

## Re: David M

by David M, 13-Jan-15 05:10 AM GMT

### Monday 12th January 2015 - Kakariki update....

I don't normally post messages on non-butterfly related matters, but I have to report that the kakariki we've been hand rearing have turned into birds to die for....except unfortunately, for the youngest of the clutch, who sadly passed away last week.

The eldest three are now fully weaned and the youngest is the only one which still requires an appointment with the syringe. She needs no invitation:



In my last post, I suggested that all but one would probably be sold. I don't think that's likely now for all four surviving birds are so endearing that it would be too painful to part with any of them. You merely need to put your hand through the slats of the cage to have them swarming all round you, and if you take one of them out it will allow itself to be cuddled and when let go will climb to your shoulder, nibble your ear, go for a quick wing stretch round the conservatory before alighting back on your head or shoulder. They are **truly** lovable.

The sole male is the yellow-banded individual on the right. The other three are females:



They are SO inquisitive and SO entertaining:



## Re: David M

by David M, 08-Feb-15 12:12 AM GMT

Dates of first UK sightings 2015:

1. **Red Admiral** – 7 February, Bracelet Bay, Mumbles Head, Swansea
2. **Peacock** – 6 March, Swansea Vale
3. **Brimstone** – 6 March, Swansea Vale
4. **Small Tortoiseshell** – 6 March, Swansea Vale
5. **Comma** – 20 March, Swansea Vale
6. **Small White** – 5 April, Castle Meadows, Abergavenny
7. **Orange Tip** – 6 April, Castle Meadows, Abergavenny
8. **Large White** – 6 April, Linda Vista Gardens, Abergavenny
9. **Speckled Wood** – 6 April, Kilvey Hill, Swansea
10. **Small Copper** – 6 April, Danygraig Cemetery, Port Tennant, Swansea
11. **Green Veined White** – 11 April, Danygraig Cemetery, Port Tennant, Swansea
12. **Holly Blue** – 20 April, Linda Vista Gardens, Abergavenny
13. **Pearl Bordered Fritillary** – 3 May, Ewyas Harold Common, nr. Pontrilas, Herefordshire
14. **Grizzled Skipper** – 3 May, Ewyas Harold Common, nr. Pontrilas, Herefordshire
15. **Small Blue** – 4 May, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
16. **Green Hairstreak** – 9 May, Welshmoor, nr. Llanrhidian, Gower, Swansea
17. **Dingy Skipper** – 16 May, Kittle Quarry, Gower, Swansea
18. **Common Blue** – 20 May, Danygraig Cemetery, Port Tennant, Swansea
19. **Wall Brown** – 20 May, Danygraig Cemetery, Port Tennant, Swansea
20. **Marsh Fritillary** – 21 May, Fairwood Common, Gower, Swansea
21. **Brown Argus** – 23 May, Rodborough Common, nr. Stroud, Gloucestershire
22. **Small Heath** – 23 May, Rodborough Common, nr. Stroud, Gloucestershire
23. **Duke of Burgundy** – 23 May, Rodborough Common, nr. Stroud, Gloucestershire
24. **Adonis Blue** – 23 May, Rodborough Common, nr. Stroud, Gloucestershire
25. **Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary** – 30 May, Fairwood Common, Gower, Swansea
26. **Large Skipper** – 9 June, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
27. **Painted Lady** – 9 June, Langrove Country Club, Gower, Swansea
28. **Meadow Brown** – 14 June, Alun Valley, nr. Ewenny, Glamorgan
29. **Dark Green Fritillary** – 14 June, Alun Valley, nr. Ewenny, Glamorgan
30. **Ringlet** – 21 June, Alun Valley, nr. Ewenny, Glamorgan
31. **High Brown Fritillary** – 21 June, Alun Valley, nr. Ewenny, Glamorgan
32. **Marbled White** – 23 June, Daneway Banks, nr. Sapperton, Glos
33. **Large Blue** – 23 June, Daneway Banks, nr. Sapperton, Glos
34. **Black Hairstreak** – 23 June, M40 Compensation Area, Bernwood Forest, Oxon
35. **Large Heath** – 25 June, Whixhall Moss, nr. Whitchurch, Shropshire
36. **Silver Studded Blue** – 25 June, Prees Heath, nr. Whitchurch, Shropshire
37. **Purple Hairstreak** – 18 July, Fermyn Wood, nr. Corby
38. **White Admiral** – 18 July, Fermyn Wood, nr. Corby
39. **Hedge Brown** – 18 July, Fermyn Wood, nr. Corby
40. **Small Skipper** – 18 July, Fermyn Wood, nr. Corby
41. **Purple Emperor** – 18 July, Fermyn Wood, nr. Corby
42. **Silver Washed Fritillary** – 18 July, Fermyn Wood, nr. Corby
43. **Grayling** – 19 July, Kilvey Hill, Swansea
44. **Essex Skipper** – 25 July, Castle Meadows, Abergavenny
45. **Scotch Argus** – 6 August, Arnside Knott, nr. Morecambe
46. **Northern Brown Argus** – 6 August, Arnside Knott, nr. Morecambe
47. **Brown Hairstreak** – 8 August, West Williamston, nr. Pembroke
48. **Clouded Yellow** – 10 September, A477, Pembrokeshire

UK species seen in France but NOT seen in Britain in 2015:

49. **Wood White** – Var and Parc du Mercantour
50. **Glanville Fritillary** – Var and Parc du Mercantour
51. **Swallowtail** – Var and Parc du Mercantour
52. **Silver Spotted Skipper** – Parc du Mercantour
53. **Lulworth Skipper** – Parc du Mercantour
54. **Chalkhill Blue** – Parc du Mercantour

55. **Heath Fritillary** – Parc du Mercantour  
56. **Mountain Ringlet** – Parc du Mercantour

Non UK species seen in France in 2015:

1. **Cleopatra** – Var and Parc du Mercantour
2. **Baton Blue** – Var and Parc du Mercantour
3. **Provence Orange Tip** – Var
4. **Southern Festoon** – Var
5. **Western Dappled White** – Var
6. **Berger's Clouded Yellow** – Var and Parc du Mercantour
7. **Weaver's Fritillary** – Var and Parc du Mercantour
8. **Mallow Skipper** – Var
9. **Provence Hairstreak** – Var
10. **Scarce Swallowtail** – Var and Parc du Mercantour
11. **Green Underside Blue** – Var
12. **Nettle Tree Butterfly** – Var and Parc du Mercantour
13. **Large Tortoiseshell** – Var and Parc du Mercantour
14. **Black-Eyed Blue** – Var
15. **Rosy Grizzled Skipper** – Var
16. **Spanish Festoon** – Var

All the below seen in Parc du Mercantour only:

17. **Tufted Marbled Skipper**
18. **Marbled Skipper**
19. **Large Grizzled Skipper**
20. **Dusky Grizzled Skipper**
21. **Carline Skipper**
22. **Safflower Skipper**
23. **Olive Skipper**
24. **Red-Underwing Skipper**
25. **Glandon Blue**
26. **Damon Blue**
27. **Alpine Blue**
28. **Geranium Bronze**
29. **Osiris Blue**
30. **Mazarine Blue**
31. **Geranium Argus**
32. **Long-Tailed Blue**
33. **Mountain Alcon Blue**
34. **Meleager's Blue**
35. **Idas Blue**
36. **Amanda's Blue**
37. **Turquoise Blue**
38. **Eros Blue**
39. **Escher's Blue**
40. **Chapman's Blue**
41. **Silvery Argus**
42. **Purple-Shot Copper**
43. **Purple-Edged Copper**
44. **Sooty Copper**
45. **Scarce Copper**
46. **Sloe Hairstreak**
47. **Ilex Hairstreak**
48. **Blue Spot Hairstreak**
49. **Niobe Fritillary**
50. **Weaver's Fritillary**
51. **Mountain Fritillary**
52. **Shepherd's Fritillary**
53. **Titania's Fritillary**
54. **Marbled Fritillary**
55. **Lesser Marbled Fritillary**
56. **Cynthia's Fritillary**
57. **Queen of Spain Fritillary**
58. **False Heath Fritillary**
59. **Spotted Fritillary**
60. **Knapweed Fritillary**
61. **Meadow Fritillary**
62. **Grison's Fritillary**
63. **Lesser Purple Emperor**
64. **Southern White Admiral**
65. **Southern Comma**
66. **Poplar Admiral**
67. **Apollo**
68. **Small Apollo**
69. **Clouded Apollo**
70. **Black-Veined White**
71. **Moorland Clouded Yellow**
72. **Mountain Clouded Yellow**
73. **Mountain Dappled White**
74. **Peak White**
75. **Bath White**
76. **Great Banded Grayling**
77. **Pearly Heath**

- 78. Darwin's Heath
- 79. Alpine Heath
- 80. Chestnut Heath
- 81. False Mnestra Ringlet
- 82. Almond-Eyed Ringlet
- 83. Dewy Ringlet
- 84. Sooty Ringlet
- 85. Arran Brown
- 86. Large Ringlet
- 87. Common Brassy Ringlet
- 88. Woodland Grayling
- 89. Dusky Meadow Brown
- 90. Large Wall Brown
- 91. Great Sooty Satyr

Total species seen in 2015 – 147

Last butterfly sighting – **Red Admiral** – 3rd November 2015, Swansea Vale

## Re: David M

by David M, 08-Feb-15 05:27 AM GMT

### Saturday 7th February 2015 – Season opener.....

Today taught me to observe the old adage – 'expect the unexpected'.

First of all, don't pay too much attention to the weather forecast. When I got up just before 8am the skies were bereft of clouds, which ran contrary to what the Met Office had been advising for the last 3 days!!

Even when I logged onto the BBC website, the suggestion was for partial cloud cover until noon and cloudy thereafter.

Well, the reality was that barely a cloud appeared all day, so by 11.55am I decided to take a 15 minute trip out to Bracelet Bay on Mumbles Head in Swansea to get a bit of fresh air at the very least.

When I arrived, the upper end of the car park was closed and a helicopter was parked in the top-most area overlooking the bay. I, along with several others, watched with interest as the police kept people back from the take off area and a small number of very smartly dressed individuals milled about before a few of them boarded the craft which then took off rather incongruously given the backdrop:



It was only after it had disappeared from view that I learned it was Prince Albert of Monaco and his entourage, who had watched the Wales v England match in Cardiff the night before and had wanted to visit Mumbles Pier in Swansea before returning to their filthy rich Principality on the Cote d'Azur!!

As the crowds melted away, I headed for the flowering hebe in the sheltered area by the coastguard's hut. I immediately saw a Red Admiral nectaring, but before I could adjust my light meter the bloody thing took off and disappeared over the vegetation above.

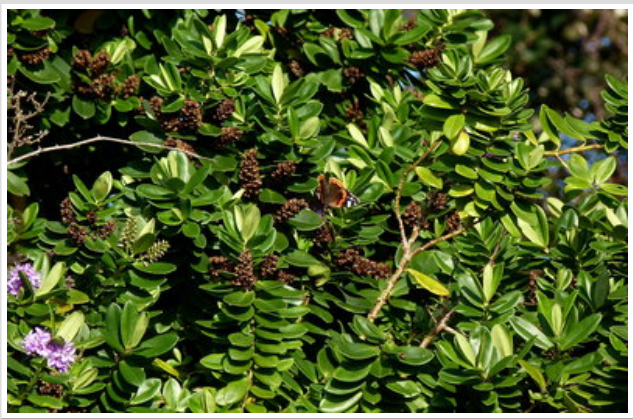
I spent over an hour searching for it, and at 1.25pm went to sit on some rocks at the edge of the beach. The bay itself looked beautiful given the time of year:



I did several circuits of the 'hotspots' and couldn't resist taking this image of a contented looking gull:

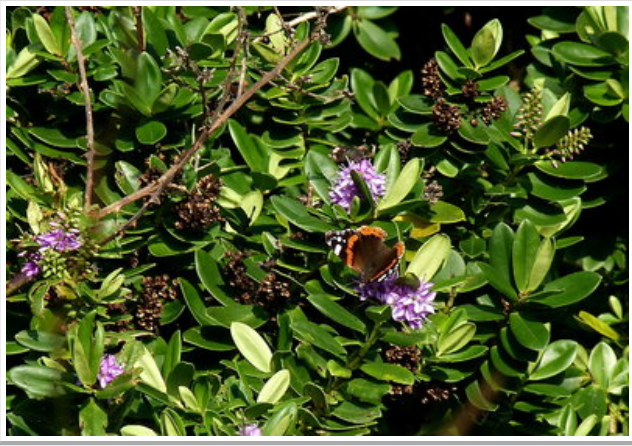


Whilst on the beach, my eyes were trained towards the coastguard's hut, and after 10 minutes or so I noticed a second Red Admiral. This one seemed to fly in from the sea and immediately came down amongst the hebe growth in front of the car park. I soon managed to locate it:



The butterfly remained in this spot for all the while I was observing it, which was a shame as it was all the while inaccessible and I had to rely on my zoom:





Delighted though I was to see butterflies so early in the year, it won't be until I see the first of the **true** UK endemic overwinterers that I'll feel properly satisfied.

