

Maximus

by Maximus, 04-May-13 06:28 PM GMT

After following and enjoying the personal diaries of others I decided that it was time to take the plunge and open an online diary of my own. The standard is high, but nothing ventured!

I saw my first butterfly of 2013 on March 14th, a Small Tortoiseshell, at Wrecclesham on a short visit on a sunny afternoon. Then winter continued! It was not until 14th April that a Brimstone flew into the garden and settled on the underside of a leaf for long enough for me to get my camera.



Brimstone

16th April.

A short afternoon visit to Noar Hill saw 6 Brimstone and 2 Peacock on the wing in a pleasant 16 degree sun.



Nectaring Brimstone

23rd April.

Another trip to Noar Hill this time in 20 degree sunshine saw 6 Peacock, 7 Brimstone and a Comma, but it would seem too early for the Duke.

Then followed a visit to Magdalen Hill Down where from 2pm we spotted 20 Brimstone, 13 Male and 7 Female (no photo opportunities), 11 Peacock, 10 Small Tortoiseshell, 1 Comma, 1 Green Veined White (camera shy) and 2 Holly Blues.



Peacock



Small Tortoiseshell



Holly Blue

25th April.

Went to Wrecclesham as weather very hot at about 20 degrees, for a late afternoon visit. Saw our first Orange Tips of the year (not stopping for decent photos) 5 males. Also saw 8 Small Tortoiseshells (what a change from last year), 4 Comma, 10 Peacock and a Female Brimstone.



Comma

On another note something is happening at Wrecclsham, not exactly sure what, but this was seen. Only time will tell!



Digger



Meadow area dug up

30th April.

Another visit to Noar Hill arriving at 1pm to see 3 Male Orange Tips speeding through by the entrance gate. Walking up through the site in pleasant sunny 15 degree sunshine 12 Peacocks, 3 Commas, 4 Male Brimstone and 1 Small White were seen. The Peacocks were having territorial battles with the victor returning to the same spot. Still no sign of the Duke!!

We returned back down the site via the left hand track and once at the gate I suggested to Cathy (my wife) that we should walk to the top pit again for one more look. On the way up we met a chap walking in the opposite direction, and talking to him it transpired he had seen a Duke of Burgundy but that his camera had failed to focus at the required time. The location of the sighting having been revealed to us we made our way to the spot. Although we searched for a good while we found nothing so looked elsewhere. Cath finally found the little beauty and together we admired him as he perched on a low branch while we took photos. He suddenly took flight leaving us both on a high.



Duke of Burgundy

1st May.
Today Butser Hill was the destination and the weather was once again warm but with a cool strongish breeze. The walk to the valley bottom takes you out of the wind and on the way 9 Brimstone, 4 Peacock and a Small Tortoiseshell were seen and once again it was Cathy, my butterfly spotter, who saw the first Grizzled Skipper of the 6 we saw in total. Surprising how a year makes you forget just what gorgeous little butterflies they are.



Grizzled Skipper

2nd May.
Another hot and sunny day, around 20 degrees, so decided a second trip to Magdalen Hill Down was in order as we were hoping to find a Green Hairstreak. Headed for the bottom of the escarpment where it was very hot and sheltered from the strong breeze. Brimstones were everywhere as were male Orange Tips, hardly stopping at all which gave us virtually no photo opportunities. Also saw 6 Peacocks, 1 Small Tortoiseshell, 2 small white and finally, after much searching, a beautiful emerald Green Hairstreak.



Brimstone



Green Hairstreak



Green Hairstreak

Species tally is now 12 so far this year after a slow start. Hopefully things will now begin to settle down.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 04-May-13 06:36 PM GMT

Thanks for the Wrecclesham update, Maximus. I daresay the developments there won't do the Glanvilles any favours?

Re: Maximus

by ChrisC, 04-May-13 07:12 PM GMT

you have done anything but lower the standard. cracking first entry. look forward to more.

Chris

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-13 07:32 PM GMT

Very nice start to your diary with some good photos, I look forward to seeing more .

Neil F.

Re: Maximus

by Neil Hulme, 04-May-13 07:59 PM GMT

Thirdded! Good stuff.

BWs, Neil

Re: Maximus

by Pete Eeles, 04-May-13 08:20 PM GMT

Fourthed 😊 Keep 'em coming.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Maximus

by Susie, 04-May-13 08:29 PM GMT

High five'd 😊

Re: Maximus

by Mark Colvin, 04-May-13 08:50 PM GMT

Nice to see your diary, Maximus.

A really great start. Keep up the good work 😊

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Maximus

by Padfield, 04-May-13 09:39 PM GMT

Ave, Maxime.

Guy

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 05-May-13 06:37 PM GMT

Hi David, can only wait and see what unfolds at Wrecclesham.

Chris, Neil F, Neil, Pete, Susie and Mark thanks for your positive comments.

Ave Guy.

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Vince Massimo, 05-May-13 09:22 PM GMT

Great stuff Mike 😊

Could you add your photo of the Duke of Burgundy to the Species-Specific Album when you get time please.

Many thanks,

Vince

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-May-13 05:54 PM GMT

Hi Vince,
I have added the image to the Species-specific Album but for some reason the site ie. Noar Hill and date 30th April 2013 did not appear in the description, is it possible to edit the text to show these?

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Vince Massimo, 06-May-13 06:24 PM GMT

Thanks for the download Mike. When you input details they need to go in the "Imagename" box rather than "Image Description" for them to appear on screen. I have made the necessary changes, but you can always amend such details yourself in the future by clicking on "Moderate" (which is listed under the image) and then "Edit".

Vince

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 14-May-13 05:05 PM GMT

8th May

As the weather was warm and sunny we decided on an afternoon trip to Bentley Station Meadow. Last year, the woodland adjoining the meadow saw lots of Orange Tips nectaring on violets, this year however was a different matter as the tree canopy had shaded out the violets and not an Orange Tip was to be seen. On the other hand, the meadow area having many patches of violets growing was frequently being visited by male Orange Tips. Once again they were not stopping long enough for a respectable photo. There were plenty of Peacocks and Commas in the meadow and these were spending most of the time waging aerial attacks on each other.



Duelling Comma



Battle scarred Peacock

In all we saw 8 Peacocks, 2 Commas, 6 Male Orange Tips and a Large White all seen in the late afternoon sun.

Although it appeared to have been cut along the edges of the footpath, we saw plenty of Garlic Mustard growing around the station carpark.



Garlic Mustard

10th May

Although the weather wasn't brilliant we went again to Butser Hill hoping to see a Duke or possibly a Dingy Skipper. Arriving at 1.30pm we walked up the track and saw only a Brimstone, a Green Veined White and a Holly Blue. As we got to the gate at the entrance to Rake Bottom a strong wind was really whipping up through the valley. After a 10 minute search we spotted a Duke of Burgundy being blown about before finally settling low down in

the grass, sheltering just long enough for us to take its photo. It then got caught in the wind and was blown out of sight across the meadow.



Duke of Burgundy

Although this was the only Duke we saw, we managed to find 5 Green Hairstreaks, 8 Grizzled Skippers, 3 Peacocks, 5 Brimstones and another Holly Blue, in spite of the unfavorable conditions.



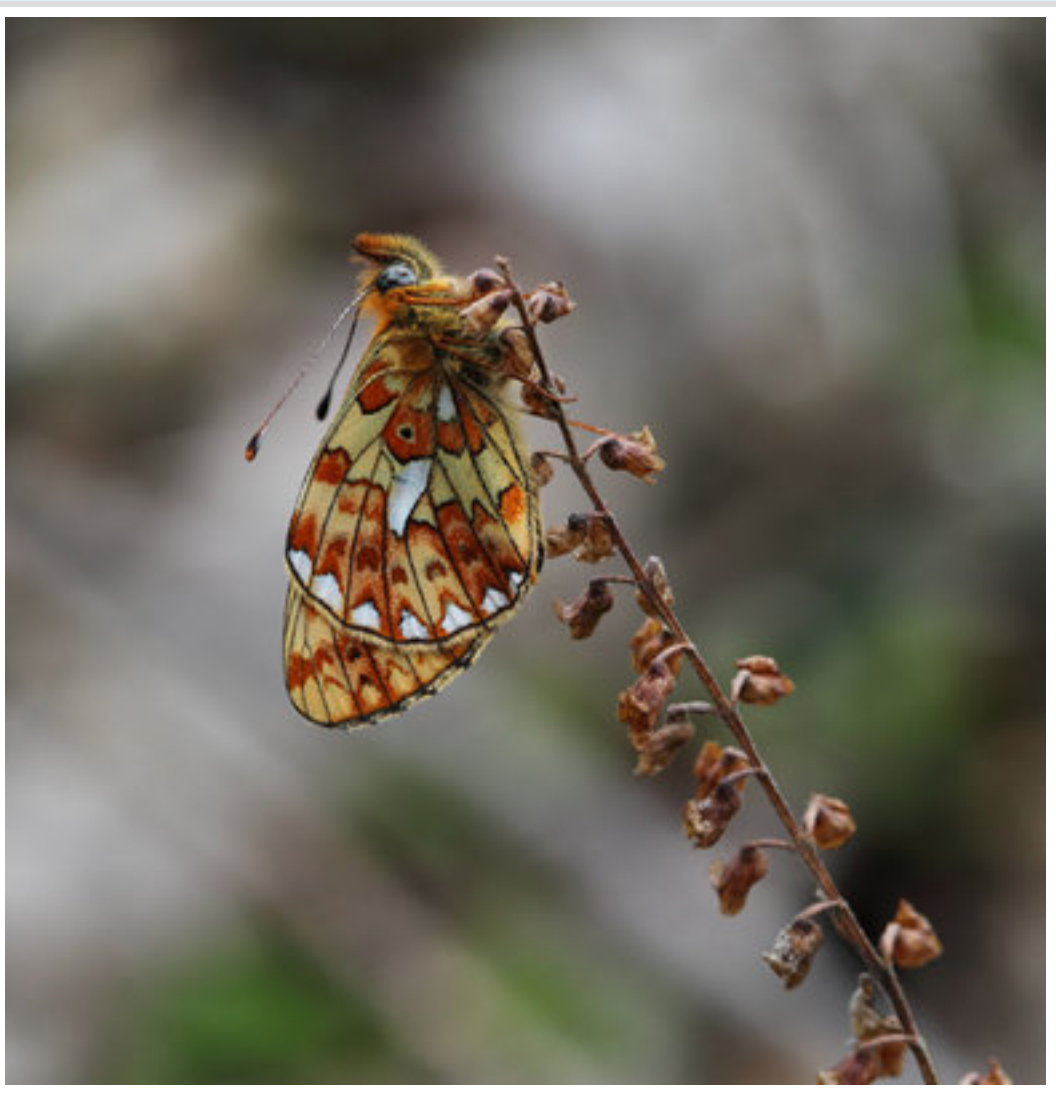
Green Hairstreak basking on its side



Grizzled Skipper

12th May

Today we made a second trip to Rewell Wood to join a BC Sussex Branch field event looking for Pearl Bordered Fritillaries led by Neil Hulme. The previous week had seen 42 participants but was unsuccessful due to later emergence of the butterflies caused by the current weather conditions. This time there were about half the attendees, and on our arrival Neil gave us the good news that the butterflies had at last begun to emerge and that he had seen some in the morning whilst leading another field trip in the wood. As heavy rain was forecast we made haste to the woodland clearing and instantly a Pearl Bordered Fritillary was seen alighting on a shrub, followed shortly by another which, due to the cool conditions, very obligingly posed for photos! Many thanks Neil for your perseverance on this one.

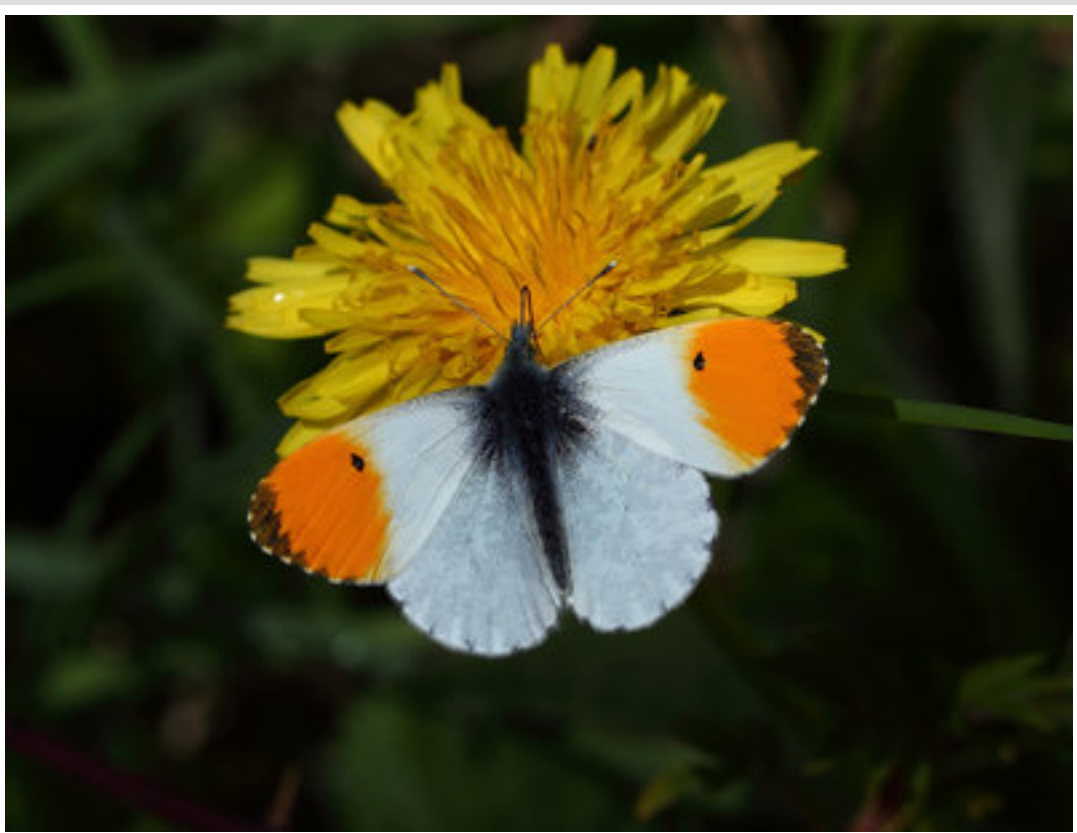


13th May

Today, fired by yesterday's sighting of the 'Pearls', Cathy and I headed off to Noar Hill for a second bite of the Dukes. As we walked up through the pits It was very overcast and windy and, unsurprisingly, we saw no butterflies, which, in our experience at least, is quite often the case here. It wasn't until we had stood for about 10 minutes in one of the deep, sheltered pits further into the reserve that the sun appeared and with it a Duke of Burgundy flew into my line of vision and settled on a grass stem in front of me. I called Cathy over to see him, another Duke joined the first and both turned their open wings to the sun allowing us to admire them and take some photos. We saw 4 in total, 2 of them beginning to look a bit faded.



While at Noar I saw several Male Orange Tips flying along the path occasionally stopping to nectar on Dandelions. I stood and waited until one settled and finally 'broke my duck' by at last photographing a lovely fresh looking male. Our tally for the afternoon was 4 Dukes and 3 Orange Tips, all in all a good day for us at Noar.



Male Orange Tip

Re: Maximus

by David M, 14-May-13 08:36 PM GMT

Some nice shots there, particularly the PBFs.

You've seen quite a bit given the atrocious conditions lately. Wish I could say the same. 😞

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 14-May-13 10:32 PM GMT

Great report Maximus and that shot of the Orange-tip is a belter 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 15-May-13 02:03 PM GMT

Hi David, thanks for the positive comments, I was pleased with the PBF photos. We just try to find a small weather window just to get out and see some butterflies but those windows have not been too frequent recently and we have been out in some rough conditions, but we have still found a few hardy individuals. I am guessing from your comments that the weather in South Wales has been a lot worse than here in the south?

Hi Wurzel, thanks, its been a long time coming (for me), a decent shot of a male Orange Tip! I have just seen your Bentley Wood PBF photos excellent stuff, your perseverance has paid off!!

Mike

Re: Maximus

by David M, 15-May-13 05:54 PM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

I am guessing from your comments that the weather in South Wales has been a lot worse than here in the south?

It's been shocking. Since those two warm days on Bank Holiday Monday and the following Tuesday it's been a complete write off. I DID venture out this afternoon, but you need sunshine when the air temperature is this low and I'm afraid that's in short supply.

I fear another weekend is about to be written off as well because the forecast doesn't look good here for Saturday and Sunday either. 😞

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 28-May-13 07:13 PM GMT

We have just returned from the Isle of Wight and a week of terrible weather. This was a family holiday so butterflies had to fit in with other activities. On the Tuesday (21st May) although the weather was not brilliant we decided to visit Bonchurch Down which would provide some shelter from the wind. As we walked along the bottom of the down a Wall Brown flew up from the path just ahead of us, followed by two fighting Walls. Although this was great, getting a decent photo was another thing! We saw a total of 4 Wall Browns, 2 Orange Tips and a Brimstone. In our experience, Wall Browns were pretty hard to keep an eye on when flying against the hillside, and sometimes flew quite a distance before settling making it almost impossible to find them again. However after some very careful stalking this was the pleasing result.



Wall Brown Male

Wednesday afternoon (22nd May) promised a break in the weather so we took a walk near Newchurch in the beautiful Yar Valley. The Orange Tips were plentiful as were the Green Veined Whites all making the most of the sunshine.





Green Veined White



We then decided to drive to Bonchurch Down again to try to get some more photos of the Wall Browns. When we arrived there was a mixture of sun and cloud and it was quite cool, but at the bottom of the Down it was very sheltered and warm once out of the northerly breeze. We saw one Wall which promptly vanished and 3 Speckled Woods one of which was almost out of sight in the grass but accepted the warmth of my finger before opening its wings and taking flight.



Speckled Wood

The weather once again took a turn for the worse with afternoon temperatures barely reaching 8 degrees, and although we searched hard, this put paid to any further butterfly sightings!

Saturday dawned with clear blue skies and moderate winds so we decided to make the most of the day and catch a later ferry. After breakfast we made haste to Bonchurch Down in almost Mediterranean sunshine and a temperature of 16 degrees. What a difference the warmer weather made.



Our first Brown Argus of 2013



Wall Brown Female



Wall Brown with closed wings through grass



Speckled Wood

We saw 6 Wall Browns, 2 Brown Argus, 3 Small Copper, 3 Small Heath, 2 Green Hairstreaks, 2 Speckled Wood and numerous 'flighty' Orange Tips. With the weather as it was we drove down to Ventnor Esplanade car park to have one last shot at the Glanville Fritillary along Wheelers Bay. As we walked along the path we started to see butterflies.



Our first Common Blue of 2013



Mating Pair



Dingy Skipper

In all we saw 6 Common Blue, 2 Brown Argus, 2 Peacock, 4 Dingy Skippers and a few Orange Tips and Large Whites. We didn't see any Glanville Fritillaries but met a man (Andy Butler) who had seen one earlier that day, but with all the butterflies we had already seen we were happy to wait to see the Glanville Fritillary another time.

The following day (26th May) we dropped my sister at Canterbury and decided on a quick trip to Blean Wood, but although it was sunny and we searched for an hour we saw no Heath Fritillaries. It is probably still a little too early yet given weather conditions this Spring!

We had to drop my sister's holiday luggage at Hythe before heading home, so as it was on the way we decided to pay a visit to Park Gate Down. We had the Down to ourselves and enjoyed a nice couple of hours in the sun enjoying the Dingy Skippers before departing. We saw 8 Dingys in total.



Monkey Orchid just coming into flower

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 28-May-13 07:33 PM GMT

Hi Maximus,

looks like you have been having a good time of late, some lovely photos, my favourite being the Dingy Skipper on the Bird`s-foot Trefoil, beautiful. All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 28-May-13 07:44 PM GMT

Cracking shots Maximus 😊 really like the Wall 🍷

Must have just missed you as I'm currently at Gurnard on the Isle of Black just drying out as it's rained non-stop all day 😞 To top it all we're coming home tomorrow as my wife can't stand the accommodation and Glanvilles have just been spotted 😞😞 Still here's hoping Wrecclesham happens this year....

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 28-May-13 08:20 PM GMT

Great report and photos Maximus, looks like you made the most of some 'challenging' conditions.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 29-May-13 11:06 AM GMT

Hi Nick, thanks for your comments and yes this year has been very enjoyable, you just have to make the best of things and work around the weather. Dingy Skippers are a favorite of mine and its good to see plenty in 2013.

Hi Wurzel, thanks, must have just missed you too, we stayed at Wroxhall and it rained pretty well non-stop for us, we just made the most of the few sunny spells. Went to Wrecclesham on Monday no Glanvilles seen, lets hope it does happen soon?

Thanks Neil, we did make the most of the challenging conditions and it made the trip very worthwhile for us.

Regards

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 29-May-13 03:50 PM GMT

Just catching up with your diary Mike and you've got some lovely shots there – my favourites have to be the Brown Argus and Orange Tip but I'm quite envious of the selection you have there 🍷 Funnily enough, I too was at Wrecclesham on Monday but it must have been late afternoon and all I saw were the Greenstreaks. I shall be watching with interest to see how the Glanvilles fare this year. Last year I saw them from the 25th but never more than a couple of dozen whereas the year before there were literally hundreds. Time will tell, not long now 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 09-Jun-13 12:19 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, thanks for the positive feedback on the photos. I think the Glanvilles are just late like everything else this year and hopefully will emerge soon.

We have been away for a week 'north of the border' to look for a certain little butterfly! The trip had been booked for several months and we hoped that it would coincide with the flight time of the Chequered Skipper? Weather reports looked reasonable for the week ahead as we travelled to Fort William. On our first morning there we drove to Glen Loy which I had read about in Lee slaughters 'revisited' report.

What a beautiful place Glen Loy is, total quiet only punctuated by the call of the Cuckoo. We worked our way carefully up the Glen in the sunshine searching likely looking spots, but by the end of the day we had seen no Chequered Skippers. We did however find a nice colony of Green Hairstreaks and also saw some Green-veined Whites, including a mating pair, and, surprisingly, also a large Salmon in a deep pool of the river Loy!





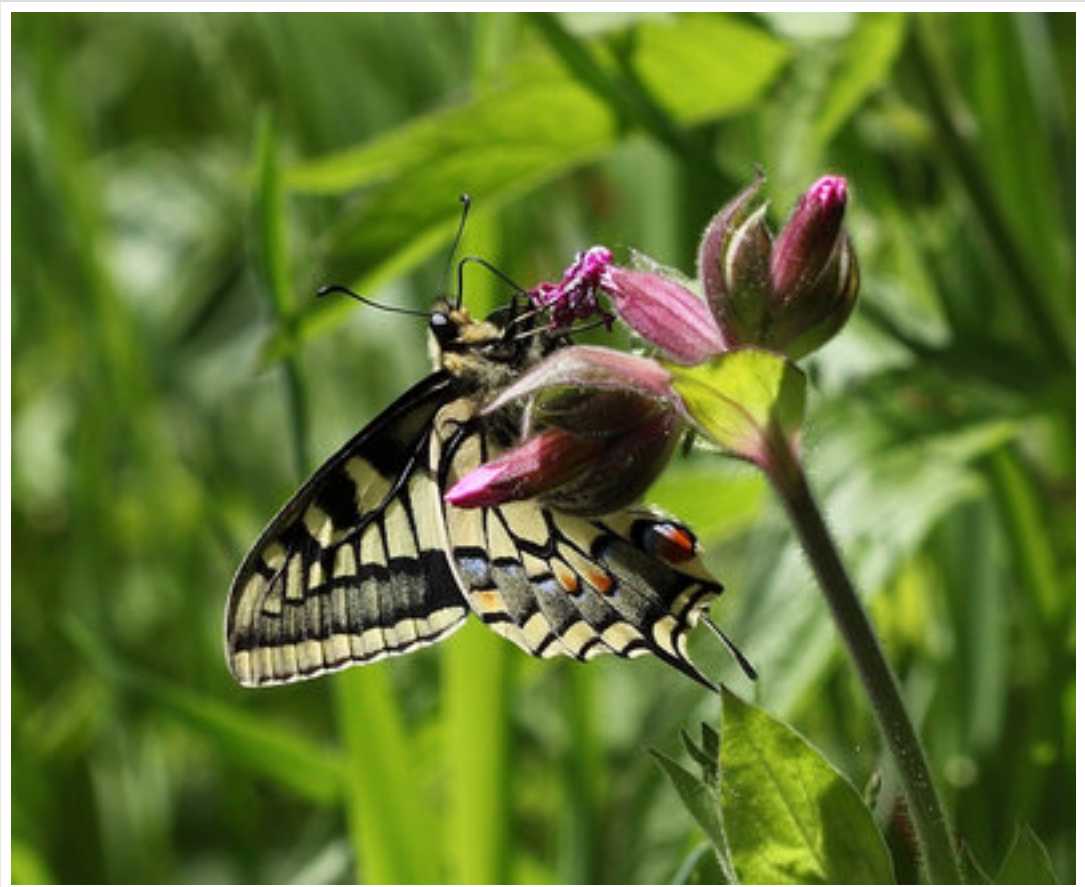
Over the next couple of days we ventured back to Glen Loy, and with the weather still reasonable we searched the same areas and others that we had not, but still no sighting of a Checkered skipper. In view of this we began to have doubts that they had yet emerged as we had spent a considerable time searching for them at this location. Clearly a change of plan was required.

