

Butterflies of the Italian Alps, July 2021

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Following on from a successful trip in August 2019, this two-week trip to the Italian Alps again focussed on butterflies in the dramatic mountain landscapes of the Dolomites. Revisiting excellent sites in Trentino, including Val di Rabbi and Peio, I also added the Lombardy and Veneto regions in the hope of finding the localised Cynthia's Fritillary and Alpine Blue.

In addition to the above two species, the main targets on this trip were Asian Fritillary and, more generally, to simply enjoy the multitude of ringlets, fritillaries and blues available in this area. In the event, travelling a month earlier this time than previously, the two trips nicely complemented each other - not only did the species selections differ, but so too did overall butterfly abundances and diversity.

8 July. Arrival in Italy.

Covid passports in pocket, digital passenger locator all completed and checked, then aboard for the 2.5 hour flight to Milan Bergamo. Arrived early evening to a massive thunderstorm, plane couldn't land, circled for a half hour, then diverted to Verona. On the ground, chaotic organisation of onward travel back to Bergamo, then a hailstorm of biblical proportions! What a start to the trip!

Amazingly managed to get back to Bergamo only a couple of hours after the original arrival time, picked up the rental car in no time at all, then hit the autostrada eastward back towards Verona and, a little over 1.5 hours later, was approaching the first destination, a hotel on the higher slopes of the splendid Mount Baldo. Tawny Owl in the darkness on arrival. 9 July. Mount Baldo.

Blue skies at dawn, a bright sun climbing. Lots of gravel and debris on the roads from the rain and hail of the evening before, I wondered what impact it might have had butterfly numbers, surely many must have succumbed. After a bit of breakfast and coffee, a nice meadow at about 1000 metres kicked off the action with the first butterflies of the trip - Meadow Browns and Marbled Whites in good enough numbers, plus one Adonis Blue, an Amanda's Blue and both Large and Essex Skippers. Soon added Queen of Spain Fritillary and High Brown Fritillary and, nearby, a colony of Chalkhill Blues on a flowery slope. One Alpine Chamois also seen, plus Black Kites and a Honey Buzzard.

Descending into the Mollini Valley, excellent in the preceding August, butterflies were distinctly lacking, very few individuals on the wing - perhaps the storm had impacted them. Gave it a quick scoot around, then turned instead to the higher altitudes of Mount Baldo, the main destination for the day. Took a chair lift to 1840 metres, highland meadows with plenty of butterflies - quite a few Woodland Ringlets, Chalkhill Blues and Small Tortoiseshells. Also Little Blue and assorted others too. Overhead, Alpine Swifts screaming past and Alpine Choughs tumbling through the skies.

From here, I hiked to the 2140 metre peak at Cima delle Pozzette - scree slopes and a low diversity of butterflies, but this rocky terrain is home to one highland specialist - Sooty Ringlet. Finding them was fairly easy, photographing them rather harder - active only on the steep slopes of loose scree, they are also highly mobile, rarely settling long. Fortunately, after slipping and sliding for quite a while, I eventually got a few photographs, a nice butterfly. One Mountain Fritillary here too, plus Queen of Spain Fritillaries. With that, by now early afternoon, I then wandered northward along the main ridge of Baldo, a couple of Swallowtails, several Dingy Skippers, a population of Common Brassy Ringlets, many Chalkhill Blues, then descended a rough track back to middle altitudes. Several Large Wall Browns on route down, plus more Common Brassy Ringlets, a couple of Bluespot Hairstreaks, two Tufted Marbled Skippers and, lower down, a single Marbled Fritillary giving grief to a Silver-washed Fritillary. Pearly Heaths also here.

Finished the day with a several kilometre wander back to the car, mostly through woodland, no new butterflies. All in all, despite a relative lack of butterflies at the lower altitudes, 39 species this day, a reasonable enough total to start the trip. 10 July. Lowlands & Madonna di Campiglio.

Northward day, departed Baldo and headed towards Madonna di Campiglio, briefly stopping at two roadside localities in the lowlands - Lago di Cavedine and a riverside near Stenico. Randomly found localities, both had served me well the year before and I thought deserving of another visit. However, with the notable exception of at least 20 Great Sooty Satyrs and a Woodland Brown in rocky terrain just before, the first site was actually fairly poor - very arid and few flowers, the only butterflies of note were six Scarce Swallowtails. Arrival at the second site didn't seem much better, but then I decided to explore a short track a hundred metres above the river. This was better - a dozen or so species, including several White Admirals, Wall Browns, a variety of fritillaries and, the highlight, four very nice Chequered Blues nectaring on flowers.

