergne. The direct link to the archive page is www.shnao.net/arvernsis.php



Le Queyras

Visit to the Parc Naturel Regional du Queyras, 19 – 26 July 2014

In the last Newsletter, Dudley Cheesman reported on a memorable week in Valjouffrey in the French Alps. He and his wife Jean continued eastwards to Le Queyras close to the Italian border, where they encountered some nice butterflies but not all the target species. Better weather might have helped..... (Ed)

Le Queyras

The area of south-east France known as the Queyras sits north of the Maritime Alps, hard against the Italian border, east of the Ecrins Massif, to the south/south-east of the town of Briancon. It is an isolated region accessible by three difficult roads: the D902 north-east from Guillestre to Chateau Queyras, following the Guil torrent through the Combe du Queyras, the D902 south from Briancon, over the Col d'Izoard (c.2400m.), and the D205 over the Col Agnel (c.2700m.) from Italy. It includes a number of small towns and villages, including St. Veran, the highest village in Europe, at c.2000m. The geology is complex to the east with schists and volcanics, but limestone to the west. Many of the peaks rise to c.3000m. and over all looms Monte Viso, on the Italian side of the border, at 3841m.

A previous visit in July 1999, fondly remembered

The Queyras is said to be one of the sunniest parts of France and, indeed, we found it so in 1999. In a week here in July of that year we found many high level specialists, including **Apollo** (*Parnassius apollo*), **Small Apollo** (*P. phoebus*), **Peak White** (*Pontia callidice*), **Geranium Argus** (*Aricia eumedon*), **Silvery Argus** (*Aricia nicias*), **Alpine Blue** (*Plebejus orbitulus*), **Glandon Blue** (*P. glandon*), and numerous **Fritillaries**. The weather was superb and there was no shortage of butterflies so, at the beginning of 2014 we decided it was time to go back. We did not enjoy the same weather in summer 2014!

Above Fontgillarde,
21 July 2014.



Return in July 2014

I had contacted **Roger Gibbons** to ask for any current information on the Queyras as he visits fairly regularly. **Roger** provided very helpful references and mapping, and species data that complemented our own information from 1999, for which we are most grateful.

Saturday 19th July 2014 – conditions sunny with cloud, but windy and cool. We arrived soon after mid-day, having departed Valjouffrey in the western Ecrins early to avoid the Tour de France that would be coming over the Col d'Izoard and down Combe du Queyras later in the afternoon. We were unable to check into our hotel so drove ▼



Le Queyras cont.



Large Ringlet (*Erebia euryale*)

20 July 2014.

► down to the Aigue Blanche, between Molines and La Chalp.

In sheltered areas along the waterside there were **Blues** showing – **Silver-studded** (*Plebejus argus*), **Idas** (*P. idas*), **Mazarine** (*Cyaniris semiargus*), **Damon** (*Polyommatus damon*) and **Chalkhill** (*P. coridon*) – and **Dark Green** (*Argynnis aglaja*), **Glanville** (*Melitaea cinxia*) and **False Heath Fritillaries** (*M. diamina*); **Almond-eyed** (*Erebia alberganus*) and **Large Ringlets** (*E. euryale*) and **Large Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata maera*) were also recorded. **Small** (*Thymelicus sylvestris*) and **Essex Skippers** (*T. lineola*) were numerous, and a **Red Underwing** (*Spialia sertorius*) and **Alpine Grizzled Skipper** (*Pyrgus andromedae*) were also noted.

Sunday 20th July – a stormy morning in St. Veran was followed by a cool, grey afternoon walk along the river at La Chalp. Here we found only roosting butterflies amongst which were **Brown** (*Aricia agestis*) and **Mountain Argus** (*A. artaxerxes*) and **Escher's Blue** (*Polyommatus escheri*), plus **Olive Skipper** (*Pyrgus serratulae*).



Female Shepherd's Fritillary

(*Boloria pales*) 21 July 2014.

