



## Spain

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Local Recording Scheme	The Catalan Butterfly Monitoring Scheme has been running since 1994 ( <a href="http://www.catalanbms.org">www.catalanbms.org</a> ) and there are plans afoot to start operating the scheme in other areas of Spain.
Butterfly List	Simon Coombes' website has a butterfly list for Spain ( <a href="http://www.butterfly-guide.co.uk/regions/country_list.htm?43*">www.butterfly-guide.co.uk/regions/country_list.htm?43*</a> ) although it contains just 219 species. He also provides lists for each of the Canary Islands ( <a href="http://www.butterfly-guide.co.uk/regions/canaries/index.htm">www.butterfly-guide.co.uk/regions/canaries/index.htm</a> )

## Books

There are no field guides dedicated exclusively to the butterflies of Spain as a whole, but the ***Atlas of the Butterflies of the Iberian Peninsula and Balearic Islands (Lepidoptera: Papilionoidea & Hesperioidea)***, published in 2004 by the Sociedad Entomológica Aragonesa (SEA), gives distribution maps and brief text in both English and Spanish for 230 species that occur on the Spanish mainland and in the Balears.

The best field guides in English are undoubtedly general, Europe-wide works such as Tom Tolman and Richard Lewington's ***Butterflies of Britain and Europe*** (HarperCollins, 1997), and Tristan Lafranchis' ***Butterflies of Europe: new field guide and key*** (Diatheo, 2004), both of which cover all the mainland Spanish and Balearic species, although Lafranchis does not cover the Canary Islands. There are, however, quite a number of differences in the taxonomy and nomenclature of the Spanish butterfly fauna between the two.

Much more information is available – in Spanish – at a regional level:



- An excellent photographic field guide for the north of Spain is Vicente Arranz, J. C. y Hernández Roldán, J. L., ***Guía de las Mariposas Diurnas de Castilla y León***, Náyade Editorial, 2007 (Medina del Campo, Valladolid). It includes detailed information and maps for the 186 butterflies found in the region, ranging from the southern Picos de Europa to the northern Sistema Central (Gredos and Guadarrama), and from the Portuguese border east to the edge of the Sistema Ibérico (practically the whole watershed of the river Duero in Spain).
- Hugo Mortera's ***Mariposas de Asturias*** (published by the Principado de Asturias and KRK Ediciones in 2007) is another exceptional book, although a little large for a field guide. It contains comprehensive descriptions and distribution maps (by 10kmsquares) of the 146 species known to occur in Asturias (including the western and northern sectors of the Picos de Europa), illustrated with photographs of pinned specimens (showing both under and upper wings) and butterflies in the wild.
- For the neighbouring province of Cantabria, there is ***Mariposas y Ecosistemas Cántabros*** (Sanz Román, P., *et al*), published in a rather cumbersome landscape format by Cantabria Tradicional (Torrelavega) in 2004, which also covers day-flying moths. It contains fairly detailed information about the species, but the distribution maps are rather unreliable, and not a few species that are extremely unlikely to occur in the region have been included (for example, Dewy Ringlet *Erebia pandrose*).
- ***Mariposas Diurnas del Parque Nacional de los Picos de Europa (Lepidoptera, Rhopalocera)***, by Georges Verhulst *et al.* (2004), gives details of the 124 species of butterflies that have categorically been recorded within the boundaries of the national park, although there are some notable omissions (Geranium Argus *Eumedonia eumedon*, for example).
- Moving south, rather dated distribution maps for the butterflies of Extremadura can be found in the ***Atlas de los Lepidópteros Ropalóceros de Extremadura (Hesperioidea & Papilionoidea)***, by García-Villanueva, V., *et al.*, published in 1997.
- For Andalucía, butterflies and a selection of moths are covered by the field guide: Díaz, M., ***Mariposas Diurnas y Nocturnas de Andalucía***, 1998 (Centro Andaluz del Libro, Sevilla). The colour illustrations are rather vague, but a good deal of detail is given as to where each species occurs within southern Spain.
- Marco Baez's ***Mariposas de Canarias*** ([Editorial Rueda](#), 1998) describes about half of the 600 or so species of butterflies and moths of the Canary Islands, illustrated with colour photographs.

Lastly, ***Travellers' Nature Guides: Spain*** (Teresa Farino and Mike Lockwood, in English), published by OUP in 2003, is a site-by-site guide to mainland Spain and the Balears, in which butterflies feature prominently.

