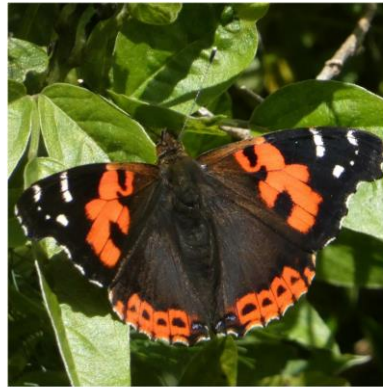


Butterflies of Tenerife

Mariposa Nature Tours trip report

26th March – 1st April 2025



Tour leaders David Moore & David Fairhurst

Trip report by David Moore

(Images, clockwise from top left: Monarch © Gillian T; African Grass Blue © Gillian T;

Canary Red Admiral © Steve M; Canary Speckled Wood © John V)



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Introduction

This early season tour to Tenerife was designed to take in some of the butterfly species that are either endemic to the Macaronesian Islands or are seldom seen elsewhere in Europe.

The base for the week was in the northern coastal town of Puerto de la Cruz.

Joining us for the tour were Gillian & Stephen, Christine, Brietta, Cees, John, Steve & Anne, and Joyce.

What follows is a daily diary for the week, followed by gallery and species lists.

Day 1, 26 March

Arrivals day was relatively straightforward, with more than half the group already in situ at the hotel having arrived a few days earlier for a welcome extension to their break.

The remaining four made quick stops at Playa San Juan and at Santiago del Teide, but few butterflies were seen as conditions were rather cloudy.

By late afternoon, the entire group was at the hotel to take advantage of some good facilities and a variety of evening meal choices by way of the buffet service.

Day 2, 27 March



Cloudy skies frustrated the group on this first morning, and with the forecast not offering a great deal of hope in the northern part of the island, it was decided to ascend to the montane plateau above 2,000m, where one is almost always above the clouds due to the altitude.

So it proved as the group climbed, and the recreation area at Las Lajas was thankfully bathed in sunshine upon arrival.

David M and John got lucky as they were near an area of flowering plants when a **Tenerife Green-striped White** *Euchloe eversi* suddenly flew by, offering a minute or so of photo opportunities as it briefly came down to feed.

Most of the others eventually got to see it as it flew into the light woodland, and happily everyone enjoyed a chance to spot the endemic Blue Chaffinches which inhabit this part of the island.

A picnic lunch was taken in the dappled sunlight beside the car park before the group moved on to a site in the shadow of the Mt Teide caldera, about 10km up the main road, with there being a moment of frustration when a **Canary Blue** *Cyclotrius webbianus*



flew right by the windscreen as the vehicle was turning out of the site back onto the main road.



The next location had been visited the previous day by David F and Joyce and had been flagged as an excellent spot for the endemic Tenerife Green-striped White.

So it proved, as plenty were seen, no doubt attracted to the flowers planted by the staff at the adjacent parador in an area which is otherwise something of a moonscape.

The highlight was finding a mating pair, which is always something of a bonus with a typically skittish species such as this, as it is one of the few times they can be relied upon to stay still!

Everyone had the opportunity to take in the fabulous views of the peak of the volcano before moving on to the Papillon Café on the way down to La Orotava.

This was an excellent refuelling stop, for not only was the group able to enjoy some much needed refreshments, but they were also soon getting very close to some semi-tame Canaries and Blue Chaffinches which were happily flying onto the tables to search for crumbs left by visitors who had finished their meals.



Outside the café, a couple of lizards were basking on the rocks, and they were lucky to be able to do so, as the cloud from lower altitude was kept just at bay at this location, a fact which changed markedly on the way back to Puerto de la Cruz, where the rain was torrential at times and temperatures briefly dropped to 6°C.

It was much warmer once back at the hotel, and there was a sense of satisfaction in having had such good views of one of the more difficult butterfly species to be found on the island.

Day 3, 28 March

Again, the weather forecast gave little hope for prolonged sunshine, but conditions were expected to be better on the eastern side of the island so the first stop was made near to Tacoronte, where a meadow full of brassica can usually be relied upon for a fair number of butterflies.

Unsurprisingly, **Small White** *Pieris rapae* were extremely numerous, but there were double figure numbers of **Canary Speckled Wood** *Pararge xiphioides* too, many of which were in beautifully fresh condition. **Small Copper** *Lycaena phlaeas* and **Clouded Yellow** *Colias crocea* were on the wing too, but there was no sign of the Holy Grail on these islands, the elusive **American Painted Lady** *Vanessa virginiensis*.



