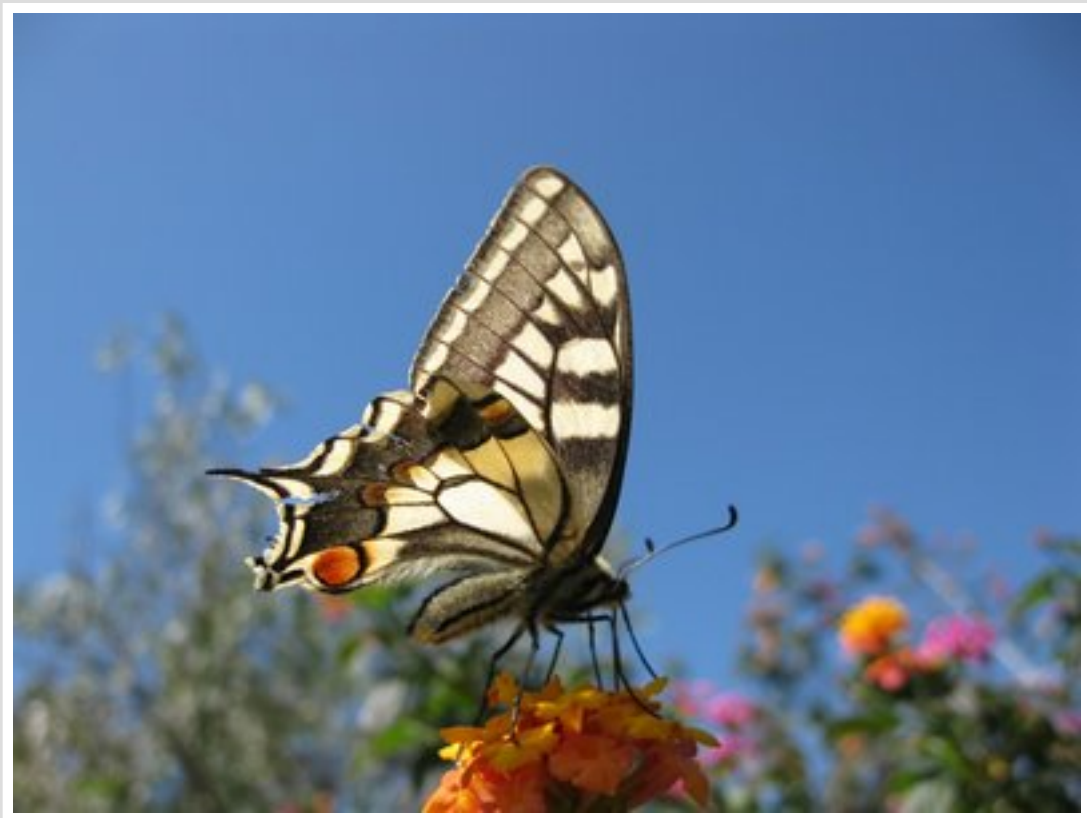


## Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 06-Aug-10 02:55 AM GMT

2010 has certainly been my best butterfly year yet, probably because I am slowly becoming a little more knowledgeable and certainly because we have been lucky enough to have had two European holidays this year. I will try to remember some of the highlights and hopefully there will be many new stories to add in the future.

Before any butterflies dared to show themselves after a long cold winter we headed off for some sun to the Algarve. Our holiday was supposed to be between the 3rd and 17th April, although it turned out to be longer than that. We went to a villa that we have visited a couple of times in the past, but this time I found an area close-by that must have been leveled for housing a couple of years ago. Luckily no houses had been built on the plot and it was covered in wild flowers. This proved to be a fantastic spot for butterflies and I made daily pilgrimages there to see what I could spot.



This swallowtail was in the abandoned orange grove next door.



Speckled woods were very territorial and could be relied upon to be in the same place day after day.



There were a lot of Spanish festoons about.



I spotted a Spanish festoon laying eggs at the side of the road.



The clouded yellows were quite obliging and stayed in place long enough for me to photograph.

## Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 06-Aug-10 03:53 AM GMT

I only spotted what I assume was the same brown argus in more-or-less the same area each day.



These little geranium bronzes were found all over on window boxes and anywhere where ornamental geraniums were growing.



I was delighted to find green hairstreaks flying amongst the cork oaks. I had never seen one before. They are truly beautiful.



Western dappled whites were about the most common butterflies in the area...



...closely followed by green-striped whites.



There were a few blues flying around. I think this is a black-eyed blue.



And I think this is a faded common blue.



## Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 06-Aug-10 04:14 AM GMT

There were a few different butterflies up in the mountains above Faro.

I think this one was a holly blue. *[Edit: I have now been corrected - possibly it is a black-eyed blue.]* It wouldn't let me get any closer and the family were getting impatient, so I had to make do with this picture.



Others seen that day include a long-tailed-blue, painted ladies, large tortoiseshell, small heath, small whites and a wood white, none of which stopped for a picture!

Back near the house and I spotted this skipper. I think it is a red-underwing skipper, but I was interrupted just after taking the photo. My wife came and found me to say that some volcano had erupted in Iceland and they may be cancelling some flights to the UK!



A Spanish marbled white teased me for a couple of days before I could get close enough for a picture.



Others seen, but not very well photographed included large white, meadow brown and small copper.

We had to move further along the coast to Rocha Brava for the next eight days until our flight was re-scheduled. Strangely, although the complex was in a more rural location than the villa there were very few butterflies in the area. However, the area seemed to be a hot-spot for marsh fritillaries.



All together it was a great holiday, with plenty of opportunities to go butterfly watching in between family trips to the beach and water parks! A total of 25 [Edit: 24] species, many of which I hadn't seen before.