Hopefully an unseasonal Tortie is but a week or three away!

### Re: David M

by NickMorgan, 09-Feb-15 06:13 AM GMT

Wow, fantastic. I suspect it will be a while before I see any butterflies up here, but I did notice a lot of Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock wings on the floor of a barn I rent today. I guess the spider population in the rafters has been feasting on them. I hope there are plenty more to come out in the spring.

### Re: David M

by Chris Jackson, 10-Feb-15 03:02 PM GMT

Glad you could get out and about with a bit of blue sky – Spring is only a very few short weeks away.

At least I can ID your helicopter, its a twin-engine Ecureuil (our company handles the manufacturers' technical publications 😊)  
Cheers, Chris

### Re: David M

by David M, 07-Mar-15 02:34 AM GMT

Friday 6th March 2015 – Waking up....

Even though it wasn't particularly warm today (10c at best) I took my camera into work on the off chance that it might be bright and sunny at lunchtime.

So it proved, and as a result I did a circuit of the wild areas near to my office and was delighted to see three butterflies – all different species.

First up was a Peacock:



The area where it was seen was in the foreground of this image, a place where Orange Tips can be found in numbers by mid-April when the stream is bedecked by copious cuckoo flower growth:



I headed on towards the railway embankment where there is a sprawling evergreen that Brimstones can't resist. Sure enough, within 5 minutes one appeared, but as ever, getting an image was a question of 'hit the shutter and hope':



I was just about to cross the road to go back to work when I noticed another butterfly suddenly dart out by the end of the pathway leaving the lake area – a Small Tortoiseshell:



So, only Comma to go to complete the 'Royal Flush' of adult overwinterers. I daresay there'll be a few around over the next week or two!

## Re: David M

by Chris Jackson, 07-Mar-15 03:06 AM GMT

That was a good lunch-time haul David, for 10°C. 😊

Even I didn't do anywhere nearly as good as that today in the South of France (13°C); and as well, these 3 species don't even exist down here. 🙄

Your hunch was right to take your camera to work.

As you say, Spring is here 😊

Cheers, Chris

## Re: David M

by Padfield, 08-Mar-15 03:40 AM GMT

Good to see things up and flying in Wales, David.

Guy

## Re: David M

by David M, 19-Mar-15 05:50 AM GMT

### Tuesday 17th March 2014 – Butterfly bereft.....

I had a friend staying with me between 15th and 17th March and promised to show her Rhossili Bay and Worm's Head on the Gower Peninsula whilst she was here.

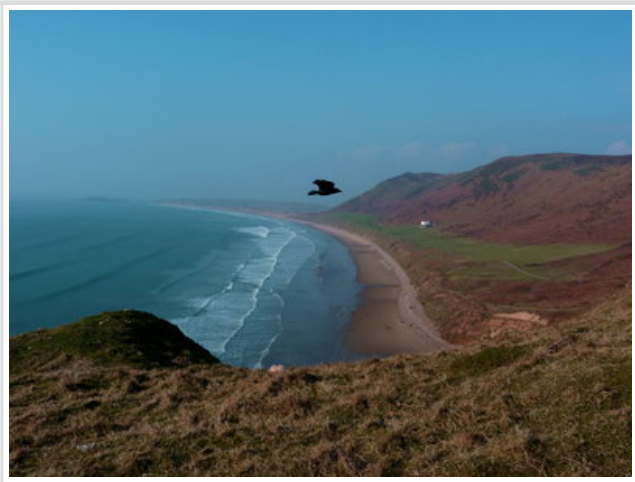
Tuesday was glorious if still a bit chilly (11c max), however with light winds I felt it appropriate to give my beloved old 'banger' a bit of early spring exercise:



Conditions were abnormally calm on this exposed western edge of the Gower, but in spite of the benign weather not a single butterfly was seen.

There **were** compensations though....

..the view was wonderful:



....and even better was the presence of a fair number of Choughs along the cliff edges:





**Re: David M**

by Neil Hulme, 19-Mar-15 05:58 AM GMT

Great car, great crows.  
BWs, Neil

**Re: David M**

by David M, 21-Mar-15 06:45 AM GMT

**Friday 20th March 2015 - Full House at last....**

With the solar eclipse on the agenda this morning, my camera was safely stowed into my car prior to leaving for work.

Although my images of this event failed to merit anything remotely resembling a picture worthy of sharing, it did at least offer me the opportunity of taking time out at lunch to wander around the scrubby wild areas adjacent to my workplace in search of butterflies.

I only saw three - a female Brimstone fluttering tantalisingly on the far side of the stream that runs beside the main path through the walkway, a Small Tortoiseshell purposefully taking nectar from a selection of Celandines alongside the water's edge....and....finally...my first Comma of the year:



I always feel relaxed once I've seen all the adult overwinterers - it gives you a week or two to prepare for the next glorious phase of the annual butterfly calendar....Speckled Woods, Holly Blues, Large/Small/Green veined Whites, Small Coppers.....and, of course...Orange Tips!!

Only a fortnight to go! 😊

**Re: David M**

by David M, 22-Mar-15 07:09 AM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel. Yes, Commas always seem to sit 'just right'.

**Saturday 21st March 2015 - Warming up....**

I had to go into Swansea city centre today so I thought I'd first take a little detour to Danygraig Cemetery to see what was about.

Well, what was about was good - 3 Peacocks, 2 male Brimstones, 2 Small Tortoiseshells and a Comma.

This Brimstone settled momentarily on some flowers placed upon one of the graves:



One of the Peacocks seemed more interested in basking on the gravestone itself:



The solitary Comma seen was also basking, but on vegetation:



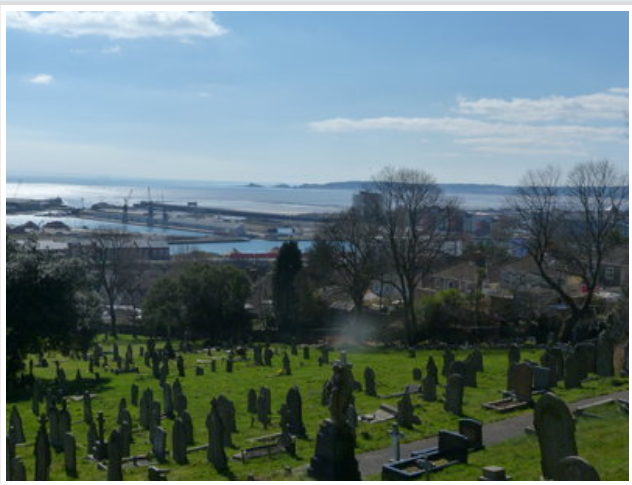
By contrast, the Small Tortoiseshell I got close to was buried in a flower:



A squirrel was busy foraging underneath one of the many mature trees:



With clear skies, temperatures hit 14c here today and the view towards Mumbles Head was reminiscent of a summer's day:



**Re: David M**

by Goldie M, 22-Mar-15 05:37 PM GMT

Great Photo's David, it's strange isn't it how cemeteries always seem to have loads of Butterflies, (due to the flowers placed there) I wonder!

I love your view also your Comma, I've yet to see one, last year I saw a lot more than previous years so hope fully it won't be too long before I do Goldie



**Re: David M**

by Neil Freeman, 23-Mar-15 03:53 AM GMT

Great stuff David 😊

Looks like you certainly had better weather than we did this weekend, yesterday was cold and cloudy and today had an underlying chill in the air despite the sun being out all afternoon.

Cheers,  
Neil.

## Re: David M

by David M, 07-Apr-15 03:09 AM GMT

### Sunday 5th April - First non-adult overwinterer...

Drove back from Liverpool to Abergavenny on Easter Sunday, and with the temperature seemingly stuck on 15c I thought I'd pop into Castle Meadows before returning to my friend's home.

It was mainly overcast and gone 4pm, but there were a handful of Small Tortoiseshells, Commas and Peacocks about. In addition, my first Small White of 2015 fluttered by and with it being cloudy, was far more approachable than is the norm:



This Peacock on a fallen tree was irresistible:



## Re: David M

by David M, 07-Apr-15 07:06 AM GMT

### "Wurzel" wrote:

Things are really buzzing over your way David....Hopefully the Orange-tips won't be far behind.

How strangely prescient, Wurzel, as you will see.....

### Monday 6th April - Temperatures soar.....

Well, I don't know who was responsible for the weather forecast for Easter Monday, but whoever it was **grossly** underestimated daytime maxima.

At 10pm on Sunday, it was predicted that 17c would be tops for Abergavenny, but in the event it reached a glorious 21c, and boy did the butterflies respond!

Small Tortoiseshells numbered almost 100, whilst Peacocks topped two dozen and even Commas were in double figures.

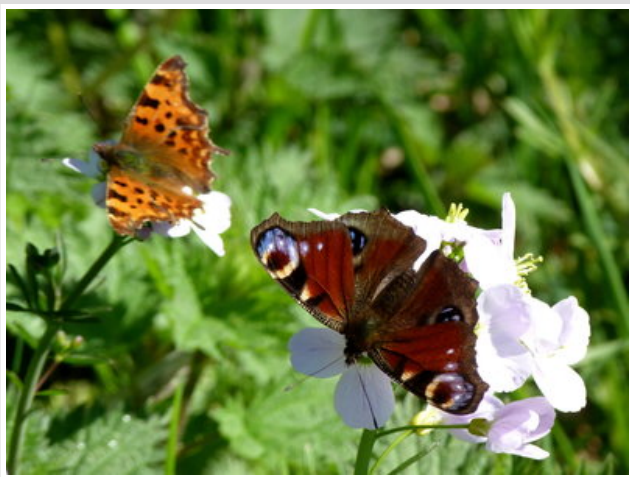
In Linda Vista Gardens, this Comma was in superb nick:



I also saw my first Large White of 2015, and he readily settled on the bergenia which was kind of him:



I was on the lookout for Orange Tips, and I headed straight for the spot on Castle Meadows where cuckoo flower always blooms earliest. No luck, sadly, although I did manage to get an interesting 'combo':



I then stumbled across a few fritillaries 😊



I saw a couple of Small Whites flying near the hedgerows so I pressed on right to the eastern edge of the parkland whereupon I experienced that most uplifting annual event – first Orange Tip! He wasn't in the mood to sit still, but he did alight briefly on a celandine which allowed me this single long range image:



I saw another on my way back to the car and to be honest, I could have remained there all day such were the conditions and the butterfly activity. However, I needed to be back in Swansea so I set off at 2.30pm but stopped at the bottom of Kilvey Hill en route to check out my Speckled Wood 'hotspot'. This proved a good decision, as I saw three in total:



I jumped over the wall into Dan-y-graig cemetery which is something of a playground for butterflies. Here's a view of it from the pathway up Kilvey Hill:



I couldn't find any Holly Blues, but I watched for 15 minutes with interest as these two Peacocks engaged in courtship rituals:



Whilst gingerly tracking them ensuring I didn't step on any graves, a small, bright object caught my eye. It readily settled and I was delighted to greet my first Small Copper of the year:



So, a wonderful day given that it was less than a week into April. Nine species in a day is something I wouldn't expect until May normally. Let's hope things keep rolling along. It certainly looks to be a promising next few days weatherwise.

**Re: David M**

by Maximus, 07-Apr-15 08:38 AM GMT

Fantastic stuff, David, looks like it's all kicking off big time, they were just waiting for 18 degrees C! Great to see the Large White and Speckled Woods.

**Re: David M**

by trevor, 07-Apr-15 03:22 PM GMT

Hi David,  
I am in awe of your Easter sightings, we had 18c yesterday, which produced lots of Peacocks and a few Small Tortoiseshells.  
Lovely images too.  
All the best,  
TREVOR.

**Re: David M**

by Chris Jackson, 07-Apr-15 04:33 PM GMT

Nine species sounds good to me David, I can only just about scrape that myself down here 🙄, and I can only dream of Peacocks, let alone see a Comma and Peacock together 🍀  
*à bientôt le sud de la France*  
Chris

**Re: David M**

by Goldie M, 07-Apr-15 06:52 PM GMT

Fantastic photo's David, your doing well for Butterflies can you send that Orange Tip North please 😊 Goldie 😊

**Re: David M**

by Hoggers, 08-Apr-15 12:30 AM GMT

Can I add my praise and admiration!  
I'm Green with Envy!!  
Best wishes,  
Hoggers.

**Re: David M**

by Neil Freeman, 08-Apr-15 03:16 AM GMT

Hi David,  
Impressive tally there, great stuff 😊. Just 4 species for me so far but plenty of those the past couple of days. I have never yet seen an early Red Admiral around my way and still waiting on the Orange-tips, Specklies, etc to start emerging.  
Cheers,  
Neil

**Re: David M**

by David M, 09-Apr-15 05:24 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments, folks.  
Yes, this part of the country is usually pretty decent in early spring. The proximity to the coastline generally sees fairly early emergences. That will change though as the season progresses and the south east enjoys temperatures several degrees above what we usually see here. Still, there's plenty to look out for over the next couple of weeks – Holly Blue, Green Veined White, Wall Brown, Dingy Skipper, Small Blue and Green Hairstreak should all be on the wing within a fortnight.

