

Malaga area

by Matsukaze, 05-Jan-13 06:04 PM GMT

Just back from a week in Spain, just inland from Fuengirola. Lovely warm weather and a fair few butterflies on the wing.

30 December – Painted Lady, Red Admiral, African Grass Blue

31 December – Painted Lady, Small Copper

2 January – Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Clouded Yellow, Long-tailed Blue

in addition, loads of unidentified whites – probably Large and Small White – some individuals were extremely small.

Many Painted Ladies – hopefully they are on course for a good year.

I have seen Small Copper in early January here before and suspect the flight season, in sunny areas in the far south of Spain at least, extends right the way through from spring into the New Year, possibly even being continuously brooded in some places. Something similar may happen with Speckled Wood, Wall Brown and some of the whites, all of which I have seen at this time of year before.

Bordeaux, September 2012

by Matsukaze, 03-Apr-13 12:19 AM GMT

Following the demise of my PC am currently unable to upload/process photos...

Bordeaux city has a few possibilities for butterflies. Along the Gironde waterfront there are considerable areas of municipal gardens, which were relatively nectar-rich with *Verbena bonariensis* for example. This attracted the usual species that will fly in search of nectar to forage on – Painted Lady, Small White, Clouded Yellow, Berger's/Pale Clouded Yellow, and Hummingbird Hawk-moth, but more surprisingly also a male Common Blue on one of the grassy areas along the riverbank, perhaps forming part of a breeding colony within the city.

The somewhat neglected municipal botanic gardens were a delight for butterflies, with Small White, Red Admiral, Mallow Skipper, ovipositing Common Blue, Long-tailed Blue and Geranium Bronze. I watched a pair of the latter species courting, which was akin to watching a hopscotch game played on sunny stones, before the pair disappeared onto the lower leaves of a shrub to mate.

There were also plenty of Asian Hornets *Vespa velutina* around – a recent alien invasive to the city. These are slightly smaller than our native species and rather differently coloured, patterned orange and black. Common in the city parks, these did not appear to be posing the threat to human health that some of the more alarmist media reports had suggested, and the locals were happily jogging/toddling/sunbathing without being alarmed at the alien menace in their midst.

South of Gironde-sur-Dropt we encountered a male Lesser Purple Emperor, which perched on vegetation at the bottom of a none-too-promising looking culvert before flying round my wife's head several times and disappearing off into the upper branches of a nearby aspen. Also an abundance of Peacock larvae in the area (in September?), in various instars, some quite small and others evidently looking for a place to pupate. For the first time I came across a lost UK resident species – a Mazarine Blue – the male absorbing warmth from tarmac on a road edge and occasionally fluttering about; initially I had taken it for a male Common Blue until seeing the pattern on the underwings.

At St-Macaire we came across numerous roosting lycaenids in the grass along the banks of the Garonne – mostly Common Blue, Brown Argus and Small Copper – and were treated to an aerial display by Red Admirals, chasing in circles and appearing to flash the red in their wings at each other. Presumably this is territorial behaviour rather than courtship? There were Hornet Moth exit holes in poplars between the town and the river.

We explored the fringes of the Landes forest. In the glades and rides, the sandy habitat was home to numerous browns, notably Great Banded Grayling. At one crossroads I found my first Short-tailed Blue, a male, which was bobbing about to and fro chasing and being chased by the Common Blue males in abundance there. Although similar in colour its slightly different flight and considerably smaller size gave it away – it seems they vary in size up to Common Blue size however and I wonder how many immigrants to the south coast get overlooked as Common Blues...

Toledo, central Spain, March 2013

by Matsukaze, 03-Apr-13 12:34 AM GMT

Just back from a few days' city break. Well worth visiting as a tourist destination and definitely above average for the butterfly-watcher, even if we only saw six species whilst there. The attraction is the Tajo gorge which loops around the city to the south, giving a feature that only Bristol in the UK can really compare with. There is a well-established footpath running along its length making access easy. It looks like the soil is too fertile to make it a really excellent butterfly site – mostly awash in shoulder-height vegetation that appeared to be largely some species of mallow. However there were extensive stands of rape and other white brassicas and these attracted swarms of Small White, which chased each other up and down the steep slopes in their hundreds. Also Red Admiral, Speckled Wood, a single Geranium Bronze in the city, and Clouded Yellow and Mallow Skipper on the patches in the gorge with thin soils – areas that looked very promising for later in the year when blues are on the wing.

