

We made two visits to Turkey, first in 2014 and then in 2019. Although we covered much the same ground, no two butterfly excursions are ever the same.

The second trip was two weeks later in the year - a large difference in terms of insect emergence - and with the benefit of lessons learned in terms of productive versus less productive locations.

The scenery was beautiful, at times spectacular and the food was excellent, although as the first visit coincided with Ramadan, lunch was sometimes scarce and dinner served rather later than we would have liked.

- 1: Coast
- 2: Emlî Valley
- 3: Göreme
- 4: Gürün
- 5: Zara
- 6: Erzin/İlan
- 7: Erzerum
- 8: Uzundere
- 9: Kaçkar
- 10: Çoruh



Mediterranean Coast



The whole coastal area is hot and dry, suiting a number of butterflies that aren't to be found elsewhere. Here we photograph Millet Skipper, Indian Grass Blue*, Lebanese Silver-line*, Little Tiger Blue, Grass Jewel, Lesser Fiery Copper and Small Desert Blue.

*only found on our first visit



10th July, 2019

There are so many remarkable archaeological sites in southern Turkey, relics of the Roman and Byzantine periods. In Europe, these would have been thronged with visitors - here we have the ancient town of Korykos pretty much to ourselves.

A trading centre since the first century BC, and an important town well into the fifth and sixth centuries, the town spreads over 120 hectares with two castles, one on land and one at sea. A chain connecting them could be raised to prevent enemy ships from entering the port, but once it was captured by the Ottomans in 1471 its strategic importance was apparently lost.

This had been a productive site during our visit in 2014, but access to the castle area has been suspended on our current visit, although we are unable to find out why. We move on to another site, the ruins of the ancient city of Kanlidivane, featuring a 70m deep sinkhole into which criminals were apparently thrown during the Roman times.

In the afternoon, we visit the Göksu Canyon river valley site near Kargışak, which proves to be an excellent location for the Small Desert Blue. Butterflies are found in some numbers along the side of the road, almost always on the same plant.

Uzuncaburç



10th July, 2019

Even after we leave the coast, we find monuments and ruins around every corner. These magnificent remains near Uzuncaburç are a surprising find at the end of a long and tiring day in the field. The structures formed part of the ancient city of Olba or Olbe, located in a hilly area at the foot of the Taurus Mountains.

According to Greek mythology, Olbe had been built by Ajax, the son of Teucer; it contained a temple of Zeus, whose priest once ruled over all Cilicia Aspera. The temple would have been closed when Christianity was introduced during the persecution of pagans in the late Roman Empire. Also featured here are the remains of the temple of Tyche, and the Olba aqueduct.

A number of different species are found here, with the first specimens of Gerhardt's Black Hairstreak nectaring on the roadside flowers. A highlight is finding Lebanese Adonis Blue which, while superficially appearing very similar to the usual Adonis Blue, attracts attention because it seems "slightly different". As is often the case, here it is behaviour rather than appearance that first brings it to notice, but on closer inspection the broad borders distinguish it from *P. bellargus*.