**Re: David M**

by David M, 11-Apr-15 11:34 PM GMT

**Saturday 11th April 2015 – Change in conditions.....**

After the summer-like conditions of the past few days, today we were back to early April – 12c temperatures and a fresh breeze blowing. This obviously suppressed butterfly activity and not a lot was flying.

I took another trip to Kilvey Hill & Danygraig Cemetery but apart from 3 Speckled Woods, a few Tortoiseshells and a Peacock, the only butterflies I saw were 2 Whites. One didn't come to rest but was either Small or Green Veined. The other DID come down during an overcast spell and I was able to record my first Green Veined White of the year for sure:





### Re: David M

by Goldie M, 14-Apr-15 02:58 AM GMT

Just read your posting David, your lucky to to see the GWV no sign of them here yet, nice day forecast for tomorrow hope fully we could see some, things really slow here though so I'm not convinced, nice pic by the wayGoldie 😊

### Re: David M

by David M, 22-Apr-15 05:52 AM GMT

#### Monday 20th April 2015 – Orange Tips....

In spite of seeing enough Orange Tips to sink a battleship in France last week, it was still lovely to observe roughly two dozen males cavorting around in the rather more austere surroundings of Linda Vista Gardens and Castle Meadows, Abergavenny on Monday.

Perids have definitely gained the upperhand over Vanessids over the past two weeks. Although I saw a handful of Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells and Commas, numbers were well down on those a fortnight ago in the same location.

Small Whites were well into double figures, whilst 3 definite Green Veined were also seen. Most pleasing of all however was the appearance of 4 male Large Whites, which hopefully signifies an increase in numbers on this species' *annus horribilis* in 2014.

2 male Holly Blues were also seen, although neither was in the mood to stay still for any length of time – the second one descended briefly to nectar on a Viburnum shrub, but it was soon off on its travels, no doubt in search of a female.





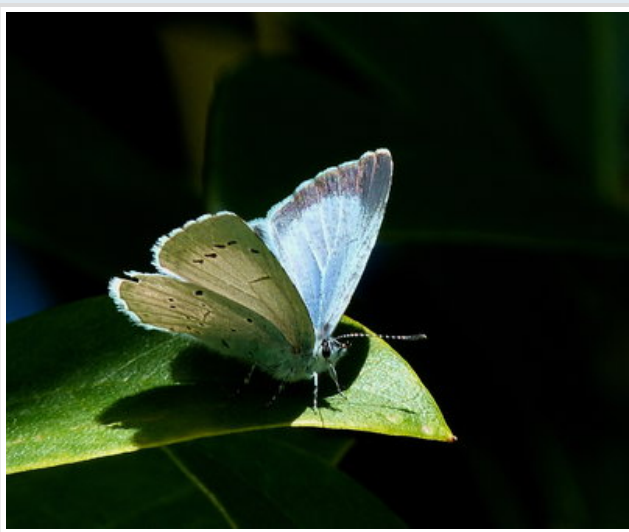
## Re: David M

by David M, 27-Apr-15 01:43 AM GMT

### Sunday 26th April 2014 - awaiting next emergences.....

In spite of the cool conditions (13c at best), I nonetheless paid visits to both Danygraig Cemetery (to look for Holly Blues) followed by Crymlyn Burrows (to check if Dingies/Small Blues were about yet).

In the first location I managed to see at least 7 Holly Blues, although only one settled anywhere within pointing distance of my camera lens:



Not a huge amount was happening at the second location. Although the kidney vetch is out, there's no sign yet of any Small Blues. Equally conspicuous by their absence were Dingy Skippers, though I hardly saw any bird's foot trefoil in flower so maybe it's not surprising. I guess they'll both be around by next weekend.

Lots of Orange Tips again, including my first UK females of 2015:



Pleasingly, once again I saw a handful of Large Whites, including a female. This male basked just long enough to get into this diary before a Speckled Wood 'ushered' him away:



Other species seen were Small and Green Veined White, Brimstone, Peacock and Small Copper.

### Re: David M

by Pauline, 27-Apr-15 02:30 AM GMT

I do like that Holly Blue shot David – the one with the really dark background. I think it looks quite dramatic. I haven't managed to get near any of these so far this season.

### Re: David M

by David M, 27-Apr-15 06:15 AM GMT

#### "Pauline" wrote:

I do like that Holly Blue shot David...I haven't managed to get near any of these so far this season.

This was the first I've got near to, Pauline, and that includes the two dozen or so I saw in France recently.

They're particularly difficult in spring. At least in late summer they can be relied upon to turn up on the bramble flowers, but right now, it's either a leaf or the flower of a shrub....and both usually above head height!! 😞

### Re: David M

by David M, 05-May-15 05:30 AM GMT

Sunday 3rd May 2014 – Spring delight.....

One of my favourite moments in any spring is the sight of Pearl Bordered Fritillaries. Given I was spending the Bank Holiday weekend in Abergavenny, I deemed it a point of order that I should take the 20 minute trip just over the English border to Ewyas Harold Common, near Pontrilas.

Weather conditions weren't ideal, with a fresh breeze blowing and 15c being the top temperature, but there were sufficient sunny intervals for the Frits to get active.

I saw 23 in all (in about an hour and a half), the majority of which were in the 'hotspot' on this large site, which is just the other side of the dip in this image:



Both males and females were seen, including this courting couple:



Most individuals were in excellent condition:





Sadly, as is often the case at this site in early May, precious few other butterflies were seen – just two Green Veined Whites, a Peacock and, pleasingly, a solitary Grizzled Skipper which was very obliging in coming to rest at waist level on the branch of a sapling:



**Monday 4th May 2014 – Small Blue...**

On my way back to Swansea from Abergavenny, I popped into Crymlyn Burrows on the coast and managed to find one solitary Small Blue. Again, not much flying which was disappointing, but with Dingy Skipper, Brown Argus & Common Blue all set to emerge very soon, I expect to find a quite different state of affairs when I next visit.



**Re: David M**

by Nick Broomer, 05-May-15 05:43 AM GMT

Hi David,

Thats a lovely photo of the Pearl with it's wings closed, the background colours compliments the butterfly. What a beautiful insect, i could stare at photos like that all night.

All the best, Nick.

**Re: David M**

by David M, 10-May-15 07:34 AM GMT

**"trevor" wrote:**

Any Marshies on your door step yet ?

Not yet, Trevor, but I suspect the first handful will be around within the next ten days or so.

**Saturday 9th May 2015 – Green Hairstreaks.....**

Ironically, I visited my prime local 'Marshie' spot this afternoon, but this was an excursion to observe Green Hairstreaks, and I'm pleased to say I found 15-20 of them.

It's always fascinating to watch the territorial skirmishes between these insects, as each takes turns to launch itself from its perch to swirl around in a flash of green and brown with an intruder.

Some were already a bit worn, but amongst the dozen and a half or so, there were a few that looked in tip-top condition:



This one was probably the most attractive, with an impressive array of 'streaks':



This species is always irresistible on blue flowers:



In spite of ordinary May temperatures, Welshmoor was looking in fine fettle:



On my way back home, I took a short detour to Kittle Quarry to see if there were any Common Blues/Brown Argus. There weren't, but I spotted a raptor perched at the top of the quarry. Looks like a Peregrine if I'm not mistaken (apologies for the poor image, but this bird was some distance away from me):



### Re: David M

by Trevor, 10-May-15 03:43 PM GMT

Those Green Hairstreak images are superb!. A species that's been avoiding me this year, so far. And can be a tricky subject to photograph.

Good hunting,  
TREVOR.

### Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 10-May-15 06:18 PM GMT

Hi David,

Smashing Green Hairstreaks and I like that PBF underside against the bracken, great stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: David M

by Padfield, 12-May-15 04:59 AM GMT

You've nailed those green hairstreaks, David! I think only last year you were lamenting you couldn't catch the texture and range of colours ... Well, these pictures certainly do them justice.

Guy

### Re: David M

by David M, 13-May-15 02:31 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments everyone.

Guy, I think I'm just a very slow learner! I'm gradually exercising more patience in the field and I'm now much more *au fait* with the light settings as well as the close-up attachment I bought for my camera a couple of years ago (I still delete more than three-quarters of my images though so I've a long way to go!) 😊

### Re: David M

by David M, 17-May-15 06:20 AM GMT

#### Saturday 16th May 2015 - Disappointing....

I had a two hour window around midday today so I figured it'd be best to stay very local and check out activity in both Kittle Quarry and on Fairwood Common.

I had hoped that Common Blue and Brown Argus may have emerged at the former, but in spite of the bird's foot trefoil being in full bloom, not a single individual of either of these two species were seen.

In fact, butterfly numbers generally were worryingly poor. In the quarry I saw just two Peacocks, one male Brimstone, one male Large White, one female Green Veined White and a Dingy Skipper.

The last of these was a bonus, since not only was it my first of 2015, but it was the first time I've seen this species in this location:





The Dingy was extremely hyperactive, and the best image I could manage was one from a fair distance:



Even worse was the return at Fairwood Common, just a mile or so away.

I had pondered whether the first few Marshies might be out, but not only were **they** absent, but everything else was missing too except for a solitary male Orange Tip and a Green Hairstreak.

We're currently stuck in a weather pattern that does this part of the UK no favours whatsoever – moderate to strong, moist westerly winds, meaning sunshine is at a premium and temperatures are constantly in the 11 – 15c range.

Clearly, this is suppressing emergences locally, and given the very ordinary short term forecast, I feel it might take till the last few days in May before things start to get moving again.

## Re: David M

by David M, 21-May-15 01:59 AM GMT

### Wednesday 20th May 2015 – Slight improvement....

The wind's still about as are the cool temperatures in south Wales but at least the sun made an appearance today, meaning that I was able to chance an hour or so at Danygraig Cemetery to see if Common Blues had finally emerged.

It didn't take long for me to see my first, although only 4 were observed in total (unsurprisingly, all were males):





Another species that is fond of this cemetery is Wall Brown. They can be found in small numbers all over Kilvey Hill, but they seem to enjoy taking time out in the sheltered spots of the graveyard where the grasses are left to grow long and there are plenty of headstones upon which they can bask. This spot at the top corner always attracts them best:



I saw three in total (of which the two that settled were both males). Both Wall and Holly Blue can be tricky to locate, so it's comforting to know that this location is a near certainty for both at the right time of year:



**Re: David M**

by Willow, 21-May-15 04:45 AM GMT

Glad you had some better weather in Swansea and managed to see some emerging species David 😊 Cracking **Common Blue** pics, really good captures there!

Bill 😊

## Re: David M

by David M, 24-May-15 10:50 PM GMT

Saturday 23rd May 2015 - Rodborough/Selsely Common

One of the most delightful days I have had in some while.

Finally, the sun shone, the wind dropped and temperatures soared.

Willrow and I spent a good 4 hours at Rodborough Common, near Stroud, Glos, before moving on to neighbouring Selsely Common to spend a further hour checking out the Duke habitat there.

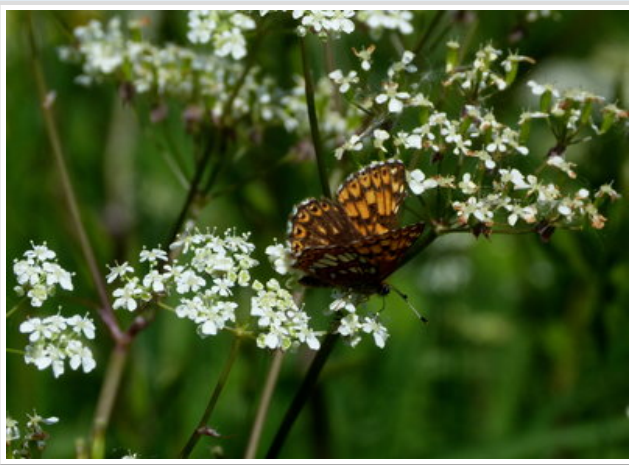
The first thing that struck me was the phenomenal numbers of Brown Argus. Normally, you will see maybe one for every 5 or 6 Common Blues. Today it was easily the reverse, with Brown Argus probably notching a century plus!



Dingy Skippers were also numerous, with 60+ being seen, along with Small Heath with about 50.



