



## Identification Guide to the Pyrgus Group of Grizzled Skippers in Europe



## European Butterflies Group







# Identification Guide to the Pyrgus Group of Grizzled Skippers in Europe

**Bill Raymond and Roger Gibbons**

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The other free to download guides in this series are available at [EBG Identification Guides](#)

# How to use this Guide

- I Introduction** Please read the Introduction on page I which gives some background to the difficulties of Pyrgus identification.
- II List of Species** The sixteen species of Pyrgus found in Europe and covered by this guide are listed on page II. If you wish to go direct to a Species Description click [here](#) to go to the list.
- III Is it Pyrgus?** Use the guide on page III to ensure that your butterfly is a Pyrgus and not one of the similar looking species.
- IV Explanation of Terms used** An explanation of the terms used in this guide to describe wing markings is given on page IV. Links back to this page  [Terms](#)  are included on each Species Description page. For simplicity we have used the scientific species name in the text to avoid unwieldy repetition of the common English names, and in some instances we have not strictly followed the scientific conventions on the use of italics in the interests of readability.
- V Quick Upperside Identification Key** For a definitive identification of many Pyrgus it is usually necessary to have a view of both upper and underside. To help narrow down the possibilities start with the Quick Upperside Identification Key on page V. This will hopefully lead you to a detailed Species Description where you can make a comparison of the underside to confirm identification. If in doubt, try again to match your specimen to a description in the Quick Key remembering that **accurate identification by upperside only is not feasible for the majority of species**.
- 
- Species Descriptions** Each of the Species Descriptions shows what could be described as a 'typical' specimen. The arrangement and order of the Descriptions is designed, where possible, to have species which are difficult to separate on the same page to facilitate comparison. Keep in mind that: [i] there is considerable variation and in some cases the illustrated specimen may not exactly match the description in the text. This is because the illustration is geared to showing the key identification features. [ii] very often, **several underside marks and not just the key features need to be compared for a confident identification**. [iii] in some cases it may only be possible to identify a specimen by examination of the genitalia, a practice which should only be undertaken by skilled observers.
- Species Links** Useful links to facilitate reference to a Species Description page are provided throughout, e.g. [andromedae](#) 
- Montane Group** To help identification at high altitudes a checklist is provided of the species which can usually be found above 2000m together with their locations. A link [Montane Group](#)  is available where appropriate.
- Distribution Maps** Detailed distribution maps for each species can be found at the end of the guide. See Appendix for details of the geographical area covered. A link to the maps  [Maps](#)  is included on each Species Description page.

# Introduction

The English term 'Skippers' describes a group of butterflies which are instantly recognisable. They are small with stout bodies, wide heads and are noted for their short rapid bursts of flight, hence the name.

The *Pyrgus* group of 'Grizzled Skippers' in Europe consists of sixteen species and is one of the most difficult and confusing groups to identify. They are difficult because they are all very similar and the key identifying features are often quite obscure. The problem is exacerbated because they are prone to variation, perhaps more than any other group and in many cases, especially at altitude, several species can fly together.

For each species, a 'type' specimen can be described, but because of the degree of variation, there can be an area of overlap between two species. For reasons of space and simplicity, books nearly always show the 'type' specimen without mentioning the degree of possible variation. Books can also simply illustrate or describe only the males of each species as males are more frequently encountered, especially as they are very prone to 'puddling' behaviour [taking salts from the ground], often in large numbers. Females are less likely to be seen as they tend to remain in the region of the larval hostplants. However, in several cases the female uppersides can be significantly different, usually, but not always, having weaker markings than males.

In most instances, a view of both the upperside and the underside will be necessary. The upperside may be the most prone to variation, often making it impossible to identify a particular specimen on the grounds of an upperside view alone. However, the underside hind-wing markings are more characteristic and fortunately *Pyrgus* species often rest with closed wings. These hind-wing markings are also prone to variation, but to a much lesser degree than the uppersides. It is often the case that one mark alone is not sufficient, and a combination of marks is necessary for a 'confident' identification.

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## List of Species

The 16 species of *Pyrgus* found in Europe and covered by this guide [see Appendix] are listed below. If you wish to bypass the Identification Keys and go directly to a detailed Species Description click on the species name below.

[Alpine Grizzled Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus andromedae]*

[Carline Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus carlinae]*

[Cinquefoil Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus cirsii]*

[Dusky Grizzled Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus cacaliae]*

[Foulquier's Grizzled Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus foulquieri]*

[Grizzled Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus malvae]*

[Large Grizzled Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus alveus]*

[Northern Grizzled Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus centaureae]*

[Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus armoricanus]*

[Olive Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus serratulae]*

[Rosy Grizzled Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus onopordi]*

[Safflower Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus carthami]*

[Sandy Grizzled Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus cinarae]*

[Southern Grizzled Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus malvoides]*

[Yellow-banded Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus sidae]*

[Warren's Skipper](#)  
*[Pyrgus warrenensis]*

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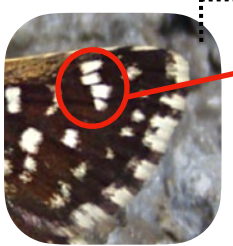
# Is your butterfly Pyrgus?

The Pyrgus group of skippers could be confused with Spialia and Muschampia species. **The white markings on the upperside offer the best way of differentiating** as the undersides sometimes require close comparison. Use the notes below [males and females are usually similar] to determine that your butterfly is a Pyrgus.

## Spialia



There are **five** very similar species of **Spialia**. They can usually be separated from *Pyrgus* by the upperside features below. Keep in mind **especially on Spialia** that these features are not always present or clear due to age, variation, etc. These features **tend to be more consistent on Pyrgus**.



**4 marks** here is **strongly indicative of Spialia**. Sometimes there are fewer marks similar to **Pyrgus** which usually has **3 marks**.  
*N.B. Take care not to include mark on top edge of wing.*



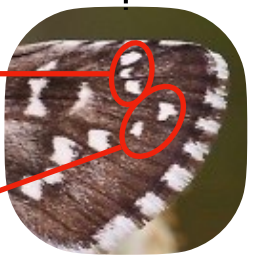
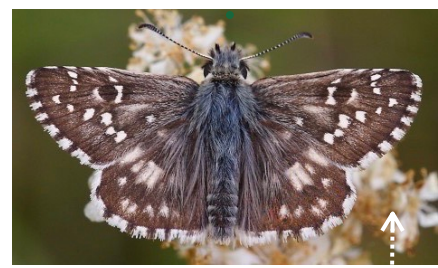
On **Spialia** usually **well defined**

**Pyrgus** has **two marks displaced outwards** from the row here. **Spialia** does not have this feature.

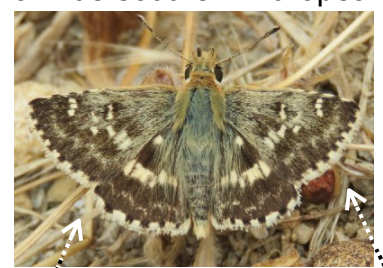
Small marks along edge of fore-wing

On **Pyrgus** usually **faint or absent**

## Pyrgus



Sage Skipper [*Muschampia proto*] is the species most likely to be encountered having a wide southern European distribution.



Apart from the characteristic mark highlighted above *proto* can usually be distinguished from *Pyrgus* by the:

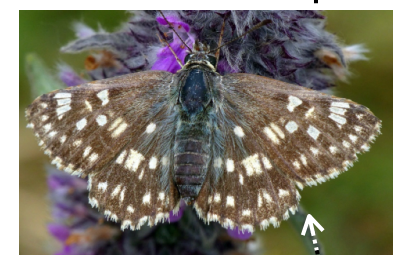
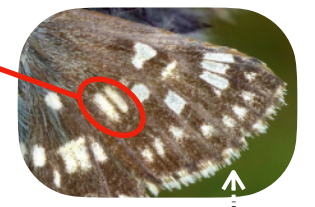
[i] distinctive bright yellowish-grey hairs covering the upperside. These give the butterfly a 'furry' appearance.



[ii] absence of significant white marks in this area of fore-wing.