The next morning saw us on route to Glasdrum Wood in the pouring rain with the hill tops obscured by low cloud. When we arrived it was still raining and the outside air temperature sensor in the car read 10 degrees, I told Cathy I would eat my hat if we saw one in these conditions! We set off up the right-hand path which takes you up the hillside and loops back round to the bottom. We arrived at a point where some power lines cut through the wood and took a path to the right beneath them. We reached a small burn, by which time the rain had stopped and the sky was brightening. I walked ahead and then heard Cathy call that she'd found one. I slowly walked (rushed over) and there he was with open wings, enjoying the first rays of the sun. It was at this point I felt a spot of hat munching was in order.



Our brief visit to Scotland had come to an end all too soon, but at least it had ended on a high with finding a total of 6 Chequered Skippers – mission accomplished!

When we'd planned our trip to Scotland earlier in the year we had also toyed with the idea of making a brief stop in Norfolk to see if the Swallowtails were on the wing. So, as the weather for the Norfolk area looked promising we decided to go for it. After a gruelling 500 plus mile drive taking over 8 hours because of the appalling traffic on the A1, we finally got to our destination and managed to book ourselves into a hotel near Great Yarmouth. The following morning was sunny but the cool wind kept the temperatures down, and we had our doubts as to whether we'd see any butterflies at all let alone a Swallowtail! However, we were there and were not going to be deterred by the cool conditions, so set off for Strumpshaw Fen late morning. On arrival we saw the car park at the reserve was pretty full already, so we gathered our cameras and headed straight up the track to the Doctor's garden. The beautiful flower border was in full bloom and there were a couple of Peacocks busily nectaring. Whilst we stood admiring them a couple of Swallowtails in full aerial combat swooped overhead, did a circuit of the Doctor's garden then promptly disappeared into an adjoining field. We pursued them in haste and found a small group of fellow enthusiasts already gathered in the field, cameras at the ready, waiting for one of the two Swallowtails to perch on the abundant red campion. After only a few minutes one of the battling pair obliged and landed within feet of us, but, as is often the case with Swallowtails, its wings were rapidly fluttering which made a decent photograph nigh on impossible. However, we were afforded a couple of photographic opportunities where they settled, wings open and still.





We were fortunate enough to bump into the Doctor whilst admiring his garden, and had a really interesting conversation with this rather knowledgeable gentleman, a retired entomologist, who recounted tales of his past encounters with our native Large Blue on Dartmoor back in the late 1940s. He told us how during that time he had collected butterflies, as many did in those days, and had mounted them in a mahogany case, and, due to his deep regret in later years at having done so, had donated them to the Norwich Museum. He was quick to point to our digital cameras and say he wished they'd had them in his day to capture images of butterflies instead.

Friday 7th June, a couple of days after we'd returned, we decided to pay a visit to Chiddingfold Forest in the hope of seeing some Wood Whites. The forecast was for 'the hottest day of the year', but rather predictably was grey, wet and windy!! Nevertheless, we set off regardless and arrived in pouring rain at the Botany Bay entrance, where we parked up and sat in the car for a while until the rain eased off. While walking down the track we bumped into a couple who had also been searching for Wood Whites and who, after several hours, had only seen a few Speckled Yellow moths. We walked from one end of the woods to the other, also only encountering Speckled Yellow moths, but were pleasantly surprised by the number of Nightingales we heard singing, even managing to get a distant shot of one on the camera at full zoom, and also hearing the cuckoo a couple of times too. After a couple of hours the skies began to clear and the sun made an appearance, and almost immediately we spotted a Wood White bobbing along the edge of the ride. We were initially excited with seeing just the one, but as the weather warmed up we began seeing more and more of them.





Is this a form of courtship



Wood White in flight



Something sinister going on in the background



Spider with Speckled Yellow moth



A Nightingale sang...

Whilst walking along the ride we found a promising looking open grassy area in which we discovered quite a large colony of Dingy Skippers.



After a pleasant afternoon spent in fantastic surroundings we saw in total 35 Wood Whites and 22 Dingy Skippers, very satisfying considering the rather inclement weather at the start of the day.

Re: Maximus

by Padfield, 09-Jun-13 12:41 PM GMT

Lovely pictures and observations, Maximus. Yes, that is wood white courtship – a quite remarkable ritual. Some male butterflies are all aggro and adrenalin but wood whites do romance.

Guy

Re: Maximus

by David M, 09-Jun-13 12:42 PM GMT

Well, what a memorable last few days you've had, Maximus.

Great images (especially the first chequered skipper and the wood white in flight).

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 11-Jun-13 05:59 PM GMT

Thanks Guy, and its good to know that romance isn't dead!

Thanks David, yes it really was a great week.

Monday 10th June.

Today we decided on a visit to Figsbury Rings situated a couple of miles to the east of Salisbury, a site that we had last visited at the end of last August, where we saw some second-brood Adonis Blues. It was overcast as we set off in the morning but some sunny spells were forecast for the afternoon. When we arrived it was quite cool, but as we entered the site and walked along the perimeter ditch we disturbed the first Adonis Blue which flew up ahead of us before settling on a tall grass stem wings closed. As we walked around the earthworks the sky brightened and it became noticeably warmer, bringing the bank alive with the iridescent blue of a number of Adonis Blues. We stopped counting at 30 but estimated at least 50 plus, mainly males with a count of 6 females.



Male with wings open



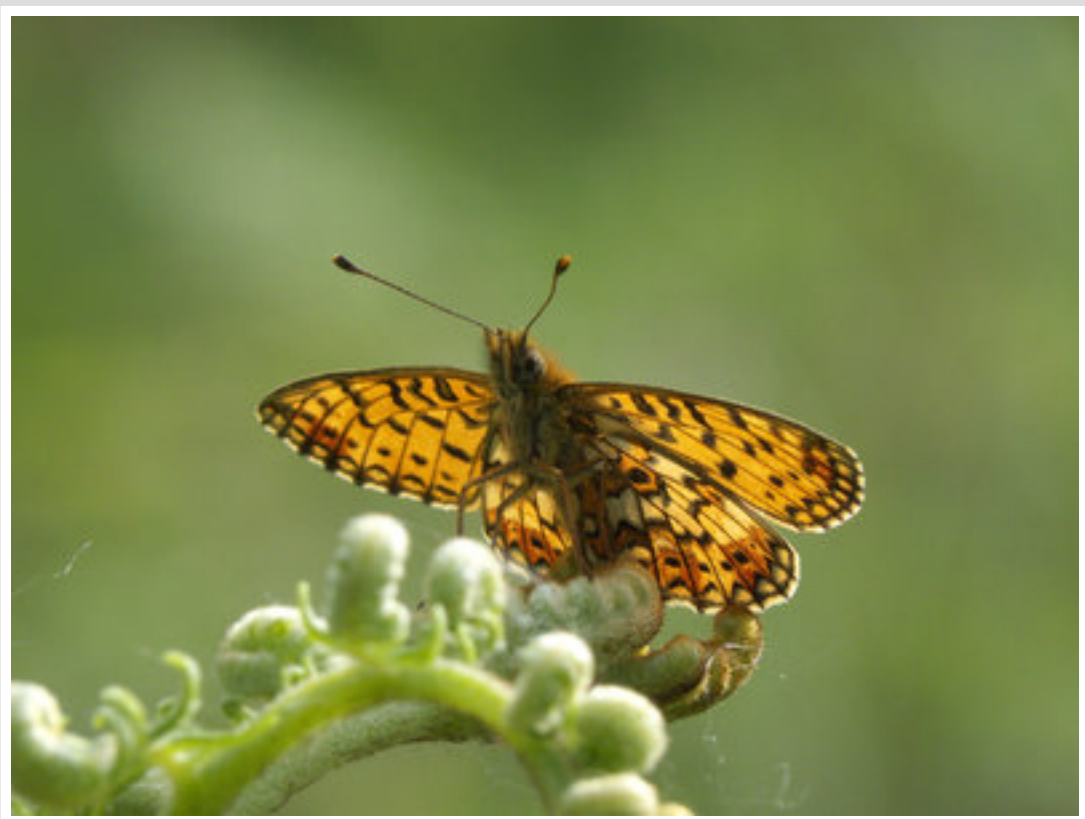




A beautiful female

We spent some time admiring these beautiful butterflies and also saw a few Small Heaths and some Dingy Skippers basking on the bare earth excavated by rabbits. As it was only 2pm and a few breaks appeared in the clouds we decided to head across to nearby Bentley Wood hoping for a glimpse of some Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. We weren't disappointed as, when we arrived, the car park was empty and the sun was out in full. Our first encounter was as we entered the Eastern Clearing and saw one skimming the tops of the ferns. We wandered further into the clearing and cut across the small ditch into a damper area where we found many small PBF's on the wing. They were quite tricky to photograph while the sun was out in full, but as soon as there was a little cloud coverage they seemed to settle quite well, which gave us ample opportunity to get some reasonable photos.







A perfect end to a perfect day!

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 11-Jun-13 06:16 PM GMT

Just caught up with your diary Mike. What wonderful adventures you have both been having and some very enviable photos there. I have been wanting to see a Swallowtail for 3 years now but can't seem to sort out the logistics.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 11-Jun-13 09:24 PM GMT

Excellent images, Maximus. I'm extremely envious.

Re: Maximus

by CJB, 11-Jun-13 10:15 PM GMT

What an amazing few days you seem to have had!

Some great pictures and absolute corker species. 🎁

I was at Bentley this weekend and tried to head to Figsbury Rings afterwards but couldn't find it on the map. 😞

What is next on your quest!?

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 11-Jun-13 10:31 PM GMT

An astonishing series of photos with a huge variety of species in just a few days. I don't envy you the driving, mind!

Is the Figsbury Rings site at SU188338? This is really close to Bentley Wood.

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 12-Jun-13 08:55 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, thank you for your positive comments, your photos have always been an inspiration to me!! We have had a great couple of weeks and have had some good luck on our side as well. The Swallowtails involve a 360 mile round trip from Hampshire, we were on our way back from Scotland so just made the most of it, but the drive and the crazy A1 pushed us both to the limit!

Thanks David, for your positive comments.

CJB, yes we have been very lucky but have done a lot of driving recently. Figsbury is just north of the A30 which is just north of Bentley Wood. 'Quest' what quest..... hang on just a minute though I have just seen that the weather forecast for Blandford Forum is not too bad tomorrow afternoon....

Hi Dave, glad you like the series of photos and its variety of species, but yes it was bonkers driving. Figsbury is bang on the reference you give of

SU188338, which is 15 mins from Bentley Wood.

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 12-Jun-13 09:04 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

I can only second the previous comments, an amazing selection of species and some lovely images 😊

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-13 07:46 PM GMT

I'll third that seeing the Wood Whites, Cheques and Swallowtails 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-Jun-13 01:00 PM GMT

Cheers Neil and Wurzel, our internet has been down for a few days but is hopefully now up and running.

13th June.

This afternoon as some sunny spells were forecast we went to Wrecclesham. Although we looked in all the places that we saw them at this date last year there was no sign of the Glanville Fritillaries. Perhaps as the season is late they may yet emerge? There was a strong wind but we managed to find some Common Blues, Green Hairstreaks, Small Coppers, a very battle worn Peacock and our first Large Skipper of the year.





14th June.

Sunny periods were once again forecast for the afternoon so we decided at the last minute to head for Hod Hill in the hope of finding some Marsh Fritillaries, as I knew that Wurzel and Philzoid had seen them there fairly recently. We set off late and after struggling to find the right place finally arrived at the entrance gate at the top of the hill around 2.45pm (out of breath from the steep climb). The wind was awful as we set off but we found some shelter in the deep ditch which runs around the earthwork. We had only walked a short distance when we saw the first Marsh Frit which, due to the strong wind, was quite content to sit tight and be photographed. The sun was in and out (mostly in) as we walked further round the perimeter. Thankfully it was quite warm, sheltered between the grassy banks, as we then started to see a lot more action, with many Small Heaths, Common Blues, male and female, Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and a single Brown Argus at various points along the ditch.





Female full of eggs





In total we saw 9 Marsh Fritillaries, including this mating pair!



On our next outing Cathy will protect herself with a good coating of Deet based insect repellent as she found 3 ticks on various parts of her body after our last couple of outings!

In the meantime we are celebrating five new arrivals in our home!! The Orange Tip eggs we had in our kitchen have now hatched. They are on Garlic Mustard in a water bottle on the windowsill and are residing on separate parts of the plant, which is just as well as 'Big Jack', as we've named the first hatchling, would probably eat his mates given half a chance. We moved them inside as the previous eight caterpillars which we left out in the garden were predated. We will separate them from each other as they grow but are not sure what needs are required for their pupation? So if anyone can advise us on what course of action we should take we'd be most grateful.



Little Jack



Big Jack



Top egg darkening just before hatching

Re: Maximus

by Vince Massimo, 17-Jun-13 05:27 PM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

In the meantime we are celebrating five new arrivals in our home!! The Orange Tip eggs we had in our kitchen have now hatched. They are on Garlic Mustard in a water bottle on the windowsill and are residing on separate parts of the plant, which is just as well as 'Big Jack', as we've named the first hatchling, would probably eat his mates given half a chance. We moved them inside as the previous eight caterpillars which we left out in the garden were predated. We will separate them from each other as they grow but are not sure what needs are required for their pupation? So if anyone can advise us on what course of action we should take we'd be most grateful.

Hi Mike,

It's great to see so many people now taking an interest in rearing caterpillars 😊.

Keep the larvae apart and watch them as they develop. When they reach a length of approximately 30mm they will be fully grown. At this stage they stop feeding and become restless and are likely to leave the food plant in search of a pupation site. If you want to observe further stages of development you will need to confine the larvae in a well-lit and airy container topped with fine netting and provide them with twigs set at an angle. Put in some food plant as well in case they decide to resume feeding. With luck they will attach themselves to the underside of a twig and pupate a day later, but they may also choose other locations (such as the netting or lid of the container).

Please keep us advised of progress and just ask if there are any further issues that arise.

Regards,

Vince

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-Jun-13 05:49 PM GMT

Hi Vince,

thanks for the information and I will certainly keep you advised of their progress.

Regards,

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Jun-13 09:21 PM GMT

18th June.

Today we had a trip to Magdalen Hill Down primarily to look for the Small Blue which we had yet to see this year. Our son also came along as he wanted to try out his new camera. Although it was warm it was also overcast, but we need not have worried because as we walked up the path and turned right over the first stile we immediately saw a Small Blue basking in the long grass. I'd forgotten what beautiful, delicate little butterflies they are! As we explored the reserve further we saw lots of Small Blues (20 to 30 plus), Common Blues, Brown Argus, Small Heaths, a single Brimstone and some very fresh looking Large Skippers. All in all we had a very nice afternoon in lovely surroundings with only the beautiful song of the Skylark to accompany us.









Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 18-Jun-13 09:26 PM GMT

I love that Small Blue shot with wings shut Mike. Beautiful silvery grey with a hint of blue and lots of detail. Great!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 20-Jun-13 12:10 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, and thanks, I agree they are lovely delicate little butterflies and that's the first time I have managed a closed wing shot.

19th June.

Today we found ourselves on the 7.15am ferry heading for East Cowes, I had been awake since 3.30am such was my excitement and anticipation. We had decided that one of the surest ways of seeing the Glanville Fritillary was to visit it on its 'home turf'. Once docked we drove straight to Compton Bay in the morning sun where we parked up in the empty car park at 9am. As we walked along the cliff top path we fully expected to see a Glanville at any moment, but no such luck! It was not until 10.20am after much searching that we found what we had come here for. On the path ahead of us, wings open in the warm sunshine was a Glanville Fritillary.





Guy Padfield Attempted Shot!

Cathy and I went in separate directions hoping to find a few more Glanvilles, but after some time, although we found no more Glanvilles at this spot, we did see some rather fresh looking Painted Ladies which, due to the hot sun, were quite active and only gave us a record shot. We also spotted a number of Small Heaths and Common Blues whilst we were there. We ventured down a grassy slope where part of the cliff had slipped away and almost immediately spotted a fresh looking Small Blue and two battling Large Skippers. Cathy also spotted a Clouded Yellow which perched briefly on yellow flowers on the cliff edge, but by the time she made her way over to it, it had flown. We then had quite a long period of cloud coverage during which we saw no butterflies at all, so decided to head for Wheeler's Bay. By the time we got to Wheeler's Bay and parked up the sun was out again, and as we walked along the esplanade we began seeing more Glanvilles perched at various places along the bottom of the cliff.

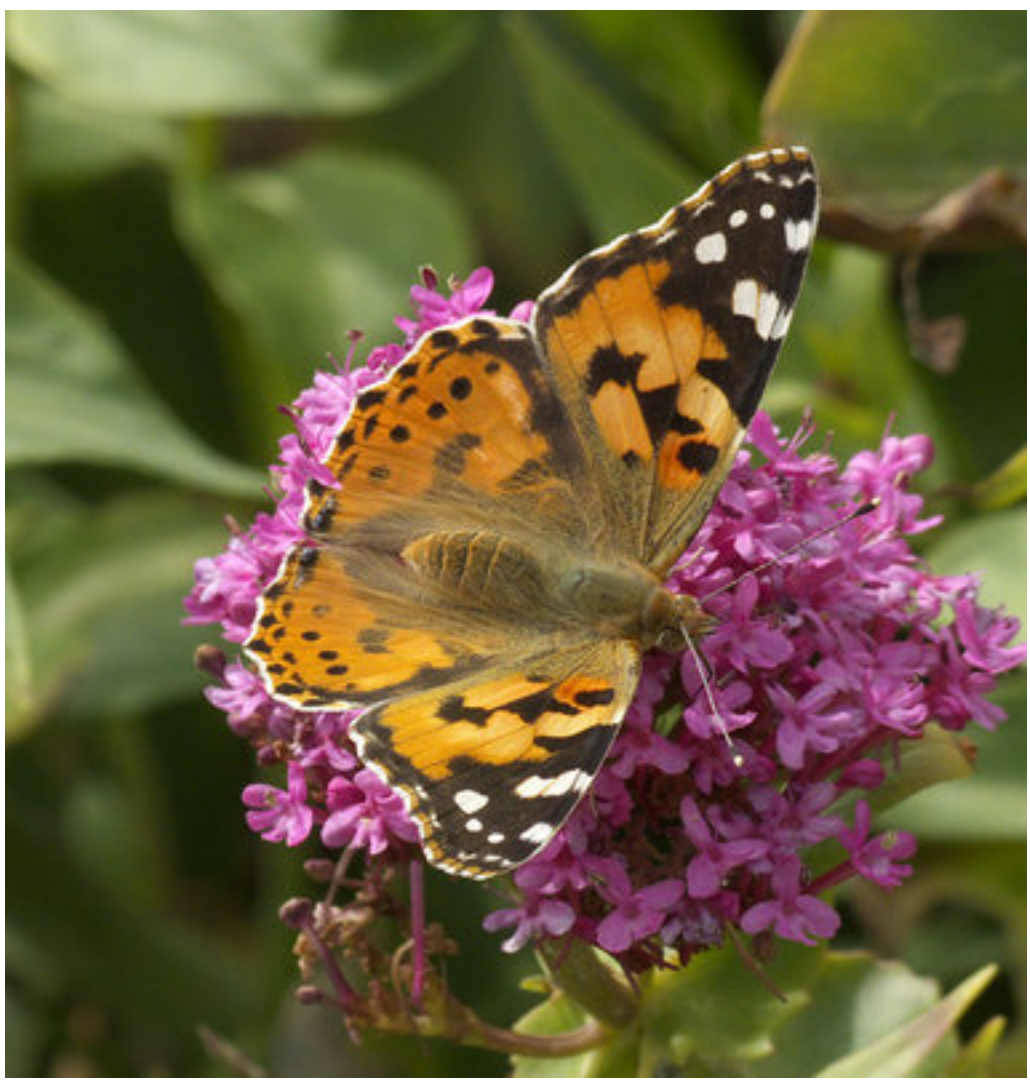




We spent a couple of hours searching along the cliff bottom and saw some Dingy Skippers, plenty of Common Blues and one tired looking Peacock. We had to head back to the car park before our ticket expired and on the walk back we spotted another Clouded Yellow. It was rather reluctant to have its photo taken, but with a lot of patience we managed to get a shot of it before it disappeared up the cliff face and out of sight.



Our last sighting was of a beautiful, fresh looking Painted Lady nectaring on some pink Valerian, which fortunately posed quite happily for some pictures.



We had a fantastic day on the I.O.W. and enjoyed a pleasant trip back on the outer deck of the ferry in 21 deg C. Our total count for Glanville Fritillaries today was 12, Painted Ladies 5 and Clouded Yellows 2...

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-13 11:32 PM GMT

Cracking shots of three butterflies I'd love to see 🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Debbie, 21-Jun-13 01:47 PM GMT

Wow, I just adore the Clouded Yellow.

Debbie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 21-Jun-13 02:49 PM GMT

I second that Wurzel 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 24-Jun-13 08:00 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, you will see them, you always do!!! 😊

Glad you like the Clouded Yellow Debbie, they are lovely butterflies.

Hi Goldie, You seem to see some amazing butterflies yourself. 😊

21st June.

Went for a couple of hours to our shared allotment west of Guildford and just as we arrived a Painted Lady landed on the plot near us. Fortunately had the camera so got a quick snap. I wonder if there could be a few more seen this year than last?



24th June

Even though the weather was dull and overcast we decided to visit Thursley Common in search of Silver-studded Blues. Unfortunately the car park was full when we arrived, including a coach!! We spent a short while searching some promising looking spots before drawing a blank and heading off for a more 'peaceful' look on Broxhead Common where we'd seen some SSB's last year. We arrived mid-afternoon, the weather still dull, grey and breezy, and headed for the same area we'd spotted them last year. I found one fresh looking male SSB low down in the tall grass, which didn't make for an easy photograph, then searched the rest of the area, finding another two males. We only found three in total the whole time we were there, and also a couple of Small Coppers which were quite active.





Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 24-Jun-13 09:45 PM GMT

24th June.

Our Orange Tip caterpillars are now down to four, the last one to hatch fell off the food plant and although we helped him back on he did not make it 😞 On the positive side, Big Jack was found off the food plant wandering across the kitchen worktop surface and although we put him back on the plant it was clear he had other things on his mind. He is now suspended on silk on the underside of a twig in his little Cryo-chamber, in the process of pupation. This was him feeding up yesterday before leaving the food plant. We will continue to monitor him, and the other three, closely and will keep you updated..



