

Bonus Month. October 2018.

Contributed by Jos
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Unprecedented numbers of butterflies flying late into autumn, no less than 12 species in the first half of the month, including good numbers of Pale Clouded Yellows, plus unexpected species such as Wall Brown and late-flying Sooty Coppers and Common Blues. Even in the third week of the month, despite cooler conditions, still a half dozen species flying, very unusual for Lithuania!

1-6 October. Autumn Heat. Rare indeed that butterflies fly in any numbers in October, Lithuania usually distinctively autumnal with first frosts frequently occurring and dustings of snow not totally impossible. Into this, you'd normally be lucky to see more than an occasional brave Peacock or other lingering species. Not so 2018! Following on the heels of a stunning summer, the temperatures just refused to drop - unprecedented highs of 16-19C on a near daily basis. And with it, an impressive selection of late butterflies! At sites around Vilnius, not only expected late species such as Pale Clouded Yellow, Queen of Spain Fritillary and Small Copper, but also a few Common Blues and Sooty Coppers still flying and, even more unexpected, Wall Browns. As a measure of the season, divided between two localities on the 7 October, all of the following butterflies noted:

- Small White - 35
- Pale Clouded Yellow - 25
- Brimstone - 2
- Small Copper - 12
- Sooty Copper - 2
- Common Blue - 8
- Red Admiral - 1
- Peacock - 3
- Comma - 2
- Queen of Spain Fritillary - 16
- Speckled Wood - 1
- Wall Brown - 2

11-18 October. The End is Nigh! Forecast of chilly times approaching, but for the time being still tee-short weather - should be frosts and rain by now, but instead sun and 20 C! As for butterflies though, now just six or seven species per day, plus numbers of individuals dropping fast, most surviving individuals now rather faded and past their best. Most numerous butterflies now flying were Queen of Spain Fritillary (c.15 at one locality), Pale Clouded Yellow (six) and Small Copper (seven), though perhaps more noteworthy still one Sooty Copper and a couple of Common Blue. On the non-butterfly front, did very well with a Yellow-browed Warbler at Labanoras, as well as a flock of some 60 Cranes heading south, along with numerous White-fronted and Bean Geese all streaming towards wintering grounds distant. 21 October. Season End? Following a couple of cool cloudy days and a light frost overnight, a bright sunny day, albeit only 11 C. As the afternoon progressed, with no wind and a feeling of warmth, I thought I might be able to scrape a last few butterflies for the year ...and impressed I was, expecting to find one or two if I was lucky, I found a grand total of six species! In total, one Speckled Wood (my first for over two weeks), one very faded Small Copper, no less than 12 Pale Clouded Yellows, plus single examples of Queen of Spain Fritillary, Comma and Common Blue. Dragonflies not finished either - two species noted, Southern Hawker and Ruddy Darer.

But that really was it for the year, the weather turned a day later, two weeks of cold wet weather culminating in early snow - no more butterflies seen in 2018!