

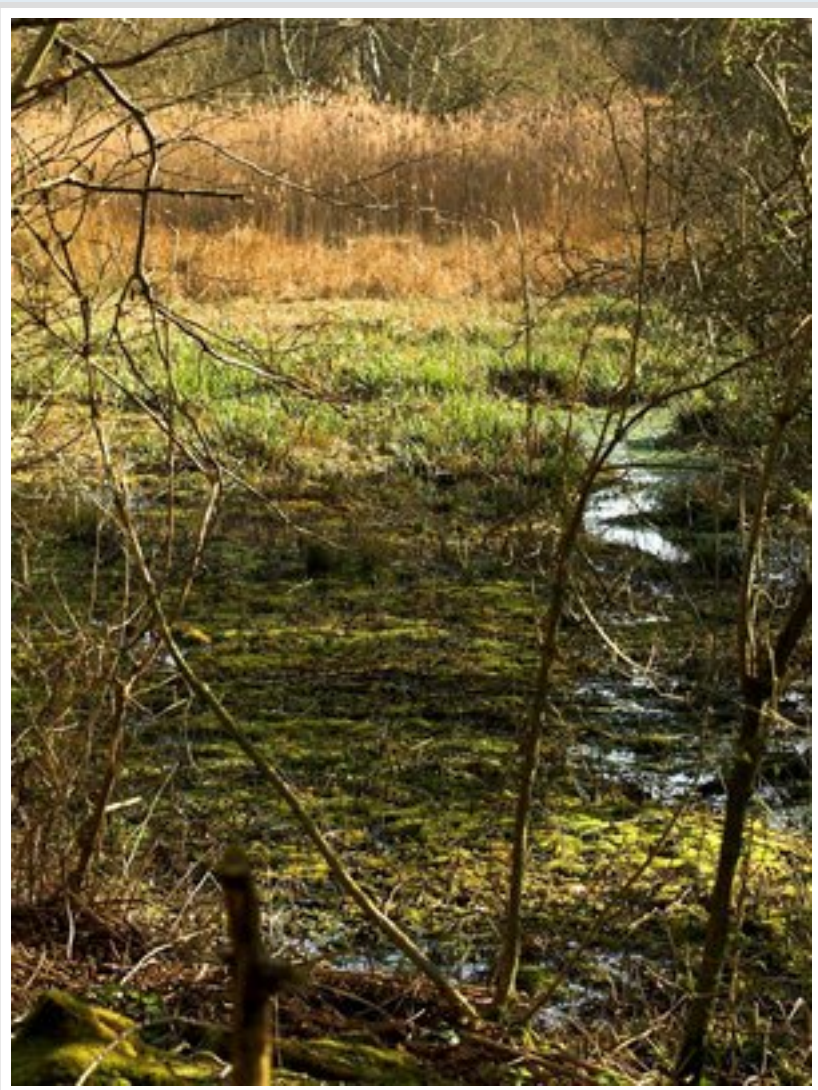
## MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 10-Mar-14 12:18 AM GMT

Although I have been contributing to the forums for a while, I have not previously started a personal diary, mainly because I have my own website and this seemed enough. I'm finding now that posting yet more photos of well-known butterflies has a declining appeal and so I have decided to try the diary format, to see how a new 'butterfly year' pans out.

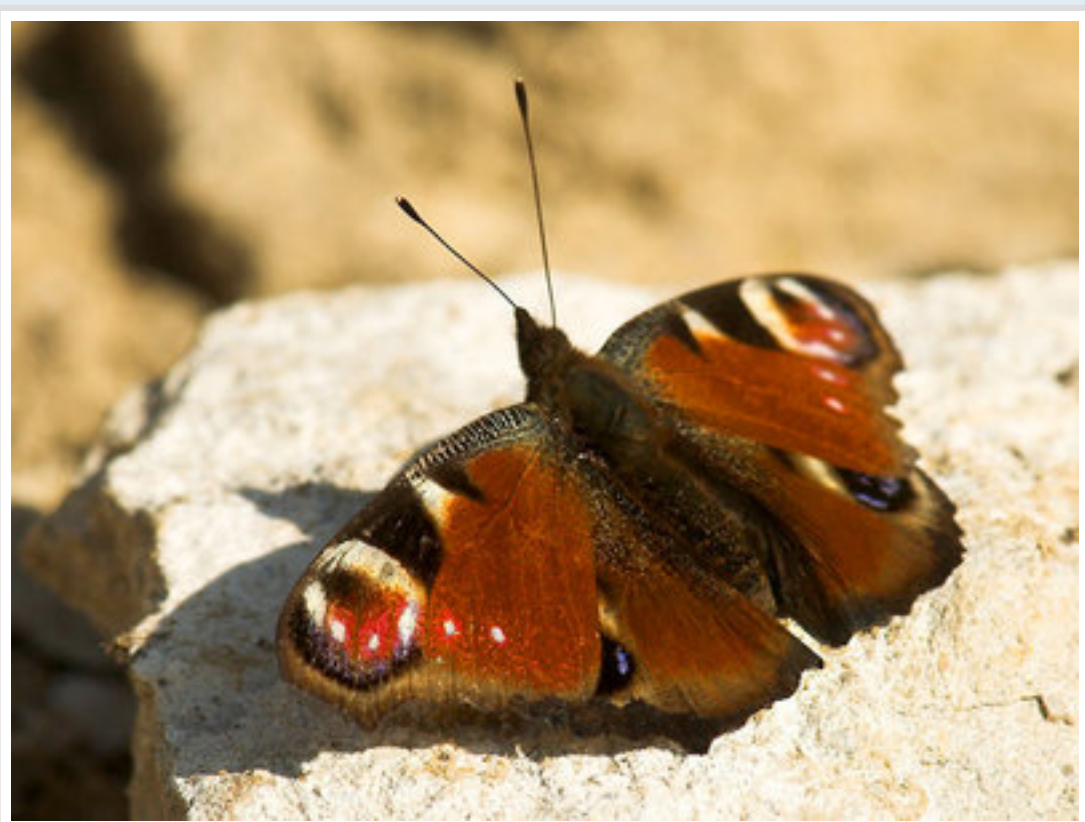
I always find this time of year amazing – one moment it's Winter – cold, gloomy, damp days and early nights – and then, seemingly so suddenly, the evenings are lighter and the sun appears again. Of course, there is still plenty of time for spells of really cold weather but, nevertheless, the mood is definitely upbeat!

Last year, I was fortunate to see and photograph, in early March, five species at one of my local reserves – Dry Sandford Pit, near the village of Cothill between Oxford and Abingdon. It is one of a small cluster of reserves, which share an unusual alkaline fen habitat that produces a range of interesting flora and fauna. See <http://www.bbowt.org.uk/reserves/dry-sandford-pit> for more info.



*Dry Sandford Pit – the open fen*

So, with the onset of warm, sunny weather, I made my first trip of the year to Dry Sandford this afternoon (9th March). At first, it seemed very quiet and I scanned the warm-coloured sandstone quarry face in vain but, early in the afternoon, a coolish breeze dropped and suddenly, there were Peacocks and Brimstones basking on the warm stones or patrolling the length of the low cliff.



*Peacock – Dry Sandford Pit – 9th March 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4+1.4XTC– 1/500s@f/11 ISO400*

I walked to a small patch of Primroses that were providing nectar for several visiting Brimstones.



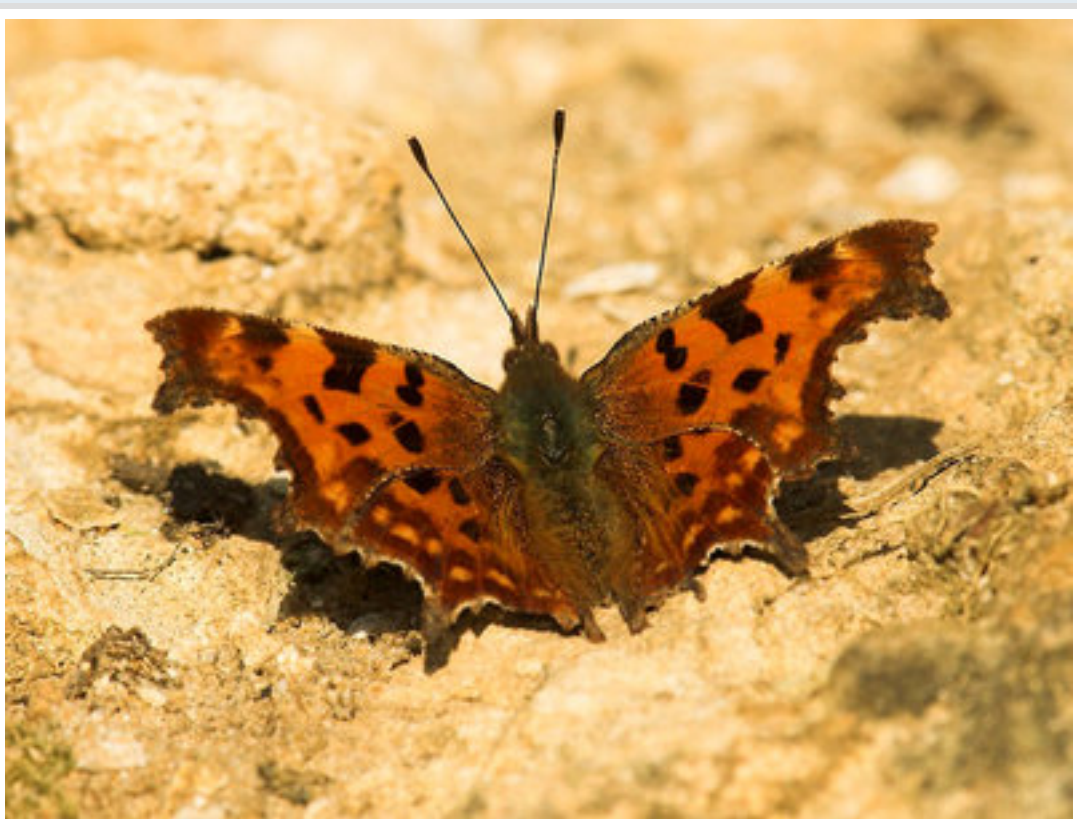
*Brimstone – Dry Sandford Pit – 9th March 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4+1.4XTC- 1/250s@f/9.5 ISO400*

One Brimstone seemed to be having trouble with its proboscis and settled on a leaf for some time, cleaning it. Suddenly, all was well again and it took off in an instant to resume its search for females – of which I saw none at the Pit, although there were some in my garden this morning.



*Brimstone Proboscis – Dry Sandford Pit – 9th March 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4+1.4XTC- 1/250s@f/13 ISO400*

Returning to the cliff, there was now much more aerial activity with, at one time, a foursome of Commas and Peacocks sparring in the air, before going their separate ways to bask on the rocks.



*Comma – Dry Sandford Pit – 9th March 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4+1.4XTC- 1/500s@f/13 ISO400*

Then, at last, I found a Small Tortoiseshell, which seemed to prefer the more vegetated parts of the cliff face and was far more difficult to spot, when it landed, than the other Vanessids, which liked bare sandstone.



*Small Tortoiseshell – Dry Sandford Pit – 9th March 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4+1.4XTC- 1/180s@f/11 ISO400*

The bright sun on the rock made exposure difficult, so I was using spot metering for many of my shots, I find that most species are very easily disturbed at this time of year, so I used a telephoto lens rather than attempting to get close enough for macro shots. In fact, I find that my Nikon 300mm f/4 lens, with a 1.4X converter attached, provides remarkably good detail, even when the photos are cropped to show details (as in the Brimstone proboscis example)

Only four species this year (missing Red Admiral cf.2013) but still a very satisfying start to the year 😊

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by William, 10-Mar-14 08:09 AM GMT

That Brimstone feeding on Primrose is lovely Mike – a real spring shot, one that I would love to get 😊😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 10-Mar-14 08:28 AM GMT

Lovely close-up of the Brimstone Mike. Looking forward to seeing many more of your splendid photos.

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 10-Mar-14 11:45 AM GMT

Thank you for commenting, **William** and **Pauline**. I must try experimenting a bit more with my photography and also explore the earlier stages of the life-cycle.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Neil Freeman, 10-Mar-14 09:39 PM GMT

Great start to your diary Mike with some lovely photos 😊

Looking forward to see what you post as the season progresses.

Neil.

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 11-Mar-14 12:28 AM GMT

Glad to see you've taken the plunge and started a PD 😊  
Looking forward to seeing some more posts.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 16-Mar-14 09:09 PM GMT

Thank you for your kind remarks, **nfream** and **Wurzel**.

It's been a beautiful sunny weekend in Oxon so, yesterday afternoon (Saturday 15th), I decided to take a walk on Otmoor, just North of Oxford.

Otmoor is a fascinating place – an unexpected wetland in the heart of Oxfordshire. It was drained in the early 19th century and became a patchwork of fields that are supposed to have inspired the chess-board in 'Alice Through the Looking Glass'. More recently, this idea inspired opponents to the M40 motorway, which was planned to cut across the moor. A field (called Alice's Meadow) was bought and sold off in small lots, to create a huge complex of compensation claims that would all have to be considered individually! In the end, the M40 was re-routed and Otmoor was saved; a large part of it is now an RSPB reserve and the large reed-beds have returned.



*Oddington Church from Otmoor, Oxon*

Unfortunately, yesterday, there was a cool wind blowing across the moor, which was sufficient to suppress the butterflies. I only saw a single Peacock, which was flying low in the shelter of one of the drainage channels. On the other hand, I heard the evocative call of a Curlew and managed to get a photo as it flew past:



*Curlew, Otmoor – 15th March 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 + 1.4X TC – 1/500s@f/6.7 ISO400*

Although the butterflies were lying low, a Chiffchaff was loudly announcing the arrival of Spring from a branch over the Roman Road that cuts across the moor.



*Chiffchaff, Otmoor – 15th March 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 + 1.4X TC – 1/750s@f/5.6 ISO400*

Today, Sunday, I stayed at home, enjoying sunshine in the garden. Several Brimstones passed through, including a pair (M&F) circling around each other, though they didn't stop in my garden. There were also several Peacocks passing through but none paused for their portrait!

Mike

**Re: MikeOxon**

by David M, 17-Mar-14 04:01 PM GMT

Great shot of the curlew, Mike. Nice image too of the Chiffchaff. We heard this bird's call whilst doing scrub management at Alun Valley in Glamorgan on Sunday, but none of us could locate the bird itself. 😞

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 17-Mar-14 04:29 PM GMT

I'm pleased you like the shots, **David M**.

My 300f4 lens has a focus range switch, which allows selection of either the full range (down to 1.4m) or just the distant range (>3m), where the AF is much faster. When I am hoping for butterflies, I set the full range so, when the Curlew suddenly appeared, the AF was too slow to grab it. Fortunately, after I had switched range, the bird returned, so I got my shot after all! It doesn't happen like that very often 😊

The Chiffchaff also needed some field-craft, since it was ahead of me on the track and directly into the sun, when I first spotted it. I walked very slowly along the path, keeping my eyes down and hoping not to flush it, then, when it was behind me, I turned and managed just this one shot before it decided it did not like the look of me! The ruffled nape is evidence of the fairly strong wind that was blowing across the moor.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 19-Mar-14 07:56 AM GMT

I'm in awe of your bird photos Mike as I still struggle with mine. Lovely Chiffchaff which is a bird I've often heard but never seen.

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 19-Mar-14 12:53 PM GMT

Thank you **Pauline**. Early Spring, before the leaves are out, is the best time to see Chiffchaffs. They often sing from a high exposed branch but, I agree, they are often surprisingly difficult to spot.

I think bird photography is an area where the DSLR with a fast AF lens really comes into its own. I had no success at all before digital and have a better rate with my D300s / 300f4 combination. than with my older D70. The AF is now lightning fast and tracks a moving bird. Combined with a shooting rate of nearly 8 frames per second, it almost makes the job easy 😊

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Maximus, 25-Mar-14 08:08 PM GMT

Great start to your PD Mike, some splendid images already. I particularly like the Otmoor landscape and bird shots, very nice Chiffchaff photo.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 31-Mar-14 10:44 PM GMT

It was a glorious day of sunshine on Saturday (29th) at the RHS Wisley garden, where we had gone for the Orchid Show – what astonishing variety is to be found in the plant world! The Alpine House is also looking excellent at present, as are the Camellias and Magnolias on Battleston Hill.. Not surprisingly, there were plenty of Brimstones and Peacocks out in the sunshine. In the Glasshouse, I saw just one deceased reminder of the Butterfly event earlier in the year:



With fine weather continuing on Sunday (30th), I paid a visit to my local BBOWT nature reserve at Dry Sandford Pit. Spring was firmly in the air, with plenty of Catkins on the trees and Primroses and Violets in profusion.



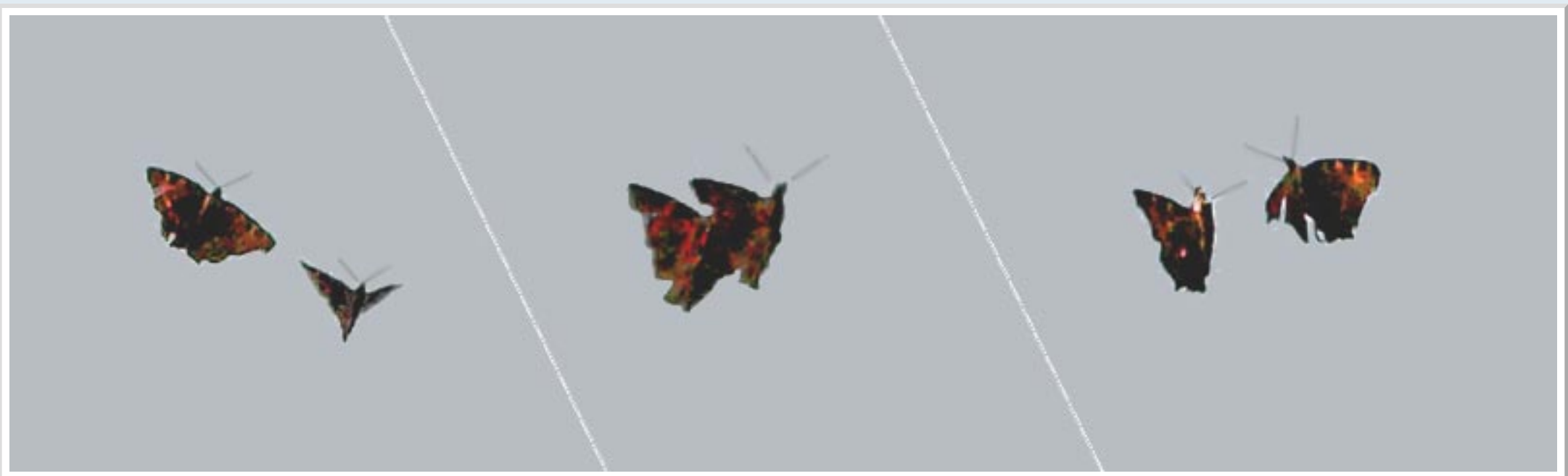
*Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon*

Let's hope that the Violets augur well for Fritillaries later in the year!



*Bank of Violets - Dry Sandford*

I took several photos of Brimstones, Peacocks, and Small Tortoiseshells at this site, many in excellent condition, presumably as a result of a mild Winter. I've decided to have a go at taking photos of butterflies in flight, so practised on some of the Peacocks that were spiralling overhead. It's not easy to keep them within the frame and in focus, and my attempts were not very successful. It's interesting to see how close the encounters can be; possibly, these are the source of some of the wing damage that is often seen.



*Peacocks sparring - 30th March 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR zoom - 1/750s@f/9.5 ISO400*

The camera settings were a mistake, as I had left the aperture that I'd been using for close-up shots. I generally use aperture-priority mode and should have set the aperture wide open, to secure the fastest possible shutter speed. No matter how automated the camera, the photographer still has to remember to make appropriate choices 😊

Butterflies in flight are especially difficult, because of their erratic, rapid flight. I had much more success with some Hover Flies which, although much smaller, do stay in the same place for short periods. I was interested to see the way they sometimes held their legs outstretched in a cluster. Is this, perhaps, a way of stabilising their flight during the hover?



*Hover Fly – 30th March 2014 Nikon D300s with 70–300VR – 1/3000s@f/5.6 ISO400*

Perhaps someone can identify the species from this photo?

Mike

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by Padfield, 31-Mar-14 11:14 PM GMT

Interesting experiment, Mike – and I think the flight pictures are great!

I can't ID the hoverfly – but yes, hoverflies do often appear in crystal-clear focus in mid-air in butterfly photographs. They are much more obliging flight subjects because they take the trouble to pose for one!

Guy

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by robpartridge, 01-Apr-14 08:36 AM GMT

Hello Mike,

I like the flight shots and will be having a go at that. It's useful to see habitats as well, as a change from basking butterflies!

Rob

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 02-Apr-14 04:58 PM GMT

After several good days, the weather locally has turned very dull, plus a liberal sprinkling of Saharan dust over the cars! In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the local butterflies seem to have taken cover!

I was very pleased, however, to be able to photograph, once again, the leucistic Starling that has been visiting our garden for several years.



*Leucistic Starling, Abingdon – 2nd April 2014 Nikon D300s with 70–300VR zoom (through window) – 1/500s@f/8 ISO800*

This story started for me when I spotted a young, pure white Starling on a neighbour's roof on 8th October 2008. A year passed and I saw nothing more of the bird until, suddenly, on 9th September 2009, something unusual caught my eye and I looked out of my window towards the garden bird feeders to see, once again, a pure white Starling! 2011 marked a major milestone in her life since, towards the end of May, she appeared at my feeders with two offspring, both normally coloured. She was back at the garden feeders in May 2012, with a new brood of two offspring and it was during that Summer that she posed for my favourite photo of her.



*Starling with young, Abingdon - 14th May 2012 Nikon D300s with 300/4 lens + 1.4X TC - 1/750s@f/5.6 ISO 400*

She returned again to my garden last year to breed successfully but I did not see her again after 28th May 2013 although I had received one or two reports of sightings, from around the local area. Then, she paid a fleeting visit on 12th February, this year. Over the last few days, she has, once again, become a regular visitor, so I am hoping she may breed successfully again in her sixth year.

She has certainly proved that, despite being 'different', she could survive and succeed in fulfilling her role within the Starling community! There are more photos of her on the 'Birds' pages of my website at <http://home.btconnect.com/mike.flemming/birds2.htm> and on some later pages

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by robpartridge, 02-Apr-14 05:15 PM GMT

An amazing bird and an amazing story,

Rob

### Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 02-Apr-14 05:18 PM GMT

Have you got room for another visitor for a couple of weeks Mike? 😊 I know I have seen some of these shots before but they still amaze me and it is something I would love to see. The closest I have ever got was some years ago with this Crow (please feel free to delete)



### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 02-Apr-14 06:02 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Thank you for showing me your photo. I believe that Crows and Blackbirds do show some white fairly frequently but, from my web searches, it seems very uncommon in Starlings. What I find so amazing is how, with such a 'different' appearance, she has survived and proved such a successful breeding bird. When I had not seen her at all since last May, I thought that perhaps her time was up. It's hard to explain how delighted both my wife and I were to see her again 😊

Mike



**Re: MikeOxon**

by Neil Hulme, 02-Apr-14 07:04 PM GMT

Hi Mike,  
That's a remarkable bird and an excellent image of it with its youngster.  
BWs, Neil

**Re: MikeOxon**

by Lee Hurrell, 02-Apr-14 10:51 PM GMT

What a lovely story, Mike. Great photos too!

It reminds me of my English classes at secondary school when I used to watch and sketch a family of partly white crows that lived a group of large trees in the school fields. My English didn't suffer, thankfully.

I also used to see a Blackbird with one white outer tail feather most mornings when I lived in Kent. I remember reading around that time that recent research had shown that people think they see the same Blackbird(s) each day but mostly they were just passing through. I knew this one was local!

Keep up the good work.

Best wishes,

Lee

**Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 06-Apr-14 09:38 PM GMT

Still not the weather for butterflies locally. Today was dull and drizzly but, by way of compensation, there was a beautiful Red-necked Grebe in full breeding plumage on my local Farmoor reservoir, this afternoon.



*RNGrebe, Farmoor res. Oxon - 6th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 + 1.4X TC - 1/500s@f/6.7 ISO800*

Mike

**Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 09-Apr-14 10:35 PM GMT

The weather was looking considerably better in Oxon today. While I returned to Farmoor Reservoir for another look at the beautiful Red-necked Grebe in full breeding plumage, I also noted several Peacock butterflies ranging over the grassy banks of the reservoir.

A surprise came this evening, as I went to put out the wheelie bins for collection tomorrow. A Peacock was roosting on the vertical side of the bin. I placed the bin in a sheltered position by the hedge at the front of the house and hope the butterfly will wake early enough tomorrow to escape 'the early bird'.



*Roosting Peacock, Abingdon - 9th April 2014 Lumix TZ25 - fl=13mm, 1/60s@f/4.7 with flash*

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 11-Apr-14 06:12 PM GMT

Since I decided to start this blog, there seems to have been rather a dearth of butterflies locally. Yesterday was especially frustrating, as I set off to explore the Roman Road on the Southern edge of Otmoor in glorious warm sunshine.



*'Roman Road' Otmoor, Oxon*

This track, which starts adjacent to the entrance to the RSPB Reserve, provides a wonderful sheltered habitat for butterflies, dragonflies, and several species of warblers; indeed it is known locally as 'warbler alley'. At the far end, as seen in the photo, is the 'forbidding gate', which I have mentioned in a previous post at [viewtopic.php?f=16&t=5917&p=54337#p54334](http://viewtopic.php?f=16&t=5917&p=54337#p54334)

When I arrived, I could see good numbers of Brimstones, Orange Tips, Peacocks, and Small Tortoiseshells, all patrolling the length of the ride but then, within minutes, the clouds rolled in and they all disappeared!

I had to content myself with the songs of Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, and a trio of Blackcaps making a great noise as they chased each other along the hedgerows. At one stage, I spotted a couple of Peacocks in a tussle overhead but, unfortunately, an alert Chaffinch also spotted them and took one. The only photo I managed to get was of a Speckled Wood, grounded in the suddenly cool air. Not a great photo but my first sighting of the species this season.



*Otmoor, Oxon - 10th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 + 1.4X TC - 1/350s@f/5.6 ISO800*

I was expecting a repeat of the same today, as it was a glorious morning but I had a lunchtime appointment! Fortunately, however, although it became much cloudier, there were still some good sunny spells into the afternoon. This time, I decided to visit my nearest reserve, at Dry Sandford Pit. It was cloudy when I arrived but then the sun broke through and the quarry face was soon being patrolled by all the expected species. They all seemed to be in perpetual motion but then I found their feeding station, where an Orange Tip paused for my first photo of the year.



*Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon - 11th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR zoom - 1/500s@f/5.6 ISO800*

When the sun disappeared again, I had my eye on an OT so was able to find its roost, which provided a few more photo opportunities.



*Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon - 11th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 - 1/750s@f/5.6 ISO800*

This time the cloud was quite extensive, so I moved in for a closer look at the underside scales. Although these appear greenish from a distance, a close view shows that they are, in fact, a mixture of yellow and black scales.



*Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon - 11th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 - 1/250s@f/8 ISO800*

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by William, 11-Apr-14 07:36 PM GMT

That Peacock roosting on the bin is brilliant Mike 😊😊 , it's very difficult to get that level of detail on the underside when so often they are backlit or in harsh light.

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 11-Apr-14 07:49 PM GMT

Thank you, William. Proof of the excellence of the Leica lenses used on the Lumix compact and bridge cameras.

I sometimes wonder why I lug around my Nikon gear 😊

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Butterflysaurus rex, 11-Apr-14 08:07 PM GMT

I have to admit it Mike I'm a real sucker for those back lit Orange Tip photos. That Orange has an almost fiery glow, lovely stuff 😊

B'saurus

### Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 12-Apr-14 06:51 PM GMT

That's a great close-up of the OT Mike and interesting observation on scale colour.

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 14-Apr-14 07:48 PM GMT

At last, a splendid afternoon on the Roman Road, Otmoor, Oxon. I spent several hours there on Sunday, having decided it was time to brush up my camera technique and try some new ideas.

Brimstone, Orange Tip and Peacock were the most abundant species present but I was pleased to see both Small and Green-veined Whites, and a few Speckled Woods, which provided me with much entertainment later!

Whites are notoriously difficult to photograph well, so I was pleased with this shot of a Small White, where the oblique lighting has really made the veins stand out. I am always surprised by how yellow the undersides look in photos but, when I look at Richard Lewington's paintings, they show similar colour, so it must be correct! I suspect that it's another example of how the brain assesses colours according to context, rather than perceiving what is actually there.



'Roman Road' Otmoor, Oxon - 13th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR zoom - 1/2000s@f/5.6 ISO400

On the opposite side of the ride, I spotted another white; this time it was a Green-veined, lit through the wing, which has enhanced the appearance of the veins.



*'Roman Road' Otmoor, Oxon - 13th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR zoom - 1/750s@f/8 ISO400*

Next, I found a female Green-veined White, with her abdomen raised in the typical "stop bothering me" position. The muted colours of the shady background have helped to keep attention on the butterfly.



*'Roman Road' Otmoor, Oxon - 13th April 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro - 1/350s@f/13 ISO400*

If whites are difficult, Orange Tips in sunshine are doubly so, because of the strong contrast between body and inner wing and then the saturated colour of the wingtips. The extended brightness range (dynamic range) offered by a DSLR in RAW mode really helps here and, with a little 'dodging and burning' allows all these very different areas to be rendered reasonably well. I did some experiments and found that photos taken with  $-0.7$  exposure compensation gave the best overall result. (Incidentally, the 'HDR' mode on some Lumix cameras - e.g. FZ200 - does a good job, providing the subject remains still through multiple exposures)

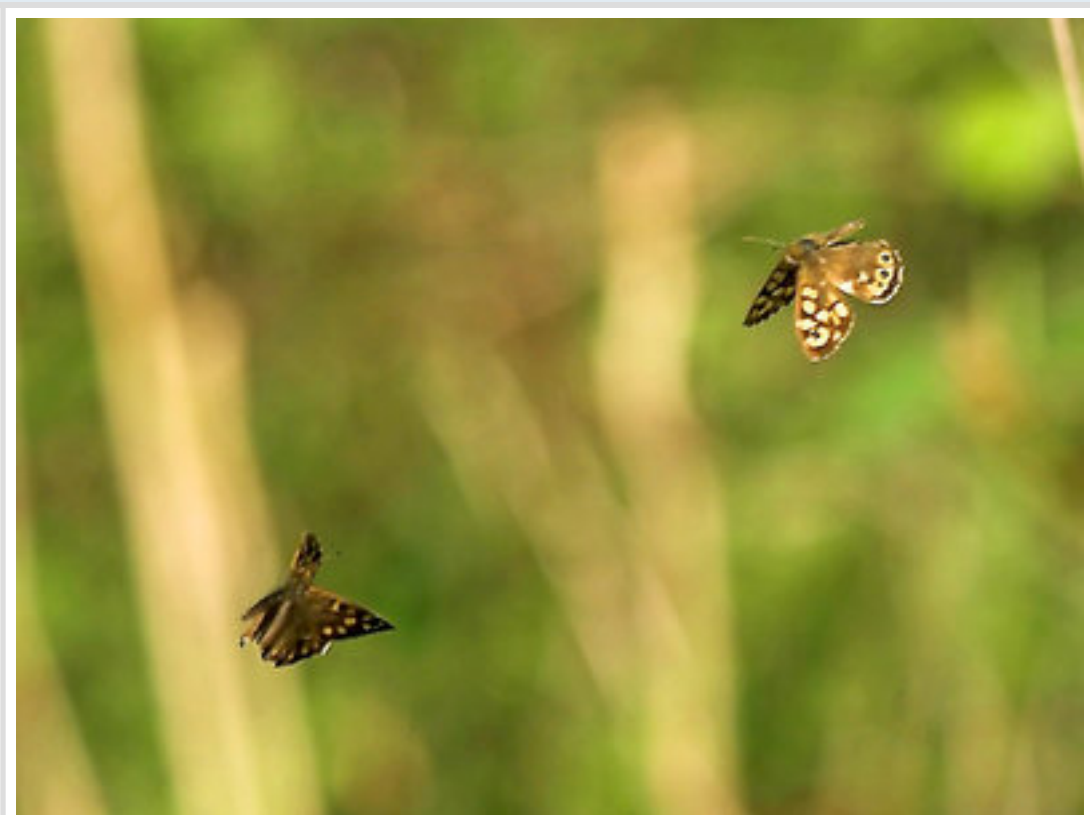


*'Roman Road' Otmoor, Oxon - 13th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 lens - 1/750s@f/13 (-0.7EV comp) ISO800*

Later in the afternoon, I found a pair of Speckled Woods engaged in a prolonged aerial combat. They were continuously gyrating around each other, while moving to and fro across a fairly limited 'jousting field'. I decided that it was time to practice some 'in flight' photography. Although modern automatic cameras are wonders of technology, there is still a need for practice, to get the best results. After all, we wouldn't expect to be able to play a piano well, without a few hours practice each day! It's the same with a camera - we have to develop a sort of 'finger memory', so that we know exactly

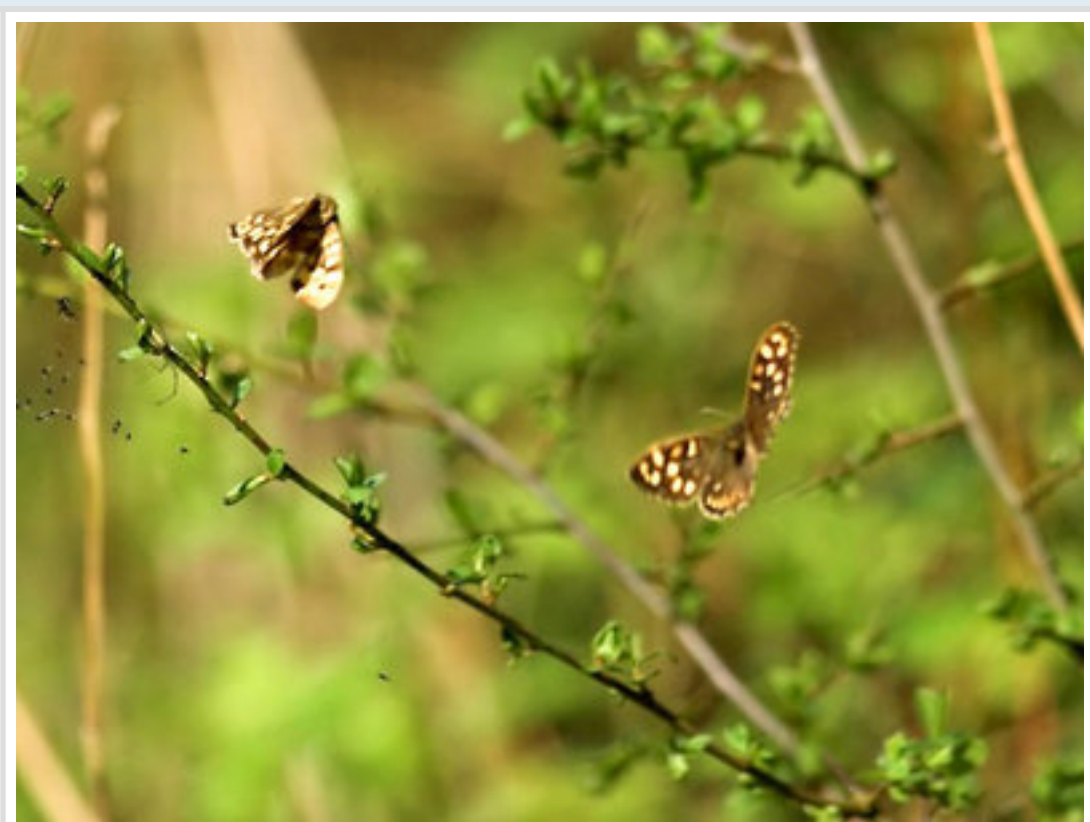
where each control is and, more importantly, how much to move it. This allows us to get the effect we want by innate 'feel', rather than having to read dials. So, a quick roll of the thumb on shutter speed or aperture, to react to changing conditions or, even more important, an instinctive twist on the focus ring – in the right direction at the right time! This last is an area where a 'prime' (non-zoom) lens scores, since there are too many variables with a zoom and it is very difficult to develop the 'instinctive' feel for such a lens.

