

Baltic Butterfly Challenge, 2016

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Deciding myself to the Lepidoptera of the Baltic States in 2016, it was a very productive year, particularly Lithuania. Active throughout the butterfly season (March-October), I was fortunate indeed to encounter 109 species in total, this including 104 for Lithuania alone.

Scroll down this page for a full account of the year, or alternatively click on any of the links below to zoom directly to specific sections/months: - Introduction - January-February (roosting butterflies)- March (first emergence)- April (including Camberwell Beauty, Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell and Large Tortoiseshell) - May (rising numbers, including Eastern Bath White and mass flights of Green Hairstreaks)- June (excellent mix, including Clouded Apollo, Baltic Grayling, Alcon Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Duke of Burgundy Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, Bog Fritillary and Frigga's Fritillary)- July (peak season, many rare and scarce species including Marbled Fritillary, Twinspot Fritillary, Titania's Fritillary, Cranberry Fritillary, Bluespot Hairstreak, Marbled White and Meleager's Blue) - August (late specialities, including localised and rare species such as Tree Grayling, Scotch Argus, Brown Hairstreak, Brown Argus, Chalkhill Blues, Clouded Yellow and Meleager's Blue)- September (a lot of late activity with 30 species still on the wing, including Eastern Bath White, Clouded Yellow, Chalkhill Blue, Brown Hairstreak and Brown Argus)- October (unseasonably warm with 16 species, including large numbers of Eastern Bath Whites and Queen of Spain Fritillaries and unprecedented records of Chestnut Heath and Large Copper)- November-December (roosting butterflies only, see January-February link) - FOOTNOTE (notes on Meleager's Blue, a new species for Lithuania) INTRODUCTION The Baltic States are characterized by an extremely diverse selection of butterflies, this especially true of Lithuania in the south. At the season's peak in early July, the range and abundance of species is truly dazzling, a tantalizing 50 species possible in eastern Lithuania on an exceptional day, including many species of fritillaries, blues and coppers. Including such stunning classics as Swallowtail, Camberwell Beauty, both Purple and Lesser Purple Emperor and Poplar Admiral, a typical active year (April through to September) will see me recording 60-70 species during the season, the previous highest ever total being 78 in 2010. Setting myself a target for 2016, I had thought the holy grail of 100 species was hugely over-ambitious, but by including Latvia and Estonia into the recording area, I was certainly aware that it was at least theoretically possible. In reality, I would have been happy to break my existing record of 78 species and to hopefully also find a few new species of butterflies for me, chiefly amongst them the rare Clouded Apollo, a localised species that can be found in parts of all three Baltic States. That I actually found 109 species during the year astounded me, even more so that it included a new species for the Baltic States, namely Meleager's Blue.

MONTH TO MONTH ACCOUNTS:

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2016 In the depths of underground chambers, vaults and tunnels, sharing a winter home with roosting Daubenton's Bats and unusually good numbers of Barbestrelles this year, the first butterflies of the year were found – Peacocks hibernating in good numbers in virtually all sites visited, mostly in the sections nearer the entrances to the outside world. **BALTIC YEAR LIST**

- 1. Peacock.

MARCH 2016

27-28 March, the first relative warmth of the year, bright sun and temperatures touching 10 C on the 27th and a positively tropical 13 C on the 28th! Still patches of snow lingering, shaded pools frozen, but there they were, eagerly awaited splashes of yellow fluttering along the byways ...and so opened the 2016 butterfly season, ten Brimstones on the 27th, another half dozen the following day and two Small Tortoiseshells too! And with the sun, so too the first flowers of the season poking up in the meadows, my first incoming White Stork of the year, plus the first frog, the first bumblebee and the first ticks, three of the latter crawling up my leg! **BALTIC YEAR LIST**

- 2. Brimstone.

- 3. Small Tortoiseshell.

APRIL 2016 An excellent start to April, an excellent end to April, but three weeks of cold nothingness in between! With warm sunny days gracing the beginning and end of the month, the superb selection of butterflies in the first days included a Camberwell Beauty and multiple Yellow-legged Tortoiseshells, while the month's end saw a magnificent eleven species, including Large Tortoiseshell and flights of Holly Blues, Map Butterflies et al. 4 April. Mass Emergence. A little over a week into the annual butterfly season and a positive explosion in butterfly numbers! With sun and temperatures reaching 16 C, it was the warmest day of the spring so far, perfect conditions for a few early butterflies. What I found however far exceeded my expectations – grand masses of butterflies out enjoying the sunshine, an estimated 230 butterflies and no less than six species! By any standard, this was superb for so early in the season. I started the day on my plot at Labanoras, yellow flowers poking through the meadows and a carpet of blue flowers dotting the woodland. Not on these though were butterflies congregating, instead mostly settling to lap up the oozing sap from the stumps of birches recently felled by Beavers – not a behaviour I have noted before, but a good 35 or so Small Tortoiseshells doing this, plus a couple of Commas. A handful of Brimstones also fluttering past. Next up, a 20 km meander through neighbouring pine forests. Brimstones super abundant, my first Peacocks of the year on the wing, then an absolute classic – repeatedly settling on a sunny track in an area of open pine, one smart Camberwell Beauty, a top butterfly indeed. This was soon followed by the first of four Yellow-legged Tortoiseshells (another rather

uncommon species) and endless more Brimstones, plus another two Commas and a few Small Tortoiseshells. I had expected a mere two or three species this day and perhaps a dozen or so individuals, but by the trip's end, I was staggered – totals sat at approximately 170 Brimstones, one Camberwell Beauty, four Yellow-legged Tortoiseshells, at least 40 Small Tortoiseshells, 12 Peacocks and four Commas! Amongst the non-butterflies, several more White Storks had arrived atop their nests, the first displaying Green Sandpipers had returned, a singing Chiffchaff was active in the forest, one Moose went crashing through my reedbeds and a gentle procession of Common Toads lumbered towards the breeding pools. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 4. Comma
- 5. Camberwell Beauty
- 6. Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell

6-13 April. All Fizzled Out! After the glorious start to the month, a predictable shift in the winds brought cool northerlies, generally overcast skies and temperatures barely topping 10 C. Still, spring pushes on, good numbers of Common Toads and Common Frogs spawning, a continuing trickle of summer migrants arriving and, in a few hours of sunshine at Labanoras on the 11th, a small collection of butterflies in sheltered spots - four Small Tortoiseshells, six Brimstones and, my fifth of the season, another Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell. Forecast for the next week - much the same, cool northerlies, occasional sunny patches, probably no new species of butterfly on the wing ...fortunately warmer climates to the south were beckoning for me! 14-17 April. On the Hunt for Eastern Festoon Taking a break from the cold wet Baltic States, this was a short trip to explore the Aegean island of Kos, with the principal goal being to find Eastern Festoon and any other spring butterflies on the wing. Turned out to be an excellent little trip, seeing no less than 27 species of butterfly. [CLICK HERE](#) for a full report of this trip. 21-25 April. Snowing! One degree and snow, the culmination of three weeks of fairly abmmissal weather, temperatures rarely exceeding 10 C and absolutely not conducive to flights of butterflies. Needless to say, not a single butterfly to be seen. Surprisingly good however for birds, quite a few migrants moving despite the conditions - the Labanoras selection including a healthy dose of raptors, with White-tailed Eagle, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Osprey, Montagu's Harrier, Marsh Harrier, Common Buzzard, Sparrowhawk and Common Kestrel amongst the species seen. 28-30 April. Out on a High. A change in the weather! A rare sun putting in an appearance and, for a handful of days at least, the temperature rising to a pleasant 17 C. Harbingers of pleasant spring days, Brimstones were up and about, pastel yellows along woodland edge. At Labanoras on the 28th, no less than eight species seen, many in good numbers. A dozen Peacocks, a few Small Tortoiseshells, three Commas and a Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell all attracted to flowering willows, while at meadow edge the first Orange Tips, Holly Blues and Green-veined Whites of the year. On the bird front, Pied Flycatchers and Wood Warblers were back on territory and both Water Rail and Moorhen were back in the flooded forest, hopefully to repeat last year's breeding performances. Two days later, in a few hours before cloud returned to dominate, it was even better - a total eleven species and perhaps 70 individual butterflies seen, including a very nice Large Tortoiseshell (never a very common butterfly) and the first Map Butterflies and Wood White of the season. Excellent for raptors too - Osprey, Montagu's Harrier, Lesser Spotted Eagle and Black Kite all seen, along with the more usual Marsh Harriers, Common Buzzards and Sparrowhawks. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 7. Orange Tip
- 8. Green-veined White
- 9. Wood White
- 10. Holly Blue
- 11. Large Tortoiseshell
- 12. Map Butterfly

MAY 2016

Sunny days to start and finish the month, an immediate upswing in the numbers of butterflies, Orange Tips and Butterflies abundant early on, plus Camberwell Beauties, three Bath Whites and a emergence of many hundreds of Green Hairstreaks. Towards the month's end, a second wave of butterflies saw many species on the wing, not least Pale Clouded Yellows, Queen of Spain Fritillaries and Little Blues.