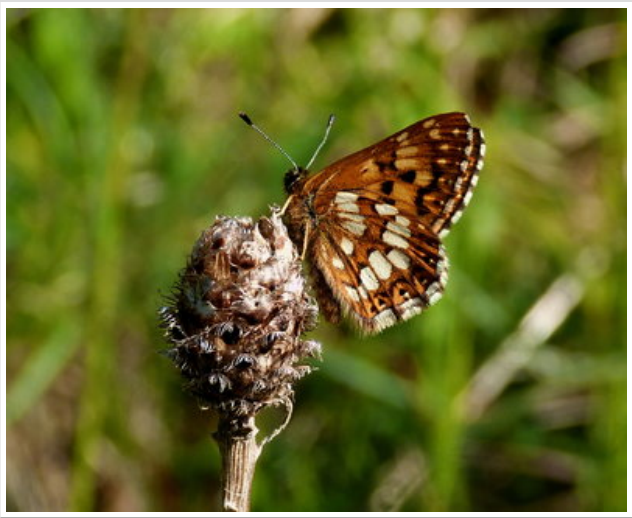
Encouragingly though, Dukes of Burgundy were also seen in high numbers. We looked for them in the dips and hollows on the way from the car park to the fort and were already into double figures before moving to the sheltered 'crater' which seems to be their epicentre. We even clocked up another out in the open on the flat plain nectaring on cow parsley which was a real surprise:



In the hotspot, the grass had been well trodden down so quite a few fellow enthusiasts had obviously been there before us. Their efforts to get to the bottom of this steep hill would have been well rewarded, as there were probably a dozen or so different Dukes active there:



Here are a couple of the brightest individuals from the day:



Of course, this abnormally warm micro-climate is what attracts Adonis Blues at this northerly (for them) outpost. About a dozen were seen in total but none from anywhere else on the site. This male was in fine fettle save for the missing antenna:



Mating pair:



Nice female:



Over at Selsely Common, we found the largest concentration of Dukes of the entire day. I spent half an hour at the bottom of this dip and counted 21, whilst Willow, who stayed an additional 20 minutes, was up around 30, all in a 200 yards stretch. It really was quite astonishing:



A couple of Small Blues were seen here to add to the singleton at Rodborough:



In total, between the two sites, 16 different species were seen. In addition to those mentioned above, we observed Common Blue, Large White, Small White, Green Veined White, Holly Blue, Peacock, Green Hairstreak, Speckled Wood, Brimstone (female) and Orange Tip (female).

**Re: David M**

by Willow, 25-May-15 04:02 AM GMT

Nice report David, a thoroughly enjoyable days butterflying in a favourite location...

**"David M" wrote:**  
the sun shone, the wind dropped and temperatures soared

...and that's all we needed... 😊

Best Wishes,

Bill 😊

**"When in doubt - venture out"**

**Re: David M**

by Chris Jackson, 25-May-15 06:27 PM GMT

Hi there David,  
That is stunning scenery to go butterfly spotting in, and some great photos too.  
A shame we don't get "blue" female Blues down here - very nice indeed.  
Cheers, Chris

**Re: David M**

by Jack Harrison, 25-May-15 06:37 PM GMT

That blue female Common Blue is surely an aberration? It is almost completely lacking in orange lunules at the edges of the wings.

See this thread:

[viewtopic.php?t=8297&start=0#p98446](http://viewtopic.php?t=8297&start=0#p98446)

Jack

**Re: David M**

by Goldie M, 25-May-15 11:48 PM GMT

Lovely Photos David the Butterflies look so fresh, love the Black one, very unusual Goldie 😊

**Re: David M**

by Neil Freeman, 27-May-15 06:26 AM GMT

Great report and photos from Rodborough / Selsely Commons.

As others have said, that female Common Blue is a cracker, in fact if it wasn't for the clear white margins she would almost have a bit of female Adonis about her. A lovely individual 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: David M

by Pauline, 27-May-15 02:46 PM GMT

Some great shots in your diary recently David, especially the Wall Brown and Brown Argus 🦋 – 2 species I always find difficult to photograph. I also especially like the Duke on Cow Parsley – very unusual 😊

### Re: David M

by David M, 31-May-15 03:57 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments everybody. It's a sign of how poor the weather's been that my Rodborough trip was the first time this year I haven't needed to wear my fleece whilst out in the field. 😊

#### Saturday 30th May 2015 – Feasting on scraps....

Yet another cool and cloudy forecast, but there **was** a brief opportunity to get out as this morning was supposed to be sunny till 10am with a steady deterioration afterwards.

So, by 8.40am I was out on Fairwood Common less than a mile from my home looking to see if anything was flying prior to the grey skies descending.

Well, I only saw four butterflies in the hour I was there – three were Green Hairstreaks but the other was my first Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary of the year. I took a record shot first from a distance:



As the clouds obscured the sun, the 11c temperatures sent him into semi-torpor and he dropped down into the grasses:



Whilst studying him, I noticed a large spider heading towards him so I shooed it away. However, given he was struggling to move due to the cold, I feared that if the spider returned then this recent emergee's life would be over before it had properly begun. I coaxed him onto my finger and put him out of harm's way on a nearby shrub:





I went back to my car and into Killay to do some shopping. However, whilst driving back the sun was still shining through hazy clouds and my car's thermometer was reading 13c so I thought I'd pop down to Welshmoor to see if I could find some Marsh Fritillaries there.

In the space of an hour, I found 33. Most of these were disturbed as a result of me walking through the grasses and I quickly resolved to walk slowly and watch my step in case I should potentially tread on a sleepy Marshie!



The only other butterflies seen were 2 Common Blues and a geriatric Green Hairstreak.

Roll on the predicted heatwave next week (though I suspect the Swansea area will be vastly cooler than the south east).

**Re: David M**

by bugboy, 31-May-15 06:37 AM GMT

Lovely SPBF, still need to tick that one off but I suspect I will have to leave that lifer for next year, need to save some for next year!

**Re: David M**

by Willow, 31-May-15 11:48 PM GMT

Some nicely taken images of the fritillaries David, you (like myself) reap the benefit of having both mentioned species within a mile or so of our homes...now how fortunate is that 😊

Hope you have a sizzingly good June 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

**Re: David M**

by David M, 08-Jun-15 06:47 AM GMT

**Sunday 7th June 2015 - Encouraging.....**

Got back from Abergavenny at about 1pm so I decided to take a trip out to the further reaches of Fairwood Common to check out Marsh Fritillary numbers.

I'm pleased to say that numbers were respectable, with 40-50 Marsh Frits seen in just over an hour, along with around a dozen Small Pearl Borderedds too.

I managed to see my first female SPBFs of the year:



I was keeping a keen eye out for female Marsh Frits and once I arrived in prime 'Marshie' habitat, I simply dug my heels in and waited:



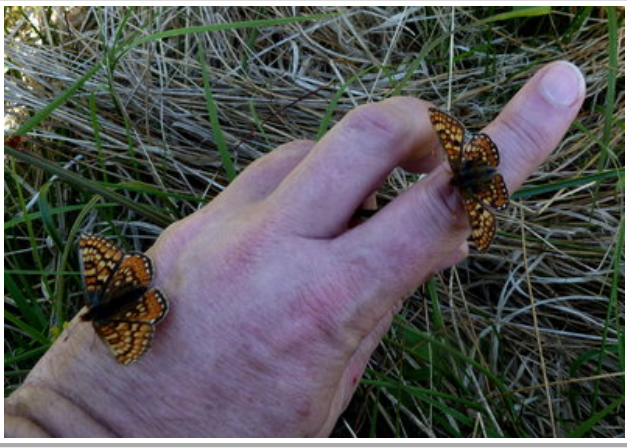
Usually, the alarm bells start ringing when you see a Marsh Frit struggling to fly. So it proved as I followed this female to her place of rest:



Whilst watching her struggling amongst the grasses, a male suddenly appeared and made attempts to court her. Clearly, given her rather faded condition and behaviour, she had already mated, and she kept walking away from him. He persisted, so I offered her my fingertip and she readily climbed aboard.....before I could pull away though, the male climbed onto my finger too:



Even whilst on the back of my hand, she remained keen to make a getaway:



Other species seen were 15-20 Common Blues, and solitary Large White, Green Veined White, Small Heath and a Peacock so tattered that it was surely in danger of celebrating its first birthday!!

**Re: David M**

by Maximus, 08-Jun-15 08:07 AM GMT

Nice pics of SPBF and Marsh Frillaries, David. It's also nice to have gorgeous butterflies on your hand 😊

**Re: David M**

by trevor, 08-Jun-15 03:37 PM GMT

Hi David,  
You are very lucky to have a site, where Marsh and SPBF occur together.  
Your images do justice to both species.

Best wishes,  
TREVOR.

**Re: David M**

by Willow, 10-Jun-15 12:00 AM GMT

Lovely captures David, Fairwood is proving very productive for you and conveniently good for after work visits...enjoy 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

**Re: David M**

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jun-15 03:30 AM GMT

Great report and photos David 😊

As with Bill, I am very envious of you having both Marsh Frits and SPBF so close to you 🍷

Cheers,

Neil.

**Re: David M**

by David M, 10-Jun-15 06:09 AM GMT

Thanks for the feedback everyone. Yes, we're lucky with Fritillaries here but not much else 😞

We still haven't had a day in the seventies since the second Easter week and everything appears to be approximately 10 days behind last year.

**Tuesday 9th June 2015 - Slow turnover....**

Another sunny but cool 'summer' day. 16c at best with moderate winds.

I took a trip to Crymlyn Burrows thinking that Dark Green Fritillaries and Large Skippers might be about, but was disappointed to find that there was no sign of the former (even the Marsh Thistles have yet to show themselves), and only a solitary example of the latter in over an hour's searching:



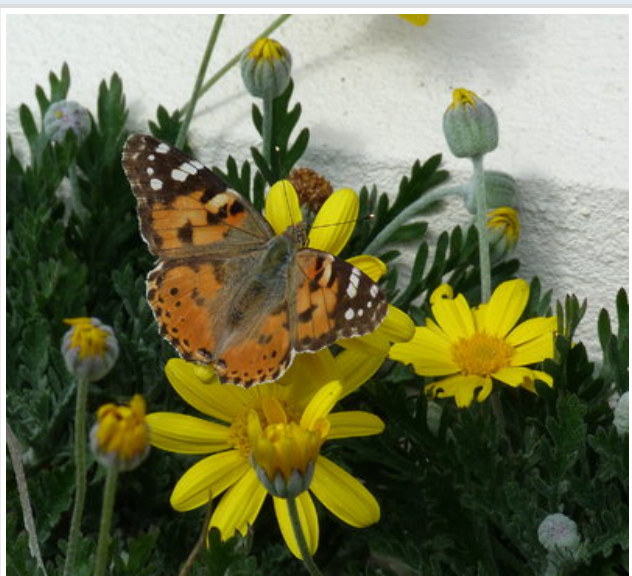
In fact, numbers of all species were a bit suppressed. Yes, there were plenty of Common Blues and Small Heaths, but Small Blues were well down on the stratospheric numbers recorded here two years ago, with only about three dozen seen:



Totals seen were as follows:

Common Blue 50-70  
Small Heath 40-60  
Small Blue 30-40  
Brown Argus 8-12  
Green Veined White 3  
Orange Tip (all males) 3  
Speckled Wood 1  
Large Skipper 1  
Dingy Skipper 1

During the afternoon, whilst watching the one-day cricket international between England and New Zealand, my neighbour shouted me to come and look at a strange butterfly on her patio. I grabbed my camera and waiting for me was my first Painted Lady of the year:



This specimen seems to have an element of *reducta* about it, as the hindwings are far more bereft of black markings than is usual. Still, I hope that this

is the first of many given the recent influx reported in southern regions of the country.

### Re: David M

by Willow, 13-Jun-15 07:05 PM GMT

Cheer up David...we're not too far off **High Brown & Dark Green Fritillary** now, lots still to look forward to.

Very interesting **Painted Lady** I assume Eve drew your attention to it?

BW's,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

### Re: David M

by David M, 15-Jun-15 07:57 AM GMT

**Sunday 14th June 2015 - Slow going...**

Saturday was atrocious here in Swansea, and Sunday dawned little better. However, by midday the sun was breaking through the clouds so I decided to pay a first visit of the year to the Alun Valley High Brown Fritillary site near Bridgend.

Work commitments and poor weather have seen me practically absent from this glorious location thus far in 2015, but 5 minutes after arriving I was delighted to bump into fellow UKBer, Willow, who himself had come down here on the spur of the moment.

It remained mainly cloudy but although butterfly numbers weren't great, we both saw encouraging signs for the rest of the summer (if only the weather would buck up).

Six Painted Ladies was probably the most notable statistic. Looks like we're having something of an influx. Long may it continue:



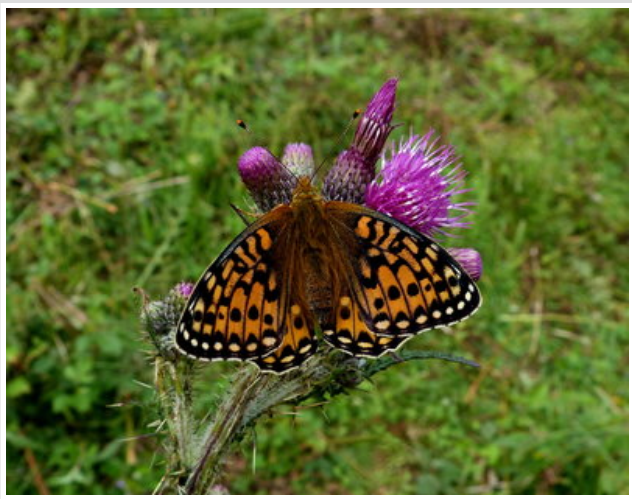
I also saw my first Meadow Browns of 2015:



A few Dark Green Fritillaries were about too. They are clearly at the beginning of their flight period given their lustrous condition. Here's a male which posed nicely during a cloudy interval:



We also got really lucky with a freshly emerged female who was taking her first tentative steps in her short life:



Vanessids seem to be re-emerging too. Five Red Admirals seen along with three Peacocks and a Small Tortoiseshell:



It was also nice to see a dozen or so Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries still going strong. Some individuals looked quite fresh so this site could well be one of the few in the UK where you can see 4 different Fritillaries by the end of June: Dark Green, Small Pearl Bordered, High Brown and early Silver Washed!



