

## millerd

by millerd, 12-Apr-12 03:23 AM GMT

After all this time I thought I'd start a personal diary instead of posting everything in the sightings forums. So what happens? The weather turns and the butterflies disappear.

Or nearly...

Working according to the old adage that if you go out, you may see something, but if you stay indoors you definitely won't, I set off round my patch near Heathrow at around 1715 today, with the sun disappearing behind an ominous dark pile of cumulonimbus that the pilots out of the airport were giving a wide berth to. I headed for the area within the J14 M25 roundabout, where there is garlic mustard in abundance. It was just coming into flower, and providing ideal camouflage for roosting Orange Tips. I found just two, but as is so often the case, they shared the same flower head.

In view of the lowering light levels, I found taking pictures difficult, but tried flash – something I have never done before with any success. Here are the results, both with and without flash, and with slightly different angles and degrees of cropping. Very different results!

Here's to sunnier days without such complications. 😊

Dave





**Re: millerd**

by Neil Freeman, 12-Apr-12 05:02 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Interesting photos.

I have been looking at those different results and like both for different reasons. If I was asked to choose between them I don't think I could.

Cheers,

Neil F.

**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-12 06:36 AM GMT

So now we know who to blame for the weather then Dave 😊

I really like the first two shots as there are no distractions and I also like the way the flower head just "appears", floating almost 😎, it almost looks like they're duelling...Cracking shots.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: millerd**

by Lee Hurrell, 13-Apr-12 09:15 PM GMT

What a lovely way to start your diary!

Nice one, Dave.

Best wishes,

Lee

### **Re: millerd**

by Padfield, 13-Apr-12 10:10 PM GMT

I find the flash pictures make it look as though the butterflies are having a nocturnal tryst, which distorts the reality, however artistic it may be. For that reason the Swiss vote goes for the natural-lighting shots. And very good they are too – I can almost smell the garlic mustard...

Guy

### **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 14-Apr-12 03:36 AM GMT

You could indeed, Guy! I knelt on a bit while taking these, and delightfully pungent it was too.

Thanks all for the kind comments. 😊

Dave

### **Re: millerd**

by Susie, 14-Apr-12 04:50 AM GMT

I'm looking forward to reading your diary Dave as the year progresses. You're off to a flying start and I, too, like all the photos you posted but the top two are my favourites.

### **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 16-Apr-12 12:43 AM GMT

Up in the Rugby/Coalville/Coventry area on Saturday but cold and occasional light hail probably lay behind the lack of butterflies. My brood of boys got to see a number of steam trains, so all was not lost.

Today, a spell of brightness enticed me out locally, but all I saw was a Speckled Wood and a solitary Orange Tip egg on a Cuckoo Flower by the River Colne.

Dave



### **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 17-Apr-12 04:38 AM GMT

Another brief foray late in the day after work. Alas, nothing flying, but I did find another roosting Orange Tip sitting on a wild rose bush.

Dave



**Re: millerd**

by Nick Broomer, 17-Apr-12 05:37 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Your first O.T. photo on your last post is beautiful.

All the best,

Nick.

**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-12 06:19 AM GMT

Cracking photos again and I haven't seen them hold their wings in that fashion before, it gives them an almost hunchback appearance.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 22-Apr-12 02:27 AM GMT

A free weekend, and a possibility of less rain than the last few days (weeks?). I drove down to the Botany Bay entrance to Chiddingfold Woods with the hope of seeing some Wood Whites, but extensive searching over a couple of hours (and even some of the promised sunshine) revealed none at all. In fact, all I managed to discover were two Orange Tips and a single Grizzled Skipper. The latter was the first one I'd seen this year and continued its

reputation with me of always turning up when I'm looking for something else...

I dropped into Denbies on a somewhat circuitous route back, and saw absolutely nothing at all, despite some more of that sunshine. I'm inclined to think that the Green Hairstreaks have disappeared with last year's scrub clearance – but I hope someone will prove me wrong.

Dave





### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-12 04:11 AM GMT

Some cracking photos and a Grizzled Skipper 🐛 I still haven't found one despite looking 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Apr-12 01:30 AM GMT

Today promised a sunny morning at least. I set off down to Noar Hill nice and early, and arrived about 0930. Almost immediately, I encountered a Dingy Skipper flying happily in a temperature of no more than about 9 degrees.

It was not for another hour or so that I found my first Duke of Burgundy – a female (I think), newly emerged, which sat patiently for some time on a cowslip. Eventually, with no particular warning, she spread her wings and launched off into the wind and disappeared. Over the next hour or so, I saw another four individuals, and managed to approach two quite closely. One was already the subject of close attention from fellow UKB member Tuts (a pleasure to meet you!).

I saw five Dingy Skippers altogether, and a couple of Orange Tips, but nothing else. Others on the hill had seen a Small Heath, but I failed to spot it.

A selection of photos – and for the first time this year, I've managed a post without an Orange Tip in it!

Dave











### Re: millerd

by Mark Tutton, 23-Apr-12 02:23 AM GMT

It was nice to bump into you too dave. I haven't had time to process my photos yet but yours are great! Managed to see four dukes and added green hairstreak and holly blue at another site on the way home before the hailstorms set in – again!

Hope to bump into you again soon 😊 mark

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Apr-12 02:41 AM GMT

Looking forward to seeing your photos, Mark!

On the drive home, I saw several Orange Tips in the Surrey countryside, and also two Brimstones (I hadn't seen any of these since March).

I managed to get home just in time to scoot round my local patch before the rain set in. In fact, as I stepped from the car, I spotted a white butterfly on a dandelion on the grass verge – none other than a female Orange Tip. The 30-minute walk produced more butterflies and more species than Noar Hill, but nothing unusual. I saw half a dozen more more Orange Tips, a Small White, a Speckled Wood, a Holly Blue, and no less than five Peacocks. As the rain arrived, I also saw one of those small dark shiny moths with extraordinarily long antennae, but the photos are awful because it was so dark.

It appears that the temperature today must have crept above a certain threshold, enough to reactivate the Peacocks and Brimstones.

OK, I give in. Here are some Orange Tip photos.

Dave



**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 26-Apr-12 04:18 AM GMT

There appears to be a temporary lull in the deluge for about 36 hours from around lunchtime tomorrow in these here parts – according to the Met. Office website. Now how do I persuade someone that I'm not needed at work on Friday...

I saw a heron today in the middle of the Two Rivers shopping centre in Staines this afternoon. My small son thought it was plastic until it turned its head towards him!

Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Apr-12 06:45 AM GMT

The rain stopped at about 1500 today, and the temperature rose noticeably too. I'd like to say the sun shone, but that would be a bit of a fib. Nevertheless I headed to the spot in the middle of J14 of the M25 where the Orange Tips roost. They didn't let me down: there were two, sharing a flower head, a male and a female. Every time the sun briefly peeped out, the male became restless, and at one point made an attempt to accost the female – she ignored him completely. Eventually, the cloud came over again and they settled down more firmly than ever. With the two so close together you can see (as noted by others earlier in the year) that the male's eyes are distinctly larger than those of the female.

There were also dozens of the moths with the unfeasibly long antennae – one made it into a photo. Is it only the males that have the long ones? Some individuals did and some didn't.

Dave



## Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-May-12 02:33 AM GMT

A lovely day today, apart from a strongish wind and the fact I was stuck on the inside of the office looking out. I managed a bit of a walk locally after work, and spotted a couple of Orange Tips, a male Small White, and both male and female Green-veined Whites. The last of these was small and rather dusky.

Dave



*Male Small White*



*Male Small White (underside)*



*Female GVV*

**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 01-May-12 04:35 AM GMT

Some cracking White action there and that last one is very dusky 😊

Like you I was cursing those that had today off while I was stuck at work so I did a cross county dash to Martin Down!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-May-12 08:01 AM GMT

I kept an eye on the weather all morning, and around lunchtime the satellite photos showed clear blue skies hitting the south coast. I made my excuses at work and left. Soon after half past three, I arrived at Rewell Wood. For reasons unfathomable, I always park on the A29 and walk up through the trees along the very steep and currently very slippery footpath to Yewtree Gate – and then straight down the forestry track.

It was gloriously sunny, not too breezy, and there were plenty of what I had come to see – Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. When I arrived, they were very active in the sunshine, stopping only briefly to nectar. However, almost as if someone had rung a bell, they all suddenly began to congregate on the bugle flowers, feeding avidly. At one point I could see at least a dozen within a few feet of where I was standing. I paused to take a photo of one individual and found as I withdrew that three more were within a few inches of the original target. After about an hour, the behaviour changed again, and as the sun dipped, the Fritillaries left the bugle to bask on dead leaves, dry bracken, and logs. Finally, after another 20–30 minutes, they all disappeared into the sweet chestnut plantation. By half past five, I couldn't find a single one.

As well as the Pearls, I saw four or five Grizzled Skippers and a single Small Heath, but nothing else. On the drive back, I pass within five minutes of Botany Bay (Chiddingfold), so decided to drop in briefly to see if I could spot any roosting Wood Whites. I drew a blank there, but did encounter a late-flying Peacock and a Brimstone hiding under a bramble leaf.

Dave







### Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-May-12 06:22 AM GMT

Went to Winchester for the day for my smallest boy's 7th birthday outing, and as the sun miraculously appeared in the afternoon, we decided to incorporate a bit of air and countryside. Taking the scenic route home, we stopped of for a walk on Magdalene Hill Down. It was very windy and quite cool, and all we saw was a male Green-veined White, plus this amorous pair of beetles. They were a beautiful glossy black, with iridescent legs reflecting green, blue and purple – it was notable how much smaller the male was than the female. Can anyone say what they are?

Dave



### Re: millerd

by Colin Knight, 08-May-12 04:34 PM GMT

Are they Bloody-nosed beetles (*Timarcha tenebricosa*)?

### Re: millerd

by Mark Colvin, 08-May-12 06:29 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Depending on size, the Bloody-nosed Beetle *Timarcha tenebricosa* is a likely candidate if the specimens were around 15 mm long (and I appreciate the male is smaller than the female in your picture). If smaller, around 7–8mm long, it could be *Timarcha gottingensis*. Generally, the elytra in *T. tenebricosa* appear less rugose (irregular pitting) than the image suggests.

Either could potentially be found at Magdalen Hill Down.

I hope this helps (confuses more)?

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-May-12 05:24 AM GMT

Thanks Colin and Mark for the beetle info – the female was just over a cm in length and the male rather less. The shell definitely had the orange-peel look to it.

Today, despite a grey unpromising look to the sky at nine o'clock, I set off once again down to the Botany Bay end of Chiddingfold Woods, hoping for Wood Whites. I walked right across to Oaken Wood and back, and had almost given up – but not quite...

Around 1030, the sky lightened, blue bits appeared and it became distinctly warmer. As soon as the sun came out, even briefly, Wood Whites materialised from their hiding places and set about nectaring and (the males at least) investigating anything white. I counted at least six individuals, of both sexes, and watched two come together for the curious ritual that I have yet to see end in mating. On this occasion, the male abandoned the female for no apparent reason. As the sun went in for a while, another male fluttered in from some way off, unerringly homing in on the female and presumably the scent or pheromones released earlier. He settled down close to her, but there was no interaction and he left again a little while later.

While watching these two, I was joined by Colin Knight (pleased to meet you and put another name and face together, Colin! The Holly Blue had gone by



the time I reached the dung incidentally...).

I returned home with just enough time to scurry round my local patch, where several Orange Tips were active, along with a couple of GVW and Holly Blues.

Dave





## Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-May-12 12:15 AM GMT

Grey skies, a stiff breeze, drizzle in the air – but at least it was warmer than recently, and around midday, you could feel warmth from the sun through thin bits in the cloud cover. Enough to provoke something into flight?

I walked around my local patch and found that a couple of Small Whites had been tempted out along with a Peacock making a brave attempt to bask (I nearly trod on it, so unexpected was its appearance). And once again, fast becoming the abiding memory of this soggy spring, the inevitable roosting Orange Tip. It's raining again as I write this, but the forecast is for three better days. I certainly hope so.

An interesting sign has appeared along my usual route. The area to the North East of J14 of the M25, between the motorway and the River Colne, has always been the richest area on my patch for butterflies in terms of variety. Over the last four years, I have seen 23 species here (and a 24th within 100 metres, as the Purple Hairstreaks live in oak trees just away from this area). There has been in past years a particularly strong Small Heath colony. I knew it was owned by BAA and is basically landscaped from spoil that came from the building of Terminal Five – I think it was one of the conditions of that construction. However, it has now acquired a name: the Heathrow Conservation Site Colne Valley. Quite what this means in reality remains to be seen, but at least BAA *seem* committed to maintaining it as is. I feel encouraged!

Dave



**Re: millerd**

by NickMorgan, 11-May-12 03:42 AM GMT

Wow, that's a brutal looking horse stile!

**Re: millerd**

by Susie, 11-May-12 03:56 AM GMT

That'll keep the wheelchair users out 😊

**Re: millerd**

by Neil Hulme, 11-May-12 04:30 AM GMT

That's right Susie, I can't see many making it over Becher's Brook. I won't be taking my mother there!  
Neil

**Re: millerd**

by Susie, 11-May-12 04:47 AM GMT

Nor anyone with a push chair or limited mobility. I can understand why it's necessary but it's such a shame that a few people (on scramble or quad bikes, etc, ) spoil it for many.

Apologise Millerd for hikacking your diary. Please feel free to delete my comments.

**Re: millerd**

by Jack Harrison, 11-May-12 06:24 PM GMT

Superbly sharp photos Dave. What camera?

Jack

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-May-12 03:51 AM GMT

Yes, Susie, the obstruction is to deter bikes, but to be honest, I've never seen one. The bigger problem is local worthies with air rifles snaffling the rabbit population for the pot!

The camera, Jack, is my trusty Sony DSC-H20. Almost permanently set on "Program-Auto" with the macro on and occasional use of the 10x zoom. Anything more in the way of controls would confuse me!

(A few days behind at the moment – internet problems from a dodgy phone line...)

### May 11th

It was mostly cloudy, windy and chilly when I arrived at the Dunstable Downs visitor centre. Setting off down the slope and bearing left, I headed for the sheltered gullies and watched for breaks in the cloud. Patience paid dividends – two Duke of Burgundy appeared like magic with the sun. One was new, but the other rather worn. No other butterflies braved the wind.

### Later the same day...

Only five minutes later in fact, as Totternhoe Quarry is only three miles from the visitor centre. The sun was working harder now as I walked around the path to the left and across to the old chalk pits. I found both a Green Hairstreak and a Dingy Skipper sheltering in the lee of a copse, and then in one of the smaller pits (very sheltered and warm in the sun) I encountered five Dukes. They were very active, and I witnessed an amazing tussle between two that took them spiralling way up into the sky only to plummet back down just as quickly and pulling out of the dive at the last possible minute. Increasing sunshine also brought out Orange Tips of both sexes, a couple of Small Whites, a Speckled Wood and a Peacock.

### May 12th

Back home, and other commitments meant just a quick walk locally, but the sunshine had brought out at least five Holly Blues, including a female frantically searching a Holly tree for flower buds. She was successful in the end.

### May 13th

Still at home, and a longer walk. Even more Holly Blues were out – I counted 10 before becoming unsure whether duplication was setting in. There were numerous Orange Tips and Whites both Small and Green-veined. I also encountered my first Large White of the season. Peacocks were back out in force (I saw six), showing how they seem to be able to endure repeated bouts of inactivity in poor weather between short bursts of warmth. A check of the Small Heath colony revealed the first of the year, but just the one. I spotted only one Speckled Wood, too.

Dave



*Dunstable Downs*



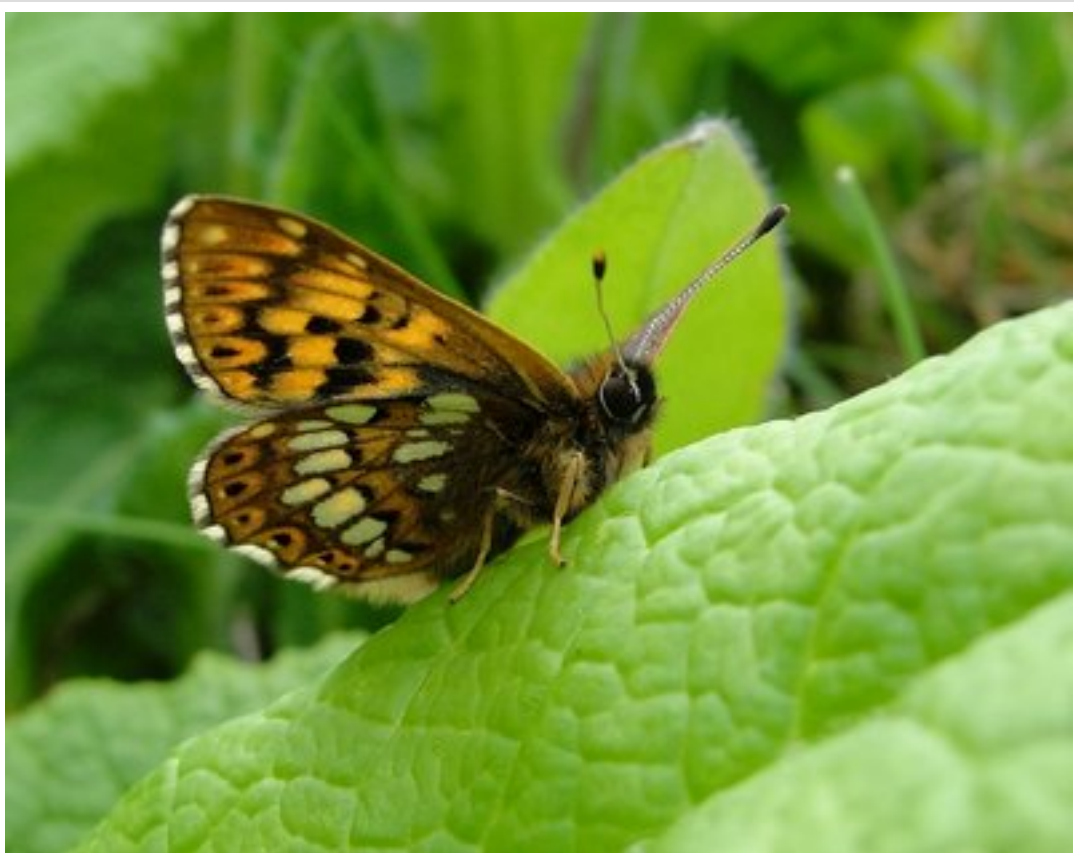
*Dunstable Downs*



*Duke on a lovely lush primrose at Totternhoe*



*Totternhoe - discolouration on the right hindwing of this one*



*Totternhoe*



*Dingy Skipper flattened against a teasel*



*Green Hairstreak: Totterhoe again*



*Holly blue ovipositing*



*Male Holly Blue taking salts*



*Male Holly Blue*



*Female Holly Blue*



*The obligatory Orange Tip!*

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-May-12 06:02 AM GMT

Cracking photos Dave I really like the one of the Duke on the Primrose as it serves to remind me how small they are! 😊

I see that you too have joined the Green Hairstreak list...less said about that the better 😏😏

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-May-12 06:35 AM GMT

#### Saturday May 19th

With the prospect of reasonable weather, I decided to spend the afternoon at Denbies Hillside. The first hour or so was bright rather than sunny, but quite warm and there were a few butterflies to be seen across the slopes. A few Dingy Skippers flew around somewhat lethargically, as did one or two Small Heaths and a solitary female Brimstone.

At the far (western) end of the hillside, I was following a Dingy in flight but was distracted by something smaller – a newly emerged Grizzled Skipper. Walking eastwards again, there was a flash of colour, and a male Adonis Blue crossed the path. Also new, it seemed to have slightly bent a wing on emergence. Whilst admiring this individual and taking the odd photo, I looked up to see the hitherto deserted hill now swarming with people. This turned out to be a BC outing, and from chatting to them it appeared that one or two other Adonis were out, and there were also Brown Argus and Green Hairstreak to be found.

I joined a little knot of folk enjoying one of the latter species – I'm pleased to see that the herbicide treatment of the scrub at Denbies last year has not eliminated this delightful butterfly as I had feared it might. After a pleasant conversation with a lady from Epsom whose name I didn't catch, the BC group disappeared from the hill as quickly as they had appeared.

I stayed a while longer – well worth it as I encountered a fresh male Common Blue thinking about roosting, but still opening his wings to bask every time the sun peeped through. I hoped to find a Brown Argus doing the same, but failed, though as compensation I was unexpectedly rewarded with a selection of basking Grizzled Skippers, including two sharing a twig.

A successful afternoon: the lack of full-on bright sunshine meant the butterflies weren't darting madly about – so photos were that much easier to come by. Overall, the Dingy Skippers were the most numerous of the species seen, with dozens out across the hillside. Small Heaths were also frequent, and it was pleasing to have counted six Grizzled Skippers.

Now, some photos. Apologies for the attempts at artistic ones with views behind the insects – I'm not sure whether these work or not.

