

EUROPEAN
BUTTERFLIES
GROUP



eNewsletter

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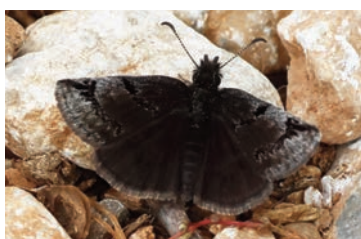
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Welcome to the Spring edition of the EBG Newsletter, my first as Editor, a role I am looking forward to. I am grateful for the guidance I received from Anne Spencer and Mike Prentice and also our previous Editor Nigel Peace, who generously passed on the experiences he gained from his tenure. Finally, I also must thank our graphic designer Trish Connolly Morgan, who has again worked hard to put together such a professional looking Newsletter.

In this very full edition, there is an interesting variety of articles and my thanks go to everyone who has contributed, particularly the two first time contributors. An article on the survey carried out by EBG members in Sardinia for the Endangered **Sardinian Blue** (*Pseudophilotes barbaggiae*) has been written by Sam Ellis. Reports on butterfly holidays, include a short article on a flight-free trip to the Bavarian Alps by Robin Griffiths, and more comprehensive reports of trips to Central Sweden and Swedish Lapland by Mark Searle and Allan Ferguson respectively, which are illustrated with some superb photographs. There is a particularly interesting article by Andrew Lipczynski recalling his journey and experiences with nature from his childhood days, to more recently assisting with EBG surveys. Finally, Mike Williams has written a comprehensive review of Jean-Pierre Moussus's new and affordable guide, *Butterflies of Britain and Western Europe and their Caterpillars*. With several 'new' species described by the author, I am sure there will be many debates regarding some of his taxonomic conclusions.



Inky Skipper (*Erynnis marloyi*)
near Siatista, Greece,
28 April 2026

Spring is now upon us and many of you will be looking forward to summer trips for butterflies into Europe or further afield and I hope these are all successful. Perhaps some of you could share your experiences by writing an article for the next Newsletter. My butterfly year has already started with a very successful short trip to Northern Greece at the end of April. The spring specialities I

saw on the trip included **Grüner's Orange-tip** (*Anthocharis gruneri*), **Bavius Blue** (*Pseudophilotes bavius*) and **Inky Skipper** (*Erynnis marloyi*) and I will summarise the highlights in the next Newsletter.

Barrie Staley, Newsletter Editor, May 2026
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Barrie Staley

An introduction from the Newsletter Editor – Barrie Staley

I am absolutely delighted to have taken over the most important position of Newsletter Editor. My predecessor, Nigel Pearce retired after ten years in the role in May 2024 and was responsible for 20 editions. Under his guidance the Newsletters consistently attained a high level of presentation and were always informative and interesting. Following Nigel's retirement Mike Prentice and Anne Spencer stepped in as interim Editors and maintained the high standards that Nigel had set. I'm sure we have all enjoyed reading and

learning from it and they all deserve our thanks for their hard work. It is now my responsibility to continue those high standards.

I have been a birder for over forty years, locally in Staffordshire, further afield in the UK and in Europe. My interest in butterflies grew initially from my birding exploits and became more serious in 2012 when with my wife Anita, our son Elliott and our friend Tony, I took part in a private butterfly tour to Bulgaria. We enjoyed it so much we organised another two years later and I have since made a further five visits to that wonderful country. Other trips into Europe followed, initially with *Greenwings* and more recently *Mariposa Nature Tours*, often under the leadership of our Treasurer, David Moore. My butterfly ID skills have benefitted greatly from knowledge shared by David and Nick Greatorex-Davies, EBG's Bulgarian expert. Having been a member of EBG for nearly ten years and recently retired, I'm now able to contribute to the group in an active way. Some of you will have met me with Anita on butterfly tours around Europe, but for those who haven't, please say 'hello' at an EBG event in the future.

When not out in the field I write the Warblers, Crests and Flycatchers sections for the *Derbyshire Bird Report*, something I have done for 30 years and I wrote a number of species accounts for the Birds of Derbyshire. More recently, I have just completed an article for the forthcoming *DBR* entitled 'Rare Warblers in Derbyshire'.

Request for Articles

Most of the material for this Newsletter has come to me unsolicited and I am most grateful to the contributors for their excellent articles. Two of the articles have been written by new contributors and I hope this will encourage others to do likewise in the future. The deadlines for the next two issues are 30 September 2026 and 31 March 2027. ▼



I would be pleased to receive articles/contributions on the following topics:

- EBG Surveys
- Taxonomic updates
- Identification
- Trip reports
- News Items
- Short photographic articles, e.g. Photospots or My Best Day
- Anything else of interest

Barrie Staley

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AGM and Members Day, 24 October 2026

The European Butterflies Group Members Day and AGM will be held in the George Stephenson room at the Ibis Hotel in Birmingham on Saturday 24 October 2026, from 14.00 to 17.00. The hotel is also known as the Ibis Birmingham New Street Hotel. Following the formal business there will be talks from two speakers: -

- Bernard Watts, one of our Committee and author of European Butterflies: A portrait in Photographs.
- Yeray Monasterio from ZERNYTHIA who are one of the leading butterfly conservation organisations in Spain. EBG has co-operated with ZERNYTHIA on projects on **Spanish Greenish Black-tip (*Euchloe bazae*)** and currently on **Canary Islands Large White (*Pieris cheiranthi*)**.

Full details of the talks and arrangements for lunch before the meeting will be circulated to members nearer the time and placed on the website.

2027 EBG Calendar

Entries for the 2027 calendar competition should be sent to Anne Spencer by 1 September 2026. The **correct email address** for entries is rhoslan.anne@gmail.com (they will get lost if sent in any other way). There is a maximum of three photographs per entry and the size of the photograph must be 1MB or greater. Please ensure the English common and scientific names of the butterfly are included with each photograph, together with details of where the photograph was taken.

EBG Website

A new section entitled 'Surveys' has been added to the EBG website. It includes summaries highlighting the important survey work carried out by EBG over the past five years. During the period surveys have been carried out in Madeira, Northern, Central and Southern Spain, Greece, Romania, and Sardinia. ▼



Notices and News contd

Bavus Blue (*Pseudophilotes bavus*)

Bavus Blue flies in Bulgaria, mainland Greece, North Macedonia, Romania, and is possibly present in Albania. Bavus is very variable with several subspecies being cited. The suggested differences for these subspecies are considered unreliable and they are not included here.

Upperside MALE and FEMALE

Colour: sexes similar but females usually darker with less blue

Submarginal marks: orange marks present on hind-wing of both sexes. These vary in size and number but usually more on females.

Upperside hind-wing submarginal marks: Male and female upperside hind-wings have ONE or more orange submarginal marks. This will distinguish from the similar looking Chequered Blue [see below] and Eastern Baton Blue [see opposite] with which it may be found flying.

Fringe lines: both sexes have bold dark fringe lines or 'chequering', especially on fore-wing

Underside MALE and FEMALE

Boldly spotted undersides of male and female are similar. Usually a cell spot on fore-wing but sometimes absent.

Key Identification Feature

Upperside hind-wing submarginal marks: Male and female upperside hind-wings have **ONE** or more orange submarginal marks. This will distinguish from the similar looking Chequered Blue [see below] and Eastern Baton Blue [see opposite] with which it may be found flying.

Eastern Baton Blue (*Pseudophilotes vicrama*)

Colonies of Eastern Baton Blue are found in many parts of eastern Europe. See below for details of distribution.

Upperside MALE and FEMALE

Colour: sexes can appear similar but females are usually darker with less blue than males

Fringe lines: both sexes usually have bold dark fringe lines or 'chequering', especially on the fore-wing

Underside MALE and FEMALE

Sexes are similar. Normally boldly spotted but this varies. Usually a cell spot present on the fore-wing but sometimes absent.

Hind-wing submarginal marks: NO orange marks in s1 and s2. Always exactly FIVE orange marks in s3 to s7.

Key Identification Feature

Underside hind-wing submarginal marks: Male and female underside hind-wings **always** have exactly **FIVE** orange submarginal marks in s1 and s2. This will distinguish from the similar Chequered Blue [see below] and Bavus Blue [see opposite] with which it may be found flying.

Similar 'Commoner' Species which can confuse are Chequered Blue (*Scollantides orion*) and Baton Blue (*Pseudophilotes baton*). See comparisons below to help differentiate.

Chequered Blue

Chequered Blue can be found flying in many parts of the ranges of both Bavus and Eastern Baton Blue

Chequered v Bavus

Both sexes of Chequered have:

- [i] NO orange marks on the upperside which easily distinguishes from Bavus [see above].
- [ii] very large prominent underside spots which stand out from the pale white ground colour.

Chequered v Eastern Baton

Uppersides of Chequered and Eastern Baton can appear similar. A view of the underside is needed to confirm identification. Look for the orange submarginal marks in s1 and s2 of the Chequered's hind-wing which reliably distinguishes from Eastern Baton [see above].

Baton Blue

Baton v Eastern Baton

Uppersides and undersides of these two species are very similar and virtually impossible to separate. Fortunately their ranges have a very limited overlap where they might be found flying together. This is roughly along a line drawn due north from the Italy/Slovenia border to Scandinavia. This imaginary line is represented by the dotted line on the maps opposite.

