

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 06-Jan-13 11:09 PM GMT

Doing Some Digging

I've been spending most of my time recently updating the UK Butterflies website. Having updated the phenology charts, the next item on my list is to update the subspecies descriptions. I think that Adrian Riley's *British and Irish Butterflies: The Complete Identification, Field and Site Guide to the Species, Subspecies and Forms* is superb, but I was keen to see the original subspecies descriptions and started to find them on the Internet. However, in order to really understand a subspecies description, you also need to understand what comprises the *nominate* form. And so I've also been digging into this also – and this has taken a huge chunk of time; looking at more websites than I care to remember. But there are some great resources out there – the top 3 being:

Google Books – <http://books.google.co.uk/> Internet Archive – <http://archive.org/index.php> Biodiversity Heritage Library – <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>

Having been through this exercise, when I read a reference such as *Esper (1777)* it actually means something! In this case, it's a reference to a work that contains the first definition of the Scotch Argus nominate form (*Erebia aethiops aethiops*); *Die Schmetterlinge in Abbildungen nach der Natur mit Beschreibungen* (also known as *Die europäischen Schmetterlinge*) – with the definition at <http://www.archive.org/stream/dieschmet...2/mode/1up>, and a plate at <http://www.archive.org/stream/dieschmet...8/mode/1up>. I've had to brush up on Latin, French and German in the process 😊 I'm really amazed at how much good-quality material is out there. Just take a look at the plate above. Or even better, start at the following link and work your way forward; some stunning illustrations: <http://www.archive.org/stream/dieschmet...0/mode/1up>

I'm glad to say that my first pass through all of the species, subspecies and forms on the British list (including the secondary species) is now complete – some references taking over an hour to track down (really!). I've found the vast majority and have linked them into the website, both within the species descriptions, and on a new "References" page (<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/references.php>) where you can access links to the individual descriptions and plates within each reference. As ever, all comments welcome. I now need to track down the missing references, locate actual physical copies of those not freely available online, and then I'll finally be in a position to update the subspecies descriptions, making my life complete 😊 Until next week, that is.

The reason for posting this in my personal diary is that I do want to revisit my memories of this moment in time at some point. Despite the sheer amount of work involved (it really has been a long hard slog), I've really enjoyed it. Names that I've lived with since my youth, such as Esper, Fabricius, Denis & Schiffermüller, Oberthür, Rottemburg, Verity and, of course, Linnaeus, have all been "brought to life" during my analysis – it's been fascinating just digging into the lives of these luminaries and reading up on the literature they've produced. And this may sound *really weird*, but I feel I've definitely made a connection with times gone by and have a renewed appreciation of what the collectors of old have done for our understanding of butterfly fauna today. Although we seem to have moved from paintings to photography, and collecting to conservation! I've also got a real sense of where the entomological centres were – not just London, but also in Germany, France, Sweden, Austria and others. To see that the *type locality* for the Common Blue is Germany says it all!

And if you must know – it took me 1 hour and 45 minutes to track down the original naming of the Indian Red Admiral (*Vanessa indica*). The main reason for this is that its moniker was inscribed on a plate (not in the text) and most copies of the associated work (*Natursystem aller bekannten in- und ausländischen Insekten*), credited to Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Herbst (we're on first name terms now), have had their plates sold off (each plate sells for a few hundred ££) and all of the scanned works available online are missing the plates. It turns out that his collaborator, Carl Gustav Jablonsky, was the Lewington of his time (as well as the private secretary to the Queen of Prussia) and his work in high demand! I even ended up trawling around online artshops and eBay! The plate in question can be found at <http://gdz-srv1.sub.uni-goettingen.de/c...000053.jpg>. I also include it here to make this post more colourful 😊 Taken from the "Center for Retrospective Digitization, Göttingen" (Seiten des Göttinger Digitalisierungszentrums): http://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/dms/lo...=PHYS_0001



Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Vince Massimo, 06-Jan-13 11:37 PM GMT

Absolutely amazing work Pete 😊 .

This and other recent improvements takes the site into new realms.

Cheers,

Vince

Re: Pete Eeles

by MikeOxon, 06-Jan-13 11:43 PM GMT

Congratulations on a splendid piece of work, Peter.

I think members of the forums sometimes forget that the answers to many of their questions are already on this website and that there is a wealth of authoritative information at their fingertips, thanks to the work of yourself and a few colleagues.

Mike

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 07-Jan-13 09:02 AM GMT

What amazing work – thank you Pete.

It's fantastic to have that link to the Esper – I think I will keep going back to that. By coincidence, I have recently been studying that Herbst picture, including *indica*, as it is reprinted in the latest volume of *Butterflies of the Palearctic Region (Nymphalidae V, subfamily Nymphalinae)*. That book also shows the original Hübner picture of *calliroe* and an account of the history of the names *indica*, *calliroe* and *vulcania*.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Hulme, 07-Jan-13 09:28 AM GMT

Eccellente ... Ambassador, with these upgrades, you're really spoiling us.

Great work Pete!

BWs, Neil

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 07-Jan-13 12:52 PM GMT

Pete said:

I've had to brush up on Latin, French and German in the process 😊

Why not get that polyglot Padfield to help you out?

Brilliant research Pete. Very impressed.

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by Susie, 07-Jan-13 02:38 PM GMT

I never cease to be amazed by the incredible work you produce. 😊

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 07-Jan-13 04:21 PM GMT

I can only concur with the previous posters' comments.

There surely cannot be a better website devoted to butterflies and those who are interested in them anywhere in cyberspace.

Hats off to you, Pete.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 07-Jan-13 09:07 PM GMT

Thanks for the very kind comments all – much appreciated 😊

"padfield" wrote:

By coincidence, I have recently been studying that Herbst picture, including *indica*, as it is reprinted in the latest volume of *Butterflies of the Palearctic Region (Nymphalidae V, subfamily Nymphalinae)*. That book also shows the original Hübner picture of *calliroe* and an account of the history of the names *indica*, *calliroe* and *vulcania*.

Thanks Guy. I don't have my copy yet – I normally pay a visit to Pemberley Books so that I can have a chat with Ian at the same time 😊 But do look forward to reading up on this!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 18-Jan-13 09:39 PM GMT

Garden Finches

With the snow falling, the bird feeders in the garden have been getting even more attention today than they normally do – which I didn't think was possible. Greenfinches, Goldfinches and Chaffinches, in particular, are very partial to the sunflower hearts we put out. We had a Fieldfare in the garden today too, although still waiting for a Brambling. We also have a resident Pied Wagtail that has a distinct limp! Photo and video below.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MehG87jGkzM&feature=youtu.be>

I've also started updating the aberration descriptions on the species pages – which is going to take a VERY long time! All of the skippers are now done (which is, I estimate, 1/20th of the effort) and we'll start creating albums for those aberrations where we have images, move the images, and get them into the right place on the species pages. The descriptions have come from an unpublished work, although the vast majority of its content is itself paraphrased from the original publications (if not a direct copy), and I'll refine the text once I've gotten access to the original publications myself.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 19-Jan-13 06:48 AM GMT

What a fantastic film Pete. I had thought my garden feeders here get good trade but not really a patch on yours. But I do get Sparrows galore.

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by Susie, 19-Jan-13 08:22 AM GMT

That film was lovely to watch. Like Jack my bird feeders were very busy yesterday but not as much as yours.

I did have a redwing in the garden yesterday though 😊

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 19-Jan-13 08:12 PM GMT

Great stuff with the garden birds Pete. I've scanned through the Skipper aberrants and it looks fascinating – but I'm really waiting for the Hedge Brown/Gatekeeper list so that I can feed my obsession 😊 Cheers for all of your hard work on this Pete!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

ps looking ahead hope to see you at Bentley Wood this season?

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 19-Jan-13 08:25 PM GMT

Thanks all!

We'll definitely meet up this year Wurzel! Either Bentley or Portland Bill would be just fine!

As for aberrations, I'm happy to do requests. I'll bump Gatekeeper to the top of this list. Just finished Swallowtail – all 97 abs – and will upload soon!

Any other requests just let me know – I was going to do Purple Emperor soon also 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 19-Jan-13 08:42 PM GMT

Which is the UK species with the fewest abs, Pete?

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 19-Jan-13 09:53 PM GMT

"David M" wrote:

Which is the UK species with the fewest abs, Pete?

White-letter Hairstreak, with 7 named abs. The most is the Chalkhill Blue, thanks to the ridiculously over-analysed (IMHO!) work of Bright and Leeds (*A Monograph of the British Aberrations of the Chalk-hill Blue Butterfly*), with 144 pages of aberrations of just this one species! Suffice to say, that will be the last species I'll be doing!

Anyway – I've just changed the way aberration-related information is presented, otherwise the species pages will get ridiculously long for some species:

– The detailed aberration information for each species is now held on a separate page, accessible from the aberration section on the species page, except in the case where an image exists for that aberration. This new page is only available if aberration information or images are available for that species.

– The same page can be accessed from a new "Aberrations" page that is accessible from the "Species" menu. The aberrations page is at:

<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/aberrations.php> (certain species are "greyed out" if there is no information or images available).

– To keep the administration of species-specific albums in the gallery manageable, an album will only be created for an aberration if a photo is available (otherwise, what's the point?!). Vince and I will create albums as required and move images accordingly. Just post any aberrations into the "Aberrations" album if the appropriate aberration-specific album doesn't yet exist.

Any questions just ask!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 20-Jan-13 07:48 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

I'll bump Gatekeeper to the top of this list.

Done – and images sorted 😊

<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/aberrati...s=tithonus>

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 20-Jan-13 09:11 PM GMT

Much appreciated Pete, and looking good 😊 Cheers!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 20-Jan-13 09:24 PM GMT

In the Snow

The bird life is still providing the highlights in the garden – I managed to get pretty close to a Fieldfare this morning, who appreciated the apple that we'd put out. He's a real bully though – chasing away every blackbird that comes within 10 feet of his precious piece of apple! It's nice to get the camera out again 😊



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxEOx_up4wg&feature=youtu.be

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by MikeOxon, 20-Jan-13 10:06 PM GMT

Like you, I have been exercising my camera on Fieldfares in the garden. It seems strange that a bird which is so shy of humans is so aggressive to the regular garden birds! Our Blackbirds were chased with extraordinary vigour, until the Fieldfare had the 'field' to itself.

In previous years, the Redwings have always been first into the garden after a snowfall, while Fieldfares took much longer to appear. This year, Redwings seem to be holding back.

I have just put some photos on my own website.

Mike

Re: Pete Eeles

by Susie, 20-Jan-13 10:18 PM GMT

Lovely photos Pete.

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 20-Jan-13 11:40 PM GMT

Looks like a 'posh' thrush and I lament the fact that I've never knowingly seen one.

As others have commented, this bird is unusually aggressive which can perhaps be put down to the kind of austere lifestyle it endures at this time of year.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 23-Jan-13 10:05 PM GMT

OUMNH Visit

Today I had a really superb time in the company of Mark Colvin at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History – and my thanks to Mark for introducing me to some very knowledgeable and very friendly experts who look after the Hope Collection – especially Darren Mann and James Hogan. See <http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk/collect/entom.htm>. My reason for visiting was to browse their extensive library and pick up some hard-to-come-by definitions of various subspecies and forms – one of my current "pet projects" – the results of which will appear on UKB on the various species pages. The second reason was to take a look at historic specimens of some of our extinct subspecies and races to "connect" the words in the various papers with something more visual! I was able to look at some classic collections, such as that of J.C.Dale, where some well-known individual specimens can be found. It really does hammer home just how valuable these historic collections are when it comes to research – in my case, retracing our past and getting a first-hand view of races we've lost. It really is a great shame that subspecies aren't afforded the same level of protection as species.

Photos of Mark and I below – Mark poring over various races of Large Blue (Cotswolds and Devon/Cornwall) and I looking at specimens of the extinct

English Chequered Skipper. And to top off a perfect day, we had lunch with Jeremy Thomas 😊 who is a Professorial Fellow at New College, just around the corner from the museum. Top stuff 😊



Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 23-Jan-13 10:29 PM GMT

Alright Pete?

Sounds like a fascinating afternoon 🍷 Also food for thought with regards to protection of subspecies. Is there no way that subspecies or races can get protection? Surely if there is a push to maintain biodiversity then that means covering all subspecies/races and as many genetic variants as possible? Surely endemic forms/races/subspecies are worthy of just as much protection as the nominate form? Perhaps the only way will be to protect the sites and areas where there are distinct populations of them, for example at Great Orme or Prees Heath?

On a lighter note...Did you see any Hedge Brown collections perchance? Actually I don't want to know – I don't think could handle the jealousy 😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 24-Jan-13 07:32 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Is there no way that subspecies or races can get protection? Surely if there is a push to maintain biodiversity then that means covering all subspecies/races and as many genetic variants as possible? Surely endemic forms/races/subspecies are worthy of just as much protection as the nominate form?

I couldn't agree more.

"Wurzel" wrote:

On a lighter note...Did you see any Hedge Brown collections perchance?

I didn't go aberration hunting (that's for a later date!), so didn't look at the Gatekeepers. Too busy looking at Large Coppers and the like 😊 The targets were:

Chequered Skipper – From England (e.g. Northants). Allegedly larger than Scottish colonies.
Swallowtail – From Wicken Fen. The original colony is extinct. Allegedly smaller than other colonies.
Large Blue – Devon / Cornwall – Cornwall is the type locality for the extinct ssp. eutyphron
Large Blue – Cotswolds (allegedly, a different shade of blue)
Large Blue – Northants (Barnwell Wold) – this was the northernmost colony
Large Copper – ssp. dispar (British)
Silver-studded Blue – ssp. masseyi (e.g. from Witherslack, Westmorland)
Silver-studded Blue – ssp. cretaceous (e.g. from Kent)
Mountain Ringlet – from Ireland.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 24-Jan-13 09:34 AM GMT

I've asked this before, but is there really no usable genetic material in all these collections? If so, is that because of the thorough drying? What a shame none of these extinct forms were preserved in any way that would allow us to recreate them now.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 24-Jan-13 10:33 AM GMT

Guy:

I've asked this before, but is there really no usable genetic material in all these collections? If so, is that because of the thorough drying? What a shame none of these extinct forms were preserved in any way that would allow us to recreate them now

Juarassic Park Mark 2?

A great idea and I'm sure could well prove possible in the future. Think of that: SS.Blue *masseyi* in the Lake District once more!

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by Mark Colvin, 24-Jan-13 06:52 PM GMT

Hi Guy,

"padfield" wrote:

I've asked this before, but is there really no usable genetic material in all these collections?

This is a very important point you raise and the simple answer is '**there is usable genetic material in well-curated collections**'. I know when I look at old reference specimens, such as those Pete and I recently viewed at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History (OUMNH), I always ask myself "*what could we (man) have done to have prevented their demise or decline*". This is of course not always an easy question to answer.

Museum specimens, particularly well-represented taxa such as butterflies and beetles, can provide us with enormous potential data for investigating the effects of climate change, habitat modification and loss and the resulting distributional changes over time, often spanning many decades. This is still an often untapped resource in many research areas. Although many 'historic' specimens housed in museums collections will be unsuitable for molecular research; due to their age, methods of preparation or preservation there are still many that can provide scientists with valuable data. For example, in the case of the adonis blue butterfly, where researchers amplified microsatellite DNA from museum specimens over 100 years old to examine population changes over time. In more recent years, it has also become possible to extract nucleic acids from dry insects without causing

external morphological damage; an important consideration with extremely rare or type specimens. Certainly with regards to the OUMNH, specimens are made available to researchers for both traditional (morphological studies, data mining) and molecular research (population genetics, barcoding, molecular systematics), providing their methodologies are scientifically robust.

The following published research tells more:



Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 24-Jan-13 07:55 PM GMT

Thank you for that information, Mark. I remember well how Adonis blue populations had become critical in the late seventies, after decades of unfavourable grazing, the loss of rabbits and then the heatwave of 1976 (though being a Suffolk boy I have never seen an Adonis blue in the UK). It's very interesting – though not surprising – to see that reflected in the genetic make-up of the subsequent, increasing, populations. And interesting to see the slightly different situation with the Scandinavian large blues.

I'm sure Pete didn't mind this brief digression, but I'll decamp to another page if I have any further questions!

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 24-Jan-13 09:23 PM GMT

"padfield" wrote:

I'm sure Pete didn't mind this brief digression

Not at all – really enjoying the observations / discussion!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 24-Jan-13 09:50 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Mountain Ringlet – from Ireland.

That's not something I've ever heard about before. When was this species present in Ireland?

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 24-Jan-13 10:15 PM GMT

"David M" wrote:

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Mountain Ringlet – from Ireland.

That's not something I've ever heard about before. When was this species present in Ireland?

There are 3 specimens that have been described – both by E.B.Ford (in "Butterflies" in 1945) and by B.C.S.Warren in "On the Race of *Erebia epiphron* indigenous in the British Isles." *Entomologist*, vol. 81: pp.181–186. Aug. 1948. A quick scan for the dates/locations comes up with 1854 (Croagh Patrick,

County Mayo), 1901 (Mt. Nephin, County Mayo) and 1895 (Lake Gill, County Sligo).

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 25-Jan-13 10:11 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

"David M" wrote:

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Mountain Ringlet – from Ireland.

That's not something I've ever heard about before. When was this species present in Ireland?

There are 3 specimens that have been described – both by E.B.Ford (in "Butterflies" in 1945) and by B.C.S.Warren in "On the Race of *Erebia epiphron* indigenous in the British Isles." Entomologist, vol. 81: pp.181–186. Aug. 1948. A quick scan for the dates/locations comes up with 1854 (Croagh Patrick, County Mayo), 1901 (Mt. Nephin, County Mayo) and 1895 (Lake Gill, County Sligo).

Cheers,

– Pete

Strange how there are no records from north Wales given that the species seemingly once occurred in Ireland.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 26-Jan-13 08:51 AM GMT

A common factor of all past and present localities for Mountain Ringlet is large amounts of rain.

Any bets on where it will be found in Southern England this year after the deluge of 2012? 😡

Mind you, I wouldn't count against it turning up in my garden here on Mull. In the past six weeks I have recorded 250 mmms of rain

Forecast: Spring should arrive on Tuesday with sunshine 13 degrees in the south.

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by MikeOxon, 26-Jan-13 12:44 PM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

Spring should arrive on Tuesday with sunshine 13 degrees in the south.

The Met Office forecast on my computer agrees with that but, alas, also forecasts heavy rain 😞

Mike

Re: Pete Eeles

by Susie, 26-Jan-13 10:22 PM GMT

It felt like spring had arrived today. Blue sky, warm sunshine and birds singing. Bliss 😊

Re: Pete Eeles

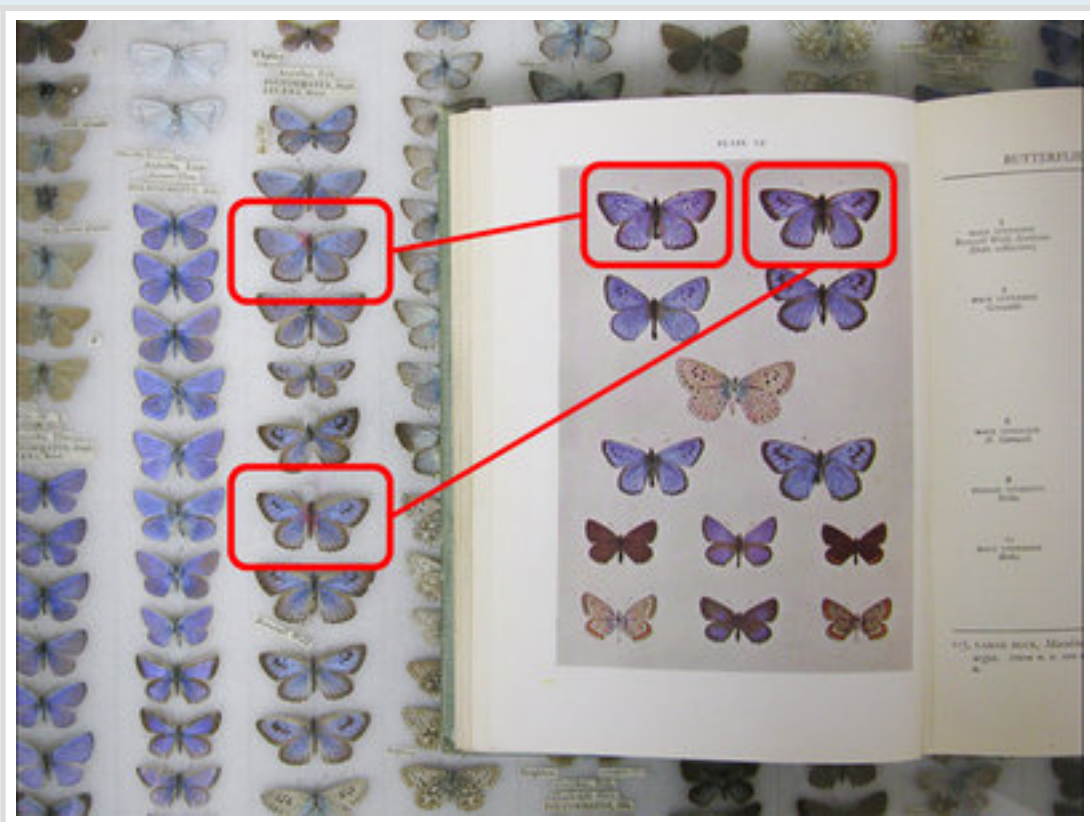
by Pete Eeles, 26-Feb-13 10:18 PM GMT

OUMNH

Another enjoyable day spent in the company of Mark Colvin at Oxford Uni. Museum of Natural History. I spent most of my time tracking down additional references to support the subspecies (and race) descriptions that I've been refining (thankfully, these references are all in English!). I also took the opportunity to look at specimens of each of these subspecies / races in order to correlate them with the original descriptions.

One "race" that Mark and I failed to locate during our last visit was the most north-easterly colony of Large Blue from Barnwell Wold in (I think!) Northamptonshire, since there aren't any specimens from this locality in the main collection. However, we had a stroke of luck as I was perusing a signed, first edition, copy of "Butterflies" by E.B.Ford (that he donated to the museum) and, lo and behold, it figures 2 specimens of Large Blue from Barnwell Wold – stating that they're from the Dale collection. It just so happens that this collection is housed, intact, in the museum. And so off we went to where it's located, and were rather gobsmacked as the first drawer we looked at contained the very same specimens that Ford had figured. Katherine Child has already photographed these for us (and they'll appear on the website soon) – the photos below are of the relevant drawer (with glass lid, where I've highlighted with a marker pen, on the glass, the 2 specimens figured) with the relevant page from "Butterflies" opened. The second shot highlights these specimens.

At first glance, these specimens appear somewhat different, again, from those found in the Devon/Cornwall and Cotswold colonies, with rather reduced spotting. But I'll await the professional photos before jumping to conclusions. Again – saddened that this race is extinct, and even more appreciative of the value of this historic record (that is maintained so well by the team at the university).



Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Matsukaze, 27-Feb-13 08:18 PM GMT

Fascinating...are there any specimens from the old Somerset colonies there and if so how do they fit in with the Cotswold and the far south-west specimens? I wonder if DNA analysis would show – whether the local forms had diverged long ago or relatively recently, and whether the genes and the visible diversity match. That would make a fine PhD thesis for someone...

Presumably the Dale collection has some of the Glanville's Wootton Mazarine Blues, but would it have any of the Swallowtails he took in the area 200 years ago? Would these match the British subspecies or the Continental ones?

Mountain Ringlet

by Matsukaze, 27-Feb-13 08:24 PM GMT

"David M" wrote:

Strange how there are no records from north Wales given that the species seemingly once occurred in Ireland.

I'm aware of a 19th century record from the Long Mynd (not quite north Wales but near enough) although unsupported by any evidence other than the word of its discoverer, and, I think, not generally accepted. Interestingly the same is true of an alleged Large Blue from roughly the same time and place – a somewhat unlikely combination of butterflies it must be said!

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 27-Feb-13 09:16 PM GMT

Five or six years ago at a Black Hairstreak watch in Glapthorn Cow Pasture, a retired teacher from Oundle School gave an impromptu talk about Black Hairstreak history. I believe the gentleman's name was Euan Thomas or similar.

Mr.Thomas had noticed that the distribution of the Black Hairstreak correlated quite remarkably with land formerly owned by the Rothschild family. He speculated that a Rothschild, many of whom were nature lovers, might have introduced into his woods Black Hairstreak from Continental stock. Somebody – I think it might actually have been me – wondered whether the Large Blue colony at nearby Barnwell Wold might similarly have been a Rothschild introduction: after all, Barnwell is a long way from the nearest old Cotswold colonies. Mr.Thomas didn't dismiss the idea out of hand.

So....?

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by Matsukaze, 27-Feb-13 10:07 PM GMT

If it really was an isolated introduced colony of Large Blues, how would it be done? As the butterfly's requirements were unknown at the time, the Rothschilds would have to have got very lucky indeed using eggs or larvae. I know introductions using adults were done in Cornwall in the 1890s, but that was moving them from one valley to the next, and transporting live adults from (say) the Cotswolds to Northamptonshire pre-1860 would have been difficult.

There are very old Large Blue records from Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire (and maybe Rutland – I don't remember exactly right now), which fit with a population in eastern Northamptonshire.

Again, I don't remember the details, but I am pretty sure that the Rothschilds **did** move Black Hairstreaks around.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 27-Feb-13 10:15 PM GMT

"Matsukaze" wrote:

Fascinating...are there any specimens from the old Somerset colonies there and if so how do they fit in with the Cotswold and the far south-west specimens? I wonder if DNA analysis would show – whether the local forms had diverged long ago or relatively recently, and whether the genes and the visible diversity match. That would make a fine PhD thesis for someone...

Presumably the Dale collection has some of the Glanville's Wootton Mazarine Blues, but would it have any of the Swallowtails he took in the area 200 years ago? Would these match the British subspecies or the Continental ones?

Great questions – and do keep them coming! There are so many things to explore it's hard to know where to start.

Yes – Large Blues from Somerset and South Devon are on the wish list. There's LOTS of stuff in the Dale collection, and good thinking about the non-Norfolk native Swallowtails – will definitely take a look at these next time.

As for DNA, I'm told we still a few years away from having the technology that will allow efficient DNA analysis.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 27-Feb-13 10:38 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

There's LOTS of stuff in the Dale collection, and good thinking about the non-Norfolk native Swallowtails – will definitely take a look at these next time.

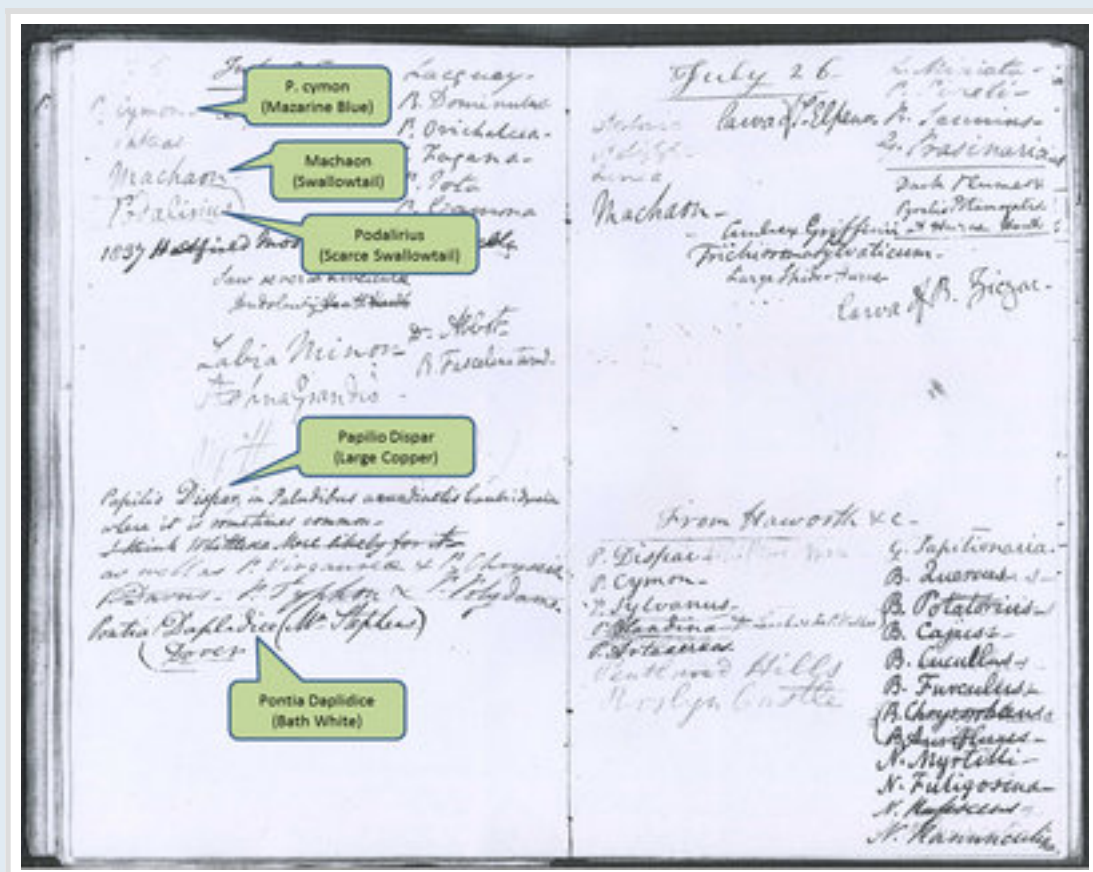
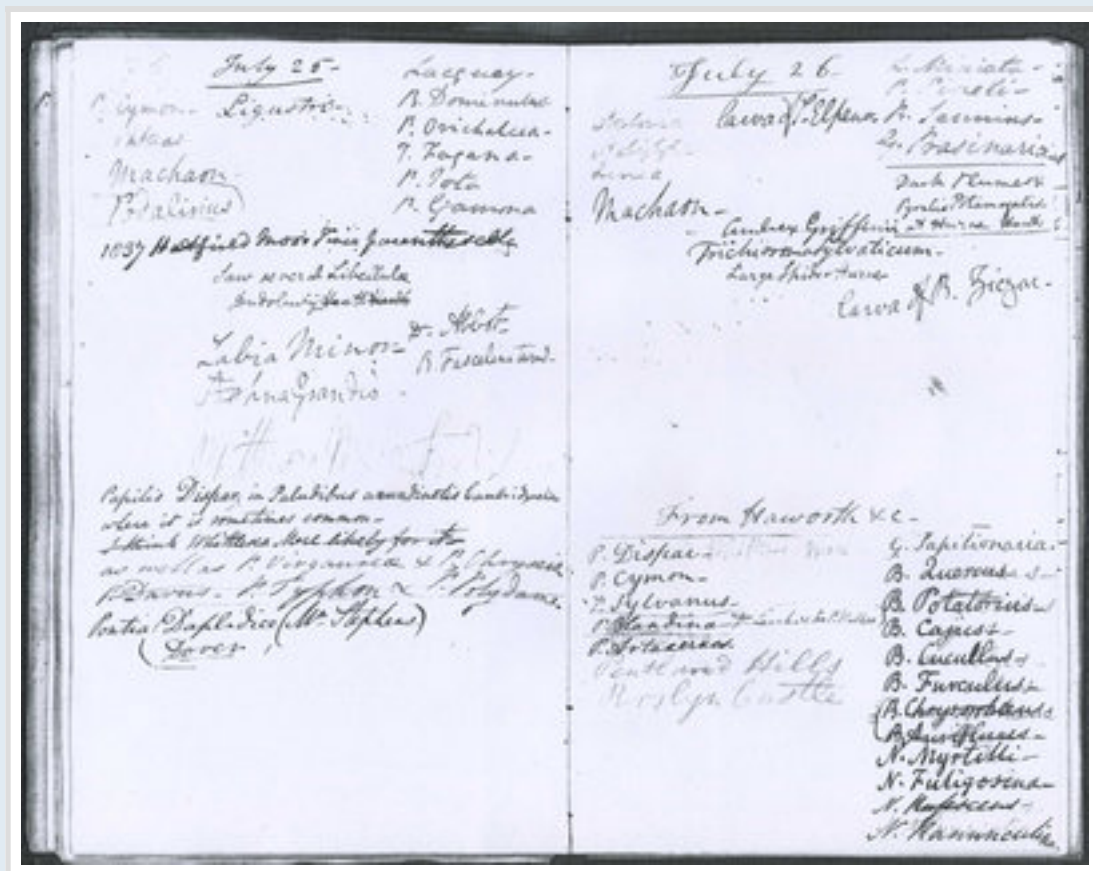
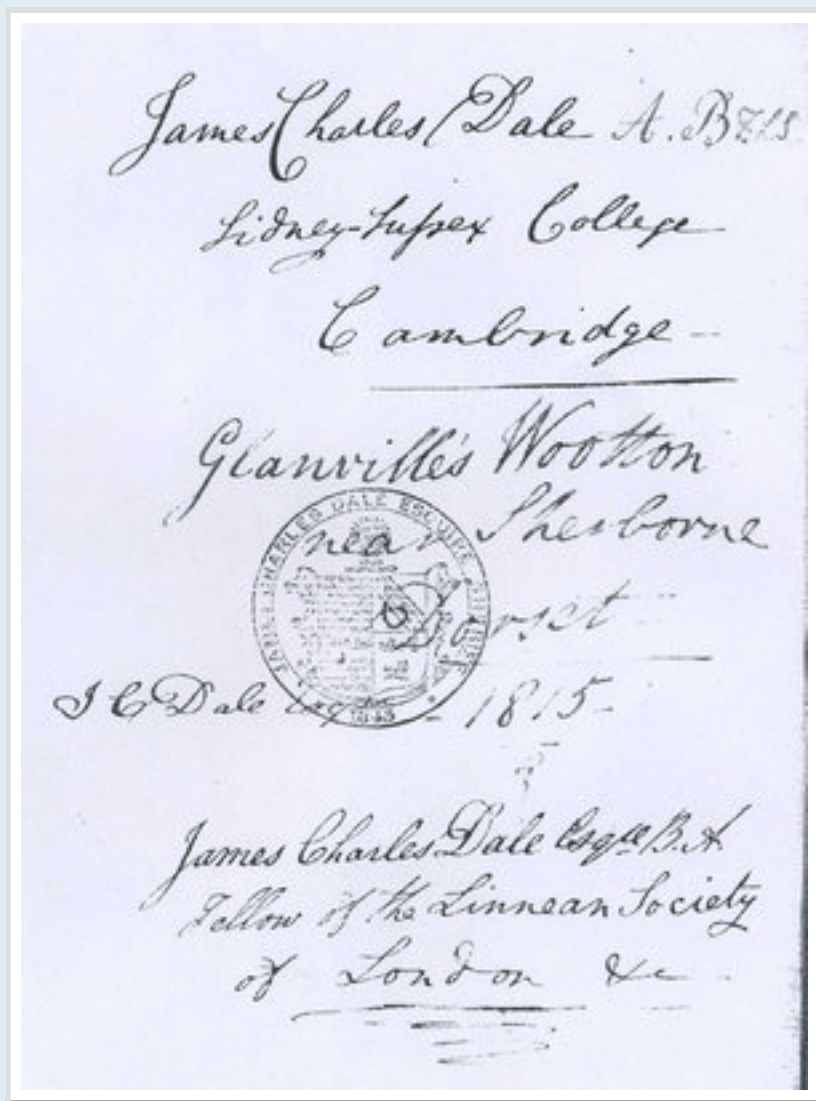
That would be particularly interesting!