### Re: Nick Morgan

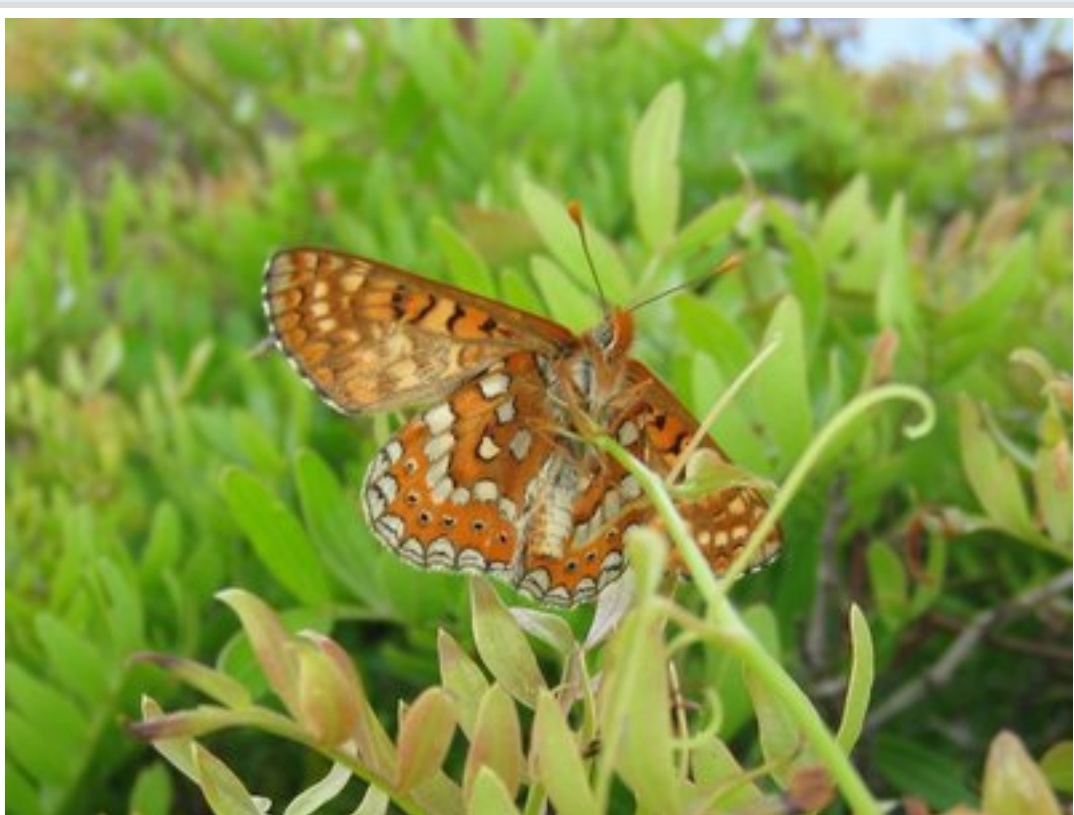
by Paul, 06-Aug-10 04:23 AM GMT

Fantastic record, love to see them... your last set... that's no Holly Blue, ??? Black Eyed again??...Guy will tell us what though 😊 and the last one looks like Spanish Frit (desfontainii) to me ( Marsh Frit family)... keep up the good work! 😊

### Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 06-Aug-10 04:39 AM GMT

Thank you Paul. I only thought the blue was a holly blue after I saw the picture. Having recently seen a lot of holly blues in Menorca, I think that the underside of the wings may be too dark and too strongly marked. I have attached a couple more pictures of the fritillary, which may aid identification, assuming they were all the same species.



## Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 06-Aug-10 05:59 AM GMT

Once we managed to return home from Portugal on 25th April the butterflies were out in East Lothian with a vengeance. Large, small and green-veined whites, orange tips and small tortoiseshells were flying in good numbers. My mission for 2010 was to try and get some better pictures of orange tips. I always seem to have problems with exposure and my wee Canon has a very narrow depth of field. I certainly managed to get some better pictures, but I am never satisfied, so will be out trying again next year!



I then decided to look for some eggs. I soon got my eye in and found an egg on most garlic mustard plants I looked at – just one per plant.



I kept an eye on these for a couple of weeks until they hatched, and then kept an eye on the caterpillars as they grew.



Unfortunately I haven't manage to find any chrysalises yet.

### Re: Nick Morgan

by Padfield, 06-Aug-10 06:51 PM GMT

The marsh fritillary is that - marsh fritillary - but the southern European subspecies *beckeri*, which does resemble the Spanish fritillary in many ways, as Paul pointed out.

The unidentified blue on the ground is most likely a female black-eyed blue (again, as Paul suggested), though I certainly couldn't swear to that without seeing a little more of it!

Great pictures - it must have been a wonderful trip!

Guy

EDIT - I forgot to say - yes, that is definitely a red-underwing skipper.

### Re: Nick Morgan

by Jack Harrison, 06-Aug-10 11:53 PM GMT

Nice report.

Jack

### Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 07-Aug-10 03:48 AM GMT

Thank you for the kind comments and particularly for the identifications. I will have to edit my post for the "non-holly blue" and change the number of species identified to 24!

Having heard from Iain Cowe in the Borders that there is a colony of small blues on the Berwickshire coast, I asked him for directions to find them. He kindly send me very detailed information about where they were, so I headed down there during my lunch hour on 21st May. Despite me being able to take up to two hours for lunch, after driving down there and then walking into the site I only had about ten minutes before I had to leave! However, as soon as I arrived at the site near Eyemouth I spotted a small blue sunning itself on a rock.





In the short time I was there I spotted about ten individuals of this delightful species. They are such beautiful wee things.



On the 4th June I took the day off work so that I could have a more leisurely visit to the small blue colony. Amazingly, although the weather was beautiful at home and for 39 of the 40 mile trip, just as I arrived at the turn-off to the site, thick mist rolled in off the sea. Having travelled there, I thought that I should walk down to the coast just in case the sun broke through. I wasn't to be disappointed. After seeing a couple of small heaths I managed to find a few small blue eggs on the kidney vetch.



