

## BUTTERFLIES IN MOROCCO

By D. HALL\*

## Part I – August 1982

Several friends had recently visited Morocco and had told me what an interesting country it was, so in the summer of 1982 I decided to pay a visit there myself. Accordingly I arrived in Marrakesh on July 30th and spent the first few days exploring this fascinating city and its environs. The weather was very hot and few butterflies were on the wing. The lawns of my hotel produced the little blue *Zizeeria knysna* Trimen in good condition and the gardens *Parage aegeria* L. and *Artogeia rapae* L. neither of which were common or very fresh.

Marrakesh is set on the edge of the plain of Haouz at the foot of the High Atlas Mountains and the city is surrounded by large groves of olives and date palms. Nearly all the vegetation beneath the trees and at the roadsides was completely dried up at this time of year but the few remaining flowers attracted many large *Lycaena phlaeas* L. form *elea* Fabricius with its dusky wings and long tails. On an abundant spiny shrub *Zizyphus vulgaris* there were many of the attractive little *Tarucus theophrastus* Fabricius with its beautifully marked undersides. The olive grove in the Menara garden near my hotel was well irrigated and the paths between the trees were overgrown with fennel and here *Papilio machaon* L. was fairly common.

It was obvious that to see more butterflies I must head for the mountains, so on August 3rd I got the bus to Ourigane at about 4000 feet in the High Atlas. As we climbed out of the plain into the mountains, the vegetation became fresher and the olive groves were replaced by orchards of apples, peaches and walnuts, the bright greens contrasting strongly with the pinks and reds of the soil. The bus stopped at Asni so we could refresh ourselves and while buying a drink, I noticed a large dark butterfly fluttering in the window of the bar. I managed to box it without attracting too much attention and was pleased to find it was a very fresh specimen of *Pseudoter-gumia fidia* L.

At Ourigane I investigated some rocky slopes leading down to the N'Fiss river which were covered with spiny *Capparis* bushes and around them were flying many Desert Orange Tips – *Colotis evagore* Lucas. This was a butterfly I was particularly pleased to see but they were not easy to catch without entangling ones net and legs in the thorns. My antics soon attracted an audience of Berber children who all wanted to help and shouted 'Voici Monsieur' whenever another butterfly came in range.

\*The Cathedral School, Lichfield, Staffs., WS13 7LH.



Walking back through the village the hedgerows were an interesting mixture of oleander, prickly pear and blackberries, with pomegranates and peach trees overhanging the lane. Here *Iphiclides podalirius feishamelii* Duponchel was quite common sailing in and out of the trees but all the ones I saw were very worn. The ditches at the roadside were overgrown with mint and the flowers were alive with butterflies, *Pararge aegeria* L. *Colias crocea* Fourc, *Artogeia rapae* L. *Pontia daplidice* L. and *Lycaena phlaeas* L. were all common. I caught one *Syntarucus pirithous* L. and several small *Polyommatus icarus* Rottemburg. Here also *Lysandra punctifera* Oberthur was common also in a small late season form together with a few *Aricia agestis cramera* Eschscholtz.

The next day I went by bus over the High Atlas to Ouarzazate at 3000 feet. On the way there were tempting glimpses of large black butterflies from the bus windows as we ground our way over the Tichka Pass with boiling radiator. We stopped at the little mining village of Aguelmous in the mountains and here I got a closer look at *Berberia abdelkader* Pierret but didn't manage to catch any. *Pontia daplidice* L. and *Aricia agestis cramera* Eschscholtz were both fairly common at the roadside.

When we arrived in Ouarzazate the temperature was 115°F which made collecting rather heavy work but the lucerne fields near the river produced large numbers of *Colias crocea* Fourc and very fresh *Lampides boeticus* L. It was novel to be papering ones specimens under the shade of palm trees with the sound of the wailing muezzin calling the faithful to prayer across the fields.

On August 6th I went by bus up the Ourika valley near Arhbalou in the High Atlas at about 4000 feet. Here in light woodland and wet meadows beside the river the wild mint flowers proved as attractive to butterflies as they had at Ourigane and similar species were present. *Artogeia rapae* L. and *Pontia daplidice* L. were both present in small forms only 18 mm across the wings. In addition I caught *Carcharodus alceae* Esper and *Nordmannia esculi mauretanica* Staudinger, a hairstreak which has not perhaps been recorded in the High Atlas before.