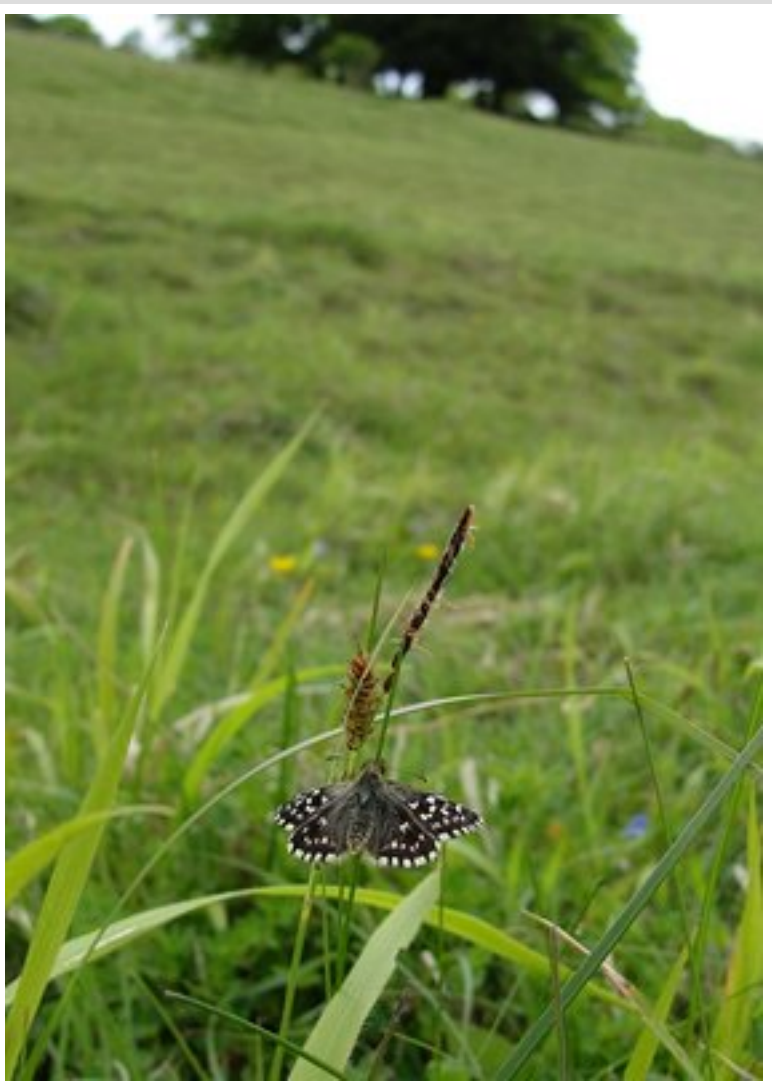
Dave











Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-May-12 07:45 AM GMT

**20th May** – cloudy and cool all day around here.

#### **21st May**

A brief foray into the local environs late this afternoon after work turned up several Orange Tips, all three of the common Whites, both male and female Brimstones, a Holly Blue and a Peacock. It was warm, and everything had suddenly speeded up. I think I've become used to lethargic butterflies!

Dave

### **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 23-May-12 04:43 AM GMT

#### **22nd May**

Mid-afternoon I went and had a first look at Harmondsworth Moor for 2012. There was not a great deal to see, despite very warm sunshine: two Small Heaths, a selection of whites, two or three Brimstones and Orange Tips. However, as I was on the point of leaving, I came across a Brown Argus – and then two more. However, no Common Blues were around yet.

I moved back a mile or two down the road to my home patch. This proved more fruitful, with four Small Heaths (one with an extra spot), a dozen or more male Orange Tips and several females, male and female Brimstones and all three Whites in reasonable numbers. A three-way tussle of whites resolved itself into a female Large White and males of the other two species. With respectable numbers of female Orange Tips around too, it really does become hard to distinguish them all without close scrutiny. One Speckled Wood was active in the woodland, along with numerous Holly Blues and half a dozen Peacocks carving the area up into distinct territories. Ten months old and still game for anything. Finally, I spotted a silvery shape darting amongst the wildflowers on a bit of disturbed ground that last year had been a major gas main excavation: a male Brown Argus.

I also saw this impressive dragonfly.

Dave





**Re: millerd**

by Padfield, 23-May-12 04:54 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

The dragonfly is a female broad-bodied chaser, *Libellula depressa*. They are very impressive – like huge hornets!

Guy

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-May-12 05:02 AM GMT

Thanks Guy – I did indeed think it was a hornet when it first whizzed by!

Dave

## Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-May-12 06:21 AM GMT

I'll swap you my Common Blue for a Brown Argus – I love those butterflies and can't wait to see them this year. Is it just me or does the underside look very grey/silver? It's surprising how much you can forget in a couple of months! 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-May-12 06:34 AM GMT

Lovely, aren't they? They do look especially silver in flight, considering how chocolatey-brown the upperside is. This one was quite new and very silver-grey underneath.

Dave

## Re: millerd

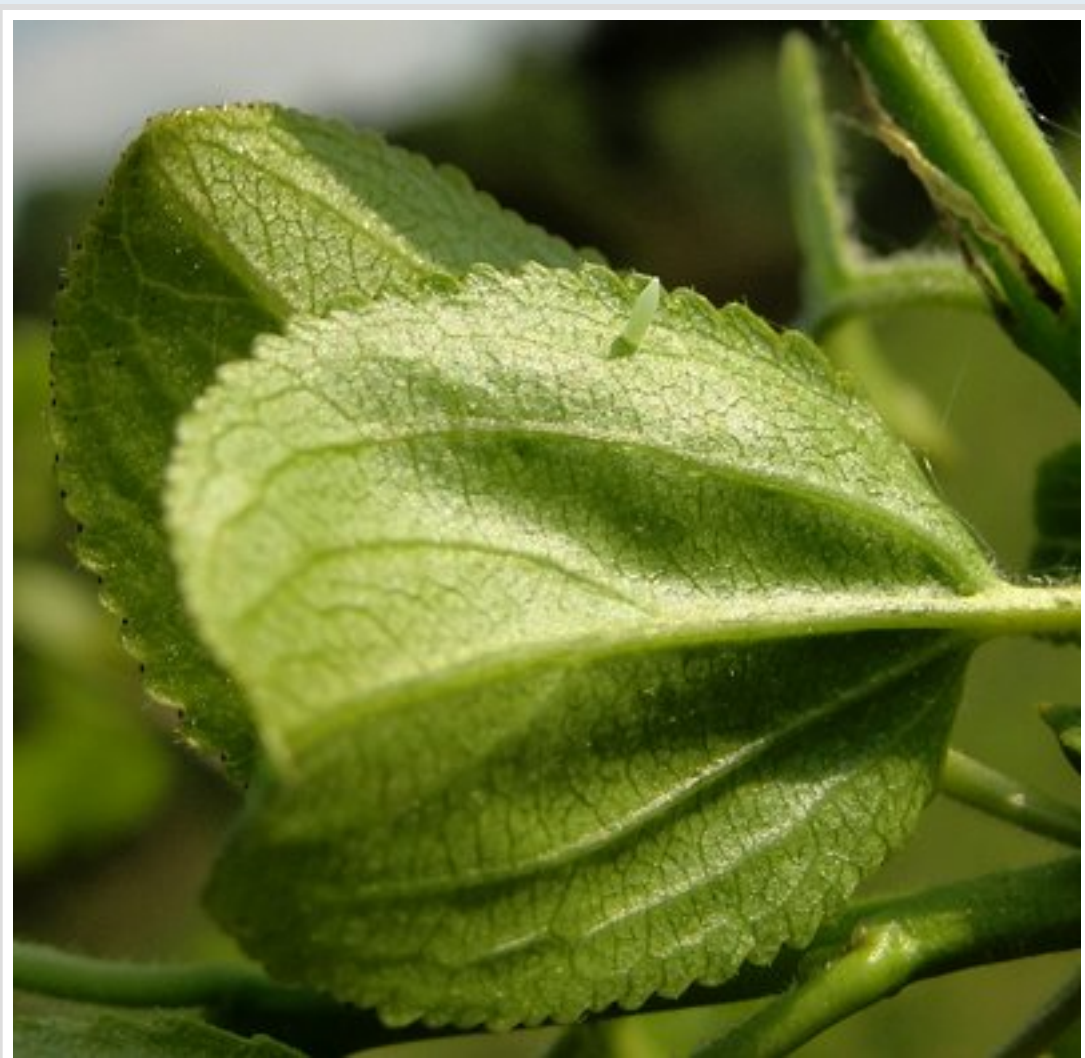
by millerd, 26-May-12 03:31 AM GMT

### 24th May

Gathering my 7-year-old from school first, I set off for a late afternoon visit to Denbies. Elliot persuaded me into a nectaring stop at Box Hill first, and on arrival started counting Brimstones and Small Heaths for me. In fact, fingers were enough for both species, and the socks stayed on. We saw as many female Brimstones as males, and at a distance watched one linger over a shrub. Subsequent examination revealed a pale turquoise egg on a buckthorn, plus an older one which was now yellow.

Sufficiently watered, we made for Denbies, and once one of us had run down the slope of Steers Field we passed through the gate onto the main hillside. We were greeted by a cluster of four male Adonis Blues hovering around a damp patch on the path, and although we did not venture far onto the hill, we saw at least another six males in half an hour. There were females too, looking quite inky blue in flight, but on closer examination only showing a dusting of blue scales. Also seen were numerous Small Heaths, several Dingy Skippers, and one each of Grizzled Skipper, Green Hairstreak and Brown Argus. As the time came to leave and face the M25, the butterflies were beginning to drift along to the eastern end of the field to roost. One of these days, I really must get down there at six or seven in the morning to watch them wake up.

Dave







## Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jun-12 02:24 AM GMT

Hooray! I seem to have the internet up and running again. Things deteriorated to the point I didn't even have a working phone. However, after endless meanderings through the help-line menu maze and interminable conversations with the BT call centre, something was done. So, where have I been and what's been seen?

### May 26th

A day out with all my boys at Ryton Country Park. We walked along the perimeter path to the BC-owned meadow and immediately encountered Green Hairstreaks. They were all along this path, mostly females down low but with a fair number of males sparring in the trees. Altogether, well into double figures were counted. On the sheltered far side of the meadow nearest the Police College, there were also good numbers of Dingy Skippers, a few Grizzled Skippers and a couple of sparring Small Coppers that would not leave each other (or anything else) alone. We also saw Brimstones, egg-laying females outnumbering males, and selection of whites and a Peacock. However, no Brown Argus and Common Blues – definitely late this year.

On the way home to the Heathrow area, I stopped briefly on the A 423 Southam Bypass where the roadside bank has been seeded with kidney vetch and Small Blues have been seen. Unfortunately, only a solitary Common Blue flew by, though it was 1830 and a bit on the late side I suppose. This bank is always really hot when the sun shines, and as well as Small Blues, I've seen several common species here in the past including Brown Argus.

Some Green Hairstreak photos from Ryton, one of the best sites I know for this species.

Dave



*Southam Bypass roadside: most of the yellow is Kidney Vetch*







## Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jun-12 04:49 AM GMT

### May 28th

An early departure from work allowed the chance drive down to Bentley Wood for the second part of the afternoon. I seem to have carefully dovetailed the visit between those of everyone else and saw not a soul the whole time I was there. On entering the Eastern Clearing, the first butterfly I saw was a Comma, somewhat surprisingly, followed by a Speckled Wood. Shortly afterwards I spotted the familiar gliding flight of a small fritillary. Following its path, I saw it make a sudden detour and settle on a low shrub – it had found a mating pair and attempted to get in on the act. They were all Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. The glorious sunshine had brought out both these and their Pearl-bordered cousins and in good numbers: the latter were more concentrated at the far end and to the left towards the newly cleared area, whereas the former were more towards the top of the clearing and along the ditch. That said, there was a good deal of overlap. Some of the SPBF were very new, utterly beautiful. In contrast, most of the PBF were a bit worn.

Other species? Well, I spotted a Grizzled Skipper and an Argent & Sable moth (and several Speckled Yellow moths as well). I have yet to see either a Duke of Burgundy or a Marsh Fritillary at Bentley, and nothing changed today, but the SPBFs make up for anything. Their intricately painted underside patterning is just amazing – and quite variable too.

Dave





*PBF - all the others are SPBF*







*Argent and Sable – none of my moth photos are very good...*

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-12 05:34 AM GMT

Cracking shots of the Small Pearls! I've visited Bentley in the evenings when there's no-one there and it's a special place. I too noticed the variability in the Small Pearls the ones I've seen seem more biege this year whereas last year they were more white and red, if that makes sense 😊?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jun-12 05:57 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – I wondered if I'd see you there at Bentley. Yes – this year's individuals seemed particularly pale to me too. But they really are lovely – I do like your "Tiffany Lamp" effect photo.

#### 30th May

With a bare hour free to have a quick look around my local patch, I set off with thunder rumbling ominously and the odd large raindrop falling. Luckily it passed to the southeast but even before the sun re-emerged, I encountered four Red Admirals and a couple of Speckled Woods flying and perching, being disturbed from their vantage points by the odd raindrop. Out in the open space of the "Heathrow Conservation Site" I found the Small Heath colony in fine fettle, with 14 counted within about 100 metres, but still no Common Blue or Brown Argus. Walking back alongside the River Colne, several whites appeared, and a Peacock, plus a single male Orange Tip patrolling and investigating every white flower and butterfly. It seems to have been a long season for them overall. Further Speckled Woods appeared, and in a patch where I've not seen one before, a single male Common Blue. Finally – not something I've previously noted as far as I can remember – a Mother Shipton moth.

Dave





## Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Jun-12 05:11 AM GMT

### 1st June

Despite the cloud, it was warm and bright, so after work I had a walk around Harmondsworth Moor near Heathrow. It proved bright enough for four male and two female Common Blues to be active – including a mating pair. There were a few Small Heath and one fairly new male Brown Argus, whose underside spotting was faint enough for the distinctive colon mark (":") to be difficult to see – but no other butterflies. There were, however, hundreds of damselflies, mostly of the type that are blue with black "thumbprints" on the wings. One of these had come to an unfortunate end in the embrace of a yellow crab spider – at least they do not dine solely off butterflies. There were also quite a few moths, clearly not being so insistent on the sunshine as their butterfly relatives. I could identify Cinnabar, and Burnet Companion, but not the one below, of which there were many. An interesting wander, for a cloudy afternoon.

Dave



*Common Blue in flagrante*



*Very blue female Common Blue*



*Brown Argus with indistinct spotting*







*Crab Spider dining handsomely*



*Unidentified moth – any ideas?*

**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-12 06:47 AM GMT

I don't know about the Moth Dave but if you find out let me know cos I've seen loads at my local patch! The other night at Five Rivers there were loads of the Damselflies which I think are Banded Demoiselles. Lush Brown Argus – another species I have yet to see this year 🤔😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jun-12 06:53 AM GMT

I would hazard a guess at Silver Ground Carpet for the moth but willing to be corrected by the experts 😊

cheers,

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Jun-12 06:23 AM GMT

#### 2nd June

I checked the satellite photos at noon, and though Heathrow had 13 degrees and drizzly overcast, there seemed to be some sort of clearance headed for the south coast – and the temperature at Shoreham was 4 degrees higher. Nothing for it but a trip down to Mill Hill. The first shock was looking left at the roundabout as I was about to join the M25 at J13 and finding a shiny brown limo alongside with a familiar lady wearing a blue hat in it. On her way to Epsom I believe...

But I digress.

With perfect timing, the sun came out as I walked down onto the lush slopes of Mill Hill, and with the sun came a scintillation of blue butterflies. They were mostly Adonis, but there were a fair number of Common Blues as well. It was impossible to count them as they busied themselves searching for females over the Horseshoe Vetch. Towards the bottom of the hill, it became evident that there were nearly as many females as males, and I saw much courtship behaviour and several mating pairs. Overall, there must have been 100s of butterflies, but I do find it very difficult to count them accurately. In addition to the Blues, there were Brimstones, Brown Argus, Speckled Woods, Small Heaths, Small Coppers, Dingy Skippers (very worn now) and Grizzled Skippers.



*Common Blue*



*Common Blue*



*Adonis Blue*



*Adonis Blue*



*Adonis (f)*



*Adonis (f)*



*very faded Dingy Skipper*



*Grizzled Skipper*



*Small Copper*

**Re: millerd**

by ChrisC, 03-Jun-12 06:34 AM GMT

i think your moth is a common carpet.

Chris

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 03-Jun-12 08:56 PM GMT

Thanks, Chris. I have Googled images of the Common Carpet (*Epirrhoe alternata*) and that's what it looks like.

Dave

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 07-Jun-12 07:44 AM GMT

6th June

After the showers today I was able to have a walk around locally this afternoon. It was pretty windy, but the spells of sunshine brought a few hardy souls out. I came across a couple of Red Admirals, vigorously patrolling areas that ten days ago were overseen by Peacocks, a Speckled Wood, several Small Heaths, one Common Blue and my first Large Skipper of the year. I also managed a reasonable photo of a Mother Shipton moth nectaring – they normally are impossible to approach. I always think the markings are more like an elephant than a witch...

Itching to get out to see more esoteric stuff, but the weather is conspiring against me!

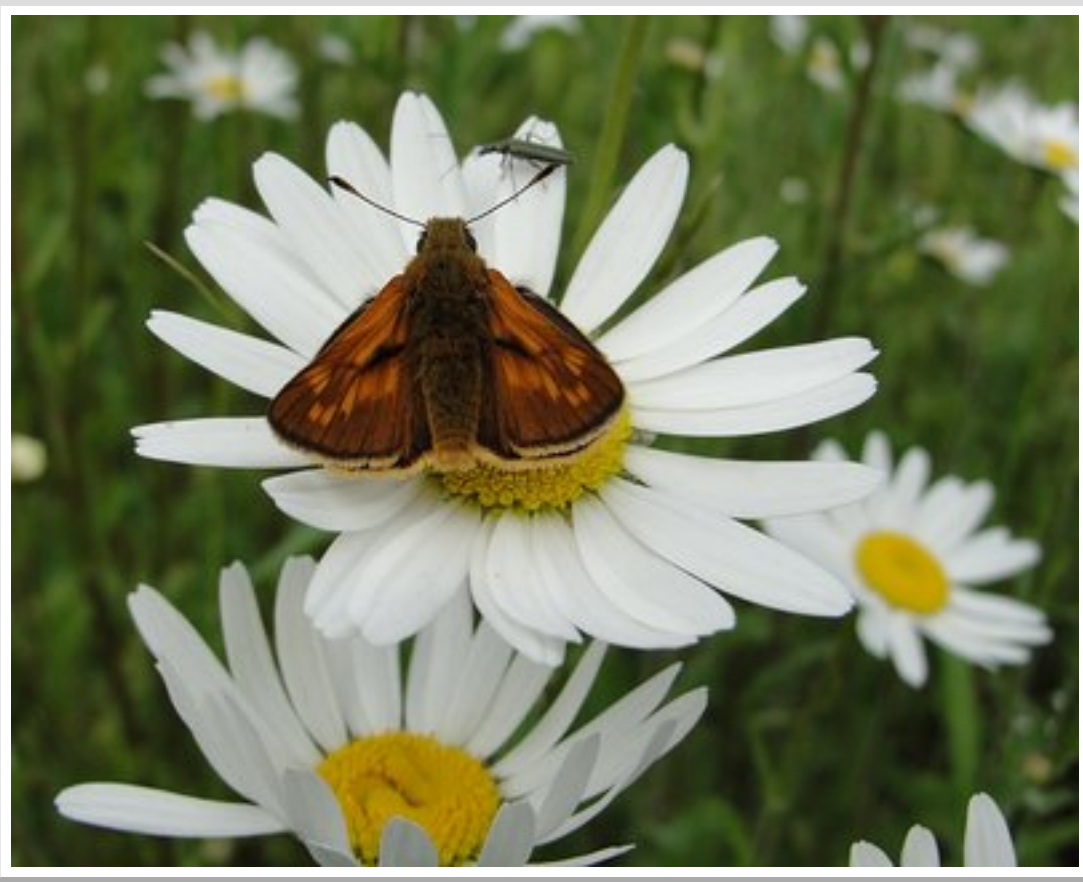
Dave



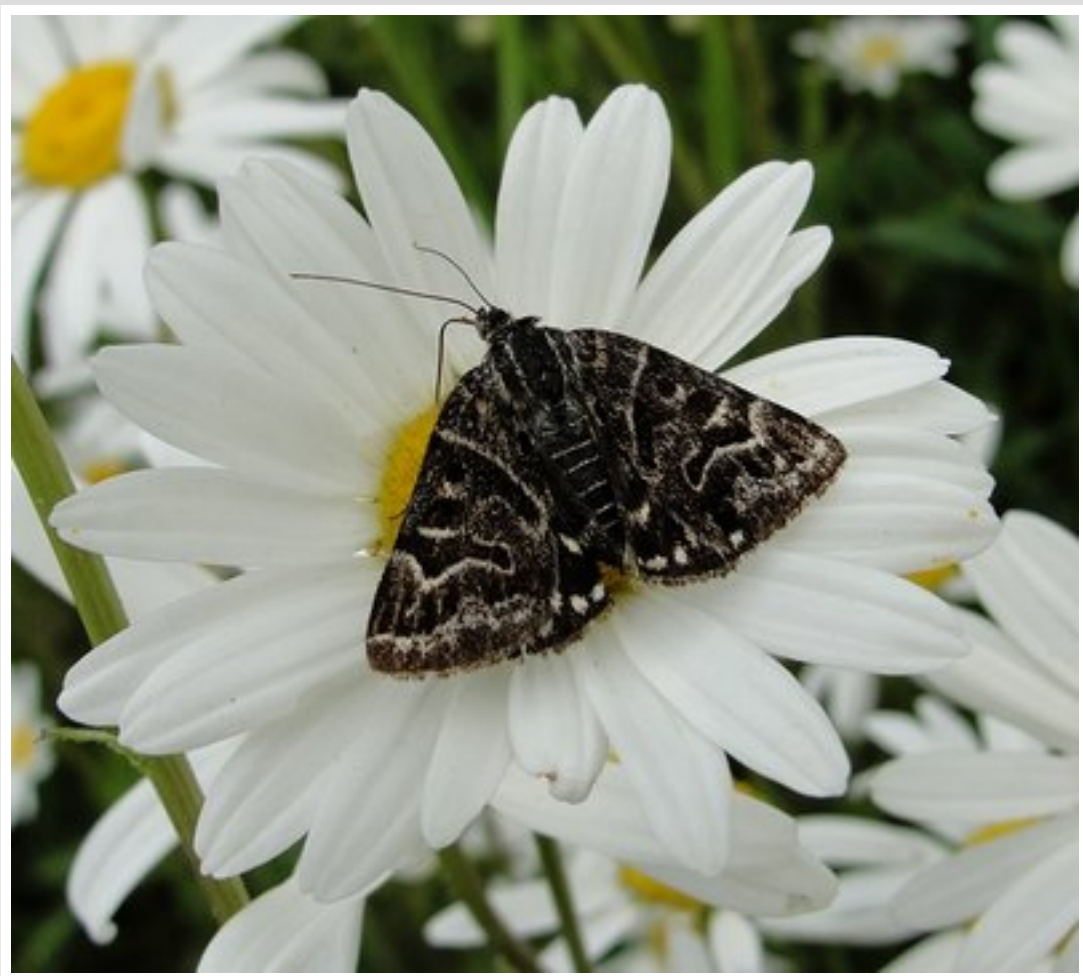
*the more worn of two seen – the other was very lively*



*This one appears to be sucking liquid from the petal*



*very fresh individual*



## **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 07-Jun-12 11:43 PM GMT

### **7th June**

Not a promising day at all, but I took an opportunity to pop into Totternhoe at around noon to look for Small Blues. There was no sunshine, and it was beginning to rain, but amongst the bushes in the usual area I managed to count no fewer than 21 roosting butterflies. I'm sure there were many more, as they were not easy to spot, but at least there was no double-counting as none of them was going anywhere. Given the conditions, they were not about to open up, so photography was limited to some silvery undersides – some individuals looked quite fresh. There was a good deal of Kidney Vetch around, more than I had noticed last year, so this at least bodes well for future generations.