At Madonna di Campiglio, I hiked to Rifugio Laghi, altitude 1970 metres - nowhere near the numbers of big fritillaries as in the previous August, but an excellent diversity of species. At lower altitude, as I began the meander upward, Purple-

edged Coppers, Mazarine Blues, Little Blues, Arran Browns and Lesser Mountain Ringlets, plus lots of Alpine Heaths and my first Northern Wall Browns and Large Wall Browns of the trip. Further up, Titania's Fritillary, several Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and one Pearl-bordered Fritillary, a couple of Silky Ringlets appearing among the Lesser Mountain Ringlets. A little beyond Rufugio Laghi, a butterfly that really got me going ...one of my main targets for the trip, a superb Asian Fritillary quietly sitting atop a flower. Settled by a momentary patch of cloud cover, this stunner was welcome indeed. Continued to Lago Ritorto and, low and behold, two more Asian Fritillaries!

From there, I decided to loop down through a wooded valley. I hadn't expected very much here, but I hit the jackpot - in an open clearing, not only at least 12 more Asian Fritillaries, many in pristine fresh condition, but also five Thor's Fritillaries, a Scotch Argus and a Chequered Skipper. Top stuff.

Rounded the day off with a Geranium Argus a little lower down, then tooted a few kilometres to Dimara, base for the next three days. 41 species of butterflies this day. 11 July. Val di Rabbi.

It's a 10 hour hike up and down, but Val di Rabbi is just sensational, top class butterflies in glorious landscapes. I began the hike at 8.00 am in the deep shade of early morning, a relative sprint of an hour or so taking me to a steep lightly wooded slope at 1700 metres. First sunshine and, immediately, butterflies sunning - Scarce Coppers, Mazarine Blues and, simply stunners, a dozen Apollos gently floating around the steep slope. Also Sooty Copper, Purple-edged Copper, plenty of Arran Browns and both Northern Wall Brown and Large Wall Brown. Pushed a little higher and arrived in what is very much the centrepiece of the Val di Rabbi - choc a bloc with butterflies, a wide open meadow at 1775 metres. Probably spent an hour here, the numerous butterflies including quite a few Clouded Apollos, plus Titania's Fritillaries and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, Large Blues and a Cranberry Blue, Almond-eyed Ringlet and Lesser Mountain Ringlets. Also added Green Hairstreak, Dingy Skipper, Chequered Skipper and Safflower Skipper. Adding to the spectacle of the previous day, eight Asian Fritillaries here too.

Could easily have stayed longer, but altitude called - the next section, bordering on near vertical in parts, was both the toughest climb and one of the most productive parts of the valley for butterflies. As the path snaked up the mountainside, soon rising above the tree line, abundant flowers peppered the slopes. The result was butterflies galore - my upward progress was necessarily slow, not because of the sheer slog of the climb, but more due to the frequent stops for butterflies. Many species present, not least heaps of Mazarine and Little Blues, dozens of Alpine Heaths, a couple of Mountain Ringlets and, as well as several colonies of Apollos, at least eight Small Apollos too ...with Clouded Apollos a little earlier, that made a full hat-trick with these dramatic butterflies!

Eventually got to the lip of the slope, the path then rising more gently as it crossed into a high altitude valley dominated by wet grassland along the stream and stunted vegetation on the valley sides. By now early afternoon, Moorland Clouded Yellows drifting by, several Alpine Graylings found in their cryptic dress, Common Brassy Ringlets and Almond-eyed Ringlets fairly common. I continued the upward walk and finally got to Rufugio Silvio Dorigoni, altitude 2400 metres. Unfortunately here it clouded over, a stubborn waft of cloud hugging the summit most of the time I was there, butterfly action immediately quashed. Alpine Marmots calling somewhere distant. With lower slopes still bathed in sunshine, soon I decided to descend - plenty of butterflies again and certainly far easier going down than up. Added Dewy Ringlet and Swiss Brassy Ringlet to the day tally, but otherwise similar species to that on my ascent.

Got back to my car early evening, a splendid day it had been, 43 species of butterflies and amazing numbers of individuals. Could have been even more had I not hit cloud at higher altitude. 12 July. Val di Peio.

