

Bonanza Month, June 2018.

Contributed by Jos
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On the tail of many weeks of never-ending sun, so June also began with high temperatures and non-stop sunshine. And with it, some pretty impressive butterflies - highlights in the first ten days including a flight of Twinspot Fritillaries, large numbers of Green-underside Blues, good numbers of Black Hairstreaks and several Nickerl's Fritillaries. With Alcon Blue, Poplar Admirals, Woodland Browns and Moorland Clouded Yellows also seen, a superb month it so started.

2-4 June. Lithuania, the New Mediterranean. Grass withered and dry, temperatures still edging towards 30 C on a daily basis, quite a remarkable spring it has been, no real rain since March. And what an amazing period it has also been for butterflies - numerous species taking to the wing weeks earlier than in previous seasons, numbers generally high. On a jaunt around the country, taking in central districts around Ukmerge and more southern localities in the Marcinkonys and Druskininkai area, an impressive 32 species were noted - a marked decline in the classic early spring species, but an upswing in early summer species, including dozens of Lesser Marbled Fritillaries and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, good numbers of White Admirals and quite unprecedented numbers of Green-underside Blues, a grand total of 61 seen! Of even more note, a remarkable five Black Hairstreaks near Ukmerge (my highest ever day count and far earlier than I have seen before) and, at the same locality, two stunning Poplar Admirals (a species I didn't see in 2017). In these few days, also managed three Large Coppers, one Large Blue and eight Brown Argus. LITHUANIAN BUTTERFLY LIST 201856. Black Hairstreak.

- 57. Large Blue.
- 58. Poplar Admiral.
- 59. White Admiral.
- 60. High Brown Fritillary.
- 61. Knapweed Fritillary.

- 62. Chestnut Heath.
 - 63. Large Skipper.
- 8-10 June. Twinspot Magic.

One species in particular has bugged me for a number of years in Lithuania - Twinspot Fritillary. Highly restricted in range, it occurs in just a few localities in river valleys in central parts of the country - and long have I tried to find and photograph it! Got brief glimpses of one in 2017, but soon lost it in a mass of other fritillaries and failed to relocate it. Fast forward to 2018 and action plan 'Twinspot Fritillary' - expecting it to be flying a little earlier than the usual end of June, I'd already been checking potential meadows for a week before this sunny weekend unfolded. On this day however, things were looking excellent from the very moment I arrived in my chosen meadow - hundreds of Lesser Marbled Fritillaries flying, oodles of other species too. And it took all of two minutes to stumble into my first Twinspot Fritillary, prominent double rows of spots decorating the underwing a perfect treat. And no brief glimpse this time, there it sat, happily feeding upon a flower top! And then more and more - the only slight difficulty being to sift through the numerous Lesser Marbled Fritillaries flying everywhere. A happy half an hour later though, an absolute minimum of 20 Twinspot Fritillaries had been seen, right corks of butterflies - really felt like a new species for me! And excellent day in many other ways too - near 30 species of butterfly, including a mass flight of White Admirals (at least 45), my first Purple Emperor of the year, my first Woodland Browns, yet more Black Hairstreaks, an early White-letter Hairstreak and a nice trio of coppers - Large Copper, Purple-edged Copper and Purple-shot Copper. LITHUANIAN BUTTERFLY LIST 2018

- 64. Moorland Clouded Yellow.
- 65. White-letter Hairstreak.
- 66. Scarce Copper.
- 67. Purple-shot Copper.
- 68. Silver-studded Blue.
- 69. Cranberry Blue.
- 70. Purple Emperor.

- 71. Dark Green Fritillary.
- 72. Twinspot Fritillary.
- 73. Spotted Fritillary.
- 74. Nickerl's Fritillary.
- 75. Meadow Brown.
- 76. Large Heath.
- 77. Woodland Brown.
- 78. Large Chequered Skipper.

11-12 June. Pitter Patter of Raindrops. First significant rains for over two months bringing much needed water to a parched landscape, but still sunny spells and nothing to dampen the march of the butterfly season. Popped out to a couple of localities these days, dodging showers and not really expecting too many butterflies. But pleasant it still was - at the first site, as spits of rain pattered down upon my back, still I quickly found a few Knapweed Fritillaries atop flower

heads. Excellent I thought, there existed hope that I might find my main target for this day - the highly localised Alcon Blue, a species restricted to just a handful of sites in the country. Not much flying, but with the cloud thin, quite a few species were still sitting out in the open - amongst these, many Pearly Heaths, Small Skippers and Heath Fritillaries, plus a couple of Purple-shot Coppers and my first Geranium Argus of the year. It took near an hour, punctuated by a couple of breaks in the car as the rain got a little heavier, but then I found my desired one - or two to be exact. On a steep slope, with Amanda Blue and Common Blue nearby, two splendid Alcon Blues roosting quietly on flowers. A half hour later, the heavens opened and a torrential storm developed - time for me to leave! Rain over and patchy blue skies next day, an ample excuse for a quick visit to another locality. Nice rewards for a hour of wandering in flower-rich meadow - 18 species, tops being my first Idas Blue of the year, one Large Copper, another Geranium Argus and a half dozen Woodland Browns. LITHUANIAN BUTTERFLY LIST 2018

- 79. Alcon Blue.

- 80. Idas Blue.

- 81. Geranium Argus.