

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jan-13 06:14 PM GMT

Happy New Year!! 😊

Let's hope it's a cracker for butterflies!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 01-Jan-13 10:06 PM GMT

You're whetting my appetite, Wurzel (along with 2013's first sighting made this morning on the Isle of Wight).

Surely, after several years' poor summer weather, we must be destined for something a little kinder this time?

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Jan-13 08:49 PM GMT

Archaeoprepona demopoon

When I originally photographed this species it was one of four butterflies at a feeding station. One was a Blue Morpho, the other some sort of Heliconius and then there were two very similar looking butterflies. The first I eventually identified as *Prepona laertes*. I was under the misconception that this was the same species but once I started looking through the photos at home I realised that they weren't the same species. With further research it became apparent that they aren't in the same genus even but belonged to the genus which *Prepona* is thought to have evolved from - the *Archaeoprepona*. The Genus *Archaeoprepona* can be separated from *Prepona* as they have sub-marginal ocelli in each cell and the males have black androconial scales, in *Prepona* they are yellow so at least this was a relatively easy set of features to start with.

So from Genus to species...At first I thought this was the White-spotted *Prepona*, also known as the Turquoise-banded Shoemaker - *Archaeoprepona amphimachus* (Fabricius, 1775). But something about the under wing didn't look quite right, the images I saw of *A. amphimachus* showed the wings to be almost two different tones with the much darker half at the leading edge. That didn't match up with the shots I saw and I went through search after search until I came across *Archaeoprepona demopoon* (Hübner, 1814) - commonly called the Two-spotted *Prepona* or Hübner's Shoemaker of which there are 6 subspecies. In fact some consider it to actually be subspecies of *A. meander*. I'm getting mightily confused by all of these sub-species, races, colour morphs and synonyms just make it even worse!



This species ranges from Mexico to Paraguay where it can be found in Tropical to subtropical forests. They fly in hot sunny conditions (all of which can be easily reproduced "under glass") and the imago has a life expectancy of up to 8 weeks in the wild, so possibly longer in captivity. They are the fastest flying butterfly reaching speeds between 30 and 50 mph so getting shots would seem to be difficult. However they feed on sap runs, rotting fruit as well as dung and carrion and when feeding they can become so engrossed that they are oblivious to their surroundings. When coming down to feed they leave the canopy and descend in a series of smaller steps, stopping off for a minute or two at various points before reaching the deck.



I think that this is a male as it is perched with its wings half open and it's head facing down which is a posture commonly shown by males.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Mark Colvin, 04-Jan-13 10:05 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Nice to see you getting interested in some exotica ...

As you mention, this can be a difficult group to identify to subspecies level with a number of regional forms. Checking my references, I think yours is probably *Archaeoprepona demophon* ssp. *mexicana* (Llorente, Descimon and K. Johnson, 1993); though I'm not 100%. I have photographed *A. demophon* myself, along with the One-spotted Prepona, *Archaeoprepona demophon* ssp. *centralis* (pictured below).

I look forward to your next instalment ...



Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 05-Jan-13 10:27 AM GMT

what a load of cobblers..... well you did say it was a shoemaker 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Jan-13 10:09 PM GMT

Cheers Mark for a confirmation of the id, I ended up staring at Google images and various other websites for what felt like hours and my eyes felt like they were bleeding before I finally got there! A. demophon rings a bell as I came across it while looking up this species. If I remember correctly Hubner (or one of the other "finders" made a mistake when he named this species as demophon had already been used so due to the rules of precedence in Taxonomy he had to go back to the drawing board...

I also had to do a double take when I read your message the first time as I read it on my iPod screen and it didn't scan as exoitica. 😳 😂

Cheers Chris 😊 There are some Waxwings round your way at the moment so keep your eyes peeled (it was on BirdNews).

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Jan-13 11:07 PM GMT

I'm finding it quite hard to write about the "captive" butterflies in my usual style. True they are stunning creatures and certainly have the wow factor about them but I miss the chase, the expectation anxiety and there is no interesting habitat or weather to talk about and less emotion, less buzz with the exotics. Still what they lack in these factors they make up for in interesting behaviours, and they provide an opportunity to find out something new as well as complicated identifications...

Heliconius?

I started off thinking that this species was *Heliconius erato* (Linnaeus, 1758), the Small Postman. When I looked at the under wing shot a bit closer I wasn't happy that the red spots actually numbered four as one looked like a small dash almost as if one spot had been damaged which would mean that it had three spot. Also the white marking didn't reach anywhere near the wing margin. These features made me think that it wasn't the Small Postman but was just a Common Postman, *Heliconius melpomene* (Linnaeus, 1758).



This species is one of the heliconiine found from Mexico to South America and has up to 30 sub-species showing a huge range in variation in the wing markings and this one could be *H. melpomene rosina*? The species has an erratic flight and is found in open areas in forests and can be locally common along river edges and streams. This along with the fact that it roosts communally is worth remembering for possible photograph opportunities in butterfly houses.

It is very similar to *Heliconius erato* and both have similar bold markings on their upper wings which demonstrate to potential predators that they are both toxic. In fact all of the information above holds true for *H. erato* so if I've got the identification wrong no worries! 😊

They look similar to each other because they are actually co-mimics. I remember reading about them in the book *Dazzled and Confused* which was recommended by Pete. Despite there being so many different sub species/colour morphs of *H. melpomene* spread throughout Central and South America there are *H. erato* mimics to match all the geographical variations. Indeed genetic studies have shown that the wing patterns are associated with a small number of gene loci which are homologous in both *H. erato* and *H. melpomene* so this could be parallel evolution. This is thought to be due to Mullerian mimicry. By sharing the same warning livery the species share the cost in educating predators that they are both toxic. If a butterfly tastes bad which has red and white stripes it doesn't matter to the predator whether it's *H. erato* or *H. melpomene* they'll avoid both and so a nasty mouthful next time and in this way both species suffer less from predation overall.



Have a goodun

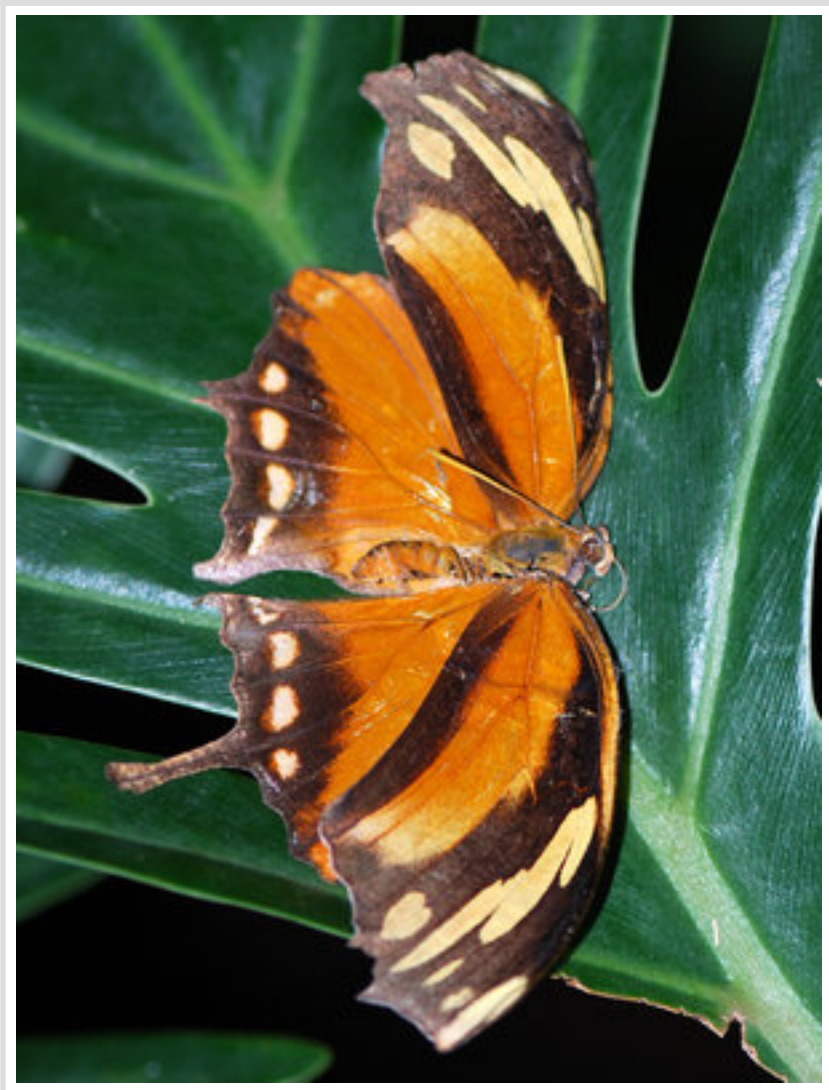
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Jan-13 11:25 PM GMT

Tiger-striped Leafwing

When I wasn't sure about the identification of this species I just labelled it as "Tiger" because of the striking markings on the upper wings. It is a Tiger, the Tiger Striped Longwing, *Consul fabius* (Cramer 1776). It is a Nymphalid and this is the most common species of the genus *Consul*. There are around 14 different subspecies and I think this one could be *cecrops*. As its name suggests it does resemble a leaf as the under wings are intricately marked in browns and greys camouflaging it perfectly when the wings are shut and looking exactly like a dead leaf. Unfortunately I couldn't get a shot of that as it didn't want to pose for long so you'll have to take my word for it.



They are found all over the neo-tropics in deciduous forest, rainforest and cloud forest and prefer the canopy or coming down lower along the river banks where they will bask during the morning and if they show this behaviour in captivity then a morning visit might ensure the best shots. They feed on rotting fruit, dung and urine and often move with a slow, gliding flight unless alarmed when they can punch it.

As soon as I saw the butterfly at the Zoo I started trying to work out why it would be so colourfully marked. I initially thought that it came down to attracting a female but some research work brought it back to mimicry. The Tiger Leafwing is part of a mimicry ring called the tiger complex. It includes representatives from a number of butterfly families and even a few moths and also has both Batesian and Mullerian mimics. The Mullerian mimics are toxic and (as mentioned when I looked at *H.erato*) evolved similar patterns to each other. It's a bit hard to explain the reason why it benefits a lot of other toxic species to share wing patterns but for example if a toxic butterfly has orange and black striped wings predators will soon learn to associate those particular markings with a distasteful snack and so will avoid other species with the same markings. It may take a few horrible lunches before the predator puts two and two together and so while it's learning the losses are shared over a greater range of species so no particular species fares worse than any other. If other toxic species have similar markings then they will benefit as the predator avoids them and they lose fewer members as the predator makes the association quicker. These predators, not very bright really 😬

In the same mimicry ring there are also Batesian mimics and it's a lot easier to see how they benefit from sharing wing patterns as they aren't toxic, just tricking the predators into thinking that they are 😊. Having had a very distasteful mouthful of orange and black butterfly it will avoid other orange and black butterflies whether they are toxic or mimics. Often you find that toxic forms are brightly marked on both upper and lower sides of the wings, whereas mimics are cryptically marked on the under wing, almost as if they're hedging their bets as to whether the warning coloration will actually work. As *C.fabius* is cryptically camouflaged to represent a dead leaf I'm guessing that it isn't really toxic and is therefore a Batesian mimic

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Jan-13 09:58 PM GMT

Snow Day!

I was actually quite glad to be roused from sleep at 6:40 yesterday as it could mean only one thing - SNOW DAY!! 😊 I looked out of the window and there was an inch or two covering everything and the snow was getting heavier even as I watched. After I'd made the necessary phone calls to spread the good news to the rest of the department we checked the girls' school website and they were closed too. So we started sorting out gloves, hats, thermals etc and then all four of us bravely set off to the corner shop for a pint of milk which I'd forgotten to get the day before.

Having sledged, snowballed, made snow angels and a snow woman and dog I then spent some time birding in the garden with my older daughter. It was incredibly peaceful with the snow muffling and dampening down all the usual noise of hustle and bustle. We stood in the middle of the garden, the snow deeper than my walking boots, just listening and scanning the black and white trees for movement. The usual crew were there with Long-tailed, Great and Blue Tits, Robins, Dunnocks, Starlings (which didn't turn into Waxwings no matter how hard I squinted at them), Pigeons and Doves (both feral and wood and Collared), Blackbirds, Green, Gold and Chaffinches and corvids wheeling over the gardens looking for those that had perished in the cold no doubt. Highlights were fly over Redwings, Fieldfares, a party of 12 Skylarks and a single Cormorant but the real star was a singing Coal Tit, with

its reverse Mr T Mohawk. Whilst the others were noisy and scrappy round the feeders in other gardens the Coal Tit would hang around the periphery and then nip in while no-one was looking, grab a mouthful and then fly away as quickly it had arrived 😏 . After our 40 minute vigil my older daughter went off to try and make small igloos and I got my camera.



Come on Waxwings!!!!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pete Eeles, 19-Jan-13 10:00 PM GMT

I really like that last photo Wurzel - it belongs in a stock library 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Jan-13 08:55 PM GMT

Cheers Pete - it was also my favourite of the day. 😊

I didn't venture out much today as I'm still feeling cold from an afternoon sledging yesterday. So instead of wandering around in the cold I set up my own private hide in my older daughters' bedroom. Her window looks out over our and several neighbours' back gardens, the sill gives me somewhere to put my tea and rest my elbows while using my bins and best of all I'm right in front of the radiator - very toastie!

Today I had a sneaky feeling that it might be a Brambling day so I paid special attention to the large, bare tree 5 gardens to my left as this is where I've found them over the past couple of years. Some Long-tailed tits dropped in, there were a few Greenfinches and Goldfinches at the top of the tree, and then fidgeting around lower down was a Chaffinch which didn't seem right, it had a much whiter breast and was slightly larger. As it worked its way along the branch I could clearer see the darker head and the unmistakable orange of a male Brambling.

A little later having watched a few Fieldfares picking a tree clean of its red berries and then chuckling off, I turned my attention to the trees at the top of the garden. There were 2 Greenfinch, 2 male and a female Chaffinch, 3 Blue Tits and another male Brambling all in the same tree. I tried for a shot but it was very distant and then I risked a quick walk up the garden to try and get a bit closer. I didn't go too far up there as I didn't want to spook them and have them waste energy flying away from me and so the shots are still ridiculously cropped. This means that they are nowhere near as good as some of the shots on here recently but I was happy for two reasons.

1. I got really close views in my own garden (through bins) without having to go all the way to Blashford Lakes (although I might head there for better photos)
2. We recently exchanged contracts on our first house and so come the 1st February this won't be my garden anymore. Instead of all the borders, the wild patch at the top, the ivy and fruit trees I'll have a 3m square courtyard of concrete. Perhaps the new tenant/owner will let me come back for a visit now and again?



Very distant



As close as I could get...



Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Jan-13 11:29 PM GMT

I wrote this a few days ago intending to post over the weekend and not expecting much to happen in between...then the snow came and then the Bramblings came but now I'm back at work with very little chance of getting out and about it should be safe to post.

Bits and Pieces...

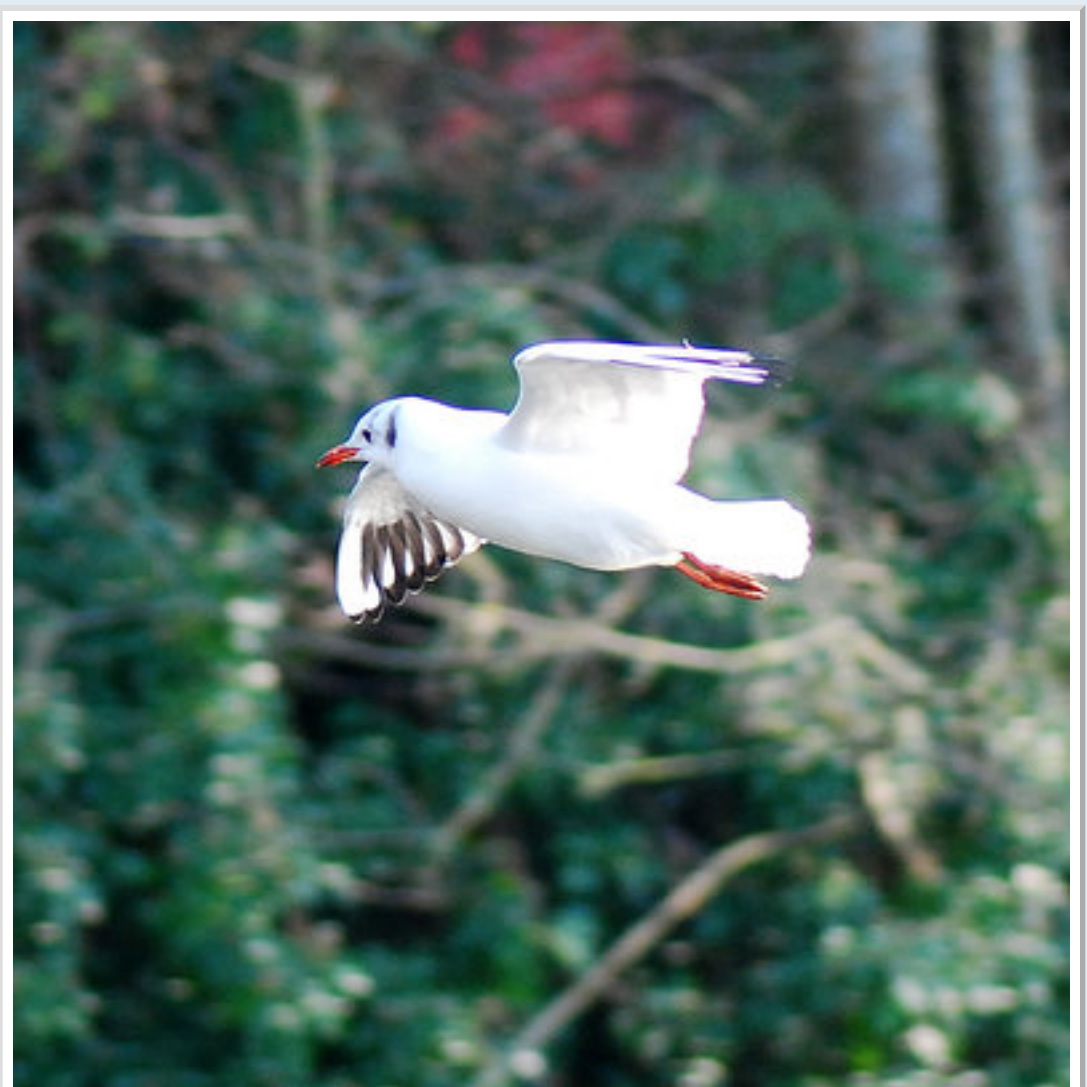
Over the past couple of weeks I wasn't able to venture far, in fact I didn't even get to do my New Years bird trip, but walks to town gave me an opportunity to at least try and use my camera. There was also a brief period a school with the enrichment group. Still it's given me a chance to try out different types of shots using sports mode in particular, in preparation for trying to get some in flight shots when the season begins as well as keeping my hand in with macro. It feels like an age since I last got a shot of a butterfly and feels like another age before I'll get to get another shot!



Town Path...



Also...



And again.



At work



Work also

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 22-Jan-13 01:21 PM GMT

That sports mode has been put to good use. Fantastic flight shot of the (juvenile) black-headed gull 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Jan-13 11:53 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 I need to remember to set it back for macro now 😊

There has been a butterfly house at Bristol Zoo for a couple of years now but as I've visited at slightly different times each winter I have often encountered a whole range of new species and there is always something new it seems. What it lacks in the frisson of the chase it makes up for in glamour. This next one was no exception and I spent almost the entire time in the house waiting for it to appear and settle for some shots. It is a stunning butterfly and I found myself mesmerised by it...

Leopard Lacewing

Cethosia cyane (Drury, 1773) is a member of the Heliconiine with two sub-species. It was found across Asia from India to Southern China. I say "was" because due to its migratory tendencies it's expanded its range into southern Asia arriving relatively recently in Malay and Singapore (2005). In fact in Singapore it is found in many wastelands where its host plant can be found and is now considered "common".

The shots I got were of a male and females have a paler underside whilst the upper side has more black and can be greenish white to brownish instead of the vivid orange that the male wears. This bright colouration indicates that the species doesn't just have to rely on its fast flight to avoid predation. The bright colours are a warning that it is unpalatable and it can exude a noxious odour which is generated from the ingesting the Passion Vine. It can release this odour when handled so care should be taken when getting those close up shots!





Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 24-Jan-13 01:23 PM GMT

Nice article and pictures Wurzel. 😊

Your Cethosia cyane looks just like the picture of the butterfly I posted from Wisley's butterflies in a glasshouse (see below) last year listed Cethosia biblis 😊😊



"Malay Lacewing Cethosia biblis" a closely related species?

I need to look into this.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Jan-13 02:47 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊

Your butterfly is indeed *Cethosia biblis* which is the "Red Lacewing" (according to Wikipedia). My one is a different species *Cethosia cyane* the Leopard Lacewing and I only just realised/remembered how to tell them apart from when I was trying to identify it initially. The upper wings on the Red have a series of white U shaped or "spot/eye" marks in a band across the black part of the wing tip, whereas the Leopard has a white stripe which is how I identified it initially. Since you got me looking I've noticed that the underwings are slightly different too as the Red has a row of "spot/eye" markings around the fore wing but in the Leopard this is broken by a white flash where the third "spot" would have been. Blooming exotics they make my brain hurt! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 24-Jan-13 09:22 PM GMT

Yes thanks Wurzel 😊 . I came to that conclusion too. Although I didn't get to see the upperside of *biblis* I noticed soon after posting that the white diagonal forewing flash on the underside of your specimen which is missing in mine. This was confirmed after googling for images. That's the problem of posting in a work lunchbreak and rushing to get it out 😞

Interestingly and perhaps not surprisingly, a few of the *biblis* google images look to be pictures of *cyane*. You have to be careful where you go when using this method of for getting identifications.

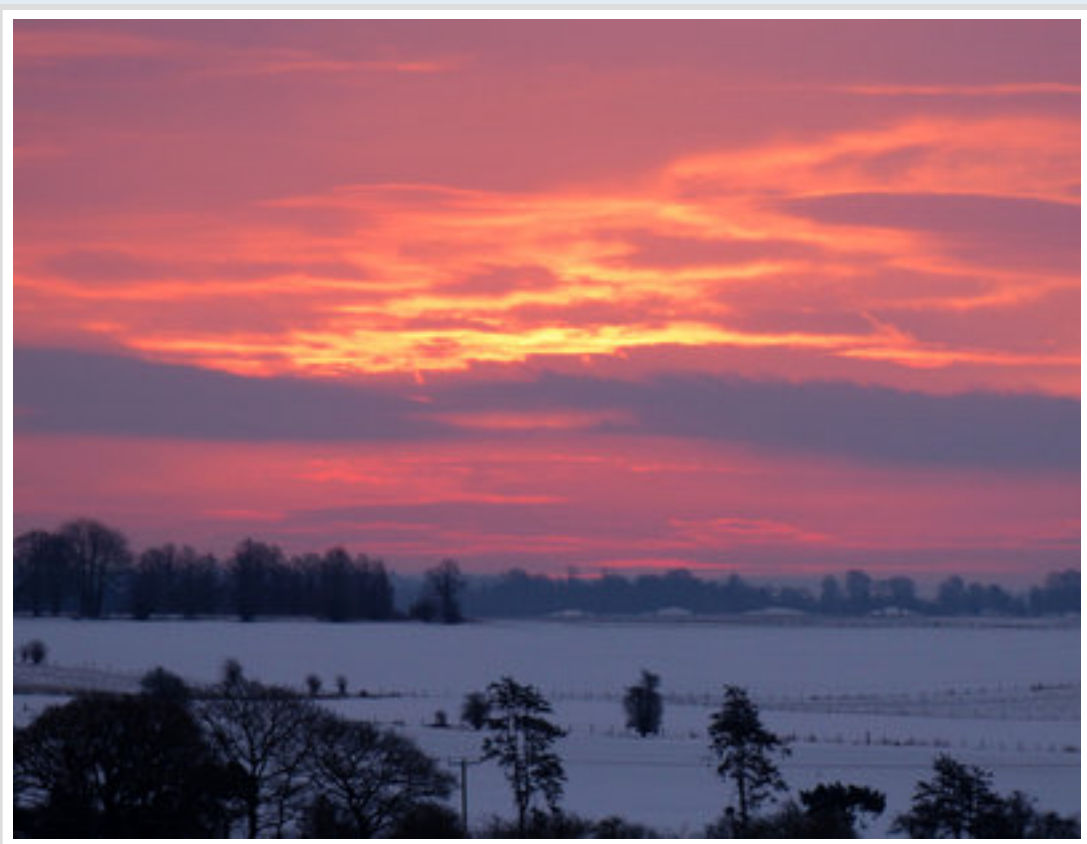
Phil

Re: Wurzel

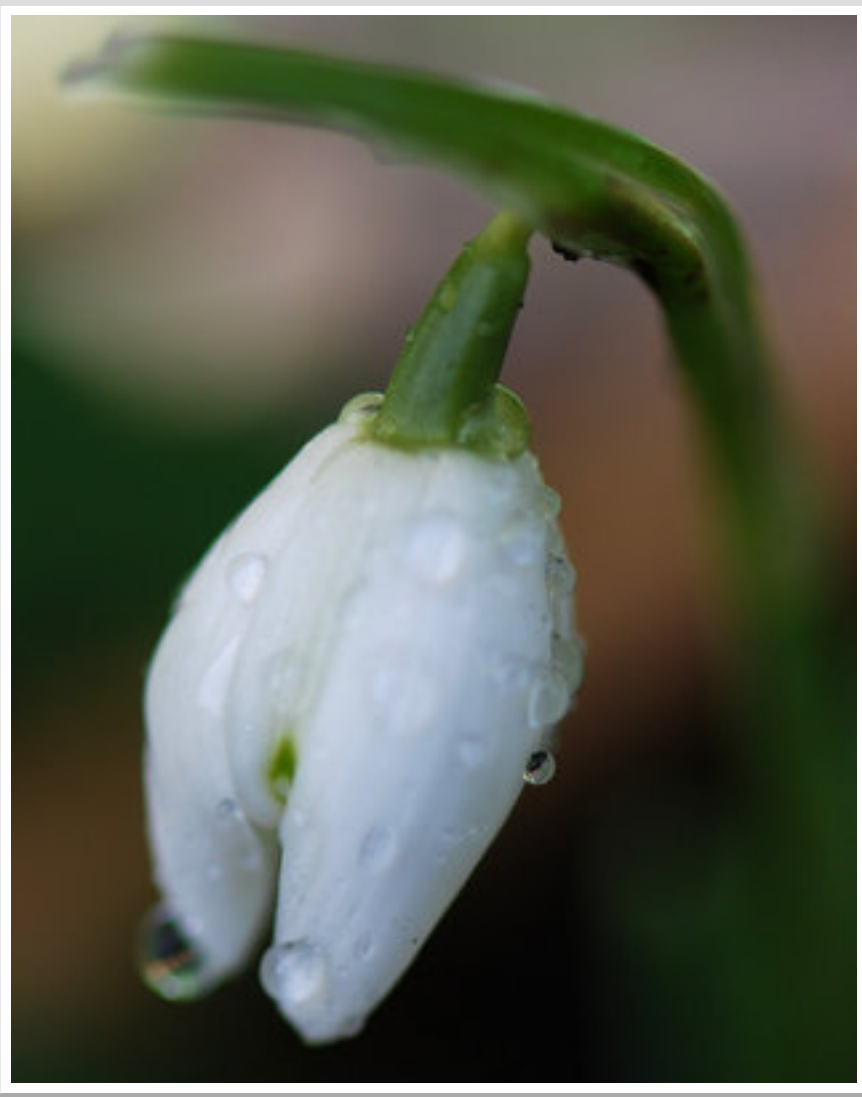
by Wurzel, 26-Jan-13 11:18 PM GMT

No worries Philzoid, to be honest I was lucky that when I typed in Lacewing images of *cyane* came up so my ID was luck rather than judgement 😞 , shhhh don't tell anyone 😊

What a difference a week makes! I drove to work on Monday and the fields were a monotony of white. A few days later and the white stuff still covered the ground. The odd covey of Partridges and a lonesome Buzzard or Red Kite injected some interest into my journeys to work as did my first Merlin for a few years. The real spectacle was on Tuesday when the sky appeared to be on fire and the contrast with the monochrome fields was spectacular.



Then today a walk up the garden and it was like spring was here, it was mild, dry and sunny. The heavy rainfall of last night had passed and taken away the last of snow as well as washing everything clean so it sparkled almost in the weak sun. The birds were calling and making singing sub-songs; rehearsing ready for the main event. Bulbs are starting to come up and were the first Snowdrops of 2013 peaking through.



There were a few flies around but no butterflies yet, which I'm actually quite glad about as I'd rather they stayed put and made it through to spring than appear briefly now and get caught out. It's still seems like such a long way off but there is now the occasional glimmer of change.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Susie, 27-Jan-13 09:05 AM GMT

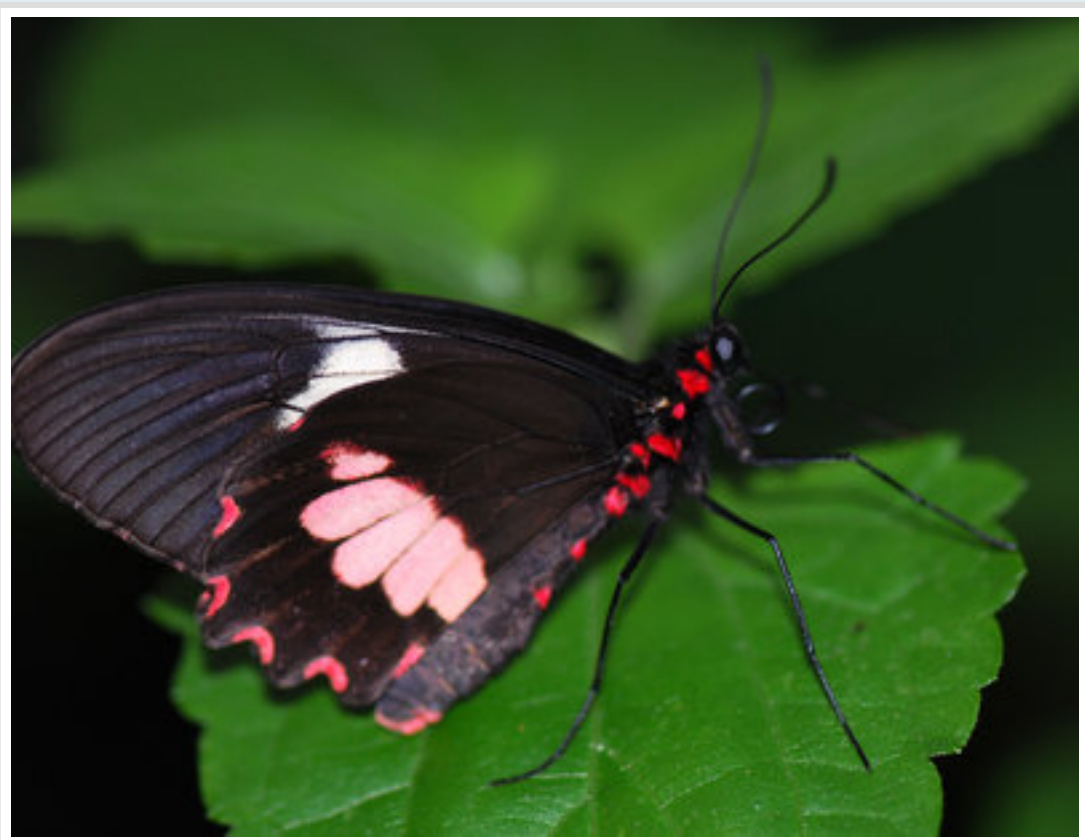
The landscape photo you have Wurzel is quite breathtaking! 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Jan-13 11:00 PM GMT

Cheers Susie 😊 It was the best sunrise for quite a while. It's mainly been dark, misty or raining recently so it was nice to have a good one for a change.

I've still got a few spesies left from Bristol Zoo and I've managed to identify most of them but there are one or two left that I just don't know where to begin looking or don't seem to match anything I've found. So I hand over and ask for any suggestions...



Not sure where to start



Papilio bootes – best I can do – is it the same as the above?

Any help gratefully received and then I can hit the books and get on with the research.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Padfield, 28-Jan-13 11:46 PM GMT

I think the second one is *P. helenus* – a species I have seen in India. I'll have to go to the books for the first.

Guy

Re: Wurzel

by Mark Colvin, 29-Jan-13 07:13 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Try *Parides zacythus* for the first. I agree with Guy for the second.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Jan-13 10:20 PM GMT

Cheers for your ID help Guy and Mark 😊

I checked out the second one and *P. helenus* looks spot on.

I was thinking cattlehearts for the first one and then when Mark suggested *Parides zacythus* I looked for it and I thought great. Something was nagging at me today though and so I checked again and there were more pink spots on the underwing and the white markings didn't seem to go far enough towards the margin on the forewing? So I went through every single entry under *Parides* on Wikipedia but none seemed to match. In the end I just entered *Parides* into google and an almost identical image appeared in the suggested box on the side of the screen – it seems to be *Parides arcas*? I hope that's right and I'm not putting too much faith in other users of the internet 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Mark Colvin, 29-Jan-13 11:08 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

As I'm sure you have already gathered, there are some very similar species in the *Parides* genus. I think *Parides arcas* is correct for your image. On checking the two main supplier catalogues both currently list *arcas* but not *zacythus*.

Good hunting.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Jan-13 11:26 PM GMT

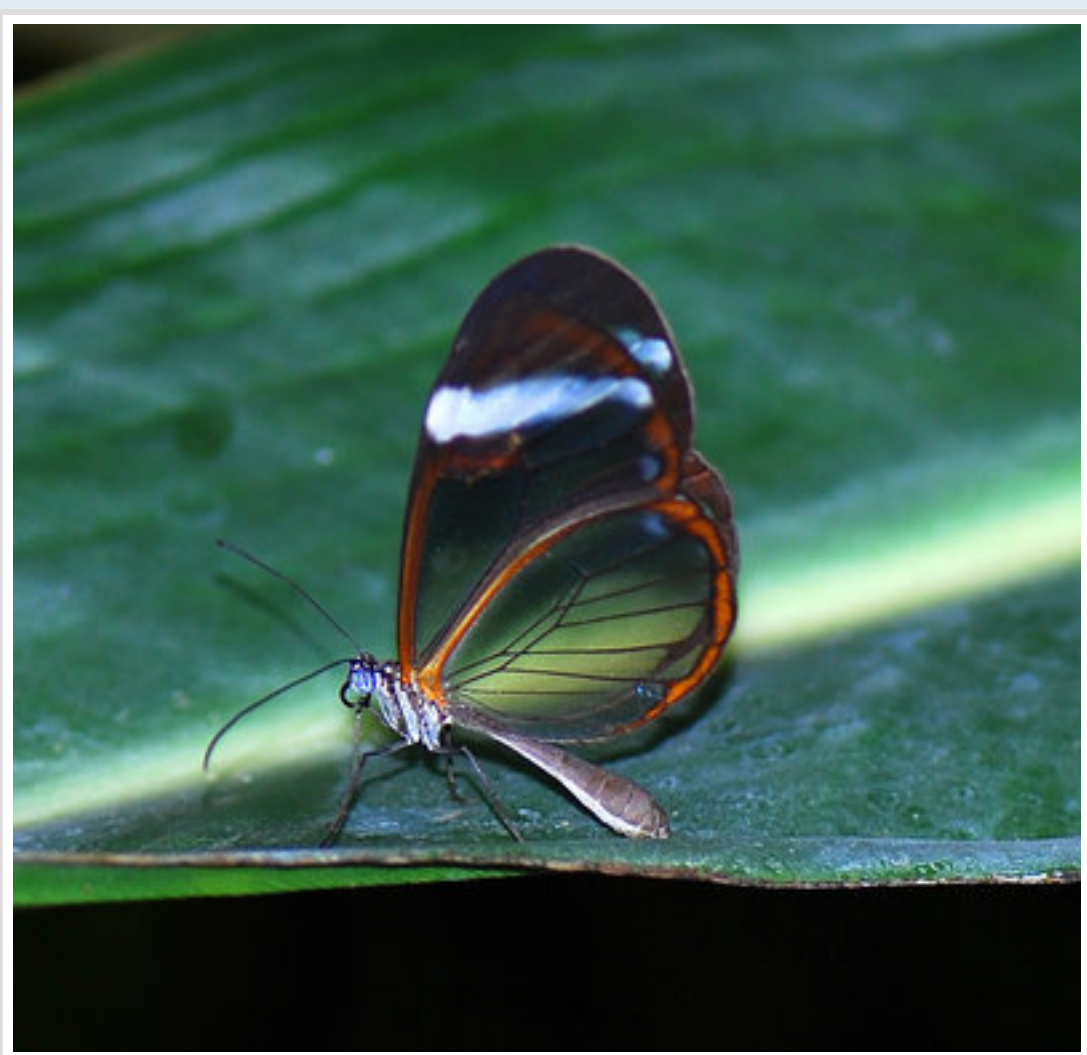
Cheers again for your help Mark, without your suggestion I wouldn't have got anywhere 😊 I'm going to have a little break from Parides as I see them everytime I shut my eyes 🙄

Glasswing – *Greta oto* (Geyer, 1837)

It is found in the neotropics from Mexico to Panama and is a “brushfooted” butterfly from the Dananinae family and this is the most common species of about 30 in the genus. The most obvious feature of this species is its translucent wings, caused by a lack of scales on the wings. It is thought that this offers some advantage as camouflage as it can blend into any background an idea which seems more likely when its habit of flying in the darkest parts of the forest under-storey is taken into consideration. They are very hard to follow when they complete their slow flight between light and dark breaks in butterfly houses let alone huge forests!

However what confuses me is that it is toxic as well but I suppose it's covering all the angles when it comes to avoiding being eaten. The alkaloids that make it toxic it gets from the nectar of its food plants and not only do they use it for defence but the males also convert it into pheromones to attract the females. The androconical scales located on their wings are plume like but are often hidden from view (as they rest with wings tightly shut) until courtship when they open their wings and allow the “scent” to spread and apparently they display lekking behaviour. This was mentioned on Wikipedia but I didn't see it elsewhere. If like birds, lekking involves males congregating at a particular point and then displaying in front of a collection of females. The male(s) with the best display(s) end up with more than their fair share of female attention. Despite their slow, deep flight they are also migratory and I've seen it mentioned that they can fly up to 12 kilometres/miles (depending on which source I looked at) as part of long migrations.

All of these fascinating behaviours and stunningly different appearance means that I'm even more gutted now as I only got one photo of this species 🙄. I regretted not getting more as soon as I got back from the Zoo, but even more so now. As it seems to be one of the commoner species in butterfly houses I should get other chances to get some photos despite my tendency to over look it while waiting for something I haven't seen before like the Leopard Lacewing etc.



Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Feb-13 12:08 AM GMT

Happy February

Moving house tomorrow/today and looking forward to two weeks of boxes, cleaning, reciting my new address again and again and intermittent broadband 🙄



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 01-Feb-13 01:45 PM GMT

A very interesting discussion on the glasswing Wurzel, especially the reference to butterfly developing toxicity from a nectar source rather than the usual route of larvae accumulating the toxins from their foodplant. Does the female have this toxin too or only the males to use it for / convert it into pheromone ?

"Wurzel" wrote:

As it seems to be one of the commoner species in butterfly houses

I've made 4 visits to Wisley already this year (I feel a picture posting coming on 😊.... three new species 😊) but I still haven't seen it 😞 😞

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 01-Feb-13 07:05 PM GMT

good luck with the move Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

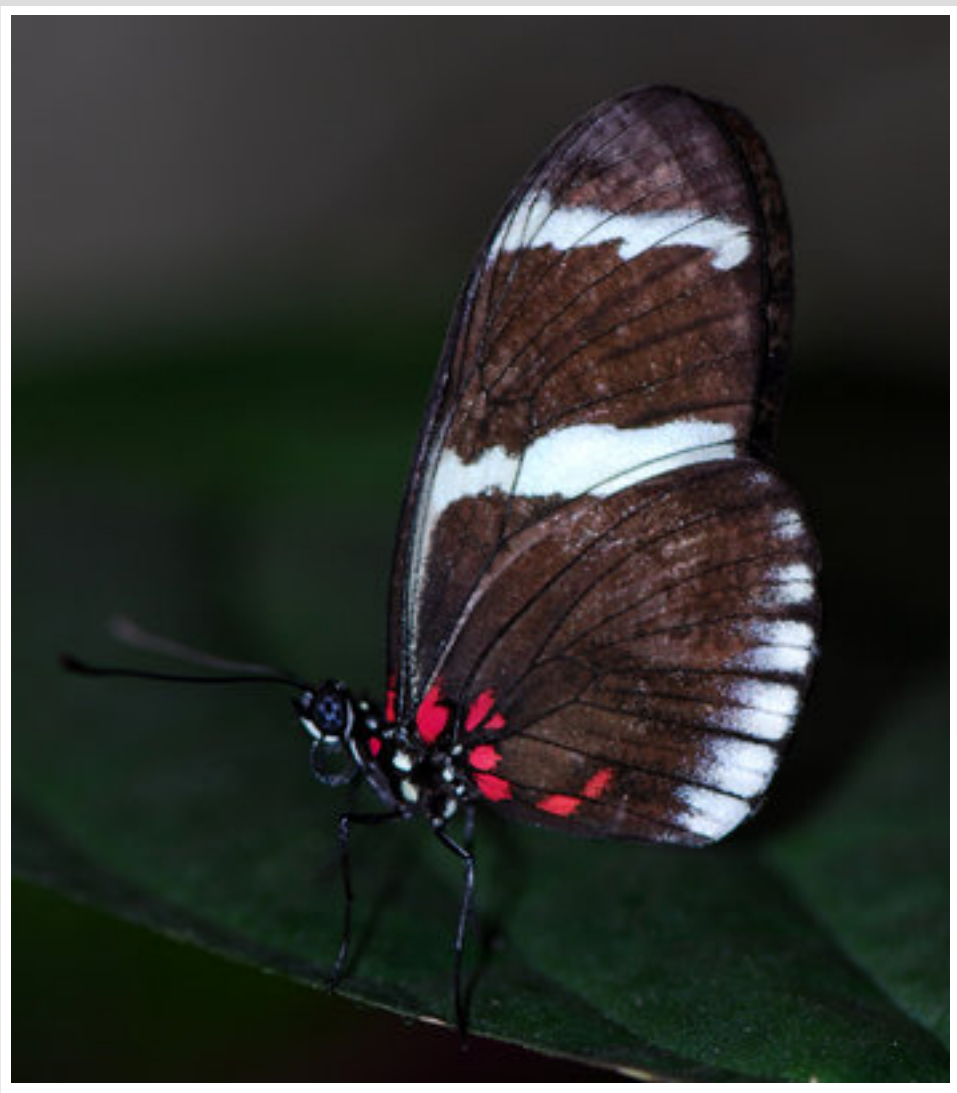
by Wurzel, 07-Feb-13 11:36 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid – as far as I'm aware the females also use it but only as a toxin. The posting was cracking – if I hadn't have been moving I'd have made a comment, perhaps I still will. 😊

Cheers Chris – the move went well but I'm still surrounded in boxes – I might make a house inside a house out of them 😊

Small Blue Grecian...

Or more correctly *Heliconius sara* (Fabricius, 1793) of which there are approx 10 subspecies and I have my suspicions that this is the subspecies *theudela* although that's more of a guess really than anything else. The species itself can be confused with *H.wallacei* when looking at the upperside although the diagnostic feature is that *H.wallacei* has red streaks near the underside base of the wings whereas *H.sara* has spots. It is found along the edges and more open areas of lowland jungles from Guatemala to Southern Amazonia.



Having researched and written about various mimics in the last couple of weeks I wasn't surprised to find out that *H.sara* is toxic. I'd already noted the boldly marked upper and under side which suggests "true" toxicity in these neo-tropical species and *H.sara* retains the toxins from feeding during the larval stage. For butterfly photographers the stunning livery isn't the only attraction as they are very long lived as they feed on nectar, in some cases reaching a grand old age of several months. They also show communal roosting and even better studies have shown that they use the "travelling salesman algorithm". This means that they memorise the locations of food sources in their home ranges in association with their communal roost. They can then plan out the most efficient circuit which they then fly each day. So if you're making a couple of visits to the same butterfly house you can try and work out where they will be and get set up ready.

One of the most interesting and possibly shocking behaviours exhibited by *H.sara* is pupal mating. The male emerges first and flies seeking out a pheromone released by the female pupae. In other species which show pupal mating the male will then settle down and wait for the female to start emerging and then he will mate with her whilst she is still emerging. In *H.sara* the males will actually break open the pupa and as soon as the genitals are accessible he will copulate! 🤩🤩

And with that graphic image I'll leave it there for now...

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 08-Feb-13 01:59 PM GMT

Excellent report there Wurzel 😊👏 .

In the Wisley butterfly house they use feeding tables which are constantly stocked with artificial nectar (sugar solution?) so I wouldn't expect the butterflies to go on a feeding circuit, but I might be wrong 😊 .

The pupal mating is amazing and raises some questions. I expect the female would be very close to emergence allowing the pupal skin to be thin enough for the male to break into? The male would also have to avoid damaging the hooks/claspers which anchor the case to a silken pad otherwise a break-in might cause difficulty for the female to emerge? I also suspect that the male would have to 'hold his horses' until the female had released meconium. Premature release of meconium can occur if pupae are handled roughly or even just handled in some cases, and this can spell the death of the insect by glueing it into its case 😞 . It would be interesting to know whether this pupal mating process causes losses or have those species that have evolved to use it got it off to a fine art.?

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Feb-13 09:58 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊

Thanks for the questions I did a bit more reading on this so hopefully I've found some answers...

"I expect the female would be very close to emergence"...in most pupal mating species the male will actually wait until the female is just emerging. With *H.sara* they too wait and then sort of help her on the way.

"I also suspect that the male would have to 'hold his horses' until the female had released meconium"... the various sources I found seemed to suggest that the females do release meconium while still copulating although they release it more slowly than if they were emerging unencumbered. From further reading it doesn't seem to be as rough and tumble as I first thought with the mating pair staying joined for a comparatively long period during which time the female completes emergence and her wings can dry out. I suppose in a way it's more efficient as the deed is done in what would otherwise be wasted time. It's not like the female can go anywhere immediately after emergence and so if she gets mating over and done with then as soon as she can fly she can start feeding and the eggs will develop sooner.

"those species that have evolved to use it got it off to a fine art."...in order for it still to be happening they must have got it, like you say, down to a fine art and also it must provide some advantage. This is merely me thinking aloud without any research to back it up...but if the male comes to her and copulates directly then she uses less energy seeking a mate and also instead of being more vulnerable at two distinct times at her life (mating and emergence) she's only vulnerable once, an original two for one as it were 😊 .

Have a goodun

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 11-Feb-13 02:02 PM GMT

Thanks for the trouble in trying to find out answers to my questions 😊 .

The more I read this the more questions I seem to find. Firstly you say that the male helps the female break out, but how?. Butterflies don't have jaws and I can't imagine their limbs are strong enough to tear open a pupal skin 😊 . Perhaps it's the female who senses the presence of the male and breaks out (flexure of the abdomen) 💡 ... either to facilitate the mating process or to get away before he has his way (are most females in the butterfly world choosy on who they copulate with expecting to be wooed by flight and scent?). If she does exercise a choice then her breaking the skin would be a feasible argument. If the male *does* break in because it's in his advantage to mate with as many females as possible (I assume pupal mating is not exclusive in this species?) she may under those circumstances have little choice but to accept his availability and get it over and done with? No advantage to her perhaps but no disadvantage to the species as such (hence this strategy has been able to evolve) 😊

Another question:- being caught in a 'compromising position' by a potential predator before you have the ability to fly may be disadvantageous, although you state the fact that they are distasteful/poisonous, which could negate against that scenario?

Isn't nature fascinating 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Feb-13 10:07 PM GMT

No worries Philzoid 😊 WRT pupal mating possibly meaning less risk I thought as I wrote it that "surely it wouldn't matter as they're poisonous" but then perhaps they could be unlucky enough to meet a predator that hasn't made the association yet?

I think the males sort of use their genitals, catching the edge of the pupal covering and tearing at it. Unfortunately a lot of the sources I found described the act quite emotionally and didn't actually go into details of the mechanics. Sorry these are just best guesses.

Lady

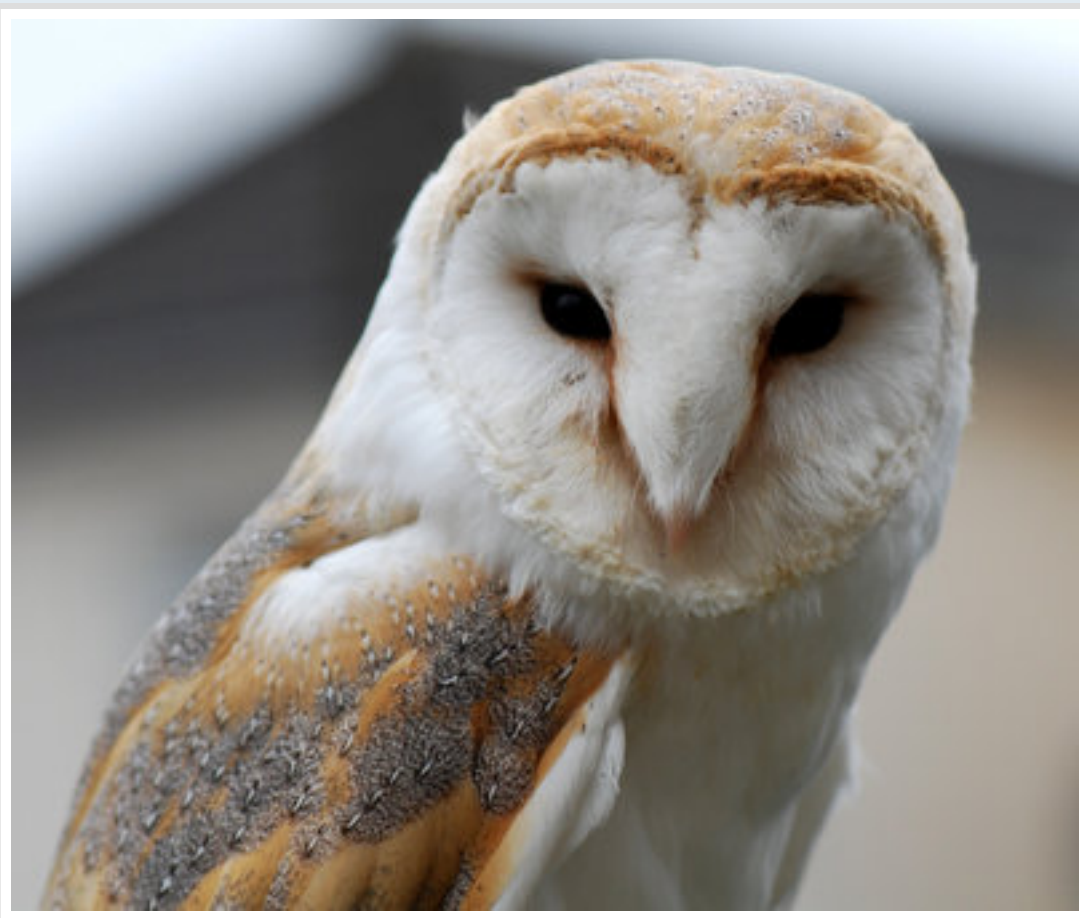
We've recently moved into a "tiny house" as my wife calls it, into the centre of Salisbury. I've gone from having a huge back garden with mature fruit trees, flower and veggie patches and shrubbed borders to a very small (possibly 2 metres square) patch of concrete.

Never mind as just over the road is the Harnham town path overlooking the water meadows which Constable once sat in to paint the Cathedral and a nearby local nature reserve. I know the area well as I spent a year living in Harnham when I was very small, and my wife and I and then my wife, daughter and I lived just over the road from where we've bought. I used to do a bird count once a month around the local streets and parks. Over the years that I did it I found Common Sandpiper, Grey Wagtail and Kingfishers along with a Wood Duck (this was at 5:30am whilst taking a walk with my wife who thought it would help with the labour pains! 😊 her idea not mine I hasten to add) and a Mandarin on the river. Some of the larger trees sheltered Willow-Chiffs, Spotted Flycatchers and most prominent in my mind one autumn there was a Fiercest.

However the thing that used to really throw me was that I swore that on some evenings I could hear a Barn Owl. "It couldn't be" I'd tell myself and then go back to watching Daubentons feeding along one of the tributaries...

Today having sat down for the first time in what feels like two weeks I heard a Barn Owl again. So I opened up the kitchen door and there was Lady sitting on the wall and staring at me. My neighbour has had her for 25 years from the egg. When she hatched her wing was turned wrong and it took so long for him to turn it correctly that by then she wouldn't accept anyone else. She was a bit moody today as she doesn't like the cold weather and at her grand old age who can blame her although she still pays for her keep as a guard owl!





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Susie, 12-Feb-13 10:21 PM GMT

She's a beauty, Wurzel, and looks in really good condition. 😊 How long do Barn Owls live?

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Feb-13 11:39 PM GMT

My neighbour seems to think that she's possibly going to make it to 26 and I hope she does. She's certainly one of the most glamorous "pets" I've seen. The best thing about her being next door is that all those years ago when I thought I was hearing things I was actually making the correct identification 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Feb-13 09:37 PM GMT

Tiger Longwing

Correctly known as *Heliconius hecale* (Fabricius, 1776) or the Golden Helicon. It is found across Central America and down into South America, from Mexico to the Peruvian Amazon. It is in the family Nymphalidae but has the synonym *Papilio hecale* so there was some debate about its' lineage and even now there is a suggestion that it's more closely related to the Fritillaries – although I only saw this on one source.

It is found in forested areas flying rapidly in the canopy and often more erratically in the lower storey. Like other “long wings” it feeds on pollen as well as nectar. This makes it much more fecund and long lived than other species. Also like other members of the genus it shows circadian communal roosting.

Again it is part of a mimicry ring, with all 29 subspecies mimicking other toxic species (generally from the Ithomiines). These are toxic too and they gain their toxicity from feeding on the passion vine as larvae. This toxicity is carried on into the adult stage. They also, surprise surprise, engage in pupal mating. They are slightly more refined than *H.sara* though in that males will gather around a female pupal case and wait for her to start emerging. As she does they will fight each other off and the victor will mate whilst she is still largely in the pupal case and as her wings harden.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 14-Feb-13 10:01 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Tiger Longwing

... it feeds on pollen as well as nectar. This makes it much more fecund and long lived than other species...

Wurzel

How does it ingest the pollen? Is it sucked up through the proboscis as well? I had no idea this organ had adapted to this feeding process in certain species. Does your source have any clarification – I'm fascinated!

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Feb-13 10:45 PM GMT

I did a bit more digging into this Dave and it seems that feeding on pollen has evolved from proboscis grooming behaviour. They don't actually ingest the pollen, instead they collect it on their proboscis and then coil and uncoil their proboscis which starts to break down the pollen grains physical. At the same time they release saliva which contains protease enzymes. These break the pollen grains down chemically and then the amino acid rich solution is taken in like nectar would be.

Isn't evolution grand?! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

PS It does take a couple of hours for the process to work. I also saw reference to a Malayan moth (unfortunately it wasn't named) that takes blood meals like Mosquitoes (can't quite believe this so I'll read a bit more about it)!!

PPS Just read about the Harvester butterfly which has a short proboscis which it uses to pierce woolly aphids and it then drinks their fluids!!

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 15-Feb-13 12:12 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel! That's an amazing adaptation – and the idea of a vampire moth and a carnivorous butterfly as well... 😡

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Feb-13 09:44 PM GMT

Blashford Lakes

I took the girls out on Sunday to Blashford Lakes. I was hoping to pick up Green Winged Teal at the same time as earning some much needed brownie points from the wife ready for when the season starts. Unfortunately the weather was terrible – raining hard, freezing cold and with a slight wind that was cutting. To placate the girls and to get warmed up a bit we started off in the woodland hide. It was good timing as we managed to set up by the only set of windows that opened just before a coach tour arrived. Unfortunately the best feeders – those that were attracting Brambling and Redpolls and Siskins were placed almost out of reach of my lens so I had to try and focus through misted up Perspex or settle for the “commoner” species visiting the feeder directly in front of me. The girls loved it ticking off the birds they were seeing and the highlight was a bank vole that kept popping up to take advantage of spills from the feeder. “Cheeky monkey” it was named by my younger daughter. 😊







We then tried our luck at the Ivy Lake hides but the Green Winged wasn't at the South hide despite there being good numbers of ducks (Pochard, Tufties, Gadwall, Shoveler and Wigeon) and checking every single Teal I could find. At the North hide it could have been there but you couldn't see through the rain splattered and misted up Perspex. So dipping we made our way homewards. Back at the car I found the open boot to be a useful rain shelter/hide with the added advantage that the girls were snug and dry inside and happy to sit and chat while I got a few more shots.



Hopefully I'll be able to head back here later in the week and with better weather so the search will be easier. Failing that it's only a "race" really (it's not but I keep telling myself that to avoid the disappointment of dipping) and there might be something else around by then.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 16-Feb-13 11:19 AM GMT

didn't know if you knew about this wurzel <http://blashfordlakes.wordpress.com/>

Chris

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 16-Feb-13 01:39 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

I had to try and focus through misted up Perspex

I agree that the hides at Blashford are very frustrating for the photographer. What few opening windows there are, are of little use, unless you have a monster lens. On the other hand, it is a great place to watch winter finches, etc., and I have had my best-ever views of Water Rail there. I have twice

arrived at one of the hides to be told that a Bittern had been parading in the open, just a few minutes earlier!

Good luck with your next visit 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Feb-13 11:27 PM GMT

Cheers Chris – if you'd have asked me that question a couple of weeks ago then I wouldn't have known anything about it but it's how I get my "inside information" now 😊😊

Cheers Mike 😊 – the winter finches are the reason that I try and get to Blashford at least once in a winter – I went again yesterday and lets just say that your comment about the Bittern was very apt 😊

I also got an unexpected bonus today as I was driving back from Ikea Southampton, just about to drive into Wellow and I slowed down because of the speed camera. Really glad I did as I caught sight of 20+Waxwing busying themselves in the Rowan (I think) trees there 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

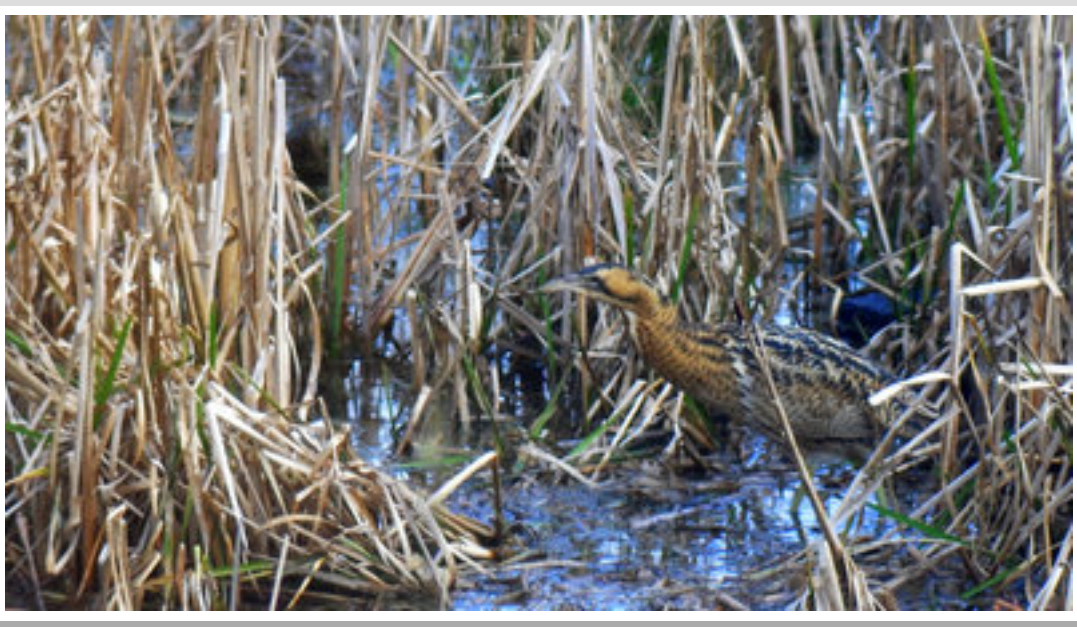
by Wurzel, 18-Feb-13 09:59 PM GMT

Another day at Blashford...

It actually started off when I dropped the girls at their Nannies. On leaving the village of Sixpenny Handley I thought I'd check out the pumping station area just down the road. As I drove along the single track road to the car park I noticed a few people about with scopes so I pulled over and asked one bloke what was about. He told me it was a Great Grey Shrike, and I squinted out across the field and could just make out a whitish blob. I quickly parked, got my gear out and then headed back to share the bird. It was a cracking sight I've seen them in Poland along with Red Backed and also Lesser Grey and Woodchat in Kefalonia but this was my first British GGS as it's always been a bit a bogey bird. This is a good site though as the rough ground around the tumuli offers plenty of food and the fencing, small shrubs and trees offer a multitude of perching sites. Over the course of the next hour I drank in all that I could; side, front and rear views, noting how the white on the breast changed from pure white to pink to yellow as it caught the light from different aspects. I really enjoyed its behaviour, flying with 7 or 8 flaps, disappearing from view and then reappearing back on a perch. 😊

Still I was supposed to be heading out to Blashford...so off I went. On arrival I headed straight to the Ivy North hide where the Green Winged is supposed to hang out. No joy despite checking every single duck be it Teal, Gadwall, Mallard, Wigeon or Shoveler. Further out there are a few Pochard visible as well as some Great Crested Grebes in spring finery and a couple of Egyptian Geese. At one point as I'm watching a Wren creeping along a tiny branch a Kingfisher flashes by before the real reason I came puts in an appearance. It too, like the GGS before it offered the full range of views; head up pretending to be a reed, skulking low and hunting, offering tantalising glimpses of its tail, back or the top of its head before finally it came out into the open. I swear you could have heard the cameras clicking in Ringwood! So, not to be left out I too had a go (again cursing the bloody Perspex windows!).



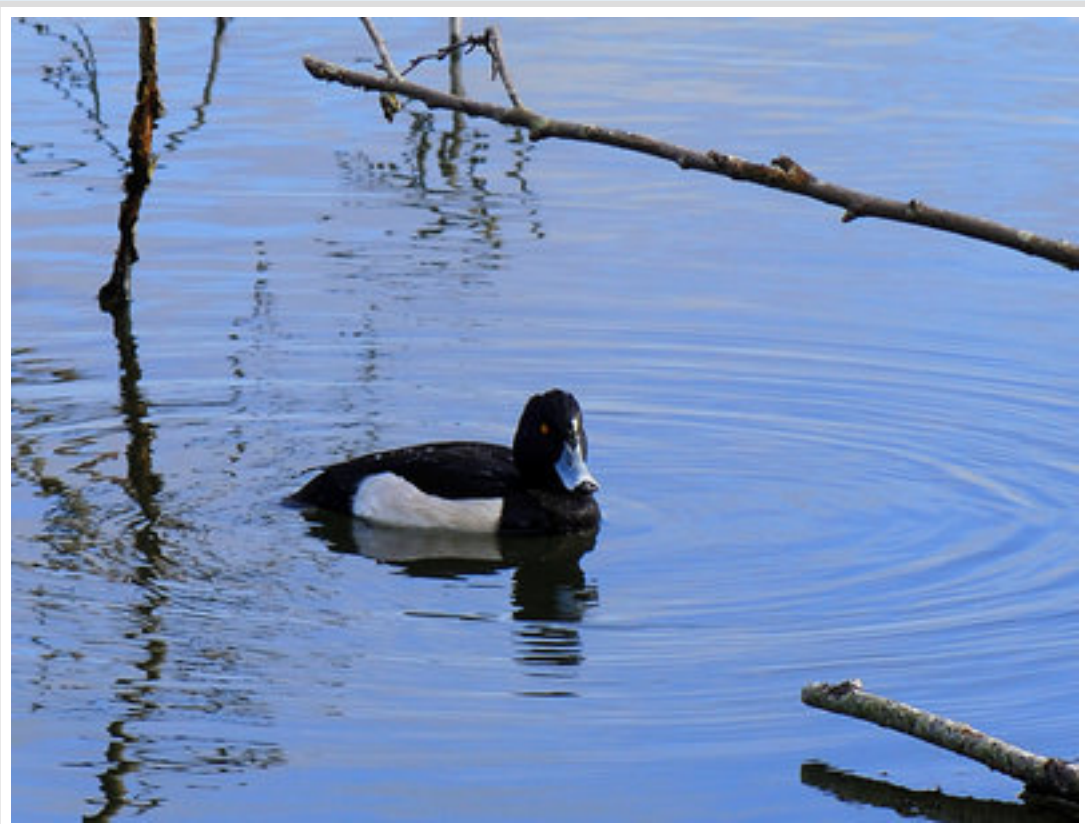
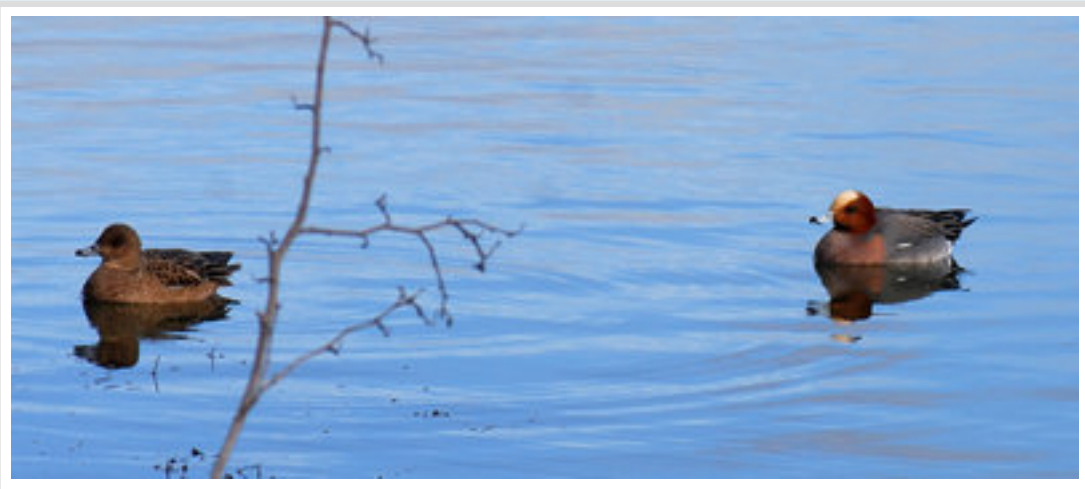
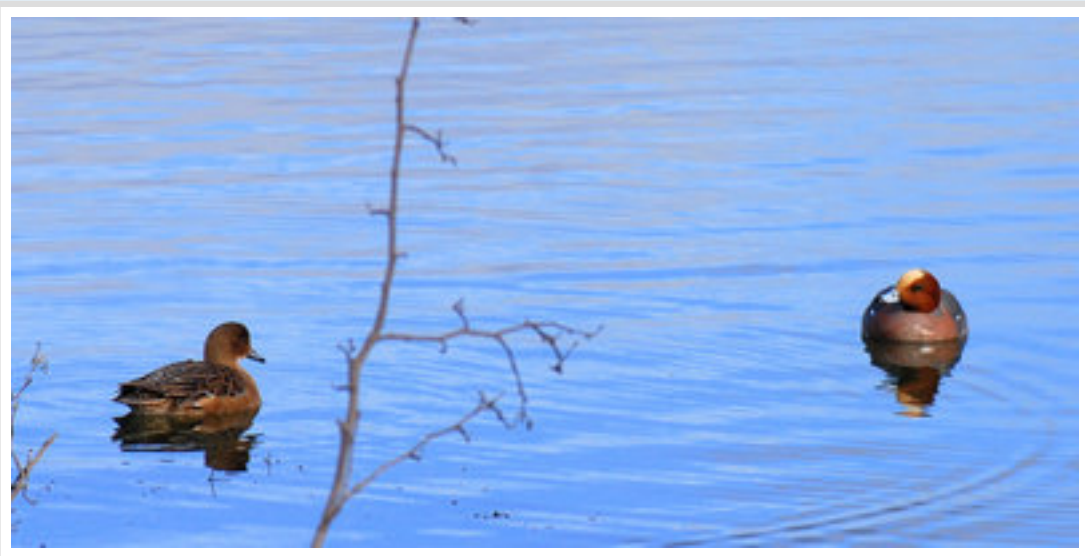


I then headed round to the Woodland hide to try and get some shots of Siskins etc. But again the Perspex windows meant I couldn't get as close I'd have liked. My favourite shots of the day were achieved using the tried and tested butterfly technique i.e. focus, click, one step closer, focus, click etc etc.





The Ivy South hide had all the usual ducks but no Green Winged Teal – although I've since discovered where it likes to hang out so I might try and get back there next weekend. Ibsley water saw me adding Goosander, Goldeneye and Pintail to the list but it was all too soon time to be heading back to Sixpenny Handley to pick the girls up.



I was supposed to be picking the girls up at flourish and as I drew up to the large roundabout I had about 20 minutes to spare to instead of turning right I went straight over – I'd just have a quick peek down at the pumping station for GGS one last time. There were more people in the car park this time and the GGS was still there but further away and a photographer stalking it was driving it further and further away. "I really better go" I told myself

so scope back in the car I reversed starting my three point turn and everyone was looking into the opposite field. I jumped out of the car and got my scope set up again as a male Hen Harrier was quartering the ridges in the field, at one point flying above the horizon in silhouette. Stunning! Still back to the car, scope away and something caught my eye – bins up and onto a Short Eared Owl. Well my scope was away by now but having found the bird (or “re-found” as it had been around before I’d arrived) a kind lady let me have a look at it through hers as it perched on a fence post. Stunning take two! I really had to go and almost as if to taunt me it flew lazily along the tumuli parallel with my journey. Stunning take three! 😊

So no lifer, but a British tick and a day which produced the most quality for a very long time, possibly ever! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 18-Feb-13 11:02 PM GMT

Congratulations on both Bittern and Great Grey Shrike! I'd be well pleased with those Bittern shots. I get the impression there are more GGS around over the last couple of years – certainly the case in Oxon, where we've had several

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Feb-13 09:46 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 There do seem to be more great Grey Shrikes around now than before and there're turning up at sights regulary – Morden in Dorset, Sixpenny Handley and the Blackgutter Bottom area of the New Forest (near Godshill) all seem to have had them the last couple of winters. It was certainly a cracking day and then with Waxwings out of the blue, a Red Kite yesterday and today Sparrowhawk, Corn Bunting, Grey Partridges and my second ever Ring Ouzel (really early but there has been a male wintering in gardens in Salisbury as recently as last year, and when you see a Ring Ouzel you know that's what it is) the birding is certainly continuing to offer some solace over the winter months. Now if only I could see and get to photograph some butterflies 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Gibster, 20-Feb-13 08:33 PM GMT

Hello mate,

have you any more pics of that bright Redpoll from Blashford Lakes? I'm thinking it looks like a 1st winter male Mealy. Pics of the wingbars, undertail coverts, mantle would be especially useful...

Cheers,

Gibster.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Feb-13 10:35 PM GMT

Cheers Gibster if you mean the one on the feeder I might have some more...I'll have a look now...

No luck on the Redpoll sorry Gibster all my shots are from the same angle and the only difference is that it turned it's head side on which isn't much use in looking for Mealy amongst lesser.

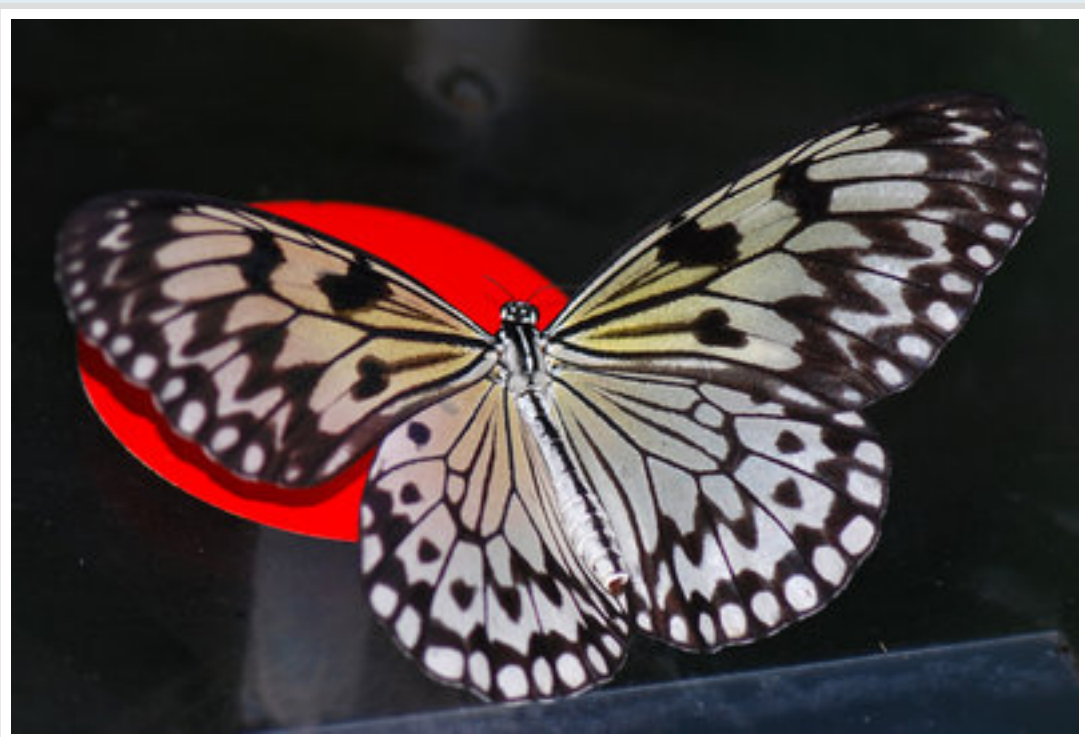
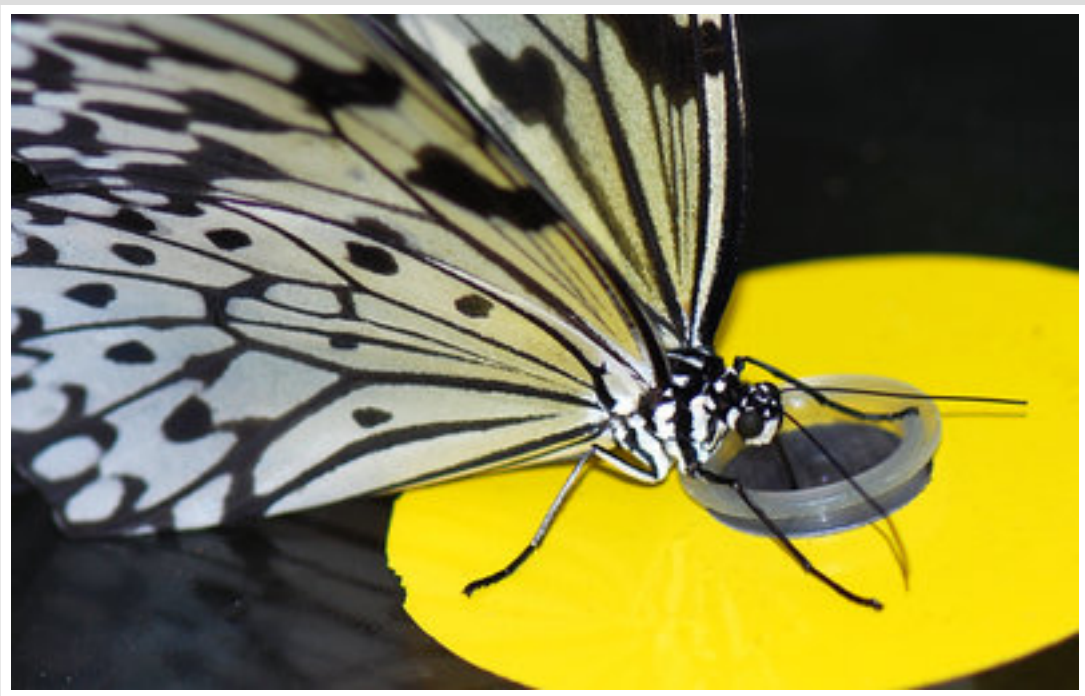
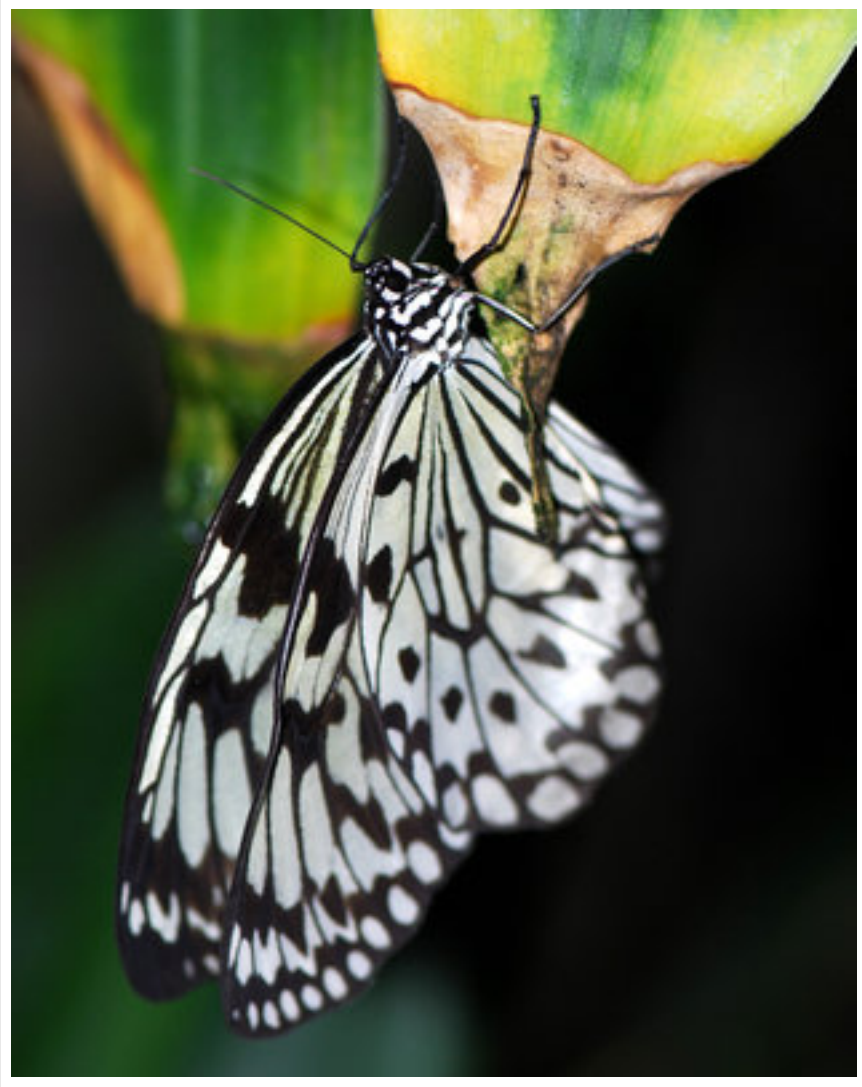
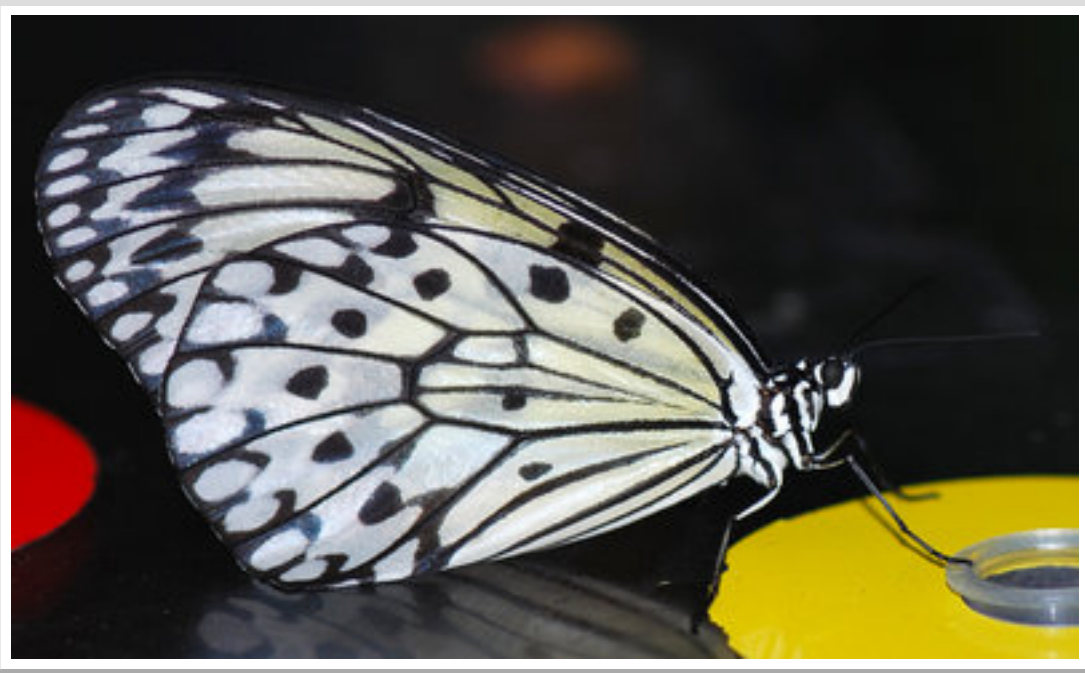
Paper Kite

The Paper Kite is also known as the Large Tree Nymph or the Rice Paper Butterfly and scientifically as *Idea leuconoe* (Erichson, 1834). It is a relative of the Monarch with 24 subspecies flying from SE Asia to Australia in lowland and coastal forest and Mangroves.

In terms of butterfly enclosures some of their behaviour needs consideration. First they are attracted to the colour red which is useful for getting a shot. Also useful to now is that the males will often perch in sunny conditions ready to intercept a female and in cooler temperatures it is less active, perching for longer periods – so check the temperature on the way in. Finally when feeding they will often flutter their wings so getting a sharp shot can be difficult.

The common names often refer to the slow, graceful and gentle flight of the butterfly which is thought to highlight and advertise the distinctive patterning of black and white which looks almost translucent with a yellow tint near to the body. But why advertise? Again, as with so many of the butterflies I've researched, it comes down to toxicity. Being a Danaine it contains alkaloids that make it distasteful and these are passed on sexually...

During mating the male and female will fly together eventually perching close together. The male then extends 2 long organs from his abdomen these are called the “hair pencils”. These brush the females’ antennae releasing pheromones encouraging the female to mate. In the chemical mix of these pheromones and also in the males sperm is the toxic compound Danaidone. So the male passes this on to both the female and her eggs protecting them by making them distasteful. This is further bolstered when the larvae feed on their host plant in a similar fashion, I guess, to Milkweed and the Monarchs. Despite their biological chemical weapons they seem to be increasingly vulnerable due to the destruction and degradation of their habitats.





It was nice to write about something other than mimicry for a change... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Feb-13 09:48 PM GMT

New Home...

We've been in our new home for three weeks now and today we had to do the final clean at our old rental property. Going back there today I didn't feel anything and I was glad to get back to our new place but one thing I did miss was looking out of the window into the garden. The old place had some cracking stuff in it and I could always find something of interest. My new garden by contrast is approximately 2 metres square of concrete and apart from when Lady is taking the air there isn't anything to see.

To get out of this blue funk I wrapped up and took walk, within 1 minute I was watching a skulking "Redcap". Then I crossed the road into Lizzie Gardens (as it's known locally) and crossed the bridge to the Harnham path looking over the water meadows. I was greeted by a stunning view...



Also enjoying this view was a female Blackbird.



On the walk back a flock of gulls passed over head and I loved the way they made strange patterns in silhouette, beautiful shapes in the sky.





The snow was trying it's best to fall and the cold had crept up on me and was biting at my fingers and toes, plus I couldn't feel my nose so I turned back to the warmth. Still no butterflies but this cold spell is hopefully a sign that things might be a bit more normal this year - with a perfectly timed spring to come and a dry, warm summer to follow? Or is that too much to hope for? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 26-Feb-13 01:42 PM GMT

Thanks for all the great info on the Paper kite Wurzel 😊. That name and Rice paper Butterfly seem more apt than Tree Nymph which is the label given to it at Wisley.

I have seen this butterfly during courtship flight but haven't noticed it being attracted to the colour red 😊. Also its slow flight makes it probably the most ideal butterfly house species to shoot in Sports Mode with a chance of getting a reasonable freeze on the image. Trouble is you're more likely to see it roosting than flying, particularly with our recent dull weather we've been having 😊. Here's hoping as you say that the cold winter weather means we're in for a good summer.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Feb-13 11:23 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 It's getting harder and harder to find out information about the exotics and I'm starting to run out of shots...I just hope I've got enough to see me through until the "proper" butterflies arrive. This winter does seem to be dragging on a bit now... 😊

Parides arcas - True Cattleheart

I did have trouble identifying this particular species and it was only after Mark Colvin pointed me in the direction of the genus *Parides* that I finally found some images which matched the shots I had. Members of the genus *Parides* are commonly called the Cattlehearts and are characterised by having elongated blackish forewings with green or yellow markings and rounded hind wings which have scalloped outer margins and scarlet on the underside. They are from the *Papilionidae* and there are about 34 species in the genus. They aren't true "Swallowtails" and in fact belong to the tribe *Troidini* along with the bird-wings of Papua New Guinea.

I was happy with my identification of this as *Parides arcas* until I did some Googling not just to find images to match my shots but to start finding out the information about it. At first it could indeed be called *Parides arcas* (Stoll, 1781). The only problem is that I then found out that in 2004 Gerardo Lamas combined *P.arcas* and *P.timias* into *P.eurimedes* leading to him to further describe 8 subspecies 😊. So now I had to try and fathom which subspecies it was - or rather I didn't as I was happy with the information I was turning up for *P.arcas* 😊. Give it a few years and I'm sure some other taxonomist will have had a look at it and decided that perhaps it can be "clumped" or "split" differently depending upon what the trend is at the time. All this has been going on for some time now in the birding world with Redpolls, Chiff-Chaffs and Rock Pipits to think of just a few species that a decade ago were represented by a single tick and now have two or three "versions". Still it certainly keeps it interesting! If only these subspecies/race/populations/variants were treated with the same importance as "species".

Back to the True Cattleheart... It is found in tropical forests from Mexico to South America where it feeds on flowers on the edges of the tree line or in light gaps and occasionally it will mud puddle. As so many of the tropical butterflies it is noxious to birds and mammals and gains it's toxins as a larva from its host plant and this is perhaps why it is relatively common and widespread.

As an adult it is relatively short lived lasting only 8 days so in collections they often appear quite fresh looking. They show sexual dimorphism with the males having green and the females' yellow spots on the fore wings. Once emerged males will patrol for females generally mating in the late afternoon. Once copulation is complete the male plugs the female's genital opening with a sphragis. This is a sperm plug, a quick setting and hardening mucus like material that prevents further copulations leaving sperm donations. So evolution by natural selection came up with the chastity belt before we did





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Mar-13 12:17 AM GMT

Spring is just round the corner...Happy March 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Mar-13 09:48 PM GMT

Yesterday I managed to find a spare 40 minutes to have a quick walk around the local area. I headed to the park and from there along the Town Path to Harnham. The water meadows on either side looked like they would hold avian treasures but the wire fence and the fact I had my new shoes on kept me from seeing what was hiding in the ditches. There were a few Redwings around and a solitary Little Egret that put on a great show for me, stalking prey, preening and then doing a slow fly past. I thought that I had some great shots in the bag but I had made the heinous mistake of not checking my camera was set up. All of my shots were more or less out of focus as I'd been clicking away thinking "isn't autofocus great" when my lens was in manual. I just about managed to salvage one shot.



I then walked on from Harnham to a local butterfly transect site.



It has a football pitch marked out and a few goal posts but there are clearly large areas that are left and I'm sure Marbled Whites and Smessex Skippers could be found here in season. Apart from a rocketing Snipe that shot overhead on my arrival it was pretty quiet here today and the hoped for sun didn't appear and neither did my first butterfly sighting. Still I consoled myself on the way home by spending some time watching a pair of Grey Wagtail. One of my favourite birds and almost the complete package; attractive appearance, charisma and present throughout the year to brighten up your day 😊 .





Despite the cold nip in the air and the dull grey skies I started to feel full of the joys of spring, the sap's rising and the flowers are starting to show well. If only I could find a few butterflies I'd be made up...





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 03-Mar-13 09:50 PM GMT

Some great shots there, Wurzel. Has Nigel Kiteley been coaching you lately?

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Mar-13 09:59 PM GMT

Cheers David 😊 I would like to say that I have been practising with advice from those that know – but it's still just a matter of finding stuff and pointing and shooting 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 03-Mar-13 10:42 PM GMT

Loved the Grey Wagtail in flight pic. Be warned – photographing birds (and butterflies) in flight is highly addictive 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 03-Mar-13 11:57 PM GMT

Sun hours for last week in London:3.5 hours. In Manchester:24 hours! 😊
No wonder we're not seeing any butterflies down south yet Wurzel!!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Mar-13 09:44 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 I know what you mean about the "flight shots" being addictive – they're defintiely something I'm going to work on this year.

Cheers Essex 😊 I noticed last year that living in Salisbury I got the worst of both worlds. When there was glorious weather in the South and South East we were covered in the same cloud as the South West. Then when it turned nice in the South West we were clobbered by whatever was in the South East! 😡 Mind you it fwelt like it was non stop rain from April until July last year...

On a more cheey note...Despite being stuck at work today I did manage to pop out over the lunchtime to the wildlife area. Whilst it's left pretty much to it's own devices there aren't too many nectar sources so I wasn't hoping for too much. As I walked up to the large wood chip pile a Small Tortosieshell took off and was gone before I'd even raised the viewfinder to my eye! Still I'd actually seen my first butterfly of 2013 😊 – 17 days later than in 2012 😊 now I need to try and get shots of one.

Just as I was recovering form the shock/surprise of seeing my first a flash of vivid yellow caught my eye a male Brimstone, it was flying fast, too fast to

settle so I grabbed a few Sports mode shots before it disappeared through the security fence and then from view.



Before I headed back in I peeked over the embankment and there flying along the railway line was another male Brimstone. I decided there and then to try my luck on the way home as well as popping in to Five Rivers for a quick walk around. Alas it wasn't to be. I did get to leave early but only so that I could get the girls from school as my wife is really ill 😞 In a way I'm glad that the weather doesn't look to good over the next few days as I won't be able to get out much what with work and nursing at home.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 05-Mar-13 09:58 PM GMT

Cracking shots Wurzel 😊

Unfortunately I missed out on the weather today, by the time I left work the sun was dropping and it was turning chilly again 😞

I have got a couple of local spots in mind to visit when I get a chance where I saw load of Commas, Red Admirals and Peacocks last year. The weather forecast is not looking too good but then again we were forecast a grey and cloudy weekend last weekend and that turned out nice in the end.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 05-Mar-13 10:16 PM GMT

One of the most joyous sights of the British countryside – an early spring Brimstone (admittedly, refusing point blank to settle).

Fair warms my heart and, I'm sure, many others besides.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Mar-13 10:50 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 Here's hoping the weather works out better this year!

Cheers David 😊 They were a joy to watch. It was relieved to see my first butterflies – now I need to start getting better shots 😊

Common Morpho

This is also known as the “Emperor” or “Pleides Morpho”, after the Latin name *Moprho pleides* (Kollar, 1850). However the specific name is up for debate as recent phylogenetic research has reduced the 80 species down to 29 relegating many to the level of subspecies, and *M.pleides* is one such species, now a sub species of *M.helenor*. It has something to do with Lamas in 2004 again...he was also involved in rearranging the Cattlehearts. Not everyone seems to use the new phylogeny and *M.pleides* is still in common usage – at least on the internet. The Morpos are nymphalids belonging to the *Satyrinae* subfamily like our “browns”.

Whether it is a “good” species or a subspecies the taxonomy doesn’t really affect the information available on the butterfly. It is found from Mexico down through Central America into South America where it flies from ground up to the canopy – there have been reports of helicopter pilots flying over the canopy seeing hundreds of Morphos basking on the tree tops. That being said most sources have them at ground level to lower storey commonly and they are often encountered along streams and at the edges of clearings. They mud puddle but generally feed on rotting fruit or animal waste tasting their meal with sensors on their legs and using their taste-smelling the air with their antennae. In captivity they particularly like Lychee or Mango – so you might want to stock up before you go. They are most active in the morning when the males will patrol for females who are more unobtrusive and often perch out of the way and also have less blue on their wings.

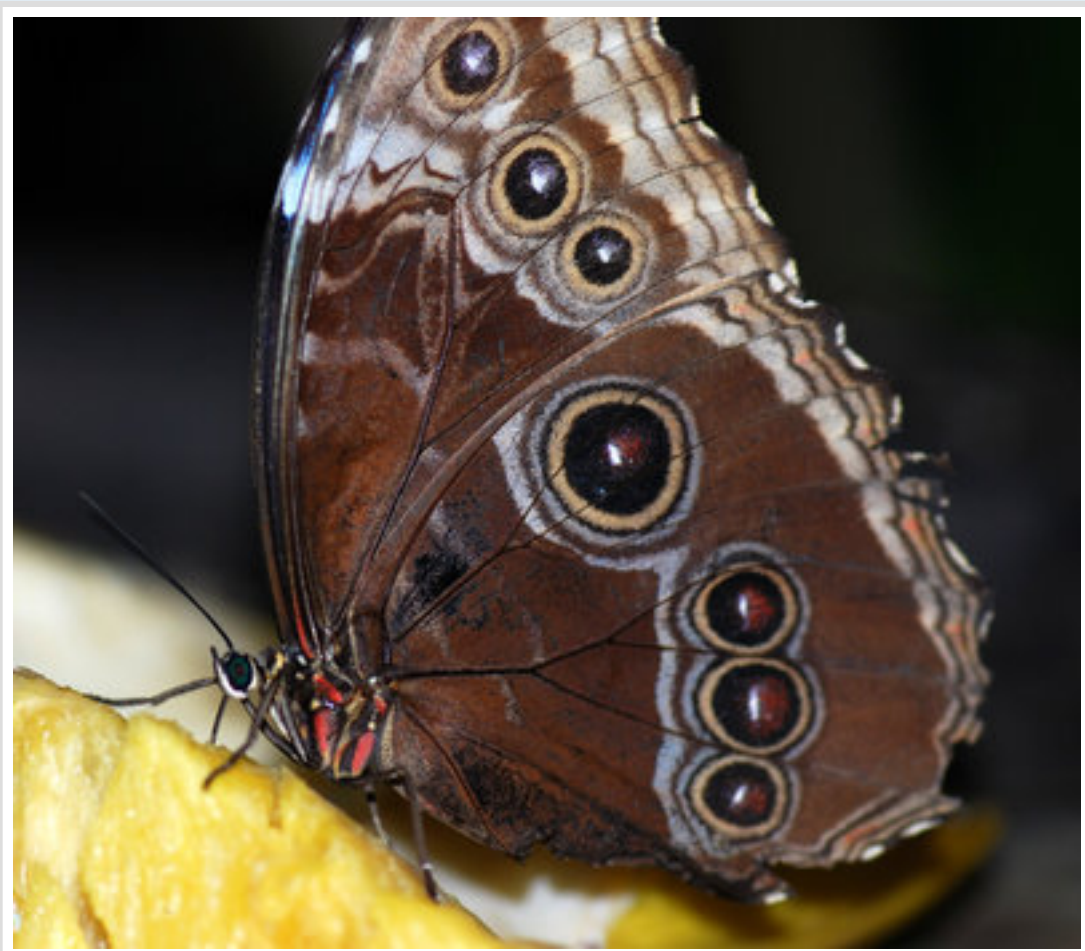


female?

In terms of other useful behaviour for photographers there is one – and that is that they show “mobbing” behaviour. Essentially hanging around in large groups to deter/confuse predators although I don’t know of this is common in captivity. A rather unusual behaviour, and one shared with other Morphos is the cannibalistic larvae!

However the most obvious thing about this butterfly is the stunning coloration. It is mechanical not chemical colouration caused by the diffraction of white light from the scales on the butterfly’s wings. It is seen in our Adonis Blue too. However the underside is duller, brown with ocelli. It has been suggested that the contrast between the dull, almost camouflaged under side and the brilliant blue upper side serves as a distractor of predators (generally birds) making the butterfly seem to appear and then disappear as it beats its wings. This is accentuated further by its’ slow bouncy flight and makes the butterfly hard to follow. Should a predator be able to follow the butterfly its flight pattern alters and becomes much more evasive with large swoops before an eventual landing. It then rapidly closes its wings disrupting the predators search program. It was looking for a “blue butterfly” and

now there is now sign of one! Should this trick not work then the final line of defence are the ocelli on the final wing margins. The bird attacks the most obvious part - the ocelli - missing the body and the vital organs!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Mar-13 10:18 PM GMT

Five Rivers



Having seen my first butterflies and got some very distant shots of brimstone earlier in the week I was eager to try my luck today. I checked all three of my weather apps and all suggested that this afternoon between 2 and 4pm would be the warmest and with the highest chance of sun. Luckily I'd been

doing my best to keep the house going during the week as my wife has been hit with a horrible flu so I had Brownie points a plenty so I grabbed my camera and made the walk to Five Rivers.

Once there I realised I'd missed the sun by about 5 minutes and it was hiding behind a huge wall of cloud. "Oh well" I thought "I'm here now let's see what there is to see". I worked my way along the banks and apart from the usual tit flocks (in much smaller numbers now) the only things of note really were the sudden bursts of a Cetti's and a whinnying Little Grebe.

I was just thinking about heading home when the sun appeared the skies became blue and it was pretty warm. I could feel the serotonin building and kick-starting my mood 😊. Back to the banks where most of my early butterflies were found last year. There was something small and brown that caught my eye a Small Tortoiseshell. It was while I was kneeling to get my shot that I remembered the problem from last year. The stinging nettles are so low to the ground the first you know of them is when you're getting stung though your jeans, and they seem particularly strong this early in the year! 🤢 My knees and hands are covered in nettle rashes - but the pain was certainly worth it.



I then took to walking forward and back along the banks while sun dipped in and out of the clouds. On one of its brief appearances the banks were bathed in a golden light and that was when I saw another/the same Small Tortoiseshell. Many more nettle stings later the shots were in the bag and I was winding my way homeward. After looking through the shots I'm pretty confident that they're two different individuals. The first has larger dark spots and more white than the later one.



So still only 2 species which is a little slow compared to last year and I don't think it'll get any better any time soon what with snow forecast next week (temperatures "feeling like" -7! 😱). Oh well hopefully Easter will be good! 😊 Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Susie, 09-Mar-13 10:59 PM GMT

That last small tort is a corker of a pic, Wurzel. 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Gibster, 09-Mar-13 11:22 PM GMT

Nah, tis over-cropped Susie. The penultimate pic is the better as it shows the behaviour/habitat more clearly. But that's just my opinion. Either which way, I'm still waiting for my first Small Tort of the year....unlike my first nettle sting of the year which occurred several weeks back. I can only think that the root is jam-packed full of energy and nutrients and those young shoots therefore have a full wallop of sting hidden in reserve. I'm seriously considering wearing the knee-pads that gardeners use, tied onto the front of my jeans. Or maybe a suit of armour (now there's a thought, raising

money by spotting butterflies whilst wearing a suit of armour....hmmm, could cause problems ascending Ben Lawers I guess...) 😊

Sorry for the minor digression, Wurzel!

Cheers,

Gibster.

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 10-Mar-13 01:20 PM GMT

Well done, Wurzel (might be a while before any of us see any more).

Those are definitely two different individuals, by the way.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Mar-13 04:56 PM GMT

Cheers Susie I'm glad you liked the "close-up" 😊

Cheers Gibster 😊 I'm glad you liked the "habitat shot" – see me, I cater for all tastes 😊 I reckon you're right about the nettles – kneepads are a must!

Cheers David 😊. Was that our spring then – what happened to summer and autumn? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 10-Mar-13 09:03 PM GMT

Early days yet, Wurzel.

Every year in the UK brings different conditions. We are, after all, in the 'battle zone' between Atlantic low pressure and continental high pressure.

Personally, I'm glad it's staying cold. I'd far rather ideal meteorological conditions descended upon us at a time of year when butterflies can truly benefit from them. Last year's unusually warm late March condemned many of them to death, since the entirety of April was a cold washout.

To be honest I simply wish for an 'average' year, i.e. mainly unpredictable with regular warm, sunny days.

Here's hoping.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Mar-13 12:07 AM GMT

That's a good point David and I can put up with a few more weeks of harshness for the benefit of the butterflies – I only hope that it does get better eventually for them. It was nice at the weekend to walk around and feel warm for the first time in what feels like forever. I guess I'm just straining at the leash now having seen a few butterflies, I feel like I've rubbed the sleepy dust of winter from my eyes and I'm raring to go. 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Mar-13 11:36 PM GMT

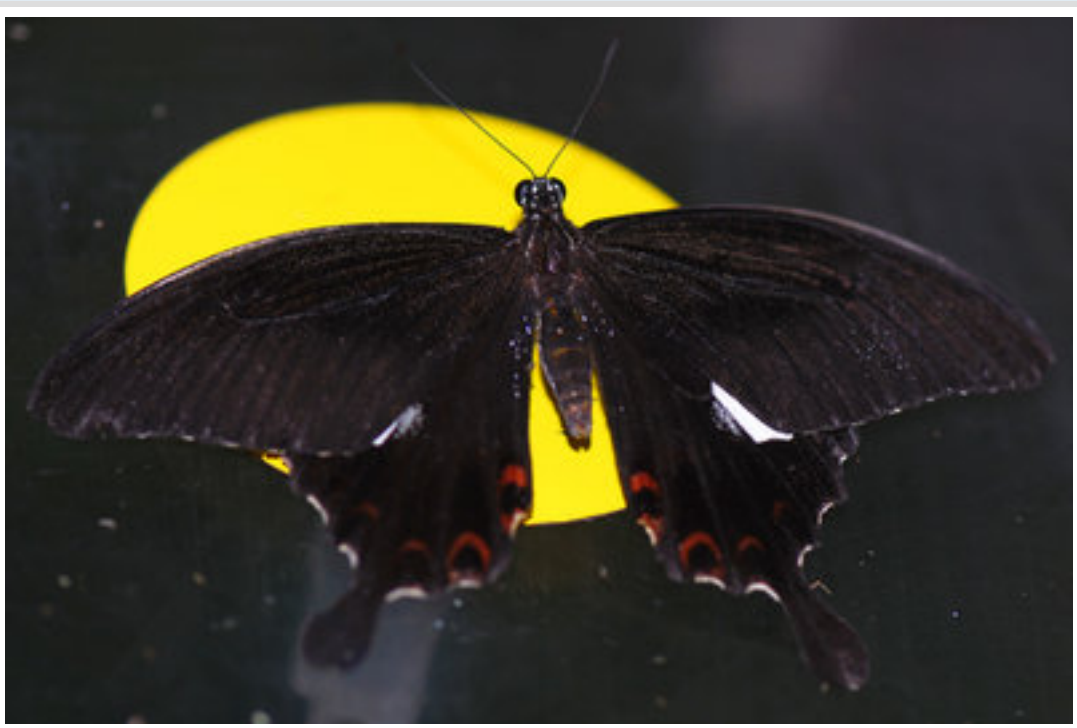
Red Helen *Papilio helenus* (Linnaeus, 1758)

This species is a "Swallowtail" one of the approximately 560 species worldwide and this particular species is a member of Papilioninae subfamily which contains about 200 different species. It is found throughout Asia from India down to the far South Eastern tip and right up to Australia, or at least representatives are as there are 13 subspecies.

It is a large Swallowtail, in fact it is the third largest butterfly in India and is a relatively common species. It is mainly found in forests or along the edge of streams although it has been known to leave its' natural habitat and frequent gardens and tea plantations. It has a rapid powerful flight but doesn't seem to stick to regular pathways however it does seem to nectar a lot. It also mud puddles alongside streams especially in the afternoons. Males prefer not to patrol instead they like to perch on the tops of ridges or hilltops to spy for females which they can then approach for copulation. This behaviour and that of puddling in the afternoon may come in useful when trying for shots in a butterfly collection.



During the wet season it seems to lose the red markings/spots on the upper side of the hind wing yet retains them on the underside. This can be quite apparent as it regularly basks with its' forewings flat almost drawing attention to itself because of the large white markings. If it feels threatened it may draw back its' fore wings making itself much less conspicuous.



The most interesting thing I discovered was regarding the larvae of various Swallowtails (including this species). The larvae have an organ called the osmeterium which is a repugnatorial organ. If threatened the caterpillar everts said organs which release a foul and noxious odour due to the presence of chemicals called "terpenes".

Have a goodun

Wurzel

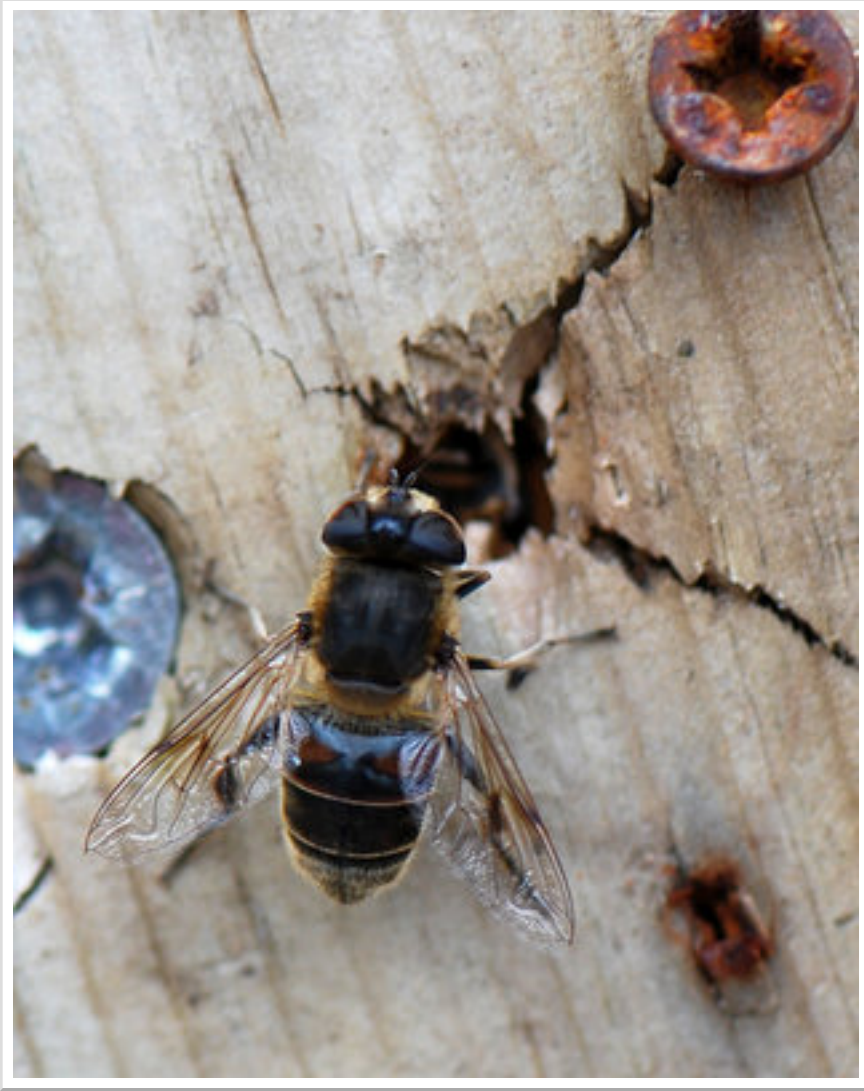
Re: Wurzel

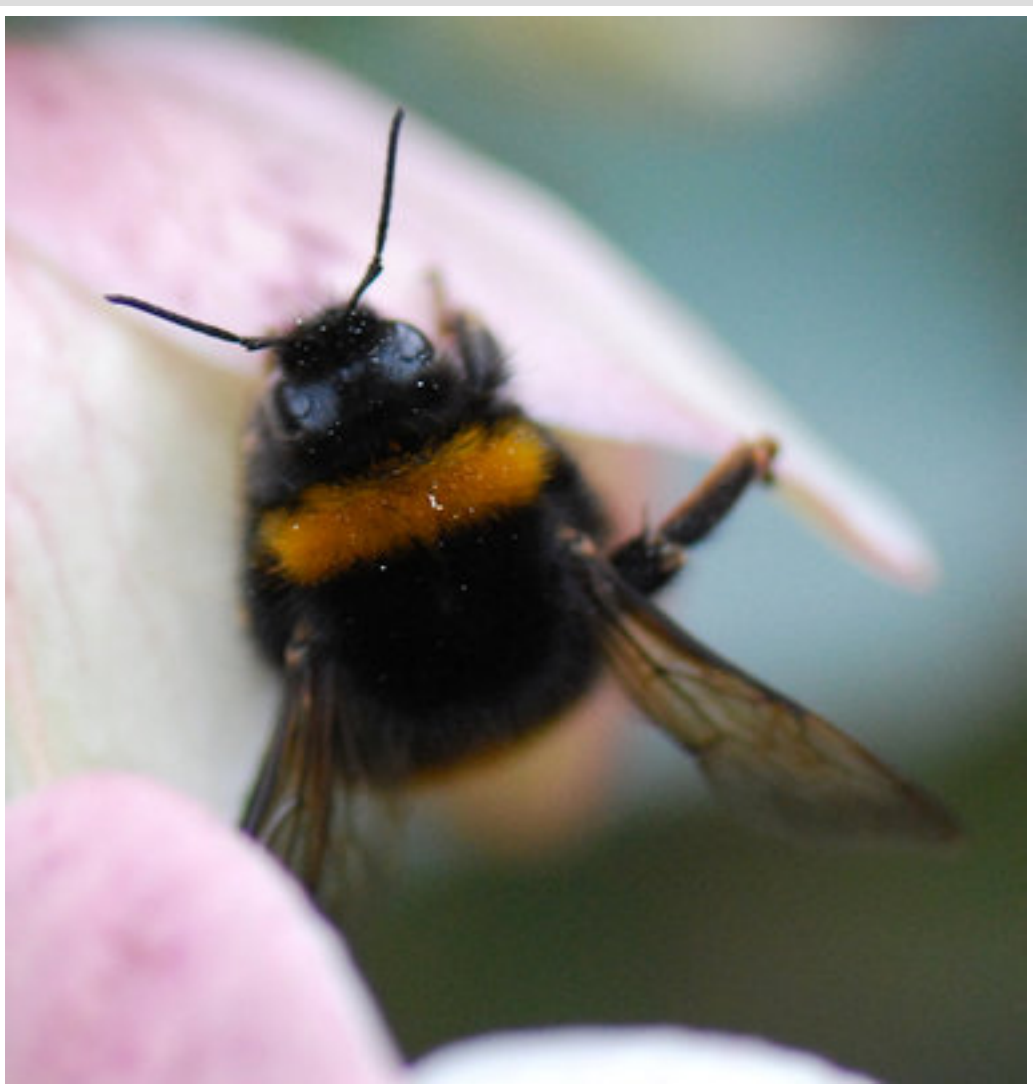
by Wurzel, 17-Mar-13 11:13 PM GMT

Wilton Garden Centre

During a brief respite between the rain and the snow I took the family out to the local garden centre at Wilton. I remember reading that at the start and end of the season these were good places for insects as they're sheltered, slightly warmer than the local environment and are jam packed with nectar sources. It must be like the equivalent of a food hall in a large shopping mall!

However it wasn't to be butterfly wise as the temperature stayed below double figures and the sun disappeared to be replaced with downpours. Still the brief 20 minute interim allowed me to find my first Drone fly and my second, third and possibly fourth Bumblebees of the year. After getting shots of one that was amongst the flower pots I realised it was stuck and so rescued it by lifting the pots up. When I checked the shots later I noticed that it was covered in mites - possibly picked up during its hibernation if it was a queen. Whilst I was slightly disappointed not to see any butterflies (a cheeky Red Admiral would have been nice) I was heartened by the bees as it means that things are starting to change and it won't be long now.





Today there was snow 🤪 , then rain 😞 and then finally some sun 😊 but it wasn't enough to bring anything out 😞 . Still this could mean that in a few weeks time when things have warmed up slightly we could be up to our knees in butterflies...here's hoping! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 17-Mar-13 11:44 PM GMT

I hope so too, Wurzel. This dreadful cold spell can't last forever. Surely there is a reward beyond the visible horizon? (and one that arrives DURING the main flight season, rather than outside of it, as has been the case these last couple of years).

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Mar-13 11:02 PM GMT

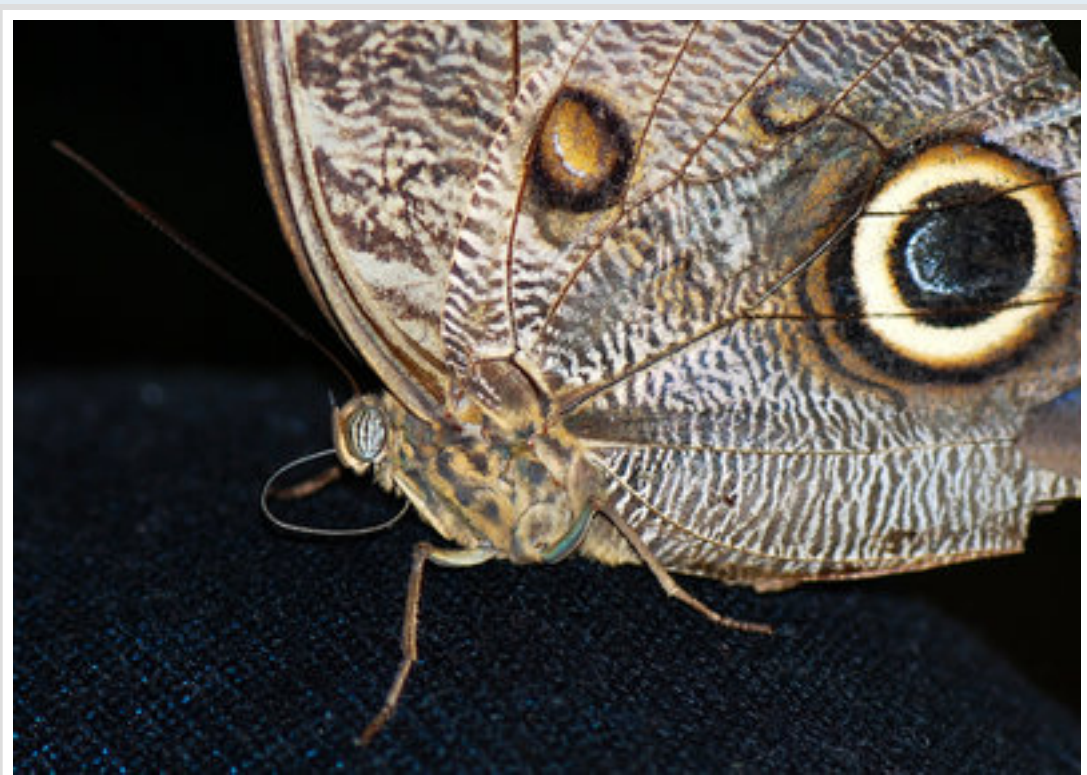
Still no end in sight unfortunately David 😞 so back to the exotics in the meantime...

The Owl Butterfly – *Caligo memnon*

I found it difficult to work out which species of the 20 or so in the genus this was. Luckily after wondering if it was *C.eurilochus* or *C.brasiliensis* I stumbled on a blog by one of the volunteers from Bristol Zoo so the identification was obvious. It was *Caligo memnon* (Felder, 1866) or the Pale or Giant Owl Butterfly. The genus is part of the Nymphalidae family in the Satyrinae so it's related to our browns although more closely related to the Morphos.



They are found in the secondary forest and rainforests from Mexico through to S.America. Their flight is slow and flappy so they are crepuscular which explains the generic name, Caligo means “darkness”. They continue to fly into the night alone along narrow trails and are often attracted to artificial lights and into buildings. Some research has shown that their frontal visual field can be p to four times as sensitive compared to the closely related *M.pleides*. They have adapted to low light by increased ocular facets.

