

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Feb-16 07:41 PM GMT

Well, it had to be done. A nice sunny day for once, so it was off down the road to Wisley for a therapeutic dose of winter butterflies.

I say winter – it seemed more like spring, with daffodils, crocuses and baby irises out. Many trees and shrubs were also in bloom, or just coming into flower, including a lovely display of camelias and the odd magnolia (especially my favourite, the stellata variety). Various scented shrub varieties were in flower too and the breeze was quite aromatic in places.



flowering camelia



some kind of hazel?

But I digress...

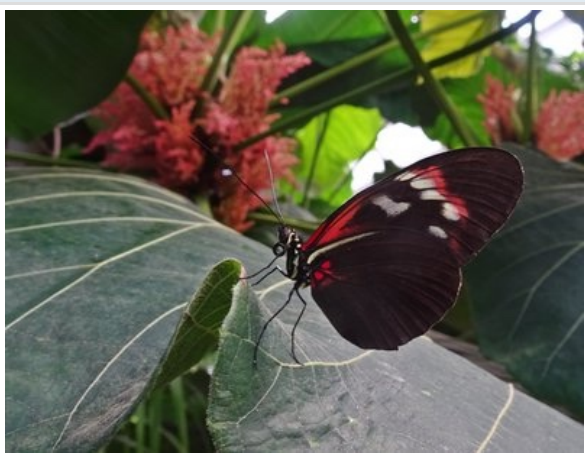
The queue for the butterflies was advertised as 50 minutes at the main entrance to the gardens, but in reality it was only 20, if that. Once inside, however, there were a lot of people packed together in the warmth and humidity. This did not make for relaxed photography, but at least modern technology meant most folk did not feel the need to get that close to the insects. There was nothing unusual flying today, but here is a selection. I have identified what I can with the aid of the supplied guide, but all observations/corrections are welcome. One or two were not on the guide at all.



Black & White Helen (Papilio nephelus)



Great Eggfly (Hypolimnas bolina)



Heliconia sp.



Indian Leafwing (Kallima paralekta)



Indian Leafwing (Kallima paralekta)



Malachite (Siproeta stelene)



Scarlet Peacock (*Anartia amathea*)



Tiger Mimic Queen (*Lycorea haia cleobaea*)



???

The following unknown species had a glorious blue/purple patch on the forewing in certain lights



???



???

A group of five gathered together for some reason. I'm not sure about any of these.



an assortment of different species

A pleasant interlude before the season kicks off – perhaps only a month away... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 07-Feb-16 07:54 PM GMT

Hi Dave

Great shots. I visited earlier in the week and have had a lot of help from Martin and Guy in trying to identify these. I believe/think your unidentified ones are Great Eggfly (Brown), Great Eggfly (Blue) and Pink Rose. Guy kindly sent me a link to his own photos from a butterfly house which is incredibly useful – you will find it in my diary.

Re: millerd

by MrSpOck, 07-Feb-16 09:14 PM GMT

The Tiger Mimic Queen (*Lycorea haia cleobaea*) is not that, its a form of *Heliconius Ismenius*, as the wing shape is heliconid and not what is listed which has broader forewings. They were also egg laying on the *Passiflora alata*, the mimic doesnt feed on Passionflowers as they are too toxic, thats why its mimicing the heliconius.

There is a picture of this form on this link http://www.heliconiusworks.com/pages/c_species.htm

The Unidentified ones are

The Heliconid i would say is Small Postman, *H. erato*, but they are always difficult to tell apart from the postman, without seeing egg laying, the pupae, or picking the females up and smelling them [ive not done the latter], when a female is picked up two yellow scent glands appear from the end of the body.

Great Morman [*P. memnon*]

The others are mostly Great Eggfly as Pauline has said, the male is the one with the 4 egg patches on the wings, the female is the blue wing patch version.

Did you visit the Butterfly Conservation people stranded in the Hatching area.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Feb-16 10:52 PM GMT

Fantastic images Dave 😊 - they're making rue the gales and rain outside even more 😞 Still shouldn't be long now, maybe five more weeks til things really start kicking off 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 08-Feb-16 12:59 PM GMT

Great way to spend the day Millerd out of the cold winds and rain, with such lovely Butterflies, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Feb-16 10:04 PM GMT

Thanks for the ID info, Mr SpOck. I won't correct my labelling on here as your amendments are immediately below, but will do so on my own copies. I didn't get a chance to chat with the BC people, as their table was busy when I passed through - I had to admire the variety of citrus trees instead.

Wisley was actually shut yesterday because of the windy weather. Ever since a nasty accident at Kew involving a branch breaking off a tree, no one will take any chances.

Thanks for your kind comments Wurzel and Goldie - it does make a big difference to the winter blues to see some colourful butterflies and the sunshine made a big difference too. Though they do fly in these glasshouses when it's cloudy, a bit of sun wakes them up properly and suddenly there are four times as many as you thought they were. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by MrSpOck, 09-Feb-16 10:43 PM GMT

The *Citrus medica* is very impressive, people were asking if they were giant lemons, ive always wanted to grow that species. Last year the citrus plants got laid on by escapee swallowtails, that we put back into the main display area, but they were laying for about 30 minutes before they were in reach.

I hope to have tropical butterflies again in my greenhouses when the weather warms up in the spring.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Mar-16 09:23 PM GMT

Getting twitchy now - another chilly day with deceptive strong sunshine from time to time, but no butterflies. I had a trawl today through a few other photos taken during the winter, but nothing much sprang out. An odd selection:

Firstly a frosty day on 22nd November up at Hindhead Common. I'd forgotten that before the record-breaking warm December, there had been a couple of cold November days. I came across a curious stone commemorating a murder, and a Robin doing a bit of pre-Christmas posing.



Next up is a particularly bright parhelion (sundog, or false sun) seen from home on 16th January. It appeared brighter than the real sun, which is in the picture behind cloud cover.



Finally, one morning when taking my son to school, I noticed a particular evergreen tree that I'd somehow overlooked before. It looked familiar, but rather out of place in a suburban front garden. Closer scrutiny revealed the presence of plump black shiny fruit – it was indeed a sizeable olive tree, complete with olives which appeared to be ripe. I know olives are quite hardy (down to minus 10), but I have never see such a large one growing in the ground in the UK, nor one bearing ripe fruit.



Roll on spring...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Mar-16 10:41 PM GMT

Great Robin shot Dave 😊 - I know what you mean about getting twitchy here we are in March and not s sniff of a butterfly 😞😞 Surely it can't be much longer now...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Mar-16 06:30 PM GMT

After the sun had burnt off the low cloud this morning, it was still pretty chilly and there was a bit of a breeze from the east. I left it till lunchtime to let the sun get to work on some of the sheltered patches of ivy, and set off round my standard walk around my local patch. Sure enough, I soon spotted the unmistakable flash of a brilliant yellow male Brimstone. It patrolled up and down a patch of ivy before settling briefly near the ground, showing the discolouration these butterflies often have from their winter sojourn in damp and dingy hiding places.



It was then disturbed by another similar butterfly, and the two of them tussled for a while before the second insect also decided to land nearby. This one was unblemished as far as I could see, and the photo doesn't do it justice as I failed to compensate for its luminosity against the darker background.



So - off the mark for 2016! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 13-Mar-16 07:01 PM GMT

Well done Dave, but TWO Brimstones is just plain greedy. 🍷
Sightings, generally seem to be a bit slow so far this year.

Best wishes,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 13-Mar-16 08:05 PM GMT

Lucky bugger, I knew there's be a fair few seen this weekend but I've had to work it all 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Mar-16 11:55 PM GMT

Nice Brimstones Dave, I got a brace the other day, but already this season I'm behind with my PD 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 18-Mar-16 11:38 AM GMT

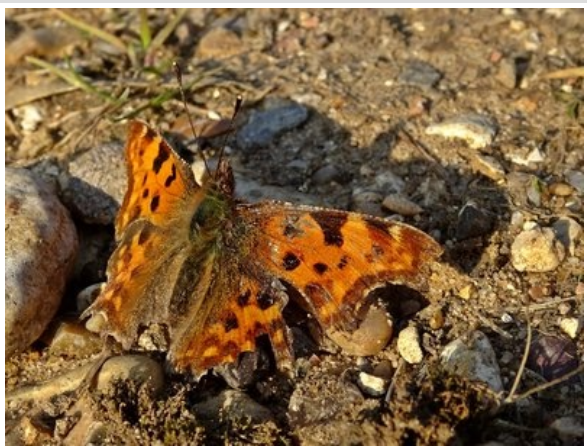
Love the Brimstones Millerd 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Mar-16 11:49 PM GMT

Thanks, folks; always good to see the first one(s) of the year.

I managed to get out in the sun today, albeit briefly rather late on. I did a quick tour of some of my local patch and found a solitary Comma basking on the ground.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Mike Robinson, 23-Mar-16 10:13 AM GMT

Such a lovely colour on the Comma Butterfly.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Mar-16 11:22 PM GMT

Nice Comma Dave – lunchtime jaunts are a must at this time of year! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Apr-16 05:41 PM GMT

At last! A sunny day, and I'm not at work. 😊

I had two separate tours of my local patch today, one between 11 and 12 and the other between 1 and half past 2. The first was notable for seeing Brimstones in double figures, the second for seeing none at all! Definitely a morning butterfly. The first butterfly encountered today was actually a white one. I assumed it would be a Small White, but having looked at the photo snatched before it set off again, it was definitely Green-veined.



I saw several more whites during both walks, but all others were of the Small persuasion.



Peacocks and Commas appeared, with the latter in good numbers during the afternoon.





I also found a couple of Small Tortoiseshells, making four new species for the year and the grand total now stands at six.



One particular piece of interest was watching a female Comma meander gently along a hedgerow (quite different behaviour than the males) and wander into a male's airspace. I managed a few pictures of their courting behaviour, but unfortunately they were interrupted by an aggressive male Peacock and lost track of each other.





A proper spring butterfly day. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 02-Apr-16 06:53 PM GMT

Interesting shots of the Commas Dave – pity the Peacock ended their interaction.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 02-Apr-16 08:05 PM GMT

As Pauline says, fascinating stuff with those Commas, and lots of great shots of a bounty of early spring species.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 02-Apr-16 08:31 PM GMT

You had a very similar day to me, Dave. Fabulous wasn't it 😊.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by David M, 02-Apr-16 09:19 PM GMT

Good for you, Dave, especially seeing the two courting Commas. It's rare to see this species sharing territory without a fight developing, but I suppose it IS spring.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-Apr-16 05:10 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave 🍷 – looks like I need to try and get out soon – I've been caught out a couple of times already by the weather men and their inaccuracies 😊 As the Whites are flying it seems things are finally moving along!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 03-Apr-16 09:28 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Good to see you are getting pout and about and seeing butterflies. Interesting shots of the Commas, not something I have witnessed myself although I have seen similar behaviour with Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks.

millerd wrote:

I had two separate tours of my local patch today, one between 11 and 12 and the other between 1 and half past 2. The first was notable for seeing Brimstones in double figures, the second for seeing none at all! Definitely a morning butterfly. Dave

Therein lies the reason that I tend not to see many early Brimstones...my opportunities to get out are mostly in the afternoons at weekends.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Apr-16 11:38 PM GMT

Thank you all. It was a good day, and very welcome.

Since then, I've been up to Yorkshire twice. The first trip had one decent day (3rd April), when I saw several Brimstones, Small Tortoiseshells and Whites passing through my sister's garden in Wilberfoss. Nothing stopped at all as at this time of year there are not many suitable nectar sources.

A couple of days back home, and on the morning of 8th, I had a quick walk around my local patch before trekking north again. I spotted a single Brimstone, and then at some distance away in one of the wooded bits, I glimpsed my first Speckled Wood of the year. I managed one lousy shot for the record.



The second trip north was to Holmfirth, and after a miserable Saturday, this morning (10th) was sunny, and just about warm enough to wake up the local Small Tortoiseshells. They were attracted by heather in particular, and again a long shot was all I could manage.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 11-Apr-16 04:07 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, at least your seeing some Whites and Speckies, looks like the East Coast is better than the West at present, not seen a single one yet of each. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 11-Apr-16 07:33 PM GMT

Hi Dave, I see you have beaten me to a Specklie this year 😊 Still no sign of them in my garden yet although there have been a few sightings around Warwickshire.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by David M, 11-Apr-16 09:57 PM GMT

Well done, Dave. Specklies and Whites are natural precursors to Orange Tips, which I hope we'll all be seeing very soon.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 12-Apr-16 07:32 AM GMT

Holly Blues soon, Dave. We are both fortunate to have a productive ' local patch '.

Best wishes,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 12-Apr-16 11:13 PM GMT

Hi Dave,
First Holly Blue seen today, but not stopping for it's portrait.

All the best ,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Apr-16 10:21 PM GMT

There's definitely a West/East divide at the moment Dave 🌍 – I just can't seem to catch a break over here and the localised Salisbury weather is doing it's usual trick of being bad pretty much all of the time – apart from the last couple of days that is.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Apr-16 11:07 PM GMT

No Holly Blues here yet that I've seen, though I've missed the last two sunny mornings by being at work. Walks locally on both days after work were quite pleasantly warm though blighted by cloud, so all I saw were singles of both Comma and Peacock. Tomorrow looks similar and then it all goes wrong again at the weekend! A bit depressing to be honest. I think I'm sharing your weather and frustration, Wurzel. 😞

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Apr-16 08:41 PM GMT

Third day lucky! This afternoon may not have been quite so warm, but there was more sunshine, and I was able to get onto my local patch an hour or so earlier too.

What a difference from yesterday – within a few minutes, there was the first Holly Blue of the year, one that had obviously been out a day or two.





It's a pity the weather goes downhill again for the weekend.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Butterflysaurus rex, 14-Apr-16 09:40 PM GMT

It doesn't seem very long since I last saw some Holly Blues Dave, they did spectacularly well in this part of the world last year. Hopefully we'll see another bumper year this year too. Nice Peacock photos as well. 😊

ATB

James

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Apr-16 07:56 PM GMT

It would be great to have another good year for Holly Blues, James. The last few have all been good ones, so unfortunately I'm expecting them to dip a bit this year because of their natural cycle in tandem with their parasite. 😞 Who knows? It may not happen. 😊

After a very chilly night, Sunday 17th started sunny, and stayed mostly that way for much of the day. However the temperature probably didn't reach more than 12 degrees at best. Nevertheless, I found a bit of interest walking around my local patch. – foremost in this were the first Orange Tips of the year. I came across a patrolling male first, in the same place that the first one usually appears, but the sun going in did not coincide with it passing by as I had hoped, and it carried on flying. Several other white butterflies appeared, but the first trio of these turned out to be Green-veined Whites, one male and two females.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 17-Apr-16 09:33 PM GMT

Nice one(s) Dave, as for the female Orange Tip 🍷 .

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 17-Apr-16 10:23 PM GMT

Lovely GVW's Dave 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 18-Apr-16 09:56 AM GMT

All your photos are great Dave, 🍷🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-16 10:40 PM GMT

Fantastic photos Dave 🍷 – and the season has really begun in earnest now you've started holly Blue Whispering 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 19-Apr-16 09:03 PM GMT

Lovely GVW underside shots, Dave. I must try to get some myself this year – I normally pay scant attention to this species.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Apr-16 09:47 PM GMT

Thank you everyone. As David says, the GVW is always worth a look. The spring and summer broods vary quite a bit, and the "green" veins are really a subtle blend of yellow and black. Some spring males can be almost pure dazzling white on the upperside – striking in the spring sun. As for whispering to Holly Blues, Wurzel – I'm afraid I had to shout at the only one I saw this afternoon, as it stayed resolutely high up... 😊

In fact, that was largely the story of this afternoon's ramble around my local patch. I was out between 4 and half past 5, in clear sunshine and reasonable temperatures. Altogether I saw one Holly Blue, two Speckled Woods, four Brimstones, one Small White, five Green-veined Whites, three that could have been either and four Orange Tips (3m & 1f) plus numerous Commas and Peacocks. Almost all (except the latter two species) were seen well above head height, and not close enough for decent photos. Even the Orange Tips stayed mostly in the trees. A selection...

Commas do like to perch and pose delightfully



Peacocks are nearly as good at it, but prefer less prominent perches



Both Speckled Woods remained high up, probably a prelude to roosting for the night



One nice female GVW up in a tree...



...and what appears to be at least two butterflies indulging in what was probably courtship, but looked pretty rough



A Brimstone, also probably thinking about settling down for the night



A female Orange Tip...



...and a male. Both were at a distance



Not a bad afternoon. Good to see the Orange Tips at last – hopefully there will be some more. With luck the female will have encountered one of the males as they were patrolling the same piece of woodland edge only minutes apart.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Apr-16 09:28 PM GMT

With a day of sunshine in prospect and scant chance of anything remotely like it in the near future, I took the day off work for my first expedition of the year.

The initial target was Noar Hill in Hampshire, and some early Dukes. For the first couple of hours, there was not much to be seen – a few Peacocks, rather more Brimstones, and just the one (female) Orange Tip. (In fact, the scarcity of Orange Tips this year is becoming a bit worrying. I didn't see any along the roadside all day today in continuous sunshine.)



A false alarm with a small dark butterfly turned out to be a Green Hairstreak.

By noon there were quite a few folk out on the hill looking for Dukes, and two or three were found. Two were quite close to each other, one male and one female.







After all that excitement, I decided to head across country to Denbies for the first visit of the year. One of the people at Noar Hill had been at Mill Hill earlier in the day and had seen Grizzled Skippers, so I hoped Denbies might have hatched one or two as well. The path at the top of the main slopes, along the treeline, was warm in the sun, and several Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells were basking and chasing each other. I headed for the steep set of steps, and as I went down I caught sight of a Green Hairstreak. This little spot is a reliable location for this species, and I'm glad to say this individual posed beautifully. I only saw the one.





I walked all the way along the bottom of the slope and then back across the middle. At the far end, I disturbed a Grizzled Skipper from the path in front of me. It settled again, but disappeared behind me as I tried to take its photo. A bit further along, another appeared, nectaring on the violets that dotted the grass. This one was a bit more worn.



A really good day – three new species for the year and the most made of some rare sunshine. The weather ahead looks thoroughly unpleasant.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 20-Apr-16 10:49 PM GMT

A fabulous haul there, Dave. The sunshine today certainly brought out the Butterflies. My next targets are Green Hairstreak, and Duke. I hope I can obtain images as good as yours. No need to worry about Holly Blue numbers, many were flying this afternoon.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Pete Eeles, 21-Apr-16 09:12 PM GMT

Excellent sequence showing the act of ... er ... mating! Well done, Dave. I've only seen this half a dozen times myself, but never captured it ... it all happens so quickly!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-16 10:08 PM GMT

Ahhhhh I hate having to work all week 🙄 Lovely Dukes, Grizzlies and Greenstreaks 🙄 And to cap it all the weather has gone down hill just in time for the weekend 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Susie, 22-Apr-16 10:13 PM GMT

It has been lovely catching up with your diary, I didn't realise that there was so much going on already!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Apr-16 09:54 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor – it was a great day out. 😊

Thanks, Pete. Yes it was very quick – only a minute or two from encounter to settling down on the bramble. It was not very private, mind – there were six or seven spectators with cameras big and small. 🙄

I was lucky with that day off, Wurzel. 😊 However, the Brownie point system applies at work too, so unfortunately I'm in deficit at a very early point in the season... 😞

Nice to hear from you, Susie! 😊 Yes, there seems to be a bit going on despite the chilliness of the weather, though it seems all wrong going out to look for butterflies still in my winter coat. 😊

Which is what I did today. I went out round my local patch in a sunny spell around the middle of the day. With the temperature no more than 12 degrees at best, I was surprised to see much at all, but there were in fact quite a few white butterflies around. The first I saw was a female Small White, and very soon afterwards a female Green-veined.



I reached sheltered stretch of path where the garlic mustard is just coming into flower – this plant is about to have an excellent year (it was hardly seen at all in 2015). Flying weakly around these plants were two more white butterflies – both turned out to be female Orange Tips. A bit further on, I found another of the same, and then at last I spotted a male which immediately attempted to accost this female. No success here – she displayed typical rejection behaviour and the male gave up. There followed a succession of various whites, and several more Orange Tips, including one very small male. None of these paused for more than a moment, and I started hoping for the sun to go in so one or two might go to ground. Eventually it did, and I managed to track a female Orange Tip to a perch on a bramble.



Overall, more Orange Tips than there have been, but still more females than males: 4 to 3. Very much a ladies' day, with all the species photographed being females.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-May-16 08:11 PM GMT

The last week has been quite sunny, but very cold, and spent entirely in the office at the best part of each day. I had an errand to run on Saturday 30th that took me across London, and it was only on the walk back from the T5 Underground station in the afternoon that I saw anything: a couple of Small Whites and a Peacock enjoying a clump of bluebells.



There was also a single Green-veined White a bit nearer home.

May dawned sunny, but a bit warmer and much less cloud built up during the day. A couple of walks around my local patch produced lots of Brimstones (including several females), Small and GV Whites, and female Orange Tips. There were a handful of males too, and the garlic mustard is shooting up well in parallel. As noted before, this plant is good in alternate years, and 2016 is going to be a very good one round here. Also seen on the earlier walk were a scattering of Peacocks, and in the same spot of dappled shade, two Speckled Woods and a Holly Blue. Visiting the same spot later in the day, I found my first Red Admiral of the year. It was a fairly tatty specimen, and I have to wonder whether it is a resilient overwinterer or an intrepid voyager from points south. Either way, it was good to see.



Finally I spotted another Small White, which took off at the same moment as I pressed the shutter. For once I captured the motion.



Things are looking up at last.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-May-16 10:13 PM GMT

A glorious day, but I didn't get the chance to benefit until after five this afternoon. I had a mind to look locally for roosting Orange Tips, hoping in fact to spot one settling down and having a last bask in the sunshine. Despite a proliferation of garlic mustard this year, I found two butterflies settled on other perches, and another basking as hoped - but rather a long way off. Apart from these, I saw four Holly Blues, but all well above head height, as the lowering sun caused them to move higher and higher in the hedgerow. I also found a few Orange Tip eggs on the solitary cuckoo flower plant growing around here. It's well shaded, but the butterflies find it easily.







Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-May-16 10:08 PM GMT

Luckily, I was able to take today off work. After the expensive chore of getting a whole new set of tyres (prompted by no less than two punctures in three days), I set off down to Denbies, prompted by Susie's recent report.

