

Butterflies of Picos de Europa

29th June - 6th July 2025

Led by Patrick Barkham & Juan Carlos Proveda Vera



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June 29th – July 6th 2025
Trip report by Patrick Barkham
With guides Patrick Barkham and Juan Carlos Poveda Vera

Day 1

The Picos butterfly pursuers met at midday at Santander Airport, with most taking the flight from Stansted but several of the group travelling earlier and enjoying a few days in northern Spain first. The 12-strong gathering had Patrick and Spanish biologist and naturalist Juan Carlos as their guides, with the addition of Patrick's 13-year-old daughter, Esme, who would be chasing up vertiginous slopes on behalf of us all to track down elusive rarities. We drove for two hours into the Picos – twisting up the impressive Hermida gorge with its vast vertical walls of limestone – to check into the lovely Hotel del Oso, which is in the heart of the mountains close to Fuente Dé. It is a traditional family hotel, in an old-fashioned stone and oak-timbered building, with excellent catering and a swimming pool – unusually luxurious by the standards of most wildlife tours!

As soon as we could, we headed up the valley and onto a tiny lane, parking at the bottom of a mountain track near the village of Pido. This was an introduction to the classic Picos landscape, a patchwork of traditionally managed tiny hay meadows and deciduous woodland beneath spectacular bluffs of the high limestone peaks. The whole area was made a national park in 1918, so in many ways was one of the founding sites of European conservation, even though few people in Britain seem to have heard of the “Peaks of Europe”!

We walked up a steep little limestone track which was filled with flowers on either side. Although the lower hay meadows had been cut by now, there was still plenty of floral margins. It was warm and sunny but clouds were gathering. David spotted a Large Wall Brown on the rocky outcrops – a handsome larger, darker version of the Wall Brown we have in Britain – and we enjoyed lovely sightings of scores of Marbled Whites, which were as common as the Meadow Browns we also saw in abundance. We admired some black-and-red striped shield bugs, which Simon noted are referred to as AC Milan shield bugs. Above us, we saw Black Kites and Griffon Vultures. Closer to hand on the floral limestone were some stunning Pearly Heaths, familiar Ringlets and Brown Arguses, which according to the local butterfly expert in this mountain range are all actually Mountain Arguses (our Northern Brown Argus). Sharp-eyed Karen spotted the first Wood White of the trip and then, as thunder began to rumble we picked up a tatty Adonis Blue. Rain began to fall, the skies seriously darkened and we retreated to the buses. The first afternoon was rained off but we had a little taster and a heatwave was coming... We enjoyed the first of many excellent evening meals provided by the Hotel Del Oso, who take their catering very seriously.



Wood White © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera

Day 2

Monday looked like being the best day of weather in the central Picos all week so we decided to maximise our chances of seeing some high-altitude butterflies. To do this we took the short drive from the hotel up to the head of the valley, a spectacular amphitheatre of limestone cliffs where we could catch the Fuente Dé cable car, from 1,000 metres above sea level in the valley to more than 1,800 metres, and well above the tree-line. It was already 28°C when we boarded the 20-person capacity cable car, which travels at an impressive 10 metres per second during its four-minute ascent, providing spectacular views of the valley below.



Gavarnie Blue © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera

Our target species was the Gavarnie Blue, which is only found in the Picos and in the Pyrenees, and lives at altitude. In bright sunshine, rising heat and a pleasant, slightly cooling breeze at this altitude, we set about our hunt. Within seconds, on the grey stony

ground before us, Esme had found and identified a Gavarnie Blue. This beautiful silver-blue butterfly with a distinctive black-and-silver-marked underside posed obligingly for us on a variety of small rocks. Patrick assured the group it wasn't usually this easy to find this high-altitude rarity.

We spread out and wandered among the grassy, rocky plateau below the highest peaks. Here, in dazzling high-mountain light, we enjoyed sightings of particularly rich-coloured Small Tortoiseshells and Painted Ladies – their orange colours pinged in the light, but as with the Speckled Woods, they appeared much brighter than the butterflies we see at home. The air smelled of thyme growing among the grassy turf and we watched Hummingbird Hawkmoths feeding at flowers. We also enjoyed nice views of the Rosy Grizzled Skipper, Long-tailed Blue, and Clouded Yellow. There was a nice array of mountain birds too: Water Pipit, Alpine Chough, Black Redstart, Crag Martin and the very striking black, white and silver version of the Northern Wheatear.