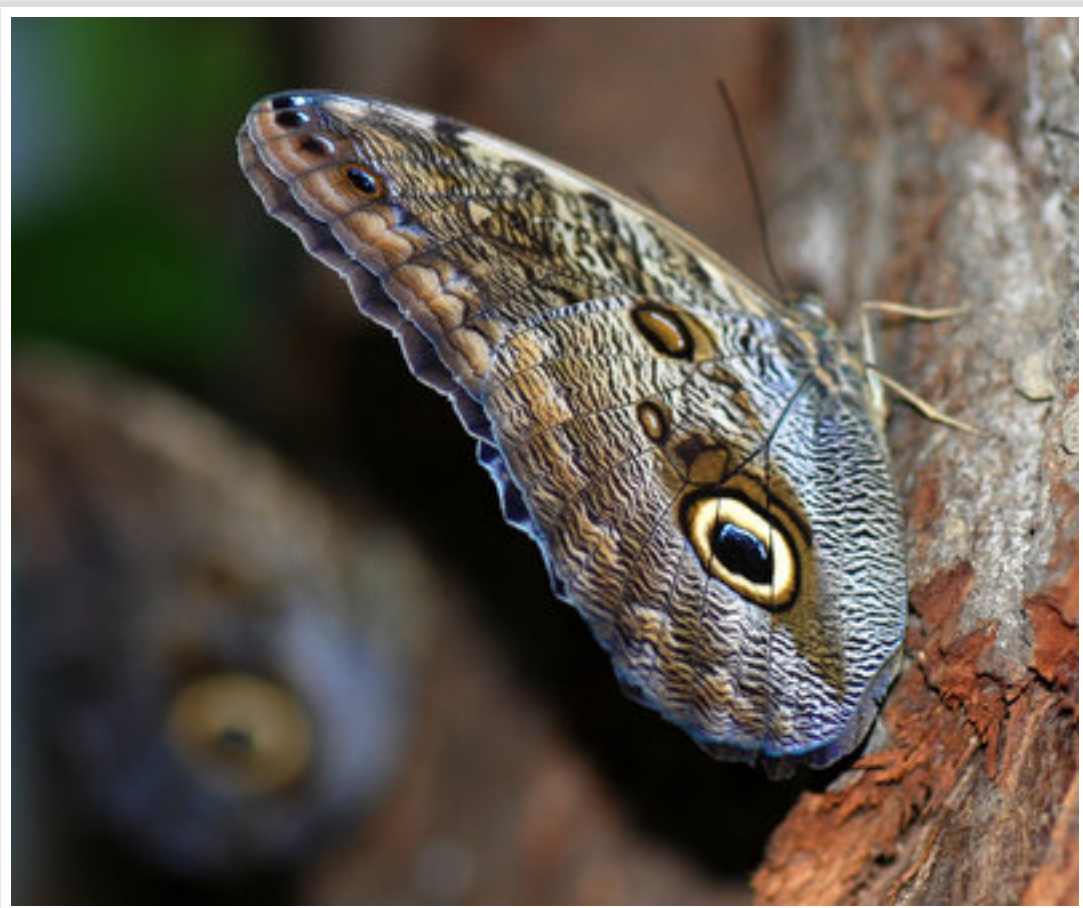


During the day they roost about 1–2 metres up and try to sit the day out – though they will fly through dull overcast weather – so they'll be pretty active in butterfly houses over here! If they are disturbed they only fly a few metres, with slow audible flaps, before settling again. This is good news for us photographers but also may explain the most obvious feature of the butterfly and why it got its common name – the huge eyespot on the underside of the wings. There are several ideas to possibly explain the “owl eyes”.

It could be that the conspicuous contrast between the upper and underside patterns could deter predators. Another idea is that if disturbed the butterfly will take off and if viewed from below the eyespots appear like those of an Owl. So Batesian mimicry as the head of a predator.



Another idea is that the eyespots with the dark area surrounding them are mimetic of a tree frog although the advantage of this is a little unclear. A more rational idea is that after a laboured and slow flapping flight the butterfly could easily be followed by an agile predator/bird to where it lands. The bird will then strike at the most conspicuous eyespots as the rest of the body is supremely camouflaged.



An unusual behaviour I came across was Lekking. In birds this is where groups of males congregate and strut their stuff while females take their pick. For the Owl butterfly males hold a territory at a site without obvious resources and occupy it at dawn. If a female passes they'll fly up to try and entice her down. However research has shown that they only occupy their lek for about 15 minutes. It's surprising when this is considered that the species is still around to perpetuate itself!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 24-Mar-13 01:48 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Interesting report on the Caligo Owls 😊 . However I would go with your initial assessment and say yours are Caligo eurilochus (brasiliensis is a ssp of eurilochus I think) 😊

I've attached some pictures which I hope illustrate the difference. (I hope I'm right because I've got a hell of a lot of file names to change if I'm not 😬😬)



eurilochus: Giant Forest Owl



eurilochus: Giant Forest Owl



memnon: Pale Owl ... The predominant species at Wisley



memnon: Pale Owl



memnon: Pale Owl

I think the seasons are going in reverse. When is this damn weather going to improve 🙄 . If anyone mentions global warming again I'll shoot them 😏

Re: Wurzel

by Gibster, 24-Mar-13 08:01 PM GMT

"David M" wrote:

Personally, I'm glad it's staying cold. I'd far rather ideal meteorological conditions descended upon us at a time of year when butterflies can truly benefit from them.

"Wurzel" wrote:

That's a good point David and I can put up with a few more weeks of harshness for the benefit of the butterflies

Tell you what, Philzoid, I know who I'm blaming for all of this! 😏

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 24-Mar-13 11:57 PM GMT

"Gibster" wrote:

"David M" wrote:

Personally, I'm glad it's staying cold. I'd far rather ideal meteorological conditions descended upon us at a time of year when butterflies can truly benefit from them.

"Wurzel" wrote:

That's a good point David and I can put up with a few more weeks of harshness for the benefit of the butterflies

Tell you what, Philzoid, I know who I'm blaming for all of this! 😊

Yep! 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Mar-13 12:51 AM GMT

In our defence we did say that almost two weeks ago so it should be getting better by Tuesday! 😊 When you're looking back on this in November after a record breakingly good year when we've been knee deep in butterflies don't forget who to thank! 😊 😊
Philzoid about the Owl...I reckon you're/I was right...that'll teach me to trust "experts" 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Mar-13 12:06 AM GMT

Caterpillars

As the weather continues to not be entirely conducive to butterfly photography I've taken to looking back over my folders and shots from last year. While doing this I found a few more photos of exotics from Bristol Zoo but not of the imagos.

These are the caterpillars of the Owl butterflies at Bristol Zoo (I think) and as such they feed on Heliconia plants and due to their gregarious nature, Bananas to pest proportions! So much so in fact that some producers are looking at using a parasitic wasp as a biological control. After 3-5 days the larva hatches from the egg and it is white with orange-brown strips down the length of its body and 2 spindles at the end. As it continues to develop into instar 2 it becomes yellowy/green and gains four pairs of horns on its head, the spindles are now termed "processes" and the body sprouts 4 hairy spines down its length. As they continue through the Instars they become browner and the number of spines increases to 6. At the end of the fifth instar the larva seeks a high spot at which to pupate and then completes a final moult to a hanging chrysalis. In terms of timing each instar lasts roughly a week and the chrysalis stage lasts about 5 weeks after which the imago emerges.



instar 3?



Gregarious

Have a goodun

Wurzel

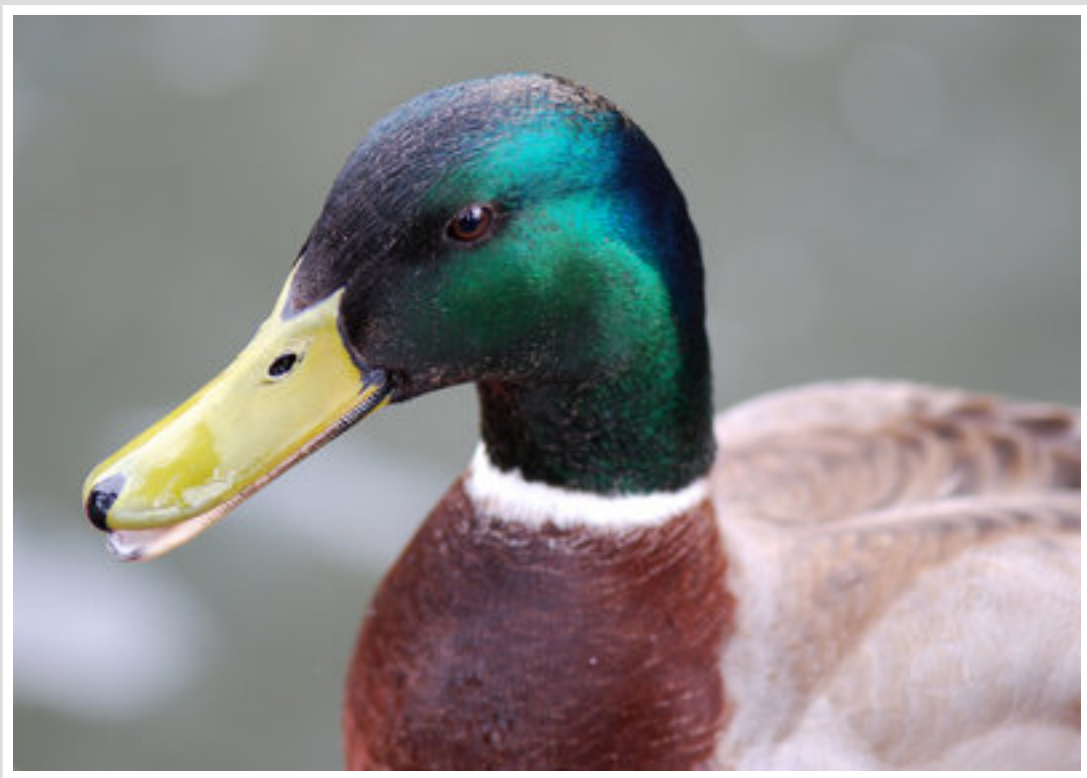
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Mar-13 11:04 AM GMT

Round Town

There is only so much time that you can spend checking through folders and tidying up folders before you go mad! So to dust off the cobwebs I took a walk around town. I took my camera so as to get into the habit ready for later in the year when you can never tell what you'll see or where you'll see it, most spring and summers I take my camera everywhere. This is presuming of course that we are going to eventually get a spring/summer though at the moment it feels like we'll have a perpetual winter - are the Frost Giants preparing for Ragnarok?

I'd previously seen a Caddis fly walking along the path but today my macro lens was used more as a telephoto. The bridge by the library proved a great place to just sit and wait as sooner or later the birds would come to me or rather come to those with the stale bread. While I waited I found some very smart looking male Mallards as well as a pigeon that was bipolar - one minute dumb looking avian the next evil incarnate!



Oh look a stoopid Pigeon

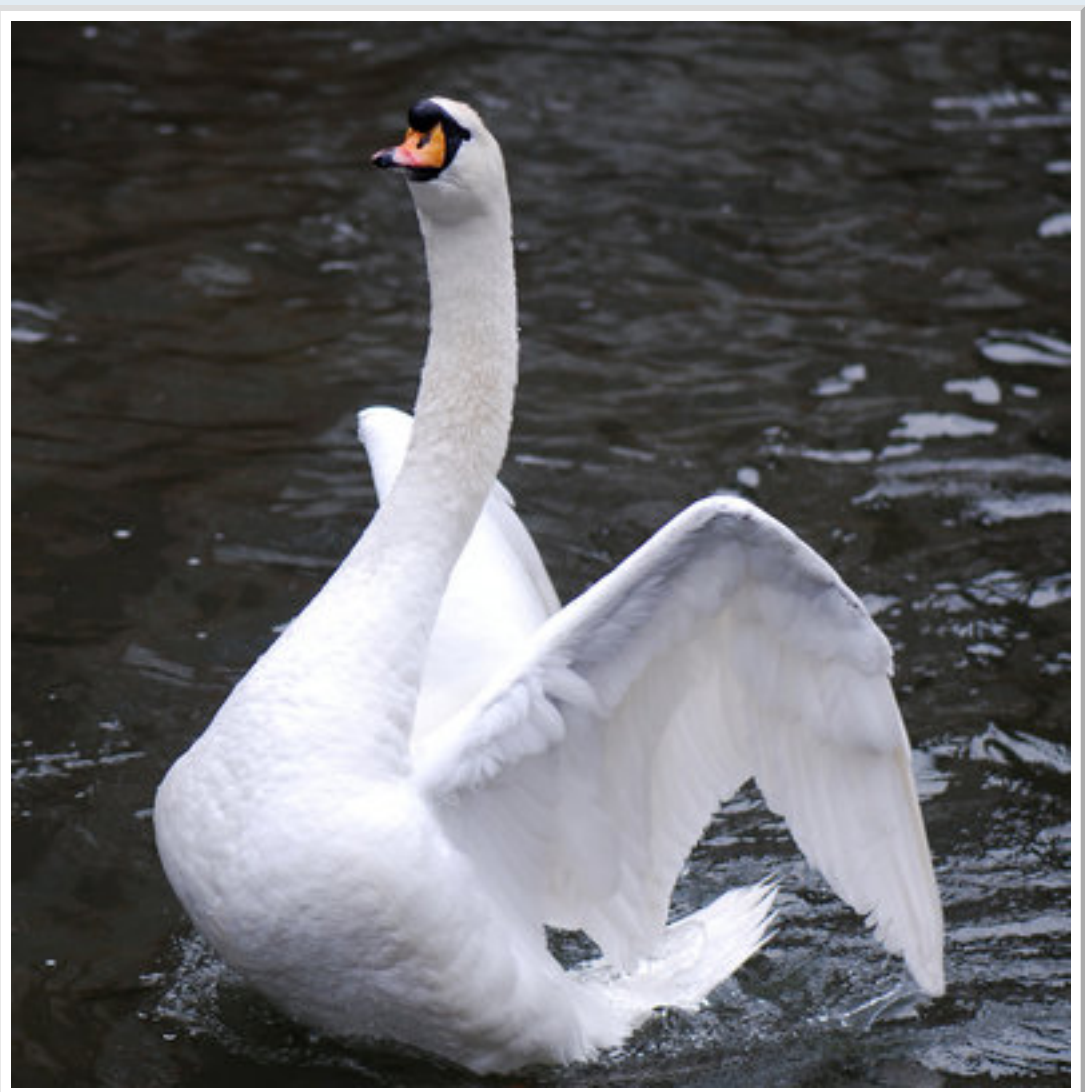


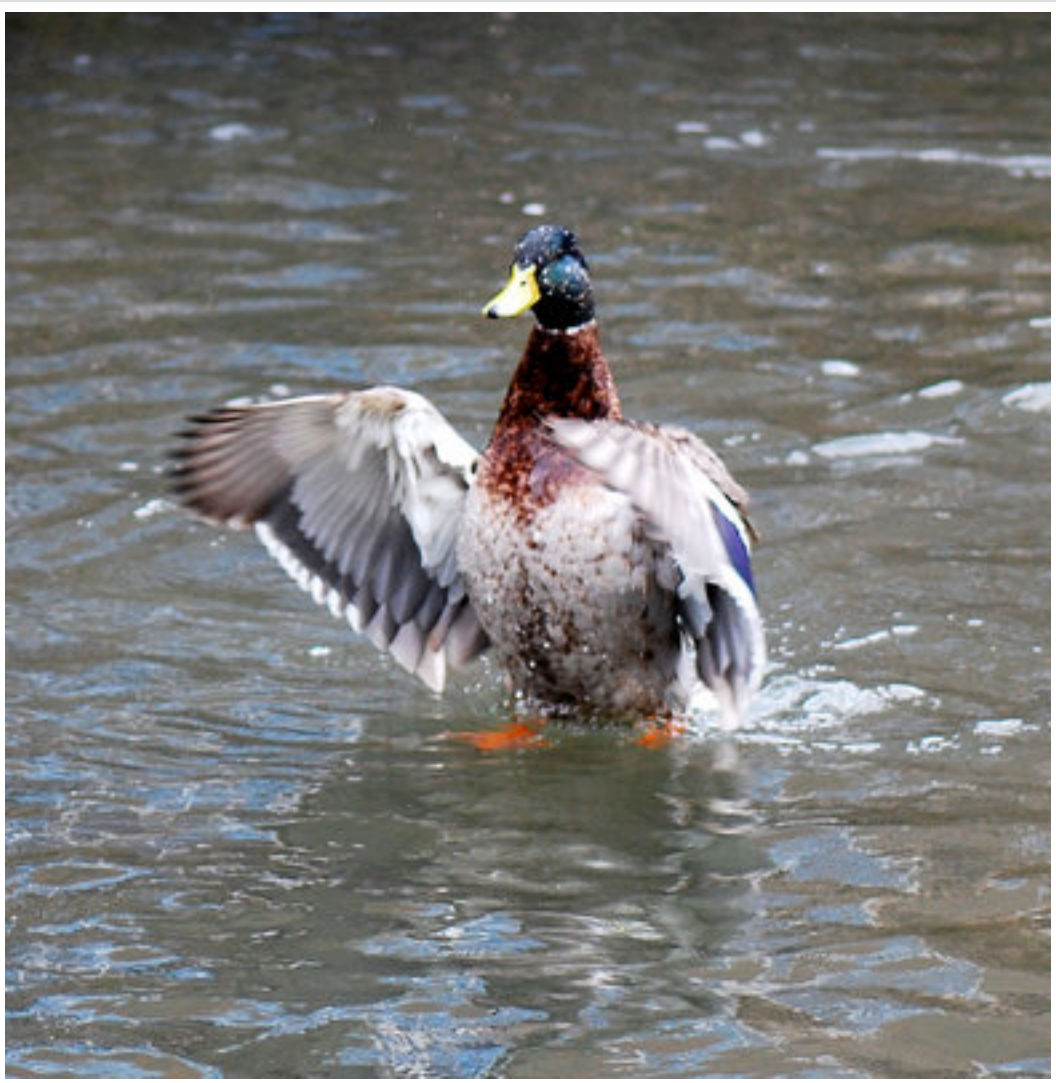
Ahhhh Evil Pigeon!

As predicted someone arrived and started chucking chunks of bread at the water and from my slightly detached standpoint behind the camera what unfolded seemed to be a feeding frenzy. Later when I was sorting through the photos at home it appeared more balletic, with twists and spins, and graceful plies (that's standing on the toes isn't it?). One Swan in particular seemed inclined to act out its own version of "Swan River" for me ending with a bow. Even the ducks it seemed wanted to join in!



Feeding frenzy or Act 1 Scene 1 - The Crowd





*"Bl**dy Swans with with thier airs and graces as if that's anything difficult..."*



"There you go see, easy!"

So March tumbles into April and it's still pretty much the same, settled and cold. If I don't start photographing butterflies soon I think I'll go mad...if I haven't already, balletic Mallards indeed! 🤔🤔🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 29-Mar-13 03:33 PM GMT

Your frustration is evident, Wurzel!! I share it too - I'm itching to take a good walk round Kilvey Hill here on the Swansea coast but it's just too cold. If only the wind would die down we'd be in with a chance.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Mar-13 11:51 PM GMT

Cheers for your empathy David. I've decided now to just get out there and see what I can see because otherwise I feel like I'd have a long wait ahead of me 😞.

Pairs

After a morning outing where I finally cracked and started going slightly mad I had a cuppa at home and calmed down a bit. However I remembered what my old PE teacher Mr Hall used to say; "You only get out what you put in" so I decided that I should put some more in now so that eventually I'll get more out when (if 😊) the butterflies appear.

As I started out for my stroll around the local park I noticed a pair of Grey Wagtail but they were on the wrong side of the river. However I didn't have to wait long as something small and brownish flitted by and landed flat against the trunk of a small tree. It was a Treecreeper and promptly shot up the trunk and out of sight. It was very quickly joined by a second and this one hung around a bit longer working its way along and under one of the lateral branches before coming back to the main trunk along the top. It then displayed classic "jizz" by flying to the next tree along, landing near the bottom of the trunk and working its way up and around. I was always taught that Nuthatches behave in the opposite fashion - landing at the top of the tree and working their way down.



After leaving the Treecreepers in peace I carried on round the path to the corner where the two rivers meet. Here there were a pair of Black Headed

Gulls and a pair of Moorhens. Some loud piping calls had me scanning the surface of the water before I saw the blue flash that had been making the noise. There wasn't just one Kingfisher but two another pair. I thought that my touch of mania was returning as every species of bird I was seeing were in pairs. As I followed the Kingfishers up river I passed a pair of Coots and a pair of Blackbirds and when I got to the Wooden bridge these pairs were joined by a pair of Long-tailed Tits and a pair of Goldcrests. I focused instead on the Kingfishers as they seemed to be courting with lots of piping calls and "quick follow me" bursts of flying before settling back to the same perch. I always feel that Kingfishers are out of place here in Britain their gaudy colouration would seem more at home in the tropics in some seething jungle.



Luckily a solitary Chiff-Chaff put in a brief appearance breaking the "pairs magic". So it seems that the birds at least are confident that we really are in spring despite the arctic conditions it must end soon surely - else we won't have time to fit Spring in before Summer is supposed to arrive? 😊 😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 31-Mar-13 12:20 AM GMT

Great stuff, Wurzel!

Kingfishers have the wow factor, of course, but also Treecreepers, they are super little birds!

Never managed to photograph one, though...

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 31-Mar-13 01:11 PM GMT

Lovely images of the kingfisher, Wurzel. They stick out like a sore thumb right now what with the colour still mainly drained from the landscape due to the wintry conditions.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Apr-13 08:57 AM GMT

Cheers Essex 😊 Treecreepers are little brown jobs but they do have a certain je ne c'est quois.

Cheers David 😊 Kingfishers do indeed stick out like a sore thumb but in a good way brightening up the day.

April - here's hoping!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by philm63, 01-Apr-13 06:19 PM GMT

Nice shots Wurzel

Kingfishers seldom seem show me photo opportunities and Treecreepers can be difficult to get pictures of as good as yours
Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 02-Apr-13 06:56 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Great Kingfisher shots 🍷

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Apr-13 09:52 PM GMT

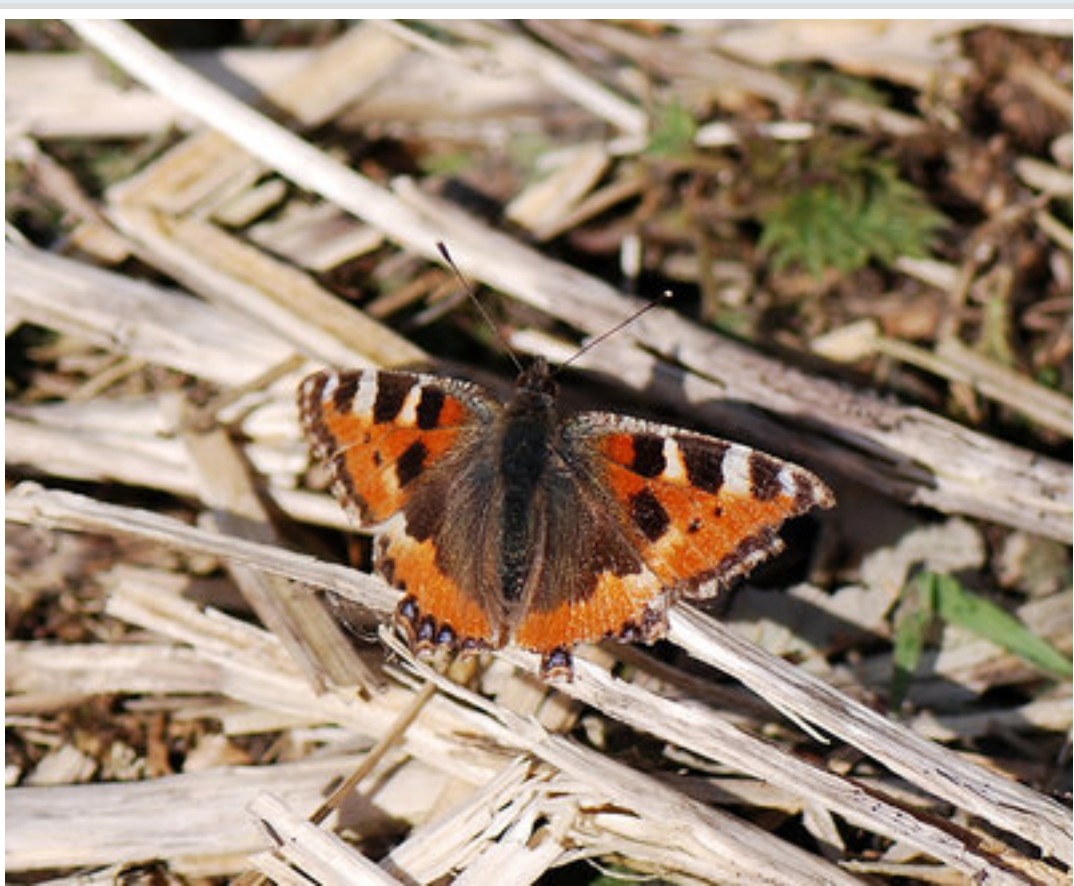
Cheers Phila and Neil 😊

Five Rivers return visit

Just about a month ago I was here and photographing my first Small Tortoiseshells of the year in balmy 11°C heat! 😬 Today was slightly different and I didn't actually hold out much hope of seeing a butterfly but thought "what the hell"! So there I was with three layers plus a coat, gloves and neck warmer patrolling the banks in vain for a butterfly. The wind was bitter and when the sun nipped behind the cloud it was proper brass monkey weather. During these times I'd hunch up and look for birds to photograph. Everything was pretty intent on feeding and seemed to spend most of the time deep in the bushes where they were a bugger see let alone to focus on 😬. I managed to pick out Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Redwing and the usual tits by their calls as well as hearing my first proper Chiff Chaff-ing of the year. Eventually a Long Tailed Tit decided to head away from the main feeding flock and so I finally got a photo.



However “one photo does not a post make” so I headed back to the banks which now were sheltered from the wind and the sun shone down surprisingly strong. In fact dare I say it, it almost felt like spring! 🤪 And just as I was thinking this something flew up from the path in front of me – a Small Tortoiseshell. I managed to follow it and it came down again so I took a few shots before a large dog upset it 😬. As it wasn't me that disturbed it I decided to try and follow it for a few more shots and I noticed that used a similar flight plan. It would loop around me twice and then it would take a longer and higher flight disappearing from view to then reappear further along the path. Once I'd gotten a few closer shots I left it in peace as it was looking decidedly tired.





A small Moth caught me unawares on the way back home but I was luckier with a nice view of a small bee which didn't look like the usual Honey Bees? Could it be a mining bee?



Tomorrow promises more of the same so hopefully I might get to head out again or failing that Saturday is shaping up to be warm (well 8°C) and much less windy so fingers, toes, legs and arms crossed – it would be nice to add to the 2013 tally as I'm still on 2!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-13 09:47 PM GMT

Unfortunately I didn't get back out to Five Rivers but it would have been pointless anyway as yesterday the wind was strong and bitter (like a good pint really – and that's what it's come too! 😞). Then today much colder again with a bitter wind and even snow flurries. Because of this I have managed to get a lot of work done but I've also had to resort back to birds and when it gets too cold even for that I'm reduced to trawling through files on the hard drive and reminiscing 😞

I was looking through some quite old shots from a camping trip to Thistledown Farm, Gloucester in July 2011 when I came across a moth shot that I hadn't picked up on at the time. Looking at it now and comparing it to my Moths UK app I feel pretty confident that it's a Common Carpet but I've made ID mistakes with moths before so any help is greatly appreciated. Cheers in advance...hopefully Saturday might produce some more butterfly friendly conditions? 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 05-Apr-13 04:15 PM GMT

At least you've seen a butterfly this year Wurzal, that's a start. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 05-Apr-13 09:14 PM GMT

"Goldie M" wrote:

At least you've seen a butterfly this year Wurzal, that's a start. 😊 Goldie 😊

...along with a few moths and bees!!

...not to mention the birds...

I'm so glad Wurzel's a member, otherwise this abominable start to the year would have seemed even worse!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-13 10:14 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie, you're right and I should be happy to have seen butterflies but I can't help thinking back to this time last year when I'd seen Speckled Wood, Holly Blue, Orange -tip etc 😞

Cheers David for your very kind comment, I'm almost lost for words trying to reply 😊 (this is a blush emoticon not an oops one)

Old Sarum

I had a feeling that today was going to be a good day. When I got up and took the girls swimming the sun was shining and it kept on all morning. Finally after lunch I took the initiative and headed out. At first I was going to stick to the tried and tested Five Rivers but every now and again the wind would whip up and I'd be reminded how cold it could be - so to compensate I headed to Old Sarum where the rings should offer shelter from the gusts.

On the way there, a four minute car journey I saw three Brimstones 😲 almost lighting up the path! Once there however it was a different story and the first thing I noticed was a complete lack of any nectar sources. I pressed on worried that perhaps I had made the wrong choice until I'd gotten half way round. Here there are more trees and it seems that they have cleared a lot of the scrub back but there were still very few nectar sources. However as I was trying to follow a Bumble Bee a Brimstone flitted by, swiftly joined by another. I was just enjoying watching these beauties when one doubled back and landed very briefly. The shot I managed to get was from quite a distance as they are very flighty at this time of year but it's a hell of a lot closer than the last shots that I got of Brimstone back at the start of March - so maybe by June or July I'll be right up in their grills! 😊



Now I carried on round the rings down between the outer and inner rings. It's a relief to get that first shot as then you're not going home empty handed and so I carried on in much higher spirits dodging the Meadow Pipits and a couple of White-arses. As I neared the castle entrance I caught a glimpse of orange about half way up the outer ring. So I scrambled up and hanging on by the finger nails of one hand I did my best to steady my other hand and got a few shots away. A lovely fresh looking Small Tortoiseshell.



After that I spent about half an hour trying to get some shots of the White-arses. I would get to within about 5 metres of them and then they would fly 10 metres away. So I'd creep slowly towards them, get to about 5 metres away and then, yep you've guessed it, they'd fly 10 metres further along the ditch. 😞 They frustrated me so much that I needed to chill out...as good a reason as any to head over to Five Rivers... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 06-Apr-13 11:30 PM GMT

Good to see you have been out Wurzal, and three Brimstones 🦋 took me ages to see one last year.

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-13 10:51 AM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 Brimstones are right pains at this time of year, so flighty they're a bu#%€r to approach and get shots off!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 07-Apr-13 02:46 PM GMT

That's a good spring Brimstone shot that, Wurzel. The males normally only alight for a millisecond at this time of year. By contrast, females are far more prone to stay put.

As regards nectar sources, I've found at this time of year the adult overwinterers (except Brimstones) tend to seek out scrubby areas where there is significant nettle growth emerging underneath. They don't seem unduly concerned with hunting for flowers.

Re: Wurzel

by philm63, 07-Apr-13 07:12 PM GMT

Glad to hear things are picking up where you are Wurzel, a Brimstone at any time here would be nice. Hope the promises of thing to come come to fruition

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 08-Apr-13 08:54 PM GMT

What can I say Wurzal, I'm 🍷🍷🍷 with envy 😊 I did see STS on Sat , didn't get a shot, to quick for me. It took me until August last year just to get a few shots of Brimstones so well done, you got them. Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Apr-13 10:30 PM GMT

Cheers David 😊 - I'm slowly going to get closer and closer to those Brimstone! 😡😂 Cheers for the info about the scrub - thinking back my experiences parry with yours in that they seem to love the nettles at this time of year.

I hope things will be up to speed in your area soon Phil 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was due some butterflies after the hours put in over the last month - anyone would think this was "UKBirds" from seeing my recent postings 😊😂

Five Rivers 06-04-2013 - "I've got Nettle stings on me fingers!"

So having had a fair bit of luck at Old Sarum I decided to see if how far I could push it and so I made my way over to Five Rivers. I had a hunch that the banks area would be good again, the lower side closer to the river in particular so that's where I headed first. I worked my way along the narrow path amongst the new growth of and in the same place as earlier in the week I found a Small Tortoiseshell. It was looking less damaged than the one I encountered here earlier in the week and was so intent on basking that when I walked round it rather than flitting off it stayed put.



It was soon joined by another, much fresher individual; in fact it was basking on the same stretch of path only 6 or 7 steps away. I've been lucky enough this year to see Small Torts in a range of livery from fresh to faded, brand new to battered, so I tried to get some different shots and I started with this one - elbow crawling up to it to get right up in its grill.



Leaving it in peace I started doing a few circuits along the stretch of this path including a small copse as well and things really started happening. The two Smalls were joined by at least another two, a couple of Brimstone did fly-bys not stopping but adding some vibrant colour to the proceedings. At one point a pair Small Torts started rising and entwining before swooping low to land on a small branch. One seemed to be displaying, rapidly vibrating its wings but the other wasn't interested and walked away along the branch in apparent disgust! At one point I forgot about trying to get some different shots as I was confronted with a stunning looking Small Tort. Finally I noticed a smaller butterfly buzzing a larger more orange coloured one so I followed the larger back to where I first started at the banks. It's more dappled shade here and the scrub is slightly longer and thicker and there it was hiding amongst the nettles - my first Comma of 2013



Comma!

After that I took a few more circuits in and just drank in the sights, felt the sun warming my back for the first time in what feels like an age and nursed my nettle stings, of which I had plenty (that's the drawback to the elbow crawling technique). After the winter that we've had (and are possibly still having) it was nice to see a range and numbers of butterflies again - 3 species with possibly 7 or 8 individuals. As I wandered back homewards the Comma gave me a few more fly-bys, following me back to the car but stopping every now and again so I could just get a few more shots. One shot even has a blade of grass pointing to the feature which gives it its name...



Another Small Tort?





"And the indicated white mark is how it got its name"...



Even though I'd been lucky enough to photograph my first butterflies back in March today felt like the proper day as I went out not "hoping to see" but "expecting". Let's hope that as the end of the winter is now in sight it turns into a nice spring and summer rather than the wash-out of 2012. I can already feel a touch of "METitis" coming on...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Apr-13 10:21 PM GMT

I meant to post this earlier in the week as I was hoping that the weather was going to have improved and I would have been able to have made my first "stop-off" on the way home from work. However that didn't happen and it stayed quite cool and today we had torrential showers and hail! 😞 Plus my work load went from middle weight to super heavy weight 😞😞 so it's taken until now to collect my thoughts and write...

Middle Street -7-04

I decided that after the success on Saturday I ought to check out my "new" local patch so I grabbed my camera and headed off to Middle Street. I stopped whilst crossing the path to get a few shots of the Black Headed Gulls that were hanging around the bridge. Typical teenagers really, hanging around making a racket and a nuisance of themselves!



I then strolled across the wooden bridge but there were no “pairs” to greet me today – neither Goldcrest nor Kingfisher so I moved on eagerly scanning the sparse reeds for any migrants. Once at the entrance to the reserve things didn’t feel particularly warm and the wind was prone to gust and then it would be bitter. I was just thinking “I doubt if I’ll see anything” when a Small Tortoiseshell defiantly plonked down in the beige grass to prove me wrong.



After I’d gotten a few shots I moved on round reminding myself that I shouldn’t really try and make predictions when it comes to the natural world. There didn’t seem to be much else around when another or possibly the same Tortoiseshell settled briefly. After watching it for a bit I decided that would really be it for the day so I took a recce at the far end of the reserve behind the football pitch. This was roughly mown last year and looks promising for Skippers and possibly (un)Common Blues. I was just looking over to plan how to approach if when the grass has grown higher, marking

out the trails and paths in my mind, when I was disturbed by another Tortoiseshell. It flew along the path and then did a few loops around me before striking out to the middle of the rough grass in the "field". I managed to keep it in sight and then started the tricky task of approaching it. Through a combination of stooping, crawling and then pulling myself along on my elbows I managed to get close enough and what I was most chuffed about was that I managed to reverse away without disturbing it! 😊



As I was making my way back the cloud cover thickened and the insects seemed to drop from the sky to shelter almost. One such insect was the cracking little bee that allowed me to get in really close. My first *A.plumipes* of the year.



The weather looks all right for the S.East on Sunday but surprise, surprise there will be strong winds and rain here...still you never know you've got to keep trying: "you only get out what you put in"

Have a goodun

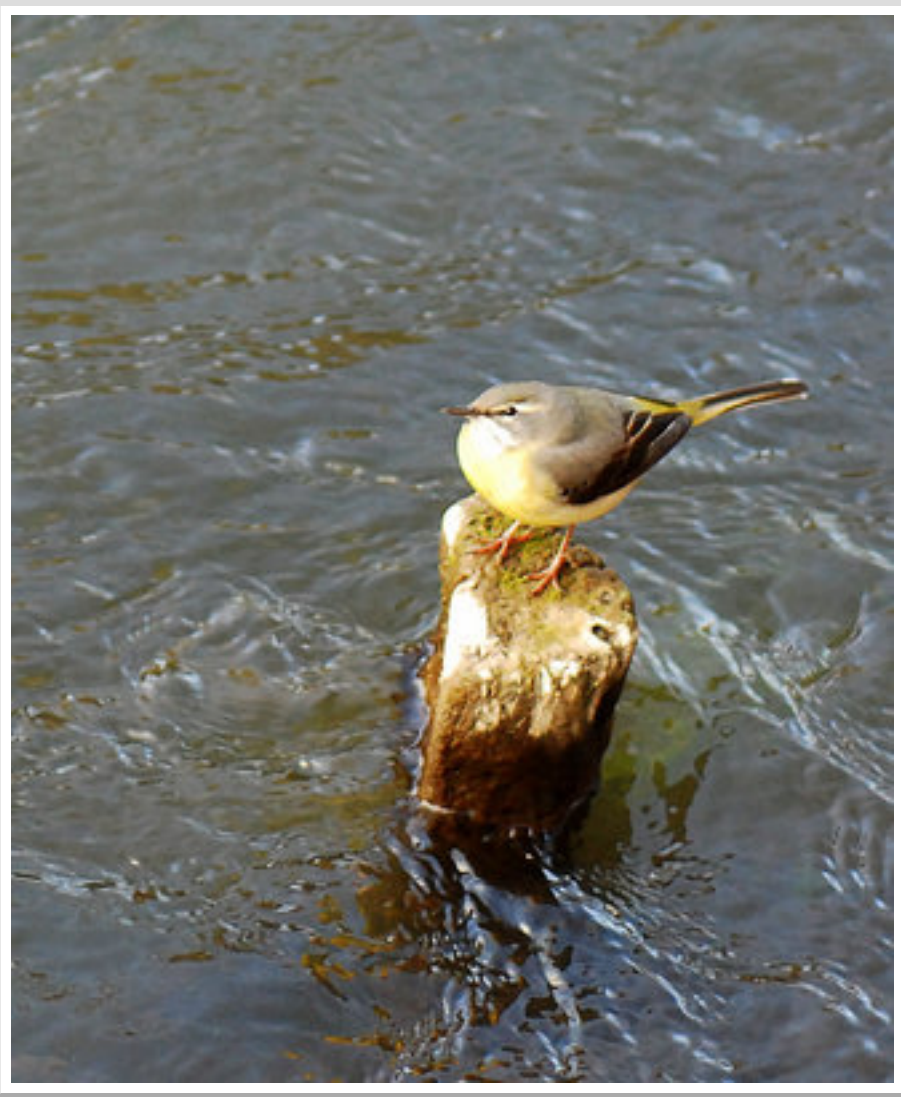
Re: Wurzel

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

The last week has been all over the place; colder than usual and now as the temperatures are rising it's getting wetter. Still I've seen Water Voles recently and my first Bees (Buff Tailed, Mining and Hairy Footed) and Butterflies of the year and I'm starting to see more and more migrants birds - including my second Swallow of the year (so that was summer then! 😊). Plus the natives are singing - on the journey to work this morning I was stopped at traffic lights so I wound down my window and heard Skylarks, a Corn Bunting and a Yellow Hammer singing accompanied by the drone of the A303.

I had to pop to town to pick up some salad tonight so I grabbed my camera just in case as it was still sunny and reasonably warm and also I'm starting to get itchy feet. I saw two male Hairy Footed Bees but they were in someone else's garden and I haven't been here long enough yet for the neighbours to accept me poking my camera lens through their hedges 😬. The walk along the river was delightful with Blue Tits flitting by, various songbirds singing, Grey Wagtails "Chis-icking" and I tried to get some shots of fly-catching Chiff-Chaffs. They were really tricky to focus on as they moved so rapidly in and out of the branches at quite a height. In the end I just watched and settled for playing around with the shutter speed at the Mill Race.





I then remembered that I was actually on an errand and so hurried to the supermarket – luckily I wasn't missed as the whole outing only took 8 or 9 minutes more than usual. So it's starting to feel like Spring is actually here – whether I get to get out and enjoy it this weekend remains to be seen with rain forecast pretty much wall to wall here. Still there's always next weekend... 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Apr-13 10:59 PM GMT

Burnt out now from posting so much on other peoples diaries 😬 so I'll leave off my proper one for today – but for the "diary" first Peacock of 2013 for me at Mottisfont. It was a day of firsts – but more of that tomorrow when I'm rested 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 14-Apr-13 11:01 PM GMT

I am intrigued... 😊

I shall tune in tomorrow evening!

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 15-Apr-13 12:19 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

It was a day of firsts – but more of that tomorrow when I'm rested

I predict a Small White/Speckled Wood.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-13 10:57 PM GMT

I'm sorry to disappoint you both Dave and David but if I'd seen anything like a Small White or Speckled Wood I'd have reported it on the April Sightings thread. I think that I might have unintentionally built this up too much? Opps! 😞

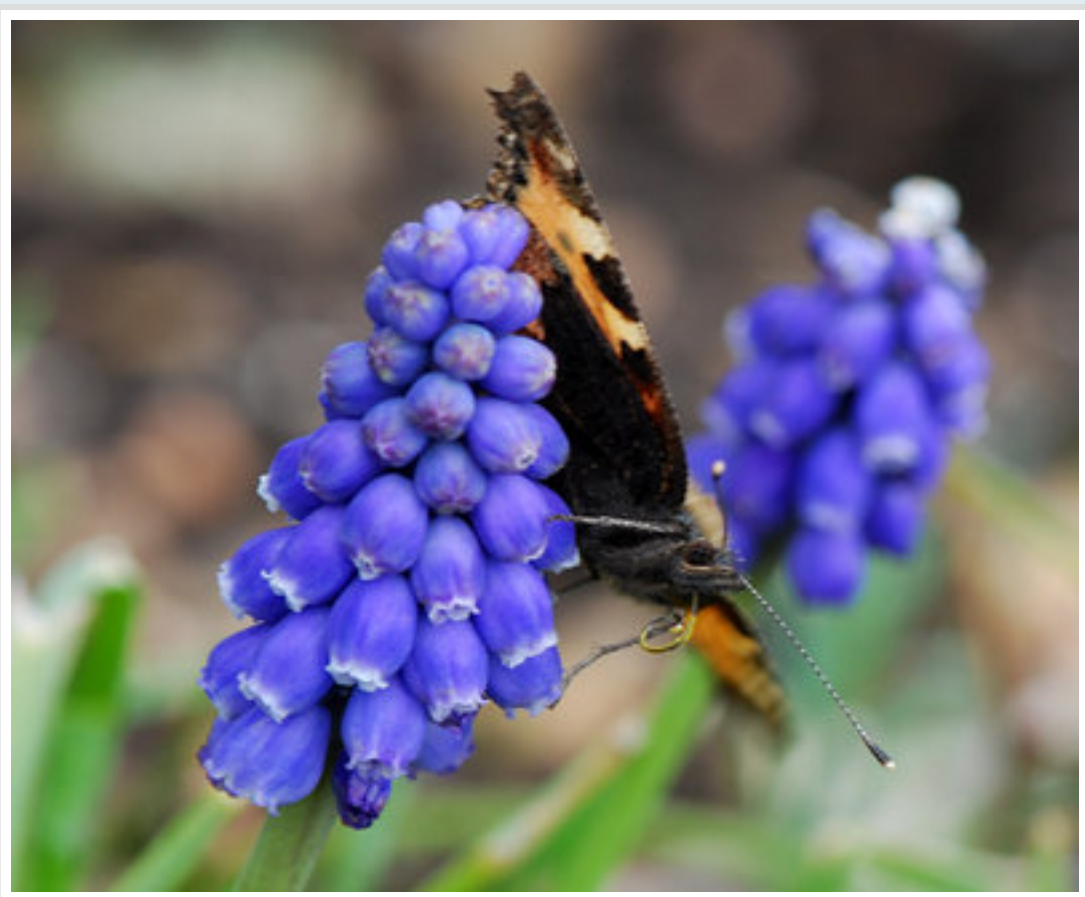
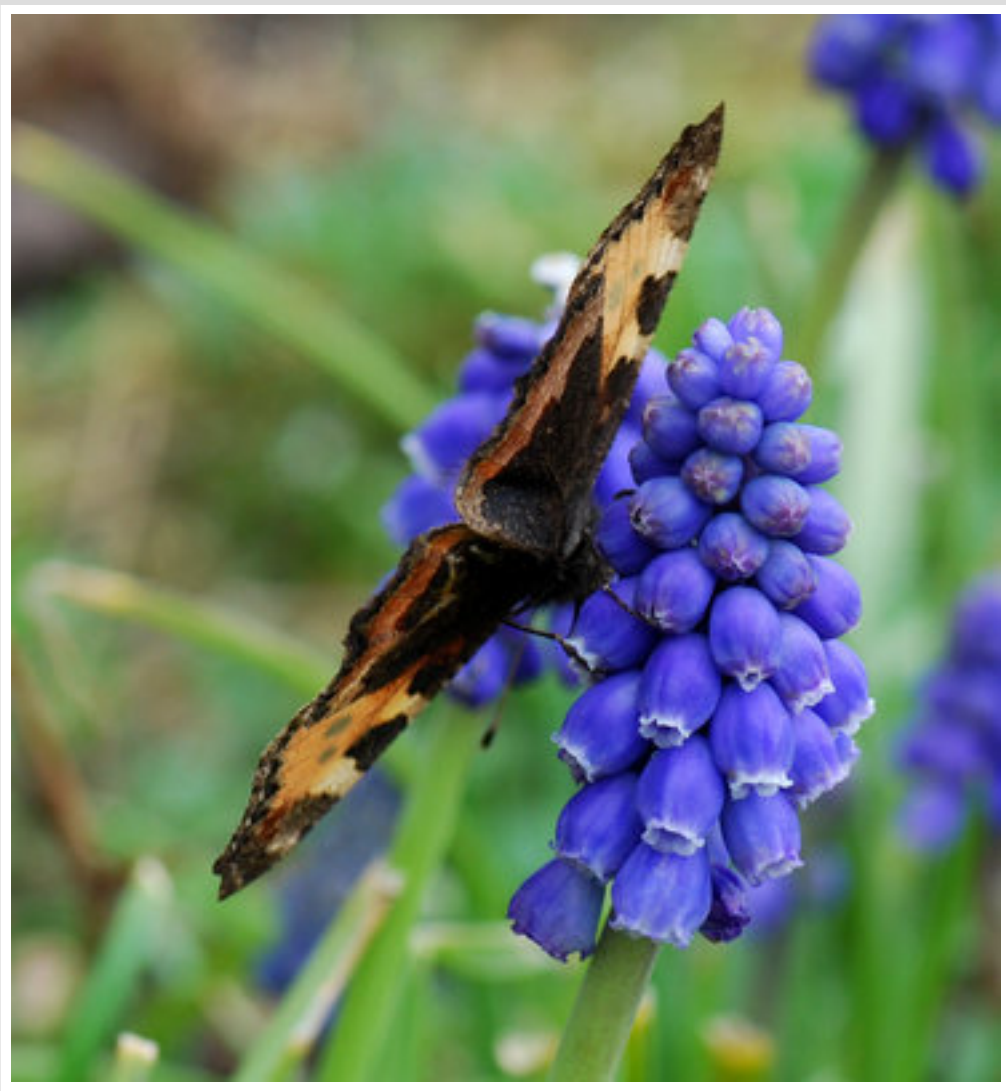
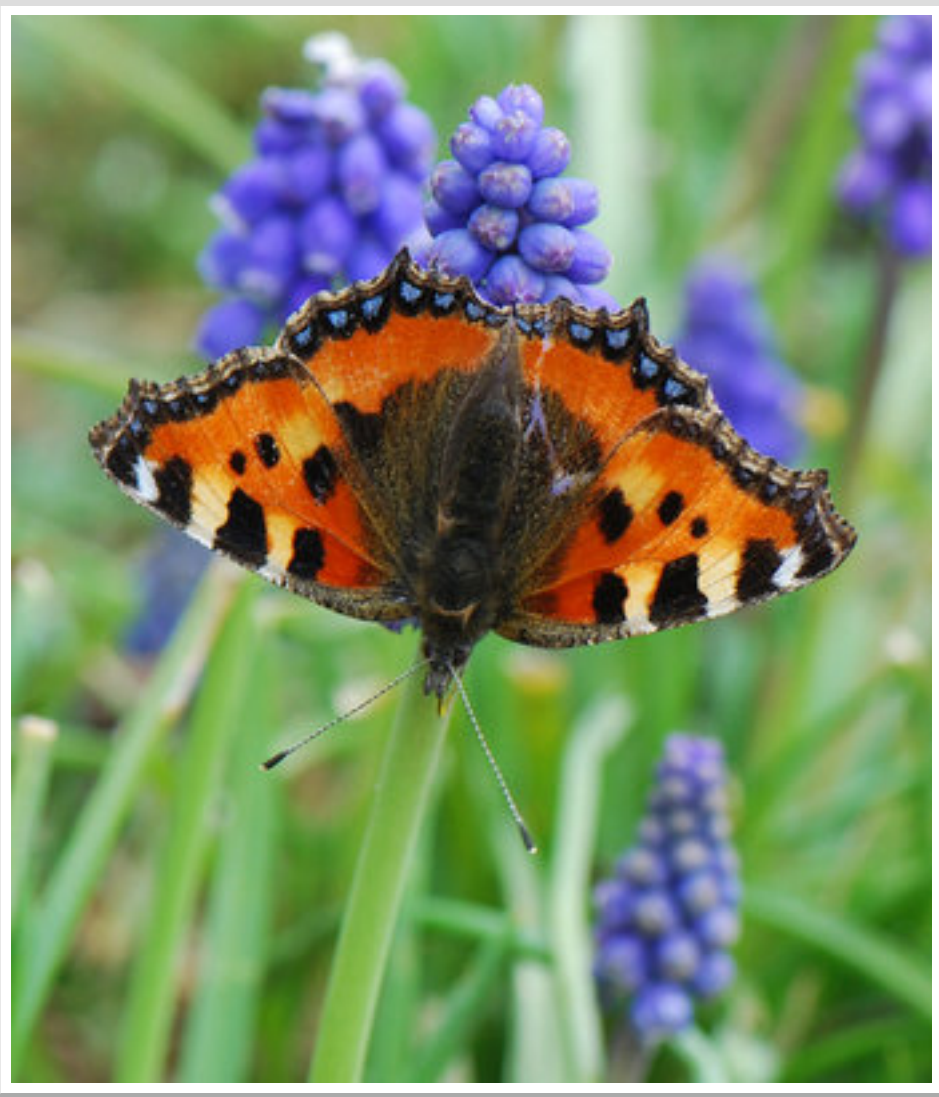
Mottisfont 14-04-2013

Having worked through the rain on Saturday I was anxious to get out today as it looked like being the best day of the week. I was hoping that a visit to Mottisfont would placate the family as well as giving the chance of seeing and photographing some butterflies 😊, or bees or anything really as was getting itchy feet!

It turned into a day of "Firsts" with my first House Martins of 2013 chittering away over my house as we set off. The drive to Mottisfont was nail-biting – would the dry weather hold? Would the temperature rise enough for the butterflies? On arrival it didn't look too hopeful as it was overcast but warmer than it has been of late. I missed a cracking shot of a Treecreeper as we sought a bench for lunch and as I was setting up the picnic a black butterfly came hurtling towards me across the lawn. It was really dark and I realised that it was my first Peacock of the year, another first 😊. Despite a sneaky 5 minutes while the girls ate their sandwiches I couldn't relocate it so no photo 😞. Instead I settled for another first – my first ever shots of Brown Trout thanks to good old Sport mode. The girls would throw the bread in and then I'd focus in on it as it started to drift downstream before clicking like mad and hoping a fish would rise for the bait.



After the bread was gone we set off upstream towards the Walled Gardens and I was hopeful of more rewards here as there should be shelter from the wind and bricks should hold the heat. And I wasn't disappointed as almost immediately a Small Tortoiseshell hove into view, posing excellently on a blue flower.



It then cooled slightly and sun stopped shining and despite a few run-ins with the same Small Tortoiseshell that was it for butterflies for the day. Instead I started looking for bees and then the first started rolling in again. I found my first Hairy Foot females of the year, all with a male in very close attendance. Then there was my first Bee Fly of the year, my first Tree Bee (and probably my best shot of this species) and my first mining Bees. I also got a lifer Bee, a species which I have yet to identify but I haven't seen anything like it before as it was miniscule.

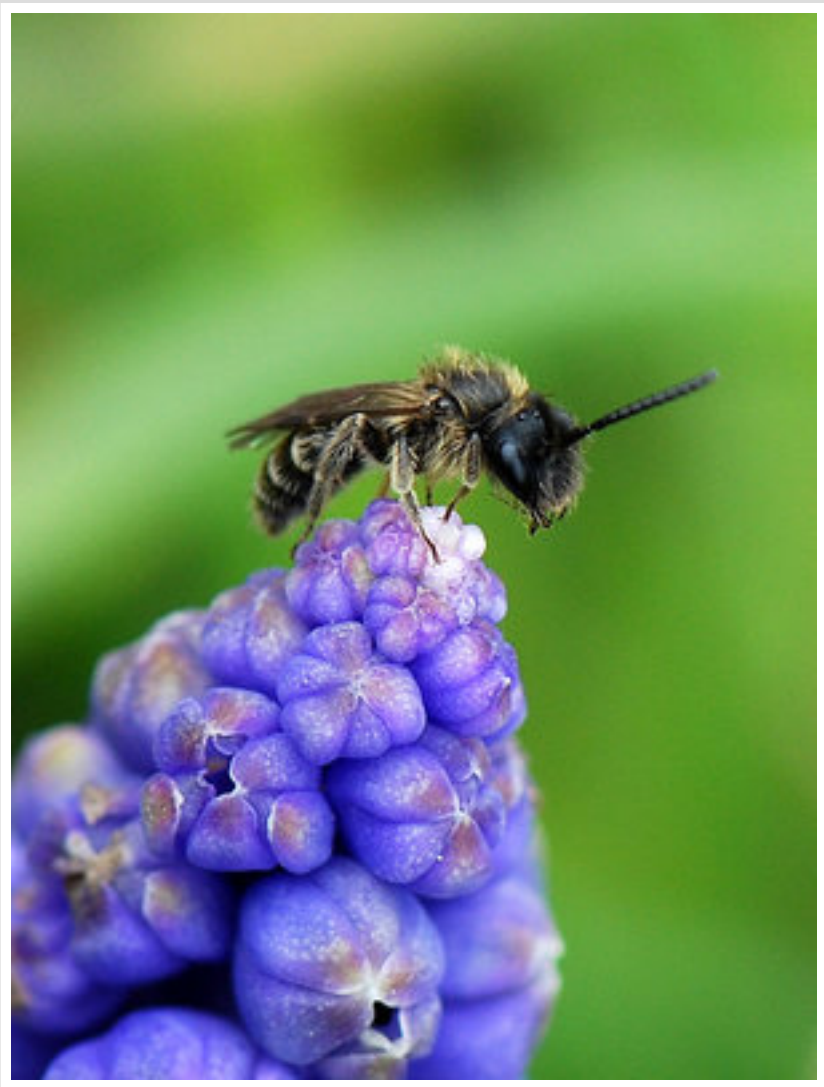


Bee Fly



Hairy Foot





lifer



lifer



Not sure but should be able to find out

So a huge number of firsts but only two butterflies all day. I don't want to seem ungrateful but the only butterfly I seem to be able to photograph at the moment is a Small Tortoiseshell they appear to be everywhere – oh for just one Peacock. Sunday was also the first time I've been back to the garden at my old house since the move...again I'll leave that for another day when there aren't any butterflies around. Hopefully I haven't built this up too much...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Padfield, 15-Apr-13 11:13 PM GMT

Lovely close-ups, Wurzel!

That's a scarlet lily beetle, *liloceris lili*. It's often described as a pest but I always think of pots and kettles when humans call other species pests ...

Guy

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 15-Apr-13 11:33 PM GMT

That last bee on the top of the muscaria (I think that's the name of the blue flower) is splendid! Those iridescent green wings especially.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-13 11:30 PM GMT

Cheers Guy 😊 In the absence of utterflies I think I zoomed in a bit too much 😊 I agree totally about the hypocrisy of us humans branding any other successful organisms as "pests". 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 Cheers for the ID too I've been wondering about plant for ages! 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 17-Apr-13 01:54 PM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

That last bee on the top of the muscaria (I think that's the name of the blue flower) is splendid! Those iridescent green wings especially.

Have to agree there, a smashing photo 😊

"padfield" wrote:

It's often described as a pest but I always think of pots and kettles when humans call other species pests ...

[If you're a keen gardener around our area (Surrey) you can forget about growing lilies. In my garden the beetles and (bird dropping) larvae chew them down to the ground 😱😱

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 17-Apr-13 01:58 PM GMT

I'm eager to see some of your butterfly images this year, Wurzel, as you definitely look to have totally mastered your camera settings. First class once again.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-13 10:38 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid and David 😊 I have to admit that I've entered into a partnership with my camera; I find the subject, stalk it and approach it to line the shot up and then my camera does all the rest 😊

Work...

I've seen a couple of Peacocks this week. One flew along the windows after a "mock Ofsted" meeting on Tuesday so obviously I wasn't able to get a shot. Then on Wednesday and tonight I saw other Peacocks at the same place in Upavon. I couldn't stop though as I had to get home to get the girls haircut on both occasions and because of traffic and road works I didn't make it on Wednesday and almost didn't make it tonight!

To console myself I've been checking out the wildlife area at work as the bees are starting to come out in force and also this week I had my Enrichment lesson. It was the first time I've been over there with this group and a couple of them were really keen to get macro shots, turning logs (and putting them back again afterwards), stalking the flowers for Bee Flies and just being generally amazed at how much life there was once you zoomed in. Various highlights included my first *B.pascuorum* of 2013 and also catching up with some Myriapods.





Myriapods I found really tricky to get shots off. First of all they seem to favour dark habitats, under logs etc. Then they are really fast so tricky to focus on as well as being long so if you get one end in focus the other end is out! These are the best of a lot of bad shots. Myriapods...need to do some work on these



one pair of legs - Centipede



two pairs of legs - Millipede

Hopefully I might be able to get out tomorrow at some point and focus my lens on some butterflies. This spring seems to be slow to arrive and slow to get going but after a fitful and faltering start here's hoping that it's finally underway and it'll be full steam ahead from now on!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 19-Apr-13 10:47 PM GMT

I'm sure you won't waste tomorrow, Wurzel. The forecast is reasonable and we are clearly on the cusp of a mass emergence of half a dozen or so species.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 19-Apr-13 10:52 PM GMT

Nice shots there Wurzel.

I too am feeling hopeful for tomorrow, I reckon I should be able to get around a couple of local spots, fingers crossed.

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

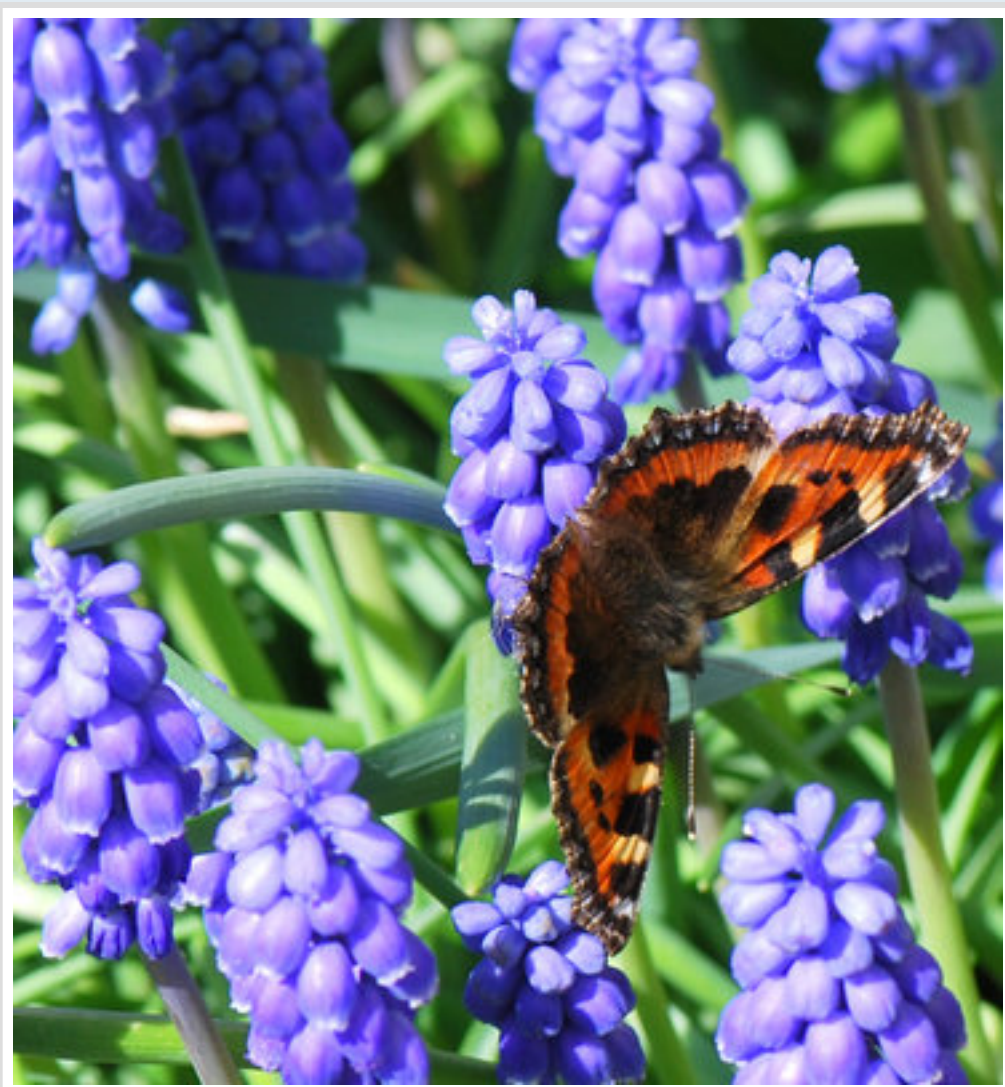
by Wurzel, 21-Apr-13 11:12 PM GMT

Cheers Dave - as you can see I certainly got out and about 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I certainly covered a few miles today

Super Saturday! 😊

I awoke to a misty morning on Saturday but I didn't mind as I had to take the girls swimming anyway. Once they were dried and ready for the rest of the day the sun had burnt through the haze and the temperature was rising so to make the most of it I volunteered to take the girls to the park before their lunch. On the way I checked out the small gardens and struck lucky with one as a Small Tortoiseshell was feeding on the Muscaria (cheers Dave). Once at the park a Brimstone did a fly by and while the girls swang themselves I checked out a little area of shrubbery. It had mining bees, Bee Flies, Caddis flies galore were flitting about and also my first Ashy Mining Bees of the year. As we were leaving another Small Tortoiseshell flew by and landed briefly on a small patch of the replanted area.



Hello old fella



Lunch eaten I then took my younger daughter out to Martin Down. As we were packing the car (water, travel potty, Skittles, Ba-ba, wellies, sunglasses, jewellery etc) a second Small Tortoiseshell was feeding again on the Muscaria as was a Brimstone and a Peacock did a quick fly-by. I almost unpacked the car there and then!



Once at Martin Down we started at Sillens Lane walking towards where it crossed Bokerley Ditch. Along the way we saw 3 or 4 male Brimstone but they were intent on patrolling and didn't stop. Whitethroats were about in good numbers and I heard my first Cuckoo. I also saw plenty of Ashy Mining Bees and my first *Osmia bicolour*. However despite many brief encounters, both at Sillens Lane and at the Blandford Road side I didn't get any shots of butterflies. They were about with 5 Brimstone and a Small Tortoiseshell at Sillens Lane and a pair of Brimstone on the Blandford Road side but the hoped for Orange-tip or GV White didn't materialise.

Pushing my luck a bit more I stopped off at Middle Street on the way back. As we walked through the gate four butterflies spiralled upwards locked in mortal combat - 2 each of Small Tort and Peacock. We headed on round further to the dried out pond area as I had a feeling that this would produce good things. Once there I was treated to 3 species in one eye view - male Brimstone, Peacock and a Small Tort! The Brimstone was very flighty and didn't hang around for a photo but the Peacock settled down and allowed an approach. Just as I was lined up another Peacock appeared and another

dog fight ensued. It went on for the next 15 minutes or so. One would settle only for another to fly over it's airspace and then up they'd go again. The size difference between the Peacocks and the Small Tort were surprisingly apparent when they fought but in the end the smaller butterfly made a break for it. While all this was going on my little one watched and giggled away at their antics.

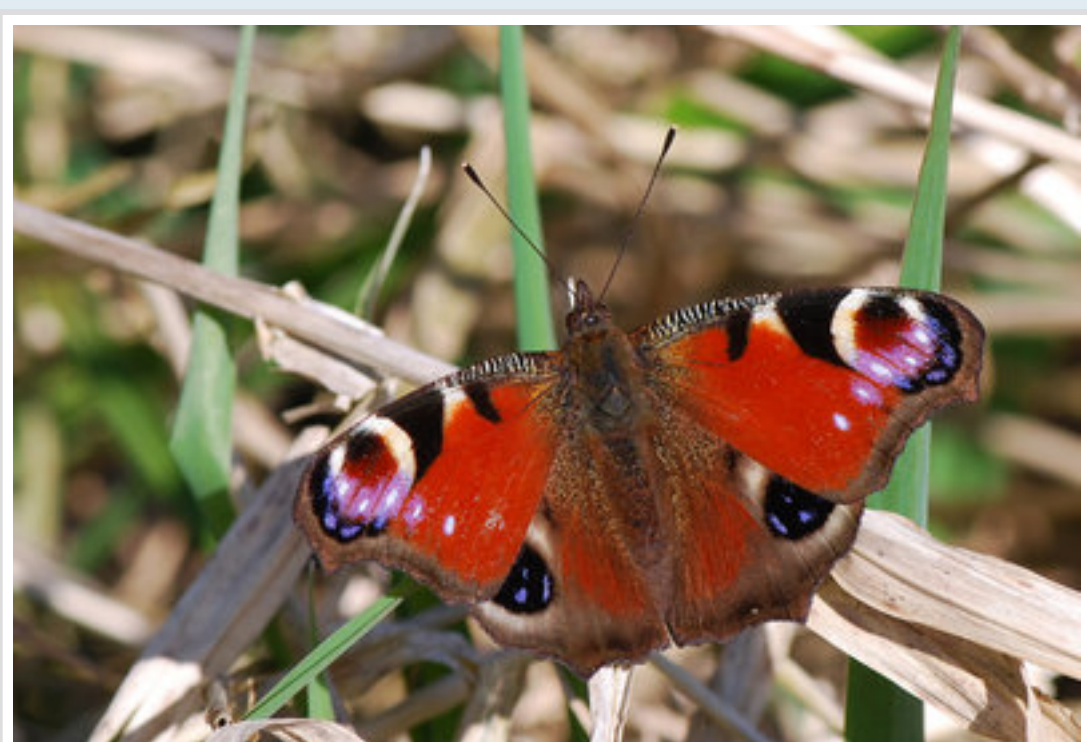
In the end one of the Peacocks became the victor so I waited for it to complete the victory lap before approaching for a shot. It allowed me to get in closer and then closer still and after a brief circuit to stretch its wings I even allowed an underside shot.



Finally!



Closer...



Closer still...



And an underside shot to finish off!

We then had to call in at our old house to pick up my wife and other daughter so I had a quick check of the garden. No butterflies but I did find an unusual looking spider.



So ended Super Saturday – a day of numbers rather than range but I’m still on four species, though at least I’ve photographed all four now. Hopefully this is a taste of things to come and spring has finally sprung!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 21-Apr-13 11:40 PM GMT

A splendid Peacock, Wurzel! And the Hoary Old Bee is a terrific photo. I must look out for such beasties more 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 22-Apr-13 12:45 AM GMT

You did`nt have to wait long to get your pictures of a Peacock Wurzel, and well worth the wait, lovely photos.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 22-Apr-13 06:49 PM GMT

i'd say your spider could be Heliophanus cupreus. 😊

Chris

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 22-Apr-13 07:35 PM GMT

Great stuff Wurzel 😊

Still on four species myself, no whites, Orange Tips, Holly Blue or Speckled Wood for me yet.

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Apr-13 11:02 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 The Ashy Mining Bees always look like the Masters in Kung Fu films to me 😄

Cheers Nick 😊 - I'm looking foward to your aberrant 🐛

Cheers for the ID Chris 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 - I see you've overtaken me now 🐛, I'll just have to put soe more effort in his weekend 😊

Simple Sunday

Sunday wasn't as warm as Saturday and it clouded over after lunch. However I set out to Five Rivers anyway as I'd not made it there on my Whistle stop tour of sites on Super Saturday. I checked the banks first and low and behold there was my first butterfly to greet me, a Small Tort. Over the next hour I wandered round and round counting a minimum of 4 more Small Torts. A Peacock (first for the year from this site) appeared briefly along the tree line by the allotments but it didn't land.

I was pretty sure with my count as I saw 2 dogfights in 2 different areas but also I managed to photograph most of the individuals. Due to the different markings and damage I was able to differentiate between individuals.





3



4

I don't know whether this is a good year for Small Torts or whether it's a case of "all at once" but I've seen loads more already this year than last. So much so in fact that having looked back over my previous posts I'm pretty sure that Small Torts make up 97% of my butterfly shots for 2013 so far! Because of this I decided to try for a different "pose". Having found my quarry I scanned the surroundings for dog mess and finding none I lay down and then elbow crawled so I was level with it.



5 in close up

I don't know how much longer I'll be able to try for shots like this as my joints did make some weird noises. Luckily it didn't spook the butterfly and I was also able to successfully reverse while it remained there almost oblivious. It clouded over after this and the wind crept up a notch and down a degree in temperature so no more butterflies. Instead I set about looking for bees. I found my first Tawny of the year as well as the St "something" flies and got a fairly typical shot of a Bumbly Bee.



As I headed home the sun came out - typical! I don't know whether the weekend will be up to much as the weather has settled into a similar pattern as 2012 - nice mid week when I'm trapped at work, terrible at the weekend when I'm not! Still at least I saw a White today, but it was so distant which one is anyone's guess.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

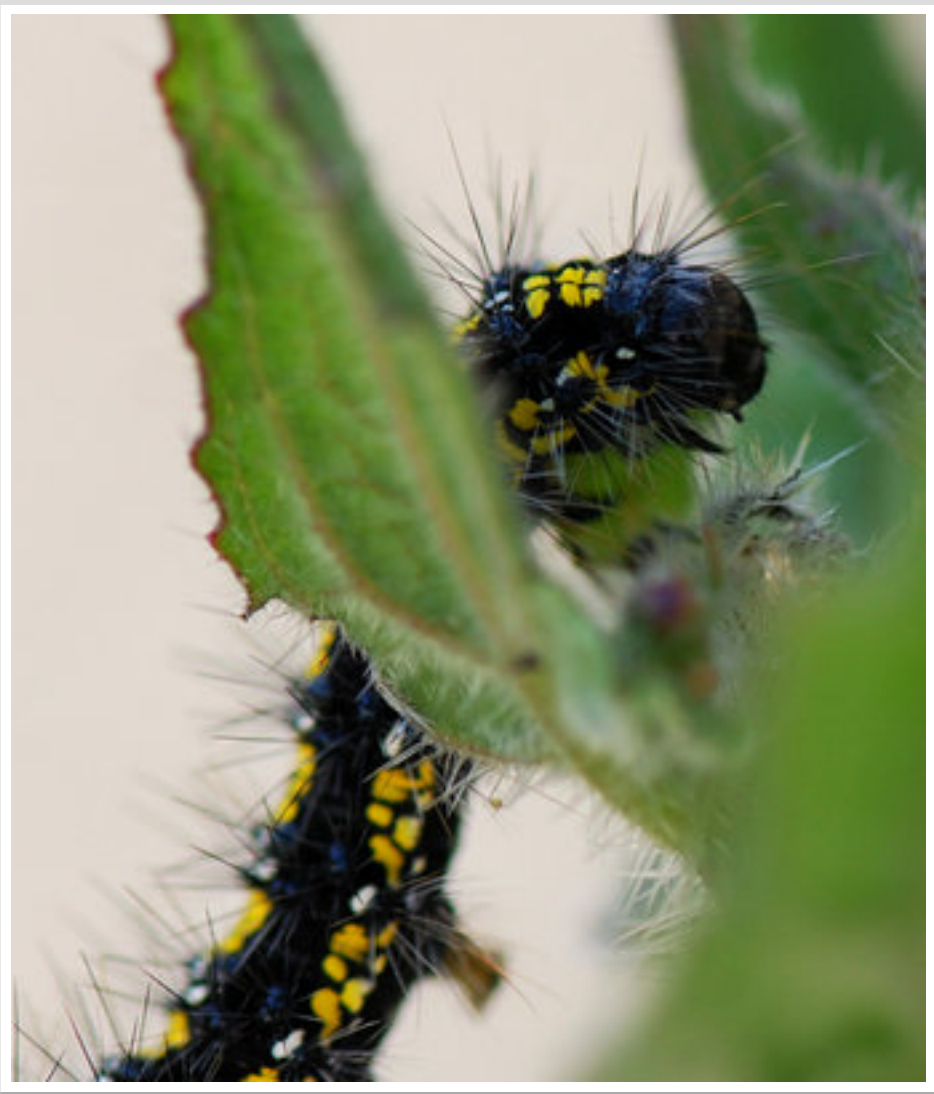
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Apr-13 11:00 PM GMT

Getting tea!

Having lost my garden when we moved house I've been really worried about where I'd find spring butterflies as last year my garden provided me with pretty much all of my spring shots. So now I've taken to carrying my camera with me every time that I pop into town and I "steal" shots from other people's gardens! So tonight when I was asked to get something for tea I grabbed my camera and happily headed off to the supermarket.

One small area in particular of all the local gardens has provided me with plenty of sightings. It is a tiny stretch of path between two houses. It's only just wide enough to fit a wheelie-bin through, about 3 metres in length and the only attention it gets is from me and the wildlife. So far I've seen a Small Tortoiseshell there along with 6 species of bees. Tonight it had some type of caterpillar/larvae I've yet to identify.



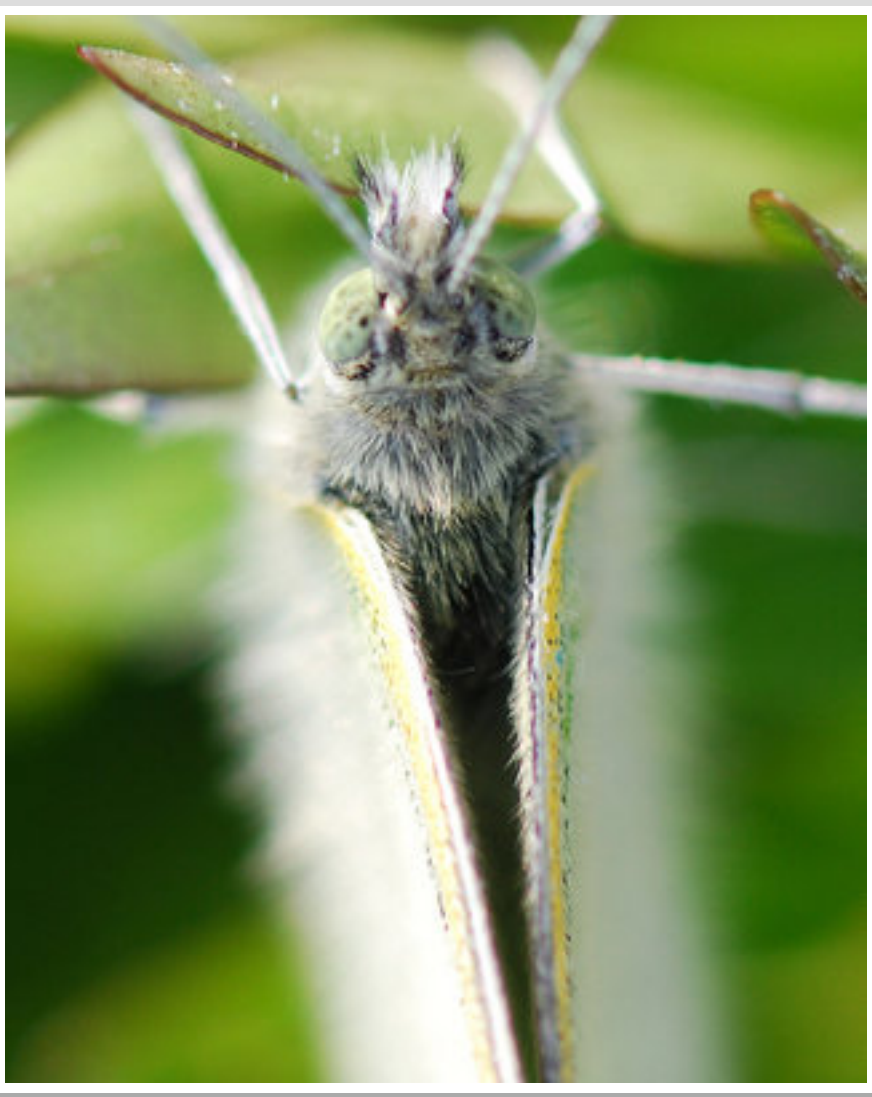
A little further on is the crème de la crème of the gardens and tonight it paid host to a male and 2 female Hairy Foots.



Still with visions of my wife wasting away from hunger I set off again smartish. I was setting a good pace along the main road when something white stood out from the top of a very green bush. Approaching I realised I'd found my first "official" Small White of the year. So I set about getting as many

shots as I could in 5 minutes. It was being so placid that I started trying some close-ups as well as some overhead shots to get a different perspective on this butterfly. I was struck by how "yellow" it is when the light caught it from a different angle and it became glaringly white again.





So carrying my camera everywhere has paid off again (despite the strange looks I get in the supermarket). My tally is now up to 5 seen, 5 photographed but it still feels slow. However a trip to the woods over the weekend might hopefully mean a few more can be added to the tally...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pete Eeles, 25-Apr-13 11:26 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Tonight it had some type of caterpillar/larvae I've yet to identify.

Look like Scarlet Tiger moth to me:

<http://www.ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=2803>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Arctiidae_-_Callimorpha_dominula-2.JPG

Good work 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Apr-13 10:11 PM GMT

Cheers for the ID Pete 😊 You're right it is that and what a horrible wee beastie - it's all warning colours and itchy hairs! My girls weren't impressed by it they much preferred the Hairy Foot bees 😊

Today another Peacock during a lunchtime foray (I should have been playing 5-a-side) and that was it. It feels like 2 steps forward, one step back at the moment 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 26-Apr-13 10:19 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

I was looking at your Caterpillar and thought, hmmm..could be a Scarlet Tiger, but wasn't sure.

I then scrolled down and saw Pete's ID....Yes, I'm getting better at it 😊😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Apr-13 11:35 PM GMT

Cheers Neil – it's good when you get an ID right isn't it 😊

What happened??

I had high hopes for the weekend which unfortunately didn't come to fruition. The weather was steadily improving as the week progressed with temperatures rising nicely and so I was working out where I should go in order to add a few more species to my tally for the year. I quick walk around at lunchtime saw a single Peacock and it was feeling decidedly cooler. Then on Saturday despite the glorious sun shining the temperature struggled to get near to double figures. I set out anyway at lunchtime in the hope that a small break in the cloud would bring out the butterflies. The gardens on the way to Middle Street offered up a few bees, but only two species which I took to be a bad omen.



Once at Middle Street I spent a good hour wandering forward and back checking all the likely looking sites and nectar sources with no joy. I did see my first Garden and Sedge Warblers of the year, a Kingfisher shot past me along the river but apart from a few Carder Bees there was nowt about. Things didn't get any better as the clouds rolled over and then it started to rain before finally hailing and then turning back to rain. I headed home and as I trudged and dripped towards my front door.

Sunday wasn't much better really if anything it was colder and cloudier. Still we had a family walk at Garston so I took my camera just in case and settled for taking photos of the wild flowers. The Bluebells are just starting to show in numbers and in a week or two there should be the carpets they're famous for but the Wild Garlic doesn't have an flower heads at all.





How did he sneak in there?

On the final stretch something rustling near a log caught my eye/ear so I stalked in closer and took a few rapid shots of a Shrew, my first ever.





So walk over and not one butterfly all weekend. I've read in various books that "such and such species emerges in...and reaches maximum numbers in..."; does the slow start to the season mean that these dates will be correct now or will species go into overdrive should we (ever) get any reasonable weather? 😊 Still next week looks good, right up until the bank holiday weekend 😞 ...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 29-Apr-13 12:04 AM GMT

I recon we are going to be behind throughout the season,Wurzel.

We must be running a good three weeks late,in the south at least,and i cannot see us making up such a lot of lost ground.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Apr-13 10:29 PM GMT

It feels like even more here in Salisbury Essex! Still you've got to keep plugging away at it...

Work and after...

After the weekend which failed to deliver it was back to work but during my lunch I nipped out to the "outback"/wild area to see what I could find. A good selection of bees with 8 species and a possible spider wasp as well as a new shield bug and a few hover flies kept me occupied for the 20 or so minutes before I had to head back in to the grindstone.





On the journey home I was straining my eyes along the banks and verges hoping to see some whites but even though I took the back roads there were none about. I stopped for all of 2 minutes near a place called Coombe and Sand Martins were going crazy along the river but apart from a very brief encounter with a Small Tort there was nothing else of note.



Once home I took the girls to the park and again drew a butterfly blank, surely things will improve soon? In the meantime I covering the miles to build up my karma in preparation for some visits I'm planning later in the season. 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 29-Apr-13 10:43 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

your first photo of the Shield Bug is just great, 😊 well done.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 30-Apr-13 06:36 PM GMT

and if you want an ID for the bug Tritomegas bicolor , pied shield bug. 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 30-Apr-13 07:08 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

It feels like even more here in Salisbury Essex! Still you've got to keep plugging away at it...

Wurzel

Hee hee, read this a bit too quickly at first and thought 'hang on, Salisbury is not in Essex 😊then I read it again 😊😂

Some more nice shots there Wurzel 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-May-13 12:03 AM GMT

Cheers for the kind comments (and ID) guys 😊

May



Here's hoping this month is when it finally gets going!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 01-May-13 01:23 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Some more nice shots there Wurzel

Have to agree. I particularly like the of the bee carrying pollen on his face.

When I was a kid I used to find dead shrews all the time. I've also heard them (high pitched squeak) but I've yet to see one alive 🐁

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-May-13 10:04 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 The last time I time I saw a live Shrew before this sighting was when I was a kid. I was helping out my Grandad with his landscaping business and I moved an old log, tried to pick up the shrew that fell out so it didn't get brained by all the other logs we were clearing and it bit me. That's gratitude for you!

Work is full steam ahead at the moment so I haven't had time to sort through my photos but looking about here and there today I managed to see my first Red Admiral, Orange-tip, Speckled Wood, Green-Veined White and Large White along with Brimstone, Small Whites and a Peacock it was a pretty good day 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-May-13 10:17 PM GMT

Work and home...

Yesterday was a golden day for me (although nowhere near as good as Dave's!). After over 3 months of searching, scanning the verges, visiting particular key sites and walking mile upon mile there were finally butterflies all around. My yearly tally went from a hard fought 5 to an easy 10 within the space of 9 hours!

It started with my first Red Admiral of the year on my drive to work. I pulled up at a set of traffic lights and looked out of my side window at the shops lining the pavement. There flitting along a window pane was a Red Admiral when it reached the corner it settled against the corner pane. It looked browner than a Peacock and once it settled I could see the red stripes. Then I realised why its identification had been so tricky - it was inside the shop trying to get out. That's why it had appeared brown, I was seeing the underside and I wouldn't have seen the usual view from above had it not been for the corner window. The lights changed and I drove on, tally up to 6!

Once at work I settled down to it but cringed every time I caught a glimpse of a distant white! At lunch I headed out, camera slung over my shoulder, to the wildlife area. Amongst the bees and the blessed Spider Wasp that I keep failing to get a shot off there were Masons, Mining, Ashy Mining, Tawny and Carder Bees but no butterflies. So I headed in and then a Large White flew over the fence from the railway embankment and landed on a Dandelion (tally up to 7). I tried to get as close as I could but it was fully charged so shot off with barely a chance for a record shot.



Further along behind the old sheds there were a couple of Small Whites and one decided to feed on a Dandelion that was more in the shade and this seemed to have a calming effect so I was able to make a much closer approach.



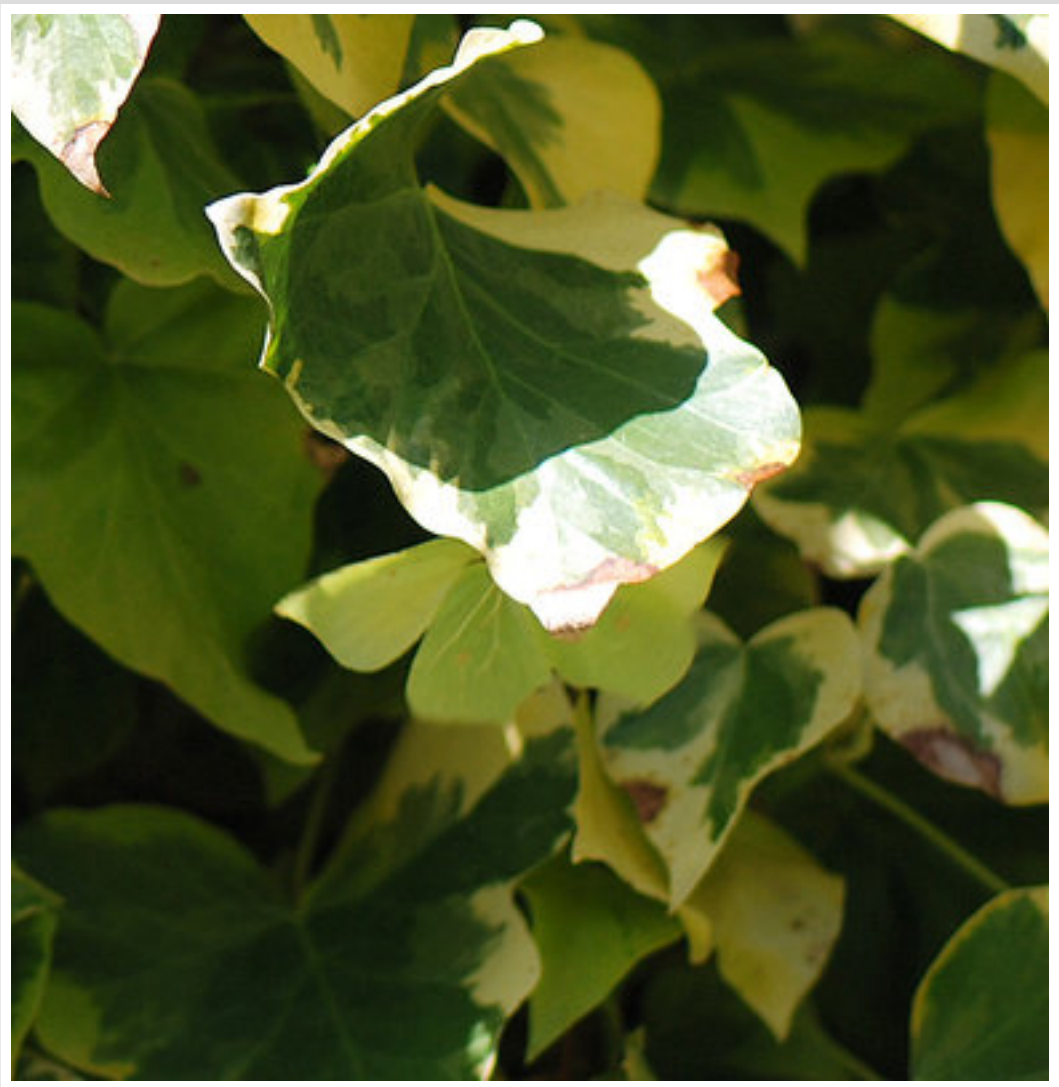
I then had to wait until after work to try for a few more butterflies. I pulled into a lay-by on one of the back roads that I've been sussing out for a few weeks now. It turned out to be a butterfly magnet. A couple of male Brimstones were knocking around as well as a couple of Small Whites and a Green Veined which refused to play nice and come out of the vegetation so I could get a clear shot of it (tally up to 😎!)



Then what I was really hoping for arrived, a male Orange-tip shot by like a rocket, quickly followed by another. I set my camera to sport mode as grabbed flight shots seemed the only way to get anything as they weren't stopping for anything or no-one! Still tally up to 9.



While I was messing around trying to get some shots of Brimstone a Speckled Wood put in a very brief appearance before deciding it was far too crowded and shot by (tally up to 10) so I went back to trying to get flight shots of Brimstone.



I then realised that I'd been here for a whole 8 minutes and I better head home before I was missed! However I called in at another stop off pint where I've seen this and that but missed photographing a Peacock on several occasions. As I pulled up I spotted some movement, got out camera in hand, got my shots and was back on the road in 2 minutes!



The photos are well below par 😞 but that's the thing with whites at this time of year – they are really flighty, seldom stopping for long enough to even make an approach. Still now they're here and I've started seeing them the pressure is off effectively and I'm sure there will be other opportunities 😊 . A few morning or early evening visits should find them more accommodating 😊 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 02-May-13 10:25 PM GMT

Looks like a brilliant day to me, Wurzel! 😊

I'm very envious of the open-wing Brimstone...

And I still haven't seen a Large White around these here parts yet.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 02-May-13 10:29 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

I then realised that I'd been here for a whole 8 minutes and I better head home before I was missed! However I called in at another stop off pint where I've seen this and that but missed photographing a Peacock on several occasions.

Hi Wurzel

Good to see you getting your tally up. It is obviously thirsty work 😊 Stopping off for a quick one 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-May-13 10:42 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 – tell you what I'll swap all of my tally for just one of your Green Hairstreaks! 😊

Cheers Jack – that's the danger of mixing typing and drinking, especially when it's a "Crafty Old Hen" 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 02-May-13 11:08 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

especially when it's a "Crafty Old Hen" 😊

Wurzel

That's just what I've been drinking this evening after my exertions! Wonderful value when you can get them at three for a fiver... 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 03-May-13 02:42 PM GMT

Good stuff, Wurzel. Nice glimpse of the Brimstone's upperwings there.

Re: Wurzel

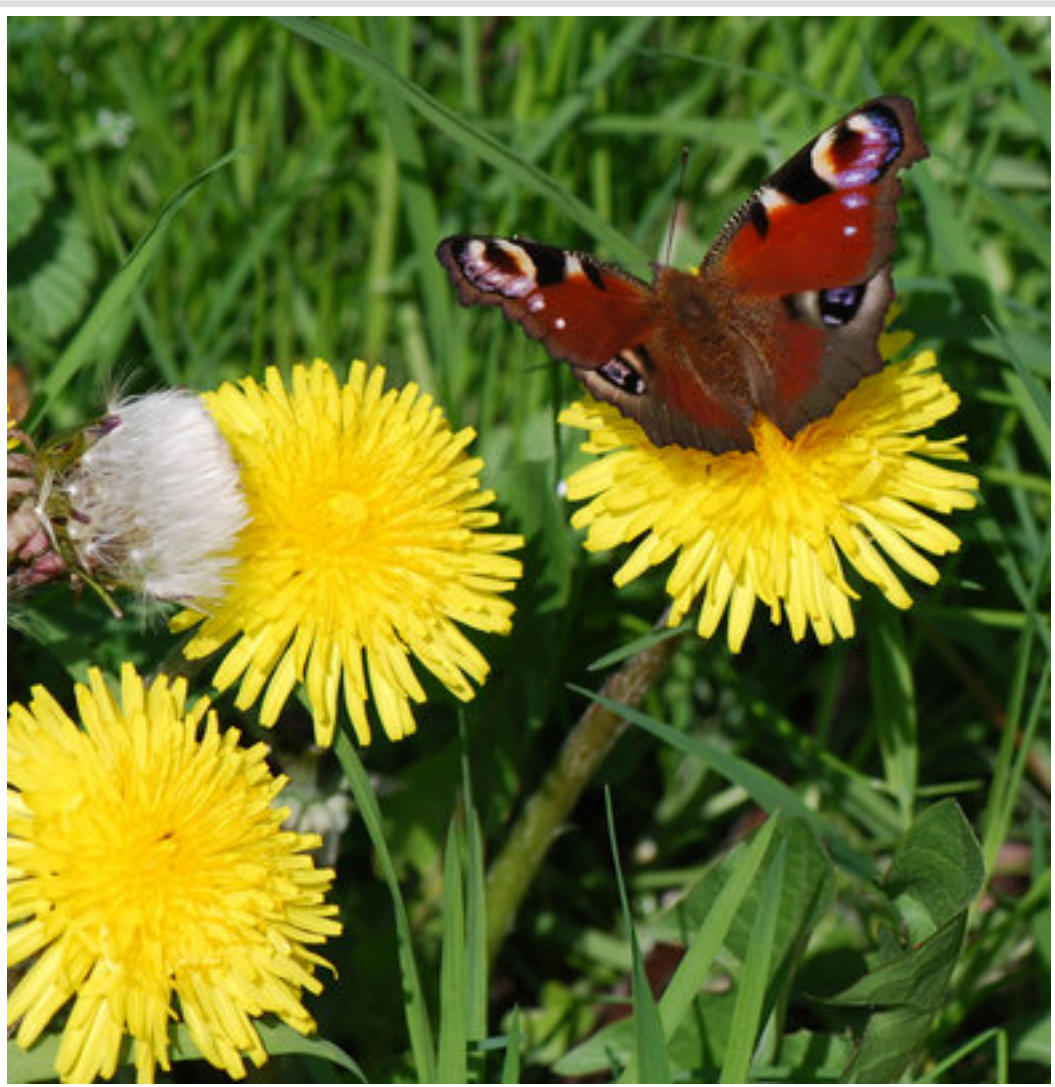
by Wurzel, 03-May-13 11:03 PM GMT

Cheers Dave, literally 😊 I was contemplating trying the Hen for a while and then the 3 for fiver offer appeared and it seemed like far to good an opportunity to miss. I might start stockpiling them for when the offer ends! 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 If only it had been a bit sharper focused, oh well something to try for again.

Enrichment

The enrichment lessons finally came to fruition yesterday when we went out with cameras round the local area. We ended up at a local nature reserve of course and while they were looking to get images for a photo competition I kept my eyes open for butterflies. First up was a Peacock contrasting gloriously with the yellow of a Dandelion.





A little further on a Small White and Brimstone put in an appearance and were gone again almost as quickly only to be replaced with a Small Tortoiseshell which wasn't in the worst state of repair but wasn't exactly fresh either.



As we entered the reserve it started off as down land and Brimstones flitted along the hedge line a pair of Peacocks were disturbed by my charges and tore away down the down so we followed them and on into a small area of original "fen". Once in the dappled fen, stomping on boardwalks the pupils put up a Speckled Wood, Small White and at one point they stood agog watching a pair of Green Veined whites spiralling upwards locked together in coitus. The return journey was much more rushed as we had to get back for the buses but there were the pair of Peacocks and they were joined by 2 male Orange-tips and a female Brimstone.

We were almost back at the school when we encountered a pair of Small Whites. They separated as we approached but one didn't fly very far and looked almost lemon in colour which I thought at first was just because of the under wings. When I relocated it I noticed that its wings were torn and crumpled and it looked more cream/very pale lemon in colour than white?



Hopefully we'll be able to get out again in a fortnights time and by then there may be a few more Specklies and possibly a blue or two?
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 03-May-13 11:23 PM GMT

Lovely Peacock, Wurzel – it makes you think when you realise it's probably been around for the best part of nine, possibly ten, months... 😊 And the Small White – definitely a lemon tinge. But that must be the third one I've seen posted here which has been deformed in some way (the first one I saw was, too). I wonder why? 😊

Dave

(PS – I think the offer closes on 22nd May, but I'd check... 😊)

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-13 10:15 PM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

Lovely Peacock, Wurzel – it makes you think when you realise it's probably been around for the best part of nine, possibly ten, months...

I was thinking this with some of the early Peacocks that I have seen over the past couple of years then I remembered last year when I saw loads of fresh example at a local spot one weekend and by the next weekend they had all but disappeared.

Last year they were up to 4 weeks later out around here than normal and went into hibernation very quickly, maybe helps explain why some of them still look fresh.

Nice shots as usual Wurzel, keep it up 😊

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-May-13 11:15 PM GMT

Cheers Dave for info, and also the confirmation that it's not just my bleary eyes seeing things 😊

Cheers Neil for the kind comments 😊

I'm running a bit behind, I'm still on Friday!

Football Rescue Friday

Having written a post on earlier in the week bemoaning how annoying Whites are at this time of year which ended with something along the lines of "I'm sure I'll get other opportunities this season" I didn't expect the opportunity to come so soon. On Friday we were just starting the Friday 5 a-side football staff vs year 11 game when I had to call time as a Large White landed on the floor of the Sports Hall. Luckily this one was the first time in a very long time when we had enough team members to have subs, so I transferred him to the ref, played and when I went off I legged it back to the lab to get my camera and a few shots. As I didn't know when the next time I'd be able to get this close I tried for the classic shots, side one, open wing, close up and after he realized that I meant him no harm he seemed to like my company, climbing up onto my hand and perching on my finger tip! In the end I took him outside and placed him amongst a large group of Dandelions before heading back to come on and play again. I don't know what tired me out more – playing the rest of the game or the run to get my camera?





I was lucky enough to leave early as I needed to get home to speak to a man about some windows but to calm myself down I pulled in briefly to the lay-by in Enford. It wasn't as packed as usual but there was a Peacock, 2 male Orange-tips patrolling a few Small Whites and also a Green Veined White popped in and stayed for a while. The windows got sorted once I was back as well, which was nice.





Over the weekend I was away in Worcester so didn't get out to start looking for my nemesis but next weekend little green butterflies better beware!!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 05-May-13 11:41 PM GMT

Lovely close-ups of the Whites, Wurzel. 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 06-May-13 04:32 PM GMT

I hope you haven't used up your Hairstreak luck on your Large White, Wurzel! 😊

I'm happy to leave Greenstreaks till the Marsh Fritillaries are out in a fortnight's time.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 06-May-13 10:11 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, just catching up on your diary, cracking shots of the Large and Green-veined Whites, especially the GV where you have captured the underside well without overexposing the topside that is showing, nice one 😊

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-May-13 10:56 PM GMT

Cheers Dave for your kind comments 😊

Cheers David - I hope so too! 😊 Are the Marshies really out in two weeks, is it that time already? 🤔

Cheers Neil, it was definitely more luck than judgement 😊😄

Weekend in Worcester

We got back yesterday from a family weekend away in Worcester visiting my sister in-laws family. Once we'd settled in we headed straight out again to a place called Croone Park with whites and the odd Brimstone fluttering along the verges on the journey there. The first butterfly on site was a male Orange-tip and as usual at this time of year it was on a mission. Down near the lake there seemed to be a good covering of Cuckoo flower but again the whites and Orange-tips were exceedingly flighty so I settled with trying to get shots of water dripping from the Swans beak. We then headed up towards the house and once we'd looked around a Peacock did a fly by as we sat on the steps.



Before we headed home the children visited the park and while they were swinging and sliding I took a stroll down a little wooded path. There were a few miniscule bees and the odd White around but I was more interested in the Orange-tips. The path seemed to be the territory of two males. One would approach from the left the other from the right, they would meet, spiral upwards in battle and then one would head left and the other would head off right. This happened twice while I was watching and after the second battle I awaited the one from the left. When he arrived back at the dueling spot he took a bit of nectar to pep him up ready for the next bout so I nipped over and clicked away. I was quite happy with the result. 😊



The next day we headed to the local country park - there was even a designated butterfly walk which we took and the habitat looked great for Green Hairstreak, Blues and golden skippers. But unfortunately it's a bit early in the season and also the sun kept hiding away behind the clouds and the temperature would drop so apart from a few whites and Orange-tips on the journey there and back I drew a blank. No matter I was impressed with the way the housing estates were arranged. There were large banks and verges and footpaths linking all the smaller estates together creating fabulous wildlife corridors.

Once back the children went out on their go-carts and bikes so I nipped over to the end of the road to one of the wildlife paths. A pair of Holly Blue (is that 11 or 12?) kept teasing me by flying around a small Holly tree a few times and then they'd disappear over the neighbours fence! There was also a Peacock and several male Orange-tips, again on a mission but I managed to get a few shots of a Small White and a tiny, black bee with white facial hair.



It was a cracking weekend and although I didn't see that much I was extremely grateful for the effort put in by my sister and brother in-law. Still I expect I've got a bit to catch up on now as everyone else will have seen their first Dukes, Grizzlies, Greenstreaks and possibly Dingy and Pearls, mind you there's always next weekend - let's hope the weather plays ball!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 06-May-13 11:10 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

i`m gland you had a cracking weekend with the family, thats what life is all about. Lovely photo of the Swans head.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-May-13 10:54 PM GMT

Cheers Nick - I was happier with the OT shot as it was from an unusual angle 😊

Have a goodun

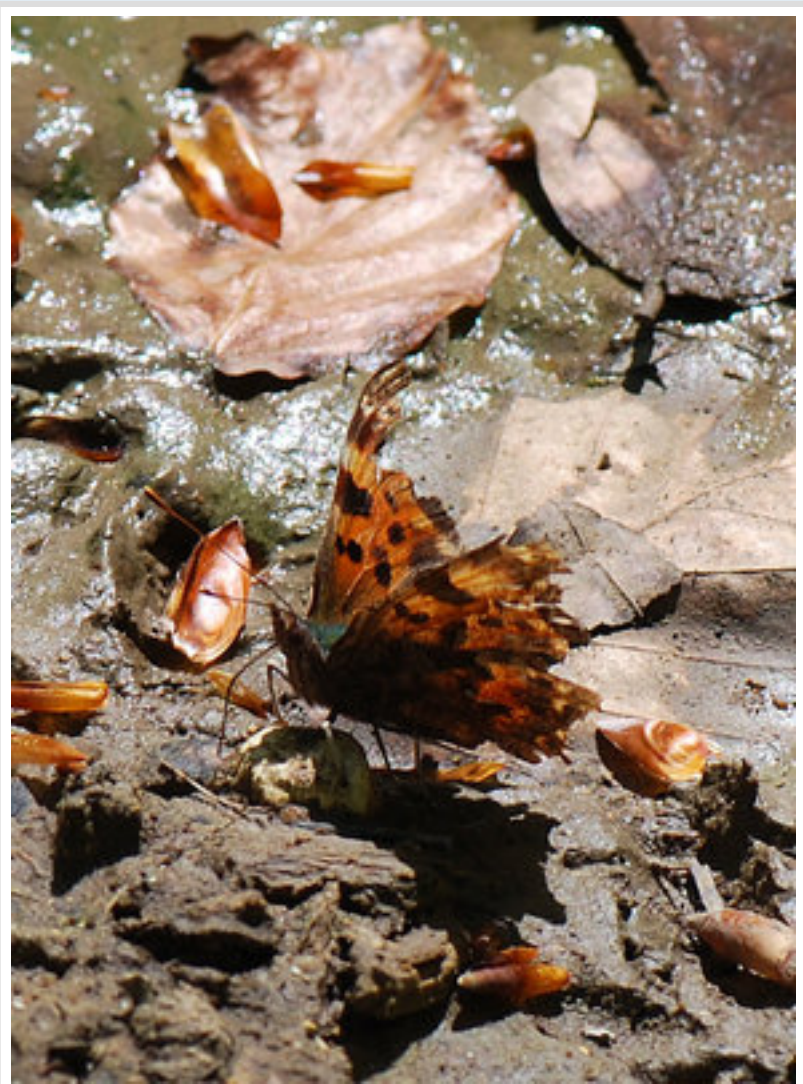
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-May-13 11:22 PM GMT

Kingston Lacy

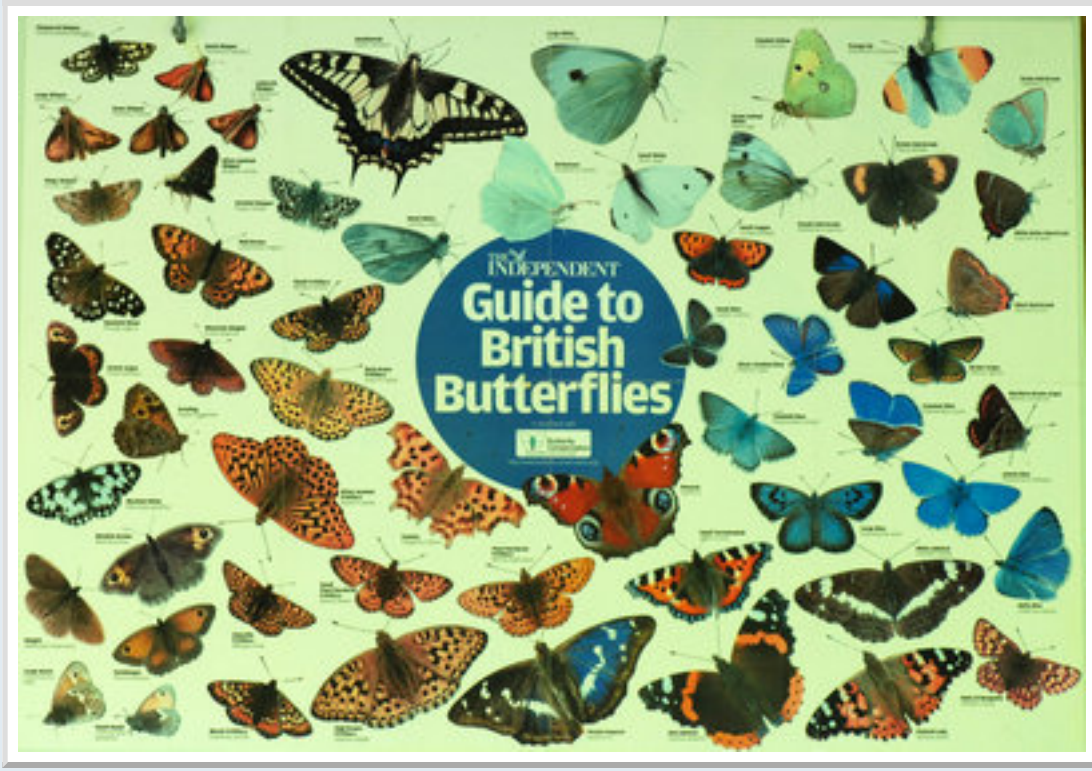
Instead of searching for Greenstreaks, Grizzlies and Dukes I continued on family duty taking the family to Kingston Lacy with my parents. It was a glorious day and we strolled and chatted and as the grandparents were on hand I was able to nip off every now and again to try and get a few shots. The Bluebells were out along the avenue but the banks were roped off and the butterflies would always land on the wrong side. However as they were Small Whites and Orange-tips they never settled for long enough anyway. The walk moved round the wood and one of the rides/paths produced a fly-by Peacock, male Orange-tip on patrol and a mud-puddling Comma. However the stars were a pair of Specklies flitting and settling. Also around were various Nomada bees.



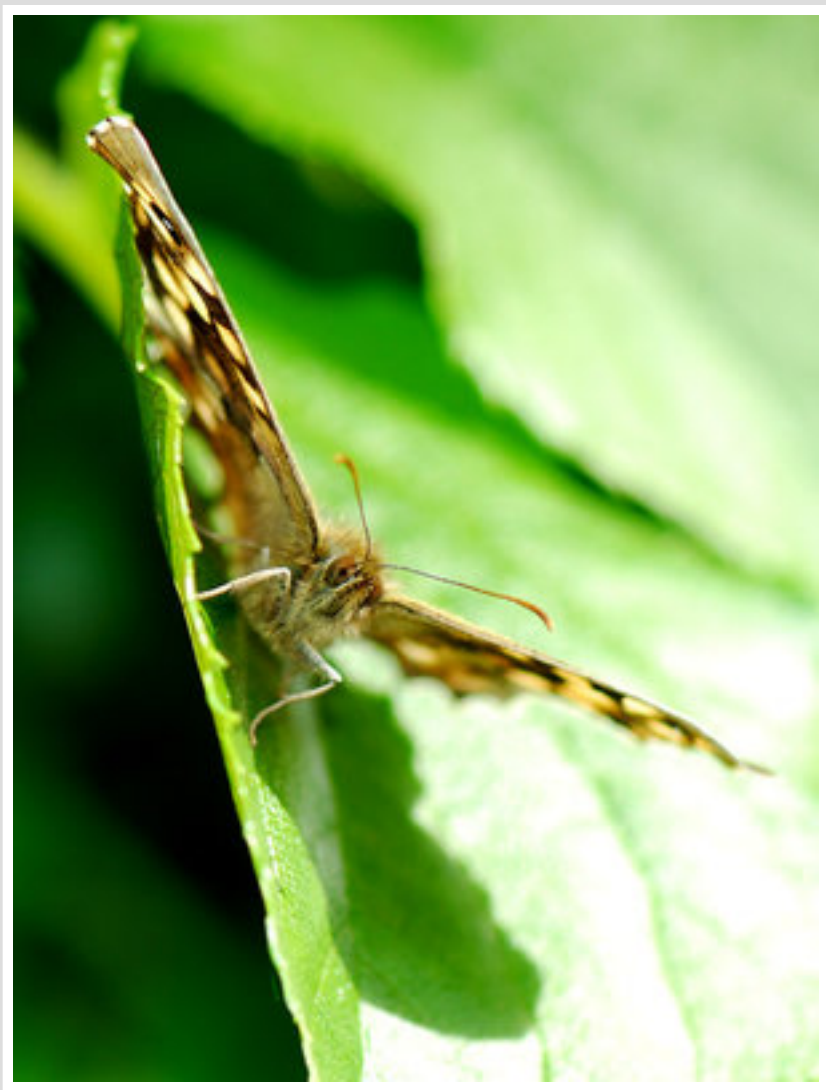


Later while enjoying an ice cream in the kitchen garden we were briefly joined by a fresher looking Comma and a Brimstone, Orange-tip and Small White all patrolled along the hedge – never stopping and finally disappearing over it and along the road. Another pause in the Japanese Garden allowed me to encounter a Peacock up close and personal, my first Large Red Damselfly of the year and all the butterflies one would expect at this time of year plus a few others as well...





Honestly it takes Pete and others an entire season to see all these butterflies, and I managed it in barely 15 seconds! 😊😄
I was then on Piggyback duty for my younger daughter so wasn't able to chase after the flighty whites and Orange-tips that would pass by. The final rest stop for the sake of my mums' knees allowed me to finally track down a reasonable shot of the Nomada bees and a Speckled Wood in the shaded garden. Whilst there I also found my second Damselfly, this time blue one, probably a female Azure Blue.





A great time was had by all and only a tiny, tiny part of me regretted not starting the search for the skippers and streaks as we drove past the entrance to Martin Down on the way home. Hopefully the good weather will have returned by the weekend so I can get out properly and get up to speed.

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by philm63, 09-May-13 08:43 PM GMT

Wurzel

Your diary is becoming compulsory reading. I must admit I get tempted to branch into other wildlife such as bees and hoverflies and ladybirds but must leave that to future days. I got a ladybird identification pamphlet online that I saved for future use and I am sure I saw a good bee site whilst surfing one evening.

Keep up the fascinating and well illustrated read!

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-May-13 10:47 PM GMT

Cheers Phil for your very kind comment 😊 I photograph anything I find now, more as a necessity as you never know whether the shots of a Ladybird or bees or whatever will be all that you'll get before the heavens open, the wind picks up, the sun disappears 😞 Blooming weather!

At work

The weather seems to have settled into the usual pattern – great when I'm at work or on family duty and terrible when I have some free time to actually get out and try and see some stuff. So like last year I've taken to just getting out and trying to shoot whatever lands in front of my lens. Over the last couple of weeks I've found a reasonable assortment of Bees in the wildlife area at work and if the weather doesn't improve I might get round to posting some of the shots – but hopefully I'll have plenty of butterfly shots to post instead!

Wishful thinking aside I managed to get out on Friday lunchtime while all the pupils were being treated to a concert by up-and-coming pop sensation "Kane". It was a bit cool and breezy but there were the usual bees and bumble bees around so I focused my attention on the less obvious mini beasts

and I've had to borrow the Insect book from the library to help me identify some of them. The first thing I noticed (and how could anyone miss it?) was a 14 spot Ladybird. It was like a little Acid House smiley beaming at me from the bushes. A little further along the hedge amongst the Hover flies and Bumble bees I found what I think is a species of Rhogogaster or something similar and then finally a possible Ichneumon sp.





On the way home I headed home via the back route to avoid the traffic and I followed a white along the hedge for a bit. As I pulled into the lay-by near Enford it landed so I grabbed my camera got out and managed to get 2 shots before it flew off again. Both shots were a bit "blown" as the white balance is well off but as they were the first shots that I got in 5 days I thought I better post it.



I just hope there is a break in the weather soon, the butterflies seemed to just be getting going and then it's back to wind, rain and temperatures just into double figures.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 11-May-13 10:52 PM GMT

Agreed, Wurzel. With us all being British, we kind of expect the weather to be unkind quite regularly, but one thing in particular is hard to reconcile oneself with, and that is ENTIRE weekends between May and September across the whole country being totally unsuitable for any kind of butterflying.

Mid May seems to have been a problem for years now – cold, wet and windy conditions everywhere. I'd love to get out tomorrow but with temperatures forecast to be no better than 11c and strong winds and cloud on the agenda, it may as well be January.

It's extremely frustrating.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 11-May-13 10:55 PM GMT

Good report and photos as usual Wurzel 😊

Seeing your Ladybird has reminded me, I have not seen a single one yet this year of any type, this time last year I had a proper little plague of them in my garden, mostly 7-spots but a few others as well.

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

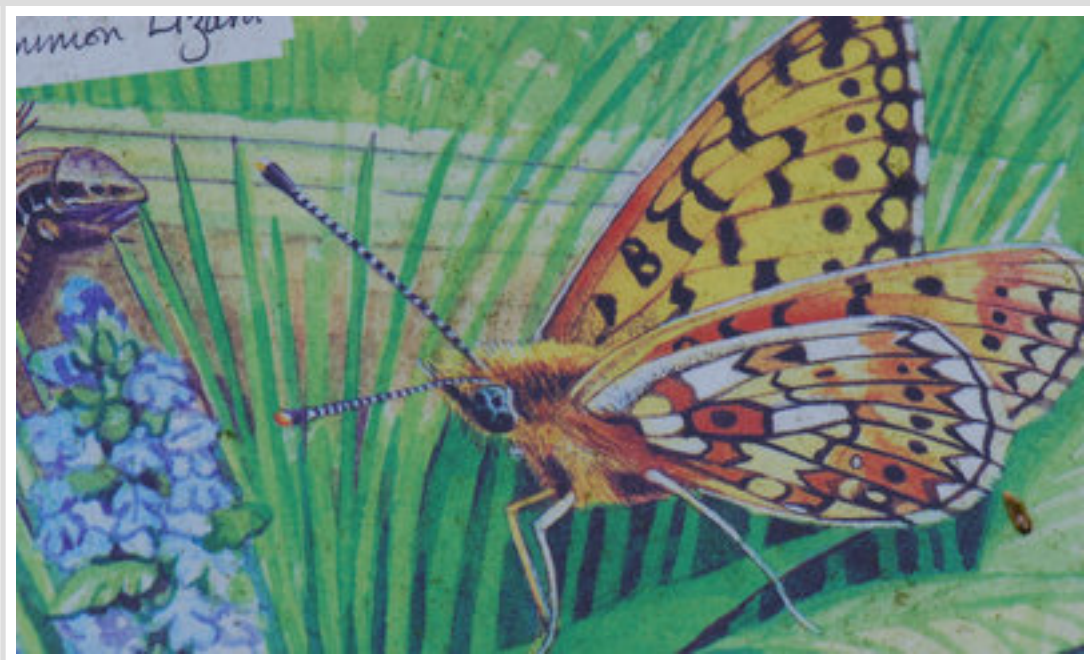
by Wurzel, 12-May-13 10:49 PM GMT

Cheers Dave for the empathy – I might give up with May – I watched the weather tonight and it was just a mass of blue over the south on Tuesday 😞

Cheers Neil – I've seen a few 7-spots but they've been tiny, last year we had that great 3 weeks in March that might have brought everything on 😊

Brothers in despondency! 😞

Despite the fact that the rain was due and the temperatures barely scraped into double figures Philzoid and I made the trek (his much further than mine) to Bentley Wood. Whilst making the arrangements we'd already worked out that it was better to see nothing in company so we'd be brothers in despondency. As we entered the Eastern Clearing with our well trained spotter children (pretty cheap to run, they work for Randoms 😊) the sun was in two minds whether to keep shining or just pack it in and save itself for somewhere else. So we chatted and spent about an hour combing the Eastern Clearing but there were only a few bees and Craneflies flying. Just in case I took a shot of the information board so at least I'd have something to show for the outing.



A very early Small Pearl!

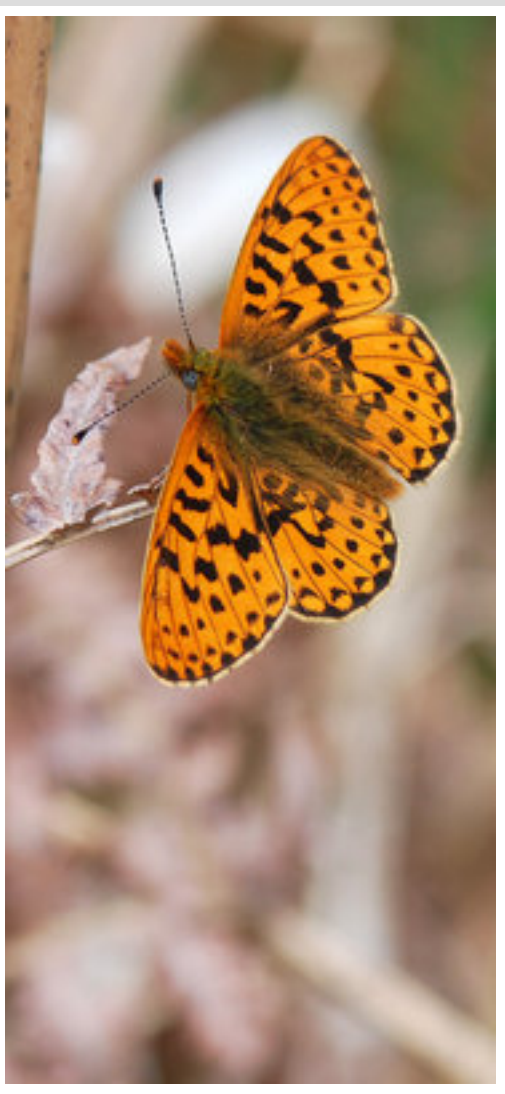
Somehow we ended up at the track leading to Cowley Copse so we followed it to the area that had been coppiced last year and it was already overgrown. There were some migrants there singing for all they were worth – Cuckoo, Willow Warblers and one of my favourites – Tree Pipit. It even treated us to a few “parachutes”. My “spotter child” needed feeding so we started winding our way back along the track when I spotted a male Oil Beetle amongst the grass on the path. As we stopped to get some shots a Green Tiger Beetle also allowed itself to be photographed.