EBG Identification Guides

A new identification guide has just been published on the EBG website. This is Part 2 of the very successful Identification Guide to the Polyommata Group of 'Blues' and 'Arguses' in Europe prepared by Bill Raymond. Part 2 covers the 'local species' and together with the already available Part 1, it completes coverage of all the European species. As with the other EBG Guides it is free to download.

An extract from the new Blues Part 2

Nomenclature of European Butterflies

There has been a number of changes to the nomenclature of European butterflies in recent years, in particular to the scientific names of some species. EBG has an updated checklist of the 454 European butterfly species, which can be found in the 'Species' section on the EBG web site, and may be downloaded as an Excel spreadsheet. The list follows the updated checklist of European Butterflies published on 31 December 2018 in the journal Zookeys and was compiled by an international committee of taxonomic experts. More details can be found on the EBG website.

Almost all of the popular Field Guides (e.g. Tolman and Lewington, 2008 and Lanfranchis, 2004) were published in advance of the latest EBG checklist and therefore the scientific names of some species shown in these guides have been superseded. As an example, in the current EBG List, **Rock Grayling** is *Hipparchia hermione*, but almost all of the Field Guides show its superseded scientific name, *Hipparchia alcyone*.

The scientific names are particularly important when dealing with our European counterparts since they will be unaware of our vernacular names.

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News from the Chairman



Canary Islands Large White
(*Pieris cheiranthi*) Photographed
on Tenerife in December 2019 by
Keith Woonton

As I sit to write these notes in a chilly UK, I know that several members are already out in the field in places as far apart as Corfu and Morocco.

I will shortly be heading to Tenerife to see if we can find any life-stages of **Canary Islands Large White** (*Pieris cheiranthi*). As mentioned in the last Newsletter there have been no confirmed sightings of the species since 2023. There are fears that the nominate species *Pieris cheiranthi cheiranthi* has become extinct on Tenerife although there is still a population of *Pieris cheiranthi benchoavensis* on La Palma. Reasons for the decline of the species are not yet fully understood but there has been a severe drought on Tenerife in recent years which may be a major contributor to the problem.

Whilst on Tenerife we will meet up with Yeray Monasterio Leon from ZERYNTHIA and Martin Wiemers, two of the foremost experts on Macaronesian butterflies, to attend a meeting with the Canarian authorities and also to spend time in the field searching for any life-stages of *Pieris cheiranthi cheiranthi*.

As you will know the European Red List of Butterflies was published in October 2025. The latest Red List is based much more on evidence collected by Butterfly Conservation Europe rather than on expert opinion. Therefore, BCE decided that having collected so much data it would be helpful to publish it in a more useful form. The result is that Bloomsbury will publish a book provisionally entitled 'A Conservation Atlas of European Butterflies'. This book will contain species accounts and distribution maps and will hopefully be published in the next year or so. Watch this space !

In reviewing the maps for the Atlas there were several instances where there were no recent records of species' presence where we knew that they had been seen. This just emphasises the need to ensure that records of sightings are submitted to the country recorder or on the Observation.org or iNaturalist platforms. These records are validated and then find their way to GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility) where they are available to researchers. (If you use the eBMS app to record your sightings there is no need to separately submit records as they are collected automatically). I know there are one or two instances where I have not submitted my records – please join me in being more diligent in recording.

If you visit our website, you may see that we have had a revamp of various areas, in particular the Surveys page which now contains more detail on the work we have been undertaking over the past few years. I would like to record my thanks to Jude Lock and Mike Haigh for all the work they do to keep our website so informative and relevant.

I hope that wherever you may go in 2026 you have success in your butterfly and moth endeavours.

Mike Prentice

Chairman

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Surveying for the Endangered Sardinian Blue *Pseudophilotes barbaggiae*



The number of Endangered species listed in the recently published European Red List (see article in eNewsletter 37) has nearly trebled (from 12 to 35 species) since the previous Red List was published in 2010. Amongst the many newly Endangered species is the **Sardinian Blue (*Pseudophilotes barbaggiae*)**, a European endemic locally distributed only on Monti del Gennargentu on Sardinia (Italy) at altitudes between 800 and 1,100m asl. The butterfly occurs on dry, rocky, mountainous slopes and on flowery patches in open scrub and the only known larval hostplant is Caraway Thyme (*Thymus herba-barona*). Details of the life cycle are not well known, but there is one generation a year.

The rationale for its designation as Endangered were its very restricted and fragmented distribution, plus the threats from climate change, over-intensive grazing on some sites, the abandonment of traditional grazing on others, as well as wildfires. For these reasons EBG decided to organise a survey during the 2025 flight season to see if we could contribute to a better understanding of its current status.

Sardinian Blue (*Pseudophilotes barbaggiae*)

Six of us (Sam Ellis, Dave Plowman, Mike Bailey, Jon Hopes, Andrew Lipczynski, and Keith Woonton) spent the first week of June in Gennargentu National Park surveying a selection of known sites, whilst looking both for new sites, as well some of the other European endemic butterflies found on Sardinia.


We planned our visit around publicly available records on the iNaturalist and Observado recording platforms (plus others provided by Mike Prentice), identifying six 'sites' with clusters of records from 2017-24 (although one record was from 2008), across three different valley systems. We surveyed four of the six sites (excluding the two more remote higher altitude localities) and found the butterfly at only one of them. This was perhaps the best-known of the sites and one colleague found the first adult butterfly before I had even finished parking the hire car on the steep mountain track!

Typical *P. barbaggiae* habitat at one of previously unrecorded sites



At first sight, our results suggest the butterfly is indeed under severe threat. However, we expanded our searches and found the butterfly at three further sites for which there are no previously published records.

We noted habitat features at the sites we visited, and all three sites where the butterfly was absent supported less or no suitable habitat, whereas occupied sites were typically characterised by early successional open vegetation with abundant flowering *Thymus spp.*, low growing grasses, bare ground and bare rock on thin soils. In contrast unsuitable habitats were characterised by lush vegetation, more ▼




low scrub cover, less abundant *Thymus* spp. (with a much smaller proportion in flower) and less bare ground and bare rock.

Three of the four occupied sites were grazed by livestock, including domestic cattle, sheep and pigs, as well as by wild boar. Over-grazing was evident on part of one site where the butterfly was absent and there was no evidence of any recent grazing at one of the unoccupied sites.

Interestingly, two of the new sites were roadside cuttings which had accidentally created new suitable habitat. One of the unoccupied sites was also a roadside cutting, but the habitat had since become overgrown and no longer suitable.

Corsican Heath
(*Coenonympha corinna*)

Like many mountainous species, recording is restricted by ease of access. All the sites were either close to roads or to mountain tracks. Therefore, it was not possible to judge how far this butterfly's distribution extends across Monti del Gennargentu, but the habitat viewed through binoculars appears to be similar to that on the occupied sites and it is possible that the distribution of *P. barbagiae* is much more extensive than the records suggest.



In summary, our survey suggests some changes in distribution are occurring but also the distribution of *P. barbagiae* may be more extensive than previously thought. Certainly, there is an urgent need to instigate more regular monitoring of this butterfly and its habitat, as well as for liaison with local farmers and the Gennargentu National Park authorities to improve the management of known sites. To that end, we shared our report with the Italian Lepidopterological Association who are planning to instigate more regular monitoring of this butterfly in the future.

Sardinia is a fantastic island to visit for butterflies. We encountered **Corsican Red-underwing Skipper** (*Spialia therapne*), **Sardinian Small Tortoiseshell** (*Aglais ichnusa*), **Corsican Heath** (*Coenonympha corinna*), **Corsican Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata pamegaera*) and **Sardinian Meadow Brown** (*Maniola nurag*) on the *P. barbagiae* survey sites. Elsewhere on the island we also found a fairly worn **Corsican Dappled White** (*Euchloe insularis*) and on our last day the stunning **Corsican Swallowtail** (*Papilio hospiton*).

Sardinian Meadow Brown
(*Maniola nurag*)

Sam Ellis
Email: sam.ellis@bc-europe.eu

Butterfly photographs by Dave Plowman
Habitat photograph by Sam Ellis

Butterflies of the Bavarian Alps - 10th–18th June 2025

In June 2025 I joined a general wildlife tour to the Bavarian Alps organised by *Wildlife Travel* which was led by Philip Precey. This was a flight-free tour, and we travelled by train from London to Munich, where we stayed on our first night. The following day we transferred 100km south to our base for the remainder of the tour in the alpine town of Mittenwald. During our stay in Germany, we travelled to all of the sites we visited by public transport, cable car and cog railway.

Alpine fen at Pulvermoos near Oberammergau



The weather was fine throughout the tour, even in the mountains, except for one day when we had a cataclysmic thunderstorm when descending Karwendel.

The trip was divided into visits to two distinct habitat types: - the relatively low and rather wet areas, and the alpine habitats of the high mountains. During the tour we saw 42 species of butterflies, 15 of these being absent from the UK and 11 which were new species to me.