## Muschampia

The **characteristic feature** of the **three** species [see Appendix] of **Muschampia** is a **pair of rectangular shaped marks\*** here on the upperside fore-wing. *Pyrgus* may sometimes have similar looking marks but they are usually not as long and rectangular. *\*Note: These are sometimes faint and vague.*



Tessellated Skipper [*Muschampia tessellum*] is local in southern Balkans and north west Greece.



## Undersides

Red-underwing Skipper [*Spialia sertorius*]  
Widespread across Europe. The *Spialia* species most likely to be seen.



The reddish-brown underside is **usually noticeable** but the colour can vary in strength  
Note: The local Spanish and Corsican Red-underwing, *Spialia rosae* and *therapne* are almost identical to *sertorius*.

Hungarian Skipper [*Spialia orbifer*]  
Widespread in eastern Europe.

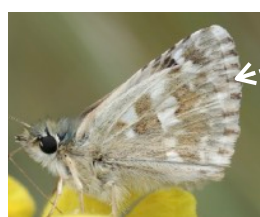


Usually with more rounded underside hind-wing white marks than *Pyrgus*.

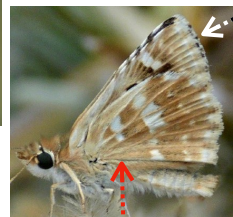
Persian Skipper [*Spialia phlomidis*]  
Local in southern Balkans.



Underside hind-wing has somewhat larger white marks than most *Pyrgus*.



*Proto* underside ground colour can be greenish in spring and orange/brown in summer.

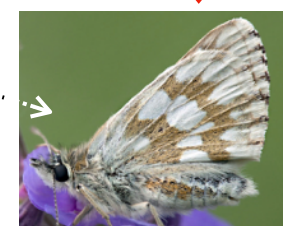


## Undersides

*Muschampia* can usually be distinguished from *Pyrgus* by the **absence of a white basal mark here** on the hind-wing.



Spinose Skipper [*Muschampia cribrellum*]  
Rare and local in Romania and southern Balkans. Its upperside has larger white marks than most *Pyrgus*.

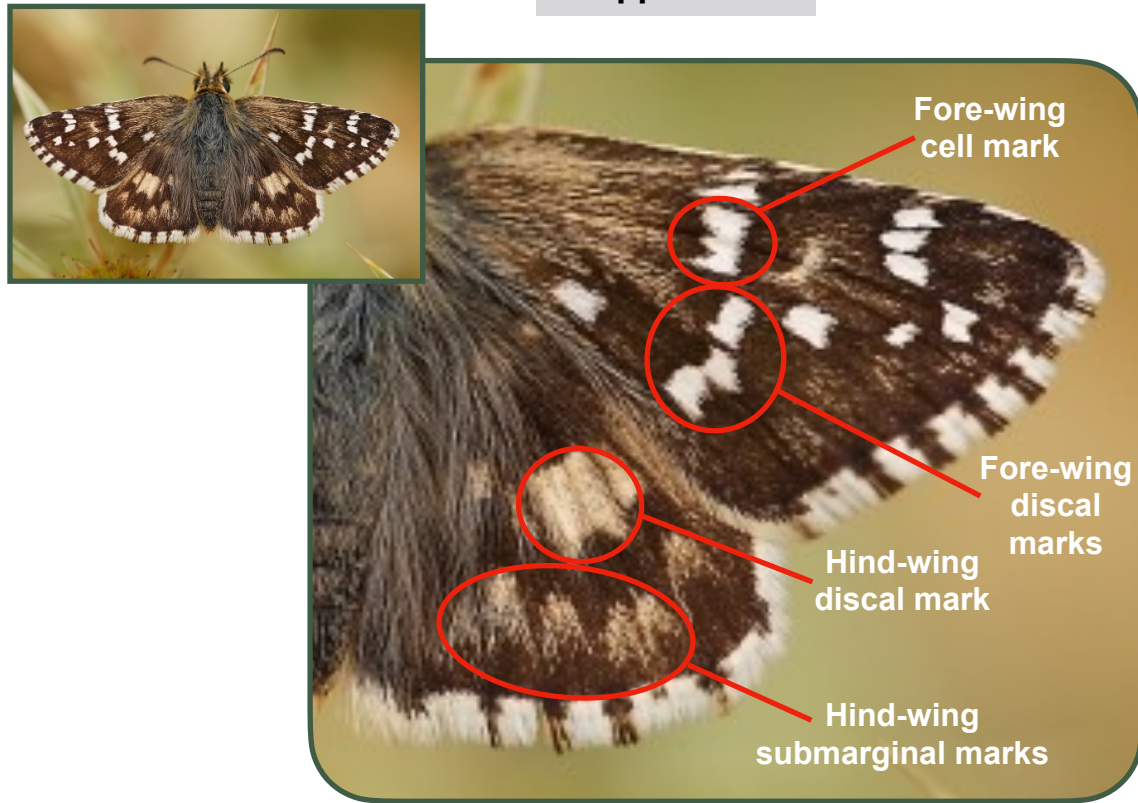




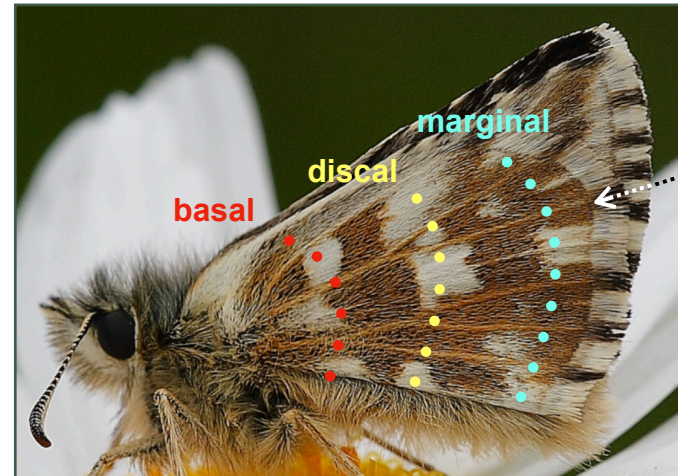
# Explanation of the terms used to describe wing markings

For the identification of *Pyrgus* it is usually necessary to closely examine the markings on the **upperside** and the **underside hind-wing**. The markings on males and females of most *Pyrgus* species are similar. Where noticeable differences occur between the sexes these will be highlighted. The diagrams below explain the terms used in this guide to describe the distinguishing wing features of *Pyrgus* species. These terms help to accurately locate these wing marks and so enable comparison between the species for identification. To facilitate reference to these diagrams a link to each Species Description page is provided below.