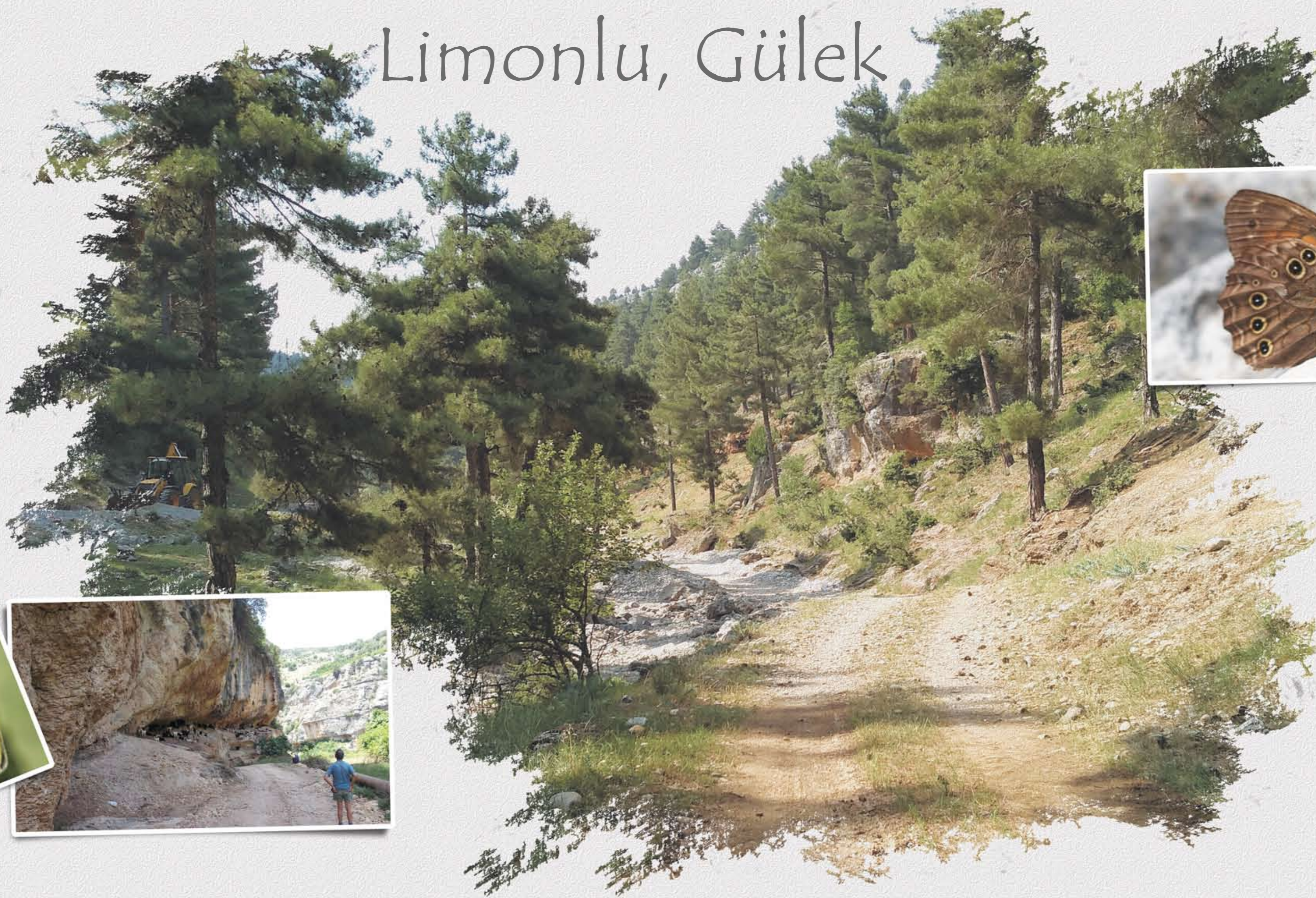
Lebanese Adonis Blue, Meleager's Blue, Grass Jewel, Ilex, Sloe* and Blue-spot* Hairstreak, Krueper's Small White, Aegean Meadow Brown.

Moving inland to the deep rocky valley of the Limonlu River in the Taurus mountains, we find ourselves in a banana growing region. As we gain more altitude the weather becomes unpredictable, with showery periods and cloud amongst the sunshine.

11th July, 2019

Limonlu, Gülek

Weather is very changeable here



Dozens of these spectacular caterpillars, larvae of the Spurge Hawkmoth, are making a feast of the Euphorbia plants growing along the hillside. Very obvious in their yellow, black and red, it is surprising that birds haven't made a meal of them.

Among the interesting butterflies here, we find Small Anatolian Blue, Lattice Brown, False Chalkhill Blue, Aegean Meadow Brown and Krueper's Small White.



Yelatan, Emlî Valley



12th July, 2019

Here we enjoy spectacular scenery in the Aladağlar National Park, on the edge of the Taurus mountains. We stay in the village of Çukurbağ at a lodge that features a wonderful cherry orchard - huge bowls of which make for a very popular dessert.

A wide selection of blues are mud-puddling in the boggy areas on the side of a mountain stream, and after lunch, in the midst of what initially appears to be a fairly unproductive steppe region, a small damp area near an abandoned shed is attracting many different Lycaenidae.

