

Re: William

by Nick Broomer, 03-Jan-14 11:19 PM GMT

Hi William,

Excellent photos of the Clouded Yellows. 😊 But i enjoyed your photos of your early stages of the Small Tortoiseshell even more. Just brilliant. 😊

I hope you and your family have a excellent New Year.

All the best, Nick.

Re: William

by William, 04-Jan-14 08:09 PM GMT

Thanks Nick - I have enjoyed your immature clouded yellows just as much - simply stunning, I look forward to the final instalments 😊 😊 .

Re: William

by Maximus, 09-Jan-14 06:45 PM GMT

A lovely sequence of Small Tortoiseshell photos William 😊

Mike

Re: William

by William, 12-Jan-14 11:25 AM GMT

Thanks Mike - it was great to see so many this year 😊 😊 .

Re: William

by William, 12-Jan-14 11:47 AM GMT

Peacock

I thought I'd continue my nymphalid theme this week and go with Peacocks. I found 2013 was a good year for these stunning butterflies, but in some areas not others. Usually in late summer Peacocks are one of the most numerous butterflies in my garden, with as many as 20 individuals. This year however they scarcely made double figures, whilst I enjoyed up to 33 Small Tortoiseshells, and similar numbers of Large Whites. Nevertheless, they were around in good numbers elsewhere, and on one thoroughly enjoyable walk on my 'patch' I counted 50 Peacocks within 10m squared on some buddleias, a wonderful experience, every flower seemed to posses a flickering pair of multicoloured wings 😊 .



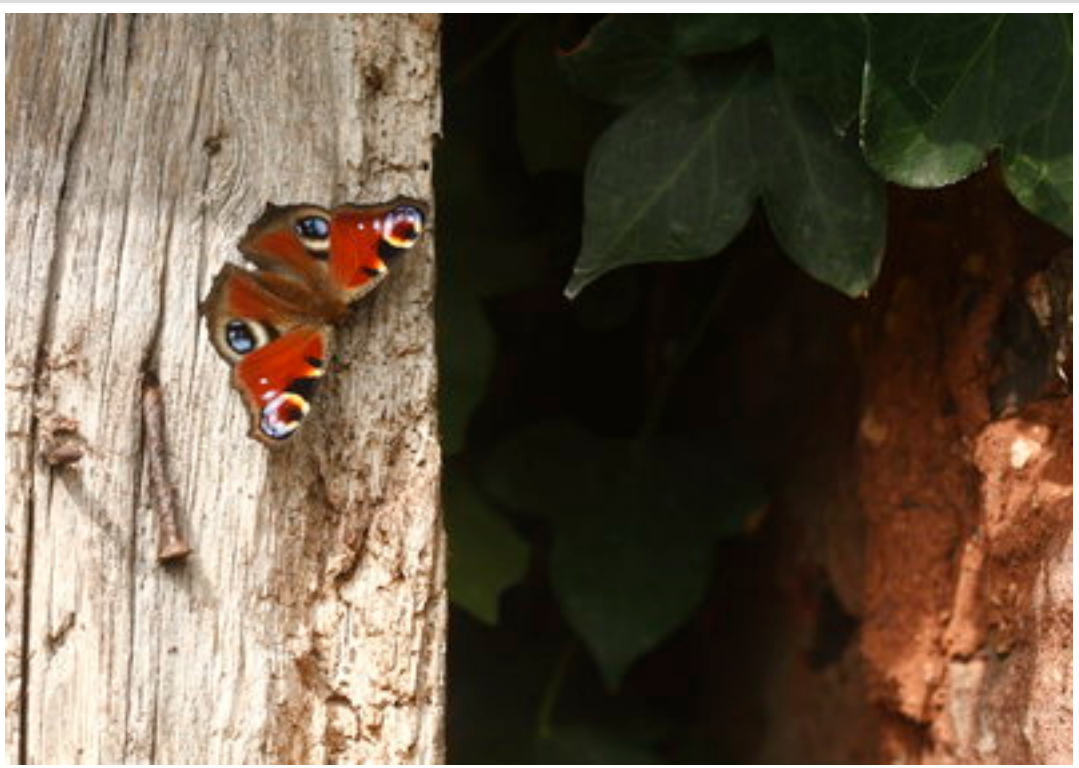
Peacock



Peacock



Peacock



Peacock



Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell

I also found far more larvae this year, somewhere in the region of 8 nests. Given that I've only ever found one nest before, I was delighted to see so many of these handsome gregarious larvae.



Peacock Larva



Peacock Larvae



Peacock larva

Re: William

by Wurzel, 12-Jan-14 09:44 PM GMT

Stunning shots William 🍷😊 My favourite has to be the Peacock and Small Tort together, it looks like one of those team building exercises where you have to rely on each other to stay balanced on a very narrow and very high platform 😲

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 13-Jan-14 06:15 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, much appreciated 😊 - I think that's an excellent analogy - I was suprised to see the two co-operating, particularly on such a small flower 😊.

Re: William

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jan-14 07:08 PM GMT

Just catching up on your diary William. Your posting some beautiful images which are really going some way to brighten up another dark and dreary evening 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: William

by William, 16-Jan-14 07:45 PM GMT

Thanks Neil - Peacocks are magnificent Butterflies 😊.

Re: William

by William, 19-Jan-14 08:42 PM GMT

I had an extremely enjoyable time today, for once being blessed with magnificent weather. Unfortunately, I didn't manage to see any adult butterflies, but a friend showed me some superb White - Letter Hairstreak ova in his garden, as well as some lovely footage of an abberant Small Copper - an afternoon well spent 😊



White - Letter Hairstreak Ovum

Re: William

by Nick Broomer, 22-Jan-14 05:11 PM GMT

Hi William,

Lovely photos of the Peacocks, both larva and the butterflies. 😊 Especially the second photo down, excellent. 😊 Also thats a smashing photo of the White- letter Hairstreak ovum. I am really looking forward to reading your PD in the coming months. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: William

by William, 22-Jan-14 08:29 PM GMT

Thanks Nick - your kind comments are much appreciated 😊

Re: William

by William, 30-Jan-14 06:49 PM GMT

Chalkhill Blues

Chalkhill Blues, are sadly, not all that common in Somerset, with a scattering of colonies on the Mendips, Poldens and at Brean Down. Nevertheless, I make a pilgrimage to see them each year, normally at a site just down the road from Collard Hill on the Poldens. This year was no exception, and I was fortunate to find them in better numbers than ever before. On a cloudy, windy evening in August, a clocked up around 50 specimens, including several handsome aberrations. The Supporting Cast included Brown Argus, Common Blue and Marbled White, these, coupled with the spectacular views, made for an enjoyable evening.

The cloudy weather made getting undersides quite easy...



Chalkhill Blue - Male

And uppersides more challenging.



Chalkhill Blue - Male

I tried to put a name to the many aberrations, but it was a thankless task - perhaps someone can help? 😊



Chalkhill Blue - Male - Post-Obsoleta?



Chalkhill Blue - Female



Chalkhill Blue - Female



Chalkhill Blue - Male



Chalkhill Blue – Male – Fowleri?

Re: William

by Pete Eeles, 30-Jan-14 08:00 PM GMT

"William" wrote:

I tried to put a name to the many aberrations, but it was a thankless task – perhaps someone can help? 😊

Hi William – great photos! The penultimate ab. is definitely a candidate for *ab. postico-obsolata* ("Underside of the hind wings with all spots absent except the discoidal. Forewings normal." and your last definitely tending toward *ab. fowleri*.

Chalkhill Blue abs. were "done to death" by Bright and Leeds in "A Monograph of the British Aberrations of the Chalk-Hill Blue Butterfly" and, as a result, we now have in the region of 500 different abs. defined that vary in the tiniest of details and pinpointing which of the 500 applies isn't easy!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: William

by William, 30-Jan-14 08:37 PM GMT

Thanks Pete – that penultimate one was my favourite so it's nice to put a name to it 😊 .

Re: William

by Wurzel, 30-Jan-14 11:33 PM GMT

A great collection of Chalkhills William 😊 Some of those abs are really interesting, you could try the Cockayne collection on the Natural History Museum website to see if any that are similar to yours. If you found that many abs from one site I think I need to check out the sites near me in more detail next year.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 31-Jan-14 07:38 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel – I did have a look, that's where I came up with the Post-Obsoleta, but I ended up deciding I lacked the necessary expertise 😊 ! I was very surprised to find so many abs, I had hoped for just one or two, but I would say 1 in 5 or 4 was aberrant! The only reason I can think of for this is that I was at quite an isolated site for Chalkhills, perhaps meaning increased variation within the smaller gene pool.

Re: William

by Nick Broomer, 01-Feb-14 08:05 PM GMT

Thats an impressive number of Chalkhill Blue aberrations, William. You might not be blessed with great numbers of these delightful insects in your area,

but the diversity of these butterflies certainly makes up for the lack of numbers. Lovely Photos. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: William

by Susie, 01-Feb-14 09:00 PM GMT

Did someone say chalkhills? 😊

This little butterfly is one I hope to never tire of seeing and that was a smashing collection of photographs, William 😊

Re: William

by William, 02-Feb-14 09:00 AM GMT

Thanks Guys I really appreciate your kind comments – I was delighted to find them in so many unusual shapes and sizes – an evening well spent 😊!

Re: William

by William, 09-Feb-14 09:52 PM GMT

Whites

I have always found Whites one of the most ubiquitous families of Butterflies in my part of the world, an observation mirrored by the Somerset Butterfly Conservation Transect Booklet for this year – Large Whites increased by 350% on 2012, Small Whites 592% and Green – Veined Whites 112%. With such excellent numbers of Butterflies around, I wasn't hard pressed for photographic opportunities, a few below....

Firstly, a female Brimstone mobbed by Green – Veined and Large Whites..



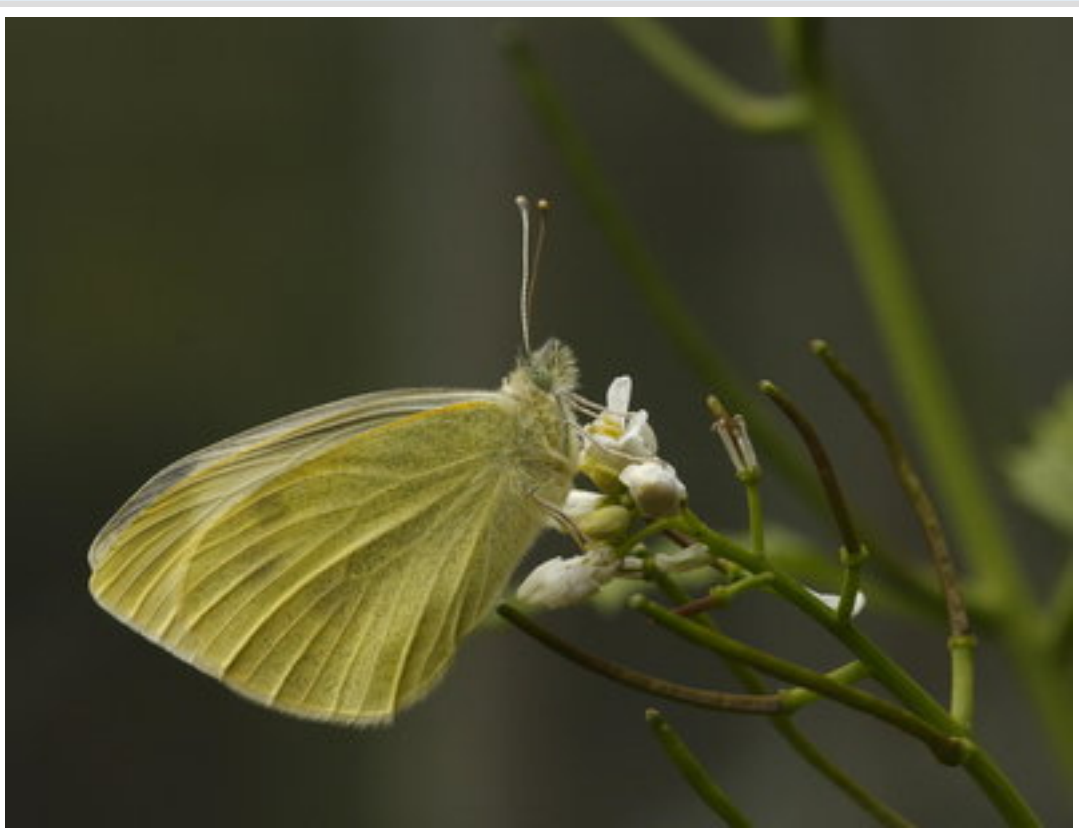
Brimstone with Large and Green – Veined Whites in Pursuit



Brimstone with Large and Green – Veined Whites in Pursuit



Large and Small White Larvae



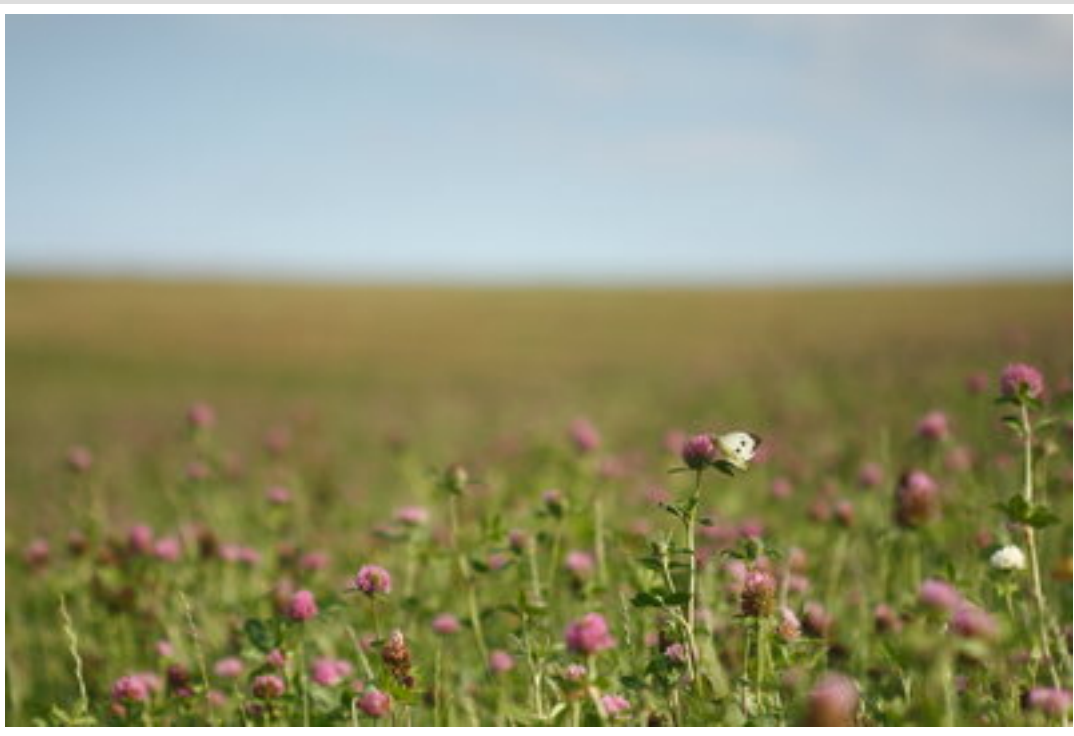
Small White



Large Whites Mating



Large Whites



Large White



Brimstone



Large White Larva

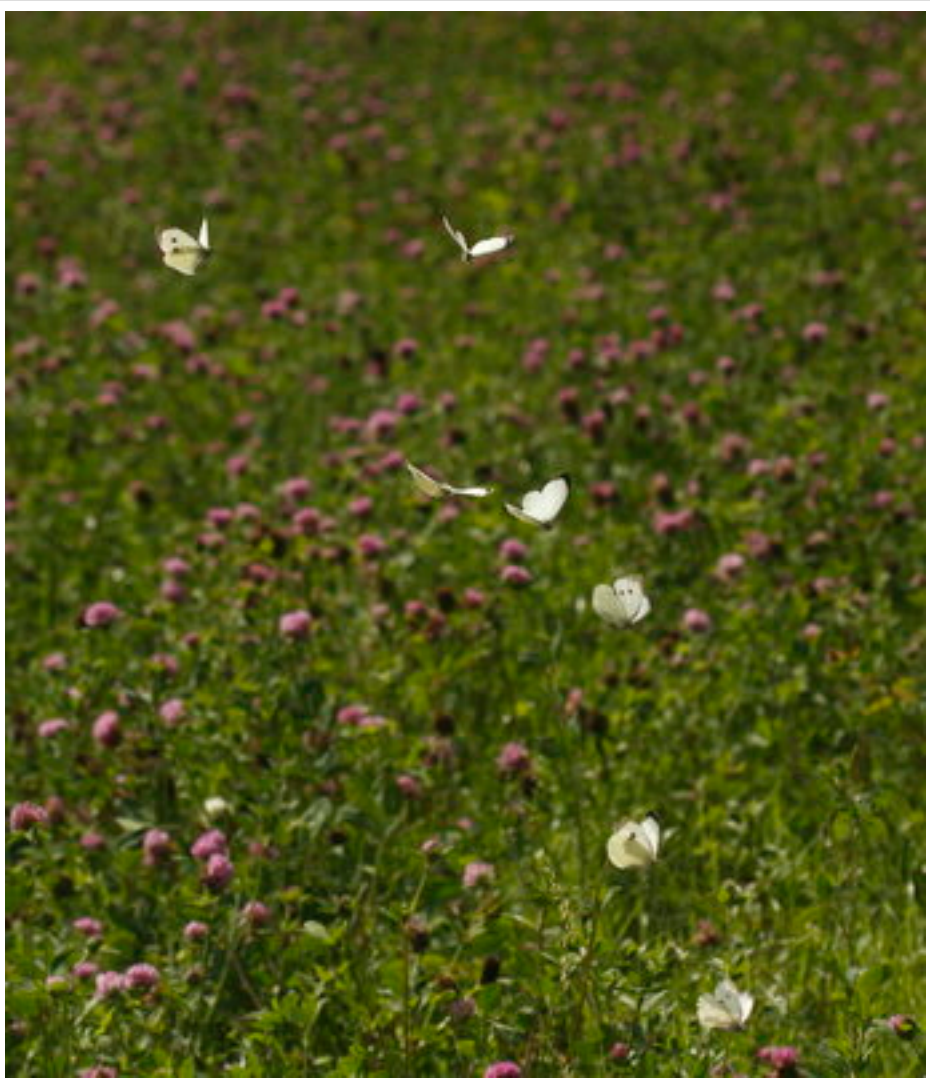


Large White Ovipositing



Green - Veined Whites

This last photo shows some behaviour I had not seen before – a large number of males following a female Large White, in a great twisting, extended line – I saw it a couple of times in a clover field where a large number of Large Whites had gathered, quite a sight! I seem to remember reading about similar behaviour 'shoaling' on the Purple Empire.



Large Whites

Re: William

by Wurzel, 09-Feb-14 10:53 PM GMT

Some mouthwatering shots there William – the in flight multi-species shots in particular are sublime 😊👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by Nick Broomer, 10-Feb-14 12:11 AM GMT

Great photos William, especially the butterflies in flight. 😊 But, the most interesting shot is the photo of the two Large White larva, the smaller one of the two is shedding it`s larval skin. Well captured. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: William

by Maximus, 10-Feb-14 12:21 AM GMT

Very nice photos of the whites William, we also recorded fantastic numbers in 2013 😊

Mike

Re: William

by William, 10-Feb-14 07:28 AM GMT

Thanks all, your kind comments are much appreciated 😊😊.

Mike - Thank You - 2013 was an excellent year, and the clover field in which I found all the Clouded Yellows was also filled with Large Whites 😊😊

Nick - Thank you very much, each year the Large Whites tear our Rocket, Cabbage, Kale and Nasturtiums to shreds so I have plenty of photo opportunities 😊😊

Wurzel - Thank you, it was a bit of a fluke, as the poor Brimstone flew slowly around trying to escape her confused suitors I bumped the shutter speed up, selected manual focus and fired away 😊😊

Re: William

by William, 15-Feb-14 05:32 PM GMT

Egging

Whilst out today I came across a couple of orphaned Purple Hairstreak Ova - they certainly brightened up the day 😊



Purple Hairstreak Ovum

As well as a few of these, I found 2 more eggs of a different kind. I presume they are moth ova of some sort, perhaps people have had a similar experience whilst searching for Purple Hairstreak Ova and know what they are? I normally find a few whenever I go looking on Oaks, they're about two thirds of the size of PH eggs.



Unidentified Ovum

Re: William

by William, 08-Mar-14 07:21 PM GMT

Meadow Browns

This week I thought I'd turn to one of the more overlooked summer Butterflies, Meadow Browns. The first of the season are always a real joy, velvety fresh, chocolate - dark males. Unfortunately as they grow more tatty some of their charm fades, as they bomb around, flushing anything and

everything. Nevertheless, I always find there is something very stirring about walking through a grassy field, alone on a hot july evening, and being surrounded by butterflies, hundreds of Meadow Browns.

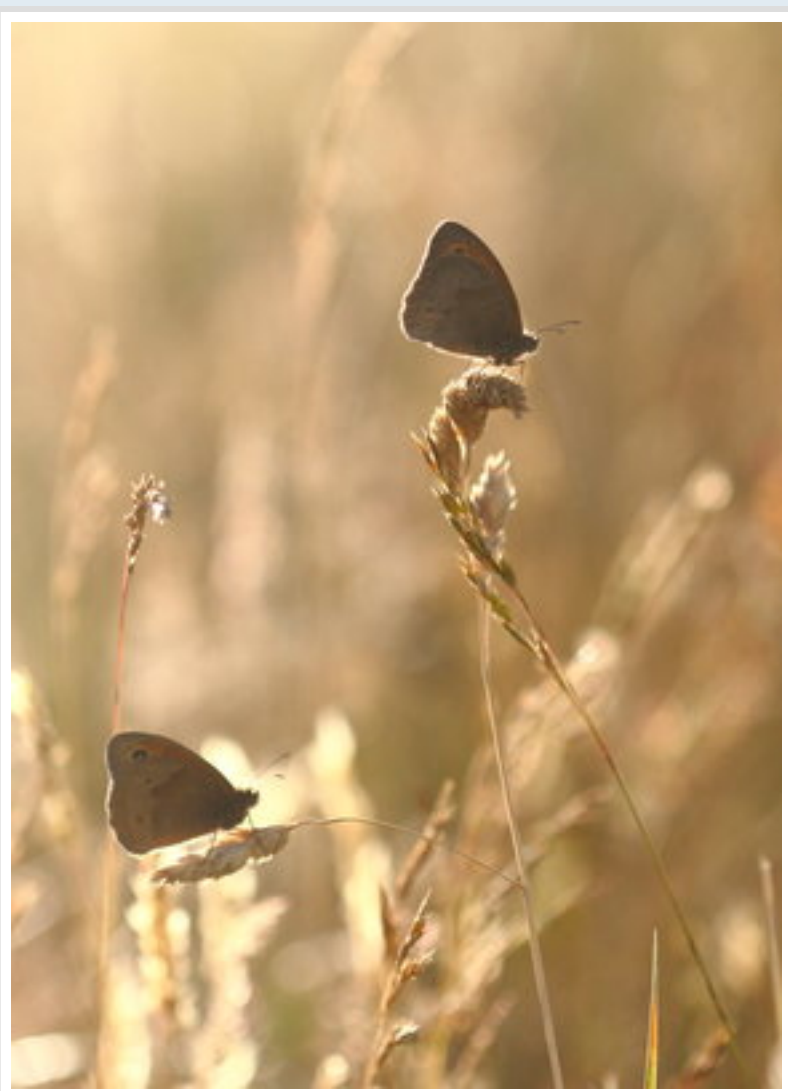
I normally end up with a few photos each season, a couple below.

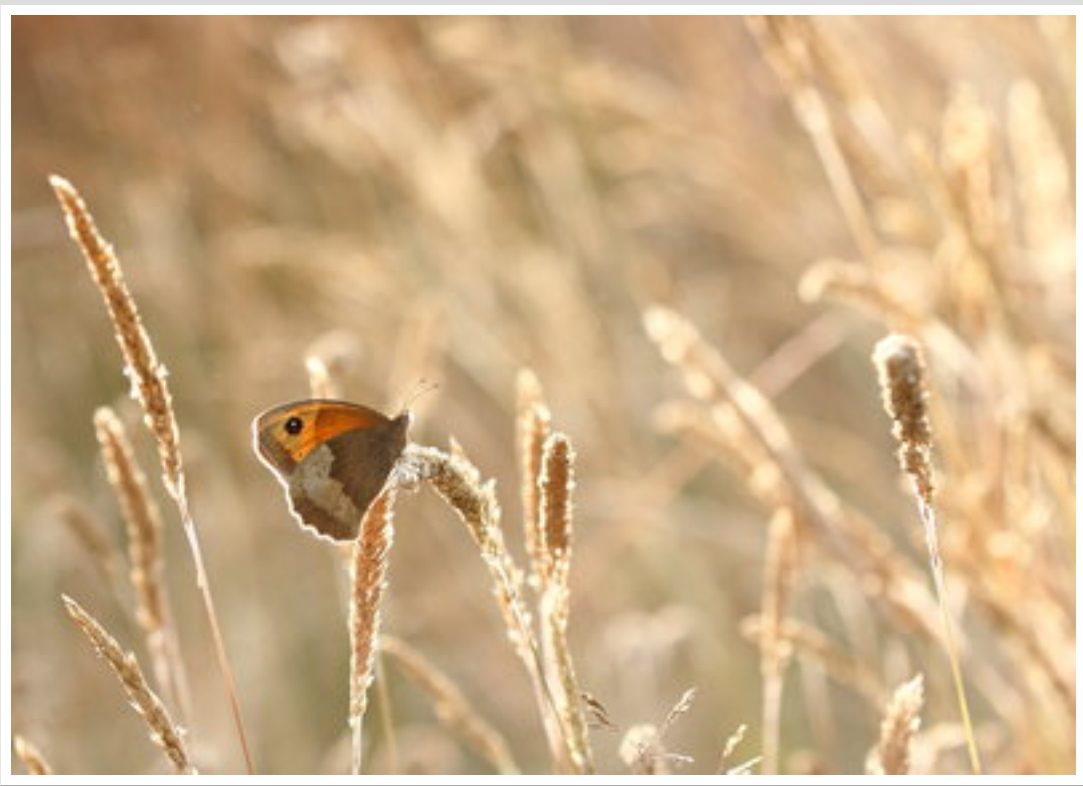


Meadow Brown – Female



Meadow Brown – Male





Meadow Brown – Female



Meadow Brown – Male



Meadow Brown Ovum

And Finally a couple of oddities, a mixed pairing with a Gatekeeper...



Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper Mixed Pairing

And a pale female from 2012



Meadow Brown Female

Re: William

by Butterfliesaurus rex, 08-Mar-14 08:22 PM GMT

Cor Blimey William! Those Meadow Brown photo's are fantastic, I particularly like number 4! I really must have a go at taking some shots like that, I highly doubt they will be as good though.

Great stuff 😊

Best Wishes

B'saurus

Re: William

by William, 08-Mar-14 09:12 PM GMT

Thanks Butterfly Saurus, it was one of those lovely moments where the light, the butterfly and my camera seemed to be reading off the same page, as is so often not the case 😊 😊

Re: William

by Maximus, 08-Mar-14 09:15 PM GMT

That mixed pairing shot of Meadow Brown/Gatekeeper is amazing William 😊 why did you sit on it for so long 🤔 😊

Mike

Re: William

by William, 09-Mar-14 08:16 PM GMT

Thanks Mike 😊😊 – I was very suprised to see it, as I walked through the garden, the strange pair flew up from under my feet and into a nearby Buddleia.

Re: William

by Wurzel, 09-Mar-14 11:31 PM GMT

Cracking shots William 😊 and that 'odd paring' is pretty special – I've not seen that before – would they have viable offspring or are they not closely related enough I wonder?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 13-Mar-14 08:33 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, your kind comments are much appreciated! I think since the two are distinct species they can't, but that's one for the experts 😊😊

Re: William

by William, 13-Mar-14 08:04 PM GMT

Browns

I thought I'd continue with the brown theme this week and go with some of the other Browns which I have not photographed enough for them to merit their own post. Wall Browns are normally quite rare in my part of the world, but each year I am lucky enough to have a few grace my garden. I have no idea where they come from, living in a sea of reseeded grassland, but it is always a joy to see them bouncing around, and appropriately enough, perching on their favourite wall.

This year I saw my first, to my great suprise basking in a hedgerow near my home towards the end of May, followed by a female that appeared a couple of times in the garden during August and another on my transect.



Wall Brown – Female

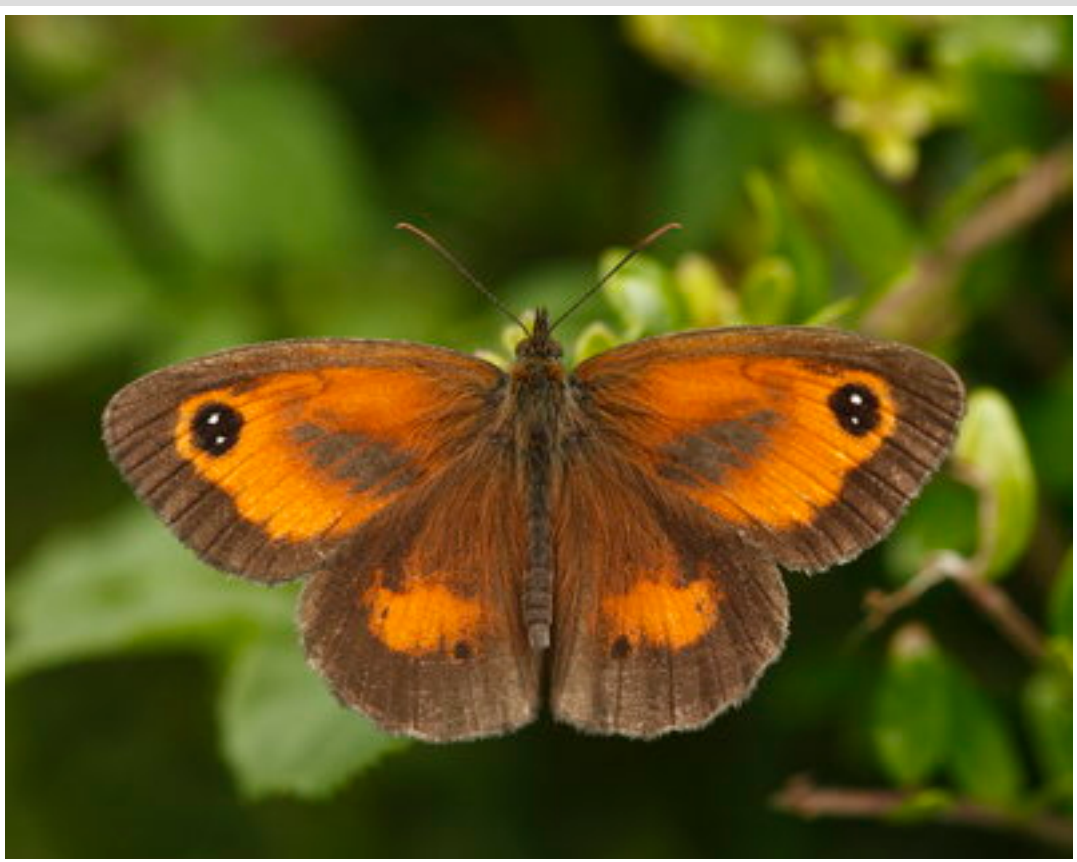


Wall Brown - Female

Gatekeepers had a pretty good year on the patch and as always it was great to see them bouncing along hedgerows in their normal way. They have taken a real liking to my little wild patch, in particular the scabious and knapweed – a real joy to watch.



Gatekeeper - Female



Gatekeeper - Male

Small Heaths are the final browns I come to. They're quite rare in Somerset, and I've only ever seen them twice on my patch, I did however find a couple roosting when I went to look for Chalkhill Blues on the Poldens.



Small Heath

Re: William

by William, 18-Mar-14 08:31 AM GMT

Common Blues

Common Blues are one of my favourite local butterflies, there is nothing like watching them go to roost, waving on lofty grass stems on a hot May evening, or pursuing them along a grassy slope in the latter days of August. This year they had one of their best years for a long time on the patch, with a strong first brood showing in a beautiful grassy meadow, followed by them turning up nearly everywhere in the second brood, on my transect, in my garden, you name it. I made an effort also to find some immature stages, some photos below.



Common Blue - Female



Common Blue - Larva and Ovum



Common Blue - Male



Common Blue - Male



Common Blue Larva - Shedding Skin



Common Blue Ova



Common Blue Ovum



Common Blue Larva

The last photo shows the distinctive 'window' feeding damage that young larvae leave which can be used to find them.

Re: William

by Maximus, 25-Mar-14 07:38 PM GMT

Hi William, just caught up with your diary, fantastic Common Blue photos from the early stages to the dew covered male, great stuff 😊

Mike

Re: William

by robpartridge, 25-Mar-14 08:16 PM GMT

Hello William,

Have to agree with Maximus, a lovely sequence of images – any chance of the camera details for the adult pictures?

Rob

Re: William

by Wurzel, 26-Mar-14 12:31 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Blues William – especially the cat crawling away from it's egg casing – just brill 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 26-Mar-14 07:56 PM GMT

Thanks Guys, your kind comments are much appreciated, as ever 😊😊

Rob, I use a Canon 40D with 100mm F2.8 macro lens (not the L series). For the photos of the ova and larvae I add a set of Kenko extension tubes (much cheaper than Canon, and from what I've heard, do the job just as well).

Best Wishes,

William

Re: William

by William, 01-Apr-14 09:06 PM GMT

Recent Doings

Hello all, I thought I'd move back to the present day (though some photos from 2013 will probably keep popping up). Things have been ticking along nicely here in West Somerset, and I've seen Brimstone (a few males as I travel about the place, Peacock (very fresh and in good numbers), Commas (not particularly common) and Small Tortoiseshells (relatively abundant, but only in discreet hotspots).

There have been lots of other nice things around too....

A friend showed me a magnificent Adder in his garden, no doubt I shall return to see more in the next few weeks, as this one slithered off without really staying to have its photo taken. I'm always suprised by how small they are.



Adder

The Spring wildflowers are also getting going, in particular the Celandines which are putting on a great display in the hedgerows and woods all around.



Celandines



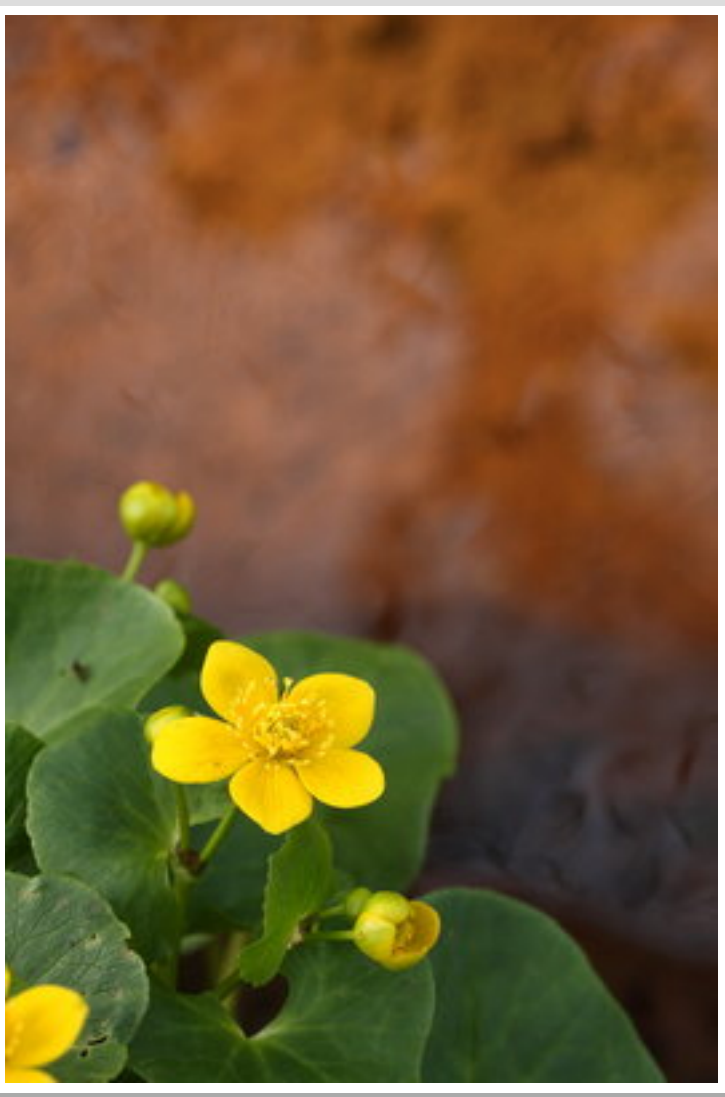
Celandines

Add to this Wood Anenomes...



