

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jan-17 09:21 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I think many of us had a similar view of the 2016 season overall but I found it fascinating last year how much some things varied around different parts of the UK.

Hi David, we are certainly having a more typical winter here in these parts, no snow yet but plenty of freezing cold nights and frosty mornings with some daytime sun but still feeling cold. This weekend is looking milder but next week is looking to turn cold again.

There have been a few Foxes lurking around the garden over the Christmas/New Year period which I think are possibly a family with older cubs...



The daylight hours are starting to stretch out bit now and it is that time of year when I start thinking about where to go this year and what I would like to see 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jan-17 08:36 PM GMT

First snow of the winter here last night...nowhere near as much as forecast, just a light dusting and a bit more this morning which soon turned to rain with a very cold wind which made it feel a lot colder than the 5 or 6 degrees it supposedly got up to today.

A couple of milder nights last weekend tempted me to put the moth trap out in the garden on Sunday night which resulted in my first catch of the year, appropriately enough a couple of Winter Moths.



Winter Moth - Coverdale 08.01.2017

I also had a couple of Light Brown Apple Moths (*Epiphyas postvittana*), a micro originally from Australia that was apparently accidentally introduced in the 1930s and has since spread over the country and become very common in some areas. I had loads of these last year in every month since I started running the trap in the garden in late March.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 13-Jan-17 11:27 PM GMT

That Winter moth looks in great nick Neil 😊 Hopefully this cold snap will do the butterflies some good.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 14-Jan-17 01:23 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, we'd the Snow has well, it's been bitter cold and we got caught in an Hail shower before the Snow arrived, I don't think any moth's will venture out here yet so it's nice to see a photo of one. Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by prettybutterfly, 14-Jan-17 07:18 PM GMT

Hi, Neil

Wow,wonderful pictures of the foxes, you're lucky to have them in your garden. Also good pictures of the moths as it is brilliant that you have these species just over night because me and my Family have not seen these moths before.

from Emma

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 16-Jan-17 08:20 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, the Winter Moths are tough little critters despite their delicate looks but they do quickly start to look a bit raggedy. Not surprising really given the conditions they will fly in.

Hi Goldie, the snow didn't amount to much here but we did have some bitterly cold winds.

Hi Emma, glad you like the photos of the Foxes and the moths...some more moths coming up.

Garden Moths 2016

Anyone who read this diary last year will know that, after thinking about it for a couple of years, I finally treated myself to my moth trap in March and ran this in my back garden regularly through the rest of the year. The season for moths doesn't really finish like that for butterflies as there are a few species that only fly during the winter months, although the number of these is obviously greatly reduced compared with the summer.

In the end I managed to catch 132 species of larger (macro) moths, most of which I had never seen before and was totally unaware were flying around the garden during the hours of darkness.

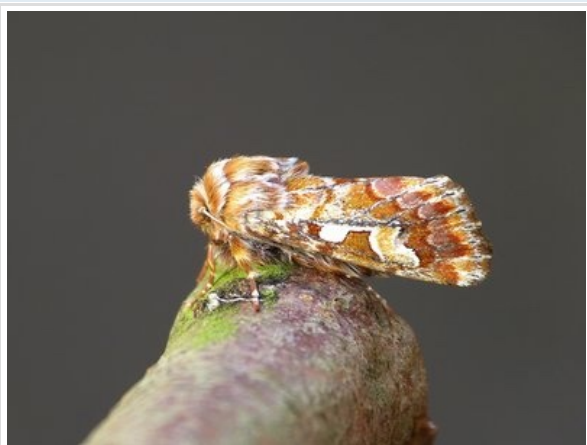
During the year I posted photos of most of the species that came to the trap but I have selected some favourites below which have been picked because they show a good variety of size, shape and colour. They are posted in rough order that they were caught, starting in late March.



Clouded Drab - 26.03.2016



Early Thorn - 09.04.2016



Pine Beauty - 14.04.2016



Chocolate-tip - 08.05.2016



Angle Shades - 13.05.2016



Brimstone Moth - 13.05.2016



Muslin Moth – 17.05.2016



Puss Moth – 23.05.2016



Poplar Hawk – 23.05.2016



Pale Prominent – 16.06.2016



Buff Arches - 22.06.2016



Light Emerald - 25.06.2016



Swallowtail Moth - 08.07.2016



Marbled Beauty – 21.07.2016



Antler Moth – 22.07.2016



Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing – 27.07.2016



Orange Swift – 06.08.2016



Yellow Shell - 07.08.2016



Old Lady - 07.08.2016



Ruby Tiger - 18.08.2016



Barred Sallow - 22.09.2016

As well as the larger moths, I also caught 50 odd species of micro moths...

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 16-Jan-17 08:38 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, I particularly like the "Muslin Moth", it seems to have it's own fur hood 😊 I saw a programme ,(can't remember where now or if I was told by some one) that if you put some cloths out at night dipped firstly in red wine and sugar and hang them out they'll attract Moths, do you know if this is true? or was some one having a joke. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jan-17 07:09 PM GMT

Hi Goldie,

Don't worry nobody was having you on. Wine roping and sugaring are two tried and tested methods for attracting moths, check out the link below...

<http://butterfly-conservation.org/3114-10110/a-recipe-for-moths-sugaring--wine-roping.html>

I haven't tried either yet myself but I may give it a go later this year. Apparently some species of moth are easier to attract to these methods than to light.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 17-Jan-17 07:44 PM GMT

That's great news Neil, I'm going to try the wine and sugar one this Summer and see what happens. Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 17-Jan-17 09:32 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

I saw a programme ,(can't remember where now or if I was told by some one) that if you put some cloths out at night dipped firstly in red wine and sugar and hang them out they'll attract Moths, do you know if this is true? or was some one having a joke. 😊 Goldie 😊

I seem to vaguely remember asking my mum for a can of beer (or some such alcohol) when I was far to young to be buying such stuff to do this. I think I mixed it with honey and used a paint brush to paint it onto tree trunks. I've no idea what if anything was attracted though, my memory fails me on that aspect sadly. I suspect there were some very happy local wasps for some days after though 😊 !

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 21-Jan-17 09:09 AM GMT

Great series of shots Neil 😊 There's quite a few there that I've not seen perhaps a trap should be my next years Christmas present 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jan-17 05:51 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments, Goldie, Bugboy and Wurzel 😊

Garden Moths part 2 - Micros

In addition to the larger (macro) moths that came to my garden trap in 2016, there were also lots of micro moths. When I started trapping in the garden in late March I had been determined to concentrate on the larger moths, after all there are apparently 874 species that have been recorded in the UK and it is quite possible to see a few hundred of these in the average garden. I had no intention of getting sucked into looking at the micros as well, of which there are 1,627 species on the British list, many of which can be difficult to identify.

Well, the problem with this train of thought was that the distinction between macro and micro moths is an artificial one based more on the families that they belong to than anything else and the reality is that there are some species that are considered micros (e.g. Mother of Pearl, Small Magpie) which are larger than many macros, and there are some macros (e.g. many Pugs, some small Geometers) that may be mistaken for micros due to their small size. So with this blurred distinction it was inevitable I suppose that I would soon start to try and identify some of the micros that I found in the trap and before I knew it I was slipping further towards the dark side.

So far I have managed to identify 50 species although I missed some at the time as taking photos of many of these can be difficult, not only due to their small size but also due to the fact that many of them seem to be just as lively during the day as at night and more than a few got away before I managed to get a photo good enough for ID purposes.

My most helpful reference for identifying these micro-lepidoptera is the 'Field Guide to the Micro Moths of Great Britain and Ireland' - <http://www.ukmoths.org.uk/book-reviews/sterling-and-parsons-micro-book/> - which I treated myself to last year and is a great introduction to this group of moths.

Only a few of the larger or more common micros have common names with most known only by their scientific names which in many cases don't really lend themselves to being easily pronounced or remembered.

Starting off with the largest of the micros, through the summer months I had good numbers of Mother of Pearl (*Pleuroptya ruralis*) plus Small Magpie (*Anania hortulata*) and its close relative *Anania coronata*.



Mother of Pearl (*Pleuroptya ruralis*) - 06.08.2016



Small Magpie (*Anania hortulata*) - 16.07.2016



Anania coronata - 11.08.2016

The commonest micros in my garden judged by total numbers coming to the trap throughout the year were Light Brown Apple Moths (*Epiphyas postvittana*) which I had in varying numbers right from when I started trapping in late March through to last week (Jan 8th) when I had a couple in the trap. This species is originally from Australia where it is a pest in orchards and is thought to have been introduced accidentally into this country sometime in the 1930s and has since spread and become very common in many areas.



Light Brown Apple Moth (*Epiphyas postvittana*) - 04.04.2016

Another accidental introduction from Australia which is rapidly spreading and becoming common in some areas is *Tachystola acroxantha* which I saw from May right through until December in good numbers, sometimes a dozen or more around the trap on each occasion.



Tachystola acroxantha - 07.05.2016

During June and July I had lots of grass moths of the types we are all probably familiar with when they may be seen in large numbers in grassy meadows when looking for butterflies. I reckon I had 3 or 4 different species regularly but am only fairly confident of the ID of couple of these.



Crambus pascuella - 01.07.2016

Most of the other species turned up in smaller numbers varying from single examples to maybe a dozen or so on each occasion from April through to the end of September when numbers of most species tailed off.

I am fairly confident that I have got the IDs right for those posted below but would welcome any corrections.



Barred Fruit-tree Tortrix (Pandemis cerasana) - 18.06.2016



Chequered Fruit-tree Tortrix (Pandemis corylana) -



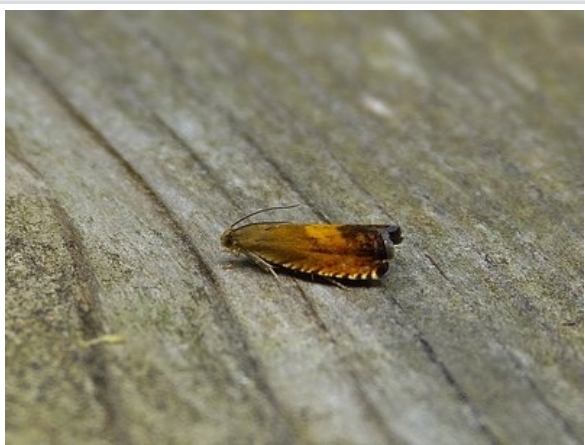
Cherry Bark Tortrix (*Enarmonia formosana*) – 08.07.2016



Celypha lacunana – 12.06.2016



Bramble Shoot Moth (*Notocelia uddmanniana*) – 01.07.016



Pammene aurita – 21.07.2016



Lozotaeniodes formosana – 05.07.2016



Epiblema foenella – 23.07.2016



Carcina quercana – 14.08.2016



Argyresthia goedartella - 07.08.2016



Bird Cherry Ermine (Yponomeuta evonymella) - 25.07.2016



Honeysuckle Moth - (Ypsolopha dentalla) - 19.07.2016



Ypsolopha scabrella – 13.08.2016



Mint Moth (Pyrausta aurata) – 20.08.2016

One of the biggest differences between looking at butterflies and looking at moths is that with a few exceptions the butterflies are easily identified, even when on the wing. With moths there are so many, especially when the micros are included, that identification can often mean taking a photo of an individual and trying to ID it afterwards. Then you can add in the fact that some moths are very variable in appearance...but on the other hand there are similar species that are difficult to tell apart, and I ended up spending loads of time comparing my photos with reference images, both in my books and on the internet. This can be very time consuming so I saved some of this for the winter which helps to pass some of those dark and gloomy days and nights.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 22-Jan-17 06:36 PM GMT

Even more racking moths Neil – some of those micros are little gems 😊 My favourite has to be the Honeysuckle moth – it looks mishapen 🤪😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 06-Mar-17 08:19 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel...sorry for the late reply, I somehow missed your comment. I didn't realise how diverse the micro moths are until I started looking at them last year.

