



EUROPEAN  
BUTTERFLIES  
GROUP

# eNewsletter

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I am pleased to present the 32nd EBG newsletter – the 17th I have put together as editor. How many more, I wonder? I need your articles to keep the newsletter going so please keep sending them in. My next deadline is 31 March and all contributions are welcome.

Personally, I have not found 2022 an easy year for butterflying in Europe. Although covid restrictions steadily eased, I still lost two trips to the pandemic – one to France in April when I caught it myself, and one to Sweden in June when the leader went down. I did make it to France at the end of June, but the landscape was already becoming very dry, and the parched conditions made a trip to the Montes Universales in Spain at the end of July a difficult photographic challenge – my images tended to be swamped by the golden tones of the background and the results were generally disappointing. My most successful trip was to Armenia at the end of May, and that is written up in this newsletter.



**Iberian Sooty Copper (*Lycaena bleusei*)**, Spain, 31 July 2022

A reminder that all previous newsletters are available on the website, at [www.european-butterflies.org.uk/about.html#newsletters](http://www.european-butterflies.org.uk/about.html#newsletters). There is an index helpfully kept up to date by Graham Revill. There is a wealth of material about European butterflies in the articles and I do commend the resource to you.

**Nigel Peace**, Newsletter Editor, November 2022





# Notices and News

## Contact details

### Chairman:

Mike Prentice

Email: [mikeprentice7@gmail.com](mailto:mikeprentice7@gmail.com)

Tel No: 07831 280259

### Secretary: Simon Spencer

Email: [cerisyi@btinternet.com](mailto:cerisyi@btinternet.com)

Tel No: 07866 428875

### Membership Secretary:

Anne Spencer

Email: [Rhoslan.anne@gmail.com](mailto:Rhoslan.anne@gmail.com)

Tel No: 01691 649615

### Treasurer: David Moore

Email: [dcmoore67@hotmail.com](mailto:dcmoore67@hotmail.com)

### Newsletter Editor: Nigel Peace

Email: [liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk)

Tel No: 01420 85496

### Other Committee Members:

Martin Davies

Email: [mdavies854@btinternet.com](mailto:mdavies854@btinternet.com)

Nick Greatorex-Davies

Email: [nickgdlepman@googlemail.com](mailto:nickgdlepman@googlemail.com)

Roger Gibbons

Email: [gibfam@ntlworld.com](mailto:gibfam@ntlworld.com)

Dudley Cheesman

Email: [dudleycheesman@icloud.com](mailto:dudleycheesman@icloud.com)

Sam Ellis

Email: [sam.ellis@bc-europe.eu](mailto:sam.ellis@bc-europe.eu)

Dave Plowman

Email: [suedaveplowman@btinternet.com](mailto:suedaveplowman@btinternet.com)

Marian Thomas

Email: [bc.brd-nlc-824181@virginmedia.com](mailto:bc.brd-nlc-824181@virginmedia.com)

Bernard Watts

Email: [br.watts@btinternet.com](mailto:br.watts@btinternet.com)

Mike Williams

Email: [wmbutterflies@gmail.com](mailto:wmbutterflies@gmail.com)

### EBG WEBSITE:

[www.european-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.european-butterflies.org.uk)

Website content: Jude Lock

Email: [lock.jude@gmail.com](mailto:lock.jude@gmail.com)

Website Manager: Mike Haigh

Email: [webm@european-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:webm@european-butterflies.org.uk)

### EBG Facebook Page:

[www.facebook.com/ButterflyConservations](https://www.facebook.com/ButterflyConservations)

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

## From the Chairman

I hope that you have all had a successful butterfly season wherever you may have been. We know from the Big Butterfly Count that butterfly numbers in the UK were at a very low level and the season in Europe seems to have been quite strange with some areas in advance of the norm while in other areas the season has been late. The weather has been very unpredictable and surely there can no longer be any doubt that we are seeing some of the effects of climate change.

Once again some of our planned activities had to be cancelled but surveys were carried out for the northern population of **Spanish Greenish Black-tip (*Euchloe bazae iberae*)** and **Dils' Grayling (*Pseudochazara orestes*)**. The former were found in reasonable numbers in their stronghold of the Valcuenta area although they seemed to have emerged somewhat later than normal but once again Dils' Grayling was not seen despite an intensive search. This may have been because the butterfly emerged late (thus after the time of the survey) or due to overgrazing in the vicinity. Further surveys are planned for this species which is currently classified as Vulnerable but which I suspect may be reclassified in the new Butterfly Red List which is currently under revision.

You will be aware that due to the pandemic we have not held an AGM and Members Day in person since October 2019. I know for many members the meeting gives a valuable opportunity to meet and exchange news and information and so I am pleased to tell you that we plan to return to a "face to face" meeting again in Autumn 2023 (covid permitting). The meeting is likely to be in October and once again in central Birmingham as this is generally accessible to most members.

### Mike Prentice

Chairman

[mikeprentice7@gmail.com](mailto:mikeprentice7@gmail.com)

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## EBG Research Bursaries

The EBG granted three research bursaries of €600 each in 2022, for the following projects:

Clàudia Pla-Narbona Leon (from the Granollers Natural Sciences Museum) mapped **Twin-spot Fritillary (*Brenthis hecate*)** in Moianès county, Catalonia. The species is rare and local in Catalonia, and the study, whilst establishing the continued existence of known populations, did not find any new ones, thereby confirming the vulnerable state of the species in the region.

Emily Boig (from University College London) studied habitat requirements for **Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*)** in Sheskinmore Nature Reserve, Co Donegal, Ireland and made recommendations for adapting management plans.

Guim Ursul Colomé (from the Madrid National Museum of Natural Sciences) ▼





looked at the Endemic, Near Threatened and other interesting mountain species present in Gredos mountain range (Catilla y Leon, Spain). His project involved resampling some field sites which were analysed in the 1980s and specimens stored in a collection in the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, and visiting a recently burned area very close by.

Reports from these three projects will be placed on the website when available.

## News from France Autumn 2022

Contributed by Jude Lock ([lock.jude@gmail.com](mailto:lock.jude@gmail.com))

### Atlas des papillons de jour d'Aquitaine, Biotope editions, published September 2022



This collective work was coordinated by Pierre-Yves Gourvil and Mathieu Sannier. The atlas covers the administrative area of Aquitaine before it became Nouvelle Aquitaine in 2016. The 5 departments concerned are Dordogne, Gironde, Landes, Lot and Garonne and Pyrénées Atlantiques. The atlas incorporates observations and inventories carried out by amateurs, volunteers and professionals including those of the Conservatoire d'espaces naturels de Nouvelle-Aquitaine and LPO Aquitaine mainly via the Observatoire de la Faune sauvage de Nouvelle-Aquitaine and LPO Aquitaine's 'faune-aquitaine' website. It comprises almost 400,000 records of 158 species for the period 2000 - 2020.



The book starts with an introduction to butterflies, their observation and identification, the history of butterfly studies in Aquitaine, local habitats, butterfly conservation in Aquitaine and finally the methodology and results of the atlas project.

The monographs (which include English names) take up the vast majority of the book. They focus on each species' caterpillar host plants, ecology, biology, distribution and flight period, together with an historical analysis, species status, threats and conservation information. Each monograph is illustrated with photos, a distribution map and flight period graph.

The atlas is co-edited by the scientific publications unit of the MNHN (National Museum of Natural History).