Top day, a mega 50 species of butterflies recorded. Started with a double ski lift ride up to the giddy heights of 3000 metres. Barren of vegetation and patches of pretty deep snow, no butterflies up here. Alpine Accentors, Alpine Choughs and Alpine Marmots the key wildlife seen. After a bit of a plunge up to my waist crossing one snowfield and cutting my leg on rocks in the snow, I began my descent to greener pastures further down.

At the first hints of vegetation, one Small Tortoiseshell and two Mountain Ringlets, but it was not until about 2300 metres that I really began to see butterflies in any numbers - here, just above the tree line, Mountain Fritillary, Alpine Grayling, many Alpine Heaths, Mountain Green-veined Whites, a couple of Mountain Alcon Blues and quite a few Common Brassy Ringlets and Almond-eyed Ringlets. Descending further, it became ever better - a couple of Swallowtails floating past, flower meadows with Mazarine Blues, Olive Skippers and Lesser Mountain Ringlets, forest edges with Arran Browns, Moorland Clouded Yellows and yet more Asian Fritillaries. Big fritillaries however were distinctly low in numbers in comparison to my August trip, but still a good diversity of species - Silver-washed, Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries all seen, along with a few Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and a dozen or so of both Queen of Spain Fritillary and Heath Fritillary.

As I passed the middle ski lift, it was now 30 C and I was encountering Woodland Ringlets and, a little further, classic low altitude species began to appear - Small Heaths replacing the Alpine Heaths, a few Meadow Browns, dozens of Scarce Coppers, the odd Sooty Copper and Purple-edged Copper here and there. Amongst these, one Large Blue. Found a nice area of cow manure, a damp patch at one end attracting puddling butterflies - alongside Mazarine Blues and Amanda's Blue, one rather fine Geranium Argus and one Chequered Skipper. Continuing down, now rich

meadows and well-developed forest edge, Niobe Fritillaries appeared, so too Titania's Fritillaries and whole range of other common species, including Small Whites, Common Blues and both Small and Large Skipper.

Eventually, nine hours after starting, I was back at base altitude - 1400 metres. The end of an excellent day, the final stroll of a couple of kilometres back to the car added Grizzed Skipper and Scarce Swallowtail. 13 July. Madonna di Campiglio.

From 50 species of butterflies the previous day to five on this, a weather affected day! Cloudy skies from morning, I decided nevertheless to walk the Vasenella trail on the eastern slopes above Madonna di Campiglio.

One Arran Brown fluttering in the dampness on the lower slopes, then the brief appearance of a weak sun though the clouds at 1800 metres was enough to bring a Mazarine Blue and Scarce Cooper to sit atop flower stalks and to persuade me to climb higher. Justly rewarded with two further species, the last remnants of the brightness producing two fine Thor's Fritillaries and a colony of Mountain Green-veined Whites. Many Crossbills and Nutcracker also.

Thereafter, as I climbed above the tree line, thickening cloud ended any chance of further butterflies. Did see a few more birds however - Alpine Chough, Alpine Accentor, Water Pipit and abundant Northern Wheatears. And then, as I reached about 2300 m, it started to rain. With the sky ever blackening and rumbles of thunder echoing up the valley, I decided it time to run! A marathon run all the way back to the base of the mountain, I arrived at the car just as it started to absolutely tip down. And that's how it stayed for the rest of the day, heavy rain till evening. 14 July. Passo Gavia.

Plan this day was to search for Alpine Blue and other high altitude species on the Alpine meadows at Passo Gavia, 2650 metres above sea level. With my entire wardrobe for the trip consisting of tee-shirts and open crocs, I had not planned for a cold front to hit the Alps - but that is exactly what did happen, it was snowing and a mere 0.5 C at the pass! Brrrr! A layer of fresh snow on the surrounding peaks and a cocktail of rolling clouds, fog, snow and hail all day didn't make for happy butterfly hunting!

Still, did see a flock of Snowfinches on a rocky crag, one Alpine Marmot by the roadside and six Alpine Ibex on a slope, the male carrying very impressive horns. Predictably butterflies were very few...did manage to find two Dewy Ringlets sheltering however, plus four Little Blues and one Mazarine Blue.

Waited all day for a break in the weather, alas it was not to come. Eventually gave up at about 4 pm and headed to lower altitude in the Bormio area. Pleasant sun greeted me, so I stopped and explored random meadows - not a bad evening, 16 species of butterfly flying, including many Marbled Whites, a Mountain Alcon Blue and, new for the trip, at least 10 Knapweed Fritillaries. 15 July. Bormio.

