

Peak Season. July 2016

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The peak of the butterfly season, with many rare and scarce butterflies seen, taking me to the target of 100 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 I 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 Svetoji 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. Twinspace 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 dew-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 96 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 97 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 (97 in Lithuania)

- 102. Purple Hairstreak (98 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. None 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 southern Poland, approximately 380 km to the south. Species number 103 for my Baltic year, number 99 for the Lithuanian year and what a cracker! BALTIC YEAR LIST

- 103. Meleager's Blue (99 in Lithuania)

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