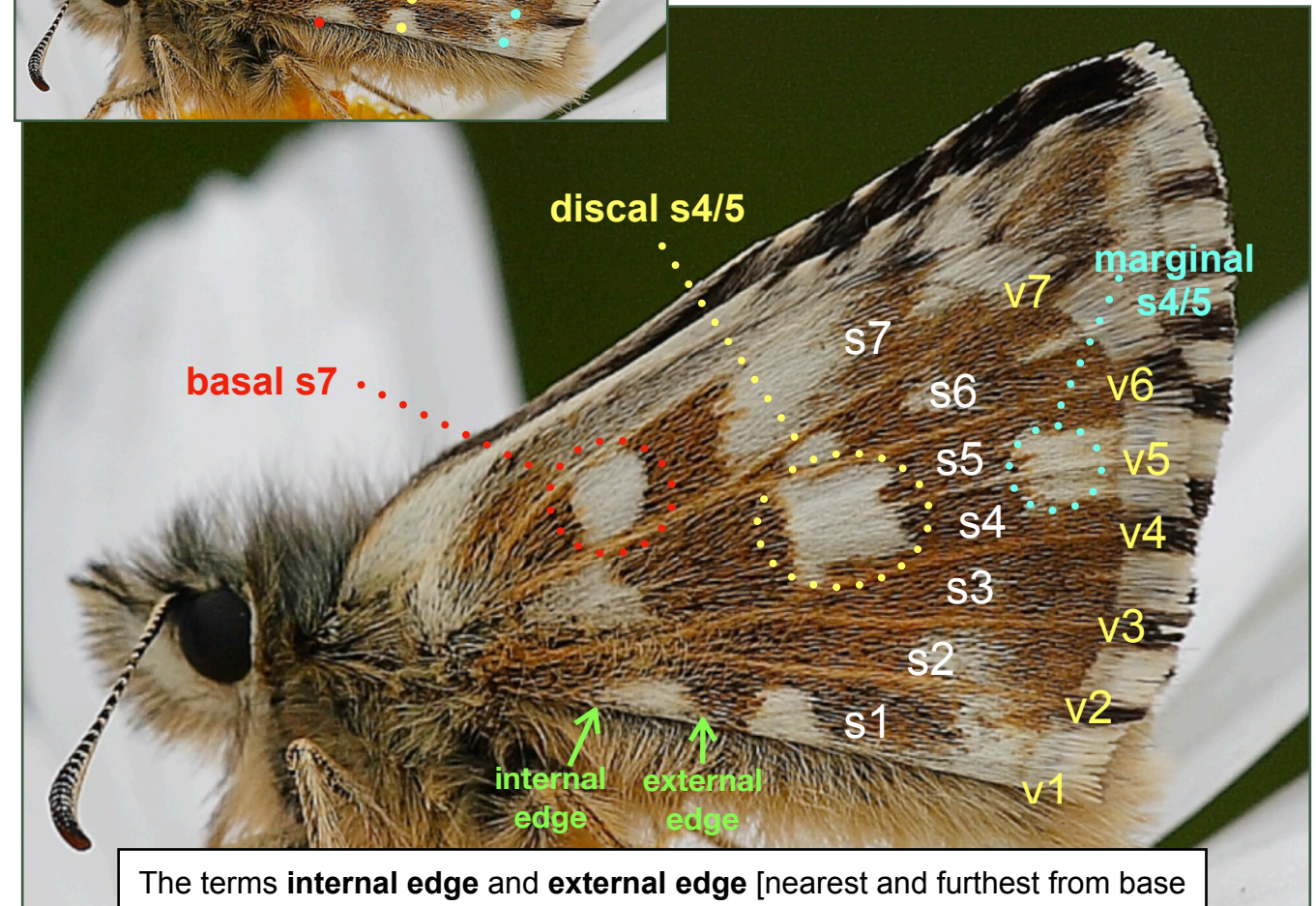
## Upperside



## Underside hind-wing



There are **three principal bands** of underside hind-wing markings starting from the base of the wing outwards: **basal, discal, marginal**. These terms are used in conjunction with the 'space' numbers explained below.



The terms **internal edge** and **external edge** [nearest and furthest from base of wing respectively] are used to refer to either side of a **wing mark**.

The **V** numbers refer to the **veins** in ascending order from bottom to top of the underside hind-wing

The **S** numbers refer to the **spaces** between the veins in ascending order from bottom to top of the underside hind-wing

**Wing marks** are referred to by combining the **band** and the **space** where they are located. For example, '**basal s7**' [see diagram]. Where a mark extends over two 'spaces' it is referred to as '**discal s4/5**' [see diagram]

Links to Species Descriptions

[alveus](#) →

[andromedae](#) →

[armoricanus](#) →

[cacaliae](#) →

[carlinae](#) →

[carthami](#) →

[centaureae](#) →

[cinarae](#) →

[cirsii](#) →

[foulquieri](#) →

[malvae/malvoides](#) →

[onopordi](#) →

[serratulae](#) →

[sidae](#) →

[warrenensis](#) →

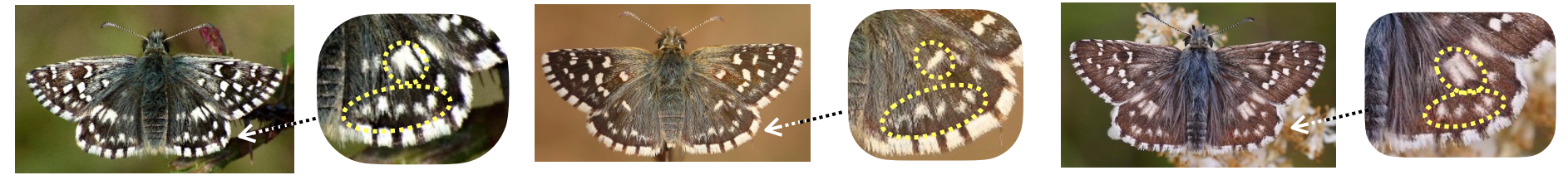


# Quick Upperside Identification Key

Use this quick key to compare the upperside of your butterfly with the feature or combination of features illustrated below\*. Decide which it most closely resembles and follow the link to the detailed Species Description page. Keep in mind that [i] for a definitive identification of many *Pyrgus* a view of both upper and underside is usually necessary, [ii] there is great variation in *Pyrgus* and the features shown below may not always be clear or present. For an Explanation of Terms used click [here](#) ➔  
\*Males and females are usually similar. Exceptions are highlighted in Species Descriptions.

This key covers all European species except *centaureae* which is only found in Fennoscandia. If your butterfly was found there follow this link to [Fennoscandia Key](#) ➔

Hind-wing discal mark  
**bright, prominent**  
Hind-wing sub  
marginal marks  
**strong and often  
arrow shaped**



*malvae/  
malvoides*  
or  
*armoricanus* ➔

Hind-wing discal mark  
**long, split down centre**  
Hind-wing sub  
marginal marks  
**a series of streaks**



*sidae* or *carthami* ➔

Fore-wing cell mark  
**distinctively shaped**  
Hind-wing  
**no bright white marks**



Cell mark  
looks 'C'  
shaped  
*carlinae* ➔

Hind-wing  
marks pale  
yellow/grey  
*cirsii* ➔

Cell mark  
wide and bright

These marks also bright

Fore-wing marks  
**distinctively shaped**  
Hind-wing  
**usually no bright  
white marks**

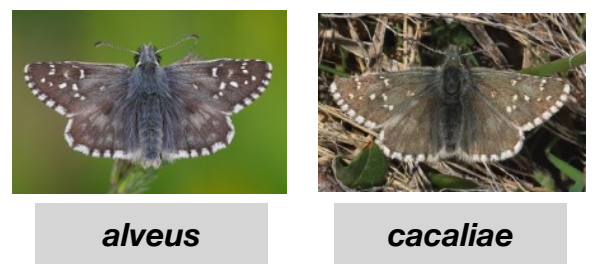


Strong, white  
marks with jagged  
edges, especially  
discal marks here  
*foulquieri* ➔

Hind-wing  
marks  
usually pale  
yellow/grey  
*andromedae* ➔

Three marks  
here  
Lower two look  
like an = sign

Fore-wing marks  
**generally small  
and scattered**  
Hind-wing  
**no bright white marks**



*alveus*

*cacaliae*

These five species have very similar uppersides. They can usually only be separated by a comparison of the undersides. Go to next page ➔

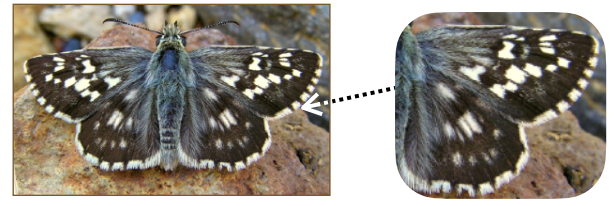


*onopordi*

*serratulae*

*warrenensis*

Fore-wing marks  
**very bright prominent  
large white marks**



*Cinarae* is a very local species and rarely encountered. It is found in southern Balkans with isolated colonies present in the mountains of central Spain.

Note: The upperside of *cinarae* might possibly be confused with *malvae/malvoides*. If in doubt, compare the Species Descriptions.