Wood Anemone

Marsh Marigolds...



Marsh Marigold

And Primroses...



Primrose

And you have a perfect spring walk so far as I'm concerned.

With the flowers come the pollinators, firstly a real favourite of mine, Bee Flies...



Bee Fly

And of course, the Butterflies...

My first Comma of the year, a solitary male that was holding territory on the edge of a wood.



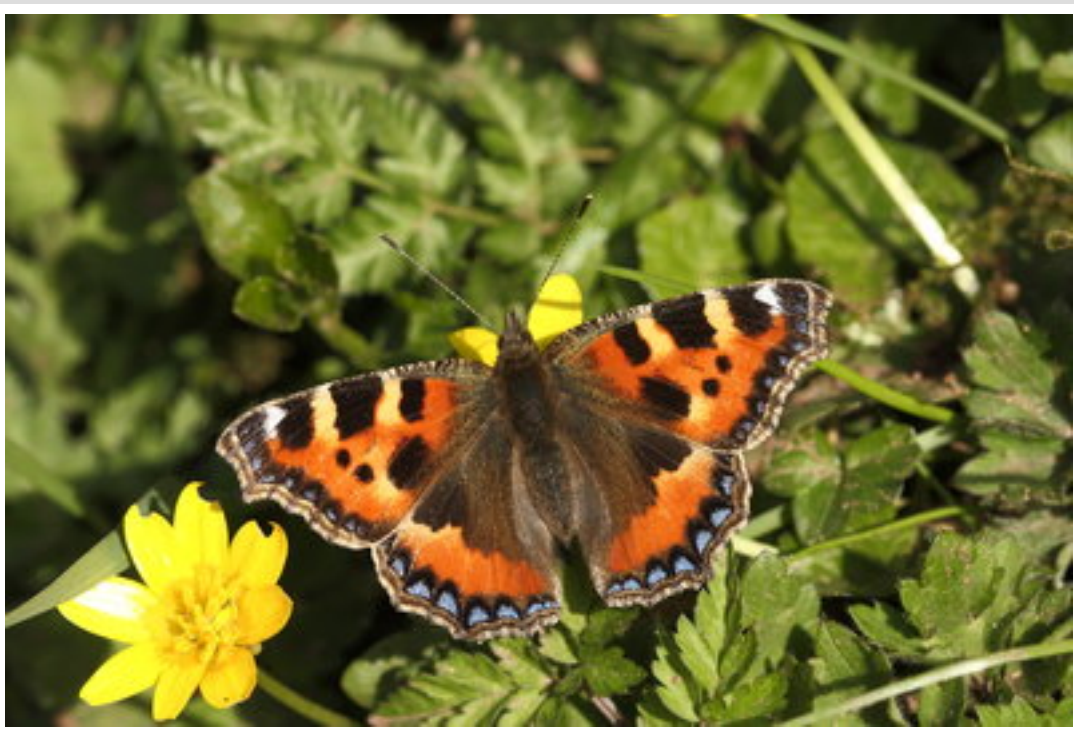
Comma

And a Peacock that was in a clearing in the same wood.



Peacock

A Small Tortoiseshell feeding on Celandines



Small Tortoiseshell

And another with strangely pale forewings..



Small Tortoiseshell

My Orange Tip pupa are looking ready to hatch, the green one in particular has gone from this...



Orange Tip Pupa

To this...



Orange Tip Pupa

I think however, that I will have to wait a week or so for adults, with things like Garlic Mustard and Cuckoo Flower still a little way off flowering (though the Honesty that survived numerous rabbit attacks in the garden is blooming).

I couldn't resist this 'blind' Emperor Moth that a friend showed me to finish, a magnificent creature.



'Blind' Emperor Moth

Re: William

by David M, 01-Apr-14 10:20 PM GMT

Some great images there, William.

Looks like many UKB members have been blessed with spectacularly early sightings so far this year.

Re: William

by William, 02-Apr-14 08:00 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

Some great images there, William.

Looks like many UKB members have been blessed with spectacularly early sightings so far this year.

Thanks David 😊😊 , it seems I'll have to wait a bit longer for spring emergences this year, but the wait will make it all the better when they finally do appear 😊

Re: William

by robpartridge, 02-Apr-14 08:28 AM GMT

More good pictures. For the record, I also had my first comma of the year here in Cambs yesterday, despite others reporting them as being quite numerous. Peacocks everywhere, beginning to outnumber the small tortoiseshells, and small whites from the 31st of March. Do you have any thoughts on how butterfly populations might have been affected by the flooding in your county?

Rob

Re: William

by William, 02-Apr-14 10:47 AM GMT

"robpartridge" wrote:

More good pictures. For the record, I also had my first comma of the year here in Cambs yesterday, despite others reporting them as being quite numerous. Peacocks everywhere, beginning to outnumber the small tortoiseshells, and small whites from the 31st of March. Do you have any thoughts on how butterfly populations might have been affected by the flooding in your county?

Rob

Thanks Rob 😊, I find Commas are always rather late with me, and I only ever see the odd one or two whenever I go for a walk locally at this time of year, though in Autumn I can get 10 or so on the rotting Apples.

I live in the West of the county, meaning I have avoided the worst of the flooding. I expect that the butterflies on the levels will have been hit pretty badly, particularly the grass feeding larvae, though that remains to be seen. Having said that, we should never underestimate our butterflies, in fact the other day I saw a magnificent photo of several Ladybirds, snails and larvae that had climbed up grass stems to escape the flooding, so perhaps there is hope yet 😊😊.

The best of the level's lepidopteran fauna tends to be found in the boggy woodlands such as at Shapwick Heath, and I think these remained largely unflooded, so fingers crossed that the butterflies haven't taken too much of a blow.

Re: William

by Pauline, 02-Apr-14 05:19 PM GMT

I'm not really into moths William but if you keep posting images like that I could well be. What a cracker! 😊

Re: William

by William, 02-Apr-14 05:45 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, it's a rather unusual form and I was very lucky to photograph it 😊😊

Re: William

by Wurzel, 02-Apr-14 11:17 PM GMT

That Small Tort does look a big pale 😊 The Blind Emperor is fantastic 🍷😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 03-Apr-14 07:53 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, your kind comments are much appreciated 😊😊

Re: William

by Lee Hurrell, 03-Apr-14 01:25 PM GMT

Hi William,

I love the Blind Emperor! I've only seen an Emperor moth once or twice before, that last time I was about 12 and in Yorkshire on holiday. I also saw my one and only Gothic moth on that trip.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: William

by William, 03-Apr-14 05:49 PM GMT

Thanks Lee, the Emperor is a magnificent beast, and I was delighted to get up close to these ones. Previously, my only sightings had been supercharged males blasting past on hot April afternoons 😊😊

Best Wishes,

William

Re: William

by William, 04-Apr-14 06:39 PM GMT

Spring in the Air

There's a definite feel of spring in the air now locally, with flowers starting to bloom all over the place. Cuckoo Flower has just come out, as has Honesty, and Garlic Mustard is not far behind.



Cuckoo Flower

All this can only mean one thing, that Orange Tips are just around the corner. Sadly I haven't seen any yet, and judging by my pupae (the orange is just beginning to show on one of them) they're 10 or so days off.



Orange Tip (Male) Pupa



Orange Tip Pupa

Butterfly activity has been minimal over the last few days, with very little sunshine. Nevertheless, there's been a bit about, and Peacocks continue to feature. I also saw my first Speckled Wood of the year (albeit briefly) on Tuesday, so all is well.



Peacock



Peacock

I spent a happy 10 minutes with this Small Tortoiseshell which was mud-puddling furiously (if that is possible), crawling around energetically on a muddy track and taking short flights between puddles.



Small Tortoiseshell

In the absence of other butterflies, I have kept myself entertained with other wildlife, including these nice cowslips which have sprung up on our lawn..



Cowslips

And this beautiful Dormouse which we found hibernating in our greenhouse (we were careful not to disturb it, though if any thing epitomises 'out for the count' this little creature does).



Dormouse

Re: William

by Pauline, 04-Apr-14 06:50 PM GMT

William you are so privileged to have such a unique guest 🐭. I have only ever once (last year) been lucky enough to see and hold one of these amazing little creatures. It is also a great photo and I would love to hear more news of it idc.

Re: William

by William, 04-Apr-14 07:07 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline 😊😊 they truly are one of the cutest of british mammals. At the moment he/she (nicknamed 'Darius') is snoozing happily in a pile of grass and leaves in our Greenhouse, from what I've read that will remain the case for at least another 3 weeks. It seems we're pretty well suited for them in our neck of the woods, with abundant Hazel and Honeysuckle (the mice feed on the Hazel and make a nest out of shredded Honeysuckle bark apparently – rather specialist!)

Re: William

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-14 10:54 PM GMT

Lovely shot of the Dormouse William 😊 I too have just seen my first Cuckoo Flowers in bloom so all I need now is a little nice weather and hopefully the OTs will be around soon. Good luck with the pupae – keep us posted on their progress.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 05-Apr-14 07:35 AM GMT

Thank Wurzel 😊 I will try and keep everyone posted on the pupae, though I've found when I breed things I have an uncanny ability to miss the emergence!

Re: William

Orange Tip Pupa

With every day that passes now, I'm getting closer to my first Orange Tip of the year, I give my home grown pupa three days... 😊



Orange Tip Pupa - Just over a month ago



Orange Tip Pupa - About 3 weeks ago



Orange Tip Pupa - 3 Days Ago



Orange Tip Pupa - Yesterday



Orange Tip Pupa - Today

Re: William

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-14 10:15 PM GMT

Great sequence of shots William 😊 Are you hoping that your emerging OT's are going to be your first of the year? If so you must be doing the opposite of me – driving and walking places and purposefully NOT scanning the hedgerows and verges 😊 Currently I have a running tally of near misses – 3 head on, 12 clipping the verge and 6 drifting over cat's eyes and still no OT's – maybe this week some time?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 08-Apr-14 07:55 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I think we're quite far behind in West Somerset (due to altitude and general rubbish weather), so I fear that when Osmund emerges he will indeed be my first Orange Tip 😊 . I've managed to catch up with Green – Veined White now, so Orange Tips can't be too far away.

Re: William

by Maximus, 11-Apr-14 08:38 PM GMT

Nice sequence of Orange-tip pupa shots William 😊 have you had an emergence yet ?

Re: William

by Butterflysaurus rex, 11-Apr-14 08:53 PM GMT

I'm on tenterhooks here William, is there any news?

B'saurus

Re: William

by Goldie M, 13-Apr-14 09:32 AM GMT

No news from you yet William so I'm thinking nothing yet Goldie ? 😊

Re: William

by William, 16-Apr-14 08:07 PM GMT

Thanks guys for all the kind words....I shall put you out of your misery 😊 😊

Re: William

by William, 16-Apr-14 08:38 PM GMT

Osmund Emerges

After a long wait, I was lucky enough to look out of the Kitchen Door yesterday and spot 'Osmund' doing his thing, I felt truly privileged to witness something as beautiful as his emergence, which was surprisingly fast, about 20 seconds.



Orange Tip Pupa - 6 Days before emergence



Orange Tip Pupa - 2 Days before emergence



Orange Tip Pupa - 1 Day before emergence



Orange Tip Pupa - 1.5 hours before emergence



Orange Tip - Male



Orange Tip - Male



Orange Tip - Male



Orange Tip - Male



Orange Tip - Male



Orange Tip - Male



Orange Tip - Male



Orange Tip - Male



Orange Tip - Male



Orange Tip - Male

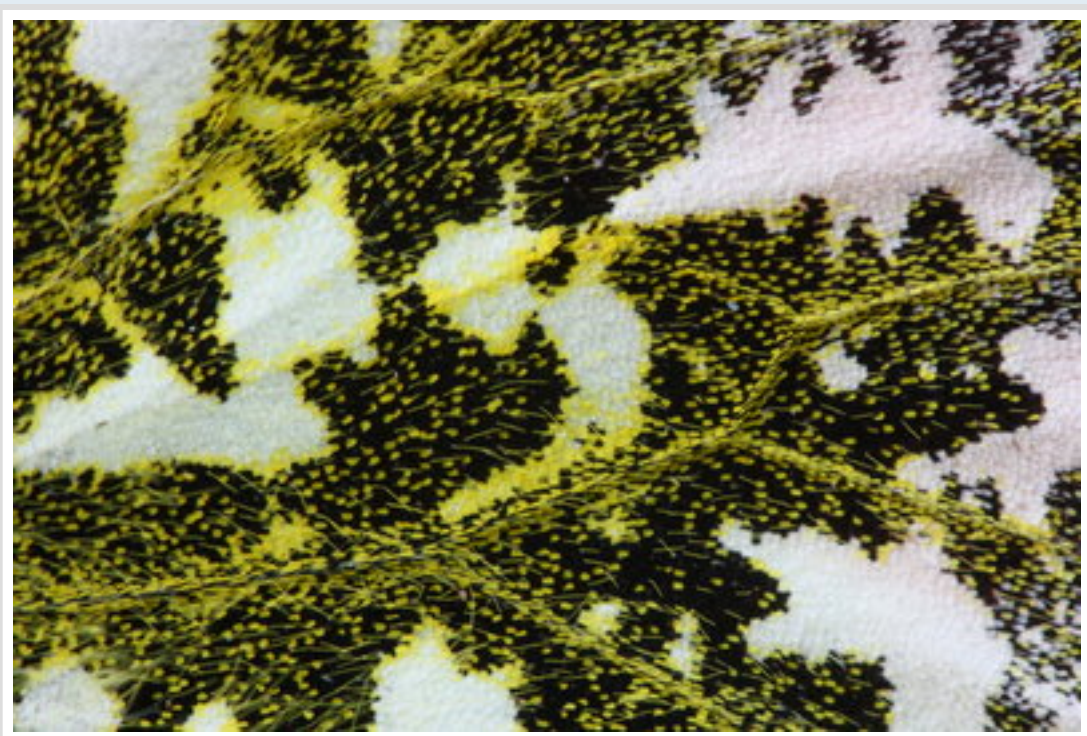


Orange Tip - Male

I'm always a sucker for close ups - I love the way the yellow and black scales blend to make green, so I took a couple whilst he was freshly - emerged and dodderly.



Orange Tip - Male



Orange Tip - Male

His first flight was just over an hour after emergence, revealing suprisingly heavy black markings.

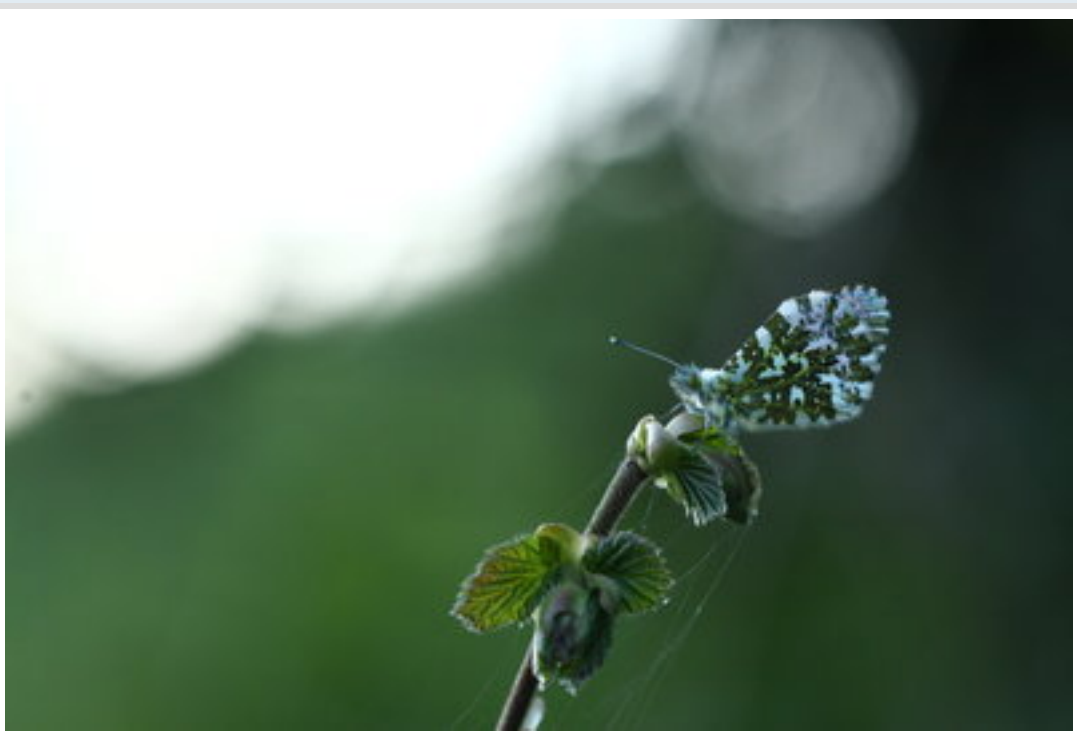


Orange Tip - Male

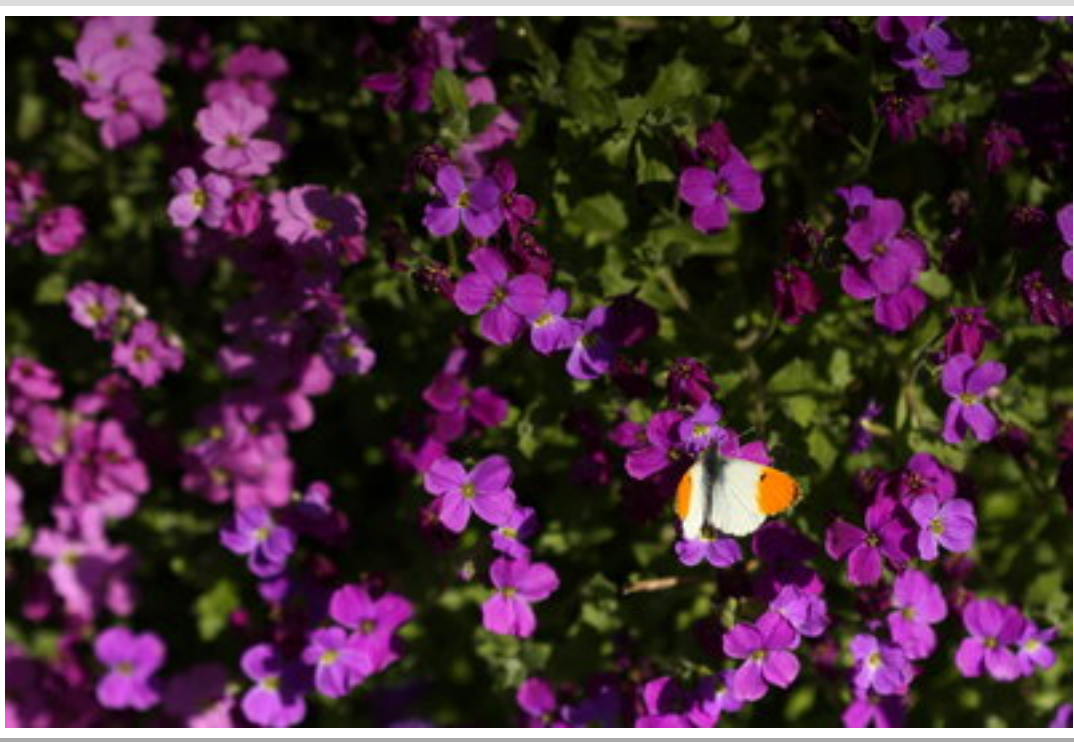


Orange Tip - Male

I saw my first Orange Tip 3 days before 'Osmund' emerged and they've been a constant presence in the garden since, I think they'll have quite a good year. I've also had my first Holly Blues (which seem to be doing well this year), Brimstones, Small Whites and Green - Veined Whites, so things are well underway.



Orange Tip - Male



Orange Tip – Male



Orange Tip – Male



Speckled Wood

Re: William

by Katrina, 16-Apr-14 08:43 PM GMT

Amazing photos of the emerging Osmund!

Re: William

by Butterflysaurus rex, 16-Apr-14 09:07 PM GMT

Well William, what can I say it was more than worth all of that suspense. Simply stunning 😊

Osmund the Orange Tip on the wing at last.

B'saurus

Re: William

by Padfield, 16-Apr-14 09:20 PM GMT

The Osmund sequence is outstanding. I'm really impressed, by your pictures and accompanying observations (and I'm not just saying this because you

have made kind comments in my own diary! 😊).

Guy

Re: William

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-14 11:04 PM GMT

Fantastic series of shots William 🍷 – the bit that stands out for me is the general wafting around of the proboscis, a bit like a human sticking their tongue out when concentrating 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 17-Apr-14 07:53 AM GMT

Thanks Katrina and Butterflysaurus – it was a pleasure to watch it happen, I was amazed by how determined he seemed, and he very quickly wriggled free of his pupa.

Thank you Guy – your kind comments are much appreciated, there's a reason I always post on your diary, your pictures are fantastic (and I have a soft spot for big nymphalids and hairstreaks 😊).

Cheers Wurzel, he flicked his head (and his tongue) around a lot as he emerged, I think to provide some forward momentum 😊 – I was suprised to notice that his proboscis is actually divided into two parts as he emerged – the things we notice wen we have time to observe in detail 😊

Re: William

by Pauline, 17-Apr-14 08:57 AM GMT

There's nothing left for me to say William – the others have said it all. Truly magical 😊 . I'd be interested to know how long the emergence took.

Re: William

by robpartridge, 17-Apr-14 09:24 AM GMT

That's A* work, William – very well done,

Rob

Re: William

by Buchan Boy, 17-Apr-14 10:15 AM GMT

Yep,that is a trully awesome sequence of shots,excellent.

Re: William

by William, 17-Apr-14 10:24 AM GMT

Thanks everyone – your kind words are much appreciated 😊😊

Pauline – I was suprised at just how quick the emergence was, I don't know how long it had been going for when I took the first photo, but from then to the last emergence picture is 19 seconds. He seemed very determined to be free, and after a bit of head wriggling he crawled straight out.

Thanks Rob and Buchan Boy – it was an incredible experience 😊😊

Re: William

by Vince Massimo, 17-Apr-14 10:25 AM GMT

Great work William 😊

Vince

Re: William

by Lee Hurrell, 17-Apr-14 02:27 PM GMT

A wonderful report William – really good work.

Your close up images are phenomenal! I had never noticed scales all the way down a butterfly's legs before.

Outstanding.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: William

by badgerbob, 17-Apr-14 04:25 PM GMT

I have always hoped to see this happen. My female emerged last year when I was at the doctors, so frustrating. Excellent sequence of photos.

Re: William

by William, 17-Apr-14 04:50 PM GMT

Thanks Vince – that is a great compliment coming from the master of emergence sequences, your Orange Tip report was 'the bible' when I bred mine 😊

Thanks Lee – I have a lot of fun playing around with my extension tubes, worth the investment 😊

Thanks Badgerbob, I've bred Small White, Large White, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral and always missed the emergence, this is the first time I've seen it – stick with it 😊

Re: William

by MikeOxon, 17-Apr-14 07:40 PM GMT

May I add my compliments on such a super series of OT emergence photos 😊

I always enjoy the proboscis-unfurling bit. It's as though there's an internal 'check-list' for testing all systems. Expanding the wings is also fascinating to watch – it's quite a tight time-scale between getting them fully extended and them hardening. No wonder it often goes wrong, with some degree of distortion, but all was well this time!

Mike

Re: William

by William, 17-Apr-14 08:47 PM GMT

Thanks Mike 😊 – I was worried that the wing inflation would fail as 'Osmund' emerged during a fairly breezy spell and got blown around a bit, nevertheless, as you say – all was well 😊

Re: William

by Maximus, 18-Apr-14 03:59 PM GMT

Great sequence of your male Orange-tip emerging William, brilliant photos, stunning 😊

Mike

Re: William

by William, 18-Apr-14 05:57 PM GMT

Thanks Maximus – may I return the compliment, your hairstreak larval photos are fabulous 😊

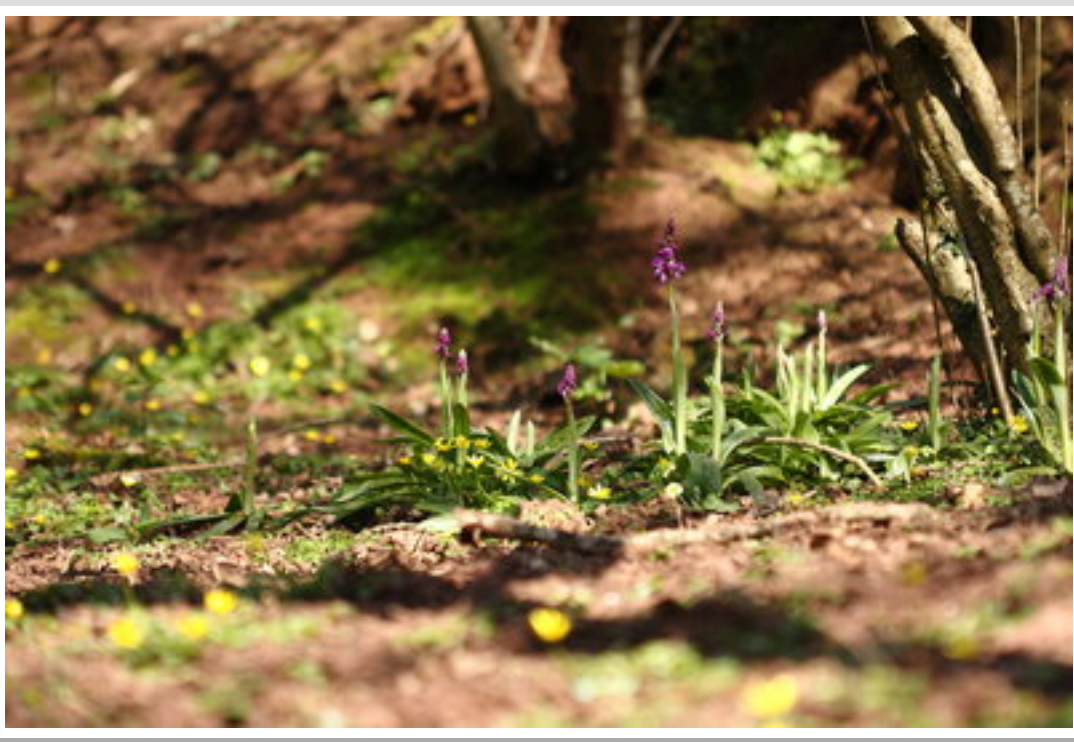
Re: William

by William, 18-Apr-14 07:41 PM GMT

Recent Doings

A couple of nice walks recently (all on the local patch of course 😊) and Butterflies seem to be flourishing, Orange Tips in particular. Brimstones too are doing well, they're normally very rare in my part of Somerset (I see 2 or 3 each year) and I've already seen 5 😊

Everything seems to be moving along rather quickly, Early Purple Orchids are getting going in the woods near me...



Early Purple Orchids

As is the Ragged Robin...



Ragged Robin

I was surprised too to see my first Small Coppers of the year today, when on a 'fact-finding walk' in a wood near my home in the hope that it might be suitable for Green Hairstreak (oh if only!) There were 3 all basking on a stony path, all 'fresh out the box'. I think this is the earliest I've seen them, as things tend to emerge a bit later than everywhere else in windy Somerset. There were probably more on site, but unfortunately I had to be off before I could have a proper look.



Small Copper



Small Coppers

If you look closely in this one there's a Ruby Tiger moth above the Small Copper on the left.



Small Copper

I was pleased to find some Coltsfoot also, not a plant I normally encounter on my patch.



Coltsfoot

Re: William

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-14 11:15 PM GMT

Great Small Coppers, lovely and fresh 🍷 I might have to start my Larkhill stop offs now they've put in an appearance 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 19-Apr-14 09:07 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel - I think it would be worth a go, they're normally quite late in Somerset so they should be out where you are 😊 😊

Re: William

by Pauline, 21-Apr-14 04:08 PM GMT

I'm astonished that it only took 19 secs William. No wonder it is so easy to miss the main event. I had expected you to say about 20 mins!!!

Re: William

by William, 21-Apr-14 06:08 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I'm astonished that it only took 19 secs William. No wonder it is so easy to miss the main event. I had expected you to say about 20 mins!!!

Yes - I was bowled over too by how fast it was, I assumed there would be much struggling and wriggling. How wrong I was 😊

Re: William

by William, 21-Apr-14 08:15 PM GMT

More Coppers

Today I returned to the Small Copper site near my home. There seems to have been a pretty serious emergence over the past couple of days and I counted 15 including an egg-laying female.



Small Copper - Female



Small Coppers - Courting



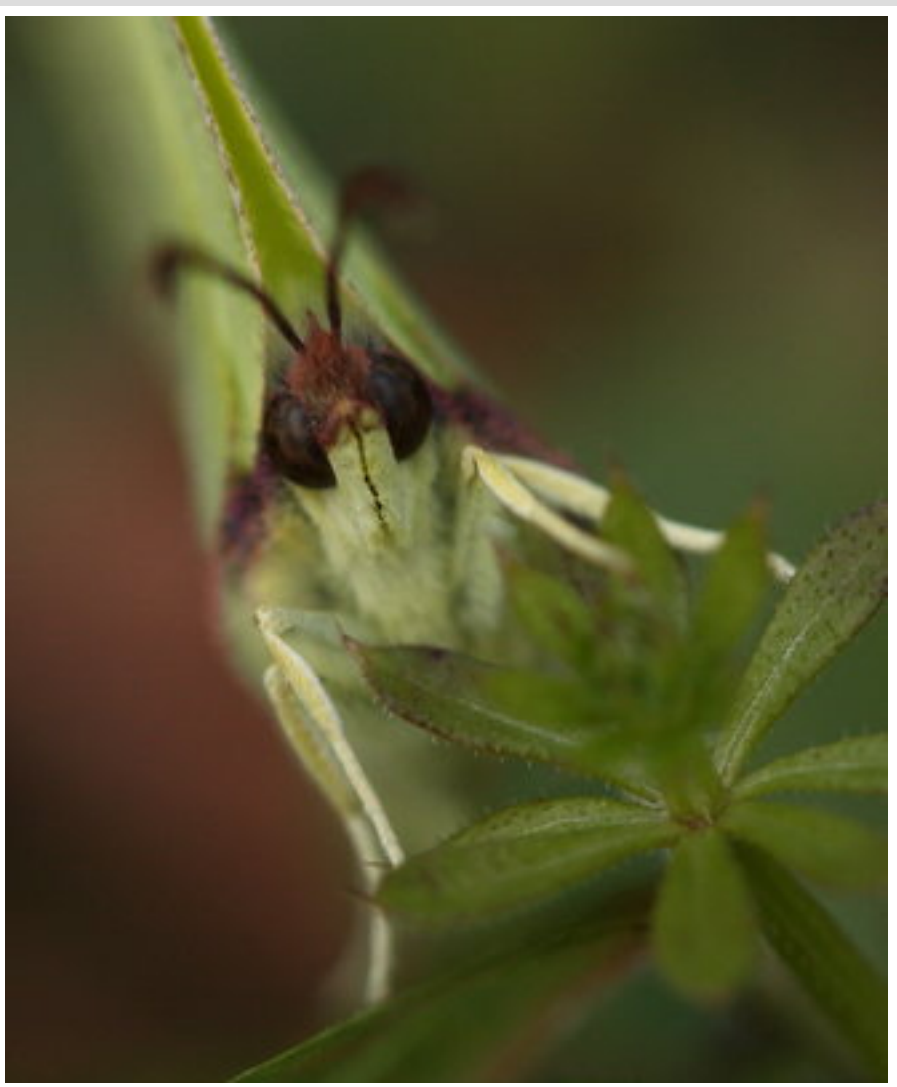
Small Copper

It's not what I'd think of as a typical Small Copper site, being a heathy, grassy, not particularly flowery patch of commercial forestry. But further inspection revealed a massive concentration of suitable Sheep's Sorrel plants, all very small and nitrogen rich growing in the sheltered dips created by the tree planting.



Sheep's Sorrel

Other big excitement today was the male Brimstone that has been bombing in and out of the garden all week stopping for a couple of photos.



Brimstone - Male

Re: William

by Neil Freeman, 21-Apr-14 08:26 PM GMT

Hi William,

Superb sequence of the Orange Tip emergence. I also love your Small Copper photos 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: William

by William, 22-Apr-14 07:17 AM GMT

Thanks Neil – it was wonderful to see so many coppers soaking up the heat 😊

Re: William

by Paul Harfield, 22-Apr-14 10:53 PM GMT

Hi William

I was just catching up on your diary. I think all your photos are superb in quality and variety of styles 😊 I particularly like your distance shots as well as your close ups 😊 I am surprised that nobody has commented on your Speckled Wood with no pupils in the eye spots a couple of pages back. To me this looks quite unusual and I can not recall seeing another like it 😊

Re: William

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-14 11:08 PM GMT

Jack is spot on – I went back and looked at the Specked Wood and it does look unusual – a 'blind Specklie' – I've not seen one like that before – I expect Vince would like that one the Species Specific Album 😊

The Coppers are lush – that I think is the most appropriate word to describe the images 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by PhilBJohnson, 23-Apr-14 05:42 AM GMT

Hi,

I like the Small Copper pictures. I haven't seen one yet this year. I must "dig out" my Butterflies of Surrey Revisited book to find the best places to see them in my locality.

Best Wishes,

Philip

Re: William

by William, 23-Apr-14 07:21 AM GMT

"jackz432r" wrote:

Hi William

I am surprised that nobody has commented on your Speckled Wood with no pupils in the eye spots a couple of pages back. To me this looks quite unusual and I can not recall seeing another like it 😊

Thanks Jack – you're quite right and far more observant than me 😊, Vince picked up on this the other day and I've added it to the species – specific album, it's always a nice bonus when someone spots these things 'post production' 😊.

Thanks for all the kind words guys, Small Coppers are a real favourite of mine and it's amazing how far they are ahead. I'd try for some better photos but I've only been able to visit the site in the heat of the afternoon.

Re: William

by Goldie M, 23-Apr-14 11:43 AM GMT

I'm abit late in saying your emergence photo's were great William, I've been too busy going out and about 😊

Also love your Small Copper photo's I've not seen one yet but it's very encouraging seeing yours, Ill be out again tomorrow weather permitting, keep the

photo's coming Goldie 😊

Re: William

by robpartridge, 23-Apr-14 01:27 PM GMT

Lovely picture of the female Small Copper, not seen one in Cambs yet this year,

Rob

Re: William

by William, 23-Apr-14 05:51 PM GMT

Thanks Guys 😊 – the Small Coppers were amazing, in large numbers for this time of year too. Hopefully I'll be able to catch up with some of the Skippers and Hairstreaks everyone has been seeing in the not too distant future 😊😊

Re: William

by William, 27-Apr-14 07:43 PM GMT

Rainy Ramble

Sadly the recent beautiful, settled weather of late has been replaced with the more typical rain, high winds and clouds in Somerset. Nevertheless, I was determined to make something of my Sunday so I headed out for a tramp around the lanes and fields near me. In the end I was fairly pleased with my tally of 8 roosting Green – Veined Whites and a solitary female Orange Tip.



Green – Veined White



Green – Veined White



Orange Tip



Orange Tip

Not only this, but the Early Purple Orchids were reaching their peak in the woods.



Early Purple Orchids



Early Purple Orchids



Early Purple Orchid

Re: William

by Butterflysaurus rex, 27-Apr-14 08:43 PM GMT

Really nice work for such damp and dour day William. Makes me think I should have been a bit more adventurous and gone out myself today. we even had a little bit of sunshine this afternoon!

All the best

B'saurus

Re: William

by Katrina, 27-Apr-14 09:05 PM GMT

I really like the raindrops in the first orange-tip image- excellent photo!

Re: William

by David M, 27-Apr-14 09:21 PM GMT

Nice images and clearly from a cloudy day (which is sometimes not a bad thing).