## Websites

- **Iberian Wildlife Tours** ([www.iberianwildlife.com](http://www.iberianwildlife.com)) contains species lists for the butterflies of Extremadura and the Picos de Europa, as well as detailed information about the natural history of the Sierra de Grazalema (Andalucía) and the Picos de Europa, including their butterfly fauna.
- Photos and field notes for many of the Spanish species, including endemics, can be found on **Matt's European Butterflies** – [www.eurobutterflies.com/index.html](http://www.eurobutterflies.com/index.html)



- **Zerynthia** (Asociación Española para la Protección de las Mariposas y su Medio) – [www.asociacion-zerynthia.org](http://www.asociacion-zerynthia.org) – is the only national NGO for butterflies and moths.
- **Simon Coombes'** site – [www.butterfly-guide.co.uk/regions/spain/index.htm](http://www.butterfly-guide.co.uk/regions/spain/index.htm) – gives information about the butterflies of the Pyrenees, Picos de Europa and Andalucía.

## Holidays

Butterfly enthusiasts will find a visit to Spain a highly rewarding experience, but please note that **it is ILLEGAL to use a butterfly net or moth trap without a permit from the relevant authorities, even if you do not take specimens.**

**Iberian Wildlife Tours** ([www.iberianwildlife.com](http://www.iberianwildlife.com)) regularly organises butterfly and moth holidays and daily excursions in Spain, particularly in hotspots such as the Picos de Europa, the Spanish Pyrenees and Catalunya.

Richard Lewington leads butterfly tours to Spain for ([www.sunbirdtours.co.uk](http://www.sunbirdtours.co.uk))

## Sites & Species

**Peninsular Spain and the Balearic Islands** are home to between 232 and 239 species of butterfly (depending on the source consulted).

Amalgamating data from Tolman and Lewington, Lafranchis and the SEA *Atlas of the Butterflies of the Iberian Peninsula and Balearic Islands*, the following butterflies are unique to mainland Spain:

- **Spanish Brassy Ringlet** (*Erebia hispania*) is nowadays considered to be endemic to the Sierra Nevada (NB see *E. rondoui*, below);
- **Zapater's Ringlet** (*Erebia zapateri*) is restricted to limestone habitats in the southern Sistema Ibérico (provinces of Teruel, Castellón, Cuenca and Guadalajara), usually above 1,200m;
- **Chapman's Ringlet** (*Erebia palarica*) is the largest species in the genus, which flies in flowery meadows amid *Genista* scrub in the western and central Cordillera Cantábrica, between Galicia and Cantabria/Palencia);
- **Andalusian False Grayling** (*Arethusana boabdil* = *A. arethusa boabdil*) is confined to open woodlands and scrubby grasslands in south-eastern Spain, centred on the province of Granada;
- **Carswell's Little Blue** (*Cupido carswelli*), very similar to the Small Blue (*C. minimus*), is restricted to the mountains of south-eastern Spain, for example, the Sierra de Cazorla and the Sierra de Espuña;
- **Zullich's Blue** (*Agriades zullichi* = *A. glandon zullichi*) is unique to the Sierra Nevada (Granada and Almería), where it flies only above 2,400m;
- **Plebejus hespericus** (= *Plebeius hesperica*) is known principally from three discrete areas in central and south-eastern Spain. Some authors consider it to be a subspecies of Zephyr Blue (*Plebejus pylaon hespericus*);

- **Andalusian Anomalous Blue** (*Agrodiaetus violetae*) is a rather dubious taxon that has variously been assigned to *A. ripartii violetae* or *A. fabressei violetae*. It flies only in the mountains of eastern Andalucía and Albacete;
- **Oberthür's Anomalous Blue** (*Agrodiaetus fabressei* = *Polyommatus fabressei*) is unique to the Sistema Ibérico and mountain ranges in south-eastern Spain;
- **Agenjo's Anomalous Blue** (*Agrodiaetus agenjo*), which some authors consider to be a subspecies of Oberthür's Anomalous Blue (= *A. fabressei agenjo*), occurs only in north-eastern Spain, in the provinces of Girona, Barcelona and Lérida (Lleida);
- **Forster's Furry Blue** (*Agrodiaetus ainsae* = *Polyommatus ainsae*) is known only from the limestone plateaux of central northern Spain and the central prePyrenees, generally at altitudes of 900–1,200m;
- **Catalan Furry Blue** (*Agrodiaetus fulgens* = *A. dolus fulgens* = *Polyommatus fulgens*) flies only in Catalunya. Some authors consider it to be conspecific with Forster's Furry Blue (*A. ainsae*), although the two differ in both chromosome number and chromosome morphology;
- **Nevada Blue** (*Polyommatus golgus* = *Plebicula golgus*): an extremely rare species, again known only from the highest peaks of the Sierra Nevada, possibly with a discrete subspecies (*sagratrox*) in the adjacent Sierra de la Sagra (Granada)
- **Azure Chalk-hill Blue** (*Lysandra caelestissima* = *L. coridon caelestissima* = *Polyommatus caelestissimus*), which is confined to the provinces of Teruel and Cuenca (Montes Universales), in eastern Spain.