On August 9th I hired a car to visit Oukaïmeden at 6000 feet in the High Atlas. The lower mountain slopes were cool and showery but higher the weather was dry but windy and overcast. This didn't seem very promising but the rocky slopes below the gorge leading to the village were a rich collecting ground and butterflies abounded on the flowers, especially on the large bluish-grey thistles. Here *Lysandra punctifera* Oberthur was common in a large brilliant form together with *Issoria lathonia* L., *Melitaea didyma occidentalis* Staudinger, *Maniola jurtina hispulla* Esper and many large fresh *Chazara briseis* L. I was also very pleased to see many *Berberia abdukkader* Pierret most of which were, however, rather worn



but I did manage to net some fairly good specimens. Another large dark butterfly proved to be *Satyrus ferula* Fabricus. Here also I caught one *Neohipparchia stalilinus* Hufnagel and one *Coenonympha pamphilus* L. From here I drove up to the village of Oukaimeden, set in a valley reminiscent of a landscape in one of the bleaker parts of the Lake District. Here the grassy meadows and hillsides were alive with *Melanargia galathea lucasi* Rambur and *Aricia artaxerxes montensis* Verity. The roadside thistles also produced many *Gonepteryx cleopatra* L., *Pseudocharzara atlantis* Austaut and *Hyphonephele maroccana* Blachier, the last two local and interesting Moroccan species. I also caught the magnificent *Pandoriana pandora* Denis and Schiff and the attractive *Hesperia comma benuncas* Oberthur in which the white spots on the hindwings are joined to form a wide band.

This was an excellent locality but thundery showers put an end to further collecting, so I returned to Marrakesh.

On August 10th I had another trip to Ourigane to see again the charming little *Colotis evagore* Lucas and also caught *Coenonympha dorus fettigii* Oberthur feeding on the blackberry flowers.

Early in the morning of August 13th I sadly made my way to the airport for the plane to Casablanca and London, very pleased with my first visit to Morocco.

## Part II – April 1983

I had found my trip to Marrakesh in August 1982 so interesting that I was very keen to pay Morocco another visit. At the end of the Spring Term 1983, therefore, I was packed and 'ready for off' again.

I flew out on March 28th to Gibraltar and the morning of the next day I spent touring the Rock, visiting the caves of St. Michael and photographing the apes. After lunch I walked up the steep streets past the Moorish Castle to an area of light woodland and flowery lanes near St. Catherine's Battery. Here were pine trees, bright yellow gorse, broom and bushes draped with wild clematis, honeysuckle and Aristolochia. I was very pleased to see sailing along the roadside many *Zerynthia rumina rumina* L. with occasionally a few *Gonepteryx rhamni* L. and *Gonepteryx cleopatra europaea* Verity which required a more determined chase.

In the clearings of the woods were several of the lovely little *Anthocharis belia euphenoides* Staudinger, very freshly emerged, the females with lovely creamy markings. Here also there were a few *Pararge aegeria aegeria* L. and later, by the roadside, a small white butterfly proved to be *Euchloe tagis tagis* Hubner.

A plane late in the evening took me across to Tangier so that now my second visit to Morocco had really started. After breakfast the next day, I walked out a mile or so along the Avenue D'Espagne to the east of the town. There was a welcome profusion of colourful



wild flowers along the sandy roadside and in the vacant lots and gardens. Although it was windy there were several species of butterflies on the wing. *Artogeia rapae* L. and *Pontia daplidice* L. were common together with a few worn *Papilio machaon* L. and several *Iphiclides podalirius feisthamelii* Duponchel fluttering around the fruit trees. *Euchloe belemia belemia* Esper was very common apparently first and second broods flying together. *Lycaena phlaeas phlaeas* L. darted along the flowery roadsides and on the way back to town on some waste ground, I was very pleased to find several *Tomares ballus* Fabricius settling on the rough herbage. It is a very beautiful little insect especially the velvety sage green of its underside.

