

Re: Oman

by Tony Moore, 30-Jan-20 06:37 PM GMT

Just back from some winter sun and butterflies in Oman. Despite being so close to Iran, it is a very stable country and feels very safe. While we were there, the much loved and respected Sultan Qaboos died. There was an initial four day mourning period when no music was played – good – and no alcohol was served – not so good! As the price of a snifter was so astronomical no regular drinker would venture there unless he was either a millionaire or a masochist...

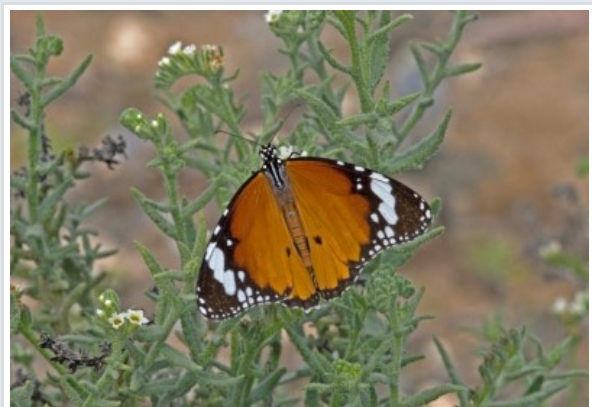
The Sultan's death precipitated the arrival of many world dignitaries for the funeral. We first noticed the presence of various suited 'heavies' around the place. Two such gentlemen came padding along the beach one morning in their polished black leathers, followed closely by a dressing-gowned Boris Johnson, who had been for a swim! There were also several very dangerous looking Palestinians toting blatant hardware around the place, presumably protecting some wheel from that country. We certainly had no worries about terrorist infiltration!

Oman is very interesting, butterflywise, in that little research seems to have been done. There is one old book by Torben Larsen (1980), which has photographs of set specimens and that's about it. No one seems even sure about the species count; Larsen listed 53, but other sources suggest 80 odd! I saw 20 or so in ten days. The followings pix and I.Ds are mainly from Larsen. If any errors are spotted, please let me know...

Our hotel, on the coast a few miles from Muscat, was built at the confluence of several small wadis, which flood in the rainy season. These had been mostly left wild and were heaving with butterflies as soon as the sun shone:



The most obvious was the Plain Tiger (*Danaus chrysippus*):



There were dozens in an area of wadi the size of a football pitch, and all in sparkling condition. Apparently the larvae often feed on *Calotropis prosera* :



There were several large examples in the area, but diligent searching failed to find any early stages. The pretty little Blue-spotted Arab (*Colotis phisadia*) was also common:



Most days I saw one or two Salmon Arabs (*Colotis fausta*), but during the first six days they sped around the exposed rock faces and I never saw one land. I was surprised and delighted when two examples were much more accommodating on my last day and allowed a couple of shots:





Another common species was the Caper White (*Anaphaeis aurota*):



The normal specimen is female Meadow Brown size, but there were many very small individuals. Larsen suggests that this is because the larvae often totally strip the available vegetation and many starve to death. Ill-fed ones, which survive to pupation, produce small imagines. The second of these butterflies looks very dark to me for Caper White. Does anyone have any ideas?

t.b.c.

Re: Tony Moore

by Wurzel, 30-Jan-20 08:17 PM GMT

Not sure if I can help with the IDs Tony - cracking looking butterflies though 😊👍 The two 'Arabs' look a bit like our Cloudy but seem to be keener to open up, or were you just lucky enough to capture the open wing shots? 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Oman

by Tony Moore, 30-Jan-20 09:10 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel,

The Salmon Arabs were two different insects (they are an amazing salmon colour in flight). The first one landed a couple of times, both with wings open. The second behaved so differently that I thought it was another species. I saw it on the ground at first and when it flew, it was only a couple of yards and it sat again tightly closed. I got very close without spooking it. I think it may have been freshly emerged.

Tony.

Re: Tony Moore

by bugboy, 30-Jan-20 09:29 PM GMT

Some interesting butterflies, those *Colotis* look more like *Colias*. I did a quick google search for 'butterflies of Oman'. Top hit was, no surprise, the Wikipedia page which oddly states a total of 53 species but goes on to list non of the Pierids which you saw!

Re: Tony Moore

by Tony Moore, 30-Jan-20 11:30 PM GMT

Yes, Bugboy,

I had already sussed that. Wiki also suggests that *Papilio demodocus* does not occur in Oman, whereas Larsen shows a map of the distribution of both species. Wiki is not for serious readers imho! 😏

Tony M.

Re: Tony Moore

by Padfield, 31-Jan-20 09:47 AM GMT

Looking forward to the rest of your piccies, Tony! It sounds a good part of the Middle East to visit, though I'm not sure how I'd cope without cheap beer...

I saw small salmon Arabs in India but never once with their wings open. I imagined they were like *Colias* species in this respect. You did well to get that picture!

