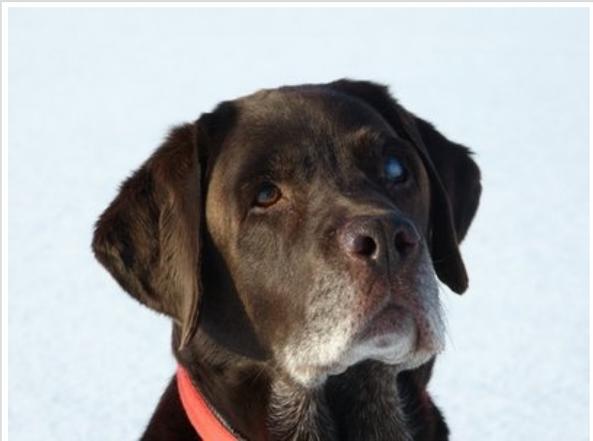


Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 24-Jan-16 07:43 PM GMT

I realise now that it is over six months since I posted in my diary. It wasn't the best of butterfly years for me for various reasons. Our old Labrador and my butterflying companion Jimmy was put to sleep earlier in the year. He had battled on despite cancer, a damaged eye and latterly three legs and made it to 13 years old. It is never an easy decision to make, but we had to do what was best for him.



Then in June we had a chimney fire and the house wasn't sorted out until the end of October. This caused much disruption and I still can't find where we temporarily put some of our stuff!!

The weather this year could only be described as grey. South-east Scotland seemed to be in between the sunny spells that occurred further north and south. I shouldn't complain, as we also seem to have been between the heavy rainfall that has recently hit the north of England and eastern Scotland. I am still waiting to get in the last few butterfly records for East Lothian, but it seems that the weather didn't have too much of an impact.

2015 seemed to be a particularly good year for Common Blues. Maybe I just happened to be out and about at the right time, but there seemed to be more of them around than I remember seeing before. Also I saw a lot more females than I have ever seen in previous years.





Re: Nick Morgan

by Padfield, 24-Jan-16 08:02 PM GMT

Nick, my deepest condolences. It is a blessing that we outlive our dogs – I could not bear to imagine leaving Minnie or any of my other dogs without their friend and master – but a terribly painful blessing.

Guy

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 25-Jan-16 01:24 PM GMT

Thanks Guy,

It is a horrible thing to go through, but good to be able to do what is best for the dog. Jimmy was a real gentleman. We have a three year old yellow Labrador, too, but she can hardly be described as a lady!

Re: Nick Morgan

by Goldie M, 25-Jan-16 02:04 PM GMT

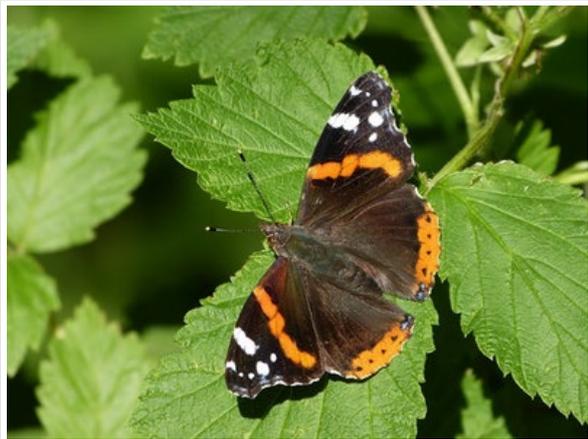
Hi! Nick, I was sorry to hear about your dog and you have my deepest sympathy, I've had to have two dogs put to sleep and the worse part about that was my last dog who was only 8 year's old. I love dogs but I couldn't go through the heart ache again i'm too old for that, so we share our daughter's dog now, 😞 At least you've still got a dog to take some of the hurt away, all the best for the coming BF year Goldie 😊

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 25-Jan-16 09:57 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie. Dogs are such great companions and always seem to want to please you.

On 1st July I was walking our coastal path on a cloudy and windy day and I saw my first Red Admiral of the year. As I walked a little further another Red Admiral flew in from the sea and over the path. In the short distance that I walked a further five Red Admirals flew in from the coast. I thought this rather unusual and wondered if it had been the same butterfly that had been flying in circles!



When I arrived home I received an e-mail from a recorder who had seen seven Red Admirals flying or blowing in from the sea a little further up the coast and over the next few days I received various similar reports suggesting that thousands of them arrived around that time.



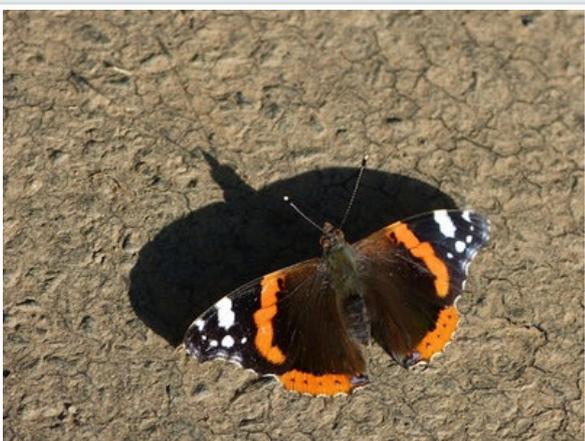
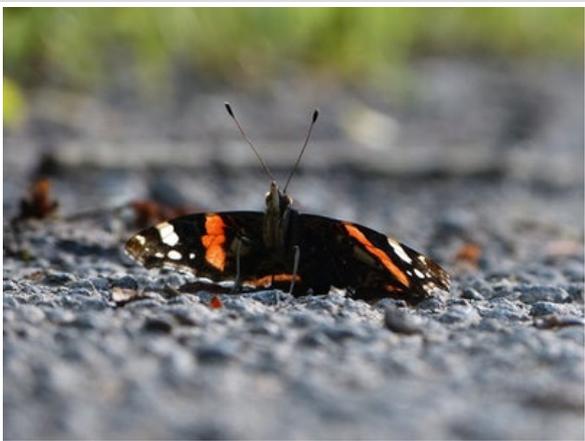
A couple of evenings later I drove along a local farm track and eleven Red Admirals flew up in front of the car. So, the next evening I returned at the same time with my camera. There did not appear to be any on the track, but as I walked into a slight dip a Red Admiral flew up next to me.