Price 35€ plus p+p. 464 pages. Text in French.

For more information and to order see here: <https://leclub-biotope.com/en/naturalist-bookstore/1742-atlas-des-papillons-de-jour-d-aquitaine>

(Written by Jude Lock and David Simpson, who relay thanks to European Butterflies Group members who contributed to the Atlas.)



## Notices and News cont.



### Guide photographique des papillons de jour et zygènes de France. Hentz, Jean-Laurent, Dhondt, Jean-Pierre & Dauguet, Philippe (2022) Gard Nature.

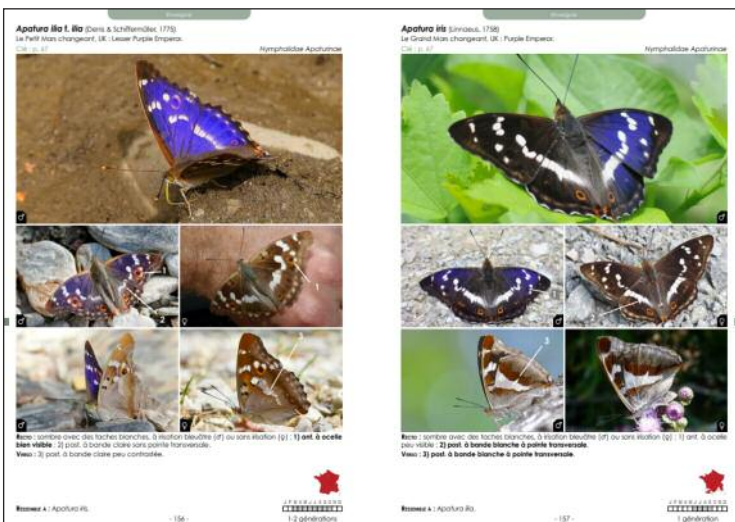
This book has now been published, although at the time of writing (November 2022) distribution is still in progress.

The book is a photographic guide to the butterflies, burnet and forester moths of France. It has two main sections, the identification keys and the species monographs. All 297 species found in mainland France are described, with images of both upper and undersides of males and females.

There are three species identification keys: a "classic" key using both the upper and underside; a second key, using the upper side; and a third key, using the underside. The second and third keys aim to show how far one can progress with an identification

when there is just a photograph of the species with the wings either open or closed. Several species discussion documents, created in support of the identification criteria, will be available on the Gard Nature website in due course.

The monographs are the main section of the book, each monograph comprises the scientific name and family, French and English vernacular names, a reference to the main identification key, 5 photographs, with a succinct text of the main id criteria which are also indicated on the photos, a small distribution map for France, flight period, the number of generations and the species status where applicable.



The book is a result of a collective involvement of more than 100 participants. Format 15 x 21cm, 512 pages, price 35€ plus postage, text in French.

For more information, to view sample pages and to order a copy of the book, please consult the Gard Nature website, see here: [http://gard-nature.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022\\_commande\\_papillons\\_de\\_france.pdf](http://gard-nature.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022_commande_papillons_de_france.pdf)

With many thanks to EBG members who have participated in the project.



### La Vie des PAPILLONS

Authors: **Tristan Lafranchis, David Jutzeler, Jean-Yves Guillosson and Pieter & Brigitte Kan.**

The Life of Butterflies. Ecology, Biology and Behaviour of the Butterflies of France.

This book, published in 2015, is now available to purchase in PDF in both English and French versions. It has been translated into English by David Simpson, European Butterflies Group, Dordogne.

Please contact Tristan Lafranchis directly by email to purchase: [tlafanchis@gmail.com](mailto:tlafanchis@gmail.com)  
<http://diatheo.weebly.com/la-vie-des-papillons.html>



Notices and News cont.

### Oreina supplements: volume 3 (Iconographie de plusieurs familles d'hétérocères de la faune de France)



The first two supplements in this series presented real-life images of the Geometrid and Noctuid moths of France. This third supplement covers the following further macro families: Hepialidae (Swifts), Limacodidae (Festoon and Triangle), Cossidae (Leopard and Goat moths), Castniidae, Thyrididae (Lutestrings etc), Cimeliidae, Drepanidae (Hook-tips), Lasiocampidae (Eggars), Brahmaeidae, Endromidae (Kentish Glory), Saturniidae (Emperors), Sphingidae (Hawk-moths), Notodontidae (Prominents), Eutelidae, Erebidae and Nolidae (Black arches).

Paperback, A4, 96 pages, 702 photos, price 25€ (20€ for oreina members), including postage.

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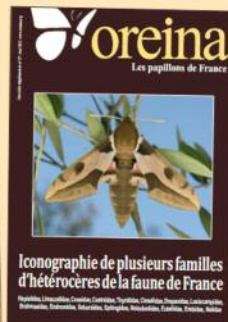
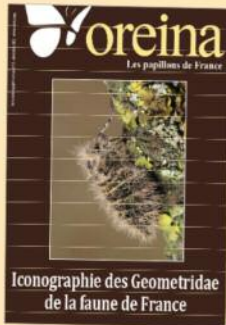
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- 3 - Les autres familles d'hétérocères : 25 € port compris (20 € pour les adhérents d'oreina à jour de leur cotisation) - A4, 96 pages, 702 photos.
- 4 - Les 3 opuscules : 75 € port compris (55 € aux adhérents d'oreina à jour de leur cotisation).

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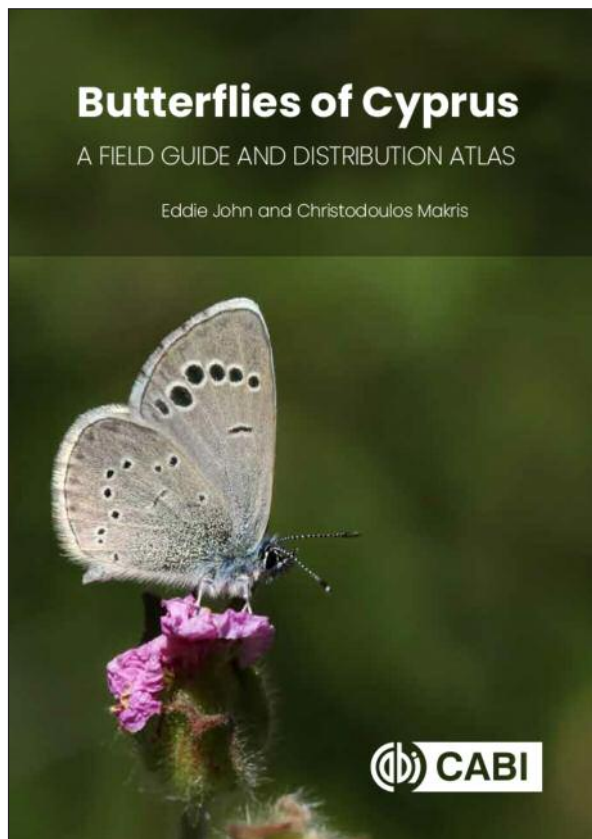
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# Book review

## Butterflies of Cyprus: A Field Guide and Distribution Atlas, by Eddie John & Christodoulos Makris



Published by CABI, July 2022.

