

## High Spring. May 2018.

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Amazing weather throughout the month, producing many species early this year - Baltic Grayling, Clouded Apollo, Violet Copper, Green-underside Blue and Bog Fritillary among the butterflies flying, Downy Emeralds, Golden-ringed Dragonfly and Norfolk Hawker among the dozen species of dragonflies.

1 May. Dragons and Damsels. With the turn of the month, so the dragons and damsels take the stage. I did see a small number of Siberian Winter Damselflies in early April, but otherwise these were the first flights of the year - and dramatic they were, Siberian Winter Damselflies decorating grass stalks adjacent to a pool in Labanoras, perhaps 40 Northern White-faced Darters in the same area. A few hundred away, in a clearing in flood forest, yet another emergence of the dragons - rather splendid Downy Emeralds also taking to the wing in considerable numbers. And just to round things off, one Four-spotted Chaser too. So spring is truly here, butterflies and dragonflies now both active. In the butterfly category, also saw another Swallowtail this day, the eleventh in just a few days. 5-6 May. Good Stuff.

Amazing weather of spring 2018 continues, bringing no less than 21 species of butterfly this weekend, plus a mass emergence of several species of dragons and damsels. With sun and blue skies both days, I hit Labanoras one day, the south of the country the next. And splendid the days were - a massive spike in dragonfly numbers at Labanoras, with many hundreds of both Downy Emeralds and Northern White-faced Darters, then a butterfly fiesta in the Druskininkai area. Amongst the many butterflies present, several new for the year - a splendid Short-tailed Blue, several Small Heaths, a bunch of Large Whites and, unusual for so early in the season in Lithuania, almost 30 Red Admirals. Also eight Swallowtails, a couple of Camberwell Beauties and two Grizzled Skippers. Impressive flights of dragons and damsels in the Druskininkai area too - as at Labanoras, many Downy Emeralds, but here too numerous Common Clubtails, a number of Four-spotted Chasers and several Irish Damselflies. Stopped en route back to Vilnius with additional success - not just four Queen of Spain Fritillaries and my first Small Copper and Small White of the year, but also several Hairy Dragonflies, another new species for the year and perhaps a couple of weeks earlier than is more typical. LITHUANIAN BUTTERFLY LIST 2018

- 20. Small White.

- 21. Large White.

- 22. Red Admiral.

- 23. Short-tailed Blue.

- 24. Small Copper.

- 25. Small Heath.

12 May 2018. Second Wave. Two to three weeks early, phase two of the butterfly year already underway - traditional early species such as Orange Tip and Green Hairstreak on the wain, but an ever increasing variety on the wing and the emergence of quite a number of species more typical of later in the month - amongst the highlights this day, at least 35 Pale Clouded Yellows and 18 Sooty Coppers, plus the first Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Weaver's Fritillary and at least 20 Queen of Spain Fritillaries. Under a blazing sun and temperature of 27 C, also managed my first Common Blue of the season and a whole host of other good butterflies, including six Swallowtails, one tatty Camberwell Beauty and, all good for so early in the season, my second Small Copper of the week, over 40 Small Heaths and three Grizzled Skippers. Though I spent much of the day in meadows, my main targets for the day were actually a couple of species more restricted in their range - Baltic Grayling and Dingy Skipper. Much sloshing up to my knees to visit a bog where I had found several dozen of the first in late May in 2017 - a beautiful spot of stunted pines, floating mats of vegetation and heads of cotton grass. Thought I was perhaps too early in the season, but I was in luck - after a half hour of searching, one pristine Baltic Grayling resting on the side of a pine trunk as is their habit. And then another. Not a common butterfly in Lithuania, it is always an honour to see these - and as very fresh individuals, I presume they had only just emerged. And then to an area zigzagged by hot dry gravel tracks, habitat of Dingy Skippers. Couldn't have been easier, within just a few minutes of arriving, I had at least 16 buzzing about a single small patch of habitat - easily the best number I have ever seen together in Lithuania! Also here, two Short-tailed Blues. So truly a successful day - no less than 26 species seen during the day, six of which new for the year. LITHUANIAN BUTTERFLY LIST 2018

- 26. Pale Clouded Yellow.

- 27. Sooty Copper.

- 28. Common Blue.

- 29. Weaver's Fritillary.

- 30. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

- 31. Baltic Grayling.

- 32. Dingy Skipper.

