

## Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 14-Feb-20 05:51 PM GMT

### Charles Nicol wrote:

glad your Mallows are popular with the local butterflies ....  
will you be able to bring them indoors if it gets wintry ?

Hi Charles, here we are in mid February and in the south of France on the coast it has not really dropped below 6°C at night at all this winter so far. A cold spell must not be ruled out. I will keep an eye out for my Mallow Skipper cats when it gets a bit warmer.  
Chris

## Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 14-Feb-20 05:55 PM GMT

The latest from the south of France.

This mild winter seems to have brought things forwards.

Today's sighting of a Green Hairstreak on my local patch would seem to indicate that the season is running 2 weeks ahead compared with an "average" year.

Here, perched on Mediterranean buckthorn :



It flitted over on to a neighbouring Strawberry tree and alighted next to a Two-tailed Pasha cat that I would never have spotted otherwise :



The TTP cat is at shoulder height in this Strawberry tree :



The cat is already 35 mm long which seems to me well advanced for the month of February.

Saturday 15 Feb.

Morning : First Geranium Bronze of the year in my garden, which should soon start taking care of my neighbour's geraniums 😊 tee hee hee.



Afternoon : First Large Tortoiseshell of the year on the outskirts of Marseilles :



Chris

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 16-Feb-20 06:45 PM GMT

Some great sightings Chris – especially nice to see as I sit in Wales with storm Dennis the Menace rampaging outside 😊🇬🇧😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 18-Feb-20 06:27 PM GMT

#### Chris Jackson wrote:

The latest from the south of France.

This mild winter seems to have brought things forwards...

Nice to see your array of early spring species, Chris.

Even better to hear how things are running a little ahead this year. My last two trips to the Pyrenees in late May have been difficult due to successive 'late' seasons. Hopefully this forthcoming one will be more in keeping with normal conditions, or even a touch in advance, which will make my life easier!

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 23-Feb-20 04:29 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel and David,

I was unsure of whether my first sighting of a Green Hairstreak two weeks back was announcing the start of its flight period down here.

I think that today I can confirm that the GH flight period is well underway as I saw conservatively approximately 7 individuals flying / battling over a distance of 100 metres in my local park.

Here is the same individual on two different plants – the integrity of its hairs would indicate that it is quite fresh.

On *Ulex parviflorus* :



On *Euphorbia characias* :



If there was a prize for the butterfly that knew how to strike only one single pose, I think the GH would get it 😊.  
Chris

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 23-Feb-20 08:49 PM GMT

They are the masters of the 'side on with antennae at a jaunty angle' shot Chris – a bit Derek Zoolander and Blue Steel 😊😊 Lovely shots 😊 We're heading to the Grand Causses the second week of August this year – I don't suppose you've any idea of things I should look out for in particular? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 24-Feb-20 05:42 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

I'm no expert regarding Les Grands Causses. Keep your eyes open though, you're bound to see something out of the ordinary. An unexpected Cupido, Araschnia, Lycaena, ...

Today in the south of France temperatures have reached around 23°C. It is very easy to see Large White, Large Tortoiseshell, Cleopatra, Green Hairstreak, Red Admiral ...



My Mallow Skipper cats are waking up a little too early.  
This cat is 17 mm long.



But the host plant has not started growing yet – this could lead to a survival problem.



On my local patch, Large Tortoiseshell seems to put in an appearance earlier and earlier each year. Usually around 19th March, or exceptionally 03 March, but now end of February. Here on the trunk of a lime tree.



In the defensive position.



But also benefitting from the nectar of viburnum flowers.



Chris

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 24-Feb-20 10:58 PM GMT

Cheers Chris - I'll keep em peeled 😊 I hope the Mallow Skippers make it through, fingers crossed 🤞 Must be great to see the Large Torts 😊🇫🇷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 24-Feb-20 11:35 PM GMT

Wow! 23 degrees! That must be unusual even at your latitude for February, Chris? No wonder there are plenty of butterflies on the wing.

Do I recognise that tree? Isn't that the one which your early Large Tortoiseshells seem to covet every year?

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 11-Mar-20 07:39 PM GMT

{quote=Wurzel\_post\_id=150763\_time=1582585116\_user\_id=9821} .... Must be great to see the Large Torts 😊🇫🇷 .... Wurzel Hi Wurzel, Now, mid March, Large Torts are commonplace and I must admit I am stopping taking photos of them this year because things are speeding up with spring around the corner. In the south of France the season is dynamic and you have to be on the ball. Each species has its photo slot and you must go with the flow to make sure that you are not overtaken by events. See below for the latest.  
Cheers, Chris.

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 11-Mar-20 07:45 PM GMT

#### David M wrote:

.... Wow! 23 degrees! That must be unusual even at your latitude for February ? ..... Do I recognise that tree? Isn't that the one which your early Large Tortoiseshells seem to covet every year?