These were the skills I decided to practice on the Speckled Woods! I must have taken well over a hundred shots, with the camera set on high-speed firing rate (in my case, 8 frames per second). The first 60 or so were complete rubbish but then I started to get the hang of it!



*'Roman Road' Otmoor, Oxon – 13th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 lens – 1/750s@f/4 ISO400*

First of all, even the high-speed autofocus of my Nikon AFS lens was totally useless. Even if it caught one of the pair momentarily, it instantly lost focus again, as they spiralled around each other. So, it was time to switch to manual and train my 'finger memory'! The Nikon 300mm f/4 lens has a nice broad focus ring, which turns easily and smoothly – essential for this work. It's also essential to get used to which way the ring turns, to move closer or further away. So I spent some time learning to keep focus as well as I could on the rapidly moving subjects, standing back sufficiently far from the combat to have a chance of keeping them within the frame. These butterflies were moving really fast, so I used aperture priority, set at maximum (f/4 for this lens), to achieve the highest possible shutter speed as they moved in and out of sun spots. Gradually my success rate began to improve and became even better when I increased to ISO800 for a still higher shutter speed so that, at last, I started to get some reasonable photos:



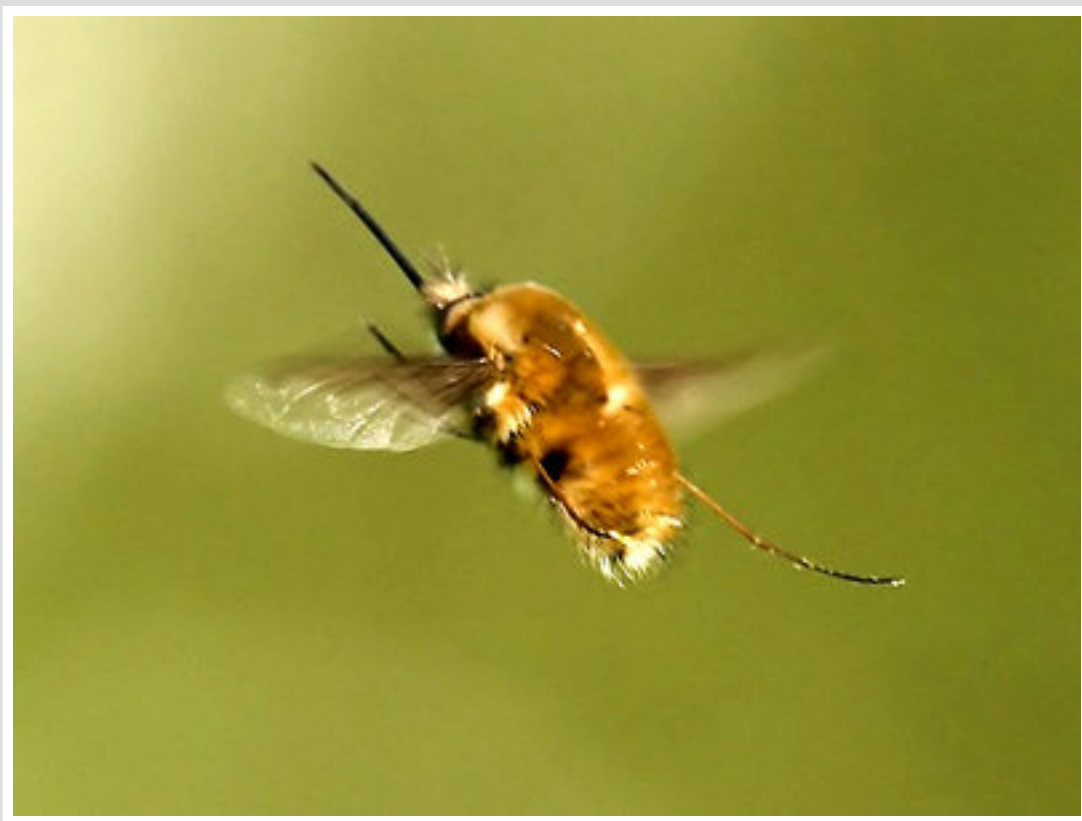
*'Roman Road' Otmoor, Oxon – 13th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 lens – 1/2000s@f/4 ISO800*

I had the cameras on a loose ball head on my monopod, which provided a little stability (in the viewfinder), while leaving me free to pivot around, following the action. Then, it was just a case of following focus with the manual ring and touching the shutter button whenever there seems to be a reasonable chance of a decent result! I don't know about the butterflies but I was exhausted when they finally gave up their chase (10 –15 minutes!) and suddenly parted to go their separate ways.



'Roman Road' Otmoor, Oxon – 13th April 2014 montage of photos taken during prolonged airborne duel

With my new-found skills, I finished the day with a few shots of the bee-flies hovering over the ride – at least they kept reasonably still for a few seconds at a time.



'Roman Road' Otmoor, Oxon – 13th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 lens – 1/350s@f/9.5 ISO800

All have to do now is continue to put in lots of practice 😊

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Willow, 15-Apr-14 08:33 PM GMT

Thoroughly enjoyed your post Mike, I can only admire your new found (and well earned!) skills, as a fellow Nikon D300 man I know what your going through...in fact I know so well that I decided to quit 😊 and put all my impatience and lack of ability down to chronic camera shake!!! Incidentally you surely chose one tough species to hone your skills on, akin to the butterflies version of 'whirling dervishes' 😊

Kind Regards,  
Bill 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by Neil Freeman, 15-Apr-14 08:38 PM GMT

Great post and some superb photos, I particularly enjoyed the sequence of Speckled Wood in flight 😊

Cheers,  
Neil.

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 15-Apr-14 08:47 PM GMT

Many thanks Bill and Neil. Your approval is a **huge** encouragement. 😊

I've taken so many butterfly portraits that I'm trying to 'spice things up' a bit. A cynic could ask why I don't just use a video camera but I'm trying the

flight shots as a challenge!

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Butterflysaurus rex, 15-Apr-14 08:53 PM GMT

I've got to say your efforts have been very well rewarded with some really lovely photos. Whatever you're doing Mike keep on doing it 😊

B'saurus

### Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 15-Apr-14 09:59 PM GMT

You've shown real patience there, Mike and have deservedly got your rewards.

Lovely images.

### Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 16-Apr-14 06:38 AM GMT

Great shots of the butterflies in flight Mike. Never been able to manage it myself. I take my hat off to you for your dedication and skill.

### Re: MikeOxon

by robpartridge, 16-Apr-14 09:29 AM GMT

Some terrific photos in your recent posts, Mike – especially the whites. By the time I have worked out the exposure compensation they've always long gone!

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 16-Apr-14 10:14 PM GMT

Yet another brilliant sunny day in Oxon.

I decided to visit Linkey Down since I had heard that Ring Ouzels were 'on passage' there. It's a favourite stopover on the migration routes to Northern hills. The Down used to be part of the Aston Rowant NNR before that was cut in two by the M40 cutting, so this is the remnant on the South side of the motorway. (Click on any of my photos for enlarged versions)



*View over Oxon from Linkey Down*

The panoramic view over the Oxon plain is impressive but the slope is much steeper than is apparent in the photo. As a result, I decided to leave most of my heavy photo gear at the top before starting down the slope. This was not a good decision since, although I did get some rather distant views of a Ring Ouzel, I also found a Green Hairstreak that was only too willing to pose for photos! So, I had to do the best I could with my birding tele lens. With a 400mm lens, it's a bit of a tightrope between camera shake and insufficient depth of field! Fortunately, the bright sunlight was on my side!





*Linkey Down, Oxon - 16th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4lens + 1.4X TC - 1/125s@f/16 ISO400*

The iridescent colours, when seen in direct sun, are stunning – ranging from peacock blue at one extreme to yellow-green at the other. I hadn't noticed the brilliant orange leading edge of the wing so clearly before. This individual also had a fairly well-marked hair streak. For some reason, most of the examples I saw last year had very little, or no, white on the wings.



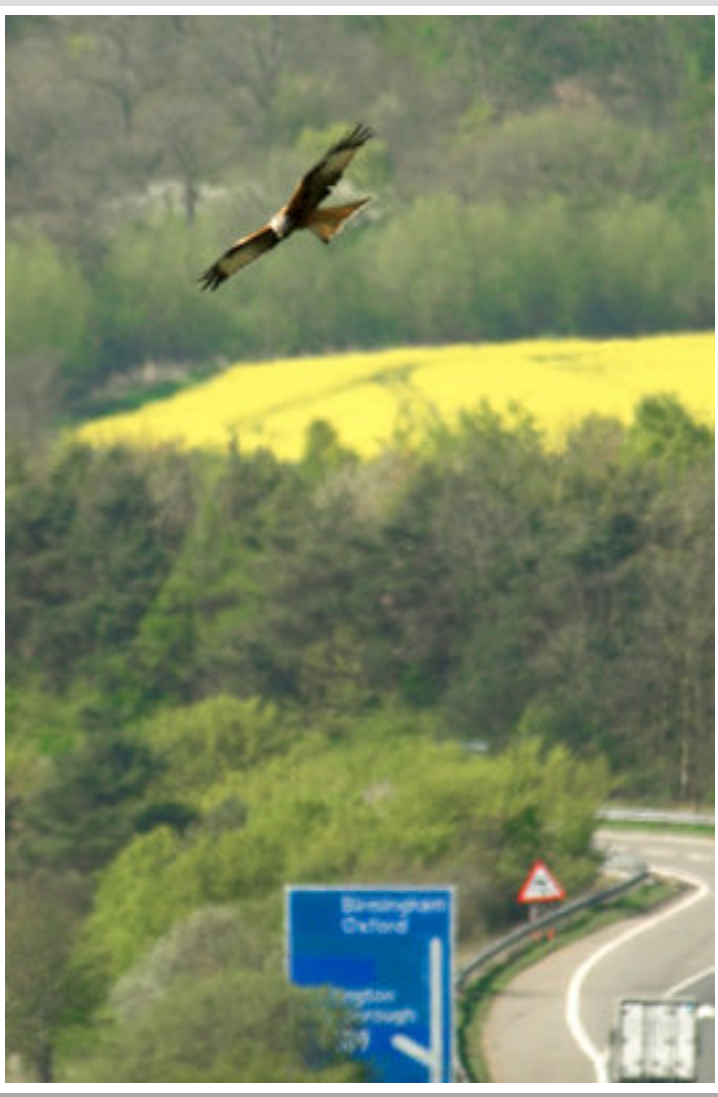
*Linkey Down, Oxon - 16th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4lens + 1.4X TC - 1/250s@f/11 ISO400*

The next photo shows rather more of the upper wing surface than usual because the fore-wing is distorted – probably as the result of damage on emergence from the pupa. I've noticed that these hairstreaks often seem to 'writhe' their hind-wings up and down when resting but I have no idea of possible reasons for this behaviour.



*Linkey Down, Oxon - 16th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4lens + 1.4X TC - 1/180s@f/11 ISO400*

Finally, the M40 cutting is well-known as a place to see Red Kites circling overhead. This one seemsto be checking its position on the road sign 😊



Red Kite over M40 - 16th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4lens + 1.4X TC - 1/1000s@f/5.6 ISO400

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-14 11:16 PM GMT

That is a stunningly marked Greenstreak Mike, a real cracker of a shot 😊 I reckon the Red Kite is trying to work out how to get back to Wales 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 17-Apr-14 11:39 AM GMT

#### "Wurzel" wrote:

That is a stunningly marked Greenstreak Mike

I agree, especially after comparing this one with others that I've photographed in previous years. I suspect it was freshly emerged but had, unfortunately, some wing damage that made it less 'flighty' than others.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 18-Apr-14 10:15 PM GMT

Today, I made a return visit to Linkey Down, as Ring Ouzels were still reported to be passing through. No luck and the weather was distinctly cooler than on Wednesday, so I didn't find any Green Hairstreaks either. I was, however, pleased to spot a Grizzled Skipper as it flew up from the ground onto a bare branch, where I suspect it stayed to roost for the night (it was about 4.30pm when I saw it first). Initially, its wings were open but then a band of cloud came over and it quickly folded its wings and dropped its antennae. Click on the images to see the fine detail.



*Linkey Down, Oxon - 18th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro - 1/500s@f/11 ISO800*

I waited until the cloud passed and watched as the antennae rose and the wings started slowly opening again.



*Linkey Down, Oxon - 18th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro - 1/350s@f/13 ISO800*

Unlike my last visit, I did have my macro lens with me but decided to experiment by taking a comparative shot with my 300mm tele.



*Linkey Down, Oxon - 18th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300f4 lens - 1/350s@f/9.5 ISO400*

The different perspective is apparent but there is little difference in the quality of the two images. Of course, the bright sunlight meant that both lenses were well stopped down, so this was not a tough test. It interests me to see how even this butterfly shows some iridescent colour, which varies according to the angle of view - compare the bright reddish area on the left fore-wing in the last two shots.

Mike

## **Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 01-May-14 08:53 PM GMT

The weather has not been great for butterflies, of late, in Oxon, so I have been spending my time recently photographing some of the early native Orchid species. The Orchids pages on my website get by far the greatest number of 'hits', so I feel that I really must improve them, since many of the photos are now quite old.

I've also been finding that the weight of my Nikon camera gear seems to increase with my age, so decided that it's time to try one of the Lumix FZ-series cameras, which seem to produce such good results for many members of these forums. The following is a somewhat 'techie' summary of my experiences with the Lumix, so far.

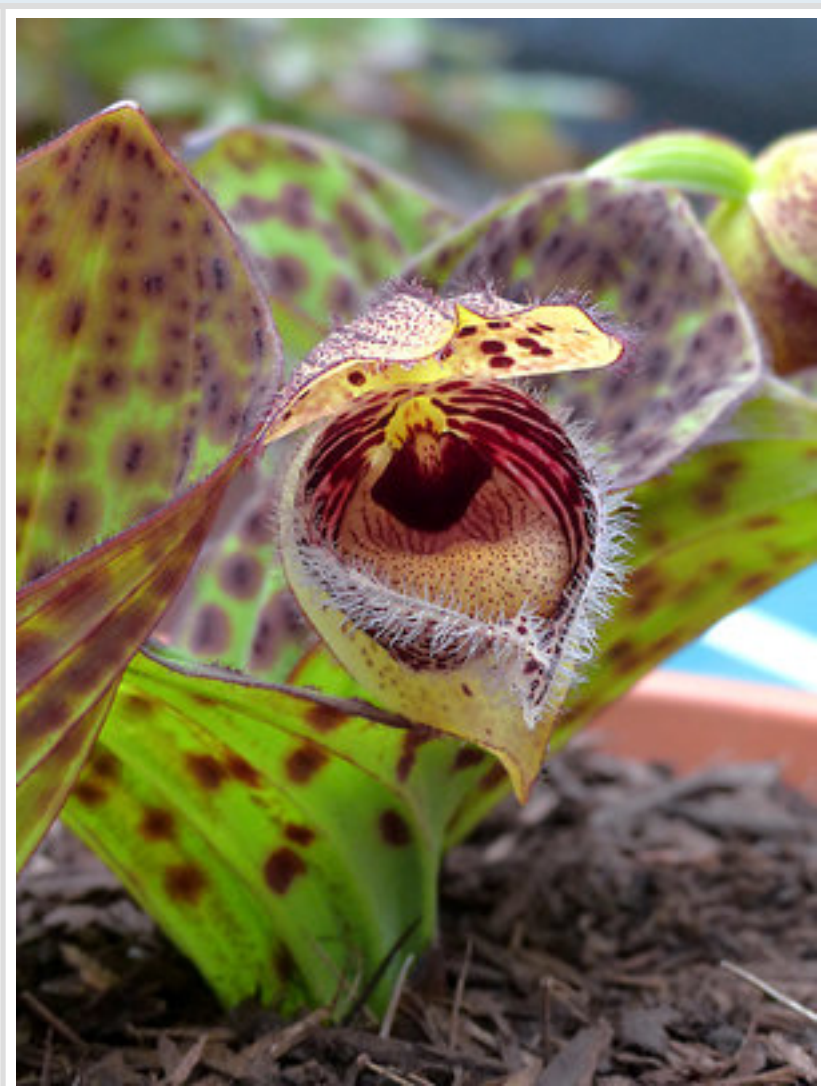
The Lumix FZ200 is a remarkable piece of kit, mainly for its 25–600mm (35mm equiv) lens, which maintains a constant f/2.8 aperture across its entire range. I have experienced many SLR lenses with impressive 'headline' specs that simply do not perform at the extremes of their range, so I was somewhat 'gobsmacked' when I found just how well this Leica-badged lens performs, even when set to '600mm' @ f/2.8. I use a neighbour's FM aerial as a target for telephoto lens tests and the following pics compare my Nikon D300s with Nikon 300f4 lens plus 1.4X teleconverter with the FZ200. These pics are enlargements from the centre of the two images:



*Nikon D300s vs Lumix FZ200 telephoto comparison*

The large aperture of the Lumix lens allows a lower ISO setting to be used, for a given shutter speed, which compensates, to some degree, for the poorer noise performance of the small sensor. In addition, the greater depth of field that is achieved by the smaller lens/sensor of the Lumix allows the wide aperture to be used successfully on macro subjects, such as butterflies. For example, the Lumix set to 25mm focal length and f/2.8 aperture offers similar field of view and depth of field to the Nikon with my 90mm Tamron macro set to f/11. (see <http://www.cambridgeincolour.com/tutorials-size.htm> for the basis of these calculations)

My first 'field trial' of the Lumix was at the Alpine Garden Society show in London last Sunday (27th April), when I took the Orchid shown below with settings of 1/80s@f/2.8 ISO125, inside the Linley Hall. To me, this showed that the lens could perform pretty well as a macro, as well as at the telephoto end of its range! This 'trial' also proved the advantages of carrying a compact kit weighing 640g, against the backpack, weighing 7.1kg, that contains my Nikon and all the lenses needed to cover a similar focal length range!



*Alpine Garden Society show – 27th April 2014 Lumix FZ200 – 1/80s@f/2.8 ISO125*

To get back to butterflies – I took the Lumix to my local Dry Sandford Pit reserve, yesterday afternoon. Although it was warm and sunny, there was not a lot to see but I took some shots of a Peacock and Green-veined White. I had inadvertently set the camera to RAW mode, so had to tackle conversion of the images to JPEGs for display, which raised a few interesting points!

The RAW converter included with Photoshop Elements (PSE) v.11 cannot process FZ200 photos but needs an upgrade to v.7.4 of the Adobe RAW converter. This proved hard to find on the web, until I realised that I simply had to select the 'Update' option in the PSE software! I was rather disappointed with the converted images, as they seemed to have a 'gritty' quality that I had not seen in my previous JPEG trials. So, I decided to try the 'Silkypix' software bundled with the Lumix. Again, it was not the latest version, so I downloaded v.4.1 from the web. I had read lukewarm reports of this software and, especially, of its user interface but I got on with it quite well. The manual is a slightly difficult-to-read Japanese-English translation but the basic tasks are clear enough.



Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon – 30th April 2014 Lumix FZ200 – 1/1600s@f/4.5 ISO200 full zoom, macro 'on'



Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon – 30th April 2014 Lumix FZ200 – 1/1600s@f/5.6 ISO200 full zoom, macro 'on'

I found these results much more pleasing than those from the Adobe converter but, providing the initial exposure is good, I'm not sure whether the RAW format offers many advantages. Whereas, in the case of the Nikon or other larger sensors, there is a lot of dynamic range 'in hand', which can be exploited when processing RAW images, this is not really the case with the tiny sensor in the Lumix.

So my conclusions, after just a few days use, are that the reduced size and weight are *extremely* welcome and the image quality can be very good, especially when the 'fast' f/2.8 lens can be exploited to keep to a low ISO setting. The versatility of the camera is amazing, covering wide-angle to long telephoto, plus macro, with no need ever to change lenses! The electronic viewfinder is also remarkably good, with 1.3M dots providing a clear, crisp image. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the operation of the camera is much slower than a true DSLR. The AF is pretty good, in good light, but not fast enough for a moving bird (or butterfly) and I have not had much success in my initial attempts to capture any flight shots. Both zoom and manual focus are by means of rocker switches, so there is no manual 'feel', as with a DSLR. The performance of the tiny sensor is remarkable and a huge advance on what could be achieved just a few years ago but there is little reserve 'in hand', so exposure has to be right and the subject needs to fill the frame, since quality degrades rapidly when an image is 'cropped'.

The Lumix won't displace the Nikon on 'special' trips but, as an 'always at hand' camera, I feel that it can be used with confidence to get good shots of static subjects in favourable light conditions. Perhaps, as I gain more experience with it, I shall discover more of its capabilities!

Finally, a mention that I saw my first Holly Blue in the garden yesterday but it's been pouring down all day, today.

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by PhilBJohnson, 01-May-14 11:51 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

A very interesting read. I particularly like the account of the Speckled Woods from 13th April which I will read several times to try and take in some of what you have said.

Also interesting is your locality to the Farmoor Reservoir. I have done some work on the Farmoor Reservoir in the past where my colleague was using a Leica DNA digital level which measures to 5 decimal places! We had to watch out for the trout fisherman's back cast on our way around the reservoir !



best wishes,  
Philip

## Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 01-May-14 11:59 PM GMT

Interesting read Mike – I was thinking about getting a Lumix for my daughter and then when my neck wears out I could swap it for my Nikon 😊 Looks like I'll have to start saving the pennies.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 02-May-14 02:25 PM GMT

Many thanks for the comments, Philip and Wurzel.

I can confirm that back casts are still a hazard at Farmoor! The grassy banks of the reservoir are good basking areas for butterflies, in addition to the varied bird interest.

Wurzel, your daughter will doubtless feel herself a very lucky girl indeed, if you get her a Lumix. In pre-digital days, we gave our son a Praktica SLR and he never looked back. He's now a professional biologist and no mean photographer!

Mike

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by Padfield, 02-May-14 04:39 PM GMT

I had a Praktica SLR from 1974 (second hand – 25 years old then) until 2004, when it died. The very mention of it brings back good memories, Mike!

Guy

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by badgerbob, 02-May-14 06:33 PM GMT

Zenith B for me!!! Seriously though you did learn about photography with cameras such as Zenith and Praktica. Happy memories.

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by Neil Freeman, 02-May-14 08:49 PM GMT

Interesting report on the FZ200 Mike.

I have been using an FZ150 for the past couple of years and it is starting to get a bit knocked about, entirely my fault, slipping down grassy slopes and putting my feet in Rabbit holes and such like. In fact it has proved to be a robust camera considering some of the knocks it has had.

Consequently I have been thinking about replacing it, either with another FZ150 or maybe going for a FZ200.

I must admit that am not at all technically minded about the camera, all my photos are taken on the 'P' setting and the only fiddling that I do is with the exposure, usually switching between -1/3 or -2/3, going to -1 for 'whites' in bright sun. Everything else is set to 'auto' apart from I have the camera set to centre spot focusing which I find I prefer.

Also I only shoot in jpeg and the only software that I use is a free download called PhotoScape for cropping and re-sizing and maybe a bit of basic adjustment to brightness.

Cheers,

Neil.

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 02-May-14 10:08 PM GMT

Hi Neil.

I suggest you try looking through the viewfinder of an FZ200 before making your decision. The 1.3M dot display is much clearer than the earlier models. You may think that it is enough to justify the price difference!

There are some good videos by Graham Houghton on YouTube about the FZ200. I followed his suggestion to choose 'Natural' from the Photo Style menu and then set all of Contrast, Sharpening, Saturation, and Noise Reduction to '-2'. I like the more subdued effect that this produces. Otherwise, I use exposure compensation just as you do.

I'm pleased to hear that your FZ150 has stood up to a fairly tough life. This was an aspect that concerned me coming from the weather-sealed and ruggedised Nikon.

Mike

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by Pauline, 04-May-14 06:32 AM GMT

I too have found your appraisal of this model both interesting and useful Mike. It is always in the back of my mind that one day my camera might just give up the ghost and leave me with the dilemma of what to replace it with – like Neil's model, my camera has also had a few knocks in the field 😊

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by Jack Harrison, 04-May-14 12:58 PM GMT

As many will know, I am a happy FZ150 user. Once that fails, or is dropped one time too many (hasn't been dropped at all – yet!) I will undoubtedly get an FZ200 or whatever is its successor. So I am a convinced bridge camera user.

However .....

Gary Richardson, aka Gruditch, says that nothing can beat a DSLR. It is hard to argue with that when you see his marvellous landscape pictures:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/gruditch/>

But you will find in the accompanying notes Gary [https://www.flickr.com/photos/gruditch/ ... 3073069021](https://www.flickr.com/photos/gruditch/...3073069021) admits that a DSLR plus all the kit is a heavy load to cart up mountains. So for likes of us oldies, it has to be a bridge camera.

Jack

### Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 04-May-14 01:57 PM GMT

Thanks for posting that link, Jack.

Gary's photography is undoubtedly Premier League standard.

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 04-May-14 02:01 PM GMT

#### "Jack Harrison" wrote:

.... Gary Richardson, aka Gruditch, says that nothing can beat a DSLR. ....

I agree entirely – the combination of through-the-lens viewing, relatively large sensor, and fast operation, makes the DSLR first choice, if practical issues, such as size and weight can be ignored. On the other hand, a modern 'bridge' can run it very close for IQ *when working within its limitations*.

At present, I stick with my earlier feeling that "The Lumix won't displace my Nikon on 'special' trips but, as an 'always at hand' camera, I feel that it can be used with confidence to get good shots of static subjects in favourable light conditions."

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 05-May-14 03:42 PM GMT

We spent yesterday in the garden; I was taking photos of various plants, while also pursuing a Holly Blue that showed no signs of ever stopping! Later in the day, we visited the BBOWT Meadow at Bernwood, Oxon. Later in the year, the hedgerows around this meadow will be home to Black Hairstreaks but, at present, the meadow has a spectacular carpet of Green-winged Orchids, as well as numbers of Adder's Tongue ferns, in the damp patches between the ridges.



Green-winged Orchids, BBOWT Meadow, Oxon – 4th May 2013 Lumix FZ200 ('stitch' from two photos)

After my lack of success with the Holly Blue yesterday, I was lucky to spot one looping rather lethargically in the chilly morning air, before settling perilously close to the bird feeders in the garden. I found her dozing on a leaf, with antennae turned down, waiting for the sun to warm up a bit.



*garden, Oxon - 5th May 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro - 1/180s@f/9.5 ISO400*

As soon as the sun broke through the early morning haze, she raised her antennae and slowly opened her wings:



*garden, Oxon - 5th May 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro - 1/90s@f/13 ISO400*

Then she turned slowly on her leaf, before spiralling up into the holly tree in the garden.



*garden, Oxon - 5th May 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro - 1/125s@f/16 ISO400*

Mike

## **Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 15-May-14 03:34 PM GMT

A recent couple of days with warm sunshine provided some good local butterfly trips.

On Tuesday afternoon (13th May), I visited the **BBOWT Hartslock** reserve, near Goring. This reserve occupies a delightful spot on the South-facing steep slope of the 'Goring Gap', where the River Thames cuts through the chalk downs, North of Reading. As well as offering a wide range of natural history interest, the site provides excellent views across the 'Gap', with Brunel's original line of the Great Western Railway crossing and re-crossing the river below.





*View over the Goring Gap from Hartslock Reseve*

Hartslock is notable mainly for its rare orchids, including, uniquely, hybrids between Lady and Monkey orchids, which have arisen naturally at this site.



*Orchis x angusticuris - Hartslock - 13th May 2014*

It has many other chalk downland plants which, in turn, support a good range of butterflies.



*Hartslock, Goring - 13th May 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens - 1/180s@f/13 ISO400*

My photo of a **Dingy Skipper** shows it nectaring on Chalk Milkwort, whose deep blue flowers cover the slopes. I also photographed a tiny pyralid moth *Pyrausta nigrata*, which was on the wing together with the purple *Pyrausta purpuralis*



*Hartslock, Goring - 13th May 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens - 1/180s@f/13 ISO400*

During my current visit, I also saw **Green Hairstreak**, **Holly Blue**, and **Orange Tip**, as well as several pairs of **Brimstones**, chasing each other across the slopes. I watched the courtship and mating of one of these pairs, taking many photos throughout the process. As this happened within a cordoned-off area of the reserve, I was only able to record from a distance, using my 300mm telephoto lens.

The following selection of photos shows the initial approach, where the female appears to be upside down, with her antennae held close together. The male fluttered around her for some time until she moved into a more receptive position. After a lot more circling around her, the male eventually moved in for coupling and then the two parted again. (*as with all my photos, click on the following image for an enlarged version*)



These photos were taken over a period of 6 minutes, though it seemed far longer, and luckily coincided with a bright sunny interval. Soon afterwards, a heavy shower sent me in retreat to the car.

My second trip, on Wednesday afternoon (14th May), took me a little further afield, to **Hailey Wood**, just to the West of Cirencester off the A419 to Stroud . There is a triangular clearing, South of the Saw Mill, which can be seen quite clearly on Google Earth.



*Hailey Wood, Cirencester Park*

When I arrived at the clearing, there were several Pearl-bordered Fritillaries spiralling in the sunshine. They all seemed to disappear, the moment a cloud passed over, but I was fortunate to find one resting quietly with open wings on some coarse grasses.



Hailey Wood, Cirencester - 14th May 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens - 1/125s@f/9.5 ISO400

Once the sun returned, the males resumed their seemingly endless patrol, searching for females, but, eventually, one paused to 're-fuel', providing an opportunity for a photo showing the underside markings.



Hailey Wood, Cirencester - 14th May 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 lens - 1/500s@f/9.5 ISO400

Just as I was leaving the site, I saw this rather 'colourless' Speckled Wood, looking rather like a moth at first glance.



Hailey Wood, Cirencester - 14th May 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 lens - 1/250s@f/6.7 ISO400

Today, the weather has returned to overall cloud, locally, but the forecast looks good for the coming days, so I'm hoping to make more additions to my photo collection.

Mike

**Re: MikeOxon**

by dilettante, 15-May-14 04:07 PM GMT

Love that first PBF picture! I wish there was somewhere in my neck of the woods for these.

**Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 15-May-14 04:37 PM GMT

Thank you, Dilettante. I was lucky that the sun went behind a cloud, 'grounding' this individual for a portrait!

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 15-May-14 11:24 PM GMT

Cracking Brimstone sequence Mike 😊 I'd liked to have seen a closer view of the Orchid hybrids.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 15-May-14 11:56 PM GMT

#### "Wurzel" wrote:

I'd liked to have seen a closer view of the Orchid hybrids.

Just for you,Wurzel – and thank you for your comment.



The photo shows the Lady O. near the centre, surrounded by some of her offspring. More information on my web page at <http://home.btconnect.com/mike.flemming/hybrid.htm>

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by CJB, 16-May-14 10:56 AM GMT

Good morning Mike,

I have been following your posts with interest.

I have recently moved near Cirencester and I am hoping to get a couple of hours this afternoon to look for our fluttering friends.

I wondered which sites you would recommend the most in the area?

Flutter on!

CJB

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 16-May-14 05:57 PM GMT

Thank you for commenting CJB.

By far my favourite site in your area is Daneway Banks, just past Sapperton from where you are. A little further on is Strawberry Banks and then Rodborough Common. Look up the first two in the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust website for more info. – they're both exciting places!

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 16-May-14 11:52 PM GMT

Another warm afternoon, today, though sunshine was in fairly short supply, locally.

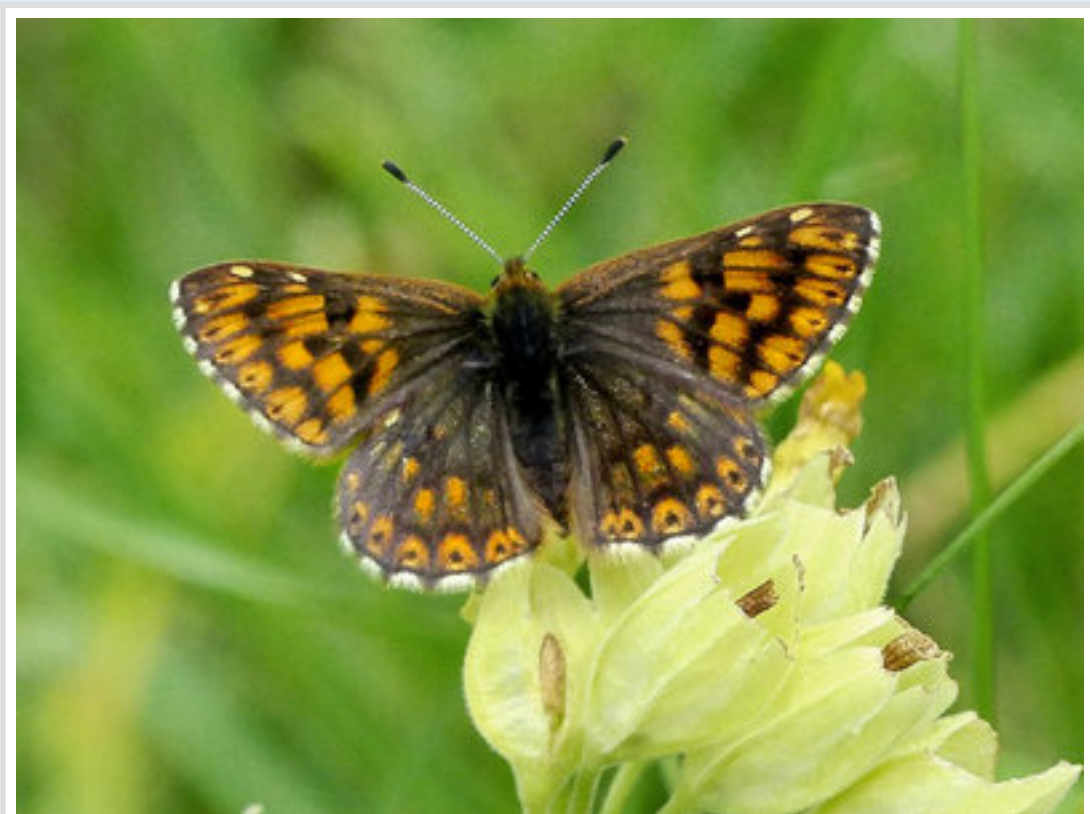
I drove to the Lambourn Downs, near Wantage, and parked on a minor road at SU325833, from where a bridleway leads up to **Crog Hill**. For this trip, I decided to take my 'lightweight' FZ200 camera, as my back was complaining after a couple of trips with the full Nikon gear!