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 12-Mar-13 08:47 PM GMT

OUMNH again!

First off, I forgot to examine the Swallowtails – too busy looking at Meadow Brown, Grayling and Green-veined White subspecies! Will have to wait for the next visit. Anyway, I know that Mark will be posting some information on the Dale collection at some point, but wanted to provide a glimpse from one of Dale's diaries that we pored over during our last visit. The 2nd image below is a typical page from this particular diary (for 1815). In the second image of the selected page I've marked up some of the highlights.



Some of the species names have been amended since 1815 (e.g. *Papilio cymon* is now *Cyaniris semiargus* = Mazarine Blue) and, once analysed, it quite clearly demonstrates what you could go out and see on a late July day in 1851! Looking through the diaries, Swallowtail seemed to be commonplace, and this was a fairly unique page in that it contains a confirmed sighting of *Podalirius* (Scarce Swallowtail). In addition to the sighting of *Pontia daplidice* (Bath White) from Dover by Mr. Stephens, the most amazing sentence I read was this (annotations within [] are mine):

"*Papilio Dispar* [Large Copper] in *Paludibus arundinetis* [marshes and reeds] Cambridgeshire where it is sometimes common".

Dale also adds what I think might be "wishful thinking":

"I think Whittlesea Mere [which is hopefully going to be returned to wetland as part of the Great Fen project] likely for it [Large Copper – confirmed in correspondence with Haworth on the following day] as well as P.Vigaureae [Scarce Copper] + P.Chryseis [prior scientific name for Purple-edged Copper], P.Davus, P.Typhon & P.Polydama [forms of Large Heath]".

Every time I visit the museum my head is filled with ideas of what we can learn from its contents! This particular rabbit hole seems to be going deeper and deeper 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 12-Mar-13 08:51 PM GMT

Wow! Scarce Swallowtail.

When was the (verified) last time this species was recorded in the UK?

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 13-Mar-13 01:15 AM GMT

When was the (verified) last time this species was recorded in the UK?

Phil Grey (Still alive? Good friend of Ken Willmott) lived near Swanage and told me many years ago that he once had an unmistakable view of a Scarce Swallowtail flying inland over his head at on the coast in the Swanage area. *(Can't remember where. St.Adhelm's Head perhaps?)*

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 20-Apr-13 10:46 PM GMT

Spring Doings

With home duties complete, and lawn cut, I took the opportunity to spend a couple of hours mid-afternoon to visit a couple of sites where I normally find the early spring species, such as Orange-tip, Speckled Wood, Holly Blue, Green-veined White, Grizzled Skipper and Green Hairstreak. Spring must still be way behind because I didn't find any of these – despite the highest temperatures for some weeks.

The first stop was Woolhampton Gravel Pits, where I found plenty of Brimstone, Peacock and Comma. The Peacock, in particular, were doing very well, with a least a dozen seen – including a courting couple. The courtship consisted of the male moving behind the female and seemingly tapping her on her hindwings with his antennae – reminiscent of a Small Tortoiseshell courtship.



Courting Peacocks

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SLmkFtbXus&feature=youtu.be>



Comma

The site is also renowned for its Grass Snakes, with an entire family hunkered down under a piece of corrugated iron.



Grass Snake

The briefest of visits to Greenham Common turned up a few more Peacock and Comma, but no Grizzled Skipper or Green Hairstreak. The visit reminded me that I'd rescued a couple of Grayling ova last year, so I took a look this evening at the pot of grass I've kept them in, and was very pleased to see them both feeding, one in the typical position at the tip of a blade of Sheep's Fescue.



Grayling larva



Grayling larva

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 20-Apr-13 11:05 PM GMT

Alright Pete? Great shots of the Grayling – they don't seem that cryptic but I suppose that's because I'm not seeing them in context? And what is that courtship behaviour like!? It's a bit like a bloke in a pub going up to an attractive lady, tapping her on the shoulder repeatedly and asking her if she "fancies a bit?" 😏 And that works does it? 😏

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 20-Apr-13 11:12 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel – the larvae are deep within a grass tussock during the day and completely out of sight. However, with the onset of evening, they climb up to the top of a grass stem to feed. They're actually quite easy to spot if you know they're there – although they're only around 8mm long at the mo! Although the brown colouring against a green stem is quite a contrast, what you're not seeing is the brown colouring of nearby dead stems, which they're very camouflaged against.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 25-Apr-13 05:36 PM GMT

The Boys are Back in Town

Oh yes. 'Nuff said 😊



Orange-tip - Woolhampton Gravel Pits - record shot

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 25-Apr-13 08:58 PM GMT

Oh, how I yearn to see this in Swansea. Could be a few more days yet, sadly.

Well done, Pete. First Orange Tips always give a boost to the senses.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 25-Apr-13 10:05 PM GMT

Nice "record" shot Pete 🍷 Still no Orange-tips here in Salisbury but I'll be looking harder over the weekend

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 25-Apr-13 10:37 PM GMT

Thanks chaps. The little blighter gave me the runaround for at least 15 minutes late this afternoon, before settling for about 3 seconds. It's the most exercise I've had all day, so it's not all bad 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 02-May-13 08:39 PM GMT

Home Doings

Probably my busiest butterflying day of the year. Starting at home, the first of two Orange-tips emerged from its pupa, with the other due to make a showing tomorrow. The last shot of this sequence is a close up of the wing scales, clearly showing that the illusion of green is created using a mix of yellow and black scales.



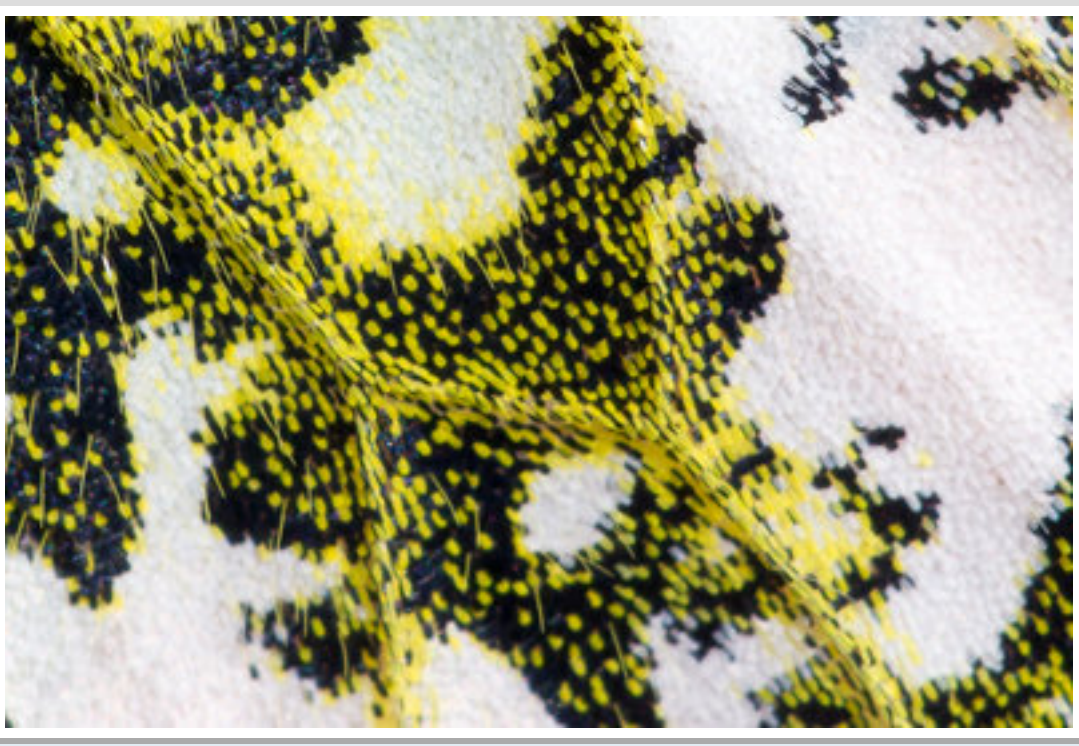
Orange-tip Pupae



Orange-tip (male)



Orange-tip



Orange-tip wing scales

I also checked on some Small Skipper larvae that overwintered in a pot of grass and managed to find this chap snuggled up in a rolled up leaf:



Small Skipper larva

Noar Hill

A quick jaunt to Noar Hill produced a couple of Duke of Burgundy, the first pointed out to me by none other than UKB's Dave Miller 😊 Both were seen in the chalk pits toward the back of the reserve and, after a quick plea, the second obliged by landing on its foodplant – in this case, Cowslip.



Duke of Burgundy

Magdalen Hill Down

I popped into Magdalen Hill Down on the way home and my tally of species for the year almost doubled, seeing my first Grizzled Skippers, Green-veined White, Small White, Large White, Holly Blue and Green Hairstreak for the year! Butterflying days don't get much better than this!



Green Hairstreak

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Mark Colvin, 02-May-13 09:17 PM GMT

Glad to see you had a successful day, Pete.

That's a really cracking shot of the *sylvestris* larva. Great work 😊

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 02-May-13 10:20 PM GMT

That Duke shot is something else Pete 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 02-May-13 10:28 PM GMT

Thanks chaps 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Vince Massimo, 03-May-13 02:11 AM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Butterflying days don't get much better than this!

I entirely agree Pete 😊. With so many species being reported by everyone, the day felt like a turning point in the season.

I think your Small Skipper larva image is spectacular and very elegant . It also looks like it's ready to moult soon (or perhaps explode). I'm sure we'll find out soon.

Cheers,

Vince

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 06-May-13 03:09 PM GMT

Small Skipper

Thanks all. Yes, the Small Skipper did moult into the second instar, and I caught him in the act of moving home. I assume he's now in a larger rolled up leaf somewhere, because he's not in his original home! If he's a needle, the pot of grass he's in is a haystack, so not sure if/when I'll see him next!



Small Skipper larva (2nd instar)

Greenham Common

Although a female Orange-tip was a nice surprise, my visit was primarily to see if Grizzled Skipper had emerged – and they have – although in very small numbers at the moment (I saw 4 in total). A couple of flighty males was followed by a sighting of a freshly emerged female which posed for quite some time. It wasn't long before she was accosted by an amorous male which, despite his best attempts, failed to mate with her. A few Green Hairstreak made for a nice trip – things are definitely moving apace now 😊



Orange-tip (female)



Grizzled Skipper (female)



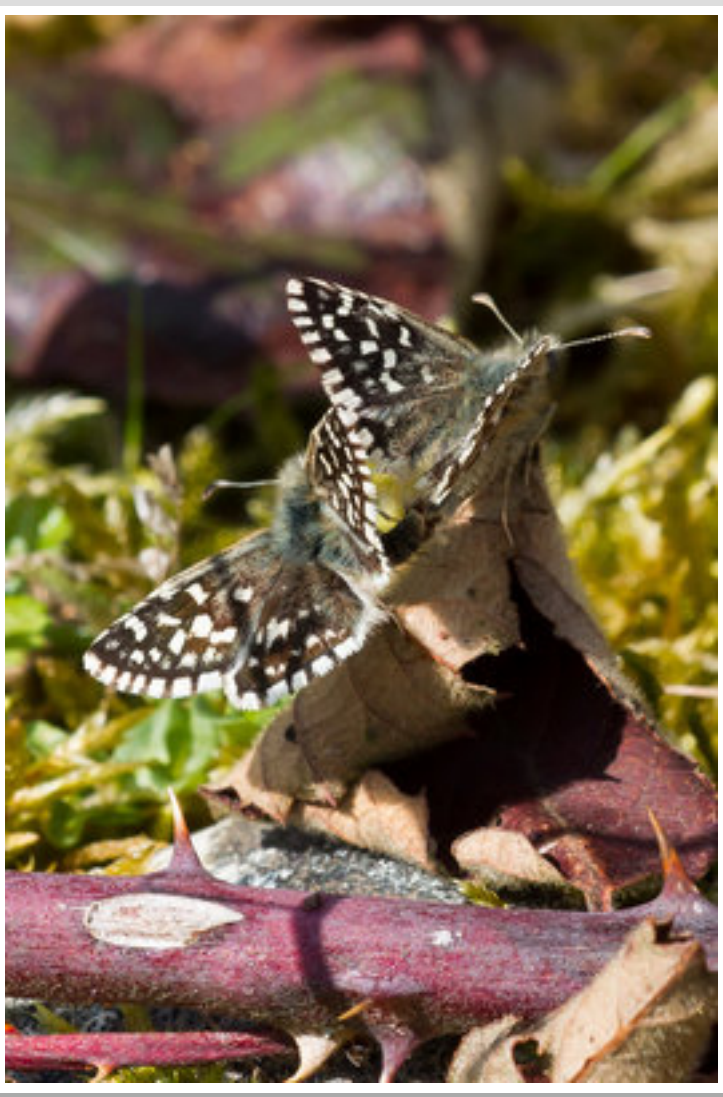
Grizzled Skipper (female)



Grizzled Skipper (female)



Grizzled Skipper (female)



Grizzled Skipper "trying it on" :)

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 10-May-13 09:11 PM GMT

Ova galore

Having complimented Vince on his recent observations and photos of both Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock egg batches, he invited me round yesterday to take a look for myself. I must compliment him more often 😊 This was a real privilege, since I've not found an ovipositing female of these species since I was a boy, in the late 1800s 😊 A walk through a very breezy "Happy Valley" in Coulsdon, Surrey, eventually ended in a very sheltered hollow where a few whites (Orange-tip, Green-veined White and Large White) were flying. Vince has both egg batches marked so that he can monitor progress as the season unfolds. Some images below and thanks again, Vince, for a wonderful morning – and thanks for the cuppa. Top man 😊



Small Tortoiseshell ova



Peacock ova



Peacock ova



Cheers,
- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Vince Massimo, 11-May-13 02:09 AM GMT

It was a pleasure to show you around Pete 😊 . Your images are superb, my personal favourite being the Small Tortoiseshell ova. I noted that, such is the size of the Peacock egg mass, the leaf has become distorted as it struggles to grow normally, although the egg mass has also slightly changed shape as a result. It should be interesting to see how both batches develop because the nettles are still quite small for the time of year (as can be seen by the last photo).

Cheers,

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 12-May-13 04:16 PM GMT

Inkpen

Today I took part in a charity walk around Inkpen near Hungerford, walking up to Gallows Down and Combe Gibbet – erected in 1676 for gibbeting bodies. Lovely stuff 😊 A few whites were on the wing in the sheltered areas, including this Green-veined White (male):



Green-veined White (male)

Back home I checked on the White Admiral larvae, and they've all changed into the penultimate 4th instar, leaving behind the relatively-drab appearance of the 3rd instar in which they overwintered. I have to say, they look more spectacular by the day! Various shots below. The first shows a newly-formed 4th instar larva, together with the old 3rd instar skin, the second shows a 4th instar larva in profile and the last shows a 4th instar larva in the classic "bum in the air" pose. They're all about 1cm long, but all looking very healthy. I just hope the blue tits that are breeding in one of our nestboxes don't find them.



White Admiral larva (4th instar)



White Admiral larva (4th instar)



White Admiral larva (4th instar)

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by ChrisC, 12-May-13 04:19 PM GMT

can you do a picture of the feeding signs please Pete.

Chris

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Hulme, 12-May-13 06:02 PM GMT

Hi Pete,

That last *camilla* cat shot is fantastic. Love the GVW image too.

Best Wishes, Neil

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 12-May-13 06:27 PM GMT

Thanks Neil! Chris - I've just popped out and taken a couple of hurried shots to show the feeding pattern - hope this is what you're after! Will try and get some better shots when I get a chance and the light has returned!



Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 12-May-13 08:35 PM GMT

Brilliant pictures, Pete! I will definitely take the time this summer to track down the foodplants of my local white admirals so I can have a chance of seeing these wonderful caterpillars.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pawpawsaurus, 12-May-13 09:03 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Back home I checked on the White Admiral larvae, and they've all changed into the penultimate 4th instar, leaving behind the relatively-drab appearance of the 3rd instar in which they overwintered. ... They're all about 1cm long, but all looking very healthy.

You've re-inspired me to get back out and have another look for some.

I'd guess that yours are a little ahead of wild larvae, and 1cm is possibly smaller than those which a novice larva hunter like me might be able to find, but if/when the sun reappears and temperatures rise a little I'll be out looking again.

Paul

Re: Pete Eeles

by ChrisC, 12-May-13 10:19 PM GMT

thanks Pete. just the job. any other hints for searching? sun/ shade, is there a preference to height in the wild? host tree the honeysuckle is climbing?

Chris

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 12-May-13 10:34 PM GMT

It's been a few years since I visited Coombe Gibbet but the last time I saw Willow Tits there. Cracking shots of the "cats" 📷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 12-May-13 10:35 PM GMT

Thanks all.

Chris - this thread has some thoughts: viewtopic.php?f=16&t=6810&p=70114#p70114

I've found females ovipositing on Honeysuckle from a foot off the ground to head height, but know others have seen ova being laid 20 feet from the ground on at least one occasion. I don't believe that the "host" plant on which the honeysuckle is climbing is a factor. You definitely need honeysuckle growing in shade or semi-shade, but somewhere the females would normally be flying, such as honeysuckle climbing on shrubs below the tree canopy in a forest ride, rather than the middle of dense woodland.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 18-May-13 08:04 PM GMT

Far-from-Dingy Skippers

I managed to get a couple of hours in at Greenham Common around 11am, and the intermittent sun was just perfect for photography with any butterfly trying its best to catch what little sun there was. My target was Dingy Skipper, since I've yet to catch up with them this year. I saw my first about 10 yards from where I parked, and quite a few more throughout the morning. As many others have commented, a freshly-emerged Dingy Skipper is anything but dingy! They're always quite variable in terms of the ground colour, but I wasn't prepared for what I saw - something I first witnessed a few years ago at a private site near Stockbridge Down - an almost-white Dingy Skipper, and my first aberration of the year. Its appearance was most striking when sat next to a female Dingy Skipper that it was courting. Dingy Skipper were by far the most numerous butterflies, with a few Grizzled Skipper also flying. Green Hairstreak was noticeable by its absence.



Dingy Skipper (male)



Dingy Skipper (male)



Dingy Skipper (male), aberration



Dingy Skipper (male, aberration and female)



Grizzled Skipper (male)

Back home and a welcome visitor to the garden in the shape of a female Green-veined White, which was quite happy posing on the Forget-me-not.



Green-veined White (female)

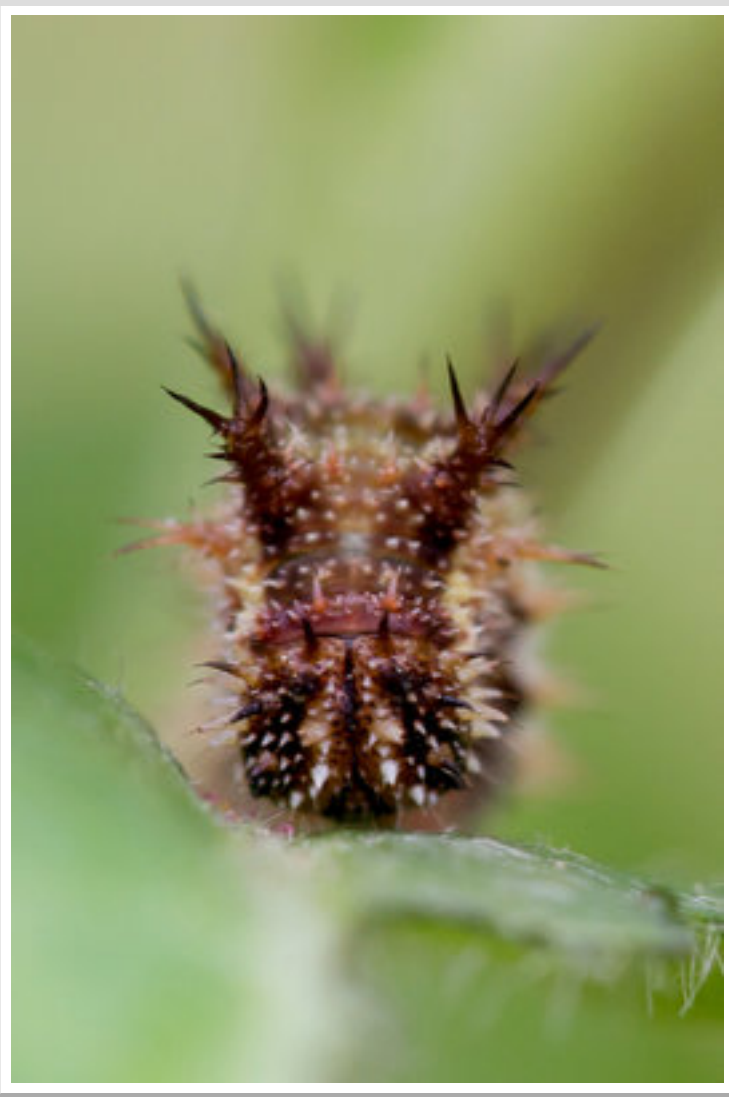


Green-veined White (female)

All of the livestock I'm rearing is doing really well – especially the White Admiral larvae which are in their penultimate instar now, and filling out quite rapidly!



White Admiral larva – penultimate instar



... with a face that only a mother could love :)

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 18-May-13 08:15 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

... with a face that only a mother could love ...

... or a Brachen demon:



(picture from http://www.growingguides.com/buffy/A77_EIO_13b.htm)

More great pictures, Pete! 😊

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 18-May-13 09:12 PM GMT

That's quite an individual, Pete.

I never knew Dingies could exhibit such aberrations (the Green Veined White shot is excellent too).

Interesting that the right forewing is 'cloudy' but the left one is much better defined in keeping with the normal form.

As you say, part cloudy conditions can be a bonus for photographers.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 18-May-13 09:17 PM GMT

"padfield" wrote:

... or a Brachen demon:

Very good! Nature got there first though – as it has with most things 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 18-May-13 09:52 PM GMT

Is the Dingy a named aberrant or is it down to temp during development? Cracking shots and the Green Veined is stunning, I don't think I've ever seen such a yellow individual before 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 18-May-13 11:49 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel,

Individuals that exhibit (possibly extensive) patches that appear "bleached", like this Dingy Skipper, are referred to as pathological forms, which occur more commonly in some species than others. Looking at the literature, the Meadow Brown seems particularly susceptible (and I suspect many members will have come across an individual that has one of the four wings paler than the others). It's unclear of the root cause, but a deformation of the scales during development has been suggested by Ken Wilmott [Entomologist's Record and Journal of Variation, Vol. 109, 1997, p.148].

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 23-May-13 10:41 PM GMT

Yesterday (Wednesday 22nd May) was definitely my "busiest" butterflying day of the year ... here's why:

Bentley Wood

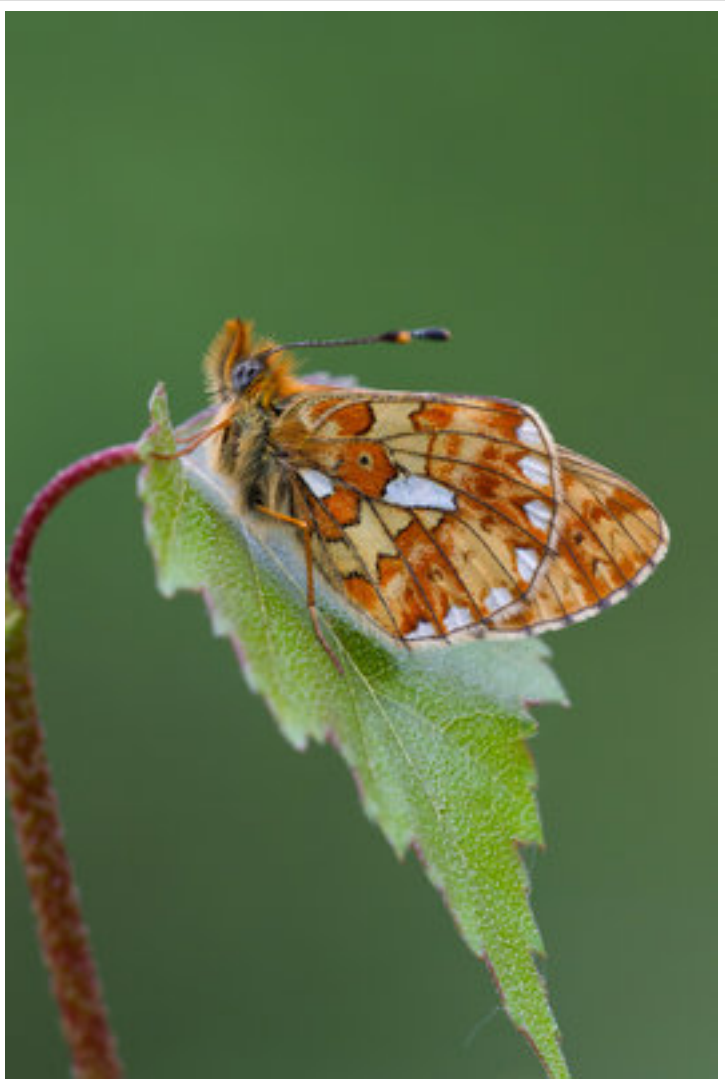
With a promise of some sun (that didn't materialise until late afternoon!) I decided to head off to Bentley Wood in the morning to see how the Pearl-bordered Fritillary were doing, knowing that a few had already been seen this year. Despite the heavy cloud, I had one of those rare moments, where within 10 feet of setting foot in the Eastern clearing, I spied my first male PBF with wings open, clearly trying to catch the few rays that were trying to break their way through the cloud. This was clearly a good omen. While a couple of other visitors took photos, another male PBF was found and, with a breeze picking up, this critter decided to keep his wings closed, revealing the lovely white pearls from which this species gets its name. It flitted from grass stem to Silver Birch and, at one point, sat atop some Bluebells. By this point I had well over 100 photos, of which the following 4 are acceptable 😊



Pearl-bordered Fritillary (male)



Pearl-bordered Fritillary (male)



Pearl-bordered Fritillary (male)



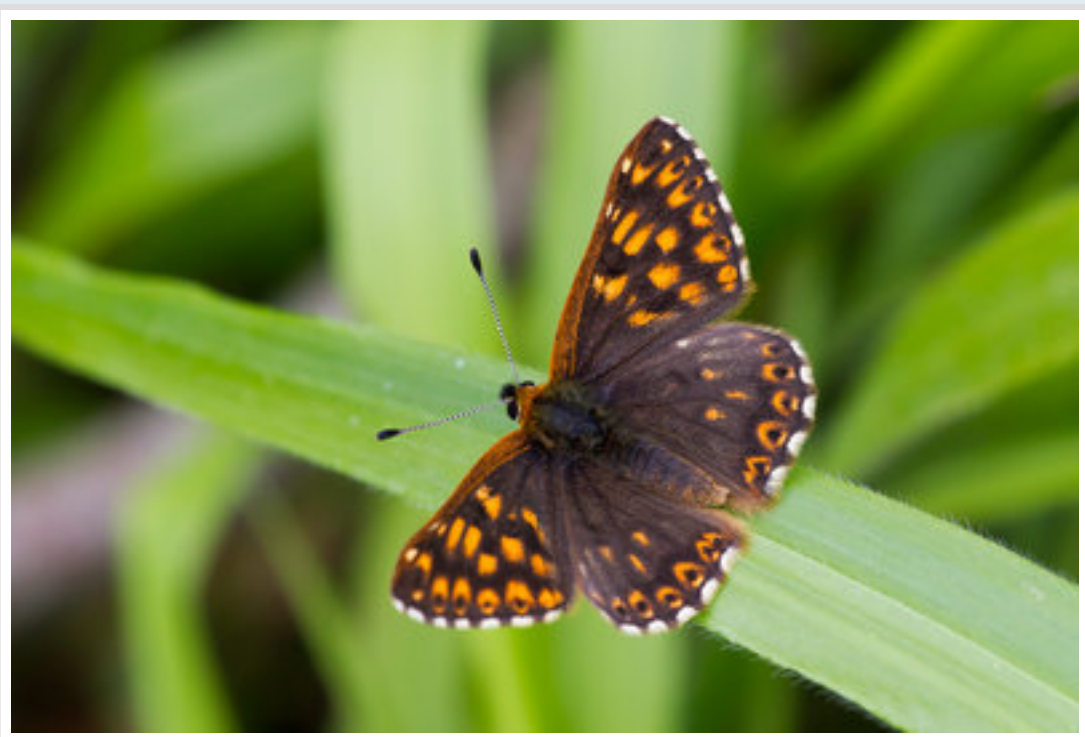
Pearl-bordered Fritillary (male)

I then returned back to the first male who had now been left in peace, and he also had his wings closed. As I knelt down to get a photo of his underside, the clouds parted and the briefest of sunny spells caused him to take to the air, travel 5 feet away, directly to a female that had clearly just emerged and that was completely invisible to me on a nearby Bramble and, without any courtship whatsoever, mating took place right in front of my eyes – I had a front row seat 😊 How the male found that female so quickly was quite staggering, and I can only assume that a newly-emerged female must give off some kind of pheromonal signal. This all happened at 0945. With the clouds now back, the happy couple sat with their wings closed for at least an hour before another shaft of sunlight caused them to open their wings – a really quite beautiful sight. At 1150 they were still there, but I needed to move on given the day ahead and the schedule I was keeping!