Forster's Furry Blue (male)  
*(Agrodiaetus ainsae)*  
 © Teresa Farino



Chapman's Ringlet  
*(Erebia palarica)*  
 © Teresa Farino

The **Canary Islands** are home to around 600 species of Lepidoptera, more than a quarter of which are found nowhere else in the world. Four butterflies are endemic to the western islands of the archipelago:

- **Canary Islands' Large White** (*Pieris cheiranthi*): an endangered species found in shady laurel forests on Tenerife, La Palma and La Gomera, as well as possibly on Gran Canaria;
- **Canary Grayling** (*Pseudotergumia wyssii*) occurs as distinct races on all the western Canary Islands, where it is particularly associated with rocky gullies at middle altitudes;
- **Canary Speckled Wood** (*Pararge xiphioides*) is a fairly common species on La Gomera, La Palma, Tenerife and Gran Canaria;
- **Canary Blue** (*Cyclirius webbianus*): a widespread species in all the western Canary Islands except El Hierro, found from the lowlands up to altitudes of 3,000 m in the Cañadas del Teide National Park (Tenerife)



Canary Blue (*Cyclirius webbianus*) © Teresa Farino

In addition, the Canary Red Admiral (*Vanessa vulcanica* = *V. indica vulcanica*), a denizen of the laurel forests, completes its life-cycle only in the Canaries and Madeira, although as a vagrant it may reach western Europe, while the African Migrant (*Catopsilia florella*), which first became established in the Canaries in 1965 and had spread to all islands by 1995, is not known to breed elsewhere in Europe. Similarly, the only European site for the Desert Babul Blue (*Azanus ubaldus*) – an essentially North African butterfly – is in Gran Canaria.

### **Quasi-endemic species**

Although not confined to mainland Spain, a number of butterflies have their centres of distribution here:

**Iberian endemics (species restricted to mainland Spain and Portugal):**

- **Spanish Heath** (*Coenonympha iphioides* = *C. glycerion iphioides*) occurs only in damp places in the northern half of the Iberian peninsula (NB, there is an isolated colony of *C. glycerion* in the eastern Pyrenees);
- ***Lycaena bleusei***, sometimes considered to be a subspecies of the Sooty Copper (*L. tityrus bleusei*), occurs in the Sistema Central (Gredos, Guadarrama and central Portugal), in a geographically isolated population;
- **Panoptes Blue** (*Pseudophilotes panoptes*) is a fairly widespread species across Spain and Portugal, with the exception of the northern, Atlantic zone and the Pyrenees.



Spanish Heath (*Coenonympha iphioides*)  
 © Teresa Farino



Panoptes Blue (*Pseudophilotes panoptes*)  
 © Teresa Farino



Panoptes Blue (*Pseudophilotes panoptes*) © Teresa Farino (male, female)

**Species confined to Spain and the French Pyrenees:**

- **Gavarnie Ringlet** (*Erebia gorgone*) is a Pyrenean endemic, occurring mainly in the central part of the range;
- **Pyrenees Brassy Ringlet** (*Erebia rondoui*), which was recently split from Spanish Brassy Ringlet *E. hispania*), is known only from the Pyrenees, including Andorra;
- **Lefèvre's Ringlet** (*Erebia lefebvrei*) is confined to the Pyrenees and the Cordillera Cantábrica, usually flying above 1,800m;
- **False Dewy Ringlet** (*Erebia sthenyo*) flies only in the central Pyrenees (Huesca and Lérida), just extending into France;
- **Gavarnie Blue** (*Agriades pyrenaicus*) is known only from two discrete populations: the central Pyrenees (subspecies *pyrenaicus*) and the Picos de Europa and southern Asturias (subspecies *asturiensis*);
- **Spanish Argus** (*Aricia morronensis*) is present in a number of widely scattered colonies across Spain, as well as just extending into France on the northern flank of the Pyrenees, where it is very local;
- **Mother-of-pearl Blue** (*Polyommatus nivescens* = *Plebicula nivescens*) has a primarily eastern Spanish distribution, but just extends into the French Pyrenees.



**Gavarnie Blue** (*Agriades pyrenaicus asturiensis*) © Teresa Farino (male, female and underside)

In addition, there exists a whole suite of butterfly species **known only from Spain in Europe**, although they are also present in Africa or the Middle East. These include Zeller's Skipper (*Borbo borbonica*), Spanish Chalk-hill Blue (*Lysandra albicans*) and the cryptically coloured Southern Hermit (*Chazara prieuri*), as well as butterflies typical of semi-desert conditions, such as Desert Orange Tip (*Colotis evagore*), Sooty Orange Tip (*Zegris eupheme*), Greenish Black-tip (*Euchloe charlonia*) – with colonies in the Hoyas de Baza and Guadix (Granada) and Los Monegros (Huesca/Zaragoza), as well as in the eastern Canary Islands – and the diminutive Common Tiger Blue (*Tarucus theophrastus*), whose larvae feed only on the spiny shrub *Ziziphus lotus*.