Moving on a little further, we encounter many Steppe Browns and Graylings on the arid slopes of a steep rocky valley. They are difficult to follow, and almost impossible to see once they've settled among the boulders.



Sigbert's Blue, Hermit, Odd-spot Blue, Geranium Argus, Anatolian Green-underside Blue, White-banded Grayling, Oriental Steppe Brown, Odd-spot Blue, Loew's Blue.

Topuz Dagi



13th July, 2019

Revisited after six years, this productive spot is still a reliable location for Furry Blues, here clustered around the same clump of flowers as on our previous visit. There are two contrasting areas at this location; the path to the side of the cultivated areas, and the dry rocky slopes of the hillside just above, home to a number of diverse large Satyridae. These latter fly rapidly on the breeze, then go to ground deep amongst the grass, making photography difficult.

Highlights here are Great Steppe Grayling, Eros Blue, Mithridates, Firdussi's and Ripart's Anomalous Blue, Amasian Satyr, Lebanese Anomalous Blue, Tawny Rockbrown, Iphigenia Blue and Turkish Furry Blue.

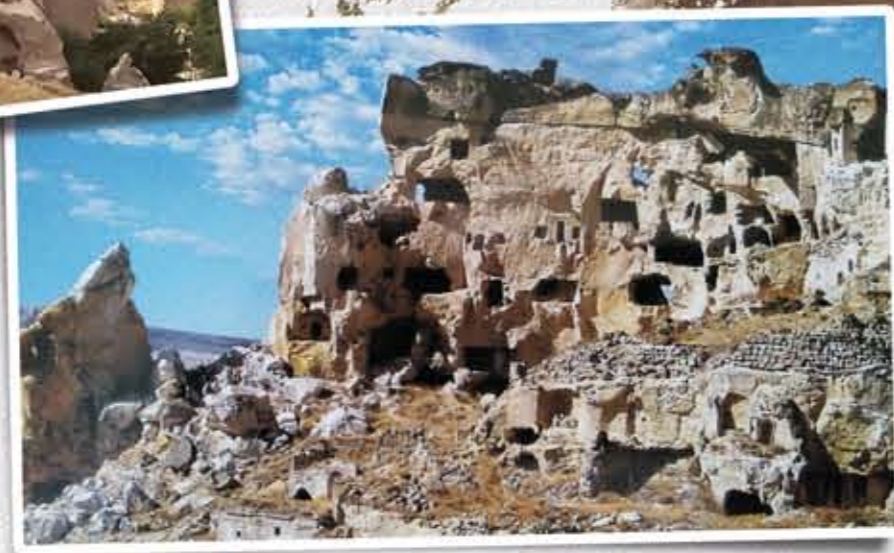
In the afternoon we visit the Zelve open-air museum. An ancient city featuring remarkable examples of houses, churches and even wineries that had been carved out of the soft sandstone. Here we see Blues flying around the Bladder Sennas but they never settle, so we are unable to confirm whether these are Iolas or Long-tailed Blues.

Göreme

Remarkable scenery here in Cappadocia, apparently caused initially by erosion, followed by locals carving out homes, churches and even wineries from the soft rocks left from volcanic deposits.

Lots of tourists from all over the world, and we have plenty of time to explore this remarkable region.

13th-14th July, 2019



Quite unforgettable



This area is dry - really dry. We follow a track leading down from the Ortahisar lookout spot where we find Persian Fritillary, but not a great deal else of interest.



Hot and dusty, but we have a couple of excellent meals at this restaurant in the foreground

Also, rarely for this part of Turkey, beer was available (although not on the menu, wink, wink).





Not far from the amazing scenery around Göreme is a dry roadside site where we'd been lucky enough to find Nogel's Hairstreak on our earlier visit. This time we investigate the site in some detail, but fail to discover this interesting species again.



We then set off on a long drive east, past the huge sprawling city of Kayseri, through country that is becoming increasingly arid. Towards the end of the afternoon, we stop at the Ziyaret Pass, by now quite cold and overcast at 1900m.