There were astonishing amounts of elm along the gorge and also planted throughout the city. I did keep my eyes open for Large Tortoiseshell and look for White-letter Hairstreak larvae, but without success; in the former case I suspect the habitat needed to be more wooded and in the latter I had left my beating-tray at home. A similar attitude from cities in southern England might produce interesting results though.

Re: Matsukaze

by NickMorgan, 05-Apr-13 12:59 PM GMT

Good to know that there are butterflies flying somewhere in the world!!

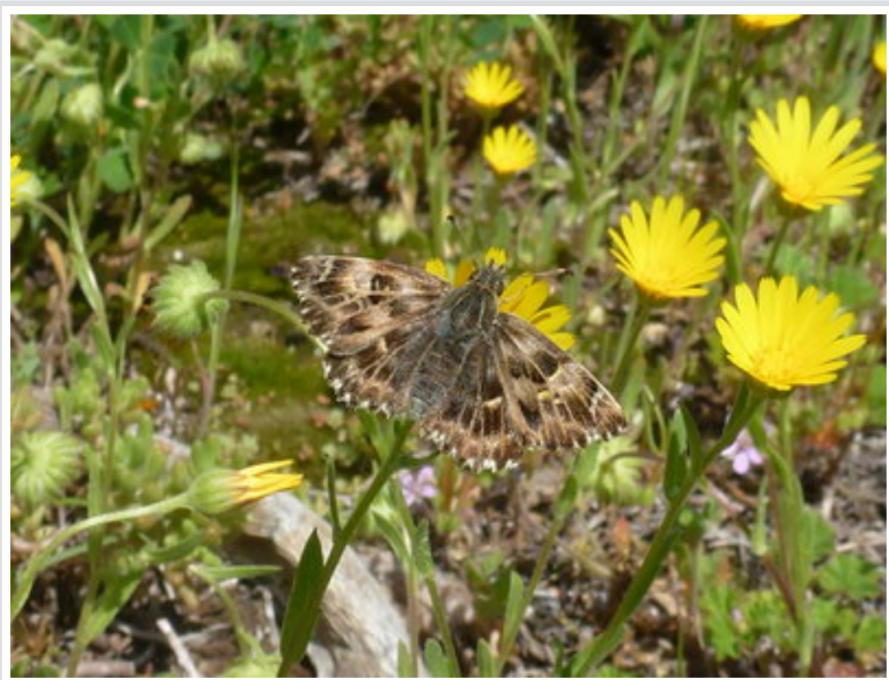
Re: Matsukaze

by Matsukaze, 12-Dec-13 12:47 AM GMT

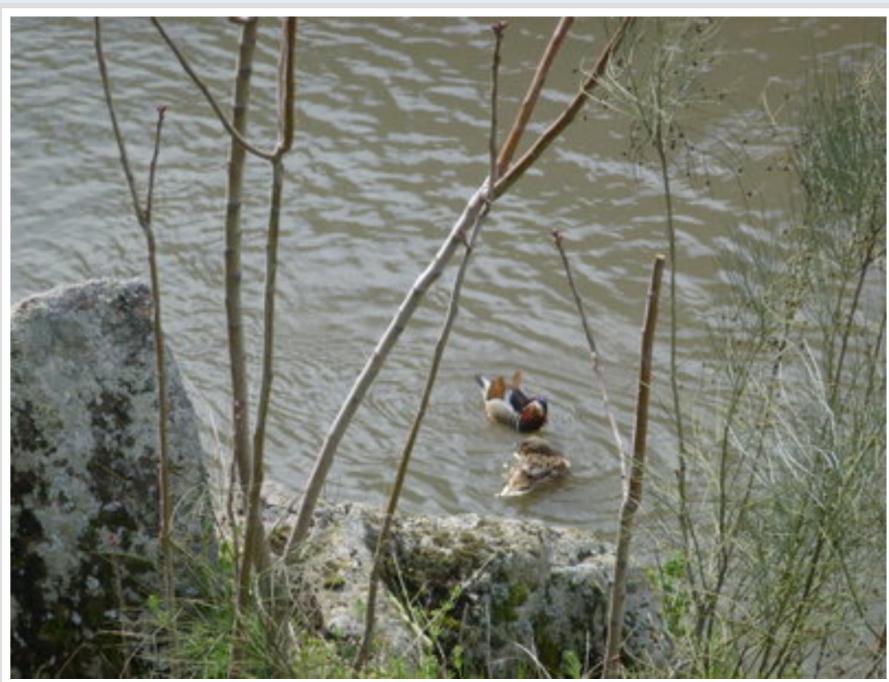
A few photos from the spring, some in Spain in late March, the rest in Somerset.