Other species seen were Green Veined White, Common Blue, Speckled Wood, Large Skipper and this male Brimstone which could be in line for a longevity award (and still looks in reasonable nick):





## Re: David M

by David M, 22-Jun-15 05:26 AM GMT

Thanks for the feedback everyone. This year is turning into one that requires additional effort and hours in the field to get any kind of reward. 😞

### Sunday 21st June 2015 – Still wearing my fleece....

Yep. Midsummer's Day and I never once removed my fleece in nearly 4 hours at the Alun Valley site in Glamorgan! Just 16 degrees with blustery winds. In a week's time I will be in the French Alps and it can't come soon enough (if only to walk around in a T-shirt again!)

I arrived in the morning when it was very cloudy, thinking that these might be the conditions in which to locate a few torpid Fritillaries.

Well, prior to the sun emerging at around midday, I **did** disturb half a dozen or so, but they all zoomed off pretty rapidly out of reach of my camera lens!

I managed to see several fresh Ringlets though, one of which was kind enough to pose awhile:



At least 40 Frits were seen in total, but most were males intent on flying incessantly in search of freshly emerged females. They are highly adept at weaving their way through the bracken but, of course, their reluctance to settle was frustrating.

I positively identified about a dozen Dark Greens, including this male imbibing from a thistle:



I also spotted a couple of female DGFs. This one was abnormally dark:



This heavenly spot was well frequented, with many fritillaries popping in to either inspect it or take nectar:



This is the hardest time of the flight period to separate male DGFs from High Browns. The former are still in good condition meaning that it is almost imperative for them to settle in order to reach a conclusion. In total, three High Browns came to earth sufficiently long for me to be sure of their identity. This one only stopped briefly, which was a shame as he is slightly aberrant, with much greater black suffusion near the body:



Other species seen were Meadow Brown (a dozen or so), Large Skipper (approx 10), Speckled Wood (half a dozen), Painted Lady 4, Small Tortoiseshell 3, Red Admiral 2, Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary (2 females).

### Re: David M

by Willow, 22-Jun-15 07:30 PM GMT

Well done David, considering the conditions 3 certain **HBF** is good going, all we need is a spell of more settled weather, that wind can play havoc with such active species and the enthusiasts who pursue them 😊😊

BW's,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

### Re: David M

by trevor, 24-Jun-15 11:31 PM GMT

Beautiful DGF female, and High Brown. The nearest of the latter are 100's of miles from me, the former are very local. I have been told of a good way of telling the two apart when they fly together, as in your case. DGF's are attracted to mauve or purple, ( only yesterday i saw DGF's nectaring on Knapweed and Red Clover ) where as a High Brown is more likely to nectar on Bramble Blossom. Of course no theory like this can be 100%, but i am sure there's truth in it.

Have a great season,  
TREVOR.

### Re: David M

by David M, 25-Jun-15 03:03 AM GMT

Trevor, I often use precisely that behavioural aspect to home in on what I suspect are High Browns. Of course, this species will happily nectar from the marsh thistles just as Dark Greens are prone to do, but they certainly have a fondness for bramble blossom which isn't shared with anything like the same zeal by DGFs.

#### Tuesday 23rd June - A long overdue exercise in self-indulgence...

Pleasant, sunny conditions on offer today, and with me now being off from work, I couldn't resist the opportunity to spend an entire day out in the field (though rather too much was also spent in traffic jams, irritatingly).

First stop was Daneway Banks which by 9.20am was bathed in sunshine. Here's a view of the inn at the bottom of this glorious site:



I was a little disappointed to find that the marjoram which was attracting female Large Blues last year had yet to flower, so I wandered off to the upper easterly part of the site and that's where I found 7 of the 8 individuals seen (the other one was basking in the field immediately below). I wonder if the lack of wind encouraged them to fly higher up?



I also saw my first Marbled Whites of the year. Whilst not quite abounding in the same four figure numbers as on my last visit here in 2014, they nevertheless were about in the low hundreds:



Amongst the forty or so Large Skippers seen was my first female of 2015:



Plenty of other species about too – Meadow Brown (100+), Ringlet (40+), Common Blue (30+), Small Tortoiseshell (approx a dozen), Large White, Small Heath & Small Blue (2 of each), and singleton Painted Lady, Dark Green Fritillary and Green Hairstreak.

By 11.30am I needed to move on.....

#### **M40 Compensation Area**

Black Hairstreaks are devilish subjects and they drove me insane in the four hours I spent at the M40 compensation area in the recesses of Bernwood Forest.

The morning had been cloudy, but the sun arrived just as I did at 1.30pm and there were only 4 other individuals seeking to punish themselves similarly.

As ever, there was plenty of activity up in the trees and within an hour I had a painful dose of 'Hairstreak neck'. Occasionally, one (like this male) would taunt me by moving slightly lower down, usually to nectar on the emerging wild privet sprays:



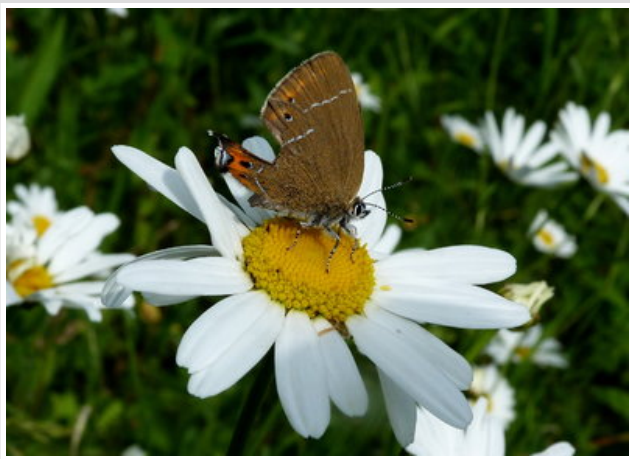
This female got down to 8 feet:



Then, at about 4pm, this female descended to eye level to check out the blackthorn, behaving in just the manner everybody craves with this species – docile, approachable....the only problem was that she was in a terrible state, with significant wing damage:



I watched her for a good 10 minutes (though she never actually laid an egg) before she did something I wasn't expecting....she fluttered off clumsily and settled on an ox-eye daisy!!



All told, I estimate around 30 Black Hairstreaks were seen, but the adjacent forest hasn't yet welcomed the arrival of White Admirals or Silver Washed Fritillaries yet. However, I did see one other species I wasn't expecting in the form of two Dingy Skippers in the meadows of the compensation area:



### Re: David M

by Willrow, 25-Jun-15 04:23 AM GMT

Fine report David, I'm so pleased to know your well earned trip went well with a nice range of species seen and some spiffin images taken also – just hope your 'hairstreak neck' gets better before your hols 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

### Re: David M

by David M, 26-Jun-15 10:54 PM GMT

**Thursday 25th June – Eve of holiday marathon....**

With a cloudy forecast, I hesitated at travelling to Shropshire until virtually the last minute. However, given that Large Heath was my target I figured that they'd be about in serious numbers at Whixhall Moss, meaning that I would almost certainly disturb some and may even be able to get close to this normally highly skittish species.

By 10.25am I was there, although it took some finding. Four years ago I got lost and ended up at the adjacent Bettisfield Moss. However, with the help of a gentlemen on a barge trip, I managed to get to the car park and onto the vast expanse of bog in this isolated borderland.





The first hour remained very overcast, but in spite of that I still saw about 10 Large Heaths, usually having walked past where they were roosting. They tended to shoot away and land again about 25 metres away. If I saw where they'd actually come down, I was able to home in on them. Here's a male:



A female:



This female actually lay on her side on the grass during a particularly cloudy spell:





It then started to progressively brighten up, and Large Heaths suddenly became much more active. In just short of two hours, I saw 61 in total so I dread to think how many would be observed on a warm, sunny day here – probably multi-hundreds.

There weren't many other butterfly species – a handful of Large Skippers, a Small Copper and three fresh Brimstones (2 males and 1 female). There's plenty of Buckthorn growing here so Brimmies ought to be out in force very shortly.

Walking down the track towards the entrance threw up 3 Speckled Woods and a Ringlet, but it nearly sent me to hospital – I almost trod on an adder basking by the gate. I saw it rear at me just as my foot was coming down and I immediately pulled away a couple of metres whilst it carried on hissing at me. After 30 seconds or so, it calmed down and I took a few shots of it:



At half past twelve, I made the short trip to Prees Heath and spent an hour in the company of serious numbers of Silver Studded Blues. I reckon well over 100 were seen (including half a dozen or so females). They were fluttering round the clumps of heather like sapphire jewels and it was a real delight to the eye.





Prime habitat:



Other species seen were Small Heath (20–30), Meadow Brown (10–20), Small Tortoiseshell 4, Ringlet 2 and a solitary Painted Lady (they seem to be cropping up everywhere right now).

## Re: David M

by David M, 20-Jul-15 06:58 AM GMT

### Saturday 18th July 2015 - The wrong shade of purple....

I confess that I could have made the pilgrimage to Fermyn Woods on Saturday 11th. However, after the exertions of an 11 day French Alps trip which only saw me back in the UK late on Thursday 9th, I was simply too fatigued to get my backside out of bed at 5.30am on that date, and instead left it till a week later.

I figured that whilst Purple Emperors were unlikely to be seen grounded, they would nonetheless be observable in flight at canopy level. Well, they **were**, albeit just three of them, but it is clearly true that these insects are far more prone to come to *terra firma* early in their flight period.

The last Emperor seen DID flirt with a patch of damp bridleway, glowing iridescent purple all the while, but the other two were observed flying high amongst the trees with no sign whatsoever of even a low 'fly-past'.

The day was not without alternative rewards though. Purple Hairstreaks were about in serious numbers:



I reckon I saw the greater part of 100, with a huge concentration in the largest oak in the 'square' a couple of hundred yards from the side road entrance.

I even had the rare privilege of seeing a female basking on the ground. I only got one decent photo which is entirely due to a bloody Ringlet that wouldn't leave her alone causing her eventually to fly up into the shrubs:



Given my long absence from any kind of UK butterflying trips, it wasn't surprising that the visit provided a few 'firsts' for 2015. After Purple Hairstreaks came Hedge Brown:



Within a few minutes, a pair of Small Skippers came into view:



Whilst White Admirals weren't exactly common (20–30 seen in total), they were nevertheless a welcome addition:



At first, I wondered whether Fermyn actually had Silver Washed Fritillary as a resident. Eventually, I saw three or four in the main rides, but a detour into a wider ride replete with bramble growth showed that they were about in serious numbers. In total, I would say I saw at least 60. Here's a male:



Several females were seen as well, but I was quite surprised to encounter two *valezinas*, as I thought these were restricted to the south of England:



Peacocks and Commas (including a Comma ab. suffusa) made a welcome reappearance with decent numbers seen, and half a dozen or so Red Admirals and a solitary Painted Lady were recorded.



The full list of species seen (in descending order of abundance) was:

Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Purple Hairstreak, Large Skipper, Silver Washed Fritillary, Hedge Brown, Large White, Comma, Green Veined White, Peacock, Small Skipper, White Admiral, Small White, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Purple Emperor, Painted Lady.

## Re: David M

by David M, 21-Jul-15 05:23 AM GMT

Purple Emperors are rarely easy. However, they DO seem to like descending to the ground at Fermyn. They tend to do this earlier in the flight period though, after which they're much harder to spot.

Still, one possibility of a later visit is that you might see Empresses going about their egg-laying activities. One guy I met on Saturday had seen three flying around the willows in Souther Wood, which is a 10 minute walk from Fermyn.

### Sunday 19th July 2015 - Local duties....

After a marathon driving stint on Saturday, I could barely muster the energy to drive to the Alun Valley site on Sunday morning. I arrived there at

10.45am and spent till just gone midday on Old Castle Down to see if I could spot any female HBFs in the throes of egg laying.

I **did** see half a dozen or so, but they were all busy nectaring, along with several Silver Washed Fritillaries and a few very faded Dark Greens.

On my way back home, I stopped off at Kilvey Hill to see my first Graylings of 2015:



### Re: David M

by Willow, 21-Jul-15 06:11 AM GMT

Good to see you made it to Fermyn David, that sure is some count for **Purple Hairstreak** 🤩

#### "David M" wrote:

I was quite surprised to encounter two valezinas, as I thought these were restricted to the south of England:

So did I, and I've asked literally dozens of people if it were true over the years, I spoke to two guys during my recent visit and they mentioned that they had spoken to a guy who had actually seen a couple, now you have confirmed it 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

### Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jul-15 04:23 AM GMT

Hi David, interesting report from Fermyn and great photos. You may not have seen a grounded PE but you did better than me with the Purple Hairstreaks 🍷 😊

#### "David M" wrote:

... but I was quite surprised to encounter two *valezinas*, as I thought these were restricted to the south of England...