This last is a desolate spot, but we eventually discover a sheltered pond where a number of species are roosting, including good specimens of Loew's Blue.

14th July, 2019



Ürgüp and Ziyaret

Nogel's Hairstreak*, Poseidon Blue, Loew's Blue, Iphigenia Blue, Eastern Brown Argus, Great Steppe Grayling, Freyer's Tawny Rockbrown, Klug's Tawny Rockbrown, Orange Hermit, Levantine Skipper.

15th July, 2019

A number of interesting and varied locations around the town of Gürün, where we stay in a quintessential roadhouse, servicing long-distance buses travelling between Istanbul, Ankara and Teheran. Apparently the journey takes around 40 hours!

Here we start by exploring a steep arid hillside to the north of Darende, where the main targets are the larger Satyridae. We have our usual interaction with the local police - this time they seem satisfied with our story - before we move to a small garden where the drip irrigation system has attracted a number of species.

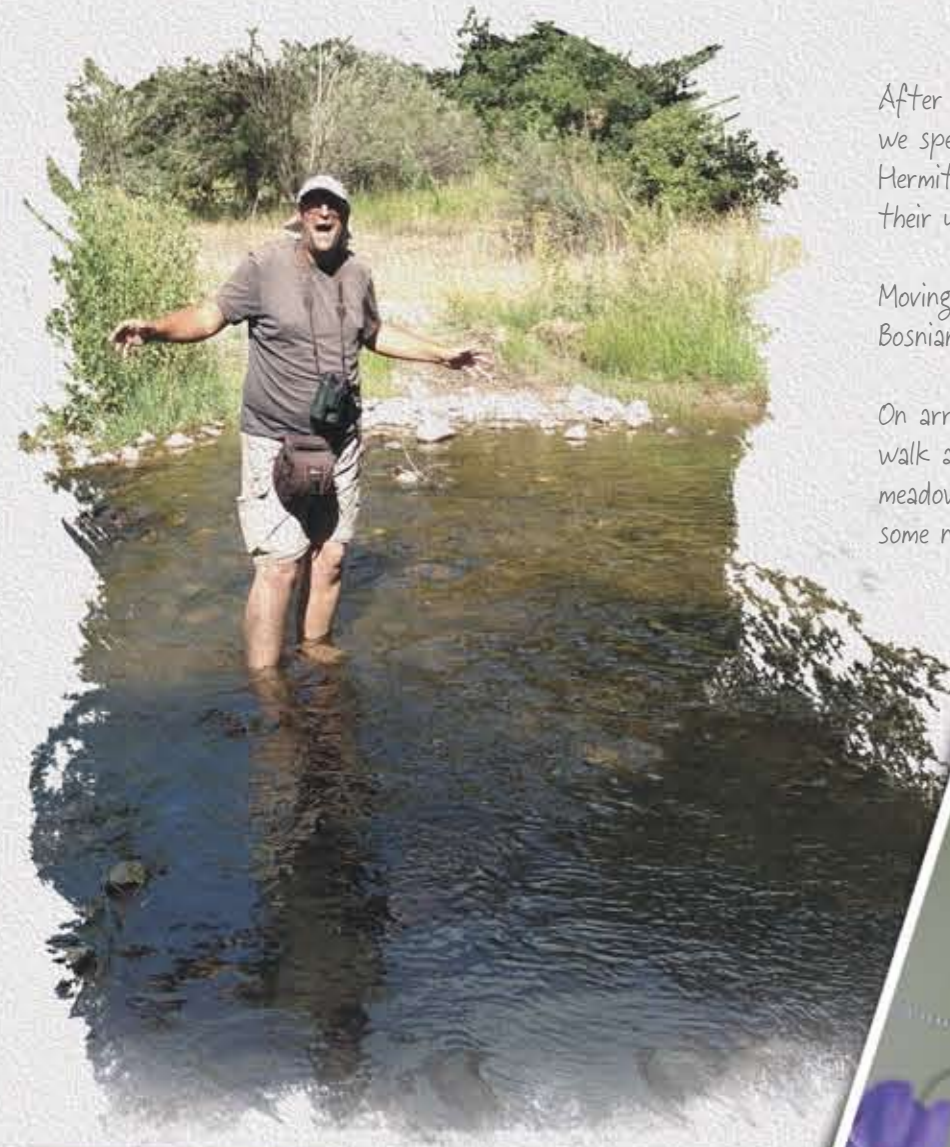
We then travel a short distance to Günpınar, where we stop at an apricot orchard with numerous blues and a Scarce Swallowtail, the picture of which is now on my wall. Here we are treated to a feast of apricots by the resident farming family.