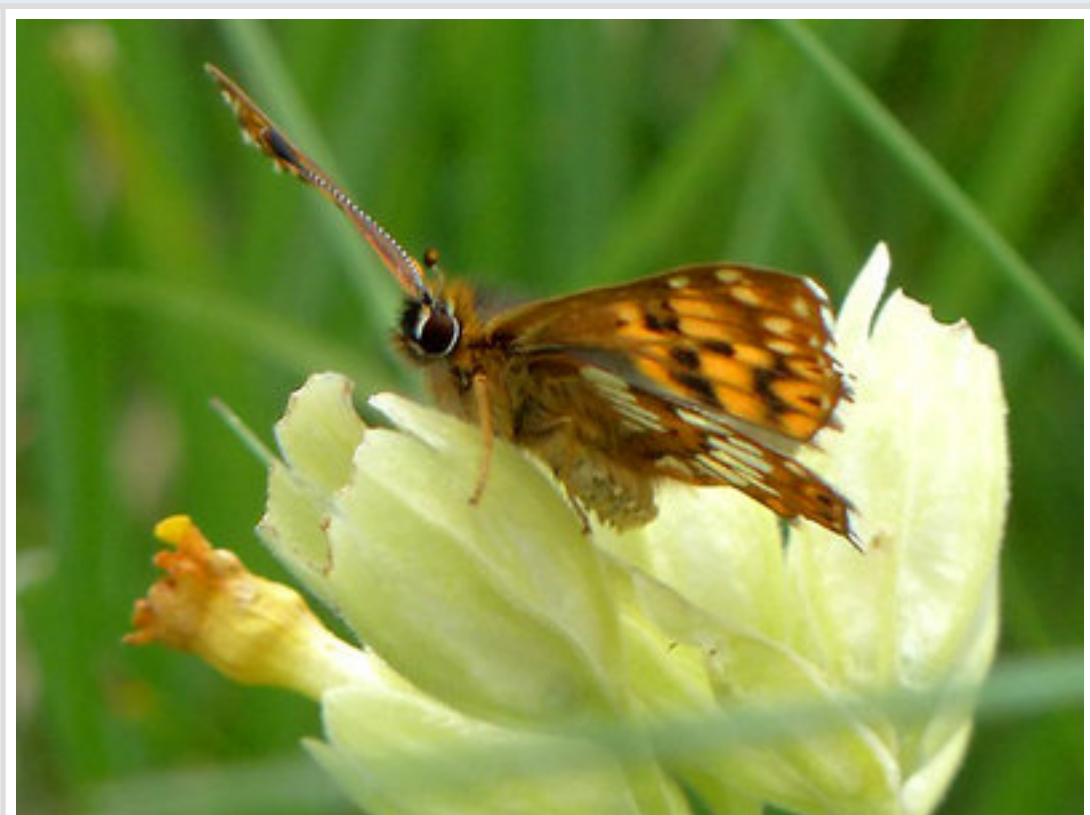
*Bridleway to Crog Hill -16th May 2014*

At the top of the track, just beyond the narrow strip of woodland seen in the above photo, is a good place for **Duke of Burgundy**, and I was not disappointed. I am still learning how to use the FZ200 and don't feel that I have optimised the settings yet. I have an old set of 55mm Hoya close-up lenses, originally bought back in the days when I used a Pentax Spotmatic, and have fitted these to the FZ200 lens, by using a 52-55 adapter ring.. Many of these shots were taken with the +1 dioptre lens in place.

The first DoB I saw was a rather faded female but I soon found several males in excellent condition and ready to pose on Cowslips.



*Crog Hill, Berks - 16th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/640s@f/5 ISO200*



*Crog Hill, Berks - 16th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/500@f/4 ISO125*

In the same area, there were several **Dingy Skippers**, **Brimstones**, **Orange Tips**, and rather faded **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Peacock**. As I walked back to the road, I also saw several **Small Blues**.

I decided to continue walking along the road to the **BBOWT Seven Barrows** reserve.



*Seven Barrows BBOWT reserve - 16th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/1600@f/4 ISO160*

Until recently, this reserve had a good colony of Marsh Fritillaries but these now seem to have disappeared, though I still keep a look-out for them.

Today, there were good numbers of **Small Blues**:



*Seven Barrows, Berks - 16th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/400@f/4 ISO125*

A flash of orange led me to a very newly-emerged **Small Copper**



*Seven Barrows, Berks - 16th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/1600@f/4 ISO125*

**Dingy Skippers** and **Brown Argus** were also plentiful:

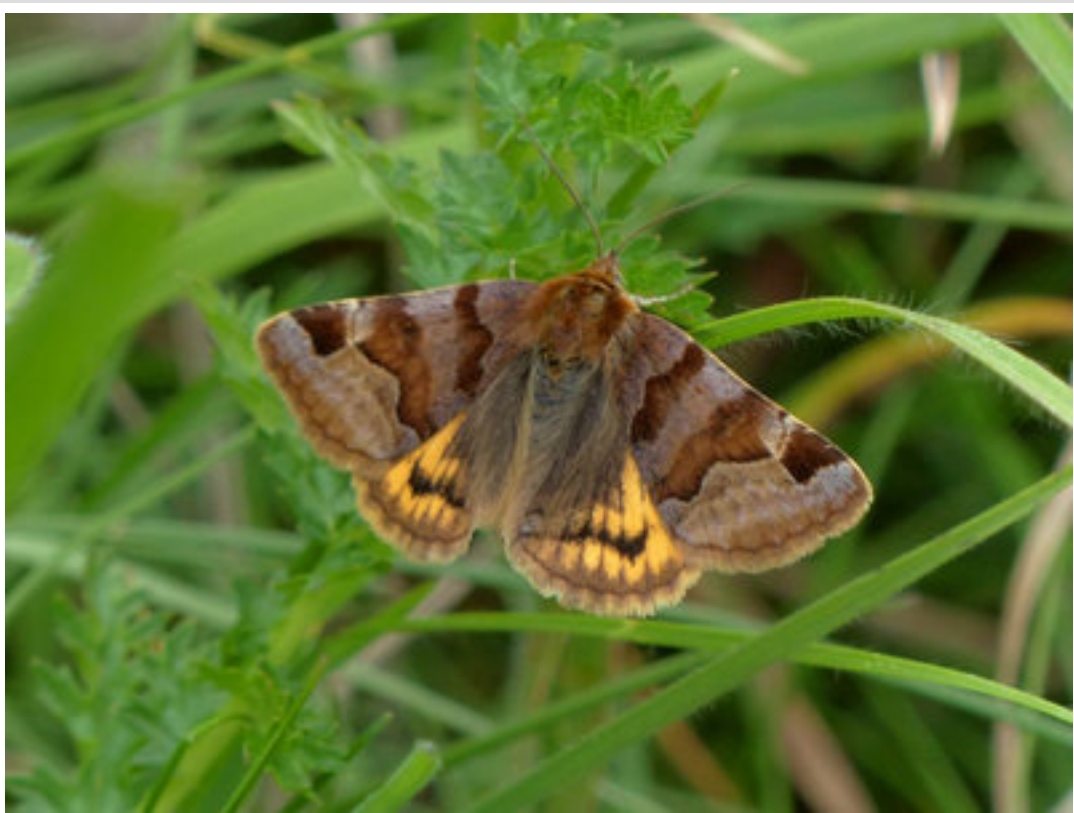


Seven Barrows, Berks - 16th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/640@f/4 ISO125



Seven Barrows, Berks - 16th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/640@f/4 ISO125

I had a heart-stopping moment when a much brighter fulvous 'butterfly' appeared but it was not the hoped-for Marsh Fritillary but a very fresh Burnet Companion moth.



Seven Barrows, Berks - 16th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/320@f/4 ISO125

As I was leaving the reserve, I spotted a very pretty moth skulking in the undergrowth, which I think is a Red Twin-spot Carpet, though I'm ready to be corrected.



*Seven Barrows, Berks – 16th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 – 1/160@f/4 ISO125*

Mike

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by CJB, 17-May-14 07:32 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

Thank you for your info!

I drove past Hayley Wood, so have located that and will visit the Gloucs website.

Thank you for getting back to me and I hope you have managed to make the most of the weather! I am yet to get stuck in but from very early on have had Brimstones, S Whites, GV Whites, Small Copper (with blue spots), S Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Orange tip, Red Admiral (noticeably scarce) all in my garden, which is spoiling.

I am yet to make a trip to find the other local specialities but will try to do so tomorrow.

Flutter on!

CJB

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by Wurzel, 17-May-14 10:32 PM GMT

Looks like you had a cracking day 😊 Cheers for the extra shot of the hybrids it's interesting which characteristics they pick up 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 18-May-14 10:51 PM GMT

Since retiring, I tend to stay at home and enjoy the garden at weekends.

Today, I spent some time exploring settings on the Lumix FZ200 and trying to get more familiar with this camera.



*handsome male blackbird standing on the head of Pan!*



I decided that the 'minimal' settings I had adopted previously ('Natural' from the Photo Style menu and then set all of Contrast, Sharpening, Saturation, and Noise Reduction to '-2'.) resulted in very 'flat' images that needed a lot of post-processing in Photoshop. A series of trials led to me increasing the Contrast to '0' and the Saturation to '-1', leaving Sharpening and Noise Reduction at -2. This gave me acceptable results out of the camera and left me to judge the appropriate degree of sharpening and/or noise reduction for each individual image.

I am gradually getting a feel for the very different depth of field, when compared with a DSLR, though it is also important to realise that it is not infinite but still needs consideration, especially at the longer zoom settings. Similarly the image stabilisation is good but cannot perform miracles, so camera shake has also to be considered at longer zoom settings – I find it advisable to use a monopod much of the time, just as I do with a DSLR.

After taking various flowers and birds on the garden feeders, I noticed a Holly Blue spiralling around the garden. Eventually it paused on a leaf in the late afternoon sun and I managed a few shots before it resumed its patrol. A little later 'it' settled again, very close to the original location but, when I looked at the photos, I realised that the 2nd set were of a female whereas the first were of a male!



*HB male, garden – 18th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 – 1/640s@f/4 ISO160*



*HB female, garden – 18th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 – 1/500s@f/5 ISO125*

I wonder how often we think we have seen one butterfly (or other creature) when, in fact, there were several. I have read stories of people feeding a 'pet' hedgehog in their garden, only for it to be demonstrated that they have been feeding about a dozen hedgehogs 😊

Mike

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by Pauline, 19-May-14 06:39 AM GMT

I have just read your last post with interest Mike and it has spurred me on to look once again at my camera settings. It is so helpful to be given details such as those and that shot of the Blackbird is lovely. I know how hard it is to take good shots of black creatures but the detail in the plumage is very apparent, whilst the background nicely blurred tho' providing context for the bird.

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by Jack Harrison, 19-May-14 08:43 AM GMT

**FZ200.**

ISO 100 is probably optimum but ISO 200 (at least on my FZ150) gives undetectable loss of resolution. And of course with ISO 200 you can use faster shutter speeds and thus reduce camera shake.

*Some professional snooker players have used alcohol to reduce "cue shake". Worth a try Mike? 😊*

Jack

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 19-May-14 10:19 AM GMT

Thank you for the comments, Pauline and Jack. I was very pleased with the Blackbird, too. It was sat in shade and the camera set the exposure perfectly.

I've set the ISO to 125 but the camera seems to alter it to 160 sometimes. For the second (female) butterfly shot, I set shutter priority at 1/500s as light levels were falling and I was using a long zoom setting, hand-held. Other shots were on Program.

Feel free to send me a case of the local malt any time, Jack, and I shall be happy to conduct a series of 'shake' experiments 😊

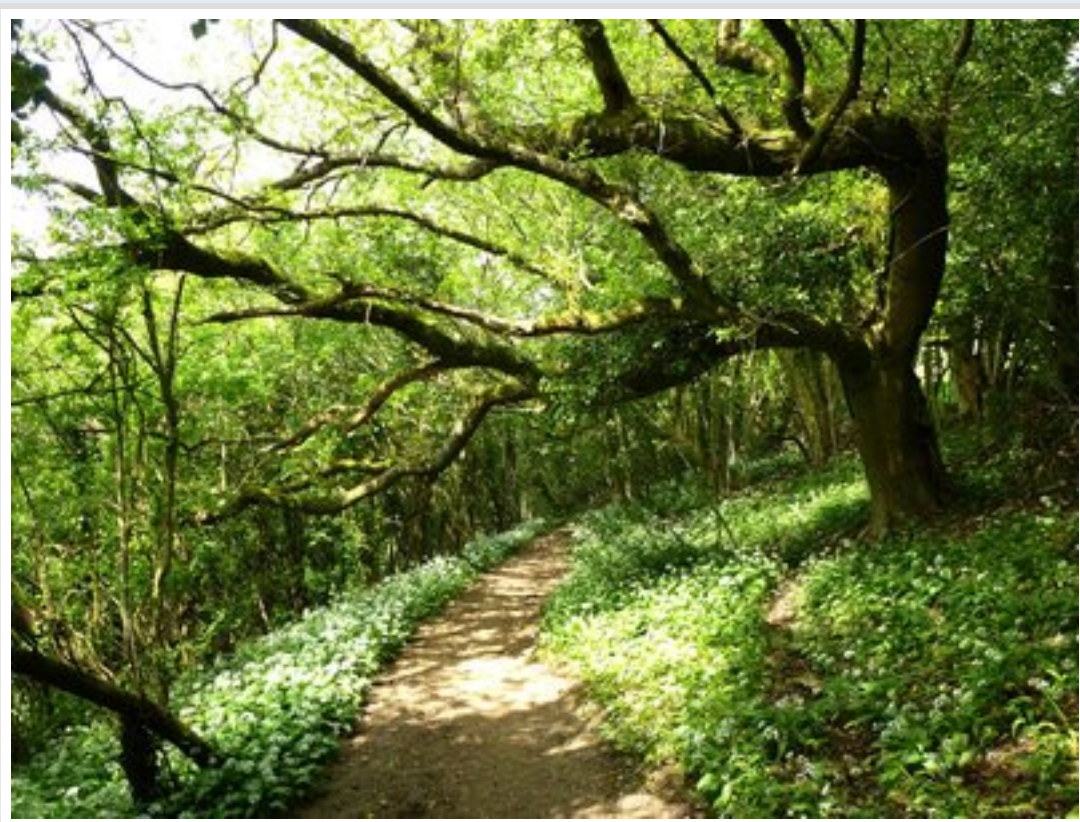
Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 20-May-14 02:32 PM GMT

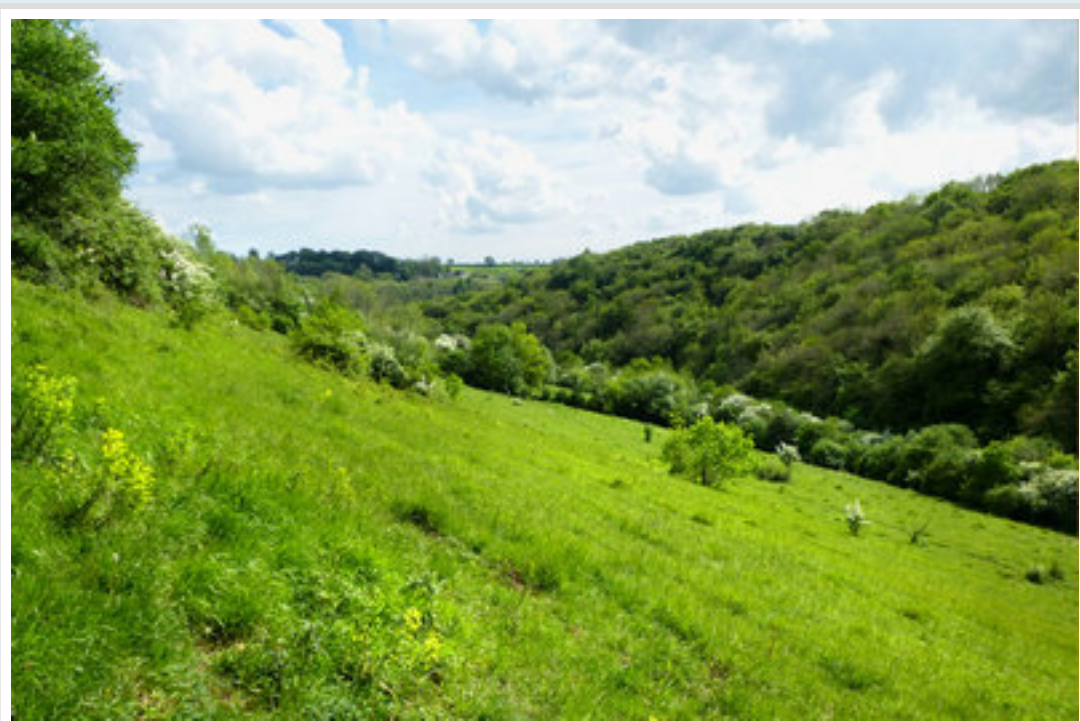
Another splendid day for the diary, spent at the Strawberry Banks reserve of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, on Monday 19th May.

It is a delightful reserve set in a steep-sided valley among woodland. The banks are thought to have once been used to grow strawberries, hence the name, and there are plenty of strawberry flowers still to be seen. I approached from the village of Oakridge Lynch, over a series of stiles and then down a pleasant sloping path through woodland, where the ground was covered in white Ransomes (*Allium ursinum*) flowers.



*Approach to Strawberry Banks from Oakridge Lynch*

As you emerge from the trees, there is a view across the whole reserve.



*Strawberry Banks Reserve Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust*

It was a warm, sunny afternoon and I saw my first Marsh Fritillary part-way down the path into the valley. Alongside the path, I also saw several Lesser Butterfly Orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*) plants; this is the scarcer of the two British butterfly orchid species. There were also many Early Purple Orchids (*Orchis mascula*) scattered across the site.



*Lesser Butterfly Orchid - 19th May 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens - 1/125s@f/11 ISO400*

**Marsh Fritillaries** were present across all of the reserve and, at one point, I watched a group of four chasing each other in 'follow my leader' style. Others were very willing to pose on the many flowers, including this female with her swollen abdomen:



*Strawberry Banks - 19th May 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens - 1/350s@f/9.5 ISO400*

For this trip, I had decided to take my full Nikon kit, as I do not yet feel completely 'at home' with the FZ200. I was pleased that I had, when I came across a three-some of Marsh Fritillaries all attempting to mate low amongst long grasses. With the Nikon, I had the 'instinctive feel' that I needed, in order to select the optimum aperture, and other settings, in this difficult situation, with rapidly-changing light levels and many intervening leaves.

The following 'X-rated' sequence shows the three-some, with the third member desperately trying to inveigle himself into the other pair. (*as with all my photos, click on the image for an enlarged view*)



It was a scene of constant movement until, eventually, the intruder left and left the pair to complete their mating in peace.



Strawberry Banks – 19th May 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens – 1/60s@f/16 ISO400

Other species seen included **Dingy Skipper**, **Brimstone**, **Orange Tip**, **Small Blue**, **Common Blue**, **Small Heath**, **Peacock**, and **Small Copper**. On several occasions, I thought I saw a Duke of Burgundy sallying forth but each one I managed to investigate more closely, turned out to be a small Marsh Fritillary.

At the end of a long, hot afternoon, the Nikon kit felt very heavy indeed, especially when climbing over the stiles, and I am feeling quite stiff, today. I am sure that the FZ200 could have done a good job most of the time but the Nikon/macro lens combination had the edge when following the movements of the mating pair amongst the grasses, so the 'pain' was worth it on this occasion 😊

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 20-May-14 05:18 PM GMT

Mike I love your Photo's of the Marsh Fritillaries, I'm still getting used to my camera, I hope when I do My photo's turn out like yours but I doubt that very much, I've still alot to learn about Photography Goldie 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 20-May-14 05:39 PM GMT

Thank you for commenting, Goldie. Some of those photos involved me acting like a contortionist – probably why I'm feeling rather the worse for wear, today 😊

For that last shot, I wanted both butterflies' eyes in focus, so I set an aperture of f/16 (beyond that, diffraction starts to reduce image sharpness noticeably). That meant a slow shutter speed, so the camera was sat firmly on the ground and I manage to move a few grasses from the foreground, without disturbing the butterflies – which were rather intent on what they're doing.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 21-May-14 02:06 PM GMT

Very interesting series of Marshie shots 🍷 – I hope to see a similar action on my next visit to my Marshie site 😊 WRT the 'Butterfly Orchid' does it have a range of colours or is it always that creamy white colour? Mind you to my mind it looks more like an 'Albino 6 Spot Burnet Moth Orchid' than a butterfly 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 21-May-14 02:43 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel – it was a case of being in the right place at the right time.

There are two 'butterfly orchids' in UK: greater and lesser. Both are the same greenish-white colour but have different scents and pollinators. There are photos of both on my website at <http://home.btconnect.com/mike.flemming/orchids4.htm>

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 21-May-14 11:42 PM GMT

Today I made a short trip to **Lough Down**, above Streatley, Berks. This site is on the opposite side of the Goring Gap from the Hartslock Reserve, which I visited last week. The view from the Down shown below, looking East, includes Hartslock:



*View across the Goring Gap from Lough Down, Streatley*

My aims were to see Adonis Blues and to get some practice in using my Lumix FZ200. Although generally bright and sunny, there was a thin veil of high cloud and a breeze that was keeping temperatures down. At first, the slopes of the Down looked like a 'butterfly free zone' but, soon, I saw a **Common Blue** cruising low across the grassy hillside.



*Lough Down, Berks - 21st May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/1300s@f/4 ISO100*

The double fringe is very clear in this photo. When worn, the appearance of 'chequers' on the inner fringe can cause confusion with Adonis Blue.

I walked slowly along the path which runs low down across the South side of the Down, keeping my eyes peeled, and felt very fortunate to spot a **female Adonis Blue**, low amongst the vegetation:



*Lough Down, Berks - 21st May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/250s@f/5.6 ISO100*

She had beautiful chocolate brown wings with very blue edges to the red spots on the hind wing. This last feature is often said to distinguish Adonis Blue females from Chalkhill Blues but, in practice, I have found that, in many cases, the blue on the Adonis has faded to white (as in the Chalkhill).

It began to look like a 'girls day out', since the next butterfly I found was a very blue **female Common Blue**:



*Lough Down, Berks - 21st May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/640s@f/4 ISO100*

I decided that any male **Adonis Blue** that were about would be seeking females, so decided to wait near the female I had already found. Patience was rewarded and a flash of electric blue suddenly appeared on the slope. For me, it is the most exciting moment in UK butterflying, to see this vivid colour.

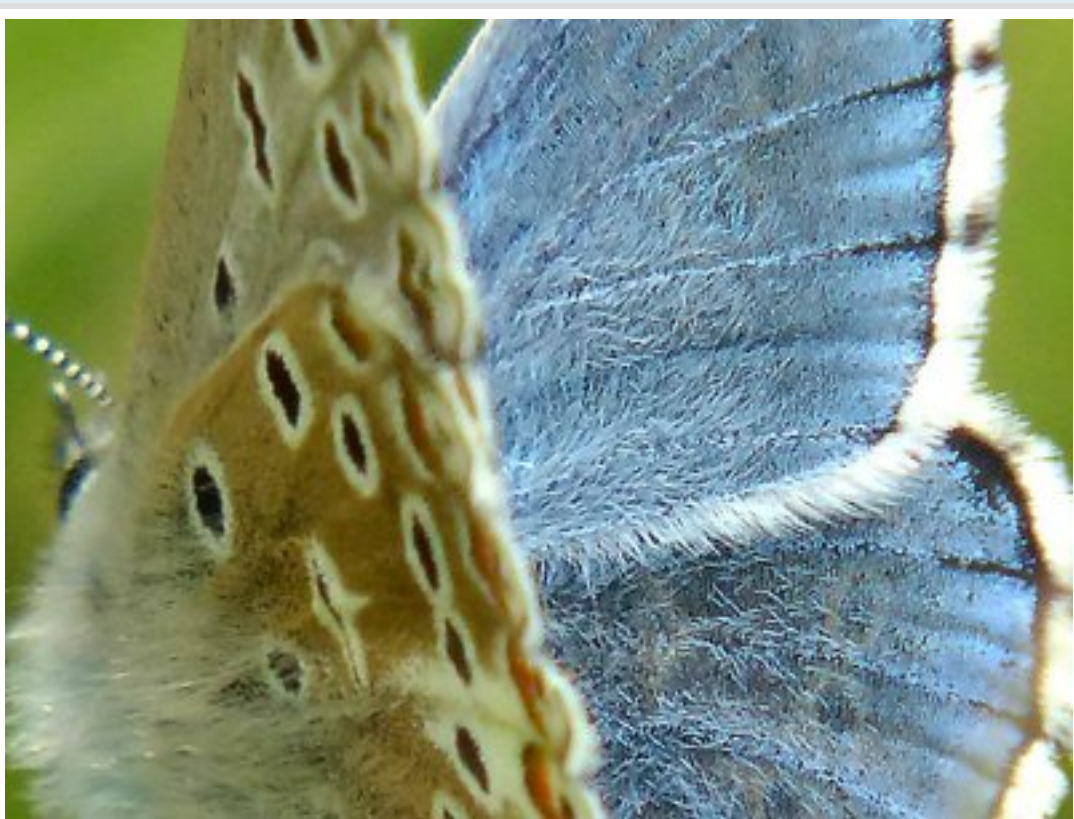


*Lough Down, Berks - 21st May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/800s@f/6.3 ISO125*

He turned out to be very compliant and willing to pose for photographs. I took the opportunity to try a range of techniques with the FZ200, varying apertures and focal length settings. I find close-ups with the FZ200 are quite difficult, because the closest focus distance varies with the zoom setting. Thus, I am finding it difficult to develop a 'feel' for the optimum distance/focal length setting to use.

I also experimented with a +1 dioptre close-up lens. Back in my film days, I used to find these lenses quite difficult to use, because of the very limited distance range over which they can be used, and was very glad, years ago, when I could finally afford a proper macro lens. Nevertheless, they do provide a valuable increase in image magnification when used with the FZ200 and, once I had found the distance range over which the lens works, I found it successful.

Crops from some of the photos I took with the close-up lens showed a considerable amount of detail:



*Lough Down, Berks - 21st May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/1000s@f/5 ISO125*

I was interested to see the raised very fine hairs above the tile-like scales on the wing. Perhaps these have a role in producing the iridescence when sunlight strikes the wing at an appropriate angle or perhaps they are to help protect the delicate scales from damage? The rows of 'tiles' on the wings can also be seen clearly in the following photo:



Lough Down, Berks - 21st May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/1300s@f/4 ISO125

Later, the same male posed for me on a flower, this time showing the underside of his wings. I took the opportunity to experiment with a range of apertures, as shown below (For all my photos, click on the image to enlarge):



Lumix FZ200, fl=108mm with +1 dioptre close-up lens varying aperture

These were all taken with the lens at its longest zoom (fl = 108mm) with the +1 dioptre close-up lens. Under these conditions, it is clear that the smallest aperture (f/8) provides the best overall sharpness, when the results are, in my opinion, very good indeed.



Lough Down, Berks - 21st May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/640s@f/8 ISO125

I am still far from feeling completely 'at home' with the FZ200. Some of the menus are tricky to navigate and, for example, I find the manual focus mode difficult to select and use. I also find that my clumsy thumb keeps pressing buttons on the back of the camera, when I only intend to hold the camera. This often leads to settings being changed inadvertently. On one occasion, I found I had activated the 10sec delay timer and I frequently alter the exposure compensation setting unintentionally. I expect I shall get used to all this, eventually, but if anyone has any suggestions on how to avoid these errors, I shall be interested to hear from them.

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 25-May-14 01:56 PM GMT

Mike your photo's are stunning, I like your pair of March Frit's very much and the Adonis Male, I used to get mixed up with those and Common Blue but I know more now so not as thick as I used to be 😊

I'm still trying to get to grips with this new len's I bought, it's great for bringing distant things closer and then you can choose Micro, but you've to stand a certain distance a way . This got me frustrated at first and I still tend to go too near the subject, having said that it was great when I was at GB filming the Duke of Burgandy, I wouldn't have got the mating couple of Dukes with any other lens, has they were quite 16ft are more a way, of course the computer helped to bring them in even more 😊

I suppose there's nothing like practice to get used to some thing, but seriously, if my photo's turned out half as good as yours I wouldn't worry Goldie 😊

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 25-May-14 05:27 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie – you are very kind about my photos 😊 I think other people's photos always look sharper and clearer than one's own – perhaps because I compare my own pics with the real thing, as I remember it, and they are never that good!

The business of finding the closest focus distance is always difficult with zoom lenses, because it varies with the zoom setting on some cameras and lenses (very much so, in the case of the Lumix FZ200).

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 25-May-14 06:11 PM GMT

We visited my Brother-in-law yesterday (24th May) and he showed me some **Orange-Tip** larvae on Garlic Mustard plants in his garden.

As it was heading towards dusk, I decided to try to take a few photos, using flash with my Lumix FZ200. In my experience, on-camera flash rarely gives decent results but I was pleasantly surprised by how well this came out. I chose an aperture of f/5.6, using full zoom with a +1 close-up lens.



*OT larva, Andover – 24th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 – 1/200s@f/5.6 ISO125, with flash*

His sharp-eyed Grand-daughter spotted an egg, as well, so I had a go at photographing this too.



*OT egg, Andover – 24th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 – 1/200s@f/4.5 ISO125, with flash*

Since the whole aim of buying the Lumix was to reduce the size and weight of my kit, I do not intend to start adding things like an external flash-gun but I may try making a diffuser, to reduce the glare in close-up shots.

I'm quite pleased to have joined the trend towards photographing the earlier stages of butterfly life 😊

Mike



## Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 25-May-14 07:27 PM GMT

Mike

may try making a diffuser, to reduce the glare in close-up shots

I once made one from a small plastic milk bottle. Worked a treat (but looked odd!)

jacjk

## Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 25-May-14 07:36 PM GMT

**"MikeOxon" wrote:**

I'm quite pleased to have joined the trend towards photographing the earlier stages of butterfly life 😊

You'll never look back! I was a relatively late convertee but since I began taking the early stages seriously butterflies have never been the same. Every time I see an adult its whole life flashes before me, along with the trials, tribulations and dangers. Every butterfly you see is the one-in-a-hundred that made it – and every one has a remarkable story to tell.

Great pictures, too, Mike, as others have said!

Guy

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 25-May-14 09:18 PM GMT

Thank you for your comments, Guy. It is very difficult for us, from our lofty position in the food chain, to comprehend how 'life' works lower down. We see such amazing sophistication and 'perfection' in tiny creatures that it seems incredible that most of them are eaten by something bigger and never get as far as fulfilling their reproductive 'purpose'.

Thank you Jack. I was already thinking along similar lines 😊 .

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 27-May-14 04:40 PM GMT

To while away a wet Bank Holiday afternoon, yesterday, I decided to do some lens experiments.

I had started to do some simple optical calculations but soon realised that a complex lens, like that on my Lumix FZ200, is not amenable to such basic treatment, so I turned to experiments instead.

As mentioned in previous entries, I have been using an old Hoya set of close-up lenses with my FZ200. Then, when reading the specs. for Panasonic's own close-up adapter (DMW-LC55), I realised that it has a 'strength' of +2 dioptre (based on the farthest focus distance of 500mm) whereas, so far, I had only tried a +1 dioptre lens.

So, I set the Lumix to its closest focus distance of 1 m, with the lens set to maximum zoom. I then photographed a ruler, first with the unaided lens and then with +1 and +2 dioptre supplementaries, respectively.



The sensor in the FZ200 measures 6.17 mm x 4.55 mm, so the magnification of each image can be determined by dividing the width of the sensor by the distance shown on each ruler image. The results are  $6.17/83.5 = 0.074X$  for the unaided lens and 0.152X and 0.224X for the +1 and +2 close-up lenses, respectively. I also measured the distance from the back of the camera to the subject in each case. These distances were 112 mm, using the unaided lens, and 63mm and 43mm for the +1 and +2 lenses, respectively.

Although these magnification figures look quite small, at first glance, it must be remembered that the FZ200 sensor is very much smaller than a 35mm frame and, therefore, needs less magnification to fill the image area

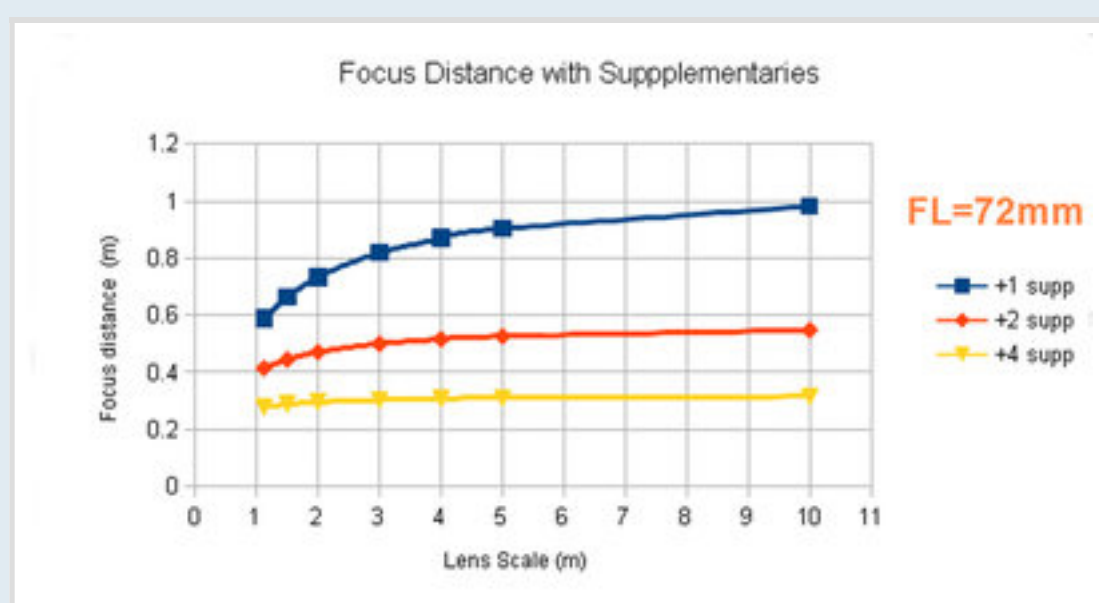
In their data sheet for the DMW-LC55, Panasonic quote a magnification of 'about 3 times'. This statement appears to refer to the increase in magnification over what can be achieved from the unaided lens.

#### Calculations.

A complex zoom lens, like that in the FZ200, often achieves close focus by altering its focal length. Although the lens may have a nominal focal length of 108 mm, when focussed at infinity, it may be much less than that, when set to its closest focus distance. From the measurements I have taken, it is possible to calculate the effective focal length of the lens, when set to its closest focus.

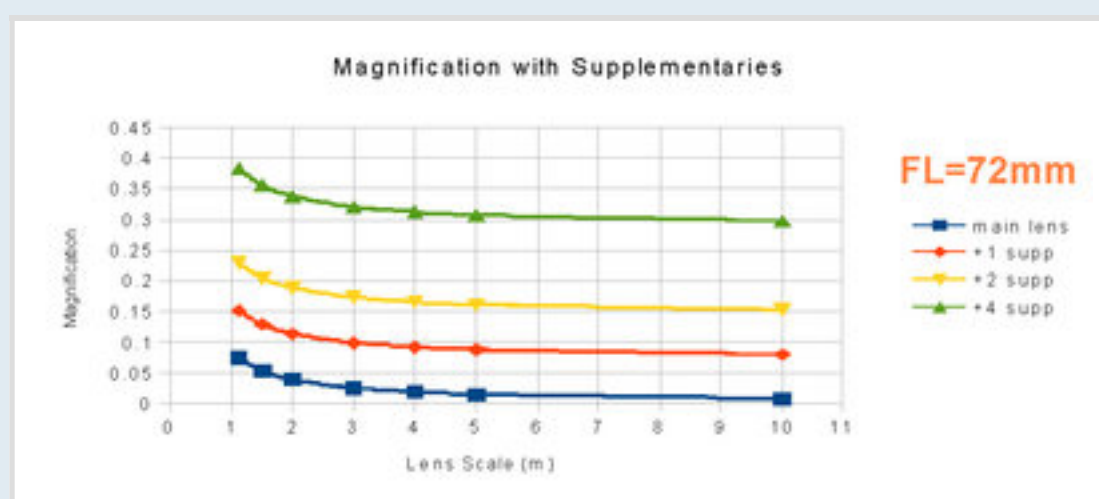
My calculations resulted in a focal length for the unaided lens of 71.85mm. Now I had the bit between my teeth, so went on to construct an Excel spreadsheet, which could calculate the focus distances and magnifications at a range of distance settings.

The first graph shows the calculated distance from the sensor to the subject (d), when the focus on the lens scale is set as shown on the horizontal (X) axis. The minimum distance that can be set at maximum zoom, in 'macro' mode, is about 1m (measured from the sensor).