I made straight for the steps, and was soon watching several Green Hairstreaks gyrating and sparring around me, frequently perching on the shrubs as well. This sheltered spot, and the flowers alongside the steps, also attracted a variety of other species: Grizzled and Dingy Skippers, Orange Tips and Brimstones. Female Brimstones were laying on the buckthorn plants in amongst the general scrubby vegetation.







After spending quite a while with the Hairstreaks, I set off down to the bottom of the slopes and walked along to the far end and back. Next to where the path leaves the slopes by a gate, I came across another set of Green Hairstreaks. I was not aware of this separate colony before. On the gentle walk back, there were frequent Dingy Skippers, and quite a few Grizzled Skippers as well.







The highlight amongst all these was a mating pair of Dingies.



Soon after this, I came across Bugboy coming the other way. He had also been spending time with the Hairstreaks, and had also seen a Small Heath (🦋) which I failed to do. Good to see you, Buggy!

Back at the top of the slopes, I found another couple of Hairstreaks wandering along at ground level, stopping here and there to nectar.





All in all, a really good trip out.

I returned home the long way round, via Chiddingfold. It was still very warm and sunny when I arrived at around half past three, but butterflies were few and far between. I saw two Speckled Woods, only two Orange Tips, a handful of Peacocks and numerous Brimstones (though not as many as I've seen in previous years).





There were no Wood Whites yet, but it can't be long.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 05-May-16 10:41 PM GMT

Those Green Hairstreaks deserve a few mrgreens. Particularly the 4th image down. 🍷
You had a day of good sightings. Wood Whites can't be far off.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 05-May-16 10:51 PM GMT

Great to see you again. You had better luck with those Grizzlies than I did, far too flighty by the time I was coming across them. There were at least two Small Heaths, possibly three in the end that I could find.... and on the walk back to westhumble I found a Small Copper as well 😊 Four season firsts in one day 😊😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 06-May-16 07:54 AM GMT

lovely Hair Streaks Dave, 🍷 I hope to see them soon 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-May-16 09:22 PM GMT

Thank you for your kind comments everyone. 😊 Green Hairstreaks are a splendid butterfly. I showed some work colleagues a few photos today – they were amazed such beautifully-coloured insects existed in the UK.

After work (about half past four) I had a tour of my local patch. Having mentioned to Bugboy yesterday that I wondered whether the Holly Blues were on a downswing in my neck of the woods, in the space of an hour I counted no less than sixteen. Most were patrolling the upper reaches of ivy-festooned trees, no doubt looking for emerging females. One or two were patrolling more widely, and there was one hovering over the path, hoping for a damp patch from which to take minerals. However, none actually came to a standstill, and I was left without a single photograph. Never mind, it was just reassuring to see so many again.

Aside from the Blue Bonanza, there were Small and Green-veined Whites, Brimstones, Orange Tips of both sexes, several Peacocks, a Comma and two or three Speckled Woods. Like Bugboy, I found a mating pair of GVW, in what looks like a similar spot. Amazingly camouflaged in amongst the vegetation, I only spotted them when another butterfly took an interest.



Now it does properly feel like spring...

A selection from this afternoon.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 07-May-16 11:45 AM GMT

Lovely shots Dave we seem to be very short on Green Veined Whites here I've only seen one up to now at HLB I hope things pick up for them, your shot of the mating pair remind me how things used to be there. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-May-16 09:48 PM GMT

Absolutely cracking OT shots Dave – and there was you saying how you couldn't get close to a male OT this year 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-May-16 03:44 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie – there's been a small explosion of GVW here over the weekend – hope they appear up north as well. 😊

Thanks, Wurzel – yes, it's all changed now, as soon as I said it. Like me telling Buggy I was worried about the Holly Blues... Now I'm surrounded by them! 😊

Saturday 7th May was a lovely day, partly spent having a picnic at Runnymede and partly watching Harlequins lose appallingly to Exeter at the Stoop in Twickenham. Surprisingly few butterflies by the Thames in the morning, though I did see my first Small Copper of the year fly across, plus a number of Holly Blues. In the afternoon, a Small Tortoiseshell crossed the pitch at half-time, and there were quite a few Holly Blues in the various suburban gardens between the ground and Twickenham station.

Sunday 8th was a much more interesting day.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 09-May-16 09:19 PM GMT

Hi Dave, just catching up on your diary, some great reports and photos recently. You certainly seem to be filling your boots 🍷😊

I hear that things are starting to kick off at Ryton now with Grizzled and Dingy Skippers and Green Hairstreaks all being seen over this past weekend.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-May-16 09:54 PM GMT

Thanks for the news about Ryton, Neil – I hope to be up there in a week or two. I'll be looking for Small Blues at Southam too, maybe also Bishop's Hill.

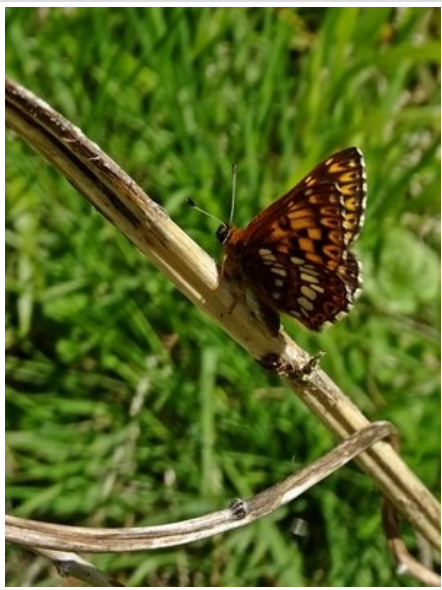
Sunday 8th May:

The promised hot and sunny day materialised. I decided to start off at Totternhoe, just in case the Small Blues had made an appearance, but also to see what else was around. Orange Tips greeted me in the car park, but I saw very little as I walked along the bottom of the cliffs to the left towards the old

quarry. Finally, I disturbed a lone (very fresh) Green Hairstreak, before finding my usual route had been cut off by sheep (a polite notice requested that their compartment not be entered).



The pits produced several Dingy Skippers too.





With plenty of time left in the day, I returned to the car and continued a few miles along the Chilterns to Ivinghoe Beacon. The ice cream van was a welcome sight, and suitably refreshed, I set off for the sheltered gully southwest of the hilltop. My first sighting was a Grizzled Skipper, followed shortly by several Dingies.



Brimstones were everywhere, and I spotted Green Hairstreaks here too. However, I was hoping for further Dukes – I saw quite a few here last year. I spoke to an NT warden, who said he'd seen one on 5th, but further down towards the cattle grid on the road up to the car park. Before I had even begun to descend further, though, I glimpsed the flash of orange-brown – there was a fresh Duke of Burgundy. I think there were probably two, but I can't be sure. It still appears to be early days here.







After another ice cream (it was pretty warm up there), I returned home for a look at my local patch too. I lost count of the Holly Blues today. They were energetic in the heat, and when they stopped they stayed tightly closed.



There were also good numbers of white butterflies, including the first Large White I've seen this year, and reassuring numbers of Orange Tips. I caught sight of a Red Admiral in the same spot as the one last week – but not close enough to confirm whether it was the same individual.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 09-May-16 10:18 PM GMT

Very nice Green Hairstreaks Dave, and Dukes too. Don't leave the PBF for too long. They are in perfect condition at the moment.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-May-16 11:00 PM GMT

Monday 9th May:

A different sort of day – cloud and a few spots of rain to start with, then it steadily brightened and became very warm again. I had taken the day off, so with the weather uncertain, I decided to stay put and invest more time than usual on my local patch, especially the Holly Blue population.

Things didn't go to that plan at first at all. Everything was just beginning to fly and I disturbed quite a few white butterflies and Orange Tips as I walked along the path.



. I spotted the same Large White i'd seen yesterday (a rather tatty male), then shortly afterwards came across another, much fresher, male.



Not long after that, an Orange Tip led me to an equally fresh female Large White.



. There were a few more Speckled Woods around, and a few Peacocks hanging on in there, but curiously, no Brimstones at all.



With all that to distract me, it was a while before I got to concentrate on the Holly Blues. With very hazy (or no) sunshine, but still very warm, they didn't fly so energetically. The males, however, patrolled the hedgerows endlessly, accosting every female they came across – which happened quite often. The females tended to stay in and around the ivy and holly, and I watched several wandering about inside the foliage and laying eggs on holly flowers in quite deep shade. One particular piece of hedgerow containing both plants borders a lakeside field/meadow and was home to dozens of Holly Blues today. (It is also two minutes walk from home 😊) The females seemed willing to sit open up a bit today, when they weren't in the depths of the bushes, but the males barely stopped.



One female was delightfully new:





Another was noticeably small:



One other opened out almost completely flat, but was oddly coloured and appeared a bit deformed.



I managed to capture a couple of examples of the courtship action on display; both males were unsuccessful in the end.



The female in the second photo was vibrating her wings rapidly – a sure sign of rejection, something I saw several times today.

This species makes an interesting study – looking at today's females, they seem to have as much black on them as summer brood females do. Or am I imagining it?

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 09-May-16 11:11 PM GMT

Those open wing Holly Blues shots Dave 🍷🍷🍷 !!!
I'll have to visit the old railway soon !.

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-May-16 11:13 PM GMT

Few things make me more envious than shots of Holly Blues like those, Dave. Well done.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 10-May-16 08:46 AM GMT

Lovely Holly Blues Dave, only had flitting glances of them yet. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 10-May-16 02:39 PM GMT

Wow, thats a real 'Holly Blue fest'. I'm still struggling to get more than the odd one fly past here and there!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-May-16 09:54 PM GMT

It's all gone Holly Blue Mad over your way Dave! 🤪🍷 I've only just seen my first and second – so that puts Salisbury about 2 weeks behind, pretty usual timings then 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-May-16 08:46 PM GMT

Thank you all for your comments on the "Holly Blue Fest" as Buggy has called it – pretty accurate. 😊 This really was an example of just keeping pretty well in one place and waiting patiently for the butterflies to appear and do their thing. Discovering that the females spent a lot of their time *inside* the bushes and appeared from time to time to sun themselves (and be accosted by males) helped get the open-wing shots. The males were much more active and rarely settled. As I've mentioned before, this particular area is ideal for them, with both holly and ivy in abundance and plenty of pink-flowered bramble which the second brood are very partial too later in the year.

Sunday has been followed by two days of warm rain, almost continuous until just after five this evening. I could see the clearance approaching and set

out round my local patch while there was still drizzle in the air. Almost immediately I spotted a Holly Blue flying in the rain, presumably enticed out by the warmth of the sun through the clouds which despite the latish hour was still quite noticeable. Eventually, the sun did come through properly and within a minute or two the first whites were flying.

A pair of GVW took advantage straight away and disappeared together into the trees. I saw mostly GVW, though there was one pale female Small White.



My photo of the upperside turned out as a bright splodge with no subtlety whatsoever.

One GVW male was intent on nectaring, moving quickly from flower to flower for some little while.





Finally, with the sun getting lower, I headed for home, seeing another couple of Holly Blues tussling in the air over my neighbour's garden.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-May-16 08:02 PM GMT

A trip to Bentley Wood today produced this little gem of a butterfly.



More from this trip a bit later.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pete Eeles, 12-May-16 08:05 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

A trip to Bentley Wood today produced this little gem of a butterfly. [\[attachment=0\]PBF ab2 120516.JPG\[/attachment\]](#)
[\[attachment=1\]PBF ab5 120516.JPG\[/attachment\]](#) More from this trip a bit later.

Dave

Excellent shots, Dave. I suspect you bumped into a couple of others since they both sent me similar shots, although you definitely have the best underside shot. What an amazing ab.!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: millerd

by trevor, 12-May-16 08:52 PM GMT

What a find, Dave. That Pearl ab. makes all the other Butterflies in these diaries look mundane. Is this a previously known ab ?. I'll watch what those with the knowledge have to say with great interest. I wonder if the topsy turvy Winter/ Spring had anything to do with it.

Take a good sprinkling of mrgreens.

Re: millerd

by MrSp0ck, 12-May-16 09:02 PM GMT

treavor wrote:

I wonder if the topsy turvy Winter/ Spring had anything to do with it.

If its not genetical, it would be when the pupa wing pigment was forming up it got too warm in the sun. The abs in Sussex are genetical as there are lots the same and every year.

The weather the last 2 weeks has been warm, and the pigments only form 24-48 hours before hatching, so the cold spell in April was too far back, which can also cause pigment abs.

Re: millerd

by David M, 12-May-16 09:20 PM GMT

That's truly off the scale, Dave.

Brilliant find!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-May-16 10:27 PM GMT

I have to say at the outset that I was not the person who first found this lovely butterfly, nor its rediscoverer a bit later on! That accolade belongs to another, who I believe has been in touch with Pete directly about it and has, I suspect, much better photos than mine. There were a small group of lucky folk who were able to share in this serendipitous find, something unlikely to be repeated. 😊

I had reached the Eastern Clearing at Bentley Wood around 9, and had squelched my way around for about an hour before seeing either a butterfly or anyone else for that matter. It was mistily sunny, but became clearer from around 10 onwards, when the Pearls started to appear. I had seen three or four when the ab. was first spotted, and saw many more during the morning. The ab. appeared to be newly emerged and was very sluggish, not flying far when it took to the wing. Eventually, it started to seek out flowers to nectar from, and at one point took a passing interest in a female which passed by. However, it did not really interact with the other PBFs flying, and certainly none of them took any interest in it at all. As the day warmed up quite considerably, the ab. began to close its wings instead of basking: presumably its dark colouring absorbed more heat from the sun than was comfortable, and certainly more than a "normal" PBF would.

Here are quite a few shots of this beautiful creature, plus a few of the standard model seen today as well.















The day was not yet over – a walk around my local patch later produced my first Small Heaths of the year. I shall leave that for a separate report!

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 12-May-16 11:20 PM GMT

Fabulous insect Dave. Puts my slightly melanistic ones to shame!

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 12-May-16 11:27 PM GMT

That's an amazing ab. Dave, really stunning.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-May-16 11:46 PM GMT

Looks like I'll be heading over there on Saturday then Dave! That is a stunning ab! 🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Philzoid, 12-May-16 11:56 PM GMT

Wow 🤩👏

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 13-May-16 08:36 AM GMT

Now! that's what I call an ab, fantastic Dave Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-May-16 08:16 PM GMT

Thank you all. It was a splendid insect to have seen, and I do hope some of you get the chance to see it as well before it gets too worn.

Impossible really to follow that, but I did have a walk around my local patch in the afternoon once I'd returned home on Thursday. There weren't so many Holly Blues today, but their behaviour was just the same as a few days ago, and I managed another shot of a female opening up a little.



Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-May-16 08:31 PM GMT

Friday 13th May:

It seemed a shame to waste the whole of another sunny day, so after a slightly early finish at work, I set off down to Botany Bay to look for Wood Whites. The journey took twice as long as usual, with lots of Friday traffic in all directions. This meant it was after half past four when I got down there. Not many areas were still sunlit, but one of the favoured banks was, and there were several male Brimstones still nectaring on the bugle and bluebell flowers. After wandering slowly up and down for a few minutes, one of the Brimstones disturbed another butterfly. The rather limp flight and small size gave it away immediately – a Wood White. I saw one other while I was there, but the second one flew away through a gap in the trees. However, the first one provided a variety of good opportunities for photos.







Such a delicate little thing – especially compared to the Brimstone that had initially disturbed it.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-May-16 10:28 PM GMT

Beautiful Wood Whites Dave 😊 Everything is coming all at once now! Glannies, Wood Whites, Pearls there were even three Marshies at my Marshie Site! What to go for first 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by kevlng, 14-May-16 01:51 PM GMT

Dave,

Great photos of the Pearl Bordered Frits and I especially love the *ab*. I'm a fortnight away from a holiday nearby, so hopefully they will still be on the wing then.

Regards Kev

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-May-16 09:03 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – yes, it's difficult to know which way to turn – though that well-known hill in Wiltshire looks favourite next along with Hutchinson's Bank. 😊

Thanks, Kev – in a fortnight's time you will quite likely get to see the Small Pearls down there as well.

I am leading a walk at Bedfont Lakes Country Park tomorrow for the BC Herts and Middx branch, so I thought I should do a dry run to see what might be about (hopefully with as much sunshine as today). There were a variety of whites flying in the chilly breeze, and I spotted a tiny Orange Tip caterpillar on the only Cuckoo Flower I found all day.





It was clearly still too early for Common Blues and Brown Argus, and I have a feeling the Small Coppers have disappeared from this site now. However, passing close to the railway line that separates the two sections of the park, I spotted a Green Hairstreak. I don't think these have been seen before to the north of the railway. Unfortunately, my attempt at a photo was too dismal to post even with an apology.

Things then got even better. While trying to snap a settled Orange Tip, I became aware of a large orangey-pink butterfly flying around me. This was a really intensely-coloured Painted Lady. It was intent on feeding wherever it could when the sun shone, and by the look of its shrunken abdomen had been travelling for some while and used up most of its reserves.



I then drove round to the southern part of the park. I headed straight for the other side of the railway line to where I had been earlier, and sure enough found another Green Hairstreak. This time the photo was acceptable.



The other species here were similar to those found to the north.



One female Orange Tip was particularly cooperative with photos.



I also had time for a late walk round my local patch, but I think I'll make that a separate diary entry.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 14-May-16 09:35 PM GMT

A nice day from the looks of things. That Painted Lady really does look shattered!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-May-16 10:35 PM GMT

A pretty good day, yes, Buggy. 😊 And not quite finished...

There was still time for a gentle stroll around my local patch too. Red Admirals have been arriving, and I saw four different ones in a variety of spots.



I also found a Small Heath at the top of a grass stem, clearly fresh from the chrysalis.





And (though it was after five now)... no Holly Blues at all.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 15-May-16 01:11 PM GMT

Please Dave can you send some of your lovely Butterflies North 😊 In spite of the lovely weather we've had lately we're not yet seeing a great amount of Butterflies. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 15-May-16 05:35 PM GMT

Hi Dave, just catching up on your recent adventures. Superb photos of the PBF ab. I have seen a few photos of this lovely butterfly appearing in various place around the internet over the past few days but not all have been able to see it when still fresh. It does tend to overshadow your other reports and photos a bit but the other PBFs, Wood Whites, Red Admirals, Painted Lady and all the rest are all making me a bit 🍷 Great stuff 😊

cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-May-16 10:13 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie - I'd love to send you a few spares! 😊

Thanks, Neil - it was great to see that PBF on the day it emerged, one of those never-to-be-forgotten days. There has been a lot of other stuff, too and it's a struggle to keep up. There are at least two more trips that need doing soon, in completely opposite directions... 😊

No one turned up for the butterfly walk at Bedfont today - probably for the best as there was a lot less around today for some reason. The weather was slightly better if anything. I did see my first Burnet Companion of the year, doing its usual Dingy Skipper impersonation, and the inevitable female Holly Blue enjoying the sun.





I decided to spend the unexpected spare time by seeing what was out firstly at Aston Rowant, and then later on at Denbies.

Up on the northern hillside, I found quite a few Green Hairstreaks and Dingy Skippers in the shelter at the foot of the slope, plus a single Common Blue.





Nothing else yet – this is an exposed site and the Chilterns are definitely behind the North Downs.

At Denbies, it was quite a bit warmer, and here there was much more to see. In particular the Adonis Blues were out: I saw over a dozen, including both sexes.



The females were generally quite blue and I don't think I saw a classic plain chocolate individual.





I also saw several Common Blues, and a single Brown Argus which was far too active to photograph.



There were both Dingies and Grizzlies in reasonable numbers, and a few Green Hairstreaks here and there in the grass.





Three new species for the year!

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-May-16 10:32 PM GMT

Adonis are out now as well – it's all coming too thick and fast now! 🤩😄 Great shots especially the females, often overlooked 🤩👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 15-May-16 11:05 PM GMT

Lovely Adonis, Dave. I have yet to see a female that blue. You've had a brilliant week !.

Best wishes,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 16-May-16 04:36 PM GMT

Lovely Adonis , I can't believe so many Butterflies are out down there, I can't even get a decent shot of an Holly Blue up here 😞
Never mind I'll be down there in a few weeks, Great photos, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 16-May-16 10:14 PM GMT

What a purple patch you're having right now, Dave. Adonis Blues on top of all the other species you've encountered recently. 🤩

Some great shots there.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-May-16 10:25 PM GMT

Thanks, all – the Adonis were brilliant – literally! There is nothing quite like the intensity of a a fresh male Adonis Blue. 😊

Another species today – I took the opportunity when passing not too far from Totternhoe to see if I could find some Small Blues. They were out, albeit in small numbers – I saw perhaps six males and one female, and they were difficult to find and follow in the strongish breeze and intermittent sunshine. However, after a while I got my eye in and tracked a few down to their perching and hiding places. For some reason, the female chose a piece of flying tissue to perch on – I lost it after this so couldn't improve on the background.









I didn't go far, restricting myself to the path close to the old quarry, so saw just a few other butterflies: five Small Heaths, three Dingy Skippers and two Common Blues.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-May-16 10:59 PM GMT

How do you find the time Dave, you're out every day 🍷🍷 Lovely Small Blues, looks like I'm still playing catch-up!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 18-May-16 09:29 PM GMT

Oh bloody hell, Adonis, Common, Small Blues and Brown Argus all about, looks like I need another fortnight off 🤪

Re: millerd

by Susie, 19-May-16 08:35 PM GMT

I love your diary, Dave! Great stuff

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-May-16 10:35 PM GMT

I've been lucky, Wurzel, plus benefiting from a bit of generosity at work in relation to ad hoc days off... I've still got to get to Croydon, and to your famous hill! 😊

You picked a brilliant fortnight to be off, Buggy – sometimes I think you need to take the whole of May off to do the month justice. 😊

Thanks, Susie – glad you've been enjoying it. 😊

There was a bit of watery sunshine late this afternoon, so I went out locally for the first time since Saturday. I was hoping some Common Blues and Brown Argus might have appeared, but no luck there. It hasn't helped that the nearest area to home where they were both found in 2015 had been mown flat by the council before the wildflowers had even bloomed. The first butterfly I saw was a female Holly Blue (of course) which popped out of some ivy and immediately opened up.



It had seen better days, in common with the others (half a dozen or so) I saw later on, including this male.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 20-May-16 09:00 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

How do you find the time Dave, you're out every day 🍷🍷 Lovely Small Blues, looks like I'm still playing catch-up!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

What Wurzel said...I still haven't managed to get more than a couple of miles from home yet

Great reports though Dave, I really enjoy reading your diary 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-May-16 10:35 PM GMT

Long may your luck hold Dave!