Dave



*Small Blue in the rain*

## **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 10-Jun-12 05:01 AM GMT

### **9th June**

Took the children down to Box Hill this afternoon and naturally enough kept an eye open for anything of interest – by this time of year, Marbled Whites and Dark Green Fritillaries are often flying. But it was not to be – the wind was still strong, and all we saw braving it were a handful of Small Heaths, Common Blues and (mostly female) Brimstones, with a singleton Red Admiral in the woods and just one new Meadow Brown that disappeared into a tussock when the sun went in.

Dave







*female Brimstone*

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jun-12 02:04 AM GMT

### 14th June

Managing to swop days off around allowed me out on what appeared to be a promising sort of morning. I headed for Wrecclesham and was there before ten, but the sun was becoming a bit sporadic. Conditions were a bit breezy, but fairly warm, and I quickly spotted the first Glanville Fritillary. After seeing another two, all in well-spaced out locations, I bumped into RobS (good to meet you, Rob) whilst encountering a Green Hairstreak. We circled round in opposite directions and met up again, during which time I'd found a further three Glanvilles. As Rob and I chatted, another UKB member joined us and recommended a patch near the lake in the old sand pit. Off we went, but though thoroughly entertained by the frog chorus down at the lake, we only saw one more Fritillary.

As well as the Glanvilles and the Green Hairstreak, there were several Common Blues and Large Skippers, plus a couple of Small Skippers and Meadow Browns. The last of these were really dark, with striking orange in contrast underneath the forewing. Not at all like the Meadow Browns of late summer! Burnet Companions and Cinnabars were very frequent, too.

On the way home, I looked in at both Dawney's Hill (Pirbright) and Fairmile Common (Cobham) for Silver-studded Blues, but despite a burst of sunshine at the latter, saw none at all. Still a tad early, I suspect.

Dave



*exquisite painted underside*



*very fresh*



*Green Hairstreak*



*male Meadow Brown*



*male Large Skipper*



*Small Skipper*



*Another blue female Common Blue*

### Re: millerd

by David M, 15-Jun-12 04:43 AM GMT

Image 3 is a lovely underside shot, Millerd.

Well done!

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jun-12 06:03 AM GMT

Thank you, David. They really do have beautiful undersides.

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Jun-12 06:15 AM GMT

I agree with Dave Dave that underside shot is pure text book 😊 Great to see Small Skippers are out I'll have to start checking their haunts round my way.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Jun-12 06:35 AM GMT

#### 17th June

An opportunity to have stroll around the local patch presented itself today and off I set: mostly sunny, breezy, but pleasantly warm for a change. The highlight of the excursion was the explosion in Small Heath numbers to between 30 and 40, perhaps more. In the same area, depicted below, I counted around a dozen Common Blues; in the brambles at the edge of the woodland I saw five or six Large Skippers. Overall, I also encountered a couple of Red Admirals, three Speckled Woods, a Meadow Brown, a Small White and a Holly Blue.

In the course of following a Large Skipper over the daisies, I caught sight of this large (and slightly battered) green beetle. Can anyone identify this one?

Dave



**Re: millerd**

by Susie, 18-Jun-12 06:37 AM GMT

Your beetle is a rose chafer, Dave. Once seen, never forgotten. They are amazing little critters (for some reason they have a habit of dive bombing me at Denbies – it can be very disconcerting!). 🐞

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 18-Jun-12 06:43 AM GMT

Thanks, Susie. Interestingly, when I disturbed the little chap, he kept buzzing round me in persistent fashion for some while! It must be what they do 😊

Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Jun-12 06:03 AM GMT

### 20th June

I decided to take the day off and have a circuitous wander round Surrey.

First up was Thursley Common, where the Silver-studded Blues had just started to emerge. I spotted nine, all males, widely spread out, plus one Speckled Wood in the wooded margin to the heathland. It is worth noting that this area has ground-nesting birds and therefore a bit of care is needed as the paths are not very evident.

Not too far from Thursley is Botany Bay. I had hoped to see the first White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillaries, but there was not a sign. I made do with around a dozen Wood Whites (some of which were egg-laying), several Large Skippers, a couple of Speckled Woods and a Common Blue.

Moving on, I headed now for Denbies, wondering if the sunshine had brought out the Marbled Whites. Indeed it had, but only a handful. Small Heath were numerous, and were accompanied by Meadow Browns, Large Skippers and a solitary Holly Blue.

A short step now to Box Hill. Preparations are underway here for the Olympic cycling, and car-parking at the top has all but disappeared – as has the tea counter! However, a mobile arrangement has been substituted by the NT for the time being. As for butterflies, I saw Small Heaths, Meadow Browns, large Skippers, Common Blues and a Brimstone. No Marbled Whites here yet, nor any Dark Green Fritillaries.

The final port of call – Fairmile Common. The Silver-studded Blues were out here too, and in greater numbers than at Thursley, especially considering the small area I looked at at Fairmile. I counted ten males and two females. All were very new, and the females showed off the amazing sheen they have when fresh and the sun catches them.

Dave



*Wood White, Botany Bay*



*Marbled White, Denbies*



*Male SSB, Fairmile*



*Female SSB, Fairmile, showing sheen on wings*



*Male SSB, Fairmile*





*Male SSB, Fairmile*



*Female SSB, Fairmile*



*Male SSB, Fairmile*



*Female SSB, Fairmile*

**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-12 06:22 AM GMT

Cracking shots Dave 😊 It gives me hope for "my" SSB's at Slop Bog. I'll check em next chance I get. That last shot of the female SSB is lush 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 21-Jun-12 06:39 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – best of luck with them. They are definitely my favourite Blue. It has taken a few years to get a shot of a female like that: they usually spend so much time buried in the vegetation that they get worn in no time. Generally, the only way I find them is because there are attentive males clustering around a tussock of grass which is hiding a female.

Dave

**Re: millerd**

by NickMorgan, 22-Jun-12 05:41 AM GMT

Lovely pictures of amazing butterflies. They are all foreign to me! I was completely stumped by the female Silver Studded Blue. I wish we had those species up here, but at least it is easy for me to identify the limited number of species we have!

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 24-Jun-12 07:11 AM GMT

Thanks, Nick. I envy you the sight of Small Tortoiseshells – currently absent from my part of southern Britain... 😞

I realise I missed a day earlier:

**19th June**

A brief visit to Harmondsworth Moor after work today, mostly to see if Marbled Whites had appeared (they hadn't). I did however see several fresh Meadow Browns and Large Skippers, a few Small Heaths, and a couple of care-worn Common Blues – plus a number of this attractive yellow moth.

Dave





**Re: millerd**

by ChrisC, 24-Jun-12 07:18 AM GMT

yellow shell for the moth.

Chris

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 25-Jun-12 03:56 AM GMT

**24th June**

As I was in the vicinity, visiting a miniature railway with my seven-year-old, I dropped into Dawney's Hill (near Woking) this afternoon, There were about a dozen Silver-studded Blues out here, all males, over a wide area. Nothing else seen, bar one or two Small Heaths.

Dave



**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 25-Jun-12 05:29 AM GMT

That is another lush photo Dave 🍷 That's it I'm off to Slop Bog this week!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 25-Jun-12 05:34 AM GMT

Go get 'em, Wurzel! 😊 Little gems...

Dave

**Re: millerd**

by Gothic\_dreams, 25-Jun-12 05:38 AM GMT

Lovely photos Millerd, look forward to seeing more 😊

Chris

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 26-Jun-12 04:00 AM GMT

And me more of yours, Chris – many thanks for the kind comments.

**25th June**

A very brief opportunity after work to whisk round a small part of my local patch: I saw only one species, but nine Red Admirals isn't bad going in a small area. Six of these were attempting to occupy the same leafy glade next to the river – this does not work and there were constant dogfights and spiralling tussles up into the trees. I pointed the camera more in hope than expectation, but managed a distant shot which nevertheless caught no fewer than five in a *mélée* together. When any were close enough to look at properly, they were unsurprisingly a bit worn.

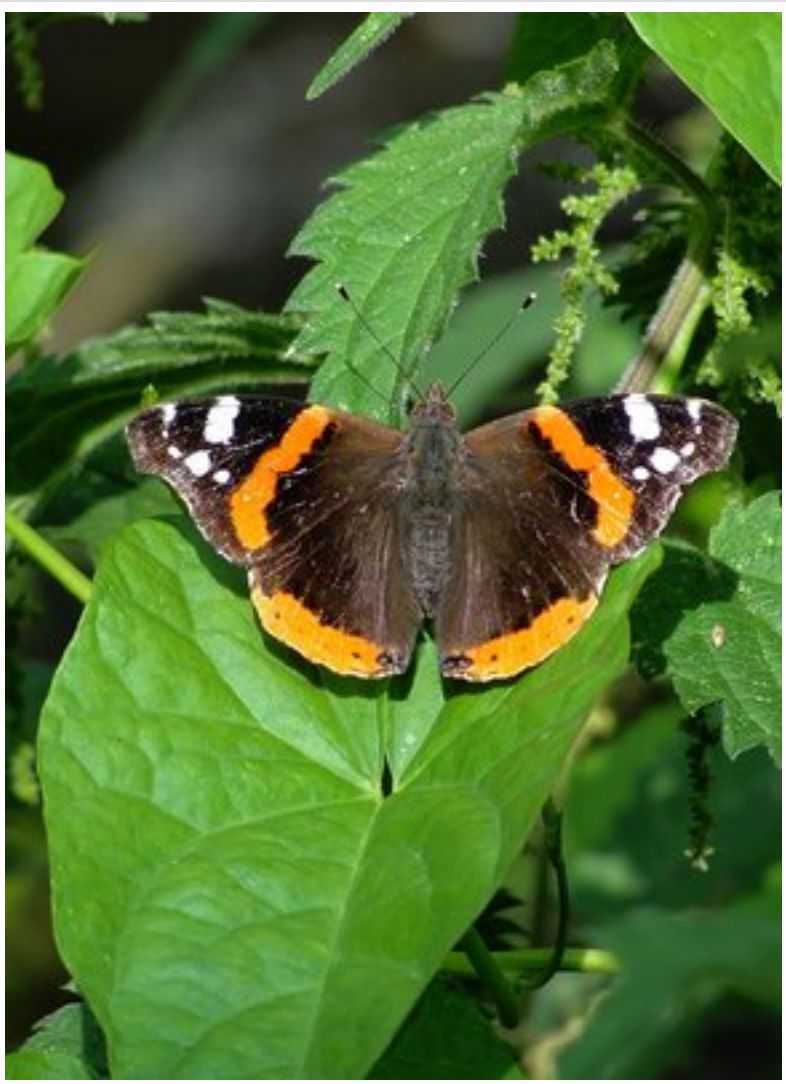
Dave



*disputed territory*



*aerial battle*



*a protagonist resting between bouts*

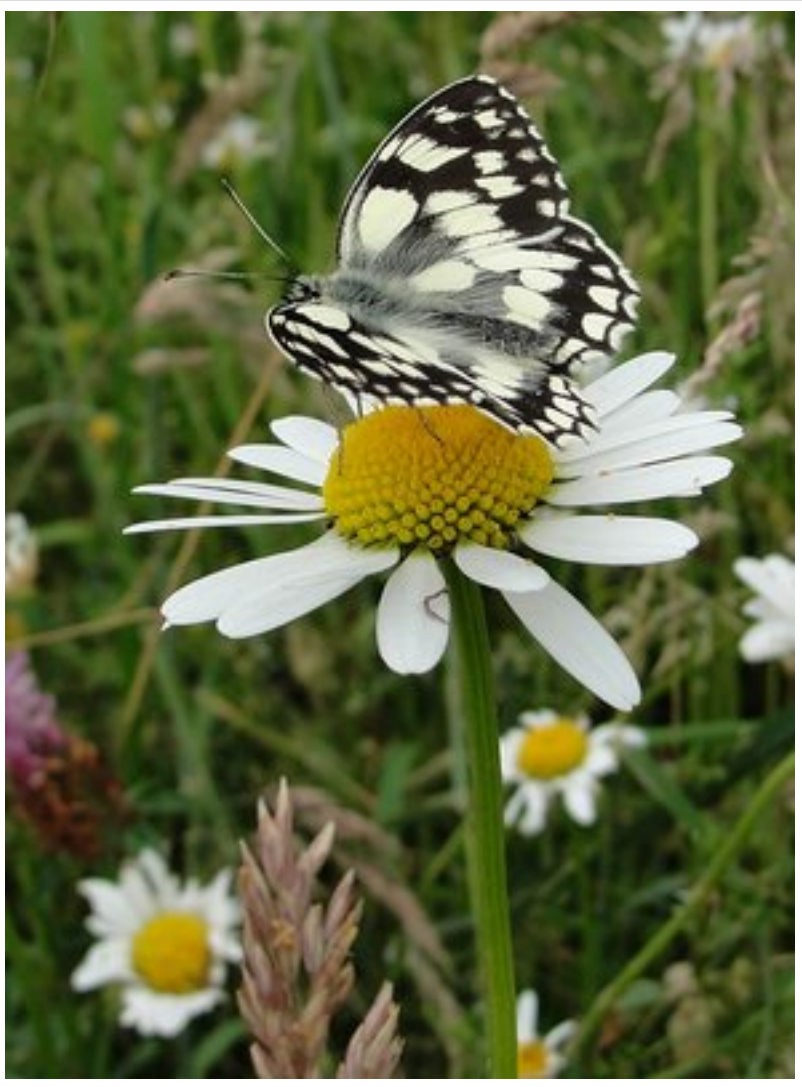
## **Re: millerd**

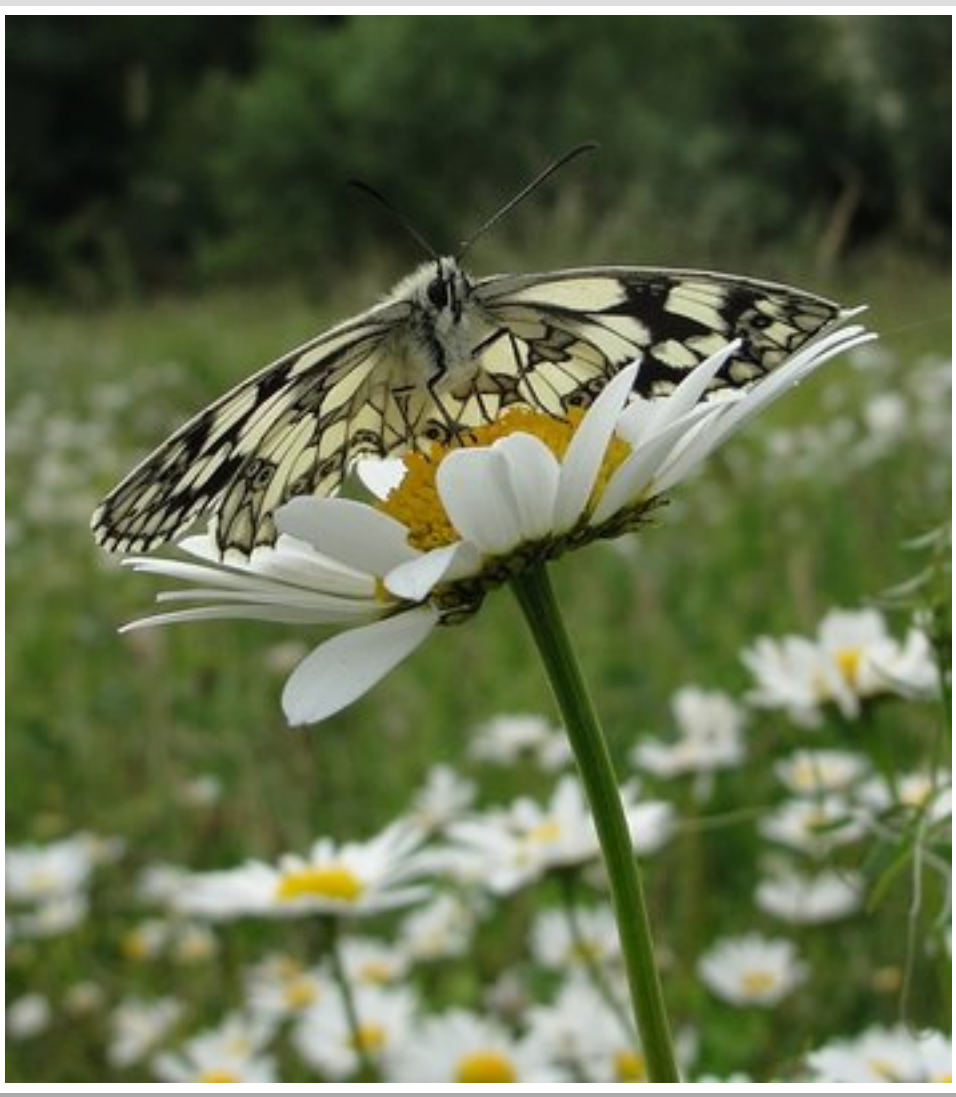
by millerd, 28-Jun-12 03:44 AM GMT

### **27th June**

It was six o'clock, overcast, but still very warm and muggy. A visit to Harmondsworth Moor can't hurt, I thought. I found good numbers of Meadow Browns of both sexes, but the star of the evening was a pretty fresh Marbled White, the first I've seen here this year. With no wind and barely any sun to energise it, it was relatively easy to approach.

Dave





**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 28-Jun-12 05:41 AM GMT

Cracking shots Dave- my Marbled White tonight just wouldn't sit still and when it did it wouldn't open it's wings 😞 Still now I've got photos of one many more should follow!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: millerd**

by Gothic\_dreams, 28-Jun-12 08:32 AM GMT

Stunning Marbled White shots, one of my favourite butterflies and lovely to see quite a fresh one 😊

Chris

**Re: millerd**

by Debbie, 28-Jun-12 02:56 PM GMT

The marbled white is beautiful. Debbie

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 29-Jun-12 04:17 AM GMT

Another favourite, the Marbled White. Thank you all.

**28th June**

Once again, a very late excursion, and only locally, at the glorious tail end of a hot day. There were numerous sparring Red Admirals again in various spots (mostly the shadier ones) and when I came to the conservation area I was met with good numbers (over 30) of Small Heaths and more Meadow Browns than I've seen in previous years – over a dozen in a smallish area. There were still a couple of Common Blues, including a blue female that deserved a photo, but wasn't prepared to sit for one. Large Skippers completed the roster here, mainly females now, but beautifully orange in the late sunshine.

On the way back, I came across a summer Comma (*f. hutchinsoni*), perching and chasing anything that moved – Red Admirals, dragonflies, swallows – and even reacting to the aircraft taking off from Heathrow passing only a couple of hundred feet up. Lovely butterflies, and pleasing to see them out at last. Near to home, I watched a pair of Red Admirals that I took to be courting. They chased in and out of the treetops in close association (with none of the spiralling up and swooping down of the dogfights). A couple of times they landed close together 20 feet up, only to take off again after a second or two. I lost track of them when they landed together on the ivy surrounding an ash tree and as far as I could tell, disappeared into it. If this is what they do, it is unsurprising that finding a mating pair is pretty well unheard of.

Dave







**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 30-Jun-12 03:34 AM GMT

Another scoot round in late afternoon on a more restricted route in rather blustery winds. The Red Admirals were undaunted in their usual haunts, and another new Comma appeared as well. Nothing else except a male Small White, the first of these for a little while.

Dave





## Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 30-Jun-12 06:40 AM GMT

Cracking shots of the Comma Dave, I'll keep my eyes open for those now! 🍷 Everything round my way seems to be two weeks behind everywhere else?!

Havecs goodn

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jul-12 07:38 AM GMT

### 30th June

A whole day available, so I thought another Surrey tour was in order to see what new delights might be out.

Botany Bay first: I was there between about ten and midday, and was disappointed to see no sign at all of White Admirals or Silver-washed Fritillaries. I came across a few Ringlets (first ones for me this year), Meadow Browns, Speckled Woods, Red Admirals and Large Skippers – and only a handful of each. Oh, and a solitary Comma.

On to Denbies, where despite quite a lot of sun, a fierce wind was blowing up the slope, deterring the butterflies from venturing forth. Calmer interludes saw good numbers of Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns, Small Heaths and Large Skippers. Suddenly there was a flash of orange at the top of the hill – a Dark Green Fritillary? And so it proved to be, as a few minutes later it threw itself into the grass close to the path and I was able to get a photo.

Before heading to the top of Box Hill, I thought I'd try Juniper Bottom. This lovely valley is well-sheltered from the wind, and SWF are seen here too – but not today. There were Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Green-veined Whites, Speckled Woods and no less than three Brimstones, all males. I couldn't approach them closely enough to tell whether they were new individuals or hibernators from 2011.

And so to Box Hill for much-needed tea (the new café is open). Refreshed, I went out onto Burford Spur, where surprisingly the wind was not too bad. When the sun shone, the hillside came alive with butterflies – Meadow Browns in bigger numbers than last year, Small Heaths, and Marbled Whites predominantly, though there were as always Large Skippers too. However, the best part was seeing perhaps a dozen Dark Green Fritillaries whizzing over the slopes, mainly being chased by all the smaller butterflies they constantly disturbed. The average male DGF appears to be a bit of a wimp.

I just had time to pop into Fairmile Common. The Silver-studded Blues were mostly already roosting, but one or two opened their wings. The low evening light brought out different aspects of the blue colour – the new ones in particular shimmer beautifully in a variety of shades. I counted about thirty butterflies without searching particularly hard.

Dave



*Ringlet: Botany Bay*



*Speckled Wood: Botany Bay*



*Dark Green Fritillary: Denbies*



*Marbled White underside: Box Hill*



*Marbled White: Box Hill*



*Dark Green Fritillary: Box Hill*



*Silver-studded Blue underside: Fairmile*



*Silver-studded Blue: Fairmile*



*Silver-studded Blue: Fairmile*

## Re: millerd

by Gothic\_dreams, 01-Jul-12 07:50 AM GMT

Some more lovely photos Dave, more cracking Marbled White shots 😊

Chris

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jul-12 07:51 AM GMT

Thanks, Chris. I was pleased with those two in particular.

