Spring butterflies on the Island of Kós (Greece) (Lepidoptera: Hesperioidae & Papilionoidea)

by

Alain OLIVIER


Résumé. Après une courte introduction ainsi qu’une esquisse de l’histoire de la recherche lépidoptérologique effectuée dans l’île de Kórs, l’auteur nous entretient de ses propres observations faites les 10 et 11 avril 1986. Ainsi, 8 nouvelles espèces pour la faune de l’île de Kórs sont mentionnées. Une discussion à propos de quelques espèces non encore observées mais appartenant très probablement à la faune de l’île et une liste des 38 espèces actuellement connues de l’île de Kórs concluent l’article.

Introduction

The Greek island of Kós is situated in the Aegean Sea, facing the Turkish coast, more precisely the province of Muğla, and lying approximately half way between the islands of Sámos to the north and Ródos to the south. It has an area of about 286 km².

The western half of the island is flat, being mainly constituted of cultivated land and dry garrigue. The north-eastern part is very fertile and green. The central part is probably the most interesting, with wooded areas (mainly pine woods), especially around and on the flanks of Mt. Díkeos (850 m), the highest peak of the island. The main town, KósTown, lies on the coast at the north-eastern corner of the island.

History of the lepidopterological research

Our knowledge of the butterfly fauna of Kós is rather limited. A publication (Turati, 1929) is based on some collecting done by the Italian professor Alessandro Ghigi on the islands of the «Dodekannesos» in August 1926 and
includes 13 different butterfly records from the island of Kós (under Italian occupation at that time). The next paper (Rebel, 1936) contains 18 records from Kós, 12 of which are new for the island. Here the collecting was done by Dr. Otto Wettstein-Westersheim around the town of Kardámena and on Mt. Díkeos, from 6 to 8-VI-1935.

In later publications (Hartig, 1940; Bernardi, 1961, 1971; Bretherton, 1966; Koutsafikis, 1973) one can find a series of records from Kós, but these are all based on the papers by Turati and by Rebel. Only Hartig adds one species not listed before: Hipparchia senetes (Fruhstorfer, 1908) (recorded as «Satyrus semele L. cretica Rbl.»).

A very recent publication (Thomson, 1985) adds 4 new species to the list. Mr George Thomson visited the island on a one-day-trip on 30-V-1983, collecting 19 different species in the vicinity of Kós Town.

F orementioned records thus cover a period from 30-V to the month of August.

**Personal observations**

In order to investigate the spring butterfly fauna of Kós I undertook a trip to the island on 10 and 11-IV-1986. Although I only had time to collect butter-
flies for a couple of hours in the late afternoon of 10-IV and one full day on
11-IV, the weather was splendid and I could observe 19 species, of which 8 are
new for the island.

Collecting took place at the following localities, all situated in the central-
eastern part of the island:

A. 1 km W. of Ágios Dimitrios (300 m), 10 & 11-IV-1986. Ruines of an aban-
donated village; olive grows and wasteland; dry garrigue. Aristolochia was
present in the two first mentioned biotopes. On 11-IV special attention
was paid to the dry garrigue area.

B. 7 km W. of Kós Town (lowland), 11-IV-1986. Olive grows. Dry soil with
many flowers, mainly Compositae. Aristolochia present.

C. 2 km N. of Asfendioú (100 m), 11-IV-1986. Wasteland, dry meadows,
roadsides with shrubs and trees.

In the following list my own records are given (A, B and C refer to the
localities mentioned above). For species already listed by previous authors
bibliographical references are given.

Papilionidae

Zerynthia cerisyi (GODART, 1822): very few specimens at A and C, abundant
at B. Most of the males were already worn to very worn, which seems to
imply that the flight period of this species on the island of Kós starts at
about the middle of March. The postdiscal row of marks and the mark on
the costa in S7 of the hindwings are always red when present. Two out of
the six females collected are ochreous.

Papilio machaon LINNAEUS, 1758: (TURATI, 1929; REBEL, 1936; THOMSON,
1985). I took one fresh male at B.

Iphiclides podalirius (LINNAEUS, 1758): B and C. One specimen observed in
Kós Town on 10-IV.

Pieridae

Colias crocea (FOURCROY, 1785): (THOMSON, 1985). I observed one single
female at B.

Pieris brassicae (LINNAEUS, 1758): (TURATI, 1929; THOMSON, 1985). I took
the species at A and C.

Pieris rapae (LINNAEUS, 1758): (REBEL, 1936; THOMSON, 1985). I found it
at B.

Euchloe simplonia (FREYER, 1829): I found the species quite commonly at A
and C. All specimens observed belonged to the first brood.

Lycaenidae

Calophas rubi (LINNAEUS, 1758): one specimen found on a roadside at C,
two more taken in dry garrigue flying around bushes of Quercus ilex at A.
The specimens were very fresh.

Lycaena phlaeas (LINNAEUS, 1761): (REBEL, 1936; THOMSON, 1985). A single
female observed at A.
Celastrina argiolus (LINNAEUS, 1758): A and C. Observed flying around buckthorn (Prunus spinosa L.).

Glaucopsyche alexis (PODA, 1761): found only at A on dry garrigue and on an open spot with many Asphodelia. The specimens were all fresh.

Aricia agestis (DENIS & SCHIFFERMUELLER, 1775): one single fresh female at A on 10-IV.

Polyommatus icarus (ROTTEMBERG, 1775): (TURATI, 1929; REBEL, 1936; THOMSON, 1985). One single very fresh male at A.

**Nymphalidae**

Vanessa atalanta (LINNAEUS, 1758): (TURATI, 1929). Observed at C.