To the sound of the cow bells softly ringing from distant grazing cows – alongside horses – we pursued lots and lots of rarely-stopping ringlets. We identified the Piedmont Ringlet but other high mountain ringlet species eluded us. Despite checking and checking again, every ringlet we intercepted turned out to be Piedmont.



Piedmont Ringlet © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera

It was a special experience being high in the mountains on such a glorious day: the light was extraordinarily vivid. With the temperature soaring towards 35°C, most of the group sweated up the track higher into the mountains and past the barren scree slopes beloved of Lefebvre's Ringlet. Unfortunately this little, dark ringlet refused to reveal itself. We spotted some other interesting species however, most notably the dusky Mountain Clouded Yellow as well enjoying some fine close-up views of Alpine Accentor and Snowfinch.

After lunch beside a towering cliff-face where we hoped to chance upon a Wallcreeper, we descended and met the rest of the group who in the heat had decided to stay closer to the cable car. With thunderstorms building again after another extremely hot day, we descended in the cable car once again, and then forged on, into the woods behind the cable car and into a floral meadow which had not yet been cut. Here we found some nice field crickets, a Mole Cricket and a Great Green Bush-cricket. Steve found the first Knapweed and Small Pearl-Bordered Fritillaries of the trip and Esme spotted an Orange-tip – a surprising find soon after midsummer but perhaps an indication that the butterfly season here was later than usual and some of the high-summer species were yet to emerge.

Day 3

With the heatwave forecast to end with showers in the Picos, we headed south – for the sun. We took the twisting road out of Potes and over the Picos range, up through fine beech woods. Patrick's bus in the lead were fortunate to see a Beech Marten cross the road ahead of us, and we had some lovely views of White Stork on nests and prospecting freshly-cut fields on the other side of the high pass.



Blue-Spot Hairstreak © Helen B

On the south side of the mountains, we entered Leon and what felt like a very different region – a hotter, drier terrain of large fields, low hills and sleepy villages with their shutters pulled down against the sun. The landscape of central Spain was large and very lightly populated, giving an indication of the size of the interiors of this big country.

A short unscheduled roadside stop saw us pick up the first Sloe and Blue-Spot Hairstreaks of the trip and after a good two-hour drive we reached our destination, a fine limestone gorge close to the small town of Aguilar de Campoo.

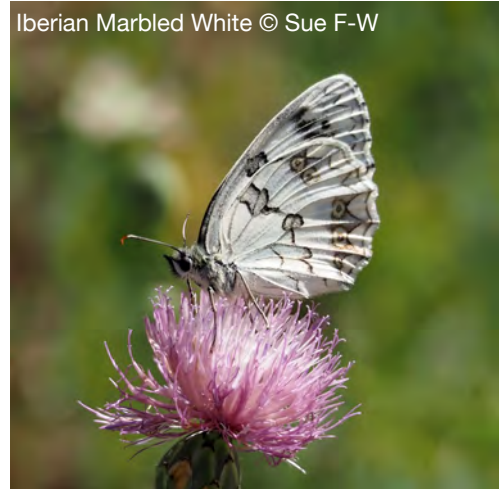
It was hot – the temperature rapidly rising to at least

34°C – and an island of Viper’s Bugloss right beside where we parked was filled with butterflies. We soon identified Chapman’s Blue alongside Common Blue, lots of lively Long-tailed Blues and the first Ripart’s Anomalous Blues and Red Underwing Skippers of the trip.

We also identified the first Iberian Marbled Whites of the tour so far – distinguished by the large white panels on their upperwings compared with the much darker ordinary Marbled Whites. As we slowly walked up the track, we clocked a grand profusion of butterflies including Spanish Gatekeeper, Turquoise Blue and Small Copper. It was lovely to see such large numbers too – there were a dozen Blue-spot and Sloe Hairstreaks on a small clump of flowers.

Esme called out the first Black-veined White of the trip, which the group enjoyed seeing nectaring on thistle alongside the first Cardinal as well. It turned into a stupendous day for fritillaries with this site also serving up the Provençal Fritillary (distinguished from the ubiquitous Heath Fritillary but its bright orange palps), Lesser Marbled Fritillary, Dark-Green Fritillary and an ageing Twin-spot Fritillary.

Iberian Marbled White © Sue F-W



Once in the short gorge, where a small stream ran, Simon, whose expertise extended to dragonflies as well as birds and butterflies, spotted a Common Goldenring Dragonfly.