That afternoon I spent exploring the medina with all its lively bustle. I was surprised to see a Berber woman with a large basket of live hedgehogs for sale. I walked up through the narrow streets to the Kasbah for some mint tea and to enjoy the wide views across the straits to Spain. Also from here I could see a range of wooded hills to the west of the town which looked interesting and worth investigating.

The following morning I was up early and making my way across the town and out along already hot and dusty streets to the west. I was soon out in the country with masses of flowers at the roadside, buttercups, vipers bugloss, wild gladiolus, cistus, lavender, brilliant scarlet vetch and carpets of tiny iris which were in bud. The road was busy with camels and donkeys carrying huge bundles of firewood to the town and also old men and women trudging along with great piles of heather and brushwood on their backs.

Here by the roadsides and on the gorse and lavender covered banks were many of the bright yellow males of *Anthocharis belia belia* L. and the pale females, differently marked to those I had seen in Gibraltar a few days before. Here also were many more *Tomares ballus* which were rather wary of being stalked with the camera. As I was focusing on one, I noticed how pale was the underside of its forewings. I put the camera down and netted the butterfly. It was a beautiful aberration in which the orange of the upperside was replaced by a very pale silvery yellow. As I walked through the low scrub, small dark butterflies fluttered up here and there and then sank lazily back to earth a few feet away. This proved to be *Tomares mauretanicus* Lucas which was local but common and easy to net as its flight was so sluggish. On these heathy slopes *Polyommatus icarus* Rott. was also common together with *Lysandra punctifera* Oberthur including many of the large and beautifully marked females and *Aricia agestis cramera* Eshscholtz.

In the damper areas near streams, I found *Lasiommata megera* L. and *Coenonympha arcanoides* Pierret fluttering about and sitting on the leaves. The gardens of some cottages by the roadside produced sightings of several more *P. machaon* and *I. podalirius feisthamelii* but they were not easy to catch.



After a lunch of a couple of oranges under the shade of the umbrella pines near the hilltop, I started back as the sun was now very hot. On the way I was interested to see several shrikes or butcher birds perched high on the thorn bushes and to find many of the large moths which they had impaled on the thorns. In the heather and low scrub I frequently came across huge red and black devil's coach horse beetles whose warning colouration certainly deterred me from interfering with them.

*I. podalirius feisthamelii* was still to be seen around the gardens I had passed earlier in the day. One large female which had settled low on an almond tree was too tempting to leave. I furtively clambered through the hedge and made my way through the garden. I had just successfully netted the butterfly and almost made my escape, when a vociferous gentleman whom I took to be the owner of the garden, emerged from his cottage higher up the hill. Fortunately he only waved and shouted what I took to be cheery arabic greetings. The roadsides suddenly seemed to have little of entomological interest to detain me further so I returned hastily towards the town. The butterfly later obliged by laying several eggs which I have enjoyed rearing up after my return to England. I collected in this area, known as la Montagne, several times during the next two weeks and added *Zerynthia rumina africana*, and *Pieris brassicae* to the list of species I had seen as well as the beautiful *Glaucopsyche melanops algerica* Heyne which was local on the higher slopes and rocky hillsides.

This was a delightful area in which to collect, hot pine scented breezes, hillsides covered with white cistus and purple lavender and an ever changing parade of donkeys, camels and carriers on the road far below. In a stream side pool I found a pond tortoise *Emys orbicularis* and in several areas in the scrub, I found colonies of the fantastic purple orchid *Serapias cordigera* which I had never seen before.

On my way back the tiny irises — *Iris sisyrinchium* Linn. I had noticed in bud earlier in the day were now fully out and I realized they only opened in the afternoon. The meadows and roadsides were blue with great sheets of flowers.

I was soon back in the town and a cafe in the medina provided some very welcome tea delicately scented with orange flowers and a chance to rest after a very enjoyable days collecting.

On the 1st of April I got a bus which took me south to Fez from where I hoped to go up into the Middle Atlas to visit Ifrane and Azrou, but the weather was disappointingly cold and wet and there seemed little point in going further into the mountains so I took the chance to do some sightseeing and to visit Meknes, Moulay Idriss and the marvellous roman ruins at Volubilis.

On my way back north I made a detour to the Rif Mountains



to stay at Chaouen for a couple of days. This was a very beautiful little town of whitewashed houses perched high in the mountains with spectacular views across a patchwork of fields and wide valleys with groves of poplar trees and braided silver rivers far below.