Mazarine Blue (*Cyaniris semiargus*)



Large Heath (*Coenonympha tullia*), photo by Philip Precey

The Lowland Damp Areas

In the lower-lying areas, we visited the boggy margins of the mountain lake of Lautersee and the dramatic gorge of Leutaschkamm, both near Mittenwald. We also explored Eibsee below Zugspitze, as well as Murnauer Moos, the largest continuous Alpine fen in Central Europe, and the fen meadows of Pulvermoos near



Dusky Large Blue (*Phengaris nausithous*), photo by Philip Precey

Oberammergau. The butterflies in these regions included **Chequered Skipper** (*Carterocephalus palaemon*), **Wood White** (*Leptidea sinapis*), **Duke of Burgundy** (*Hamearis lucina*), **Mazarine Blue** (*Cyaniris semiargus*), **Camberwell Beauty** (*Nymphalis antiopa*), at Leutasch, **Heath** (*Melitaea athalia*) and **False Heath Fritillaries** (*M. diamina*) and **Large Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata maera*).

The species new to me in these areas were **Lesser Marbled Fritillaries** (*Brenthis ino*), which were widespread and common; at Lautersee, **Large Grizzled Skipper** (*Pyrgus alveus*); at Murnau, **Geranium Argus** (*Eumedonia eumedon*), **Large Heath** (*Coenonympha tullia*) and the scarce **Dusky Large Blue** (*Phengaris nausithous*). My best find was by the River Leutasch, when soon after I had seen a **Camberwell Beauty** by the riverbank, I disturbed a largish brown butterfly, which flew up to perch on a leaf and reminding of a **Grayling** (*Hipparchia semele*), but to my delight, ▼



Butterflies of the Bavarian Alps cont.

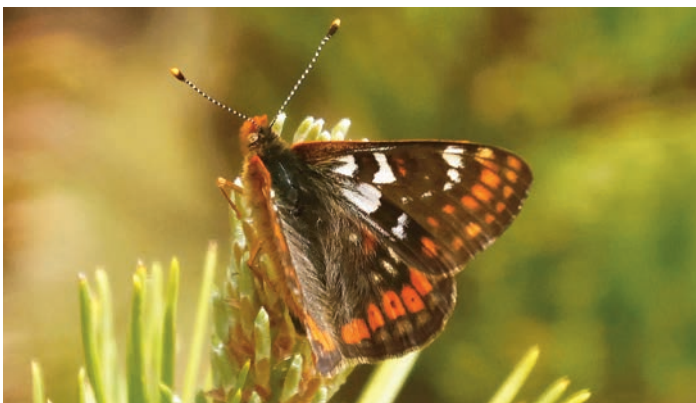


Woodland Brown (*Lopinga achine*)

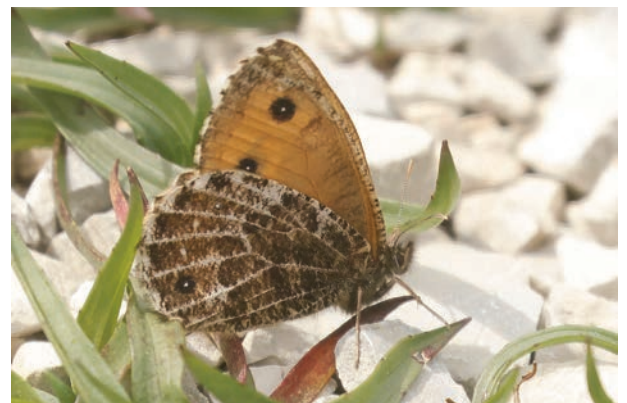
it was my first ever sighting of a **Woodland Brown** (*Lopinga achine*). We saw a second in Murnau two days later.

The High Mountains

The three mountains we visited were Zugspitze, which is Germany's highest mountain at 2,962m asl, Karwendel at 2,244m and Wankberg at 1,780m. We accessed Zugspitze by cog railways, but it was not productive butterfly-wise with only 'hill-topping' **Small Tortoiseshells** (*Aglais urticae*) and a **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui*) seen flying over the snow. Whilst at the summit, Alpine Choughs (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*) were present, boldly pinching titbits from tourists and a pair of White-winged Snowfinch (*Montifringilla nivalis*) flew past us.



Cynthia's Fritillary (*Euphydryas cynthia*), photo by Philip Precey



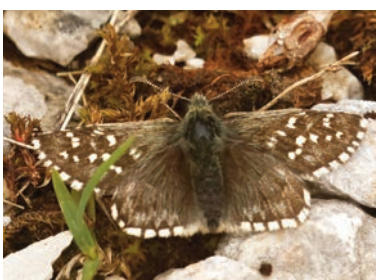
Alpine Grayling (*Oeneis glacialis*), photo by Philip Precey



Dewy Ringlet (*Erebia pandrose*), photo by Philip Precey

It was the other two mountains, Wankberg and Karwendel, where we saw the specialist alpine butterflies as we were able to walk away from the cable car terminal at both mountains to explore the alpine zones. At Wankberg there were plenty of **Swallowtails** (*Papilio machaon*), also **Large Blue** (*Phengaris arion*) and two range-restricted and difficult to track down species, **Cynthia's Fritillary** (*Euphydryas cynthia*) and **Alpine Grayling** (*Oeneis glacialis*), both easy to identify, and neither being expected on this trip.

On Karwendel the butterflies were dominated by **Dewy Ringlets** (*Erebia pandrose*), which were very hard to photograph. They are true mountain top butterflies, which we didn't see anywhere else. There were also a few fast-flying **Peak Whites** (*Pontia callidice*), which were even harder to photograph, a handful of **Alpine Grizzled Skippers** (*Pyrgus andromedae*) and on the scree slopes, **Broad-bordered White Underwing** (*Anarta melanopa*) moths.



Alpine Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus andromedae*), photo by Philip Precey

Although my main interest on the tour was butterflies, this was a general wildlife trip and many of the flowers we saw were spectacular and included 18 species of orchid and many alpine specialities. Additionally, the other wildlife sightings included c70 species of bird and 11 species of odonata.

Robin Griffiths

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All photographs taken by the author unless noted.

For more information about this tour please see:

<https://wildlife-travel.co.uk/europe/bavarian-alps>

The Butterflies of Central Sweden 17th June – 6th July 2025

Forest habitat at
Hummelsvedjans in Uppland



Sweden is the largest of the Scandinavian countries, extending from vast tracts of mountainous terrain and bleak tundra in the north and west, to the central low-lying forests and lakes, to the fertile plains of the south. Climatic variations between the subarctic of the north to the humid continental climate of Central and Southern Sweden supports around 120 species of butterfly, reflecting a wide diversity of habitats. While the Arctic latitudes are well known for the amazing selection of endemics, the central lowland forests, which enjoy a mild summer climate, appear to attract less attention from lepidopterists but hold some noteworthy attractions!

We flew to Stockholm for a three-week expedition through these central lowlands heading north through Uppland and along the Gulf of Bothnia, making bases in Gävle, Sundsvall and finally Umeå, a few hundred kms short of the Arctic Circle, before returning along the same route. The Swedish Butterflies and Moths website (<https://www.lepidoptera.se/butterflies.aspx>) provided invaluable species and site information around which we were able to plan a route. We also acquired a copy of the Swedish Butterfly field guide 'Nordens Fjärilar by Bo Söderström' which, thanks to the miracle of Google Translate, allowed access to some interesting insights into Northern Scandinavian species, variations and distribution.

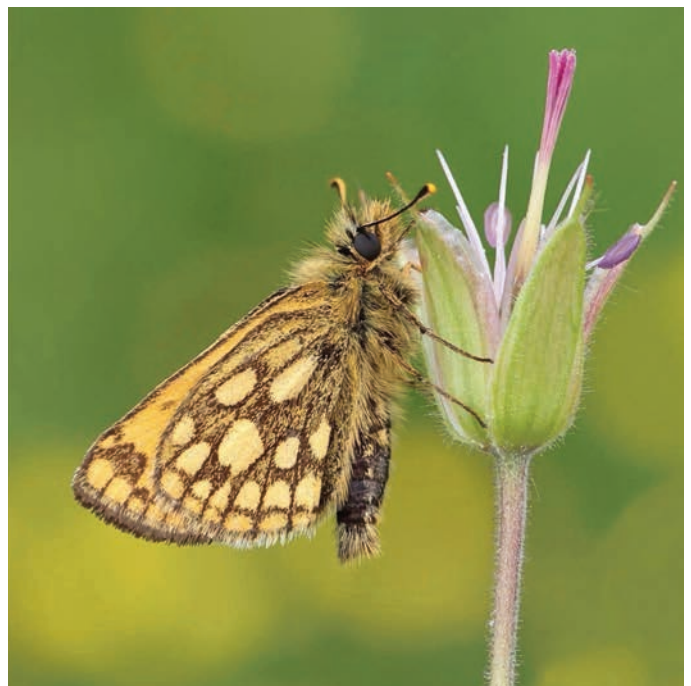


Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary
(*Boloria selene*)

were **Pearl-bordered** (*Boloria euphrosyne*), **Small Pearl-bordered** (*Boloria selene*) and **Heath Fritillaries** (*Melitaea athalia*), with **Camberwell Beauty** (*Nymphalis antiopa*), **Black-veined White** (*Aporia crataegi*) and **Pearly Heath** (*Coenonympha arcania*) also making an early appearance, amongst many other common species. ▼



Black-veined White (*Aporia crataegi*)



Northern Chequered Skipper (*Carterocephalus silvicola*), male





The Butterflies of Central Sweden
17th June – 6th July 2025 cont.