Where the track branched, there was a tremendous stench of a decaying animal which detective David eventually discovered was the rotting carcass of a large Wild Boar. This looked like a much better bait for a Purple Emperor than Patrick’s shrimp paste, which only attracted ants and flies. Sure enough, Patrick spotted an Emperor racing past but unfortunately it did not linger for anyone to see it or identify if it was the Lesser Purple Emperor which is also found in these parts.

There are always some butterflies that get away, and we continued to enjoy a great profusion of sightings including some very friendly Rock Graylings, which kept landing on or near us. These flew alongside ordinary Graylings and we also twice spotted the more elusive Great Banded Grayling, which can resemble a White Admiral in fleeting flight.

We stopped for lunch at a nearby picnic location where we found a welcome bench or two beneath the shade of a walnut tree. In the meadow we saw more butterflies including a Short-tailed Blue, a Southern Small White and some blues that we later identified as Escher’s Blue. These were slightly larger than Common and Chapman’s Blue but a slightly different form to those in the popular field-guides.

We then drove back towards the Picos, stopping in the foothills at a view-point in the midst of some rather fine oak woodland. Our brief foray into the woods turned up our first Ilex Hairstreak of the tour so far as well as dozens and dozens of Silver-Washed Fritillaries and Ringlets. Simon also spotted the first Marbled Skipper of the trip.



Dusky Large Blue © Helen B

By now it was late afternoon but there was still time in the hot sunshine to visit a valley site within the southern side of the Picos which can only be known as Site Y. This beautiful, incredibly tranquil boggy meadow is a site for the Bog Fritillary – one of the most southerly sites in Europe – but also for the Dusky Large Blue, an extremely rare butterfly which is still the target of butterfly collectors. Within minutes of entering the meadow, we found the Dusky Large Blue. We saw at least six fresh individuals, both males and females. The male is a large midnight blue, and the female shines bright brown.

Our other target species, the Bog Fritillary, remained elusive (we may have been too late in the season) but this gorgeous meadow was filled with other great species. We saw plenty of the first Meadow Fritillaries of the trip alongside Small Pearl-Bordered Fritillaries. Simon pointed out that these are easily distinguishable on their top-

side by looking along the forewing top-edge where the number '730' is spelled out by the patterning on the wings.

Sharp-eyed Karen spotted an Iberian Sooty Copper (relatively recently declared a separate species from the Sooty Copper) and the first Chestnut Heaths of the tour. Simon found Keeled Skimmers by the pond areas, and we also found a Tufted Marbled Skipper and Esme identified a Chapman's Ringlet, which was not seen by all the group but which hopefully we would find on a later outing. This handsome large ringlet is probably the rarest butterfly of this tour in terms of distribution, only being found in the Picos range.

It was a hot, humid evening in the meadow but everyone enjoyed the rural tranquility of this scene, before we took the twisting pass home, arriving back at the hotel at 7.50pm after a long, hot and epic butterfly day. We were all very tired, but it was a good, relaxing weariness after an exciting day of butterflying in beautiful places, and we had clocked up an impressive 66 species in a single day.

Day 4

The heatwave broke across the Picos and Wednesday dawned wet and very grey, with temperatures dropping back down to a more benign (for British folk, anyway) 20°C, which was still decent enough for butterflies. Patrick and Juan Carlos consulted their four different weather forecasts which indicated that the weather might brighten in the afternoon, particularly higher up the valley. Given the drizzle, we headed into historic Potes for a spot of pottering, with some of the group shopping and others perusing the pretty riverside of this attractive and historic small town. Simon found a Pincertail dragonfly by the river, while Patrick spotted a Western Spectre dragonfly in the shopping street (thanks to Simon for his dragonfly-identifying skills).



Western Spectre © Patrick Barkham

The weather was brighter than expected and so we headed to a hot dry track on the road to Argubanes to hopefully pick up some hairstreaks. It was unexpectedly humid as we walked up the stony track, which was surrounded by scrubby holly bushes – ideal for Ilex and False Ilex Hairstreaks, which we quickly found, alongside Sloe Hairstreaks as well. Simon found the first Lesser Spotted Fritillary of the tour so far – a very faded specimen – and we enjoyed some really nice views of common



Cleopatra © Helen B

butterflies, including Clouded Yellow, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Mountain Argus and Short-tailed Blue, as well as the handsome Cleopatra. Simon found the a Tufted Marbled Skipper, a good spot. Under grey skies and cooler temperatures, it was actually much better for butterfly photography today, with the butterflies also posing with their wings open for longer. The group got some good pictures. And then we enjoyed fantastic views of a male and female Red-backed Shrike, perching on fence posts and darting into a cut meadow to find beetles to eat. We ate here too, enjoying our picnic lunch at the picnic tables before moving on at 2.30pm, hoping the weather was going to brighten as forecast.

