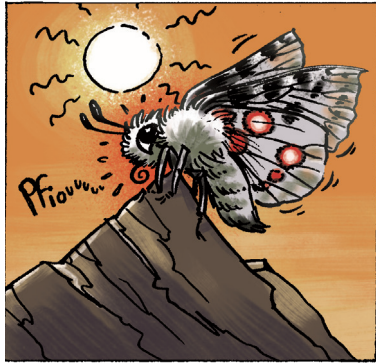


> Adorable but vulnerable

Beautiful as a god, with its colouring of white with red and black, this Apollo of butterflies is a very popular species with collectors. Its slow, heavy flight does not help it in this regard. Hence its classification as a protected species in France and several other countries.

This has not been sufficient to halt its decline, which is essentially linked to the transformation of low-altitude biotopes with the abandoning of pastoral practices and the closing of some environments.

Global warming is also a threat to this cold climate inhabitant. Forced to live at ever higher altitudes, the populations are increasingly isolated. There is less genetic mixing, leading to greater vulnerability. As you can tell, it is high time that man came to its rescue. Rather than capturing them, we should photograph them from a distance without disturbing them.



Expert opinion

- 1/ **TRUE.** During mating, it secretes a horny structure which attaches to the female's abdomen, preventing her from mating with other males.
- 2/ **FALSE.** The record is 3000 m.
- 3/ **TRUE.** They have a foul-smelling erectile organ, the osmaterium, which can be everted when they are threatened.
- 4/ **TRUE.** Parnassus is the name of a mountain range in Greece, dedicated to Apollo and considered the sacred place of poets. It's all Greek to me!...

The apollo



Family: Papilionidae
Size: 70 to 85 mm
Lifetime: flies from June
to September
Altitude: from 400 up to 2700 m

Distinctive features

- ✓ Beautiful as a god, with its multiple black and red ocelli
- ✓ Hairy, to put on airs
- ✓ Speaks with its hands, rubbing its legs against the base of its wings

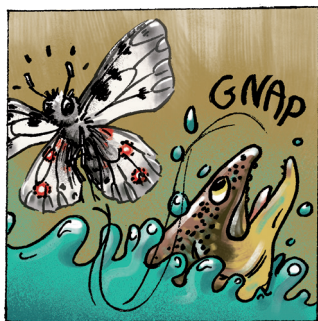
At the start

> A native mountain dweller that has adopted the Savoie region

Originally from the Palearctic regions, this butterfly colonised western Europe during the ice ages. As the earth warmed up, some moved north, others to the mountains. The result: there are 10 species of Papilionidae in France, out of some 600 worldwide.

> Not one, but several apollo

Among its close cousins that have taken up residence in the Alps, the Small Apollo and the Clouded Apollo, both of which like living 2000 m above sea level. The former lives on the banks of streams; the latter lives in humid meadows and clear woods. However, finding a date for the cousins to get together is not easy, as the Apollo and the Small Apollo fly between June and September, while the Clouded Apollo flies from May to July. And only on sunny days.



Small Apollo



Clouded Apollo

Habitat

> The wide-open meadows as neighbours, the sun as a witness!

Present at altitudes of between 400 m and 2700 m, the Apollo is very demanding of its environment. It needs specific climate conditions: cold in winter and sunny in summer, as well as open spaces, with less than 5% shrub cover and more than 50% grass. In a nutshell: flowering meadows. With the guarantee of finding purplish flowers (knapweeds, thistles, scabious, etc.) whose nectar it enjoys, but also nourishing succulents for the generations of caterpillars to come. It is not surprising that it has settled in the Vanoise region, which alone counts a third of France's flora!

Daily life

> A daily life that is going well!

"4 months is the period during which you see me flying. But all those who have studied me will tell you that I actually live for a year.

- In winter, I am an egg, laid on a branch or on the ground, waiting for spring to come before I hatch.
- As a caterpillar, I enjoy succulent plants (without any fat!) such as sedum and houseleek.
- In May-June comes the time of the great metamorphosis, with successively the weaving of the cocoon that is slightly buried or placed under dry grass, forming a chrysalis, then pupation (the transformation into an adult butterfly) which can last from ten days to several weeks.
- From June to September, I am fully transformed and flit here and there, ensuring my progeny."



What not everyone knows is that the males generally hatch before the females. This timing allows them to spot and fertilise their future mates as soon as they emerge from the cocoon. Without going so far as to say that marriages are arranged, it is clear that couples are encouraged very early on. Well, you only live once, and not for long.

True or false?

Answers : on the last page

- 1/ The male Apollo favours the chastity belt
- 2/ Apollos have been seen flying at an altitude of 4000 m
- 3/ Apollo caterpillars are a little like skunks
- 4/ Their Latin name Parnassius apollo comes from the Greek