Dave

## Re: millerd

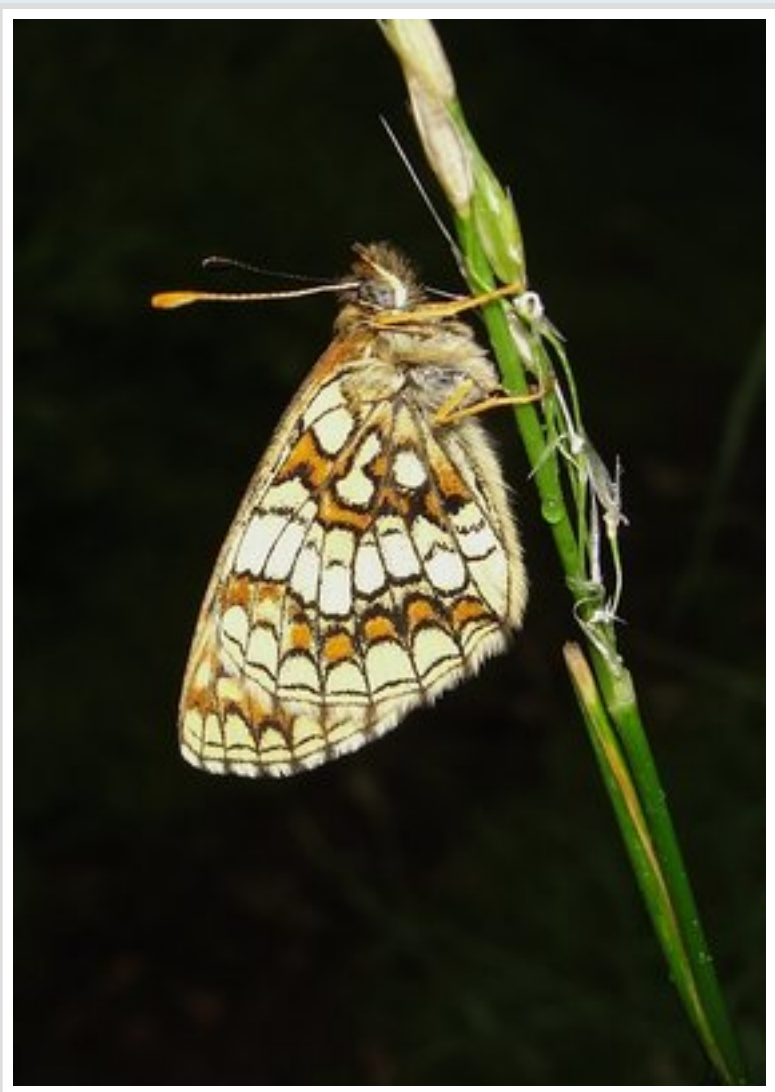
by millerd, 03-Jul-12 07:33 AM GMT

### 1st July

As luck would have it, I was invited down to Dover for a day or two. It seemed like only a slight detour to drive via Canterbury, and only an even smaller detour on top to take in East Blean Woods. Leaving in sunshine, I passed through torrential rain in the middle of Kent, and reached the car park around half past three, with it only just easing off. I squelched into the woods and managed to locate one or two roosting Heath Fritillaries, one of which I tried to photograph with the flash on. As with the Orange Tips right at the start of this diary, the poor thing looks as if it was disturbed in dead of night. A few Meadow Browns were actually flying in the gloom.

But then the weather brightened, and the sun burst through the trees, sparkling off the raindrops adorning every plant. Within a couple of minutes, dozens of Heath Fritillaries emerged from hiding places all over the clearings nearby. They were a lovely sight in the sunshine-after-rain light, with their delicate flutter-and-glide flight, and basking on the low shrubs and the abundant cow-wheat. Many were quite worn, but some appeared freshly-emerged, so it must be still worth a visit for a little while yet.

Dave



*with flash...*



*...and without*



*female*



*female*





*female (with raindrop)*



*female (same individual)*



*male*

## Re: millerd

by Jack Harrison, 03-Jul-12 05:03 PM GMT

Dave:

...I tried to photograph with the flash on. As with the Orange Tips right at the start of this diary, the poor thing looks as if it was disturbed in dead of night.

I have had exactly that problem. The flash with my camera, overrides the "natural" exposure, so eg if I am using F/8, the flash sets exposure at say 1/160. This is fine for the target butterfly but results in a totally underexposed background. I minimise the problem by using a wide aperture, eg F/4. The flash output is unchanged, but the background now receives 4 times more light.

Using manual settings would enable even more control but are frankly a bit of a hassle

This picture shows was taken at F/4.5 with flash. No crop or other treatment, merely re-sized. The picture lacks "sparkle" but that is correct in the

circumstances: the weather was cloudy and very dull.

**PLEASE UPDATE YOUR ACCOUNT TO ENABLE 3RD PARTY HOSTING**



FOR IMPORTANT INFO, PLEASE GO TO:  
[www.photobucket.com/P500](http://www.photobucket.com/P500)

Jack

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Jul-12 10:41 PM GMT

That's interesting Jack – and the result is excellent. I will certainly have to investigate the various settings that I can easily adjust (or remember at the appropriate time!). I'm afraid I like my photography to come reasonably easily, so that I can concentrate on the creeping up on the target without worrying that I've forgotten to twiddle knob "A" a quarter turn or press button "B". Every now and then I get some results that I really like and I can tell from the comments on this site that everyone's opinion of a "good" photo differs, so that's fine.

### 3rd July

A damp day, but warm. I ventured out locally regardless, and managed to see five Red Admirals, a dozen Meadow Browns, four female Common Blues (including these two – one rather tired and the other quite fresh) and twenty or more Small Heaths. I also clocked my first local Ringlet, perched several metres up in a tree.

Dave







**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 03-Jul-12 11:09 PM GMT

One from Sunday I overlooked...

Dave



**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-12 11:29 PM GMT

That's the kind of shot that I like to get... 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: millerd**

by MikeOxon, 03-Jul-12 11:42 PM GMT

**"Jack Harrison" wrote:**

Using manual settings would enable even more control but are frankly a bit of a hassle

Flash is difficult to use well with most cameras. Many have an option in the flash menu called "slow sync" (I know Lumix do), which adds flash to the background exposure. In the Lumix instructions they say "When taking pictures against a dark background landscape, this feature will slow the shutter speed when the flash is activated. Dark background landscape will appear brighter."

On-camera flash always gives very 'flat' (low contrast) lighting but, fortunately, in close-up shots, the flash is relatively well to the side, which helps a

lot. Putting some sort of diffuser over the flash head (a single ply of tissue works well) also helps to soften the light and make the results less harsh.

Mike

### Re: millerd

by Jack Harrison, 04-Jul-12 12:06 AM GMT

Mike says:

Many have an option in the flash menu called "slow sync" (I know Lumix do), which adds flash to the background exposure.

I can't find that option but it is no doubt there. All I can find in the flash option is 1st or 2nd curtain. So where do I look?

Jack

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jul-12 04:44 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Some good shots there, I really like the Small Heath with the angled horizon in the background.

Cheers,

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by Jack Harrison, 04-Jul-12 05:02 AM GMT

I asked:

All I can find in the flash option is 1st or 2nd curtain. So where do I look?

A PM has pointed me in the right direction. Thanks Mike.

Jack

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Jul-12 05:10 AM GMT

And I have found the option on my Sony. Let's see what happens - I have a feeling there will be a few more photos to be taken in dull weather this year.

Thanks everyone for the info, and for your appreciative comment about the Small Heath, Neil. No flash there, just a lowering sky...

Which has inspired me to have a "fiddle" in Photoscape. This photo was so much shades of grey, I wondered how the monochrome treatment would work.

Dave



## Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Jul-12 11:41 PM GMT

### 4th July

Surprised to see a bit of sunshine around lunchtime, I ventured out and decided to extend my local walk further north along the River Colne to a point near Colnbrook known as the Mad Bridge. This is all still part of the Heathrow Conservation area and after the initial landscaping into gentle slopes and creation of the main path, it has been left wild. The poor soil has generated loads of flowering plants, and at present with all the rain it is a very colourful sight (and indeed site!).

The commonest butterfly is the Small Heath. Though numbers thin out a bit as you walk north, they are everywhere, and there must be hundreds of them here. Meadow Browns were frequent too, and I was surprised to see so many Common Blues today. These two species are also ubiquitous along this walk. In lesser numbers I found Large Skippers, plus one male Small Skipper; there were Commas and Red Admirals, including two of the latter egg-laying on the generous stands of nettle that border the river; a handful of Whites made an appearance, both Small and Green-veined. However, the highlight of the excursion for me was discovering no less than three Small Tortoiseshells. Two were very new, but the third was a little more careworn. They are the first I've seen this year anywhere I've been.

Dave







## Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Jul-12 04:26 AM GMT

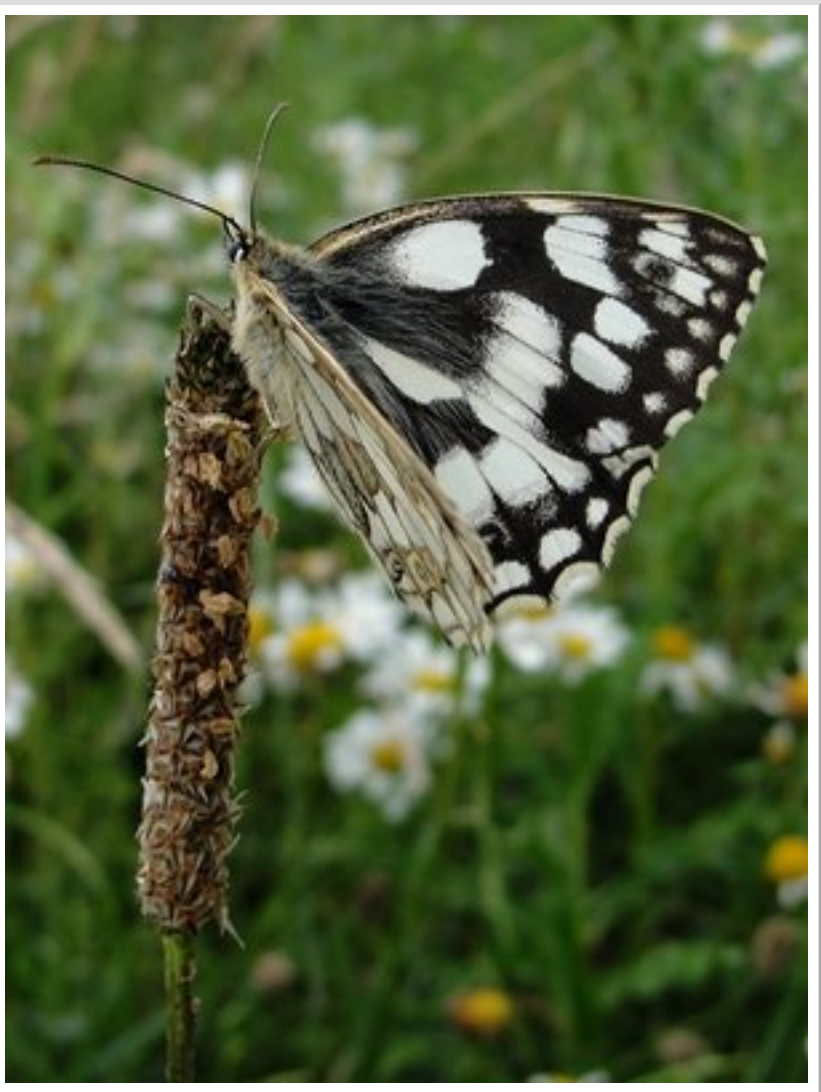
### 4th July (continued)

I found time later to see how the Marbled Whites were doing at Harmondsworth Moor. Despite large grey clouds spoiling the sunshine as I arrived, I saw at least a dozen flying and there were no doubt more tucked down in the grass. There were a similar number of Meadow Browns, plus a couple of Small Skippers, but no Common Blues. The colony here and the one a mile away nearer home are well out of synch with each other it seems!

Dave









## Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jul-12 05:12 AM GMT

### 5th July

A bright start with a hint of better, perhaps. I set off for Black Park (Strawberry Wood), adjacent to Pinewoods Studios in South Bucks, with the aim of seeing White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillaries. The initial lack of proper sunshine made them slow to appear, but I did glimpse several of the latter within a short while (mostly high up), and then eventually a couple of the former too. Blue sky was sighted on the horizon, so I waited... Out came the sun, and with it, the butterflies. I saw at least half a dozen SWF, probably a few more, including one splendid individual that just kept coming back to the same patch of tall thistles. Of White Admirals, I saw at most five, but none obliged by coming down to the brambles to nectar. However, one came down instead to hover over the damp path; it then approached closer and closer before eventually settling on my lower trouser leg to take on salts – in the manner of a certain close relative (of whom there was no sign today).

As well as the main attractions, I saw a lot of Ringlets, plus Meadow Browns and Large Skippers, and one Red Admiral. Finally, I disturbed a small grey butterfly that made its way laboriously up into a birch tree, and then an oak. At its brief stop, I identified it as a male Purple Hairstreak.

Dave







**Re: millerd**

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jul-12 05:22 AM GMT

Some nice photos there Dave.

I have yet to see any Marbled whites, Silver-washed Fritillaries or White Admirals around here. I am hoping to get out to Oversley Wood or Snitterfield Bushes sometime soon for a look although I fear for the WA a bit following the low numbers in the midlands last year.

Neil.

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 06-Jul-12 05:25 AM GMT

Thanks, Neil.

I hope to have a look at Ryton on Saturday (weather and children permitting!), so I wonder if there'll be anything to see.

Dave

**Re: millerd**

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jul-12 05:38 AM GMT

Weather on Saturday is looking reasonable so far.

Warks BC have their open day at Ryton Wood Meadows on the following Saturday (14th). I am hoping to make it over there then.

Neil.

**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-12 07:01 AM GMT

Brill shots Dave I'm chuffed that you managed to get the SWF and WA, the White Admiral seems to be very attached to you – are you testing out Purple Emperor bait? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jul-12 07:16 AM GMT

Well, Wurzel, I'm not washing that pair until July is out, if that's what you mean! 😊

Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Jul-12 05:50 AM GMT

### 6th July

The window of opportunity stayed obstinately shut for most of the day. A very brief and squelchy walk close to home when the sun finally made an appearance around four provided glimpses of the following:

Common Blue (2)

Meadow Brown (5)

Large Skipper (2)

Small Heath (10)

Large White (1)

Small White (2)

Green-veined White (1)

Red Admiral (2)

A female Small White was busily laying on various wild crucifers, but paused for a photo. The Small Heath depicted below was to my mind unusually hairy – a survival trait for a poor summer?

Dave





**Re: millerd**

by Jack Harrison, 07-Jul-12 05:44 PM GMT

Dave

The Small Heath depicted below was to my mind unusually hairy – a survival trait for a poor summer?

Fascinating thought: it *almost has some characteristics of Large Heath*, a species that presumably evolved to live in wetter climates. Maybe your Small Heath shows some insights into evolution.

Jack

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 08-Jul-12 05:20 AM GMT

**7th July**

Up on one of my regular daytrips to Warwickshire today. I took the boys to Ryton again: the weather was quite friendly, in that the sun did shine and the showers were few and brief. However, ground conditions in the woods and around the meadow varied from very muddy to under water. We saw an abundance of Ringlets, numerous Meadow Browns, Large and Small Skippers, a Comma and several Red Admirals, a scattering of Marbled Whites in the meadow and two White Admirals in the woodland flying vigorously with no sign of a stop. We met a chap whose task for the day was "weeding" the meadow of thistles: he said that SWF were out (but we didn't see one) and pointed us at the correct area for WLH (we didn't see these either!).

Better than it could have been!

Dave

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 08-Jul-12 07:12 AM GMT

One of many enjoying the damp conditions at Ryton today...

Dave





## Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Jul-12 05:30 AM GMT

8th July

Went down with my smallest son to the Alice Holt Country Park in the middle part of the day. I was allowed to spend a small while down one of the rides, and we saw reasonable numbers of Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Large Skippers, plus two Red Admirals, a lone Silver-washed Fritillary and at least four White Admirals. Two had yet to suffer bramble damage, but one of these two had clearly been rained on. We watched them glide elegantly around for a while – something I could personally do for ages – but in the end the playground beckoned!

Dave



*not sure why this photo has the blue-green cast to it...*



*that's more like it*



*this one has been out a while*



*undamaged*



*the same individual*



water damage on hindwings

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-12 05:36 AM GMT

Cracking shots again Dave! 😊 Everytime I tell my daughter that we're going to meet up with Philzoid the second question she always asks me is "are we going to Wrecclesham?" I thought it was because of the butterflies bug I've since found out that it's because of the park! 😲

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Jul-12 05:48 AM GMT

Thanks again, Wurzel.

Yes, that does sound familiar – a certain amount of bargaining goes on... 😊

Elliot tells me he had a lovely day, so we must have got the balance right... 😊

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Jack Harrison, 09-Jul-12 02:04 PM GMT

Wurzel about his daughter:

...the second question she always asks me is "are we going to Wrecclesham?"

There was a lovely story that went something like this.

Dad persuaded his youngster that butterflies were interesting, including looking at *"pretty pictures"* in a book. Dad later took child to see **REAL** Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Skippers.

Child, somewhat underwhelmed: *"Now can we see Camberwell Beauties Dad."*

Jack

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Jul-12 08:10 AM GMT

#### 12th July

For various reasons, I walked to Terminal Five and caught a bus to work this morning. One of these reasons was to investigate en route a patch of hedgerow elm trees that might harbour WLH. I saw none; however I was distracted a bit by discovering a thriving little colony of Essex Skippers. These were on the roadside verge on the southeast corner of the roundabout between the A 3113 and the A 3044, close to the airport perimeter. In no more than 20-30 square metres I counted over a dozen.

Another case of looking for one thing and finding another – and an example of butterflies hiding under our noses in everyday places. A good thing this verge doesn't seem to get cut, either. The centre of the roundabout itself is also a riot of colour and long grass.

Dave



*Essex Skipper*



*Essex Skipper being coy, but identity confirmed!*



*Essex Skipper habitat: the verge with traffic inches away*

**Re: millerd**

by Gothic\_dreams, 13-Jul-12 08:14 AM GMT

Nice find with the Essex Skipper colony, its amazing what can be found in our busy cities when we take the time to look 😊

Chris

**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-12 05:35 PM GMT

I was thinking only yesterday that I need to get out and start looking for Essex Skippers – and then you find some which reassured that they're indeed about 😊 I like the "coy" shot as to confirm the id of female Smessex you have to get that unusal view!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jul-12 05:13 AM GMT

### 14th July

A trip to Kew Gardens this afternoon in very unpromising weather at the behest of one small boy who loves it there. It was good to see that there are good uncut "wild" areas as well as acres of manicured lawn, so I was hopeful we might see something. We went up onto the treetop walk, and I was pleased to see that this takes you past the tops of a number of mature oaks. Lo and behold, I spotted a Purple Hairstreak darting around up there under the overcast skies. Back on terra firma, we walked around to Queen Charlotte's Cottage, where there are particularly good unkempt areas of grass and bramble. The sun came out, and we quickly spotted Meadow Browns, Small Skippers, a Comma, a Red Admiral and a couple of Green-veined Whites. Up in the oaks, more Purple Hairstreaks were playing. I would say that given the number and variety of oaks at Kew, there must be a healthy population of this species here. I will have to go back on the treetop walk on a sunny evening, should we get one.

Dave



*roosting Comma*



*likewise GVW*



*female Meadow Brown welcoming some sunshine*



*female Small Skipper...*



*...with ID confirmed*

**Re: millerd**

by Nick Broomer, 15-Jul-12 06:02 AM GMT

Some lovely photos Dave, keep them coming. 😊

All the best, Nick.

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Jul-12 07:13 AM GMT

Great stuff Dave that Comma is brill – I want a shot like that it's such an interesting pose 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jul-12 07:38 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments, chaps – glad you like the pictures.

The Comma had obviously been sitting there awhile in the rain and was oblivious – dare I say *Comma-tose* – to me. I was trying to remember how different the markings of a hibernating Comma are: so much darker with quite distinct green elements. Consequently, I studied this one for several minutes. I didn't get to see the upperside at all.

Dave

PS Sincere apologies for that awful pun... 😞

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 15-Jul-12 05:18 PM GMT

Don't apologise for it Dave, it may be bad but it is good...if you know what I mean 😊

Stand by it and be proud 😊😄

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

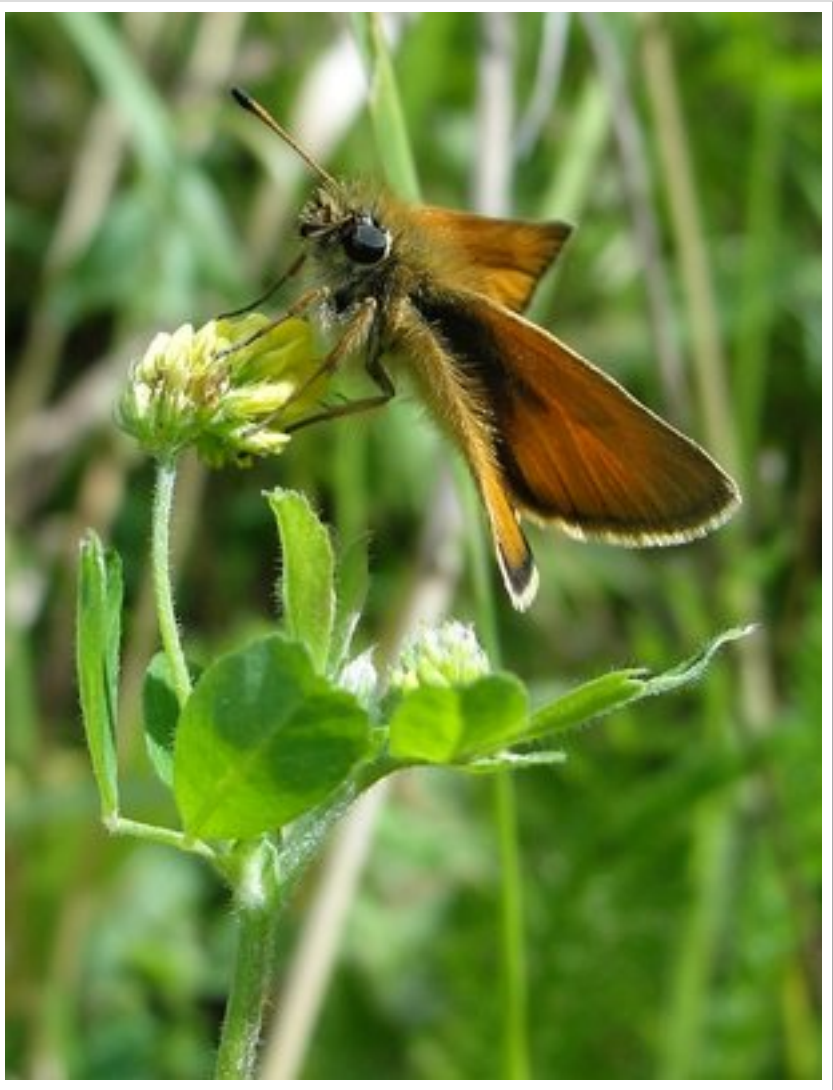
by millerd, 15-Jul-12 09:17 PM GMT

#### 15th July

I had an hour to look around locally this morning and made for the nearer end of the Heathrow Conservation site near J14 of the M25. If you like brown and orange butterflies, you would have had a treat: there were Meadow Browns and Small Heaths in abundance, several Skippers darting amongst them (of which all scrutinised turned out to be of the Essex persuasion) and the first of the season's Gatekeepers. The latter were beautifully deep and rich in colour, making the Meadow Browns and Small Heaths look rather dull in contrast. I also saw three Red Admirals, a Speckled Wood, a Comma and a number of whites – of all three common types.