2 May. Bits and Bobs.

Month's start, weather improving, a good deal of sunshine, temperatures climbing to above 16C. Only limited time in the field this day, but a reasonable selection of butterflies active - Orange Tip, Holly Blue and Map Butterfly amongst them. 5 May. Spectacular in Green. Heatwave by this year's standards, 23 C and wall-to-wall sunshine! A marked reduction of Small Tortoiseshells on my land at Labanoras, but a big rise in the numbers of Map Butterflies, Orange Tips, Wood

Whites and Green-veined Whites. Also first Speckled Woods of the year (never very common here, but four active this day) and a Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell. Out in the pine forests beyond, a very nice surprise was awaiting. A surprise in very big numbers! One of the daintier of the early spring butterflies, Green Hairstreaks are fairly widespread in the open pines of eastern Lithuania, but rarely common, usually just the occasional one or two seen here and there. Not so today! In the chunk of forest that I covered, they were absolutely everywhere ... after initial excitement with four in a sunny patch of lichen-draped bilberry, I then went on to find them in virtually all open areas. The highlight of the morning was 25 or so Green Hairstreaks clustering around a single small Salix bush, all the more impressive for the fact that two stunning Camberwell Beauties patrolled the very same clearing and yet another Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell fluttered in to join the Green Hairstreaks on the Salix! So, what a day - a grand total of about 70 Green Hairstreaks, by far the highest ever day total that I have recorded (also significantly exceeding the average number that I usually see in an entire year). Also two cracking Camberwell Beauties, two Yellow-legged Tortoiseshells and a whole host of other butterflies. In total, fourteen species and over 300 individual butterflies. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 13. Small White

- 14. Green Hairstreak

- 15. Speckled Wood

Grass Snake and Black Terns also seen, mass arrival of Whinchats on territory. Bittern, Savi's Warbler and Moorhen all vocal in the reeds. 7-8 May. More Spectacular in Green! Well, I had been bowled over by 70 Green Hairstreaks on the 5th ... little did I expect this to rise yet more! After another 40 or so in Labanoras on the 7th, I spent the morning of the 8th in pine forest south of the Vilnius ... 23 C, perfect sunshine and Green Hairstreaks by the bucketload! With dozens flitting in sunny glades and endless excellent habitat stretching in all directions, I quickly realised I was going to smash my record of two days earlier. Trying to get some sort of count, I resorted to following a forest track and counting on a ten kilometre transect (through a mix of good open habitat and less good mature growth) - result, a grand total of 190 Green Hairstreaks! Truly amazing, there must have been thousands flying on this day across the forest. Few other butterflies were active in this area however, so I then shifted to adjacent meadows that are very productive later in the summer. Not so bad today either - several hundred whites flying, Green-veined Whites, Small Whites and Wood Whites in the main, but a good scatter of Orange Tips too, plus the icing on the cake, at least three Bath Whites. A localised species in Lithuania, I have only ever seen this on a handful of occasions, always second generation individuals in the late summer. So there we have it, a top day for early butterflies, 190 Green Hairstreaks and three Bath Whites!

BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 16. Bath White

Aside the butterflies, Eagle Owl, Wryneck, Red-backed Shrike, Golden Oriole and Corncrake also recorded. 29-30 May. Second Wave Starts. After two weeks in Japan, I arrived back to all change on the butterfly front – the first wave of the butterfly season was effectively over, the second main wave just beginning to kick in. In warm sunny conditions and temperatures sitting at a pleasant 25-26 C, my first impressions on my land at Labanoras were of very much reduced butterfly numbers - no sign of any of the early spring butterflies, with previously common species such as Small Tortoiseshell, Map Butterfly and Brimstone all conspicuous by their absence. Lots of nice birds, including Red-backed Shrikes and two Great White Egrets, but I saw very few butterflies at all. A few kilometers away at lakeside meadows though, the first hints of wave two were fluttering across a small patch of slope - a half hour or so producing a whole bunch of new species for the year, Large White, Heath Fritillary, Small Heath, Sooty Copper and Common Blue included.

This did not prepare me for the afternoon however - shifting to flower-rich meadows south of the capital, I was in for a real treat. Sixteen species of butterfly on the wing, again not including many of the typical first wave butterflies, but instead quite a few Common Blues, a bunch of Sooty Coopers, a single Small Copper and, very pleasing, five species of fritillary (Pearl-spotted, Small Pearl-spotted, Weaver's, Queen of Spain and Heath Fritillaries). Also, several rather early Pale Clouded Yellows, quite an emergence of Small Heaths and a couple of Grizzled Skippers. With the forecast promising continued sun and high temperatures, all was looking good for some excellent action in the subsequent days. One day later, I added six Little Blues to the collection of special butterflies, these flying on roadside verges at a location near my home. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 17. Large White

- 18. Pale Clouded Yellow

- 19. Small Copper

- 20. Sooty Copper

- 21. Little Blue

- 22. Common Blue

- 23. Queen of Spain Fritillary

- 24. Pearl-bordered Fritillary

- 25. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

- 26. Weaver's Fritillary

- 27. Heath Fritillary

- 28. Small Heath

- 29. Grizzled Skipper

JUNE 2016.

Excellent month, with top action in both Lithuania and Latvia, a grand haul of totally new species
Clouded Apollo, Baltic Grayling, Alcon Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Duke of Burgundy Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, Bog
Fritillary, Nickerl's Fritillary and Frigga's Fritillary!

4 June. Latvian Extravaganza. A spectacular start to the month with a trip to Latvia netting an amazing seven species that I had never previously seen in the Baltic States! Close to midnight on the Friday night, casual communication with a butterfly enthusiast in Riga had got my mind whirling ...I had asked about Clouded Apollos, and the reply had mentioned a whole bunch of mouth-watering extras, chief among them not only the Clouded Apollo, but also Baltic Grayling and Duke of Burgundy Fritillary! Dream species for someone in Lithuania, where they are highly rare and restricted in range.

An hour later, loaded up with gear and some pretty good maps, I was in the car heading north for a quick 960 km round trip to the sunny delights of Latvia. Slept three hours at the border, then pushed on to arrive at the first destination way too early for butterflies to be flying. One Moose plodding in wet meadows, a couple of Cranes flying over, one River Warbler trilling in song, Red-backed Shrikes sitting atop piles of dead wood, not a bad start to the day. A most picturesque raised bog decorated with numerous orchids, I strolled around for an hour or so seeing not a single butterfly, but then on the stroke of 9.30 a.m. as the day began to warm, suddenly butterflies began to appear. Within 15 minutes or so, I was in heaven – my first new species of the day, Marsh Fritillaries were all over the place! Soon I added the next with a half dozen Scarce Heaths also flitting about, then added a third with a single False Heath Fritillary, a butterfly I am sure I sometimes overlook in Lithuania among the Heath Fritillaries. Glorious these butterflies were, but my main target here was still eluding me. Changing habitat, I set off to search adjacent flower meadows for the butterfly in question, the enigmatic Duke of Burgundy Fritillary. A little late in the season for this one, so after searching for quite a while, I began to assume I had missed it. Or maybe I was just in the wrong habitat – I had interpreted its favoured 'forest clearings' to mean small flower meadows dotted amongst the pines. No sign however. Either way, after giving up in the meadows, I wandered back through the pines only to find a small butterfly alighting on the track in a relatively open glade. And there it was, a fantastic Duke of Burgundy Fritillary, a far smaller butterfly than I had expected and an absolute cracker. Very obliging too, the individual spending great periods of time taking salts from patches of bare ground or simply sunning on low-standing vegetation.

So, site one had delivered all its hoped for butterflies and the day was still young. Onward to the next destination, a drive of some 45 km to a small meadow bordering a stream. Here, if all went to plan, Clouded Apollos should be flying at the peak of their season. And indeed they were, within about fifteen seconds of arriving, two were floating past and a third briefly landed on a flower head! Super, these were one of my main targets for the entire year, nicely complementing the Apollos and Small Apollos that I had seen for the first time in the Alps one year earlier. As with these larger cousins however, getting photographs was quite a challenge however – it seems that Apollos are not fans of settling for very long! After an hour and more in this meadow, staking many a fine Clouded Apollo, I eventually got a few reasonable shots. Small Heaths and Large Skipper also here. As a farewell, as I wandered back to the car, yet another Clouded Apollo landed on my leg and sapped up whatever salt or sweat it fancied! Truly hot and sunny, a very pleasant 24 C at this stage. Driving towards my next destination, another 60 km to the north, numerous Black-veined Whites and occasional Moorland Clouded Yellows were on the wing. All was looking good for the final target of the day, albeit that I was potentially a little late in the season. Arriving, I was at another very nice raised bog with open tussock grasses and numerous dead stunted pines dotting the fringes. This was the habitat of Baltic Grayling, a butterfly very rare and localised in Lithuania, but a little more abundant in Latvia. A couple of Green Hairstreaks as I walked towards the open area, one or two Moorland Clouded Yellows also floating past, then quite an abundance Pearl-spotted Fritillaries flying at the margin of the bog. Very soon, a moderate-sized grey butterfly fluttered past and settled on a trunk of one of the withered pines ...very clear what that was going to be! And then there were three, then a couple more further along. Celebration, at least a dozen Baltic Graylings still on the wing, some quite tatty, but fortunately still some quite pristine. One Large Wall Brown too, plus a Grizzled Skipper.

What great day, I had now encountered ten new butterflies for the year, six of which were species I'd not seen in the Baltic States before and four were completely new for me! Being a little greedy, I still had the possibility of one more addition to the day – Olive Skipper, which would also be a species that I had not seen in the Baltic States before. The locality however was north-east of Riga, a distance of some 160 km. By the time I reached the site, it was past 6 p.m, quite a breeze was blowing and basically my chances were very low. I only saw a couple of butterflies in total at this site, both of which were Small Heaths.

