



eNewsletter

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Welcome to EIG 22. We revert in this newsletter to electronic format. The printed magazine which was circulated in the spring seems to have been well received but it was relatively expensive and time-consuming to produce so it will not be a regular event. Extra copies can still be purchased from BC Wareham, at the EIG Members Day in London on 4 November, or from the EIG table at the BC Members Day in Cheltenham on 11 November.

There is a good range of articles in this edition covering Spain, France, the Canary Islands, and Greece. But can I draw your attention in particular to page 2, about our forthcoming name change to European Butterflies Group. Can I also ask you not to overlook the final two pages, which have some photographs from my own recent exciting trip to Far East Russia.



Purple Emperor (*Apatura iris amurenis*), FE Russia. Photo by Tony Hoare, July 2017.

A warm word of thanks is long overdue for the designer of this newsletter, Trish Connolly Morgan of Morgan Creative. Trish also designed the printed magazine. She is based in Shropshire and her website is <https://morgancreative.carbonmade.com/>

Nigel Peace, Newsletter Editor, Nov 2017





Chairman's Introduction

A Name Change

by **Simon Spencer**

When EIG was started in 2006 it was described to Butterfly Conservation (BC) Council as a way of bringing together those members of BC who were 'interested' in European Butterflies. We were therefore set up as Butterfly Conservation's 'European Interests Group' which soon became shortened to EIG.

The late **John Reeve's** completely brilliant logo using these three letters to make a blue butterfly was a masterpiece that helped us establish ourselves as a credible organisation. Now with over 450 members and contacts and partnerships all over Europe we are recognized as a valuable source of information, expertise and in several countries where we have done surveys 'boots on the ground'.

However, 'European Interests Group' is incomprehensible to foreigners, does not appear to have anything to do with butterflies and requires the Butterfly Conservation prefix to make any sense. It is invariably shortened to EIG which is just as incomprehensible and also does not appear to have anything to do with butterflies.

EIG committee have therefore decided that we want to change the name from 'Butterfly Conservation's European Interests Group' to 'Butterfly Conservation's European Butterflies Group'. 'European Butterflies Group' is self-explanatory. It is less likely to be shortened as it does what it says on the tin. We have secured the domain name www.european-butterflies.org.uk which will give us a much higher hit rate on search engines for anyone looking for 'European Butterflies'. That sort of thing matters nowadays. Our focus has always been butterflies though we would welcome members interested in moths. 'Butterfly' Conservation has the same problem with its name in seemingly ignoring moths. Though 'European Insects Group' would keep the same initials we would lose the sharp focus on European butterflies which is what interests most of our members.

In all other aspects we will remain exactly the same. There will be changes to our website, bank account, BC's membership documentation etc. We will also amend the logo. Though the EIG committee made the decision in the spring and has sought and obtained approval from BC headquarters we kept it under wraps for the summer when we are usually all away and will announce it at our AGM on the 4th November in London. The website will be changed soon after and anyone with a link to www.bc-eig.org.uk will be redirected to www.european-butterflies.org.uk. •

Simon Spencer

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Notices and News

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Danube Clouded Yellow (*Colias myrmidone*)

Does the species still occur in Bulgaria?

Evidence for the **Danube Clouded Yellow** (*Colias myrmidone*) being present in Bulgaria is based on three specimens in the National Museum of Natural History in Sofia that were collected at two sites not far south-east of Sofia in the early part of the 20th century. It has not been recorded in Bulgaria since, but is still found in Romania to the north and formerly occurred just over the north-west border in Serbia.

Nick Greatorex-Davies and **Zdravko Kolev** had discussed back in July 2015 that it might be worthwhile to search for the species in Bulgaria. Zdravko considered that there was a real possibility that the species may occur in relatively unrecorded parts of northern Bulgaria where several species of the butterfly's hostplant, *Chamaecytisus* (broom) species, are known to occur and where agricultural practices are generally less advanced than elsewhere in Bulgaria.

In the light of other survey work being carried out by EIG members in neighbouring Romania in 2015 and 2016, Nick decided to organise a survey in north Bulgaria from 6-13 August 2017. The dates were selected hopefully to coincide with the second (larger) generation of the Danube Clouded Yellow. Participants were **Martin Davies**, **Nick Freeman**, **Nick Greatorex-Davies** and **Dave Wright** from UK and **Zdravko Kolev** from Bulgaria.

Zdravko provided map polygons of potential *myrmidone* sites to survey based on his own ideas of where the species might occur, combined with sites selected following an inspection of satellite imagery of northern Bulgaria on Google Earth. Nick added more polygons after further inspection of Google Earth satellite imagery, as well as sites in north-west Bulgaria where *Chamaecytisus* had been found on previous site visits. Zdravko conducted a pre-survey of sites in June when *Chamaecytisus* is in full flower and added a few additional sites to the original selection.

It was clear that there were far too many sites to visit and survey in a week, so based on travel distances, sites selected for visiting were limited to central north and north-west Bulgaria, leaving out sites in north-east Bulgaria.

Each day several sites were surveyed for the presence of *Chamaecytisus* plants. Where these were found often some were still flowering and a sample was taken and retained for later identification by a Bulgarian botanist. Vehicular access to sites was often somewhat limited and we did not have time to survey whole sites (polygons) or go for long walks. Where possible we found local roads and tracks for access. Some additional sites were also visited as they looked potentially suitable from the car.

We visited and surveyed in part 27 sites. Unfortunately, no Danube Clouded Yellows were seen during the whole survey. However, *Chamaecytisus* was found at 10 sites - a white-flowered species (possibly *C. albus*?) at four sites and a yellow-flowered one (possibly *C. austriacus*) at six; at four of these sites the ▼



Potentially suitable-looking habitat for *C. myrmidone* in NW Bulgaria.



Chamaecytisus species,
probably *C. austriacus*.

► plants were widespread and abundant. A detailed report including a description and butterfly species list for each of the sites is currently being prepared.

We did not have time to cover even a fraction of the areas where the species could potentially occur but we did look at a reasonable sample cross-section. Apart from the areas that were identified for survey prior to the survey we saw many other areas where at least the *Chamaecytisus spp* foodplant could be present and even abundant. *C. albus* has not been recorded as a larval food plant for the Danube Clouded Yellow but the yellow-flowered *C. austriacus* has (but note that specific determination of these plants has not yet been confirmed).

It seemed to us that there was a real possibility that at least two of the sites could be suitable for the Danube Clouded Yellow, especially comparing them to known Romanian sites visited previously by some of us. However, there were also striking differences in the agricultural regimes in the two countries, with lots more hay meadows and low intensity grazing in and around the current Romanian sites. In contrast, hardly any domestic grazing animals at all were seen in these parts of northern Bulgaria (although this was apparently not the case some 50 years ago, according to local people we talked to).

With the lack of any previous records for the Danube Clouded Yellow in north Bulgaria and the fact that we searched sites with suitable food plants at what should have been the peak of its flight time, our failure to find it (the species was flying in abundance in Romania this very same week) suggests the strong likelihood that it does not occur in the area. Although we were hopeful, it always seemed a bit of a long shot that we would find it in north Bulgaria. But if no-one goes to look, how can we possibly know? •

Nick Greatorex-Davies nickgdlepman@googlemail.com and **Martin Davies** mdavies854@btinternet.com

Further surveys for Danube Clouded Yellow in 2018

Romania

We have had a request from **Matthias Dolek** who with **Jacqueline Loos** is leading collaborative work on **Danube Clouded Yellow** in Romania. Previous work has identified two populations in Romania and surveys by EIG members and Romanian colleagues have mapped their distribution. Matthias wants to estimate the population size of a site near Cluj using mark and recapture. This involves a lot of chasing butterflies with nets. There are normally two generations a year in May and end-July to early September. The latter is larger but with enough volunteers it would be possible to cover both generations.

Matthias and his colleagues are looking for self-funded volunteers to join them. The area has many other butterflies and is like stepping back a century with hay stacks and horses and carts. There are cheap Wizzair and other flights to Cluj and local hotel accommodation. Matthias's webpage is http://www.geyer-und-dolek.de/myrmidone_dreiframe.htm.

Belarus

Mike Williams will be surveying for *myrmidone* in SE Belarus from 4 – 11 August 2018: if interested please contact Mike at wmbutterflies@gmail.com •

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for more information or
Matthias Dolek
(Matthias.Dolek@Geyer-und-Dolek.de).