Then a very obliging small blue appeared and posed for me on a bramble leaf. After a quiet spell the sun came out and the number of butterflies at that spot was amazing. It was difficult to know how many there were as I stayed for about an hour and a half, but I guess there must have been about 30 small blues there. Sometimes I would be watching four at the same time. There was also a good number of small heaths, two small coppers and four walls appeared briefly and then vanished!





I then continued along the coastal path to look for northern brown argus and walls in areas that Iain had recommended. Sadly the NBA didn't show themselves, but a couple of kilometres further north a wall allowed me to get close enough to take a distant picture. Unfortunately there was quite a strong, cold wind coming in from the sea which must have deterred a lot of butterflies. But it was still a great day and I will now make an annual pilgrimage to the Eyemouth area to look for small blues.

It makes me wonder about a section of the embankment along side the A1 near Haddington. When this was built about five years ago the embankment was seeded with wild flowers including kidney vetch. It seems to be doing quite well and it would be fun to introduce some small blues. Maybe they would just end up being splatted against the front of passing cars!

## Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 07-Aug-10 08:36 PM GMT

On the 15th June I visited John Muir Country Park to see if there were any common blues about yet. Unfortunately the weather on the coast was cooler, overcast and breezy, so I was initially a little disappointed. However, half way down the main track I spotted my first common blue of the year. There were also a couple of small heaths and the common blue disturbed a small copper. In a clearing in the woods I was disappointed not to find anything until I spotted another five common blues in an area of taller grass. The cooler weather at least allowed me to get close enough to photograph them. Later as the sun tried to break through a few green-veined whites, orange tips and another small copper ventured out.





## Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 07-Aug-10 08:50 PM GMT

Having been inspired by the Walls I saw at Eyemouth, I thought that it may be possible that they could have managed to reach the East Lothian coast. On the 18th June I went down to Bilsdean to have a look at a section of the John Muir Way along the top of the cliffs. There is a stone wall that runs along this section, offering protection from the coastal breeze, just like on the Borders Coastal Path. The first butterfly I spotted was a very faded painted lady, and then a little further along the path I saw a lovely red admiral. Then a small butterfly rose up and flew around me. It was a wall. A bit further along the path I saw a second and then a third. Having walked along to the waterfall, I returned along the same route and this time I spotted five walls and two red admirals. Also some green veined whites and a large white.



I am afraid that the pictures aren't very good, but at least they are a record of the butterflies being there. A wall brown was recorded on Traprain Law in 2005, but as far as I am aware these are the only other walls that have been recorded in East Lothian (admittedly only just over the border!). I will head down to Bilsdean again in August to see if there are any second generation butterflies there.

## Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 08-Aug-10 07:39 PM GMT

Our family summer holiday this year was to Menorca between 26th June and 10th July. We rented an old farm house more-or-less in the middle of the

island and it came with about half an acre of orchard (my daughter counted 19 different kinds of fruit trees!). Next door was another orchard tended by Pedro, who would bring us baskets of pears or peaches most evenings. The rest of the area around the house was made up of small fields. The ground is very stony and I guess when they improve the soil the easiest way to get rid of the stones is to build walls, so each small field is surrounded by large wide limestone walls. Many of the fields are unused now, so many of the walls are covered in ivy and brambles and there are a lot of fruit trees with fruit just dropping onto the ground.

Before we went away I tried to research what butterflies occur in Menorca and it seems that up to 30 species have been recorded, but some of those were one-off records. I think that 25 species is probably more realistic. So, I went with low expectations of seeing much.

However, what Menorca may lack in variety it certainly makes up for in quantity!

The abandoned fields with their wild flowers, fruit trees and walls make perfect butterfly habitat. I really couldn't get over the number of butterflies in our orchard. At any one time between 8am and 8pm there must have been over 100 butterflies in the orchard. Over the two weeks, between family trips I went for various walks around the island. There is a coastal path right around the island, a nature reserve at Es Grau and the amazing Algendar gorge, all of which offer different habitats and potentially different butterflies. There was also a great selection of damsel flies, dragon flies and birds.

It was interesting, that having searched for butterflies in various areas of the island, all 20 species that I saw occurred in our orchard (I could have saved myself a lot of walking in the heat!).