*cinarae* ➔



**Quick  
Upperside  
Identification  
Key: cont'd**

Comparing the factors below may also help to identify:

**Size**

**Distribution**

**Altitude Range**

**Maps** →

**Terms** →

**A view of BOTH the upperside and the underside is necessary to definitively separate these five species.**

|                | <i>alveus</i> | <i>cacaliae</i>                                   | <i>onopordi</i>                   | <i>serratulae</i> | <i>warrenensis</i>       |
|----------------|---------------|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
|                |               |   |                                   |                   |                          |
| Size           | Large         | Large   | Medium                            | Medium            | Very small               |
| Distribution   | Widespread    | Only found in Alps, Pyrenees and Balkan Mountains | Spain, Italy, and southern France | Widespread        | Rare, only found in Alps |
| Altitude Range | 0-2100m       | >1500m  | 0-1300m                           | 0-2200m           | >1700m                   |

Note: The uppersides of female *armoricanus*, *carlinae*, and *foulquieri* might possibly be confused with the above species. Compare the Species Descriptions.

**Use the notes below to help differentiate these five species from one another by the underside hind-wing. Follow links for more details.**

*onopordi*

The mark is 'waisted' at the centre, and often but not always completely symmetrical. It is normally black-edged.

*onopordi* →

*onopordi* can usually be distinguished from the other four species by [i] the **distinctive anvil shaped mark in discal s4/5** on the underside hind-wing [see above], and [ii] **altitude** - *onopordi* usually **only found below 1300m**.

*cacaliae*

This white mark is usually noticeably longer and thinner than the other four species.

*cacaliae* →

*Cacaliae* can usually be differentiated from the other four species by its **basal s1 mark** which is **long and thin**.

*warrenensis*

*warrenensis* can be difficult to separate from *alveus* and *serratulae*. Firstly consider these factors:  
 [i] **altitude** - *warrenensis* **does not fly below c.1700m**  
 [ii] **location** - *warrenensis* **is only found in the Alps**  
 then use comparisons below referring to Species Descriptions.

***Warrenensis* v *alveus*** [i] *warrenensis* is noticeably small compared to *alveus*, and most other *Pyrgus*, [ii] **upperside fore-wing marks of *warrenensis* are all small** whilst *alveus* may have some noticeably larger marks, [iii] **upperside hind-wing discal mark** is usually **absent in *warrenensis*** but just visible in *alveus*.

***Warrenensis* v *serratulae*** Shape of mark in discal s4/5 on underside hind-wing may differentiate.

*warrenensis* →

*warrenensis, alveus, serratulae*

To separate *alveus* and *serratulae* compare the mark in **discal s4/5** on the underside hind-wing.

*alveus*

*alveus* mark usually has [i] an **irregular external edge**, [ii] the **internal edge aligned with mark above in s6**.

*serratulae*

*Serratulae* mark usually looks **roughly rectangular**.

Pattern of white markings on *alveus* and *serratulae* is **very similar**. For detailed comparison follow the link below.

*alveus, serratulae* →



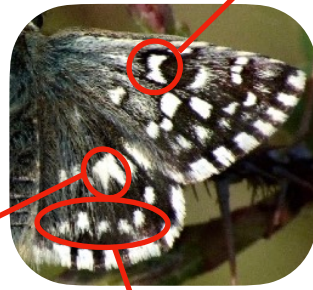
## Grizzled Skipper [*Pyrgus malvae*]

Widespread, common Male/Female: similar Size: Small Flight: Apr-Jun Altitude: 0-2300m

### Upperside



Fore-wing cell mark: strong



Fore-wing marks generally: strong, white, very contrasted.

Hind-wing discal mark: **Strong, white and a characteristic shape [as shown].** Note: Sometimes just a single horizontal line.

Hind-wing submarginal marks: strong, often arrow-shaped, sometimes strongly. [See *malvoides* photo below].

### Key Identification Features

Upperside hind-wing discal mark: **strong, white and characteristic.**

Wing shape: **more compact and rounded than most other *Pyrgus*.**

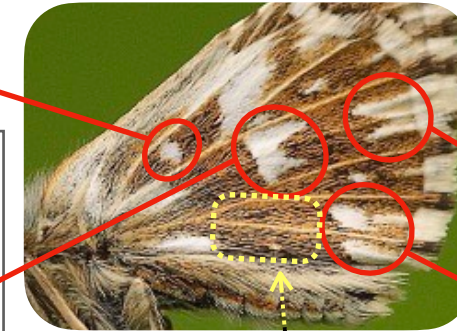
Veins: clearly visible

Basal s7: small round mark

Discal s4/5: external edge of mark is concave, mirrors upperside hind-wing discal mark

Discal s1: small round spot, sometimes very small

### Underside hind-wing



Marginal s4/5: mark clearly divided by vein 5

Marginal s1/2: marks amorphous, but strong

Discal s2: usually no significant mark



## Southern Grizzled Skipper [*Pyrgus malvoides*]

*Malvae* is replaced by *malvoides* in south western Europe. *Malvae* upperside marks are often more clearly delineated. Undersides are identical for all practical purposes.



The two species have distinct genitalia and can also be separated on a geographical basis; an approximate dividing line running through central France and the Alps. *Malvae* occurs to the north and east of this transition zone and *malvoides* to the south [see maps]. *Malvoides* has two broods at lower altitudes from mid March to August.

### Form *taras*

This aberrant form of *malvae* and *malvoides* has fore-wing white marks that are noticeably large and elongated. Underside white marks are reduced.



***Malvae/malvoides* upperside could be confused with *armoricanus* below.**  
To separate definitively, compare the underside hind-wing markings, particularly **basal s7, discal s1, discal s2** using the descriptions above and below.

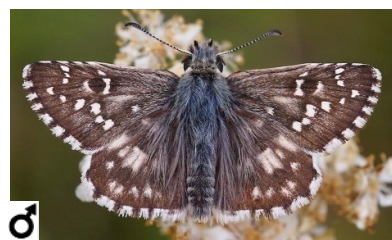
Terms →

Maps →

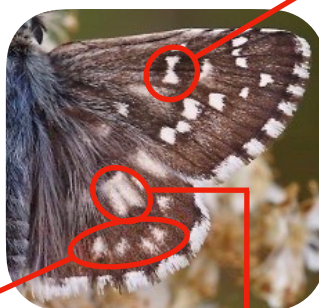
## Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper [*Pyrgus armoricanus*]

Widespread, local Male/Female: upperside different Size: Medium Flight: May-Sep Altitude: 0-1500m

### Upperside



Fore-wing cell mark: strong



Fore-wing marks generally: medium-sized complete white marks.

Hind-wing submarginal marks: **usually prominent and often arrow-shaped.**

Hind-wing discal mark: **Pale white but strong [as shown], especially in summer/autumn broods.**



The upperside marks of the female are much weaker than the male. **Underside view is necessary to confirm identification.**

### Key Identification Features of Male

Upperside hind-wing discal mark: **pale white, and quite prominent.**

Upperside hind-wing submarginal marks: **usually bright.**

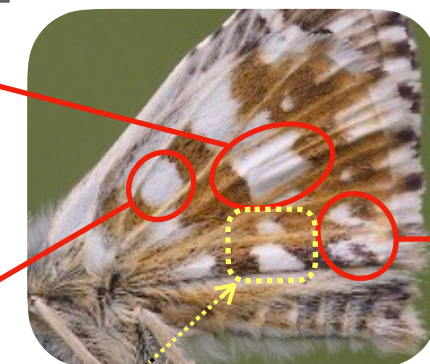
Veins: distinctly prominent

Discal s4/5: external edge of mark is concave, internal edge sometimes concave at the top

Basal s7: medium-sized rectangular, straight edges

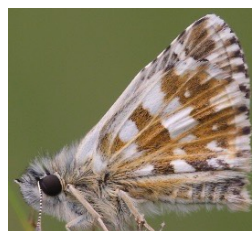
Discal s1: mark usually leaning internally

### Underside hind-wing



Marginal s1/2: clear arrow-shaped marks, usually not solid

Discal s2: rounded or amorphous mark, nearly always present





## Yellow-banded Skipper [*Pyrgus sidae*]

Localised colonies Male/Female: similar Size: Large Flight: May-Jun Altitude: 0-900m

### Upperside



Colour: greyish hair at wing bases



Fore-wing cell mark: strong

Fore-wing marks generally: usually not very strong

Hind-wing discal mark: variable, usually pale and split down the centre [as shown]

Hind-wing submarginal marks: long and narrow, usually prominent

### Subspecies *occiduus*



*Occiduus* is found in Sierra de Gredos, Spain, south east France, western coastal areas of Italy, and on Istrian peninsula in Croatia. Slightly smaller than *sidae* with similar but less prominent markings on the upperside. The underside bands are a paler yellow than *sidae*.