None too promising weather again, low cloud and rain early on, I had to presume snow at Passo Gavia. By 9.00 am, with the weather a fraction brighter, I decided to hike Cimo Bianco directly above Bormio town. The theory was that it might be in a slight rain shadow and would, perhaps, be more likely to have an occasional sunny patch than Passo Gavia.

It didn't really turn out that way - I hiked through cloud and fog to 2500 metres, not a hint of sun. Many Nutcrackers and Crossbills in the scattered pines, then Water Pipits and a Rock Ptarmigan on the open slopes. At 2500 metres, I didn't see much point going higher, so waited it out …rolling banks of cloud and fog till late afternoon, intermittent rain. One very welcome Wallcreeper did appear however, feeding on a boulder-strewn hillside. One approachable Alpine Marmot too.

At near 5 pm, one ultra brief sunny spell, literally less than 10 minutes. It was however just enough time to get a few butterflies up and about - one Mazarine Blue, about six Alpine Heaths, two Blind Ringlets, one Lesser Mountain Ringlet, one Mountain Fritillary and two Olive Skippers. No Alpine Blue. And then back came the cloud, time to descend and return to base. 16 July. Passo Stelvio.

A miracle - in total contrast to the forecast, the day dawned blue and cloudless. Made the most of it and departed Bormio fairly early for the short drive to Passo Stelvio, the second highest paved road in Europe at 2760 metres. At 8.30 am, still in full sunshine and an almost balmy 6 C, I stopped a half dozen kilometres short of the pass and began my exploration, altitude 2200 metres. Superb! Excellent butterflies from the offset - several Mountain Clouded Yellows, a number of Alpine Graylings, a splendid Glandon Blue (a new species for me), several Mountain Argus. And then my Holy Grail, flitting from flower to flower, ghostly white patches on the underwing, one male Alpine Blue. After two days of fruitless searching, and a complement to my Arctic Blue one year earlier in Norway, here was the main target of my whole trip ...it certainly evoked a little whoop of joy. I found four at this little spot, a sheltered gully of mixed scree and flower patches. Got nice photographs of the uppersides, failed to photograph the characteristic underwing though ... fortunately this would be remedied a few days into the future. Also added an Eros Blue here too, plus Silver-spotted Skippers and Mnestra's Ringlet.

About 3 km further, now a pleasant 12 C, another stop proved equally productive - among plenty of Alpine Heaths,

Mazarine Blues and Little Blues, a few Dewy Ringlets, three Olive Skippers, a couple of Mountain Fritillaries and two Apollos. Highlight here however was the finding of a colony of Marsh Fritillaries - quite unlike the one I see in Lithuania, these were of the Alpine race, very pale and unmarked on the underwing. In the midst of these, one 'Heath Fritillary' also briefly landed ...hmm, 'dumbbell markings on the wings, should photograph that' thought I. Checking later, seems I found myself a Grison's Fritillary, a fairly rare high altitude species, new one for me.

By now mid-morning, I drove the last couple of kilometres up to Passo Stelvio itself, a remarkable ramshackle of tourist grockle shops and small cafes, all only open in the summer. Clambered up the adjacent peak for a quick walk in Switzerland, a couple of Dewy Ringlets and a Small Tortoiseshell the only butterflies seen, then settled down for a coffee in one of the open air cafes. Alpine Choughs tumbling around and, blimey, then a Lammergeier! Round and round it soared, even settling on rocks immediately adjacent to a hotel, it definitely seemed attracted to this small settlement. That was a bonus indeed!

Descending the eastern side of the pass, less good for butterflies - though one stop with a half dozen Glandon Blues, a Black-veined White and several Arran Browns couldn't be sniffed at. In reality however, I did not have a lot of time here - ahead of me was the longest journey of the trip, a five-hour hop over to the Veneto region for the next part of the trip. Arrived about 6 pm, checked into an apartment near Sappada. 17 July. Passo Sesis (Sappada).

260 km to the west of previous sites, cloudy again. Target here was the beautiful Cynthia's Fritillary, a localised species that inhabits some of the highest Alpine slopes. From 1800 metres, I hiked up to the mountain pass at 2360 metres, a steep and (with no sun) butterfly-less climb. Still, a couple of pairs of Alpine Accentors on route, several Alpine Choughs and numerous Water Pipits. At the pass, skies totally overcast and very windy, I walked a ridge trail to slightly higher terrain near the Austrian border, prime habitat for Cynthia's Fritillary. Not a hint of sunshine however and not a hint of any butterfly of any description.