Monday 21st July – sun and cloud but still cool and windy. We drove up to a parking area above Fontgillarde. Our first **Apollo** (*Parnassius apollo*) showed and **Mountain Clouded Yellow** (*Colias phicomone*) was photographed for confirmation; **Berger's** (*C. alfacariensis*) was also seen. A **Scarce Copper** (*Lycaena virgaureae*), the dominant species we had seen at Valjouffrey, was spotted, and a repeat of earlier Lycaenids, but including **Geranium** (*Aricia eumedon*) and **Silvery Argus** (*A. nicias*), **Glandon** (*Plebejus glandon*) and **Eros Blue** (*Polyommatus eros*). **Dark Green** (*Argynnis aglaja*) and **Niobe Fritillaries** (*A. niobe*) were numerous and **Shepherd's** (*Boloria pales*) and **Mountain Fritillaries** (*B. napaea*) were to be seen basking in sunny, sheltered patches on the hillside, the challenge being to obtain satisfactory photos to differentiate these two notoriously difficult species; **Titania's** (*B. titania*), **Pearl-bordered** (*B. euphrosyne*), **Grisons** (*Melitaea varia*) and **Nickerl's Fritillaries** (*M. aurelia*) were also present. **Alpine** (*Coenonympha gardetta*) and **Chestnut Heaths** (*C. glycerion*) were seen (we thought also **Darwin's** (*C. gardetta f. darwiniana*) but have no photo), together with **Small** (*Thymelicus sylvestris*), **Essex** (*T. lineola*), **Grizzled** (*Pyrgus malvae*) and **Large Grizzled Skippers** (*P. alveus*). ▼



Alpine Heath (*Coenonympha*

gardetta) and **Silvery Argus**

(*Aricia nicias*) 21 July 2014.



Le Queyras cont.



Silvery Argus
(*Aricia nicias*) 22 July 2014.

Above L'Echalp, 22 July 2014.

► **Tuesday 22nd July** – conditions were similar to those on Monday. We drove up a separate valley to L'Echalp, above Abries and Ristolas. We had wanted to find **Small Apollo** (*Parnassius phoebus*), which was seen here in 1999, but, despite sightings of **Apollo/Small Apollo** (*P. apollo/phoebus*), we were unable to obtain photos to confirm which of the two. A single **Scarce Copper** (*Lycaena virgaureae*) was seen and we added **Mountain Alcon Blue** (*Phengaris alcon rebeli*) - both ova and adult - to the range of **Blues** flying here that we had recorded elsewhere. A good range of **Skippers** was showing, including **Large** (*Ochlodes sylvanus*), **Carline** (*Pygus carlinae*), **Alpine** (*P. andromedae*) and **Dusky Grizzled** (*P. cacaliae*). **Queen of Spain** (*Issoria lathonia*), **Weaver's** (*Boloria dia*), **Knapweed** (*Melitaea phoebe*) and **Spotted Fritillaries** (*M. didyma*) were added to the list of this group seen and oddly, at higher level, **Marsh** (*Euphydryas aurinia*). I had wondered whether this might have been female **Cynthia's** (*E. cynthia*), but the photo was confirmed as **Marsh** (*E. aurinia*). We discovered that the track up to the Belvedere du Viso, used in 1999, was closed to vehicles.



Titania's Fritillary
(*Boloria titania*) 23 July 2014.

Wednesday 23rd July – heavy cloud and some rain with little sun, remaining windy. We had planned to go higher above Fontgillarde to locations recommended by Roger Gibbons but it was a disappointing morning so we drove back to a track below Pierre Grosse, near the campsite. We enjoyed a good walk but the only new species were a **Marbled White** (*Melanargia galathea*) and **Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper** (*Pyrgus armoricanus*)!

Thursday 24th July - conditions remained poor during the morning but improved slightly during the afternoon. We decided to walk along the riverside at La Chalp. Jean managed to photograph a worn female **Mountain Alcon Blue** (*Phengaris alcon rebeli*), whilst I found eggs on a small patch of Cross Gentian (*Gentiana cruciata*). Again, some 30-40 species were seen but nothing new.

Friday 25th July – remaining unsettled with low temperatures (15-17C) and windy. We did find **Purple-edged Copper** (*Lycaena hippothoe*) as well as **Scarce** (*L. virgaureae*), another **Mountain Clouded Yellow** (*Colias phicomone*) ▼



Le Queyras cont.