Please contact Mike at
wmbutterflies@gmail.com



Surveying for Dils' Grayling (*Pseudochazara orestes*) in Greece in 2018

Following on from the EIG survey in July 2017 of the Phalakron area of Greece (north of Drama) for **Dils' Grayling** (*Pseudochazara orestes*) and a similar survey a few years ago - both of which only yielded single individuals - we would like others to repeat surveys in this area but in late June which is supposed to be the main flight period. Details of sites where this species has been seen in the past can be supplied in confidence and we can suggest places to stay etc. It is a very special area for butterflies with many interesting species. Those going from the UK would probably need to fly to Thessaloniki and hire a car. EIG cannot help with expenses but Greece is quite cheap despite the weak pound. •

Please contact
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if you are interested, or
Simon Spencer
cerisyi@btinternet.com

Annual Research Bursary

Two bursaries were awarded in 2017. One was made to **Will Langdon**, who visited Hungary to take part in a project on marking and recapturing *Maculinea (Phengaris)* species. They were flying in abundance in 2017 and record numbers were marked. Will has reported enthusiastically and will give a short presentation at the AGM.

The other award was made to **Matthew Sparks** to investigate the use of a drone for surveying inaccessible parts of Mount Taygetos (southern Greece) for *Acantholimon androsaceum*, the larval host plant of **Odd-spot Blue** (*Turana taygetica*). As reported by **Simon Spencer** in his article on Greece (page 24 below) the experiment had only limited success on this occasion, but the use of drones may nevertheless have potential in this area of conservation.

One or two bursaries (normally of £500) will again be offered in 2018. They are designed to assist with travel and other expenses incurred in studying European butterflies and are particularly suited to surveys of rare and threatened species. They are open to citizens of any country in the Council of Europe. Although there is no upper age limit for applicants, the scheme has been drawn up with younger candidates in mind.

Applicants should submit a short project proposal and an estimate of overall cost. The deadline for applications for 2018 projects is 17 April 2018. Full details including how to submit applications are on the website at www.bc-eig.org.uk/downloads/FIG_Annual_Research_Bursary.pdf (but please note that the website will be changing shortly to www.european-butterflies.org.uk).•

Application
Deadline
17 April
2018

Calendar 2018

The 2018 Calendar will be available shortly at the cost of £8 for one or £15 for two, plus P&P as appropriate. For more details, or to order your copy, please email **Anne Spencer** rhoslan.anne@gmail.com. Copies can be posted, or picked up at the AGM in London on 4 November, or at the Butterfly Conservation AGM on 11 November in Cheltenham •

AGM and Members Day, Saturday 4 November 2017

This year's AGM and Members Day will be held at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL (near Kings Cross station), on Saturday 4 November from 1.30 to 5.00. There will be talks by **Martin Davies** (on Searching for Rare and Local Butterflies in Europe), **Will Longdon** (on *Phengaris* in Hungary) and **Martin Warren** (on Conserving Butterflies in Europe – Opportunities and Threats). •

BC Symposium, 6 - 8 April 2018

Butterfly Conservation's eighth international symposium will be held at Southampton University from 6 – 8 April 2018. It will focus on the latest breakthroughs in the ecology and conservation of butterflies and will end with a look at future challenges, including the impact of climate change. EIG (by then EBG) will be sponsoring a wine reception.

Guest speakers will include **Martin Warren**, recently retired BC Chief Executive whose talk will celebrate the 50 year history of the charity and **Scott Hoffman Black**, Executive Director of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation (USA) and Chair of the IUCN Butterfly Specialist Group, who will discuss the status of common and widespread species in the USA. •

News From France

Contributed by Jude Lock (lock.jude@gmail.com)

Butterfly and Burnet Moth Atlas of the Aquitaine, France Invitation to contribute

Following the publication of the "pré-atlas des rhopalocères et zygènes d'Aquitaine" [see here](#), the programme for the Butterfly and Burnet Moth Atlas of the Aquitaine is under way.

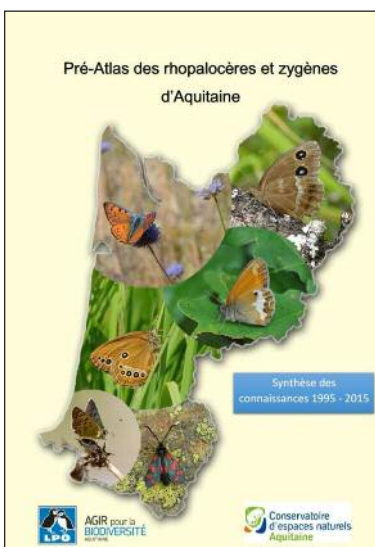
The Atlas is being developed in collaboration with the LPO Aquitaine (Ligue pour la protection des oiseaux Aquitaine) and is due to be published in 2019.

There have been regular communications, training workshops and field studies during 2017, with more programmed during 2018. To keep up to date with news of the atlas, click on the link for the page on the CEN Aquitaine website [see here](#) or the Faune-Aquitaine website of the LPO <http://www.faune-aquitaine.org>.

EIG members who have records of butterflies and burnet moths are kindly requested to help by submitting them to assist with the completion of the species distribution maps. All observations are useful and welcomed.

Records can be sent using the EIG recording form, or by Excel to the project manager **Pierre-Yves Gourvil**: py.gourvil@cen-aquitaine.fr.

The programme falls within the 'Plan Régional d'Actions en faveur des lépidoptères patrimoniaux' (Regional Plan of Action for Heritage Lepidoptera) co-financed by Europe (FEDER), l'Agence de l'eau Adour-Garonne, the region of Nouvelle ▼



- ▶ Aquitaine and the DREAL (Direction régionale de l'environnement, de l'aménagement et du logement). •



New identification key for the Lycaenidae of Bourgogne-Franche-Comté

This detailed ID guide by the Conservatoire botanique national de Franche-Comté - Observatoire régional des Invertébrés can be found by going to the website as follows <http://conservatoire-botanique-fc.org/doc-cbnfc-ori/entomofaune-franche-comte-doubs-jura/connaissance/498-les-lycaenidae-de-bourgogne-franche-comte-cle-d-identification-j-ryelandt>

The guide covers 8 species of *Theclinae*, 7 species of *Lycaeninae*, 25 species of *Polyommatae*, and 1 species of *Riodininae*. •

Butterfly Atlas Occitanie

(formerly the regions of Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrénées)

The CEN Midi-Pyrénées are currently sifting through all records for the Butterfly Atlas of the Midi-Pyrénées and validating records where possible. The atlas will be lacking in records for the *Pyrgus* family, so if you have 'confirmed' photographs for the Midi-Pyrénées, particularly for *cirsii*, *onopordi*, and *andromedae*, please get in touch with **Jude Lock** (lock.jude@gmail.com). •

Atlas des Papillons « de jour » du Nord – Pas-de-Calais, 2000-2014

This is volume 2 of the collection Faune de Nord - Pas-de-Calais by GON (Groupe ornithologique et naturalistes du Nord - Pas-de-Calais). The Atlas is animated by **Daniel Haubreux** and coordinated by **Daniel Haubreux**, **Sébastien Mézière**, **Théalie Dhellemmes** and **Robin Quevillart**.

It is the fruit of 15 years of data collecting, recording and research, from 646 contributors and 17 technical partners. The volume is of 494 pages and covers 96 species. The format is 200mm by 160mm. There are over 500 illustrations including photos, designs, watercolours, graphs, distribution maps etc.

The preface is by **Tristan Lafranchis**. The following 11 chapters cover themes such as the history of the working group on the Lepidoptères Papilionoidea, Nord - Pas-de-Calais, the presentation of the regional Red List of threatened butterfly ▼



► species, the regional list of heritage butterfly species and the regional plan of action for the conservation of butterflies and their habitats.