Dave









## Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Jul-12 04:52 AM GMT

### 15th July (continued)

A walk along the Thames at Runnymede this afternoon – more of the same to be seen, really! Ringlets, Meadow Browns, several new Gatekeepers (male and female), both Small and Essex Skippers, a few Small and GV Whites... and a Comma. The female Gatekeeper depicted was as large as a small Meadow Brown, and considerably larger than the males seen today.

Dave



*Small Skipper (f)*



*Small Skipper*



*Essex Skipper (and friends)*



*Essex Skipper*



*Gatekeeper (female)*

### Re: millerd

by Gothic\_dreams, 16-Jul-12 07:57 AM GMT

Some more lovely photos Dave, i love the gatekeeper underside shot 😊

Chris

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Jul-12 05:15 AM GMT

Thanks, Chris. She chose to sit in a very symmetrical setting on that thistle.

#### 17th July

My only opportunity today was after seven this evening. It was warm and there was a bit of late sunshine, and I made for the usual area near J14. Up on the small oak trees next to the A3113, I spotted half a dozen Purple Hairstreaks dancing around. I then watched another make its way unhurriedly across a 50 metre gap from another oak, apparently unaware of pursuit by a hefty dragonfly. However, the somewhat erratic meanderings of the butterfly defeated the straight-line zooming of the other insect and it made it across unscathed. The grassy areas threw up dozens of Meadow Browns – the population here has exploded from a mere handful in 2011 – a few Small Heaths and a single Essex Skipper. On the way home along the wooded bank of the River Colne, I encountered six or more Red Admirals in various spots. These were flying in the gloom under the trees and several landed on me after some quite belligerent swooping and circling. One perched on a hawthorn branch for a while, so I experimented with the flash to see what I could capture. It never occurred to me that red-eye reduction might be appropriate for butterfly photography, but in some shots the eyes glowed bright red. Anyway, here are a couple of shots, one with flash, and the other au naturel.

Dave





## Re: millerd

by David M, 18-Jul-12 05:21 AM GMT

### "millerd" wrote:

On the way home along the wooded bank of the River Colne, I encountered six or more Red Admirals in various spots. These were flying in the gloom under the trees and several landed on me after some quite belligerent swooping and circling.

This species seems to have a tendency for night flight like no other. I wonder whether its naturally migratory instincts have, over time, enabled it to tolerate darker conditions than most other butterflies (after all, if you're flying over the sea at dusk the last thing you need is to go blind once night falls).

## Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-12 07:13 AM GMT

Great contrast between those two shots Dave 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Jul-12 04:40 AM GMT

### 19th July

Whilst I'm at work, the only real opportunities to see things are after five in the afternoon. Consequently it was another local walk again late on today. However, it's always worth it – within five minutes of home, I found a rather worn Small Tortoiseshell. These are so few and far between these days, this counts as an event. It was also a long way from the others I saw a couple of weeks ago. The rest of the walk produced nothing remarkable: four or five Gatekeepers, a handful of Small Heaths, one female Large Skipper, lots of Meadow Browns... There were four Commas, three of which were engaged together in aerial combat, spiralling way up into the sky before plummeting down to earth, and the obligatory Red Admirals at regular intervals. I also saw a few Whites, one a definite male Large White, the others Green-veined. Purple Hairstreaks dashed around the oaks, and I saw a couple more elsewhere around a different tree some way away. On two separate occasions, I saw an individual set off from the top of an oak tree and make its way across a gap of some 50 metres to settle on an ash instead.

Reviewing the photos, I looked a bit more closely at this mating pair of Meadow Browns. Is that a Common Blue caterpillar lurking on the dead head of the flower they are using to perch on?

Dave



*Meadow Browns (and friend?)*



*close-up - is this a Common Blue larva?*



*worn Small Tortoiseshell*



*Gatekeeper*



*Green-veined White*



*Small Heath (deceased) upperwing*

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Jul-12 06:14 AM GMT

### 21st July

First up today was a walk down the road for a coffee at the local garden centre. Halfway down, I spotted a Holly Blue in the road, dancing about six inches from the surface before landing on some brightly-coloured foil. Disturbed, it flew up into the roadside shrubbery. As I came back along nearly an hour later, it was back in the road – in exactly the same spot as before.

Dave



@1026hrs



*a better pose*



@1114hrs

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Jul-12 06:43 AM GMT

### 21st July (continued)

Denbies beckoned this afternoon – I was in the area anyway, as if I needed an excuse... The weather was possibly ideal in that it was unusually still for this location, the clouds were teasing with the sun, but it was warm and very bright. The hill was alive with Chalkhill Blues. I didn't venture much beyond the gate from Steers Field onto the main slopes, but there were surely hundreds, mostly with wings open to the tempered sunshine. Two little groups were also seen taking minerals from unpleasant sources (more of that on 22nd!). I only spotted two or three females amongst the multitude. As for other species: Marbled Whites were still plentiful, but looking a bit worn now, sadly. Meadow Browns were everywhere too, and in Steers Field, there were more Skippers than I've seen before (all my photos show Small Skippers, but there may well have been Essex in there too). One or two Small Heaths completed the picture.

Apologies for the plethora of photos – I rather like this butterfly...

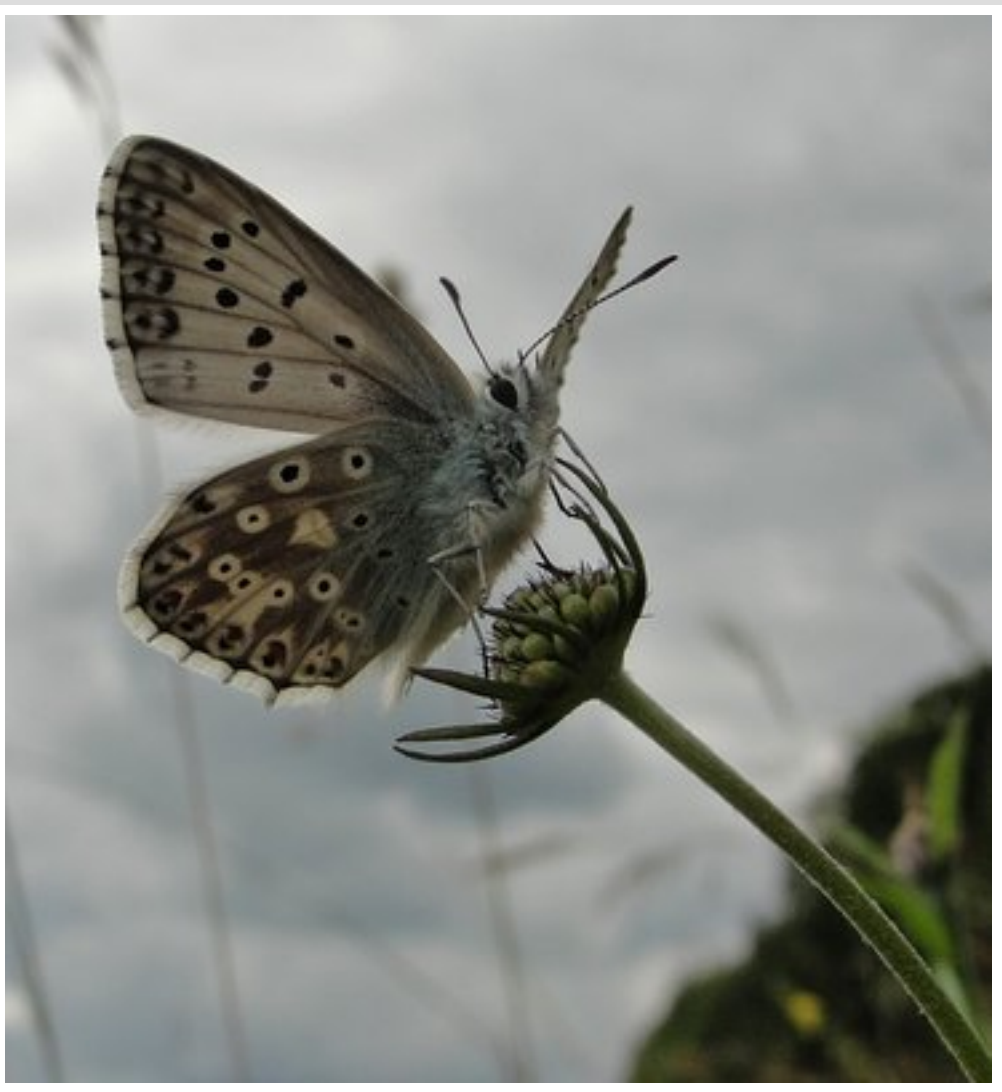
Looking over the images, I see only one has the orange spots on the upperside of the hindwing . Not sure what the overall incidence of this is in the population.

Dave











*orange spots*

### **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 23-Jul-12 07:00 AM GMT

#### **21st July (concluded)**

There was time after the excesses of Denbies to visit my local patch at around five. The usual suspects were around: Meadow Browns, Essex Skippers, Small Heaths, Gatekeepers, a few Ringlets, Commas, Red Admirals, Small and GV Whites. I thought the Large Skippers had all disappeared, but I chanced upon a mating pair of fairly worn individuals.

Dave





### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-12 07:21 AM GMT

Cracking shots Dave 😊 The Chalkhills are lush but I was more intrigued by the Holly Blue- isn't that a Strawberry Cornetto wrapper? I wonder if other species prefer this flavour 😊😊

Have a goodun  
Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Jul-12 07:28 AM GMT

#### 22nd July

Another trip to Denbies where things were a lot more energised than yesterday. The highlight was the astonishing group of over 50 Chalkhill Blues on one piece of dog poo (photo on the July sightings thread). There were several other instances of this, though none so populous. There must be many hundreds of newly emerged Chalkhills out here at the moment, all but a tiny fraction being males. Difficult to estimate, but over a thousand is not out of the question. Nothing else of particular note, though I did see a large pale orange butterfly racing high along the woodland edge at the top of the main slope. Silver-washed, and Dark Green Fritillary were both candidates, as well as Painted Lady, but alas I will never know. The lack of time here means that I seem to have nothing but excremental images... I must try and get there either late or very early this week to see them roost.

A little later, I popped into Dawney's Hill, near Pirbright. There were still quite a few Silver-studded Blues about, (including a very fresh female) and I did spot three Graylings. I tracked one down as it did its masterful disappearing trick, but the camera was fooled by the camouflage and failed to focus on it properly. Also seen here were Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, one Small Copper, a couple of Small Heath and a Brimstone. A couple of the latter had also been seen while driving along leafy Surrey lanes earlier on.

Dave





## Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Jul-12 06:13 AM GMT

### 25th July

A local outing in the stifling heat of a late Heathrow afternoon and early evening. Nothing unusual – the numbers of Gatekeepers are building at the moment, and there is currently a hiatus in the Small Heath world. Meadow Browns abound and have expanded into previously unoccupied areas; Essex Skippers are doing well.

13 species seen:

Comma – 4 (all together in a major tussle)

Red Admiral – 7

Speckled Wood – 1

Gatekeeper – many

Meadow Brown – many

Small Heath – 5

Large Skipper – 1 (male)

Essex Skipper – many (none scrutinised turned out to be Small Skippers)

Brimstone – 1 (male)

Green-veined White/Small White – 10 (both definitely present)

Holly Blue – 2

Purple Hairstreak – 2

Dave



*Meadow Brown (f)*



*Large Skipper (m)*



*Essex Skipper (m)*



*Small Heath – the wings appear slightly open*



*Small Heath*



*Gatekeeper (f)*



*Gatekeeper (f)*

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Jul-12 07:51 AM GMT

### 26th July

After work I went down to Denbies. The journey took 90 minutes instead of 30, which meant that roosting was well underway by the time I was out on the hillside. There are an extraordinary number of Chalkhill Blues out at the moment, as noted before, and to see them congregating in mass roosts is a sight worth seeing. Females are steadily increasing in number now, but are still outnumbered at least ten to one by the males. Also roosting in amongst the Blues were the Marbled Whites and Small Skippers – Meadow Browns appear to have different habits and were mostly lying low in the grass. Other than these, and one or two elderly Small Heaths, no other species were seen.

But who's complaining? Clouds of blue butterflies are not just wild imaginings – they really exist.

A selection of photos, in many cases given unusual and interesting hues by the late evening light (my excuse anyway!)

Dave



*Small Skipper*





*Chalkhill Blue (m)*



*Chalkhill Blue Tree*



*Chalkhill Blue (f)*



*Chalkhill Blue (f)*



*Marbled White (f)*



*the flash went off...*



*Marbled White*



*Marbled White*



*view across Denbies Hillside at around 2000hrs*

## **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 29-Jul-12 06:31 AM GMT

### **28th July**

Today was probably my only opportunity to see Purple Emperors this year (having taken the first week of July off work for this purpose many months in advance 😊). I chose to go north as the roads to the south were disrupted somewhat by Olympic cyclists, and ended up at Bernwood. After a good deal of walking and neck cricking, I and a number of others were rewarded with the sight of at least two different Emperors circling and swooping to the right of the main ride not far down from the car park. Eventually, one settled for a while high in an oak, and I fear these distance shots will be all I shall have as souvenirs of the 2012 PE season. Also seen were a handful of Silver-washed Fritillaries (mostly females – one settled on my trousers briefly), a

couple of White Admirals, lots of Ringlets and Large and Small Skippers, and Marbled Whites straying in from the nearby meadows.

Dave





**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 30-Jul-12 02:51 AM GMT

**28th July (continued)**

On the way back from Bernwood, I stopped off at Aston Rowant and walked across the slopes of the side north of The M40. It was pretty breezy (as it often is) and the sun was intermittent at best. However, it wasn't long before I saw the first Silver-spotted Skipper settled on a bit of bare path. After a

little practice, I got my eye in, and by watching for the patches of bare earth it became relatively easy to spy the little orange dots amongst the chalky lumps. The Chalkhill Blues were also freshly emerged (there were none last weekend), and in my judgment (backed by another "regular" to the site who I bumped into) there are more here than for a number of years. There were a few females amongst the male majority., showing a good deal of variety in markings. I have posted some photos of these separately, as I am curious to know whether any of the variation strays into the realms of aberration.

As the sun emerged after around four, the flowery slopes came alive, and it was clear that there were good numbers of Silver-spotted Skippers out – also mostly males at the present. As well as the two main species, Large and Small Skippers were present, some rather worn Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Small Heaths, plus singletons of Small Copper and Small Tortoiseshell. The second brood Common Blue and Brown Argus were not yet in evidence.

Aston Rowant is particularly lush with flowers this year, and the bare paths and patches favoured by the Skippers are not so much in evidence as usual. I hope this isn't detrimental to them.

Dave







*this one is a female*



### **Re: millerd**

by Pauline, 30-Jul-12 03:25 AM GMT

I love your SSS pics Dave, especially the first and last – I'll be well pleased if I can get photos like that when they appear near here.

### **Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 30-Jul-12 04:30 AM GMT

Cracking shots of SSS Dave 🍷 Everything seems to be coming out at once!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 30-Jul-12 06:05 AM GMT

Thank you both for the kind comments! A very photogenic butterfly with a tendency to pose nicely on scabious flowers, it has an endearing teddy-bear cuteness. 😊

It is interesting that this is probably the most northerly site (or not far off) in the UK for this butterfly, yet it's often out here earlier than further south. And this particular slope is west-facing and often windy, so you wouldn't have thought it ideal for them. I hope it won't be long before they're out elsewhere, Pauline – I look forward to your shots, as I suspect they'll be better than mine!

Dave



## Re: millerd

by NickMorgan, 30-Jul-12 07:12 AM GMT

Lovely pictures, and so many butterflies that we don't get up here.

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Jul-12 07:11 AM GMT

### 30th July

Whistlestop visits today: a spin around a local circuit in the morning showed that the Whites are appearing again – nothing else of note except a Comma which seemed to be of the summer (hibernating) type, not *hutchinsoni*. I then had to pick up two children at Cherwell Valley services on the M40, so strayed again onto the slopes of Aston Rowant. No change here from a couple of days ago, though there were a few more fresh Small Skippers around. Finally, on the return journey, we stopped at Beaconsfield services. There is a pleasant landscaped area at the back, complete with small lake and surrounded by woodland. There is a line of medium-sized oaks next to the children's play area and sure enough they supported a colony of Purple Hairstreaks. I also spotted a single roosting male Common Blue not far from the water.

Dave



*feeding up for the winter already?*



GVW



*Small Skipper: Aston Rowant*



*Common Blue roosting*

## **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 06-Aug-12 05:05 AM GMT

### **1st August**

Some time off work, and a break with family in Yorkshire beckoned. Rather than indulge in the pleasures of the M1, it seemed a good idea to try the A1 for a change and stop off on the way. The Nene Valley Railway proved an excellent diversion for my three boys, and what should be within a few miles of the western terminus at Wansford but the area of woodland known as Bedford Purlieus. This is in the extreme corner of Cambridgeshire (I think!). I eventually found a place to park and enter the woodland, and we rambled along a sunny ride for half an hour or so. Most striking was the number of Silver-washed Fritillaries – three or four were in view most of the time, and we were treated to several courtship flights along the ride, mostly at waist height. The boys found this behaviour fascinating once it had been pointed out and described. We also saw Large, Small and Essex Skippers, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Ringlets, a scattering of Whites and a couple of Brimstones and Commas. However, the highlight had to be a delightful White-letter Hairstreak nectaring on a thistle under an elm tree. It eventually took off for the tree, where it joined at least two more in dancing around the higher branches. On the way back to the car, we came across a newly emerged Peacock, the first I've seen anywhere of the new brood.

Dave





## Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Aug-12 06:10 AM GMT

### 3rd August

Well, no holiday in the UK in August is complete without a trip to the seaside. Filey was the destination of choice, an unspoilt gem of a resort with miles of sand and today at least, a gentle breeze from the the south. As the boys turned one small patch into a building site, I investigated the slope at the back of the beach. This appeared to be in a state of collapse along its length, being composed largely of highly mobile clay and mud, but was covered in flowers, including large swathes of kidney vetch and knapweed. And there were butterflies: nothing special, but good numbers of Small Skippers, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, plus two fairly fresh Common Blues. I only studied a very small area at random, so along the whole length, healthy populations must likely exist. I have no idea whether the Kidney Vetch supports any Small Blues, but I saw no larvae or evidence of there being any.

Dave



*Small Skipper and attractive hoverfly*



Seaside habitat

## Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-12 06:53 AM GMT

Dave the White Letter is an absolute beauty 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Aug-12 07:36 AM GMT

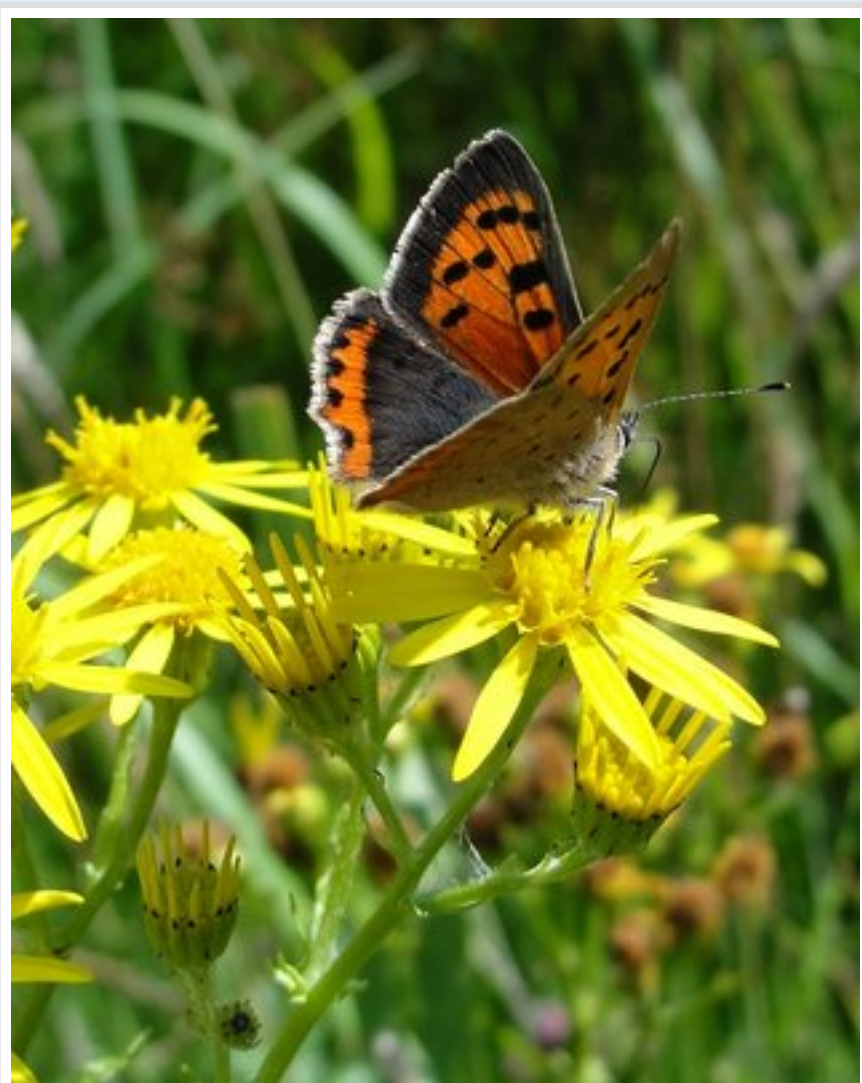
### 4th August

This afternoon turned into a glorious sunny interlude between hail and thunder. My sister took me to a spot called Allerthorpe Common, near Pocklington in the East Riding. Mostly coniferous woodland, there were also cleared patches of sandy heath bordered by oak and birch. Altogether, we saw 14 species of butterfly (listed below), including a veritable feast of Small Coppers. The heathy area was host to most of these – we gave up counting after 15 or so. Also of note was a colony of Purple Hairstreaks in a group of more mature oaks – my sister was completely unaware that the species could be so easily found, not being used to wandering along with eyes cast skywards, I imagine! Altogether, there were:

- Small Copper (lots)
- Purple Hairstreak (at least 5)
- Small Skipper (lots)
- Large Skipper (2)
- Speckled Wood (2)
- Gatekeeper (lots)
- Meadow Brown (a handful)
- Ringlet (4 or so)
- Whites Large, Small and Green-veined (all seen in low numbers)
- Brimstone (2)
- Comma (2)
- Small Tortoiseshell (1)

Dave







**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 07-Aug-12 04:34 AM GMT

**1st - 5th August**

Garden interludes in Yorkshire

It was nice to be somewhere where Small Tortoseshells still regularly appear on garden buddleia.