Scarce Fritillary (*Euphydryas maturna*)



Green-underside Blue (*Glaucopsyche alexis*), 'blue' female form





Lesser Marbled Fritillary (*Brenthis ino*)



Northern Brown Argus (*Aricia artaxerxes*)

However, our first two key target species for the trip, the stunning **Northern Chequered Skipper** (*Carterocephalus silvicola*) and **Scarce Fritillary** (*Euphydryas maturna*) took a couple of days to find. The latter is confined to a few small areas of Sweden in this part of Uppland. The **Green-underside Blue** (*Glaucopsyche alexis*) was certainly the most abundant of the Lycaenidae, including the sighting of an extreme 'blue' female variant seen alongside **Green Hairstreaks** (*Callophrys rubi*), **Geranium Argus** (*Eumedonia eumedon*), **Mazarine Blues** (*Cyaniris semiargus*), **Silver-studded Blues** (*Plebejus argus*) and **Common Blues** (*Polyommatus icarus*) along open sunny tracks. **Large Skipper** (*Ochlodes sylvanus*) and **Grizzled Skipper** (*Pyrgus malvae*) also made an appearance in small numbers. The **Large Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata maera*) proved to be quite common, frequently spotted basking in the sunshine, typically on stony ground. The Scandinavian form (*f. borealis*) is notably less colourful than its southern cousins and lacks any significant orange banding on the forewings. ▼



Geranium Argus (*Eumedonia eumedon*)



Cranberry Blue (*Agriades optilete*)

Älvkarleby, Grinduga near Gävle and Hofors

On day four we moved northwards to base ourselves on the coast in the town of Gävle for a few days. We explored local sites east of Älvkarleby along Route 76, where a roadside layby gave access to some superb open habitat of coppiced woodland and boggy meadows. We quickly added a few new species including **Dingy Skipper** (*Erynnis tages*), very fresh **Lesser Marbled Fritillary** (*Brenthis ino*) at the beginning of their flight period, and **Marsh Fritillaries** (*Euphydryas aurinia*) now quite well advanced, but highly variable in wing patterns and colouration. The first **Northern Brown Argus** (*Aricia artaxerxes*), of the Nordic form *vandalica*, was spotted which at best showed a few vestigial upperwing orange markings. Wood Cranesbill (*Geranium sylvaticum*) was abundant on the open sunny tracks and fresh **Geranium Argus** were found nectaring in good numbers, alongside more familiar Lycaenids. A track running south from Grinduga near Gävle was explored the following day and this yielded **False Heath Fritillary** (*Melitaea diamina*) and, in an area of heathland, our first **Cranberry Blues** (*Agriades optilete*). We headed inland from Gävle ▼



The Butterflies of Central Sweden
17th June – 6th July 2025 cont.

Scarce Heath
(*Coenonympha hero*)



Amanda's Blue
(*Polyommatus amandus*)



along the E16 towards Hofors for the next of our key targets, an increasingly uncommon European species and confined to a small area in Central Sweden. We found three small populations of **Scarce Heath** (*Coenonympha hero*) in damp grassy meadows and birch woodland clearings created close to an electricity substation! This habitat also yielded our first **Amanda's Blue** (*Polyommatus amandus*), and a fleeting fly-by from a **Moorland Clouded Yellow** (*Colias palaeno*), along with many of the others already described!

Västernorrland county, including Gammelbodarna NR

The following two days were wet as we headed north up the Gulf of Bothnia to our next base in Sundsvall in the county of Västernorrland. The weather then improved significantly for a trip inland to explore forestry and meadows on the Jämtland border. We had identified woodland areas near the Nature Reserve at Gammelbodarna where we subsequently discovered ▼



Northern Chequered Skipper (*Carterocephalus silvicola*), female (left)
Chequered Skipper (*Carterocephalus palaemon*), (right)



Thor's Fritillary
(*Boloria thore*)

Northern Chequered Skippers in greater abundance than observed further south. Just to sharpen the identification skills, a **Chequered Skipper** (*Carterocephalus palaemon*) was also spotted flying alongside the remarkably similar females of the Northern form. A very tame **Camberwell Beauty** followed us around for some while as we added a few other new species to the trip list, including **Dark Green Fritillary** (*Speyeria aglaja*), a rather tatty **Northern Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata petropolitana*) and a stunning fresh male **Thor's Fritillary** (*Boloria thore*), which in Central Sweden, appears to be confined to this small area, though more widespread in the north west. We also searched for **Violet Copper** (*Lycaena helle*) but with no success, despite reported sightings in this area.

The Island of Alnön

The Island of Alnön sits just off the coast of Sundsvall and is readily accessed by road bridge. Though significantly populated, some woodland meadows, patches of heathland and a few walking tracks warranted exploration. Here we spotted our only **Queen of Spain Fritillary** (*Issoria lathonia*) of the trip, good numbers of **Small Heath** (*Coenonympha pamphilus*), and a few **Grizzled Skippers**. However, **Large Grizzled Skipper** (*Pyrgus alveus*) is reported in this area, but was expected to be only at the beginning of its flight period. After much searching a ▼



The Butterflies of Central Sweden
17th June – 6th July 2025 cont.

fresh male was finally spotted at the end of the afternoon. The unexpected highlight was, however, a strong colony of **Clouded Apollo** (*Parnassius mnemosyne*) cruising along some woodland margins and settling occasionally during cloudy interludes to permit a close approach.



Clouded Apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*)

Umeå and the county of Västerbotten

On 28 June we headed to our most northerly point of the trip at Umeå, a few hundred kilometres short of the Arctic Circle. Forest tracks near Tomterna, which included a few areas of acid peat bog, and the forestry around Grössjön, Lansväg and at Degersjön offered some new habitat and the prospect of a few more subarctic species, though many remained elusive. **Moorland Clouded Yellows** proved to be more abundant, while **Large Heath** (*Coenonympha tullia*, *f. demophile*) were spotted floating over the peat bogs. Here we at last managed to find a few **Northern Wall Brown** in reasonable condition. This far north, the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary**



Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Boloria euphrosyne*)



Poplar Admirals (*Limenitis populi*)

(*Boloria euphrosyne*) shows wide variation with the darker form *lapponica* (with heavy, diffuse black spots) found to be abundant and a truly stunning variant that initially caused some identification issues!

Returning south in Uppland

We returned south under heavy clouds, taking a welcome break from the rain at the excellent Härnosänd Motor Museum north of Sundsvall. In the final two days, and in sunny conditions, we returned to a few spots further south in Uppland, some two weeks after our initial visits. **Lesser Marbled Fritillaries** were now in abundance in early July, as were **Silver-studded Blues** and **Large Wall Browns**. But the real highlight was the sighting of two fresh **Poplar Admirals** (*Limenitis populi*) patrolling the roadside margin and adjacent tracks, occasionally settling for just long enough to photograph close-up. We hoped for a few **Silvery Argus** (*Aricia nicias*), but this species still hadn't appeared!

Three weeks in Central Sweden had been a big success! The summer climate had been agreeable, the countryside verdant and peaceful and relatively mosquito-free! We may have been a little early for some of the more northerly species, but the forests of Central Sweden yielded 52 species in good numbers, and most importantly plenty of excellent photographic opportunities to record many stunningly fresh new species, half a dozen of which were new to our list.

Mark and Caroline Searle

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All photographs taken by the authors



Swedish Lapland - In search of Arctic endemic butterflies

27th June to 7th July 2025

Whilst I usually prefer to search for butterflies in the warmth of the Mediterranean summer, for example in the Alps, the Pyrenees or Greece, I accepted, with a little trepidation, an invitation from a fellow butterfly photographer whom I met on a trip to Thailand, to join him on a trip to the far north of Sweden to look for some of the Arctic specialities to be found there. Also joining us on the trip was Julian, another avid UK butterfly photographer. As the Arctic summer is a brief affair, choosing the right time to visit is essential. Local records indicate that butterflies emerge towards the end of June and are on the wing into the beginning of July, so we planned our visit from the 27 June to 7 July 2025, giving us ten days there, which allowed for a few days being lost to inclement weather. We were based in Abisko, where we rented a comfortable self-catering chalet for the duration of our stay.

27 June 2025 – Krokvic bog

After arriving at Stockholm airport, we took an internal flight to Kiruna, arriving around noon, where Göran met us with a hired car. He had travelled up earlier to prepare for our arrival and we were soon on our way heading to our first stop, a blanket bog at Krokvic just to the north of Kiruna. Göran had looked in at Krokvic during the morning before meeting us at the airport and had seen **Arctic Ringlet (*Erebia disa*)** and it was with great optimism that we made the short drive there. Our enthusiasm was further

Arctic Ringlet (*Erebia disa*),
photo by Göran Assner

heightened by the splendid weather, blue sunny skies and 21°C. However, Göran did warn us that it had been a late spring which may have delayed the emergence of some of the species we had come to search for. Indeed, we could see that there was still a considerable amount of snow lying on the hills around us.

