

April 2017. One Day Wonder.

Contributed by Jos

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All about a day! April started off with a real punch - a spectacular day of high temperatures and superb butterfly action (Camberwell Beauties, Large Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, etc). Then it came to a grinding halt with temperatures dipping for the rest of the month and even a few days of snow!

2 April. Early Bonanza. Sunshine, 22 C! Months of dreary temperatures a distant memory (for a day at least), a most impressive selection of early season butterflies were out basking in the warmth, plus the first frogs and toads. Choosing the extreme south of Lithuania, I harboured ambition to find two of the more dramatic species on the wing in early spring … Camberwell Beauty and Large Tortoiseshell. Site one, right on the border with Belarus, set the scene for the day ‐ still fairly early in the morning, but already Brimstones on sun-dappled banks and bunches of Small Tortoiseshells gathering around sparse flowers, plus the first Peacocks of the year and a Comma. As the warmth of the day built, a flash of cream and dark ‐ patrolling a sandy track, one splendid Camberwell Beauty. Five species already, pretty good for early April. And then, as I meandered through open pinewood for an hour or so, it just got better ‐ as well as numerous Brimstones, I notched up no less than 14 more Camberwell Beauties, one of my highest ever day totals. A few kilometres further, most gathering at pussy willow catkins, the next site added more Small Tortoiseshells, Brimstones and Peacocks, plus another couple of Commas. Most unexpected, however, was a Red Admiral - not a species that overwinters in Lithuania, early spring examples are exceedingly rare, more usually a butterfly that can be found from June onwards. Now early afternoon, I still had not found a Large Tortoiseshell though. Remedied this en route back to Vilnius ‐ stopping in a small meadow tucked up against forest, yellow flowers were proving a magnet to Small Tortoiseshells and Brimstones, a couple of dozen of each present. Wandered round for about an hour, soaking up the afternoon sun, then a large orange butterfly arrived, flying and gliding with fair power. Settling on the trunk of a silver birch, there the butterfly was, my desired Large Tortoiseshell! Didn't find anything else, so eventually headed off, quite pleased with the day. So, approximate counts for butterflies this day: 230 Brimstones, one Red Admiral, 15 Camberwell Beauties, one Large Tortoiseshell, 95 Small Tortoiseshells, 22 Peacocks and three Commas ...a grand total of about 370 butterflies! Just for comparison, 2 April 2016 was a cool 11 C, I managed a grand total of eight butterflies, all Small Tortoiseshells. **BALTIC YEAR LIST**

- 5. Red Admiral.
- 6. Camberwell Beauty
- 7. Large Tortoiseshell
- 8. Peacock

5-29 April. Snow, frosts, rain and wind!Gee, what happened to spring?! A near full month of disgusting weather - day after day of fairly abysmal conditions, dominated by cold northerlies and rare sunshine. Even had a carpet of snow on the 15-17th of the month, several centimetres in Vilnius and Labanoras!!! After such a promising start with butterflies at the beginning of the month, high hopes of additional species faded as the days went by, not a hunt of anything. In reality, it was an almost complete wash-out on, the only butterflies seen being three Small Tortoiseshells and a Peacock braving a sunny day and 5 C on the 20th and an equally hardy Small Tortoiseshell basking in sun between snow squalls on the 23rd! However ... Fortunately, my sanity was preserved via a mini escape mid-month to the sunny climes of Catalonia where I had a splendid time, finding an impressive 45 species of butterflies, including the much-desired Spanish Festoon, Provence Hairstreak and Nettle-tree Butterfly.[CLICK HERE](#) for a full trip report.

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