Some random recent stuff

Over the past couple of weeks the transition from meteorological winter into spring has stuttered on with a good mixture of different weather conditions including some cold nights and frosty mornings, spells of heavy rain and blustery winds, but also some nice sunny spells which have felt quite pleasant.

Most of the plants in the garden appear to be at about where they should be at this time of year which indicates to me that things are fairly normal so far around here, although it is obviously far too early yet to guess how spring will shape up this year.

I have yet to see my first butterfly of the season but this is normal for me and I would not normally expect to start seeing anything around here for another week or two at least.

The moth trap has been out in the garden a few times and I have started seeing the first early spring moths including a few Common Quakers. This widespread and often abundant species overwinters as a pupa and the emergence of these is a sure sign that spring is just around the corner.



Common Quakers – Coverdale 19.02.2017

I have also had a few micros in the trap, so far all species that overwinter as adults, including a nice example of *Acleris cristana*. This species occurs mainly in southern England which makes it a good garden record for me here in the midlands.



Acleris cristana – Coverdale 19.02.2017

All the usual birds have been visiting the garden including a number of Bullfinches which seem to be increasing in number around here.



A couple of female Bullfinches taking turns at the black sunflower seeds



Bullfinch pair



A splash of colour in the bare branches.

I am always pleased to spot the Blackcaps in the garden although curiously I only ever see them from the second half of the winter.



Male Blackcap lurking in the shrubs

One bird that used to be very common around here but which I don't often see in the garden these days is the Starling. Years ago, back when I was a nipper in the 1970s, there used to be thousands of these roosting every night on the high window ledges of the tall buildings in Birmingham city centre and I vividly remember the noise they made as we waited at the bus stop after shopping trips with my parents. I was chuffed therefore to see one on my feeders yesterday (Sunday) and grabbed my camera as he posed nicely in the late morning sun.



Starling - Coverdale 05.03.2017



Starling - Coverdale 05.03.2017



Starling - Coverdale 05.03.2017

Looks like another cold night and a frost for the morning and then another band of heavy rain heading in tomorrow but the end of the week is looking to be a bit better so fingers crossed for next weekend.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 06-Mar-17 08:53 PM GMT

Nice bird images, Neil.

Yes, starlings were a nuisance in our garden when I was a kid. These days, I tend to only see them in supermarket car parks!

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 06-Mar-17 11:19 PM GMT

I'm jealous that you get bullfinches in your garden, Neil! 🍷

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 07-Mar-17 08:48 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Love that Bullfinch pair, shots like that are some compensation for the lack of Butterflies at the moment.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 07-Mar-17 08:25 PM GMT

I echo what everyone else has said Neil 😊 Also it's good to hear numbers of Bullfinch are on the up – now if other species showed similar upturns (like Tree Sparrow) that would be great. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 10-Mar-17 07:30 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments David, Mark, Trevor and Wurzel, appreciated as always 😊

I first saw the Bullfinches in the garden a few years ago – just the one pair to start with – and they have been regular visitors ever since with at least 3 pairs seen together this year. I have also seen increasing numbers out and about around my local patch over the past couple of years.

Friday 10th March

Well, it seems that just about every other UKB member has seen some butterflies lately, particularly during yesterdays lovely spring day that was enjoyed over most of the country. Yours truly was stuck in the office at work and my lunch break is too short to get out anywhere for a look so I have still to see my first butterfly of the season.

At least the milder weather has started to wake things up in the garden and increasing numbers of spring moths have been coming to the trap,



4 Hebrew Characters from Wednesday night



Acleris literana – an attractive micro usually found in oak woods. A new one for my garden.



Dotted Border – Widespread and Common but a new one for me.



Clouded Drab



A nicely marked Common Quaker

The weekend weather looks like it is changing for the worst but tomorrow might not be too bad...fingers crossed.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 10-Mar-17 09:14 PM GMT

Shame you missed out, Neil (though the moths at least provided SOME recompense).

You may well have another chance tomorrow if the forecast is right.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 12-Mar-17 09:31 AM GMT

Sorry you missed out Neil 😞 But it will make your sightings even sweeter when they come 😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 13-Mar-17 08:29 PM GMT

Cheers David and Wurzel, unfortunately the weather tuned for the worst over the weekend so I still haven't seen a butterfly.

As you say David, the moths do provide some recompense, in fact I am finding these denizens of the dark hours increasingly fascinating...speaking of which,

Monday 13th March

After the lovely spring day we had last Thursday during which I was stuck in the office, the clouds rolled in on Friday, and Saturday saw us under a thick layer of dark grey overcast which made it feel rather gloomy around here. Sunday was little better and although the sun did make a few attempts to warm things up it wasn't out for long enough to have much effect. I went round to my Moms house on Sunday to do a bit of tidying up in her garden and took the chance to have a look around the park by her house which is where I often have my fist sightings, but without success.

I put the moth trap out in the garden last night and lo and behold the skies cleared which led to the temperature dropping like a stone and with a bright full moon and a bit of a breeze, conditions were not looking good for moths.

I was pleased therefore to have half a dozen Common Quakers and Hebrew Characters plus a couple of Oak Beauties which were my first of this species this year and are one of my favourite spring moths 😊



Oak Beauty - Coverdale 13.03.2017



Oak Beauties – Coverdale 13.03.2017

And wouldn't you just know it...back to work today and the sun was back out to tease me 😞

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 13-Mar-17 09:16 PM GMT

It must be so frustrating seeing us southerners flaunting all those Commas, sorry 😞. I'm sure your time will come though and your moths do make a nice change from the norm.

I have to say Mother Nature really does have a wonderful way of using drab colours to make something quite beautiful doesn't She, those oak Beauties really living up to their name 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 14-Mar-17 12:37 AM GMT

I feel your frustration Neil – the hours I've spent at work whilst the sun has shone and others have been able to make the most of it only to witness cloud and rain when I can get out with my camera 😞😞 On the bright side nothing ever lasts forever including bad weather and those Oak Beauties (which really live up to their name) are definite compensation 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 14-Mar-17 09:57 PM GMT

Thanks Bugboy and Wurzel 😊

I am sure it won't be long before I see my first butterflies, there has been a flurry of sightings around the midlands but unfortunately for me they were on the pleasant sunny days when I was stuck in work.

I think the thing with UKB, and the other online places that I see sightings reported on – twitter/facebook etc – is that it is easy to forget that the season can vary appreciably around the country. It is perfectly normal for my season to start in late March and to generally run a couple weeks behind the south-east so I just have to be a bit more patient and wait my turn.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 15-Mar-17 12:19 AM GMT

Neil, your time will come....most probably in mid-April when you'll be seeing more Speckled Woods than the rest of us put together. 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 24-Mar-17 08:26 PM GMT

Cheers David, no Specklies yet but I have now seen my first 2017 butterfly 😊 ...

Friday 24th March

After a week of cold and sometimes very wet weather around here, things were forecast to start looking a bit better from today (Friday), and so it proved to be with some good sunshine although a cold wind from the north-east was still keeping the temperature down a bit. During a bit of pottering about in my garden this afternoon I disturbed a splash of orange – a Comma – that flew down to one of my clumps of Ivy and basked for a couple of minutes before taking off over the neighbours. A slightly ragged looking individual with a chunk missing from one hindwing but my first butterfly of 2017 😊



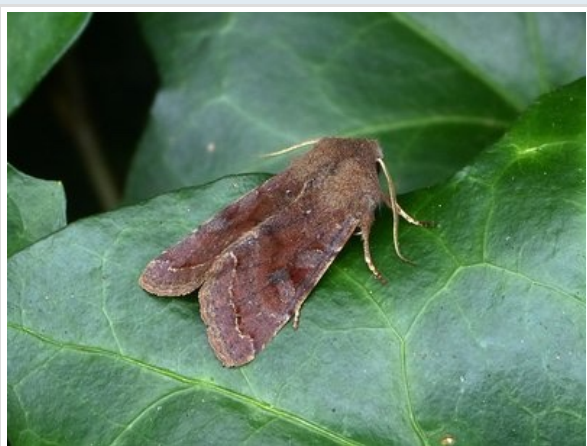
Comma – Coverdale 23.03.2017

The past few nights here have even been too cold and windy for me to bother putting the moth trap in the garden, with last Saturday being the last time that I lit up when I had 23 moths of 8 species (including micros). With the increasing numbers of species now starting to fly it is beginning to get challenging to get the IDs right with some of them



Clouded Drab – Coverdale 14.03.2017

Compare the individual above with the example below of the same species trapped a couple of days later and you can see why identifying some of these species can be interesting.



Clouded Drab – Coverdale 16.03.2017

Pugs are another group that can be a nightmare to ID correctly, particularly later in the year when a number of species of these small moths can turn up on the same night



Double-striped Pug – fairly easy to ID when fresh but difficult when faded and worn.

And a couple of micros to finish off,



Diirnea fugella – a decent sized micro that is larger than the Pug above.



Caloptilia sp. – one of a number of similar species, all with this curious resting posture, that are very difficult to tell apart

The weather is looking promising for tomorrow so I am hoping to finally get a chance for a look around one of my local spots...

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 24-Mar-17 10:05 PM GMT

Glad to see you've finally got your season started, and like the rest of us with a Comma 😊. Good luck over the weekend, I expect lots more lovely pictures when I get home from work tomorrow!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 25-Mar-17 12:43 AM GMT

Excellent news that you're off the mark Neil 😊 A Comma is a great 'first' butterfly of the year to find 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 26-Mar-17 06:12 PM GMT

Thanks Bugboy and Wurzel...a few more coming up 😊

Saturday 25th March.

After a run of weekends during which we have had cool and cloudy conditions here with the best of the weather being during the week whilst I was at work, Saturday dawned with clear blue skies and after a nippy start soon turned into a pleasant day. I rushed through the normal Saturday morning shopping and household stuff and after lunch went around to my local spot at Bickenhill near Solihull, this being one of my most reliable sites for awakening hibernators.

Arriving at Bickenhill, there was a bit of a cool breeze blowing from the north-east but the temperature on the car display was reading 15c and I was confident of finding a butterfly or two in the usual sheltered spots. Sure enough, I was making my way along the first hedgerow when I disturbed a Comma from the footpath in front of me although this one quickly disappeared over the hedge and despite lurking around for a bit it didn't return. I then made my way to a sheltered corner that has reliably produced Commas for the past few years and on approaching slowly spotted one on the path in front of me. This one stayed put as I crept up and took a couple of shots before he took off to intercept a second individual that had strayed into his corner.