As I was marvelling at the mini beast's mighty jaws and horrible feeling of deja vu stole over me. Last year I'd visited Bentley about a week too early for the Pearls when I'd amused myself with Tree Pipits (check), an Oil Beetle (check) and a Green Tiger Beetle (check!). The only butterfly that day had been a Speckled Wood that decided not to present itself fairly. The weather had been very similar that day as well - this didn't bode well - and we trudged on with that gnawing feeling that we were going to dip.

Then !! Philzoid spotted a movement in the bracken - yep a Pearl and just like that our spirits rose, like a shot of serotonin laced with adrenalin! It was a very flighty individual only perching long enough to see where it had landed let alone to try and approach it. Still in the end waiting for it to fall into our laps seemed to work and it presented itself in the classic "butterfly on a stick" pose.





I found a second one which seemed more intent on closing its wings. We did our best to keep the pretty active pair in view but we got momentarily distracted by a female Oil Beetle and by the time we'd placed it safely back where we'd found it the sun had disappeared again and we almost set off back to the car park.



Luckily one of the two appeared and just as the sun finally disappeared not to be seen for the remainder of the day so it settled wings firmly shut so closed wing shots and close-ups were the order of the next hour. From certain angles it looked remarkably pale compared to what I remember from previous years?







We then thought we'd push our luck and try for a Grizzlie or a Dingy or maybe even a Duke? A Speckled Wood appeared briefly but turned out to be the hardest butterfly to see all day! Despite another 2 hours searching along the paths and the clearings we didn't add to the days tally. However due to the quality rather than quantity of the butterflies we saw we ended the day as far from brothers in despondency as possible! 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 12-May-13 11:23 PM GMT

Enjoyable read as usual Wurzel, and some lovely photos as well.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 13-May-13 07:15 PM GMT

Cracking report Wurzel and smashing photos 😊

I must try for some fresh PBF photos myself this year, the past couple of years I have gone to the Wyre Forest at the start of the SPBF flight period and the PBFs have been past their 'best before date'.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 13-May-13 08:40 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

However due to the quality rather than quantity of the butterflies we saw we ended the day as far from brothers in despondency as possible! 😊

United in triumph I'd say 😊 ... but pity this didn't translate to the football front 😞 . It's in the balance now and just to compound things my missus supports Spurs 😞 .

PS The 'stained glass window' shot is a cracker 😊👍

Re: Wurzel

by Susie, 13-May-13 08:49 PM GMT

Epic, Wurzel, and great photos to boot! 😊

Re: Wurzel

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

Perseverance pays off, Wurzel. Well done and some lovely shots (as ever).

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 13-May-13 09:33 PM GMT

Now I am envious! 🍷 I had decided to go to Bentley for PBF this year again (I usually get there for the SPBF start, so the PBF are a little tired), but timing it right is proving a nightmare with the unpredictable weather. At least I now know they've started! Lovely pictures, Wurzel!

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-May-13 11:36 PM GMT

Cheers Nick for your kind comment 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 PBF's are one of my faves but you're right, they do fade quickly 😊

Cheers Philzoid – agreed Brothers in Triumph, and long may it continue 😊 And you never know Spurs might have a bad day 😊

Cheers Susie for your kind comment – good to see you've added PBF to the tally too 😊

Cheers David for your kind comment 😊 – I've given up waiting for the weather to improve now so I'm just getting out there anyway 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 It makes a nice change for you to be envious of me 😊 If you get the weather definitely get to Bentley Wood there will only be more of them by now.

Bentley Wood part 2

On Sunday I didn't really get a chance to look through all of my shots as I was rushing in my excitement to get a posting out. So I had another look and there were a few that I'd skipped over and missed. So I thought I would post those as well because the weather for the next few days doesn't look like it's going to be up to much for butterflies.





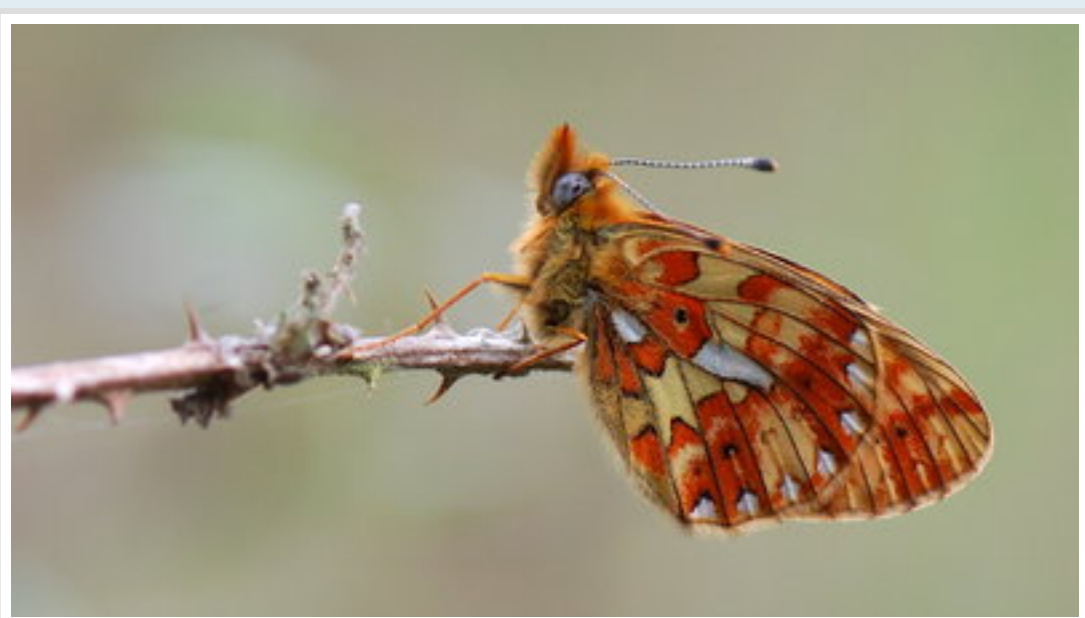
I also did some reflecting about how we managed to find this species. Last year we headed out in similar temperatures and conditions but a week earlier. Like last year the day started bright but the sun disappeared from mid morning behind a thick blanket of cloud but that didn't seem to be the key - Philzoid reasoned that temperature was the kick starter to bring them out from their hiding/roosting place and I reckon he's right. The sun in the morning started to warm the site but the cloud that came over from mid-morning held the temperatures up and there the butterflies were. So it seems that brilliant sunny weather isn't a must and they can handle the cooler temperatures just into double figures. But then this is the "April Fritillary". Also despite seeing the species across the range of Bentley Wood; Eastern Clearing, Cowleys Copse, East Howe Copse and along the rides to the crossroad and beyond, the area we found them in this year is pretty close to where we found them last year, in fact just further along the path. They seem to like to be on the dead Bracken and in amongst the previous years' Bramble growth, venturing out along the twigs like tightrope walkers to warm up in the weak sun. So it'll be worth checking this area in subsequent years.

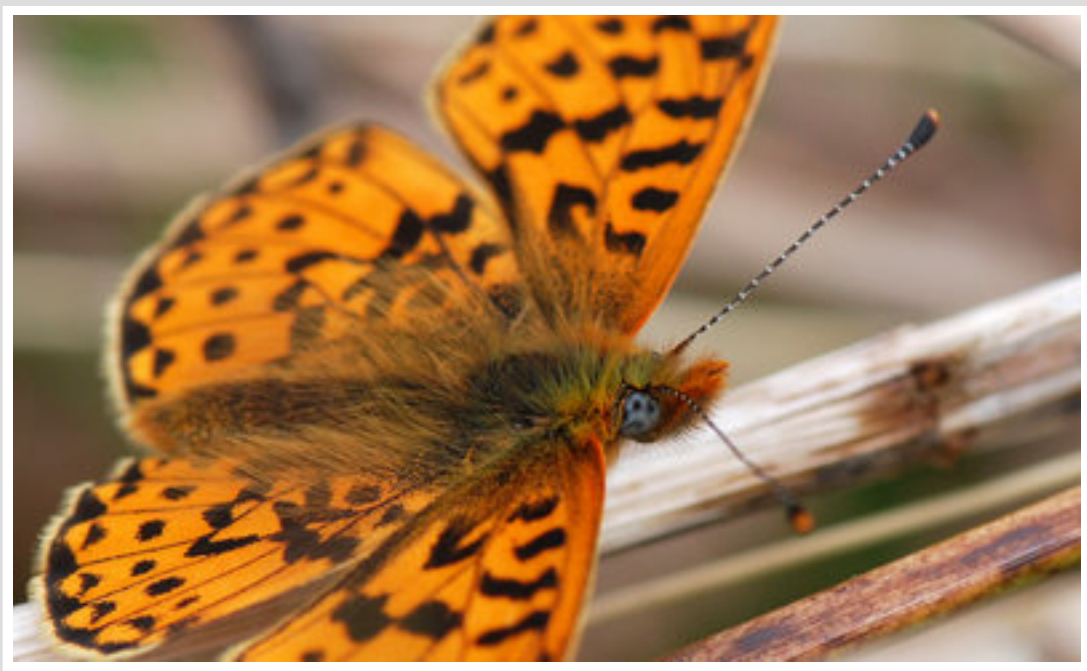
In terms of numbers last year we found 5, this year only 2, but I'm not too concerned because the first was reported on the Bank holiday Monday and up until our visit no more were reported at the site so I think we were seeing part of the first wave of emergence. When we visited last year they had been seen in ones to threes for almost a fortnight before our visit.

The final thing I noticed was that one of the individuals from this year seemed much paler, more orange and cream than the orange and red on the underside of last year. I've posted a shot from this year and one from last year for a comparison. How much this comes down to lighting I'm not sure but to my eyes anyway there is a noticeable difference. I thought the same thing last year about the Small Pearls (browner and less "red") compared to 2011. 😊



This year 12th May





This has to rate up there as one of my favourites as for me it is the first highlight of the year! Also the brilliant upperside looks fantastic against the dull browns and weak greens of spring and add to this the underside which is enough to get even the most uncouth Dorsetian waxing lyrical – sublime. 😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 15-May-13 01:27 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

The final thing I noticed was that one of the individuals from this year seemed much paler, more orange and cream than the orange and red on the underside of last year. I've posted a shot from this year and one from last year for a comparison. How much this comes down to lighting I'm not sure but to my eyes anyway there is a noticeable difference.

That was my initial impression too, paler in colour from those we saw last year 😞. Those we saw last year I think really were just out of the chrysalis, getting their wings dry whereas these, although one would consider fresh, were quite active by comparison. Perhaps a time difference of a day or two, or even a few hours is enough to cause a slight 'fade' in colour:?

Have to say I'm impressed with these latest photos, particularly the three hoverflies on a dandelion and the tiger beetle which is almost as green as my face right now 🍀 😊

What's our chances for the weather to clear (a bit) this weekend 🤔 I'm hoping to put in a visit to Chiddingfold for Wood Whites.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 15-May-13 08:41 PM GMT

Smashing photo's Wurzel I really am GreenStreaked 🍀 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 15-May-13 11:51 PM GMT

Great stuff,Wurzel!

I'm just a little envious as i'm probably not going to get the chance to see any pearls this year 😞

Enjoy the sight and scent of the bluebells at the weekend,if you go. 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-May-13 10:41 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 The weather might be alright for Wood Whites 🍀 but here in Salisbury we get our own unique weather – basically it's bad during the weekend and then the best day of the week is generally a Wednesday or a Thursday 😞😡

Cheers Goldie for your kind comment 😊...and also the wind-up 😊

Cheers Essex 😊 I think Ill be in the same boat with Wood Whites and Dukes 😞 Still I'm looking forward to the Bluebells this weekend 😊

Quick one

The weather has been steadily improving over the last few days from rain and wind earlier in the week until yesterday afternoon when the sun broke through and for the first time in a long time there was wall to wall blue sky. It was so warm I almost took my jumper off. However the weather apps reliably informed me that it isn't going to last so yesterday became increasingly frustrating. In the end I gave up and tried to get a few shots through a crack in the window during a dull moment. I was hoping that the local Starlings would come a bit closer as they are looking pretty fantastic at the moment but they stayed a bit further away so I had to crop a fair bit.



On the way home I finally gave up grinding my teeth and cursing all those retired/part-time people and pulled in along the river in the Woodford Valley. The danger of this action was incurring the wrath of my wife so I started my stopwatch so I would I could keep an eye on the time as if I was only 5 minutes and I got rumbled it wouldn't be too bad 😊 .

I strolled into the field and immediately found a male Green-veined White shining in the lush grass of the meadow.



I then scanned around and noticed a couple of Small Whites and another white that was a lot more fluttery. It would fly to a flower, land for what seemed like a second and then move to another of the flower heads. I watched this behaviour for a minute and then tried to approach and luckily it let me. I then realised that it was a female Orange-tip and it wasn't feeding but ovipositing stretching her abdomen around underneath her while clinging to the edge of the petals. This reproduction was obviously thirsty work as she then took some nectar at her next stop and so I left her in peace. then after 2 minutes





Not bad and I was back on the road in just under 5 minutes and so far I've got away with it 😊 . This was a cracking little find and it's also over the road from the Devenish Reserve which might also be worth a butchers in the next week or so...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 16-May-13 11:18 PM GMT

Worth checking out the Whites just now - there are quite a few females Orange Tips in amongst them. Nice shots, Wurzel!

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 17-May-13 09:47 PM GMT

Nice female Orange Tip shots Wurzel.

Like Dave, I have noticed a fair number of females about and they seemed to appear along with the males this year instead of a little later, probably a consequence of the late emergence.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-May-13 10:20 AM GMT

Cheers Dave and Neil for your kind comments 😊 I've just rediscovered the only draw back to reasonable weather and being able to get out and that's the huge amount of time spent uploading and sorting through images! I've got four sets to go through and we're heading out this afternoon 🤪 To make matters worse work keeps getting in the way 😊

Have a goodun

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-May-13 11:32 PM GMT

Full Fathom Friday

I was lucky enough to be asked to cover a class in the Wildlife area on Friday morning. So while the Year 10 Prefects ran their event and were supervised by my Mentee I mooched around the Nettles with my camera and took shots of anything that appeared in the cool morning. Everything was very quiet and I was trying not to shiver as it was surprisingly chilly. Luckily the sun came out and so did the wildlife. There were the usual bees ; Tawny Lawn, Bumble and Carder Bees as well as a Nomada sniffing around. However I've taken plenty of shots of them so I tried for some flies and Hoverflies as there seemed to be a range of those around. There were plenty of very small red eyed, black bodied flies around as well as a single monster fly. However the stars of the morning were the Hoverflies with probably 6 or so different species around. My favourite was one which looked silver in appearance but when you got closer looked like burnished bronze.



David...



Goliath

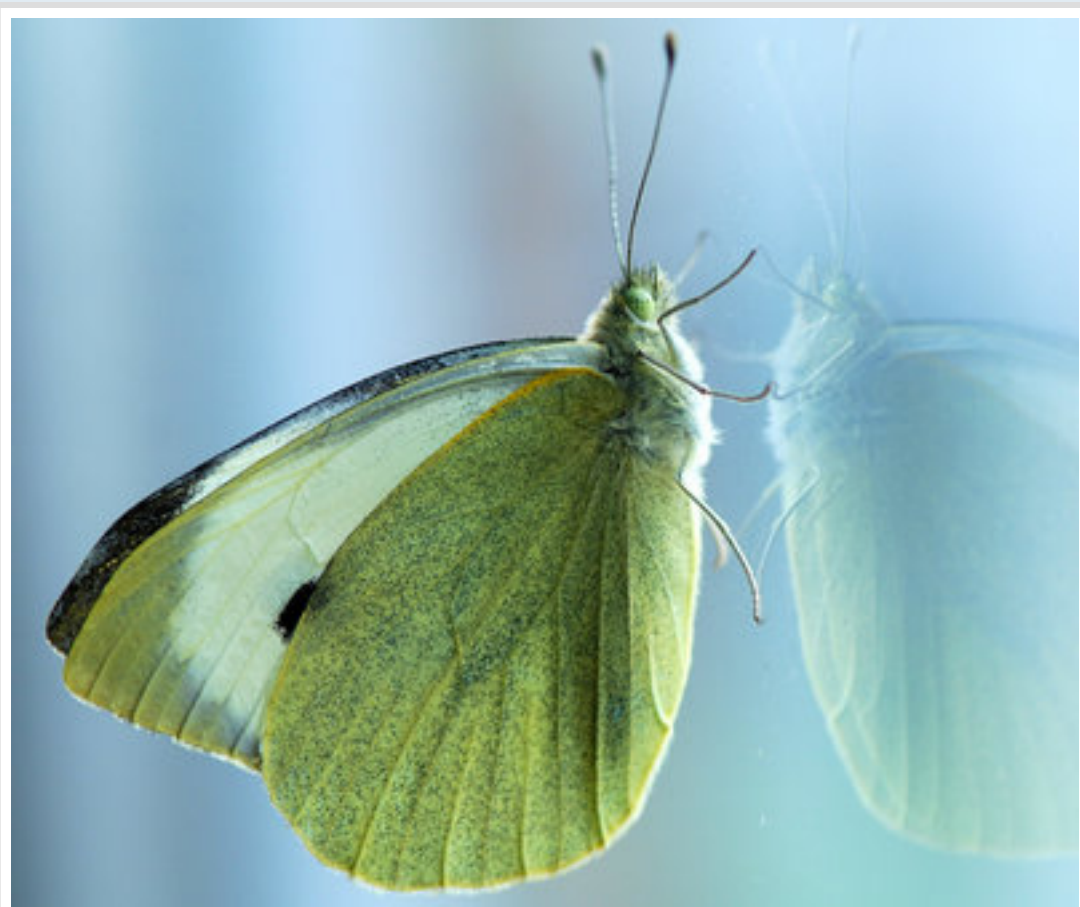


and from the from the side





However there were no butterflies not even a moth so I went in with the attitude of “seen some nice stuff, but nothing to really post about”. From then until lunch it was business as usual and then I donned my kit for the final 5–aside game of the season. The last game we played was stopped (by me) to rescue a Large White. So it was again today. This time however I passed the mini beast onto the sub and stayed on the pitch. In fact he came on for the last 15 seconds and almost scored with the Large White still in his cupped hands! 😲 Luckily his charge was still okay and I took it back to the lab, took a few shots and released it none the worse for its ordeal. In fact it was a lot better of than another female that I found on pitch, well when I say female I know this because all that was left of her was a fore wing. 😞





So I'd finally found a butterfly to photograph and I still had a free last lesson...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 20-May-13 07:43 AM GMT

Well saved Wurzel! Like the pics.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-May-13 11:03 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline, if only I could have gotten there for the other one 😞 And to compound my misery we lost the final game of the season 😞😞 Still the unhappiness didn't last too long...

More time at work...

So having rescued a Large White during the second successive 5-a-side game I thought it wise to check out the allotment next to the Sports Hall. When you can't really get away from work during the day it's good to have a few places on site that you can visit for a quick nature fix. The allotment is just off site by literally a metre so as I had a free period and my endeavours during the week meant that I was almost on top of things I popped over there to see if there were any whites. Almost as soon as I got there a Small White took off from mud-puddling but was quickly replaced by a male Large White which really went wild for the Dandelions.





Having only been 10 minutes or so I had a quick check of the wild area as the sun dipped in and out from the clouds. A miniscule wasp was a new find as was what I think is a Nettle Moth - *Anthophila fabriciana* as it was in amongst the nettles. I'll have to check back in a month or two to see if there are any feeding signs of the caterpillars.





The final shot of the day was the Nomada bee that had been around all morning but was stubbornly refusing to stay still long enough for a photo. I'd found it hiding away amongst the twigs so a few snaps and I left it in peace.



So a busy day at work - although it seems like I didn't do much I actually achieved more than I expected as the thought of getting out for a bit served as my motivation. Unfortunately the minute I got back there was another mountain of work waiting for me. Where it came from I guess I'll never know... 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 20-May-13 11:27 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

nice to see something different, your photo of the mirrored image of the Large White is brilliant. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-May-13 11:56 PM GMT

Cheers Nick for your kind comments 😊

Martin Down

On Saturday I need to have some Daddy and daughter time with my younger daughter and as my older daughter had been out previously for Pearls she

wanted to go somewhere so she could tick off butterflies. So after swimming, with tick pictures drawn and lunch barely finished we set out to Martin Down.

From the main car park we headed down the main track and turned off slightly into a sheltered area that was productive last year. There was an assortment of moths around, most of which escaped the lens of my camera as well as a few Beetles. As it's Tuesday and I'm still posting about Saturday I'll have to leave the moths for another day, particularly as I need to have a go at identifying them first.

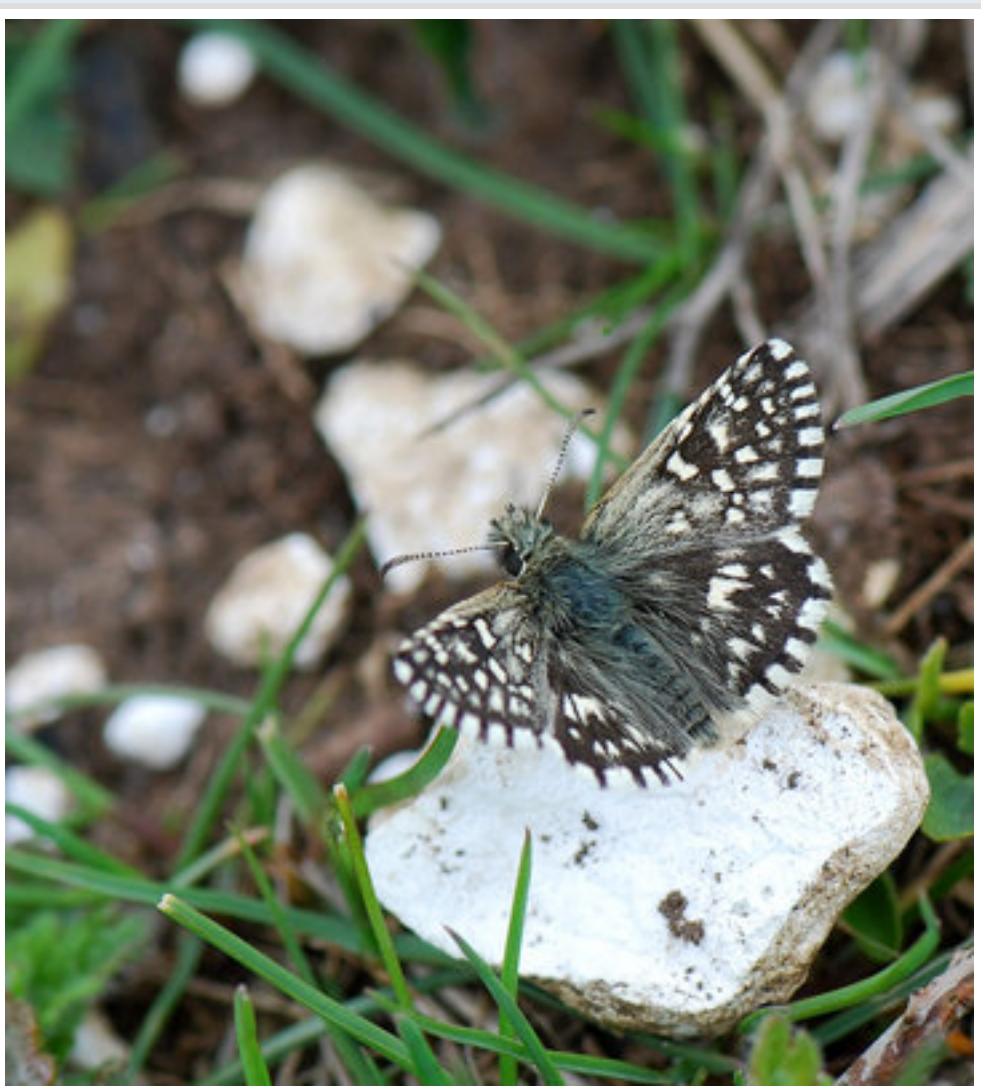


Something caught my eye at one point and a careful creep up saw me finding my first Grizzlie of the year. Luckily as I approached the sun nipped behind a cloud so he was quite content to pose for a few close-ups.





However it took off all of a sudden and somehow ended up flying straight towards me before landing on my chest near my shoulder strap. I was a bit worried about moving and the strap catching its legs so I cupped my hand over it and then backtracked to show my daughter. She was entranced by this funny looking thing and giggling still she peered in while I set it down on a likely looking stone. It then showed us its wings proper almost as if to say "thank you". We stood back and watched it for a few more minutes and then it set off about its business and my daughter ticked her first sighting box of the day.



We then headed across to the Dyke and started to follow it downhill noting a few more Grizzlies on the way. There were a few more moths about – Common Carpets mostly by the look of them and then a female Orange-tip stopped in. My daughter was pretty annoyed as I hadn't drawn one of those for the tick list but some Quavers cheered her up and allowed me to try and get a shot. It was tricky as she held her wings at a strange angle and kept moving with the breeze.



Down near our stopping point (a small stand of Juniper and Hawthorns past the butts) we found more moths and some Orchids but there were no more butterflies, not even a Small Heath. So apples eaten we started to head back to the car park and when we got to the butts we stopped to watch 2 male Brimstones fly-by and they were joined by a Green hairstreak! Unfortunately it didn't stop and I couldn't relocate it.



We then tried Sillens Lane and set off along the path hugging the hedge aiming for where it eventually crossed the Dyke. Straight away we saw another Grizzlie but as my little spotter child pointed out "we've already ticked that one!" However the next sighting was of Dingy and after allowing a few shots of the open wing variety it moved very graciously to a seed head and closed its wings moth style. I was dead chuffed as this was a shot that I was longing to get all last season.





We the carried on along to the dip where I've found so many of my butterflies and we were accompanied some of the way by a Green Veined White. At

the dip a Peacock briefly appeared and a few Brimstone hung around including one female ovi-positing but it was pretty quiet so we wound our way back adding a pair of male Orange-tips and a Holly Blue to the days tally.



I drove home with my spotter child very quiet in the back worn out from her mammoth hike and reflected on the day. Not a bad haul compared to recent trips out – 9 species in all, but that is well down on this time last year when there were Small Coppers, Small Heaths, Common Blue and Brown Argus. And it felt like such hard work whereas previously I've been tripping over butterflies. Even though there were Grizzlies and Dingies today they aren't up to the numbers seen here last year. It seems like we're finally starting to get going even though it's been a long time coming and just as things get up to speed I fear that the brakes are going to be out back on while another low sweeps in from the north. 😊
On the other hand my "spotter child" had a great day chatting and ticking butterflies, marvelling at wildlife and sneaking the odd piggy back. I don't think it could have been any better really. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 22-May-13 12:27 AM GMT

Absolutely lovely shots of the Dingy Skipper, Wurzel. One I've still to see this year. They remind me of an intricately designed carpet – something to do with the texture as much as the colour and patterning.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-May-13 10:39 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I agree with the carpet view, I think I went from one extreme to the other – stunning Pearls to a study in subtlety – once again "ain't nature great" 😊

Moths of Martin Down

I've been looking through the moth shots that I got from Martin Down and using the Bird Guides "Moths of Britain" APP to try and identify them. It's taken me about an hour and a half of searching through and I'm almost there.

The first one I think is a Common Heath (*Ematurga atomaria* – 1952) with an unusual hind wing – lacking the pigmentation.



Next up is possibly a Small Purple-barred (*Phytometra viridaria* - 2470). I say possibly because it is so worn it doesn't look purple at all - in fact it looks like a Small Pale Red-barred...Still my eyes hurt now having pored over the APP for so long 🤔.





Which lead to the final species and I haven't a clue - any help greatly received! 😊



Who knows if the weather is rubbish tomorrow I might actually get round to posting about Sunday!
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-May-13 10:45 PM GMT

Garston Wood

On Sunday the whole family braved the weather and headed out to Garston Wood. When I say "braved the weather" what I really mean is walked in the rain. All morning the sun shone, the temperature rose and there was barely a cloud in the sky. Yet as we approached the Wood the clouds appeared and it felt noticeably cooler. Then the rain started and with it my hopes of seeing any butterflies finished 😞. Still there would be other things to see. The wildflowers were out and resplendent and due to the cool spring everything seemed to have bloomed at once. My favourites of the day were the white Bluebells and the Wild Garlic.



A little way round something really small, only a couple of millimetres flew in front of me and somehow I managed to follow it until it landed. When I finally managed to focus my camera in close enough I realised it was a micro moth, in fact perhaps it should be renamed as a negligible moth! Another species to try and ID...



As we continued through the wood Blackcap and Garden Warblers sang and were joined by Marsh Tits, Nuthatches and at one point an afternoon Tawny Owl. We'd stop every now and then to take in the wild spectacle in front of us and savour the scents and aromas. I got a little confused as we reached the edge of the Wood as from a distance it looked like it had snowed but once the Gallic odour reached my nose I realised that I'd made a mistake.



The local deer population stayed just out of shot in the surrounding fields and through the trees we would catch glimpses of white, black "normal" coloured individuals and there were also some interesting Bee mimic hoverflies.



As we drove along the track towards Sixpenny Handley and a nice cuppa at my folks house the sun appeared and with it the butterflies. Indeed the Rape fields seemed alive with whites and over the 3 minutes journey I saw 2 Brimstone, 2 male Orange-tips and 5 assorted whites 😊 ! Oh well the season has to start soon, it can't keep going on like this...

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 23-May-13 11:06 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

great shots of the Bee, Beetle, and the close up of the white flowers, beautiful. Shame about the weather, but it still looks like you had a good time. It was hot sunshine all afternoon in these parts, but i did`nt get a photo until early evening of a Wood White when it started getting cooler. So the rain spoiled your chances of a butterfly photo, and the sun spoiled mine, can`t win. 😞

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 24-May-13 02:05 PM GMT

Great pictures Wurzel. I particularly like that last beetle.

Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 24-May-13 04:28 PM GMT

"Which lead to the final species and I haven't a clue - any help greatly received! 😊" it's a Tortricidae..... you did say ANY help 😊

your other micro is one of the leafminer species take a look at Phyllonorycter

not 100% if there are more than one species or not but Violet ground beetle.

CHris

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 24-May-13 08:45 PM GMT

No idea what that beetle is Wurzel but I love the way you have captured the colours.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-May-13 10:03 PM GMT

Cheers Nick 😊 We should have swapped the weather 😊

Cheers Nick for your kind comment

Cheers Chris for the ID help - when it's raining next week and I'm stuck in the caravan I'll look though that group, hopefully my eyes will last that long:?

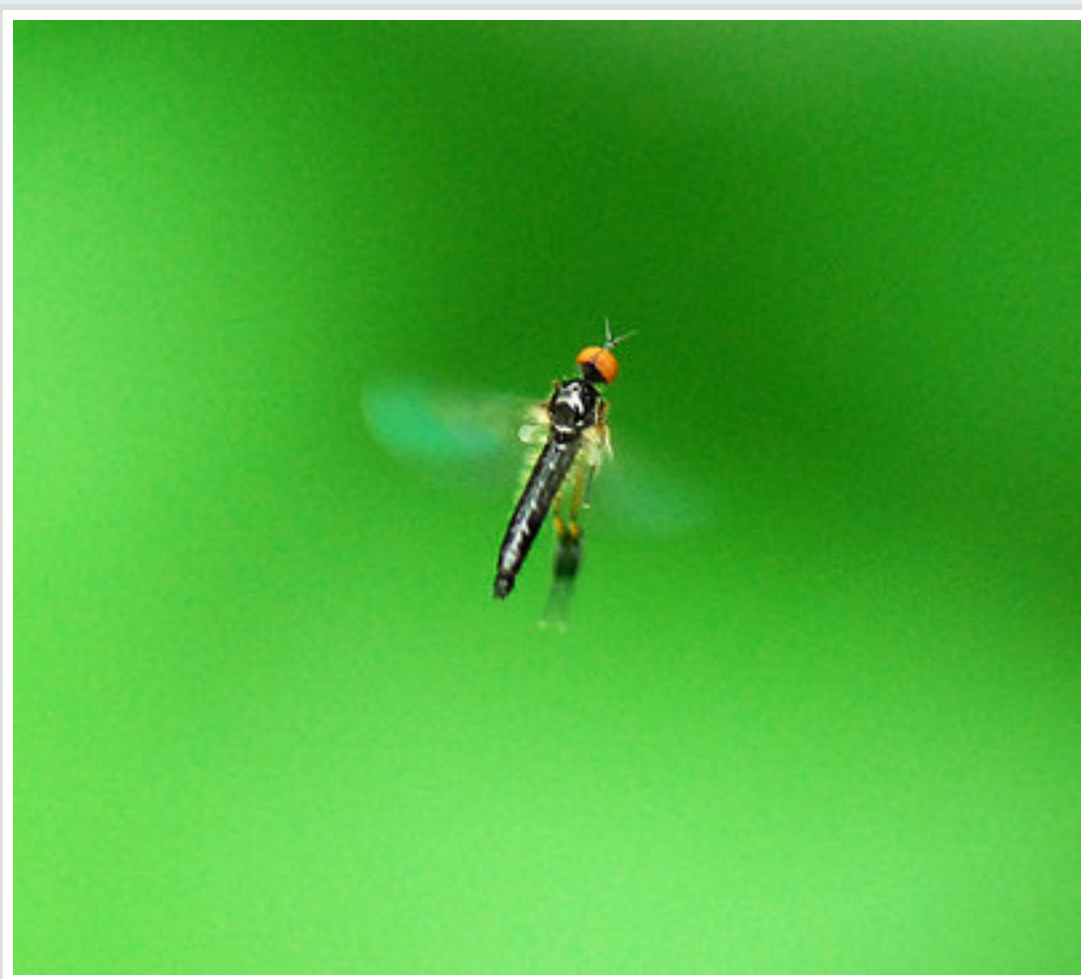
Cheers Pauline I put it down to getting lucky with the light 😊

Wednesday (I'm catching up again)

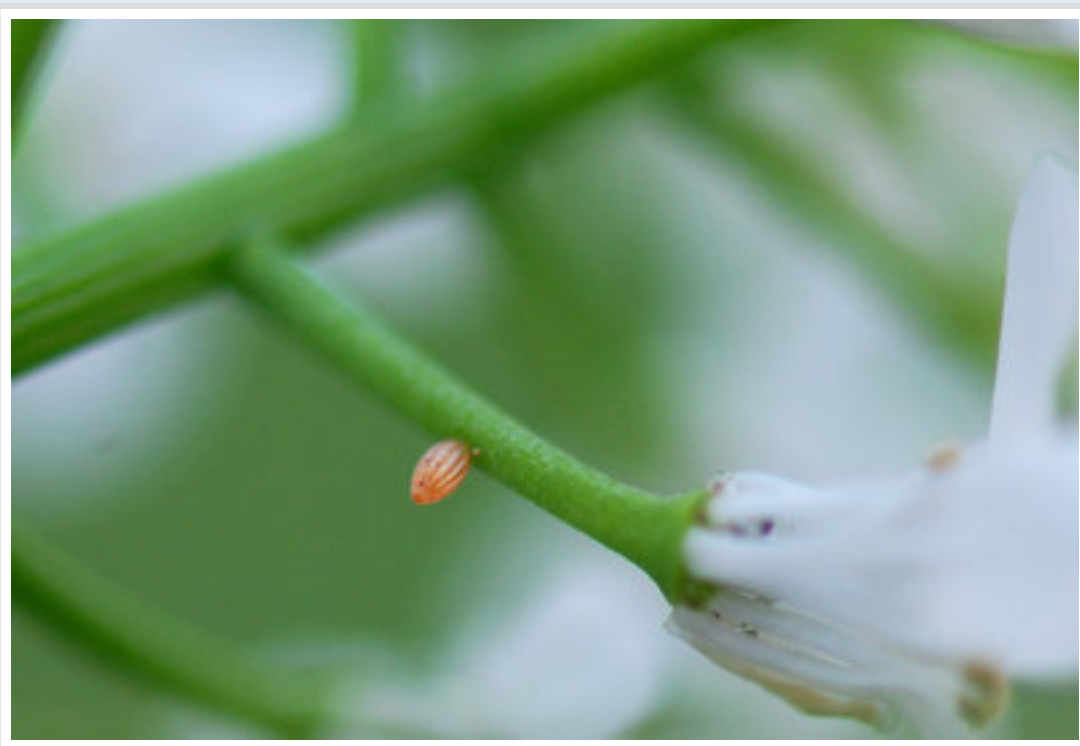
I'd finally had enough by Wednesday so I headed out at lunchtime to do a quick walk of my "local patch" namely my place of work! I checked the area by the allotments first and a couple of Large Whites flew up from the path on the way there and one then landed on some netting. It seemed slightly annoyed that the butterfly proof net was turning out to actually be that! 😊



Round in the wildlife area there were the usual bees and flies and I managed to find the silvery looking hoverfly from one of my previous visits as well as a weird looking tiny fly that hovered with what looked like its massive legs hanging down. It was really hard to get it in focus as it was constantly adjusting its position and was very small but a fair whack of sharpening produced an image that hopefully will enable identification. That was enough and I headed in feeling slightly chilled.



Once at home the sun came out strong and I decided to risk it a try an evening visit to the Woodford Valley. The area I'd previously visited held a Small White and down amongst the water meadow there were numerous moths of which I managed to get shots of a couple. However it had clouded over and both the light and the temperature notably dropped so I soon called it a day. On the way back I checked the flowers on the verge and managed to find what I think is an Orange-tip egg? It seems fitting, almost Zen, that I end the day with the first stages of a butterfly's lifecycle



What isn't Zen is this crazy weather, we're almost into June and the season still doesn't seem to have kicked off 😊 . I know that more and more species are emerging but they seem to be coming in dribs and drabs and numbering few. Is there no end to this dire weather? I'm visiting the Isle of Wight next week and back when we booked the holiday I thought "Ace, Glanvilles by the bucket load!" but I don't think a single specimen has been recorded yet! 😡

I wrote this on Friday night but I take it back as today was a cracker! I moved a few species from my "seen" to "got shots of" list including the dreaded Green Hairstreak and added 4 more species to the tally (though sadly 3 of them are on the "seen only" list). The one draw back of such a great day is that I've now got to look through 400 odd shots 🤪🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

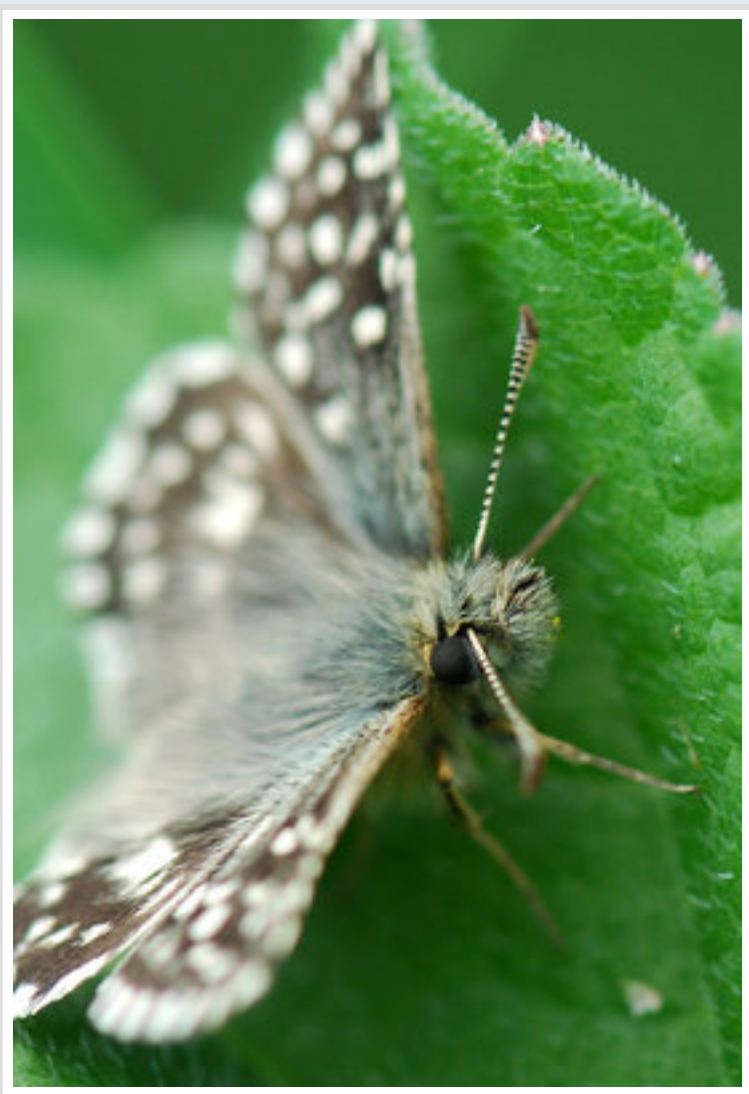
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-May-13 11:03 PM GMT

Martin Down

I managed to get out on Saturday despite my older daughter being fully booked. She went straight from her swimming lesson to a party and then I picked her up and dropped all of my girls (wife included) in town for the Arts afternoon. While they were making stuff and bouncing down bouncy slides I pulled into the car park at Sillens Lane Martin Down. I must be a glutton for punishment but I was here to check for my nemesis.

Glumly I set off down the path and worked my way along the hedge peering at the leaves and willing them to turn into a Green Hairstreak but no joy alas. Still I was soon cheered up by a Grizzlie that was just off the path.



I pressed on and the path splits with one branch heading on to meet Borkerley and the other branch follows the hedge and turns into a kind of tunnel with a high Hawthorn Hedge on either side. Just before I headed down the tunnel a male Orange-tip caught my eye and for once it stopped long enough for me to make an approach. Luckily the sun nipped behind a cloud so it stayed for some time allowing me to get a few shots but with its wings tightly shut. Then the sun reappeared and it set off but only as far as the entrance of the tunnel where it took a liking to some of the flowers and spent a good 10 minutes refueling. I love watching Orange-tips, the bright orange is stunning when the sun catches it.



This bit of the tunnel was jam packed with butterflies with 3 Holly Blues, a Peacock, an almost endless stream of Brimstone, some Green-veined Whites and a couple of Speckled Wood but none stopped for long enough. As I wandered down the length I listened out for the Lesser Whitethroat and sure enough he was still there and his dulcet tones were overshadowed briefly by the gronking of a Raven overhead, a slightly discordant harmony! Coming out at the end of the tunnel there was a Peacock to meet me, basking on the path and as I checked the small area of slightly longer grasses a miniscule butterfly appeared, followed by another and another – my first Small Blues of the year! Two were males with their blue scaling.





As I was getting my shots another nature enthusiast arrived and as I was chatting he informed me that he'd seen Green Hairstreaks along the tunnel. So I backtracked and waited roughly two thirds of the way along. I scanned the hedge and peered at all the leaves and what with the Lesser Whitethroat and then Turtle Doves calling and the balmy heat I went into a bit of a daze, my eyes unfocused and I could feel all my tension slipping away 😎. As I came back and refocused on the hedge right there in front of me was a Green Hairstreak! How long it had been there I couldn't say it must have just popped up from somewhere. The curse was broken and I took my fill of shots! 😊



Oi get back here!!





Hopefully I'll be able to post part two on BT Wifi from the Isle of Black tomorrow 😊 but for now I can't stare at a screen for long enough to sort any more shots tonight...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 26-May-13 11:22 PM GMT

Great stuff Wurzel, glad to see you got your Green Hairstreak 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Pete Eeles, 26-May-13 11:28 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

The curse was broken and I took my fill of shots! 😊

Congrats Wurzel – and nice shots too!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 26-May-13 11:38 PM GMT

Good for you, Wurzel. You'll be tripping over them now... 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 27-May-13 02:16 PM GMT

Gorgeous first photo of the Grizzled Skipper Wurzel, and at last you got your Green Hairstreaks, well done, a great day. All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 27-May-13 04:12 PM GMT

"hideandseek" wrote:

...and at last you got your Green Hairstreaks, well done, a great day.

The relief is palpable (for us all as well as for you!)

Wurzel's first Greenstreak is fast becoming one of the year's landmark events! 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 28-May-13 07:26 PM GMT

Well done Wurzel great photos, glad you got your Green Hairstreak!

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-May-13 10:10 PM GMT

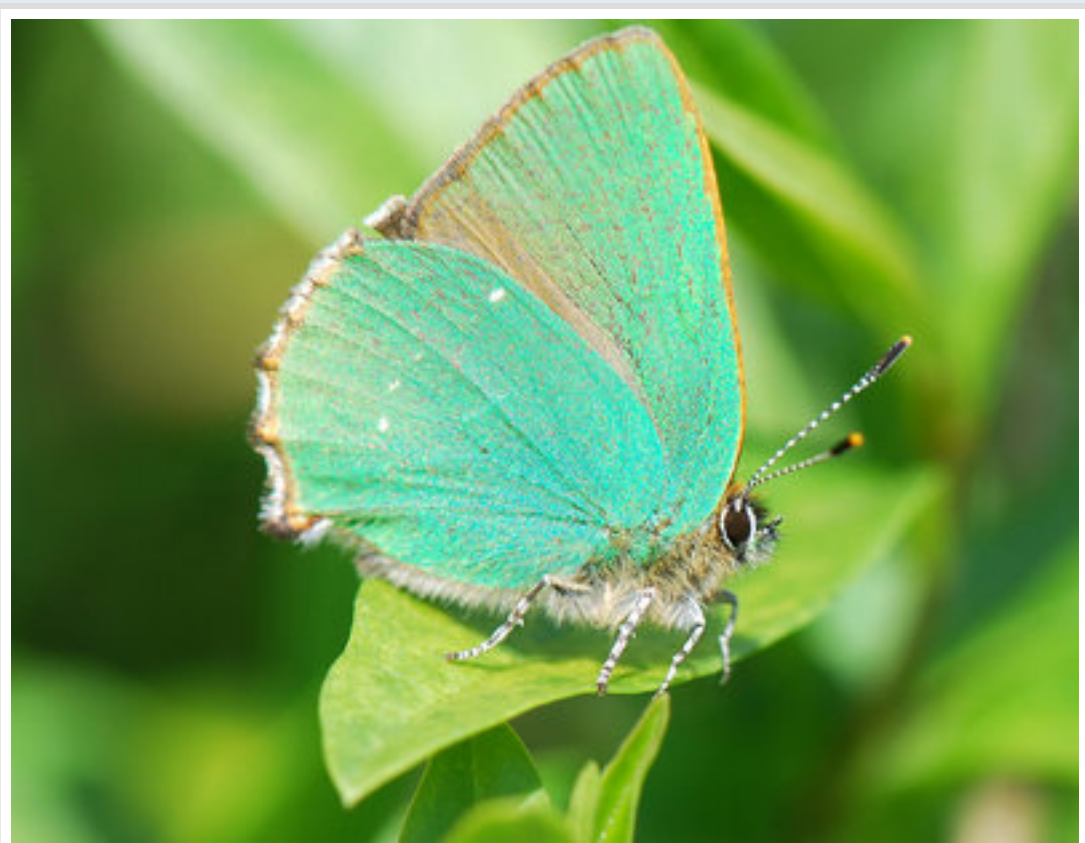
Cheers guys for all the congrats and kind comments 😊 And thanks as well for putting up with all my moaning about Greenstreaks 😞 - I'll try to not let it get to me next year... 😞

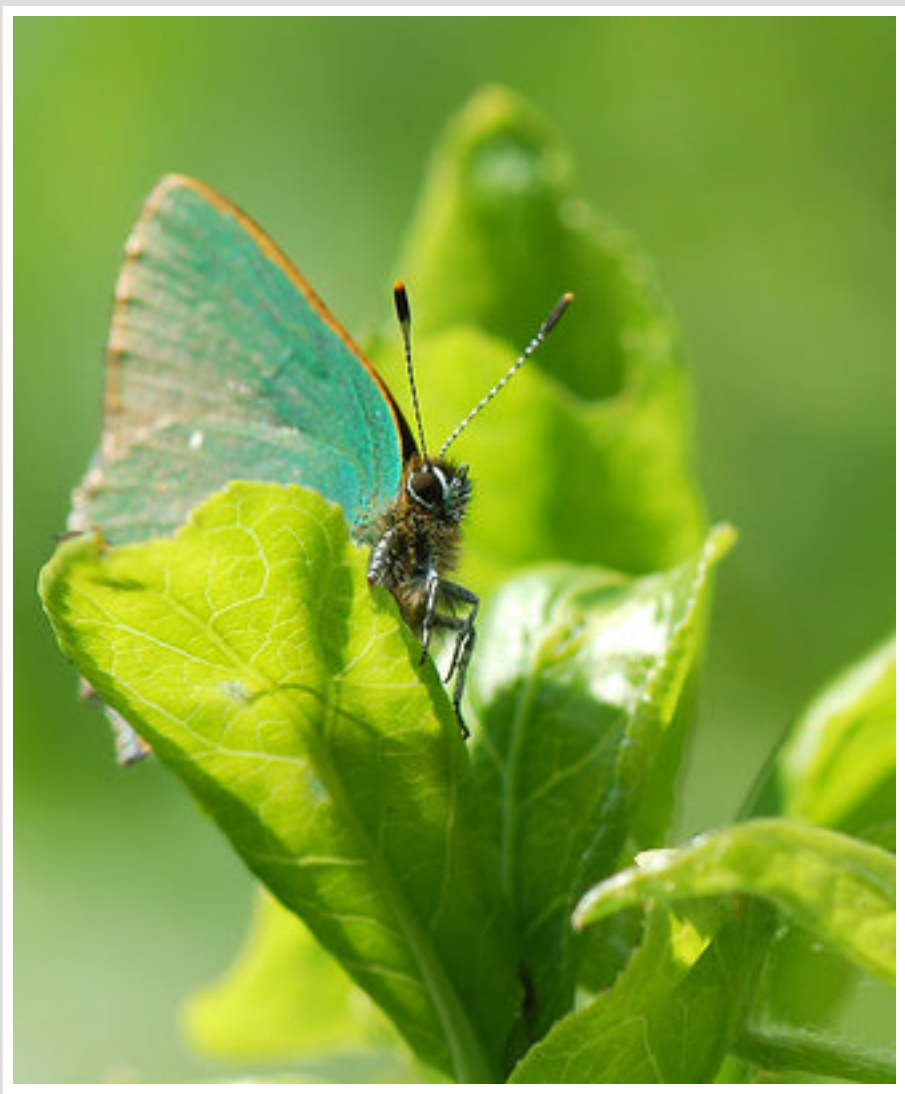
Martin Down Part 2

While I was making the most of my find one of the Holly blues decided to pay me a visit also, perching low down and just in the line of the sun so getting a shot without it completely blowing out was tricky. In the end I managed to get close and clicked away when the sun went momentarily behind a cloud.



But the Holly Blue was being a bit coy really, refusing to open its wings and besides the Greenstreaks seemed to be putting one a bit of a show as if to entice me back to watching them. One would disappear, land and then hide behind a leaf before peeking out over the top of the blade. Absluelty lovely little critters, like little Teddies when seen up close.





Again I was momentarily distracted this time by a Small Blue looking for some attention. But it wasn't long before I was back with the Greenstreaks despite the Holly Blue teasing me by opening her wings just a fraction.





All Greenstreaked out I set off again. From the tunnel I then strolled over the top towards the dip where the path from Sillens Lane transects the ditch. As I reached the first ring of the hill fort something was bombing along aided by the breeze. The jinking flight reminded me of something as did the particular orangey/red colouration. As it shot past me I realised too slow that it was a Marsh Fritillary (hopefully my first of many) and almost as soon as I started trying to follow it I lost it. After a further 20 minutes of scanning and searching I gave up and carried onwards. The "dip" over the years has been one of the hotspots for me with my first ever Green Hairstreak, Duke of Burgundy and Grizzled Skipper as well as offering me the chance to get shots of most of the Blues but I was gutted to see on this visit that there has been a small fire and the vegetation hasn't recovered yet. So instead I set off down the path but something small and orangey caught my eye - my first Small Copper but it too didn't stop for photos. In fact by now not an awful lot of things did stop apart from a (I think) Common Carpet and finally once almost back at the car a Dingy Skipper.



On the way to the site I was running through what ideally I would have liked to see. It went something along the lines of :
Have a bit of a tidy up, get better shots or first shots of species that I've seen but not got photos of (male Orange-tip, Holly Blue)
Find some Small Blues

Find some Green Hairstreaks ("ha! I thought sarcastically I may as well wish for a Martin Down Marshie")

Blow me down if I didn't! 🤪 Remind me next time to think "hope to see a Large Tortoiseshell or Camberwell Beauty" as I drive somewhere 😊

An absolutely cracking day - one of those epic ones that lives on in your memories. It almost felt like the season had finally started only for the weather to go off again a few days later. Oh well if it stays two steps forwards and one back we'll get there eventually.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 29-May-13 10:56 PM GMT

Splendid to hear (and see) how it all just came together for you... I am now planning an expedition down to Martin Down sometime Friday onwards, maybe venturing that bit further to Hod Hill for the chance of fresh Marsh Fritillaries and lots more too I hope.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 30-May-13 09:05 AM GMT

What a fantastic selection of butterflies you have seen. Great pictures, too.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 30-May-13 09:07 AM GMT

Excellent stuff Wurzel 😊

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-May-13 10:17 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 - I recommend parking at Sillens Lane end if you find yourself at Martin Down and follow the hedge along the bottom of the hill - it's level and easy walking and there are butterflies all along the hedge. I don't know if Marsh Frits are out at Hod Hill yet but I'm keeping my eyes open ready 😊

Cheers Nick and Neil for your kind comments 😊

Bentley Wood

On Sunday I made a visit to Bentley Wood with the Wiltshire Branch. I normally prefer to go out on my own or in very small groups as you get to see more and also stand more of a chance of getting some shots but this was in a different part of the Wood and hopefully a chance to do a bit of a recce for Small Pearls. I took my older daughter along as she was up for a wander.

Once we entered the wood butterflies seemed to be about with good numbers of whites (Brimstones in particular) and a pair or two of Speckled Woods however nothing was stopping for very long. There were a few long horned moths around and they looked spectacular catching the sun like burnished gold.



We headed off the main trail and my older daughter found a Peacock and there was also an Argent and Sable about but it didn't allow a decent approach. I handed the camera over to my daughter for a bit and she managed to creep up on the Peacock which was busy nectaring.



taken by my 8 year old

However it got a bit too piney and dark so we made our back to and then further along the main track. A pair of Pearls appeared and then led us on a merry dance for a bit as it was getting near to midday, the temperature was nice and high and they were obviously super charged. The closest I could get was about 3 feet away. We arrived at the pond for lunch and as we munched my daughter and I watched the tadpoles, Minnows and a Newt in the pond and the Large Red Damselflies around it.



We then said our goodbyes as the party carried on along the switchback to the Eastern clearing and started on our way home. Almost back at the car I saw a sign for a familiar bit of the wood which I'd visited last year and then it had taken me almost an hour to get to it. Yet when I looked through the trees I could make out some familiar landmarks so we veered off to check it out. Indeed it was the same site and there was a Green Veined White and a couple more Pearls to greet us. After some much closer shots we wound our way back and Speckie stopped to wish us a goodbye.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 30-May-13 10:21 PM GMT

Incredible that we're still seeing spring Peacocks on the cusp of June!!

Well done to your lass for snapping it! 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 31-May-13 11:47 PM GMT

Cheers David 😊 Although it's almost June it still "feels" like late spring 😊 My little girl was made up when I told her I'd posted her shot it seems my training her as a "spotter child" paid off 😊

Isle of Wight...just for a night (or two)

Last Monday we set off on one of the "Sun holidays" to the Isle of Wight. When we booked it back in January or whenever it was, the last week of May seemed like the perfect time to go. It would be warm enough for butterflies, we usually get a dry spell and the Glanville Fritillaries should be emerging in force so I contacted Marmari (cheers) and genned up on sites around the Island...

The journey over was pleasant and the sun shone down as we started out to find our way around. As we couldn't check in until 4pm we headed over to West Wight and had lunch on the coast path. The odd White and male Orange-tip patrolled along the hedges but refused to stop so I settled instead for some shots of a Slow Worm.



Lunch over we drove one westwards to a National Trust nature reserve at New Town. A quick stroll down to the bird hide added a Peacock the tally and there were more whites and another male Orange-tip. All were very flighty and none stopped for a photo. So I settled for some Orchids - at least they can't fly/run away and my first shot of Scorpion Fly of the year.





Then things started to go a bit astray. When we checked into the accommodation it was terrible - minging beds 😓, stains on all of the seats and lino 😓 and handfuls of clumped hair in the drawers 😓 as well as ants all over the kitchen. The next day despite some Red Squirrels running around outside I don't think I saw another living animal all day as it rained from the minute we awoke to the minute we went to sleep 😓. So we cut our losses and the next day we were on the ferry heading back to the mainland. We'll be back as the island itself is fantastic but next time we'll camp because then you know exactly what you're going to get.

As I was sitting at the ferry terminal I realised that I hadn't taken a single butterfly shot in the island 😓 and to compound my woes the first Glanvilles had been reported! Here's hoping Wrecclesham comes good again this year.

Back home with all the unpacking done I walked into town to get some provisions and stopped for a sight I have never seen before. As usual a Grey Wagtail caught my eye but there was a strange call catching my ear. Once I'd located the bird I noticed further movement from among the branches that it was perching on. Then I saw 4 chicks all begging for food. The parent would fly out, catch a Mayfly and return and once sated the offspring would close it's eyes and have a little doze while it's siblings carried on making their appeals to mum and dad - and I thought I had it tough as a parent to two little girls! 😊





Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 01-Jun-13 11:23 AM GMT

Shame about the weather, Wurzel - it's the one thing we can do nothing about.

Quite a contrast to 2011 when you think the Glanvilles at Sand Point in Somerset had disappeared by Whit bank holiday!! I daresay they haven't even emerged yet this year.

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 01-Jun-13 11:45 AM GMT

Sorry to hear about your IOW experience and the lack of Glanvilles. As always your bird shots are fantastic. 😊

Will keep you posted on any recces to Wrecclesham.

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-13 11:27 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 Definitely keep me informed on the Wrecclesham situation. 😊

Cheers David 😊 it was a bit galling to be sitting there at the ferry terminal in Cowes reading about the first sightings 😞 Still I've just had an absolutely cracking weekend with firsts for the year all over the shop from two new sites (including Dukes and Marshies 😊). But before I can look at the 1000+ photos I've still got Thursday and Friday to sort out. So here goes...

Wet afternoon at Bentley

Having returned from the IOW I was at a bit of a loss what to do with myself. I was supposed to be surreptitiously tracking down Glanvilles while the girls played on the beach and instead I was faced with a wet Thursday. In the end I reasoned that a trip to Bentley Wood might pay off and so I bundled the girls into their willies and water proofs and we set off.

Once in the Eastern Clearing the girls set up camp by one of the benches; umbrellas to make little tents, a rug to sit on, library books to read and sweets to eat. Once they were all sorted I was free to roam within line of site so off I set. If the girls thought I was straying a little too far then shouts of "Wurzel" would echo round the clearing. However it wasn't producing the goods with sightings of only two Pearls braving the light rain. We moved camp to the look-out post and I tried my luck along the track there. I've often wondered what happens to butterflies when it cools down or when it rains, I thought they'd hunker down but it seems that Pearls head to the trees.





So that's where they go!

We moved back to the Eastern Clearing as I had a hunch that the rain would stop and then the sun might shine through. There were a few more moth species around including what I think is a drab Looper?





But then the rain did stop and the sky brightened and all of a sudden there were 3 or 4 Pearls active in the clearing. Brill! My patience paid off and as I've caught up with this species a fair bit this year I tried for some different shots but couldn't resist one "Classic" side view too.





We drove home the girls all played out after 4 hours in the field. Brill again! And typical as I pulled out of the car park the temperature rose and the sun shone down!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broome, 03-Jun-13 05:11 PM GMT

Entertaining as usual Wurzel, well written, with some lovely photos, keep it up. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jun-13 09:15 PM GMT

Sorry to hear about your IOW experience Wurzel.

Smashing report and great photos, you always seem to pull something out of the bag no matter what 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 04-Jun-13 01:31 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

The plain brown winged moth is as you say a Drab Looper (which is one I haven't seen before). The first one pictured is Brown silver-line and the micro is *Celypha lacunana* 😊

looking forward to the next installment!

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Jun-13 11:25 PM GMT

Cheers Nick, or should I say Neil 😊 - I'll certainly try to keep it up 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 , I just keep plodding away 😊

Cheers for the ID's Philzoid 😊 That was a great trip out on Sunday 😊 but I've still got Friday and Saturday to sort out and on that note...

Mottisfont

On Friday we took advantage of the good weather and spent the day at Mottisfont a National Trust site in the Test Valley. As soon as we arrived we set out along the river in amongst the dappled light. The first beastie to meet us was a Speckled Wood which seemed intent on keeping this little patch of the path to itself. Anything that entered into the zone was soon seen off - a fly, then a Bumble Bee and finally a male Orange-tip, which I was rather annoyed about because it was about to settle!



The river opened out onto a lush flower meadow but apart from a couple of whites there were no other butterflies which surprised me as it looked like it would be great for Uncommon Blues? Still we ended back across the fields in the lawned garden. After our picnic lunch the girls went off and found friends to run around with, my wife enjoyed lazing in the sun and I trawled along a small area of nettles. It was a cracking little area. A Holly Blue put in a brief appearance, as well as a Banded Demoiselle. There was a Nomada bee, Scorpion flies, various other flies, some micro-moths (3 different species) as well as a large, black and white wasp. What really caught my eye was a moulted case of a May Fly.



Up in the walled garden there were a few more whites around but they were no playing ball; flying endlessly along the borders and then dipping down before soaring up and over the wall. We moved on pretty quickly as there was a swarm of bees on one of the posts which took off on mass. From the walled garden we got the girls some ice creams and I picked up a little mate, a lovely coloured beetle.



Finally we went to feed the fish and play Pooh sticks on the bridge so I sloped off for a few minutes and found a late Peacock that wouldn't come out of hiding and a Large White that was a bit more accommodating. The butterflies were proving to be hard work, very skittish and turbo charged so I settled for a few shot of the Brown Trout feeding.





Once back as if the girls hadn't had enough fresh air I took them to the park in the town. While they were playing I nipped over the fence and got a shot of a Small White. It must have thought it was a way from prying eyes having landed down in the Brambles but it hadn't realised that there was a nice window through which I could see it.



Even though there weren't that many specialities an absolutely brill day!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Mark Colvin, 05-Jun-13 02:44 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel.

Just to let you know your "lovely coloured beetle" is the Varied Carpet Beetle (*Anthrenus verbasci*).

Keep up the good work.

Kind regards. Mark

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-13 11:41 PM GMT

Cheers Mark for the ID 😊

Due to the fantastic butterflying last weekend I forgot to update my calendar...

Fingers crossed for June.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

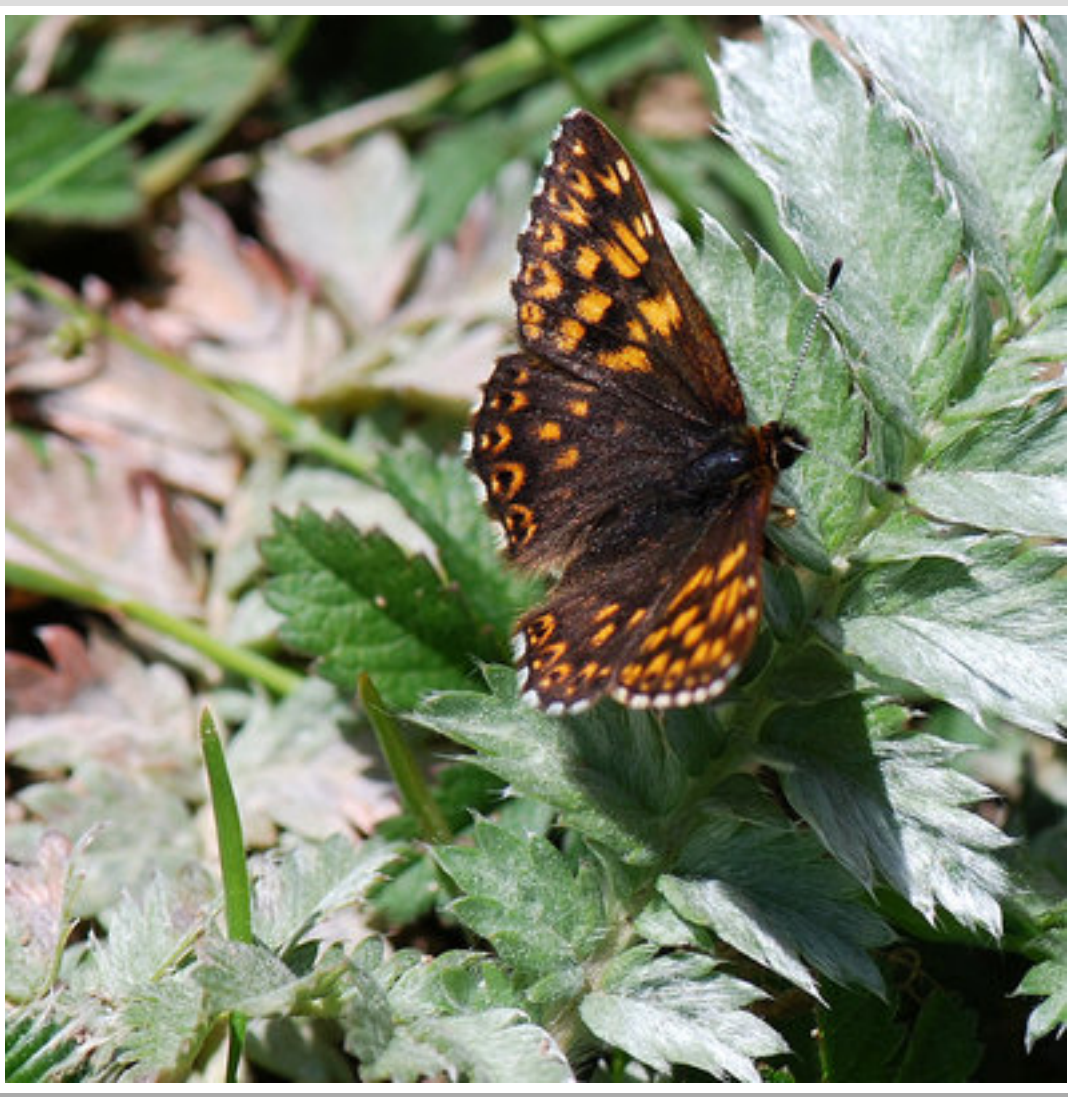
by Wurzel, 06-Jun-13 11:47 PM GMT

On Saturday I tried a new site on Salisbury Plain and so with the girls in tow, a picnic lunch packed and with directions from Rob H I set off. Through villages and up and down Downs we drove for about 20 minutes before pulling off the road and making use of tank tracks. When I pulled up on a grassy verge I saw that there was a square of longer grass and scrub bordered by two parallel paths, almost making a little field. Beyond this it became scrubbier with larger trees working their way up the hill. Loaded up with all the required equipment for the girls (sun hats, picnic rug, lunch, paper and crayons, books etc) we took the path on the right as I looked at the hill.

We'd only walked a couple of metres from the car when I saw the first butterfly of the day - A Duke! I couldn't believe it I'd spent hour upon hour roaming the Wiltshire woods for the occasional sighting and here today they were greeting us from the car! Unfortunately it flew off of the path into the scrub in the middle field so we pressed on up to the top of the path. Here there was a t-junction and we set up for a picnic. While the girls had their lunch I mooched around for a bit and within an area of about 6 feet square encountered 3 Dukes, 2 Small Heath - a first for the year, a Grizzled Skipper, a Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak. In the end I poured myself a coffee and sat there with camera in one hand, coffee in the other. It was one of the easiest sites I've ever worked and when Rob and daughter met us I couldn't thank him enough.







Lunch part one over, we packed the things into the bag and set off again taking a left at the T Junction. Within 20 metres or so we reached the next corner and set up again. This area held a few Grizzled Skippers, Small Heath and the larger shrubs and bushes had Green Hairstreaks that seemed a bit tired and faded but still had some fight in them and the girls seemed impressed with their fathers Nemesis. The Grizzlies too seemed aged and I don't know whether that's why one individual looked darker than what I'm used to or whether it was because the markings were smaller?



Less heavily marked?



Finally we set off back towards the car which must have been only 100 metres down the parallel path to the one we'd first taken and it looked to be Duke Heaven. That's all I can manage now as I'm knackered more tomorrow...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 07-Jun-13 12:27 AM GMT

Brilliant report, Wurzel – nothing like venturing into uncharted territory and finding the buried treasure is sitting on top of the sand waiting for you. Salisbury Plain must hold many secrets in the bits the military don't let us into, if the fringes we *can* ramble in are as good as this. There are rumours of vast Marsh Fritillary colonies...

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 07-Jun-13 02:34 PM GMT

Good grief, Wurzel. We've now gone from not seeing Green Hairstreaks at all to having them on your fingertips!

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 07-Jun-13 07:59 PM GMT

You got your Duke at last Wurzel! Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-13 11:52 PM GMT

Cheers Dave – venturing to new places is good especially when you get onto little beauties like these 😊 As for Marshies on the Plain that's all hush hush – as you'd expect on MOD land 😊

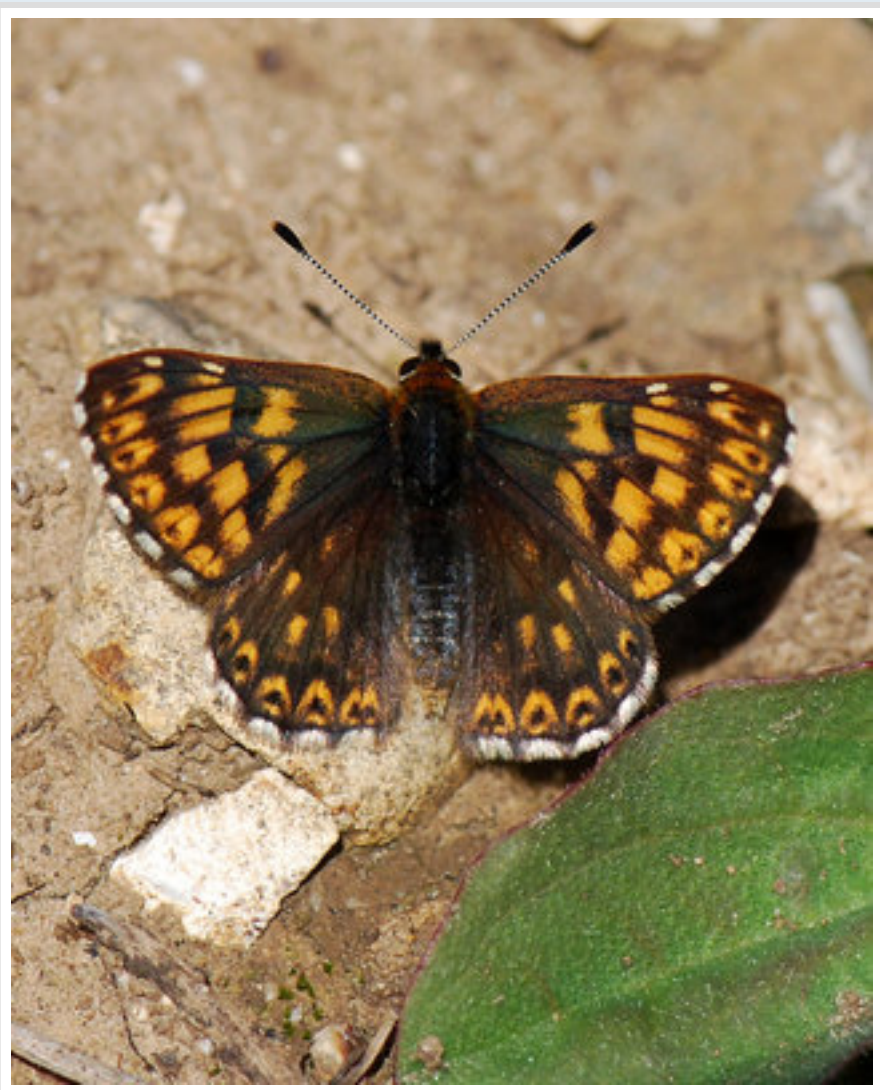
Cheers David – it looks like I've found my sites to try in future years for what was my Green nemesis 😊

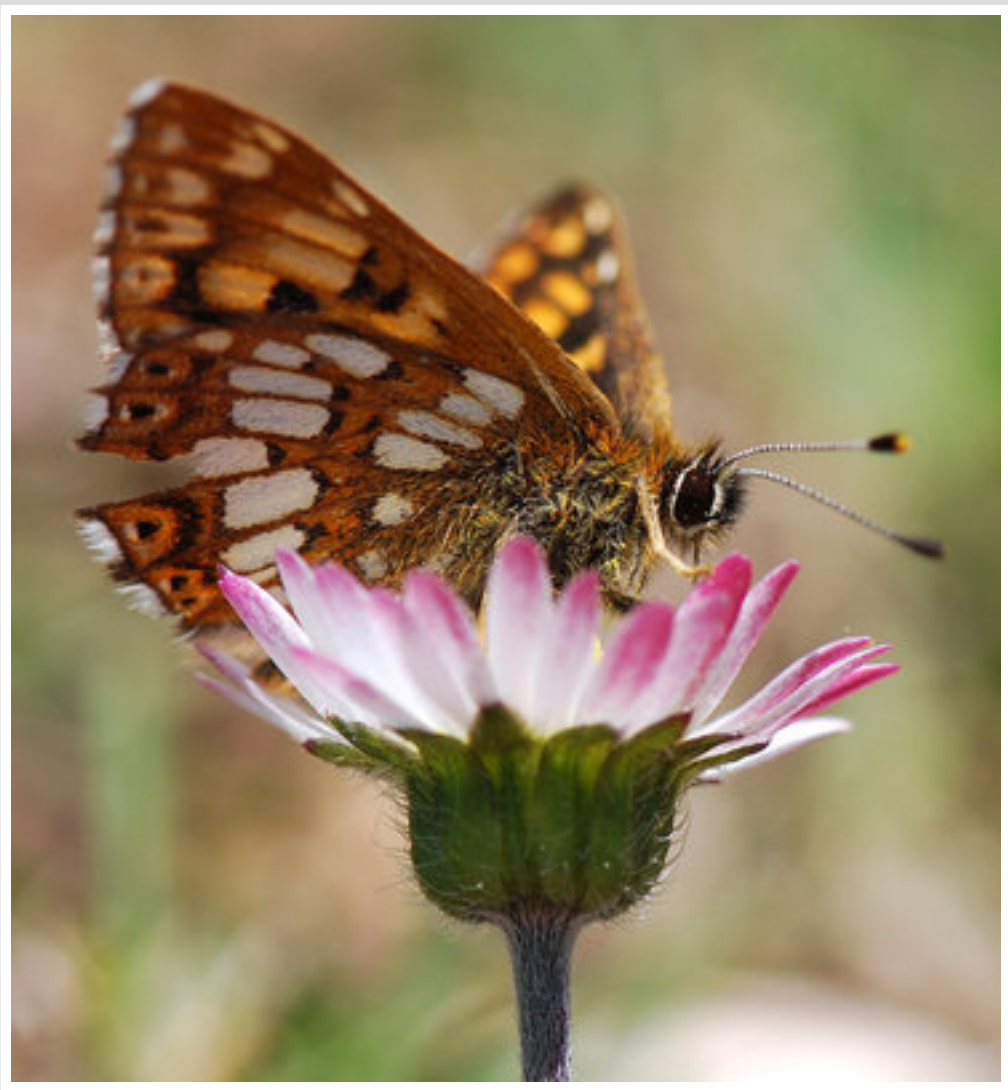
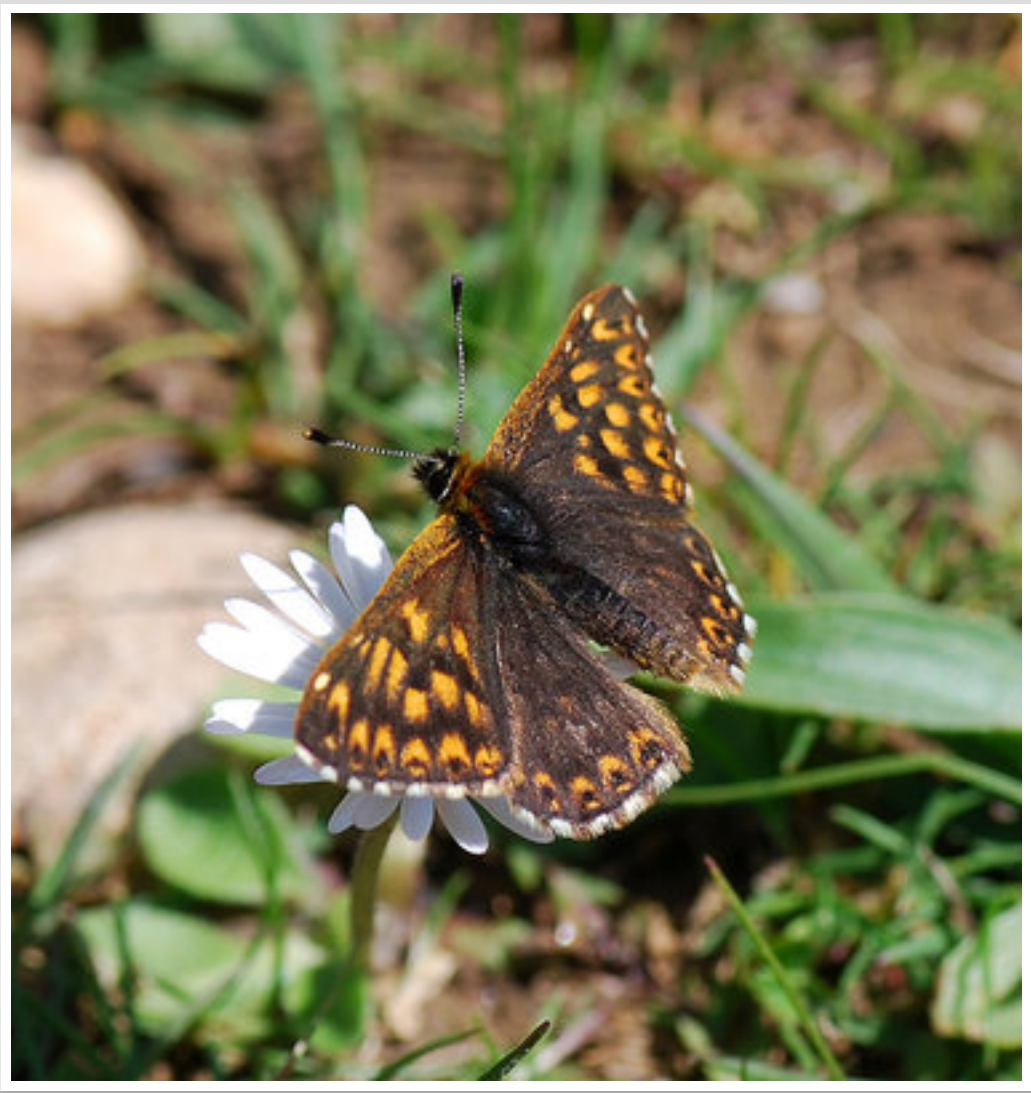
Cheers Goldie – got there in the end, and then some! 😊

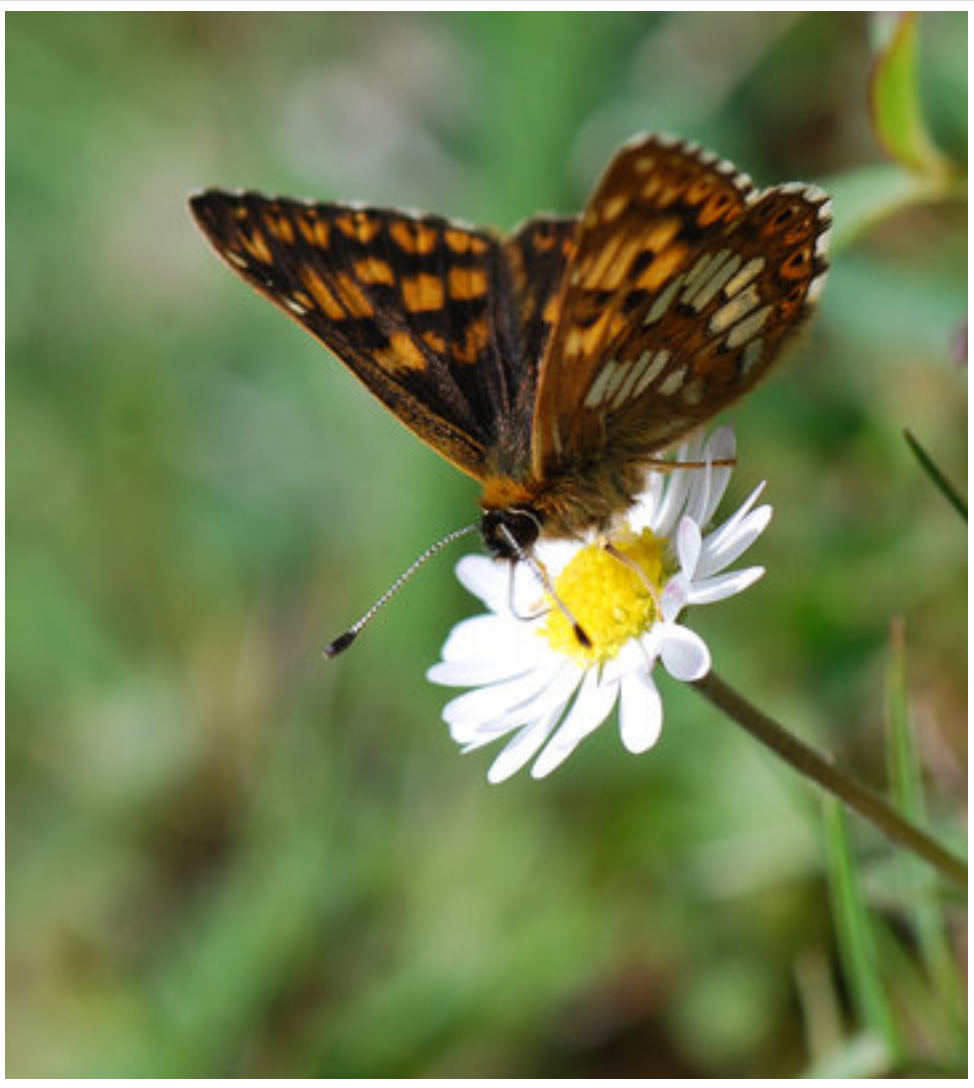
Plain Part 2

This path had less turf and was more rutted than on the other side but the minute I started walking down the Dukes started flying. By the time we'd walked two thirds of the length I'd counted 14 Dukes – and that was including only those on the path itself. We set up camp for the final time and the bribery sweets that I had secretly stashed earlier kept the girls content when they weren't helping their dad out with his "spotting". I took to walking up the path and then back again. This should only have taken me a couple of minutes but in actual fact each stretch (up or down) took about 15 minutes as I was stopping so often to get shots. I must admit that I went a bit Duke crazy, like a fox in a chicken coop I didn't know which Duke to look at first. What struck me was the wide range in colouration – some had hardly any orange markings, others were almost brown and orange chequered and some were almost black and orange as the background colour was so dark.

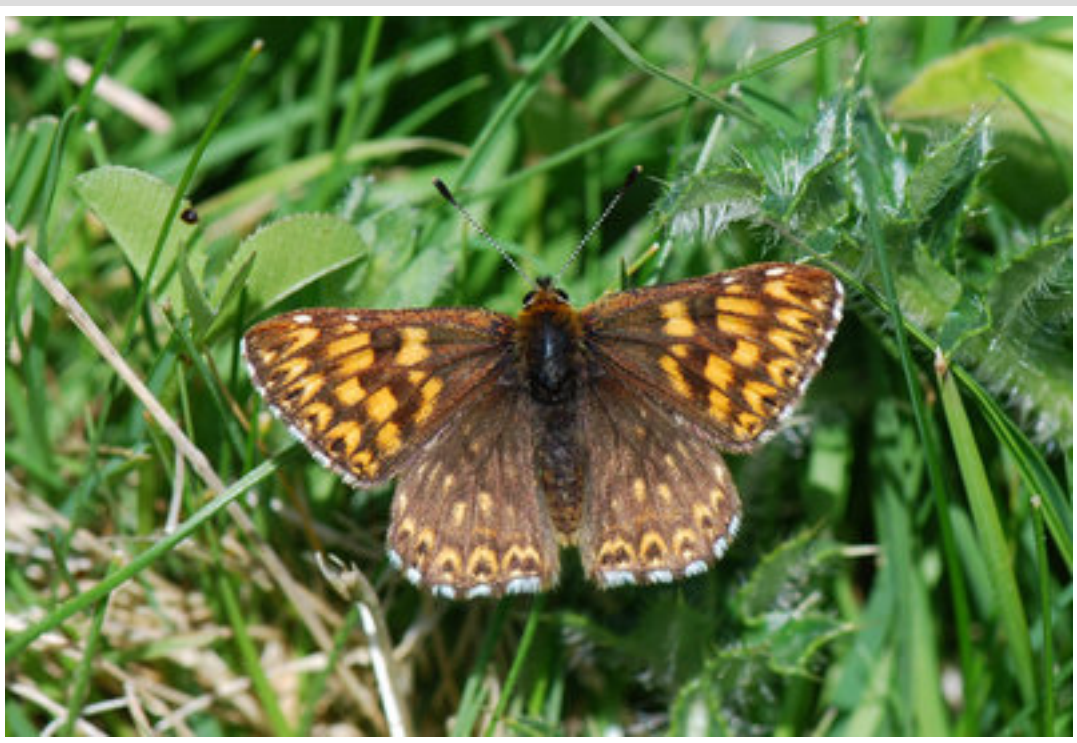
Whilst I was clicking away merrily my girls kinda got carried along in a wave of Duke fever. My older daughter was trying to count them and also trying to point out other species and my little one was spending her time trying to calm them down or admonishing them for scrapping telling them; "it's okay, stop fighting, be nice little Duke".







Really dark



Finally I dragged myself away and we packed the camp away and started for home. On the way I stopped occasionally and found Small Blues, both Dingy and Grizzled Skippers as well as Green Veined White and a possible Wall (lightish orange, bombing along and larger than a Small Heath?). As if to top it all there was another Green Hairstreak low down in the vegetation - showing part of the open wing due to the damage. It was almost like they're falling at my feet now!





So all in all an amazing little find by Rob and I'm extremely grateful to him for sharing it with me. It's on my regular list of "places to go" and so hopefully next year I won't have to my struggle to see Dukes and Greenstreaks!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 08-Jun-13 12:04 AM GMT

Just wonderful – what a site to discover. Those Dukes are stunning.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 08-Jun-13 12:25 PM GMT

Some good images there, Wurzel (particularly the Small Blue which has turned out really sharp).

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jun-13 07:42 PM GMT

Just catching up on your diary Wurzel, more great report and great photos.

Its great to try somewhere else and find a little goldmine, it makes you wonder how many undiscovered colonies of some species are actually out there.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

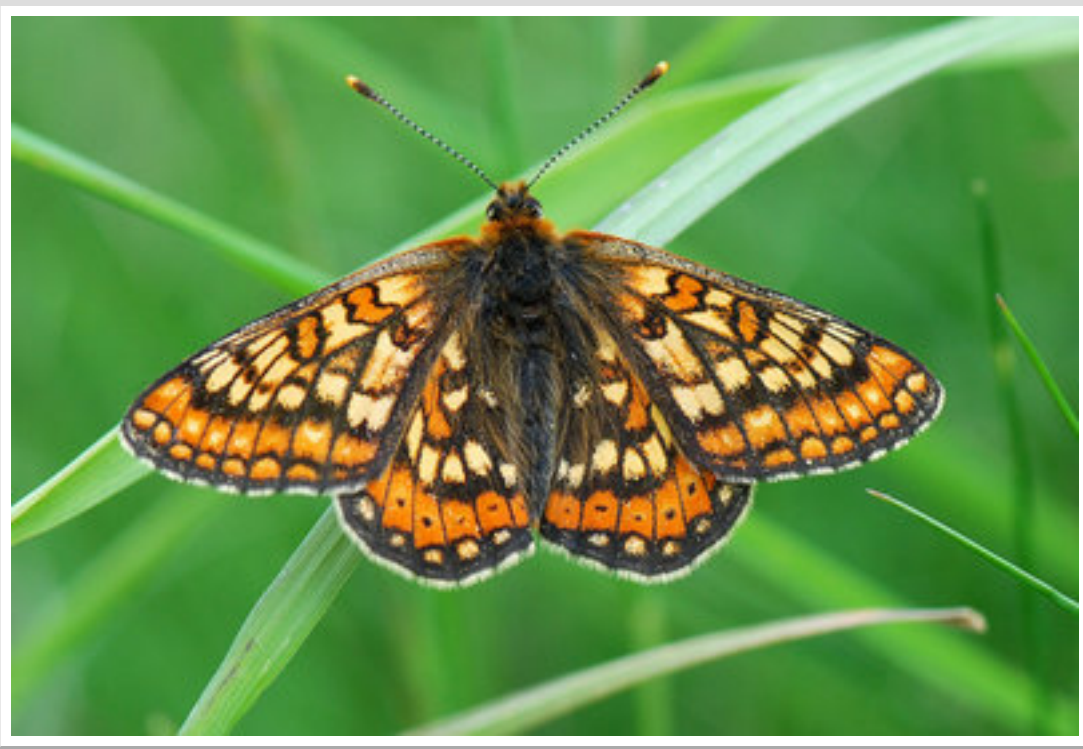
by Wurzel, 08-Jun-13 11:32 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 It's a right belter of a site and the best thing is it's only about 30 minutes away 😊

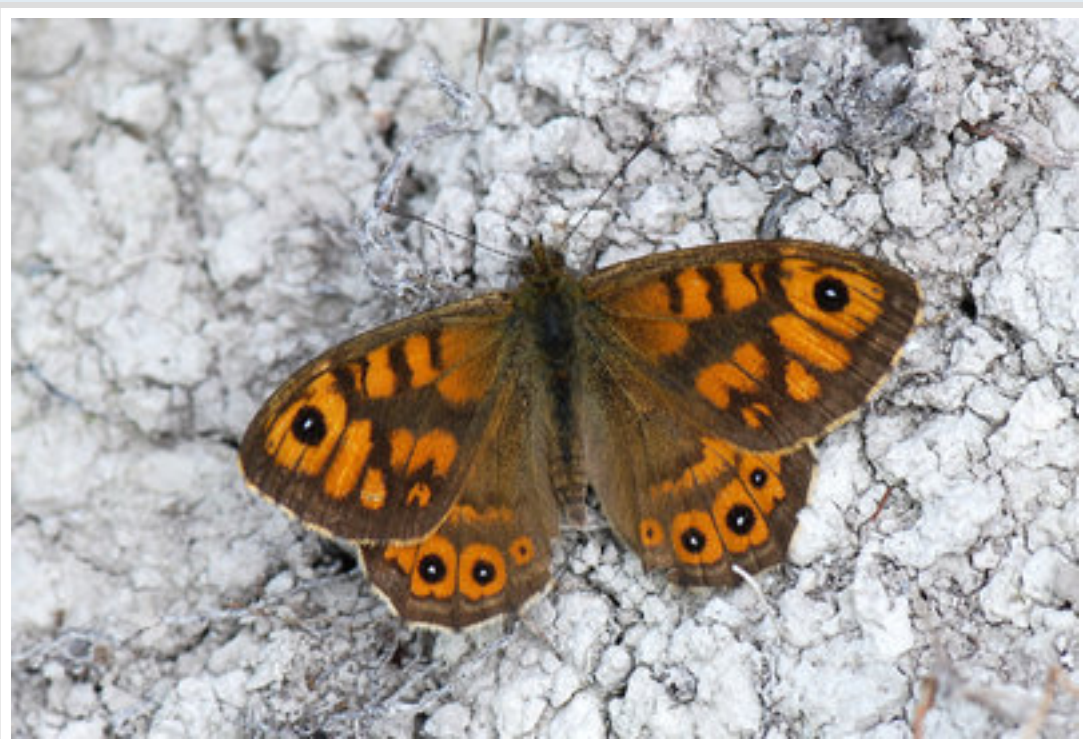
Cheers David – I was chuffed with the Small Blue 😊

Cheers Neil – what was even better was that the day after I tried and found another one! 😊 (see below)

After the cracking day on Saturday I wasn't sure if I would be able to top it on Sunday but I thought that Philzoid and I would give it a try. Having not seen any reports of Marsh Frits from Hod Hill and Millerd hadn't seen any there a few days before we tried somewhere new. I'd gotten the inside track from attending the local branch meeting the week before and with a grid reference and some vague half remembered directions we set out hopefully. Once there we walked uphill along the narrow path bordered by trees on one side and Hawthorn on the other before we it opened out along the side of the down. We stuck to lower path as this was lush with longer grass and almost immediately (Small Blue and Heath aside) we found our intended quarry – a Marsh Fritillary and a fresh one as well. It was soon joined by a slightly more worn individual.



We carried on round noting how the side of the down at one point formed an amphitheatre and the occasional Small Heath and Marsh Frit would take off along with various moths. The side of the down became much steeper and something bombed past us and then landed on the bare chalk on the side of a small cliff. As I was ahead I climbed down first and edged my way along the ridge scanning the cliff side and there it was, a stunning male Wall Brown. So we took shot after shot, it moved a little almost so we could get a closed wing shot, and then it was gone.





We carried on round for a bit but the cloud came over and apart from the odd Small Heath or moth there wasn't much flying. So we started to make the return journey. Back at the Wall Brown ledge a Small Blue showed off for us and then the sun appeared again and with it the butterflies. Everything seemed to happen at once so it is hard to recollect exactly which order things occurred. A male Orange-tip patrolled along the boundary hedge, a Brimstone shot by and then there were Marshies popping up left right and centre. At one point a smaller, darker Marshie (male?) was crawling after a large, paler Marsh frit (female?) but it didn't end well. A wee head butt and then the larger one was off. It seemed that Dingy Skippers also have a real problem with Marsh Frits and one Dingy seemed to be actively seeking out the Marsh Frits and hassling them! I'd be stalking a nectering Marshie or lining up the shot when a Dingy would appear from amongst the grass and buzz the Marshie. Amongst all this action we came across a Green Hairstreak - possibly ovi-positing and then a mating pair of Marsh Frits. They were stunning to see as I hadn't managed to get a proper shot of the under wing before and here was exactly that of both a male and female.





"Come on baby, let's get it on!" "Not a chance!"





What felt like 10 minutes actually turned out to have been an hour and so we reluctantly started to edge our way back to the “amphitheatre”...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 08-Jun-13 11:48 PM GMT

Incredible. I love the first Marsh Fritillary shot and am incredibly envious of the Wall. 🍷 I can never get them to sit like that long enough to look at, let alone have their portrait taken... Brilliant.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 09-Jun-13 07:48 PM GMT

Great stuff Wurzel, your Marsh Frit shots are great, plus the Walls, is there any stopping you now?

All the best

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 09-Jun-13 07:56 PM GMT

Great effort there, Wurzel.

You have definitely worked out where and when to spot your species this year.

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 09-Jun-13 09:46 PM GMT

Great Marsh Frits W. You didn't mention your mating pair 🍷

Re: Wurzel

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

Cheers Dave – as with all Wall it was really a matter of right place right time. 😊

Cheers Maximus 😊 Hopefully not! 😊

Cheers David 😊 I'm getting better informed this year, aren't Ordinance Survey maps brill!

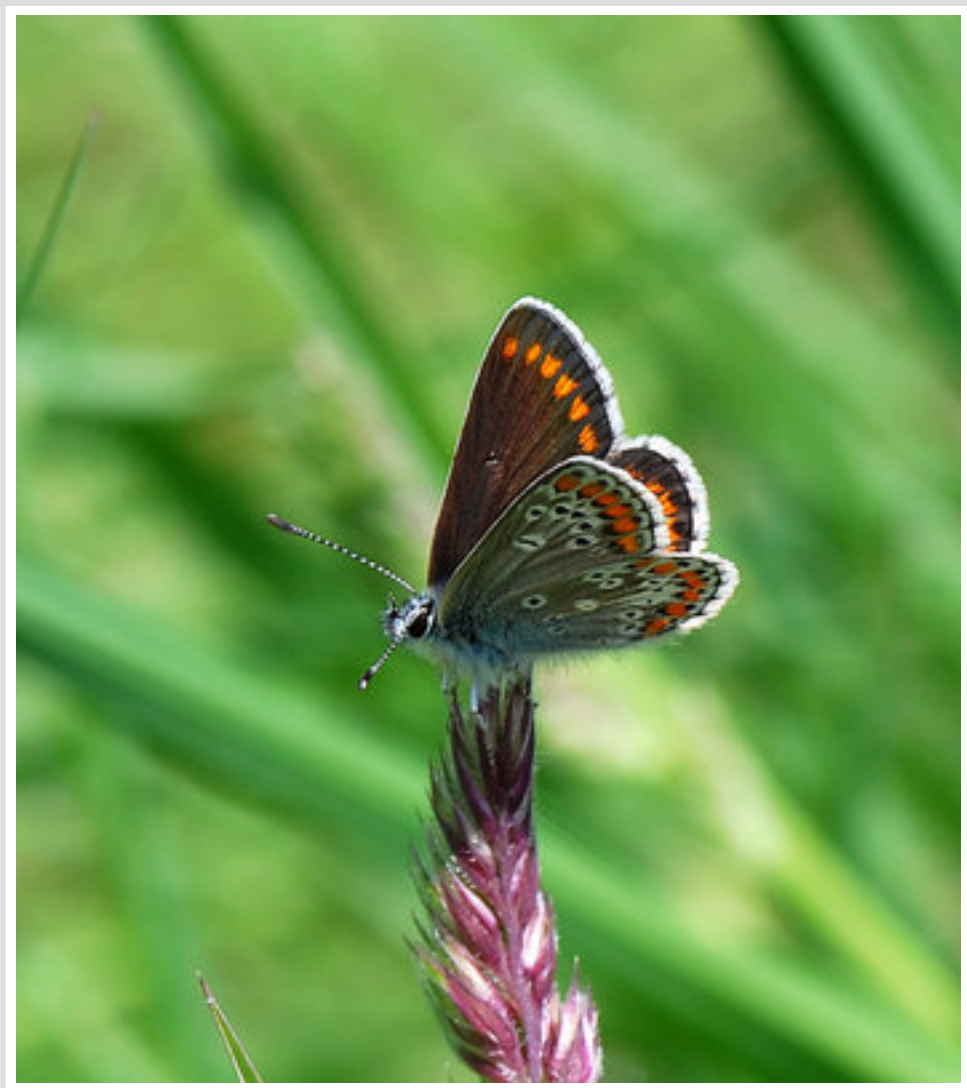
Cheers Pauline 😊 I'd gotten all wrapped up in the Small Pearls so it slipped my mind.

I'm now an entire week behind and probably have 4 or 5 posts to do to catch up but hopefully work won't get in the way and I can get cracking 😊

Part 2

As we reluctantly trudged back to the amphitheatre to head home a few more Marshies and Small Heath kept trying to tempt us to stay and then at the base of the amphitheatre an amazing spectacle started to unfold before us. There was a gradual build up started by my first Brown Argus of the year. Then looking over to my left my first Common Blue of the year distracted me from a Small Blue.

These both rested/nectared for a while allowing me to get some shots and then made their way into the centre of the amphitheatre. I was struggling to work out where to focus my lens as there were Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, Small Blues, Small Heaths, Marsh Frits, Brown Argus and Common Blues surrounding us. I'd find a target, focus, get a few shots and then it would be off. So then I'd look to my left or right, take a step or two and there would be my next target, focus, take a few shots and it would be off. So I'd look left or right, take a few steps, focus etc etc. This went on for how long I don't know as it was just fantastic. After the dimly long winter and the non-existent spring to be surrounded by butterflies of allsorts and to be spoilt for choice was sublime.







Stained glass heaven

And then it just got better as Philzoid and I were witness to a Battle Royale, a stunning aerial display with skirmish after skirmish and dog fights of almost epic savagery. I'm not sure which species kicked it all off, probably a Dingy as they'd been harassing the Marsh Frits all afternoon. A butterfly would fly by and buzz another one, which would then veer off and spook another. This was happening across the whole amphitheatre and the hillside was awash with butterflies of all sizes and colours, some would zip around like Spitfires, others would fly low and fast and then pull up and bank like they were completing a bombing run whilst others would spiral upwards locked in a vicious dogfight. We were able to pick out Common Blue, Small Blue, Brown Argus, Grizzlies and Dingies, Small Heaths and Marsh Frits. At one point a Green Hairstreak flew from the right to the left hugging the hillside as if it was a civilian flight caught in the cross fire. And just as quickly as it quickly as it started it ended and the butterflies dropped to earth and settled or went back to feeding. For a moment or two I just stood there as I couldn't believe what I'd seen. Even now I feel that my words are inadequate to express exactly what we saw. Then after a few more shots we headed back to the car.

When we were back at the top of the path we stopped for a few more Small Blues, a mating pair of Small Heath and also a pair of Marshies, possibly the original two that started the day off so well. One very kindly agreed to crawl onto Philzoid finger so I was able to get one of the best under wing shots I've ever achieved.





A fantastic site and another one added to visit again next year for sure. In the end we had a total of 13 species, 3 yearly firsts for me as well as a first photographed (Marshie), an awesome day and a fitting end to an awesome weekend! I just don't think it could have been any better – it was one of those days the reminiscence of which keeps you going during the “closed” season.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 09-Jun-13 11:28 PM GMT

Amazing again, Wurzel. It's good to know places like that still exist. I was amazed to wander through clouds of Chalkhills last year, but that was all one species – your experience must have been staggering. That Marsh Fritillary is striking – I love their little ginger quiffs!

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 09-Jun-13 11:41 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

just catching up with your diary, excellent reports as usual. Just love your Marsh Fritillary photos, especially the male chasing the female, depicting nature as it should be recorded.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Jun-13 11:22 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 The memory got me through the entire week and it's still just as fresh in my mind now 😎 Things certainly seemed to have accelerated over the last week.

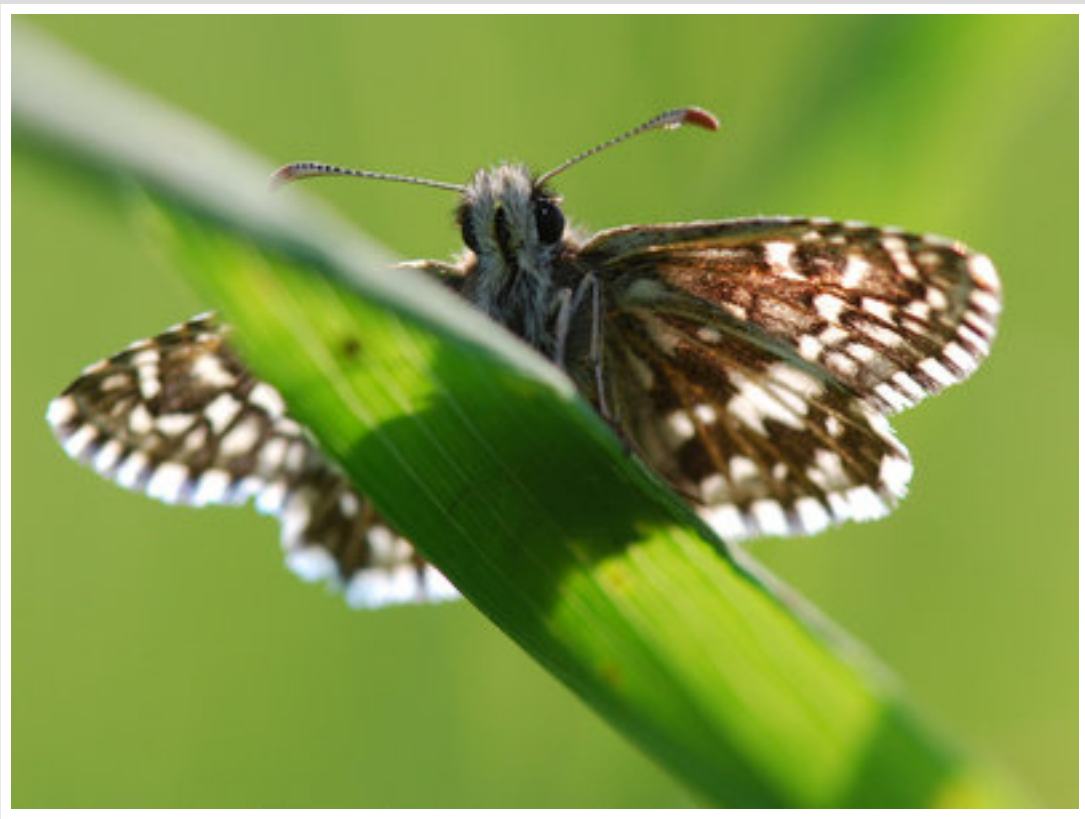
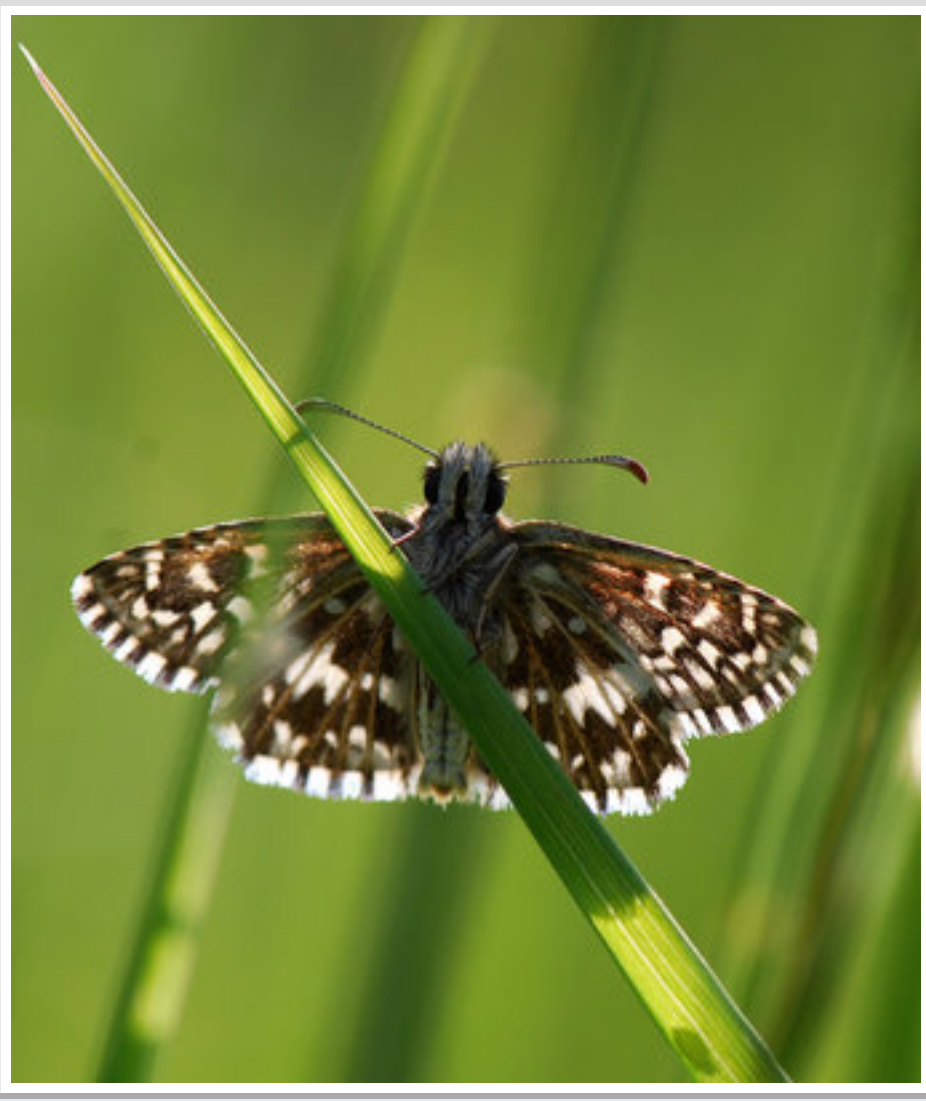
Cheers Nick for you kind comments, much appreciated 😊

Five Rivers

After a stunning weekend last week I tried to make the most of the good weather and so being trapped at work during the day I made an evening trip to Five Rivers on Wednesday. As I pulled up in the car park there was a lovely breeze and any clouds were shifted away quickly.

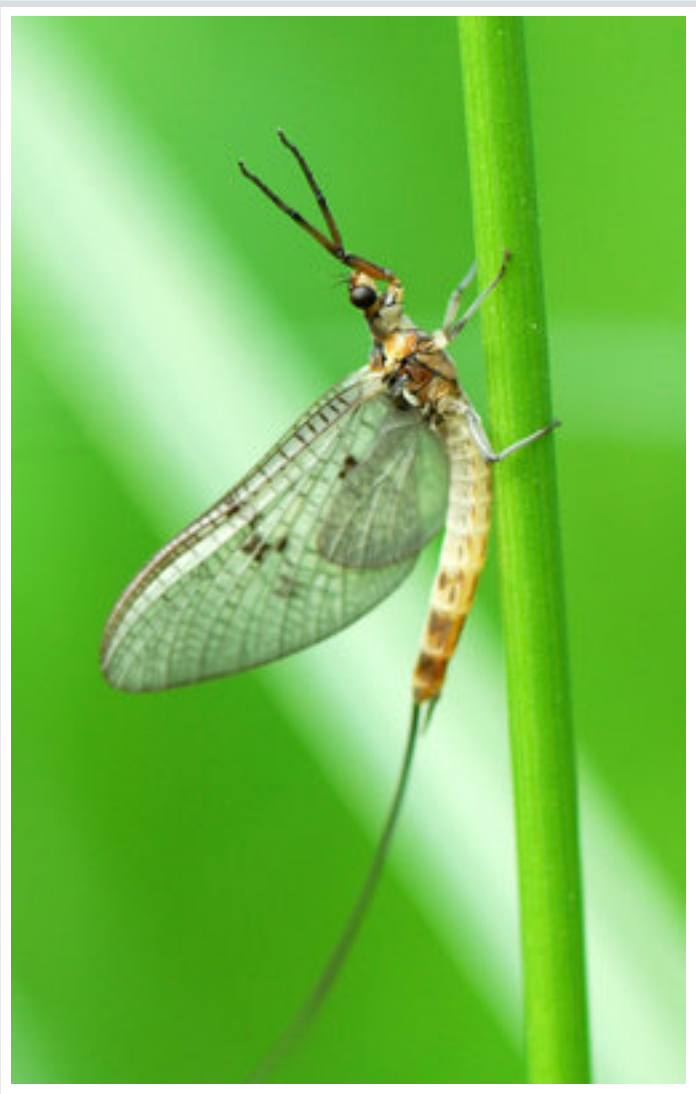
I dawdled for a bit amongst the longer grasses hoping for some Blues or a Small Copper but as I scanned across the grass tops no butterflies were flying. In a few weeks hopefully there will be Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns and Golden Skippers all flitting around, skimming the grass tops and disappearing down amongst the stems. As it was so quiet here I made for the banks.

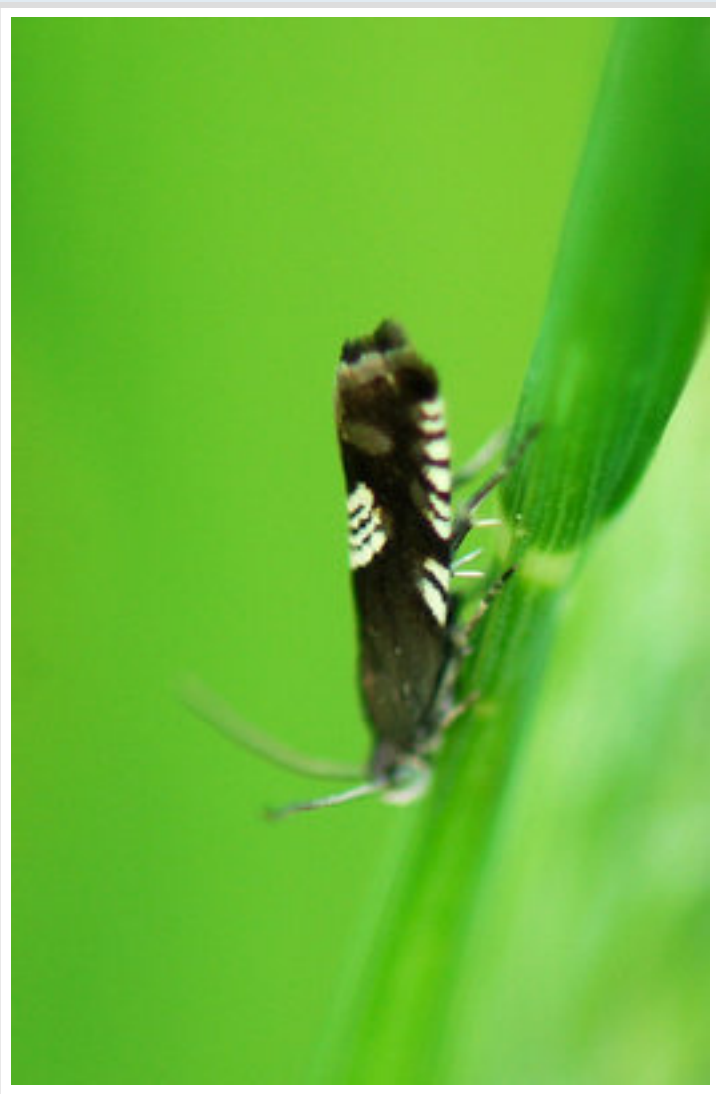
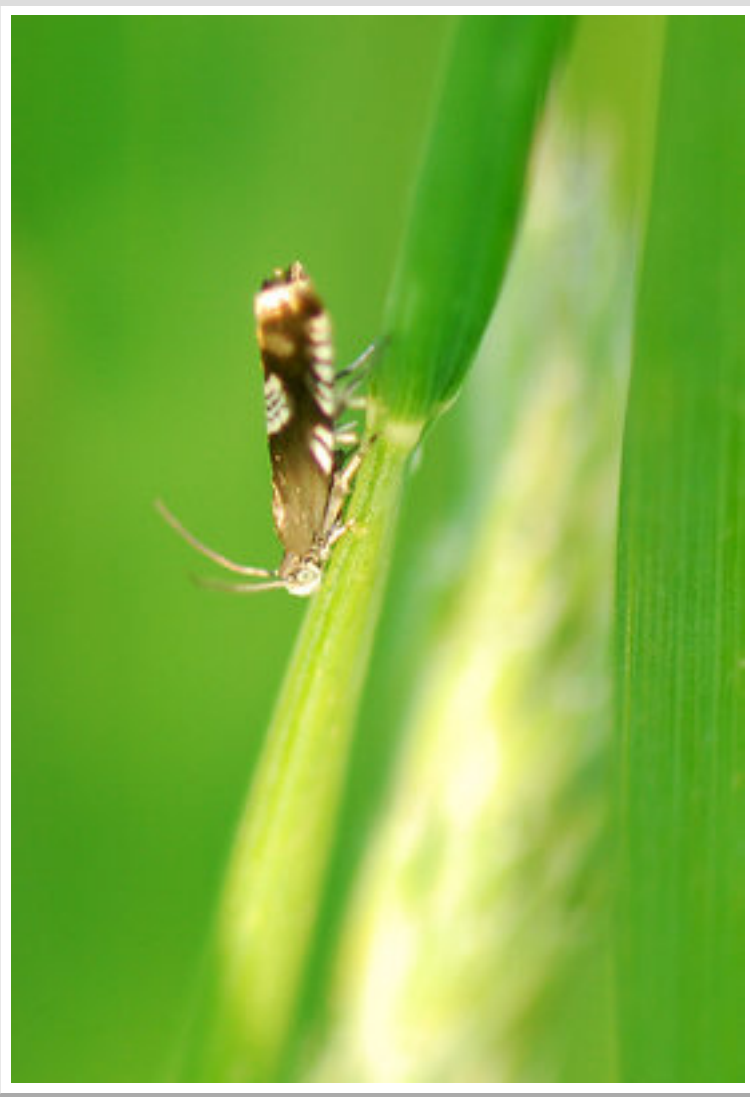
The topside which is more open held lots of Mayflies and some micro-moths but no butterflies so I moved through the hedge onto the lower, more sheltered slopes and almost immediately something small and silvery caught my eyes. At first I thought it was just a moth – possibly a Common Carpet but I tried to follow it anyway. Once it settled it was obvious straight away what it was – a Grizzled Skipper. I'd found some Five Rivers Grizzlies again, and in the same place as last year – can I officially call this a colony now? As I got some shots I noticed a second one but it flew off disappearing in the vegetation so I settled for my very accommodating Grizzlie. I tried for one of my stained glassed shots and not sure how successful it was but it certainly gave me a different view of the Grizzlie.





After this I wandered along the banks and round and back up to the fields of taller grasses but I didn't add another species of butterflies to the list. So in the end I settled for photographing anything I could find - mainly Mayflies and some of the micro - moths. These are so small that they're almost at the edge of my lenses capabilities.





Hopefully the good weather over the weekend just passed will have enabled the blues to start emerging s I'll have to try and get back to the site at some point this week - though with work, a work visit to Bath and the in-laws visiting at the weekend I don't know how I'll squeeze it in? Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 11-Jun-13 01:50 PM GMT

Great underside shot of the Marshi on my finger 😊 (not so sure about the mug shot)

The description you've given of events that we saw in the ampitheatre brilliantly sums it up 😊! I don't think i've ever been somewhere where it was so difficult to know which way to turn and what to try and focus on 😊. Of all the species my view was that the Dingies were the most pugnacious 😲 (and the Small Heaths the least).