Dave









## Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Aug-12 04:49 AM GMT

### 5th August

Time to return home, and more directly than on the way up. A break was taken at Donnington Park services on the M1/A42 junction, where there is a sizeable green area left wild beyond the manicured picnic lawns. This was too much to resist, and a break between hefty showers allowed exploration. There were good numbers of Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns, plus both Small and Essex Skippers (though not the best, these photos do show the difference between the male sex brands of the two species). A couple of second brood Common Blues completed the picture and though the sign by the entrance advertised Small Coppers, we didn't see any.

Dave



*Common Blue*



*Male Small Skipper*



*Male Essex Skipper*

### **Re: millerd**

by Neil Freeman, 07-Aug-12 05:01 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Nice photos from up north, I have yet to see second brood Small Coppers locally to me. I plan to go looking later this week.

It is also interesting to see that Small Tortoiseshells seem to be doing better in the north than they are further south.

Cheers,

Neil F.

### **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 07-Aug-12 05:15 AM GMT

#### **6th August**

A bit of a miserable end to the afternoon, so I didn't expect much of a local walk. However, the spits and spots of rain didn't stop some of the Meadow Browns from flying, nor one or two Gatekeepers. And the damp and gloom seemed to make no difference at all to the local Red Admirals, which were actively swooping and soaring, chasing each other and rising to any overflying bird – as well as buzzing me repeatedly and landing on my camera hand at one point. I did not see a single Red Admiral during my Yorkshire trip and it was good to see them continuing strongly here just west of the airport. I counted seven along a small section of tree lined riverside.

A rather nice green cricket appeared in the foreground and distracted me at one point...

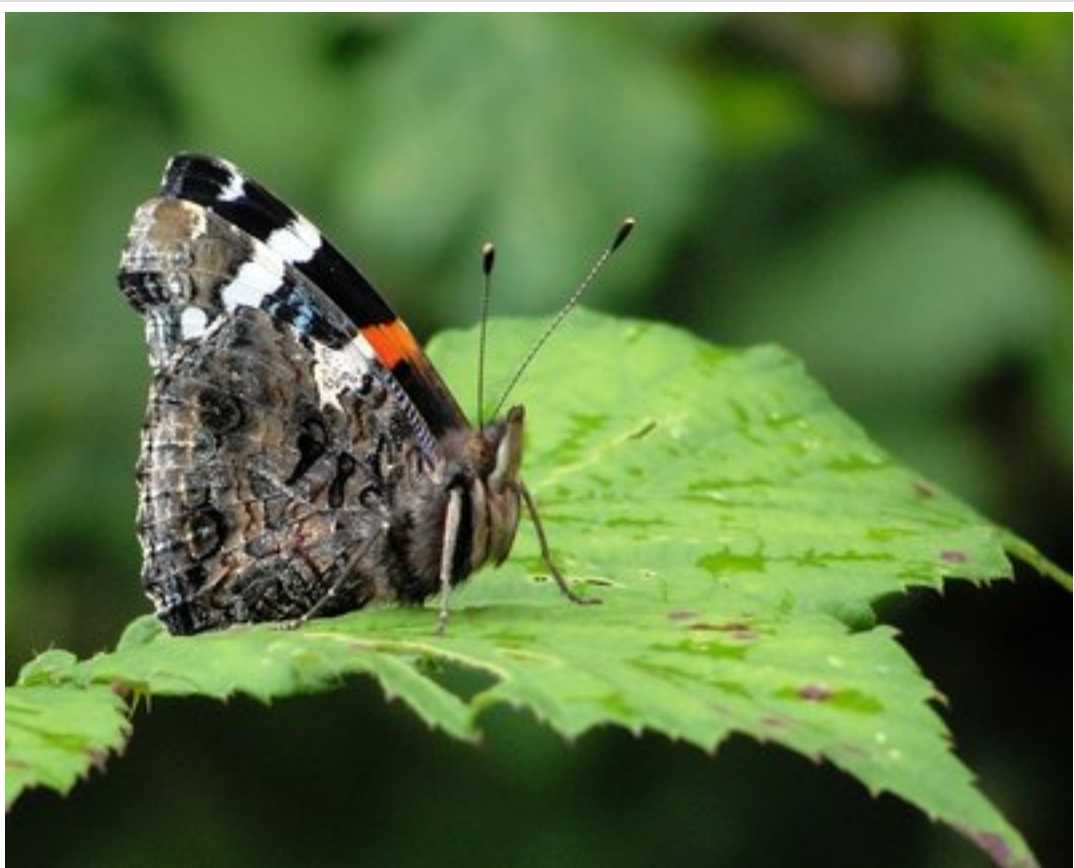
Dave



*Sheltering (though not very well)*



*A foreground distraction*



*The original target, in the rain*

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 07-Aug-12 05:20 AM GMT

**"nfreem" wrote:**

Hi Dave,

Nice photos from up north, I have yet to see second brood Small Coppers locally to me. I plan to go looking later this week.

It is also interesting to see that Small Tortoiseshells seem to be doing better in the north than they are further south.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Thanks, Neil – the Coppers were a revelation! I have hardly seen any down south this year, and to see so many in one place was great. What would they (and lots of others) do without Ragwort, I wonder.

Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Aug-12 04:30 AM GMT

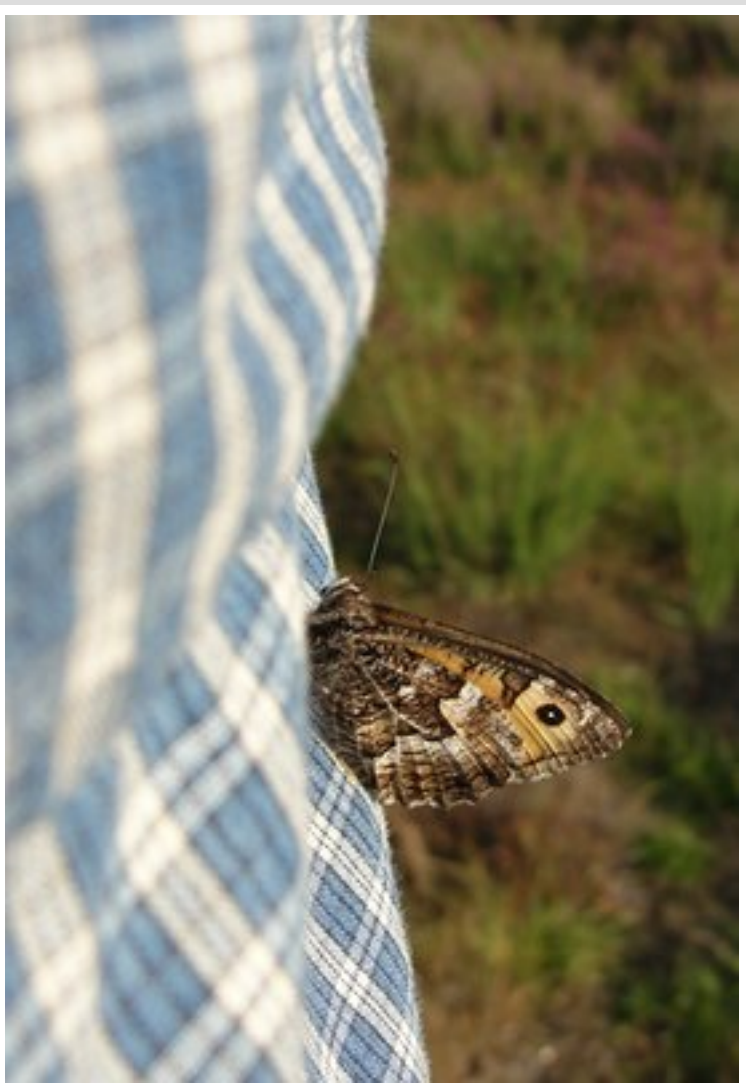
### 9th August

After work I trundled down through the sunshine to Dawney's Hill to see the Graylings. There were plenty around, but despite the fact they kept landing on me, creeping up on *them* was not so easy. I was surprised to find half a dozen or so Silver-studded Blues still flying as well, worn almost to the point of whiteness in some cases. Also seen were Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and a single Common Blue.

Quite a few photos, I'm afraid, but the Graylings are a lovely subject.

Dave









## Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-12 06:01 AM GMT

Cracking shots Dave – the last couple show the context very nicely 😊. I encountered Grayling for the first time last year and almost couldn't wait to try and find them this year as they are sublime in their subtlety.

By the way I really need to ask you what cologne you wear – as now you've added Grayling to your "butterflies Dave wears" collection 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel



## Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 10-Aug-12 06:09 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Those Grayling shots are making me 🤔, a butterfly that does not occur anywhere close to me. I saw quite a few at Arnside recently but found them hard to follow on the loose rocky slopes.

Cheers,

Neil F.

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Aug-12 07:36 AM GMT

Thanks for the kind comments, chaps.

As for the "cologne", Wurzel, I really can't comment! There is something on another site about the chemical that attracts Purple Emperors – possibly identified as methyl mercaptan. The Wikipedia entry makes smelly reading...

But Grayling are attracted to trousers of all types for some reason. I have never been amongst them without having them land on me. 😊

I have seen Grayling at Arnside too, Neil, and they are almost impossible to get close to on the scree. And incredibly well camouflaged. In contrast, the Surrey heaths are nice and flat! However, they don't offer the other butterfly delights of Arnside, sadly.

Dave

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Aug-12 06:54 AM GMT

### 10th August

Leaving work a bit early, I braved the Friday afternoon M25 to go to Denbies. It was still very warm at 4.30 and unusually not particularly windy. The Chalkhills were down in number on ten days ago, but still plentiful, and there were now many more females about. A high number of mating pairs were in evidence and much courtship behaviour. The heat ensured few opened their wings, and as the sun went down, instead of heading off to the long grass to roost as I've seen before, many butterflies simply roosted on the flowers upon which they were nectaring minutes earlier. There were other species: I saw a couple of Common Blues, a Small Copper, a Brimstone, several tired Marbled Whites, plus reasonable numbers of Small Skippers, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers. The most notable feature was the lack of any Adonis Blues as yet (and I didn't see any Brown Argus either).

Dave





*the same pair as the second one above, from the other side.*





*a bluish female*





## Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Aug-12 07:55 AM GMT

### 11th August

A lovely day, and a chance to visit a spot I had not been to before – at least not with a view to looking for butterflies. I went down to High and Over, on the South Downs behind Seaford and overlooking the Cuckmere River estuary. The intention was to see Wall Browns, a species I rarely see, as I'm based inland. I remember them from the distant days of my youth in North London and Somerset, and especially later from the years I lived in Dover; however, aside from three very brief sightings at Great Orme's Head, Hurst Castle and Mill Hill over the last five years or so, I've not seen them at all.

The first thing today was the strong easterly wind. This made things a bit difficult for photos, but at the top of the slope down to the river there was a lot of butterfly activity. I saw Common Blues, Brown Argus, Holly Blues, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Small Heaths, Commas, Small Tortoiseshells, a Peacock and... probably the single commonest species, the Wall. This was the encouraging bit. The downside was that the wind exacerbated their tendency not to linger in any spot for very long, and certainly not long enough for a decent photo. Many were rather worn, but a few were quite fresh. It was odd for me to see them bobbing around the hedges and paths like any old common butterfly, with no appreciable difference between these and the hedgerows and paths nearer home – where you would never see one. I walked down to the river and along to the pub at Exceat for a little refreshment – and there were Walls down there too, by the main A259 road, and a Chalkhill Blue in the pub garden. Then came the walk back *up* the hill...

A successful day – I saw what I came down to see and got a good chance to see Wall behaviour and attempt to pick them out from the Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers with which they flew and often tussled.

Some photos (but not so good, I'm afraid).

Dave









### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Aug-12 05:52 AM GMT

You still got some good shots of a damn tricky butterfly. They're hard because they're so flighty, have good camo on their underwings and seem to have quite powerful flight- at least those are my reasons for finding them do difficult to photograph 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Aug-12 05:58 AM GMT

#### 12th August

Thanks for the encouragement, Wurzel! Though it's all been made worse by Pauline's beautiful shots 😊

A brief stop at Box Hill today whilst entertaining a small boy who had decided to be completely bored by butterflies. He'll come round again soon... Around the hot and sunny viewpoint slopes in a welcome breeze, we did see a few Chalkhills and Silver-spotted Skippers, plus some new Common Blues and a single female Dark Green Fritillary too. Nothing stayed still long enough for a photo, including Elliot. 😊

Dave

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Aug-12 05:12 AM GMT

#### 14th August

Had to go into the big city today to meet my eldest son off a train at Euston. Whilst enjoying a coffee in the entirely concrete forecourt area, I spotted a Speckled Wood flying purposefully through from east to west. I would have thought the only reasonable nearby habitat would have been in Regent's Park, but I suppose some of the little squares in this part of the capital might host the odd colony.

On returning home, we had a walk around my local patch near Heathrow. Things are slowly changing - we only saw a very few Gatekeepers and no Skippers. Red Admirals were about in good numbers, but now were largely attracted to various wild buddleia bushes, instead of scrapping along the paths. They were joined (I'm pleased to say) by half a dozen Peacocks. In the open areas, Meadow Browns persisted undiminished, but flying amongst them were the second brood Common Blues, just up to double figures in the smallish area investigated. There were a handful of Whites: all we got close to turned out today to be Small ones. Finally, we saw a couple of Holly Blues, a worn *hutchinsoni* Comma, and a single Purple Hairstreak flying in

characteristically unsteady fashion from a bramble blossom up into the top of an oak.

Dave



### Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Aug-12 03:35 AM GMT

#### 15th August

While I was at work today, my largest son Toby walked along the path next to the River Colne between Stanwell Moor and Colnbrook. He reported spotting several Small Tortoiseshells, Common Blues, and Small Heaths, and then really annoyed me by showing me the video of the Painted Lady he'd seen. I have yet to encounter one this year... 🙄

Dave

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Aug-12 05:27 AM GMT

I too haven't seen a Painted Lady this year but they are supposed to come in numbers cyclically like Clouded Yellows aren't they? 😊 Sounds like your largest is a chip off the old block, you've taught him well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 17-Aug-12 05:51 AM GMT



"millerd" wrote:

15th August

....and then really annoyed me by showing me the video of the Painted Lady he'd seen. I have yet to encounter one this year... 🍷

Dave

Ouch, hard luck Dave 😊 Well done Toby 😊

I have only seen the one Painted Lady so far this year, a rather tatty one a few months back now.

Neil F.

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Aug-12 06:39 AM GMT

16th August

This afternoon, I insisted that Toby take me to the place where he had seen the Painted Lady. Naturally enough, it was no longer there, despite there being plenty of wild unkempt buddleia and a good deal of thistles of many types to keep its interest. Oh well... 😞

We counted the Common Blues over a mile of path and reached over 25, all but one being males. This is the first week of the second brood, and there are no doubt more to come. We also saw the first of the Brown Argus second showing, a total of five widely spaced out, all males and very active. Peacocks were also now out in good numbers – we must have seen a dozen altogether, mostly nectaring alongside three Small Tortoiseshells and a couple of Red Admirals and Commas. One of the latter was precisely where we had seen it two days ago. Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Small Heaths provided the brown contingent, and for the whites, we encountered a male Green-veined foisting his attentions on a female (I think from the pose these were unwelcome, but I'm not sure), plus a few Small ones.

Dave



*Brown Argus (m)*



*Common Blue*



*Small Tortoiseshell*



*Peacock on Teazel*



*Comma on Burdock*



*Two Gatekeepers, two Meadow Browns*



*GVW - is she rejecting him?*



*Small White*

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Aug-12 05:48 AM GMT

### 18th August

I managed to persuade the boys to have a picnic at Denbies today, but none of us felt very energetic in the heat. There were certainly plenty of butterflies, with female Chalkhills now perhaps more numerous than the males – and there was courtship activity everywhere you looked. I had set out hoping to see Adonis Blues, Silver-spotted Skippers and perhaps a second brood Dingy. However, the last of these was absent, and I was worried the first on this list was too until I spotted a single male close to the gate as we plodded back to the bottom of Steers Field. When he landed, he did his best to burrow down into the grass – a reaction to the heat, perhaps? Nevertheless, only one is a little worrying at what should be a peak time for them, even allowing for a late season. Silver-spotted Skippers were encountered fairly regularly, but were impossible to approach. Also seen were Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, a Speckled Wood, a Brimstone, a Peacock, a Small Copper and a handful of Small Heaths.

When we arrived home, I popped out around the local patch. Most notable was the sudden appearance of numerous Speckled Woods that just weren't there two days ago, and some female Common Blues amongst the males.

A few photos: all undersides – nothing was opening up much in the heat today.

Dave



*Elliot finds a Chalkhill Blue*



*Small Copper*



*Small White*



*Speckled Wood*



*Common Blue (f)*



*Common Blue (f)*

## **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 20-Aug-12 05:48 AM GMT

### **19th August**

A hot day forecast, three boys to amuse? Nothing for it but a trip to the seaside – which for us, our favourite spot means is a long drive down to Studland. We arrived at around 10, and were in the sea within 20 minutes. Wonderful. The dunes at the back of the beach are full of interest – I believe all the reptile species found in the UK can be seen here. While the other two buried each other on the beach, Toby and I had brief wander through the heather, and saw three, possibly four lizards altogether, including one large one that was very close to snapping up a Grayling. There were quite a few of these, well spread out, but pretty well ubiquitous. Also seen were a few Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, and patrolling the beach at speed were Small Tortoiseshells. I can remember this behaviour from my childhood holidays, and it was interesting to see it again.

The trip home took hours. Sunday afternoon traffic is not friendly.

Dave



*the one the lizard missed, though maybe not its first encounter...*



*an annoying piece of grass spoils this one*



*another missing a chunk of hindwing*



**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-12 07:09 AM GMT

I hope you were careful wandering the dunes at Studland with a camera what with a the nudies down there 😊  
Cracking shots 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 21-Aug-12 06:19 AM GMT

The eternal confusion between Naturalist and Naturist 😊

**20th August**

Time for the big children to return home, which meant a trip up to Cherwell Valley services on the M40. The return leg allowed a couple of sidetrips, firstly to Whitecross Green Wood for possible Brown Hairstreaks. After all, I saw my first ever BH at the top of an ash tree here. My, it was disappointing – I saw hardly any butterflies at all, merely a few Meadow Browns, a single Small Copper and one Purple Hairstreak on an oak. There was only one "might be" Brown Hairstreak, quite high and languidly flapping between trees – the silhouette looked right, but who knows? One Holly Blue in the car park brought the visit to a disappointing end. The main problem was that there seemed to be barely any flowers. No hemp agrimony, very little angelica and few thistles.

There was still time for an hour at Aston Rowant. The weather was as it always is when I visit – windy with a mix of sunny intervals and cloud but reasonably warm. The profusion of flowers was such a contrast, and butterflies were numerous. Plenty of Chalkhills remained, with courtship and mating taking place everywhere. Silver-spotted Skippers were easy to find, too, settled on the paths and bare patches and including a good proportion of fresh individuals. The wind made any attempt to capture them in a classic nectaring shot pretty well futile, but grounded shots were relatively easy. Again, a couple of mating pairs and some courtship behaviour was seen. Also out today were Meadow Browns, Brown Argus, a few Common Blues, a Peacock and a Brimstone. However, I didn't have time to venture far along the slopes today.

Dave



*Brown Argus (f)*





*Chalkhill soldiering on*



*Silver-spotted Skipper (f)*



*Silver-spotted Skipper (m)*



*Silver-spotted Skipper (mating pair)*

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-Aug-12 06:42 AM GMT

Cracking shot of the mating Silver Spots Dave 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Aug-12 07:19 AM GMT

#### 21st August

For once, the sun actually emerged at the same time as I did from work, so I sped off to look around my local patch. It was rather late in the day, so most butterflies were settled down or looking to do so, but I saw Common Blues of both sexes, Meadow Browns, a couple of Gatekeepers and Small Heaths, a Brown Argus and some Small Whites. The Common Blues were to be seen in several spots, including places I but rarely see them, and the overall number was good too. I chanced a glance up at the oak trees next to the motorway roundabout, and was pleased to see a couple of Purple Hairstreaks dancing around the top. Then, as so often seems to happen, I disturbed another Purple Hairstreak low down on a shrub, and watched it gently meander its way up to join the others. On my way home along the wooded path along the River Colne, I was buzzed by two separate Red Admirals for daring to walk through their patches – one of them briefly settled on me to make the point.