It flew up into the trees and was joined by a second butterfly. Then, as I watched, two other Red Admirals flew out of the tree and spiralled up into the air together. There turned out to be at least eight Red Admirals in those trees.



Occasionally one would fly down and land on the road, or on a plant next to the road, but as soon as another flew past they would spiral up into the tree again!





It was fantastic watching so many butterflies in such a small area. There were also four Speckled Woods in those trees and they would join in the aerobatics each time the Red Admirals flew close to them!



It wasn't until I enlarged this photo that I noticed how many flies there were amongst the branches of the trees!



I am still surprised by the number of Red Admirals that arrived here in such a short period of time. They all seemed to come in over the sea from the east. We had particularly strong south-easterly winds at the time, but it wasn't warm or sunny. I wonder if something triggered this mass migration in Europe?

This invasion of Red Admirals produced many offspring which were seen here in great numbers until the end of October, when they all mysteriously disappeared! Strangely, they weren't accompanied by any Painted Ladies, which were quite scarce up here this year.

Re: Nick Morgan

by Wurzel, 26-Jan-16 10:27 PM GMT

Cracking shots and an interesting record of an 'invasion' Nick 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Nick Morgan

by Chris Jackson, 03-Feb-16 05:57 PM GMT

NickMorgan wrote:

.....Our old Labrador and my butterflying companion Jimmy was put to sleep earlier in the year

Sorry to hear about your dog Jimmy, Nick. He does look like a gentleman dog, and he is so stoic in his photo.
RIP Jimmy.
Chris

Re: Nick Morgan

by Pauline, 03-Feb-16 06:05 PM GMT

Just catching up on the diaries Nick and have to say I feel for you. Had 2 black Labs myself at one time and have a real soft spot for them. I know how special they are and your old boy looks amazing so I am sure you will have amazing memories tho not much consolation at the moment.

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 10-Feb-16 09:47 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel, Chris and Pauline.

In July we had our family holiday in Cyprus. We were based in a villa on the outskirts of Pegia, about five miles from the coast at Coral Bay.

Normally, before we go anywhere on holiday I spend ages researching what butterflies I may see, but this year my life was made so much easier by Eddie John's fantastic web site - <http://www.cyprusbutterflies.co.uk/>. This has all of the information anyone would need about the butterflies of Cyprus. Eddie runs the butterfly recording scheme for Cyprus and he was kind enough to send me the grid squares they use to record butterflies along with some tips on good places to look for them.

I also bought a copy of "The Butterflies of Cyprus" by Christodoulos Makris. This is a large book with details of every species of butterfly that has been seen on Cyprus along with distribution maps.



I was advised that July isn't a particularly good month for butterflies in Cyprus because much of the vegetation is dried out at that time of year. However, as I discovered, if you pick your spots then there were plenty of opportunities to see butterflies.

53 species of butterflies have been recorded on Cyprus, but five of those are very rare migrants, so it is probably more realistic to say that 48 species occur on Cyprus. 38 of those species occur in July.

Near the villa was an area of waste ground where there were two large Thyme plants growing. Every time I visited them there were about ten butterflies in that small area. The most common was the Cyprus Meadow Brown, *Maniola cypricola*.



The upper side of the females has lovely orange markings.



The males are less boldly marked and I noticed that both males and females can be quite variable.

There were also a number of Large Wall Browns, *Lasiommata maera*, in the area. Superficially these looked quite similar to the Cyprus Meadow Browns and I would have to wait for them to land before I could positively identify them!



And in amongst these two were the occasional Wall Brown, *Lasiommata megera*.



As well as seeing these butterflies in this area, these three species would also regularly drift through the garden of the villa we were staying in. Several times a day we would also have a Swallowtail, *Papilio machaon*, fly into the garden and spend several minutes flying around the orange trees. It seemed to be attracted to the trees, but never landed on them.

Long-tailed Blues, *Lampides boeticus*, were very regularly seen in the garden, but again they never landed or fed on any of the plants.



On our first day a Cleopatra, *Gonepteryx cleopatra*, flew into the garden and landed on a Hibiscus plant. They are so well camouflaged that I couldn't find it until I disturbed it and it flew off. I realised that I had been staring at it all along thinking it was a leaf! That was the only one I saw in the area.

Meanwhile, back at the patch of Thyme I regularly saw Holly Blues, *Celastrina argiolus*, and Lang's Short-tailed Blue, *Leptotes pirithous*. These are becoming much more common on Cyprus than they once were.



Further down the track there was a dried-up stream where I was lucky enough to see a Millet Skipper, *Pelopidas thrax*. This was the only one I saw on my holiday.



I also saw two or three Pigmy Skippers, *Gegenes pumilio*, there.



I saw the occasional Bath White, *Pontia daplidice*, here. It used to be thought that it was the Eastern Bath White, *Pontia edusa*, that occurred in Cyprus, but recent genetic research has proved that it is *P. daplidice* that occurs there. The Small Bath White, *Pontia chloridice*, also occurs there, but I don't think I saw that!



Later on our holiday I was surprised that I hadn't seen any Dark Grass Blues, *Zizeeria karsandra*. Up until recently these were considered to be a subspecies of *Zizeeria knysna*, which I regularly see in Spain and the Canary Islands. There they are commonly found on irrigated grass, road sides and by water courses, but for some reason I didn't find them in similar habitats on Cyprus. Eventually I spotted some flying next to a bin in Coral Bay when I had driven in to buy my morning croissants!