Chapter 6 forms the heart of the Atlas. It comprises the species monographs which make up more than half of the book. •

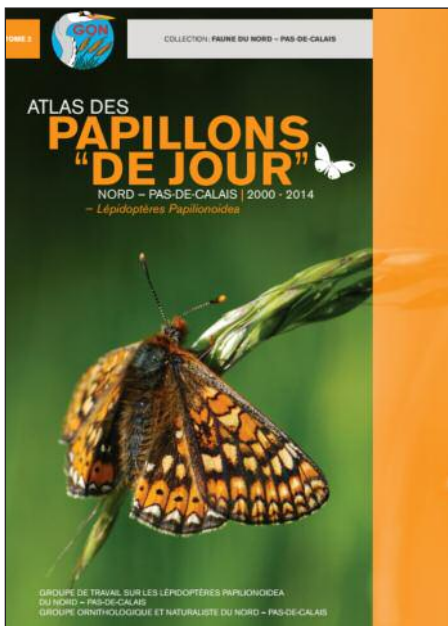
Price: €35 plus postage. To order:

Postal address: GON - 23 rue Gosselet, 59 000 Lille, France

Email: contact@gon.fr

Website: <https://gon.fr/gon/produit/atlas-des-papillons-de-jour/>

Information communicated by Robin Quevillart (EIG partner, GON)



— LA PIÉRIE DU CHOU
PIERIS BRASSICAE (Linnéus, 1758)
 | GROEF KOOLWITTE; LARGE WHITE; GROEBER KOLCHENBLAU

— RÉPARTITIONS EUROPÉENNE ET FRANÇAISE
 La Piéride du Chou se rencontre dans toute l'Europe y compris dans l'ensemble de la Scandinavie et des îles de la Méditerranée. L'espèce reste toutefois absente d'Italie. En France, elle est présente partout y compris en Corse.

— RÉPARTITION DANS LE RPDC ET TENDANCE
 La Piéride du Chou est très commune dans le Nord – Pas-de-Calais même si elle ne compte que pour environ 25 % des effectifs des trois piérides présentes avec la Piéride de la Rave *Pieris rapae* et la Piéride du Navet *Pieris napi*. Elle est répartie dans l'ensemble du territoire. Opportuniste quant à ses habitats et plantes hôtes, l'espèce ne montre pas de variation significative dans le Nord – Pas-de-Calais au cours de la période atlas (Hubert & Haubruex, 2014). Il s'agit d'une espèce capable d'effectuer des migrations massives et l'observation d'une Piéride du Chou dans un site n'atteste en rien de son autochtéon.

— PHÉNOLOGIE
 Vole en deux à trois générations de la fin février – début mars à la fin octobre, avec des pics marqués fin avril début mai et en juillet. Hiverné au stade de la chrysalide.

— HABITAT
 La Piéride du Chou est une espèce généraliste qui s'observe dans tous types de milieux, y compris dans les zones urbaines. Ce papillon fréquente assidûment les jardins, les potagers et les zones de cultures vivrières. Elle s'observe également dans les prairies.

— MENACES
 Considérée comme un ravageur des cultures, elle pâtit fortement de l'utilisation de pesticides largement répandus dans les terres cultivées, les potagers et les jardins publics. Si le parasitisme existe, il n'a pas entraîné de baisses annuelles significatives des effectifs au cours de la période atlas. Lafanchis (2015) cite l'eradication de la Piéride du Chou en Australie par le parasite *Cotesia glomerata* et des phénomènes de parasitisme massif ne sont pas à exclure. On notera que le réchauffement climatique ne devrait pas, à priori, avoir d'incidence sur cette espèce (Settele et al., 2008).

— PROTECTION
 L'espèce étant très commune, elle ne bénéficie d'aucune protection et n'est pas considérée comme menacée. Cependant, comme toutes les espèces communes, l'évolution de ses effectifs et de sa distribution sont des indicateurs de la qualité de l'environnement. Dans les espaces cultivés intensivement, les produits phytosanitaires utilisés sont souvent peu sélectifs et impactent bien d'autres insectes que la Piéride du Chou. C'est l'ensemble de la biodiversité qui aurait à gagner de l'utilisation de méthodes de lutte plus ciblées ou répulsives non vulnérantes permettant d'aboutir à une meilleure conciliation entre l'obtention de hauts rendements agricoles et la conservation de la biodiversité. On peut toutefois espérer une diminution voire un arrêt de cet usage par les particuliers et les collectivités en raison de l'interdiction réglementaire d'usage des produits phytosanitaires à partir de 2019. Leur remplacement par des produits de biocontrôle moins nocifs (ministère de l'écologie, du développement

Two pages from the Atlas covering **Large White (*Pieris brassicae*)**.



Charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SC039268)
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 Registered office: Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP.
 Email: info@butterfly-conservation.org Website: www.butterfly-conservation.org

Southern Spain

Semi-deserts and Sierras

by Peter Bygate and David Dennis

An early season trip to eastern Andalucia was planned in detail by us, greatly assisted by **Javier Olivares Villegas** and **José Miguel Barea-Azcón**, two superb local experts and co-authors of the fine book, 'Las Mariposas diurnas de Sierra Nevada'. Arriving in Almeria on March 25th 2017 we wasted no time in heading north on the wonderfully traffic-free A92 on our way to Baza.

Semi-deserts

Although not a true semi-desert in precise geological terms, the Hoya de Baza and the Cabo de Gata (which is classified as a semi-desert) sit like bookends at each end of our trip with the Sierra Nevada slotting in between.

Hoya de Baza

Target species, somewhat inevitably, comprised the endemic **Spanish Greenish Black-tip** (*Euchloe bazae*) and the **Common Tiger Blue** (*Tarucus theophrastus*) respectively at these sites. The Hoya was predominantly a Pierid habitat with **Western Dappled White** (*Euchloe crameri*), **Portuguese Dappled White** (*Euchloe tagis*), **Green-striped White** (*Euchloe belemia*) and **Spanish Greenish Black-tip** much in evidence though rarely stopping, and when they did it was only for a matter of seconds making decent photography extremely difficult. However, we were incredibly fortunate to get many underside shots of a male *bazae* and we waited for 1 hour and 40 minutes (yes, really!) for it to open its wings as the chilly morning air temperature rose slowly after a frosty night.

Two minutes later and it was gone, whisked away on the stiff breeze, just caught in the photograph on the left.

The **Provence Hairstreak** (*Tomares ballus*) was fairly common here, and throughout our trip, always flying close to the ground, and a single male '**Southern**' **Blue** (*Polyommatus celina*) put in an appearance along with a hill-topping **Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata megera*) and the ubiquitous **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui*).

Sadly, there is a real ▼



Spanish Greenish Black-tip
(*Euchloe bazae*)



Provence Hairstreak
(*Tomares ballus*)



Common Tiger Blue (*Tarucus theophrastus*): male and female.



Common Tiger Blue (*Tarucus theophrastus*), underside.

► threat to this unique ecosystem from the steady encroachment of agricultural development and the potential exploitation of gypsum, an abundant mineral here. *E. bazae* itself has seriously declined in recent years, mainly due to new large cultivations and pine plantations.

Cabo de Gata

Although superficially similar to the Hoya, this coastal site is much warmer and drier with a very different range of vegetation typified by several mound-forming spiny shrubs, one of which is the host plant of the **Common Tiger Blue (*Tarucus theophrastus*)**. Once the apple-green leaves of *Ziziphus lotus* have been identified it is relatively easy to find the adults which do not stray far from the shrubs. We were

lucky that our presence on 2 and 3 April coincided with the very first emergence of this species and the butterflies were in pristine condition as can be seen from the photographs. The Pierids of Baza were here too though in much smaller numbers.

This coastal strip is dominated by the unsightly ‘plasticulture’ polytunnels which clearly threaten the location and its medium-term future looks just as shaky as that of the Hoya de Baza.

Sierras

Our itinerary took us from Baza to the west along the northern edge of the Sierra Nevada to the town of Alfacar, near Granada, which served as our base for 3 nights. The wonderful snow-capped mountainous landscape was a stunning contrast to the Badlands of Baza and the butterflies we encountered were quite different too.

Sierra de Huetor

Our most productive location of the trip was the Prado Negro in the Sierra de Huetor, a limestone habitat, which produced 26 species during the day notably including **Spanish Festoon (*Zerynthia rumina*)**, **Large Tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis polychloros*)**, **Black-eyed Blue (*Glaucopsyche melanops*)**, **Panoptes Blue (*Pseudophilotes panoptes*)**, **Moroccan Orange-tip** ▼



Panoptes Blue (*Pseudophilotes panoptes*)



Southern Spain cont.



Mallow Skipper
(*Carcharodus alceae*)

► (*Anthocharis euphenoides*), and a **Mallow Skipper** (*Carcharodus alceae*), the sole Skipper of the entire trip.