On arrival back at the car park, David M spotted a blue butterfly settling on some medick in the now cloudy conditions. It was an **African Grass Blue** *Zizeeria knysna* which subsequently behaved rather commendably by allowing some close approaches.

Further to the east, the skies were still largely blue, and it was clear when looking at the communications mast at the top of Parque de las

Mesas that it was worth risking a visit to this location in the hope of finding **Canary Skipper** *Thymelicus christi*.

Despite much searching, there was no trace of the skipper, but there were plenty of **Bath White** *Pontia daplidice*, quite a few Clouded Yellow, and even a **Southern Brown Argus** *Aricia cramera* which was patrolling one of the pathways.

Gillian spotted a Lycaenid not far from the car park and managed to get an image. It turned out to be an unexpected **Canary Blue**, which made rather a mockery of the time spent at the known site for this species without success.



The views from high on the hill were spectacular, with Gran Canaria visible to the east and a whole swathe of Tenerife coastline, although clouds were obscuring the higher land.



With Santa de la Cruz basking in sunshine, it made sense to visit the Palmetum by the coast, where the group were regaled by several huge **Monarch** *Danaus plexippus*, as well as a handful of African Grass Blue, which are at the polar opposite of the scale as far as wing-span is concerned.

On the return to the hotel, skies clouded over once again, but the forecast for the following day was the best of the week so there was a great deal of optimism amongst the group.

Day 4, 29 March

The morning was sunny so a stop was made at Mirador de Lagrima to look for **Canary Large White** *Pieris cheiranthi*, which spends most of its time flying around the sheer rock faces near the northern coast.

Sadly, none could be found, but Steve came up with a great find by noticing a **Canary Red Admiral** *Vanessa vulcania* nectaring a little way down the slope over the wall from the mirador.

It was then time to move on to one of the best sites on the entire island, Charca de Erjos, which is at around 900m and probably has the widest variety of wildlife on Tenerife.



Pleasingly, the walk started with several Canary Red Admiral, which were still warming up in the morning sun; basking on walls and on leaves and allowing good photo opportunities.

David M managed to find a **Long-tailed Blue** *Lampides boeticus*, whilst others in the group saw **Canary Brimstone** *Gonepteryx cleobule*, and even an **African Migrant** *Catopsilla florella*, whose huge size gave it away.

Rather unusually, the cloud layer thickened on the southern side of the col, meaning that butterflies were hard to find at the cemetery in Santiago del Teide. So, it was decided to move back down to the coast to Barranco de Ruiz, for another attempt to find Canary Large White.

Once again, this species was absent, but there were a few Canary Brimstone flying around as well as a small number of the endemic Laurel Pigeon, with its striking white rump in flight.



Day 5, 30 March

This day began with a repeat visit to Barranco de Ruiz, in the hope that a morning search might be successful in the continued hunt for Canary Large White. Several of the group spent an hour on the terraces scanning the rock faces, but although David M spotted a possible contender near the water cylinders, no definitive trace could be found of this butterfly, which is of some concern given its rarity.



Once again, there were Canary Brimstone to keep the group occupied, with several Canary Speckled Wood also flying amongst the vegetation.

After an hour and a half here, the group headed to the botanic gardens at La Orotava, where Steve immediately spotted a **Geranium Bronze** *Cacyreus marshalli* close to the entrance.

Several more were seen during the circuit of the gardens, and the section with asclepias proved popular with Monarch, with at least four constantly flying around this area.

There were ironic cheers when the week's first **Red Admiral** *Vanessa atalanta* was seen nectaring on some asters, and a quick once round the wild area at the top of the gardens yielded Small Copper, Clouded Yellow, and Canary Speckled Wood.

Some of the group had a walk round the barranco down the hill from the hotel before dinner, with African Grass Blue and Monarch being sighted.



Day 6, 31 March

With Canary Blue having proved particularly irksome during the week, it was decided that a further visit to the cemetery was necessary to try to ensure everybody saw it.

En route, there was time for an hour's stop at Charca de Erjos again, principally for Gillian to see the Canary Red Admiral she had missed a couple of days earlier, and in addition there were sightings of Bolle's Pigeon, another island endemic.



Irritatingly, the weather was once again poor in Santiago del Teide. Normally, this town is outside the northern 'rain shadow' but the group was yet again subjected to cloud, cool temperatures, and even a little light rain, which brought proceedings to a relatively swift halt.

Lunch was taken at Barranco de Ruiz, but unfortunately where hot drinks were concerned the café was closed. Once again Canary Large White eluded the group, although Canary Brimstone provided compensation.