With Panasonic's own (+2 dioptre) adapter attached, this graph shows that the distance range that can be achieved lies between 0.5m (with the main lens set to infinity) and 0.4m (with the main lens set to 1m).

The second graph shows the magnifications that are provided by the various lens combinations at different settings of the focus scale.



These graphs are not necessarily very accurate for a real lens, since the focal length may change as focus is adjusted.

If anyone has read this far and is interested in the spreadsheet, please PM me and I'll send a copy.

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 28-May-14 04:06 PM GMT

Yesterday and today, I have had a much more pleasant diversion from wet weather than having to resort to mathematics! (*apologies, Guy*)

i wrote about the white (leucistic) Starling that has been visiting my garden for several years in a previous post (dated 2nd April). Yesterday (27th May), I looked into the gloom outside my window and saw **two** white birds! I soon realised that it was the white Starling plus offspring:



Abingdon - 27th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/125s@f/2.8 ISO100

A little later, while the youngster was sitting in a tree, Mum returned with another white offspring! Now there were **three** 😊

I failed to get a photo of all three together, yesterday but, as I hoped they would, they returned at about the same time today. The light was still pretty poor but I got the following shots:



Abingdon - 28th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/320s@f/2.8 ISO320



Abingdon - 28th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/1000s@f/2.8 ISO320



Abingdon - 28th May 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/1000s@f/2.8 ISO320

Perhaps, this is the start of a new race of Starlings! I'm hoping the weather might improve and I shall get some better photos before they disperse. The FZ200 did an excellent job in the conditions and the f/2.8 telephoto capability proved its worth.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Padfield, 28-May-14 04:14 PM GMT

That's wonderful, Mike! Intriguing too - but mostly just wonderful.

Guy

### Re: MikeOxon

by Neil Hulme, 28-May-14 04:24 PM GMT

Agreed. Fabulous birds. I would imagine it's very rare to photograph multiple leucistic individuals. It must be worth investing considerable time to get the very best images possible!

BWs, Neil

### Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 28-May-14 04:40 PM GMT

That's amazing, Mike. To see one is good fortune but to see two, parent and offspring, must be almost unique.

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 28-May-14 06:06 PM GMT

Thank you for the comments- I'm very pleased to be able to show these photos! As Guy says, it is just wonderful to see 😊

I've been thinking about the genetics involved and am hoping to get some expert opinion soon.

In the current poor weather, the f/2.8 lens on the FZ200 is invaluable. I've taken some shots with the Nikon as well but, with my 300mm f/4, there is so little depth of field that I cannot keep all the birds in focus. If the weather improves, I shall have a better chance and, perhaps, they will be prepared to come out from the shelter of our trees!

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 28-May-14 06:31 PM GMT

When can I move in Mike???? 🍷🍷 That is incredible. More images please 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by Willrow, 28-May-14 09:53 PM GMT

Well Mike, what a turn up, that's absolutely amazing and for them to actually be in a naturalist/photographers garden is pretty darn good eh 😊 Please keep us all up to date on this unique avian family, and thanks for providing us with some lovely images.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: MikeOxon

by Lee Hurrell, 28-May-14 11:03 PM GMT

I can only agree, Mike – I'm transfixed! Please take some more photos 😊

Best wishes,

Lee

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 29-May-14 07:30 PM GMT

A warmer and brighter day with some sun. No visits from any white Starlings, however. They must have a different routine in good weather. Just one **Holly Blue** flitting through the garden during a sunny interval.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 30-May-14 08:56 AM GMT

Fantastic stuff Mike 🍷 😊 I've seen partially leucistic birds before but never anything like the fully white ones. It's quite a surprise to see that they've actually bred as normally they'd be the first ones picked off by a predator. The rarity of this type of mutation suggests a recessive allele to me but that is just a guess. If that's the case then there must also be a leucistic carrier male out there to pass on it's copy of the gene. It'll be interesting to see if the juveniles attain the yellow bill like the mother has once they grow up a bit, keep us posted.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 30-May-14 12:56 PM GMT

#### "Wurzel" wrote:

The rarity of this type of mutation suggests a recessive allele to me but that is just a guess.

That's my assumption, too, but it also raises interesting questions.

She has bred three times before, to produce 'normal' offspring. I don't know much about mating habits of Starlings but this suggests a different paring this year. I would think that she must have paired with a close relative, carrying the same recessive allele, but, since Starlings form large flocks in Winter, one would expect the gene pool to become widely dispersed.

Although white feathers are relatively common in Blackbirds and Crows, they seem to be extremely rare in Starlings, so the character must only be expressed in very unusual circumstances. There is, perhaps, a complex pattern of alleles involved which, therefore, makes it surprising that **both** her offspring show the effect!

Also, far from suffering a huge disadvantage, as one might expect, the 'mother' has survived well since 2008. It remains to be seen how these youngsters fare, but perhaps something in the modern environment will give them a selection advantage, Who knows?

All rather puzzling! – I'm still hoping for an expert opinion.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 30-May-14 02:16 PM GMT

Hi! Mike your photo's are fantastic, 🍷 🍷 I get loads of Starlings in the garden , the nearest I've come to a White one is the tail feathers of just one of the birds 😊 I hope they come back so you can post more pic's Goldie 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by Willrow, 30-May-14 02:47 PM GMT

I've shared my house with nesting Starlings for many years Mike, I've always been very partial to them, must say though I never remember any mention of white Starlings, white Jackdaws, Carrion/Hooded Crow, Blackbirds etc certainly, seen several, white Starlings have to be very special and would make a super interesting national news item, if you could possibly put up with the intrusion and also keep your location secure for the birds sake 😊

I'm so glad you've shared this with us Mike 😊 hope they fall victim to your new Panasonic Lumix FZ200 again...cos' they need shooting 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

**Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 30-May-14 03:03 PM GMT

**"Willrow" wrote:**

would make a super interesting national news item

I suspect we don't realise how few share our interest in the natural world! A few weeks ago, the mother bird was feeding on the grass verge of a local pavement, as several people were passing. No one seemed to notice, even though I was standing watching her!

Now, if I had a photo of a minor celeb. showing an inch more flesh than she should, that would be different 😊

Mike

**Re: MikeOxon**

by Padfield, 30-May-14 04:48 PM GMT

**"MikeOxon" wrote:**

I suspect we don't realise how few share our interest in the natural world! A few weeks ago, the mother bird was feeding on the grass verge of a local pavement, as several people were passing. No one seemed to notice, even though I was standing watching her!

I had a similar experience last year, Mike, when I saw a white house sparrow mucking in with the normal ones at Martigny station. No one else noticed.



Guy

**Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 30-May-14 05:11 PM GMT

Thanks Guy - good example! If it were a white pigeon or duck, then it would be quite routine. It's just the species in which it occurs that is special.

One of the white youngsters was back at our feeders this afternoon, looking very independent!

Mike

**Re: MikeOxon**

by Jack Harrison, 30-May-14 07:14 PM GMT

Now, if I had a photo of a minor celeb. showing an inch more flesh than she should, that would be different 😊

Anyone on ukb know who is top of the pops at them moment? Or has sold the most albums? I wouldn't have a clue nor am I in the least interested. But I could be amused by the *saddos* who **DO** know about these things!

Isn't there a pop artist called Justin Bebo? Or am I confused. He might be a darts player. ONE HUNDRED AND S\_I\_X\_T\_Y!

Jack

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 30-May-14 08:40 PM GMT

"Jack Harrison" wrote:  
ONE HUNDRED AND S\_I\_X\_T\_Y!

180, I think 😊

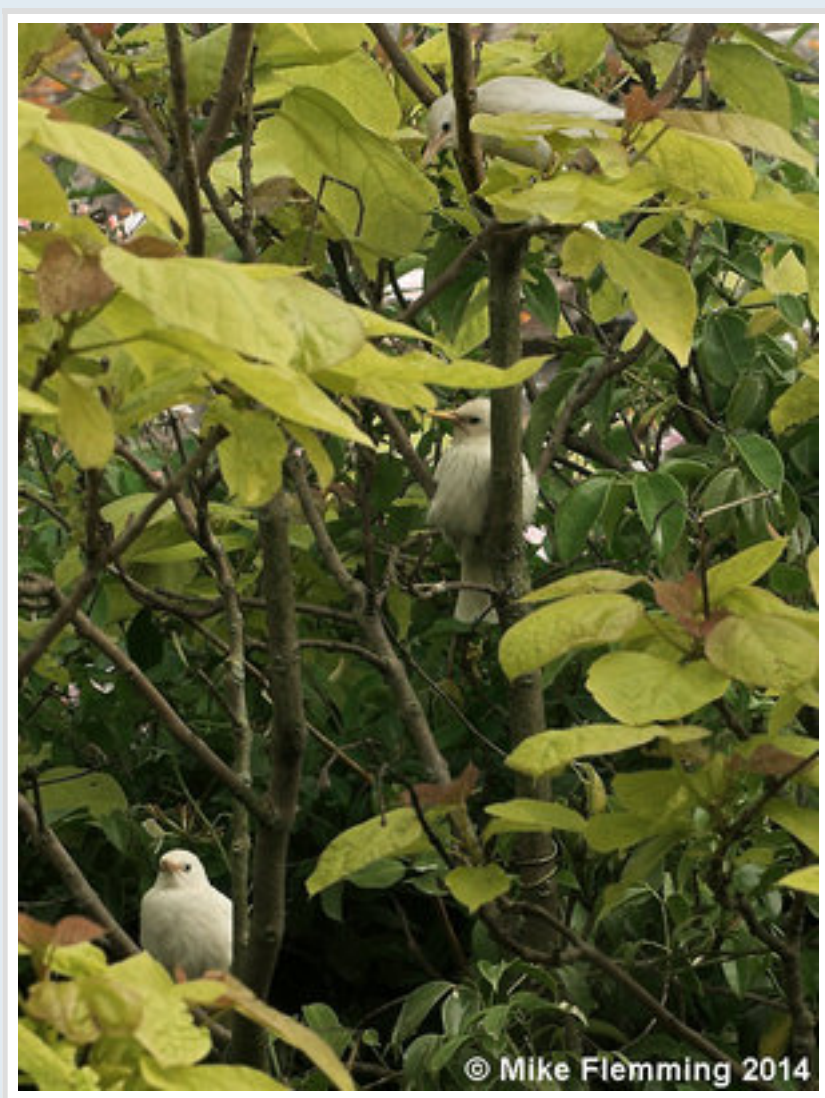
Mike

ps if anyone wants to respond to Jack re. 'trivia' knowledge, please use a different thread 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 31-May-14 10:23 PM GMT

In response to popular request, some more white Starling photos:



All three were in my Catalpa tree this morning – Mum in the middle, with the two offspring above and below.



This family portrait shows Mother and child. I'm hoping they will stay around long enough for me to be able to determine whether son or daughter. Conveniently, when the beak colours develop, males have a blue base to the bill, while females have pink – yes, really!

When I photographed **Orange Tip** larvae recently, I commented on the harshness of on-camera flash. I have just built my 1st-prototype diffuser for the FZ200. It consists of the cap from a deodorant aerosol can, with a small piece of black tape added, to block direct light.



Unfortunately, the weather outlook is not great for more butterfly trips in the week ahead.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 01-Jun-14 06:38 AM GMT

These are unique photos Mike – please keep taking them and posting them.

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 04-Jun-14 02:29 PM GMT

This week saw me visiting **Otmoor**, once again. On Monday (2nd June), I went in search of the Turtle Doves, which are now regular Summer visitors to the moor. It is always a delight to listen to their purring. The hedgerows were bursting with bird-song, though the singers always show great skill in remaining hidden! I only managed fleeting glimpses of Whitethroats, Reed Buntings, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, and Chiffchaffs.

Butterflies were most noticeable by their absence but, fortunately, my wife was with me and she has much sharper eyes than mine, for spotting 'mini-beasts' along the edges of the paths. First 'spot' was of groups of **Peacock** larvae clustered on the nettles:





Otmoor, Oxon - 2nd June 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 + 1.4x TC - 1/180s@f/5.6 ISO800

Then a lone **Small Tortoiseshell** larva looking quite close to pupation:



Otmoor, Oxon - 2nd June 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 + 1.4x TC - 1/180s@f/9.5 ISO800 (with flash)

When it comes to caterpillars, it seems that moths have all the best colours! These **Yellow Tail** moths were basking openly on leaves, presumably confident in their defensive spines and warning colours:



Otmoor, Oxon - 2nd June 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 + 1.4x TC - 1/180s@f/8 ISO800 (with flash)

Another colourful find was this Red-headed Cardinal Beetle (*Pyrochroa serraticornis*)



Otmoor, Oxon - 2nd June 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 + 1.4x TC - 1/180s@f/8 ISO800 (with flash)

We seem to have entered another wet spell but temperatures are predicted to rise later in the week so, perhaps, more will be on the wing by then.

Mike

P.S. For anyone interested in following the story of 'my' white Starling, I have now written a dedicated webpage at <http://home.btconnect.com/mike.flemming/WStarling.htm>

### Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 05-Jun-14 09:55 PM GMT

A wonderful report on the Starlings Mike. Do please keep us informed of their progress and whether you are able to determine eventually the gender of the youngsters.

### Re: MikeOxon

by Nick Broomer, 05-Jun-14 10:15 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

I think your family of white Starlings are just brilliant. I wonder what the chances are of this phenomenon ever happening again? I`ll leave you to work that out. 😊

All the best, Nick.

### Re: MikeOxon

by Willow, 07-Jun-14 04:11 PM GMT

Lovely bug shot Mike, and what can I add about those magnificent Starlings 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 08-Jun-14 06:46 PM GMT

Yet another visit to **Otmoor**, today; this time as a member of a group from the Oxford Ornithological Society. It proved a memorable day, bird-wise, with the highlight being a sighting of Glossy Ibis, to the background accompaniment of a purring Turtle Dove. For me, though, I was especially pleased to see my first **Red Admiral** of the year, basking at the edge of one of the rides.



Otmoor, Oxon - 8th June 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/200s@f/6.3 ISO125 (with flash)

It was a morning of sun and cloud and, after basking with wings open, as a cloud passed over, it obligingly closed its wings for an underside shot when the sun's heat became quite fierce.



Otmoor, Oxon - 8th June 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/400s@f/6.3 ISO125 (no flash)

The butterfly looked more pristine in reality than the photo indicates, possibly as a result of using flash for the top-side shot, when the butterfly was in shade. Other butterflies seen included **Common Blue** and various **Whites**. One problem of being in a (non-butterflying) group is that one cannot linger too long, to establish the identification of every butterfly seen!

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 10-Jun-14 10:57 PM GMT

After reading a report on the Oxon Wildlife Blog (<http://oxfordshirewildlife.blogspot.co...-june.html>) that **Black Hairstreaks** were on the wing in good numbers at **Whitecross Green Wood**, I decided to make a visit after lunch today.

Whitecross Green Wood is a BBOWT Reserve, a little to the North of the Bernwood complex in Oxfordshire, quite close to the M40 motorway. During the week, it is usually quiet and has a good selection of bird and plant life, as well as butterflies. Until a few years ago, there were colonies of Wood Whites but these sadly disappeared after changes to the ride management. Fortunately, it remains one of the best sites in Oxfordshire for the Black Hairstreak.

The entrance is an unmarked gate off the minor road that encircles Otmoor. It lies immediately opposite a small thatched cottage, Panshill Cottage, at grid ref. SP599150. A short distance down the track from the first gate, a second gate leads into the Reserve car park.

From the car park, a grassy ride leads in a South-West direction. The ride is not mown at this time of year but two narrow paths are provided, between the profusion of wild flowers, including spectacular numbers of Common Spotted Orchids.



*Common Spotted Orchids – 10th June 2014 Whitecross Green Wood*

After about 220m, a second ride branches off to the left (SE). I initially continued to the end of the first ride, to an area where the Blackthorn has been cut back to encourage new growth. Unfortunately, the sun had found the largest cloud in the sky to hide behind and a strong, cool breeze was blowing straight along the ride, making conditions very unfavourable for butterflies!

I returned to the junction and took the South-East ride, which leads, after about 600m to one of the best areas for Black Hairstreak in the wood.



*Whitecross Green Wood – 10th June 2014*

A Silver Birch on the right hand side of the ride is a good marker and, in another 100m or so, the whole width of the ride has been mown, no doubt to cater for the expected throng of visitors during the next few weeks. All along this ride I saw lots of **Large Skippers**, several Dragonflies, and heard continuous bird song.



*Whitecross Green Wood – 10th June 2014 Lumix FZ200 – 1/250s@f/4 ISO125*

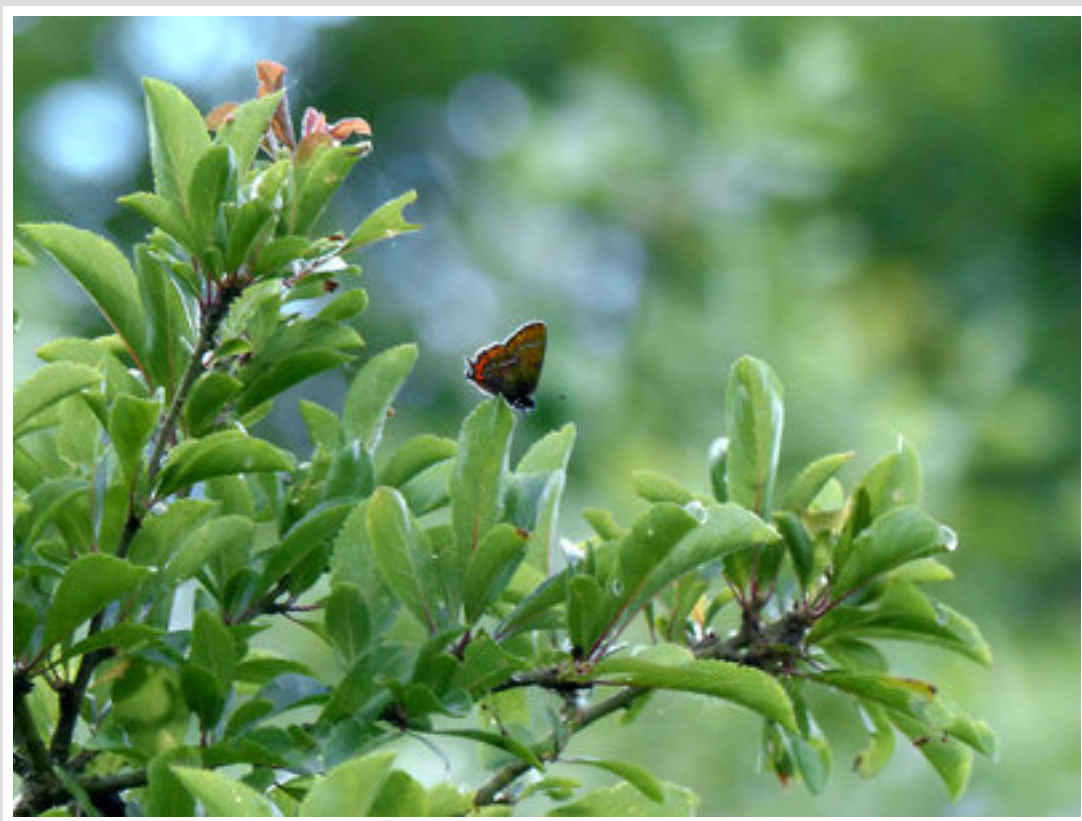
You will soon see a turning to the left marked 'Pond' and this junction is the 'hot spot'. At first, I found very little, as the sun dodged in and out of cloud, but a more settled spell of sunshine brought a pair of tiny dark shapes jinking around the upper new growth of the Blackthorn by the pond.

These butterflies are difficult! They appear and disappear amongst the fronds in an instant and can suddenly zoom to a different area altogether. After watching for a while, I returned the short distance back from the pond to the junction and scanned the south facing bank of Blackthorn. Again, I kept getting brief glimpses until, at last, I spotted one resting amongst the leaves. It was difficult to get a clear view, especially as the butterfly was tilting its wings towards the sun, away from an observer below!



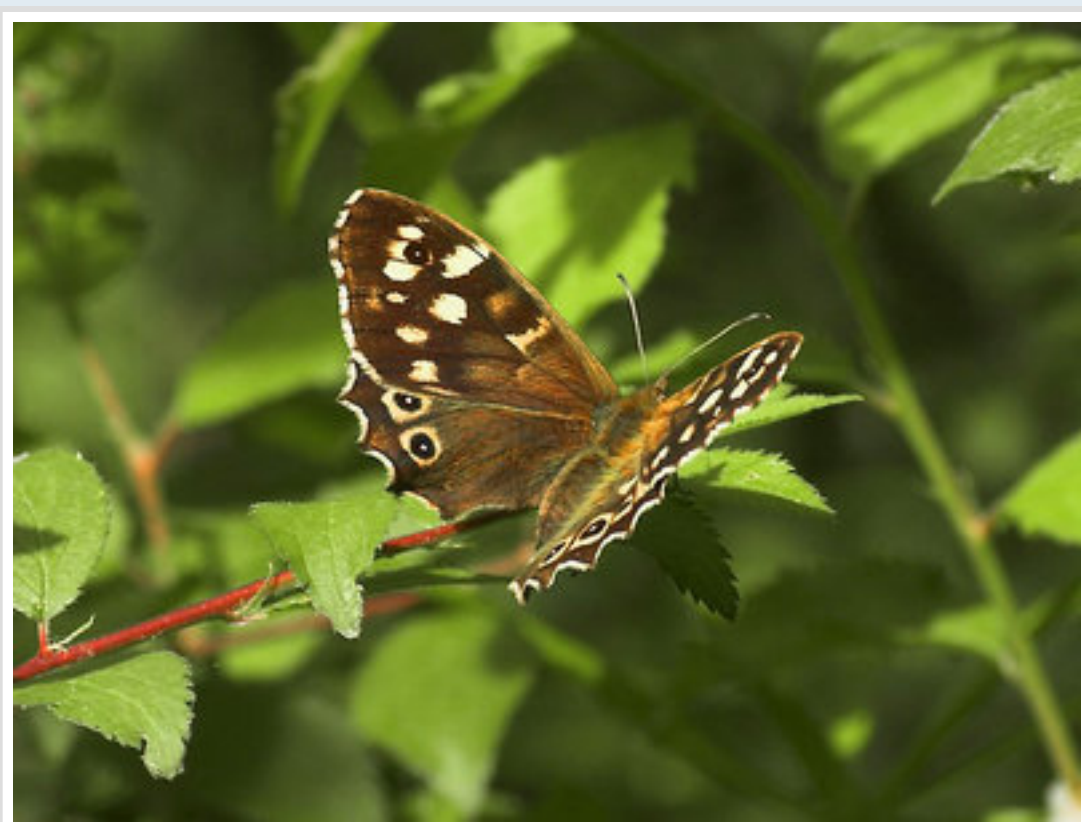
*Whitecross Green Wood - 10th June 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/500s@f/4 ISO125*

At around 4pm, there seemed to be a flurry of activity as about half a dozen of these butterflies congregated around the higher branches of the untrimmed Blackthorn on the Southern side of the ride (against the sun!). It is quite difficult to pick out resting butterfly under these conditions, since the new leaf tips have a similar red colour and shape. The following shot is typical of the view an observer can expect to see.



*Whitecross Green Wood - 10th June 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/320s@f/4 ISO125*

Another distraction is provided by **Speckled Wood** butterflies, which can fly up amongst the Blackthorn in a similar manner.



*Whitecross Green Wood - 10th June 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro lens - 1/250s@f/8 ISO800*

I felt that I saw at least a dozen different BH individuals during my visit and suspect that numbers will increase over the next few days, if fine weather holds, so this could be a good year for them at Whitecross!

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by LancsRover, 10-Jun-14 11:49 PM GMT

Hi Mike, Thanks for your comprehensive report on Black Hair-streaks at White Cross today. I came down a little late last year and with the weather not being great, I only managed one record shot (at the top of a blackthorn bush near the pond).

I'm trying to get down on Friday/Saturday of this week, the forecast is looking promising (at the moment), and I hope to get a decent photo this time but as you say these b/f's are not easy.

Thanks again for your report, Russ.

### Re: MikeOxon

by William, 11-Jun-14 07:24 AM GMT

Really like your second Black Hairstreak Mike, lovely soft lighting 😊

BWs

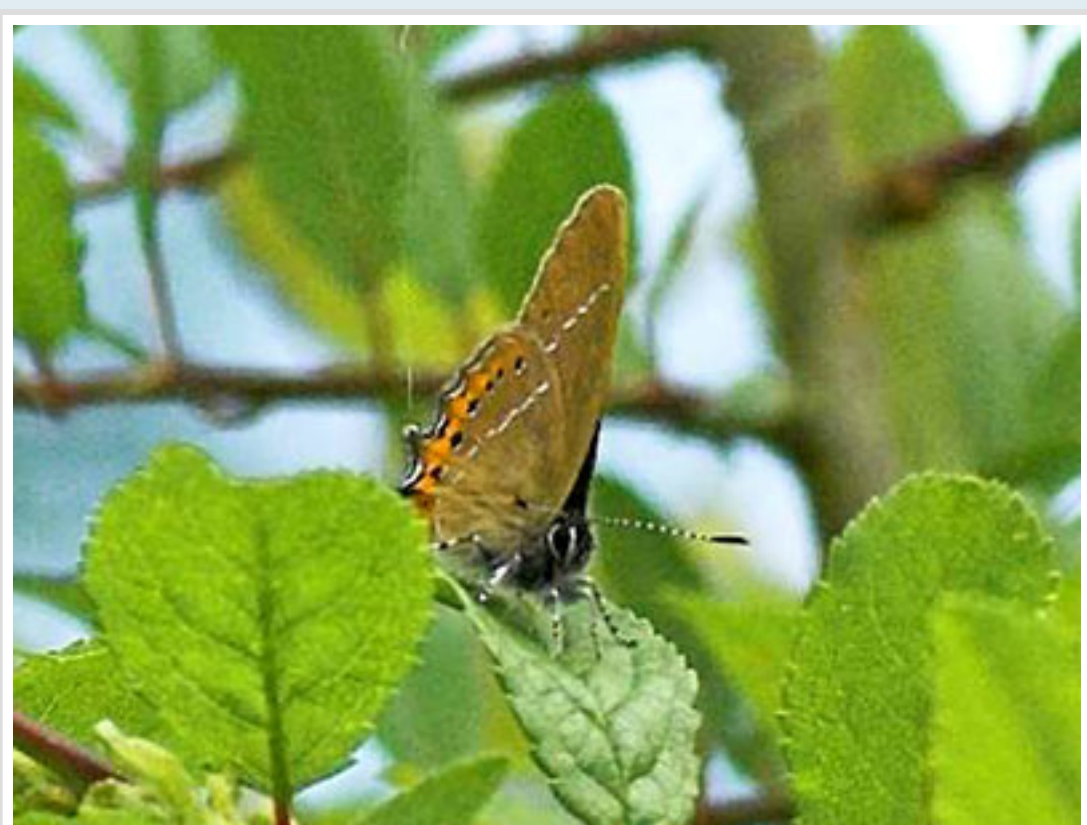
William

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 11-Jun-14 02:34 PM GMT

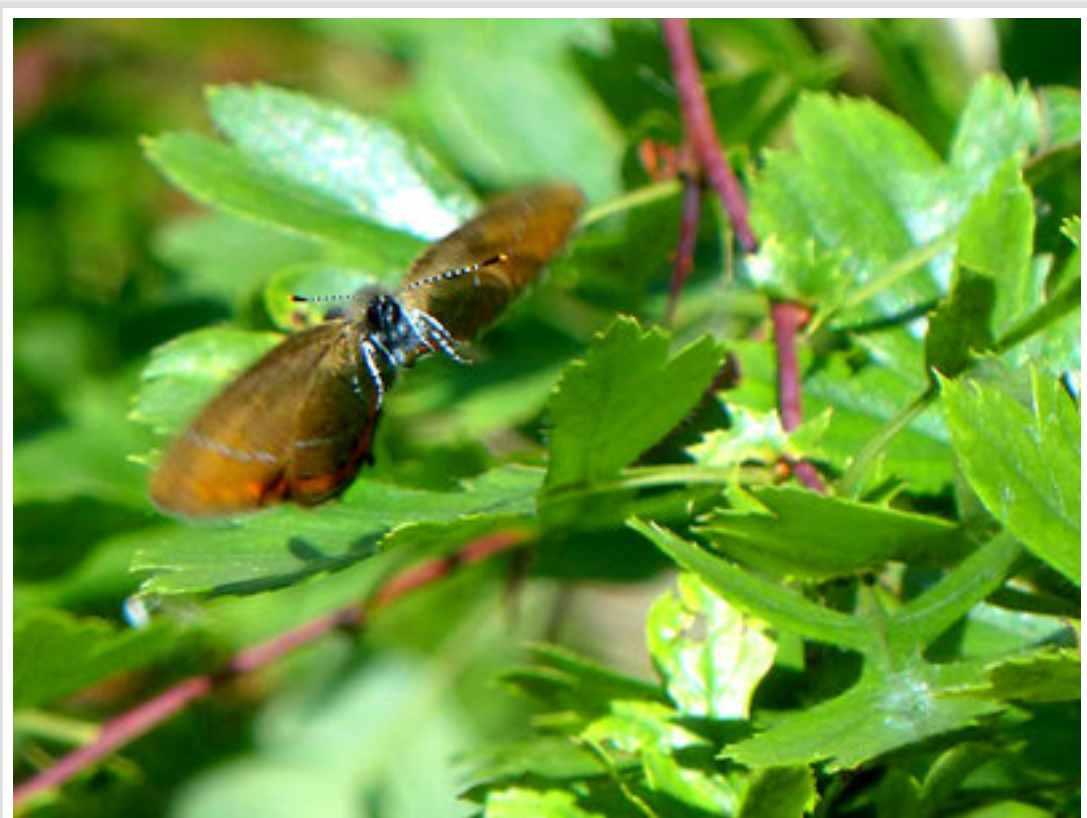
Many thanks to all who have commented on my diary. I realise that, although Black Hairstreak is local for me, it involves quite a trek for many and is a 'special' butterfly. I have tried to provide some helpful guidance to those for whom this is a 'lifer'

I'd also recommend to bring a long-focal length lens, if you have one. I was using full zoom on my Lumix most of the time, since you have to be lucky to get close with a macro lens. The following is a crop from one of my macro shots:



*Whitecross Green Wood, Oxon - 10th June 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro lens - 1/250s@f/8 ISO800 (heavily cropped)*

and here's one that almost got away...



*Whitecross Green Wood, Oxon - 10th June 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/1000@f/4 ISO125*

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Chris Jackson, 11-Jun-14 03:10 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

I think the Black Hairstreak will have to remain on my long-term wish list. I'm not about to see one down here. As I use the FZ150, I sympathize for the distant shots on full zoom, which are only good for "record" shots, although I find the FZ150 quite versatile for close-up and medium range shots. My shutter speed will go up to 1/2000 which is barely fast enough to guarantee a satisfactory frozen shot in flight - that's about my only regret so far.

Chris

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 11-Jun-14 04:21 PM GMT

Thank you Chris. I'm in a bit of a dilemma over cameras at the moment! While the FZ200 is a remarkable piece of kit, combining huge versatility with a lightweight package, the small sensor cannot hope to match the performance of a DSLR. The differences can be quite subtle at times and I think are largely due to the reduced dynamic range of the smaller sensor. I have tried using a monopod with the Lumix, which helps a lot with long tele shots. My aim yesterday was to try a 'lightweight' kit of Lumix plus Nikon with just the macro lens. As things turned out, I never got a chance with the the macro. The example I show is heavily cropped and, in that comparison, I think the Lumix wins.

My main problem with the Lumix is its relatively slow operation. I missed a shot of a fox on the path because the Lumix took so long to start up, wasted precious moments informing me 'Sleep Cancel' and then seemed to take forever to zoom, by which time I just saw the brush disappearing into the hedge! If I'd had the tele on the Nikon, it would have been lift, shoot...done. Another problem with carrying two cameras is that it creates a moment of indecision – which shall I use.

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 11-Jun-14 04:43 PM GMT

Really well done with the BH Mike – all the better for them being in the right place at the right time 😊

I, too, find the Lumix slow Mike and have been in exactly that situation with a fox, and also with a Red Kite the other day which gave me the closest view I've ever had. Perhaps a DRSL is on the cards after all 😊

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 11-Jun-14 05:32 PM GMT

Thank you, Pauline. As you know, I'm still feeling my way with the Lumix but slowness of operation is a pain after a DSLR. It's a bit better than some compacts but still a potential frustration, if you want to take 'grab shots'! Do try a DSLR but aim to keep the weight down – there are plenty of options that are much lighter than my kit. Don't compromise on the sensor size – nothing smaller than 'APS-size'.

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 18-Jun-14 12:27 AM GMT

With a good weather forecast today (17th June), I decided to visit **Daneway Banks**, a little West of Cirencester, to look for **Large Blue**. This Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust site is much nearer to my home than Collard Hill and is also a much quieter place to visit.

It's a place which I always enjoy, both for the location, with rolling hills and a mix of woodland and flower-filled meadows, and for the variety of both flora and fauna. The following general view along one of the main paths shows a patch of orchids in the foreground, with both Common Spotted and Pyramidal Orchids in view. Other Orchids on the reserve include Bee and Fragrant orchids.



*Daneway Banks Reserve, Glos. – 17th June 2014*

From the butterflies' point of view, an important feature is the many Thyme-covered ant-hills, dotted throughout the reserve.



*Ant-hill at Daneway Banks - 17th June 2014*

I soon spotted my first Large Blue - a female laying on a Thyme flower.



*Daneway Banks, Glos - 17th June 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro lens - 1/180s@f/4.8 ISO400*

After laying, she moved into an area of long grasses, where she adopted a head-down roosting position.



*Daneway Banks, Glos - 17th June 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro lens - 1/125s@f/16 ISO400*

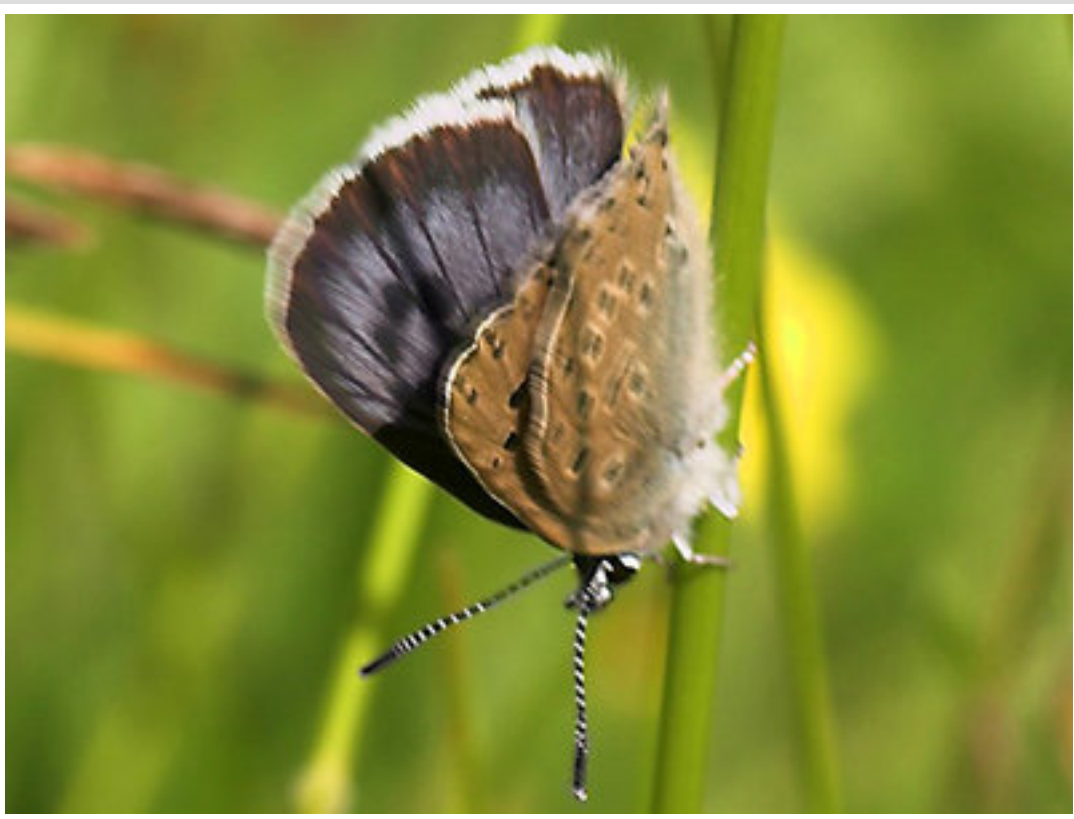
I had brought both my Nikon DSLR and Lumix FZ200 bridge cameras on this trip. I used the Nikon for macro shots and the Lumix mainly for general site views. The small-sensor Lumix is also excellent for setting a butterfly within the overall context of the site, because of the wide-angle lens and great depth of field that can readily be achieved.





