

September 2017. Distinctly Autumn.

Contributed by Jos
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Departure of birds, abundant fungi, cool blustery conditions, summer a memory. On sunny days however, still butterflies flying, not least Queen of Spain Fritillaries and Pale Clouded Yellows, plus late records of Silver-spotted Skipper, Brown Hairstreak and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Even more remarkable, a Large Copper, Large Skipper and two Camberwell Beauties in the latter parts of the month.

1-9 September. Late Glories. Many sites now devoid of butterflies, but a cracking day on the 1 September produced no less than 20 species at key localities in the south of the country and closer to Vilnius – in sunshine and a temperature of 25 C, hordes of butterflies were on the wing, one of the sites holding an estimated 300 Small Whites, while another managed 120 Common Blues! Also still three Chalkhill Blues and a Reverdin's Blue, plus my final Silver-washed Fritillaries, Scarce Coppers, Meadow Browns and Small Heath's of the year. Clouded and rain on the forecast for a number of days thereafter, but fortunately I departed for southern Spain for four days to enjoy delights such as Two-tailed Pasha and Desert Orange Tip – see [HERE](#) for the report. Back in Lithuania, sun was back in control on the 9 September, though a bit windy and only 15 C. Perhaps one of the last 'good' days of the year for butterflies in Lithuania, species were similar to those a few days earlier, though numbers slightly reduced: Small Whites at about 250, Green-veined Whites at 70 and Queen of Spain of Fritillary at 10. Going the other way, with increased numbers, also 35 Weaver's Fritillaries and about 45 Small Coppers. More noteworthy, a single Silver-spotted Skipper was my first for three weeks and represents perhaps the latest record of the species in the country. Also recorded my last Sooty Copper of the year. 16 September. Hairstreak Surprise. Season nudging towards its end, surely only a couple of weeks left before a frost or other weather finishes the season once and for all. Good sunshine and 16 C this day though, so made the best of it and returned to a couple of favoured sites in the Vilnius area, one south of the city, one north – still 15 species flying, key amongst them at least 225 Small Whites, 55 Green-veined Whites, five Eastern Bath Whites, 16 Pale Clouded Yellows, 50 Small Coppers, 40 Small Tortoiseshells and 20 Queen of Spain Fritillaries. Biggest surprise however was a splendid Brown Hairstreak – found while failing to find late season Brown Argus, this was only my second Brown Hairstreak of the year. A slightly faded individual, it was most cooperative, frequently returning to the same patch on a steep slope and often opening its wings in a quite atypical hairstreak manner. Back to rain and cloud in the days after, a week of fairly poor weather. 23-29 September. New summer! By rights, the butterfly season in the Baltic States should be more-or-less over by mid- September, a few last species still flying. In the last couple of years however, with periods of warm sun pushing right towards October, things are changing in Lithuania – not only good numbers of species flying later and later, but rare instances of second generations occurring in a number of traditional one-generation species. Found both Large Copper and Chestnut Heath at the very end of September in 2016 and so too this year some late surprises – not only another Large Copper in the 24th, but a totally unexpected Large Skipper on the 23rd, a fresh pristine individual, clearly newly emerged. To the best of my knowledge, last year's and this year's Large Coppers represent the latest records ever of the species in Lithuania, while the Large Skipper is probably the first record of a second generation in the country. More than just these however, these days were quite exceptional – an impressive 20 C, bright sun and up to 19 species of butterfly recorded per day. Amongst many dozens of Small Whites, Green-veined Whites and Small Tortoiseshells, some of the other less expected species included an exceptionally late, and rather faded, Reverdin's Blue, a slightly tatty Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and a pair of very smart Camberwell Beauties, these presumably taking a short break from hibernation (over five weeks since my last individuals). More expected, still good numbers of Red Admirals, Queen of Spain Fritillaries and Small Coppers, plus a few Eastern Bath Whites, a Pale Clouded Yellows and a single Weaver's Fritillary. The days are numbered however, surely the season's finale is mere days away.

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