We headed back past our hotel and up the valley and, unfortunately, the forecast was inaccurate because the weather began closing in. Mizzle was falling when we stopped in the village of Pido beside the river. Patrick had received a hot tip from a local contact who had seen a Purple Emperor here the previous day. It was not a scenic spot – the Emperor is partial to a bit of grot – but the weather was not right for a swooping tree-top dwelling butterfly, although we did see some Silver-washed Fritillaries. On we went, back to the track we had been rained off on the first day. This time, we walked all the way up the track to an uncut hay meadow at the top, but the drizzle worsened and we were left enjoying the butterflies that are hardy enough to fly in the rain – Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Marbled Whites. We checked the Meadow Browns for Dusky and Oriental Meadow Brown but they were all the classic species. Nevertheless, it was a lovely,

peaceful walk in a beautiful spot. That evening, we headed to Potes to enjoy a meal out in a rather splendidly decorated local restaurant which offered very authentic local food in a building whose roof was favoured for nesting by scores of Swifts.

Day 5

Another grey, wet day was forecast for the Liebana Valley but the prospects were brighter on the southern side of the Picos, with sunshine predicted until 3pm. So we took the twisty mountain road up to San Glorio Pass and down the other side to a riverside site that can only be known as Site X. Closely watched by National Park rangers, these boggy meadows are another hotspot for the very rare and threatened Dusky Large Blue. We were also confident that we could find that other great Picos specialist Chapman's Ringlet here, with most of the group not having seen it on Day 3. These high mountain valley sites also represented a good chance of bumping into an Apollo, although an encounter with these fast-flying, far-ranging butterflies cannot easily be planned.

We also hoped we might intercept an Apollo at San Glorio Pass but we watched in disbelief as the car thermometer dropped from 21°C to 15°C as we entered thick cloud at the top of the pass, 1,609 metres up. Nothing here in the gloom apart from the rather lovely call of nearby Quail.

The group's morale may have dipped a bit but Juan Carlos and Patrick can congratulate themselves for their reading of the weather forecasts because not long after our descent we suddenly met with sunshine for the first time that day: Site X was bathed in it.

The geology here was mixed, with the classic Picos limestone alongside more acidic Devonian sandstone, bequeathing a marvellous diversity of flowers, grasses and shrubs – and butterflies. We stepped out of the van and immediately saw some nice Iberian Marbled Whites, Large Wall Brown and lots of Silver-studded Blues. We took a track alongside a mountain stream with rocky, floral mini-meadows and sallow surrounding ourselves. Gwen spotted only the second Swallowtail of the trip, and we soon clocked up a Heath hat-trick: Small, Pearly and Chestnut. Simon spotted what Patrick identified as the first Shepherd's Fritillary of the tour – this mountain-loving fritillary is a graceful, slender winged medium-sized fritillary and it was great to see it.



Silver-studded Blue © Sue F-W

There was so much diversity here. We ticked off more Dusky Large Blues, enjoying beautiful views of them in the meadows, and also enjoyed excellent views of Chapman's Ringlet. This large, dark ringlet with big eye-spots was relatively easy to see and photograph, unlike some ringlets that never settle. In slightly cooler conditions, around 23°C with a warm wind and a light breeze, the butterflies were more willing to settle than in earlier heatwave conditions (apart from the big fritillaries), and so it was an excellent day for butterfly photography.

We spent a long time in a relatively small area of stream-side meadows just because there was an astonishing diversity and abundance of butterflies, particularly fritillaries. David deserves



High Brown Fritillary © David M

a big shout-out for staking out a promising patch of knapweed for an hour to finally obtain photographic proof that the big fritillaries we'd seen swooping in and dashing off again were High Brown Fritillaries. The first of the trip. They were flying alongside Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, Heath Fritillaries, Provençal Fritillaries (like Heath but with the orange palps), Spotted Fritillaries, Lesser Spotted Fritillaries, Dark-Green Fritillaries, Knapweed Fritillaries, a Glanville Fritillary (one very tired specimen), Silver-washed Fritillaries, Lesser Marbled Fritillaries and Queen of Spain Fritillaries. I don't think any of us had

seen so many fritillaries in one place before! Patrick also identified False Heath Fritillaries.