Great Red Admiral – they've been a bit thin on the ground this year – or is that just me? Anyway if you can make it to the Wiltshire Hill soon they have started emerging and so you'll get onto one of these bad boys...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

ps I can get rid of the shot if you don't want it cluttering up your PD

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-May-16 10:13 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil – I still feel I haven't seen everything on offer yet and get frustrated with the weather (like it is at the moment! 😞).

And thanks again, Wurzel – I think hardly any Red Admirals survived the winter to produce local offspring and the immigrants have only just started to appear. It was good to see four different ones on the walk recently. 😊 I hope I can manage a trip to Wiltshire soon – that shot of yours adds encouragement! 😊

Barely a moment of sunshine today (though it was bright in the middle of the day with definite heat radiating through the clouds). Always worth a ramble around my local patch, but not much was evident: a couple of Speckled Woods, three or four GVV and a male Orange Tip all made it into the air.







They never seem to disappoint.

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 21-May-16 10:19 PM GMT

Those are beautiful Holly Blue shots, Dave. It's p**ed it down all day here today so any kind of outing was out of the question. 😞

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-May-16 10:02 PM GMT

Great Holly Blues Dave 😊🍷 Finally got a 'record' shot of one today amongst lots of other goodies 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-May-16 10:34 PM GMT

Thanks David - those Holly Blues keep on coming, rain or shine, at the moment! 😊

Thanks, Wurzel - I saw the good weather this morning and hoped it extended to the south and east of here where I think you were headed. It sounds as if you found what you were seeking! 😊

Having seen Pete's note about using up space, I know I'm guilty as charged for posting multiple similar images. Those three Holly Blue shots above are a

case in point. I shall have to be more decisive in future.

Today was blessed with a reasonably sunny morning and early afternoon, but I was restricted to just a local excursion again. I was still hoping for the first appearance of the local Brown Argus and Common Blues, but they are still not out yet. At one point I did think I'd struck lucky, as a blue butterfly was flying way out in the open over the field/meadow area, fluttering between clumps of what I think is lucerne. However, it was not a Common Blue at all, but yet another female Holly Blue – and she seemed to be laying eggs.



Elsewhere was the usual mix of GVW, Large White, Orange Tip, Speckled Woods and more Holly Blues. One of the males settled for a change.



The Specklies were posing nicely too.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 23-May-16 06:16 AM GMT

Great shots of the Holly Blue egg-laying Dave (and the open wing images). 😊 I bet the eggs are tiny. Last year I looked (unsuccessfully) for their eggs and larva but shall try again this season.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 23-May-16 09:25 AM GMT

Love the open winged shots of the Holly Blue Dave, I've yet to get a good shot of one yet Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-May-16 10:44 PM GMT

Thanks, Pauline – I regret not looking carefully for the eggs at the time, as I was following the butterfly. 😊 In the first of the images above I think you can just make out the egg right at the tip of the abdomen (a distinct white splodge). Holly Blues in the spring seem to lay on almost anything when holly isn't available, and towards the end of the brood (as we nearly are) the females range out all over the place.

Thanks to you to, Goldie – I think patience is what you need with Holly Blues (plus a reliable patch as I have 😊). You have to stand and wait and watch, and eventually one will land under your nose. Good luck! 😊

Another rather late wander out after work today, with a stiff breeze and not much sun. After quite a way round with nothing at all, I found a female Orange Tip settled down, antennae firmly together.





However a burst of sunshine woke her up and she soon fluttered off in characteristic bumbling fashion.



The sun brought several whites out from their hiding places as well, a somewhat worn male Orange Tip which was eager to nectar before settling down properly for the evening.





Amongst the GVW, there was the first Small White I've definitely identified for a little while.



No Holly Blues this evening (though I had seen a couple earlier next to my son's school in Staines).

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-May-16 09:56 PM GMT

It certainly did Dave, mind you it may be August before you get to see any shots as I'm a tiny bit behind with my PD 😊😊 I'm doing a recce at the Hill tomorrow and the weather on Sunday looks good so I'll keep you posted. Cracking OTs! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 26-May-16 08:32 PM GMT

Lovely OT's Millerd, and in particular I love the shot of the Small Heath 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-May-16 11:10 PM GMT

We're used to it Wurzel – seeing May in August will be par for the course! Always worth waiting for... 😊 I'm hoping for a chance to head for that Hill this weekend, but the forecast keeps changing. I may have to just take pot luck and go.

Thanks, Goldie – every day throws up something different. 😊

As did today. I escaped for an extended lunch break from work and popped into Bedfont Lakes Country Park again – the main part to the north of the railway line. Hoping for Common Blues and Brown Argus, the first butterfly I saw was fussing around tangled growth of vetches near enough at ground level. After recent experience, I knew what it was – another female Holly Blue, apparently looking to lay on the vetch and also having the odd sip of nectar from the flowers.



I noticed that over the boundary fence of the park, there was a fairly bare field (I think it was a mound of spoil that had been given nice rounded contours last year by bulldozers), now covered in large patches of Birds'-foot Trefoil. I could see over this area there were quite a few Common Blues flying and squabbling with each other. Sadly, the area was not accessible. Moving on, I came to the path by the railway where I had seen the Green Hairstreak ten days ago. Down in the grass I soon spotted one, and a bit further on, another. The first one was a female, and she was seeking out patches of Trefoil amongst the grass and clover and (like the Holly Blue) apparently seeking spots to lay. Clearly this represents a colonisation of this area from the established colonies across the railway, and with luck they will spread along this path.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-May-16 08:43 PM GMT

After work on 26th, there was still time (I love the long summer evenings 😊) to have a look around locally. It was early evening really, but I did find the first Common Blue of the year for this patch, roosting uncomfortably in the breeze.



Several Small Heath were still flying too, though starting to perch rather than hide in the grass.



Finally, I was accosted by a Red Admiral, and then right at the end, by another one. This one was happy to bask in the late sunshine.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-May-16 09:19 PM GMT

Today was my opportunity to visit Hutchinson's Bank: the day-off-from-work fairy had already waved her wand, and amazingly the weather fairy decided to be kind as well – much kinder than predicted too.

On arrival just before 12, I located Martin (Mr. Spöck) in the cutting with one or two other folk, admiring a Glanville aberration. An interesting butterfly, brand new and quite obliging for photos, it had set up a territory and though disappearing from time to time, it turned up again in the same part of the cutting.





There were several "normal" Glanvilles about in the cutting too, and as it turned out there were still more in various other parts of the site.





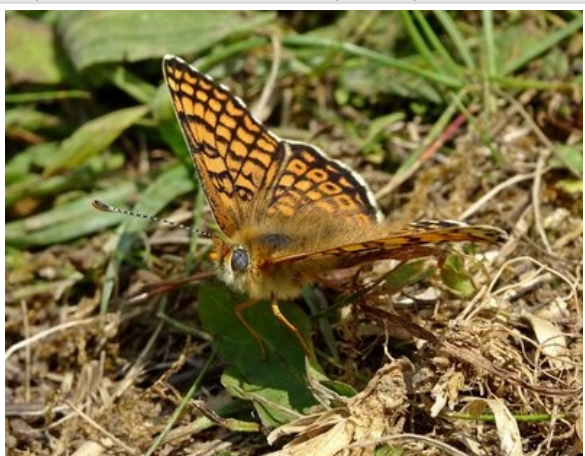
Martin is incredibly knowledgeable about this species and its history here (with which he is very much involved), and it was great to have him on hand to

enlighten about every aspect of the Glanville Fritillary – and much more besides. A big thank you for that. 😊

As well as the star attraction, Hutchinson's Bank offered Small Blues (popping up in ones and twos almost anywhere), Dingy Skippers (similarly), Green Hairstreaks, Small Heaths, Speckled Woods, Holly Blues, Common Blues (only just starting to appear), a single Grizzled Skipper and a single Brown Argus.



As you might expect, there were Whites, Orange Tips and Brimstones, plus a couple of Peacocks and a Red Admiral. I think I saw 17 different species today, but one stands out – what a lovely butterfly it is.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-May-16 10:35 PM GMT

Great series of shots of the Glannies Dave 😊 If you're still thinking about the Hill I reckon Sunday is the best bet as 2 out of four weather apps have sunny intervals and the other two have cloud as opposed to rain on the Saturday.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-May-16 09:04 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. Glanvilles require a lot of crawling around at ground level, something I'm finding increasingly difficult these days! 😊 Thanks also for the weather advice – Sunday it is, though I suspect today might have been okay on that score. However, the traffic might well have spoiled things. Queues on the A303 are not recommended...

A large splotch of puffy cloud sat over my part of the world until midday, whilst all around seemed sunny. I did have a local walk this morning regardless, and in the brighter bits, saw over a dozen Small Heaths and five or six Orange Tips. One of these I took to be injured, as it fluttered inelegantly close to the ground and settled on it once or twice, wings open. However, looking at the pictures, it was sucking up minerals, not something I've seen this species do before.



Heading for home, a few Holly Blues were still around and a Red Admiral swooped back and forth. The moment I reached the doorstep, the sun came out properly, so I decided to head further afield for the afternoon.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 29-May-16 04:37 PM GMT

That's a great shot of the Small Blue Dave. I find they are a tricky little butterfly to get a nice sharp image of but not only have you managed that, you've caught that gorgeous sheen and oily colours 😊 – and you already know what I think of your Glanville ab. 🍷🍷 Well worth that convoluted journey 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 29-May-16 05:08 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, lovely photo's but I really like the Silver Y, It looks just like an African Mask from that angle 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-May-16 09:57 PM GMT

Great OTs Dave, very large spot on the fore wing – could that be an ab or is it within usual range? Philzoid tells me you got your Small Pearls so a cracking end to a cracking day. It was great to finally meet in the field and share some butterflies first hand 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 30-May-16 10:26 PM GMT

You've really been racking up the trips out lately with some very rewarding results. Also getting a good collection of abs this season 🍷🍷🍷

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-May-16 11:31 PM GMT

Thank you Pauline – Female Small Blues when very fresh do have that amazing sheen and I was lucky enough to capture it. 😊

Thanks Goldie. You are right about that Silver Y – it looks exactly like that! Scary, in fact... 😬 I wonder if that's to scare away predators?

Thanks, Wurzel. 😊 I reckon that Orange Tip is not really extreme enough. It was its behaviour I was interested in and didn't notice the larger than usual spot till later. It was great to meet up with you, Phil and your apprentice in a terrific spot on a glorious day – and yes, Phil and I found the SPBFs later on as well. However, I'm getting a bit behind now after a packed weekend. I understand your problem completely... 😊

A few more trips still to come, Buggy. I just had to make the most of the weather and three free days. 😊 The abs are a bonus! To be fair, there seem to be a few around this year.

After an excellent Friday, Saturday and Sunday were just as packed, if not more so. After my local walk on Saturday, the sun came out so I decided to spend the afternoon at Denbies. I was rewarded by a hillside populated by good numbers of Adonis Blues, with a mixture of very fresh and somewhat worn males standing out. There were females, but I didn't track down many new ones, and only saw one blue female of the sort I'd seen a week ago. Here are some of the new nes. One or two had black dots in the hindwing margins: most did not.





One individual was sucking up minerals from the chalk path



There were more Common Blues now, but the ratio of Adonis to Common was at least 5 to 1.



Small Heaths were everywhere, and Dingy Skippers were still around, particularly at the bottom of the slope. One perched some fresh oak foliage and almost disappeared.





In this same spot I also saw two Small Blues, the first I've ever seen at Denbies, and a Brown Argus. Neither species stopped for a photo. On the way back up to the car park through Steers Field, I spotted movement – butterflies are not frequent up here until a bit later in the year, so I tracked the insect to the ground to reveal it as a worn Small Copper. I was pleased to see this increasingly rare sight (except at Dungeness of course...)



Dave

Re: millerd


by trevor, 31-May-16 07:11 AM GMT

  I can offer nothing but mrgreens for those Adonis images, Dave.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 31-May-16 09:21 PM GMT

Looks like you are having a cracking season so far Dave 😊

I love the Orange-tip on the bare earth a couple of posts back, not a combination you often see. Also, that female Common Blue is gorgeous and as for the Adonis  😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-May-16 11:14 PM GMT

There is nothing to beat the colour of a fresh Adonis Blue, Trevor. 😊 In fact they do seem to vary a bit in shade, though it can just be the way the light falls. They were very obliging on Saturday, and the bit of cloud about helped.

Thanks, Neil – you picked out my favourites precisely! I would single out the Adonis slurping at the chalk as well – though the open-winged shots are glorious, this one has more appeal and life to it. 😊

Now for Sunday 29th. The plan had always been to head down to Wurzel's Wiltshire hillside come rain or shine – the weather forecast over the days beforehand was spectacularly uncommitted on which it might be, but by Saturday evening became heavily inclined towards the latter. I set off early under cool grey skies, but beyond Andover, the sun emerged and by the destination was out amidst clear blue. It was still cool to start with and quite

breezy, and it was a while before the butterflies appeared. However, gradually as I walked gently along the paths following the contours along the lower slopes, Marsh Fritillaries began to appear. Almost all were showing signs of wear unfortunately – I don't think I actually saw any that had emerged on the day (except perhaps for the female of the mating pair spotted later on). However, they were a lovely sight, with a great deal of colour variation between individuals. I'll leave the photos until the end.

Marshies were not all on offer by any means. Also seen were Dingy Skipper (lots), Grizzled Skipper (not so many), Large Skipper (3 or 4), Green Hairstreak (lots – mostly right along the bottom of the slope, but not exclusively), Small Heath (lots), Brown Argus (5+), Common Blue (2 or 3), Adonis Blue (a dozen or more), Small Blue (3 or 4), Speckled Wood (a couple along the path from the parking area), Large White (2 or 3, including a huge male dwarfing every other butterfly), Small/GVW (several, with both definitely present), Orange Tip (4 or 5), Brimstone (4 or 5), Red Admiral (2), Peacock (1), Small Tortoiseshell (1). A selection:



A lovely fresh Adonis Blue female



Brown Argus (m)



Another Brown Argus (m)



One of many – this one was quite fresh



Female Grizzled Skipper



Faded male Small Blue



A fresh male Large Skipper

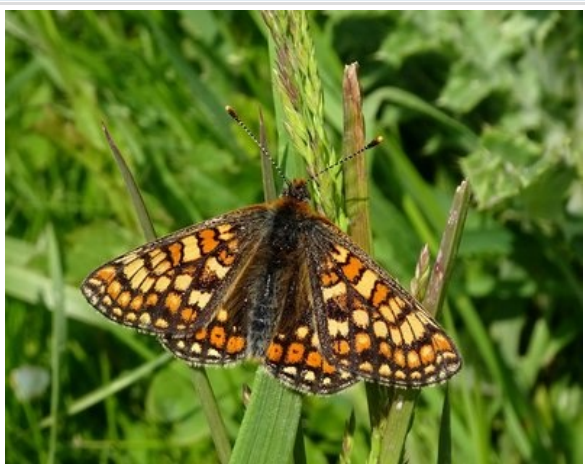
In the middle of proceedings I was hailed from a higher path. There were Wurzel (plus daughter) and Philzoid out to enjoy the glorious countryside and the wonderful butterfly offering here. It was good to finally meet Wurzel out in the field (rather than over a beer or two as is customary), and to see Philzoid too. We spent a very pleasant couple of hours or so spotting various things (more pairs of eyes a distinct advantage!).

Towards the end of our sojourn on the hill, we found a mating pair of Marsh Fritillaries: there were no doubt many others down in the grass (which appeared longer than usual).



Here are a variety of others seen throughout the day:







A splendid outing – but the day was not yet over, and there was another spot to visit on the way home.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 01-Jun-16 10:11 AM GMT

Wow ! that's quite a bag full Dave, lovely shot's of the Marsh Fritillaries Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 01-Jun-16 10:44 AM GMT

Pleased that you were able to enjoy this species rich site. Great Marshie shots. If I were a betting man I'd say we have some Small Pearl images coming up !.

Re: millerd

by Philzoid, 01-Jun-16 12:31 PM GMT

Was great to meet up with you on Sunday. You've posted a lovely array of Marsh Fritillaries there 😊 .

I think we saw 20 species in total at Cotley which is a fantastic count on a single site 😊

I think Trevor might be onto something 😊

Phil

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 01-Jun-16 05:47 PM GMT

Great post from Wiltshire. Brings back happy memories of my visit last year. As the weather improved through the morning the turf seemed to erupt butterflies all over the place 😊 It's just a shame places like this are few and far between these days, particularly down here in the south east 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jun-16 07:52 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie – yes, there was a lot to see, though there were more Marsh Fritillaries than anything else. 😊

How did you guess, Trevor? If you were a betting man, there's no one would have offered you very long odds, I suspect... Certainly not Philzoid, but he had insider knowledge! 😊

Thanks, Buggy – it's a terrific place, and one I've now visited three years on the trot. A fixture on the calendar now, all thanks to Wurzel. 😊

So, as Trevor suspected, the logical place to drop into on the way back from deepest Wiltshire was Bentley Wood. With the recent decent weather bringing the season back on track a bit, there was a very good chance the first Small Pearls would be out. The Eastern Clearing had a few people looking, but none admitted to seeing anything much beyond good numbers of PBF. These were zooming about madly in the sunshine, and stopping very infrequently.



Now it really was time to go home, after a really excellent day.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 01-Jun-16 10:05 PM GMT

Great Small Pearls, Dave. I guessed Bentley Wood and had heard that some were on the wing there.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-16 10:50 PM GMT

Totally cracking shots from a totally cracking day Dave 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Philzoid, 01-Jun-16 10:56 PM GMT

Great Small Pearls Dave and a nice lateral underside shot 😊

millerd wrote:

Finally, I tracked down a very small (1 cm?) Brimstone caterpillar on buckthorn – I'm sure there were many more there somewhere.

Took you less than 2 minutes to find it tbf, and thanks for showing me where to look 😊

millerd wrote:

I was told on a previous visit this might be an Oak Eggar – Phil believed it could be a Fox Moth.

I think it is too early in the flight season for an Oak Eggar. Aside from a Fox moth there's the possibility of it being a male Emperor
Wonder if False Apollo managed to get himself a Small Pearl picture?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Jun-16 10:28 PM GMT

Thanks, all – the SPBF were a fine end to a terrific day out. I'm not sure we'll ever know about the moth, Philzoid. Never mind. 😊

Only caterpillars today – not a peep of sun here since Sunday, and cool grey and windy with it, so all self-respecting butterflies were hidden away. My usual walk turned up Orange Tip caterpillars on some kind of crucifer – one with bright yellow flowers.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Philzoid, 03-Jun-16 11:06 AM GMT

Plant I think could be Charlock or White Mustard (*Sinapsis arvensis* or *alba*)

You'll have to find me an Orange-tip caterpillar when we next meet up in the field 😊

Re: millerd

by Andy Wilson, 03-Jun-16 11:57 AM GMT

Lovely SPBF pics! I'm on a mission to see all native Fritillary species this year. So far I've seen Pearl-Bordered, Marsh and Glanville, so now that we have sadly lost the SPBF in my home county of East Sussex, I think a trip to Bentley Woods may soon be in order.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Jun-16 11:25 PM GMT

More caterpillars today, Phil – but much easier to find than the others... 😊 Charlock seems the likely candidate: than you for that. I've not seen Orange Tips on this before and it's obviously been preferred to the large amount of Garlic Mustard around this year.

Thanks, Andy. Best of luck with the fritillaries – I think Bentley would be your nearest for SPBF. 😊

Friday was yet another grey day here. Like yesterday, I think the sunshine might not have been that far to the west, but I didn't have the opportunity to find out. In a brighter spell this, afternoon I did venture out, seeing a couple of brave GVW and a single worn Small Heath being blown around in the breeze.



on the way back home, with the brightness disappearing again, I found a small huddle of Small Tortoiseshell caterpillars.



Considering the fact that Peacocks outnumber Tortoiseshells 10 to 1 around here, I find far more Tortoiseshell nests than Peacocks. Very odd.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Philzoid, 04-Jun-16 05:39 PM GMT

Nice Speckled Bush Cricket *Leptophyes punctatissima* Dave. Have seen plenty of adults but not the nymph (it lives up to its name with those markings) 😊

I think your damselfly is a female Banded Demoiselle (*Calypteryx splendens*) which has lighter coloured wings than the v. similar *Calypteryx virgo* (Beautiful Demoiselle) Lovely shot 😊

Phil

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Jun-16 10:43 PM GMT

Great shots of a really smoky GVW Dave 😊 I'd go with Philzoid's Damselfly ID – the app I use suggests that the obvious white wing-spot (false pterostigma whatever that means?) is possibly the easiest way to distinguish between the two females. Why are teh females always the most difficult to ID – it's like Adonis/Chalkhill all over again 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Jun-16 11:00 PM GMT

Thanks Phil and Wurzel – between you, you have increased my knowledge of damselflies by about 1000% 😊. It certainly is a beautiful creature. And thanks for the cricket ID too, Phil – it was a tiny insect, but amazingly marked. 😊

One of my regular trips to the Midlands today, and though the weather remained obstinately cloudy, it really warmed up a lot. In the afternoon, along with all my boys, I was able to pop into Ryton for an hour or so. We walked into the woods, and very soon found that the paths we normally take through to the meadows had been blocked off, so that even the path along the edge of the meadow was inaccessible. I assume this is to prevent access by casual visitors to ensure the habitat remains unspoiled. Making a circuit within the wood, with the brightness and warmth increasing, we did spot a few butterflies: a Holly Blue, a Brimstone, a Large White, a Green-veined White and three Wood Whites. The latter individuals were unmistakable in their floppy meanderings, and never once stopped for more than a second: warm enough to fly, but not dark enough to stop. I'd not seen them here before. The cloud then thickened a bit, and during our return to the Country Park we saw not a single butterfly.

On the way back home, I had to stop on the Southam Bypass to check the Small Blue colony. The kidney vetch covered the roadside cutting in a thick carpet – quite an extraordinary amount of the plant in fact.



Parking in a convenient layby, I only had to walk a few metres to find a couple of Small Blues.



Within ten or twenty more, I had found a dozen: no doubt there were many more.





Most, like this one, appeared to be females. The low light levels didn't make for the best of photos unfortunately.

Dave

Re: millerd

by kevling, 05-Jun-16 09:44 AM GMT

Dave,

Some nice shots of the Small Blue you have there. It's nice to just pullover in a lay-by and be confronted by so many.