Numerous Alpine Marmots scampering around, one more Alpine Accentor and a Snowfinch. I milled around in the vague hope of some sunshine, eventually descending about 3 pm when it became clear that skies would remain cloudy.

Back at the car, I returned to even lower altitude, seeing the only butterflies of the day - all at roost, Small White, Green-veined White, Mazarine Blue, Little Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Heath Fritillary and Bright-eyed Ringlet. 18 July. Passo Sesis.

A tale of two mountains! Seeing cloud over my target peaks (surrounding Passo Sesis), I decided to hike up a neighbouring sun-dappled mountain. Some early success, seeing Apollo, Thor's Fritillary and Large Ringlets, but the sun had disappeared by the time I was at altitude and spots of rain were falling. Thoughts of higher slopes evaporated, I returned to the valley bottom where sunshine still prevailed and butterflies such as Swallowtail, Clouded Yellow and Heath Fritillary flew.

To the east, however, the tops around Passo Sesis now seemed somewhat brighter, so I relocated and once again slogged up the steep slopes to the lands of Cynthia's Fritillary. Cloud hugging the peaks on arrival, but no way I was descending again, I had put in too much effort, so instead I stubbornly remained in place eyeing the sky for a break in the clouds. With two layers of clouds moving in opposite directions, occasional blue patches never seemed to hit the exact mountain I was atop, frequently the slopes in Austria would be bathed in sun, occasionally those behind me in Italy. Five Griffon Vultures made for good distraction, but it wasn't until fairly late in the afternoon that gaps in the clouds aligned and finally a bit of sunshine hit my location - a grand total of 15 minutes of moderately weak sun, blighted by a rather windy conditions! It was enough though to get a few butterflies up and about - tops being a few Blind Ringlets and a Silky Ringlet. And then, just prior to the sun once again vanishing, a glimpse of a high-velocity butterfly catching the wind and hurtling across the slopes. I couldn't swear that it was not a moth of some sort, but it appeared fritillary-like and boasted a bright orange band at the rear and a piebald front half ... intriguingly similar to what a male Cynthia's Fritillary should look like. Moments later, it or another appeared on another slope nearby - again fast flying and not settling, this was almost certainly the real deal, a male Cynthia's Fritillary. Then it totally clouded over, end of butterflies. Frustrating, almost certainly I had found my target, but it was not enough.

I decided that was that and descended. Sunshine on the lower slopes and, saving the day in true style, I then found an Alpine Blue ...an Alpine Blue gracious enough to allow me to photograph the underwing. One Eros Blue and two Little Blues at the same locality, not a bad end to the day. 19 July. Passo Sesis.

Repeating the pattern at Bormio, day three at Passo Sesis was just perfect weather - blue sky from horizon to horizon and barely a breath of wind. Not daring it would last, I quickly returned to the valley beneath Passo Sesis and virtually sprinted up the slope, cutting almost half an hour off the time it had taken the previous day. So there I was, 8.30 am at 2400 metres, already moderately warm and immediately my first butterfly of the day - a Mountain Fritillary, not a bad start. As a sideshow, a big flock of Snowfinches also here this day, at least 40 feeding on the grassy slopes. Concentrating on patches of more verdant vegetation, this being where I expected to find Cynthia's Fritillary, it was soon clear that I was going to have a good day - Dewy Ringlets and Blind Ringlets were beginning to appear, plus Common Brassy Ringlets and Almond-eyed Ringlets soon after. And then, a little after 9.00 am, quietly sunning on a big leaf in a vegetated gully, the crown jewels - one male Cynthia's Fritillary in all its glory. Small in size, but quite unlike any other

fritillary, the distinctive white patterning really is quite stunning. Seeing it fly, it was immediately clear that the butterflies I had briefly seen the day before were indeed Cynthia's Fritillaries. They, however, were now forgotten, here I had stunning views of a classic butterfly in perfect weather to the backdrop of one of the most amazing landscapes in Europe.

Over the next hour, I found no less than five male Cynthia's Fritillaries, all in pristine fresh condition. I found no females. It would seem their flight season had only just begun. Nicely complementing them, one Marsh Fritillary too. Somewhere around 10 am, they all suddenly vanished ...maybe hilltopping further up the slope?