At lunchtime, Esme made an interesting if melancholy discovery – we could add Ripart's Anomalous Blue to our day's tally because there was one pinned, dead, to the Ford Transit grill. During lunch, we enjoyed the spectacle of 22 Griffon Vultures floating overhead, drifting down this vast, silent, people-less valley. Afterwards, we walked further up a little path, twisting up the valley beside the stream. Eventually, we crossed the stream and entered a little meadow sheltered by outcrops of rock and sallow. "It's like fairyland," said Karen, which perfectly encapsulated this little slice of heaven on Earth.

This was simply the most floral mini-meadow we had seen, and every flower seemed to be visited by a butterfly. All the fritillaries were here, but also Peacocks and Speckled Woods and Clouded Yellows and Whites and Blues – including Chalkhill Blue and Turquoise Blue. Then, to our surprise, we found a little trove of coppers. After enjoying a Sooty Copper, Helen, who was the copper whisperer, discovered our first Scarce Copper, which in northern Spain is slightly different in appearance to those found in the rest of Europe (its English name is a misnomer) – a spectacular orange male. Then we discovered a huge and immaculate female Purple-shot Copper. Shortly afterwards, we found a male Purple-edged Copper.



Turquoise Blue © David M

We also enjoyed seeing Mallow Skipper, Red Underwing Skipper and Oberthür's Grizzled Skipper, and almost everything else apart from the elusive Apollo.

The sun was still shining when we left Site X at 4pm. We hoped it might also be shining up on the pass to enable a final bit of butterflying but we re-entered the clouds and so continued our drive back to Hotel Del Oso. It was the kind of glorious day of butterflying that leaves you glowing all evening.

Day 6

We didn't quite believe it would be a sunny day as we drove down the Liébana Valley in the gloom. It was forecast to be dry and sunny until thunderstorms were set to arrive at 4pm, and so we drove north back down the Hermida gorge towards a small mountain village which was typical of the area. On our way, we stopped in a lay-by on the upper gorge to check for gorge-dwelling butterflies. The first sun of the day emerged and we immediately found our 90th species of the trip, a Spanish Purple Hairstreak. We had a useful hairstreak lesson provided by roadside flowers which were being visited by False Ilex and Blue-Spot Hairstreaks as well.



Spanish Purple Hairstreak © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera

Esme caught a glimpse of a Scarce Swallowtail but we couldn't tell if it was the Southern/Spanish species until thankfully another butterfly returned and gave us a good view of its wing patterning to prove it was the former.

We then drove up to the village, parked, and began a significant walk up the zig-zag farm track out of the village. We were ascending 300 metres to reach some high altitude oak woodland and one of only two sites in Spain known to harbour the elusive and increasingly rare Woodland Brown. The butterfly is still unfortunately a target for collectors.

On the way out of the village, Patrick reminded everyone to look out for the Large Chequered Skipper which was distinguished by its distinctive bouncing flight pattern. This butterfly uniquely looks like it's being bounced on a piece of string. Patrick had never seen one here before, and had last seen the butterfly in the Picos more than 20 years ago, but on the 2019 trip he'd caught a

too-fleeting glimpse of a butterfly that might have been one. As we passed through village-edge meadows, Esme spotted a bouncing butterfly which Simon rapidly confirmed was a Large Chequered Skipper. This was a great thrill. Before we knew it, we'd spotted another couple of these bouncing butterflies, several of which paused fleetingly to nectar from flowers in a curious fashion, hanging below the flower they were "drinking" from. David got some excellent photos and soon most of the group had enjoyed close encounters with this special insect.



Large Chequered Skipper © Helen B

We were also keeping a sharp eye out for Apollo on the mountainside but sadly all the jinking or fast-moving whites proved to be Marbled Whites or lovely Cleopatras or Large Whites. There were lots of smaller butterflies to enjoy on the trackside, including Mountain Argus, Silver-studded Blue and a tiny, darting blue that Simon identified as the first Baton Blue of the trip. This was a great spot. On the way back down the track, we finally found some Silver-studded types which were conclusively Idas Blues, distinguished by the thin black border on the topside of the male's wings, unlike the Silver-Studs which have a much broader black band which diffuses into the veins.

