

Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 13-Jan-19 01:10 PM GMT

Hi Folks,

The year starts down here in the south of France as would be expected, blue skies, sunny, but with a chill wind.

The odd Red Admiral can be seen from time to time.

This weekend has been relatively mild which prompted me to get out and check out a couple of guaranteed sightings.

In my local Parc des Bruyères my 3rd stage Southern White Admiral caterpillar from 2018 is still in its hibernaculum on *Lonicera implexa*:



We can make out its hairs in this view. Photo taken with flash. The fresh leaves nearby look as though they may have been nibbled?



On the outskirts of Marseilles it is relatively easy to find Two-Tailed Pasha caterpillars:



Here is some context down a fire track in Saint Marcel. The *Ulex parviflorus* is in flower.



Context (sorry about the blue skies 🌤️):



Context: This is where the TTP cat. is at head height on *Arbutus unedo*:



In the same location, this is freshly sprouting *Biscutella laevigata* (Buckler's Mustard). I am slightly perplexed because this is the host plant for the early Spring species, Western Dappled White and Provence Orange Tip, and I have never seen this plant pushing up before March. Either I am mistaken or is this the sign of an early season?



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by essexbuzzard, 13-Jan-19 05:42 PM GMT

No need to apologise, Chris. It's nice to see the sun still shines somewhere. Your buckler mustard does seem early but, provided it doesn't throw up any flowering stems, it should be fine.

Nice Two-Tailed Pasha caterpillar pictures, too. For that, and for the blue sky, you set a 🍀

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 14-Jan-19 08:31 PM GMT

Blue sky! 😊 I can't remember when I last saw one of those 😊🍀😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 14-Jan-19 09:08 PM GMT

I've seen those habitat shots so often I almost feel they're my own 'home patch'!

Don't apologise for the blue skies, Chris. We get them here too but generally with 5–8c temperatures rather than the low teens.

Good luck with your Admiral/Pasha larva tracking.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 15-Jan-19 12:23 PM GMT

Hi Essex, Wurzel and David.

Yep, blue skies do boost the moral in the winter.

As well, temperatures today in Vitrolles are between 6 and 12°C, so during my lunch break I went up onto the plateau and predictably saw at least 4 Red Admirals.

In the distance I saw 2 different whites, and I suppose that one could have been *P. brassicae* and the other *E. crameri*.



Context – Plateau de Vitrolles, next to my workplace:



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 15-Jan-19 10:25 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

In the distance I saw 2 different whites, and I suppose that one could have been *P. brassicae* and the other *E. crameri*.

Cramer in mid January? Is that normal, Chris?

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 16-Jan-19 06:18 AM GMT

David M wrote:

Chris Jackson wrote:

In the distance I saw 2 different whites, and I suppose that one could have been *P. brassicae* and the other *E. crameri*.

Cramer in mid January? Is that normal, Chris?

I suppose *P. daplidice* could be a more likely option by a couple of weeks.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 17-Jan-19 09:03 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

...I suppose *P. daplidice* could be a more likely option by a couple of weeks.

That wouldn't surprise me unduly. If you can capture a January *cramer* I'll be beyond impressed!

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Charles Nicol, 17-Jan-19 10:26 PM GMT

thanks for the midwinter cheer Chris ! i love that little hut that the caterpillar is sheltering in 😊

Charles

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Andrew555, 18-Jan-19 11:14 AM GMT

What a cute caterpillar that Pasha is! Interesting stuff Chris. 😊
(love the blue sky!)

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 16-Feb-19 04:36 PM GMT

Thanks for your encouragement David, Charles and Andrew.

Today 16th February, south of France – 16 to 17°C in Marseilles

As each year on the outskirts of Marseilles in February (or sometimes in January), as soon as the temperature reaches 15 or 16°C, I can almost guarantee sightings of ex-hibernators in exactly the same spot, on the same bush or on the same pile of scree, year after year.

N. polychloros warming itself on its pile of scree:



Its pile of scree in the dry river bed:



And as always at the same time and in the same place but perched higher up, *L. celtis*:



My 2019 list so far:

- 1: *V. atalanta*
- 2: *P. brassicae*
- 3: *C. crocea*
- 4: *P. rapae*
- 5: *P. daplidice*
- 6: *L. megera*
- 7: *N. polychloros*
- 8: *L. celtis*

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 16-Feb-19 10:59 PM GMT

Wow those are great shots of the LT and L. celtis 🤩📷 Does the L.celtis have a summer brood – I was wondering if I'd catch up with it in August?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 17-Feb-19 06:13 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

... Does the L.celtis have a summer brood – I was wondering if I'd catch up with it in August? ...

Hi Wurzel,

I've sent you a PM with my sightings, however August appears limited, at least near me.

One theory – could it be that hibernators, like L. celtis, acclimatised for the winter, fear the hottest months ?

Meanwhile, today I popped back to my local spot and managed to get off a couple of shots. Possibly the same individual as yesterday.

On the outskirts of Marseilles – L. celtis:



In this shot, the forewings are positioned very slightly asymmetrically, so I guess I'll have to go back and improve 🤔



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 17-Feb-19 06:48 PM GMT

Cheers for the PM and info Chris 🤩 More cracking shots 🤩📷 The markings don't appear real on this butterfly to me for some reason, almost like they've just been splodged on 🤔🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 18-Feb-19 08:43 PM GMT

Good upperside images of *celtis* are hard to come by so well done there, Chris.

It's a fascinating butterfly. It looks like it's been designed by Jackson Pollock and its behaviour is pretty unusual too.

I've only ever seen them once, in the Var in April 2015. Like many vanessids, I miss out on them when in France in late spring and high summer. 😞

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 27-Feb-19 07:25 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and David.

I believe temperatures in the UK this week have nothing to envy over the south of France.

At the moment we can easily see Large Tortoiseshells coming out of hibernation.

Here, today at lunchtime, high up in an oak tree



(FZ1000)

Here is the oak tree that survived major wildfires 3 years ago:



A female Small White attracted my attention and this is what she deposited:



(FZ1000)

on a 'brassicaceae'.
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 28-Feb-19 10:33 PM GMT

We may have had parity in terms of temperatures but definitely not in terms of butterflies Chris – great shot of the Large Tortoiseshell 😊🇫🇷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 01-Mar-19 12:16 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

I believe temperatures in the UK this week have nothing to envy over the south of France.
At the moment we can easily see Large Tortoiseshells coming out of hibernation.

Indeed, Chris. We had 21c at Kew Gardens last Tuesday. Back to the usual wind, cloud and rain now though. Hopefully it won't last too long.

Great (as always) to see your early Large Tortoiseshells, although there have been sightings over here too. I guess there's a decent likelihood that this species is again breeding in the UK, although until someone finds conclusive evidence it's hard to be sure.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 03-Mar-19 05:31 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. I'm looking forward to hearing about your adventures in Portugal this year.

David M wrote:

.. Back to the usual wind, cloud and rain now though ...

I know, David.

The UK and most of France (apart from here on the south coast) is under the weather.
Down here we still have sun and highs of between 17 and 20-odd °C.

This weekend in Marseilles I saw my first Holly Blue and Green Hairstreak.
For these species, this date is about "average" – I have known earlier and later extremes.

My first Green Hairstreak 03 March 19, on Mediterranean buckthorn:



My first female Lang's Short-tail Blue, on Sage-leaf cistus:



Both seen here in my local Parc des Bruyères:



A few metres away, each year the Large Tortoiseshells have the same ritual, defending the same territory on the trunk of the same lime tree:



The lime tree in the Parc des Bruyères:



And here is a Western Dappled White in the same park:



My 2019 list continued:

- 9: Swallowtail
- 10: Speckled Wood
- 11: Cleopatra
- 12: Comma
- 13: Western Dappled White
- 14: Lang's STB
- 15: Holly Blue
- 16: Green Hairstreak

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 07-Mar-19 01:02 PM GMT

07 March – south of France

With temperatures up to 17°C in the south and with intermittent cloud, during my lunch break I wandered down into the olive grove behind work. Although this place was burned to a cinder 3 years ago, the vegetation has slowly come back, and so have the Glanville Fritillaries:



The cats. currently measure 21 to 23 mm – here on *Plantago*:



There is *Plantago lanceolata* growing about almost everywhere here, however for some reason, the Glanville Fritillary caterpillars are still in exactly the same spot that they used before the fires – on the path at the foot of this olive tree in the centre:



A view from the opposite side:



Same view – after the fires in 2016:



So this is a dynamic species that re-populates rapidly 😊.
Cheers,
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by MrSp0ck, 08-Mar-19 08:45 AM GMT

Your Glanville larvae are well ahead of ours in the UK, ours woke from hibernation during the warm spell in mid-february, and are just going through their first post-hibernation skin change. so still have 2 instars before pupation, the ones in your photos look like they are around their last skin change or just into the last instar.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 08-Mar-19 06:18 PM GMT

MrSp0ck wrote:

Your Glanville larvae are well ahead of ours in the UK the ones in your photos look like they are around their last skin change or just into the last instar.