### Key Identification Feature

Underside hind-wing colour: **Two unmistakable yellow/orange bands are DIAGNOSTIC of *sidae*.** NO other species of *Pyrgus* has this feature.

### Underside hind-wing



Two obvious and distinctive yellow/orange bands with black edges. These vary from the pale yellow of subspecies *occiduus* to the strong vibrant colour shown above.



The bright colour of the bands may fade with age



but the black edges to the bands will still be obvious.

***Sidae* upperside could be confused with *carthami* below.** To separate by upperside, compare **fore-wing cell mark, location** [see maps] and **altitude** - *sidae* rarely found over 1000m.

Terms →

Maps →

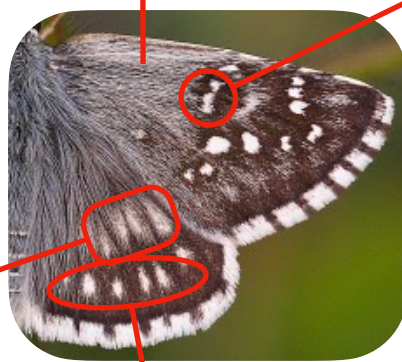
## Safflower Skipper [*Pyrgus carthami*]

Localised colonies Male/Female: similar Size: Large Flight: May-early Sep Altitude: 0-2300m

### Upperside



Colour: pale hair at wing bases



Fore-wing cell mark: not strong. Sometimes clearly **3** shaped like this



Hind-wing discal mark: long and narrow, usually split down the centre, often with narrow marks either side [as shown]

Hind-wing submarginal marks: long and narrow, prominent

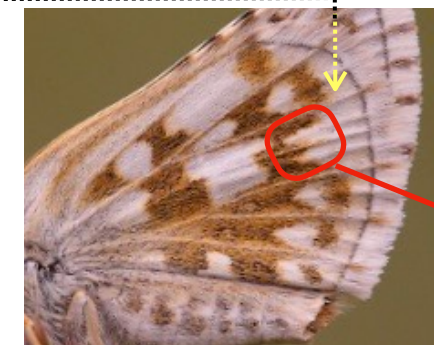
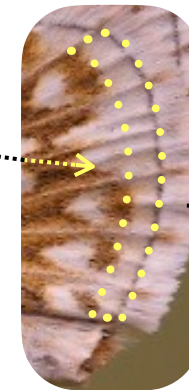
Fore-wing marks generally: usually strong

### Key Identification Feature

Underside hind-wing margin: **Unbroken white band of consistent width, extending from s1 to s7.**

Note: *Serratulae* sometimes has a similar white band. If in doubt, compare the marginal s4/5 mark.

### Underside hind-wing



**Marginal s4/5:** two symmetrical pointed marks, separated by vein 5

**Colour:** ground colour varies from reddish to greenish and white marks sometimes have darker outlines similar to form *nevadensis* below.

### Form *nevadensis*



*Nevadensis* is found in southern Spain. Differs from *carthami* in having [i] larger, brighter white markings on upperside and [ii] underside markings defined by dark edges.





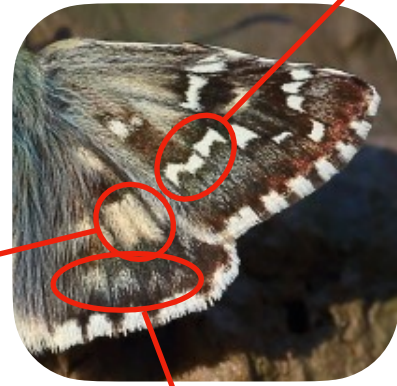
## Foulquier's Grizzled Skipper [*Pyrgus foulquieri*]

Localised colonies Male/Female: upperside different Size: Large Flight: July - Aug Altitude: 0-2000m

### Upperside



**Fore-wing marks generally:**  
Strong, white with jagged edges.  
Especially the discal marks here.



### Key Identification Features

**Upperside fore-wing marks:**  
Usually appear jagged at the edges. Some other *Pyrgus* can exhibit slightly jagged marks but not to the same extent as *foulquieri*.

**Upperside hind-wing discal mark:**  
Usually large and very prominent.

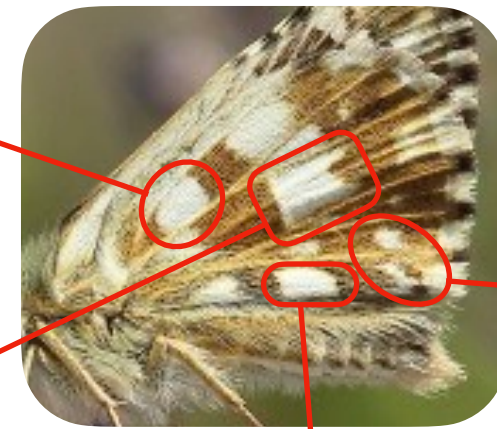
### Underside hind-wing

**Basal s7:**  
rectangular mark

**Discal s4/5:**  
external edge of mark is concave, internal edge is straight

**Marginal s1/2:**  
amorphous marks

**Discal s1:** This mark is usually wider and larger than any other *Pyrgus*,



**Hind-wing discal mark:**  
Large and very prominent. Usually pale, straw-coloured.

**Hind-wing submarginal marks:**  
pale yellow, often arrow shaped



Female marks much weaker than male. **Underside view of female necessary for identification.**

[Terms](#) →

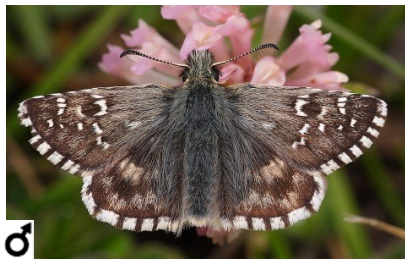
[Maps](#) →

***Foulquieri* and *carlinae* undersides are similar and could be confused.**  
The best way to separate is by comparing size and shape of discal s1.

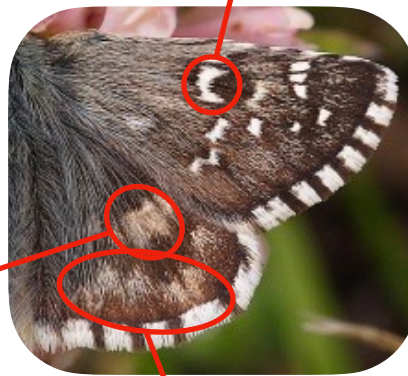
## Carline Skipper [*Pyrgus carlinae*]

Localised colonies Male/Female: upperside different Size: Medium Flight: mid Jun - Aug Altitude: >1500m

### Upperside



**Fore-wing cell mark:**  
Usually 'C' shaped.



### Key Identification Features

**Upperside fore-wing cell mark:**  
Shaped like a 'C', concave externally. If highly concave this strongly indicates *carlinae*. If only slightly concave then also compare the

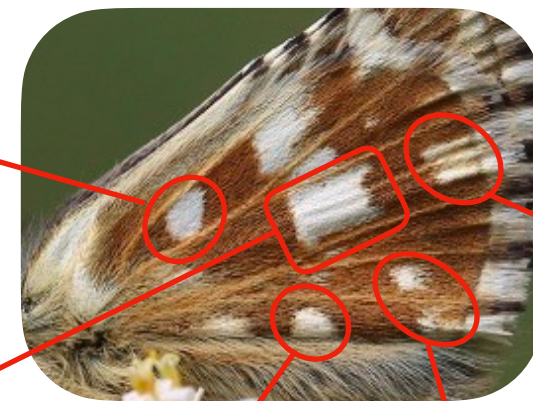
**Underside hind-wing marginal s4/5 mark**  
[illustrated right]

### Underside hind-wing

**Basal s7:** can be rounded, especially on the internal edge [as shown]

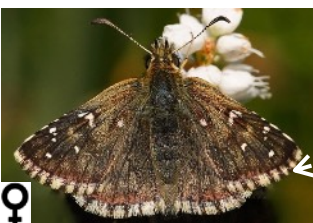
**Discal s4/5:** narrowish and compact mark, usually with straight internal edge [as shown]

**Marginal s4/5:**  
Usually a long rectangular white mark straddling v5 with a **straight internal edge**. Key feature is the straightness of the internal edge as the mark is not always long.