Hi David,

After a couple of days at 23°C the temperature dropped backed down to the norm (lo's of 8°-ish and hi's of 13°-ish). Today we are suddenly back up to 21°C on the south coast and even 24° in other places.

Yep, that tree with the Large Tort is the same one as each year – well spotted !

I think I caught the sun today – I must start putting sun lotion on 😊

There hasn't been a single frost in Marseille this winter, which may be the reason for my latest sighting – see below!  
Chris

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 11-Mar-20 07:50 PM GMT

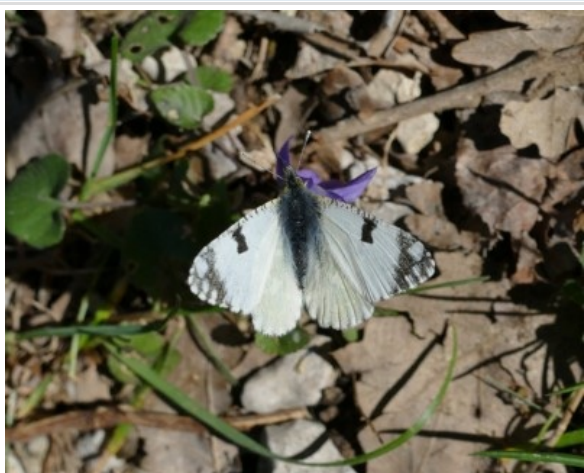
Today (11th of March) in the south of France, I had my first sighting of a Provence Hairstreak this year.

At the best I would expect a first sighting at the very earliest on the 19th of March, so today's sighting really came as a surprise.

Provence Hairstreak – at least 1 week early :



Also seen today – a Western Dappled White :



Cheers, Chris

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 11-Mar-20 09:46 PM GMT

Cracking species Chris 😊🇫🇷 Can you get them to slow down a bit though – I'm hopefully visiting the south of France the second week of August (Covid-19 willing) and it would be nice if there were still some species flying! 😊🇫🇷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by essexbuzzard, 11-Mar-20 11:54 PM GMT

Fantastic, Chris ( he says through gritted teeth!). It's so interesting to have someone like your good self showing us what's going on elsewhere in Europe.

We too have had very little frost this winter–indeed one of my neighbours still has Geraniums in their garden! Mind you, there has been very little sunshine, either. So our situation is very different to yours, and I am still waiting for my first warm day, and my first butterfly sighting.

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 14-Mar-20 03:22 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post\_id=150966 time=1583967253 user\_id=11426]We too have had very little frost this winter–indeed one of my neighbours still has Geraniums in their garden! Mind you, there has been very little sunshine, either. So our situation is very different to yours, and I am still waiting for my first sighting.

Agreed. It's been the strangest winter/early spring I can ever remember. Mild but virtually sunshine bereft. Some of my daffodils are actually dying back now before I've seen a butterfly!

After all these dreary weeks though, things look set to change quite soon, with high pressure becoming established over the UK at long last! In the meantime, it's good to be able to see a few species down your way, Chris. Provence Hairstreak is one of my favourite species so good to know it's around, albeit rather early.

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 17-Mar-20 06:43 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

My PH sighting is worrying early – global warming ?

Let's hope this virus is cleared up before August, for your hols. I would have thought so.

Hi Essex,

Get out now butterflying while you can in the UK – unfortunately soon you'll be following Italy, Spain and now France.

Hi David,

I'm glad I got a sighting of Provence Hairstreak before the confinement measures we now have in France. I should think that your spring travel programme will be seriously disrupted by restrictions – make the most of what you've got on home territory.

Cheers, Chris

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 17-Mar-20 06:47 PM GMT

Hi Folks,

Just before France went into lock-down at lunch time, I made a trip to my local Parc des Bruyères.

This species is a lot easier to photograph when it is otherwise preoccupied as here:

Female on the right :





Female on the left :







I don't know how rare *L. celtis* cop-shots are, but it has made my day 😊😁  
I will be braving French lock-down and will report on my local park as and when I can.  
Yours in confinement,  
Chris

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 17-Mar-20 09:25 PM GMT

I've got my fingers crossed that things get a bit better by August Chris 😊 In the meantime a fantastic set of shots of a species I'd dearly love to see. I too don't know how unusual cop shots are of this species but they also made my day 😊👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 18-Mar-20 06:59 PM GMT

#### Chris Jackson wrote:

..I don't know how rare *L. celtis* cop-shots are...

Very rare, Chris. In fact, all this family seem to be so that's one hell of a sighting.

Hope you can still get out clandestinely down there. I believe there are fines for those that don't have a "valid" reason to be outside. I sincerely hope that policy isn't implemented here but it wouldn't surprise me if it were.