Regards
Kev

Re: millerd

by Philzoid, 05-Jun-16 12:01 PM GMT

Amazing carpet of Kidney vetch 😊

Re: millerd

by jenks, 05-Jun-16 08:39 PM GMT

I agree with Philzoid and Wurzel re the damselfly. I've made the mistake in the past of calling a green damselfly "Emerald D. " and been corrected. Female Banded Demoiselle has tinted wings and the end of the abdomen is tinged bronze. Emerald D has clear wings and the body is completely.....emerald ! Large numbers of Banded Demoiselle and Common Blue Damselfly along the River Wye at Monmouth late this afternoon. I had been on a walk with Gloucs Butterfly Conservation, led by Simon Barker, around May Hill common and Newent Wood from 11.00 to 13.45 hours and had sightings of Wood White 4, Common Blue 5, Green veined White at least 5, Small Heath at least 10 and 1 each of Large White, Small White, Speckled Wood and Painted Lady. So they're coming closer to Wales, David ! Also saw Spotted Bee-fly, which I was told is quite rare, and male and female of

Broad bodied Chaser.

May Hill common and Newent woods were a new site for me. Well worth a visit; good variety of bird life and flora too. Thanks to Simon for leading the walk.

Jenks.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Jun-16 10:56 PM GMT

Thanks, Kev and Phil – there are bound to be other havens alongside main roads. In fact, next to the southbound carriageway of the M40 between J10 and J9 there are several banks covered in wildflowers, including one with extensive kidney vetch that probably has Small Blues. 😊

Thanks for the additional info about those damsels, Jenks – I shall take more of an interest in them in future. 😊

At last, a proper sunny day. I was limited in how far I could go, however, but I persuaded Elliot he might like a walk at Aston Rowant. It was pleasantly cooler up on the top of the slope on the north side of the motorway, but aside from a Speckled Wood right at the start, there were no butterflies. Then there was a flash of pink – a Painted Lady was jiggling across the hillside, stopping periodically on bare patches to warm up.



This is a worryingly small total for a warm sunny day in early June – where are all the Common Blues?

Back home, I had a tour of my local patch. Again, there was not much about: two Speckled Woods, two male Orange Tips, two Large Whites, perhaps a dozen Small Heaths, and two Common Blues. The last of these were showing a particular interest in the grass vetchling flowers, which look like miniature sweet peas.







One tiny Orange Tip caterpillar was found, on Garlic Mustard this time, and also a few of the bizarre larvae of the Vapourer moth.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jun-16 08:35 PM GMT

After admiring Pauline's SSBs, I managed to pop out to Fairmile Common late this afternoon to see if any had emerged here. Well, I did see just one, but it didn't stop long enough to be photographed. There were not many other butterflies – a couple of whites and a single Green Hairstreak were all that appeared.





Whatever else may be happening, these little chaps have been turning up almost everywhere I've been this year. I shall give it another week for the SSBs and try again.

I did come across an unusual plant: a broomrape. These are lacking any chlorophyll and are parasitic on various other plants – I think this one is *orobanche minor*, which is a parasite on clover. Weird-looking thing.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-16 08:10 PM GMT

Greenstreaks do seem to be doing well this year – that's one of my 'wanted' shots – Greenstreak on Gorse 😊🇬🇧 Cheers for pointing out the Broomrape I've seen those before and wondered what the hell they were 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Jun-16 09:51 PM GMT

The little green one does seem to be doing okay, Wurzel – my nearest colony in the Country Park has certainly spread and crossed a main railway line to do so. 😊

An expedition out locally this afternoon was quickly truncated as thunder rumbled close by – wandering over open fields and hillsides and thunderstorms do not mix. I managed to see a couple of Holly Blues, a Speckled Wood and another Orange Tip caterpillar before coming home.



Returning along the other side of the river, I noticed the brambles are now well into flower. My eye was then drawn to something large nectaring on the bramble – a splendid Painted Lady. I would say that there is a definite influx at the moment with the continental air – they seem to be cropping up everywhere.

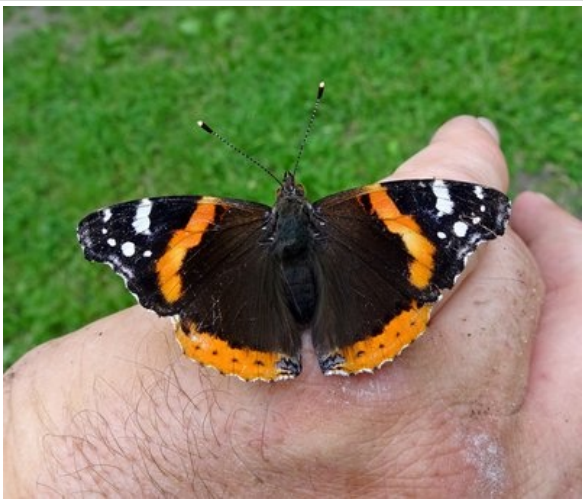




Finally, as I reached the glade where I had seen a very tatty Red Admiral the other day, the familiar whoosh of wings past my head announced the presence of another, much fresher, individual. It settled on a bare patch, and I noticed it seemed a bit unusual.



The red bands had a noticeable yellow-orange patch in the middle (and another similarly-coloured bit at the top edge of the forewing). In fact, the overall red colour was distinctly more orange than the customary bright scarlet/vermillion. The butterfly resumed its energetic swooping up and down the glade, and once again I stuck out an arm to see if it would "come to hand". Amazingly, almost instantly, it did. It was definitely interested in my sweat (plenty of that today!), and became hard to dislodge.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 07-Jun-16 10:01 PM GMT

Looks like we had similar afternoons on our respective local patches 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Jun-16 10:19 PM GMT

Yesterday was a miss on the butterfly front, because of cloud and warm tropical rain at the opportune moment. Today was a rather different day, and I had the chance to have a brief ramble in the Country Park at Bedfont Lakes. There was very little to be seen: two male Brimstones, a Speckled Wood, a handful of Common Blues, two sparring Large Skippers, a few whites. However, I did find a solitary Brown Argus (the first here this year) and my 30th

species of the year – a Meadow Brown.



Oh, and how could I forget: three different Holly Blues.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-16 10:57 PM GMT

As you've seen a Meadow Brown Dave I'll start looking in about a fortnight as that's roughly how far we are behind over this way 😊 I haven't seen that many Brown Argus yet myself and I'm getting a bit worried as they seem to be having a dreadful year 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-Jun-16 11:10 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

I haven't seen that many Brown Argus yet myself and I'm getting a bit worried as they seem to be having a dreadful year

Agreed. They have been practically absent from my part of the UK thus far, Wurzel. Worrying.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Jun-16 11:42 PM GMT

Yes, Wurzel, Brown Argus and Common Blue are both not doing well in all their usual haunts round here. I suppose their life-cycles are broadly in tandem, so what affects one tends to affect both.

After work, there was time to go down to Fairmile Common again with the hope of Silver-studded Blues. After a bit of searching, I discovered five or six tucked away in the "V" between the A3 and the A307 where the latter road crosses the former. One of them appeared to have been caught in one of the

deluges of the last few days...



...but the others were looking pretty new. There is a surprising amount of variability in the amount of black on the wings, with some having quite marked black spots on the hindwing and black scaling along the veins. The lighting also makes a huge difference to the blue colouration, and the most intense shades appear when the butterflies are not in bright sunshine.





Another week, and there should be many more out here, including some females – which were absent today.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 10-Jun-16 06:30 AM GMT

Great shots of the SSB there Dave. I always find the Blues difficult to photograph but you have captured lovely, crisp images there 📷

Re: millerd

by trevor, 10-Jun-16 07:31 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

A fine set of Silver Stud. images. A very photogenic species, especially when posing on flowering Heather. When I was a very small Boy I thought that all blue Butterflies lived on Heather, we used to picnic at Hindhead.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-16 08:26 PM GMT

Cracking Silver-Studs Dave 📷 😊 Hopefully the weather will cheer up next week so I can get out for some of my own 😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Jun-16 07:54 PM GMT

Thank you all – here's hoping the weather will improve so that we can all go out and find a few more. 😊

I spent the last weekend in Yorkshire and didn't see a glimpse of sunshine, and one solitary Small White. On the way back on Sunday I also passed through a huge storm near Luton which included an amazing display of lightning. The week since back home has been little better, but I had to go out this evening round my local patch as it's been a whole week since last I did so. It was bright and quite warm at least, but still with rain in the air. It took little time to track down some more Orange Tip caterpillars, of varying sizes from the tiny to the quite large, and on several different plants.



By August, we'll be largely ignoring them...

One of the Common Blues was notable for being of the variety *ab. flavescens*, where the underside lunules, normally red/orange, are instead a pale yellow.



Compare the normal one below.



I saw an example of this here last year (or was it the year before?) so I wonder if this is genetic, and present in this particular population. This variation is worth looking out for as it can be easily dismissed as a worn individual, whereas this is definitely not the case as you can see. I believe that when this *ab.* occurs in females, the upperside lunules can be similarly affected, but in the male (as in the one I saw today) the blue upperside is quite normal.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jun-16 08:28 PM GMT

[quote][/]Same time, same place, twenty-four hours later. More sunshine, but not so warm. The day had had a few hefty showers in it (again!) and everywhere was wet. Four species were seen, including another new one for my patch this year: the Large Skipper. Looking at all the photos, I seem to have seen four individuals with varying degrees of wear – all males. a selection:



I also saw a handsome dragonfly take a moth from the air and settle down to enjoy its meal.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 15-Jun-16 08:50 PM GMT

Great closeup of that Dragonfly, it's a female Black-tailed Skimmer, the males are powder blue with black tips to the abdomen. If I was a betting man I'd say the unfortunate meal was a Burnet companion.

Popped over to your SSB site at fairmile common today, saw at least 20 I think including 3 females. Males were active even in light rain!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Jun-16 09:08 PM GMT

I must get over there again soon, Buggy, or maybe one of the other Surrey sites near me. As long as they haven't all drowned – there have been a few hefty storms this week.

Up the M40 to Cherwell Valley and back this afternoon – miraculously the sun came out for the whole journey. I had time to briefly have a look at the meadows round the back of the service area: lots of flowers (including a fair bit of birds-foot trefoil) but only one solitary butterfly in the whole expanse – a fresh female Large Skipper.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Jun-16 10:45 PM GMT

The weather is still being decidedly iffy here to Dave – I think it could be one of 'those' years 😊 I reckon that if a similar aberrant feature keeps showing up in a population it must have a genetic basis, you might get to name the 'form' 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Jun-16 11:11 PM GMT

And "iffy" again today, Wurzel. No sunshine today here until 8 in the evening, when the sky cleared...

However, I still went out early afternoon to see what might fly on a cloudy day with a bit of heat getting through from the midsummer sun. Five species were prepared to brave the sunless conditions: Common Blue, Small Heath, Meadow Brown, Large Skipper and the first Small Tortoiseshell for a while. Meadow Browns in particular – they reached double figures quite easily.





There were still plenty of Orange Tip caterpillars around, getting gradually larger.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 19-Jun-16 09:15 AM GMT

Great photos Dave, in seams to be a year for beating the weather so far 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jun-16 10:53 PM GMT

Some sunshine this morning, but unfortunately I couldn't get out in it until after one – when it promptly disappeared. This meant yet another walk under cloudy skies, with much the same result.

A Common Blue posed on its food-plant:



Finally, caterpillar of the day was the Peacock, with this nest of black wrigglers looking shiny and bloated as they tend to do before a skin change.



It would be nice to have a proper sunny day again...

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Jun-16 09:15 PM GMT

At last – some sunshine, though it came at the end of yet another extremely wet day. After work I didn't have a lot of time to play with so stayed fairly local and visited Harmondsworth Moor for the first time in a while. For some time, all I saw were a handful of Meadow Browns, and I was on my way back to the car when I was distracted by a white butterfly. Something different for a change, and more so than I had thought – it was the first Marbled White of the season. The wind made life a bit difficult, as well as the ubiquitous high grass overtopping everything else including the Marbled White's favourite knapweed flowers, and the blowing pollen was starting to make me sneeze. However, a few photos were achieved.



It is possible the soil here does have chalk in it, as I believe it is an artificial site created years back as a side benefit of one of the major construction projects linked with Heathrow and/or the M25, and it may come from deeper down originally.

The Marbled White (or possible one just like it) came around again, but disturbed another quite different butterfly – a Small Tortoiseshell – and disappeared. The tortoiseshell appeared quite golden in colour, rather than deep orange, possibly accentuated by the early evening sunshine.



One of the photos I took made it look distinctly odd – I have no idea why.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-16 10:56 PM GMT

Lovely Marbled Whites Dave 😊 I generally start to look for species about a week and a half after you first report them as that's roughly how far we are behind over this way 😊 (I've probably said that before so apologies if it seems familiar). There is something unusual about your Small Tort – there doesn't seem to be as much difference between the ground colour and the usual white marks on the leading edge of the fore wing? It seems to look like the Small Tort Hutchinson's equivalent – if that makes any sense? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 20-Jun-16 11:05 PM GMT

Marbled Whites already, this season is zooming by! Shame the weather isn't aware its fast approaching high summer!

Re: millerd

by David M, 20-Jun-16 11:09 PM GMT

Marbled Whites AND 2nd brood Small Tortoiseshells?

....MUST be midsummer!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Jun-16 10:32 PM GMT

Thanks, all – yes, Marbled Whites herald summer – we just need the sun to agree with this.

The last couple of days have again been cloudy until the end of the day. I've been out locally both days and seen the same stalwarts as before, soldiering on under grey skies – Common Blues, Small Heaths, Large Skippers, Meadow Browns and Small Tortoiseshells. When the sun did appear for a few minutes, it showed there were far more butterflies around than I'd thought – no extra species, but Meadow Browns erupted from the grass all over the place, and there were quite a few Small Heaths as well. Here's a small selection from both days.





The highlights? Yesterday was the lovely fresh female Meadow Brown found just round the corner from home, the first female I've seen this year.



Today, it had to be what is for me perhaps more than anything the midsummer butterfly – the *hutchinsoni* Comma.



With the colours and elegant flight of a fritillary and its aerial battles with Large Skippers in particular, they are a splendid sight.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-16 10:28 PM GMT

A great eclectic mix there Dave 😊 After my speil about being 2 weeks behind in my last comment I only went and found my first Marb the very next day, very timely it being the herald of summer and seeing it on the Solstice 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jun-16 08:05 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

A great mix of summer species in your recent reports. I haven't had much chance to get out round my local patch lately and seeing your photos had made me realise how quickly the season whizzes by.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 24-Jun-16 10:40 PM GMT

Hi Dave,
I remembered your ' pale ' Small Tortoiseshell from 20th June, when I spotted one today.
Most unusual. It was the colour that attracted my attention.

Great reports as usual.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Jun-16 11:40 PM GMT

Yes, an interesting selection, Wurzel, but all prepared to fly in the absence of sunshine. 😊

Thanks, Neil – yes, suddenly it's not spring any more but summer is really stuttering to start. It amazes me how much you can see despite the weather. 😊

Thanks Trevor – I wonder why we have pale Tortoiseshells? 😊 I have to say the golden colour is quite attractive instead of the usual orange.

On Friday 24th I drove down to Taunton to spend the weekend with an old friend from school days. As I had the whole day to do it, I made a detour off the A303 north to Collard Hill following the encouraging report on the Large Blue blog the previous evening. I arrived under cloudy skies with a bit of drizzle, but it was bright and quite warm. Nothing of any sort appeared to be flying, but someone had found a Large Blue hunkered down on the grass amongst the raindrops.



I could see brighter weather out to the west, so sat down and stayed with the butterfly whilst others wandered away. Sure enough it brightened and warmed a bit more, and the butterfly became active, flying up a short distance to sit on a flower.





I took an extraordinary number of photos, of which these are just a few. The sun then came fully out, and suddenly there were Large Blues everywhere, mostly females laying eggs on every available bit of thyme.





The very steep terraced-looking slope not far from the entrance seemed a particularly favoured spot, sheltered from the wind. The sun stayed out for a couple of hours, but I then looked up to see an ominous dark cloud. My brisk walk back to the car was not quite brisk enough – down came the rain. As I drove down to the road to Taunton, it got worse, and across the levels it was almost impossible to see. I think I struck lucky with the timing! Here is the view before the rain arrived.



A great interlude with a lovely butterfly – their dark shade of blue (especially when it was still cloudy) is unlike anything else.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 27-Jun-16 08:07 AM GMT

A very worthwhile detour, even the weather played ball, it hasn't done that much this year !.
Several Large Blues were seen, by some, in the Cevennes. I've yet to see one.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Jun-16 10:04 PM GMT

I was very lucky to get the weather window I did. Those female Large Blues must have known the rain was coming – the egg-laying activity was frantic while the sun was out. I hope you get to see them, Trevor: they should be around for another week at a guess.

Saturday 25th: I had planned (if it hadn't tipped it down) to overshoot Taunton after Collard Hill, and carry on over to Haddon Hill for Heath Fritillaries, before coming back to stay with my old chum. However, the weather put paid to that plan, and on Saturday I continued with the original scheme I had hatched for this day, which was to visit the Heddon Valley on the North Devon coast. Luckily, my friend was happy enough to come along, and we took the coastal route via Minehead, Porlock and Lynmouth. I'd forgotten how small some of the roads were, and how steep the hills as well, but the scenery was stunning, and there was even sunshine patchily along the coast. Eventually we arrived at Hunter's Inn and walked down to the sea and back.



I did not see the underside to be absolutely sure, but it just did not look like the other species. It is really hard to say why! (Someone will tell me now that it isn't DGF at all... 😊). Four new species for the year in about 20 minutes, plus yesterday's Large Blue. 😊 In the end, a vague plan to take in Haddon Hill on the way back was again thwarted by a stormy sky over Exmoor, and Sunday was dismal. Never mind – it was a very successful butterfly weekend (and beer was also drunk!). The highlight for me had to be getting my first good view of the underside of a fresh High Brown Fritillary.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 28-Jun-16 02:50 PM GMT

That's a lovely shot of the High Brown Dave, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 28-Jun-16 08:51 PM GMT

Ooooooh High Browns, I wonder if I'll get lucky with them this year up at Arnside. Your's do look very nice 🍷

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jul-16 09:45 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie – I was very pleased with it. 😊 I'm very envious that you don't have to travel too far to see these splendid butterflies. 🍷

Thank you too, Buggy. I hope there'll still be some around at Arnside at the end of the month when I plan to stop there on the way up or back down from York (a bit of a detour but always worth it).

Back to normality on 27th June, and the briefest of walks locally with the standard overcast produced just a Comma, a Large Skipper, and any number of Meadow Browns, including a few females.



I then went down with some kind of bug for a day or two, but didn't seem to have missed any summer happening outside, so can't complain really. This evening, after a day at work, a burst of sunshine prompted another trip out – this time a specific walk to the local Essex Skipper colony next to the airport perimeter.







Cute or what? Essex do somehow seem to have a bit more character than their Small cousins.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-16 10:24 PM GMT

I agree Dave – Essex over Small every time although the most charismatic Skipper has to be the Lulworth (just a slight bit of regional bias there 😊). Lush High Brown from the post before too!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Jul-16 10:34 PM GMT

I saw a few Small Skippers today at Box Hill – very dull in comparison. Not sure about the Lulworths, Wurzel, but the Silver-spots are pretty cute too. 😊 (Awful to say it, but they are only a couple of weeks away now...)

There was sunshine this morning (some) and the rain held off (until the downpour) and it did get warm(ish)... Anyway, I took Elliot down to Box Hill. We had a good walk in the woods first, but saw nothing but a tired Speckled Wood and a couple of Red Admirals. One was a splendid insect.



As we set off back to the car, we found a mating pair of Marbled Whites, a view which demonstrated for Elliot the clear difference between the sexes of this attractive butterfly.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 02-Jul-16 10:53 PM GMT

All the rain this year must have made the Red Fescue grow rich and lush for all those Marbled White caterpillars this spring!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Jul-16 10:59 PM GMT

After taking Elliot off to a scout event early afternoon, I walked part of my local patch (not including the Essex Skipper bit this time). I was pleased to see five Commas and five Red Admirals, with three of the former and one of the latter on the same stand of bramble.



While waiting for one of the quartet of hyperactive butterflies to settle, I noticed something smaller bumbling in and out of the bushes. This proved to be a Gatekeeper, the first I've seen this year. The butterfly already seemed a bit worn, but could well have been buffeted and rained on in the last twenty-four hours.





I also saw the first whites for a few weeks, mostly GW, but one or two Small ones, a Small Heath and lots of Meadow Browns.



I have seen these reptiles occasionally round here before, but never close to. A shame to encounter one in this way. 😞

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 03-Jul-16 09:55 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, lovely shots of the Marbled White's, I wish they'd come North West 😊 I know they're in Yorkshire so why not Lancashire 😊
We are lucky to have the High Brown so near to us, trouble is they're like the "Will O Wisp" now you see me now you don't 😊 Last year I saw them on the 15th Of July at Gait Barrow near where the Dukes usually are,
Good luck at Arnside, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Jul-16 09:13 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie. Marbled Whites are doing well and extending their range apparently. I'm sure they'd be happy your side of the Pennines. 😊

The early morning sunshine was a bit deceptive – I made the relatively short trip to Black Park near Iver, and within ten minutes of arrival lower cloud and higher cloud ganged up to obscure most of it. There were bursts from time to time, and this was enough to bring out a single Silver-washed Fritillary, one of my aspirations for the visit.



I saw one fast-moving butterfly at a bit of a distance which looked very much like a White Admiral (the other target species) but I really couldn't be sure. Another fast mover, pale pink in flight, was definitely a Painted Lady, careering around and stopping only briefly to nectar on the brambles.

The final piece in the jigsaw of a somewhat frustrating morning was to see a pale grey butterfly fly in leisurely fashion from the brambles behind me and up onto the leaves of an ash tree a few feet above my head. This is all I could achieve by way of a photo.



Enough to confirm my suspicions – a Purple Hairstreak, probably on its maiden voyage to the treetops after hatching earlier in the day under one of the many oak trees. If I had been looking, I might have seen it basking amongst the low vegetation, but of course I hadn't. It did bask on the ash for a while (I could see its outline through the leaves), before it disappeared even higher up somewhere.



Oh to be five metres tall... (there are probably very few other benefits to be honest, but viewing Purple Hairstreaks on a level would be one certainly. 😊)

I also saw this delicately marked moth hiding under a bramble leaf. It looked white in flight, but I assume the green tinge here is light transmitted through the foliage.



Frustrating, certainly, but two more definite species for the year, and a "maybe".

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-16 10:53 PM GMT

I'm reading all the weekend exploits with real envy Dave, congrats with the Purple Hairstreak 🍷🍷 – perhaps they could be the species to buck the trend of 2016 and have a good year?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Jul-16 10:11 PM GMT

Maybe, Wurzel – I saw a few today near home whizzing about at the top of an oak. Or there could be other candidates for the species that are doing okay: Green Hairstreak? Marbled White? Or even the one that featured in my Sunday afternoon, following Philzoid's recent report.