There was a thunder storm on our last night and the next morning it was still cloudy. So, I decided to pay a quick visit to the Thyme bushes to see if there were any different butterflies flying in the overcast conditions. The usual species were still flying as usual, but on the track I spotted a Grass Jewel, *Chilades trochylus*, on a plant in the middle of the track. These are Europe's smallest butterflies and they are almost impossible to follow when in flight.



I had seen a Grass Jewel earlier in my holiday on a trip up to the Troodos Hills. I will try to add posts about what I saw in Troodos, Larnaca Salt Lake and the Mavrokolympos Dam over the next few days.

Re: Nick Morgan

by David M, 10-Feb-16 10:27 PM GMT

Great images, Nick. I particularly like the Pigmy Skipper which, sadly, appears now to be extinct in France.

Re: Nick Morgan

by Wurzel, 10-Feb-16 10:49 PM GMT

Cracking shots Nick and that Grass Jewell is just that, a real gem of a butterfly 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Nick Morgan

by Paul Harfield, 10-Feb-16 11:25 PM GMT

Hi Nick

Just catching up. I really enjoyed reading the piece on your Red Admiral encounters, I really felt like I was there experiencing it with you 😊

Nice selection from your Cyprus holiday, that Large Wall Brown is lovely 😊

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 11-Feb-16 07:58 PM GMT

David – it is sad to hear that the Pigmy Skipper no longer occurs in France. I wonder why that is. I think they are still found in Spain and other parts of southern Europe.

Wurzel – I was so pleased to spot the Grass Jewel. It is an amazing little butterfly and I guess that many are mistaken for flies they are so small!

Jack – the Red Admiral experience was really something special. I have heard about people seeing Painted Ladies coming in from the sea on the south coast, but I would never have believed they would arrive in Scotland from the east!

Mavrokolympos Dam, Cyprus

A couple of days into our holiday to Cyprus I walked up the road towards Mavrokolympos Dam. I had been told that this road was a great place to see butterflies, but I had also been told that July was not a good time of year for butterflies in Cyprus.

I walked for about two kilometres, but there were no butterflies along the side of the road, or along some small tracks leading to the dried up river. So, I decided to drive up to the reservoir and walked along its west side to the small river that feeds into it.



I was surprised that there were still very few butterflies, but in a small gully I found 11 Common Blues, *Polyommatus icarus*, all but one were males.



In the same area I saw a single Small White, *Pieris rapae*.



During the course of my walk I also saw a Wall Brown, *Lasiommata megera*, a Cyprus Meadow Brown, *Maniola cypricola*, a Mallow Skipper, *Carcharodus alceae* and another Pigmy Skipper, *Gegenes pumilio*.



I was surprised to see water running down the river into the reservoir. There were several species of fish swimming in the water including some that looked just like goldfish!

I searched the grass around the river for some time, thinking that it would be a good place for Dark Grass Blues, *Zizeeria karsandra*, which at that time I hadn't yet seen. Unfortunately, there were none there, but a Swallowtail, *Papilio machaon*, spent a long time feeding on the flowers of a shrub there.



There were also many different varieties of dragonflies and damselflies there, which I spent some time watching. By this time I realised that I had spent longer than planned here and I was due to buy some bread on my way back for lunch. I rushed back to the car and started driving down the road, only to discover that it had been closed to traffic! Three large boulders had been pushed across the road. I drove back up to the dam where there were two men surveying the dam wall. We all drove back to have a look at the road block and after many very animated phone calls the men told me that the road authority wanted money to open the road again!



One benefit of waiting there was that a Hermit, *Chazara briseis larnacana*, landed at the side of the road.



The underside was a lovely pattern of beige and brown and the upper side was mostly dark grey with white markings. The butterfly tended to land and immediately close its wings, then a few seconds later flash its wings open very briefly. I was lucky to snap this fuzzy picture of it with its wings open.



We spent some time looking at the boulders and at a fence next to the road to see if we could make a way past. Eventually the men suggested that we should try to drive along a dirt track. They said their truck could make it, but it could be a problem for my hire car! Eventually, after much wheel-spinning, bumping and sliding we made it through to a tarmac road. All along I was thinking of the contract that I had signed with the car hire company stating that I wasn't to take the car off-road! Luckily no damage was done and they were none-the-wiser!

Re: Nick Morgan

by Padfield, 11-Feb-16 08:47 PM GMT

Brilliant stuff, Nick! *Karsandra* and *trochylus* are two of my favourite butterflies – I have very special memories of both. I was surprised *daplidice* flies in Cyprus so looked it up in the books. It seems the idea of eastern/western is not quite right. *Edusa* is essentially more northerly, with *daplidice* flying in Iberia, North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean, and only creeping up further north in the west. I live almost exactly on the boundary – just into *edusa* territory.

Guy

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 11-Feb-16 09:19 PM GMT

Padfield wrote:

Brilliant stuff, Nick! *Karsandra* and *trochylus* are two of my favourite butterflies – I have very special memories of both. I was surprised *daplidice* flies in Cyprus so looked it up in the books. It seems the idea of eastern/western is not quite right. *Edusa* is essentially more northerly, with *daplidice* flying in Iberia, North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean, and only creeping up further north in the west. I live almost exactly on the boundary – just into *edusa* territory.

Guy

Thanks Guy. Yes, I am very fond of *karsandra* and *trochylus* and *galba*, which I saw later in my holiday. It must be very difficult being on the *daplidice/edusa* boundary, as I am sure they must be almost impossible to separate visually.

Re: Nick Morgan

by Pete Eeles, 11-Feb-16 09:43 PM GMT

Great stuff, Nick 😊 That Hermit is quite something 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Nick Morgan

by David M, 11-Feb-16 10:14 PM GMT

Indeed. Nice Hermit images, Nick.

Re: Nick Morgan

by Chris Jackson, 12-Feb-16 06:59 AM GMT

Lovely photos from Cyprus, Nick.