Here the weather was hot and sunny and a rough track leading up beside some waterfalls into the mountains behind the town, proved to be a rich collecting area.

The brightly marked *Eurodryas aurinia beckeri* Herrich — Schaffer was common along the honeysuckle draped hedges and the dark red *Nymphalis polychloros erythromelas* Austaut was frequent sailing across the rough ground but was not easy to net on such rocky slopes. *Callophrys rubi* L. was very common on the blackberry bushes and I also saw *Anthocharis belia*, *Gonepteryx cleopatra*, *Tomares mauretanicus*, *Lycaena phlaeas*, *Coenonympha pamphilus*, and *Lasiommata megera*.

Some steep abandoned fields covered in *Anchusa* were an excellent locality for *I. podalirius feisthamelii* and had I known I need not have bothered to trespass earlier, as here it was easy to take two or three in the net at once, as they hovered in front of the blue flowers.

The track up into the mountains was a busy thoroughfare with cattle and goats being taken up and down and donkeys carrying vast piles of hay and brushwood. The berbers who passed me were very interested in my collecting activities and to see what I had caught. It was charming to receive splendid smiles from behind the lowered veils of the young country women or a wave from their henna painted hands.

In the cool of the evening I enjoyed relaxing with a large glass of fresh orange juice or some coffee and sorting through the days catch at a table under the mulberry trees in the square and watching the huge pink and grey mountains fade in the shimmery dusk. Here indeed was a place to visit again.

The bus I took back to Tangier stopped for a couple of hours at the village of Khemis as it was market day. This was one of the most colourful markets I had ever seen at which all the people from the mountain villages congregated each week. The Berber women wore wide brimmed straw hats decorated with ropes and pompons of indigo wool and layers of very brightly coloured dresses and petticoats with huge belts around their waists and heaps of gaudy jewellery in silver and amber about their necks and wrists. The men were dressed in rough brown djellabas with hoods or crocheted caps on their heads. The square was a riot of colour and noise, huge piles of brilliant oranges, baskets of yellow and brick-red spices, beautiful fresh vegetables and fruit, gaudy sweetmeats and fly covered heaps of offal on the butchers stalls. It was easy to wander for hours amongst so much colour and bustle but the blar-



ing horn of the bus reminded me it was time to go and in another couple of hours I was back in Tangier and comfortably settled at the Rif Hotel.

During the last few days of my visit I was content to relax and explore the intricacies of Tangier.

However, I had several walks out to the east of the town to an area of low hills covered with dwarf oaks and palms, lavender and white flowered cistus. The only species I saw here I had not noticed before were the tiny silvery blue *Pseudophilotes abencerragus* Pierret and the skipper *Spialia sertorius ali* Oberthur.

There were many *V. cardui* here and by following a female I was able to collect a few ova, however, they were very small and difficult to see, their jade green colour exactly matching the underside of the thistle leaves. These ova I reared up on my return home and was able to take some photographs of the very attractive larvae and pupa. In this same area I noticed a small striped mammal scurrying about in the scrub, it was *Mus barbarus* the Barbary Striped Mouse.

My two trips to Morocco had provided plenty of colour and interest and the opportunity to see about fifty different species of butterflies of which thirty five or so were kinds I had not seen before. Also I had seen a fascinating sample of the Natural History of a beautiful and friendly country.

#### List of butterflies from Morocco

- (M) – Marrakesh (August 1982)
- (A) – Ourika and Ourigane High Atlas (August 1982)
- (O) – Oukaimeden High Atlas (August 1982)
- (G) – Gibraltar (April 1983)
- (T) – Tangier (April 1983)
- (C) – Chaouen Rif Mountains (April 1983)