Dave



*hints of turquoise in this one when the sun caught it...*



*...whereas this one was more violet in hue*



*settling down for the evening*



*defending this bit of path*

## **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 24-Aug-12 04:50 AM GMT

### **23rd August**

Once again, all I could do this evening was to see how the Common Blues were doing locally. They had already settled down when I arrived, but had chosen an area right along my chosen route. I consequently found myself amidst a dozen or so roosting Blue butterflies. In amongst them and not so settled, was a Brown Argus. This individual was clearly intent on bedding down with his relatives, but only succeeded in disturbing them. It was

interesting to note that he and the female Common Blues generally kept their wings open longer in the fading light than the male Blues. Meadow Browns were still flying, the odd Gatekeeper and Small Heath, and one Holly Blue. The riverside path had Red Admirals of course, and two Commas and a Speckled Wood. There was one three-way clash between species, a splendid soaring chase around the tops of the ashes and sallows before all retired to their respective vantage points. This Comma was a worn *hutchinsoni*, but the other one I saw was a fresh summer form, much darker, especially underneath. Finally, there were a few Whites, but in contrast to my last visit, the ones I approached were all Green-veined.

Dave



*On guard...*



*GVW (male)*



*Brown Argus (m)*



*Not what it looks like - I think these two are both females*



*Common Blue (f)*



*Lovely male Common Blue*



*Common Blue (m)*



*Three of a kind...*



*...and another three*

## Re: millerd

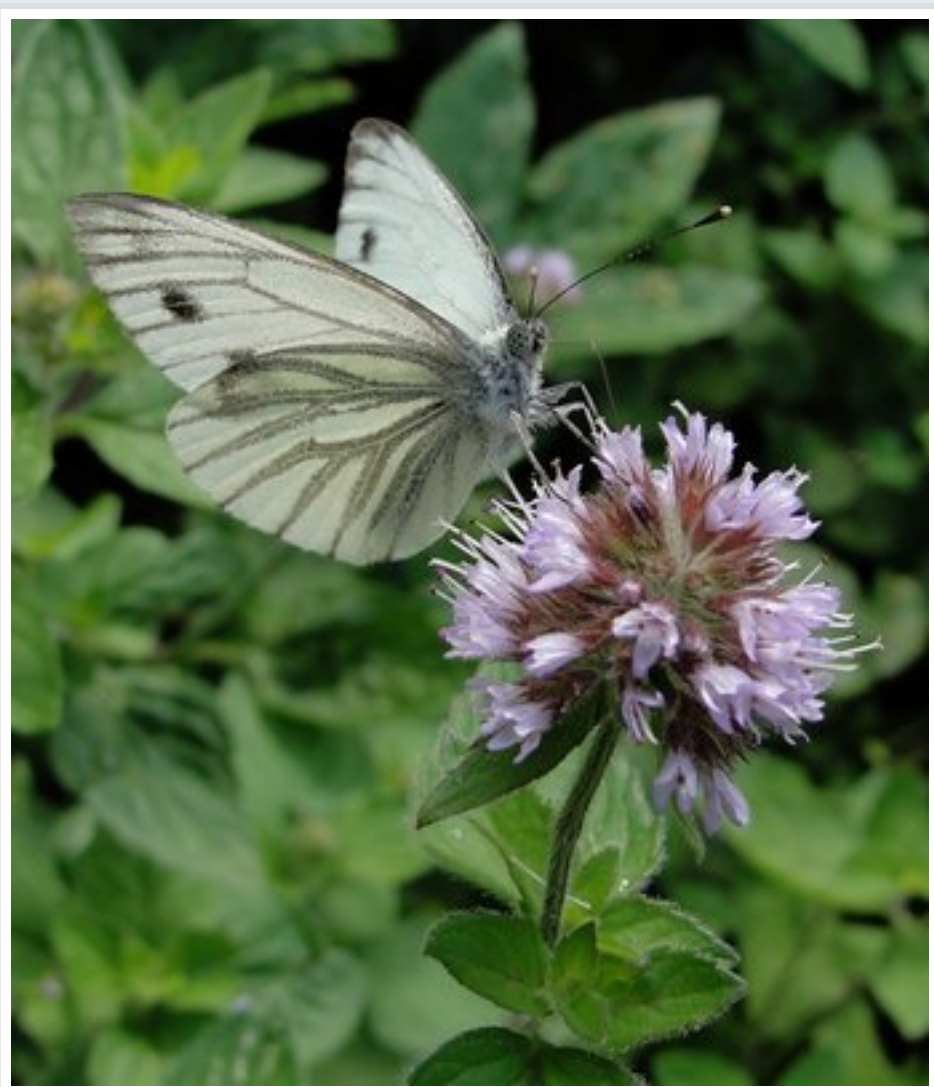
by millerd, 28-Aug-12 07:06 AM GMT

### 26th August

It looked like a nice day, so I thought I'd pop down to a spot near the edge of Bookham Common suggested to me last year by Philzoid as a good site for Brown Hairstreaks – probably one of the closest to me as well too. I wandered along the recommended route, and noted an ash tree rising behind the line of blackthorn that bordered the path. After gazing up for five minutes or so, a couple of butterflies made a brief circuit before diving into the foliage again. With no oak trees in the immediate vicinity, and a glint of gold rather than silver, I decided these were probably Brown Hairstreaks (must remember to bring the binoculars...). A little further on was a similarly placed ash, and another butterfly made a tour of the top. I ambled back, and before long, who should I come across but Philzoid himself, bent on a similar quest.

We made a couple of round trips along the favoured route (much more lush and overgrown than last year, but with a number of newly cleared areas which would bode well for next year). We came across Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Speckled Woods, a couple of Red Admirals, a new dark autumn Comma, a female Brimstone, Small and Green-veined Whites, two Silver-washed Fritillaries (the one we were near to was very worn), and a trio of Small Coppers. While we were investigating these latter individuals, Phil turned and spotted a female Brown Hairstreak basking on the foliage. He managed a record shot, but she was up and away before I had the lens cap off. Despite an extended ramble, we failed to see any others. Nevertheless, it was a very enjoyable time in good company, and another trip down there over the next couple of weeks seems like a good idea.

Dave









**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 28-Aug-12 07:15 AM GMT

**26th August** (further adventures)

Once home, I found a bit of time to have another look at the local Common Blues. There were more females about today at the roosting spot – one was very small, no bigger than a Brown Argus.

Dave





*A very small individual*



### Re: millerd

by Philzoid, 28-Aug-12 09:08 AM GMT

Hi Dave

You got some nice pictures there at Bookham Commons. I particularly like the side on comma with cut-out shape and the contrast of it's dark wings with the white legs 😊 .

Am hoping to make another trip but might have to try and persuade my folks to come with me or get them to spend an hour or two at Wisley (it worked last year when my mum came with me to Denbies and I got some Silver-spotted Skipper spotting in while she soaked up the fresh air and the lovely view 😊 )

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Aug-12 07:08 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave it's nice to see a brown common blue if that makes sense 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Aug-12 03:08 AM GMT

Indeed it does, Wurzel. There are three different individuals there, and they were all mostly dark rather than blue. I hope to get a chance to survey a bit further locally towards the end of the week.

Dave

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Aug-12 04:16 AM GMT

28th August

A very brief look at Denbies this afternoon – it was quite sunny and warm, but very windy (again!), so photo opportunities were virtually non-existent. However, whipping past on the breeze, there were still good numbers of Chalkhill Blues of both sexes and plenty of Meadow Browns. Aside from that, I saw a couple of Silver-spotted Skippers that stopped to nectar long enough to be identified, and one definite male Adonis Blue that very briefly dropped at my feet before careering off downwind.

Only one photograph, a shot of the underside of a female blue – but which one?

(Looks like a Common Blue to be honest, comparing my photos taken near home recently. Which would be ironic, considering the overwhelming preponderance of Chalkhills at Denbies...)

Dave



### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-12 06:13 AM GMT

Alright Dave? Your blue has got me confused as it looks like a Chalkhill to me...but it is difficult to judge and I'm not sure why I think that:? Still whatever it is it got my little grey cells working, no mean feat after a whiskey or three 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Aug-12 06:18 AM GMT

Well, Wurzel, I thought it was a Chalkhill until I looked at the photo at home. The blue/green colour near the body is not very like a Chalkhill, though, and more like a Common Blue. And it doesn't seem quite brown enough for a Chalkhill. Without the fringes, this gets difficult... 😊

Dave

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Sep-12 04:40 AM GMT

#### 31st August

Following the information given by Simon C that the North Downs slopes east of Box Hill are interesting, I walked along that way today in glorious sunshine (but didn't quite reach the old quarry area). In view of the lateness of the season, I didn't expect or see all that much, but I can see that a couple of weeks ago things would have been very different. As it was, there were still a great many Meadow Browns everywhere, and a fair few Chalkhill Blues. It was surprising to see one or two fairly new males – giving an overall emergence of around eight weeks, I should guess. There were a few Common Blues, Red Admirals, Small Heaths, Speckled Woods and Silver-spotted Skippers, the last of these looking really rather worn now. At one point, a flash of electric blue caught my eye – it was a male Adonis Blue. Sadly, the individual was very small, had badly deformed left-hand side wings, and showed aberrant markings on the "normal" right-hand side. I have rarely seen Adonis Blues at Box Hill, and saw no others today – it was a shame that this one was some way short of perfect.

Dave



*Fairly fresh male Chalkhill Blue*



*A little more worn...*



*Female Chalkhill Blue*



*Mating Common Blues*



*Female Silver-spotted Skipper*



*And again...*



*Deformed male Adonis Blue...*



*...showing aberrant underside makings*

## **Re: millerd**

by millerd, 02-Sep-12 05:24 AM GMT

### **1st September**

The last chance to spend a day on the beach before the school holidays end, so I carted the brood off down to Studland again. Leaving grey and cool behind at Heathrow, we walked onto the sand as the sun came out. (I wish children wouldn't take these things for granted – I was up half the night sacrificing small mammals to achieve that sort of timing... 😡 )

During the course of the day, we saw a regular succession of Red Admirals fly in from the sea, and a number Small Tortoiseshells patrolling the water's edge. A wander through the heather on the dunes behind the shore showed that the Red Admirals were congregating there, nectaring avidly on the heather in groups of three or four. In this area we also found a Small Copper, a Brimstone and an aged Grayling, plus a great number of Silver-Y moths. We had a bit of lunch and a cup of tea at the NT café, which had potted lavender dotted around by way of decoration. Up pipes Elliot: "Look, Dad, a butterfly. It's a Painted Lady!" And so it was. My first (and thus far, only) one of the year. It too was feeding like there was no tomorrow, and only once paused to bask on the ground – presumably it was also a new arrival from the south. The lavender was also playing host to a White – I initially took it to be a Large White by the size, but I now think it's a Small White because the black tips are not extensive enough for the other species.

Dave







**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 02-Sep-12 06:23 AM GMT

Great shots of the PL Dave – was that part of the package or did it cost an extra two shrews or half a goat? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by grumpy, 02-Sep-12 06:29 AM GMT

Read a posting on a French site reporting 1000's of Painted Ladies at Creux Du Van Switzerland nr French border on Aug 1st, IF we get a settled spell perhaps we may see a few more ? Would go a small way to making amends for the poor show we have had thus far ! 🍀

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Sep-12 04:38 AM GMT

### 2nd September

No sunshine hereabouts today, but a brief foray locally in bright and warm conditions at around one o'clock provided a few sightings, notably three Commas sitting within a few metres of each other. Also seen nearby were two each of Speckled Wood, Green-veined White and Red Admiral. All the Commas were of the hibernating kind, but showed a bit of variation in colour.

Dave



*Comma no. 1*



*Comma no. 1 (underside)*



*Comma no. 2*



*Comma no. 3*

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Sep-12 03:52 AM GMT

### 3rd September

What a lovely day. Unfortunately, all except the last little bit was spent in the office. That last little bit, though, I used to walk my local patch in the evening sunshine. Well worth it – the tally was not bad at all:

Red Admiral – 2  
Comma – 6  
Peacock – 1  
Small Tortoiseshell – 1  
Speckled Wood – 4  
Meadow Brown – 7  
Small Heath – 12  
Green-veined White – 5  
Small White – 3  
Common Blue – 15

The Common Blues were in the process of roosting (again!) and several females were noted, including a quite brown example. Some of the Small Heaths were attempting to settle in the same spots, but they were made very unwelcome – a completely different reception than that given to other Blues (several species often roosting communally).

I followed one Small Heath that paused to nectar a couple of times – on each occasion, it briefly twitched its wings open as if irritated by something. I attempted to take a series of shots in quick succession in the hope I might capture a partially open-wing view. The results were mixed, as you can see. The auto-focus didn't, the exposure was too long and my hand was not very steady. Curiously, shortly afterwards I watched a completely different individual do the same thing to a rather lesser extent, also whilst nectaring. Is this a known quirk?

The final butterfly of the evening was a lovely Small Tortoiseshell, basking on a fence.

Dave



*Backlit Blue*



*Colour contrast*



*A brown female*



*A nice male*



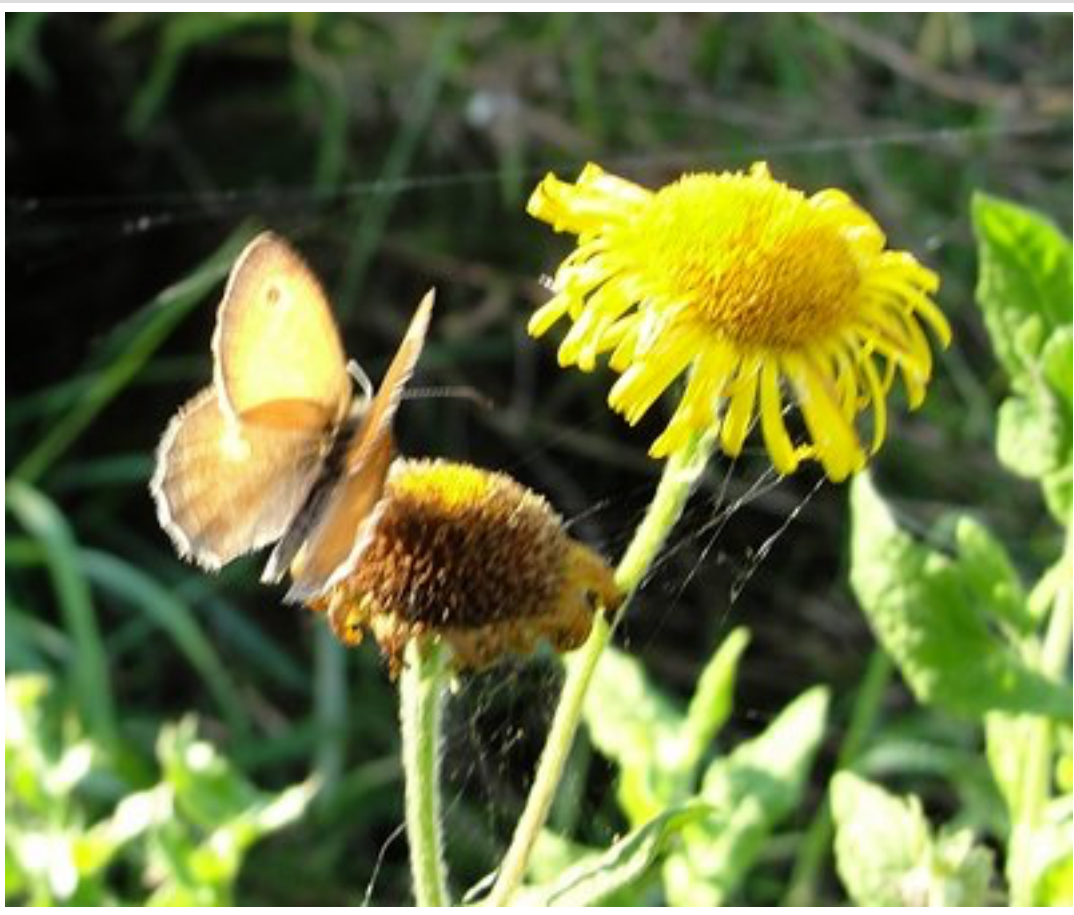
*One of only two seen this evening*



*Those wings are slightly open...*



*...a bit more...*



*...a lot more!*



*Glorious colours accentuated by golden evening sunlight*

**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 04-Sep-12 04:59 AM GMT

"Glorious colours accentuated by golden evening sunlight" indeed glorious 🍷 The backlit shot is a cracker too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Sep-12 05:09 AM GMT

### "Wurzel" wrote:

The backlit shot is a cracker too 😊 Wurzel

Your favourite, Wurzel! 😊

Dave

## Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-12 03:50 AM GMT

### "millerd" wrote:

#### 1st September

During the course of the day, we saw a regular succession of Red Admirals fly in from the sea, and a number Small Tortoiseshells patrolling the water's edge. A wander through the heather on the dunes behind the shore showed that the Red Admirals were congregating there, nectaring avidly on the heather in groups of three or four. In this area we also found a Small Copper, a Brimstone and an aged Grayling, plus a great number of Silver-Y moths. We had a bit of lunch and a cup of tea at the NT café, which had potted lavender dotted around by way of decoration. Up pipes Elliot: "Look, Dad, a butterfly. It's a Painted Lady!" And so it was. My first (and thus far, only) one of the year. It too was feeding like there was no tomorrow, and only once paused to bask on the ground – presumably it was also a new arrival from the south. The lavender was also playing host to a White – I initially took it to be a Large White by the size, but I now think it's a Small White because the black tips are not extensive enough for the other species.

Dave

Hi Dave,

Just doing a bit of catching up after my week in Dorset. We went to Studland on Monday 3rd and as the rest of the gang did the beach thing I wandered through the heather behind the dunes.

I have never seen as many Red Admirals in one place as I saw here, there were hundreds of them nectaring on the heather.

Also good numbers of Small Torts which was good to see.

Silver Y moths were reaching plague proportions, there must have been thousands along this stretch 😲

And yes, there were a couple of Painted Ladies, I saw at least 2 different individuals here plus about half a dozen others at different locations during the week.

Load of photos to sort through, will probably need 2 or 3 updates to my diary 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Sep-12 07:39 AM GMT

From this and other posts, it looks like the South Coast is playing host to a lot of immigrant Red Admirals.

#### 8th September

I went down to Bookham again this morning in search of possible Brown Hairstreaks, and once again bumped into Philzoid. We searched for a couple of hours without success, but he may have struck lucky after I left. I had intended to head down to Denbies, but found I needed to be back home by five, so returned and did a tour of my local patch instead. Everything is winding down, sad to see, which feels odd on what was a very sunny and hot day.

So what did I see? At Bookham, two or three Speckled Woods, several Meadow Browns, two Commas, a Red Admiral and a Small Copper. At home, there were rather more Speckled Woods, a handful of Meadow Browns, about a dozen Small Heaths, fifteen Common Blues, a Holly Blue, a Comma, a Small Tortoiseshell, two Red Admirals and good numbers of Whites of all three types. Vast areas of the open areas I walk through have now been coarsely mown (though islands of wildness do remain), so I hope this haircut has been late enough not to affect anything too much. It is now labelled as a Biodiversity Site rather than a Conservation Area – whether this is better or worse, I know not. I shall probably write to BAA and ask what their designation means.

Dave





*Comma perched on blackthorn singularly devoid of Brown Hairstreaks*



*Meadow Brown – so pale compared with the ones that emerge at the end of May*



*Small Copper – a noticeable green sheen*



*Same individual*



*A Surrey Speckled Wood*



*Small White*



*A Middlesex Speckled Wood*



*Fading fast...*

## **Re: millerd**

by Neil Freeman, 09-Sep-12 05:35 PM GMT

### **"millerd" wrote:**

From this and other posts, it looks like the South Coast is playing host to a lot of immigrant Red Admirals.  
Dave

Hi Dave,

I e-mailed Dorset BC with some of my sightings, including the Red Admirals at Studland, and received the following reply,

*Dear Neil,*

*Thanks very much for your holiday butterfly records which were much appreciated. I thought you would like to know that your Red Admirals behind the beach at Studland on 3rd September are turning out to be part of a huge migration into Dorset coming on shore from West Bexington in the far west [September 3rd], Portland [120 in the garden of the Bird Observatory on 5th plus 25 Painted Ladies], & in the east at Southbourne [100 plus on Sept.5th]. 2 Monarchs have also been seen [Portland 7th & Southbourne 5th]. Scattered Clouded Yellow records are also turning up all over Dorset.*

*Best Wishes,*

*Bill Shreeves {Dorset Butterfly Records Officer}*

Cheers,

Neil F.

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Sep-12 07:20 PM GMT

Thanks for the info, Neil! When we watched them flying in off the sea at the rate of about one every ten minutes or so (just our bit of beach, of course!), I wondered whether anything significant was happening. Now we know! Pity there wasn't a Monarch in amongst them...

I'll send Dorset BC my sightings as well.

Cheers,

Dave

## Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Sep-12 02:25 AM GMT

Cracking shots Dave- especially like the Small Copper with the green sheen, is that because of it's age, it's corroding? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Sep-12 07:02 AM GMT

### 9th September

A commitment to take Elliot to a miniature railway today rather curtailed activities on another beautiful day. We did pop out locally first but the main interest for Elliot was blackberries... Plenty of White butterflies were around, including more Large Whites than at any time this year, plus the inevitable Red Admirals and Commas. Elliot did find a Small Tortoiseshell as well – rather encouraging, as I've seen at least one on almost every trip out round here since the start of August. Also seen was this distinctly blue dragonfly.

Down at the Great Cockcrow Railway, near Chertsey, we saw a large number of miniature steam engines, including some rare migrants – and a Small Copper by the track as we whizzed past at a cracking 10 miles an hour. 😊

Dave



*Green-veined White (f)*



*Blue dragonfly*

## Re: millerd

by MikeOxon, 10-Sep-12 07:16 AM GMT

Good to see the late-season butterflies enjoying the weather. Your dragonfly is a Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna mixta*)

Mike

## Clouded Yellows

by millerd, 16-Sep-12 06:22 AM GMT

### 15th September

Another weekend – and more sunshine. Instead of taking the boys to Studland again, we took a shortened journey to Southbourne instead. I managed a side trip from the sand to the slopes at the back of the promenade where sea aster was flowering (and was told off by a beach patroller for venturing on the wrong side of the fence). The slope was host to a variety of butterflies, including Large and Small Whites, Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells. However, I had really come to look for Clouded Yellows at what might possibly be the most reliable spot in the UK for this species. I'm pleased to say that I saw at least three – but at a distance only, and the photos were at the limit of the 10x zoom of my camera. Add a bit of a breeze and a very unsteady hand deriving from the 45 degree slope, and the results were rather poor. Never mind, they were lovely to watch – my first for three years, and my 47th species (likely to be the last now) of 2012.