**Hind-wing discal mark:**  
not noticeably strong and sometimes diffuse

**Hind-wing submarginal marks:**  
tend to be weak and sometimes diffuse, often arrow shaped



The upperside marks of the female including the 'C' shaped cell mark are much weaker than the male. **Underside view of female is necessary for identification.**



## Dusky Grizzled Skipper [*Pyrgus cacaliae*]

Localised colonies Male/Female: similar Size: Large Flight: June-Aug Altitude: >1500m

### Upperside



**Hind-wing discal mark:**  
no white mark present, although sometimes a very pale impression [as shown]

No white mark here  
Compare *andromedae* below

Fore-wing cell mark:  
Very small.



**Hind-wing submarginal marks:**  
no noticeable marks present

### Key Identification Feature

**Fore-wing marks:**  
Very small, especially cell mark and widely separated.  
Other high altitude *Pyrgus* have similar uppersides so an underside view is necessary to confirm identification.  
**Montane Group** →

Terms →  
Maps →

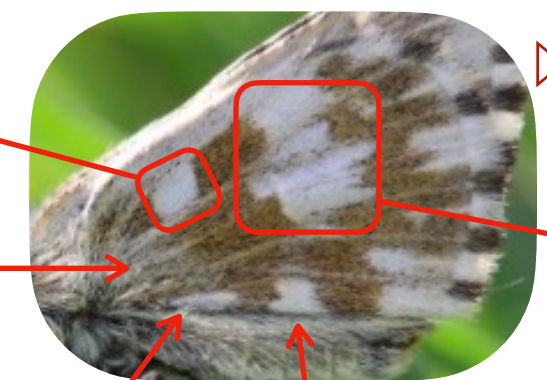
**Ground colour:**  
light brown

**Basal s7:**  
rounded rectangular mark

**No significant white mark in the middle of the basal row or in discal s2**

**Basal s1 and Discal s1**  
Basal s1 is usually long and thin compared to the more rounded adjacent discal s1 mark. *This difference is usually not as marked as in *andromedae* below.*

### Underside hind-wing



**Discal s4/5:**  
irregular mark, wider in s5. Marks above in s6/7 noticeably narrower.

*Cacaliae* and *andromedae* have similarly marked underside hind-wings. Differentiate by: [i] ground colour, [ii] the presence of a significant white mark in the middle of the basal row and/or in discal s2 identifies as *andromedae* NOT *cacaliae*, [iii] size/shape of basal s1 and discal s1, [iv] shape of basal s7.

## Alpine Grizzled Skipper [*Pyrgus andromedae*]

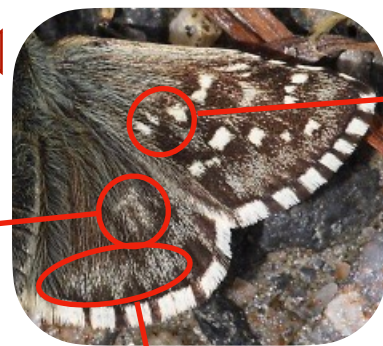
Localised colonies Male/Female: similar Size: Large Flight: June-July Altitude: >1600m

### Upperside



**Hind-wing discal mark:**  
pale and generally obscure, somewhat scruffy appearance

**Fore-wing marks generally:**  
reasonably well defined



**Hind-wing submarginal marks:**  
weak and rather diffuse

### Key Identification Feature

**Three distinctive fore-wing marks near cell mark:**  
Marks usually clearly visible, although can vary in size and shape. The lower two marks resemble an = sign.  
Notes: [i] On older specimens marks may become obscured [ii] Fore-wing marks usually more clearly defined than most other high altitude species.  
See **Montane Group** →

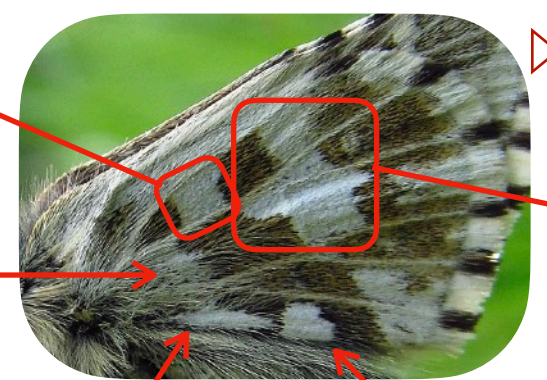
**Ground colour:** dark brown

**Basal s7:**  
rectangular, not rounded

**Presence of a significant white mark in the middle of the basal row [as shown here] or in discal s2 [not shown] differentiates from *cacaliae*.**

**Basal s1:**  
usually elongated, pointed at external end and noticeably wider than the adjacent discal s1 mark

### Underside hind-wing



**Discal s4/5:**  
irregular mark, wider in s5. Marks above in s6/7 noticeably narrower.

**Discal s1:**  
prominent mark, usually rounder or squarer than the adjacent basal s1

*Together, these two marks are said to resemble a horizontal exclamation mark!*



## Rosy Grizzled Skipper [*Pyrgus onopordi*]

Localised colonies Male/Female: similar Size: Medium Flight: April - mid Oct Altitude: 0-1300m

### Upperside



Fore-wing marks generally: medium strength  
Compare *cirsii* below



Hind-wing discal mark: frequently vague and not well defined [as shown]

Hind-wing submarginal marks: pale yellow or grey, not well defined [as shown]

### Key Identification Feature

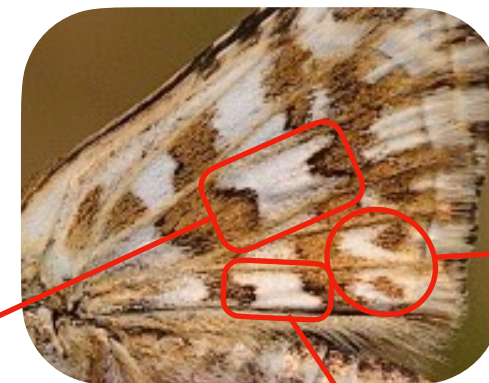
Underside hind-wing discal s4/5 mark:  
**Distinctive 'anvil' shaped mark, 'waisted' at the centre.**

Note: This mark is strongly indicative of *onopordi* but other species can have a similar looking mark, e.g. *armoricanus*, *cacaliae*, *carthami*, *cirsii*, *malvae/malvoides*. Therefore, if in doubt, compare other marking differences.

Veins: prominent

Discal s4/5:  
The 'anvil' shape is often, but not always, completely symmetrical. It is normally black-edged.

### Underside hind-wing



Marginal s1/2: amorphous, arrow shaped marks

Discal s1: top half of mark is significantly displaced internally

Terms

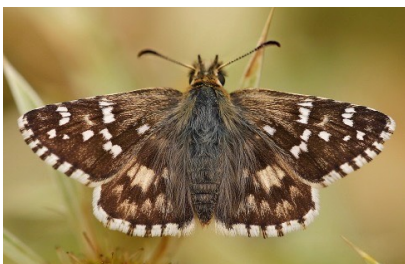
Maps

*Onopordi* and *cirsii* have similarly marked underside hind-wings  
Differentiate by: shape of marks in discal s4/5 and discal s1.

