

Cacyreus marshalli Butler, 1898.

Blaveta dels geranis (cat.) Mariposa de los geranios (cast.), Geranium bronze (eng.)

Distribution: Native of Southern Africa, introduced to the Balearic Islands, Spain, France, Belgium and possibly other countries in Southern Europe.

Description. Adult. 30 mm. Wingspan. The forewing is brown in colour, with white blotches and brown raised edges. The hind wing is of a very light brown with dark patches and abundant white veins. On the bottom part of the hind wings is a black eyespot with a small appendage.

Caterpillar : 14 mm. long. Pale green in colour, with red markings and long white stiff silk-like hairs. The adults lay their eggs on the buds of the geraniums and when the eggs hatch the buds are left hollow which prevents the plant from flowering or makes the shoots dry out later on. It can burrow inside the stalks on which it feeds, and causes the plant to die. **Chrysalis** 12 mm. Colour and markings similar to the caterpillar. They can hibernate and are therefore found all year round. The metamorphosis takes place on the dead leaves on the outside of the plant, and is attached by a thin strand of silk.

Plants on which caterpillars feed. *Geranium spp* and *Pelargonium spp*. Especially ornamental geraniums.

Cacyreus marshalli in Menorca

Representation in the BMS (Butterfly Monitoring Scheme). A species which is occasionally observed on the routes covered by BMS, however it is a rare species in the natural environment although it is often seen in gardens, especially where there are geraniums.

Flight path. Owing to the lack of information from the BMS because of the extent of cultivated geraniums, there is no flight curve available, but it is a species which flies nearly all year round. In fact it does not hibernate completely and if the winter is mild, one can see specimens in December or February. Their population density is low in spring (after winter mortality rates), and they recover during the season, reaching their maximum in September and October. But as it is a species which is dependant on cultivated geraniums, it can be seen in abundance in towns and villages at any time.

Habitat and behaviour. Found basically in gardens especially where there are geraniums on which it can feed. It is considered a plague for geraniums as it causes the plants to die. It is thought to have been introduced to the Balearic Islands from Southern Africa, from where it originates, and from the Balearics it moved to the Spanish mainland and other countries in Southern Europe.

Similar species found in Menorca. It can be confused with *Leptote pirithous* but the obverse of the wings is brown and the design on the reverse of the wings is also very characteristic. If observed with care it is fairly easy to see the difference.

Cacyreus marshalli