This is one of his smaller brethren.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-13 10:41 PM GMT

I certainly hope so with regards to the Painted Ladies. Lovely shots again Maximus 😊 I seem to be getting behind again as everyone is getting shots of Silver Studs – still this weekend hopefully...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 25-Jun-13 08:13 PM GMT

You have certainly done some travelling in the past few weeks Mike but the impressive selection of species you have seen and your excellent photos are your just rewards.

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 26-Jun-13 12:58 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, is your nearest SSB colony in the New Forest?

Thanks Neil, you have done some travelling too with some impressive results.

25th June.

Today I decided to make a visit to Wrecclesham in another attempt to find the Glanville Fritillaries. I spent the whole afternoon in perfect conditions looking in the areas I saw them last year and also in other areas across the site. The result....nothing, not one solitary Glanville! So my feeling is that most probably there are no longer any Glanvilles at Wrecclesham! I can only surmise that as we saw reduced numbers last year, maybe the poor weather finally 'finished them off'. If this 'is' the case it will be very sad as they gave pleasure to many of us, but at least we made the most of them while we could. A quick reminder of what we saw on June 13th 2012.



On the positive side, Pauline, the owners only appear to have 'treated' the verges of the main track from the bridge to the lake. The rest of the site appears to remain much as it did, although the grass is very long in places. While I was there I saw plenty of Large Skippers, some very fresh first brood Small Tortoiseshells, some faded Common Blues and my first Small Skippers of the year, so all is not lost. 😊







Also saw this beetle



A poor photo of this Egret

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 26-Jun-13 01:11 PM GMT

Hi Maximus,

your Small Skippers are Essex Skippers, look at the antennae, and the back of the hindwings.

All the best Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 26-Jun-13 01:48 PM GMT

Hi Nick, thanks for your observations. I attach a photo to clarify that the undersides of the antenna tips are orange and not black, which would signify that this is indeed a Small Skipper and not Essex. I appreciate that this was not easy to see in the side-on photos.



Regards,
Mike.

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 26-Jun-13 03:21 PM GMT

Hi Mike

My heart skipped a beat when I saw the Glanvilles – thought you'd found some but looks like they're well and truly gone. I don't think I've seen Small Skippers reported yet so you did well to find that and I really like the Egret, simply because of the reflection. Now, your beetle – I think I can tell you what that is – *Pyrochroa serraticornis* – a type of cardinal beetle. Thanks to this site my horizons are being broadened and I am being educated 😊 (Going to feel pretty stupid if I'm wrong 😊)!

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 26-Jun-13 05:06 PM GMT

I`ll have to get myself some new spectacles. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jun-13 07:46 PM GMT

Uh Oh!, time for those little golden skippers again 😊 I got caught out by one last year 😊

I am not sure what the flight times are like further south but around my part of the midlands the Small Skippers are usually on the wing for a week or so before the Essex show up. This would mean that the first ones seen are almost certainly Smalls if you can't get close enough to see the antennae. That is very much a general observation and like always there will always be the exception to the rule.

Cracking photos again Mike, keep it up 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-13 10:12 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Smessex Mike 😊 They remind me of the pencil toppers I used to have at school that used to bounce down the pencil. 😊 I could go to the Forest for Silver Studs but I wouldn't know where to start looking so I favour Slop Bog near Ferndown.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

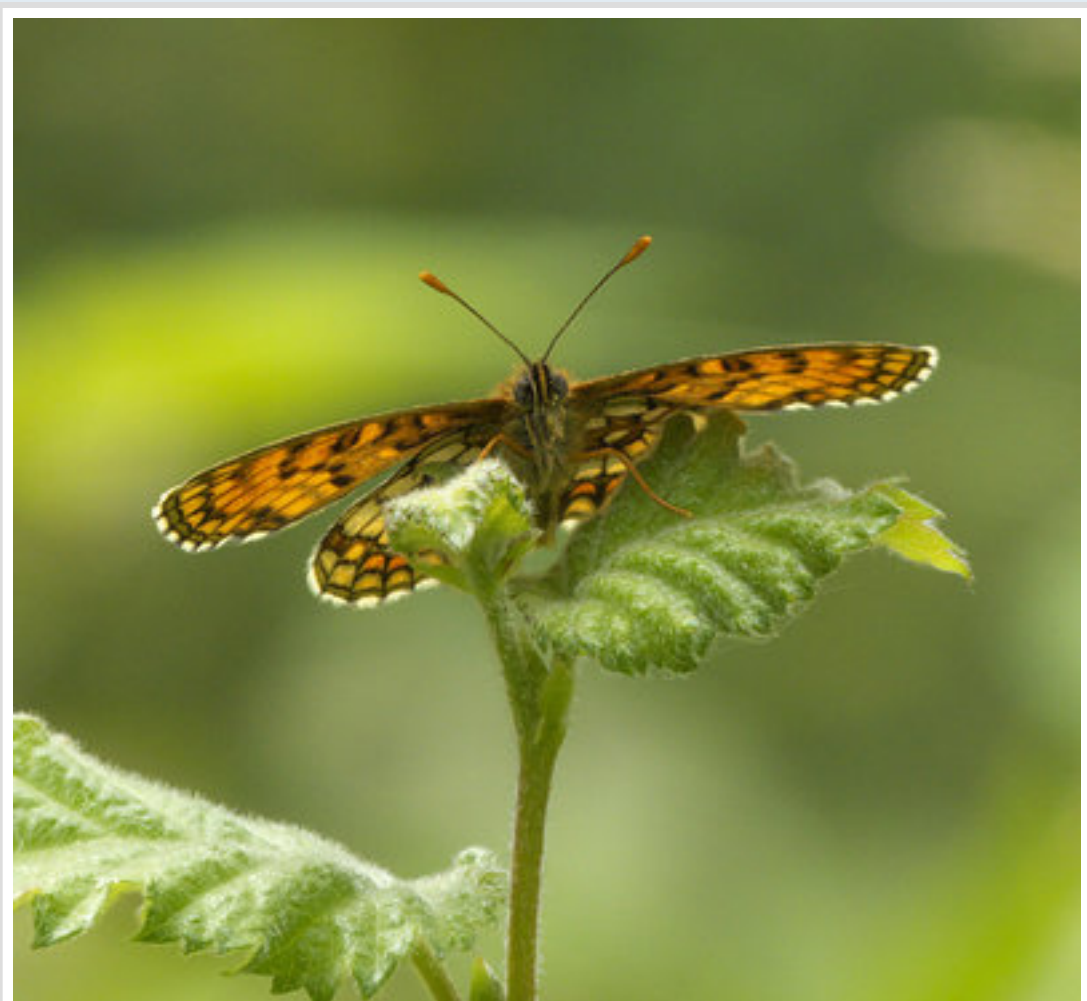
by Maximus, 28-Jun-13 02:03 PM GMT

Hi Neil, and thanks, I think that your general observation regarding the flight times of Small and Essex Skippers would also appear to apply in the south of England.

Hi Wurzel, glad you like the Small Skipper. Hope you get to see SSB's at the weekend?

27th June

Today we headed off to East Blean Woods having checked the weather and finding sunny spells forecast for the Canterbury area in the afternoon. After a couple of hours' drive on the busy M25 we finally arrived at the car park at Blean at 1.30pm, noticing a few cars there already. Luckily the sun was breaking through the clouds, and heading for the same area we had found them last year we spotted our first Heath Fritillary within minutes. It was a fresh looking male, perched on a tall grass stem, wings open in the dappled sunlight. In this one small area we found a total of five Heath Frits, all male, and only one with any signs of wear. It wasn't long before we were joined by other people keen to get a glimpse of the Heath Fritillary, so, having already got the photographs we wanted we left them to it and headed off elsewhere.





A male with unusual markings...a variant maybe?



Also spotted our first Meadow Brown of 2013

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 28-Jun-13 02:20 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, sorry i'm getting slack in my replies, but no excuses..Yes, looks like the Glanvilles have disappeared from Wrecclesham 😞 But whilst there I was lucky enough to spot the Small Skippers. Glad you liked the Egret photograph, only wish I'd been a bit closer for the shot. Thanks for ID-ing the beetle, you certainly got it right, I looked it up afterwards and it indeed appears to be a Red Headed Cardinal Beetle!!

Mike

ps. hows Maggie?

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 28-Jun-13 10:27 PM GMT

Cracking shots of the Heaths Mike – and that looks like an aberrant to me 😊🍷 I was planning to try and see them next week and as it's such a drive I was planning on driving over night and sleeping in the car ready. However my wife is worried about me driving tired on the way back so that idea has been out on hold. I'll still work on it but I don't hold out much hope... 😞 Still hopefully the Silver Studs will be out at Slop Bog tomorrow as I'm taking the girls for an outing 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 02-Jul-13 08:41 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, yes it is an aberration but that was the only shot we got before it vanished out of sight. I understand your frustration regarding the Heath Frits but I suppose it is an awkward journey for you 😞

30th June

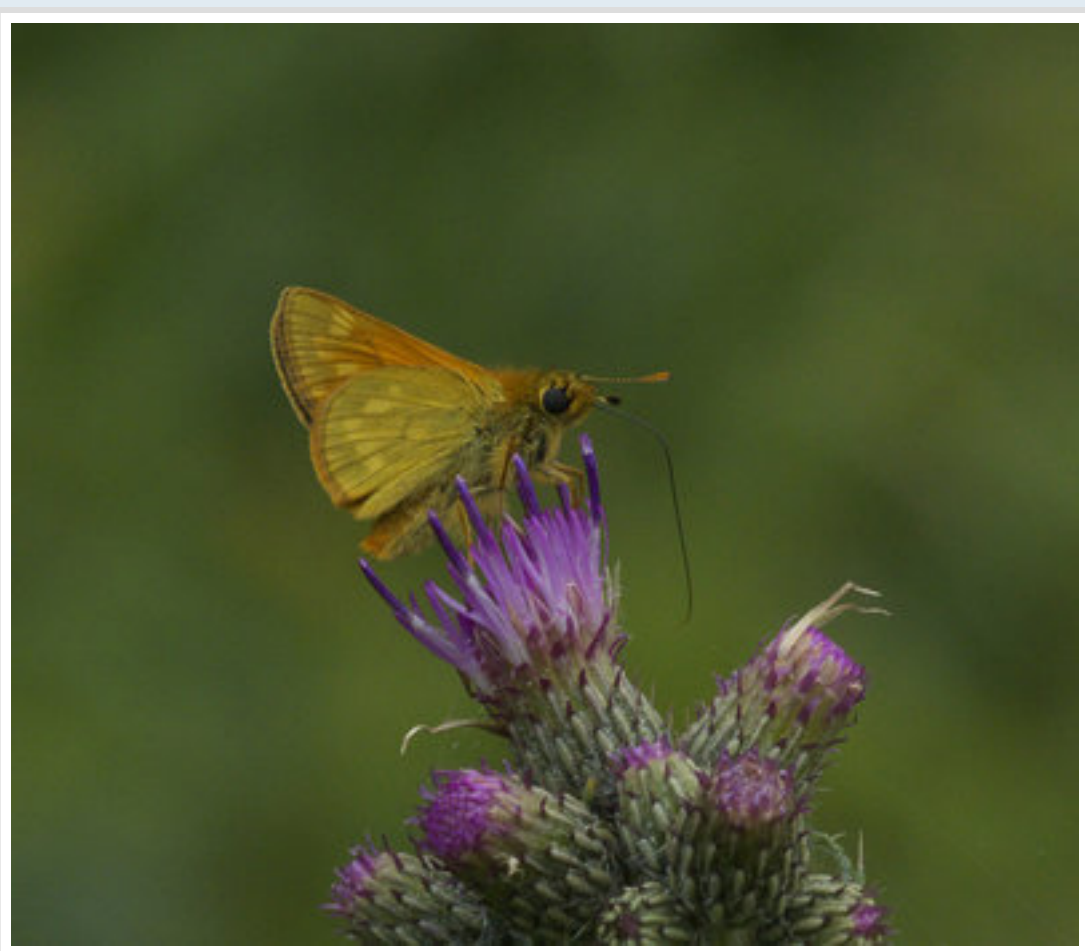
Today we paid another visit to a site not far from where we live to look for Silver Studded Blues. We had already searched this site several times without success, so we planned our visit for the afternoon as the forecast was for sunshine. Fortunately our timing was perfect as we soon spotted some fresh looking males extremely active in the warm sunshine. Best of all for us, however, was the sight of two freshly emerged females which happily posed for photos, though it's impossible to do justice to the amazing silver studding on the undersides of their hindwings.





1st July

Inspired by Mark's (Colvin) beautiful photo of the Black Hairstreak, today found us heading for Whitecross Green Wood in Oxfordshire. We chose Whitecross because it looked much smaller than Bernwood Forest on the map, our logic being that the less ground to cover the better chance of finding a Black Hairstreak. Sunny spells were forecast for about 3pm so we got there around 2pm. As we walked along a lovely grassy ride full of wild flowers we spotted our first velvety Ringlet of 2013. Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Speckled Woods were plentiful along the ride, and there were a fair few Large Skippers settling on the thistle flowers as we made our way deeper into the wood. A Speckled Wood caught our attention as we watched it fly into and beyond a young Ash at the edge of the ride. As we watched it, Cathy caught sight of a different butterfly sitting at about head height on the leaves of the Ash. As I trained my binoculars on the spot I was amazed to see a Black Hairstreak perched there in all her glory. We only managed a couple of quick record shots before the Hairstreak took flight and disappeared into the trees, but we were more than satisfied as we hadn't expected to find one so soon after arriving. During our brief visit we managed to spot a total of six Black Hairstreaks, though most of them were flying high up in the blackthorn, settling only briefly and out of reach of any good photos.





I've just seen David and Neil's superb photos taken on Sunday at Whitecross and Bernwood, excellent stuff especially Davids marathon day out.

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 02-Jul-13 08:52 PM GMT

Wow! I have never seen such a distinctly marked SSB Mike. She is gorgeous. D'you mind if I ask where this was Mike? You should be well pleased with your BH shot too – lovely, and well worth the journey.

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 02-Jul-13 08:58 PM GMT

I agree about that SSB! Stunningly coloured and large "studs". Some of those I saw at Thursley and Fairmile on Saturday had no studs to speak of at all.

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 02-Jul-13 11:12 PM GMT

Great shots of the Silver Studs Mike 😊 I did manage to see my Silver Studs at Slop Bog but no females there yet. I've noticed over the last couple of years that females are often more heavily stuffed than the males but the one you have us a cracker 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jul-13 08:29 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Wow! I have never seen such a distinctly marked SSB Mike. She is gorgeous.

Agreed,

Great photos of a beautiful individual 😊

All the best,

Neil F.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Jul-13 06:47 PM GMT

Our broadband has been down again over the last few days and only got it sorted this morning! Thanks Pauline and Dave for your comments. That was a nice Freudian slip Wurzel, or maybe just a slip of the finger on the keyboard? 😊 Glad you saw your SSB's at Slop Bog. Thanks Neil, glad you like the photos, yes she was a beautiful butterfly. We think she was a 'one off' as further visits to Fairmile have not yeilded any quite as well marked as she was!





3rd July

Today we went first to the Straits Inclosure and took a walk along the woodland ride and although the sun was not out, some nice new Ringlets, Meadow Browns and some Speckled Woods were on the wing. The only downside was that the pesky Horseflies made a bee-line for us.



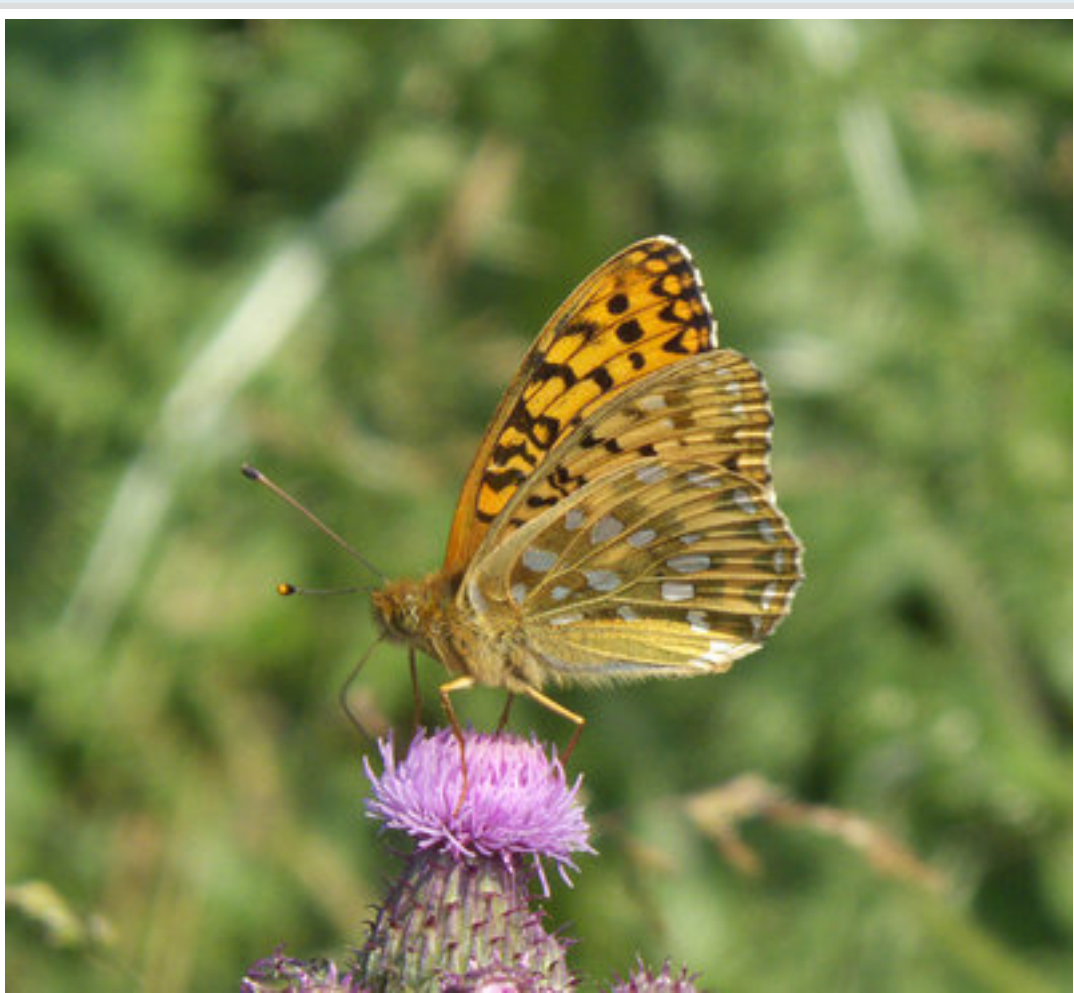
On the way home we decided to have a walk around Wrecclisham and although we saw no 'Glannies' we did see our first Marbled Whites of 2013.

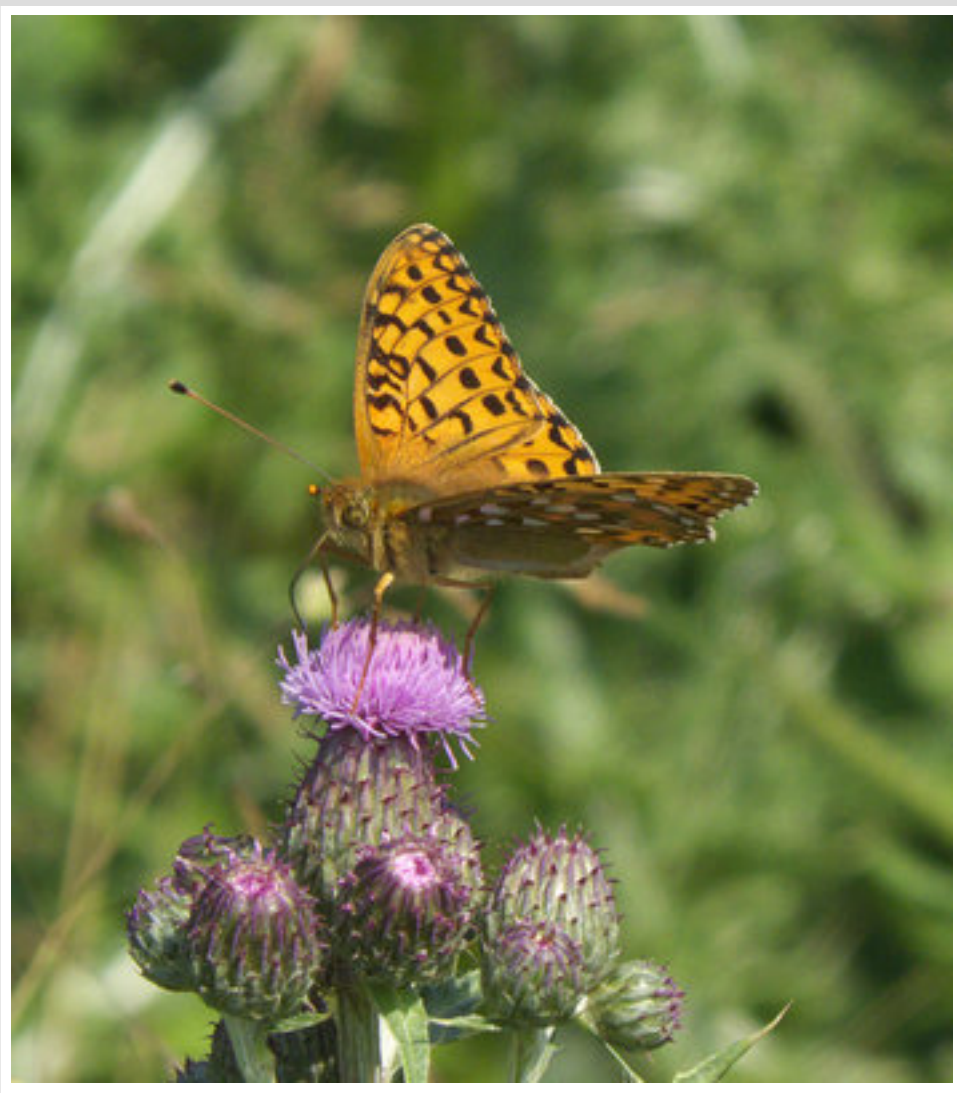


During our quick visit we also saw Small Tortoiseshells, Small Skippers, Large Skippers, Several Ringlets and a lone Speckled Wood.

5th July

Today we paid a visit to Old Winchester Hill with Dark Green Fritillaries our target, having seen them here in 2012. Along the path to the hill fort were many Small Heaths flying up at every footfall, they seem to be doing well in 2013! We also saw some very fresh Large Skippers further along this path. We had walked about half way round the earthwork before we caught a glimpse of a DGF speeding past. What amazingly powerful fliers they are, like the jet plane of the butterfly world, wings beating furiously as they speed along seeking to intercept any intruder in their path. They did however on occasion make some nice slow gliding passes very close to us, revealing their lovely dark patterned upper wings. Getting a decent photo was never going to be easy and in the end we waited for them to come to us by staking out some thistles, which were just coming into flower, on which we observed that they would occasionally stop to nectar.





We saw a total of 7 DGF's during our visit which was in 28 degree sunshine. We also saw 30+ gorgeously coloured Small Tortoiseshells (they seem to be doing better than in 2012), A few Marbled Whites, 6 Large Skippers, one Red Admiral (only our third this year so far) and numerous Small Heaths. All in all a great way to spend a fine summers day.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-13 11:12 PM GMT

Indeed it was a typo – the kind that comes from using an iPod, the "keys" are far too small 😞😞 Lovely shots of Dark Greens 🍷 Is it just me or has everything turned up at once?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 11-Jul-13 09:22 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I know what you mean about the small keys. Yes, its not just you, everything has turned up at once.