Greenish Black-tip (*Euchloe charlonia*) © Teresa Farino

Similarly, southern Spain is home to a number of species whose European distribution is restricted to the Iberian Peninsula, including False Mallow Skipper (*Carcharodus tripolinus*); Green-striped White (*Euchloe belemia*); Lorquin's Blue (*Cupido lorquini*), False Baton Blue (*Pseudophilotes abencerragus*) and Spanish Marbled White (*Melanargia ines*). The Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) and American Painted Lady (*Vanessa virginiensis*) have their only resident populations in Europe in coastal regions of southern and western Iberia and the Canaries.

In addition, butterflies such as the Spanish Swallowtail (*Iphiclides feisthamelii* = *I. podalirius feisthamelii*), Spanish Festoon (*Zerynthia rumina*), Spanish Purple Hairstreak (*Laeosopis evippus* = *L. roboris*) and Provence Hairstreak (*Tomares ballus*) are essentially Iberian species, whose range only just extends northwards into France.



Spanish Swallowtail (*Iphiclides feisthamelii*)  
© Teresa Farino



Spanish Festoon (*Zerynthia rumina*)





Spanish Purple Hairstreak (*Laeosopsis evippus*)  
 © Teresa Farino

### Red Data Book species in Spain

The 1999 *Red Data Book of European Butterflies* lists 16 species for Spain that are considered to be threatened at a European level, and two for the Canary Islands:

<b>Mainland Spain</b>	
Cinquefoil Skipper ( <i>Pyrgus cirsii</i> )	SPEC 1
Lulworth Skipper ( <i>Thymelicus acteon</i> )	SPEC 2
Apollo ( <i>Parnassius apollo</i> )	SPEC 3
Violet Copper ( <i>Lycaena helle</i> )	SPEC 3
Provence Hairstreak ( <i>Tomares ballus</i> )	SPEC 2
Chequered Blue ( <i>Scolitantides orion</i> )	SPEC 3
Green-underside Blue ( <i>Glaucoopsyche alexis</i> )	SPEC 3
Large Blue ( <i>Maculinea arion</i> )	SPEC 3
Dusky Large Blue ( <i>Maculinea nausithous</i> )	SPEC 3
Alcon Blue ( <i>Maculinea alcon</i> )	SPEC 3
Mountain Alcon Blue ( <i>Maculinea rebeli</i> )	SPEC 1
<i>Plebejus hespericus</i>	SPEC 1
Marsh Fritillary ( <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> )	SPEC 3
Aetherie Fritillary ( <i>Melitaea aetherie</i> )	SPEC 3
Woodland Brown ( <i>Lopinga achine</i> )	SPEC 3
Spring Ringlet ( <i>Erebia epistygne</i> )	SPEC 1
<b>Canary Islands</b>	
Lulworth Skipper ( <i>Thymelicus acteon</i> )	SPEC 2
Canary Islands' Large White ( <i>Pieris cheiranthi</i> )	SPEC 1

Lulworth Skipper, Apollo, Green-underside Blue and Marsh Fritillary are widespread and abundant in Spain, while Violet Copper, Dusky Large Blue, Mountain Alcon Blue, *Plebejus hespericus* and Woodland Brown are known from only a few scattered sites. Cinquefoil Skipper and Spring Ringlet are more or less confined to the north-eastern quadrant of Spain, Provence Hairstreak is primarily a southern species, although Catalunya is also a stronghold, and Aetherie Fritillary is restricted to the extreme south-west. Members of the genus

*Maculinea* are nowhere common in Spain; of these, the Large Blue has the broadest distribution, for the most part concentrated on the north with an outpost in the Sistema Ibérico.

At a national level, the Spanish Invertebrates Red Data Book\* includes the following threatened species for mainland Spain:

Cinquefoil Skipper ( <i>Pyrgus cirsii</i> )	VU
Yellow-banded Skipper ( <i>Pyrgus sidae</i> )	VU
Apollo ( <i>Parnassius apollo</i> )	LC
Clouded Apollo ( <i>Parnassius mnemosyne</i> )	LC
Zullich's Blue ( <i>Agriades zullichi</i> )	EN
Violet Copper ( <i>Lycaena helle</i> )	EN
Dusky Large Blue ( <i>Maculinea nausithous</i> )	VU
Mountain Alcon Blue ( <i>Maculinea rebeli</i> )	VU
<i>Plebejus hespericus</i>	VU
Nevada Blue ( <i>Polyommatus golgus</i> )	EN
Aetherie Fritillary ( <i>Melitaea aetherie</i> )	NT
Southern Hermit ( <i>Chazara priouri</i> )	VU
Woodland Brown ( <i>Lopinga achine</i> )	VU
False Ringlet ( <i>Coenonympha oedippus</i> )	DD
Spring Ringlet ( <i>Erebia epistygne</i> )	LC
Nevada Grayling ( <i>Pseudochazara hippolyte</i> )	NT
Greenish Black-tip ( <i>Euchloe charlonia</i> )	NT