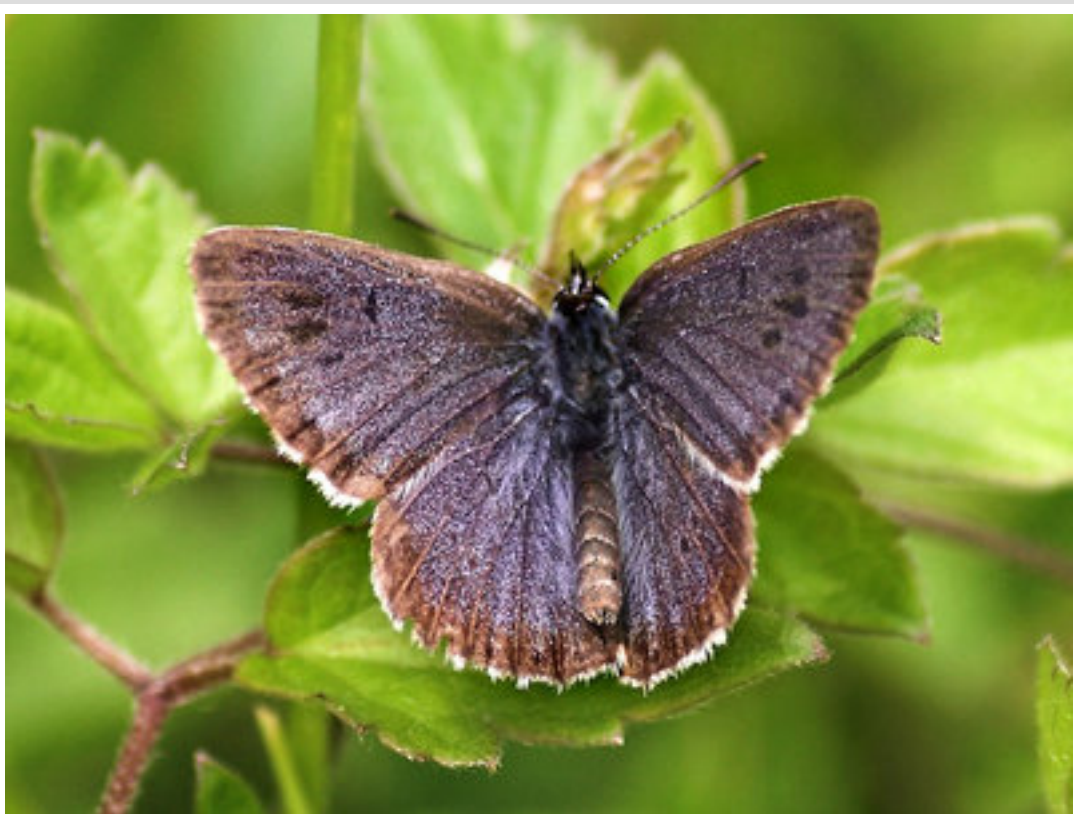
*Daneway Banks, Glos - 17th June 2014 Panasonic Lumix FZ200 - 1/1000s@f/5.6 ISO125*

Of course, I was hoping for an open-wing shot but, initially, I only got a quick flick of the wings for a tantalisingly brief view of the upper-side markings. The contrast between the deep blue of the main wing area and the reddish-brown outer fringes was very striking on this female.



*Daneway Banks, Glos - 17th June 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro lens - 1/125s@f/16 ISO400*

Further into the reserve, I was very fortunate to find a very dark-winged male, basking with wings spread, close to the path.



*Daneway Banks, Glos - 17th June 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro lens - 1/180s@f/6.7 ISO400*

My visit wasn't just about Large Blues, since many other butterflies were enjoying the carpet of flowers in the sunshine. Species seen included **Large Skipper**, **Brown Argus**, **Common Blue**, **Small Heath**, **Meadow Brown** and **Ringlet**. **Marbled Whites** were especially abundant and, at times, each foot-fall raised another cloud of these attractive butterflies. They are very sensitive to movement and proved difficult to photograph, until I found this female willing to pose for me:



*Daneway Banks, Glos - 17th June 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro lens - 1/180s@f/6.7 ISO400*

Towards the end of my visit, the peace was somewhat shattered by two over-flying B52 aircraft, probably heading for RAF Fairford.

Mike

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by CJB, 18-Jun-14 09:42 AM GMT

Good morning Mike,

I was hoping you were going to post about LB's at Daneway and Voila! 😊

I am going there on Friday morning and keeping my fingers firmly crossed as it would be incredible to add it to my list. I assume I park at the Inn and head up the hill 😊

Do they have DGF's there as, of all the species I am yet to snap, that seems an easy one for this year?

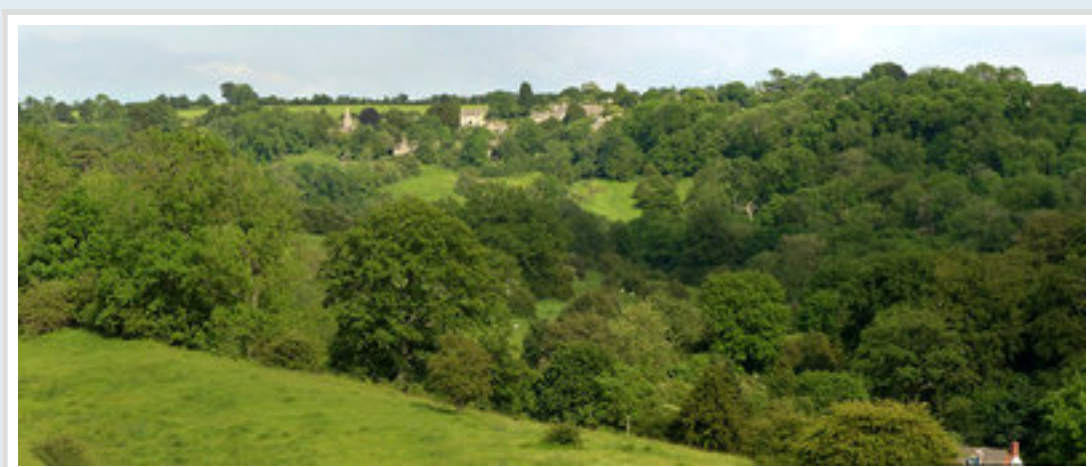
My list of home species is growing: SWhite, LWhite, GVWhite, OTip, STort, SCopper, Peacock, MBrown, BArgus, CBlue, RAdmiral, Brim, SWood, Comma and keeping fingers crossed for a WLH.

Flutter on!

CJB

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 18-Jun-14 11:39 AM GMT



*Daneway Banks, Glos - 17th June 2014*

There's a small car park just before the road from Sapperton crosses the bridge by the Inn. The roof of the Inn can be seen in the bottom right corner of the photo above, with the village of Sapperton in the distance.

I only saw one distant Fritillary, yesterday, but took the following photo on the reserve in July last year, so there's a good chance of finding them there: catching up with one is the main problem 😊



Daneway Banks, Glos. - 5th July 2013 Nikon D300s with 300/4 lens + 1.4X TC - 1/350s@f/9.5 ISO400

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by CJB, 18-Jun-14 12:09 PM GMT

Thanks Mike!

Fingers crossed for the weather and LB on Friday morning! A DGF would be a bonus too! Have you seen any hairstreaks there?

Just opposite the inn there is a public footpath towards the wood and I have scoped the field which has a lot of ant hills covered in thyme so I might have a quick peak there too.

I will report back!

Flutter on!

CJB

### Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 18-Jun-14 04:38 PM GMT

Mike, just love your photo's , the Marbled white is a lovely Butterfly , I can't wait to see it and get a photo, your Large Blues also look great 🍷 I'll have to wait another year to see them I think Goldie 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 18-Jun-14 05:28 PM GMT

Thank you so much, Goldie. i agree about the Marbled White and I enjoyed your NBA photos, too. We need somewhere in the middle of the country where all the Southern and Northern species could get together. 😊

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-14 09:47 PM GMT

Cracking shots of Large Blues Mike 🍷 😊 Still to see my first ever but hopefully that will happen this weekend.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 18-Jun-14 10:14 PM GMT

Informative stuff, Mike. Thanks very much for that.

It'd be nice to see Large Blues unencumbered by hordes of people who are more interested in a 'tick' than actually observing this precious species.

### Re: MikeOxon

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jun-14 10:25 PM GMT

**"MikeOxon" wrote:**

... We need somewhere in the middle of the country where all the Southern and Northern species could get together. 😊

Mike

Oh, I wish it could work like that, I am in the middle of the country 😊

Great reports and photos Mike, I have only seen Large Blue once before, at Collard Hill last year. Like David I would love to see them in quieter circumstances.

Cheers,

Neil.

**Re: MikeOxon**

by David M, 18-Jun-14 10:30 PM GMT

**"nfreem" wrote:**

Like David I would love to see them in quieter circumstances.

This could be our chance, Neil!!

I'm prepared to leave it till later in the flight period when visitor numbers will naturally diminish.

One important thing I've learned is that the majority of folks feel compelled to see certain species within days of their emergence. Once several days have passed they just drift away.

**Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 18-Jun-14 10:43 PM GMT

Thanks again all for the comments, Wurzel, David, and Neil.

I hope that Collard will remain the place for all the 'tick listers', since it is a compact site with on-site guides. I thought hard before writing about Daneway but was assured that it is now regarded as 'public knowledge'. It's not an easy site, however, and the butterflies range over a large area at low density, so some skill is required! I met one person who had had no sightings on the day I was there – he rather gloomily commented that it is such a large place and where does one start? Well, it will need patience and some feeling for likely places to look.

Mike

**Re: MikeOxon**

by David M, 18-Jun-14 11:13 PM GMT

**"MikeOxon" wrote:**

I met one person who had had no sightings on the day I was there – he rather gloomily commented that it is such a large place and where does one start? Well, it will need patience and some feeling for likely places to look.

If one is **truly** interested in butterflies, then careful study over a long period without any obsession towards obtaining a 'trophy' picture will come naturally.

Sometimes, just selecting an appropriate spot and sitting and waiting for half an hour will produce far, far more than a madcap ramble throughout the site.

I look forward to visiting Daneway Banks for an extended length of time and merely taking in anything it throws at me.

**Re: MikeOxon**

by CJB, 19-Jun-14 12:46 PM GMT

I look forward to visiting Daneway Banks for an extended length of time and merely taking in anything it throws at me.

Hi David,

Daneway is an amazing place and it will throw all sorts at you. I have managed to sneak out and have a couple of forays there and both times were amazing in terms of species and numbers. Not so great for my hay fever which is particularly bad when it comes to grass pollen, which is not ideal for watching our fluttery friends.

I will report back after I go there tomorrow morning and let you know what I see. I must admit I am rather excited about having LB's down the road from me and had no idea when I moved to the area 12 weeks ago; a real privilege. The fact that I have seen 14 species in my garden is a huge excitement and I know that there will be some surprises as the season goes on, but not quite as surprising as susie's Gorganus!! 🤔

I have enjoyed reading your reports and hope you get some enjoyment from mine.

Mike, thank you as ever for your helpful pointers.

Flutter on!

CJB

### Re: MikeOxon

by Lee Hurrell, 19-Jun-14 11:03 PM GMT

Lovely report, Mike with some beautiful images.

I hope to visit next year perhaps, for much the same reason as David and yourself.

Best wishes,

Lee

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 19-Jun-14 11:48 PM GMT

Thank you very much Lee. You have lots of good things in your PD too 😊

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Lee Hurrell, 20-Jun-14 01:29 PM GMT

That's really nice of you to say. 😊 There's a lot still to come!

Lee

### Re: MikeOxon

by Willrow, 20-Jun-14 11:56 PM GMT

Just caught up with your excellent Daneway Banks report Mike, thoroughly enjoyed and seeing your really fine images was a lovely bonus, thanks for sharing 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 22-Jun-14 08:01 PM GMT

Yesterday, Saturday 21st June, my son suggested that we visit the **Alun Valley** site, to look for **High Brown Fritillaries**. It's a straightforward journey for me along the M4, although there was heavy congestion around Bristol and quite long queues at the Severn Bridge toll booths. After leaving the M4 at J35, we stopped at the White Horse in Coychurch for a very good (and generously sized) ploughman's lunch in their shady garden. It's then a short distance along the A473 before turning south onto the B4265 through Ewenny, in the direction towards St Brides Major. After emerging from woodland, with Old Castle Down on the left, there is a large lay-by at SS898763, on the right-hand side of the road. There is then a path up onto the Down, skirting the woodlands along its Northern edge. At the top, this opens out into a broad track, with a continuous fringe of bracken, gorse, and brambles on the left, before the drop into the trees.



View along the path at Old Castle Down, Bridgend – 21st June 2014

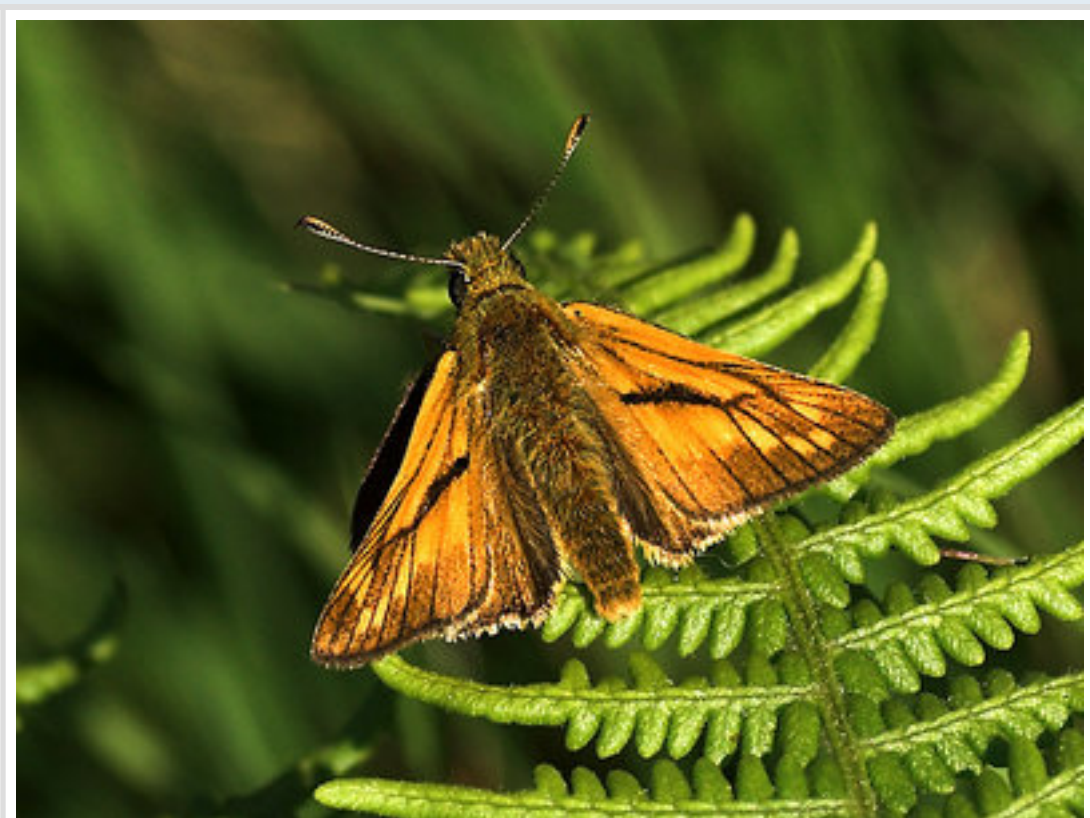
There is another narrow path between the bracken and the trees, which can give close encounters with butterflies but means that you are looking into

the sun, when scanning the bracken. To the North, there are extensive views over Bridgend, towards the mountains of Southern Wales. The brambles were flowering profusely but, for the moment, the male fritillaries are too intent on searching for females for any lengthy feeding stops. On a hot, sunny afternoon, they were constantly on the move, so that it was impossible, for me at least, to distinguish between High Brown and Dark Green Fritillaries. In fact, I would suggest the generic term: High Speed Fritillary (HSF).



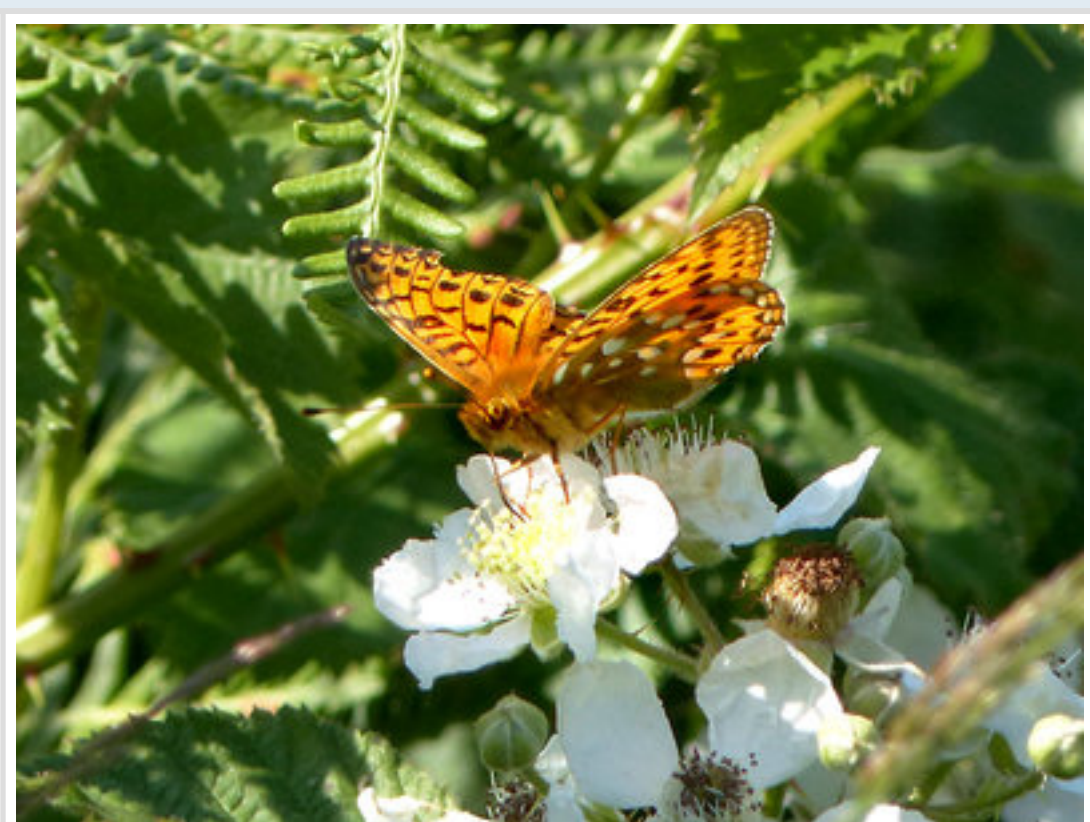
*View North from Old Castle Down, Bridgend – 21st June 2014*

We decided to make a 'base camp' and enjoy watching the fritillaries zooming around, sometimes in groups of three or more, until the temperature began to fall later in the afternoon. Many of the bracken fronds carried a defending **Large Skipper**, which sallied forth after every passing butterfly, including the large fritillaries!



*Old Castle Down – 21st June 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens – 1/350s@f/9.5 ISO400*

Occasionally, a fritillary would pause momentarily and we would scan it with binoculars, to try to decide whether HBF or DGF. This is by no means easy and one of my photos of a **Dark Green Fritillary** (taken at long range) illustrates some of the problems:



*Old Castle Down – 21st June 2014 Lumix FZ200 max zoom – 1/500s@f/4 ISO125*

Visually, this Dark Green Fritillary could easily be taken for a High Brown, The edge of the wing is torn, giving it the 'concave' look of HBF, while the light shining through the wing causes some of the upper surface spots to show through, as if they are underwing HBF markings! Unfortunately, I did not succeed in obtaining a good underwing photo of an HBF on this visit, though my son did, which was welcome proof that their presence was not just down to wishful thinking!

We soon realised that yet another Fritillary was present – smaller and slightly less rapid in flight (though still quick by SPB standards!). These **Small**

**Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** were in surprisingly good condition, for such a late date, and were still quite plentiful, roaming across the stands of bracken and feeding on the brambles.



Old Castle Down - 21st June 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens - 1/350s@f/9.5 ISO400

I was fortunate to spot a pair of SPBs with amorous intent and then tracked them as they descended into a patch of long grass to mate. It was not easy to get into position for a photo but I eventually managed to get a fairly clear view of them both. I suspect the one on the right is the male, since it has a much larger eye. They had chosen a very discreet spot, partially wrapped around by a grass leaf!



Old Castle Down - 21st June 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens - 1/350s@f/9.5 ISO400

It was while I was struggling to capture shots of this pair that my son called to say he had an HBF underside in his sights - but I decided to stick with my own 'find'. Other butterflies that we saw included **Brown Argus**, **Small Heath**, **Red Admiral**, **Meadow Brown**, and **Ringlet**. Another insect that my son spotted first was a large Golden-ringed Dragonfly (*Cordulegaster boltonii*). When he first tried to draw it to my attention, I failed to see it, because it was so much larger than my brain was expecting!



Old Castle Down - 21st June 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/320s@f/4 ISO125

After initial distant shots with my Lumix FZ200, it became apparent that it was so intent on consuming its prey, that a close approach with the macro lens on my Nikon was possible. This shot shows the bee, which is being consumed.



Old Castle Down - 21st June 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens - 1/250s@f/8 ISO400

As evening approached, the butterflies showed very little signs of slowing down but seemed to melt away into the trees to roost. I think it will need a return visit, a little later in the season, when the males have succeeded in finding their mates and are ready to spend more time in other pleasures, such as nectaring. When we finally left the site at around 7:30pm, Meadow Browns were still basking on the bracken fronds - perhaps the longest day of the year was not the best choice for seeking resting Fritillaries 😊



Old Castle Down - 21st June 2014 Lumix FZ200 max zoom - 1/1000s@f/2.8 ISO125

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Willow, 22-Jun-14 08:14 PM GMT

So glad you enjoyed your visit to Old Castle Down Mike 😊 your generic term for the fritillaries during the heat on Saturday is very apt...High Speed Fritillary 😊 love it!!!

I was there on Friday and experienced similar conditions to yourselves, but its a wonderful site worthy of such lovely butterflies 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

### Re: MikeOxon

by CJB, 23-Jun-14 10:31 AM GMT

Hi Mike,

I just wanted to thank you for the pointers at Daneway which led to my seeing 3 LB's and a lifer, which was amazing and mainly down to you.





*Daneway LB*

I also had my 17th species in the garden at home which was a marbled white, which came as a huge surprise.

I am keeping my eyes peeled for DGF's but to no avail the far.

I am glad your weekend was a success.

Flutter on!

CJB

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 23-Jun-14 11:30 AM GMT

Many thanks, Willow and CJB. I'm really pleased to see the Large Blues doing well at Daneway, while Old Castle Down was a splendid experience.

With good weather after a warm Spring, this is developing as a good butterfly year. Let's hope some continental species think that we are worth a visit this year 😊

Mike

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by David M, 23-Jun-14 07:02 PM GMT

Just to further confuse things, Mike, those visiting Old Castle Down in the next week or so may actually have to identify **FOUR** different Fritillaries, as Silver Washed will be around any day now and, as you saw, the last of the SPBFs are still hanging on!

Oh were Pearl Bordereds still found at this site (extinct 1985, sadly). Then we'd have all five violet-feeding Frits. If only BC could get their hands on this place, maybe that would become reality again.

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 23-Jun-14 08:01 PM GMT

Thanks David - I suppose the challenge now is to get them all in one photo 😎

Mike

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by CJB, 25-Jun-14 12:21 PM GMT

Good morning Mike!

Once again thank you for helping me locate the LB; an amazing lifer!

I gather that there are WLH's at Daneway and wondered if you knew where they are?

I am trying to drop in there this afternoon and would love to find them!

Imagine if I can catch up with a DGF as well! 😊😊😊

I am up to 45 species snapped on the mobile so far, which I will publish once I have the full set!

My most treasured picture, even though it is not a particularly great picture is of a monarch which I snapped at London Zoo. I pointed it out to the keeper of the butterfly house who said it was not an escapee!

My biggest disappointment to date was failing to catch up with the Long Tailed Blues after a trip to Dover, but I suspect there might be a chance this year if the season continues in its current form.

The tally in the garden is now up to 17 species, including a Marbled White, which was a real surprise. 😲

Looking forward to your next report.

Flutter on!

CJB

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 26-Jun-14 11:39 PM GMT

With the weather forecast predicting a cooler and wetter period ahead, I decided to pay a return visit to **Daneway Banks** this afternoon (26th June). There was a thin layer of high cloud, with a coolish breeze, but this did not deter the huge numbers of **Marbled Whites** ranging over the site.



*Daneway Banks - 26th June 2014 Lumix FZ200 with +1 closeup lens - 1/60s@f/5.6 ISO100*

It was not long before I spotted my first **Large Blue** but it was being harrassed by a Meadow Brown and flew past very rapidly. My wife saw another Large Blue, together with a **Common Blue**, at around the same time. **Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Small Heath, and Large Skipper** were all plentiful. Apart from butterflies, there was much more Thyme in flower than on my previous visit, as well as several colonies of Pyramidal Orchids



*Daneway Banks - 26th June 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/500s@f/4 ISO125*

We had further 'fly pasts' of, possibly, the same Large Blues, as we walked up the central valley through the reserve. Further up the path, we saw the Small Eggar larval web, mentioned yesterday by CJB in his Personal Diary. To provide a sense of scale, I show this being viewed by my wife plus a close up of some of the caterpillars on top of the 'web'.



*Daneway Banks - 26th June 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/640s@f/4 ISO125*

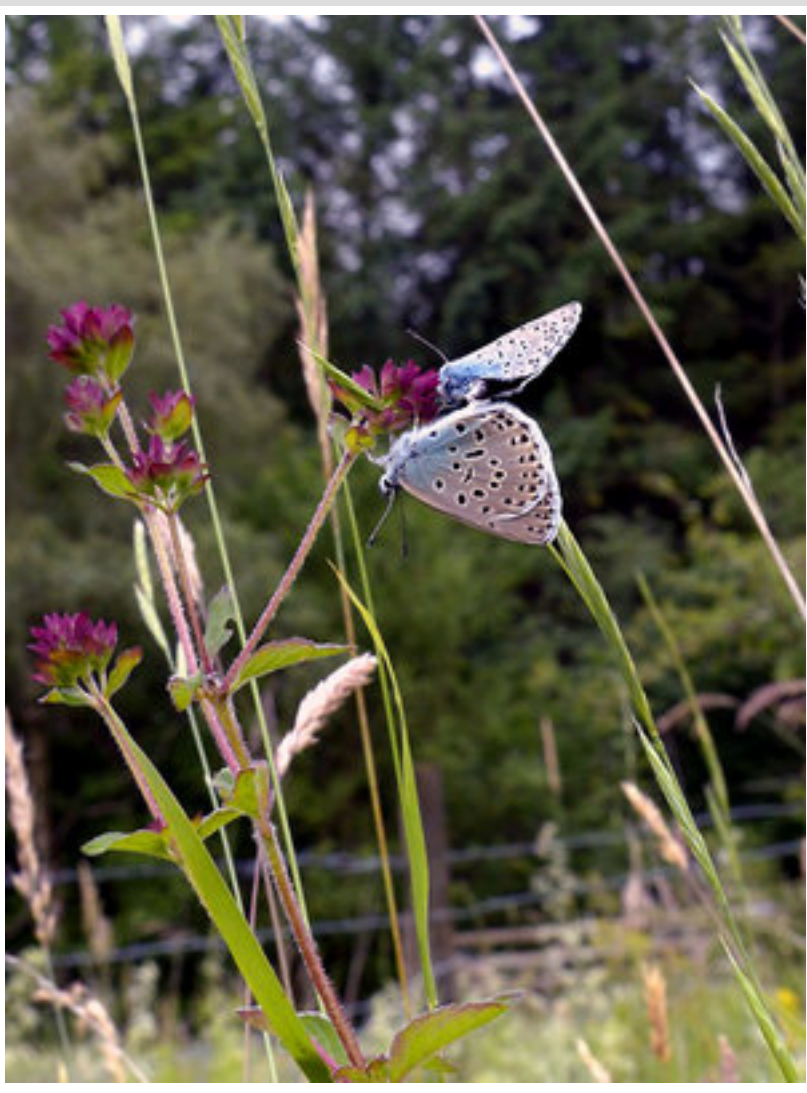


*Daneway Banks - 26th June 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro lens - 1/180s@f/9.5 ISO400*

We completed a circuit of the reserve, enjoying the clouds of Marbled Whites and the profusion of wild flowers. We did not see any more Large Blues, however, and the clouds were getting thicker all the time. Then, when we had returned to within only about 20 yards of the Entrance Gate, I was fortunate to spot a pair of **mating Large Blues**, close to the path.

By this time, the other visitors we had seen during the afternoon had all left the site, so I was able to take photographs without interruption. As on my previous visit, I had brought both my Lumix FZ200 bridge camera and my Nikon D300s, with 90mm Tamron macro lens, so I took my time experimenting with many different settings, including use of flash for some photos (which showed no sign of disturbing the butterflies). I have chosen just two photos to illustrate the relative merits of the two cameras.

The bridge camera excels in taking photos that show the butterfly within the context of its setting.



*Daneway Banks - 26th June 2014 Lumix FZ200 with +1 closeup lens - 1/50s@f/5.6 ISO100*

On the other hand, the DSLR/macro lens is excellent for isolating the subject against an out-of focus background.



*Daneway Banks - 26th June 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro lens - 1/60s@f/8 ISO400*

The time passed quickly but, at around 5:30pm, the first drops of rain started to fall and we retreated to the car. I do hope that the Large Blues found some shelter, since the rain soon became quite heavy but I expect that the butterflies have learned how to cope with changeable weather conditions, over their many million years of evolution.

Mike

ps I have no information about WLH at this site, CJB.

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by David M, 27-Jun-14 12:03 AM GMT

Excellent images, Mike. This site is really becoming a 'must visit' and I intend to do so very soon.

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by CJB, 27-Jun-14 09:43 AM GMT

Hi Mike,

The hibernaculum was an extraordinary sight to behold and thank you for educating me on the technical term!

I met a local called Mark who told that there are two spots where the WLH have been seen, but I wasn't sure about the exact location. He said that there were two elms next two ash trees in two spots up from the inn. Hopefully between you and I we will locate them.

It is great reading your Daneway reports and being able to picture where you are! The LB's were in all corners of the reserve, including next to the small gate at the bottom of the hill, by the inn.

Flutter on!

CJB

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 27-Jun-14 11:52 AM GMT

I've probably misled you over technical terms, CJB. A hibernaculum is strictly a place where creatures such as bats hibernate. Although I've used it for these webs, it's not accurate and I think they should be called 'larval webs'. I'll edit it out of my post! You are getting to know the site better than I do, since I was not aware of a gate by the Inn 😊

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 28-Jun-14 02:54 PM GMT

[list:1lq8f55m][[/list:u:1lq8f55m]Following my initial report on my last visit to **Daneway Banks** (26th June), I spent a wet afternoon, yesterday, working through all the photos that I had taken of the mating pair of Large Blues. I found that I had taken 65 photos of the pair, with the Nikon, and 43 with the Lumix. The Nikon pics were all in RAW (NEF) format, whereas I am, so far, only taking JPEGs with the Lumix.

My first step is to view each of the on-screen images and 'weed out' all those that are obviously out-of-focus or motion-blurred, as well as those where foreground grasses have obscured the image. Occasionally, I grant a 'reprieve' for an image that shows some particularly interesting aspect of the subject.

For the Nikon images, I then use my RAW converter software to adjust colour balance and exposure, before comparing the many very similar images at 1:1 size, to select the best out of these groups. After making this selection, I convert the remaining RAW images to JPEG format and file away the RAW originals. For the Lumix images, I copy the original images to a separate folder, where I make a more detailed selection, viewing the images at 1:1 size. Again, I file away the originals, knowing that I can re-visit any particular image, if I decide that I have been too Draconian in my second selection. I work on the basis that hard-disk storage space is now very cheap and there is no need to risk deleting an image that may later turn out to show an interesting detail. By this stage, I had 19 Nikon images and 15 Lumix images to choose from.

As I mentioned in my earlier post, I was experimenting with various different camera settings, so I kept several of the images just so that I could study the effects of choosing different apertures and shutter speeds, as well as the effects of using flash. Although I have a pretty good idea of what to expect, when using the Nikon, I am still 'feeling my way' with the Lumix.

I felt that I had achieved the best results when using a little fill-in' flash with the Nikon. I was particularly pleased to find that, although I was travelling light and had not brought my separate SB 600 flashgun, the on-camera flash of the Nikon did a good job in bringing out the 'sparkle' in the dusting of coloured scales on the undersides of the wings. The difference in colour between the male (bluer) and the female (greener) is very clear in the following photo (*click on the image to enlarge, to see scale detail*).

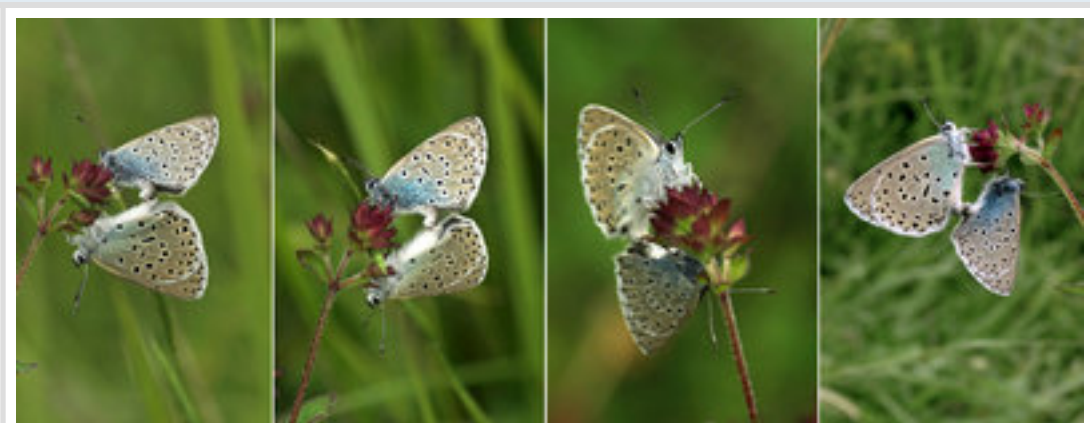


*Daneway Banks - 26th June 2014 (5:15pm, dull cloudy conditions) Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro lens + 1.4X converter - 1/180s@f/9.5 (manual setting) ISO400, with flash*

The above photo also shows that the entrance to the '*corpus bursae*', where the sperm packet is stored inside the female, is some distance from the tip of her abdomen.