I turned and headed back to Lithuania, arriving home some 21 hours after my early morning departure ...a lightning

tour of Latvia, but one that really impressed me. Many thanks are due to the butterfly enthusiast in Riga, the pointers were truly appreciated. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 30. Clouded Apollo
- 31. Black-veined White
- 32. Moorland Clouded Yellow
- 33. Duke of Burgundy Fritillary
- 34. Marsh Fritillary
- 35. False Heath Fritillary
- 36. Large Wall Brown

- 37. Baltic Grayling
- 38. Scarce Heath
- 39. Large Skipper

5 June. Good Stuff in Lithuania, Part One.

Weather about to break, but a last sunny morning to enjoy the spoils. After heading north the previous day, I decided on a trip to southern Lithuania on this occasion, focusing on epkeliai Bog, the largest raised bog in the country. I have to say, the butterfly abundance was very low in comparison to what I had encountered in Latvia the day before, but I was still in for treat – I had been hoping to find Cranberry Fritillary, a species I have seen here in the past, but no such joy on this day. Instead, arriving to initially no butterflies, I then noticed a number of small fritillaries flying in the bog-stunted tree transition zone ...hmm, thought I, maybe the target species. Checking them out however, I found not Cranberry Fritillaries, but the rather more common Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, a good dozen or two. I would have been a tad disappointed if it had not been for one single butterfly that appeared 'different' – a glimpse at the underwing and there I spotted a row of distinctive black circles with white centres near the margin of the hindwing! I was looking at my first ever Bog Fritillary, a very good species to find in Lithuania! To make things even better, a single Baltic Grayling also appeared, landing on a trunk just as in the individuals in Latvia had done so the day before. So there we have it, one totally new species for me, and one new for me in Lithuania ...not bad at all. Also saw a couple of Moorland Clouded Yellows, my first Purple-shot Copper of the year, a handful of Green Hairstreaks and a Grizzled Skipper. Then, as midday approached, it clouded over, action for the day over. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 40. Purple-shot Copper

- 41. Bog Fritillary

6 June. Good Stuff in Lithuania, Part Two.

The forecast for the coming weekend was decidedly bad, so with warm sun still remaining I sneaked a few hours out from work and headed to a river valley near Dkkštos to explore meadows that have proved excellent in past years. And excellent they once again proved – no less than sixteen species in just a couple of hours, some of the rewards including my first Mazarine and Amanda's Blues of the year, my first Pearly Heaths of the year, my first Purple-edged Copper and, highlight of the day, four species of fritillary, including significantly at least four Knapweed Fritillaries (a species I have only ever encountered on a couple of occasions in Lithuania) and, better still, one splendid Nickerl's Fritillary. This latter is not only a very localised species in the country, but it is also a completely new species for me! So it was, a good couple of hours in the field, including six new butterfly species for the year count. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 42. Purple-edged Copper

- 43. Mazarine Blue
- 44. Amanda's Blue
- 45. Knapweed Fritillary
- 46. Nickerl's Fritillary
- 47. Pearly Heath

11-12 June. Brrrr!Then it all turned yuk! Cloudy, wet and a rather pathetic temperature of 7 C on the 11th, improving only somewhat the next day to about 13 C with occasional sun.

Needless to say, zero butterflies on the first day, but actually not too bad on the next. Dodging showers and concentrating on the occasional sunny spells, I notched up 13 species, chief amongst them two additions for the year - Lesser Marbled Fritillary and Large Chequered Skipper. Also quite an increase in Pearly Heaths, so too Amanda's Blues. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 48. Lesser Marbled Fritillary

- 49. Large Chequered Skipper

13 June. Surprise! Investigated a new area this day, a quaint riverside in middle Lithuania, a sometimes haunt for Twinspot Fritillary a little later in the season. Thought there was a small chance of an early one today, but did not expect the first butterfly that I saw - a Clouded Apollo! After travelling to Latvia a couple of weeks earlier to see them, this was a very pleasant surprise to find one locally - a rather faded individual, but a good find in Lithuania, so no complaints from me! What was equally nice though was the supporting cast of butterflies ...not only at least 80 Lesser Marbled Fritillaries and a few Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, but also a second generation Map Butterfly, a minimum of 45 Large Skippers, a whole bunch of Large Chequered Skippers and a couple of new species for the year too, namely several Chestnut Heaths and two Large Heaths. To top this off, adjacent woodland glades added yet more species, two Woodland Browns (a localised species in Lithuania) and my first White Admiral of the season amongst them. In total, nineteen species on this day. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 50. White Admiral

- 51. Large Heath

- 52. Chestnut Heath

- 53. Woodland Brown

- 54. Small Skipper

16-20 June. Splendid Times. Despite a mixed bag with the weather, an excellent few days with several very rare species seen, most notably Frigga's Fritillary and Alcon Blue. 16 June. epkeliai. Cloudy with sunny spells, strong wind - weather far from ideal for butterflies on the wing. This was my second visit of the season to epkeliai, a large raised bog in the southeast of the country. On my previous visit, I had already found Bog Fritillary and Baltic Grayling, but still the locality held a number of highly localized specialities, most notably Cranberry Fritillary and Frigga's Fritillary, this latter species restricted in Lithuania to this single location. Added my first Dark Green Fritillaries and Red Admiral of the year at Rop jos Forest on route, before arriving at epkeliai just in time to watch the sun vanish behind a bank of high cloud and the wind to increase significantly! Very few butterflies remained on the wing, but exploring the bog from the Belarussian side for the first time, I did find sundews and other marshland plants. Trudged about an hour or so, encountered eleven fritillaries, all but two being Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, most rising to catch the wind and vanish off into the distance within seconds. I also found a Bog Fritillary aside a small pool, but prize of the day went to the last butterfly of my walk a Frigga's Fritillary! No photographs, this butterfly too got the wind under its tail, one quick observation on the ground, then it was lost. Back on dry ground, a brief sunny spell allowed quite a nice selection of added extras alone a nearby forest track, cream of the pick going to several Moorland Clouded Yellows, a couple of Black-veined Whites and two Green Hairstreaks. Also found another Bog Fritillary on the opposite side of epkeliai.

BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 55. Dark Green Fritillary

- 56. Frigga's Fritillary

- 57. Red Admiral

18 June. Labanoras and Dkkštos. Sunny, gusting winds. Numerous trees toppled during the night, pines snapped like matchsticks. Flower meadows on my land at Labanoras were exposed to the full force of the wind, a single species did I see a brave Meadow Brown, my first of the year. Seeking better conditions, I drove a half dozen kilometers to the east to find a sheltered meadow bathed in quite warm sunshine, this was considerable more productive with many dozens of butterflies flying, prominent among them at least 25 Lesser Marbled Fritillaries, a few more Meadow Browns, a White Admiral, three Purple-shot Coppers and my first Silver-studded Blue. Also three Dark Green Fritillaries, a White Admiral and good selection of others. Next stop was Dkkštos, flower-rich meadows in the Neris Valley. Several times I had been here in the previous weeks hoping to find Alcon Blues that could perhaps occur on the slopes, never had I been successful. With the wind abating and the meadows abuzz with many good butterflies, this day however proved most excellent - 23 species in just an hour, many in high abundance. And in among these many butterflies, a few real crackers - one Poplar Admiral, six Nickerl's Fritillaries, one Geranium Argus (my third ever in Lithuania), one Idas Blue (also my third in Lithuania) and, the cr me de la cr me, two splendid Alcon Blues on a patch of short turf. This species occurs in just one or two known localities in the country and I was purely guessing that they might occur where I was searching! And so it was, a good find indeed!!! BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 58. Silver-studded Blue

- 59. Idas Blue

- 60. Alcon Blue

- 61. Geranium Argus

- 62. Poplar Admiral

- 63. Meadow Brown

- 64. Essex Skipper

19 June. Ukmergė. Wandering riverside meadows, sunny and 25 C, another hunt for the localized Twinspot Fritillary. No joy, but a classic day all the same, a Northern Chequered Skipper (my first since 2012) among the first butterflies of the day, then at least 150 Lesser Marbled Fritillaries and 180 Chestnut Heaths in the myriad of butterflies present, along with 18 White Admirals, two Purple Emperors, a Woodland Brown and my first Ringlets of the year. A nearby hillside added yet more, including a faded Glanville Fritillary, one more species that I rarely see. Twenty-two species on this day, my year list climbing by a healthy four species! BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 65. Glanville Fritillary

- 66. Purple Emperor

- 67. Ringlet

- 68. Northern Chequered Skipper

20 June. Vievis.

I have only seen one Ilex Hairstreak in Lithuania prior to this year - a single individual on 3 July 2010 in a small forest clearing near Vievis, the butterfly pictured below. With the six-year anniversary of this event approaching, I have returned to this very same clearing on a couple of occasions in recent days hoping for a repeat performance. Today was another attempt - a weak sun did not promise too much and wandering the same tree line produced very few butterflies, a number of Heath Fritillaries and Pearly Heaths mostly sat on flower tops, a few Large Large Skippers also prominent. After crisscrossing the area for half an hour or so, focusing on areas near oaks, I decided the weather was not conducive for success, so returned to my car. One Painted Lady flushed, a new species for the year, one Little Blue too. Got in the car, drove off looking for where to turn ...then stopped! A mere two hundred metres from the locality of six years earlier, a small butterfly was settled on the road - I jumped out of the car and got a nice look at the butterfly ...one Ilex Hairstreak! What luck! Up it flitted and then it was lost, perhaps rising to settle in one of a number of oaks lining the track. With the exception of Green Hairstreak, I always struggle to find any of this group, so a most welcome addition to the year! BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 69. Painted Lady

- 70. Ilex Skipper

29-30 June. Up, Up and Up. A few days away in Switzerland, then back to Lithuania for a massive upswing in the number of butterflies on the wing - with hundreds of individuals and over thirty species, these last couple of days of June truly marked the beginning of the peak season. Not only numbers and variety, but sheer class in the mix with species including Niobe Fritillary and my first ever Eastern Baton Blue! Year list jumps to 78, equally my highest ever total for a single year in Lithuania. 29 June. A few hours to spare, I headed to favourite butterfly haunts south of the capital - and a treat it was, 35 species and literally hundreds of butterflies along the forest tracks, Heath Fritillaries alone numbering an absolute minimum of 500, and other totals including 95 Pearly Heaths and 50 Silver-studded Blues. First Silver-washed Fritillaries and High Brown Fritillaries of the year, a nice Queen of Spain Fritillary too, plus Purple Emperors and quite a lot of Scarce Coppers and Ringlets. Shifting a few kilometres to open forest heath, the abundance of butterflies diminished significantly - this site is far better a little later in the season - but what it lacked in numbers, it certainly made up for in quality! Quickly found my first Spotted Fritillaries of the year, then after a long search my first Grayling, but better was soon to follow! First found a Niobe Fritillary, then the absolute cream on the cake ...an Eastern Baton Blue! Initially expected it to be a Silver-studded Blue, many in this very area, but stonking great spots on the underwing, the identity immediately very obvious. Never seen this species before, so yet another fantastic find to add to the top class month. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 71. Scarce Copper