13 May. Flight of the Apollo. Another day of temperatures topping 27 C, another day of butterflies and dragonflies in abundance. Seemed to be a notable emergence of assorted dragonflies and damselflies in the Labanoras area, the

existing species continuing in good numbers, but also a flush of new species: several damselflies including Red-eyed Damselflies, plus Broad-bodied Chasers and a Scarce Chaser among the dragonflies. Building on their good numbers this season, also four Swallowtails at Labanoras this day, plus other species including Short-tailed Blue, Small Copper and Red Admiral. Changing location, also noted my first Wall Brown of the year in Lithuania and, rather more exotic, a superb flight of Clouded Apollos - rare and localised in this country, I found no less than 18 fluttering around a warm sunny bank at one site, then two more individuals at another locality several kilometres away. In line with the generally early season, these are exceptionally early, a good two weeks before they usually fly. LITHUANIAN BUTTERFLY LIST 2018

- 33. Clouded Apollo.
- 34. Wall Brown.

14 May. Time of the Specials. Exquisite but rare, Violet Copper in Lithuania is restricted to just a couple of isolated wetland localities. Flying fairly in the season, usually from the end of May, this goal this day was to see if I could locate any early individuals. Thrush Nightingales and Common Rosefinches singing as a backdrop, Speckled Wood and Wood Whites at the margin of the bog, many Northern Damselflies and Large Red Damselflies too. Out on the bog however, all seemed fairly quiet - no initial sign of Violet Copper, nor any Marsh Fritillaries yet on the wing. Success was to follow however - after about half hour or so, finding a couple of Grizzled Skippers in the process, I then flushed a small butterfly. And as it landed, a fine male Violet Copper it transpired to be, splendid. Soon lost this individual, but some time later also found a female. March of the early season continues, these Violet Coppers a good couple of weeks earlier than might be expected. LITHUANIAN BUTTERFLY LIST 2018

- 35. Violet Copper. 16 May. No Olives. Tried for another localised species this day - Olive Skipper. I have never managed to find this species in Lithuania ...and did not this day either! Despite searching a few suitable sites in a river valley, not a sign did I find. Did see however a few very welcome Clouded Apollos and my first Little Blue of the year. Perhaps more notable, quite a good showing of Odonata - along with plentiful Club-tailed Dragonflies and Northern White-faced Darters, also several Broad-bodied Chasers, plus my first Norfolk Hawkers, Banded Demoiselles and Azure Damselflies of the year, about six of the first, fifteen of the second and at least 20 of the latter. LITHUANIAN BUTTERFLY LIST 2018

- 36. Little Blue. 19 May. Southern Borders. Somewhat blighted by overcast skies early on, the Druskininkai area was not looking too promising! Fortunately all change from midday - clouds totally vanishing and a pleasantly warm sun for the remainder of the day ...and with it, quite a transformation, 20 species of butterfly on the wing, many in very good numbers. The absolute highlight however was a fine colony of Green-underside Blues - all freshly emerged, and not a single female among them, a total of 43 individuals counted, a quite remarkable total for this species that is generally rare in Lithuania. Also a couple of very tatty Camberwell Beauties surviving, while newly emerged were my first 18 Heath Fritillaries of the year, a couple of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, a couple of dozen Sooty Coppers and, rather early, three Small Skippers. A new emergence of Brimstones also on the wing and increased numbers of Common Blues. Also a dizzying array of damselflies this day, several species flying together and hundreds of individuals. Clouds of Banded Demoiselles littering riverside bushes, a colony of Red-eyed Damselflies in rank grassland. As for the rest, a soup of identification challenges - small blue-and-black damsels by the bucketload! May have overlooked some, but Azure Damselflies and Blue-tailed Damselflies seemed to dominate, but also quite a few Variable Damselflies and a number of White-legged Damselflies too. Dragonflies by contrast less abundant - one Norfolk Hawker, three Downy Emeralds, one Common Clubtail, a few Northern White-faced Darters. LITHUANIAN BUTTERFLY LIST 2018

- 37. Green-underside Blue.

- 38. Heath Fritillary.

- 39. Small Skipper. 20 May. Down In the Woods. In fantastic weather, a small detour on the way back from Druskininkai saw me visiting several sites in southern and middle Lithuania this day - Zuvintas Reserve near Alytus, then a couple of woodland sites in the Kaunas area. Zuvintas was a mere pause on my route, though Swallowtails and Pale Clouded Yellow did prove nice, as did the impressive numbers and varieties of dragonflies, but I was keen to reach the rich forests of middle Lithuania - hopefully a couple of select species would already be flying. And indeed they were. In no time at all, I had located the first individuals - a classy pair, Chequered Skippers and Northern Chequered Skippers flying together, indeed occasionally chasing each other off. Along a single woodland edge, no less than 15 Chequered Skippers counted, along with six Northern Chequered Skippers - recipe for a good day.