From Black Park I drove down to Dawney's Hill near Woking with the sun still undecided whether to be in or out. Phil had reported very good numbers of Silver-studded Blues, and he was not wrong. I'd only say I found the numbers of females to be higher, with them barely being outnumbered by the males. There were fresh examples of both sexes as well as a lot of worn ones, and as Phil mentioned there were big differences in size. The work that has been done here to open it up more by cutting back the big clumps of gorse seems to have worked so far, and as long as the heather grows back well all should be well. It will be interesting to see how it affects the Grayling population – they should be out soon too.

Anyway, here are some Silver-studs, firstly a selection of males. The variety between individuals is quite wide when you look closely – the big difference between the width of the back border between the first two for example...





The only other butterfly seen was a female Meadow Brown doing Grayling impersonations as I've seen them do here before. Must be the habitat.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jul-16 09:40 PM GMT

I didn't finish work till half six on Tuesday 5th, but it was still very sunny so I went out to inspect local oak trees for Purple Hairstreak. Sure enough, one large solitary oak had four or five silvery darts flying around the top and squabbling with each other. Of course, when I pointed the camera, they

disappeared.



Whilst gazing upwards, I was aware of Commas and Red Admirals whizzing about under the trees, and on my walk back in the gloomy shade, I spotted a Red Admiral down on the ground. Despite moving from spot to spot, it refused to open up, but allowed a close approach for an underside photo.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-16 10:13 PM GMT

I reckon a closed wing view of a Red Admiral is even more impressive than when it opens up – those markings are sublime and subtle, if you let your imagination go you can see all-sorts in there 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Jul-16 10:10 PM GMT

After looking at Trevor's splendid photos from today, I almost hesitate to post my account of Chiddingfold a day earlier in apparently ideal conditions. I was there from before nine to nearly one o'clock and despite seeing at least two Emperors in flight, none were tempted down to either Trevor's bait or even the magic formula laid down in various choice spots by Neil Hulme. Perhaps it needed a day to mature... 😊

Nevertheless it was a good morning, meeting Trevor (and later Katrina) for the first time and encountering Neil in the field once again. We really did think his presence would work the magic, but even that didn't do the trick. I consoled myself with a few shots of the White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillaries that were also flying. It was noticeable how few butterflies there were overall – even the ubiquitous Ringlet hardly abounded, there were low numbers of Skippers and not a single Comma. Hopefully I'll get another chance over the next few days but the weather doesn't look as promising (especially Sunday when it will be quite windy). Anyway, some shots of the supporting cast:



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 07-Jul-16 10:52 PM GMT

Dave, I'd be very happy to see those lovely Butterflies you've shot because it's been awful here this week for Butterflies, I love the Admiral shots, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Jul-16 12:14 AM GMT

Thank you, Goldie. Since then I've only been out locally, but every afternoon/evening and mostly under warm partly overcast skies. This has been the pattern of the summer so far and almost all my photos have been taken under cloud.

Over the last four days I have seen 15 species locally, which isn't too bad. The overall stars have been the *hutchinsoni* Commas and on the evening of 6th July I saw over 10 individuals in various spots. Considering how relatively few hibernated Commas I saw in April, their offspring are doing reasonably well. They are quite variably marked and make an interesting study.



Also showing well are the Red Admirals with five around the walk, and the Meadow Browns are doing better than last year, though still not as numerous as the year before. There were some very large females amongst them now, including this interestingly marked individual.



Gatekeepers are now emerging with six seen, and Small Heaths continue, though most seem worn at the moment. I counted five in a relatively small area and one other a long way from the main colony. I glimpsed a couple of Purple Hairstreaks on one of the other oak trees (not the big oak where I saw them earlier in the week) and singleton Small Tortoiseshell and Small Skipper.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Jul-16 11:06 PM GMT

7th July was a similar kind of evening, with broadly the same mix of species. I did see a couple of Large Skippers and a few more Small Skippers today, as well as the ever-attractive Commas.



There were two Red Admirals, one of which was the one I'd seen exactly a month ago on 7th June, still with its hints of yellow on the scarlet bands. Today:



A month ago:



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Jul-16 07:00 PM GMT

Late on 8th July followed the same pattern as recently. The main addition to the list was a single second brood Holly Blue flying high between ivy-clad trees – the first of the summer. Not many Commas today for some reason.

Another selection:



male Gatekeeper



newish Red Admiral
Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Jul-16 09:21 PM GMT

Saturday **9th July**. I was able to take in more of my local patch over a lengthier spell this afternoon, including the verge where the Essex Skippers compete with the Heathrow traffic. I saw 12 species in all, with Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers most frequent: over 20 of each seen, with the former well in excess of that.



There was also a single Speckled Wood – this species is well down in numbers this year, especially after the bumper autumn it had here in 2014.

On the Essex Skipper patch, at least six were active, and also yet another Comma.



However, the Skippers stole the show.



female Essex Skipper



Not too bad considering the continuing lack of proper sunshine.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Jul-16 09:56 PM GMT

Sunday **10th July**. The forecast declared that the sun would appear after two today, so I headed off to Denbies. The sun duly came out on the way

down, but it was blowing a gale up on the top of the Downs and I was optimistic of seeing anything settled at all. However, down in little sheltered nooks there were good numbers of Marbled Whites, easily outnumbering the Meadow Browns which didn't seem to cope with the wind half as well.





There were quite a few Skippers and Small Heaths as well, but they were impossible to follow at all.

Walking right across the slopes and back, I hoped I might find a Chalkhill Blue or two. In fact, I found two: a mating pair. How this couple managed to find each other in the windy conditions I know not. Perhaps he was just lucky to be blown to the ground at the spot where she was emerging. Certainly an unusual first sighting.



I did see two others, both male. One walked onto my finger and proceeded to suck up the mixture of sweat and coffee on the end. I moved it down into the most sheltered spot within reach, tidied the grass a little, and it opened up. Exhausting the possibilities of my fingertip, it abruptly sailed off downwind and disappeared.



Hopefully, another trip in a week or so, on a calmer day, will produce a lot more.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Jul-16 10:25 PM GMT

There was time after the Denbies trip to have an early evening look around locally. Despite the sunshine, the continuing strong wind ruled out Purple Hairstreaks, but the more sheltered spots soon produced butterflies: the usual suspects mostly. Meadow Browns, Commas and Red Admirals were all up to the double figure mark, with a few whites and Gatekeepers thrown in.



The Whites were generally roosting in the brambles, unseen until I accidentally disturbed them. Today's newcomer was a new second brood Peacock, high up at the back of a deep bank of brambles - hopefully over the next two or three weeks I'll see more of these before they disappear as early hibernators.



One particular Red Admiral paid close attention to the human in its territory, finally settling very close by and allowing me to cast a shadow as I experimented with different camera settings.





At one point it set off after two other individuals which were very closely involved with each other. They dived into a thick patch of ivy up in an ash tree and didn't emerge, and my companion promptly gave up and came back to its spot on the bramble. I have seen this behaviour once before, and assume I am seeing a male and a female courting and that the disappearance into thick foliage is in order to mate. Two males squabble violently and spiral into the sky along with madcap chases. Two females don't really interact at all. That only really leaves one of each as an option...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 12-Jul-16 11:16 PM GMT

Your lucky to see all those Butterflies Dave and great shots as well, lets hope the weather picks up soon if not for us for the Butterflies, they do seem to be suffering, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-16 10:31 PM GMT

Just catching up after a week of no butterflies Dave – seems you're well ahead again – congrats with the Chalkhill Blue – excellent find! 😊👍 And I'm damn envious of your H.Comma shots – I need to get down to the woods before it's too late!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jul-16 07:30 PM GMT

Thanks, both. The Commas hereabouts are splendid, Wurzel! 😊

The weather took a down-turn, work intervened and I didn't get out again until the weekend, and then only locally. However, the sudden warmth made everything super-charged, and though I saw quite a lot, laying a camera on them wasn't so easy. All the following were seen: Large, Small and GV Whites, a Brimstone, Small and Essex Skippers, a Speckled Wood, Gatekeepers (including my first female of the year), Small Heaths, Meadow Browns, a Ringlet, Red Admirals in droves, Commas likewise, Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks. The surprise of the weekend was a fresh second brood Brown Argus. I had only seen one first brood individual so to see one at all was very pleasing. A selection:



Second brood Brown Argus

Now it's been too hot to go out... strange summer.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 19-Jul-16 08:06 PM GMT

Great shot of the Comma egg Dave – never seen one altho I have reared the cats.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 19-Jul-16 08:59 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

A nice selection from the weekend at your local patch. I managed a couple of hours at one of my local spots on Sunday afternoon but despite the good weather it was fairly quiet, most of the expected species were about but numbers were well down on usual for the time of year. For example I only saw half a dozen Gatekeepers, all males, when they should be well out by now.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Jul-16 08:02 PM GMT

After a couple of stifling days in the south, on Wednesday 20th, I headed for Wilberfoss in Yorkshire, picking up offspring en route. Most frustratingly, the usual plan to take in Arnside by means of a sizeable detour came to nothing, with the M6 shut at Rugby and again near Stoke-on-Trent. Sitting in two-hour traffic jams with three boys and 30 degree heat stretches my dedication too far. 😞 By contrast, the M1 was a breeze, though not a cool one...

I was surprised to find my sister's reliable buddleia almost bereft of butterflies – some whites, a Small Tortoiseshell and a Red Admiral put in appearances, though that was all. Most disappointing. However, the weather stayed warm and humid, though not particularly sunny, over the next few days, and there were some interesting bits.

21st July. With so little flying in the garden, I took an interest in the eggs to be found on the nasturtiums. Both Large and Small Whites had been busy – these were on the same leaf.



There was also some courtship/rejection behaviour, including these Small Whites.



Late afternoon, I popped down the road a mile or so to Calley Heath, a preserved bit of lowland sandy heathland. Here were a few more butterflies, including Green-veined Whites, Meadow Browns, Small Tortoiseshells, Ringlets and the odd Red Admiral.



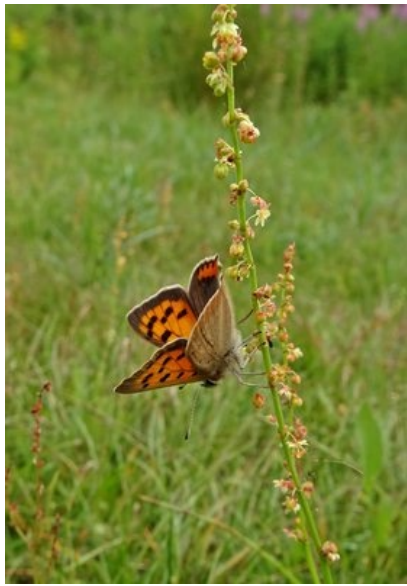
nothing to pick between the male and female here colourwise
However, I was delighted to find that there were also Small Coppers.



One of these I watched for a while as it jiggled down a plant stem, flew off, and then back to another stem only to repeat the exercise – could this be this the "stalk dance" described by Hoggers? I rather think it was.







Lovely to see this increasingly uncommon butterfly.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 26-Jul-16 08:42 PM GMT

Love the shots of the Copper Dave, yet to see them this side of the Pennines. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Jul-16 09:11 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie – it was great to see them anywhere at all, but this little spot is still a reliable site. 😊

July 22nd – I had to look to the garden for interest today, and there was some to be found. Firstly, I spotted a couple of Ringlets, which I had not seen in my sister's garden before. Better still, the first one turned out to be nearly blind (ab. *arete?*), a first for me anywhere.



However, there were probably more Large Whites today, including this pair of which I managed a sequence of shots showing attempted courtship by a male and rejection by the female.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-16 11:01 PM GMT

Great action shots (or should that be lack of action?) Dave 😊 Your Ringlet looks good for an arete too 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Jul-16 07:12 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. I was amazed the Large Whites stuck around on the lawn as long as they did. 😊 Another ab, too – I've seen a few this year, mostly unspectacular like this one, but interesting to see what turns up in ordinary butterfly populations just about anywhere.

July 23rd. More garden watching, but nothing particularly exciting.



Early evening, it brightened up a bit, so we had a walk at Allerthorpe Common near Pocklington. The brief sunshine brought out a few Gatekeepers, Ringlets and Meadow Browns, plus one or two Red Admirals.



Almost all the Gatekeepers were males, with one exception.



In one grassy area, the sun energised a platoon of Small Skippers, which darted around in all directions.



Of the hoped for Small Coppers, one was seen, but jinked quickly out of sight and was lost over the heathland.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Jul-16 07:24 PM GMT

July 24th. Time to return south. However, there was a bit of sun in the morning (despite hearing the Test Match up the road in Leeds being rain-afflicted). I had some more views of the Comma from the 23rd, plus a nice Red Admiral (but only at an odd angle).



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 28-Jul-16 10:38 PM GMT

Love the Comma shots Dave, the one on the Buddliea really looks impressive a bit like a dragon 🐉 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Jul-16 08:36 PM GMT

I see exactly what you mean, Goldie. It looks quite menacing and the scalloped wings are just right. 😊

On **27th July**, after two days at work, I was able to go around my local patch for the first time in nearly two weeks. Not a lot had changed, except for the Commas and Gatekeepers being worn now, and Skippers having pretty well disappeared.

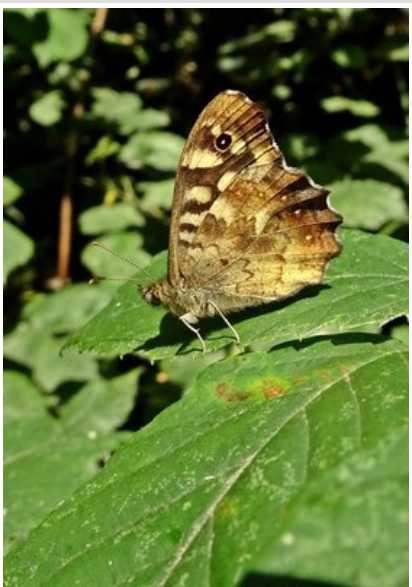




There were lots of Red Admirals now, though, varying in wear and also in size. One or two were really large.



Also nice to see were three or four new Speckled Woods, which have been really infrequent here this year.



It was good to catch up with the local environs again. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jul-16 08:48 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Just catching up with your Yorkshire trip, great reports and photos...love the 'Dragon Comma' as imagined by Goldie.

Not much around my patch at the moment apart from Whites, Skippers, Satyrids and a few Holly Blue...very few Small Torts and no Peacocks yet. I am not seeing the numbers of Red Admirals that are around further south either, just a couple so far.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 29-Jul-16 08:54 PM GMT

Good to see that you've caught up with the Holly Blues again, Dave.
Fresh ground searching males are easy prey for the camera, but not later on !.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Jul-16 09:24 PM GMT

Thanks for your kind comments, Neil - it really is slow going, even down here.

Yes, Trevor, you're right. I found another one today that despite taking a rest from slurping up goodies from the ground and perching, refused to open up at all.



I had another walk this afternoon (29th July), very similar to the last, even to the extent of there being a Painted Lady in it. No photo today, though - it was far too lively. I caught a glimpse of a Purple Hairstreak high up, a new Common Blue that wouldn't sit still at all, and found a small area right next to J14 with about a dozen Red Admirals (and a few Commas) in it. White butterflies popped up in most places, but were really hard to get near to. However, I succeeded with this Green-veined White, which seemed to have reduced black scaling along the underside veins.



Unusually, I also managed to approach a female Meadow Brown.



Finally I came across a very new Small Heath, with beautifully subtle markings.



Much overlooked and underrated in my book.

The weather today was quite benign, really, but a burst of low sun across the fields with clouds made much darker – plus the dead tree – created quite a dramatic vista.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Jul-16 11:19 PM GMT

Beautiful Small Heath there Dave, those subtle eyes are lush! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 30-Jul-16 04:05 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, lovely shots you've got there, 🍷 I saw a Holly Blue very briefly at HLB not seen one since, we're really short on Butterflies here at present, not even a peacock yet. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Jul-16 08:00 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie. I think I'm quite lucky with my local patch – nothing unusual but lots of variety on almost any day I go out. 😊

Saturday **30th July**: a bit further afield today, though. With Denbies and Box Hill out for the equation this weekend because of the takeover of the roads by cyclists, I headed up to Aston Rowant. This is probably the best time of year for this site too, with lots to see. As expected with this summer, there wasn't a lot of sunshine, but it was pretty warm, and there was only a little breeze for a change. The slopes abounded in Chalkhill Blues and Meadow Browns in particular, and the site's speciality the Silver-spotted Skipper was also out in reasonable numbers: mostly males at the moment, with only one or two females. After what seemed like a dismal first brood, Brown Argus had appeared again, and were thankfully more plentiful now. Also seen: Peacocks, Small, Large and Essex Skippers, Gatekeepers (not very many), Brimstones, Large Whites, a few Common Blues, a Red Admiral, a few ghostly Marbled Whites, and a single Small Copper.

There were a couple of other folk out on the hill looking for the skippers, one local lady and another all the way from Staffordshire. I was able to help in pointing out the patches of bare soil the Silver-spots like to bask on (as well as on the worn sheep paths through the grass where it's easy to disturb them well before you've seen them). Once you get your eye in, suddenly they seem to be everywhere!

Chalkhills:









Brown Argus:





Silver-spotted Skippers:



a distinct green tinge to this one







The supporting cast:





Essex?





Despite all the other species on show, for me the highlight of the day was this lovely Small Copper:



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 31-Jul-16 09:32 PM GMT

That's a bumper haul for one day, the Silver Spots especially.
I must visit my local site for them if the weather behaves, and next week doesn't look good.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by David M, 31-Jul-16 09:42 PM GMT

Wow! I was surprised to see a Marbled White near me yesterday, so I'm even more astonished that they're still on the wing in Oxfordshire!!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-16 10:35 PM GMT

Great range of shots and species Dave for such a poor year 😊 I renewed my acquaintance with the Silver-spotted Teddy on Friday and I know what you mean about when you get your eye in, I always forget how big they are and spend the first part of my visits being distracted by micro moths 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 01-Aug-16 10:45 AM GMT

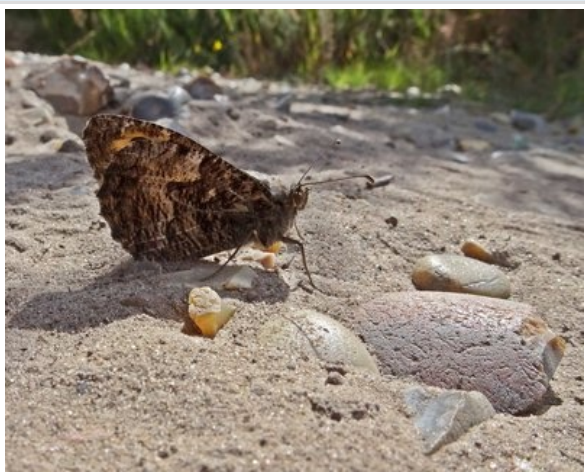
Lovely Butterfly shot's Dave, especially the Copper, 🍷 none up here yet but hope fully I'll see some soon when I journey South. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Aug-16 08:17 PM GMT

Thanks everyone for the kind comments. 😊 It was good to see so many butterflies, even though the numbers of some were much lower than usual. I also forgot to mention I'd seen a rather worn Dark Green Fritillary down near the ditch.

Sunday **31st July** looked reasonable again, even good early on, but the cloud built and we headed for another warm, but mostly cloudy day. I elected to look for Grayling first, and visited Chobham Common initially. I'd forgotten how this is a bit of a hotspot for dog-walkers, and the evidence was clear to see, both visual and olfactory. Nevertheless, I made my way to the steps up the small hill amidst the heathland, and stood looking around to see what was flying.



Wandering a little further from the steps, I saw one other Grayling, plus a variety of Skippers and some Ringlets and Gatekeepers.





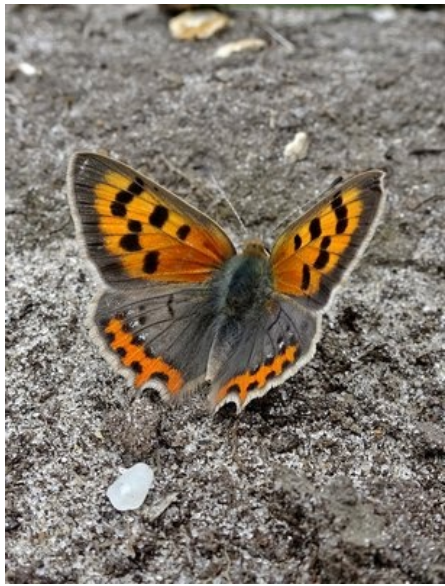
A couple of Commas patrolled one of the paths, and I also spotted a single female Silver-studded Blue.



From Chobham, I continued to Dawney's Hill near Pirbright, where the clearance of much of the gorse has left a lot of the site seemingly barren. The Silver-studded Blues here seemed unaffected a few weeks back, but an hour today only produced one single Grayling.



However, I struck lucky again, with another new-looking Small Copper which was sporting nice blue spots as well.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Aug-16 09:10 PM GMT

31st July continued... After Pirbright, I headed further on down to Chiddingfold. Visits there at this time the last couple of years have proved really worthwhile, and I hoped at least to see some second brood Wood Whites. What was most noticeable was the continuing theme of a real shortage of numbers, though the variety remained. The ride through the trees from the Botany Bay entrance is really overhung now, with the trees meeting overhead, so little sunlight reaches the edges of the path where brambles used to attract Commas, White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillaries. Purple Emperors used to come down all along here a few years back, but it is just too shady now. Beyond the bridge, things remain open, and despite persistent cloud, it was bright enough for four or five Wood Whites to be active. It also meant that they stopped more frequently and were easy to approach. I continued further, beyond the triangle and into the clearing/meadow to the left. A lot of scrub was removed from here last winter, and it is a good deal more open with many more flowers. However, there is now virtually no bramble, and therefore no nectaring White Admirals. In fact, though there were quite a few butterflies about, there were nowhere near as many as last year. Only a handful of fresh Brimstones and Peacocks, instead of dozens.





No Common Blues. Just one or two Skippers, Gatekeepers and tired-looking Ringlets.



Only the Silver-washed Fritillaries seemed as numerous as ever, and I saw no less than three sets of courtship flights in various locations.



Wood White habitat - spot the courting SWF...

I did see one solitary White Admiral waft through the trees low down, but also watched a much larger (but ragged-looking) butterfly fly two sorties from the top of an oak and then return to his perch. I'm pretty certain this was a Purple Emperor, but given the lateness in the year, I can't be 100% sure.