The first butterflies we spotted when we arrived at our rented house at 8:30pm were speckled woods. There were two real hot spots in the garden, both around plum trees where there would regularly be 10 or more speckled woods.



Holly blues were the most common butterflies around the house. They were found along the track to the house and in the ivy on the walls of the orchard. It was really lovey to see so many. On an average walk around the place I would see about 40 on the track to the house (I think they roosted in the brambles) and as many again in the ivy around the orchard.



It was funny finding wall browns there, having only just seen them in Scotland.



Clouded yellows were the most common of the whites. Apparently Berger's clouded yellow occurs there, too, but I believe that the best way to tell the difference is by looking at the caterpillars. There were some paler variants on the island and I watched one laying eggs in the orchard. Unfortunately, I didn't find any caterpillars.



This painted lady (I assume it was always the same one) was the only one I spotted, but it was always in one small area of the orchard and was there for about 10 days.



There were usually one or two large whites on patrol in the orchard.



And the occasional small white.



More common were the cleopatra. These were beautiful, with their orange tint to the upper wings and their ability to blend into the ivy when they roosted. I had never seen these before. Some web sites say that brimstones are found on the island, but as far as I am aware I only ever saw cleopatras.



I chased after many common blues as I had read that adonis blues also occur on the island. Every one turned out to be a common blue and I believe that the adonis blue is very localised.



Other little butterflies that were in the grass amongst the fruit trees were brown argus ...



... and small heath. I was interested to note that these behaved differently from the ones in Scotland. They just seemed to get on with their daily business and were usually nectaring whereas the ones back home spend much of their time tilting their wings towards the sun. An obvious reflection on the different climates!



Around the house swallowtails regularly visited the plants in the pots and flower beds. They rarely were still, hopping from plant to plant and continually vibrating their wings. Another regular visitor to the pot plants were geranium bronzes. More familiar butterflies for me were small coppers and meadow browns.





I was so excited when my wife spotted a two-tailed pasha on a plum tree, feeding on the fruit. We saw one on three different occasions and it was amazing seeing its powerful flight and then gliding amongst the fruit trees. It is a spectacular butterfly and very alert, not allowing me to get close at all. I took this standing on top of a wall using full zoom!



On my walk through the Algender gorge I spent ages chasing after a southern gatekeeper without managing to get a picture. Luckily for me a couple of days later I found one in the orchard which was a little more obliging.



A long-tailed blue also made an appearance in the orchard, but I wasn't quick enough with the camera. However, on our last day of the holiday I spotted a Lang's short-tailed blue on a shrub next to the swimming pool. It was interesting that it stayed on that shrub for most of the day, obviously enjoying the nectar.





It was a fabulous holiday, both as a relaxing family holiday and for people like me who are obsessed with butterflies! While we were there the island was experiencing unprecedented numbers of a particular moth. They flew in the day and night and there would be thousand of them around each street light. Apparently they experience large numbers of these on a four year cycle, but the numbers this year were exceptional.

### Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 19-Aug-10 06:38 AM GMT

There were so many butterflies in the garden of the villa in Menorca that on three occasions a butterfly landed close to me and laid an egg. First off was a clouded yellow that landed on some birds foot trefoil and quickly laid an egg. The egg started off white and turned orange over the next three days.



The mother was a pale form, but unfortunately I never found the caterpillar, so couldn't determine if it was *Colias croceus* or *alfacariensis*.