10th July

This afternoon another visit to the Straits Inclosure was in order and this time the summer weather and the butterflies did not disappoint. So coming (hopefully), to a wood near you...



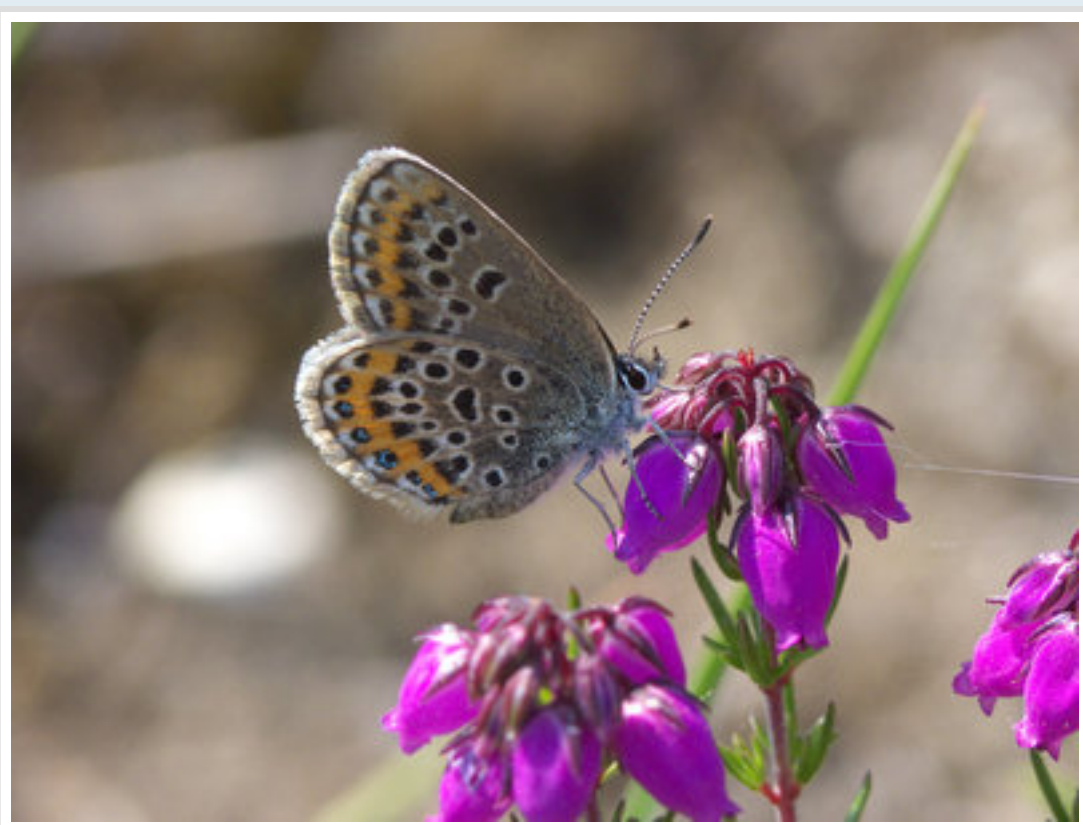




It was very nice to meet you again Pauline, in the same place, almost exactly one year later, how time flies!

11th July

Today we wanted to make another visit to see the Silver-studded Blues before they fade away. They appear to be at their peak at the moment and we saw several mating pairs. There are plenty of fresh looking individuals out there. They have become a firm favorite of ours.





We also saw this lovely Golden-ringed Dragonfly



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-13 09:41 PM GMT

Lush photos Mike 😊 I hope indeed they'll be about soon, last weekend SWF and WA were in short supply at Bentley Wood.

Hsve a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 12-Jul-13 10:42 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, i'm sure the SWF and WA will be out in numbers at Bentley soon.

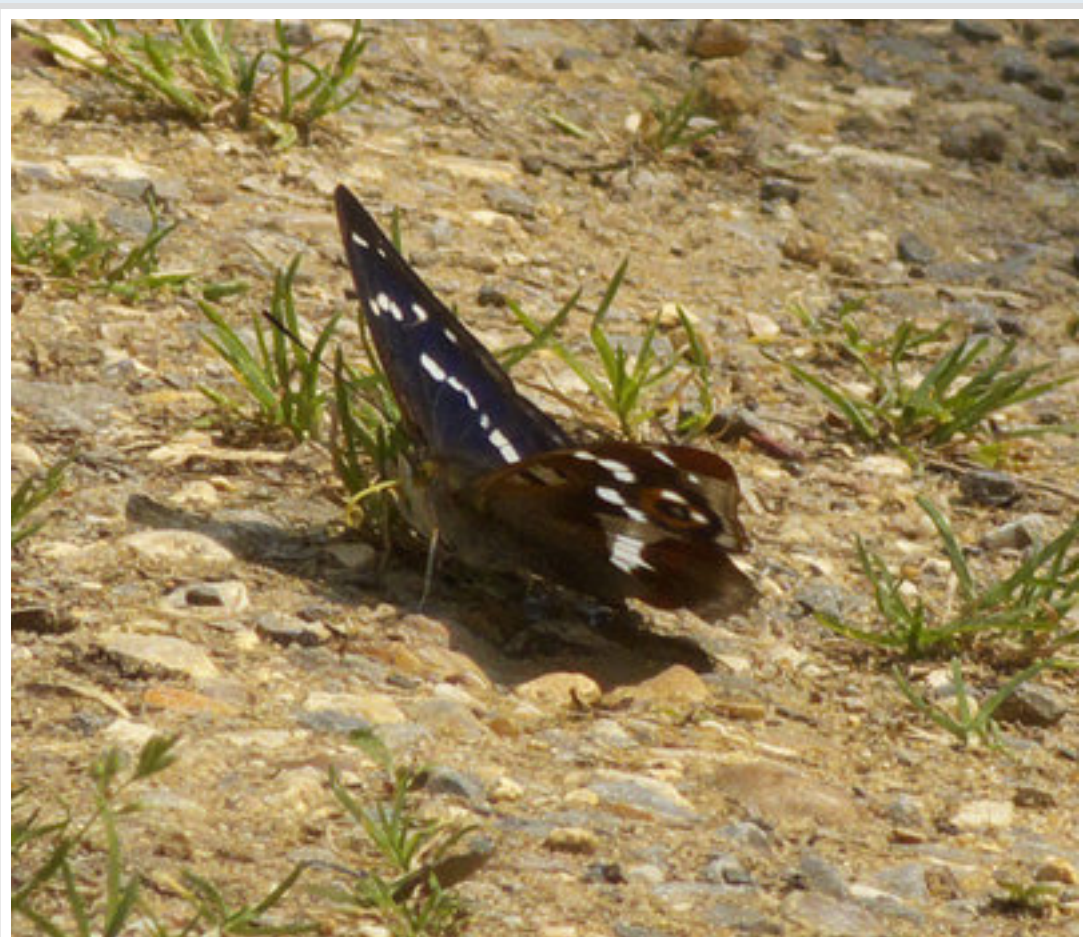
12th July

Today we headed back to the Straits with HIM on our agenda. When we reached the rather small car parking area it was full so we parked in the lane. It was obvious that 'word had got around as there was an almost carnival atmosphere to be seen. We worked our way along the ride until we were alone at the second tower.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 13-Jul-13 12:29 AM GMT

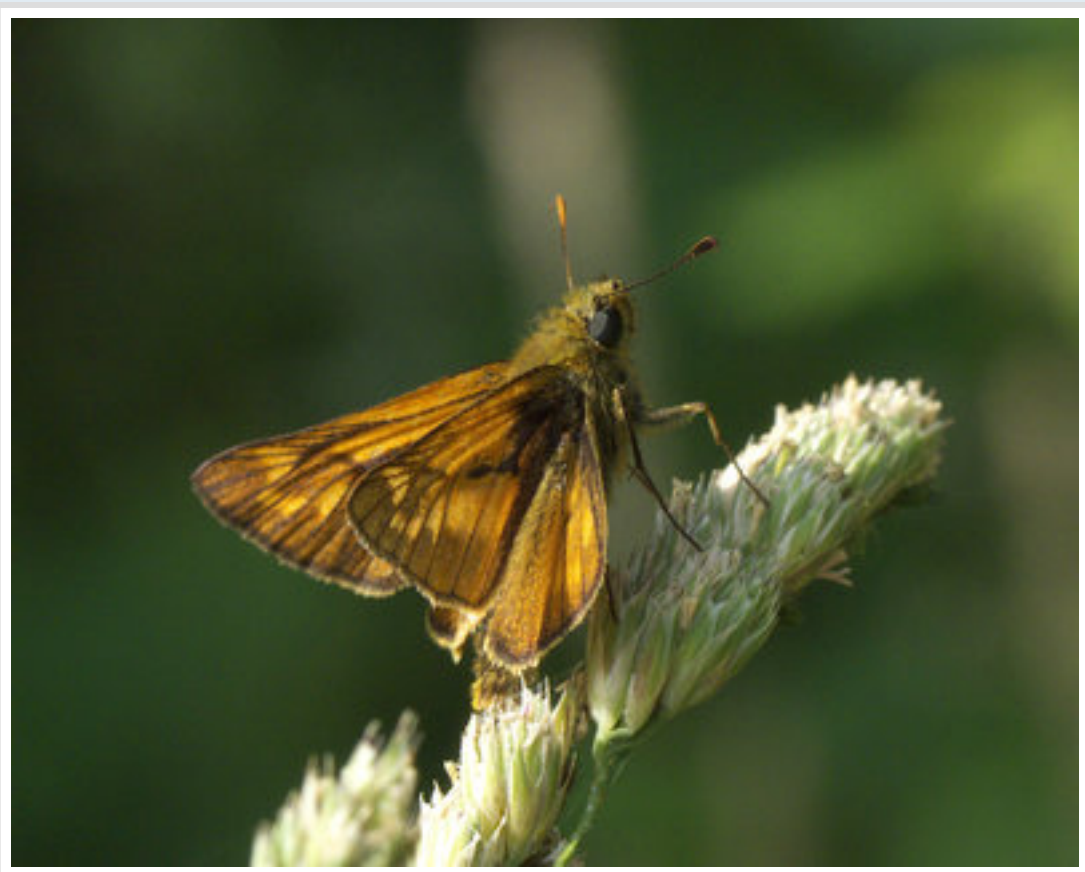
We met a chap there who told us he had spent almost a week looking for Purple Emperors, and as he was heading back to the car park we walked part of the way with him. We left him halfway down the path and as we could see him disappearing into the distance, suddenly a PE alighted on the track in front of us. We managed a couple of record shots before he took off, flew down the ride and finally came back past us and then vanished into the trees, we were thrilled with our first audience with HIM.



We waited around for a while but we saw no more sight of him so decided to go to Goose Green. When we got there we found Ashley Whittlock already there observing and recording three PE's who continuously chased each other in the tree tops. One of the three had a piece of its wing missing and so Ashley called him 'Nick'. Nick was considerably smaller than the other two males, who fought a continuous battle for the prime spot in the oak. After a while we decided to head off to Wrecclesham, and as we were leaving Goose Green we bumped into Matthew Oates who was interested to hear that we'd seen 3 PE's here and a grounded male PE at the Straits.



At Wrecclesham the heat was relentless and as we entered the site there were Marbled Whites buzzing around everywhere. We noticed there were quite a lot of Skippers on the wing too, large, small and our first Essex Skipper of 2013.



Large Skipper



Essex Skipper



Small Skipper

We also saw several dark looking Fritillaries which we were unable to positively identify as they were flying quickly on the breeze and disappeared out of sight and we were unable to find them again, Glanvilles in July?

We returned to the Straits arriving at 5pm. We walked along the ride admiring the Silver Washed Fritillaries and White Admirals. We stood at the first tower for about an hour and had several sightings of PE high in the oak trees in the background. Although we spent some time watching they did not appear on the track.





So we headed home and as we arrived we saw this lovely Small Tortioseshell with lots of blue...



Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 13-Jul-13 02:36 PM GMT

Yesterday was a long day out in blistering heat and so I omitted to add some photos which help to sum up just how exceptional the day was. I should also add that at the entrance gate end of the Straits Cathy joked that whilst she was 'otherwise engaged' amongst the privacy of the trees a PE would probably land on me and she'd miss seeing it. She didn't realise how close to that happening she was, as whilst I was standing waiting on the path another PE buzzed me at close quarters making a fair clicking noise with its wings as it did!





Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 13-Jul-13 08:29 PM GMT

Some lovely shots there Mike, but next time you go to Wrecclsham can you take a net 😄😄

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-13 12:08 AM GMT

Some fantastic sots there Mike – especially the HComma 😊 Bentley tomorrow with Fish paste from the Polish Deli, I wonder if His Nibbs will like it? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Jul-13 11:49 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, yes I think maybe a net is the only way we'll ever know for sure whether the Glanvilles really have vanished from Wrecclesham 😊

Cheers Wurzel, hope the Emperor bait worked at Bentley.

This last week has seen us chasing after the PE's for a wings open ground shot, but alas our timing has always been out and we've usually just missed them 😞 Even though we didn't devote as much time to these as we did the Emperors, here are a few shots of some other species we encountered whilst on our impossible quest.



Fresh female Silver-studded Blues





Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 20-Jul-13 05:25 PM GMT

19th July

Today we decided on the spur of the moment to take a trip to Bentley Wood. During our previous visits we had only set foot in the Eastern clearing whilst looking for PBF's and Small PBF's, but this time we set off along the switchback and deeper into the wood. As we walked along the rides it seemed that every patch of bramble was covered in butterflies. We saw many Ringlets, Silver-washed Fritillaries, Large Skippers and Small Skippers. We also saw some fresh looking Red Admirals, Peacocks, Marbled Whites, several Purple Emperors in the treetops and our first confirmed Gatekeepers of 2013. Best of all however were the six White Letter Hairstreaks which we watched flying around the top of an Elm, where they stayed, never descending to a lower level for us to photograph.



First Gatekeeper of 2013



White Letter Hairstreak Record shot



White Letter Hairstreak territory



Silver-washed Fritillary, mating pair



Unusual looking Ringlet, ab. arete?

We also saw this unusual, stunningly marked Peacock





After this visual feast at Bentley, we stopped off at Broughton Down on the way home, and here saw our first Chalkhill Blues of the year.. how time is speeding along!





A very brown looking, Green-veined White

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 20-Jul-13 10:02 PM GMT

Great shot of mating pair SWF Mike. Had my chance today and totally blew it 😞

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jul-13 10:38 PM GMT

Great stuff Mike, love the Silver-washed Fritillary pair 😊

Neil F.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-13 11:17 PM GMT

Great report Mike – now I know what to look out for tomorrow 😊 Great aberrant find with the Ringlet and I really like the Brown Veined White 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

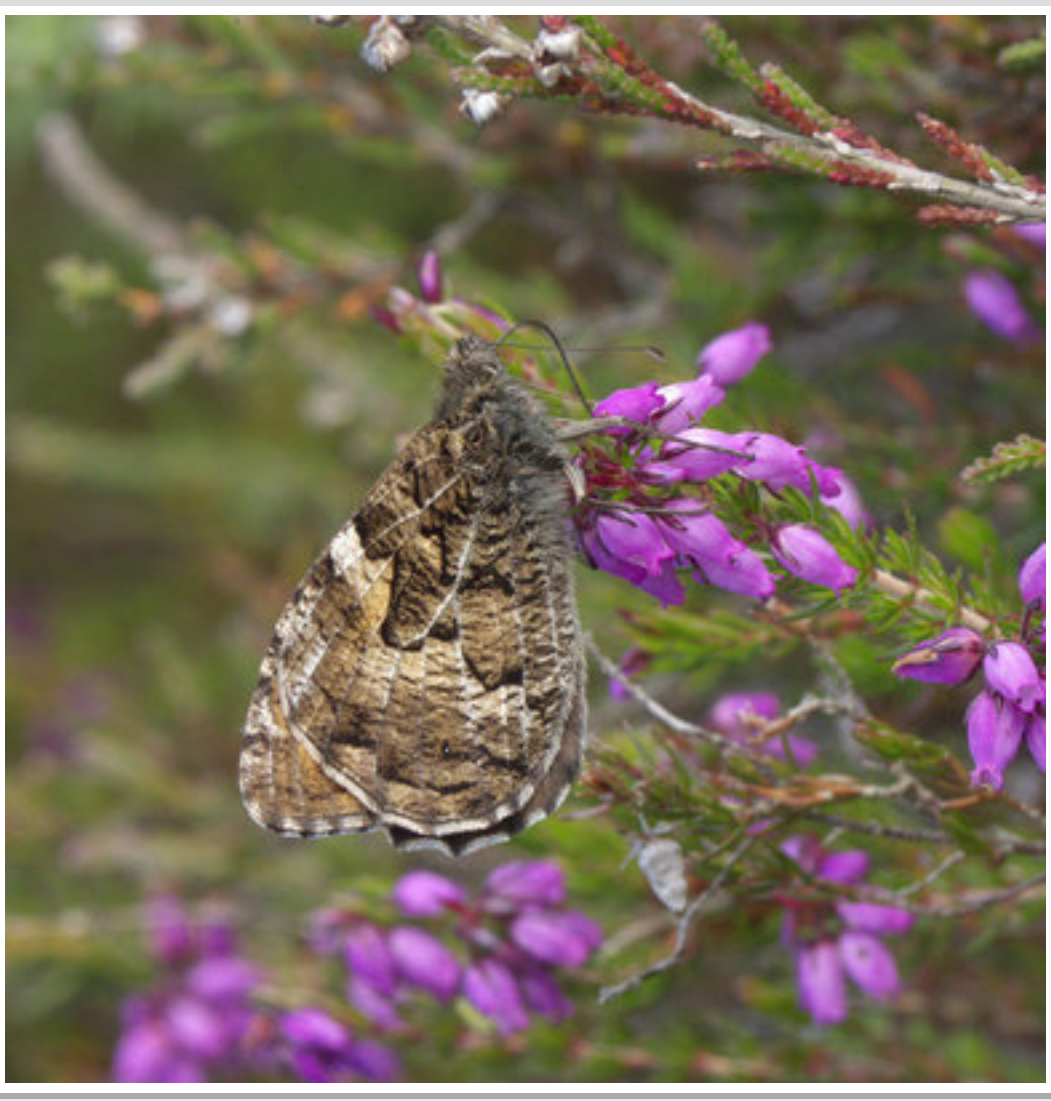
by Maximus, 27-Jul-13 12:31 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline and Neil and Wurzel. We saw another Ringlet ab. today, but it flew over a fence and we could not find it again.

24th July

Having spent some time looking for a PE on the ground without success it was time to do something more sensible. We therefore paid another visit to Dawneys at Purbright to see if any Grayling had yet emerged. Our change of plan paid dividends as we found six freshly emerged male Grayling across the site along with some very worn Silver-studded Blues.







It was lovely to see these beautiful butterflies who are real masters of disguise and only take to the air when you are about to tread on them. We also observed that when threatened, eg. us with our cameras, they will sometimes raise their forewing and in doing so give some fantastic photogenic views. More non-PE activities to follow.....

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 27-Jul-13 06:51 AM GMT

Well done with the Grayling shots Mike – not an easy butterfly to photograph and not a site I've ever visited.

Re: Maximus

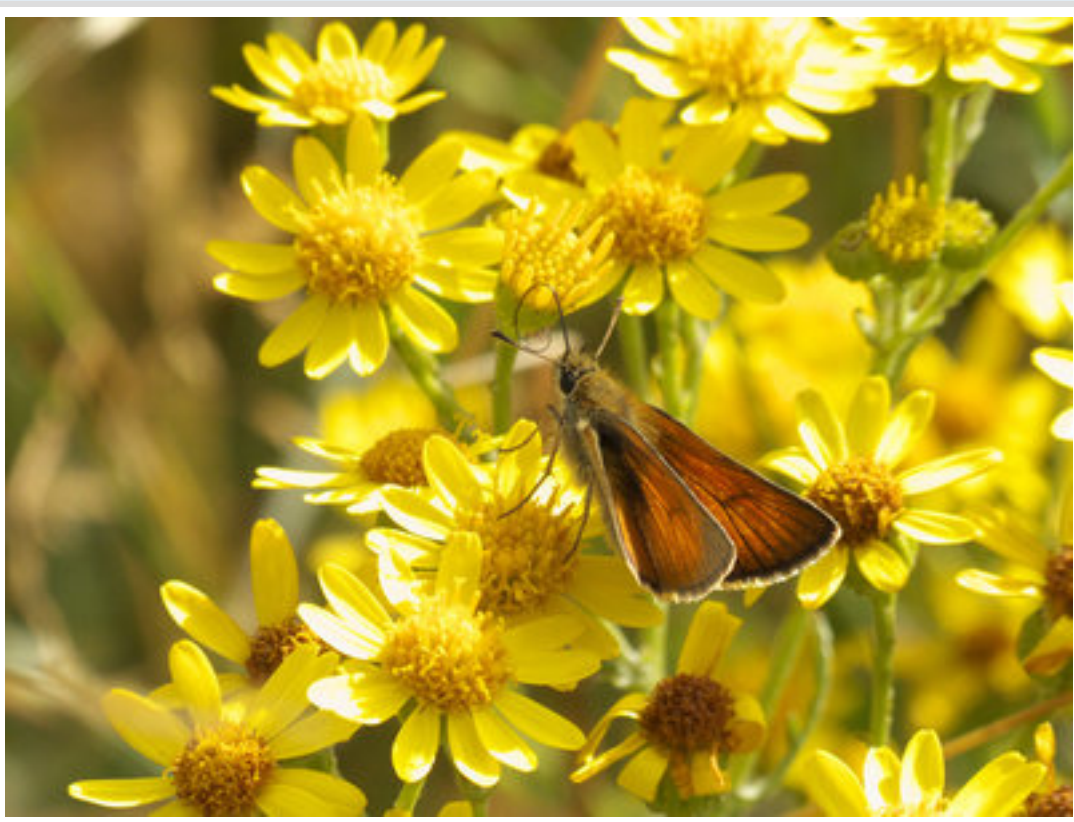
by Maximus, 27-Jul-13 04:17 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline – Fortunately some of these Grayling were quite obliging once they'd settled and seemed quite content to stay put whilst I took my photos. I even had one land on me at one point, with some even investigating me before settling at my feet.

25th July

Today we decided to pay a visit to Old Winchester Hill in the hope of some better photos of Chalkhill Blues. We got there around 1pm and although it was sunny and 25 deg.C, the wind was quite strong and so made it difficult for taking photos. On the path towards the hill fort we saw many, many Small Skippers buzzing through the long grass along with numerous Marbled Whites, a couple of Peacocks, Red Admirals, Brimstone and Small Tortoiseshells. Meadow Browns and Ringlets were also there in large numbers too, as were Gatekeepers, Large Whites and Small Whites.





Around the hill fort we encountered so many Chalkhill Blues it was hard to put a number on them, but it was certainly in the hundreds, including a few mating pairs. Some of the males appeared quite worn, although there were plenty of fresh individuals, both male and female, to be seen.





