

First record of *Cacyreus marshalli* (Lycaenidae) from the Balkan Peninsula

KOSMAČ MARKO¹ & RUDI VEROVNIK²

¹ Župančičeva 8a, 5270 Ajdovščina, Slovenia; e-mail: kosmacmarko@volja.net

² University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Department of Biology, Večna pot 111, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia; e-mail: rudi.verovnik@bf.uni-lj.si

Cacyreus marshalli Butler, 1898, a native of South Africa, was accidentally introduced in the Balearic archipelago in about 1990 by imported, ornamental *Pelargonium* (Geraniaceae), one of its larval food plants (Eitschberger & Stamer 1990; Raynor 1990; Sarto i Monteys 1992). Since then it has become one of the best studied invasive butterfly species in Europe and its range expansion has been well documented. Records from mainland Spain (Sarto i Monteys 1992) and surprisingly Belgium (Troukens 1991) were soon to follow. Unlike in Belgium, the discoveries in mainland Spain refer to established breeding populations that mark the beginning of its large scale range expansion in Europe. The expansion continued in neighbouring France, Portugal and Morocco (Tarrier 1998), and quickly followed in Italy, where the butterfly was first recorded from Rome (Trematerra et al. 1997). Since then, there have been records from most of Italy, including Sardinia (Quacchia et al. 2008). Despite its recent publication the distribution map in Quacchia et al. (2008) is already outdated as the species has been observed further eastwards as far as Vicenza (Stefano Beretta, pers. comm.). The butterfly was recently found also on Malta Island (Sammut 2007), which represents its easternmost record in Europe. Given the fast colonization speed of *C. marshalli* it is surprising that the species has not so far been observed along the western coast of the Balkan Peninsula together with its offshore islands.

During summer holidays the first author visited Lošinj Island, a well-known tourist destination in Croatia. On August 8, 2008 he observed a small dark lycaenid flying along the coast and settling on low bushes of *Inula crithmoides* L. (Asteraceae). The butterfly was not shy and upon close inspection was immediately recognised as *C. marshalli*. It was observed on the west coast of a small peninsula at about 2 km NW of the town of Mali Lošinj (44° 32' 10" N, 14° 26' 42" E) (Fig. 1). There were no *Pelargonium* plants nearby, but they are abundantly grown in Mali Lošinj. Despite an intensive search no further specimens were found in the following days. Therefore, it is still too early to state that this single record represents a successful colonization and that there is a breeding population on the island. However, the mild climate in the region is favourable for the reproductive success of the species and hence its permanent colonization, both being factors that may eventually trigger further spread of *C. marshalli* in the Balkan Peninsula in the forthcoming years.



Fig. 1. Approximate position of the observation site of *Cacyreus marshalli* in Croatia.

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