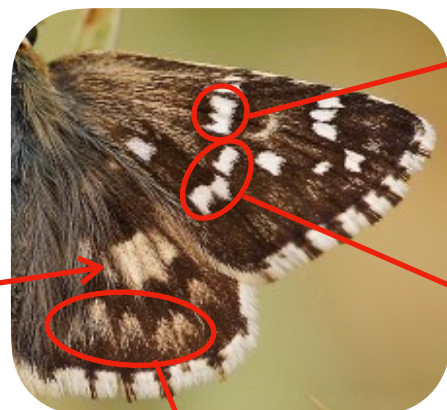
## Cinquefoil Skipper [*Pyrgus cirsii*]

Localised colonies Male/Female: similar Size: Small-Medium Flight: late July - Sep Altitude: 0-1500m

### Upperside



Fore-wing marks generally: strong, wide and prominent



Fore-wing cell mark: Strong and wide.

Fore-wing discal marks: Wide and bright.

Hind-wing discal mark: Usually strong, prominent and often pale yellow rather than white.

Hind-wing submarginal marks: usually prominent, arrow shaped and often pale yellow rather than white

### Key Identification Features

Upperside fore-wing cell mark:  
**This mark is wider and stronger than nearly all other *Pyrgus*.**

Upperside fore-wing discal marks:  
**Wide and bright, said to look like a 'waving' flag.**

Upperside hind-wing discal mark:  
**Usually large and prominent.**

### Underside hind-wing

Veins: distinctly prominent

Discal s4/5: mark often edged with black

Discal s1: this mark usually leaning strongly internally [as shown]



Marginal s4/5: washed brown mark straddling vein 5. Usually short, rectangular, with an irregular internal edge.

Marginal s1/2: weak, amorphous marks



## Large Grizzled Skipper [*Pyrgus alveus*]

Localised colonies Male/Female: similar Size: Large Flight: June - Aug Altitude: 0 - 2100m

### Upperside



**Fore-wing cell mark:**  
weak, sometimes almost absent

**Fore-wing marks generally:**  
generally small white marks with some noticeably larger

**Hind-wing discal mark and submarginal marks:**  
pale and weak, just visible, usually almost unmarked.

### Subspecies *accretus*



*Accretus* replaces *alveus* in southern France, northern Portugal, Spain, and northern Italy. Upperside is brighter with more prominent white marks than *alveus*.

### Key Identification Feature

No specific characteristic features.

Differentiation from similar *Pyrgus* is usually achieved by comparing the underside hind-wing markings, especially the marks listed below:

- andromeda* - basal s1
- cacaliae* - basal s1
- carlinae* - marginal s4/5
- carthami* - marginal s4/5
- foulquieri* - discal s1
- onopordi* - discal s4/5
- serratulae* - see this page

Terms →

Maps →

### Underside hind-wing

**Basal s7:**  
broadly rectangular mark

**Basal s1:**  
compact mark, not elongated

**Discal s1:**  
prominent mark, external edge clearly leaning inwards

**Marginal s1/2:**  
weak arrow shaped marks, slightly amorphous

**Marginal s4/5:**  
rectangular mark straddling vein 5, with irregular internal edge

**Discal s4/5:**  
internal edge of mark is aligned with internal edge of mark above in s6. External edge irregular.

*Alveus* and *serratulae* can only be separated by comparing underside hind-wing markings, especially the marks in basal s7, discal s1, discal s4/5, marginal s1/2.

## Olive Skipper [*Pyrgus serratulae*]

Localised colonies Male/Female: upperside different Size: Medium Flight: May - Aug Altitude: 0 - 2200m

### Upperside



**Fore-wing cell mark:** weak

**Fore-wing marks generally:**  
variable white marks which are often small

**Hind-wing discal mark and submarginal marks:**  
Pale, weak, often completely unmarked



Female has a distinctive brassy suffusion.



At high altitude *serratulae* can be darker with brighter markings.

### Key Identification Feature

No specific characteristic features.

Differentiation from similar *Pyrgus* is usually achieved by comparing the underside hind-wing marks, especially the marks listed below:

- alveus* - see this page
- andromedae* - basal s1
- armoricanus* - discal s1
- cacaliae* - basal s1
- carlinae* - marginal s4/5, marginal s1/2
- carthami* - marginal s4/5
- foulquieri* - discal s1
- onopordi* - discal s4/5

### Form *major*

*Major* is noticeably larger than *serratulae* and occurs in south east Europe.

### Underside hind-wing

**Basal s7:**  
rounded or nearly rounded mark

**Basal s1:**  
compact mark not elongated

**Discal s1:**  
mark is usually not leaning internally

**Marginal s1/2:**  
Reasonably solid rounded marks, especially s2

**Marginal s4/5:**  
mark straddling vein 5 usually has an irregular internal edge

**Discal s4/5:**  
mark is straight ended on both internal and external edge



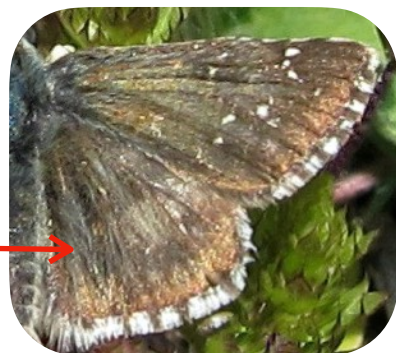
## Warren's Grizzled Skipper [*Pyrgus warrenensis*]

Localised colonies Male/Female: similar Size: Very small Flight: July Altitude: > 1700m

### Upperside



**Fore-wing marks generally:**  
All white marks are very small, widely separated and not elongated.



**Hind-wing discal mark and submarginal marks:**  
Both these marks are basically absent.

### Key Identification Features

**Size:**  
usually noticeably smaller than other *Pyrgus*

**Upperside fore-wing marks:**  
very small

**Upperside hind-wing discal and submarginal marks:**  
basically absent

To differentiate by underside from the three similar species which might be found flying with *warrenensis* compare the underside marks listed below:

*alveus* - discal s1  
*cacaliae* - basal s1  
*serratulae* - discal s4/5

### Underside hind-wing



**Basal s7:**  
wide and broadly rectangular mark

**Basal s1:**  
compact mark, not elongated

**Discal s1:**  
large mark, slightly rounded, not leaning or only slightly leaning internally

**Discal s4/5:**  
broadly rectangular, with a straight internal edge that may extend at the top of the external edge.

**Marginal s1/2:**  
amorphous, weak marks

### Distribution

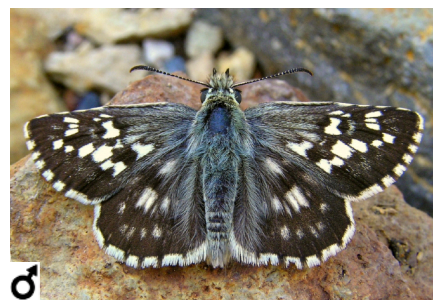
*Warrenensis* is generally regarded as a rare species. It is only found in localised colonies in the Alps. For details of species that might be found flying with *warrenensis* see **Montane Group** →

Terms →

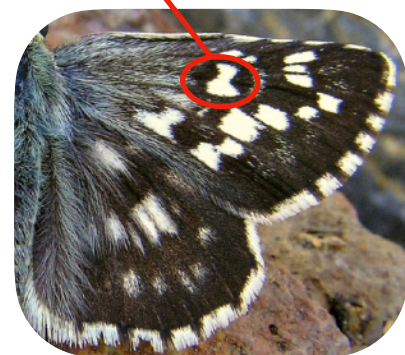
Maps →

## Sandy Grizzled Skipper [*Pyrgus cinarae*]

### Upperside



**Fore-wing cell mark:**  
Noticeably large and often appears 'waisted' at the centre [as shown]. This shape is distinctive but variable.