- 72. Eastern Baton Blue

- 73. Silver-washed Fritillary

- 74. High Brown Fritillary

- 75. Niobe Fritillary

- 76. Spotted Fritillary

- 77. Grayling

30 June. Turn of Labanoras - spent a couple of hours on my land, checking the beds of wild strawberries for a species that I often encounter in this area ...and so I found it, a single Short-tailed Blue, my 78th species of the year in the Baltic States. Quite chuffed with this - with the peak month of July still to come, and a several easy species yet to see, I had now equalled my highest ever year total in Lithuania, achieved in 2010. Whatever my final total, it is going to be record-breaking. BALTIC YEAR LIST

78. Short-tailed Blue

JULY 2016

The peak of the butterfly season, with many rare and scarce butterflies seen, taking me to the top of the list of species in the year. Notable finds included Marbled Fritillary, Titania's Fritillary, Cranberry Fritillary, multiple White-letter Hairstreaks and Bluespot Hairstreaks and, best of the lot, a population of Marbled Whites and a Meleager's Blue, a new species for Lithuania. 1 July. Up the Blues. Evening is not usually productive for butterflies, but with an hour to spare and temperatures at 28 C, I decided to head out to meadows west of Vilnius that often hold Turquoise Blues. Probably a few days too early for this species, but had a good walk round anyhow ...didn't find any, but did stumble across a colony of Large Blues!!! Haven't seen this butterfly in Lithuania since 2010, so a welcome find indeed! BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 79. Large Blue

2 July. Nemunas Foray. Next couple on the hit list - Scarce Large Blue and Marbled Fritillary. For chances of these, I need to travel to the Nemunas valley in south-west Lithuania - both have restricted ranges in this country, the Scarce Large Blue at a variety of localities in central and western part, whilst the Marbled Fritillary occurs in just a few localities in the south-west. Fortunately, I have seen Scarce Large Blue before in Lithuania, so I had a concrete locality to begin the search, but for Marbled Fritillary I had no such information - I would need to search for areas with suitable habitat, then hope to get lucky! So it was, a scorcher of a day with temperatures touching 30 C, I began my day aside the Nemunas River near Jurbarkas. European Bee-eaters decorated roadside wires, their flutely calls filling the air, Red-backed Shrikes spied from straggly bushes, I parked up and began to wander the meadows. Almost immediately realised I was probably a week too early - precious few blue butterflies of any description were flying at this locality and an hour later, I was still drawing a blank on the main target. I did however find two Large Coppers and a Northern Brown Argus, both new species for the year, plus my first Small Copper since May. Zigzagged for another hour, hoping for an early Scarce Large Blue or even a Swallowtail, the latter seeming to elude me everywhere this year, then decided to give it up and travel further west to search for Marbled Fritillaries. Flower meadows in forest clearings, broad rides through deciduous stands, the habitats I was seeking. And soon I found a likely site, a walk producing a nice variety of butterflies, including numerous Silver-washed Fritillaries and even several Lesser Marbled Fritillaries. Many dozens of Ringlets and Brimstones also present, Scarce Coppers, Holly Blues and a couple of Purple Emperors too. At one stage, a very probable Marbled Fritillary came flitting through, but failed to settle and eventually rose high above trees and vanished. Over 25 species in this clearing, but eventually decided to move on, no confirmed Marbled Fritillary to add to the list. A few kilometres on, through a maze of forest tracks, I came to another excellent looking clearing - several flower-rich meadows, good mixed forest alongside. Had to stop for a bunch of butterflies taking salt from the track - Wood Whites mostly, but also several Holly Blues and a few Silver-washed Fritillaries. Glanced to the left and saw a medium-sized fritillary atop a flower. Hmm, thought I, quickly nipping over with my camera ...and indeed it was, one Marbled Fritillary, my first ever in Lithuania! I soon lost this individual, but in my good fortune I had actually stumbled across a colony of Marbled Fritillaries - the meadows to my immediate rear supporting at least six more, plus a Pallas's Fritillary thrown in for good measure.

So, a good day - no Scarce Large Blue, but four new for the year. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 80. Large Copper

- 81. Northern Brown Argus

- 82. Pallas's Fritillary

- 83. Marbled Fritillary

4 July. Heavens Open, Twinspot Delight. Second day in a row, cool temperatures, cloudy skies and frequent heavy rain ...a major spanner in the works, absolutely not conducive to finding butterflies! This said however, I still managed to find one of my main targets for the month - Twinspot Fritillary. In Lithuania, this species is restricted to the Svventoji River in central parts of the country, flowery meadows its favoured habitat. Twice in preceding weeks, I had failed in searches for the butterfly and, given the weather, I did not have high expectations for this day. Fortunately, a relatively brief sunny spell brought some hope - many butterflies on the wing at my first stop, a meadow not far from the river. 24 species in all, Lesser Marbled Fritillaries proved particularly common, but searching through them revealed no Twinspot Fritillary. Already beginning to cloud over again, I changed location, this time focusing on a steep slope cloaked in flowers. Still a few Lesser Marbled Fritillaries, plus a dozen Heath Fritillaries and one Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

Heavy cloud rolling in, a storm approaching, spots of rain already in the air. Then Lady Luck paid a visit with a single butterfly on a flower top - two rows of neat spots along the margins, a classic individual. Twinspot Fritillary, yet another new species for me! And then the rain started, action over for the day. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 84. Twinspot Fritillary

6 July. Cranberry Delights. Heavy skies on departure from Vilnius, prolonged rain and little apparent prospect of change. Had spent a while the previous evening studying weather satellites and had determined that south-east Lithuania probably offered the best possibilities for the day, perhaps sun breaking through. Drove through heavy rain for entire journey down, but miraculously hit the first hints of a break in the weather just prior to arrival in epkeliai. Thereafter, the clouds fragmented and blue skies appeared - the day turned out to be mostly sunny, though still with the need to dodge the occasional thunder storm. Spent most of the day at the margins of epkeliai Bog and in adjacent forest clearings - many hundreds of Heath Fritillaries and Ringlets flying, plus an excellent selection of added extras, including many Weaver's Fritillaries, several Spotted Fritillaries, at least 20 Red Admirals and, highlights of the morning, my two targets - four Cranberry Blues and two Cranberry Fritillaries, these latter butterflies flying in the same area as the rather similar Weaver's Fritillaries. With this success under the belt, I then moved to meadows in the vicinity of Margionys, one of the only localities in Lithuania for Safflower Skipper. Didn't find this localized species, but in the continuing good weather I did manage another top class range of species, including eight Geranium Argus, one Dusky Meadow Brown and, finally, my first Swallowtail of the year in the Baltic States. Back to Vilnius I went, back into cloud and rain. 36 species of butterflies this day, not bad given most of Lithuania had sat under a blanket of thick cloud for the entire day.

BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 85. Swallowtail

- 86. Cranberry Blue

- 87. Cranberry Fritillary

- 88. Dusky Meadow Brown

8 July. Home Straight More dodgy weather - 19 C, heavy showers, cloudy. Hadn't planned any butterfly spotting, but having forgotten my phone at home, I needed to pop back midday ...and just by my home is one locality that I occasionally see White-letter Hairstreaks. Despite the weather, I thought I would give it a look as I passed. Very few butterflies active - one Silver-washed Fritillary, one Comma and several Small Whites - but there, sitting atop a daisy, was the star, one White-letter Hairstreak! BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 89. White-letter Hairstreak

9 July. Latvian Extravaganza. Two targets for me in Latvia - Titania's Fritillary and Arran Brown, the first of these recorded in Lithuania solely on the basis on a specimen found in an old collection, whilst the second is localized. In Latvia however they are more widespread and at a location south of Cesis, both are apparently common. And a top class day I had, arriving at 8.00 a.m. at a fantastic area of flower meadows and patches of mixed forest near Lielmani. Early morning cloud was just burning off and already a heady cocktail of butterflies were sitting up on due-drenched flower tops taking in the first rays of the sun. Black-veined Whites, Northern Brown Argus, Geranium Argus, oodles of Silver-washed Fritillaries, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and Lesser Marbled Fritillaries, plus Dark Green Fritillaries and High Brown Fritillaries also in the mix. Hundreds of Essex Skippers too, with lesser numbers of Small Skippers and Large Skippers also present. Didn't find either of my two main targets initially, the sheer volume of other fritillaries a somewhat hindrance to picking out the less abundant Titania's Fritillary. Also got a little sidetracked by an exquisite White-letter Hairstreak that I found at the edge of the meadow, then after about ten minutes with this butterfly, I noticed a fritillary on a cornflower just adjacent ...my first Titania's Fritillary of the day! Super stuff, the underwing of this butterfly is the stuff of an artist's palette, deep reds and purples running into each other, splodges of black and yellow alongside. My day list was already running to well over 20 species and I had not even left the first meadow yet. Now truly warm, I turned my attention to the woodland edge, walking along a track with broad sunny fringes and bracken slopes ...and there, along with Ringlets by the dozen, my first Arran Browns of the day, two individuals alternating between taking nectar at flowers and resting on the bracken. More Arran Browns at the next clearing, more beyond that. And so the day continued, a dizzying array of butterflies at every turn - many thousands of butterflies across the meadows and forest edges, additional species including Pallas's Fritillary, Large Copper, White Admiral and Purple Emperor. Also found three Ilex Hairstreaks, one being devoured by a jumping spider, and no less than five Cranberry Blues. As for the target butterflies, I saw at least 15 Titania's Fritillaries (probably more present, huge numbers of assorted fritillaries drifting everywhere) and a minimum of 45 Arran Browns. Mid-afternoon, I finally departed, thereafter stopping on forest heathland near Galkalne. Much lower density of butterflies here, but did manage almost 30 species, including a single Large Blue and a couple of Dusky Meadow Browns. Four Rollers also present here, plus several Woodlark and other birds. So ended an excellent day, a massive 49 species seen, one of my highest ever day totals in the Baltic States - all the more remarkable for the fact I had basically only visited two localities. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 90. Titania's Fritillary