The final destination was Parque de las Mesas for a second time in the hope that Canary Skipper could finally be located. It was Groundhog Day at the site though, with plenty of Small and Bath White, Clouded Yellow, a few African Grass Blue, but not a sign of *christi*.

The Canaries had suffered some unusually cool and wet conditions in the weeks leading up to this tour, and one wonders whether this may have had an effect on emergences. Certainly, the entire week had been tricky from a weather perspective with cloud building up even when the forecast had hinted at clear blue skies.

Day 7, 1 April

The group bade farewell to Brietta and Christine who were staying at the hotel for an additional week. En route to the airport, a stop was made at the roundabout in Playa San Juan to check if any African Migrant were flying around the cassia growing there.

Unfortunately, the local authorities have trimmed these shrubs right back making them less visible to any passing *florella*, and it was not surprising that none were found despite scouring all the lantana, a flower this butterfly finds highly attractive, which were in bloom in several gardens close to the roundabout.

Thereafter, it was a straightforward run to Reina Sofia airport for everybody to board their flights home.

Footnote and acknowledgements

The tour highlight was probably finding such numbers of the endemic Tenerife Green-striped White on the lower Teide plateau on the first full day. Good numbers of Canary Red Admiral were also very welcome, with Monarch, African Grass Blue, and Canary Brimstone all seen well. Sadly, the absence of Canary Large White was a major disappointment, as was the fact that not everybody saw the small number of Canary Blue encountered during the trip.

The weather was not particularly helpful, although with careful planning, cloudy and wet parts of the island were easily avoided. Mariposa would therefore like to thank all nine guests who joined us for the week, with everybody contributing positively. The atmosphere at the hotel was convivial and the group gelled very well, with everybody getting on fine with one another.

This tour is not an especially easy one, given the early time in the year it takes place, and it is always dependent on weather conditions being conducive to butterfly-watching. Most of the target species were seen however and, as ever, the scenery on this northern side of the island was spectacular.

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BUTTERFLIES OF TENERIFE 26 March – 1 April 2025							
Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Butterflies							
Canary Skipper <i>Thymelicus christi</i>							
Southern Brown Argus <i>Aricia cramera</i>		✓					
Geranium Bronze <i>Cacyreus marshalli</i>				✓			
Lang's Short-tailed Blue <i>Leptotes pirithous</i>							
Long-tailed Blue <i>Lampides boeticus</i>			✓				
Canary Blue <i>Cyclurius webbianus</i>	✓	✓	✓				
African Grass Blue <i>Zizeeria knysna</i>		✓		✓	✓		
Small Copper <i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Monarch <i>Danaus plexippus</i>		✓	✓	✓			
Plain Tiger <i>Danaus chrysippus</i>							
Canary Speckled Wood <i>Pararge xiphinoides</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Red Admiral <i>Vanessa atalanta</i>				✓	✓		
Canary Red Admiral <i>Vanessa vulcania</i>			✓	✓	✓		
Painted Lady <i>Vanessa cardui</i>							
American Painted Lady <i>Vanessa virginiensis</i>							
African Migrant <i>Catospilla florella</i>			✓				
Clouded Yellow <i>Colias crocea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Tenerife Green-striped White <i>Euchloe eversi</i>	✓						
Canary Brimstone <i>Gonepteryx cleobule</i>			✓	✓	✓		
Canary Large White <i>Pieris cheiranthi</i>							
Small White <i>Pieris rapae</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Bath White <i>Pontia daplidice</i>		✓	✓		✓		

Galleries

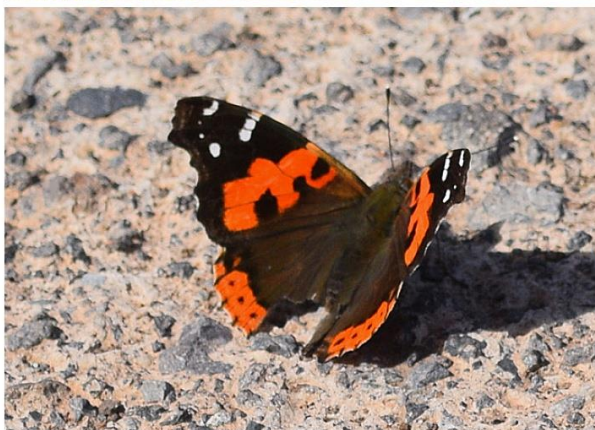
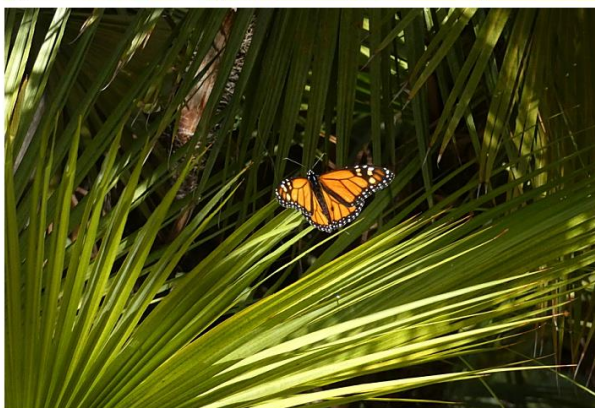
All images that follow were kindly shared by tour participants