The Hermit drew my attention because it has recently disappeared from a site near me in the South of France, so I have yet to see one. I should think that an upperside shot on your first encounter is a 1 in 100 chance.

Chris

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 12-Feb-16 07:02 PM GMT

Thank you folks. Yes, the Hermit was a thrill for me. I saw some more near the villa too.

Larnaca Salt Lake, Cyprus

My favourite family of butterflies is Lycaenidae – the blues, coppers and hairstreaks. When I was looking at Eddie John's fantastic web site of Butterflies of Cyprus there was one particular butterfly that I decided I really wanted to see – The Small Desert Blue, *Chilades galba*. Eddie kindly told me a good place to go and look for it, so on 22 July I set off from our rented villa to drive 100 miles to Larnaca Salt Lake.



Eddie had told me to head for the Hala Sultan Tekke mosque and to walk along the track beyond it around the salt lake. This was certainly good advice, as while I was parking the car I noticed a small blue butterfly flying at the edge of the track. I jumped out of the car and was delighted to discover that it was a Small Desert Blue.



The Small Desert Blue, *Chilades galba*, is small butterfly with a wing span of 17 – 22mm. I noticed that the males are a lot smaller than the females. It only occurs on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean. The books say that it is only found where its foodplant, *Prosopis farcta*, grows. This is a short thorny shrub, which it turned out was growing along both sides of the track. I believe that it can be quite invasive and it has very deep roots. It was certainly having no problem growing in the hostile environment around the salt lake.

I needn't have been so hasty to look at the first butterfly I saw as it turned out that there were thousands of them on the plants along the edge of the

track. Sometimes it was impossible to take a picture without another Small Desert Blue trying to get into the shot!



I have never experienced butterflies in such numbers, they were almost flying up in clouds as I walked along the track.



Eddie also told me that if I walked as far as a flight of steps I would find some *Zizyphus lotus* bushes. He said if I looked in these I may find Little Tiger Blue butterflies, *Tarucus balkanicus*. I struggled through the vegetation to the only bush I could see and was soon rewarded with a Little Tiger Blue. This was a real thrill, as I have never seen a butterfly like this before.



According to the books this butterfly is the same size as the Small Desert Blue, but it appeared to be larger to me. The underside of the wings are beautifully marked, but very difficult to photograph, because they either had the sun glaring off their wings or they had shadows from the leaves on them.



As I walked back to the car I realised that there were several *Zizyphus lotus* plants growing along the track that I had walked past. When I had a look, many of them also had Little Tiger Blues flying around them.



Having learned which plants the butterflies liked I found a perfect area with *Zizyphus lotus* and *Prosopis farcta* growing alongside a blackberry bush. Here I also saw Long-tailed Blues, Small Whites and Lang's Short-tailed blues, *Leptotes pirithus*.



Most thrilling of all for me were a couple of Lesser Fiery Coppers, *Lycaena thersamon*. These are quite large with a wingspan of between 28 and 35mm.



The first one that I saw was the female above, and later I saw the male, below. The pictures don't really do them justice, as they are a beautiful bright orange/copper colour when they fly.



Among all of the Small Desert Blues there were a few Common Blues, *Polyommatus icarus*. They looked really big compared to their smaller cousins.



Further along the track my eye was caught by this female Lang's Short-tailed Blue, *Leptotes pirithous*, which was, I think, trying to fend off the advances of a male. It was vibrating its wings, which made the blue scales shine with a real intensity.



This behaviour continued for several minutes with the occasional male Small Desert Blue joining in! Eventually, the male appeared to give up and he settled close to the female who then closed her wings. Sadly I had to drag myself away. It was 35 degrees Celsius and the sun was very intense and I had a 100 mile journey ahead of me to return to the family. What an amazing day, though. I will never forget seeing so many Small Desert Blues and such a great variety of Lycaenidae. I am very grateful to Eddie John for suggesting I should go there. I would never have imagined that a hot, dry area next to a salt lake would be such a great place to look for butterflies!



Re: Nick Morgan

by Padfield, 12-Feb-16 09:03 PM GMT

I think we have quite a lot in common, Nick! What fantastic Lycaenids you've seen. The grass blues, *Chilades* and their kin, are just wonderful little creatures, and you have taken some really good pictures of *galba*.

I'm sitting in a room several degrees below zero, clinging onto a mobile radiator and feeling quite warm just from looking at your photos.

Guy

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 12-Feb-16 09:26 PM GMT

Guy, a common interest, but in a different league I think!!

That day has to be the best day of butterflying I have experienced, closely followed by the Sierra Nevada the year before. However, at Larnaca Salt Lake it was all Lycaenids, other than some Small Whites, and to see them in such numbers was something I have never experienced previously. 😊

Re: Nick Morgan

by David M, 12-Feb-16 10:21 PM GMT

That must have been an exceptional experience, Nick. You did the research prior to your trip so you thoroughly earned your reward.

Top quality stuff!

Re: Nick Morgan

by Wurzel, 14-Feb-16 10:48 PM GMT

Even more stunning butterflies – I would see one and think that's my favourite and then read down and I'd see the next species and that would be my favourite and then I just got confused in a sea of envy 🤩 😊

Have a goodun

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 17-Feb-16 09:28 PM GMT

Thanks Dave and Wurzel. Yes, it was an amazing day. I would have never known to look there without the help of Eddie John. It was a three hour drive from the villa we were staying in, but well worth the journey.

Troodos Mountains, Cyprus

On 28th July I decided to head for the Troodos Mountains in search of some different species of butterflies. I had been told that many species make their way up into the cooler mountains from the coast in the summer. There are also various other species that are only found in the mountains. I drove along the coast and then up the F616 towards Troodos, stopping a few times whenever I saw a spot that looked good for butterflies. My first stop was to take a picture of the view, but I noticed a small patch of *Polygonum equise*, so thought I should check if any butterflies were feeding on it. There was a very old and tattered Common Blue and then I noticed a really small butterfly. I was delighted to see that it was a Grass Jewel, *Chilades trochylus*. It was so small that I could only follow its shadow as it flew from flower to flower. I mentioned these in a previous post, but this was the first one I saw and I was overjoyed!