- 91. Arran Brown

10 July. Dip on Scarce Large Blue! Stopped off on route back from Latvia at the Nemunas River again near Jurbarkas. Hoped to locate Scarce Large Blue - but failed to do so for the second week in a row! In rather windy conditions, I did see 20 species however, including Pale Clouded Yellow, Swallowtail and an interesting butterfly that I debated for quite a while before settling on a rather well-marked Northern Brown Argus. Its southern cousin, Brown Argus was the other contender, but I think the orange linules on the upper wing were just not prominent enough. 11 July. Hairstreak High. Phenomenal, I had gone out in search of a Lesser Purple Emperor and in the process stumbled across the biggest collection of hairstreaks that I have ever seen, discounting Green Hairstreaks of course! Started with a wander along forest tracks, duly finding a tatty Lesser Purple Emperor and my first Camberwell Beauty since the spring, then transferred to meadows immediately adjacent. Hazy sun and 28 C, loads of butterflies out and about, I thought there might be a chance of a hairstreak or two, so worked the area along the woodland edge. Assorted fritillaries, plenty of skippers, heaths by the bucketload, all nice enough. Then I struck gold, or purple to be exact - a patch of purple flowers coated in hairstreaks!!! My eyes almost fell out, a dozen and more on the flowers! Initially thought they were all White-letter Hairstreaks, an impressive enough sight in itself, but then I noticed there were others amongst them! Slightly larger, lacking the distinctive 'w' on the rear hindwing, but sporting a prominent blue spot, these were indeed good butterflies - my first ever in Lithuania, Bluespot Hairstreaks. First there were two, then three together. Then it got even better, an Ilex Hairstreak joined the party! Amazing, not only the new species for me in the country, but also the first time I have ever seen multiple species of hairstreak sharing a flower top! And just to top it off, I also found my first Turquoise Blue of the year just adjacent! BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 92. Bluespot Hairstreak
- 93. Turquoise Blue
- 94. Lesser Purple Emperor

12-15 July. Rain and Thunder. Days of rain, several thunderstorms extremely heavy. Bad news for the peak of the butterfly season, the intensity of the rain certainly knocking out quite a lot of butterflies. In clearer spells, albeit not blessed by sunshine, I did manage another couple of White-letter Hairstreaks within Vilnius city and spent two hours on the morning of the 14th in open forest south of the capital. Not much actually flying, but tramping around, I did eventually find a reasonable collection of species typical for the locality - a few dozen Silver-studded Blues, one Dusky Meadow Brown, several Graylings and, new for the year, four Rock Graylings. Then light drizzle set in, thus postponing my search for Reverdin's Blue for another day. BALTIC YEAR LIST

95. Rock Grayling

16 July. Third Time Lucky. My target for this day was Scarce Large Blue, a species restricted in Lithuania to scattered localities in the west of the country. As I had already missed the species twice in recent weeks at Jurbarkas, I had planned to widen my search this day, identifying up to a dozen potential sites from satellite images in the Telsiai region. So here I was at the first, a very good looking locality adjacent to a small river, a swathe of flower-rich damp meadow sandwiched in an oxbow of the river. The weather however was lousy! I had departed Vilnius under a thick layer of cloud, then driven 230 km under similar, finally arriving at my locality to drizzle! The forecast had been somewhat better, hopefully it would brighten sometime soon. Needless to say, a half hour or so at this site failed to produce anything much at all - the grand tally of butterflies amounting to one Wood White, two Meadow Browns and one Essex Skipper! Still, things were looking far better to the south and west with cracks in the weather appearing on the horizon and great patches of blue edging in. Another of my potential sites was in that direction, so I gave up on site one and drove the 15 minutes or so to the next. Definitely warmer and brighter on arrival, even if not actually sunny. Also quite a few butterflies flying - Peacocks and Commas on the field margins, Brimstones here and there, one Short-tailed Blue on a patch of clover. To be honest, the site did not look very good for Scarce Large Blue, not only rather dry, but the whole area had also been cut in recent days. I decided to take a walk anyhow. And good that I did, a mere 100 metres from where I parked, a rather chunky blue butterfly flushed from a patch of rank grass, fluttered over to the road verge, then settled again. Great dirty margins to the dark blue uppers, smallish dark spots to the uniform pale brown underwings ...female Scarce Large Blue! Species number 96 for the year. And then out came the sun, the day was suddenly looking a whole lot better! After about half an hour at this site, not locating any other Scarce Large Blues, I decided not to bother with my other potential sites for the species, but headed instead to the pine forests a little further south. Now warm and sunny, truly impressive numbers of Silver-washed Fritillaries were on the wing, with single clumps of flowers holding upward of 40 to 50 individuals and many hundreds seen in each kilometre section. Also Map Butterflies and Peacocks in good numbers, plus over 20 other species present too, including more Short-tailed Blues, several Holly Blues and three Speckled Woods. Some kilometres further I reached the meadow I had discovered two weeks earlier with Marbled Fritillaries ...even more present today, 30 or so active in the meadow, several rather tatty, but several fresh too. Also one Lesser Marbled Fritillary here, plus yet more Silver-washed Fritillaries (several brown forms), along with High Brown Fritillaries and Heath Fritillaries. One Large Copper too, joining Scarce Coppers, Small

Copper and Purple-shot Copper. Glutton for punishment, I thought I would give the Jurbarkas site another check on the way home - predictably, no Scarce Large Blue. Did see Northern Brown Argus again however. BALTIC YEAR LIST - 96. Scarce Large Blue

17 July. More Hairstreak Highs. Returned to a site near Ukmerge to see if Twinspot Fritillaries were still flying - one of the only species that I have seen this year, but failed to photograph. Short answer is nope, they weren't - with the notable exception of Silver-washed Fritillary, numbers of all fritillaries at this locality were generally well down, especially so the immense masses of Lesser Marbled Fritillaries now reduced to just 30 or so. As for other butterflies however, numbers were very good. Particularly impressive was a massive patch of thistle that was absolutely shimmering in butterflies - difficult to say exact, but amongst the dozen or so species present, perhaps 150 Peacocks, 60 Commas, at least 100 Silver-washed Fritillaries and 35 Holly Blues, a nice spectacle indeed. And then, at the one end of the thistles, a cluster of White-letter Hairstreaks, 12 in total, very nice! A kilometre away, on a steep slope that harboured a Twinspot Fritillary two weeks earlier, more hairstreak magic with yet another two Bluespot Hairstreaks, my second sightings in a week, and my second ever in Lithuania! Also ten White Admirals and two Pale Clouded Yellows. Meanwhile, over in Labanoras, a good selection of coppers - at least 100 Scarce Coppers, one Small Copper, five Sooty Coppers and two Purple-shot Coppers - along with a nice range of others, including 20 more Holly Blues, a Short-tailed Blue and a Speckled Wood. On route back, did a little reconnoitering for a species I hope to see a little later in the season, more of that later in the month. 18 July. Edging Closer! Year list on 96 at the start of the day, three potential species left in Lithuania with reasonable odds of adding to the list - Reverdin's Blue, Large Grizzled Skipper and Silver-spotted Skipper. Over the last decade, I have seen the first of these in seven years out of ten, while both the latter in only four out of ten. Thus, my list of 'guaranteed' species was now exhausted and even in the event of seeing all three of these, I still need one more to reach the big 100, this almost certainly being something I have never seen in Lithuania before. Target for this day, Silver-spotted Skipper. Locality one, a site where I saw one last year, two hours walking under mostly cloudy skies ... Spotted Fritillary, Dusky Meadow Brown, Grayling, Rock Grayling, no Silver-spotted Skipper. Locality two, an area of meadow where I have seen them several times. Sunny, many butterflies flying, Pale Clouded Yellow and Queen of Spain Fritillary included. Two seconds out of the car, one Silver-spotted Skipper sitting on a flower top!!! Spent an hour here, saw a total of six Silver-spotted Skippers, a rare event indeed for me to see more than a single individual in any one given day. Several Small Coppers also here, plus other odds and ends. Had a look for Large Grizzled Skipper nearby, no joy this day. BALTIC YEAR LIST - 97. Silver-spotted Skipper

24 July. Marbled White, Red Letter Day! Marbled White is not a species to be expected in Lithuania - according to published literature, the only records date from the 1920s (three specimens in Panevezys) and 2001 (one in Viesville). Edging towards my 100th species for the year, Marbled White was not in my thoughts! Chalkhill Blue however was very much in my thoughts, a rare localised species that occurs in a few localities near the southern borders of the country.

Overcast skies again early morning, but with a forecast perhaps offering better, I set off for my destination, the Belarus border zone near Druskininkai. Still cloudy when I arrived, but considerably brighter and quite warm. Spent a while finding a locality that looked promising, then began my exploration, Belarus a mere hundred metres distant at times. A limited number of butterflies already flying, Wood Whites, Scarce Coppers and the like, but most species were still inactive. Started walking around, lots of Peacocks and a few Red Admirals seen ... then a butterfly fluttered past with distinctive white and brown chequering! Marbled White! A very mobile butterfly however - after zigzagging around the meadow for quite some minutes, finally it settled and I got photographs. And then I found another! Only a hundred metres from the first, I initially thought it had to be the same one, but whilst the first had wing damage, the second was pristine. Much to my surprise, I added a third a little while later! Also continued my search for Chalkhill Blues, which ultimately proved unsuccessful (perhaps still a week or so early in the season), but did find several other blues in the process - Short-tailed Blue, Holly Blue, Common Blue and, new for the year, Reverdin's Blue. Also two Swallowtails and a Pale Clouded Yellow. I had plans to check another locality for Chalkhill Blue, but two little incidents disrupted my plans, one was the border police catching me in the border zone without passport and thus politely evicting me, while the second was entirely better - a chance happening upon a meadow, a meadow full of yet more Marbled Whites! I could not believe it, amongst numerous Scarce Coppers, Map Butterflies, Commas and mixed fritillaries, there were Marbled Whites everywhere, rarely settling, but visiting flower tops, pursuing each other and several appearing to be egg laying. Difficult to count, but I would say there were at least 35 present at this second locality, the site 4 km from the first. Truly a good day! Unable to visit my second planned destination, I then decided to drive to a site near Marcinkonys for another attempt on Safflower Skipper, probably too late in the season now, but a good locality anyhow. Didn't find the desired one, but amongst the rich selection I did see were at least 30 Dusky Meadow Browns, two Queen of Spain Fritillaries, a couple of Nickerl's Fritillaries, two slightly tatty Large Blue and one equally tatty Large Copper. Over 30 km north-east of the earlier sites, I also found one more Marbled White!!!