Also here Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and a range of other common species, while a short hop to another nearby locality added Speckled Woods and Wall Browns, plus seven Clouded Apollos on a grassy slope as well as my first Mazarine Blue of the year and, continuing the skipper flavour, one Small Skipper and a couple of Grizzled Skippers.. LITHUANIAN BUTTERFLY LIST 2018

- 40. Mazarine Blue.

- 41. Chequered Skipper.

- 42. Northern Chequered Skipper. 25 May. Mega Day. Classic day - a new species of butterfly for my Lithuanian list, then two new species of birds for my land in Labanoras! Temperature topping 26C, so popped out of work pretty early and zoomed down to meadows south of the capital for a bit of butterfly action. On arrival, first up was a stunning giant of a dragonfly in the form of a Golden-ringed Dragonfly - a localised species, this was very nice indeed and quite notable for the fact that it was quite out of habitat, usually preferring slow-flowing rivers. However, this dragonfly sighting was soon to be eclipsed ...on short flowery turf just nearby, a small distinct butterfly was sunning itself - a Mallow Skipper. A relatively new butterfly in Lithuania, a dozen or so records of this species now exist in the country, all since 2006 and all in Varena or other southern regions. Not only my first in Lithuania, but seems to represent further range expansion. Also here my

first Black-veined Whites of the year, a Short-tailed Blue, three species of fritillary and a Northern Chequered Skipper. Next up, a quick zip across to an area of bog and another localised species soon appeared - Bog Fritillary, a grand total of three already flying. Several Baltic Graylings also flying, plus many Small White-faces. And then, early evening up to Labanoras for the night. And there, more rewards awaiting - having managed to survive a full month of sun and high temperatures, the floodpools continue to do well. And no exception this day - as well as the Little Grebes continuing to incubate and the pair of Whooper Swans still present, no less than seven species of wader present ...and among these, my first ever Ruff for my plot, a male in full finery, and my first Marsh Sandpiper for my plot, a truly excellent find. And with that, now 176 species of bird recorded on my plot. LITHUANIAN BUTTERFLY LIST 2018

- 43. Black-veined White.

- 44. Bog Fritillary.

- 45. Mallow Skipper.

26-27 May. North and Middle Lithuania. A day of searching forest areas along the border with Latvia on the 26th - idea was to find Northern Wall Brown, a species only recorded in Lithuania on a couple of occasions. No big surprise, I failed to find, but some compensation with a nice colony of Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, plus a single Baltic Grayling and good numbers of Black-veined Whites. Beautiful Demoiselles also. Next day however was wholly more successful - visiting some of my regular haunts in the Ukmerge region, I was certainly impressed by the numbers of Clouded Apollos - scattered between three sites, several dozen noted in all. Also good, seeing for the first time this year in Lithuania, one Purple-edged Copper, one Brown Argus, two Amanda's Blues, four Lesser Marbled Fritillaries, two Glanville Fritillaries and two Pearly Heaths. LITHUANIAN BUTTERFLY LIST 2018

- 46. Purple-edged Copper

- 47. Brown Argus.

- 48. Amanda's Blue.

- 49. Lesser Marbled Fritillary.

- 50. Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

- 51. Glanville Fritillary.

- 52. Pearly Heath.

Cracking day for the dragons and damsels too - 'big boys' on the block, Blue Emperors and Lesser Emperors flying, plus Norfolk Hawker and numerous Common Clubtails and Black-tailed Skimmers. Downy Emeralds, Four-spotted Chasers and Broad-bodied Chasers also flying, along with huge numbers of Banded Demoiselles and a good number of damselflies - Azure Damselflies most common, but also Red-eyed Damselflies and White-legged Damselflies. 29 May. Lithuania, Endless Sun. And so the amazing weather continues - near eight weeks of basically non-stop sun and high temperatures, fabulous butterflies throughout. 30 C this day and a short visit to one special locality - a small wetland harbouring a whole bunch of Red Data Book species, including several butterflies of very limited range in the country. A mere hour was all I had, but mouthwatering were the results - two Violet Coppers, two Large Coppers, eight Scarce Heaths, ten Marsh Fritillaries and six Bog Fritillaries! Very pleasing, I finally managed to get a few good photographs of the Bog Fritillaries, a species that I have previously only managed poor record shots. LITHUANIAN BUTTERFLY LIST 2018

- 53. Large Copper.

- 54. Marsh Skipper.

- 55. Scarce Heath.