Notable here is the inclusion of more recently described Spanish endemics such as Zullich's and Nevada Blues, as well as several more widespread European species that are represented by isolated populations in Spain, such as the Yellow-banded Skipper and Nevada Grayling. Essentially North African species such as Greenish Black-tip and Southern Hermit are also included. Interestingly, this is the only source that mentions the False Ringlet as being present in Spain.

\*Verdú, J. R. and Galante, E. (eds), *Libro Rojo de los Invertebrados de España*, Dirección General para la Biodiversidad, Ministerio de Medio Ambiente, 2006 (Madrid).



Green-underside Blue (*Glaucopsyche alexis*)  
© Teresa Farino



Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) © Teresa Farino

## Sites

Geographically, Spain can be divided into three distinct units: the mainland, which is part of continental Europe, the Balearic Islands in the western Mediterranean, and the Canary Islands: a far-flung archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean, considerably closer to Africa than to Europe.

Mainland Spain occupies about 80 per cent of the Iberian Peninsula – a squarish land-mass lying at the south-western edge of continental Europe – which it shares with Portugal, Andorra and Gibraltar. It covers around 493,500 sq km, with the Canary Islands adding approximately 7,500 sq km and the Balearic archipelago a further 5,000 sq km,

Three principal mountain chains are positioned around the margins of the Iberian Peninsula – the Cordillera Cantábrica, the Pyrenees and the Sierras Béticas – with the interior ranges of the Sistema Central and the Sistema Ibérico completing the picture. The Sierras Béticas continue north-eastwards under the Mediterranean Sea, terminating in the scatter of unsubmerged peaks that today makes up the Balearic archipelago. The Canary Islands, some 1150 km to the south-west, however, are true oceanic islands: volcanic land-masses that rose from the floor of the Atlantic between 20 and 1.5 million years ago.

The Iberian Peninsula lies at a biological crossroads between Europa and Africa, separated from the former by the 400-km mountain chain of the Pyrenees and the latter by just 15 km of open water at the Straits of Gibraltar, the two landmasses having been linked physically at various times in the past. In addition, it is located at the intersection between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, and as such experiences climatic conditions associated with both, although the interior reaches are characterized by a rather more continental regime. The distant Canary Islands, on the other hand, are subject to a warmer, subtropical climate.

As a result of this geographic and climatic variation, Spain is one of Europe's hotspots of biodiversity, hosting an extremely rich butterfly fauna that includes many endemic species (see above). In the southernmost parts of the country, and in the Canary Islands, butterflies are on the wing almost all year round, with spring – and to a lesser extent autumn – representing peak times for maximum species diversity. More mountainous regions, however, especially those in northern and west-central Spain, are best visited between June and August.



It is thought that the conservation status of butterflies in Spain as a whole is rather good, owing to the fact that human impact on the environment is low over large areas. Obviously, some areas harbour significantly richer assemblages of butterflies than others, with diversity generally being higher in mountainous regions, and in the north of the country. Many of the better-preserved ecosystems lie within protected areas, and a recent study revealed that populations of 97% of Spanish butterfly species can be found within these parks and reserves.

The following is a selection of the most diverse butterfly regions of Spain, which between them harbour the majority of the endemic species, as well as those that do not occur outside Iberia in Europe. Detailed descriptions of the habitats and wildlife of these sites can be found in Farino, T. and Lockwood, M., *Travellers' Nature Guide: Spain*, Oxford University Press, 2003 (Oxford), and so is not repeated here.



**1 Somiedo:** Somiedo is probably the best butterfly site in Asturias after the Picos de Europa (see below), home to typical upland species such as Apollo (*Parnassius apollo*), Shepherd's Fritillary (*Boloria pales pyrenemiscens*), Lefèbvre's (*Erebia lefebvrei astur*), Mountain (*E. epiphron*) and Chapman's (*E. palarica*) Ringlets and Gavarnie Blue (*Agrides pyrenaicus asturiensis*). Chequered Skipper (*Carterocephalus palaemon*; rather rare in Spain), Geranium Argus (*Eumedonia eumedon*) and Large Blue (*Maculinea arion*) occur in the midlevel forest-meadow mosaic. The Saliencia valley is of particular interest, harbouring a colony of Spanish Argus (*Aricia morronensis*) and boasting the only Asturian records for Great Banded Grayling (*Brintesia circe*) and Dusky Meadow Brown (*Hyponephele lycaon*).