Hampshire Duke site

I then went to a site that the Hampshire and Isle of Wight branch has had cleared of scrub and that's near to what I believe is the largest woodland Duke of Burgundy colony in the country, and where the larval foodplant is Primrose. I was really pleased to find 5 Duke of Burgundy in this new area, 4 very fresh and all male, suggesting that this species is just emerging here. The same site was alive with whites when the sun came out.



Duke of Burgundy (male)



Green-veined White (male)

BBC

I eventually headed off to Oxford to meet up with John Brown, an award-winning BBC photographer (he filmed the "Madagascar" series, for example – see his excellent website at <http://www.johnbrownimages.co.uk>) and thoroughly nice chap, who's been filming footage for a Springwatch special on Butterflies and Moths, currently scheduled for July (the date may change, of course!). A few weeks ago I got a call to ask if I had any livestock that John could use for filming immature stages. Although John didn't have time (given the deadlines) to film the spectacular White Admiral larvae I've been rearing, he did make use of some other livestock I provided. But the main reason for visiting was take ALL of the livestock that John had been provided off his hands, so that they get successfully reared through to (hopefully) fulfill a purposeful life.

With livestock safely packed away, I then drove back home to sort out the livestock and grab some tea. I've never had so many species "on the go" at any one time, and the garden looks like a zoo with sleeves on quite a few trees and bushes, and lots of potted foodplants also in use, but am confident that everything will get through to adulthood ok. I then set off for a Hampshire and Isle of Wight branch main committee meeting. I eventually got home at around 11pm, absolutely shattered and absolutely elated 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Mark Colvin, 23-May-13 10:53 PM GMT

Nice work, Pete.

I particularly like the close-up of the male PBF resting on birch; and as for the mating pair ...

I'd say a rather good day 😊😊😊

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Pete Eeles

by millerd, 23-May-13 11:11 PM GMT

Wonderful PBF pictures, Pete. The intensity of the colour when they are new is amazing.

Dave

Re: Pete Eeles

by Nick Broomer, 23-May-13 11:20 PM GMT

Sounds like you had a great day, although a hectic one, but well worth it, with some lovely photos.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Vince Massimo, 23-May-13 11:32 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Pete 😊. I particularly like the mating pair and am looking forward to the results of your latest livestock intake. No harm in buying a lottery ticket for this Saturday either.

Cheers,

Vince

Re: Pete Eeles

by jonhd, 24-May-13 12:23 AM GMT

Hi Pete,

Jon here – we met at the Dukes site. They certainly were dark, weren't they? I've compared your photo, and the ones I took, and they seem to be tonally similar, but darker than the Duke pictures I took last year at the same site... The chocolatey-brown is not far removed from H000000! Any idea why?

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pauline, 24-May-13 08:44 PM GMT

Just seen your PBF mating on the Hants site Pete – smashing shots!

Re: Pete Eeles

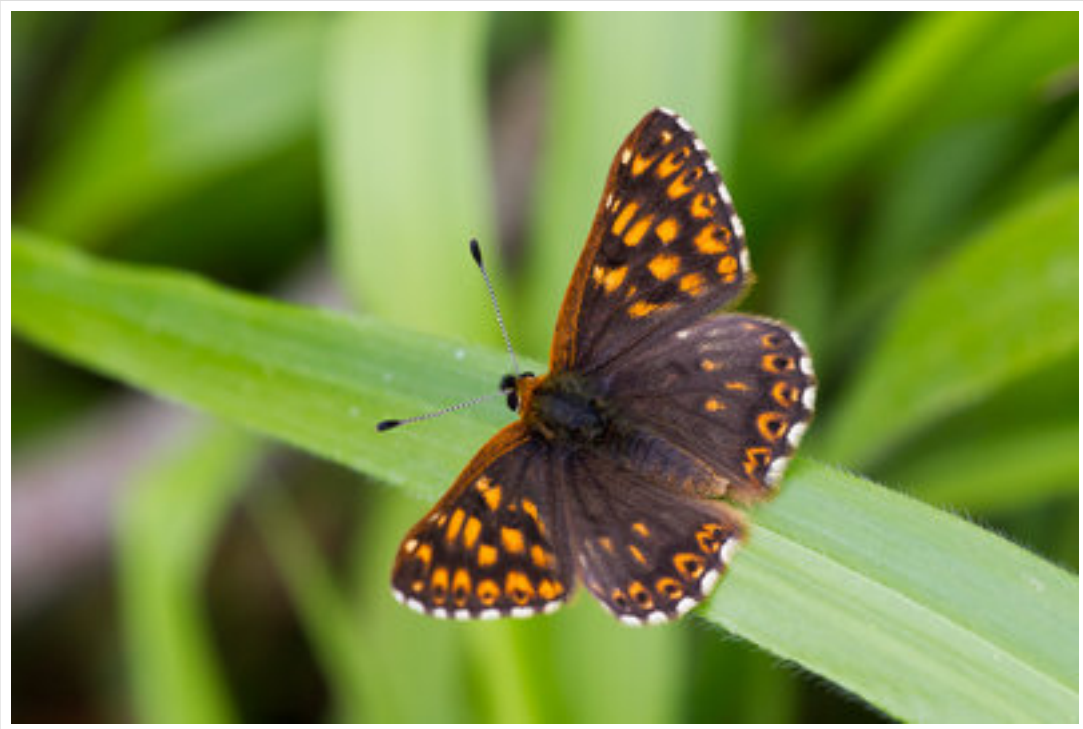
by Pete Eeles, 24-May-13 11:27 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline – and good to meet you John!

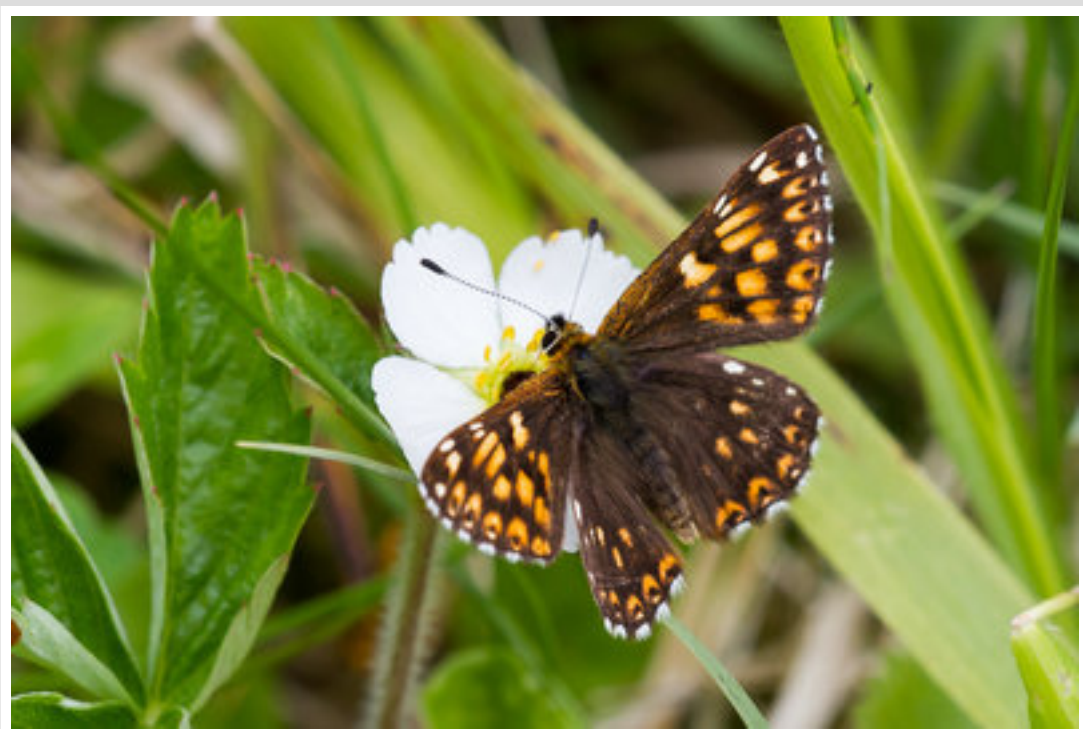
Yes, the Dukes are very variable aren't they – if these are darker than average, I'm not sure why this would be, since the colour is (obviously!) determined by the genetic makeup and isn't environmentally-controlled. Here are shots of the few I found:



Darkest



Average



Brightest

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by jonhd, 25-May-13 11:43 PM GMT

Pete,

re

I'm not sure why this would be, since the colour is (obviously!) determined by the genetic makeup and isn't environmentally-controlled.

pardon my ignorance, but I thought temperature (and other environmental factors) does affect colour & markings?... In particular, during pupation.

Jon

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 25-May-13 11:56 PM GMT

Of course you're right John, the appearance (and every other aspect) of an individual is determined by its genes and its environment. However, I believe that the environment only has an effect on wing colour if there are temperature "extremes" just prior to (or during, or just after) pupation, something a few breeders have reproduced consistently in captivity to produce a series of aberrations.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 26-May-13 10:25 PM GMT

Cracking shots Pete, hopefully I'll be able to try and find a few next weekend but I'm off to the Isle of Black tomorrow for a few days, managed to slip that one past the wife 😊 Unfortunately I haven't seen any records of them yet 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 26-May-13 11:13 PM GMT

Greenham Common

I managed to get out for a couple of hours around lunchtime, and was immediately greeted by my first Small Heath of the year as I stepped out of the car, which was a welcome sight. I knew that most species would be buzzing about with little opportunity for photos at this time of day, although I did manage to see the 3 species I was expecting - including Dingy Skipper (22), Grizzled Skipper (8) and Green Hairstreak (4). I also saw a single Peacock and also a female Orange-tip. Having recently read Mike Slater's excellent "Field Class Lesson 4 - Finding Dingy Skipper Eggs" (download on this page: <http://www.warwickshire-butterflies.org.uk/downloads.asp>), I decided to take a look at some likely spots, since I've never seen the egg before. I first looked for a hollow, then for some bare ground inside the hollow, then for some Bird-foot Trefoil hanging over the bare ground and, blow me down, I immediately found my first Dingy Skipper egg! I was hooked, and looked for more, but found none in another 30 minutes of searching. Beginner's luck I guess! I'll definitely be taking another look at some point, and marked the egg I found since it was still pale green, and not the distinctive orange that it becomes after about 5 days.



Small Heath



Green Hairstreak



Grizzled Skipper



Dingy Skipper egg

This evening I took a look at some of the livestock being reared through. A first instar Orange-tip larva, around 2mm long, was showing the distinctive secretions on the tips of its hairs. But what I really wanted to get a photo of were the Grayling larvae, which are now about 15mm long and in their penultimate instar. The trouble is, they drop to the ground with the slightest disturbance. And so I brought their pot indoors, having removed the netting that protects them, and left them in darkness for a while. They eventually moved up from their daytime home, hunkered deep down in the grass tussock, to the tips of the stems of Fescue on which they feed. I also released a fresh Poplar Hawkmoth that had emerged from a pupa I was given.



Orange-tip first instar larva



Grayling larva (penultimate instar)



Grayling larva (penultimate instar)



Grayling larva (penultimate instar)



Poplar Hawkmoth (male)

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Maximus, 28-May-13 09:31 PM GMT

Hi Pete, Sorry to hijack your personal diary but we have two Garlic Mustard plants and Orange Tip females have laid four eggs on each plant! Is there any way to ensure all larvae survive when the eggs hatch, given their cannibalistic tendencies? They have probably been on the plants now for about a week.
Mike

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 28-May-13 10:03 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

Orange-tip are possibly the most cannibalistic larvae we have, and the only way to ensure that all larvae survive is to put them on different plants (at least, different fronds of the same plant). If it were me, I'd remove 3 of the 4 eggs (carefully) and place them in separate containers until they hatch and then gently move the larvae (using a fine paintbrush) to another plant.

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pauline, 29-May-13 04:06 PM GMT

They are great photos of the immature stages Pete – and a Dingy Skipper egg!!! You must have better eyesight than me 😄😄

Re: Pete Eeles

by Goldie M, 29-May-13 08:48 PM GMT

Love the photo's of your Duke Pete, I took a shot of a Duke at Gaits Barrow that also seemed dark to me. The weather had been cold except for one or two days, in fact we thought this year there wouldn't be any. Goldie 😊



Re: Pete Eeles

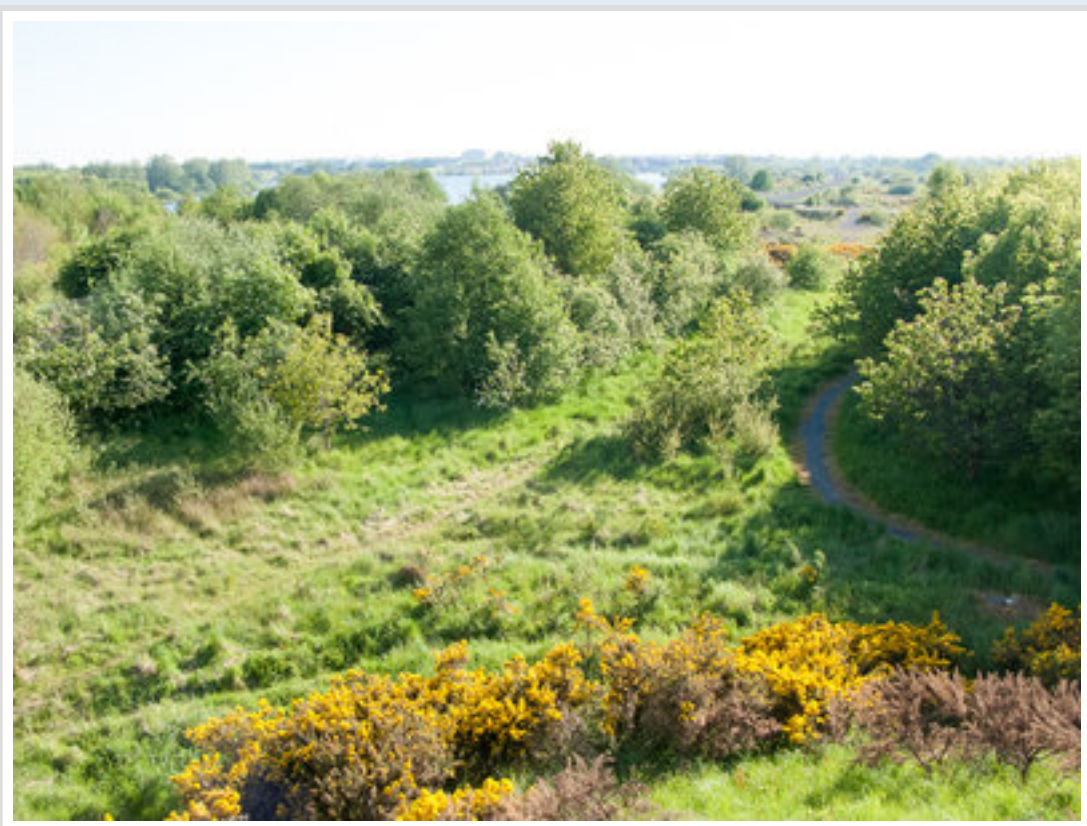
by Pete Eeles, 31-May-13 11:34 AM GMT

Thanks for the kind comments all 😊

Ireland - Part 1

A hastily-arranged business trip required me to visit Dublin on Wednesday and, given the glorious weather predicted, I also packed my camera, hoping that I might be able to grab some time in the evening to visit some local spots before flying home. Given a series of logistical mishaps, I ended up staying over until Thursday and decided to take the day off, heading home Thursday evening instead.

One species I've been desperate to see is the newly-identified Cryptic Wood White, which was originally "lumped" with Real's Wood White and, prior to that, considered merely a subspecies of Wood White. Seeing this species would complete my list of all resident butterflies in the British Isles. I'd previously corresponded with Ian Rippey, the well-respected butterfly recorder for Northern Ireland, who was extremely generous with his time and knowledge. The only regret I have of my trip is not meeting Ian face-to-face; something I hope to rectify in the near future. Based on Ian's advice, I drove from Dublin up to Craigavon Lakes in Northern Ireland, moving from the land of Euros and kilometres, to one of pounds and miles 😊 The scenery was quite stunning as I drove past the Mountains of Mourne in County Down and the weather was superb, which gave a special glow to this Emerald Isle 😊



Craigavon Lakes - a view from the road



Craigavon Lakes – looking back to the road



Craigavon Lakes – looking further ahead and between the 2 lakes

Arriving on site, I saw my first and unmistakable Cryptic Wood White within the first 20 feet! And another, and another. I was so engrossed watching these delicate gems that I didn't venture more than 100m from where I was parked, and missed out on a walk around the lakes and even more *juvernicae* 😊 But I was perfectly happy where I was! After a couple of hours I'd pretty much seen everything on show, and managed to get shots of male, female and several courting couples (including a video). Although I didn't see a mating pair, I did watch an ovipositing female and managed to get a photo of the resulting egg.



Cryptic Wood White (male)



Cryptic Wood White (female)



Cryptic Wood White (courting couple, female on left)



Cryptic Wood White (courting couple, female on left)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blpiQHdeCV4>



Cryptic Wood White (ovum)

I must admit, the only real difference I noticed between this species and the Wood White is that it was quite happy flying over open ground, meaning that it would turn up literally anywhere, and I can see why it's so widespread across Ireland.

An added bonus, given my winter pastime of sorting out the various subspecies descriptions (with Guy Padfield's incredible help, and encouraged by Mark Colvin's enthusiasm!), it was great to see in the flesh (or is it "in the chitin"?!) Irish subspecies of Green-veined White (ssp. *britannica*) and Orange-tip (ssp. *hibernica*) also. Unfortunately, these critters weren't hanging around, and I only managed to get a single shot of the Green-veined White, although it most definitely conformed to the subspecies description, being much darker in colour than typical *napi*.



Green-veined White (female) ssp. britannica

I saw about 20 Cryptic Wood White in this small area in total, together with 2 Small Heath, 4 Green-veined White, 2 Orange-tip (both male), 4 Large White and 26 Orange-tip ova (all laid on Cuckooflower). This was my first "proper" trip to Ireland (albeit brief) and I'm absolutely hooked, and will definitely be returning; the scenery is stunning and I got a real sense of "space", even when driving along the roads between towns. With the end to a superb day, and promising weather for the Thursday, I was wondering what to do. To be continued 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 31-May-13 12:13 PM GMT

Fascinating stuff, Pete. We rarely get any information from Ireland now that Dave McCormick seems to have stopped posting.

I look forward to the next instalment.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 31-May-13 11:28 PM GMT

Ireland - Part 2

On Thursday I was torn between seeing Irish subspecies of Marsh Fritillary, Common Blue and Small Copper, which would have had me stay in the east of Ireland, or visiting the unique Burren on the west coast of Ireland, home to the *baynesi* subspecies of Dingy Skipper, and a location I've long-wanted to see. The Burren won out in the end, because I really wanted to make the most of my trip, and see as much of Ireland as I could! Setting off from the outskirts of Dublin at 0630, I passed through more glorious countryside as I headed west on, I have to say, some of the nicest roads I've driven on - with hardly another car in sight. It didn't feel long before I was entering County Galway, before taking a route south-west, into County Clare, home of the Burren. This massive limestone outcrop can be seen from many miles away, and I eventually homed in on the small village of Boston, just north of Lough Bunny, for the simple reason that it resides within the Burren National Park and many of the photos in Adrian Riley's excellent *British and Irish Butterflies* were taken here.



On the edge of The Burren

Getting out of the car I spied a Green-veined White and, while not in particularly good condition, was in marked contrast to the individual I'd seen the day before – this one being much paler in colour and what I would consider "normal". The conclusion is that the *britannica* subspecies isn't found all over Ireland (although some authors suggest that it is) and that Verity's original description of this subspecies, which states that the darker form is found only in Northern Ireland and Scotland, is correct. Although jumping to conclusions on the basis of two photos is a bit much! But I shall take another look at the specimens at Oxford University Museum the next chance I get to correlate with Verity.



Green-veined White (female)

My first good look at the limestone pavement stretching away for, literally, miles into the distance was quite something – a feeling of being on another planet for sure! I quickly learned to watch my step as multi-tonne boulders would shift under foot. The cracks between the slabs were home to a multitude of flowering plants including Bird's-foot Trefoil, the larval foodplant of the Dingy Skipper subspecies found here, as well as several orchids. It may sound strange, but in the blazing sun some of the grass-filled areas with their rich flora reminded me more of an alpine meadow! I can see why this region is considered the butterfly hotspot of Ireland.



The Burren



The Burren Flora

After an hour or so of finding the right sheltered spots, I eventually found what I had come to see – the Dingy Skipper *ssp. baynesi*, that is found only here on the whole planet! According to its description, "Ground colour brownish-black, light markings very pale grey, often approaching white". I managed to find a dozen or so individuals over a 3 hour period (I was too busy taking in the view!) and the last I saw (and the last figured below) certainly conformed to its description and really stood out! The habitat seemed ideally suited for them – with plenty of nectar sources and larval foodplant, and plenty of bare rock to warm up on.



Dingy Skipper ssp. baynesi



Dingy Skipper ssp. baynesi



Dingy Skipper ssp. baynesi



Dingy Skipper ssp. baynesi

As well as the Dingy Skipper, there were several Wall in the area, although they were all very flighty and never settled with their wings open given the bright sunlight. The occasional Wood White would also flutter by and I also managed to see a single Brimstone *ssp. gravesi*, albeit in very poor condition. Just as I headed back to the car, a bright orange butterfly flew right past, which I initially thought was another Wall. On settling, however, it showed itself to be an immaculate female Pearl-bordered Fritillary, capping off a most excellent trip and certainly not bad for a last minute change of plan!



Wall (male)



Pearl-bordered Fritillary (female)

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 31-May-13 11:33 PM GMT

Cracking reports Pete and some cracking butterflies 🍷 Perhaps the subspecies of Green Veined White should be renamed the ashy white as it's more grey than white and that Pearl – it almost leaps out of the screen 😲

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 09-Jun-13 05:57 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel!

Greenham Common

Having spent the last week in the US on business, and having missed all the good weather, I had to get out for a couple of hours today to restore my sanity! I again visited my local patch at Greenham Common and was relieved to see that the Common Blue are out in really good numbers, having crashed at the end of last year. I must have seen 30+ male, 6 female and a couple of mating pairs.



Common Blue (male)



Common Blue (female)



Common Blue (mating pair, male at top)

I then went to re-locate the Dingy Skipper egg that I'd found over a week ago now, and couldn't even find the scrape it was in! Since it was the only egg I found within a 30 minute period, I was rather gutted, wondering if I'd ever manage to find another. The area of the common I visit is carpeted in Bird's-foot Trefoil, the larval foodplant, and it did feel like I'd be searching for a needle in a haystack. However, putting the simple guidance of a) Find a hollow/sheltered piece of ground, b) Look for bare earth and c) Look for the foodplant growing out over the bare earth, paid dividends, since I managed to find 5 very conspicuous orange eggs in the space of 10 minutes! One was found right next to a path, and 2 eggs were found in the same scrape. In the second figure below, you can see the scrape at the bottom of the picture. The next picture shows the scrape itself and you can just make out an egg toward the top right.



Carpets of Bird's-foot Trefoil



Scrape at bottom of picture



A close up of the scrape

I then went back to the car to add some extension tubes, allowing me to get some half-decent shots of the eggs. Sanity has been restored 😊



Dingy Skipper ovum



Dingy Skipper ovum



Dingy Skipper ovum



Dingy Skipper ovum

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 09-Jun-13 06:37 PM GMT

Really interesting stuff, Pete!

I've been studying your *baynesi*, because it struck me at first that this bright grey/white was found on most fresh dingy skippers – and yet they did look different. When I compared the patterns it became apparent that a major difference is the submarginal, wavy, grey band, beyond the dark postdiscal band. In your *baynesi*, and especially in your second picture, that band is complete and well-developed, while in most dingies from elsewhere it is broken and poorly developed. I wonder if this is what makes *baynesi* look so exotic.

Love the dingy eggs too. That is something I must try (except for the go back and get different lenses bit! 😊).

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Mark Colvin, 09-Jun-13 07:01 PM GMT

Great work, Pete.

Really pleased to see you struck Irish gold 😊😊😊

I particularly like the close-ups of the eggs (must get my macro lens out) and the shots of *baynesi*.

Enjoy your next trip.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 09-Jun-13 07:07 PM GMT

"padfield" wrote:

I've been studying your *baynesi*, because it struck me at first that this bright grey/white was found on most fresh dingy skippers – and yet they did look different. When I compared the patterns it became apparent that a major difference is the submarginal, wavy, grey band, beyond the dark postdiscal band. In your *baynesi*, and especially in your second picture, that band is complete and well-developed, while in most dingies from elsewhere it is broken and poorly developed. I wonder if this is what makes *baynesi* look so exotic.

Thanks Guy – much appreciated! The *baynesi* moniker has been bugging me because, like you, the photos I took didn't seem that different from other Dingies I've seen, and I've not had a chance myself to do any "deep" analysis ... so really appreciate your observations here!

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 09-Jun-13 07:21 PM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

Great work, Pete.

Really pleased to see you struck Irish gold 😊😊😊

I particularly like the close-ups of the eggs (must get my macro lens out) and the shots of *baynesi*.

Enjoy your next trip.

Kindest regards. Mark

Thanks Mark!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 10-Jun-13 08:08 PM GMT

Common Blue Fest

Given the relatively-poor weather today, I decided to take another brief trip to Greenham Common, in order to find some roosting Common Blue (I couldn't imagine they'd be flying!). I must admit, I do like the variability of the female Common Blues and the brief moments of brightness allowed them to open their wings, but remain fairly motionless otherwise. As I was leaving the site, everything came to life as the sun finally broke through. A selection of images below.



Common Blue roosting (female, female, male)



Common Blue roosting (male, male)



Common Blue roosting (female, female)



Common Blue (male)



Common Blue (female)



Common Blue (female)



Common Blue roosting (male, male, female, male, male)

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 10-Jun-13 08:15 PM GMT

Impressive images, Pete.

Yes, the female Common Blue is a much under-rated butterfly but I'm struggling to think of another that is so randomly variable wherever it is encountered.

I'm pleased to say that my experiences this year have shown that this species is out and present in considerable numbers. Given the recent prolonged dry spell, all it needs is for a dose of rainfall to replenish those larval foodplants.....and that is precisely what is forecast.

Happy days (for once)!

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 10-Jun-13 11:01 PM GMT

Love the shot of the collection of 5 blues 😊 I haven't seen any really brown females for a few years now. When I first started I was always concerned about misidentifying female Brown Argus/Common. But the last couple of years all the female I've seen have had at least a smattering of blue on them, could this be an environmental/climatic variation?

Have a goodun

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 13-Jun-13 10:46 PM GMT

Another Birth!

Seriously inspired by Tony Moore's images of a Dingy Skipper larva emerging (see <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=16&t=6864>), I noticed a couple of days ago that an egg I've been looking after (rescued from the path over which it was laid and in serious danger of getting squished) had also darkened. Noticing that the shell was starting to be eaten from the top, I quickly assembled my gear to see if I could emulate Tony. In the images below, I've put the time of the image in its title to give some sense of elapsed time. The first sequence shows the larva eating off the top of the egg. Watching this through the viewfinder was quite something – my own personal Springwatch 😊



14:44



14:52



16:06



16:15



16:19



17:03



17:29



17:39



17:40



17:41



17:44



17:49

Like Tony says, it takes an age for the larva to eat off the top of the egg, only for it to emerge in less than a minute! With the larva now "testing" to see if his/her head would fit through the hole, I quickly reset the camera to capture the final moments of emergence.



17:57:48



17:59:38



17:59:51



18:00:08



18:00:20



18:00:47



18:01:08



18:01:19

Of these sequences, my 2 favourite photos are below.



Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-13 11:49 PM GMT

Cracking shots Pete 😊 - I was scrolling down really quickly but it didn't quite form a "movie" 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Vince Massimo, 14-Jun-13 01:59 AM GMT

Absolutely amazing Pete 😊 . I was pleased to see that the little fella emerged at a civilised hour.

The quality of the images actually makes you forget that the subject is only around the size of this full stop .

I also think we're going to need a bigger Species Album 😊

Regards,

Vince

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 15-Jun-13 08:47 AM GMT

Thanks guys.

"Vince Massimo" wrote:

I was pleased to see that the little fella emerged at a civilised hour.

