

Two Visits to Europe during 1976

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(1) Provence in Early June

At the instance of Mr. Leonard McLeod, I last visited Provence at the end of August 1975 (*vide Ent. Rec.*, **88**: 12-13). In the spring of 1976 he once more kindly extended to me a further invitation to revisit that most attractive and rich part of southern France, possibly much earlier in the season in May or early June, but it was not until June 3rd that I once more flew out to Marseilles and sailed up the autoroute in a small Fiat with the mistral blowing its fiercest. In fact, there were notices along this motorway warning against the force of this wind. When I reached the small village of St. Pierre Vassols, not far from Carpentras where Leonard McLeod is now living, I was afraid this strong wind would wreck my collecting there as it is liable to last quite a week once it sets in. However, it had subsided considerably when I reacquainted myself with the famous slopes of Mont Ventoux on the 4th. It was a glorious day with plenty on the wing. By far the commonest butterfly seemed to be *Aporia crataegi* L. with *Anthocharis euphenoides* Staud. still very fresh, and a great many *Leptidea sinapis* L. On the lower slopes were flying a fine form of *Plebicula escheri* Hübn., while at slightly higher levels were *Lysandra hispana* H.-S., together with *L. bellargus* Rott. and a few *Cyaniris semiargus* Rott. The chief Nymphalines were *Clossiana euphrosyne* L., *Mellicta athalia* Rott., *Melitaea phoebe* Schiff. and a few *Aglais urticae* L. While I was having a light lunch at the Café Reynard at about 5,000 ft. where the white screes begin, I suddenly noticed an obvious *Erebia* alight on a table outside, but it soon made off when I approached it. However, another flitted by which I caught and it proved to be *E. triaria* de Prunner. So I soon went to investigate further and was amazed when from a small heap of damp sand at the side of the restaurant there rose quite a cloud of these insects, at least two dozen. I have never seen *Erebias* before on any damp patch and I wonder what the attraction was in this instance, possibly some salt in the sand? On further search, the species was flying in some quantity on the white screen slopes adjoining the café, but I could not locate a single specimen in the pinewood which just reached this area on one side. I have seen this *Erebia* often among trees in other parts of Europe. In this instance it seemed confined to the screes, like *E. scipio* Boisd. at a later date. The following day, the 5th, again very fine, I revisited the Gorges de la Nesque which had proved so fruitful in 1973 and 1975. This time too I was not to be disappointed. The most interesting captures were a few *Mellicta deione* Geyer as well as *Limenitis reducta* Staud., the Lycaenids *Everes alcetas* Hoffmannsegg, *Glaucopsyche alexis* Poda, *Plebicula dorylas* Schiff., *Celastrina argiolus* L., *Cupido minimus* Fuessly and *Heodes alciphron*

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Rott. It was even warmer on the 6th when I accompanied my host to a special locality where he pointed out to me several somewhat diminutive bushes of *Colutea arborescens*, the bladder senna and foodplant of the largest European blue, *Iolana iolas* Ochs. Examination of the already ripe pods provided a few very small larvae of this fine insect which had been on the wing for quite a month. We saw one or two very late and worn *Euchloë tagis* Hübn., another speciality of that region. *L. hispana* was quite numerous there. In another spot we also saw *Argynnis adippe* L., *Pyronia bathseba* Fab. and *Heodes tityrus* Poda. On the lower slopes of Mont Ventoux that day the only additional species was *Plebicula amanda* Schneider. The next morning of June 7th saw me again with Leonard McLeod, this time in a secluded valley to the north side of the big mountain which was not as productive as we had hoped. *Hamearis lucina* L. and *Polygonia egea* Cramer were the only new species. Later that day I saw *Erebia triaria* again at high levels. I was once more in the Gorges de la Nesque on the 8th in great heat and was most surprised to take a *Parnassius apollo* L. at this very early date. *Melitaea didyma* Esp. was on the wing and also the large noctuid *Minucia lunaris* Schiff. I returned via Sault and the steep road to the top of Mont Ventoux where many *L. bellargus* were flying. On June 9th, I did a big detour through the small town of Malaucène to the attractive valley of the Toulrenc river, where little was to be seen so that I made again for Sault and the Gorges, lunching at the little village of Monieux. *Papilio machaon* L. and *Iphiclide podalirius* L. were noted, as well as an early *Maniola jurtina* L. and *Gonepteryx rhamni* L. The morning of my last collecting day, June 10th, was spent under a blazing sun in the special locality for *Iolana iolas*, where I distinctly spotted a male at rest among some low herbage, but it eluded me. *E. triaria* was again in fair numbers on the high ground, together with many *Cupido minimus*.