Dusky Grizzled Skippers
(*Pyrgus cacaliae*) 25 July 2014.

► plus a **Mountain Green-veined White** (*Pieris bryoniae*), a full range of **Blues**, **Fritillaries** and **Skippers** including a very worn **Chequered Skipper** (*Carterocephalus palaemon*). A final, and second visit, to the Col Agnel on the Italian border was a lost cause due to the "Nebbia", or mist that covers the Col. We scrambled along a path recommended by Roger hoping to find roosting rarities, but managed only a pair of **Dusky Grizzled Skippers** (*Pyrgus cacaliae*) amongst the Edelweiss and Globeflowers.

Saturday 26th July. We departed in the morning having failed to find **Small Apollo** (*Pyrgus phoebus*), **Peak White** (*Pontia callidice*), **Alpine Blue** (*Plebejus orbitulus*) and **Cynthia's Fritillary** (*Euphydryas cynthia*), all seen in 1999. Also, strangely, we had not recorded **High Brown Fritillary**

(*Argynnis adippe*) although **Niobe** (*A. niobe*) was numerous. In total we had recorded less than 80 species for the week, against 90 plus in the fine weather in Valjouffrey a week earlier. Nevertheless a superb area. The scenery is spectacular and the wildlife plentiful in the hay meadows and on the mountainside. We should like to visit again, but in fine weather!

A note on accommodation

Hotel accommodation is limited, but there appears to be a good supply of apartments. We stayed at Le Chamois, a Logis in Molines-en-Queyras; the hotel we had used in Pierre Grosse in 1999 is no longer, having been converted to apartments, just as had the café we used then at the end of every day to review our records.

Winter sports and summer tourism boost the local agricultural economy and craft working in wood. I am not aware of any natural history tour company using the Queyras, perhaps because of the difficulty of access and isolation. •

Dudley Cheesman

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(All photographs by Dudley Cheesman)

Glandon and Damon Blues
(*Plebejus glandon* and
Polyommatus damon)
25 July 2014.





Safe butterfly seeking

Being safe while seeking butterflies

Risk assessments are often considered as a bureaucratic hurdle put there to make a difficult job impossible, but when something goes wrong or accidents happen the usual conclusion is that some forethought would have made the situation so much better.

Dogs

We are somewhat complacent in the UK about the hazards of the countryside as we live in a fairly well-managed landscape where poisonous snakes are rare and dangerous wild mammals virtually non-existent. In France wild boar are everywhere and though they are usually so scared of people they run away, in a confined space they could be very nasty. Looking for butterflies in Europe does present us with some unfamiliar challenges which we might not expect. We might encounter guard dogs in the UK but rarely loose in the countryside. Greek sheep dogs are a different animal altogether. They can be extremely aggressive and often appear unexpectedly in numbers. A friend who made a film about Greek shepherds and their transhumant journey up to the mountains in summer was frequently bitten by the dogs despite supposedly being one of the shepherds. They wear collars with protruding nails to defend them from bears and wolves and after several thousand years of selection only the most aggressive survive. They only understand one thing – a well-aimed rock. **Bernard Watts** had a horrible encounter with dogs in Greece. As hazards go they are the top of my list. In common with most other hazards there is considerable safety in numbers. You are much more vulnerable on your own. One of the joys of EIG has been that I rarely now do extensive butterfly watching alone. I nearly always carry a walking pole in the field and I retreat to the car pretty quickly when challenged by dogs. Flocks of sheep and goats are to be avoided. There is a type of white dog in the Alps that lives with the sheep to protect them from wolves. It was originally the Pyrenean Mountain Dog or Patou. Don't go near them and keep away from the sheep. There have been many cases of walkers being attacked and badly bitten.

Cattle

I keep sheep and cattle myself so though I am wary of livestock especially lone bulls I normally can tell when I should give them a wide berth. I was once badly frightened by a group of wild cattle in the Coto de Donaña in southern Spain and it is not something I wish to repeat. They surrounded the little hide where I was photographing birds and rubbed themselves on it as cattle do. I was frankly terrified. With ordinary cattle it is usually curiosity rather than malicious intent. A smart tap on the nose with a stick usually does the trick if they get too close.