All along the road I saw Swallowtails and Small White as I drove along. Further up in the hills I stopped a couple of times to look for some of the Grayling species that occur on Cyprus. However, all I saw were Long-tailed Blues. Eventually, I arrived at Pano Paltres and just as I was leaving the village I saw a small parking area with walking trail. This was a rough trail following a small river up to Caledonian Falls.

As I started to walk up the track I saw several butterflies. The first I thought was another Long-tailed Blue, but it turned out to be a Purple Hairstreak, *Favonius quercus*. This was a surprise as I have been lead to believe that the Purple Hairstreak is rare in Cyprus and this was in an area of fruit trees with no sign of any oak trees – their normal food plant. I have only ever previously seen subspecies *ibericus* in Spain, so this was the first time I have seen a proper Purple Hairstreak!



It allowed me to take one picture, but then flew off. There were a number of Long-tailed Blues at this lower end of the track along with Holly Blues. An Oriental Meadow Brown, *Hyponephele lupina*, briefly landed at the side of the trail and I was able to take a quick picture before someone walked past and disturbed it.

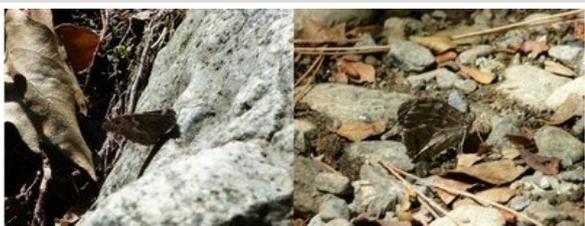


A little further up the track three Large Whites were feeding on a plant. I was about to take a picture of one of them when three kids ran up with fishing nets swiping at the butterflies!! Unfortunately, this walk proved to be very popular and it was difficult to see any butterflies for any length of time before they were disturbed by someone walking past.

However, this area had a good number of different butterfly species. I was surprised to see a few Speckled Woods, *Pararge aegeria*, here.



Among the Speckled Woods I was teased by a number of dark butterflies that would not let me approach them. I would only notice them when they flew up from the rocks on the trail. They would always land too far away for me to identify them, but I did manage to take a couple of pictures on full zoom which allowed me to identify two of them as Cyprus Graylings, *Hipparchia cypriensis*. One is a male and one is a female.



One other butterfly I was able to identify was the Lattice Brown, *Kirinia roxelana*. This is a very striking butterfly with large brown ocelli on its wings. I disturbed it as I was walking up the trail, it flew off and landed next to a rock and then crawled into the vegetation. Unfortunately it flew off when I tried to get a better view of it.

All along the trail there were Holly Blues, *Celastrina argiolus*, resting on leaves, feeding on flowers and drinking from the damp soil at the edge of the river.



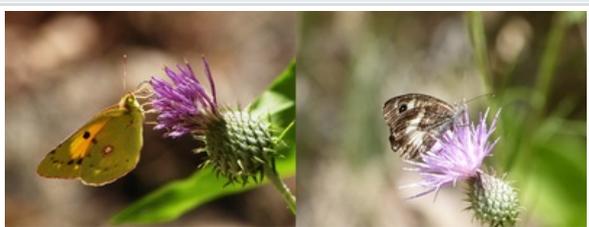
The walk to the falls was well worth the climb with the fine spray nicely cooling the air.



On my return journey, as I was driving through Paltres I noticed a large thistle with some Large Whites, *Pieris brassicae*, feeding on it. I stopped the car and walked back thinking that I could get a photograph to make up for those chased away earlier by the kids.



While I was watching them a Clouded Yellow, *Colias croceus*, and a White-banded Grayling, *Pseudochazara anthelea*, briefly landed on the thistles, each allowing me just enough time to take a fuzzy photograph!



On my way home I stopped off a few more times. In a small field just outside Kedaes there was a small irrigation channel surrounded by wild flowers. Among them I saw several Common Blues, *Polyommatus icarus*.



The field also contained many Large Whites, Holly Blues, Clouded Yellows, including the white form *helice*, a Speckled Wood and a Cleopatra. A little further down the road next to a layby I saw another Grass Jewel and a Mallow Skipper. All together a very successful day searching for butterflies even if most of the pictures are fuzzy!

Re: Nick Morgan

by Mike Robinson, 18-Feb-16 11:24 AM GMT

A very interesting commentary.
But fuzzy pictures? They seem pretty much OK to me.

Re: Nick Morgan

by David M, 18-Feb-16 05:15 PM GMT

I'm really enjoying this report, Nick. Lovely images once again.

Re: Nick Morgan

by Chris Jackson, 18-Feb-16 06:49 PM GMT

Great pics, Nick,
I'm starting to think toward future holidays already.
The Purple Hairstreak is a treasure 🇨🇵
Chris

Re: Nick Morgan

by Jack Harrison, 18-Feb-16 07:32 PM GMT

[quote]even if most of the pictures are fuzzy!! used to go to Cyprus regularly some 50 years ago when in the Air Force. All I ever saw were Bath and/or Small Whites.

Nice report Nick even though the quality of the the pictures is not always what you might have wished, it gets the flavour of of you visit perfectly.

Jack

Re: Nick Morgan

by Wurzel, 21-Feb-16 09:07 AM GMT

More great reportage Nick 🇨🇵 😊 You're making me look forward to my next visit abroad even more 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 24-Feb-16 08:20 PM GMT

Thanks everyone.
Jack, I noticed large areas of Cyprus which were marked "United Kingdom". I hadn't realised that there was still such a large military presence there.