During my last two nights I ran my short strip Heath light in my host's garden. Quite a number of moths came during the first hour. Among them were several *Acontia luctuosa* Schiff. and *Emmelia trabealis* Scop. Other visitors included *Arctia villica* L. and *Atolmis rubricollis* L.

I travelled home on June 11th after a brief but very pleasant stay in this delightful region, thanks largely to the kindness and hospitality of Leonard and Sue McLeod who accommodated me in their most comfortable home.

(2) Collecting in Catalonia: July 1976

According to Lt. Col. W. B. Manley, the mountainous area lying between Barcelona and the main chain of the Pyrenees has until fairly recently been much neglected, certainly by British lepidopterists (*vide Ent. Gazette*, 1973, 23: 79-89). However, his account of the butterflies in that region tempted me to try my hand this summer. I flew to Barcelona on July 20th, where I picked a fast and spacious Simca

and was soon speeding along the great avenue through the centre of the big city and then along one of the coastal motorways until I reached the road which eventually leads to Puigcerda and Bourg-Madame on the French frontier in the high Pyrenees. My haven was the Hostal-4-Carreteras which borders the main road on the outskirts of the small town of Tona, some 45 miles north of Barcelona. This very comfortable hotel had also served Dr. and Mrs. Lionel Higgins well in 1973, also the Manleys on several occasions, since in the article referred to above there is a long list of the local species and localities for them, most of which I visited with noted success. The first of these was on the edge of a fir forest just north of Taradell, only five miles from my hotel. On the afternoon of my arrival this spot produced *Colias australis* Verity, many *Melanargia lachesis catalana* de Sagarra, *Leptidea sinapis* L. and the first of the fine form of *Agrodiaetus dolus fulgens* de Sagarra. Also there was what I shall refer to as *Agrodiaetus agenjo* Forster which does not conform to either *A. fabressei* Oberthur or to *A. ripartii* Freyer, since it lacks the white stripe on the underside of the hindwings. *Thymelicus acteon* Rott. was another capture. The next morning, fine and warm and in the 80s, I explored the plateau to the west, near the small town of Moya. It is reached by a tortuous but good road up a steep escarpment. I soon discovered a small glade surrounded by scrub oaks round which were flying dozens of male Gipsy Moths. *M. lachesis* was by far the commonest butterfly with *Pyronia tithonus infrafulva* de Sagarra a good second. *A. agenjo* was also quite plentiful with several paired up, but it was not easy to distinguish the females of this species from those of *A. dolus* except by the white instead of brown fringe of the latter insect. The fine large and bright males of *A. damon cabreræ* de Sagarra were equally numerous. *Satyrus actaea espanoli* Agenjo was just appearing with *Pararge megera vividior* Verity and *Coenonympha pamphilus barcinonis* Verity. A severe thunderstorm with torrential rain broke that evening so that the morning of the 22nd was much cooler. The skies soon cleared when I set out northwards to the main Pyrenees range. A path along the river near Montesquieu provided *Ladoga camilla garrigæ* de Sagarra, *Argynnis aglaia* L., *Pyronia bathseba pardilloi* de Sagarra and *Ochlodes venata faunus* Turati. After a break for lunch at Ripoll, I proceeded up the long mountain road to the Puerto de Tosas at 5,400 ft., some 15 miles from the French frontier. Here beside the road were flying *Erebia meolans zagasia* Fruhstorfer with an occasional *Parnassius apollo* L. and *Lasiommata maera* L. I covered the 50 miles back to Tona by the same route. Early on July 23rd I revisited the Moya locality under a scorching sun. *Gonepteryx cleopatra* L. males were flying in plenty. *Polyommatus icarus zelleri* Verity and *Plebicula thersites ferdinandi* de Sagarra were equally numerous. Later that day I discovered a rough road near Colluspina leading from the top of the ascent from Tona.