Thanks for the info Mr Sp0ck. I must monitor this site closely in the coming days (during my lunchbreaks). I would like photos of pupae. It is encouraging to see these butterfly species re-populating after natural disasters.
Reminder of the Glanville cats. from the previous page:



Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 09-Mar-19 05:12 PM GMT

Saturday 09 March

I'm not sure what the weather is like in Blighty at the moment, but if it is like the north of France it can't be too good. However, here on the south coast we seem to be protected for the moment. Today in the lowlands the temperature reached 18°C but I went upland to 440 m altitude.

Here is a BH egg next to a *Prunus spinosa* flower bud. I must admit that not all the buds are this well developed as I write.



Green Hairstreaks are common-place at the moment:



Large Tortoiseshell:



GV White:



And my first (male) Baton Blue of the year:



Cheers,
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by MrSp0ck, 09-Mar-19 07:32 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

I would like photos of pupae.
It is encouraging to see these butterfly species re-populating after natural disasters.

The pupae are often formed in silk webs like a few moth cocoons, often in groups. the one we found at Hutchinsons Bank was attached to a stone, again a place like on a pebble beach.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 10-Mar-19 07:59 PM GMT

Baton Blues are one of the species that are really high up my "Wish List" Chris 🍷🍷 Another great shot of the Large Tort – not one normally seen as most people go for the open wing shot 😊🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 14-Mar-19 12:36 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

I'm not sure what the weather is like in Blighty at the moment, but if it is like the north of France it can't be too good...

Ever since the end of February when we all experienced such wonderful conditions, it's been stormy and wet, Chris. 😞

Looks like that cycle is about to end though, with more benign weather on its way from Sunday (not before time). This should give many of us the opportunity to search out our first non-adult overwinterers (Speckled Wood, Small White, Holly Blue, etc) of 2019.

Good to see conditions continuing to be mild in the south of France. After last year's paltry returns, I'm anticipating that my trip to the Pyrenees towards the end of May will be far more productive this time round.

Nice to see Green Hairstreaks around on your 'patch', and well done with the *betulae* ova. Hopefully you'll track down a few adults later in the year?

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 20-Mar-19 08:42 AM GMT

Thanks for your comments Mr Sp0ck, Wurzel and David.

Down here on the south coast of France we have escaped the bad weather affecting the north of France and the British isles.

It has been quite windy recently which has stopped temperatures from climbing. At the moment we are typically getting 7°C in the morning and about 16°C in the afternoon.

Here are some views of what I have been seeing the last couple of days:

I am getting my fill of early species at the moment.

This is a Marsh Fritillary caterpillar (*E. aurinia* provincialis) at 650 m altitude on a bit of dead *Cephalaria leucantha*. Its other host plant here is *Lonicera etrusca*. The cat is 21 mm long.



This is the context for the Marsh Frit cat - in the foreground are the dead stalks of last year's *Cephalaria*, the cats feed on the fresh leaves sprouting at the base of the plants.



Behind our offices, in the olive grove, a *M. cinxia* cat, again 21 mm long. I'm still waiting to witness pupation.



In the same place feeding on the same *Plantago* as the former, is a small colony of *M. didyma* cats. These are also 21 mm long.



Here are 2 shots of the said olive grove. Before the wildfires there were 40 butterfly species here, and they are gradually coming back. Open end of the olive grove:



Closed end of the olive grove:



A newcomer to the olive grove is the Spanish Festoon, on the dry banks of the closed end. In fact the fires encouraged the growth of its host plant, *Aristolochia pistolochia*. This photo was taken yesterday when I counted 3 specimens, which puts the emergence of this species I would say about 2 weeks ahead of the norm.



When its host plant is fully grown, it looks like this:



And finally, in a different, damper, place, my first Wood White of the year



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Charles Nicol, 20-Mar-19 11:08 AM GMT

thanks for the latest update Chris. lovely to see the Festoon in your olive grove. the regeneration is well under way.

Charles



Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 21-Mar-19 01:49 PM GMT

Great to see the Festoon Chris 🤔🌱 And good to hear/see the regeneration on the way 😊 I used to live at Canford Heath and the 2nd and 3rd years after a burn were always the most productive 😊 It might not be the case for all species in an Olive Grove but there will definitely be some that benefit 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 21-Mar-19 02:18 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments Charles.

Yes Wurzel, I think you're right about the 2nd and 3rd years after burning being productive. Subsequently, I wonder if there is then a decline as the vegetation starts getting dense again? I will pay attention to that.

And for both of you, here is today's latest sighting, a quarter of an hour away from my workplace during the lunch break. The date of emergence is about right.

A fresh Southern Festoon:



This is the only host plant I could find on the site, it is small but it is just the start of the 3 / 4-week flight period and it will start growing rapidly.



And this is the marshy environment:



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 21-Mar-19 09:12 PM GMT

Now you're teasing us, Chris – both Festoons within 15 minutes of each other!

Great to see them, a real sign that spring is progressing in the south of France.

The olive grove looks to have recovered extremely well too. Here's hoping you might find a new species or two...

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by essexbuzzard, 22-Mar-19 09:53 PM GMT

I've yet to see a Southern Festoon and it's high on my wish list so, through gritted teeth, you get a 🍷 !

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Charles Nicol, 22-Mar-19 10:21 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

Thanks for your comments Charles.

Yes Wurzel, I think you're right about the 2nd and 3rd years after burning being productive. Subsequently, I wonder if there is then a decline as the vegetation starts getting dense again? I will pay attention to that.

And for both of you, here is today's latest sighting, a quarter of an hour away from my workplace during the lunch break. The date of emergence is about right.

A fresh Southern Festoon:

polyxena26.JPG

This is the only host plant I could find on the site, it is small but it is just the start of the 3 / 4-week flight period and it will start growing rapidly.

Aristoloche ronde polyxena.JPG

And this is the marshy environment:

context - polyxena.JPG

Chris

i wish this site had a "drool" emoji

sigh

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 23-Mar-19 05:12 PM GMT

The colour range and shape of the markings on the Southern Festoon are stunning Chris 🤩😍 For me they are one of those species that I don't know how I will get to see them - all of my foreign jaunts for the foreseeable future will have to coincide with the school summer break and that's too late for them 😞🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 24-Mar-19 09:22 PM GMT

Thank you David, Essex, Charles and Wurzel for showing so much interest in my thread. I don't deserve it.

I must reply to each of you individually.

Meanwhile, and just to keep you simmering, here is the challenge.

Please tell me what are we seeing here with this series of photos. A small colony.

The only clue I will give you is that it is the south of France, in the Var, at the end of March, at 650 m altitude. The BF over-winters as an egg laid on the ground at the base of the future host plant.

Context:



The host plant is here, half covered by leaf litter:



Host plant (*Filipendula vulgaris*) – coming up now in March:



The cat is 8 mm long



Bugboy should bust this in 2 secs.
However, the answer is a give-away in the host plant.
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Charles Nicol, 24-Mar-19 11:57 PM GMT

Melitaea ornata



Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 25-Mar-19 10:33 AM GMT

Charles Nicol wrote:
Melitaea ornata



Try Brenthis sp., Charles. 😊

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 25-Mar-19 10:40 AM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

The colour range and shape of the markings on the Southern Festoon are stunning Chris 😍😍 For me they are one of those species that I don't know how I will get to see them – all of my foreign jaunts for the foreseeable future will have to coincide with the school summer break and that's too late for them 😞🇧🇪🇧🇪🇧🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

I know the problem, Wurzel. Whether you are a teacher or you have school-age children (or double whammy, both) then you are limited to school hols.. My little dears have more or less left home so I've got more time on my hands. The problem also with the Festoons in France is the short 'window' available. Roll on retirement then ?
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 25-Mar-19 10:46 AM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

I've yet to see a Southern Festoon and it's high on my wish list so, through gritted teeth, you get a 🇧🇪!

The time slot for Festoons is quite tight, Essex. Book an early spring holiday.

The emergence dates can be variable – this year near my workplace it was the 21th March, last year it was the 6th April because of the "beast from the east". There is a rule of thumb which says that *Z. rumina* emerges 10 days after *Z. polyxena*. However, for me this year the order was reversed (mother nature playing tricks on me !!).

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 25-Mar-19 10:49 AM GMT

David M wrote:

Now you're teasing us, Chris – both Festoons within 15 minutes of each other!

I am lucky David. This is a very precious time of year and when it is over, I have to wait another 11 months for it to come round again!!
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 25-Mar-19 10:42 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

However, the answer is a give-away in the host plant.