Levantine Leopard - *Apharitis acamas*

On the last day of our holiday in Cyprus I decided to walk along a dried-up stream bed not far from our rented villa in Pegia. I had hoped that there may

be some different butterflies there that I hadn't seen so far. However, after about a kilometre I hadn't seen any butterflies and I was about to turn back when I saw a Cyprus Meadow Brown. This spurred me on to continue a little further along the stream bed.



A little further along the stream I saw a small butterfly in the distance behaving like a Long-tailed Blue. I climbed out of the stream bed to see if I could find it and I was amazed to see that the butterfly was a Levantine Leopard, *Apharitis acamas*.



This is a butterfly that I thought was so rare that I didn't stand any chance of seeing one! Every time it landed it closed its wings immediately. I could see when it was flying that the upper side of the wings was a yellow colour. The underside is a cream colour with brown stripes, each containing a line of silver scales. There are two tails on each hind wing, the larger of which has a blue patch that only shows when the sun hits it.



I had read that this butterfly is easily approached and does not scare easily, so I slowly reached out to one and coaxed it onto my finger. I couldn't believe how much the silver scales glinted as I turned it in the sunlight. Stupidly, I had picked it up on my right hand and I discovered that it is impossible to use my camera using my left hand!!



I was surprised that there were five Levantine Leopards in this one small area and I found two more 100 metres further up stream. This was a thrilling end to my butterfly hunting in Cyprus.

I saw 29 different species while I was there, with 13 of them being species that I hadn't seen before. I was surprised not to have seen any Brown Argus, *Aricia agestis*, or Painted Ladies, *Vanessa cardui*. The only butterfly that I was hoping to see that I didn't was the Southern White Admiral, *Limenitis reducta*, but I really can't complain having seen so many Lycaenidae that I had wanted to find.

I was delighted with what I had seen and I am very grateful to Eddie John for his help with good places to look for butterflies. His excellent web site can be found here: <http://www.cyprusbutterflies.co.uk/>.

Re: Nick Morgan

by Wurzel, 24-Feb-16 09:45 PM GMT

Wow what a stunning butterfly 🤩👍👍 It's so beautifully marked it doesn't seem real 🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Nick Morgan

by Jack Harrison, 25-Feb-16 07:47 AM GMT

~~[quote]~~Levantine Leopard That patterning must be some type of camouflage but your photos show them perching quite openly. I wonder where they hide when 'off duty'. There is a parallel with our Brimstone: very noticeable in flight and nectaring but as soon as it goes onto a patch of ivy (maybe to hibernate) becomes almost invisible. And think of that little white mark on the Comma: looks like a chink of light through a tangle of branches.

These patterns have usually evolved for a reason.

And yes, a lot of UK sovereign territory in Cyprus. I was there when Greeks and Turks lived happily (?) side by side. I hung some shirts out to dry outside my room and they were 'appropriated' by one of the locals. I was able to find out some details and subsequently, had a distinctly biased view as to who were the 'goodies' and who were the 'baddies'.

50 years on though I have forgotten whether the perpetrator was a Greek or Turkish Cypriot. Time heals – all is forgiven!

Jack

Re: Nick Morgan

by Pauline, 25-Feb-16 04:03 PM GMT

Hi Nick

that Levantine Leopard has to be one of the most beautiful butterflies and so unusual. I'm sure you'd say your photos don't do it justice but I would have to disagree as the silvery markings are clearly visible together with the blue on the tail. It is hard to believe it is real. You must feel so privileged to have seen it. I am assuming it is about the same size as a LTB?

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 25-Feb-16 07:02 PM GMT

Wurzel – I think that one of the reasons I wasn't expecting to see it was because it is so different and almost unreal!

Jack – I would guess that they will hide in amongst the thorny bushes, so possibly they are quite difficult to spot. Funnily I was looking for hibernating Commas this winter (without success) thinking that the little white mark would give them away! I am pleased that you have got over the loss of your shirts!!!

Pauline – I always think that my pictures could be better, and it was frustrating not being able to take a picture of the Levantine Leopard when it was on my finger. As its angle to the sun changed it really sparkled. Yes, it was the same size as a LTB.

It must be the most unusual butterfly that I have seen. I liked its striped abdomen, which reminded me of a wasp. It also had a very thick proboscis, which it seemed to be constantly moving and touching the plant it was on.

Re: Nick Morgan

by David M, 25-Feb-16 10:19 PM GMT

Great stuff again, Nick. This is a butterfly I'd hitherto never heard of and a look at my Collins European butterfly guide failed to enlighten me, even though Cyprus is in Europe!!

Apharitis myrmecophila – Desert Leopard, is in, and mentions distribution in Cyprus, but *apharitis acamas* is NOT included, so unless there have been some taxonomic amendments been made recently, this is an insect that Collins does not cover!!

Re: Nick Morgan

by Goldie M, 25-Feb-16 10:44 PM GMT

Hi! Nick,Wow! what a beautiful Butterfly, it's the most unusual I've ever seen, I bet your thrilled with your self I know I would be and what an end to great holiday Goldie 😊

Re: Nick Morgan

by Chris Jackson, 26-Feb-16 08:16 AM GMT

I echo the comments on the Levantine Leopard – it really is out of the ordinary.
Chris

Re: Nick Morgan

by Padfield, 26-Feb-16 09:41 PM GMT

Really lovely butterflies, Nick. You're giving me ideas.

Guy

Re: Nick Morgan

by Roger Gibbons, 26-Feb-16 11:25 PM GMT

Apparently Levantine Leopard is not common in Cyprus.

Eddie John is the Cyprus expert – this is his page for this species:

<http://www.cyprusbutterflies.co.uk/page12.html>

Worth going to Cyprus just for this species!

Roger

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 27-Feb-16 08:22 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. It certainly was a thrill seeing the Levantine Leopard and many of the other species there. I had quite low expectations for Cyprus. We were drawn there by the price of accommodation, but later discovered the price of flights!!