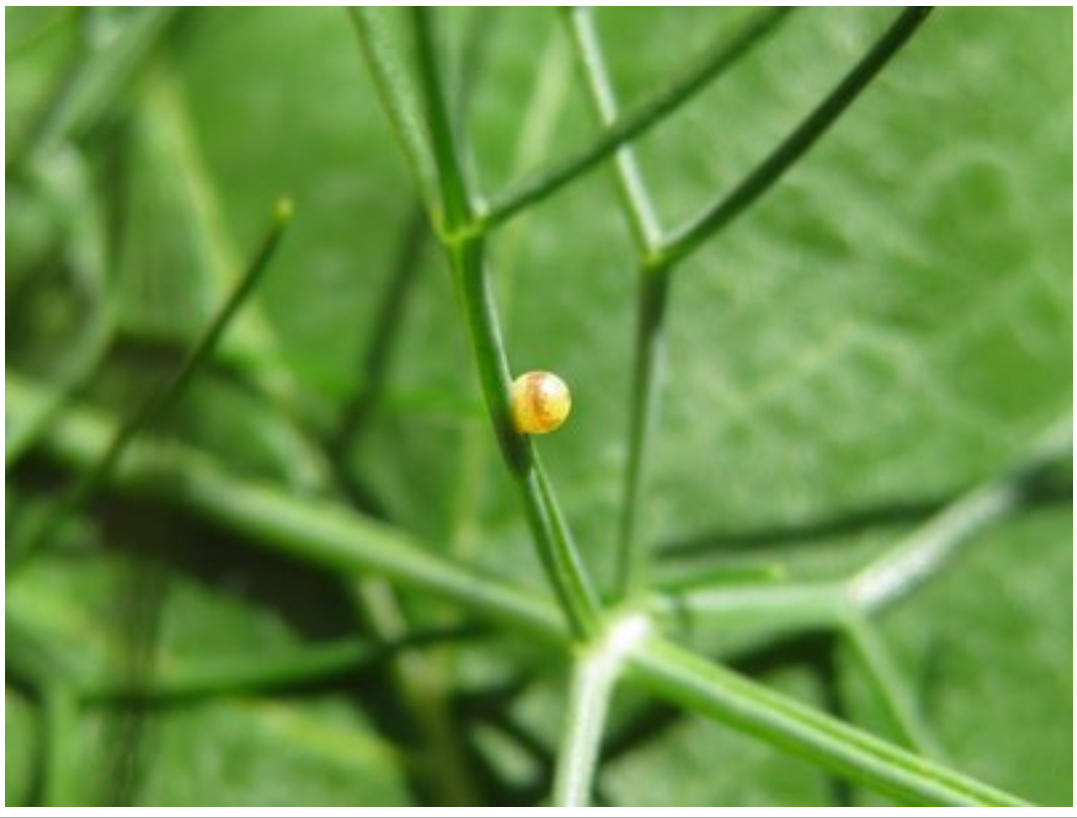
Another time a cleopatra landed in a tree next to me for a split second and left an egg behind. A few days later I found a small green caterpillar, but I can't be sure it was a cleopatra.



The best one was a swallowtail that landed on a small wild fennel plant. When I had a look it had laid a bright yellow egg.



Three days later a brown line developed around the egg.



Two days later when I looked it had hatched and the caterpillar was chewing on its egg shell.



Sadly this was the last day of our holiday, so I wasn't able to watch "Barry" develop any further.



## Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 21-Aug-10 07:14 AM GMT

The weather here has been terrible since the first week of July. Having spotted some wall browns on the coastal path near Dunglass in June, I really wanted to see if they had managed to successfully breed. I visited the site several times over the last few weeks, but the weather was always cloudy and I didn't manage to see any. However, yesterday I was delighted when I saw ten second generation walls on a 800 metre section of the John Muir Way. Again the weather was very overcast, but being that little bit warmer there was a good variety of butterflies around. So it seems that wall browns have extended their range north into East Lothian.



There were also quite a few green-veined whites, lots of peacocks, small whites, two small tortoiseshells, a comma and a small copper with small blue patches on its hind wings. Not bad for a cloudy day!



## Re: Nick Morgan

by NickMorgan, 21-Oct-10 07:19 AM GMT

This morning was the first morning of the winter when I have had to scrape ice off the windscreen of my car, so well and truly the end of the butterfly season. Or so I thought until I was battling my way along the River Tyne doing a survey for a new path. In a sunny sheltered spot a comma flew past and settled on a lime tree long enough for me to catch a few pictures.



A little further along the river a peacock flew by, but didn't stop for a photo.