Yes, Twin Spot Fritillary, Chris, an insect I'd very much like to see in France (I broke my duck with it in Spain last July). 😊

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 25-Mar-19 11:34 PM GMT

Cheers Chris – only another 25 years (by current reckoning though I'm sure it'll increase) to go 🤖

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by bugboy, 26-Mar-19 01:44 PM GMT

Sorry Chris, just caught up with your posts. You over estimated my skills with continental species 🤖, wouldn't have got close to that species without doing a lot of reading up on foodplants and lifecycles and even then it would be a blind stab. Give me another ten years of visiting Europe and I might have an idea next time 🤖

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Roger Gibbons, 26-Mar-19 04:39 PM GMT

If you have found hecate in your backyard, Chris, that is quite a find. The PACA Atlas shows no sighting in that region and only a limited number of sightings in western Var – I have seen it there near Montmeyan. But its main stronghold is in the east of Var and over the border in the west of the Alpes-Maritimes where, if you find Filipendula, you tend to find hecate.

My one local 100% reliable site was grazed to possible extinction a couple of years ago by sheep. We found one or two there last year, but it may or may not be able to survive.

Roger

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 26-Mar-19 06:51 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

... You over estimated my skills with continental species 🤖

Hi Bugboy, I've got you down as an all-rounder but I suppose this species is a bit specific. Hey we're all learning. Thanks for looking in 🤖.

A reminder of the subject --> Brenthis hecate caterpillar, 8 mm long



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 26-Mar-19 07:03 PM GMT

Roger Gibbons wrote:

If you have found hecate in your backyard, Chris, that is quite a find. The PACA Atlas shows no sighting in that region and only a limited number of sightings in western Var

Hi Roger,

'Backyard' is 40 kms from Marseilles.

This very small colony is a short walk from where we had lunch together last summer at the Sainte Baume in the west Var.

I tend not to advertise it too much, if at all.

The Twin-spot Fritillary should be flying from the end of May. I must explore its flight period and see if it flies earlier. I estimate the site to cover a radius of 50 metres, no more. A reminder of the stark early spring Provençal nature that hides so much, unless you know where to find it (at your feet): (View looking south over the Sainte Baume):



Filipendula vulgaris in the leaf litter:



Host plant of the Twin-spot Fritillary:



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by bugboy, 26-Mar-19 08:26 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

bugboy wrote:

... You over estimated my skills with continental species 😊

Hi Bugboy, I've got you down as an all-rounder but I suppose this species is a bit specific. Hey we're all learning.

Thanks for looking in 😊 .

A reminder of the subject --> Brenthis hecate caterpillar, 8 mm long

hecate8 caterpillar 8 mm long Hostellerie Ste Baume 24Mar19 (2).JPG

Chris

Sorry to disappoint 😊. I've just returned from my first foray into the world of continental butterflies so your expert eye may come in handy with my next few posts 😊

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 27-Mar-19 06:02 PM GMT

Nice to see the habitat shots, Chris. Is this '50m strip' the only place you know for *hecate*?

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 29-Mar-19 02:28 PM GMT

David M wrote:

Nice to see the habitat shots, Chris. Is this '50m strip' the only place you know for *hecate*?

This is the only site I know of David for *B. hecate*. The regional sightings website never shows anything closer to Marseilles. I will return in a couple of weeks to see if I can find a later instar of the cat.

Cheers, Chris

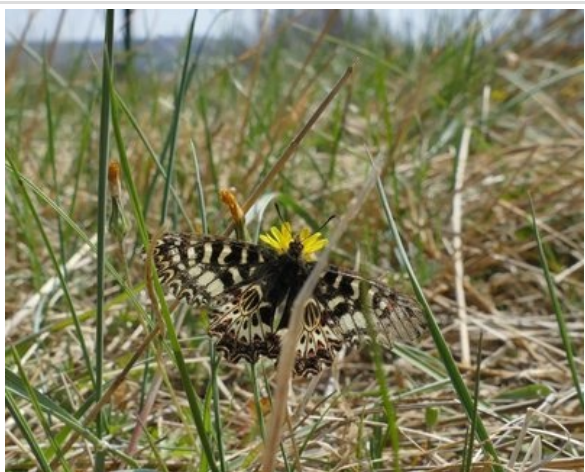
Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 29-Mar-19 02:29 PM GMT

Hi Folks,

We are now 9 days into the Southern Festoon season at the site near my workplace.

It is not surprising therefore that some individuals are starting to look worn. See the wings on this one:



Over a week ago the host plant was barely visible.

Now it is quite a bit easier to find – *Aristolochia rotunda*:



it can be found in the long grasses of the verge along this path:



And on the underside of one of the leaves, here are the eggs:



Another individual:



And another:



This is the marshy context of this site, here:



and here:



Cheers,
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 29-Mar-19 09:22 PM GMT

Interesting that they seem so go 'greasy' like the Marsh Frit Chris, mind you I'd still love to see one in any state 🤔🌍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 29-Mar-19 10:19 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

This is the only site I know of David for *B. hecate*. The regional sightings website never shows anything closer to Marseilles. I will return in a couple of weeks to see if I can find a later instar of the cat.

Thanks, Chris. Is this species 'marginal' due to available habitat in your wider region?

Best of luck with the larvae. I'll look forward to seeing images of those.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 30-Mar-19 09:06 PM GMT

End of March, south of France,

A quick update with my latest sighting

Here is the context in the Var *département* at 650 metres altitude (Roger G knows this place 😊)



For the moment I am considering this to be a vagrant, unless a new colony is forming in this place. What do you think this could be ? I have a good idea !!



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 30-Mar-19 11:30 PM GMT

Is that a Spring Ringlet – *Erebia epistygne* Chris? 😊 If it is then it just proves how good the Butterflies of Europe app is 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 31-Mar-19 10:58 PM GMT

Fabulous butterfly, Chris, and you've done real well to track it down.

This is one of those 'out of season' species that require a great effort to see for we UK dwellers.

Like Provence Hairstreak in 2015 though, I intend to make precisely that effort in the not too distant future!

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 01-Apr-19 08:57 AM GMT

David M wrote:

... Is this species 'marginal' due to available habitat in your wider region? ...

Hi David,

I can find *Filipendula vulgaris* in many places, however *B. hecate* is not present.

I don't know why this small colony is so localised. One suspicion is that in this calcareous location there are many underground cavities and waterways, and it is possible that some spots are damper than others – a dampness that may be obvious to butterflies but not to blinkered humans ?

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 01-Apr-19 09:01 AM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

Is that a Spring Ringlet – *Erebia epistygne* Chris? 😊 If it is then it just proves how good the Butterflies of Europe app is 😊
... Wurzel

You are right Wurzel !! Spring Ringlet.

Although I have encountered this species a couple of times, its sudden unexpected appearance on the path in front of me was a heart-stopper, and it made my day.

My only sure colony is a few kilometers away and 400 metres higher.

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 01-Apr-19 09:06 AM GMT

David M wrote:

... This is one of those 'out of season' species that require a great effort to see for we UK dwellers ... I intend to make precisely that effort in the not too distant future!

David,

End of March to end of April is a critical time for those early species down here. Once its over, its over.

The bad news is that we have a week of bad weather starting tomorrow – this always seems to occur just when I intend getting Provence Orange Tip photos, and we have a Provence Hairstreak search on this weekend, so that might get rained off.

Cheers,

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 01-Apr-19 09:12 AM GMT

Yesterday, the last Sunday of March, I had my 2nd only ever photo encounter with a Camberwell Beauty in the west Var at 490 metres altitude. Often these fly past overhead, patrolling their territory, without a photo opportunity.

However we noticed this one, by the side of a dried up river bed, that tended to stop and pause briefly on a bare patch of ground.

We were patient and eventually, during one of its rounds, it did pose for us.



This is the context – by the side of this dry river bed. No doubt its host tree is in here somewhere:



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 01-Apr-19 06:26 PM GMT

I was chuffed that I got that ID right 😊 Great shot of the Camberwell I've got a single shot in my collection of a very distant, white edged triangle 🤖
🤖 I've seen that 'pose' from Small torts and Peacocks before and it always reminds me of the Batman logo for some reason 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 02-Apr-19 06:22 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

... Great shot of the Camberwell I've got a single shot in my collection of a very distant, white edged triangle Wurzel

Hi Wurzel,

Now that I know the location of this site I hope it will be a yearly sighting – I bet they have the same habits, generation after generation, in the same location, just like Large Tortoiseshells.

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 02-Apr-19 06:30 PM GMT

Hi Folks,

Today, Tuesday 2nd of April.

Just before some bad weather is due to set in – probably the same you are getting in Blighty.

Behind my workplace during the lunchbreak, I finally spotted some of the Spanish Festoon host plant coming through – *Aristolochia pistolochia*.

Although this plant is still very small, a female has clearly found it and laid her eggs on it.



Here is the relative size of the plant:



Here is the context, in the closed end of the olive grove.



And today in the same place in the olive grove I saw my first Glanville Fritillary imago of the season, whereas there are some straggling *M. cinxia* cats from the same colony still feeding on the *Plantago* and that have still to pupate:



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 02-Apr-19 06:56 PM GMT

I reckon you're right about the Camberwell 'passing' down habits - I have a spot at my early site called Comma Corner due to this phenomenon 😊😄
Cracking shot of the Glannie 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 03-Apr-19 12:23 PM GMT

Nice work with *antiopa*, Chris. You may well be right about their recurring habits; I know Roger G often finds them in the same locations year after year.