We soon pulled into the large car park conveniently located adjacent to the bog at Krokvic and put on our waterproof overshoes to keep our feet dry in the marshy ground. We had also taken the precaution of bringing with us mosquito head protection nets, of which we were very glad. On a warm day like this, with little breeze, on the bog the mosquitoes were voracious and relentless. The first butterfly we saw on entering the bog was a ▼





Swedish Lapland cont.



Northern Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus centaureae*), underside



Northern Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus centaureae*), upperside

Northern Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus centaureae*), which soon sped away and was lost in the vegetation. We then searched around the bog hoping to find the **Arctic Ringlet** which Göran had seen that morning but to no avail. We did however see some fritillaries which turned out to be **Freija's Fritillary** (*Boloria freija*) and we were very happy that we managed to get good shots of these.

Unfortunately, the only other butterflies that we saw that day, and which we saw every other day but one, were **Green-veined Whites** (*Pieris napi adalwinda*), which is a much darker form than the ones we have in the UK.

We then set off on the very picturesque drive to Abisko, about one hour away, passing by the banks of the vast Lake Torneträsk and enjoying views of the incredible Lapporten glacial trough. Arriving at Abisko we checked into our chalets and settled in. Abisko is a small village centred around the railway station on the line that transports iron ore from the mines at Kiruna to the port at Narvik. Accommodation is limited, with no hotels in the village but there is a small store selling some basic necessities. There are rooms available a little way along the road at the Abisko Turiststation, albeit rather expensive. ▼



Freija's Fritillary (*Boloria freija*)



Green-veined White (*Pieris napi adalwinda*)



Swedish Lapland cont.



28 June 2025 – Mount Njulla

The day dawned sunny and warm and we made our way to the area around the foot of Mount Njulla, just to the west of the village. A footpath named the Kungsleden skirts a fast-flowing river tumbling over boulders with Birch woodland to the left carpeted with Globeflowers (*Trollius europaeus*), Cranesbills (*Geranium sp.*) and Yellow Wood



The author leading the search for butterflies on the tops of Mount Njulla

Violas (*Viola biflora*), the latter being the food plant of **Thor's Fritillary** (*Boloria thore*), one of our target species for the day. However, despite extensive searching of the boggy area under the birches no butterflies were found. It was apparent that due to the late spring **Thor's Fritillaries** had not yet emerged.

Other species which can normally be found around the base of Mount Njulla include **Bog Fritillary** (*Boloria eunomia*), **Cranberry Fritillary** (*Boloria aquilonaris*), **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (*Boloria euphrosyne*), **Frigga's Fritillary** (*Boloria frigga*), **Freija's Fritillary**, **Arran Brown** (*Erebia ligea*), **Moorland Clouded Yellow** (*Colias palaeno*), **Cranberry Blue** (*Agriades optilete*) and **Northern Grizzled Skipper**. With none of these in evidence it was decided to take the chairlift to the top of Njulla to see if there was anything flying there.



We had good views of Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*) as we were going up in the chairlift, and on arriving at the top we began to scour the area to see if we could find any butterflies. This is a good location for **Dusky-winged Fritillary** (*Boloria improba*), **Mountain Fritillary** (*Boloria napaea frigida*), and **Pale Arctic Clouded Yellow** (*Colias tyche verdandi*). The first butterfly we saw was a **Dewy Ringlet** (*Erebia pandrose*), which flew off at speed and was soon lost, but then Göran saw a **Pale Arctic Clouded Yellow** and took off in pursuit. It soon landed on an Arctic Willow (*Salix arctica*), a low growing shrub which grows no more than about four inches high, where it sat for some time allowing us to get good shots of it.

Dewy Ringlet (*Erebia pandrose*)

Whilst here Göran spoke with a group of plant researchers who were carrying out a study of the plant and insect life on the mountain. They told us that just two weeks previously the mountain was still covered in snow and they had had cold northerly winds since April with the result the season was running about two weeks late. Not good news for our quest. Despite further searching no fritillaries were spotted so we descended for a late lunch at the Turiststation. ▼



Swedish Lapland cont.

29 June 2025 – Abisko village

We awoke to rain and temperatures were struggling to get into double figures so after a leisurely breakfast and having checked the weather reports for the area we decided to have a rest day. In intervals between showers, we walked around the village checking the flower-filled banks, but nothing was flying, not even the **Green-veined Whites**. The flora proved interesting though, with Coralroot Orchid (*Corallorhiza trifida*), Fragrant Orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*), Arctic Starflower (*Lysimachia europaea*) and Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia*) being a welcome diversion.

30 June 2025 – Kiruna area

After the disappointing weather of the previous day there was little improvement at Abisko, but the forecast indicated better conditions around Kiruna in the afternoon so we made our way back to Kiruna with the intention of visiting the Ice Hotel whilst waiting for the weather to pick up. Following an interesting visit round the Ice Hotel the weather had cleared somewhat and we added **Small White** (*Pieris rapae*), **Green Hairstreak** (*Callophrys rubi*) and **Holly Blue** (*Celastrina argiolus*) to our tally in the roadside verges outside the hotel, as well as a Northern Emperor Dragonfly (*Somatochlora arctica*). We followed this up by checking out a couple of sites to the east of Kiruna but with no success.

View towards Lappporten from Krater Lake



1 July 2025 – Krater Lake

With the weather improving slightly, although still overcast, we opted to take a walk up to Krater Lake. This is a good site for **Arctic Blue** (*Agriades aquilo*) one of our target species as well as **Pale Arctic Clouded Yellow**. The walk starts from the car park area at Björkliden before climbing up the hill to the Aurora viewpoint and following the footpath across the hills to Krater Lake. This was a wonderful walk with spectacular views across the hills towards Lappporten, with some nice views of Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), Long-tailed Skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) and encounters with Moor Frogs (*Rana arvalis*) on the path. On reaching Krater Lake we crossed the small stream and ascended the hill to the right-hand side of the lake where we started our search for **Arctic Blues**. Some fritillaries were seen that were flying too fast

for any positive identification, but we soon found **Dewy Ringlet** and this time they were sitting allowing good views. Also flying here were **Pale Arctic Clouded Yellows** and surprisingly, a **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*), but despite extensive searching there was no sign of our target butterfly.

2 July 2025 – Mount Nikkaloukta and Krokvik bog

As the weather forecast had indicated that today would be sunny and clear we decided to make an early start and drive south of Kiruna to Mount Nikkaloukta for our best chance of seeing **Lapland Fritillary** (*Euphydryas iduna*), **Arctic Fritillary** (*Boloria chariclea*), **Dusky-winged Fritillary** and **Arctic Grayling** (*Oeneis bore*). Access to the mountain top is easiest by helicopter and we arrived at the helipad at 08-00 for the first flight of the day. Everything went according to plan and we were soon dropped on the top of Nikkaloukta to begin our search. With a fine sunny day and a temperature of 16°C any butterflies on the mountain should be in flight, ▼



Our helicopter landing on the snow laden fells at Mount Nikkaloukta



Swedish Lapland cont.



Frigga's Fritillary
(*Boloria frigga*)

however the large drifts of snow still on the mountainside were ominous. We were not alone in our search, a father and son who had trekked up the mountain and had bravely camped there overnight were also looking for butterflies and we were later joined by another couple of Swedish lepidopterists to add to the hunt. We were also accompanied by Rock Ptarmigan (*Lagopus muta*) and Snow Buntings (*Plectrophenax nivalis*), but after an extensive search we were unable to add a single butterfly to our tally. Liaising with the other parties revealed that they had also scored a zero, more or less confirming that due to the late season nothing had yet emerged up there. After enjoying a picnic lunch, we cut our losses and called for the helicopter to take us back down.

On the way back to Abisko we called at Krokvik again to see if we could find anything new there. **Northern Grizzled Skipper** were seen again, and this time as the temperature was a little cooler, they were less flighty and we had some good views of them. Fritillaries were also flying, more **Freija's Fritillaries**, also **Frigga's Fritillary** and then a blue was spotted which when we caught up with it, turned out to be our first **Cranberry Blue** (*Agriades optilete*). At least we had found two good new species and the day wasn't a complete write off. We were also pleased to see some Reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*) which ran across the road in front of us as we made our way back to base.

3 July 2025 – Abisko village

Although the following day started out sunny and mild it soon turned to rain and we contented ourselves with some walks around Abisko. The former helicopter pad at Abisko has been known in the past to have a good number of **Lapland Fritillaries** but our search of this area revealed only **Cranberry Blues** and **Freija's Fritillaries**.