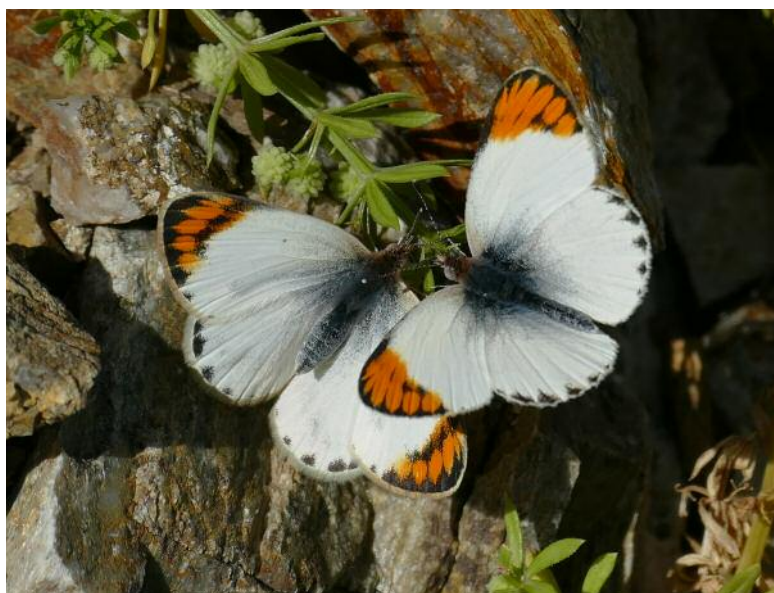
A mid-week excursion with Javier and José added to the enjoyment and quality of the trip, their recommendations and knowledge readily shared with us. However, after a generally late start to the season this year we were too early for **False Baton Blue** (*Pseudophilotes abencerrargus*).

Vereda de la Estrella

The Vereda de la Estrella in the Genil valley to the east of Granada turned out to be a different experience to the Prado Negro. On a bright sunny day the trees remained in winter mode, bare branched, and butterflies were few and far between but hibernators put on a good show particularly the first **Small Tortoiseshells** (*Aglais urticae*) of the trip. In our research we'd discovered that **Chapman's Green Hairstreak** (*Callophrys avis*) might be seen nearby at Dudar but it eluded us. However, in two small gullies full of rubbish either side of Dudar we stumbled across **Provençal Fritillary** (*Melitaea deione*) including a gloriously fresh mating pair in the two shots below by David Dennis, the female uppermost and on the left respectively, and also a **Long-tailed Blue** (*Lampides boeticus*) amongst others.



Provençal Fritillary (*Melitaea deione*): mating pair.



Desert Orange-tip (*Colotis evagore*)

South coast

Having failed to find one of our key species, **Sooty Orange-tip** (*Zegris eupheme*), being again too early, at a location to the north of Guadix, we left the mountains for the final leg back to Almeria along the south coast. Here we'd meet Javier and José once more and benefit greatly from their inputs. A small rocky outcrop was highlighted on our map as a possible site for the **Desert Orange-tip** (*Colotis evagore*) and we were ecstatic to find a thriving colony of this beautiful species. A Common Chamaeleon added to the wonderment! Similarly, Javier took us to probably the last remaining breeding colony of **Monarchs** (*Danaus plexippus*) in eastern Andalusia, a fallow field of approximately no more than ▼



Southern Spain cont.



Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)

► c3,000 square metres surrounded by orchards and cultivated fields. Its survival is highly unlikely, but in this weedy patch an adult was indeed on the wing and a further unexpected surprise was a solitary **Geranium Bronze** (*Cacyreus marshalli*).

La Charca de Suárez, Motril

José arranged for us to visit a conservation site, La Charca de Suárez, at Motril, a wetland reserve set amongst high rise buildings but passionately protected by a dedicated group of volunteers. From a lepidopterist angle the site is notable for successful attempts to grow *Asclepias curassavica* for the benefit of 'Mariposa Monarca' and also the

cultivation of an alternative host plant for the **Two-tailed Pasha** (*Charaxes jasius*) which takes advantage of the tropical fruit anonas grown in these parts. A visit to the website at www.motril.es provides an encouraging contrast to the habitat despondency voiced elsewhere in this report and it comes highly recommended.



Spanish Marbled White (*Melanargia ines*)

Cabo de Gata – eastern end

Our final Sierra sits outside the main mountain range being the volcanic promontory at the eastern end of the Capo de Gata. On a very windy day we explored the flowery hillsides and were frustrated throughout the morning and well into the afternoon by the fact that butterflies were just not stopping. Annoyingly these included the **Spanish Marbled White** (*Melanargia ines*) and the **Spanish Gatekeeper** (*Pyronia bathseba*), the latter continuously skulking around the base of shrubs and bushes, rarely sitting in the open and easily disturbed. But persistence paid off in the end and decent shots were obtained. Mosquitos were an unexpected and unwelcome irritation here.

Summary

During 9 days in the field a total of 47 species were seen and all but 3 photographed between us. A full day list is available upon request from the principal author although one or two site details are deliberately vague. We hope it's clear from the report that a huge debt of gratitude is owed to Javier and José for the success of the trip and we'd like to encourage EIG to support their conservation efforts in whatever ways are possible.

For a full photographic record of the trip visit www.lepidigi.net and go to Europe/Spain/Andalucia. •

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Spanish Gatekeeper (*Pyronia bathseba*)

(All photos by Peter Bygate except Provençal Fritillary by David Dennis)



Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*)

In search of the Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*) in Eastern France, June 2017

by Pete Smith

I had the great pleasure of spending the first week in June this year travelling around the departments of Doubs and Jura in Eastern France, in search of butterflies. My main target was the **Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*)**, a species that I had never seen before, but one that I very much wanted to add to my “tick list” of European butterflies.

The idea behind this trip was conceived back in the summer of 2016. I had decided that not only did I wish to see and photograph this creature, but that it would also be interesting and perhaps useful to survey a number of sites in the region to get some idea of how widespread the species was. The populations in the French Pyrenees and in Romania have been the subject of previous studies and EIG reports, but I hadn’t heard or read much about the status of *helle* in the east of France.

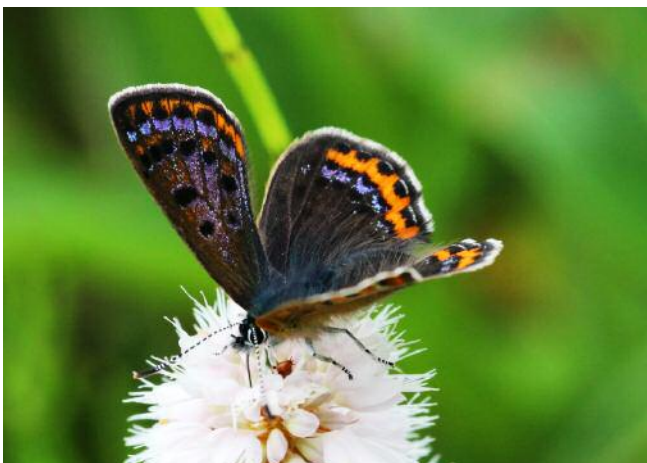
Violet Copper habitat.



Background research

Prior to this trip I was completely unfamiliar with the region, so I began with a bit of background research. By the use of internet searches, coupled with google earth imagery and cross referencing to the excellent French IGN 1:25000 maps, I drew up a list of fifteen potential areas which appeared to have some prospect of supporting colonies of my target species. I figured I should be able to cover this number of sites easily over the course of seven days.


Ideally, I wanted first to visit a known site for **Violet Copper**, so that I could “get my eye in” and get a feel for the habitat, before setting out into the wider area in search of further colonies. With this in mind, I contacted several fellow enthusiasts, but it soon became apparent that getting any specific information on individual sites was not going to be easy. Understandably, it appears that people ▼



Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*), female.



Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*), male.



Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*)
cont.

► are reluctant to divulge details of such rare and threatened species as this, given the continued presence of collectors active in many parts of Europe. Fortunately an eminent French lepidopterist kindly gave me the location of a colony, for which I was extremely grateful. On the 2nd June I flew into Geneva airport, picked up my hire car, and headed straight to this location...



Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*),
mating pair.

A perfect start

I was rather excited about the prospect of seeing my first Violet Copper, but was completely unprepared for the sheer numbers that were on the wing! Within fifteen minutes I had counted over two hundred adults, had photographed males and females, observed egg-laying, and I spent the next couple of hours getting to know this stunningly gorgeous butterfly and its habitat quite well. This was the perfect start to the week, and set me up nicely for the days ahead.

But unpredictable weather

However, what I hadn't factored into my planning was the local weather, and by day three I had lost the sun and was contending with cool and mainly cloudy conditions, with temperatures often struggling to reach double figures. This region is apparently notorious for unpredictable summers. A change of tactics was called for, so in order to continue with my schedule of site surveys I switched to searching for the eggs of *helle* on the Bistort. In this way I managed to visit all fifteen of my potential sites, and also searched several other areas spotted from the road whilst driving around.



Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*),
ovum.

I pretty much lived in Wellington boots for the whole week – they are essential footwear in the bogs and wetlands here – and there were a few sites where it was just too swampy to search safely, but I was delighted to find eggs at a total of 6 sites. At one of these sites the sun appeared briefly and several dozen adult Violet Coppers appeared on the wing. I also found adult butterflies at a further two sites during windows of sunny weather, giving me a total of nine colonies, including the first “known site”.



Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*), underside.

Features of colonies

Colonies ranged in altitude from 805m to 928m above sea level, and all shared certain features. Bistort was frequent or abundant on all sites, scattered trees and scrub were invariably present, all sites were damp (one site close to a cemetery was so waterlogged and dangerous that I quickly abandoned searching, but not before I had seen four or five coppers), and tussocks of grasses were almost always noted, giving an uneven ground surface. Most of the colonies were in areas designated as “Natura 2000” or “zone de protection de biotype”, but three of the colonies fell outside of such areas.

My impression is that there may be considerably more colonies present in this region: they are not too difficult ▼



Violet Copper (*Lycaena helle*)
cont.

► to find but they are highly localised and potentially vulnerable to inadequate or inappropriate management, and also to collectors, should they stumble across them. A couple of apparently suitable areas gave negative search results, and large open meadows of Bistort with no scrub or tree cover invariably proved to be unoccupied by *helle*.

Other species

I had a great time getting to know this beautiful part of France, and encountered quite a few other interesting species of butterfly. **Lesser Marbled Fritillary** (*Brenthis ino*) was often common in damp meadowland, **False Heath Fritillary** (*Melitaea diamina*) and **Woodland Ringlet** (*Erebia medusa*) turned up at most Violet Copper sites, and **Black-veined White** (*Aporia crataegi*), **Pearly**



Black-veined White
(*Aporia crataegi*)



Lesser Marbled Fritillary
(*Brenthis ino*)



Woodland Ringlet
(*Erebia medusa*)

Heath (*Coenonympha arcania*) and **Small Tortoiseshell** (*Aglais urticae*) were very widespread. Less common but still found on several bogs was the **Purple-edged Copper** (*Lycaena hippothoe*), while **Chequered Skipper** (*Carterocephalus palaemon*) and **Large Copper** (*Lycaena dispar*) were decidedly infrequent. **Large Heath** (*Coenonympha tullia*) was already on the wing on 2nd June at one site, and I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to visit a site for **Scarce Heath** (*Coenonympha hero*) while I was in the area.

All in all, despite a few days of poor weather, this was a most memorable and successful trip, and I have to say that the Violet Copper is now one of my favourite European butterflies!

With special thanks to Philippe Bricaire. •

Pete Smith
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Scarce Heath (*Coenonympha hero*)

(All photos by the author)



Canary Islands

Report on trip to Tenerife and La Gomera, 5 to 11 June 2017 by Keith Wootton



The author at El Alto de Garajonay, La Gomera. Mount Teide (Tenerife) is on the horizon.

5 June 2017 – Tenerife (San Isidro)

My brother Walter and I, two enthusiastic amateur lepidopterists, touched down at Tenerife South airport at approximately 2:30pm. With a three and a half hour window before our crossing to La Gomera, we drove to the town of San Isidro to confirm our hotel booking, and to collect supplies. With all our chores done, it was now 4pm giving us a good hour to look for butterflies. On a narrow strip of roadside verge running along the top of the TR1 motorway embankment, we found two **Bath Whites** (*Pontia daplidice*). They were in pristine condition, giving us our first photographic opportunity of the trip. After this we continued to our accommodation, at the foot of the Hermigua valley on La Gomera.



Bath White (*Pontia daplidice*)

6 June 2017 – La Gomera (Hermigua valley)

The plan for today was to stay local, in the Hermigua valley. The weather was overcast with just the occasional glimmer of hazy sunshine breaking through. It was not looking overly promising for butterflies but undeterred we began our search.

Starting at the top of the beach where the dry river bed of the Barranco de Monteforte enters the sea we spotted our first butterfly of the day, a very worn **Long-tailed Blue** (*Lampides boeticus*). Having duly documented it, we proceeded to follow the course of the river up stream. The valley at this point is a mixture of river channel and dirt road used to access the many banana plantations which line the valley. We soon started to see some butterflies in open areas of the river. At this point only **Small White** (*Pieris rapae*) was positively identified. The numbers of Small Whites continued to grow as we approached the town of Hermigua with an end of day count well in excess of forty individuals.



Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)

Eventually we decided to leave the river bed and climb to road level in the town of Hermigua. After a short time we reached a small park called Complejo Deportivo located at Las Hoyetas, altitude approximately 200 metres. Entering the park we came upon a sunken circular children's play area with flower beds surrounding it. As we circled around the play area, sitting at head height on a bush with wings open wide was a **Monarch** (*Danaus plexippus*).

At least three were flying in and out of the area, and at least one of them kept returning to the same small flower tucked away in the shade under a larger bush. I decided to wait here and try for a close-up photo. The interest of the butterfly became apparent as it proceeded to deposit eggs on the underside of a leaf. Not being a botanist myself, I have been reliably informed that the plant is Milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*).

Having had our time with these magnificent creatures we moved on further up the valley, reaching about 300 metres and only seeing more Small Whites we decided to call it a day. ▼



Canary Islands cont.



Canary Speckled Wood
(*Pararge xiphioides*)



Canary Blue
(*Cyclirius webbianus*)



African Grass Blue
(*Zizeeria knysna*)

▶ **7 June 2017 – La Gomera (El Alto de Garajonay)**

Today we made for the island's highest point at "El Alto de Garajonay". We parked on the roundabout at Parajito and took the trail designated "Ruta 17", a 4.6 kilometer route which slowly ascends to the peak.

From the moment we entered the trail things were looking good, as at about 3 meters in we spotted our first endemic species, a **Canary Speckled Wood** (*Pararge xiphioides*), this being the first of at least 20 seen during the day. It was quickly followed by a **Canary Blue** (*Cyclirius webbianus*), our second endemic.

After a short wooded section we were on an open hillside with spectacular views over the clouds to the other islands on the horizon, quite a breathtaking sight. The vegetation is a mixture of new tree growth, following the forest fire of 2012, and banks of wild flowers and grasses. It would seem to me that the re-growth of the forest will eventually mean the loss of the current habitat which at the moment is butterfly heaven.

Small White (*Pieris rapae*) and **Bath White** (*Pontia daplidice*) were in such profusion that they were impossible to count – perhaps 1000 of each seen in our ten hour day here. Other species seen in good numbers were **Southern Brown Argus** (*Aricia cramera*) on the dried grasses and **Small Copper** (*Lycaena phlaeas*) and **Meadow Brown** (*Maniola jurtina*) present in most areas. **Clouded Yellow** (*Colias crocea*) numbered around forty, including at least one of the white form *helice*. Also seen today were five **Canary Red Admirals** (*Vanessa vulcania*), two **Painted Ladies** (*Vanessa cardui*), fifteen **Cardinals** (*Argynnis pandora*), and lastly a single fly-by **Canary Brimstone** (*Gonepteryx cleobule*).

8 June 2017 – La Gomera (Barranco de la Villo & Langrero)

Our target species for today were the **African Migrant** (*Catopsilia florella*) and the **African Grass Blue** (*Zizeeria knysna*).

Having read a trip report by Teresa Farino of Iberian Wildlife Tours which gave the park in San Sebastian as a location for African Migrant, this seemed to be a sensible starting point. Our plan was to make a short visit to the park and then to walk up the dry river bed of the Barranco de la Villo to look for the African Grass Blue. Unfortunately we failed to take into consideration that our trip was three months later in the season than Teresa's (in March 2014) and consequently much of the vegetation at this low altitude had long since dried up and gone to seed.

In the park, not a single butterfly was seen. Undeterred we stuck with our plan and proceeded down onto the river bed. In

the first few sections there is a lot of bamboo in the margins and as stated most of the other vegetation had gone to seed. Speaking of which BE WARNED we were in shorts and trainers and the needle-like seeds made our socks resemble two small porcupines and quite uncomfortable.

At first we only saw the occasional butterfly but eventually our efforts were rewarded when we found a colony of **African Grass Blues** (*Zizeeria knysna*), hard to spot being so small and flighty but well worth the effort. Whilst in the river bed we also had two sightings of Monarch.