Hbk, 408pp. ISBN 9781800621251

£75.00 (discounted price)

Cyprus is the easternmost country in the European Union. It has about 50 regularly occurring butterfly species, and together with five rare immigrants and one species probably now extinct (**Large Tortoiseshell** *Nymphalis polychloros*) they make up the 56 species covered by this beautifully presented and totally authoritative new book.

Cyprus is of course a popular holiday destination and its butterflies offer a taste of the butterflies of the eastern Mediterranean. That is not to say however that they will be completely unfamiliar to butterfly enthusiasts from more western parts of Europe, particularly those with some knowledge of the butterflies of Greece. Some 40 of the 50 species occur on the Greek mainland and three more (**Dark Grass Blue** *Zizeeria karsandra*, **African Ringlet** *Ypthima asterope*, and **Millet Skipper** *Pelopidas thrax*) on Crete or some of the Aegean Islands. Two more are the recently-arrived **Lime Swallowtail** (*Papilio demoleus*) (see EBG 31 p.18) and the recently re-discovered **Dark Rockbrown** (*Chazara persephone*). This leaves five species which cannot be found elsewhere in 'Europe' and may be of particular interest to butterfly observers on holiday from the west – the three endemics **Paphos Blue** (*Glaucopteryx paphos*), **Cyprus Grayling** (*Hipparchia cypriensis*), and **Cyprus Meadow Brown** (*Maniola cypricola*), and two species with a Middle Eastern distribution, **Small Desert Blue** (*Chilades galba*) and the spectacular **Levantine Leopard** (*Apharitis acamas*). Paphos Blue incidentally is the image on the front cover.

If you are drawn to Cyprus to look for these five butterflies – or indeed any of the other 45 species – then this book will tell you all that you need to know about how to identify them, whereabouts on Cyprus they occur, flight periods, and so forth. It will not guarantee sightings of difficult species – it does not give specific sites and Levantine Leopard in particular is hard to find (it has so far eluded this reviewer, and see Paul Selby's account at EBG 30 p.25). However, you cannot prepare yourself better for your quest than by acquiring this book.

The heart of the book is the 56 species accounts in the section headed 'Presentation of Species'. Each account begins with a set of excellent photographs, many the work of Christodoulos Makris, illustrating male, ▼



female, upperside, underside and often mating pair, immature stages, larval host plant, etc. Helpfully (for those who aspire to take similar photographs) the date of the photographs is given. The images of Levantine Leopard are particularly mouth-watering.

Also impressive for their thoroughness are the species range maps. They are built on records for each 5km square and they cover the whole of the island (including Northern Cyprus).

Each species account has a section on 'Presence in the eastern Mediterranean' which, in addition to describing range, includes discussion of the taxonomy of the forms found on Cyprus. Some points that I noted of particular interest:

- recent DNA work on the **Bath White** complex (the morphologically inseparable ***Pontia daplidice*** and ***P. edusa***) has indicated that *P. daplidice* (the more western form) is present in Cyprus and Lebanon, and has confirmed that *P. edusa* (Eastern Bath White) is widespread in Turkey. Both taxa appear to meet in SE Turkey.
- regarding **Cyprus Grayling** (***Hipparchia cypriensis***), the book explains that authorities disagree whether this taxon deserves full species rank or should be regarded as a subspecies of *H. pellucida*. The authors treat it as a full species whilst recognising that the taxonomy is difficult.
- **Pigmy Skipper** (***Gegenes pumilio***) is widely distributed across the island but is not easily separated from **Mediterranean Skipper** (***G. nostradamus***). The latter, found elsewhere in the Levant, is now considered (on photographic evidence) to be present in Cyprus but specimens are required for genitalia examination before it is confirmed as a new species for Cyprus.

The species accounts are comprehensive and include inter alia sections on phenology, larval hostplants, ecology, identification, and conservation status in Cyprus.

I cannot conclude better than by quoting a sentence from the foreword by Dr Martin Wiemers "This book is an amazing step forward which compiles the results of all [previous] efforts into a truly comprehensive piece of work, with a wealth of information, which is of importance not only to students of the butterflies of Cyprus but also to those of the Western Palearctic region in general."

Available from booksellers such as Pemberley Books (<https://www.pemberley-books.com/>)

Nigel Peace  
[liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk)



# France

## France in 2022

by Roger Gibbons

If 2020 and 2021 were strange years of Covid reasons, 2022 was strange for a different reason – an exceptionally early year across the whole country, and it seems flight periods have been shifted as much as three weeks earlier than normal in many cases. I prefer to plan trips well in advance and book overnight stops, so as not to have to find accommodation at the end of the day. The downside of this, as was amply demonstrated this year, is that you may arrive too late for some target species.


Added to the mix was the exceptional “canicule” (heatwave – I hear it was quite warm in the UK, too) with July temperatures of 30-35C almost every day and an almost complete absence of rain, it didn’t look too promising.

### *Travelling south to Fréjus, May*

We did at least get to travel south in May this year and I managed to persuade my wife that a 250-mile diversion via the eastern Pyrenees would be a good idea, the reason being **Spanish Fritillary** (*Euphydryas desfontainii*), a species that is very very localised on the French side of the Pyrenees, at a location I had been given only after taking a vow of total secrecy.

The first stop on our route was in central France at a location where I had seen **Chequered Skipper** (*Carterocephalus palaemon*) some twenty years ago with only a vague recollection of the location, but a lucky guess found the spot and it was a delight to see that they were still there.

The *desfontainii* location was exceptional, although it was tricky to identify the one male and one female I could be sure of from the fifty or so very similar **Marsh Fritillaries** (*E. aurinia*) of the form *beckeri*, given that everything was flying at full speed in cloudless sky and 30C heat. I think the *desfontainii* flight period was also early as the one male was showing some signs of wear. This was the best shot of a nectaring female I could get.



**Chequered Skipper**  
(*Carterocephalus palaemon*),  
15 May 2022

It has to be said that *beckeri* could challenge *desfontainii* for visual appeal. It always amazes me how one species – *aurinia* – can have adapted to such widely differing terrain and have so many quite diverse forms. Here is female underside.



**Spanish Fritillary** (*Euphydryas desfontainii*),  
female, 17 May 2022



**Marsh Fritillary** (*Euphydryas aurinia beckeri*),  
female, 17 May 2022





France in 2022 cont.



Provençal Fritillary (*Melitaea deione*), 18 May 2022

There didn't seem to be any common species here, the most numerous Blues being **Chequered Blue** (*Scolitantides orion*) and the next most numerous Fritillaries being **Provençal** (*Melitaea deione*) – here is a pair *in copula*.

*Var, end May and June*

On to Var, where there are many interesting species, often rather localised. Here is a female **Spanish Purple Hairstreak** (*Laeosopis roboris*) giving a rare glimpse of its upperside.



Spanish Purple Hairstreak (*Laeosopis roboris*), female, 3 June 2022



Silver-washed Fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*), female, 8 June 2022

This female **Silver-washed Fritillary** (*Argynnis paphia*) appeared to be just emerged and quite stunning in its pristine form, especially the blue tinge at the margins which I have never previously seen.



Blue-spot Hairstreak (*Satyrium spini*), 20 June 2022

In late May there is an explosion of *Satyrium* hairstreaks, the charge being led by **False Ilex Hairstreak** (*S. esculi*) which can be counted in hundreds. **Blue-spot Hairstreak** (*S. spini*) is the second most populous of this genus, quite noticeable amongst the throng on account of its greater size and rather more rounded shape. I have found it quite difficult to get good photographs of these *Satyrium* species as it seems to need the light to be at exactly the right angle. This image of a fresh *spini* is about as close as I have managed, in order to show this handsome insect in its full glory.