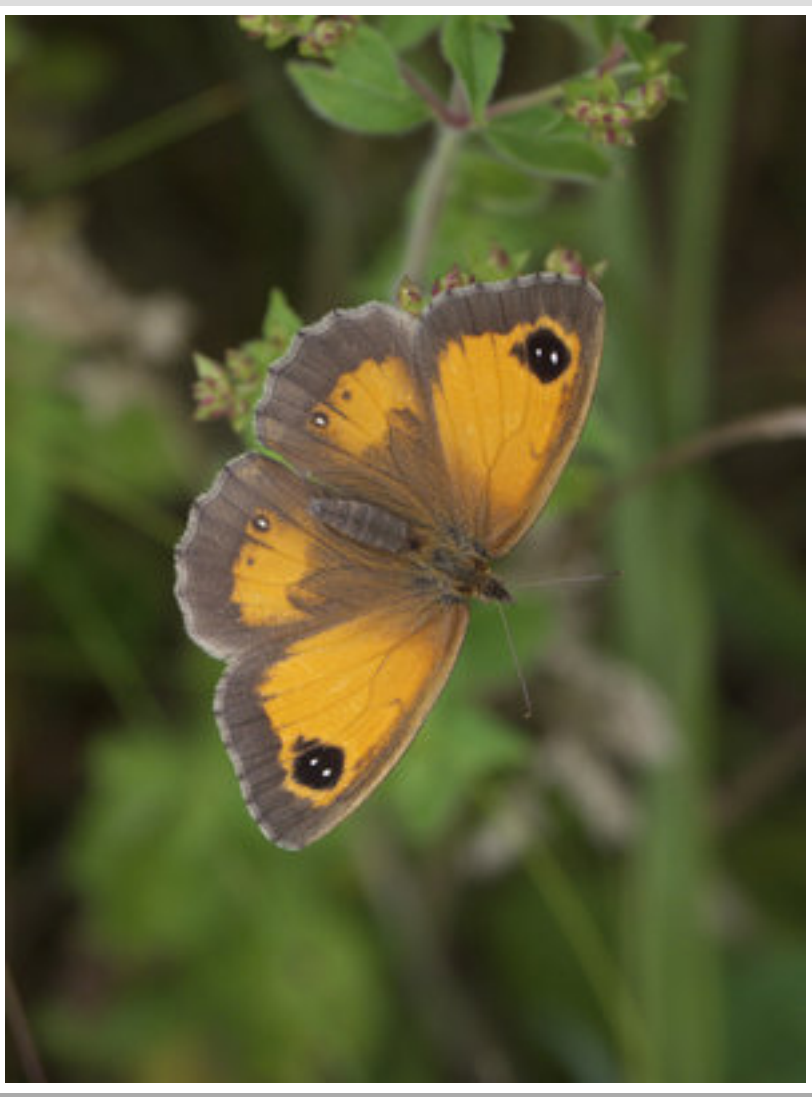
A real butterfly-fest of a day 😊

26th July

Spurred on by the sight of so many different butterflies on our outing to Old Winchester Hill yesterday we decided to see what Magdalen Hill Down had in store for us today. We arrived just after lunch in baking 28 Deg.C and bright sunshine. The meadow was a spectacle of wild flowers and, like Old Winchester Hill, butterflies were to be seen in large numbers in this butterfly paradise. Everywhere we looked there were Skippers, Marbled Whites, Peacocks, Red Admirals, Gatekeepers, Ringlets, Commas, Meadow Browns, Large and Small Whites and Brimstones by the score!







Our first female Gatekeepers



Also found this Meadow Brown with two eye pupils!

Although there were a number of Chalkhill Blues to be found, there were nowhere near as many as we had encountered on Old Winchester Hill. Also, to our surprise, we found two very fresh looking Small Blues, one which appeared to be ovipositing on some Kidney Vetch! Another positively uplifting day among the lovely Lepidoptera 😊



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-13 10:37 PM GMT

Lovely Chalkhills Mike 😊 And the female Gatekeeper is a beauty with those comma marks under the "eyes" – definitely not the run of the mill Hedge Brown 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-13 10:40 PM GMT

Great photos Mike,

I love the Chalkhill Blues sitting round in a huddle, you can almost hear them *'right lads what we doin' next then, eh?'*

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 02-Aug-13 12:16 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, she was a beautiful Gatekeeper.

Yes Neil, they do look like naughty boys up to no good!

1st August

Today we went to Old Winchester Hill looking for Silver-spotted Skippers. The air temperature was more than 30 degrees and the Chalkhill Blues flew in their hundreds across the hillside, not stopping for our cameras. Like last year they were having a ball in the July sunshine, scattered like confetti in the wind. We saw several males pursuing single females and many mating pairs, which bodes well for next year. As we walked back to the car park a different butterfly got us excited, a Clouded Yellow which flew past before settling on some knapweed to nectar. We were given some good photo opportunities which we seized with both hands. We also spotted two Painted Ladies which didn't settle at all as they flew at speed along the pathway. Unfortunately we didn't see a single SSS and believe it was because at this site they tend to emerge a little later than at others, which was confirmed by one of the Natural England volunteers who we met in the car park before we left. We counted 18 different species of butterfly during our brief visit today 🙄





Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 02-Aug-13 12:49 AM GMT

Hi Mike, just caught up with your diary. Posting some lovely photos, especially the Grayling and the Clouded Yellow, you lucky so-in-so. 😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 02-Aug-13 01:15 PM GMT

Thanks Nick, you didn't do badly yourself with his Majesty!!

All the best,

Mike

Re: Maximus

by MikeOxon, 02-Aug-13 06:32 PM GMT

Splendid Clouded Yellow pics! I'm still hoping some will head my way, into Oxfordshire.

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-13 10:15 PM GMT

Cracking photos as usual Mike, especially the "canary" 🎁 😊 Isn't that your second of the year? Come on start sharing em out 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 03-Aug-13 07:13 AM GMT

Lovely Clouded Yellow shots Mike. OWH seems a good place for them seen them there before but no photo opportunities. Really pleased for you both.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 03-Aug-13 09:16 PM GMT

Thanks Mike, I hope some do reach Oxfordshire, in fact what is needed is a 'Clouded Yellow' year!

Hi Wurzel, yes it is the second of the year, perhaps this 'Canary' will find its way over to you 😊

Hi Pauline and thanks, yes OWH is a good stopping off point inland from the coast. Have you been busy this week?

2nd August

This evening I paid another visit to a heathland site where I have seen some Grayling recently. I thought that the numbers would be increasing, but during the two hours I spent there I only found three. I have photos of two of them which I believe to be males. I am not sure why the numbers are still low or why I have seen no females, maybe they are just keeping a low profile?





Spot the Grayling

While looking for Grayling I also spotted a couple of fresh-ish looking Silver-studded Blues.



There were also plenty of Silver-Y Moths which give the Grayling a run for their money when it comes to disguise.



Spot the Silver-Y

As I was leaving I saw this lone SS Blue roosting in the grass where once there were many, but he was probably content having fulfilled his purpose in helping to secure the future of his species.



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 03-Aug-13 10:16 PM GMT

Great shots and I love playing spot the Grayling Mike 😊 In fact it's given me an idea for another book that I might have to write – it would mean having to spend long time in the field getting shots of one of my top ten butterflies of course, oh how we suffer for our art 😊😊 I've thought that there aren't as many Grayling about but then it could just be that numbers are still building perhaps, although they've been sighted for a while now 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 05-Aug-13 06:12 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel i'm glad you like playing spot the Grayling. You must have quite a few books planned and now you've even got me thinking 💡 ouch 😊 Perhaps the Grayling numbers are still building, I'll have another look one evening this week.

4th August

There were many Large and Small Whites in the garden today, they seem to be particularly plentiful this year, which may not please everybody. I watched a Large White egg-laying on one of our pea plants, she was there for some time and was so intent in her task I was able to closely observe her as she laid her clutch of eggs.



When she had finished I looked under the leaf and was able to see what she had been busy doing.



Just adjacent to where she had deposited her eggs is a much shredded cabbage and on top of a leaf was a well grown Small White Caterpillar along with ten early instar Large White caterpillars, happily (I think) co-existing.



I then noticed a small insect lurking at the edge of the leaf. It seemed to have an interest in the goings-on and would walk across to the Large White cats and touch them with its antenna. The caterpillars would react to this by rearing up in unison which would send it packing back to the edge of the leaf, in fact they carried on doing this about once every fifteen seconds or so afterwards for some time. Is it possible this small insect could be a Trichogramma wasp with no interest at all in them, but a more pressing interest in the freshly deposited eggs nearby? I would have liked to have watched further but unfortunately had other commitments.

Re: Maximus

by Vince Massimo, 05-Aug-13 07:39 PM GMT

That's interesting Mike, I've never heard of Large Whites laying eggs on peas. Could you keep an eye on the eggs please and post the first two images into the Species-Specific Album when you get time.

Many thanks,

Vince

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Aug-13 10:40 AM GMT

Hi Vince, now posted and I will keep an eye on the eggs.

Regards,

Mike

Re: Maximus

by hilary, 06-Aug-13 11:22 AM GMT

Hello Mike,

it is interesting about the L. and Sm. Whites laying eggs on peas (but it looks like you're committed to having your pea crop ruined!). I've also seen a lot of whites about, particularly L. Whites, and although they are a beautiful, I find myself imagining the state of some neighbour's cabbage – but now maybe not! Earlier in the year I saw some L. white caterpillars on a more likely fodder crop; Honesty, but they all disappeared a few at a time.
Liz

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 11-Aug-13 01:21 AM GMT

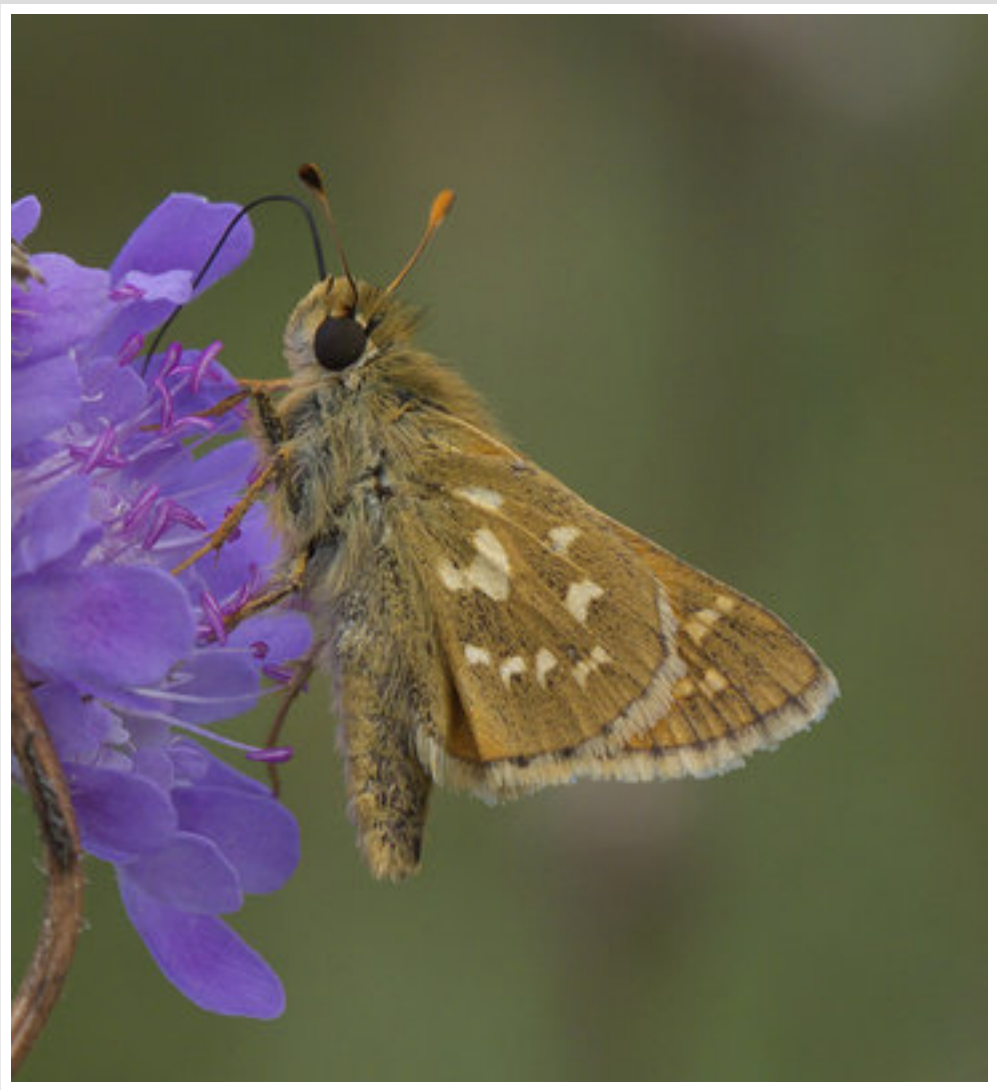
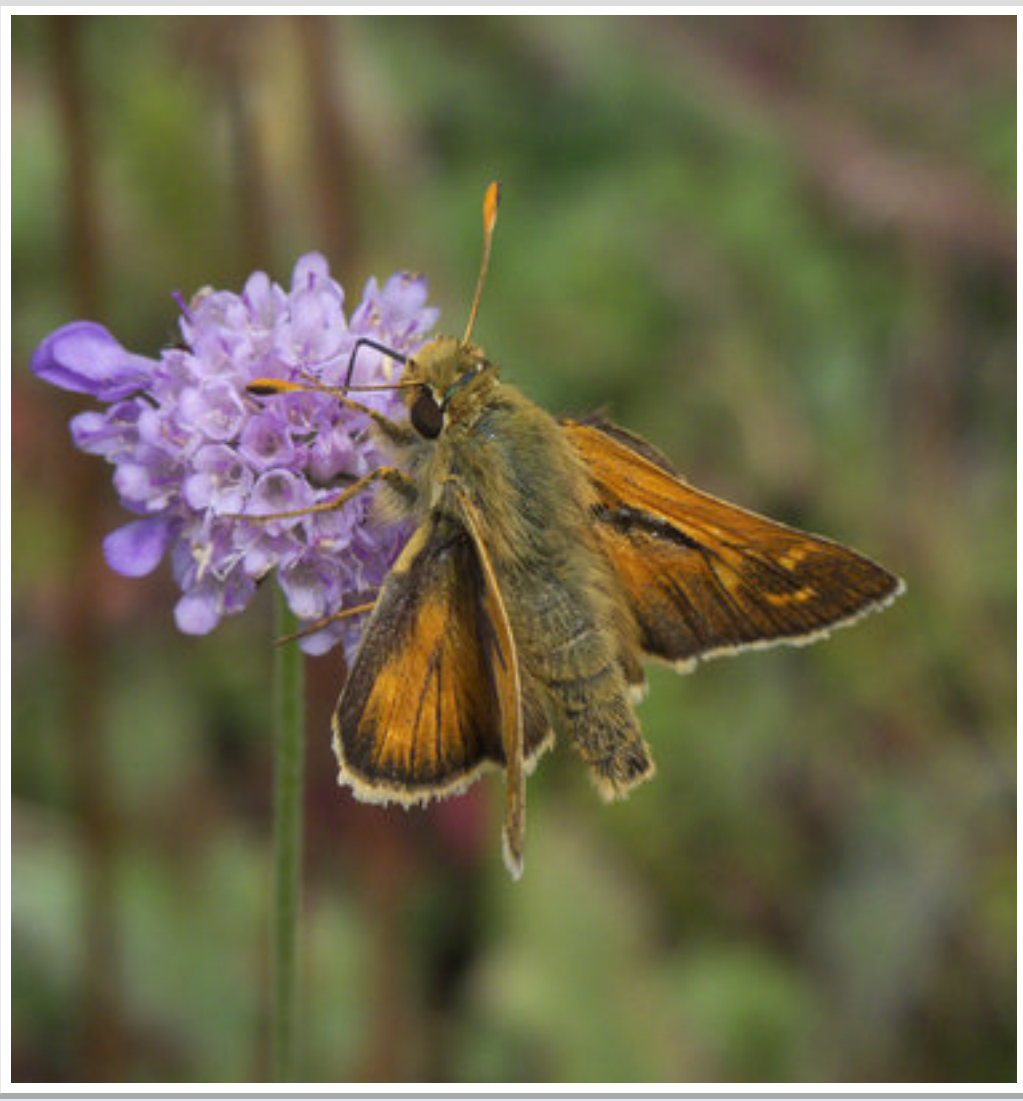
Hi Liz, I'm quite happy to sacrifice some pea foliage to Small and Large White caterpillars. The eggs are at present ok, but snails (or slugs) have eaten some of the foliage around them, so they are more exposed. I think that Large and Small Whites are very beautiful butterflies and I am happy to plant some 'sacrificial' cabbages for them to lay on. Yes the caterpillars are predated which is I guess why they lay so many eggs. It is interesting that they also use Honesty, as indeed do Orange Tips.

Mike

6th August

Today we decided to pay a visit to Aston Rowant as we were very keen to see Silver-Spotted Skippers, having failed to see any at Old Winchester Hill during the previous week. The traffic was awful during our journey and we arrived at least half an hour later than we expected. As we walked onto the hillside the temperature was 18 degrees with a slight breeze and we quickly spotted our target species. It very soon became apparent that they were out in amazing numbers and were buzzing around the hillside everywhere, we couldn't have imagined a more amazing sight.







They escaped with their lives, but really, nectaring while mating!

We saw an amazing array of other butterflies during our visit, Essex Skipper, Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Brown Argus, Chalkhill Blue, Common Blue, Small Copper, Small and Large Whites, Peacocks, Brimstone, Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Small Heaths.







During the drive home after an amazing afternoon at Aston we were already making new plans, based around dropping our son off at Gatwick Airport the following day.

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 11-Aug-13 11:57 AM GMT

Great photos Mike 😊

Aston Rowant is another great site that is certainly doing well this year.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 11-Aug-13 09:30 PM GMT

Ditto – great shots – especially the final Small Copper 😊

I'm wracking my brains trying to figure out where you're heading next 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

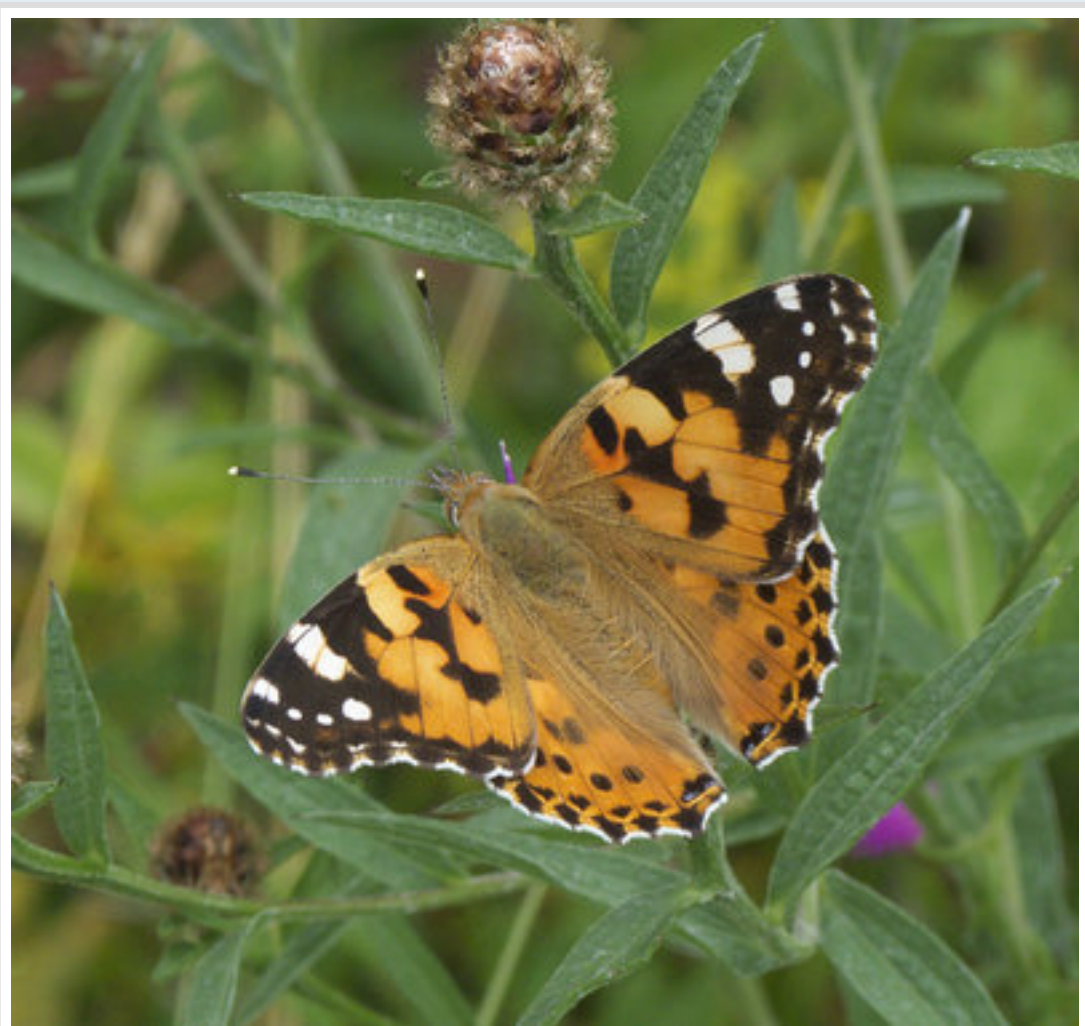
by Maximus, 11-Aug-13 11:22 PM GMT

Thanks Neil, Aston is a great site, with a fabulous variety of beautiful butterflies.