This spot proved very fruitful providing the first hairstreaks, notably mainly *Strymon esculi camboi* de Sagarra on the marjoram, especially numerous, though mostly worn, while the few *S. spini bofilli* de Sagarra were freshly out. Both *Brintesia circe hispanica* Spüler and *Hiparchia semele martire* de Sagarra were flying in this terrain where there were plenty of sprigs of majoram as an attraction. *Hipparchia alcyone ibarrae* Agenjo was flitting along the steep sandy slopes. The first *Colias croceus* Fourcroy was also seen. The 24th, yet a further blazing day, I travelled through the outskirts of the large town of Vich and eastwards to the small hamlet of Pruit where among grassy slopes butterflies were very plentiful. Species I had not seen before included *Argynnis adippe* D. & S., *Mellicta athalia* Rott., *Coenonympha arcania* L. and *Hesperia comma* L. There were a few *A. damon* and *L. coridon*, but later that day I found a piece of downland at the top of the nearby pass alive with both these insects reminding one of similar terrain in Britain. Both sexes of *L. coridon* were in hundreds and mostly just out. Soon after my arrival I had been trying to make contact, but without success, with Señor Joaquín Vilarrubia, the acknowledged authority on the lepidoptera of this region. That evening I called at his fine château at Torres Llabreta, quite near Tona, to find he had left shortly before on a collecting trip. I had hoped to hear from him about the possibility of locating *Apatura ilia barcina* Verity, perhaps the main speciality of this part of Catalonia. July 25th saw me on a tour westwards, via Olos and Prats and back via Artes to Calders to Moya, where *Arethusana arethusana dentata* Saud. was just appearing. The next morning dawned overcast, and in fact July 26th proved to be the only day without sun. However, I ventured along the very attractive wooded valley to the small town of Viladrau and on towards Arbucias, but conditions were unfavourable for collecting. I surveyed this rich area which was to prove most fruitful in the ensuing days. On the 27th I paid my last visit to the locality near Moya. This small town vaunts an excellent restaurant. *A. arethusana* was now well out in numbers with an occasional *Hipparchia fagi tuxiensis* Varin. In the afternoon I retraced my route through Tona and to a bridge over a ravine just beyond Seva on the road to Viladrau. Here I discovered two fairly large patches of marjoram alive with insects. *Argynnis paphia magnifica* Verity was well to the fore, together with a few *Issoria lathonia* L. and *Brenthis daphne* D. & S. Among smaller visitors were *Everes alcetas* Hoffmansegg and *Aricia cramera* Eschscholtz. The 28th saw me in the morning on the very tortuous mountain road which runs southward via Seva towards Montseny. As this route did not seem very rewarding, I retraced my steps to the butterfly corner on the bridge where I counted no less than 20 species literally jostling for a good position on the marjoram patches. Among this seething concourse I spotted a fresh *A. dolus* and *Laeosopis roboris demissa* Verity. Nearly all the possible fritillaries were present, includ-

ing *A. adippe* and *A. aglaia*, *Brenthis dia* L., also *Papilio machaon*. I then made my way once more via Viladrau along the mountainous valley to Rabell, which also sports an excellent eating resort but few insects. However, on the way back a halt was made at a huge buddleia on the outskirts of Viladrau. This large bush was smothered in butterflies since it seemed to be quite isolated. *B. circe* was its largest client, together with plenty of *A. paphia* and several *Pyrameis cardui* L., *P. atalanta* L. and *Polygonia c-album*. My last collecting day, July 29th, was again very warm and spent in the same area as the previous one. The marjoram patches everywhere were well patronised, especially by *Strymon esculi* and by a crossing of a small river I was almost certain I caught a flash of an *Apatura ilia* sailing round a small oak near a large grove of poplars. Many *E. alcetas* were in this locality and I saw a single *Pyrgus foulquieri* Oberthur. The big buddleia in Viladrau again provided quite a circus with most of the species seen the day before with the addition of *Gonepteryx rhamni* L., *Inachis io* and *Pararge aegeria* L. I made a last survey of the marjoram on the bridge where I saw the two White Admirals (*C. camilla* and *L. rivularis*) feeding side by side with a couple of the Swallow-tails, *Iphiclides feithsameli* Dup. which is appreciably different from *L. podalirius* L. My final call was where I began, at Taradell where there is another small valley full of poplars and willow, but no *A. ilia* were apparent. I later heard the first brood was virtually over by the time I reached this area. *Leptidea sinapis* was swarming in this spot. In all I recorded 57 species of the local butterflies. Col. Manley in his 1973 paper enumerates 108. On July 30th I motored via Barcelona to the airport and was back in London that afternoon after a most enjoyable tour in this grand part of Spain.

CATOCALA FRAXINI L. IN NORTHUMBERLAND. — A male Clifden Nonpareil was found at Morpeth early on the morning of 21st September, 1976. Dr. A. G. Long tells me that this is only the second record of this species for Northumberland, and the first one this century. Unfortunately the identity of the finder remains unknown. — D. A. SHEPPARD, Department of Agricultural Biology, Close House Field Station, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Northumberland.

THE HERALD (SCOLIOPTERYX LIBATRIX L.) HIBERNATING EN MASSE. — For some reason over 60 *S. libatrix* decided to hibernate here *en masse* in a windowless cellar room, and ten times more than occurred here during the whole year in the trap. — H. C. J. GODFREY, Pinehurst West, Swiffe Lane, Broad-oak, Heathfield, Sussex.



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