Chequered Skipper (*Carterocephalus palaemon*)  
 © Teresa Farino



Geranium argus (*Eumedonia eumedon*)  
 © Teresa Farino

**2 Picos de Europa** (136 species in the park, and more in the surrounding valleys and adjacent Cordillera Cantábrica): A well-known butterfly hot-spot, with high-altitude highlights including Apollo, Gavarnie Blue and Lefèvre's Ringlet. A diverse mosaic of flower-rich haymeadows, broad-leaved woodlands and high-altitude pastures and rock-gardens harbours lycaenids and fritillaries galore, plus Chequered Skipper, Yellow-spotted Ringlet (*Erebia alberganus*), Dryad (*Minois dryas*), Woodland Brown (*Lopinga achine*), Spanish Heath (*Coenonympha iphioides*), Geranium Argus, Alcon Blue (*Maculinea alcon*) and Dusky Large Blue (*Maculinea nausithous*). Mountain passes to the south host Chapman's Ringlet and isolated colonies of Bog Fritillary (*Boloria eunomia*).



Dusky Large Blue (*Maculinea nausithous*)  
 Teresa Farino



Woodland Brown (*Lopinga achine*) ©  
 © Teresa Farino

**3 Páramo de la Lora:** The most notable early-flying butterfly on this high-level limestone plateau is undoubtedly the Spring Ringlet (*Erebia epistygne*), but later in the year butterfly diversity increases considerably, with species on the wing in July and August including Silverspotted Skipper (*Hesperia comma*), Apollo, Spanish Heath, The Hermit (*Chazara briseis*), Great Banded, Rock (*Hipparchia fagi*) and Tree (*Hipparchia statilinus*) Graylings, Black Satyr (*Satyrus actaea*), Dusky Meadow Brown, Spanish Argus and a veritable

cornucopia of blues, including Spanish Chalk-hill (*Lysandra albicans*), Forster's Furry (*Agrodiaetus ainsae*) and Ripart's Anomalous (*Agrodiaetus ripartii*).

#### 4 The Spanish Pyrenees

From west to east, some of the best butterfly-hunting areas in the Pyrenees are as follows:

- **Sierra de Guara** (137 species in the *parque natural*): Spring sees Mountain Small White (*Pieris ergane*), Portuguese Dappled White (*Euchloe tagis*) and Spring Ringlet on the wing, with Chequered Blue (*Scolitantides orion*) appearing in May. Summer butterflies include Cinquefoil Skipper (*Pyrgus cirsii*), Apollo (ssp. *aragonicus*), Autumn Ringlet (*Erebia neoridas*), Spanish Chalk-hill Blue, Provence Chalk-hill Blue (*Lysandra albicans*), Meleager's Blue (*Meleageria daphnis*), Iolas Blue (*Iolana iolas*), Forster's Furry Blue, Damon Blue (*Agrodiaetus damon*) and Ripart's Anomalous Blue.



Damon Blue (*Agrodiaetus damon*) © Teresa Farino

- **Ordesa** (131 species in the national park): In June and July, the open pine woods of the Pineta valley are home to Northern Wall Brown (*Lasiommata petropolitana*). Woods and meadows in the middle reaches of the park harbour Mountain Small White and Mountain Alcon Blue (*Maculinea rebeli*), with the high-level pastures the haunt of Alpine Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus andromedae*), Gavarnie Blue (*Agriades pyrenaicus pyrenaicus*) and Glandon Blue (*A. glandon*). At altitude the *Erebia* species are the most plentiful butterflies, with Large (*E. euryale*), Lefèbvre's, Mountain, Pyrenees Brassy (*E. rondoui*), Western Brassy (*E. arvernensis*), Gavarnie (*E. gorgone*), False Dewy (*E. sthenno*) and Autumn Ringlets all recorded from the park.



Lefèbvre's Ringlet (*Erebia lefebvrei pyrenaea*) © Teresa Farino

- **Posets-Maladeta** (93 species in the *parque natural*, and many more in the Benasque valley as a whole): Higher slopes harbour Apollo (ssp. *pyrenaicus*), Clouded Apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*) and Glandon and Eros (*Polyommatus eros*) Blues, as well as a wealth of *Erebia* spp, including Water (*E. pronoe*), Gavarnie, Pyrenees Brassy, Dewy (*E. pandrose*), False Dewy and Lefèbvre's Ringlets. The upper Ésera valley is home to Alpine Grizzled Skipper, Shepherd's

Fritillary and Bright-eyed Ringlet (*Erebia oeme*). The Estós valley is worth checking out for Large Blue and Great Sooty Satyr (*Satyrus ferula*) in July.