At San Antonio we decided to leave the river bed as the discomfort from the needle-like seeds in our socks won out over the numbers of butterflies being ▼



Canary Islands cont.



Canary Brimstone
(*Gonepteryx cleobule*)

▶ seen. Walking back to San Sebastian on the road we passed through the village of Langrero where we spotted an area with a lot of flowering plants and added **Geranium Bronze** (*Cacyreus marshalli*) to our list. We also saw two more Monarchs.

9 June 2017 – La Gomera (CV-14 road, Chorro de El Cedro & El Alto de Garajonay)

The plan for today was to fill in the gap between the coastal river areas and the high area of Garajonay previously visited and to include an area of laurel forest.

We drove along the GM-1 road ascending the Hermigua valley and turned off right onto the CV-14. After 0.7 km we came

across a steep bank rising on our left. As we drove past we saw a **Canary Brimstone** (*Gonepteryx cleobule*) so having parked we walked back along the road to the bank. Several Brimstones both male and female were patrolling in and out of the area and we stayed for about an hour trying to get that elusive good camera shot. Also seen here were **Long-tailed Blue**, **Canary Blue**, **Small Copper**, **Canary Red Admiral**, **Meadow Brown**, **Canary Speckled Wood**, **Small White**, **Bath White** and **Clouded Yellow**.



Plain Tiger (*Danaus chrysippus*)

Further along the road we came to a notice board headed "Chorro de El Cedro". We parked here and took the trail down into the El Rejo ravine. The short section we walked drops down into the ravine and bearing left climbs back up to the road a little further along.

This short section turned out to hold one of the highlights of our trip. We followed the path down to its lowest point and as we began to climb upward again we happened upon a small disused terraced field, maybe 30 metres square and completely filled with thistles. Almost smack bang in the middle of the thistles taking its fill of nectar was a **Plain Tiger** (*Danaus chrysippus*). Being dressed in the perfect clothing (shorts, "T"-shirt and trainers), I ventured into hell to try for some close-up shots. Amazingly it was extremely approachable and gave really good opportunities for the camera.

Apart from the scratches and shoes full of spiny prickles I only suffered one small but painful mishap, when I stepped off the edge of an unseen wall and landed flat on my back in a deep bed of thistles. Unable to get myself upright again without rolling over and putting my hands and knees down on the thistles I was forced to seek Walter's help, MOST UNDIGNIFIED!

Back at the car we continued along the road soon arriving at Reventon Oscuro where there is a notice board for "Ruta 8 and 18". Parking, we spotted a **Canary Red Admiral** (*Vanessa vulcania*) fluttering around the entrance way and showing particular interest in some common nettles where she



Canary Red Admiral
(*Vanessa vulcania*)

occasionally stopped to lay eggs.

By now it was approaching 4 o'clock in the afternoon, so as El Alto de Garajonay was only a short distance away we decided to revisit that site. Again it did not ▼



Canary Islands cont.

► disappoint and **Southern Brown Argus**, **Canary Blue**, **Small Copper** and **Meadow Brown** were all seen in good numbers as well as some **Canary Speckled Woods**, several **Canary Brimstones**, several **Cardinals**, and two **Painted Ladies**. A **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*) was a new addition to our tally.



American Painted Lady
(*Vanessa virginiensis*)

10 June 2017 – Tenerife (North Tenerife)

Having caught the first ferry back to Tenerife, we disembarked at 09:00 and made our way to the north of the island. Our main target species for Tenerife was the **Canary Large White** (*Pieris cheiranthi*). Following a good tip-off as to a location we committed ourselves to spending the day there.

At the entrance road leading into the site we caught sight of a **Monarch**, a promising start, we thought, and we also spotted a **Geranium Bronze** and the odd **Small White** and **Canary Speckled Wood**, but as we started to enter the site proper sightings were few and far between. Walking on we reached an area where it was open enough for photography, with nasturtiums growing wild and the larger shrubs forming a natural bowl. There were several **Small Whites** in the area, but not as many as I would have expected given the abundance of the nasturtiums. We decided to stop at this location as it was the most likely spot we had seen for attracting **Canary Large White** or any other highly mobile butterfly species.

We were visited by at least two **Canary Brimstones** but apart from one distant flyby of what we suspected to be a **Canary Large White**, frustratingly unconfirmed, none were seen.

We made our way back and, almost at the main road, we crossed a bridge over a small dry stream. Looking over the edge we spotted a **Painted Lady** taking nectar about six metres away and below us. I managed to fire off a couple of quick shots just before it flew off into the distance. Not until I returned home and looked more closely at the images did it come to light that in fact it was an **American Painted Lady** (*Vanessa virginiensis*).



Long-tailed Blue
(*Lampides boeticus*)

11 June 2017 – Tenerife (Tenerife South Airport)

We had a good hour to spare at the airport and not wishing to miss an opportunity we went looking for butterflies in the area around the terminal buildings. We identified two **Long Tailed Blues** in good condition plus a **Small Copper** and flybys from a **Clouded Yellow** and a **Bath White**. Sadly, now out of time, we returned to the airport for our flight home, having had a really enjoyable and productive trip. •

Keith Woonton

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(All photos of butterflies by the author)



Hautes-Pyrénées

**EIG trip to the Hautes-Pyrénées, hosted by Borderline Holidays,
30 June – 7 July 2017**

by Jude Lock

The trip was led by Dudley Cheesman and Jude Lock, with the participation of Jean Cheesman, Kathy Foot, Al and John Roberts, Peter David, Helen Senior, and Adrian and Alison Neil.

The aim of the trip was to bring EIG members together in the field for a week of observation, study and surveying of local butterflies. Records will be incorporated into the online Butterfly Atlas of Occitanie (previously the regions of the Midi-Pyrénées and Languedoc-Roussillon). Records for the village of Saligos fall within the umbrella of the Village Biodiversity Atlas (Atlas de la Biodiversité des Communes), coordinated by the Parc National des Pyrénées, and will be incorporated into that scheme.

The group was accommodated in the villages of Barèges and Luz Saint Sauveur. The weather during the spring had been exceptionally warm and sunny (the warmest month of June for decades) which led to many species emerging a good two weeks earlier than usual.

A wet start

On our first day, the weather was poor, with rain throughout the day at all altitudes. So we commenced our day at the Reserve Naturelle du Pibeste, where we watched a couple of rather sad and bedraggled Griffon Vultures. Subsequently we retreated to a café for hot refreshments. Later we visited the Millaris museum in Gèdre, which contains an exhibition of the local geology, cirques, hydro-electric works, the UNESCO World Heritage site, the history of the valley and the 'grand hommes' and local pioneers - Henry Russell, Louis Ramond de Carbonnières and Jean-Pierre Rondou.



Gavarnie

Apollo
(*Parnassius apollo*)



Ossoue valley, Gavarnie

On Sunday 2nd July, sunshine and blue skies! We spent most of the day in the Ossoue valley at Gavarnie. Here we were delighted to see a large number of butterfly species, with good views of all the five species of Copper locally present, including the beautiful **Purple-shot Copper** (*Lycaena alciphron gordius*). We saw a wide range of puddling **Skippers**, **Large Blue** (*Phengaris arion*), numerous **Lesser Marbled Fritillaries** (*Brenthis ino*), **Rock Grayling** (*Hipparchia alcyone*) and the first **Apollo** butterflies (*Parnassius apollo pyrenaicus*) of the week, floating by. Other species of interest included a **Yellow-** ▼



Hautes-Pyrénées cont.

► **winged Darter** (*Sympetrum flaveolum*), and a colony of **Spanish Fly beetles** (*Lytta vesicatoria*).

Lac des Gloriettes

On Monday 3rd July, under clear blue skies, we headed up to lac des Gloriettes at 1688m altitude, above the village of Gèdre. As the previous day, we found a large number of species, including sightings of numerous **Apollo** butterflies (*P. apollo pyrenaicus*), and one remaining **Clouded Apollo** (*P. mnemosyne*). Several **Ringlet** species were on the wing, including **Mountain Ringlet** (*Erebia epiphron*), **Yellow-spotted Ringlet** (*E. manto constans*) and **Common Brassy Ringlet** (*E. cassioides*). We also observed **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (*Boloria euphrosyne*) and its cousin the **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** (*B. selene*). There were **Blues** in abundance including **Large** (*Phengaris arion*), **Small** (*Cupido minimus*), **Silver-studded** (*Plebejus argus*), **Turquoise** (*Polyommatus*



Lac des Gloriettes



Eros Blue (*Polyommatus eros*)



Scarce Copper (*Lycaena virgaureae*)

dorylas) and **Mazarine** (*Cyaniris semiargus*), but the butterfly of the day was the wonderful male **Eros Blue** (*P. eros*)! Lower down in the Héas valley Dudley spotted our first striking **Amanda's Blue** (*Polyommatus amandus*) of the trip.