My attempts to use flash on the Lumix were far less successful, resulting in very 'artificial' jet black backgrounds. I attribute the lack of success to my being much less familiar with the camera, the low power of the built-in flash, and the limited dynamic range of the Lumix sensor. Only time will tell how well I can overcome these limitations.

Over the time period that I was observing these butterflies, they were far from static, constantly rotating around one another on the flower head. It was only on examining all my photos that I realised that, in the initial photos, the male was in the upper position, whereas they had reversed in the later shots. It's all too easy to miss such observations when they eye is 'glued' to a viewfinder, concentrating on holding composition and focus!



*Daneway Banks - 26th June 2014*

In the above sequence, the first three images (L-R) are from the Nikon, with the last from the Lumix. The Lumix tends to over-emphasise blue colours, especially in shadow areas, so I have attempted to match the colour balance in Photoshop.

My apologies to those who are not interested in all this 'techie' photographic detail but I find it useful to document my experiences, especially when working with a new and unfamiliar camera.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by badgerbob, 28-Jun-14 04:24 PM GMT

Great stuff Mike. Love the mating pair.

### Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 28-Jun-14 04:52 PM GMT

I am most certainly interested in you 'techie' details Mike so please don't stop providing them. I was about to compliment you on your female Marbled White ..... and then I saw the mating Large Blues. All I can say is Wow! Great find and great shots – and very interesting explanation 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 28-Jun-14 09:51 PM GMT

Many thanks, **badgerbob** and **Pauline**. I felt very privileged to be given an extended private audience with this pair. Of course, I was secretly hoping that they would separate and then bask with open wings for a while 😊 I do hope that they coped with the adverse weather that arrived just as I left.

Writing this PD has fired me up, to try a bit harder to understand these creatures better, in all their life stages. On my own website, I have noticed that the vast majority of 'hits' are on my 'orchids' pages. I need to learn a lot more about those too, as I only started photographing them because there are several rare species found in Oxfordshire. Amongst these is the most enigmatic of all, the Ghost Orchid (*Epipogium aphyllum*), which has not been seen locally for many years. Indeed, the plant had just been declared extinct in Britain, when one popped up in the West Midlands! You have to admire a plant like that 😊

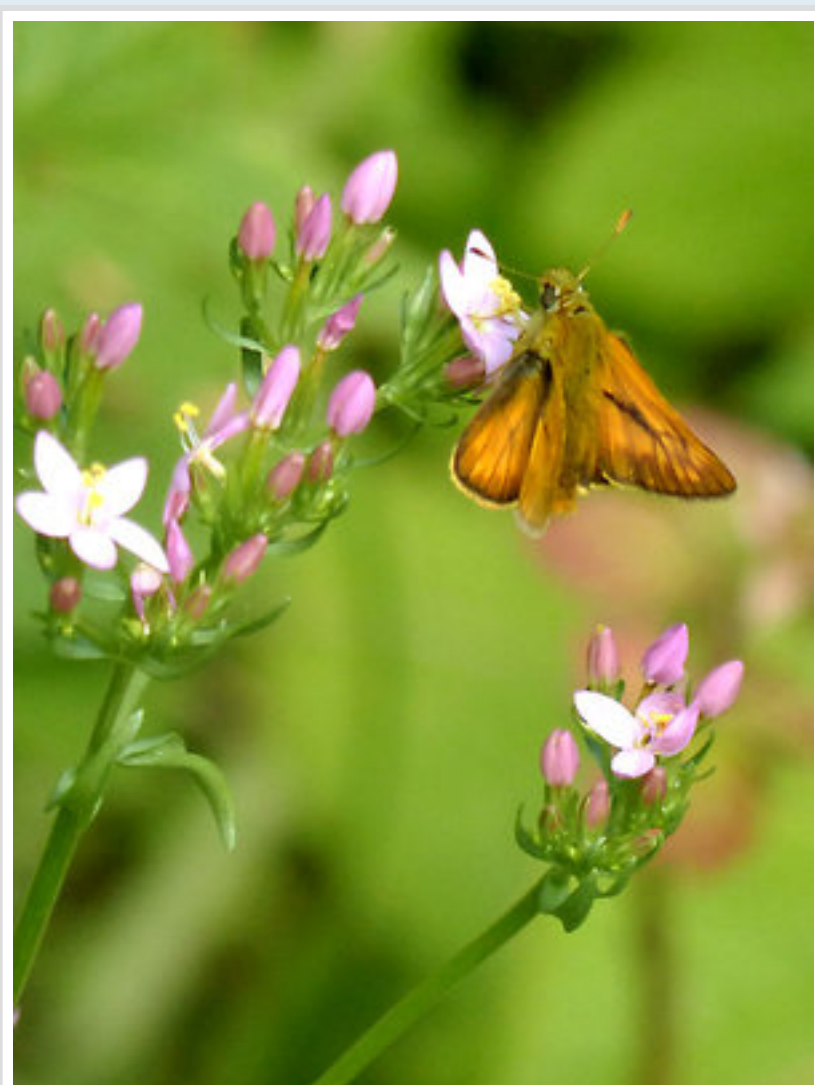
Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 03-Jul-14 11:59 PM GMT

This afternoon (3rd July), my wife and I took our bikes for a gentle ride through **Bernwood Forest**, starting from the Oakley Wood car-park at SP611116. It's an easy start along the main ride, with a steady descent for the first 500m or so.. After that, the route is more undulating but always over a good gravel surface, with easy going.

From the outset, there were plenty of butterflies along the verges on either side of the ride: **Meadow Browns**, **Ringlets**, and myriads of bright **Large Skippers**, often spiralling upwards in groups of three or four.



Bernwood Forest, Oxon – 3rd July 2014 Lumix FZ200 at full zoom – 1/500s @ f/4 ISO200

Soon, we started to see other, much larger, bright orange butterflies and I looked for one of their nectaring spots in a clump of brambles. These were my first Silver-washed Fritillaries this year and I was pleased to see them present in good numbers. My initial attempts at photography were thwarted when another, similarly coloured butterfly, engaged in combat and then settled on a shrub nearby, presumably resting after driving off the larger intruders! This **Comma** was particularly brightly coloured:



*Bernwood Forest, Oxon - 3rd July 2014 Lumix FZ200 at full zoom - 1/500s @ f/5 ISO200*

A female **Silver-washed Fritillary** soon returned and spent some time feeding on the bramble flowers, obligingly showing both her top side and the wonderful streaked underwings.



*Bernwood Forest, Oxon - 3rd July 2014 Lumix FZ200 at 98mm fl - 1/320s @ f/4 ISO200*



*Bernwood Forest, Oxon - 3rd July 2014 Lumix FZ200 at 93mm fl - 1/160s @ f/5 ISO200*

In my second shot, the butterfly seems to have navigated successfully around a minefield of spiders webs!

No sign of Purple Emperor on this trip but I'm sure they'll be around soon.

For those interested in the white Starlings, I can report that one of the youngsters is a regular, daily visitor to my garden, while the other puts in more occasional appearances. The adult bird seems to have left the area, which was her usual pattern in earlier years. Encounters between the siblings are not always friendly, as this snapshot, taken yesterday, demonstrates!



Abingdon, Oxon - 2nd July 2014 Lumix FZ200 at full zoom - 1/60s @ f/2.8 ISO200

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 04-Jul-14 05:09 PM GMT

Good to have a Starling update Mike and great shot as usual. I also like the composition of the Large Skipper shot 😊 (Hark at me - sounds like I know what I'm talking about 😊😊 !)

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 04-Jul-14 05:26 PM GMT

Thank you, **Pauline**. I always value your comments highly.

I rather liked that Skipper shot, too. I was taking my opportunity while one was actually stationary for a few moments!

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Willrow, 04-Jul-14 08:06 PM GMT

Great to see 'your' Starlings are doing okay Mike 😊

Interesting overview of your DSLR/Lumix experiences, its always good to know what other users are finding out about their photo gear.

BW's

Bill 😊

**"When in doubt...venture out"**

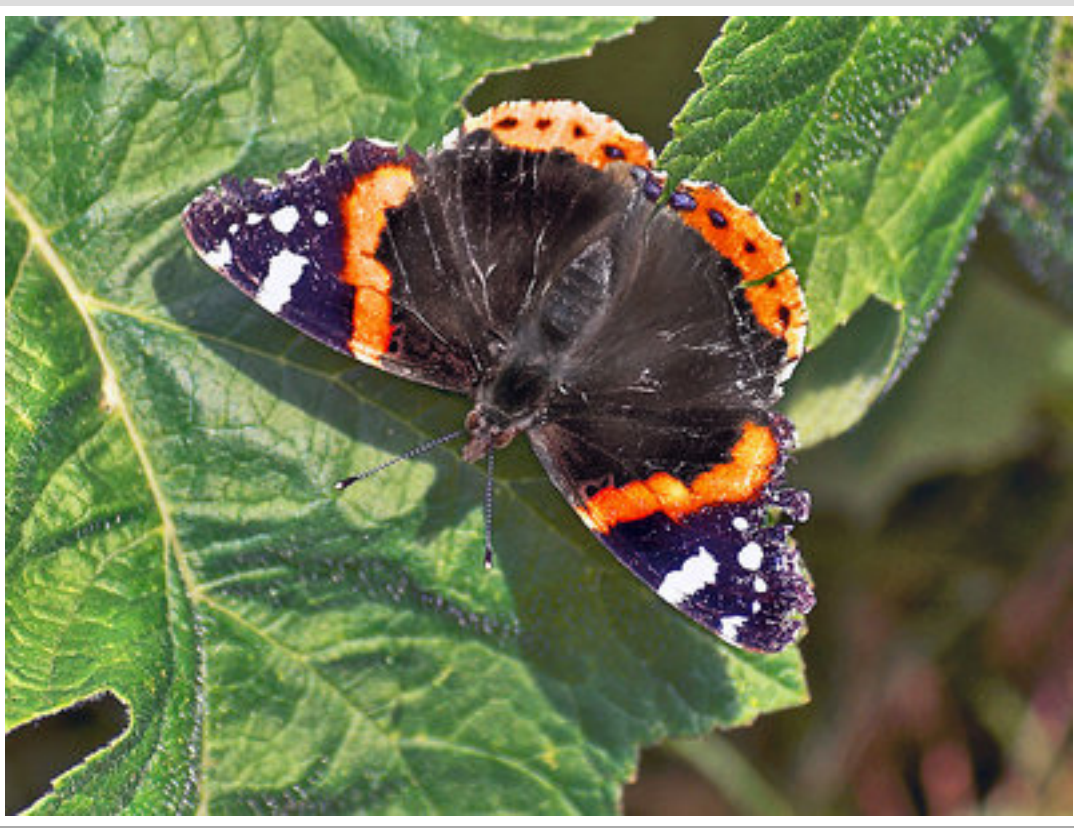
### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 13-Jul-14 04:28 PM GMT

Yesterday's (12th July) hot and sultry afternoon saw me, once again, visiting the Roman Road on **Otmoor, Oxon**. I found it very quiet and it seemed that all sensible creatures had taken cover from the hot sun. What's that about mad dogs and Englishmen?

My first encounter was with a **Red Admiral** basking low down and, seemingly, far too lazy to move when I approached for a photo:





Otmoor, Oxon - 12th July 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro - 1/180s@f/6.7 ISO400

Otherwise, almost all the butterfly activity was from Skippers - still mainly **Large Skippers** at this location:



Otmoor, Oxon - 12th July 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro - 1/180s@f/8 ISO400

A few Meadow Browns flapped lazily amongst the foliage and some very bright **Commas** patrolled the ride, between rests - I rather liked this pose on the end-nibbled stalk.



Otmoor, Oxon - 12th July 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro - 1/180s@f/8 ISO400

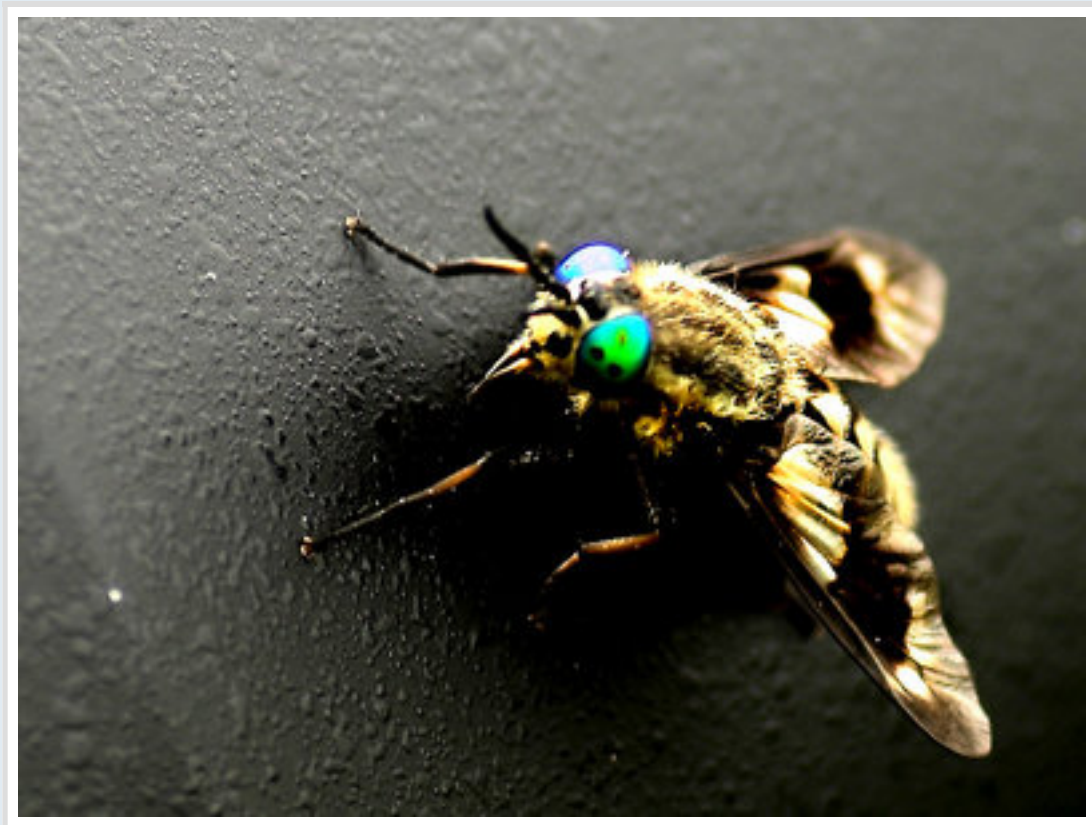
There was the sound of machinery from a field over the tree-lined hedge along one side of the ride - possibly mowing - and it seemed to be disturbing the local Red Kite population, of which several were wheeling overhead and constantly calling. They sometimes landed in the tallest of the Oak trees and, fortuitously, I snapped two having a 'brief encounter' just above the ride. I had the macro lens on the camera which, in this case, was fortunate, since I would not have fitted the action into the frame with a longer lens! (*as usual, click on image to enlarge*)



© Mike Fleming 2014

Otmoor, Oxon - 12th July 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro - 1/750s@f/13 ISO400

Horse Flies were out in force but, fortunately, seemed more interested in my lens-hood than my skin. Don't be lured by the kaleidoscope eyes - this creature is after your blood! This one must have thought it had found a very thick black hide.



Otmoor, Oxon - 12th July 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm Tamron macro - 1/90s@f/8 ISO800

This really was one of those lazy, hazy days of Summer, to a sound track from two Turtle Doves purring gently in the trees.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-14 09:57 PM GMT

Just doing some catching up Mike - great to see the Starlings are doing well. Great H.Comma and Red Kite shots 😊 This post took me a bit longer to type than expected as I got caught by those eyes 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jul-14 10:18 PM GMT

Some great photos there Mike 😊

Those eyes almost divert the attention away from the vicious looking mouthparts...almost 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 16-Jul-14 06:54 AM GMT

A fantastic shot of the Red Kites Mike 🇧🇧 - tho I notice you didn't take it with the Lumix 😊 Having said that I seem to remember that NeilF has taken some pretty good bird shots with a Lumix so I need to get out there and give it a go!

## Re: MikeOxon

by PhilBJohnson, 16-Jul-14 06:54 PM GMT

Hi Mike,  
I am also loving your pictures & that you display the ISO, F number & Shutter speed making it easier for people like me to learn,

Best Wishes,

Philip "P mode" Wright 😊

## Re: MikeOxon

by Mike Robinson, 16-Jul-14 08:36 PM GMT

I do like the large Skippers.  
Possibly since I don't really need to think too much when I see them; which is not quite the case with sightings of Small or Essex Skippers!

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 17-Jul-14 11:36 PM GMT

😊 Thanks for the appreciative comments.

On Monday (14th July) I paid a quick visit to the New Forest to see if I could find the elusive Bog Orchid. I was pleased to see and photograph several of these tiny plants – not at all spectacular but a challenge to find!



*Bog Orchid, New Forest – 14th July 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens – 1/125s@f/9.5 ISO400*

I found myself in the vicinity of **Lough Down** (Lardon Chase) near Streatley this afternoon (17th July), so looked in to see what was on the wing. This Down rises steeply above Streatley on the opposite side of the River Thames from Goring, with splendid views across the 'Goring Gap'.



*View from Lough Down – 17th July 2014 Lumix FZ200 – 1/1600@f/5.6 ISO160*

The grassy slopes were generously dotted with marjoram, providing feeding stops for a host of Chalk Hill Blue butterflies – to describe these as abundant would be an understatement. I have read the post by **nomad** at [viewtopic.php?t=7747&start=10000](http://viewtopic.php?t=7747&start=10000) concerning sighting of a Silver-studded Blue lower down on the slope, so I made my way down to the coarser grasses, keeping my eyes peeled for any darker blues. Alas, all those that I followed were Common Blues. There were, however, good numbers of **Small Tortoiseshells** and Peacocks on these lower areas of the Down. Despite being the most common of our three (😊) Tortoiseshells, these remain one of our most beautiful butterflies, in my opinion. I assume my photo is of a female, with a very distended abdomen.



Lough Down, Berks - 17th July 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens - 1/180s@f/9.5 ISO400

Returning to the slopes, there were a few Marbled Whites and several Meadow Browns amongst the Chalk Hill Blues. Skippers seemed absent. I photographed one particularly strongly marked female **Chalk Hill Blue** - note the broad dark markings in the fringes on the wings.



Lough Down, Berks - 17th July 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens - 1/750s@f/6.7 ISO400

When she opened her wings, a purple-green iridescent sheen towards the outer edges of the forewings was very noticeable and I am pleased to see that this feature is visible in the photograph. The photograph, below, also shows patches of pale-coloured scales near the centres of the wings that I have not noticed before.



Lough Down, Berks - 17th July 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens - 1/250s@f/11 ISO400

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 23-Jul-14 09:56 PM GMT

Yesterday afternoon, **22nd July**, found my wife and I sitting on the sun-drenched slope at **Aston Rowant NNR**, watching the butterflies skipping from one flower head to the next. It's an enjoyable walk down the path from the car-park, flanked by tall spires of Rosebay Willowherb, with a glimpse of the viewpoint ahead to enhance anticipation:



Aston Rowant NNR – 22nd July 2014 Lumix FZ200 – 1/160s@f/4 ISO160

An easy path then follows the upper part of the slope, almost on the level. My current photographic *modus operandi* finds me using the Lumix FZ200 for general shots and during the 'walk in', as I establish which species are present.

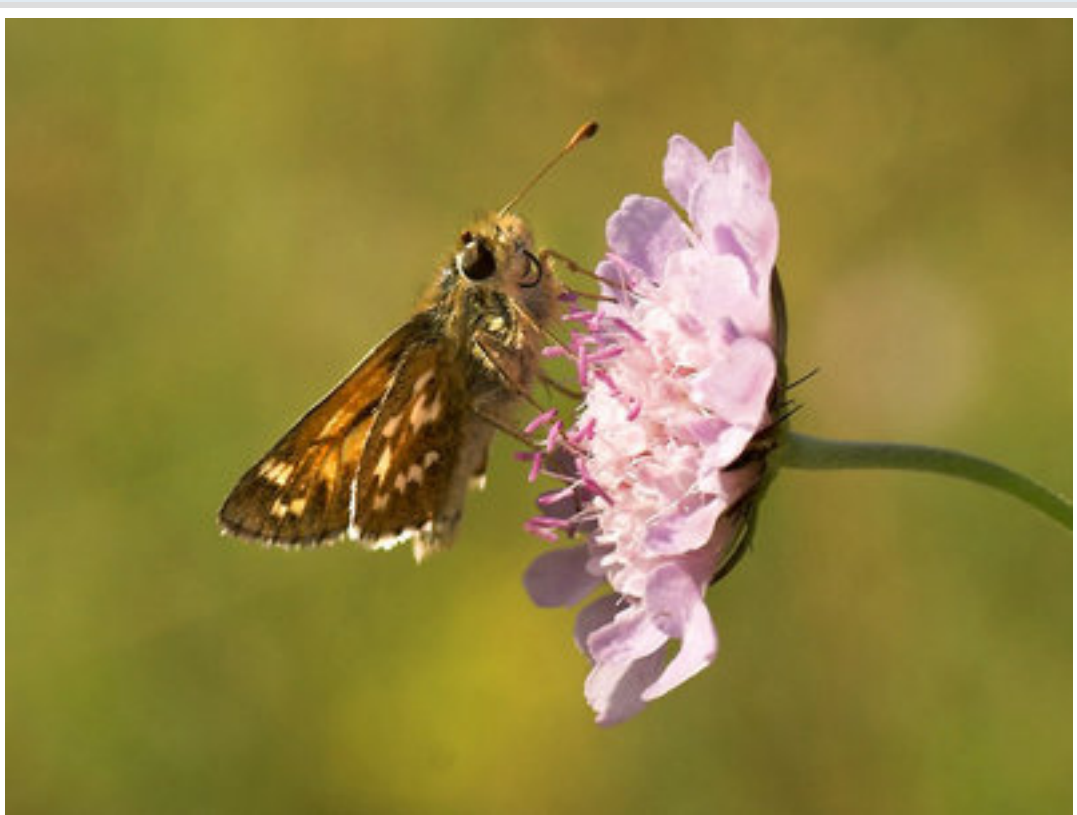
At first, the dominant skipper species along the upper path was Small Skipper, together with Meadow Browns, and a few Gatekeepers and Commas.



Aston Rowant NNR – 22nd July 2014 Lumix FZ200 – 1/500s@f/4 ISO160

There seems to be a sort of 'Wallace Line', where Silver-spotted Skippers suddenly take over from their Small cousins (actually, it corresponds to the taller vegetation being replaced by the sheep-nibbled grass of the main slope). These 'mowing machines' were much in evidence, making their way in a flock steadily across the slope.

At first, there seemed to be few visible butterflies but, as I got my eye in, it became apparent that, in fact, quite large numbers of Silver-spotted Skippers were darting rapidly between the Field Scabious flower heads, in short, fast, low-level flights. The easiest way to photograph them was to set up near a cluster of these flowers and wait for one to arrive, which usually just took a few minutes.



Aston Rowant NNR – 22nd July 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens + 1.4x TC – 1/180s@f/13 ISO400



*Aston Rowant NNR - 22nd July 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens + 1.4x TC - 1/180s@f/13 ISO400*

Chalk Hill Blues were also present, though by no means as abundant as I had found on Lough Down, a few days earlier. A few Small Tortoiseshells were visiting the flowers and sparked occasional confrontations with the Skippers. As well as visiting the flowers, both the Chalk Hill Blues and the Silver-spotted Skippers liked to rest on patches of bare earth. Judging by the large eyes, this is a male showing his interesting selection of grooming tools on the forelegs.



*Aston Rowant NNR - 22nd July 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens + 1.4x TC - 1/180s@f/13 ISO400*

For me, the drawback of this site is the constant drone from the ever-present traffic on the M40 motorway at the foot of the slope, so we decided to move to a quieter area of the reserve. While walking back, I spotted a Silver-spotted Skipper resting on the path. It proved remarkably 'bomb proof', so I took the opportunity to try several different photographic approaches, using the Lumix camera. I should really have used a close-up lens but, without it, I found that the focus confirmation in the viewfinder can be very misleading. Several times, I got the green symbol when I was actually slightly too close! The best results seemed to be obtained at intermediate focal length settings. This time it's a female, with smaller eyes and distended abdomen.



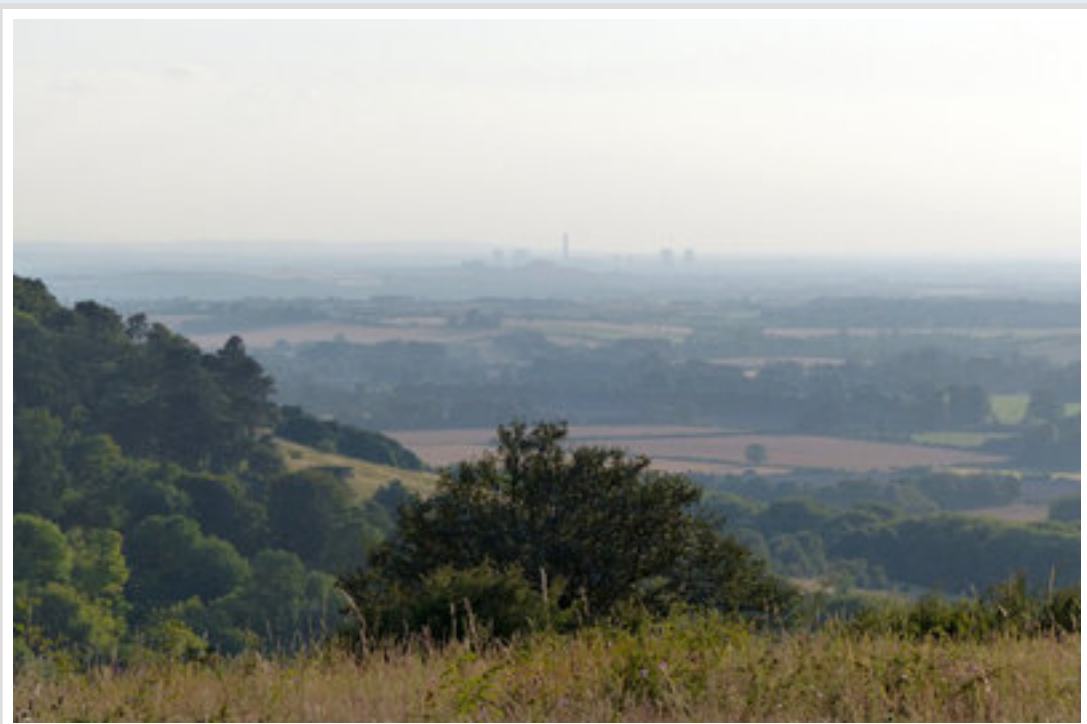
*Aston Rowant NNR - 22nd July 2014 Lumix FZ200 fl 20mm (112mm equiv) - 1/1600s@f/4 ISO100*

We moved on to the part of the reserve that lies on the opposite side of the motorway. This side, across the road from the Cowleaze Wood car park, was much quieter and also had good numbers of Silver-spotted Skippers on the South-West facing slope. There are several shady seats under the trees along the top of the slope, which make excellent viewing places. As well as butterflies, this area is notable for wild orchids and I was very pleased to find the flower spikes of several Frog Orchids.



Aston Rowant NNR – 22nd July 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens + 1.4x TC – 1/125s@f/11 ISO400

The view to the west includes the soon-to-be-demolished Didcot Power Station, seen through the heat haze over the Oxfordshire plain.



Aston Rowant NNR – 22nd July 2014 Lumix FZ200 – 1/1600s@f/4 ISO100

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-14 10:01 AM GMT

Cracking Silver Spots Mike 😊🍷 Whereabouts in the New Forest did you find the Bog Orchid – I'd be interested in making a trip to see if I can find some too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 24-Jul-14 01:48 PM GMT

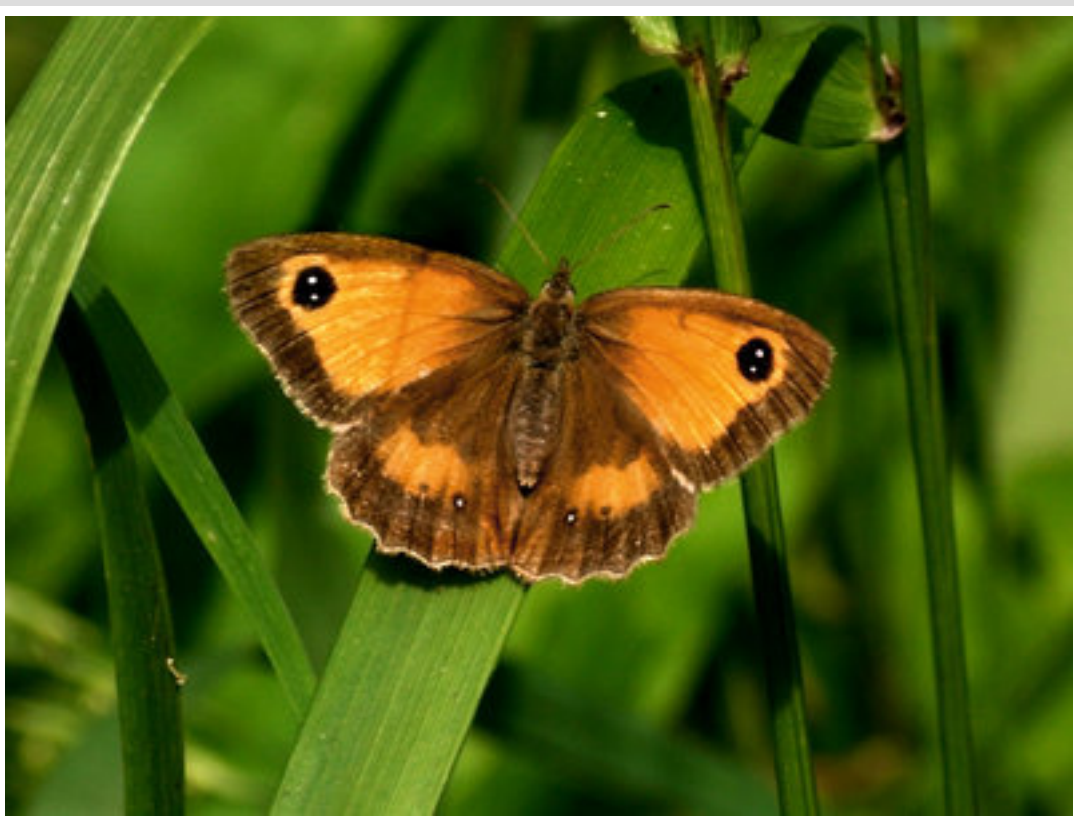
Pleased you liked the SSSkippers, Wurzel. For photography, it's much easier to wait for them to come to you, rather than the pretty hopeless task of chasing them 😊 I'll PM you re. the orchids.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 30-Jul-14 11:11 AM GMT

After reading several reports of Brown Hairstreak sightings around Otmoor, I visited the Roman Road yesterday afternoon (29th July). I had no luck with BH although there were plenty of 'decoys' in the form of **Gatekeepers**:



Otmoor, Oxon - 29th July 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro+ 1.4X TC - 1/180s@f/9.5 ISO400

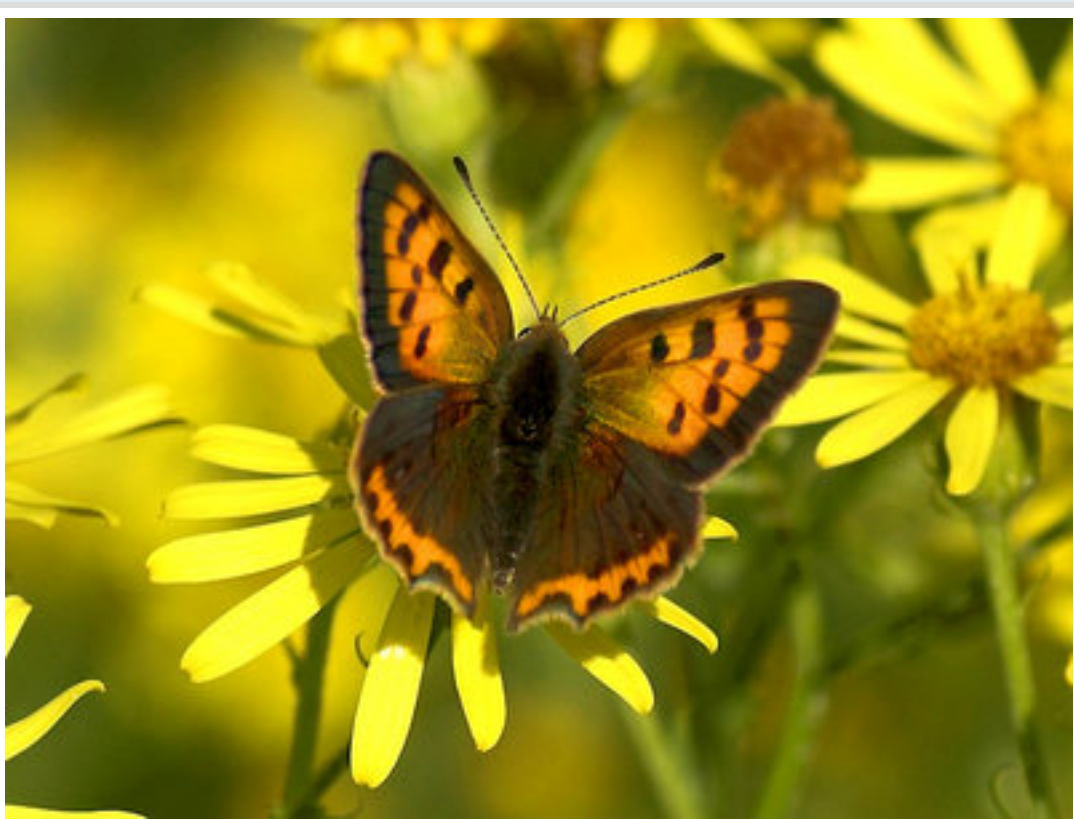
It seems curious how, on one day, there can be loads of butterflies feeding low down and then, on a seemingly similar day, there are none. I had such an experience last year, when every thistle head along the Roman Road seemed to have its Brown Hairstreak, whereas two days later, I saw none! Plenty of time yet for a good experience this year!

I followed a weakly-flying darker butterfly, to find it was a rather aged **Ringlet** that seemed to have a problem with its proboscis!



Otmoor, Oxon - 29th July 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro+ 1.4X TC - 1/90s@f/6.7 ISO400

Finally, I was rewarded with a very bright, seemingly newly emerged, **Small Copper**:



Otmoor, Oxon - 29th July 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro+ 1.4X TC - 1/750s@f/9.5 ISO400

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-14 09:57 PM GMT

Cheers for the PM Mike - I will get round to replying properly but this is just a quick catch up as I've just gotten back from holiday 😊 Good luck with the Brostreaks, I'm glad I'm not the only one to have my head turned by a Hedge Brown 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 08-Aug-14 04:18 PM GMT

Yesterday (7th August), proved a rather frustrating day, at least from a photographer's point of view. With a less-settled spell of weather in prospect, I decide to make the most of the sunshine and went out to look for Brown Hairstreaks in the **BBOWT Meadow** reserve at Bernwood, Oxon. The meadow had been mown and looked very different from my previous visit in the Spring, when I went to photograph the carpet of Green-winged Orchids.



*BBOWT Meadow, Bernwood, Oxon - 7th August 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/1300@f/6.3 ISO160*

Although Adrian Riley commented recently that he "Always found the females easy enough at Bernwood Meadow.", this was not to be the case for me 😞 There were all the usual decoys, including this **Meadow Brown** that, with its twin spots, also seemed to be trying to substitute for a Gatekeeper!



*BBOWT Meadow, Bernwood, Oxon - 7th August 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/800@f/4 ISO160*

Another 'decoy' was a female **Common Blue** that jinxed around the sloes in the ancient hedgerow, in excellent mimicry of BH flight!