As this site was so good I just had to pay another vist after Bentley last Sunday and as expected it proved to be time well spent. All species seen the previous week were present, plus Adonis Blue and Large Skipper and I got my very own mating Marsh Fritillaries 😊

Good luck with finding some time to get out next weekend 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-13 03:18 PM GMT

Cracking Photo's Wurze, 🍷 I couldn't get out unfortunately 😞 I Still it's early day's yet Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-13 10:21 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 You're back in the lead again now with that Large Skipper 😊😞 My plans for another post and to catch up on my PM's have had to be put on hold as we got the call today that all schools dread – OfSTED are in tomorrow 😞 So better get back to the lesson planning 😞

Cheers Goldie 😊 I'm sure you'll be out there soon enough, and in time for some goodies 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 12-Jun-13 08:29 AM GMT

Am at work now so got to be quick: That well patterned micro is *Grapholita compositella* 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-13 12:06 AM GMT

Cheers for the ID Philzoid 😊

To work and whilst there...

During the good weather last week I was regularly stopping off for five minutes on the way to work. I'd pull into the lay-by near Larkhill, grab my camera from the passenger seat, start the stopwatch going and start off scanning the grasses for butterflies. At four and a half minutes on my watch I'd take my last couple of shots and head back to the car. I'd then finish the journey to work in discomfort as the dew would have soaked me from the knees down so I'd have the blower on full pelt and burning in the hope that my trousers and shoes would dry out by the time I pulled into the car park at work.

Last year I discovered this site quite late in the season but it yielded Common Blues, Marbled Whites and Ringlets. Then in the early autumn there were Whites and Red Admirals so this year I was hoping to add to the species tally...

A few stops saw me adding Wall Brown and Grizzled Skipper to the list. The Wall was there and then gone in the blink of an eye and the Grizzlie I located at 4 minutes 15 seconds so I didn't have enough time to follow it and try for some shots 😞 but next time I'll have a closer look. I also Small Blue to my "stop off list", and luckily it played ball, coming out from hiding in the long grasses to pose very elegantly for me. 😊





Whilst at work I've also been lucky enough to make a few visits to the wildlife area and whilst butterflies are in short supply it has produced some new moths. Some are so micro that they are right on the edge of the capability of my lens and it's tricky to get the focusing right. Still at least I have a record of the species.





The weather for the weekend doesn't look very conducive for butterflying and I've got my in-laws visiting so I don't know if I'll be able to get out anywhere. But what with OfSTED visiting this week I'm still behind on my postings as I've got last Saturday and Sunday still to sort out so the bad weather means I might actually catch up!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 14-Jun-13 01:33 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

The weather for the weekend doesn't look very conducive for butterflying and I've got my in-laws visiting so I don't know if I'll be able to get out anywhere. But what with OfSTED visiting this week I'm still behind on my postings as I've got last Saturday and Sunday still to sort out so the bad weather means I might actually catch up!

Make sure you 'bank' Father's day for when the weather is better wurzel 😊

Your moths are *Celypha lacunana* (you've had him before i think) a leaf miner *Phyllonoryncter* (harrisella perhaps 😊) and *Micropterix aruncella* 😊
There, that's my lunch break gone 😞 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Jun-13 10:52 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 Sorry for depriving you off your lunch break 😊 I'll definitely "bank" Father's Day 😊

Martin Down

Last weekend I headed over to Martin Down with my older daughter hopefully to see Blues – ideally Adonis at that. We had a cracking afternoon walking the downs, photographing butterflies and just enjoying the wind and the sun. However it's taken until now to sort my photos and write my report because of another trip 😊 and also OfSTED 😡.

We set off from the Sillens Lane end but instead of the normal route along the boundary path to where it transects Borkerley we took the path up the hill. We were heading to the small area of springy turf we discovered the year before as this seemed to be a magnet for butterflies. We were accompanied by Dingies, Brimstones and ubiquitous Small Heath that flitted along the edges of the path.

Almost as soon as the area came into sight we noticed butterflies. First was a Common Blue that was being harassed by a voracious Dingy. Small Heath would erupt from the almost non-existent turf as we headed to the oasis of the Bramble and Hawthorn Island. As we set up first camp a Brown Argus whizzed by and there was one of our quarry, a slightly ragged but still stunningly coloured Small Copper. The set was completed with a Yellow Shell, Grizzlie, ragged Greenstreak (looking lost) and Dingy with peachy orange markings along the hind wing margins which I had never seen before.



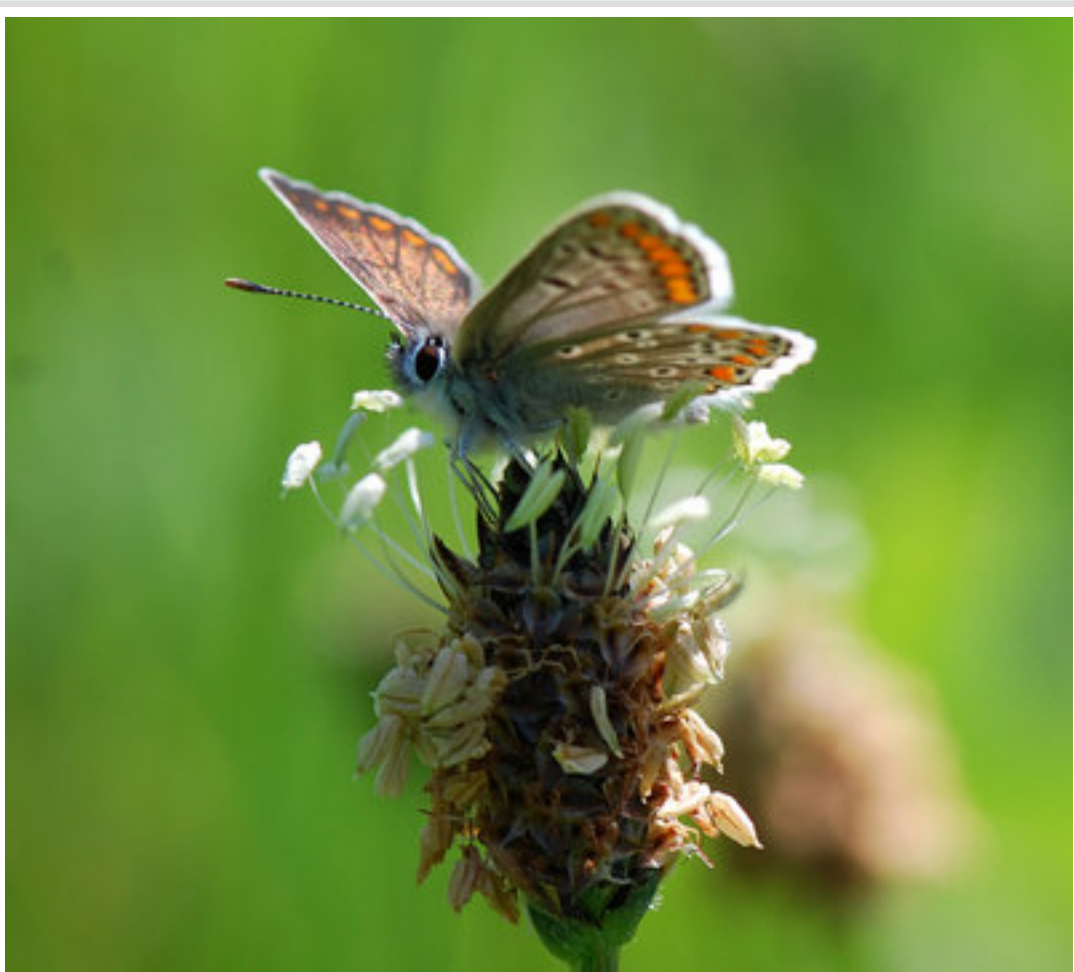


Having enjoyed the springy turf area we set off again to the top of the down so we could then wind our way down along the ditch. As we walked there were Grizzlies, Small Heath and Dingies everywhere it seemed. We made a very brief stop for another, fresher and brighter looking Small Copper. Unfortunately it was quite nervous so I couldn't get too much closer as at the time I thought it was more orange than normal, and I noticed that the spots on the forewing seemed much smaller than usual - an aberrant?





Finally we reached the top of the ditch and my daughter set up camp two on top of the earthen mound so while I wandered along the base of the she became engrossed in a Famous Five book. This little area was great as I found more Common Blue, including a mating pair and a fighting pair of males, more Brimstones, Green Hairstreak (I can't seem to get away from them 😊), Small Blues and a charismatic little Brown Argus. Also here was an Adonis Blue although the white wing margins don't seem that chequered and the ground colour looks too pale?





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 15-Jun-13 11:26 PM GMT

Definitely Adonis with the chequered pattern on the fringes. Some of them are near enough the same colour as Common Blues, especially at certain angles to the light. That's a lovely Dingy - there seem to be wide variations with this species too.

I envy you your proximity to places like Martin Down, Wurzel! 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 15-Jun-13 11:59 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel
Your 2nd Small Copper certainly looks quite unusual. Martin Down looks like butterfly heaven at the moment 😊 I almost headed there myself yesterday but decided at the last minute for somewhere closer to home as the weather was not that great early on. In the meantime I will just have to make do reading your wonderful reports 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-13 11:47 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 - you know how it is sometimes when you see a species for the first time after 8 or so months and you're a bit rusty with it 😊 It is great having Martin Down just down the road but then you have Wood Whites, and you're closer to Heath Frits than I am 🍷

Cheers for your kind comments Jack 😊 It seemed that Martin Down was back to it's usual best, last year it was a bit lack lustre 😞

Part 2

Eventually I managed to rouse my daughter from her book and we set off down the hill to the "hotspot". On my last visit I noticed that it had been burnt out but the area just as the ditch starts uphill on the other side of the path is equally as good. And so it turned out today in fact we saw almost everything we'd seen around the rest of the reserve, all jam packed into this tiny little area! 😊

After finding Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and Small Heath almost under pretty much every step I found another Green Hairstreak. This is the same area in which I saw my first ever Green Hairstreaks three seasons past. The next year I struggled to relocate them and in the end managed a singleton and likewise last year. So to find them at four or five sites across the reserve this year suggests to me that 2013 has been a goodun for Greenstreaks! 😊 There were also Blues around with a difficult to chase Brown Argus, Small Blues and Common Blues. One Small was taking minerals from a large piece of dung whilst the Common Blues were engaging in that all important business of ensuring that there might be some Common Blues here next year, the sole purpose for their existence.





Whilst I was letting my daughter loose with my camera she said “Dad I got a Blue” and she had, a much better view of the Adonis and one looking much more like the second brood – more electric blue and less pastel. It seems that all of a sudden the temperature had reached the optimum as all along the ditch Blues were flying, fighting, generally larking about and mating.





One female was tiredly crawling through the grass stems as if she were hacking her way through a jungle, dragging her mate along behind her when another male literally dropped out of the sky next to her, totally oblivious to me. He must have thought that he was a better prospect than the incumbent male and made a lot of flapping fuss but the other male stayed locked to the female. In the end she decided by turning round and crawling off further into the grass, dragging her male behind her. I followed them for a bit and they maintained copulation for another 5 or 6 minutes by which time my daughter had borrowed the camera and was busy taking landscape shots.





The way back held more Dingies and Grizzlies as well as very flighty Brimstones and all too soon we'd reached the car and so the glorious afternoon was at an end. As I drove over the bumps and potholes of Sillens Lane I thought "Better try for Small Pearls tomorrow while the weather lasts"...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Jun-13 11:34 PM GMT

Bentley Wood

After a successful afternoon on the Saturday I pushed my luck even further and arranged to meet Philzoid and his girls with my girls at Bentley Wood for Small Pearls last Sunday. We arrived there early and headed straight to the Eastern Clearing and set up camp by the bench under the small Oak. While the girls applied and read books I had a mooch around the main clearing and ended up in the more reedy, damper area just over the stream to the North of the main clearing. There I met another butterflyer and we were shortly joined by Pauline and also my girls and then we waited for the temperature to rise sufficiently for butterflies to take to the wing.

Eventually it seemed that there was sufficient warmth and a few faded and worn Pearls started flitting over the reed heads. Then they were joined by much fresher and more ginger Small Pearls. They were actually quite frustrating to begin with as they played hard to get. The Sun would come out and then about 3 minutes later so would the butterflies. But as soon as the sun went in, so would they. So we spent the next half hour in intermittent sun chatting, and then hunting. Finally one of the Small Pearls settled for long enough to allow an approach and then it closed its wings for us. As I was lining up the shot I thought that it seemed paler than the Small Pearls I'd seen in previous years.



Quite heavily marked?



Leaving this Small Pearl alone I had a further mooch and found a few more to get some shots of, including a very poor attempt at a Padfield but also a cracking addition to my "Stained Glass collection". There were also a few more Pearls still hanging on in there. What a difference a week or two makes as most looked positively knackered.

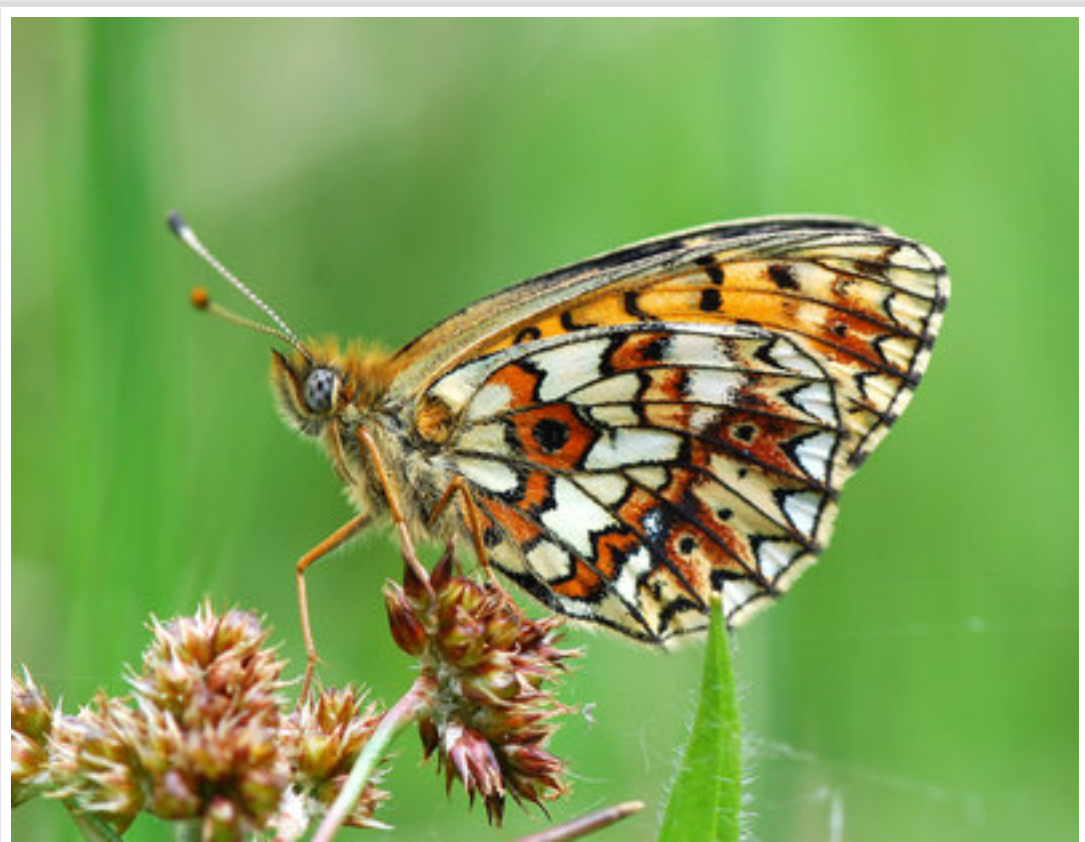
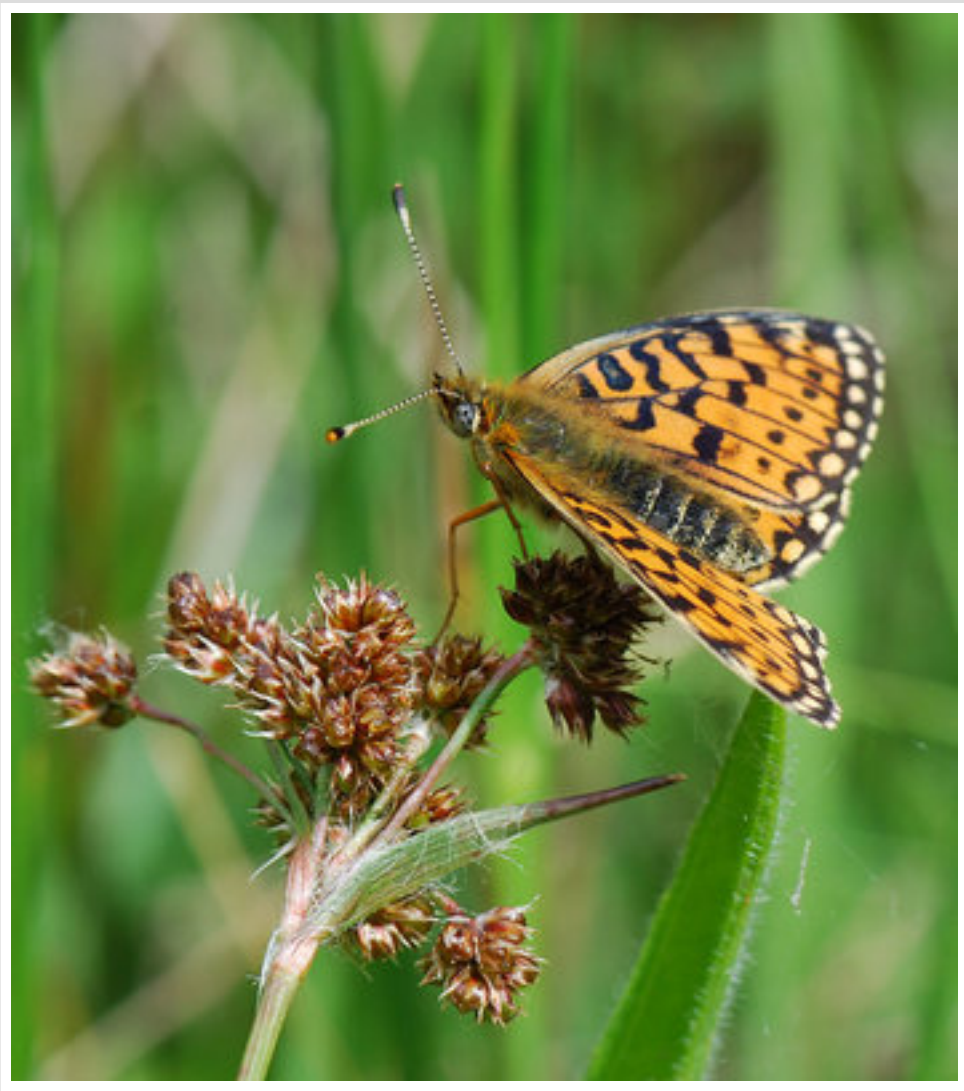


A failed Padfield



Dave had moved over to the main part of the clearing but I'd stayed in the "reeds" so that my girls could get some of their own shots but we made a move when Dave kindly put us onto a female Small Pearl that had been roosting for a good 10 minutes. In exchange we pointed out the Grizzlie that the girls had been enjoying watching - so a fair exchange?

Apart from the larger and rounder abdomen I've noticed that Small Pearl females seem to have much paler marking around the wing margins, with almost white spots created by the chevrons. This individual was stunningly marked and so myself and the girls spent a good 15 minutes just looking at it and taking shot after shot. While I was revelling in the butterfly I thought about the comparison between it and the Pearl Bordered and I came to the conclusion that it's a good job that Pearls emerge earlier than their "Small" cousins else they might not get a look in compared to the wonderful under wing markings of the Small Pearl. Last year I'd arrived later in the morning and it was a lot warmer so under wing shots were at a premium then hence now I lapped it up for all it was worth.





Leaving the Small Pearl in the capable hands of Pauline the girls moved back to their original camp under the trees where my older daughter read her Famous Five book and my younger daughter managed to get my iPod, load up Angry Birds Star Wars and complete a particularly difficult level that I was struggling with! I meanwhile was in "mooch" mood again and added another species to the tally for the day. A Bentley Duke of Burgundy.



Philzoid arrived but we only had a short time to catch up and a brief wander around and make plans for the next major meet up. We also bumped into CJB, I knew it was him almost as soon as I saw the iPhone and a bare space around his neck where a camera should be 😊😄. He'd come to see the Pearls and there right before him was a Pearl and a Small Pearl. Eventually we had to go as my younger daughter had a Birthday party to attend, mind you she moaned like a goodun all the way home as she wanted to stay at Bentley. As we drove home we chatted about which butterflies we'd seen and then I realized that we'd only seen 6 species all morning: Small Pearl, Pearl, Grizzlie, Duke, Brimstone and a Green-veined White. But who needs quantity when you have quality like this!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 17-Jun-13 11:57 PM GMT

It seems you had a great time Wurzel, as usual. Lovely photos of the SPB, especially the one for your glass stained collection, what a beauty. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by CJB, 18-Jun-13 12:12 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

It was great to meet you and as ever you have produced some great shots!

The iPhone is still doing me proud at the moment (😌) and I am in Dorset this weekend, so with a bit of luck will get out to the Giant at Cerne to snap an Adonis! Still ticking off the species one by one, or two by two as was the case with Bentley; what a great place. I am up to 41 species so far, but it is starting to get more difficult!

It is my trip to the Trossachs in Scotland which I am most excited about as I am hoping to come away with a Scotch and Northern Brown Argus as well as a Large Heath, so wish me luck! I don't think the Mountain Ringlets are nearby so I won't get to emulate SussexKipper's amazing shots. 🇬🇧

It is the hairstreaks that are eluding me, apart from a lucky Green a few years ago, I have failed to get onto them, so hopefully this year will be different.

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 18-Jun-13 09:17 PM GMT

A lovely set of photos from Bentley Wurzel, especially the 'stained glass' effect. Surely that heavily marked one has to be an aberration – I am surprised no-one has commented. Wish I'd seen it.

Re: Wurzel

by Padfield, 18-Jun-13 09:25 PM GMT

Yes, beautiful pictures (the 'failed Padfield' made me laugh! – not at the picture, but the whole idea 😊). I especially enjoy seeing pictures of small pearl-bordered as this is quite uncommon in much of Switzerland and I hardly ever see the species for real.

I agree with Pauline that that is a very striking melanic pearl-bordered. I've noted before that the small fritillaries in general are very prone to melanism but the variety of forms and patterns that get thrown up makes them all fascinating to find.

Guy

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Jun-13 11:36 PM GMT

Cheers Nick I was dead chuffed with the day 😊

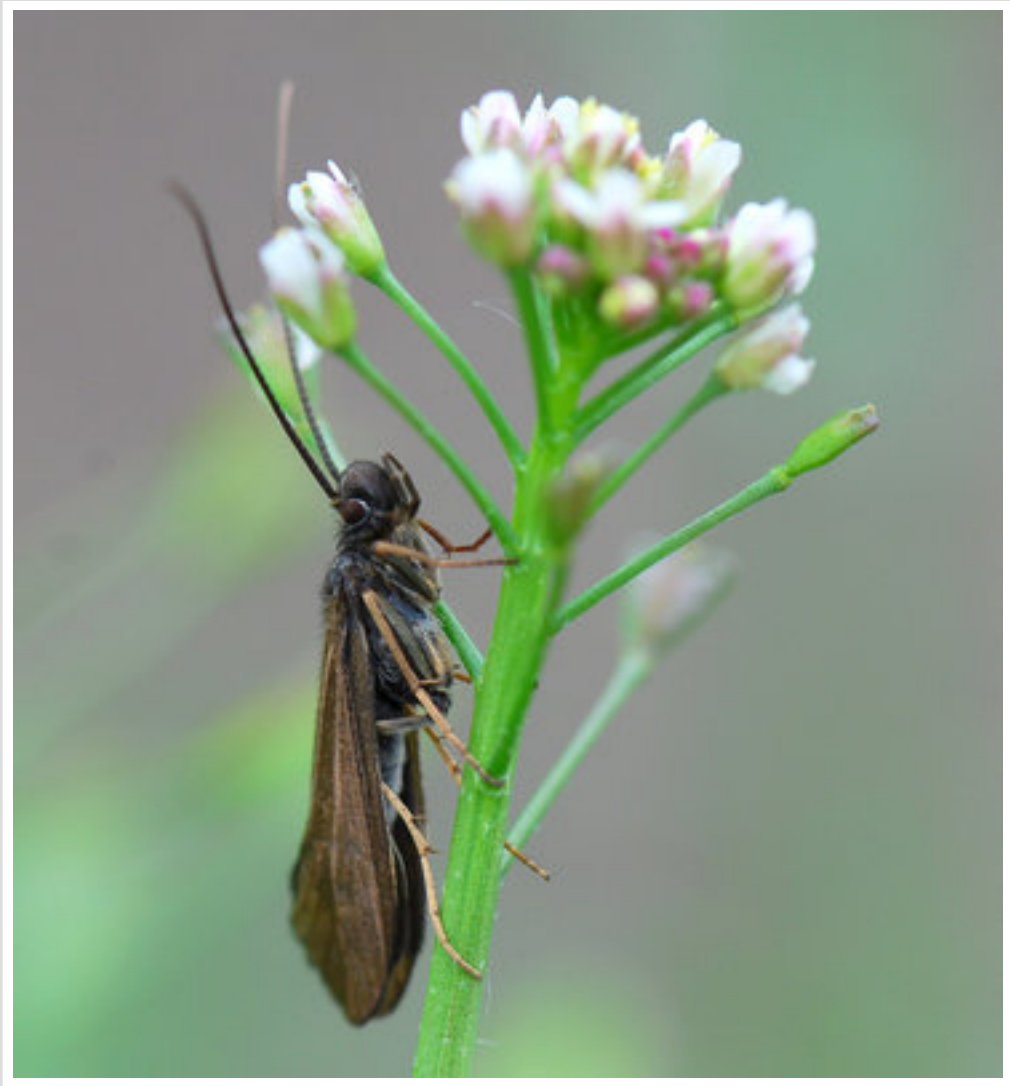
Cheers Pauline 😊 I didn't notice the dark PBF at the time it was only later checking through tat it seemed to stand out.

Cheers Guy 😊 I'm enjoying your diary and I keep hoping to see a Badger in there 😊

Middle Street

Over the weekend the weather wasn't up to much so getting out was going to prove difficult. Also my in-laws were visiting and my younger daughter was sick so I looked after her all day Saturday in order that my wife could spend time with her folks. On Sunday she wasn't any better and so I faced another day in the house encouraging her to sip water and fetching the bowl. My wife suggested that I went out for some fresh hour to give me a break so I leapt at the chance, grabbed my camera and headed off to Middle Street.

It wasn't looking great as there was no sun and it was pretty cool but I strolled along the town path hopefully enjoying Sedge Warblers and Caddis flies en route as well as finding a cracking looking larvae.



Once at the site I couldn't believe the transformation from the last time I'd visited. The grasses were now at waist height and some of the taller ones reached up to my chest. There were wild flowers everywhere and it looked like a butterfly haven, if only it was sunnier/warmer. Still I worked my way round the pond and then down along the river and over the course of the next 45 minutes I checked out likely looking parts of the site ready for when the Golden Skippers and Marbled Whites arrive. I also managed to get some shots of Common Carpet and a new Bee and Wasp.



However the real star appeared just as I was leaving. I was starting to make my way back when an unusual looking leaf caught my eye low down in the vegetation at the very edge of the path. As I got closer I realised it was a Moth – an Angle Shades. It was in a pretty obvious position and I didn't want one of the local dogs to disturb it so I encouraged it to crawl onto my hand so I could move it further into the bushes. It was too good an opportunity to miss so I also got a few shots and then placed it out of the way.



No butterflies; "I'll have to try and get back here when there's a bit more sun going because it should yield some butterflies - if I haven't missed them already that is" I thought to myself as I set off back home to resume nursing.
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 20-Jun-13 01:16 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, you have posted so many fantastic photos over the last week, I don't know where to start. But love the SPFB's and the Angle Shades is amazing!

Re: Wurzel

"Maximus" wrote:

Hi Wurzel, you have posted so many fantastic photos over the last week, I don't know where to start. But love the SPFB's and the Angle Shades is amazing!

Yes Great pictures wurzel 😊 .. the angle shades is an impressive looking moth and a species I haven't had yet this year but a few of my moth-er associates have. Round my way it usually starts turning up in September onwards. 😊
That larva shot is impressive too but i've no idea what it is (macro or micro moth 😊)

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-13 11:46 PM GMT

Cheers Maximus for your very kind comments, they made my day 😊

Cheers Philzoid too 😊 - but you'll be cursing me in a mo as we're back on level pegging 😊😊

A few more stop-offs

At the start of the week I had to shake off the cooped up feeling so I broke my own rule and stopped off at Larkhill...on the way home 😊. Almost as soon as I'd gotten out of the car I found a male Common Blue which delighted in showing off, delicately pirouetting around the flower head.



After spending a whole minute with the little chappy I tore myself away and set off down one of the paths. Small Heath erupted from beneath my feet and the occasional moth would try to vie for my attention. However it was a golden blur that I was looking for and sure enough that was exactly what I saw, two of them in fact - my first Large Skippers of the year. I got a few shots before it set off again in a blur. I was happy with the higher resolution shots but lost quite a bit of detail in the resizing to fit the limit. Still hopefully I'll get to see and photograph plenty more of the next month or so.



I then fell into bad ways and stopped for another 5 minutes on the way home on Tuesday. However I didn't stop for too long and the lay-by was filled with vans, travellers visiting for the Solstice and Police. It was quite surreal making my way through the melee and down the path, from hustle and bustle to the relative peace of the natural world. I say relative as there was a Happy Hardcore providing the soundtrack to my photography. However that aside it was a cracking 4 minutes. There was a female Brimstone, Large White and 6 or 7 Small Heaths. A male Common Blue flew towards me up the path and a couple of Large Skippers zig-zagged in and out of the grasses. I noticed a little greyish butterfly/moth which turned out to be a Grizzlie - my first photographs from this site, an in surprisingly good nick for this time in the season.



After a minute or two I worked my way back seeking the same number and range of species as on my walk down the path. I stopped momentarily to get a shot of a Small Heath against a cracking flower.





A little bit closer...

My time was almost up so I headed back to the car, the Happy Hardcore getting louder all the while, when I was accosted by a bald, heavily tattooed and studded Traveller. After the initial "what you taking photographs of?" he was really interested and it seems he'd seen a few Small Blue and Common Blues over the day as well as Large Skippers (at least that was the identification we made from his description). I made my apologies and explained that my wife wouldn't be best pleased to find out that I was having a chinwag when I should really be at home and so chuckling he headed back to his van. The copper on the other hand was a completely different kettle of fish. He watched me get in the car with my camera and then as I went to pull away he stopped me and made me wind the window down before giving me the third degree in a short and surly and quite rude fashion. Oh well I suppose he wasn't there out of choice or for a party unlike the Solstice attendees.

So not a bad 10 minutes over the two afternoons - a first for the season and a first photograph for the site. Better not get into this as a habit though...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by dilettante, 21-Jun-13 04:37 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

and a couple of Large Heath zig-zagged in and out of the grasses.

Really? 😊

Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 21-Jun-13 07:04 PM GMT

try *Depressaria daucella* for your caterpillar 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-13 07:44 PM GMT

Just wishful thinking Dilettante 😊 All edited now 😊

Cheers for the ID Chris 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jun-13 09:46 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Just catching up on your diary after my week in Devon, great reports and photos 😊

Cheers,

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 21-Jun-13 11:15 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

I then fell into bad ways and stopped for another 5 minutes on the way home on Tuesday. However I didn't stop for too long and the lay-by was filled with vans, travellers visiting for the Solstice and Police. It was quite surreal making my way through the melee and down the path, from hustle and bustle to the relative peace of the natural world.

My time was almost up so I headed back to the car, the Happy Hardcore getting louder all the while, when I was accosted by a bald, heavily tattooed and studded Traveller. After the initial "what you taking photographs of?" he was really interested and it seems he'd seen a few Small Blue and Common Blues over the day as well as Large Skippers (at least that was the identification we made from his description). I made my apologies and explained that my wife wouldn't be best pleased to find out that I was having a chinwag when I should really be at home and so chuckling he headed back to his van.

The copper on the other hand was a completely different kettle of fish. He watched me get in the car with my camera and then as I went to pull away he stopped me and made me wind the window down before giving me the third degree in a short and surly and quite rude fashion

Hi Wurzel

I have to say you are a braver man than me Wurzel 😊 If my chosen stopping place was full of the like, I would have found somewhere else to stop 😊

Your encounter with the police reminds me of something that happened to me when I was about 14. I was looking for moths, at night, with a net close to where my father had an industrial unit. He was working late and I had come along for some 'mothing'. As a young teenager I had yet to acquire a full quota of common sense and chose the central reservation of the adjacent dual carriageway to carry out my chosen pastime 😊 This was a short length of dual carriageway that served as an approach to junction 9 of the M27. Needless to say, within a very short time, a motorway patrol car pulled up and the officers enquired what I was up to. I explained what I was doing, but the response I got from the 2 police officers was one of ridicule and I was told to move on. When I recounted this story to my father he was outraged and made an official complaint to the police. As a result I had to go to the local Police station, give a statement and 'enjoy' a guided tour of the station. I have to say that I was acutely embarrassed by the situation and even worse, I can not recall seeing any moths at all 😱

Superb diary and photos by the way 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Jun-13 11:12 PM GMT

Cheers Jack 😊 Your story was great and made me chuckle away for an age – my wife didn't know what I was laughing about and thought that it was finally time to call the loony bin 😊

Cheers Neil for your kind comments 😊

Back to Middle Street

On Tuesday night I took an evening stroll over the Town Path to Middle Street. It was still war, the sun still shone and I was hopeful of seeing one butterfly at least. I started over at the pond as I'm convinced this should be the hotspot of the whole reserve due to the range of flowering plant found here. All it could manage were some Damselflies and lots of Cluster flies however.





From this area I moved on round to the football pitch, or more accurately the half pitch behind the true pitch which hasn't been mowed to an inch of its' life. There were plenty of bees here, busily collecting from the numerous Clover flowers and I saw 6 different species of larger bees. What really caught my eye was a male Common Blue. What surprised me was the state of wear that it was in. I think that what with the late start to the season and some horrible weather I've kind of missed the boat with the Common Blues - they've been and gone before I've realized that they've been! Still this chap played ball and after finding a more picturesque perching post he settled down and threw some shapes for me. The other good thing is that I've found some Common Blues and after their terrible season last year that has to be a good thing!





Having taken a fair few shots of the Common Blue I stood up straight to have a break and stretch my back and I saw a White fluttering about. So I did a slow approach and it seemed to be taking shelter under a leaf for the night. So I only took a few shots before slinking off to leave it in peace.





That was it for butterflies, which was twice as many sightings as I'd hoped for so I settled for some more Damselflies and moths to finish up my evening visit. These will give me another excuse for checking out my Apps 😊







And so ended my return to Middle Street... I was hoping that the weather would hold but the long range forecast suggested that we were entering into the frustrating pattern of great weather during mid week, rain, wind and cooler temperatures at the weekend. Still that is one advantage of the long range forecast - and that is you can try and make the most of the good weather while it lasts...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-13 11:33 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Your caterpillar looks like one of the burnet moths, not sure which one though.

Great Damselfly photos, the ones with the blue tail are unsurprisingly Blue-tailed Damselflies 😊 . I read up on these last year after seeing loads locally and discovered that the female has five colour forms, the one with the pink thorax is *rufescens*.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 22-Jun-13 11:53 PM GMT

Lovely photos of the Damselflies Wurzel, Neils right, your moth larva is a Burnet, a Six-spot Burnet.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-13 10:39 PM GMT

Cheers for the ID Neil 😊 My APP only has details of three colour forms so I'll have to do some internet research into the other two.
Cheers for the ID too Nick 😊 – does this mean that Burnet moths have two broods?

Lunch time

Last Wednesday I was growing increasingly frustrated by the ever gloomy weather predictions for the weekend and so to make the most of the warm and sunny weather while it lasted I took a break during the day, signed out and took my lunch out. I decided to check out the edges of the local nature reserve and started off by the play park. Unfortunately as I walked through the gate the mower was packing up having eaten all the tall grasses and butterfly habitat so I crossed the rail tracks and checked the small field out on the other side. A white did a brief fly-by before disappearing up and over the railway embankment and that seemed to be it for this area so I headed down the path into a damper and more shaded area. Here there were numerous Moths, mainly the nettle Moth but also some other micros too.



I checked the time and I had another 20 odd minutes left so worked my way back up hill and took the path to the left which would eventually come out at the start of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust reserve. However I wouldn't have time for that so consoled myself with scanning the edge of the marsh/fen land. Almost immediately something hove into view on the Thistle heads – a very battered and scarred Peacock, the deep colour faded from the maroon to a light red; eyes practically blinded. It seemed too knackered to worry about me so I took a few shots and left the geriatric in peace.



At the end of the path I noticed a few webs over the nettles and there were larvae crawling all over them. Some were a purple colour, others had white markings and others still were black and spiky. I'm doubtful that they are different species so they are probably different instars.



Time had almost escaped me so I had to run back to the car so as not to miss afternoon registration, stopping only briefly on the way for a white moth - something else to have a go at iding at - guess what I'll be doing during the down season.



I must say that despite the mad dash to get back I don't think that I've ever felt more refreshed and relaxed before afternoon lessons so perhaps this is a habit that I need to form?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 23-Jun-13 11:09 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, the Six-spot Burnet has one brood a year and, over winters as a larva.

Your photo with lots of caterpillars that you have just posted, i would say they are Peacocks, thats going by the black spiky one to the top right of the leaf, lovely photo.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 24-Jun-13 12:07 AM GMT

The caterpillars look like Peacocks to me too, Wurzel. You've caught them just between instars, so you have dull, unshed skins on some, a brand new one just out of his old skin with pale spines and feet, and one who shed a while earlier, with dark spines and reasonably identifiable as a Peacock. I haven't found larvae any near me yet, despite having seen lots of adults this spring.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 24-Jun-13 06:21 AM GMT

Your Damselfly/Demoiselle shots are stunning Wurzel. The colours and detail you have captured are wonderful.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-13 11:03 PM GMT

Cheers for the info and ID Nick 😊

Cheers for the ID too Dave 😊 - that photo is a bit of a bargain - three for the price of one 😊

Cheers Pauline, that's the wonder of evening lighting, and lots of luck! 😊

Sneaky stop off

Last week having broken my rule of not stopping on the way home I went ahead and did it again 😊. I know that I shouldn't have but this year so far has been all over the place weather wise and the only guarantee of seeing anything is to get out in the good weather while you can and while it lasts. So conscience salved I stopped off for 5 minutes at the Devenish Reserve in the Woodford Valley.

As soon as I arrived I started the stopwatch and ran through the wood and the lower field to the side of the down. This is crazily steep but thankfully someone has cut foot holes to make an ascending path. About half way up there are a few terraces with more flowers and shorter grasses. It was here that I saw my first butterflies just as the sun peaked through the cloud. A few male Common Blues sparred with each other, tumbling down the hillside, all of which looked decidedly worn.



Something larger and browner caught my eye as I started my descent and it turned out to be my first Meadow Brown of the year. It was very flighty but luckily for me in one of its frenetic flights it plonked down just within range of my lens.



Down on the lower slope there were a few more butterflies as it was more sheltered from the wind and a brief foray turned up a few more male Blues – a few Adonis and Common Blues as well as a female Common Blue and a feisty Brown Argus. But I couldn't stop for long as my time was ticking away.





In a previous post I noted that perhaps I'd missed out on the best and freshest Blues and my stop off today reiterated that point for me as apart from the Meadow Brown everything else looked to be on their last legs! Still this is my first proper visit to this reserve and hopefully the blues I saw battered and beaten today will have bred so I'll have another chance to see pristine individuals later.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 25-Jun-13 07:30 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

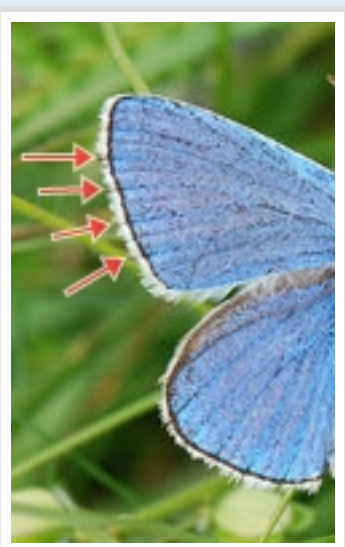
A few male Common Blues sparred with each other, tumbling down the hillside, all of which looked decidedly worn.

Wurzel

Wurzel,

Had you considered this might be an Adonis Blue? It's just that though the fringes are worn, on the left hand forewing outer edge I think I see hints of chequering. Also, the colour looks the deeper shade Adonis have when worn - Common Blues seem to lack much colour at all in their later days. You are welcome tell me that this is miles from a colony and I'm seeing things! 😬 😊

Dave



Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 25-Jun-13 07:45 PM GMT

silver ground carpet for the moth 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 25-Jun-13 08:12 PM GMT

"ChrisC" wrote:

silver ground carpet for the moth 😊

Doh .. beaten me to it 😊 And Scoparia pyrallela for the one in Middle Street on Tuesday 😊

You're up on me with you butterfly count with ST and MB 🍷 (and I wouldn't be surprised if you're close to my moth count too 😊 😊) Fantastic photos great narrative as ever 😊

Pressure's on for a Salmacis Brown Argus 😊 (have been informed by Michael Harris of Durham Wildlife Trust that Bishop Middleham Quarry is the place to go and not Castle Eden)

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Jun-13 11:32 PM GMT

You're right Dave it could be an Adonis Blue as they were present on the day. Your eyes are better than mine as I didn't see any chequering until you pointed it out 😊 I'll have to look a bit more carefully in future as I've made a few more visits there and the blues haven't improved with age 😊 😊

Cheers for the Moth ID Chris 😊

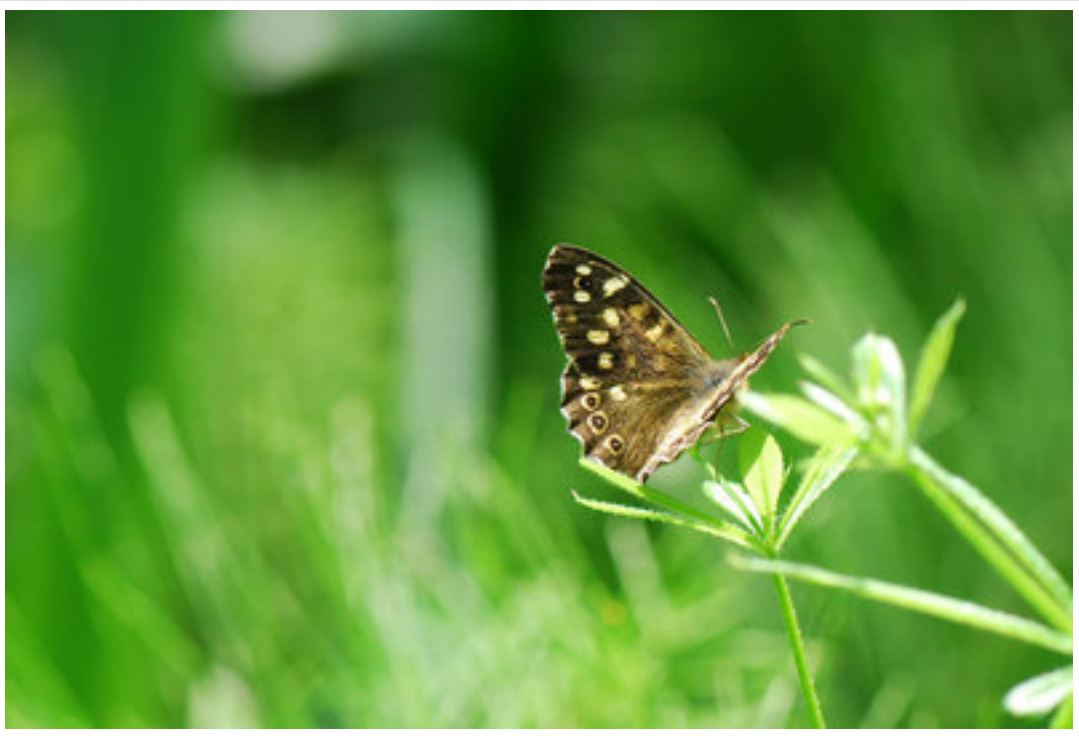
Cheers for the ID Philzoid 😊 – good luck with the Salmacis – you've got the grid reference for the Bishops Site? Don't forget my Ringlet on Sunday, gotta add that to the tally 😊

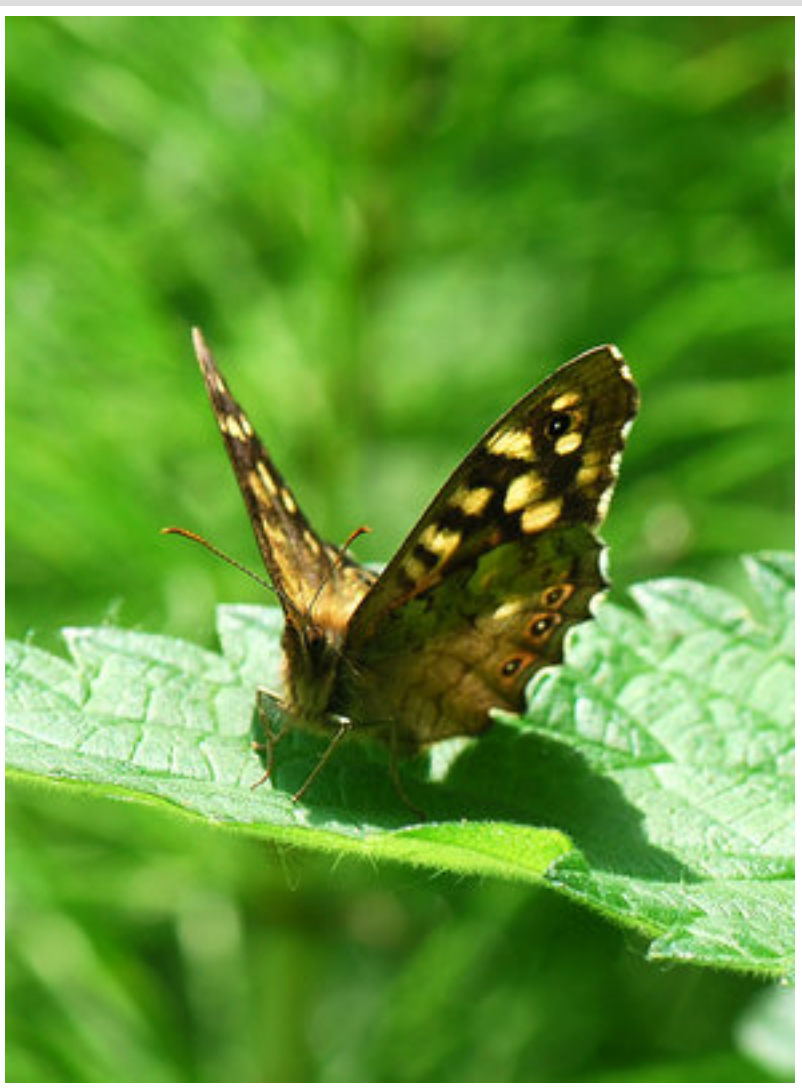
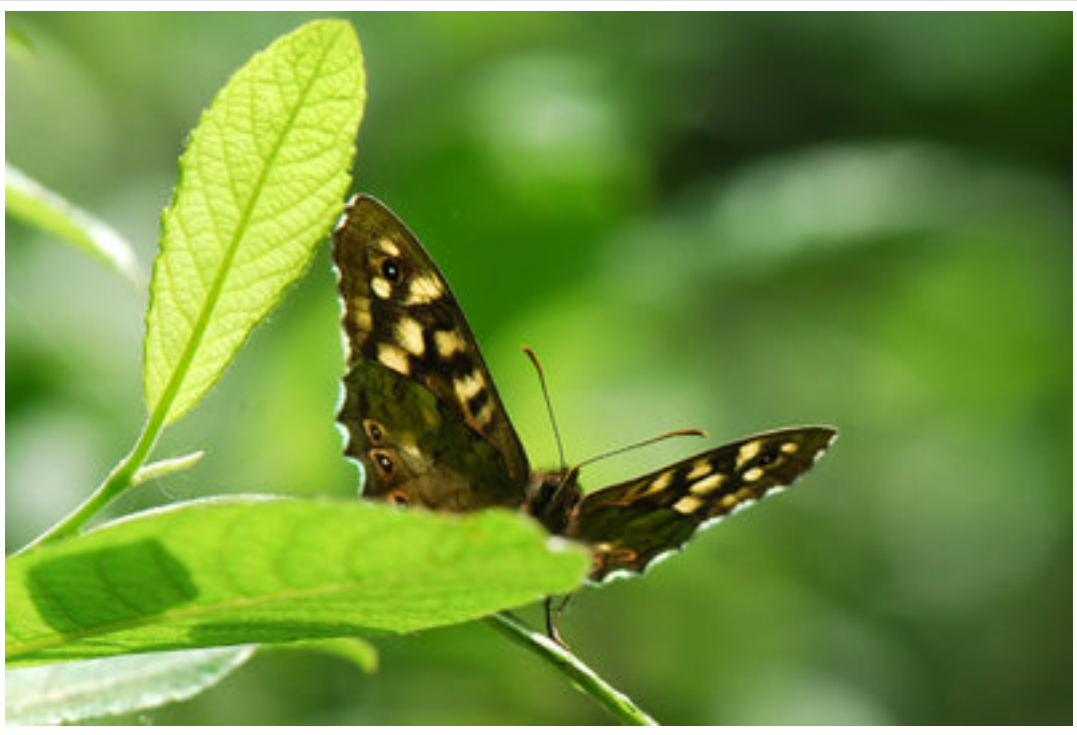
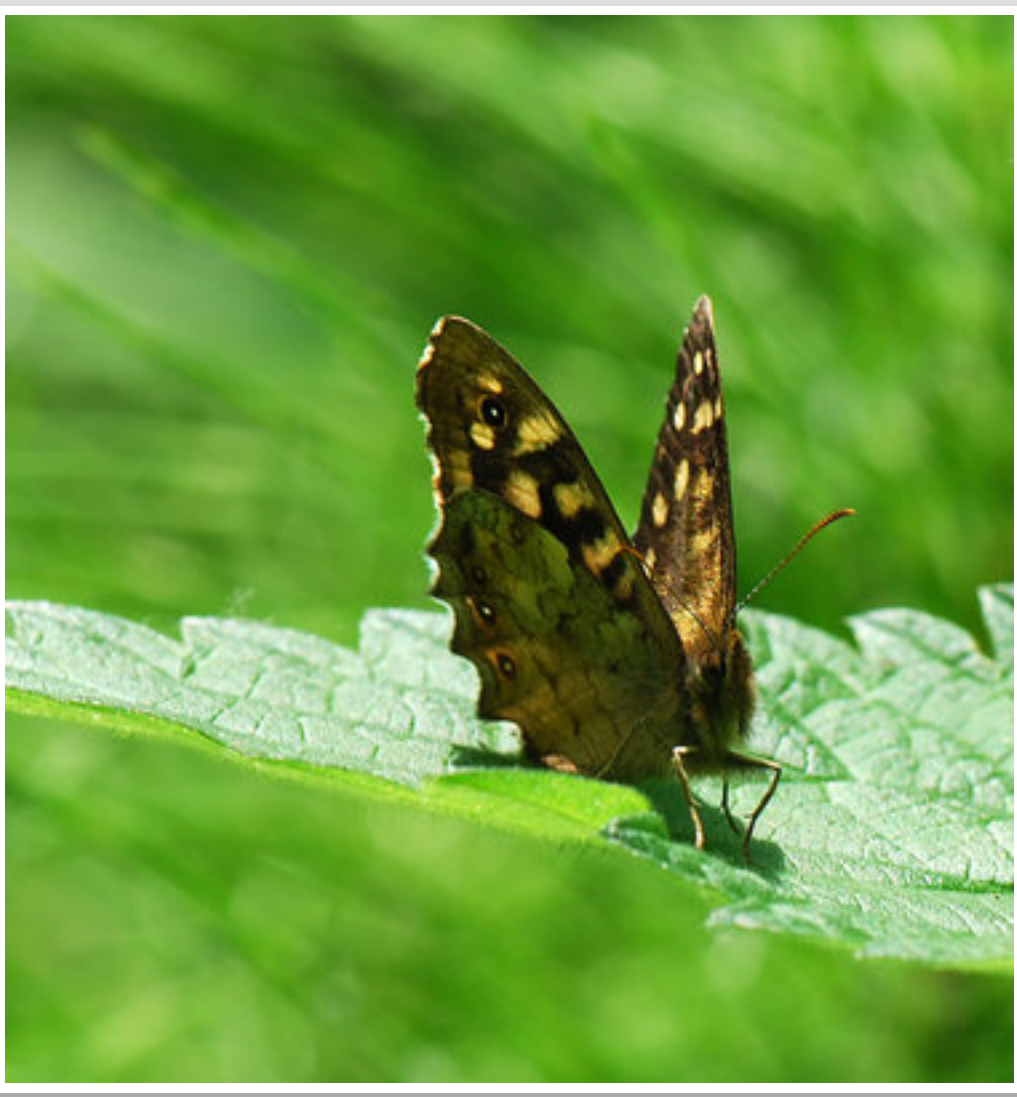
Lunchtime...

By Friday I could take it no longer. The thought of being trapped at work all day while outside there was sun and warmth and butterflies...ahhhh it was torturous! So in the end I grabbed my camera and lunch, signed out and headed over to the local Wiltshire Wildlife Trust – "Something Jones' Mill".

There was a hillside covered in tall grasses with a hedge bisecting it and paths leading down to the foot of the hill where the river runs through marsh, a small wood and proper Fen. The grasses held no butterflies at all, not even a Small Heath which I thought was pretty unusual and pretty soon I was on the circular boardwalk through the wood and out across the marsh before it headed back into the wood again. Again there was not an awful lot around; a few moths, a solitary Small White well out of reach across the marsh/bog.

Once I was entering the wood again a came across a flighty Speckled Wood. It would disappear only to reappear again back in roughly the same spot. I didn't want to disturb it so I carried on into the wood. Where I shortly came across another Specklie, there was a small clear patch where the sun shone down strongly and the Specklie was holding court here. He would nip off only to return a few moments later and he kept repeating this behaviour. I conjectured that this was his territory and he'd nip off to patrol the borders and try and entice any wandering females in for copulation. Whilst he was busy it allowed me to encroach more into his space so when he returned I was able to get some shots of him in various different poses.





All too soon I had to head back but on the way I saw at least another 4 individuals in this little wood. Once back at work I found I was more effective and focused, having had my lunchtime meditation.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 26-Jun-13 01:35 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

you've got the grid reference for the Bishops Site? Don't forget my Ringlet on Sunday, gotta add that to the tally

Yes, I've found a website that's very useful for Grid references <http://gridreferencefinder.com/> Did I miss the Ringlet 😊 😊 . I'm going to need to get to my SSB and Grayling site as soon as i get back

A nice way to watch specklies: A sunlit woodland clearing marshalled by a feisty butterfly that sees off everything that comes into its patch 😊

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-13 10:53 PM GMT

It was indeed and was just the break to keep me going on a long Friday afternoon after a very long fortnight – still waiting for the verdict from the Gove Bully Boys – if guilty of "needing to improve" I'll be cast out and into penury 😞 Mind you at least I've already bought my camera 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Jun-13 10:46 PM GMT

Devenish Take 2

This time last week I made my second flying visit to the Devenish Reserve. I started off by checking the edges of the wood and found my first butterfly of the visit, a female Common Blue hiding away at the base of the trees. She must have flown in from the side of the Down, or more likely been blown in by the strong wind.



I then made my way out onto the Down proper and I headed straight to the side of the Down and made my way to the cut steps to about half way up. Here there is a little terrace of shorter turf and more wild flowers cling to the hillside. On my last visit I noticed that there seemed to be more butterflies present here. I spent the next few moments just watching the Blues chasing each other along the side of the Down. The showy Adonis Blues would be hassled by the slightly duller and therefore more envious (?) Common Blues and the Brown Argus would just attack anything that came within an inch of their airspace. I had to tear myself away and remember that I wanted to get some photos and that time was ticking away.



As I was watching a larger, brown butterfly joined in the fray - my second Meadow Brown of the year. It was very flighty which is something that I seem to forget every year and it always takes me by surprise how fidgety they are. Luckily I managed to use some of the long grass to hide myself in order to make a close approach, a bit like a lumpy Cheetah. I'm sure that I'll soon be cursing these Brown beauties as they spook another butterfly that I'm trying to photograph but for today they were the find of the day...or so I thought.





Just as I was almost at the bottom of the cut steps on my way back to the car I had to stop as a Brown Argus, a lot fresher than the individual I'd seen on my previous visit, was twirling round a flower head and throwing all kinds of poses. Due to this engaging performance it stole the accolade of "star of the day" from its bulkier distant cousin.





This Reserve is turning out to be a bit of a hidden gem and is currently vying for my affections with Five Rivers and Middle Street. It's definitely somewhere where I'll have to visit properly so as to get more than just a feel for its treasures.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jun-13 10:49 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

....Luckily I managed to use some of the long grass to hide myself in order to make a close approach, a bit like a lumpy Cheetah....

Oh, that puts so many pictures in my mind 😂

Those Meadow Browns do it on purpose, they wait until you are just in range to take your shot and off they go, I swear I can here faint laughter on the wind 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 29-Jun-13 10:53 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

"Wurzel" wrote:

....Luckily I managed to use some of the long grass to hide myself in order to make a close approach, a bit like a lumpy Cheetah....

Oh, that puts so many pictures in my mind 😂

Those Meadow Browns do it on purpose, they wait until you are just in range to take your shot and off they go, I swear I can here faint laughter on the wind 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

LOL! I know what you mean. They're proper teases early in the season, and when they're ragged, faded and totally unphotogenic in late August they'll happily bask all day with wings open inviting you to take a shot. 😡

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 29-Jun-13 11:16 PM GMT

Beautifully written Wurzel, a really enjoyable read. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-13 11:37 PM GMT

Cheers Neil – I was really struggling with how to conjure up my feeble attempts at stalking in other peoples minds Neil – and after many beers and hours that was the best I could come up with – a case of publish and be damned! 😊

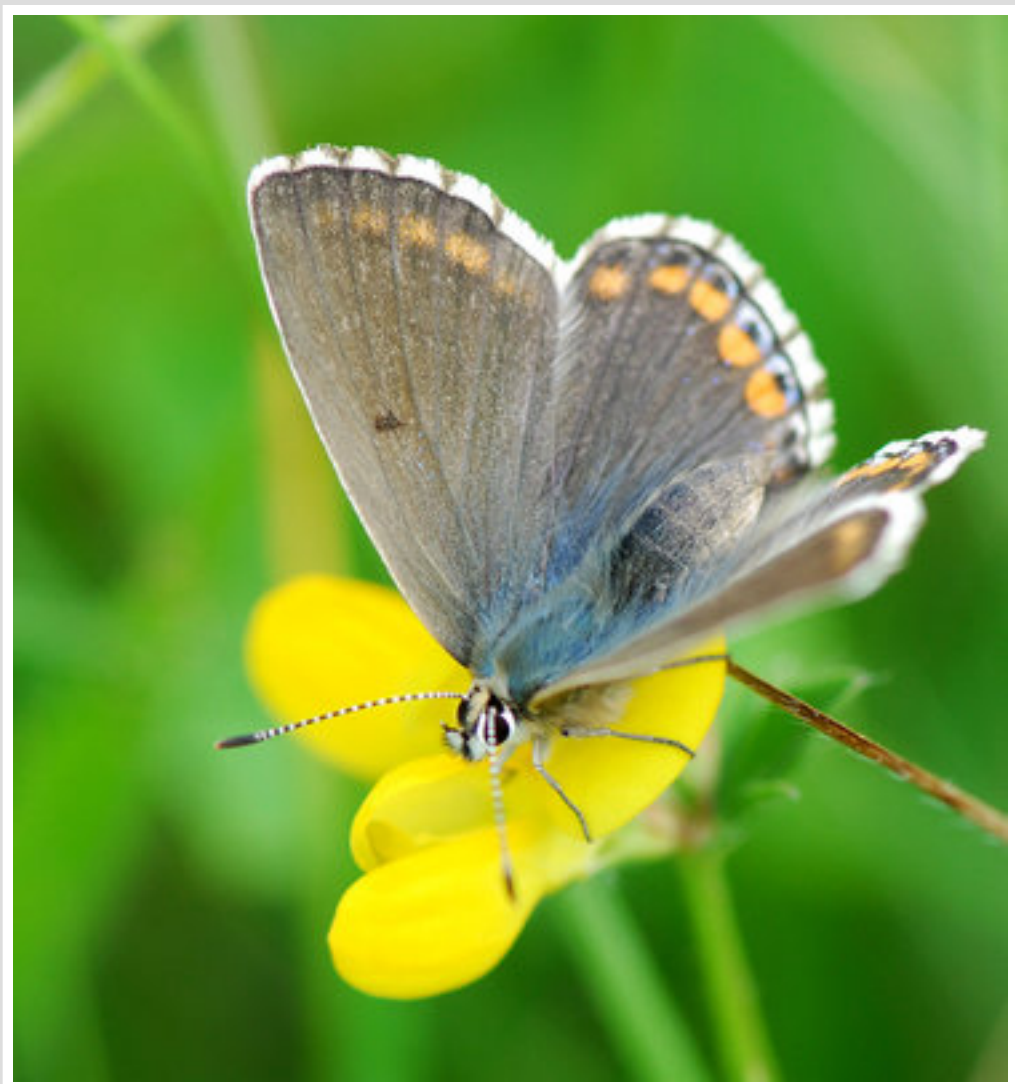
That's Meadow Browns pretty much summed up David! 😊 You often read about the delightful side of nature but rarely do you read commentary like "they are complete gits to photograph", "they're proper thugs these butterflies" or "they're just flirts and have no intention of letting you get even a half-way decent shot" 😊

Cheers Nick for your very kind comments 😊

Devenish 3

Last weekend I saw the weather forecast and thought "stuff it". It wouldn't be good for Large Blues and my planned trip for Heath Frits might need to be put off for another year, but I decided to head out anyway. I was planning to pick my way between the cloud and showers to the patchy sunshine so my main concern was the strong wind with fierce gusts. So I settled on a proper visit to the Devenish. I thought that the Down would be a write-off but the lower field should be protected by the trees on all sides.

K jumped at the chance to accompany me so we drove over there and set off through the wood. We sampled the Down first so K could climb the "cut steps", look out over the whole valley and be blown along the Down top. Whilst there, we found a fresh female Adonis and a practically deceased Grizzlie.





Once K was all blown out we headed back down the hill to the peace and stillness of the lower field. K settled down with her book and I took to mooching forward and backward along the tracks. It wasn't looking too good at first with only a few moths but as the sky started to clear a Speckie hove into view closely followed by a Large Skipper.

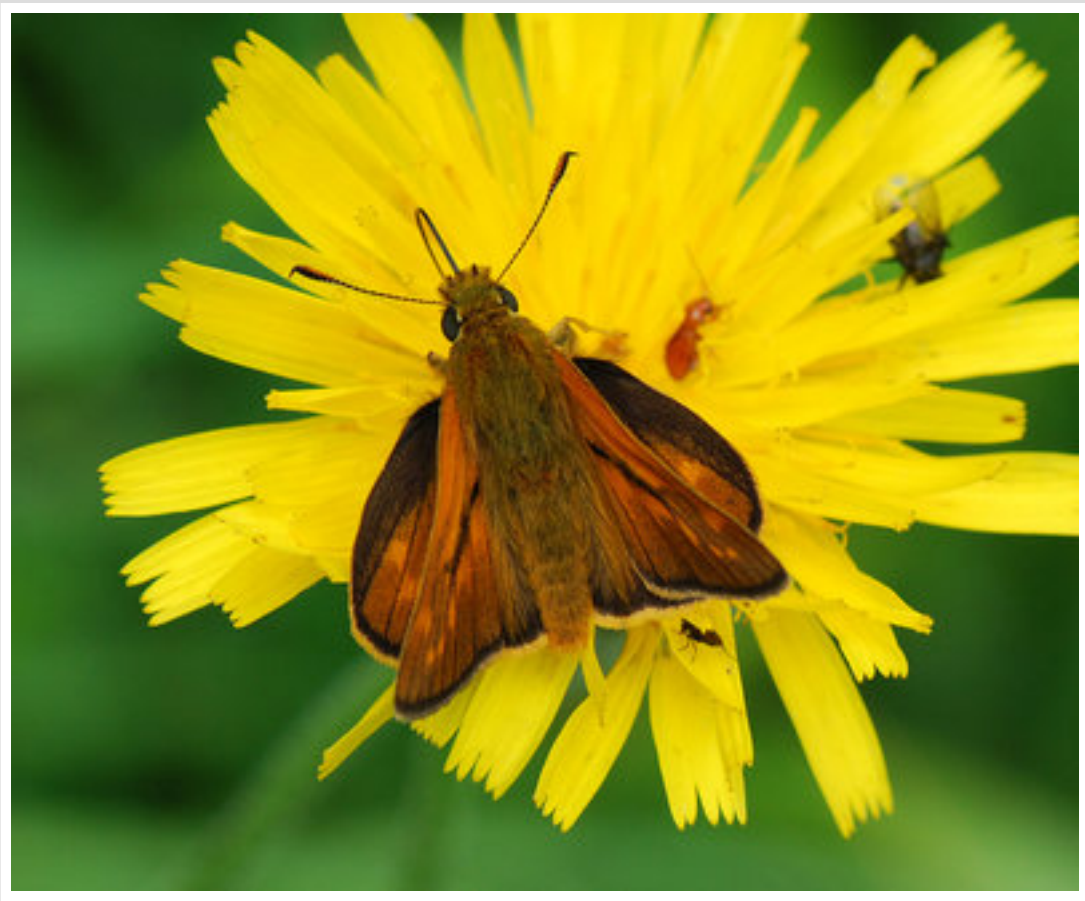


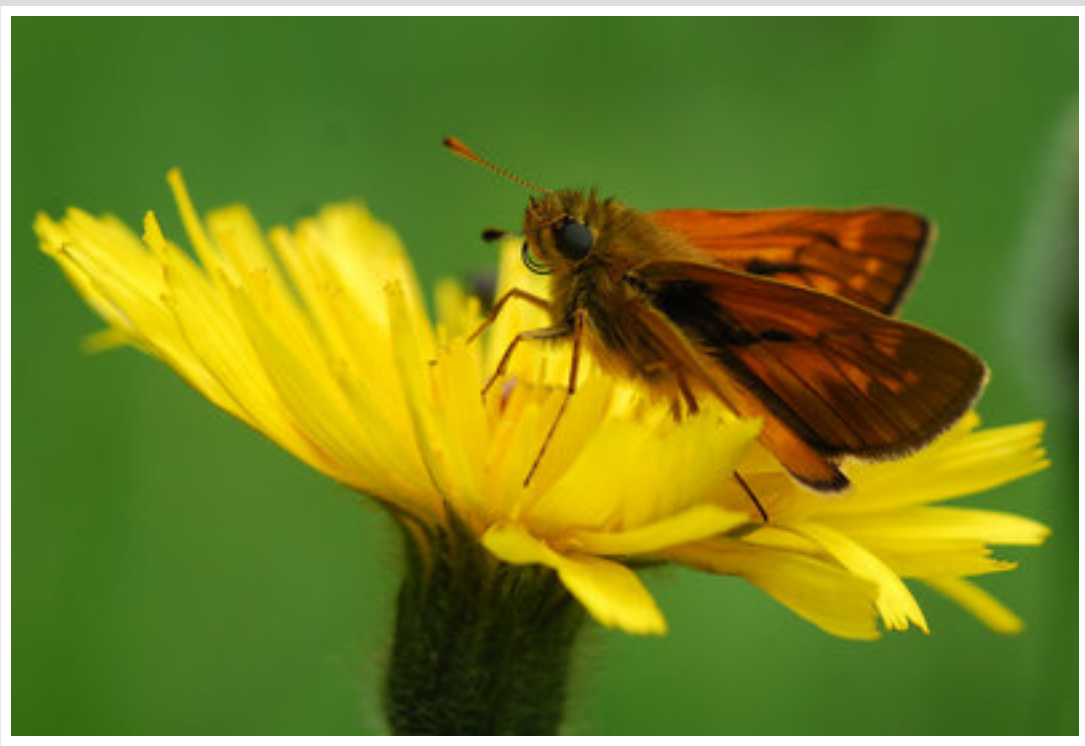
Back at the other end of the field there were patches of shorter grasses with more flowers intermingled and also more butterflies - with another Large Skipper and a fresher looking Grizzlie. All of a sudden a really dark butterfly appeared and flitted around a bit before settling. A Ringleet, my first of 2013 and possibly the first overall? It was cracking to see, stunningly marked purple velvet on top and chocolate brown on the underside. It didn't want to go far and sought the shade and shelter of the larger shrubs. Elated I set off to try for a few open wing shots of the Large Skipper.



Elated I set off to try for a few open wing shots of the Large Skipper after I took a quick turn around the bottom of the down where a Speckie deemed to land for me. Back in the field the Grizzlie and some Meadow Browns distracted me from finding my main quarry as did the antics of the Speckled Woods. There were three all flying around a fourth and eventually after plenty of argy bargy these seemed to be whittled down to one but the female still wasn't interested and promptly flitted off somewhere to wind up some other males presumably. Eventually I managed to locate one of the Large Skippers which was nicely posed on a Dandelion and was so busy nectaring I could approach easily.







It should have ended there but I took another quick look on the Down and found a few more blues and another Brown Argus. This was the freshest looking one yet from this site so I seem to be working in reverse. After this we packed up and checked out the woodland on the top of the down on the other side. K liked this area too as she could climb the trees and there was one which had a large horizontal branch from which she could look out over the valley.



So I managed to have a proper look at the Devenish in the end and I can draw the conclusion that it is a cracking little reserve and definitely worth keeping an eye on.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

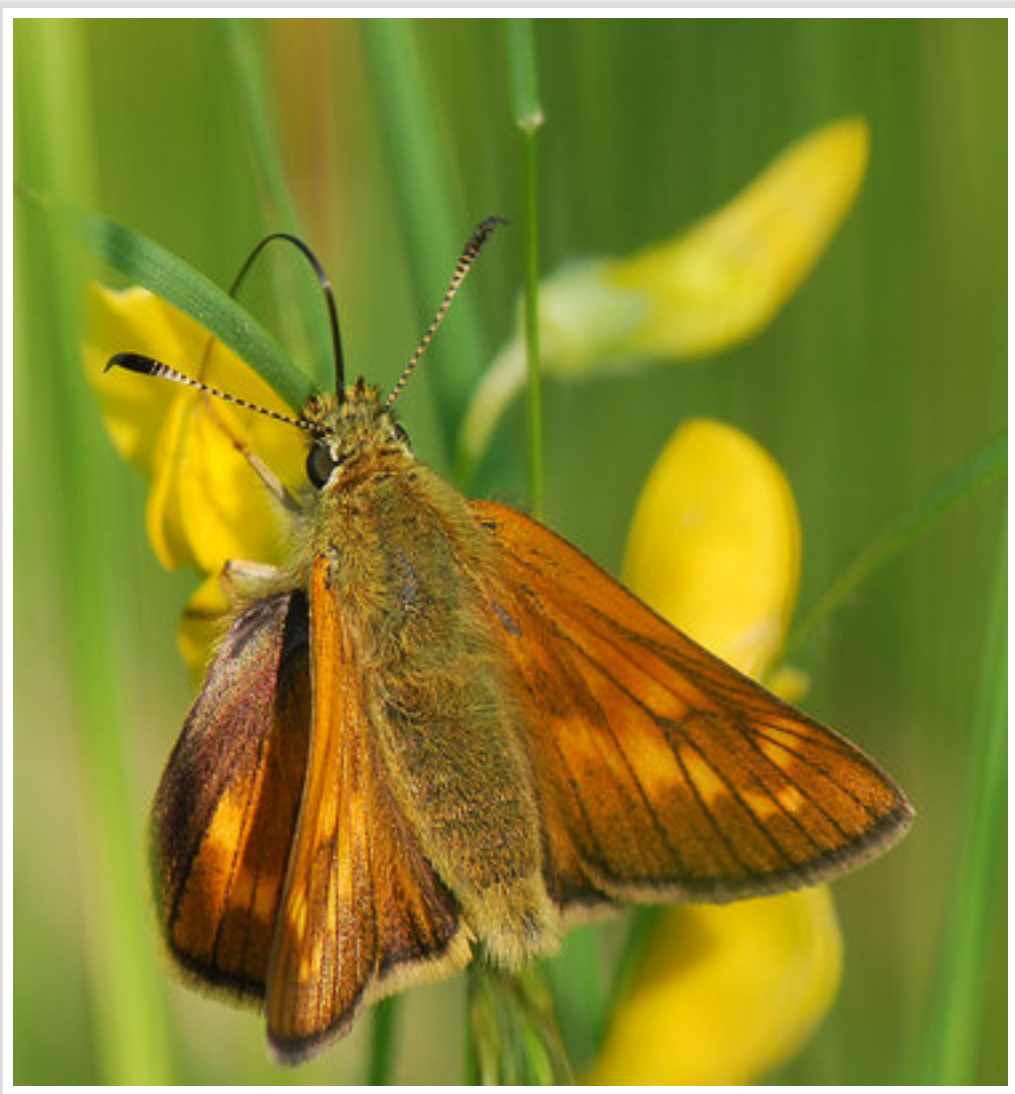
by Wurzel, 30-Jun-13 11:31 PM GMT

Brief check in at Woodhenge

After stopping off at Larkhill almost every day on my way to (and much more rarely and only when feeling very brave - from 😊) work I thought that I should give one of my older stop-offs a quick check. Woodhenge is a favourite when the Marbled Whites are flying and as I've seen reports of Marbled

Whites coming in from the county as well as seeing my first Ringlet at the weekend I thought now might be the time to see my first. However should that not be the case I could always check it out for Skippers as I've seen three of the golden skippers here before.

The brief five minutes I allow myself in the morning gives me just enough time to check out the longer grass by the gate to the National Trust property and also to check the field that runs alongside the road. This is one of the best parts of the site as it is from here that I have encountered most of the species that I've seen here. The Marbled Whites in particular love to roost amongst the longer grass stems here, and when cooler in the morning they are much easier to approach. However today this wasn't the case as I saw only one species - a Large Skipper. What was great was that it was the first female I've seen this year and she was in particularly fine fettle. I noticed that the females have white "faces" compared to the more uniform yellow of the males and also this female seemed to be struggling to get her proboscis in order.





I'll have to pop in here again next week and the week after that when the Marbs have emerged but there aren't many more weeks left until the summer when my visits will have to stop.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-13 12:02 AM GMT

July 2013

Let's hope for a calm, warm month 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 01-Jul-13 11:39 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

July 2013

Let's hope for a calm, warm month 😊

According to the BBC monthly outlook, we might be in for even better than that!

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/2635167#outlook>

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-13 11:52 PM GMT

Fingers crossed David 😊

Old Sarum

Having stopped off on the way to work and enjoyed glorious sunshine I then took an evening stroll to make the most of it. I was trying to work out where I should try - Middle Street or Five Rivers but then I thought of Old Sarum where I saw my first Marbled White last year and also my second Painted Lady and what with all the immigrants flooding in it seemed like the best bet.

Once I arrived I set off round the rings clockwise but I didn't see a butterfly until half way round. The first half though did allow me to look down into the rings while Scarlet Tigers flitted up and down like Yo-Yos in reverse. Half way round the ring sloped down more gently and there are areas of cleared scrub. Once there a few Whites flitted around and a closer examination (whilst being bombarded by Scarlet Tigers) showed that at least one of them was a Small White



There were Scarlet Tigers around everywhere and they were fast becoming as annoying as Meadow Browns as they spooked a Large Skipper, another White and a Small Tortoiseshell. I gave up checking the scrub and instead started my way back round the rings when I found a pristine Small Tortoiseshell that just dropped down in front of me on the path. I reeled off a few shots marvelling at the brightness of the colours.



I had to leave it too soon though as there were walkers and joggers all approaching and the path here is only really wide enough for to people. After that it seemed to quiet down slightly. There was another Small Tort which could have been the same one, another Large Skipper and of course the ubiquitous Scarlet Tigers. It wasn't until I got almost all of the way round that I saw something different a Common Blue roosting in the longer grasses on the side of the path nicely set against the evening sun.



No joy with the Painted Ladies or Marbled Whites but hopefully it'll just be a matter of time for the former and the Small Tortoiseshell provided the joy.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

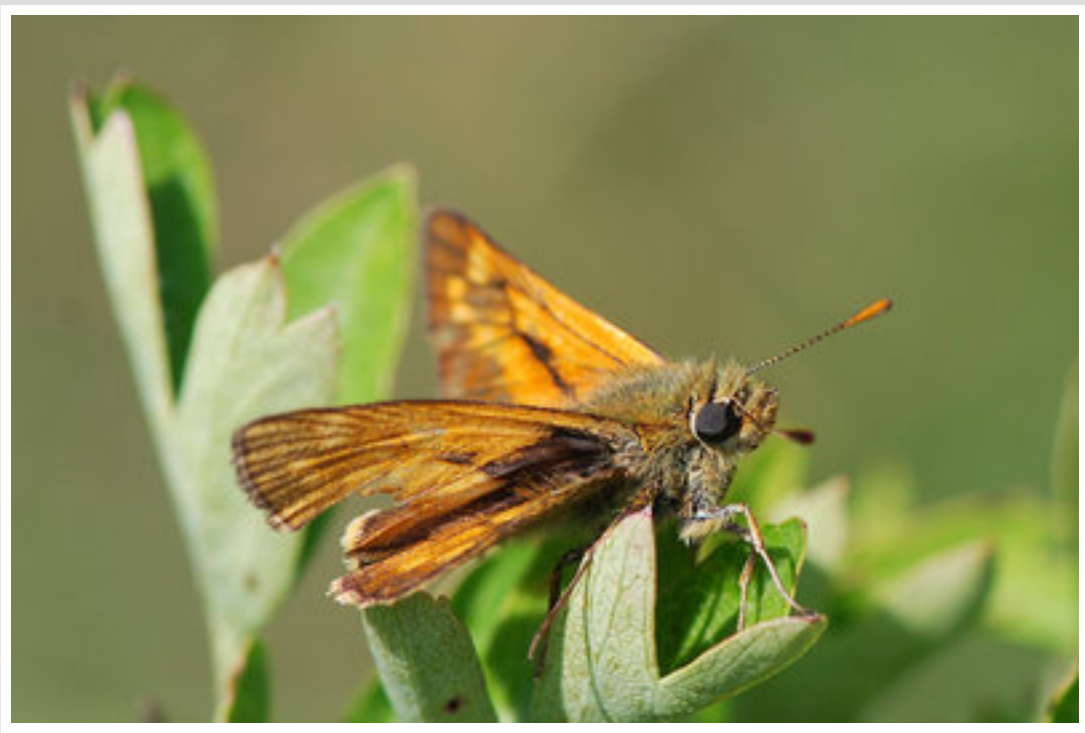
by Wurzel, 02-Jul-13 11:46 PM GMT

Larkhill Stop Off

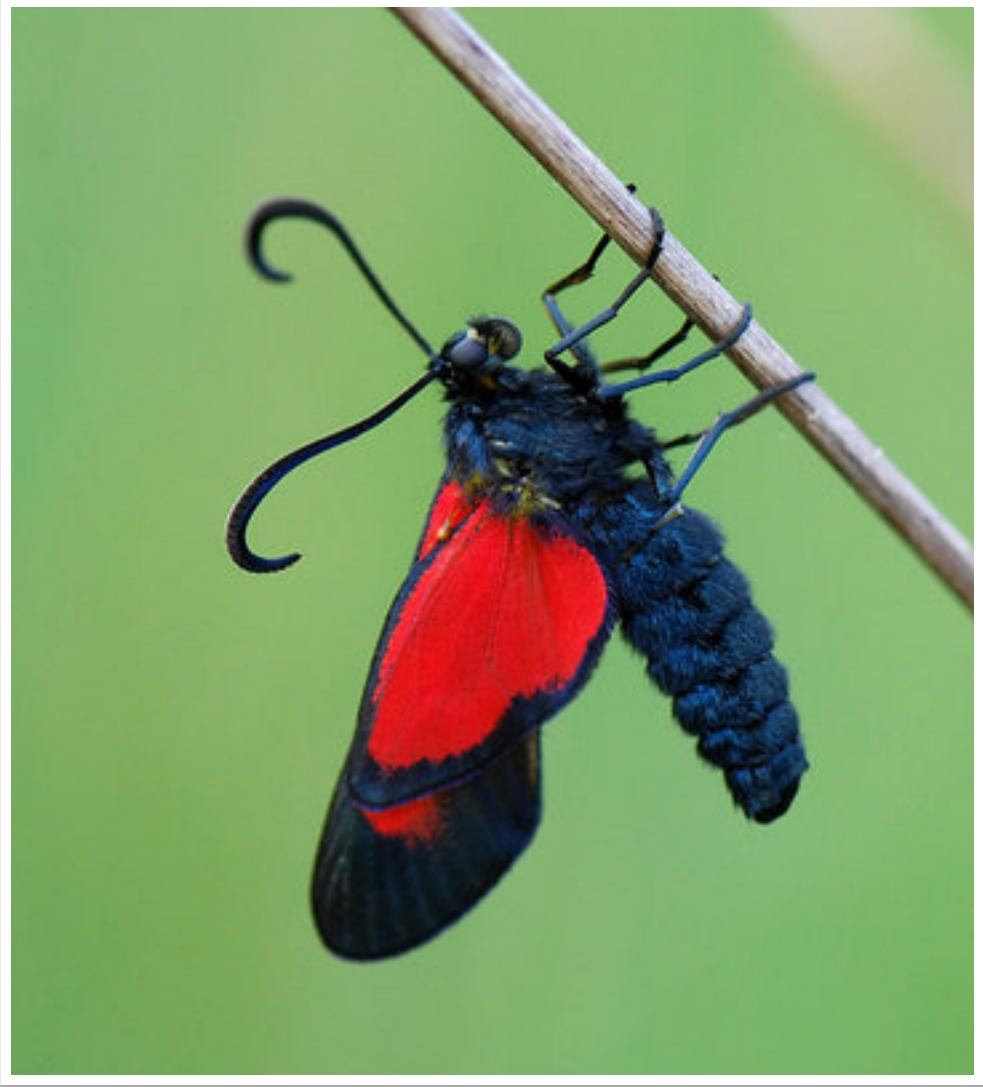
I called in a few times at Larkhill last week but I didn't add to the species count for the year – just revelled in what was there. I did see my first Larkhill female Blue and she looked a bit worse for wear with rips in the wings but she was still holding her own. A pair of Brimstones occasionally dropped in but it didn't stop long enough for a photo and over the week I noticed a change in the butterfly populations – the Small Heath seemed dwindling as Large Skippers began their ascendancy. There was one shot that I think is almost my favourite of the year. One of the remaining Small Heath did the usual explosion from the grass and then ironically perched on a sign and began taking minerals from the rust. I say “ironically perched” because the sign warns visitors not to cross for fear of unexploded shells!

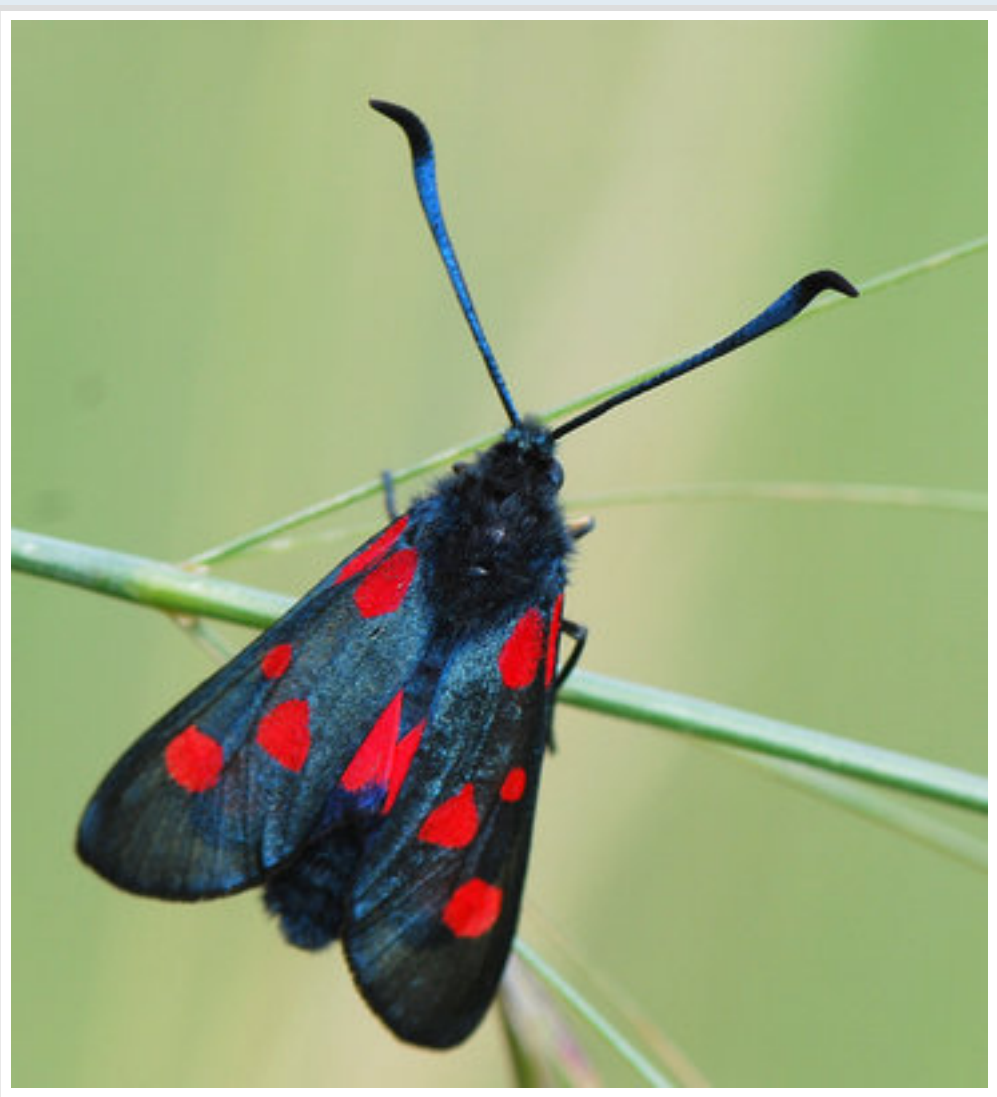


The Large Skippers seemed to be having a good week with 5 or 6 individuals present by my last visit. Some seemed very fresh and had that lovely yellowy colour which glistened in the sun. One rather tatty male had taken a territorial perch on a Hawthorn branch which possibly accounted for the tears in his wings.



I have a confession to make. What I really enjoyed last week were the Burnets. It's not usual for Moths to take precedence in my photography as normally they are compensation for missing or not finding a butterfly. However this week they were emerging in large numbers looking like Aliens as they ruptured from their cocoons and they stole the limelight from their cousins. I found mating pairs, managed to get standard shots, close ups of their faces and also sots of the scarlet under wings.





So I'm looking forward to the end of the week with warmer, sunnier mornings meaning that I can make some more stop-offs and who knows perhaps I can add Marbled White or Smessex Skippers to my Larkhill tally?

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Debbie, 03-Jul-13 12:54 PM GMT

As always I think all your photos are great – but what stunning Burnet photos.

Debbie 😊😊😊

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 03-Jul-13 01:24 PM GMT

Lovely photos as usual Wurzel, you must of captured every possible angle on those Burnets, brilliant. The Large Skipper nectaring on the pink flower has to be my favourite photo, and also getting a record shot of the Small Heath taking minerals from rust on that old sign is excellent, well done.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jul-13 08:15 PM GMT

Great photos Wurzel, especially the Burnets 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-13 11:43 PM GMT

Cheers Debbie, Nick and Neil for your kind comments 😊

Woodhenge

This is totally out of sync as I've still got a report from Slop Bog on Saturday and Five Rivers twice on Monday to write but a brief stop at Woodhenge on the way to work paid off today. I saw my first Marbled Whites on Monday at Five Rivers but I was checking out this site last week for them thinking that they should be turning up any time soon. However the stop off this morning was more out of force of habit than with any expectation. It was cooler and fresher than of late, there was a fine drizzle in the air and the grasses were soaking. I checked out the small field near the car park and there was a male hunkering down in the grass and in such a position as to be able to approach from the side. What an ace way to start the day! 😊



Coming up to my time limit I found another male this time roosting with its wings open. It couldn't get comfy it seemed so it would climb up the stem, leg over leg as if on a rope, twirling round and round as it went. From the top it would lean out so the grass bent and came into contact with another stem or it would make a weak flutter to another blade and then repeat the process. Why it didn't close its wings I don't know? Could it be using its outstretched wings to balance it like a tightrope walker uses a pole? Anyway whatever the reason it allowed me to get a couple of "centrefold/double page spread" shots 😊😊. An even better start to the day - slightly spoilt unfortunately by the realization that I had to go to work 😞.



Now I know they're there and with better weather on the horizon a few more stop-offs are one the cards, still need to find some Smessex 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 04-Jul-13 05:24 PM GMT

This is a butterfly that looks particularly beautiful when freshly emerged, and you've captured one right there, Wurzel.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-13 12:01 AM GMT

Cheers David 😊 I got some in cop on Monday and today they were all dew soaked. I love this time of year because even when you can't get out to see the "specialties" you can always rely on the Marbled Whites to brighten your day – as they're a bit special 😊

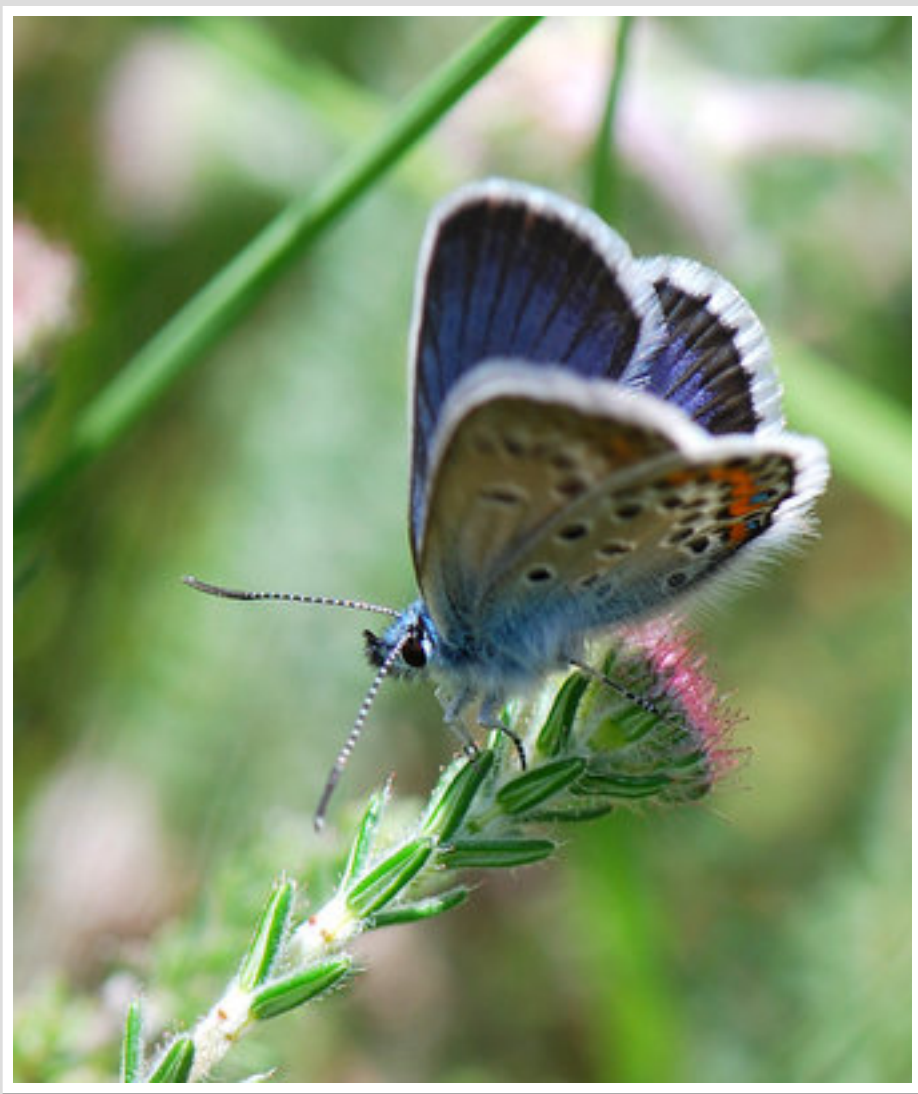
Slop Bog

I said to myself last year that I needed to find another area for Silver Studs so in 2013 and so I intended to find one. But then this year I thought why? I know they're at Slop bog so why not go where I know? Having had this discussion with myself last Saturday I loaded both the girls, snacks, books and assorted colouring pencils and paper into the car and we all set off. They have been out for a couple of weeks at other sites now and the first Silver Studs have been reported on the Dorset Branch website so as this is a late site, in a late year I was hoping that they'd started emerging.

I've found that with some species I make a trip to see them, see them and then that is it until the following year (hopefully) – and Silver Studs seem to fall into this group. I'd love to go back time and again to some places but in way a single visit is more beneficial – less trampling, less petrol burnt and less intrusion I suppose so if I think that a site is a "one visit job" I try and make the most of it. This means that I'm much more focused on trying to get my photographs so I often catch something I've not seen before or of interest to me. But it also means lot and lots of images to sort through...hence the lateness of this posting!

Once there we walked over the board walk which both girls loved especially when we stopped to look over the bog with damsel and dragonflies a plenty. Very shortly we made our first stop, in the shade of a pine tree just along the path and almost as soon as we stepped onto the heath. While the girls settled down to some serious playing I mooched forward and back long the path and within just under a minute I'd found 2 males. It was quite

warm so they were pretty active and difficult to approach but I had a go anyway.



As I was watching the Silver Studs something shot by me that was very yellow in colour. It couldn't be could it? No it wasn't a Clouded Yellow 😞 but a Clouded Buff, not the yellow I was hoping for but still a first for me 😊 . Later a bright Orange something fluttered by which I believe was a female.



Heading back to the girls we did a quick Tick check as I had 15 or more crawling over my trousers but luckily not one had found its way up our trousers and just as I was putting on the last boot having tucked trousers in socks an errant dog came a harassing 😡 . My girls don't mind dogs on leads but are very nervous of those off leads and as this was a Springer Spaniel, all malicious, noisy bouncing my little L was pretty upset 😡 . I get a bit fed up with the same old "don't worry he/she never bites" line that is uttered every time 😊 . More to the point this is a nature reserve and an SSSI with ground nesting birds so dogs should be on leads. Still we took this interruption as an opportunity to pack up and check out more of the Silver Studded Heath.



But the girls were more fascinated by the Sundew. And I think I had to explain how they fed on insects in quite gory detail at least three times before they were fully sated (the girls that is) I could see things whirring round in little L's brain but thought it better not to ask 🤪😬!



After a stroll round and a quick chat and comparison of notes with the local transect taker we settled back down at the side of the path. After another quick Tick check - only 9 on my trouser legs, the girls started pointing out Silver Studs so I could find them easier. One of the things that I hadn't really noticed before and I was loving today was the way the colour of the margins changed according to the angle the wing was held at...



Orange and green sheen...



Electric blue...



Some red on the hind wing...

I then tried counting but they had an annoying habit of just appearing from nowhere and you couldn't tell if you'd counted it yet or not. In the end I just enjoyed watching their antics and all the hurly burly. Over the next half an hour we probably saw 9 males, including one with a deformed fore-wing and I came close to the classic open wing shot and consoled myself with a Padfield 😊. However we didn't see a single female despite all the tumultuous spiralling fights of the males which must have been more for territory than for the right to mate. I took this as a sign that they are only just emerging here so a visit next weekend might mean finding a few of the oily-sheened brown females.





Deformed wing



A "Padfield"

We then had to make our way back home stopping once more on the Boardwalk to watch the blue and Small Red Damselflies and as we were doing the final Tick check before getting in the car I realised that I had seen only one species of butterfly all afternoon! Slop Bog - what a cracking place.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

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

Lovely butterflies, Wurzel – a favourite of mine as you might have noticed. And the sundews are terrific. Elliot would spend hours feeding them if we had some in the garden... 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-13 10:09 PM GMT

Cheers Dave I think Silver Studs are one of my faves too (though I have a feeling that I say that about all of them 😊). It sounds like Elliot and my younger daughter would hit it off – and then look out world 😊 While my older daughter was listening rapt to the idea that a plant moves and eats insects my younger one was looking for ants to feed to it 😊 I guess she was doing her bit for the environment 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 05-Jul-13 10:21 PM GMT

I know what you mean about taking certain sites/butterflies for granted, Wurzel.

It may seem crazy, but this Sunday I'll spend 4 hours+ at Alun Valley in Glamorgan and I may not even reach for my camera to take images of High Browns, as I suspect they'll be around in silly numbers. Instead, I'll try to keep some sort of count going whilst simultaneously looking for White Letter Hairstreaks.

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 05-Jul-13 10:58 PM GMT

Lovely butterflies Wurzel. It sounds like you had a great day.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-13 11:59 PM GMT

It must be hard for you David – how do you cope with all those pesky High Brown Frits around, they must be a right nuisance 😊😊

Cheer Nick – it was a cracking day indeed 😊

Having added Small Skipper to my yearly tally on Friday as well as spending the day with Philzoid and White-Letters today it seems a bit odd to be posting about Five River from last Monday. But I'm getting seriously behind with my PD so I need to catch up. In fact what I really need is a few extra hours in the day so that I can get my work done, photos sorted, posts written and still be able to sleep!

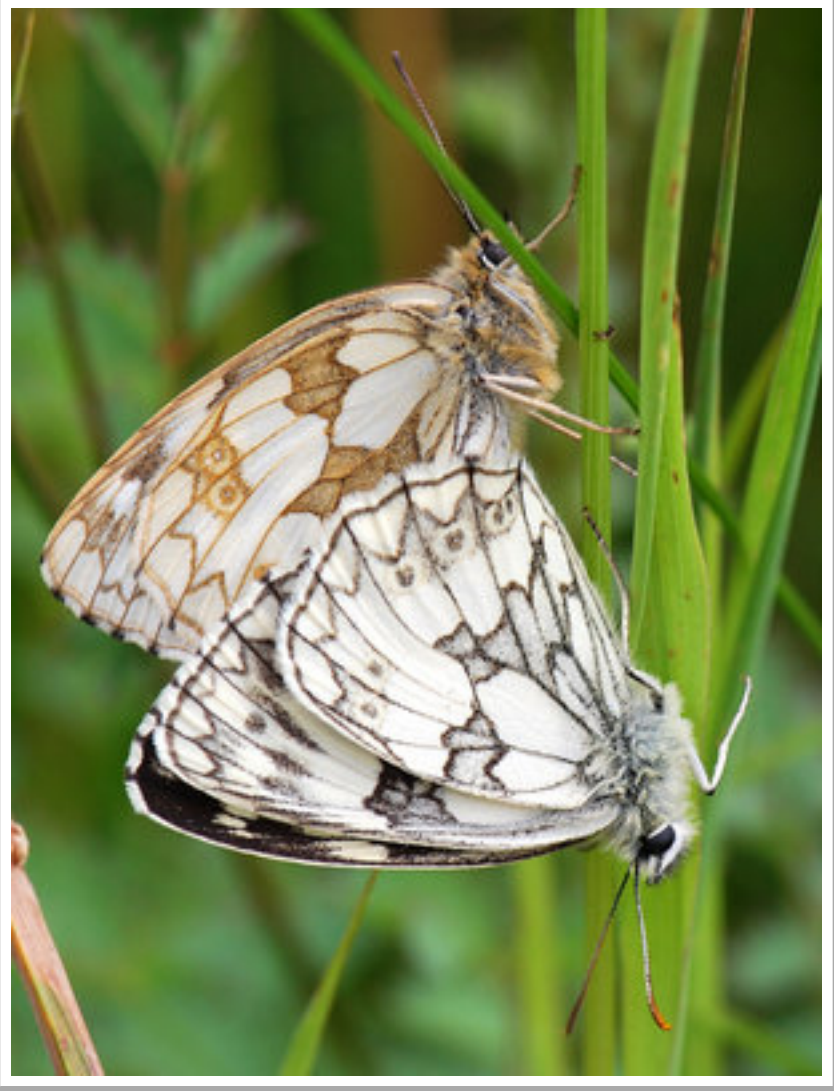
Five Rivers – the morning.

Last Monday was a TD at work, but unlike the pupils I still had to work. Luckily I'd arranged to visit a local school so I was able to walk to work, and even better, have an hour at Five Rivers before I was expected 😊.

I set out across the field heading to the banks thinking to myself that it was about time for some Marbled Whites and low and behold as I reached the banks one flitted into view, my first Marbled White of the year and it was a cracker, really dark.



It was quickly joined by another more grey and white individual. Once I'd got a few photos of it I thought I better set off on my way when I spied a pair in cop. As I took shots the female started climbing up the grass stem while still locked with her partner. Near the top of the stem it stopped and the male was just hanging there, suspended in mid air, still locked on by its genitals.





Leaving the amorous pair to continue I made my way along the path at the top of the bank. A few Meadow Browns flew by joined occasionally by a Ringlet or two and even fewer Large Skippers. Down the other side of the banks to the main field I unwittingly disturbed a Small Tortoiseshell, which quickly spooked a second. Both were really fresh and settled again quickly allowing me to get some shots. The second one seemed really dark to those I've previously photographed this year.



Time was ticking away and I need to allow some time to pick all the seed heads out of my socks and trousers so I started back across the field towards the entrance to the reserve. On the way I saw another 3 Small Torts, a few more Meadow Browns and Ringlets and Large Skippers. The final butterfly was a male Common Blue, looking tired and worn but still hanging on in there.



This was a fantastic start to the day, even better than usual. I mean 5 minutes at Woodhenge is great but a whole 45 minutes? Bliss.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 07-Jul-13 01:59 PM GMT

Nice report(s) and photos Wurzel, I like the SSB's and Large Skippers in particular. You always seem able to post a good variety of species in your diary.

Regards,

Mike

Re: Wurzel

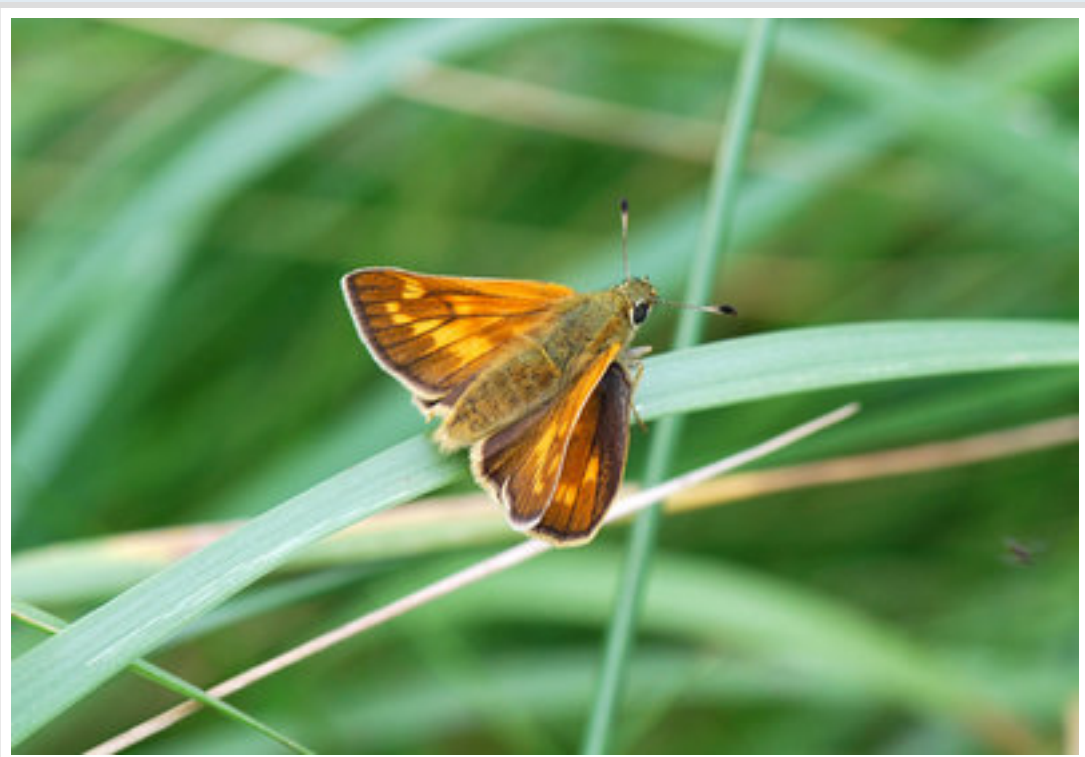
by Wurzel, 07-Jul-13 11:39 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 I just point and shoot at everything! 😊

Five Rivers - The Afternoon

So having made my observations, had my meetings and left very impressed with the school I had visited I found that I had an hour to kill before my normal knocking off time. So I headed off homewards which happened to take me back through Five Rivers.

I was surprised in the change in the range of the species that I was able to photograph. Whereas in the cooler morning Marbled Whites were the order of the day now Small Tortoiseshells had come to the fore. However on working my way to the banks I saw plenty of Ringlets and Meadow Browns which were supplemented with Large Skippers. I also came across a battered Small Tortoiseshell I nick-named Stumpy. I couldn't work out whether Stumpy was a geriatric or a world weary traveller but what was puzzling me more was how Stumpy was able to still take to the wing given that he was a bit short changed in that department? Actually this little area of footpath just at the base of the banks proved to be quite rich in butterflies with all bar two of the days species encountered here.





Stumpy



Once up on the banks I checked the right hand side, that away from the river and facing the fields as here the grasses were shorter and so more wild flowers had managed to get a root hold. Again all the usual suspects were present but what I was most pleased with was a nicely blue female Common Blue. She seemed more than happy to pose and in the end I left her still there and went off to find something else to photograph - I don't think she was amused! There were also Ringlets here that were willing to sit still for a minute and to finish off the banks a Marbled White.





So all pretty much as before really but I thought that just before I left the site to continue the journey home I should check out the compost heap. During the spring a small area of the woodland had been used as a large compost heap containing all the cuttings produced from maintaining the paths I presume. However now Thistles and Brambles have overtaken the area and I thought it might hold one or two Small Tortoiseshells. As it turned out this was a bit of an underestimate! As I approached I saw 5 Small Tortoiseshells all in one view and after a brief scan I counted 11 on the thistles alone. By the time I'd checked the Brambles the total had reached 17. I'm pretty sure that there were more as they would fly in and others would fly off but the most I saw here at any one time was 17. Here was me thinking that 4 or 5 would make a good day. Whether these were freshly hatched or not I couldn't say; though personally I'd like to think that they were home grown 5 Rivers stock. I noticed again that one seemed really dark compared to the others but it wouldn't come down the bank and insisted on satiating partly hidden behind a Bramble bud!





Darker?

So what I day - it could only have been better if I'd visited a school near Bernwood or Wheelers Bay!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 08-Jul-13 01:36 PM GMT

Butterflies certainly hone one's observational skills Rich and I love the way you have captured those different shades on the SSB. Good job!

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 08-Jul-13 05:38 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Great photo of old stumpy, for the first time in two years i am actually seeing 2nd brood Small Tortoiseshell on a regular basis, albeit only the one on each occasion i go out, so i can see a photo looming of the wing uppersides in the near future, or am i just dreaming. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 08-Jul-13 11:14 PM GMT

I do like that female Common Blue – such amazing variety with these and they sit like little jewels in the grass. And all my local ones have disappeared for now... 🙄

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-13 11:23 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊 I must have been all those refraction lessons I've been teaching recently 😊

Cheers Nick 😊 Stumpy was a right character, really belligerent 😲 I reckon a Small Tort is definitely on the cards 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 Cheer up the next brood will be along soon – all fresh and shimmering 😊

Woodhenge revisited

Last Thursday morning I stopped off at Woodhenge again. I was looking to try and improve on the Marbled White count from the previous days two. However it wasn't looking too good as it was cooler than of late and instead of the blue skies that we're experiencing now it was grey and overcast with a hint of drizzle or mist in the air. However I tried my luck first along the path that runs parallel to the road along the top of the embankment.

Having found one hardy soul trying to sit out the drizzle I suddenly saw 5 or 6 more, all clustered around various grass heads. It was the same slightly further along the path. I'd scan across the tops of the grass looking for the "white flags" and not see anything. Then when I scanned again my eye would catch one, then 3 or 4 before a proper look revealed even more. I think they roost low down in the grass which is why I didn't see them at first, not until they started the twirling climb up the grass stem.

Once I'd found one in a nice position I also noticed the way that the drops of mist were catching on their antennae and appendages, beading them like little pearls. I'd long wondered how to go about getting some "dew soaked" shots and as the opportunity had presented itself to me so fortuitously I decided to spend a bit longer than usual this morning. So 6 minutes after taking my first shots I started my way back to the car 😊 .







Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 08-Jul-13 11:39 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

I love your 'dew drop' pics of the Marbled Whites, very unusual 😊 I have yet to see any Marbled Whites this year, but hopefully any day.

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 08-Jul-13 11:51 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

you never cease to amaze me with the way you portray your butterflies in your photos, the close up of the male Marbled White in the second photo with the dew in it`s eye, and the detail is excellent. But the third photo is even better, all those dew drops on its antennae, brilliantly captured, brought a big smile to my face, 😊 don`t change the way you photograph these beautiful insects, your photos are a breath of fresh-air, and something i look forward to seeing.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

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

Cheers Jack 😊 Definitely by the weekend 😊

Cheers Nick for your very kind comments – they really made made my week, let never mind day 😊

On the way home...

On Friday I was a lonely soul in the department as one member of staff is on maternity leave, another only worked half a day and the Technician finished early. As I had a protected free I locked up and made everything safe, gained the necessary permission and signed out half an hour earlier than usual.

I reckoned that with careful usage of time I could make two stops and still be home at my usual time. The first was on the Plain and I pulled off the road and onto tank tracks before grabbing the gear and making my way along the path. It took me up a slight incline with tall grasses on either side and at the top are two lines of trees running at 90 degrees to the path. A pair of Small Tortoiseshells were my only company along the path barring numerous pale moths and very soon I`d reached the tree line so I turned left onto this new track. About 20ft along another path cut across the fields diagonally back to the car park and it was at this triangular junction that I found the majority of my butterflies. In fact there was a nice range of species here – Large Skippers, my first Smessex (probably a Small), male Common Blue, Ringlet, Marbled White, Meadow Browns and Small Heath. Another Small Tort appeared and tried to entice me away but I was enjoying the scene before me as everything seemed to be making wild use of their probosci.



Tearing myself away with the promise of a return visit here I made my way along the diagonal and the Smessex kept landing in front of me, teasing me as every time I'd get close it would be gone. At one point I even risked losing my limbs on any unexploded ordinance lying around to get a few shots of a Chimney Sweeper moth. Back at the car limbs all still attached the Small Torts flitted by to wish me goodbye and it was back to the road.



My second stop was at the Devenish and I added Specklie to the tally with 2 in the car park and another along the wooded path to the lower field. I spent the next 10 minutes checking out both the lower field and the lower slopes of the Down. The former held Ringlet, Meadow Browns and Large Skippers while the Down also had Marbled Whites, a Common Blue and a lone and belligerent Brown Argus. But everything was turbo charged in the mounting heat. I can't believe the difference between here now compared to just two weeks ago.

As time was ticking away fast I had to run back down the Down and as I jogged through the lower field something small and golden caught my eye. It landed and settled allowing a brief approach and I was only able to get two shots before it was off again. Never mind though as it was my first official Small Skipper of 2013! I'm sure I'll encounter many more of these little beasties and soon will begin the neck wrecking checking for ink pads to distinguish the females!





Almost caught up now as I've only got Saturday, Sunday and Larkhill to sort through now...
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jul-13 06:33 PM GMT

"hideandseek" wrote:

Hi Wurzel,

you never cease to amaze me with the way you portray your butterflies in your photos, the close up of the male Marbled White in the second photo with the dew in it`s eye, and the detail is excellent. But the third photo is even better, all those dew drops on its antennae, brilliantly captured, brought a big smile to my face, 😊 don`t change the way you photograph these beautiful insects, your photos are a breath of fresh-air, and something i look forward to seeing.

All the best, Nick.

Absolutely agree 😊

Excellent photos Wurzel, keep it up.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 10-Jul-13 10:18 PM GMT

And so do I. The dew-sparkling Marbled Whites are just lovely. 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-13 11:15 PM GMT

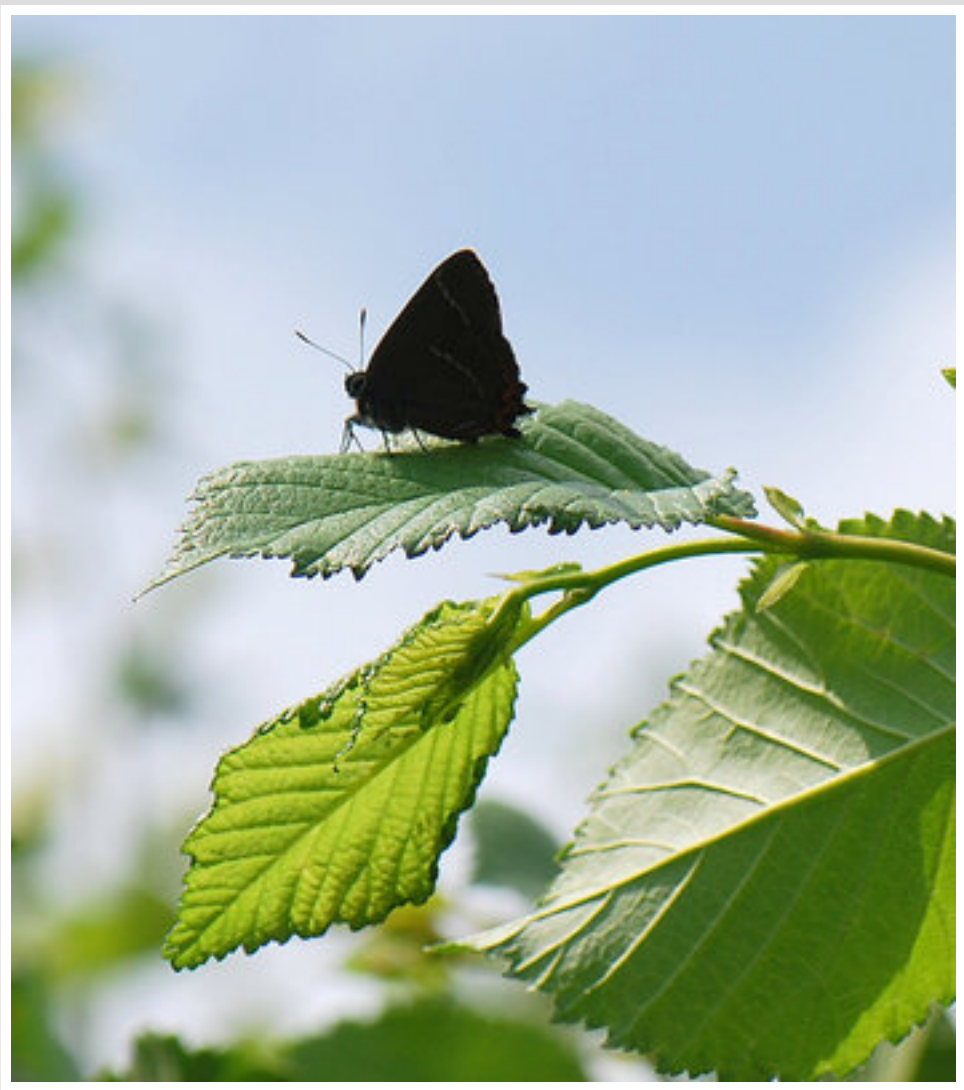
Cheers Neil and Dave for your very kind comments 😊 In fact having read them yesterday along with Nicks again, I took the night off, cracked open a Poachers Choice and put on a Midsomer Murders 😊

Large Blue or Secret Squirrels?

On Saturday Philzoid and I met up to do some quality butterflying. There were two options. Head West to Collard Hill for the Large Blues or East to a Secret Squirrel Site and White Letter Hairstreaks? As it was a balmy 23 degrees at 9am and there wasn't a cloud in the sky it seemed a better bet to head East and risk cricks in our necks rather than spend a few hours getting sunburnt and twisted ankles trying to follow turbo charged Large Blues.