**Fore-wing marks generally:**  
Very bright, prominent, large, squarish white marks.

### Key Identification Features

**Upperside fore-wing marks:**  
Large and prominent

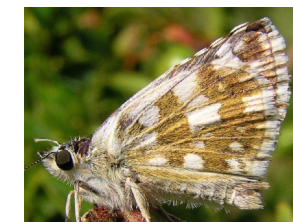
**Fore-wing cell mark:**  
Noticeably large and frequently 'waisted' at the centre.

**Distribution:**  
Very restricted range. Rarely encountered.

Note: *Cinarae* might be confused with *malvae/malvoides*. Differentiate by:  
[i] *cinarae* is usually noticeably larger and brighter  
[ii] comparing size of discal s1 and basal s7 marks on underside hind-wing.

Localised colonies Male/Female: upperside different Size: Large Flight: mid June - early Aug Altitude: 500-1800m

### Underside hind-wing



**Basal s7:**  
clear roundish mark

**Discal s1:**  
clear large mark

**Basal and discal marks generally:**  
white marks usually clear and well defined

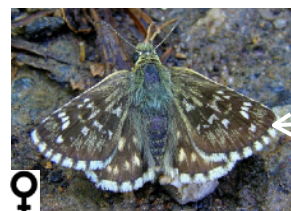
### Distribution

*Cinarae* is found in localised colonies in the southern Balkan peninsula.

### Subspecies *clorinda*

*Clorinda* is also rarely encountered. It is found in the mountains of central Spain: Serrania de Cuenca, Sierra de Albarracin and Sierra de Avila. Males and females have a more yellowish ground colour on both the upper and underside than *cinarae*.

Female fore-wing white marks much weaker than male. **Underside view of female necessary for identification.**





# Northern Grizzled Skipper [*Pyrgus centaureae*]

Localised colonies Male/Female: similar Size: Medium Flight: June - July Altitude: 0 - 1000m

## Upperside



Fore-wing marks generally: **Strong, clear white marks**

## Key Identification Features

Upperside fore-wing marks: **bright and prominent**  
Underside hind-wing veins: **prominent, white and distinctive**

## Underside hind-wing

Basal s7: large rectangular mark

Basal s1: compact mark, not elongated

Discal s1: large mark

Veins: **White and clearly visible**



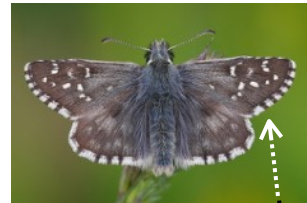
## Fennoscandia

*Centaureae* is only found in **Fennoscandia**, flying in central and northern Norway/Sweden and Finland. It has a fairly specialised habitat of wet places on exposed grassland and boggy areas in woodland which may help to distinguish it from the other three *Pyrgus* species present in its range: *alveus*, *andromedae*, *malvae*. *Centaureae* usually **appears much whiter** than these species. To help differentiate use the comparisons opposite and Species Descriptions.

*alveus v centaureae*

*andromedae\* v centaureae*

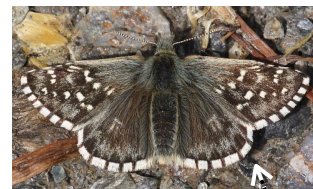
*malvae v centaureae*



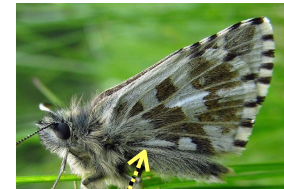
*alveus* has **small** white marks on upperside fore-wing



*alveus* has **brown veins** on underside hind-wing



*andromedae* has **no white marks** on upperside hind-wing

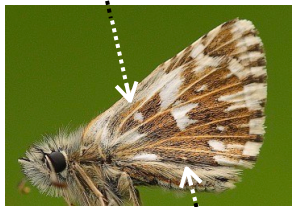


*andromedae* basal s1 mark is usually **elongated**



*malvae* usually has a **strong white hind-wing discal mark**

Basal s7: *malvae* has a small round mark



Discal s1: *malvae* has a small round spot, sometimes very small

\* flies at 0-1000m in Fennoscandia

[Terms](#)

[Maps](#)

## Montane Group

To help identification at high altitudes listed here are the *Pyrgus* species which regularly fly **above 2000m** and the mountain ranges in which they are found. Refer to Species Descriptions and Distribution Maps for more information on altitude range and location.

Alps, Balkan Mountains, Pyrenees

[Safflower Skipper \[\*Pyrgus carthami\*\]](#)

[Olive Skipper \[\*Pyrgus serratulae\*\]](#)

[Alpine Grizzled Skipper \[\*Pyrgus andromedae\*\]](#)

[Dusky Grizzled Skipper \[\*Pyrgus cacaliae\*\]](#)

[Large Grizzled Skipper \[\*Pyrgus alveus\*\]](#)

northern Alps, Balkan Mountains

[Grizzled Skipper \[\*Pyrgus malvae\*\]](#)

southern Alps, Pyrenees

[Southern Grizzled Skipper \[\*Pyrgus malvoides\*\]](#)

Alps

[Warren's Skipper \[\*Pyrgus warrenensis\*\]](#)

western Alps

[Carline Skipper \[\*Pyrgus carlinae\*\]](#)

# Distribution Maps

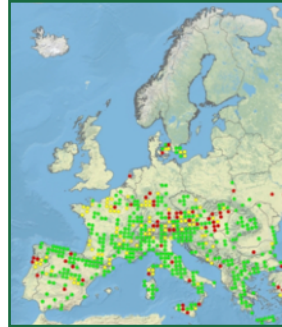
● Up to 1950    ● 1951 - 1980    ● After 1980



*alveus* →



*andromedae* →



*armoricanus* →



*cacaliae* →

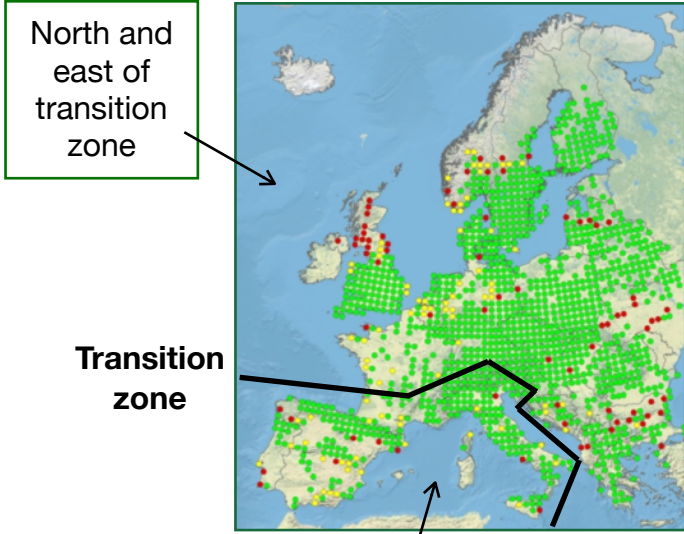


*carlinae* →



*carthami* →

*malvae* →



North and east of transition zone

Transition zone

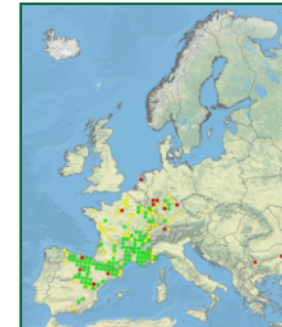
South of transition zone



*centaureae* →



*cinarae* →



*cirsii* →



*foulquieri* →



*onopordi* →



*serratulae* →



*sidae* →



*warrenensis* →

*malvoides* →



## Appendix

### Geography

The geographical area covered is as shown on the Distribution Maps excluding the coast of northern Africa.

### Taxonomy

We have followed the current EBG checklist of European butterflies which comprises species found in Europe up to the eastern boundary of the European Union. This checklist was compiled by an international committee of taxonomic experts. However, for completeness please note that:

[i] *foulquieri* = *bellieri*, [ii] recent research has revealed two new cryptic *Muschampia* species; *M. alta* occurring in southern Italy and Balkan peninsula, and *M. proteides* found in easternmost Europe.

## Acknowledgements

The distribution maps are reproduced by kind permission of LepiDiv Projekt. For more information please visit [LepiDiv](#)

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