It was a great effort by the older members of our group and several people nursing injuries to get up to high altitudes, and we were rewarded with lovely views of limestone peaks, wooded valleys and the red-tiled villages spread out below. We also had excellent close-up views of a Griffon Vulture, which perched on a rock on the skyline, and Red-billed Choughs.

Walking on through several classic Picos high hay meadows, we reached the oak woodland, which was a fantastic example of woodpasture, with sunny and very floral clearings between old hazel coppice and lichen-encrusted oaks. Here we found plenty of Ringlets, Silver-washed Fritillaries, and Large Wall Browns but every time we thought we might see the movement of a Woodland Brown, it turned out to be one of the former. This elusive butterfly lives at low densities and is known to be in serious decline so we always knew it would be a hard one to find. We enjoyed a sunny picnic lunch in this fantastic woodland before slowly descending back to the village, where we enjoyed a well-earned cold drink in the local bar, topped off with a very ripe slab of the local cheese. On the way home, we stopped to inspect some gulley woodland, seeking some big nymphalids. We only found Comma and Peacock but when we were stuck behind an extremely long traffic light in the gorge – where the twisting road is being painstakingly upgraded – Patrick, Esme and sharp-eyed Karen in the front seats saw a female Purple Emperor swooping about in the wooded gorge. Esme and Karen jumped out to get a better look and the traffic lights suddenly changed so they had to rush back into the van but we had seen enough – it was indeed the Emperor.

The thunder was later than forecast but the first spots of rain began falling just as we arrived back at the hotel for the evening. Good – or lucky – timing!

Day 7

For our final day, we focused on touring some beautiful local woodlands to pick up some woodland species which had evaded us so far. We began the day with the most obvious butterfly excursion of all – a walk out from the hotel on a track which climbed the wooded hillside of the valley, ultimately leading to the village of Pambes.



Large Tortoiseshell © Juan Carlos Poyeda Vera

At 9.30am, most of the butterflies of the Picos were still sleeping but we had a lovely view of a Red Squirrel busy snaffling cherries from a woodland tree. The Marbled Whites and Speckled Woods were soon on the wing and Simon heard the call of a Short-toed Treecreeper. We saw some nice Silver-washed Fritillaries but not much was about until we paused on the track beside a small clearing, which was filled with shafts of morning sunlight. We were about to turn back when Simon called out: "I think that's a Large Tortoiseshell." Of course, he was right, and it was a brilliant spot.

This large nymphalid was motionless on the trunk of a small dead tree, showing a triangle of bright orange. To spot this elusive butterfly without it moving was very impressive work. When it flicked its wings closed, it was utterly invisible against the tree bark.

Walking back down the track, Karen, who does a special Purple Hairstreak count near her home, was the first to spot the distinctive dashing silver flight of a Purple Hairstreak – another new species for the trip. Arriving back at the hotel we finally saw the Geranium Bronze we knew were darting about the three small pots of geraniums scattered outside the hotel. That was three new species before 10.30am, and suddenly the big 100 species was looking very possible.



We drove out through Potes and turned towards the small mountain village of Colio, stopping shortly after the road crossed a small stream. We walked along the road to inspect this wet, wooded ravine – surely a great place for admirals and emperors. We enjoyed nice views of Painted Ladies, Commas and Red Admirals, and the group also saw close-up views of Buzzard and, further afield, Honey Buzzard. Patrick caught a glimpse of an Emperor but it was far too fleeting to confirm if it was Lesser (as we hoped). But the group then saw the first White Admiral of the trip, which was just what we were looking for. A Scarce Swallowtail type dashed towards us, and a heroic grab-shot by David got the picture we required to prove it was in fact a Southern Scarce Swallowtail – our 100th species of the tour.