'Comma corner' - you can just see one on the path slightly below the middle of the photo



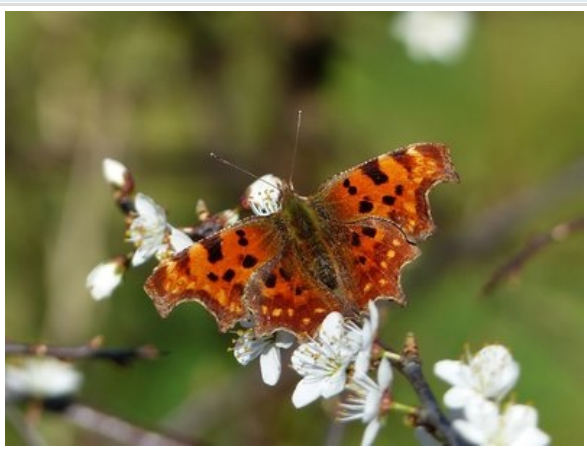
Comma - Bickenhill 25.03.2017 - close up of the one in the photo above

These then spiralled high into the sky before splitting up with the original occupant returning to his corner. I tracked the second individual to where he came to ground a short distance away and crept up on him to take a photo before he was off again for another round with the one in the corner.



Comma - Bickenhill 25.03.2017

Moving further along the paths I came to a spot where some good stands of blackthorn is coming into blossom, this being where I often manage to get some shots of butterflies on blossom which is one of my favourite sights of spring. As well as a couple more Commas, there were also a couple of Small Tortoiseshells flitting about amongst the blossoms and I spent some time here watching them and taking photos when they came within range.



Comma - Bickenhill 25.03.2017



Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 25.03.2017



Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 25.03.2017

During my time spent here I reckon I counted 4 Commas and 3 Small Tortoiseshells but I was a bit surprised to not see any Peacocks, these usually being the first species I see at this site. Peacock numbers were well down around here last year for the second year running so fingers crossed they bounce back a bit this year as the Small Tortoiseshells seem to have done lately.

I was also accompanied for most of the time here by the sound of Buzzards calling as they circled around high above me and I also heard my first Chiffchaffs of the year, all in all a very pleasant couple of hours.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 26-Mar-17 09:38 PM GMT

Sounds blissful indeed Neil 😊 I'm struck every year by how the same species always seem to turn up in the same places and also have my own 'Comma Corner'. 😊 It's been a great year for them and long may it continue 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 28-Mar-17 08:43 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I know what you mean about the same species using the same spots year after year, right down to the Specklies in my garden using the same plants for perches...spooky 😊

Not much to report since last Saturday, with it being Mothers Day on Sunday we had my Mom round for dinner and my daughter also came round with the grandkids.

The Sunday was cloudier and a little cooler than Saturday and the only butterfly I saw was a single Small Tortoiseshell that passed through the garden. I also noted the first Bee Flies of the year in the garden and there seemed to be plenty of big fat queen bumble bees buzzing about.

I put the moth trap out on Sunday night and amongst the usual Common Quakers and Hebrew Characters was a first for the year Early Grey. This brought the total garden moth species so far this year up to 20 (11 macros and 9 micros).



Early Grey - Coverdale 26.03.2017

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 28-Mar-17 09:45 PM GMT

Ah, someone else with a Comma Corner. I have the same with Red Admirals too. Lovely Commas, and the Tortoiseshell on the blackthorn is a great combination too. 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 28-Mar-17 11:33 PM GMT

Some beautifully captured, classic, springtime shots of the Comma and Small Tort. on Blackthorn. I'm glad that Spring has caught up with you.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 29-Mar-17 09:12 AM GMT

Lovely Spring shots of the Butterflies Neil 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 31-Mar-17 08:17 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, Trevor and Goldie, appreciate your comments as always 😊

Friday 31.03.2017

The last day of March and I managed to see a couple more butterflies although I am still only on 2 species. After yesterdays cloudy but warm weather during which it reached the giddy heights of 20 degrees around here, today was much cooler and breezier but the sun did feel reasonable warm when it popped out this afternoon.

After finishing work at lunchtime as usual on a Friday I picked Jane up and we went round for our Friday afternoon visit to my mom. After a cup of tea and some biccies 😊 I went for a quick look around the park by her house to see if anything was about. It was quite breezy but in the shelter of some trees there are some small blackthorns where I a couple of Small Tortoiseshells, one of which was a tatty looking individual but the other looked in much better condition and posed nicely for a few minutes before taking off over the trees.



Small Tortoiseshell - Langley Hall 31.03.2017



Small Tortoiseshell - Langley Hall 31.03.2017



Small Tortoiseshell - Langley Hall 31.03.2017

As mentioned earlier, Thursday was the warmest day here so far this year and with the cloud cover, the overnight temperature only dropped down to about 13 degrees. This made for ideal conditions to run the moth trap in the garden with the result that I had my highest numbers so far this year - 41 moths of 8 species - albeit most of them were the usual suspects I have been already seeing. Among the new arrival were a couple of Twenty-plume Moths, a micro with the most delicate looking divided wings. The common name is actually a misnomer as each of its 4 wings are separated into 6 'plumes'. The scientific name *Alucita hexadactyla* is more accurate, meaning '6 fingered'.



Alucita hexadactyla - Twenty-plume moth

April 1st tomorrow and the weather is looking so-so, maybe better on Sunday. I am hoping to get out and look for my 'missing so far' Peacocks.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 31-Mar-17 08:35 PM GMT

Lovely Small Torts Neil and that shot of the 20 plumed moth is a belter, I've tried to get shots of them before but I find them a right pain 🤖 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 31-Mar-17 10:30 PM GMT

Neil, your day(s) will come, I'm sure. Meantime, keep your eyes open for those first Midlands Specklies...you'll have more within 50 yards of your home than I can get in a whole day before long!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 03-Apr-17 08:22 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel... yes those Twenty plumes can be a right pain to get a shot of, as can a lot of the micros 😊

Hi David, I'm sure my day will come. its just that I was finding the lack of Peacocks a bit concerning but all is well now...

Sunday 2nd April

For once the weather forecast was almost spot on, Saturday was a day of mostly cloud and showers with the sun making a few feeble attempts to break through but never for long enough to put any warmth into what was a fairly cool day.

Sunday was much better, it started off cool and cloudy but by mid-morning the clouds were thinning and it was starting to turn into a decent day. As mentioned in my previous post I was keen to return to my local spot at Bickenhill to look for Peacocks as I was a bit concerned when I didn't see any there on my visit last weekend as this had always been a good site for seeing my first Peacocks of the year.

Before I had chance to get out however, there were a few little jobs at home to get out of the way and just around midday I looked out of the kitchen window and saw a white butterfly come over the fence into the garden. It looked to have settled on a dandelion so I grabbed the camera and managed to get a record shot before it was off again - my first Small White of the year.



Small White - Coverdale 02.04.2017

Anyway, by early afternoon, I was free for a couple of hours and went back to Bickenhill. The sun felt pleasantly warm when it was out but it must be said that when a passing cloud came over you could still feel an underlying chill in the air. The first paths and hedgerows were devoid of any butterflies but as soon as I reached 'Comma Corner' I saw one basking on the path in front of me, a later photo proved this to be a different individual to last weeks occupant. As I was sneaking up for a photo, the shadow of a butterfly came past me from behind - a Peacock - which the Comma took off to intercept and they both spiralled up into the air. Watching as they separated, the Comma returned to his corner and I watched the Peacock come to ground further along the path.

Before I could sneak up for a photo, the Peacock was up again and as he flew across a large nettle patch to the side off the path a second Peacock took off and these two then did the spiralling up into the air thing.

I soon saw a few more Peacocks and reckoned I saw maybe 7 or 8 during my time here, maybe more but I am not certain as I recognised the same individuals in different spots as I moved back and forth along the paths. Strange that there were none here last week when this species is usually the first I see at this site. Oh well, they are here now 😊 .



Peacock - Bickenhill 02.04.2017



Peacock - Bickenhill 02.04.2017



Peacock - Bickenhill 02.04.2017



Peacock - Bickenhill 02.04.2017



Peacock - Bickenhill 02.04.2017

As well as the Peacocks there were also around half a dozen each of Comma and Small Tortoiseshell sharing the same stretches of path and I watched many an aerial tussle during the couple of hours spent here.



Comma - Bickenhill 02.04.2017



Comma - Bickenhill 02.04.2017



Comma - Bickenhill 02.04.2017



Comma - Bickenhill 02.04.2017



Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 02.04.2017



Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 02.04.2017

Also seen were a couple of patrolling male Brimstones (or maybe the same one doing a circuit?) but the surprise of the day for me was a male Orange-tip that flew across in front of me as I was just about to take a photo of one of the Peacocks. I watched it hoping that a cloud would come over prompting it to settle, but it was not to be and it just kept going and going until it was out of sight. This was my earliest ever sighting of an Orange-tip, they don't usually show up at my local spots until the second week of April, and I have never before had a first sighting of Peacock along with Small White and Orange-tip on the same day.

Including the Small White seen in my garden earlier that was 6 species in one day...not as many as some have seen, particularly in the south-east, but good going for around here at the beginning of April 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 03-Apr-17 08:34 PM GMT

A nice selection, Neil. I do like the Comma underside with the green on it. It is interesting how what you see first varies from year to year. I have kept records for a few years now and there is no pattern whatsoever! 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 03-Apr-17 09:31 PM GMT

A lovely selection there Neil, I too love the Comma underside, often overlooked but if you catch the green in the sun like you have, no less stunning than the uppers 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-17 10:11 PM GMT

More great shots Neil, especially the Comma underside. I also really like the contrast between the two Small Tor shots showing off the difference in the markings - yellowy on one to almost white on the other 😊 This year is turning out to be a funny old year as just as you're wondering when a particular species will turn up it does 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 05-Apr-17 07:00 AM GMT

Glad to see you've finally had chance to do justice to things round your way, Neil. It's also good to know Pierids are out and about further north. With further mild weather to come I expect most of us will get more opportunities to see new emergees over the next few days.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 07-Apr-17 08:34 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Dave, Bugboy, Wurzel and David 😊

Friday 7th April

A chilly week with a cold wind and temperatures struggling to rise above the low teens on most days has meant that things have been very quiet and despite the longer hours of daylight I have not seen a single butterfly since last Sunday.