Indeed! Tony's dedication, staying up until 5am, is quite admirable!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 15-Jun-13 09:53 AM GMT

Back on the Green Isle

I was fortunate to be working in Dublin at the end of last week, and managed to spend a chunk of time at North Bull Island Nature Reserve, off the coast of Dublin. I didn't know the place existing until I looked at the sightings page for the Republic of Ireland (<http://www.butterflyireland.com/RECORDS.aspx>) and saw that 298 Marsh Fritillary (*f. hibernica*) were seen on transect on 7th June. Clearly, there had been a population explosion and so I got in touch with David Nash (co-author of the excellent "Ireland's Butterflies: A Review" and also a former President of the esteemed Dublin Naturalists' Field Club) who gave me some pointers. Despite an unpromising weather forecast, I was on site at 0930 on Wednesday morning, having landed at Dublin airport at 0815. As I made my way to the favoured spot for Marsh Fritillary I came across several Garden Tiger moth larvae ("woolly bears") on the paths between the sand dunes, as well as several Small Heath. I was also on the lookout for female Common Blue to see if they conformed to the description of *ssp. mariscolore* where the female has extensive patches of blue, with large and bright orange marginal spots. The distribution of this subspecies is a subject of debate, but the few females I saw were quite "normal" to my eyes.



Common Blue (female)

I eventually reached an area where masses of Devil's-bit Scabious (the larval foodplant of the Marsh Fritillary) grew, interspersed by Marsh Orchids. In fact, I've never seen so much of the stuff; every square metre contained a good number of plants.



North Bull Island

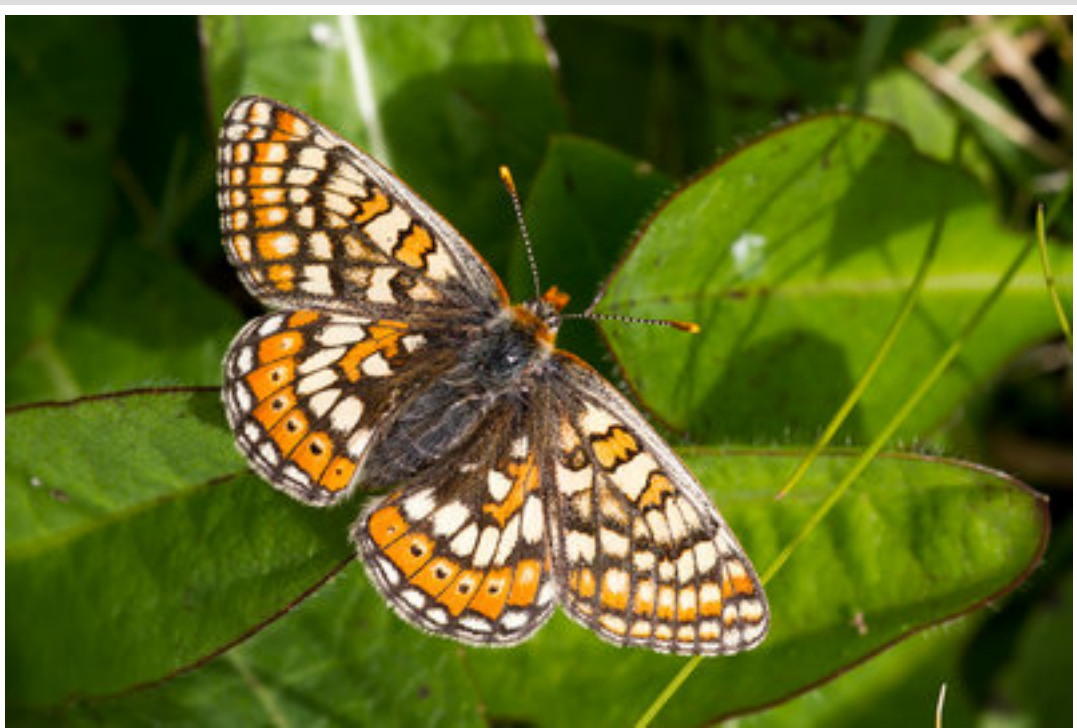


Devil's-bit Scabious

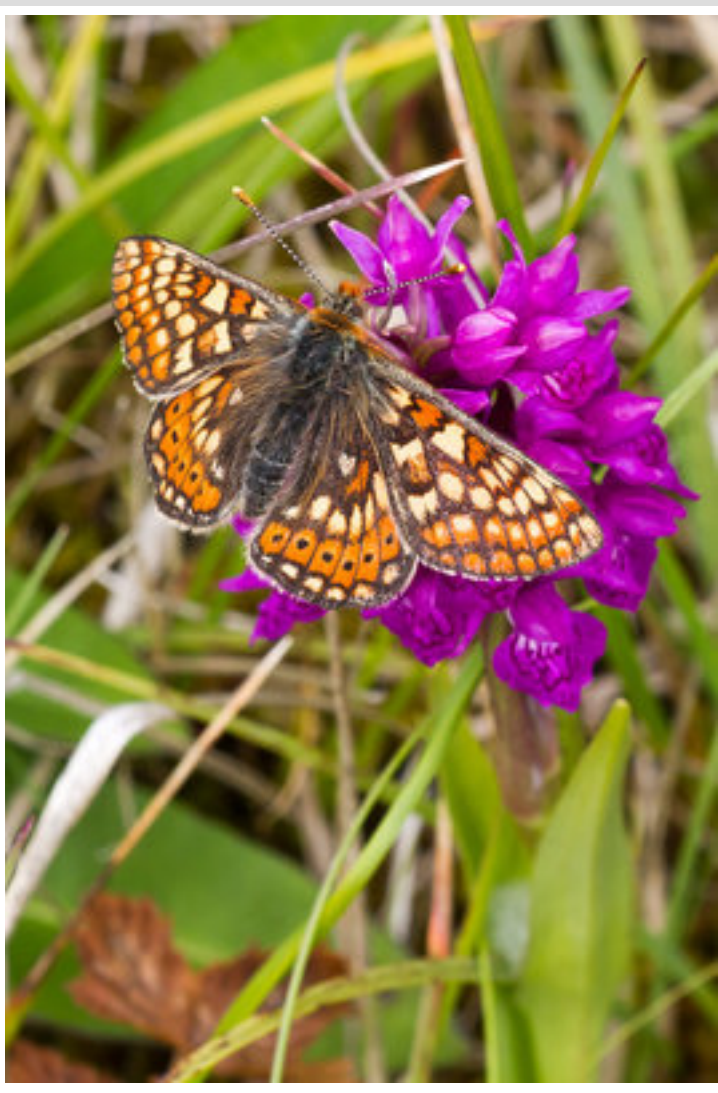
Given my current fascination with subspecies and forms, I was really looking forward to my first ever sighting of the *hibernica* form of Marsh Fritillary, which is found all over Ireland, and is said to have a greater contrast between the orange ground colour and cream markings than those found in the south of England that I'm familiar with. Within 30 minutes a minor miracle happened when the dark clouds that dominated the sky dissipated and the next few hours were spent in perfect butterflying conditions, of intermittent sunshine. It wasn't long before I found my first Marsh Fritillary, then another and another. I must have seen well over 100 by the time I'd left.



Marsh Fritillary f. hibernica (male)



Marsh Fritillary f. hibernica (female)



Marsh Fritillary *f. hibernica* (male) on Marsh Orchid



Marsh Fritillary *f. hibernica* (female) on Marsh Orchid

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeySSHxXgts>

At 1240 I started to leave the site, having had my fill of Marsh Fritillary sightings, interspersed by the occasional Common Blue and Small Heath, and started to wander the mile or so back to the car. I then noticed a female Marsh Fritillary acting very strange and clearly looking to oviposit. I managed to capture her on video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YiNVCuw9gwU>

She eventually found a leaf on which to lay and, blow me down, another female was already tucked away ovipositing *on the same leaf*. Now I don't know if this is just pure coincidence, but the chances of the same leaf being used among the thousands of leaves available must be pretty small. In the first photo below you can see the pair of ovipositing females toward the bottom centre of the picture, followed by a closeup and a video.



Pair of Marsh Fritillary *f. hibernica* (female) ovipositing



Pair of Marsh Fritillary *f. hibernica* (female) ovipositing

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCbShlwj0kg>

As I watched the pair oviposit for quite some time, a third female flew onto the same leaf before, eventually, landing about a foot away where she found another leaf on which to oviposit.



Marsh Fritillary *f. hibernica* (female) ovipositing

Why 3 females should all choose the same leaf given the area of the site and amount of larval foodplant available is beyond me, but I do intend to write this up for a journal, since it's not something I've come across before. Some theories are:

1. Pure coincidence.
2. The particular plant is in a favoured position for the site, and has a favoured leaf.
3. The females give off some chemical/pheromonal signal that attracts other females – perhaps giving the resulting (and larger) larval nest a better chance of survival (assuming, of course, that there is available larval foodplant).

I didn't have time to wait for all 3 females to finish laying (the process taking literally hours) so returned the following morning to get some shots of the

various egg masses.



Marsh Fritillary f. hibernica egg masses 1 and 2

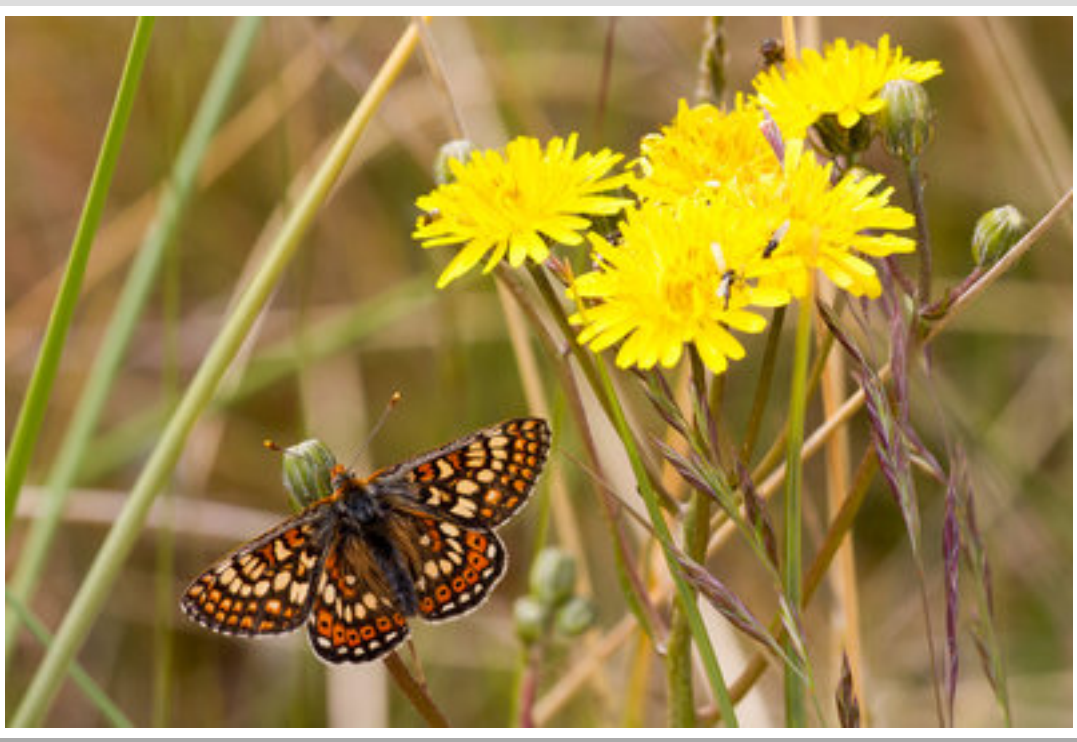


Marsh Fritillary f. hibernica egg mass 2 (closeup)



Marsh Fritillary f. hibernica egg mass 3

And finally, for some reason I really like the photo below, so thought I'd finish this report with it! As usual, an excellent time spent in the Emerald Isle. I must admit, I love the place – perhaps it's because I'm technically half-Irish (all of my grandparents on my mother's side came from Ireland)!



Marsh Fritillary *f. hibernica* (male)

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Vince Massimo, 15-Jun-13 12:24 PM GMT

Another good day at the office 😊

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Why 3 females should all choose the same leaf given the area of the site and amount of larval foodplant available is beyond me, but I do intend to write this up for a journal, since it's not something I've come across before. Some theories are:

1. Pure coincidence.
2. The particular plant is in a favoured position for the site, and has a favoured leaf.
3. The females give off some chemical/pheromonal signal that attracts other females – perhaps giving the resulting (and larger) larval nest a better chance of survival (assuming, of course, that there is available larval foodplant).

Small Tortoiseshells are reported to exhibit the same egg-laying behaviour (Thomas/Lewington – page 185), but the reason for this is not explained.

Regards,
Vince

Re: Pete Eeles

by Mark Colvin, 15-Jun-13 01:16 PM GMT

Hi Pete,

Just catching up ...

Congratulations to the new father; I trust you'll be wetting the baby's head with a pint of Guinness 😊

Great to see the shots of *hibernica*. Certainly from those that I have seen in the past I would agree that there is a greater contrast in ground colour.

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 15-Jun-13 02:42 PM GMT

"Vince Massimo" wrote:

Small Tortoiseshells are reported to exhibit the same egg-laying behaviour (Thomas/Lewington – page 185), but the reason for this is not explained.

Thanks Vince (and Mark!). I'll drop JT an email to see if there's a name for this phenomenon and gather the theories (if there are any!). Shall report back!

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

"Vince Massimo" wrote:

I'll drop JT an email to see if there's a name for this phenomenon and gather the theories (if there are any!). Shall report back!

Just to close the loop ... I asked Jeremy the following:

"I had the pleasure of spending a day observing Marsh Fritillary (f.hibernica) at North Bull Island, off the coast of Dublin, last week. The site is fairly large with a large supply of Devil's-bit Scabious. I was therefore somewhat taken aback when I followed a female (that was clearly looking to oviposit) which ultimately landed on a leaf that already had an ovipositing female present. The second female then took up position and also started ovipositing. A 3rd female then attempted to join them, but found another leaf about 10 inches away. I'm wondering if this sighting is worth writing up for a journal, or whether this is a common and well-understood occurrence / phenomenon (and, if so, does it have a name?). My own theories are:

1. Coincidence.
2. The plants in question are in a favoured spot, even within a large site, and therefore not much of a coincidence.
3. The larvae benefit from being part of the larger communal web that results and this is a deliberate oviposition strategy (possibly brought on by chemical / pheromonal signals emitted by an ovipositing female)."

Jeremy's reply is along the following lines:

1. He would rule out coincidence.
2. Theory 2 is almost certainly part of the explanation since, like most butterflies, female Marsh Fritillary select a surprisingly small subset of available foodplants for oviposition, choosing those growing in optimum conditions for their young.
3. Theory 3 is possibly the major factor. Some related species (e.g. Glanville Fritillary, Small Tortoiseshell) frequently choose the same leaf as another female, sometimes laying their eggs onto the older batch. The theory being that the larvae can thermoregulate more efficiently when numbers are higher and, more convincingly, that their prickly bodies are a greater deterrent to birds, mice etc when en masse.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

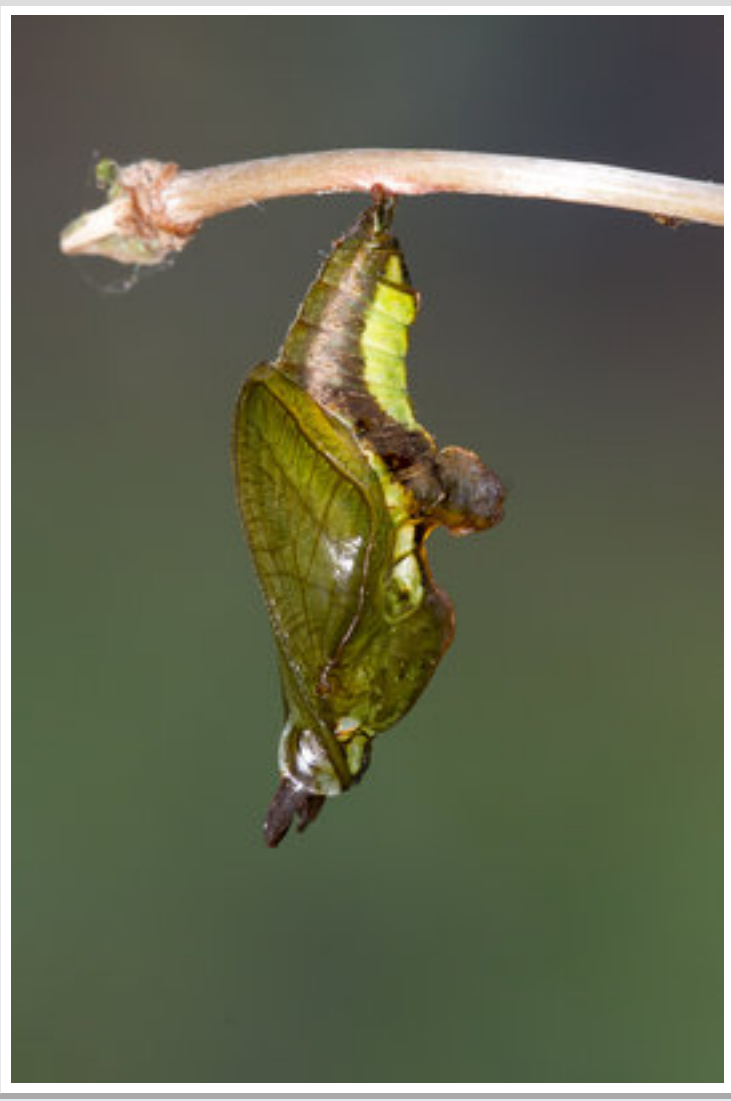
by Pete Eeles, 17-Jun-13 09:28 PM GMT

White Admiral doings

The White Admiral larvae I've been rearing are all now pupating and, yesterday, I managed to catch one in the act! Rather than post a long series of separate images, I've taken's Wurzel's hint and created a "montage" to save you scrolling!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5202aKaYnQM>





Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 17-Jun-13 10:03 PM GMT

Beautiful images, Pete.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 19-Jun-13 11:06 PM GMT

Thanks David!

Adonis Fest

The variation found in many of our blues is a constant source of fascination for me, and I set off this morning to an Adonis site in Wiltshire, hoping to catch up with a variety of Adonis Blue females, aspiring to get a decent shot of the bluest, the brownest, and everything in between! I must have photographed over 20 different females in the space of 2 hours, and was also lucky enough to watch a female rummaging through the Horseshoe Vetch as she oviposited. Given the known inter-breeding between Adonis Blue and Chalkhill Blue (resulting in *ab.polonus* = *bellargus* x *coridon*), and the similarity of the larvae (albeit that the Adonis Blue larva is diurnal, and the Chalkhill Blue larva nocturnal), I was expecting the egg to also be similar - but it definitely isn't! The Adonis egg is much more "delicate" in terms of its patterning and overall shape.



Adonis Blue (male)



Adonis Blue (female)



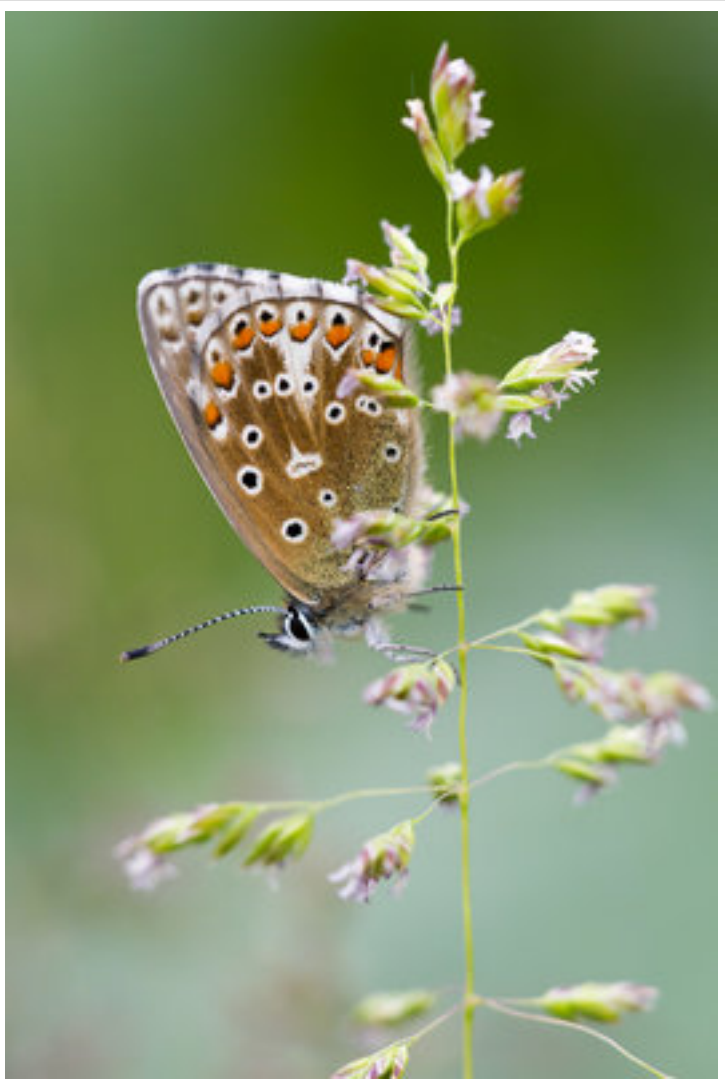
Adonis Blue (female)



Adonis Blue (female)



Adonis Blue (female)



Adonis Blue (female)



Adonis Blue (ovum)

Also saw my first Large Skippers of the year at Stockbridge Down 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 19-Jun-13 11:26 PM GMT

Cracking shots Pete 😊, an thanks for the montage 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 26-Jun-13 06:50 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel!

Hampshire and Isle of Wight New Members' Day

Saturday saw the branch's annual New Members' Day, attended by around 30 new members to the branch. This is one of the most enjoyable events of the year, with a high level of enthusiasm all round! A morning of presentations and discussion was following by a trip to the branch's flagship reserve at Magdalen Hill Down. Unfortunately, the weather didn't play ball, although we did manage to find several butterflies and, especially, some immature stages. One particular and small Purging Buckthorn played host a dozen Brimstone larvae, some absolutely tiny, and others absolutely huge!



Andy Barker leading a group



Brian Fletcher leading another



Mullein moth larva



Brimstone larva

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pauline, 26-Jun-13 07:06 PM GMT

Don't know how I've missed out on your diary for so long Pete but I certainly have been missing out. There is some amazing stuff on there. Re Marsh Frits, how long is it after mating that they oviposit? The footage of the White Admiral is incredible. Over what period of time did the transformation occur? I love the way you have presented this.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 26-Jun-13 07:23 PM GMT

Great Orme

First off, a big thanks to stu51 and LancsRover for their reports of Silver-studded Blue on the Great Orme, near Llandudno in North Wales. And so it was that a 0430 start yesterday saw me arrive at the Orme at 0830, without a cloud in the sky. My first (and only, as it happened) stop was Happy Valley, having managed to park 100 yards from it! The site is amazing, with south-facing slopes carpeted in Rock-rose, whose yellow flowers provided nectar for a host of insects.



Happy Valley from above



Happy Valley from below

Within 2 seconds I saw my first male Silver-studded Blue, *ssp. caernensis*, and within another minute I found the primary reason for travelling the 230 miles – a beautiful female SSB with the characteristic splashes of blue. Wow! This really was like finding a new species for me. The next 4 hours were spent observing what must have been over 100 SSBs all over the site. I was particularly interested in the range of colours exhibited by the females, and that range is shown in the photos below (roughly going from darkest to lightest), having been motivated by the excellent paper that discusses SSB races so well – <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~zool0376/PargusAnimalConserv.pdf>. As shown on the species page, this subspecies differs from the nominate subspecies as follows:

1. It is smaller in size.
2. The male upperside has narrower, sometimes absent, dark borders.
3. The male underside is paler.
4. The female upperside has a blue flush that extends over most of the hindwings and base of the forewings.

Of these characteristics, I'd say that characteristics #1 and #4 are the most noticeable.



Silver-studded Blue ssp. caernensis (male)



Silver-studded Blue ssp. caernensis (female)



Silver-studded Blue ssp. caernensis (female)



Silver-studded Blue ssp. caernensis (female)



Silver-studded Blue ssp. caernensis (female)



Silver-studded Blue ssp. caernensis (female)



Silver-studded Blue ssp. caernensis



Silver-studded Blue ssp. caernensis (female on left)

While photographing the SSBs, I was disturbed now and again by an occasional Wall. However, the 3rd "Wall" I closely looked at turned out, in fact, to be the second endemic subspecies found on the Great Orme I'd come to see - Grayling *ssp. thyone* - which appeared slightly smaller than the Grayling I'm used to seeing. The dozen or so I saw were quite obliging as they flew among the rocks at the top of the slope.



Grayling ssp. thyone (male)



Grayling ssp. thyone (female)

And what would you do if you had a site that held several endemics? Build an artificial ski slope, of course! Yes, there is indeed such a thing bolted onto the side of the Great Orme, which was quite a surprise to say the least!

Prees Heath

By 1pm I was absolutely shattered and needed to get some food and drink! With the clouds now appearing I decided to head home, but thought I'd pop into Prees Heath since it was on the way home. It seemed that SSB are only just starting to emerge here, but I did manage to find a few roosting males, which were markedly larger than those I'd found on the Great Orme, and a great end to another butterflying adventure!



Silver-studded Blue (male)



Silver-studded Blue (male)

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 26-Jun-13 07:26 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Don't know how I've missed out on your diary for so long Pete but I certainly have been missing out. There is some amazing stuff on there. Re Marsh Frits, how long is it after mating that they ovipost? The footage of the White Admiral is incredible. Over what period of time did the transformation occur? I love the way you have presented this.

Thanks Pauline! I'm not sure what the time lag between mating and laying is (and is probably species-specific). I know that some butterflies start to lay within a couple of hours of having mated. As for the White Admiral, start to finish is probably 10 minutes to shed the skin, and 4 hours for the pupa to get its final shape.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Hulme, 26-Jun-13 08:19 PM GMT

Hi Pete,
Great report, and a trip down Memory Lane for me. I don't dare calculate how long it's been, but I'm inspired to go back, perhaps next year.
BWs, Neil

Re: Pete Eeles

by Mark Colvin, 26-Jun-13 09:02 PM GMT

Super report, Pete.

I don't know about subspecies; to me it could be a different species ...

Great work.

kindest regards. Mark

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 26-Jun-13 09:33 PM GMT

I've read plenty about the female of this form, but I think this is the first time I've seen photographs of it on this site.

Clearly, there is a marked difference between the colouration of these females and those residing throughout the rest of the UK.

A beautiful little butterfly, and well done for supplying the images, Pete.

Re: Pete Eeles

by millerd, 26-Jun-13 09:42 PM GMT

Lovely photos of a butterfly I've wanted to see for ages – I've always been on the Orme too late in the year.

Dave

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jun-13 10:07 PM GMT

Just catching up on your diary Pete, some really interesting reports and great photos.

I also particularly like your last *f. hibernica* Marsh Fritillary image.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-13 10:24 PM GMT

Great report Pete and superb photos 😊 It's easy to see why the Silver Stud has sub-specific status but trickier with the Grayling as they show such a

range of variation in colour anyway 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 26-Jun-13 10:32 PM GMT

I can only heap praise on praise! Some really great pictures here, Pete. I've seen many varieties of silver-studded blue but never come across females like those *caernensis*. Fantastic stuff.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 26-Jun-13 10:52 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments all – much appreciated! I must admit, I'm finding the various subspecies and forms absolutely fascinating. Especially when races, such as *caernensis*, must have evolved over a very long time (since there's only one brood per year)!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by millerd, 26-Jun-13 11:07 PM GMT

Pete,

Are there still (introduced) populations of the same sub-species at sites just to the east of Colwyn Bay? Not for the purist, I know... 😊

Dave

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 26-Jun-13 11:49 PM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

Pete,

Are there still (introduced) populations of the same sub-species at sites just to the east of Colwyn Bay? Not for the purist, I know... 😊

Dave

Yes there are, although I'm not sure how large the population is these days.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 29-Jun-13 08:33 PM GMT

Silchester Common

Two weeks ago I found none, but today I found 17 male and 5 female Silver-studded Blue at Silchester Common (including a newly-emerged male) – good to see they're still here in good numbers given the removal of gorse in the "hotspot" over the winter. One male had particularly prominent spotting on the underside. The pristine females showed off the characteristic sheen as it caught the sun.



Silver-studded Blue (male)



Silver-studded Blue (male)



Silver-studded Blue (female)

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 05-Jul-13 11:40 PM GMT

Portland

Another early start was needed to get me to Portland Bill this morning before the butterflies woke up – the target species being the Silver-studded Blue race that's found here, and that some authorities consider to represent *ssp. cretaceus*, an extinct subspecies formerly found on chalk downland in Kent, Surrey, Hampshire and Dorset. The SSBs can be found in many of the disused quarries found here. First stop was the wonderful Tout Quarry. If you've never been here, it's somewhere the family can enjoy the various sculptures and patterns that have been created out of the Portland stone, and the spectacular views over Chesil Beach, while you get down to the serious business of butterflying 😊



A view of Chesil Beach from Tout Quarry



Half of an Archway!



Tout Quarry



Tout Quarry

After an hour I found my first male SSB followed by a few more.



Silver-studded Blue (male)



Silver-studded Blue (male) showing off a beautiful sheen as it caught the sun

I examined each to see just how well they conformed to *ssp. cretaceus* which, when compared with the nominate subspecies, exhibits the following differences:

1. It is slightly larger in size, on average.
2. The male upperside is of a brighter blue.
3. The male upperside has narrower dark borders.
4. The male upperside hindwing has distinct marginal spots, rather than a dark band.

Of these characteristics, I'd say that characteristics #3 and #4 are the most obvious differences, although this is a highly variable species, even within the same colony. I later moved on to Broadcroft Quarry, where at least 7 individuals were found, including 2 females.



Silver-studded Blue (male)



Silver-studded Blue (female)

Having seen 4 races of SSB over the last few weeks (Silchester Common, Great Orme, Prees Heath and Portland) I find it incredible just how different these races are. I hope to visit other colonies next year to complete the "set" of distinct populations – including those on the Cornish sand dune system as well as those found on mossland in North Wales.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pauline, 06-Jul-13 06:48 AM GMT

Butterflies certainly take you to some beautiful places Pete – your lovely photos of the area give context to the butterflies; places that might as well be a million miles away for me as I will never be able to get that far 😞🇬🇧

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 06-Jul-13 05:33 PM GMT

I do realise how lucky I am to get to these places, Pauline. I'm determined to make the most of whatever opportunities I have, and you certainly seem to be doing that too!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 06-Jul-13 09:44 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

I hope to visit other colonies next year to complete the "set" of distinct populations – including those on the Cornish sand dune system as well as those found on mossland in North Wales.

Hi Pete,

Just for interest's sake, which 'race' do the Pembrokeshire populations belong to? These are very isolated indeed (though I believe this species used to be present on the Gower).

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 06-Jul-13 11:07 PM GMT

"David M" wrote:

Just for interest's sake, which 'race' do the Pembrokeshire populations belong to? These are very isolated indeed (though I believe this species used to be present on the Gower).