Guy

Re: Tony Moore

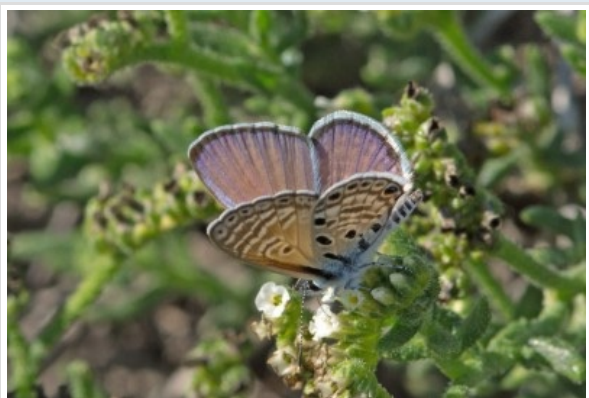
by Tony Moore, 31-Jan-20 04:30 PM GMT

Thanks, Guy,

Believe me, the beer price is unbelievable. The best you can find is about £5 for a 330ml bottle – hotels charge twice that!

Oman cont.

There were many 'Blues' around the various flowering shrubs, the commonest being Desert Babul Blue (*Azanus ubaldus*), a new one for me:



One of the Grass Blues was also present, but declined to be photographed. I did find a pair of Long-tailed Blues (*Lampides boeticus*), the only ones I saw:



A very large 'Blue', which appeared one day is, I think, a female Pomegranate Butterfly (*Deudorix livia*):



I saw three altogether, but they were all females – the males have bright orange uppers. They were easily approachable, but flew off at great speed when seriously disturbed. The larvae are destructive to pomegranates and loquats, feeding inside the fruit. One day, we had a trip out to the Wadi al Shab, a local beauty spot:





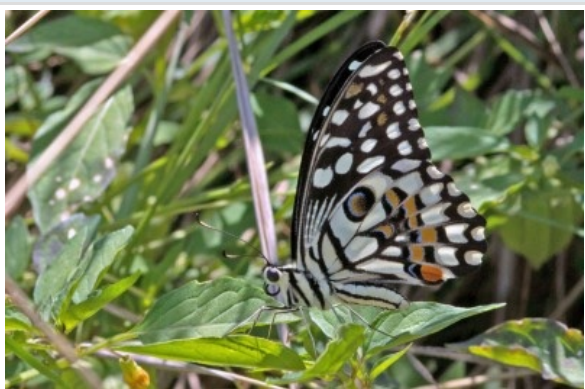
It looked very hopeful, but there was little around and the only butterfly of consequence was a Blue Pansy (*Junonia orithya*):



Back at the hotel, the Lemon Emigrant (*Catopsilia florella*) was much in evidence, both white and yellow forms – I watched one ovipositing on a wild legume of some sort:



The hotel had planted a few Lime and Lemon trees in the gardens and these had attracted the stunning Lime Butterfly (*Papilio demoleus*):





Larsen gives two different species and suggests that *P demoleus* is found in North Oman and *P. demodocus* in the south. That would make my one *demoleus*, but any comments would be welcome. They flash about at great speed, but land frequently and are easily approached.

Oman is a safe and really fascinating country – I would love to visit the south someday and perhaps find some of the 'Orange tips'.

Re: Tony Moore

by Padfield, 31-Jan-20 06:37 PM GMT

Hi Tony. Your *Papilio* is definitely *demoleus* to me. I only know these two species in the flesh from the Papiliorama butterfly house, but I have seen them there on several occasions. *Demoleus* has a spot missing in the forewing pd series (counting up from the base, it goes, 'big irregular spot, spot, spot, missing spot, spot'). Strangely, both the individuals in Larsen have the missing spot (i.e., it's not missing), so it is not at all obvious what the diagnostic difference is. Yours is missing the spot and looks in all ways like *demoleus* to me.

£5 for a 330ml bottle. 😞

Guy

Re: Tony Moore

by Tony Moore, 31-Jan-20 07:12 PM GMT

[quote]£5 for a 330ml bottle. 😞

Guy, my sentiments entirely – I had three bottles in 10 days – my total alcohol consumption – very boring... 😞

Thank you for your *demoleus/demodocus* explanation. Larsen also mentions the usually larger red hindwing spot on *demoleus*, which is another indicator in my example.

Tony.

Re: Tony Moore

by bugboy, 31-Jan-20 10:45 PM GMT

Congratulations, that's another 3 species to add to Wikipedia's exhaustive list 😄 Looking forward to seeing what else you can add. Really does look like a tempting country to visit 😊

Re: Tony Moore

by Tony Moore, 01-Feb-20 11:52 AM GMT

Sorry, Bugboy, but that's the end of it.

I did see many Painted Ladies and a few Desert or Bath Whites but didn't manage a photo to separate them. My feeling is that they were *dapidice* because of the size.

Tony.

Re: Tony Moore

by David M, 03-Feb-20 11:57 AM GMT

You certainly get to some unusual places, Tony.

There may not have been too much in the way of variety, but what you DID see is very interesting. I especially like those two *colotis*, as well, of course, as the spectacular Blue Pansy. I'd happily pay £5 for a beer if it guaranteed one of those. 😊

Re: Robin

by Tony Moore, 26-Mar-20 01:02 PM GMT

A little avian light relief in these troubled times...

Robins have taken up residence in a hole in the wall right outside my back door.



Both doors are in frequent use, which seems to faze the Robin not a bit!



She is now sitting hard and I hope for a subsequent successful fledging.



Also several Peacocks looking at my camellia.

Keep well, everyone...

Tony M.

Re: Tony Moore

by David M, 27-Mar-20 08:17 AM GMT

Love it, Tony. One consolation is that this year, nesting birds will suffer minimal interference.

