

The first record of Silvery Argus *Aricia nicias* (Meigen, 1829) (Lepidoptera, Lycaenidae) in Norway, and notes on its ecology and situation in Fennoscandia

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The Silvery Argus *Aricia nicias* (Meigen, 1829) has a limited distribution in central parts of Sweden and the southern half of Finland, and the two countries share a population just north of the Gulf of Bothnia. In July 2006, the species was found in Norway for the first time; at three sites in a small area in the very eastern part of Hedmark County, close to its most western outpost in Sweden. This is supposedly the first record of a new butterfly species in Norway for 70 years. The present paper describes the species' appearance and biology, as well as its occurrence, situation and potential threats in Norway and elsewhere.

Key words: *Aricia nicias*, butterflies, new to Norway, threatened species, cultural landscape.

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INTRODUCTION

The Silvery Argus *Aricia nicias* (Meigen, 1829) is represented in Fennoscandia by the subspecies *Aricia nicias scandicus* (Wahlgren, 1930). In Sweden, the species occurs from the northern part of Uppland to Jämtland, Ångermanland and Dalarna, as well as just north of the Gulf of Bothnia (figure 1). It is normally quite rare, but can locally be rather numerous. Permanent snow cover during winter is suggested to be a prerequisite that limits its breeding range to the south (Eliasson 2005, Gärdenfors 2005).

The species was not known in Norway until 2006 when it was found by the authors. This is a bit surprising since its distribution along Västerdalälven river, far west in Dalarna County in Sweden, reaches almost to the Norwegian

border by Trysil in Hedmark County (figure 1, Eliasson 2005), and parts of the same river system flows into Norway (C.U. Eliasson, pers. comm.). However, already Bakke (1975) suggested that it may occur in Hedmark, in the areas bordering on Sweden. Further, the species is distributed in several separate areas in Finland, the eastern Pyrenees, the Alps, Ural and Altaj.

According to Gärdenfors (2005), the Silvery Argus expanded its distribution range in Sweden during the 1940ies. Its population trend is negative in Sweden and Finland, but is considered to be stable in the rest of Europe (Van Swaay & Warren 1999, Eliasson 2005). The Silvery Argus is one of nine butterflies classified as 'vulnerable' (VU) in the Swedish Red List, and it is listed as 'rare' in Finland and Spain (Gärdenfors 2005).