Re: William

by Neil Hulme, 27-Apr-14 09:39 PM GMT

Hi William,

I agree with the others. More beautiful images which are a little different from the norm. It's always a joy to look at your diary.
BWs, Neil

Re: William

by William, 28-Apr-14 07:14 AM GMT

Thanks Butterfly Saurus, your kind comments are much appreciated, perhaps it wasn't the best idea to go out on such a drizzly day as my water proof trousers and bin-liner jacket were no match for the wet ditch I sat in for the OT photos 😊

Thanks Katrina I had to do a lot of searching to find her – all worth it in the end 😊

Thanks David for your kind words – you're quite right, if I can summon the willpower to go out on such a dreadful day there's normally something that'll sit and have its photo taken around.

Thank you Neil, your compliments mean a great deal with the brilliant photography you consistently produce – something for me to aspire to 😊

Re: William

by badgerbob, 28-Apr-14 05:31 PM GMT

Hi William, How right it is. Stay at home and you won't see anything. I also had a much better day than expected yesterday despite the weather!! Great GVW photos by the way.

Re: William

by William, 28-Apr-14 06:09 PM GMT

Thanks Bob – they looked beautiful perched on the cuckoo flower 😊

Re: William

by Neil Freeman, 28-Apr-14 07:35 PM GMT

Hi William,

Lovely images of the Green-veined Whites from your 'Rainy Ramble' 😊

I remember being out with my son on a drizzly day a couple of years ago when we were photographing roosting Marbled whites underneath an umbrella 😊 . It is very true that you never know what you will find unless you go out and look.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: William

by William, 28-Apr-14 08:32 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Hi William,
photographing roosting Marbled whites underneath an umbrella 😊 .

Only Butterfly watchers 😊 – Thanks for your comments Neil – I've often found it to be the case that any day is worth a go, and even if you don't see anything, getting out and enjoying the scenery restores the energies – there's something wonderfully relaxing about a good rainy day 😊

Re: William

by Lee Hurrell, 29-Apr-14 11:09 PM GMT

Hi William

Just to add my agreement; such wonderful pictures from your rainy day that are different to most. Really beautiful images. I too had a cloudy and cool start on Sunday in Sussex but the sun did eventually come out.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: William

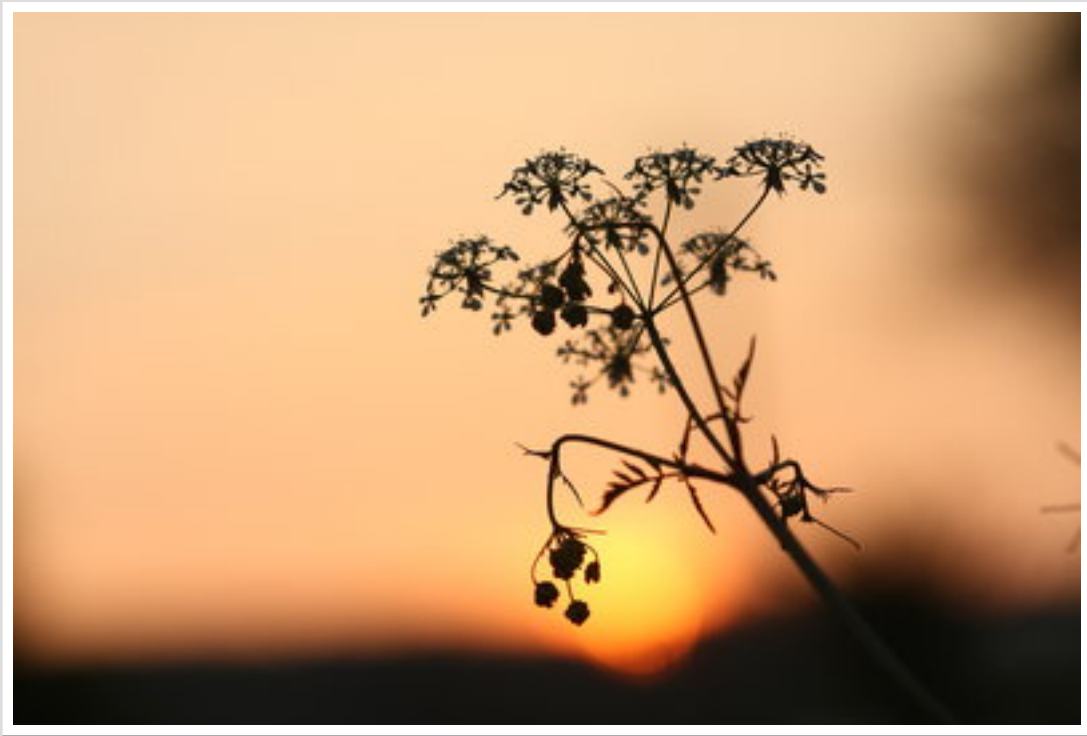
by William, 30-Apr-14 07:11 AM GMT

Thanks Lee – it's the best kind of weather for photographing butterflies 😊 though you do need to have a bit of time on your hands 😊

Re: William

Recent Doings

With the cloudy weather back and me busy things have been rather quiet recently, apart from a couple of brief butterflyless jaunts. Cow parsley is now in full swing – nothing is quite as Somerset as the magnificent displays we get of this plant and there are some nice Cowslips in flower in a lay-by near me.

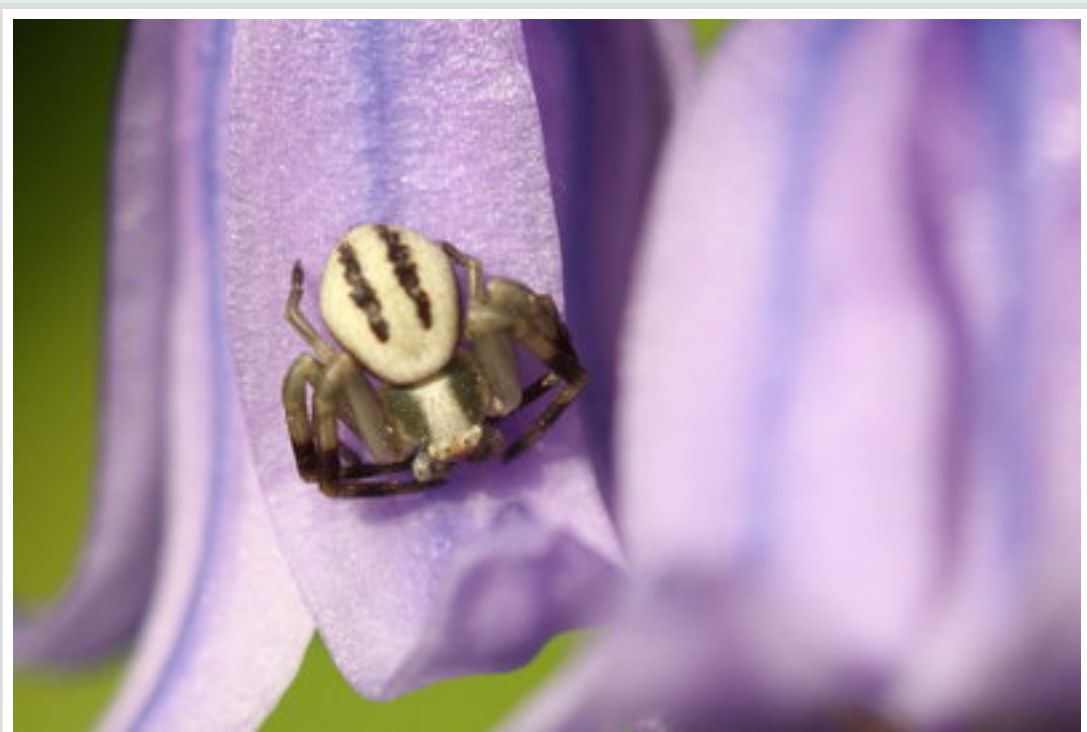


Cow Parsley



Cowslips

The Bluebells in the garden have also been occupied by an interesting collection of Crab Spiders, mostly *Misumenia Vatia* I think, but this one seems different.



Crab Spider

Today was set to be another cloudy uneventful day until the sun came out at about midday and the butterflies with it. In the space of about 10 minutes I had courting Orange Tips and mating Green – Veined Whites, before I left for Haddon Hill (where I'll be doing the transects in late May and June – expect Heath Fritillary Photos, lots of them).



Orange Tip



Orange Tips



Orange Tips



Orange Tips



Green - Veined Whites

When I returned in the evening there was a nice Green - Veined White roosting in the garden, so photos to follow (hopefully with some Dukes and Skippers if tomorrow goes according to plan).

Re: William

by David M, 03-May-14 11:04 PM GMT

Love that first photo of the male OT approaching the female - he's almost completely side-on!!

Re: William

by Pauline, 04-May-14 06:05 AM GMT

You must be so pleased with those OT shots William. The one on the Bluebell is stunning but I particularly like the courtship shots as I think photos showing the butterfly's behaviour are more interesting. I have tried in the past to get photos like that and failed miserably so very well done.

Re: William

by William, 04-May-14 07:51 AM GMT

Thanks David - The male did seem to try everything he had, banking and whirling and even landing on the female.

Thanks Pauline, I always just bump the shutter speed and frame rate up and hope for the best 🤔

Re: William

by Wurzel, 04-May-14 10:11 PM GMT

Cracking behaviour shots William, especially the mating Green-veined 😊👍

Have a goodun]
Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 06-May-14 09:04 PM GMT

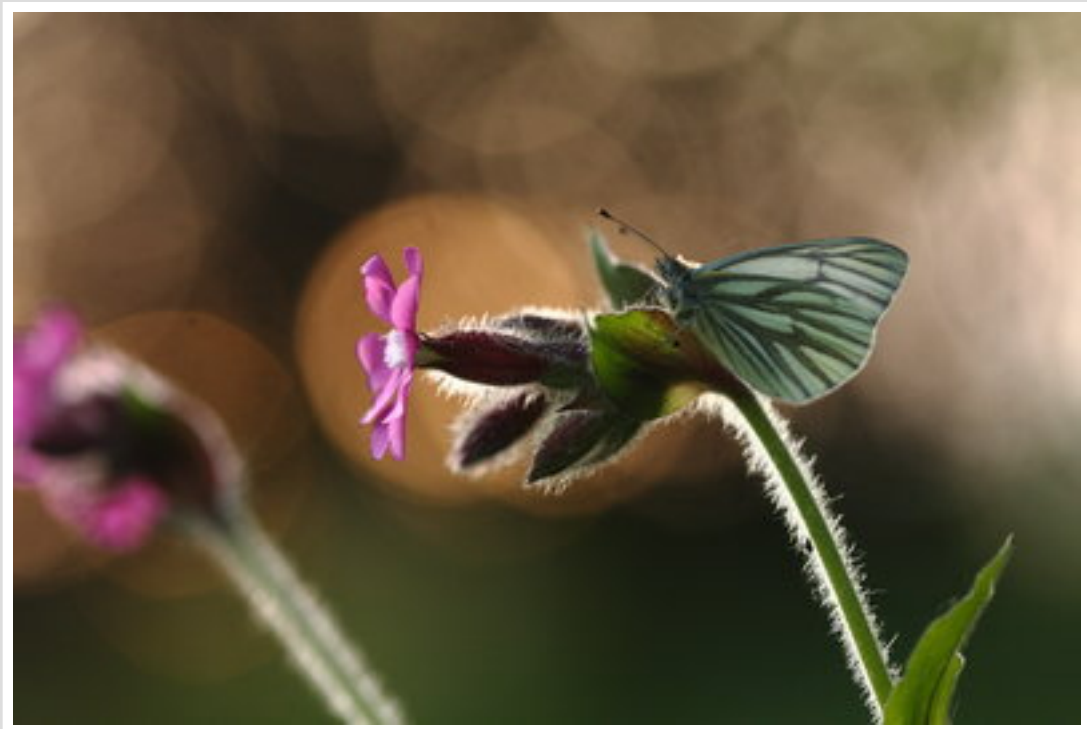
Thanks Wurzel – it was a privilege to witness 😊 , we've had several pairs of Green – Veined Whites in the garden this year.

Re: William

by William, 06-May-14 09:41 PM GMT

Catching Up

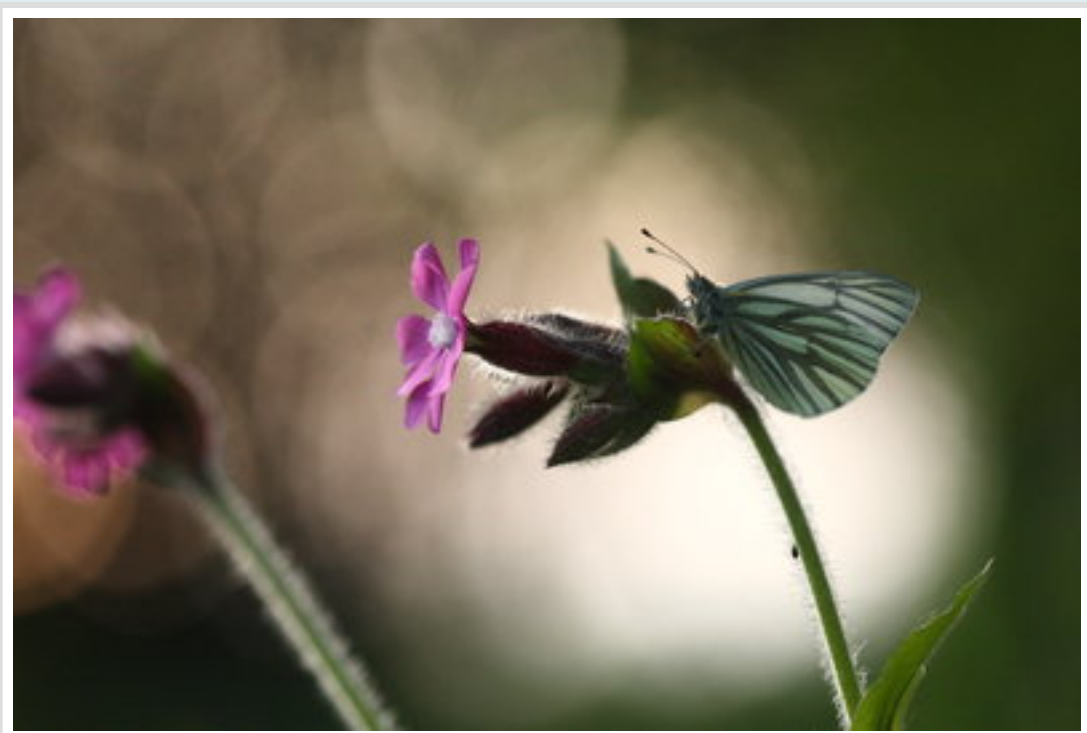
Last weekend was a real mix butterfly wise, first off a nice Green – Veined White that stayed the night in the garden. I indulged myself with some really arty-farty photos – I couldn't resist the light of the sunset coming through the bushes behind 😊



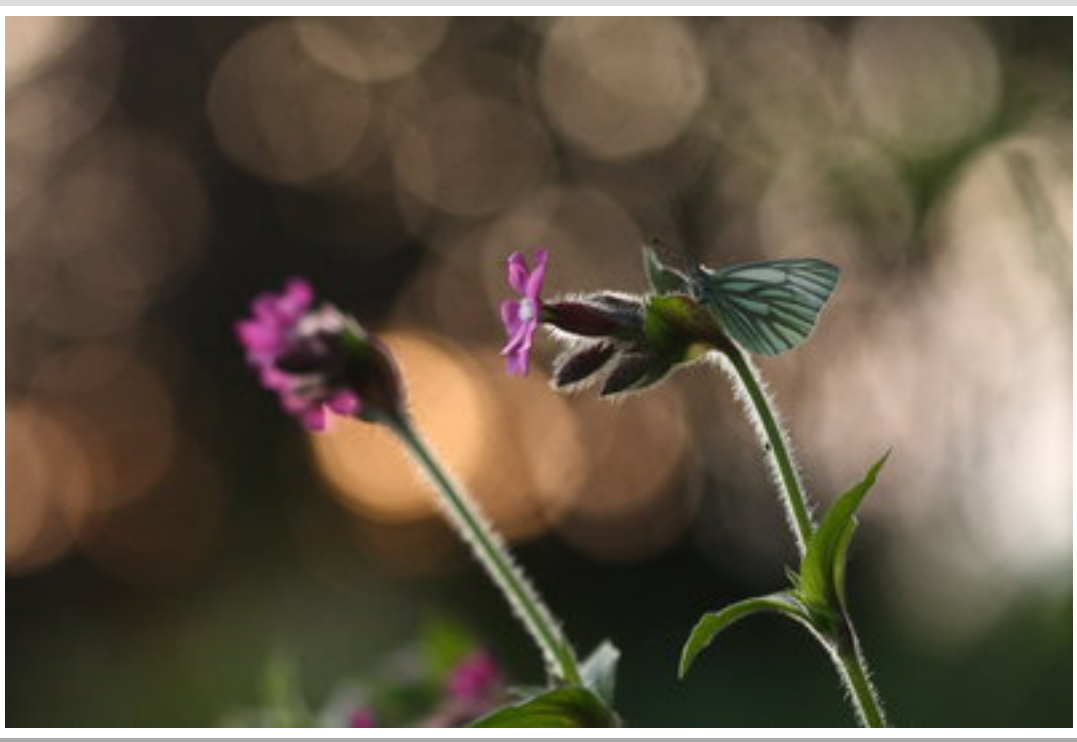
Green – Veined White



Green – Veined White



Green – Veined White

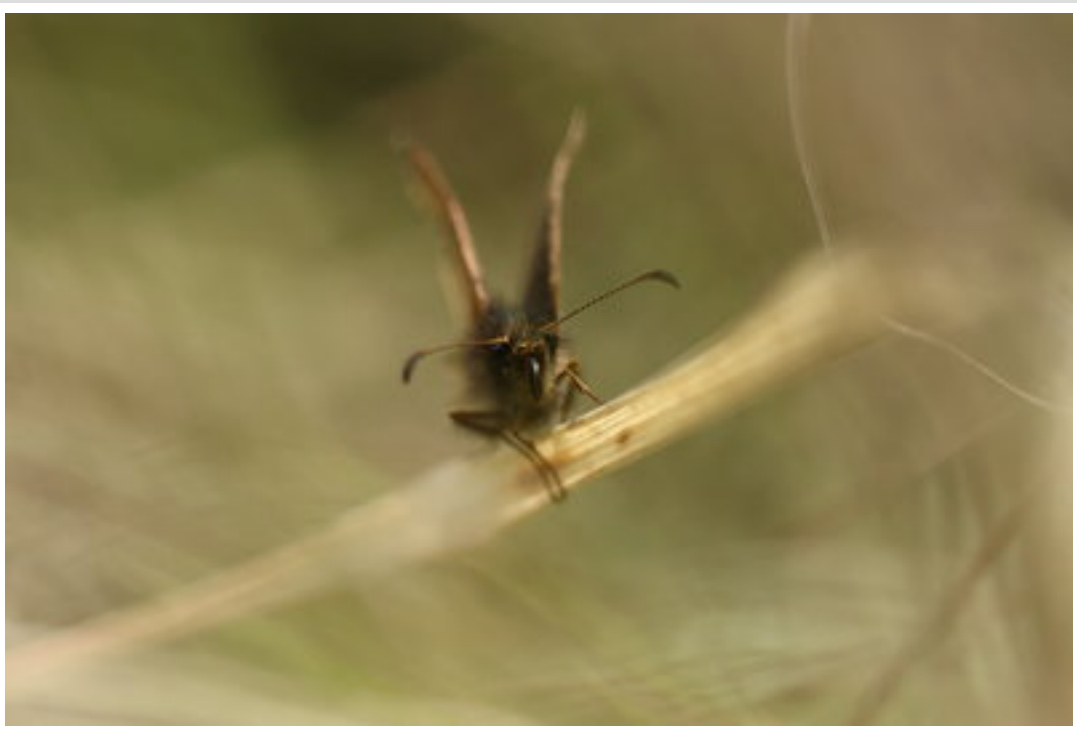


Green - Veined White

The next day I went out to my usual Duke site in beautiful sunny weather, as usual it delivered the goods and I saw c.12 Dingy Skipper, c.15 Grizzled Skipper, 3 Dukes and a surprise Green Hairstreak (I haven't seen one at this spot for a couple of years). The Dukes were unusually flighty, the first just bombed past, the second disappeared over a hedge after a couple of minutes and the third (a Duchess) was off after one photo. Nevertheless, a beautiful spring morning with equally beautiful butterflies (and the full Nightingale treatment) so what's not to like 😊



Grizzled Skipper



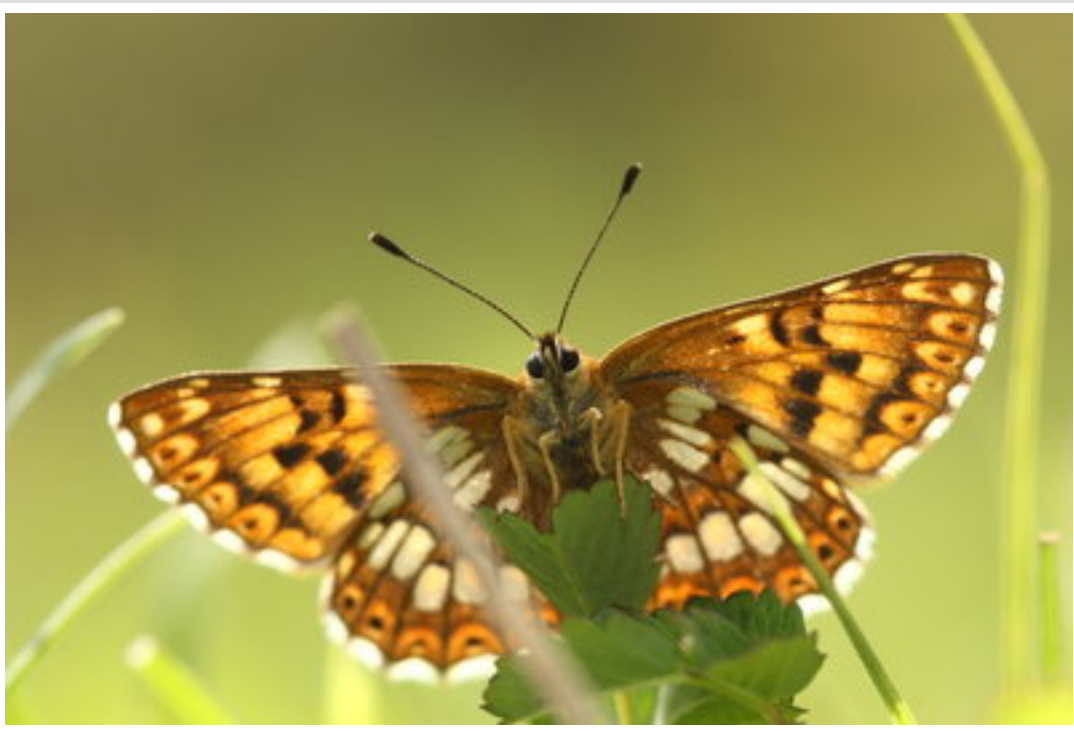
Dingy Skipper



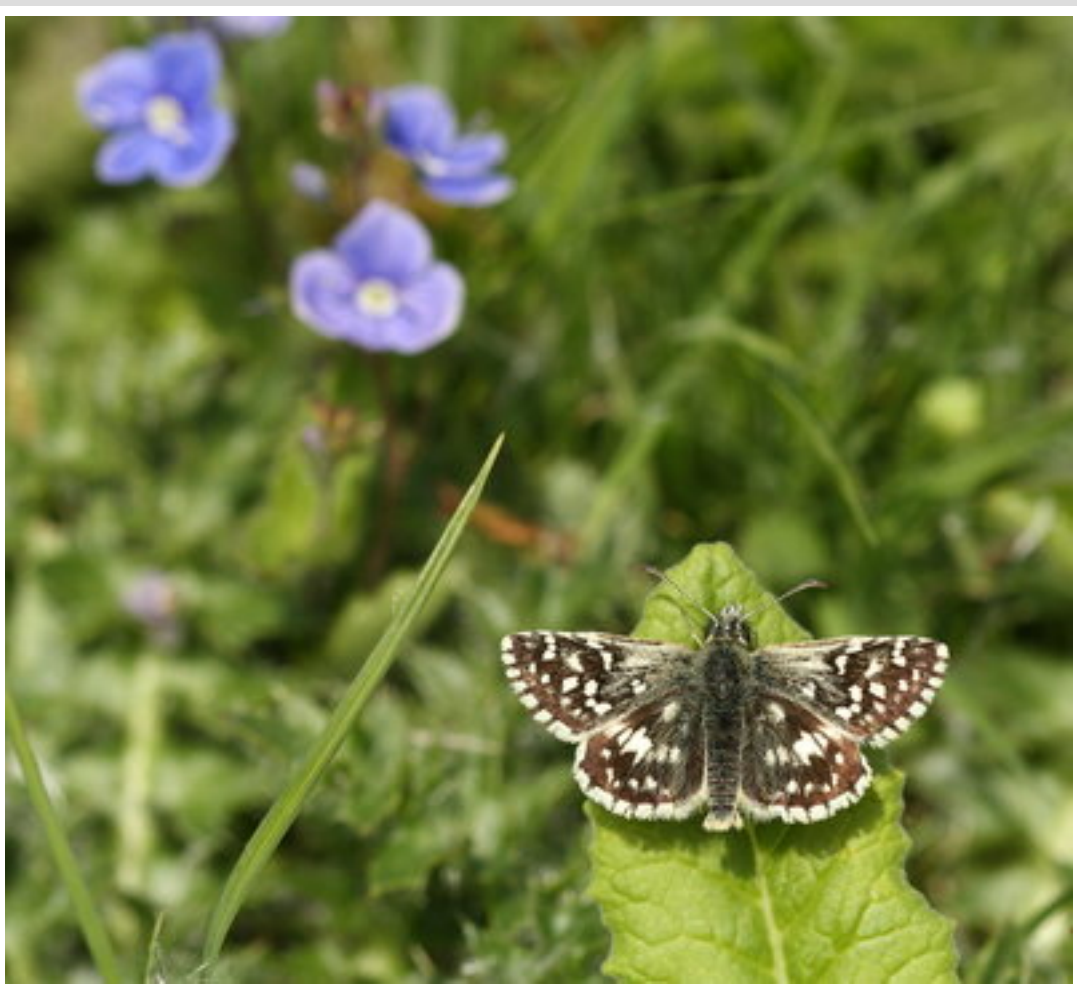
Duke of Burgundy



Grizzled Skipper



Duke of Burgundy



Grizzled Skipper



Peacocks



Duchess

The Garlic Mustard which I've grown is now littered with Orange Tip eggs (very satisfying 😊) all at varying stages of development.



Orange Tip - Fresh Ovum



Orange Tip Ovum - 1 Day before Hatching

Re: William

by William, 11-May-14 06:41 PM GMT

Coppers as good as Gold

Despite typical may conditions for my part of the world (40mph gusts and ridiculously unpredictable weather) the last few days have been exceptionally enjoyable (on the patch as ever). Early Purple Orchids are now in full swing in the woods including a nice rose pink specimen, and plant wise things see to be ticking along nicely.



Early Purple Orchid

This morning a beautiful female Brimstone paid the garden a flying visit, long enough for a quick close up.

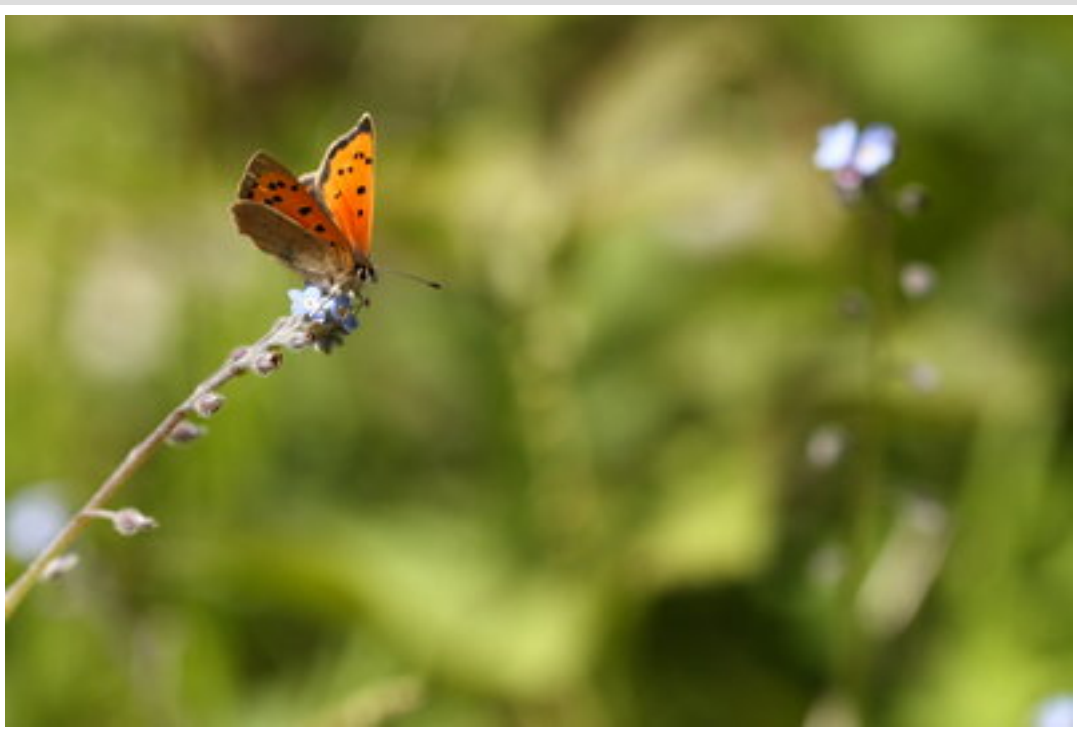


Brimstone

And then this afternoon, it was copper time! I headed back to the spot where I saw 15 or so of these little beauties about 2 weeks ago despite the wind, and I was not to be disappointed. There seems to have been an explosion in numbers and I lost count somewhere in the 50s. It was a truly incredible sight, the patches of Forget me Not and Sorrel were all filled with these little buzz bombs vying for space and rotating studiously on flower – heads. I had a fantastic time soaking it up and enjoying them, definitely worth going to have a look! I suspect if I headed off the path I could have seen almost as many again, with more flying amongst the grass, which was almost red with sorrel, no doubt the reason for their incredible numbers, indeed, it was not unusual to have 7 or 8 in view at once.



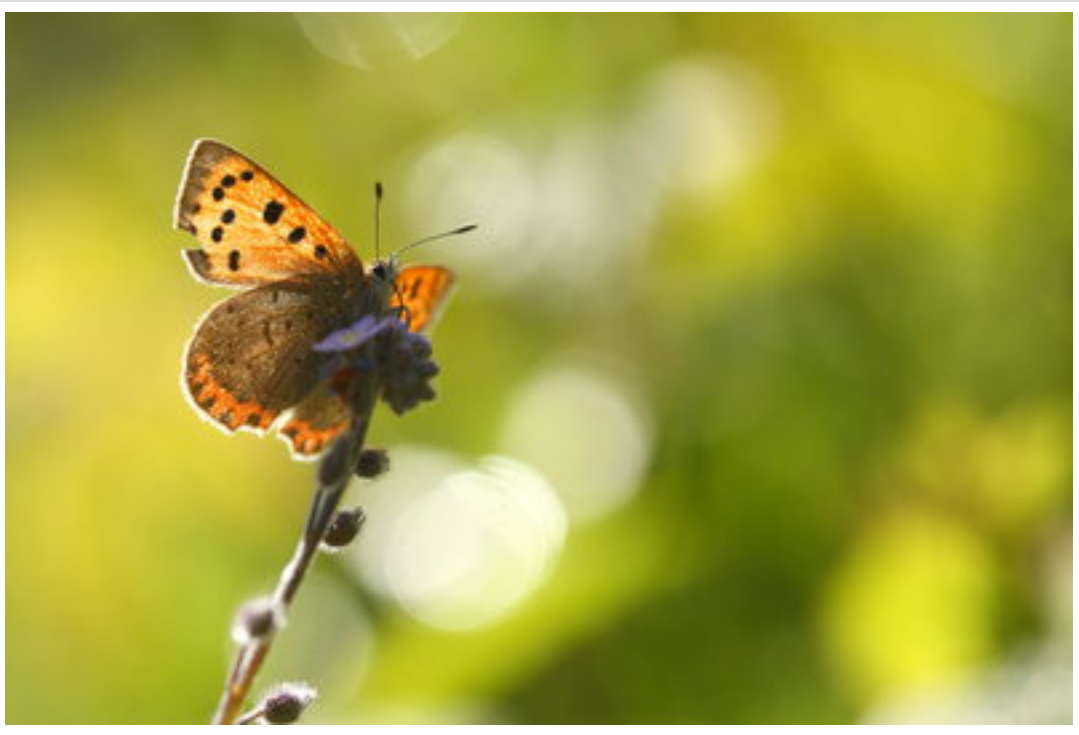
Small Copper



Small Copper



Small Copper



Small Copper



Small Copper



Small Copper

There was a bit of variation in the uppersides in terms of the extent of the orange, along with a couple of nice *caeruleo-punctata*. I'm beginning to wonder if this form is caused by high temperature, since it is very frequent on the continent and with this warm spring people seem to be seeing lots of them (when they're more usually thought of as a warm second brood thing).



Small Copper - F. Caeruleo-Punctata

This Female had quite a nice dusting of orange on her hindwings.



Small Copper - Female

But the real variant of the day was this chappie...



Small Copper

I'm going to stick my neck out and say he's some sort of aberration (possibly *culpinus*?) as he was markedly more pale (almost white in flight) than his fellows. He also behaved differently, far more of a typical male copper, vivacious, territorial and inclined to long patrol flights that made him difficult to photograph. Whereas the other coppers, perhaps dulled by the density of their population were more docile.



Small Copper

This was the first photo I got of him. The ladybird eventually crawled onto his hindwing, flushing him and causing a howl of dismay.



Small Copper

He was a beautifully coloured specimen, in some lights appearing almost grey, under cloud a pale white and when the sun hit him right, this pale straw yellow.



Small Copper

Finally a comparison with a more normal copper.



Small Coppers

Re: William

by David M, 11-May-14 07:23 PM GMT

That watered-down Small Copper is a real find, William.

Re: William

by William, 11-May-14 08:52 PM GMT

Thanks David, once I realised the numbers on site I had hoped I might find something unusual, little did I know 😊

Re: William

by William, 16-May-14 07:29 AM GMT

Common Blues

I saw my first Common Blues of the year on wednesday, out in excellent numbers at a local spot. After a bit of patience they posed nicely, particularly one beautifully marked female, lacking any orange on her upperside.



Common Blue Female



Common Blue Male

In this photo you can see the male cleaning his antenna.



Common Blue Male



Common Blue Male



Common Blue Male



Common Blue Female



Common Blues



Common Blues

The Buttercup meadows are now in full bloom – good places to look for Small Coppers and the aforementioned Common Blues.



Buttercups

2 Speckled Woods duelled for just under a minute over one.



Speckled Woods

Re: William

by Pauline, 16-May-14 09:46 AM GMT

Fabulous photo of in flight SW William 😊

Re: William

by Lee Hurrell, 16-May-14 01:12 PM GMT

I agree!

Re: William

by William, 16-May-14 02:23 PM GMT

Thanks all – it was a lovely sight 😊

Re: William

by Paul Harfield, 17-May-14 12:05 AM GMT

Hi William

That female Common Blue without the orange is a beauty 😊 And I love your buttercups.

Re: William

by William, 17-May-14 08:22 PM GMT

Thanks Jack – I was lucky to find such a beautifully marked specimen 😊

Re: William

by William, 17-May-14 09:08 PM GMT

Magical Marshies

Last year a colony of Marsh Fritillaries was discovered only 15 minutes from my home. Unfortunately I found out too late to go and see them, but this weekend I more than made up for it, they were out in excellent numbers. Initially they proved flighty, but in the infrequent cloudy spells they were more forthcoming.