Gürün, Darende, Gökpinar



In the afternoon, we visit the Gökpinar Lake region where Lattice Meaths are found on the lakeside tree trunks, and take in an adjacent cow pasture with large numbers of coppers and blues.

Scarce Swallowtail, Lattice Brown, Hermit, Saadi's Heath, Eastern Wood White, Adonis Blue, Turkish Furry Blue, Poseidon, Small and Anomalous Blue, Inky Skipper, Lesser Fiery Copper, Sandy Grizzled Skipper, Anatolian Tawny Rockbrown.



After checking out of the Gürün roadhouse, we make our first stop just north of the town, where we spend the morning exploring an arid valley populated with a number of larger Satyrids, particularly Hermits. Here at least they settle on flowers, making for rather more attractive photographs than in their usual cryptic position on the bare earth.

Moving on, we pass a location where, on the previous trip, we had stopped for lunch and found Bosnian Blues and Levantine Skippers among a host of mud-puddlers.

On arriving in Zara, we unpack at our hotel in the centre of town and after checking in, we take a walk along the bank of the Kizilirmak River. Here we are in a delightful hillside location, a sunny meadow overlooked by craggy cliffs, which hosts many butterflies including Lesser Lattice Brown in some numbers and the first Lulworth Skippers of the trip.

17th July, 2019



Zara

Dusky Meadow Brown, Dusky Steppe Brown, Klug's Tawny Rockbrown, Lulworth Skipper, Meleager's Blue, Sooty Copper, Dark Green Fritillary, Bosnian Blue, Lesser Lattice Brown.

Erzincan



The following day we head out on the highway east, stopping some 10km out of Zara at an attractive grassy area by the side of the road. This proves to be a good spot for some of the larger Satyrids. It is then time for lunch, and a few kilometres further on, we discover the Palanin Yeri, a roadhouse serving Iranian truck drivers, which does an excellent baked moussaka-type dish.

Moving on, we stop again east of the Kizil Dagı Pass, at the Cobanlı Stream, the spot where previously we'd had our first interaction with the police. As the day wears on, we stop at our final butterfly location, the Sakaltutan Pass. The weather becomes cloudy, and it is rather late in the day by now, with little to see at this desolate spot, so we move on to our hotel.



Next day, we drive to a mountain location near the village of Çağlayan, where an underground stream comes gushing out of a cave in the limestone hills, feeding a muddy area where a local goatherd is watering her herd. We trek up the valley, finding several puddling spots alongside a smaller stream, where we pick up photographs of a number of interesting species. On our earlier trip here we'd found both Levantine and Large Silver-line, but this time such species are unforthcoming.

The puddling spots are certainly productive, with good shots of Krueper's Small White, Aedon Blue and Grey Asian Grayling. A local carrying a large shotgun tells us rather brusquely to get off the mountain, although he gives no indication why. Fortunately by now we are on our way back. Somewhat strangely, having looked out for Silver-lines all the way up and down the valley, we fail to see any until just 100m short of where the vehicle had been left earlier in the morning. Here one hangs around just long enough for a quick picture before flying away, never to be seen again in spite of some enthusiastic searching.

All in all, a challenging but rewarding location on both our trips.

Apollo, False Chalkhill Blue, Lebanese Silver-line, Grey Asian Grayling, Aedon Blue, Zephyr Blue, Krueper's Small White, Sandy Grizzled Skipper, White-banded Grayling, Lebanese Silver-line, Large* and Levantine* Silver-line, Aedon Blue, Bosnian Blue, Krueper's Small White, Zephyr Blue, Eastern Brown Argus, Dingy Skipper, Mountain Small White, Tawny Rockbrown.