4 July 2025 – Stordalen Mire Nature Reserve

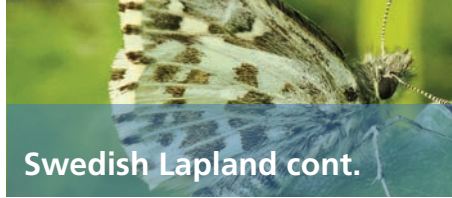
Today it had been our intention to visit Mount Boarrasachokko on the far side of Torneträsk Lake for **Norse Grayling** (*Oeneis norna*), **Northern Clouded Yellow** (*Colias hecla sulitelma*), **Arctic Blue** and **Alpine Grizzled Skipper** (*Pyrgus andromedae*), but as we saw there was still considerable snow cover on the mountain we decided we would have little more success than we had on Nikkaloukta. Instead, we checked out Stordalen Mire Nature Reserve situated ▼



Cranberry Blue (*Agriades optilete*), Underside



Cranberry Blue (*Agriades optilete*), male upperside



Swedish Lapland cont.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary
(*Boloria euphrosyne*)

Pale Arctic Clouded Yellow
(*Colias tyche werdandi*)



Alpine Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus andromedae*)

about eight kilometres southeast of Abisko, where **Arctic Ringlet** has been regularly seen. Stordalen Mire is in the discontinuous permafrost zone and has been under international environmental research for several decades. The immediate benefit of this from our point of view was that the researchers had installed boardwalks over the bog which made access around the bog much easier. We were accompanied into the marsh by a pair of Grey-headed Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava thunbergi*) which followed us along the path. As we got further into the bog they handed us over to several Wood Sandpipers (*Tringa glareola*) and Redshanks (*Tringa totanus*) who were also keen to check out their visitors. Unfortunately, the **Arctic Ringlets** failed to appear.

5 July 2025 – Mount Njulla

Next day we decided to check out the base of Njulla again to see whether there had been an emergence of **Thor's Fritillaries**. To great excitement a fritillary was seen but when it settled and we got a good look at it, it turned out to be a **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (*Boloria euphrosyne*). Another fritillary flew by which we tentatively identified as a **Cranberry Fritillary**, but it did not settle for a definitive confirmation. **Moorland Clouded Yellow** was seen, but there was still no sign of **Thor's Fritillary**. We carried on back to Bjorkliden where we enjoyed a

good lunch at the Hotel Fjället before checking the surrounding meadows. More blues were seen, this time **Idas Blue** (*Plebejus idas*) as well as further **Cranberry Blues** and **Green Hairstreaks**.

6 July 2025 – Krater Lake

For our last day we had a final walk to Krater Lake for one last attempt to find **Arctic Blue**, **Dewy Ringlet** and **Pale Arctic Clouded Yellow** were still in evidence and the only new species that we added to our list was **Alpine Grizzled Skipper**.

As a consolation for our lack of success in the field, we treated ourselves to very tasty dinner at the Abisko Mountain Lodge, which served us with such delicacies as Reindeer carpaccio and Arctic Char rounding off the trip rather nicely.

Well as Robbie Burns said, 'The best laid plans o' mice an' men gang aft agley' and despite having planned our visit for the optimal time for the flight periods of the butterflies we wanted to see, the increasingly unpredictable climate had thrown our plans into disarray. Of the sixteen species that can only be found in the European Arctic, in ten days we had only managed to see five due to vagaries of the weather which, whilst a little disappointing at least it gives us a good reason to return at some point to enjoy the impressive scenery and hopefully next time more of the butterflies we had hoped to find.

Allan Ferguson

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All photographs taken by the author unless noted

Mind-Expanding Adventures with European Butterflies

I've always had a keen interest in natural history, inherited from the Scottish side of my family. My great grandfather was a gamekeeper who moved down from Crathy in Aberdeenshire to take up a position at Haddon Hall in Derbyshire and so settled in the Peak District. My grandfather regaled me with stories of how Corncrakes (*Crex crex*) used to keep him awake all night and as a child I went on walks with him looking at Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) nesting in the barn, Red Grouse (*Lagopus scotica*) and Twite (*Linaria flavirostris*) on the moor and Dippers (*Cinclus cinclus*) and Grey Wagtails (*Motacilla cinerea*) in the stream below the cottage.



Rock Grayling (*Hipparchia hermione genava*)



Rock Grayling (*Hipparchia hermione genava*), genitalia inspection to confirm identification

As a teenager there were other distractions, then university, helping to raise a family, plus a career in the pharmaceutical industry took up all my time and energy. However, the flame still flickered, and I became a part-time birder based at Sandwich in Kent with occasional birding trips to the Far East, Indian sub-continent, Europe and N. Africa. Otherwise, free weekend days were spent volunteering at Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory, and I got involved in *ad hoc* census work and WeBS counts. During the 'quieter' summer months, I followed a well-worn birder's path of developing an interest in day-flying invertebrates. Sandwich Bay has an incredibly rich biodiversity with 32 dragonfly, 43 butterfly, 1250-plus moth and 350 bird species recorded over the years in just a few square miles. Helping the conservation team and walking the BMS and dragonfly transects when the warden was away built my experience and membership of Butterfly Conservation and the British Dragonfly Society naturally followed.

Defining Moments

Perhaps a defining moment came in 2011 after the kids had fledged the nest, when Rosie and I went on a *Naturetrek* holiday to La Brenne in France, another region of rich biodiversity. Led by Tony Williamson we visited the Cherine reserve and sites nearby. At one stage we were walking through a cloud of **Black-veined Whites** (*Aporia crataegi*), something I had never experienced before. In 2012 I was in a fortunate position to take early retirement and decided to devote more time to studying butterflies (and dragonflies) but focusing on Europe and the Western Palearctic so avoiding long haul flights. After some research, I joined tours organised by Greenwings and led by dear departed Tristan Lafranchis to Provence in 2014, the Vercors in 2016 and the Queyras in 2017. Following Tristan in the field I was amazed, for example by his gentle examination of the exposed genitalia of a male Grayling to confirm we were looking at a **Rock Grayling** (*Hipparchia hermione genava*) (See Editor's note) and also by his intimate knowledge of the interplay of geology, botany and lepidopterology enabling identification of a 'blue' at twenty paces without lifting his binoculars. ▼



Joining the European Butterfly Group

Starting with Tristan's Butterflies of Europe (with the somewhat optimistic subtitle of "Identifying Butterflies is Easy")! I studied various other identification guides, marveling at the scholarship of Tom Tolman and the artistic accuracy and precision of Richard Lewington in 'Collins'. In 2015 I had joined the BC European Interest Group (EIG) and in 2017 the Butterflies in Europe Anniversary Magazine dropped through my letterbox. With mouth-watering articles by Simon Spencer and John Salmon (Greece), Nick Greatorex-Davies (Bulgaria), Martin Davies (Romania), Tony Hoare (Estonia), Bernard Watts (Scandinavian Arctic), Marian Thomas (Alps), Mike Prentice (Alps and Sierra Nevada), Roger Gibbons (France), Jude Lock (Pyrenees), Dudley Cheesman (Montes Universales) and of course the Updated Checklist of European Butterflies describing the then known 454 species. I was well and truly hooked.

Early Butterfly Tours

However, locally I was still heavily involved at Sandwich Bay as trustee and then Chair, plus the Kent branch of BC helping in the conservation and census of the **Duke of Burgundy** (*Hamearis lucina*). I joined a Greenwings tour of Lesbos in 2018 and in 2019 a three-week tour of Turkey visiting a series of reserves and habitats stretching from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, organised by Wild Echo and led by Mario Langourov. Suddenly, I was faced with a bewildering array of new Lycaenids and Nymphalids and six years later I'm still working through some of the photographs taken at the time. Further Greenwings tours followed led by David Moore and Jon Dunn (now co-owners of Mariposa Nature Tours) to Spain's Montes Universales (2021), Northern Greece (2022), a scouting trip to the French Pyrenees and to Central/Northern Spain in 2023. Each tour delivered a string of never-to-be-forgotten encounters with new butterfly species in excellent company and wonderful scenery, building a modest level of experience. However, I was left wanting to contribute something more constructive and worthwhile. It was at this time I paid more attention to the regular emails from the now named European Butterfly Group (EBG) seeking volunteers to support vital survey work.

Ridge and scree slopes, El Buitre, Sierra Nevada



EBG Survey Tours

2023: Nevada Grayling
(*Pseudochazara williamsi*),
Cordilleras Béticas, Andalusia,
Spain

In July 2023 I joined an EBG survey team organised by Sam Ellis and led by David Plowman, working with Spanish experts José Miguel Barea Azcón and Javier Olivares, plus Sara Castro Cobo and Enrique Le Desmond Ruiz who were working on the new Spanish Atlas. Our focus was to survey a series of mountain ranges for ▼



Mind-Expanding Adventures with European Butterflies cont.



Nevada Grayling (*Pseudochazara williamsi*)

the Critically Endangered endemic **Nevada Grayling** (*Pseudochazara williamsi*). A full account is given by David in Issue 34 of the 2023 eEBG Newsletter. It was a real privilege surveying the fabled high sierras (Sierra Seca, Nevada Veleta, El Buitre, de Maria, La Sagra and El Chullo) with varying success. This species really is in a perilous state with a very restricted range and abundance contracting and with several ecotypes already extinct. An update was given very recently by Sam in Issue 36 of the 2025 eEBG Newsletter.



Nevada Blue (*Polyommatus golgus golgus*)

tracks to the survey sites - let's just say we were very glad we took out the collision damage waiver on our hire car - and thanks to a combination of heat, exhaustion and dehydration, coupled with 30 years of smoking and bunking off school cross-country runs, I never made it to the summit of La Sagra.

