

July 2012. Exotic Lands

Contributed by Jos
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The vast bulk of July was spent in South Africa, tracking down birds and beasties big and small. Amongst the numerous highlights, no less than 25 felines (Lion, Leopard, Cheetah and African Wild Cat), African Civet and close to 400 species of bird.

In the meantime however, a few days in Lithuania saw a marked improvement on the appalling weather conditions of June, temperatures rising to respectable levels and even a showing of the sun. In numbers still far below par for the season, the better conditions also gave a boost to butterfly observations, a total of over 20 species noted, including such charmers Reverdin's Blue, Silver-studded Blue and both Purple Emperor and Lesser Purple Emperor.

1-2 July. Limping into Action, Butterflies. With the double battering of rain and low temperatures for nigh on a solid month, little wonder that the world of lepidoptera is hardly sparkling! With the turn of July, so came a little relief, warmer conditions and a degree of sun egging out the expected butterflies. A wander through my favoured patch south of Vilnius, whilst yet to amaze with the usual bountiful flurries of species and individuals, was certainly a step-out on previous weeks. In weather that varied from subdued sun to thunderstorm, a total of 21 species were noted, none in particular abundance. Amongst the smaller species, the highlights were the exquisite Silver-studded Blues, two Reverdin's Blues, one Little Blue and a few smart Large Coppers, also rans including Amanda's Blues, two more species of copper, two heaths and three of skippers. Big, bold and chunky, the day's honours however went to the stars of the Nymphalidae family - several Purple Emperors and, the much rarer cousin, one Lesser Purple Emperor. Also Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries amongst the rest. Away from butterflies, Labanoras continues to produce its highlights, a raptor watch notching up a pair of Lesser Spotted Eagles, one Osprey, one Black Kite, one Hobby and a number of Marsh Harriers and Common Buzzard. Basking in the sun, also one very obliging Grass Snake, my third of the season here. 6-31 July. Felines and Critters of the Night, South Africa. Three weeks focussing on the regions of South Africa I enjoy the most, namely the arid semi-deserts of the Karoo and Kalahari, turning my attention to mammals in a more dedicated manner than usual, the idea being to seek out felines and some of the more elusive night mammals, all of which achieved most successfully. [FULL REPORT HERE](#)