Hi David – I constantly refer back to this paper: <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~zool0376/PargusAnimalConserv.pdf>. Although by inference any race not covered by this paper could be considered to confirm to the nominate subspecies (*Plebejus argus ssp. argus*), we all know that the separation of subspecies and forms, and even species (see <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/taxome/jim/pap/des...Oprint.pdf>), is not an exact science. If the Pembrokeshire populations have been isolated for a significant period of time, then there could well be some morphological differences with other races – it's just that nobody has observed this as far as I'm aware, so could be a good candidate for further analysis.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-13 11:24 PM GMT

I thought I'd gotten the only Dorsetian endemic with Lulworth Skipper, I better get myself back "home" next year just in case *cretaceus* is a "proper" race on Portland. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

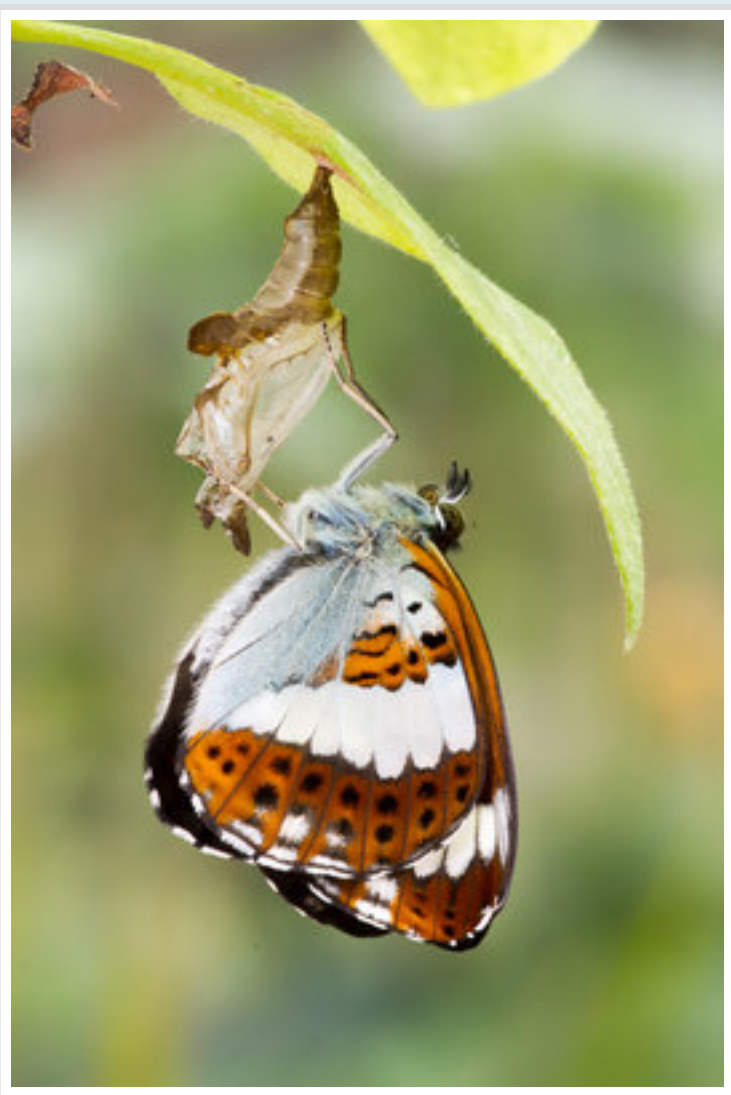
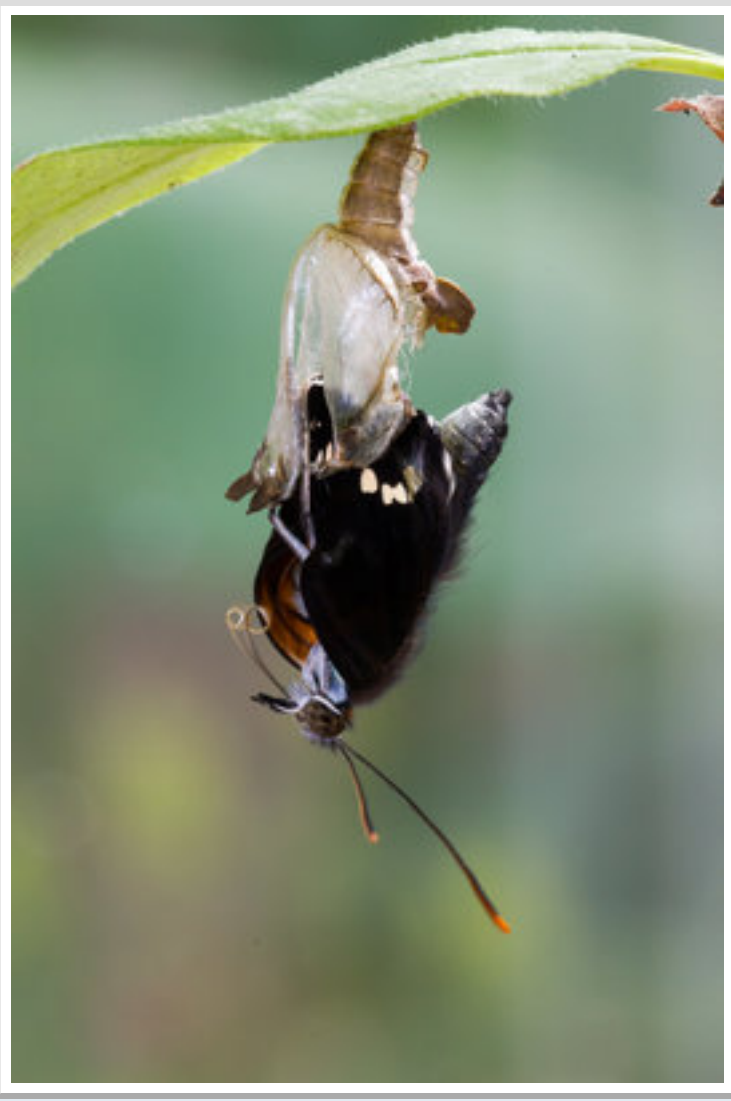
by Pete Eeles, 10-Jul-13 08:37 AM GMT

Doings @ Home

I'm currently oop north (more to follow) but 5 minutes before we were due to leave, I noticed that one of the White Admiral pupae I've been rearing was about to emerge. Camera out at the double – and some shots below! Unfortunately, I missed the finale (wings fully inflated) but am happy knowing that the critter is now flying freely in a Berkshire wood.







Cheers,

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 10-Jul-13 09:04 AM GMT

Northern Specialties - Part 1

I'm spending this week visiting my in-laws near Consett, County Durham, and was lucky enough to spend all of yesterday out butterflying. Thanks to Iain Cowe's (IAC) expert advice (thanks Iain!), I set out to visit St. Abb's Head as well as a site further down the coast. My 2 targets were Northern Brown Argus and Grayling *ssp. scota*.

A 5am start saw me at the first site by 7am, and butterflies were already very active. But I wasn't prepared for the first proper encounter - a pair of Grayling flew in front of me, landed, and proceeded with their amazing courtship display, right in front of my eyes! I've only seen this spectacle a few times before and felt very privileged to be witnessing this first hand once again (although the two didn't mate). The sequence of events is along the lines of:

1. The male and female land on the ground, the male behind the female.
2. The male moves around to the front of the female to face her head on.
3. An unreceptive female flutters her wings (shot 1 below) while a virgin female will remain still.
4. The male flicks his wings upward to reveal the orange patches found on the underside of the forewings.
5. The male flicks his wings open and shut for a short time before bowing to the female and slowly bringing his wings together, when the female's antennae are brought together over the sex brands found on the male's forewings (shot 2 below).
6. The male moves behind the female who is then mated.



Courting Grayling (male on left, female on right)



Courting Grayling (male on left, female on right) - the moment where the male bows and brings the female's antennae over his sex brands

Keeping on the Grayling theme - I was particularly interested in getting some shots of this subspecies (*ssp. scota*) which is said to differ from the nominate subspecies as follows:

1. Slightly smaller size.
2. Upperside fulvous markings extensive but very pale, almost yellow.
3. Underside of the hindwings with extensive and very dark marbling, with the white transverse band variably expressed; Dennis (1977) states that this band is not lacking a white transverse band, as its formal definition suggests.

I can't say I noticed the smaller size, but the other characteristics definitely hold. A few shots below show the variability of the underside hindwing markings, the first where the white transverse band is pretty much absent.



Grayling ssp. scota (male)



Grayling ssp. scota (male)



Grayling ssp. scota (female)

More to follow!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 10-Jul-13 06:31 PM GMT

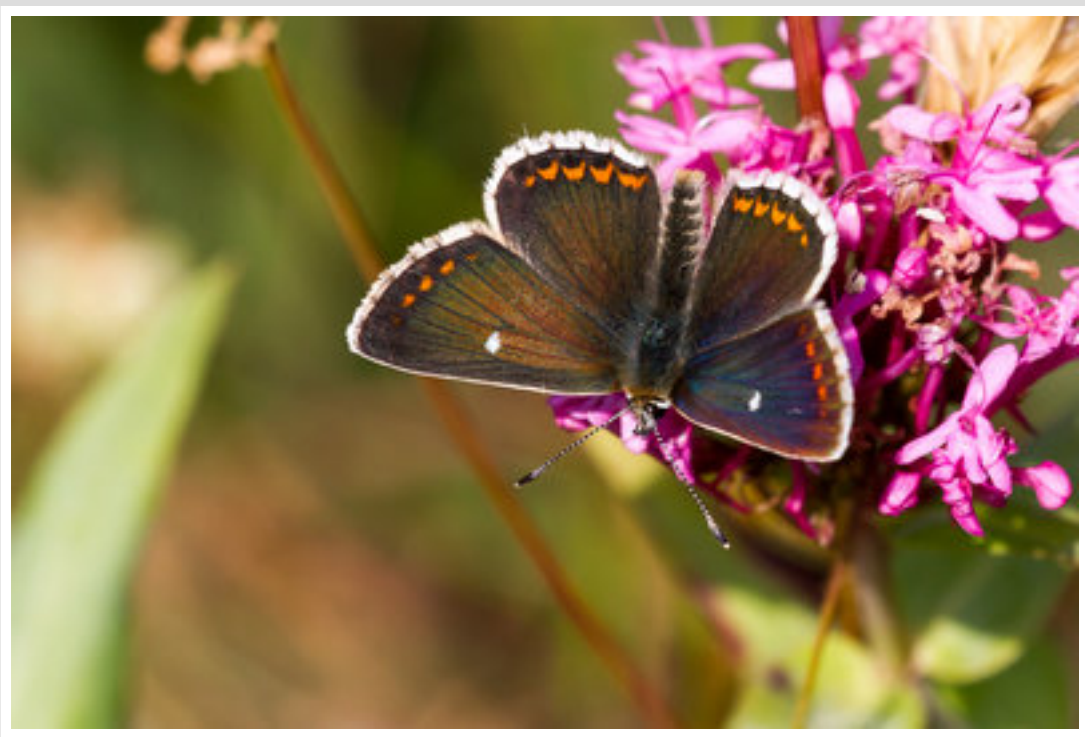
Northern Specialties – Part 2

Of course, one of the species I was hoping to catch up on (and probably the main reason for visiting this area at all!) was to see Northern Brown Argus and, in particular, the nominate subspecies *ssp. artaxerxes* that I'd never seen before (I'd only ever seen *ssp. salmacis* at Arnside Knott. The first site I visited was extremely good for NBA (the same site where I saw the courting Grayling) and I eventually moved onto St. Abb's Head. Some photos of St. Abb's are below, the first looking north-west away from Mire Loch and the other looking south-east towards Mire Loch, where I was half expecting to find a sign reading "Kipper was here" 😊 The steep embankment above and below the road were extremely good for Grayling, and I saw half a dozen Dark Green Fritillary in the green area below the road.

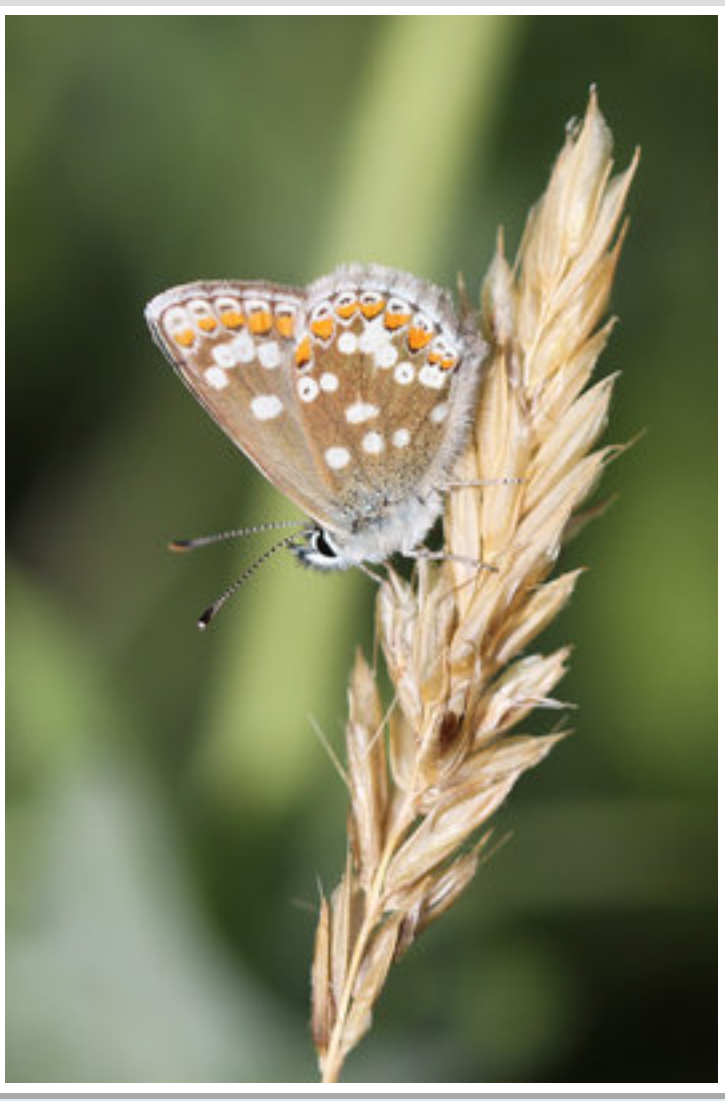


Mire Loch

Most male NBA were anything but fresh, but most of the females were in mint condition, and very photogenic!



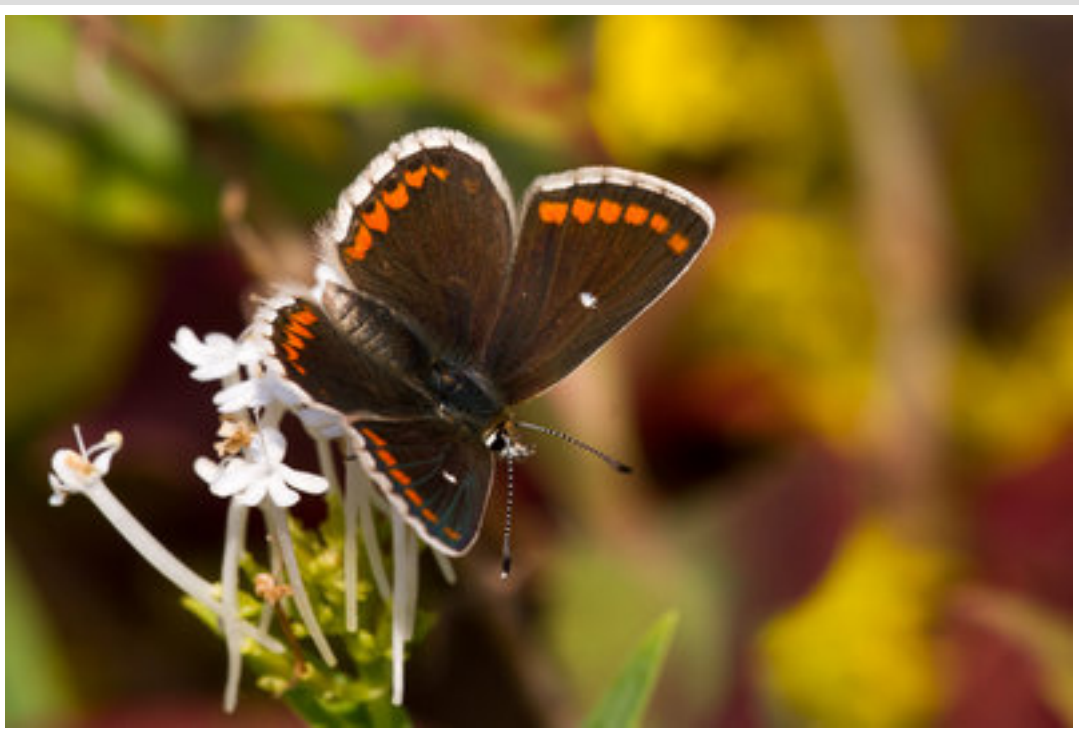
Northern Brown Argus (ssp. artaxerxes) male



Northern Brown Argus (ssp. artaxerxes) male



Northern Brown Argus (ssp. artaxerxes) female



Northern Brown Argus (ssp. artaxerxes) female



Northern Brown Argus (ssp. artaxerxes) female

The white spots on the forewing were also quite variable and I saw at least one individual where these were completely absent (but failed to get a photo). There were also several *ab. quadripuncta* flying, where spots can also be made out on the hindwings – an example is below.



Northern Brown Argus (ssp. artaxerxes) female ab. quadripuncta

And finally, I took a look at some lush Common Rock-rose plants to see if I could find the apparently (according to Thomas and Lewington) conspicuous eggs. The first plant I looked at had a hatched egg which was pretty conspicuous (although I didn't find the larva, despite evidence in the form of "windows" on the Rock-rose leaves). The next plant I looked at had one egg, then two, then three etc. Within 2 minutes I'd found 12 eggs on a single plant, and I'd have to concur with Jeremy Thomas that this must be one of the easiest eggs to locate! Again – another superb day of butterflying and, again, my thanks to Iain/IAC for being so generous with his local knowledge.



Common Rock-rose containing a dozen or so NBA eggs



A hatched NBA egg



NBA egg



NBA egg

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jul-13 07:42 PM GMT

Great reports Pete, fascinating stuff with the Graylings and that first photo is a bit special 😊

Cracking NBA photos as well, loving the colours on the third one down (11.jpg)

Cheers,
Neil F.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Hulme, 10-Jul-13 08:25 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Pete! I love the WA emergence sequence, particularly the first shot. A fine example of the 'so much' that we never get to see. The female *artaxerxes* images are stunning. It's a VERY long trip to St Abb's Head, but one day I must go back.

BWs, Neil

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 10-Jul-13 08:39 PM GMT

Sterling stuff once again, Pete.

That Grayling image is the best I've ever seen of this insect with its wings open.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 10-Jul-13 11:02 PM GMT

Thanks all – yes, it's been a rather splendid week so far 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 10-Jul-13 11:44 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Pete those NBAs are lush 🍷 Are you going for the Small and Large Heath Races as well?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by IAC, 11-Jul-13 12:33 AM GMT

Superb Pete, Grayling photos are very nice indeed. NBA females are cracking. I was thinking how long it had been since I had last seen a 4 spotter female...then I started thinking....hold on...I have seen that young lady somewhere before. I rattled through some snaps I took the other day.....and....hey presto...of all the butterflies present, would you believe it!! 🤩 Its a very small world indeed.

Enjoyed reading about your trip...well chuffed I could help.

Iain.



Petes 4 spotter revisited...by IAC

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 11-Jul-13 07:47 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cracking stuff Pete those NBAs are lush 🍷 Are you going for the Small and Large Heath Races as well?

Thanks Wurzel. The Small Heath *ssp. rhoumensis* is too far away and will have to wait for another year (unless I find myself in the Inner Hebrides

sometime soon!). Large Heath *ssp. polydama* are a possibility, but not sure if I'll get the opportunity!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 11-Jul-13 07:49 AM GMT

"IAC" wrote:

I was thinking how long it had been since I had last seen a 4 spotter female...then I started thinking....hold on...I have seen that young lady somewhere before. I rattled through some snaps I took the other day.....and....hey presto...of all the butterflies present, would you believe it!! 😲 Its a very small world indeed.

Very nice photo Iain 😊 – and should be added to the NBA aberrations species-specific folder (I intend to continue documenting the aberrations over the winter)!

"IAC" wrote:

Enjoyed reading about your trip...well chuffed I could help.

Not as chuffed as I 😊 Thx again!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 11-Jul-13 08:40 AM GMT

Excellent sequences of the WA emergence and the Grayling courtship, neither of which I have ever seen.

The Small Heath *ssp. rhoumensis* is too far away and will have to wait for another year (unless I find myself in the Inner Hebrides sometime soon!

The Small Heaths I am seeing here on Mull would appear to be absolutely standard. Yet the Isle of Rum is a mere stone's throw away. I know the ukb doesn't mention Mull as a locality. Here's recent Mull Small Heath.



Normal I would have thought.

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 11-Jul-13 08:50 AM GMT

Thanks Jack – as shown on the species page ...

This form was first defined in Harrison (1948) (type locality: Isle of Rhum, Scotland). This form is found on the Isle of Rhum in the North Ebrudes of Scotland, where it is widespread and common. Harrison (1951) extends its distribution to North Uist, South Uist, Eriskay and the Barra isles (but not Barra itself) and Harrison (1952) further extends this to Raasay. This form differs from the nominate form as follows:

1. Forewing underside has a duller ground colour and a narrower pale area around the eye spot.
2. Hindwing underside largely grey rather than brown. The white band is inconspicuous, narrower and often absent.

As we know, the separation between subspecies isn't an exact science and I'd say your individual is definitely tending towards an underside that is largely grey and where the white band is inconspicuous!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Paul Wetton, 11-Jul-13 11:52 AM GMT

Great stuff Pete. St. Abbs Head is a fantastic spot if the weather is fine. I've seen Clouded Yellows coming in off the sea onto the grassy areas above the cliffs there.

I didn't realise Small Heath *ssp. rhoumensis* was on the Outer Hebrides. I'll keep my eye out for them in a couple of weeks. Do you know if the nominate *ssp.* is also present on the islands?

Keep the reports coming in.

Thanks.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 11-Jul-13 08:40 PM GMT

"Paul Wetton" wrote:

Great stuff Pete. St. Abbs Head is a fantastic spot if the weather is fine. I've seen Clouded Yellows coming in off the sea onto the grassy areas above the cliffs there.

I didn't realise Small Heath *ssp. rhoumensis* was on the Outer Hebrides. I'll keep my eye out for them in a couple of weeks. Do you know if the nominate *ssp.* is also present on the islands?

Keep the reports coming in.

Thanks.

Thanks Paul. I'm almost tempted to say "get as many photos as you can and we'll sort it out later"! Seriously – I think the whole region is massively under-recorded. The formal localities given for *ssp. rhoumensis* are shown above, namely "*This form is found on the Isle of Rhum in the North Ebrudes of Scotland, where it is widespread and common. Harrison (1951) extends its distribution to North Uist, South Uist, Eriskay and the Barra isles (but not Barra itself) and Harrison (1952) further extends this to Raasay*". The inference is that any individuals found elsewhere do NOT conform to the subspecies description and are therefore the nominate subspecies, *pamphilus ssp. pamphilus*. I believe that all of the listed islands are in the Inner Hebrides (but would need to check).

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 11-Jul-13 09:06 PM GMT

North Uist, South Uist, Eriskay and the Barra isles....I believe that all of the listed islands are in the Inner Hebrides

Rum is Inner Hebrides. However, North Uist, South Uist, Eriskay and the Barra isles are Outer Hebrides.

Jack (Mull – Inner Hebrides)

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 16-Jul-13 05:39 PM GMT

Thanks Jack!

Northern Specialties – Part 3

Just catching up with my diary. Friday was my last opportunity to get out and about, and so I got up early to visit Muckle Moss, which is just down the

road from Hadrian's Wall! I was hoping to find some Large Heath *ssp. polydama* but drew a blank. However, I did enjoy looking at the extensive patches of Hare's-tail Cottongrass, the larval foodplant.



Muckle Moss



Hare's-tail Cottongrass

Back at base, we were having a quiet day and, not being someone who can sit still for more than an hour, headed off to Bishop Middleham Quarry, even though I knew that any Northern Brown Argus *ssp. salmacis* would be past their best. It was my first visit here, and I'll definitely be returning – the number of NBA was still very good, despite the intense heat and it being early evening. The photos below are a scan of the site, from left to right.



Bishop Middleham Quarry



Bishop Middleham Quarry



Bishop Middleham Quarry



Bishop Middleham Quarry

Some of the NBA were still relatively-fresh, and I managed to find a female with a particularly striking underside 😊 What really surprised me was that a few of the individuals whose uppersides I saw had the distinct white spots, supposedly reserved for *ssp. artaxerxes*. Given my previous sightings of some NBA *ssp. artaxerxes* with no white spots, I've come to the conclusion that the white spotting is a generalisation, and the presence or absence of these white spots is within the normal bounds of variation!



Northern Brown Argus ssp. salmactis (female)



Northern Brown Argus ssp. salmactis (female)



Northern Brown Argus ssp. salmactis (female)

And finally, once again, I found quite a few eggs on the Common Rock-rose, all laid on the upper surface of a leaf.



Northern Brown Argus ovum

Cheers,

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 16-Jul-13 09:24 PM GMT

Doings @ Home

Everything seems to be happening at once and the same is true at home! A couple of Brimstone larvae have pupated and the first emerged this morning (although I missed the big event). A Chalkhill Blue larva has also pupated and will be released tomorrow (as a pupa!).



Brimstone pupa



Brimstone pupa (male) 2 hours before emergence



Chalkhill Blue pupa

But the species I've been wanting to see for some time as a full-grown larva - is the Silver-spotted Skipper - considered by some to be the ugliest larva of all of our British butterflies. Unfortunately, I have to agree - as it looks like a saggy bag barely held together by its skin! The larva lives in a tube formed from strands of Sheep's-fescue (in this case), sealing the top with some strands of silk, and looks quite strange hunkered down in its protective

home! While watching this morning, one of the two I'm rearing through decided to go for a wander (possibly to get to fresh food) and I managed to catch it in mid-sprint (and they really CAN move!) since, thankfully, it remained perfectly still when disturbed (which is handy for photography!).



Silver-spotted Skipper (final instar larva)



Silver-spotted Skipper (final instar larva)



Silver-spotted Skipper (final instar larva)

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 16-Jul-13 10:54 PM GMT

Cracking shots of a caterpillar that has definitely been hit with the ugly stick 🤪

Have a goodun

Re: Pete Eeles

by millerd, 16-Jul-13 11:13 PM GMT

It's not a lovely creature is it. 😞

Terrific photos, though – and it does become a particularly attractive butterfly in the end.

How large is it? A couple of centimetres?

Dave

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 17-Jul-13 07:07 PM GMT

Thanks Dave – yes, 2cm would be about right.

Fermyn Wood

With Matthew Oates seeing 137 individual Purple Emperor at Fermyn yesterday (<http://apaturairis.blogspot.co.uk/>), I just had to go and see for myself! Despite, by all accounts, today being a little "quieter", I still saw more than 50 individuals myself (I gave up counting since I found one every 50 yards or so), which is more *iris* than I've seen in the last 3 years put together! Arriving at 0745, I saw my first grounded Emperor at 0805 and it carried on like that until at least midday, with a definite peak of grounded males between 1000 and 1100.

It was great to meet up with the man himself, and Matthew pointed out various master trees and "breakfast tables" (e.g. fox scats!). This was extremely helpful since Fermyn is a big place, even when sticking to the Lady Wood, Souther Wood, Titchmarsh Wood and Greenside Wood block as I did. It was also great to see Nick Ballard (NickB), Mark Bunch (essexbuzzard), Mark Tutton (Tutts), a plethora of other UKBers (all of whom were very kind about this website!) and Max Whitby and Fiona Barclay from NatureGuides. If you want to see a Purple Emperor and get some decent photos of this beastly, get to Fermyn now!





Cheers,
- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 20-Jul-13 09:40 PM GMT

The bags are packed ...

... and I'm sitting at Heathrow Terminal 5, waiting to board a flight to Sydney (via Singapore). For work, I hasten to add 😞 I can't tell you how difficult it is leaving our glorious summer for an antipodean winter - I'll have to make the most of the cricket by mentioning it in every meeting I have 😊

Back home - there are just a few critters left to look after. First off, the Grayling larvae I've been looking after are all fully-grown and have started to pupate. I must admit, I was very surprised at how deep into the soil these guys go to pupate - very moth-like! Their colour is also a surprise - being very bright orange-red. The family have strict instructions on what to do should any emerge as an adult while I'm away!



Grayling pupa



Grayling pupa

And finally – a Dingy Skipper larva, showing its "tent" of Bird's-foot Trefoil leaves, and a shot with them opened up where you can see that the larva is about to change into the next instar. The tent was carefully put back together with some cotton "ties".



Dingy Skipper larval tent



Dingy Skipper larva

So – 2 weeks of winter coming up for me – and I've already got plans for squeezing the last drop out of summer when I get back, with a trip to Ireland beckoning and, hopefully, some more subspecies. I'll be monitoring UKB in the meantime, so do keep the excellent posts and photos rolling in!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Susie, 20-Jul-13 09:56 PM GMT

Have a safe journey. 😊

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-13 10:31 PM GMT

Have a great trip and safe journey. I'd definitely mention "128" a lot 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 21-Jul-13 02:26 PM GMT

Thanks both! Currently in Singapore airport waiting to reboard. Heard a loud bang on the way over, thinking the plane had hit an air pocket, but it turned out to be someone fainting and whacking their head on the floor! Poor thing, but all ok now!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 21-Jul-13 02:42 PM GMT

air pocket

Sorry to say so Pete but with over 40 years as a professional pilot and 50 as a glider pilot, I never did understand what an "air pocket" is.

Turbulence with a down current: yes. But there is no such a thing as a "pocket of air" which results in an aircraft falling.

But I am impressed with you technology in sending a message to ukb from Singapore. I guess (as it's night at the moment) you won't even see any of these butterflies out of the terminal windows.

<http://butterfly.nss.org.sg/images/book...er-340.jpg>

I haven't been to Singapore for some 40 years. Painted Jezebel and Common Bluebottle were much in evidence then.

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by Susie, 21-Jul-13 03:56 PM GMT

I know from my time in an aviation litigation department which dealt with fatal incidents that sometimes 'air' can sometimes be less dense, ie when large pockets of marsh gas has been released, which can cause planes to drop. However this is incredibly rare.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 21-Jul-13 05:57 PM GMT

Susie

I know from my time in an aviation litigation department which dealt with fatal incidents that sometimes 'air' can sometimes be less dense, ie when large pockets of marsh gas has been released, which can cause planes to drop. However this is incredibly rare.

That's intriguing and I'd never heard of it before. Do you have any specific accident records/references where marsh (presumably methane) gas was cited as being contributory to the accident? I'd be fascinated – as no doubt would be my son who flies for a low-cost UK based airline – to get more details.