Amazing to see Glanvilles on the wing so soon. Is this the earliest you've ever recorded them?

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 04-Apr-19 12:54 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

... Cracking shot of the Glannie 😊 Wurzel

Thanks Wurzel. 😊

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 04-Apr-19 12:57 PM GMT

David M wrote:

... Amazing to see Glanvilles on the wing so soon. Is this the earliest you've ever recorded them?

Hi David,

Up to now the earliest I've seen a Glanville is the 10th of April.

This year I can't determine whether the season is early or late – it seems bit of a mix depending on the species.

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 04-Apr-19 01:05 PM GMT

Hi Folks,

This is to bring you up to date with my local Southern Festoon colony not far from work.

My first sighting was on the 21th March, which means that today we are 15 days through the flight period.

I went to the site at lunch time but the conditions were not favourable – a chill wind (12°C) and intermittent cloud – although one cloud seemed to linger just above me for most of the time 😊 so my sightings today were probably not representative.

Here is the only worn individual I saw, grounded with the sun behind that cloud:



These small *Aristolochia rotunda* plants were peppered with eggs at different stages of maturity. There is even one small cat. just about visible on the middle plant, and another down on the dead grass at the foot of the plant:



And here is the context. The host plant is alongside this path:



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-19 08:49 PM GMT

A chill wind of 12 - I'd settle for that at the moment - we've had sleet and hail 🙄🇩🇪🙄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 05-Apr-19 11:02 PM GMT

That's quite a move on your earliest Glanville date, Chris. Perhaps a cooler snap will slow emergences down somewhat?

Those *aristolochia* plants are properly 'peppered' with ova. Will they eat their way through the entire plant once they all hatch?

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 06-Apr-19 10:15 AM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

A chill wind of 12 - I'd settle for that at the moment - we've had sleet and hail 🙄🇩🇪🙄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Hi Wurzel,

Despite a fine spring day yesterday, today Saturday 6th we are rained out in southern and south-east France - this must be the tail-end of what you are experiencing. Today a regional Provence Hairstreak hunt was scheduled by local associations but obviously now this has been cancelled. Fortunately I

had a sighting yesterday.
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 06-Apr-19 10:19 AM GMT

David M wrote:

... Those *aristolochia* plants are properly 'peppered' with ova. Will they eat their way through the entire plant once they all hatch?

Hi David,

In my short experience I have never seen so many eggs together. I would say that on average I would expect about 4 eggs per leaf. With 4 eggs on one plant, the plant generally grows quicker than the cats. can eat it (finishing with the fruit that will appear at the top). It will be interesting on these 3 plants to see who eats how much of what. I will monitor things.
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 06-Apr-19 10:26 AM GMT

A pleasant spring day in the south of France yesterday, with a hi of 15°C.

Making the most of it I set off in search of a reported new colony of Provence Hairstreak, a species which barely reaches west across the border into my *département*.

One individual does not make a colony, but its a good sign – and here he is:



Seen (as reported) along this path. View looking back down:



View looking up:



And I found the necessary host plant – in our region => *Dorycnium hirsutum*:



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-19 03:49 PM GMT

They are cracking yet odd looking butterflies, like a Small Copper that's fallen head first in a tin of green paint 🤪😬 Hopefully normal business will resume in your part of the world soon, we look like having un-butterfly friendly weather for the long haul over here 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 06-Apr-19 08:52 PM GMT

~~{quote}~~ In my short experience I have never seen so many eggs together. I would say that on average I would expect about 4 eggs per leaf. With 4 eggs on one plant, the plant generally grows quicker than the cats. can eat it (finishing with the fruit that will appear at the top). It will be interesting on these 3 plants to see who eats how much of what. I will monitor things.

Thanks, Chris. Monitoring progress would probably be a good idea to see whether the cats can outstrip the plant growth! Are adult numbers in excess of what you are used to seeing this year?

Well done with the Provence Hairstreak. I know this is quite an iconic species in France so any new populations are to be welcomed.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 07-Apr-19 06:09 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

... we look like having un-butterfly friendly weather for the long haul over here 😞 Wurzel

Spring is often a dodgy time weather-wise, just when we need to see those spring species. 😞

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 07-Apr-19 08:16 PM GMT

David M wrote:

~~{quote}~~ Are adult numbers in excess of what you are used to seeing this year?

Ah David, unfortunately I am stuck to my office chair 99% of the time. I consider myself lucky to see what I actually do see. I cannot judge the populations. I wish I was out and about more often to get better statistics.

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 07-Apr-19 08:31 PM GMT

Hi Folks,

On January 13th I posted photos of a Southern White Admiral cat. in his hibernaculum.

Today he is out of hibernation on his host plant.

L. reducta 3rd instar on *Lonicera implexa*:



his hibernaculum is still hanging on:



The Southern White Admiral cat. is on his host plant here, growing out of this rock face on the left:



Elsewhere on the outskirts of Marseilles, we have Provence Orange Tip eggs on *Biscutella laevigata*:



This is the context for the POT host plant:



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by bugboy, 07-Apr-19 10:11 PM GMT

Your diary has taken on a slightly different slant for me now that I'm familiar with several species you follow down there 😊

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 08-Apr-19 09:21 AM GMT

Interesting to see the SWA cat Chris 😊 – I'm used to seeing images of the WA but I don't know how they compare appearance wise – this looks a little more 'stripey'? 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 09-Apr-19 06:16 AM GMT

Excellent early stage images, Chris. There's so much going on down your way with your extended species range, meaning there is plenty to find even when the weather is not conducive to butterfly activity.

Surely you'll get some respite from your office seat over the Easter break? 😊

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 10-Apr-19 04:04 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

Your diary has taken on a slightly different slant for me now that I'm familiar with several species you follow down there 😊

That's great bugboy. Its nice to be able to concentrate on these effemeral early species before the high season BFs emerge.

Your Gib. report has got me thinking about a possible jaunt down there late winter next year. They seem to have 4 or more weeks head start over the south of France.

Now that you are an early Med. species and Festoon man, you may like what follows.

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 10-Apr-19 04:20 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

Interesting to see the SWA cat Chris 😊 – I'm used to seeing images of the WA but I don't know how they compare appearance wise – this looks a little more 'stripey'? 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Hi Wurzel,

I have very little experience with 'standard' White Admirals, they do not fly down my way. Whenever I see one on my travels I get excited because they are part of my 'exotic' species (along with Peacocks), probably as much as northerners get excited when they see our SWAs.

As for seeing early spring Med. species, you don't have to wait for retirement, you could pull a sickie, fly into Marseilles preferably in the first week of April and see Southern Festoon and Spanish Festoon within the space of 2 hours and in a radius of no more than 5 km from the airport, then fly back home on the next plane 😊. That is the week when they overlap the best in the region.

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 10-Apr-19 04:35 PM GMT

David M wrote:

Excellent early stage images, Chris. There's so much going on down your way with your extended species range, meaning there is plenty to find even when the weather is not conducive to butterfly activity.

Surely you'll get some respite from your office seat over the Easter break? 😊

Thanks David.

I think you've hit the nail on the head – our range of species means that even if the spring weather is dodgy (April showers and the rest) and the adults are not flying, there are still things to see. Eggs and cats are relatively sedentary and easy to find as many of the early species have only one 'regional' host plant and can be found easily in the same places year after year. Talking of which there is more below.

Easter break ? if I'm not tied to the office chair I will no doubt be expected to over-indulge myself as usual with the in-laws, but I will try and sneak off with my camera if I'm in a state to 😊.

Cheers,
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 10-Apr-19 04:47 PM GMT

Here is the latest instalment from my [Southern Festoon](#) site.

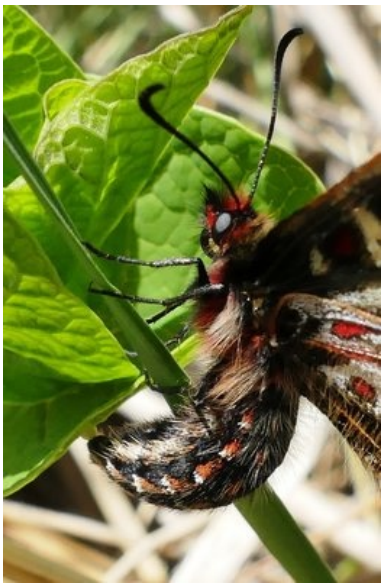
This week in particular there is a lot of activity.