Snakes

I have occasionally come across snakes when butterflying in Europe. I have fortunately never been bitten. I was once throwing quadrats in the UK in order to assess violet abundance and looked down to see an adder curled up in the ▼

► centre of my quadrat. This is unlikely to happen again! Snakes will normally move away if they hear you but if you surprise them or tread on them they will naturally bite. I always wear long trousers and walking boots not only as protection from snakes but also as a defence against horse flies. Canvas gaiters might be a good investment. Move slowly and make a noise. If you do get bitten by a snake then it is extremely helpful if you can identify it or better still photograph it. A colleague leading a butterfly tour in Europe had someone in his group bitten by a Horned Viper (*Vipera ammodytes*). Fortunately she was able to get to hospital very quickly and receive the right snake bite serum. Despite this she had a bad reaction and was hospitalised for several days.

Equipment

Any butterfly expedition on foot should always be well equipped. Even for a fairly short walk you need water, mobile phone and some protection if the weather changes. Add GPS, compass, map and space blanket and my field jacket gets rather heavy. First aid kit, sun lotion and insect repellent add even more weight. Falling over while chasing after butterflies has quite a high probability. You rarely know the terrain and you don't always look where you are going as you know that you must not take your eyes off the butterfly. Your quarry does not stick to paths. The walking pole is invaluable here especially on slopes. Again what could be very dangerous for a solitary walker becomes far less dangerous for a group of two or three. Know your emergency phone numbers; this is 112 in much of Europe.


If you are in the middle of nowhere then a GPS or a smart phone with GPS can give the rescue party an exact location. If you do go off on your own then tell someone exactly where you are going and stick to it and agree a time when you will return. If you don't come back on time your buddy should organise a search party. Mobile phones have a very good coverage in Europe – much better than rural Wales, but don't assume that you will always get a signal everywhere.

New terrain and especially forests can be disorientating and it is really quite easy to get lost if you cannot see a distant horizon. You should either retrace your steps to return or at least be able to do this if you fail to find a circular route back to your starting point or the car. I use the GPS to waymark the car if I have any worries about getting back to it again. It is also worth following marked trails even if you have no walking map of the area. They can be found again in the opposite direction and they do at least go somewhere.

In southern Europe you are worried about dehydration and heat exhaustion but in Scandinavia it is bogs and mosquitoes that are your main concern. Some local knowledge and preparation is very useful. For one you need an unbreakable water bottle and a hat and for the other you need wellies, gloves and a head net as well as a hat.

Insects

Ticks and tick borne diseases such as Lyme disease are always a likely threat in new environments. Check yourself for ticks at least once a day and remove them. Other stinging or biting insects may be unfamiliar. I was bitten once by something on the lip and this swelled up alarmingly but fortunately went down in a ▼



Safe butterfly seeking cont.

► couple of hours. I think the culprit was hymenopteran but I never identified it. The ubiquitous horsefly is just something you have to endure but the smaller the area of bare flesh the better. Beekeepers often put hives along paths and tracks and though I have rarely been stung I keep away from bee hives if I possibly can. Putting a butterfly net over one's head will give you some protection.

Plants

Away from the UK you may not be familiar with some of the dangerous plants found in southern Europe. We recognise nettles and deadly nightshade but prickly pear may be unfamiliar.

Tiredness and cold

Most accidents happen when people are tired and exhaustion can adversely affect your judgement without you realizing it. If you are not sensible about what you take on then you can soon get into trouble. Cold can also affect your judgement and in mountains the weather can change very quickly. You might start off in brilliant sunshine and leave the warm and waterproof clothing behind but you might soon regret it. It can snow in August in the Alps and afternoon thunderstorms are frequent. In these conditions you can miss a path or go off on the wrong track and make a bad predicament worse. Despite the legendary St Bernard with its cask of brandy alcohol, these situations can be very dangerous. It affects your judgement but it also makes you lose heat quicker.

