

**Re: Matsukaze**

by Matsukaze, 06-Feb-19 12:10 AM GMT

The first moth of the year – Pale Brindled Beauty, fluttering at a lit window this evening.



**Re: Matsukaze**

by Wurzel, 06-Feb-19 08:47 PM GMT

That's one subtle beauty there Matsukaze – love the 'mossy green' look it's modelling 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Matsukaze**

by David M, 07-Feb-19 07:11 PM GMT

**Matsukaze wrote:**

The first moth of the year – Pale Brindled Beauty, fluttering at a lit window this evening.

Very nice, Matsukaze....and extremely welcome following on from that awful cold snap.

Here's hoping the milder weather will see a few more take to the wing.

**RETURN OF THE LIVING BUMBLEBEE**

by Matsukaze, 18-Feb-19 10:30 AM GMT

This morning...



### Re: Matsukaze

by David M, 19-Feb-19 07:01 AM GMT

Always gives you a lift does the first bumblebee of the year. Usually, if I spot one I'm normally confident that butterflies will be around too (so long as the sun is shining).

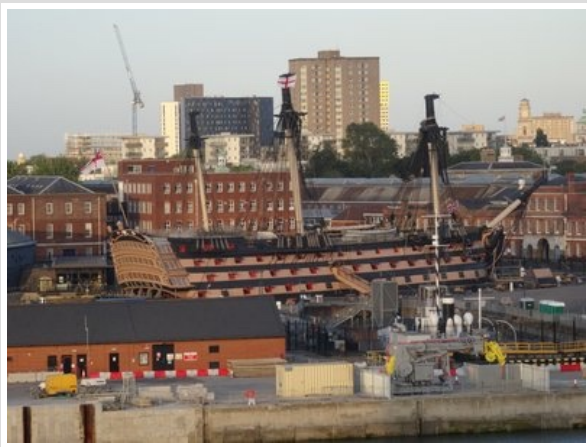
### Re: Matsukaze

by Matsukaze, 19-Jul-19 03:30 PM GMT

**Provence, late June 2019**

Considering how hot it was later to get, it is surprising to remember that when we got on the ferry at Portsmouth it was grey and drizzly. We had already discovered that the car's air-conditioning was not working, but did not realise how much trouble this was going to give us...

Leaving Portsmouth harbour, you get treated to a range of flagships of all ages:



*HMS Victory*



*HMS Warrior*



*HMS Queen Elizabeth*

The sun had come out by the time we reached Le Havre, which has some cliffs that look good for exploration one day.



We had a four hour journey south to Orléans, where we stopped overnight on the drive south. Us British lepidopterists tend to celebrate France for its expanses of butterfly habitat and the many species which live there, which is true, but there are equally large areas of agrochemical wasteland, where it is impossible to imagine any insect life existing (it must do, as stonechats perch alongside the roads in these wastes, and they must find something to feed on). The first day and a good part of the second were spent crossing these areas, and it wasn't until we stopped for lunch on the second day that we came across butterflies.



This one flew up from the ground as it approached – whether it is a White Admiral or Southern White Admiral I am not sure – I tried to get it to move by throwing sticks into the canopy around it, which only succeeded in getting it to fly higher and out of view. Can it be identified from the photo?

A second stop was by the Pont du Gabarit in the Massif Central.



Here there was a slope with patches of thyme and bird's foot trefoil, and two butterflies, a Glanville Fritillary and a Chapman's *icarinus* Blue (can this be identified from the photo?). In Provence we were in between broods of the Glanville Fritillary, and I think this was the only one I saw in all the two weeks. I didn't knowingly see Chapman's again, either.



### Re: Matsukaze

by Padfield, 19-Jul-19 05:30 PM GMT

Hi Matsukaze. I incline to female *icarinus* for that last blue, because the black submarginal spots on the hindwing are mostly confluent with the orange inside. In Chapman's, these spots are mostly discrete. This is female Chapman's, to show what I mean:



Guy

EDIT - actually, I think that's a male - the blue of the ups is showing through the hindwing fringe. Here's a female with a male:



**Re: Matsukaze**

by David M, 20-Jul-19 09:25 PM GMT

**Matsukaze wrote:**

..Us British lepidopterists tend to celebrate France for its expanses of butterfly habitat and the many species which live there, which is true, but there are equally large areas of agrochemical wasteland, where it is impossible to imagine any insect life existing (it must do, as stonechats perch alongside the roads in these wastes, and they must find something to feed on).

That probably explains why butterfly disappearances in France are far more west-centric than they are east-centric.

Like in the UK, swathes of low lying fertile land in this part of France are routinely given over to agriculture.