Even the latest edition of Thomas and Lewington still repeats this, complete with a dotted line on a map to show the range. They have been seen in some Warwickshire woods for a few years now, on the very first page of my PD which was started in 2011 there is a photo of a *valezina* that was taken at Snitterfield Bushed near Stratford upon Avon. I am not sure how far north they may be found but they can certainly be found at a number of places in the midlands.

Cheers,

Neil

### Re: David M

by Willow, 24-Jul-15 07:59 PM GMT

Neils information adds further to the range of *valezina* David, I have always thought it rather strange that these females were supposedly so restricted in their range, even allowing for the vagaries of our native butterflies in such a small island. Resources such as **UK Butterflies** and it's countrywide membership will continue to alter the maps and some of the long held assumptions. I'm always ready to expect the unexpected, but thoroughly dislike the perpetuation of myth 😞 ...let us be the '**New Aurelians**' and leave our own legacy 😊 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

## Re: David M

by David M, 27-Jul-15 06:20 AM GMT

Interesting observation, Neil & Bill, and on the subject of distribution....

### Saturday 25th July 2015 - Surprise on the doorstep....

Castle Meadows in Abergavenny is a wonderful place in spring. The sheltered south-facing aspect attracts huge numbers of early Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks whilst Holly Blues are fairly commonplace in the adjacent Linda Vista Gardens.

In late summer though it's a bit of a write-off. The grass grows long and there isn't a great variety of plant life to attract butterflies, nor, to my knowledge, are there any colonies of Purple or White Letter Hairstreaks to compensate for this lack of variety. In fact, it's one of those places where you can expect to see the usual suspects for the time of year and little if nothing else.

On Saturday I needed to get some sun on my back because the weather here in south Wales has been dire beyond description lately. I just fancied an hour or so in a scenic location with a few fresh Vanessids/Common Blues to keep me company.

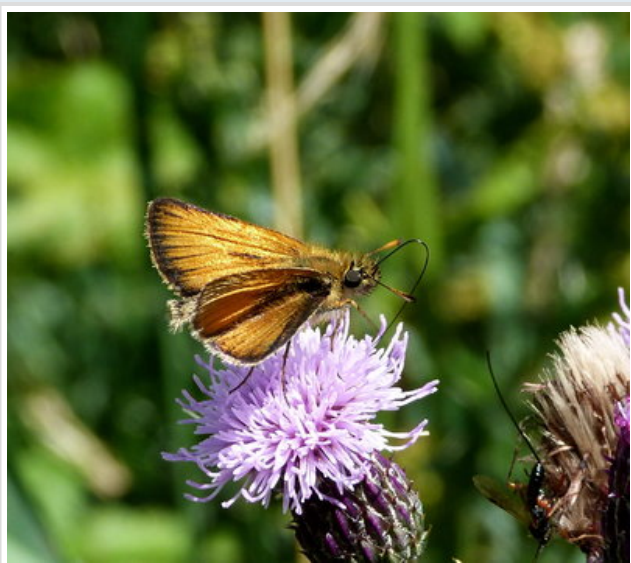
Well, I got both the above but also had a bit of an unexpected (but very pleasant) surprise.

Apart from Meadow Browns, a few Whites and the odd Small Tortoiseshell nectaring on creeping thistle, I saw nothing until I got to the penultimate field to the east of this location.

I spotted a golden skipper which, to my expectation, turned out to be a male Small Skipper. However, the second skipper I saw nectaring on the thistles caught my eye. I took an image from distance and then played it back:



It looked unmistakably 'Essex' to me so I moved in closer:



This species has been recorded in Cardiff and I have seen it myself near Usk, but to find it in Abergavenny was a bit of a shock, especially when moving on the the easternmost field in the meadows, which is the most sheltered of all:



There were three dozen plus skippers at least in this location. I studied 19 separate individuals and, astonishingly, 14 of them were Essex Skippers:



I also managed to find a mating pair. In the next image, it is the female attached precariously to the grass blade with the male in 'free-fall':

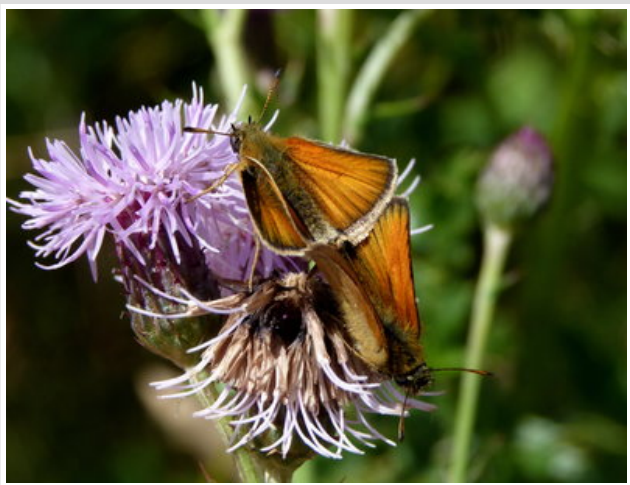




A different angle clearly shows the black undersides to the antennal tips:



They were 'buzzed' by another individual which prompted them to fly to a more comfortable looking location:



I'm not aware that this species has been recorded in Abergavenny before, so I intend to report it to the local VC co-ordinator. If the colony is a viable one, it will be nice to return to observe them in future years as previously I have usually only seen them when visiting sites in England for other, rarer species.

It was a new experience to be in a position to concentrate first and foremost on this species at a particular site. I doubt many of us venture out with Essex Skipper as the target species, but this could well provide an opportunity for me to do just that in future.

## Re: David M

by Willow, 27-Jul-15 06:25 PM GMT

Excellent discovery David 😊 just a bit more info **Essex Skipper** has been recorded from several different locations in Monmouthshire in the last few years; Martin Anthony (County Recorder) apparently had the first county record for the species in the Newport area, since then it has been discovered

as far north as Blaenserchan, not so far from Abergavenny. Of special interest to you – the species has been recorded from the Swansea area, which you may well be aware of?

Personally I think the species is under-recorded in south Wales, and as you know you have to spend time with the busy smessex clan to sort them out 😊

Consider letting Martin know of your new finding, I'm sure he would be very interested.

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

## Re: David M

by David M, 09-Aug-15 06:03 AM GMT

### Thursday 6th August 2015 – Northern Time Warp...

After visiting the Isle of Man on 5th August, I undertook what seems to now have become an annual pilgrimage to the environs of the Lake District to indulge myself in those species frequenting these northern latitudes.

After checking in for the first time to Smardale Gill in 2014, I was back at Arnside Knott this year and what struck me was just how 'late' everything seemed to be.

The weather has been pretty grim up in these parts and perhaps that explains why Dark Green Fritillaries and Ringlets were still going strong (albeit that individuals of those species seen were quite faded).

In previous trips, Scotch Argus were mainly past their best, but this year they were almost all in excellent condition. The part cloudy conditions also allowed decent opportunities to closely approach this normally skittish species. Here's a view looking east from the Knott with an indication of the cloud cover:



Here are two male *aethiops*:





This female had abnormally well developed ocelli:



Several worn Dark Green Fritillaries were seen:



A single female High Brown Fritillary was observed too:



There were a fair few faded Ringlets as well, which made me feel as though it was still mid-July. What's more, Meadow Browns were often still looking quite fresh:



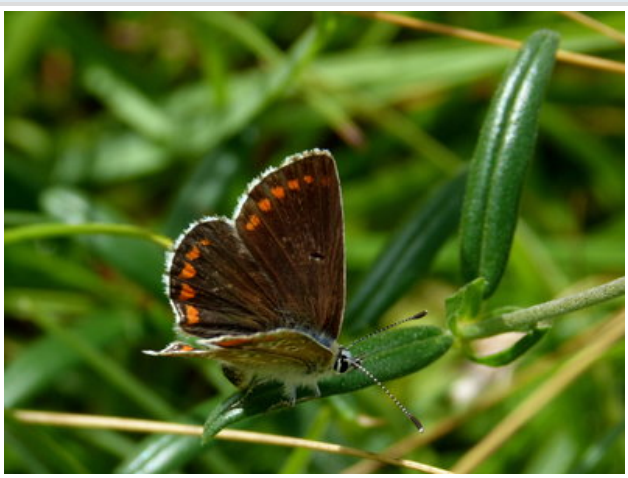
I got a bit of a surprise when I saw what I first assumed to be a late female Northern Brown Argus:





However, on inspecting the images 'full screen', this individual shows faint traces of blue around the thorax as well as some white edging to the orange markings on the hindwings. If it is a female Common Blue, then I am perplexed, since I'd expect any *icarus* specimens at this time of year to be second brood, meaning that they should be gleaming. In addition, one would also expect to see plenty of males, but I never saw a single one!

Later on, I saw another individual that I am almost convinced is *salmacis*. Why? Well, this one didn't have any blue suffusion at all, nor did she have any white edging to the orange markings on the hindwings:



In addition, she was laying eggs on rock rose:



Here's the evidence:



In just less than three hours, the following species were noted:

Hedge Brown, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Speckled Wood, Grayling, Scotch Argus, Dark Green Fritillary, High Brown Fritillary, Peacock, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Small Skipper, Northern Brown Argus and possible female Common Blue.

Amazingly, no Whites were seen at all, although several were observed flying by the roadside driving into and away from the site.

#### Re: David M

by millerd, 09-Aug-15 06:55 AM GMT

That's definitely a NBA, not a Common Blue. Your underside shot has the "colon" of spots that a Common Blue wouldn't have (though one is very faint). The blue sheen to the thorax is misleading – a Brown Argus (of either species) has no blue *scales*, but may have this sheen.

I'm very envious of all these sightings – lovely shots of the Scotch Argus. I would guess some might still be around in a fortnight when I may have a chance of getting up there.

Dave

#### Re: David M

by David M, 10-Aug-15 05:09 AM GMT

##### "millerd" wrote:

I would guess some might still be around in a fortnight when I may have a chance of getting up there.

I think you'll be okay, Dave. I saw a fair few (albeit faded) on 18th August 2012, and this year is a few days behind that.

##### Saturday 8th August 2015 – Early visit to my favourite site....

A bit early for Brown Hairstreak spotting in Pembrokeshire, but with warm temperatures and cloudless skies forecast for the entire day in this exposed part of the UK, I set off at 9am to simply bask in the delights this beautiful place has to offer.

I figured that the ash trees on the perimeter of this field were likely to be the areas where male Brown Hairstreaks congregated, however, I was disappointed as despite spending probably at least an hour in total looking at the canopies of these trees (as well as others nearby), I didn't see any butterfly activity except for the occasional Holly Blue, of which I probably saw a dozen at least:



Peacocks were particularly in evidence, with at least 30 seen. Red Admirals were in double figures too. Many of these were imbibing from the buddleia growing just 20 yards into the horses' field:



There were plenty more in the thistle patch in the second field, with Hedge Brown, Comma and Small Tortoiseshell seen here too:



I ventured onto the foreshore to take stock of how things looked, and visited the limestone ridge towards the eastern end of the site, and although there were no Wall Browns (which appear sporadically here), I saw Large, Small & Green Veined White, as well as Small Skipper, Speckled Wood, Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Common Blue and Small Copper.

I returned to the horses' field at noon, and spent time at the most sheltered corner of this spot, where I found a territorial Small Copper:



I kind of 'camped out' here for a while, as this was a very productive area for Brown Hairstreaks in 2014:





Many a butterfly flew past, usually Meadow or Hedge Browns, but one caught my eye as I couldn't reconcile its flight pattern with either Hedge Brown or Small Copper. It soon settled to give me quite a surprise:



I certainly hadn't been expecting to see a female Brown Hairstreak this early in August, much less see one pottering about on blackthorn suckers as if to 'sniff out' an ideal egg laying location. Much bending of the abdomen was observed but she never actually deposited any eggs.



Eventually she was content to just bask:



A couple of Silver Washed Fritillaries pushed the day's tally to 17 species prior to me leaving at ten past two. A very satisfactory day, and weather permitting I'll be back at least twice more before the season is over.

### Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 12-Aug-15 06:08 AM GMT

Hi David, just caught up with your report from Arnside. Interesting comparison with my trip up there the previous week when the Scotch Argus were just starting and I only saw males.

That is a beautiful fresh Brown Hairstreak too.

Great stuff 😊

Neil.

### Re: David M

by Maximus, 13-Aug-15 04:26 AM GMT

Lovely Brown Hairstreak shots, David, they do seem to ovi-practice quite a lot – guess they're just searching for the exact right spot. Looking at your photos I think you should go back at least a couple of times 😊

### Re: David M

by David M, 14-Aug-15 05:38 AM GMT

#### Wednesday 12th August 2015 – Too good an opportunity to miss....

With winds from the south east, meaning rare near perfect conditions in the south west of Wales, I deemed it imperative to book a last minute day off work in order to pay a quick second visit to the Brown Hairstreak site in Pembrokeshire.