Saugué

On Tuesday 4th July we visited another of our favourite sites, the plateau de Saugué near Gèdre, at 1640m altitude, on a glorious sunny day with deep blue skies and plentiful butterflies. Initially we stopped to identify the many puddling species, including the first **Baton Blues** (*Pseudophilotes baton*), interspersed with numerous **Grizzled Skipper** species. During the course of the day we came across large numbers of **Lesser Marbled Fritillary** (*Brenthis ino*), our first **Blue-spot Hairstreak** (*Satyrium spini*), and several **Scarce Coppers** (*Lycaena virgaureae*). We attracted some attention from passers-by as we relocated a caterpillar of the **Giant Emperor** moth (*Saturnia pyri*) - also known as the **Great Peacock** moth - to safety. The highlight came towards the end of the afternoon when numerous fresh **Niobe Fritillaries** (*Argynnis niobe*) that we had observed fleetingly during the day decided to settle on us, including one on John's ear, very fetching as an ear ring!



Saugué





Hautes-Pyrénées cont.



Niobe Fritillary (*Argynnis niobe f. eris*)



Spotted Fritillary (*Melitaea didyma*)

► *Barèges valley and Col du Tourmalet*

Wednesday 5th July. Another fine sunny day which we spent in the Barèges valley, initially around the flowery hay meadows above Barèges where again we were fortunate to see both **Apollo** (*P. apollo*) and **Clouded Apollo** (*P. mnemosyne*) as well as a wide range of species including puddling **Olive Skipper** (*P. serratulae*). To our great delight and with Dudley's helpful expertise we were able to observe eight species of **Blues** puddling in one small damp area - **Amanda's** (*Polyommatus amandus*), **Escher's** (*P. escheri*), **Turquoise** (*P. dorylas*),



Shepherd's Fritillary (*Boloria pales pyrenesmiscens*), female with pale underside markings.



Col du Tourmalet

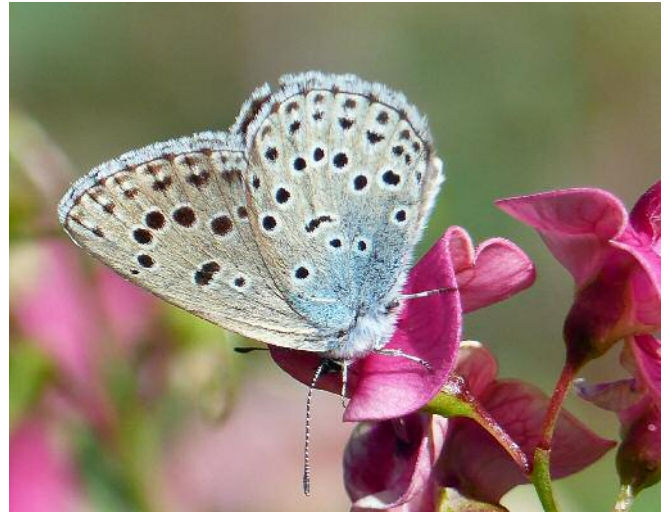
Chalkhill (*Lysandra coridon*), **Mazarine** (*Cyaniris semiargus*), **Long-tailed** (*Lampides boeticus*), **Small** (*Cupido minimus*) and **Silver-studded** (*Plebejus argus*). A **Holly Blue** (*Celastrina argiolus*) was also flying in the same vicinity.

Continuing higher up the valley towards the Col du Tourmalet, we stopped to seek out some of the higher altitude species including **Common Brassy** (*Erebia cassioides*), **Pyrenees Brassy** (*E. rondoui*) and **Gavarnie Ringlets** (*E.gorgone*), and **Shepherd's Fritillary** (*Boloria pales*).

Finishing the day on the Col du Tourmalet at 2115m altitude, we were rewarded with spectacular views across the valley and **Lefèbvre's Ringlet** (*Erebia lefebvrei*) to add to our species list. We stopped briefly for a well-earned beer only to find a Snow Finch hopping underneath the tables of the café. ▼



Hautes Pyrénées cont.



Large Blue (*Phengaris arion*)

Saligos

Thursday 6th July was our last day together and we decided to spend the morning around the village of Saligos, to survey for the village biodiversity scheme, coordinated by the Parc National des Pyrénées. The altitude of the village is 596m and the lower altitude site gave us the opportunity to find **Marbled Fritillary** (*Brenthis daphne*) and an 'early' **Gatekeeper** (*Pyronia tithonus*), species that had not been seen previously during the week, as well as **Peacock Butterfly** (*Aglais io*) and **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*). We also found a **Rosy Footman** moth (*Miltochrista miniata*).

In the afternoon we revisited the site at Pibeste at 500m altitude. In contrast to the bedraggled Griffon Vultures of the first day we had sightings of many Griffons in the air, a Short-toed Eagle, Peregrines, Kites, and two low flying Egyptian Vultures. We were spoiled on the butterfly front, with many new additions for the week including numerous **Cleopatra** (*Gonepteryx cleopatra*), **Scarce Swallowtail** (*Iphiclides podalirius*), **Great Banded Grayling** (*Brintesia circe*), **Ilex Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium ilicis*) and **Adonis Blue** (*Lysandra bellargus*), to mention a few. We also observed a rare and beautiful blue Longhorn beetle **Rosalia alpina**, which landed on a tree trunk in front of us.

There were several days with good sightings of Lammergeier, and other birds included Chough, Alpine Chough, Tree Pipit, Linnet, and Wheatear. The Iris were in full bloom and widespread across the hillsides.

A total of 88 butterfly species were recorded during the week. What this report fails to show is the sheer delight of being immersed in butterflies for a very enjoyable week with a lovely group of enthusiastic EIG members.

Many thanks to my friends, Kathy Foot for the use of her beautiful photos and Dudley for his boundless enthusiasm, energy and knowledge. •

Jude Lock, www.bc-eig.org.uk Lock.jude@gmail.com

(All photos taken on the trip by Kathy Foot except Apollo and the first Saugué photo, taken by Jude Lock, and Shepherd's Fritillary, taken at Gavarnie on 20 July 2017 by Keith Woonton)

Greece

A Summer in Greece by Simon Spencer

Our ancient little camper van has been to Greece five times but this last trip was pushing our luck. We left the UK in the first week of May 2017 and arrived in Greece on the 14th on a ferry from Venice. I had never been in Greece in early May as I am usually dodging the clouds to count Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Boloria euphrosyne*) in the UK.



Southern Festoon
(*Zerynthia polyxena*) (photo by
Nigel Peace, May 2014).

May – Zagoria in the Pindos mountains, NW Greece

We picked up my old friend Lazaros Pamperis and headed up to Zagoria to a site near Monodendri that I had visited several times before. I got my main target species **Southern Festoon** (*Zerynthia polyxena*) within minutes. I had seen a distant one years before on a February visit to the Peloponnese but I had never seen one close up. They were common as was **Clouded Apollo** (*Parnassius mnemosyne*) which I had seen on the same site in 2004. We camped there overnight though we were both slightly worried by reports of bears

being common. We put our fridge on the front seat just in case.

The next day we were joined by Nikos from the National Park and tried to visit a village high in the mountains. On the way up the engine boiled and though the breakdown chap got to us within an hour, engine trouble was to plague us for the whole trip. The van was going to take several days to fix so we checked into a hotel and hired a car.

We did get to that village and had useful days out with Nikos and Lazaros when the weather allowed. We were keen to make contact with the Greek National Parks and will return in 2018 to run Butterfly Identification training sessions in both the Pindos National Park and also Parnassus National Park north of Delphi. Ideally we want both to train National Park staff in butterfly monitoring and identification but also encourage collaboration between Greek amateur butterfly enthusiasts and National Parks. Butterfly expertise is very limited in Greece with few experts apart from Lazaros Pamperis. His book 'The Butterflies of Greece', now available free as a smart-phone App, is the seminal work on Greek butterflies.

The National Park knew we were coming of course because we had applied for 'butterfly photography permits' which required us to say where we would be and when. They were free and were granted but you cannot help think what a complete waste of time for both the National Park staff and for tourists hoping to photograph the wonderful butterflies of Greece. ▼



Greece cont.