I would certainly recommend Cyprus as a holiday destination and as a destination for butterfly enthusiasts. I was primarily there with the family, but had two days off when I went off on my own specifically to look for butterflies. With more time, I am sure I would have seen even more species. June would be a good month to go, with the Paphos Blue and Eastern Baton Blue also flying there. If you do go, be sure to send in your butterfly records to Eddie John!

Re: Nick Morgan

by David M, 27-Feb-16 10:01 PM GMT

Thanks for sharing the details with us, Nick. Cyprus is a place I've long fancied visiting, and if there are butterflies like those around, then the attraction is all the greater.

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 18-Mar-16 10:27 PM GMT

I have at last finished sorting out last years records for East Lothian. Despite the weather I received a bumper number of records, which gave a really good picture of how the butterflies fared over the year.

I will remember 2015 as being rather grey and cool. After a mild winter with only one dusting of snow, spring arrived in mid March with butterflies regularly being recorded from the 18th March.

Much of the summer was cloudy with only short spells of sunshine. While areas north and south of East Lothian enjoyed longer sunny periods, we seemed to miss any good weather. In fact when I was checking the Butterfly Transect results, I didn't come across one record sheet showing the temperature being above 20 degrees Celsius!

However, the weather in September and October was lovely and later in the year we avoided the heavy rain, which caused flooding elsewhere in the UK. The weather didn't really turn cold until 4th December.

Peacock, *Aglais io*

The first butterfly recorded in 2015 was a Peacock on 4th March. They were regularly seen with the last record of a worn specimen being seen on 30th June. On 16th July the first of the new generation was spotted and again they were seen in good numbers until 1 November.



Small Tortoiseshell, *Aglais urticae*

Small Tortoiseshells also did well this year with the first record being on 19th March. There was no clear division between the generations and they were recorded through to 8 December. That was our last butterfly record of the year.



Comma, *Polygonia c-album*

I think 2015 was the best year we have had for Commas here in East Lothian. The first record was on 23rd March and they were regularly spotted through April. I only received one record each month in May, June and July and then from the beginning of August they were seen in good numbers through to 26th October.



Small White, *Pieris rapae*

The number of Small Whites recorded in the spring was down on previous years, probably reflecting the poor weather we had late in the summer of 2014. The first record in 2015 was on 9th April and they were seen through to the 7th July. From 6th August the second generation appeared and they were seen in better numbers until 1 October.

Orange Tip, *Anthocharis cardamines*

Orange Tips did well this year. The first record was on 9th April and they were recorded through to 27 June. This was quite a prolonged flight period, maybe as a result of the cool weather.



Green-veined White, *Pieris napi*

Green-veined Whites always do well here. The first record for 2015 was on 9th April and they were seen in smaller than normal numbers until 16th July. On 6th August the second generation emerged and they were seen in good numbers until 14th October.



Red Admiral, *Vanessa atalanta*

The first Red Admiral record was on 10th April and I only received three more records until July when we were literally invaded by hundreds of them. On 1st July I saw six Red Admirals flying or blowing in from the sea on a cold grey day. Six other people reported similar sightings that day and I received several records of Red Admirals over the next few days. These butterflies went on to produce a further generation and high numbers of Red Admirals were seen until 11 November.



Large White, *Pieris brassicae*

Like the Small White, numbers of the spring population of Large Whites were quite low. They were first recorded on 15th April until 7th July. The second generation was seen between August 6th and October 26th in far greater numbers.

Speckled Wood, *Pararge aegeria*

The first Speckled Wood was recorded on 18 April. Their numbers seemed a little disappointing compared with last year, but they picked up later in the season. The last record was on 26th October. They didn't extend their range as they have in previous years, but considering the weather they continued to do well.



Small Copper, *Lycaena phlaeas*

Small Coppers did very well here in 2015. Because I received so many records there was a nice clear division between the two generations with the first generation being between 20th April and 8th July and the second generation being between the 12th August and 1st October.



Holly Blue, *Celastrina argiolus*

I only received one record of a Holly Blue in 2015 on 21st April. Whilst it is sad to only receive one, it gives me hope that there may be a hidden colony of Holly Blues somewhere in East Lothian. Records in recent years have all come from three neighbouring villages, so I intend to have a thorough search of the area this year!

Small Heath, *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Small Heaths were recorded from 4th May until 25th September. This is a longer season than I have seen here before, which is possibly a result of the cool summer we had.



I'll continue with the remaining species in my next post.

Re: Nick Morgan

by Wurzel, 19-Mar-16 10:16 PM GMT

Looking forward to the next instalment Nick. I definitely agree with you about the Large Whites – they had a terrible year down here at the opposite side of the country 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 05-Apr-16 07:32 PM GMT

Continuing on from my previous post ...

Green Hairstreak, *Callophrys rubi*

We only discovered Green Hairstreaks for the first time in East Lothian in 2014, although I am sure they were probably hiding away in their remote locations for several years before that. This year the first record was on 20th May and they were recorded until 7th June. They were mostly recorded in the Lammermuir Hills, but also in an area of lowland woodland.



Wall Brown, *Lasiommata megera*

There were two distinct generations of Wall Browns between 30th May – 2nd July and 16th August – 19th September. They seemed to be quite abundant this year and I have been told that they were particularly abundant on the coast in the Scottish Borders. This is good news as they are struggling in southern England, possibly as a result of climate change.



Painted Lady, *Vanessa cardui*

I had thought that 2015 was a poor year for Painted Ladies, as I only saw one all year! However, I received quite a few records from other enthusiasts. Considering the number of Red Admirals that arrived here in July, I was surprised there weren't more Painted Ladies, though. The first record I received was on 11th June and the last one seen was on 26th October.



Common Blue, *Polyommatus icarus*

The first Common Blue recorded in 2015 was on 11th June and they were recorded through to 29th September in good numbers. There was no clear division between the two generations. For some reason there was a much higher proportion than normal of females reported than in previous years.



