

August 2017. High Summer.

Contributed by Jos
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Past the peak for many species, but still quite a lot on the wing, several Purple Hairstreaks included, plus a selection of added extras, perhaps the most notable being a Marbled White 70 km north of the core area. Also seen, a few Turquoise Blues at one locality, good numbers of Chalkhill Blues in the south, a few Brown Argus and increasing numbers of Pale Clouded Yellows.

1-7 August. As Lithuania finally experienced something akin to proper summer weather, I spent a few days trying to find the localised Arran Brown - probably too late in the season and probably not at good localities, needless to say I didn't find any! I did however find four Large Wall Browns, individuals right at the end of their flight season. Biggest surprise though was a completely out-of-habitat Purple Hairstreak sunning on vegetation in a clearing in an otherwise pine-dominated landscape. My 104th species of the year in Lithuania, equalling my highest ever annual total in the country! I then found another two the following day in the far more usual habitat of oak forest, typically as ever flitting high in the canopy and not exactly photogenic. One two White-letter Hairstreak at this latter locality too. Spot the butterfly! Also optimistically spent a day scouting an area for Mallow Skipper - a species only recently recorded in Lithuania. Walked a considerable section of river valley in the suitable areas and certainly found some splendid habitat - predictably no Mallow Skipper, but amongst the good selection, I did add eight Swallowtails, seven Wall Browns and a number of Brown Argus, with Queen of Spain Fritillary and Weaver's Fritillary also seen, and of quite some note, a single Marbled White - this being my most northerly individual to date, a distance of about 70 km from the main colonisation zone. Elsewhere, amongst quite a few species now declining in number, a number of species also on the increase, Pale Clouded Yellows and Short-tailed Blues included. Also a good scatter of Large Grizzled Skippers and another bunch of Brown Argus in the Neris Valley. BALTIC YEAR LIST 104. Purple Hairstreak

12 August. One Day Heatwave.

Hottest day of the year, 35 C, but a massive reduction in overall butterfly numbers. Started off at a favoured site in the southern border zone - two weeks earlier, 510 Marbled Whites at this site, 46 Meleager's Blues and many hundreds of Map Butterflies, Ringlets, Peacocks, Scarce Coppers et al. Today, a mere 14 Marbled Whites, single male and single female Meleager's Blues and a meagre four Map Butterflies, one Ringlet and dozen or so Peacocks and Scarce Coppers. Brimstones and Small Whites remained in their hundreds, but reductions too in virtually all other species, fewer browns, fewer fritillaries, just one Swallowtail, just one Camberwell Beauty and on it went. Fast forwarding towards the end of the season. Fortunately, a few species were going the other way - in a good year for them, Chalkhill Blues had increased to at least 70 at this locality, so too an increase in Common Blues (about 60 present), Small Heaths (about 25) and Small Tortoiseshells (about 35). Other species of note, a couple of Queen of Spain Fritillaries, one Reverdin's Blue and two Silver-spotted Skippers. One Large Grizzled Skipper too. Pretty much the same picture at my next locality, Marbled Whites down from 65 to a lone single and drops of 95-99% in many other species, Peacocks, assorted fritillaries and Essex Skippers included. Again though, a slight rise in Chalkhill Blues and a notable rise in Common Blues. As at the earlier site, also a single Reverdin's Blue, a single Swallowtail and a single Camberwell Beauty. Far too hot to be lamenting the lack of butterflies as I wandering around withered flowers and thistleheads now shedding masses of airborne seeds, I departed and headed home. Stopped aside a lack midway, two Pallas's Fritillaries a nice surprise (only my fourth this year, all the others in mid-July), plus several Red Admirals and three Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. Recorded 36 species this day, 14 lower than two weeks earlier at the same sites. 13 August. Army Day. Into the restricted access military zones, a few square kilometres of habitat that supports the only Tree Graylings in the Baltic States. A near continual pop pop pop of gunfire signalled it was perhaps wise to proceed with caution. Meandered through pine forest to arrive at the spot I wanted - open sandy dunes with stunted tree growth. But darn, military exercises were close - between the firing, I could even hear the guys shouting. Having no wish to get caught, I concentrated my search on one small area of heath in the lee of a ridge ...Rock Grayling, Grayling, two Swallowtails, Silver-studded Blues. No Tree Grayling. Excellent habitat before me, but way too open - I would surely have been spotted. So near, so far - I guess this will be a species I miss this year. 19 August. Tatty Ends. Some superb fresh Queen of Spain Fritillaries on the wing this day, emergences of Eastern Bath Whites, Red Admirals and large numbers of Common Blues too. In the far south, in temperatures of 32 C, still plenty of Chalkhill Blues, plus what will surely be my last Meleager's Blue of the year, a rather tatty female, and probably my last two Marbled Whites too. Overall, 35 species this day, but still very much a picture of a season nearing its end - just a single Map Butterfly, no Heath Fritillaries anymore and declines in many species. Amongst other highlights though, two Pallas's Fritillaries, eight Large Grizzled Skippers, a very faded Blue-spot Hairstreak and a Camberwell Beauty. Closer to Vilnius, I stopped at a locality that always seems to shine late in the season - no exception this year ... amongst abundant whites, a minimum of 35 Eastern Bath Whites represented my highest count of the year, while Pale Clouded Yellows, Weaver's Fritillaries and Queen of Spain Fritillaries were also in no short supply, one Silver-spotted Skipper present too. Days of rain now forecast, running towards the end of the season ...still a chance of a Painted Lady, a species that is usually fairly common, but otherwise my Lithuanian year total seems destined to remain on 104 - equalling, but not beating, my mega 2016 total.