Odd-spot Blue
(*Turanana taygetica*)
(photo by Kevin Tolhurst,
June 2017).

► **June – Mount Taygetos, Peloponnese**

The **Odd-spot Blue** (*Turanana taygetica*) is a Red List endangered butterfly species and the European population is restricted to Greece although it also occurs in Western Turkey. In Greece it is only found only in very small areas of Mount Chelmos and Mount Taygetos in the Peloponnese though its food plant *Ancantholimon androsaceum* is a little more widespread being found in rocky places on the tops of some other Greek mountains. It is one of Europe's scarcest butterflies.

On Taygetos in June 2017 we joined an EIG team with Lazaros Pamperis and Rika Bisa from the Tsoumerka National Park who counted 8 *taygetica* over 500 metres on scattered *Ancantholimon* 'above the tree line'. An attempt to use a drone to map the *Ancantholimon* had only limited success. The drone flight time per battery was short and the *Ancantholimon* was not in flower in contrast to other sites. These are the first *taygetica* records on Taygetos for some time.

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July – Mount Chelmos, Peloponnese

An EIG survey in 2009 had found *taygetica* in a very restricted but well known area of Mount Chelmos with very little of the food plant on the rest of the mountain. The whole *taygetica* colony occupied less than 5 hectares. We re-visited this site in 2017 and found a flight area of only about a hectare and unoccupied *Ancantholimon* scattered very thinly over most of the original 5 ha. A count of 15 was made in 90 minutes on July 1st.

While the EIG team on Chelmos was making their count they encountered two German butterfly collectors with nets. Though they were furtive and hid initially, when challenged they claimed to have permits to take specimens of butterflies ▼

The EIG team below Mt Taygetos
(left to right: Kevin Tolhurst,
Anne Spencer, Simon Spencer,
Matthew Sparks, Lazaros
Pamperis, Rika Bisa, and John
Salmon) (photo by Mike Bailey).





Greece cont.

► other than those on the restricted list. They asked for information on where to collect **Chelmos Blue** (*Polyommatus iphigenia*), whose range is restricted in Europe to Mt Chelmos and is on the restricted list. It flies close to the *Acantholimon* site and we did see it later. We have since discovered that collecting permits were issued by the Ministry to two Germans.

I joined another EIG team which re-visited the *Acantholimon* site on Chelmos at the end of July to look for **Fiery Copper** (*Lycaena thetis*) which also uses

Acantholimon as a foodplant. Despite 6 people searching for two mornings on this small site none were seen. However a colleague of Lazaros Pamperis found *thetis* on Taygetos on 10th July. We may have been too late. It is reputed to occur on other mountains in Greece and also occurs in Turkey.



Acantholimon androsaceum,
with dead centre.

Comment

Chelmos is a famous place for butterfly observers and photographers with over 140 species and 3 special Greek butterflies *iphigenia*, *taygetica* and *thetis*. British tour groups and individuals visit annually bringing much needed business to the hotels and restaurants. If these very threatened butterflies

disappear the business will go elsewhere. The Greenwings tours to Chelmos led by Sotiris Alexiou do an annual timed count of *taygetica* (the count in 2016 was lower than 2017).

Though butterfly collecting is not usually the principal cause of a species declining the extremely small area of habitat and proximity to the road make this population very vulnerable. I visited the National Park office to discuss the problem. They feel completely undermined by the Ministry of the Environment issuing permits to collect butterflies.

Our van did get us back to the UK but broke down again a mile from home. ●

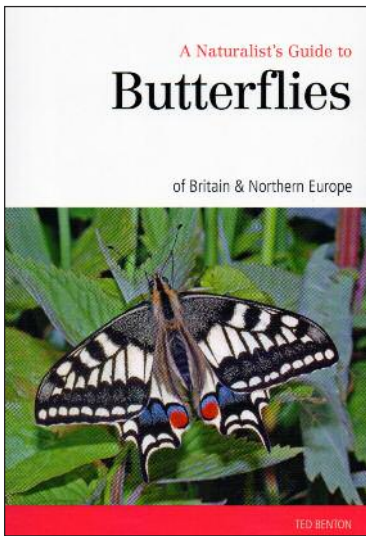
Simon Spencer

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Chelmos Blue
(*Polyommatus iphigenia*)
(photo by Kevin Tolhurst,
July 2017).



Book Review



A Naturalist's Guide to Butterflies of Britain and Northern Europe, by Ted Benton

John Beaufoy Publishing Ltd, Oxford, England 2017.
176 pages.
300 photographs.
£11.99

This compact and attractive little book covers all 158 resident or regular migrant species of butterflies that occur in northern Europe (defined here as Britain, Ireland, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia).

It is published by the same company as the excellent recent books on *Butterflies of India and Butterflies of Peninsula Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand* and is the same size and format (180mm x 127mm), although the cover layout design is slightly different.

It is packed with a wonderful collection of high-quality photographs of the adult butterflies, showing upperwing and underwing of virtually every species and often male and female where these differ in overall appearance. Combined with a refreshingly new and original text, it forms an excellent identification aid. Unlike so many other European butterfly guides, it does actually try to point out the key features to look out for in each species! The majority of species are each given a full page, allowing room for several good-sized photos and within the text for a reasonably fulsome description of the adult butterfly, the species distribution in northern Europe and its habitat and habits. Prior to the individual species accounts, a succinct but interesting 20 page section at the beginning of the book discusses butterfly biology, ecology, distribution and conservation.

It says much for Ted Benton's dedication to travel over 35 years and for the diligence with which he has worked to prepare this book in that virtually all the photographs (all but 6) are his own and they are all of a consistently high quality. The design and printing (in India and Malaysia respectively) appear to have done full justice to these photographs in ensuring faithful colour reproduction.

As a reference guide, this is well worth adding to any shelf of European butterfly books and like all the "Naturalist's Guide" series is very reasonably priced. However, it is also small and thus light enough to consider adding it to one's luggage when in search of butterflies in these northern European countries. As well as the stated focus countries, it also covers the majority of species present in northern parts of Germany, France and Poland.

Prolific in his entomological writings, Ted Benton will already be well-known to many as the author of two wonderful New Naturalist volumes on *Bumblebees and Grasshoppers and Crickets* and also *The Easy Butterfly Guide and Butterflies of Colchester and North East Essex*. He has also just published a new Naturalist's Handbook to *Solitary Bees*. How he finds time to be Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Essex University is a complete mystery!

Martin Davies

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Photospot

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

Butterflies of Far East Russia

by Nigel Peace

This summer I had the good fortune to join a butterfly photography tour to the Ussuri region of Far East Russia. The tour was of considerable interest from a western viewpoint, as many of the butterfly species are the same as species found in Europe, or at least closely related to them. In addition the absence of intensive agriculture, and the abundance of butterflies, gave some indication of what butterflying must have been like in our part of the world in times gone by. There were one or two hitches but overall the tour was a great adventure and hugely enjoyable.

We flew via Moscow to Vladivostok and stayed at three bases, each within a day's drive of Vladivostok. The predominant habitat was humid temperate forest, and we spent much of our time walking forest tracks and adjacent open areas. Rough grassland was also productive, as too were disturbed car parking areas which supplied good puddling opportunities. Altitude was mainly from sea level up to about 500 meters, although we made one excursion to 900 meters.

The weather was often hot and sunny, alternating with bands of rain. Overall the climate seemed not dissimilar to south east England at the same time of year, but a little warmer and more humid. Accommodation was sometimes simple, but we enjoyed some excellent Russian home cooking.

The tour was arranged by my good friend **Adrian Hoskins** (adrianhoskins@hotmail.co.uk). **Tony Hoare** and **Bill Berthet** were my fellow participants. **Yuri Berezhnoi** arranged the Russian end.

There are about 225 regularly-occurring species of butterfly in this part of Russia, which is now known as Primorsky Krai. Of these about 70 occur in western Europe, and another 100 or so belong to genera that are found in western Europe. Only ▼



Parnassius nomion



False Comma (Nymphalis vaualbum)



► 50 or so are from genera that do not occur in western Europe at all.

I have prepared a report of the trip and hope to include it in a future edition of the newsletter when there is space available. In the meantime here is a small selection of photographs which may give some hint of the range of species we enjoyed. •

Nigel Peace

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Phengaris arionides



Argynnis ruslana



Lesser Purple Emperor
(*Apatura ilia praeclara f. clytie*)



Freyer's Purple Emperor
(*Apatura metis substituta*)



False Ringlet
(*Coenonympha oedippus*)



Scarce Heath
(*Coenonympha hero*)