Apollo (*Parnassius apollo pyrenaicus*)  
 pyrenemiscens)  
 © Teresa Farino



Shepherd's Fritillary (*Boloria pales*)  
 © Teresa Farino

- **Aigüestortes** (83 spp in the national park): Butterflies at altitude include Peak White (*Pontia callidice*) and Pyrenees Brassy, Western Brassy, Yellow-spotted (*Erebia manto*), Bright-eyed and Gavarnie Ringlets, with meadows and pastures lower down hosting Mountain Fritillary (*Boloria napaea*) and Silvery Argus (*Aricia nicias*).



Bright-eyed Ringlet (*Erebia oeme*) © Teresa Farino

- **Cadí- Moixeró and La Cerdanya** (120+ species in the area): The Segre valley is bordered by the limestone Serra del Cadí to the south and the granitic main axis of the Pyrenees proper to the north, producing a mosaic of habitats harbouring species ranging from Map Butterfly (*Araschnia levana*), Bog Fritillary, Sloe Hairstreak (*Satyrrium acaciae*), Silvery Argus, Mountain Alcon, Large, Damon and Ripart's Anomalous Blues in the meadows, to Clouded Apollo, Mountain Fritillary and Black Satyr in clearings in the high-level pine forests. The highest peaks have Lefèbvre's (*Erebia lefebvrei pyrenaea*) and Gavarnie Ringlets, Peak White and Glandon Blue.



Bog Fritillary (*Boloria eunomia*) © Teresa Farino

- 5 El Montseny** (142 species in the *parc natural*): Six Butterfly Monitoring Scheme transects across this granitic massif have provided considerable information about the butterflies of the Montseny. Notable species are Cinquefoil Skipper, Foulquier's Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus foulquieri* = *P. bellieri*), Lesser Spotted Fritillary (*Melitaea trivia*), Spring Ringlet, Catalan Furry Blue (*Agrodiaetus fulgens*) and Meleager's Blue.





Meleager's Blue (*Meleageria daphnis*) © Teresa Farino (female)

**6 Monegros:** Semi-arid pseudosteppes and dry cereal fields in the middle reaches of the Ebro valley are home to Greenish Black-tip (*Euchloe charlonia*) and Sooty Orange Tip (*Zegris eupheme*) in spring, and Southern Hermit (*Chazara prieuri*) towards the end of June.



Greenish Black-tips (*Euchloe charlonia*) © Teresa Farino - mating

**7 El Moncayo** (127 species): This isolated peak (rising to 2,313m) on the north-eastern edge of the Sistema Ibérico is another place where butterflies of Atlantic and Mediterranean climes come together. May sees Panoptes (*Pseudophilotes panoptes*), Mother-of-pearl (*Polyommatus nivescens*), Chequered and Iolas Blues and Spanish Fritillary (*Euphydryas desfontainii*) on the wing, with summer heralding the emergence of Oberthür's Anomalous Blue (*Agrodiaetus fabressei*) and Southern Hermit, as well as a wealth of other lycaenids and fritillaries. The Moncayo endemic race of Apollo (*Iaufferi*), with distinctly grey-coloured females, flies above 1,500m in summer.

**8 The Sistema Central:** The so-called ‘backbone’ of Spain runs diagonally across the country to the north of Madrid, comprising the Sierra de Guadarrama to the east and the Sierra de Gredos (97 species in the park) to the west. Notable spring butterflies include *Lycaena bleusei*, with Apollo (ssp. *escalera*) – only in the Guadarrama – and Mother-of-pearl Blue appearing later in the year. The Lozoya valley harbours an isolated colony of Dusky Large Blue. The western end of the range extends into Extremadura, where the **Garganta de los Infiernos** is home to Yellow-banded Skipper (*Pyrgus sidae*) – found only in the western Gredos in Iberia – as well as Green-striped White (*Euchloe belemia*), Nettle-tree Butterfly (*Libythea celtis*), Oriental Meadow Brown (*Hyponephele lupina*), Black Satyr, False Grayling (*Arethusana arethusa*) and Mountain Argus (*Aricia artaxerxes* = *A. montensis*).



Green-striped White (*Euchloe belemia*) © Teresa Farino

**9. Serranía de Cuenca:** One of the most renowned European sites for butterflies. In the Ciudad Encantada, Spring Ringlets are on the wing by April, with Zapater’s Ringlet (*Erebia zapateri*) appearing in July and August. Uña is well-known for its population of Sandy Grizzled Skipper (*Pyrgus cinarae*), in its only western European locality. Good opportunity to differentiate between Esper’s, Spanish (*Melanargia ines*), Western (*M. occitanica*) and Iberian (*M. lachesis*) Marbled Whites; Marsh (*Euphydryas aurinia*) and Spanish Fritillaries; and Oberthür’s Anomalous, Ripart’s Anomalous, Escher’s (*Polyommatus escheri*), Chapman’s (*P. thersites*), Amanda’s (*P. amandus*) and Mother-of-pearl Blues. Essentially Atlantic species such as the Large Blue reach their southern limits here, and the range is also one of the strongholds of the Spanish moon moth (*Graellsia isabelae*).