Marsh Fritillary



Marsh Fritillary



Marsh Fritillaries



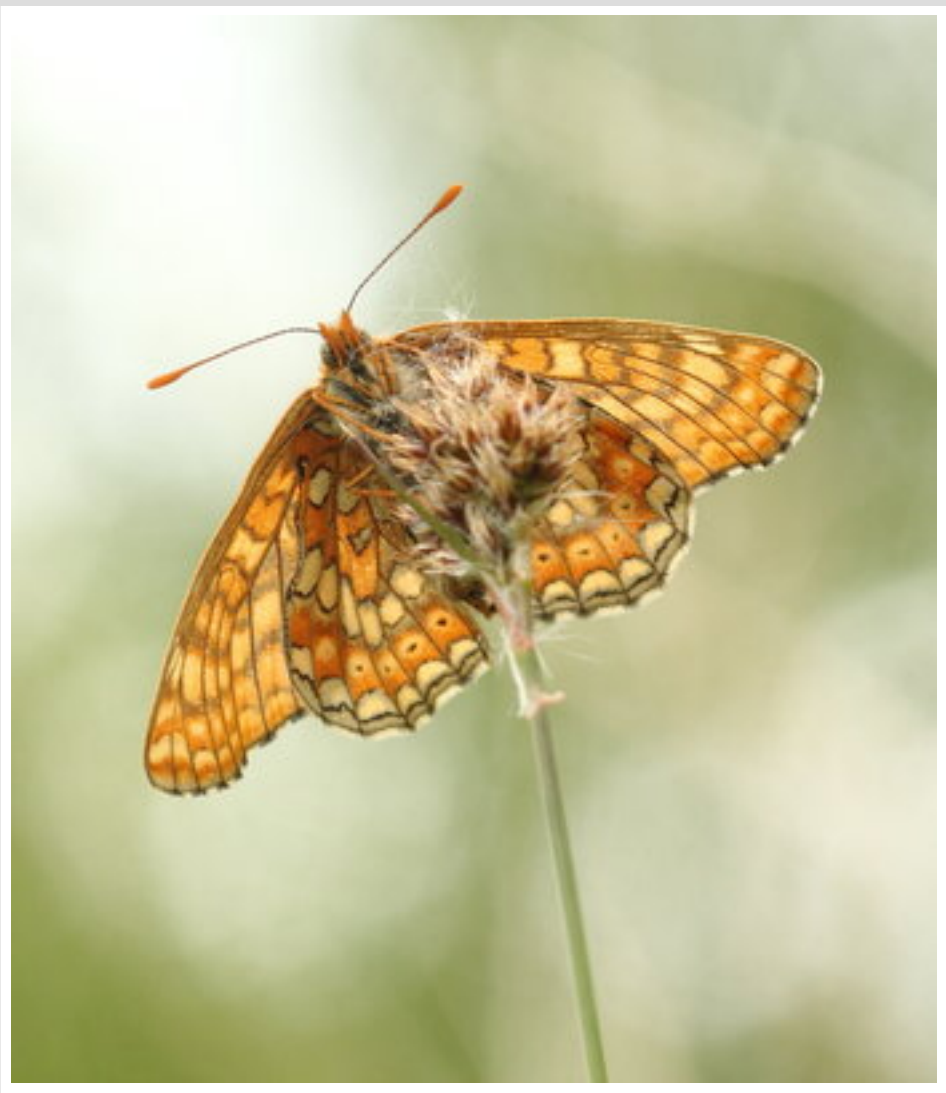
Marsh Fritillary – Female



Marsh Fritillary – Female



Marsh Fritillary – Female



Marsh Fritillary



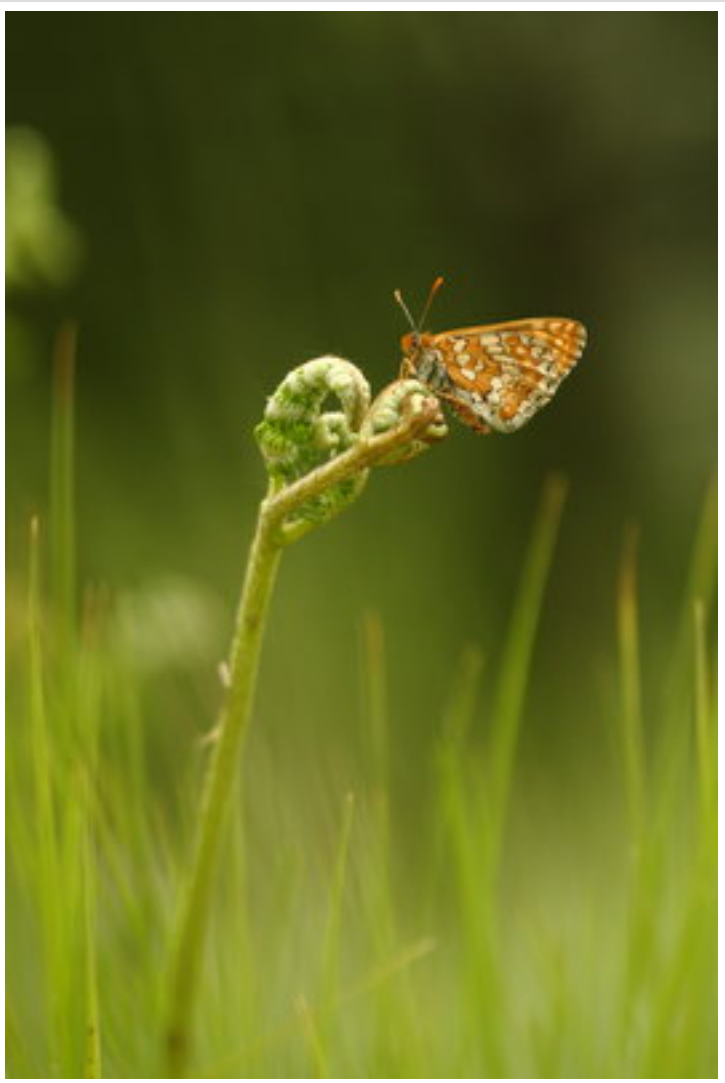
Marsh Fritillary



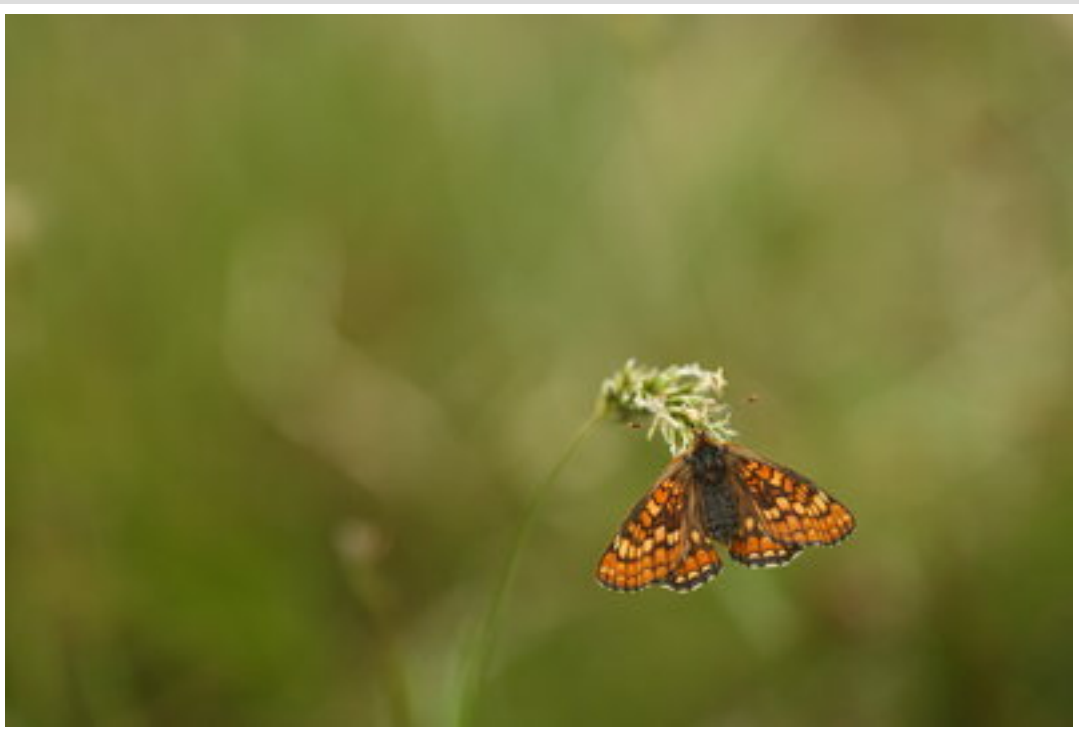
Marsh Fritillary



Marsh Fritillary



Marsh Fritillary



Marsh Fritillary



Marsh Fritillary



Marsh Fritillary

Several nice Common Twayblades were also flowering on site, my first ever.



Common Twayblade

Re: William

by William, 25-May-14 06:54 PM GMT

Recent Doings

Things have been fairly quiet recently, with the cloudy weather. Nevertheless a few nice roosting Common Blues around.

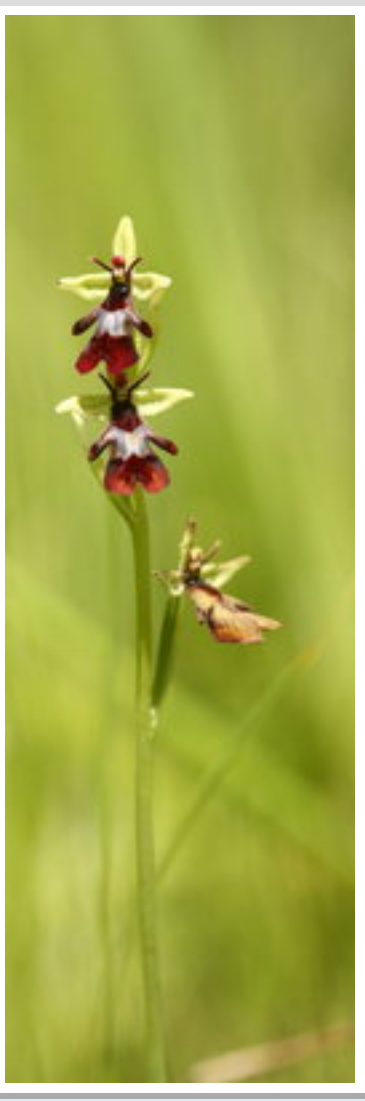


Common Blue

And today I was lucky enough to see the legendary Somerset '*ophrys*' hybrids (Fly x Bee).



Fly x Bee Orchid Hybrid



Fly Orchid

In other Orchid news, Southern Marsh are doing well at my local pond.



Southern Marsh Orchids

Re: William

by Matsukaze, 25-May-14 09:21 PM GMT

Bee-fly Orchids?

Re: William

by William, 26-May-14 10:32 AM GMT

Perhaps 😊 I think they have been branded *ophrys pietzschii*, but not being a distinct species the name was dropped. Still, if they become a distinct species, you saw 'Bee Fly Orchid' here first 😊

Re: William

by badgerbob, 26-May-14 02:54 PM GMT

Fab hybrid orchid. Now its my turn to be jealous!!!
Bob.

Re: William

by William, 27-May-14 10:18 AM GMT

Thanks Bob - they were very impressive plants, far taller than their Bee or Fly Orchid parents 😊

Re: William

by Wurzel, 27-May-14 10:03 PM GMT

Some stunning shots of the Marshies William 😊 and the blue spot Small Copper is really well 'spotted' they're huge blue spots 😲

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by Maximus, 28-May-14 08:24 PM GMT

Superb photos of the Marsh Fritillaries and the beautiful Orchids William 😊

Re: William

by William, 29-May-14 07:19 PM GMT

Recent Doings

Thanks All, your kind comments are much appreciated 😊

Orange Tip eggs are all over my Garlic Mustard now (as are Green - Veined White), many of them beginning to hatch.



Orange Tip Ovum



Orange Tip Larva

The Small Coppers are still going strong, and at the same site I was delighted to spot my first Painted Lady of the year, and best of all 5 Wall Browns – a rare butterfly indeed in West Somerset. A female Large White posed nicely also.



Small Coppers



Wall Brown



Large White

To cap an excellent day I found a new spot for Common Blues (which are doing very well this year) up the road from me.



Common Blue



Common Blue



Common Blue

Re: William

by Lee Hurrell, 29-May-14 08:05 PM GMT

What a stunning female. Beautifully captured, William!

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: William

by William, 29-May-14 08:35 PM GMT

Thanks Lee – she posed beautifully 😊

Re: William

by Padfield, 29-May-14 09:05 PM GMT

The female is beautiful but I love the male, set against the field of ox-eye daisies, even more. It's a perfect picture.

Guy

Re: William

by Pauline, 30-May-14 06:04 AM GMT

I'm really enjoying your diary William especially the Marsh Frits and the orchids – splendid 😊 . I especially admire the butterfly shots with the wild flowers behind the butterflies as it shows the context.

Re: William

by William, 30-May-14 02:24 PM GMT

Thanks Guy – from the master of landscape Butterfly photos, that comes as a great compliment 😊

Thanks Pauline – I always try to take something of the site away with me – it helps with the long rainy days 😊

Re: William

by Willow, 30-May-14 02:33 PM GMT

Agree with the other commentators William, lovely!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: William

by William, 31-May-14 07:25 PM GMT

Exmoor and Others

Thanks Bill – much appreciated 😊

Fairly slow going over the past couple of days, but larvae continue to thrive on the Garlic Mustard. Here's a second instar Orange Tip engaging in some egestion.



Orange Tip Larva



Orange Tip Larva

And what I think is an early instar Green - Veined White (though I've been caught out on this before).



Green - Veined White Larva

And a Green - Veined White Ovum.



Green - Veined White Ovum

A trip up on to Exmoor to do the transects at Haddon Hill and Haddon Moor was fairly unproductive due to the cloudy weather, with a few Green - Veined Whites, a nice Mother Shipton and my first Small Heath of the year. A nice gentleman I met also informed me that he'd seen a Green Hairstreak, though I failed to catch up with that.



Small Heath



Green - Veined White



Mother Shipton

Despite their absence, habitat at Haddon Hill looks in good condition for Heath Fritillaries, with cow - wheat everywhere, general thinking is they'll be another week or so.



Common Cow - Wheat

Re: William

by Wurzel, 31-May-14 10:08 PM GMT

Lovely shot of the Green-veined White 😊 Once the Heaths are emerging how long do they take to reach their peak? I'm just wondering about a trip over that way for a lifer 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 01-Jun-14 08:09 AM GMT

Wurzel

I think it's normally about 2 weeks, but I'll keep you posted they tend to fly throughout June really. A trip down to sunny Somerset would be a good idea, I've seen 50 plus Heath Fritillaries at Haddon Hill at the right time of year, and you could combine it with a trip to see the Large Blue (and the Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillaries down the road at Haddon Moor) 😊

BWs

William

Re: William

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-14 08:25 AM GMT

Cheers William 😊 That would be great 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

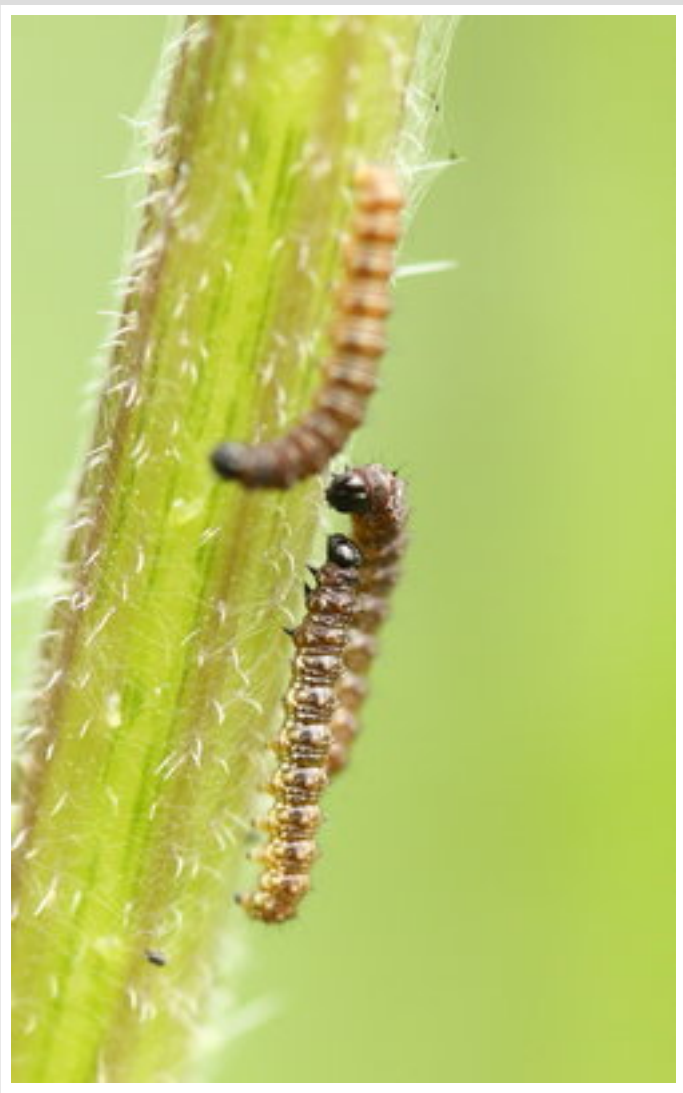
by William, 08-Jun-14 05:22 PM GMT

Recent Doings

Things have been fairly quiet recently, with some rather poor weather. Despite this I've been out and about, paying particular attention to the 'nests' of Nymphalid larvae near my home.



Peacock Larvae (first instar)



Peacock Larvae (first instar)



Peacock Larva (freshly moulted second instar)



Peacock Larvae (second instar)



Peacock Larvae (second instar)

These Small Tortoiseshell larvae made rather strange bedfellows with a fearsome looking spider (ID appreciated)



Small Tortoiseshell Larvae



Small Tortoiseshell Larva (freshly moulted)

The Garlic Mustard is turning into the gift that keeps on giving with Orange Tip larvae.

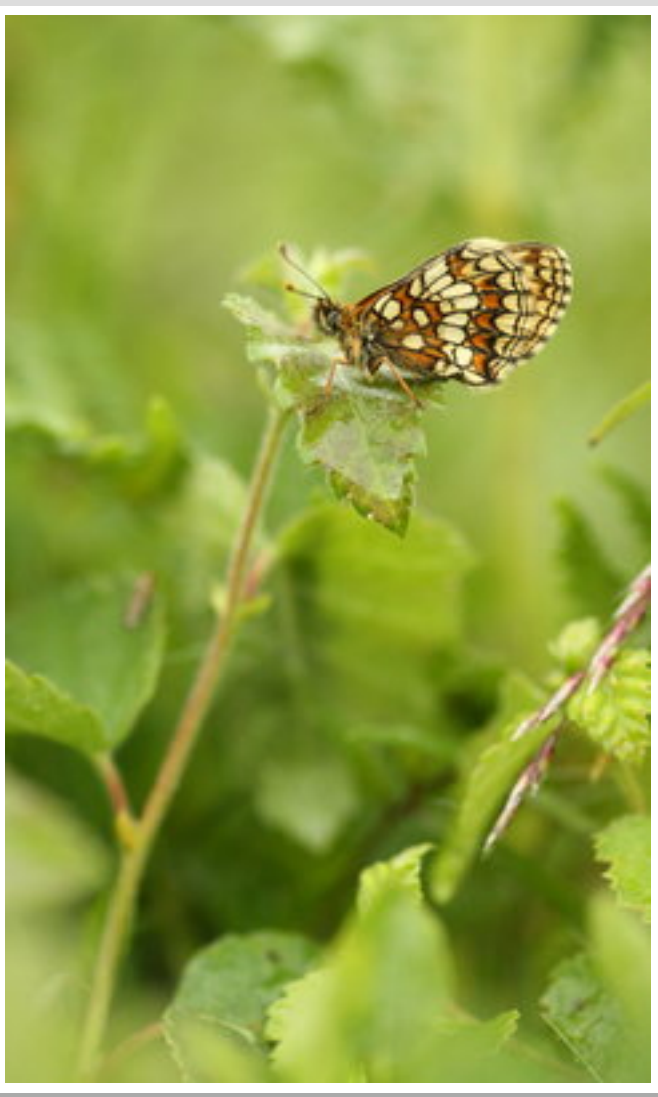


Orange Tip Larva (second instar)



Orange Tip Larva (third instar)

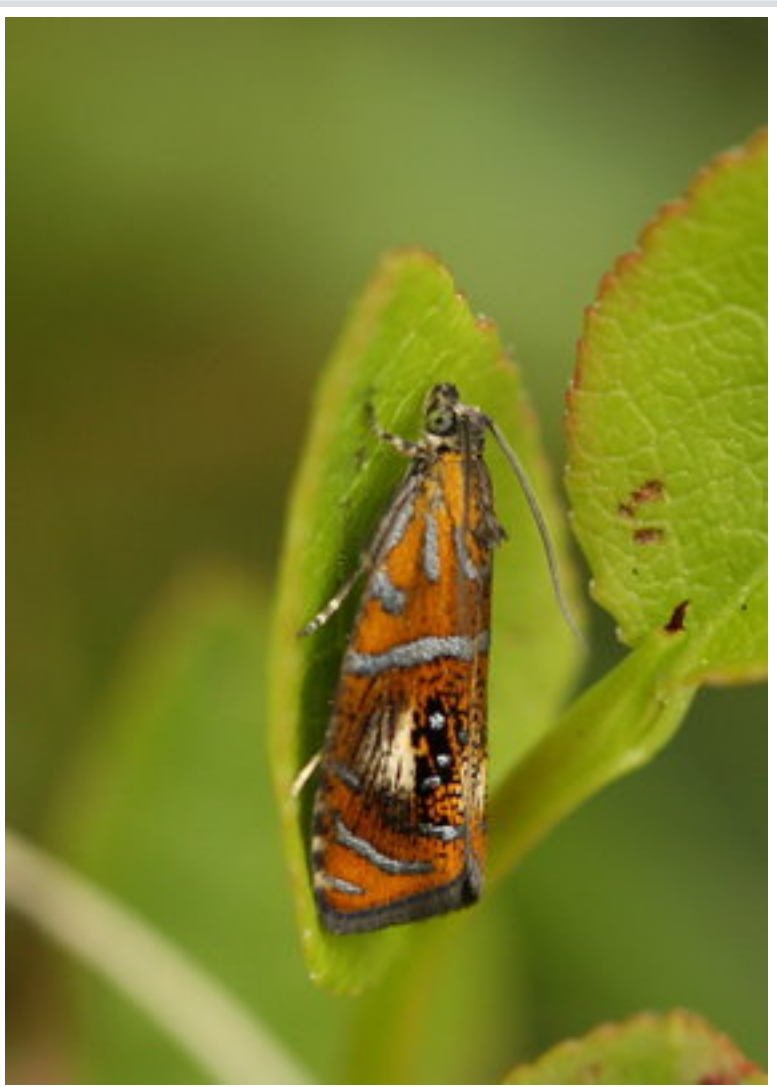
Today I went up to Haddon Hill to do the transect, initially it proved fruitless, until the sun came out – safe to say Heath Fritillaries are now on the wing 😊 – I saw around 8 in the usual hotspot (it's still early days though) with a supporting cast of Green Hairstreak, Large Skipper and the rather attractive micro moth *Olethreutes Arcuella*. Unfortunately the heavens opened when I reached Haddon Moor, so no transect and no Small – Pearl Bordered Fritillaries there.



Heath Fritillary



Green Hairstreak



Olethreutes Arcuella

Re: William

by Wurzel, 08-Jun-14 11:41 PM GMT

Lovely Heath Frit shot William 😊👍 When you say that it's still early days will a trip in two weeks still see some fresh looking Heaths? I was thinking maybe next weekend but with the Iron Man closing the road on Sunday I might not be able to make it?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 09-Jun-14 07:22 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel 😊 2 weeks time should be fine I think, the Fritillaries will probably just have reached their peak then – PM me at a later date for details 😊

Re: William

by Paul Wetton, 09-Jun-14 08:59 AM GMT

Hi William

I think your spider is *araneus diadematus* which is the Garden Spider. I'm no expert so may be corrected on this.

Re: William

by Maximus, 09-Jun-14 09:04 PM GMT

Fantastic images William 😊

Re: William

by Willrow, 10-Jun-14 12:59 PM GMT

Interesting info regards Haddon Hill, I think this area will be quite busy over the next few weeks William 😊 Great shot of that stunning micro moth 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: William

by William, 14-Jun-14 08:11 PM GMT

Thanks for the kind words guys, much appreciated, thanks for the ID Paul – a magnificent beast 😊

Recent Doings

With a recent spell of warm weather I've been 'making hay whilst the sun shines'. A couple of local walks have given me my first Meadow Browns of the year (all males).



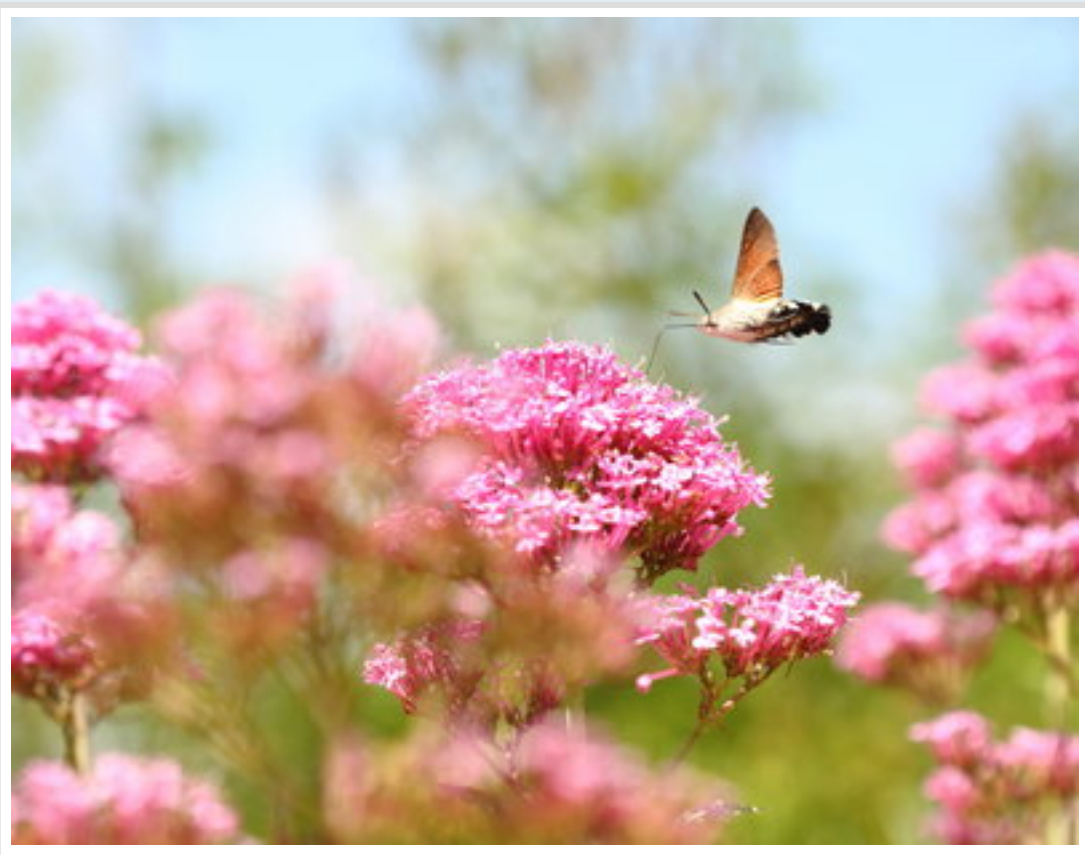
Meadow Brown

I was interested to see the Hop Trefoil at the set-aside near my home absolutely covered with these larvae (50 plus) – any ideas?



Hop Trefoil Larva

The recent warm southerly airflow has brought across some nice migrants, I have seen good numbers of Red Admiral recently, the odd Painted Lady, 2 Hummingbird Hawk Moths on the Red Valerian in the garden, and best of all a beautiful male Clouded Yellow that blasted past me whilst driving along a country lane.



Hummingbird Hawk Moth

Next big excitement was a Small Heath on my transect (from my home), I haven't had one of these on the patch for 4 years, so when this rather battered one plonked itself down on a nettle near me, I was delighted.



Small Heath

Later in the day (Thursday) I was lucky enough to have a trip out on to the Mendips which looked truly stunning in the evening sunshine, there are few places more beautiful. Ubley Warren, a site I had never visited before came up with the goods with fantastic numbers of Green Hairstreak (one of my favourite butterflies, at least 15 seen), my first Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries of the year (3), Small Heath (c.12), Meadow Brown (1), Brimstone (3), Large Skipper (4), Dingy Skipper (2), Grizzled Skipper (5), Common Blue (9) the highlights, along with a lovely robust Bee Orchid and several Common Spotted.



Green Hairstreak



Bee Orchid



Green Hairstreak

Yesterday, another nice walk on the patch saw good numbers of Dragonflies, in particular male Broad Bodied Chasers, and the Peacock larvae are doing well.



Peacock Larva



Broad - Bodied Chaser

And then it was back on to Exmoor to do the two Haddon Transects. Haddon Hill was on fine form, I counted 14 Heath Fritillaries (this doesn't sound like much, but they are very visible in the hotspot, and easily found, though photographing them in the sun is another matter), 7 Green Hairstreaks (I settled for photographing these instead!), 18 Large Skippers, 1 Red Admiral, 2 Green - Veined White, 2 Speckled Wood and 5 Small Heath, along with 5 beautiful Wood Tigers (virtually impossible to photograph, scared by camera noises and footfalls on bracken).

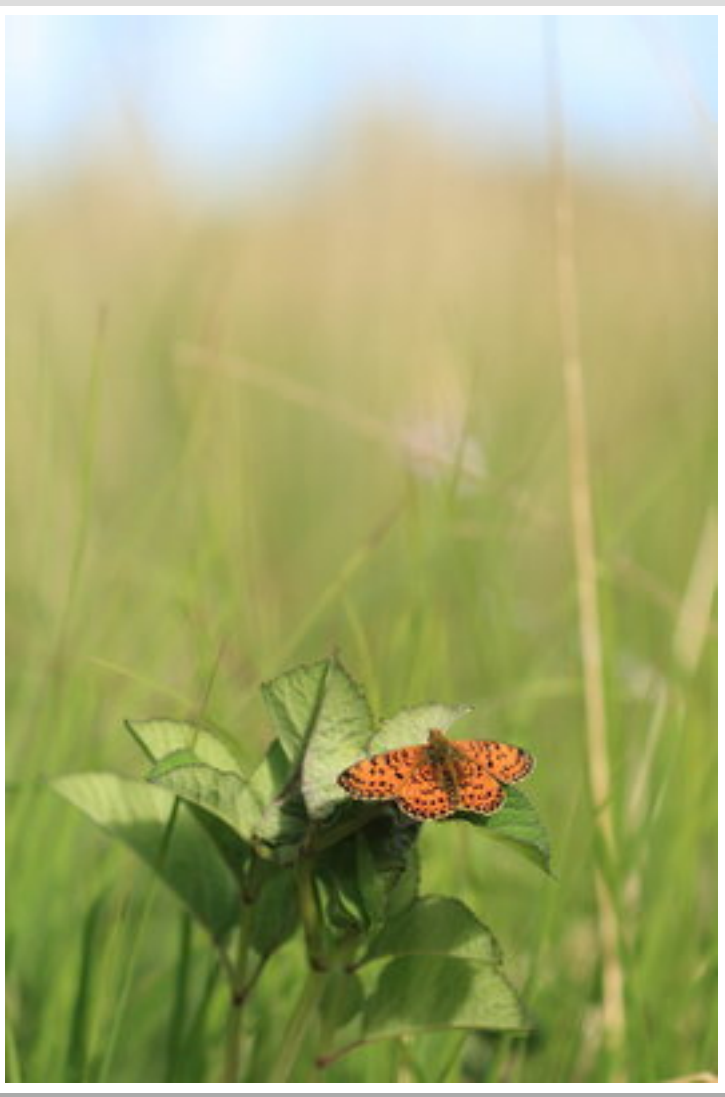


Green Hairstreak

Haddon Moor was just as good, with 9 Green - Veined White, 7 Large Skipper and 19 Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillaries. The Fritillaries were very flighty, on constant patrol, but by 5:30, they started to calm down.



Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillary



Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillary



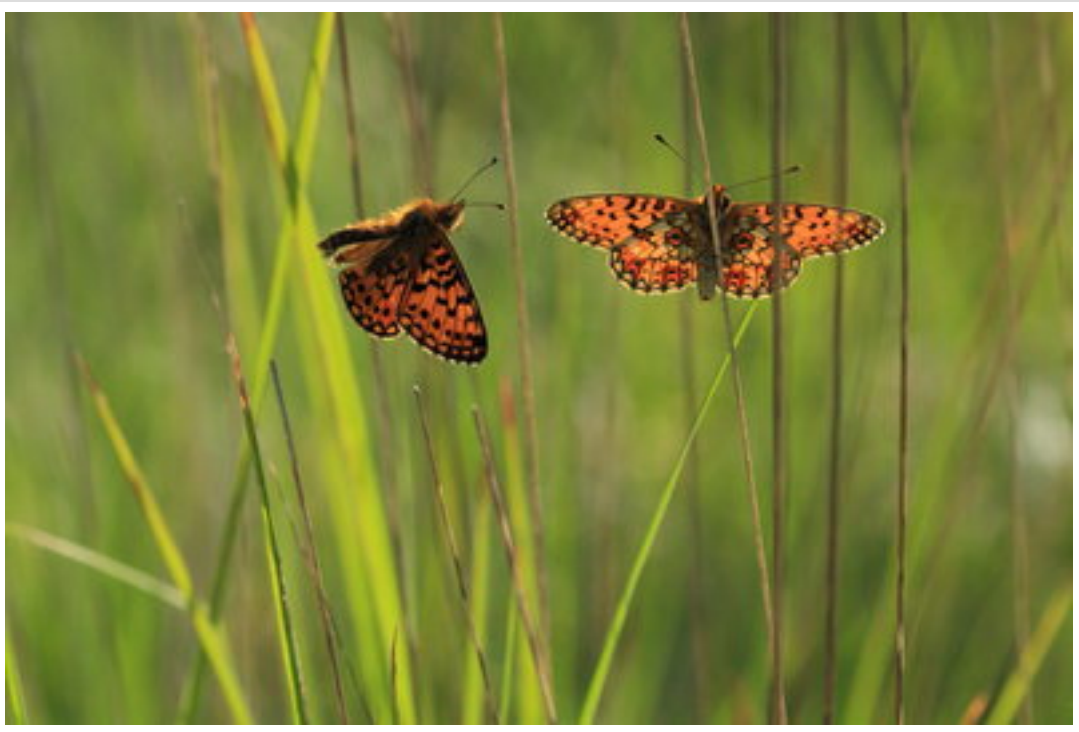
Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillary



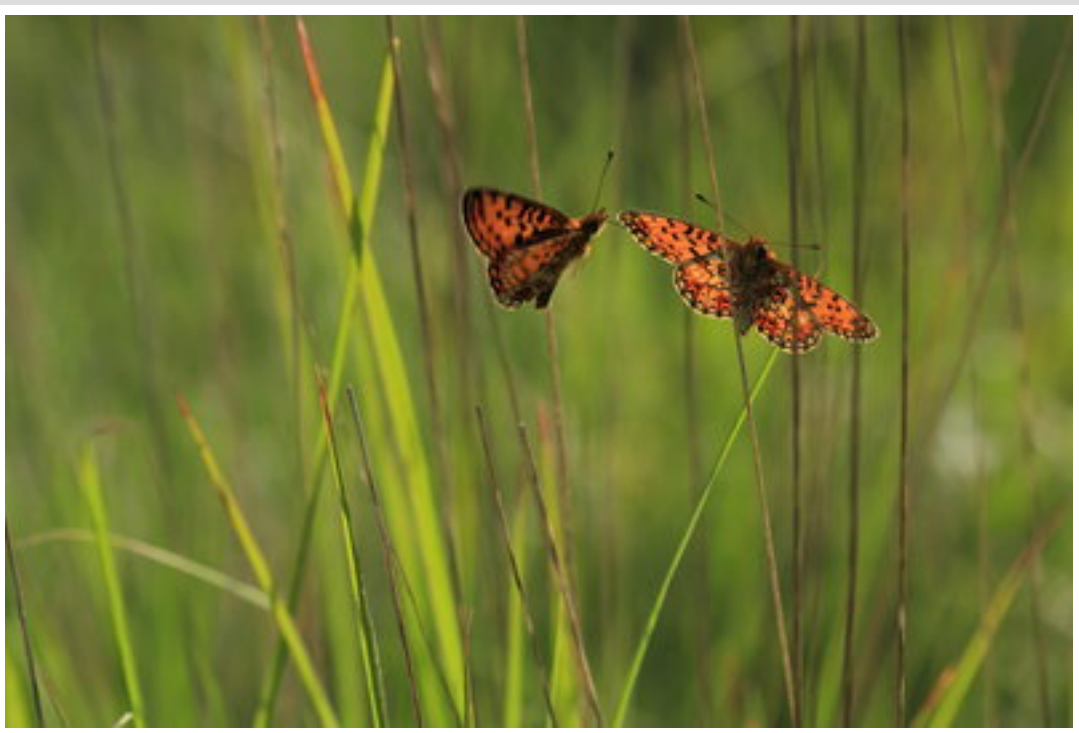
Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary



Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillary



Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillaries



Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillaries



Haddon Moor

Re: William

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-14 08:35 PM GMT

Very emotive sequence of shots William, lovely to behold 😊 , although I can't get used to seeing Small Pearls amongst the grasses – I always see them amongst the woods.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 14-Jun-14 09:06 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

I can't get used to seeing Small Pearls amongst the grasses – I always see them amongst the woods.