Clearly some sort of influx had occurred, a total of four Marbled Whites had been recorded in the entire country in the

previous century, I had seen probably over 40 in the single day!!! BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 98. Marbled White
- 99. Reverdin's Blue

24 July. Species number 100!!!

Way back in the spring, the thought of getting 100 species in the Baltic States in the single year was a mere fanciful idea, I didn't actually expect to achieve it. But here I was, on the 24th July, sitting on species number 99, searching for number 100.

A pretty good day weather wise, albeit again with high cloud. Pretty good for butterflies too, with almost 40 species seen, Pallas's Fritillary, Eastern Bath White and Silver-spotted Skipper amongst them. I however was conducting a dedicated search for Large Grizzled Skippers. In several hours of searching, I didn't find it along a track that I have seen them in past years, so tried instead an area of poor soils where pines are naturally reclaiming a hillside. And there, after a half hour's walk, bingo! One Large Grizzled Skipper resting on leaves and flower tops, species number 100! BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 100. Large Grizzled Skipper

28 July. Onward and Upward, Luck and Target. What next? Onward and upward ...my target had been 100 species in the Baltic States, but at a country level, the end result could be broken down to 95 species in Lithuania and 52 species in Latvia. So a new natural target evolved, try to reach 100 in Lithuania alone, and as high as possible for the combined Baltic list. Already I had a couple of potential species in my sights in Lithuania, both of which would be new species for me in the Baltic States. The 25th to 27th saw continued mixed weather, with the best of the sun occurring whilst I was working, so no real attempts to find anything new, but occasional butterflies did include 17 more White-letter Hairstreaks in the Vilnius area and Swallowtail and Turquoise Blue near my home. Come the 28th however, with a few hours at my disposal, off I thought I would slink for attempts on two possible targets - Brown Argus and Purple Hairstreak, the first of which I have never seen in Lithuania, the second of which I have never seen anywhere! A fine area of grassy meadow in the Neris Valley was destination for the first, steep flower rich slopes seeming as good as anywhere. Temperatures approaching 30 C on arrival, but the sun very weak and soon snuffed out by light rain! Sat in the car and waited, an hour ticking by, then the clouds thinned and out popped the sun again - time for butterflies! Wandered the slopes, one Swallowtail, two Pale Clouded Yellows, a bunch of Common Blues, my first Little Blue in almost six weeks ...no Brown Argus. Maybe too early in the season, maybe not a good location. Decided to cut back to the car via the outskirts of a village ...a good move, for there sunning on piles of old roofing sheets, one Wall Brown! My first in Lithuania since 2010 and species 101 for the Baltic year, number 96 for Lithuania. What a stroke of luck! For Purple Hairstreak, it was a case of eyes to the sky, this is a species that rarely descends to ground level, but prefers instead the canopy of oaks. With the peak flying season late July through to August, it was now time to begin my search. I relocated to an area of oak woodland and strolled along a broad track scanning both trackside flowers and the canopy. One Speckled Wood was the main reward. A kilometre or so along I got to a point where I had seen a brief hairstreak a week earlier, but failed to nail the identification before it disappeared. A very nice spot with high oaks surrounding a small clearing and mid-size oaks encroaching across the open area, all in all a lot of habitat for the oak-loving Purple Hairstreak. A few Peacocks about, plus Wood Whites, then I spotted a midget of a butterfly flying amongst the lower branches of one of the young oaks just in front of me. It landed, I checked with binoculars ...and there the distinctive form of a Purple Hairstreak, a pale underwing with the typical jagged hairstreak line, a single spot at the rear adjacent to the tail. It was probably low enough to even get a photo, but barely had I begun to wade through the grass and it took off, only to land much higher up. Ten minutes later, a second fluttered around the canopy of an adjacent oak, much higher this time and settling only out of sight. So there we had it, my first ever Purple Hairstreaks and species number 102 for the Baltics year list. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 101. Wall Brown (96 in Lithuania)
- 102. Purple Hairstreak (97 in Lithuania)

Also in this area, Elephant Hawk Moth caterpillars and Wasp Spider:

30 July. New Species for Lithuania!!! Was back on the southern borderlands of Lithuania, seeking Chalkhill Blues again. Still Marbled Whites in the area, several in the same areas as the week before, plus a new population of at least 17 at another locality. Pretty impressive influx, only four individuals ever in Lithuania prior to 2016, and I had now seen at least 55 in the space of seven days! As in the previous week, Chalkhill Blue hunting wasn't successful, I think still too early in the season, but I was not complaining, not only were the Marbled Whites floating about, but also a whole bunch of other highly localized or scarce species, six Silver-spotted Skippers, four Eastern Bath Whites, three Camberwell Beauties, a Bluespot Hairstreak and two Reverdin's Blues amongst them, along with Swallowtails, Pale Clouded Yellows and two dozen other species. One of this prepared me for one of the last butterflies of the day however - I was just

wondering why the sirens of a border patrol vehicle were wailing when I spotted a moderate-sized blue species fly past, distinctively pale on the underside. Initially thought it might be the Chalkhill Blue I was seeking, but when it landed, I was absolutely gobsmacked! Highly distinctive serrated rear edge to the wings, surely this was not what I thought it was! Followed it round for a while, eventually getting a few nice photographs, my mind simultaneously trying to find alternative identifications to what was in reality clear. There was nothing else it could be - the butterfly was a female Meleager's Blue, a species I had previously seen in southern France, but one I was pretty sure had never been recorded in Lithuania before! Back at the car, two friendly border guards were waiting for me, but shucks, even if they hadn't been friendly, I wouldn't have cared ...I had just discovered a new species for the country. Subsequent checking confirmed that this butterfly had indeed never been recorded in Lithuania. With a distribution range stretching from southern Europe through to Ukraine, the nearest known populations are in central and southern Poland. Species number 103 for my Baltic year, number 98 for the Lithuanian year and what a cracker! BALTIC YEAR LIST
- 103. Meleager's Blue (98 in Lithuania)

AUGUST 2016

As the season began to wind down, the focus in August turned to a few rare and localised species that appear late on the wing - chief amongst them Tree Grayling in Lithuania and Scotch Argus in Latvia. Also encountered a Brown Hairstreak, two Brown Argus, a few more Chalkhill Blues and, major rarities, a Clouded Yellow and a second Meleager's Blue.

1 August. Military Day. Target, Tree Grayling. In the Baltic States, this species is restricted to a few fragments of habitat in a plot of land barely three kilometres by three kilometres. All of which is within a military training area surrounded by numerous 'no entry' signs and subject to live fire exercises a dozen days or so a month! Hmm, my heart rather sank when I discovered this, sandy slopes beckoning me in, but a military camp certainly warding me off! I made enquiries to see if it was possible to access the area if there was no active training that day. 'Sort of' was the reply, theoretically entry was not prohibited if training wasn't occurring in that zone that day, but it could be closed anyhow and I would need to have a reason to be there if challenged. That was good enough for me, Tree Grayling seemed a perfectly good reason I thought. I admit being a tad nervous venturing past the line of 'no entry' signs - hopefully I would see the Tree Grayling before the military saw me! I initially searched an area on the fringes of the zone, i.e. as far from a very visible military camp as I could. And super it was, dozens of Silver-studded Blues all over the place, six Silver-spotted Skippers, three Camberwell Beauties, one Niobe Fritillary and, moving towards the correct family, a dozen Graylings and seven Rock Graylings. No Tree Grayling though! Zigzagged a number of times, Dusky Meadow Browns here and there, but not a single Tree Grayling did I find. Checking habitat further into the zone, a deep rumbling signified a military truck coming up a track towards me. I nipped out of sight, then ran pretty nifty a few hundred meters and vanished into an area hidden by bushes. If they saw me, they didn't care. Beyond, I came across a barbed wire fence ...I decided it prudent not to cross that! Ambled off the other way, Swallowtail floating past, but still did not find the desired Tree Grayling. Decided I had pushed my luck enough for the day, perhaps I was still too early in the season for Tree Grayling, I would return another day!