Escher’s and Chapman’s Blues  
 (*Polyommatus escheri* + *P. thersites*)  
 © Teresa Farino



Large Blue (*Maculinea arion*)  
 © Teresa Farino

**10 Sierra de Javalambre:** Species to watch out for here are Oberthür's and Ripart's anomalous blues and the exceeding rare *Plebejus hespericus*, formerly considered to be a subspecies of Zephyr Blue (*P. pylaon*), as well as Zapater's Ringlet, which flies from late July into September in clearings in the pine forests up to 1,650m. Spring Ringlet is on the wing by late March, with a distinct race of Apollo (subspecies *hispanicus*) in high summer.

**11 Las Villuercas:** the sheer variety of habitats on offer makes Las Villuercas one of the richest areas for butterflies in Extremadura, with species more reminiscent of the central or northern Iberian mountains – for example, Twin-spot Fritillary (*Brenthis hecate*) and Brown Hairstreak (*Thecla betulae*) – mixing with more southerly elements such as Nettle-tree Butterfly, Two-tailed Pasha (*Charaxes jasius*) and Chapman's Green Hairstreak (*Callophrys avis*). Look out too for Spanish Fritillary and Spanish Purple Hairstreak (*Laeosopis evippus*).



Two-tailed Pasha (*Charaxes jasius*)  
© Teresa Farino



Brown Hairstreak (*Thecla betulae*)  
© Teresa Farino

**12 Calar del Mundo & the Sierra de Alcaraz:** More than 30 species of lycaenids have been recorded here, most notably three Spanish endemics: Oberthür's Anomalous, Andalusian Anomalous (*Agrodiaetus violetae*) and Carswell's Little (*Cupido carswelli*) Blues. The best time to visit is probably late June or early July, although April sees Provence Hairstreak (*Tomares ballus*) and False Baton (*Pseudophilotes abencerragus*), Panoptes and African Grass (*Zizeeria knysna*) Blues on the wing.



African Grass Blue (*Zizeeria knysna*) © Teresa Farino

**13 Cabo de Gata:** A mosaic of semi-arid habitats and volcanic outcrops in Almería, where the highlights are Desert Orange Tip (*Colotis evagore*) and Common Tiger Blue (*Tarucus theophrastus*), the latter often seen flying around its larval food plant – *Ziziphus lotus* – in early spring. False Mallow Skipper (*Carcharodus tripolinus*), Green-striped White and Spanish Marbled White are also present at this time of year.

**14 Sierra Nevada** (116 ssp. in the *parque natural*): Peaking at 3,479m, and sometimes referred to as the 'roof of mainland Spain', the Sierra Nevada is comparable to the Pyrenees for sheer butterfly diversity and degree of endemism, with the highlights being Zulloch's Blue (*Agriades zullichi*), Nevada Blue (*Polyommatus golgus*), *Plebejus hespericus*, Spanish Brassy Ringlet (*Erebia hispania*), the latter now considered to be unique to this range, and Nevada Grayling (*Pseudochazara hippolyte*). Other butterflies of note here include Southern Small White (*Pieris manni*), Spanish Fritillary, Black Satyr and Lorquin's Blue (*Cupido lorquini*). Many endemic races of more widespread butterflies occur at altitude, including Apollo (ssp. *nevadensis*), Heath Fritillary (*Melitaea athalia nevadensis*), Purple-shot Copper (*Lycaena alciphron granadensis*) and Idas Blue (*Plebejus idas nevadensis*).

**15 Grazalema** (75 spp.) & Los Alcornocales (46 spp.): Evergreen forest, *dehesas*, limestone crags and sandstone outcrops harbour many essentially Mediterranean species, with notable records including Southern Marbled (*Carcharodus boeticus*), Sage (*Syrictus proto*) and Safflower (*Pyrgus carthami*) Skippers, Aetherie, Spanish and Marsh Fritillaries, Two-tailed Pasha, Dusky Meadow Brown, Nettle-tree Butterfly, Spanish Purple and Provence Hairstreaks and Osiris, Lorquin's, Green-underside, Iolas, Panoptes, False Baton and Spanish Chalk-hill Blues. Monarchs (*Danaus plexippus*) and Plain Tigers (*D. chrysippus*) and Zeller's (*Borbo borbonica*) and Mediterranean (*Gegenes nostradamus*) Skippers can be found in the hinterland of the nearby Bahía de Algeciras from April onwards.



Safflower Skipper (*Pyrgus carthami*) © Teresa Farino

***Please remember that it is ILLEGAL to use a butterfly net or moth trap in Spain without a permit from the relevant authorities, even if you do not take specimens.***