Thanks Wurzel 😊 , perhaps if you come and look at the Heath fritillaries and pop next door for Small Pearls you'll be able to get to grips with your very own grass – living Somerset Fritillaries.

BWs

William

Re: William

by David M, 14-Jun-14 09:16 PM GMT

Nice images, William.

I too saw a Humming Bird Hawk Moth at Collard Hill this afternoon. They're fascinating creatures, aren't they?

Re: William

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jun-14 10:17 PM GMT

Great report William and some beautiful photos 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: William

by Pauline, 15-Jun-14 05:08 PM GMT

I love the style of your photos William and I have been trying to think of words to describe them – atmospheric, picturesque but nothing I can think of seems to do them justice. Wurzel comes close with his 'emotive' but it is a combination of all of this and more. The Meadow Brown, Green Hairstreak and Pearls are beautiful and demonstrate real skill. I am glad that you are not one of the folk who delete your data as when I admire a photo I try to learn from it. Looking forward to more.

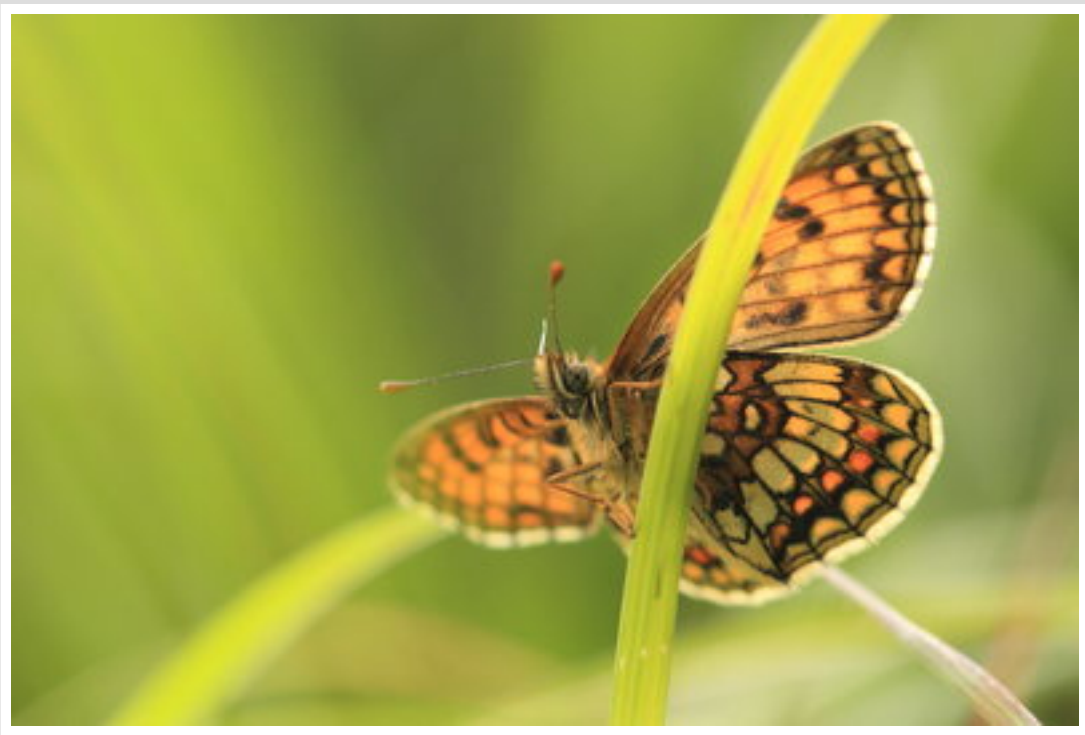
Re: William

by William, 22-Jun-14 08:39 PM GMT

Thanks Guys for all the kind words, much appreciated as ever 😊

Recent Doings

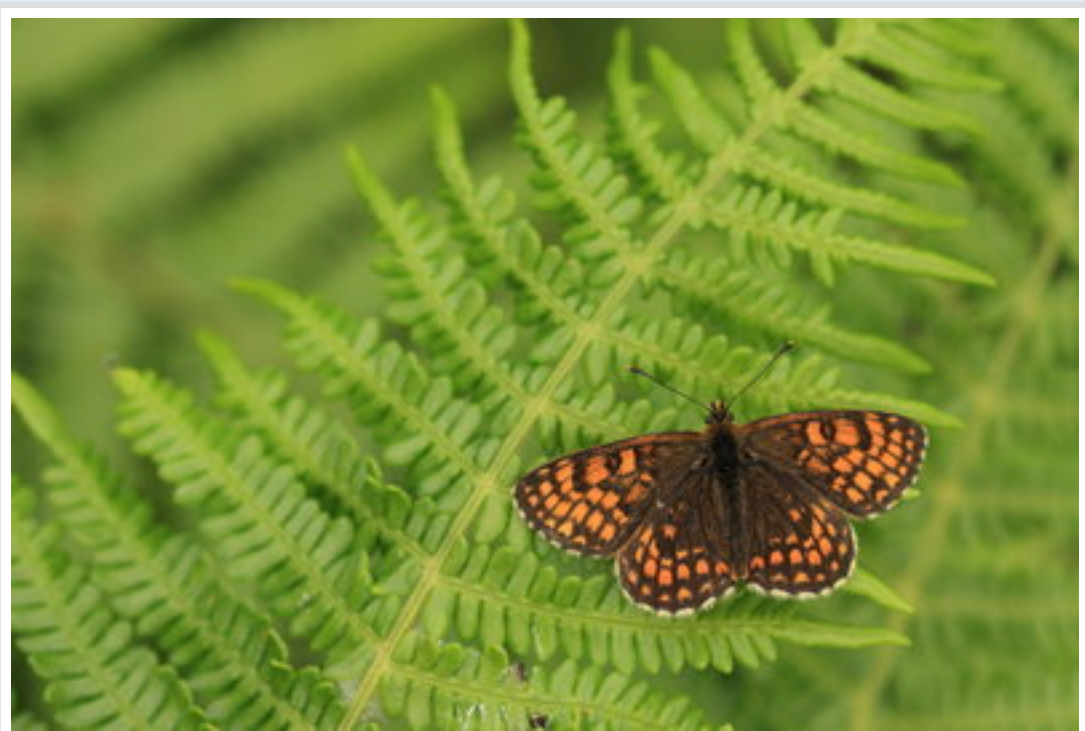
As ever this week, I've done the two Haddon transects, both of which have been very productive, with Heath Fritillaries seemingly approaching their peak and Small Pearl – Borderededs doing very well (and showing reluctantly for the camera). Heaths are very easy to find and photograph on a day with brief sunny intervals, and well worth a go. Both them and Small Pearl – Borderededs are slightly past their best now, the latter being extremely difficult to photograph in the sunny weather. Large Skippers are also out in force at both sites.



Heath Fritillary



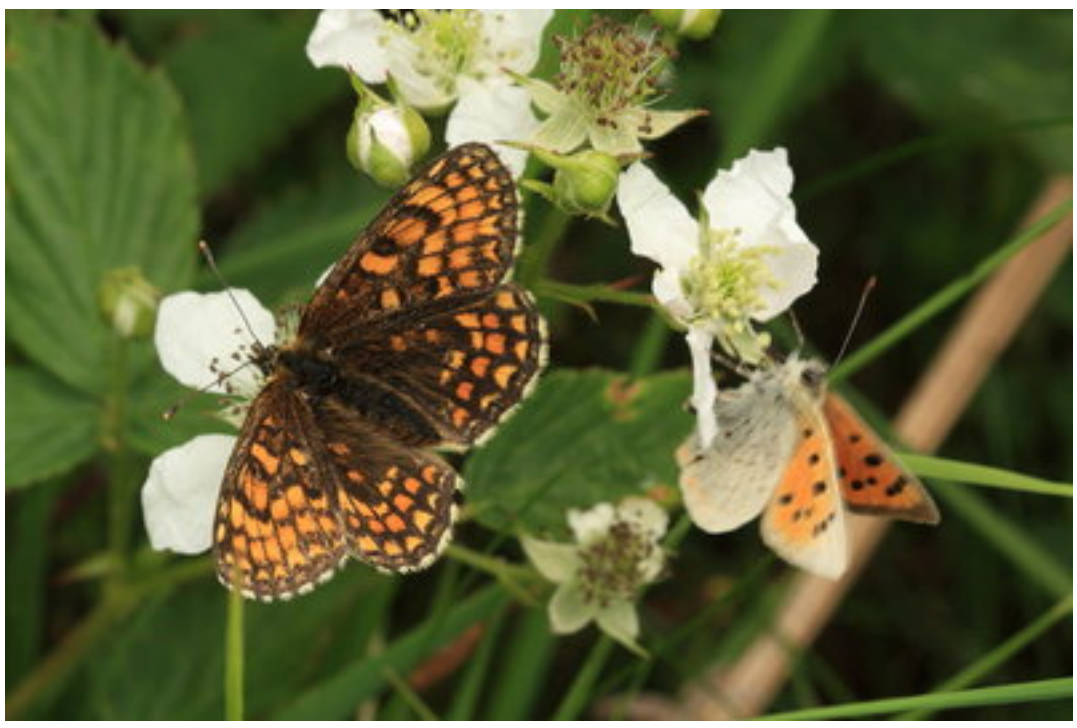
Heath Fritillaries



Heath Fritillary



Heath Fritillary



Heath Fritillary and Small Copper



Large Skipper



Large Skipper



Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillary



Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillary



Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillary



Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillary

In other news, my peacock larvae have now pupated.



Peacock Larva – Pupating



Peacock Pupa

Re: William

by Pauline, 24-Jun-14 01:21 PM GMT

Some lovely shots William, especially the Large Skipper and the Peacock pupa. I particularly like your style of photography where the butterfly isn't 'in your face' so to speak yet the lovely atmospheric background provides a really appealing image.

Re: William

by William, 24-Jun-14 06:36 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline 😊 – I've been lucky enough to get out to some really great places recently, and it's nice to take some of that away in the photos. There should be some Collard Hill stuff soon as I've had 4 days (another tomorrow) there helping the wardens – a fantastic experience 😊

Re: William

by Willow, 25-Jun-14 08:49 PM GMT

Lovely images of your **Peacock** pupa William 😊

Great to hear how well the **Heath Fritillary** are doing on Haddon Hill, my recent visit there was a delightful experience.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: William

by badgerbob, 25-Jun-14 09:35 PM GMT

Yes, a superb image of the Peacock pupa.

Re: William

by William, 26-Jun-14 03:19 PM GMT

Thanks Bob and Willow, I've been talking to some of the Exmoor BC folks and it seems this is actually one of the best Heath Fritillary years on record at Haddon – single figure counts are normal, when I've had up to 20, which is great news 😊 .

Re: William

by William, 26-Jun-14 03:58 PM GMT

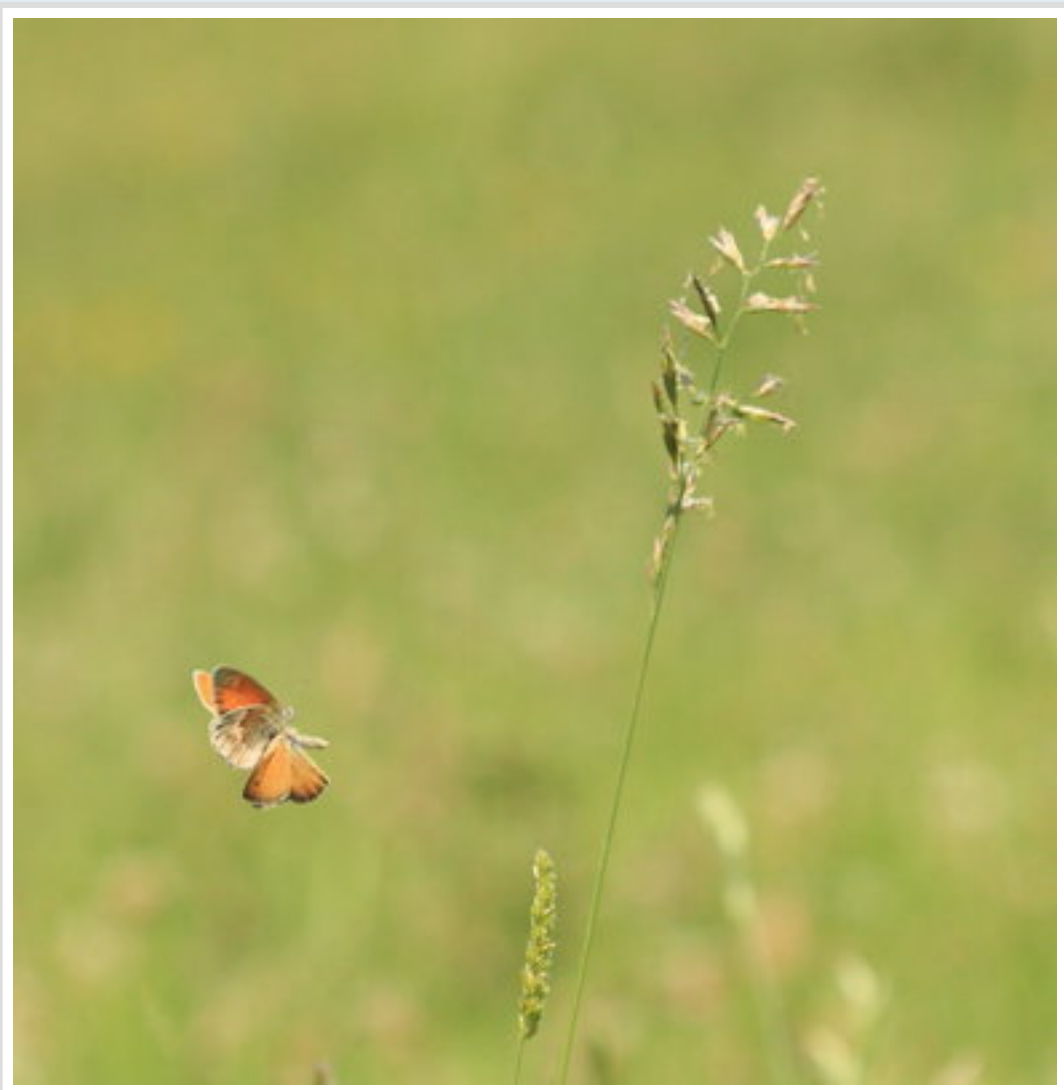
Cracking Collard

Over the last 5 days I have been fortunate to help out members of the National Trust in their work at Collard Hill. As many will know, it has been a poor season for Large Blues on the majority of their Somerset sites, with the well – documented situation at Collard repeated across the Poldens at nearly all their locations (I believe a couple of private sites at lower altitudes have fared better).

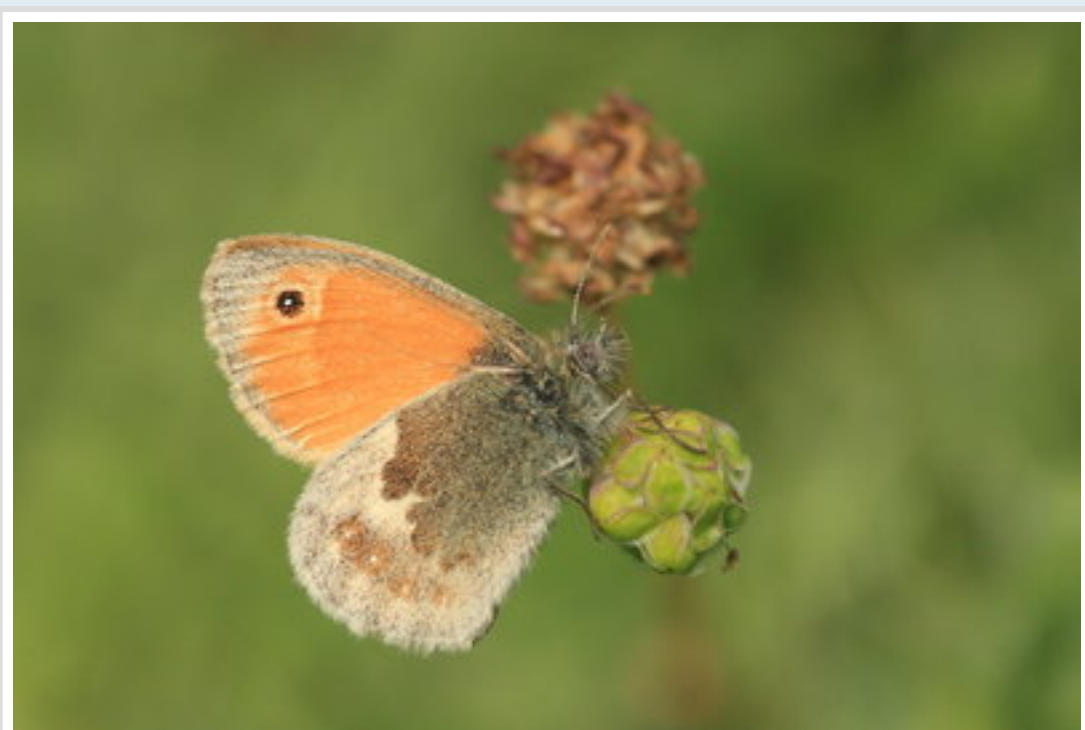
Fortunately, this scarcity did not deter that most hardened and optimistic of species, the british naturalist, and counts of 50 visitors each day (with 93 on the open day) were fairly standard at Collard. Despite the paucity of Large Blues, many of these went home with happy faces, as most days the unremitting efforts of National Trust volunteers and visitors tended to turn up an obliging female of some description.

As one visitor quite rightly pointed out: *'If you don't see the Blue, enjoy the view'*, words that held true throughout the week as, in the periodic absence of *arion* visitors sampled the other delights Collard had to offer. These included...

Small Heaths (every day I was there 2 were fighting by the bench on the centre of the site, a small wonder they did not die of exhaustion in the heat), and Marbled Whites.



Small Heaths



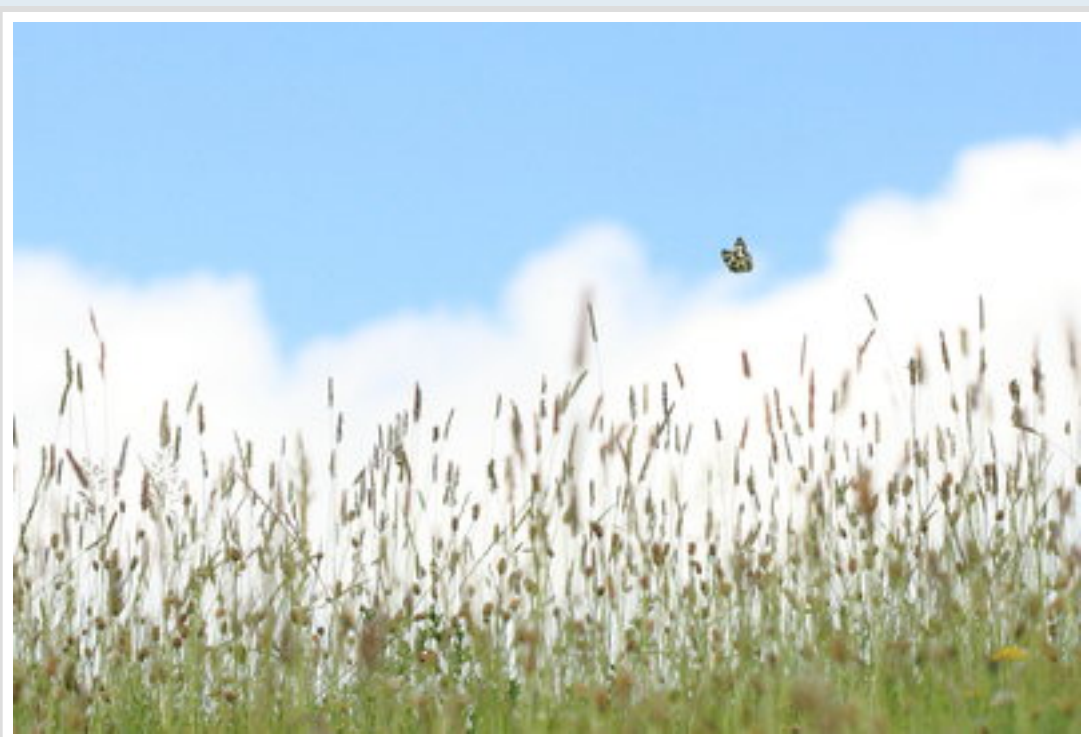
Small Heath



Small Heaths



Small Heath



Marbled White

Orchids of various kinds, lots of Pyramidal, including a nice var. *albiflora* , Bee – including the legendary var. *trolli* (Wasp Orchid) of which one specimen is flowering this year.



Bee Orchid



Pyramidal Orchid - Var. Albiflora



Bee Orchid



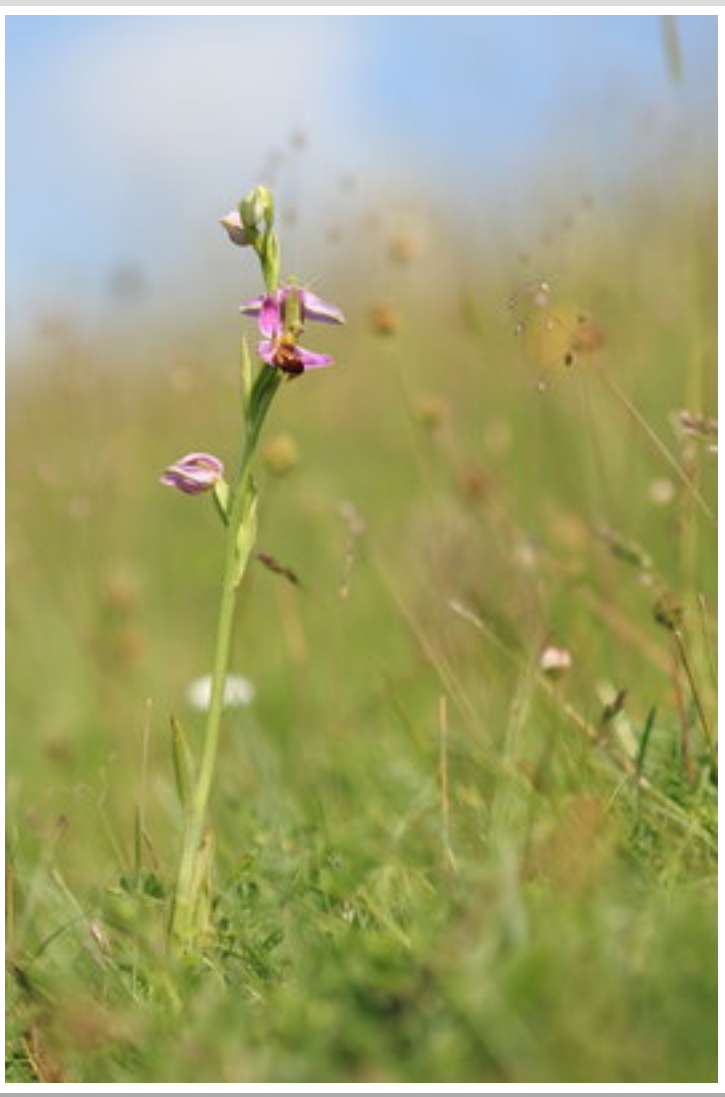
Pyramidal Orchid



Bee Orchid



Pyramidal Orchid Var. Albiflora



Bee Orchid

Small Tortoiseshells in abundance...



Small Tortoiseshell

Including this female mating with a Meadow Brown, a rather unsettling sight in the Eastern Glade.



Small Tortoiseshell pairing with Meadow Brown

A host of Migrants, including Hummingbird Hawk Moth, Clouded Yellow, Painted Lady and Red Admiral (I saw about 20 of the latter each day, flying strongly northwards up the slope, never stopping), photos of the former two's eggs here.



Humming Bird Hawk Moth Ovum



Clouded Yellow Ovum

Burnet Moths of different stages of development everywhere...



Six Spot Burnet Larva - Pupating



Six Spot Burnets In Cop

And of course, 'the view'.



Collard Hill

Some Blues to follow....

Re: William

by William, 26-Jun-14 04:37 PM GMT

Brilliant Blues

Despite their rarity this season (we had around 4 on transect when I was there), Large Blues performed fairly well for visitors when found. Best spots to look were 'The Eastern Glade' (on cooler days), the bottom of the gravelled path that takes you down from the bench to the bottom of the site (quite often egg - laying females here in the morning) and the slope in the middle of the site above (in the morning) and around the gorse (on cooler afternoons). It was however, largely pot - luck as the Blues do range over the site in their search for either females or thyme.

Males were virtually unapproachable, and I only ever got photos of one as it rested after mating, but females were relatively easy to get close to once found, perching on thyme to lay eggs and nectar. A very fresh female was found on the open day that stayed pretty much within 10 metres of where it was found at 11:00 all day, still being there when I left at 5:00. This lack of any meaningful activity was seen in several Large Blues and is perhaps why they were so difficult to find, and numbers so low as they rested on grass stems in the intense heat.

The jury is still out on why the Large Blues are in such low numbers and so late. One theory is that Collard's claggy, clayey soil stores water, lowering its temperature and retarding the development of the thyme and the Large Blue larvae in the ants' nests, this explaining their lateness, whilst the drought conditions last summer caused thyme to wilt and starve the young larvae, resulting in a high mortality before they reached the ant's nests and low numbers this year.

Time and science will tell, and hopefully there'll be some interesting answers after the yearly egg counts etc. have taken place, certainly, many of the females were busy laying eggs, here is the first one I photographed on Sunday morning on the upper slopes.

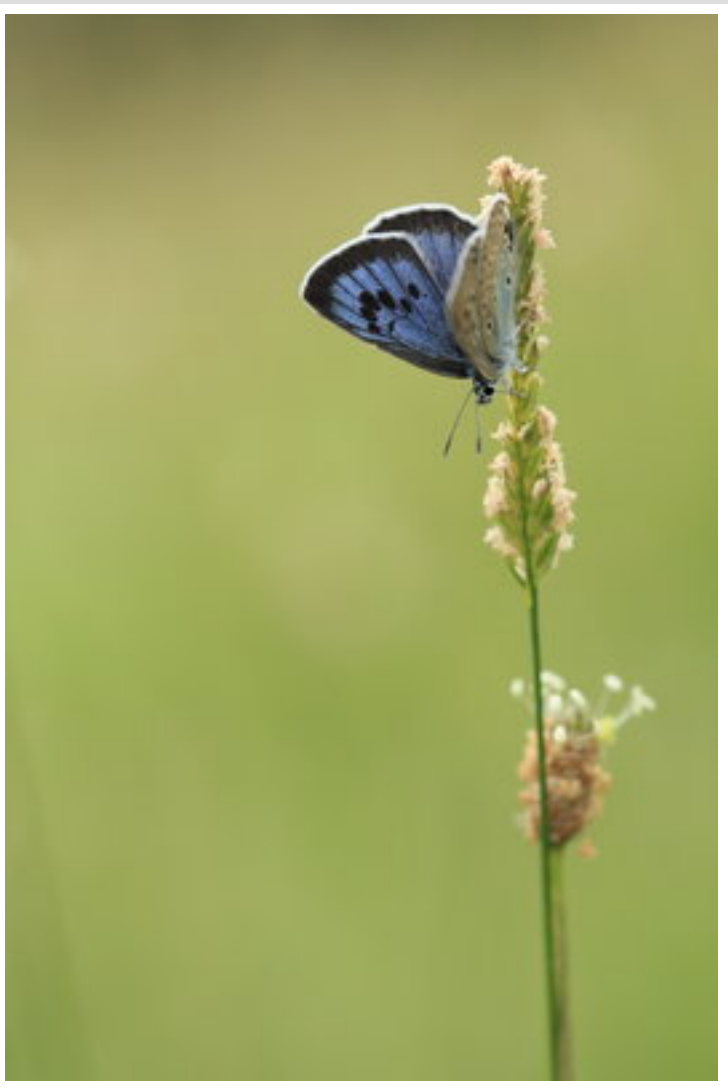


Large Blue - Female

The legendary open day female...



Large Blue - Female



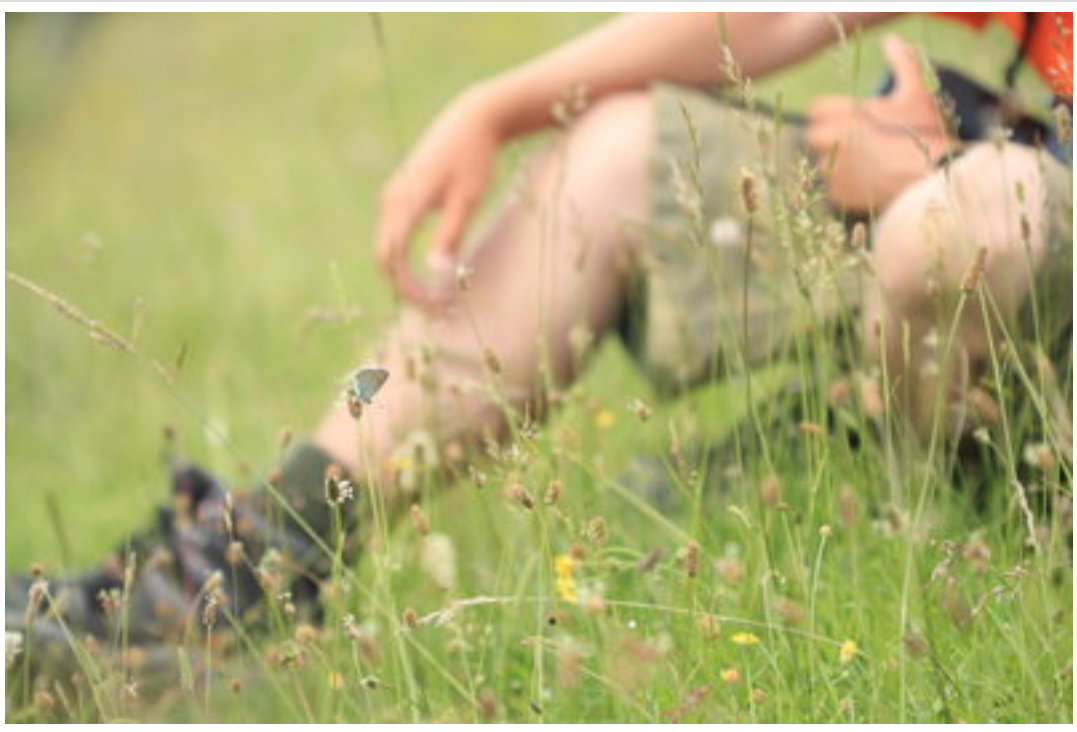
Large Blue - Female

With a crowd of suitably respectful admirers...



Large Blue – Female

And Jono, the Large Blue Warden...



Large Blue – Female

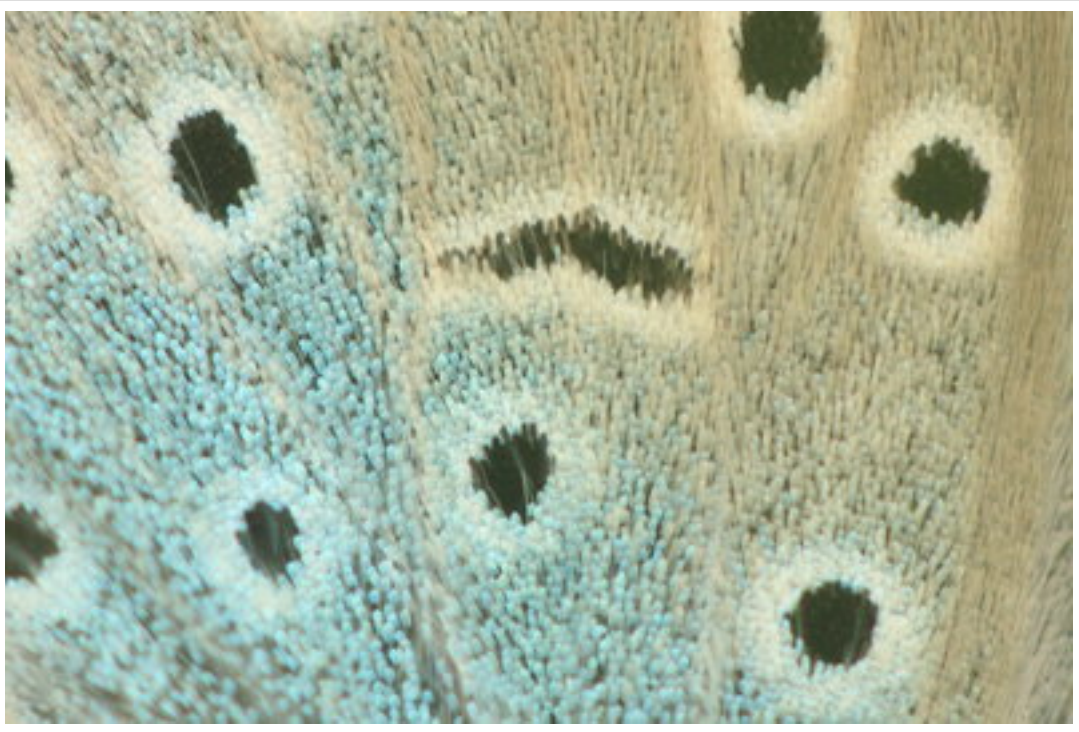
More females...



Large Blue – Female



Large Blue - Female



Large Blue - Female - Close Up



Large Blue - Female

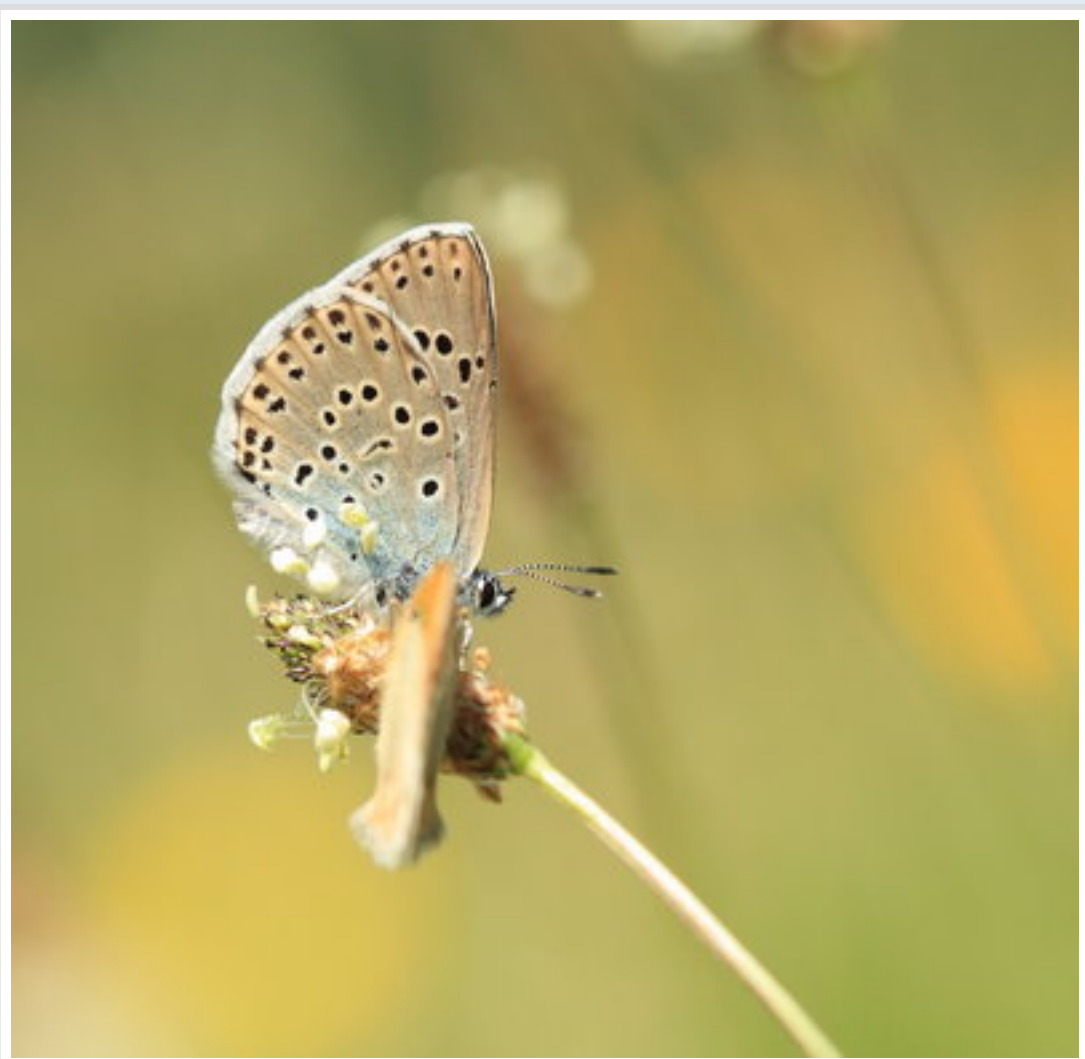


Large Blue - Female



Large Blue - Female

A few oddities, a Large Blue and (blurry) Small Heath...