I then returned to the wood Whites.



...and the male
Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 01-Aug-16 09:57 PM GMT

Can't believe you're still seeing Large Skippers, Dave. They vanished from south Wales quite a while back!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-16 11:09 PM GMT

A hell of a day Dave – or should that be Heaven? Beautiful Wood Whites Dave – it almost makes me wish that I hadn't seen them earlier in the year so I'd have to travel to see them again 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 03-Aug-16 10:05 AM GMT

Hi! Millard, it's great to see the Wood White photos, I saw my first WW's this year , Unbelievable! Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Aug-16 10:47 PM GMT

Yes, David, Large Skippers at both Chobham and Chiddingfold, and also one at Aston Rowant the day before. I think we've had better weather than you recently, though, so they have persisted longer here. The same is probably true of the Marbled Whites you mentioned earlier.

The Wood Whites were as delicate as ever, Goldie, a lovely sight. Well worth another visit, Wurzel, if you have any points in the bank... 😊

Looking back, over the three days Friday to Sunday (the last three days of July), I saw 31 different species across the four places visited. And Small Tortoiseshell was one I didn't see! Not bad at all.

Since Sunday, the weather has been indifferent or just plain wet. I did have a short walk this evening, but only spotted a couple of Small Whites and a single Holly Blue before the cloud came over again.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 04-Aug-16 06:43 AM GMT

Lovely photos of the Wood Whites Dave. They look great on the different coloured flowers and lively backgrounds – very vibrant. Perhaps I might yet get over to see them.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 04-Aug-16 09:32 AM GMT

You've certainly been productive recently Dave 😊. Your local patch seems to be faring better than mine this year 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Aug-16 09:56 PM GMT

Thank you Pauline. I'm really pleased you like the more natural backgrounds in these pictures (which to be honest feature in most of my photos!). Wood Whites don't seem to discriminate as much as some species over what they settle on, so you get a wide variety of wildflowers in the photos too. They are very photogenic little things as well. 😊

Yes, Buggy – my local patch has been okay for variety this year, though as with most places numbers of some are well down.

I had another ramble locally this evening, and despite a strong breeze, a bit of sunshine brought some butterflies out. In particular, those stalwarts of early summer evenings, the Red Admirals, were around in numbers – I lost count at 15 after only a part of the walk, and was persistently dive-bombed throughout. In amongst them and joining in the various melées, were several Commas: perhaps seven or eight in all. there were also two or three Peacocks. I spotted four Speckled Woods and five or six Holly Blues.



In the meadow area between the River Colne and the M25, there were still dozens of Meadow Browns, mostly females, and I did find a single Small Heath as well.



Of Gatekeepers and Common Blues, there was no sign at all.

The Commas were largely fading now.





Quite late in the day for these to still be emerging.

However, the main attraction was the Red Admirals. As can be seen, several were of the *bialbata* variety, with white spots in the red forewing band.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-16 10:58 PM GMT

There does seem to have been a surge Red Admiral numbers recently – I'm wondering if they're migrants or homegrown? If they are migrants it would be nice if they'd brought along a few of their cousins or even more distant relations 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Aug-16 10:58 PM GMT

I have seen a few Painted Ladies, Wurzel, but nothing more exciting on the migratory front. No Cloudies for example... 😞

I actually got to go out on my local patch today in the middle of the day, and in bright sunshine, too! A rather different set of butterflies greeted me, including one very special one.

As normal, Meadow Browns outnumbered everything else, but were mingled with Gatekeepers, Small Heath and even a few Essex Skippers. The first photo is a deceased Gatekeeper – I would guess old age. It's amazing how rarely you come across dead butterflies, particularly those who have succumbed to natural causes.



However, the star today was a Small Copper. This species has been absent on my local patch (or I haven't seen any) since 2012, and it was a joy to find this one.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 06-Aug-16 11:15 PM GMT

Your local patch certainly produced the goods today, Dave. You didn't resist the female Holly Blue luckily, with the very strong, black, forewing markings. A great pity she failed to open up more.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 07-Aug-16 10:44 AM GMT

those Wood Whites are so tempting, can't believe after travelling the length and breadth of the country this year they are still on my to see list 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 07-Aug-16 10:52 AM GMT

David M wrote:

Can't believe you're still seeing Large Skippers, Dave. They vanished from south Wales quite a while back!

They virtually didn't appear in the first place in my part of the world!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Aug-16 10:19 PM GMT

Yes, Trevor, very productive: 23 species for the year round here now, though some have been very poor in numbers. The sun was just too strong for that Holly Blue to open further, unfortunately, and I couldn't get in a better position as it was in a neighbour's front garden... 😊

There might still be a few Wood Whites about, Buggy, but Chiddingfold isn't easy by public transport I know. 😊

I was passing the entrance today (7th August), so I popped into Bedfont Lakes Country Park. Things started pretty well, with two Painted Ladies spotted almost immediately.



Even the Whites were in relatively short supply.

Later on, I had a shorter walk locally than yesterday. The clear winners today were the Holly Blues, and I counted over 20 in a circular route. A few stopped to nectar on bramble or to sit in the shade – not many stayed out in the sunshine.



There were also a few more Speckled Woods – they really are making up for their absence earlier in the year.



I didn't get as far as the open meadow area, so didn't check on the species usually found there, but I suspect a repeat of yesterday (in much windier conditions) would have followed.

Dave

Re: millerd

by MikeOxon, 07-Aug-16 10:32 PM GMT

A nice collection of species, Dave. Like you, I have noticed an absence of both Common and Chalkhill Blues from sites where I normally expect to see loads. We must hope that enough eggs are being laid to provide for a recovery next year!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Aug-16 10:52 PM GMT

Great Painted Lady Dave 😊 There may be fewer numbers of the blues about but everything is okay as you're still whispering the Holly Blues down 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Aug-16 07:54 PM GMT

Thanks, Mike – you are quite right and my trip out today was shocking in that regard. 😞

Thanks, Wurzel. The Painted Lady on the ground was immaculate and I suspect locally hatched. 😊 No shortage of Holly Blues yesterday, certainly, but they were most reluctant to come down generally. Weak sunshine is best.

8th August. A less warm day, a bit breezy, but reasonable sunshine. I took my smallest son to Box Hill and then Denbies.

At **Box Hill**, we ambled across the slope to the east of the viewpoint slopes, and sure enough, reasonable numbers of Silver-spotted skippers appeared.



We then walked round through the woods to Burford Spur, seeing several Speckled Woods en route.



All in all, quite worrying for a prime butterfly site on the North Downs.

Denbies was windier, and walking down through Steers Field, I saw nothing until nearly at the gate where the first few Chalkhills were hopping from one clump of marjoram to the next. Though nothing like the numbers of some recent years, there was a reasonable showing of this species, and they are still emerging, judging by some of the new individuals seen.





In the middle part of the field where the rabbits keep the grass short, there were at least half a dozen Silver-spotted Skippers.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Aug-16 11:19 PM GMT

Another local walk today while the sun shone this morning, and it was good to see that there were at last a few more Common Blues around.



In the same area where I had seen a Small Copper a couple of days ago, another individual appeared, which is even more encouraging – not just a stray one-off, then.





Leaving the meadow area, in the more wooded parts by the river I saw Peacocks, Red Admirals, Speckled Woods, Whites (mostly GVW) and a handful of Commas.



And of course, there were numerous Holly Blues, certainly the commonest woodland/hedgerow butterfly seen today.





Dave

Re: millerd

by MikeOxon, 09-Aug-16 11:41 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

Walking back to the car, I saw another Skipper – though the underside of the antennae look fairly dark, they are not inky black

so I think this is a Small Skipper.

I would go for Essex Skipper from that photo, especially as there seems to be a male *lineola* scent mark showing through the wing. Super pic, whichever it is.

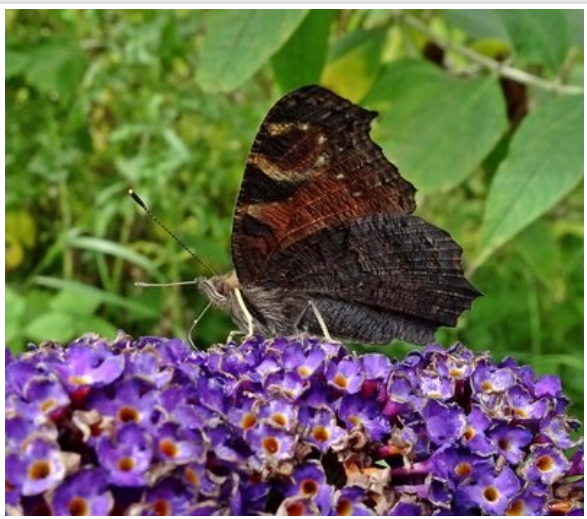
You need some more expert opinion 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Aug-16 08:12 PM GMT

Thanks, Mike – I'm still not sure either way to be honest... 😊

I've been away in Yorkshire for a few days again. The sun shone at some point on each day and things had inevitably moved on from the last visit three weeks before. On **Thursday 11th**, it was afternoon before butterflies appeared in my sister's garden, and the buddleias became adorned with Large Whites and various Nymphalids.



One of these was a Painted Lady – my sister said a Painted Lady had been a regular visitor over the previous week, but she suspected there might be more than one. Compared to those seen recently down south, it was small – no bigger than the Peacocks, perhaps the size of a Small Tortoiseshell.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 15-Aug-16 08:20 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Painted Lady Dave, especially the last one. I've only seen 2 this season.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Aug-16 08:58 PM GMT

Thank you Pauline - I think I've been lucky with the Painted Ladies as I've seen them in several different spots now. If only some Clouded Yellows would turn up too... 😊

12th August was a lovely sunny day, especially after lunch. I counted 27 Peacocks at one point on the various buddleias, plus two or three Red Admirals and numerous Whites. A couple of Holly Blues and a very worn Meadow Brown drifted through the garden, and one pristine male Brimstone made an appearance.



There was also a Painted Lady, and I am pretty sure it was not the same as the one seen the day before.



Later in the afternoon, we went out to Allerthorpe Common. The main path through the woods into the heathland was bordered by tall stands of willow-herb, and we soon spotted a couple of Peacocks, a Red Admiral and a few Speckled Woods. Looking ahead, we could see a particular clump of willow-herb had a lot of activity around it – when we got there, the relatively small area of flowers was host to at least 20 Brimstones. there were near enough equal numbers of each sex and it was intriguing to see males and females nectaring on adjacent blooms when next spring they would be chasing one another and spiralling into the sky. What was particularly odd was to have so many in such a small place, when there were many equally sunny spots up and down the path.



Aside from the congregation of Brimstones, there was nothing else of real note – lots of Small Skippers were still flying, perhaps a dozen Peacocks, plus a few Meadow Browns and female Gatekeepers, but there were no Common Blues or Small Coppers.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 15-Aug-16 10:51 PM GMT

Nice Painted Ladies, I'm seeing them on virtually every trip out now too, all fresh home bred editions as well! Come on Clouded Yellows, I'm closing in on the half century of species this year!!!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Aug-16 09:42 PM GMT

Thanks, Buggy - I'm still hopeful of those Clouded Yellows. The weather's ideal for a few to hop the Channel at the moment. 😊

13th August. Most of the day was taken up by walking all round the walls of York during which a few Peacocks were seen on bits of wild buddleia. Later on, we popped down to Calley Heath, which is right on the A1079 but virtually hidden unless you know where the gate is. Almost immediately the first orange jewel appeared, followed by several others - I managed to identify six different individuals, but there were probably more across the site. In previous years, there have also been Brown Argus, but it was possibly between broods, or they have disappeared. Also seen were Meadow Browns and Large and Green-veined Whites, plus a Painted Lady and a Comma scrapping. Needless to say, the Comma came off best and maintained its territory while the Painted Lady soared away at high speed.



Last of all was a very new-looking Small Tortoiseshell.



However, the visit was made by the Coppers.





Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 16-Aug-16 10:22 PM GMT

Cripes, I thought you'd been to dungerness for a bit there!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Aug-16 10:26 PM GMT

That last Copper is a beaut Dave 😊 Just catching up after a very hot (and virtually butterfly free) week in Lisbon. It seems that you've discovered where

all the Coppers have been hiding 🙄😏

Have a goodun

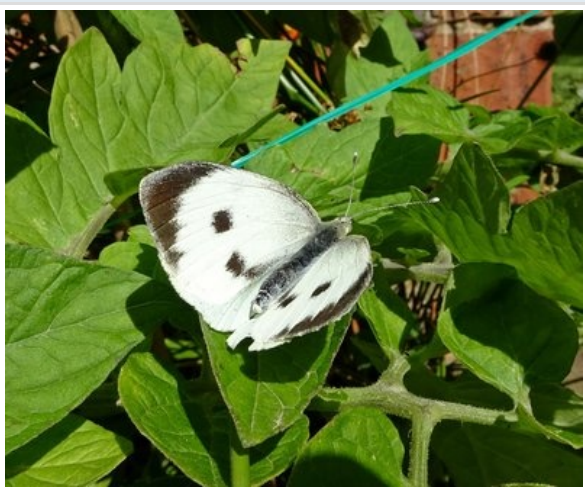
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Aug-16 08:21 PM GMT

Thanks, Buggy and Wurzel - it's the first time I've seen more than one or two Small Coppers at a time for ages. A very small site too - compared to the vast shingle expanse of Dungeness.

Before heading back south, there was time to capture a few more shots of the garden butterflies, including the Large White larvae decimating the nasturtiums.



number one suspect...



... caught in the act

There were lots of Peacocks, a few Red Admirals, and the Painted Lady seen in previous days.





Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Aug-16 08:40 PM GMT

The long trek south on Sunday 14th August culminated in a traffic hold-up on the M40 caused as a knock-on effect from something worse which had shut the M1. It was quite late, but the sun was out and it was pretty warm, so I diverted at Aston Rowant and had a walk across the northern hillside. One advantage was being able to see how the queue was doing, of course!

The butterflies were starting to go to roost, and in quite a few cases were electing to have a final sunbathe before bedding down. There were quite a few Chalkhills around, but new specimens were very much at a premium; however, Brown Argus and Common Blue were also now in better numbers, and overall much fresher in condition.





I saw quite a few Silver-spotted Skippers, but they were surprisingly active given the time of day, and extraordinarily difficult to follow in the late golden sunlight.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-Aug-16 10:48 PM GMT

The is a lovely 'tailed' Copper Dave 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 18-Aug-16 11:25 PM GMT

Don't think I've ever seen a Small Copper with such pronounced tails before, Dave. Mind you, any Small Coppers at all is welcome in my part of the world right now! 🍷

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Aug-16 06:27 PM GMT

Thanks, both. As we've seen from Hoggers' continuing studies, there is a lot of variation in Small Coppers, and the length of the tails is just one aspect. Highly noticeable in this one! 😊

After a bit of a gap, it was time to see how the local patch was going. On **15th August** I set out late afternoon as usual into warm sunshine. Within half an hour I had exceeded a total of 20 Holly Blues, and stopped counting. This matches the last couple of years, and sooner or later the books say there should be a crash as their parasite gets the upper hand, but at present they are everywhere.



However, Small Heath are building again, and amongst them was one on fleabane, flicking its wings partially open from time to time as they sometimes do when nectaring.



Not something I've captured often before with this species, and to find them not buried in the grass was lucky too.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 19-Aug-16 07:11 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

I seems that you are to Holly Blues what Hoggers is to Small Coppers 😊

Lovely images of the fresh Small Copper, those tails soon get shorter with wear. Great shot of the Small Heath pair as well. Both species that have been

in very short supply around my local patch so far this year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 19-Aug-16 11:00 PM GMT

Hi Dave, I can only echo what you said about Denbies . I was there a couple of weeks ago, and I said in my PD how tall and thick the vegetation is. It now looks totally unsuitable for the Adonis Blue. But, perhaps , they can find just a few small areas, grazed by rabbits , that will keep them going...

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-16 10:08 PM GMT

A great 'set' of Small Heath Dave 😊 You can really see how differently marked they can be...(I know I have a thing about counting spots 😊😊)

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Aug-16 10:34 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil – certainly no shortage of Holly Blues to study round here. I usually see the first one before shutting the front door on a sunny day. 😊

Thanks, Wurzel – I was particularly pleased with that pair of Small Heaths. 😊 You're right, there is quite a bit of variability with markings (including spots!) – something else I could study as they are also a reliable species hereabouts.

And talking of Denbies, Essex – I paid another visit on **Tuesday 16th**, late in the afternoon, and there were thankfully some Adonis flying. As predicted they were favouring the areas where the rabbits have kept the grass shorter.





I also saw Chalkhill and Common Blues (the former very worn, but the latter with some fresh examples).



There were Meadow Browns, Small Heaths and several Silver-spotted Skippers, but they all eluded the camera. I spoke to a group of people who relayed the fact that a couple of Clouded Yellows had been seen at the bottom of the slope earlier on, but I'm afraid I couldn't track them down.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Aug-16 07:49 PM GMT

Sunday 21st August. The weather forecast was not very clear cut, so having resolved that today would be a Brown Hairstreak day, I had to decide where to go. I took the nearest option, on the basis that if it turned out cloudy or wet, not much effort would have been expended. I therefore headed for Bookham Common, arriving around 11.

The sun was just showing signs of appearing, and the strongish wind looked set to assist in blowing away the cloud cover. The first thing I saw was a surprise – a male Large Skipper, nearly three months after I'd seen the first one this year.



On my second circuit, around one o'clock, I spotted a small dull-looking butterfly down on the brambles by the path. As I approached, I identified it as a male Brown Hairstreak, but before I could even wave the camera at it, it set off for the treetops. However, this disappointment was immediately countered when a female Brown Hairstreak appeared, meandering along the hedgerow, stopping frequently and opening up a little too. It has large cuts in its hindwings, showing the value of those tails when thwarting bird attacks.





Eventually, it disappeared over the hedge into the field. On my next walk in this meadow, I encountered the same butterfly again, where it was spending time in the hedge seeking out blackthorn on which to lay.





It stayed like that a while, before hopping along the hedge as the other one had done, stopping enough to give some underside views. It was in better condition, with one tail at least partially intact.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 21-Aug-16 09:06 PM GMT

I was at Bookham this afternoon, got there around 1.30. You had better luck than me though, a Hairstreakless day for me 🙄🇬🇧

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Aug-16 10:11 PM GMT

I left around 2 o'clock – must have missed you somehow, Buggy. Bad luck with those Hairstreaks – I've had many a blank day looking for them here in the past. 😞

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 22-Aug-16 10:57 AM GMT

Now I'm really envious Dave 🍷🍷 BHS and Adonis all on the same day Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Aug-16 09:24 PM GMT

Thank you, Goldie – not quite on the same day, but not all that far apart. Denbies and Bookham are about five miles apart in a straight line.

Over the last couple of days, I've posted the more interesting excursions, but I've been several times locally as well. All these trips have had the same themes – lots of Holly Blues, good numbers of Meadow Browns and assorted White butterflies, Red Admirals and Speckled Woods cropping up everywhere (especially the more shady bits), Commas of both types with the new overwintering ones gradually replacing the summer *hutchinsoni*, and a sprinkling of other species. Holly Blues First:





Red Admirals:



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Aug-16 10:18 PM GMT

Great set of posts recently Dave – somehow I missed your Brostreaks – still looking good 😊 Interesting looking GVV too, those markings on the fore wings look different to normal?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 23-Aug-16 07:22 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, Brostreaks confirmed at Gait Barrow isn't that great 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Aug-16 08:22 PM GMT

Yes it is, Goldie. 😊 Now you'll have to go up there egg-hunting in the winter to see how they are doing! 😊

I had to go into Central London for a meeting today – not the best sort of day to do it with temperatures over 30 degrees. Luckily the trains (and even the District Line tube) have air conditioning. How did we manage without? I did see a butterfly – a Small White in a small patch of green on Horseferry Road.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Aug-16 10:31 PM GMT

That GVW, Wurzel – I did wonder about it at the time. There are distinct black lines along the veins on the upper hind wings, which look noticeably odd.

It's been really hot round here over the last three days. After the meeting in London, the next two days have been spent at work. However, I managed to get out for an hour at lunchtime on Wednesday 24th, and visited Bedfont Lakes Country Park. I had hoped a few Clouded Yellows might have made it here (they do most years), but the closest I came was a female Brimstone.





A couple of Holly Blues, some worn Meadow Browns and a fast-flying Comma completed the picture. Whilst trying in vain to persuade a nice fresh Common Blue to settle, I was sidetracked by this rather splendid spider.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Aug-16 10:58 PM GMT

Today (25th) I wasn't able to visit my local patch until nearly six – it was still hot, but the butterflies were fast disappearing to roost. At one point I disturbed about a dozen together – a mixed bag of Common Blues, Brown Argus and Small Heath.



I saw a few of all of these elsewhere too. Even the ubiquitous Holly Blues had mostly settled down out of sight, but a few were still around the ivy, high up. Late on, I came across a Green-veined White, avidly nectaring on fleabane in the shade, almost undisturbable. A nice, nearly new female.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-16 11:06 PM GMT

Lovely sequence of shots Dave – again the GVV's are particularly cracking 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Aug-16 09:13 PM GMT

I was pleased with that GVV too, Wurzel. Nicely marked top and bottom, quite fresh and very obliging. Ideal, really! 😊

More from another visit to my local patch on Friday **26th August**, only a bit earlier in the day, and with strong sunshine. The highlight was the arrival of a male Clouded Yellow: however, its appearance was relatively brief, as it was constantly disturbed by Meadow Browns which seemed to take exception to it for some reason (much as I've seen them do with DGFs at Box Hill). I failed to get anywhere near enough for a photo, but hopefully it or others will appear again.

Other than that excitement, the mix was the same as before, with rather more Speckled Woods than in previous days, and a big increase in the Small Heath population.





Both types of Comma were around, but it was the *hutchinsoni* old guard that were most in evidence in the heat, whizzing around and chasing anything that moved.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 27-Aug-16 09:42 PM GMT

Bookham might be worth loitering around on a Clouded Yellow hunt, I noticed a couple have been seen recently and there's more than enough Fleabane to keep them occupied there!