I felt a tad short-changed in that I saw no males flying around the ash canopies when I visited on Saturday, so by 8.40am I arrived in the little car park to devote 5 hours to scanning the tree tops.

I'm pleased to say that this time there were several individuals observed high up, but, sadly, no females were seen at ground level this time round.

It's always hard to definitively identify a butterfly when it's flying so far away from you, but I'm absolutely certain I saw a **minimum** of six males in the ash trees, and very possibly as many as ten.

One male I can report with certainty was this one:



Most photos I took were merely 'hit and hope', as it's particularly difficult to locate the butterfly in your viewfinder amongst the faraway foliage even when you can see it clearly with the naked eye! Still, this image at least proves that males are present in given ash trees, although a couple of individuals didn't seem 'right' to me. They lacked that orange tint in flight, and a little later on I spent a while observing a Hairstreak that fell precisely into this category:



To my knowledge, Purple Hairstreaks were first recorded here only two years ago, and it's still a bit of a mystery as to why they're here, as oak trees are very few in number and the only one present in this first field is a rather young, stunted specimen. Clearly, it doesn't prove to be an obstacle to *quercus*:



Just like last Saturday, I saw 17 different species. Two new ones were recorded – Painted Lady & Purple Hairstreak, whilst Ringlet and Small Skipper were notable absentees from last time round.

Once again, Peacocks were in strong numbers, particularly on the buddleia in the first field:



This impeccably fresh Comma also proved irresistible:



Six Silver Washed Fritillaries were seen during this visit, with one male seemingly wedged to the hemp agrimony in the old glade on the foreshore:



There was another uplifting moment when a faded, male SWF briefly indulged in a little nectar-imbibing on the buddleia by the observation tower. I took several photos of it alongside both Peacocks and Red Admirals but, sadly, it isn't possible to demand that all species pose with their wings open simultaneously so that curious humans can take photos!!

A very satisfying day overall. Barely a cloud passed by in nearly 5 hours and the return was as follows:

Hedge Brown 60-80  
Meadow Brown 40-60  
Peacock 20-30  
Red Admiral 8-12  
Brown Hairstreak 6-10  
Holly Blue 6-10  
Silver Washed Fritillary 6  
Small Copper 5  
Large White 5  
Small White 4  
Speckled Wood 4  
Common Blue 3  
Comma 3  
Small Tortoiseshell 2  
Painted Lady 2  
Purple Hairstreak 1-3

## Re: David M

by David M, 16-Aug-15 07:58 AM GMT

### Saturday 15th August 2015 – Betulae Bonanza on record breaking day....

A third visit to the Brown Hairstreak site at West Williamston in Pembrokeshire within a week saw surprises galore and records shattered.

My previous best tally for sightings of this species here in a single day was 10 in late August 2013, but today there was an absolute minimum of 12 different individuals seen, and very possibly double that total.

I arrived at 8.35am and had barely set foot into the first field when I saw my first male BH in the ash tree overlooking the car park. A thorough investigation into the activity in the ash canopies saw at least 8 different males, with a particular flurry around 9.30am when 2 separate 'dogfights' were observed between warring individuals.

As ever here, these insects do not descend to earth to take nectar; instead they are wedded to the upper reaches of the tree canopy meaning that the only images possible are those taken with maximum zoom from distance:





At about 10.15am this activity died down to the point where I deemed it wasteful to spend further time attempting to study it. Instead, I wandered around the field, at all times inspecting the hedgerows and the trees for any further possible sightings.

A particularly satisfying interlude was when two different female Holly Blues alighted on bramble blooms/leaves and opened their wings, which was unexpected given the sunny conditions:



A *caeruleopunctata* Small Copper was seen too:



Two Painted Ladies were present in the upper field, but both ran the gauntlet of regular harassment from the half dozen or so male Silver Washed Fritillaries present:



Then, just prior to midday, I finally spotted a female Brown Hairstreak low down in the field:



There were a couple of people who had come to the 'open day' having never seen a Brown Hairstreak before, and it was fascinating to watch their reaction to this most exquisite of British insects. We watched this first individual for a good 20 minutes before we were distracted by another female who appeared simultaneously. Both were in immaculate condition and were a joy to behold:







I even had the privilege of one of these females landing on my shoulder:



One of the females also laid the first recorded egg on this site in 2015. Bizarrely, she chose a very poorly blackthorn sucker which doesn't look as though it will survive into 2016. Still, I suppose these females are as yet very much in 'experimental' mode:



Of the four females seen, one had noticeable wing damage, as if some kind of liquid had caused stains on the upperwings:



No Purple Hairstreaks were seen, and Peacock numbers were well down on even last Wednesday. In total, 15 species were seen in a 6 hour stay in this single field. Normally, I wander throughout the site, but given the fact that it was a Hairstreak open-day, I decided to concentrate on a small area, which obviously diminished the numbers of butterflies recorded:

Hedge Brown 30-40  
Brown Hairstreak 12-20  
Holly Blue 5-10  
Red Admiral 5-10  
Silver Washed Fritillary 5-10  
Meadow Brown 5-10  
Peacock 5-10  
Speckled Wood 5  
Large White 4  
Small Copper 2  
Small White 2  
Painted Lady 2  
Common Blue 1  
Comma 1  
Green Veined White 1

### Re: David M

by Pauline, 16-Aug-15 02:48 PM GMT

A beautiful set of photos David. They are all gorgeous but I especially like the last 2 BH 😊😊 The Painted Lady shot is one I have been trying to get for a long time - wonderful underside 🍷🍷 .... and how does everyone manage to get blue spots on their SC???? 🍷🍷🍷

### Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 17-Aug-15 01:01 AM GMT

Hi David, in any other post those cracking Holly blue shots would have attracted more comment but the series of gorgeous Brown Hairstreak photos have overshadowed them somewhat.

Great stuff 🍷🍷🍷

Neil.

### Re: David M

by David M, 20-Aug-15 06:29 AM GMT

Many thanks for the feedback, everyone.

Sadly, my plans to take four days off within the next week to further my experience with this species look to have been stymied by the abnormally atrocious weather which has been forecast for this part of Wales.

Looks like it'll be Bank Holiday weekend before I next get down there, which is an awful indictment of the vagaries of the British 'summer' climate.

I sometimes wonder how butterflies survive at all in this outpost! 😞

This is **August**, not November!!

### Re: David M

by Chris Jackson, 21-Aug-15 10:39 PM GMT

Just catching up with your Brown Hairstreak photos, David.  
Only one word for them ... WOW !!  
Chris

## Re: David M

by David M, 30-Aug-15 06:35 AM GMT

### Saturday 29th August 2015 - Weather takes its toll...

Tuesday 18th August was the last convivial day weatherwise in Pembrokeshire. Since then, conditions have been truly appalling for August which is why I wanted to visit the West Williamston Brown Hairstreak site today to see what effect it has had.

Whilst things weren't exactly ideal, it was certainly sufficiently clement for these insects to go about their usual routine - 30% sunny spells, light to moderate winds and temperatures around 18c.

Well, having arrived just after 10am I was heading back to my car at 1.30pm having not seen a single Brown Hairstreak, even though general butterfly numbers were fairly reasonable.

I did one last circuit of the area that was cut in the upper field last year and lo and behold, I managed to spot a solitary female *betulae* just as I was resigned to getting into my car to head home empty handed.

The time was 1.33pm and a look at her left profile suggested she was a 'tidy' specimen:



However, when she opened her wings, it became clear that she had a deformed right hindwing:



She visited 3 different blackthorn suckers, and did something I've never seen before on the first.

She fidgeted around in typical *betulae* ovi-posturing fashion at first:



Then she laid an egg:



I expected her to move away, but she remained and continued to probe the same area with her abdomen:



She then proceeded to lay a second egg immediately above her first:



Here are the two eggs side-by-side after she'd shuffled off up towards the top of the blackthorn sucker:



A cursory inspection of some of the other new blackthorn growth threw up this little treasure trove:



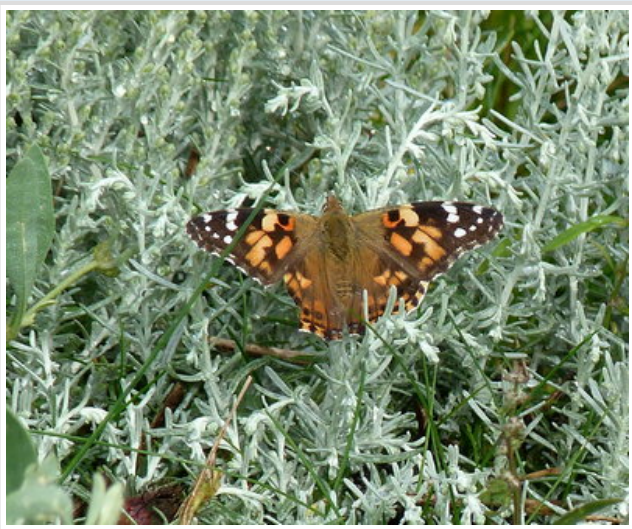
Aside from this, there were plenty of other species to be observed. Small Tortoiseshells were about in numbers on the sea asters near the high tide mark as well as the thistles in the last field before the foreshore. This one was particularly attractive:



Surprisingly, Peacock numbers were still in double figures:



Painted Ladies were also fairly ubiquitous. I managed a single long range shot of this quite dark specimen:



Hedge Browns were still about too, although all but three seen were females:



A bigger surprise was the appearance of a Meadow Brown:



I spent my last two hours in the upper field, and throughout this period a lovely female Large White kept me company:



A dozen or so Common Blues were seen, including this stunning female:



In approximately 4 hours on site, the following species were observed:

Small Tortoiseshell 30–40  
Hedge Brown 15–20  
Common Blue 10–15  
Speckled Wood 10–15  
Peacock 10–15  
Painted Lady 13  
Small Copper 6  
Green Veined White 3  
Small White 1  
Red Admiral 1  
Holly Blue 1  
Meadow Brown 1  
Large White 1  
Brown Hairstreak 1

I hope to get back down for an egg count during September, and in the meantime I pray that weather conditions improve sufficiently that those Brown Hairstreaks still remaining can go about their business. After a promising start here, things have gone downhill spectacularly.

## Re: David M

by David M, 06-Sep-15 07:48 AM GMT

### Saturday 5th September – Busy *betulae*....

Once again I was cursing the weather forecasters when I arrived at the Pembrokeshire Brown Hairstreak site at 10.05 this morning. Light cloud was predicted until 11am whereupon skies would progressively clear. Nowhere did it suggest that rain would be falling in this part of the country but that's what I had to put up with for the first half hour here. 😞

I dutifully did an egg count in the upper field nearest the car park and having reached 14, I noticed that by 10.50am skies were clearing and suddenly the sun came out and warmed things up considerably.

After a fruitless 20 minutes searching this first field I decided to move on down to the foreshore to see what other species were about.

Walking through the sea asters, I was delighted to once again see double figure numbers of Tortoiseshells. However, I was most surprised to encounter my first Brown Hairstreak of the day in this exposed part of the site:



I followed this individual for just over 5 minutes until she flew up over the shrub line:





I carried on wandering through the sea asters and stumbled upon a rather tatty looking female Silver Washed Fritillary. This is the latest date upon which I've ever seen this species. Here she is in company with one of the four female Hedge Browns seen:



And an image of her by herself whiling away the final days of her short life, blissfully unharassed by males:



Walking back along the blackthorn line, I spotted my second Brown Hairstreak just prior to midday. Although these butterflies are no longer immaculate at this time of their flight period, they are all individually recognisable due to the various blemishes they have acquired. The first specimen had a 'nick' missing out of the lower left hindwing, whilst this one was missing a tail:



I watched her ovi-posturing as well as basking for a good half hour:



She kept settling on fairly mature blackthorn but I never saw her actually lay an egg:



I then briefly had that wonderful moment when a second Brown Hairstreak buzzed past me whilst I was observing a different individual. This one flew up and over the shrub line straight away and was the only one I didn't get an image of. However, whilst searching the blackthorn for eggs, I spotted a fourth *betulae* basking on convolvulus leaves:



I duly made my way back to the first field, but couldn't resist this Red Admiral en route:



This pristine Comma was equally irresistible:



A further search for ova disturbed a fifth Brown Hairstreak by the perimeter of the first field:



By 2pm, the clouds had evaporated and I decided to stay later than I do normally. This paid dividends, as at 2.03pm I saw my sixth and final female of the day, and I immediately recognised her as the individual I saw laying eggs last Saturday:



There was absolutely no mistaking the deformed hindwing of this female, and it made me so proud to know that she'd survived another pretty dire week of weather and avoided the myriad of predators along the way. Whilst tracking her, there were two occasions when spiders came close to her and I was ready to intervene both times to protect her. She was also the only individual of the day that I observed actually laying an egg. She eventually flew up into the ash tree at the back of the field next to the telegraph pole at 2.22pm, having first enjoyed a well-earned rest on the perimeter fence:



Six females is an excellent return at this site, and a final egg tally of 54 isn't bad either. Clearly, these butterflies have been actively egg laying in the past week as last Saturday I only found 11 ova. On two occasions I found triplets:



Just under four hours on site returned the following:

Speckled Wood 30–40  
Small Tortoiseshell 15–25  
Small Copper 8  
Brown Hairstreak 6  
Red Admiral 5  
Common Blue 4  
Hedge Brown 4  
Large White 3  
Peacock 3  
Silver Washed Fritillary 1  
Comma 1

I hope to pay one last visit here in a couple of weeks to do a further egg count. Given the flurry of activity recently as well as a reasonable weather forecast for next week, I hope that this count will break the 100 barrier!