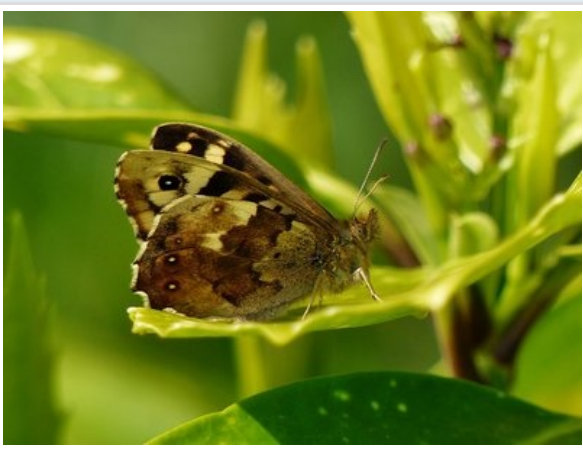
My usual visit to my moms this afternoon and after a cool and cloudy morning, the clouds thinned for the sun to shine through enough to tempt me to do a quick circuit around her local park. A couple of spells of nice warm sunshine produced my first Speckled Woods of the year, two males squabbling over a sheltered corner. I just managed to get a couple of shots of one before they were off again and disappeared over some shrubs and despite hanging around to see if they would return that was the last I saw of them.



Speckled Wood – Langley Hall 07.04.2017

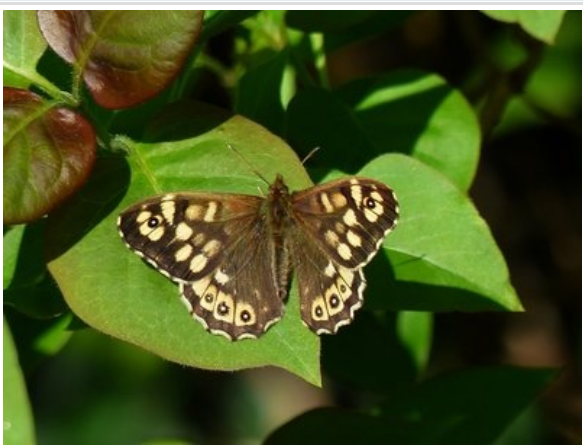
On my way back to my moms house I also saw my first Holly Blue patrolling along a hedge.

Back home later, it had turned into a beautiful afternoon so I spent some time in the garden. I was pleased to see my first garden Speckle of the year, sure enough, in the same corner they appear in every year 😊



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 07.04.2017

In fact during the time I spent in the garden three different males showed up, one of which already had what looked like a bird strike to its hind wing proving the value of those eye-spots.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 07.04.2017



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 07.04.2017

I also saw at least one each, maybe more as I am never sure if I am seeing the same individuals doing a circuit, of Orange-tip and Holly Blue. By now there wasn't a cloud in sight and these were almost constantly on the move with the Orange-tip pausing briefly just once and just long enough for me to get a record shot.



Orange-tip – Coverdale 07.04.2017

The Holly Blue settled a few times and always high up but on one occasion I managed to get a shot against the blue sky by stretching up holding my Lumix at arms length and using the vari-angle screen.



Holly Blue – Coverdale 07.04.2017

It looks like most of the country is in for some good weather this weekend so lets hope there are some good butterflies around 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-17 10:15 PM GMT

Spring has sprung and the season has now officially started; Hoggers has seen Small Coppers 😊, I'm already behind on my PD 😊 and you've seen your first Specklies of the year 😊 Greta shots especially the underwing 🍷

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 07-Apr-17 10:18 PM GMT

Good to see your "pet" Specklies are emerging, Neil. All is right with the world! Nice Holly Blue, too. They do strike some great poses. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 07-Apr-17 11:10 PM GMT

That's more like it, Neil!

You are to Specklies what Hoggers is to Small Coppers.

I feel you have several weeks to make hay!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 09-Apr-17 09:54 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, Dave and David, yep the Specklies are out in my garden and all is well 😊

Just out of interest the dates below are the earliest I have seen Speckled Wood in my garden since 2011 which was when I first started keeping notes. This shows that this year is about average for this species here but seems early compared with last year, with 2013 and 2016 being late and 2012 being the earliest...and look how that year turned out.

Speckled Wood - 07.04.2017
Speckled Wood - 04.05.2016
Speckled Wood - 09.04.2015
Speckled Wood - 11.04.2014
Speckled Wood - 07.05.2013
Speckled Wood - 25.03.2012
Speckled Wood - 06.04.2011

Saturday 8th April

The morning was spent doing the usual early Saturday stuff - a bit of shopping, then some household chores which included some pottering about in the garden. Right from the first thing, there was not a cloud in the sky and by the time I got into the garden around middle morning it had warmed up nicely.

The first butterfly that I saw was a feebly fluttering white that looked like it might be my first Green-veined White of the season but on approaching closer turned out to be a Small White, its fluttery flight explained by the fact it looked like its Left hand hind wing was missing.



Small White - Coverdale 08.04.2017

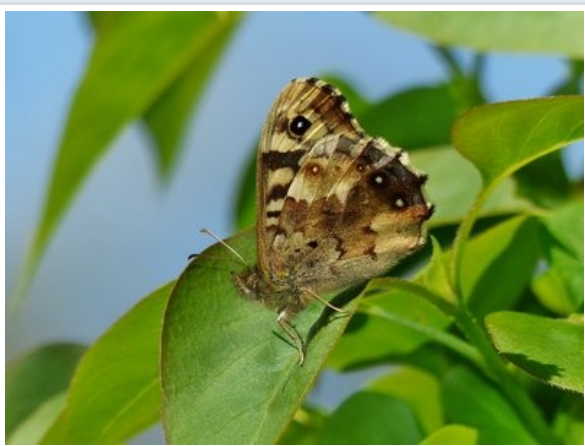
Orange-tip, Holly Blue and Speckled Wood all soon put in an appearance but all were highly active in the warm sun with only the Holly Blue and speckled Wood settling, and then with wings firmly closed.



Holly Blue - Coverdale 08.04.2017



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 08.04.2017



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 08.04.2017

Saturday afternoon was spent at the Warwickshire BC Spring Meeting where it was good to catch up on recent goings on in the county and listen to some interesting presentations...and enjoy some excellent cakes 😊. Orange-tips and Brimstones were seen by most people flying around outside the venue.

Looks like today is set to be similar if not warmer, before cooler conditions return for next week. I am keeping my finger crossed for Easter week when I have a week booked off work.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 09-Apr-17 03:36 PM GMT

No sign of the Holly Blue here yet Neil and I think so far there's only been two sightings of the OT, things are very slow getting going here. Your shots of the Speckie are great. Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 09-Apr-17 10:18 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie, I'm sure you will soon be seeing your Holly Blues and Orange-tips. Don't forget that not everyone's season starts as early as it does in the south-east...things have only really got going around here this weekend.

Sunday 9th April - Morning

Another beautiful sunny morning and with the rapidly rising temperature the same species were soon seen in the garden, namely Orange-tip, Holly Blue and Speckled Wood, although like yesterday they were very active and not settling.

I have a large berberis darwinii shrub in the garden which is usually covered with small orange flowers at this time of year and I have noticed before that Speckled Wood are one of the few species of butterfly that will nectar from it, although it is a favourite with bees.

This morning I spotted a Speckled Wood doing exactly that and closer inspection showed it to be the first female in the garden, hopefully fueling up to lay plenty of eggs.



View down the garden showing the berberis darwinii



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 09.04.2017

Anyway, with such a cracking day and a couple of hours free in the afternoon I was keen pay a first visit this year to my other local spot at Castle Hills near Solihull...

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 10-Apr-17 12:21 AM GMT

Lovely contrast in colours between the Speckle and the flowers, Neil. I rarely see this species feeding in spring although a few were imbibing from blackthorn blossom yesterday.

I'll look forward to reading about the rest of your day.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 10-Apr-17 08:36 PM GMT

Thanks David, it is mostly the females that I see feeding from flowers in the spring although I have also occasionally seen males on this shrub as well. Forget-me-nots are another spring flower that I have seen both sexes take nectar from.

Sunday 9th April - Afternoon

With Sunday afternoon shaping up to be another glorious day and a couple of hours free, I was keen to visit one of my other local sites where a couple of public footpaths run across Castle Hills, just the other side of Solihull.

On arrival I soon spotted a couple of male Orange-tips patrolling the hedgerows and over the next couple of hours spent here these were easily the most numerous species seen. There was not a cloud to be seen in the clear blue skies and with the temperature on my car display showing 22 degrees on arrival the Orange-tips were constantly on the move. With no clouds around to enable the usual tactic of watching where they settled and waiting for the cloud to pass and getting a photo as they open their wings, I realised that it would be an afternoon of mostly watching and trying for some half decent record shots if an opportunity presented itself. At one spot I found what looks like a species of flowering cherry at the side of the path and I noticed one male Orange-tip pause briefly for a quick refuel, closely followed by a second one. I staked this spot out for a while and eventually managed to get a couple of shots that I was reasonably happy with.



Orange-tip - Castle Hills 09.04.2017



Orange-tip - Castle Hills 09.04.2017

I also spotted a couple of individuals settle down in the vegetation where they promptly clamped their wings shut. I waited to see if they would open their wings but the instant they did so they were off again without that brief pause that usually presents the opportunity for capturing the open wings.



Orange-tip - Castle Hills 09.04.2017

The only Orange-tip that I did see with open wings was when I was heading back towards the car and spotted one land on at the side of the path in front of me, and on creeping up noticed it was settled on a bit of discarded rubbish, the colour of which had possibly made him think it was a female. His wings were half open so I tried cautiously positioning myself so that my shadow covered him whereupon he opened his wings further enabling me to get a couple of shots before he decided to take off again. I could have wished for a better background but he was the only one I saw with open wings all afternoon.



Orange-tip - Castle Hills 09.04.2017

I did see a couple of females but as with the males these were highly mobile and I didn't see either of them settle.

I also saw a few Green-veined Whites, my first this year but as with the Orange-tips they were highly mobile and only presented a couple of fleeting opportunities for record shots.



Green-veined White - Castle Hills 09.04.2017

The three common hibernating vanessids were also still in evidence with at least half a dozen each of Peacock, Comma and Small Tortoiseshell seen.



Peacock - Castle Hills 09.04.2017



Comma - Castle Hills 09.04.2017



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 09.04.2017

One particular wet patch of track around a large puddle had a Comma and a Small Tortoiseshell taking up minerals from the muddy ground,



Comma - Castle Hills 09.04.2017



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 09.04.2017

Speckled Woods seem to be having a good start to the season and they were present here in good numbers along the shadier parts of the footpaths. These were mostly staking out territories to which they would quickly return if disturbed and which could easily be tempted to open their wings by carefully casting my shadow over them.



Speckled Wood - Castle Hills 09.04.2017



Speckled Wood – Castle Hills 09.04.2017

So then, a cracking couple of hours with plenty of butterflies seen but with limited photo opportunities due to the warm sunny conditions. Dare I say a bit of cloud would have been welcome (perhaps not given how cloudy last year was) and in fact some this wispy high level stuff did start coming over later in the afternoon, but by that time I had hung on as long as I could and had to return home. As it was getting quieter and the butterflies were disappearing, just before I left I managed to find a final Orange-tip settled down to roost.