A tremendous bonus of being involved in these expeditions is that one gets the opportunity to see other special endemic taxa. **Spanish Brassy Ringlet** (*Erebia hispania*), **Nevada Blue** (*Polyommatus golgus golgus* and *P.g. sagratrox*), **Spanish Argus** (*Aricia morronensis ramburi*), **Andalusian Anomalous Blue** (*Polyommatus violeae*), **Rock Grayling** (*Hipparchia hermione vandalusica*), **Apollo** (*Parnassius apollo nevadensis*), **Idas Blue** (*Plebejus idas nevadensis*) and **Zullich's Blue** (*Agriades zullichi*) were all recorded during our surveys. We also took a break to explore the Genil valley and a few of us made a slight detour via the coast to 'twitch' **Desert Orange-tip** (*Colotis evagore nouna*) at Playa del Castell de Fero.

I'll spare you the gory details of some hair-rising drives with Harry Clarke up mountain



Mind-Expanding Adventures with European Butterflies cont.

2024: Danube Clouded Yellow (*Colias myrmidone*), Cluj County, Transylvania, Romania

In Issue 34 of the 2023 eEBG Newsletter, Mike Prentice described the Endangered status of the **Danube Clouded Yellow** (*Colias myrmidone*), EBG's long-standing support of conservation efforts in Romania and the results of surveys performed in May/June and Aug/Sept 2023. Responding to a call for further volunteers I joined Mike and a small team in late May 2024. Based on the west side of Cluj we visited several special sites in the historical region of Transylvania including land near Agarbiciu which, because of EBG surveys, had been scheduled as a Protected Area of Community Interest by the Romanian government.



A freshly laid myrmidone egg on the larval foodplant



Danube Clouded Yellow (*Colias myrmidone*), female

Although not blessed by perfect weather, especially torrential thunderstorms in the afternoons, it was a wonderful opportunity to become familiar with and then survey the first spring brood of **Danube Clouded Yellow**, while trying not to get too distracted by the scores of **Woodland Ringlets** (*Erebia medusa*) and **Melitaea** fritillaries, all to a soundtrack of Woodlarks (*Lullula arborea*) and Golden Orioles (*Oriolus oriolus*). A personal highlight was the opportunity to spend quality time with Mike teasing apart the subtle diagnostic differences in the underside

wing patterns of **Heath** (*Melitaea athalia*), **False Heath** (*M. diamina*), **Assmann's** (*M. britomartis*) and **Nickerl's** (*M. aurelia*) **Fritillaries**. When the weather was poor at our target sites, Mike kindly took us on excursions to find **Spinose Skipper** (*Muschampia cribrellum*) on the terraces above Suatu, **Violet Copper** (*Lycaena helle*) deep inside woodland near Satulung and to the delightful Runc Gorge for **Scarce Fritillary** (*Euphydryas maturna*) and **Eastern Short-tailed Blue** (*Cupido decoloratus*). I was also grateful for Mike's patience in helping me work through seemingly hundreds of **Wood Whites** (*Leptidea sinapis*) until confident in seeing that the fore-wing of **Fenton's Wood White** (*L. morsei*) was indeed "slightly falcate under the apex".



Assmann's Fritillary (*Melitaea britomartis*)





I also found my first Ornate Bluet (*Coenagrion ornatum*) and came across several colonies of Small Blue-tails / Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies (*Ischnura pumilio*) and when I returned to Sandwich Bay, I was well rehearsed to discover in August the first for Kent!

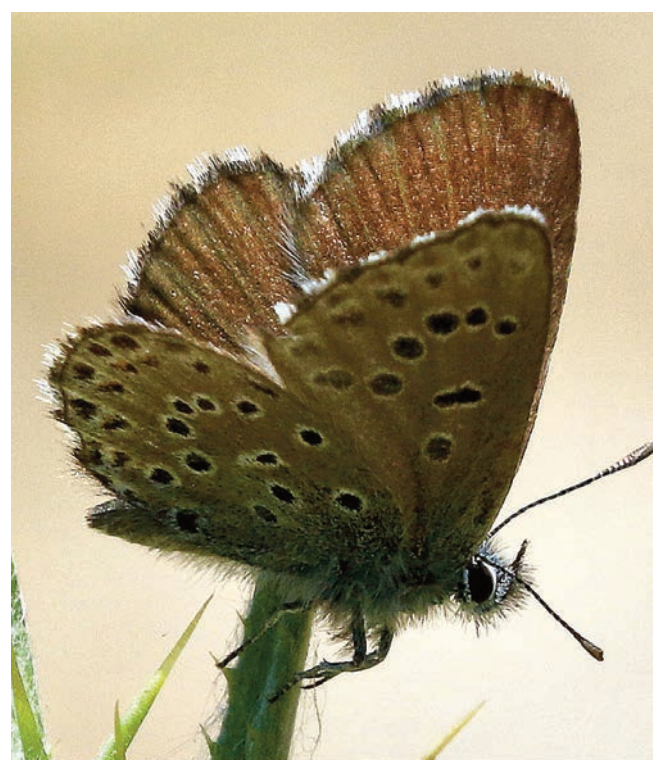


Desulo below Punta La Marmora, Monti del Gennargentu, Sardinia

**2025: Sardinian Blue
(*Pseudophilotes barbaggiae*),
Monti del Gennargentu,
Sardinia, Italy**

In May 2025 I joined an EBG team led by Sam Ellis and Dave Plowman surveying **Sardinian Blue** (*Pseudophilotes barbaggiae*), another species classified as Endangered in the new European Butterfly Red List. We found the butterfly in six locations (three of which were previously unknown) often quite close to suitable stopping places on the roadsides. The habitat of the

locations where the butterfly was not recorded appeared to be degraded, however there were extensive areas of mountainside where the habitat appeared suitable, but we did not have time to explore. The good news is that we concluded the population is probably more widely distributed than previously thought. Following on from our surveys I understand Italian colleagues have committed to undertake regular monitoring. ▼



Sardinian Blue (*Pseudophilotes barbaggiae*)



Mind-Expanding Adventures with European Butterflies cont.



Corsican Dappled White (*Euchloe insularis*)



Sardinian Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais ichnusa*)

During the survey we also recorded many of the endemics including **Corsican Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata paramegaera*), **Corsican Dappled White** (*Euchloe insularis*), **Sardinian Small Tortoiseshell** (*Aglais ichnusa*), **Corsican Red-Underwing Skipper** (*Spialia therapne*), **Corsican Heath** (*Coenonympha corinna*) and **Sardinian Meadow Brown** (*Maniola nurag*) and a **Pygmy Skipper** (*Gegenes pumilio*) close to our base in Galtelli. After days of chasing swallowtails on our last day, we finally found several **Corsican Swallowtails** (*Papilio hospiton*) hill-topping and dogfighting with **Two-tailed Pashas** (*Charaxes jasius*) at the spectacular Punto Panoramico Gorropu. I do have a special fondness for Burnet moths and hence it was satisfying to find the endemic Corsican Burnet (*Zygaena corsica*) in the Gennargentu mountains.

I also managed to see and hear my 'target' bird species: - Marmora's Warbler (*Sylvia sarda*), Moltoni's Warbler (*Sylvia subalpina*), Tyrrhenian (Mediterranean) Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata tyrrhenica*) and Corsican Finch (*Carduelis corsicana*). Odonata were not overlooked and we found the endemic Island Bluetail (*Ischnura genei*) and Mediterranean Bluet (*Coenagrion caerulescens*).

Final Thoughts

Otherwise, my education continues in migrating (slowly) from the use of Anglocentric Vernacular to Binomial Nomenclature. After all, if my young grandchildren can converse in *T. Rex*, *Brontosaurus* and *Triceratops* then surely this old dog (*Canis lupus*

familiaris?) can learn a few new tricks. Peter Eeles' *tour de force* Life Cycles of British and Irish Butterflies has been a revelation with the realisation that there are similar stories for the other 400 European species. I follow the scientific literature especially on the discovery of cryptic species through the application of molecular biology techniques and I keep an eye on the evolving taxonomic landscape ▼



Corsican Swallowtail
(*Papilio hospiton*)

while developing a basic understanding of subjects such as interglacial refugia, postglacial speciation and the effects of climate change.

Of course, one can just enjoy being in beautiful parts of Europe and revel in the wonder of it all. I'll admit to being afflicted by the guilt of knowing that while half the people of the world struggle to survive under the hooves of the four horsemen of the approaching Apocalypse, I am fortunate to have been born in the half that generally has the health, wealth and opportunity to 'look at butterflies'. I'll now put a stop to all this rambling (well done if you've made it this far) and I'll leave you with what Tristan wrote on the first page of my cherished battered copy of his Butterflies of Europe; "*here's to another thousand years of butterflies, birds and dragonflies*".