I did however find this old Notam (Notice to Airmen) that might have some relevance:

TEMPORARY FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS ARE IN EFFECT FOR NATURAL GAS VENTING WILLIAMS NORTHWEST PIPELINE

That presumably was referring to Natural Gas from a fuel-supply supply pipeline

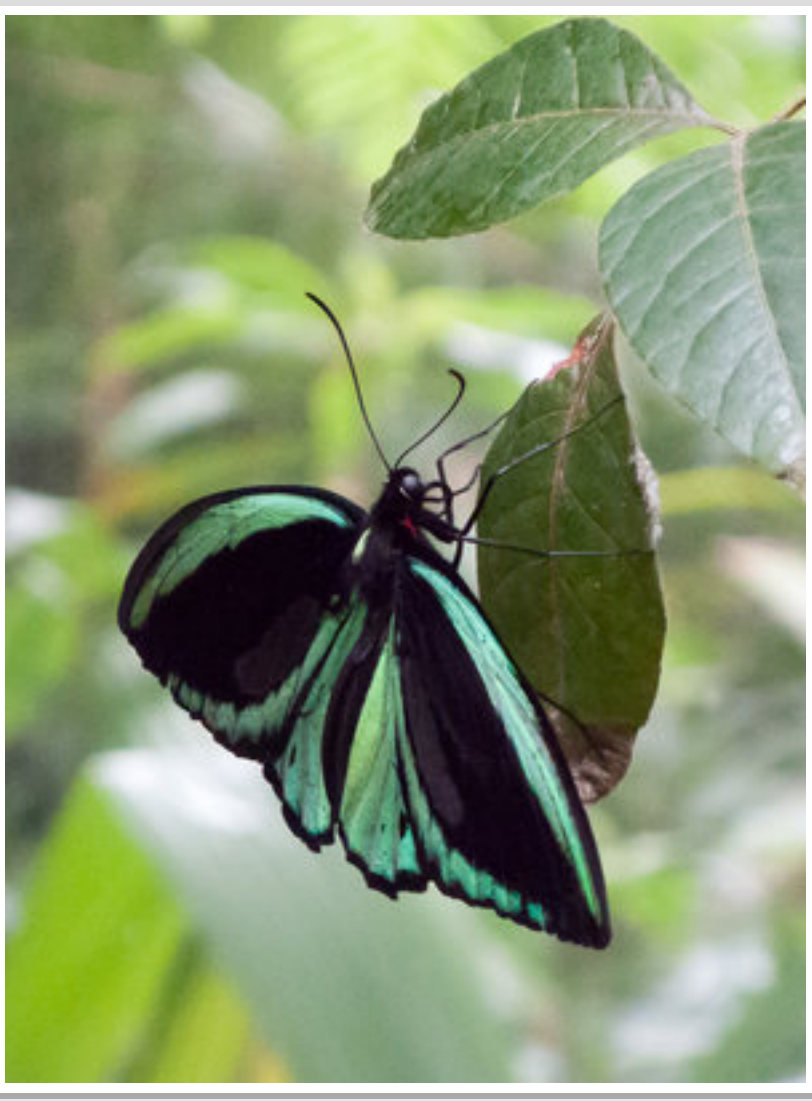
Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 28-Jul-13 12:09 PM GMT

Doings Down Under

Greetings from the other side of the planet 😊 Of course, it's winter here, and having moved from Sydney to Melbourne, I can feel it – with short days and a need to wrap up when going out. With all of the action I'm missing at home, I needed to somehow get some butterflying in! ... so decided to pay a visit to Melbourne Zoo where they have a pretty extensive butterfly house. Of course, being this side of the planet, the species were somewhat different from butterfly houses back home and, stepping into the enclosure, was immediately greeted by a species I was hoping to see – my first ever encounter with a birdwing (albeit in captivity) – a Cairn's Birdwing, Australia's largest native butterfly (found in Queensland). I was pretty gobsmacked watching such huge butterflies flying so delicately around the place – simply breathtaking! The butterflies here seem to do well in general, and I witnessed quite a few pairings of various species, egg laying etc. A Cairn's Birdwing egg is HUGE! Unfortunately, most of the other visitors seemed pretty oblivious to what was going on around them, although I could see the educational value of this exhibit with quite a few children taking interest in the butterflies around them and asking their parents difficult questions 😊 There was also an emerging cage with various pupae (behind glass, unfortunately!) – including the Cairn's Birdwing (photo below).



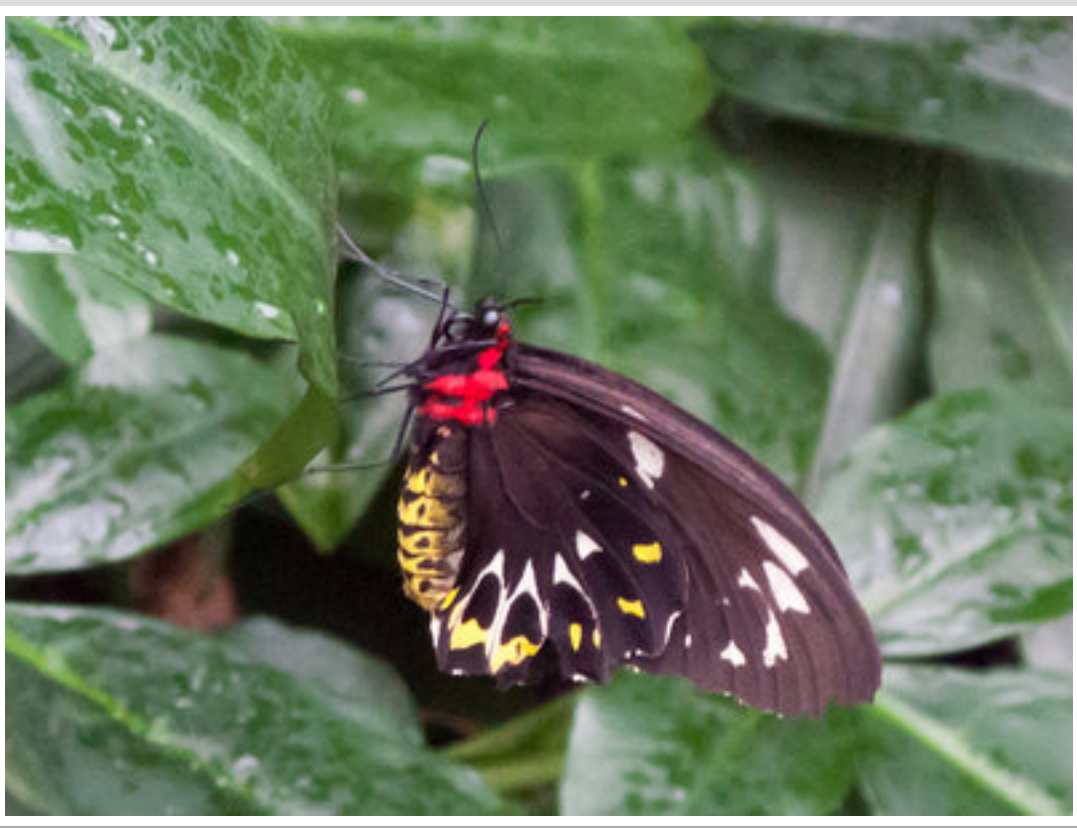
Cairn's Birdwing (male)



Cairn's Birdwing (male)



Cairn's Birdwing (female)



Cairn's Birdwing (female)



Cairn's Birdwing mating pair (female at top)

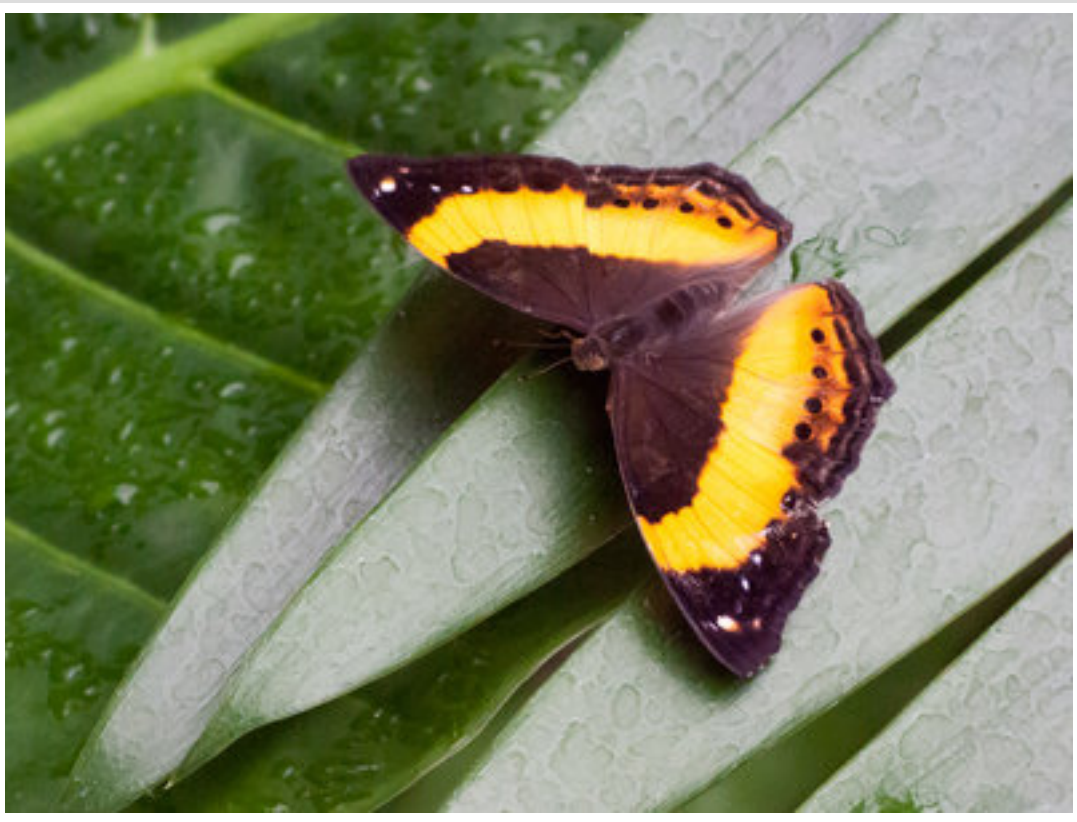


Cairn's Birdwing (egg)



Cairn's Birdwing (pupa)

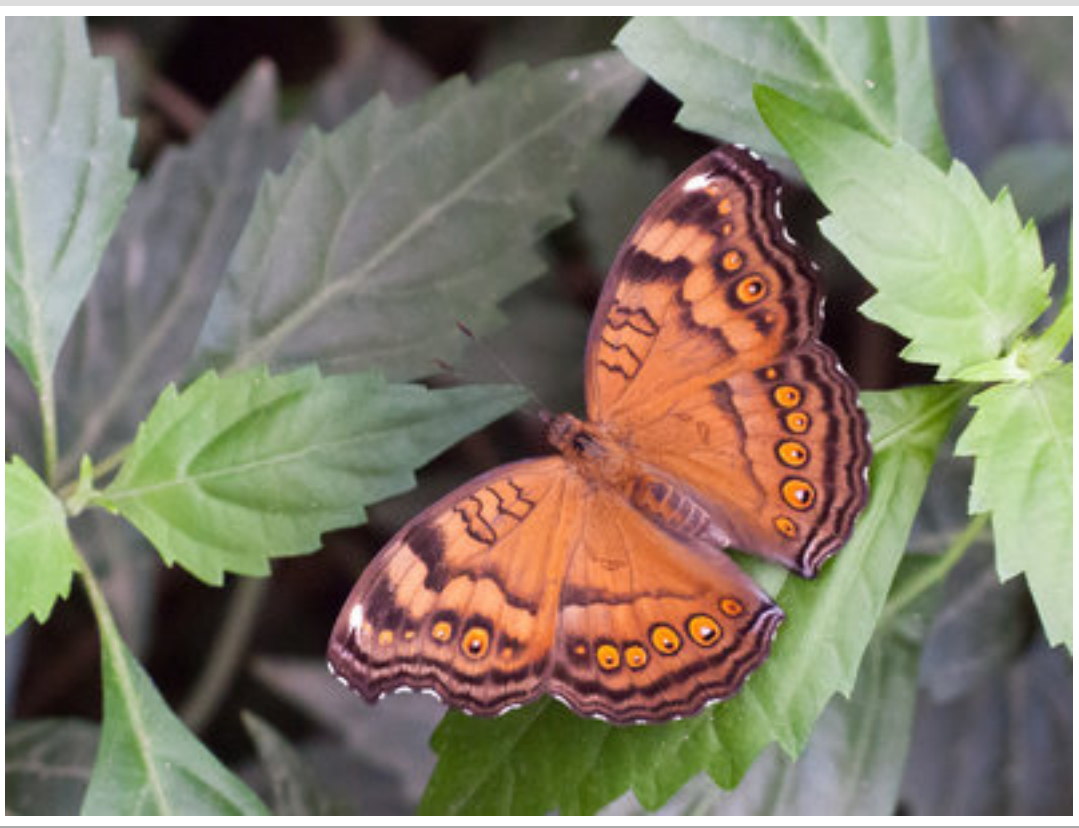
A selection of other species is below, finishing off with a non-butterfly, taken at Sydney Zoo 😊 At Melbourne Zoo I got the opportunity to walk in an open area that contained Emus, Kangaroos and Wallabees – another first for me!



Australian Lurcher



Blue-banded Eggfly



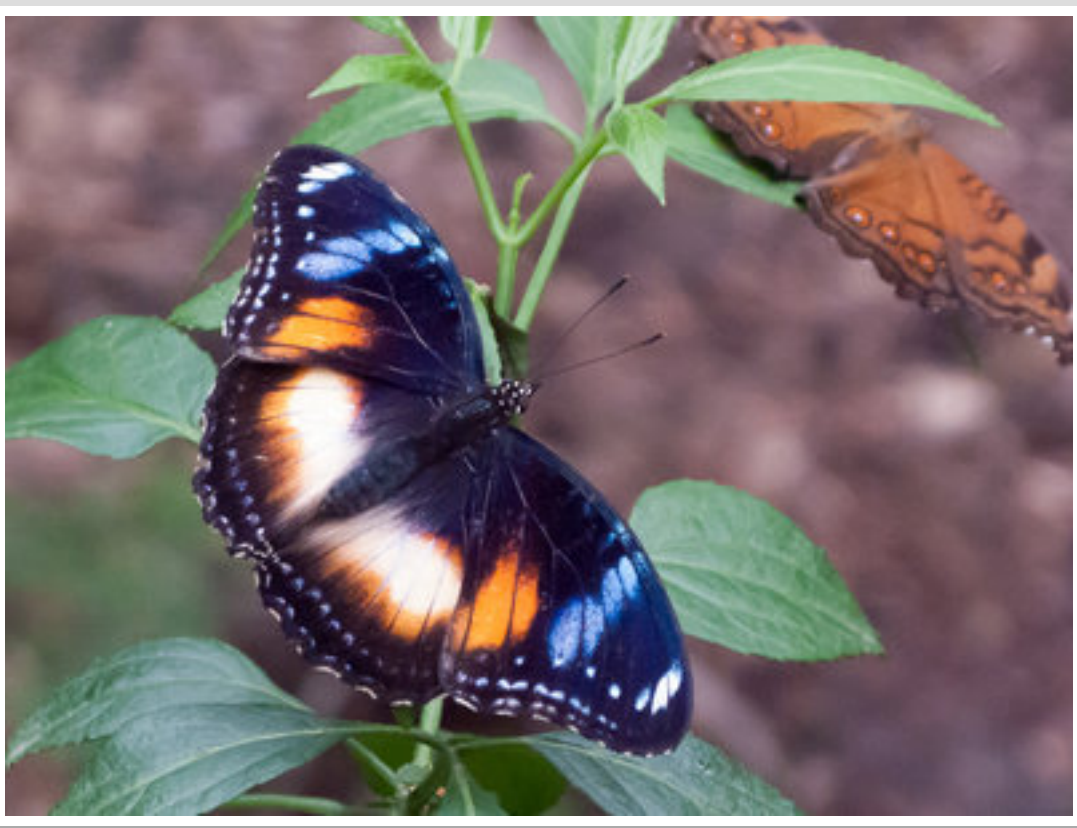
Brown Soldier



Common Crow



Common Eggfly (male)



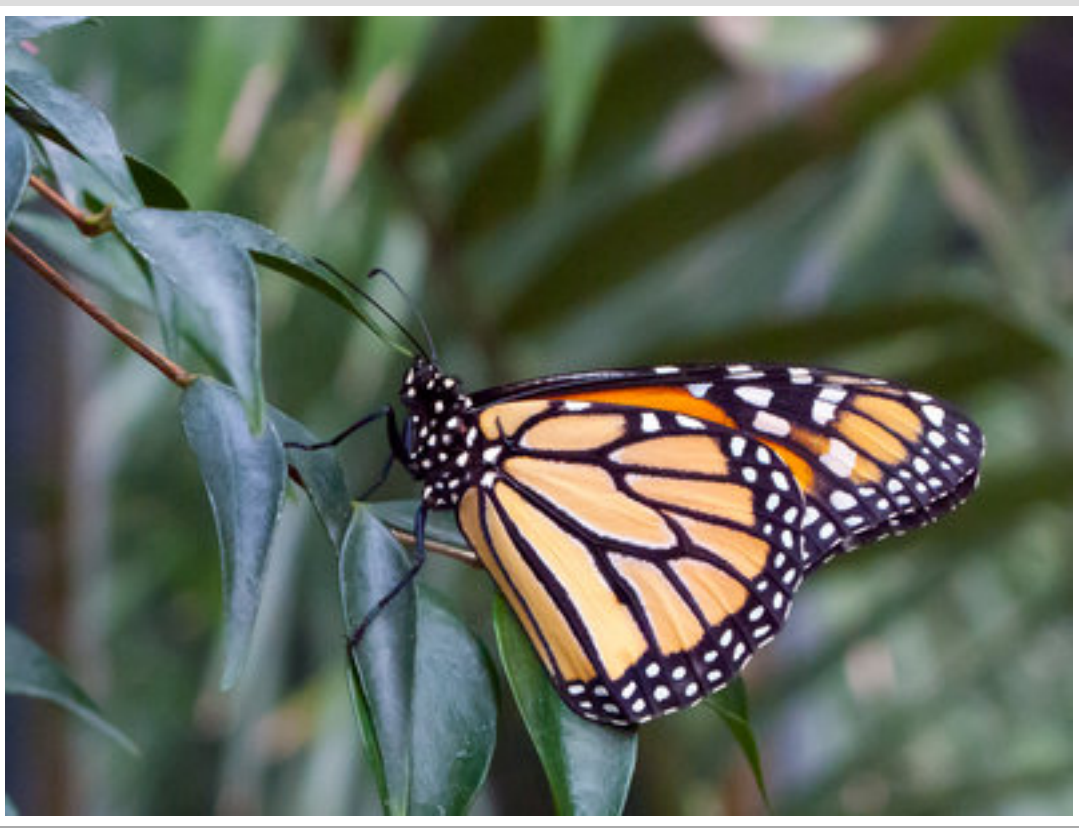
Common Eggfly (female)



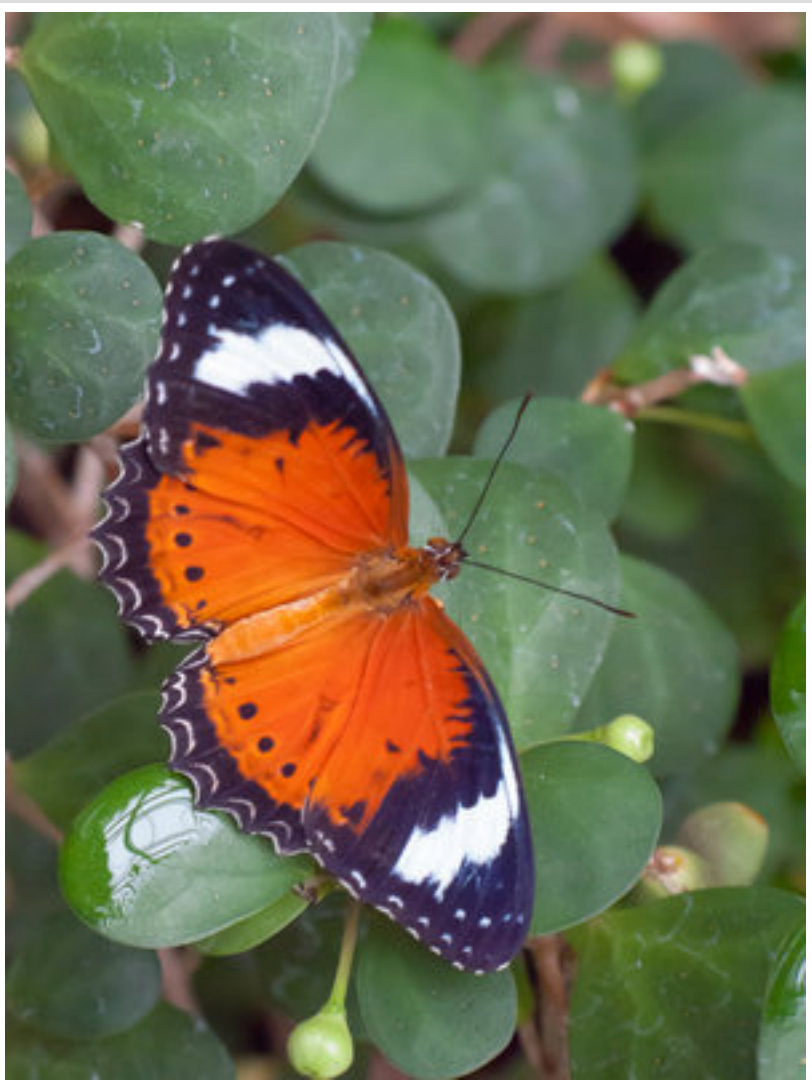
Cruiser (male)



Cruiser (female)



Monarch (called a "Wanderer" down under!)



Orange Lacewing



Orchard Swallowtail (male)



Orchard Swallowtail (female)



Not a Butterfly :)

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Mark Colvin, 28-Jul-13 12:18 PM GMT

Hi Pete.

Nice work. Glad to see you are keeping your hand in 😊😊😊

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 05-Aug-13 05:08 PM GMT

Home at Last!

I arrived home on Saturday from Melbourne, exhausted but glad to be back! Anyways ... time to check up on the last of the livestock, and I managed to get some (what I think are) interesting photos! The first 2 photos show 2 different Chalkhill Blue pupae. The 2nd looked like it still needed to "colour up" but 2 hours later the blighter had emerged and I missed the whole thing!



Chalkhill Blue pupa



Chalkhill Blue pupa (2 hours before emergence)

The Dingy Skipper larva is doing well and is starting to look nice and plump.



Dingy Skipper larva

The next 2 shots show the colouring up of the same Grayling pupa. I'm confident this will emerge in the morning, hence my comments on the images!



Grayling pupa (emergence -2 days)



Grayling pupa (emergence -1 day)

And, finally, a Silver-spotted Skipper pupa that was nestled within the grass blades of Sheep's Fescue. I'm amazed at the pupal case, clearly showing two pairs of legs, the antennae and, most surprisingly, what I believe to be marked pockets where the androconial scales (that make up the sex brand) of a male would be. Time will tell! I wonder what a female pupa looks like – I suspect that Reg Fry's image is of a female:

<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/gallery/images/upload/8287ba8436370cb656b021661d31201b.jpg>.



Silver-spotted Skipper pupa

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Mark Colvin, 05-Aug-13 05:53 PM GMT

Welcome back, Pete.

I know it will be good to get back to some real entomology ... 😄😄😄

Re: Pete Eeles

by Vince Massimo, 05-Aug-13 07:44 PM GMT

Welcome back Pete, looks like you arrived just in time 😊

Some really interesting shots, but particularly the Silver-spotted Skipper pupa. I also notice that yours has a (relatively) much longer proboscis sheath than the Reg Fry example. Could this be another feature of a male pupa compared to a female?

Regards,

Vince

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 05-Aug-13 08:45 PM GMT

"Mark Colvin" wrote:

I know it will be good to get back to some real entomology ... 😄😄😄

Too right!

"Vince Massimo" wrote:

Some really interesting shots, but particularly the Silver-spotted Skipper pupa. I also notice that yours has a (relatively) much longer proboscis sheath than the Reg Fry example. Could this be another feature of a male pupa compared to a female?

Well spotted. Could be – it's fascinating stuff for sure!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 06-Aug-13 04:08 PM GMT

Stockbridge Down

First off – I was correct – the Grayling emerged this morning and is, as we speak, hopefully procreating where he (for it was a "he") was released. I was hoping to get some nice photos, but the blighter had other ideas. So ungrateful 😊

Anyway – with much-needed therapy required – I headed off to Stockbridge Down where I had 3 surprises that I'll come to. First off, the Chalkhills are absolutely everywhere and a conservative (and unscientific) estimate would put their numbers at around the 5000 mark, but there could easily be double this number. Lots of emerging adults, mating pairs and ovipositing females. And so to the first surprise – an *ab.fowleri* male – very nice!



Chalkhill Blue (male)



Chalkhill Blue (female)



Chalkhill Blue (male) ab. fowleri

Wandering through the clouds of butterflies was "heaven on earth" as far as I'm concerned 😊 At one point the wind died down to nothing, no cars were driving along the road, and all I could hear was the sound of crickets doing their stuff. So I lay down on the ground and just gazed into space for a while. If that's not therapy, I don't know what is! Back on my feet and I decided to look for Silver-spotted Skipper. Lots of whites were flying, but one flew right by me and – WOW! – the second surprise! Not only my first Clouded Yellow of the year, but a female *f. helice*. Absolutely stunning. I was hoping to get a backlit shot but she had other ideas.



Clouded Yellow (female) f. helice

I finally found a dozen or so Silver-spotted Skipper, and was pleased to also find a couple of fresh Small Copper on the way and a male Clouded Yellow travelling at high speed across the down.



Diminutive Policeman



Silver-spotted Skipper (male)



Silver-spotted Skipper (female)

And to the last surprise of the day which, unfortunately, was a nasty surprise. A well-known (to the Hants/IOW branch) collector was on the down, looking out for aberrations. I know who he is, where he lives, his phone number, his car registration etc. etc., but the wildlife crime unit don't seem to be able to do anything about him. He's a pleasant enough chap – just amoral in my opinion. Anyway, I made my views on collecting perfectly clear before walking away, which he rebuffed by claiming that taking a dozen Chalkhill Blue from a population of thousands isn't going to do any harm. And he's probably right – but that's not the point is it? Hey ho. I now need some more therapy!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-13 04:56 PM GMT

That's great news about Stockbridge – now I need to just hope for some good weather at the weekend 😊 Congrats for the first two surprises 😊 As for the collector man 😡 is there nothing that can be done? 😞

In terms of therapy I recommend a good beer (Crafty Old Hen, Poachers Choice or Old Thumper are good) and a Midsommer Murders, always makes me feel human/ better/ relaxed 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 06-Aug-13 07:07 PM GMT

A well-known (to the Hants/IOW branch) collector....

There can't be all that many collectors these days. Does he by any chance have the initials CL? If it *IS* the same CL that I know, yes he is a pleasant enough chap. I don't agree with what he does but he is probably right – little harm in the long term.

Or was it PM?

Devil's advocate here. Without those Victorian collectors, we would be far less knowledgeable today.

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

"Wurzel" wrote:

As for the collector man 😡 is there nothing that can be done? 😊

Having looked into this several times before, it seems that getting a prosecution is extremely difficult. In fact, I'm not sure if anyone has ever been prosecuted for collecting (only for selling protected species).

"Wurzel" wrote:

In terms of therapy I recommend a good beer (Crafty Old Hen, Poachers Choice or Old Thumper are good) and a Midsommer Murders, always makes me feel human/ better/ relaxed 😊

Being teetotal my therapy is found in the wilds of Hampshire 😊

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

Does he by any chance have the initials CL? Or was it PM?

No – it was neither CL nor the Prime Minister 😊

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

Devil's advocate here. Without those Victorian collectors, we would be far less knowledgeable today.

Very true. It was also a long time ago and a lot of those specimens are in museums.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pauline, 07-Aug-13 07:39 AM GMT

I must just have missed you yesterday Pete. That was where I photographed my Clouded Yellow but not the pale version and the photos not as good as yours as I couldn't catch her nectaring. Still, my second one of the year and lovely to see.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 07-Aug-13 09:03 PM GMT

Denbies Hillside

I had a meeting in London this afternoon, so decided to pop into Denbies on the way to see what all the fuss has been about! A real pleasure to spend some time with UKB's Susie who knows this site better than most, and who pointed out various items to me as we wandered around the site. Thanks Sooz! The site is renowned for its aberrations and it wasn't long before Susie spied the first – my 2nd *ab.fowleri* in 2 days! We managed to find a few other male aberrations approaching *ab.fowleri*, but a more detailed analysis will have to wait until winter!



Chalkhill Blue (male) *ab.fowleri*



Chalkhill Blue (male) ab.



Chalkhill Blue (male) ab.

Other aberrations were also present, with a couple shown below. I believe the second to be *ab. postica-obsoleta*.



Chalkhill Blue (male) ab.



Chalkhill Blue (female) *ab. postica-obsoleta* (corrected following Neil's later comment)

But the spectacle I enjoyed the most was seeing a group of male Chalkhill Blue feeding on a dog turd 😊 Photo and video below. Wish you could have been there 😊



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuM-hUzwv7w>

We also found several Silver-spotted Skipper along the way. As I left the site, who should be coming down the hill but Matthew Oates and Patrick Barkham with a Channel 4 TV crew in tow! I started chatting with the birthday boy (it's Matthew's 60th birthday today) and realised I was being filmed! Fortunately, with a face made for radio, the footage wasn't broadcast on Channel 4 News this evening! But I really enjoyed talking with both Matthew and Patrick, as ever. Again, my thanks to Susie for really making my morning!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Hulme, 07-Aug-13 09:49 PM GMT

Hi Pete,

Lovely *ab.* shots, and most impressed with your *fowleri*, particularly the Stockbridge specimen. From memory *ab. krodeli* is the equivalent *ab.* in *bellargus*, so that's probably *ab. postcaeca*. Could be wrong ... *abs.* aren't my speciality, but certainly worth checking.

Best Wishes, Neil

Re: Pete Eeles

by Susie, 07-Aug-13 10:18 PM GMT

Thank you Pete, I had a smashing morning and really didn't want to leave the site. You are great company and pointed out far more butterflies to me than vice versa! You have my permission to visit the site any time you like 😊

Oh, and just for you, I put this together from my pictures taken this morning



Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 07-Aug-13 10:22 PM GMT

"Susie" wrote:

Oh, and just for you, I put this together from my pictures taken this morning

[attachment=0:1i9ymco1]936520_10151824950886972_242932573_n.jpg[/attachment:1i9ymco1]

LOL 😂 [I mentioned to Susie that I didn't really like images that have artistic effects applied 😊]

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 07-Aug-13 10:44 PM GMT

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

From memory *ab. krodeli* is the equivalent *ab.* in *bellargus*, so that's probably *ab. postcaeca*

Thanks Neil. You are, of course, absolutely right! Got my species mixed up! Given the rules of precedence, while this is *ab. postcaeca* (Leeds), the "correct" name is *ab. postica-obsoleta* (Tutt), which really rolls off the tongue. Not. 😂

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 10-Aug-13 09:13 PM GMT

Back on the Green Isle - Day 1

I'm in Ireland with two of my sons for a few days, having taken the ferry from Fishguard to Rosslare on Thursday afternoon, before travelling up to Dublin. Yesterday was spent in the capital and, having taken a tour around the city, my two sons decided to make a beeline for the Guinness factory, so I decided to drive over to the North Bull Island Nature Reserve. Here I caught my first glimpse of Meadow Brown *ssp. iernes*. The key distinguishing feature (as shown on the species page) is "Male forewing upperside has a well-defined orange band". Unfortunately, only one male was willing to show his upperside for a photo (see below for a poor shot), but I can confirm that the males do, indeed, have large orange patches on the forewings, and some specimens of this subspecies look very much like an overgrown Gatekeeper when in flight! Most of the adults are past their best, but I hope to catch up with this subspecies again tomorrow when in Co. Kerry.