Orange-tip – Castle Hills 09.04.2017

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 10-Apr-17 08:51 PM GMT

Spring really is advancing Northwards. Lovely selection and images. 😊

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 10-Apr-17 09:12 PM GMT

You're catching up fast, Neil! 😊 I do like the Tortoiseshell puddling – not a common sight and one brought on by the very dry spring, perhaps.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-17 05:33 PM GMT

You had to go and ask for more cloud didn't you Neil 😊😊

Mind you I know exactly what you mean – we can't win with butterflies – either it's cloudy and they don't come out or it's brilliantly sunny and they zoom around everywhere!

A great set of shots by the way and I agree with David – beautiful contrast between the flowers and the Speckle in your previous post 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 13-Apr-17 01:17 AM GMT

Although you've lagged behind lately, Neil, I now find myself a little envious of you as my patch is virtually bereft of vanessids whereas yours are seemingly still going strong!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterflysaurus rex, 13-Apr-17 09:13 PM GMT

Great stuff as ever Neil! Orange Tips are so fabulous they can easily make me late home for dinner. Speckled Woods are doing rather well down this way too. They are so smart when they are fresh.

ATB

James

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 16-Apr-17 10:43 AM GMT

Thanks Trevor, Spring is well and truly here now 😊

Cheers Dave, I have seen both Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks puddling in the spring but as you say usually in the drier years.

Sorry Wurzel, in my defence I did say "perhaps not" 😊

Hi David, I have noticed before in your previous posts that the spring vanessids seem to appear and also disappear before they do around here. In fact your season seems to run earlier than mine in general.

Hi James, it is indeed hard to beat the chocolate and cream look of a fresh spring Speckled Wood...almost as if they have evolved especially for Easter 😊

Saturday 15th April

The glorious warm sunshine of the previous weekend was not to last and we soon returned to more normal spring weather around here with lots of cloud and a cool breeze and some sunny spells. The only butterflies that I have seen during the week were a couple of my ever reliable Speckled Woods to greet me in the garden when I got back in from work later in the afternoon.



Speckled Wood male from earlier in the week

On the other hand, the clouds have usually melted away at night leaving clear skies which have led to some cold breezy nights and a light frost on some mornings. This has meant that I have had low numbers of moths coming to the trap with just a few Hebrew Characters and Common Quakers on the couple of nights I ran the trap recently.

Saturday arrived and being Easter weekend we had some family stuff going on, between which I spent some time in the garden generally pottering about with my camera close to hand as usual.

It was quite cool at first but by mid-morning the occasional sunny spell had a bit of warmth to it and the first Speckled Woods were up and about, two males holding their corners.



Speckled Wood male #1



Speckled Wood male #2

These were soon followed by Holly Blues and Oranges-tip doing their rounds, probably the same few individuals doing circuits which always makes it seem like there were more of them. The Holly Blues settled a few times but always out of reach. One of the Orange-tips however was tempted to stop for a brief top-up at one of my 'bowles mauve' plants which gave me a chance for a quick photo.



Orange-tip - Coverdale 15.04.2017

Later in the afternoon I managed to catch the shot below, of which a close examination proves that it was the same individual which I had seen earlier, although on one occasion I saw 2 in the air together so there was at least 2 of them going around.



The same individual seen earlier in the day

During one of the cloudier periods in the afternoon, I watched a Green-veined White slowly fluttering about the garden and settle frequently, including on one of the cow-slips growing in the lawn, which gave me some good photo opportunities before the sun came back out and he warmed up enough to be on his way.



Green-veined White – Coverdale 15.04.2017



Green-veined White – Coverdale 15.04.2017



Green-veined White - Coverdale 15.04.2017



Green-veined White - Coverdale 15.04.2017



Green-veined White - Coverdale 15.04.2017

Also seen during the afternoon were at least one Small White and a fresh looking male Large White, my first of the latter species this year. This meant that this was the first time this year I had seen all three common whites on the same day.



Small White - Coverdale 15.04.2017



Large White - Coverdale 15.04.2017

I am off work next week and even though the weather does not look very promising around here, I am hoping to get out a couple of times...fingers crossed.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 16-Apr-17 11:16 AM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Neil, we're well behind up here, still, early days yet. That's a great shot of a Large White.

Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 16-Apr-17 04:21 PM GMT

Lovely crisp Green-veined Whites Neil but I'm still awaiting my first Large White!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 16-Apr-17 06:46 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie, I am sure your time will come. I remember last year when I was in Arnside/Silverdale in early June that the weather up there had been better than that which we had been having here.

Thanks Bugboy, I was lucky with that GVW in that he appeared just as the sun went in and the cool breeze slowed him down somewhat.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-17 09:03 PM GMT

A cracking set of shots Neil 📷📷 Such lush whites and OTs 📷📷 Hope you have a productive week off! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 16-Apr-17 09:36 PM GMT

Brilliant set of images Neil. I saw the Countryfile weather forecast for next week this evening, they reckon -6c on Weds. morning in the Midlands. Hope not!, that could do some damage. Perhaps you need to come to the South for your week off.

Hope they got it wrong !,
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 18-Apr-17 07:55 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, the week started off a bit grim but I managed to get out today for a very pleasant session...see below 😊

Thanks Trevor, we had a bit of a frost this morning and another one is forecast for tomorrow but apparently not quite down to -6 around here. Mind you it might drop to that a bit further out in the sticks. It looks like the south and south-east could cop for a frost tonight as well.

Tuesday 18th April

Easter Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday were both dull and cloudy days with a cool breeze blowing and some intermittent drizzle which meant I spent a good part of both days indoors doing family stuff...and earning bownie points 😊

After a cold night and a frosty start to the morning, today (Tuesday) was much sunnier although it took until late morning for the sun to feel like it had any warmth to it.

With the forecast of a mixture of clouds and sunny spells this afternoon, I was keen to return to my local site at Castle Hills to see if I could get any better Orange-tip photos, my previous visit just over a week ago being when the temperature was a good 10 degrees higher than today and everything was flying round in turbo mode.

Arriving just after mid-day with the sun struggling to raise the temperature into double figures against the cold wind, I followed the footpath to a sheltered damp meadow where I had seen plenty of Orange-tips the other weekend. Sure enough I soon saw a couple and in the much cooler conditions they were much slower and settling frequently to soak up some warmth from the sun.



Orange-tip - Castle Hills 18.04.2017



The same one as above when the sun came back out

During the couple of hours that I spent wandering around the footpaths across this site, Orange-tips were again the most numerous species seen with easily a couple of dozen scattered around the site.



Orange-tip - Castle Hills 18.04.2017



Orange-tip - Castle Hills 18.04.2017



Orange-tips - Castle Hills 18.04.2017



Orange-tip - Castle Hills 18.04.2017

At least four females were also seen...



Orange-tip female - Castle Hills 18.04.2017



Orange-tip female – Castle Hills 18.04.2017



Orange-tip female – This one was quite small with slightly deformed right wings

At one point I also spotted a mating pair down in the grass...



Orange-tip pair – Castle Hills 18.04.2017

More Green-veined Whites had emerged since my last visit with maybe a dozen seen today...



Green-veined White male - Castle Hills 18.04.2017



Green-veined White male - Castle Hills 18.04.2017

Speckled Woods were again present in good numbers along the more wooded sections of path...



Speckled Wood - Castle Hills 18.04.2017



Speckled Wood - Castle Hills 18.04.2017

...including this male that almost looks to be like a darker summer brood example.



Speckled Wood - Castle Hills 18.04.2017

The three common Vanessids were still about with examples of Peacock(4), Comma(2) and Small Tortoiseshell(2) all seen during the afternoon, although all are looking past their best now,



Peacock - Castle Hills 18.04.2017



Peacock - Castle Hills 18.04.2017



Comma - Castle Hills 18.04.2017



Comma - Castle Hills 18.04.2017



Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills 18.04.2017

Curiously, No Holly Blues seen today despite there being a couple of usually reliable spots here, nor Small or Large Whites. Perhaps the cool breeze was keeping them tucked up. Nevertheless, a better than expected afternoon given the original forecast for the day and the persistent cool (cold even) breeze.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 18-Apr-17 08:23 PM GMT

Lovely selection of Orange Tips, Neil. Your damp meadow seems to have lots of cuckoo flower to tempt them down – it's not common round here. I particularly like the shot with two on the same flower head. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-17 11:03 PM GMT

Stunning shots there Neil 😊 I especially like the first female OT with those crescent moon markings – that's lush that is 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 18-Apr-17 11:28 PM GMT

Good things come to he who has to wait, Neil.
First rate set of images too. Two male OT's on one flower head, that's a new one!.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 18-Apr-17 11:42 PM GMT

Brilliant set of Orange-tip photos, Neil 😊

Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 19-Apr-17 08:19 PM GMT

Thank you Dave, Wurzel, Trevor and Mike for your comments, very much appreciated as always 😊

Wednesday 19th April – Snitterfield Bushes

Another cold night but at least we were spared the hard frost that some other areas woke up to this morning with the overnight temperature here staying just above 0 degrees...just!

The cool breeze of the previous few days had dropped this morning and as the sun began to feel like it had a bit of warmth to it we decided to have a drive down to Snitterfield Bushes which is about 30 minutes away, a couple of miles outside of Stratford-upon-Avon. This is a Warwickshire Wildlife Trust reserve and SSSI which has good paths which Jane can manage with her limited mobility. There is usually a good display of wild primroses there at this time of year which Jane was keen to see.

We arrived just after 10.30 and began to take a slow wander around the paths on what had turned into a very pleasant morning with plenty of sun and some thin high level cloud. We soon found plenty of primroses along the sides of the paths and under the trees as well a some good drifts of bluebells

which looked to be still early in their season and not yet fully out.



Snitterfield Bushes Warwickshire



Snitterfield Bushes Warwickshire

As it warmed up we began to see male Orange-tips patrolling the paths on the lookout for females. We also saw a number of 'whites' and as we got our eye in, we could see that they were mostly female Orange-tips with a few Green-veined Whites also flying. In fact it soon became apparent that male and female Orange-tips were flying in roughly equal numbers.



Orange-tip – Snitterfield Bushes 19.04.2017



Orange-tip – Snitterfield Bushes 19.04.2017



Orange-tip – Snitterfield Bushes 19.04.2017



Orange-tip – Snitterfield Bushes 19.04.2017



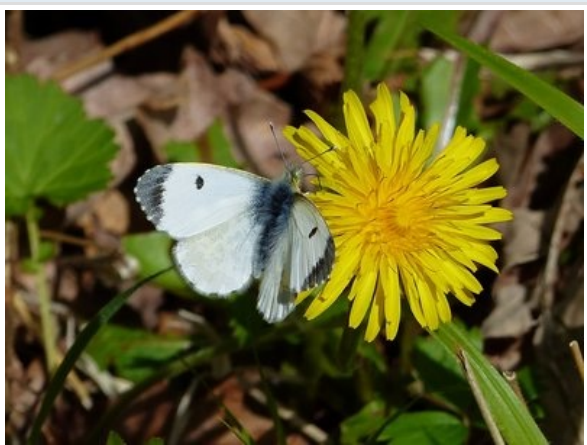
Orange-tip female – Snitterfield Bushes 19.04.2017



Orange-tip female – Snitterfield Bushes 19.04.2017



Orange-tip female – Snitterfield Bushes 19.04.2017



Orange-tip female – Snitterfield Bushes 19.04.2017

On a few occasions we saw a male OT pursue a female, upon which she would usually drop to earth and raise her abdomen in the rejection display showing that she was already mated.