Sois prudent et bon courage.

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 28-Apr-20 09:16 AM GMT

`{quote=Wurzel_post_id=151059_time=1584476748_user_id=9821}` .... things a bit better by August Chris 😊 ... Wurzel Now with a little hindsight, Wurzel, August is not all that conservative ? 😊  
Chris

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 28-Apr-20 09:19 AM GMT

#### David M wrote:

.... Hope you can still get out clandestinely down there. I believe there are fines for those that don't have a "valid" reason to be outside ....

Well they finally locked up my local park, David, which is in fact a "Parc National", but I've been able to continue studying life cycle as you can see below  
:  
Chris

## Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 28-Apr-20 09:19 AM GMT

Chris Jackson wrote:

David M wrote:

.... Hope you can still get out clandestinely down there. I believe there are fines for those that don't have a "valid" reason to be outside ....

Well they finally locked up my local park, David, which is in fact a "Parc National", but I've been able to continue studying life cycle as you can see below :  
Chris

## Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 28-Apr-20 09:25 AM GMT

What does the Two-tailed Pasha do in March and April ?

The TTP egg would have been laid last autumn, and the caterpillar has overwintered, feeding only when mild. It's host plant is the Strawberry Tree.

On March 16th, this cat is nearly 30 mm long which is big for the end of winter. It was very mild this year without even a frost:



By April 18th the cat has reached its maximum size of 50 mm:



At 50 mm long, the cat is showing signs of loss of vital fluids, I may be wrong, but I am worried about parasitic attack:



On April 24th, 8 am, the cat unusually had not returned to its home leaf and I found it deeper in its bush, exploring a branch:



By 12 midday it had moved under the same branch and appeared to be preparing an area under the branch with a weaving motion with its mouth:



By 4 pm the cat was in position for pupation:



On April 27th, 3 days and a couple of hours later, after much concern over whether the cat had been parasited and had died, the cat pupated unexpectedly and rapidly between 4 pm and 8 pm:



The butterfly is expected to emerge for mid May.  
Chris

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Pauline, 28-Apr-20 11:24 AM GMT

Great observation Chris – an incredibly interesting post. Left me wanting more 😊

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by essexbuzzard, 28-Apr-20 11:33 AM GMT

Agreed. A fascinating observation brilliantly captured.

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by kevlng, 28-Apr-20 06:39 PM GMT

Chris,

Nice observations of the Two Tailed Pasha. It's pupa is wonderful. I hope you are there to see it emerge. It is one of my favourite non British butterflies.

Regards  
Kev

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles



by Wurzel, 28-Apr-20 08:25 PM GMT

Really interesting sequence Chris – the pupae an odd shape – like a little bell pepper 😊 I hope you can still get your butterfly 'fix' legitimately 😊 and that you're keeping safe and well.

Have a goodun, stay safe

Wurzel

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Janet Turnbull, 28-Apr-20 09:37 PM GMT

What an amazing sequence of shots, Chris! Can't wait to see what happens!  
Stay safe. Janet

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 29-Apr-20 09:25 AM GMT

I salute you, Chris. Fabulous sequence and I sincerely hope a butterfly emerges from that very striking pupa rather than a parasite.

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 20-May-20 06:21 PM GMT

Thank you Pauline, Essex, Kev, Wurzel, Janet and David for your kind encouragements.

I had hoped that the Two-tailed Pasha butterfly would emerge from its pupa during the day .... wrong !

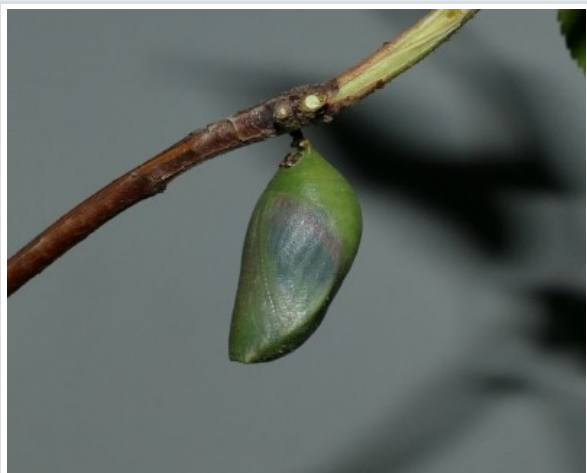
Nature decided otherwise and it emerged over-night which means that I missed out on many photos.