EIG risk assessment form

We provide a simple generic risk assessment on the EIG website <http://www.bc-eig.org.uk/about.html> , under 'Policies'. We follow the usual practice of assigning a risk level of low medium or high. It has been plagiarized from various sources but is worth looking at.

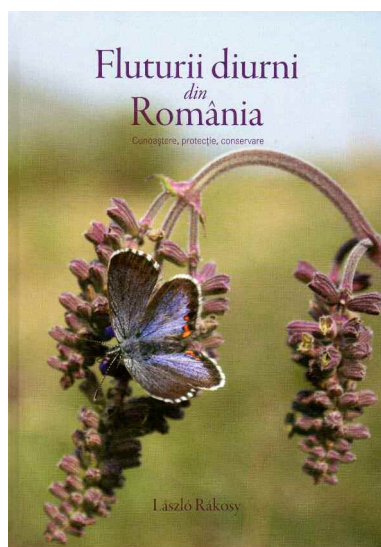
Being seen using a butterfly net

One last word of warning: using a butterfly net in Spain or Germany can get you into trouble even if you are not a collector. In these countries collecting butterflies is illegal. I have been interrogated by armed Guardia Civil in Spain. A folding net that can be kept out of sight is one solution. You have the same problem in many national parks. I have in the past got a permit from the national park authority but it is quite difficult and time consuming especially if you don't speak/write the language. Where they have National Park offices you might call in and ask but having been refused you are in a more difficult situation. •

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Book Reviews



Fluturii diurni din România – Cunoaştere, protecţie, conservare

by László Rákossy

2013. Published by Editura MEGA Cluj-Napoca, pp352. Text in Romanian.

I recently purchased a copy of this splendid book on the butterflies of Romania and have started to study it with great interest since I plan to go there for the first time this coming summer. EIG is of course continuing to support efforts to survey the **Danube Clouded Yellow** (*Colias myrmidone*) in Romania in 2015 and I will be helping with this and so backing conservation efforts to rescue what may now be one of its last remaining populations in Europe.

192 species of butterfly

Romania supports an amazing 192 species of butterfly and still boasts a remarkable wealth of natural and semi-natural habitats, stretching from the marshes of the Danube Delta to the high mountains of the Carpathians. The text of the book is exclusively in Romanian and it is to be hoped that this beautiful publication will help encourage many more Romanian people to take an interest in their wonderful butterfly fauna and its conservation.

However, for those of us who do not speak any Romanian, do not be deterred! The text is surprisingly accessible since (uniquely in eastern Europe) Romanian is of course a Latin-based language. Knowledge of French, Spanish or Italian (or even Latin itself) makes it possible to guess your way through much more of the text than I would have imagined at first sight and so to glean a remarkable amount of useful and helpful information.

Four main sections

The book is divided into four main sections, the first being some 45 pages of general description of butterfly biology, study and census methods and conservation and legal protection status. A brief but useful national taxonomic list (which includes all species and subspecies in Romania) is then followed by the core of the book comprising 217 pages of species texts.

Most species (and many of the local subspecies) have at least half a page of photographs of the adult butterflies and some of larvae and eggs, plus small but clear national distribution maps. Opposite the photographs, each species has a half-page of text devoted to its taxonomy, identification, habitat, biology, protection, conservation, world range and distribution in Romania. The photos are of a uniformly high quality and feature some species and subspecies for which I have not previously seen any such photos in the wild (e.g. **Nogel's Hairstreak** (*Tomares nogelii dobrogensis*) – this latter is not too surprising since Romania was the only European country in which the species occurred and the endemic subspecies is sadly now thought extinct, having not been seen here for 25 years). Amongst many other notable species featured are included the rare and local **Spinose Skipper** (*Muschampia cribellum*) and **Bavius Blue** (*Pseudophilotes bavius hungarica*).

Identification

The identification features (Diagnoza) look as though they might prove particularly useful – other European field guide authors please note – and I look forward very ▼

► much to testing this for real in some Romanian hay meadows this summer. The final section comprises 48 plates with photos of set specimens, showing male and female and upper and underwing of virtually every Romanian species. 10 pages are given over to a helpful and unusually extensive bibliography.