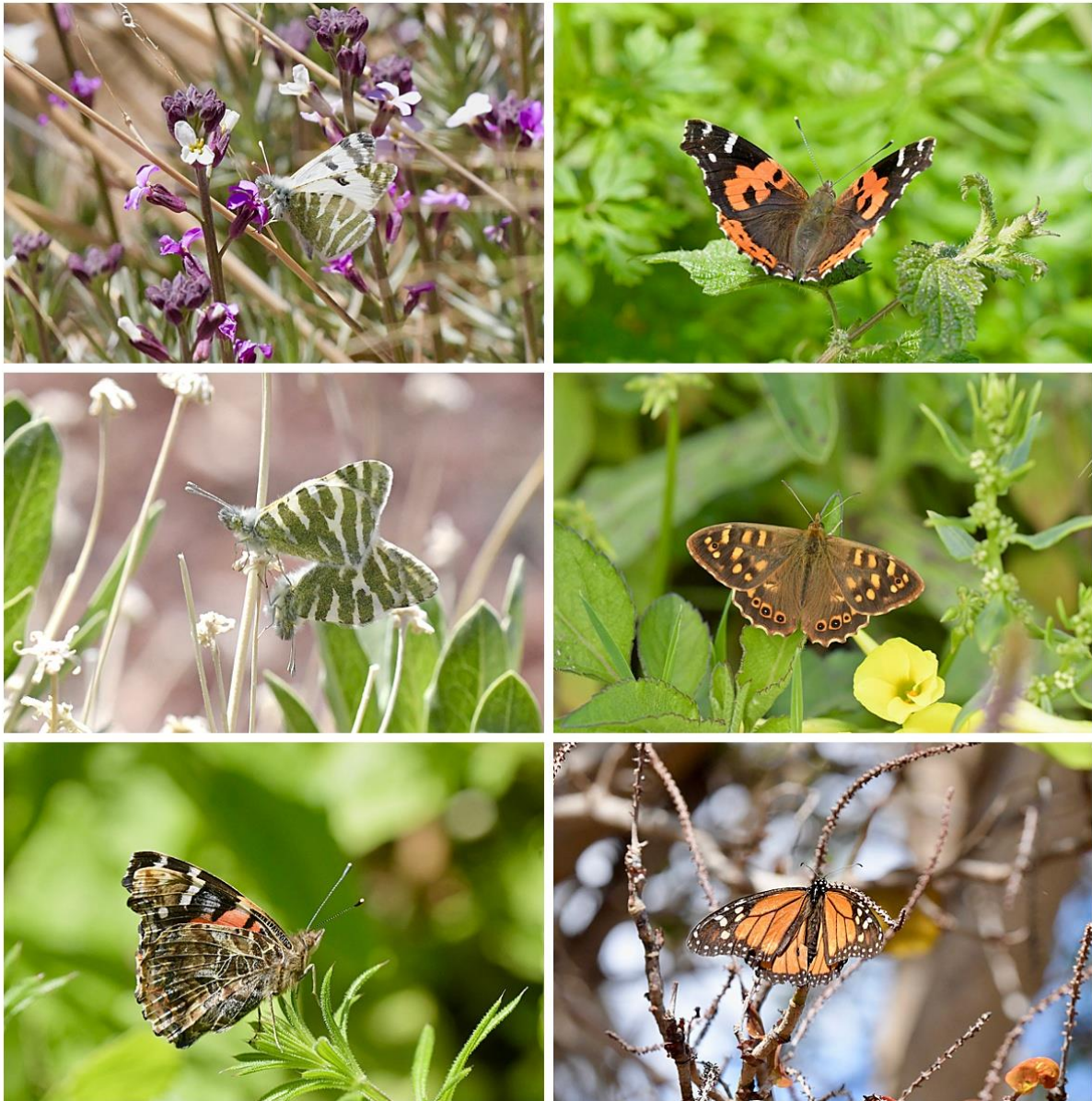
Images © Gillian



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Images © Steve



Images © John

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