Spanish Moon Moth (*Graellsia isabellae*), 23 May 2022

By pure chance, we were offered the opportunity for a night trip to look for what is known as the **Spanish Moon Moth** (*Graellsia isabellae*). I can't give any details of the location, but it certainly produced the hoped-for result. The photograph, not easy at night, doesn't really give any indication of size, this male being around 15cm across. ▼





France in 2022 cont.

### French Alps, July

**Amanda's Blue** (*Polyommatus amandus*), female (left) and **Escher's Blue** (*P. escheri*), male (right), 2 July 2022



Starting from Var on the south coast for a trip around the Alps in July, the first stop was the Mercantour, a species-rich region about one hour inland from Nice. One favourite location at 1400m altitude is a flowery meadow traversed by a wide track, where some fifty species can usually be recorded. I was too late for **Clouded Apollo** (*Parnassius mnemosyne*), but no shortage of other interesting species. One image that I noticed, as alongside, needed something of a double take. It was, in fact, a female **Amanda's Blue** (*Polyommatus amandus*) on the left and a male **Escher's Blue** (*P. escheri*) on the right. Very nicely posed, not a "staged" shot at all.

My main focus for the trip was the Durance valley in the Hautes Alpes, historically a very species-rich area. I had researched areas that looked potentially promising, in most cases adjacent to rivers and ideally on roads that led to nowhere. One region to the west of Embrun that seemed to be largely devoid of human activity was quite species-rich but one caught my eye – a few **Esper's Marbled Whites** (*Melanargia russiae*) among the many hundreds of its common cousin **Marbled White** (*M. galathea*). The *russiae* were larger and whiter than *galathea* and were actually not hard to identify, having seen quite a few in the Drôme département in recent years. Here is a female.



**Esper's Marbled White** (*Melanargia russiae*), female, 8 July 2022

The next location was a tributary of the Durance, a road running parallel to the river. Where the road crossed the river there was an open area that looked like it had possibilities. I happened to notice that there was a narrow track into a wooded area, and this flowery track ran alongside the river. It was one of those locations that are just magnets for butterflies in terms of diversity and density, almost impossible to see everything flying there. There were several **Meleager's Blues** (*Polyommatus daphnis*) including this female, which I could see was of the nominate blue form in flight.



**Meleager's Blue** (*Polyommatus daphnis*), female, 9 July 2022

I spent a day at the higher reaches of the Durance not far from the Italian border. There were indications that **Nickerl's Fritillary** (*Melitaea aurelia*) flew in the region. I have not yet attempted any study of the images of the *Melitaea* species I took there, as I reserve that for the winter months, but the options were surely limited to **Nickerl's** or **Heath** (*M. athalia*) and the altitude of 1900m was probably beyond the normal range of *athalia*. There were a number nectaring at this location, ▼

Probable **Nickerl's Fritillary** (*Melitaea aurelia*), 7 July 2022





France in 2022 cont.

seemingly limited to a smallish area, so there were no real clues based on open flight (*aurelia* flight being noticeably weaker than *athalia*). I have seen *aurelia* for certain in eastern France and the regular pattern is quite distinctive. Those flying at 1900m looked very similar but *athalia* is hugely variable. I have images of undersides which show the yellow-filled marginal band, which would appear to preclude *athalia* and point strongly to *aurelia*. Were they all *aurelia*, all *athalia*, or – unlikely – a mixture of both? Here is a male I am cogitating about – the only choices are *athalia* and *aurelia* and I don't think it is *athalia*; any views would be welcome.



Oriental Meadow Brown (*Hyponephele lupina*), 7 July 2022

Slightly below the last location at 1600m, a track led off from a hairpin bend (these always seem to produce rich sites!) toward a small river. There were several damp spots near the river which attracted good numbers of males puddling. Among the usual suspects were a couple of **Meleager's Blues** (*P. daphnis*), always a welcome sight, and one butterfly that particularly caught my eye as being different, which I am fairly sure is the rather elusive **Oriental Meadow Brown** (*Hyponephele lupina*), very probably misnamed as its link with a meadow must be tenuous at least. Its very similar close cousin, **Dusky Meadow Brown** (*H. lycaon*) is frequently encountered at altitude, but I think there are several reasons why this must be *lupina*.



Dusky Large Blue (*Phengaris nausithous*), female, 23 July 2022

#### Heading north, end July

Travelling north and homeward, there are some interesting damp regions to the east of Lyon, very good for *Phengaris* (*Maculinea*) species. One little-known location is a rich area for **Scarce Large Blue** (*P. teleius*) and **Dusky Large Blue** (*P. nausithous*), the spot being accessible by a narrow track and not immediately visible even then. Normally, Great Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), the larval hostplant of both species, to which they are both "glued", is immediately visible and as both species are usually perched on the flowers, they can easily be viewed using binoculars. At this location, there is very little *Sanguisorba*, but it is remarkable how little it takes to support healthy colonies, as here. This spot is unusual in that the flight period is some two weeks later than at other not-too-distant colonies. There were, on 23 July, perhaps thirty of each species flying here, mostly pristine, as this egg-laying female *nausithous*.



Reverdin's Blue (*Plebejus argyrognomon*), female, 26 July 2022

Now north of Dijon, a stop at a location well-known for **Scarce Fritillary** (*Euphydryas maturna*) in May/June. I wasn't expecting to see much but was very pleasantly surprised to find fresh **Reverdin's Blues** (*Plebejus argyrognomon*), both males and females. Here is a fresh female, which could surely challenge any male blue for visual appeal. ▼





France in 2022 cont.

### *Back to Var, end August*

Having spent most of August in England, we headed south at the end of August for a few weeks in Var. We had booked our overnight stop in central France and had a couple of hours to spare before checking in. A meander around the region with no particular objective, we passed a Lucerne meadow alongside a country lane, dotted by yellow butterflies, and a swift U-turn ensued. Could it be the elusive

**Pale Clouded Yellow** (*Colias hyale*)? I have had hopes dashed before when the yellow butterflies turned out to be **Clouded Yellows** (*C. crocea*), just as appealing but not quite as exciting. Not this time. I could have counted some fifty or so *hyale* in amongst the hundreds of **Adonis** (*Lysandra bellargus*) and **Common Blues** (*Polyommatus icarus*). Here is a very lucky shot of a female engaged in courtship (or not).



**Pale Clouded Yellow** (*Colias hyale*), female, 26 August 2022

We returned the next morning but too early for *hyale* to be on the move, although this pristine **Swallowtail** (*Papilio machaon*) was warming up



**Swallowtail** (*Papilio machaon*), 27 August 2022

Now having arrived in the south, in the region of Sainte-Baume, a stop we often make at the end of August on the way to Var (and not even a 250 mile detour). This location is very good for late season species although the heatwave and lack of rain for months on end meant that everywhere was baked and butterflies were exceptionally sparse, as were flowers. The one species that almost seemed unaffected was **Sage Skipper** (*Muschampia proto*), with around six buzzing around the few Scabious flowers that were the only nectar sources anywhere in the vicinity. This is a fresh female.