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All photographs by the author

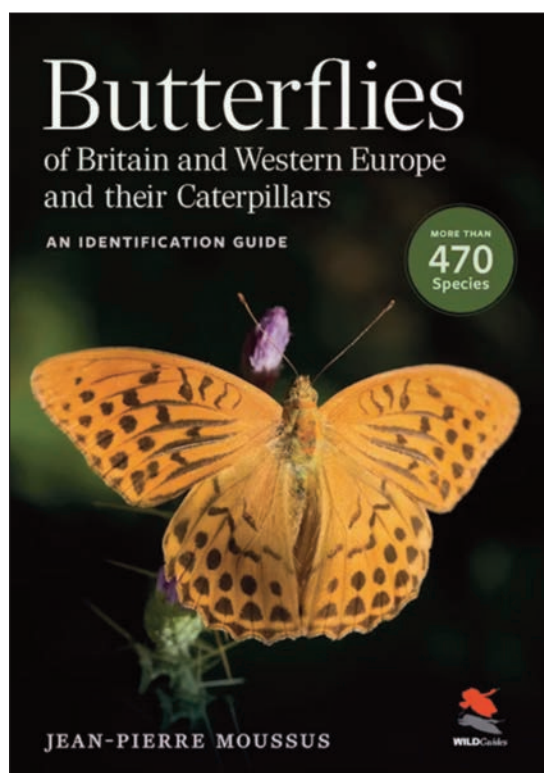
Editor's Note: - Rock Grayling (*Hipparchia hermione genava*)

Some authorities give full species status to this sub-species as *H. genava* and three different vernacular names have been adopted in some field guides alongside *H. genava*: - Lesser Rock Grayling, Lesser Woodland Grayling and Swiss Grayling.

Book Review

Butterflies of Britain and Western Europe and Their Caterpillars: An Identification Guide by Jean-Pierre Moussus

Publisher: Princeton University Press, 2026 - ISBN: 978-0-691-27179-8
640 Pages covering 474 species found in Britain and Europe
Price: £27.95



It is not often that we see a new guide to European butterflies published and certainly none as ambitious as this. Not only does it include photos of all the butterflies found in Europe, including the Canary Islands, the Azores, Madeira and Cyprus, but it also provides a key to identifying caterpillars, a section separating out difficult species by examining their genitalia and a means of identifying egg type to at least the right butterfly family. The aim of the book is to enable the identification of all butterflies encountered within Europe through a series of keys which, if followed carefully, will lead to correct identification of species.

Don't skip the introduction!

There is a tendency with a new identification guide to skip the introductory chapters and cut to the chase, but that would be a mistake here for two reasons. Firstly, the introduction explains why particular species have been included and others left out, and it provides a well written account of how the butterfly fauna of Europe has been shaped by geography and the influence of glaciation.

Secondly, it provides an analysis of the major threats to European butterflies and compares the situation in different countries. While we are familiar with the declines in butterfly numbers in the UK, the situation is even worse in some parts of northern Europe with, for example, the Netherlands showing a 15% loss of historical breeding species. While climate change is a factor in the decline of some species, the author argues that habitat degradation resulting from human activities is the most important cause and this, in his view, means that the situation is not hopeless. The right measures, enabling our agricultural land to become more compatible with biodiversity and linking habitats to help species disperse, will aid conservation at a landscape scale. Moussus does not under-estimate this task but hopes that disseminating the information in the guide will improve understanding of the challenges ahead. In short, conservation is based on sound identification of species and a consequent knowledge of their distribution: he puts forward a series of keys to achieve this.

Keys to identification

The keys begin by helping the reader to place a butterfly seen into the appropriate family and then, for each family, further keys are offered that should lead to the identification of the species. For some species, for example the 'Grizzled Skipper' group, correct identification depends on obtaining good views of both the ▼



Book Review cont.

upper and underside of the butterfly and, where this is the case, keys are provided to both. Having worked out from the keys which species you are looking at, you are then referred on to a monograph/species page covering each butterfly which provides more information on its range including a distribution map, a note on larval food-plants and flight period. This is something of a fail-safe mechanism and allows one to re-check features possibly missed at the initial stage and also helps distinguish between species that are virtually identical but can be separated by their geographical range. Species such as the Scarce Swallowtail and the Iberian

Scarce Swallowtail and the three species of Greenish Black-tip are good examples of this. The author recognises that there is a temptation to miss out on the keys altogether (some of us are, I admit, a little resistant to using them) and head straight for the monographs but he warns against falling into this trap, which he suggests will inevitably lead to mistakes. However, he accepts that experience will enable users to shortcut this process eventually, when they know which grouping of species the yet-to-be-identified butterfly belongs.

Species covered

The guide provides details of 474 species, a growing list resulting from taxonomic studies that have led to new species being described. Some are former sub-species that have been elevated to true species status so, for example, the Vosges Ringlet was formerly considered to be a sub-species of Yellow-spotted Ringlet, from which it can only be separated by examination of the genitalia. Much of this work has been very recent and is still contentious, with opinions differing over whether particular newly described butterflies can be really classed as separate species. My previous go-to book on European butterflies (*Butterflies of Britain and Europe: A photographic guide* by T. Haahtela et al, published in 2011) lists 444 species so, in just 15 years, we have added 30 species to the European list: that is two a year! To take just one group, the

Anomalous Blues have grown from two species in 2011 to eight now. As the author acknowledges, the definition of a species remains a matter of convention, even where it is scientifically argued, and there is no doubt that new work will lead to further revisions.

Study guide more than field guide

The book extends to 640 pages and is a weighty tome in every sense of the word. It strikes me as less a field guide and more a book to be studied alongside one's photographs (upper and lower sides where possible) on return from a European trip, or perhaps back in the hotel room after a day in the field. Similar species are grouped together in the monograph section, which is helpful and to save space, a series of symbols are used to provide information about the number of generations, feeding and territorial behaviours, dispersal abilities, caterpillar feeding habits, location of caterpillars and pupae, and even the threat caused by climate change. I feel this is less successful: some of the symbols used are not very intuitive although no doubt, they will become familiar with use and a fold-out section of the back cover explains them. In this regard, perhaps the author has

UNS KEY TO PAPILIONIDAE

1/3 On HW: [GC yellow] AND [conspicuous tail]

1.1 On HW: [black stripes] AND [veins not highlighted with black]

Scarce Swallowtail p. 130 Iberian Scarce Swallowtail p. 131 Southern Swallowtail p. 134

1.2 On HW: veins highlighted with black

Swallowtail p. 132 Corsican Swallowtail p. 133

2/3 On FW: wing margin transparent

Apollo p. 120 Small Apollo p. 121 False Apollo p. 123 Clouded Apollo p. 122

3/3 On HW: [GC whitish to pale yellow] AND [GC variegated with red, black, and yellow]

Spanish Festoon p. 124 Southern Festoon Italian Festoon pp. 125 and 126 Eastern Festoon p. 127 Cretan Festoon p. 128

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been over-ambitious, including more information than is needed for identification and over-generalising other aspects of the life history. The monograph on the Brown Hairstreak, for example, lists 16 possible larval food-plants including interestingly hawthorn and even birch, which is not used in the UK to my knowledge.

A few reservations

The inclusion of the sections on genitalia and caterpillars in a guide of this nature is certainly an innovation, but one that I suspect will be used less by the average reader. Examining genitalia involves more handling of a butterfly than many will

feel comfortable with and in some cases, means killing the specimen, while the problem with caterpillars is of course, that many will be moths or other insect orders not covered by this guide. The section does offer some assistance in identifying non-butterfly caterpillars which is helpful but still leaves many problems of identification with so many species having very similar caterpillars. The book only shows the final instar of each caterpillar's life before it pupates, on the basis this is the stage most likely to be encountered which I am not sure is entirely true. The guide concludes with a very useful bibliography and list of useful websites. An index of English names with space to add the date and place seen will appeal to the butterfly twitchers amongst us. There are also some familiar names amongst the acknowledgements to those who supplied photos including Roger Wasley, who contributed so many excellent images to Butterflies of the West Midlands.

HESPERIIDAE

SILVER-SPOTTED SKIPPER *HESPERIA COMMA*

Habitat: Low-growing grasslands and grazed meadows.
Hibernating stage: Egg (and caterpillar at high-elevation sites, where the development is biennial).
Elevational range: Up to 3,000 m.
Egg-laying: Eggs are laid singly on the stems and leaves of the LRP or in its neighbourhood.
Flight period: From June to October.
Host plants: Low-growing grasses, including *Festuca ovina*, *F. rubra*, *F. livensii*, *Agrostis vinealis*, *Avenella flexuosa*, *Corynephorus canescens*, *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Elymus repens*, *Nardus stricta*, *Poa annua*, and *Lolium perenne*.
Diversity and systematics: Most European populations belong to the nominate subspecies. Subspecies *catens*, which flies in northern Scandinavia, is protected. Subspecies *hibera* is found in the Iberian Peninsula and southern France.

Did you know?
 In England, where the Silver-spotted Skipper declined significantly until the 1980s, its numbers have benefited from increased rabbit grazing and climate change (warmer summers).

IMAGOS	LARVAE
Food: 🍷	Food: 🌿
Behaviour of males: 🏠	Caterpillar location: 🌱
Dispersion: 🚗	Chrysalis location: 🐛

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Conclusion

Despite these reservations, this is a tour de force among butterfly ID guides and the author is to be commended for completing such a comprehensive guide, justifying its claim to be 'an essential guide for all lepidopterists and entomologists from amateur enthusiasts to professionals'. Even if it is not suitable to be taken into the field because of its sheer size and weight (3lb 11oz), it is a very worthwhile purchase as a back-up to more portable guidebooks and

enables many more species to be confidently identified. Priced at less than £30, it represents extremely good value for money.

Mike Williams

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This review was originally written for the West Midlands Butterfly and Moth Society Web Site and EBG would like to express our thanks in allowing us to use it in our Newsletter.