## Re: David M

by David M, 11-Sep-15 06:18 AM GMT

### Thursday 10th September 2015 – Last hot day of the year....

More than ever, I'd been keeping my eye on the weather forecast this week. South-easterlies gaining in strength from Tuesday resulted in 20c temperatures and blue skies in Pembrokeshire today, so I duly booked a day's annual leave to visit the Brown Hairstreak site in Pembrokeshire for a record breaking seventh time in a year!!

This one was more of a social visit though, as I had a friend with me who had just sat an accountancy exam the previous day and was in need of a simplistic 'back to nature' experience, so unlike other trips, this one saw me neglect my time-consuming studies of how many eggs had been laid, and we simply meandered around the site basking in the rare glory of a mid-September day with no clouds whatsoever and temperatures nudging the seventies Fahrenheit!

My friend proved to have excellent eyes, as she spotted the first two Brown Hairstreaks whilst they were basking on blackthorn. Normally, I only notice this species when I observe them in flight. It just proves that no matter how much experience you have, a different pair of eyes and a different *modus operandum* can occasionally 'trump' you.

Four females were seen in total on the foreshore. They were all a bit the worse for wear, but two of them were actively egg laying, and in addition we were able to provide a first ever view of this rare species to a couple who had travelled a fair way to be here today which is always very satisfying:



There's still a fair range of species flying here. We saw 13 in total. Apart from the 4 Brown Hairstreaks, the following were observed:

- Small Tortoiseshell 30-40
- Speckled Wood 10-20
- Common Blue 5-10
- Small White 4
- Red Admiral 3
- Hedge Brown 3
- Painted Lady 3
- Small Copper 2
- Peacock 1
- Large White 1
- Meadow Brown 1
- Holly Blue 1

This Tortoiseshell stood out because of the abnormally expanded black area on the forewings:



Having attained such a tally prior to 1pm, I felt it was my duty to refrain from further hunting in the quite windy conditions, so we decamped to the gloriously rugged Pembrokeshire coastline to take in St. Govan's Chapel:



The coastline round here is spectacular:



The Peacock at West Williamston didn't come to ground, but my friend managed to nail the one we saw on the coast which briefly settled in a sheltered dip:



To cap the day off, I spotted my first UK Clouded Yellow fluttering along the main A477 about 10 minutes into our journey home. Like a fool possessed, I veered off the highway and parked on the cycle lane of the road and got out to try and track this critter down. After a few minutes, I spotted it flying again and noticed that it was a flighty male. It came down about 40 yards away but in spite of a thorough inspection, I was unable to flush it out and must have looked pretty ridiculous to passing motorists walking up and down the same stretch of roadside with my camera at the ready 😞

Still, if Clouded Yellows have reached THIS western outpost, then I suspect that they must be about in greater numbers further east. With my work virtually over at the Brown Hairstreak site now for 2015, I at least have another target to concentrate on before October arrives and obliterates what's left of the butterflying season!

## Re: David M

by David M, 18-Sep-15 12:29 AM GMT

### Thursday 17th September 2015 - Good day for an egg count....

The weather forecast for today was probably the most disgracefully inaccurate one I've ever known. Even at 9am, as I was getting my things together to pay another visit to Pembrokeshire, we were promised sunny intervals and light cloud all day.

Arriving at 10.20am, the sunny intervals were precisely TWO in number, after which a bank of grey cloud rolled in which thickened enough to produce rain by 12.40pm, at which point I decided to call it quits.

Still, the day was not without its successes. I did a timed Brown Hairstreak egg count in the upper field, reaching a creditable 61 in exactly an hour. I found a further 7 on the foreshore bringing the total tally to 68.

There WERE butterflies about - a dozen or so Speckled Woods which seem impervious to dank conditions, five Small Tortoiseshells and singleton Painted Lady and Red Admiral.

Here's the dismal scene (Met Office - you should be ashamed!)

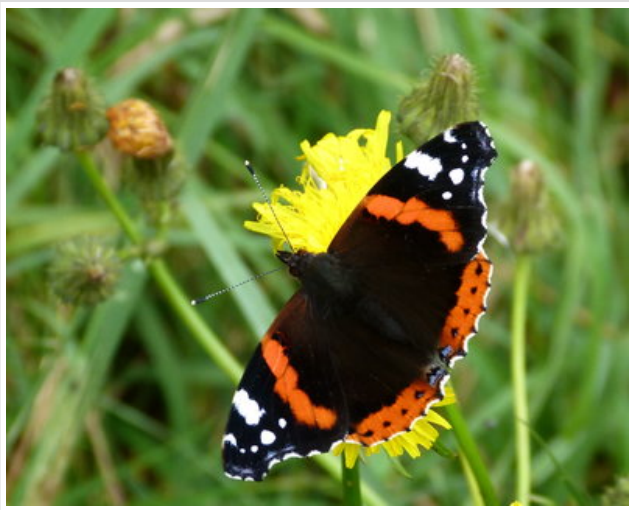


Painted Lady in the top field:





Last butterfly seen before the rain arrived:



### Re: David M

by jens, 18-Sep-15 03:51 AM GMT

David, I've long believed the Met Office prepares its forecasts with London, the south and the south east in mind, and take little or no interest in the rest of us. Back in July when we were promised a heatwave, and indeed I was sitting at home watching tennis at a sweltering Wimbledon, the rain was absolutely p\*\*\*ing down outside (I live 10 miles north of Cardiff). What annoys me most is that two of the Met's foremost presenters on the BBC, Carol Kirkwood and Matt Taylor, were born or raised in Scotland, so they at least should be aware that there is a world outside of Bracknell! And of all the public funded companies the Met Office has probably had more money given it to purchase up to date computer equipment to ensure its operating efficiency than any other government department. And they still cant detect a b\*\*\*\*y great rain cloud over south Wales. It remains to be seen whether the replacement to the Met will be any more accurate.

Right, rant over! I'm glad you had success in finding Brown Hairstreak eggs and managed to see at least 3 butterfly species! At least your journey wasn't in vain. We can but hope for a late sunny spell with the chance of a few more sightings.

Jens.

### Re: David M

by David M, 28-Sep-15 06:10 AM GMT

#### Sunday 27th September 2015 – Coastal capers.....

Time to make the most of the unseasonably good weather today without having specific butterfly species in mind.

Me and my neighbour walked round Whitford Burrows on the north west Gower coast between 11.30am and 2pm today. Red Admirals numbered about a dozen or so (most were found nectaring on the ivy on the lanes leading down from the car park). Eight or nine Speckled Woods were seen too, along with singleton Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Small Copper and Meadow Brown.

It was still glorious when we arrived back at the car, so we took a little detour to Port Eynon which is on the south coast of the peninsula.

A couple of Small Whites were seen amongst the dunes, along with some everlasting pea, which I paid attention to just in case by some miracle a wayward Long Tailed Blue had found its way this far west! 🤔

No such luck, but there was a most pleasant surprise by way of a beautiful, female Clouded Yellow which was observed enjoying herself on the valerian blooms:



We watched her for a good ten minutes or more as she fluttered delicately amongst the dunes, occasionally alighting on the ground as if to inject some warmth into her:



However, she wasn't interested in any nectar source other than valerian, and several times she moved in a wide arc only to suddenly dart back down on the nearest flower:



Here's the area where she was found:



Whilst it was a beautiful day, with temperatures reaching 17c and barely a cloud to bother the sun, one can't help wondering why we can't have a dose of these conditions in May, June, July or August. Apparently, it's set to continue, but there are precious few butterflies left to benefit from it, although I daresay Red Admirals will have a field day!

### Re: David M

by Maximus, 07-Oct-15 04:17 AM GMT

Great shots of a beautiful Clouded Yellow, David. They don't appear to have been quite so common this year in the UK, especially inland.

### Re: David M

by David M, 12-Oct-15 06:16 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments, folks, as always.

#### Sunday 11th October 2015 – Cloudy skies but the season still rolls on....

Shame that conditions were largely overcast today, as a visit to the National Botanic Gardens near Cross Hands, Carmarthenshire, always has potential for butterflies given the abnormal array of flowering plants present.

The main draw for those butterflies still active was undoubtedly the verbena growing in and around the walled gardens. Had it been sunny I'm sure 30+ individual butterflies would have been seen, but given the cloud, few were active.

Half a dozen Red Admirals were observed, along with 5 Small Tortoiseshells. A single Speckled Wood was also seen at the woodland edge to the north west of the site, and the biggest surprise was provided by a Painted Lady, still going strong and seen nectaring and basking on the way out at about 3pm.

Here's a view looking back towards the glass dome (the butterfly is on the rocks just above the leaf on the right near the lawn edge):



A closer view:



### Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 14-Oct-15 07:14 AM GMT

Hi David, congratulations on that quite superb Clouded Yellow a couple of posts ago. I would be happy with a sighting and pictures like that at any time, never mind October!

For what it's worth, I have tended to find more Clouded Yellows the further west on travels on the south coast of England, reaching a peak in Cornwall, Devon and Dorset, though only a few this year. In contrast, most Long-tailed Blues have been in the south-east. Interesting that you are seeing Red Admirals, they have been notable in their absence in the east this year.

### Re: David M

by David M, 02-Nov-15 06:10 AM GMT

#### Sunday 1st November 2015 – Beautiful conditions....but not many butterflies...

After the frustrations caused by yesterday's persistent high cloud, today was glorious from the word go; in fact, it was possibly the warmest November day I've ever experienced, with temperatures reaching 17c and not a cloud to be seen.

Setting out for Bracelet Bay on the Swansea coast at 11.30am, I deemed it likely that double figure numbers of butterflies would be seen, but in the event, I saw only four – three Red Admirals and, surprisingly, a lone male Green Veined White.

This was the only one of the four to actually settle:



The area in the following photograph is the expanse of winter flowering hebe, which thrives in the maritime microclimate around the coastguard's hut here at Bracelet Bay. Sadly, there weren't too many flowers in bloom today, but hopefully there will be more over the coming weeks and I will keep checking for butterflies up until the run-up to Christmas:



**Re: David M**

by Butterflysaurus rex, 03-Nov-15 03:46 AM GMT

WRT your Painted Lady sighting David, we saw what looked like a freshly emerged example on Brighton racecourse on Saturday! This year seems to be full of surprises!

All the best

James

**Re: David M**

by Neil Freeman, 03-Nov-15 04:46 AM GMT

Hi David,

You may have only seen four butterflies but that was three more than I saw in very similar conditions 🍷

Cheers,

Neil

**Re: David M**

by David M, 07-Nov-15 03:31 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments, folks.

With this weekend being a washout, further opportunities to see adult butterflies appear slim.

That said, we haven't been anywhere near a frost in south Wales thus far, and if these conditions persist, I suspect Red Admirals at least will be around for a week or three yet!! 😊

**Re: David M**

by David M, 25-Nov-15 04:58 AM GMT

A butterfly reported by a work colleague this afternoon (not seen by me, but given the 11c temperatures and intermittent sunshine it wasn't surprising).

We've only had one frost so far, meaning that if things stay relatively becalmed, there could still be some action around the warm coastline here into December!

**Re: David M**

by David M, 28-Dec-15 06:00 AM GMT

**Christmas 2015.....**

Global warming...ho hum!! Well, even for a sceptic like me, it is surely a reality when you have 15c temperatures on Boxing Day with people actually drinking their pints outside on the pub benches:



Christmas Day itself in SE Wales was stormy and wet, but mild nonetheless and the weather played havoc with the annual Yuletide chicken treat of 1kg of sweetcorn and half a kg of raw mince served up on a platter....only half the flock turned up when it was gifted to them....the rest were sheltering in the sheds!!





Christmas dinner for *homo sapiens* was a formidable beef joint, which went down very well and lasted Boxing Day AND 27th December lunch!!



However, it didn't feel right eating it with the conservatory windows open and then going to bed without the central heating! Unfortunately, unlike many parts of southern England, the warm conditions haven't brought about anything in the way of sunny periods round these parts, so skies remain grey, rain keeps falling (though not anywhere near as heavily as in the north of England) and the wind is regularly gale force. Flowering plants have been taken out of their natural cycle - I saw celandines and ground elder abloom on Boxing Day whilst walking the dogs....but no butterflies, though had the sun come out for an hour or two then I'm sure there'd have been a Red Admiral or two to observe.

My New Year's wish is for AT LEAST one week of seriously cold weather...these conditions if prolonged will not do nature any favours (my friend's housekeeper is a farmer's wife and only today she told me that she was expecting the first lambs before the end of January).