*BBOWT Meadow, Bernwood, Oxon - 7th August 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/500@f/4 ISO160*

There were several Common Blues keeping low over the grass of the meadow while, overhead, squadrons of dragonflies were circling, perhaps persuading most of the butterflies to lie low. Along the path that skirts the southern fringe of Bernwood, adjacent to the meadow, there were several **Silver Washed Fritillaries**, continuously patrolling and not interested in posing for photographs.

As it was by now very hot in the open meadow, I decided to go to the shadier Roman Road, leading on to Otmoor from the village of Beckley – another good location for BH. At least I did see one here, but only high in an Ash tree, with no indication of any intention to descend lower! Along the ride were several **Comma**, **Speckled Wood** and, this time a 'genuine' **Gatekeeper** posed for a photo.



*Roman Road, Otmoor, Oxon – 7th August 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens – 1/180s@f/8 ISO400*

I continued through the 'forbidding' gate at the end of the enclosed part of the lane, out onto the open moor. There appeared to be no bulls or even aggressive cows with calves, and there was no shooting on the adjacent rifle range, so I felt quite safe! The grass had been cropped very short and, as I walked along the blackthorn hedge, I suddenly spotted a flash of orange as a butterfly skimmed just above the short grass – **Clouded Yellow** and my first this year 😊 It seemed to pause and, keeping my eyes fixed, I walked towards the spot where I had last seen it but got no further sign. I continued my walk, enjoying the open space and watching Buzzards rising from the trees to circle overhead. When I turned back, the Clouded Yellow appeared again, in almost the same place and, again, I tried to follow it by eye but soon lost it. It appeared a third time, very close, taunting me to chase it but, as many others will have experienced, I had no chance against its rapid flight! In compensation, a bright **Small Copper** landed in the grass close by but moved off again, before I could get more than a 'grab shot'.



*Otmoor, Oxon – 7th August 2014 Nikon D300s with Tamron 90mm macro lens – 1/125s@f/8 ISO400*

So, a pleasant, if rather hot walk, though disappointing from the photographic angle.

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-14 09:58 PM GMT

Love that Hedge Brown shot Mike! I wish I'd taken that 🍷 Better luck with the Brostreaks next time 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: MikeOxon

by jonhd, 11-Aug-14 12:09 AM GMT

Hi Mike. You mentioned, a while back, the problem with inadvertent button presses on the FZ200 – have you tried Graham Houghton's simple 'mod' – see "Preventing Unwanted Button Presses on the FZ200" at <http://www.grahamhoughton.com/fz200-specific-pages/> ?

One other tip, relating to your frustration with the slow startup, resulting in missed shots. This drove me to distraction until I went through the Setup menus, and disabled the LCD timeout, and Lens resume – the thing now stays on all of the time (just like my DSLR). Disabling Lens resume is essential, to stop that daft message appearing, during which time you can't do anything. A second battery is advisable(!), and I do switch-off when I'm certain that I'm not going to be taking a photo. I get ~ 300 (JPEG + RAW) shots per recharged battery, so it generally does for a day's photography (and I keep the

spare battery in a pocket).

I've put a sleep-inducing post about my modus operandi with the FZ200 in the Photography forum "FZ200 thread"...

Cheers, Jon

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 12-Aug-14 04:44 PM GMT

Hi jonhd,

Thank you for passing on these tips - I think I'll try the rubber washer idea, to shield the buttons.

I'd thought about disabling the time-out, though I can see it is a recipe for flat batteries! A nice thing about the Nikon is that there is no need ever to switch it off, since it automatically powers down to a very low consumption state, while remaining ready for instant action - I often find it left switched on in my bag but it's no problem.

I enjoyed your post on the other thread - I tend to do most of the same things. I find a 1 dioptre close-up lens works well with the FZ200 and feel that the 2 dioptre strength of the 'proper' Lumix accessory would often be too much in the field, though great for egg shots, etc., in a studio. The 1 dioptre neatly takes over where the unaided lens leaves off. Your 150 is probably a good compromise.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by jonhd, 15-Aug-14 01:32 AM GMT

I'd thought about disabling the time-out, though I can see it is a recipe for flat batteries! A nice thing about the Nikon is that there is no need ever to switch it off, since it automatically powers down to a very low consumption state, while remaining ready for instant action - I often find it left switched on in my bag but it's no problem.

Funny you should say that... During a break in the rain, I popped out for a quick lunchtime recce, and discovered that I'd left the FZ200 switched on - must have been like that for a couple of days - with the LCD screen closed, and the lens cap on - and, there was still 2/3 battery left. According to the specs, the power consumption difference between the EVF and the LCD screen is quite minimal, but I've noticed that the battery life is much better than my first Panasonic bridge (an FZ7, I think).

Cheers, Jon

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 16-Aug-14 01:07 PM GMT

"jonhd" wrote:

... discovered that I'd left the FZ200 switched on - must have been like that for a couple of days - with the LCD screen closed, and the lens cap on - and, there was still 2/3 battery left.

That's very reassuring - perhaps I should be less cautious! I notice that, while there 's an 'LCD-off' timer in the menus, there's no equivalent for the EVF, which perhaps suggests that Panasonic think it unnecessary.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 18-Aug-14 07:25 PM GMT

On my third (perhaps fourth) attempt, I finally managed to catch up with several **Brown Hairstreaks** along the Roman Road at **Otmoor**. this morning (18th August) They were in their favourite Ash Tree and never descended really low down, but they were moving around quite a lot and resting in visible, sunlit positions 😊

I almost missed seeing my first one, as it was amongst brightly-coloured Hawthorn berries:



*Roman Road, Otmoor, Oxon - 18th August 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR lens - !/350s@f/8 ISO400*

After that, I watched several, looping around the leaves of the Ash Tree and occasionally pausing in the sunlight. I think this one may be a Male:



*Roman Road, Otmoor, Oxon - 18th August 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR lens - !/500s@f/8 ISO400*

My last shot of these shows how closely the perched butterfly can resemble a dead leaf, in both shape and colour - at first, I thought there were 2 or 3 butterflies here!



*Roman Road, Otmoor, Oxon - 18th August 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR lens - !/500s@f/8 ISO400*

An unexpected bonus was to see another small butterfly behaving in a very similar way but, as it flew, I saw the silvery-flash of a **Purple Hairstreak**. As usual, it was very difficult to follow its rapid flight by eye but I eventually managed a grab-shot when it paused, apparently to sample the sticky coating of the new buds.



*Roman Road, Otmoor, Oxon - 18th August 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR lens - !/500s@f/8 ISO400*

The most common butterfly on the wing was the **Speckled Wood** and, on many occasions, it was easy to be misled by these, while looking out for the Hairstreaks



*Roman Road, Otmoor, Oxon - 18th August 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR lens - !/350s@f/9.5 ISO400*

There were also several **Green-veined Whites** - a challenge to photograph in the bright sunshine. For these shots, I selected Spot-Metering, to avoid burning out the highlights - note the shorter exposure:



*Roman Road, Otmoor, Oxon - 18th August 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR lens - !/750s@f/13 ISO400*

A similar challenge was presented by a male **Brimstone** that was systematically visiting Convolvulus flowers along the edge of the ride. I believe that this species has a long proboscis, which enables it to take nectar from Primroses in the Spring, and it seems that this facility is equally useful in the Autumn.



Roman Road, Otmoor, Oxon - 18th August 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR lens - !/750s@f/13 ISO400

So, a successful visit, even if there was a sudden sharp downpour just as I was leaving 😞 In addition to butterflies, there were plenty of dragonflies on the wing, including Migrant Hawkers and both Common and Ruddy Darters.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-14 09:45 PM GMT

I'm glad that you eventually got your Brostreaks Mike, and with the added bonus of the Purp and the crash landed Brimstone 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 23-Aug-14 10:13 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. Temperatures dropped sharply after my visit and it now feels as though Autumn has arrived locally.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 24-Aug-14 04:02 PM GMT

I like your BH on the Hawthorn berries Mike. For a couple of years now I have wanted to see one on berries (any sort of berries) but without success. The Brimstone is also worthy of a second look - you did well to get that.

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 24-Aug-14 09:50 PM GMT

A cool, cloudy morning today (24th August) in Oxon (15°C in the garden) and forecast of rain and wind for the Bank Holiday, tomorrow, so I thought I would look back over my year. Of course, it's not over yet and I'm hoping for the usual good showing of Vanessids on the herbaceous borders at Waterperry, in late-September/early-October.

Considering that I didn't make any special, longer-distance trips this year, I am pleased to have seen a good selection of species, including most of my 'favourites': 40 species seen and 38 photographed. I missed photographing a High Brown Fritillary at Old Castle Down, near Bridgend in South Wales, although I positively identified several through binoculars, and I only got fleeting views of a Clouded Yellow as it zipped past me on Otmoor.

I was going to make a simple list to summarise my diary for the year, so far, but then I thought it would be good to add some photos, so preparing this post took rather longer than I initially anticipated! What follows is a visual synopsis of my 'butterfly year', in chronological order (*click to enlarge each spread*):

Butterflies - 1

© Mike Fleming 2014



Dry Sandford Pit - 9th March



Dry Sandford Pit - 9th March



Dry Sandford Pit - 30th March



Dry Sandford Pit - 13th April



Dry Sandford Pit - 13th April



Roman Road, Otmoor - 13th April



Linkay Down - 16th April



Linkay Down - 16th April



Abingdon - 5th May

Butterflies - 2

© Mike Fleming 2014



Hartslock - 13th May



Cirencester - 14th May



Crog Hill - 16th May



Crog Hill - 16th May



Crog Hill - 16th May



Crog Hill - 16th May



Seven Barrows - 16th May



Strawberry Banks - 19th May



Lough Down - 21st May

Butterflies - 3

© Mike Fleming 2014



Lough Down - 21st May



Whitcross Green Wood - 16th June



Whitcross Green Wood - 16th June



Daneway Banks - 17th June



Daneway Banks - 17th June



Old Castle Down - 21st June



Old Castle Down - 21st June



Old Castle Down - 21st June



Old Castle Down - 21st June

Butterflies - 4

© Mike Fleming 2014



Daneway Banks - 26th June



Bermwood Forest - 3rd July



Bermwood Forest - 3rd July



Roman Road, Otmoor - 12th July



Aston Rowant - 22nd July



Aston Rowant - 22nd July



Aston Rowant - 22nd July



Roman Road, Otmoor - 29th July



seen Otmoor - 29th July



I was sorry to miss Purple Emperor this year – I believe it flew fairly early in Bernwood Forest – and I also failed to make contact with any Painted Ladies. Apart from those, the gaps were mainly species that would have required special trips, including all the 'Northern' species.

I've been photographing butterflies for very many years and, sometimes, I look back and feel saddened that so many species have disappeared from where I used to see them – Marsh Fritillaries from several sites, Wall Browns, which I used to find on my own drive at home, as examples. But there are gains, too, since Silver-washed Fritillaries and Purple Emperors seem much easier to find than they were in my younger days.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 24-Aug-14 09:59 PM GMT

There's still time for Painted Ladies, Mike.

Keep perservering!

### Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 25-Aug-14 05:03 PM GMT

Just Catching up on Postings Mike, I saw a Painted lady, much to my surprise a Arnside Knot, it was in very good condition about a week a go, so still time for that one like David said.

I think your Photo's are great, I've not got has many species has you though this year, I'm still on the hunt for a clouded Yellow has you know 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 25-Aug-14 05:22 PM GMT

Thank you David and Goldie MM. Perhaps, if the rain clears, I shall get my chance!

I still miss the easy access to the Northern species from when I was in Lancashire, Goldie – the M6 is a real 'off-put' from here.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 25-Aug-14 09:22 PM GMT

#### "MikeOxon" wrote:

Perhaps, if the rain clears...

Good luck with that one!

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-14 10:28 PM GMT

When I read your posting when you looked back over the year I initially thought "bit previous Mike", but then this bad weather hit and will be with us for some time so I was wondering what Shamanic powers you have Mike 😊 If it clears you could still pick up a late Painted Lady – I got one at the end of October in the New Forest last year – good luck in your next endeavour 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 25-Aug-14 10:56 PM GMT



**"Wurzel" wrote:**

I was wondering what Shamanic powers you have Mike 😊

I was struck, on my last visit to Otmoor, by how autumnal the vegetation was looking. It seems as though, having started early, the plants have decided they've done enough! In addition, in previous years, I have always associated the appearance of Silver-spotted Skippers as marking the end of the mainstream season, and they were around locally in early July.

I'm sure there will be plenty of butterflies around for a while yet, as I mentioned in my post, but I'm not expecting to see more species, unless I strike lucky with a Painted Lady 😊

Mike

**Re: MikeOxon**

by Pauline, 28-Aug-14 06:59 AM GMT

I love the way you've presented your summary Mike. I was looking to do something similar but haven't a clue how. It seems that you might have actually photographed 39?

**Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 28-Aug-14 01:57 PM GMT

**"Pauline" wrote:**

I love the way you've presented your summary Mike. I was looking to do something similar but haven't a clue how. It seems that you might have actually photographed 39?

Thank you Pauline. If you look closely, you'll see that the Clouded Yellow photo was taken last year, but I included it because it represented exactly how I saw one this year- flitting rapidly across the grass from flower to flower. In addition, I wanted a number of species divisible by three, to fit my format!

I make these selections using the brilliant **Irfan View** program, which I have recommended on several occasions.

**WARNING** - However, another member has advised me that when she downloaded it recently, her computer became infected with the Trojan program 'Blasteroids', so at present, I cannot recommend downloading it.

Mike

**Re: MikeOxon**

by Jack Harrison, 28-Aug-14 03:12 PM GMT

I too liked the photo diary. Sums up in an easy-to-absorb way.

My best year ever was 1976 with all 58 of the mainland species. Since then, only 2010 has come anywhere near with just 52 plus Camberwell Beauty.

This year on Mull, I have hardly needed two hands to count the species despite it being a very good summer.

But I have to wonder: if Scotland becomes independent would we have our own list? Another matter that has yet to be discussed by the campaigners.

*PS. Just cast my postal vote in the referendum. Discretion prevents me from letting you k**NO**w how I voted.*

Jack

**Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 28-Aug-14 05:51 PM GMT

Thank you Jack. As I replied to Pauline, I also thought I'd leave a little ID exercise, as well.

On a few occasions over the years, I have met a guy at Whitecross Green Wood, who aims to see all the British species, every year! We've never got to exchanging names but, if he's on here, I hope he succeeded this year 😊

I am hoping that all the canny folk from the Highlands and Islands will be casting their sensible votes.

**Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 30-Aug-14 10:29 PM GMT

Yesterday, 29th August, I made a visit to relatives in Somerset, near to **Cadbury Castle**. It was not a photographic trip, so I had only taken my small Lumix TZ25 compact. As it happened, the garden had many Vanessids, feeding on figs and other flowering plants. The TZ25 has the same sensor as my FZ200 and is capable of similar results but I found it much more difficult to frame my shots on the screen, in the bright sunlight.

Here are two of the many **Red Admirals** enjoying figs:



Sutton Montis, Somerset - 29th August 2014 Lumix TZ25 - 1/800s@f/5 ISO100

I noticed that at least one of the Red Admirals had white spots in the red band, characterised as ab.*Bialbata*. Since I first noticed this aberration at Fermyn Wood, a couple of years ago, I have found that quite a number of my photos are of this form, so I suspect that it is more common than is usually assumed. Indeed, back in 1911, Dr. Maurice Goetghebuer noted that this form was common in Flanders, occurring as frequently as the type. He suggested that this aberration could be seen as a return to the ancestral form or, perhaps, it is the true type of *atalanta*?



Sutton Montis, Somerset - 29th August 2014 Lumix TZ25 - 1/320s@f/4 ISO100

In addition, **Small Tortoiseshells** and **Commas** were plentiful, although they seemed more interested in flowers than figs:



Sutton Montis, Somerset - 29th August 2014 Lumix TZ25 - 1/250s@f/4 ISO100



Sutton Montis, Somerset - 29th August 2014 Lumix TZ25 - 1/160s@f/4 ISO100

As well as the butterflies, I also spotted a Mint Moth (probably *Pyrausta aurata* - though I cannot discount the possibility of it being *P. purpuralis*)



Sutton Montis, Somerset - 29th August 2014 Lumix TZ25 - 1/80s@f/3.3 ISO100

Unfortunately, my journey home was very protracted, due to a major accident having closed the A303 near Stonehenge.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-14 10:08 PM GMT

Lovely Comma and white spot Red Admiral Mike 😊 I know what you mean about the A303 I've been caught out by that stretch of road many a time - and I always avoid it from midday on Friday until Sunday if at all possible 😞 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 31-Aug-14 10:13 PM GMT

#### "Wurzel" wrote:

I know what you mean about the A303 I've been caught out by that stretch of road many a time - and I always avoid it from midday on Friday until Sunday if at all possible

My relatives did warn me to look for alternatives but I carried on regardless 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 01-Sep-14 02:00 PM GMT

Recently, I recommended the 'Irfan View' image editing program.

**WARNING** - However, another member has advised me that, when she downloaded it recently, her computer became infected with the Trojan program

'Blasteroids' , so at present, I cannot recommend downloading it.

### Re: MikeOxon

by peterc, 01-Sep-14 02:44 PM GMT

Regarding the Irfanview program I suspect it depends upon the supplier of the download software?

Peter

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 01-Sep-14 05:09 PM GMT

PeterC - I'm sure that you are right and that this is not in any way the fault of Irfan himself.

Unfortunately, even formerly-reputable download sites now 'bundle' dubious software and, if you are not very alert, it is all too easy to download unwanted rubbish. This can be navigated around by the computer-literate but makes life very difficult for many people, so I decided it's best not to expose others to this minefield.

It is very sad that rampant commercialism means that anything 'free' is now exploited by the unscrupulous.

### Re: MikeOxon

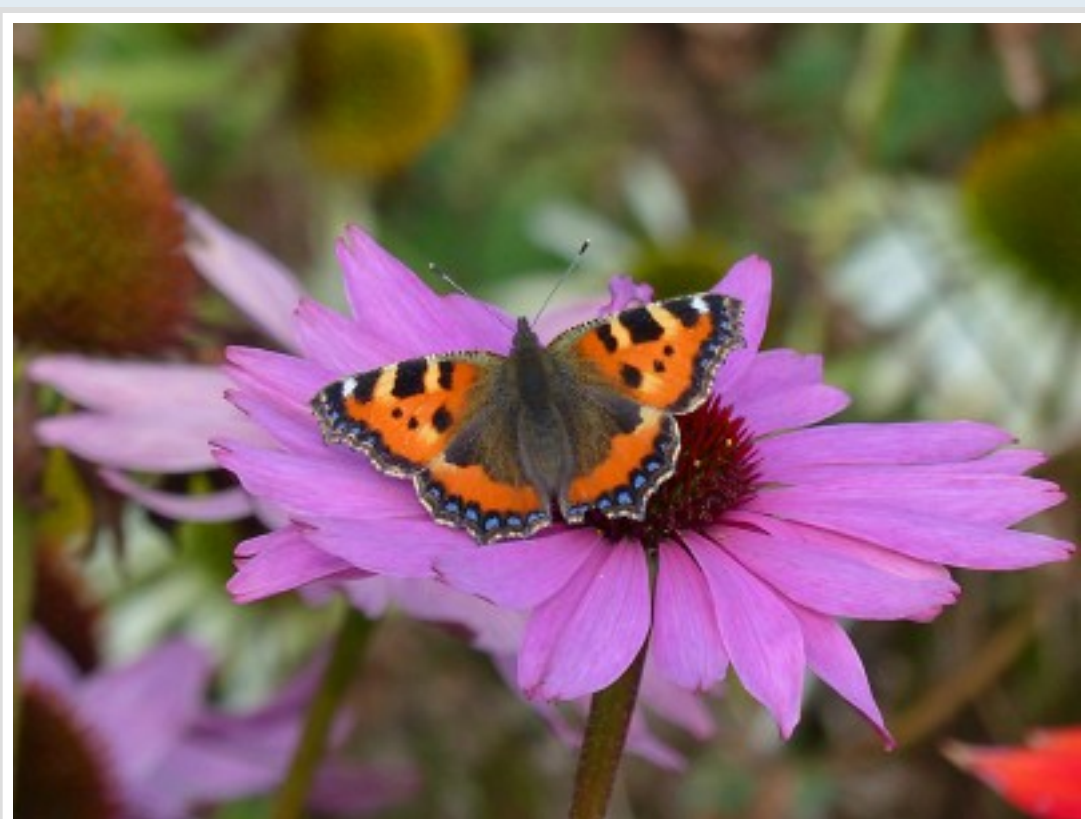
by MikeOxon, 08-Sep-14 04:11 PM GMT

We have just returned from a very sunny weekend in South Wales, where we visited the orchid show at the **National Botanic Garden of Wales**. While my wife was engrossed in the orchids, I explored the flower beds for butterflies. At first, it was quite a cool, cloudy morning and the first butterfly I saw was a **Small Tortoiseshell** warming itself on the stones at the side of the path:

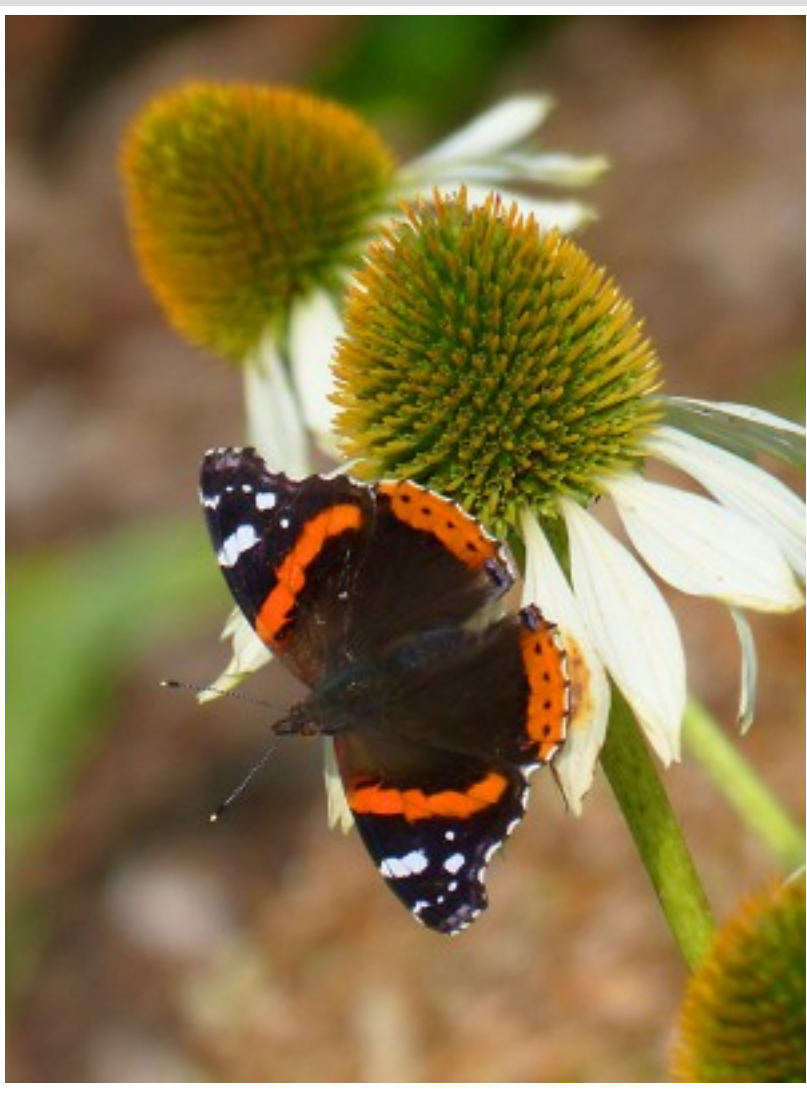


*National Botanic Garden of Wales - 6th September 2014 Lumix FZ200 (at max zoom) - 1/800s@f/4 ISO160*

As the sun broke through, more butterflies appeared, the many **Small Tortoiseshells** being joined by good numbers of **Red Admirals** as well.



*National Botanic Garden of Wales - 6th September 2014 Lumix FZ200 (FL=93mm) - 1/800s@f/4 ISO160*



National Botanic Garden of Wales - 6th September 2014 Lumix FZ200 (at max zoom) - 1/1600s@f/4.5 ISO160

**Speckled Woods** inhabited the woodland areas while the Brassicas in the Wallace Garden were proving very attractive to **Small Whites**.

In the afternoon, we visited **Aberglasney Gardens**, fascinating for the cloister garden and the indoor 'Ninfarium', built within the ruinous central rooms and courtyard of the mansion. The flowers in the gardens were proving especially attractive to Red Admirals, as were the cordon fruit trees along the walls.

On the way home, we paused for a cup of tea in a lay-by on the A40 and I spotted a lone Small Tortoiseshell that had found a small clump of flowers on the roadside verge. My photo includes a distant view of the Brecon Beacons in the background.



A40 verge near Sennybridge, Wales - 7th September 2014 Lumix FZ200 (FL=8mm) - 1/800s@f/4 ISO160

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-14 09:58 PM GMT

Lovely report Mike with some great shots. The last one is great and could easily be a Benningfield painting 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 08-Sep-14 10:33 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel - I'm pleased you enjoyed it.

That type of shot is very much easier with a small-sensor camera than with an SLR. The butterfly was higher up when I first saw it but moved lower, so that I had to get right down on the ground for that shot. Unfortunately, that meant that the Beacons were rather hidden behind the hedge-row.

## Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 09-Sep-14 08:19 AM GMT

### "MikeOxon" wrote:

We have just returned from a very sunny weekend in South Wales, where we visited the orchid show at the **National Botanic Garden of Wales**

A lovely location, Mike. It's amazing what they've got growing there and the plants hang on in right till mid-November.

I must get over there myself in the next couple of weeks.

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 09-Sep-14 11:54 AM GMT

Indeed it is, David.

Our first visit was soon after the garden opened and they were just starting work on clearing the walled garden. It is amazing to realise that everything in there has only been growing for a dozen years!

There was a patch of wild plants (buddleia and mints) near the old wall, by the entrance to the tropical house, which was proving a magnet for the Small Tortoiseshells.



*National Botanic Garden of Wales- 6th September 2014 Lumix FZ200 (FL=13mm) - 1/800s@f/4 ISO 160*

They preferred those plants over all the gaudy garden plants, so many of which are 'all show and no nectar'.

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 09-Sep-14 11:40 PM GMT

I spent this afternoon (9th September) on a very quiet, but warm and sunny **Otmoor**. Several migrant waders have been reported over the last few days but the only one I saw was a Green Sandpiper.

**Green-veined Whites** were abundant along the verges of the paths; indeed these were the only butterflies I saw, apart from a single Red Admiral, which flew over as I was leaving.



Otmoor, Oxon - 9th September 2014 Nikon D300s with 300f4 lens + 1.4X TC - 1/1000s@f/9.5 ISO400



Otmoor, Oxon - 9th September 2014 Nikon D300s with 300f4 lens + 1.4X TC - 1/500s@f/11 ISO400

I watched a Heron fishing for some time. It had a few failed attempts and then succeeded in spearing a large Roach - I feel I can see a smile on the birds face!



Otmoor, Oxon - 9th September 2014 Nikon D300s with 300f4 lens + 1.4X TC - 1/750s@f/5.6 ISO400

There were also several dragonflies, including this Migrant Hawker that hovered very co-operatively in front of my lens.



Otmoor, Oxon - 9th September 2014 Nikon D300s with 300f4 lens + 1.4X TC - 1/1000s@f/5.6 ISO400

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 10-Sep-14 06:45 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Dragonfly and the Heron Mike. I can't imagine it is a common sight seeing them catching fish of that size - you did incredibly well to catch it on camera.

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 10-Sep-14 12:05 PM GMT

Thank you Pauline. The Heron was a case of watching and waiting! It was a lovely sunny afternoon, so I was happy to watch the world go by for an hour or so.

I chose the shots in this post to show where the DSLR scores - high speed action and isolating a subject from the background.

I've been using the Lumix FZ200 quite a lot recently, so had to remember to use small apertures for the butterfly shots. Even at f/11, the GvW wings are not all in focus.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by CJB, 10-Sep-14 03:07 PM GMT

Amazing Dragonfly picture Mike! 🍷

Flutter on!

CJB

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 10-Sep-14 05:32 PM GMT

Thank you, CJB. I had the right camera for the job - I think it would be tricky with an iPhone - that's not a challenge 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 12-Sep-14 10:46 PM GMT

That is a stunning Dragonfly shot Mike, and the first Green-veined White is so crisp 😊 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 13-Sep-14 01:58 PM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel. I find depth of field, especially when using a DSLR, to be a tricky subject. Sometimes a shot at a smaller aperture (higher f number) seems worse - it's all to do with selecting the right spot on which to centre the focus. That first GvW shot works because I was exactly perpendicular to the wing surface and managed to get the focus spot-on. I also selected spot metering, to keep detail in the wing, although it makes the background sky look dark.



The dragonfly kept returning, to hover at the same spot for a few seconds at a time. I fired a burst on continuous shutter (7 fps), then selected this frame because I liked the positions of the wings. For in-flight shots, I select Aperture Priority mode, with the aperture set wide open, so that the camera selects the highest possible shutter speed for the lighting conditions.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 14-Sep-14 04:48 PM GMT

Your shots are stunning Mike, I love the Heron with the fish and your Dragon Fly. I was at Penn Flash last week and watched a Heron fishing but he didn't catch anything , I love action shots like that, I managed a shot of a Dragon Fly in Flight but certainly not as near as yours or as good as yours:D Goldie 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 14-Sep-14 05:19 PM GMT

Thank you, Goldie. You know how to do it. A great thing about digital is that it costs nothing to experiment, so keep practising 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by Debbie, 19-Sep-14 12:39 PM GMT

I have been popping in to view your diary and super pictures.

Malewarebytes is a good free programme to use for computer bugs – always restart computer after removal.

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 19-Sep-14 08:07 PM GMT

Thanks for looking in, Debbie and I'm pleased you like the photos 😊

I agree that 'Malwarebytes' can do a good job. It's such a pity that previously reputable download sites now try to trick you into downloading unwanted advertising software, just to make a fast buck! Some of these programs can be rather difficult to remove. I have found that the 'Kaspersky Rescue Disk 10' can be very effective against these. It runs from a CD or USB stick and has its own operating system (Linux), so that Windows is never started when it works. This enables it to find things that hide themselves quite deeply inside the Windows OS.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 20-Sep-14 12:34 PM GMT

Hi! Mike I may be over cautious, I've got both on my Computer, I'd so much trouble in the past with bugs. I get them to check every where once a week and so far so good 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 20-Sep-14 01:29 PM GMT

Better safe than sorry, Goldie

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 01-Oct-14 12:59 PM GMT

Yesterday (30th September), I visited the Oxford University Arboretum at **Nuneham Courtenay**.



*Nuneham Arboretum, Oxon - 30th September 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/160s@f/2.8 ISO100*

I find this a delightful place at all times of year, with splendid specimen trees and flowering shrubs, but especially so in Autumn, when the 'Acer Walk' turns to a blaze of red.



*Nuneham Arboretum, Oxon - 30th September 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/1600s@f/4.5 ISO250*

The only butterfly i saw was a **Red Admiral**, enjoying the small white flowers of a Strawberry Tree. It was quite high in the tree against a bright blue sky and my photo was not very good so I decided to apply the 'Dynamic Auto Painter' software (from <http://mediachance.com/dap/index.html> ), to create the following:



*Nuneham Arboretum, Oxon - 30th September 2014 Lumix FZ200 - 1/1300s@f/5.6 ISO250 - DAP 'Aquarelle'*

Rather better than I could manage with a paint brush 😊

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 03-Oct-14 12:35 PM GMT

Yesterday (2nd October), I made my annual pilgrimage to **Waterperry Gardens, Oxon**, to see the magnificent herbaceous border.



Waterperry Gardens, Oxon - 2nd October 2014 Lumix FZ200 - fl=11mm, 1/100s@f/4, ISO160

Unfortunately, unlike previous years, when the border has been 'swarming' with Vanessids, there were, initially, no butterflies to be seen at all! I thought I was going to have to content myself with this plant - *Gaura lindheimeri* 'Whirling Butterflies'



Waterperry Gardens, Oxon - 2nd October 2014 Lumix FZ200 - fl=20mm, 1/1600s@f/4.5, ISO160

Then, as the warm sun continued through the afternoon, I encountered my first **Small Tortoiseshell**, not on the profusely flowering borders but in the small rock garden:



Waterperry Gardens, Oxon - 2nd October 2014 Lumix FZ200 - fl=93mm, 1/1600s@f/4, ISO160

A little later, on the horticultural beds, I spotted a **Peacock**, so things were definitely looking up 😊



Waterperry Gardens, Oxon – 2nd October 2014 Lumix FZ200 – fl=52mm, 1/1000s@f/4.5, ISO160

I decided it was time to attach my 1 dioptre close-up lens and took the following, to demonstrate that the Lumix *can* do differential focus:



Waterperry Gardens, Oxon – 2nd October 2014 Lumix FZ200 – fl=18mm with +1CU, 1/400s@f/4, ISO160

Next up was another **Small Tortoiseshell**, though i didn't recognise it at first sighting, as it was unusually tiny – more like a Large Skipper at a glance!



Waterperry Gardens, Oxon – 2nd October 2014 Lumix FZ200 – fl=16mm with +1CU, 1/1000s@f/4, ISO160

Returning to the main herbaceous border, a lone **Red Admiral** was taking advantage of the nectar bounty:



*Waterperry Gardens, Oxon – 2nd October 2014 Lumix FZ200 – fl=87mm, 1/640s@f/4, ISO160*

And then, at around 4pm, Whites suddenly started to appear. I missed photographing a Green-veined White, which appeared close by, while I was concentrating on the Admiral but, shortly afterwards, I caught this **Small White**. I noticed that the whites were favouring the white flowers as though they knew they were better camouflaged on these!



*Waterperry Gardens, Oxon – 2nd October 2014 Lumix FZ200 – fl=108mm, 1/1300s@f/4, ISO160*

In the end, then a satisfying visit, though by no means the great Autumn butterfly-fest that I have experienced in previous years. In particular, I saw no Commas.

A parting shot of the amazing border above a group of Naked Ladies 😊 (Colchicums)



*Waterperry Gardens, Oxon – 2nd October 2014 Lumix FZ200 – fl=8mm, 1/200s@f/4, ISO160*

With temperatures now set to fall, this may have been the last chance for a mass showing. Perhaps there is still a chance for some late migrants to appear.

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 03-Oct-14 05:06 PM GMT

...1 dioptr close-up lens...

Mike. Is that a simply plano or did you manage to source a 1 dioptr achromatic? I have a +2 achromat but have been unable to find a +1 achromat only a plano which (despite your photo) can never be **quite** as good.

Jack

## Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 03-Oct-14 06:06 PM GMT

Gorgeous colours in your last couple of postings Mike – both plants and butterflies. I am always interested to see the camera settings you have used to achieve various effects.

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 03-Oct-14 07:02 PM GMT

Hi Jack – It's from a Hoya set of three. I think it's a simple meniscus, which seems OK at +1, though not for anything stronger.

I find that +1 is the most useful in the field. Higher powers become very critical on focus and are prone to introduce more aberrations (*not in the butterflies, before you comment!!!*)

Glad you like the colours, Pauline. I should have mentioned that I used quite a lot of exposure 'correction' for some of the shots. -1EV for the white flowers and butterflies, for example. I found the Lumix to be excellent on this visit – versatile for a very wide range of shots, with no lens changes, and so light compared with my DSLR. Although most of the shots shown here were taken at f/4, I was actually varying the aperture quite a lot, to optimise depth of field in particular shots.

Because the butterflies were rather sparse, they needed tracking down and I became totally absorbed in the chase – the afternoon flew by 😊

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 04-Oct-14 09:36 AM GMT

I will dig out my +1 plano (meniscus) and make some direct comparisons with my +2 (nominal – actually measured at +1.75) achromatic.