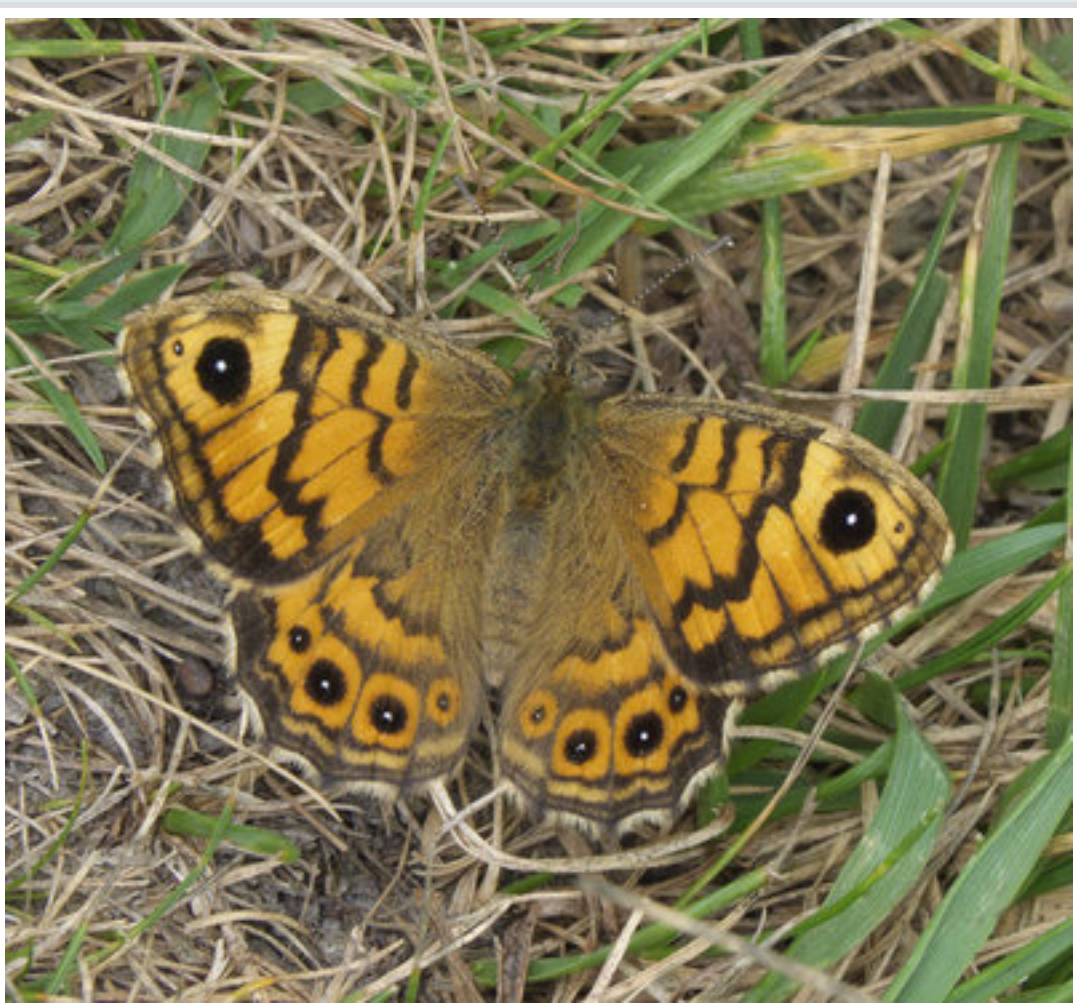
Glad you like the Small Copper shot Wurzel, 'wrack' no longer 😊

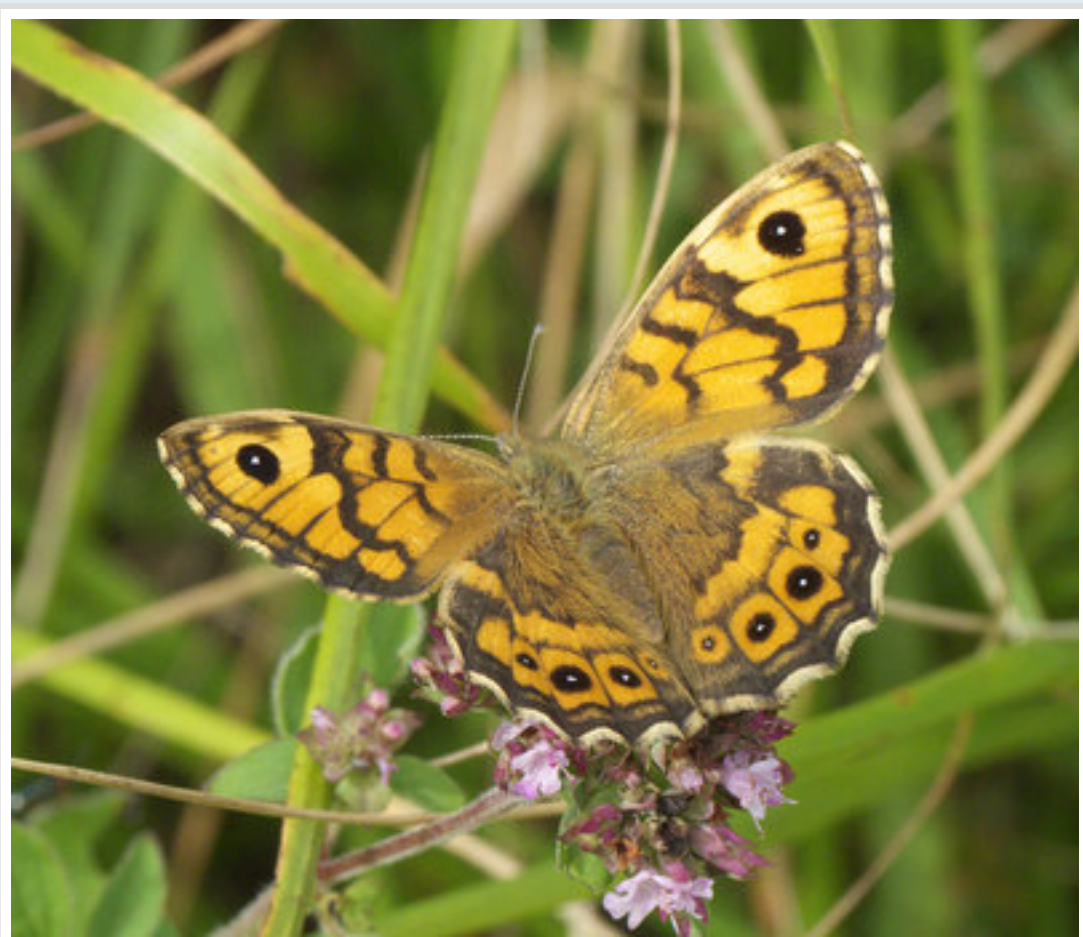
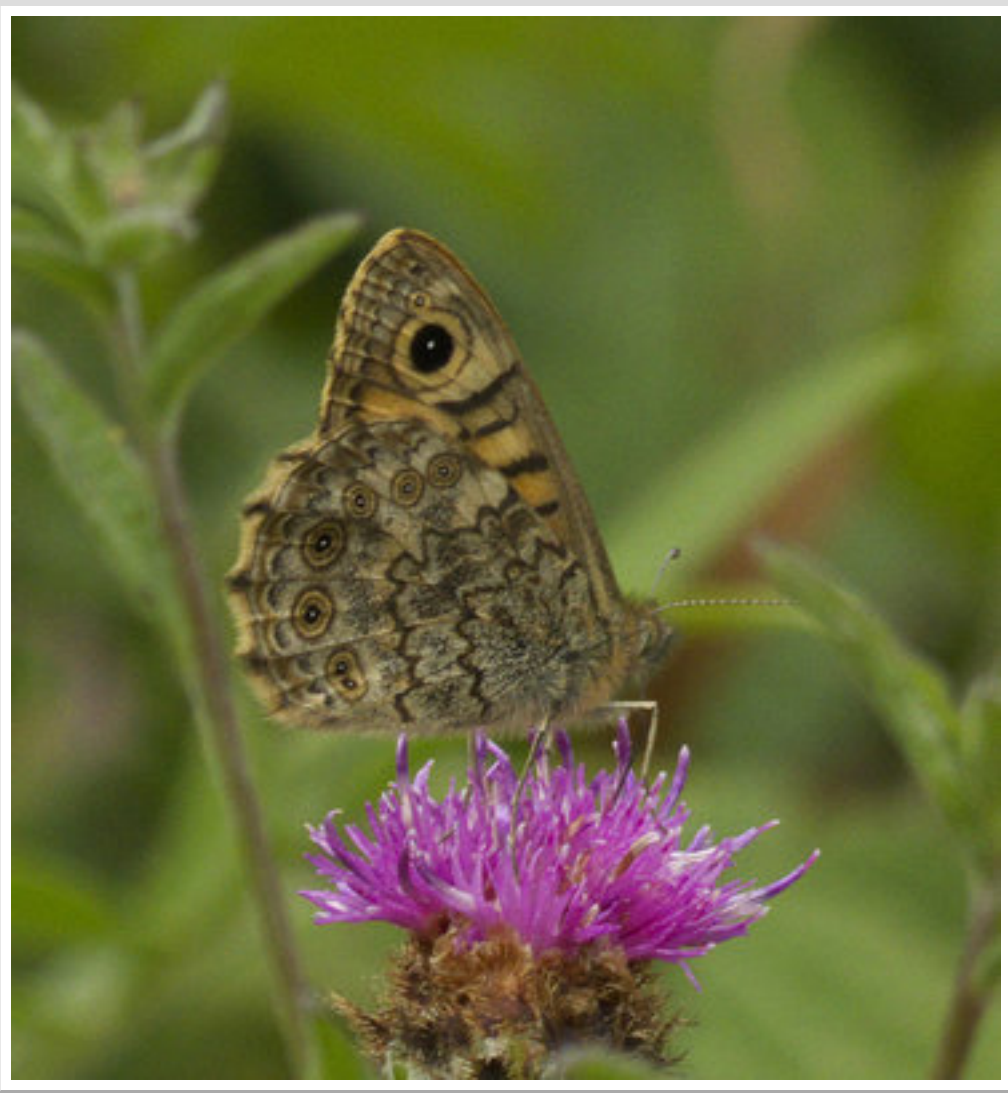
7th August

After dropping our son at Gatwick at around mid-day we headed straight for Steyning with thoughts of Brown Hairstreaks on our minds. This was our first visit to Steyning, so we parked up and headed along the footpath which we guessed would lead to the old rifle ranges. Fortunately, fixed to the first gate was a notice with reference to an organised walk on the 17th August looking for Brown Hairstreaks, to be lead by Neil Hulme, so we knew we were on the right track! It was a warm afternoon and the first butterflies we encountered were some really fresh Common Blues followed very quickly by a beautiful Painted Lady.



As we walked along a well worn path Cathy spotted a different butterfly, and on closer inspection found it was a Wall Brown. We followed it along the path taking photos as it settled briefly always a short distance ahead of us then we began seeing more individuals chasing each other along the path, with some stopping to nectar on the abundance of wild Marjoram.





Although we searched the areas we thought were the most likely spots to find Brown Hairstreaks we drew a total blank, even though there was plenty of Blackthorn below the Ash Trees and lots of nectar sources. However we did see a number of other butterflies whilst we were there, including Small Tortoiseshells, Holly Blues, Brown Argus, Small Skippers, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Ringlets, and one solitary Silver-spotted Skipper. There were a number of Large and Small Whites, a few Peacocks, a couple of Marbled Whites and one Large Skipper.



Steyning from the rifle ranges

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 12-Aug-13 07:42 AM GMT

You're keeping one step ahead of me Mike 😄 You got the Clouded Yellow first, now great shot of mating SSS 🍷🍷 and lovely Wall Browns – but I'm catching you up 😄😄

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 13-Aug-13 09:34 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, yes I try 😊 but you are just too quick for me 😊 😊

9th August

Made a late afternoon visit to the Grayling site, hoping to see a female. What I did see were 6 males, my largest count for a while.



Spot the Grayling



Nectaring while standing on the ground



Spot the Grayling



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 13-Aug-13 10:12 PM GMT

Great stuff Mike 😊 I'm trying my best with the spot the Grayling but it's proving very difficult on my iPod 😬 My eyes feel like they're going to bleed 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 14-Aug-13 07:44 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

Great reports and photos, I took a while to spot the Graylings but got them in the end 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 14-Aug-13 08:18 PM GMT

Those Graylings are certainly masters of camouflage Mike and your photos have demonstrated that magnificently. I am hoping to find some very locally if I can get time to look.

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 14-Aug-13 10:24 PM GMT

Great reports and photos Mike. My favourite photo has to be the Large White ovipositing on the Pea, brilliant. 😊 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 15-Aug-13 10:03 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, no more spot the Grayling, your health is more important 😞 😞

Hi Neil, they can really blend in to their surroundings 🙄

Hope you get a chance to find some Pauline, they are beautiful butterflies, if you can see them 😊

Thanks Nick, glad you like the Large White laying on the Pea, thats our dinner gone for a burton 😊

12th August

Today we fancied a trip to Noar Hill as our last visit was way back in early May looking for 'The Duke'. When we arrived there were already four cars parked in the lane. As we walked up through the hollows they appeared very overgrown compared to our last visit. However we were amazed to see that the abundant Hemp Agrimony was covered in butterflies. There were Peacocks by the dozen, some very beautiful Red Admirals and Small Tortoisells, there were also some lovely fresh looking Painted Ladies, Brimstones and some really smart Common Blues.









Noar Hill

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 15-Aug-13 10:43 PM GMT

Thanks for thinking of me Mike, I'll have go again on a larger screen when my eyes have recovered 😊 Great shots from Noar Hill, especially the three species one 🍷🍷 This looks like a great site, I'll have to try and get there sometime.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 16-Aug-13 06:19 PM GMT

Noar Hill is a great site Wurzel, it was brimming with butterflies during our visit 😊 There was a 'minimum' of 100+ Peacocks across the site. Hope your eyes get better soon 😊

13th August

As my route home took me past the Grayling site I decided to spend half an hour looking for a female (Grayling), and here she is!



for comparison here is a male photographed during the same visit.



From my observations/species specific albums etc the outline of the pattern at the centre of the underside of the hindwings is generally more pointed (H. semele) on the female, with a not very distinct white band. The male has a more rounded profile to the pattern outline, with a more distinct white band, as can be seen in the photos. These characteristics would be the same on the upper wing surface, if it were visible!

14th August

Today we made an early start, heading for Shipton Bellinger to make the most of the sunshine which was forecast until 11am. When we arrived there was already one person walking along the track. He showed us a photo of a male Brown Hairstreak he had just seen. As we walked along the hedge we spotted a BH and followed until it stopped. We could then see that it was a female as she slowly opened her wings in the morning sun. She never came closer than about 10 feet therefore not allowing us any close-up photos before she flew up into the trees. We saw another female elsewhere, but she flew off at speed and we could not find her again. By 10am it had clouded over and the consensus of opinion among the couple of fellow enthusiasts was that it was over for the day. We went for a walk around the site without seeing any more BH and on our return to the field we were on our own. Unfortunately it began to rain so we headed back to the car for something eat and drink before heading home. As we sat there it began to brighten up so we quickly grabbed our cameras and headed off. We had not gone very far when Cathy spotted a male nectaring on wild parsnip three feet above the ground. As we were taking photos, Andy and Linda Barker walking their transect came across to see what we were up to. We showed them the male BH and Andy took some photos while we chatted. The BH stayed nectaring in the same area for at least 20 minutes, and was still there when we went looking elsewhere. We went to an area we had not visited before which Andy had kindly pointed out to us, where he had seen them before. As we walked through the area I spotted a BH nectaring on a thistle and we took some shots before he suddenly disappeared. Just then the sun reappeared so we decided to have one last look along the field where we saw a further four nectaring male BH.





We saw a total of 5 male and 2 female Brown Hairstreaks, we also saw loads of Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Common Blues, Small Heaths and some Brimstones, Holly Blues and Peacocks.



Male Holly Blue with wings open!



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 16-Aug-13 07:01 PM GMT

Brill shots Mike 😊 I visited Shipton Bellinger myself for the fourth year in a row on Tuesday with Philzoid and it was cracking – there were butterflies everywhere – the hedge at the back by the field is a hotspot if you know where I mean 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 16-Aug-13 07:22 PM GMT

There are some great photos in the last couple of reports Mike 😊

Cracking shot of the three vanessids together and I especially like the head on male Brown Hairstreak portrait, a change from the usual poses.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 17-Aug-13 06:49 AM GMT

Hi Cathy, Mike. Really glad you got to see those Hairstreaks – isn't it so often the way, just when you are about to give up and give in you give it one more shot and ... Bingo! My favourite has to be 3rd one down tho it's hard to choose as this is such an attractive butterflies and your photos certainly do it justice.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-Aug-13 07:04 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, glad you had a good day at Shipton Bellinger, looking forward to your posting. Yes I know where you mean, nudge, nudge, say no more 😊

Hi Neil, glad you like those particular shots, there's a lot of luck involved.

Hi Pauline, It was great to see the BH's especially in changeable weather conditions, also thanks for your kind comments.

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 17-Aug-13 11:36 PM GMT

Glad you got to see and photograph the Brown Hairstreaks Mike, lovely pictures. 😊 Just shows you, never give up. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 22-Aug-13 06:46 PM GMT

Thanks Nick, and thats right, never give up because its not all over until she sings 😊

17th August

Today we were picking our son up from Gatwick so got down to Steyning early. It was sunny as forecast but as we walked up the track to the rifle range it began clouding over 😊 As we don't know this site very well we just looked in all the likely places. Quite early on we saw a Brown Hairstreak, but it was flying at speed along a blackthorn hedge before disappearing into an Ash. We only had a short time there but managed to find plenty of Wall Browns, Common Blues, Small Tortoiseshells, Large and Small Whites, Brown Argus, Small Coppers, Small Tortoiseshells, Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns and Holly Blues. We also saw and got just a record shot of a Silver-spotted Skipper nectaring on bramble, the only one we saw during our visit, not sure if they are commonly seen here?





Silver-spotted Skipper

Re: Maximus

by Neil Hulme, 22-Aug-13 07:17 PM GMT

Hi Mike,
Silver-spotted Skipper has not colonised Steyning Rifle Range yet, but it will in time! You've got an aged Large Skipper there.
BWs, Neil

Re: Maximus

by David M, 22-Aug-13 07:23 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

You've got an aged Large Skipper there.

Helluva spot for late August!

I'd take that over an SSS at this stage in the year!!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 22-Aug-13 07:59 PM GMT

Thanks for the ID Neil, that was the only shot we got and on full camera zoom, no close-up view. On reflection I should have put a question mark after the description, i'm glad it will colonise eventually though.

It doesn't look too badly worn either David, which makes it quite a well preserved geriatric!

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 22-Aug-13 08:58 PM GMT

On our return from Gatwick we decided to visit a local site looking for Grayling. This was the same site we have visited several times previously. We spotted our first Grayling within five minutes of entering the site. Over a period of about an hour we counted ten Grayling, Nine males and one female, our first double figure count here! There is something really special about being 'up close and personal' to a gorgeous Grayling butterfly. We are still looking for our first mating pair, but its probably getting too late in the season now! Before we departed we watched the the Grayling making long flights to their roost in the tops of some tall pine trees bordering the site, a great end to a great day.



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 22-Aug-13 09:07 PM GMT

Great shots Mike of the Grayling 😊 My eyes have recovered now do you don't have to make the Grayling spotting that obvious 😊 Nice Wall too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 24-Aug-13 12:10 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, if we find some Grayling soon, we will put you to the test 😊 😊

21st August

This afternoon we headed for Noar Hill as it is such a lovely place to spend some quality time at. As we walked up the track leading to the site the sun beat down on us, a really hot afternoon! We had only walked as far as the first pit when a turbo-charged Clouded Yellow appeared in front of us. It was nectaring on scabious but was only spending a very short time on each bloom, which made getting a photo challenging, to say the least! We saw three Clouded Yellows as we walked around the site, although Peacock numbers were down, compared to our last visit. What we found amazing however was the number of Small Tortoiseshells at Noar, they were everywhere, which was really good to see and there were also loads of Brimstones. During our visit we also saw Large, Small and Green-veined Whites, Red Admirals, Small Heaths, Small Skippers, Common Blues, Silver-washed Fritillaries (in reasonable condition), Brown Argus, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers. As we reached the top end of the site we found a beautiful Painted Lady, busily nectaring in the warm afternoon sunshine.







Also, a couple of shots from previous trips which I omitted posting.



A well marked Small Copper



Small Egret? Hayling



Very small female Common Blue, Hayling

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 24-Aug-13 01:01 PM GMT

Sorry Pauline, but I rushed the posting as it was the second time I tried (had to re-type it again) as my internet lost its connection on the first attempt just as I was about to submit it!!! What I meant to say of course was that it nice to meet up with you at Noar and catch up on things. Glad you got some very nice shots of the Clouded Yellows. The lighting makes a massive difference in the way the image appears, too bright (harsh) and it can lead to over exposure of the subject, too dull and the colours can become less saturated (washed out). My personal preference is for even, diffused lighting, the type you get when its cloudy but bright, but of course we can't control the weather conditions. I also take all my photos in RAW format, which may involve more post production work but gives more scope (of getting a good result) when working with images that are not correctly exposed. Mike is right about flash being an option in dull conditions, to 'lift' the colours out. The problem is that when using the close-up lens on the Lumix, with the macro conversion set in the menu, the flash is disabled. You can enable flash, but you have to turn the macro conversion off in the menu, which is just one more thing to do when confronted with a rare butterfly in your sights!

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 24-Aug-13 06:31 PM GMT

Great shots Mike 😊 My faves are the Small Coppers , though don't point out the blue spots to Pauline 😊 Those Clouded Yellows eh, common as muck really I don't know what all the fuss is about them 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 24-Aug-13 07:17 PM GMT

Thanks for bringing that to my attention Wurzel – so, OK Mike, where were these 'previous trips' so I can hotfoot it down there and get my blue spotted copper 😊 . Seriously tho, Mike F might be pleased to know that I did try to use the flash on my lumix (for the first time ever) with the CY. I'm not sure it would have made any difference but it didn't work anyway and now I know why so thanks for that bit of info Mike.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 29-Aug-13 06:34 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, Small Coppers are great, especially when they sport blue spots 😊😊 Clouded Yellows are now 'two-a-penny', but I'm glad they are 😊

Pauline, those 'blue-spotted' thingys were seen at Ashton Rowant 😊 It is a brilliant site full of beautiful butterflies and should be on your agenda for next year 😊 Glad I was of help with your camera flash 😊

Mike

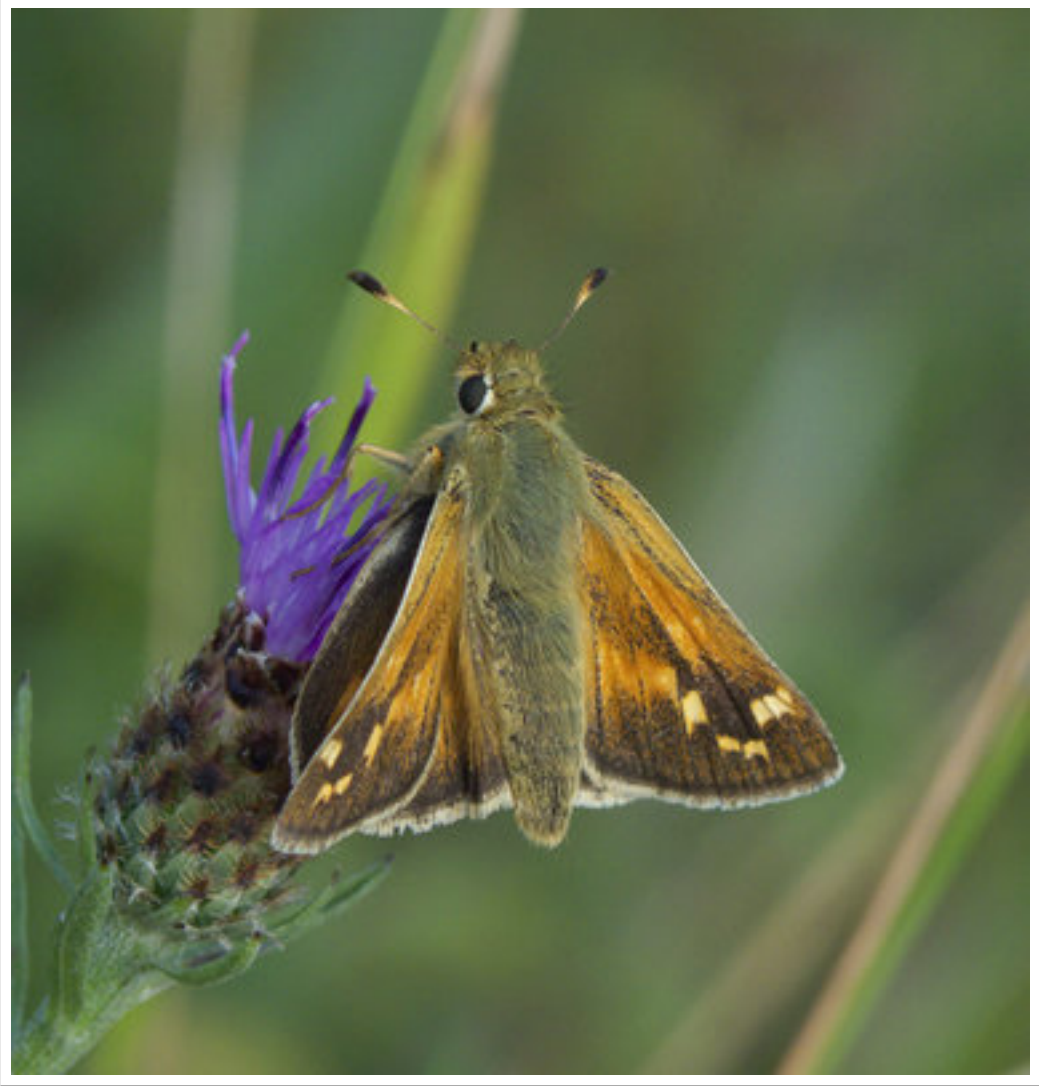
25th August

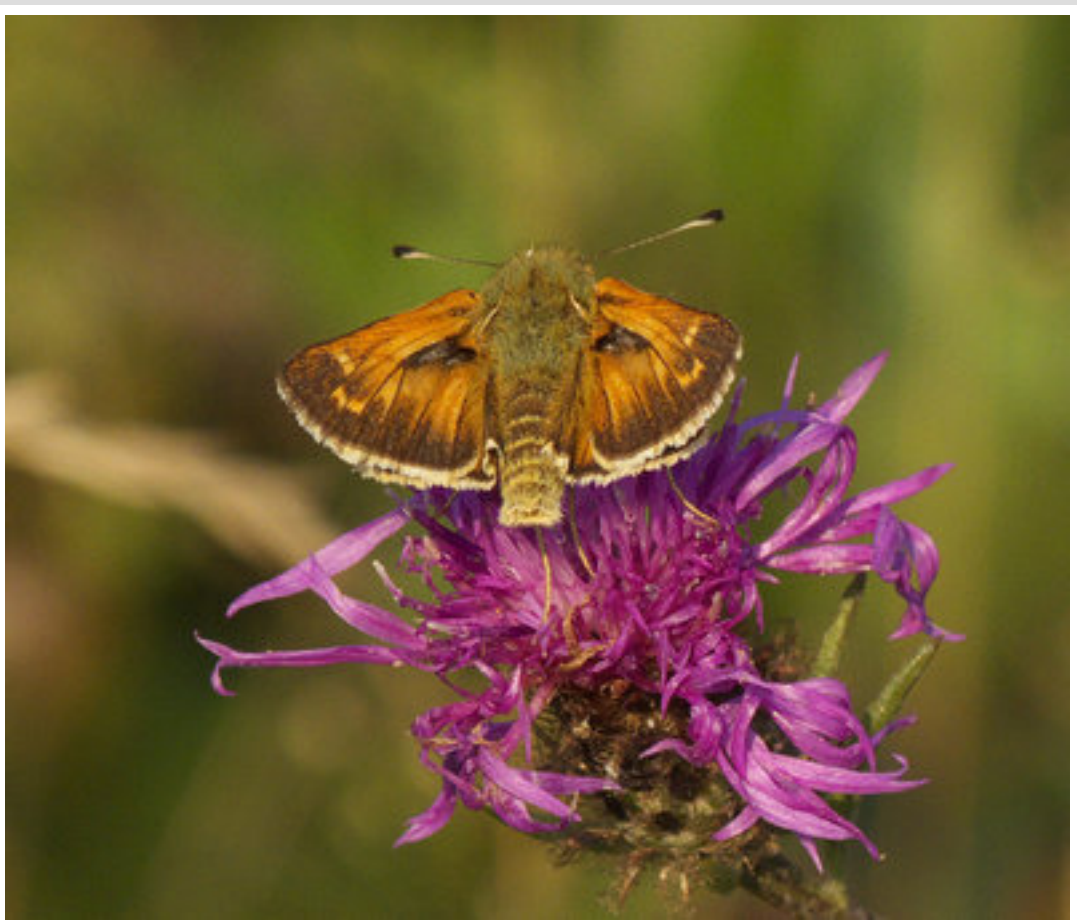
Today we decided on a visit to Old Winchester Hill, its a great site at this time of year as you are never sure what will put in an appearance. Obviously being a very hot bank holiday weekend it was very busy and we took the last space in the car park. As we started out along the track we saw our first Clouded Yellow, which hurtled along at the speed of light before flying down the hillside and disappearing out of view. This was a similar story for all six of the CY's that we saw today, which is why no CY photos will appear in this entry 😊😊 The species that we had really come hoping to see were the Silver-spotted Skippers, having been too early for them on our previous visit. It was not too long before I saw the first one, a female egg laying, her abdomen curled round in an area containing lots of Sheep's-fescue. When she flew off I tried to find an egg but could not among the tangle of grasses, even though I thought I had the spot marked.