Surprisingly considering the time of year most of the Spanish butterflies were in tatty condition, like this Red Admiral. The Mallow Skipper

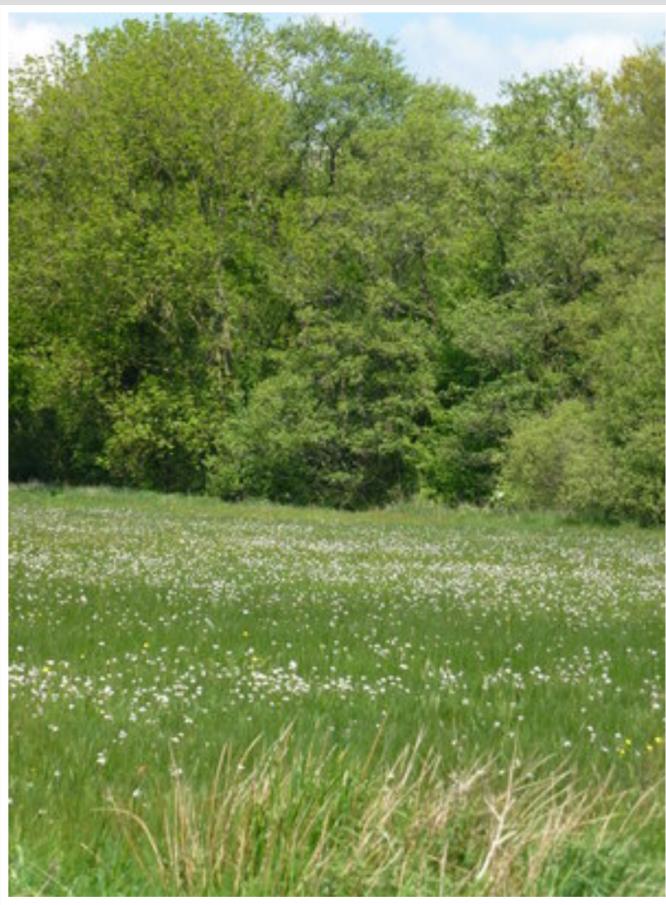
photographed was comfortably the least worn that I saw.



I did not expect to see a Mandarin duck in Spain, nor do they usually display to female Mallards.



The white in this meadow north of Glastonbury is lady's smock. Every spring this is alive with Orange-tips and Green-veined Whites.



This collared dove was watching us fill up with petrol



In May we found Pearl-bordered Fritillaries at Grovely Wood in Wiltshire, but they would not stop for photographs. This Glow-worm larva was a bit more obliging.



The leaf-mining micro-moth *Phyllonorycter kleemanella* is only 5 mm long, but quite beautiful.



Re: Matsukaze

by Wurzel, 16-Dec-13 10:53 PM GMT

Grovely Wood is just down the road from me Matsukaze I'll have to give it a try next season. Lovely shot of the micro moth, I find them a right pain to photograph and that is a cracker 🍪

Have a goodun

Wurzel