While at the site I was fortunate to meet Frank Smyth, who is one of a small number of prolific recorders based in Dublin. We had a good natter about a variety of subjects, and Frank pointed me in the direction of a Grayling colony on the reserve. Unfortunately, I failed to find any Grayling at the site and the weather certainly didn't help - I was in danger of getting the biggest soaking I've had since I rescued a brick from drowning back in my schooldays

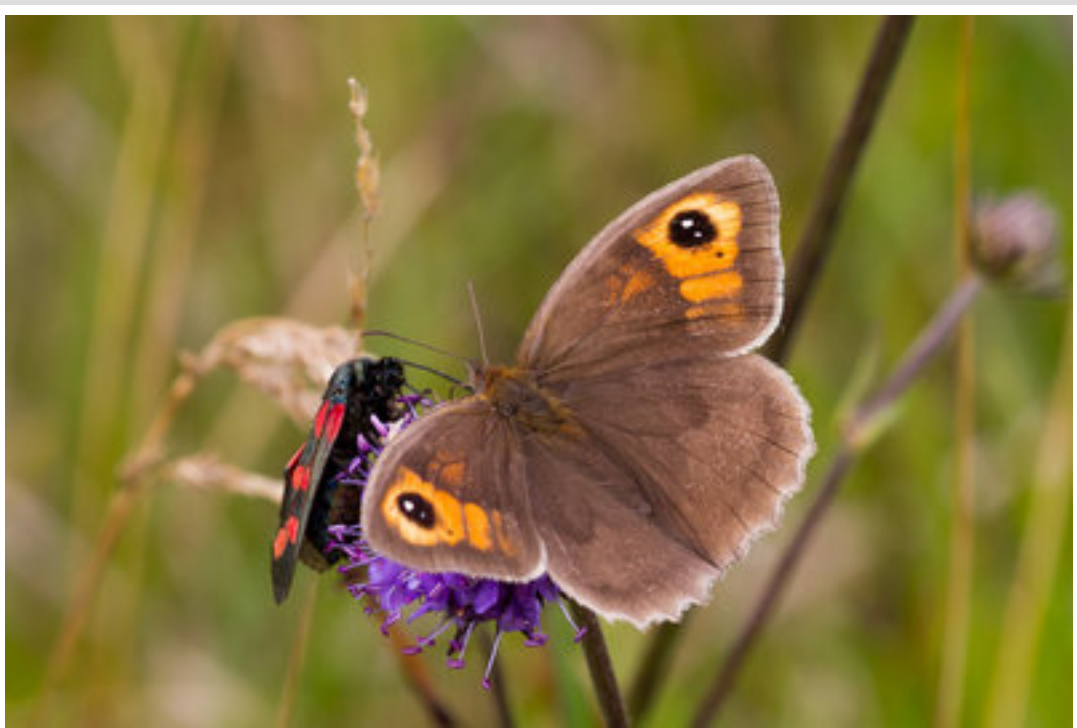




Meadow Brown ssp. iernes (male)



Meadow Brown ssp. iernes (male)



Meadow Brown ssp. iernes (female)



Meadow Brown ssp. iernes (female)

The main reason for visiting, however, was to take a look at the progress of the Marsh Fritillary larvae (I found 2 females laying on the same leaf a while back). Frank assured me that there were quite a few large larval webs to be found, and I was sure he must have been referring to the one that stemmed from the 2 egg batches I saw being laid. However, once I'd relocated these, the total web must have been less than a foot wide. A further search quickly resulted in more larval webs, ranging from those that must be an amalgamation of 4 or 5 egg batches, up to a few that were absolutely massive – up to 5 or 6 feet in length and 2 or 3 feet wide. I was rather gobsmacked at the number of larval webs in general, and had to be very careful where I tread! In the space of 30 minutes I must have found at least 30 webs, several of which were part of large amalgamations.



Marsh Fritillary larval web



Marsh Fritillary larval web (closeup)



Marsh Fritillary larval web (the result of several egg batches)



Marsh Fritillary larval web (5 feet wide!)

And finally, I also came across a few summer brood Green-veined White *ssp. britannica* which exhibited quite striking markings when compared with those back home. They seemed to exhibit markings that were, once again, somewhat different from the Green-veined White I'd seen earlier in the year at Craigavon Lakes in Northern Ireland and in the Burren.



Green-veined White ssp. britannica (female)



Green-veined White ssp. britannica (female)

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 10-Aug-13 09:50 PM GMT

Ireland – Day 2

Today was spent travelling from east to west, eventually ending up in Galway. A stop for a coffee overlooking Galway Bay, with the Burren looking imposing on the other side of the bay, looked quite enticing from a Lepidoptera perspective! And so, on the way down to Limerick (where we're based for the last 2 days of the trip), I decided to pop in at the south side of the Burren – at Boston. I had no idea what I might find, but I knew the area and was hopeful that I might catch up with some specialties. First stop was at a small nature reserve just before you get to Boston. I was hoping to get a decent shot of a male Meadow Brown and, although I found a few, none was posing for pictures and the weather certainly didn't help! And then, out of the blue, this chap landed right in front of me, which I really wasn't expecting!



Brown Hairstreak (male)

We carried on to Boston, and I couldn't have been on the limestone pavement for 30 seconds, when I caught sight of my first ever Grayling *ssp. clarensis*, which lived up to its reputation of being extremely pale when compared with other subspecies and looked really "washed out" despite some being very fresh! These were, to my surprise, the commonest species by far, with one being flushed up every minute or so!



Grayling ssp. clarensis (male)



Grayling ssp. clarensis (male)



Grayling ssp. clarensis (female)

One species I was hoping to find at some point, but isn't something you can really plan to see with any certainty, was the Small Copper *ssp. hibernica*. Fortunately, one (and only one) was guarding his territory in a sheltered spot, and exhibiting the broad orange band on the hindwing that is one of the characteristics of this subspecies.



Small Copper ssp. hibernica (male)

And finally, the other nice surprise of the afternoon, a lovely male Brimstone *ssp. gravesi*. It definitely lived up to its reputation of having a greener underside, since this male (and it definitely is a male – characteristically yellow in flight!) looked just like a female when settled! The two photos below are of the same individual, the second shot being backlit.



Brimstone ssp. gravesi (male)



Brimstone ssp. gravesi (male)

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-13 10:17 PM GMT

Fantastic images Pete 😊 Sometimes I can't see much difference in the "sub species/races" and think that sometimes it's just a geographical decision – they're on an island so they're different almost 😊 But the Grayling do look much paler than those I've seen this year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 11-Aug-13 08:32 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel!

"Wurzel" wrote:

Sometimes I can't see much difference in the "sub species/races" and think that sometimes it's just a geographical decision – they're on an island so they're different almost 😊

Well, it's always geographic separation that results in the formation of subspecies, so that's certainly true! And yes, the difference can be remarkably subtle!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 11-Aug-13 10:06 AM GMT

Fascinating and instructive Pete.

Anyway, despite visits to central Ireland in both the spring and summer, I have yet to see Brimstone. *The Burren* in 2011 was fascinating if only for the

three days of non-stop heavy rain! Of course no butterflies seen then.

We have an unwanted fully-furnished "second home" in Co.Cavan so we visit Ireland regularly. (*House going cheap if anyone's interested: the housing market collapsed after the boom years*). We had planned going this month but my knee problems put a stop to that. A visit is planned again next spring and maybe before as well.

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 13-Aug-13 12:26 PM GMT

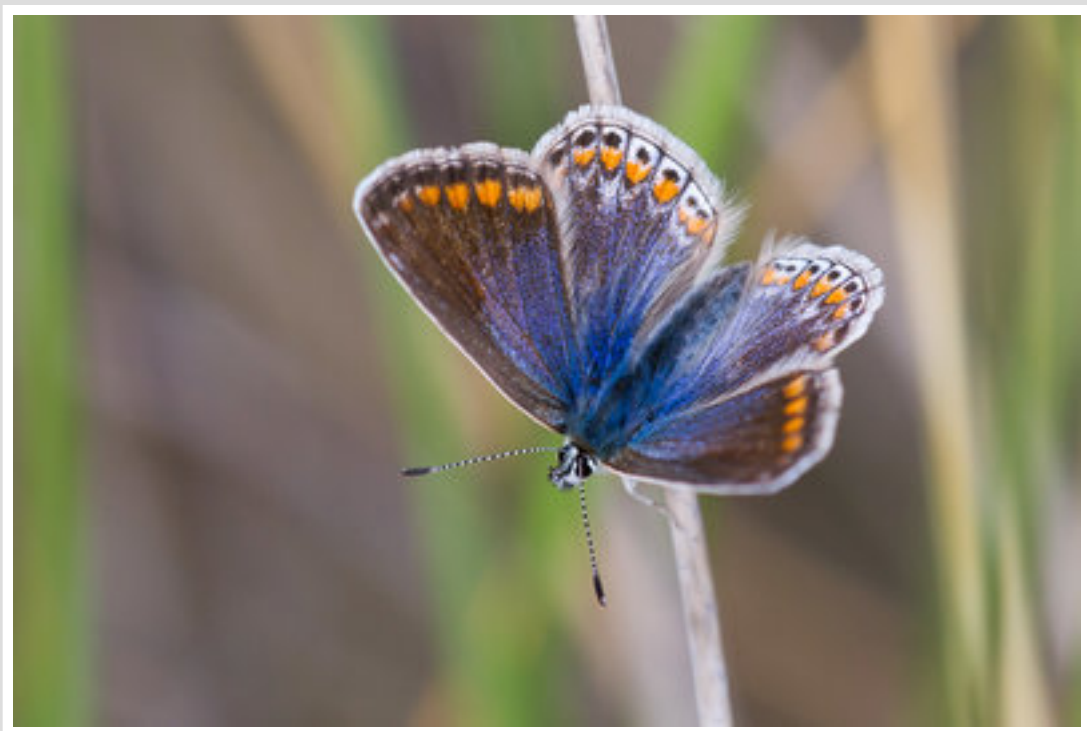
Thanks Jack. Yes, trips to Ireland are always governed by the weather and I do consider myself very lucky to have found a few sunny spells!

Ireland - Part 3

The last Irish subspecies I was on the lookout for was Grayling *ssp. hibernica*. Despite travelling 200+ miles in search of the beastly, I drew a blank, and this particular nemesis will have to now wait until next year (at least I have an excuse to go back)! I fear I was simply too late in the season. Visits to Dunquin on the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry, Knockadoon in County Cork, and The Raven in County Wexford provided stunning scenery nonetheless. The last site was particularly productive, despite arriving at 6pm. Common Blue and Small Copper abounded and I managed to get some shots of both. As I've said before, the female Common Blue look quite normal to me and I wonder if *ssp. mariscolore* is confined to north-west Ireland only. I also managed to get some underside shots of the Small Coppers, showing the prominent red band on the underside that this a characteristic of this subspecies, as well as the wide orange band on the hindwing upperside. I also had an obliging Red Admiral ovipositing while at Knockadoon.



Common Blue female ssp. mariscolore?



Common Blue female ssp. mariscolore?



Small Copper ssp. hibernica (male)



Small Copper ssp. hibernica (male)



Small Copper ssp. hibernica (female)



Small Copper ssp. hibernica (female)



Red Admiral ovum

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 17-Aug-13 03:22 PM GMT

I've gotten out when I can over the last few days – some shots below. The highlights were spending time with UKB's Mark Colvin watching fantastic numbers of butterflies in Chiddingfold Forest, and also finding a couple of Holly Blue ova on the ivy at home, which both hatched the following day.

Chiddingfold Forest



Wood White (male)



Wood White ovum

Greenham Common



Small Copper (male)



Small Tortoiseshell



Clouded Yellow (male)

Home



Holly Blue ovum



Holly Blue 1st instar larva (with egg to the side)



Holly Blue 1st instar larva



Holly Blue 1st instar larva

Cheers,
- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 21-Aug-13 12:12 AM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

The last Irish subspecies I was on the lookout for was Grayling *ssp. hibernica*. Despite travelling 200+ miles in search of the beastly, I drew a blank, and this particular nemesis will have to now wait until next year (at least I have an excuse to go back)! I fear I was simply too late in the season. Visits to Dunquin on the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry, Knockadoon in County

It Ain't Over until ...

An unexpected turn of events at work required me to be back in Dublin tomorrow. Working out the logistics meant that I could, feasibly, spend some time today butterflying. Seeing that the weather was going to be ok, I trawled the excellent ButterflyIreland website for current and old records of Grayling (*ssp. hibernica*). I was surprised that both this year, and in past years, there had been sightings of Grayling well into September, many sightings at Ballyteigue Burrow Nature Reserve in County Wexford, on the south coast. A brief correspondence with David Nash confirmed that the place is one of the best sites in Ireland for Grayling!

And so a 0415 start, 0640 flight and 2 1/2 hour drive found me at the reserve – but the place is huge and the Grayling (I was told) were in an area about 4 miles from where I parked. The reserve is essentially a long spit, and there's not really any way to get closer to the area I needed to visit. Since I could do with the exercise 😊, I loaded up with water and some food, and headed off.

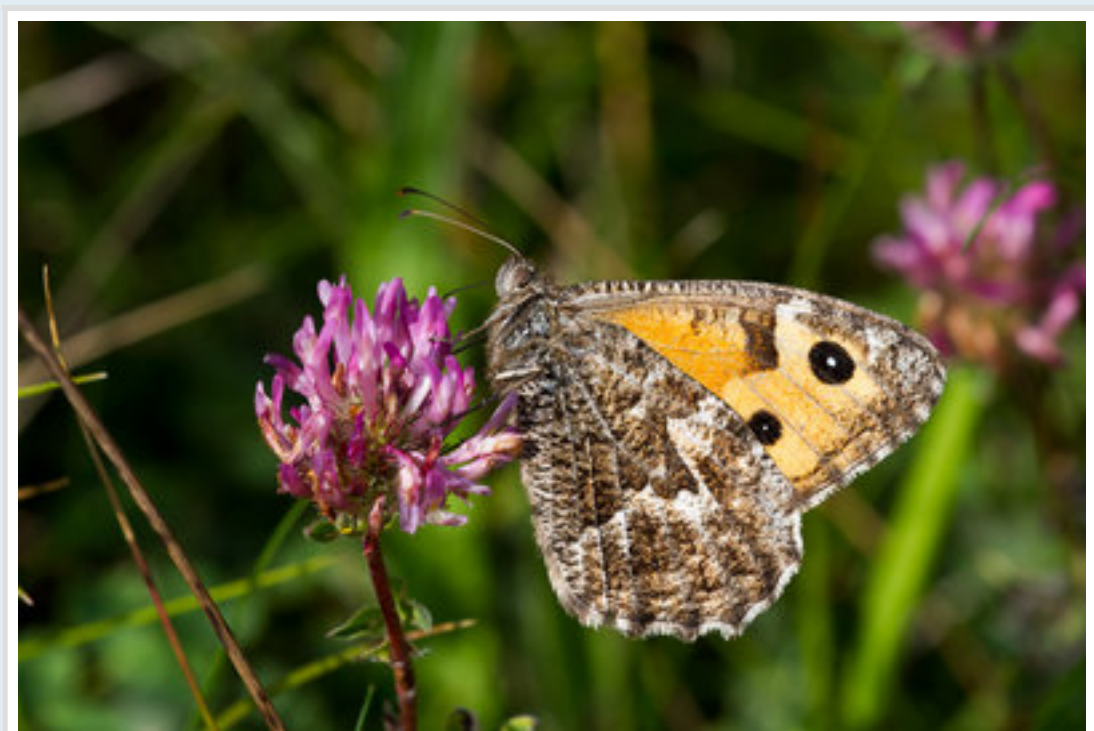


Ballyteigue Burrow Nature Reserve

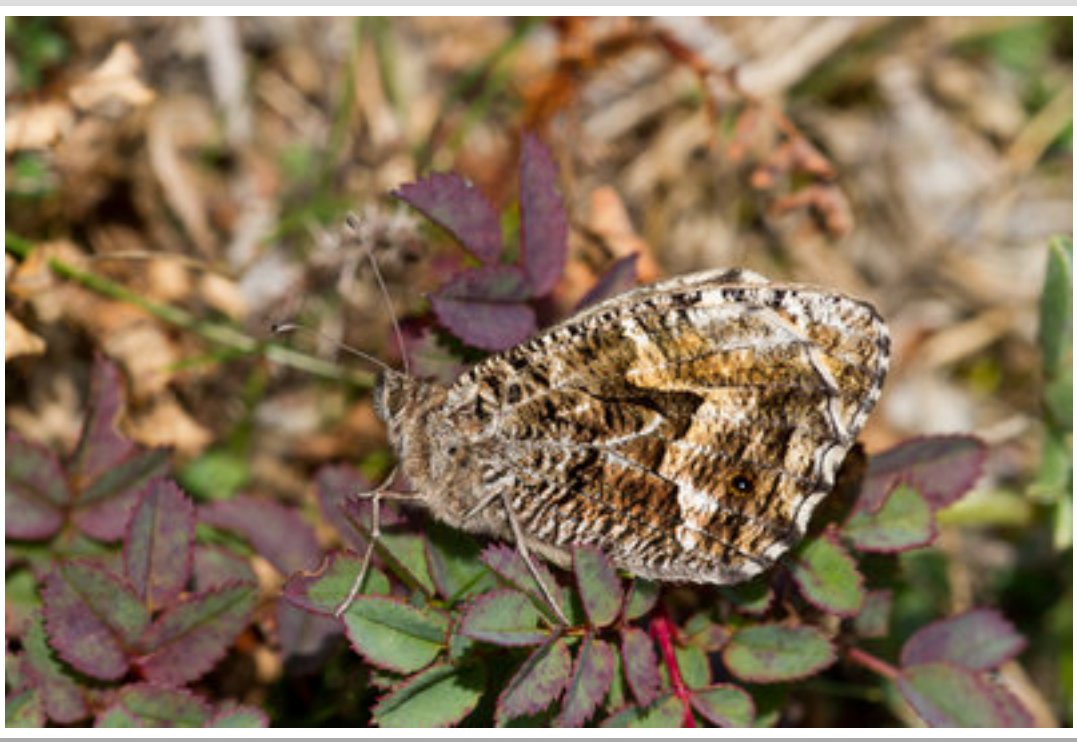
Quite fresh Meadow Brown (*ssp. iernes*) were flying but I had to be single-minded and find my nemesis! After (I estimate) 2 miles, I saw what I thought was a Dark Green Fritillary but, blow me down, it was the largest Grayling I've ever seen – an absolutely huge female Grayling *ssp. hibernica* flashing its orange-brown upperside as it flew! This area produced a dozen Grayling in total and it was fascinating watching males guard their territories and lurch up at anything that flew by.



Grayling ssp. hibernica (male)

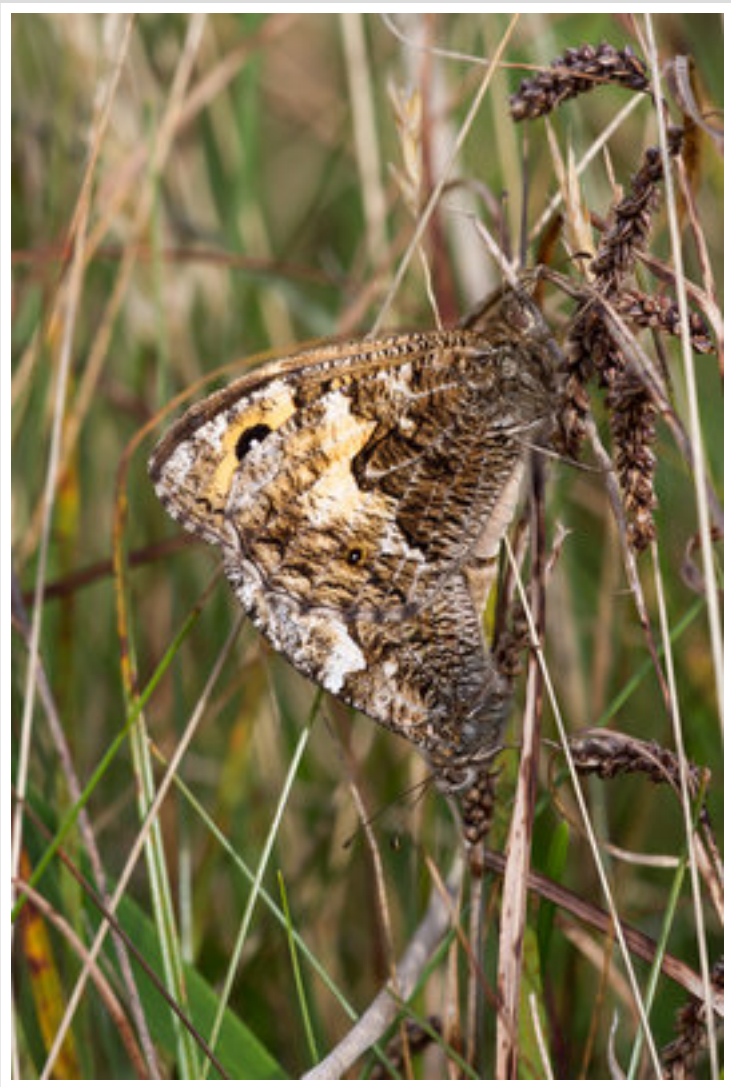


Grayling ssp. hibernica (female)



Grayling ssp. hibernica (female)

Moving on to the recommended area, Grayling were everywhere and I estimate I saw at least 50 individuals in total, including females egg-laying and a couple of pairs "in cop". But the highlight (after several failed attempts on this trip and others) was filming the Grayling courtship ritual to its conclusion – a mating pair! Watching the male draw the female's antennae over his sex brands seemed to put the female under a spell since, as you can see, he moves around to the side to mate with her. Top stuff! I've now seen 5 of the 6 Grayling subspecies – *ssp. atlantica* is definitely a 2014 target!



Grayling ssp. hibernica (pair in cop)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNat4V3XlwI>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vHzIVvIUv8>

With the Grayling "in the bag" (not literally!) I then searched out the Meadow Brown, which were much fresher than those I'd seen at North Bull Island in Dublin on previous trips. As luck would have it, I managed to get the very shot I was after – an upperside of a male Meadow Brown *ssp. iernes* that has extensive orange patches and which, back home, would almost certainly be mistaken for a female!



Meadow Brown ssp. iernes (male)



Meadow Brown ssp. iernes (male)



Meadow Brown ssp. iernes (female)



Meadow Brown ssp. iernes (female)

To top it off, I not only caught up with a freshly-emerged Small Copper *ssp. hibernica*, but also saw half a dozen Wall to boot, topping off one of the best butterflying days I've had this year!



Small Copper ssp. hibernica (female)



Small Copper ssp. hibernica (female)



Wall (female)

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Mark Colvin, 21-Aug-13 03:41 PM GMT

Hi Pete,

Great work 😊😊😊

I particularly liked the video footage and think you did exceptionally well to capture the actual pairing ...

Will we recognise you after all that exercise 😊

Speak soon ...

Kindest regards. Mark

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 21-Aug-13 05:04 PM GMT

Yes, really well done to capture the pairing. What a special moment!

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 21-Aug-13 06:57 PM GMT

Cracking shots and video Pete 😊 When I questioned the classification I guess I was a little vague what I should have asked is why they are considered a subspecies and not just part of a cline, is there sufficient genetic difference to make these sub-species? 😊 If this hasn't been checked then what about the Wall Brown it's on an island and it could show exceedingly subtle variation from individuals on this side of the Irish Sea so how come it isn't considered a sub-species along with the others? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 21-Aug-13 08:14 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

why they are considered a subspecies and not just part of a cline, is there sufficient genetic difference to make these sub-species? 😊 If this hasn't been checked then what about the Wall Brown it's on an island and it could show exceedingly subtle variation from individuals on this side of the Irish Sea so how come it isn't considered a sub-species along with the others? 😊

A similar thought had crossed my mind.

Does there have to be some kind of visual difference to attain ssp status? Although I can see such a difference in the Meadow Brown, I have to confess that I can't with the Small Copper. So, why is *phlaeas* considered a subspecies yet Wall Brown is not?

Brown Hairstreak must be the best geographical candidate for subspecies status in Ireland, as it is only found in the far west and it isn't a butterfly that flies long distances, meaning that there can be no dilution of the genes from the British mainland. However, *betulae* isn't terribly prone to visual aberrations whereas Graylings, for example, are.

Am I the only one that's confused?

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 21-Aug-13 08:42 PM GMT

Thanks for all the kind comments 😊 Yes – that Grayling "moment" was, indeed, very special!

"Wurzel" wrote:

why they are considered a subspecies and not just part of a cline

According to the web, a cline is "A continuum with an infinite number of gradations from one extreme to the other". While this applies to species such as Large Heath and Speckled Wood, this wouldn't seem to apply to Grayling (i.e. there are deemed to be distinct and specific differences between subspecies and these characteristics don't "blend" into one another).

"Wurzel" wrote:

is there sufficient genetic difference to make these sub-species?

As Guy once remarked, there are no such things as species (let alone subspecies!) and he's right, given that something like 25% of species hybridise in the wild if you look across all of the European species (see <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/taxome/jim/pap/decimon&mallet09%20print.pdf>). A species is a man-made distinction that is an aid to classifying and communicating groups of individuals with common characteristics and a subspecies is a man-made distinction too. As far as I'm aware, while some DNA analysis has certainly allowed us to be more accurate in terms of the identification of species (and species "lumped" or "split" accordingly), the same analysis hasn't been performed for subspecies (except for those that got "lumped" into a species which presumably have become subspecies). In other words, I believe that the vast majority of subspecies have been identified purely on their physical appearance (and not DNA analysis).

"Wurzel" wrote:

what about the Wall Brown it's on an island and it could show exceedingly subtle variation from individuals on this side of the Irish Sea so how come it isn't considered a sub-species along with the others? 😊

Because it exhibits no consistent physical differences from those on the mainland.

"David M" wrote:

Does there have to be some kind of visual difference to attain ssp status?

Yes – according to the current approach for the identification of subspecies.

"David M" wrote:

I have to confess that I can't with the Small Copper. So, why is *phlaeas* considered a subspecies yet Wall Brown is not?

Because Small Copper does consistently express a difference (even if it's subtle) whereas Wall doesn't. To be honest, for some subspecies, you'll only notice the differences if you're looking at museum specimens!

"David M" wrote:

Brown Hairstreak must be the best geographical candidate for subspecies status in Ireland, as it is only found in the far west and it isn't a butterfly that flies long distances, meaning that there can be no dilution of the genes from the British mainland. However, *betulae* isn't terribly prone to visual aberrations whereas Graylings, for example, are.

Yep – Brown Hairstreak in Ireland look identical to those on the mainland, whereas Grayling don't. Simple as that! Now – if you were to look at the gene pool instead, you might have a very different story! But as things stand, subspecies are identified by physical appearance only.

"David M" wrote:

Am I the only one that's confused?

Nope – Wurzel is confused too 😊 Just kidding. Good discussion.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 21-Aug-13 08:54 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Brown Hairstreak in Ireland look identical to those on the mainland, whereas Grayling don't. Simple as that! Now – if you were to look at the gene pool instead, you might have a very different story! But as things stand, subspecies are identified by physical appearance only.

Thanks for the explanation, Pete. I guess Brown Hairstreaks will have been geographically isolated from the mainland for longer, perhaps, than any other Irish species. One would suppose that at a genetic level this would be expressed, yet it doesn't naturally translate into physically observable differences.

One thing that's always intrigued me though...

...Cryptic Wood Whites. To my knowledge there's no record of them from the British mainland. So, is this a butterfly that was once *sinapis* that has diverged so much that it is considered a separate species, rather than subspecies?

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 21-Aug-13 10:01 PM GMT

I don't want to butt in on Pete's page, but it might just be helpful to note that some of the comments seem to equate the concept of a discrete population with the concept of a subspecies. The taxonomic level of subspecies is wider than that of population (although we have no standard, scientific nomenclature for it, a truly discrete breeding population is a valid taxonomic level). For a population or group of populations to be usefully classed as a subspecies there needs to have been divergence, and as Pete has said, the current approach (following the historical approach) still tends to require morphological divergence. I've often quoted Kudrna's assertion that the only truly natural taxonomic levels (for higher organisms) are the individual and the breeding community, or population. All other levels are to a greater or lesser extent arbitrary and introduced essentially so that humans can work some kind of manageable structure into the fluid and constantly changing kaleidoscope of nature.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 21-Aug-13 10:21 PM GMT

Cheers Pete for clearing that up in a nutshell then the sub-species are formed through Allopatric speciation mainly and is these cases obviously and not

para or sympatric speciation. Sorted I was just worried that butterflying would go the same way as birding with all the "splitting and clumping" 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 23-Aug-13 03:58 PM GMT

"David M" wrote:

Cryptic Wood Whites. To my knowledge there's no record of them from the British mainland. So, is this a butterfly that was once *sinapis* that has diverged so much that it is considered a separate species, rather than subspecies?

When it comes to evolution and speciation, I suppose the only correct answer is that *sinapis* and *juvernica* share a common ancestor. Just as man didn't evolve from a Chimp 😊 There's a white paper discussing the DNA analysis and hypothesis for the distribution, but I don't think it's freely available online ("Unexpected layers of cryptic diversity in wood white Leptidea butterflies" – Dinca et al.).