Failed courtship attempt...

As well as the Orange-tips and Green-veined Whites we also saw a few Speckled Woods and a single Peacock that had seen better days.



Green-veined White – Snitterfield Bushes 19.04.2017



Peacock – Snitterfield Bushes 19.04.2017



Speckled Wood – Snitterfield Bushes 19.04.2017

By early afternoon some heavier cloud had built up and so we called it a day and headed home after what turned out to be a very pleasant morning.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 19-Apr-17 08:55 PM GMT

Great Orange Tip images again, and lovely fresh specimens too. They seem to be having one of their better years.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 19-Apr-17 09:03 PM GMT

Is it possible to overdose on Orange-tips? I do hope not, I can't imagine ever getting bored with them 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 19-Apr-17 09:31 PM GMT

You've certainly made up for lost time there, Neil. An enviable array of spring species, of which I think the array of male and female Orange Tips are the most impressive and evocative.

Lots more to come, I'm sure. This time of year is possibly the best of all!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 20-Apr-17 06:30 AM GMT

Some great shots of Orange Tip's lately Neil – love the one of the 2 males together – very unusual 🍷

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 20-Apr-17 09:12 PM GMT

Fantastic shots of the Orange Tips Neil, can't pick one I like best they're all great. Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-17 07:14 PM GMT

Another set of cracking shots Neil, especially the OT's – you've really made the most of the opportunities with them. The second shot shows the markings to beautiful effect 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 21-Apr-17 07:29 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor, the Orange-tips do seem to be having a pretty good year 😊

Hi Bugboy, don't worry, it is absolutely impossible to overdose on Orange-tips 😊

Hi David, not really lost time from my perspective though, I just need to remember that my season normally starts a couple of weeks behind the south-east and to learn to be patient.

Thanks Pauline, I was watching those two take turns circling around to that Cuckoo Flower and just managed the one shot as they both arrived together.

Cheers Goldie, they are all favourites in their own ways but the one I like best is probably the one with the Primrose, just sums the morning up nicely - Primroses and Orange-tips 😊

Friday 21st April

A bit of a catch up post for the past couple of days in the garden.

Later on the Wednesday (19th) afternoon the clouds had built up into a thick grey blanket and I was pottering about in the garden when I spotted a Holly Blue go to ground. Sneaking up with my camera I found him settled on a dock leaf where he appeared to be taking moisture from the surface of the leaf. He opened his wings slightly - just enough to confirm he was a male - but then took off again and disappeared next door.



Holly Blue - Coverdale 19.04.2017



Holly Blue - Coverdale 19.04.2017

After a cloudy and fairly mild night, Thursday morning dawned with some intermittent rain showers and that set the scene for the rest of the day. With a few jobs to be done around the house I decided to stay home and get on with it apart from a brief spell in the garden in the early afternoon when the sun popped out for about 10 minutes.

This was just long enough for a couple of Speckled Woods to come out, closely followed by a female Orange-tip that swooped down and basked for a few minutes before warming up enough to carry on her wanderings. It never ceases to amaze me how quickly butterflies will respond to the briefest sunny spells at this time of year, I suppose the spring species have had to evolve to make the most of our usually unsettled spring weather.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 19.04.2017



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 19.04.2017



Orange-tip female - Coverdale 19.04.2017

With the run of clear, cold frosty nights last weekend and earlier this week, I had not run the moth trap for a few nights but with the cloudy and milder conditions on Wednesday and Thursday nights I lit up and had a few nice moths come to it.



Waved Umber - love the way these look like a slice of bark.



Angle Shades - Coverdale 19.04.2017



Currant Pug - Coverdale 20.04.2017



White-spotted Pug - Coverdale 20.04.2017

The weekend is not looking too bad but I don't like the look of next weeks forecast when it appears we will be getting another cold spell.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-17 07:40 PM GMT

Very envious of your Holly Blue Neil 🍷 And I really like the Currant Pug for some reason, there's something about the markings 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 21-Apr-17 08:32 PM GMT

Sometimes, Neil, cloudy weather plays into your hands, and Holly Blue is one species that becomes abnormally docile in such conditions.

It's great that you have them in your garden. This is a species I need to work hard at to observe although this spring, they seem to be everywhere and must surely be at the peak of their cycle vis-à-vis their known parasitic predator.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 23-Apr-17 11:05 AM GMT

Thanks David, Holly Blues seem to be doing better this year around here than last year so far. I have wondered before if their parasite/host cycle runs the same all over the county as I have seen reports in previous years from other areas which don't seem to be in sync with what I see around here.

Cheers Wurzel, I know what you mean about the Currant Pug, an attractive combination of colour and markings.

Saturday 22nd April.

A beautiful sunny day with hardly a cloud in site although there was a bit of a cool breeze blowing most of the time which kept temperatures around a maximum of 15 or 16 degrees or so. I would have been tempted out but I had some work done on the house last week and still have a skip on the drive that I wanted to make the most of and have a bit of a clear out. Like a lot of blokes, I have accumulated a vast amount of 'stuff' in my garage which I thought might be useful at some vague time in the future, but the truth of the matter is some of it has been there gathering dust for years without being touched.

Anyway, for this reason my day was mostly spent clearing out a lot of this miscellaneous junk, but in my usual fashion I did take a few breaks in the garden.

As usual, the Speckled Woods were flying first, closely followed by Holly Blues, Orange-tips and GV whites. At one point I saw 2 male Specklies spiralling around the far end of the garden and at the same time another 2 males doing the same nearer the house which meant that there were at least 4 males contesting their favourite spots.



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 22.04.2017

For most of the day the butterflies were active in the sun with only the Speckled Woods settling regularly and then with their wings tightly closed and angled to the sun so that both sides were shaded. Later in the afternoon, they started to slow down and as the sun started to dip lower they would start basking to make the most of the reducing warmth.

The Orange-tips, GV whites and Holly Blues were actively mobile and I saw a regular procession of these species through the garden during the day. I have mentioned before that I suspect that I am actually seeing the same few individuals repeatedly coming around again on circuits, a fact that is supported by the two photos below, taken of the same individual male on two separate visits to the garden half an hour apart.



Orange-tip male - Coverdale 22.04.2017



The same individual as above taken later.

The same was seen with this slightly bedraggled female Holly Blue, again two photos taken about half an hour apart as she returned again to the garden.



Holly Blue female...note the damaged RH forewing



The same female as above, the damaged RH forewing can be seen

During a few 'coffee breaks' through the afternoon and counting only the butterflies I am sure are different individuals, I reckon I saw at least 5 Speckled Wood (4 males and 1 female), 3 Orange-tips (2 male, 1 female), 2 Green-veined Whites (both males) and 4 Holly Blues (2 females, 2 males).



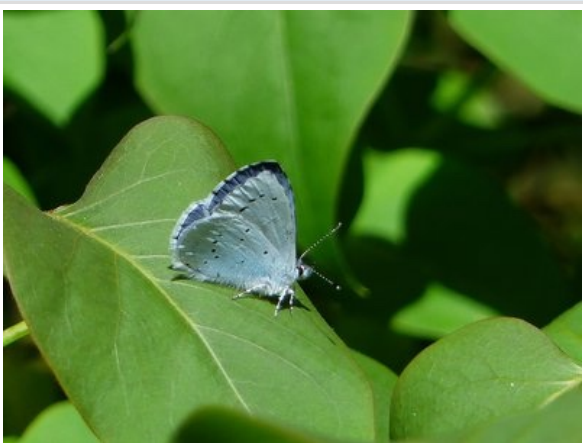
Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 22.04.2017



Speckled Wood female trying to be unobtrusive



Holly Blue male...quite pleased with this shot



Holly Blue male – you can just make out by the black markings on his LH forewing that he is a different one to the one above.

With a lot more cloud building up today (Sunday) and feeling cooler I will be spending it at home again building up a few more brownie points to spend later.

Small Coppers and Green Hairstreaks are out in Warwickshire but it is still early days for these and I haven't seen any Grizzled or Dingy Skippers reported here yet so it will probably be another week or so before I venture out looking for any of these.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 23-Apr-17 07:12 PM GMT

I'd be happy with the Holly Blue shot too Neil 😊🍷 You're not that far behind me in Wiltshire Neil, Dinghies and Grizzlies have only been out a week or so and they're only just starting 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 24-Apr-17 08:14 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, it look like the further cold snap this week may hold things back a bit...just as I see the first PBFs have been reported from the Wyre Forest. Oh well! I am stuck in work all week anyway.

Sunday 23rd April

As mentioned in my last post I spent most of Sunday doing stuff around the house (otherwise known as earning brownie points for later in the season 😊). As it happened the early cloud gradually thinned out during the day to produce some good sunny spells later in the afternoon, although it was somewhat cooler than Saturday.

The Speckled Woods and Holly Blues were soon flying in the garden again but it was some time before the first Orange-tip showed up, not until the afternoon sun had warmed things up a bit more.

These were the only three species that I saw today, no other 'whites' were flying and given the amount of cloud cover they were all settling regularly, including the Holly Blues although they stubbornly refused to open their wings more than half way.



Holly Blue female – Coverdale 23.04.2017



The female HB with the damaged wing seen on Saturday was back again...



Holly Blue male - Coverdale 23.04.2017



Holly Blue male - Coverdale 23.04.2017

Speckled Woods are still emerging with new individuals seen...



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 23.04.2017



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 23.04.2017

Later in the afternoon, one particular Orange-tip was passing through when a large cloud came over and he settled on a white (Spanish) bluebell which made for a nice looking pose,



Orange-tip – Coverdale 23.04.2017

As the sun briefly came out he opened his wings before moving off...



Orange-tip – Coverdale 23.04.2017

...but only reached the other end of the garden before it went behind another lump of cloud and he came down again, this time on a dandelion seed head where he stayed for a good half an hour before the sun came out long enough to warm him up enough to take to the air again.



Orange-tip - Coverdale 23.04.2017



Orange-tip - Coverdale 23.04.2017



Orange-tip - Coverdale 23.04.2017

By this time it was gone 5.00pm and although the cloud thinned again it started to go quite chilly as the shadows lengthened across the garden.

It looks like we have some more frosty nights ahead of us this week, finger crossed that this cold snap doesn't last too long.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 24-Apr-17 08:56 PM GMT

Thanks for the pictures Neil, I've not seen an Orange-tip for a few days, I'm getting withdrawal symptoms 😊😁

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 26-Apr-17 08:51 PM GMT

Some nice Holly Blues, there, Neil (speaking as a connoisseur... 😊), and the Orange Tips and Specklies. Looking forward to your expedition to Wyre Forest for PBF too. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 27-Apr-17 10:54 AM GMT

Neil, your so lucky with your garden seeing all those Butterflies, I've not seen one in my Garden this year and that's really worrying for the more common species a round here, usually my garden see's STS, Peacocks, Whites, etc this time of year, I'm just hoping it's because the weather has been cooler than usual and not the fact they've been hit badly . Fingers crossed we'll see some in May but even when I've spotted some at HLB there's only been one or two seen, the same at other places I've been to. Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 27-Apr-17 12:02 PM GMT

Lush photos Neil, especially of the one on the dandelion clock 🍷🍷 I definite 'I wish I'd taken that' 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 27-Apr-17 10:15 PM GMT

That female Holly Blue you've posted from 23rd April is just about perfect, Neil. You've got the ideal angle to catch it right with the way the scales reflect the light.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 28-Apr-17 08:24 PM GMT

Thanks Bugboy, Dave, Goldie, Wurzel and David for all your comments 😊

I have been fortunate with the Orange-tips, Holly blues and the Specklies in the garden and the cooler and cloudier weather last weekend slowed them down for me to get some photos.