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 28-Aug-16 10:32 AM GMT

Hi Dave, you are capturing some cracking photos of whites from your recent trips, the Green-veined in the earlier post and that last Small White especially 😊

Great stuff,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Aug-16 08:57 PM GMT

Thanks, Buggy – I might go down again and go beyond the hairstreak haunts and see if I can find some Cloudies. 😊

Thanks, Neil. 😊 The period just before they roost seems to be best for getting shots of Small and Green-veined Whites, particularly on hot days. Rather like Orange Tips, really. 😊

DAY OUT IN DARKEST DORSET

Saturday 27th August. I had been promising my smallest son a trip to the beach for a while, and this was the chance. The forecast didn't look ideal, but we set off early and were on the sand down at Studland by 10. It was cloudy, warm and there wasn't a breath of wind, and there were a few drops of rains every now and again. The sun did try to come through as well, and it was very pleasant sitting there by the sea. My son did brave the water (18-19 degrees apparently), but not for long. The only butterfly was a splendid Red Admiral on one of the buddleias near the shop.

After a few hours, we returned to the car and headed through Swanage to Durlston Country Park. We left Studland in a particularly sharp shower, but drove through the town in sunshine, and once up on the hills on the other side, it came out quite strongly. We walked over towards the lighthouse and then back along the coastal path. I had hoped there might be a few Lulworth Skippers still around, and it turned out that there were. I saw six or seven in various places, all worn, all female and mostly nectaring on yellow flowers.



Getting home to the heat of the environs of Heathrow I found that we had done well to miss some quite violent weather – very lucky, and a great day out.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 28-Aug-16 10:58 PM GMT

Nice pics even if they were a little past their best. I wonder if any of them were fresh on my visit a few weeks ago (no idea of the life expectancy of a Lulworth adult). That's yet another gorgeous part of the world to go butterfly hunting and when I was there I could hear Peregrines calling from the cliffs, presumably a nesting pair.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 29-Aug-16 07:16 AM GMT

The first and last Adonis shots are what the tabloids would call 'stunna's'. They are also worthy of a mrgreen, and no grass blades in the way. 🍷

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Aug-16 09:48 PM GMT

Thanks, Buggy. 😊 One year I will try to see Lulworths earlier in their long season – I only have photos of tired-looking individuals.

Thanks, Trevor. The shots you've picked out are the same butterfly and what a stunning specimen it was too. 😊 The colour was amazing, and possibly even more so in flight, when it if anything looked a deeper blue. I would also say that the colour is enhanced when there isn't bright sunshine, bright overcast being perhaps the best. None of these shots was in full sun.

Sunday 28th August. A thoroughly autumnal feeling day – rain, wind, cloud and much cooler. Odd bits of sun forced their way through in the afternoon, and following the old advice I shed doubt and ventured out. It was only locally, mind, but I was hoping as ever for another Clouded Yellow. No luck there again, but what sun there was brought out a few things. Common Blues must still be emerging, and maybe Brown Argus too – they still seem quite fresh.





Other new arrivals were several Commas in winter colours and a fresh Small Tortoiseshell.



Plenty of Meadow Browns and Small Heaths were around, hiding in the grass today.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-16 11:36 PM GMT

Great to still see Lulworths Dave 😊 If you can get to Durlston in the first week of the holiday you can pick up some really fresh looking Lulworths. Lush Adonis BTW 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 30-Aug-16 08:36 PM GMT

Great report and photos from 'Darkest Dorset' Dave 😊

Marbled Whites certainly seem to hang on down there, I have previously seen them in early September still looking in good condition at a number of sites in that area including Durlston, Durdle Door and Bindon Hill.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Aug-16 09:58 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. The Adonis were as good as they get. 😊 The earliest I've been down there is the end of July, and the Lulworths were a bit fresher, certainly. They have an amazingly long season (starting in May?) – I wonder why?

Thanks, Neil – I know you're fond of this bit of coast too. 😊 It is odd about the Marbled Whites, as I think they start here at the same time as elsewhere. The Adonis are a bit behind those in the southeast, though.

MORE ADONIS AND A TOUCH OF YELLOW FEVER

Monday **29th August** – Bank Holiday Monday, but I was at work until 3. However, that gave me enough time to pop up to Aston Rowant with the dual aim of seeing the Adonis Blues here, and hopefully also seeing some more Clouded Yellows. The visit proved successful on both counts, and one or two other things made it a very good late afternoon.

I walked along the path that cuts across the middle of the northern hillside and was aware that the flowers here were still showing well, with plenty of scabious in particular. There were good numbers of Brown Argus, Common Blues and Meadow Browns, with a few Small Heath, elderly Chalkhills and a single Small Copper too.



After some while spent with these, I wandered slowly back along the lower path thinking that once again I had missed out on the Clouded Yellows. However, I was instantly proved wrong when not one but two appeared right in front of me. As is customary, they flew around at speed, enticing me up the slope (not recommended!) and down again. Eventually one decided to nectar on a succession of flowers, and even sat on the ground in front of me (edge on of course...), but at last a decent picture was in the bag. Phew.





Chasing the Blues away may be recommended, but chasing the Yellows – definitely not.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 30-Aug-16 10:19 PM GMT

The last photo is lovely and sharp – great capture. Clouded yellows are busy butterflies and certainly not mellow.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Aug-16 10:23 PM GMT

Thanks, Katrina. There was a bit of effort expended catching up with that butterfly! 😊

Tuesday **30th August**. With a really lovely day going on outside, I started work early and finished in time to brave the M25 the other way and head for Denbies. A bit of a contrast with Aston Rowant – large areas of tall grass (or straw as it is now) and very few areas of rabbit-grazed herbage.





Once again as I turned and decided to leave, the Clouded Yellows appeared. There were three or four I'd guess, and they led me another merry dance allowing very few opportunities for photos. These are certainly two different butterflies.



I think I may just wait for the next Clouded Yellows to come to me... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 31-Aug-16 07:47 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Clouded Yellow Dave 😊. I can certainly empathise with the effort put in to achieve those great results. Good job they appear at the end of the season as I doubt I'd be fit enough to run up and down the steep hills that they seem to favour so much! 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 01-Sep-16 05:39 PM GMT

Lovely shots Dave of all the Butterflies, glad to hear the Tort's looked fresh may be there's a chance we'll see some up here yet. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-16 09:46 PM GMT

Cracking series of shots Dave 🍷 Going back to the Lulworths – I reckon they have such a long flight time as they like to 'make hay while the sun shines' and in Dorset we get a reasonable amount of sun 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 01-Sep-16 10:30 PM GMT

You're making me envious now, Dave. Virtually everybody else is seeing Cloudies.....except me! 😞

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Sep-16 11:14 PM GMT

Thank you, Pauline. Well worth the puffing and panting up and down the slope. I wish I had the patience to wait – the Denbies contingent did perform wide circuits and end up back in the same area again. 😊

Thanks, Goldie – I hope you see some Tortoiseshells too. 😊 Until these I hadn't seen any for a while. 😞

Cheers, Wurzel. This is probably the last gasp of the season – not many outings now will have this variety and such fresh butterflies. I know about the Dorset sunshine – isn't Weymouth the sunniest spot in the country? That coastline from Bournemouth to Portland is just beautiful too. 😊

Those Cloudies must be getting closer, David. They are so restless that given sunshine and a bit of wind assistance it won't take them long. 😊

Thursday 1st September. Stuck at work on another warm sunny day. I took a lunch break and looked round the nearby Bedford Lakes Country Park. Everywhere was extremely yellow and dried up, including almost all the wild flowers, with almost head high grass (straw) in places. There were virtually no butterflies: I saw a few Whites, a handful of Meadow Browns (completely camouflaged except when settling on the few scabious to nectar), a single Small Heath and perhaps half a Speckled Wood.



I then spotted something unexpected and different just ahead by the footpath: a Small Copper.





After almost a complete blank with this species earlier on, since the start of August I've seen Small Coppers in several spots, though rarely more than one at a time.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 03-Sep-16 08:34 AM GMT

Hi Dave,
I have only just found your Clouded Yellow conquests, very nice.
Who needs to go to the gym when there are Cloudies to photograph.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Sep-16 09:55 PM GMT

I too would count that Speckled Wood as a 'half' 🤔😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 04-Sep-16 10:05 PM GMT

I'm pleased you saw Adonis Blues at Denbies. It was looking so overgrown when I went, I wondered if any would appear at all.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Sep-16 11:25 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor – they led me a merry dance, those Yellows, and you're right, that's quite enough exercise for the time being. 😊

I also wondered about that, EB, but there were a reasonable number around. 😊 I'm a bit more concerned for next year as the females will struggle to find the foodplants in the grass. 😞

I saw a few whole Specklies today, Wurzel to make up! 😊

Sunday 4th September. Cloudy all day, but dry and certainly not cold. A bit of brightness mid afternoon tempted me out round my local patch, and I initially saw eight or nine Red Admirals around a wild buddleia, but annoyingly mostly on the far side from where I was. It's quite a big bush. A bit later, another Red Admiral and a Comma sat close together on the brambles – a most autumnal picture.



Good weather is forecast this week, but I shall unfortunately be back at work... 😞

Dave

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 04-Sep-16 11:32 PM GMT

Lovely Small White photos – I find them really hard to get close to.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Sep-16 07:29 PM GMT

Thank you Katrina – I have to agree that they are very tricky to approach. The recent ones have all been either towards the end of the day, or when it's been cloudy. They seem to have been less active, though even when nectaring they hop frustratingly from flower to flower just as you get close. 😊

Monday 5th September

COMMAS and COPPERS

Not what you'd call an ideal day – warm and muggy, with very little sun – but really quite productive for the time of year on my local patch. In fact, worth splitting up into sections to avoid it becoming a bit cluttered.

Part One: Everything Else

As with Sunday, there were several Red Admirals on the big buddleia not far from home – a bit more amenable today.



one of each: the BA much the fresher of the two



However, the two highlights of the day for me were the Commas and the Small Coppers...

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Sep-16 08:19 PM GMT

Part Two: COMMAS

One thing was noticeable today – there were more new Commas. I've been seeing ones and twos for a few weeks, in amongst the fading *hutchinsoni* forms, but today they were far more in evidence.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 06-Sep-16 08:27 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Commas Dave. Looking forward to seeing the Coppers 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 06-Sep-16 08:32 PM GMT

Nice Comma's, that final one looks like a *Hutchinsoni* 😊 Certainly looks paler in your photos and has noticeably less scalloped wings edges. Her abdomen looks rather full of eggs as well!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Sep-16 09:20 PM GMT

Thank you, Pauline – Coppers on the way... 😊

Thank you too, Buggy – I see what you mean about that Comma – it does look almost intermediate between the forms. 😊 However, the markings bordering the pale spots along the hindwings look much lighter than the bold dark spots, whereas in *hutchinsoni* they are the same dark shade – more

or less! Easier to tell the difference from underneath of course. Either way, I think she'll have to hang onto those eggs for a good six months as no new males are going to take the slightest interest in her until next spring! 😊

Monday 5th September (Part Three):

COPPERS

Up by the M25 slip road, along with the Brown Argus, Common Blues and the odd Small Heath, I had spotted another butterfly joining in the dogfights. I had previously seen just one Small Copper up here, but on three separate occasions – apparently different individuals each time, and the last one had been ten days ago. Here was another – however, as I progressed up to the top of the slope, I realised that there were actually at least three or four. Though they rested frequently, they were constantly sparring with each other and the other small butterflies. Groups of four or five butterflies of mixed species would take off together, with the Brown Argus and Coppers the most aggressive. They were hugely difficult to follow, but Small Coppers have a reliable tendency to return to the same spot – for a second or two at any rate. As well as this Copper hotspot, I encountered two others in the general area (one fresh and one rather ragged), but a good 100 metres away and very close to the spot where I had first seen one here in April 2010. I suppose they could have been here on this site all this time, but I failed to see any here in 2013, 2014 and 2015. This a shot of the hotspot area.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 06-Sep-16 10:51 PM GMT

Well done on finding the Coppers, they have been in short supply this year!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Sep-16 11:54 PM GMT

Thank you, Katrina. With so many tales of doom and gloom about this species, finding them unexpectedly again locally this year has been a real highpoint for me. 😊 It's not as if I haven't looked for them either.

Wednesday 7th September: With the promised hot sunshine appearing at last (pushing 28 degrees at around half past four) I had another stroll around my local patch. Compared with the cloudy day on Monday, with just glimpses of the sun, there were fewer butterflies around, curiously. Clearly the new Commas, destined for hibernation, do not care for hot sunshine and were hiding away somewhere. I only saw one, and at a distance. However I spotted a Peacock, again settled a way away, which was somewhat unexpected as I haven't seen one for several weeks. A lousy record shot:



There were a few Common Blues as well, all male.



As I predicted the other day, the one species which popped up more numerous in the sun was the Small Heath. Some were old, some new, and I spotted one nectaring and flicking its wings characteristically. I managed a few shots of semi-open wings, but of course this was an aged individual, so they are far from striking.



Finally, on the gentle walk home along mostly shaded paths there were some more new Speckled Woods around.



Interesting to see how changes in the weather can have a big impact on what you see – with the perhaps unexpected effect that hot sunshine is nothing like as good as bright warm cloudiness for seeing certain butterflies.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 08-Sep-16 07:46 PM GMT

On Tuesday, I photographed a Small Heath AB. and that one kept flicking it's wings part open. Tantalising glimpses that my camera could not capture. So very well done with your shots.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Sep-16 10:37 PM GMT

Thank you, Trevor. 😊 I've seen this behaviour a few times, but this is the first time I've managed to get the shots. Difficult to say, but I don't think they open up much more than this, and it's always when feeding. I saw your ab – I've never come across one remotely like that! 🍷

Thursday 8th September: I wangled a day off today and spent most of the morning at Denbies. Lots of sunshine and pretty warm, but much windier and fresher than of late. Consequently the butterflies were much trickier to get close to and even track down. The mix was as described by Buggy the other day (when it was warm, muggy and cloudy, and without the wind): Adonis, Common and the occasional Chalkhill Blues, Brown Argus, Small Heath, Meadow Browns, Clouded Yellows, a couple of Tortoiseshells and a single Small Copper.



I'll check to see if this was the same Small Copper Buggy saw...



Attempts at upperside shots using the burst mode on my camera failed dismally – the butterflies were just too quick or took off at oblique angles.

Most trips out have their special moments and today's star was a brand spanking new Painted Lady up on the top path in a bit of shelter. A splendid insect.





Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 08-Sep-16 10:55 PM GMT

Looks like a different Copper to what I saw on Tuesday, mine had subtle but clear blue badges. (I possibly had two, or one male that was VERY mobile!) I wonder whether that was my male Cloudie? Lovely Painted Lady too, I've had a pretty good year with them 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 09-Sep-16 07:30 PM GMT

Lovely Clouded Yellow Dave and Painted Lady, nothing doing here at all except for SW's and Whites, the Tortoiseshell's only appear if the Sun Shines 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Sep-16 10:50 PM GMT

Great stuff with the Small Heath Dave 🍷 And your Painted Lady has the blue spots - I've still not seen one of those 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Sep-16 10:35 PM GMT

Definitely not the same Small Copper, Buggy – which is good, as there may be more around than we think. 😊 Not your Cloudie, either – I think there must be at least four around at Denbies. The curious spot in the middle of the hindwing is almost like a fingerprint – no two are alike and it makes counting them possible (as long as you have a picture of all of them!).

Thank you, Goldie. The Painted Lady was a real bonus, and much less hard work than the Clouded Yellows. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel! 😊 I wish the Small Heath had been a bit less tatty, but you can't have everything. I noticed the blue spots on that Painted Lady at the time – how unusual is this? Looking at a few photos from this year, it seems quite a rare occurrence.

Sunday 11th September. Yesterday was a complete washout. Despite the pretty good weather we've had round here since the start of August, most of the weekends have been very average, which tends to colour the memory somewhat. However, Sunday was sunny, though a good deal cooler than it has been. I started off with a morning walk locally, and found that the Red Admirals had started to feed on the newly opened ivy flowers, a sure sign that the season is drawing to a close. There was quite a variety in size, but most were pretty fresh and probably locally hatched. There were around a dozen in various places, including four in one spot with ivy *and* blackberries – what more could they ask for?



However, there were a couple of Small Coppers.





It won't be long before this area is bereft of butterflies, and the woodland paths with the flowering ivy will be centre of what activity remains.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Sep-16 07:43 PM GMT

Sunday 11th September – Part Two.

After my local walk, there was plenty of time to head somewhere a bit more exotic. A creature of habit, I elected for Aston Rowant again – I seem to be alternating between here and Denbies lately, and though the species found are similar, the sites feel rather different. Numbers are slowly dwindling here now, but once I'd got my eye in, it was clear there were still quite a few Brown Argus flying, even the odd quite fresh one.



Most were worn, tiny grey-brown ghosts, but there was still some courtship behaviour.



Bigger grey-brown ghosts turned out to be female blues – when worn like this, it is very hard to distinguish between Chalkhills and Adonis. One of each, in that order? I'm guessing here...



Bigger again were the Meadow Browns, with quite a few females still flying.



However, I was looking to see how the Adonis Blues were faring. It turned out that there were still quite a reasonable number of males around, their intense blue catching the eye. All were getting worn in various degrees, but some were in reasonable condition.







The same could not be said for the last remaining Chalkhills...



A brilliant Small Copper managed to evade the camera lens twice, much to my annoyance, but then over on the far side by Beacon Hill I caught sight of a Clouded Yellow. I watched it go to ground as a cloud hid the sun, and closed in, only to be faced with an age-old dilemma: there on a flower head just in front of the grounded Cloudie was another Small Copper. After a very quick and very poor distant shot of both for the record, I inevitably ended up getting a proper shot of neither.



Never mind – the Clouded Yellow reappeared, along with one other, and I did eventually get close enough for the odd photo.





On the return across the slopes, I was surprised to disturb a female Silver-spotted Skipper which was not too badly worn considering the date.





Also seen: Small Heaths, Small Whites, GVWs and a Speckled Wood. A pretty good afternoon, really.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 12-Sep-16 07:54 PM GMT

Hi Dave, I have not managed to get down to Aston Rowant this year so it is good to see your reports from there to remind me of what I have missed...Oh well! hopefully next year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Sep-16 11:57 PM GMT

Aston Rowant has been pretty good this year, Neil. I've just looked back at my visits for the same weekend in 2014 and 2015: 11th September 2015 was very similar and I even had a Clouded Yellow in exactly the same spot. On 12th September 2014 the season looked all but over with far less variety and fewer butterflies. Interesting to make the comparisons.

13th September: Record-breaking heat here in the southeast, and when I went out after work at around 1630, it was still over 30 degrees and I didn't expect to see much on my local patch. This turned out to be true, with one major exception – I saw at around 20 Red Admirals, with a dozen of them on one ivy patch alone. Many were favouring the shade, and most were nectaring with wings closed. I spotted only one Comma, apparently dozing with antennae close together up on a willow branch.



One was a Common Blue, and I think the other was a Brown Argus from the shot I got when it was left on its own.



However, over to the Red Admirals again – a selection:



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 14-Sep-16 12:15 AM GMT

You can never have too many Red Admirals Dave. Considering the heat you did well to get as many shots. On the way back from Dungeness on Monday I pulled off the A259 for a pub lunch, as I re-joined the main road, after lunch, clouds of Red Admirals flew up from some ivy as an HGV passed by at speed. 50 to 100 I would think.

There's life in the season yet !
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Butterflysaurus rex, 15-Sep-16 10:27 PM GMT

Aren't Red Admiral undersides amazing Dave! If you catch them in the right light 'as you have done' it really brings out their rich and complex pattern, very smart on the upper side and amazingly psychedelic underneath.

Absolutely stunning when they are this fresh.

ATB

James

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-16 07:22 PM GMT

Beautiful Red Admirals Dave 😊🍷 It just seems a pity that we didn't have this weather earlier in the season when a lot of the species on their last legs now would have been resplendant 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Sep-16 08:21 PM GMT

Thank you both for your kind remarks – much appreciated. 😊 I have a fondness for Red Admirals and could watch them for hours – helped by the fact that they are relatively fearless and approachable, and also readily investigate people – which they seem to regard as some sort of mobile bush for perching on. Their undersides are wonderfully intricate and colourful, matched in my view by very few others – maybe the Wall of which some great images have been posted recently. At present, they are intent on nectaring, and as the ivy has come into flower have diverted all their attention to it for most of the day.

After a dismal and chilly Saturday hereabouts, Sunday **18th September** was much warmer with the bright cloudiness that has been the rule for a fair bit of this year's butterfly season. It was enough to enervise the white butterfly contingent which, with only a couple of Large exceptions, were all Small Whites.



...and mixing in with the Red Admirals on the ivy one Holly Blue. This butterfly was new and very active, not staying on any flower long enough for a photo before a combination of bees, wasps and bigger butterflies set it flying off into the trees. I wonder if a third brood will appear – the recent hot weather may well have encouraged some individuals to complete their life cycle now instead of in the spring. To be honest there seem to be one or two most years.

Finally, the Red Admirals. One individual, though relatively worn, appeared bursting with eggs – a huge abdomen reminiscent of a large spider rather than a butterfly.



Most of the others were pretty new-looking: I saw a dozen or so overall, with half of this number on one particular clump of ivy.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 19-Sep-16 08:43 PM GMT

Beautiful Red Admirals, Dave. I have never seen one spread it's wings as far as the specimen in the last few images. The best specimen I have ever seen was found this morning. Unfortunately my image does not do it full justice.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Sep-16 08:47 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor. Almost all the Red Admirals round here are brand spanking new at the moment and are a splendid sight. 😊

Friday 23rd September. A lucky chance to go out locally on what was a lovely sunny day today, as my son had an unexpected "Insect Day" from school as he has taken to calling them. After breakfast at the local café, we encountered our first Red Admiral sitting on the footpath in front of us. It was distinctly docile, and took a bit of persuading up onto an ivy flower, and I wondered if it had been caught by the slipstream of a passing car. It did not appear to be damaged. My camera was out of charge, so we couldn't record any of this, and it meant a stop at home to collect a charged one. Out on my usual patch, the currently favoured clump of ivy had easily a dozen more Red Admirals feasting on it, and I managed five in one view.



There's still life in the season, yet. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 23-Sep-16 09:38 PM GMT

This warm spell looks set to continue for a few a while yet so plenty more action left before winter arrives. (assuming we get a winter this year!)

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Sep-16 10:48 PM GMT

Lovely Small Copper Dave, and that is a wonderfully fresh Common Blue 😊 I was looking back at you Common Blues from 13th September – the first blue on it's own shot seems to be missing the second spot from the head end from the 'arc' on the hindwing. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 23-Sep-16 11:02 PM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Dave, especially the Copper ,Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Sep-16 09:45 PM GMT

Hopefully you're right, Buggy – there seems to be a reasonable amount of sun in the forecast and it won't be too chilly in the South East at least.