We arrived there surprisingly quickly shaving at least 6 minutes of the Routeplanner and 7 off the SATNAV times 😊, but then when you're chatting away and driving you can really eat up the miles. Having parked and wandered in the baking heat to the site we saw the first butterfly of the day - our target species! 😊 A few very distant "hope they crop okay" shots later and we felt that the pressure was off, should we want to see any more Whitters then we could always work our way back here. And in fact this is what we did, as we'd stroll to one end of the site and then back stopping for a while at the larger Elms en route. In fact there were four other trees which played host to the White Letters but the first place we came too first seemed the best

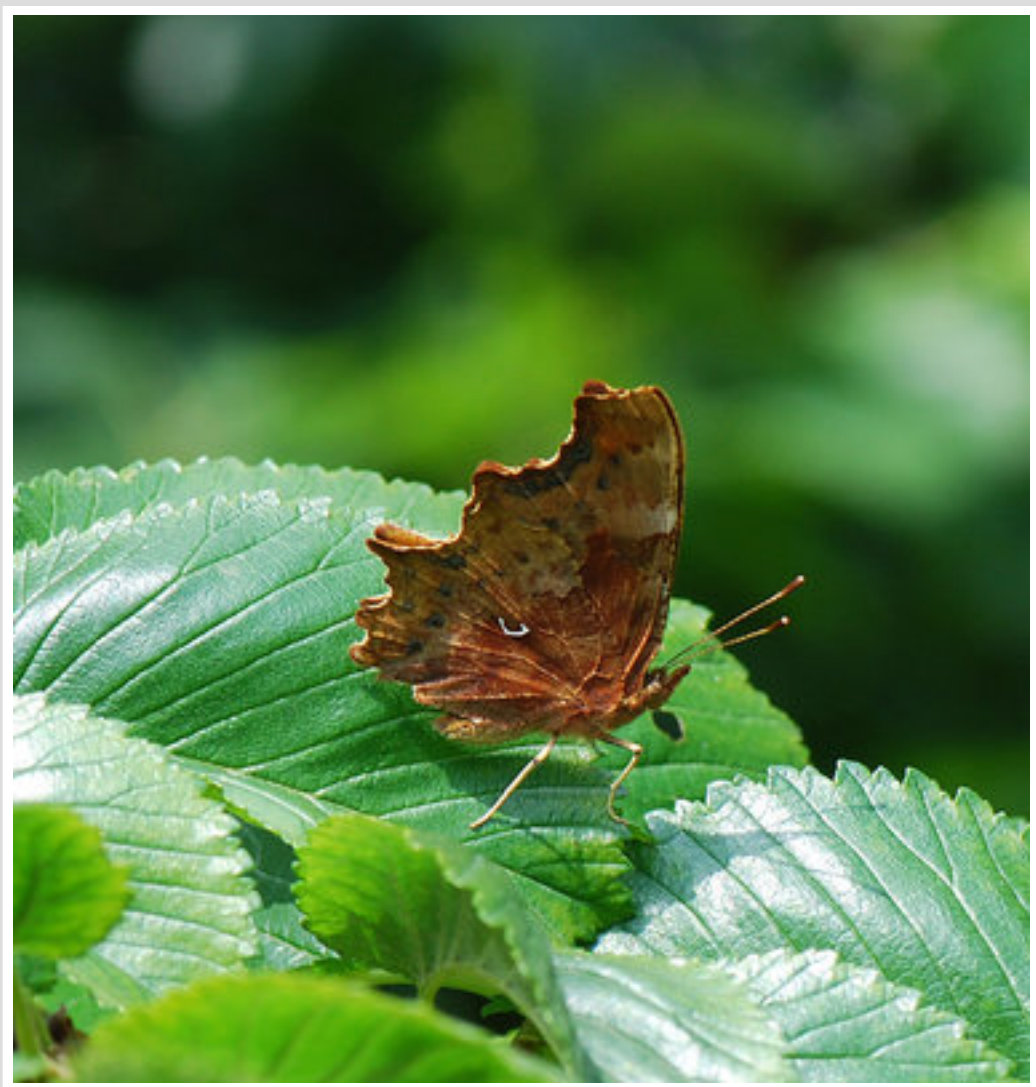
as the trees were slightly lower and there was a bank opposite which we could stand on giving us a little bit more elevation and clearance. This is obviously a tactic used by those who have visited the bank before us as most of the vegetation was trampled and there were large patches of bare earth 😞. Still on our second call in at this end of the site the Whitters came slightly lower down with one individual crawling along a branch directly overhead over the path! 😊



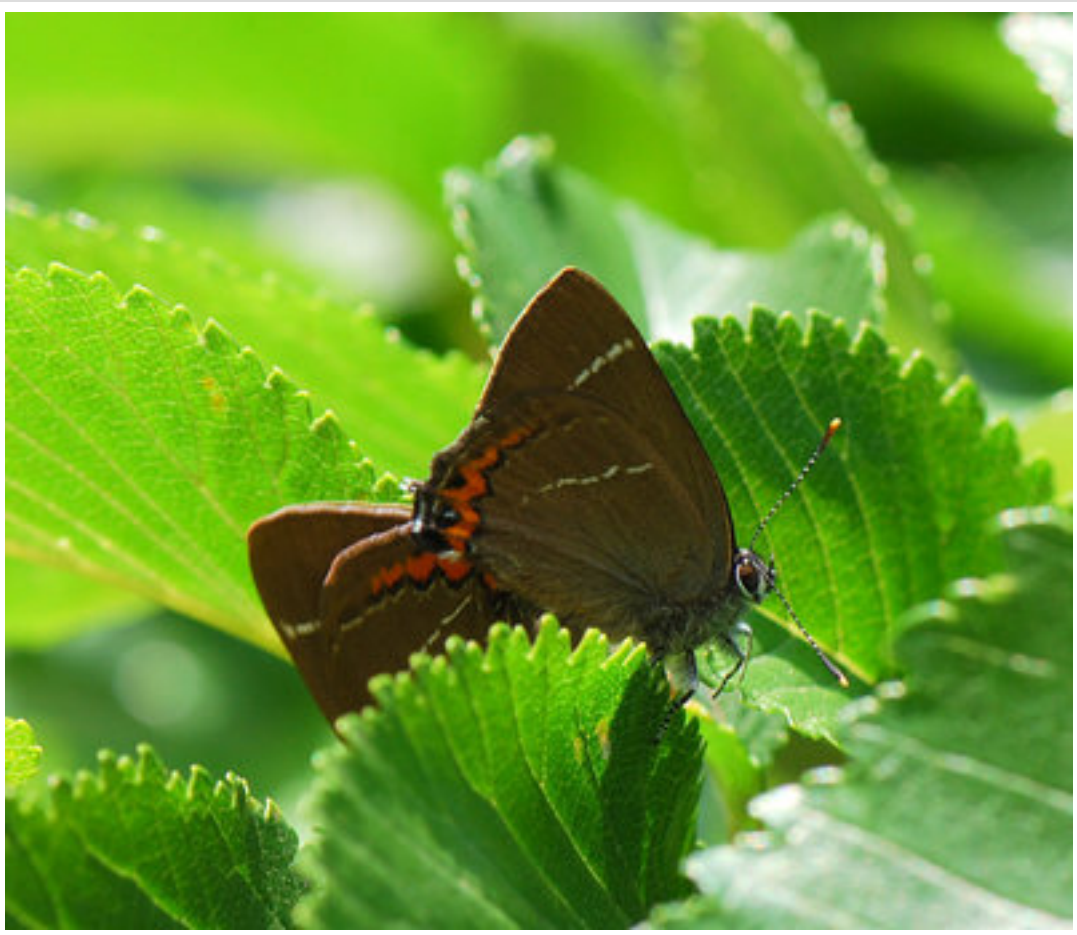
There were plenty of other things around with Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Marbled Whites putting on a good show as well as a fly by Small Tortoiseshell and one, possibly two, Common Blues and a Large White. Very unusually I found it difficult to get any photos of these butterflies, almost as if my heart wasn't in it. I enjoyed seeing them but they were no-where near as good as seeing the Whitters clattering into each other, buzzing each other at terrific speed or idly plopping onto a leaf and tilting their wings to face the sun and so disappearing from view as their shark fin profile vanished.

A couple of things I did photograph were my first H.Comma of the year and also some Bee Orchids which were nestled in the grasses near some

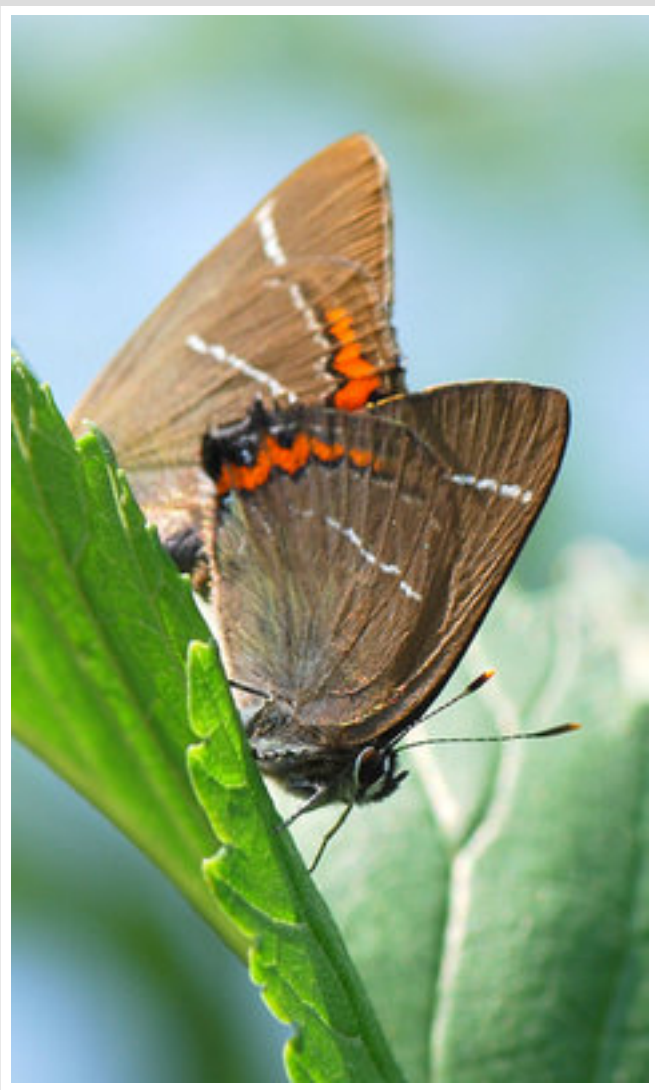
Thistles. The thing is I look at the Orchid now and can't see the flower. Instead I see a little Gnome wearing brown Dungarees with a green pointy hat and green shoes. He's very cheerful and has a massive smiley face, twinkly eyes and he's waving his right arm in greeting!



It was reaching sweltering point now at midday and the Whitters weren't coming down to the Thistles to nectar as hoped – perhaps because it was too hot or perhaps it's still a little too early in the season for that? So we headed back to the starting point which was at least slightly shaded joined by a fellow butterflyer. Once there we were treated to the same tantalising views, always slightly too far away, always just out of reach of a great shot, bombing out and back again or viciously silhouetted. I decided that enough was enough and so tried one of my favourite tricks for butterfly luring. “Do want a coffee Philzoid?” I asked, poured one from my flask and just as I finished pouring the second a Whitter came down. As Philzoid was lining up on it I noticed something on the other side of the path – a mating pair! They were within reach so here would be our opportunity for some close up shots of this almost ridiculously marked butterfly 😊. The cameras clicked away in a symphony of photography as we three made the most of this lucky chance. I was impressed not just by the lovely pair of butterflies but also by the etiquette we showed; always checking that we weren't in the way of the others shot, or that they'd finished before we could take our turn. Very civilised and worlds away from some of the twitches I've been on. And so shots hopefully in the bag we left the lovebirds ensuring that there will be some more Whitters here next year and made our way the whole 25 metres back to the car.







Amazing stuff! We couldn't believe our luck and with a few more hours in the bag we set off to Bentley Wood. Once there we went from the sublime to the ridiculous. There were so few butterflies it was almost as bad as back in April! Or at least that was how it felt. The Eastern Clearing held a few Brimstones but not the Clouded Yellow written in the book and a Small Tort did a fly-by. Down the Rides towards Donkey Copse the odd Meadow Brown, Ringlet or Large Skipper put in an appearance but not the hoped for ginger beasties. Eventually we did find a White Admiral but it wasn't for stopping, a small grey butterfly flitted across from one Oak to another - a Purple Hairstreak and something large, ginger and fast flew past high up on the return journey. In all I took 5 snaps of a Large Skipper and 8 of a Ringlet the whole time I was there. I think I was sated by the Whitters earlier in the day and the image is still burnt onto my retina when I close my eyelids even now! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 12-Jul-13 12:01 AM GMT

Excellent stuff Wurzel, excellent WL Hairstreak photos and a mating pair too! The Hutch. Comma is a very nice shot, the Bee Orchids are amazing! You always deliver.

Best regards,

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-13 03:16 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 Most of the time it comes down to luck, and failing that giving up and pouring a coffee seems to do the trick, perhaps butterflies are attracted to the smell of coffee? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 12-Jul-13 04:13 PM GMT

Jackpot, Wurzel!

Mating WLH's...I don't think I've ever seen an image of that before.

Re: Wurzel

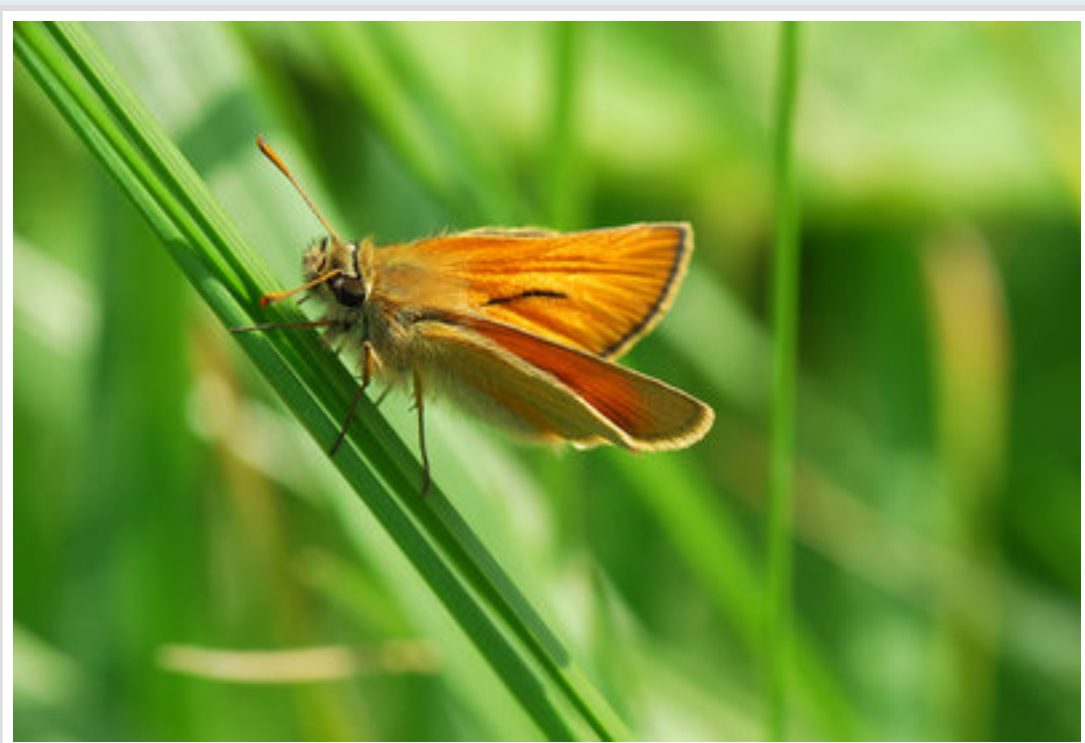
by Wurzel, 14-Jul-13 12:23 AM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 When your lucks in...

Middle Street Skippers (sounds like a Shirley Hughes story?)

Last Sunday morning was spent in the park; paddling in the river, eating a picnic lunch and generally baking. In fact the girls got so hot we headed home earlier than expected and they had their TV time. This meant I was freed up for an hour and a half so I grabbed my camera and then headed over to Middle Street. On entering the reserve I was shocked that the grasses have grown even higher, those that were at ankle height were now at waist and the previous waist heights were at head height! The first butterfly of the day didn't exactly fly past, rather it became visible in a dip in the grasses where they were slightly lower and some flowering plants had fought their way through. What made me notice it was the glittering colour, my second definitive

Small Skipper of the year. Last year I seemed to spend a huge amount of time crawling on my hands and knees trying to look for “indicator lights” or “Ink pads”, but the ID for this male was much, much easier. After a while he changed position and settled down to pose, nonchalantly leaning against a one of the grass stems.



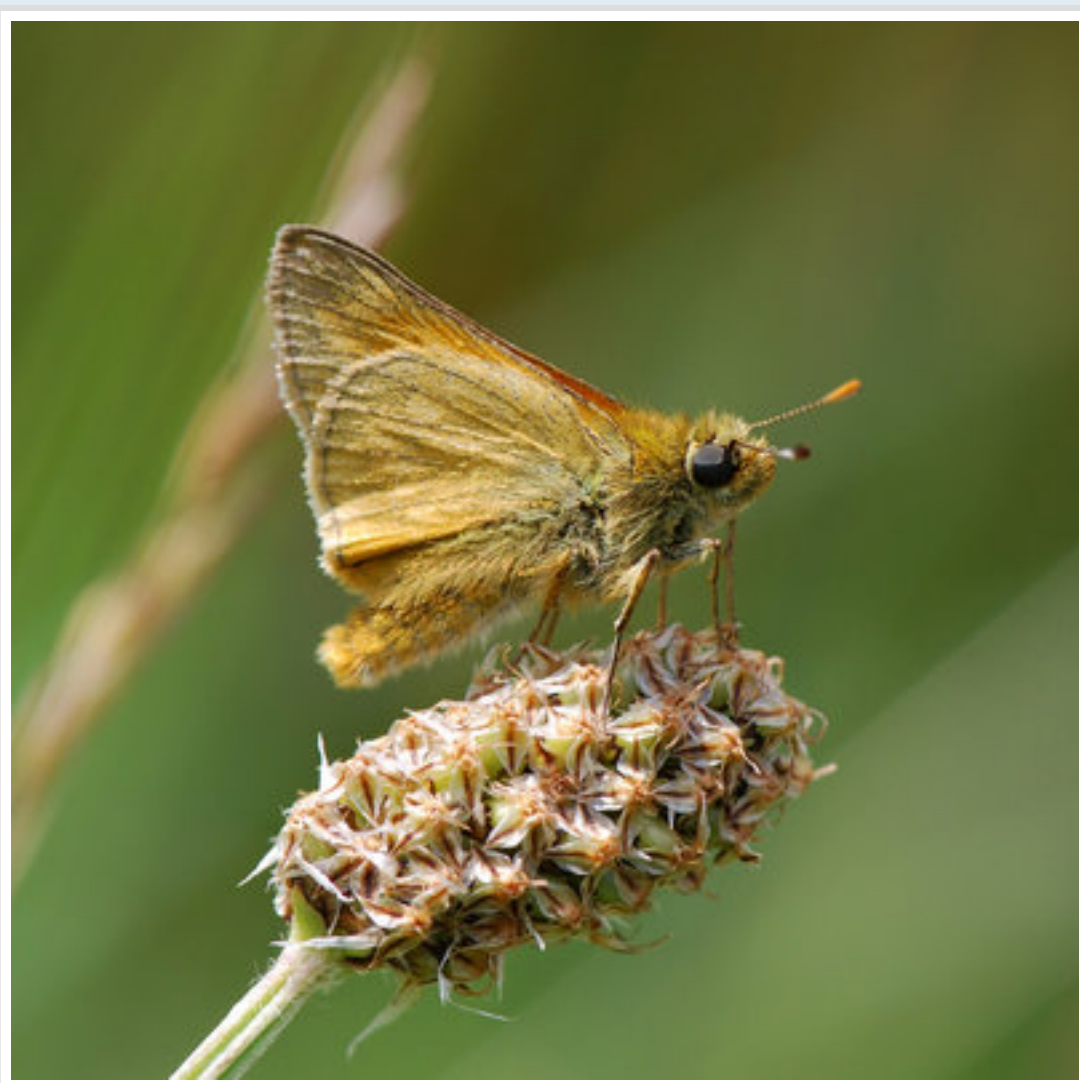


I left him in peace and headed round to do a circuit of the pond. On the way I encountered another Small Tortoiseshell that looked pretty dark to my eyes. A Common Blue seemed to be enjoying annoying the small white moths Ringlets and Meadow Browns as it would fly through the grass stems setting them off along with the occasional Blue-tailed Damselfly. Once at the gently sloping "beach" housed the main interest with Ringlets and Meadow Browns pausing here to take nectar. There was also another Small Skipper but it was having a spot of bother with a Large Skipper that was being a bully quite frankly. The Small would just settle to start supping when the Large would appear and buzz the Small until the golden blur disappeared from view. Eventually the Small would reappear only for the same scenario to be played out again.

After witnessing it three times I wished the little fella luck and congratulating him on his perseverance I moved on round the pond. Here I almost immediately spooked a Small Tort which was grounded and hidden by the overhang of the reeds which lined the path. This set off another two and all three spiralled upwards locked in an amorous battle. A Red Admiral flew by and I walked on trying to remember whether this was my second or third of the year, yet normally I'd have lost count by now.

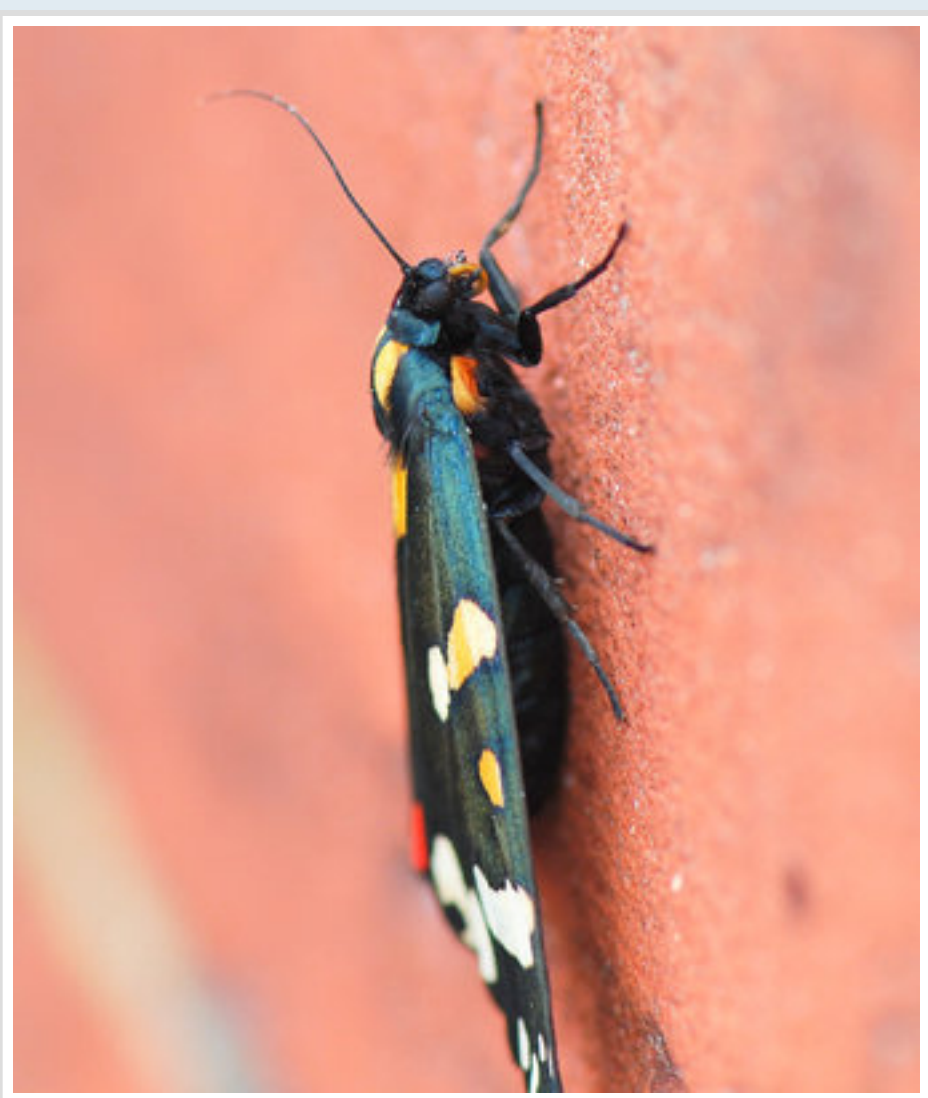
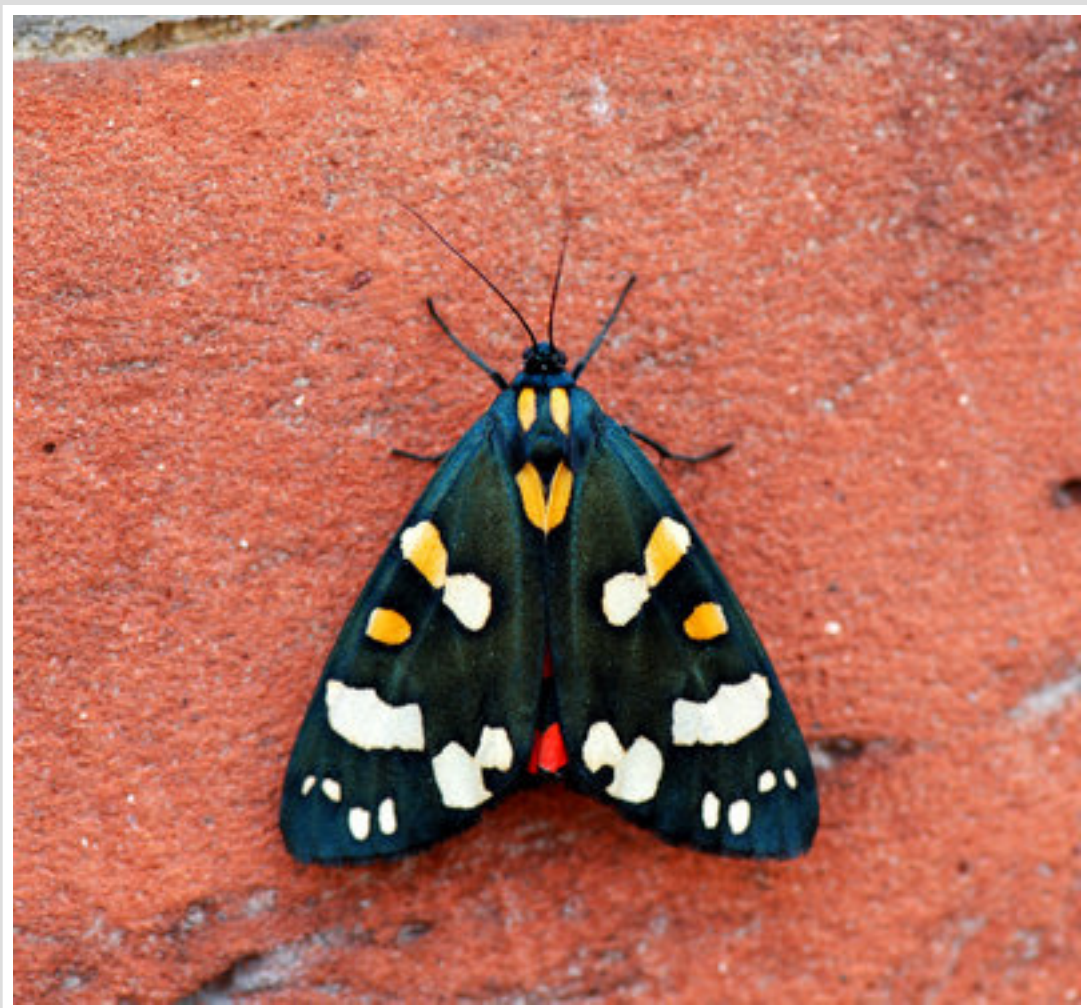


Eventually I reached the far side of the reserve and the flower rich field played host to Ringlets and Meadow Browns a plenty as well as two more male Common Blues, a Marbled White, another Small Tort but it was the Skippers that I took the most delight in. I fell back into the habit of trying to take the shots of the antennae from below so I could make sure which Skipper the Smessex was. I approached one, got into position and another Skipper buzzed it. I waited hoping it would come back and thinking it had clicked away. The Dark antennae tips had me thinking "Ace an Essex", so I crept around to the side and realised that it was actually a Large. Damn it, this wasn't the same butterfly I had originally crept up on, but that was probably a Small anyway as Essex always seem a bit later



I found a few more Small Skippers holding onto flower tops and rocking in the breeze but most of the time they were zooming around like loons so I thought it best to start the return journey. As I left the reserve a pair of Small Torts chased each other into a neighbouring garden almost as if they were

sending me off. The journey home was pretty quiet and I put my head down and marched so I arrived back with almost 15 minutes to spare. It would have been more but just as I was turning into my street a Scarlet Tiger flew across my line of sight and landed on one of my neighbours houses. After the merry dance they'd led me at Old Sarum a chance to get a close up was something I couldn't allow to slip away.



So another cracking little visit to Middle Street, if only it had some Dark Green Fritillaries I'd be made up!
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 14-Jul-13 12:52 AM GMT

I see you`re another one with a magic paint brush hidden within your camera Wurzel, 😊 beautiful Small Tort, what lovely vivid colours.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-13 11:06 PM GMT

Cheers Nick 😊 It's actually an Imp and it works okay until it wants a fag break or it runs out of paint 😊

Larkhill stop-offs

My stop-offs last week in the morning were more like those in the afternoon of the previous week and the afternoon was almost pointless as the butterflies were either roasting or turbo charged. 😊 However I persevered and as the heat continued to persist and build the Browns increased in numbers and the Blues were replaced by Golden Skippers (finally! 😊).

The first stop-off saw the usual mix but my best bet of getting any photos was a pair of Common Blues in cop. They started on the pink flowers and

then fluttered still locked together to a lower boudoir down in the grasses. Once again I was amazed by the overall strength of the female and the strength of the male's genitals in particular. I witnessed not only the male suspended by his genitals as with the Marbled White pair at Five Rivers but also the female heaving the male round so she could face the other way!



The next stop-off in the afternoon was the start of the change with Small Skippers starting to fill in for their larger cousins. But due to the heat my shots were few and far between and when they came they were smash and grab. Still I managed a couple of decent ones and this was the best of the bunch.

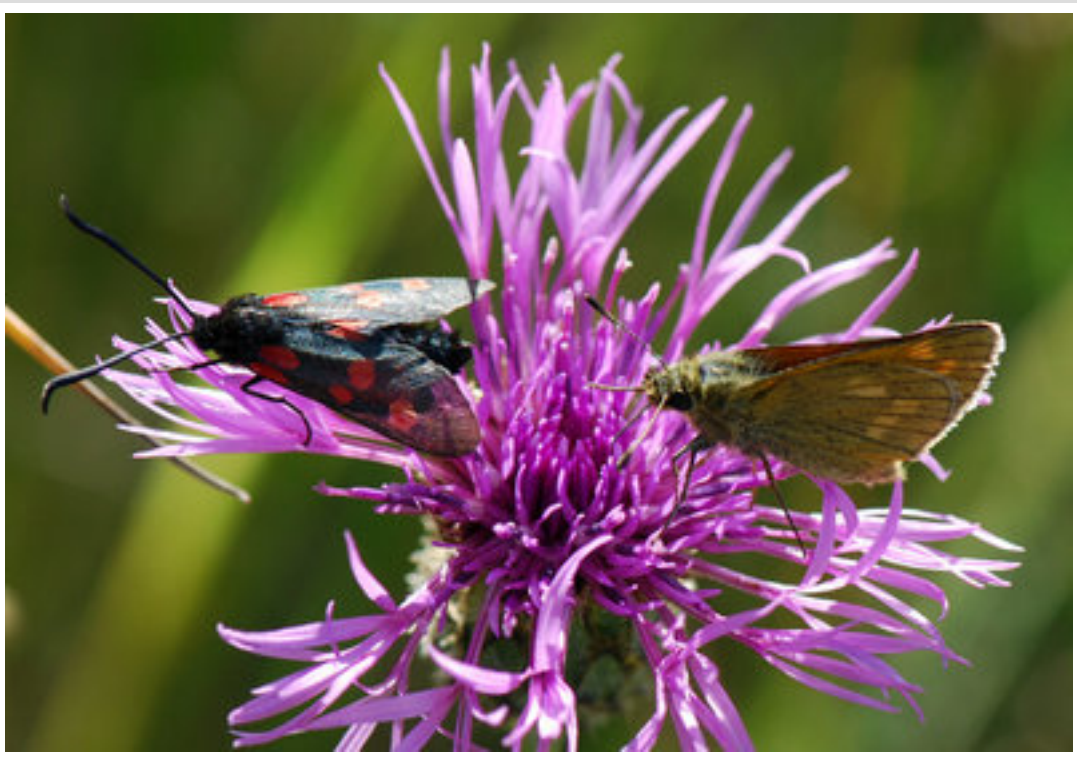


After this less fruitful visit I left off the afternoon stops and stuck to the mornings and it paid dividends with the first butterfly of the day my first Essex Skipper of 2013 perching in the morning sun and glowing. There were also Large Skippers around one aged one of which was sharing a flower head with an equally aged Burnet, probably bemoaning about "these young upstarts". To complete the set a Small Skipper appeared, allowing me to make the comparison between these two similar species.





A little closer



"The youth of this month, they don't know how lucky they are!" "Tell me about it, I remember this when it was all Travellers and shoots, dead cold it was too!"



So looking good for the rest of the week, again if only there were a few Dark Green Frits about here, still you never know what might turn up?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jul-13 12:45 AM GMT

Those are definately Essex Skippers,Wurzel. Well done.

But i've still beaten you by four days,as i saw them on Wednesday! 😄

Cheers.

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 15-Jul-13 09:34 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Have just got around to reading your diary:-

"Wurzel" wrote:

At one point I even risked losing my limbs on any unexploded ordinance lying around to get a few shots of a Chimney Sweeper moth.

Perseverance paid off Wurzel that Chimney Sweeper is a hard little bleeder to get near to, and heads right into the undergrowth when it does settle 😊👍

"Wurzel" wrote:

A couple of things I did photograph were my first H.Comma of the year and also some Bee Orchids which were nestled in the grasses near some Thistles. The thing is I look at the Orchid now and can't see the flower. Instead I see a little Gnome wearing brown Dungarees with a green pointy hat and green shoes. He's very cheerful and has a massive smiley face, twinkly eyes and he's waving his right arm in greeting!

😄😄😄 I took a similar shot and you've perfectly summed up my thoughts of this flower (all he needs is a little fishing rod) 😄. It's hard to believe these orchids have evolved to produce the scent and the look like a female bee so as to attract amorous males as an aid to pollination 😊 (although I believe by and large they rely on self pollination nowadays). Even harder to believe the male bee is fooled by a 'gnome' 😊😊.

"Wurzel" wrote:

"Do want a coffee Philzoid?" I asked, poured one from my flask and just as I finished pouring the second a Whitter came down. As Philzoid was lining up on it I noticed something on the other side of the path - a mating pair!

Those White Letters made for a great day 😊. After my first ever blank Purple Emperor day at Straits on Saturday 😞 I'm coming to the conclusion that I need to adopt some sort of lucky talisman like your bushwhacker hat or flask of coffee ... it never fails 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

It would have been more but just as I was turning into my street a Scarlet Tiger flew across my line of sight and landed on one of my neighbours houses.

Lovely shots of the Scarlet Tigers Wurzel 😊, something (like Small Tortoiseshell) we just don't seem to get around this part of Surrey 🇬🇧. BTW I've picked up Silver Washed and Silver Studs since our last meet up. You've added Essex (which I haven't seen) so I reckon we could be level pegging 😊

Phil

Re: Wurzel

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

Cheers Essex 😊 To be fair you should see them first in Essex 😊

Cheers Philzoid 😊 I still can't work out how the Bee is fooled either, I suppose it's because we're not looking at it through compound eyes? 😊 Which is a good thing else I'd be seeing a whole fishing fleet of Gnomes 😊 The pouring the coffee charm only works because I am a great believer in the Law of Sod 😊

In terms of the tally - I too got SWF, as well as a definite Purple Hairstreak, Gatekeeper and His Nibbs. I reckon though that you'll still win in the long run, blooming NBA and Wood Whites... 😊😊

Lunchtime

Last Thursday I took a quick trip out at lunch to Vera Jones Mill. This was mainly because I hadn't gotten out that morning as I had to stop en route for petrol so my five minutes of peace, tranquillity and meditation hadn't occurred. But also the last time I'd visited the down lands leading to the reserve proper were looking good for Smessex Skippers. However instead of the expected Skipper fest on my visit the flower meadows on the down were gone apart from the odd margin around the hedges. Everywhere I looked there was hay drying and Meadow Browns flitting about amongst the desolation wondering where their Meadow had gone?

One individual I noticed seemed to not follow in the footsteps of its brethren in that it didn't explode from the grass just in front of my feet. Instead it

tried to crawl away and hide under a leaf. I little closer examination revealed the cause of this odd behaviour as its wings were deformed – perhaps from drying out too quickly in the mad heat? I managed to encourage it to crawl towards my hand so I could get an even closer look and then I placed it back where I found it.



The actual reserve itself was very quiet with the usual Ringlets, the odd Large Skipper, Meadow Brown everywhere and singles of Brimstone and Small Tortoiseshell. However my main interest from the reserve was a grotesque looking fly.



My lunch break was almost over so I had to head back up the hill amongst the confused Meadow Browns and fly back along the country lanes. As I departed the reserve I noticed an uncut section tucked away on the other side of the down so I might have to make a return visit at some point and juts hope that it can escape the mower in the mean time...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 15-Jul-13 11:10 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Lovely shots of the second brood mating Common blues, or is the male a late first brood specimen or just a tatty early emergence of the second brood? What is the female doing to the male in the third photo? poor thing. Cracking shot. 😊

I thought your photo of the Orchid/Gnome looked rather like an infant Mr. Punch in a baby-grow. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 16-Jul-13 08:17 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Cracking reports and photos 😊

Loving your 'Little Gnome Orchid', one of those things that once seen, cannot be unseen 😊

Thinking about it, some butterfly common names have changed over the years, your Hedge browns/Gatekeepers being an obvious example, I wonder..... 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Padfield, 16-Jul-13 08:37 PM GMT

As always, I'm thoroughly enjoying your diary, Wurzel, but I agree – the little gnome, in his dungarees or baby-grow, is just brilliant!

Guy

Re: Wurzel

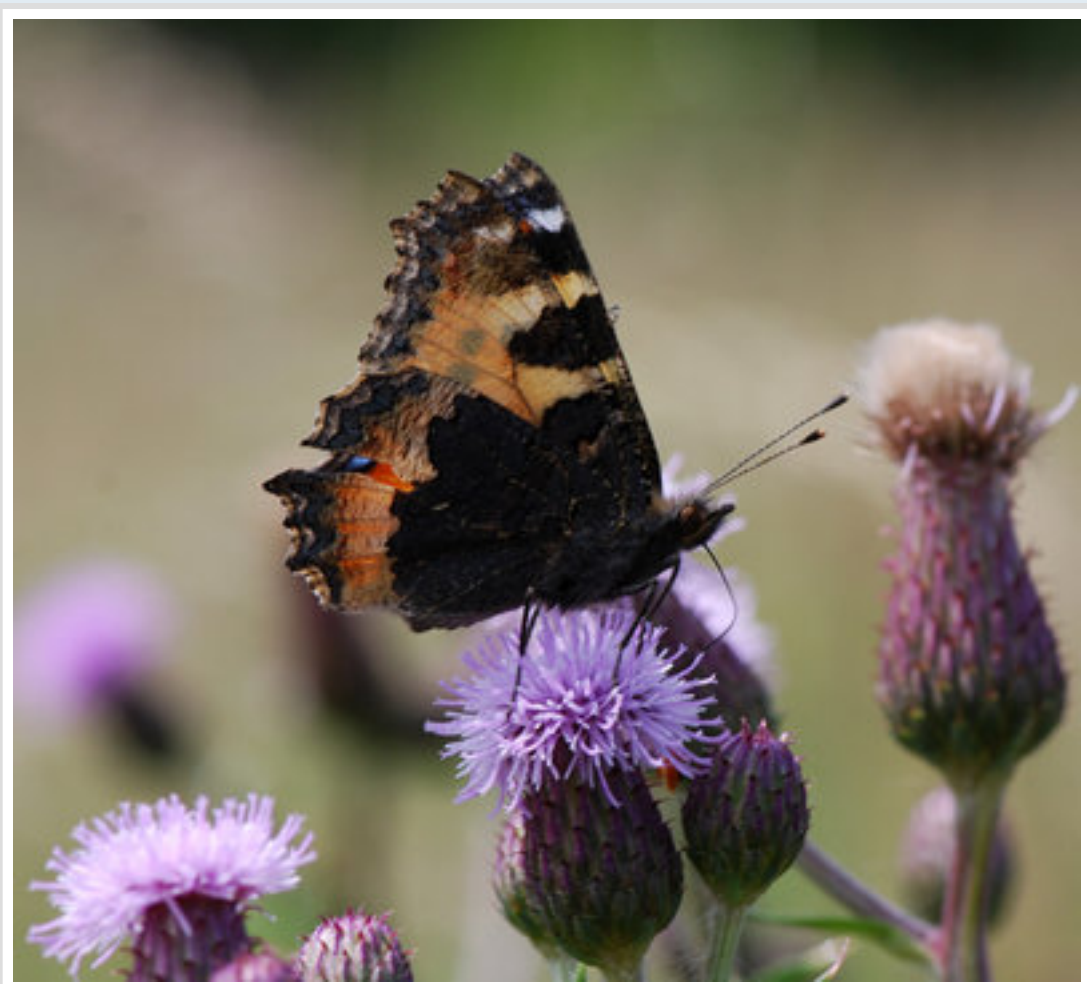
by Wurzel, 16-Jul-13 11:22 PM GMT

Cheers Nick, Neil and Guy for the kind comments 😊 Little Gnome Orchid it'll be from now on 😊. If other Orchids are as ridiculous looking as this I might have to get into them just for laughs! 😊

Field near work

Last Friday I went out for a break at lunchtime and after a disappointing time at Vera Jones I checked out another place a bit nearer. In fact it's just over the road from work and is just a bit of waste ground. Waste ground to some, to me butterfly haven. The grasses have gone crazy in the last couple of weeks and are now almost at my chest height, some of them are so tall they almost obscure the path behind a straw screen.

First up was a Marbled White looking incongruous flying over tarmac! Then I reached the site itself and waded my way along the path. Large Thistles poked up from amongst the grasses and there were three Small Torts feeding amid the baking sun. Further along I started seeing small golden blobs amongst Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns and Ringlets. A few were Large Skipper but most were smaller Smessex and in good numbers. I set about trying to get close enough and found the best way was to walk along the path and then stop every now and again and they'd come to me almost. After finding my first Essex Skippers at Larkhill I was after some shots of the males so that I could see the smaller, finer straight androconi but I was happier with the shots below to be honest.



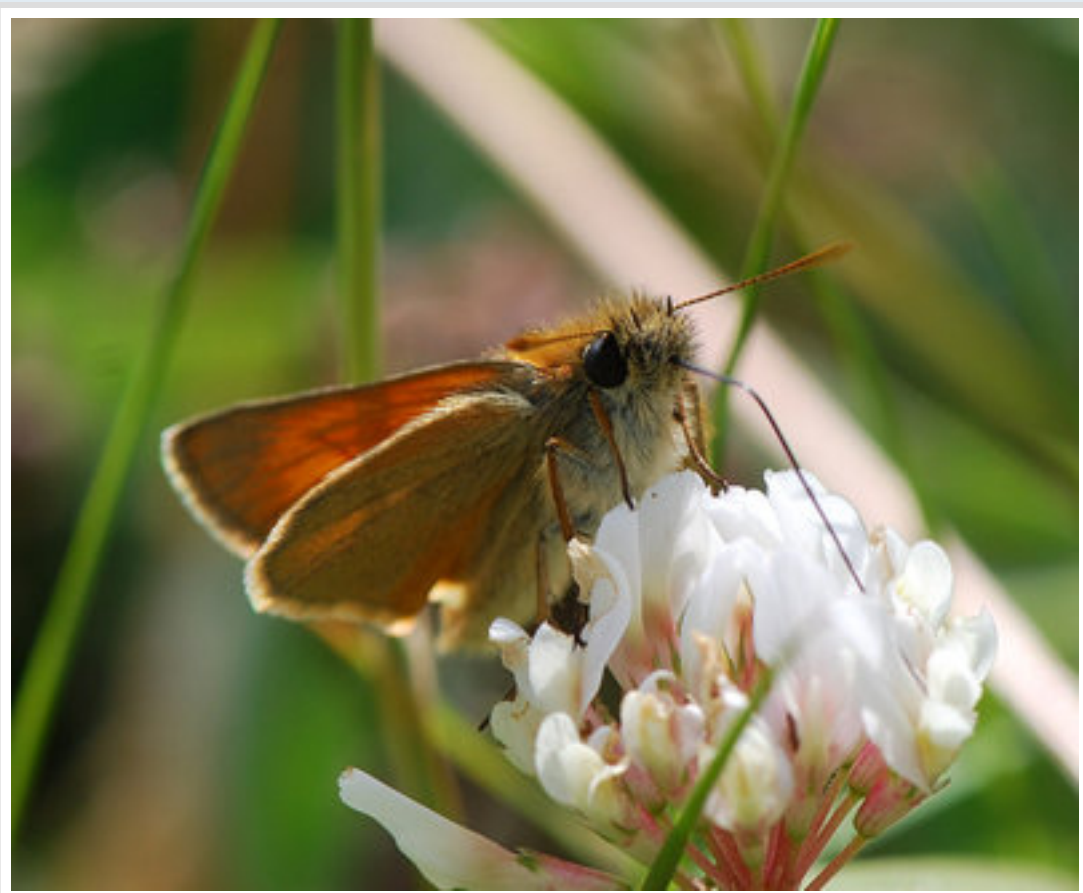


I cut across the field breaking through onto the path that runs along the margin. Here there were Brambles along sides and the butterflies present were mainly more Ringlets and Meadow Browns but I couldn't stay too long due to the huge Horseflies. Not quite as big as those at Bentley but still enough to cause a massive bite.





Once back on the site proper I wandered the paths watching the antics of the Skippers. One would be nicely settled before another would buzz it. There would be a golden blur spiralling upwards as they both took off and had a bit of a “discussion” before separating and bombing off in different directions with their jinking flight. I tried following it and most of my time was wondering if they’d ever land. Then when they did the process would repeat itself again. It was a cracking little drama to watch. Eventually I found a nice front on Small Skipper nicely showing the “indicator lights” and then had to head back stopping briefly for a pair of Ringlet in cop. I seem to be doing alright for “cop” shots this year 🤔



I had to stay to do some bouncing for the year 11 Leavers Prom so to kill an hour or so I popped back. Others went to the pub but I prefer to drink when I know I don't have to drive for at least another 8 hours. It was still as hot if not hotter and everything was turbo charged so in the end I found a good patch and watched and enjoyed. There were battles, buzzing, hassling, exploding from the grasses etc etc. One Smessex was posing problems as it seemed to have a chubby abdomen (female?) but also small straight sex brands (male Essex?) with hook tips, not drum stick shaped antennae (Small?). In end I went with female small - as sex brands weren't they were just veins after all.



I also found gliding H.Comma at the bottom of the hill which eventually stopped gliding along the trees here but again I couldn't stay long as the Horseflies were loving the dappled shade just as much as the Comma!



I started to make my way back through the ever increasing number of Skipper skirmishes when I reached the path where the turf is lower and there I found something different - a worn Small Copper. I think this is my fourth or fifth this year but this is only the second site I've seen them at! Judging by the wear this individual showed it must have been here a while so was obviously hiding from me.



Again time ran out so I had to head back and get into my monkey suit, adopt an impassive face and stand stock still barring the entrance. I was going to make a stop off on the way home but it was getting dark and it was still baking.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 18-Jul-13 04:51 PM GMT

Nice photos Wurzel, especially the Essex Skippers.

All the best

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-13 10:56 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊

Bentley Wood

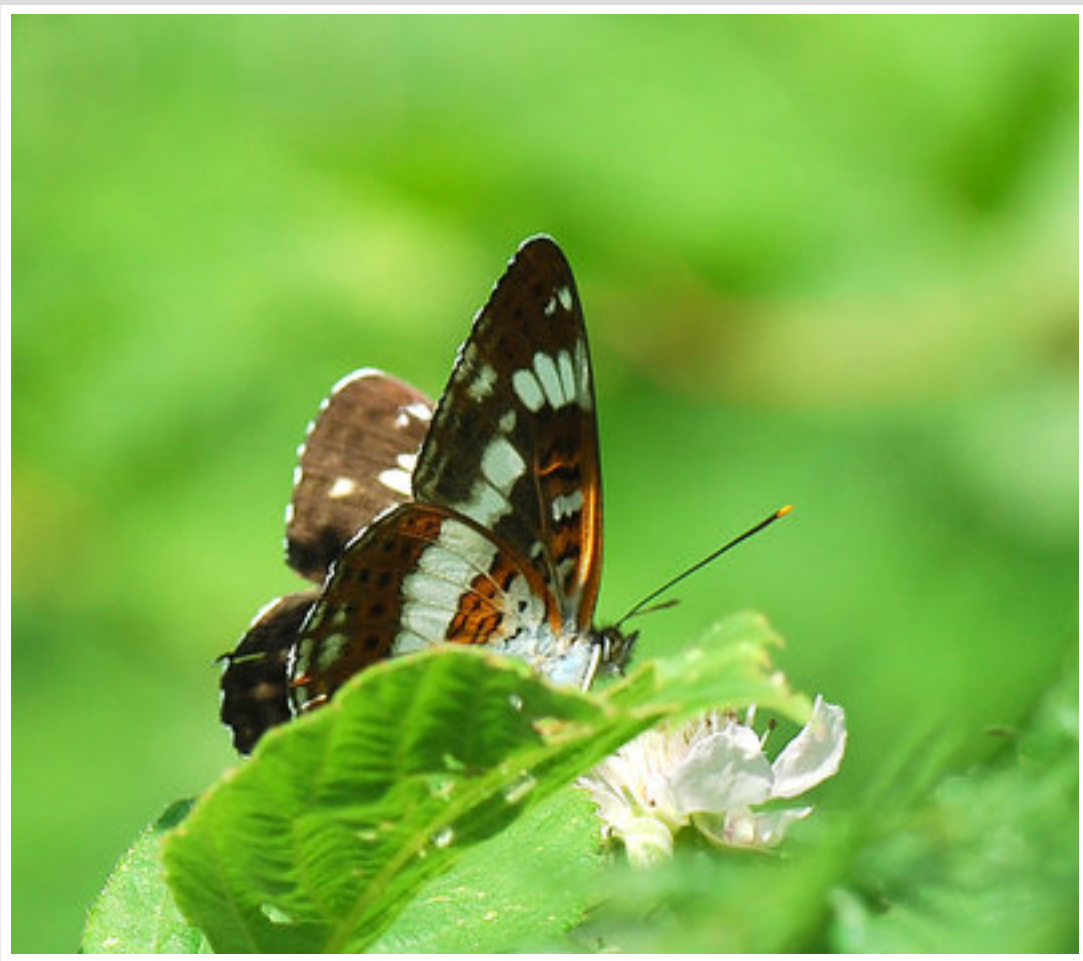
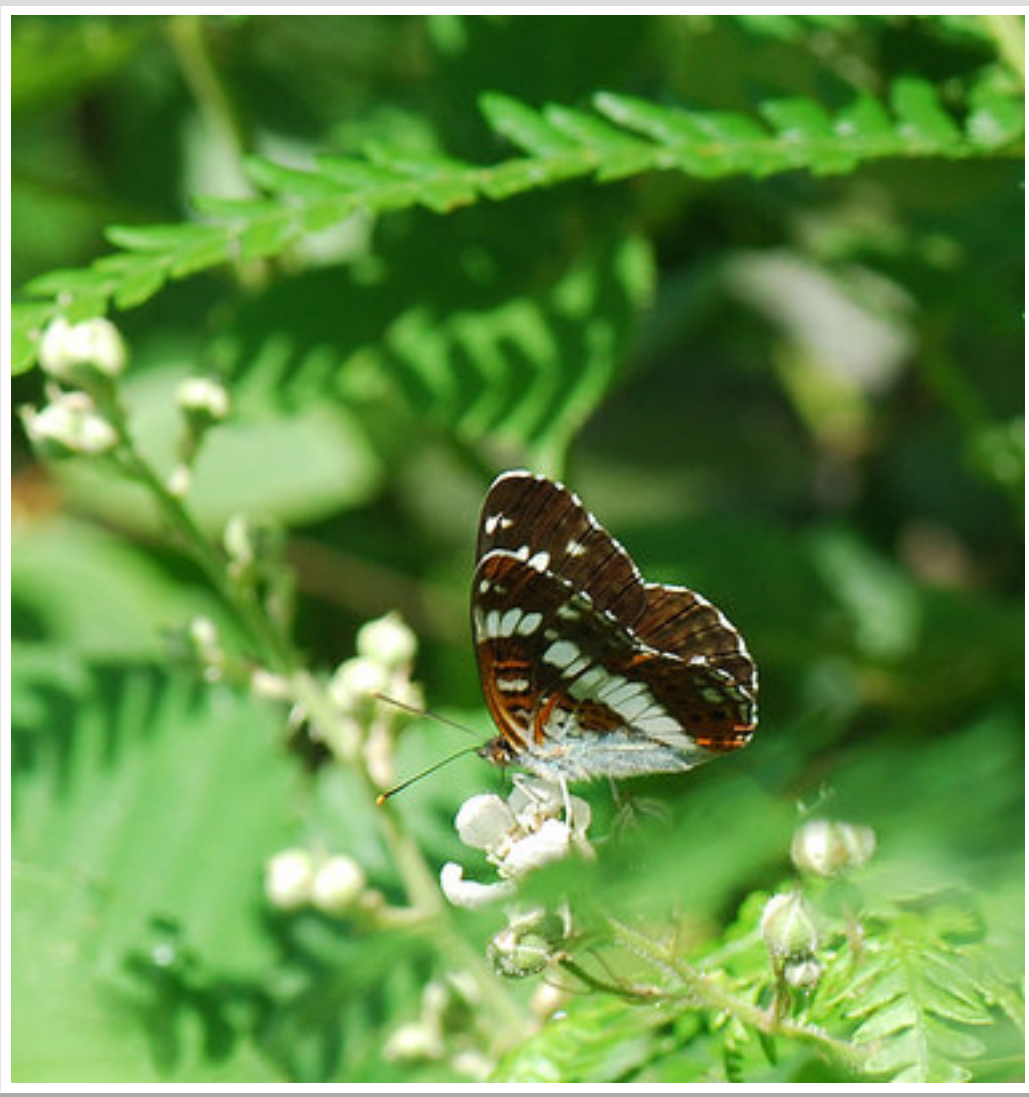
Hearing reports and reading posts about Purple Emperors made me realise that the silly season is upon us and so I headed over to Bentley Wood with the girls in tow and a tin of Polish fish paste tucked in my man bag. We started off in the Eastern Clearing hoping to find some Dark Green Fritillaries which would save me a trip later in the week. As it was a single White Admiral glided around without stopping in that frustrating way that they do when

we arrived in the clearing proper. It was joined very briefly by a Silver Washed which bombed past amongst the numerous Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Marbled Whites.

We then walked through the woodland path to the track stopping on the way for my first 2 gatekeepers of the year. My obsession has started again and I couldn't help noticing that the first one had 6 white spots on the under wing, which I think is a new one for my collection. The other was multiocellata (if that is the correct term) with a diamond marking on the fore under wing just below the "eye". A great start to my Gatekeeper variation records for 2013!



After a brief stop back at the car we then took main track down to the crossroads bumping into the same chap from my Small Pearl visit. As we walked long the baking track there seemed to be surprisingly few butterflies about - the odd Ringlet, Large Skipper or Meadow Brown but not the usual large numbers of Frits gliding over the fern tops, silvery Purple Hairstreaks flying around the tops of the Oaks and definitely no sign of His Nibbs despite seeing 3 and an Empress along this stretch last year. Is it too hot for butterflies - it was still just after 8am but already the temps were in the high 20's? At the crossroads we took the left hand track (opposite direction to the White-letters) and to left of the path I found a large clump of bramble just off the path hidden behind a screen of Ferns. In here there was another SWF and a WA and this one allowed closer views. It always seems odd to me that when at rest WAs are black with white markings yet when they are gliding and flying they appear almost white/silver.



Distractions over we continued along the path then bent round to the right towards Donkey Copse. The girls set up camp and at the junction they took great delight in laying down some fish paste. I'm not sure now that it was the right stuff as the women in the Polish deli didn't speak great English and I have only 3 Polish phrases, none of which work outside of a pub! While we waited the girls read their books and drained all the life out of my iPod and I settled for a few Silver-washed Fritillary shots.





As we were watching a WA He finally appeared, His Nibbs. It was as if he'd just materialised. After a few glides by He went again but those few circuits around the wood were a joy to behold. Big and very fast, powerful and much more stocky than a WA in flight and the wings looked broader too. He returned and landed briefly on a tree so I got a distant shot, I watched as he opened his wings and blue shone through, ace. Unfortunately one of our number was too keen and He was spooked. He shot off not to be seen by me again.



Nothing but a record...but I have the memories

The girls decamped and we worked our way further round adding more Skipper, Meadow Browns and the occasional Silver Washed to the days tally along with a "wave" moth. At one point I watched a small silvery butterfly fly across from one Oak to another, the wings looked almost square - a definite Purple Hairstreak. There were a few more SWF's bombing along but we didn't have any more joy with Purple Emperor despite checking the same area later in the afternoon. So hot, tired and sticky from sweat and sun cream we wandered back to the car park, stopping occasionally en route for a few more Silver-washed. Once in the car park I tried leaving the doors to my car open in the vain hope that it might encourage any Purps to come down and have a try. As well as a brief fly-by WA and a few Silver-washed a H.Comma also put in an appearance. After a brie





Just as we were leaving we bumped into Rob H he'd had a grounded individual on the first track we'd been on (groan) but by then we'd been out of the house for almost 7 hours so I did the decent thing and took the girls. Well after a quick stop off at Figsbury to check out where the site actually is (Skippers, Small Tort and Red Admiral all in the car park).



I have to confess that during the day it was amazing but on reflection I'm slightly disappointed after last year's fantastic party atmosphere and sightings aplenty included grounded individuals. Perhaps they've all been invited to Fermyn? Still seeing His Nibbs was still an honour and a privilege...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 18-Jul-13 11:38 PM GMT

Think you could be right,Wurzel–there were 20 or more on the ground at Fermyn yesterday! What a splendid sight they were. But any sight of his royal purpleness is a memorable encounter–nevermind the quantity,it's all about the quality!

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 19-Jul-13 09:13 PM GMT

Evening Wurzel – I can certainly empathise with you re PE. It does seem a bit like hard work this year to get a close up view but when it eventually happens, doesn't it make it all the more satisfying. Not quite the same when you're tripping over them 😂😂😂😂

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-13 11:33 PM GMT

Cheers Essex – if only I could upload my memories to do my post 😊

Cheers Pauline – I don't know about satisfaction I'm quite prepared to enjoy them less and be tripping over them 😊😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 20-Jul-13 10:00 PM GMT

You're right of course Wurzel – it's just that I'm a deep shade of green seeing all these magnificent photos returning from Fermyn 🍀🍀🍀 Perhaps one day

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-13 11:34 PM GMT

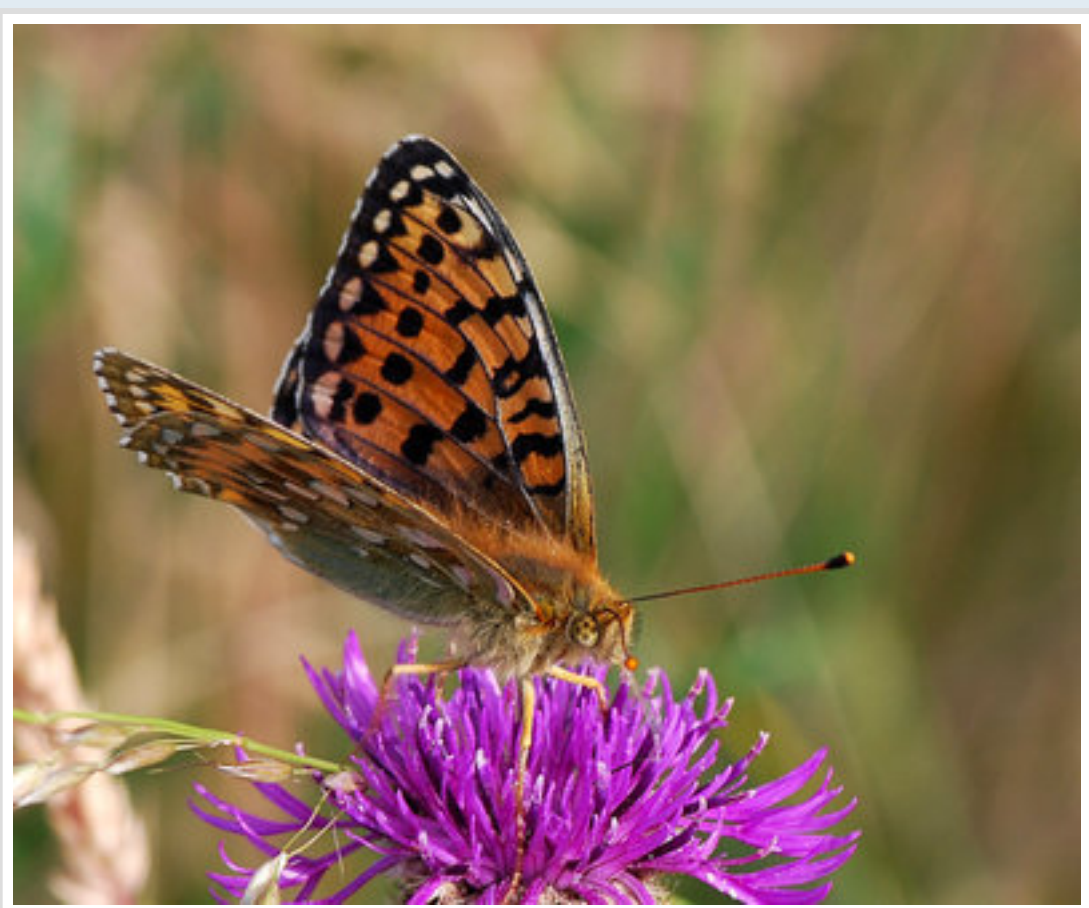
Cheers Pauline – I reckon Fermyn is definitely on my wish list of places to visit 😊

Martin Down – an evening visit

I had been ogling the fantastic shots of Dark Green Fritillaries that have been littering the site for a week or more and last Tuesday I rushed over to Martin Down once the girls were ready for bed to try and get some of my own. My visits in the last couple of years have seen plenty of action in the car park but that wasn't the case on this evening. In fact I was slightly worried because despite the immense heat there didn't seem to be much about. I headed to my usual hotspot, through the car park and the little cut through to the dip that rises up to Borkerley and as I broke through the Hawthorns a fantastic sight presented itself to me. There were butterflies everywhere; Meadow Browns, Marbled Whites and Ringlets in amongst a multitude of Smessex Skippers and more importantly from my point of view, almost as many DGFs! I'd heard tell that there were hundreds of them here and that seemed about right.

On the drive to the reserve I wondered what I'd see and ran through in my head the type of shots I'd like to get in order of priority...

1. Anything DGF! – essentially for the yearly tally/list.



Tick

2. Underwing – I've only had limited success as they are always so active. The best I've had was from a pair in cop but a "gooseberry" kept getting into shot or with sun behind so appearing "Stained Glass". So to get one of those field guide, classic shots would be great.



Tick 2



3. Topside showing off all their ginger loveliness.



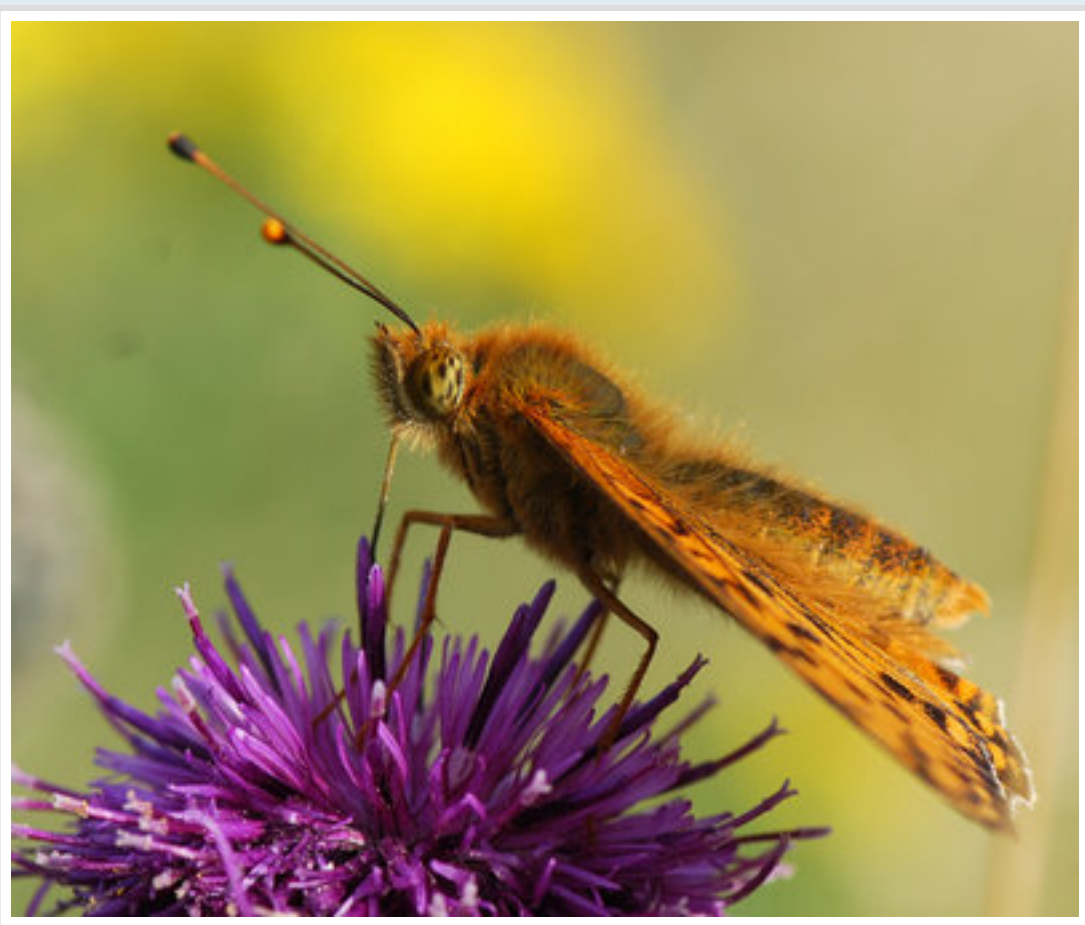
Tick 3



4. Close-ups. I like to try and get a few close ups of all the species I encounter if possible, and Dark Greens offer a bit of a challenge as they can be so active but challenges aren't supposed to be easy to achieve.



Tick 4

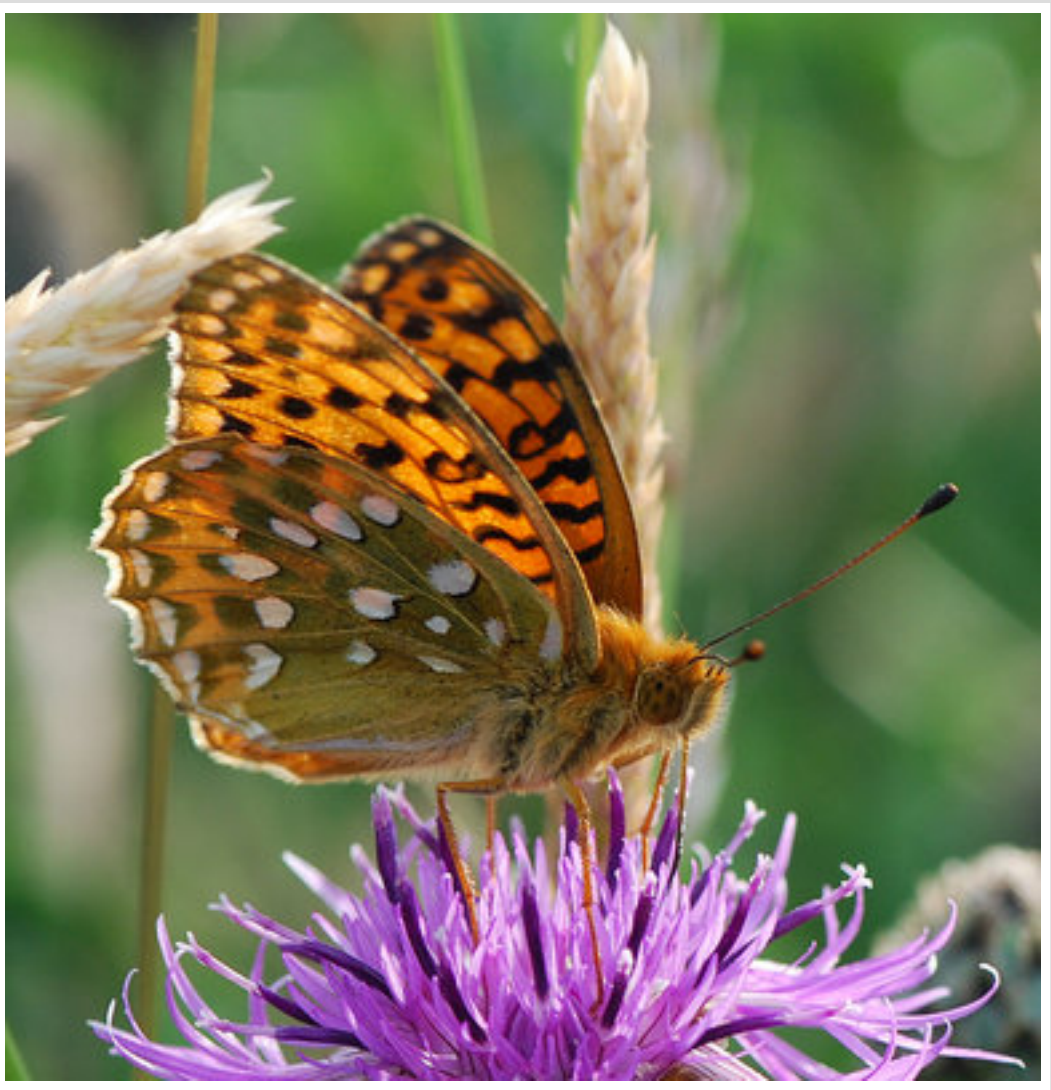


5. Stained glass – to go in my collection.



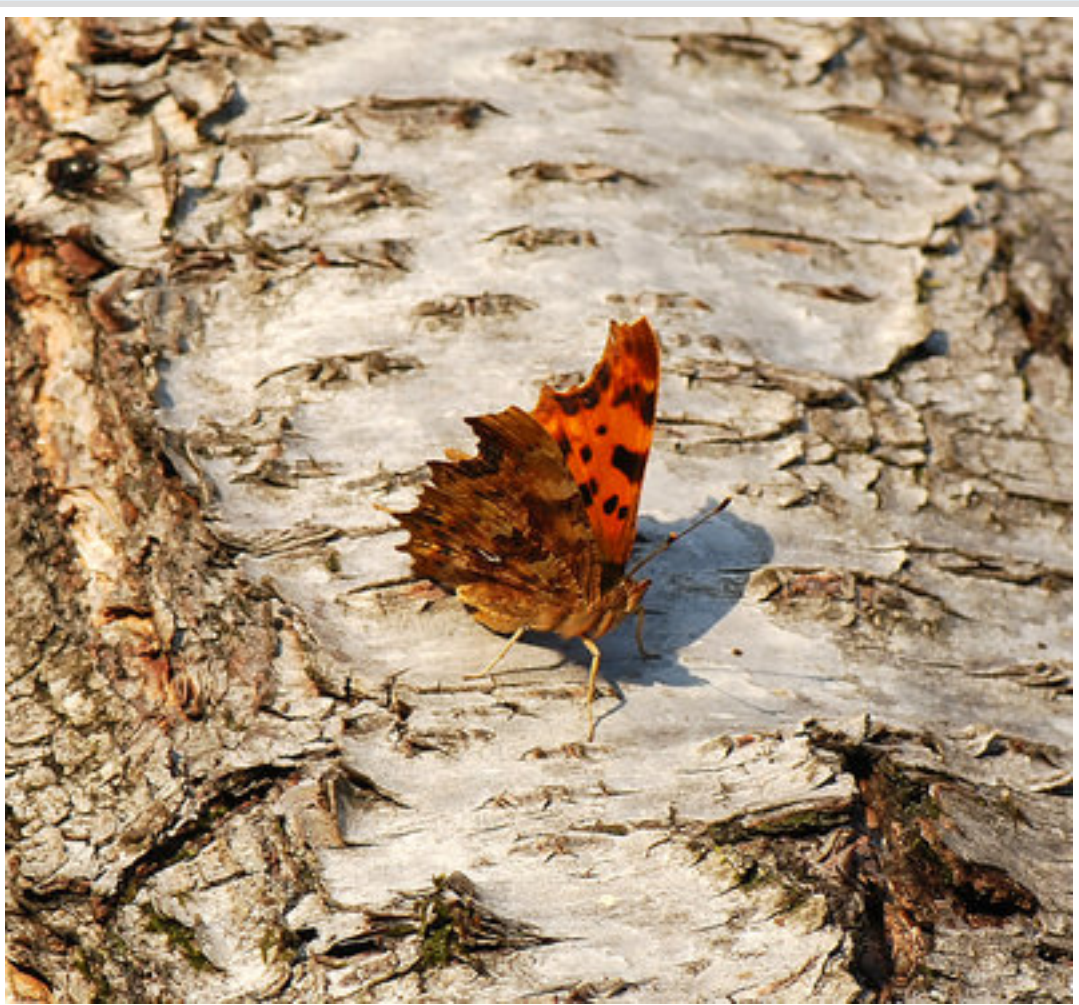
Tick 5

6.Habitat. It's good to try and get some shots that tell the story and place the butterfly in context, something different from the usual, something that offers perhaps a little insight into the life of the butterfly. Sometimes I worry that when I'm selecting shots I miss out some that represents the butterfly as a living organism merely because they're not sharp enough, or there's a shadow or perhaps part of the wing is out of focus etc. Anyway I like to think that this shot kinda placed it in context - nowhere near a Padfield but the intention was there.



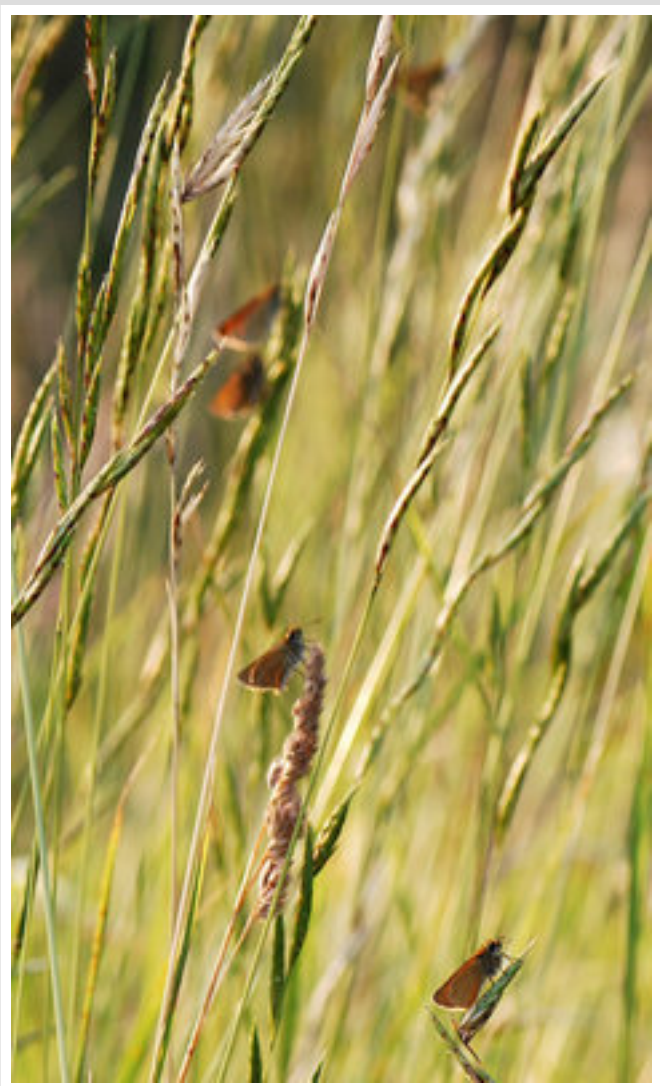
Tick 6

Despite everything going exactly to my plan for DGFs I didn't have everything I was hoping for as I was hoping to get some slightly better shots of WA and SWF in the cooler temps of evening over in Kitts Wood. The cooler temperatures didn't really happen so even though I saw both species they weren't hanging around even at 8pm. So I just enjoyed the wander and the glorious evening light.





As I was winding my way homewards something caught my eye – a communal roost of Smessex Skippers. Try as I might I could only get 5 of the 8 or so in one shot and the way they were arranged made a fantastic curve shape amongst the grasses.



A fantastic evening and well worth the wait. My only concern now is that the heatwave has brought the butterflies on strong and now they'll burn out before we get a proper chance to enjoy them?
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jul-13 04:16 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Some cracking shots there, especially DGF underside Tick 2 and the communal Smessex Skippers 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Jul-13 11:29 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊

Small Trip to town

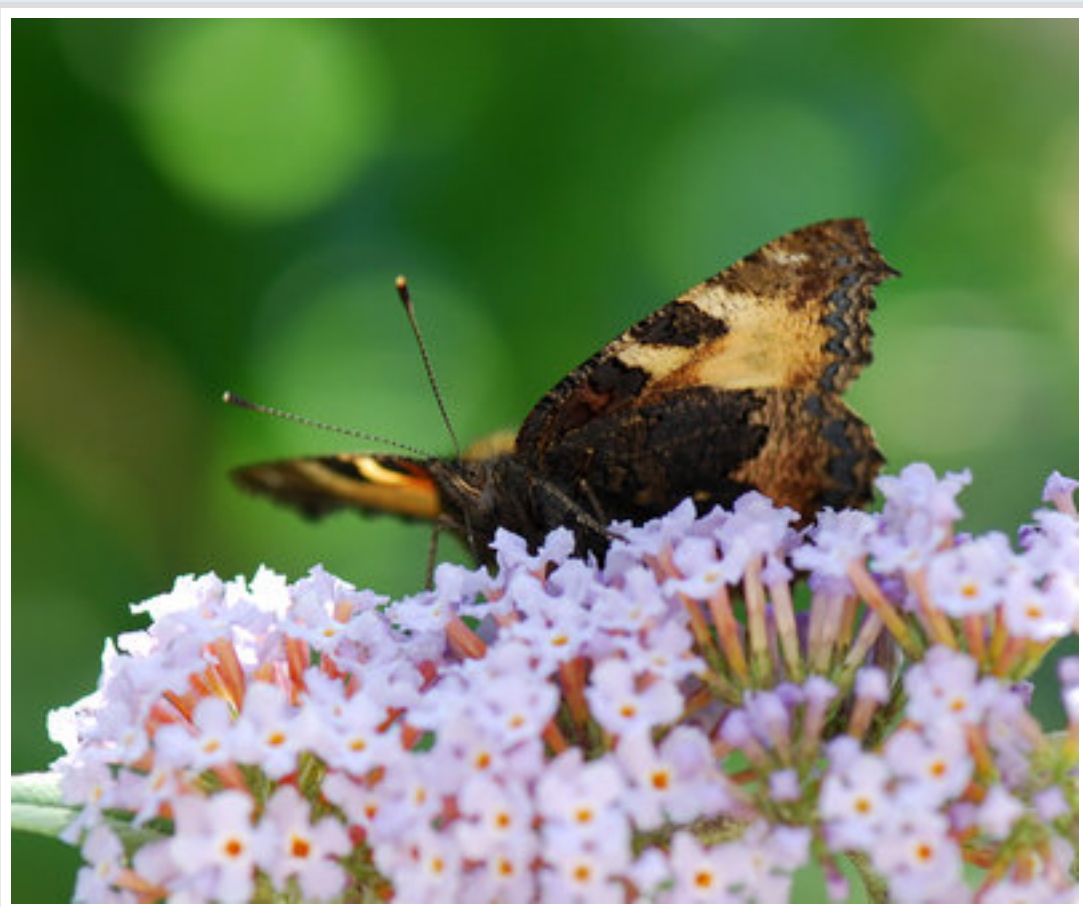
On Friday I had to pop into town to get some necessities and as it was still as hot as it was at midday I packed my camera into my man bag and set off. At this time of year my camera goes pretty much everywhere with me, wrapped up in a woolly hat to stop any minor bumps and scratches, because you never know what you might see. In fact I didn't take it to town on Wednesday and missed shots of some second brood Holly Blues 😞. So now wherever I go the Nikon goes too.

The evening was no exception. As I strolled along the river I saw a likely looking Buddleia on the opposite bank. There was a walk way right up to it if I hoped over a small gate so this I did and gently approached the bush. Straight away I found a Small Tortoiseshell taking nectar and then it was joined by a White.





I turned my attention back to the Small Tortoiseshell which was so intent on feeding I managed to get some close-up shots.



Still I had some food to get so after this couple of minutes of break I climbed back over the gate and back into the noisy, busy real world. It's these small moments of meditation that make all the difference 😊.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 22-Jul-13 08:07 PM GMT

All lovely photos Wurzel, especially the Dark Green Fritillaries.

Cheers

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-13 11:01 PM GMT

Cheers Mike for your kind comments 😊

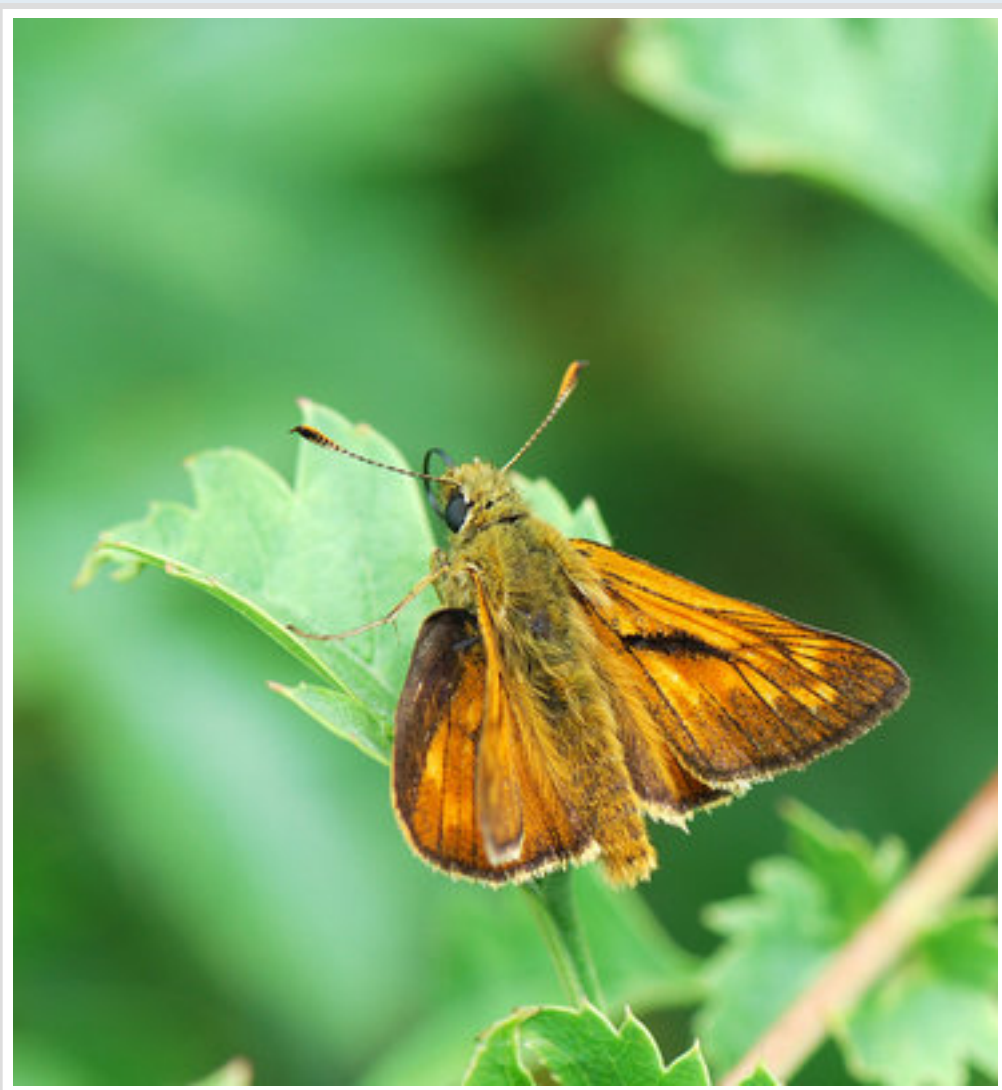
Another week at Larkhill

From the 10th until the 16th I made a few stops at Larkhill in the mornings with the occasional one in the afternoon. I also tried Woodhenge once or twice but there are road works and traffic lights that would eat away at my 5 minutes in place on the main road there. Also I had to interview an applicant on one of the days and I don't think it would have made too good an impression turning up with grass seeds sticking out over my shoes and suit. Over the week I saw a wide array of species and found that each time I stopped I'd find something new and something which made the stop worthwhile.

10-07

At the start of my visits there were plenty of the Browns around but the Skippers had started to steal the show. Not the small, fast and showy Smessex but the old timers. The Large Skippers made their mark by hanging in there and bullying their smaller cousins. Some were holding territories and awaiting possibly their first or possibly another chance of mating. They were often to be found sitting Green Hairstreak like on the end of Hawthorn branches and then they would fly out and investigate when other butterflies appeared.

The one that really stole the show was an aged Grizzlie the first one I've ever encountered in July which is indicative of the lateness of the season. He didn't look like he was going to be of this world much longer but looks can be deceiving as after I'd taken a few shots a Ringlet chanced to pass and he was off hassling it like a miniature incandescent ball of rage.



11-07

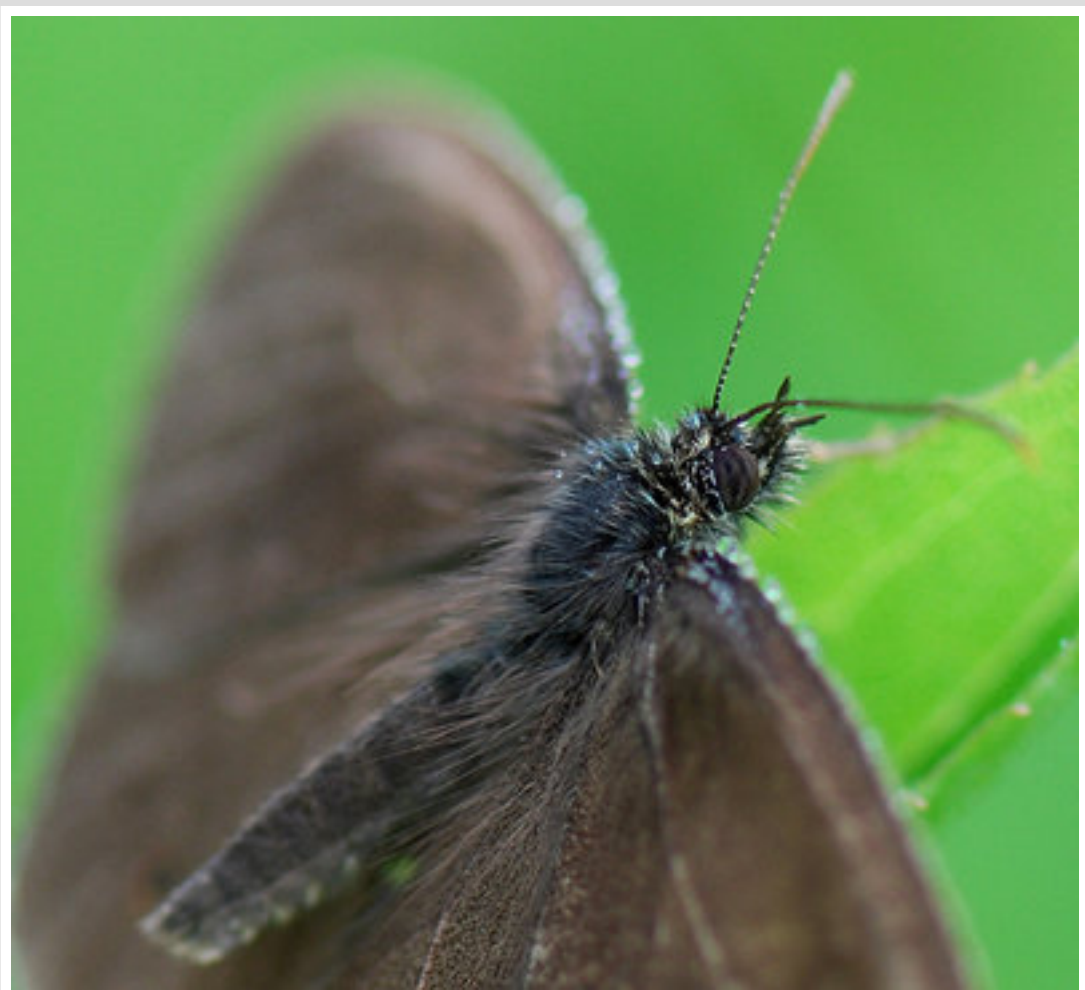
The following day it was relatively quiet and I found things to be quite jittery so I spent my time watching Marbled Whites mainly. They would fly in the morning light and would appear all kinds of shades from silvery through to a soft lemony colour (probably the females) and sometimes I thought they also picked up or reflected the hue from their surroundings. One was very settled and even allowed me to straighten its wings slightly so I could get them in focus. I just lightly pushed the wings towards me and he obliged by shifting ever so slightly so all the wing was in focus.



12-07

After some success at getting dew covered butterflies I had another go but this time on Ringlets. It was harder to get as close as they seemed to prefer roosting in the middle of the shrubbery or low to the ground unlike their more amenable cousins the Marbled Whites which would climb tot eh top and sit on the flower heads posing nicely. So the Ringlets were a struggle and when I write my "The Real Nature of Butterflies" book Ringlets are going down as "flightly, skittish and just generally awkward, bit of a prima donna".





15-07

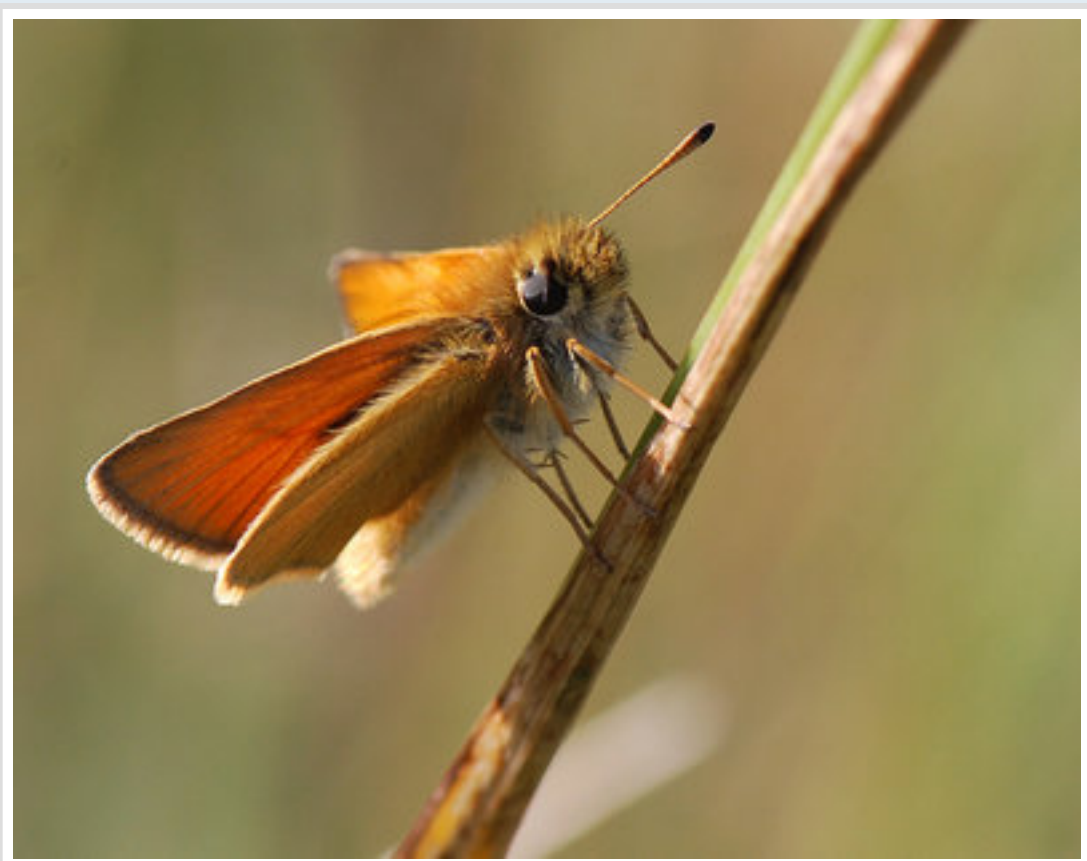
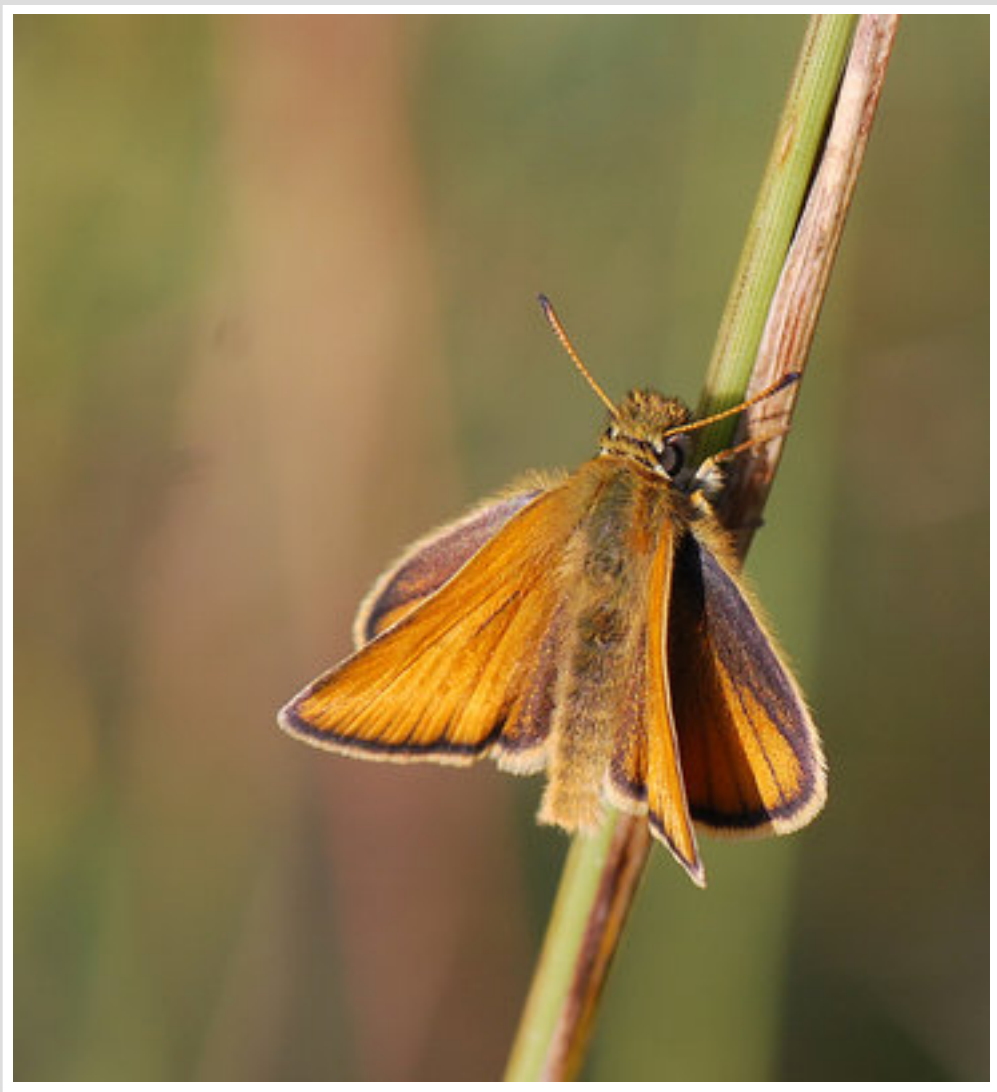
The number of browns was increasing by the day it seemed so it would have been churlish to have ignored them anymore. Mind you I wish I had as I had a frustrating 4 minutes trying to stalk them for a shot. A male would be sitting on the Hawthorn basking wings stretched out and I'd be within a metre when out of the grass in front of me 2 or 3 more would erupt spooking not just the butterfly I was stalking but everything else around and I would be back to square one. It's got to that time of year where the novelty has worn off and they're becoming pains again now! However to cheer me up I found my first Larkhill Gatekeeper of 2013.



16-07

The final visit I made in this series I realised that I'd been missing out on the skippers as they would buzz off almost as soon as I pulled up in the car

park. So I went looking for Essex Skippers and wasn't disappointed. These really are great little critters and once you've got your eye in to the more obvious differences - sex brand, ink pads and antennae shape some other differences start to present themselves. For instance I reckon that Essex have more rounded faces than Small and to my eye look more like Teddy Bears (though I see Gnomes in Orchids 🤪) and the wings margins look a different shade.



I've visited Larkhill over a few more mornings this last week but that will be the final series until possibly September as I break up for the summer on Wednesday - just as the weather breaks -typical! 🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 22-Jul-13 11:41 PM GMT

Lovely pictures of the teddy bears, Wurzel! 😊 Just wait till the Silver-spotted lot are out – they are even *more* cuddly-looking in my opinion.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 22-Jul-13 11:57 PM GMT

Great read as usual Wurzel. 😊 I totally agree with you about the Ringlets being awkward, forever messing the photographer about, little bu.....

Judging by your diary i`m sure your book will be a great success and, an excellent read.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jul-13 07:57 PM GMT

More great reports and photos Wurzel, always an entertaining read 😊

That sounds like a great idea for a book, definitely one to look forward to 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-13 11:44 PM GMT

Cheers Dave, Nick and Neil for your kind comments 😊 The book is one of three I'm planning to write. One is going to be about butterflies on poo and the other is a photo book of butterflies in cop as I've now got shots of four Fritillaries, 3 Blues, 3 Browns and Hairstreaks all caught "at it" 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 24-Jul-13 12:04 AM GMT

Hmmm. Coffee table books or ones for the smallest room? ... One sounds eminently suitable for the latter 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-13 11:29 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I reckon one is definitely for reading while cogitating 😊

Bentley Wood Part 2

Last Sunday I arranged to meet Philzoid at Bentley Wood in the hope of some further Purple Emperor action. As I live a hell of a lot closer than Philzoid I arrived first and knowing how busy it can get I took up two spaces in the car park 😊 and then went to join the crowd in the car park. All the usual suspects put in an appearance with a White Admiral and Silver Washed Fritillary treating us to fly-bys until His Nibbs arrived on the scene and overshadowed them both. He did a few passes over head, rested for a bit high up, did a few more passes and then disappeared. A Purple Hairstreak and a few Whites tried in vain to fill the gap he'd left and then Philzoid and his girls arrived so we set off to Donkey Copse.



A short way along the main track it has a dip and on the left is a large patch of Bramble. I've seen all manner of species here and it's a regular hot spot for me and just as I was saying this to Philzoid something landed on the path but it was a White Admiral. Slightly further on it was joined by a Red Admiral which actually settled for long enough to become my first photographed this year. This little area again proved to draw in the butterflies with another Red and then White Admiral, Silver Washed, Large Skippers and Ringlets all taking nectar from the Brambles as well as a Small White. We stopped here for a while wondering if His Nibbs would join the fray here as He had done the previous year but after a short while we decided to press on.

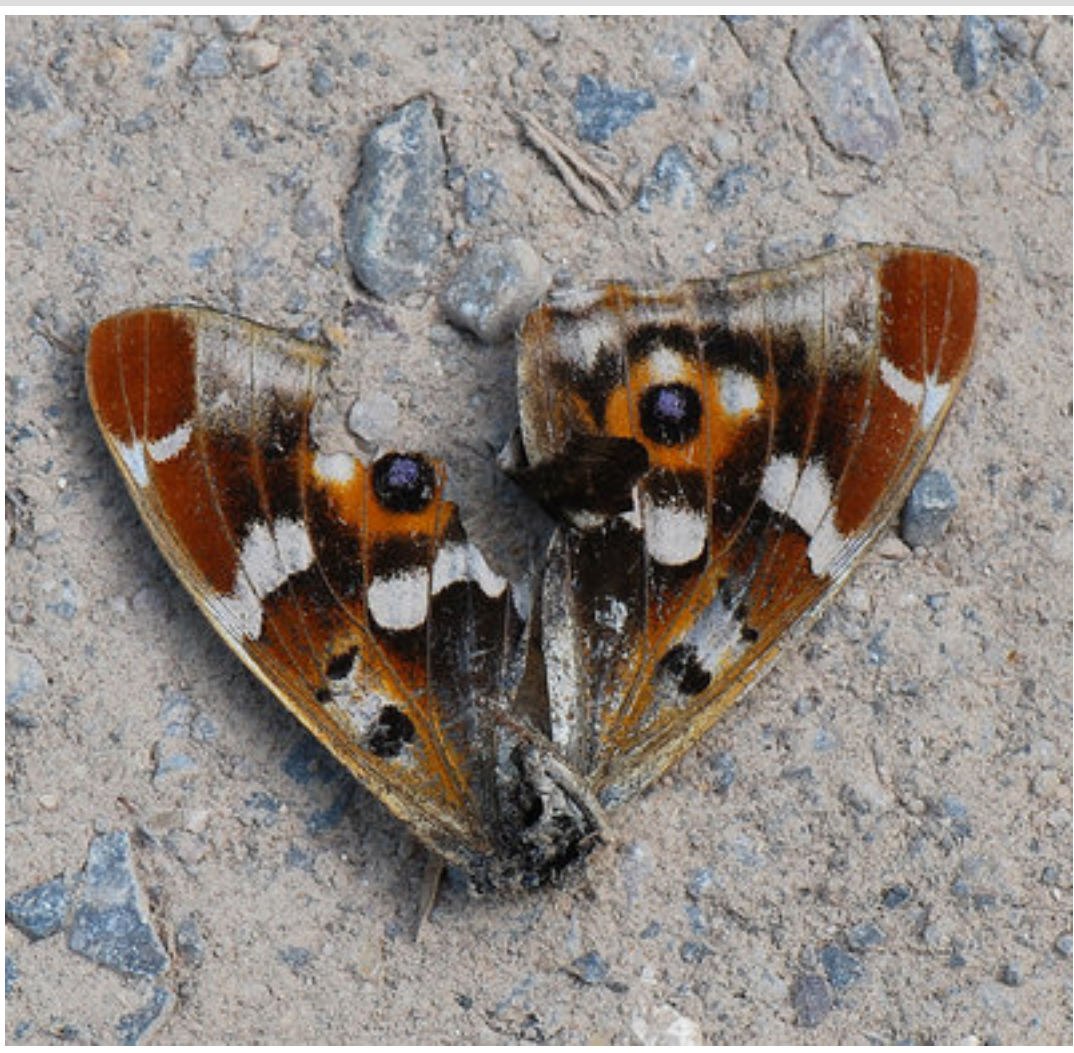




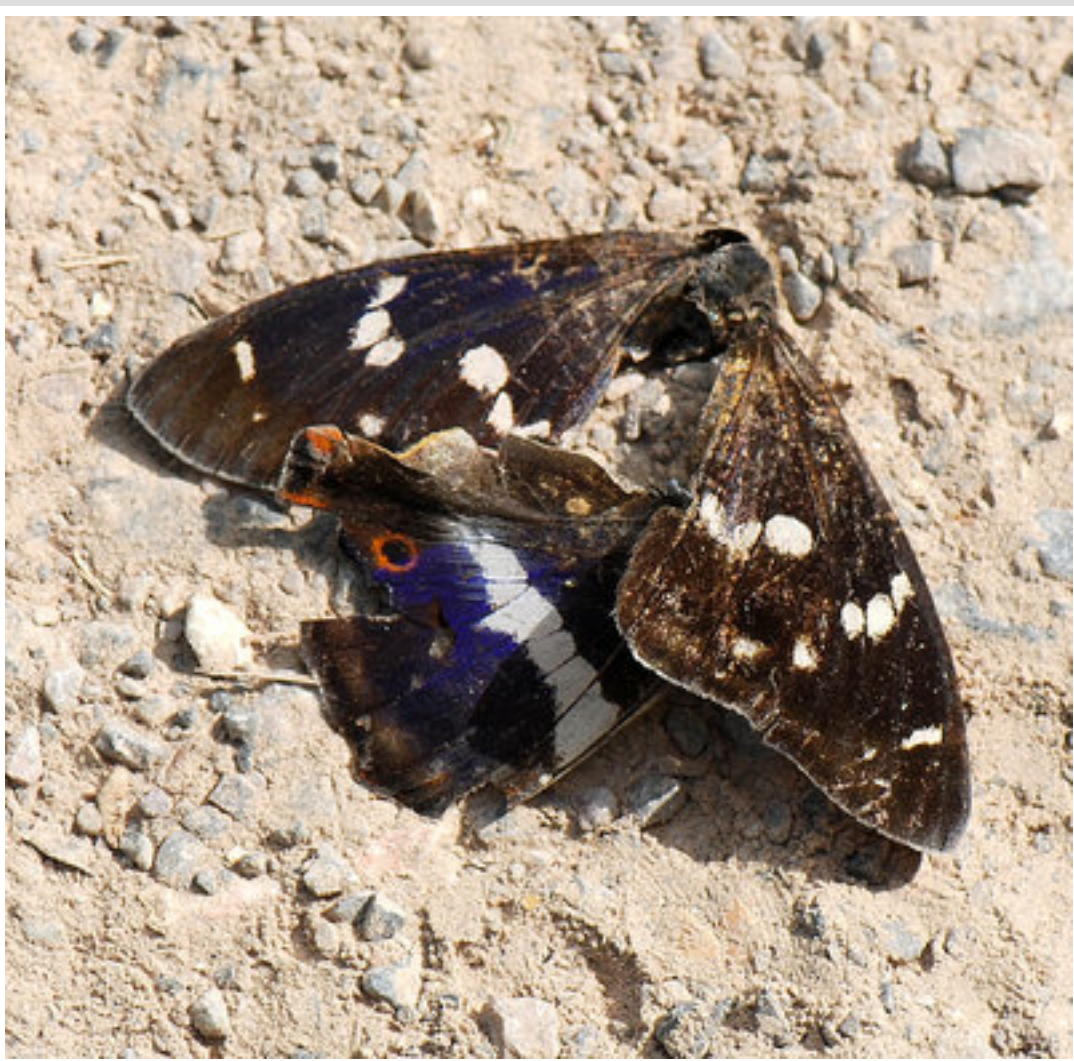
Stunted wing?



Slightly further on Philzoid and I were wandering along alternately scanning the track ahead and the tree line when we got called back by the girls as they'd "found one". Unfortunately it was a dead one if you can call it that as all that remained was a hind wing and the two fore wings. I took a few shots just in case all the while hoping that this wouldn't be the closest shots I'd get.



A timely reminder that whilst we think of His Nibbs as majestic, magnificent, glorious...



...to others he is merely lunch!



At the cross roads we checked the puddles out but they'd almost completely dried up and so we took a left and started down the track towards Donkey Copse. All the way along Silver Washed and White Admirals tried to tempt us off the path. Whites flew by as well as various members of the Browns - a single Marbled White, Meadow Browns and Ringlets a plenty as well as a cracking little Gatekeeper or three. Remembering the aberrant Ringlets reported recently I took a closer look at some of them and came across one which reduced eyes and also a paler band in form the margin. Also here were Purple Hairstreaks flitting around the Oaks but staying out of lens range unfortunately. Another patch of Bramble near to the corner at the end of the path was host to a fresh looking Peacock. How come they look more reddish and less purple at this time of year?







Just around the corner we bumped into the same bloke from last year and he was all baited up...
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 25-Jul-13 10:14 AM GMT

Some nice Essex Skippers there Wurzel. Hurry up with those books as I can't wait to read them 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Jul-13 11:39 PM GMT

They're in the pipeline Pauline, well at least one of them is 😊

Bentley Wood Part 2

...At the corner we were treated to a few fly-bys by His Nibbs, some really close but unfortunately he didn't come down to ground despite the best efforts of Bait Man. After a brief chat with Bait Man (sorry can't recall your name 😊) we carried on round to Donkey Copse proper in the hope that one of the Emperors that have been knocking around would come down to the deck. The heat continued to rise and the girls set up camp in the shade and settled down to some serious chat so Philzoid and I could have a mooch around. At one point I saw a male trying to entice a female to copulate. She was flying directly in a straight line not wavering from her course whereas the male was flying in continual loops around. I felt like I was watching a ginger wheel moving through the air. Then something took off from the shade and its path bisected the amorous couple. As it left the shade I could see that it wasn't gingery like the other two but silvery - a Valesina - but it didn't hang around as both the ginger male and female went for her and chased her off into the shade.

As compensation Philzoid found a pair in cop so we spent a good while with the mating pair.





The girls were getting hot and as the morning slipped away so did our chances of an Emperor on the deck as I'd been led to believe from speaking to some other butterflyers previously, so we started a slow wander back. We didn't get very far when I saw a Purple Hairstreak land in an Oak branch overhanging the path. It was almost out of range but with a bit of cropping and sharpening the image I got was not too bad and a vast improvement on last year. Having photographed a female with open wings in my first year and then the next found individuals on Bracken for the classic closed wing and male open wing shots I think I'd not realised how difficult a species this can be to photograph. After two years of standing on tip toes, camera at full reach and still having to crop and sharpen the living hell out of the images obtained I'm definitely starting to appreciate the difficulty of Purple Hairstreaks!



As we neared the baited area we bumped into Bait Man on his BMX who was just going to check another baited area deeper in the wood. He said something along the lines of "I'll come back with you as He always turns up when someone new arrives". And sure enough His Nibbs did come down from the tree however we couldn't get close enough for nay really good shots as He was very nervous. Despite leaving him to settle for an unbearable 5 minutes and the slowest stalk in history He took to the air and rested up in a tree. We all watched through binoculars we were that far away and He was magnificent to see. Bait Man explained that this particular Emperor had come down the previous day almost as before the bait was out of the jar. But then He'd been spooked by an over eager photographer who got too close too quickly as well as firing off his multi-shot camera sounding like a machine gun. Now He was jittery and didn't like to be approached. Bait Man went on to explain that from personal experience he'd come to the conclusion that Emperors learn to be nervous of humans and once learnt the behaviour remains so there are simple rules to follow to enable the maximum number of people to enjoy His Nibbs. Most people already know them - give Him/Her 4-5 minutes to settle, approach very slowly and only take a few shots each time not hundreds on fast fire multi-shoot mode. He was also kind enough to show us his Bait factory and I came away with the names of many strange and wonderful concoctions to try out next year. Thank you Bait Man and hopefully we'll meet up next year and we can share in plenty of Purple-ness!



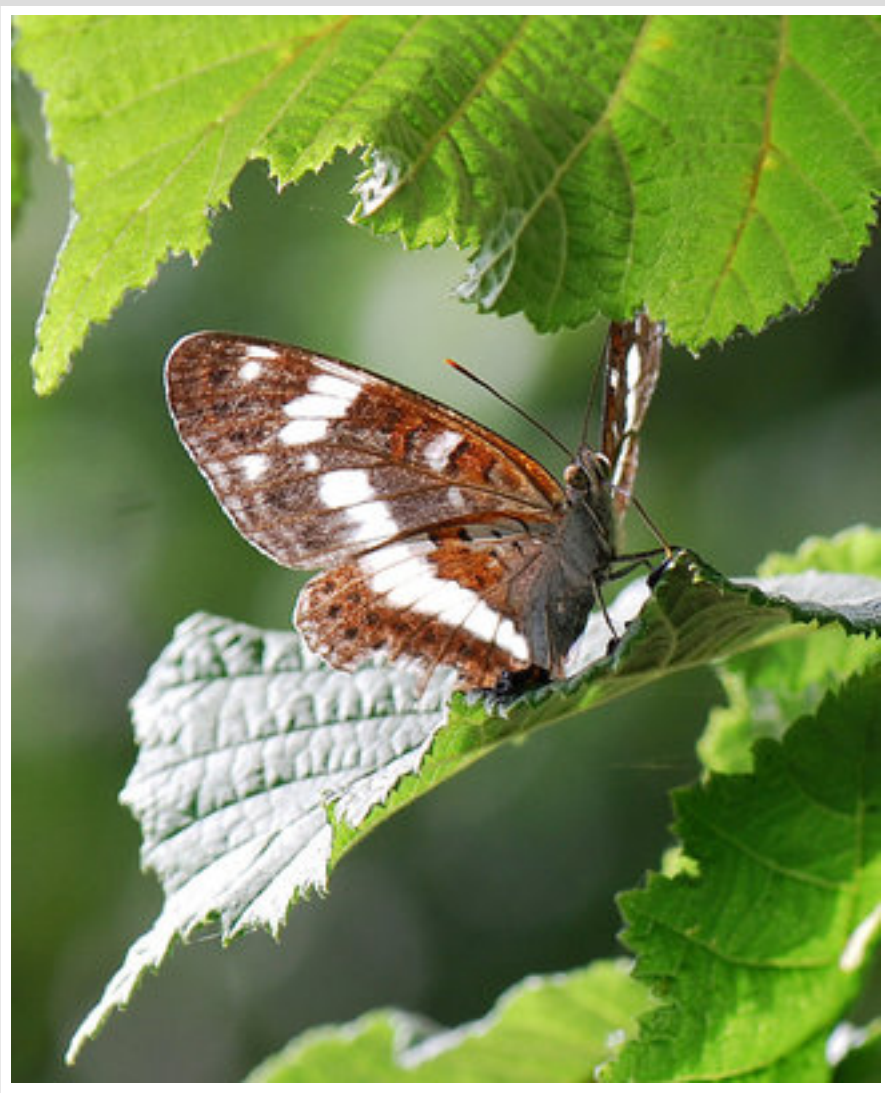
Best I could manage

The walk back was hot and sticky but we still scanned ahead hopefully just in case. Actually we didn't do too badly and I was able to catch up with one or two individuals that have proved tricky over the last few weeks/months including an obliging Brimstone and a truly wild Large White. There were also Smessex and Large Skippers a plenty and a Comma amongst the Meadow Browns and Ringlets. I also found a grounded Silver Washed back at the "dip" along the main path and it seemed to be taking salts from the grasses?



Once back at the car park we eagerly tucked into our lunch and a White Admiral posed nicely whilst feeding on some bird droppings allowing me to finally get the closed wing shot (though slightly faded) and a stained glass one for my collection.





Oh well there's always next year for His Nibbs and perhaps it'll be the turn of Bentley to host the Purple Party (WINK). Whilst I was slightly disappointed not to get a grounded Nibbs in reality it didn't matter as I witnessed new behaviours, found out some really useful info about baiting and Emperor behaviour and had a thoroughly pleasurable day due to the excellent company. And when you add all that together who cares about what you didn't photograph 😊!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 26-Jul-13 12:03 AM GMT

A fascinating account of a brilliant-sounding day out. You're right – days rarely go to plan, but there's always something interesting or different and new to see and stimulate the appetite for the next trip. If we saw everything just right first time every time, what would we do next year? Splendid stuff, Wurzel, just splendid. 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by CJB, 26-Jul-13 09:39 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

That sounds like a great day and a successful one at that! 🍷

I love the PHS shot and as you say they are SERIOUSLY tough to get a shot of! 😡

I am off to the Trossachs on Monday and am hoping to get some local specialities, so wish me luck.

With a bit of luck I will return with a Scottish Argus, Northern Brown Argus, Large Ringlet, Dark Green Frit (yes, still yet to get one!?) and dare I even contemplate a Mountain Ringlet.....

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jul-13 08:06 PM GMT

Another entertaining report Wurzel and some great photos 😊

Keep it up,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-13 11:11 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 You've hit the nail on the head there 😊 It's a matter of "you've got to go looking to see anything".

Cheers CJB 😊 Good luck with all your Northern species 🍷

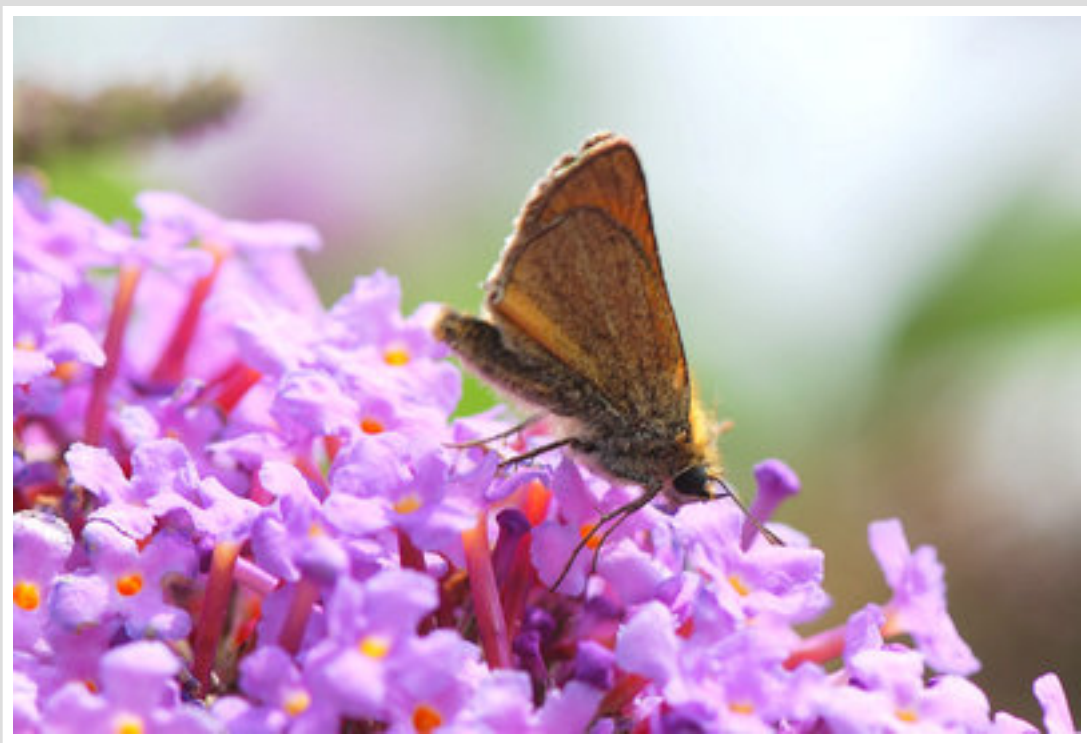
Cheers fro your kind comments Neil 😊

Stop off for a Bombay Bad Boy 😎!