**Re: Matsukaze**

by Matsukaze, 21-Jul-19 11:24 PM GMT

Thanks folks – yes, what I have seen of western France does not impress, which makes me wonder why I have agreed to go there on holiday this September...

Interrupting the Provence holiday narrative with this picture of a Large Blue. Collard Hill, 9 June 2019.



**Re: Matsukaze**

by David M, 22-Jul-19 11:35 PM GMT

**Matsukaze wrote:**

Thanks folks – yes, what I have seen of western France does not impress, which makes me wonder why I have agreed to go there on holiday this September...

It's still a big improvement on the UK, Matsukaze, in spite of its limitations in comparison to the eastern side of France.

**Re: Matsukaze**

by Matsukaze, 14-Aug-19 09:32 PM GMT

Outdoor swimming is to my wife what watching butterflies is to me, and a break from driving at the Lac de Salagou in Hérault gave her some welcome relaxation – it was also handily timed so we avoided trying to navigate Montpellier at rush hour. Whilst she swam, I searched for butterflies on the shore, which proved to be one of the most barren locations I have ever come across in Europe, with patches of desiccated grass scattered amongst hard red rocks.

I got a very brief view of this skipper – either *Carcharodus* or Sage Skipper – which was distracted by the Marbled White, and lost to sight. The Marbled White was making occasional use of the handful of scattered scabious plants, but was rarely stopping and then only briefly, which seems to be the way of this genus when it is hot. Tolman has this area as the border zone between *galathea* and *lachesis* – is it possible to determine which of the two it is?



The fringes of the lake, with grassy areas and scattered trees, proved good habitat for Great Banded Grayling, a huge butterfly full of character, which flies with slow wing-beats like a big Morpho from a tropical house – except when they are chasing each other. Although the larvae are grass-feeders, they appear to need to roost on trees, and so seem to require a largely grassy landscape with a scattering of trees.



It was still another four hours from here to our destination, another lake – the Lac de Sainte Croix in Var – with just about enough time to enjoy wine on the terrace and then to sleep.

### Re: Matsukaze

by Wurzel, 15-Aug-19 08:55 PM GMT

A cracking and typical shot of the Great Banded Grayling I'm glad you described them the way that you did as I've been trying to find a way to describe their flight myself and yours is spot on 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Matsukaze

by David M, 17-Aug-19 09:06 AM GMT

I think your Skipper looks good for Sage, Matsukaze, from the details I can make out. I'd favour *lachesis* over *galathea* too, given the more delicate underwing markings.

### Re: Matsukaze

by Matsukaze, 15-Oct-19 07:21 PM GMT

On Day 1 of our stay in Var – 18 June – I walked up a limestone gorge tucked away nearby the Lac de Sainte Croix. This is a good walk in May with plenty of unusual blues, pearl-bordered fritillaries, Spanish festoons and other species. This time numbers were slightly on the low side, possibly owing to the heat, with the stars of the show being an abundance of low-flying hairstreaks – blue-spot and ilex.



I discovered an area of wayleave under some pylons that I had not previously come across before. Black-veined whites were flying here along with plenty of hairstreaks and a few blues. There were also two fritillaries I could not identify – Niobe and a *Mellicta*?







The stars of the show, however, were the day-flying moths.



*Beautiful Marbled*



*Cynaeda dentalis*



*Cydalima perspectalis* – Box Moth

The non-native Box Moth has become extraordinarily abundant in parts of France, and I was turning them up regularly by day – in one wooded area that did not look like it held much box, I was putting a dozen or so up every few strides. Sooner or later, some bird species is going to have a population explosion in France based on this new, abundant food source.

### Re: Matsukaze

by Wurzel, 16-Oct-19 10:41 PM GMT

Those Hairstreaks make for a cracking sight Matsukaze 🤔👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Matsukaze

by Matsukaze, 17-Oct-19 10:13 PM GMT

Yes, they are wonderful to seen, not least because I so rarely come across groups of butterflies nectaring like this – Spanish gatekeepers do something similar.

### Re: Matsukaze

by David M, 20-Oct-19 02:22 PM GMT

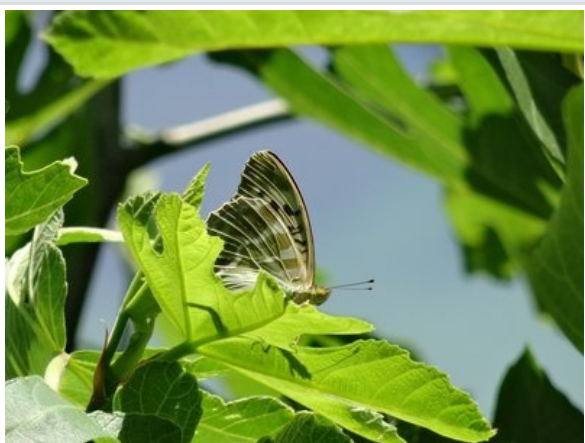
June is a great time for Hairstreaks in the Var, Chris. It's always quite a culture shock to see members of this group busily nectaring away en masse like that.

