

A note on *Pyrgus warrenensis* VERITY its history and distribution (Hesperiidae)

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The many misconceptions and misunderstandings which still surround *Pyrgus warrenensis* have led me to try to elucidate its position. It was on Friday 8th August 1919 that B. C. S. WARREN set out to walk from Lenzerheide to the Urden Fürkli – a pass 2546 m high crossing the mountains to Arosa. It was a perfect day and a long hot climb of some 1070 m, the path traversing the slopes of the Parpaner Rothorn and the Parpaner Weisshorn. That evening in his diary B. C. S. WARREN noted that on the way up he caught a pair of "*Hesperia alveus*" in cop just as he reached the Alp Scharmoin, 1919 m.

These two little "*Hesperia alveus*" were figured by WARREN in his *Hesperia* Monograph in 1926 under the name of "*Hesperia alveus ryffelensis*". The name "*ryffelensis*" had been given by OBERTHÜR in April 1910 by mistake to typical *Pyrgys alveus alveus* from Zermatt. At that time OBERTHÜR thought *Pyrgus accreta* was *P. alveus alveus* which is how he came to make the mistake. Later OBERTHÜR gave some specimens of the species which was afterwards to be named *warrenensis* from Larche in the Basses-Alpes to Prof. Dr. J.-L. REVERDIN under the name of "*ryffelensis*" (REVERDIN, 1916). REVERDIN lent these specimens from Larche to WARREN, who figured them in his *Hesperia* Monograph in 1926 as "*Hesperia alveus ryffelensis*" (pl. 43, figs. 1, 2, 3 and 4) because he thought they were the same as the specimens which OBERTHÜR had described from Zermatt. WARREN also figured his own two little "*Hesperia alveus*" from the Alp Scharmoin (pl. 43, figs. 5, 6, 7 and 8) with them as "*ryffelensis*" for the latter were the same species as the specimens from Larche.

In 1928 Dr. Roger VERITY published an article pointing out that OBERTHÜR's original description of "*ryffelensis*" applied to the form of *alveus* which OBERTHÜR had captured at Zermatt and not to the specimens from Larche which OBERTHÜR had sent to REVERDIN; VERITY also showed that the Zermatt specimens were simply a wellknown aberration of *alveus* with very small spots on the upper side of the forewings, *Pyrgus alveus*

ab. *alticola* REBEL – name published 22nd May 1909 – (= misuse of *scandinavicus* STRAND). Therefore the name “*Hesperia ryffelensis*” OBERTHÜR, 1910 became a synonym of *P. alveus* ab. *alticola* REBEL.

The specimens from Larche however were a very different insect. Verity realised that they belonged to a new race, which he then named *warrenensis*; and he asked WARREN to choose the type specimens for it. B. C. S. WARREN wrote in 1929 (*Entomologist's Rec. J. Var.*, 41 : 149) “I take the very beautiful little ♂ from the Alp Scharmoir, above Lenzerheide, which is figured in my monograph on Pl. 43, figs. 5 and 6, as the type”. Therefore *warrenensis* has never been synonymous with ab. *alticola* REBEL.

Another factor which complicates the correct identification of *warrenensis* is that wherever *P. alveus* is to be found there are always some specimens which are much smaller than normal. Such small specimens however are nearly always larger than real *warrenensis*, and are simply very small *alveus*. *P. warrenensis* usually emerges about ten days before *alveus*.

In 1951 B. C. S. WARREN caught some small skippers in the Täschental in the Valais which on dissection proved to be *warrenensis*. This stimulated him to complete a study of the *alveus* group which he had begun in 1938. He was able to borrow forty four of REVERDIN's slides from the Geneva



DISTRIBUTION MAP

● = Localities of *Pyrgus warrenensis*.

Natural History Museum, after studying these and much other material, he found that *Pyrgus sifanicus* was a distinct species and not a subspecies of *P. alveus* as had been previously thought. *P. warrenensis* he found to be a European subspecies of *Pyrgus sifanicus* and not a form of *alveus* at all (WARREN, 1953).

Pyrgus sifanicus was originally described from the Kuku-Nor region of north Tibet by GROUM-GRSHIMAILO in 1891. In 1915 REVERDIN identified some specimens from the Caucasus as *P. sifanicus*. In 1967 Dr. B. ALBERTI discovered that not one but three species of the *alveus* group occurred in the Caucasus : 1) *P. sifanicus* like that from north Tibet, 2) *P. alveus* the same as the central European *alveus*, and 3) *P. jupei* a new high altitude species named by ALBERTI.

In 1972, in his excellent study of the genus *Pyrgus*, Dr. R. DE JONG concluded that *warrenensis* was neither a form of *alveus* nor of *sifanicus*, so he gave it the taxonomic status of a separate species. Thus it became *Pyrgus warrenensis* VERITY, 1928 (= *Hesperia alveus ryffelensis*, WARREN, 1926).

The slide of the male genital armature used by Reverdin in 1915 and Warren in 1926 to illustrate *sifanicus* shows the typical structure of *jupei* which is very similar to *warrenensis*. In view of this and of its habitat, I think it is possible that *P. jupei* will prove to be a slightly larger eastern subspecies of *warrenensis*.

The type specimens of *Pyrgus warrenensis* VERITY are in the Warren Collection in the British Museum (Natural History) in London. The slide of the dissection of the genitalia of the holotype is BMNH No. 14111.

Distribution

It is often not realised that *Pyrgus warrenensis* is widely distributed throughout the Alps, though always very local. It is a high altitude species probably not found below 1500 m ; whereas *P. alveus* ranges from a little above sea-level to about 2,500 m. *Pyrgus warrenensis* has been recorded from :

Switzerland : Lenzerheide (the type locality), Preda, the Albula Pass and Maloja in Graubünden, and Täsch and Zermatt in the Valais (REVERDIN, WARREN, KAUFFMANN).

France : Larche in the Basses-Alpes, St. Véran and Clavières (?) in the Hautes-Alpes, Pralognan la Vanoise and the Col du Mont Cenis (OBERTHÜR, REVERDIN, WARREN, BRETHERTON).

- Italy : Above Aosta, Oulx, Sestrières and Valtournanche in Piedmont, Sulden (Solda) in the Ortler, and the Stelvio Pass (VERITY, BRETHERTON, DE JONG).
- Germany : Laufbacher Eck in the Allgäu, and Trischübel in the Berchtesgadener Alpen (PRÖSE, 1955).
- Austria : The Samnaun Gruppe, Vent and the Brenner Pass in the North Tyrol ; Hinterbichl, the Frossnitzal, Steiner Alm, Glanzer Berg, Kals, the Gross Glockner and Mallnitz in the Hohe Tauern (WARREN, DE JONG, 1975).

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