Northern Brown Argus, *Aricia artaxeres*

I am only aware of four sites in East Lothian where Northern Brown Argus occur. Three of these sites are smaller than the average sitting room. This year I only received records from two sites with the earliest being 20th June and the latest was on 7th August.



Ringlet, *Aphantopus hyperantus*

Ringlets were seen in their usual good numbers between 24th June and 16th August. They seemed to have a longer season than in previous years, possibly because the weather was so poor.



Meadow Brown, *Maniola jurtina*

As usual Meadow Browns were very numerous in 2015. The first record was on 27th June and they were seen through to 3rd September, with a peak in numbers in early August.



Dark Green Fritillary, *Argynnis laodice*

The Dark Green Fritillary is mostly found on the coast of East Lothian, but there are a few inland sites where they are also found. The first record in 2015 was on 27th June and they were seen until the 15th August.



Small Skipper, *Thymelicus sylvestris*

The Small Skipper was first recorded in East Lothian in 2011 at Aberlady Local Nature Reserve. It has since done incredibly well and spread along the coast and is also found at a couple of inland sites. In 2015 it was recorded between 28th June and 29 August.



Grayling, *Hyparrchia semele*

I am only aware of three sites where Grayling occur in East Lothian. One of those sites is in an area that is due to have houses built on it and we are currently unable to access it. All of the records I received in 2015 were from a nearby site, which is an old mining spoil heap. The first Grayling was recorded on 3rd July and they were seen till 6th August.

Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, *Clossiana selene*

The only record of a Small Pearl Border Fritillary this year was on 3rd July when I briefly saw one at a site in the Lammermuir Hills. This is the only place I am aware of them occurring in East Lothian, so I hope they are able to hang on there.

The only butterfly that I was hoping to see in East Lothian that we didn't record in 2015 was the Large Skipper. They had been seen just inside the East Lothian boundary in 2014 and we had high hopes that they would increase in number or progress along the coast as so many other species have done. They may have been there, but due to the lousy weather no one was there to spot them! With a bit of luck we will find them again in 2016.

It is fantastic having so many people contributing to the butterfly records in East Lothian. We are building up a really good picture of what is going on during a very interesting period in the distribution of butterflies here. I wonder if we will have any new butterflies in 2016?

Re: Nick Morgan

by Pauline, 05-Apr-16 07:45 PM GMT

Some smashing photos in your last few posts Nick. I love that Northern Brown Argus but my favourite has to be the pair of Green Hairstreaks – a photo

I've been trying to get for 4 years now 🙄🙄🙄

Re: Nick Morgan

by Jack Harrison, 05-Apr-16 08:14 PM GMT

Very useful info Nick especially the dates. I haven't been here long enough to experience a full butterfly season here on the Moray Coast so your data is invaluable as to what to expect and when.

No mention as far as I can see of Scotch Argus. Certainly plenty here late July and August. Perhaps it's more of a Highland and Island speciality although I have seen them in the past in upper Strathdon well to the east of the main mountains.

Jack

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 05-Apr-16 09:20 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline. The person I was with the day I photographed the Green Hairstreaks had observed that they flew up into the spruce and pine trees to mate. We observed it three times that day. These two kindly landed at about head-height. It would be interesting to know if this behaviour is common, as I have noticed that all of the Green Hairstreak colonies I have found here are within about 20 metres of a conifer plantation.

Jack,

I guess the butterflies may be a week or two later up with you than they are here in East Lothian. I have noticed that the plants at my father's house in the Scottish Borders are a couple of weeks behind those here, so I think East Lothian benefits from its proximity to the coast and obviously being a little further south than Nairn.

So far we haven't found any Scotch Argus here. There may be one or two remote valleys in the Lammermuir Hills that are suitable for them, but they are probably too far from any other colony. There are quite a number of places where they are found in the Scottish Borders, though just south of here. I am hoping to check out a few more likely sites this summer.

I will be interested to see how the butterflies compare up there with those here this year.

Re: Nick Morgan

by Jack Harrison, 06-Apr-16 05:55 PM GMT

{quote}I guess the butterflies may be a week or two later up with you than they are here in East Lothian. This is where I am not sure. The Moray Firth area has a quite incredible micro-climate for which it is famed. But my ten months here suggest that while it is certainly it is dry and sunny (and long term data confirm) it is not all that warm. So what it amounts to is: are emergences primarily influenced by temperature or sunshine (or both)? I suspect temperature is the main factor and we are not as warm as your part of Scotland although possibly sunnier and drier.

Maybe a clue from the timing of oil-seed rape flowering. The first flowers have appeared here in the past two days. Any idea when your crop first flowered this year? (I presume it is grown in East Lothian).

Jack

Re: Nick Morgan

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-16 10:09 PM GMT

Interesting report and that NBA is a cracking little butterfly 🙄🙄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Nick Morgan

by David M, 07-Apr-16 11:18 PM GMT

A lovely recap of your local species in 2015, Nick. Let's hope weather conditions in 2016 allow for better opportunities to do further studies.

Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 08-Apr-16 09:41 AM GMT

Dave. Let's just hope for some decent weather so that we can see some butterflies this year!! We had a couple of good days last month when I managed to see a Small Tortoiseshell, a Peacock and a Red Admiral. Since then we have hardly seen any sun here!

Thanks Wurzel. Yes, the NBA is the butterfly I really look forward to seeing here each year. It is amazing that it is clinging on in such small colonies.

Jack. It sounds as though your Oil Seed Rape is at about the same stage as ours, so possibly the butterflies will occur at around the same time. East Lothian is blessed with drier, sunnier weather than the neighbouring regions, but we also have cooler breezes off the sea as a payback. If you want to PM me your e-mail address I can send you my last few years' butterfly records. It will be interesting to see how they compare with what you see up there.