**Sage Skipper** (*Muschampia proto*), female, 28 August 2022

One final image, a species that I feel is rather under-recognised for its beauty, a female **Large Wall** (*Lasiommata maera*). •

### **Roger Gibbons**

[gibfam@ntlworld.com](mailto:gibfam@ntlworld.com)

All photos by the author



**Large Wall** (*Lasiommata maera*), female, 31 August 2022





# Brittany

## Mothing in Brittany: tales of the unexpected

by Philip Horton

For many years a member of Butterfly Conservation, I have always been interested in, and tried to identify, the butterflies and larger moths seen on trips around Europe. My daughter and her family's move to a rural part of central Brittany in September 2015 however gave me a base and time to investigate them more thoroughly, including running my Heath light trap on a regular basis. Just before BREXIT in December 2020, my wife and I decided to join our daughter in Brittany and we now own our own house not far away from hers. This has of course given me the opportunities to hugely increase my trapping sessions.

### First records, 2015

My first trapping session in Brittany was over three nights between 4 & 7 September 2015 when the first unexpected moths appeared. I should say that they were only unexpected to me; to more experienced European 'mothers' they might be considered routine. It quickly became apparent that Brittany was the place to see species which only occasionally occur in the UK and then only in the southern coastal counties. I refer to these species as 'UK rarities'. They include many species that years of light trapping in South Lincolnshire had failed to produce. My familiarity with them came only from studying the photos in the various reference books. These 'UK rarities' are clearly widespread in France as many were subsequently encountered by the late Tony Hoare and your editor, Nigel Peace, as related in recent editions of the Newsletter, although they were both further south in France.



Rosy Underwing (*Catocala electa*)

The species recorded over my first three nights in September 2015 set the pattern for future sessions. The two most stunning were an **Old Lady** (*Mormo maura*), three **Rosy Underwings** (*Catocala electa*) and, on the last night, a **Clifden Nonpareil** (*Catocala fraxini*). Other 'UK rarities' included a **Portland Ribbon Wave** (*Idaea degeneraria*) (the clue is in the name regarding its occurrence in the UK) and several **L-album Wainscots** (*Mythimna l-album*). Over the years these last two were to appear regularly in my trap along with **Guernsey Underwing** (*Polyphaenis sericata*) and **Orache** (*Trachea atriplicis*). The former, as its name suggests, only qualifies for a place on the UK list because it occurs on the Channel Islands. A year later a second Clifden Nonpareil was recorded along with a **Convolvulus Hawkmoth** (*Agrius convolvuli*). ▼



Clifden Nonpareil (*Catocala fraxini*)



Guernsey Underwing (*Polyphaenis sericata*)



Convolvulus Hawkmoth (*Agrius convolvuli*)





Mothing in Brittany cont.



**Tau Emperor (*Aglia tau*)**, female, 16 April 2022



**Tau Emperor larva**, 15 May and 7 June 2021

### *2021: a spring surprise*

Light trapping was sporadic until 2021, although I note from my photos that a **Mullein Wave (*Scopula marginepunctata*)** turned up in June 2019. Trapping at our daughter's house on 23/24 April 2021 however attracted another stunning 'surprise' species: a female **Tau Emperor (*Aglia tau*)**. This attractive species has never been recorded in the UK but turns out to be relatively common in this part of Brittany. I was unsuccessful in trying to lure a day-flying male for my female, but much to my surprise the bright red eggs she laid were fertile. I released most of the larvae, which feed on a variety of broad-leaved trees but retained a few, feeding them on Silver Birch. Three of the latter pupated successfully. They emerged on 14, 15 & 16 April 2022 respectively, all females. I took them to my daughter's and, after a three hour wait, was rewarded by the arrival of a male. The moths were all subsequently released.

### *An ideal night in early June: humid and thundery*

The night of 1/2 June 2021 was humid and thundery, potentially ideal for moths. This turned out to be the case and I recorded 44 species of macro-moths. These included the colourful **Garden Tiger (*Arctia caja*)** and **Cream-spot Tiger (*A. villica*)**, **Bird's Wing (*Dypterygia scabriuscula*)**, **Poplar Kitten (*Furcula bifida*)**, **Lobster Moth (*Stauropus fagi*)** and the rather similar **Great Prominent (*Peridea anceps*)**. All are widespread in the southern UK but never appeared in my Lincolnshire light-trap. The highlights of the night however were no less than three **Striped Hawk-moths (*Hyles livornica*)**, two males and a female, along with five other common species of Hawk-moth.



**Three Striped Hawk-moths (*Hyles livornica*)** and a **Poplar Hawk-moth (*Laothoe populi*)**

### *Regular trapping in 2022*

Once established in our own house in the spring of 2022 regular light trapping became possible, both here or at my daughter's. The latter is located in a more rural setting with adjacent woodland and has produced most of the 'UK rarities' including on 09/10 May a **Scarce Hook-tip (*Sabra harpagula*)**. Later in the month friends from England, Mary-Anne and John Creedy, brought over their MV light trap and things really took off. The ▼





Nothing in Brittany cont.



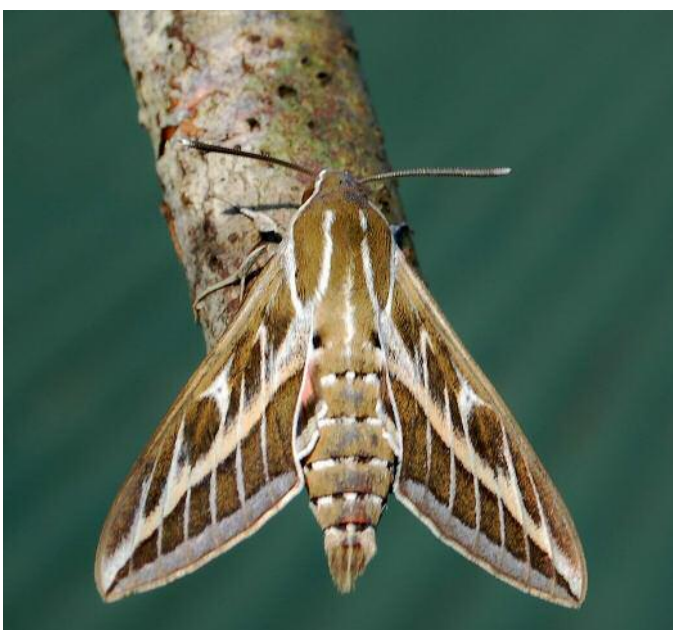
Willowherb Hawk-moth (*Proserpinus proserpina*)



Scarce Merveille du Jour (*Moma alpium*)



Delicate (*Mythimna vitellina*) (photo by John Creedy)



Striped Hawk-moth (*Hyles livornica*)

night of 17/18 May was again thundery and produced 63 species of macro-moths. The highlight was a **Willowherb Hawk-moth** (*Proserpinus proserpina*) but other 'UK rarities' included a **Scarce Merveille du Jour** (*Moma alpium*), **Purple Marbled** (*Eublemma ostrina*), **L-album Wainscot** (*Mythimna l-album*), **Delicate** (*M. vitellina*), **Satin Lutestring** (*Tetheella fluctuosa*), **Dog's Tooth** (*Lacanobia suasa*) and **Orache** (*Trachea atriplicis*). During their week's stay we recorded almost 100 species of macro-moth.