Large Blue (female) and Small Heath

And two sitting together, post - cop.



Large Blue - Male (top), Large Blue - Female (bottom)

With all the egg - laying females around, having watched Dave Simcox at work, I picked up the trick of finding Large Blue eggs...



Large Blue Ovum



Large Blue Ovum

Finding eggs was very satisfying, but there are few feelings as satisfying as watching a butterfly that until not so long ago was extinct in Britain, fluttering over the grassy sward, in a field filled with wildflowers, in its search for thyme to bring on the next generation....brilliant.



Large Blue – Female

Re: William

by Katrina, 26-Jun-14 04:48 PM GMT

Fantastic photos William. I love the last one!

Re: William

by Padfield, 26-Jun-14 04:56 PM GMT

I agree – that last photo is remarkable. I love it.

Guy

Re: William

by David M, 26-Jun-14 06:34 PM GMT

One of the best sequences I've seen on this site (and there has been plenty of competition).

Thanks for sharing.

Re: William

by Neil Hulme, 26-Jun-14 07:58 PM GMT

Great report and beautiful images. The last one and the quarter open female are the pick of an excellent bunch for me. Many of the regulars on UKB have their own photographic styles, but I'm particularly fond of your 'butterflies in a landscape' shots – they capture summer memories and feelings so well, and that's not easy to do.

BWs, Neil

Re: William

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jun-14 08:19 PM GMT

Totally agree with the other comments William, great reports and beautiful images.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: William

by Maximus, 29-Jun-14 06:13 PM GMT

I'm just 'catching up' on your diary William, great reports and really lovely images in your last three posts 😊

Mike

Re: William

by Pauline, 29-Jun-14 07:24 PM GMT

Absolutely stunning photos William. I can imagine many of them as illustrations in an expensive book about butterflies – and if they were, then I would definitely buy it. I wish I could emulate your style and produce images like that.

Re: William

by PhilJohnson, 29-Jun-14 08:06 PM GMT

Hi William,

Excellent Large Blue pictures, I think. Not just the butterflies but also the "spirit of the occasion" with the "butterfly tourists" 😊 Best Wishes, Philip

Re: William

by Pete Eeles, 29-Jun-14 08:33 PM GMT

Superb shots William. Like others, I think that last shot is just brilliant!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: William

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-14 11:36 PM GMT

I can also throw my hat into the ring regarding that last shot, sublime comes to mind 🍷😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by Rogerdodge, 30-Jun-14 12:48 AM GMT

William

On the 31st of May you wrote–

A nice gentleman I met also informed me that he'd seen a Green Hairstreak, though I failed to catch up with that.

That "nice" man was me. I also saw you in the distance at Collard on a few weeks back, you were busily strolling around with a clip-board, but I didn't get to see you again.

I have only just discovered your diary here, and it is excellent.

Your photos are superb, and you have both real artistic flair, and technical skill for someone so young.

Keep up the excellent work – you are putting we oldies to shame.

I revisited Haddon on Sat 21st, and saw dozens of HF, mostly around the area below the large dead tree, and some a little further east.

There were also a few over that rise – but only a handful.

I am always worried that it is rare to see youngsters enjoying butterflies (on the last foreign foray I had we were 17 people, and I was the youngest at 59 years!!) and meeting you has given me real hope for the future.

Hope to bump into you again.

Roger

Re: William

by William, 01-Jul-14 12:49 PM GMT

A really big thank you for all the kind comments guys, I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity I did, and my 5 days spent at Collard will live long in the memory, the photos provide just a small record of an incredible experience at an amazing site, and if they capture a bit of summer, then I am much the happier.

The breadth of knowledge and character exhibited by the people met on the site were fascinating (one gentleman specialised for example in Grasshoppers and another lady in Figwort Weevils), and the butterflies themselves were beautiful. The last photo took a bit of time, an egg – laying female was bouncing around the grass at the top of the site, and I fired off a few photos in an attempt to do her justice, more luck than judgement, but a wonderful moment.

Roger – it is always great to put a name to a face, I did find that Green Hairstreak a week later, and several more besides 😊 and your kind words are much appreciated, as a young person, it is a pleasure to be outdoors in the incredible places that butterflies fly, look forward to seeing you again in the field!

BWs

William

Re: William

by William, 04-Jul-14 09:44 PM GMT

Alpine Frolic

Last week I was lucky enough to spend a few days in the Alps, when visiting family. Having never visited the area before, I did not know what to expect, all I can say is that the legends are true about the diversity of this area, I walked out of the door into a small meadow where I easily saw 20 species in a short morning walk – just incredible. This, coupled with the stunning scenery made for quite an experience, in a few hours of butterflying in two

different spots I saw 33 species, including several new and exciting ones.

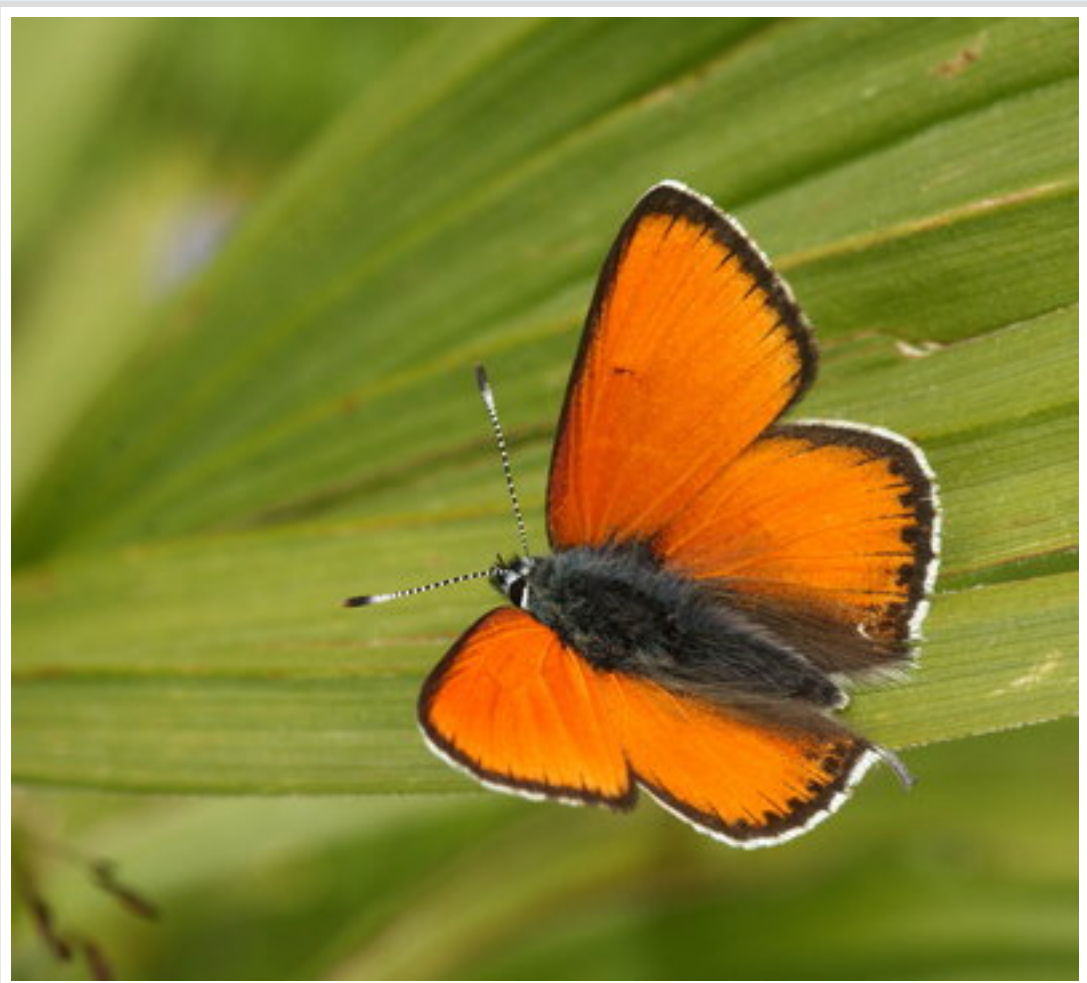
First highlight was a vibrant little colony of Purple – Edged Copper, I also managed to find a few Scarce, a butterfly that I have always wanted to see, but unfortunately, these were on a family walk and I had to rush off to catch up with 'the peleton' so no photos.



Purple – Edged Copper



Purple – Edged Copper



Purple – Edged Copper



Purple - Edged Copper

Black - Veined Whites were relatively common at the same spot.



Black - Veined White



Black - Veined White

Another nice White was this Wood White.



Wood White

I also came across this lovely dusky female Large Blue, a real contrast to the brighter butterflies I had been watching at Collard not days before.



Large Blue

This was not the only blue I saw, others were Small, Silver – Studded, Adonis, Mazarine and Geranium Argus.



Mazarine Blue

I was surprised by the paucity of browns, with only single figures of Meadow Brown in the verdant grassland, and less than 20 Small Heath and Marbled White. I was pleased however to see my first ever Large Heaths in a boggy meadow (no photos like the Scarce Copper), and this Large Wall Brown (you guessed it) on a wall.



Large Wall Brown

Skippers were around also, I clocked up Small, Large, Dingy a few flighty, unidentified *pyrgus* types and my first ever Chequered by a stream at about 2000m – lovely. Nearby this Lesser Marbled Fritillary posed nicely...



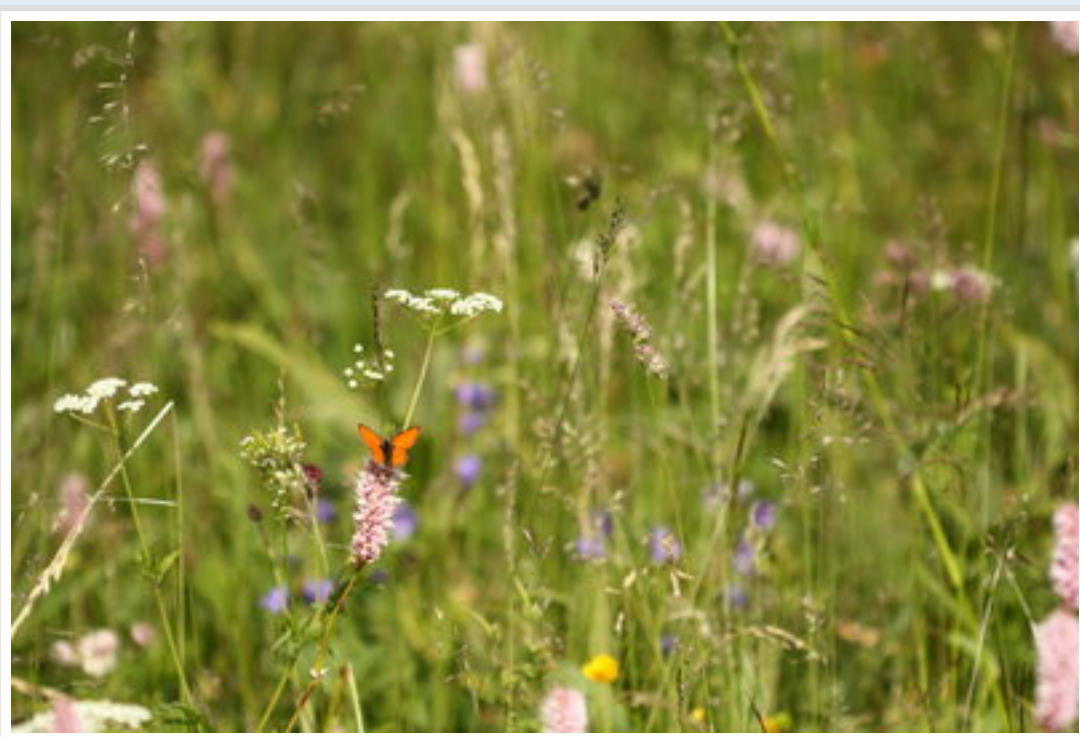
Lesser Marbled Fritillary

I saw several other Fritillaries: Queen of Spain, Dark Green, Titania's (tbc), Weaver's, Pearl – Bordered (my first, next to the Chequered Skipper), Glanville (another first), False Heath (tbc) and Grison's (tbc) – not bad for a few hours wandering around in suitable looking spots!

Other species on the trip were Orange Tip (2 males sparring next to a Dark Green Fritillary – a bizarre sight!), Large White, Purple Emperor (seen during the wedding, getting curious about the eaves of the registry office), Comma and Almond – Eyed Ringlet (tbc).

These, along with some interesting Orchids (still flowering at altitude), stunning displays of wildflowers and amazing vistas, not something I'll forget.

Some more photos to follow if I can get my tenuous IDs confirmed 😊



Purple – Edged Copper

Re: William

by David M, 04-Jul-14 10:12 PM GMT

I reckon your 'Wood White' was NOT *sinapis*.

What kind of terrain did you see it in?

Re: William

by William, 04-Jul-14 11:14 PM GMT

Hi David,

It was flying on a fairly narrow Woodland ride, about 1700m. The wood itself was mainly conifers with a few bands of deciduous trees – it would be nice if it were something different, another new species 😊

BWs

William

Re: William

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-14 10:29 PM GMT

Fantastic set of Holiday snaps William 😊🇩🇪 The Marb Frit is lushious but my fave shot has to be the first Copper brill composition 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by Padfield, 05-Jul-14 11:31 PM GMT

Hi William. I missed this when you posted it. Lovely shots – and I'm glad you had such a good time in the Alps, even if it was only a short trip.

Both *juvernica* and *reali* fly in the French Alps – only *juvernica* in Switzerland (as well as *sinapis*, of course). I think yours is most likely to be *sinapis* though. It looks like a rather worn spring brood individual – which is normal at 1700m at the beginning of July, when orange tips are usually still flying.

Guy

Re: William

by William, 22-Jul-14 10:13 AM GMT

Thanks for the kind words guys, I recently returned (briefly in poor weather) to the Alps and will have some more photos soon 😊

Re: William

by Chris Jackson, 22-Jul-14 08:34 PM GMT

"William" wrote:

Alpine Frolic

... but unfortunately, these were on a family walk and I had to rush off to catch up with 'the peleton' so no photos

I know the problem William; it is a luxury to reserve oneself an hour-or-so's private butterflying time 😊

Lovely photos!

Chris

Re: William

by Paul Harfield, 22-Jul-14 10:31 PM GMT

Hi William

Just catching up with your diary. Your Alpine selection are great 😊 That Purple Edged Copper is a beauty, if only we had those here. Your Large Blue selection is, as others have said, superb 😊

Re: William

by William, 23-Jul-14 08:11 PM GMT

"cjackson" wrote:

"William" wrote:

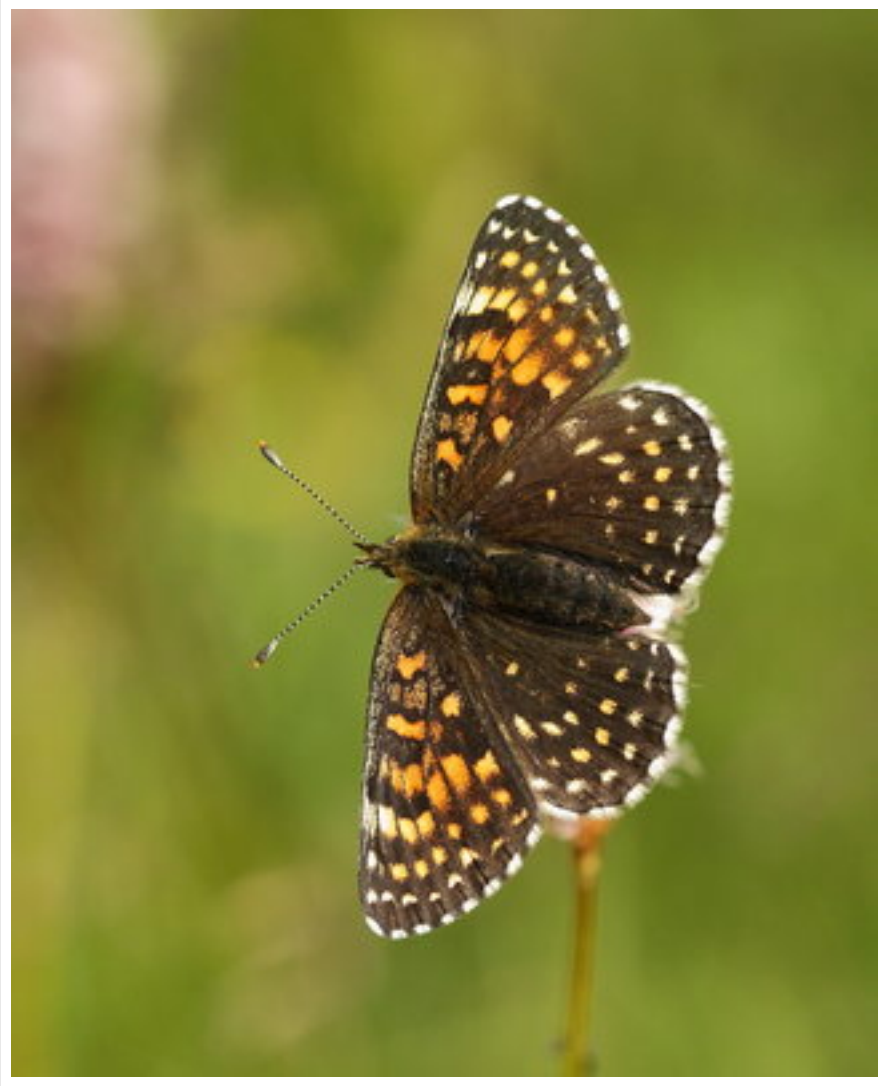
Alpine Frolic

... but unfortunately, these were on a family walk and I had to rush off to catch up with 'the peleton' so no photos

I know the problem William; it is a luxury to reserve oneself an hour-or-so's private butterflying time 😊

It's the story of my life Chris, but at the end of the day, it's a pleasure to be in the places where these butterflies fly and having the chance to enjoy them, no matter how small.

A few more pictures from the Alps (IDs kindly confirmed by Guy) before I get onto some other holiday snaps 😊



False Heath Fritillary



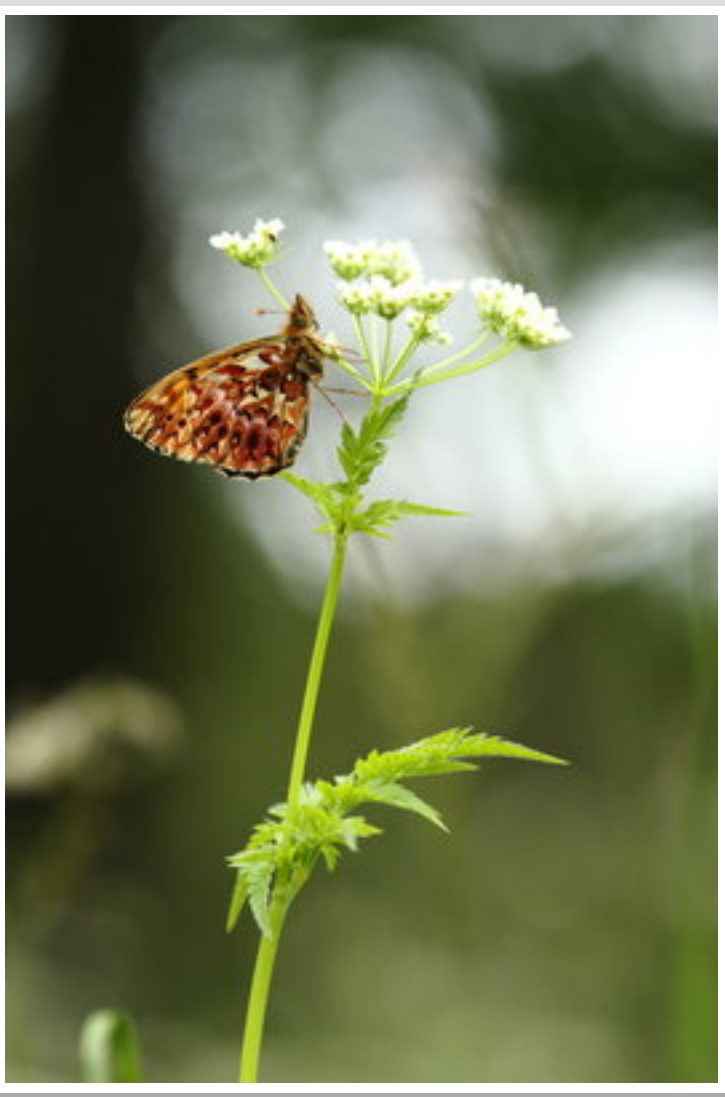
Grisons Fritillary

I was really chuffed to find the Grisons Fritillary, one of about 20 flying in a stunning yellow rattle and fragrant orchid filled meadow at about 1800m.



Grisons Country!

I also managed to find a few Titania's Fritillaries – lovely butterflies 😊



Titania's Fritillary



Titania's Fritillary

Re: William

by William, 28-Jul-14 11:08 AM GMT

Foreign Fling (Part 1)

Every couple of summers my family and I head off on a foreign fling, usually involving lots of driving (with obligatory air – conditioning failure), and visits to several different places, very occasionally aimed at wildlife watching. This year our holiday started in Provence. Here it was hot and dusty, few things were in flower and upon first arrival I was not optimistic for butterflies. Nevertheless, persistence paid and in spots like roadside verges and the edges of orchards (fruit growing is a big industry in Provence) I managed to find a few butterflies.

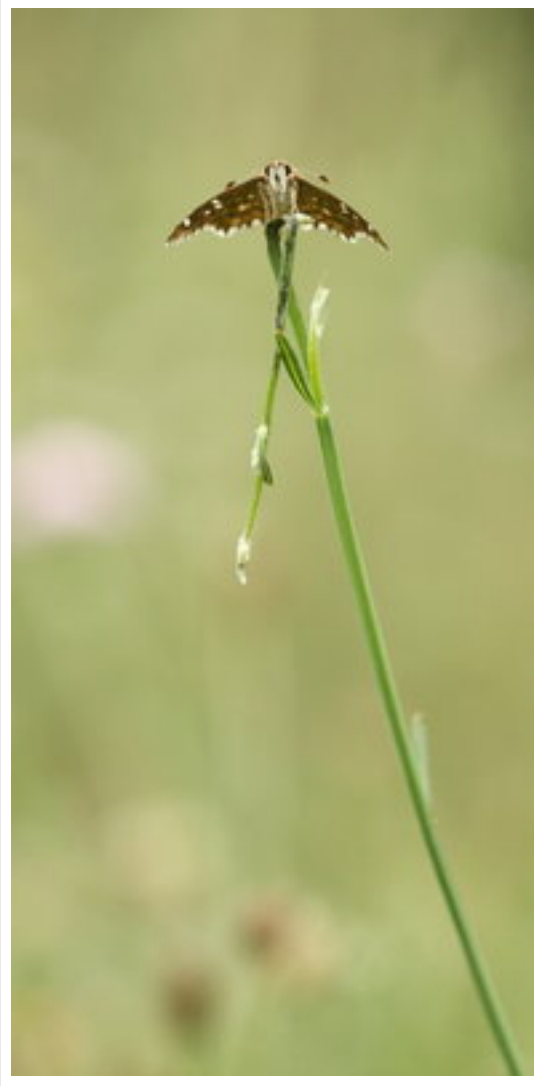
Diversity was actually fairly good, and I managed to clock up 40 species with only one wildlife – oriented walk in an area not known for its butterflies. I might even have seen more had not the weather betrayed me for the majority of the trip, with clouds and 40mph gusts on most days – not the Provencal heat we had hoped for!

Anyway, a few butterflies, this first lot were all seen in the almond orchard and roadside verge near where we stayed.

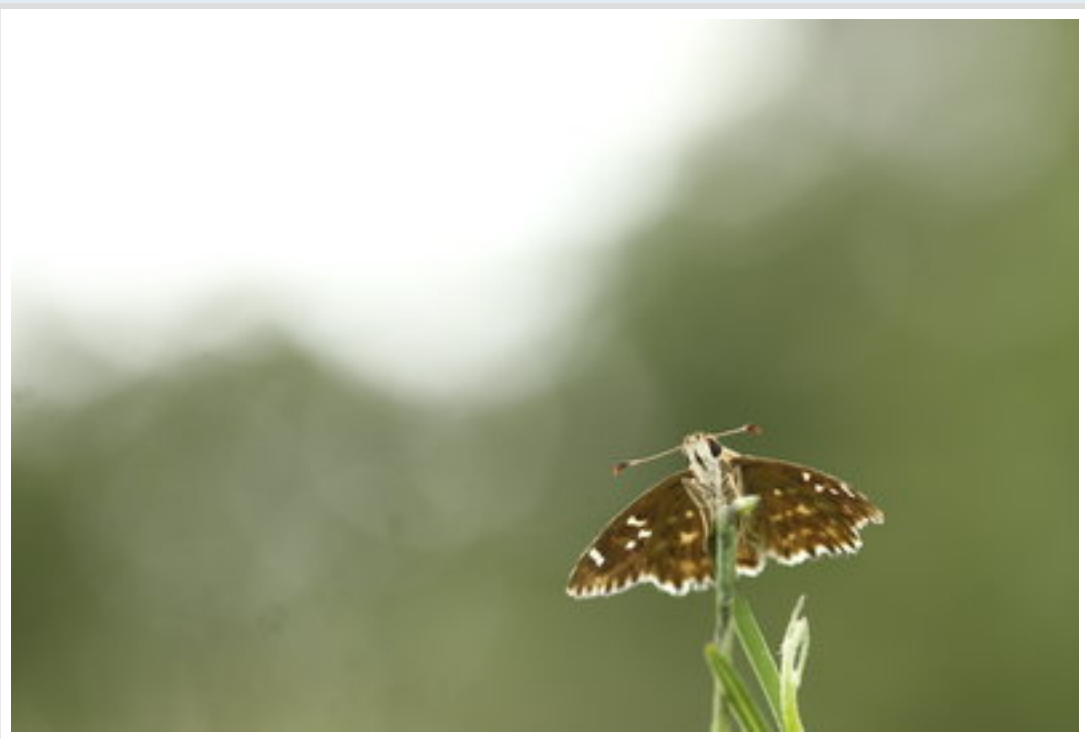
Small Heaths were incredibly bright in this area, they were larger than their English counterparts, with more prominent silver eye – spots and a sandier tone to the underside.



Small Heath



Mallow Skipper



Mallow Skipper



Glanville Fritillary



Glanville Fritillary

I could not get over the male Spotted Fritillary that spent a lot of time around the Scabious patch where we stayed – is anything quite so orange!



Spotted Fritillary



Spotted Fritillary



Spotted Fritillary



Spotted Fritillary

Re: William

by badgerbob, 28-Jul-14 06:29 PM GMT

That last Spotted Fritillary is beautiful!! As you say, very orange.

Re: William

by Padfield, 28-Jul-14 06:41 PM GMT

"badgerbob" wrote:

That last Spotted Fritillary is beautiful!! As you say, very orange.

The French call it *la méliée orangée* ...

Guy

Re: William

by Matsukaze, 28-Jul-14 07:58 PM GMT

It has the finest underside of all the fritillaries, in my opinion.

Re: William

by David M, 28-Jul-14 10:32 PM GMT

"Matsukaze" wrote:

It has the finest underside of all the fritillaries, in my opinion.

Very possibly. The sexual dimorphism is also very interesting. Definitely one of my favourite 'common' European species and by God I wish we had it here in the UK!

Re: William

by William, 29-Jul-14 07:20 PM GMT

Thanks Guys – I certainly echo David's sentiments on spotted Fritillaries – stunning butterflies!

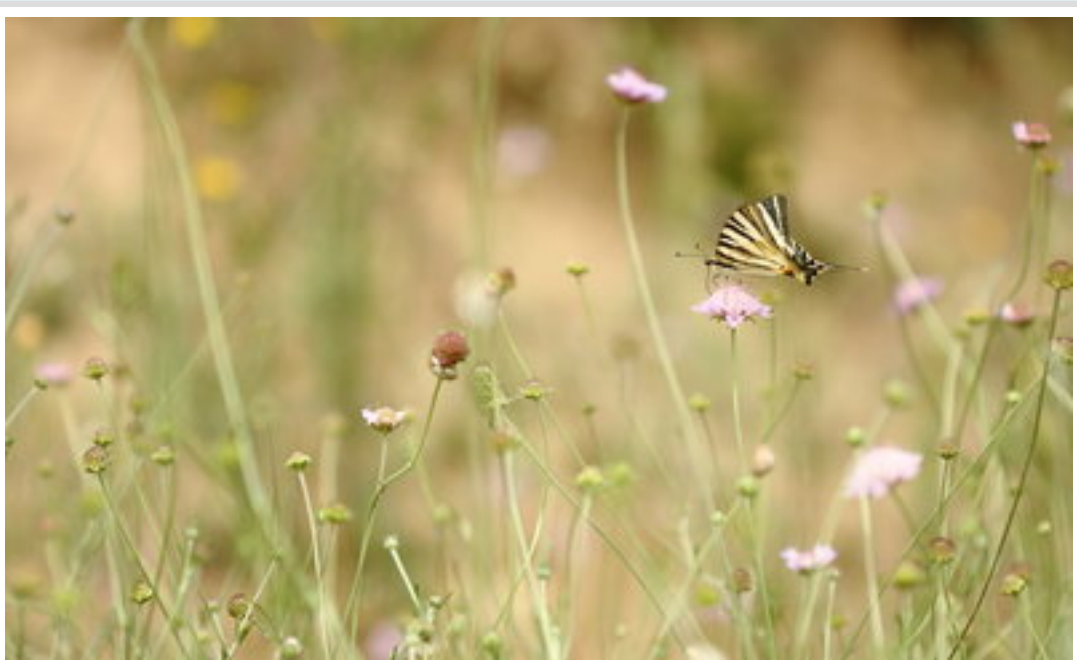
Foreign Fling (Part 2)

A few more butterflies from Provence...

Scarce Swallowtails were fairly common throughout, given the large numbers of commercial fruit trees which they presumably use as foodplants, nectaring regularly on Scabious and Valerian.



Scarce Swallowtail



Scarce Swallowtail

Blues in general were fairly uncommon, with Brown Argus most abundant, the occasional Silver – Studded, Chapman's and Common as well as singles of Adonis, Furry and Holly, as with all other butterflies I suspect we would have seen more had we not been subjected to howling gales much of the time.



Chapman's Blue



Furry Blue



Adonis Blue

Skipper wise it was very quiet with just the single Large and Mallow and a few Oberthur's Grizzled in the hillier areas.



Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper

I managed to find a few Clouded Yellows whilst I was there, both the 'traditional kind' (including a mating pair) and a single (my first) Pale Clouded Yellow.



Clouded Yellow



Clouded Yellow



Clouded Yellows



Clouded Yellows



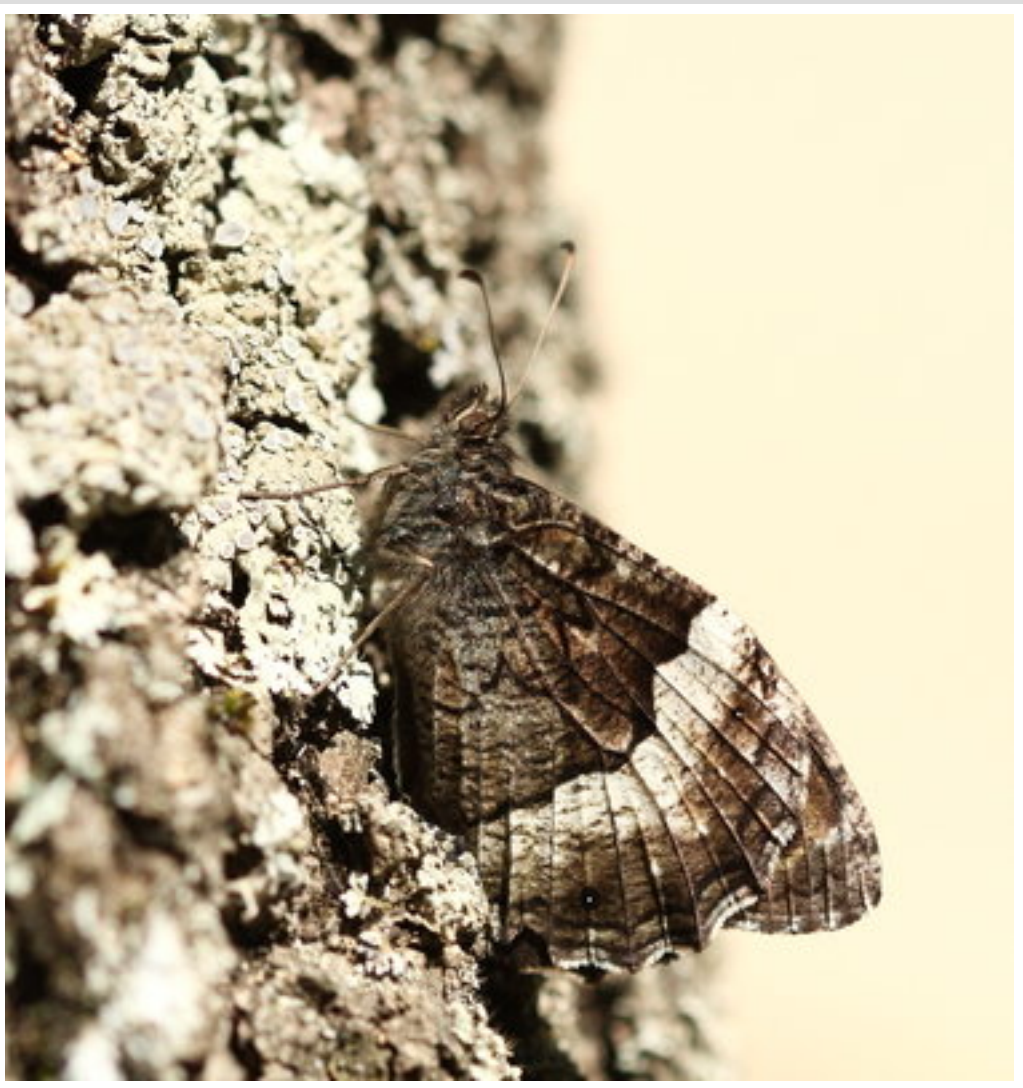
Pale Clouded Yellow

Other Pierids included Large, Small, Southern Small and Bath Whites along with singles of Cleopatra and Brimstone.