Easily portable

Produced and published in Romania, the print, colour reproduction, paper quality and binding are all excellent and look pretty durable. The book is of a relatively small format (150mm x 215mm) though fairly heavy for its size due to the high quality gloss paper. It is nonetheless easily portable in the field (and on a plane!) and don't be put off if you can't speak Romanian – it is packed with useful information and some excellent photographs and is well worth the fairly modest price of €30. •

The book can be obtained
from the Societatea
Lepidopterologică Română.
Contact Andrei Crisan
(andrei.crel@gmail.com),
website:
<http://www.lepidoptera.ro/publicatii.htm>

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Mariposas Diurnas de la Rioja

by Yera Monasterio Leon and others, published by Instituto de Estudios Riojanos (ISBN978-84-9960-060-04)

This is an excellent and lavishly illustrated guide to the Butterflies of Rioja, which as well as being an excellent wine is a province of northern Spain. Rioja has a rich butterfly fauna and this guide in Spanish will assist in the conservation of the rarer species as well as stimulate interest in butterflies locally. There are distribution maps and accounts of 151 species known from the region along with accounts of their life history and biology. •



Tracking Butterflies for Effective Conservation

by Chris van Swaay (ISBN 978-94-6173-998-8)

This is a published version of Chris's doctoral thesis at the University of Wageningen. It might be a bit technical for EIG members but it represents a major review of the methodologies for monitoring butterfly populations and distribution in Europe. It is in English but draws heavily on the work of de Vlinderstichting in the Netherlands. The various European butterfly monitoring schemes are combined into a grassland butterfly indicator which is important in influencing the European Biodiversity Strategy. The references are really an extensive bibliography of butterfly research and as such are a good up-to-date starting point for any research on butterflies. •

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Photospot

Any reader who would like to submit a few photographs to conclude subsequent newsletters is most welcome to do so.

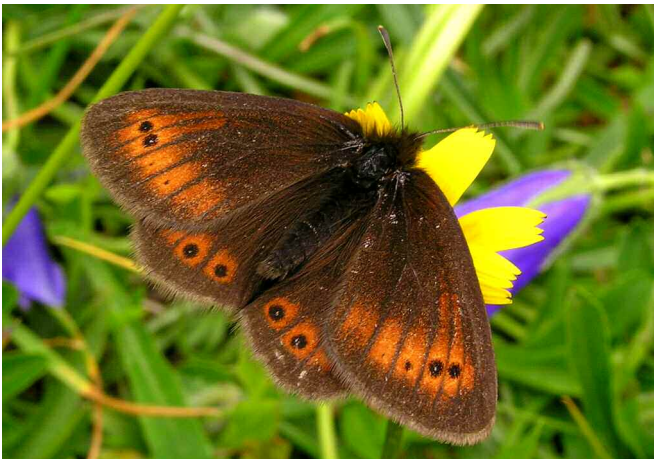
Ringlets of Bulgaria

Ringlets of the genus *Erebia* may not be the most beautiful butterflies in the world but they occur in some spectacular places and their subtle features make them a fascinating identification challenge. Four species whose European distribution is wholly or mainly limited to South East Europe are to be found in the mountains of Bulgaria. Here are photographs by Bulgaria lepidoptera specialist Nick Greatorex-Davies (nickgdlpman@googlemail.com). •

Nick leads regular butterfly tours to Bulgaria for the British-Bulgarian Society, and many more photographs from his tours are to be found on his website www.bulgarialepis.com.

Nigel Peace

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Bulgarian Ringlet (*Erebia orientalis*) male,
Kartala, Rila Mountains, 19 July 2009.



Nicholl's Ringlet (*Erebia rhodopensis*) male,
Kartala, Rila Mountains, 19 July 2009.



Ottoman Brassy Ringlet (*Erebia ottomana*) male,
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Black Ringlet (*Erebia melas*) female,
Vihren, Pirin Mountains, 24 July 2010.



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Compiled by Nigel Peace & Graham Revill

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