In a very short period during my lunch break, I observed fresh adults flying (despite my dismay during recent bad weather), including females laying on leaves that already have many eggs, there are hatched eggs, and 2nd instar caterpillars eating healthily – all on plants next to each other 😊

This female has just laid an egg next to a more mature egg :



Here is a close-up of her actually laying the egg:



A female on the host plant – *Aristolochia rotunda*:



On the same patch, many eggs on the underside of the leaves – rarely on top:



And in parallel, at the same time and in the same place, earlier eggs have hatched and there are 2nd instar cats eating well:



The usual context, alongside this path:



In 2 weeks at most the flight period will be over (at least here).
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-19 10:23 PM GMT

"...you could pull a sickie, fly into Marseilles preferably in the first week of April and see Southern Festoon and Spanish Festoon within the space of 2 hours and in a radius of no more than 5 km from the airport, then fly back home on the next plane 😊" I wish you'd not suggested that – plans are whizzing round my head now 🤪😄😄 Mind you I might not even need to pull a sickie I'll just need a very early Easter hmmm 😊 Lovely shot of the egg-laying female – they're even beautifully marked down the abdomen 🤪😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 11-Apr-19 02:47 PM GMT

Great sequence, Chris. This species certainly makes full use of the seemingly limited habitat available.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 12-Apr-19 07:18 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and David,

I'll leave the Southern Festoon cats to mature a bit and I'll get back to them in a couple of weeks.

This coming week I'll go and see how the Spanish Festoons are getting on.

Meanwhile, down in the olive grove behind work, there has been progress with other cats.

For the last month or so I've watched Glanville Frit (M. cinxia) cats and Spotted Frit (M. didyma) cats maturing on the Plantago.

The Glanvilles are now flying and the Spotted Frits are close behind in the chrysalis stage.

This is the chrysalis of the Spotted Fritillary – it was relatively easy to find because I had observed the cats on their patch over the previous weeks:



Here is a reminder of the Spotted Fritillary cat 3 weeks ago on Plantago:



Both species' early stages cohabit here due to the high concentration of Plantago – circled in red:



Here is one Glanville cat that will never reach the adult stage – parasited:



Here is one that made it – bravo !! :



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-19 10:45 PM GMT

Cricky Chris that Spotted Frit cat and chrysalis are even more striking than the butterfly 😍😍 Lovely looking Glannie that made it 😊 and the one that didn't – are all of the small white cocoons represent a parasite larva – I can count 23–24 and it looks like there are even more underneath the cat carcass 😳😳😳

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 13-Apr-19 08:25 AM GMT

That's one very striking pupa, Chris. There's plenty going on round your way at the moment, it seems.

How long before *reducta* is on the wing?

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 16-Apr-19 02:29 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and David,

The earliest I've photographed *L. reducta* is the 26th of April, but anytime early to mid May would appear to be average.

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 16-Apr-19 02:37 PM GMT

Hi Folks,

A couple of updates from the south of France.

On the Brown Hairstreak front, I went to check out our local eggs and found that about half of them had hatched although I couldn't see one single cat (probably burrowed into a leaf bud somewhere).

Hatched egg:



Hatched egg:



BH context:



BH context:



And the cats in my local Twin-spot Fritillary colony surprisingly showed a whole variety of growth stages, ranging from 9 mm to 21 mm long. Twin-spot cats ranging from 9 mm to 21 mm long:



This cat is 21 mm long, feeding on *Filipendula vulgaris*:



Context for the Twin-spot Fritillary – the *Filipendula vulgaris* is growing at the foot of this tree stump, under the leaf litter:



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 16-Apr-19 11:23 PM GMT

You're becoming something of an expert in locating early stages, Chris. Those *hecate* cats are fascinating as are the images of the habitat where you find all these creatures.

When is Twin Spot Fritillary usually on the wing in this location?

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 22-Apr-19 08:26 PM GMT

David M wrote:

.... When is Twin Spot Fritillary usually on the wing in this location?

Hi David,

My earliest Twin-spot Frit sighting down here up to now has been the 1st of June but I will be exploring earlier – perhaps 2 weeks earlier.

If you can make it – I'll show you where 😊 .

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 22-Apr-19 08:35 PM GMT

Hi Folks,

Here is the latest news from the south of France.

This weekend I had an outing with a group of serious entomologists from the *département* of La Vaucluse, just to the north of Marseilles – a group called the "R.E.V.E.". For these people, BFs represent only a minor insect group but I managed to get my final annual fix of Provencal Orange Tip : Male Provencal Orange Tip (relatively easy to find) on host plant – *Biscutella laevigata* :



Female Provencal Orange Tip (much more difficult to find) on *Biscutella laevigata* :



Female Provencal Orange Tip on *Biscutella laevigata* :



A POT egg on *Biscutella laevigata* :



Also, now is the moment – Marsh Frits are on the wing – our sub-species down here is *E. aurinia provincialis* :



This is what a group of French entomologists looks like at picnic time – nice people, they even put up with me !! :



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-19 10:51 PM GMT

Great stuff Chris 😊 I was really interested to see the Marshie – to my eyes it seems to have a thicker and more consistent orange band on the hind wings than the UK subspecies – is that one of the ID markers? The male POT is stunning but I from your shot of the female I would probably rate her higher – there's beauty in the more subtle tones 🤔👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 22-Apr-19 11:56 PM GMT

How I wish I could get away to see *hecate* at that time, Chris. Sadly, I'll be just back from the French Pyrenees and preparing for another jaunt to Italy a few days later (can't wait till I retire)!

Nice to see Provence Orange Tips on the wing. Hopefully they'll be in full flow when I arrive in the Pyrenees in 4 weeks time.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 26-Apr-19 03:49 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

... the Marshie – to my eyes it seems to have a thicker and more consistent orange band on the hind wings than the UK subspecies – is that one of the ID markers? The male POT is stunning but I from your shot of the female I would probably rate her higher – there's beauty in the more subtle tones Wurzel

Hi Wurzel,

I've never seen a UK Marshie with my own eyes, nor any of the six French subspecies other than our local *provincialis* so I am not used to differentiating between them. In France each subspecies has its host plant, and I am comforted by the fact that I find our local subspecies cats on their allocated host plant (White scabious + Honeysuckle). There must be areas (in France) where 2 subspecies cohabit – now that must be fun in the field 😊 .

I agree for the female Provence Orange Tip, she has more subtle colours, and considering the significantly smaller number of females compared to males, I can tell you that the excitement of seeing a female is 10-fold over that of seeing a male. They are one of my spring high points. Getting an annual photo of a female for me is one sign of a successful spring.

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 26-Apr-19 03:56 PM GMT

David M wrote:

How I wish I could get away to see *hecate* at that time, Chris. Sadly, I'll be just back from the French Pyrenees and preparing for another jaunt to Italy a few days later (can't wait till I retire)!

Nice to see Provence Orange Tips on the wing. Hopefully they'll be in full flow when I arrive in the Pyrenees in 4 weeks time.

I'm sure you'll be getting your share of butterfly sightings in the weeks to come, David, French *hecate* will wait.

Indeed, down here in the south many species will have stopped flying but will just be starting in the Pyrenees when you are there.

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 26-Apr-19 03:59 PM GMT

The latest from the south of France.

It seems like only 3 weeks ago that I was watching *M. cinxia* cats feeding on Plantago, and here we are again already with eggs on that same Plantago. Freshly laid Glanville eggs:



Glanville eggs:



Here is the context. The *Plantago* is growing thick in the centre foreground:



In the same place I found a cat on *Dorycnium pentaphyllum* – possibly a Burnet moth cat. Any suggestions – *Z. filipendulae*?



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by essexbuzzard, 26-Apr-19 07:54 PM GMT

Hi Chris.

Provence Orange Tips are one of my favourite European butterflies. Mind you, normal Orange Tips are one of my favourite British ones!

Loved your Spotted Fritillary chrysalis pictures. What an amazing creature this fritillary is, in all its stages!

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 26-Apr-19 08:09 PM GMT

That's a quick turnaround Chris from adult to eggs in a few weeks – are the imagos still flying?

"There must be areas (in France) where 2 subspecies cohabitate – now that must be fun in the field 😊...I think I'd get the shots and then sort out the IDs during the winter months, roaring fire going, beer closer to hand than Tolman 😊😁 I had no idea that France had that many subspecies of Marshie – it looks like the 'splitters' aren't just present in the Birding world 🤔😁 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 27-Apr-19 06:04 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

I'm sure you'll be getting your share of butterfly sightings in the weeks to come, David, French *hecate* will wait. Indeed, down here in the south many species will have stopped flying but will just be starting in the Pyrenees when you are there.

Hope you're right, Chris. Things certainly look far more promising than last year, where conditions were about as bad as you could expect.

I still reckon 100+ species is possible in a week at that time of year. I shall be trying my best to achieve that!

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 01-May-19 10:54 AM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Hi Chris. Loved your Spotted Fritillary chrysalis pictures. What an amazing creature this fritillary is, in all its stages!

Thanks Essex,

I'm still waiting for the butterfly to emerge so that I can recover the empty pupa!!

For me, now, and down here, early stages provide just as many photo opportunities as the imagos, and they don't move as fast 😊

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 01-May-19 11:01 AM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

That's a quick turnaround Chris from adult to eggs in a few weeks – are the imagos still flying? Wurzel

Yes Wurzel, the imagos are flying and in numbers on many of my sites. Here is the proof :



Wurzel wrote:

..... I think I'd get the shots and then sort out the IDs during the winter months, roaring fire going, beer closer to hand than Tolman 😊😄
Wurzel

That's a good life philosophy, Wurzel, I see you're well organised 😊
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 01-May-19 11:09 AM GMT

David M wrote:

.... I still reckon 100+ species is possible in a week at that time of year. I shall be trying my best to achieve that!