Trapping later in May and early June produced a **Dusky Hook-tip** (*Drepana curvatula*) and **Bordered Straw** (*Heliothis peltigera*) along with two more male Striped Hawkmoths on 5 June, almost exactly a year after I recorded the first three. The rest of June was spent in the UK but five trapping sessions during July produced **Festoon** (*Apoda limacodes*), **Latin** (*Callopietria juvenina*), and a **Splendid Brocade** (*Lacanobia splendens*). Day-flying moths were also recorded with **Hummingbird Hawk-moths** (*Macroglossum stellatarum*) making regular appearances in my garden. A closer inspection of one feeding from a buddleia bush on 27 July turned out to be a **Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth** (*Hemaris fuciformis*), yet another unexpected species

Trapping over the night of July 29/30 produced a number of interesting but fairly common species including a female **Oak Eggar** (*Lasiocampa quercus*). I released the moth after photographing it but I was surprised that two days later a male had flown into the house through an open window in search of the female. Two much more uncommon species in the UK also turned up that night. ▼





Nothing in Brittany cont.



Pine-tree Lappet (*Dendrolimus pini*)



Langmaid's Yellow Underwing (*Noctua janthina*)



L-album Wainscot (*Mythimna l-album*)

One was the very distinctive **Pine-tree Lappet** (*Dendrolimus pini*), the other a smallish yellow underwing which somehow differed from the common species which I had seen previously. On examination of its hindwings I tentatively identified it as **Langmaid's Yellow Underwing** (*Noctua janthina*). This was only recognised as a separate species in 1991 and was recorded for the first time in the UK in 2001 in the Southsea garden of noted lepidopterist, the recently late John Langmaid. Its ID has since been confirmed by Mael Garrin at Rennes University, to whom I send my records. He considers it a fairly common species in Brittany.

August started with very hot days but cold nights due to strong northerly winds. I ran my Heath trap first in August over the night of 11/12. The catch was disappointing but included two migrants to the UK: a **Dark Sword-grass** (*Agrotis ipsilon*) and a **Portland Ribbon Wave**, along with three **Jersey Tigers** (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*). The night of 20/21 proved to be better with many more moths present, most of them micros. The macros included two **Hawk-moths**: a late male **Poplar** (*Laothoe populi*) and a male **Convolvulus**, my first since 2016. Other UK migrants included yet another **Dark Sword-grass** and **Portland Ribbon Wave**. During the rest of August the numbers of **Hummingbird Hawk-moths** on our Buddleias increased and on 26 August they were joined by another **Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth**.

Most of September was spent in the UK but I hoped that there would still be time for a couple of sessions before the editor's deadline of 23 September. In the event the nights were very cold but I did run my trap on the night of 22 September and recorded another **Convolvulus Hawk-moth** and several **L-album Wainscots**. •

**Philip Horton**

[philhorton@home.co.uk](mailto:philhorton@home.co.uk)

All photos by the author except where indicated





# Stara Planina

## A Visit to the S.W. Stara Planina Mountains (June 8th-20th 2022)

by Hilary Raeburn

The Stara Planina mountains include part of Bulgaria to the east and Serbia to the west and in June 2022 I was lucky enough to join a Wild Echo group to explore the beautiful scenery of this area. Because there are different altitudes and vegetation zones there is an exceptionally large number of butterflies to see. In addition to about 120 species of butterflies we also saw some spectacular dayflying moths including **Slender Scotch Burnet** (*Zygaena loti*), **Woodland Burnet** (*Z. osterodensis*), **Black-veined Moth** (*Siona lineata*), **Small Argent & Sable** (*Epirrhoe tristata*) and the tiny *Thyris fenestrella*.



**Poplar Admiral** (*Limenitis populi*)

### Dragoman, Bulgaria

On our first day we travelled northwest from Sofia to Dragoman where we stayed for our first three nights. On the way to our hotel we stopped at the Iskar Gorge where I saw my first **Poplar Admiral** (*Limenitis populi*), one of several on the trip. Also flying there were several blues including **Chequered Blue** (*Scolitantides orion*), fritillaries including **Twin-spot** (*Brenthis hecate*) and **Queen of Spain** (*Issoria lathonia*), **Large Copper** (*Lycaena dispar*), **Sooty Copper** (*L. tityrus*), **Purple-shot Copper** (*L. alciphron*), **Duke of Burgundy** (*Hamearis lucina*), **Clouded Apollo** (*Parnassius mnemosyne*), and several whites including **Black-veined White** (*Aporia crataegi*).



**Almond-eyed Ringlet** (*Erebia alberganus*)

On our second day we explored the beautiful flower meadows near Gubesh which support many species including **Mazarine Blue** (*Cyaniris semiargus*), **Wood White** (*Leptidea sinapis*), **Duke of Burgundy**, **Large**, **Sooty** and **Purple-shot Coppers**, **Southern White Admiral** (*Limenitis reducta*), **Hungarian Glider** (*Neptis rivularis*), **Grizzled Skipper** (*Pyrgus malvae*), and several fritillaries including **Twin-spot**, **High Brown** (*Fabriciana adippe*), and **Queen of Spain**. We also visited a nearby karst area to see the rare **Spinose Skipper** (*Favria* [formerly *Muschampia*] *cribrellum*).



**Russian Heath**  
(*Coenonympha leander*)



**Safflower Skipper**  
(*Pyrgus carthami*)

Later the same day we went to the scrubby limestone hills near Komshtitsa village where we saw our first **Almond-eyed Ringlet** (*Erebia alberganus*), **Woodland Ringlet** (*E. medusa*), **Russian Heath** (*Coenonympha leander*), **Chestnut Heath** (*C. glycerion*), **Large Wall Brown** (*Lassiomata maera*), **Safflower Skipper** (*Pyrgus carthami*) and **Chequered Skipper** (*Carterocephalus palaemon*). ▼





Stara Planina cont.



Dragoman Marsh

In the morning of day three we went to Chepan Hill but our visit was curtailed by torrential rain. However, although still overcast, later the weather improved so that in the afternoon we were able to explore the rich habitat of the Dragoman Marsh. In addition to species already seen on this trip we encountered **Eastern Bath White** (*Pontia edusa*), **Weaver's Fritillary** (*Boloria dia*), **Knapweed Fritillary** (*Melitaea phoebe*), **Spotted Fritillary** (*M. didyma*), **Sloe Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium acaciae*), **Blue-spot Hairstreak** (*S. spinī*), **Green Hairstreak** (*Callophrys rubi*), **Great Banded Grayling** (*Brintesia circa*) and burnet and forester moths including the **Slender Scotch Burnet** (*Zygaena loti*). An afternoon was nothing like long enough to explore this wonderful site.



Slender Scotch Burnet (*Zygaena loti*)



Woodland Burnet (*Zygaena osterodensis*)



#### Chiprovtsi, Bulgaria

On day four we travelled north to Chiprovtsi but the torrential rain and storms that day prevented us from looking for butterflies on the way.

The next day (day five) the weather improved and we visited sites near Chiprovtsi where we found two of our target species, **Freyer's Fritillary** (*Melitaea arduinna*) and **Freyer's Purple Emperor** (*Apatura metis*). Other species seen that day included **Southern Small White** (*Pieris manii*), **Short-tailed Blue** (*Cupido argiades*), **Cardinal** (*Argynnis pandora*), **Heath Fritillary** (*Melitaea athalia*), **Nickerl's Fritillary** (*Melitaea aurelia*), **Lesser Marbled Fritillary** (*Brenthis ino*), **Yellow-banded Skipper** (*Pyrgus sidae*) and good numbers of **Green Hairstreak**. ▼

**Freyer's Purple Emperor** (*Apatura metis*) The tiny day-flying moth *Thyris fenestrella* can also be seen in the photo, feeding on the same patch of excrement.