4-5 August. Grasslands. Target, Brown Argus. Already two weeks, I had been looking for this, travelling to numerous sites across southern and eastern Lithuania all to no avail. Tried the Ukmerge area on the 4th, cloudy skies basically thwarting my attempts, tried again on the 5th, the weather now simply amazing, blazing sun all day and temperatures touching 30 C. Three localities on my radar, one west of Vilnius, two to the north. Loads of Common Blues at the first, eight Turquoise Blues and four Little Blues too, but no Brown Argus. At the next two sites, things were even better - they were buzzing with butterflies, the combined tallies including at least 80 Common Blues, an impressive 75 plus Pale Clouded Yellows, 55 Brimstones and 60 Small Heaths. Also one Swallowtail, 13 Little Blues, eight Queen of Spain

Fritillaries and 14 Wall Browns. Walked a couple of hours, wading through Common Blues in search of a Brown Argus all the way. Didn't find one. Almost back at the car, one last 'female Common Blue' fluttering on the slope. But, ah ha, it wasn't one! At last, I had found my elusive target butterfly, slightly faded, one Brown Argus ...one more for the year lists, species number 100 for Lithuania, 104 for the Baltic States. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 104. Brown Argus (100 for Lithuania)

6 August. Success on the Belarus Border! Ominous looking skies nearly turned me back, blanket cloud cover and spells of rain on route. I persevered however, my destination once again the Belarussian borderlands to the far south-east of Lithuania. My goal was yet again Chalkhill Blue, plus I planned a perhaps optimistic search for the super star of the week previous, the female Meleager's Blue. No sun on arrival, but the clouds had thinned to a considerable degree. Some activity amongst butterflies. I checked a couple of meadows, including the site where I had found the Meleager's Blue, to rather better results than I had feared - along with a dozen or so more common species, one Queen of Spain Fritillary, three Large Grizzled Skippers and several Silver-spotted Skippers. No Chalkhill Blue however and, despite quite an extensive search, no sign of the Meleager's Blue. Moving a kilometre further, I then began a search along the wide margins of a sandy track, rough pasture to the one side. Bingo! Almost immediately ran into a male Chalkhill Blue, the uppers appearing an almost ghostly pale whitish-blue when in flight. Quite a few Common Blues at the same locality. Quite active initially, the Chalkhill Blue briefly had a run-in with another largish blue butterfly at one point, my thoughts running along the lines of 'hmm, that looked interesting' but as it did not settle, I did not pursue it beyond that as I had not yet photographed the Chalkhill Blue. As the cloud thickened slightly, the Chalkhill Blue became a little less active, sitting on flower heads for rather longer, I got my photographs! The largish blue butterfly began to bug me, I had a sneaking suspicion that I had perhaps walked away from a rather significant butterfly! With most butterflies now inactive, I began to search for the butterfly and about ten minutes later, I found it sitting quietly on a stalk of grass. My suspicions were confirmed - a male Meleager's Blue! Not sporting the classy features of the female, the male is far more subdued and moderately easy to overlook ...and that was what I had almost done! Weak scalloping to the rear wings, underwing markings shadowing the female's more prominent pattern - the identification was secure.

Amazing, second record ever for Lithuania! However, given that this is a non-migratory species, the presence of this male at a distance of only 550 metres from the female location must further strengthen the likelihood that a hitherto unknown population may well exist in the vicinity, potentially across the border in Belarus or quite possibly on the Lithuanian side. Rather chuffed with this, I continued my day, finding two more Chalkhill Blues at another location nearby, plus an assortment of other species, including two Camberwell Beauties, several Reverdin's Blues, a few Dusky Meadow Browns and one Weaver's Fritillary. Markedly though, I saw no Marbled Whites, the impressive flights of weeks previous seemingly over.

BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 105. Chalkhill Blue (101 for Lithuania)

7 August. Weather Warning. A mere two weeks or so of the season left for any hope of my final targets and the weather forecast is ongoing doom and gloom - cool, wet and cloudy for the most part! Tasks to do at Labanoras this day ...not that enjoyable, mostly cool and windy. A small selection of butterflies seen, the best being Large Grizzled Skipper, the rest being a few tatty Scarce Coppers, a couple of Red Admirals and a dozen or so other species. Felt like autumn!

8-12 August. All For Tree Grayling! The humble Tree Grayling, probably the most challenging species that I was attempting to see in 2016 ...as mentioned earlier, one location only in the Baltic States, rare even there, 100% within an active military training ground and, just to top it off, dodgy weather right at the heart of the season combining with days of live artillery firing to leave it highly problematic to see this butterfly. On the 8th August, on my third attempt in less than two weeks, I failed to find my target when I noticed a significant increase in the amount of military hardware moving into the area - I checked some areas, but learning that five days of live artillery firing were just getting underway snubbed out any ideas of sneaking into a big open central area. Did see Niobe Fritillary and three Camberwell Beauties for my troubles however. Was back again on the 12th, military activities were scheduled to wind down from 3 pm, but being a rare day of warm sunshine, I decided to have a nose round from late morning - initially avoiding the main firing range, butterfly numbers were clearly somewhat reduced from days earlier, but still I soon found a selection of the typical heathland butterflies, Silver-studded Blue, Dusky Meadow Brown, Grayling and Rock Grayling but yet again no Tree Grayling. At around 2 p.m., avoiding a couple of soldiers who appeared to be on sentry duty, I got to the open area, an expansive area churned up by military activities, but looking perfect for Tree Grayling. All seemed quiet on the battlefield, so decided it was 'now or never', I began my explorations, choosing an area of fairly open sands dotted by scattered small pines - ambled around the area for over an hour, saw very few butterflies, basically one or two Rock Graylings, a Queen of Spain Fritillary and a few Small Heaths. Thoughts of success were beginning to fade. Then

however, catching the light breeze, a butterfly with very dark uppers went zooming past. Had to be Tree Grayling! I darted off after the butterfly, rather alarmed at the speed it was covering ground - fortunately I did not lose the butterfly and it eventually settled, bright creamy-ringed 'eyes' on the dark underwings, white spots on the centre ...Tree Grayling indeed! Then it shut its wings, now blending perfectly into the background. Exquisite and quite a relief, I got a few photographs before it decided to fly again, seeming to settle a short distance away, I however could not relocate it. Half an hour later, I found another two a couple of hundred metres away, my quest was over, a species I particularly wanted to see.

BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 106. Tree Grayling (102 for Lithuania)

14 August. Scotch Argus Tumbles in Latvian Backwoods. Third excursion of the year into Latvia, target Scotch Argus, a species not seen in Lithuania for several decades, but still very common in the open pine forests south-west of Riga. Forecasts of very mixed weather did not bode particularly well, but with sunny spells at least theoretical, I set off from Vilnius at 6.00 a.m. for the three-and-a-half hour drive.

Overcast and dull on arrival! Remarkably however, even before parking the car, I spied a dark butterfly fluttering weakly across the roadside verge. Scotch Argus! Parked and wandered for a while, soon found more ...five Scotch Argus, mostly settled on the ground or low vegetation. Then, a bare ten minutes after arriving, it began to rain, butterflies vanished, game over for a while. Fortunately, just over an hour later, broad pockets of blue sky appeared, resultant sunny spells lasting through to afternoon...and with the better weather, numerous more Scotch Argus, perhaps 60 or more, plus a small assortment of other species, one Camberwell Beauty and several tatty Silver-studded Blues amongst them. Banks of cloud then rolled in, I departed and began the return journey. A few kilometers further however, blue skies returned, so I stopped at a random patch of forest, exploring broad tracks and seas of clear fell. A good decision - two dozen species seen, a very fine late summer collection, including Weaver's Fritillary, Queen of Spain Fritillary, Large Grizzled Skipper, Pale Clouded Yellow and a motley crew of faded left overs from earlier in the season, Scarce Coppers, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and the like.

So there we have it, a day in Latvia, 28 species seen, critically including Scotch Argus, my 107th species of the year in the Baltic States. BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 107. Scotch Argus (102 for Lithuania)

15-17 August. Season's Decline. One day of reasonable sun, two days of cool, wet and blustery conditions. Even on the sunny day, a marked decline in butterfly numbers - visiting Labanoras and Kernave, I notched up 21 species, top of the pick being my second Brown Argus of the year, with other nice butterflies including Little Blue and three Queen of Spain Fritillaries. These aside though, numbers of most species were well down, the key exceptions being Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells, both of which were more abundant than in recent weeks, perhaps the start of a final flush. All in all however, especially with the onset of heavy rain, the season truly felt near its end. 18-21 August. Grand Finale. Scraping the barrel, there were only a couple of final potential species remotely possible this year ...Brown Hairstreak was the most likely, a butterfly that I had not seen in Lithuania since 2009, and after that a vagrant species from south, one of the clouded yellow group being at the top of my mind, even though none are annual in Lithuania! And so I turned my attentions to these butterflies! 18 August. Dukstos. Despite searching for Brown Hairstreak without success in several localities over the previous couple of weeks, I reasoned I had as good a chance in the Neris Valley as anywhere else, so decided upon the mixed forest and meadow landscapes of the Dukstos area this day. Hit and miss weather, good sunny periods and about 20 C, but so too occasional banks of clouds and spots of rain. Further reductions in butterfly numbers immediately apparent, only 13 species seen with Common Blues and Small Heaths the only species appearing in fairly good numbers. As for Brown Hairstreak, I searched high and low in areas that I thought looked encouraging, but saw zilch. Then however, as I tramped back towards my car after three hours of wandering, there was a Brown Hairstreak! Surely the most stunning of the Lithuanian hairstreaks, the vivid oranges of this fresh individual were simply splendid. Probably the last new species for the year, a wonderful finale to an excellent year. Stupid me, I forgot to put a memory card in the camera, so no shots this day - fortunately I have a photograph of a near identical of this stunner from 2009 (below). BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 108. Brown Hairstreak (103 for Lithuania) 21 August. Druskininkai. Southern border areas again. Basic reason to be in this region was to search for potential vagrants from more southerly parts of Europe, for example Clouded Yellow, Berger's Clouded Yellow or, probably unlikely these days, Danube Clouded Yellow. With temperatures topping 26 C, a fine day it turned out, 28 species seen in all, with exceptional numbers of some late butterflies - my highest ever single day count, I estimated a minimum of 460 Red Admirals were present, quite possibly quite an under-estimate. Alongside, also at least 80 Queen of Spain Fritillaries, another personal record for a day count. And much more too - ten Weaver's

Fritillaries, five Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, five tatty Silver-spotted Skippers, a couple of small colonies of Reverdin's Blues and, wonderfully fresh individuals, seven Chalkhill Blues. Checked two main localities along the border, numerous butterflies at both, but numbers of migrant butterflies were decidedly low - a mere seven Painted Ladies and six Pale Clouded Yellows. However, late afternoon, I hit the jackpot - the deep yellows of a Clouded Yellow catching my eye. Typical of the species, it was highly mobile, flying at speed across the territory, appearing to have actually flown in from Belarus. Went racing after it, had it settle for a brief second, before it stormed off north, eventually rising over a line of trees to vanish into Lithuania's interior! Clicked my camera wildly at the rapidly disappearing butterfly, a vivid yellow blurry blob the result. The Clouded Yellow near Druskininkai: And a comparison of Clouded Yellow (left, photographed in France) and Pale Clouded Yellow (below, Lithuania) :

BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 109. Clouded Yellow (104 for Lithuania)

22 August. Pabrade. Labanoras fairly quiet, so decided to cut back to the military areas near Pabrade. Rat-a-tat of automatic gunfire at the first block, but fortunately all clear at my favoured site some 3 km further. Camberwell Beauty to welcome me, then a steady procession of Red Admirals and occasional Painted Ladies as I walked the kilometre or so to the central open areas. 26 C again, bright sun, I had high hopes of further Tree Graylings on the heath. And I was not disappointed - a little beyond where I encountered them the previous week, I found no less than four this time. Slightly faded, especially the creamy rings, but nice all the same. Also, remnants of flights earlier in the season, a couple of Rock Graylings in the same area, a dozen Silver-studded Blues too. Wandering back to the car, added single Wall Browns and Speckled Woods, quite probably my last of the year.