I'm not surprised that your trips are so popular, David, keep up the good work.
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 01-May-19 11:24 AM GMT

Hi Folks – south of France.

Here are some images from last week end.

Our local host plant for the Orange Tip is Rock Cress or Arrow-leaved wall cress (*Arabis saggitata*).
Here is an OT egg on the Cress:



This is the Cress :



And here is the context, near Marseilles :



Further upland we can find Black-veined White cats in their last instar. They are mostly found on Hawthorn, as here. BVW cat on Hawthorn:



But occasionally on Wild Pear, as here. Interestingly on Wild Pear they are less developed than on Hawthorn. Hawthorn must be more nutritional – or its because it comes into leaf a couple of weeks earlier than Wild Pear .. hmmm !. BVW cat on Wild Pear:



Context for the Black-veined White cats at 650 m altitude :



Usually I find my Scarce Swallowtail eggs on fruit tree leaves, this one however I watched being laid on Hawthorn next to the BVW cats:



Here is a 3 mm-long Brown Hairstreak cat on Blackthorn at 440 m altitude :



Context for the BH cat :



In the same place, Wood White :



and male Green-underside Blue :



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 01-May-19 07:52 PM GMT

Crickety it's almost possible to see the full life cycle in one sitting with those Glannies 😊 Lovely shots of the WW and Green-underside Blue 😊🇬🇧 I was a bit surprised at the Scarce Swallowtail egg – it really stands out, I thought it might have been a little more discrete, mind you the imago isn't discrete either is it 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 02-May-19 10:06 PM GMT

Some great early stage action for you again, Chris. Does cuckoo flower not grow at all in your neck of the woods?

Lovely Green Underside Blue. I'm looking forward to reacquainting myself with this delight in 3 weeks time.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 06-May-19 06:23 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

.....I was a bit surprised at the Scarce Swallowtail egg – it really stands out, I thought it might have been a little more discrete, mind you the imago isn't discrete either is it 😊 Wurzel

Hi Wurzel,

Yes, the Scarce Swallowtail eggs are big and quite easy to find.

Here are 2 photos of the same egg:

Again, seconds after being laid:



and 7 days later:



Next I'll get the cat !!
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

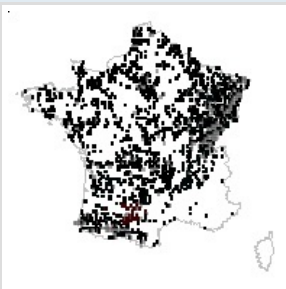
by Chris Jackson, 06-May-19 06:30 PM GMT

David M wrote:

.....Does cuckoo flower not grow at all in your neck of the woods? Lovely Green Underside Blue. I'm looking forward to reacquainting myself with this delight in 3 weeks time.

Hi David,

No cuckoo flower in central southern France or SE France it would appear. Here is its distribution:



That's why the Orange Tip uses *Arabis sp.* around Marseilles.

This really is the peak of the season at my latitude for Green-underside Blue. Afterwards, it's finished. Here's one for the road from last Saturday:



You may well see some in 3 weeks time, David – if it stops snowing upland !! 🤪

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 06-May-19 06:39 PM GMT

Hi Folks – south of France

A couple of images from last week-end.

I went looking for Black-veined White pupae but I think I'm at least 1 week too early at my latitude and at this altitude (650 m ASL), because the cats

were still on the Hawthorn and on the Wild Pear.
However amongst the BVW cats I did find one parasited individual protecting its "offspring":



And here's my annual sighting of a Pearl-bordered Frit (playing peek-a-boo). The other side of this individual was worn, so its been flying for a while:



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 06-May-19 08:13 PM GMT

Good luck with the cat Chris 😊😊 Are there any regional differences between the Pearls over there and over here? There seems to be between the Marshies so I was wondering if it was the same for the Pearls, mind you regional variation/races seems to crop up more in the more variable species?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 07-May-19 06:40 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

.... Are there any regional differences between the Pearls over there and over here? Wurzel

Hi Wurzel,

In France we have the Pearl-bordered Frit and the Small Pearl-bordered Frit. I'm on the edge of Pearl-bordered Frit territory but I've never seen the 'Small' cousin - still on my wish list - its further inland.

Cheers,
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 07-May-19 06:50 PM GMT

Hi Folks - south of France

In the south of France there is a time lag between the start of the Southern Festoon (*Z. polyxena*) and Spanish Festoon (*Z. rumina*) flight periods - as a rule of thumb in my limited experience and on my patch, it seems to be about (at least) 10 days.

Whereas many *polyxena* cats have now reached late instars, local to my work place the *rumina* cats are relatively small.

Today :

Spanish Festoon cat (6 mm long) on *Aristolochia pistolochia* :



Spanish Festoon cat (9 mm long) on Aristolochia pistolochia :



Context, not far from work. Dry river bed, Vitrolles, south of France:



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by essexbuzzard, 07-May-19 07:43 PM GMT

Interesting, Chris. I had no idea there was such a difference, either in flight times or caterpillar progress. Southern Festoon is high on my wish list, having only seen the caterpillar.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 08-May-19 06:51 AM GMT

Thanks for the cuckoo flower chart, Chris. Very interesting. Clearly, it doesn't thrive in the drier environments of the south.

Those Festoon cats are quite bizarre. I presume the series of spikes affords them some protection, given they are quite conspicuous on their lhp?

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 13-May-19 06:30 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Interesting, Chris. I had no idea there was such a difference, either in flight times or caterpillar progress. Southern Festoon is high on my wish list, having only seen the caterpillar.

Hi Essex,

See you down here beginning of April 2020 then ? 😊

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 13-May-19 06:39 PM GMT

Cheers for the info on Pearls/Small Pearls Chris 😊 Interesting to read about the flight times of the two festoons – especially as my wife said "I fancy going to Barcelona" today out of the blue – it got me thinking about when would be the best time to visit 😊 I think she'd like to see the sights whereas I had (butterfly) sites in mind 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 13-May-19 06:40 PM GMT

David M wrote:

... Those Festoon cats are quite bizarre. I presume the series of spikes affords them some protection, given they are quite conspicuous on their lhp?

Hi David,

Their spikes may well be dissuasive to some predators. I know of other species down here that are much more visibly susceptible to predation (parasites). This is a resistant species I feel, apart from the fact that it is photographically spectacular.

By the way, even today I found a fresh *Z. rumina* which is most surprising considering that at my latitude they should be about gone.

Chris

The scales and fringes are immaculate on this one seen today near work;





Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 13-May-19 06:53 PM GMT

Hi Folks – south of France – month of May

Here is bit of a catch-up:

Remember the fresh Glanville eggs on *Plantago lanceolata* from April 26th ?



In the olive grove near work:



Well today I just happened on the start of hatching:



Remember the Orange Tip egg on *Arabis saggitata* from April 27th ?



Here near Marseilles:



Well today here is the OT cat measuring 6 mm:



Cheers,
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 14-May-19 11:51 AM GMT

That was great timing with those Glanville larvae, Chris.

As for Spanish Festoon, I wonder whether they are toxic, given their colour pattern of yellow, black and red.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 19-May-19 07:48 PM GMT

David M wrote:

That was great timing with those Glanville larvae, Chris.

As for Spanish Festoon, I wonder whether they are toxic, given their colour pattern of yellow, black and red.

Hi David. I do believe the cats are toxic having eaten the host plant.
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 19-May-19 07:52 PM GMT

Hi Folks.

South of France, late May.

Introduction to Turquoise Blue.

Not a common butterfly and unusual so close to home. This is a newcomer near me in Marseilles.

Turquoise Blue male on its host plant (the female is brown) :



Male undersides (wide white marginal borders and no fwd uns cell spot):



Context in my local park where the host plant is :



Host plant leaves (*Anthyllis vulneraria*) :



Host plant – *Anthyllis vulneraria*



And in the same place the Little Blue uses the same host plant, *Anthyllis vulneraria*:



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 19-May-19 08:12 PM GMT

Another cracking species Chris 🤔🇫🇷 Interesting to see the underside – seems really unusual to have the white margins, I don't know why, I suppose it just goes against all the usual species I see 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 19-May-19 09:08 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

...Introduction to Turquoise Blue...

An absolute joy. One of my favourites, Chris.

Didn't know they were scarce round your way. I always thought they favoured dry environments?

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 22-May-19 02:03 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

Another cracking species Chris 😊👍 Interesting to see the underside – seems really unusual to have the white margins, I don't know why, I suppose it just goes against all the usual species I see 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Hi Wurzel,

At a glance, the Turquoise Blue could easily pass for a Common Blue, particularly when you're not expecting it. As you can see on the map further down, they are not very common close to Marseilles.