Since then the cold spell this week which brought some frosty mornings has slowed things down again and I haven't seen anything else. This coming bank holiday weekend is looking like it could go either way with milder temperatures forecast but also a lot of cloud and some rain expected so I have not made any plans...will wait and see what the weather ends up doing.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 30-Apr-17 10:43 PM GMT

Sunday 30th April

The last day of April and the month has just sort of fizzled out here under a dull grey overcast. Saturday was cool and gloomy but today started off with a bit of sun this morning before the clouds gradually built to leave another grey afternoon. It felt a bit warmer today and the usual Speckled Wood were soon flying in the garden this morning closely followed by a couple of male Holly Blues which the cloudy conditions tempted to settle and open their wings to soak up some warmth.



Holly Blue male - Coverdale 30.04.2017



Holly Blue male - Coverdale 30.04.2017



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 30.04.2017

With the cold and frosty nights last week, I didn't run the moth trap in the garden until it warmed up a bit on Friday night when I had 16 moths of 8 species including a couple of Red-green Carpets.



Red-green Carpet - Coverdale 30.04.2017

I also had a couple of Twenty Plume Moths. These delicate looking micros can be a pain to get a decent photo of so I was pleased with the shot below,



Twenty Plume Moth – Coverdale 30.04.2017

I wasn't going to run the trap again last night but changed my mind at the last minute and was glad I did when a Brindled Beauty turned up. I only had one of these last year and had been wondering if I would see this species this year.



Brindled Beauty – Coverdale 30.04.2017

Bank Holiday Monday tomorrow and heavy rain is forecast to be coming in overnight and into the morning so I will wait and see what it looks like before I decide what I am doing.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 01-May-17 08:42 PM GMT

The site seems to be ok at the moment so here goes with another post...fingers crossed.

Monday 1st May – Wyre Forest

Bank Holiday Monday and the weather was looking traditionally iffy. Jane had arranged to go to our daughter Sarah's for a 'girlie' day and I was off the leash...but where to go?

Looking at the various forecasts it didn't seem to matter which direction I headed in, they were all saying cloudy with showers and maybe some sunny spells, so in other words expect anything, anywhere.

In the end I decided to drive over to The Wyre Forest which is about an hour or so away from me. I had seen Pearl-bordered Fritillaries reported here about a week ago but that was before the cold snap last week and I was unsure if this would have knocked them back a bit. Working on the principle of 'if you don't look, you won't know' I set out under grey drizzly skies and arrived mid morning at the car park at the end of Dry Mill Lane.

During the morning I slowly meandered along by Dowles Brook and found a few roosting Orange-tips on some nice patches of Cuckoo Flower in the damp meadows here but it was getting on for midday before the first breaks in the cloud allowed the sun to peep through and I saw the first butterflies flying, mostly Orange-tips and a few Green-veined Whites.



Dowles Brook - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017



Damp meadow - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017



Orange-tip - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017



Orange-tip female - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017



Orange-tip female - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017



Green-veined White female - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017

As the sunny spells increased I saw more Orange-tips and GV Whites which were all well and good, but I can see these in my garden and I was hoping to see Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, so far without success. I was thinking about last weeks cold snap but also the fact that my previous visits here have usually been later in May so I was wondering if maybe I was a little early for them here given the recent weather.

I then wandered up to the old railway line which is another 'hotspot' for PBFs, and as a good patch of blue sky opened up I saw a PBF flitting along the bank here, then another, then another, so I had three in sight at the same time. I spent an hour or so at this spot and reckon I saw maybe half a dozen all told along a stretch of a few hundred yards.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017

With some thick clouds interrupting the sunny spells I managed to keep sight of a couple of individuals a couple of times as they settled which enabled me to get some nice underside shots and also be on hand when the sun came out again and they opened their wings to warm up before taking off.



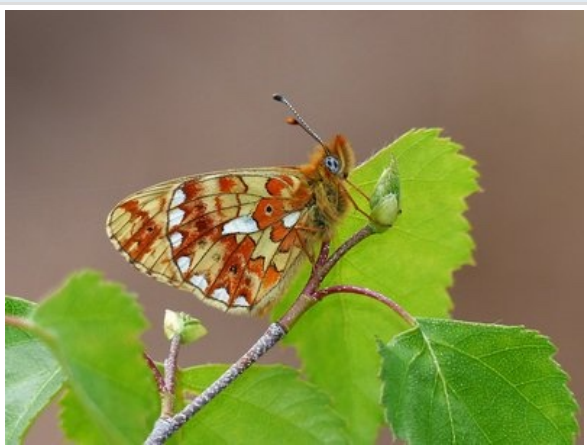
Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017



Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017

I then retraced my steps back to the meadows by Dowles Brook to see if maybe the sun had brought any PBFs out there but it was still just the Orange-tips and GV Whites. In one meadow I spotted a mating pair of Orange-tips and was taking a few photos when another male tried to hustle in.



Orange-tips - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017



Orange-tips - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017

By this time the cloud was increasing again so I decided to slowly wander back to the car and head for home. I took a different path back up to the old railway line and was having a last look in another clearing along here when I spotted an Adder basking on a fallen tree stump which made for a nice ending to the day.



Adder - Wyre Forest 01.05.2017

So then, one of those days when I really wasn't sure to start with if it was going to be worth going anywhere. Just three species of butterflies seen and none of them in great numbers but all in all a really enjoyable day spent in one of the best locations in the Midlands.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 01-May-17 09:23 PM GMT

Looks like a wonderful day out Neil, what more could you wish for on the first day of May 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 01-May-17 09:51 PM GMT

What a joyous array of images after such a gloomy, barren spell, Neil?

That damp field full of cuckoo flower looks absolutely lush for Orange Tips, and the fact you managed to find a coupled pair proves it!

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 01-May-17 10:50 PM GMT

Some fabulous shots from today, Neil. A very worthwhile day out. Love the PBF underside images.

Wish I was there !
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 02-May-17 06:00 AM GMT

A wonderful series of images Neil. It is hard to select a favourite but mine would be the closed wing PBF ... and the adder which I have so far failed to find. You really are spoiling us. Excellent field craft btw 😊😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 02-May-17 10:26 PM GMT

Every one of those PBF shots is one I wish I had taken, Neil. 😊👍 A mix of sun and cloud is ideal as long as your eye is good enough to follow the butterflies. It is interesting that all but one of them has the butterfly perching up on something – down at Bentley the other day, they were always on the ground or near it, even with wings closed. Lovely shots.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 03-May-17 07:28 PM GMT

Stunning photos of the Pearls, Neil 😊👍

Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 03-May-17 08:26 PM GMT

Lovely set of shots Neil – especially the Pearls – they're practically jumping out of the screen they're so vivid 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 03-May-17 09:02 PM GMT

Many thanks Bugboy, David, Trevor, Pauline, Dave and Wurzel...it certainly turned into a better day than anticipated 😊

Pauline wrote:

...Excellent field craft btw...

Cheers Pauline but I must admit my field craft consists of a lot of standing still and moving slowly, both things that I find easier as I get older 😊

millerd wrote:

... A mix of sun and cloud is ideal as long as your eye is good enough to follow the butterflies. It is interesting that all but one of them has the butterfly perching up on something – down at Bentley the other day, they were always on the ground or near it, even with wings closed. Lovely shots.

Dave

I did take a lot of photos of the Pearls lower down on the ground when they were more active in the sunny spells, but the angle was always 'off' or there was vegetation in the way. I was lucky with the two different individuals, that I kept in sight on separate occasions, when I saw them settle on birch saplings whilst the sun was covered by clouds for 10-15 minutes. With the second one, I was trying to shuffle into another position when my arm brushed the plant and disturbed the butterfly who flapped a few feet across to land on the dead bracken stem. I waited until he was settled and then I must admit I did a bit of 'gardening' to remove some intruding vegetation to get a better background for the photos.

Wednesday 3rd May

Back to work and with the dull cloudy conditions no further butterflies seen in the garden.

Even though there was a lot of cloud about on Monday, by the time the evening came it had melted away to leave a cold night. At least the wind had dropped a bit so I decided to run the moth trap in the garden. Just 6 moths of 6 species but that did include a nice Chocolate-tip...just a bit too late for Easter 😊



Chocolate-tip - Coverdale 01.05.2017

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 03-May-17 09:05 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Neil, I love the Pearls and the Orange Tips I just can't choose which I like best 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 04-May-17 06:01 AM GMT

There's a lot to be said for standing still and moving slowly Neil 😊 - makes it possible to observe so much more and avoids the trampling that can happen when folk persist in chasing after a butterfly. That's a great moth shot and one I would love to see 📷

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 04-May-17 08:31 AM GMT

I agree, those closed wing pbf pictures are excellent! I would love to find a meadow full of cuckoo flowers like that, and enjoy those orange tips, very soon, they will be gone.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 05-May-17 09:36 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

There's a lot to be said for standing still and moving slowly Neil 😊 - makes it possible to observe so much more and avoids the trampling that can happen when folk persist in chasing after a butterfly...

Indeed Pauline. I find that 'chasing' after butterflies to get a photo is usually counterproductive as it just spooks them more. If I put a butterfly up, I will usually move back a few paces and wait, often the butterfly will return or settle again within sight when I will then sneak up on it. If not, then it was not to be that time.

essexbuzzard wrote:

I agree, those closed wing pbf pictures are excellent! I would love to find a meadow full of cuckoo flowers like that, and enjoy those orange tips, very soon, they will be gone

Thanks Mark, That is the best patch of Cuckoo Flower I have seen this year. it is much scarcer around my immediate local patch.

Goldie M wrote:

Fantastic shots Neil, I love the Pearls and the Orange Tips I just can't choose which I like best 😊 Goldie 😊

Thanks Goldie...I must admit I was pleased with the Pearl photos as I don't get to see them so often 😊

Friday 5th May

Not much to report this week, the past couple of days have been quite cold with a chilly wind from the north-east but this afternoon brightened up a bit

although it was still windy.

Whilst pottering in the garden I saw two different Speckled Wood females fluttering low down trying to keep out of the wind and a single faded male valiantly holding his territory in one corner,



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 05.05.2017

A couple of Holly Blues passed through, one of each sex, and the male paused briefly on a forget-me-not. The large patch I had of this flower has largely been overgrown now by grasses and other 'stuff' and is a plant I want to increase again in the garden as I find it very good for attracting both Holly blues and Orange-tips to linger a while.