Have to say that curry plant is definitely one of their favourites.

### Re: Matsukaze

by Matsukaze, 27-Oct-19 09:40 PM GMT

On 20 June we ascended to around 1300 m, to a site I have visited before, but not at this time of year. It turned out to be awash with vetches and similar, and in consequence was alive with butterflies. The highlights were the Apollos, but there were also plenty of blues and fritillaries here – the blues proving very active and so quite difficult to photograph. A couple of ID requests included here as well.



*Silver-washed Fritillary f. valezina*



*Pearly Heath*



*Apollo*





*Provence Chalkhill Blue? Upperside very pale blue.*



*unidentified Mellicta fritillary*



*underside photo of previous fritillary*



*de Prunner's Ringlet?*



*Knapweed Fritillary (with Provence CHB in background?)*



*unidentified Mellicta fritillary*

Also these three Pyrgus – can anyone identify them?



**Re: Matsukaze**

by David M, 27-Oct-19 09:57 PM GMT

Your final Fritillary looks like Meadow Fritillary to me, Chris. The one on the rock may be Provençal Fritillary.

I think you're right with the *erebia*; certainly looks good for DePrunner's, and this species would be quite worn and tatty (as yours is) towards the end of June.

**Re: Matsukaze**

by Matsukaze, 27-Oct-19 11:08 PM GMT

Thanks David – I have seen de Prunner's on the same site, looking much fresher, in mid-May, which fits nicely.

**Re: Matsukaze**

by Padfield, 28-Oct-19 09:10 AM GMT

I agree with David except for the first *Melitaea* fritillary, which I believe is heath. The upperside pattern and the conspicuous dark branding on the outer margin of the forewing underside seem unambiguous to me.

Guy

EDIT: I forgot about the skippers. The first looks most like *carthami*, from what can be seen of that hindwing. The next perhaps *armoricanus* and the last one also perhaps *armoricanus*. As always, it's a bit hit-and-miss without undersides ...

### Re: Matsukaze

by Matsukaze, 26-Nov-19 10:01 PM GMT

Thanks Guy - is there anything one can do that will encourage *Pyrgus* butterflies show their underwings for photographs? I do not usually carry a net and the butterflies are so rarely co-operative. I have tried asking them politely, to no avail.

### Re: Matsukaze

by David M, 27-Nov-19 09:38 PM GMT

#### Matsukaze wrote:

...is there anything one can do that will encourage *Pyrgus* butterflies show their underwings for photographs?

This group is the hardest to identify in Europe as far as I'm concerned, Chris, but they're also the easiest to catch in a vial. *Pyrgus* tend to settle low and generally are content to bask for longer than most other butterflies. You don't need a net to get them....simply slow your pace down and approach with stealth. Gently position the vial above them and in most cases you can place it down slowly without them realising they have been 'incarcerated'.

You can then get the underside shots you need (as well as uppersides if necessary) and you will find that when you take the lid off to liberate them, they will often linger on the edge of the vial to bask a little more, giving you plenty of scope to take several more images in a more natural way.

Here are a few I've 'potted' using this technique:

Olive Skipper:



Alpine Grizzled Skipper:



Rosy Grizzled Skipper:



### Re: Matsukaze

by Matsukaze, 23-Dec-19 11:21 AM GMT

Northern Var is good for moths too – these came to light on the balcony in the village where we were staying. There were many more, particularly tortrix moths that I have yet to be able to identify.



*Dicycla oo* - Heart Moth



*Scopula decorata*





*Idaea ostrinaria*



*Box Moth*



*Box Moth - dark form*



*Euchromius anapiellus*



*Bena bicolorana* – Scarce Silver-lines

**Re: Matsukaze**

by Wurzel, 24-Dec-19 06:02 PM GMT

Cracking sets of butterflies and moths Matsukaze 🤔🌿 That Heart Moth is particularly well named and a bit of a subtle cracker 😊🤔🌿

Have a goodun (and a Merry Christmas and New Year)

Wurzel

**Re: Matsukaze**

by Matsukaze, 27-Dec-19 11:33 AM GMT

Thanks - some really lovely moths out there - hope you are enjoying your festive break!

**Re: Matsukaze**

by David M, 27-Dec-19 03:50 PM GMT

Hopefully those Box Moths aren't around in the same plague numbers as in the Mercantour, Chris.

Beautiful (especially the dark form) but destructive, unfortunately.