Not a great photo but it shows her ovipositing

We saw plenty more as we crossed the site, some quite fresh, others fairly worn.





Is this 'Elephant face' a threat display!

We also saw Chalkhill Blues in reasonable numbers, some stunning Common Blues, and even more stunning second brood Adonis Blues.





The following species were also seen during our visit. Large, Small and Green-veined Whites, Brown Argus, Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshells, Small Skippers, Peacocks, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and some stunning Small Coppers.



Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 29-Aug-13 08:56 PM GMT

Lovely report and photos Mike, 😊 and well done for capturing the Silver-spotted Skipper ovipositing, not the easiest photo to get, but could `nt find an egg, would you like to borrow my glasses. 😊 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-13 10:47 PM GMT

Great stuff again Mike 😊 Really like the Silver Spot shots 😊 and it was different to not see Yellow 😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 31-Aug-13 06:43 PM GMT

Thanks Nick, perhaps I should borrow them 😊 😊

Glad you like the Silver Spots Wurzel, I think I can see some Yellow coming again soon 😊 😊

Mike

31 st August

For the first time in my diary I intend to jump forward (briefly) in time. Yesterday while visiting a site not too far from home, something happened which took us 'full circle' in our Butterfly summer. And so I can't resist posting just one photo for now.....

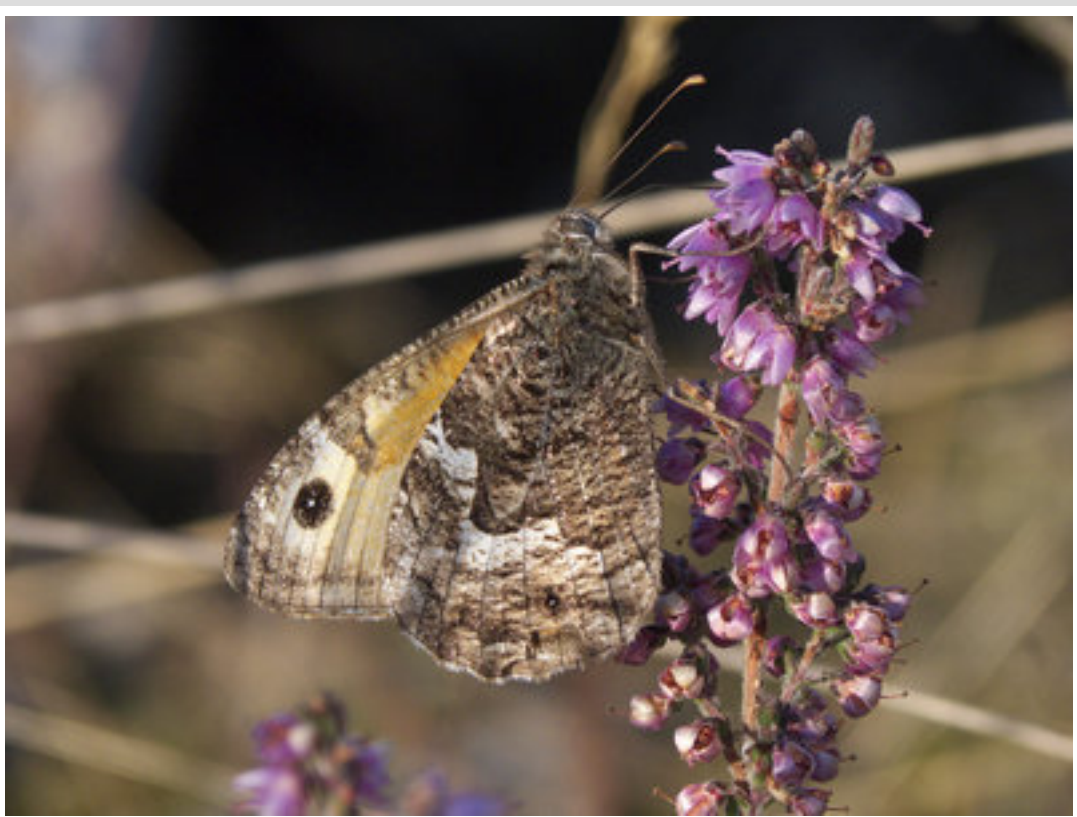


27th August

Today I decided to pay a late afternoon visit to see if the Grayling were still around. Arriving in full sunshine it was not long before I spotted the first one, which then proceeded to fly straight into the pine tree roost. This also happened with the second one, so it was third time lucky when I found another totally preoccupied with nectaring in the heather. He took absolutely no notice as I edged into position to take a photo.

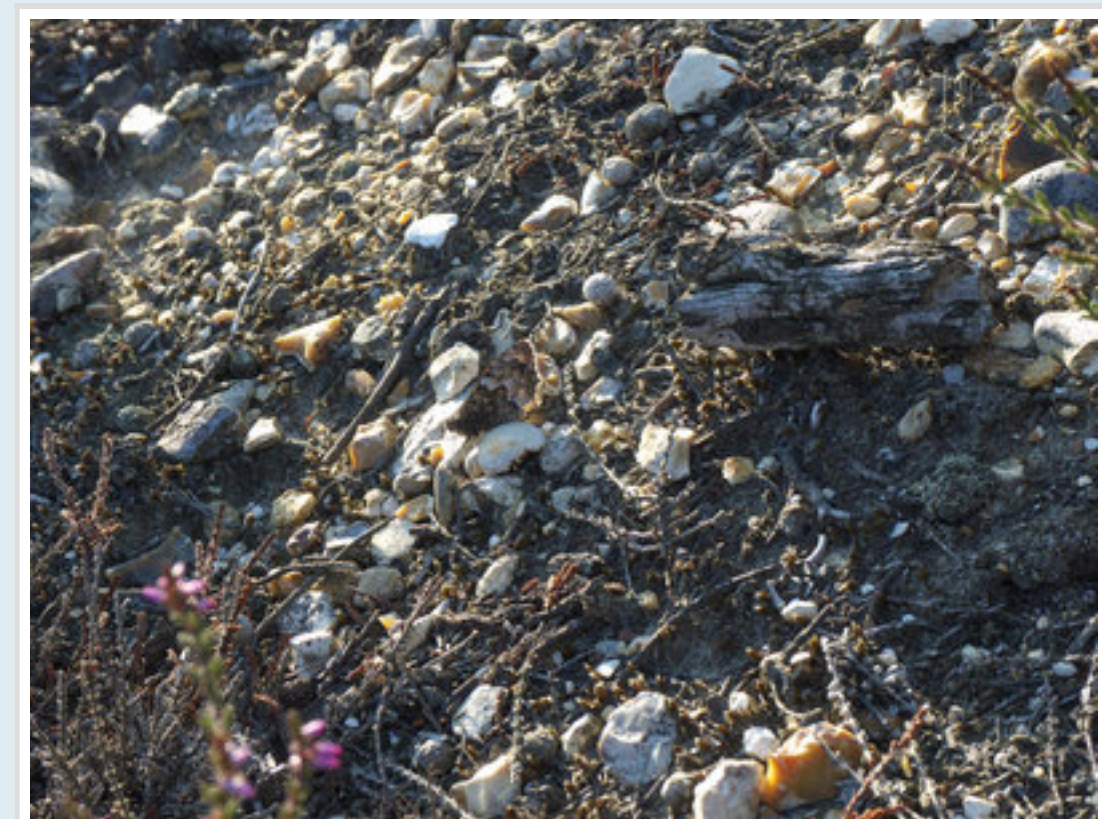


It was the same pattern with the next three I saw, too busy nectaring to worry about me. I have paid quite a few visits to the Grayling, which I have found a fascinating and really enjoyable experience. I was hoping to witness their mating ritual and subsequent pairing, but it was not to be, at least not this year. I now think its time to leave them to enjoy the rest of their lives nectaring, in the last of the summer sunshine. Also the last 'spot the Grayling' from me for this year 😊





An easy, spot the Grayling



Slightly harder, spot the Grayling

Re: Maximus

by Neil Hulme, 31-Aug-13 06:58 PM GMT

Nice Brownie! 😊
BWs, Neil

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-13 11:34 AM GMT

Looking forward to the Brostreak report Mike after the appetiser 😊 Great Grayling shots- and I spotted both of them in record time so my eyes must be back to full working order 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 01-Sep-13 11:09 PM GMT

Great photo of the Brown Hairstreak Mike, well done. 😊 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Sep-13 07:17 PM GMT

She was a very nice Brownie Neil and she really made our day 😊

Thanks Wurzel, I need to catch up on my postings so the Brownstreak report will follow this one. Glad your eyes are now OK 😊 😊

Thanks Nick, she was a great subject 😊

28th August

An early start today heading to Dorset with Lulworth as our first port of call. Arriving at the Heritage Centre car park we headed up the path towards the cove which took us past the butterfly garden where we lingered for a while, enjoying the lovely variety of butterflies on the many nectar sources. There were loads of Small Tortoiseshells, Common Blues, Small and Large Whites a very faded Painted Lady and a remarkably fresh looking Marbled White. We got chatting to a young guy, who it turned out was looking after the garden and was aiming to improve it for butterflies. We then set off up the path towards the cove and were greeted by a Grayling which settled on the chalky path in front of us, its body tilted towards the sun. As we stood there looking down towards the sea we suddenly saw a Clouded Yellow darting between some yellow flowers, stopping for a short time on each to nectar. As we made our way carefully down to the spot, we found there were actually at least three Clouded Yellows and mixed in with them were some stunning Wall Browns.







After spending some time in this spot, happy with the photos taken so far, we decided to head up to the field above the car park. As we walked along a well trodden path we began seeing Common, Adonis and Chalkhill Blues in beautiful condition, including mating pairs.





Also along the path were some Grayling, one of which decided to use Cathy's shoe as a perch. He would fly off to intercept rivals, returning to his trainer perch after each sortie.





Very last 'spot the Grayling'.

There were so many butterflies at the cove, that we decided to stay put for the rest of the day. Clouded Yellows were everywhere, and we even managed to find one ovipositing shortly before we left, but unfortunately we didn't manage to get a photograph 😞 The one species we hoped to find eluded us, the Lulworth Skipper, which was nowhere to be seen, although we searched the area thoroughly 😞

Re: Maximus

by Butterflysaurus rex, 06-Sep-13 08:12 PM GMT

Great Wall Brown shots there Mike, they can be very tricky to photograph. They are quite plentiful down my way but that doesn't seem to make things any easier!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 07-Sep-13 07:18 PM GMT

Thanks Rex, Walls can be a little bit flighty and usually do take flight just as you get into position for a photo.

30th August

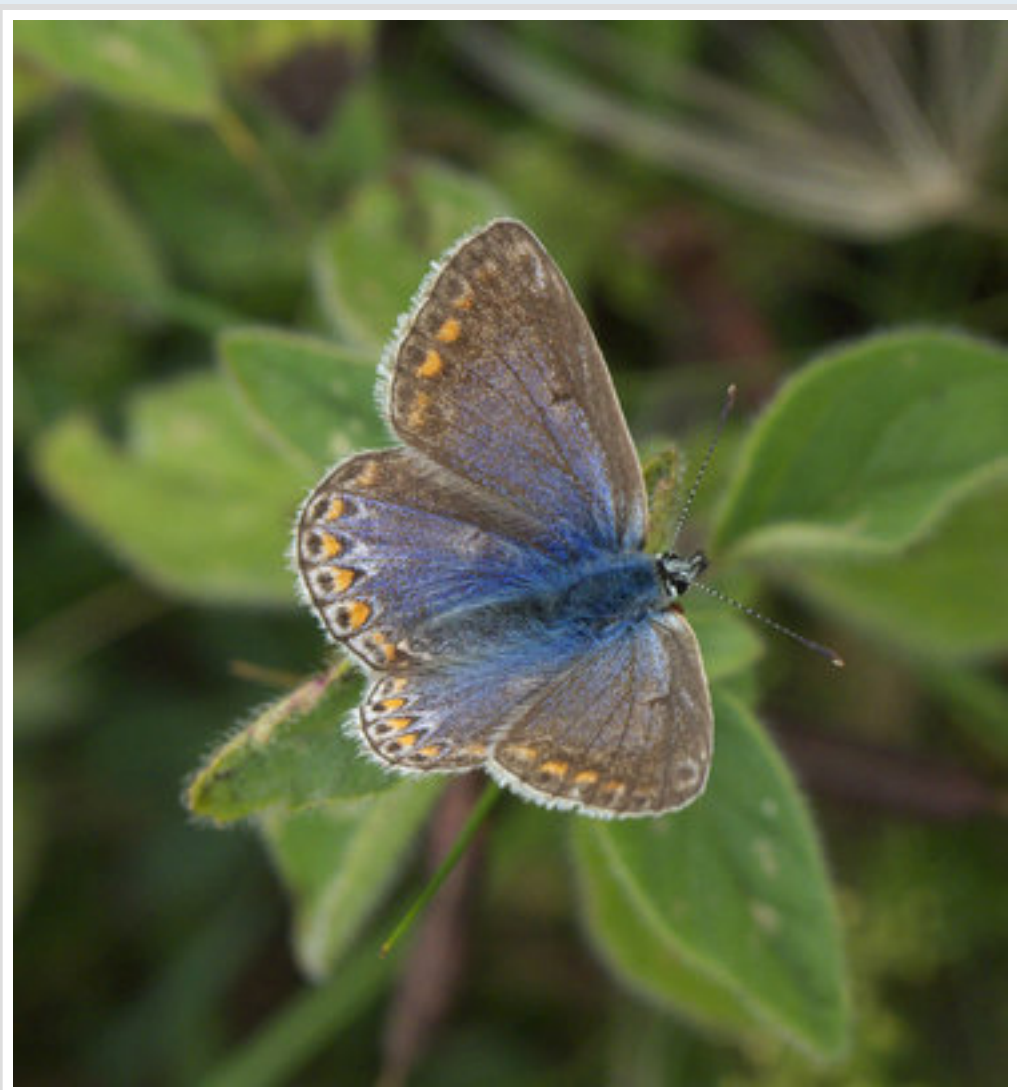
Today we made a last minute decision on a visit to Noar Hill to see if we could find any Brown Hairstreaks. The day started off dull and grey but when we reached Noar at about midday it was warm and sunny. There were no other cars parked on the verge so we quickly set off along the track into the site. As we neared the entrance we were greeted by a lovely male Speckled Wood, which I just had to take a photo of.



Once inside we explored the first pit which was full of Common Blues and a nice looking Green-veined White.



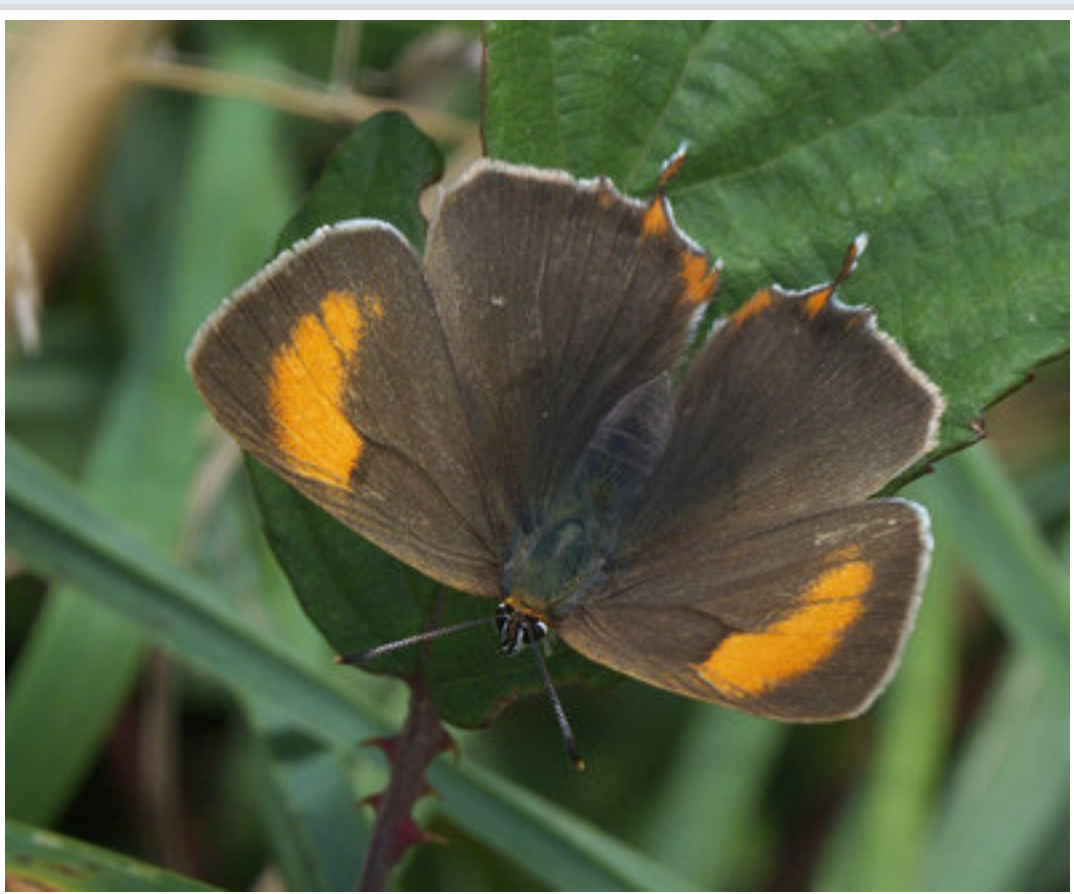
As we made our way up through the reserve there were many male and female Common Blues, including this rather blue female..



and this female with white lunules having virtually no trace of orange.



Although I don't know exactly where the 'triangle' is, I have a good idea of where it should be, so that's where we headed. When we arrived the area had been well trampled but the cowpats gave away who was responsible for the flattened grass. We spent some time carefully looking around the area, it had all the right ingredients, tall Ash trees at the back fronted by large blackthorn bushes with plenty of nectar sources below them. We had been looking for about twenty minutes when a brown butterfly flew past Cathy and settled on a leaf two feet from the ground. Not sure exactly what it was we edged closer and there revealed to us was a beautiful female Brown Hairstreak. As the sun came out from behind a cloud she slowly opened her wings showing us her glorious orange flashes on the upper side. She then moved onto some ragwort and spent some time nectaring before flying onto a young blackthorn which she spent a while exploring. This was the 'full circle' in our butterfly summer which began on 30th April at Noar Hill with our first sighting of the Duke of Burgundy, culminating today 30th August, again at Noar Hill with our sighting of this lovely female Brown Hairstreak. She stayed with us for a while and then made a longer flight and settled on a yellow flower some distance away. Just as I said to Cathy, "I think she's going to take her leave", she flew off into the top of a nearby Ash and disappeared from our view.







I corresponded with Clive Wood during last winter and am aware of the work being done behind the scenes in order to reduce the over-cutting of blackthorn hedges around the Noar/Selborne area and hope that this may mark a turning point for the Brown Hairstreak at Noar Hill and that their numbers can increase to the levels seen in the past.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 07-Sep-13 08:02 PM GMT

The Green Veined White is absolutely stunning, Maximus, and your first Brown Hairstreak shot is excellent too.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 07-Sep-13 09:23 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Mike, you got the full range there and the final shot is lush:D 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 07-Sep-13 10:21 PM GMT

Great photos Mike, my favourites being the first and second Brown Hairstreaks, excellent. 😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-13 09:12 AM GMT

Just catching up after a week in Dorset, great reports and photos Mike 😊

Looks like you were at Lulworth about a week before me, one of my favourite places and loads of butterflies 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 10-Sep-13 06:45 PM GMT

Cheers David, Wurzel, Nick and Neil. I agree Neil that Lulworth is a great place to spend time and there are butterflies everywhere, I look forward to reading your report 😊

5th September

As a scorcher was forecast for today we were on the road early heading back into Dorset. The car park was very quiet when we arrived at our chosen destination, Durlston Country Park. As we walked westwards along the path out of the car park the first butterflies we encountered were Clouded Yellows, which were nectaring on Fleabane allowing some photos.



As we made our way along the path we encountered more Clouded Yellows, some Wall Browns, Common Blues and many Adonis Blues. There were also plenty of Small Heaths and some surprisingly fresh looking Marbled Whites.







As we searched some areas of long grass off the main path we spotted a Great Green Bush Cricket basking in the hot sun.



We then discovered an area of long grass with lots of Ragwort growing amongst it. A quick search of this area revealed what we had come in search of, Lulworth Skippers, and in pretty good condition too. Having not found them at Lulworth on our previous trip we decided to make a last ditch effort, and here they were. To say we were pleased would be an understatement as this would have been our last chance to see them this year 😊





Having achieved our aim of finding the Lulworth Skippers, and as it was not too late, we decided to drive across to Ballard Down to see what we could find there...

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 10-Sep-13 07:22 PM GMT

Great stuff Mike 😊

Interesting to see the differences and similarities compared with my visit to Durlston a couple of days earlier.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 10-Sep-13 08:15 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Great stuff Mike 😊

Interesting to see the differences and similarities compared with my visit to Durlston a couple of days earlier.