Cynthia cardui (LINNAEUS, 1758): (TURATI, 1929; REBEL, 1936; THOMSON, 1985). Observed at A.

Polyoegon egea (CRAMER, 1775): (TURATI, 1929; THOMSON, 1985). One male was observed at A on 10-IV and again on 11-IV.

Pararge aegeria (LINNAEUS, 1758): one single male was taken at C, fluttering discretely under a scrub, near a small footpath. The specimen is of the southern form, the colour of its marks being orange. The butterfly is very damaged, lacking almost the entire right hindwing except the basal part.

Lasiommata megera (LINNAEUS, 1767): (REBEL, 1936; THOMSON, 1985). Two males and one female were taken on 10-IV at A between the ruins of the abandoned village.

Lasiommata maera (LINNAEUS, 1758): (REBEL, 1936). Two males and one female taken at A on 11-IV along a steep rocky slope in an area of dry garrigue near a small pine wood. Two specimens are very fresh, one is very worn.

**Discussion**

Taking into account the very restricted lapse of time that I could spend on Kós, the results may be considered successful. Nevertheless, some species that might be expected to occur here were not seen. Archon apollinus (HERBST, 1798) was not encountered, this being probably due to the late date (consider that even Z. cerisyi was getting over!) as the species is known from all the Turkish provinces bordering the Aegean Sea as well as from the Greek islands of Lésvos (GRAVES, 1918; COUTSIS, 1972; VAN DER POORTEN, 1984), Híos (pers. obs.) and Sámos (DE FREINA, 1985 and pers. obs.). There are also reports from Ródos (REBEL, 1916: caterpillars; PIERRON, 1978: adult specimens). If present on Kós, the species must fly as early as in February-March, being already over in April.

Investigations at a later period of the year should add more taxa to the known list. Widespread species like Aporia crataegi (LINNAEUS, 1758), Hipparchia syriaca (STAUDINGER, 1871) and others are very likely to belong also to the fauna of the island.

Anthocharis cardamines (LINNAEUS, 1758), a common and conspicuous butterfly, occurs on the Greek islands of Lésvos (VAN DER POORTEN, pers.
comm.), Híos (pers. obs.) and Sámos (ASSELBERGS, 1978 and pers. obs.), but is apparently absent from Kós and Ródos, as well as from the adjacent Turkish provinces of Aydınpınar, Muğla, Denizli and Burdur, as far as known (VAN OORSCHOT, pers. comm.).

*Pon*itia da*plidice* (LINNAEUS, 1758), although recorded from Kós, was not seen at the time of my visit.

*Coenonympha pamphilus* (LINNAEUS, 1758) seems strangely enough to be absent from Kós. The only island along the western coast of Turkey from where it is known with certainty is Lésvos.

**Check list**

The following list mentions the 38 butterfly species actually known from Kós. The taxa that are mentioned for the first time here are indicated by an asterisk (*).

**Hesperiidae**

*Thymelicus acteon* (ROTTEMBURG, 1775)  
*Carcharodus alceae* (ESPER, 1780)

**Papilionidae**

*Zerynthia cerisyi* (GODART, 1822)  
Papilio machaon LINNAEUS, 1758

* Iphiclides podalirius (LINNAEUS, 1758)

**Pieridae**

*Pon*itia da*plidice* (LINNAEUS, 1758)

*Euchloe simplicia* (FREYER, 1829) (1)

**Lycaenidae**

*Callophrys rubi* (LINNAEUS, 1758)  
*Satyrium ilicis* (ESPER, 1779)  
*Lycaena phlaeas* (LINNAEUS, 1761)  
*Thersamonia thersamon* (ESPER, 1784)  
*Syntantheus piriithus* (LINNAEUS, 1767)  
*Lampides boeticus* (LINNAEUS, 1767)  
*Cupido minimus* (FUESSLY, 1775)

* Celastrina argiolus (LINNAEUS, 1758)  
* Glaucopsyche alexis (PODA, 1761)  
* Plebejus ioewii (ZELLER, 1847)  
* Aricia agestis (DENIS & SCHIFF., 1775)  
* Polyommatus thersites (CANTONIER, 1824)  
* Polyommatus icarus (ROTTEMBURG, 1775)

**Nymphalidae**

*Danaus chrysippus* (LINNAEUS, 1758)  
*Limenitis reducta* STAUDINGER, 1901  
*Vanessa atalanta* (LINNAEUS, 1758)  
*Cynthia cardui* (LINNAEUS, 1758)  
*Polygonia egea* (CRAMER, 1775)  
*Mellita a*tria (DENIS & SCHIFF., 1775)  
*Hipparchia segetum* (FRÜHSTORFER, 1908)(2)  
*Hipparchia funa* (FREYER, 1845)

*Pseudochazara anthelea* (HUEBNER, [1824])  
*Maniola tete* (ZELLER, 1847)  
*Hyponephele lupina* (COSTA, 1836)  
* Pararge aegeria* (LINNAEUS, 1758)  
* Lasiona nigra* (LINNAEUS, 1767)  
* Lasiona atra* (LINNAEUS, 1758)  
*Kirinia roxelana* (CRAMER, 1777)

---

(1) Mostly designated under the name «Euchloe ausonia» in the current literature. I follow the nomenclature used in HIGGINS & RILEY, 1984.

(2) For the use of this name at specific level I follow KUDRNA, 1984.
Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. H. VAN OORSCHOT (Amsterdam) for putting at my disposal the available information on the distribution of some butterfly species in western Turkey.

Bibliography


Olivier A. : Oosterveldlaan 5; B-2020 Antwerpen (Belgium)