Freyer's Fritillary (*Melitaea arduinna*) upperside and underside





Stara Planina cont.



**Bulgarian Ringlet** (*Erebia orientalis*)



**Balkan Copper** (*Lycaena candens*)



**Black-veined Moth** (*Siona lineata*)



**Small Argent & Sable** (*Epirrhoe tristata*)

On day six we travelled with 4WD about 1,800m up the mountain above Chiprovtsi to see the **Violet Copper** (*Lycaena helle*) in its marshy habitat by a stream. Our visit revealed only 2 or 3 tattered males, probably because of the recent torrential rain in the area. However, on the way back to the village of Chiprovtsi we stopped at

more beautiful alpine meadows where we found **Bulgarian Ringlet** (*Erebia orientalis*), **Bright-eyed Ringlet** (*E. oeme*), **Eastern Large Heath** (*Coenonympha rhodopensis*), **Mountain Argus** (*Aricia artaxerxes*), **Niobe Fritillary** (*Fabriciana niobe*), **Provençal Short-tailed Blue** (*Cupido alceas*), **Geranium Argus** (*Eumedonia eumedon*), **Balkan Copper** (*Lycaena candens*) and the beautiful **Black-veined Moth**.



**Bog Fritillary** (*Boloria eunomia*),  
uppersides and underside



### Serbia

On day seven we travelled to Serbia from Chiprovtsi making a few stops along the way, ever hopeful of seeing the **False Comma** (*Nymphalis vaualbum*). Unfortunately this very rare species eluded us. The recent storms may have been the reason for this. We stayed at the splendid Stara Planina Hotel for the next three nights. We spent day eight in and around the developing ski resort of Babin Zub. At the moment the rich butterfly habitats are co-existing successfully with the resort but for how long? The area is home to such rare species as **Freyer's Fritillary**, **Bog Fritillary** (*Boloria eunomia*), **Balkan Copper**, **False Comma** and, the big surprise, **Violet Copper**.





Stara Planina cont.



Bog Fritillary habitat showing the foodplant *Bistorta officinalis*

I was exploring the alpine meadows near the ski lifts when a glint of gold in the sunlight caught my eye. On closer examination I found a Violet Copper nectaring on Thyme. Bog Fritillary was also flying in the same area. This is a new locality for the Violet Copper and for the first time a *syntopy* and *synchrony* of *Lycaena helle* and *Boloria eunomia* (species sharing the same habitats, same food plant at the same time) was observed in the Balkan Peninsula <sup>1</sup>.

On day nine we moved to the small town of Pirot a few kilometres south of Babin Zub for the last two days of our trip to this wonderful area. We stayed at the aptly named 'Happy Hotel' - good food but awful rooms. Visits to nearby

sites yielded yet more new species to add to our bulging butterfly list. **Mountain Small White** (*Pieris ergane*), **Large Blue** (*Phengaris arion*), **Lesser Purple Emperor** (*Apatura ilia*) and **Purple Emperor** (*Apatura iris*) were all found in the surrounding locality.



Lesser Fiery Copper (*Lycaena thersamon*)



Delattin's Grayling (*Hipparchia volgensis*)

On day ten we went to Topli Do where we saw more **Large Blue**, our first **Eastern Festoon** (*Zerynthia cerisyi*) and, always a star attraction on any butterfly trip, lots of **Apollo** (*Parnassius apollo*).

Day eleven was our last full day and in the beautiful area around Gorni Krivodol we found **Lesser Fiery Copper** (*Lycaena thersamon*), **Delattin's Grayling** (*Hipparchia volgensis*) and the eggs and adults of **Alcon Blue** (*Phengaris alcon*).

The following day we had to make our way back to Sofia airport for our journeys home. Thanks are due to Mario Langourov for leading this highly memorable and enjoyable tour. •

**Hilary Raeburn**

[hilaryraeburn@gmail.com](mailto:hilaryraeburn@gmail.com)

All photos by the author

<sup>1</sup> Langourov M., Raeburn H., 2022. A new locality of the Violet Copper *Lycaena helle* on the Balkan Peninsula. *Historia naturalis bulgaria* **44**(6): 41-44.



# Armenia

## Armenia

by Nigel Peace

On 20th May this year (2022) I joined a two-week butterfly trip to Armenia, run by the Bulgarian tour company Wild Echo. Our leader was Mario Langourov, who had led the tour on two previous occasions and had a good knowledge of where to find the butterflies, and was expert on their identification.

### *Is Armenia part of Europe?*

This is probably the first question you will ask. Armenia is a small republic in the Caucasus mountains, bordering north eastern Turkey. Georgia lies to the north, Iran to the south, and Azerbaijan to the east. It is therefore well to the east of the European Union and the European Butterfly Group's normal coverage. However, Armenia's butterfly fauna is Western Palearctic and it is an excellent place to see species which just reach Greece and Bulgaria from the east, but can be hard to find there.

The Armenians look to Europe in many ways, and to give two fairly superficial examples they participate in European football competitions and the Eurovision Song Contest. However, the country was formerly part of the Soviet Union and is in a military alliance led by Russia. It has participated in certain NATO peace-keeping operations and there is a co-operation agreement with the EU, but neither applying for EU membership nor joining NATO are currently on the agenda.

### *Is Armenia safe to visit?*

Relations between Armenia and neighbouring Azerbaijan are not good, and there are intermittent clashes over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. The FCO advises that Armenia is safe to visit, as long as sensitive border areas are avoided. In fact there are currently Russian peace-keeping forces in the country, although they were mainly out of sight so far as we were concerned. We found

access to one border area restricted, in the south east, but otherwise we were able to visit all the sites on our itinerary without any hindrance or hassle. Indeed, everyone we met was friendly and helpful, including the Armenian soldiers who stopped us on one occasion to enquire what we were up to.

Looking back, I do not recall meeting another English-speaking tourist outside our own group during the trip. So if you prefer to avoid fellow Brits on holiday, and do not mind a ▼



Khor Virap monastery, near the Turkish border. Mt Ararat (in Turkey) is on the horizon.





Armenia cont.



Map of Armenia, showing route taken

discreet military presence, Armenia may be the destination for you!

### Our itinerary

Travelling to Armenia was easy – Air France operate a direct flight from Paris to Yerevan and there are no visa requirements for UK passport holders. Our itinerary comprised four main areas: Khosrov Forest State Reserve, in hills quite close to Yerevan; Meghri, in the far south of the country on the border with Iran; the highlands around Yeghegnazor, in the middle of the country; and the hills on the eastern side of Lake Sevan, a large high-altitude lake on the eastern side of the country. We stayed in good quality hotels and lodges throughout; and we were well looked after by Mario and our Armenian driver, David, who kept us safe on sometimes poor roads and in the face of some dreadful overtaking.