Monday I had to take my wife for one of her "big three" hospital check-ups 😞. So I had the afternoon off work in order that I could run around and

make sure that my family got dropped off, picked up and supported. It was packed itinerary which I was glad for as it meant that I didn't have time for my mind to dwell on what was happening.

I left at the start of lunch and stopped off at a Co-Op on the way so that I could pick up a Bombay Bad Boy – my all time favourite Pot Noodle. If only they'd been around during my student days when all we had was Chow Mein or Chicken and Mushroom (I know there were other flavours, rice even, but really it came down to these two when all was said and done). As I left the shop I spotted a large Buddleia in the corner of the car park and as I had a few minutes to kill and also as I was still technically on lunch break I checked it out. As I got nearer I could see a Large White and a Brimstone as well as a Peacock. They seemed to take their fill and then move on so once I reached the bush all that appeared to be left was a Small White. As I was about to focus in something else caught my eye higher up, something I'd not seen before. A Small Skipper feeding on Buddleia and not only that but in the middle of an urban car park. It was soon joined by what I'm taking to be a second Peacock.





Later I had to leave my wife there and pick the girls up from school. As I walked down the path to collect them a Meadow Brown flew across and a Comma kept fluttering around, stopping now and again. It would make to perch and but then it wouldn't? I examined one of the leaves and saw a small yellow blob which I thought at the time was an egg, though now I know it wasn't having seen the excellent shots on Hideandseeks PD 😊 so perhaps it was just checking out the foliage and deciding that it wasn't suitable 😊.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-13 11:25 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Interesting about your Small Skipper on the buddleia. I had a Large Skipper in my garden this morning, a first in itself but it also stopped for a while on one of my dwarf buddleias, got a couple of shots but pretty ropery so didn't bother posting in my diary.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 28-Jul-13 10:59 AM GMT

Nice report(s) and photos Wurzel, great SWF mating pair. The PE has been giving us the 'run around' too, but yes there is always next year 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-13 11:28 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 If only Silver-Spotted Skippers visited Buddleia in Co-Op car parks 😊😊

Cheers Mike 😊 There is always next year, and I'll be prepared with Bait – I know where and what to get now 😊😊

Devenish Record stop off

On the last day of work last week we finished early and had a BBQ to say goodbye to some staff members that were moving on. This meant that I had arranged to pick the girls up from their school and give the entire family a lift home as well as having about 15 minutes at The Devenish. 😊

After the speeches, skits and some almost tearful goodbyes I wished those that I will see in September a good summer and raced to the car and set off. Things were looking good and I was well within my time frame. However almost as soon as I left the village where I work I ran into trouble. One of those drivers that don't drive to the road and the conditions, not even one that sticks rigidly to the speed limit but the worst drivers of all. I'm pretty sure that they can see and read the numbers it's just that in their brains 40 becomes 25 or 30 and 30 becomes 20 😊 As for 50 well they just can't cope with that 😊 and so range between 40, speeding up to this just as you're contemplating overtaking them and 25 when there is no way you can get past them (bends, blind summits, traffic coming the other way etc). This old duffer even had the temerity to do the pointing out of the window thingy probably accompanied by "look at the lovely view over there Doris"! 😡😡

This ate into my time considerably which was further eroded away by tractors and traffic lights; in fact pretty much everything that can slow you down on the road barring animals on the carriageway or alien invasion 😊.

In the end I pulled into the car park at the Devenish with a measly 5 minutes to spare before I had to be on my way again in order to make the pick up on time. This would be a record breaking stop-off if I could manage it...

One minute to run up the hill, find a Chalkhill, there's one, will it land?

15:42 (according to the clock on my camera - but it's out by about 42 minutes) - first photo with a few more following on...



There's one - record shot in the bag



Better

15:44 - final photo



Nice pose – that's the keeper

A minute to run back to the car park.

Stuff in the boot tidily so as not to raise suspicion and then tear out of the car park and bomb it across the valley, over the hill, down the hill, park. Sprint down the footpath...

Made it just in time!! It seems that all that training at Larkhill has paid off 😊 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 28-Jul-13 11:52 PM GMT

I'm out of breath just reading that, Wurzel! Perseverance pays off as usual, despite all that driver could do to stop you. I know the type – drives at 40 in a 50 limit, and when you get to the 30 sign, carries on at 40 as if nothing was there. 😬

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 29-Jul-13 12:01 AM GMT

Just catching up with your diary, great read as usual Wurzel with some lovely photos but, have you ever thought of buying some running shoes, might give you a few extra minutes with the butterflies. 😊

All the best, Nick.

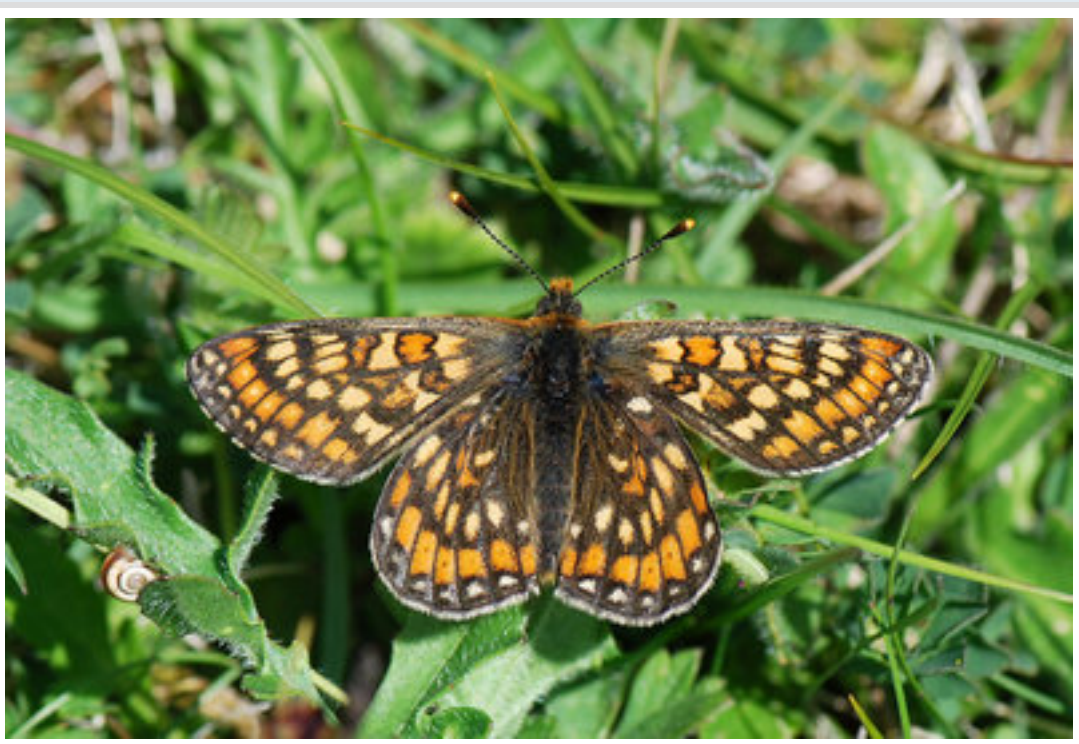
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Jul-13 11:01 PM GMT

Cheers for the empathy Dave 😊 Cheers Nick – good suggestion 😊 but I'm not sure that running shoes would fit in with the professional (corporate) dress code at work 😬 Still I'll see what I can get away with 😊

Hampshire Marshies

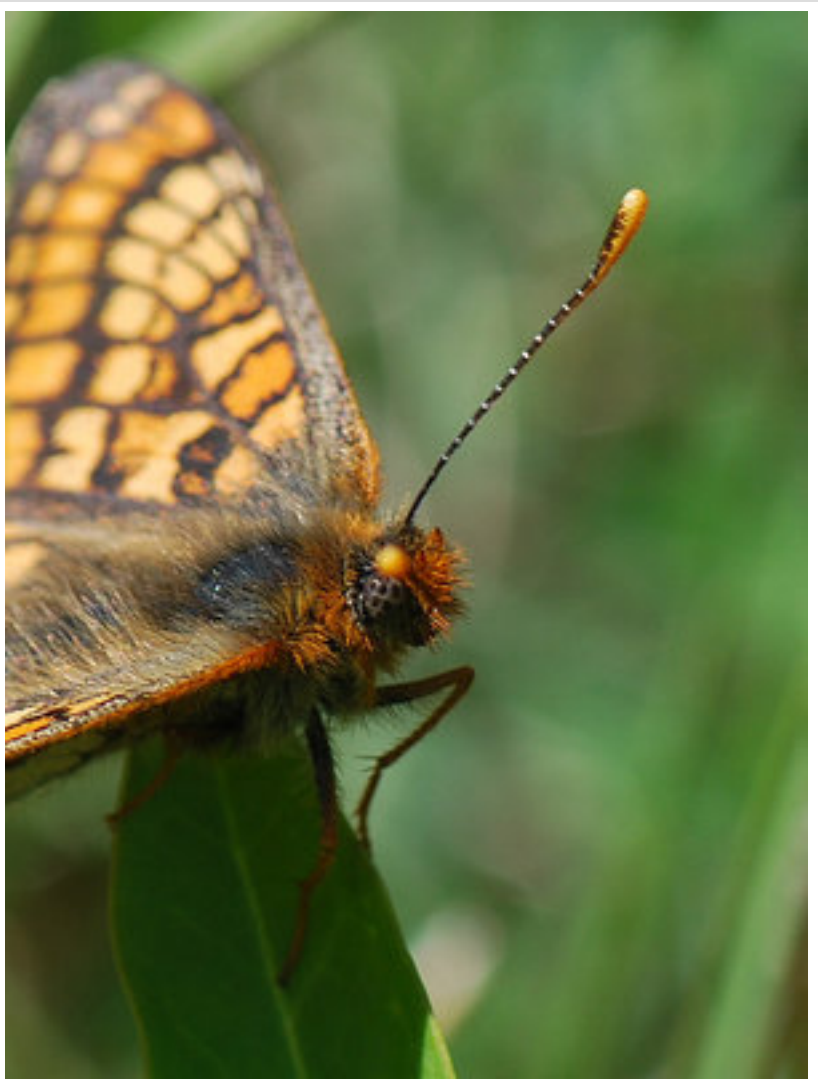
A little while back I took a visit to a site in Hampshire looking for Marsh Frits. Well to be honest I wasn't really looking for Marshies as I'd heard from other people that they had been recorded there but I'd visited a few times before with no luck so I doubted if they were still present. However, during the course of the afternoon I managed to see not just one, but 2 in one area of the site and at least 4 in a second area of the site. The first one of the day as basking in the sun on the closely cropped turf and was holding its wings out as far as they could go in a poise I've not captured before. It wasn't the freshest looking individual I've seen but it was still in pretty good nick.



Further down at the second area that I saw them some were a bit more worn though none looked like a greasy dishcloth quite yet. I noticed that the level of wear only became really apparent when the butterfly held its wings in such a way as to catch the light just right. The minute they twisted or turned slightly the wear wasn't noticeable.



By the end of my time they seemed to have gotten used to my presence so I was able to get really close. I love the reddish palps and the dark proboscis.



What made it extra special was the fact that I have now seen and photographed Marshies in three different counties; Hod Hill in Dorset, a Wiltshire Wood and Hill and now in Hants too. Perhaps next year I should try for a Devonian or maybe head even further afield over to David M's neck of the woods and look for a Welshie Marshie? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 29-Jul-13 11:51 PM GMT

I love the close-ups, Wurzel. I've always liked their little ginger quiffs as well. And their eyes can be almost blue... 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-13 10:34 PM GMT

Cheers Dave – Marsh Frits – the Johnny Rotten of the butterfly world 😊

I've just returned to Wiltshire after revisiting my homeland of Dorset for a few days (I missed the Wurzels 😊 but wasn't accused of being a grockle once 😊) and having caught up I'm now too knackered to do a posting even though I'm about 2 weeks behind with my PD 😊 I'm also late with my calendar so to rectify that...

August



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 03-Aug-13 04:17 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Hope you had a great few days away. I`m in the same boat as you when it comes to my personal diary, i`m so far behind, i`m going to need a time machine to catch up.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Aug-13 10:31 PM GMT

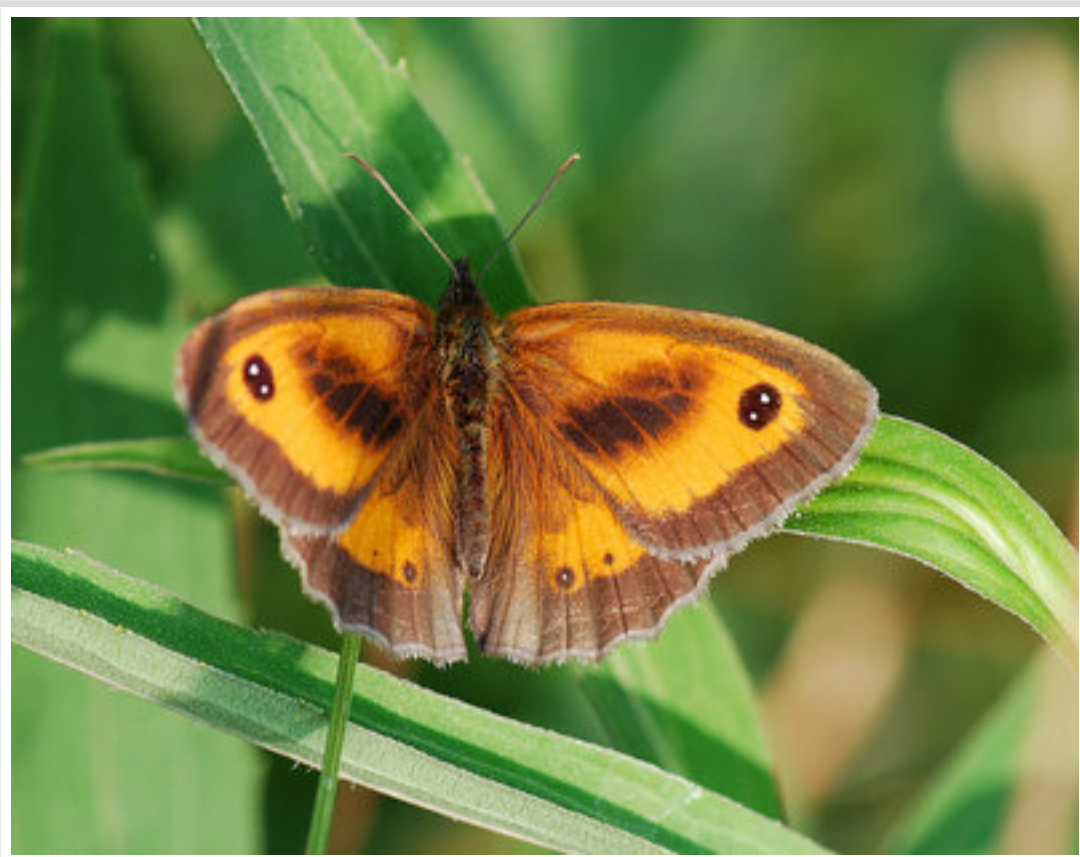
Cheers for the empathy Nick 😊 - in an attempt to circumvent the need for a time machine I've taken to turning 4 possible posts into 1 😬 Oh well needs must...

Larkhill

Skippers were becoming less of the norm during my final week of visiting Larkhill. All my stop-offs for the week were morning ones as I was keen to get home as the end of work was so close.

18-07-2013

Gatekeepers seemed to be in abundance on a 5 minute stop-off although there were other Browns about. I took the Northbound path and made my way along it and it felt joyous to have butterflies erupt from the grass in front of me in such numbers. This was definitely a Brown day with Gatekeepers, Meadow Brown and Ringlets which were now fading fast.

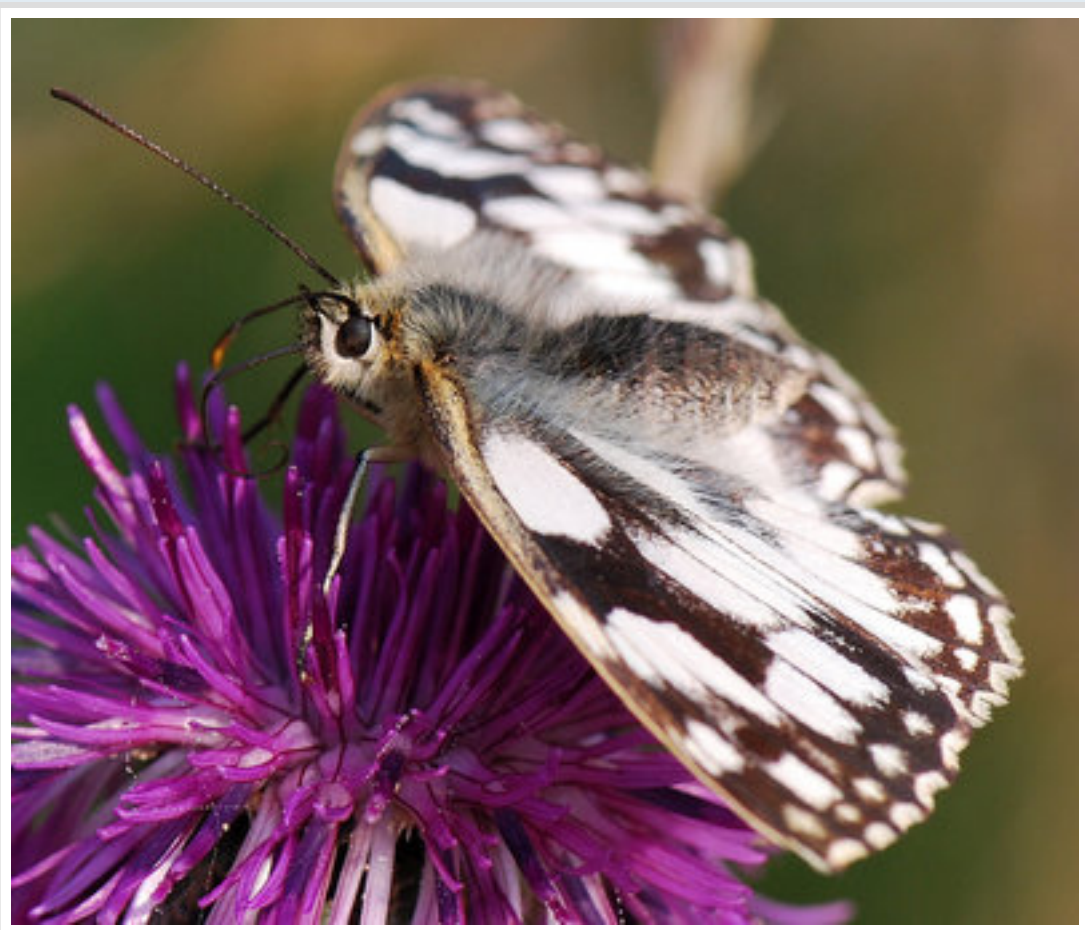
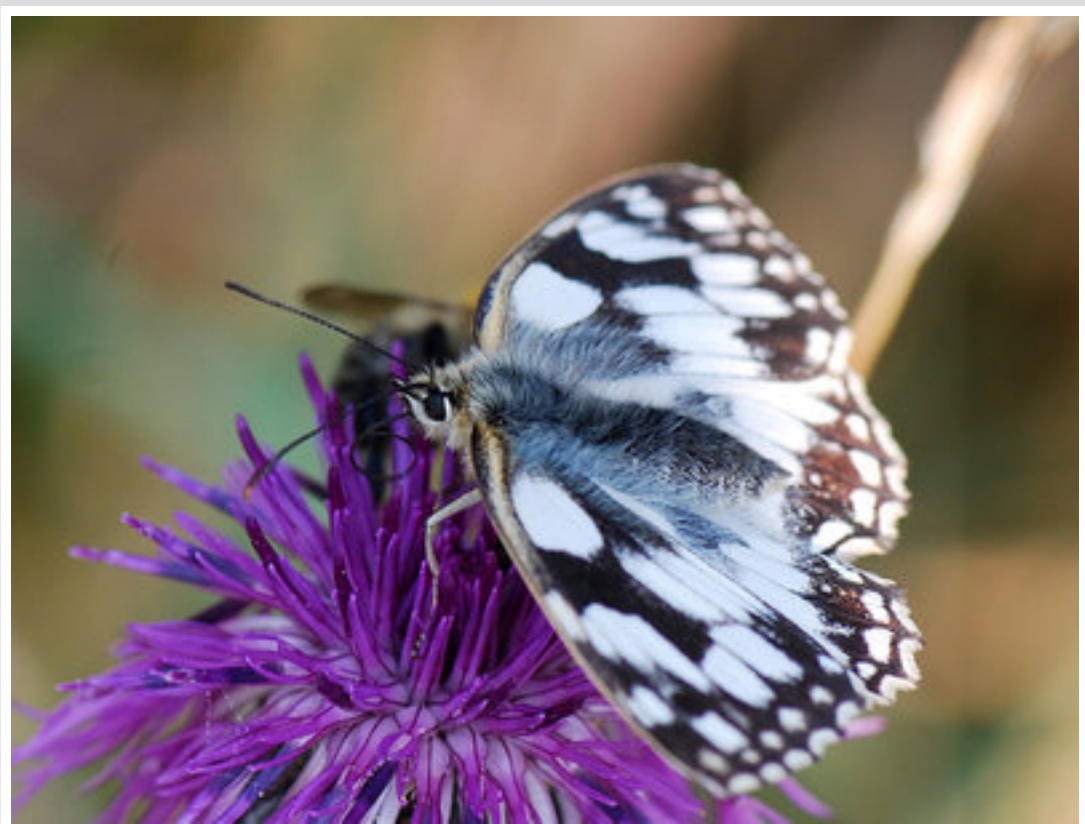




When I was almost back at the car I practically stumbled onto a Marbled White (yet another Brown) which allowed some pretty close up shots - even sheltering a *Bombus humilus* from what I'm still not too sure



Better in higher res...



19-07-2013

Today was a regular Gatekeeper fest as I started my yearly quest to find various unusual individuals to add to my collection. I'm enamoured by Hedge Browns again. A couple in this small site stuck out almost immediately and were duly added to the "Carter Collection". The first was a female with an eye, brown spot and a white spot on the hind wing as well as having a misshapen eye and extra dot on the right fore wing.



The other with its wings closed revealed six white spots on the hind wing and a heptagonal eyespot.

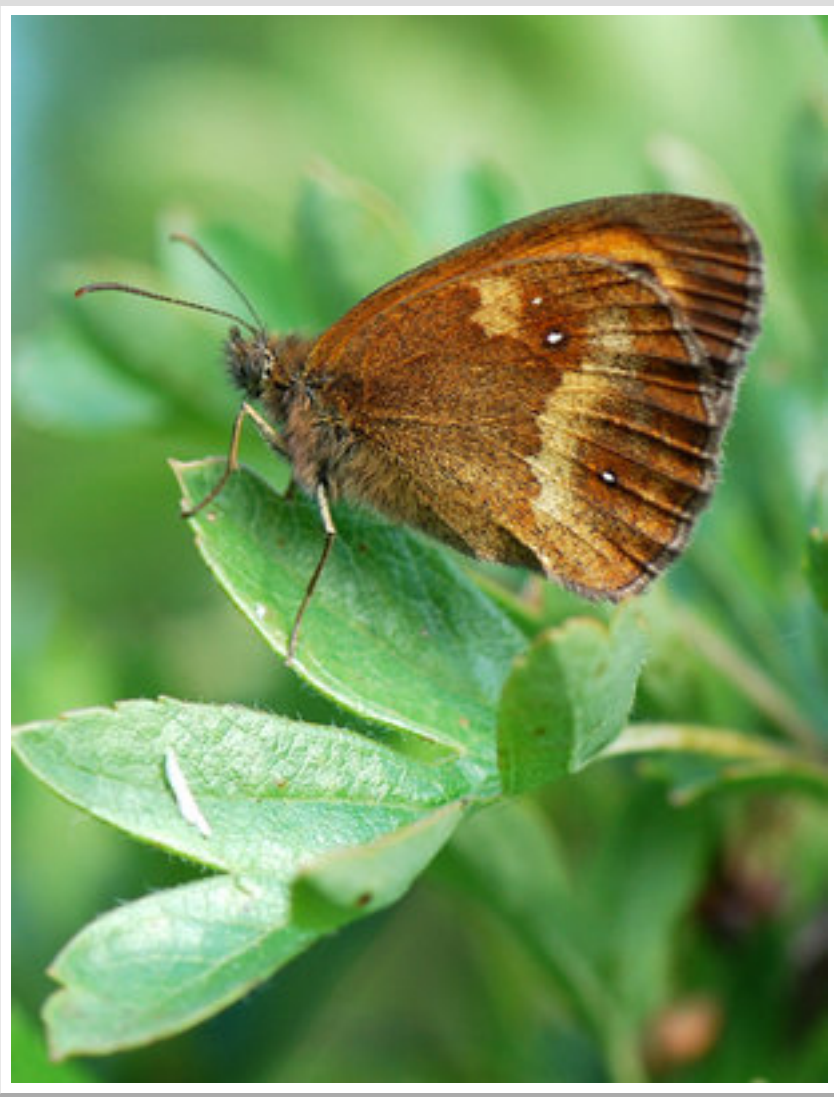


Next came another closed wing shot - this time with only 3 spots before finishing up with a cracking male which had its eye spots almost divided into two.



22-07-2013

I didn't get back until after the weekend. A very quick stop of only a couple of minutes meant not seeing an awful lot. A Small Tortoiseshell and Brimstone bombed by joined by a green Veined White. The usual Browns erupted from the grass ahead of me but again I found myself wandering and wondering after Hedge Browns, like a romance rekindled.



24-07-2013

I'd missed out on the penultimate visit as I gave the Dance teacher a life to school. As he hailed from Brixton I didn't know how he'd take to me pulling in for a 5 minute butterfly foray so I didn't get to visit Larkhill until the final morning of work.

What was strange was how similar the final and first visits were conditions wise - cool, damp, dark and drizzly - in July, really? What also added to the dampness of my mood was the desolation of the Westbound path. Where I'd photographed my first Large Skipper, my Burnet moths, my first Essex Skipper, mating Common Blues - gone!

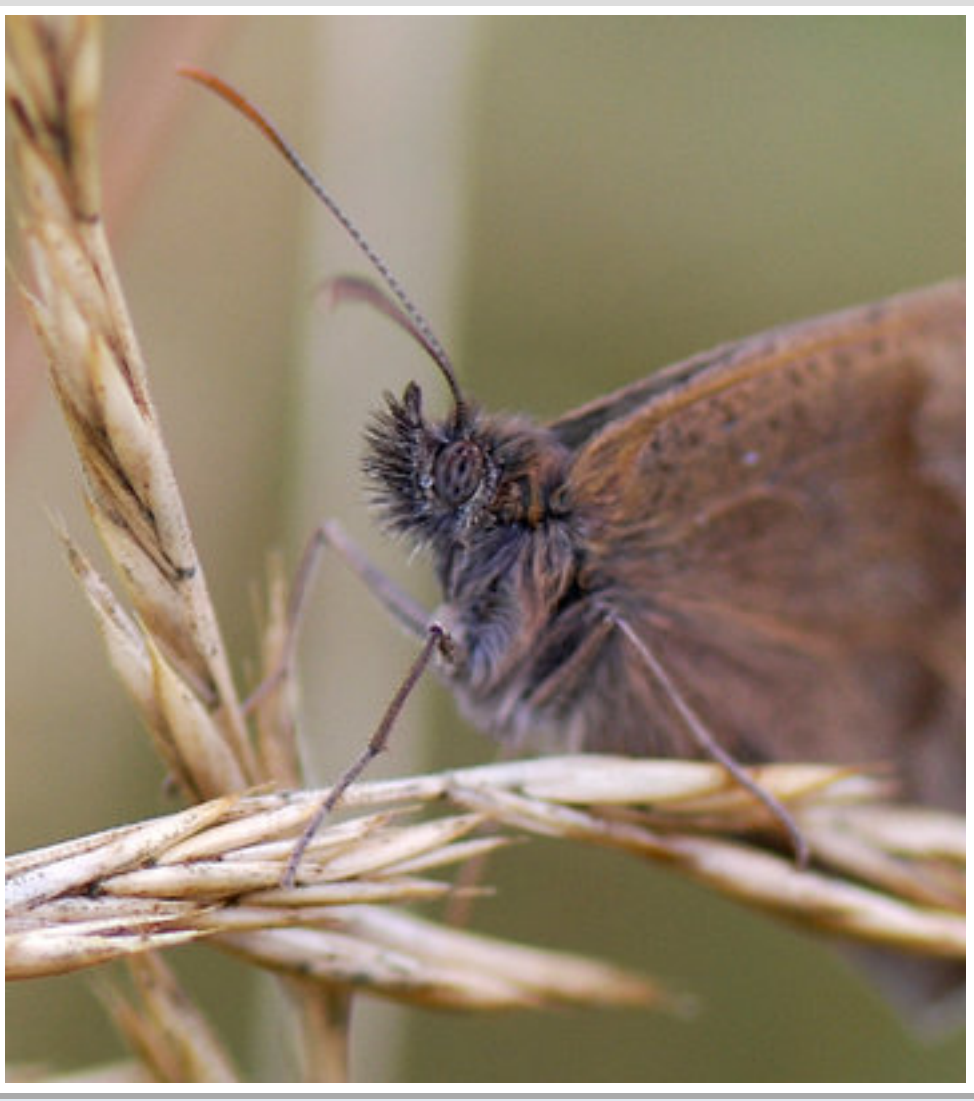


It had previously looked like the Northbound path.



Gutted I checked the Northbound path which was still intact. Butterfly of the day it seemed was the humble Meadow Brown and I managed to capture two dew soaked individuals. The later summed my mood as a single dew drop sat tear-like, by its eye.





I also found a suffering Marbled White. Dew soaked, chilled and with bloodsucking (well haemolymph really) critters on board, it was a shadow of its former self.



That is it then unless September brings an Indian Summer and some species third brood. Of course there may be migrants - here's hoping 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 03-Aug-13 11:09 PM GMT

Brilliant stuff Wurzel, lovely photos as always, don't , (I'm sure you would'nt), forget, the beautiful BH.

You post always make me smile,

All the best,

Mike.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-13 10:06 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 Indeed I haven't forgotten the BH - I'll be trying for that and SSS as soon as I return from West Wales - if I can swing it past the wife that is 😊😊

Horse riding in the holidays

The first day of the holidays wasn't spent as I thought it would be. No looking for Chalkhills or Silver Spotted Skippers for me. Instead it was lunch at my Aunts so the girls could have a free horse ride. I took my camera though just in case 😊 . As I sat in the garden before lunch various butterflies made visits. On the variegated Ivy a Small White seemed to take shade in amongst the leaves. Both a Red Admiral and a Comma made fleeting visits and a Small White investigated and then laid on one of the pot plants.



Once at the stables a few more butterflies were evident. In the stable yard itself while Jigsaw was being groomed and saddled I took a quick look at the nettle patch - finding caterpillars and a Large White. Another Red Admiral and a Peacock put in appearances but didn't stay long as they set off looking for an even bigger Buddleia.



Up on the field there were Meadow Browns, the odd Small Tortoiseshells and Red Admiral but my camera usage was reserved for the girls as they rode around on a seemingly gigantic horse. Once back in the yard I had a quick mooch around adding a Small White and an older Small Tortoiseshell to the day list.





Driving home at the time I thought; "I'll have to try and cram in some butterflying soon - but how I don't know? The weather doesn't look crash hot next week, typical!"...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 04-Aug-13 10:09 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Tomorrow looks like its going to be pretty 'orrible almost everywhere but Tuesday onward looks better, showers maybe but some good sun between hopefully.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Aug-13 11:21 PM GMT

Cheers Neil - I just hope that it lasts until the weekend - I've still got Silver Spots to try and see 😊

Stourhead 26-07-2013

Again instead of looking for Silver Spotted Skippers I took the family to Stourhead. A red Admiral in the car park was a good sign and we decided to do the "top route" through the woods this time. So we walked across the bridge to the walled gardens with little L asking "why isn't there a river?". In one of the small boxes filled with Lavender three species of White were represented. An area 2m x 1m held 15 whites! I tried a few shots but the light was too strong and my images were bleached out. Never mind there should be plenty of other opportunities as whites were everywhere.



I caught up with the girls in the next walled garden up the terrace where again there were plenty of whites as well as some Small Tortoiseshells - 7 in total. They ranged from "edgeless" to "scaleless" to almost immaculate.





On entering the woodland Avenue proper Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers with the odd battered Ringlet fought amongst the equally ubiquitous whites for any available Brambles. The whites were also aping the browns as they'd be down in the grass and would erupt from in front of your feet. One Bramble bush was particularly popular with the butterflies. There was a Red Admiral, a few Ringlet and Meadow Browns, Green Veined, Small and Large Whites as well as a Peacock that dropped in briefly right at the back out of reach.



My wife pointed out a "weird looking butterfly" which it turned out to be weird because it wasn't one butterfly but actually a pair of Green Veined Whites in cop (another species in the "sex book"). They accommodated me by landing close by on some Bracken and I managed plenty of shots while the girls ran up and down the woodland paths. Rather than mating with both parties holding their wings closed they seemed to prefer a "one with wings closed, while the others were open" system. Perhaps this was so that they were ready for a quick getaway?

I got a few close up shots which as well as the "in cop" and "stained glass" seem to be one of my "things" this year. Despite getting so close in they eventually accepted my presence it seemed as the male adopted a more relaxed attitude, antennae drooped and wings partially closed. I left them in peace and my family moved on.





The Avenue opens to a view of the Obelisk and by the brush next to the Ha-Ha I did a bit more mooching. Again there were whites everywhere - some looking tattered round the edge - a side effect of taking nectar from Bramble flowers. A few Dragon flies buzzed around trying to distract me from the butterflies when a Ginger Beastie appeared. A male Silver Washed, a species which I didn't know was found here, dropped down onto the bush scaring everything else away. It was a cracker lovely and fresh almost as if it had just come out of the box, in mint condish as it were.





As we carried on a couple of Peacocks added themselves to the day list as well as some mating Blue Damselflies. I also got a 4 butterfly/3 species shot. But the stars were the whites with more and more of them appearing. I'd look about and in a single view I could see 6 or 7 whites. Some would fly by and behind me only to be replaced but more from some underground bunker. In the end I passed my camera to my older daughter so she could have a go and I could stand back and take in the spectacle 😊.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 05-Aug-13 11:58 PM GMT

Lovely SWF, Wurzel! 😊 Is it me, or are most SWF photographed facing downwards? Most of mine are...

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-13 05:18 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I know what you mean about them being head down – perhaps it so they can make a rapid escape by just dropping into space? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 06-Aug-13 10:28 PM GMT

Thats a great photo of the fresh Silver-washed Fritillary Wurzel, 😊 in such lovely condition for the end of July, you must have a magic wand. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-13 11:29 PM GMT

Cheers Nick 😊 It's that Imp again, I topped up his baccy and switched it to Cutters Choice 😊

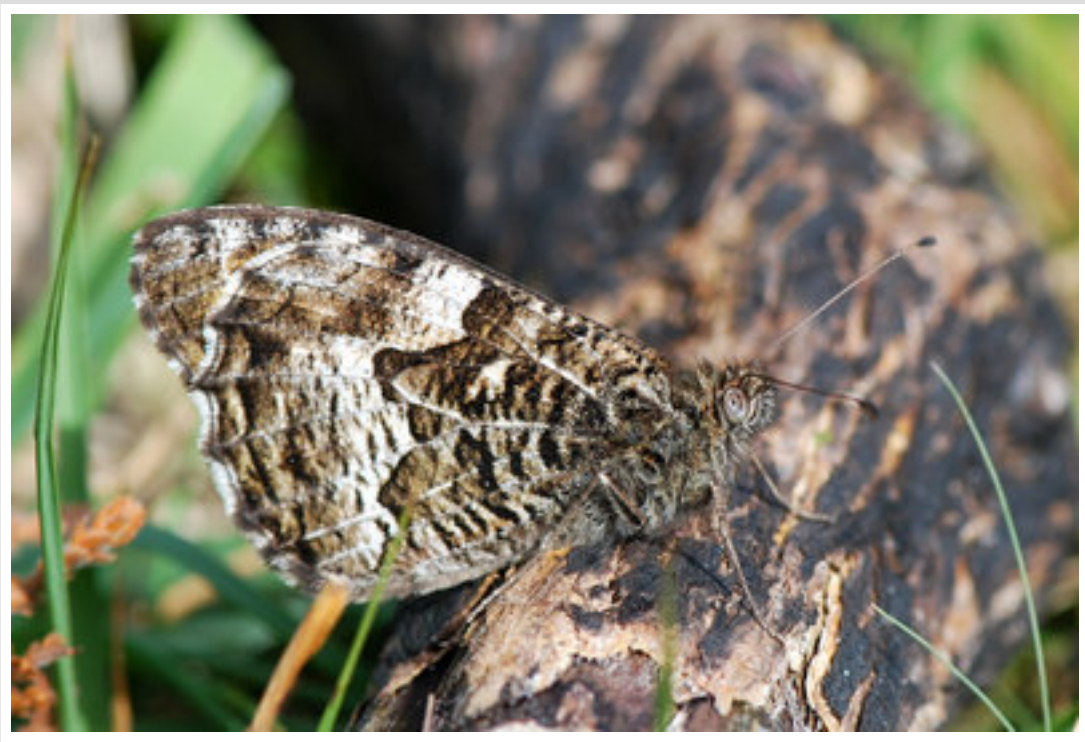
Godshill 28-07-2013

I spent all of Saturday last waiting for the rain and then waiting for it to stop. The forecast for the Sunday was better so after the girls had been picked up by their Nanny and Dad-Dad I grabbed the camera and set off to Godshill near Fordingbridge. The weather app stated that it was going to be showery and so I found myself once again racing the clouds. All the way along the Ringwood road I cast half an eye and muttered to myself that it was starting to look grey. As well as cursing the slow Sunday drivers (it was Sunday so I suppose I should have expected them) was trying to work out which way the wind was blowing and in which direction the clouds were moving.

Luckily for me they were moving in the opposite direction and so when I pulled up in the car park the sun was shining and it felt lovely and warm. I usually judge temperatures by my clothing. Earlier in the season if it's comfortable in a shirt and fleece then there might be the odd Small Tortoiseshell or other hibernator around, just a shirt with sleeves rolled up means reasonable temperatures for butterflies and when my shirt is damp with sweat it means that there will be butterflies around but they'll be too turbo charged to photograph. Today was shirt and sleeves the only problem was the brim of my hat was blowing up and down – which suggested that it might be too windy so I'd have to try and find sheltered spots where the gorse blocked out the wind. With this in mind I headed straight down the hill seeing a few Meadow and Hedge Browns keeping low to the ground and straight to the

“triangle”.

This was where I had a lot of success last year and again it proved to be the hotspot. Almost as soon as the hypotenuse path had been swallowed up by the gorse bushes I found my first Grayling. As usual it was the jinking yet fast flight that put me onto them as it was sitting on the dusty path before veering off into one of the breaks in the gorse hedge. Here there had been a fire and it blended in so well with the blackened ground and bleached sticks that I almost stood on it before I relocated it. It did a circular flighty out over the Heather before landing back 10cm from where it had originally flown from. I then found my second one slightly further along the path – I’d got my eye in.





After I'd found a few Grayling took a look around the main path area of the adjacent. It wasn't as bare as last year and grass had started to grow over what was once stone and sand so I didn't see any Grayling here. However there were other butterflies including a Large and Small Skipper as well as the Heath specialists - Meadow Browns, plenty of Hedge Browns the occasional Small Heath (aptly named for once) as well as fading Silver Studs that were looking well past their best. This was the first time I'd seen Silver Studs here but I'm unsure whether a visit could be timed here to see both these and Grayling looking resplendent?



As I started the return journey back along this part of the path something even more orange passed by and luckily landed right in front of me. A Small Copper added itself to the day list and didn't look too shabby for all the wear amongst the Heather and the Gorse.



I then got back on the Grayling watch. During the morning I saw a couple and I was surprised that there were only a few around. However when I started back I reached an area where the Heather had died back and there were loads present. They seemed to prefer the burnt/cleared barer patches compared to the area around the triangle. Again I was amazed by the variation shown by this species in terms of their colouration as I saw individuals that ranged from black and white through to sandy colours. One looked more different than the others as it appeared grey with a very noticeable white band across the wing 😊 . I stayed here for another half an hour or so practicing my stalking and getting as close as I could for as many shots as I could get of these cracking butterflies.



Close up



Big band and unusually gray?



Makes a change from "Blue on a stick"



Crossing over the bridge Gatekeepers wished me goodbyes and a Silver Stud and Grayling accompanied me up the hill. It was an excellent couple of hours with possibly my second favourite butterfly just because of they are almost the complete package - unusual habitat, flying at a great time of the year, interesting behaviour, challenging to find and get a photo and beautiful detail in their simplicity 😊 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 06-Aug-13 11:56 PM GMT

Great Grayling shots Wurzel, looks like you've got some females there!

Regards,

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Aug-13 11:40 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 How do you tell the difference between male and female? Something I'll have to look into... 😊

Studland, Knoll Beach 31-07-2013

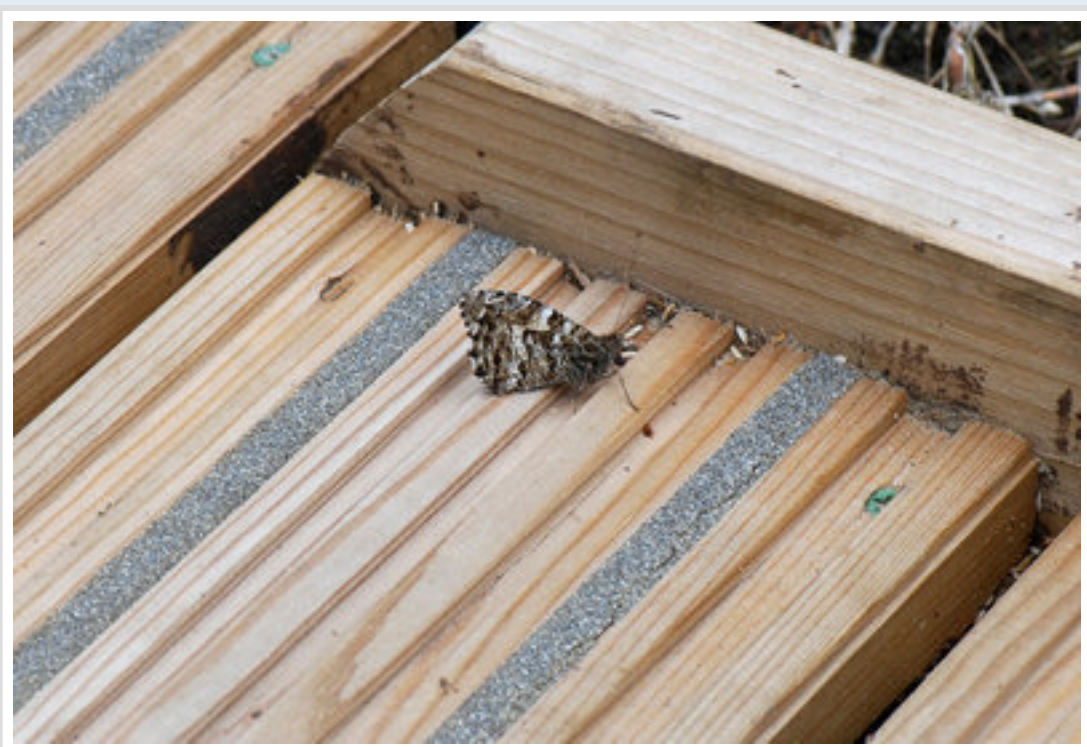
We arrived at Downshay on Tuesday last week and having set up the tent, revelled at being back in Dorset proper and had a cuppa we took a trip to Wareham to do the food shopping so there wasn't really an opportunity for butterflying.

The next day was to be different however and though most of the morning was spent sitting in a cloud we eventually packed the car and headed out for lunch by the river in Wareham. Then we moved onto Studland reasoning that it would be quieter if the sun wasn't blazing. As we pulled into the car park at Knoll Beach we saw the Activity Centre that's been built by the National Trust, which most importantly for the girls had loos. While they disappeared

off I had a mooch around the centre and the hedge around it. The first butterfly was appropriately a Gatekeeper and then something larger and darker flew into view and settled on the sandy track briefly – a Red Admiral which seemed slightly out of place until following the path to the activity centre I saw a couple of Buddleia behind the building. What I find amazing about Buddleia is how it manages to get everywhere but also how the butterflies manage to sniff it out wherever it gets too!



As I carried on towards the centre down the boardwalk I met the girls coming the other way who spooked a butterfly towards me. It flew directly at me, then around my head before landing high up on the white panelling of the building. It was a Grayling and obviously felt a bit out of place so high up and pretty conspicuous so it took off again and landed on the board walk. Again it must have worked out that it was sticking out like a sore thumb so flew about a metre away and landed on the sand where it seemed to calm down as it blended in remarkably.

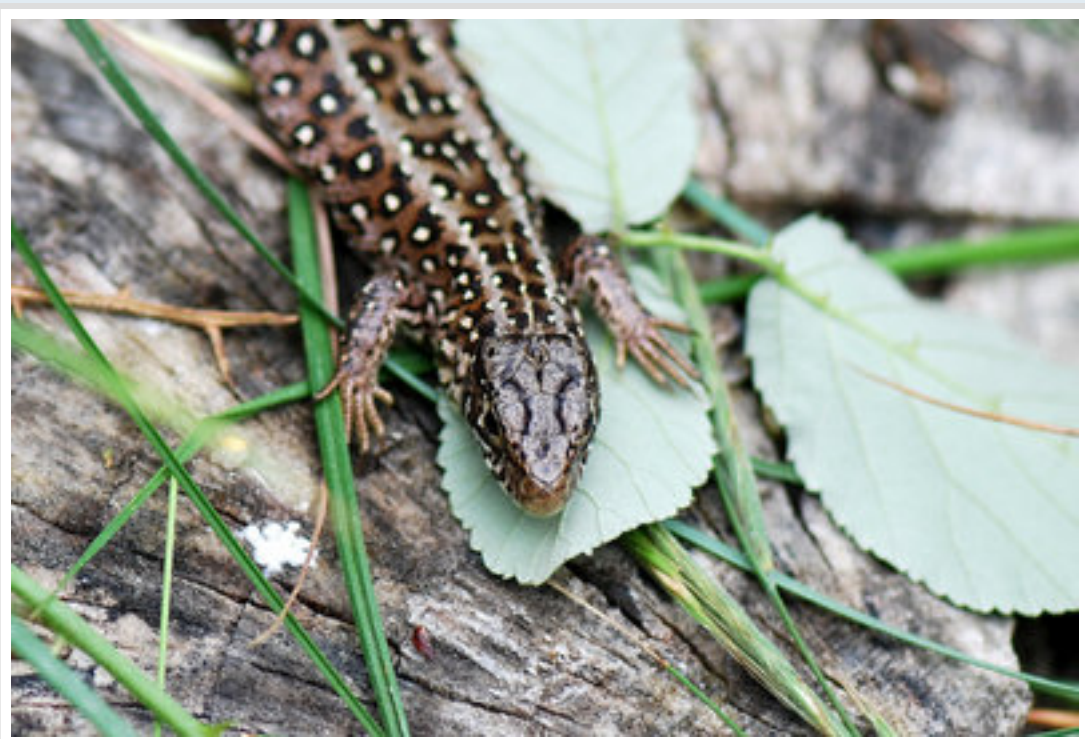
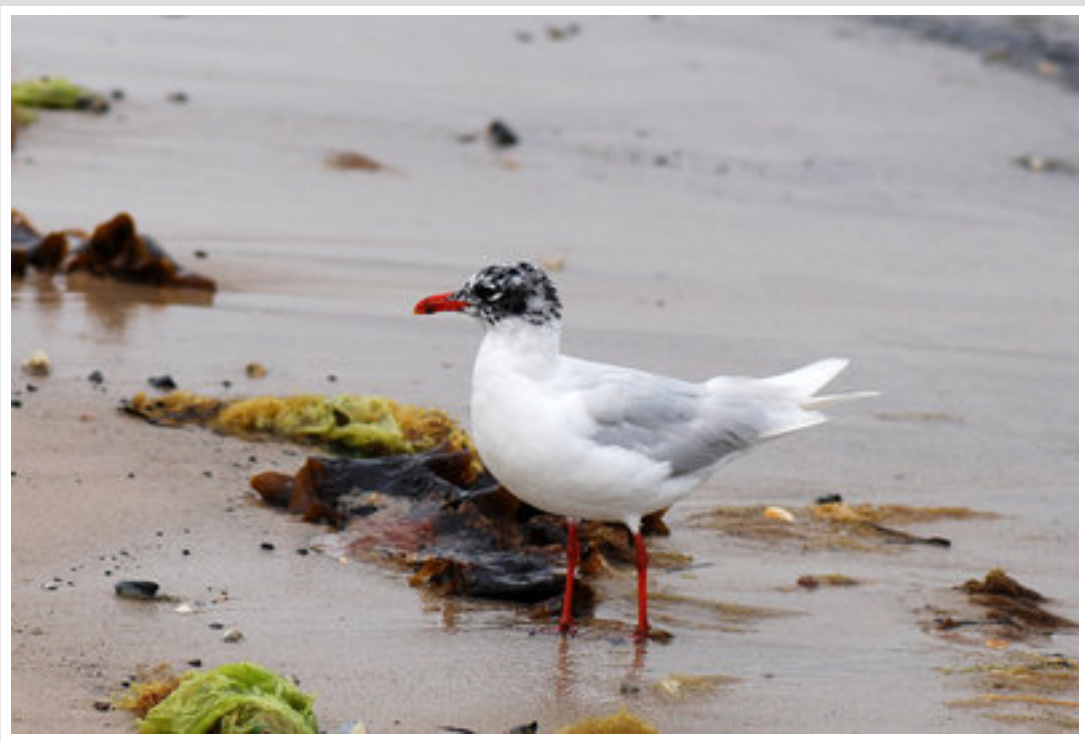




As we left the centre area to head to the beach I noticed a Gatekeeper in the hedge. There was a small Bramble growing and it had created a glade in miniature. In this little area were 9 Gatekeepers in an area of about 1m by 1m. They were so closely packed I couldn't get them all in shot unless I stood on the other side of the road, and then they weren't in focus.



Down on the beach the odd white would fly by at the waters edge before veering back into the dunes and the girls played in the sand. I packed the camera away safely and joined in. Sand castles were built, moats were filled and then we set about looking for crabs. Cracking time! While they carried on playing with some other children they met I had to head back to pick up my wife's camera and on the way I spied a Med Gull and so quietly approached it to get some shots. Back at the car park I checked the "glade" but it only held 6 Gatekeepers now although a stump opposite had a Common Lizard laid out flat basking amid the grey. I had a quick look at the Buddleias behind the building and there were a few whites, the Red Admiral (I presume) and a Grayling feeding on it. I couldn't get any shots though as it flew off, circled me again and landed on my right arm, mid way up my wrist and despite manipulating my camera into my left hand it was too close for a shot. It flew off to then repeat the manoeuvre this time landing in the crook of my elbow still out of reach! So I looked at it, it looked at me and we shared a moment 😊





We drove back to camp, tired, happy and with excellently exfoliated soles of our feet 😊 . Plus I had the happy memories of a wondrous encounter with my second favourite butterfly 🦋 . Hopefully tomorrow I might get to see and photograph my favourite?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by CJB, 08-Aug-13 11:13 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Great images and very impressed by the Lizard and Med Gull.

I had a week in the Trossachs and managed to find none of the local specialities. It rained a lot and when the sun came out I only ever saw small whites and ringlets. 🙄

However I did take a picture of this dragonfly which is the largest I have ever seen. Its body was the length of a standard bic biro (without the lid!) I suspect that you may know what it is?



Huge Dragonfly!

I have failed to get any new species recently so am determined to find some on Saturday to add to my tally of 43!
Flutter on!
CJB

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-13 12:47 PM GMT

Cheers CJB 😊 Sorry you didn't get any of the Northern specialities 😞 Still I reckon you could pick up Chalkhills and Silver Spotted Skippers this weekend (weather permitting 😊) at Denbies or Stockbridge Down.

The Dargonfly looks like a Golden Ringed to me, cracking 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Wetton, 08-Aug-13 01:00 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Your Lizard looks suspiciously like a female Sand Lizard with all those white dots in dark spaces although its head is quite narrow. You were in the correct area to find Sand Lizards.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 08-Aug-13 09:36 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Just catching up after my few days away, great reports and photos 😊

Love the last lizard photo, I never get close enough to them, they always see me first 😞

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-13 11:27 PM GMT

Cheers for the ID correction Paul 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 This one was flat out basking otherwise I'd never have found it

Lulworth Cove 01-08-2013

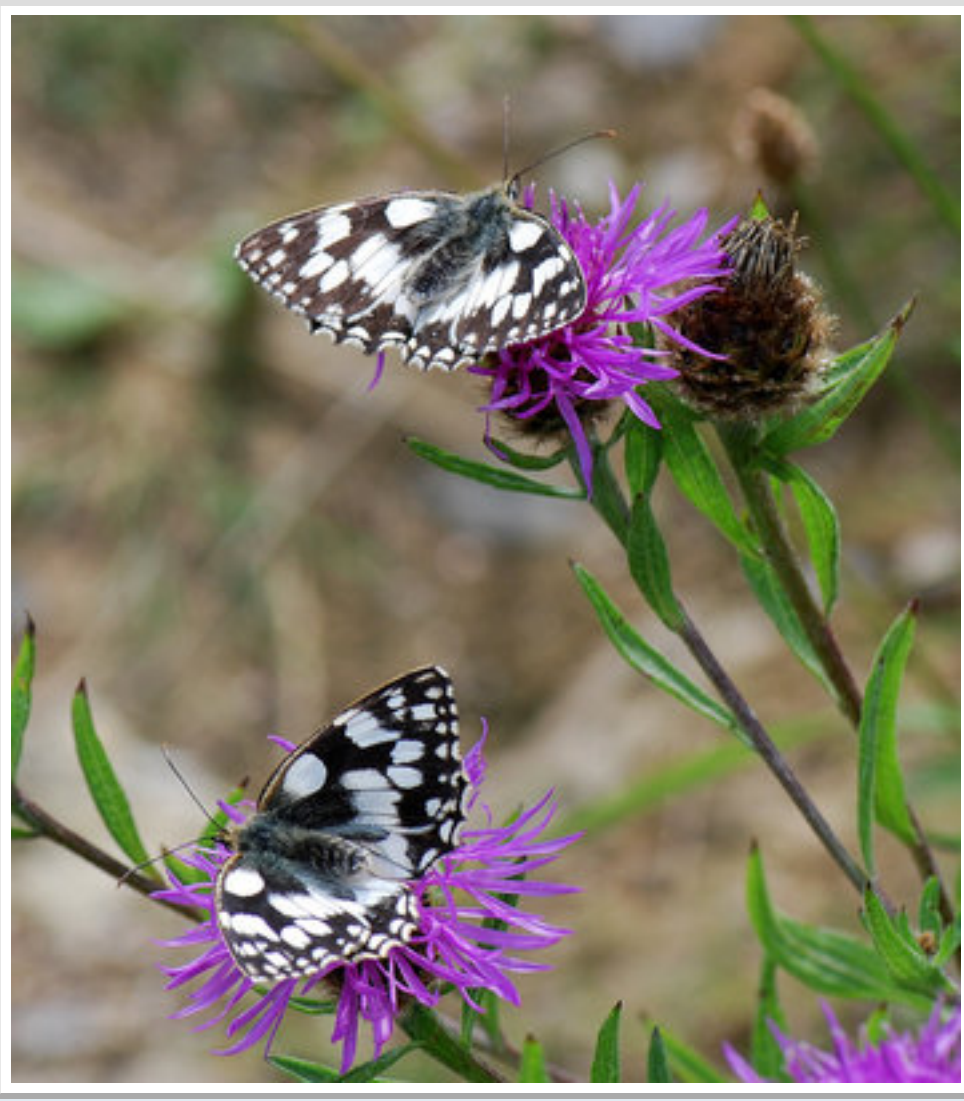
Finally we got some good weather and despite waking once again in a cloud I could see that the mist was soon going to burn up and so we headed to Lulworth Cove. I can assure you that this wasn't my suggestion imagine my surprise when my wife said that that's where we were going! 😊😎

We drew up in the car park and I had to try and conceal my desire to check out the small field at the top of the car park by the path to Durdle Door. Instead we made a move directly to the beach so I checked out the Butterfly garden near the toilets while the girls visited them. A Comma joined the

many whites floating about the place and then a DGF! I couldn't believe it and I couldn't get my camera out quick enough so it shot away.

Once down on the pebbles we settled down and the girls did a bit of paddling and digging in the small areas of sand so I took my first sortie. The right hand side of the Cove swings round sharply into the cliffs and the beach ends abruptly. Here there is a little steep path up the cliff to the more rolling grasses on top. I took this path last year and half way found Lulworths, Small Skipper ovi-positing and a faded Small Cooper. This year however things weren't living up to expectations and it was only when I got to the top that I started seeing butterflies. They were of course Lulworth Skippers looking a little faded and aged but Lulworths none the less. Since last year I'd forgotten how small they were and also how gregarious. When you see two Smessex Skippers it either a prelude to breeding, a rebuff or a fight over a females/territory/"cos youse looked at me funny", but with Lulworths even when there was one on its own another 2 or 3 weren't far away! There were other butterflies amongst the grasses here and I include a couple of shots to break up the Lulworth Skipper fest but I went a little bit Lulworth crazy - snapping away at any little group of them!







All too soon my 20 minutes was up and so I bounced down the path back to the beach with the girls so we could have a paddle and do some rock pooling around one side of the Cove. Even here just sitting back watching the girls splashing and paddling butterflies went past over the sea with a Gatekeeper and another DGF! While I was rock pooling with my older daughter a Marbled White alighted on the seaweed briefly – and I cursed that I didn't have my camera (rocks, slippy seaweed and seawater not happy bedfellows of cameras).

After lunch we headed back down to the Cove and got another space on an even smaller bit of beach. The girls were happy making a castle out of some of the only available sand in the cove. No messing about from my girls; who dragged massive pebbles up the beach to make the foundations, covered it and smoothed it with wet sand and then knocked the castle down to make a swimming pool. Chuckling over their antics I took another walk up the side of the Cove...This time I took to ambling along the narrow paths that clung to the side of the Cove. There were small patches of Thistles that acted as butterfly magnets with Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and three species of Skipper all feeding on them. I carefully pushed my way past some of them that overhung the path and then settled down for 10 minutes or so to watch a se what it produced. Again I was amazed at the sociable nature of the Lulworths. It meant that at a glance you could have a rough idea of which Skipper you were watching. One on its own for more than 3 seconds was probably a Smessex, more than one definitely a Lulworth. It also seemed from my brief observations that the minute something else landed on a flower head the Lulworths would move off. This might be because the other butterfly was bigger as in the case with a Meadow Brown but I also saw it happen when an Essex Skipper landed (so they are here Willow 😊).

I carried on my way and saw a crazy sight – loads of people all on the clifftop of the Cove, having squeezed through barbed wire. Muppets! Shaking my head in disbelief I carried on sticking to the unrestricted and well worn paths and as I was making my way back down something orangey buzzed me. I thought at first that it could be a DGF but it was smaller and the flight was wrong, reminding me of something else? I followed it as it flew round below me before dropping back down and landing on the path just below me. I could see that it was a Wall Brown but the problem I had was getting to it. Using the path I was on would mean either spooking it or splatting it under foot so I had to run all the way round, down the other path and then stealthily back up to where it was sitting on the path. I managed a few shots and then it was off again but landing up near the Thistles. The problem I had now was similar in that the quickest route to the butterfly would spook and unsettled it as well as it being face-on so now I had to run my previous circuit backwards. I say run because I could see some other walkers approaching. I made it in time and got some nice side on closed wing shots which complement those open wing shots from earlier in the year. Hot, sweaty and with calves of steel from all that cliff running I headed back down happy to the enjoy the girls swimming pool with one brief stop-off for what I think is male Lulworth but it's so worn I'm not sure 😊 .





They are there Willow





Muppets!





Time was up and we had to make a move back to the camp so we could get showered before the block got busy. Despite the rushed nature of the outing and not getting to that top part of the car park I was immensely happy to have reacquainted myself with the Lulworth Skipper! Stunning scenery, the feeling of being home, how small and sociable they are – my favourite Butterfly 😊 !

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by CJB, 09-Aug-13 09:51 AM GMT

Good work Wurzel!

As ever some great shots 📷 !

Thanks for the id on the dragonfly, what an amazing species!

Lots of talk about id of skippers! I stuck my neck out and promptly had it chopped!

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 09-Aug-13 10:09 AM GMT

Great report Wurzel and smashing photos 😊

Looks like you have identified another endangered species....*Homo idioticus* perhaps. Thinking about it are they a different species or just a sub-species of *Homo grocklus* ? 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Aug-13 10:26 PM GMT

Cheers CJB 😊 Glad I could help with the ID. When it comes to Skipper ID if in doubt "Smessex" 😊 . Don't worry about your neck getting chopped - I'm sure it'll heal soon 😊

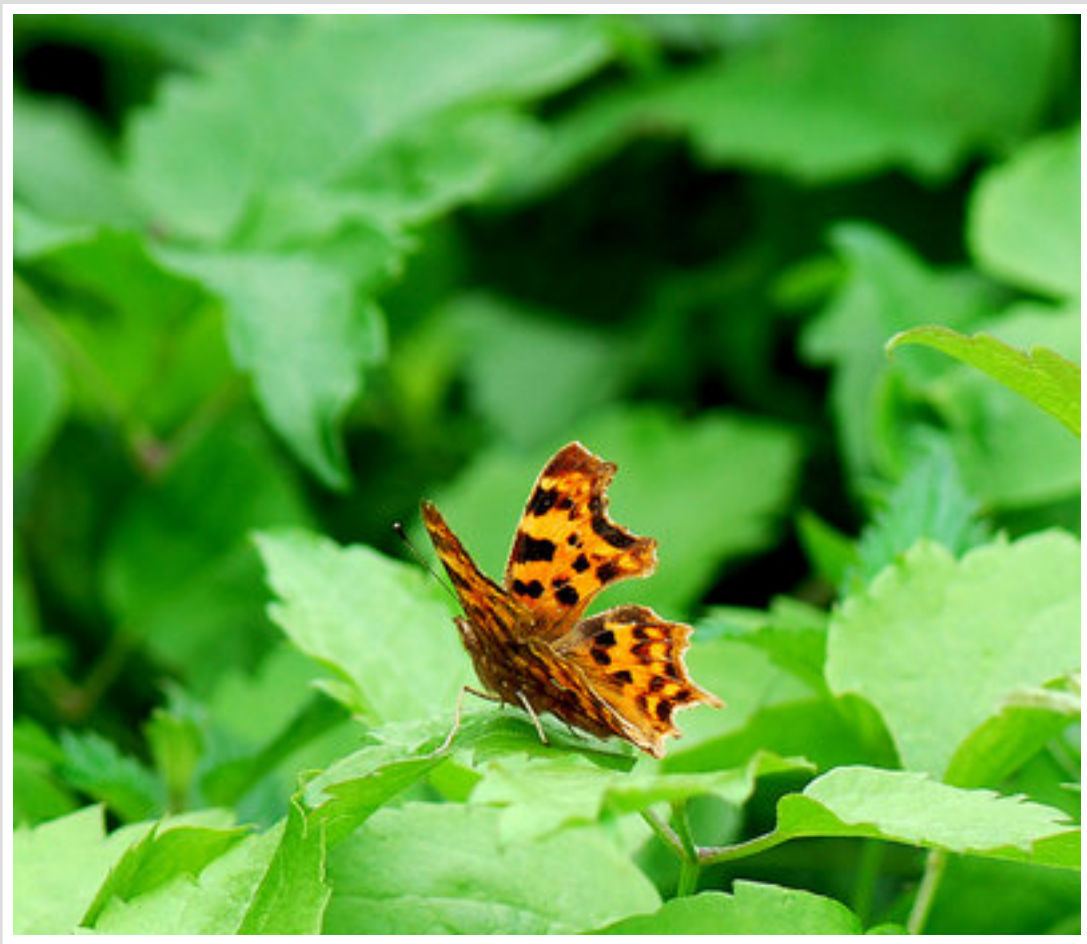
Cheers Neil 😊 Homo groklus is a species in it's own right, you can tell by the unique behaviour patterns - it tends to hoard tat, burn in the sun and sub-consciously irritate all local *Homo sapiens*. I reckon *Homo idioticus* is more of an aberrant/form as it seems to crop up everywhere, unfortunately with increasing regularity 😬😬😬

Downshay itself...

The camp site we stayed at is always worth a look as a few years ago it produced my first Wall Brown, the shower block attracts a nice range of Moths and as well as plenty of Gatekeeper variants last year I found what possible Red Admiral ova. The site is on the Cool Camping website and if you follow the link to Downshay you can see our bell tent 😊 .

However this year I didn't get as many opportunities to get out because of the weather though I did a couple of times. I'd start by working my way along the hedge that divided the two main fields and then follow this onto the concrete path that cuts diagonally across the site. At the top this goes through a gate with a dry stone wall which is covered in Ivy and Brambles and the grass is left unmown here. It's a cracking little area for butterflies and certainly beats just sitting by the tent watching one maybe two Meadow Browns fly by.

On my first visit amongst the usual Browns I encountered a haughty Red Admiral basking on the broken path and amongst the usual selection of browns and plenty of whites I found both Large and Small Skippers and also managed to creep up on a Comma that had placed itself just out of range of my camera lens. Or so it thought...it underestimated the reach that I can get by standing on tip toes, leaning with arms outstretched and peering through the view finder from my arms length away 😊 .





On my second visit a few nights later there were almost exactly the same range of species but with whites in greater numbers than before and now there were a pair of Commas. I was a bit naughty and hopped over the gate and the habitat was even better with a stony path that is crying out for a Wall to be basking on and more grass and wildflowers for nectar so more butterflies, possibly Blues. I felt bad so didn't hang around long but next time we visit I'll ask permission from the farmer when he comes calling for the "rent".

Back on the proper side of the fence I noticed a Meadow Brown that looked much, much paler than I've seen before. I know that they fade with age but this one seemed very washed out, so much so that the hairs around the "snout" and palps appeared grey/white - is this an aberrant? 😊 The Comma must have remembered me from the day before and this time it was much more approachable allowing all manner of shots from stained glass, close-up and some nicely posed ones too 😊 .





All in all a great little find in the wilds of the Isle of Purbeck. I can't wait for next year now 😊 !

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 09-Aug-13 11:48 PM GMT

Looks like you had a great time Wurzel. Excellent report as usual, good find with the Med Gull and, a lovely photo, as with the female Sand Lizard. 😊 I have `nt seen either of those two for a few years now, [even though i know a good local spot for the Sand Lizard] keep it up.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-13 10:25 PM GMT

Cheers Nick 😊 I did indeed have a great time although I'll admit that every now and again my mind was busy imagining Silver Spotted Skippers and Brown Hairstreaks 😊
Ffos-y-ffin 04-08

Having just got back from camping in my homeland we then spent a day sorting everything out and set out for my wife's (adopted) homeland. Off to West Wales. As usual the minute we crossed the bridge it started to rain. I sweat that if Wales ever suffers a drought all the country will have to do is give me a call and the minute I pass under the first giant "H" on the bridge it'll be cats and dogs!

Once we'd settled in with the Outlaws it had cleared slightly so we set out amongst the intermittent showers "up the Lane". I'm sure that I've detailed this before but "The Lane" is basically a road from Ffos-y-ffin to...well I'm not really sure as it ends in a junction. The draw of it is the ancient hedges on either side. I've recognised three species of tree present in it so by my reckoning it must be at least 300 years old?

On the way up to the "Dog Cottage" where we normally turn around there was very little, possibly spooked by the girls who were scooting ahead. On the way back however I started to notice butterflies. Generally whites flying along the hedge conspicuously and then disappearing when they landed - it always surprises me how they manage to do that.



Then there was a single Hedge Brown rather than the expected multitudes - perhaps it was too cool or damp for them? It fluttered weakly by and then dropped onto the top of the hedge where it was composed of Gorse.



Almost back and I noticed that the field behind my Outlaws home is now open; no gate, no horses, so I ducked in a bit and scanned across the field and a roosting GV White caught my eye. I made myself a mental note to make a return visit here.



The final part of the walk took me past a Neighbours Buddleia which again I made a mental note to keep an eye on – I had visions of Painted Ladies (not tattooed wenches, but butterflies 😊).



So we're here...looking forward to what it might bring!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by CJB, 10-Aug-13 11:04 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,
Some more great shots of yours!

I managed to make it to Ashton Rowant today and saw and photographed.....(on the mobile!!) 😊 (Tally:44)



Clouded Yellow!

Amazing 90 minutes! I am hoping to go to Steyning tomorrow in search of BHS and a Swallowtail?!?!?
Flutter On!!
CJB

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 11-Aug-13 10:02 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, lovely shots as always, your Lulworth report was brilliant and made great reading. I would have posted this last night but I was completely kn*****ed. As to Grayling ID, I have some thoughts and observations but for now will keep quiet, as I don't need my neck 'chopping'. This will have to wait until I photograph a female myself, as all the Grayling I have seen so far have been males!

Best Regards,

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Aug-13 10:36 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 I reckon we butterflyers need to splice some Lizard genes so we can regrow our necks 😊😂

Cei Bach

The second day of the break with my Outlaws was a washout with rain on and off pretty much all day. It would stop and brighten up for about 5 minutes so I'd grab my gear and step outside only for the rain to start again. I gave up in the end and we dug some Lego out of the loft and I built a Pirate Island, for my girls to play with of course 😊.

The following day the weather was much better and after a trip out in the morning round the Lanes and down to Aberaeron we headed to the beach - to Cei Bach. You park in a small wood with ruined buildings and follow a path alongside the river down to the beach. We'd checked the Tide Timetables and arrived as it was well on the way out and once the girls were on the sand they were off - making sandcastles, paddling, carving their names in the sand with their spades and generally going loopy. The back of the beach is made from soft clay cliffs which are forever collapsing and when they do the scars and holes remaining soon fill with wildflowers and Buddleias. So promising my wife that I wouldn't follow the cliff all the way round to Newquay (of Dylan Thomas fame) I set off for a 20 minute sortie...

I tried to reach a large Buddleia but could only get close enough to it to see the many whites and Peacocks and the single Red Admiral and Comma feeding on it. Approaching it from the other side was no better wither as my route was blocked by huge Brambles and as I was wearing my beachwear (along with my lucky hat of course) it was impassable. So I clambered back down and carried on along the beach and up a path. It hair-pinned around and continued up to a Caravan site I think, I couldn't tell as I'd noticed that at the hairpin a smaller, wilder looking path carried on diagonally up the hill. For some reason I took this track rather than continuing up the main path and within 8 steps I was glad that I had. There were butterflies everywhere - Hedge Browns, Meadow Browns, a Marbled White, various assorted whites, a fly-by Peacock and also 4 male Common Blues having a right go at each other at every available opportunity.



However what caught my eye was a little Orange blur, larger and brighter than a skipper, it turned out to be a Small Copper – what really caught my eye was it's hind wings – the usually small tail seemed more accentuated on this individual – not as much as that posted by Mikhal, but very prominent and made more so by the orange band almost ending in an arrow head shape. Probably well within the usual range but noticeable when seen with the naked eye so impressive. It also had a damaged palp which helped me tell it apart from the other Small Copper which didn't hang around that long.





However I tore myself away and tried to focus on the four males Common Blues which were all bombing around and hassling each other every time they landed on a flower head. It made photography very tricky so in the end I merely waited, camera pre-focused, by a flower head. It worked as very quickly a Common Blue (not a very fresh on) landed, I got a couple of shots and then another buzzed it and they were both away. There was also a geriatric Skipper hanging around and trying to lead a quiet life in retirement. But I kept going back to find the Small Copper...





My time was almost up so I headed back to family and we got down to some serious rock-pooling! A fantastic afternoon was had by all 😊.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 12-Aug-13 07:44 AM GMT

Great Lulworth Skipper shots Wurzel. It's a few years since I've seen them – must try to make the time next year.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-13 10:40 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊 They're my number one butterfly and you hardly ever see just one 😊

Ffos-y-ffin 06-08

Slightly out of sync but I wanted to get to that Small Copper from Cei Bach posted. Before we went to the beach I took advantage of the girls playing happily in the back garden to get out and check the Lane a bit more. So with camera in one hand and Lovefilm Disc to post (my excuse) 😊 in the other I set off. I started back at the Buddleia in the neighbours garden and it was certainly drawing in the butterflies. At first only the Whites were noticeable but as I approached nearer and nearer with slow faltering steps so as not to spook them, more species came into view. I could clearly see three different whites as well as 2 or 3 Peacocks but I was after some closer encounters with the Red Admiral – a butterfly that I saw all of the time last autumn in great numbers but one which has been a bit thinner on the ground this year for some reason.



From there I crossed back over the road and headed towards the Postbox at the other end of the Lane where it meets the back road to Aberaeron (Rhuh Goch?). Along this part the hedge reaches over 8 feet and I always seem to find Hedge Browns here with various numbers of spots but today they were all staying high up and out of reach so it was only I worked my way along the smaller hedge along the road that I started finding Hedgies. One stood out immediately a female with two large spots on the fore-wing and four "eyes" on each hind wing - excessa? There was also a male who only had the eyes on the forewings and so looked surprisingly plain. However I couldn't enjoy this finds for too long as I got caught in the "Sheep Run of Aberaeron", a bit like the bull run in Pamplona but much, much softer, you're more likely to get gently nuzzled than gored to death 😊 . Though saying that, some of them did have maniacal grins 😬😬 .





I was just recovering from all the excitement and getting back to the butterflies when they came back again – heading back the way they’d come. I wondered if this was some new marketing technique and these were to be sold as “ultra lean” Mutton? Still musing I got back to Hedgie watching and also stumbled across a Meadow Brown with two pupils in its eyes. As bemoaned by DavidM and myself earlier in the year, this one was more than happy to sit for some photographs yet it didn’t look particularly attractive, in fact it looked almost on it’s last legs – tattered and faded and well past it’s best.





Realising that I'd been gone for almost half an hour I quickly posted the Disc and headed back to the house, with a quick check of the Buddleia on the way. I swear it should have a Painted Lady 🥹 .





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 13-Aug-13 08:46 PM GMT

Great report Wurzel , love the description of the 'sheep run' 😊

I must admit I often think that sheep have a strange look... a bit of a mix of evil and stupid 😂

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 13-Aug-13 09:20 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

love the description of the 'sheep run' 😊

Please tell me this didn't happen in Wales! 😞

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Aug-13 10:31 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 I saw a New Zealand film a few years ago, I think it was called "Black Sheep" and I've never looked at them the same since 😲

Sorry David it was indeed in Wales – but West Wales if that helps 😊 . I think they'd escaped from a field really and it was fun creating the fiction but I got a bit carried away 😞

I spent a fantastic day with Philzoid today starting at Shipton Bellinger and then showing off my local patch Five Rivers. The highlights were too numerous to mention but here's a taster 😊 ...



Tomorrow back to Wales as I'm still a week behind – I really should stay in a bit more, less writing to do then 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 13-Aug-13 10:39 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Love your open wing Brimstone 😊

Did it pose like that 🤔 or did you just catch it right 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 13-Aug-13 10:51 PM GMT

Great read as usual Wurzel but, that open winged shot of the Brimstone, just brilliant. 😊😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 14-Aug-13 07:38 PM GMT

Agreed, that Brimstone is a corker, well done 🍷 😊

Looking forward to the rest,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 14-Aug-13 08:22 PM GMT

That's a cracking photo of the Brimstone Wurzel. I managed to get one years ago but it certainly wasn't as good as that – really well done,

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Aug-13 11:10 PM GMT

Cheers Jack 😊 It was like that for about 5 minutes, then the sun came out and it was off again. I thought that they always rest/roost with their wings tightly shut but it seems that no-one had told this chap 😊

Cheers Nick, Neil and Pauline for your very kind comments 😊 Still trying to catch up, so many photos to sort through 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 14-Aug-13 11:31 PM GMT

It's a classic photo. 😊

I wonder if it was freshly emerged? One thing you can see (which is normally out of sight) is the huge size and robust look of the thorax – clearly designed for lasting nearly a year and with a great deal of flying in mind. Brimstones are astonishing in their durability.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 15-Aug-13 07:57 PM GMT

That's a great Brimstone shot, Wurzel.

I've seen pics of them before when they've opened their wings in courting mode, but to get a male on film just simply basking is almost unique.

We ignore so many interesting things whilst we're out, but I guess when you're observing for so much longer than a normal person would, then you're bound to chance upon unusual behaviour such as this.

Next challenge is this: Small Heath with wings open!

Good luck.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Aug-13 11:17 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I know what you mean, it looks like it's spent far too long down the gym 😊

Cheers David 😊 I'll try to take on your Mission (almost)Impossible" 😊

Ffos-y-ffin 07-08-2013

After a few days off back to Wales and it's now Wednesday of our trip to visit the Outlaws. As the weather was holding we took a trip to Aberystwyth and parked in the usual place to meet the Outlaws who'd come in by bus. We made our way to town by the river side path and there were plenty of whites, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers on the way as well as the occasional Small Tortoiseshell. Once in town we had a poke around the shops and I reminisced to myself whilst looking around my old Uni/band day haunts. I also made my annual visit to Duncan's plaque at the Bay Hotel. We had a our lunch down on the sea wall sandwich and large Herring Gull dive bombed my older daughter, pecked her finger and made off with her lunch! Vicious blighters – you wouldn't find a Purple Emperor doing that!

The girls then walked on to the local swimming pool so I had to make the walk back on my own to pick the car up and then drive to meet them there. There were still plenty of whites and browns about but now the Small torts, Peacocks and Red Admirals were much more noticeable – possibly as it was feeling a little warmer? I stopped very briefly by the Police Station where there was a hedge almost of large Buddleia and this proved to be a good move as it was covered in butterflies- including a Common Blue which saw me coming and popped off onto something more usual.





Once back at Ffos-y-ffin I found that I had a free half hour so I popped out to check the Lane and then the field stopping at the Neighbours Buddleia first. Here there was a Red Admiral, 3 Peacocks and 2 Small Tort along with the ever numerous whites numerous whites. One of the Small Torts landed on the road and seemed to be checking it with its proboscis possibly taking minerals from it.



I wandered over to the larger hedge and the road checking Gatekeepers all the while and finding a few of interest; a female in particular caught my eye which had a large comma like mark under the fore wing eyespot. Another Hedgie seemed to be using a Bramble bud as a bar stool while it sipped nectar from a flower that had just opened. Another large Buddleia on a different neighbours drive allowed me to get a four species shot!

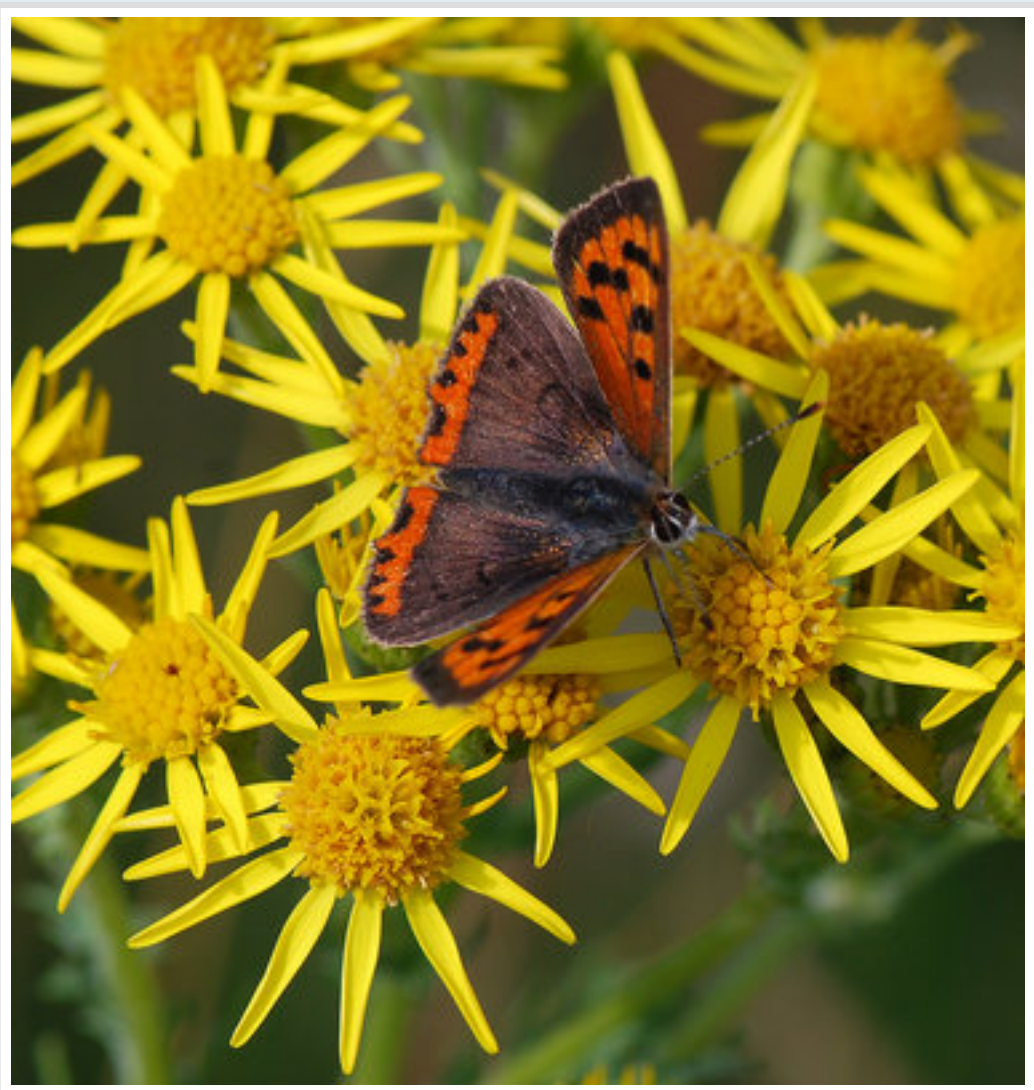




I'll park me bum while I have a drink!

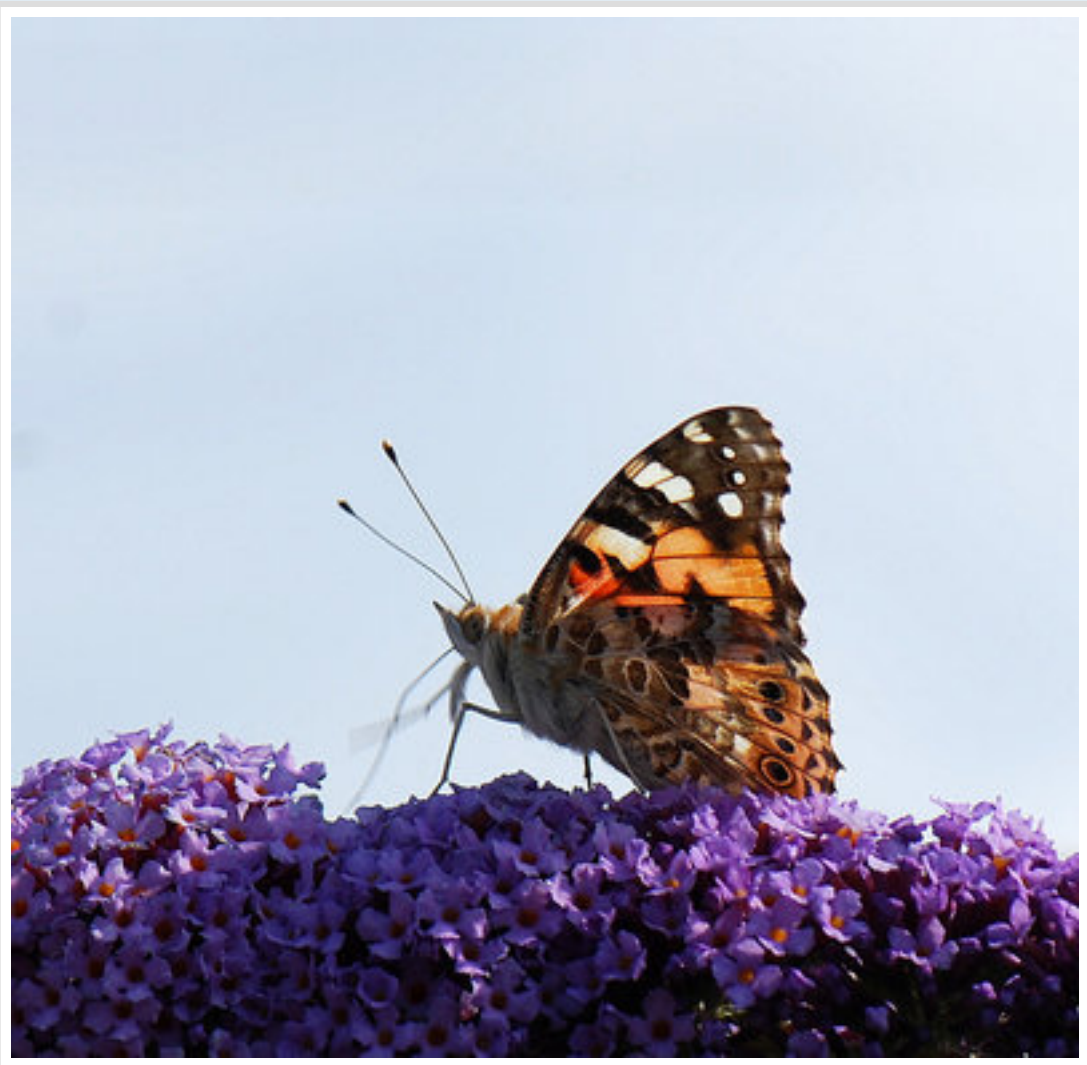
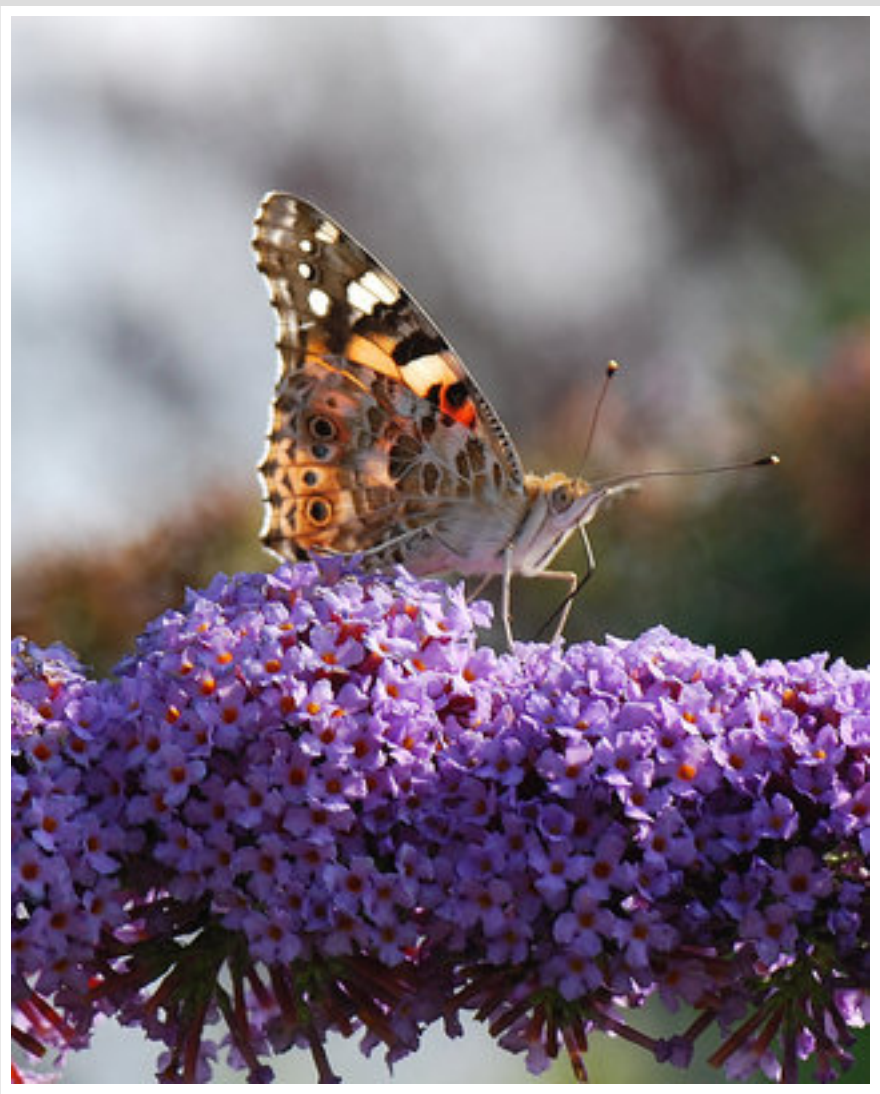
I then remembered about the field behind the house so headed back the way I'd come, up the Lane and then turned left smartish into the field without a gate. Grass moths seemed to be everywhere and each footfall would set two or three whizzing off in all directions. At first it was as I'd expected with mainly Browns and Whites fluttering around the grass tops and then ducking down in between the stems. But there were some largish patches of low growing yellow flowers and over these there were four obvious male Common Blues, when I approached a little closer I caught sight of a Smessex Skipper and female Common Blue on the periphery. I skirted round the flowers and found a well worn dusty path and on the taller yellow flowers I found two Small Coppers. They were right belligerent chasing everything and each other of "their" flowers!





I spent five or so minutes watching their antics before hearing my wife from over the fence. She was calling the girls in to tea so I thought it prudent to make my way back too. However I couldn't resist stopping off one last time by the Buddleia. The usual suspects were all present but there was something different hiding in amongst the purple flowers further back in the bush. The breeze caught the flowers heads a for tantalizing second I could see creams, and eyes leading to pink and black and white – my first Painted Lady of the year, at last. It moved slightly closer for a short while but was still deep within the bush. When it moved a second time it came out onto the edge of the bush, just further away than I'd hoped and so I got a few distant shots, including one for my stained glass collection.





I got back in just in time for “bath and story” so remained in the good books which meant that I would be able to make a visit the following morning to see if it was still about...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 16-Aug-13 10:24 AM GMT

Some great reports and shots Wurzel, particularly liked the shot of the open winged Brimstone, a shot I would love to get myself but always thought impossible – looks like you've achieved just that 🍀 Lovely shots of the PLs on the Buddleia too!

Regards,

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Aug-13 09:52 PM GMT

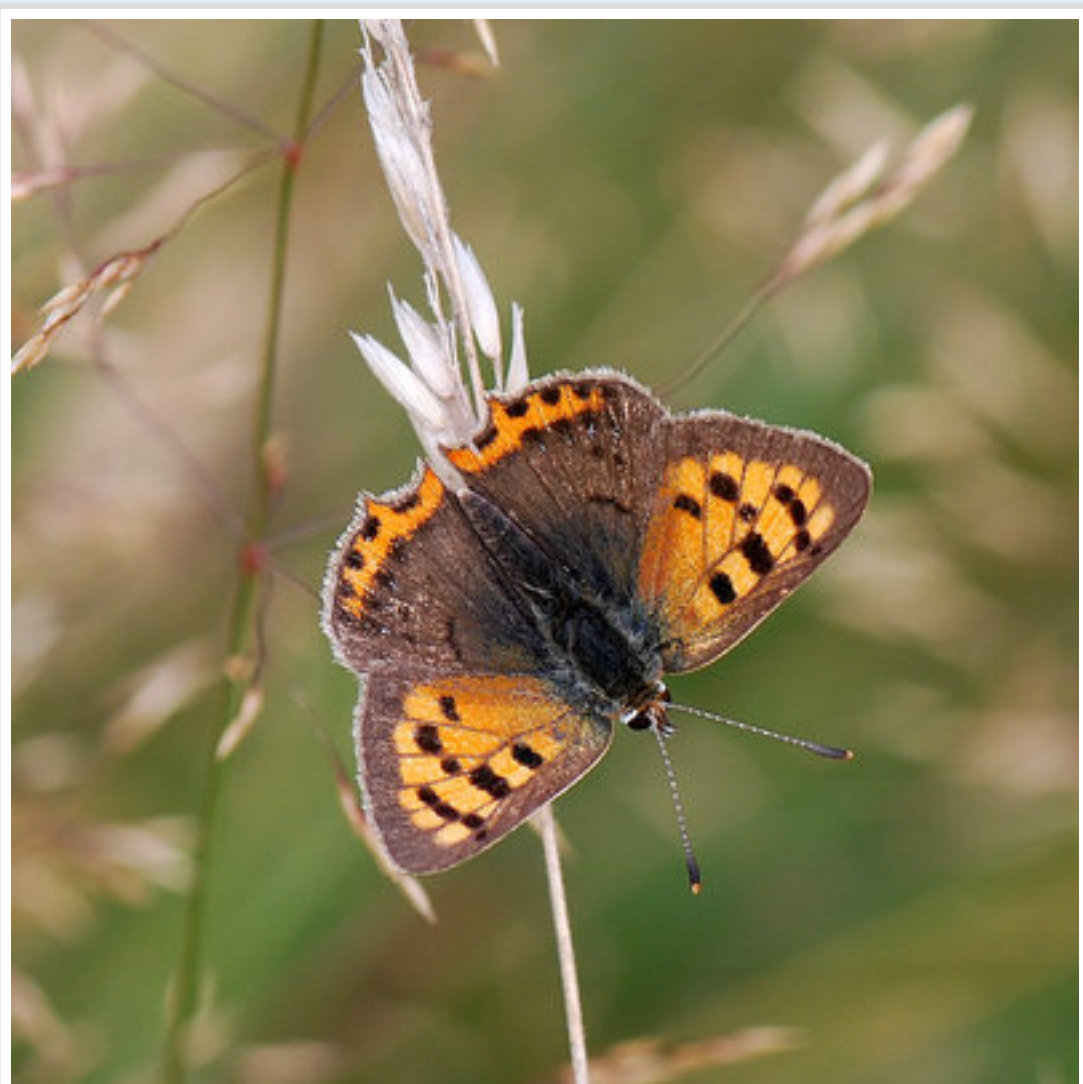
Cheers Mike for your kind comments! 😊 Just in the right place at the right time, for once 😊😄

Ffos-y-ffin again finally

So on my final full day in Ffos-y-ffin again it dawned hazy but mild so I headed out and straight to the field to try and catch the butterflies roosting. There were a few whites around but I was after some more of the Small Coppers and Blues and it didn't take long to reconnect with them. As I scanned

across the grass tops I could make out the odd blue or orange glittering like jewels or little flags of butterflies with their wings shut. It's times like these when I wish that I had a panoramic or landscape lens (is that a 35mm or "pancake"?) so that I could have recorded the glorious sight. I settled instead for trying to find the butterflies that best represented the scene before me in the hope that by piecing the individual shots together I could envisage the whole picture. So I found my closed wing Small Copper, female Common Blue, a worn male Common Blue and another resplendent male. I also managed to photograph a Small Copper with its wings open in a great pose. it would probably be my favourite Small Copper shot that I've taken if only it were fresher. Indeed the fresher looking Copper did show up on the path as I was leaving, almost begging me to take a photo and eying me reproachfully; "You missed me out!" it seemed to say 🙄.



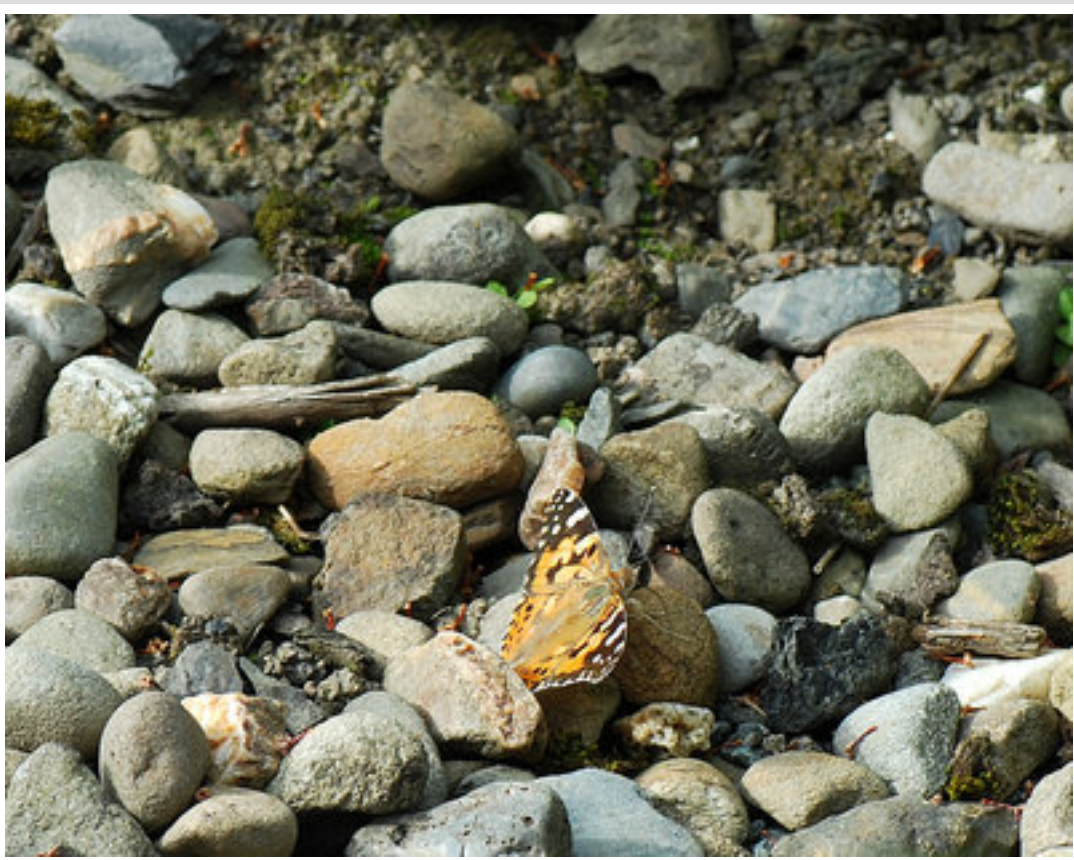


Happy with that one!



What about me?

On the way back I briefly checked the Buddleia again and the Painted Lady was still in residence. In the cooler morning air it was much closer and much more approachable. However after a few poses it worried me as it took off, fluttered round the Buddleia top and then disappeared from view. Luckily I found it again but now on the deck taking salts (I presume) from the stones at the base of the bush. It soon came back up top and it grew accustomed to me, flitting closer and closer until at one point I couldn't sensibly focus on it! My patience paid off and I was chuffed that what I'd thought should turn up eventually did 😊.



Taking salts?

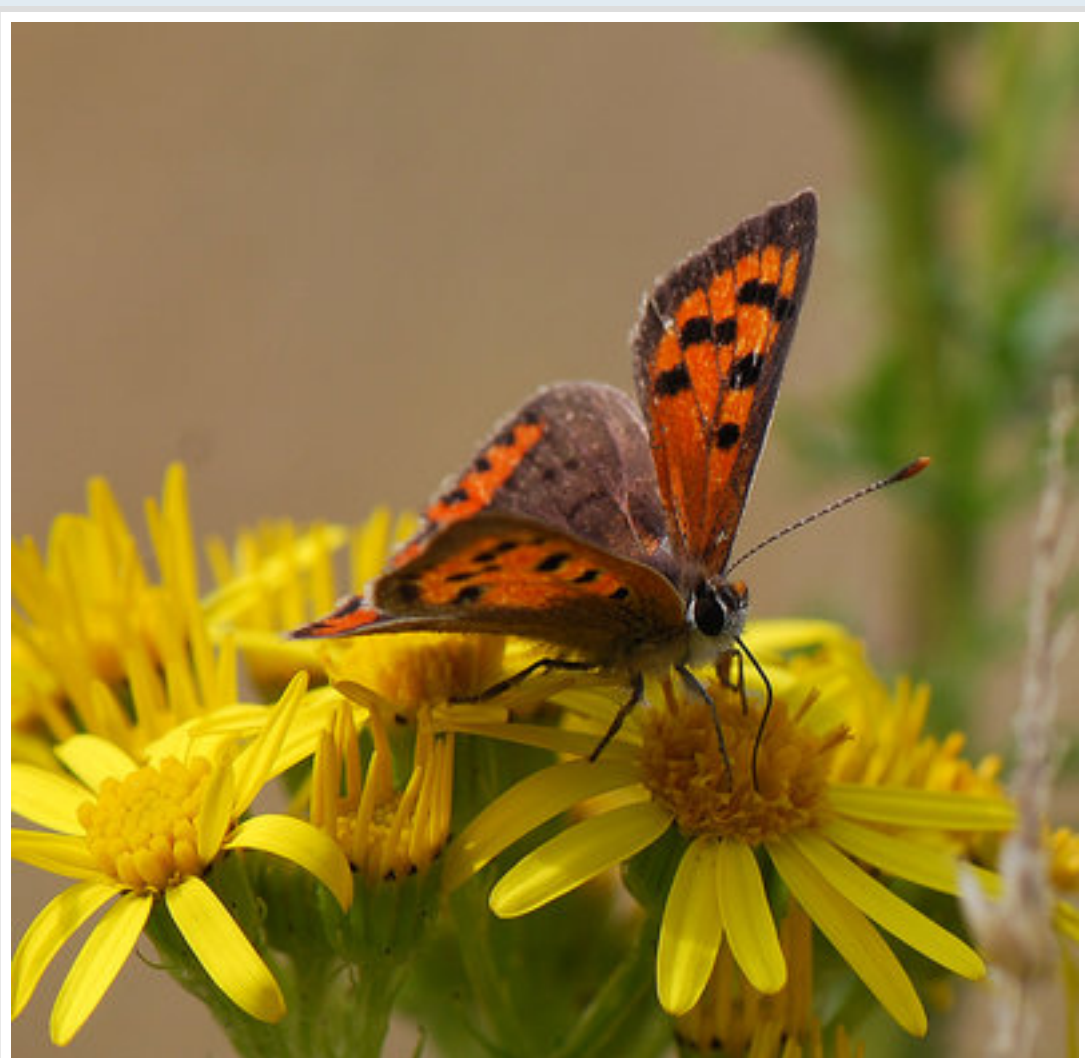
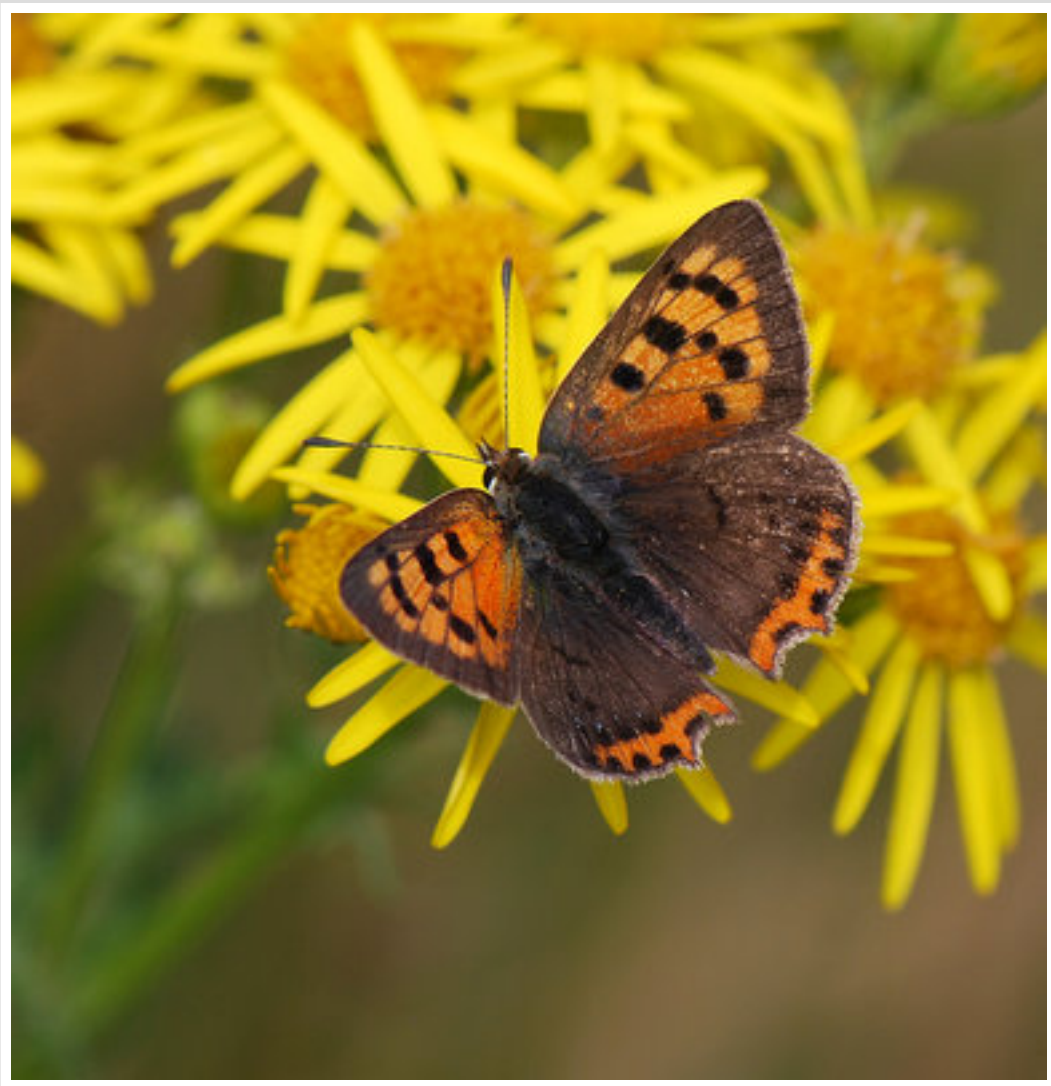


Four species!





A quick trip back to the field in the afternoon with my older daughter saw me concentrating on the Small Coppers - this time trying to get up as close and personal as possible. I also tried this with some of the local Gatekeepers without much success as they all wanted to show me their open wings, typical 😊. The only other sighting of note was another Common Blue on one of the collapsed cliffs at Newquay during a stolen 15 minutes peace from sand castles and paddling and more importantly in terms of my sanity - "The Beach Team" 😊 Don't ask about those sly pieces of work!





Newquay

And so ended our family trip to Wales, possibly my most productive one ever?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 17-Aug-13 11:23 PM GMT

Another great report with some lovely photos Wurzel, especially the blues. I the last photo you have caught just perfectly and i thought my favourite, then i looked again and had to add MissTatty Blue, wonderful. 😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Aug-13 11:19 PM GMT

Cheers Nick for your kind comments 😊 She was lovely, but tatty that one 😬😬

Stockbridge Down

Having got back from both Dorset and Wales I was itching to get over to Stockbridge Down to try for Silver Spotted Skipper and see a few more Chalkhills. Reports were good but they'd been emerging for a few weeks so I reckoned they mightn't be that fresh but at least I'd see them hopefully... As usual I was racing the weather as the glorious sun from the morning was vanishing before my eyes under a holey blanket of cloud. Pulling up in the car park just east of Stockbridge I scanned the Buddleia quickly and amongst the vanessids and whites was a battered Silver Washed. Crossing over the road I set off across the diagonal path of short springy turf and the first butterfly was a Small Copper. This was quickly followed by a male Chalkhill. So I'd gotten one of my target species but I need to find those Silver Spots. Once over by the sheep pen I found my second target, so the "pressure" was off. I spent some time with her just watching her antics and getting used to the "jizz" after a year away. I was soon recognising the different flight of the female Chalkhills - larger and paler more fluttery and less jinky - all of which were keeping a low profile, understandably as once they attracted the attentions of the males it looked horrific at times. As well as finding a couple more Silver Spots I also bumped into Maurice, nice to meet you! 😊







I then took to just wandering aimlessly around, following the butterflies I was putting up from under my feet but not being too fussed about getting shots. This is sometimes the best way and you can find all sorts to keep you amused and catch your eye. I found my way to one of the hill tops where there was a profusion of taller, pale grass as well as good clumps of wildflowers. The slightly taller Brambles offered shelter from the wind and I spent a little while here just marvelling at what was present. I counted nine different species in this one clump but the most I could get in one shot was 4!



While was concentrating on a male Chalkhill something shot past me carried on the wind. When the particular gust stopped it dropped down amongst the grasses. The thing that really sent my adrenaline skyward was how yellow it was which I gleaned from that quick glance. It wasn't limey or lemony like a Brimstone but proper Canary Yellow like a Norwich supporter. I gently approached the area it had disappeared down in and there was my first Clouded Yellow of 2013. A few shots later and it moved slightly further away before bombing away down the hillside. Boy could it shift. One second I was following it by eye, the next it was gone, just like that! 🤪

I stumbled around a little bit dazed by this brief encounter and somehow found myself lower down the hill in amongst the Hawthorns and other scrub. As I rounded a corner there in front of me was a large Bramble bush, sheltered from the wind. Again there were butterflies a plenty - Silver Spots, Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns, a Peacock, Brimstone and a few Chalkhills. The odd white would drop in as did another/the same Clouded Yellow. It didn't stop long enough anywhere and when it did settle long enough for me to make a footstep towards it it would be mobbed by something else and forced to move on. It reminded me of an Owl being mobbed by finches. I witnessed it being harassed by pretty well every species that was present at the Bramble bush. In the end I set the camera to Sport and tried a few grab shots before it bombed away down the hill. I followed it the best I could by eye and then set off on foot only to end up at dead end of impenetrable trees.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 19-Aug-13 05:18 PM GMT

Loads of great shots of lots of different species Wurzel, you have been very busy. Glad you got to see and photograph the Clouded Yellow 😊 Also looks like you might be playing a new game, spot the Painted Lady 😊

Mile

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 19-Aug-13 09:19 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, just been catching up on your reports, great reads and photos 😊

Glad to see you found a Painted Lady and a Clouded Yellow 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Aug-13 10:36 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 - I was going to slip that PL one in my "Where's the Grayling?" post during the winter months to see if anyone noticed! 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Not half as glad as I was 😊

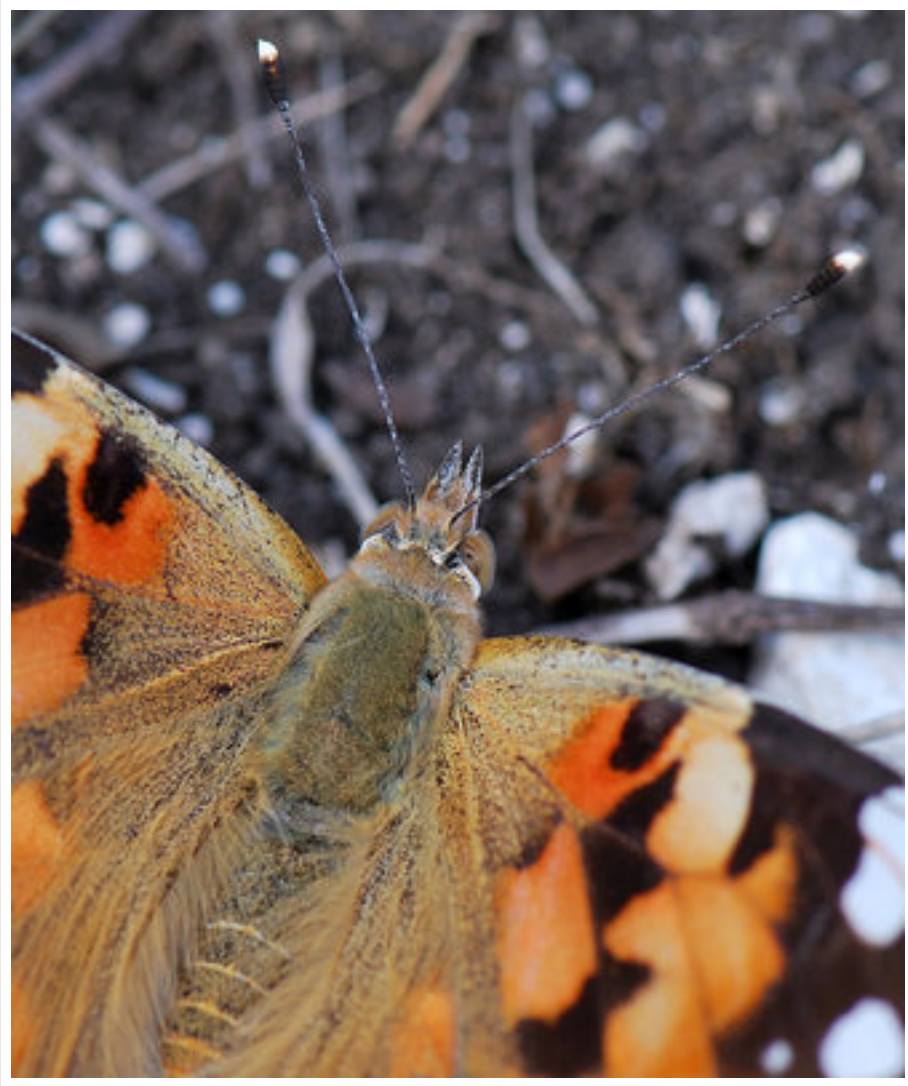
Stockbridge Down Part 2

...I started to work my way back to the Bramble bush that seemed to be acting as a butterfly magnet stopping on the way for the odd Chalkhill or Silver Spot including one which appeared to be ovi-positing and another which was sitting on a dried bit of cow dung (one for the poo book 😊). Once back at the bush I found a Brimstone that allowed a close approach, more Silver Spots looking in good nick and my enjoyment was greatly increased by the presence of a Clouded Yellow which soon became two. I now witnessed a strange game of cat and mouse almost between the pair as one would land only to be mobbed almost instantaneously by the other (even before anything else got to it). After about 3 minutes of watching this they both flew down the hill and were gone. I was so busy watching the spectacle I hadn't even thought about raising my camera 😊😊.



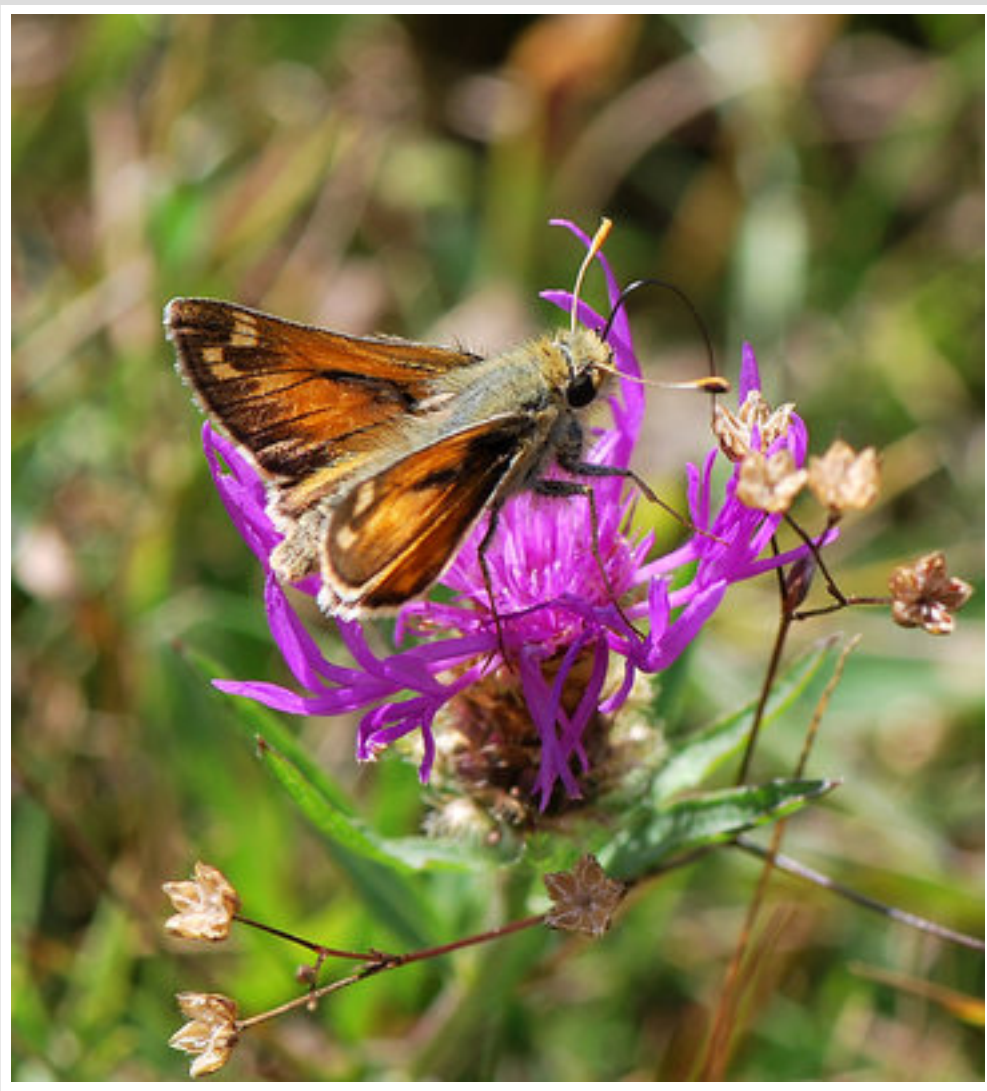


I resumed watching the sheltered area and something different dropped in, almost a Tangerine cream colour, a Painted Lady. It started basking on the bare patches of soil poking through the turf and it was hard going as the cloud cover was much less intermittent now. As the temperature had dropped slightly as the sun had hidden behind the clouds everything was calmer, less frenetic and I could get up close to many more butterflies. However the Chalkhills would seem to disappear and then reappear with the sun.