Here are some photos to give an idea of the time-line:

May 19th – 4 pm



May 19th – 6 pm



May 19th – 6.15 pm



May 19th - 10.30 pm to midnight



May 20th - 5 am - after 22 full days of pupation



Ah well ... perhaps better luck next time.  
I have released the TTP back in the local park where it originated from.  
Chris

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Pauline, 20-May-20 06:45 PM GMT

Well done Chris! I know from personal experience just how frustrating that can be but nevertheless, still a great sequence of shots there. Thanks for letting us know the outcome 😊

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 21-May-20 07:39 PM GMT

Fantastic images even though it caught out – I reckon it waited until you were sleeping 😊😄 Still a miraculous looking butterfly 🦋

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by David M, 21-May-20 08:15 PM GMT

Sublime stuff, Chris. 🦋

I'd be happy just to see an adult of this species, let alone follow the emergence from pupation.

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Chris Jackson, 28-May-20 06:50 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, Wurzel and David.

Still on the topic of the Two-tailed Pasha, here is a bit more.

Whereas the overwintering stages of the TTP tend to spread the life cycle out, the summer brood is different. In the space of 5 days or more the egg stage plays out:

May 23rd. Egg completely yellow = laid less than 24 hours previous.



May 24th. Egg with dark crown.



May 28th at 10 am:



May 28th at 5 pm. The cat eating its egg shell.



May 29th



Chris

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Pauline, 29-May-20 11:26 AM GMT

More great images Chris with interesting details to accompany. Having just spent 50+ hours (on and off) watching the antics of my Dukes I could do with seeing something evolving a bit quicker 😊 . Your posts are a refreshing change to the norm 😊

### Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles

by Wurzel, 29-May-20 07:14 PM GMT

Cricky Chris they're weird looking little things – they remind of the monsters from the Tremors movie 🤪🤪

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel



**Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles**

by David M, 01-Jun-20 02:44 PM GMT

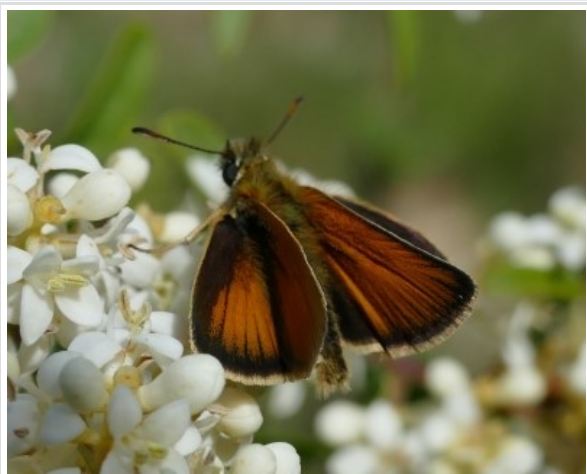
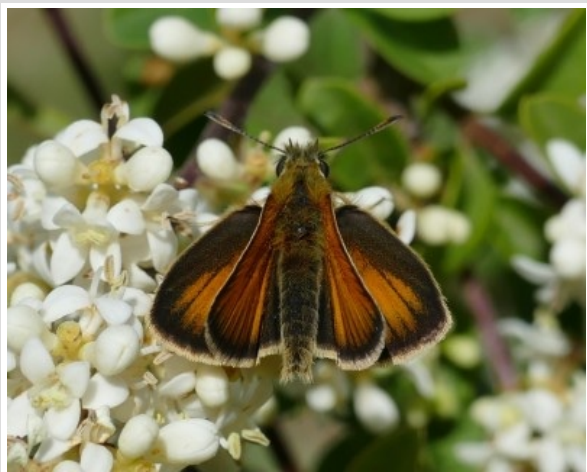
Amazing how quickly the larva emerges from the date the ovum was laid (it's not exactly the smallest larva either!)

**Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles**

by Chris Jackson, 05-Jun-20 08:34 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, Wurzel and David. Thanks for your comments. Much appreciated.

Here is a short sequence of Essex Skipper photos from the south of France. They are much less common down here than Lulworth Skippers. I made the most of overcast conditions to get a decent set. Hope I've got the ID right.





The diffused black wing borders in these photos appear more distinctive than in Pete's book.  
Chris

### **Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles**

by David M, 07-Jun-20 10:33 AM GMT

I find Essex Skippers to be more dusky in the south of France than in the UK, Chris. I guess they'll be emerging over here any day now.

### **Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles**

by Chris Jackson, 19-Oct-20 08:59 AM GMT

Thanks David.

After umpteen attempts to capture Swallowtail pupation, and having missed it by a matter of minutes each time through distraction, here it is.

To avoid boredom, I have condensed my sequence here down to one image in five.

This is a European Swallowtail, end of third voltin, so the pupa will over-winter.

The essential part of the sequence lasts less than 10 minutes.

03 October.













Chris

**Re: Chris Jackson in Marseilles**

by David M, 20-Oct-20 05:27 PM GMT

You nailed it this time, Chris. Well done. That's a phenomenal sequence. 🎯