Thanks, Wurzel. I've had a look at the "blue" you pointed out and there is no spot at all – and that's the crucial one to tell if it's a Common Blue or a Brown Argus. However, I've just noticed it's also missing a spot on the forewing which the books say makes it a Brown Argus for sure. The beauty of instant photography – you could never work all that out in the middle of a field. 😊

Thank, Goldie – I was really chuffed to get such a good selection of mostly fresh butterflies at this stage of the year. 😊

Saturday 24th September. A good forecast and a free day – a chance to set out on probably the last major expedition of the year and also a good chance to clock up species no.49 for the season. I always struggle to see Walls – there are none anywhere near me, and the sites I visit elsewhere either don't have them at all or they hide when I'm around. So, I drove down to High & Over where others had seen the species earlier in the week.

It was getting quite windy when I arrived late morning, but it was a warm wind and the sun shone. Along the path from the car park were Red Admirals and Speckled Woods, but as I came out into the open at the top of the scarp, the Walls appeared. Over an hour or so, I probably saw at least half a dozen – they were all males, quite worn or very worn for the most part, and compared to previous experience were amazingly obliging.





Since the weather remained good, I decided to take a walk inland through Frog Firl and onto the ancient trackway known as the Comp. Passing through the car park, I found another Wall nectaring on a dandelion.



Along the sheltered (and mostly shaded too) path along the top of the slope down to a massive vineyard, I found frequent Speckled Woods, a few Red Admirals and a single Holly Blue.





A successful day. It will be worth returning in spring when the first brood are fresh and the downland has other interesting species to offer.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 24-Sep-16 11:00 PM GMT

Glad you found the Walls, Dave. Well worth the trip I should think.

As far as Walls go this brood is quite accommodating, allowing at least one shot before escaping.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Butterflysaurus rex, 25-Sep-16 05:32 PM GMT

Glad to see you had a good day in my neck of the woods Dave, it can be quite good for Wall Browns down this way thankfully. I hope this good third brood means we'll get a nice big first brood next spring.

BW's

James

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Sep-16 08:19 PM GMT

Thank you both – it was very much worth the trip down to see what seems to have been a good showing of the third brood Walls. 😊 One or two allowed a whole series of shots, Trevor: not like them at all. No doubt if I come back next spring they'll behave entirely differently! 😊

Sunday 25th September: A completely different kind of sunny day today – fresh, breezy, cool almost when the cloud came over. Luckily, there was not too much of that and a wander around my local patch benefited from lots of sunshine, as did the many Red Admirals. Interestingly, though lots of them were nectaring as usual on the ivy, quite a few were seen flying at speed along the paths, or sitting perched up in shrubs. As before, the majority looked very new indeed.



Several Speckled Woods were seen, starting to look a bit faded now...



...and there are far fewer whites around than there were last week.



I came across a Holly Blue close to home, but it annoyingly flew into a neighbour's back garden and settled on a privet hedge out of camera range. However, along the edge of the path, a flash of silver caught my eye down on a clump of nettles. This turned out to be a tiny Holly Blue, which was unfortunately suffering from slightly deformed wings and I suspect had been blown into its unusual resting place.



I moved it from the shade to a better position, where it opened up a little showing the extent of the damage.





I'm pleased to say it could fly, though rather feebly. It was definitely a recently emerged individual and the timing suggests a third brood as is not that unusual around here. Continuing sunny weather may bring out a few more.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Sep-16 10:21 PM GMT

Nice to see that you still have the Holly Blue Whispering down pat Dave 😊🌿 I wonder if the BA counts as an aberrant?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Sep-16 11:16 PM GMT

There's lot of luck with those Holly Blues, Wurzel – right place and right time! 😊 I suspect that BA is just "within normal variation" – not enough spots missing to be unusual enough. Still, I have seen a few abs this year, which hasn't had a great deal else to stand out unfortunately.

Friday 30th September: Finally enough time after work to look around my local patch today. Sunny, but cooling down now, and late in the day too, but there were still nine or ten Red Admirals around and two or three Commas. One feeble GVW male was the only other butterfly seen. All the butterflies were higher up today, so the shots I managed were all with a bit (or a lot) of zoom, giving a slightly different perspective.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Oct-16 10:22 PM GMT

Saturday 1st October: Not much opportunity today between hefty showers, but I did spot a couple of Red Admirals making the most of a sunny interval. One was high up on ivy, but the other was basking lower down on the hedgerow vegetation.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Oct-16 07:17 PM GMT

THIRD BROODS

Sunday 2nd October: A much better day with a lot of sunshine, though it felt quite cool when the sun went in, even in the middle of the day when I went out locally on an extended walk. Initially, there were no surprises, with the banks of ivy flowers adorned with a selection of beautiful Red Admirals and one or two Commas.



Also flying in this area were at least three male Common Blues, also pretty bright and fairly new.



Overall a splendid day with lovely new butterflies – not quite what you'd expect for 2nd October.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 03-Oct-16 07:27 PM GMT

Well done on finding such a variety especially the Brown Argus!

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 03-Oct-16 07:33 PM GMT

Impressive selection Dave. I hope those third brooders haven't put all their eggs in one basket though, if the weathermen are to be believed this is the last week of nice weather...

Re: millerd

by trevor, 03-Oct-16 08:26 PM GMT

The Clouded Yellows kept me going until Nov.2nd last year. But I am envious of the variety at your disposal at the moment. Great images as always.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-Oct-16 10:12 PM GMT

Beautiful images Dave especially the first BA 😊 As Bugboy says I hope the third brood is a wise investment, I suppose we'll see if it pays off next year 😊 Still butterflies are always more robust than we give them credit for 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Oct-16 10:29 PM GMT

Thank you all for your comments – it was a great day for any time of year, especially October. I hope a few third brood individuals won't hurt – certainly the numbers of Holly Blues in particular here haven't suffered for it in the past.

Monday 3rd October: A very chilly morning (only 6 degrees at 0830), but a glorious day afterwards, spent largely at work... 😊 After an early morning snap of one of the eponymous bits of water, I had a brief lunchtime walk at Bedfont Lakes Country Park, seeing nothing except a Red Admiral flying fast towards the sun, and a distant White of some sort.



After work it was very late really (approaching half past five), with the sun very low and my local patch largely shaded. However, it remained warm and there were half a dozen Red Admirals taking advantage of every last photon.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-Oct-16 09:11 PM GMT

That final shot is great Dave – it's almost bursting through the screen! 😊👍
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Oct-16 10:44 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel. There are some lovely fresh Red Admirals around and that one posed perfectly. 😊

Saturday 8th October: a 20-minute burst of sun this afternoon on an otherwise cloudy day. It was enough to mobilise a few Red Admirals and I saw three altogether. There were two on the ivy and one other flying freely across the path.



Wandering further I discovered that the area by the motorway slip road, including the patch where I had rediscovered the Small Coppers, has been given a haircut.



To be fair it's not an unreasonable time of year to do this if it has to be done: the grass was long (but dead) and the flowers have largely finished.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Oct-16 09:44 PM GMT

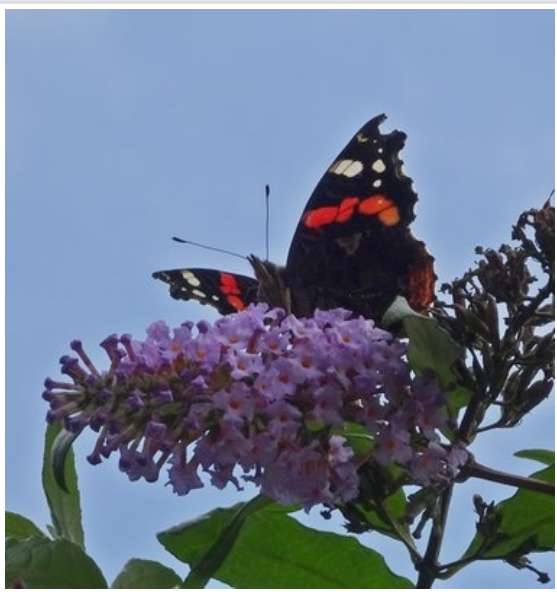
Looking out of the office window today, I watched a white butterfly potter across the manicured grass – probably a Small White, but I can't say for certain. It was barely 13 degrees out there, quite breezy and not even very sunny, so it was a bit of a surprise.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Oct-16 08:13 PM GMT

Saturday 15th October. I had hoped to head for Trevor's Clouded Yellow spot down at Shoreham, but left it too late to set off: with a forecast of rain later and such short days now, it scuppered the outing really. However, there was some sunshine at home for a couple of hours after lunch, and I toured my local patch instead. I only saw two species, both of which might be guessed from accounts of previous visits: Red Admirals and Holly Blues. I saw over a dozen Red Admirals, including as always one or two new ones.



...one dogged and rather worn individual had set up a territory as if it was April, chasing all comers and buzzing me repeatedly.



The Holly Blues were more of a surprise. I came across six at least, quite widely spread along the walk though most were seen in and around one ivy-covered ash tree.



In fact this tree was a major centre of butterfly activity, and high up in a kind of sheltered sunny basin formed between the branches, I could see several of both today's species flying and tussling together. The Holly Blues were almost all high up today – the low angle of the sun warms higher branches leaving lower ones shaded. However, I managed a few shots, including both sexes opening up a little.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 15-Oct-16 09:23 PM GMT

Those Holly Blue encounters would be welcome at any time, Dave, but in mid-October they're particularly special.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Oct-16 10:07 PM GMT

Seriously Dave you'll have to let us into the secrets – I can't ever seem to find Holly Blues willing to open up like they do for you – and to find them this late in the season is an added bonus 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Oct-16 10:47 PM GMT

Thanks both of you. 😊

As you probably realise, David, this spot is blessed with more than the average quota of Holly Blues, and they have appeared in nine out of twelve months since I've been watching them here. They are indeed special and as you say Wurzel, a nice late season bonus. As the the secret around opening up – at the moment, when they are not nectaring and decide to sit on a leaf, it appears that almost any amount of sun will get them to open. However, it's like anything – patience pays dividends. I have stood immobile for ten or more minutes halfway into a bramble thicket waiting for the sun to shine on a little silver triangle on a leaf. You do get some funny looks! 😊

Sunday 16th October. After torrential rain early this morning, sunshine returned after midday and it felt pretty warm. I wandered over to the nearest (within a couple of hundred metres of home) part of my local patch where I had spent most of yesterday afternoon and had a look around. Within fifteen minutes of the sun appearing, Red Admirals did likewise, and there were once again a dozen or so including both new and old.





A single Small White also wandered through, stopping very briefly on a dandelion, but nowhere near enough to be photographed. I was interrupted today by a family curious to know what I was doing. While explaining to them, several Red Admirals came quite close, settling on the grass and even briefly on a shoe, and a Holly Blue came down onto a buddleia leaf as well. A splendid advert, but the family were nature enthusiasts already – though not expecting butterflies in mid-October. Yes, there were several Holly Blues again, though mostly high up. The one on the buddleia did open up, revealing it to be a fresh-looking male.



I also stretched the zoom to the limit and picked out another high up in the trees. This one turned out to be sucking juice from ripe Holly berries, which has to be the most appropriate thing it could ever do, and only possible so late in the year.



Almost a Christmas butterfly! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 17-Oct-16 07:23 AM GMT

Wonderful Autumn selection, Dave. Never seen a Holly Blue this late. Just recently I've had to pinch myself as a reminder that it is in fact October.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 17-Oct-16 04:28 PM GMT

Nothing here like that Dave, every Butterfly seems to have disappeared now, I love your Holly Blue on the the Berries, fantastic, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Oct-16 09:46 PM GMT

Really quite envious of your shots Dave – I just haven't been able to get out during this part of the season 🙄 Still good news about the Holly Blue, I thought that you had some trade secret, whereas I just need to wait even longer than I do already 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Oct-16 11:03 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor. There really have been a lot of Red Admirals this month, and the Holly Blues have been the icing on the cake. I do envy you your Clouded Yellows, though... 😊

Thanks, Goldie – I really like the Holly Blue on the Holly berries, too. I think I might try it as a Christmas Card if the image quality is enough. 😊

Thanks Wurzel – it is tricky getting out at this time of year, because the afternoons are so short. After work is impossible, so dashing out for an odd hour at weekends is all there is. Luckily all the last set of photos were taken only a few hundred metres from home. 😊

I was in Yorkshire over the last few days – a half-term visit to my sister. Distinctly cooler up there, and the sun was a bit hazy when it appeared, though it didn't rain. Nasturtiums were still rampant in the garden, but there were no longer any caterpillars. However, the porch had a sprinkling of Large White chrysalids, and about an equal number of clusters of yellow cocoons of the common parasite. They appeared to have hatched.





It wasn't until this morning (25th) that the weather improved a bit. After a very chilly night, the sun was strong and a sheltered patch of ivy warmed up quite a bit. A Red Admiral appeared and spent several hours there (at least until we set off for home). It spent some time basking on various shrubs in between nectaring and soaring about in the sun.



Very briefly, it was joined by a Small Tortoiseshell – a very late date for these in my experience.



Dave

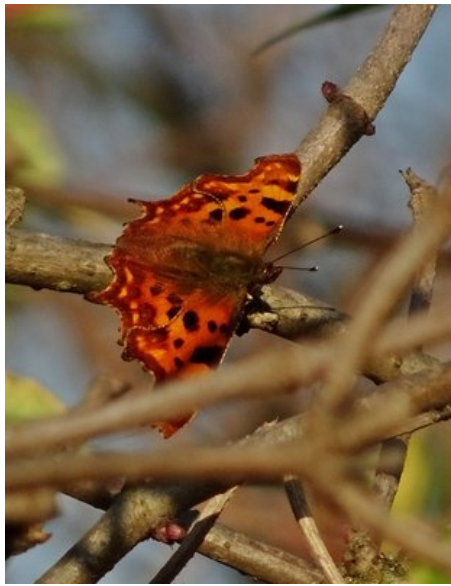
Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Oct-16 05:42 PM GMT

Monday 31st October: Interestingly, the last two Hallowe'ens have been beautiful sunny days, and I remember 2014 especially for being really warm and surprisingly full of butterflies. Today was not quite as warm as that year, but there was lots of sunshine. I managed to escape the office at around two, and headed soon after onto my local patch, which I haven't had a look at for a fortnight. The ivy is well on the way to going over now, but I was quite surprised that I didn't see a single Red Admiral. Walking along the path between the River Colne and Hithermoor Lake, I disturbed a Speckled Wood from the ground. It was a pale wraith of a butterfly, and fluttered shakily up into a willow where it basked beyond camera range. As I gazed up at it, another butterfly crossed my field of view – a Holly Blue, which continued even higher at the tops of the willows and ash trees. Two butterflies, two species and no photos. A mixed return so far. Further on, there is a very late-flowering buddleia, rather inaccessibly placed by the roadside. Happily nectaring here was a Comma.



After a couple of distant shots, it moved to bask on some bare branches, but another long shot was still all I came away with.



With the sun fast going down (what a nuisance the clock change is when you are tied to office hours!), I headed back along the road as a few sunlit ivy clumps might be worth a look. (At this point, Wurzel, you should probably look away as you can probably guess what's coming...) I crossed the road to look at a promising patch and there sure enough was a Holly Blue. It was initially in the shade, and its behaviour quickly gave away the fact that it was a female. It appeared to be laying on the ivy – it had managed to find a few remaining flower buds.



A passing white van then disturbed it, but it returned to a sunnier spot and opened up.





It basked a great deal, before once again disappearing into the foliage presumably to seek out another spot for an egg.



When the weather is warmer, such basking interludes are quite infrequent, but today, the late afternoon autumn sun required much longer warm-ups, and wider opening of the wings. I have to say that if this is the last butterfly encounter I have this year, I very happy with it!



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 31-Oct-16 06:58 PM GMT

Amazing Hallowe'en sighting, Dave. I know there's been a third brood in some parts but to see one ovipositing on the cusp of November is remarkable. Weak sun is perfect for these butterflies to open their wings and this one's really obliged.

Nice to pick up a couple of other species as well with the Comma and Speckled Wood.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 31-Oct-16 08:10 PM GMT

We should have swapped locations today, as I have seen the odd Clouded Yellow recently, but that Holly Blue, at this time of year, is remarkable !. Open wing too 🍷 . Wish I had been there !.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 31-Oct-16 10:00 PM GMT

Impressive stuff with those Holly Blues although I fear her youngsters may perish long before they reach the hibernation stage 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-16 10:55 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Dave 😊 but you warning needed to come earlier in the post 😊😊🍷 An egg-laying Holly Blue this late is certainly a notable sighting.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Nov-16 09:33 PM GMT

Thank you all for the kind comments. very much appreciated. 😊

Hallowe'en (and its balmy late afternoon sunshine) seems a world away now, with much scraping of ice from the car yesterday morning followed by a grey day of rain. 😊 The Holly Blue was exceptional, and a brilliant end to the season here. 😊

The edition of *Butterfly* that came through the letterbox today had results of the summer's Big Butterfly Count, which showed a big decrease in Holly Blue numbers (48%). I would say that did not reflect the picture in my small part of the world, with the decrease here much smaller – something I would have ascribed to the regular fluctuations caused by its known parasite. We'll see what happens in 2017.

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 10-Nov-16 09:24 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

Hallowe'en (and its balmy late afternoon sunshine) seems a world away now, with much scraping of ice from the car yesterday morning followed by a grey day of rain.

Doesn't it just! Only a week and a half since but it seems like an eternity. Still, these frosts might not be a bad thing. We've had precious few during the last 3 winters so with any luck we'll get a decent cold snap this time round which might help all butterflies (not just Holly Blues) to recover from what has been a disastrous 2016.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Nov-16 07:45 PM GMT

Sunday 13th November: I had spent the weekend in Taunton for a school reunion, and set off for home today around 1100. The sun was shining and the car was convinced the temperature was up to around 13 degrees. On an impulse I made a major detour down to the coast, aiming for Southbourne, near Bournemouth. (Apologies for passing Salisbury with telling you, Wurzel! 😊 This really was an last-minute decision... 😊)

I arrived not long after one o'clock, and found that there were quite a few people down there – even children playing on the beach – and some quite warm sunshine to enjoy.



The undercliff still sported good numbers of flowers, mostly pale purple sea asters, but others as well. I wandered along a good way in the Boscombe direction and then back again, searching in vain for a Clouded Yellow. However, I managed to track down first a Small Tortoiseshell (which was too far away up the slope to photograph) and then a Red Admiral – which wasn't (though at the limit of the zoom so not really very sharp).



Ah well, not quite what I'd hoped for, but a result nonetheless.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 14-Nov-16 07:29 PM GMT

Lovely scenery and nice you found a Butterfly Dave, your doing well down there, it's much different up here.
Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-Nov-16 08:25 PM GMT

No worries Dave 😊 Sorry that you didn't connect with your target but any butterflies in November are welcome ones 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Dec-16 08:01 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie – I think the season must be over locally for me now – it was minus 6 here yesterday morning and minus 4 today. That Sunday by the seaside seems more than 18 days ago... 😊

Thanks, Wurzel. As we discussed at the Social, you should pop down to Southbourne at some future point – really not far from Salisbury down the A338. Worth it for late season fliers if nothing else, with added ice-cream if required for bribes. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Dec-16 07:14 PM GMT

Actually, Wurzel, pop down now – a Clouded Yellow was seen there on 30th November...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Dec-16 06:28 PM GMT

Unfortunately I missed the opportunity – I got as far as the Waldorf Winter Fayre at Ringwood – maybe an early trip in February – it would be great to get a Cloudy as my first butterfly of the year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Dec-16 05:05 PM GMT

Sunday 11th December: Enjoying a bit of a lie-in on a lovely sunny morning, I was forced from my bed by the unexpected appearance of a Small Tortoiseshell fluttering around the room and then making for the window behind my head. The camera wasn't far away and I managed this shot, unfortunately almost straight into the sun.

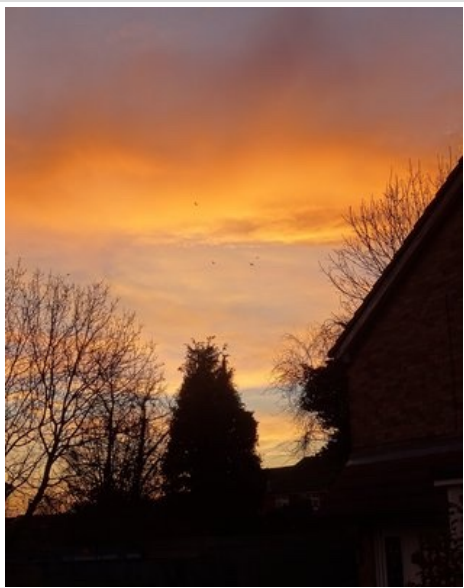


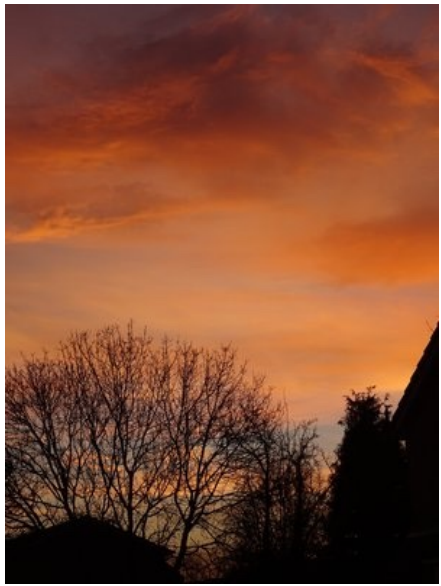
The butterfly was very energetic, and with it actually not particularly cold outside, I decided its best chances were if I released it as soon as I could. It calmed down while being transported and I managed another shot just before it flew off into the open air.



Goodness knows where it had hidden, or why it had not been woken on any earlier sunny days.

At the end of the day there was a vivid orange sunset and a rising nearly full moon, both of which I had a go at capturing on camera. I was actually out there waiting to try and snap a departing aeroplane on which a friend was travelling (as part of the record of her forthcoming holiday), but the plane was delayed by half an hour and it too dark by then to get anything other than a blur. The impressive sky while waiting was a bonus.





Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 11-Dec-16 05:23 PM GMT

I've had the odd Butterfly visit me in the garden, but never in bed !.
Lovely sunset and Moon shot too.

Best wishes,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-Dec-16 06:34 PM GMT

You say 'unfortunately straight into the sun' but I reckon 'fortunately' as it produced a cracking stained glass shot Dave 🍷 The only butterflies I've seen recently are in my imagination 😊 Oh well only 3-4 months to go.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 12-Dec-16 06:43 PM GMT

Love the Sunset pictures Dave 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 12-Dec-16 08:46 PM GMT

Hi Dave, lovely images of the sunset and moon 😊

Cheers,

Neil