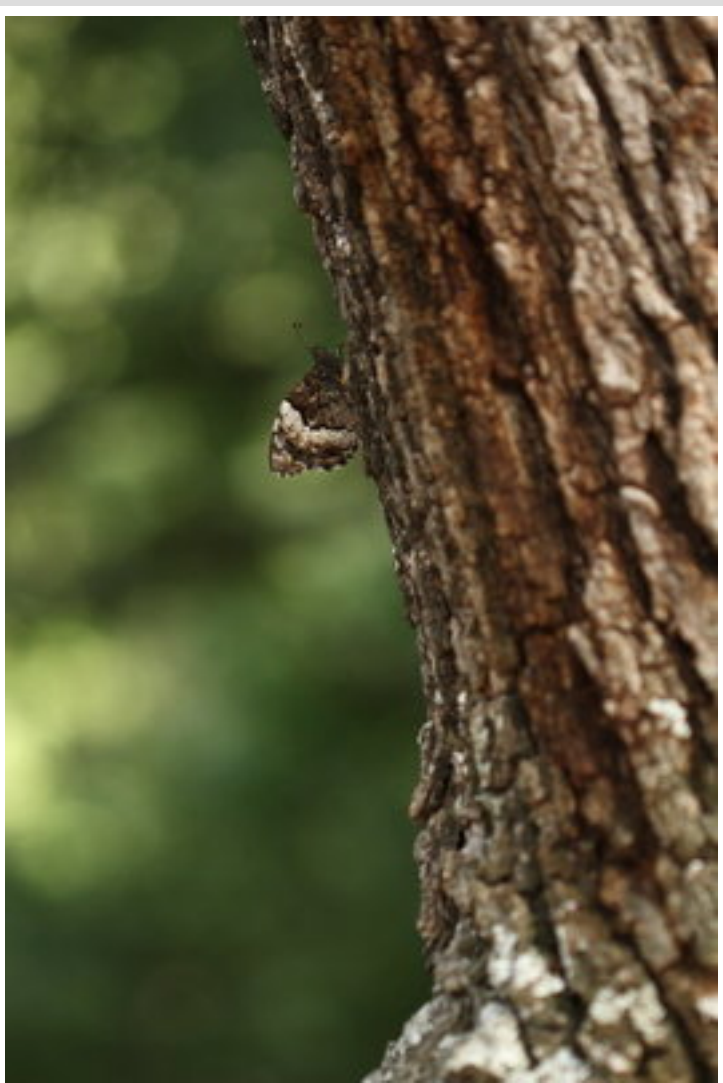


Brimstone

Browns were fairly well represented, with Wall the commonest species I saw (everywhere!), Great - Banded Grayling fairly common - a lovely, ever present feature of stony paths and dappled woodland, Speckled Wood, Southern Gatekeeper, Marbled White and the aforementioned Small Heath, with singles of Dusky Heath and Grayling.



Great - Banded Grayling



Great - Banded Grayling



Grayling

One of the big surprises of the trip came when we were making the precarious descent down a rocky hillside through the classic Mediterranean 'maquis'. The usual wind was howling and it was cloudy, even with a threat of rain, I stomped along, under both a metaphorical and physical cloud with the lack of butterflies and weather when a small grey butterfly flopped down next to me.....a Purple Hairstreak – wonderful! Over the next ten minutes we passed several small stands of scrubby oaks, clinging to the hillside, and saw good numbers of these butterflies sheltering from the wind, low down on the oak boughs. The terrible weather provided a fascinating opportunity to observe these butterflies and their behaviour up close. Nevertheless, it was a surreal experience, seeing a butterfly that I associate with English hedgerows on summer evenings clinging to a rocky hillside as a storm descended in the South of France.



Purple Hairstreak



Purple Hairstreaks



Purple Hairstreak

In the same spot I was delighted to also come across two Cardinals, a species which I had only ever seen distantly before – even more magnificent up close!



Cardinal



Cardinal



Cardinal

And Finally, to finish the walk (and provencal butterflies), a lovely male Sooty Copper.



Sooty Copper

Re: William

by Padfield, 29-Jul-14 07:36 PM GMT

Hi William. Beautiful pictures. As you might know from my diary, I have recently become a great fan of cardinals!

Your great banded graylings are woodland graylings. I hope this isn't a disappointment! Living in the Alps, I take great banded graylings for granted and get quite excited about woodland graylings ...

Guy

Re: William

by NickMorgan, 29-Jul-14 09:00 PM GMT

Wow, what beautiful scenery and pictures of butterflies. Thank you for sharing them.

Re: William

by David M, 29-Jul-14 09:52 PM GMT

i certainly wasn't expecting Cardinals from your report, William.

An excellent find and thanks for sharing the images.

Re: William

by William, 30-Jul-14 06:22 PM GMT

Thanks Guy, I was really pleased to photograph the Cardinal after my previous frustrating experience with this species – they certainly can be powerful fliers!

Thanks Nick – I was felt lucky to see it for myself.

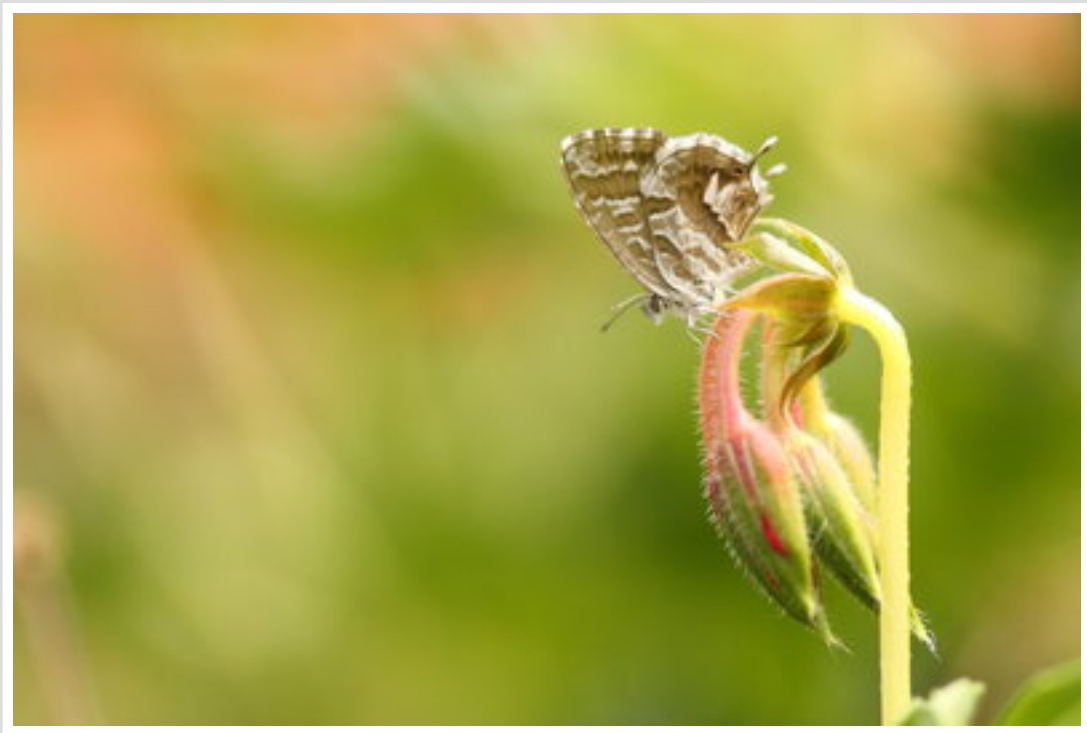
David – I can't say I was either 😊

Re: William

by William, 30-Jul-14 07:07 PM GMT

Foreign Fling (Part 3)

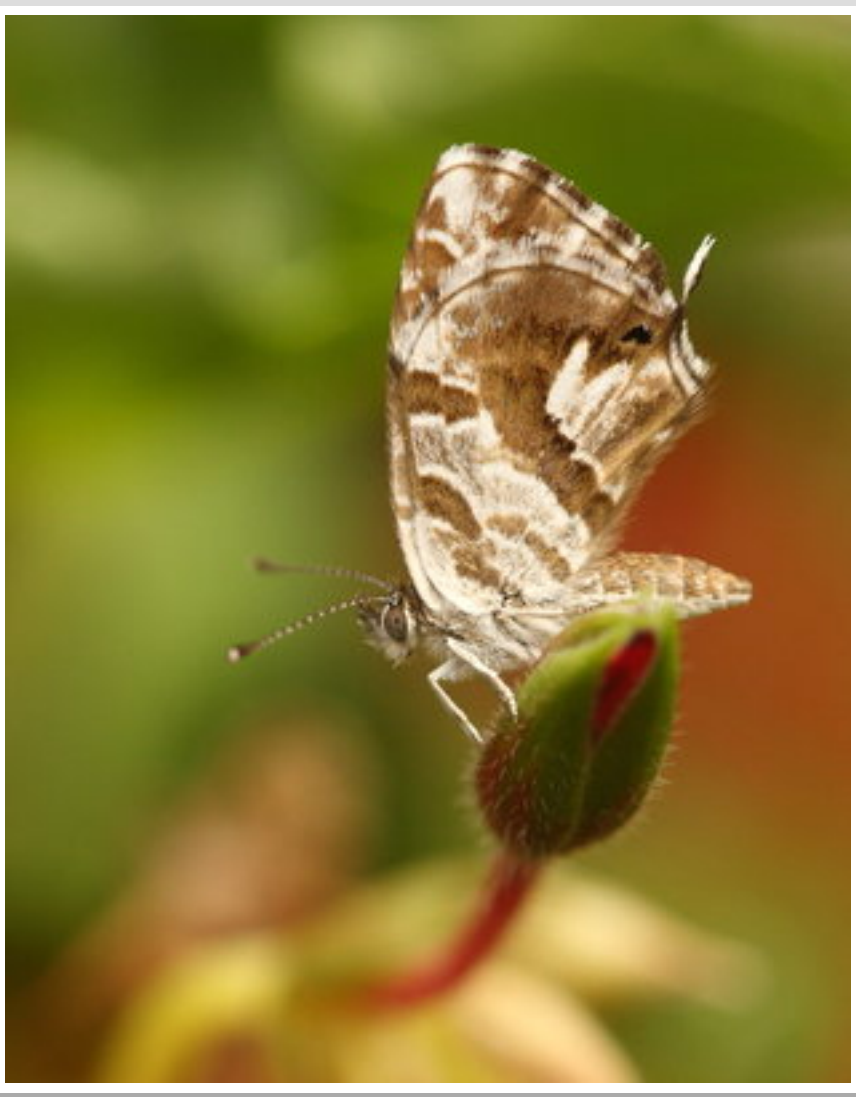
For the next part of our holiday we hopped in the car once more and headed down to Italy, this was a part more aimed at R&R but I nevertheless managed to find a few butterflies, including Long – Tailed and Lang's Short Tailed Blue and Geranium Bronze, the latter particularly abundant on the Pelargoniums in one town we visited – I drew strange looks from the assembled locals at the nearby bar as I poked a macro lens into the flowers, photographing these tiny, but charismatic butterflies.



Geranium Bronze



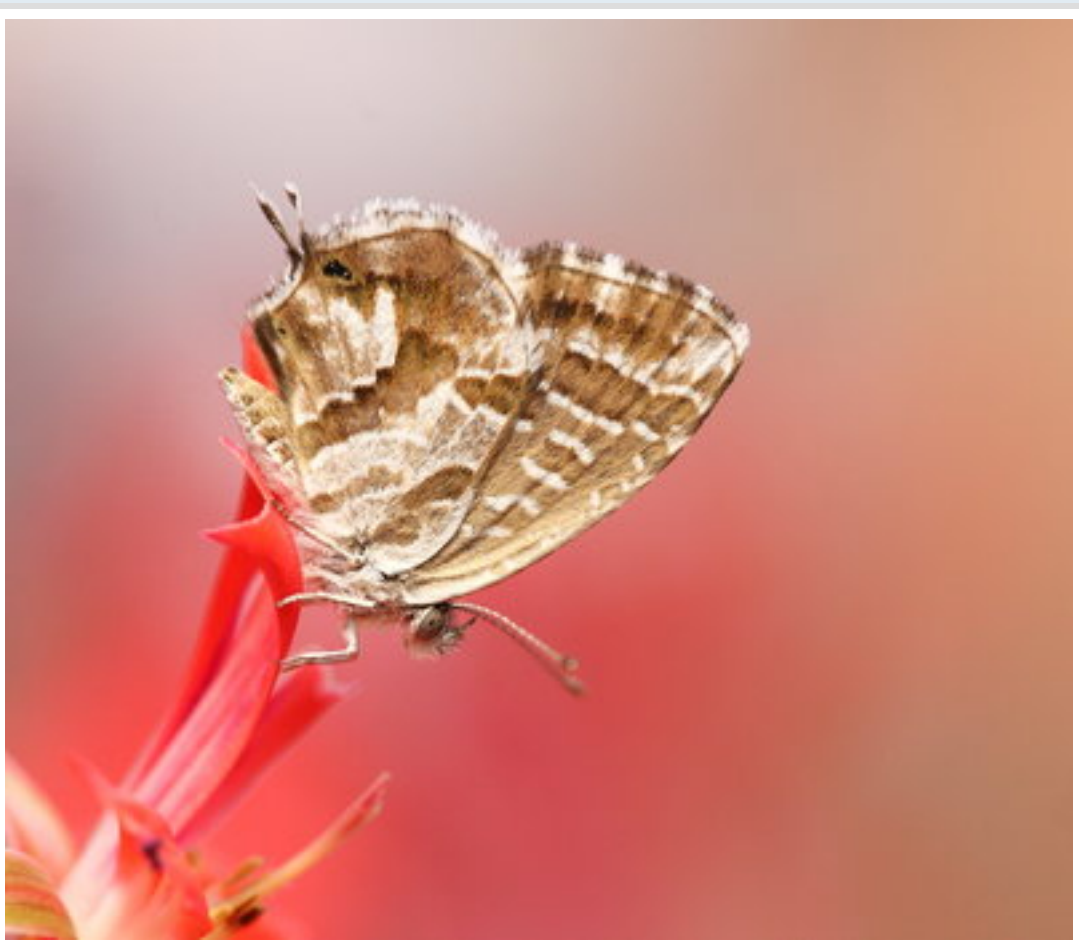
Geranium Bronze



Geranium Bronze



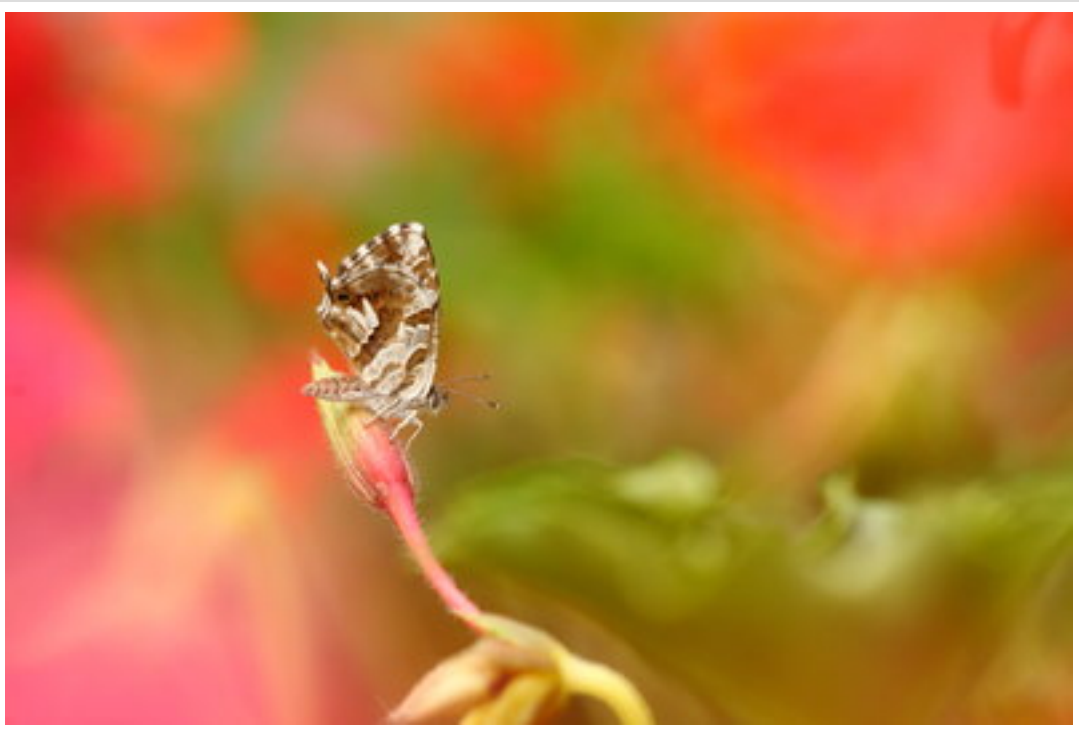
Geranium Bronze



Geranium Bronze



Geranium Bronze



Geranium Bronze

As well as the adults larvae were relatively easy to find.



Geranium Bronze Larva

Re: William

by William, 31-Jul-14 10:04 PM GMT

[Foreign Fling \(Part 4\)](#)

I'll post a few more Provençal beasties later on, but now onto the final (and most exciting) part of the Holiday, the Alps. Unfortunately we only had 2 days in the Alps, only one morning of which wasn't raining, nevertheless, as ever, I went away awestruck by the quantity and stunning variety of butterflies. On our journey to where we were staying we were lucky enough to drive through the Little St Bernard pass – safe to say I was lost for words at the stunning displays of wildflowers tumbling into rushing torrents, these with Apollos gliding over the scabious heads – just incredible!

So, the butterflies, in our one butterfly morning we managed to clock up 40 species, with many of the iconic ones which I have long gazed at with awe in field guides and never dreamed of seeing in the flesh.

Golden Skippers were around in good numbers with fairly even proportions Essex and Small.



Essex Skipper

I was delighted to photograph both species roosting together on one very cloudy afternoon.



Small and Essex Skippers

There were also a few *pyrgus* species around, including these two Olive Skippers (kindly identified by Guy).



Olive Skipper



Olive Skipper

Black - Veined Whites were common once again.



Black - Veined White



Black - Veined White

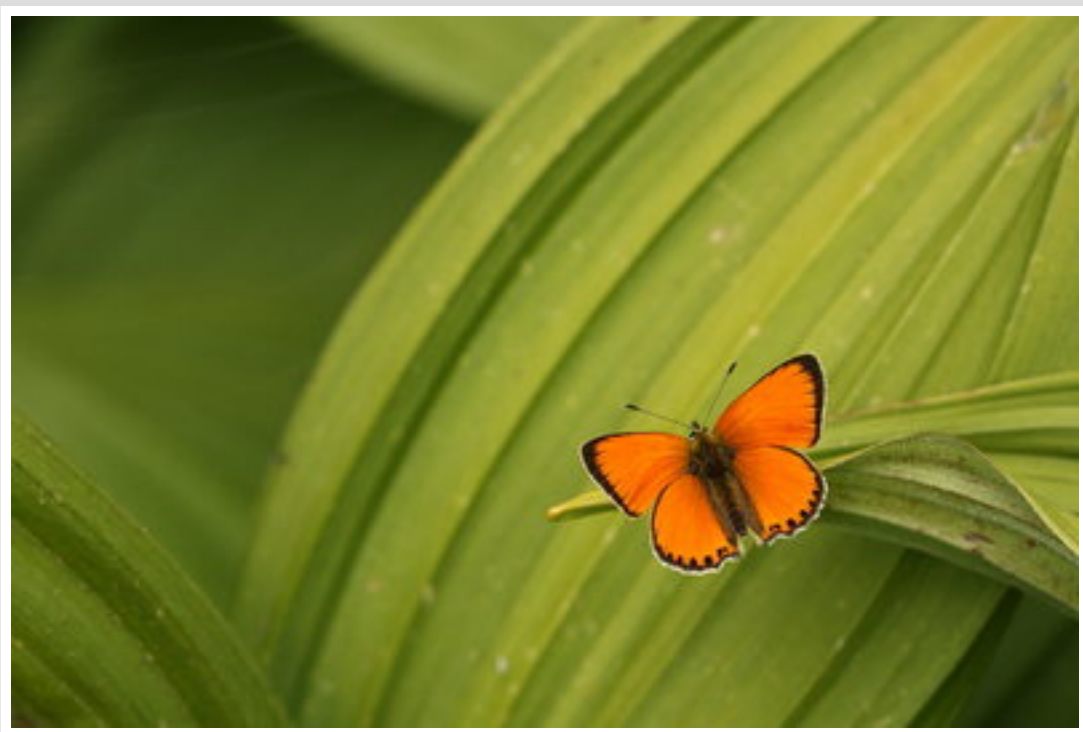
The real highlight (alongside the Apollos which I never managed to photograph) were several absolutely stunning Scarce Coppers.



Scarce Copper

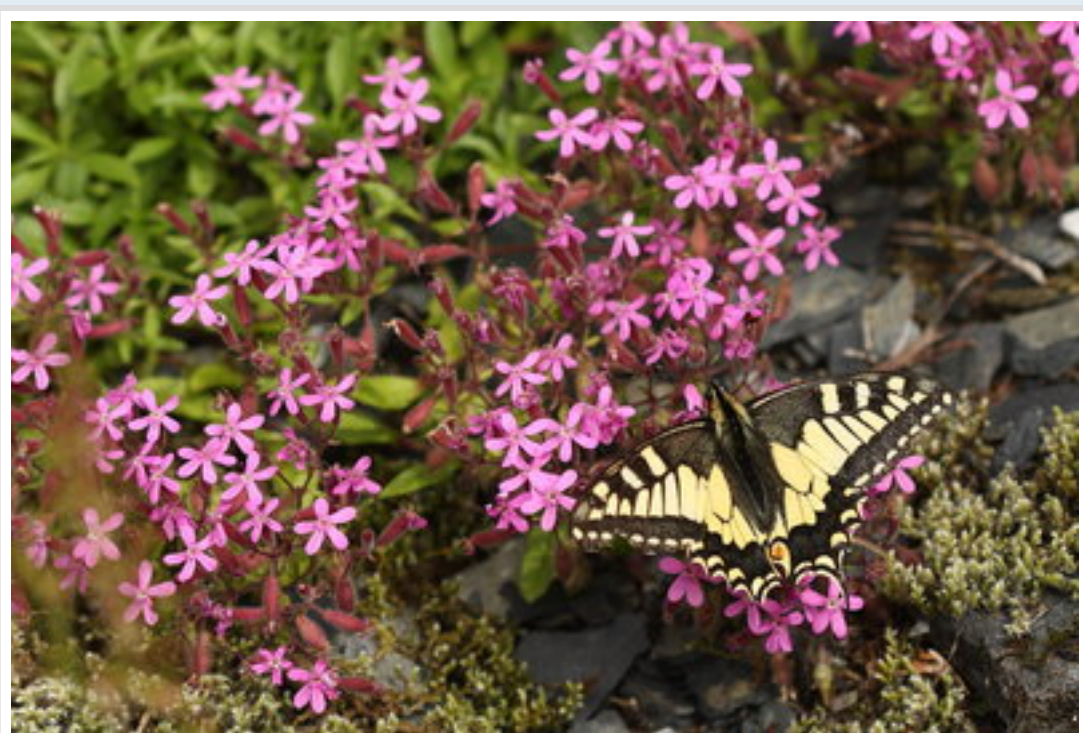


Scarce Copper



Scarce Copper

A few nice Swallowtails were also cruising around in the meadows.



Swallowtail

Kidney Vetch was abundant on the poor, rocky soil – and as a result, so were Small Blues.

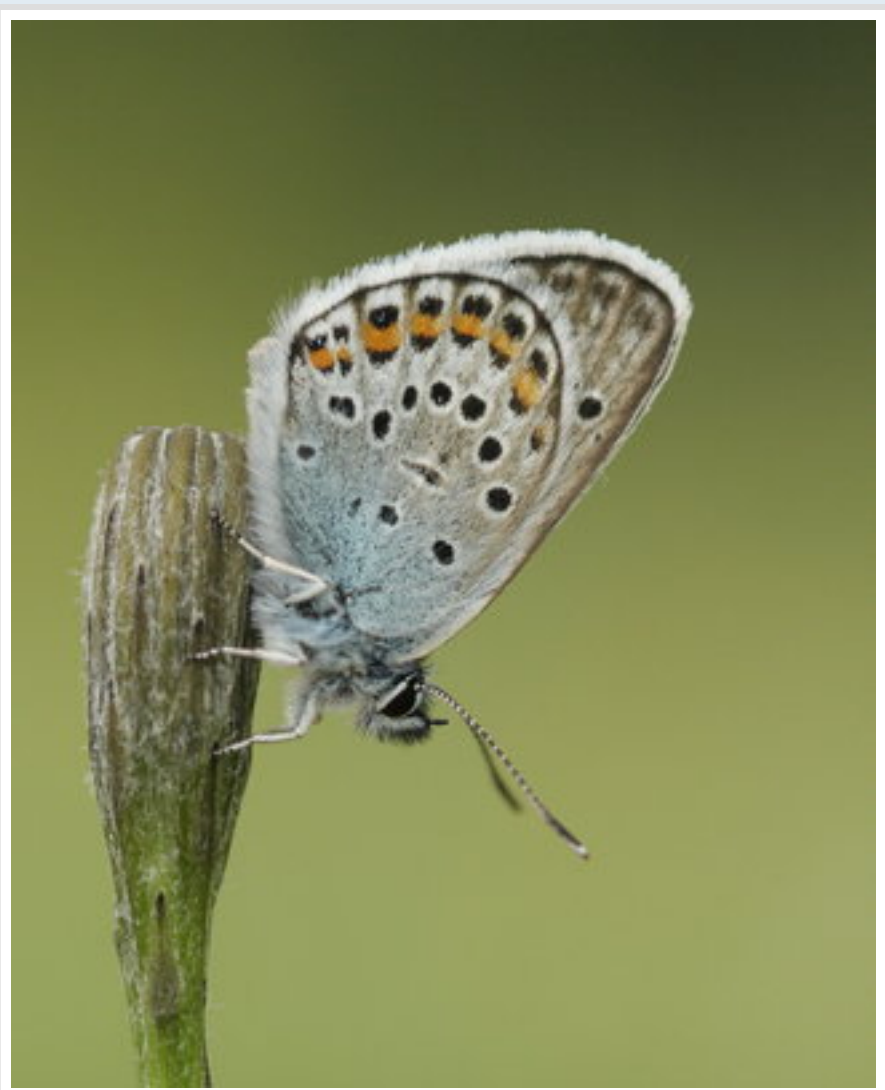


Small Blue



Small Blue

Other Blues included Silver – Studded, also very common.



Silver – Studded Blue



Silver – Studded Blue

I was pleased also, to see several beautiful Mazarines.



Mazarine Blue

Roosting near the Mazarine was my first ever Mountain Ringlet (kindly Identified by Guy).



Mountain Ringlet

Titania's and lesser Marbled were the commonest fritillaries seen, but we also noted Pearl – Bordered, Niobe and Dark Green.



Titania's Fritillary

After our first walk we did have another, higher up at around 2300m. I like to think we would have seen things like Glandon Blue and Mountain Clouded Yellow had the weather been better, but who knows? 😊

Re: William

by David M, 31-Jul-14 10:17 PM GMT

Lovely images again, William.

I absolutely agree about Scarce Copper. It really IS a beautiful butterfly and I doubt I could ever tire of seeing it.

Re: William

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-14 10:22 PM GMT

Wow the Scarce Copper is stunning – it looks like it's on the wrong continent and should be flapping around the edge of a rainforest 🤪🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by David M, 31-Jul-14 10:34 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Wow the Scarce Copper is stunning – it looks like it's on the wrong continent and should be flapping around the edge of a rainforest 🤪🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Wurzel, you need to get over to France one day to see it!

Re: William

by Wurzel, 01-Aug-14 01:32 PM GMT

Totally agree David – but it'll be a while yet... 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 01-Aug-14 02:48 PM GMT

Thanks Guys – Scarce Coppers really are stunning, and they posed beautifully in the cloudy weather we had (at least it's good for something!)

Recent Doings

Since returning from holiday, it's been 'all go' on the patch, with butterflies everywhere. Like everyone else, Peacocks have been out in excellent

numbers along with Small Skippers. Other winners have been Marbled White and Silver – Washed Fritillary, along with increased numbers of patch rarities Brown Argus and Wall Brown. Most excitingly though, my first ever patch Essex Skipper. These have been threatening to spread into West Somerset for some time, and with this one on my transect, it seems they finally have 😊



Essex Skipper

My Green – Veined White Larvae pupated just before I left and emerged sometime whilst I was frolicking in Alpine Meadows.

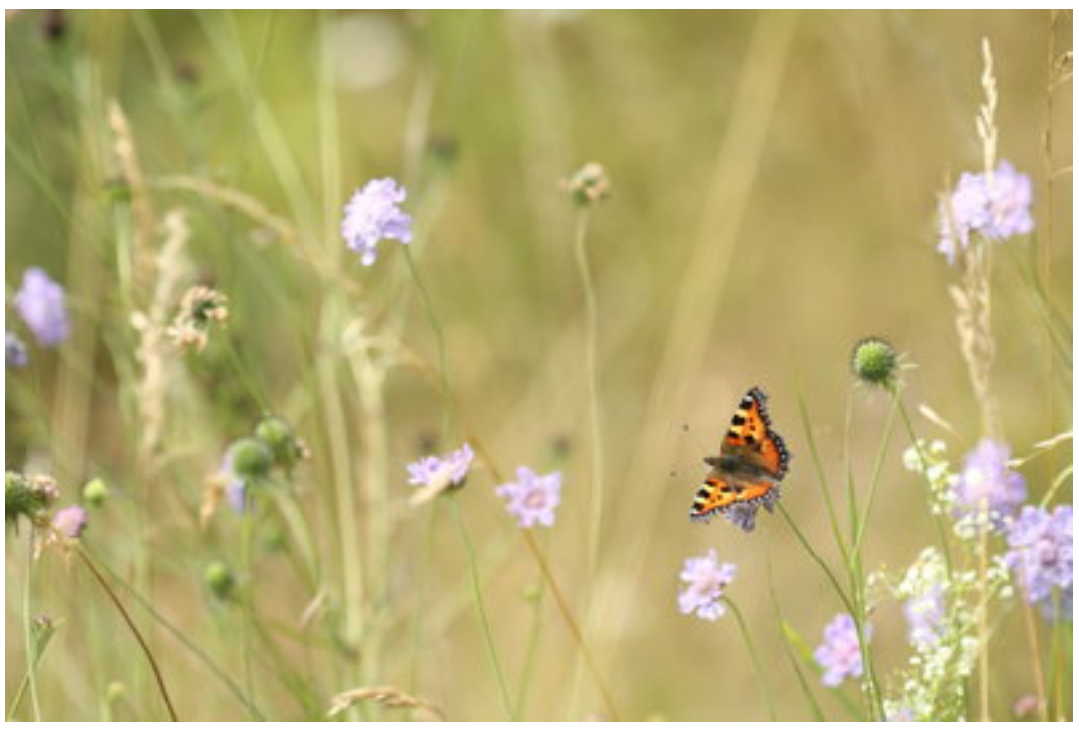


Green – Veined White Larva

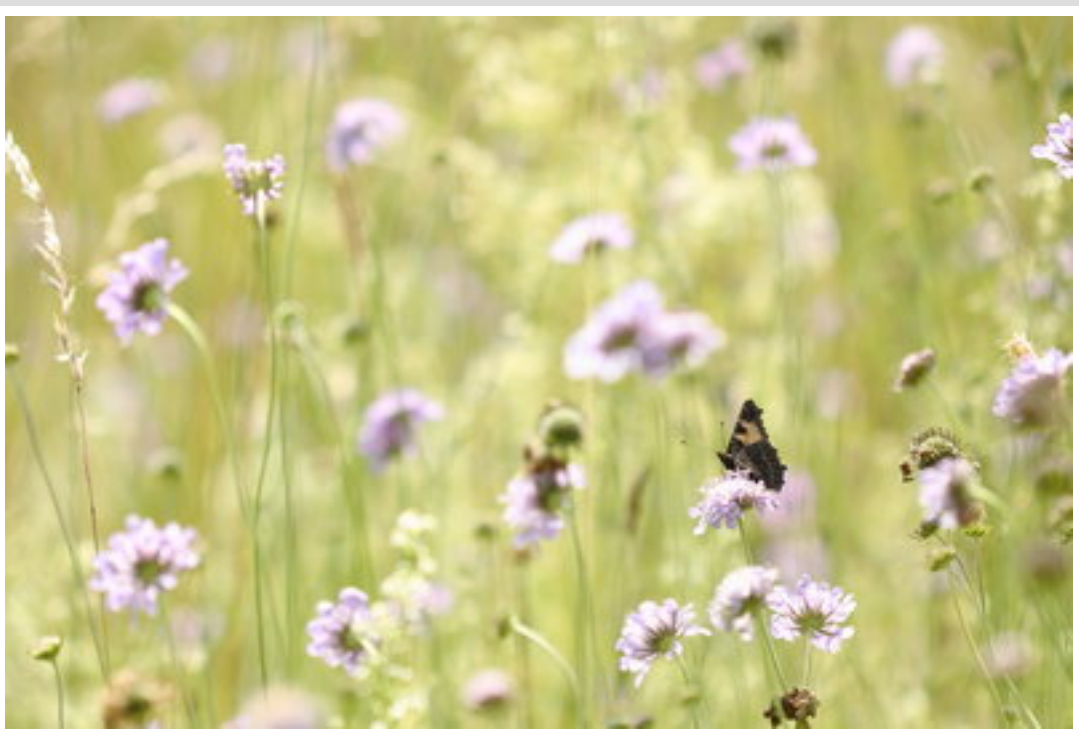


Green - Veined White Larva - Pupating

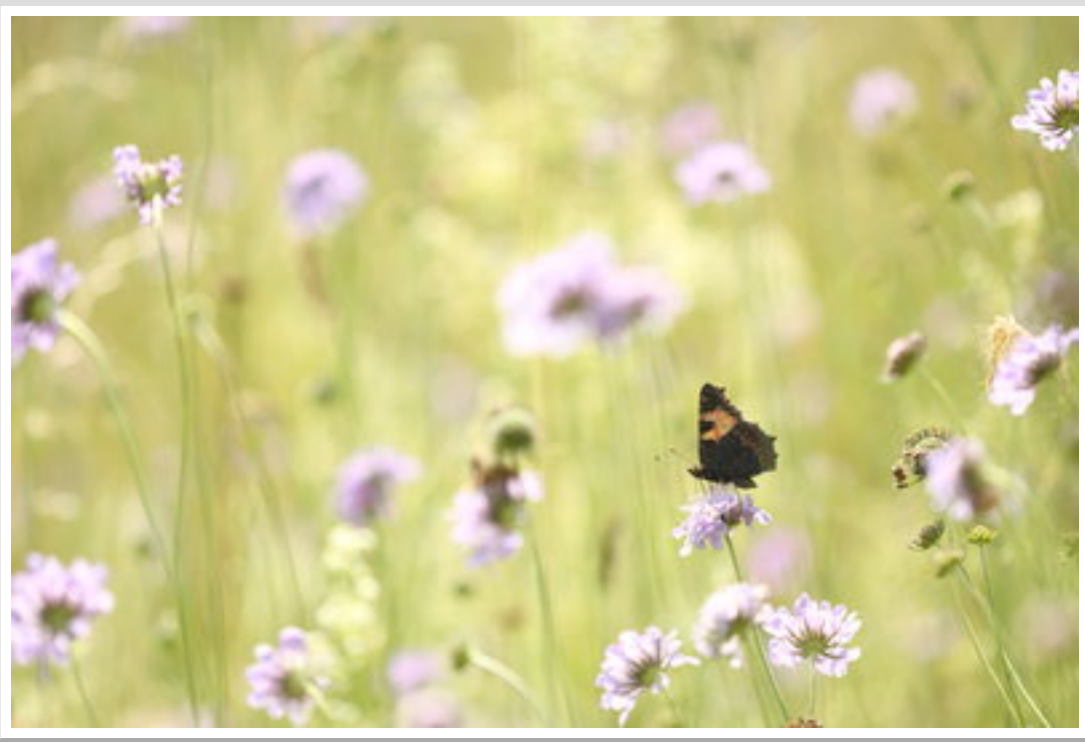
A visit to a friend's who has turned his garden into something of a butterfly paradise proved very enjoyable with abundant Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells.