Either way, searched around for a while without further sign, then began a gradual descent, eventually to below 1000 metres - superb weather the whole day and excellent butterflies all the way, the diversity of species greatly enhanced by the massive shift in elevation. As a result, a grand total of 47 species this day, the second highest day total of the trip - among the many highlights, no less than seven species of ringlets, both Alpine Blue and Eros Blues, Mountain Small White, about ten Thor's Fritillaries and one False Heath Fritillary. A good day indeed, also saw Black and Grey-headed Woodpeckers. 20 July. Mis Valley.

With all the key mountain species now seen, I descended out of the high peaks this day to the highly picturesque Mis Valley and its lush deciduous woodland hugging the steep valley sides. Perhaps a little late in the season, but one main target here - Hungarian Glider.

Arrived alongside a lake at 8.30 am, already 25 C and gloriously sunny. Many Large Chequered Skippers in their bouncy flight, a new species for the trip, plus Pearly Heaths in fair abundance and Small Whites, one seemingly a good contender for Southern Small White. Adjacent, a woodland trail followed an arm of the lake, excellent habitat, albeit rather thick woodland cover which was not conducive to easy seeing of canopy butterflies. Followed the trail for an hour or so, plenty more Pearly Heaths and Chequered Skippers in occasional open areas, plus two trip additions in deeper cover - Speckled Wood and Woodland Brown, three of each. At the top of the trail, as the path crossed a stream, I reached an area of perfect habitat for viewing Hungarian Gliders ...and indeed there it was that I found two! Floating from one patch of canopy edge to the next, they were typically unphotogenic, but success nevertheless, nice butterflies!

Returning along the southern side of the trail, I then found another Hungarian Glider near the end of the trail, this being rather more cooperative and even settling on the path to allow a quick photograph. And if that wasn't enough, immediately adjacent was sitting a very fine Duke of Burgundy Fritillary, a butterfly I have only ever seen once before and certainly not one I was expecting on this trip.

Plan for the afternoon was a quick trip to Venice, a couple of hours down the road, but beforehand, just enough time to squeeze on some nice flower meadows. Nicely complementing the woodland, added four new species for the trip here - a colony of Adonis Blues, a Spotted Fritillary, two chunky Dryads and one Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper. Plenty of other butterflies too - Swallowtail, Clouded Yellows, Common Blues, Marbled Whites et al.

And then was Venice - rubbish for butterflies (three Commas and one Small White), but what more needs to be said, Venice is Venice, impressive and unique. One Banksy artwork too. A flying visit, very much designed as a surprise for a patient Little One who had trudged up and down endless mountains for the previous two weeks, we took a ferry the length of the Grand Canal, then meandered slowly back via San Marco and through a maze of narrow alleys and along assorted canals full of gondolas. What with Covid, a pretty good time to visit the city - a remarkable lack of tourists, many canals and alleys totally deserted. Five or six hours was quite enough for me - departed the island in the late evening, stayed overnight on the mainland, back to butterflies next day. 21 July. Mount Baldo.

Final full day, back to Mount Baldo. At the base of the mountain, I started at Avio village on a small area of wasteland. Found this spot the previous year and again this time it proved excellent for low altitude species - among Common Blues and other species, a bunch of Spotted Fritillaries, several Adonis Blues and, all new for the trip, one Mallow Skipper, one Short-tailed Blue and one Lang's Short-tailed Blue. From here, I entered the excellent Molini Valley - near devoid of butterflies two weeks earlier, perhaps due to the violent hail storm, things were far better now. On flower laden verges and meadows, many stops en route up and many butterflies, Arran Browns common, several Scotch Argus and Great Sooty Satyrs also, plus various fritillaries, both Old World and Scarce Swallowtails, lots of Marbled Whites and a good range of others. At Baldo itself, I once again took the ski lift up to 1840 metres and then walked northward along the ridge to thereafter drop down the fairly steep slope back to lower altitude. No new species here, but very pleasant - not only Common Brassy Ringlets, several Large Wall Browns and Olive Skipper, but a very nice gathering of about 18 Bluespot Hairstreaks. Overhead, as well as Alpine Chough and Alpine Swift, two Golden Eagles.

Time however was ticking, next morning I had a flight from Bergamo, so it was I departed for the final drive westward. To round off the trip, I decided to randomly stop at some lowland sites south of Lake Garda - I thought I might find some common lowland butterflies that were still eluding me on this trip, Bath White and Geranium Argus for instance, but in reality I found only hot dry areas with basically no flowers and no butterflies. Concluding butterflies were a handful of Small Whites, one or two Meadow Browns and, first of the trip and last butterflies of the trip, two Brown Argus.