*For those who don't understand these terms (you can ignore this bit Mike as of course you DO understand!), different wavelengths of light refract by different degrees. A simple lens ignores this and usually the results are adequate for many purposes (eg spectacles lenses). An achromatic is made from two pieces of glass of different refractive indexes cemented together so that refractive errors are cancelled out. The achromatic lens was first used by astronomers with large refracting telescopes but was complex and costly; that was one reason why reflecting telescopes were developed as they do not suffer from chromatic aberration.*

*Out of interest, at one time my spectacle prescription just happened to be +1.75 in one eye and of course, the lens was a simple plano. By looking through my +1.75 (camera) achromatic I had a marginally but discernibly sharper image. Seemingly, achromatic lenses are not available for spectacles.*

Jack

## Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 04-Oct-14 02:09 PM GMT

Hi! Mike, I love your photo's, the Autumn ones are lovely and the Butterflies unreal I don't know much yet about Photography, But trial and error gives experience so I'll battle on 😊 Goldie 😊

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 05-Oct-14 02:30 PM GMT

### "Jack Harrison" wrote:

I will dig out my +1 plano (meniscus) and make some direct comparisons with my +2 (nominal – actually measured at +1.75) achromatic.

I'll be interested to see your results.

### "Goldie M" wrote:

.....trial and error gives experience so I'll battle on 😊 Goldie 😊

Thank you again, Goldie. You know how to take good pictures, so keep experimenting! Digital cameras are great for this, since they record all the exposure data and you can see what works (or doesn't!)

Mike.

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 05-Oct-14 08:35 PM GMT

Absolutely cracking final shot of the Red Admiral – it's in my collection of "shots I wish I'd taken" 🎁 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 07-Oct-14 06:53 PM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel. The RA was very mobile and, just after my shot, it flew up into the trees and disappeared, so I was lucky 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by PhilBJohnson, 08-Oct-14 02:50 AM GMT

Hi Mike,

I have just been catching up with some of your fantastic photos. I am particularly interested in that Heron picture. I have seen them spear large fish before and leave them on the bank if they are unable to swallow.

It might even be a large Rudd ? (very similar to a large Roach) as the fins are a very deep red making me think that unless of course, that's blood? I think it has been a good end of summer & September for Herons generally because they are wading birds and it's been quite dry leaving low water levels in some ponds and lakes. I never feel sorry for them as they always have a fresh supply of goldfish to fall back on as people tend not to build their goldfish ponds 1 metre deep or more for safety reasons leaving Herons with a big 😊

Superb butterfly shots. You have clearly had some very memorable experiences and good days out this last month or so,

Thanks for sharing,

Philip

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 08-Oct-14 12:43 PM GMT

Thank you for looking in, Philip. I think you're probably correct about the fish, since others have also suggested to me that it was a Rudd. I took lots of photos at the time and here is one that shows more of the fish with a very happy-looking Heron!



Otmoor, Oxon – 9th September 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 + 1.4X TC – 1/750s@f/5.6 ISO400

It has now turned much colder locally, so butterflies are getting few and far between. I saw a Small Tortoiseshell yesterday battering itself against the windows inside the beautiful church of St John at Wickhamford (near Evesham). It was a dilemma whether to let it risk damaging itself or to take it outside in the sunshine. In the end, I took it out and hope that it found another roost before evening.

Apart from that, the only other butterflies I have seen in the past few days were set specimens in cases, at the AES show at Kempton Park. As always,

there were lots of youngsters there and I do hope that they gain a wider interest in the natural world, apart from just collecting dead specimens.

One more photo from Waterperry Gardens, last Thursday, of a Small Tortoiseshell that I feel would make a nice painting:



Waterperry, Oxon - 2nd October 2012 Lumix FZ200 (fl=63 mm) - 1/500s@f/4 ISO160

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 08-Oct-14 08:02 PM GMT

Mike:

I feel would make a nice painting

I though you might do this (or similar) Mike. (Click on thumb for full size).



Jack

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 08-Oct-14 09:23 PM GMT

Thanks Jack. I recognise a DAP pic when I see one! *for those who don't know 'Dynamic Auto Painter', mentioned earlier in my diary - Oct 1st)*

Actually, I'd already had a go with the 'Aquarelle' theme but I think it needs a real artist 😊





*SmTortoiseshell - DAP 'Aquarelle'*

It was a good full moon this evening - hope others enjoyed it!



*Full Moon - 8th October 2014*

Mike

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by Padfield, 08-Oct-14 09:41 PM GMT

That's a beautiful picture of the moon, Mike. There is a really magical quality to the light.

Guy

### **Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 08-Oct-14 09:52 PM GMT

Thank you Guy. The main image was taken by using the 'hand-held night scene' mode on my Lumix FZ200. This takes about 20 short-exposure images and then combines them. I also took another shot set to manual exposure of 1/200s:f/4.5 ISO160 to provide the detail in the moon's face. Both used manual focus and fl=32mm (~200mm 35mm equiv).

It was a remarkable sight, as the sky was still a deep indigo blue, soon after sunset.

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by Pauline, 09-Oct-14 11:59 AM GMT

That ST shot would make a beautiful tapestry Mike for a cushion front or similar – and a great shot of the moon. You are putting me to shame experimenting with so many settings on your camera as I hardly ever change mine. I must start to make more of an effort.

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 09-Oct-14 12:55 PM GMT

Hi Pauline. My late Mother-in-law used to make tapestry cushion covers,so it's a pity she is no longer with us. As you will have realised, I love playing with my toys 😊 That hand-held night mode on the FZ200 is rather amazing.  
Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 10-Oct-14 12:50 PM GMT

Lovely Shot of the Moon Mike, I've tried once or twice with Moon shots, hope less 😊 Goldie 😊

## Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 12-Oct-14 06:35 PM GMT

I think that Small Tort photoshop painting came out really well Mike – something I might have to have a look into for my daughters – I could give them butterfly colouring-in sheets which would help them with their butterfly ID 😊

Have a goodun

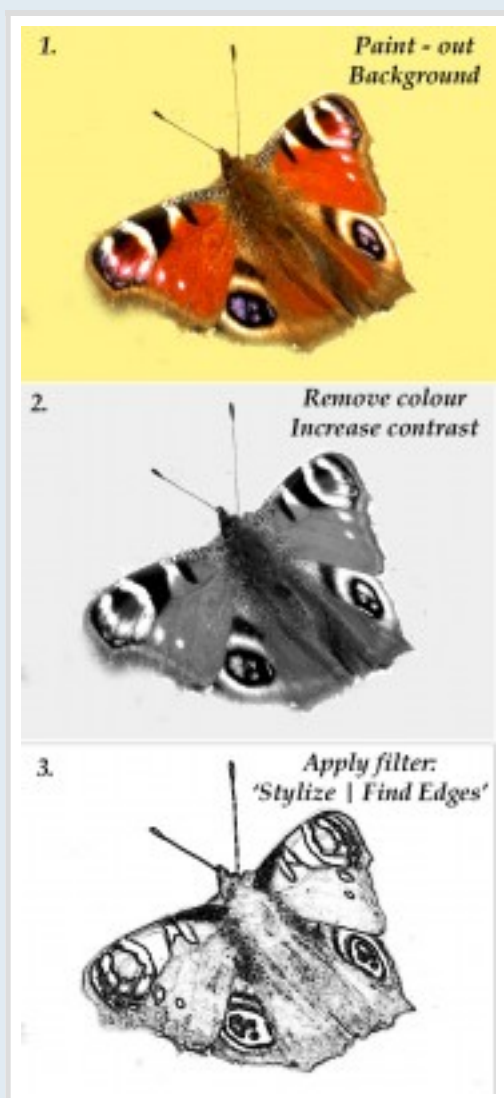
Wurzel

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 12-Oct-14 10:59 PM GMT

An idea you might like to try, Wurzel, is the use of the 'Find Edges' filter in Photoshop Elements to create a line drawing from a photo. I often use it, in a different context, as an aid to producing engineering drawings from photos.

The following example shows how it can work (*click image to enlarge*):



Start from a photo with a plain or simple background (or just use the paintbrush to provide a uniform wash). From the 'Enhance' menu you can 'Remove Color' to produce a BW image. I find it best to adjust the brightness and contrast, to get well-defined boundaries, and then go to the 'Filter' menu, where 'Find Edges' is found under 'Stylize...'

The result is an outline image that you could print out, as a basis for the youngsters to paint 😊

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 24-Oct-14 04:09 PM GMT

On a dull, wet afternoon, I've been playing with my computer (again). Earlier in the year I took a whole series of photos of a pair of Brimstones in courtship. (see [viewtopic.php?f=29&t=7459&start=40#p84266](http://viewtopic.php?f=29&t=7459&start=40#p84266) for a selection of my images)

I was flicking through these on my laptop screen and realised they formed a sort of animation, like those old flicker books that some may remember. I knew that the .gif image format can produce animations and is sometimes used for 'smileys' and the like, so I decided to try making a gif animation from a selection of my images.

I downloaded a copy of 'Ulead Gif Animator' from the web and used it to open a selection of my photos. The software allows you to alter the order and to add or delete images, to optimise the sequence, and then a 'wizard' creates the animation. The result is shown below:



Hartslock, Oxon – 13th May 2014 sequence of photos taken with Nikon D300s plus 300/f4 lens

For the technically minded, the final 'image' is a stack of layers, which are displayed in sequence. There are various options in the Ulead software, to vary the rate of display or to add captions and so on. It can also be used to convert video clips into short animations.

I did not have this outcome in mind when I took these photos but may try it out in a planned way, next season.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 24-Oct-14 05:36 PM GMT

I take it Mike that you used burst mode? How many frames/second?

Maybe no need to wait until next season to try as a *planned* technique. Birds perhaps during the off-season? I might give it a try here but it would be a difficult decision whether to test on Golden or White-tailed Eagle 🦅 🦅 Saw one of each today near Aros (between Salen and Tobermory) within space of two minutes.

Jack

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 24-Oct-14 06:01 PM GMT

Hi Jack. They were taken in bursts, though not all are one continuous sequence – you can see that the background moves about. I aligned the images on the butterflies before using them with the Ulead software. The Nikon D300s has a frame rate of about 7 fps. Some might say: "just shoot a video" but, this way, I also have hi-res images of the individual frames.

As the following exposure details show, the light was changing very rapidly, a day of sun and cloud, with a downpour soon after these shots were taken. Both the male and female look rather battered when seen statically.



Hartslock, Oxon – 13th May 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/f4 lens – 1/6,000s@f/4 ISO400



Hartslock, Oxon - 13th May 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 lens - 1/1,500s@f/5.6 ISO400

I'll await your eagle animations with interest.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Chris Jackson, 24-Oct-14 06:31 PM GMT

I like your Gif Animation presentation Mike, most original. I guess you need some good quality burst mode photos for the input. As you probably know I use an FZ150, do you think you could get the same result as above with your FZ200 ?

Cheers, Chris

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 24-Oct-14 07:02 PM GMT

Hi Chris, I can't think of any reason why you couldn't do something similar with the FZ150. My animation was built from about 15 images. I reduced the size to 320x240, so that each individual image was only about 25kB and the whole stack is only 350kB - fine for e-mail.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by David M, 24-Oct-14 08:37 PM GMT

Nice effect, Mike, though I'm afraid it's beyond my sphere of capability.

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 26-Oct-14 08:40 PM GMT

An interesting technique Mike - but like David I'm not sure it's one that I'd be able to perform 🤖 It would be a really good one for Green Hairstreaks as then you might be able to get some open wings views...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 26-Oct-14 11:16 PM GMT

Thank you for the comments. The animations started as a 'rainy day' activity but produce an interesting result - a bit like the moving pictures on the walls of Hogwarts 😊

I find it interesting the way that the brain seems to fill in the gaps. There are only 13 photos in the stack but they fit together surprisingly smoothly, even though they were never planned for this use!

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 27-Oct-14 11:08 PM GMT

It was a beautifully sunny and surprisingly warm morning, so I decided to visit **Dry Sandford Pit** in Cothill, where I usually start my butterfly year in the early Spring.

Unfortunately, cloud was spreading from the West when I arrived and a dark finger of cloud perversely chose to cover the sun for almost the whole of my visit, although most of the sky remained blue! Under such conditions, I did not expect to see much butterfly life but then I spotted a lone **Red**

Admiral catching what warmth it could on the West-facing sandstone cliffs, along the edge of the reserve.



*Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon - 27th October 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR lens - 1/180@f/6.7 ISO400*

These cliffs are riddled with holes made by many creatures, ranging from rabbits down to various species of bees and wasps but, today, they were very quiet. Just a few flowers still bloomed but Autumn fungi were appearing amongst the fallen leaves:



*Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon - 27th October 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR lens - 1/60@f/11 ISO400*

I continued my walk around the reserve but saw no more butterflies, and most of the birds were scattered by a low-flying helicopter from the adjoining military base. When I returned to the cliff, after about half a hour, the Red Admiral was still there but had now closed its wings, since the sun showed no signs of returning.



*Dry Sandford Pit, Oxon - 27th October 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR lens - 1/250@f/5.6 ISO400*

I decided to drive home over Boars Hill, which provides a fine viewpoint of the city of Oxford. As I reached the crest, a shaft of sunlight provided a spotlight on the central Oxford buildings, creating a wonderful juxtaposition between cows grazing in the foreground and the urban landscape beyond. A remarkable view, which has not changed in its main features for several hundred years.



view of Oxford from Boars Hill – 27th October 2014 Nikon D300s with 70–300VR lens – 1/500s@f/8 ISO400

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 27-Oct-14 11:54 PM GMT

That is a cracking shot Mike 😊 I haven't photographed a butterfly in almost a month now, all my usual haunts have dried up 😞🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 28-Oct-14 01:55 AM GMT

That view of Oxford is a winner.

Jack

### Re: MikeOxon

by Neil Hulme, 28-Oct-14 08:49 AM GMT

Hi Mike,  
Agreed. Magnificent landscape shot. It must be worth revisiting that view under different skies.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 28-Oct-14 12:05 PM GMT

Thank you for the comments on the Oxford view. I was driving past and just had to stop! The most amazing thing is that there is a line of pylons and wires, which usually spoil the view, but because of the patchy cloud, they happened to be in deep shadow 😊

Another brilliant sunny day, today, but I'm not free to get out – I expect there are still butterflies to be found!

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 29-Oct-14 07:02 PM GMT

Just after writing that I couldn't get out yesterday (**28th October**), the lure of the sunshine proved too much and I slipped out for a short lunch-time walk around the local gravel-pit lakes.

The lakes at **Radley Gravel Pits** were threatened with total destruction a few years ago, when they started to be used as ash pits for the local Didcot Power Station. Fortunately, however, some of the lakes were saved, as a result of a local campaign and, now that the coal-fired power station has closed, the landfill areas are also being restored. Currently, the regeneration is taking place within fenced-off areas, to which there is no access, shown in the following photo:



*Radley Gravel Pits – 28th October 2014 Nikon D300s with 70–300VR lens – 1/350s@f/9.5 ISO400*

I started my walk along a path that runs between the fenced-off area and 'Orchard Lake'. Although there were many flowers still in bloom, especially clovers, there was no sign of any butterflies. There were however, many Common and Ruddy Darter dragonflies, most looking somewhat superannuated!. On the lake, there was the usual collection of Coot, Seagulls, and a few Mute Swans, and I was fortunate enough to spot a pair of Kingfishers amongst low branches of the trees on the far side, after hearing their thin calls. I took a number of general photos of the wildlife and then decided to walk up onto the bank along the Northern edge of the enclosure.

Suddenly, there was a flash of yellow amongst the flowers along the path and I quickly took a couple of snaps – my first of a **Clouded Yellow** this year.

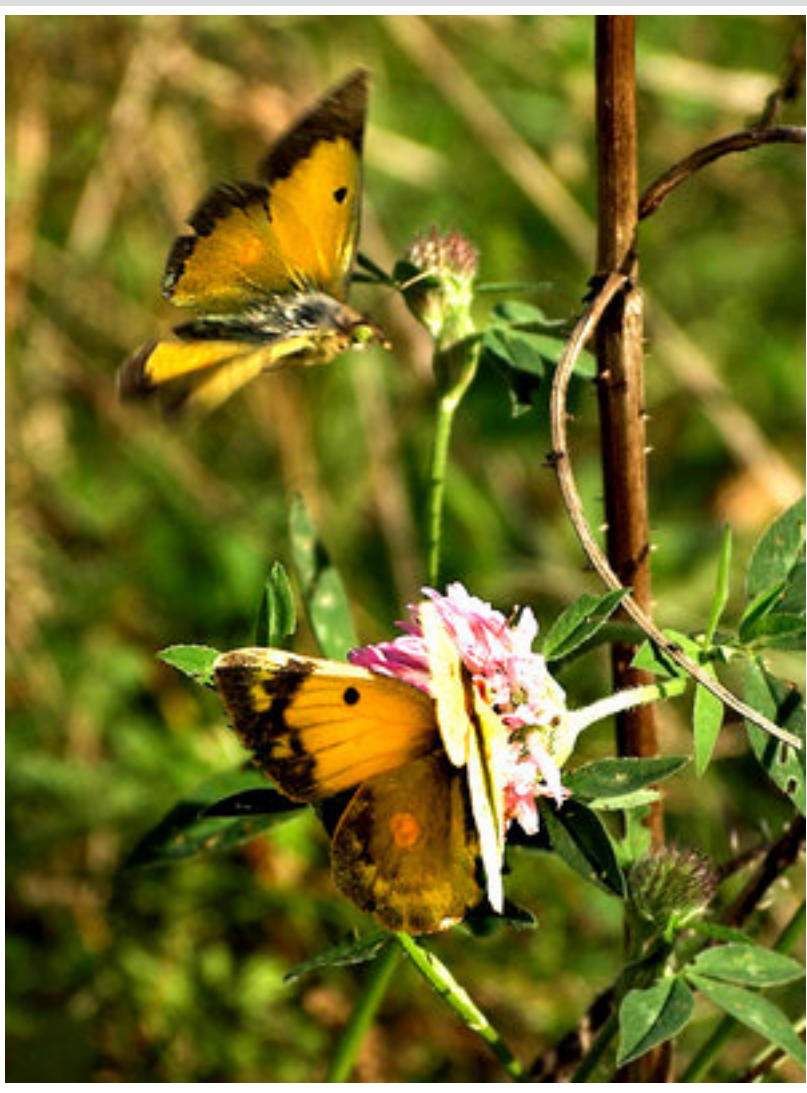


*Radley Gravel Pits – 28th October 2014 Nikon D300s with 70–300VR lens – 1/250s@f/8 ISO400*

The butterfly soon moved on but then another appeared, flying across from the enclosed area. I hurriedly followed this one but only managed a few 'grab shots' before it disappeared down the bank and back through the fence. I walked up and down the path several times, getting occasional sightings of one or more of these butterflies, moving rapidly from flower to flower.

I knew that my time was limited, so I headed back along the path towards home and then there was a pair of Clouded Yellows, chasing one another. I started to fire lots of photos, with the camera set to high-speed continuous. At the same time, I was aware of more of these butterflies passing through, so that I believe that there were at least six in the area – quite possibly many more. I decided to concentrate on the 'amorous couple' and shot several more sequences of photos. My decision to leave was made easier by a bank of cloud rolling in across the hitherto bright sun. The butterflies I had been watching flew up and disappeared over the young Birch trees.

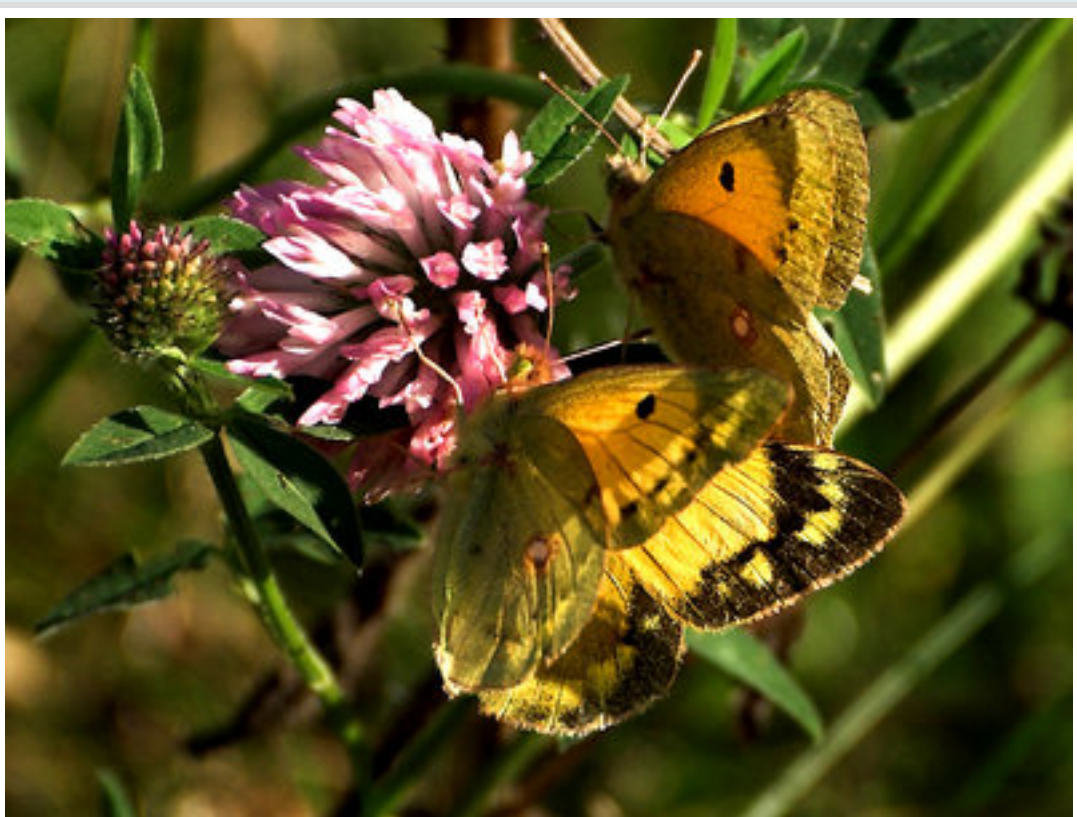
When shooting high-speed sequences in this way, it's quite hard to know what has been captured, until reviewing the photos back home. It is also surprising how many pictures one ends up taking, when shooting in continuous mode. I found that I had about 200 shots, though I soon pruned these down to about 60, for further examination. Many of these are of some interest, showing the butterflies in various poses but I've selected three that display the wing markings particularly well.



*Radley Gravel Pits – 28th October 2014 Nikon D300s with 70–300VR lens – 1/750s@f/5.6 ISO400*



*Radley Gravel Pits – 28th October 2014 Nikon D300s with 70–300VR lens – 1/750s@f/5.6 ISO400*



*Radley Gravel Pits – 28th October 2014 Nikon D300s with 70–300VR lens – 1/750s@f/5.6 ISO400*

The different patterns on the wing margins between male and female show well – the female having light patches within the broad outer fringes. In addition the female has a striking red 'hairdo', whereas the male is brown. These were far from fresh specimens, and the male's wings were quite battered, but they were still in active courtship at the end of October!

It's going to be hard to choose a 'favourite' for the annual species summary, and I may also see if I can turn some of the sequences into animations, as



described earlier in my diary.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by keving, 30-Oct-14 01:37 PM GMT

Nice photos Mike, especially the last one with the sunlight through the wings.

Good to see there are still some surprises on offer even with November rearing it's head.

I remember being in Chamonix, France last year shooting some sequences of CY taking off (hoping for a clear open wing shot). I too had about 200 images to sift through over a glass of wine that evening. Thank goodness for digital as opposed to the good old days of 'Truprint'.

Regards Kev

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 30-Oct-14 01:59 PM GMT

Amen to your comment on digital, Kevling 😊 and I'm pleased you enjoyed my photos. It was so fortuitous that I decided to go for that walk, even though I had very little time available.

I'm still looking through the pics; here's another, with at least a couple of upper-side wings particularly sharp.



Radley Gravel Pits – 28th October 2014 Nikon D300s with 70-300VR lens – 1/750s@f/5.6 ISO400

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by keving, 30-Oct-14 06:01 PM GMT

Like that one too Mike. I find that the unexpected surprises give the most joy.

Regards Kev

### Re: MikeOxon

by Wurzel, 30-Oct-14 09:27 PM GMT

Great report Mike and a cracking sequence of shots 😊👍 It's great when the quick chance visit pays off 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 30-Oct-14 09:54 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

It's great when the quick chance visit pays off 😊

I'll say 😊😊😊

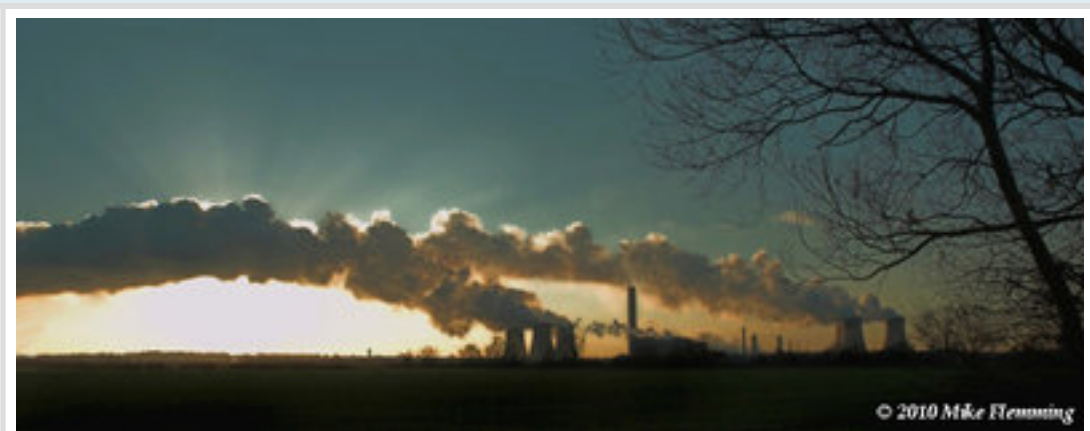
## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 31-Oct-14 11:03 PM GMT

I paid a return visit to **Radley Gravel Pits** today but, despite the warm sunshine, there was no sign of Clouded Yellows. There was quite a stiff breeze blowing across the bank, where I saw them on Tuesday, and I only spotted a single **Red Admiral**, battling hard against the wind. I also saw a couple of juvenile Peregrine Falcons, which had probably been harassing the ducks on one of the lakes nearby.

I have mentioned before how these lakes were almost all destroyed, through being used as ash pits for Didcot Power Station. Human beings can be very fickle – when the power station was first built in the 1960s, it was regarded as a major eyesore in rural Oxfordshire. When, however, the huge cooling towers were scheduled for demolition earlier this year, there was quite an outcry about the loss of a local landmark! There is no doubt that seeing these towers during a journey was a welcome sign that home was near – I even used to spot them from the air, when returning to Heathrow from the USA!

The following photo, which I took on a cold December day in 2010 is, undoubtedly, an unrepeatable shot.



Didcot Power Station, Oxon – 8th December 2010 Nikon D300s with 18-70 lens (at 18mm) – 1/125s@f/16 ISO400

Mike

## Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 01-Nov-14 02:38 PM GMT

Glad your still seeing Butterflies Mike nothing to see up here I'm afraid ,I've taken to shots of views and birds now, 😊 love the tower shots, Goldie 😊

## Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 01-Nov-14 02:58 PM GMT

Didcot Power Station was much loved by glider pilots. There was a **guaranteed** thermal. There was much sadness in the gliding community when it closed.

And you are so correct about changing opinions. RAF Marham in west Norfolk is a noisy place that had it been planned today, would have aroused huge objections. But a couple of years or so ago, it was threatened with closure. I was living in Norfolk at the time and there was an outcry about the possible closure. But the locals are delighted that Marham has been saved and look forward to the arrival of Joint Strike Fighter (Lightning 2) circa 2018.

And that railway HS2. Huge objections today not least because of the cost. But look ahead say 150 years when railways are history. What a wonderful linear nature reserve that will be.

Jack

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 02-Nov-14 01:02 AM GMT

Put simply, Jack, we don't like change!

## Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 05-Nov-14 01:45 PM GMT

No butterflies around at present but I have been having a go at photographing fireworks, at a local show organised by Didcot Rotary Club, last Saturday.

Over the years, I've tried several different cameras, with mixed results, so this year, I decided to try my Lumix FZ200. I've read a few articles on the web and they all say to use a tripod. Well, try that in the middle of a crowd 😞 They also say use a low ISO, to reduced noise, and a slow shutter speed, and I disagree with those too!

At the start, I didn't find the Lumix very good at all. The viewfinder was far too slow to catch 'the moment', so I had to use the LCD screen which, for me, means wearing glasses and that, in turn, means I can't watch the real fireworks too well 😞 I decided that watching the show came first, so left my glasses off and just used the screen as an approximate framing device – not much of a problem, as I had the zoom set to wide angle anyway. I just needed to ensure that the 'blob' of light was roughly in the middle and press the shutter at the peak brightness.

Next hurdle is exposure. I tried auto mode, but the camera seemed to ignore the bright fireworks altogether and gave ridiculously long exposures, which turned out very blurred (hand held). There was a bright moon, so I set the spot metering mode and took an exposure off the moon – around 1/125s @ f/2.8 ISO 160. Since I wanted some motion blur in the firework trails, I decided to use a shutter speed of 1/30s and set the exposure manually.(1/30s@f/2.8 ISO 400) Frankly, noise is not a problem, since the fireworks are bright and the background is meant to be black so, if the result looks a bit 'speckly', just adjust the brightness/contrast to make the background go black.

The focus – it was an 'overhead' display, so I set Manual focus to infinity. For some reason, I found that the focus sometimes changed – either it re-sets, when the camera 'goes to sleep' between shots, or I accidentally caught the autofocus button, on the left side of the lens, while handling the camera. Either way, several shots were spoiled.

I made a montage out of some of the more successful shots (including the moon) as shown below:



*Didcot Fireworks Display - 1st November 2014 (click image to enlarge)*

My conclusion is that it is important to have a camera that can set both manual focus and manual exposure, which rules out many 'compacts'. The best results I've had were from an Olympus Pen EP-1, which has the advantage of a manual focus ring that stays where it is set, rather than the electronic switch on the Lumix FZ200.

Enjoy the displays, if you are going to one tonight!

Mike

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### Re: MikeOxon

by PhilBJohnson, 06-Nov-14 02:14 AM GMT

Hi Mike, nice montage,

Like you, I enjoyed the weather for fireworks on 1st November 😊 . I remember once as a 9 year old in the 70s helping Dad light a bonfire in the back garden and "smoking out" or disturbing a male Brimstone which was hibernating. It flew off in a hurry and this was one of my first ever "magical autumn/winter butterfly experiences". As I am sure you know, back then in the 70s, it was generally colder in the autumn/winter months than it is these days and neighbours did not object so much, to others having bonfires !

Thank you very much for your Camera (Common Blue) corrections/comments.

I will try and use them as a point of reference in the future to increase my understanding, hopefully making fewer mistakes and not embarrass myself so much, 😊

all the best,

Philip

### Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 08-Nov-14 01:54 PM GMT

Hi! Mike, I always have trouble with night scenes no matter what I try, your fire work shots look great, I tried last year to take shots of Christmas lights ,( not too much success though) I'll have another go this year, at least I know my camera a little better 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by Jack Harrison, 08-Nov-14 11:30 PM GMT

Goldie M

I always have trouble with night scenes no matter what I try

If you leave the lens cap on it looks like night. Nobody would ever know,

Jack

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 08-Nov-14 11:48 PM GMT

Hi Goldie - glad you liked the fireworks! Jack's suggestion is excellent, unless you actually want to see the lights 😊

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by Goldie M, 11-Nov-14 01:30 PM GMT

With some of the night scenes I've shot you'd think the lens cap was on Jack and Mike 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 11-Nov-14 02:45 PM GMT

Now that the 2014 butterfly season is over, I decided, for my own interest, to make a PDF document from all my diary entries over the year. I was astonished to find that it came to 119 A4 pages 😊 (and that is without including the kind remarks and comments made by other members )

It really surprised me to see how a few minutes of regular diary writing adds up to a substantial book, which I shall enjoy looking back on in future years.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by keving, 13-Nov-14 11:30 AM GMT

Mike,

Let's hope that weather and conservation permitting, your diary is even bigger next year. I am new to the personal diary this year, but love adding bits to it for reference in years to come. Enjoyed reading yours.

Regards Kev

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 13-Nov-14 01:40 PM GMT

Thanks Kev. I liked your posts on early stages so, perhaps, that is something I shall explore in future years.

Mike

### Re: MikeOxon

by MikeOxon, 24-Nov-14 11:55 AM GMT

I was interested to read a review of the Nikon 300mm f/4 lens posted recently by Ken Rockwell at <http://www.kenrockwell.com/nikon/300f4afs.htm>

What caught my eye in particular were his comments on its excellent macro performance, where he showed a really sharp image of his watch face. I was pleased to see this since, as I get lazier and less able to move slowly and steadily towards my butterfly quarry, i have found myself using this lens more and more for 'macro'-type shots.

One advantage of this lens over most zooms is that it maintains its 300mm focal length when at its closest-focus settings. (Many zooms and internal focus lenses achieve close-focus by reducing the focal length) This means that the magnification at 4' 7" (1.4 m) is much greater than would be the case for these other lenses.

I have posted several examples taken with this lens in my diary but would single one out as demonstrating its performance, even when used with a 1.4X teleconverter, to increase the image magnification:



*Linkey Down, Oxon - 16th April 2014 Nikon D300s with 300/4 lens + 1.4X TC - 1/1000s@f/13 ISO400*

Of course, there is a price to be paid, not just in cash terms but in weight too! This lens is really at its best when photographing birds in flight, when the super-fast auto-focus comes into its own.

**Re: MikeOxon**

by MikeOxon, 30-Dec-14 08:23 PM GMT

I happened to notice on a star chart that the planet Uranus was quite close to the Moon on Monday night (29th December). Having an obvious reference point, like the moon, helps to find faint targets when you're not too familiar with the night sky and don't have a calibrated telescope mount to motor to an exact spot. It was a very cold, clear night but there is a lot of light pollution where I live, so I was not at all sure of being able to spot such a faint target.

The moon itself is actually a pretty bright target for photography and I used it to set the focus as precisely as I could on my tele-lens. Spot metering indicated an exposure of 1/125s @ f/13, which is what I chose to use from my tripod although, by using a larger aperture, hand-held shots of the moon would be feasible.



*Moon from Abingdon, Oxon - 29th December 2014 Nikon D300s with 300f4 lens + 1.4X TC - 1/125s@f/13 ISO800*

I then opened up the aperture and set a shutter speed of 2 seconds in the hope of recording Uranus. I use a remote release for the camera and, since I could not see the faint stars through the viewfinder, simply took a number of shots in what I hoped was the right direction! After converting the RAW images, and using Photoshop to get the best contrast that I could between the stars and the dark background, I compared the results with the sky image displayed by my 'Starry Night' software. I could determine exactly where the camera was pointing, by comparing the star patterns in my images with the software image. I found that, although I had come very close, Uranus had managed to lie just outside the frame in all my photos!!! It was too cold for another go and I revived myself with a mug of mulled wine instead.

Not to be beaten, I had another go this evening (30th December) and chose to use my 90mm macro lens in order to obtain a wider sky field. The macro has a wide aperture (f/2.8), so is useful for finding faint stars. The moon had moved further to the east relative to Uranus but I knew that the planet was due South at about 18:30, so took that as my aiming point. I took a series of horizontally panned images and then overlaid them to produce the following composite - this time, success 😊

*(Click to enlarge photo)*



*Uranus from Abingdon, Oxon - 30th December 2014 Nikon D300s with 90mm macro lens - 1.5 sec @ f/2.8 ISO800*

I've added a few star labels to the photo, mainly members of the constellation Pisces. As you can see, Uranus is just one faint dot amongst many.

Mike