Cheers,
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 22-May-19 02:13 PM GMT

David M wrote:

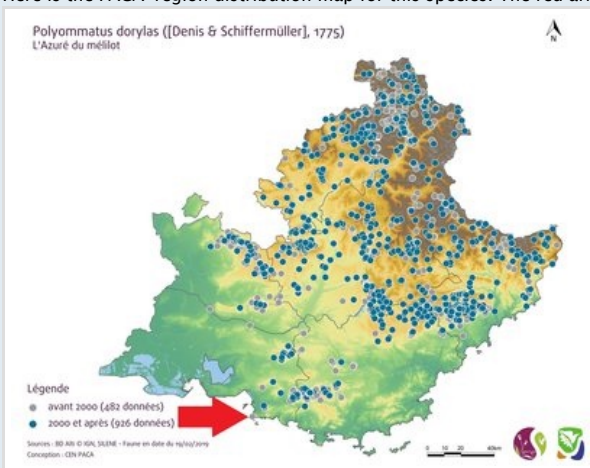
.... Didn't know they were scarce round your way. I always thought they favoured dry environments?

Hi David, down here there is dry and there is DRY.

DRY is the *garrigue* (scrub) where a limited number of species venture 😊.

My Turquoise Blues are in a transition (lush, hospitable) area of my local park between the outskirts of town and the *garrigue*. To my mind their host plant is not adapted to the *garrigue*.

Here is the PACA-region distribution map for this species. The red arrow tip indicates Marseilles – not many Turquoise Blue sightings:



The cluster of sightings we see on the map, 1 cm (approx. 40 km) north east of Marseilles, corresponds to the vicinity of the Sainte Baume mountain – by far the overall richest BF area, closest to me.

Cheers,
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 22-May-19 02:15 PM GMT

Hi Folks,

Meadow Brown has been flying down here since May 10th. Today was my first reasonable photo opportunity:



Cheers,
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 22-May-19 05:03 PM GMT

Thanks for the explanation, Chris (along with the distribution map). Yes, I see what an influence the area round Saint Baume has. No wonder it's a mecca for you.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by essexbuzzard, 23-May-19 08:01 PM GMT

Great new species for you there, Chris. Turquoise blue are a gorgeous butterfly, aren't they? Given their abundance in parts of Britain, and also in the Alps, I wouldn't consider *Anthyllis vulneriana* (Kidney vetch) particularly drought tolerant, indeed I'm surprised it grows near you at all. Though in GB it usually, but not always, has yellow flowers.

I have noticed in the Alps, near La Clusaz, that Silver studded blue also uses it, so it is a very important plant!

Great diary Chris, most interesting.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 23-May-19 08:35 PM GMT

Cheers for the info Chris – it goes to show that it was a cracking find 🤔🇫🇷👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by bugboy, 28-May-19 07:15 PM GMT

Just catching up on your diary Chris, I'm with Wurzel, that Turquoise Blue underside is very eye catching 🤔🇫🇷

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by NickMorgan, 29-May-19 12:22 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

Just catching up on your diary Chris, I'm with Wurzel, that Turquoise Blue underside is very eye catching 😊🍷

Yes, me too! The Turquoise Blue is lovely. Very like the Nevada Blue, which is one of my favourites. It also uses Kidney Vetch which manages to cling on in the high Sierra Nevada in very desolate conditions.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 02-Jun-19 10:13 AM GMT

Hi David, Essex, Wurzel, Paul and Nick.
Thanks for your encouraging comments.

For a year now I have been following the life cycle of the Black-veined White, from mating, from a female laying eggs last June, eggs hatching, the early stages, over-wintering and parasiting.

Now, the last week of May is an interesting moment for the Black-veined White.

All in the space of one week we can see the first imagoes that have emerged, mating pairs, the last stragglings preparing for pupation, and the chrysalis, and in principle, egg laying:

I saw my first male imago on May 25th:



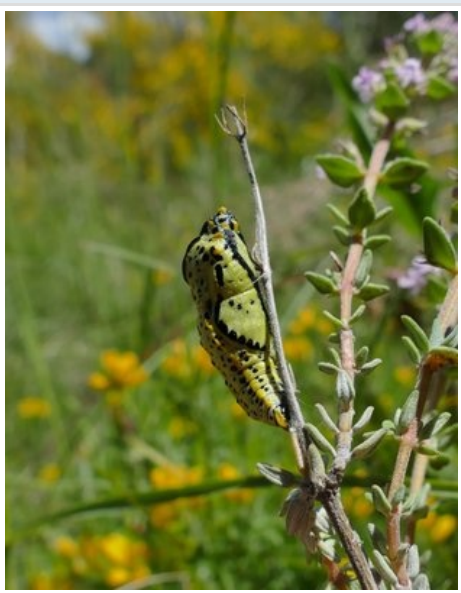
Whereas still on May 25th only a 100 metres away, a stragglings cat was preparing for pupation on a sprig of thym:



(it would need to be head-up to pupate though)



I moved it to a more protected and re-locatable sprig of thym, and by May 30th it had righted itself and pupated:



The context at 650 m altitude on the Var / Bouches du Rhone border:



After my trip back to the UK, I will start looking for this year's eggs, on Hawthorn and Wild Pear.
Cheers,
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-19 10:31 PM GMT

That would be fantastic to see, the life cycle laid out on a plate in one sitting 🤪 – it would have made Pete's forthcoming book much easier 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 02-Jun-19 11:22 PM GMT

Fascinating to see, Chris. This is a butterfly that explodes into life in late May in the French Pyrenees and, given how visible it is, can seemingly be the commonest butterfly at that time of year.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 14-Sep-19 05:34 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and David, I'm sure by now you have seen my Black-veined White life story.

As I write, 14 September, temperatures have risen again in Marseille up to 31°C in the afternoon.

At the end of last year I planted a spindly fennel plant in my garden, taken from nearby waste ground.

It is having difficulties taking root but has nonetheless obviously attracted a Swallowtail. It is only recently that I spotted the cat – it was up to then well hidden.



The cat is 30 mm long. I guess it will reach 35 mm before it pupates.
When I disturbed the cat it deployed its defensive glands (their name eludes me).



Hope I can get a photo of the pupation.
And yes, that is a Strawberry Tree we can see in the background, I am hoping for results from that!!
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Pauline, 14-Sep-19 06:26 PM GMT

Hi Chris - At last I've found it again. I knew I'd seen it somewhere and it stuck in my mind. Great life-cycle shots of the BVW. I'm impressed with all your observations of the immature stages and behavioral aspects. Shall be looking in quite a bit more now that I've discovered it. Really interesting!

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-19 07:55 PM GMT

Brilliant shots Chris 😊🌿 Thank you for letting me use Pete's book properly for the first time - those defensive glands are called its osmeterium 😊
Good luck with your charge, I'm looking forward to following their progress 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 15-Sep-19 04:44 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Hi Chris – At last I've found it again. I knew I'd seen it somewhere and it stuck in my mind. Great life-cycle shots of the BVW. I'm impressed with all your observations of the immature stages and behavioral aspects. Shall be looking in quite a bit more now that I've discovered it. Really interesting!

Thanks Pauline. That's very kind of you – I won't necessarily develop that thread. The immature stages do open up other satisfying avenues of exploration.
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 15-Sep-19 04:49 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

Brilliant shots Chris 🤩👍 Thank you for letting me use Pete's book properly for the first time – those defensive glands are called its osmeterium 😊
Good luck with your charge, I'm looking forward to following their progress 😊
Have a goodun
Wurzel

Thanks for the research, Wurzel – "osmeterium" hey?, that starts to ring a bell now.
I haven't seen Pete's book yet so it's good to hear there is a lot of useful and pertinent information in it.
I'll put it on my Xmas list. 😊
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 16-Sep-19 05:27 PM GMT

16th September

Swallowtail cat on fennel. I hope pupation is not too far away. I find the cat in the same place morning and evening but I'm not always at home to check on it during the day. 30 / 32 mm long today.



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 16-Sep-19 11:06 PM GMT

Great that you've got such a creature in your garden, Chris. I hope you will be able to observe it to pupation. I don't see how it can go anywhere else in all honesty so good luck!

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Charles Nicol, 20-Sep-19 10:40 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:
16th September

Swallowtail cat on fennel. I hope pupation is not too far away. I find the cat in the same place morning and evening but I'm not always at home to check on it during the day. 30 / 32 mm long today.

machaon33 caterpillar 30 mm long on fennel Marseille 16Sep19.JPG
Chris

it is a handsome beast ! have you thought of a name for it ?



Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 08-Oct-19 06:17 PM GMT

Hi David and Charles,

Unfortunately the Swallowtail cat crept off and pupated elsewhere other than on the fennel itself. I looked for it but I won't be getting a pupa photo this year. Next year I will plant more fennel in my garden, taken from nearby waste ground.

The cat was coming up to 35 mm long which I think must be the magic figure for pupation (down here).

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 08-Oct-19 06:31 PM GMT

Hi Folks,

Down here in the south of France in mid September there was a peak of Painted Lady imagos that lasted 2 weeks.

They could be seen in their tens on each buddleia shrub in my local park near work.