24-27 August. Bears, Butterflies and Birds. Mini trip to lands a little more exotic than Lithuania - a few days in the Cantabrian Mountains of northern Spain to seek Brown Bears, a trip nicely supplemented by close to 60 species of butterfly and assorted birds including Lammergeier, Griffon Vultures and Iberian Green Woodpecker ...see [HERE](#) for a full account of this trip. SEPTEMBER 2016 Despite the onset of autumn, still quite a flurry of butterfly activity throughout the month - Eastern Bath White, Clouded Yellow, Chalkhill Blue, Brown Hairstreak and Brown Argus amongst the near 30 species seen.

1-3 September. Autumn Pickings. Nearing the season's end perhaps, but the first three days of September were grand, a haul of no less than 22 species still on the wing, some in good numbers. Two areas visited - meadows south of the capital and borderlands in the far south, both proving better than expected. At the first locality, forest tracks were almost devoid of butterflies, but arriving a favourite area of meadow adjacent, the sight was awesome - in temperatures above 25 C, a multitude of whites and others fluttering across the fields.

Exploring in depth, the rewards were plenty - in addition to the several hundred Small Whites and Green-veined Whites, also a mighty impressive 80 or so Weaver's Fritillaries and minimum of 30 Queen of Spain Fritillaries, high totals indeed, especially for so late in the season. Also here, amongst the total of 16 species, at least 15 Pale Clouded Yellows and three Eastern Bath Whites. A couple of days later, though the sun had been replaced by high cloud, the species tallies soared ever higher. Visiting my regular localities in the Belarussian border zone near Druskininkai, my expectations had been rather low due to the cloud, but fortunately it gradually became brighter and warmer as the day wore on ...and with the improvement, slowly, slowly, more and more butterflies! Saw 20 species in all, including typical early autumn species such as Red Admiral, Comma and Small Tortoiseshell, plus lingering (and mostly tatty) butterflies from earlier in the season, amongst them Scarce, Sooty and Small Coppers and High Brown Fritillary. Best of the bunch however were Large Grizzled Skipper, Chalkhill Blue, Map Butterfly and Reverdin's Blue (all two-three weeks since my previous sightings). 7-11 September. Yet More. One day of wet weather on the 4th, then back to days of splendid sunshine and temperatures approaching 25 C ...some of the best weather of the year! I had expected the year to have been largely over by now in terms of butterflies, but how pleasantly wrong I was!!! With trips to meadows south of Vilnius, to Labanoras and to the Kernave and Dukstos areas, I was still managing to record up to 16 or 17 species a day, rather impressive I think for September in the Baltic States. And better still, amongst the rich selection, I was also seeing some very nice numbers and species. Of the high tallies, the most significant included around 65 Pale Clouded Yellows, a mighty 55 Queen of Spain Fritillaries and a wonderful 25 Eastern Bath Whites (my highest day total of the year, representing more in the single day than I often see in an average year). Notable species included a vagrant Clouded Yellow on the 9th, two Brown Hairstreaks on the 11th and five Brown Argus on the 11th. Though an non-annual visitor to Lithuania, the Clouded Yellow was my second of the year, while the Brown Hairstreaks were my second and third and

the Brown Argus my third to eighth of the year! I hadn't expected any of these species to still be flying!

Also found two more late Large Grizzled Skippers (7th and 11th), an equally late Map Butterfly (11th), a Speckled Wood (10th) and no less than 19 Small Coppers (9th and 11th). With the forecast set to remain good for at least another week, all's looking excellent for continued butterfly action for some time yet! 15-18 September. The Final Countdown. It was always a question how long the amazing run of high temperatures could last. Well, the forecasts now predicted pitiful temperatures of just 12-13 C for the next week, rain fairly frequent. That should just about end the butterfly season! In the meantime however, it was excellent - no less than 16 species recorded on the 15th and, despite a notable chill to the air and mostly overcast skies, still 10 species on the 18th. Highlights? All scattered between sites in the Druskinikai area and meadows south of Vilnius, another 20 or so Pale Clouded Yellows, no less than 74 Queen of Spain Fritillaries (!) and 32 Small Coppers, along with a single Eastern Bath White, a late Chalkhill Blue and an equally late Reverdin's Blue. Also saw Sooty Copper, Scarce Copper, Weaver's Fritillary and Speckled Wood, all of which were potentially my final ones of the year. 25-26 September. On it Ticks! No end to the season - after a run of cloudy days hovering around 12 C with periodic rain, a return to partial sun and 14 C revealed it was not all over! Far from it, no less than ten species still on the wing in my favoured meadows on the 25th, some in very good numbers. Queen of Spain Fritillaries totalled perhaps 40, some very fresh looking individuals, Small Coppers were sitting at a minimum of 35 and Pale Clouded Yellows at about 18. Remarkably, an impressive 12 Eastern Bath Whites were also present, plus three Sooty Coppers, a dozen Small Whites, two Green-veined Whites, a Comma and a Weaver's Fritillary. Two other localities on the 26th produced yet more butterflies, albeit in lower numbers - eight Pale Clouded Yellows, one Queen of Spain Fritillary, three Small Whites, a Comma and, now very late, a lingering Scarce Copper. These apparent abundances however are somewhat deceptive - most localities, especially non-meadow habitats, are now totally devoid of butterflies. That said, there must be odds on chances for a reasonable selection of butterflies lasting even until October this year!

OCTOBER 2016

Amazing weather to start the month - positively tropical at 20 C, the result being still numerous butterflies on the wing. Amongst 16 species, unprecedented records of Chestnut Heath and two Large Coppers, neither species ever recorded so late in the season in Lithuania.

1-2 October. The New Summer. Always a potential for frost in the early days of October, even snow on a rare occasion. Not so this year however - the month beginning with sunshine and very unseasonal highs of 20 C. In these stunning conditions, numerous butterflies remained on the wing, numbers actually rising as new freshly-emerged individuals appeared, including ultra unusual records of both Chestnut Heath and Large Copper, both usually single-brooded summer butterflies in the Baltic States. As far as I know, this is the first record of a second generation Chestnut Heath in Lithuania, whilst perhaps only the second of Large Copper (one record existing of an individual on 17 September some years ago). Over and above these however, numbers of butterflies in general were impressive - in many a year, all butterflies have long disappeared by October, but in the sunshine at an assortment of productive meadows north and south of the capital, no less than 16 species and 250 individual butterflies were noted on the first day of the month, this actually representing a significant rise on the numbers in late September! Amongst them, quite a number of fresh newly-emerged individuals, especially Queen of Spain Fritillaries, Eastern Bath Whites, Small Whites and Small Coppers, active mating and egg laying observed. Lots of Pale Clouded Yellows too, plus a rise in Commas and a reappearance of Painted Ladies, Peacocks and Brimstones. Somewhat a surprise, two Brown Argus were also seen, these quite possibly also being the first October records for Lithuania. On the bird front, Cranes and Whooper Swans heading south. Little parties of Crossbills doing the same. 3 October. Last Gasp for last Large Copper. With the forecasts for the following week looking ominous, this was likely to be my last real opportunity for any numbers of butterflies in 2016. Out I headed to meadows. Though mostly overcast and cool in the morning, with a grand total of just three butterflies seen (one Green-veined White and two Small Whites), things totally flipped to the positive in early afternoon when a weak sun broke through – as the temperature clambered up to 16 C, butterflies emerged for the final finale ...20 Queen of Spain Fritillaries, one Weaver's Fritillary, 16 Pale Clouded Yellows, five Eastern Bath Whites, all very nice. Also a couple of dozen Small Whites, eight Small Coppers and three Peacocks. The biggest surprise however was another Large Copper – initially assuming it was the same individual as seen a couple of days later, the underwing spotting identified it as a new individual, quite remarkable ...and signs that the species

certainly had a second generation this year. So, one brief sunny spell, nine species and approximately 75 individual butterflies ...the grand finale, over and out. 4-9 October. Season's End.

And then it was all over, the butterfly season coming to a grinding halt as autumn hit with a vengeance! Days and days of strong winds, heavy rain and daytime temperatures down to 5 C ...no point even looking for butterflies! No sun forecast for several more days to come, even then the temperatures not predicted to rise very much - I seriously doubt there will be an encore to follow! 13-16 October. No Encore. Sunny days again, but hard frost and night temperatures hitting minus 3 C. One brave butterfly in the relative warmth of the late afternoon on the 13th (a Brimstone), but otherwise the meadows and woodland edges have fallen quiet, the butterfly season is truly over. Still, with a brief flurry of snow on the 14th, winter is not so far away ...time to resume my ringing at my winter feeding stations. Weekend one notched up a bunch of birds, a good number of both Marsh and Willow Tits amongst them. Also at my feeding station, a Hazel Grouse just nearby, Bewick's Swans overhead and a Wigeon on a pool. Goodbye butterflies, hello birds. NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2016 Season over, no butterflies on the wing. Only species noted were occasional Peacocks in winter roosts.