17-18th July, 2019

Erzerum



We stop at a delightful location on the way to Erzerum; the Kop Pass near Tanyeri, where warm sunny weather brings out some magnificent butterflies. The first thing we notice is Lesser Lattice Browns on thistles, and then shortly afterwards a Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell on the same flowers. As I push up the valley, I find more Yellow-legged on and around the thistles, together with Brimstones, while a puddling spot by the side of the road has attracted some of the higher altitude Lycaenidae species. This is an excellent spot, but all too soon it is time to leave.

Subsequently we check into the Erzerum hotel, and take the cable car to the summit of Palandöken Mountain, before starting a walk back down to the bottom. Near the top we find a single specimen of Menetries' Clouded Yellow, which leads us on an extended chase before we manage to get a photograph, and a few Large Blues, my first of the trip, with a number of other species at a damp spot on the way down, including Scarce Copper and Russian Heath.

Lesser Lattice Brown, Scarce Copper, Menetries' Clouded Yellow, Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell, Russian Heath, Large Blue, Damon Blue, Loew's Blue, Balkan Copper, False Grayling.

19th July, 2019

Uzundere



20th July, 2019

Here we stop at a sunny and warm roadside location alongside a small river, with a very productive flowering bush that is attracting numerous species. Fiery Copper, a high altitude species, and False Grayling give plenty of opportunities for photographs, whilst Hi Blue is a little more tantalising, generally staying well out of reach.

Lunch is at a small roadside cafe that seems delighted at our presence, and photographs with all the hosts are necessary before we can leave.

In the afternoon, we visit the spectacular Tortum Waterfalls, an impressive sight, although there is little to see here in terms of butterflies.

Fiery Copper, Anatolian Fiery Copper, Ionian Emperor, Southern Comma, False Grayling, Hi Blue, Jersey Tiger, Turkish Furry Blue, Eastern Rock Grayling

Kaçkar

21st July, 2019

We drive through the doomed town of Yusefli, about to be flooded for a new hydro-electric scheme, before checking into our accommodation which is alongside a trout farm in the Altiparmak river valley. As we drive along the river, the scenery gets ever more spectacular. This is the area in which Ahmet Baytas, the author of *Butterflies of Turkey*, did a lot of his early studies, having grown up in the village of Yaylalar.



A muddy track before the village of Mikelis has attracted a large number of butterflies in the late morning sunshine. Here we find bee hives protected by a substantial electric fence - apparently it is necessary to protect the honey from marauding bears.

We then take lunch nestled in the shadows of the Kaçkar Mountains, at the Olgunlar restaurant in Yaylalar. Here the road ends and the well-travelled overland track to the Black Sea begins.

Damon and Turquoise Blue, together with Caucasian Spotted Fritillary are highlights on the muddy track, while Balkan Copper, Apollo and Lederer's Heath are found further up the valley alongside the mountain stream. Whilst some participants climb higher, they don't find any additional high altitude species.



Çoruh

22nd July, 2019

For us, the last day of expedition, and some familiar locations from the previous trip alongside the Çoruh River valley. I am pleased to rediscover the White-bordered Grayling in the same spot as on the last visit, as my photographs of this attractive species had been underexposed at the time. They are in the same shady clearing, but on this occasion I am better prepared with my flash exposures. Mario is taken away in a police vehicle yet again, while I am interrogated by the Jandarma with the help of Google Translate. We eventually establish our innocence.

On this trip we walk deeper into the valley to a sheltered meadow, where we all manage to get pictures of a female Short-tailed Blue egg laying, before we explore a couple of other areas nearby. Here a Silver-spotted Skipper puts in an appearance, but doesn't stop for photographs. Strangely, we run into the same resident gentlemen we'd encountered five years earlier, with whom we had a chat in French.

At the end of the day, we return to the hotel in Erzerum where we overnight before leaving for home. With my flight not departing until late in the afternoon, I take the opportunity to visit this historic city with Andrew where we enjoy a very pleasant lunch in the open air before travelling to the airport.

Short-tailed Blue, Freyer's Grayling, Orange Hermit, White-bordered Grayling, Silver-spotted Skipper.