*Papilio machaon* L. (M) a few worn ones. *Ipheclides podalirius feisthamelii* Dup. Common near gardens and orchards. (A) worn, (C & T) fresh. *Zerynthia rumina rumina* L. (G) common. *Zerynthia rumina africana* Stichel (T) becoming worn. *Artogeia rapae* L. (M.A.) a few worn ones. *Pontia daplidice* L. (A) a few worn ones. *Euchloe belemia belemia* Esp. (T) very common both first and second broods flying together. *Euchloe tagis tagis* Hub. (G) one fresh. *Anthocharis belia belia* L. (T. & C) common and fresh. *Anthocharis belia euphenoides* Staud (G) common and fresh. *Colotis evagore nouna* Lucas (A) locally common and fresh. *Colias crocea* Geoff (M.A.O.T.C.) common. *Gonepteryx rhamni* L. (G) a few. *Gonepteryx cleopatra cleopatra* L. (O) common. (T) common. *Gonepteryx cleopatra europaea* Verity (G) several. *Nordmannia esculi mauretanica* Staud (A) a few worn ones. *Callophrys rubi* L. (T & C) very common. *Tomares ballus* Fab (T) common. *Tomares*



*mauretanicus* Lucas (T & C) locally common. *Lycaena phlaeus* L. ubiquitous. *Lampides boeticus* L. (M. A & O) common near villages. *Syntarucus pirthous* L. (A) only one seen. *Tarucus theophrastus* Fab. (M. A & O) very common. *Zizeeria knysna* Trimen (M & O) common near farmland and gardens. *Glaucopsyche melanops algerica* Heyne (T) locally common. *Pseudophilotes abencerragus* Pierret (T) very local and uncommon. *Aricia agestis cramera* Eschsholtz (O. A & T) fairly common. *Aricia artaxerxes montensis* Verity (O) very common. *Lysandra punctifera* Oberthur (O. A & T) frequent. *Polyommatus icarus* Rott (O & A) common in a very small form, (T) locally common. *Nymphalis polychloros erythromelas* Austaut (C) common. *Cynthia cardui* L. (A & O) A few, (T) common. *Padoriana pandora* Denis & Schiffermuller (O) common. *Issoria lathonia* L. (O & A) a few, (C) one. *Melitaea didyma occidentalis* Staudinger (O) several. *Eurodryas aurinia beckeri* Herrick-Schaffer (C) common and fresh. *Melanargia galathea lucasi* Rambur (O) very common and fresh. *Neohipparchia stalilinus sylvicola* Austaut (O) only one. *Pseudotergumia fidia* L. (Asni) only one. *Chazara briseis* L. (O) very common. *Pseudochazara atlantis* Austaut (O) common but worn. *Satyrus ferula atlanteus* Verity (O) abundant and fresh. *Berberia abdelkader* Pierret (O) common but worn. *Maniola jurtina hispulla* Esper (O) several. *Hyponephele maroccana* Blachier (O) common but getting worn. *Coenonympha pamphilus* L. (O) a few, (T & C) fairly common. *Coenonympha dorus fettigii* Oberthur (A) only one. *Coenonympha arcanoides* Pierret (T) locally common. *Parage aegeria aegeria* L. (M. A. T & C) common in woodland. *Lasiommata megera* L. (T) locally common. *Spialia sertorius ali* Oberthur (T) local and uncommon. *Carcharodus alceae* Esp. (A) only one. *Hesperia comma benuncas* Oberthur (O) common.

---

THE MARSH FRITILLARY (*EURODRYAS AURINIA* ROTT.) IN DUNBARTONSHIRE — On June 15th 1985 I was searching a swampy field in the Ben Bowie area near Helensburgh. The area is grazed by sheep and occasionally stray cattle. Devil's bit scabious is present in the wetter areas, but is not abundant. Although I was searching for *Boloria selene* D. & S., which is common here, I was surprised to find a female marsh fritillary. Further searching turned up a male, in average condition. This is particularly interesting in view of the comments by Thompson (*Butterflies of Scotland*) who states: "The species has its headquarters in Argyllshire, possibly extending into Dunbartonshire. . .". The distribution map shows only a pre-1900 record for this species.

There are no artificial fertilizers or pesticides used in this area, but unfortunately large scale drainage is underway to prepare for conifer planting. R. CAIN, 32 Nelson Place, Helensburgh, Dunbartonshire.





Hall, David. 1986. "Butterflies in Morocco." *The entomologist's record and journal of variation* 98, 62–69.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/94966>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/195662>

**Holding Institution**

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

**Sponsored by**

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: Amateur Entomologists' Society

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

Rights: <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.