Before I knew it time had almost ticked away so I started the slow trudge back to the car. I poured myself a coffee and strolled along the path sipping from it. As is so often the way within a few sips/steps a butterfly buzzed by, landed almost in front of me and set about taking nectar for all it was worth. He was so intent on feeding I spent some time with him and he wasn't at all bothered by my presence.





Happy with the days haul and contentedly smiling I finally made my way home, that is after another Clouded Yellow shot by and disappeared from view almost as quickly as it had appeared. There seem to be so many of them about hopefully I'll have another, and closer, encounter.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 19-Aug-13 11:04 PM GMT

What a splendid Silver-spotted selection, Wurzel! And that Painted Lady is a lovely deep shade, too. They do seem to vary from pale pink to almost brown – nothing to do with age, either. It's only when there are lots of something about that we notice the breadth of variation – looking at all the Clouded Yellows posted at the moment shows that up.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

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

Another great read with some lovely photos Wurzel. I see you have seen a Clouded Yellow at last, excellent and got the opened wing shot as well, but the Silver-spotted Skipper ovipositing has got to be my favourite, but then i am a complete sucker for that sort of shot, well done for capturing the moment, brilliant. 😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-13 11:01 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I know what you mean about noticing variation – I'm seeing it in Small Coppers at the moment 😊

Cheers Nick 😊 That was my fave too, I need to work on my Clouded Yellow shots I just can't get close enough 😊

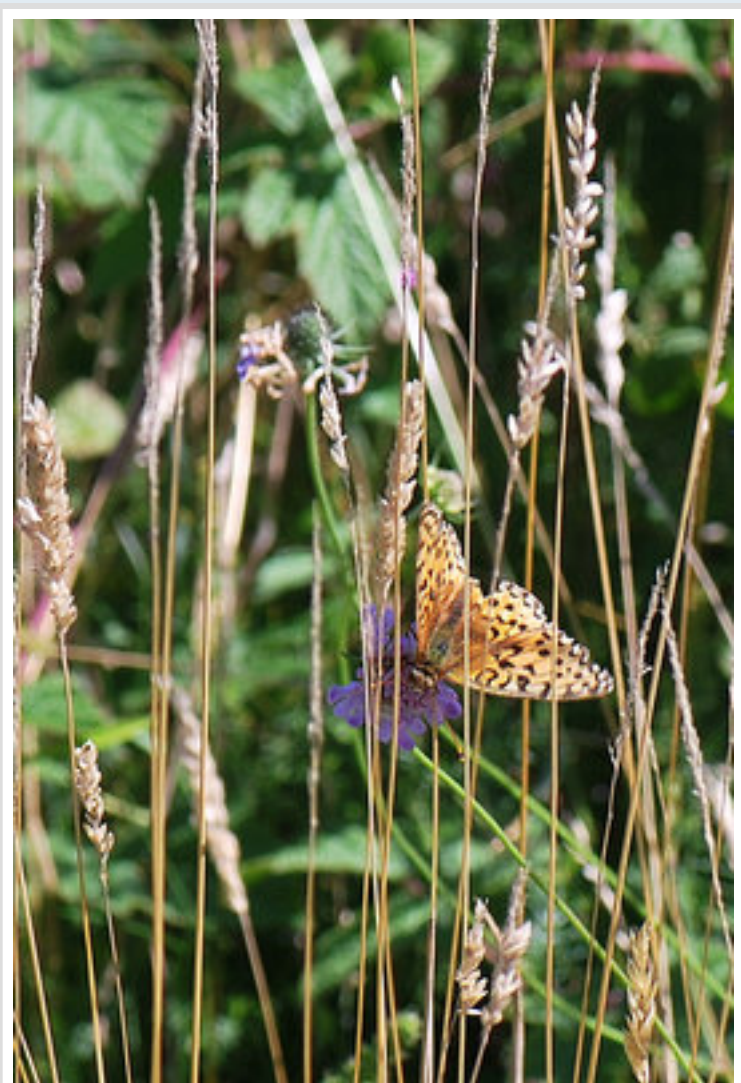
Before I forget...I took the girls to Legoland today and didn't take my camera as I didn't want to smash it on the rides or for it to get a soaking at Drench Towers. I did see a good range of butterflies – singles of Brimstone, Comma, Peacock, Red Admiral and Holly Blue as well as 3 Gatekeepers, many Small and Large Whites and 2 Small Torts. The star butterfly of the day however was a Purple Hairstreak which landed on the deck. The precise location was 2 feet away from the blue slide at Drench Towers and having moved it in my cupped hands the exact spot it had been in 30 seconds later was covered in water splashing from the side of the slide. I didn't get a photo on my iPod as I didn't want to look like a weirdo as there were kids in swim suits all around. I guess that has to be the most unusual location I've seen a butterfly in. Then there was a Clouded Yellow across the approach road to Junction 2 of the M3. Back to the PD and somehow I'm still a week behind...

Martin Down

Last Sunday after the visit to Stockbridge Down the previous day we had some family jobs to do. First we had to check on my Father's allotment while he was away in France and then we were scheduled to help out my sister in-law who was clearing out what used to be our old garden.

The allotment trip was pretty quick and I came away with two bags brimming with veggies and a sense of justice. This came from the fact that the allotment owner who had been slightly derogatory about my fathers' plot had multitudes of Small and Large Whites all over their cabbages despite the netting! 😊

As we were out at Sixpenny Handley I suggested a picnic lunch at Martin Down 😊 and once there I guided my family to the hidden little alcove of shrubs where I've found my first Grizzlies the last two years. As we sat down on the springy turf a fair number of butterflies flitted around us including a Small Copper that landed briefly on our picnic rug, as if to join us for luncheon. Brimstones and other whites doodled about on the surrounding brambles and Meadow Browns posed nicely with their wings wide open (grrrr) until the occasional Blue would bomb past and upset them. A worn DGF circled overhead and dropped down. I lazily picked up my camera while holding my sandwich in my other hand, took a photo and then when back to eating.



Best I could do with a sandwich in my hand

Once we'd eaten I let the girls loose with my camera for 10 minutes while my wife and I watched them posing for each other and then stalking for

macro shots. It seems my younger daughter is more into flowers at the moment but my older one was trying hard to stalk butterflies. I doesn't help that she can only just hold the lens upright!
Playtime over we had to get back to my sister in-laws for some heavy duty landscaping so we packed up and on the way back to the car I stole a few shots here and there.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 21-Aug-13 07:41 AM GMT

Just catching up on your diary Wurzel as I have my coffee break. That's a great photo of the SSS oviposting – well timed. That is also an amazing tale of the Purple Hairstreak but a sad reflection of the times we now live in that you felt unable to take a photo with the kids around.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Aug-13 10:29 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊 Unfortunately these are the times we're living in and any pleas of innocence would have been met with "a Purple what? Get in the back of the van!" 🤪 At least it would if I was in "Withnail and I" 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Aug-13 11:01 PM GMT

Shipton Bellinger

A little over a week ago I and my girls had a meet up with Philzoid and his. After a game of hide and seek in the central car park we made the move over to Shipton Bellinger looking for Brown Hairstreaks. As we pulled into the car park the sun came and went and it felt pretty autumnal which is kind of appropriate for the final emerging butterfly of the season. So to avoid the nip in the air we set off up the track to the two hedges. Along the route we encountered plenty of whites, a Holly Blue doing the usual trick of staying up high and browns which would tease us by flying by and looking orangey when in flight. We both knew that they weren't Brown Hairstreaks but it always paid to check them just in case, you never know...



At the top of the track we found a large Bramble bush that was attracting lots of butterflies and representatives from the range of species that we had found so far. And then Philzoid saw something high up near to the very top of the track and the Master Tree. The fast, jinking flight reminded me of the White letters we'd seen earlier in the year but this one had a definite orangey appearance. So we'd bagged a Brostreak! Delighted but wanting more we carried on out to the open area. Here there were butterflies erupting from under our feet, tumbling off of flowers and flitting by us it was a fantastic sight. While the girls set up camp Philzoid and I mooched around on the turf before moving over to the hedge that borders the site. Highlights of the first foray included a lovely fresh Brown Argus that was so intent on feeding that it seemed to stand on its proboscis and a Comma doing its very best at impersonating a dead leaf.



Only gone and got my proboscis trapped under my foot!



There were other people around and when they all started peering into the hedge and gazing intently at something a few feet away with binoculars we thought we ought to find out what all the fuss was about. Okay to be honest we knew what it was going to be but it was still early in the visit so there would be plenty of time for us to find our own. Hence we sidled up and asked the old chestnut "anything about?" One of the group informed us that there was a brown Hairstreak, a male, low down on a bush and pointed out where in the hedge it was. Once they'd relocated it for us they moved off so Philzoid and I managed to make a gentle approach. He was a right little cracker posing with his wings open then half shut before moving to another perch and closing them while he fed. At this point we were joined by another observer who, having followed our pointing fingers proceeded to wade directly through the undergrowth to where it was perching. Or rather where it had been perching because all the commotion they'd caused had spooked it. I couldn't believe it. I'd taken a good 5 minutes to get into position, edging around and picking my way around the bushes to avoid trampling them, slipping my foot down between the stems of the brambles, pausing at every foot step to check that I hadn't disturbed it and that Philzoid had gotten some shots. Five minutes to cover a distance of about 2 metres and this bloke wades in taking two footsteps, ripping the undergrowth to shreds and

spooking the butterfly in the process 😬😬 ! We did relocate further along the hedge but now it was much deeper in and only distance shots were possible.

I always like to read up on a species before venturing out into the field and most of the texts I've read all say how rare it is for males to come down from the tree tops and how you'll hardly ever see males down on the deck and those Brostreaks that do come down are invariably female. Yet for the past three years at this site (and Alners Gorse) I've invariably seen and photographed male Brostreaks. Is this a particularly good site for the males to venture down at or is the literature in need of an update? Musing this and other things excitedly (and angrily) we continued walking along the hedge to see what else was about and whether we could find any other Brostreaks.





3 species shot

On our mooching we encountered good numbers of blues and they seemed to be almost as numerous in places as the Meadow Browns. There were still Gatekeepers (or False Hairstreaks) around and the vanessids were represented by a Red Admiral, another Comma, and a brace a piece of Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell. An aged Small Skipper and Silver Washed Fritillary almost made it a full house. One Brown Argus was so fresh it had a little confused while it was flying as it looked almost like a Chimney Sweep at times. In flight it looked black on top and like a silver flash below. The blues also seemed to be bunching together around what looked like bark, but was probably very ancient dung.



We reached almost the end of the hedge and were making our way back. Philzoid had gone back a bit more in order to show some of the girls what we'd seen as by now iPods and colouring had become a bit boring and their curiosity had been piqued. The sun was dipping in and out of the clouds and during one of the duller, noticeably cooler moments I stumbled across a Brimstone, wings open basking. I couldn't believe it at first and thought first that I must be mistaken and second that it must be dead. Either way, this looked like a once in a life time opportunity, so I called out to Philzoid and he rushed over to partake in the possibly unique encounter. After what felt like an age (but was probably only a few minutes) the sun started to peak through the clouds, the temperature started to rise and it was off. It only flew a distance of about 3 metres and then quickly settled down to feed, this time with wings tightly shut in the more usual posture. Slightly stunned we carried on picking our way back to where the girls had made camp debating how that had happened. Was it that it suddenly got too cool so it had dropped, basking to desperately raise its temp?



We carried on checking the Hedge observing every Hedge or Meadow Brown that would fly past just in case but the sun was staying in the clouds for longer and longer periods of time, the wind was picking up and it was starting to feel cooler again so we didn't hold much hope. By now our wanderings along the hedge had brought us back to almost where we'd started. I remember last year Pauline put me onto a female quite close to the Ivy bush here and this year a path had been created (trampled) in by this same bush. Just on the off chance I took a few steps along it and then stopped abruptly. There in front of me at waist height was a gorgeous Brostreak. She had her wings held wide open in the classic field guide pose which I've been trying to capture for the last three years. I called out to Philzoid and we both took photo after photo. She moved around a little bit, only a few inches at a time and then closed her wings and started to nectar. After a while of this she took another wander, this time below the Bramble leaf, which possibly explains how they can just seemingly disappear at times. Sated and warmed she then took to the air and landed up a bit higher and just out of range but luckily before this all four girls had had a look so we bade her farewell and headed back to the girls camp for lunch.







Going...



Gone, apparently

It didn't look like the cloud would shift so we made our way back to the play park near the car park so that the girls could have a mess around and we could get some lunch. Absolutely cracking stuff – the final “emerger” of the year, shots I'd always wanted in the bag and one hell of a surprise too! The day wasn't over quite yet as we decided to head next to Five Rivers...
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 22-Aug-13 11:29 PM GMT

You've out done yourself Wurzel, great photos,. Which one is my favourite? have`nt got the time to name them all, brilliant. 😄😄😄😄

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 22-Aug-13 11:30 PM GMT

Absolutely stunning shots Wurzel, the second shot of the female BHS with wings open is fantastic! Great photos, you must be over the moon, especially as you 'held back' on posting these. 😊

Great stuff

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 23-Aug-13 12:24 AM GMT

A brilliant set of photos, Wurzel. I've still to see a Brown Hairstreak this year, and you go and see a selection like that. If there are degrees of envy, the beautiful new male at the start probably rates highest. 😄👍

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by dilettante, 23-Aug-13 07:37 AM GMT

The open wing brimstone pictures are amazing!

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 24-Aug-13 10:34 AM GMT

Ahhh Wurzel, payback time, my turn to be envious 🍷🍷😄

Great series of photos, not only those excellent Brown Hairstreaks but open wing Brimstones as well, great stuff 😄

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Aug-13 10:09 PM GMT

Cheers Nick and Mike your comments had me chuffed to bits! 😄😄 Cheers Dave for your very kind comment 😄 I'm sure you'll be all Brostreaked up soon! 😊

Cheers Dilettante and Neil for your very kind comments 😄 It was just luck really and the fact that I was dealing with such photogenic butterflies 😄

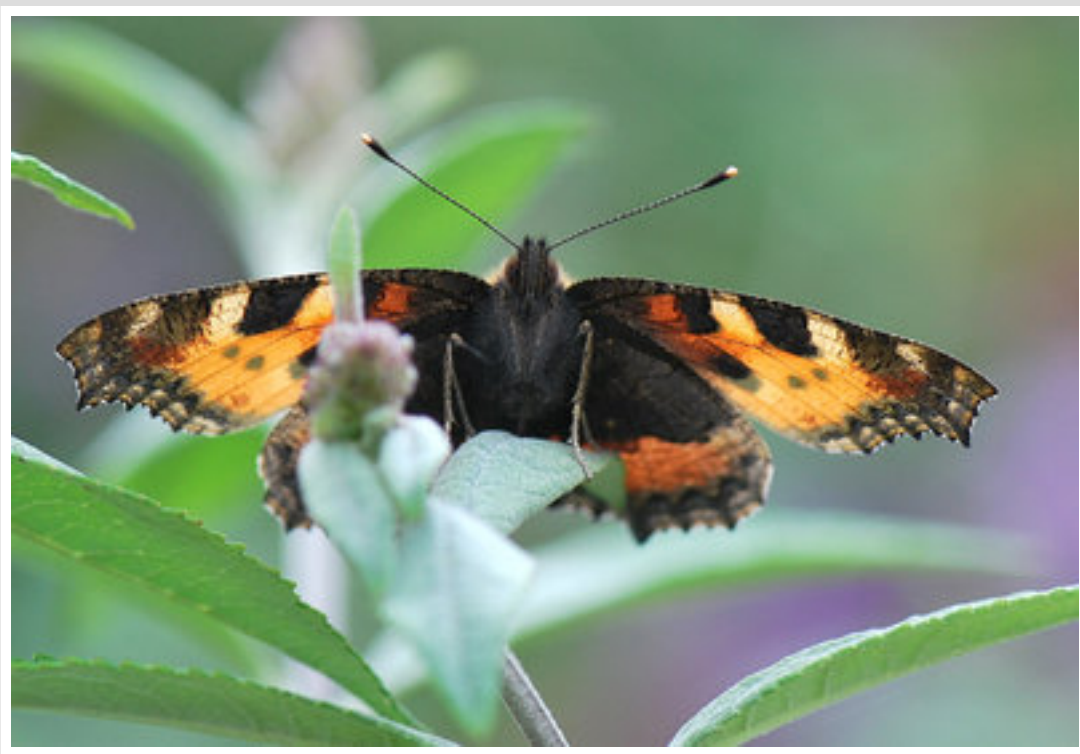
Five Rivers

Once we'd eaten lunch and while the girls were playing we decided to make a move to check out Five Rivers. A large cloud hung over the area but looking further afield it seemed much clearer over towards the west. On the way there we'd been held back by a lorry and now on the way back there was a tractor and various other drivers slowing us down still we got there eventually, pulled up in the loose stone bays, jumped out and headed off. First we checked out the thistles and brambles by the old compost heap. Most had turned by now and what was a small lake of purple was now white and fluffy. The huge number of Small Tortoiseshells had been replaced by three Commas, a looking very smart and acting very lively.

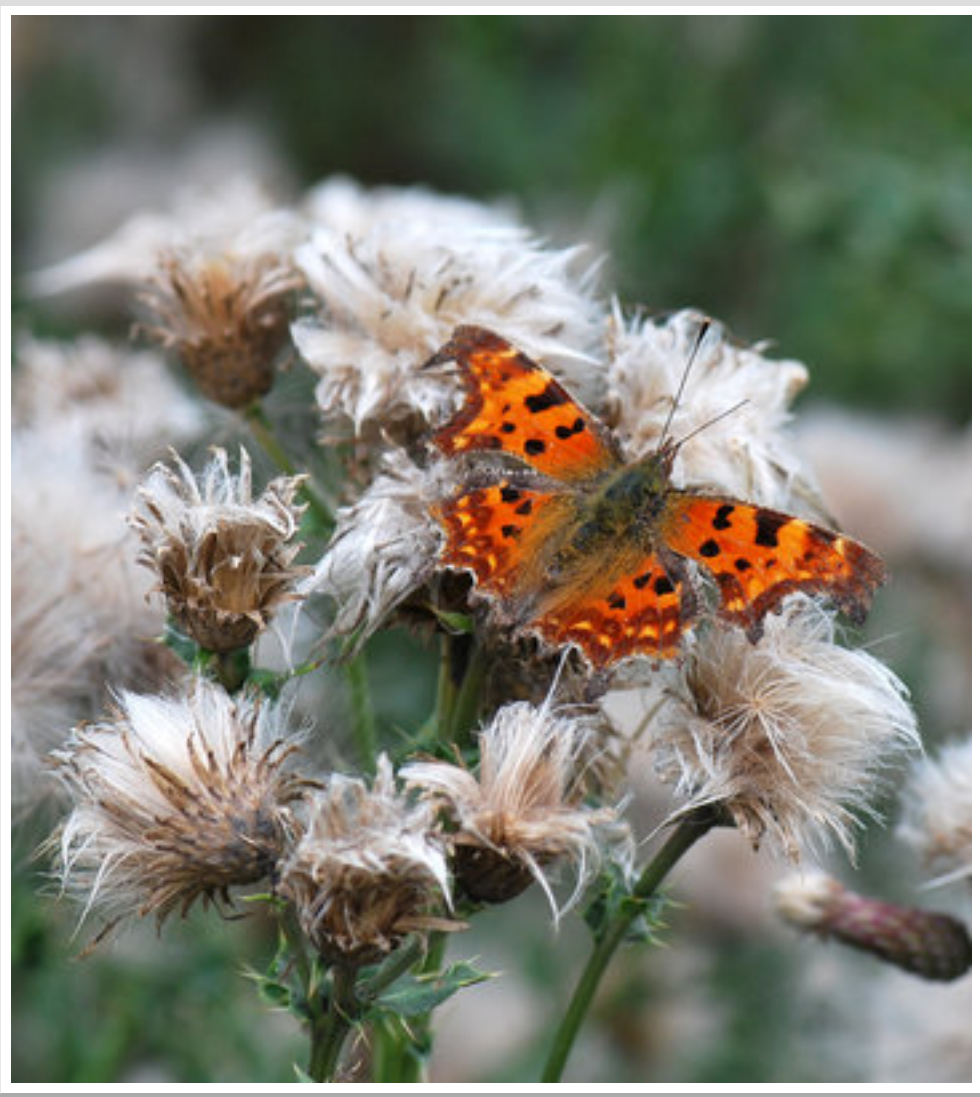
We then made our way over to the banks hoping to find an aged Essex Skipper for Philzoid to add to his years tally but we could only rustle up a Small. There were a few blues about, a couple of males whizzing around and a nice blue-ish female. She seemed quite content for me to get a few shots basking for all she was worth in the weak sun.



The middle bank with its large Buddleia looked like a better bet for finding butterflies. There was a Red Admiral lurking around the back, a few Meadow Browns, a Peacock and three Small Tortoiseshells in amongst the multitude of whites. Once again however the cloud seemed to deter the butterflies and despite moving round we didn't add much more as the sun kept hiding on the clouds and the temperature seemed to noticeably drop. The Painted Lady I was hoping for didn't materialise either and eventually we started making our way back towards the car park. That's the thing with Five Rivers it had a good range of species but nothing that's particularly out of the ordinary so it's a good place for me to drop into to pick up my common or garden species. Plus I suppose after the highlights of Shipton Bellinger where there were butterflies everywhere we'd been a bit spoilt so it I walked away feeling that Fiver Rivers hadn't lived up to my expectations 😊.



Still once back at the Thistle bed I was cheered by the lovely fresh Comma that had decided to take a break on one of natures fluffy duvets.



We then had to part ways, Philzoid to head off into the city for some food and me homewards so the girls could bath and bed. Hopefully this won't be the final meet up of the season as through the year when we've teamed up we've seen some cracking sights!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Aug-13 11:09 PM GMT

Martin Down (a week ago)

I've not been in this situation before; where I have seen "all" (barring unusual migrants) the species that I could expect to see with two weeks of the holiday to go so when I said I'd take the girls out I was at a loss where to go 😬. However remembering the relaxed butterflying offered the previous weekend at Martin Down I decided to head there. It would also mean that I could pop in for a cuppa with the girls Great Grandparents and check my fathers' allotment too...

Once we'd pulled into the car park at Sillens Lane we headed off immediately up the hill towards the spring at the bottom of Ham Hill. The progress was slow - not because of my girls dragging their heels but because there was so much to see on the way. Small Coppers would bask on the stones on the path while Common Blues, the odd Brown Argus and Chalkhill favoured the grasses and flowers along the verges. Whites were everywhere including a Cloudy at one point that flew towards me down the track and then up and over Hawthorns and into the flower meadow on the other side. I watched it bombing around from flower to flower, stopping only for a second or two at a time and all the while it was getting further and further away 😞.



Eventually we reached the bottom of Ham Hill and set up camp. My picnic was interrupted as a very pale looking, almost cream, butterfly did a few passes. I dropped my sandwich and followed it and it settled as the sun ducked behind a cloud. It was a very worn Clouded Yellow which looked like a "Helice" in reverse, with the "window" the brightest yellow part while the rest of the body was a greenish, limey colour. A quick flight shot confirmed it with the darker, broader hind wing band interrupted by large spots. Closer inspection showed the level of wear as well as chunk missing from a hind wing. Strange really as I hadn't thought about how a worn and tired Cloudy would look as I never imagined coming across one. When people talk about other butterflies I can often imagine them in various stages of decay as it were but whenever I hear Clouded Yellow I always get the image of a pristine, bright and fresh individual.





Once I'd returned to my sandwich and the girls had eaten lunch we discussed what we wanted to do. Obviously I wanted a root around the spring area as it often yields all kinds of species, my older daughter wanted to climb up the steep slope of Ham Hill (she's got to the age of Famous Five and making camps etc) and my younger daughter wanted to sit in the shade and look at the books we'd brought. So we all set off to do our own thing and as my younger daughter settled down and my older daughter set off vertically at break neck speed I took the middle ground of a quiet mooch. Basically I would stroll over to the base of the hill on one side and then back again across the flat and thin chalk soil with a bit more time spent around the bushes of the actual spring. In a little over 5 minutes I'd racked up a total of 10 species including a female Chalkhill, Brown Argus, an aged Smessex and a decrepit Dark green Fritillary.



On my second turn around the bushes by the spring the same Cloudy as before caught my eye and she moved in closer and started to lay eggs. She'd take a short flight, land a lay and then move onto the next plant. I watched her intently until she had decided that she needed to try elsewhere and then once she'd gone moved in to find a miniscule egg.



Both the girls then told me that they wanted to head to the very top of the reserve and so we set off to the top of Borkerley cutting across the rolling down. As we hiked along we were joined by a Small Copper and another Clouded Yellow bombed past, racing us to the top. It won and then proceeded to run my a merry dance once we got there, doing the usual trick of stopping for a fraction of a second before flying off powerfully. There were loads of whites here in the top field as well as a few Chalkhills, Common Blues, Brown Argus and a very timid second brood Adonis Blue.





Our enjoyment was cut short by a family who had a couple of dogs off their leads, despite all the signs and notices to the contrary 😞😞 . The dogs weren't vicious or troublesome it's just that after a nasty incident a few years ago my older daughter is petrified of dogs so to calm her down we set off down the hill to the hotspot...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Aug-13 11:06 PM GMT

Martin Down Part 2

...Having reached the Hotspot the girls set up camp just off the path on one of the terraces. As they were happily ensconced I set about wandering here and there, along Borkerly, down to the sign, across to the miniature quarry face etc and over about 20 minutes I saw pretty much everything that I's seen over the course of the morning; all condensed into this one little area. It just seems that all of the micro habitats present across Martin Down converge at this single point. What struck me was that there were at least three Clouded Yellows here which would work their way up and down the ditch or cut right across the terraces disappearing by the quarry. I now that there were at least three individuals as I watch a pair spiralling upwards having literally bumped into each along the ditch. They were joined by a third and all three intermingled and continued spiralling upwards like a little puff of sulphurous smoke. When they disbanded I spent what seemed like an age trying to approach individuals for a shot but they were a complete nightmare. In the end I managed some shots that are slightly better than those from my previous encounter at Stockbridge Down.





Whilst chasing the Clouded Yellows (metaphorically and not literally – you can't really chase them, only take two steps and they're gone!) I stumbled across a Silver Spotted Skipper which was basking on the bare chalk. Another species added to the Hotspot list and as I strolled back to the girls I realised that this meant that from this little area I really had now encountered everything that the rest of the reserve had to offer!



I grabbed a quick cup of coffee and noticed that the burnt patch from earlier in the year was now in full bloom and I felt a bit bad about missing out on a lot of species due to my blinkering by Clouded yellows. So to make amends I set about to try and see all the species that I'd taken for granted since arriving at the hotspot. First up was a Small Copper which again, to my eyes, had slightly pronounced tails as well as a few sparse blue spots, a ginger hairdo and orange on the forewing that ran right to the wing margin which I presume means that it wasn't long out of the chrysalis? I then worked my way through the species – Common Blue, Brown Argus, Brimstone, Peacock, various whites, Chalkhill Blue, Small Heath, Smessex Skipper, Gatekeeper

and Meadow Brown.





Eventually we had to make the move back home and so we set out from this little butterfly oasis back to the car park. Due to time restraints and tired little feet I didn't stop for butterflies, instead it was a case of heads down and get the walk walked! However, just as we were almost back, a strange looking butterfly seemed to be working its way along the hedge towards us. It was only when it landed that I realised what it was, a Greenish Silver Washed Fritillary! Just when you think you've seen everything that Martin Down has to offer it throws up a curve ball like this. The nearest woods are on the opposite side of the reserve, Vernditch and Kitts Wood yet here is a woodland species acting more like it's Dark Green cousin. That's the great thing about this lark - you never know what to expect!




After a little while and a few shots by me it carried off along the hedge stopping at each Bramble for nectar so I left it in peace and we all headed homeward.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 27-Aug-13 11:33 PM GMT

Like they say, Wurzel, always expect the unexpected. It's what makes this hobby so interesting. That SWF is an amazing bonus! On my wish list... 

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 27-Aug-13 11:54 PM GMT

On my wish list too Wurzel, well done. Going back to your previous post, that Clouded Yellow ovum is a great find, and a lovely photo, great work. 😊
Do you know the name of the plant the egg was laid on?

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by dilettante, 28-Aug-13 09:55 AM GMT

I always enjoy reading your reports, and that SWF is great. It's chance encounters like this that make butterflying days thrilling.

Re: Wurzel

by Hoggers, 28-Aug-13 03:44 PM GMT

Gorgeous photographs, Wurzel (such colour in the Small Coppers and Clouded Yellows!) And the SWF! What a find! I've never seen one – Great report.
All the best, Hoggers

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 28-Aug-13 09:17 PM GMT

Another great read Wurzel, your diary always brings a smile to my face 😊

Nice find with the Valesina SWF 😊, another species that seems to be hanging in there later than usual this year. They certainly seem to have been dispersing well in the midlands, I even had one turn up in my garden a few weeks back as reported in my diary, miles away from any colonies.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 28-Aug-13 10:52 PM GMT

Loving your diary at the mo,Wurzel–some great pictures there.

I am particularly envious of those Brown Hairstreaks!

The plant with the CY egg on it is common birds-foot trefoil,by the way...

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 29-Aug-13 11:01 AM GMT

Great shots and nice interesting report(s) Wurzel. Like you i'm trying to make the most of the Clouded Yellows, as who knows when we'll get another year like this 😊😊 Great shot of the CY ovum, I also saw a CY laying yesterday. Excellent stuff finding the Valasina and some lovely fresh Small Coppers too 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-13 11:15 PM GMT

Cheers Dave, Hoggers and Nick for your kind comments:D I reckon you'll all get one next year 😊 I didn't have a clue as to the identity of the plant the CY was laying on Nick but Essexbuzzard came to the rescue on that one 😊

Cheers Dilettante for your kind comment, the chance encounter certainly made up for the frustration of the Cloudies 😊😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Fritillaries do manage to hold on don't they, but they don't look their best for long do they 😊 Still always good to see 😊

Cheers the kind comments and for the plant ID Essex 😊

Cheers Mike 😊😊 Hopefully the CYs will be around for a while yet

Alners Gorse 22-08-2013

Part 1

Another day of luxury having “ticked” off all the species I was could possibly find. I should have been at work over seeing the GCSE results but it does eat into my holiday and ruin the last couple of weeks. Also with the contradictory expectations (OFQUAL – exams have to be harder and there shouldn't be more and more pupils attaining higher grades each year, OfSTED – schools should get higher grades each year 😊) and the fact that all of the exams were made harder this year as well as having the grade boundaries raised, it wasn't going to be a pleasant experience! I'll deal with the outfall in September. Also weather forecast wise it was looking to be one of the best days of the week with the lowest wind speed, lowest chance of rain, highest temperature and with a favourable mix of sunny intervals which would allow photography of Clouded Yellows should I find any. Bearing all this in mind I

decided to set out for Alners Gorse with the idea of trying Fontmell Down should the Gorse prove disappointing.

On the drive down I kept checking the sky and rather than the cloud and intermittent sun I was hoping for it was already wall to wall and inside the car it was baking hot. "Oh well if the Clouded Yellows give me the run around then I have the Brostreaks as a back-up" I thought as I started my way downhill down the avenue. There were a few whites fluttering around and the odd Meadow Brown but I was surprised how quiet it was. Something caught my eye and thinking it was a pair of Gatekeepers in cop I approached one of the Bramble bushes that lined the path. As I moved in one Gatekeeper flew away leaving behind what turned out to be a Small Copper. They'd been feeding on the same blossom one facing up and the other down but both facing the outside, hence the illusion of a pair in cop.



After a little time with the Fuzz I realised that it was really starting to get warm and so I thought any chance of a Clouded Yellow was starting to wane so I dragged myself away and turning left at the bottom I worked my way along the hedge checking the hedge to my left for Brostreaks and scanning the open areas on my right for the tell tale mustard speedball that is a Cloudy. I reached the gate and checked the area that I'd been lucky at last year but despite a Peacock, Comma and battered Silver Washed adding to the whites, Meadow and Hedge Browns there it was pretty quiet, even the birds were hushed. So I went back to the gate and made my way to the central path and upon reaching it a Yellow bombed past upsetting whites and a male Brimstone on the way. So I'd seen one, now to try for a photo or three.

This particular butterfly seemed to really like the yellow flowers growing in profusion in clumps or strips across the site and so whilst it was flitting from one group to another it was pretty "settled" by Cloudy standards and I was able to follow it reeling off shots as well as making a much closer approach on a couple of occasions. It was hard to stick to the normal "three disturbs and leave it rule" as I wasn't too sure how many times it moved on because I'd disturbed it or because it was just being a Cloudy. Also it wasn't going far and the few times I did get close in I watched it feed on a flower, then walk to another and so having polished off all the nectar available it moved on. Eventually it decided that it had worked over all the flowers in this one clump and so it took to the air, went high and was gone from my vision. I was happy with the shots as they included my "stained glass" and close-up (smile) and judging by the silhouette I'm guessing this was a female.







Yellow in the bag I then went looking for that other autumnal colour, Brown so I made my way back to the gate and the area I'd seen it in the previous year. Another butterflyer from Leicester joined me and as we chatted we noted a Comma, Red Admiral, GV White, Brimstone, Peacock as well as a couple a piece of Gatekeeper and Meadow Browns. A few jinking, orange things made some passes quite high over head, flitting from treetop to treetop but I couldn't be sure that they were actually Brostreaks. Moving back slightly towards the gate the brambles open out slightly and again the same orangey things flitted about high up. This time when I saw them I felt much more confident that they were Hairstreaks as their flight was similar to that I'd seen on Brostreaks at Shipton Bellinger and also White Letters at Secret Squirrels. As we were thinking of making a move I saw a familiar orange shark fin, cutting across the Bramble blossom. There at about chest height only 1 meter away was a Brostreak. How long it had been there is anyone's guess, probably all the time I'd been there but because of their habit of wandering across blossom and feeding on all sides of the flower it had eluded observation. From the more honey like colour I reckoned it was a male. After about 10 minutes of concerted feeding here it took off and I followed it as it moved back to where we'd originally been waiting for it.





There it is, further away now...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 29-Aug-13 11:33 PM GMT

Splendid Yellow pictures, turning me green, Wurzel! And the Brown Hairstreak too. Your observation on the feeding pattern of the Yellows matches mine – they fly for miles and then have a pit stop, moving from flower to flower in close proximity before whizzing off on another long excursion. Catching them refuelling is the trick, and they are so easily disturbed. Try it on the 45 degree slope of Aston Rowant...

Lovely images – they look terrific with the sun shining through them.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 29-Aug-13 11:35 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Your Clouded Yellows from Alners Gorse are superb 😊 I particularly like the backlit ones, lovely 😊

Re: Wurzel

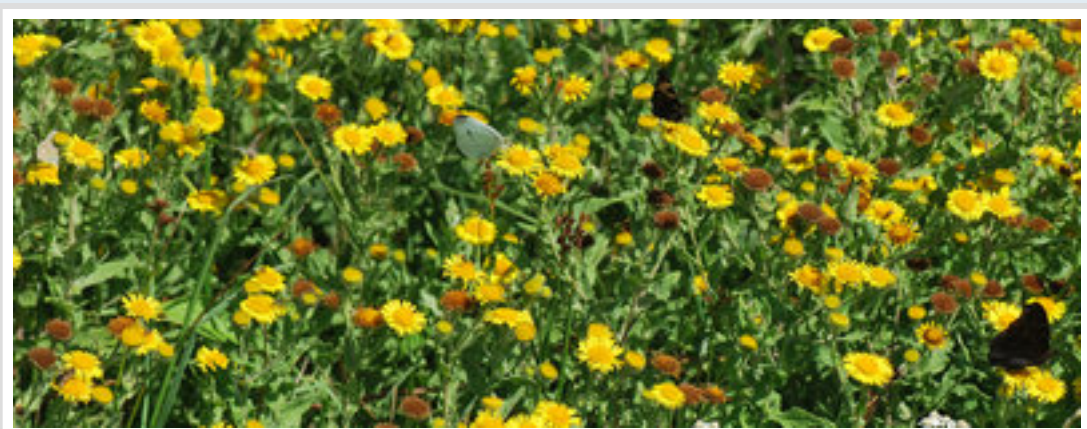
by Wurzel, 30-Aug-13 11:19 PM GMT

Cheers Dave and Jack 😊 It seems that Alners was a good place to photograph them as when they went on one of their longer fast flights they couldn't

actually go that far and there were plenty of nectar sources around, they were almost a captive subject. 😊

Part 2...

Happy to have succeeded I made my farewells to my fellow observer and then we headed off to explore in opposite directions. I carried on following the path round through the undergrowth and on the way I had a little lunch on the hoof stopping every now and again where there were good nectar sources or where it looked good for Brostreaks. I saw a few more vanessids, more whites and Browns as well as another Small Copper and a very fresh Ringlet. Could this be a later brood as it was so fresh it still had the white wing edges? Once the path opened up it connected with the main path running through the middle of the reserve and I bumped into the bloke from earlier. So we joined forces and set off round the edge of the reserve. On the way round we encountered a few Blues, two Clouded Yellows as well as an aged Small Skipper and only a few Meadow Browns which I was surprised about. I also managed a four species shot – though it was a “three” when I took it, but closer examination at home revealed a fourth hiding away. On the far side another Small Copper and a Brown Argus were added to the tally for the day. There were very fresh Speckled Woods along the hedge and a Painted Lady that didn’t hang around for too long.



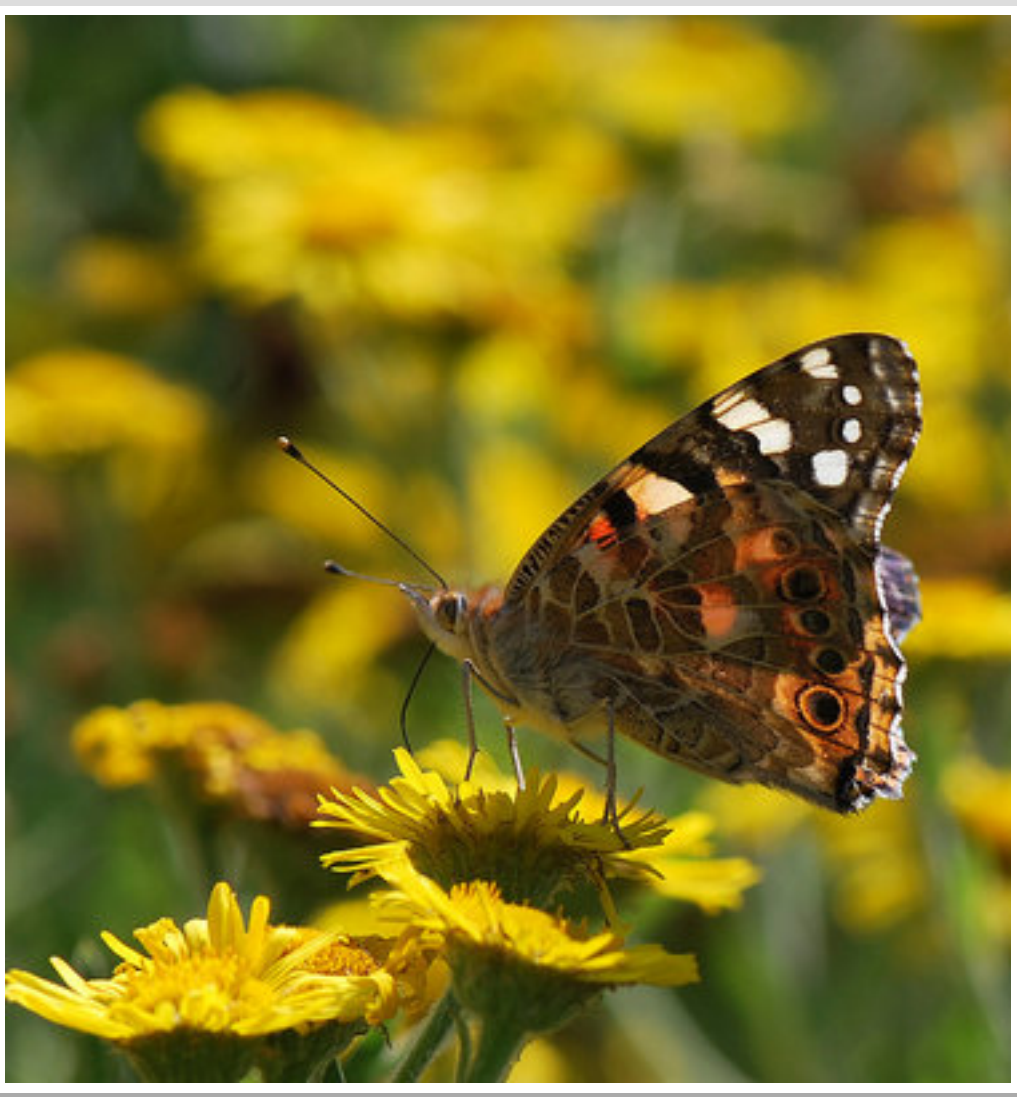


After a brief check on the male Brostreak from earlier which had remained in the same locale but had moved slightly further back onto the Brambles we once again said goodbye and headed off in different directions. This time I walked across the middle of the reserve with the intention of seeking out some more Clouded Yellows. Those that I'd seen through the morning had all shown a liking for the yellow flowers so I checked all the clumps and strips of these that I could. Eventually I reached the back edge of the reserve and there while searching around the large bramble bush I bumped into the bloke from Leicester for a third time (I think he was called Nick?). There was another Clouded Yellow here and it was posing nicely so I grabbed a few shots and then started looking around a large Bramble bush just off set from the path. I managed to get a few shots with the sun streaming through the closed upper wing and this time the silhouette lead me to believe it was a male.



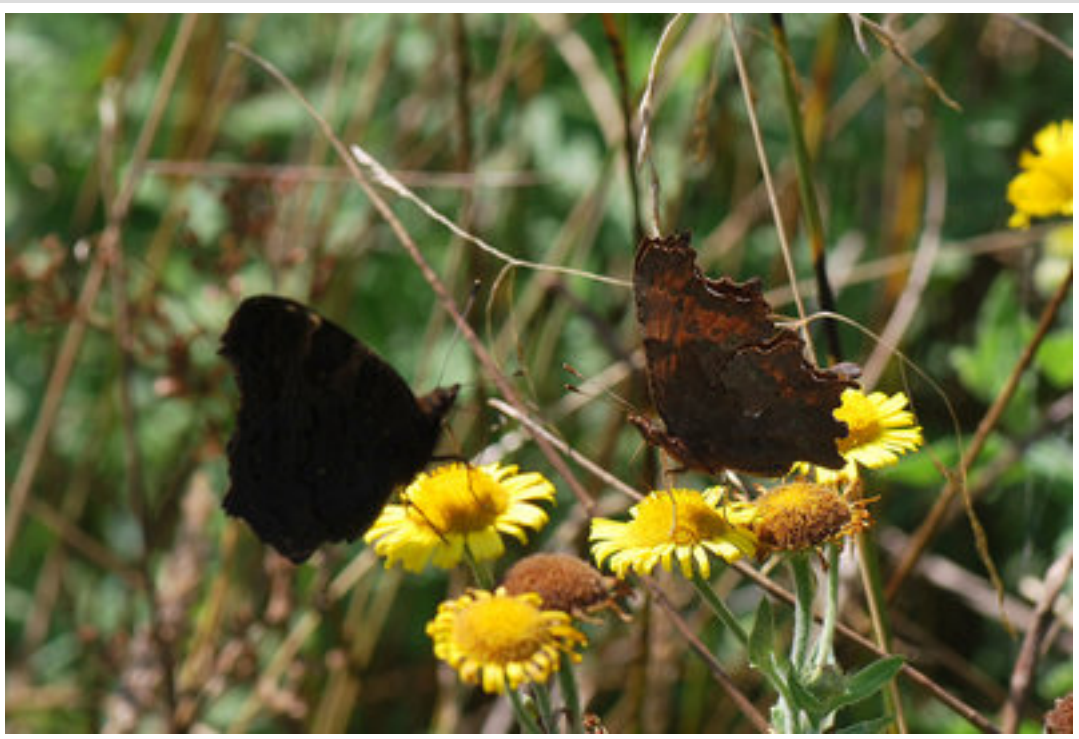
This large Bramble bush held a grand assortment of butterflies – whites and the occasional Brimstone as well as a Small Skipper, Common Blue and then there were the Small Tortoiseshells, 9 in total along with 3 Peacocks, a Red Admiral and another Painted Lady. The Clouded Yellow also made a few visits to the yellow flowers around the base of the bush. However I went back to the Painted Lady and trying to get the classic closed wing shot from up close. As usual it didn't keep its wings closed for long and I had to try and second guess where it would land and then focus in ready for the few seconds when it held its wings closed while starting feeding. This tactic seemed to work but it took a few attempts and a fair number of wrong guesses before I managed the shot I was after.

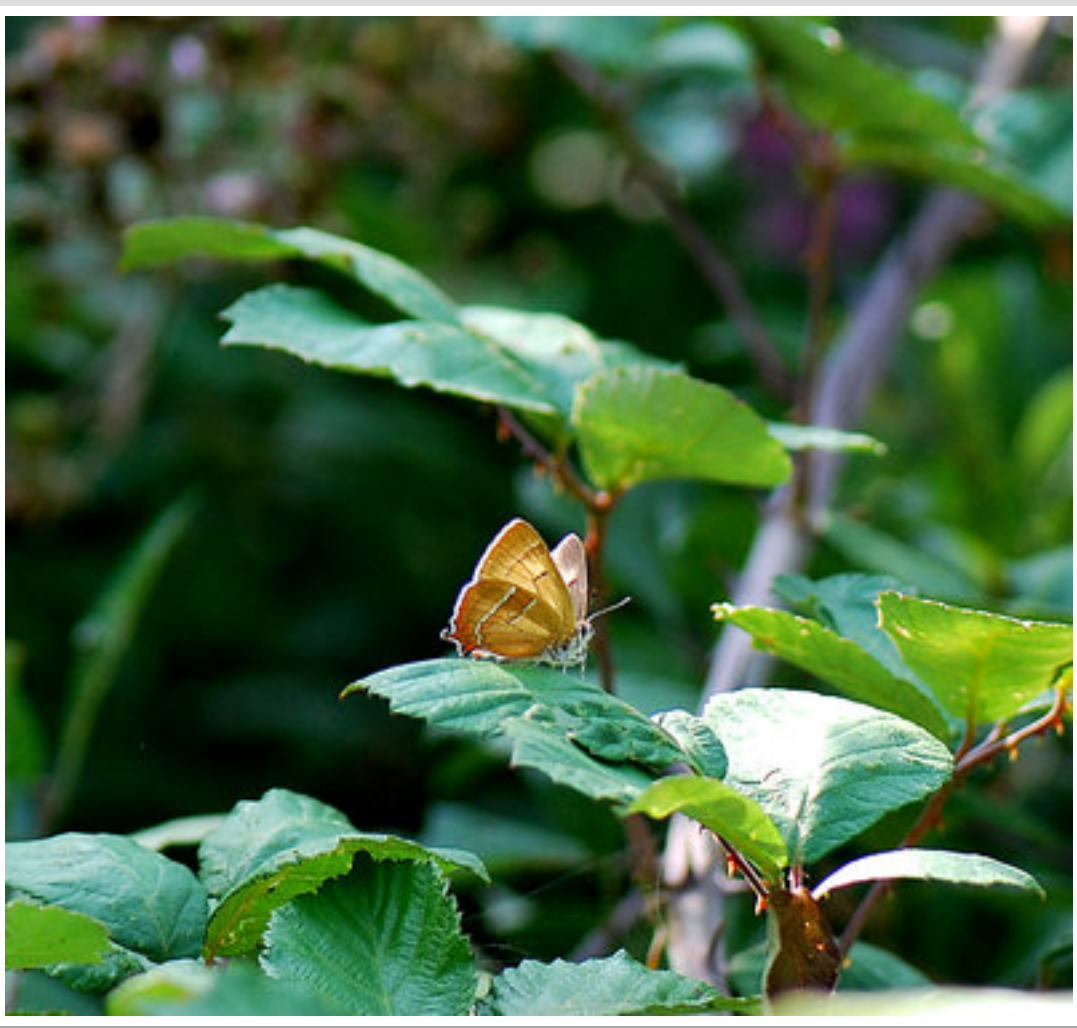




My companion of the day finally bade me goodbye and set off to check out some other Lanes on the way to Martin Down. This left me on my own and contemplating whether to stay here and try for a few more Clouded Yellows or with time ticking away and only another hour of Brostreak time remaining to try for them? As I was trying to work out what to do a familiar face appeared – Essex Buzzard and his lovely young lady all the way down in Dorset! After a good old chinwag covering all manner of aspects we set off along the scrub line looking for egg-laying Brostreaks, something I’ve yet to witness as all mine have been nectaring, basking or just sitting on a leaf. It seems that they’d been lucky with four different females but on our return journey it seems that they’d all finished for the day. Still there were still some nice butterflies around with another Small Copper, more Peacocks and a few Commas.

Once back at the original site where I’d found the male he was eventually relocated and eventually made a few faltering flights coming barely into view. I’m guessing that this is his “territory” as he’d been occupying the area for pretty much all day? We helped another couple find it and again I was struck with the difference between butterflying and Twitching. We’re a hell of a lot more polite with “Have you got your shots, do mind if I step in” rather than just barging (for the most part) through and “Here you go take this spot you’ll get a better angle on it here” or “After you”, “No after you...”. Once we’d watched it put a few more people onto it I checked the time and realised that I had to make a move so as not to be late. So rather reluctantly I wished everyone a goodbye and set off up the hill. What a great day – great setting, butterflies, weather and company. It would probably be best to leave it there for the season and go out with a bang but there could be some other opportunities and who knows what there is still to see?





I never did make it to Fontmell Down...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 31-Aug-13 01:54 PM GMT

Great report Wurzel and stunning images 😊 f.helice next 🤔 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 31-Aug-13 02:40 PM GMT

Wow that is a fresh looking Ringlet 😲 nice find.

Best

J

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 31-Aug-13 05:00 PM GMT

"Butterflysaurus rex" wrote:

Wow that is a fresh looking Ringlet

This is most unusual to see.

I reckon you might be right about 2nd brood, Wurzel. After all, a male Orange Tip was reported from Carmarthenshire last week, so strange things ARE indeed happening right now.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-13 10:32 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 Here's hoping for a Helice 😎

Cheers Rex and David 😊 I didn't know if Ringlets had second broods but it does seem like the most likely explanation 😊

Spetember

Back to work tomorrow, the summer is over for me...still the years shots will keep me cheered 😊



Have a a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 01-Sep-13 10:54 PM GMT

Great report and photos as usual Wurzel, especially your first Clouded Yellow and the male Brimstone taken into the sun, excellent. 😊😊

ON a private note, i`m pleased to hear your daughter escaped any serious injury to her arm.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 01-Sep-13 11:26 PM GMT

Fantastic diary and photos Wurzel, I've really enjoyed reading it, you've posted some wonderful images from a memorable season. I look forward to seeing and reading more of the same next year. 😊

All the best.

J

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 01-Sep-13 11:35 PM GMT

Another great report and write-up,Wurzel!

Great to see you again,and thanks for showing us where the male BH was-i doubt it we would have found it ourselves!

Your BH pictures from shipton are excellent, 🏡 of those!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Sep-13 11:02 PM GMT

Cheers for your kind comments Nick and your concern about my little girl is appreciated 😊

Cheers Rex 😊 There's still a few more posts to go – I've been stockpiling them to get me into the winter months:wink:

Cheers Essex for your very kind comments 😊 It was great catching up and no worries on the Brostreak, share and share alike, like 😊

The Devenish (bit of a mammoth one this, I did get a bit carried away... 😬😬)

I was using the final few days of the holiday when not actually out or sat in front of a screen typing up data to try and get ahead ready for the next few months by starting my "Yearly Tally". As well as sorting out the "first sighting dates" and making general notes I also started scribbling down ideas about targets for next year 😬. One of those was to concentrate a bit more on the Blues as I've kind of taken them for granted over the last couple of years. It was a case of see and photograph the first one of the year and then (notable variations aside) they sort of made up the numbers and filled in time while looking for something else 😬.

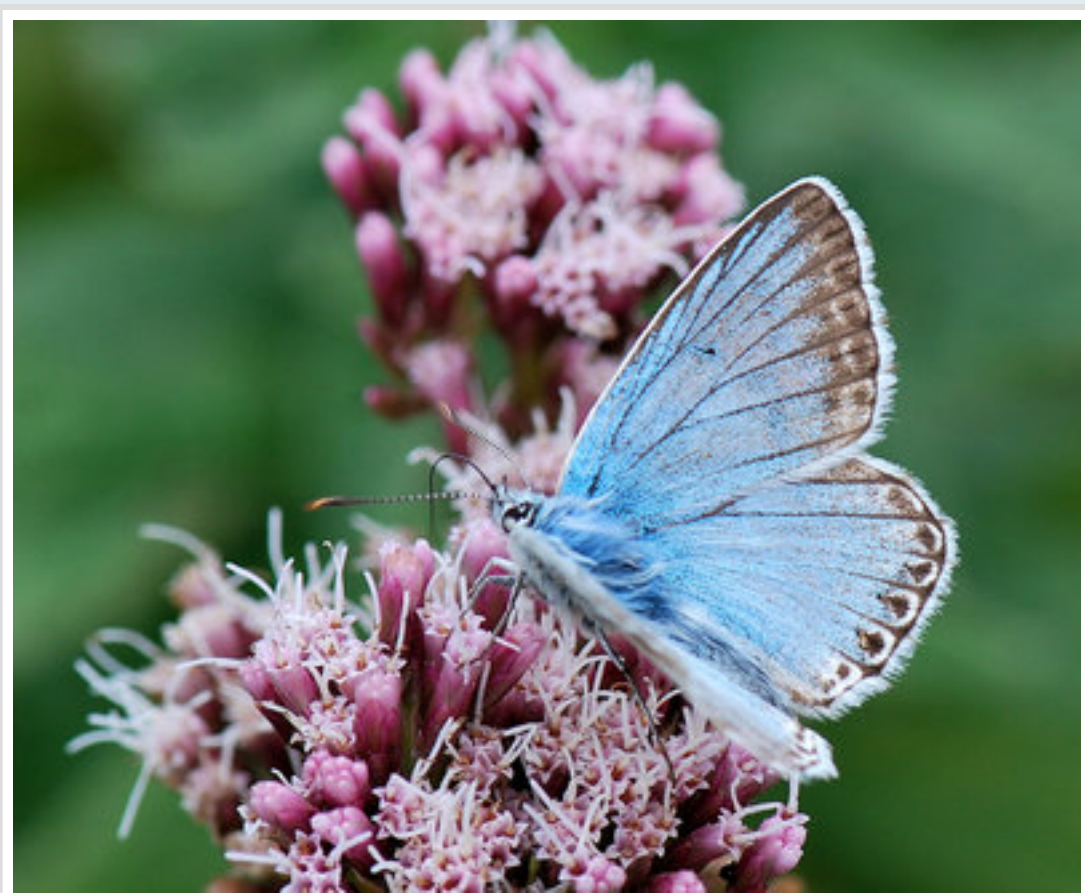
However I might need to change that after a trip to the Devenish last weekend. The girls were at their Nanny and Dad-Dads and my wife was busy so I found I had a few hours to spare. Even though it was fresher and duller than of late I headed off hopefully and within 20 minutes of leaving my house I was on site and making my way up the steep side of the down.

As I scanned across on first glance there didn't seem to be much about, if anything. However the tiniest beak in the cloud cover was enough to reveal a little blue gem, glittering in the grass. Then I saw another and another and so on until eventually I could see 14 Adonis Blues, all males, all with their heads down and their wings three quarters apart. It looked like someone had been scattering sapphires across the Down. The sun disappeared again not to be seen for another hour or so and so the gems disappeared to be replaced instead with little specklie flags



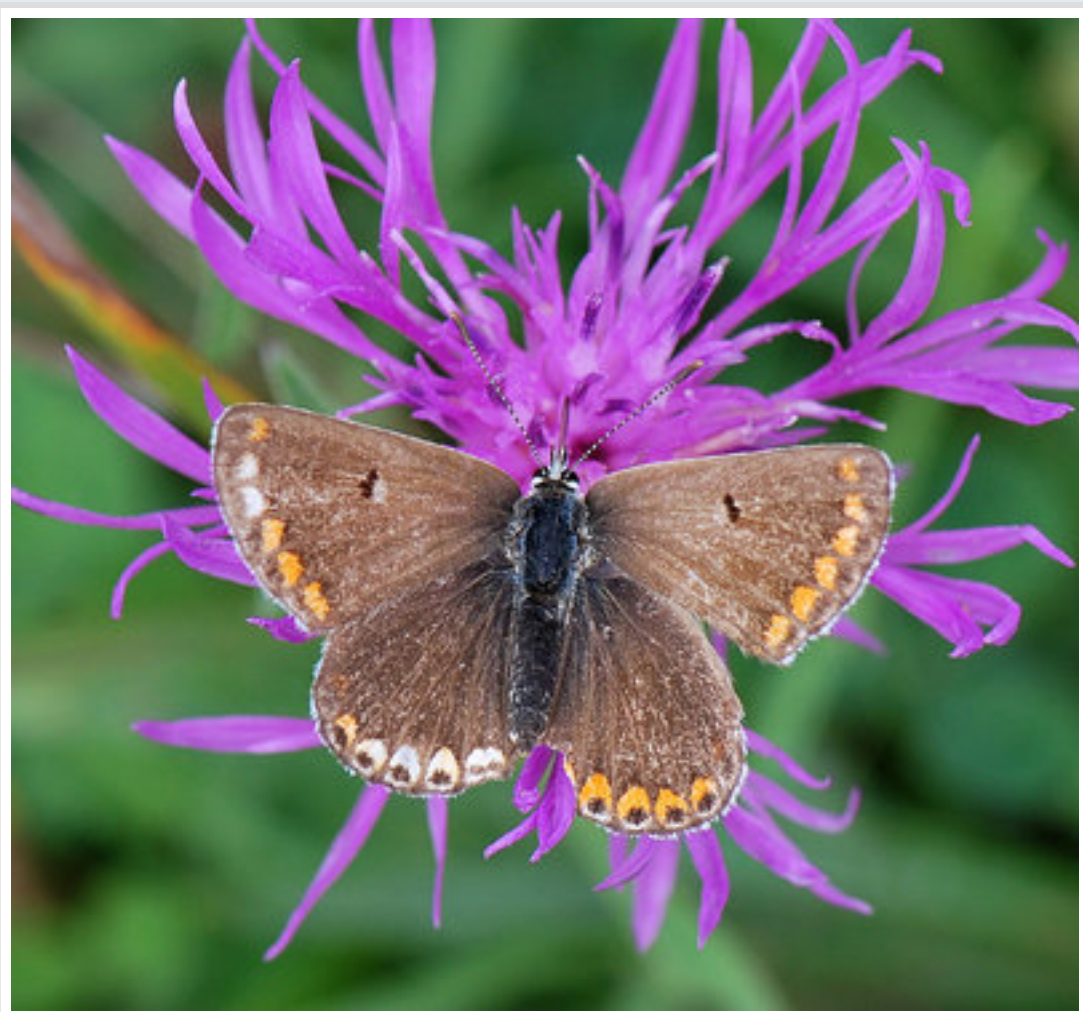
I then worked my way across the Down the line of trees at eh bottom was bordered by a ribbon of Hemp Agrimony and this was playing host to large

numbers of butterflies. I did my best to ignore the Browns, Whites and the odd Small Tortoiseshell or Specklie as I was determined to focus on the blues. Luckily the cloudy weather meant that they weren't flying far and the Hemp Agrimony was crawling with representatives from four species. The most worn, tired looking and faded were the Chalkhills although there were still one or two fresher butterflies. The Common Blues and Brown Argus showed the full range of wear and tear whereas most of the Adonis Blues were immaculate; I daresay that some were only just emerged. The photography was relatively easy and a nice change from being given the run around by Clouded Yellows. I simply tip toed up to a clump of the flowers, focused in roughly on the flower tops and then waited for the butterflies to come in to feed. After a minute or so they must have thought that I was just a shrub or tree and got on with their lives in front of me, regardless to my presence.





Perhaps I should have left it there and headed home but I had a feeling that the sun would make an appearance and so I malingered for a bit longer, working my way up to the top of the down. Here it was slightly windier and there were fewer butterflies although the occasional Small Tortoiseshell would use the wind and would disappear past a great rate of knots. Whilst admiring the view across the whole of the Woodford Valley I caught a Small Copper fluttering by out of the corner of my eye. I followed it for a bit and it was buzzed by a smaller, browner butterfly – a Brown Argus. However on closer inspection it seemed to have some white instead of orange lunules. I didn't know whether this was due to wear or was something to do with its development and the under wing shot showed that the orange was also lacking there too which suggested the latter idea might be the correct one?





Thinking that I'd sort it later I made my way to the other half of the down. This had more sparse scatterings of flowers and the turf seemed shorter and in places chalk poked through the thin soil and grass. Here Brown Argus were more prevalent and amongst the odd Chalkhill and slightly more numerous Adonis I counted 9 Argus. One had huge lunules reaching right to the tip of the wing and I'm not sure how usual this degree of variation is. I was also witness to some courtship behaviour. For 10 minutes a slightly battle scarred little male pursued a female to no avail. He'd land close to her, creep closer and a little closer still and then he'd buzz her with a rapid, almost hoverfly like flight. Unfortunately she was having none of it, presenting her abdomen and then making a short flight to try and get away from the pesky male.





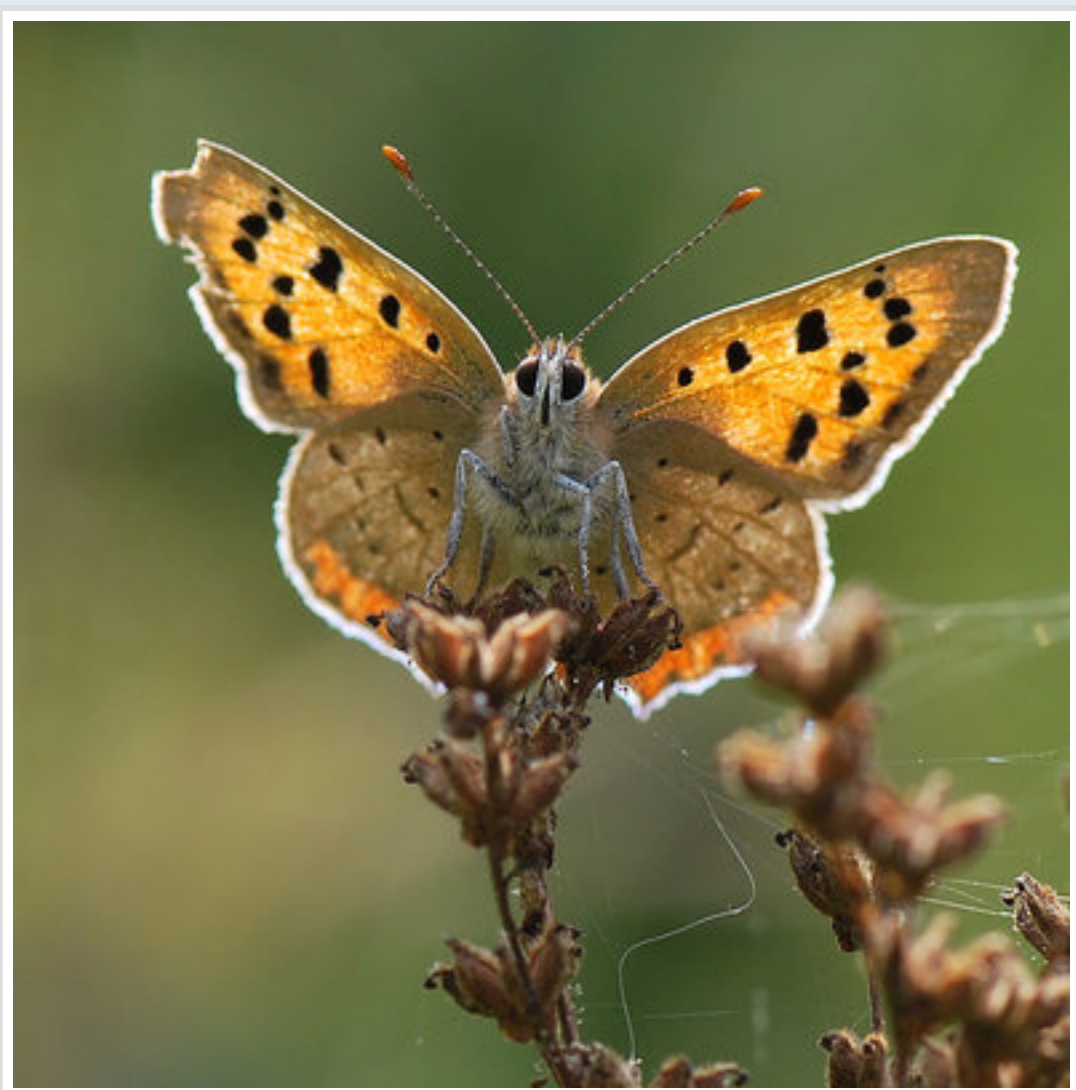
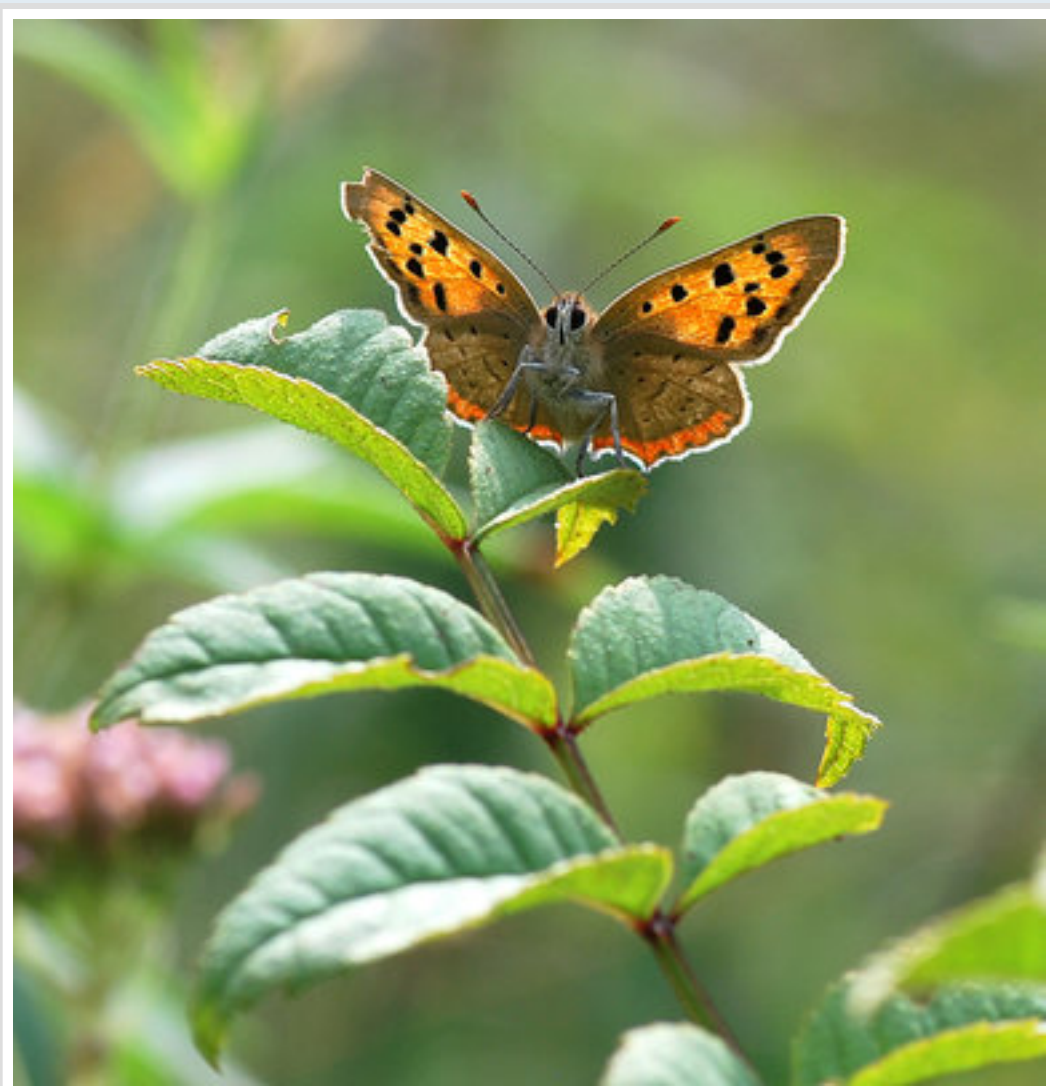
Feeling slightly sorry for the little guy I made a move back to the Hemp area to try for a few more Blues as now the sun was out and beaming strong I might be able to catch some of the electric blues.





I'd almost had my fill of the blues and felt like I'd given them their fair share of time so I packed up and headed back down the hill. I was almost at the gate when I was stopped short. My way was blocked by a Small Copper. It was perched in a fantastic pose with the sun behind it streaming through its wings. It reminded me of the original Karate Kid when he was standing on one leg on a post doing Crane kicks. Awesome. It moved about a metre away to a different perching post and again adopted the same stance. It would have been tempting to have stayed some more time with it but I had to get on

so I countered its Crane with Tiger Paw and quickly made my way through the gate.



I was almost out of the reserve when a Comma erupted after a pair of Small Torts disturbing three Speckled Woods in turn and all six butterflies bumbled around, spinning and spiralling in front of me, a fantastic spectacle to end my visit with. Perhaps they were reproaching me for ignoring them over the course of the afternoon?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 03-Sep-13 11:10 PM GMT

Of all the Blues above, I like the female Adonis best. Quite a bit of blue, lunules that are almost red rather than orange, and a beautiful dark chocolate background. Not to mention perfect fringes. I just can't understand the indifference of the male butterfly right next to her... 😊

Lovely pictures as ever, Wurzel.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 04-Sep-13 09:40 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cheers Rex 😊 There's still a few more posts to go – I've been stockpiling them to get me into the winter months 😊

Great stuff Wurzel I look forward that 😊

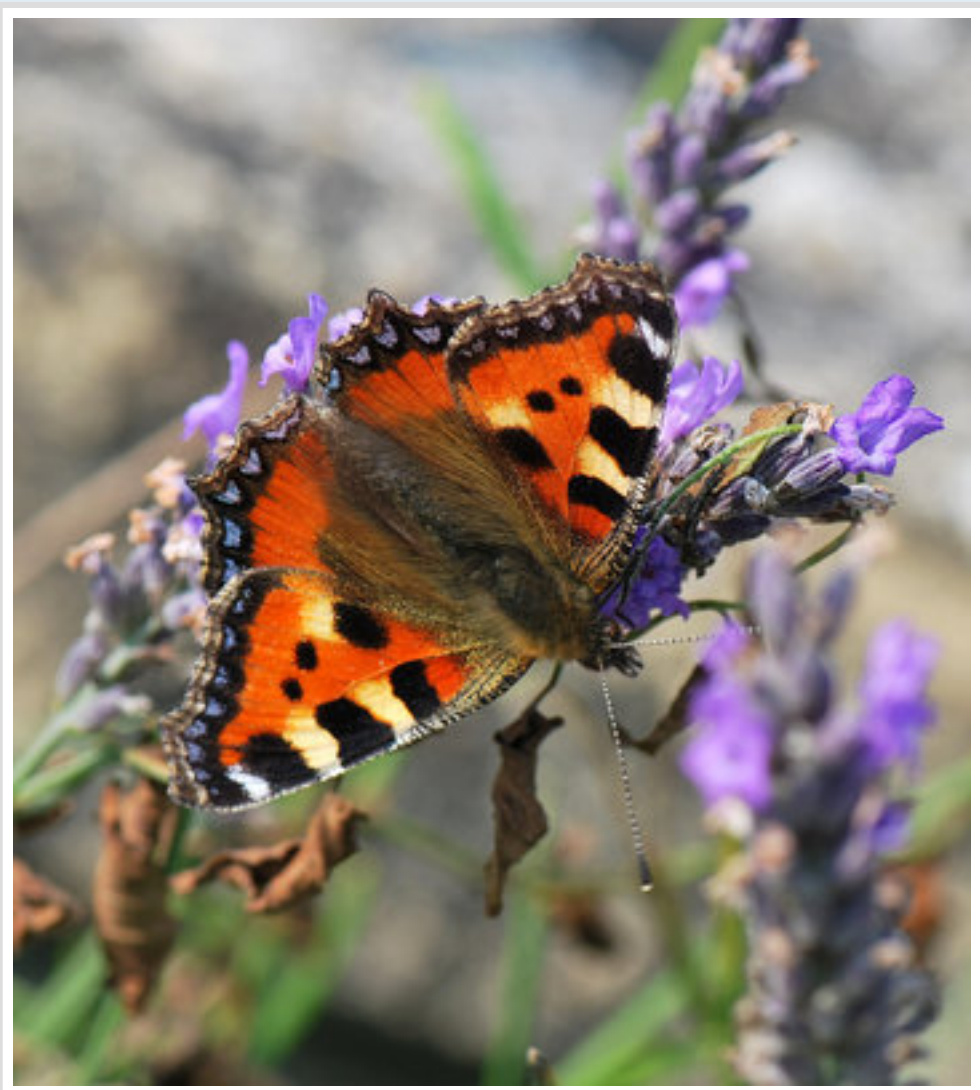
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Sep-13 11:40 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I think she might have already put him in his place as she left shortly after I got the shot possibly to seek Mr Right 😊
Cheers Rex 😊 Read on... 😊

Mottisfont

Following on from the peaceful afternoon spent at the Devenish with all the blues the next day was the Bank Holiday and so a different kettle of fish. We all headed off to Mottisfont for a picnic lunch and a walk around the gardens as well as a look at the original Winnie the Pooh sketches. Once we'd rendezvoused with my parents we headed in an across the lawns to the copse by the back of the house. On the way I saw that the line of Lavender plants was attracting plenty of butterflies. As it was kind of on our way I had a quick look noticing two Small Tortoiseshells, a Common Blue, 2 Green Veined Whites, three Brimstones, 7 or 8 a piece of Large and Small Whites and a Clouded Yellow. It seemed to be hanging around this area so once we'd had the picnic and the girls were making the most of the space and running around like loons I took a gentle stroll up and down the Lavender to see what I could find. Unlike those Cloudies I'd seen before this individual didn't stray far from the nectar source but it was still frustrating as it would only stop for a second or two at each flower. Once it reached the end of the row it flew around a bit before starting back at the beginning and working its way up the row again. My older daughter took a break from playing to enjoy it with her dad whereas my younger daughter kept trying to catch it 😊😊. Luckily she wasn't successful and it didn't seem that bothered by her feeble attempts.







We then partook in the Winnie the Pooh exhibition in the house and the girls had fun finding and counting Hunny Pots and having tea with Kanga and Roo, Owl and Rabbit. After this and a refreshing ice cream we made our way to the Walled Garden and as we came through the gate I couldn't believe the spectacle that met my eyes. There were whites everywhere, falling over each other on the Buddleias there and squabbling over the best spots. Four or five would talk off together and then tumble through the air to another source where they would put up a few more when they settled. To the left and right of me, behind and in front my vision seemed to be awash with butterflies. There were other species and I noted both a male and female Common Blue and many Small Tortoiseshells but for every one of these feeding on a Buddelia here must have been 7 whites. Others have commented that there has been an explosion of whites and I too thought that there were definitely a load about but today I fully understood what they meant. The whole of the garden just seemed crammed with them. So much so in fact that I only took about 20 photos over the whole time I was there, I was more content just to stand and stare.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

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

Lovely shots in your last two posts Wurzel and some unusual ones too 😊 the Brown Argus with the large orange lunules and the one with some white, some orange 🤔 Great shots of CY on the lavender 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 07-Sep-13 10:39 PM GMT

Excellent read as usual Wurzel, lovely shots of the Clouded Yellow, and from your previous post the Small Coppers with the stained glass effect, beautiful. 😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-13 09:29 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Just catching up again after my week down in Dorset, some great reports and photos, always a good read 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-13 11:06 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 It was abs galore that day 😊

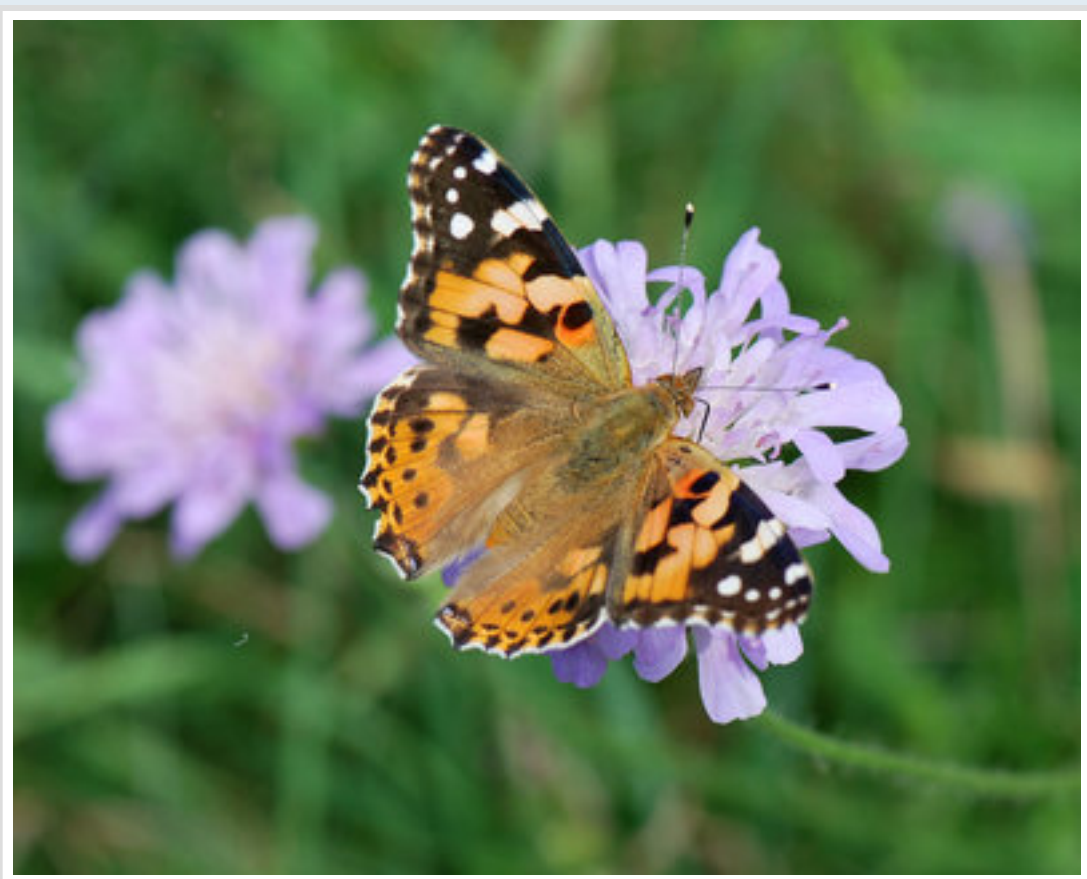
Cheers Nick for your very kind comments 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Looks like you had a great time in Dorset 😊

Martin Down 27-08-2013

After the family outing on the Bank Holiday I managed to squeeze in a few more visits in order to make the most of my last week before heading back to the grindstone. The first of these was to Martin Down with the girls which meant that I then had a other day in the bank. Once in the car park at Sillens Lane I asked the girls where they wanted to go. To the spring, along the top and then down to the hotspot or along the bottom track to the hotspot and back? They decided on the more leisurely route which I didn't mind as the hotspot usually delivers the same return in range of species, just lesser in number.

Almost immediately that we'd started we stopped as a Holly Blue was on the Brambles in the hedge. It had lost the fringes and a section of the hind wing but I took a few photos of it as I haven't seen many this year compared to last. It may be that my eyes have been peeled for other species but I can't recall seeing them at the same range of sites? Slightly further along the path a familiar orangey cream butterfly was fluttering about and stopping occasionally to take nectar. Just like with Clouded Yellows I always make an effort to get a few photos of each individual I see as you can never be sure when you'll next see one. As this has been a good year for both them and Clouded Yellows perhaps they'll be scarcer in 2014?



Once at the hotspot we laid out the blanket, I poured a coffee and the girls got out their books and started reading and chatting. I left them to it and camera in one hand and coffee in the other had a quick mooch around. Straight away I checked out the "quarry" (an small area of exposed bare chalk) and it held a Large White and a Cloudy clinging to the white rocks. They looked alert, the white flicking it's wings so I left them there and made my way towards the main path that runs along Borkerley and there were good numbers of blues still flying. The Chalkhills were looking a fair bit more tired than on my previous visit but the Adonis were still in good nick. There were also Small Heath, Brown Argus, Small Coppers and at one point three Cloudies again all spiralling upwards from the side of the ditch. As well as the various whites and Meadow Browns I also found a very heavily marked Brown Argus, a bit like the one from The Devenish, but with even more pronounced lunules.



Heavily marked



We then decided to move the camp somewhere a little more shady so that the girls didn't fry in the blazing sun and ended up on the other side of the shrubs of the hotspot. A small (deer?) track took me back to the area I'd nick named the quarry and it approached it head on rather than from the side so I carefully approached, a few steps at a time and then scanning ahead so as not to disturb any basking Whites or Yellows. Once again there was a Cloudy and fortuitously as I got within camera range the sun became covered by some cloud so I was able to approach it from the side and get really close in. As I was clicking away the sun came back out which gave me the benefit of witnessing the transformation in colour that occurs with different light levels as before my eyes it went from a limey lemony butterfly to one that was bright and vivid yellow.



I headed back to where the girls were camped and they asked me to have a go on the camera so keen to encourage their natural history photography I gingerly placed the strap over my older daughters head and let them loose. I never knew that there were bears and elephants living at Martin Down!



Once my little muppets had finished arranging their teddies and taking up valuable space on my memory stick we started to make our way back but via the "tunnel". This little area here has produced some really good butterflies over the last two seasons; last year there were Grizzlies and Small Blues everywhere and this year it allowed me to break my Green Hairstreak duck. It was much quieter this late in the season but the usual accompaniment were present with Adonis and Common Blues squabbling with the feisty little Brown Argus, whites galore, Small Heaths trying to trip me up along the path and Small Tortoiseshells showing well.



Once out of the tunnel we were quickly back at the car and as there wasn't a Valesina to keep us we made tracks for the nearest play park. "Another great day out and with another tomorrow to look forward too" I thought as I pushed the swing... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 09-Sep-13 08:50 PM GMT

Great read again with some lovely photos Wurzel, especially the contrasting pictures of the Clouded Yellow in shade and sun. 😊😊 Keep up the good work.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 10-Sep-13 07:07 PM GMT

Great report and photos yet again Wurzel, you do seem to have a knack of finding those well marked Brown Argus 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 10-Sep-13 07:59 PM GMT

Great read and photos as usual Wurzel 😊

Glad to see that I am not the only one that calls their kids muppets, and mine are 19,22 and 25 years old 😊

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-13 11:20 PM GMT

Cheers Nick 😊 I'll try but now I'm back at work the number of trips out will decrease 😞

Cheers Mike 😊 I just wish I had the same luck with Helice Cloudies 😞

Cheers Neil 😊 Muppets is such an apt term for kids of all ages 😊

My Duke site revisited...28-08-2013

This was the first stop off of my last proper day of the school holiday as the next day I had to bite the bullet and venture into work to pick up those results... 😞

I arrived just after 10am and the sun was hidden in the cloud and it was hazy at best. So while there didn't seem to be much about I had a bit of an explore taking the path up the side of the hill to the top. As I ascended on my left was the wood and on the right large swathes of tall grasses. The path was stony and had been carved through by running water draining down the hill. It was along this path that I got the first of the days shots - a Speckled Wood acting more like a Wall and basking on the middle of the path. As I made my way to the top I encountered a few more Specklies, all on the path rather than on the trees and then I reached the top. It was more wooded here and there were clearings but they were mostly on the other side of barbed wire which had small signs on and as I didn't know what they warned of I stayed on the right side of them. I had a bit of a wander up here, even venturing down towards the grasses that had been on my right on my ascent. A small patch of grass held three Blues, all males and there were Specklies in good numbers, reaching double figures. However I'm convinced that I've discovered a new sub-species/form as not one was in the wood or on a tree. In fact they showed no signs of an arboreal lifestyle and as all were in the middle of the paths I'll name them Speckled Roadies. 😊





As there was not much else about I retraced my steps and went right which took me down towards the back of the Greenstreak site. Here I started stopped to watch a family of Spotted Flycatchers and I started noticing many more butterflies as the sun started to burn through the cloud. Each smaller patch of lower vegetation where there were small flowers would have Common Blues, a Brown Argus or two, Meadow Browns would flap about, the odd white and Brimstone would flutter in and the paths would be lined with Small Heaths. It was cracking to be surrounded by so many butterflies all of a sudden. Within a few steps the vegetation would be a bit longer and then it would open up with this lower turf again and again there would be the similar collection of species. I tried counting but it was too confusing as there was so much going on so I just reverted to watching with a satisfied smile.



Whilst here I noticed a Small Heath that seemed unusual and it was only as I approached it closer that I realised that it was showing its upper side and also that it wasn't sitting on a tall grass but was trapped in a web. As I watched legs appeared around it embracing it. It struggled and put up a fight however and then with some violent wing flapping it dropped to the ground. I carefully picked it up and placed it on my knee in order to see if it might have escaped the bite. As I was watching it briefly opened its wings, just long enough for me to take two shots (one of which came out okay) and then closed them again. It seemed to be rallying so I gently moved it to a stone. It tilted onto its side and then after a few leg movements I think the poison had finally taken effect and the insides were liquefying. It had been a valiant fight and for a moment I thought it might have made it but in the end the result was to be expected.



I then headed to the more open fields with a Whitearse accompanying me. The area of longer grasses had a slightly different assortment of species with fewer Brown Argus and Common Blues which were replaced by the odd Chalkhill or Adonis Blue. The whites also didn't drop in here but just kept on steaming along brushing the tips of the grasses on their way. On my way back I stopped at a small patch of flowers and shorter turf which was like a little oasis amongst the beige dry grasses and it was packed with butterflies.





Almost back at the car I found another of these little patches and that seems to be the way of this site; it's a mosaic of microhabitats with large expanses of long grass with pockets of shorter turf and flowering nectar sources. Then there are all the different types of paths interconnecting these pockets of shorter turf. Anyway again I saw all the usual suspects along with a fly-by Clouded Yellow which I eventually tracked down for the very briefest of shots. Once at home reflecting on the day I realised that this year I managed to get better and better shots of Clouded Yellows reaching a zenith at Alners Gorse when I was practically wading amongst them. Since then they've got steadily further away and harder and harder to approach!





Still, Clouded Yellow frustration aside I drove away exceedingly happy as this is such a brilliant little site. And it's not just an early one but one that keeps delivering the goods throughout the year. I didn't see any Brown Hairstreaks here and one or two have been reported but it was still only 12:30 and Shipton Bellinger is just down the road...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 12-Sep-13 07:57 PM GMT

Another great report Wurzel 😊

I love the photo of the Small Heath with the spider legs coming around it, interesting a bit creepy at the same time.

Cheers,

Neil F.

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 14-Sep-13 06:35 PM GMT

Nice shots and report Wurzel 😊 interesting shot of Small Heath with wings open 😊 didn't you recently get a shot of a Brimstone with wings open? How do you train your spiders 😊😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-13 11:01 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 It was even creepier watching the struggling butterfly and then seeing the legs wrap around 😬

Cheers Mike 😊 When I got my open wing Brimstone shot I was set the challenge of an open wing Small Heath..job done, next! 😊 I didn't train the spiders, they trained me 😬😬

Shipton Bellinger

After a great morning mooching at Sidbury I moved onto Shipton with the hope of finding a Brostreak or two...



After a short drive I set off up the path hopefully as ever and this time made my way along the left hand side of the hedge for a change. I normally walk on the right hand track where the hedge is taller and faced with trees but apart I've not seen a Brostreak here since my first four seasons ago. The left hand track is more open with grass underfoot rather than muddy chalk. On my walk I was accompanied by a couple of Common Blues, a scattering of Meadow Browns and the usual ubiquitous Whites. I quickly reached the top where the two paths converge to one, stopped briefly to get some lunch from my bag and then munching continued up towards the master tree. About 10 metres along the path something peered over at me from about a couple of feet up from the ground - a female Brostreak. I couldn't believe my luck I'd only been here for about 30minutes and I wasn't actually expecting so have to start searching until I got to the usual hedge. So I quickly out my lunch down and gently approached her while she had a bit of a wander around the leaves. So having found my target so quickly I could have headed back and seen if my luck held at another site but I decided to press on.





Up along the usual hedge it was a lot quieter than my last visit and there were well trod inlets into the Brambles and scrub. It seems that the flowers and rough grass along the foot of the hedge had been mown and so gone were the multitude of blues that were present last time. For a change I carried on right to the end of the hedge and up onto the rough road, turning left and heading towards the main road. Here things were less peaceful but the vegetation was in a much better state and Brown Argus battled with Blues and Whites, Brimstones flitted around and nectared but I ignored all this to focus on the Brostreaks and there right in front of me was a second female. I'd never visited this area before so had a walk around after literally stumbling across this female and I didn't see any others here but it certainly looked worth a revisit next season should other areas cease to produce.

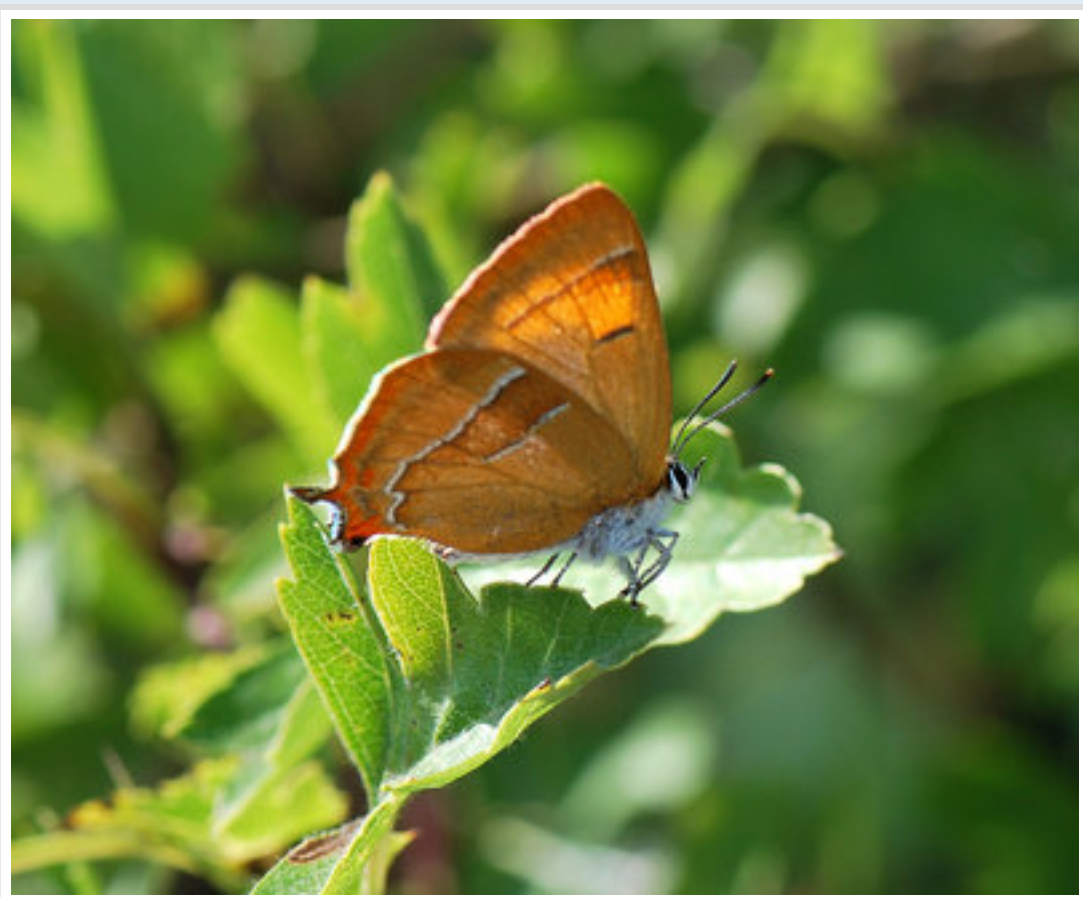


After a bit the noise of the traffic was getting to be a bit much so I made my way back to the hedge. I got to where I'd previously seen the male (on my visit here with Philzoid) and followed the trampled track slightly further in to the brambles and there was number female number three. She flitted about a bit but never strayed too far from where I'd first seen her and this allowed me to see her in a range of different poses. What was interesting was watching the way that she almost disappeared at times, the orange and chocolate fitting in seamlessly with the autumnal colours starting to show through on the trees.





After a few shots I backed gently out and carried on to the island of bramble by the small Blackthorns and there was female number 4. I was just strolling along the path and turning my head caught sight of her out of the corner of my eye. She was just sitting on a leaf by the edge of the path at about shoulder height. As I turned to raise my camera she took off and flew into the Bramble island and I managed to follow her and make an approach to get a few shots.



I couldn't believe my luck and so decided that as it was fast approaching their bedtime (3pm) I ought to call it a day and quit while I was ahead. So I bade farewell to female number 4 and set off back through the Blackthorn bushes and down the track. I reached the section where the path split into two and just as I was about to start walking down one of the two paths right on the corner was number 5! She was a bit damaged this one but she demonstrated some interesting behaviour; basking and then roosting with wings closed as well as "tasting" twigs. While she was sitting nicely composed I realized that I hadn't taken any of the classic style shots so went for a few as well as a few close ups.





I started my walk back stopping every now and again to watch the blues and whites and take the odd shot. I felt stunned and contented at the same time. What a day with a total of 16 species and including 5 different Brostreaks! Happy with that! 😊



My peace was shattered by my phone ringing. My sister in-law had gone into labour so I'd have to high tail it back home so I could drop my wife up to their house to look after their 3 year old. They were waiting for me and the contractions were 5 minutes apart! Luckily as I was at Shipton I was only 25 minutes away and so everything was all okay, just... 😬

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 14-Sep-13 11:33 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Your last Hairstreak shot does it for me 😊 I will now be going straight up to Shipton Bellinger once Hairstreak season starts next year 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 15-Sep-13 01:19 PM GMT

Really great Brostreak shots Wurzel and a great day out. 😊😊 Five different Brostreaks too 😊😊 I'm not surprised you were stunned and contented 😊😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Susie, 15-Sep-13 01:25 PM GMT

Very entertaining report wurzel and excellent photos.

I hope mum and baby are doing well.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 16-Sep-13 07:32 PM GMT

Another great report Wurzel with some added drama at the end 😊

I hope all is well with mum and baby.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 17-Sep-13 08:21 PM GMT

Love your Hair Streak Wurzal, my turn turn to be jealous 🙄 Glad all went well with your Sister-in-law and baby.

About that Spider though, I know it's live and let live but I'd have been tempted to bash it Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-13 11:28 PM GMT

Cheers Jack Shipton is a cracking little site 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 Five wasn't too bad a haul for a few hours wandering 😊

Cheers Susie, Neil and Goldie 😊 Mum and baby are doing well and thankfully it hasn't made my wife broody 😊 I couldn't have bashed the spider Goldie as it had already lost it's lunch 🙄

Back to Larkhill and the not so dirty Dozen!

After a brilliant day at my Duke site and looking successfully for Brown Hairstreaks I had to face the realization that my holiday would soon be over. Plus I still had to bite the bullet and collect those results 🙄. I'd been putting it off and finding all manner of other jobs and pieces of work to do for a week so with a heavy heart I finally loaded the girls into the car and headed off to work. As I reached the new Stonehenge roundabout at Airman's Cross I remembered that through force of habit I'd put my camera in the car so I made a stop off at Larkhill. It allowed me to show off my "kind of local" patch to the girls as well as cheering myself up ready to face the feared conclusion to my trip.

There were a few whites flying about but I found one, then two, then three Common Blues. This quickly became four then five and so on until a dozen was reached, including a few females! I actually spent slightly longer than my usual 5 minutes stop off...but it's the holidays and I'm out of practice also it's rare for me to be able to linger at my little haven. The girls soon pulled me back down to earth as they were looking forward to running around at my work. However they must have appreciated the stop off as when we got home they took great delight in pointing out that "Daddy never stops there on the way home" 😊





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Sep-13 10:05 PM GMT

End of the holidays 30-08-2013

It seemed fitting that my last outing of the holiday should be to the same place as my first and so when my Auntie offered the girls another horse ride they jumped at the chance and I looked forward to the Buddleia in the stable yard. Once there it was lovely and warm but I noticed a change straight away. Gone were the Meadow Browns, the Small Torts were fewer in number and the Large Whites seemed to have been replaced by Small Whites on the Buddleia.

While the girls were getting kitted out I quickly checked out the Buddleia and some of the older stable blocks that are now used for storage. The Buddleia was crawling with whites and then a Small Tort flew by and landed almost in front of me. It posed nicely for a moment or two before flying to the feed. It ignored the huge bush by the gate and instead made a bee line for the smallest bush in the place. It was practically just a stem with one flower head and only 3 leaves. Still it seemed contented to take nectar from this miniscule specimen and so I left it in peace. As I was wandering back across the yard a Comma flew in over the top of the stables and dropped down onto one of the wooden blocks and then crawled onto a Buddleia. It looked like an autumnal Comma, with much darker markings on the upper wings and the under wings were practically slate coloured.





Then at the weekend I only got out on the Sunday and that was pretty brief; just a quick walk around the beer garden of a Restaurant. I found a few Common Darters to occupy me, a Comma bombed by and then I was just about to get a shot of a lovely Peacock when my daughter fell off a swing. This meant a trip to AE and a few hours sitting in the waiting room - mind you here was a Small Tort there resting on the roof over the heads of the patients though I couldn't really get the camera out. In the end everything was fine, no breaks and no fractures 😊 and back to work the next day 😊 !





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 20-Sep-13 10:16 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Great report as usual, always a pleasure to read accompanied with lovely photos. I love your Brown Hairstreaks from a couple of posts ago and, your beautiful fresh Comma from your last post, brilliant. 😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Sep-13 10:21 PM GMT

Cheers for your kind comments Nick, greatly appreciated 😊

Stop off 02-09-2013

It didn't even take me a day to get back into the habit of working...well the habit of stopping off on the way to work that is 😊. At Larkhill I couldn't find the not so dirty dozen, but further along the path I found five Blues all spaced out in an area of longer grasses. I'd followed the usual method when starting my search, proceeding along the path and scanning attentively as I walked. Then not seeing anything I started to rush back to the car in order to get to work and then I caught one out of the corner of the eye. While watching it another popped into view and then another etc. The thing is they'd probably been there all along and it's only when you're watching one and you shift your position that you catch another at the right angle so that it suddenly appears.



Brown Argus sneaking in amongst the Common Blues

And so it was that on the dreadful first day back at work I was surprisingly jubilant. Amidst all the “What were your results like?” and “this is a new policy (read – lots more work for you)” I maintained an almost Zen smile. You see I was extremely happy with one of my shots. I know photography is a very subjective craft and what is “good” in one persons opinion might not be the same for someone else but this shot ticked all of my personal boxes – sharpness of focus, colours glowing, freshness of the individual and the added interest of a few dew drops twinkling like bling. It sounds silly now thinking back on it but knowing that the image was there on my memory card and in the bag got me through the entire day.



I'd expected to finish late on the first day but as we finished bang on time I reckoned that I had five minutes to stop off on e the way home. Once I pulled up I checked the golden rods - it seems that this is where the females were hanging out with a couple of nice examples. All of them were pretty "blue" including one that much more blue than brown and another with gorgeous sky blue margins.



So the first day back went well in terms of butterflies and to be honest I can't now remember anything else from during the day 😬😬
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 22-Sep-13 11:45 PM GMT

That last female Common Blue is a lovely one – they are up there with much more exotic species when they have that combination of colours.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 23-Sep-13 09:39 AM GMT

So you literally "got the blues" on your first day back at work 😄 and that made you feel happy for the rest of the day! It's a funny old world eh wurzel?
😄

Nice shots btw 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 24-Sep-13 09:59 PM GMT

Great photos Wurzel. 😊 And your still finding fresh Common Blues at this time of the year, amazing. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Sep-13 11:41 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 They're cracking aren't they 😊

Cheers Rex 😊 It's getting funnier by the day 😬

Cheers Nick 😊 Sorry I should have put a date on my posting, it was from the beginning of September The last fresh one I saw was from about two weeks ago:oops:

Larkhill 04-09-2013

I didn't get back to Larkhill the next day because of the weather and also because I wanted to get to work early. I almost didn't bother on the next day either as I drove through the early morning cloud and mist. However I stopped off amongst the dampness and feeling a little mellow I set off up the North bound path hoping that the stop off would prove to be fruitful...



As I stepped out of the car and started my stopwatch the mist coated me from head to foot like a walk in shower. I pressed on regardless but up by the usual roosting area there was a dearth of butterflies so I headed back and checked the grasses next to the pull in. Once there a little gray flag caught my eye and as I approached it twinkled at me. I was imagining that I thought but as I focused in I discovered why, it was covered (like me) in dew and as I shifted my position to get the shot various droplets would catch the little light that there was.



Happy with the shots I had another look around and spent some time admiring (a minute or so of my five) the various spider webs that were really shown off as the sun started to cut through the mist. It was like someone was turning up the dimmer switch and the background colour was changing from green and greys to orange and beige.



My little beauty was still in the same place and I was wondering whether a few more shots might be in order when I noticed another. It looked less worn with the orange lunules still showing and the spots clearly demarcated under a covering of pearls and diamonds. An absolutely gorgeous sight and one that left me feeling blissful while the day washed over me and passed on to tomorrow.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 26-Sep-13 11:58 PM GMT

Those are lovely shots, Wurzel. They look as if the slightest disturbance would destroy the equilibrium and they'd drown! I never seen such quantities of dew on a butterfly.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 27-Sep-13 11:24 PM GMT

Astonishing photos Wurzel, just brilliant. 😊😊 It must of been so difficult to get any sort of picture at that time of morning, well done.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 29-Sep-13 03:27 PM GMT

I just love your photo's Wurzal, they look unreal, fairy like, so delicate,Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 29-Sep-13 09:28 PM GMT

Superb images Wurzel, fantastic effect with the dew 😊

Unfortunately it is dark in the morning now when I am on my way to work 😞 so I miss out on the early morning dew on the cobwebs.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Sep-13 11:11 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I had to be very careful not to knock the grass heads for that very reason – which made a change from being careful so that it didn't fly away 😊

Cheers Nick 😊 It was just finding the little beauties that was the hard bit, I let the camera do the rest 😊

Cheers Goldie for your kind comments 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I'm still trying to catch up with my PD so by the time I do we might be back on BST 😊

Larkhill 05-09-2013

...The next morning I was back and having found really fresh individuals and dew coated little beauties I thought I ought to try for something else so I

tried a few backlit almost silhouette type shots. But first I'd have to try and find them. Since the heady days a week previously when I discovered the "dozen" they've been dwindling from 12 down to 5, then a pair and so if the trend continued I might not find any. Luckily I bucked the trend and found three or four different individuals in various states of repair. The first looking pretty aged and so was more Common Grey than Blue (if it is a Blue and not a Brown Argus - I can't see the cell spot?).



A later one was nicely positioned at the top of a grass at the edge of the path where I could photograph it side on with the light from behind. It had a few tears in the wings but that didn't matter overall as I was more interested in the shape of the closed wings.





The penultimate didn't hang around for any sort of shots but the final one encompassed the range of shots I'd taken recently in a montage; kinda fresh, grey and green background, a few dew drops and slightly backlit.



06-09-2013

The following day I was interviewing so didn't have time to stop on the way to work but a brief 3 minutes saw me finding a pair of males nicely contrasting each other. One was fresh with wing margins white and hairy and practically untouched and orange lunules showing nicely against the pale grey background. The other was ripped and torn, margins long gone and faded with the barest of orange lunules. It kept its back to me and got on with feeding whereas the fresher one was much more eager to show off its livery.



I'm not sure how much longer there will be butterflies here as the Indian Summer we were promised seems to have waned too soon...here's hoping I'm wrong.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Sep-13 11:45 PM GMT

October

Here's hoping that October is is mellow and fruitful...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 02-Oct-13 08:40 PM GMT

The 1st day of October was good for me Wurzel, in my Garden I've still got the STS and lots of Red Admiral's keep arriving as well as Comma's and Speckled Wood.

Weather suppose to be nice for the weekend, lets hope so Goldie. 😊

Re: Wurzel

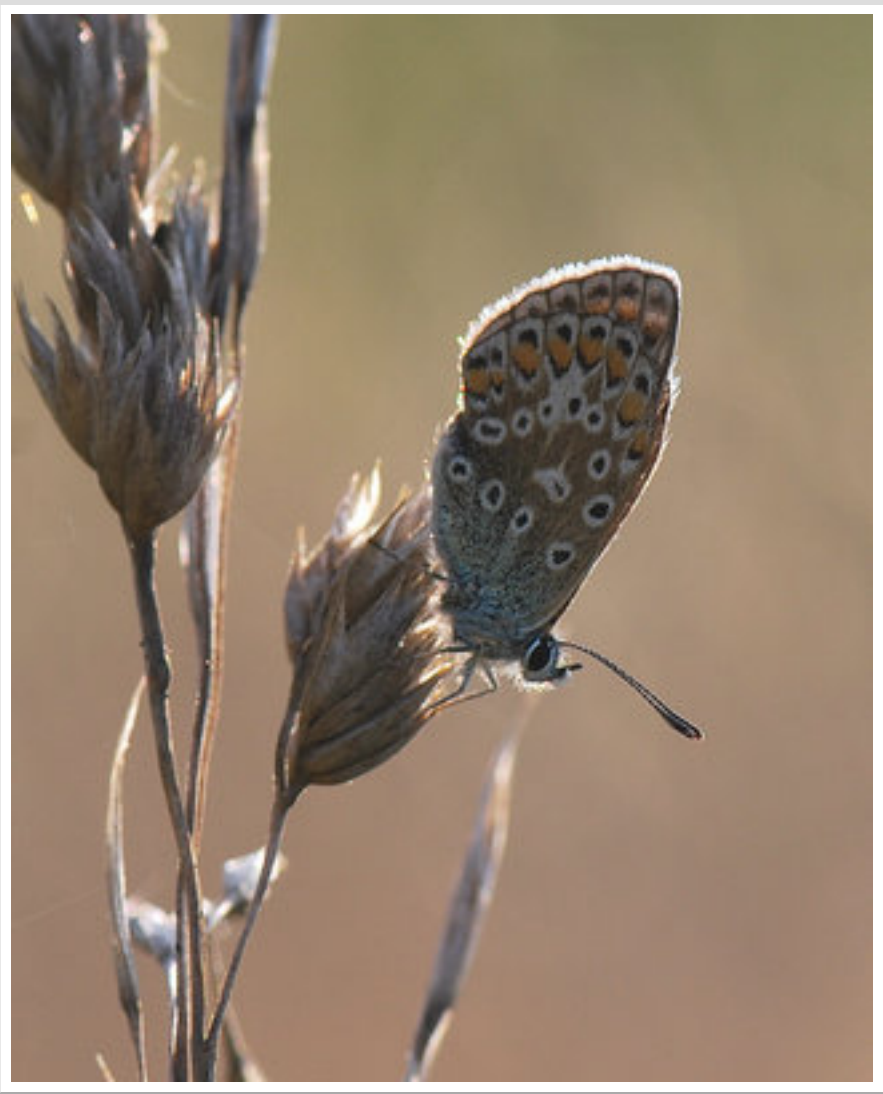
by Wurzel, 03-Oct-13 11:11 PM GMT

Glad to hear my wishes came to fruition for someone Goldie 😊 Great shots too 😊

Going for glow 10-09-2013

The following week I made another stop-off on the way to work. I guess that's another advantage to living in the South - we hold onto the bright mornings for slightly earlier 😊 . A quick walk around didn't yield much and there didn't seem to be anything else around apart from a few Blues and Brown Argus that I've photographed a few times. So as the butterflies weren't different I tried for some slightly different shots of them.

I'd admired other peoples' photos when they'd managed to capture the butterflies in the golden glow of the morning and in the silhouette so that's what I aimed for...whether I achieved it I'm not really sure, but it made for an enjoyable 5 minutes before work. In fact it was so enjoyable that I actually stayed for 8 minutes 😊



While I took my shots another butterfly caught my eye so I decided to see if it wanted to make a more personal acquaintance. I offered it my finger and it clambered on board, probably to try and beat the chill. After a few shots I gazed at the butterfly and we shared a moment and I thought to myself how tough a life it was leading. All this Zen however wasn't getting me photos so carefully I lowered my little mate down towards the grass heads and grudgingly it clung back on.



I got back to the "glow" but the time was catching up to with me and my little break was coming to an end...



11-09-2013

The next day was cooler and wetter and despite searching in all the usual places I only found the one on this morning. Unlike previously it was quite low down on a grass stalk and it made me wonder about how they roost. Is it at the top of the grass heads or do they move down and then come back up the following morning? Is their position on the stem related to the weather, perhaps moving down in cooler and wetter weather or is it just a matter of where ever they land then that's their home (for the night). The one I found was certainly pretty active, turning and climbing from one stem to another, but always low down in the vegetation. When I finally got a clear view I noticed that one of the spots seemed to be made from three smaller black dots which was interesting but probably within the usual range of variation.



Hopefully there will still be a few to see and this isn't the end, just the beginning of it...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 05-Oct-13 11:51 AM GMT

Nice report(s) and shots Wurzel, especially the beautiful photos of dew covered butterflies 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 06-Oct-13 01:50 PM GMT

Lovely photos as usual Wurzel. 😊 Your early morning forays must surely be coming to an end now, but i hope you manage a couple more before the season finally draws to a close.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Oct-13 11:13 PM GMT

Cheers Mike for your kind comments 😊

Cheers Nick 😊 The year seems to be passing ever quicker and I've really noticed the evenings drawing in but there's still some light in the mornings if only the rain and cloud would take a hike 😞

Larkhill 18-09-2013

It was almost a week until I managed to stop off again at Larkhill as I was busy at work so needed to get in early. When I finally made it back it looked like it was all over as up the Northbound path there were no butterflies, only a large and very hairy caterpillar which I think is a Fox Moth?



Just tucked in away from the Westbound path is a large patch of tall reed-like plants with narrow golden pyramids for flowers - Golden Rod I think I've found some interesting things here before - mating Small Whites, my first Essex Skipper of 2013 and today proved to be no exception. It seemed that the Blues had moved to this area for the easy nectar that it offered. Having encountered plenty of these butterflies in recently in various poses, attitudes and situations I scanned through the 3 or 4 present trying to find something different. I've taken shots of dew soaked and fresh individuals, worn and ripped, silhouetted and "glowing". As I was running through this list in my mind and wondering what I could find that would be different a male Common Blue popped up and there it was, my something different. Two of the spots on the under wing had almost fused together. As I watched and photographed this variant I was surprised how obvious it had become through simply having spots that had fused into a bar, a nice little reminder of selection pressures.





I headed back to the car stopping briefly on the way to watch a couple of whites – two Small and one large. They were feeding on the same yellow flowers which lined all the bushes around the car park margins. Only one of Whites allowed me to approach it, the other two were flighty and restless almost as if they sensed that they were running out of time and they better get a move on. Picking up on this I too decided I'd better head off, I'd been here a whole 7 minutes already!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Oct-13 09:56 PM GMT

Kingston Lacey 22-09-2013

While everyone was racing off to Kent and Sussex to see Long Tailed Blues I was confined closer to home as I had used up all the good will and Brownie points that I had collected over the previous autumn and winter. Luckily a trip out for the day was suggested and Kingston Lacey was suggested so as well as the lunch, picnic blanket and flasks I packed my camera. Once we had rendezvoused with my parents and wandered to the back lawn we set up camp and started lunch which was distracting for me as a few whites kept fluttering by and trying to catch my attention. Eventually I succumbed and set off after a ragged old White. It gave me the run around settling and feeding just long enough for me to consider approaching and as I made my first two or three footfalls it would take off. In the end I gave up and noticing something on the turning Rose bushes I checked them. As it turned out the thing that had caught my eye was a stunningly fresh Large White. Clean, crisp and citrus fresh and a total contrast to the battered individual which I eventually caught up with.



Out the box



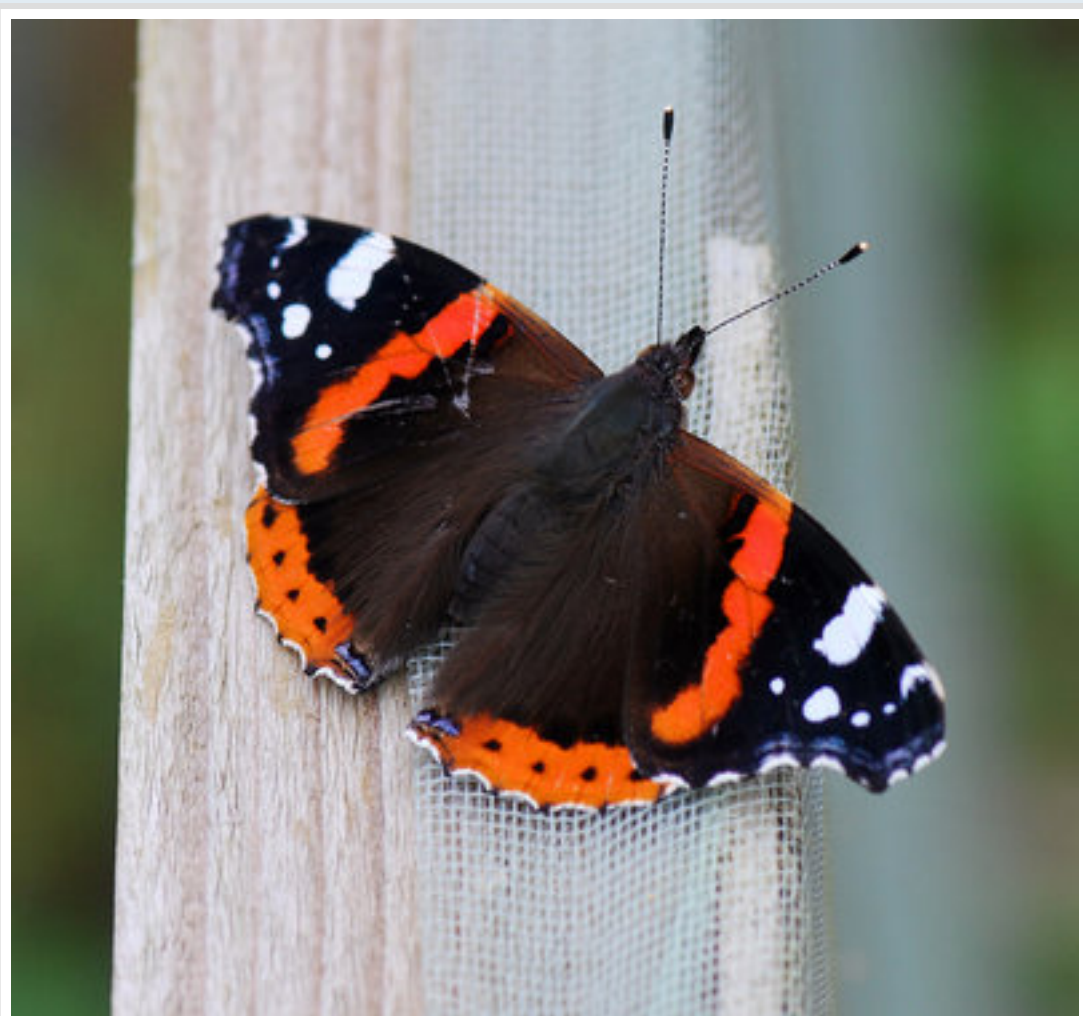
...and a "slightly" older one

Up by the house there was a small flower bed boxed in by a low hedge. It was playing host to Large, Small and Green-veined Whites as well as a Red Admiral. Unfortunately they were all on the far side of the garden so I was forced to watch them fluttering about out of reach. With lunch packed away we set off to wander the various different gardens. First up the bedding plants and topiary bushes with faces trimmed into them. Then onto the Fernery and shade garden which was surprisingly quiet on this visit. The piglets sleeping in the neighbouring field were scant consolation for missing a golden Comma. Back along the borders I stopped occasionally for the odd white or Speckled Woods and then we dived down along the avenue and in through the woods.





While the girls rode the tractors in the kitchen garden I had a wander around the allotments which were packed with butterflies - mainly whites to the gardeners dismay, but also a Small Tort and another Red Admiral - this one allowed an approach as it basked. I haven't seen that many Red Admirals this year so this one was a welcome addition. While I was getting my shots from various different angles a dad turned up with his daughter and waited patiently for me to finish up. I backed away and then set off down the path cheered by the soft wows as the little girl gazed at the butterfly I'd just left.





There were other butterflies around over the rest of the afternoon including back at the flower bed. I was watching a white and marvelling at what good nick it was in when all of a sudden it just dropped down dead just like that, literally falling off its perch! 😲 . Mind you I suppose it's getting towards that time of year again. 😞

As I drove homewards, the girls chatting away about all that they had seen and done I was surprised to find that there wasn't the slightest pang of jealousy over the LTBs that I'd missed out on. Saying that hopefully they'll be back next year which could be one of the few benefits of Climate Change. 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 11-Oct-13 10:00 PM GMT

I've really been enjoying your Common Blue photo's Wurzel.... and the others of course. Great stuff as usual 😊 Perhaps we should split caterpillars into 2 simple categories Baldies and Hairies 😊😊

Re: Wurzel

by Hoggers, 12-Oct-13 05:05 PM GMT

Gorgeous Red Admiral, Wurzel! They've been quite a rarity in Kent this year, in fact I've seen more Painted Ladies and Clouded Yellows than I have Red Admirals.