We also found a huge snake-skin on the bridge before driving on up to the pretty village of Colio. It was hot and sunny, with the temperature rapidly rising to 30°C and we found the perfect place for a picnic, in the shade of the spring shed in the centre of the village, beside a large stone trough filled with cool running springwater, and enormous tadpoles of the local toads. With this natural air conditioning and cooling system, we had our picnic in the shade. Some of the group stayed in the village while the rest of us took the steep track out of Colio, up through small meadows and mostly oak and holly woodland. Here we enjoyed a bounty of hairstreaks: Purple, False Ilex and Spanish Purple Hairstreak, which is noticeably larger than its cousins. Once again, Simon pulled an excellent spot out of the bag, finding a Brown Hairstreak at rest, our 101st species of the trip. Karen found a second specimen and we savoured fine views of this most handsome of hairstreaks. Then it was back down the hill and back to the hotel, stopping in Potes for a high-quality ice-cream in the tiny old streets by the rushing river. A smaller group went out for a second early-evening stroll up the track into the woods again but it had clouded over by now and there were very few butterflies at large. It was, however, a wonderfully peaceful stroll in a beautiful place.

We had a final meal at the hotel, who really catered for us extremely well. The following morning we left early, at 7am, to ensure we arrived back at Santander without rushing and in plenty of time for flights home.

The tour of the Picos was a hugely enjoyable trip with an excellent group, who enjoyed each other's company. Thanks to everyone for making it a positive and happy adventure. We experienced all kinds of weather but it was mostly hot and sunny and filled with wildlife. It was a real joy to together enjoy butterflies in wildflower meadows and woods in one of Europe's most beautiful landscapes.

* In the end, our list numbered over 100 species, thanks to the later identification of other species from our group's photographs.

Butterflies			29th	30th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
			June	June	July	July	July	July	July	July
Imago sightings are marked with a ✓, caterpillars are marked with a ☆			day	day	day	day	day	day	day	day
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
62	White Admiral	<i>Limenitis camilla</i>							✓	
63	Queen of Spain Fritillary	<i>Issoria lathonia</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓			
64	Twin-spot Fritillary	<i>Brenthis hecate</i>			✓					
65	Lesser Marbled Fritillary	<i>Brenthis ino</i>			✓		✓			
66	Marbled Fritillary	<i>Brenthis daphne</i>			✓					
67	Silver-washed Fritillary	<i>Argynnis paphia</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
68	Cardinal	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>			✓					
69	Dark Green Fritillary	<i>Speyeria aglaja</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			
70	High Brown Fritillary	<i>Fabriciana adippe</i>					✓			
71	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>		✓	✓		✓			
72	Purple Emperor	<i>Apatura iris</i>						✓		
73	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
74	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>			✓			✓	✓	
75	Peacock	<i>Aglais io</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
76	Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓		
77	Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
78	Large Tortoiseshell	<i>Nymphalis polychloros</i>							✓	
79	Lesser Spotted Fritillary	<i>Melitaea trivia</i>				✓	✓			
80	Spotted Fritillary	<i>Melitaea didyma</i>					✓	✓		
81	Knapweed Fritillary	<i>Melitaea phoebe</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓			
82	Glanville Fritillary	<i>Melitaea cinxia</i>					✓			
83	False Heath Fritillary	<i>Melitaea diamina</i>	✓				✓			
84	Provençal Fritillary	<i>Melitaea deione</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	
85	Heath Fritillary	<i>Melitaea athalia</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
86	Meadow Fritillary	<i>Melitaea parthenoides</i>			✓					
87	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			
88	Spanish Chestnut Heath	<i>Coenonympha glycerion</i> subsp. <i>lphioides</i>			✓		✓			
89	Pearly Heath	<i>Coenonympha arcania</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
90	Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
91	Large Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata maera</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
92	Wall	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>			✓	✓			✓	
93	Iberian Marbled White	<i>Melanargia lachesis</i>			✓		✓			
94	Marbled White	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	

Butterflies			29th	30th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
			June	June	July	July	July	July	July	July
Imago sightings are marked with a ✓, caterpillars are marked with a ☆			day	day	day	day	day	day	day	day
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
95	Rock Grayling	<i>Hipparchia hermione</i>			✓					
96	Great Banded Grayling	<i>Brintesia circe</i>			✓			✓		
97	Grayling	<i>Hipparchia semele</i>			✓			✓		
98	Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
99	Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>				✓			✓	
100	Spanish Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia bathseba</i>			✓		✓			
101	Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
102	Piedmont Ringlet	<i>Erebia meolans</i>		✓				✓		
103	Common Brassy Ringlet	<i>Erebia cassioides</i>		✓						
104	Chapman's Ringlet	<i>Erebia palarica</i>			✓		✓			

(Shepherd's fritillary struck off the list from our holiday as a mis-identification.)

Birds

Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>
Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennata</i>	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Iberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Alpine Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>
Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>
Dunnock/Hedge Accentor	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Alpine Accentor	<i>Prunella collaris</i>	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Snowfinch	<i>Montifringilla nivalis</i>
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>

Linnet
Goldfinch
Greenfinch
Serin

Linnaria cannabina
Carduelis carduelis
Chloris chloris
Serinus serinus

Yellowhammer
Cirl Bunting
Rock Bunting

Emberiza citrinella
Emberiza cirius
Emberiza cia

Mammals

European Snow Vole
Bat sp.
Beech/Stone Marten
Pyrenean Chamois
Eurasian Red Squirrel
Wild Boar (deceased)
Mole (deceased)

Chionomys nivalis
Chiroptera sp.
Martes foina
Rupicapra pyrenaica
Sciurus vulgaris
Sus scrofa
Talpa sp.

Reptiles and Amphibians

Slowworm
Common Toad
Common Frog

Anguis fragilis
Bufo bufo
Rana temporaria

Damselflies and Dragonflies

Beautiful Demoiselle
Western Spectre
Common Goldenring
Broad-bodied Chaser
Keeled Skimmer
Large Pincertail
Common Darter

Calopteryx virgo
Boyeria irene
Cordulegaster boltonii
Libellula depressa
Orthetrum coerulescens
Onychogomphus uncatus
Sympetrum striolatum

Moths

Southern Grass Emerald
Burnet Companion
Hummingbird Hawkmoth
A Yellow Underwing
Chimney-sweeper
Grass Wave
Mint Moth
Southern 6-spot Burnet
5-spot Burnet
Provence Burnet
Forester Moth

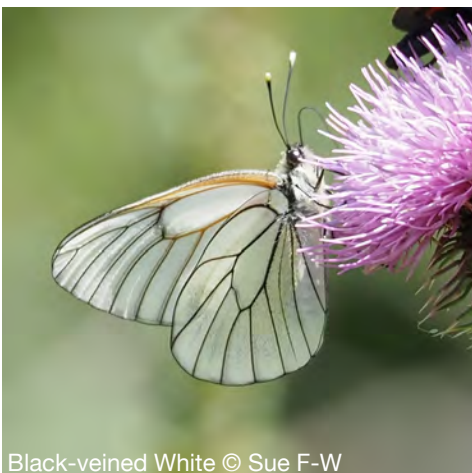
Chlorissa cloraria
Euclidia glyphica
Macroglossum stellatarum
Noctua sp.
Odezia atrata
Perconia strigillaria
Pyrausta aurata
Zygaena transalpina
Zygaena trifolii
Zygaena occitanica
Zygaenidae sp.

Other Invertebrates

Common Carder Bee
Striped Shieldbug
Mole Cricket
Great Green Bush-cricket (nymph)
Heather Crab Spider

Bombus pascuorum
Graphosoma sp.
Gryllotalpa sp.
Tettigonia viridissima
Thomisus onustus

Photo Gallery



Black-veined White © Sue F-W



Brown Hairstreak © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera

Chalkhill and Silver-studded Blues © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera



Blue-spot Hairstreak © Sue F-W



Cleopatra © Helen B



Comma © Karen G-M



Dipper © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera



Chapman's Ringlet © David M



© Patrick Barkham



Clouded Yellow © Sue F-W



Provençal Fritillary © Helen B



Southern Grass Emerald © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera



Marbled Fritillary © David M



False Ilex Hairstreak © Helen B



© Juan Carlos Poveda Vera



Escher's Blue © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera



Mountain Argus © Helen B



Mallow Skipper © Sue F-W



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary © Sue F-W

Egyptian Vulture © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary © David M



Spanish Chestnut Heath © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera



Small Skippers © Helen B

Silver-studded Blue © Helen B



Scarce Copper © Helen B



Large Grizzled Skipper © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera



© Patrick Barkham

Scarce Copper © Sue F-W



Ilex Hairstreak © Sue F-W



© Sue F-W

Purple-edged Copper © David M



Scarce Copper © David M



Northern Wheatear © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera



Red Squirrel © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera



Marbled White © Helen B



Long-tailed Blue © David M





Glanville Fritillary © Helen B



© Patrick Barkham



© Juan Carlos Poveda Vera



Oberthür's Grizzled Skipper © Sue F-W



Large Wall Brown © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera



Knapweed Fritillary © David M



Cleopatra © David M



Heather Crab Spider © Juan Carlos Poveda Vera