I bumped into Paul Brock, author of *"Insects of the New Forest"*, who had seen a few more earlier on, including a mating pair. We discussed the persistence of the Clouded Yellow in this spot, where reputedly the larvae have regularly survived the winter and the adults turn up year after year. I can certainly say it was pretty warm down there today.

Returning to base to the east of the promenade, on the way to Hengistbury Head, I saw several Small Coppers flying along the shoreline, and more Red Admirals arriving from seaward.

Dave





### Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 16-Sep-12 06:09 PM GMT

Nice one Dave 😊👍

I never did get to Southbourne whilst I was in Dorset, just ran out of time and too many excellent sites to visit. I saw a couple of Clouded Yellows, 1 at Bindon Hill and 1 at Ballard down and was well satisfied even though I did not manage to get any photos.

Cheers,

Neil F.

### Re: millerd

by David M, 16-Sep-12 09:58 PM GMT

I assume they hibernate as adults if they DO survive our winters there?

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Sep-12 12:06 AM GMT

I think it's believed they do so as larvae. Not strictly hibernating, though – instead the warm microclimate down there may allow them to remain just about active. Proper cold would kill them in all stages, as their natural home is the Med and points south. One curiosity is that Clouded Yellows are not thought to be colonial – so any spring butterflies would disperse, rather than stay and breed in situ. Breed twice in fact, to maintain an annual appearance in late summer/autumn as they seem to do.

A bit of a mystery, and one that should probably be studied for a longer period. Maybe this is being/has been done – does anyone know?

Dave

### Re: millerd

by David M, 17-Sep-12 02:28 AM GMT

#### "millerd" wrote:

I think it's believed they do so as larvae. Not strictly hibernating, though – instead the warm microclimate down there may allow them to remain just about active. Proper cold would kill them in all stages, as their natural home is the Med and points south. One curiosity is that Clouded Yellows are not thought to be colonial – so any spring butterflies would disperse, rather than stay and breed in situ. Breed twice in fact, to maintain an annual appearance in late summer/autumn as they seem to do.

A bit of a mystery, and one that should probably be studied for a longer period. Maybe this is being/has been done – does anyone know?

Dave

Interesting stuff.

From what I've read about their distribution in France, they appear to be permanent residents of the warmer southern regions, and once they've emerged from hibernation they fan out northwards.

It would be useful to know whether there are any isolated pockets in northern France where the butterfly survives year round.

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-12 05:56 AM GMT

Whatever the results Dave it's still a Clouded Yellow, I'd take it! 😊 I'll have a go at that site next season though the last time I was there (many,many moons ago) it was more the birds that were on my mind 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Sep-12 06:14 AM GMT

#### 16th September

Back home, and a quick wander around my local patch on a much cooler and cloudier day. As with everywhere else it seems, Red Admirals dominated. There is a lot of ivy around here, and it is now in flower – most large patches had at least one Red Admiral, and some had several more. Altogether, I counted fifteen, but had the sun been brightly shining, I suspect there would have been more. I also saw six Commas, a Speckled Wood, a Meadow Brown, numerous Whites of all three common types and a solitary Common Blue.

Dave









**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 25-Sep-12 07:03 AM GMT

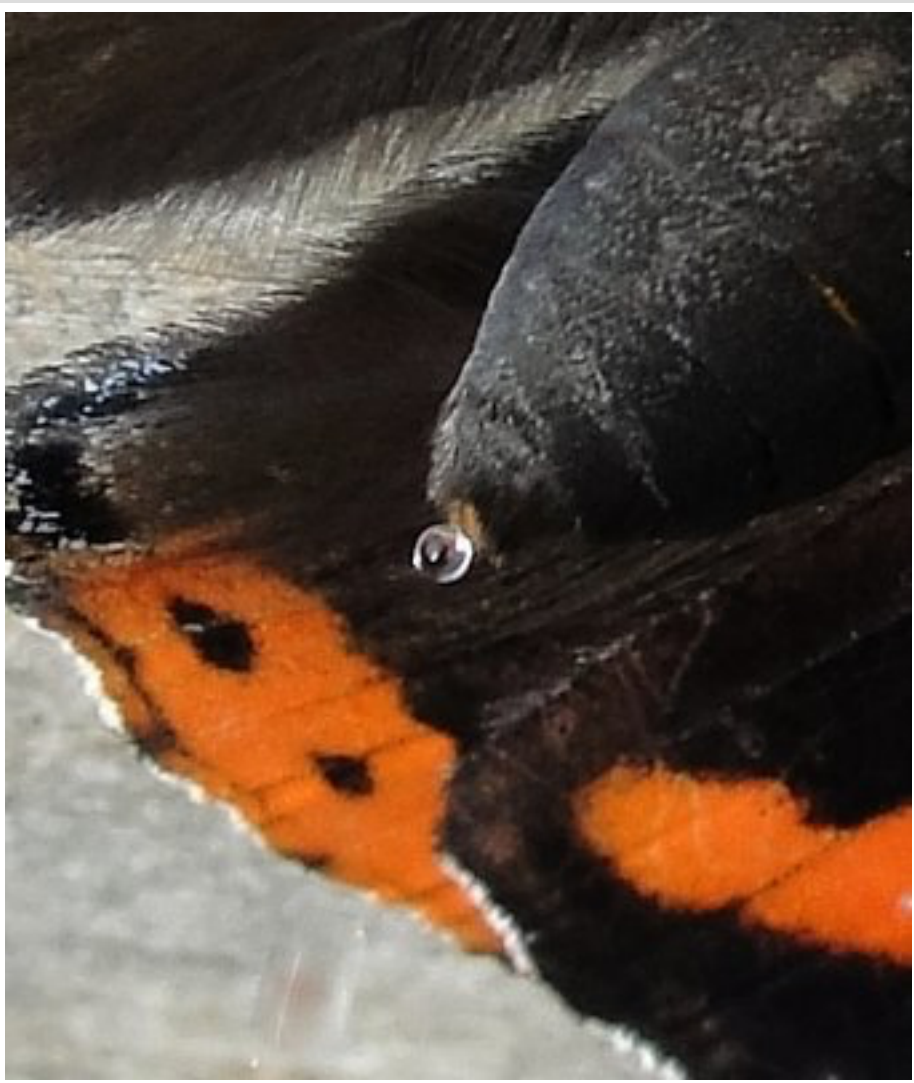
**21st September**

Only the briefest chances to have a look locally this afternoon: there were several Whites around, including a Small White on the front lawn and more Large Whites than usual. Only the one Red Admiral seen, though. Despite the obvious scuffing of the scales, this one was probably freshly emerged as there was a drop of fluid still apparently being expelled from its abdomen. It was another very fat specimen: so distended were the abdominal segments that they appeared striped, as they no longer fitted snugly together. Perhaps another egg-laden female.

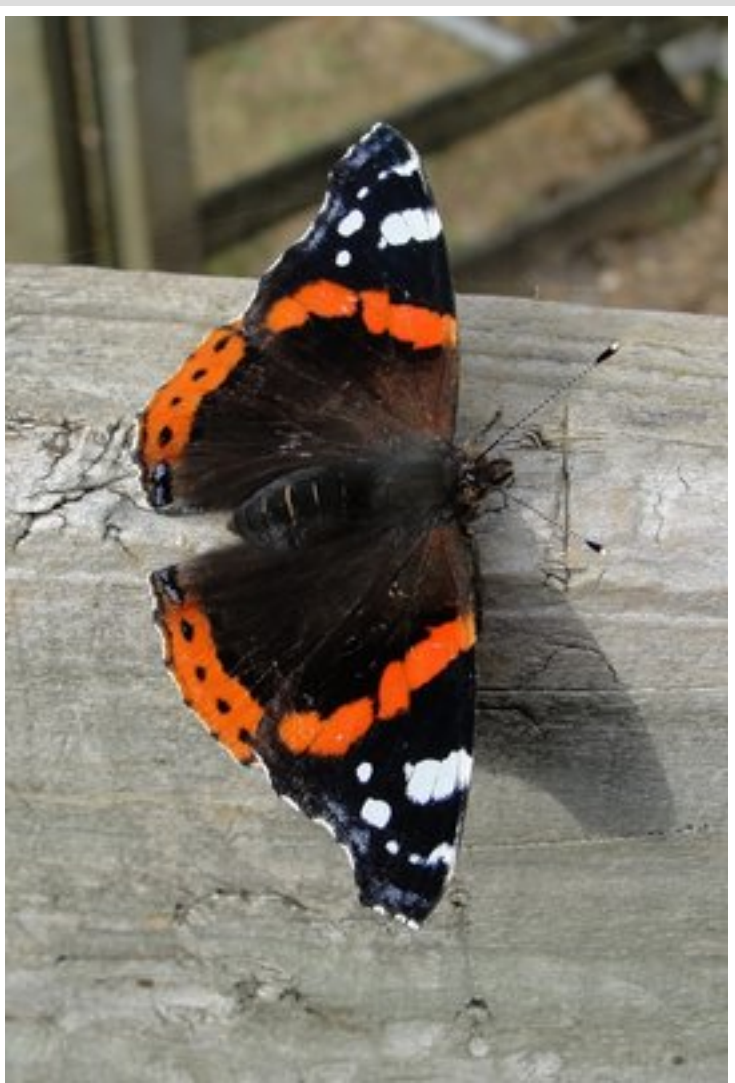
Dave



*New Red Admiral*



*Close-up of tip of abdomen, bent to expel a drop of fluid*



*Another view*

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Oct-12 07:41 AM GMT

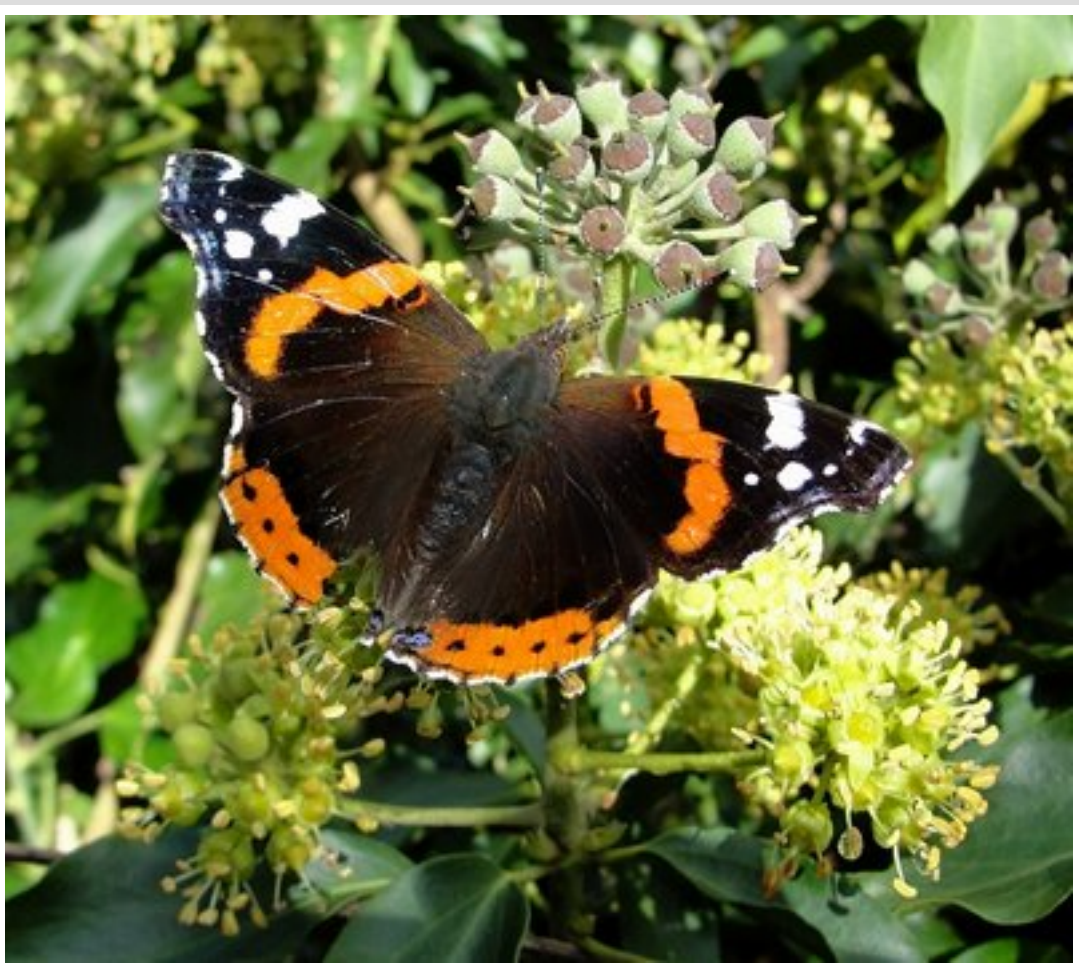
### 6th October

Having been very much stuck in the office recently, and with no scope to get out at the weekend, a sunny Saturday seemed too good an opportunity to miss. I headed south, and prompted by BadgerBob's report of late sightings, I ended up at High & Over. A good wander around, and a longer stroll westwards on the Frog Firl side revealed a good number of both Commas and Red Admirals, mostly on ivy, though the Commas sought out the last of the blackberries as well. I also noted several Red Admirals flying strongly over the area, but not in any one direction – no particular evidence of a southward migration, for example. One sheltered (and wholly inaccessible) patch of ivy in particular had attracted both these species to the extent that fights were breaking out and butterflies were soaring in scrapping dogfights over the vegetation. I saw no Walls, unfortunately, nor Blues, but did spot a Small Copper, a couple of Large Whites, a Small White and half a dozen Speckled Woods. The views, as ever, were wonderful.

Returning home around five o'clock, I spotted a couple of Red Admirals still nectaring on the local Ivy.

Dave







**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 08-Oct-12 05:33 AM GMT

Cracking shots Dave and nice to see something different – all I'm finding at the moment is Commas and Red Admirals – saying that I'm just greater up to still be seeing butterflies 😊

Have a goodun

## Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Oct-12 11:50 PM GMT

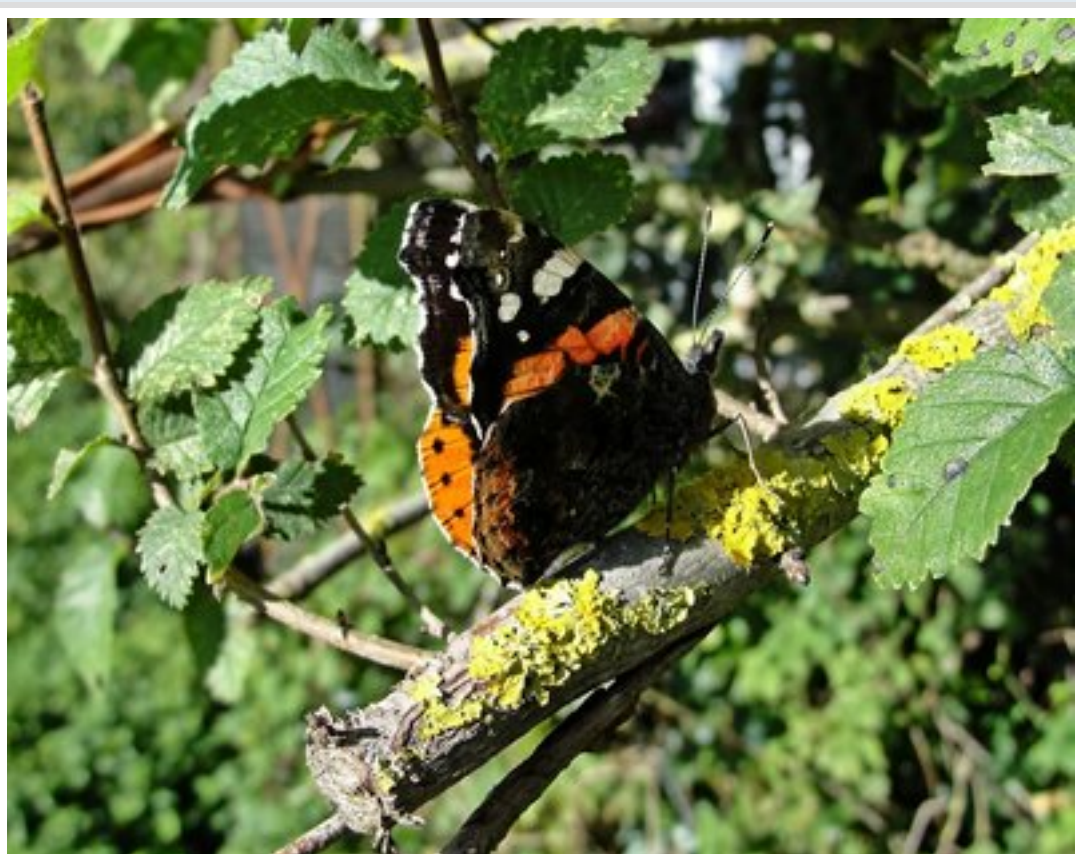
### 13th October

A day out with the boys at the Watercress Line in Hampshire: A couple of Red Admirals were spotted near Alton station, and a bit later a Comma at Ropley.

### 14th October

I persuaded the smallest of the three that a walk would be a good idea at lunchtime today. The sun was out, and it felt quite warm out of the wind. We soon found half a dozen Red Admirals on the profusion of ivy hereabouts, along with a single Comma. Suddenly, the Comma took flight, pursued by a something a good deal smaller and brighter. Having seen the Comma off, it settled in the sun – a shiny new Small Copper. Amazingly, this is the first one I have seen locally this year – mid-October is an unusual date for a first sighting! Finally, we came across a male Green-veined White, hopefully investigating anything remotely white in his quest for a female.

Dave





*now you see it...*



*now you don't*

### Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Oct-12 05:50 AM GMT

Cracking shots Dave, the Small Copper is brill and how did you get the "now don't" with the shadow so sharp? 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Oct-12 08:02 AM GMT

The shadow photo was a complete fluke, Wurzel – I took the GVW photo, moved a fraction for another shot, and as I pressed the shutter, off went the butterfly. Somehow, it must have returned its wings to the same position as they were at rest and held them there at the exact same moment the shutter opened. Now, if you could do that with a Brimstone or a Clouded Yellow...

I was very pleased to see the Small Copper: the 23rd species of the year on my local patch, with only Clouded Yellow being a no-show from the overall list for the last five years.

Dave

### Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Oct-12 12:43 AM GMT

#### 20th October

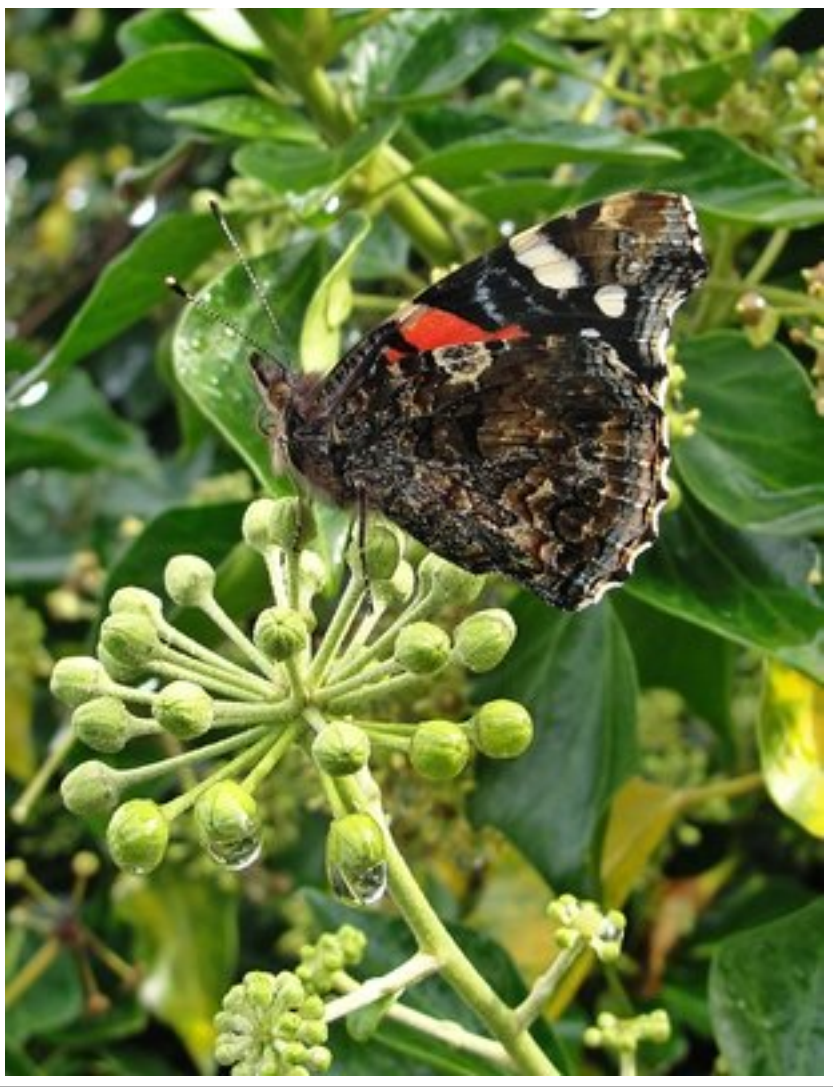
Bright and mild today – Worth a look for Red Admirals if nothing else. I set off at midday and walked around my local route – sure enough I found three different individuals enjoying the very hazy sunshine. One was very bright and new, and looked relatively small to my eyes. A marked change to the weather is predicted by the Met Office for about a week's time, with a change of wind and frosty nights, so maybe the Red Admirals will start heading south and/or tucking themselves away.

I also found the entrance to the BAA-owned and newly renamed Colne Valley Heathrow Biodiversity Site had acquired a more friendly gate. Now the season is pretty well at an end, I plan to write to BAA and see how aware they are of the diversity of butterflies found in this area, and find out what they know about what else there is that lives here.

Dave









**Re: millerd**

by Wurzel, 21-Oct-12 05:52 AM GMT

Great stuff Dave but you made me feel bad about not getting out today 😊 Still hopefully the start of next week should be good 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: millerd**

by millerd, 05-Dec-12 07:07 AM GMT

Happy Christmas to everyone, and may the weather smile on all of us – and the butterflies – in 2013. 😊

Dave



**Re: millerd**

by David M, 05-Dec-12 07:23 AM GMT

Happy Christmas to you too, Dave, and yes, I think 2013 owes us big style! 😊