I believe that some parts of the UK had an influx of Painted Ladies at the exact same time.

My workplace park has lawns studded with Mallow plants, and Painted Lady caterpillars can now be found in their second instar.

PL cat 5 mm long – second instar, on Mallow:



PL cat in its silk web on Mallow:



Here is the context – the park lawns are studded with Mallow – but the council lawnmowers will soon be here – the same massacre each year:



The same Mallow is home to Mallow Skipper cats. The Mallow Skipper is prolific and has a long season down here:



Mallow Skipper larval shelter (cat tent) on Mallow:



How can I save all these cats before the lawnmowers arrive?, its just a question of time.
Chris

(Thanks to Vince for his help).

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Charles Nicol, 08-Oct-19 10:48 PM GMT

sorry to hear that your Swallowtail caterpillar did a runner 🤪

do you have any mallow growing in your jardin ? maybe rescue a few of the caterpillars from the park before they are martyrisées by the council.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 09-Oct-19 11:32 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

..Here is the context – the park lawns are studded with Mallow – but the council lawnmowers will soon be here – the same massacre each year..

Same as here eh, Chris? All in the name of tidiness. 😞

I despair sometimes (often, in fact). Reining in our obsession with destroying habitat for no tangible benefit is an easy win from every perspective. It saves money and preserves the natural environment. Who wants a 'manicured' earth?

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 11-Oct-19 10:27 AM GMT

Charles Nicol wrote:

... do you have any mallow growing in your jardin ? maybe rescue a few of the caterpillars from the park before they are martyrisées by the council.

Good idea, Charles, so that is what I have done.
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 11-Oct-19 10:33 AM GMT

Hi Charles and David,

Here is the caterpillar rescue mission before the council park lawnmowers arrive.

I attempted to lift the whole of the Mallow plant containing the Painted Lady cat, but finally it didn't fit into my improvised container.



Instead I took the leaf with the Painted Lady cat (here on the right) and two Mallow Skipper tents (on the left).



Here is the Mallow plant I recovered from waste land near home and which is now in the garden.



The cats have been put in their new home and the PL cat set about investigating it. This morning it had settled down on its chosen leaf. It is now 7 mm long.



Cheers,
Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Pauline, 11-Oct-19 03:11 PM GMT

I applaud your rescue efforts Chris and am enjoying seeing the immature stages of species I shall probably never see – hope they're not all parasitised as many of mine were.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 11-Oct-19 06:08 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

The weather is still holding up in the south of France with a lo of around 12°C rising to 25°C+ in the afternoon mostly with blue skies. This is a Strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*) on the outskirts of Marseille today.



And here is a Two-tailed Pasha egg seen today on this same tree – its only host plant around here



The egg must be more than 2 days old because of the dark crown around it. Also, we must be very near (if not beyond) the end of the TTP flight period, despite the continued good weather.

When the egg hatches, the cat will over-winter on the top of a leaf and then pupate in the Spring.

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by essexbuzzard, 11-Oct-19 11:29 PM GMT

Blue skies and 25C? Thanks for that, Chris (I think). Are you going to try to follow that TTP through the caterpillar stages, if it is accessible? Good luck with your Skipper and Painted Lady mission, good work!

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 12-Oct-19 06:36 PM GMT

Great set of shots Chris – congrats on the rescue mission 😊😎 Those weather conditions sound fantastic and as I sit in the drear in the UK they male summer seem soooooo far away 😞😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 13-Oct-19 05:34 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Blue skies and 25C? Thanks for that, Chris (I think). Are you going to try to follow that TTP through the caterpillar stages, if it is accessible? Good luck with your Skipper and Painted Lady mission, good work!

Hi Essex,

Yep ! That's the indian summer down here, although how long it will last I can't tell.

I have indeed taken charge of the TTP egg on its leaf and when (and if) it hatches, I will transfer the larva to the Strawberry Tree in my garden (which was planted a year ago exactly in anticipation of this kind of opportunity). I have loads of cat photos of this species, but I need pupa photos, which would be for around May 2020.

More PL and Mallow Skipper cat news coming soon.

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 13-Oct-19 05:39 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

Great set of shots Chris – congrats on the rescue mission 😊😄 Those weather conditions sound fantastic and as I sit in the drear in the UK they male summer seem soooooo far away 😞😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Thanks Wurzel.

Yes, its still pleasant down here, and I can still count up to about 7 or 8 species of worn butterflies on the wing.

Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 13-Oct-19 05:48 PM GMT

Hi Folks,

At the end of the season, Mallow is becoming bit of an obsession. It is one of the places where we can easily find butterfly early-stages.

Today I found further Painted Lady caterpillars, one 7 mm long, and these, 12 mm long:



And more advanced Mallow Skipper cats, ranging from 5 mm to 19 mm – here 19 mm long:



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Charles Nicol, 13-Oct-19 10:56 PM GMT

Glad to hear you are rescuing the caterpillars from the council. i look forward to hearing about their progress.

Charles

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 14-Oct-19 11:30 PM GMT

No such thing as an obsession, Chris. 😊

I wish you luck with all your adopted early stages, and I'll be particularly interested to see how the TTPs get on.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 15-Oct-19 07:57 PM GMT

Hi David and Charles,
Two-tailed Pasha news is arriving quicker than planned.

The Two-tailed Pasha egg that I recovered a couple of days ago hatched between the 14th and 15th October.
It has consumed its chorion (its egg shell).



The TTP cat is already 5 mm long after 24 hours.



I have transferred the cat to the Strawberry Tree in my garden.
Notice the uneaten base of the chorion remaining on the leaf



I have stapled the leaf to the host plant.
Here is the Strawberry Tree in my garden.



Reminder of the egg 4 days ago



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Charles Nicol, 16-Oct-19 01:56 PM GMT

glad that your Pasha caterpillar is doing well in the garden.

ermm how about a name....

Sasha the Pasha

(both male and female 😊)

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 18-Oct-19 09:34 PM GMT

Charles Nicol wrote:

glad that your Pasha caterpillar is doing well in the garden.

ermm how about a name....

Sasha the Pasha

Maybe 'Gnasher' given how much these huge things eat, Charles! 😊

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 20-Oct-19 10:12 AM GMT

Hi Charles and David,

Sasha the Gnasher has done a bunk, unless he is well hidden !!
He's going to find that its a cruel world out there, out of his tree.

However, here is an update on the cats on Mallow in my garden.
Notice how the colouring of the Painted Lady cats varies although they are the same size. Different instars?
Painted Lady cat 29 mm long today (7 days ago it was 7 mm long):



Painted Lady cat 30 mm long today (7 days ago it was 12 mm long):



Mallow Skipper cat 19 mm long today:



Chris

Thanks to feedback from Vince, both my PL cats are 5th instar

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 20-Oct-19 05:56 PM GMT

Interesting shots - I'm not far enough into my copy of 'Eeles' yet to help out with whether they're different instars 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Pauline, 20-Oct-19 06:17 PM GMT

Hi Chris

Really enjoying your diary. Pity the TTP went AWOL. Re Painted Lady variation it's worth taking a look at this report which hi-lights variation:

<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=37&t=9757>

If link doesn't work its in Board Index – Species specific forum – general – Painted Lady early stages. Well worth a look. Makes a change me giving you something to do 😊😊

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 22-Oct-19 07:58 PM GMT

Looks like you've got something to concentrate on after the butterflies down your way have disappeared, Chris!

Good luck with it. I'll watch out for your updates with interest.

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Charles Nicol, 23-Oct-19 08:54 PM GMT

hehehe maybe Gnasher has run off with your Swallowtail caterpillar....

well done on the success of the Mallow project so far 😊

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 27-Oct-19 06:07 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, Pauline, David and Charles for your comments.

After Sasha Gnasher the Pasha going AWOL from the Strawberry Tree in my garden, now this week my two Painted Lady cats 5th instar 30 mm long wandered off (to pupate no doubt) away from my Mallow nursery. So no photos of Painted Lady pupation this time. I had a good look but couldn't find them anywhere. My provisional amateur conclusion is that 30 mm is pupation size for PL cats.

However, at the moment in Marseilles we still have a lo of 12°C and a hi of 23°C. 😊

Today a Painted Lady laid at least 7 eggs directly on my Mallow nursery. The PL alternated between nectaring on buddleia which is still just about in flower, and zooming over my potted Mallow.

Here is the potted Mallow:



One of the PL eggs laid today 27 October:



On the same Mallow plant, one of my Mallow Skipper cats, now 26 mm long:



Here is the Mallow Skipper tent, dangling precariously (reminding us we should not saw the branch we are sitting on):



Chris

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 29-Oct-19 06:59 PM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

...at the moment in Marseilles we still have a lo of 12°C and a hi of 23°C...



I admire your commitment, Chris. That Mallow Skipper tent is of particular interest. Keep us updated!

Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Charles Nicol, 30-Oct-19 11:29 AM GMT

glad your Mallows are popular with the local butterflies !

will you be able to bring them indoors if it gets wintry ?