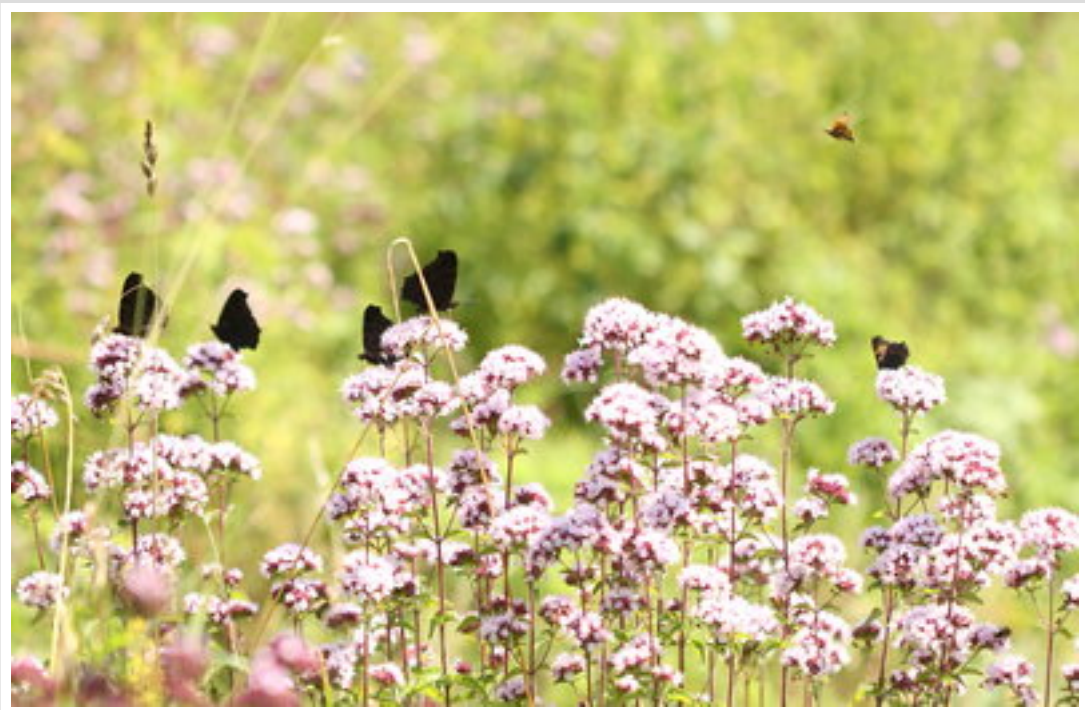
Small Tortoiseshell



Small Tortoiseshell

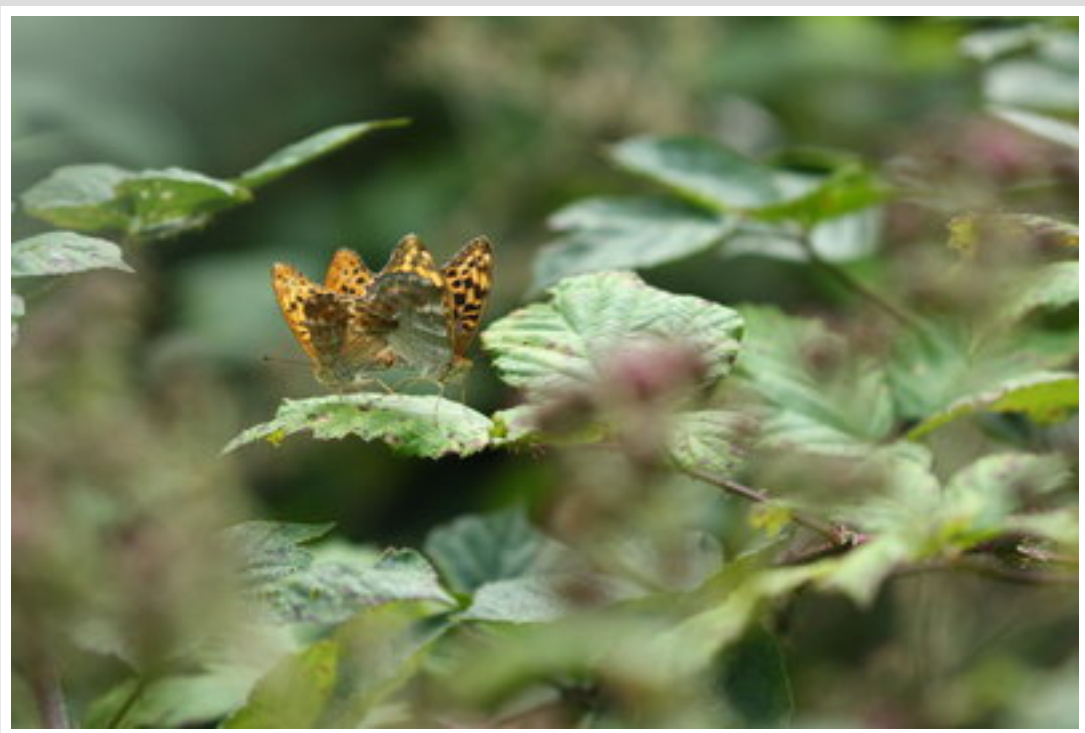


Small Tortoiseshell



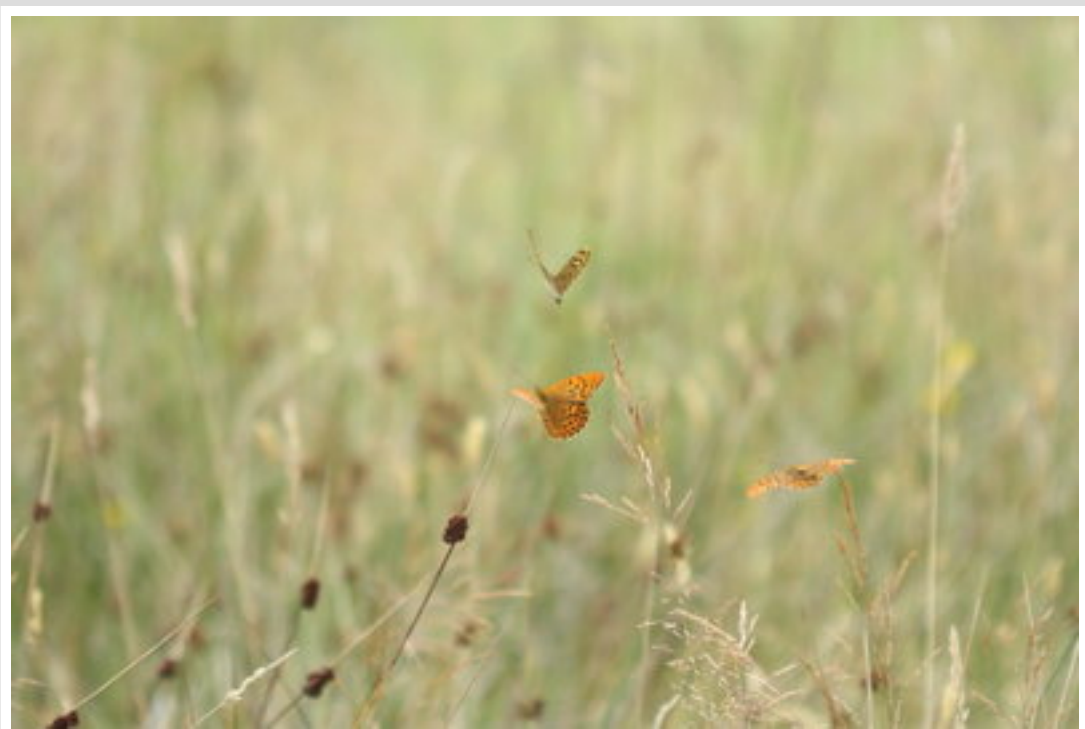
Peacocks, Large Skipper and Small Tortoiseshell

Cycling home I stopped in at a bramble filled field and was delighted to find a mating pair of Silver – Washed Fritillaries – a patch first, unfortunately they remained in the middle of a giant brambles (queue incredibly scratched legs).



Silver – Washed Fritillaries

As well as this pair there was a rather nice menage a trois...



Silver – Washed Fritillaries

Small Skippers were also feeling the love with this courting couple...



Small Skippers

The next day I found found an egg - laying female and photographed her progeny.



Small Skipper Ova

And a Large Skipper did the same...



Large Skipper Ovum

The resultant egg hatched after a week...



Large Skipper Ovum - 1 Day Before Hatching



Large Skipper Ovum - 1 Day Before Hatching

I missed photographing the hatching by a matter of seconds, but nevertheless, it was a privilege to see it and get a few pictures of the resultant larva snacking on it's egg shell.



Large Skipper Larva



Large Skipper Larva

And whilst I'm on immature stages, an oddity from a couple of days ago. I was watching a female Comma fluttering fussily around a patch of nettles near my home, when she landed to lay an egg. This she did and when I moved in to examine the resultant egg I was surprised to find it was almost transparent instead of the usual pale green, I cannot think why this might be except that it was unfertilised or something similarly strange – any ideas?



Comma Ovum

Here's a more normal one from last year.



Comma Ovum



Comma Ovum - A few hours before hatching

Also on the nettles were several Red Admiral Ova, including 2 laid together, I think by separate females as I saw a female laying on the leaf and she only alighted for a few seconds, scarcely enough for one egg I thought, let alone 2.



Red Admiral Ova

Re: William

by Wurzel, 01-Aug-14 04:57 PM GMT

Fantastic images William 😊 - that Comma ova looks like a delicate piece of glassware - could it be unfertilized?

Have a goodun

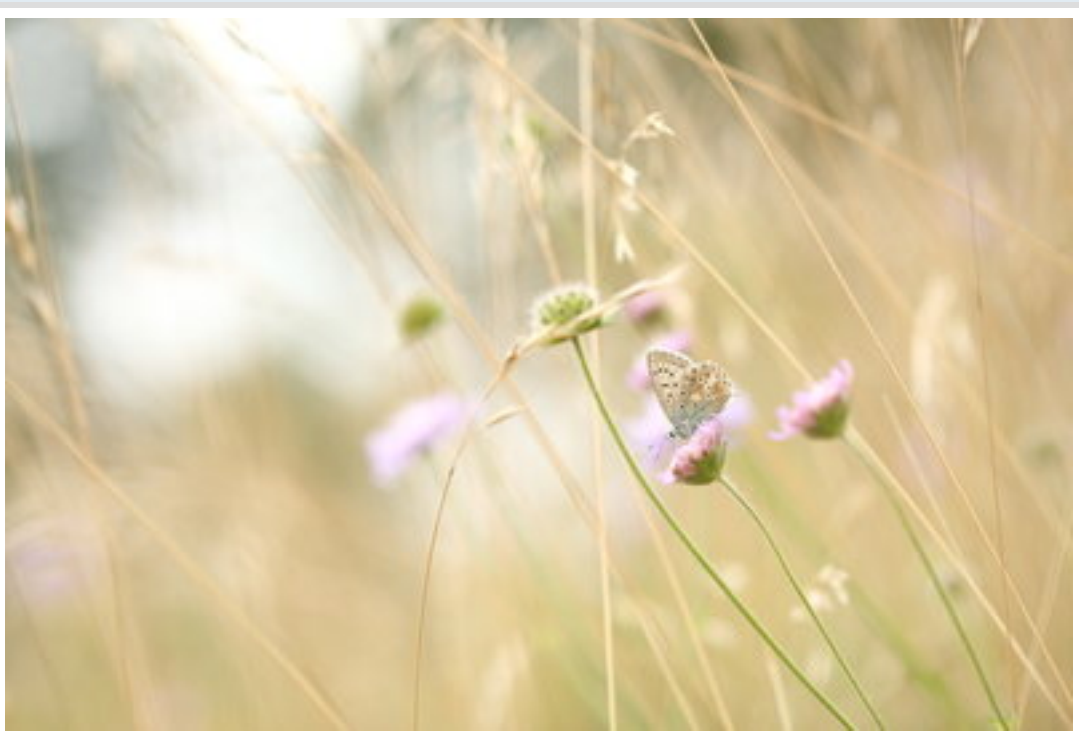
Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 03-Aug-14 07:03 PM GMT

Somerset Chalkhills

Chalkhill Blues aren't so common in Somerset as in many of the counties further east, but every year I make the pilgrimage to see them at a site on the Poldens just down the road from the famous Collard Hill, Hatch Hill, it is a lovely site, as all on the Polden ones are, with the panoramic views, wildflower displays and intermittent leafy woodlands that characterise this part of the world. Anyway, the grassland just down from the Hood Monument houses a good colony of Chalkhill blues, which I went to see a couple of days ago. As ever, they were around in fairly good numbers, often feeding on the Scabious and Knapweed which abounds on the site.



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue

It's quite an exposed site and 'catches the weather' meaning that strong winds sent many butterflies to roost on my visit.

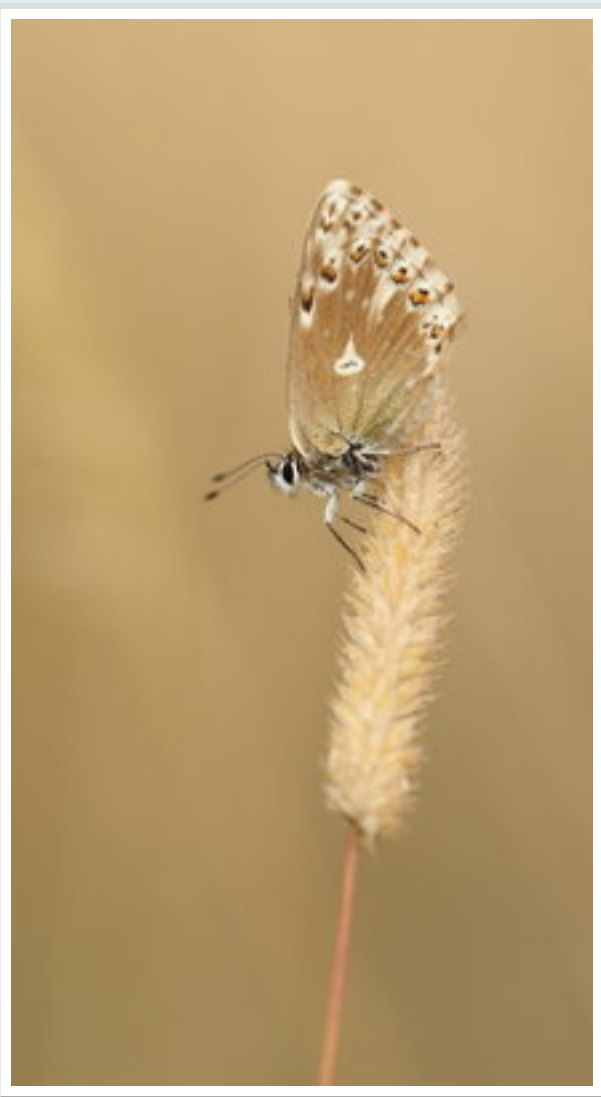


Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue

These included a few 'special editions' like this female.



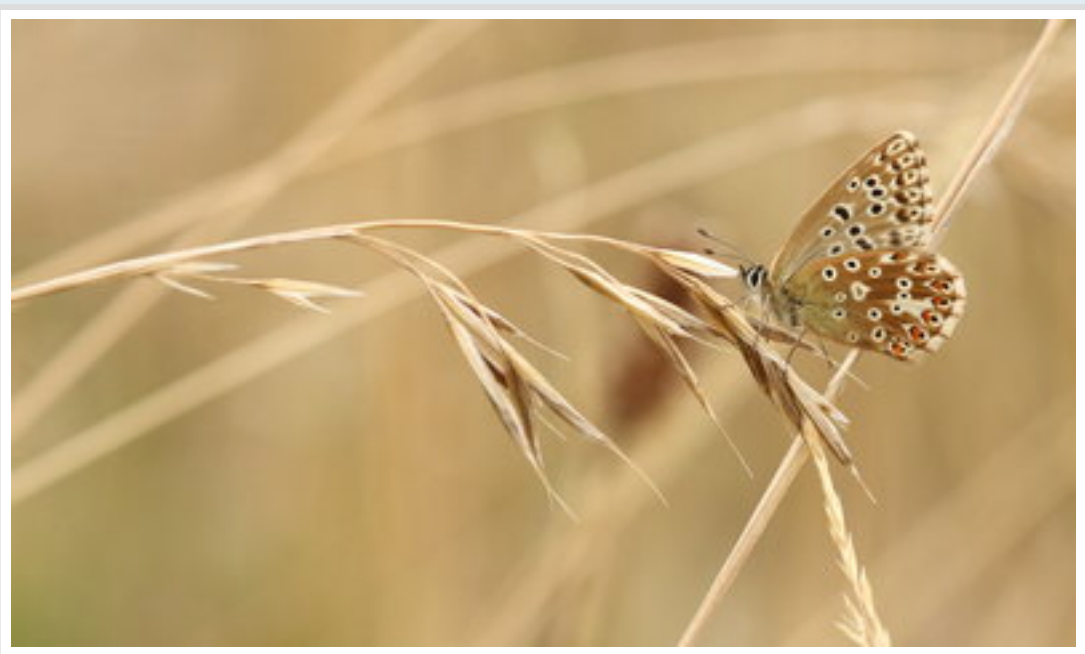
Chalkhill Blue

Another female I found was busily ovipositing among the Horseshoe Vetch, she alighted in a decent – sized patch and I watched, enthralled as she crawled happily around depositing eggs here and there, either on the undersides of the leaves or the surrounding vegetation, probably laying 6 or 7 eggs within the clump – fascinating!



Chalkhill Blue Ovum

Here are some more Females...



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue

And some males to finish...



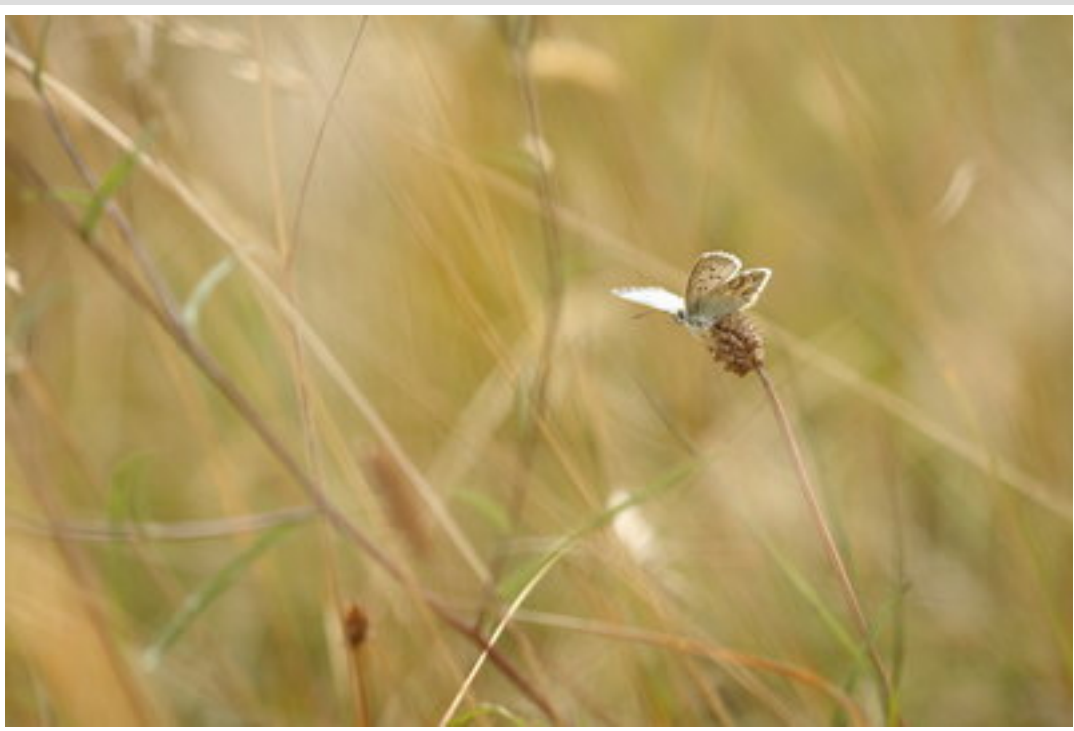
Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue

Re: William

by Matsukaze, 03-Aug-14 08:06 PM GMT

Love the photo of the Peacocks up-thread; the blackness of the underwings makes it look like the silhouettes of the butterflies have been cut out of the picture to reveal black card beneath.

Good to know that the Poldens Chalkhills are doing well - I understand the ones in the Mendips are having a reasonable year.

Re: William

by Katrina, 24-Sep-14 11:22 PM GMT

Great Chalkhill shots, the second one in particular is gorgeous!

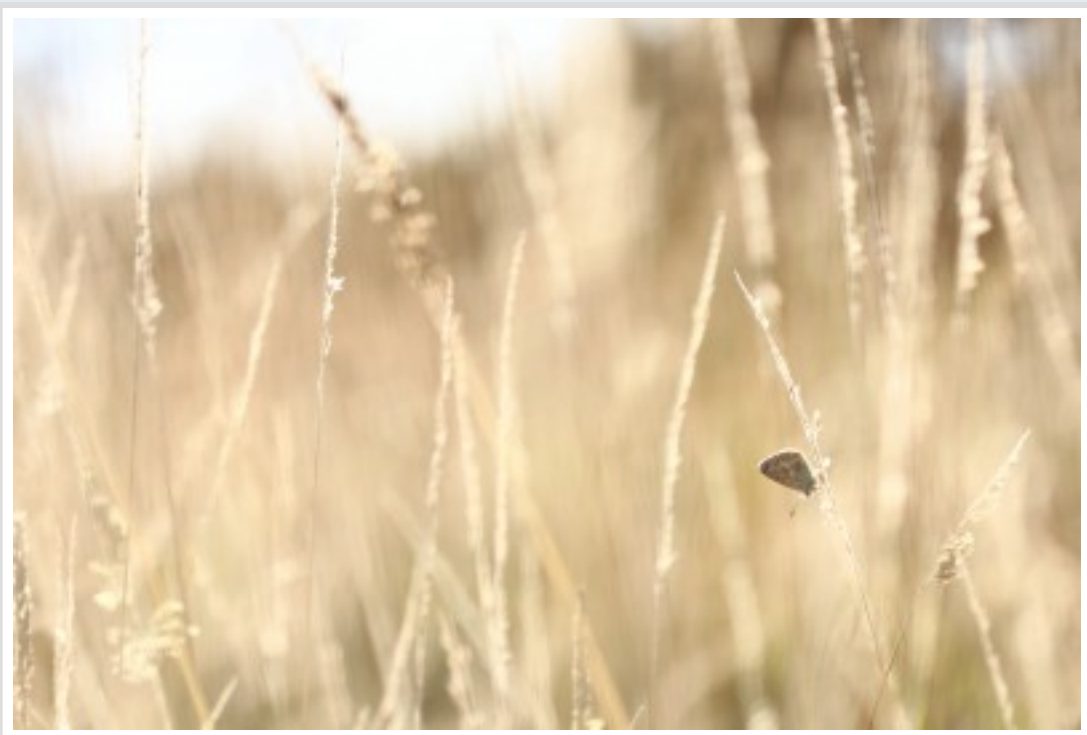
Re: William

Catching Up

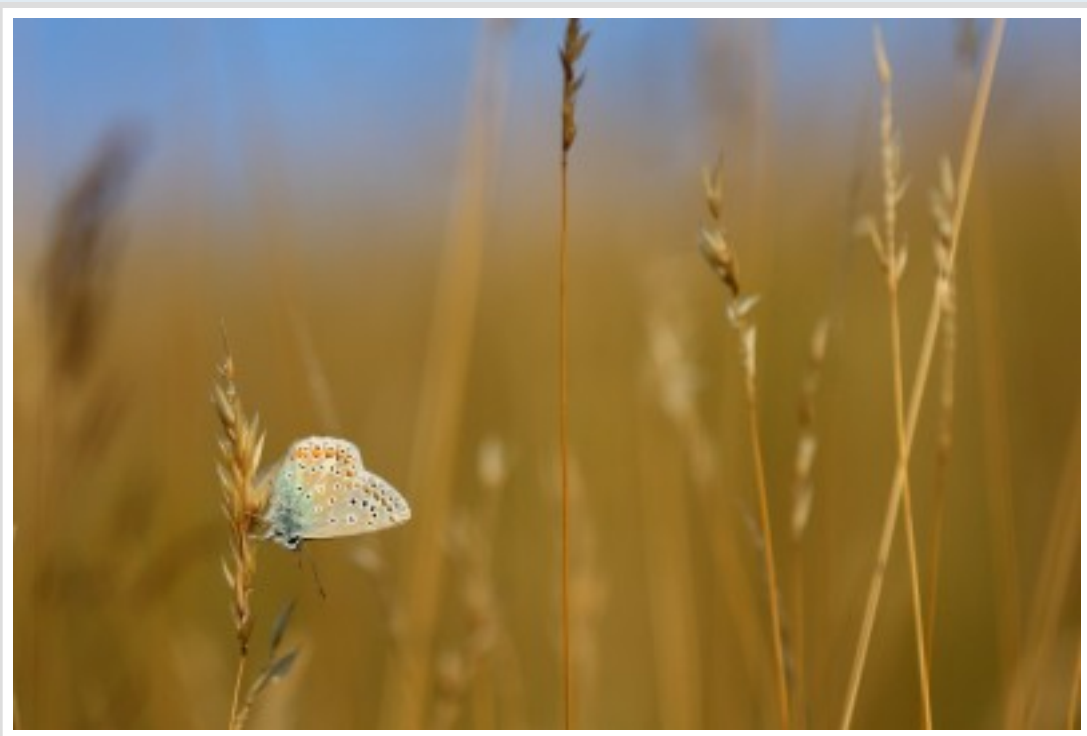
What with one thing and another I haven't posted any photos for a while, but a few here from a fairly successful late August and September. Highlight was getting regular views of Brown Hairstreaks at a Master Tree I discovered near my home (even if they were 15m above my head at a highly uncivilised 8:30 in the morning) and subsequently seeing a female at low level (my first time in 3 years of watching these beauties, though sadly without the camera!)



Silver - Washed Fritillary



Common Blue



Common Blue



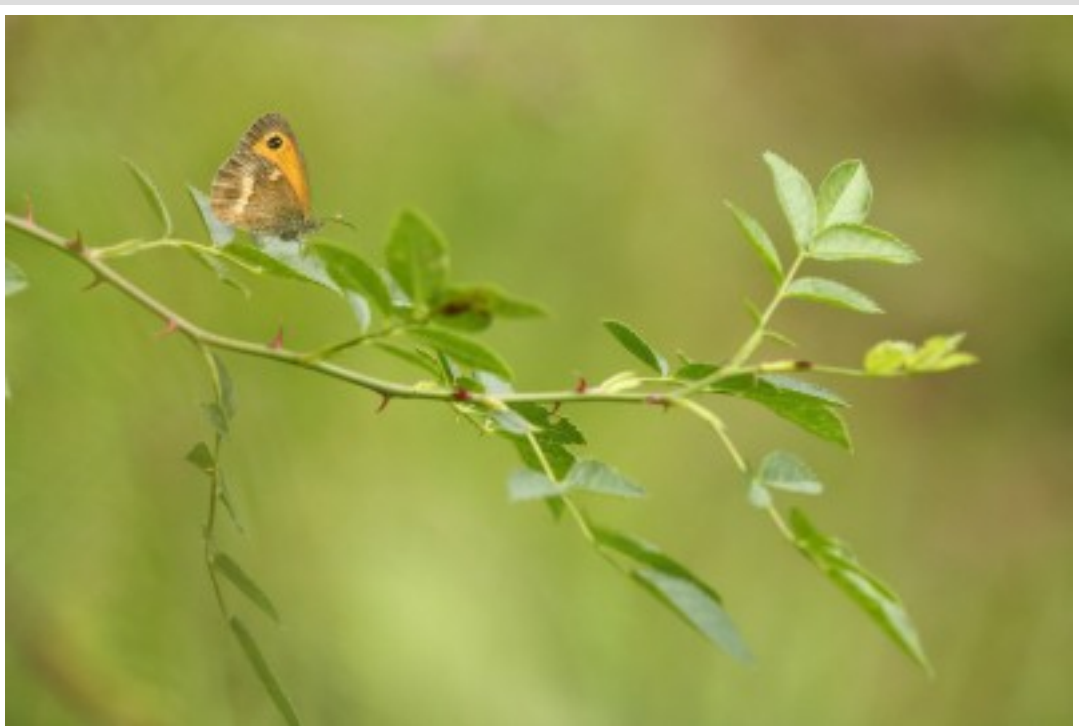
Small Skipper



Painted Lady



Green - Veined White



Gatekeeper



Silver - Washed Fritillary



Peacock



Silver - Washed Fritillary



Comma Larva (First Instar)



Comma Larva (Freshly emerged second instar)



Gatekeeper Larva (first instar)

It's been good in the garden too, and my Sorrel and Bird's Foot Trefoil have been littered with Small Copper and Common Blue eggs respectively. The Former has caused me to get out measuring leaf sizes, plant heights and grass height as I'm fascinated by their selection of Sorrels for laying, on top of this, the wildflower bank in the garden seems to be going well, so I'm optimistic for a colonisation by Common Blues next summer – watch this space!

Re: William

by Wurzel, 08-Oct-14 11:29 PM GMT

Certainly will watch this space William, especially if you can keep filling it with such cracking images. I know I have a thing for Hedge Browns but that shot of the adult is just fab-tastic 🍷🍷 If you're after male Brown Hairstreaks then I recommend Shipton Bellinger as they regularly come down – most at "bramble height" 😊 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by Goldie M, 10-Oct-14 01:04 PM GMT

William, your photo's remind me of water Colours, they're so delicate and quite lovely 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: William

by Pauline, 11-Oct-14 04:25 PM GMT

Goldie has taken the words out of my mouth. I love the style of your photos William. If I ever attempt that style it just ends up a poorly composed and cluttered mess. Something for me to practice next season.

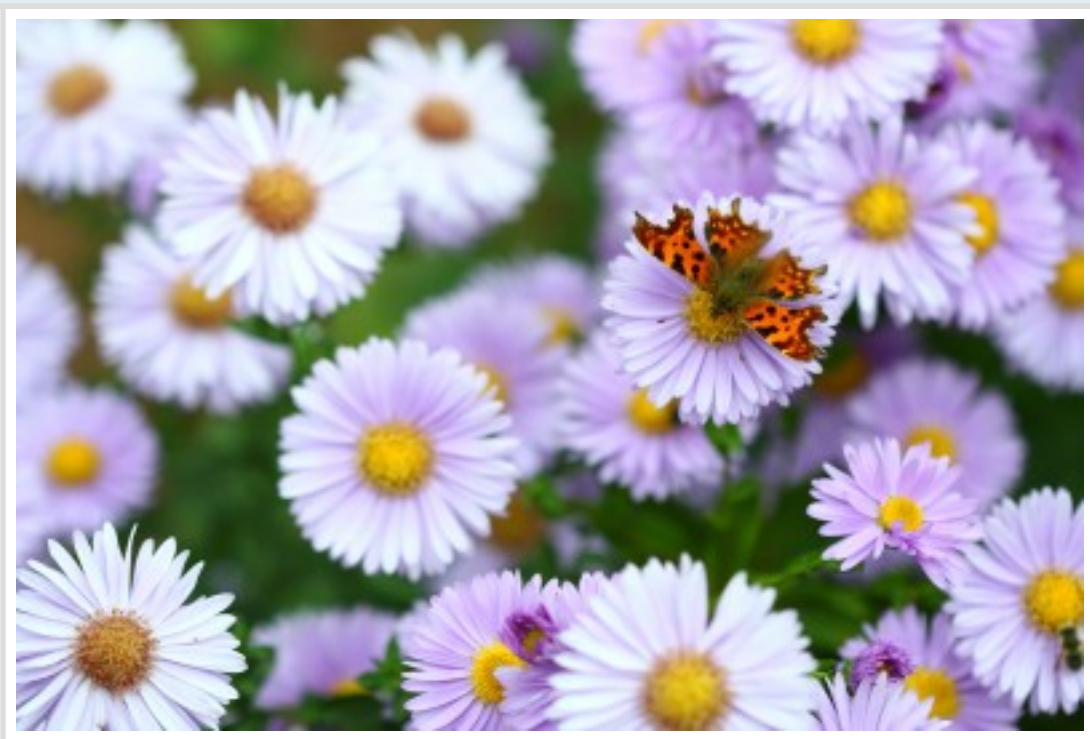
Re: William

by William, 12-Oct-14 11:59 AM GMT

Thanks for the kind comments guys, it's always a real buzz when someone appreciates my photos!

Autumn Joy

It's been a fairly uneventful Autumn season so far this year, what with returning to the grindstone and the shorter, cooler days, but nevertheless, there's been plenty going on in the garden. The Michlemas Daisies have been full of Nymphalids in particular, with my favourite Autumn Commas.



Comma



Comma



Red Admiral and Comma

The Sorrel in the garden is now replete with Small Copper Eggs, nearly always on the smallest, most underdeveloped (but most nitrogen rich) Sorrels, this one (which had 9 eggs on) is a case in point.



Small Copper Ova



Small Copper Ova

Re: William

by Wurzel, 12-Oct-14 06:49 PM GMT

I absolutely love that first Comma shoot it leads your eye into it and the contrast of the orange with the purple is sublime 😊😎🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by keving, 12-Oct-14 08:09 PM GMT

William,

Stunning photos of the Comma & Red Admiral on the Michaelmas Daisies. So different to any photo I've seen recently (especially the first one). Not sure how I missed your PD earlier, so have only just seen your ovum shots from the summer. Fantastico!!

Kind Regards Kev

Re: William

by William, 20-Oct-14 07:33 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and Kev, your kind comments are much appreciated!

Recent Doings

The butterfly season is definitely winding down now, and during the past week or so the only species I have seen have been Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell. Nevertheless, the Small Copper Larvae that have resulted from the egg-laying are a real delight, as were 3 Brown Hairstreak eggs found near my home.



First Instar Small Copper Larva and Hatched Ovum



First Instar Small Copper Larva



Small Copper Feeding Damage



Brown Hairstreak Ovum

Re: William

by Paul Harfield, 20-Oct-14 12:06 PM GMT

Hi William

As always your varied photos are all superb, like a breath of fresh air 😊 I will echo Wurzels comments and say that the first Comma on Michealmas Daisies is an absolutely outstanding image 😊😊 It is also nice to see Gatekeeper early stages, something a little different.

Keep up the good work

Re: William

by Goldie M, 20-Oct-14 07:27 PM GMT

William I love the Red Admiral and Comma shot best, if there's any thing I like better than one Butterfly it's Two Goldie 😊

Re: William

by William, 29-Dec-14 07:05 PM GMT

Thanks for the kind comments guys, as ever, much appreciated.

Egg Hunting

With sunny winter days and no butterflies to search for on them, I always go for the next best thing, their eggs. Where I am there are strong populations of Brown and Purple Hairstreak (though you wouldn't know it from the number of adults I manage to actually photograph) and a friend has White Letter Hairstreak in his garden. I succeeded in finding eggs of Brown Hairstreak – the best numbers ever in fact, two singles at two different sites, 6 at another site, 11 at another and 12 at yet another – happy days!

Sadly I haven't yet managed to find the fabled 'twoer' (two eggs laid next to each other on the same growth scar), this is about the closest I've got...



Brown Hairstreak Ova

Purple Hairstreaks were incredibly scarce this year as adults (I can normally easily find 30 adults in the right place on the right evening), so it was no surprise that in a brief search I found no eggs, but I will be back!

Nevertheless, I did manage some White-Letters.



White Letter Hairstreak Ova



White Letter Hairstreak Ovum

Re: William

by Pete Eeles, 29-Dec-14 07:57 PM GMT

Superb finds William, and excellent photos to boot, as usual!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: William

by Goldie M, 29-Dec-14 08:06 PM GMT

Welcome William, your photo's are great roll on next year and more shots from you Goldie 😊

Re: William

by bugboy, 29-Dec-14 08:53 PM GMT

Hi William, great ovum shots! I've had two unsuccessful hairstreak egg hunts over the weekend, Browns and WL so I am VERY jealous of your pics. I won't give up though!

Re: William

by William, 29-Dec-14 10:36 PM GMT

Thanks for all the kind comments guys, much appreciated! I can't really take any credit for the White-Letter eggs as they were in a friend's garden where he had already found them - I'm not complaining, though some of the fun of tracking them down is lost!

Bugboy - don't lose the faith, egg-hunting is absorbing and frustrating, but when it is successful, thrilling. I found no Brown Hairstreak eggs in the spot where I found 11 this year - butterflies are capricious creatures 😊

BWs,

William

Re: William

by bugboy, 29-Dec-14 11:15 PM GMT

"William" wrote:

Bugboy - don't lose the faith, egg-hunting is absorbing and frustrating, but when it is successful, thrilling. I found no Brown Hairstreak eggs in the spot where I found 11 this year - butterflies are capricious creatures 😊

BWs,

William

Oh no, I won't lose faith. The Brown hairstreak egg hunt was based on a 1 female sighting in an area where they haven't been recorded in many years and the WL was just a quick search, may go back another day and do a proper search for the WL. I never have a problem finding Purples when I put my mind too it. I enjoy the challenge even if I come away with nothing.