Cheers,

Neil.

...and my visit of a week before that (no Clouded Yellows seen then at all).

Lovely pictures from a top spot for lots of species.

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-13 06:16 PM GMT

Great to see the great shots of the Lulworths, hardy butterflies for Hardy country 😊 I've only ever been to Durlston for birding so perhaps next year I might try there for butterflies, any "hotspots"?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 13-Sep-13 08:09 PM GMT

Thanks Neil, its interesting to compare your visit to Durlston with ours, shows how things change, even after only a couple of days.

Thanks Dave, its amazing you saw no Clouded Yellows just a week before our visit, were those we saw fresh arrivals from the continent?

Thanks Wurzel, Lulworth Skippers do seem hardy little butterflies, with a long flight season!

5th September, continued..

After our success at Durlston we decided to pay a visit to Ballard Down before heading home. We parked in the lay-by and headed up the path to the down until we reached an area rich in wild flowers. Adonis Blues were everywhere, and every nectar source was covered in butterflies.





The Adonis ranged from very fresh to very worn, but there were hundreds on this bit of hillside. Every direction you looked in, blue and brown open wings faced towards the sun to catch its last rays. As we walked along the path and came to a more open area, we soon spotted some Clouded Yellows, about six in total, which appeared to be getting ready to roost.



We then spotted a white butterfly which, when it landed, turned out to be a Clouded Yellow, here was our helice. She was not easy to approach and was clearly not a really fresh individual, but she was beautiful. Our photos are not brilliant and do not do her justice, but we felt pleased to have at least got a couple of shots of her.





In addition to the Adonis and Clouded Yellows we saw Lulworth Skippers, Common Blues, Brown Argus, Meadow Browns, Large and Small Whites and some Speckled Woods. All in all another great day out in a great part of the country 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-13 09:48 PM GMT

Great stuff Mike 😊 All those Adonis are a great sight, the Clouded Yellow shots are lush and a Helice to boot 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 05-Oct-13 05:48 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, apologies for the belated reply, i've been busy lately with other things, non-butterfly related i'm afraid!

Mike

30th September

In spite of being otherwise engaged we have however managed to find time for a couple of trips in search of the elusive Long-tailed Blue. On 30th September we made our way to Kingsdown Lees driving into warm sunshine along the M20. The diversion at Dover cost us some time but we eventually arrived, parked up and made our way along the cliff tops. Although it was sunny the strong easterly breeze made it feel cooler and we weren't sure whether we'd see any butterflies on the wing. However we soon spotted a small brownish butterfly which landed on the path in front of us, but on closer inspection found it was a female Adonis and not the Long-tailed Blue we'd hoped for. We spent the next few hours searching up and down the cliff top scrutinising every nectar source along the way, but at the end of the day we only spotted male and female Adonis Blues, a male Chalkhill Blue in pretty good condition and several Speckled Woods, Small Whites. one Small Tortoiseshell and a Comma, the last two sheltering from the strong wind in the car park at the back of the Golf Course. While we were there we bumped into fellow UKB member, Leigh (mud-puddling), nice to meet you. At about 4.30 pm we called it a day as we didn't want to get stuck in heavy traffic on the motorway.







4th October

Today we were back in Kent after spending the night at my sister's house in Hythe. We had chosen to continue our quest for the Long-tailed Blue today based on the favourable weather forecast. During the night however we had watched the spectacular lightning display as torrential rain fell turning the road into a river. The morning dawned with strong southerly winds and lashing rain, but as we were here we were determined to make the most of it even though we were convinced we would not see any butterflies on the wing, let alone Long-tailed Blues. When we arrived at our destination the rain had eased a little but the wind was really gusting strongly on the cliff tops. After some while searching I found a Small White hiding deep in the grass and soon after a Silver-Y moth doing likewise. At least I had found something. Cathy had moved on ahead and I was slowly walking along a path in the grass searching carefully. At one point I found a small bush which was obscuring a clump of Ragwort. As I walked past the bush I could see the Ragwort more clearly, and as I looked, there sat on a flowerhead busily nectaring was a Long-tailed Blue. What an amazing sight, surreal comes to mind. As I slowly removed my camera from its case being careful not to disturb the nectaring butterfly it began to rain heavily. I managed to fire off four photos almost as if on auto pilot before the butterfly took flight, disappearing into the gloom. To say I was pleased would be an understatement but this was tempered with the fact that Cathy had missed seeing it. I quickly caught up with her and found her looking over the cliff where the LTB she had found had disappeared, denying her a photograph. The inclement weather forced us back down to the car where we ate lunch, after which we decided to take one last look up on the cliffs for any sign of the LTB's we'd seen earlier. Unfortunately we drew a blank, but satisfied with our earlier sighting we decided to call it a day.





Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 05-Oct-13 08:13 PM GMT

Congrats Mike 😊👍 Great shots, all four of em and that's four more than I've got 🤖 By the way where can I buy one of these autopilots they certainly seem to do the trick 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 05-Oct-13 08:30 PM GMT

This entire Long-Tailed Blue saga has thrown up some amazing stories. People have been massively inconvenienced getting down to this site, but it often seems as though they are blessed – poor weather, unfamiliarity with the site...but persistence seemingly pays off.

Most folk on here seem to have seen at least one – and at the end of the day, that's all you need.

The only thing stopping me from going there myself tomorrow is having seen the species in France last year. I'm pretty certain there'll be a few about having digested the reports on here.

Re: Maximus

by lee3764, 05-Oct-13 10:16 PM GMT

"To say I was pleased would be an understatement".....Well done Maximus!! I felt just as you did last Sunday to finally see one! Persistence paid off in the end. Well done & cherish the hard earned memories of your encounter with it.

Cheers,

Lee Slaughter (Cornwall).

Re: Maximus

by Butterfysaurus rex, 05-Oct-13 10:19 PM GMT

Lovely LTB photos there Mike 😊 And I really like your Clouded Yellow in amongst the leaves, unusual and beautiful lighting.

Re: Maximus

by Susie, 05-Oct-13 10:25 PM GMT

So glad you persevered and got your butterfly in the end. Lovely photographs 😊

Re: Maximus

by Paul Harfield, 05-Oct-13 11:49 PM GMT

Hi Maximus

Well done for getting your Long Tailed Blue 😊 I am very envious. I am hoping to visit Kent on Monday. Hopefully I will have at least as much luck as you have had, fingers crossed 😊

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 06-Oct-13 01:18 PM GMT

Well done Mike, a great find in such poor conditions. I am really pleased that you and Cathy got to see the LTB, and you also managed to get a few lovely photos to remind you of this day forever. 😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Oct-13 05:55 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and you know the saying, there are just some things that money can't buy 😊😊

Yes David there have been some good stories regarding the LTB's. Personally one is more than enough for me, given their small numbers and the M25 madness. I was particularly keen to see a LTB hatched on british soil but can now look forward to seeing some in France next year 😊

Thanks Lee, I will remember that moment for years to come. I'm very glad you saw one too and know exactly how you felt.

Thanks B. Rex, I got there (LTB) in the end. The Clouded Yellow was roosting in a dog rose and the sun was low in the sky giving that effect.

Thank you Susie, your Adonis Ab photo in the UKB 2014 calendar is stunning.

Thanks Jack, I wish you luck with your search for a LTB on Monday.

Thanks for you kind words Nick, it will remain etched in my memory always.

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 06-Oct-13 08:01 PM GMT

Congratulations on the LTB Mike 😊

There was no way that I could make it to Kent(or Sussex) to see these due to time/distance and family circumstances but I have really enjoyed reading about everyone else experiences, great stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by Susie, 06-Oct-13 09:13 PM GMT

Thank you. I was very surprised to be asked 😊

"Maximus" wrote:

Thanks Wurzel and you know the saying, there are just some things that money can't buy 😊😊

Yes David there have been some good stories regarding the LTB's. Personally one is more than enough for me, given their small numbers and the M25 madness. I was particularly keen to see a LTB hatched on british soil but can now look forward to seeing some in France next year 😊

Thanks Lee, I will remember that moment for years to come. I'm very glad you saw one too and know exactly how you felt.

Thanks B. Rex, I got there (LTB) in the end. The Clouded Yellow was roosting in a dog rose and the sun was low in the sky giving that effect.

Thank you Susie, your Adonis Ab photo in the UKB 2014 calendar is stunning.

Thanks Jack, I wish you luck with your search for a LTB on Monday.

Thanks for you kind words Nick, it will remain etched in my memory always.

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 05-Nov-13 05:31 PM GMT

Its been a while since my last posting on UKB as things have conspired to keep me from doing so! I also have a lot of catching up to do on other people's diaries!

Thanks Neil for your congrats on our LTB sighting, I do understand how it's not always possible just to drop everything to go in search of a butterfly, even though you would like to.

I'm surprised that you were surprised to be asked Susie, its a stunning photo!

The LTB sighting was a natural cut-off point for our 2013 butterfly season. Our aim this year was to better our 2012 total of 41 UK species seen. Our first sighting of 2013 was of a Small tortoiseshell on 14th March at Wrecclesham and our final new species sighting was the Long-tailed Blue at Kingsdown on 4th October . This brought our tally for 2013 to 53 UK butterfly species recorded, nine of these (Wall Brown, Chequered Skipper, Swallowtail, Wood White, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Black Hairstreak, White Letter Hairstreak, Lulworth Skipper and Long-tailed Blue) being first ever sightings for us. This easily beat our last year's figure, which now brings our tally of UK butterfly species to a total of 54.

We didn't manage to see the Large Blue this year, although we saw this butterfly at Collard Hill last year. Species we have yet to see are the High Brown Fritillary, Mountain Ringlet, Scotch Argus, Northern Brown Argus, Large Heath and Reals Wood White. Hopefully, six species for us to enjoy looking for next year!

Most recent butterfly sightings to follow...

Re: Maximus

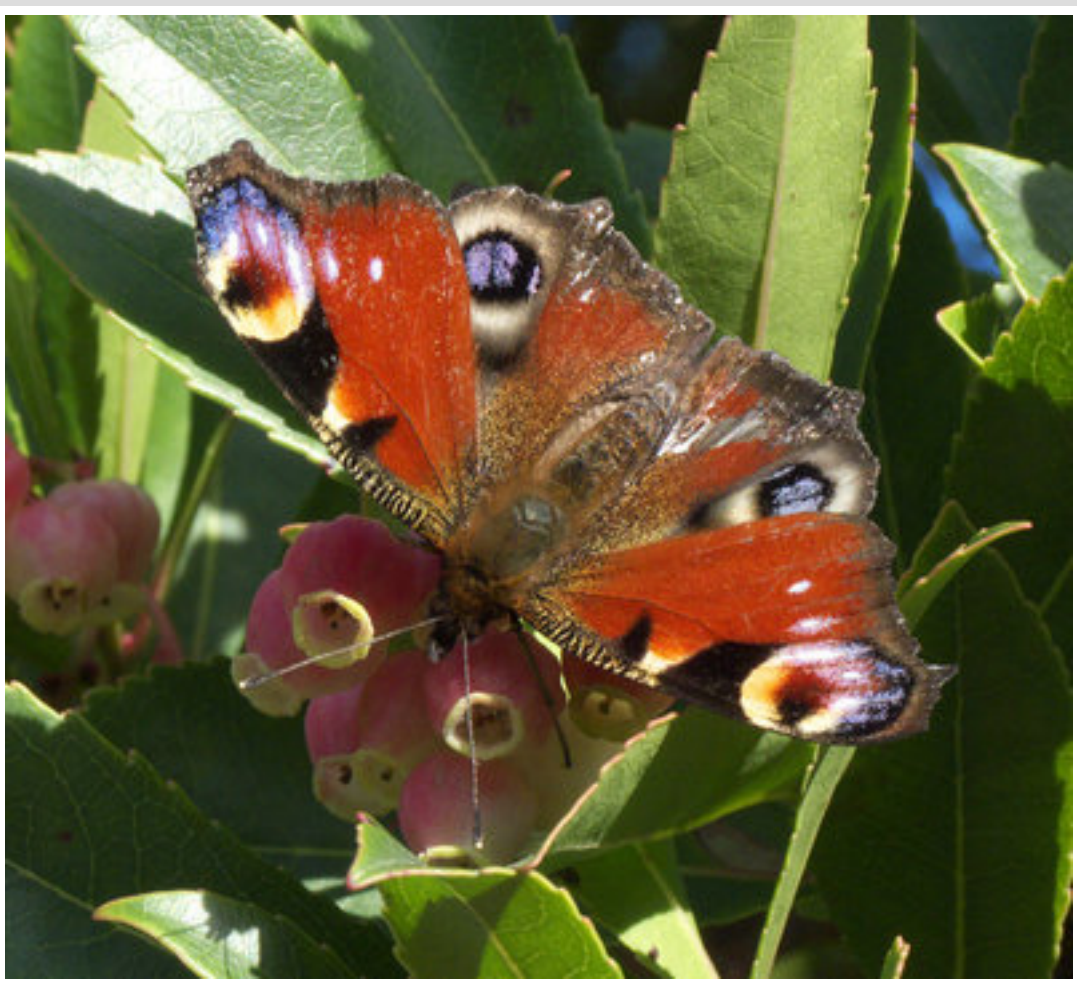
by Maximus, 07-Nov-13 04:46 PM GMT

During early October we managed to spend some time out locally and found quite a few very fresh looking Small Coppers on the wing, as well as some bright looking Commas.



More recently we have been watching Red Admirals and Peacocks nectaring on a neighbours shrub, mostly on sunny mornings. They are obviously feeding up in preparation for their winter hibernation, which looking at the predicted temperatures for next week in our area, may be quite soon. We are not sure what the shrub is and although I have looked on line I have not been able to get an ID.





waxy bell-shaped flowers



strawberry like fruits



basking in the November sun

Re: Maximus

by Padfield, 07-Nov-13 05:31 PM GMT

Hi Maximus. Your shrub is a strawberry tree, *Arbutus unedo* – a great autumn butterfly attractant. In the Mediterranean it serves as foodplant for two-tailed pashas and Chapman's green hairstreak, but further north it simply provides a welcome nectar source when flowers are scarce.

Guy

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 07-Nov-13 08:27 PM GMT

Thanks for the ID of the tree Guy. It certainly must be a very good nectar source at this time of year, which is why on sunny mornings, even in the UK in November, is covered with Red Admirals and Peacocks.

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 07-Nov-13 10:30 PM GMT

I don't think I've seen the sun here in Salisbury this November 🌧️ 😞 Lovely Snail Copper from back in October Mike. A neighbour has a Strawberry Tree(which I managed to ID from your photos and with Guys input 😊) so if we do actually see the sun in the next few days I'll have a check, cheers for the tip.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 12-Nov-13 06:14 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I hope you've seen some sun in Salisbury and some butterflies on your neighbour's Strawberry Tree recently 😊 The blooms are starting to fade now on our neighbour's tree and we have not seen any butterflies on it for a week or so 😞

Mike

12th November

This year we put in quite a bit of effort to ensure that there were plenty of nectar sources in our garden, in order to attract as many butterflies as possible. This definitely paid off, as the Erysimum Bowles Mauve, Verbena Bonariensis, Scabious, Cosmos and Oxeye Daisy, just to mention a few, have throughout the summer paid host to a variety of different species. The first to arrive were Orange Tips, which although they only stopped briefly to nectar before moving on, obviously found our Garlic Mustard plants to their liking.



We soon noticed that the caterpillars were disappearing, probably through predation, so moved all further hatchlings into the kitchen, where they were given their own sprig of Garlic Mustard to feed up on. More of these later.

The next species to arrive were Large and Small Whites, they became regulars and there were always plenty of them in the garden, especially on the Scabious and Verbena. We even planted some cabbages for them which they made full use of.





We even had a Large White egg-laying on our peas! When the eggs hatched the caterpillars initially fed on the pea leaves before moving onto the cabbage plants.





When we witnessed these caterpillars being predated by common wasps I protected them with a fine mesh net, which seemed to do the trick.



This was a great start to the butterflies visiting our garden and we wondered what was to follow.....

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 12-Nov-13 08:43 PM GMT

Great report and photos Mike 😊

I am wondering what was to follow as well....

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 12-Nov-13 09:00 PM GMT

Excellent reportage, Mike. You've clearly taken a real interest and I can't wait to see how things developed.

Re: Maximus

by Nick Broomer, 12-Nov-13 09:22 PM GMT

Ditto, you have certainly got my attention Mike.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 13-Nov-13 08:00 AM GMT

Morning Mike - I know we've spoken several times about your efforts to encourage the butterflies and protect the caterpillars but somehow it brings it

alive seeing the photos. Really well done and I shall try to follow your example next year with my Whites. I can't wait for more news of the Orange Tips and hope they eventually repay you by providing some excellent photo opportunities.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 21-Nov-13 06:42 PM GMT

Apologies for the delay since my last posting, but thanks Neil, David, Nick and Pauline. Hope all goes well with your BH's Pauline 😊

21st November

Although Large and Small Whites remained the most common butterflies in the garden, we began to get visits from other species. The first of these were Small Tortoiseshells which were attracted to the buddleia and also spent time basking on the wall in the sun.

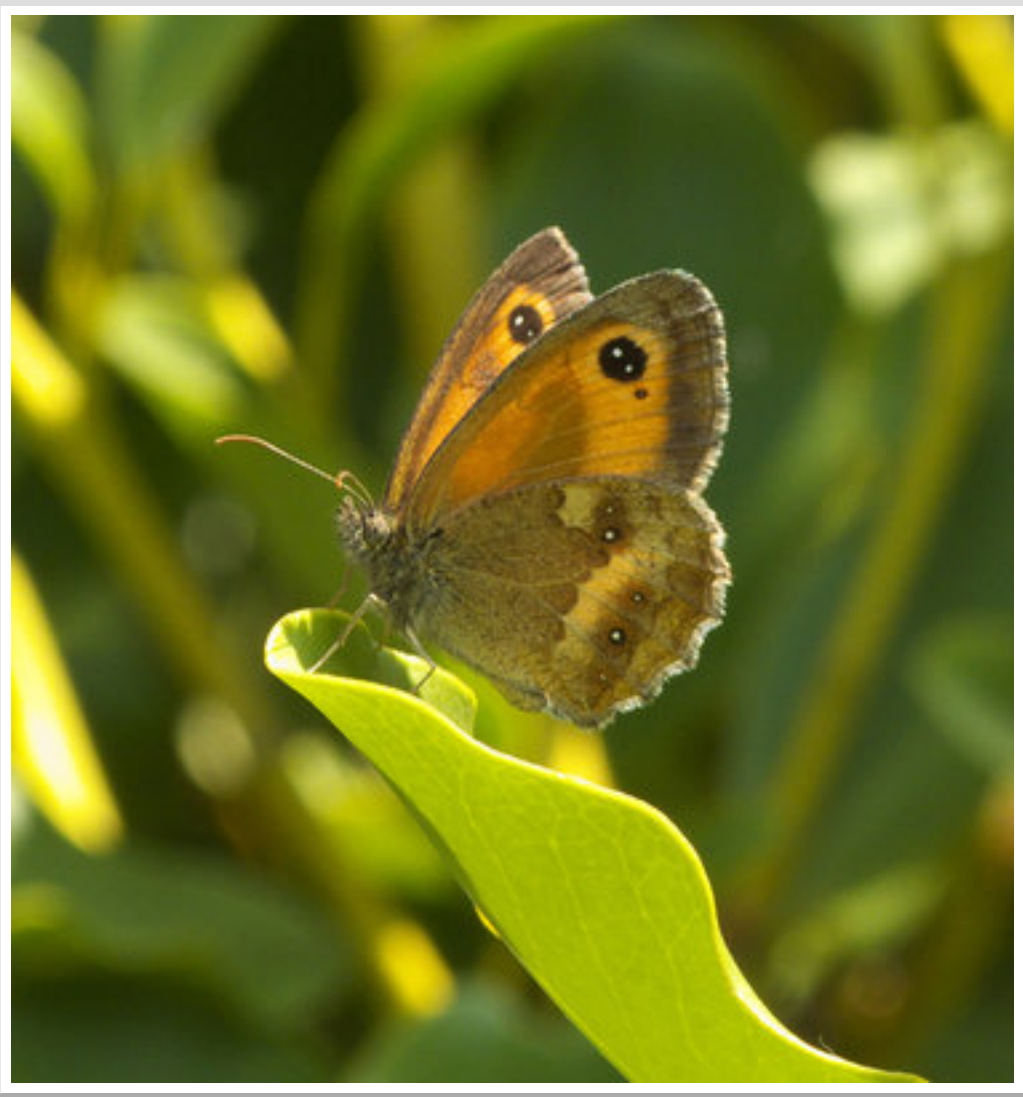


This was a particularly well marked individual

A species that found the Verbena to its liking was the Comma, there seemed to be a regular influx of them into the garden, with some of them in July being the beautiful Hutchinsoni type.



Gatekeepers began to appear in late July and were seen frequently nectaring on the Scabious.



However one of the biggest surprises of the summer came on 31st July when the garden was host to the following three species.



Ringlet on Cosmos



Meadow Brown on Oxeye Daisy



SW Fritillary on Erysimum Bowles Mauve



SW Fritillary on Cosmos

The Cosmos seemed to be attractive to both the Ringlet and the Silver-washed Fritillary, (where she came from remains a mystery to us), and the Meadow Brown seemed to prefer the Oxeye Daisy. Cosmos also appears to be a magnet for all types of Bee, there were always plenty visiting the flowers. TBC...

Re: Maximus

by David M, 21-Nov-13 08:31 PM GMT

A Silver Washed Fritillary in the garden is a notable event! I take it you're not far from woodland?

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 21-Nov-13 08:40 PM GMT

We have no woodland nearby David, which is why we were very surprised to see this butterfly in our garden. It was a nice surprise and she stayed for about 20 mins before moving on.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 21-Nov-13 08:55 PM GMT

She could only have been on a long-range egg-laying mission then, surely?

Re: Maximus

by William, 21-Nov-13 09:01 PM GMT

Wonderful shots of the Silver Washed Fritillary Maximus 😊. The purple/ silver and gold is a lovely combination. Like you, I had a few in the garden this year. A knowledgeable friend of mine witnessed the same phenomenon and suggested that, due to the lovely warm weather, the bramble blossoms had gone over more quickly and so Fritillaries ended up ranging about a bit more (and turning up in gardens) to find nectar – can't say I was complaining! 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 23-Nov-13 11:48 PM GMT

Lovely shots Mike especially the well marked Small Tort. 😊 I'm very envious of the Silver Washed as that's a species I never had in my garden when I had one 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 23-Dec-13 06:42 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and William, yes the bramble flowers were over early this year William, like you I'm not complaining if it means more SW Fritillaries in the garden 😊

As 2013 is nearing an end I need to begin to conclude my diary, taking up where I left off with our garden butterflies. We recorded a total of fifteen butterfly species in our garden in 2013 which was much better than 2012. Perhaps a better summer and an increased quantity of nectar rich flowers made all the difference?

Brimstones were regular visitors as were Peacocks later in the summer.



There were also other firsts in 2013, Small Skipper, Common Blue and Holly Blue.





In addition to the butterflies we were lucky to see the following....I'm not 100% sure of some ID's



Elephant Hawk Moth, tatty but still flying strongly



Silver-Y tatty but enjoying the nectar



Slow Worm





Brown Hawker?



Migrant Hawker?



Angle Shades Caterpillar?

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 23-Dec-13 11:29 PM GMT

A great reminiscence Mike 😊 I'm struggling with my own caterpillar identifications at the moment but it looks like it could be an Angle Shades. Looking on my App I'd agree with Brown and Migrant Hawker but I might not be right 😊 At least I got to have a play with my apps 😊 😊

Have a great Christmas 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 24-Dec-13 05:43 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, glad you got to use your apps, have a great Christmas yourself 😊

A merry Christmas and a great new year to all on UK Butterflies 😊