### The Butterflies

Our trip was timed quite early (20 May to 3 June) and the season appeared to be running late, so we missed a few target species which Mario had seen on previous tours, such as **Bowden's White** (*Pieris bowdeni*) and **Caucasian Turan Copper** (*Lycaena phoenicura*). On the other hand, we did find the delightful **Caucasian Vernal Copper** (*Tomares callimachus*), which is normally seen in April. Like **Romanoff's Vernal Copper** (*Tomares romanovi*), which we also saw and is shown alongside, it belongs to the same genus as **Provence Hairstreak** (*Tomares ballus*) found in France and Spain.



Caucasian Vernal Copper (*Tomares callimachus*)



Romanoff's Vernal Copper (*Tomares romanovi*)

In total we recorded exactly 100 species, which can be broadly divided into three categories – those which also occur widely in Europe; those which just reach the edge of Europe (mainly Greece & Bulgaria) from further east; and those which are only found further east. In general we were too early for many Satyrines and a separate trip later in the summer would be necessary to see interesting Graylings such as **Great Steppe Grayling** (*Chazara persephone*) and *Pseudochazara* species.







Armenia cont.

*Species occurring across Europe*

Here are four species with a widespread distribution which stretches right across Europe as far west as Spain.



Cardinal (*Argynnis pandora*), male



Niobe Fritillary (*Argynnis niobe*)



Knapweed Fritillary (*Melitaea phoebe*)



Mediterranean Skipper (*Gegenes nostradamus*)

*Species which just reach Europe*

Here is a gallery of 10 species with a more eastern distribution which just reaches SE Europe, all photographed during our trip. All the species would be desirable finds in Greece, Bulgaria or elsewhere in the Balkans and for me that made them the best part of the trip.



Small Bath White (*Pontia chloridice*)



Orange-banded Hairstreak (*Satyrium ledereri*)





Armenia cont.



**Bavius Blue** (*Pseudophilotes bavius*)



**Odd-spot Blue** (*Turanana endymion*)



**Bosnian Blue** (*Agriades dardanus*)



**Pontic Blue** (*Neolysandra coelestina*)



**Freyer's Fritillary** (*Melitaea arduinna*)



**Dalmatian Ringlet** (*Proterebia phegea*)



**Tessellated Skipper** (*Muschampia tessellum*)



**Inky Skippers** (*Erynnis marloyi*)

I have included an image of **Odd-spot Blue** in this category although strictly speaking the form found in Anatolia and further east is now regarded as a separate species (*Turanana endymion*) from the form found in Greece (*Turanana taygetica*). ▼





Armenia cont.

### Some Eastern specialities

Species not found in Europe are really outside the scope of this Newsletter, but we saw a number of such species which have close relatives in the west. The two *Tomares* Vernal Coppers which are members of the same genus as **Provence Hairstreak** (*T. ballus*) have already been mentioned above. In the same category – ie not found in Europe but with close relatives in the west - are two *Lycaena* Coppers, **Anatolian Fiery Copper** (*Lycaena asabinus*) and **Turkish Fiery Copper** (*Lycaena ochimus*). These two species are found in Turkey but not further west, and are close to **Lesser Fiery Copper** (*Lycaena thersamon*), found as far west as Italy. In fact, we saw all three in Armenia.



**Anatolian Fiery Copper**  
(*Lycaena asabinus*)



**Turkish Fiery Copper** (*Lycaena ochimus*)



**Lesser Fiery Copper** (*Lycaena thersamon*)



**Pfeiffer's Green Hairstreak**  
(*Callophrys paulae*) on *Onopordis cornuta*

Green Hairstreaks are difficult to identify in Armenia, where they are split into as many as four different taxa. They all look pretty similar to our own **Green Hairstreak** (*Callophrys rubi*) but **Pfeiffer's Green Hairstreak** (*Callophrys paulae*) at least can be identified with confidence if seen on its foodplant, *Onopordis cornuta*. It is more difficult to be sure of **Sovinsky's Green Hairstreak** (*Callophrys [rubi] chalybeitincta*), the taxonomy of which is not treated consistently by the different authorities.

I finish with an image of a butterfly from another of my favourite genera, the *Coenonympha* Heaths. This is **Saadi's Heath** (*C. saadi*). We expected to see it quite commonly in the south of the country, but only found a few, perhaps because we were early for them. ▼



**Sovinsky's Green Hairstreak** (*Callophrys [rubi] chalybeitincta*)



**Saadi's Heath** (*Coenonympha saadi*)





Armenia cont.



Armenian Gull (*Larus armenicus*)



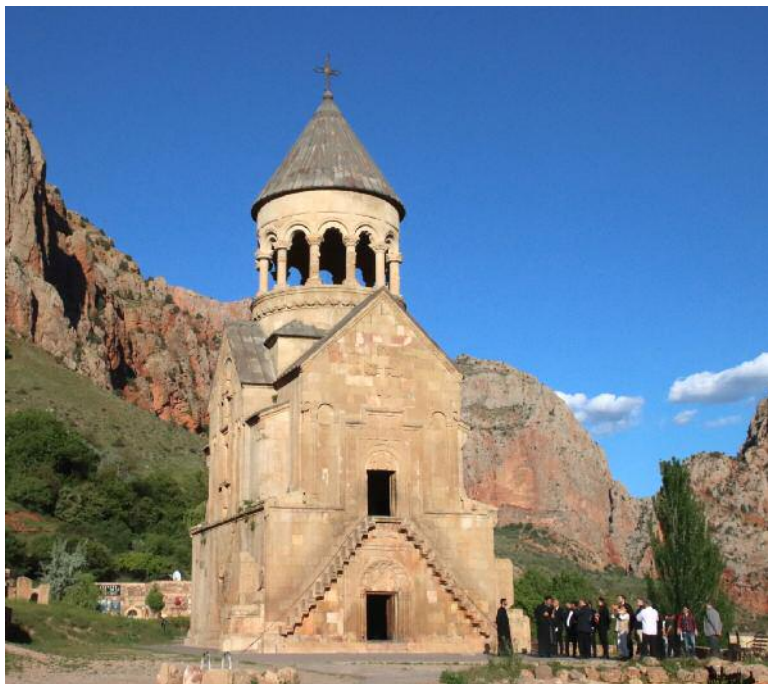
Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)



Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*)



Black-headed Bunting (*Emberiza melanocephalus*)



Noravank monastery

**Birds and monasteries**  
Armenia is not just a destination for butterflies. Birds were not my priority but I did have a long lens with me and I took photographs when the opportunity came along.

There are also many photogenic monasteries in Armenia and we visited several. They are particularly interesting for their antiquity. The Kingdom of Armenia was the first state to adopt Christianity as its official religion, in the early fourth century, and the Armenian Church is one of the most ancient Christian institutions.

**Books, website**

The most convenient guide for use in the field is Butterflies of Turkey by Ahmet Baytaş, which covers virtually all the species likely to be encountered. Weightier volumes which cover Armenia in detail are Butterflies of Europe and the Mediterranean Area by Vadim Tshikolovets, and Butterflies of Caucasus and Transcaucasia by the same author. The website butterfly-conservation-armenia.org contains a great deal of information about species and prime butterfly areas.

Finally special mention should be made of Butterflies of Bulgaria – a Photographic Field Guide, which has just been privately published by our leader Mario Langourov. This focuses on Bulgaria but was particularly useful for identifying some of the trickier species that we found in Armenia.

**In conclusion**

All in all, a most interesting tour, excellently led, to somewhere ‘a bit different’. •

**Nigel Peace**

[liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:liz-nigel@hotmail.co.uk)

All photos by the author