Come to think of it, I've seen more Long Tailed Blues than Red Admirals!

What a Year!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Oct-13 02:04 PM GMT

Cheers Rex 😊 That's not a bad idea for the classification of caterpillars - who said this Taxpnomy thing was tricky 😊😊

Cheers Hoggers 😊 I'd have swapped all of my Red Admirals for just one Long Tailed Blue- my hopes for an Idemiston population didn't come to fruition 😞 Oh well there's always next time and with Climate Change that could be quite soon 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 13-Oct-13 04:56 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Some great photos there, cracking Red Admirals and I love the Green-veined White on the mauve flower, great colour combination 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 14-Oct-13 07:02 PM GMT

Great couple of last posts Wurzel, as always an enjoyable read with lovely photos. 😊

Your ID of the Fox Moth larva is spot on.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Oct-13 09:33 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 that one makes me smile too, another serendipitous find!

Cheers Nick 😊 Thanks for the kind comment and ID confirmation. Dare I say it – I might be getting the hang of some of this IDing malarkey 😊

Larkhill 23-09-2013

After what felt like an age I took a quick stop off on the way home as I needed the break after a full on Monday and also the weather was noticeably better than it had been all day. I checked the Golden Rod on one side of the pull-in and then up the Northbound path but there was nowt about. This put me in a slightly despondent mood and so I trudged rather than walked back to the car. I then wondered if the patch of Golden Rod would have anything and so headed over there for a quick check out. Result! There were a couple of Blues and also a Brown Argus.

Having concentrated rather heavily on the Blues over my previous visits I thought I ought to spend some time with them while the season lasts. Almost as if it sensed that I was watching it started to put on a little show for me. It was a nice behaviour that I had witnessed before. It was completing circles around the flower heads and then would move to a new area and repeat this behaviour and after a few photos I started trying to work out why? Could it be keeping its territory or eyeing up threats from possible predators or was it checking out all the florets to find those with existing nectar stores? For whatever reason it was lovely to watch this delightful dance and try to capture it stop frame on film...





After my quality time with the Brown Argus I thought that I better make a move home but only after a quick check on the ubiquitous blues that were also present on the Golden Rod. They were all looking tired and I'm not sure how much longer they're going to last...





Saying that so long there is even a sniff of a butterfly I'll keep stopping off!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Oct-13 10:18 PM GMT

Larkhill 24-09-2013

I stopped off on the way to work the next day and it was totally different. Gone was the autumnal sun and golden glow replacing it was drizzle, mist, much cooler temperatures and a grey leaden sky. I almost considered not stopping but I've made a pact with myself to keep checking it out until the bitter end.

I headed straight to the patch of Golden Rod reasoning that if there was anything sitting out the dismal weather it would be here due o the profusion of nectar available. It was a pretty good hunch as almost immediately I spied a little grey flag, a Common Blue. When they're freshly emerged they look like bright white banners but once they have lost a few scales and been around the block a bit they look more like grimy grey rags wafting in the breeze. The butterfly I'd found I recognised from a week previously as it was the aberrant with the fused spots although these were surprisingly difficult to see beneath the covering of mist and dew drops. He was all "blinged" up grimly clinging to the stem probably quite literally for his life.





A quick walk around and up both the paths didn't produce any other butterflies...surely that's the end?



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 17-Oct-13 11:18 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

If that is the end for this year you could `nt of finished it with a more spectacular photo, [the 1st one] depicting the conditions these butterflies have to endure to survive another day. I absolutely love it. 😊

I have really enjoyed reading and admiring your photography in your PD and, i look forward to many more adventures next year. 😊

All the very best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Oct-13 09:01 PM GMT

Cheers Nick for your very,very kind comments 😊😬 (that's a blush not an oops). The closing question was to set up the next post which is about the next day when the weather couldn't have been more different - a little trick I picked up from someone 😊 I've still got a fair number of posts in reserve as it were so I might be able to get through to February maybe and then I'll be looking out for Red Admirals 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Oct-13 10:14 PM GMT

Bath Uni 25-09-2013

To say the weather was changeable over the last few days which I've posted about is a bit of an understatement. Following on from cold, wet and windy

weather and only a soaked Common Blue the next day got warmer and drier as the morning progressed. I had to drive to Bath Uni for work and somehow I managed to get through both Devizes and Bath city centre without the usual delays or Snails' pace. So I arrived 10 minutes earlier than planned and with knocking off 5 minutes of my lunch that meant 15 minutes to walk up to the golf course to see what was about. This is a risky business as the route takes you past the where students dwell 😊

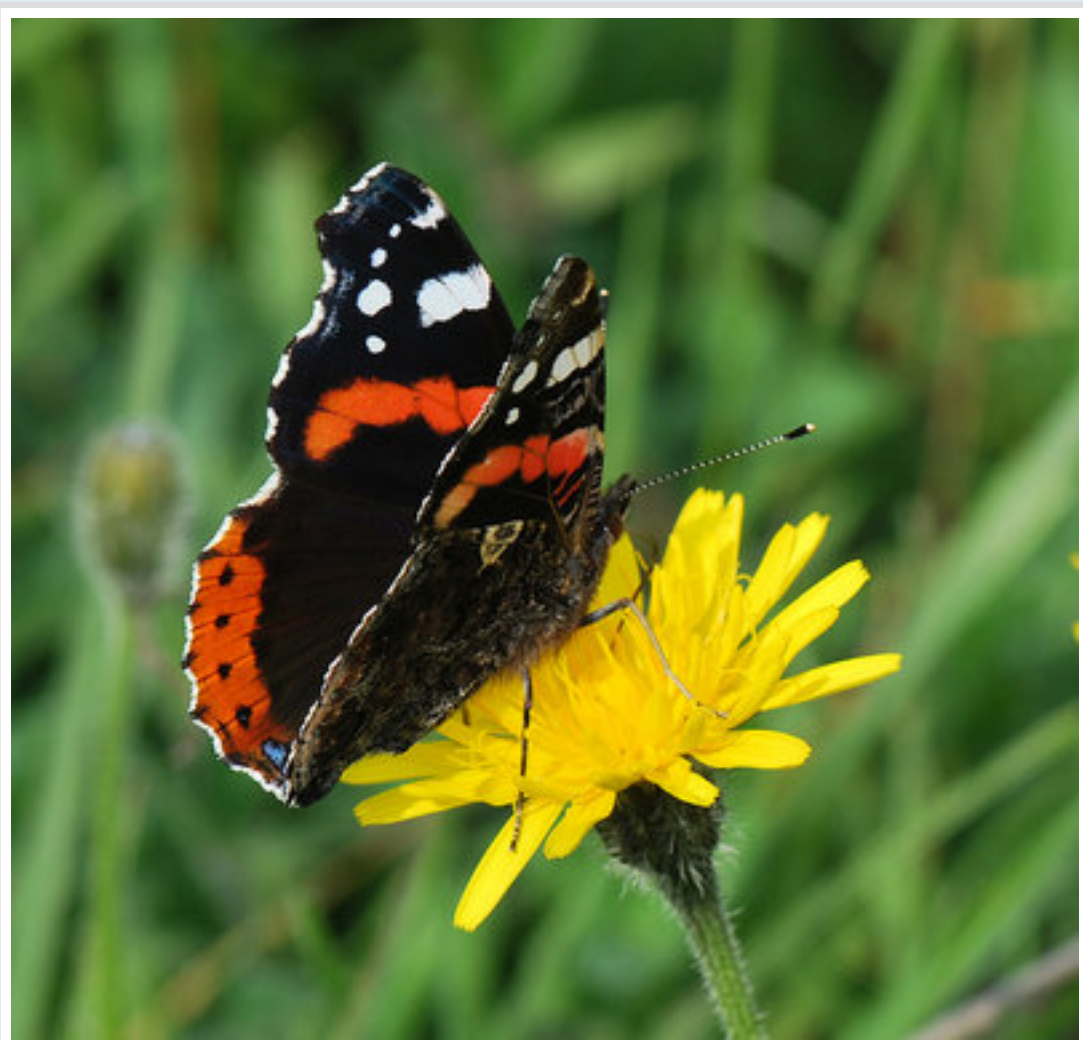
I had literally just set foot onto the woodland path when I spied a Peacock basking in a sunbeam. It had landed perfectly so that it was being picked out by a ray shining through the canopy. It was as if it was hogging the spotlight. As I crept up on it I noticed that one of its antennae appeared to be missing. It always surprises me the wounds that butterflies seem to suffer.



Up near the top of the path where it is more wooded I stumbled across a pair of Specklies. They were very flighty, so much so in fact that I only one shot of one and three of the other. The first shot was a write off as when I checked it on the screen it just showed a brown blur that is a Specklie mid take off. Luckily one of the others was in focus as it rested on a nettle leaf. However it too was long gone in a very short space of time.



Up on the golf course there were a few Whites in the distance bombing along but I didn't want to risk concussion from golf balls so I didn't stray from the path. In the end I'd walked a good couple of hundred metres round the edge of the course so with time ticking ever onwards and a distinct lack of activity I decided to retrace my steps. This proved to be a good move as on the way back I encountered another pair of Specklies (not in the wood unusually) and a Red Admiral. Frustratingly the Admiral wouldn't close its wings entirely so I couldn't get a nice closed wing shot that I was after. The best I could do was three quarters shut.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 21-Oct-13 11:50 PM GMT

Nice stuff Wurzel, I'm glad it wasn't the end, great shots and shows just what butterflies can endure 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Oct-13 10:06 PM GMT

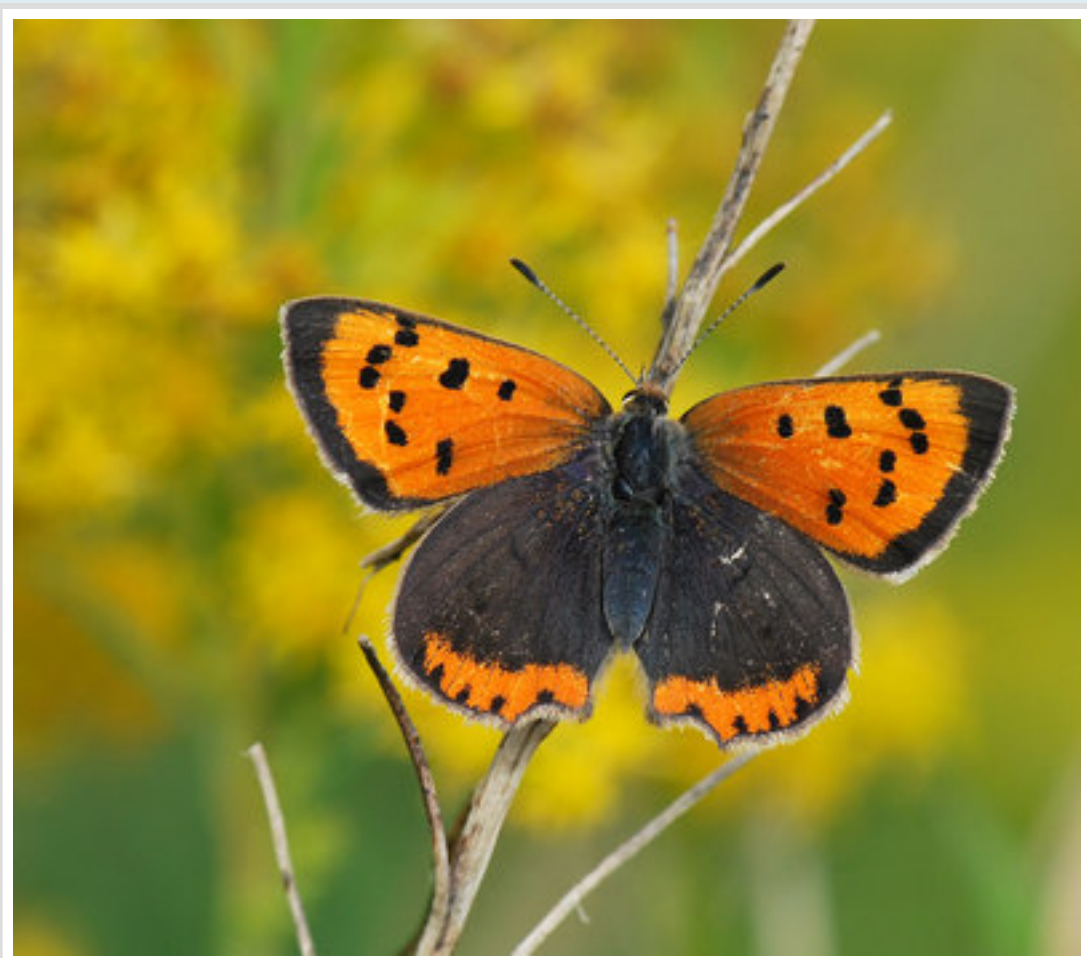
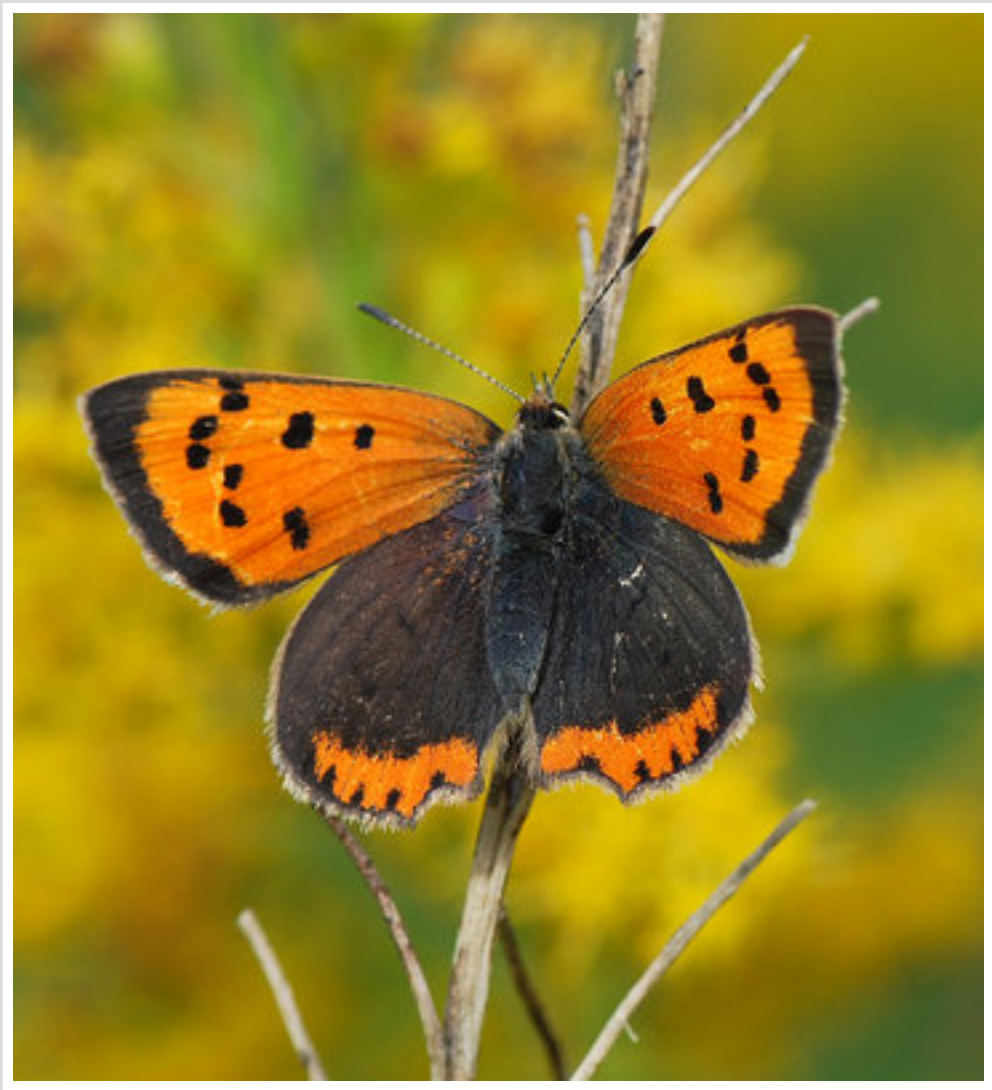
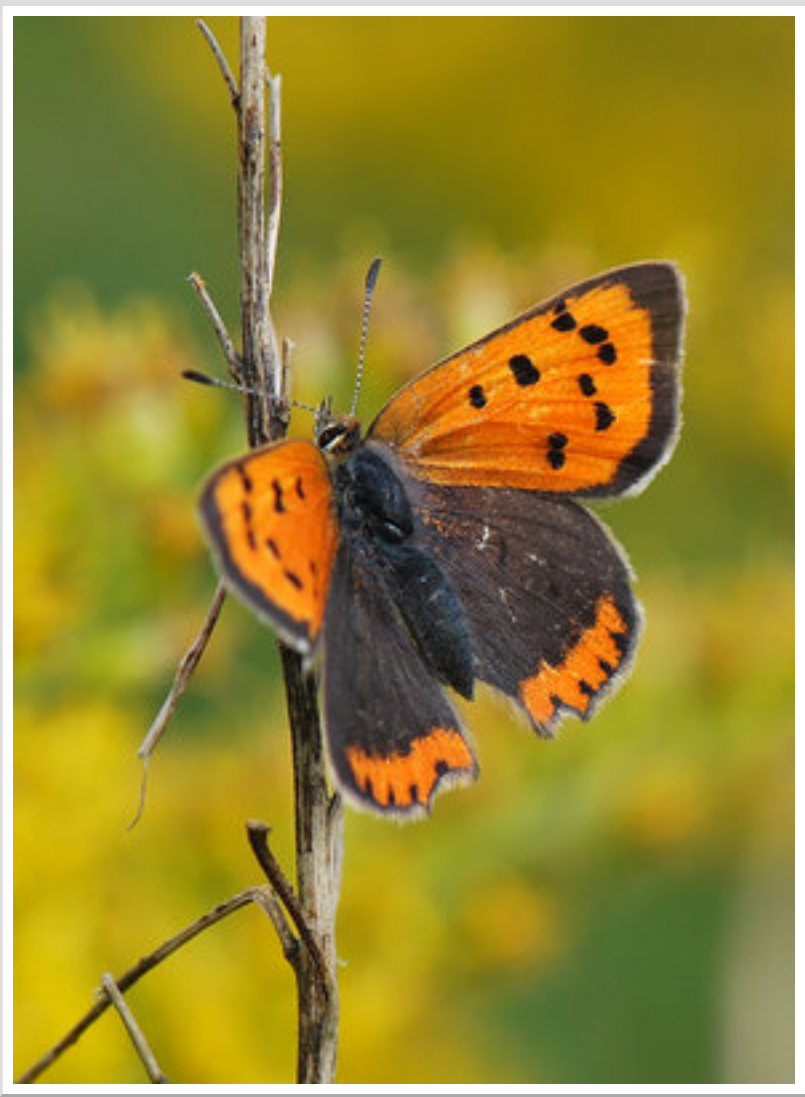
Cheers Mike 😊 It's always a bit hit or miss during this time of year isn't it and when you do see butterflies it's always a little bit more special.

Larkhill 27-09-2013

Another naughty stop off but as the weather was on the turn (again 😞) I thought that it had to be this afternoon else I might not get the chance over the weekend. It felt like the end of an era as I could only find one Blue remaining on the Golden Rod. As if to make up for it he was very obliging, moving slowly from one pose to another, letting me get the shots before trying another with a gentle transition between the two. Despite this amicable showing he was well past his best definitely a case of substance over a style. I was also upset that I couldn't find my aberrant mate and set to wondering whether it was the weather from a few days previously that had seen him shuffle off his mortal coil?



However my sombre musings were cut short as there was a beautifully fresh Small Copper amongst the Golden Rods. It moved at one point to a dead twig which seemed to show it off to better effect as it held its wings open wide to catch the afternoon sun. I think it's a she judging by the swollen, more rounded abdomen? I can't explain why or how but I felt uplifted by this tiny little insect, dressed in its finest livery persevering on when all others have given up.



So gone are the blue skies of summer to replaced with the coppers of Autumn...

Have a goodun

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Oct-13 11:46 PM GMT

Five Rivers 29-09-2013

Over the last of September I managed a quick trip out on the Sunday before another hectic week at work was upon me. It feels like this year we have hit the ground sprinting and there doesn't seem to be any let up in the near future. Despite the sun there was a nip in the air and it felt like the year was past its prime. There were a few whites around as well as Specklies but nothing was stopping. So it wasn't until I got round to the approach of the banks that I connected with my target species for the day – an autumnal Comma. It was very obliging and as I didn't know whether this would be the last of the year I made the most of the opportunity it presented to me with open and closed wing shots.





After a brief flight having been spooked by a passing White it settled back down but was now quite fitful so I only managed a few snatched shots as it worked along the brambles at the edge of the copse. This provided me with some different shots including one that shows the wings half in shade and half not and a cracking camo shot which I should have saved for my "Hunt the..." posting.





Further along the banks the Buddleia seemed the best bet and so I set up camp for a bit there, every now and again raising myself up onto the balls of my feet so I could crane my neck towards the back of the bush. My vigil paid off with 3 more Comma, a Large and Small White and a Small Tort. However whilst stretching enabled me to see the butterflies I couldn't get any decent shots as they were too far away and in order to see them I lost all stability. Next time I'll have to remember to approach from below, though the cutting in the hedge so I can creep up on the bush more.

A Brimstone passed me by later as a wandered as well as a few more whites, a Red Admiral and a Peacock but nothing was settling. It felt like everything was in a rush to get things done before it was too late. Finally just as I was about to leave a White actually stopped long enough for me to fire off 2 shots. Then it was gone again and so I made my way home. I'm not sure if I'll get back to this site this year and I feel like I've neglected it slightly however I wasn't able to make my weekly call in as my older daughter doesn't attend Rainbows anymore and I suppose I've shifted my attentions to Larkhill. Still I'll try a little harder here next year.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 29-Oct-13 08:24 PM GMT

Lovely report and photos as usual Wurzel. 😊 Would you like to borrow my stilts?, to get some of those shots just out of reach. 😊😂 But whats with the photo of deadish Blackberries. 😊

All the best Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 29-Oct-13 11:22 PM GMT

Dead blackberries? There is a closed wing Comma on there!

Shows how good the camouflage is though!

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 31-Oct-13 09:16 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzal great photo's once again. 🍷

I've just been looking at your GK in Abberations and I find I've one very like it which I took a photo of in August, my shot's not as good as yours but what do think of the comparison I'd like to know please.

I'd be interested in knowing what it's called as well because I'm still learning 😊

I'm going to London though for the weekend (wedding reception) so may not be able to answer you right a way but if you take the trouble thank you.

I won't clutter you with photo's mine 's in Identification section Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-13 01:08 AM GMT

Cheers Nick 😊 And thank you for the offer of your stilts but I will have to decline as my wife is already thoroughly embarrassed by me and they could be the final straw 😬😬

Cheers Essex 😊 I'll be doing some Where's the Grayling over the winter so keep those eyes peeled 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 It think you ab is an "excessa" hope that helps (and that it was a great Wedding) 😊

November



Missed these this year, hoping for them next...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 01-Nov-13 10:25 AM GMT

Morning Wurzel – just seen your Comma on dead leaves. What a great shot! I have to tell you that in this years BBC Wildlife photographer of the year (or was it the British Wildlife photography awards? – one or t'other anyway) there is a photo not dissimilar to yours and a very effective photo it makes too. For anyone interested in such books I can also strongly recommend The Masters of Nature Photography containing portfolios from masters such as Jim Brandenburg, Frans Lanting and many others. Worth putting on your Xmas list 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Nov-13 10:36 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊 I'll have to look up some of those photographers to nick ide... ahem, get some "inspiration" 😊😊

Larkhill 04-10-2013 (Only a month behind 😊)

After a great week with the blues and the Small Copper previously I was hoping for some more productive stop offs but it didn't get off to a good start as I didn't get to stop until the Thursday morning which was dire – wet and windy. I managed to find a sole white low down in the clinging on in there.



When I stopped off on the way home things were slightly better but only just. There was more light though which meant that finding the butterflies would be easier. I didn't have to look hard as a Small Copper flew across the Northbound path almost as soon as I'd stepped out of the car. A little bit more searching yielded a second Copper slightly further along the path. So now I'd found something to photograph I thought that it would be a good idea to have a go starting with the first that I'd found. It was the smaller of the two but what it lacked in size it made up for in charisma. It put on a lovely show both on the ground and when it took to the Golden Rod close to the car park.



Like the Brown Argus before it displayed the same feeding pattern - walking in a circular motion over the tops of the Golden Rod. As it did so I managed to bend my back in just such a way to bring myself level with it to get some nice shots with its legs all over the place.





As I was starting to make my way back to the car everything happened at once a RA shot by, a LW settled within view and a/another Small Copper appeared/reappeared. For approximately 15 seconds I dithered as I didn't know which to go for. In the end the Small Copper won out of course! So I approached it carefully as it perched awkwardly amongst the grass. I'd not seen them like this before as normally they have their wings wide open when on a leaf or twig or when they're flat to the ground. This one was in the same posture by vertical giving it the appearance of standing on the edges of its hind wings, like it was on tip toes.



It was great to catch up again with this species on what must be its third brood of the year. Now to try and find them roosting, or even better, covered in dew!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 04-Nov-13 10:47 PM GMT

I keep forgetting you're a few weeks behind with your postings, Wurzel.

For a few moments, I thought you were living inside some kind of warm bubble where Small Coppers still thrive!

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 05-Nov-13 05:37 PM GMT

Nice to see you're still posting great photos Wurzel, the Golden Rod shows the Small Coppers off well.

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Nov-13 10:23 PM GMT

Sorry David didn't mean to catch you out 😞 Blooming work keeps getting in the way 😞 Hopefully I'll have caught up by March 😊

Cheers for your kind comments Mike 😊 Small Coppers are great value butterflies and this is the first time I've seen them into October 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Nov-13 10:19 PM GMT

Bolderwood 06-10-2013

It was time for my little niece to have her first major outing so both families headed into the Forest and towards Bolderwood. I didn't expect much as it felt quite cool and autumnal but I took my camera anyway just in case and on the way saw a few Whites and a Red Admiral. So when I pulled into the car park I was feeling quite hopeful and eager to get out and seek out some late butterflies. Almost immediately I spied a pale, creamy orange butterfly fluttering across the small field directly in front of the car park. So while the others wandered over to the picnic area I took a quick stroll in the opposite direction. I had an inkling that it would be a Painted Lady and so it turned out to be. However due to the paucity of nectaring plants it was very flighty and didn't hang anywhere long. After a few grabbed shots it was not looking good as it had moved off twice so I was on my last chance of getting some shots as I generally follow the "three and leave rule". Luckily it decided to settle down for a brief bask and after I taken a few shots and noted the slightly ragged appearance I moved off to get back to the others while it remained settled.





Feeling chuffed with my initial find I joined the others and sat back and enjoyed a picnic lunch. As I was coming to the end of my I poured a coffee and as if by magic a butterfly appeared (I've never getting rid of this flask). It was an aged Specklie who was intent on watching me almost as much as I was of watching him. He had the signs of wear on him, looking paler with a few ragged edges. Also he had a fine showing of bluey green hair on his thorax like an aging punk.



We then started into the wood itself and I noticed lots of great fungi and also a Brimstone, a few whites and at least four more Specklies in one little area. Further along the path I found a neat Peacock. It flew over my head and back up the path that we had taken but a quick jog and then a stalk saw me relocating it. I don't know if it's the light at this time of year or whether it's the wear but Peacocks seem redder in the autumn whereas in the spring they have a slight purplish tinge, almost maroon? After leaving the Peacock in peace I carried on round stopping every now and again to point something out to my girls and their cousin; a fungus here, a Common Darter and another pair of Specklies.





Having passed the half way mark of the circular route on the sun went in so I focused on the fungi again but also came across a luminous larva - possibly Pale Tussock Moth? Among some nice fungal fruits there were some Fly Agarics with their perfect fairy tale hats. One of them reminded me of Fenella the witch from Chorlton and the Wheelies as it perfectly shaped to be her hat.







At our final stop off when we were almost round sun came back out as did another couple of Specklies. A Red Admiral bombed by not stopping for anyone let alone a butterfly photographer. However another, or possibly the same Peacock (?) from earlier was much more patient hunkered down on some Bracken. I'd actually headed over to this particular clump in the hope of getting some shots of the Hornets that were flying around in good numbers here but also they were too quick for me, a bit like the blooming Red Admiral that refused to stop for even a milli-second. The Peacock however drifted lazily along and then flopped down in the weak sun, extended its wings and soaked up the last rays of sun.





It was a great autumnal family walk and in the end not bad for a day for butterflies, especially when I was expecting so little. By the end of the day after checking on Bob I had 9 species which I think is quite respectable for this time of year. At least that's what I was thinking as I drove home before I started wondering what would be at Larkhill...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 06-Nov-13 11:03 PM GMT

Some excellent images of fungi there, Wurzel. Those Fly Agaric are particularly impressive.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Nov-13 10:34 PM GMT

Cheers David 😊 Even though I've got a backlog of reports the species count is falling drastically and it's getting to that time of year when I photograph anything 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 08-Nov-13 07:05 PM GMT

Wow! Wurzel just had to login to comment on some of your shots which I missed when Houdini and Stanleigh were both very ill. Some of your Small Coppers are really lovely and the aberrant Common Blue with the dew/rain is amazing. I have to tell you tho Wurzel, I have just spotted another of your photos which is just so similar to one in the books previously mentioned. Great minds think alike eh? 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Susie, 08-Nov-13 10:18 PM GMT

Really enjoying your diary, wurzel 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 08-Nov-13 10:50 PM GMT

Excellent photos of both butterflies and the fungi/toadstools etc, Wurzel. Keep them coming. 😊 As always an enjoyable read.

Your ID of the Pale Tussock larva is correct.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 10-Nov-13 09:48 AM GMT

Just catching up on your past couple of posts Wurzel, great reads as usual and love the Small Coppers 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 10-Nov-13 08:49 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

I have to agree with Neil, your Small Coppers on Goldenrod are superb 😊 I am glad you have enough material to keep us going through the darker months, you must have a good memory and full notebook 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 11-Nov-13 04:50 PM GMT

Great Coppers Wurzel, Please keep the Photo's coming Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Nov-13 11:16 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊 I don't know about great minds, I'm not sure I'd qualify for that grouping 😊 – it's purely a fluke 😊

Cheers Susie 😊 Looking forward to the Social 😊 Cheers for the ID confirmation Nick as well as the kind comments – I've got a few more posts left before the well runs dry 😊

Cheers Neil with no November butterflies 😊 it was a good job I got behind on my PD 😊

Cheers Jack 😊 – luckily reading a few scribbled notes seems to bring the memories flooding back mind you it's more difficult after a Hen or two 😊😊

Cheers Goldie I'll try 😊

Larkhill 07-10-2013

Having had good luck on the Sunday I set off to work hoping it would continue at Larkhill but the day started much greyer than before and so the stop off on the way to work yielded nothing. So the day passed and it seemed to pick up weather wise so on the return journey I'd pulled into the car park without even realizing.

Not wanting to muck around I checked out all the patches of Golden Rod that still had viable florets and lower down among the leaves was a White faded and tired and hiding away.



Thinking that would be all I'd see and with time ticking away I made my way back to the car when a little orange blur shot across the path. A Small Copper, possibly one of the pair from the previous week, still hanging in there and still looking in pretty good nick. A few rapid shots were all that I had time for but luckily it sat quite nicely on a dead grass blade even opening its wings once I'd gotten a few closed wing shots.



Shots done I set off homewards. There's a definite feel of things winding down now...
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 12-Nov-13 06:19 PM GMT

Although its winding down, some nice Small Copper shots again Wurzel 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 13-Nov-13 08:09 AM GMT

A lovely shot of the closed wing SC Wurzel – the background really sets it off too.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Nov-13 11:13 PM GMT

Cheers Mike and Pauline for your kind comments 😊

I'll catch up eventually...

Larkhill Thurs 10-10-2013

On a gorgeous Thursday morning I thought it might be worthwhile making a quick stop-off at Larkhill. The weather forecast was for it to get even better but as I was having someone round to look at reversing my stairs I wouldn't be able to stop.

I headed straight to the patch of Golden Rod but there was nothing there so then worked my way along the Golden Rod that lined the car park. I walked backwards and forwards a long it checking and on the third pass something didn't look right. As I leant in I realised that it was a roosting Small Copper and the reason why I hadn't spotted it was its unusual posture. I'm used to seeing them side on head facing down or sticking up like a shark fin but this one was roosting on the horizontal. When I went to take a photo of it I could stand directly over it rather than having to kneel to get to the same level.

As well as the usual closed wing shots I also managed to take a few close up and face on and it reminds me of the bug character voiced by Hugh Laurie in "Monsters vs Aliens".





After a little time with this individual I looked up from the viewfinder and there less than a metre to my right was another. It must have moved out from where it was hiding behind a leaf as it definitely wasn't there on my first few walk-bys. As I took my shots it looked like it was completing its morning stretches. Ablutions over it sat warming in the early morning sun and I couldn't help wondering if either of these were the same individuals that I'd seen on Friday? They certainly seemed more worn than the Coppers from Friday which were pretty fresh and I'm not sure they could get that tired looking over a matter of days?





Checking my watch I realized that I'd already been here for five minutes so shots on the card I took the 6 steps back to the car and then carried on to work. So far it's been a cracker of a year at Larkhill and it's been like the gift that keeps on giving.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Nov-13 12:04 AM GMT

Millbrook 22-10-2013

For almost a fortnight I didn't get a chance to stop off at Larkhill or indeed check out anywhere for butterflies. The weather conspired against me as did work but the main reason was the fact that my niece was rushed to hospital on the day of her 6 week scan as she had serious heart complications. This meant that butterflying went out of the window while we rallied round and supported their family. While my niece was in Southampton Hospital recovering from open heart surgery I dropped my wife off so she could visit her twin and niece but I couldn't go in as the hospital was restricting the number of visitors. Instead I parked close by and took walk around the local area.

Unfortunately the nearest "wild" area was Millbrook Cemetery but not really being superstitious (apart from having a lucky hat) I didn't read anything into it and set off to examine the dead centre of Southampton. As I wandered through the gate a Sparrowhawk circled above so I headed into the cemetery glad to be back in touch with nature as it were.



Then the rain hit and hit hard! Luckily I found a large tree to stand beneath and it kept all the rain away so I could watch as the rain lashed down like a sheet of water, it felt a little like hiding behind a waterfall. As I continued to shelter under a tree a few orangey Moths flitted about avoiding the raindrops and staying even out of Hideandseek stilt range. As the rain eased and the sun came out for a time I carried on round on my way hoping that I might catch a butterfly basking but it wasn't to be until I had almost reached the end of a circuit. Then a Speckled Wood made my day; fluttering by and settling just for me. It was quite pale and faded most noticeably round the creams spots. However it still had a good covering of hair on the thorax giving it the look of being wrapped up ready for winter.



It was soon joined by a Buff-tailed Bumble bee and then various Hoverflies and Wasps by the bucket load as well as a new species of Hoverfly for me. All were hanging around the large Ivy bushes that were dotted around the stones near the entrance of the cemetery. A larger dark butterfly flew by which I guessed was a Peacock.



As I headed back to pick my wife up I reached the car and the heavens opened in another torrential downpour and as I was early I sat in the car with a coffee musing how the rain showers aside it could almost have been early spring with Bees and very few butterflies. It'll be a long time until the spring proper...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

P.S. - my niece is now out of hospital and is back home, screaming and crying like any other 2 month old 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 21-Nov-13 07:31 PM GMT

Glad your niece is ok Wurzel 😊 Like your last shot of the raindrop on the ivy and the lone Specklie.

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Wetton, 22-Nov-13 10:58 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel

The fly looks like a Conopid Fly, not sure of the species but the antennae are joined together indicating a Conopid.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Nov-13 12:03 AM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 It's getting to that time of year when you've got to advantage of any photo opportunity that arises 😊

Cheers for the ID tip Paul I'll have to take a closer look 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Nov-13 11:47 PM GMT

Stourhead 29-10-2013

Back at the end of September we were visited by all my sisters in law and their children. So on one of the days, after The Storm, some of us rendezvoused at Stourhead to enjoy the autumnal glow. I wasn't expecting to see any butterflies but I was looking forward to perhaps a few fungi and the stunning gold, red and orange colours.

We started with the standard circular walk around the lake, past 'Kieras' bridge' and towards the grotto. On the way amongst conversation and watching the kids playing together I found a few things to photograph. A Common Darter was holding territory still by the slow waterfall. We had to abandon the woodland walk as some of the trees had come down across the path. My suggestion of lifting my niece's buggy and climbing over them didn't go down too well mind you she'd only been out of hospital for two days. However, I found a few fungi to photograph including one which looks remarkably like something else 😊. Down nearer to the lake a few more Darters were around but most stayed too far away to get any decent shots. I was just turning to catch up with the others when a gent sitting on the bench asked me if I was trying to photograph the dragonflies, he then pointed to his jeans and there was another Darter resting on his shin. After a few photos I thanked him and caught the rest of the hoard up before they entered the grotto.





What the hell!



As we were walking the second half of the circle a dark butterfly took off from the top of the hedge where it must have been basking for all it was worth in the weak sun and flew across the lake. I couldn't relocate it so wasn't able to get a photo but it served as a reminder to keep my eyes open. And almost immediately I found a caterpillar crawling across the path, which wasn't exactly what I was hoping for but was better than nothing.

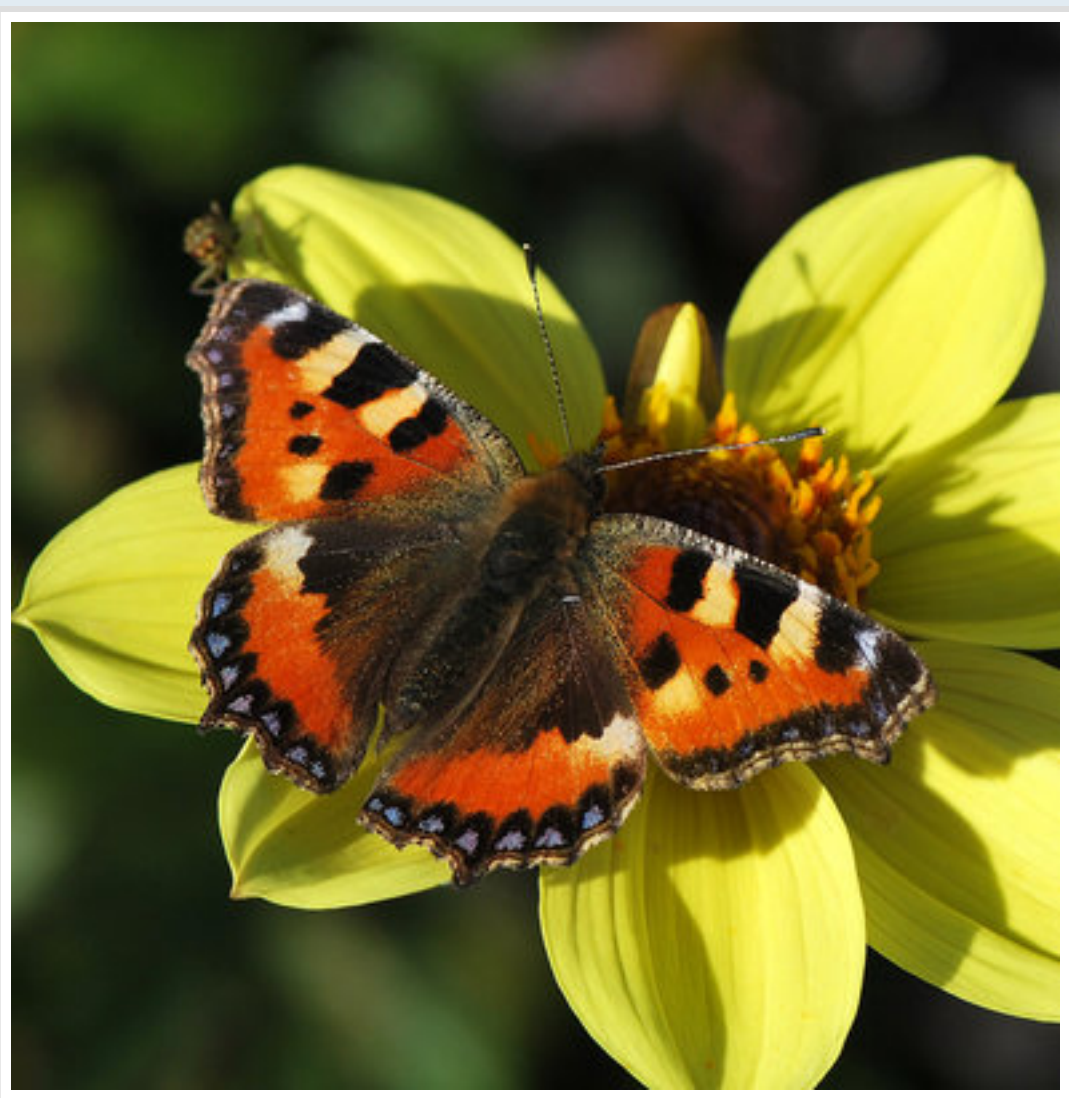


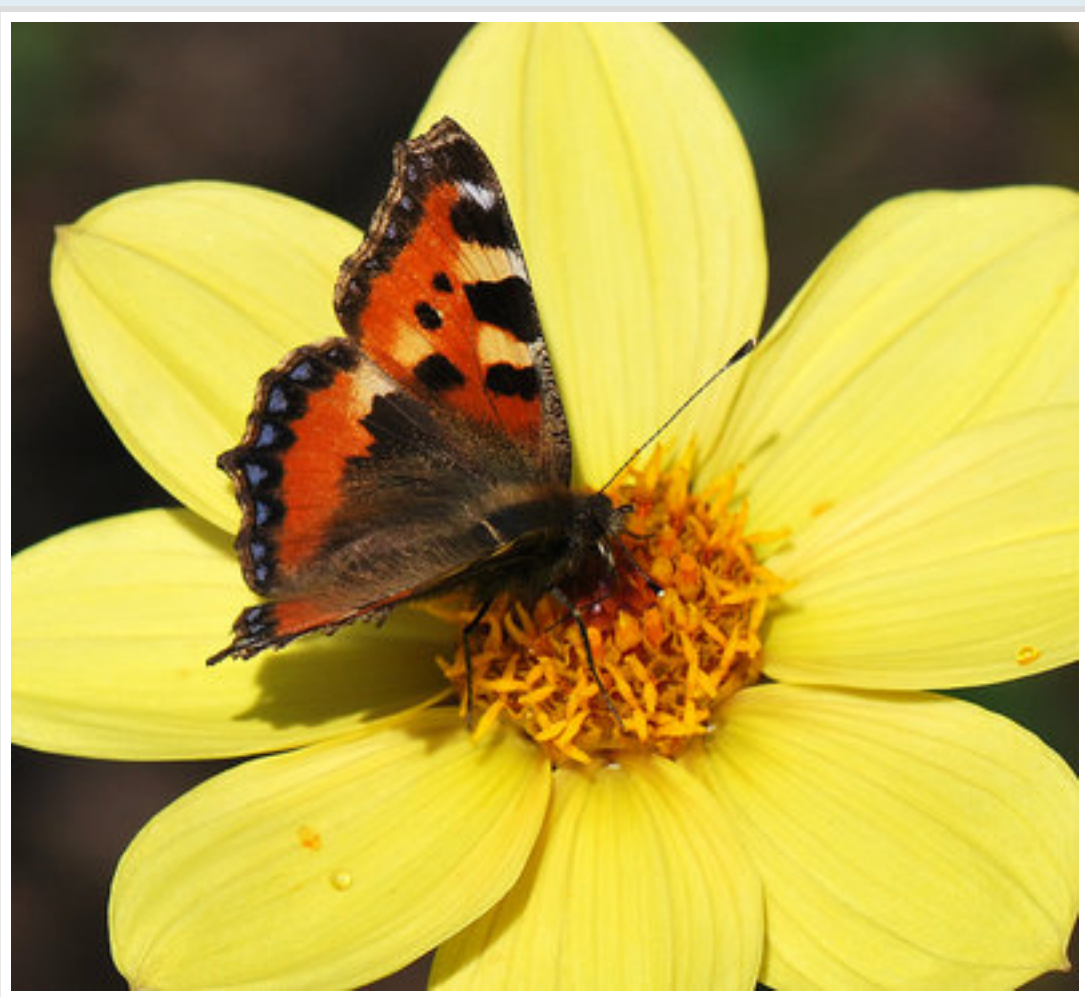
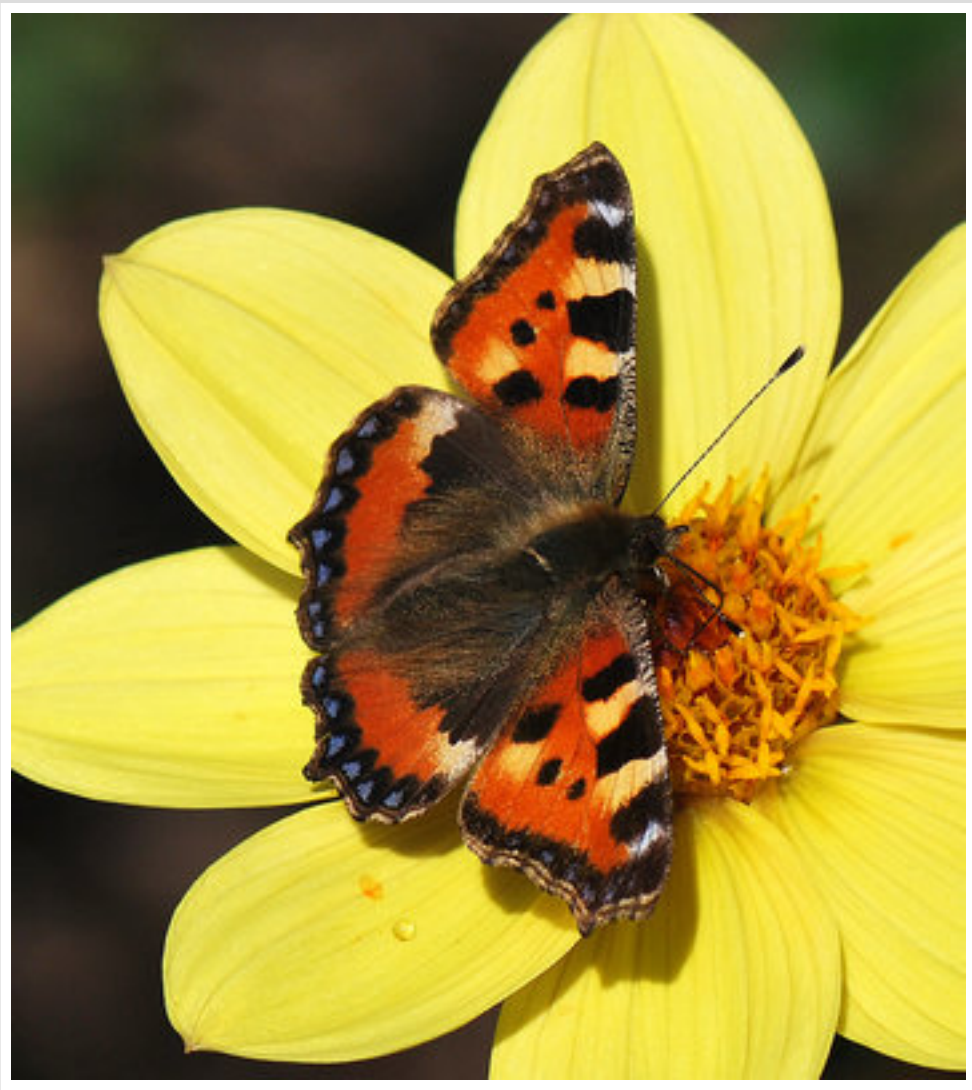
As we walked out of the entrance/exit I noticed a hurdle fence on the bank behind the kiosk. As I looked closer at it something took off as my eyes landed on it but I did see another Red Admiral which landed on the corner of the guest house just long enough for me to raise my camera. When I focused it was gone too. I always thought that butterflies in the autumn were supposed to be more approachable!

After lunch we headed back to the grounds and whilst the rest headed off to climb the hill to Apollo's Tower I checked out the area by the entrance. I asked the lady in the booth and she said I could have a closer look so I climbed up to examine the hurdle fence. There were 3 Commas basking but it was hard work steadying my camera with one hand whilst the other held onto an exposed root - the only thing stopping my going with gravity back down the slope. In the end I managed a few shots of one of the Commas the best of which below.



Then we went to the house and went through the walled garden to get there. At the top terrace I was stopped in my tracks by a gorgeous Small Tortoiseshell, gloriously capturing the afternoon sun as it pirouetted around a lemon coloured flower. I went a bit snap mad as I didn't know when I'd see the like again - possibly not for another 5 months, Bob aside that is.







After an animal search, dressing up, some piano playing and art admiring in the house we headed back to the cars and went our separate ways after a fantastic day 😊.



Last shot of the day

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by False Apollo, 26-Nov-13 07:00 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Particularly loved the Small Tortoiseshell on the lemon yellow flower, nice contrast, and the brown Fungus. That fungus looked so real I thought I could have touched it. Stourhead looks like a great place for a family day out, nice variety of wildlife. Perhaps I can get my family to go there as it is not that far from where I live.

Regards

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 27-Nov-13 09:17 PM GMT

Lovely photos again Wurzel, especially the Small Torts on the yellow flowers, which totally compliments the butterfly. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

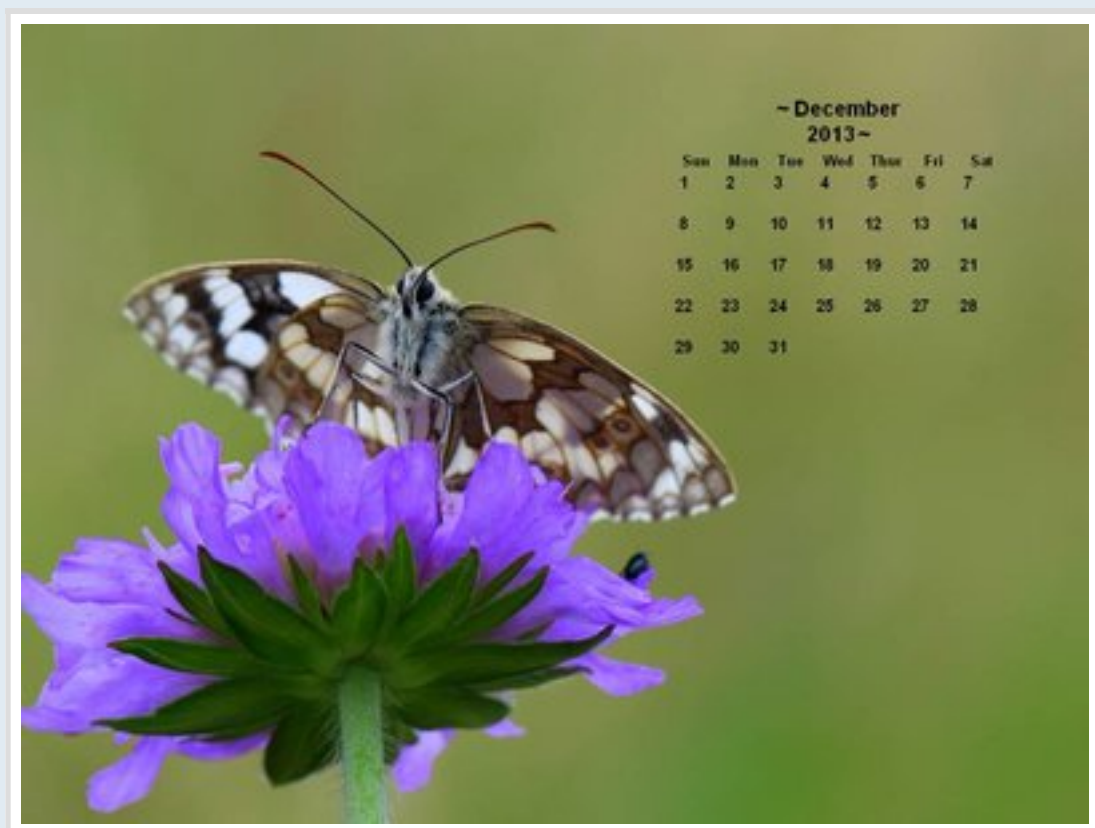
by Wurzel, 01-Dec-13 10:21 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 I can heartily recommend it for a visit as well as Kingston Lacey (a lot nearer to you).

Cheers Nick, I was dead chuffed with those shots, very serendipitous they were, the light was just right and the butterfly was so fresh 😊

December

What with the Social yesterday I got slightly behind and totally missed my December posting...so here it is now, whilst it's still the 1st, Happy Advent!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by False Apollo, 01-Dec-13 11:01 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Yes Kingston Lacey is very near to where I live. I used to warden on the estate a few years ago when I did a summer stint for the National Trust while I was studying countryside management at Kingston Maurward college. Nice to walk around and explore Badbury Rings in the summer, but I spent a lot of time on a Kubota cutting the grass in the main house grounds. Hopefully I can make the next social and meet yourself and other UK Butterflies contributors.

Regards

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 02-Dec-13 08:17 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

I am also loving the series of the Small Tortoiseshell on the yellow flower, great images 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 02-Dec-13 09:23 PM GMT

Keep 'em coming, Wurzel. I'm interested to know what you saw in November!

Re: Wurzel

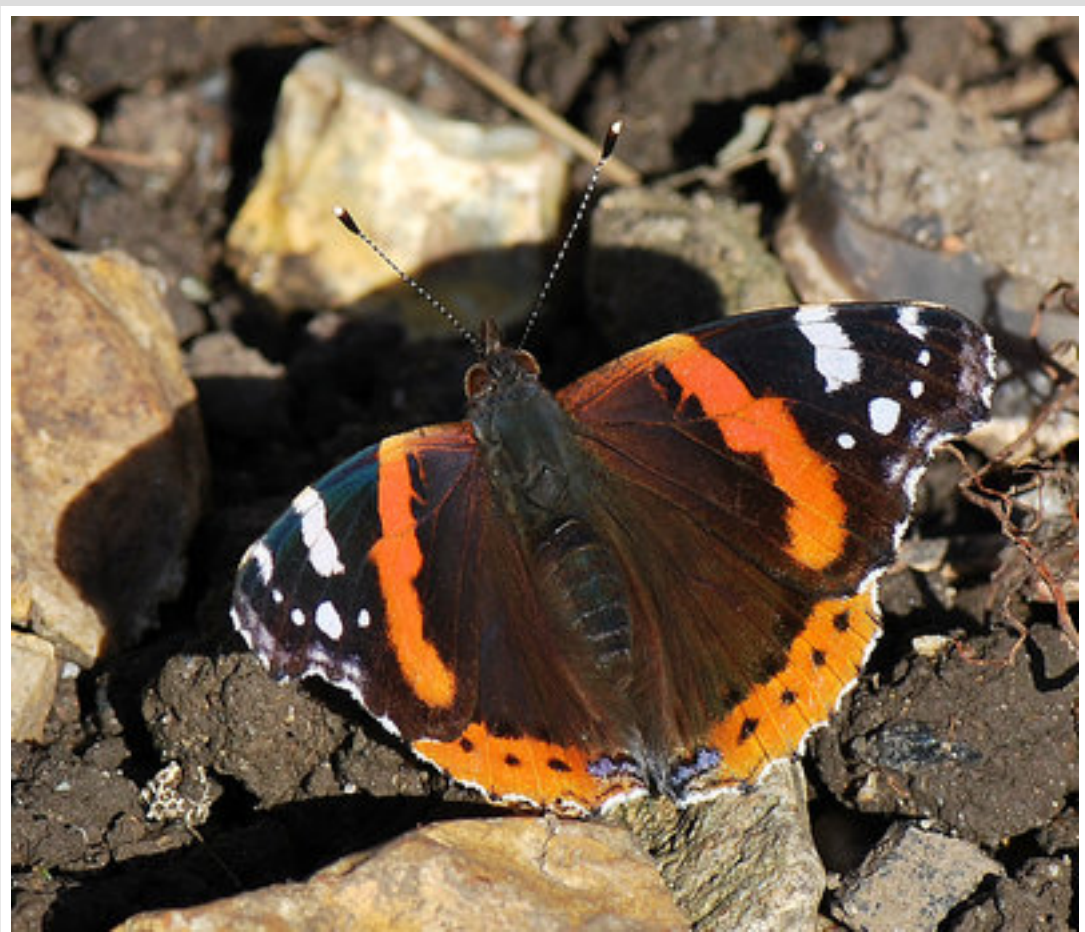
by Wurzel, 03-Dec-13 11:26 PM GMT

Cheers Neil – that shot still cheers me up now 😊

Cheers David but not really that much to tell from November and with this posting I've now caught up 😊 But then there is the retrospectives, the lost posts, Bob, some Moths and Exotics 😊

Quick stop in old garden 30-10-2013

The day before Halloween all the other Sisters In-laws had headed home leaving just my wife's twin and my new niece so we headed round for a visit as my girls wanted to see her now that she was out of hospital and well on the mend. After a catch-up chat and a quick coffee I made my way out to the garden to check the damage wrecked from the storm. Once at the top there was surprisingly little with just the odd twig and what was even more surprising was how many of the apples were still on the tree I'd expected the gales to have stripped it bare. While I was looking over my handiwork from a few weeks previously I saw a Red Admiral basking on the topsoil. It let me approach it and after a few shots it angled itself to catch the sun just right, turning the black wing margins a stunning electric blue.



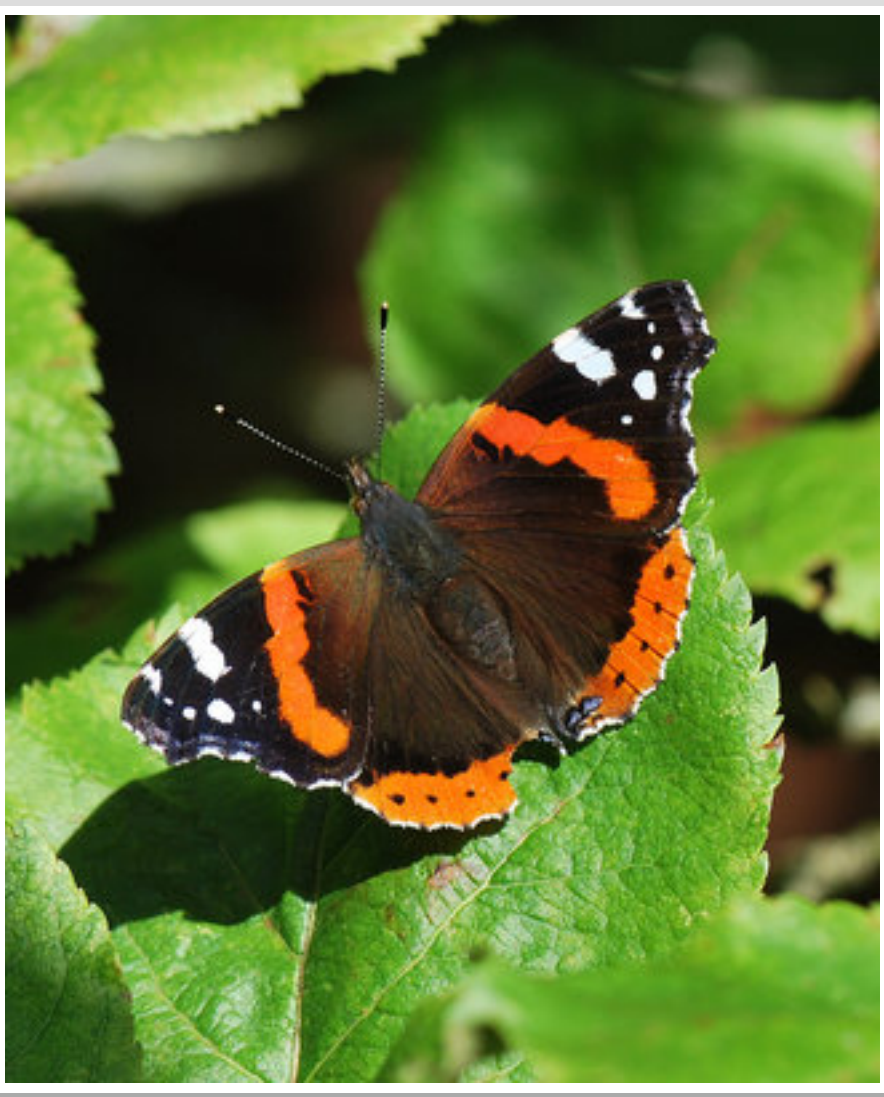
As I left this individual to bask in peace I watched another Red Admiral fly by and land promptly where it started feeding on the windfall apples. This was something I was aware of but I'd not seen for myself before so instead of trying to get closer for some shots I knelt down and watched. It would flutter around about 30 cm high until it caught sight of or smelt a likely apple. Then it would land and with wings open it would tip toe over the top the apple occasionally uncoiling its proboscis and lowering it to the skin of the apple. Eventually it would reach one that had a bruise or a tear and it would settle and start feeding. I took a few shots just as a reminder of the behaviour.



While I was enthralled by this a Brimstone fluttered by, circled and landed in the tree at head height. I couldn't believe my luck. It did seem tired with slightly torn wings but a late October Brimstone isn't to be sneezed at.



While I left yet another butterfly in peace I was visited by another, the third Red Admiral. This one had obviously noted the basking behaviour on the ground of the first, the taking of rotting apples by the second so had decided to do something different. It invited me to a game of hide and seek, never moving from within the branches of the Apple tree, hiding behind leaves and peering out at me every now and again, flying from one branch to another.



Finally as I made my way back down the garden and inside for a coffee the original was still there, basking where I'd left it so I thought I better take a few more shots as this could be my last butterfly of the year.



Despite this nice collection of butterflies it wasn't as good as last year when I recorded a maximum of seven Red Admirals in the garden compared to the three this year. And as it turned out this was the penultimate butterfly of the year (to date) so that final photograph was justified. What to do now for the next four months? I'll have to have a look back over the year I guess... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 04-Dec-13 08:34 PM GMT

Lovely report and photos Wurzel. 😊 I especially like your behaviour shots of the Red Admirals feeding on the windfallen apples, always nice to see something different, great. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 04-Dec-13 10:02 PM GMT

Must admit, I'm still caught up in the maelstrom caused by the passage of time.

Momentarily, my pupils dilate when I see Wurzel's images until I realise they were taken over a month ago!!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Dec-13 10:23 AM GMT

Cheers Nick 😊 I was hoping that they would've been slightly more inebriated as that would have been something I'd not seen before and I was intrigued how it would affect their behaviour- would they just fly erratically or would they become more amorous (I love yoush...hic) or more violent (come on let's have it, I'll batter you!)? 😊

Sorry to trick you David I was almost up to date and then I looked back and discovered some 'lost posts' so when you see Marbled Whites and Common Blues in the next few weeks that'll be why 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Butterfliesaurus rex, 07-Dec-13 04:00 PM GMT

Some lost posts eh! I certainly don't mind being transported back to July or August Wurzel, in fact BRING IT ON! 😊 It's cold and dark outside, your Marbled Whites will feel like some much needed medication 😊

Best

B'saurus

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Dec-13 10:07 PM GMT

Cheers Rex, there's still a couple of kinda catch up posts, more drawing a line under the season, before I reel out the 'Lost Posts' 😊 So I better get started...

Introducing Bob!

Over the summer I trained my girls to inform me when there were moths in the house. We have to leave the bathroom light on so that my younger daughter doesn't get scared and during the summer I took advantage of this and I'd leave the bathroom windows open. This brought in a nice range of moths - almost all of which were new to me. The girls started off excitedly waking me as "there a big green one 😊" but eventually tailed off to "there's another one dad 😊" mentioned in a bored voice.

However at the start of September (the 3rd) I came home to hear off a moth that was "hiding on the ceiling" and not resting in the bathroom and this change of scenery was enough to pique the girls' interest. When I went upstairs I discovered that it wasn't a Moth but a Small Tortoiseshell. At the time I thought it was nice but it would soon fly back out and enjoy the remains of the year before finding somewhere more suitable to hibernate so didn't think anymore about it. A couple of days later it was still there so I took a few photos and from then on I'd say hello in the morning as I'd pass along the corridor beneath him, still thinking that it would find its' way out.



06-09



10-09

It wasn't until the start of October that I realized that it would be here for the duration so I started referring to it as Bob and introduced it to all of our visitors. Bob stayed in the same place all through October and into November but I was slightly worried as the place he was hibernating was shortly to become the top of our stairs as we're reversing them. That being said Bob didn't even budge during the preliminary works...





One Sunday (17th Nov) I realized that what with work on the stairs starting the following week I'd have to bite the bullet and strip the wallpaper from the existing stairwell ready for the fitting and eventual Lime plastering. It was hot work with the steamer cranked to full speed ahead and the steam getting trapped in the stair well. I was just reaching across from the ladder to start on the next section when Bob appeared. He flew across the void and landed close to my shoulder and started to flutter his wings imploringly at me. I was quite touched that Bob had sought me out to help so I dropped down the ladder and grabbed a crème freche pot awaiting recycling, pierced the lid a number of times with a needle and allowed Bob to crawl inside. He seemed quite content to be inside, so much so that I carried him through to the bedroom without the lid on. Once there I secured the lid and popped Bob under a cupboard and when I checked on him 5 minutes later he was calm and settled down and in the same position an hour later. At least here there will be no disturbance, no spiders to worry about (hence the pot) and I can check on him every few days. Hopefully he'll be happy through the winter with us as my girls have always wanted a pet 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 07-Dec-13 11:23 PM GMT

Nice story, Wurzel, but he'll surely not survive in the warm house over the winter, will he?

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Dec-13 07:54 PM GMT

Oh for a warm house David 😞 That's the 'advantage' of living in an old cottage with original sash windows – it's freezing 😱😬 I check on Bob every couple of days and he's still looking very peaceful but should he wake I know a large log store nearby which has a few rooms spare, hopefully he'll be okay.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Jenks, 08-Dec-13 08:51 PM GMT

Great story Wurzel. Reminds me of an episode of Blackadder when Edmund B. falls in love with his "man-servant", Bob, played by a rather delightful young lady (Geraldine Glaister, if my memory is correct). Don't recall her hanging onto any ceilings though.

Jenks.

Re: Wurzel

by Susie, 08-Dec-13 08:56 PM GMT

Lovely story. 😊

Surely living in an old cottage full of spidies your girls have loads of pets already. 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broome, 08-Dec-13 10:55 PM GMT

Great story Wurzel. Keep them coming. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 09-Dec-13 09:17 PM GMT

Another entertaining read Wurzel, great stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

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

Cheers Jenks 😊 It made my night reading your comment as that was why I named him Bob – as I'm not sure what gender Bob actually is 😊

Cheers Susie 😊 Unfortunately despite my best efforts they're not into Spiders 😞 Still my younger daughter adores Woodlice, she's forever smuggling them up to her room and trying to train them 😱😬😬

Cheers Nick and Neil 😊 There are a few 'posts' left yet 😊

A Warning this was written back in November...I did say that I had 'almost' caught up 😊 ...

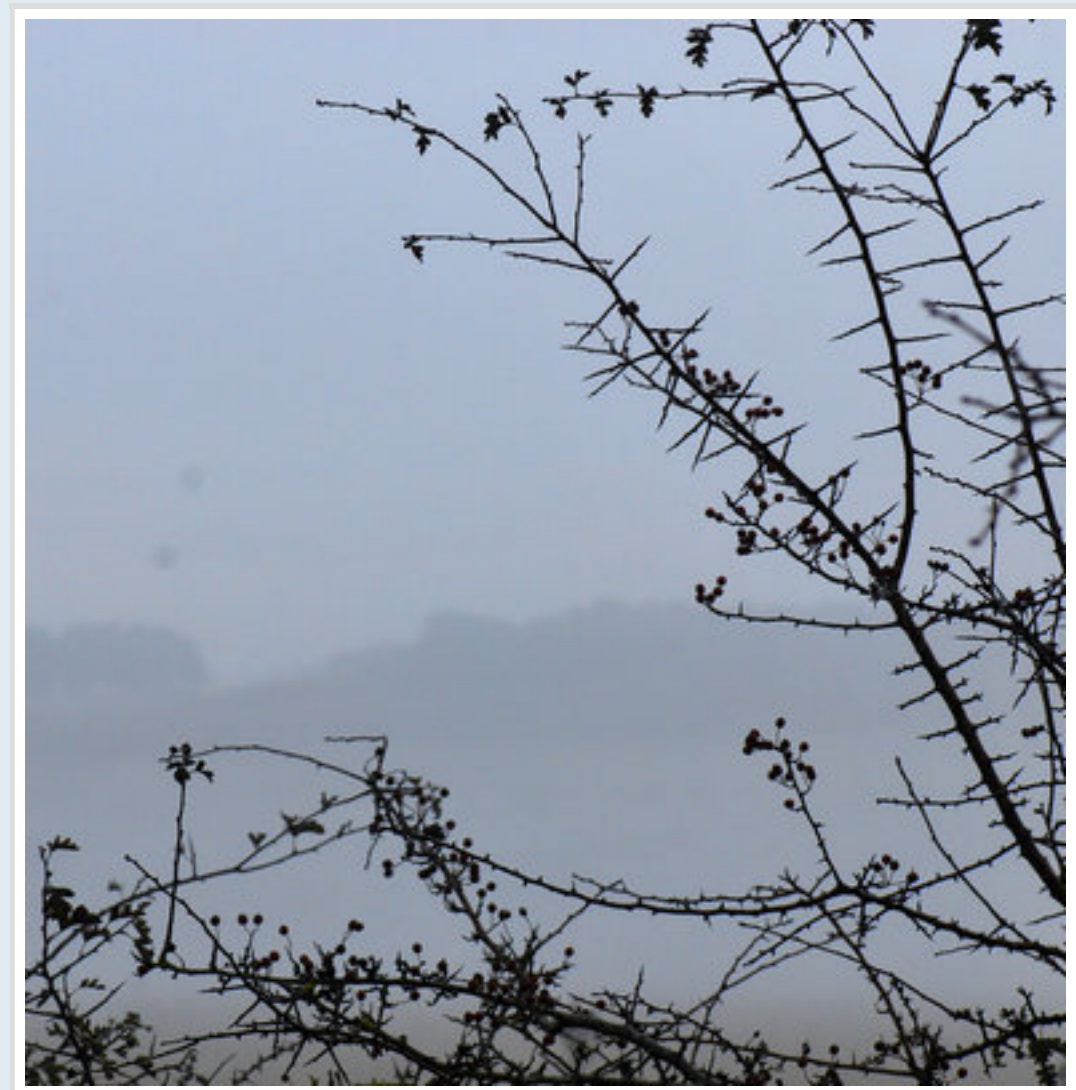
Larkhill...end of the road and looking forward

After my last visit to Larkhill back in October various things kept me from making my stop-offs. I'd have to get to work early to prepare something or stop on the way for petrol and the way home wasn't good either as I'd have to pick my other niece up from nursery or get home early as a plasterer or joiner was coming round to give a quote. Then there was the holiday – a week and half of not working but also a week and a half of not driving by Larkhill. Then there were the wet or windy or cold days. So what with one thing and another I didn't get back to Larkhill in almost a month plus the clocks had changed which meant that it was dusk by the time I could pull off the road.

Eventually fortune favoured me and I made a few morning stop-offs but the season had moved on faster than expected and the golden glow had been replaced with fuzzy mists and crunchy grass. On my first visit the cackling of Fieldfares and 'Tseep-ing' of Redwings overhead made it me feel less than hopeful of seeing any butterflies and so it proved to be. I'm not saying that there aren't any but the first frosts usually herald the final curtain for the season and if there are any then they'd appear at the warmest part of the day when I'm stuck at work.



7-11



8-11



13-11

Despite not seeing any butterflies it felt right and proper, important even, for me to see it through and note the first mists and frosts and if the forecast snow does appear then I'll need to catalogue that too. To cheer myself up from my sombre mood I thought I'd have a look through some of my photos from the season and doing so made me appreciate how great a site this is. It's a lay-by with two paths, one heading north the other west and I only ever walk about 30 metres along either one and yet it's produced a total of 22 species this year. Of those 22 Small Copper, Brown Argus, Grizzled Skipper and Small Blue are new this year and I'm hoping next year to have confirmed Peacocks and Walls and try to add Dark Green Fritillary, Dingy Skipper possibly and dare I say it - Green Hairstreak?

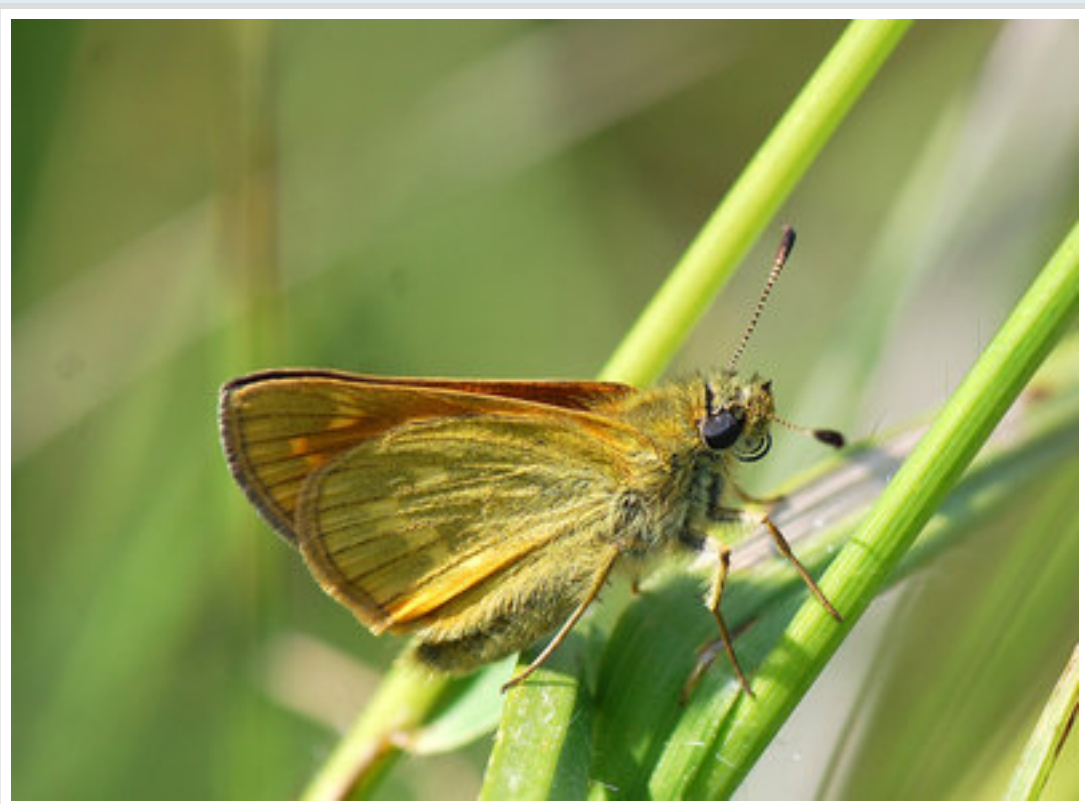
In the meantime here are the 'newbies' and a few of my highlights from my 2013 Larkhill season...

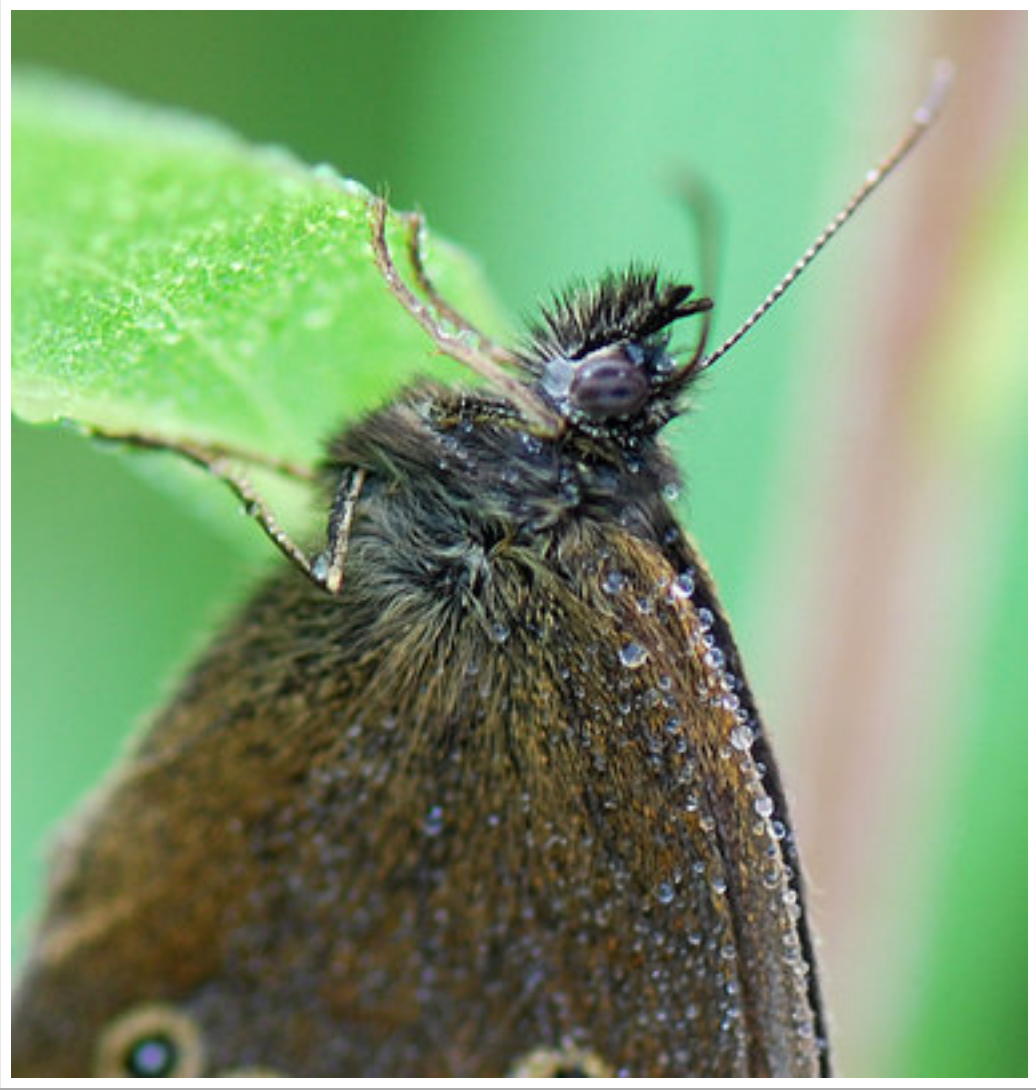
Newbs





Highlights





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 11-Dec-13 12:12 AM GMT

Nice stuff Wurzel, glad 'Bob' is safely tucked up for the winter. Lovely atmospheric winter shots, mists, dew-laden spider webs, etc. Bring on spring, the sooner the better!!

Mike

Re: Wurzel

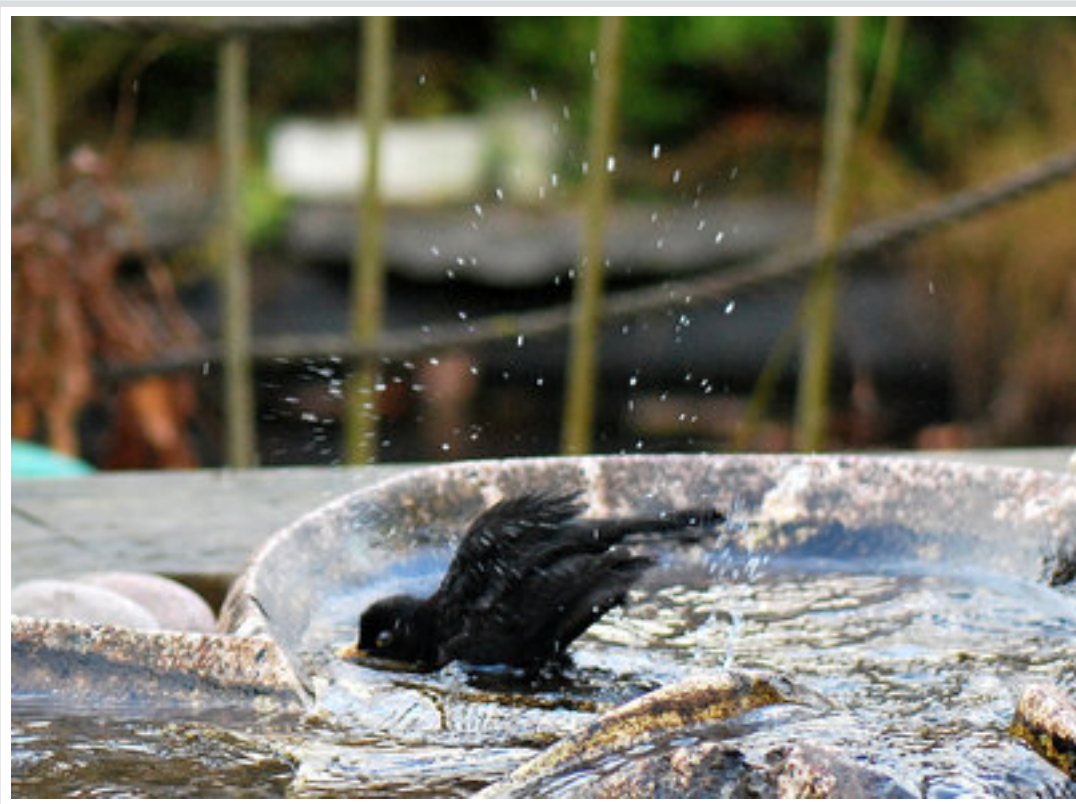
by Wurzel, 13-Dec-13 10:51 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 WRT Spring coming, the sooner the better! I just hope the Spring isn't a slow starter like last year 😊
Waldorf Winter Fayre 07-12-2013

At the weekend we visited our local Waldorf Fayre. It makes a nice change for the children to see stalls packed with wooden toys, handmade jewellery and craft goods. Plus they get to have a go at candle dipping, watch a puppet show as well as visiting King Winter or the Gnome Garden. The nice thing for me is that the grounds of the school are surrounded by woodland with wild areas scattered at the back of the school and a mixture of hedges and trees throughout the site. I'd read about December moths either on the Butterfly Conservation e-zine or from the RSPB so I thought I better take my camera, just in case.

Once the girls had looked around, completed all their activities, played on the swings and climbing frames and eaten a winter picnic lunch (like a normal picnic but you wrap yourself in the blanket instead of sitting on it) we headed over to the Lantern Cafe/shop. While my wife looked around for some little bits and bobs I watched the girls and the wildlife by the pond.

The usual birds were all around ticking and tinkling in the trees with the occasional Nuthatch calls breaking through the soft jingling. The pond during the summer months is a haven for dragonflies and damselflies but now it was gungy and dead but a Blackbird kept me entertained. It was using the 'eternity' pool as a bath, dunking itself in and flicking water over its back, rather it than me as there was a definite nip in the air.



I then got called over to the window as my well trained spotter children had found a moth on the window of the cafe. It wasn't the December Moth I was hoping for but it was a Winter Moth. This hardy little moth flies from November through to January and this was easily identifiable as a male as it had wings. The female has virtually no wings at all, just little hairy stubs and then she climbs up trees to await a visit by a male. I could only get a few photos as a family on the other side of the glass were wondering what I was doing. Once I'd held the camera screen up to the window so they could have a look it was okay but I could see their lunch arriving so I left them in peace. After my 'new' sighting another quickly followed. This time a strange bug and I've no idea what it is but the cold seemed to be playing havoc with it as it was really struggling to keep walking.





Unfortunately my time was up and my presence was requested in the shop so I put my camera away and feeling a few twinges in my wallet headed in...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

PS. Finally caught up 😊 But hang on a minute, I think I missed a few posts out... 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 15-Dec-13 08:11 PM GMT

Love the photos of the Blackbird taking a dunk 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

..... I just hope the Spring isn't a slow starter like last year 😊

I am old enough to remember the winters of 1975 and 1976 that were seemingly never-ending and the good summers that followed, particularly the infamous drought of '76. Last winter was very similar and look at the summer that followed compared with the better springs of the previous few years and the following summers.

I would happily have Spring being a bit late again if it meant a decent summer to follow.

Fingers crossed,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 15-Dec-13 08:22 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

I am old enough to remember the winters of 1975 and 1976 that were seemingly never-ending and the good summers that followed, particularly the infamous drought of '76. Last winter was very similar and look at the summer that followed compared with the better springs of the previous few years and the following summers.

I would happily have Spring being a bit late again if it meant a decent summer to follow.

Quite agree. When I was a child growing up in the 70s, the daffodils never seemed to appear before late March; many a time these days they're out in early February!

I'd happily trade it being cold into early April to guarantee a warm summer!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Dec-13 11:22 PM GMT

Cheers for the comments Neil and David, I'm all for a slightly longer winter as last year and we did have a better summer but it would be nice to start seeing butterflies slightly earlier than last year, things didn't really get going until May (or so it felt) 😞

Lost Posts

Every year there are some visits that I don't post about. Sometimes this is because I don't find my target species or because the weather report is inaccurate. Other times it's because I've observed a similar range of species as on a previous visit to the same site or it could be because during the main part of the season I just don't have enough time to actually sort the photos and write it up. On a few occasions I haven't posted because I've seen too few species or because I only saw the butterfly for a few fleeting glimpses/shots while I was out doing something else.

In other years I leave them alone and once the moment has passed they're dutifully saved and archived. But this year I got so far behind on a few occasions that some got missed out and so for the sake of completeness I've dug them back out and had another look at them. I must remember to do this next season as there were a few nice shots hidden away as well as more than a few fond memories that came flowing back as I was writing them.

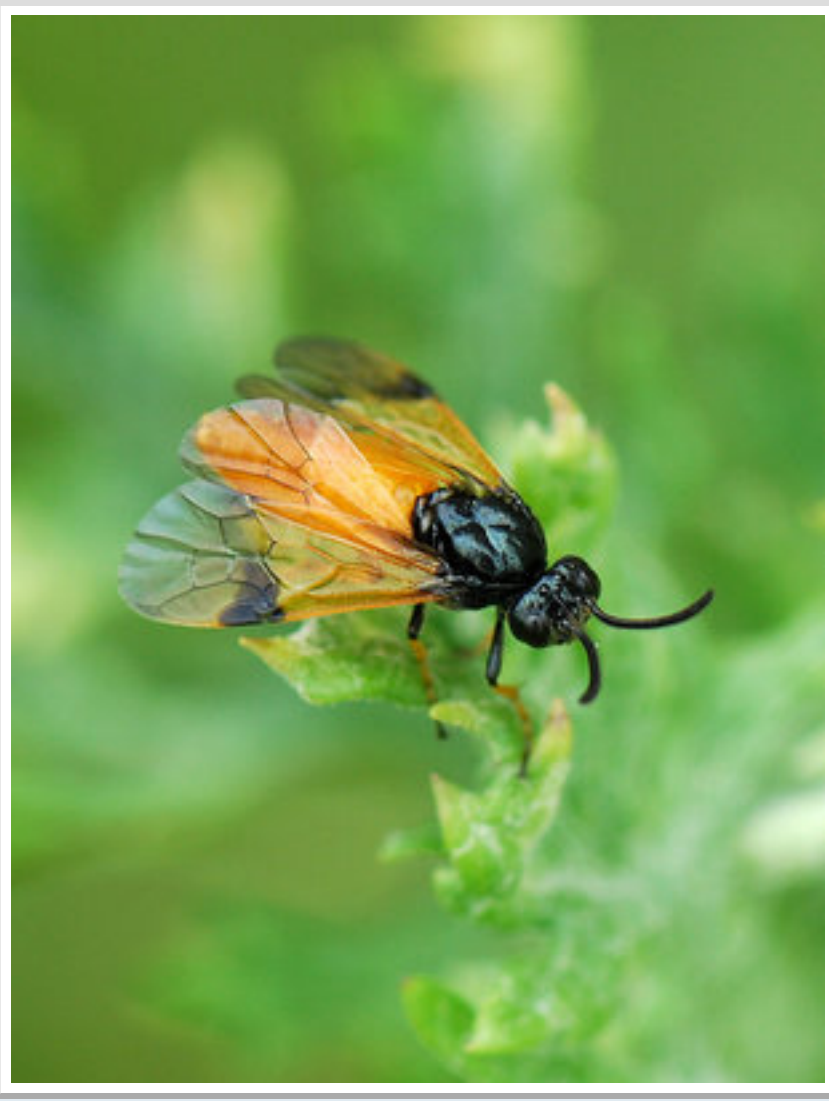
The first was way back at the end of June. After a failed trip for Glanvilles to the Isle of Black I headed out with my older daughter to a mainland site. It was just warm enough with only light winds but I was concerned that as we set off on the walk to the site the sun was hidden by thickset clouds. No matter, I knew that they had been seen here a week or so previously and I was enjoying my daughter chatting away on almost every topic imaginable. Once we got there I set up Base Camp for my daughter so I could make a few forays within ear shot. It was only when I got home that I discovered what had kept her occupied as I had an endless series of videos and photos on my iPod!

I'd visited this site before so I set about walking the paths around the small field where I's seen them previously. This was seriously trampled – in some places almost flat so I restricted my efforts t around the margins of the path as well as peering over the tops of the grasses looking out for any ginger jobbies.

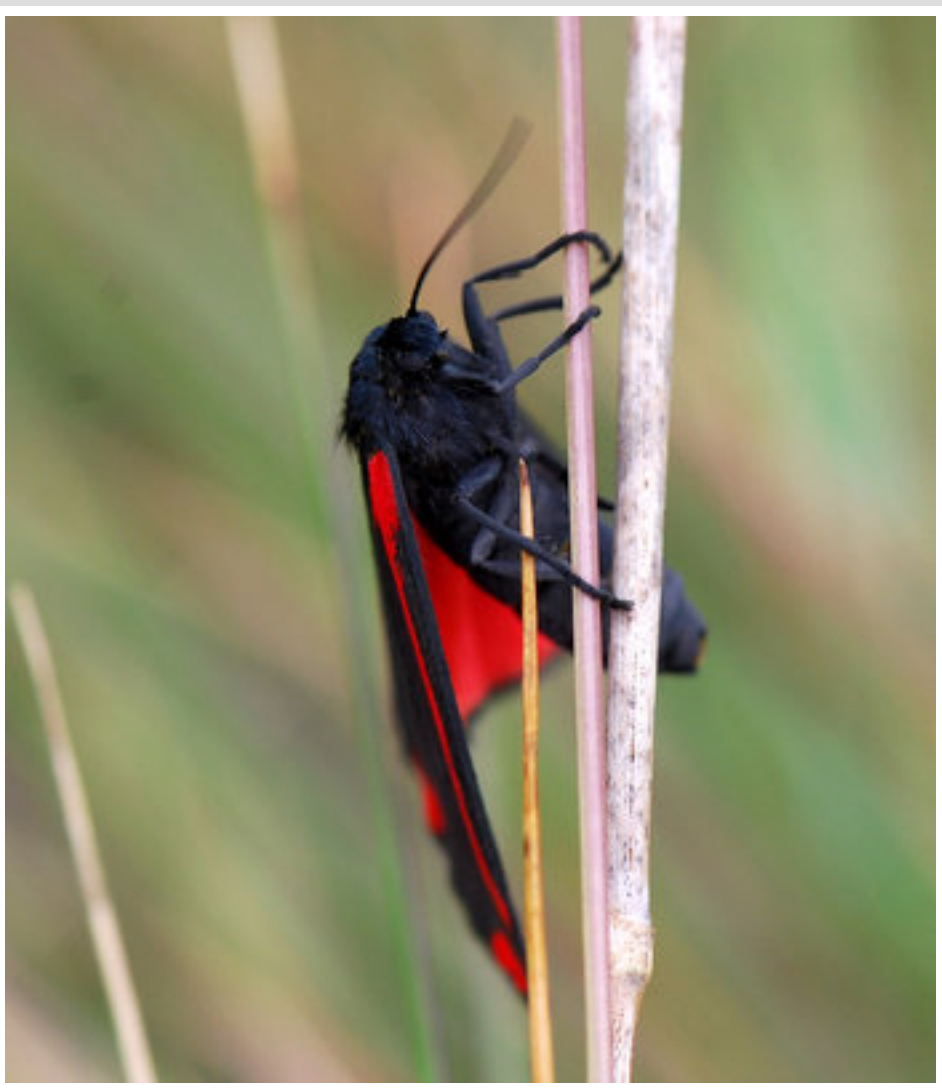
Unfortunately for me the cloud didn't burn off, the wind picked up slightly and I realized I'd left it too late. Over the course of the morning despite plenty of leg work doing endless circuits of the 'hot spots' I saw only two species of butterfly, a Small Heath and a worn male Common Blue and only one of these stayed still long enough to be photographed.

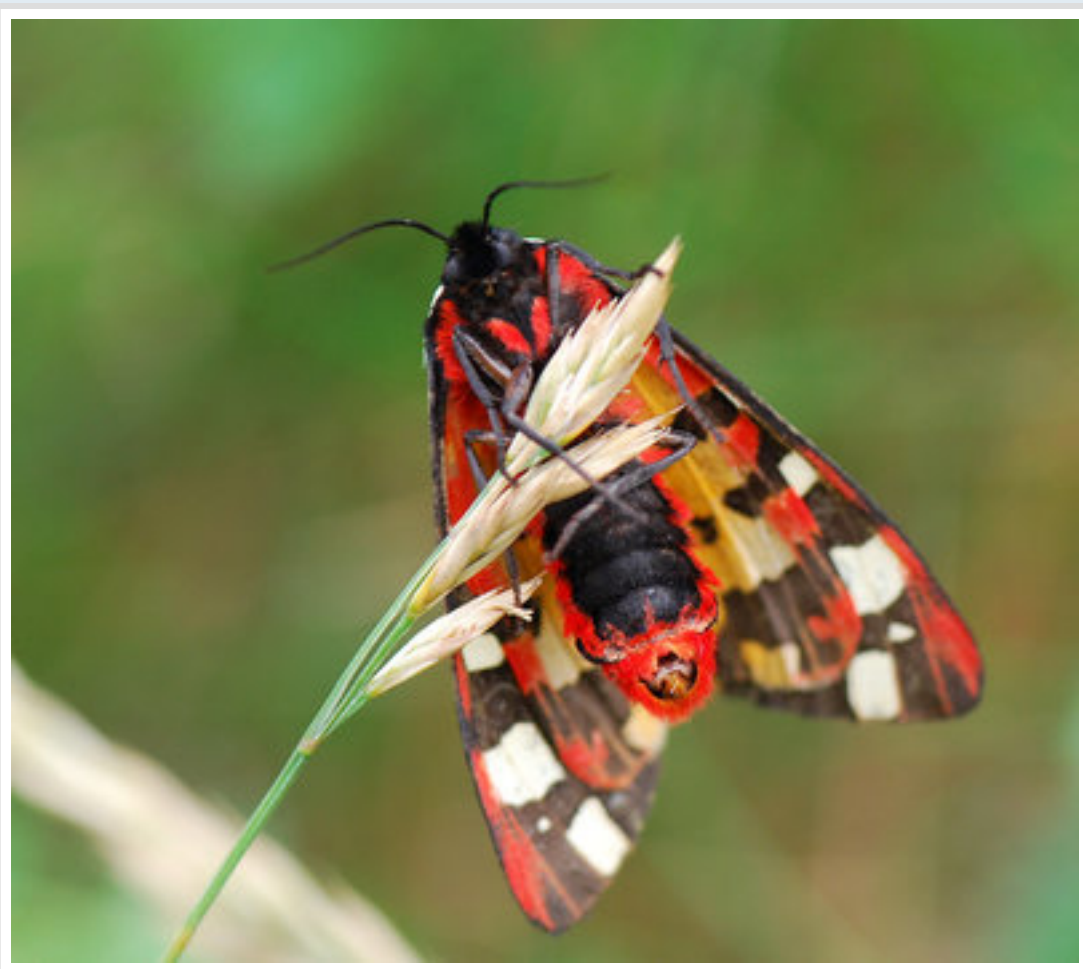
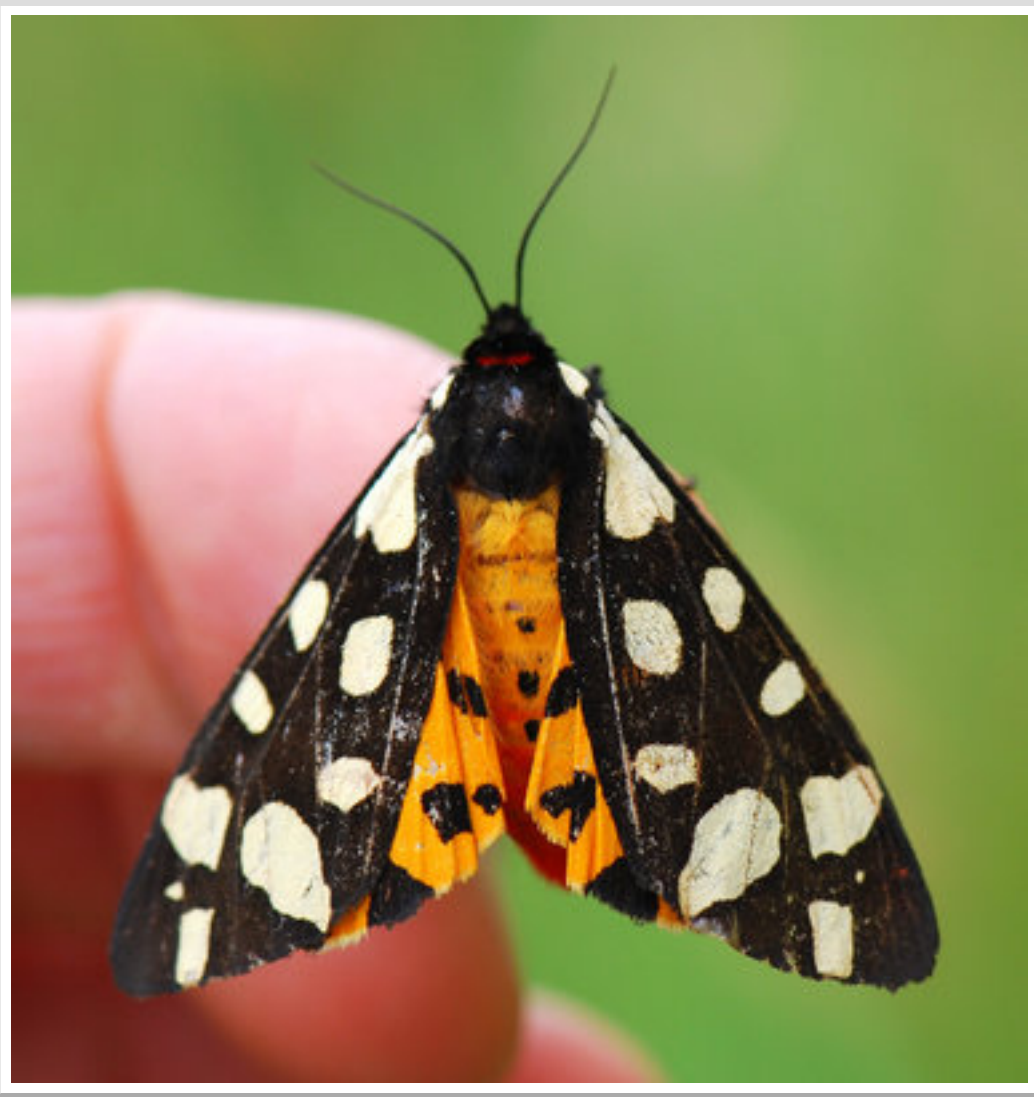


That being said there were other things of interest around including a nice looking fly, various pipits and waders and unknown caterpillar.



There were also a few moths and these offered the best photo opportunities as well as adding a bit of 'wow' to the day. Around the banks and ditches the grasses were crawling with Cinnabars whilst the taller and drier grasses on the flat were preferred by Cream Spot Tigers. There was a LBJ which had very narrow wings and which I think is a Rush Veneer(?) a migrant and with the benefit of hindsight a possible taster of things to come?





Eventually we made the long walk back to the car, my daughter chatting away just as much as before and the time I spent with her more than made up for missing my target species.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 17-Dec-13 06:24 PM GMT

Lovely photos in your last few posts, Wurzel. I think your choice of photos depicting the end of the butterfly season are just great, 😊 from the Fieldfare on the Hawthorn to the frost covered berries, excellent. And i still think your Common Blue covered in dew drops is brilliant. 😊 Your larva is that of a Brown Tail moth.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Dec-13 10:34 PM GMT

Cheers for your very kind comments Nick 😊 And thanks for the ID I can add that to my Moth Collection along side my adult Yellow Tail 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by ChrisC, 19-Dec-13 08:44 PM GMT

mystery bug looks like one of the bigger aphids, mystery fly is a sawfly for a place to start.

Chris

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Dec-13 10:28 PM GMT

Cheers for the ID's Chris 😊 I didn't know that Aphids came that big 😲 Vince ID'd the fly as a Large Rose Sawfly in a PM so your starting place was a good one 😊

Lost Post 2 - Woodhenge again...

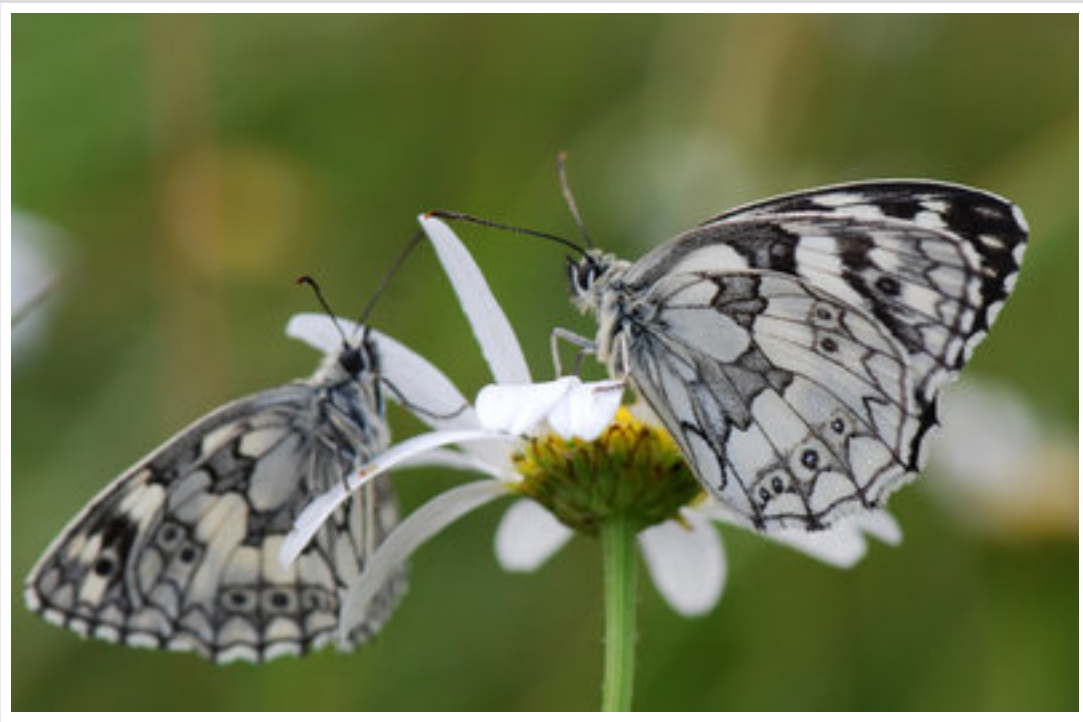
This post was originally sorted back in July. The problem was I was also stopping off at Larkhill pretty much every day and so much of what I saw on this stop-off I'd already reported several times. It felt like I was posting 'another Ringlet' and 'another Marbled White' so I didn't want to be too repetitive. O a previous visit here I'd been lucky enough to find drizzle bedecked butterflies and Golden Skippers before that but on this brief morning visit it was fine and quite warm. So I tried my luck and looked out for something new, to no avail.

I'm glad that I did go back and check through these photos because amongst them were some showing the butterflies in different postures and positions from what I previously photographed. For instance I managed some group shots of Marbled Whites as well as finding one individual that was holding its fore wings back over its hind wings looking a little like a Bat or a Moth.

The most enjoyable to watch was another Marbled White which would flutter just over the tops of the grass and then would drop down like a stone. Once in the grasses it would shimmy up like a Pirate, leg over leg until it reached the top. Then it would repeat the cycle.

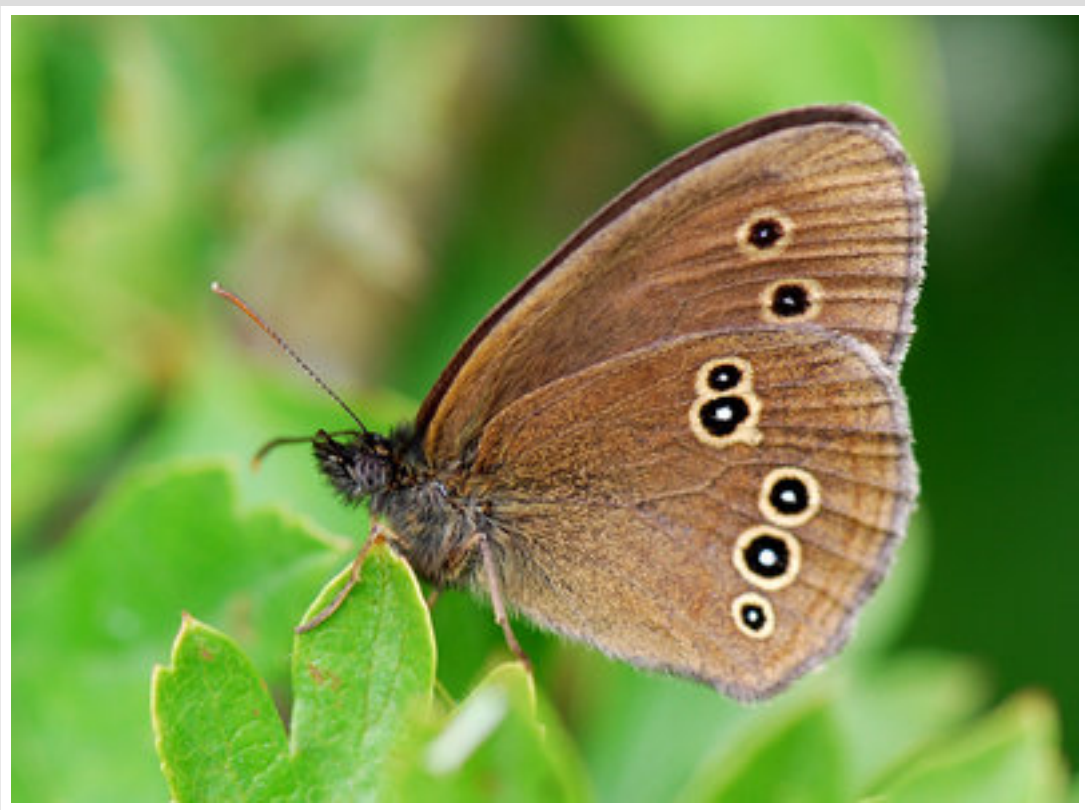


Climb that rope Pirate style...



Over on the other side of the field by the spinney the slightly more scrub like vegetation held good numbers of Ringlets. Most were very annoying. I would spot one and then it would be gone, up into the trees to hide behind the leaves disappearing from view. As the time ticked by I was worried that I wouldn't connect and they would all follow the same pattern of behaviour. However on my final attempt at an approach it flew lower into tree and I managed to spy it nestled amongst the leaves. It seemed to suss out that it had been rumbled and promptly came back on to some of the outer leaves into the warming sun.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 22-Dec-13 05:48 PM GMT

Lovely photos Wurzel 😊 The Cream Spot Tiger is a beautiful moth.

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 22-Dec-13 08:31 PM GMT

You seem to have an inexhaustible supply of great photos Wurzel, I agree with Mike fantastic Cream Spot Tiger shots there. Anyway Keep em coming your helping me to get through the winter 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 22-Dec-13 09:12 PM GMT

Ditto on the Cream Spot tiger shots, a species I have yet to see.

As other have said, keep 'em coming 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Dec-13 11:46 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 It certainly is a cracking species 😎

Cheers Rex (Ni) and Neil for your kind comments 😊 There are still a few more posts in the vaults of my hard drive 😊 Speaking of which...

Lost Post 3 – Corfe Castle

Way back in the distant summer I took my family back to my homeland, the forever beautiful Dorset, and we camped at our favourite site on the Isle of Purbeck. During our stay I photographed some fantastic moths (another post or two in the bank 😊), we visited Studland and Lulworth which threw up some cracking butterflies and I was also able to find a small un-mown area which served as my 'away from home local patch'. Because of the splendid array of species I saw and photographed the shots from the final day fell further and further down the pecking order. Our trip was quickly followed by another one to West Wales and the outlaws at Ffos-y-ffin and so this report then got lost, submerged by my passion for Small Coppers and my obsession for Hedge Browns.

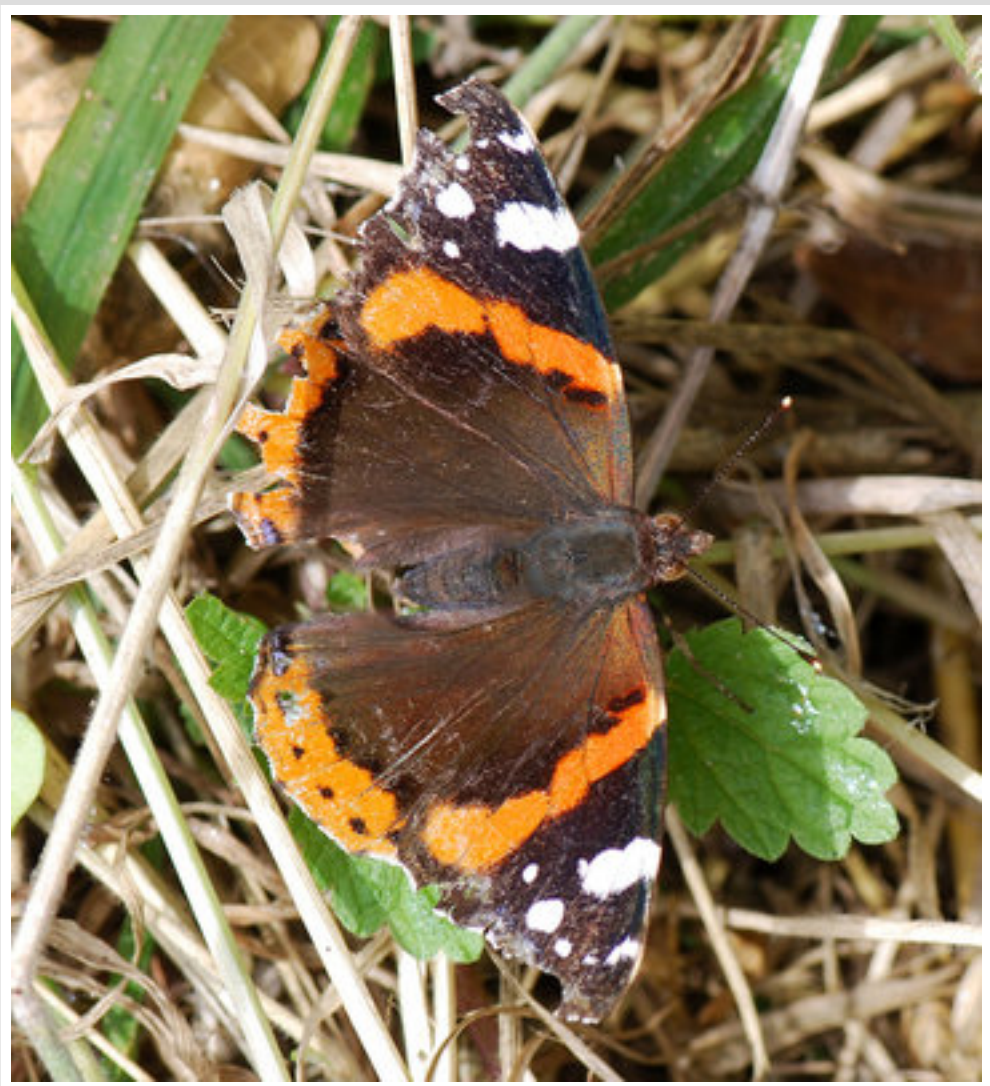
It was only when I started clearing up my hard drive, doing the winter cleaning, that I stumbled over it and memories of the day came flooding back so I thought I better finish the job I started back in August...

Having taken advantage of some free Wi-Fi the day before we saw that the weather was going to be showery and blustery so with the tent still dry from the night before we ate breakfast quickly and were packed and ready to go by 10am. Soon the girls were waving goodbye to the friends they'd made and we bounced down the track and then onto Corfe Castle. The path from the car park at the bottom of the hill winds through a small wood, crosses the river (perfect for paddling) and then ascends up and round to the main gate. On the way up I noted a few whites and a pair of Specklies but I knew that the girls would stop for a paddle on the way back so we continued to the castle.

Once inside we sat down on the grass and ate lunch watching Knight School and sparks flying from the Smithy that had a small forge going and then we made our way to the Keep. The girls love this place; looking in all the nooks and crannies, waving at serfs on the road below, completing the trail; but today it was 'Witches and Princesses'. I had to feel sorry for my older daughter who kept getting locked in a tower by my younger daughter, and man was she scary! 😱 I sat in the shelter from the wind and dozed in the sun as they played until something creamy/tangerine shot by like a brushfire fairytale.

"Possibly a Painted Lady?" I thought which roused me from daze so I had a mooch around. The Lady was long gone but I did find a Red Admiral which

looked tired and was crawling into some shelter from the wind amidst the battlements. It looks a bit battered and I couldn't work out if the damage had been received from surviving day in day out for some time or whether it was new and occurred on its recent journey here? Whatever the reason it was a welcome sight as this year they seemed well down in numbers.



With the girls all played out we made our way back down from the Keep and the path, with a Large Skipper frustratingly staying on the wrong side of the fence on the way down. Still once we reached the bridge and the river the girls kicked their shoes off and started some serious paddling. My younger daughter always tries to find the deepest spot slowly wading and testing the depth with her toes until inevitably she ends up with wet knees, thighs and knickers. My older daughter likes to build dams so once they'd started their respective activities I slipped away. Within a few steps I stopped as I was in a lush glade where I was able to watch a pair of Specklies fighting. They'd spiral up together locked in battle until they'd reach a break in the trees and then they'd be lost from sight in the dazzle. A Green Veined White fluttered delicately about looking ethereal amongst the lush greens and was joined briefly by a male Small White. I just loved the colours as it was all so verdant, so unlike the khaki greens of summer when the grasses are just on the turn. I was soon joined by a Specklie, one of the original fighting pair possibly? This one seemed much more settled (or was that just knackered?) so I managed a few quick shots.



“Mummy I’ve got wet shorts” rang up the river...the cue to head home! 😊😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Have a fantastic Christmas everyone!

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 24-Dec-13 10:01 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Must admit, when we were in Dorset we went past Corfe Castle a few times, both in the car and on the Steam Railway, but never got around to stopping off there. There are some lovely view of it as you approach on the train.

One for the next visit 😊

Hope you and the family have a fantastic Christmas,
Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Dec-13 11:00 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 I hope you and yours had a great one 😊

With the lunch eaten, the wrapping paper cleared away and all the Lego built (and then rebuilt once the girls were in bed 😊) I was at a loss what to do so back to those Lost Posts...

The Park

My last few 'Lost Posts' have covered a few of the reasons for not posting – missing the target , just being more of the same and having other more interesting reports from around the same time. This one represents the 'too fleeting an observation' reason for not posting...

During the main part of season I take my camera with me pretty much everywhere. On my trips to and from work it's hung around the headrest of the passenger seat, at work it's placed on my desk and when I leave the house it's tucked away in my MMAAANNNNbag.

On one of my family trips to town we stopped off on the way home so the girls could visit the small park which is nestled between a bend in the river. As I pushed the swing I scanned across the brambles and other assorted foliage that bordered the park amongst the hoverflies and bees a spied a Comma fluttering around amongst the prickles and the flowers. Luckily my daughter wanted to try something else so I was relieved from swing duty and then scissor kicked my way over the low fence. Having located the Comma I was chuffed that it was so nicely poised so I fired off a few shots before it moved on to start nectaring. This meant that the underside was nicely exposed so I could get a glimpse of the bark like surface with the lime dots and chevrons along the margins of the wings.

All too briefly I was called away from my revelry and put back on swing shift but for those few fleeting moments I was away, relaxed and totally absorbed for what had felt like an age. When I got back and checked the shots I realised that I'd been away for 2 minutes at most!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Dec-13 11:40 PM GMT

Break Duty

This 'Lost Post' was formulated during my break on my duty day back in mid September. I have to walk round the various different zones at work to make sure that the staff are all present and correct and then I have to walk a circuit off the premises and down to the local shop as well as checking out a few notable places where I know the smokers hide. It's very satisfying to be there just round the corner straining my ears for the rasp of a match or flint, waiting for the first long, slow exhale and then leaping out and demanding they head "Down the corridor for smoking and being off site!". This really cheers me up and helps me get through the day 😊

On previous outings I have noticed a large patch of Ivy and the weather report suggested that it would be warm and dry with some sun peeping through just before I was due to step out. So I took my camera along hoping for Red Admirals or possibly a Small Tort or late Peacock. However this post encompasses almost all of the reasons for not posting:

- The weather report was totally wrong, not a glimpse of sun, cool and damp, not exactly ideal for butterflies.
- I missed my target species.
- At around the same time I was finding Blues and Coppers at Larkhill and there were a lot of Whites around so it felt like 'more of the same'
- The views I got were fleeting and brief and of only two species as I had to get back to work.

So when I got home I looked through my photos, selected those for the bin, those to keep and those to do something with. Then the folder went into the archive. It was only when I went back over them recently that I realized that there were a couple of shots that I liked so I dragged them out.



I'm looking forward to next year when I think I'll have to have a closer examination of this area and the neighbouring allotments, once I've caught the smokers of course! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel