



## Butterflies of the Kaçkars

11th - 19th July 2022

Led by Simon Spencer, Ben Greenaway, Yiannis Christofides & Yasemin Konuralp



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## Day 1

Despite the long overnight flights to Erzurum the group were very keen to spend some time in the field. We opted to stay local for our first day to allow everyone to refresh and ease into the holiday.

Thankfully, the slope above our first hotel in Palandoken did not disappoint in terms of butterflies. Several fritillaries were flying, including Cardinal and Niobe as well as Marbled and Twin-spot. We also had our first sighting of Aedon Blue, a common species in Turkey. We retired for the day with a relatively easy tally of 49 species under our belts despite the slower pace and limited area covered, excited at what the rest of our holiday might bring.



Twin-spot Fritillary © Robert G

## Day 2

The next morning we set off early on the long journey into the Kaçkars, aiming to stop along the way at some favourite sites. The first stop was near a river and produced a good range of butterflies even though we did not see some species that had been there in previous years. Adrian had a brief view of Ionian Emperor and Esper's Marbled White was on the wing. There was Amasian Satyr and a grayling that proved to be Lydian Tawny Rockbrown. Both Swallowtail and Scarce Swallowtail were present and Southern Small White as well as Small White. Dingy skipper and the ubiquitous Small Skipper and Large Skipper were also flying. Southern White Admiral was seen along with Great Banded Grayling and Syrian Rock Grayling. Blue Spot Hairstreak made its only appearance on the trip whereas for Ilex Hairstreak this was the first of many sightings.



Tortum Waterfall © André H

We made a lunch stop at Tortum waterfall which had the advantage of wonderful Turkish tea and seats. The waterfall was impressive but the butterflies perhaps less so. We did see the usual suspects and add the diminutive Grass Jewel to the list, in what would transpire to be our only sighting of this species for the trip. We also saw our first Anomalous Blue. This difficult group of butterflies, some with brown and some with blue uppersides, often with a white stripe on the hindwing, is well represented in Turkey. They are notoriously difficult to separate and though some are widespread others have a very restricted range.

Further on, we paused in Yusefeli for petrol and supplies. This town will disappear when the Coruh dam is finished and the valley will be flooded.

There was also a roadside stop for blues on the way to Yaylarlar. This turned up a number of skippers including Marbled Skipper, Large Grizzled Skipper and Hungarian Skipper. The Persian Skipper was observed and identified by its pale leading edge to the forewing. Pyrgus and similar skippers are relatively easy in Turkey compared to the Alps with few representatives.

The blues on the other hand have over 100 species and can be challenging. Anatolian Zephyr, Holly, Short-tailed, Silver-studded, Idas, Mazarine, Common, Amanda's and Eros Blue were present along with Blue Argus and the huge Aedon Blue. Most of these were subsequently present at mud-



Aedon Blue © Robert G





Chelmos Blue © Robert G.

puddling spots during the rest of the trip. We also had our first Chelmos Blue which also occurs in Greece only on Mount Chelmos, after which it is named, but is widespread in Turkey. Ben, one of the guides familiar with the Kaçkars proved brilliant at identifying blues. It is a tricky subject requiring good eyesight and patience.

We eventually arrived at our hotel in Olgunlar and were treated to a fine supper largely made from local produce.

### Day 3

The next morning the group split into two groups. Simon and Yasemin stayed locally while Yiannis and Ben took a group on a long walk to higher altitude and managed to observe and photograph several high altitude species including Caucasian Fritillary, that replaces Shepherd's Fritillary in Turkey and Hewitson's Ringlet which is unique in having three white apical ocelli linked in small dark patch.

The local group recorded a great number of species in this paradise for butterflies including Marsh Fritillary, False Heath Fritillary, Russian Heath and Lederer's Heath. There were many mud-puddling blues including Osiris, Short-tailed, Alcon and Green Underside Blue, Blue Argus, Amanda's Blue, the large Aedon Blue, Eros Blue, Chelmos Blue, Ripart's Anomalous Blue and others.

Simon noted that it was good to see that Olgunlar had not changed much since his first visit to Kaçkar in 2008. There were more tourists and a few more

buildings but the basic agricultural system had not changed. Simon remembers women cutting hay with sickles and now there were men using scythes - that is progress! There were no tractors working the fields, and there were still horses and mules carrying tourists' baggage to the camps higher up. We were fed every morning on bread and delicious local butter and home made jams made from wild fruit. The villages have lots of bee hives protected from bears by electric fences. These produce fantastic honey from the flower rich meadows and this was also on the breakfast menu. They keep cattle and come up to the summer pastures to graze, making use of the abundant grass although he suspects that now there are fewer families dependent entirely on agriculture and fewer cattle. There was still snow higher up and for about six months of the year there is snow on the ground.



© André H

The butterflies don't seem to mind and the profusion both in numbers and range of species is a shock for anyone used to UK livestock farms. There were fresh Marsh Fritillaries every few yards, while more worn Glanville Fritillaries

moved ahead of you along the track. Dark Green Fritillary, Heath Fritillary, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Twin-Spot Fritillary, Heath Fritillary, False Heath Fritillary and Niobe Fritillary were amongst the more familiar species seen, but Caucasian Spotted Fritillary was new to most of us and distinguishable from Spotted Fritillary that also was flying. The variety and colour of the plants is amazing too.



Lederer's Heath © David C



Caucasian Spotted Fritillary © Regine H



Balkan Copper © David C

#### Day 4

The next day, which was initially cloudy, allowed the ones that had been up the mountain the day before to catch up. There was a Balkan Copper seen and we finally managed to find a Southern Small White on a wet patch on the mountain path. Here we had Green Veined White as well as Mountain Green Veined White and the more common Small White. The Aegean Skipper, that replaces Grizzled in Turkey was also mud puddling and a fresh Yellow-banded Skipper was photographed by several members of our group.

In the afternoon we took a short trip down in the bus and found Powdered Brimstone, Eastern Orange Tip and Small Bath White. The latter on the roadside was particularly amenable to photography.

#### Day 5

We moved the following day to a hotel in Barhal stopping on the way at some flowering Hemp Agrimony on the roadside for an orgy of Hairstreaks. In addition to the ubiquitous Ilex we had White Letter, Purple and Sloe Hairstreaks all on the white flowers. We also had our first Silver-washed and High Brown Fritillaries.

We did some stops in the Onbolat Deresi valley and walked down the valley. Butterflies were abundant but there were few new species.

#### Day 6

Our outings on this day were primarily looking for the elusive Ionian Emperor, a species recorded on previous trips. We made several stops along a river east of Barhal into the mountains and André had a brief sighting but sadly nobody got any photographs. However, we did have Eastern Orange Tip, Brimstone, Large Blue and Long-tailed Blue to add to our list.

#### Day 7

The group were offered a trip by one of the hotel owners' family to visit a place to see bears some way from Barhal. Some chose to go and, leaving at 3.30 and following a fairly lengthy drive, they were rewarded by a distant view of a bear with three cubs. The driver had a powerful 4x4 but some of the tracks were blocked by landslides. They got back at breakfast time. That day we explored the upper reaches of our valley again looking for Ionian Emperor. Few new species were seen.



Little Tiger Blue © Regine H

#### Day 8

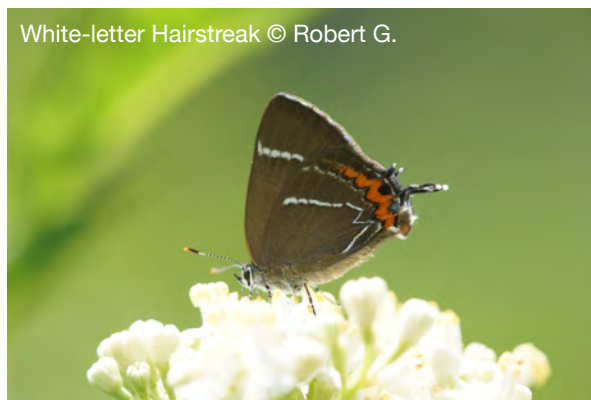
For our last day we had a five hour drive back to Erzurum and the group elected to leave early so that there could be more stops for butterflies on the way. A comfort stop by the road in the Coruh gorge added Little Tiger Blue on the Christ's Thorn and White Bordered Grayling. André was the only one to see and photograph the Fiery Copper at the next site but we also added both Orange Hermit and Hermit as well as Anatolian Tawny Rock Brown.

We re-visited the river site that had been fruitful on our way up but failed to add many species though

several saw and photographed a Lesser Fiery Copper.

For lunch we visited a village in the hills about 40km from Erzurum. This was particularly productive with Loew's Blue being added just as we got out of the bus. Yasemin and Rafik, our driver,

White-letter Hairstreak © Robert G.





produced their usual delicious lunch with some sweet local apricots for desert. There were some convenient hay bales in the shade to sit on. Moving through the village, a wet area provided some of the highlights of the trip - Odd Spot Blue with its strange displaced spot on the underside and a very friendly Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell that perched on Bob's hat and was even carried down for others to see. This site also had Eastern Brown Argus, another species that is only just found in Europe. The usual suspects amongst the Blues were there in profusion and 20 species could be seen in the same place.

In all we had provisionally noted over 140 species for the week. This is better than you would get in Europe. In addition to many species common in Europe there were the additional Turkish species. The Kaçkars is a paradise for butterflies. It is also a glimpse back in time to the 19th century rather than the 20th. Though Erzerum is a modern city complete with airport, good roads, shopping malls and universities, the countryside not far away still continues its traditional way of life. Few people realise that low intensity agriculture with its hay meadows and flower-rich hillsides is such a haven for butterflies. Long may that paradox continue.



Odd-spot Blue © Bob M



© André H



© André H

## Systematic Species Checklists

Butterflies			11th July	12th July	13th July	14th July	15th July	16th July	17th July	18th July
Imago sightings are marked with a ✓, caterpillars are marked with a ☆			day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7	day 8
	Family <b>Papilionidae</b>									
1	Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Scarce Swallowtail	<i>Iphiclidides podalirius</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Apollo	<i>Parnassius apollo</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Family <b>Pieridae</b>									
4	Eastern Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis damone</i>				✓		✓		
5	Black-veined White	<i>Aporia crataegi</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Berger's Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias alfacariensis</i>	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓
7	Anatolian Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias aurorinia</i>					✓			

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8	Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Powdered Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx farinosa</i>				✓				
10	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Wood White	<i>Leptidea sinapis</i>					✓	✓	✓	
12	Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	✓				✓	✓	✓	
13	Mountain Green-veined White	<i>Pieris bryoniae</i>			✓	✓				
14	Mountain Small White	<i>Pieris ergane</i>			✓					✓
15	Southern Small White	<i>Pieris mannii</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
16	Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
17	Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Small Bath White	<i>Pontia chloridice</i>				✓				
19	Eastern Bath White	<i>Pontia edusa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Family <b>Lycaenidae</b>									
20	Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>			✓			✓	✓	
21	Purple Hairstreak	<i>Favonius quercus</i>					✓	✓	✓	
22	Gerhardt's Black Hairstreak	<i>Satyrrium abdominalis</i>	✓							
23	Sloe Hairstreak	<i>Satyrrium acaciae</i>			✓	✓	✓		✓	
24	Ilex Hairstreak	<i>Satyrrium ilicis</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓	
25	Blue-spot Hairstreak	<i>Satyrrium spini</i>		✓						
26	White-letter Hairstreak	<i>Satyrrium w-album</i>					✓		✓	
27	Purple-shot Copper	<i>Lycaena alciphron</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
28	Balkan Copper	<i>Lycaena candens</i>			✓					
29	Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
30	Lesser Fiery Copper	<i>Lycaena thersamon</i>		✓						✓
31	Fiery Copper	<i>Lycaena thetis</i>								✓
32	Sooty Copper	<i>Lycaena tityrus</i>					✓	✓	✓	
33	Scarce Copper	<i>Lycaena virgaureae</i>	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
38	Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
39	Northern Brown Argus	<i>Aricia artaxerxes</i>			✓			✓		
40	Blue Argus	<i>Aricia anteros</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
41	Eastern Brown Argus	<i>Aricia euryпилus</i>								✓
42	Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
43	Short-tailed Blue	<i>Cupido argiades</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓		
44	Small Blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>	✓							

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45	Osiris Blue	<i>Cupido osiris</i>	✓		✓	✓				✓
46	Mazarine Blue	<i>Cyaniris semiargus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
47	Loew's Blue	<i>Euphilotes loewii</i>								✓
48	Grass Jewel	<i>Freyeria trochylus</i>		✓						
49	Green-underside Blue	<i>Glaucopsyche alexis</i>			✓					✓
50	Long-tailed Blue	<i>Lampides boeticus</i>	✓					✓		
51	Adonis Blue	<i>Lysandra bellargus</i>	✓		✓					
52	Large Blue	<i>Phengaris arion</i>						✓		
53	Alcon Blue	<i>Phengaris alcon</i>			✓					
54	Silver-studded Blue	<i>Plebejus argus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
55	Reverdin's Blue	<i>Plebejus argyrognomon</i>								✓
56	Geranium Argus	<i>Plebejus eumedon</i>			✓					
57	Idas Blue	<i>Plebejus idas</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
58	Anatolian Zephyr Blue	<i>Plebejus modicus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
59	Gavarnie Blue	<i>Plebejus pyrenaicus</i>			✓					
60	Anomalous Blue	<i>Polyommatus admetus</i>		✓						
61	Aedon Blue	<i>Polyommatus aedon</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
62	Amanda's Blue	<i>Polyommatus amandus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
63	Pontic Blue	<i>Polyommatus coelestinus</i>	✓			✓				
64	False Chalkhill Blue	<i>Polyommatus corydonius caucasicus</i>	✓					✓		✓
65	Damon Blue	<i>Polyommatus damon</i>				✓		✓		
66	Meleager's Blue	<i>Polyommatus daphnis</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
67	Turquoise Blue	<i>Polyommatus dorylas armenus</i>			✓	✓			✓	✓
68	Eros Blue	<i>Polyommatus eros yildizae</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
69	Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
70	Chelmos Blue	<i>Polyommatus iphigenia</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
71	Poseidon Blue	<i>Polyommatus poseidon</i>			✓					
72	Ripart's Anomalous Blue	<i>Polyommatus ripartii</i>			✓	✓				
73	Chapman's Blue	<i>Polyommatus thersites</i>	✓			✓				
74	Eastern Baton Blue	<i>Pseudophilotes vicrama</i>						✓		✓
75	Little Tiger Blue	<i>Tarucus balkanicus</i>								✓
76	Odd-spot Blue	<i>Turanana endymion</i>								✓
Family <b>Nymphalidae</b>										
77	Nettle Tree Butterfly	<i>Libythea celtis</i>					✓			
78	Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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79	Southern White Admiral	<i>Limenitis reducta</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
80	Camberwell Beauty	<i>Nymphalis antiopa</i>					✓			
81	Large Tortoiseshell	<i>Nymphalis polychloros</i>	✓							
82	Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell	<i>Nymphalis xanthomelas</i>								✓
83	Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
84	Southern Comma	<i>Polygonia egea</i>						✓		✓
85	Ionian Emperor	<i>Thaleropis ionia</i>		✓				✓		✓
86	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	
87	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
88	Cardinal	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>	✓						✓	✓
89	Silver-washed Fritillary	<i>Argynnis paphia</i>					✓	✓	✓	
90	Marbled Fritillary	<i>Brenthis daphne</i>	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
91	Twin-spot Fritillary	<i>Brenthis hecate</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
92	Lesser Marbled Fritillary	<i>Brenthis ino</i>	✓							
93	Caucasian Fritillary	<i>Boloria caucasica</i>			✓					
94	Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	
95	Marsh Fritillary	<i>Euphedryas aurinia</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
96	High Brown Fritillary	<i>Fabriciana adippe</i>				✓	✓		✓	✓
97	Niobe Fritillary	<i>Fabriciana niobe</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
98	Queen of Spain Fritillary	<i>Issoria lathonia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
99	Heath Fritillary	<i>Melitaea athalia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
100	Glanville Fritillary	<i>Melitaea cinxia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
101	False Heath Fritillary	<i>Melitaea diamina</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
102	Spotted Fritillary	<i>Melitaea didyma</i>	✓		✓					
103	Caucasian Spotted Fritillary	<i>Melitaea interrupta</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	
104	Lesser Spotted Fritillary	<i>Melitaea trivia</i>	✓			✓			✓	
105	Dark Green Fritillary	<i>Speyeria aglaja</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
106	Marbled White	<i>Melanargia galathea satnia</i>						✓	✓	✓
107	Balkan Marbled White	<i>Melanargia larissa noacki</i>		✓	✓					
108	Esper's Marbled White	<i>Melanargia russiae</i>	✓	✓						✓
109	Great Banded Grayling	<i>Brintesia circe</i>		✓				✓	✓	✓
110	Orange Hermit	<i>Chazara bischoffii</i>								✓
111	The Hermit	<i>Chazara briseis</i>								✓
112	Freyer's Grayling	<i>Hipparchia fatua</i>		✓						



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113	White-bordered Grayling	<i>Hipparchia parisatis</i>								✓
114	Anatolian Grayling	<i>Hipparchia pellucida pellucida</i>					✓			
115	Eastern Rock Grayling	<i>Hipparchia syriaca</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
116	Freyer's Tawny Rockbrown	<i>Pseudocharaza beroe</i>	✓							
117	Lydian Tawny Rockbrown	<i>Pseudocharaza lydia</i>	✓							✓
118	Anatolian Tawny Rockbrown	<i>Pseudocharaza mamurra</i>		✓						✓
119	Amasian Satyr	<i>Satyrus amasinus</i>		✓						✓
120	Great Sooty Satyr	<i>Satyrus ferula</i>		✓						
121	Scotch Argus	<i>Erebia aethiops melusina</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
122	Hewitson's Ringlet	<i>Erebia hewitsonii</i>			✓					
123	Woodland Ringlet	<i>Erebia medusa</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓			
124	Dusky Meadow Brown	<i>Hyponephele lycaon</i>			✓		✓			
125	Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
126	Russian Heath	<i>Coenonympha leander</i>	✓	✓	✓					
127	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	✓	✓						✓
128	Lederer's Heath	<i>Coenonympha symphyta</i>			✓				✓	
129	Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>		✓			✓		✓	
130	Large Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata maera</i>			✓		✓		✓	✓
131	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	✓	✓			✓		✓	
	Family <b>Hesperiidae</b>									
132	Mallow Skipper	<i>Carcharodus alcaea</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			
133	Tufted Marbled Skipper	<i>Carcharodus flocciferus</i>				✓	✓			
134	Marbled Skipper	<i>Carcharodus lavatherae</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
135	Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
136	Large Skipper	<i>Ochlodes sylvanus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
137	Large Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus alveus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
138	Aegean Skipper	<i>Pyrgus melotis</i>				✓		✓	✓	
139	Olive Skipper	<i>Pyrgus serratulae</i>	✓						✓	
140	Yellow-banded Skipper	<i>Pyrgus sidae</i>	✓		✓	✓				
141	Hungarian Skipper	<i>Spialia orbifer</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
142	Persian Skipper	<i>Spialia phlomidis</i>		✓				✓		✓
143	Essex Skipper	<i>Thymelicus lineola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
144	Small Skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Photo Gallery

Anatolian Zephyr Blue © Robert G



© André H



Pine Sawyer Beetle © André H



Anatolian Tawny Rockbrown © Robert G



Amasian Satyr © David C



Apollo © André H



Alcon Blue © Robert G

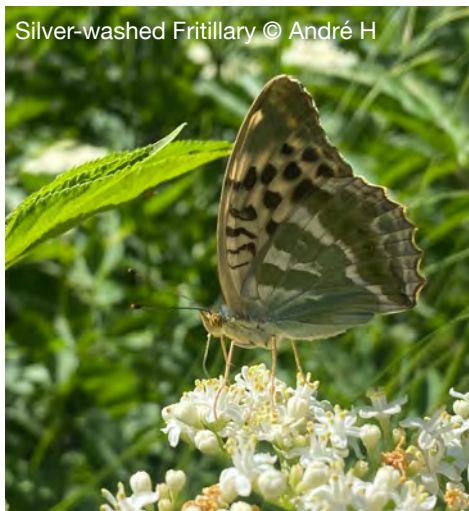


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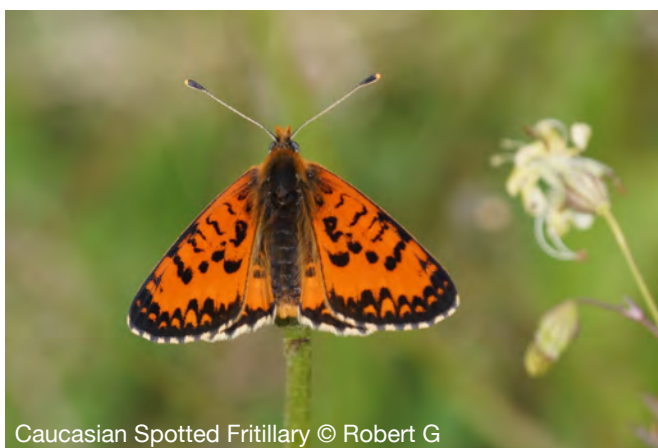
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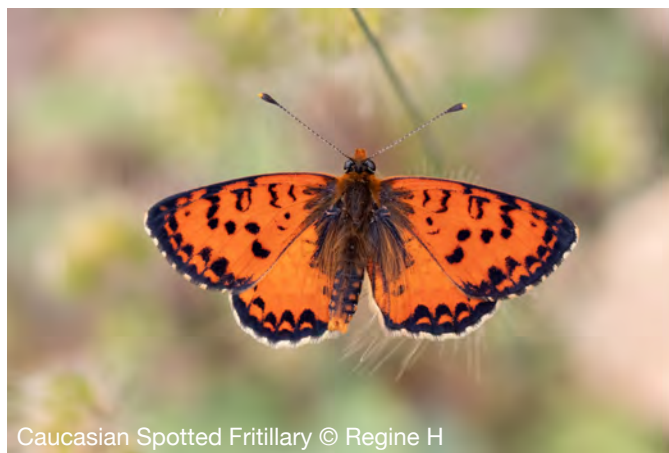
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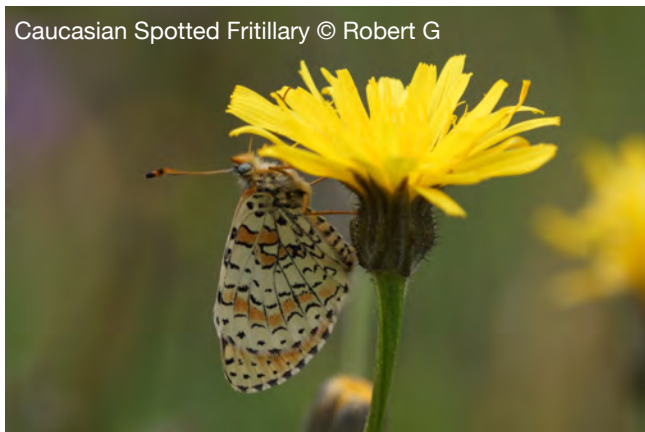
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Twin-spot Fritillary © Bob M



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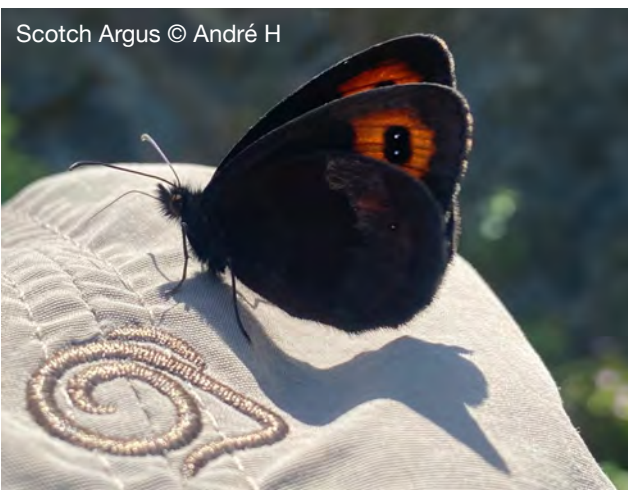
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