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

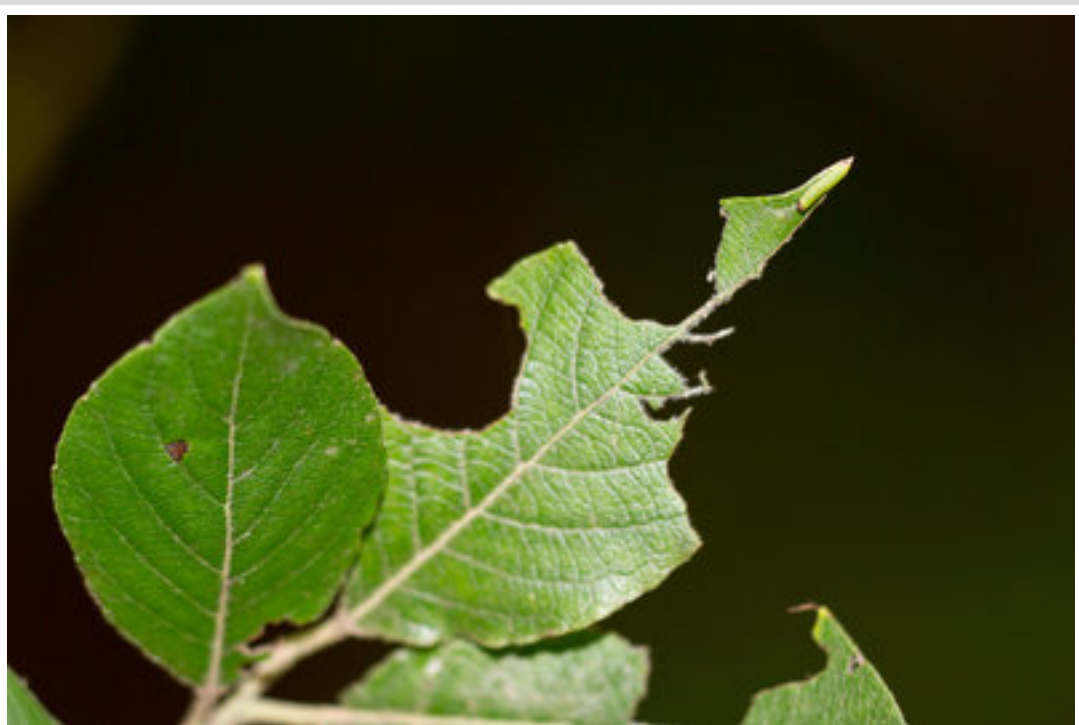
by Pete Eeles, 23-Aug-13 04:22 PM GMT

Notes and Views from a Wiltshire Wood

Given the "explosion" of Purple Emperor sightings this year, I figured that this has to be the year to go looking for the immature stages – especially since I've never found them in the wild before. The rationale is that if I can't find them this year, I never will! And so I set off this morning to a Wiltshire wood known for its *iris* population. After 10 minutes of getting my bearings, I headed off down a forest ride, looking at any willow that was in full or partial shade, as well as the shaded areas of willows that were in full sun (which is normally "deep inside" the willow). I don't know if it's beginner's luck, but the 3rd willow I searched (*Salix caprea*) had a 1st instar larva (at least, I think it's 1st instar) sitting on a leaf tip, facing toward the base of the leaf (which showed characteristic feeding damage). After another hour of searching I finally found an egg with the caterpillar fully-formed inside and is probably going to hatch within hours! So – 2 immature stages in 2 hours – not the best of records but not bad for a beginner with this species 😊



A shady willow – home to an *iris* larva



Purple Emperor – 1st instar larva



Purple Emperor – 1st instar larva



Purple Emperor egg

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 23-Aug-13 04:46 PM GMT

Thanks for the response, Pete, and well done on the *iris* cat and egg. You're really diversifying this year!

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 23-Aug-13 06:17 PM GMT

That last picture is quite amazing, Pete! The caterpillar must be very, very close to making its bid for freedom ...

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Nick Broomer, 23-Aug-13 07:20 PM GMT

Stunning photo of the PE ovum Pete, great work.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Mark Colvin, 23-Aug-13 07:28 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:
Purple Emperor egg

I can only think of one word – BRILLIANT ... 😄😄😄

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 23-Aug-13 07:33 PM GMT

Pete. That PE egg. Is it a male or female? 😊😊

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by Willow, 23-Aug-13 08:19 PM GMT

Just fascinating Pete...and a great set of images too. Seek and you will find 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

Re: Pete Eeles

by Vince Massimo, 23-Aug-13 10:07 PM GMT

Great finds Pete 😊, but that egg is particularly unique. When did you get the portable MRI scanner?

Regards,

Vince

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pawpawsaurus, 23-Aug-13 10:18 PM GMT

That photo of the egg is absolutely amazing, both for the subject matter and for the photographic quality.

I assumed that it had been taken using an MP-E 65mm lens, but the EXIF says otherwise. How the heck did you manage a shot like that with a 150mm lens? Were extension tubes involved, or a supplementary lens, or both? I am rather jealous.

Paul

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 23-Aug-13 10:24 PM GMT

Thanks for the kind comments everyone – rather unexpected! To be honest, I was a little disappointed that it wasn't the typical "plum pudding" colouring ... until I saw what I'd captured on camera!

"Pawpawsaurus" wrote:

I assumed that it had been taken using an MP-E 65mm lens, but the EXIF says otherwise. How the heck did you manage a shot like that with a 150mm lens? Were extension tubes involved, or a supplementary lens, or both?

Canon 7D, Sigma 150mm macro, 3 extension tubes, tripod, flash, Wimberley plamp, luck 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by MikeOxon, 23-Aug-13 10:45 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Canon 7D, Sigma 150mm macro, 3 extension tubes, tripod, flash, Wimberley plamp, luck

Indeed a remarkable picture, Pete, and you missed "application of excellent technique" off your list.

Mike

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 24-Aug-13 08:13 AM GMT

Photo of the year I reckon. The depth of field is quite extraordinary. I can't read the Exif so tell us what F stop was used?

And I had to look up "*Wimberley plamp*". What a wonderful name for a piece of kit!

One of its quoted uses is: *"To hold a small shade to block light from hitting your lens and causing flare"*.
I sometimes use my hand to shade the lens from direct sun, so from now on I am in *"Wimberley Mode"*.

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 24-Aug-13 09:11 AM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

Photo of the year I reckon. The depth of field is quite extraordinary. I can't read the Exif so tell us what F stop was used?

Thanks Jack 😊

Exif Gobbledegook

Exposure Time (1 / Shutter Speed) {0x829A} = 1/10 second ==> 0.1 second
Lens F-Number / F-Stop {0x829D} = 63/10 ==> f/6.3
Exposure Program {0x8822} = shutter priority (4)
ISO Speed Ratings {0x8827} = 200
EXIF Version {0x9000} = 0230
Original Date/Time {0x9003} = 2013:08:23 12:18:22
Digitization Date/Time {0x9004} = 2013:08:23 12:18:22
Shutter Speed Value (APEX) {0x9201} = 3321928/1000000
Shutter Speed (Exposure Time) = 1/10 second
Aperture Value (APEX) {0x9202} = 5310704/1000000
Aperture = f/6.3
Exposure Bias (EV) {0x9204} = -2/3 ==> -0.67
Max Aperture Value (APEX) {0x9205} = 3/1 ==> 3
Max Aperture = f/2.83
Metering Mode {0x9207} = pattern / multi-segment (5)
Flash {0x9209} = Flash fired, compulsory flash mode
Focal Length {0x920A} = 150/1 mm ==> 150 mm
Original Subsecond Time {0x9291} = 45
Digitized Subsecond Time {0x9292} = 45
Focal Plane X-Resolution {0xA20E} = 5184000/907 ==> 5715.55
Focal Plane Y-Resolution {0xA20F} = 3456000/595 ==> 5808.4
Focal Plane X/Y-Resolution Unit {0xA210} = inch (2)
Custom Rendered {0xA401} = normal process (0)
Exposure Mode {0xA402} = auto exposure (0)
White Balance {0xA403} = auto (0)
Scene Capture Type {0xA406} = standard (0)
Body Serial Number {0xA431} = 1781015255
Lens Specification {0xA432} = 150-150mm FNaN-NaN
Lens Model {0xA434} = 150mm

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pauline, 24-Aug-13 09:32 AM GMT

Just seen your recent shots Pete. Wow! They are stunning. I can only imagine the skill and dedication needed to get such amazing results and quite possibly the best photo I have seen this season.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Freeman, 24-Aug-13 10:21 AM GMT

I can only echo the other comments Pete, brilliant and fascinating stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Vince Massimo, 24-Aug-13 10:28 AM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

And I had to look up *"Wimberley plamp"*. What a wonderful name for a piece of kit!

One of its quoted uses is: *"To hold a small shade to block light from hitting your lens and causing flare"*.

I suspect Pete used the plamp to hold the tree steady 😊

Vince

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 24-Aug-13 10:38 AM GMT

Pete wrote:

TThanks Jack 😊

And thanks to you for all the Exif data.

But you're slacking Pete! You still haven't told us whether it is male or female 🙄 ? 🙄

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 24-Aug-13 04:49 PM GMT

Thanks again for all of the kind comments!

"Vince Massimo" wrote:

I suspect Pete used the plamp to hold the tree steady 😊

Indeed I did!

Wiltshire Wood – Part 2

This stuff is addictive – as evidenced by others that have succumbed to *iris* and I can see myself making several trips over the autumn and winter to check up on progress! And my first return visit was today; I just had to go back to see whether or not that egg had hatched and, indeed, it had! And so welcome to the world, Egbert 😊 (I needed something to remind me that I found him as an egg!). When I found him he had eaten all of his eggshell and had moved to an adjacent leaf and was spinning up a silk pad. By the time I'd left he'd finished and had turned himself around to face the base of the leaf.





What I didn't realise is that the larvae will sit on the edge of a curled leaf and out of sight – something I hadn't been checking. And so I thought "this must be a good tree since Egbert's mum selected it" and almost immediately found another larva – this time a 2nd instar larva with horns, and clearly the result of a different set of parents given the difference in age. I've christened this chap "Blackadder" for no other reason that I wanted to christen the first larva I found yesterday "Baldrick" since he's missing his "horns" and is therefore "bald". Anyway – something that will help me remember what stage/instar I found these guys in! Almost all Blackadder characters 😊



Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 24-Aug-13 06:07 PM GMT

I look forward very much to following these over the autumn, winter and spring, Pete!! I hope they'll be joined by Percy and Queenie ...

As I'm sure you're aware, wild larvae change resting leaf regularly and occasionally even disappear off the radar for a while, before returning to their 'home patch'. So do keep going back even if you think you've lost them!

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Hulme, 24-Aug-13 06:27 PM GMT

Great stuff Pete. Let's hope you can get such a detailed record all the way through to emergence.
BWs, Neil

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 24-Aug-13 07:17 PM GMT

Thanks for the advice, Guy!

"Sussex Kipper" wrote:

Let's hope you can get such a detailed record all the way through to emergence.

Thanks Neil – I'll see what I can do! Given the postings by Vince and others on the site, there's a lot to live up to!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 25-Aug-13 04:55 PM GMT

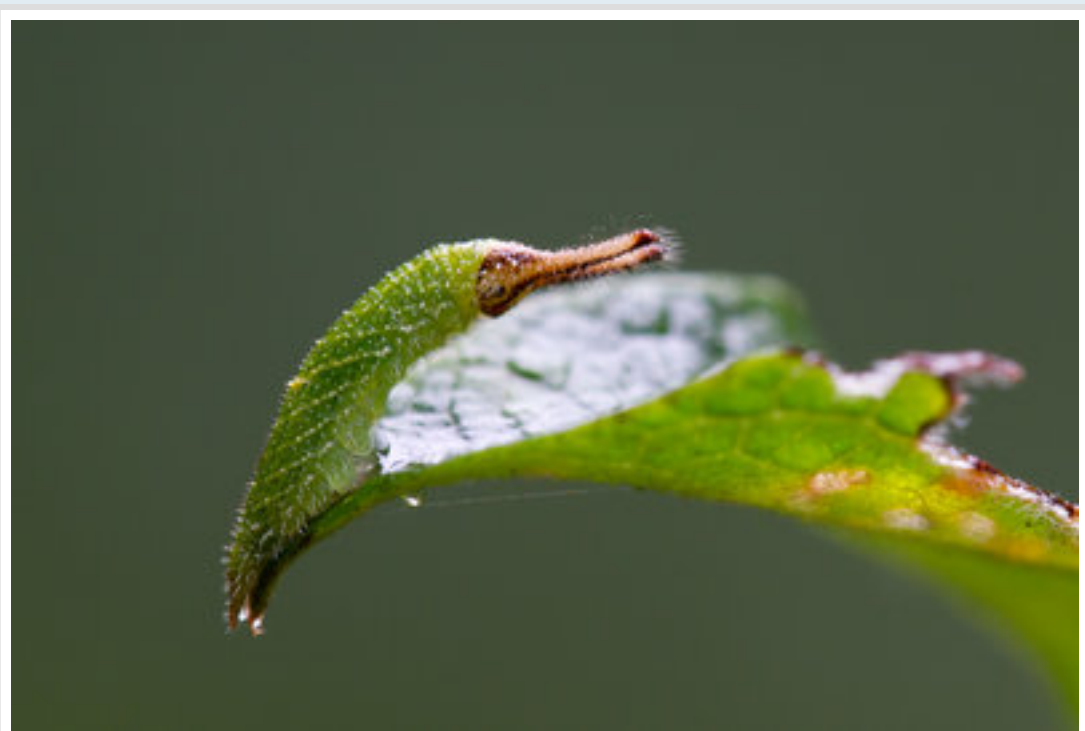
Three in a Row

For the third day in a row I've visited the Wiltshire Wood – this time in the wonderful company of Matthew Oates. What a superb day – definitely one of my "top" butterflying days of the year, despite failing to see a single adult butterfly (immature stages are equally, if not more, fascinating)! Matthew is clearly very experienced in finding the immature stages of *iris*, and turned up quite a few larvae (and an egg) that I'd completely missed the previous two days – sometimes found based on feeding damage or, believe it or not, the remnants of the egg base! But the highlight was definitely picking up so many tips from Matthew – who explained the importance of tree species, tree position, shade, shelter, leaf size, leaf colour, leaf "thwackiness" (the sound a leaf makes when you flick it), the significance of mildew and so on. I feel a lot more knowledgeable than I did at the start of the day for sure!

After 3 hours of searching, the "stats" are that we found 22 larvae and 1 egg, with an incredible 11 larvae (and the egg) on the same tree. Aside from the egg, approximately half of the larvae found are in their 1st instar, and the others in their 2nd. Matthew also found a larva that had only just changed into its 2nd instar and had yet to devour its old skin (photo below). Given the number of larvae, I've stopped naming them after Blackadder characters with the intention of following them through to adulthood, and will stick with Egbert, Baldrick and Blackadder for the time being! And my thanks to Matthew for being so generous with his time and knowledge.



1st instar larva



2nd instar larva surviving the drizzle



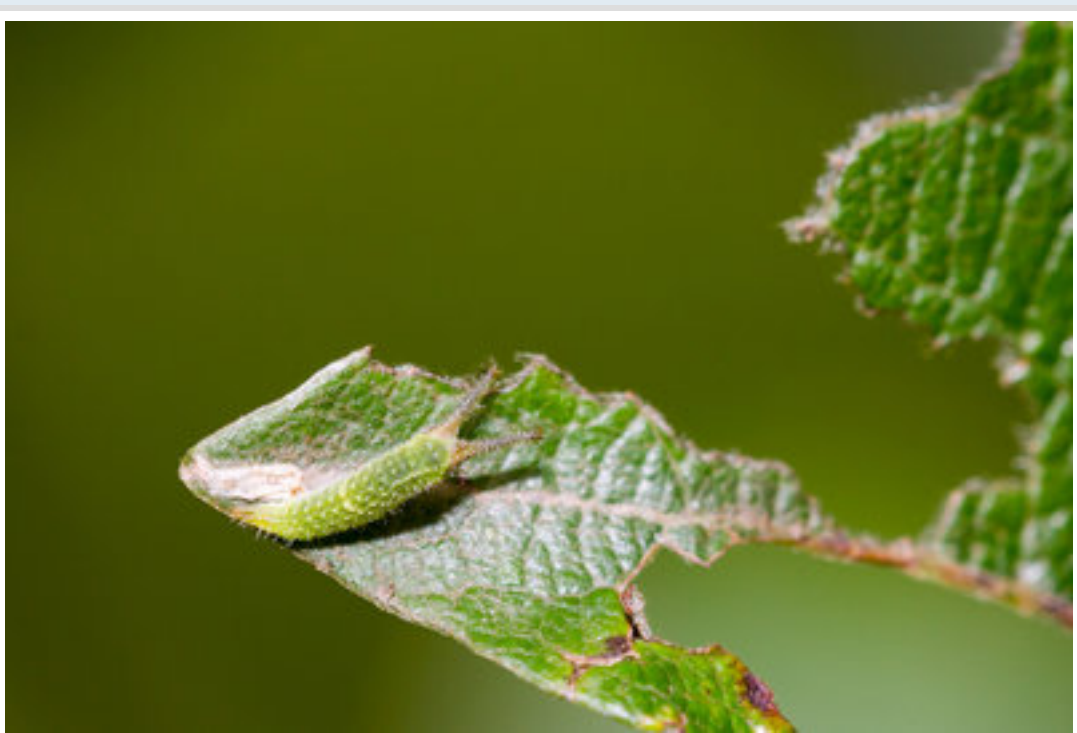
2nd instar larva in its own private water droplet



2nd instar larva



2nd instar larva found on a discoloured leaf that looked totally unsuitable!



Larva that has just changed into its 2nd instar



The master at work!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 25-Aug-13 05:08 PM GMT



The master at work.

With the Test Match being dead, at least his mind wasn't on other things.

For those not in the know, Matthew is not only a butterfly fanatic but also an avid cricket enthusiast.

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 25-Aug-13 06:08 PM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

With the Test Match being dead, at least his mind wasn't on other things.

I'd switch your telly back on, Jack. At the moment it's gripping stuff!

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 30-Aug-13 05:22 PM GMT

Recent Doings

A selection of random items from the past week. First off, the 2nd Grayling emerged – a most beautiful female – and she is now back where she belongs.



Grayling (female)

Earlier in the week I popped into Calstone and Cherhill Downs in Wiltshire, where I managed to see some Wall (although most are past their best) as well as some newly-emerged Adonis Blue. But I was really uplifted to see so many Small Tortoiseshells out and about – just like the good old days 😊 I was also lucky enough to see a Meadow Brown ovipositing, and also found some Small Copper eggs.



Small Tortoiseshell (male)



Meadow Brown (ovum)



Small Copper (ovum)

Finally, I popped into the Wiltshire Wood to check up on Egbert, Blackadder and Baldrick. All are doing well, but only Baldrick was on the same leaf. And Baldrick's no longer "bald" (and technically "Rick") now that he's changed into his second instar and his horns have appeared. I also managed to find one of the other first instar larvae and watched it move off its seat pad to feed on the same leaf, before it returned back to base!



Baldrick



Purple Emperor larva - 1st instar munching away

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 18-Sep-13 08:46 PM GMT

Holiday Snaps

Just back from 2 weeks in Koh Samui, Thailand. My holiday photos can be found at:

http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/reports_kohsamui.php



Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 18-Sep-13 09:06 PM GMT

Absolutely brilliant photos, Pete! Many of the species were ones I have seen in India and I could really feel the tropical heat as I browsed through them. I'm so glad you posted such a complete set – very enjoyable.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 18-Sep-13 09:47 PM GMT

Lovely set of images, Pete.

Is there REALLY a butterfly called Common Tit?

Have you any wider landscape shots to embellish what you've already posted?

Re: Pete Eeles

by andy brown, 18-Sep-13 09:49 PM GMT

Great report and photo's Pete just makes me jealous as when we were there a few years back now we were walking around with water up to our knees with the worst flooding in living memory 😞

Ta

Andy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Vince Massimo, 18-Sep-13 11:23 PM GMT

An excellent report Pete 😊, which brings back some fond memories. Hopefully there will now be a strong finish to the season which will cap off a memorable year.

Cheers,
Vince

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 19-Sep-13 02:10 AM GMT

Wow!

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 19-Sep-13 03:46 PM GMT

Thanks all!

Yes, the after-effects of the flooding are still there to be seen, Andy (e.g. great chunks of hillside that have slid away).

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 23-Sep-13 07:56 PM GMT

Back to normal!

It's definitely nice to be back, and I'm really enjoying reading about the various sightings of Long-tailed Blue, I have to say! What a season! I can half imagine a "UKB Camp" being set up at Kingsdown Leas sometime soon 😊

After a wonderful holiday in Thailand, I popped into a Wiltshire Wood on my way home from Bristol today to see how the Purple Emperor larvae are doing. I'm pleased to say that some are now in their 3rd instar and looking very healthy. Unfortunately, I didn't have time to do a thorough search and Egbert and Baldrick have gone walkabout. Blackadder was on his usual spray, though, and I also managed to relocate 4 other larvae. Some shots below.



2nd instar larva – just!



3rd instar larva with old skin caught in a hole in the leaf!



3rd instar larva

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

Recent Doings

Last week I made a return visit to Dublin and took the opportunity to complete one last survey of the Marsh Fritillary colony on North Bull Island, where 400 larval webs were recorded during a field trip of the Dublin Naturalist's Field Club. The last time I visited the site larval webs were quite visible, with larval damage and associated webbing clearly seen. This time, however, the webbing was nowhere to be seen and had, presumably, been eroded through the wind and rain that had been lashing the island. A good job, then, that I was in good company – joining Maryann Harris (Senior Executive Parks Superintendent of Dublin City Council) and Dr. Brian Nelson (National Parks and Wildlife Service) who each found more webs than myself! Maryann and her team do a wonderful job at monitoring all wildlife in the area and conducting appropriate surveys where relevant. One larval web was very compact, slightly larger than a tennis ball, and with brown larvae clearly visible through the webbing. Some shots below.



North Bull Island Nature Reserve



Brian and Maryann



Marsh Fritillary larval web

Today, after a business meeting in Cirencester, I decided to pop into the Wiltshire Wood where I've been following the fortunes of several Purple Emperor larvae. I'm pleased to say that most of those I've been monitoring are still there, although most have moved a little way from where I first found them. The changing colours of the leaves is starting to make them slightly more visible and so, as described so well in Matthew's article in *British Wildlife* (Vol. 23. No. 5, June 2012): "Adventures with caterpillars: the larval stage of the Purple Emperor butterfly", I'm really looking forward to seeing the larvae change colour also as they move into position on a branch to overwinter.



Bath time!



The leaves are starting to change colour

Cheers,
- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 03-Nov-13 05:13 PM GMT

Colouring Up

A good morning spent in the company of Matthew Oates searching out the many Purple Emperor larvae that have been found in a wood in Wiltshire. Matthew kindly showed me an area of less than 10 square metres that is the home to over 25 larvae – and we found a couple of new residents today too. The larvae are in various states of "colouring up" ranging from almost "Lincoln green" through to a very dark grey/green. Many larvae have moved away from their original position and are quite difficult to find as a result. Matthew found one larva moving around at the end of a twig – a totally unsuitable position for a larva looking to overwinter! Earlier I'd found one larva next to a willow bud. Some shots below.







Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Hulme, 07-Nov-13 11:07 AM GMT

Lovely shots of lovely cats! I like the U-turn best. I've never visited that wood during the flight season, so it would be good to meet up there for a day next July.
BWs, Neil

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 07-Nov-13 08:02 PM GMT

Thanks Neil – yes, the "action shot" is definitely a little more interesting! Apparently the adults are quite difficult to entice down in this particular wood (they're not often seen on the track), but I'm sure you've got some secret concoctions that might change all that!

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 07-Nov-13 10:24 PM GMT

Loving the ongoing cat story Pete 😊 Is this the same Wiltshire Wood that holds Marsh Frits or a different one?

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 07-Nov-13 10:33 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Loving the ongoing cat story Pete 😊 Is this the same Wiltshire Wood that holds Marsh Frits or a different one?

A different one 😊

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 30-Nov-13 11:27 PM GMT

Blackadder Returns

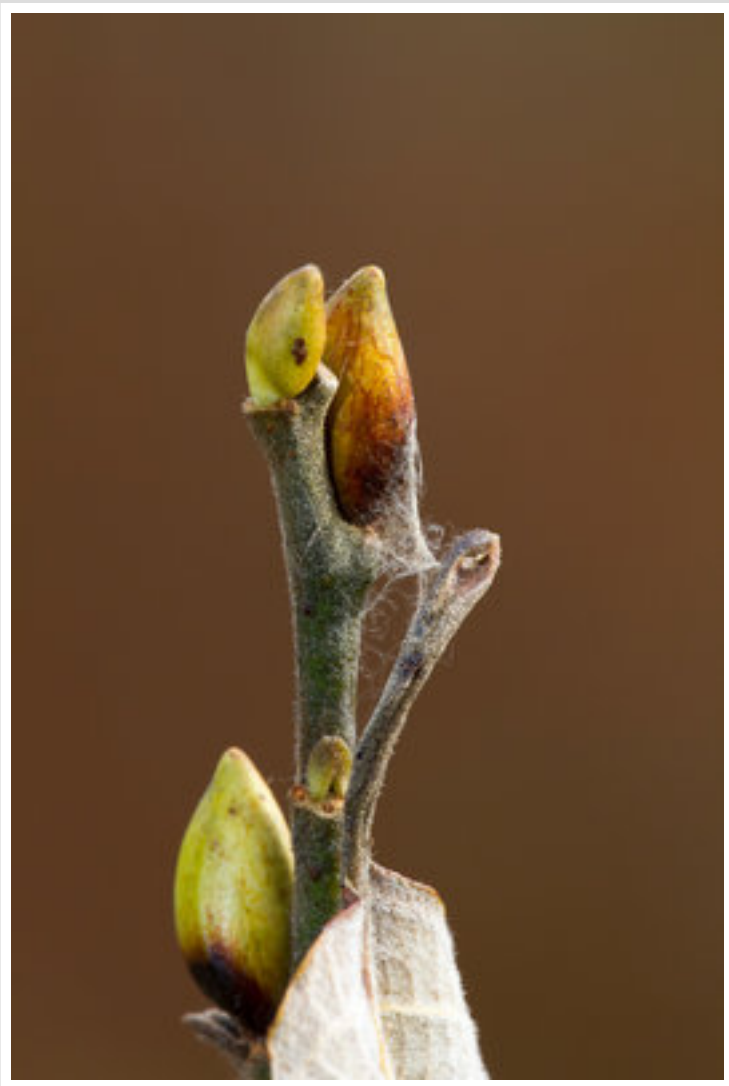
Another delightful morning spent in the company of Matthew Oates, monitoring Purple Emperor larvae in a Wiltshire Wood, before heading over to Winchester for the UK Butterflies winter social gathering. This time we returned to the area where I found my first ever *iris* larvae and ova a few months ago. We quickly relocated the few that we knew were there, but also decided to give one particular sallow a really thorough search. Now that theallows are largely devoid of leaves, any leaves that were left warranted a closer inspection to see whether or not they were attached with silk to the branch, a sure sign that a larva isn't too far away. I managed to find such a leaf pretty quickly and soon found a hibernating larva on an adjacent stem. I then realised that this was the 3rd larva I'd ever found – Blackadder returns! Matthew then surpassed himself (again) by getting us well into double figures for larvae on this one sallow and taking his own tally to over 225 for the season – amazing!



Spot the larva



Blackadder returns



Leaf stalk attached by silk



Going walkabout

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 01-Dec-13 09:46 PM GMT

Particularly like the final shot Pete, not sure why it stands out for me but it's a cracker 😊 Guttled that we still didn't catch up properly at the social yesterday but hopefully we'll meet up in the field some time next season.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 01-Dec-13 09:51 PM GMT

I agree, Wurzel.

I think that last picture stands out because that little chap is the Jonathon Livingstone Seagull of *iris* cats! At this time of year, and wearing those nice winter clothes, he's supposed to be settling down for a snooze, not wandering off on his own, doing interesting things!

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 02-Dec-13 09:21 PM GMT

Magnificently uplifting images, Pete. You must have had a really rewarding day!

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 03-Dec-13 05:52 PM GMT

Thanks all – yes, very rewarding, David ... it always is! I learn so much every time I go out with Matthew, and it's not always about poets or cricket either 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Susie, 03-Dec-13 05:59 PM GMT

Wonderful stuff Pete.

I was inspired enough to go looking myself this afternoon. Didn't find anything though 😊

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 03-Dec-13 06:02 PM GMT

Thanks Susie.

I suspect that woods with lots of sallow are the most difficult, since it's like looking for a needle in a haystack. But if you know a wood with few sallows, or a location where females lay, then that's probably your best bet!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 16-Dec-13 01:53 PM GMT

Local Goings On

Having freed 3 Small Tortoiseshell that decided to show themselves in the house this morning, I took a short walk with the dogs and spent 10 minutes looking at an oak that, in past years, has proved a favourite of Purple Hairstreak. And so it was to be again, finding 3 eggs in total, and all gleaming white before the algae take hold! This particular oak is one that toppled over a few years ago, making it very easy to search. Unfortunately, many of the buds have been nibbled off by deer, so I've rescued 2 of the eggs that are in immediate danger of becoming deer fodder.



Cheers,

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 18-Dec-13 09:34 AM GMT

Wiltshire Doings

It turns out that there are some advantages to working in Swindon – namely the proximity of a wood full of Purple Emperor larvae 😊 I managed to grab an hour or so to check out some of the larvae that I've been keeping an eye on. No new finds, but good to see that the few I was searching for were still around, despite a lack of winter (it was quite balmy at times). The penultimate photo is of a larva that has survived the felling of an enormous willow and that somehow managed to cling on as the tree toppled. As Matthew Oates often tells me – "never underestimate a caterpillar"! The last photo, not brilliant by any means, does show how the horns on the head make for a very smooth outline when seen in silhouette and, being on the north side of this particular twig, must be very difficult to find from a bird's perspective. The wood itself has transformed now that all of the leaves have fallen, looking like a skeleton of its former glory.





Cheers,
- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pauline, 18-Dec-13 12:21 PM GMT

Some great photos here Pete. I'm always in awe of those folk who can find these immature stages in the wild and then go on to impress me even further

by returning time and again to monitor their progress in their natural environment. Now I have a question for you Pete as I know that you have experience in both of these arenas. Would you say that the behaviour and development of these insects is the same both in the wild and when reared in captivity? I only ask because I am aware that with some creatures this is not so, but perhaps if conditions are replicated the cat would know no difference? BTW I appreciate both Vince and yourself giving me a confidence boost re my BH eggs but time will tell.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 18-Dec-13 02:52 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline!

"Pauline" wrote:

Would you say that the behaviour and development of these insects is the same both in the wild and when reared in captivity? I only ask because I am aware that with some creatures this is not so, but perhaps if conditions are replicated the cat would know no difference?

Quite right Pauline – if conditions are comparable, then there's no reason why the progress of immature stages in captivity should be different from those in the wild. However, recreating the right conditions isn't always an easy task. My garden, for example, is sheltered on all sides and presumably warmer as a result. As a result, unless I create some balance by rearing through certain species in more shady conditions than they might otherwise experience, then they will emerge earlier than their cousins in the wild and progress through to adulthood ahead of time.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 18-Dec-13 03:19 PM GMT

Pete highlighted the problems of captive breeding:

they will emerge earlier than their cousins in the wild and progress through to adulthood ahead of time.

I don't breed many species these days but always have a few Orange Tips. They (as chrysalises) are put in the fridge in their plastic containers (no need for any air holes) in November. This ensures that they have a "proper winter" and don't emerge prematurely. They are brought out to warm naturally in April. This way, they emerge at the correct time. I have kept Peacock adults successfully in the fridge over winter and presumably eggs of those species that hibernate in this stage could be wintered this way. Caterpillars might be difficult though as many feed intermittently in the winter.

Jack