Holly Blue male – Coverdale 05.05.2017

I was also pleased to find a Large Red Damselfly. I usually see plenty of these around and about at this time of year but this was a first in the garden.



Coverdale 05.05.2017 – Coverdale 05.05.2017

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 05-May-17 11:01 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, there's certainly a lot of Holly Blues around this year , I never get tired of seeing them in people's post 😊
Today I saw three chasing round a tree, no shots, one of them just escaped being eaten by a Robin. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 09-May-17 04:20 PM GMT

Hi Goldie,

Yes, lots of Holly Blues here too although I haven't seen much for a few days now...Saturday was awful here, Sunday was much better but I was at my granddaughter's first birthday party so didn't manage to get out...then work again.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 09-May-17 08:56 PM GMT

Tuesday 9th May

Last weekend was really quiet for me on the butterfly front. Saturday was really dull and drizzly and although Sunday was much better, we went to my daughters for my granddaughters 1st birthday party...but not before I had spotted a couple of speckled Wood in the garden in the morning. One of these was a female that was fluttering about amongst the long grass and looked to be stopping to lay eggs. I grabbed my camera and tried to take a few shots but this was difficult due to the way she was lurking in the shade under the vegetation. In the end I managed a couple of poor shots of her in the act of laying,



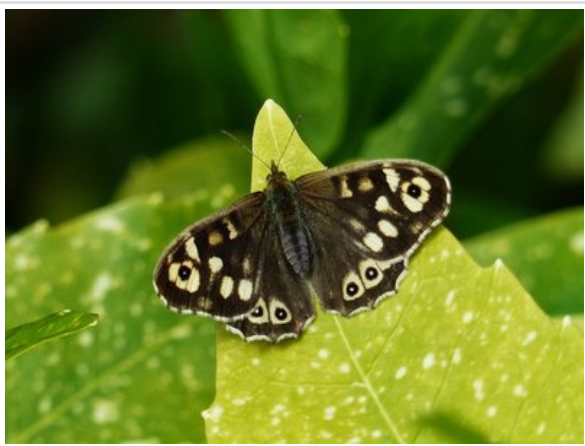
Speckled Wood female egg laying – Coverdale 07.05.2017

I was then told to 'stop messing about and get a move on' to head to our daughters 😊. Back home later on I had a look to see if I could locate the egg and managed to find it. Despite observing female Speckled Woods laying eggs in the garden a number of times in the past, this was the first time I had managed to relocate an egg afterwards and actually take a (poor) photo of it.



Speckled Wood egg - Coverdale 07.05.2017

Like most parts of the country it seems, we have been subjected to a cold wind from the north/north-east over the past couple of days and temperatures have barely struggled out of single figures. The wind dropped today and whilst it was still cold under the cloud, when the sun came out later in the afternoon it felt pleasantly warm and a few Holly Blues and Green-veined Whites passed through the garden. Speckled Woods are still continuing to emerge with these later spring ones being those that passed the winter as caterpillars whereas the earlier emerging ones are from overwintering pupae. This is the only British species of butterfly that can do this and with the offspring of these all developing at different rates gives rise to an extended emergence later in the year which often lasts until October or even early November in good years.



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 09.05.2017



Speckled Wood male - Coverdale 09.05.2017

Ironically, whilst there has been a lot of cloud about during the day recently, it has often melted away at night which along with the cold wind has meant that I haven't bothered running the trap much and on the couple of occasions that have lit up the numbers have been low. Nevertheless, I am now up to 44 species - 29 macros and 15 micros,



Brimstone Moth...I get loads of these but who can resist that colour.



Flame Carpet - Coverdale 08.05.2017



Seraphim - Coverdale 08.05.2017

Lots more species on the wing now in Warwickshire...Small Copper, Green Hairstreak, Dingies, Grizzlies, Small Blue, Common Blue, Small Heath have all been reported. Got some catching up to do...

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 09-May-17 10:18 PM GMT

Beautiful Brimstone moth, Neil. I hope the weather is better for you this coming weekend. A bit of rain followed by warm sunshine would be welcome for all of us!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 11-May-17 10:28 PM GMT

Interesting shot of the Speckle egg-laying Neil 😊 At least you get a 'stop messing about...' all I get normally is a look I lot like Paddington's Hard Stare 😊
Cracking Brimstone moth 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 12-May-17 12:44 PM GMT

That's a fantastic shot Neil of the Speckie laying an egg, it looks even more spectacular in all the Greenery Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 12-May-17 07:46 PM GMT

Thanks David, we are having a bit of rain as I type this and a mix of cloud and sunny spells (with the odd shower) are forecast here for the weekend. But in the meantime, I managed a mid-week session 😊

Cheers Wurzel, oh I know that 'hard stare' as well but that is usually reserved for when I have really pushed my luck 😊

Thanks Goldie, she was in some quite deep shade low down in the grass and given the circumstances that shot came out better than expected.

Wednesday 10th May

With a whole day of blue skies and sun forecast for Wednesday I decided to cash in some brownie points and go straight from work to Ryton Wood Meadows. This Warwickshire BC reserve is only a short drive from where I now work but under normal circumstances I usually go straight home when I finish and my 30 minute lunch break is just not long enough for it to be worthwhile going then.

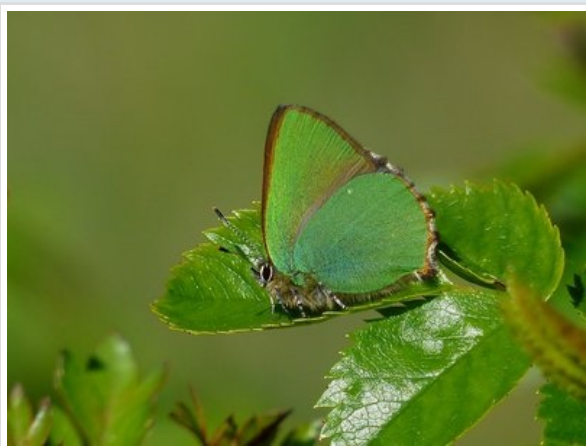
The forecast proved to be bang on for once and on arriving and walking through the wood to the meadows I soon saw Green-veined Whites, Orange-tips and Holly Blues, all of which were highly mobile in the warm sun. There are some nice displays of bluebells here but I always feel that photos of these fail to capture the full impact of the scene.



Bluebells- Ryton Wood 10.05.2017

It was also noticeable how dry the paths in the wood are with none of the wet muddy patches that are usually there at this time of year.

Anyway, my main target for my visit was Green Hairstreak and making my way to the usual 'hotspot' I spotted a couple of males chasing each other around the higher reaches of a hawthorn. I soon saw plenty more, mostly males scrapping with each other in twos and threes, but also a number of females who tended to be flying lower down a little further away from the hedge line and exploring the clumps of birds-foot-trefoil which is the larval food plant at this site.



Green Hairstreak - Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017

There were also a number of Dingy Skippers along this spot rapidly chasing each other about, but as the time approached 5.30pm they started to slow down and spend more time replenishing their energy reserves. At one point I counted five on one patch of bugle.



Dingy Skipper – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017



Dingy Skippers – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017



Dingy Skipper – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017

Looking along the hedgerow I spotted a Dingy Skipper at about head height on hawthorn blossom and then noticed that there was a Green Hairstreak also on the blossom. I have seen Dingy Skippers on Hawthorn blossom before but this is the first time I have managed to get a photo of these two species together like this.



Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017

Whilst I was watching one of the Dingy Skippers, he took off and chased after another butterfly with a more orange hue and after they separated I tracked it to where it settled where it proved to be my first Small Copper of the year. I managed one quick record shot before he was off again and unfortunately I failed to relocate him, maybe he thought he was too outnumbered by the Dingies in this spot and went to find his own territory elsewhere.



Small Copper – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017

I also had a look for Grizzled Skippers having missed them last year but without success today. It seems that this species has had a couple of bad years in Warwickshire with numbers being down at most sites in the county.

Before making my way back I stopped to check out a patch of bluebells and spotted another Green Hairstreak flitting about amongst them,



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017

Also on this same patch there was an Orange-tip and a couple of Peacocks were close by.



Orange-tip – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017



Peacock – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017

And finally a little further down the path I saw a Brimstone come to ground and managed to grab a shot before he was off again.



Brimstone – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017

A great couple of hours that I only decided to do the night before when I saw the forecast for the next day...really glad I did 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 12-May-17 09:56 PM GMT

Beautiful photos from Ryton, Neil, especially the Green Hairstreaks. I've noticed before that they have a partiality to bluebells in the woods here. Your shots are of some lovely fresh individuals. Amazing. 🍷 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 12-May-17 10:22 PM GMT

Ryton Wood looks like a wonderful place to spend a day 😊 Good shot of that egg laying Speckle earlier as well.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 12-May-17 10:42 PM GMT

Fantastic set of Greenstreaks Neil 😊 It looks like you're catching us up there 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 13-May-17 12:18 AM GMT

You've finally caught up with everyone, Neil. Lovely array of species and a real promise of what's to come in early summer.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 13-May-17 12:04 PM GMT

WoW! Neil, what a haul you got and fantastic shots as well, love the Dingy and GHS photo Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 14-May-17 06:41 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, Bugboy, Wurzel, David, and Goldie, your comments are very much appreciated as always 😊

Sunday 14th May – Morning

Yesterday (Saturday) was a mostly cool, cloudy and dull day around here (again) with a few showers and the occasional brief sunny spells were just not long enough to be of any use.

Today started off much better with a nice bright early morning and although the cloud slowly built up again it never became as thick as Saturday apart from one very brief shower mid-morning.

The usual suspects were soon flying in the garden, a couple of faded looking male Specklies and a couple of Holly Blues chasing each other about. I was eyeing up my buckthorns which are beginning to get a bit tall now when a slightly ragged around the edges female Brimstone started fluttering around

them. At that moment a cloud came covered the sun and she dropped down and settled right in front of me so I grabbed the camera which was close by – just in case as usual.

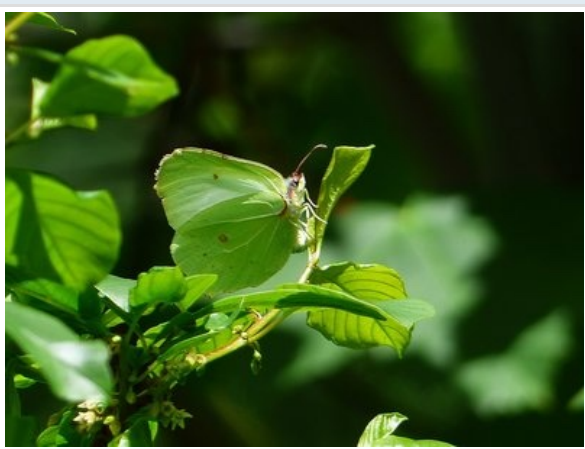


Brimstone female - Coverdale 14.05.2017

When the sun came out she made a bee-line for my bowles mauve plant to top up her energy and then returned to the buckthorns, where she spent some time going in and out of the shrubs and testing the leaves and stems before laying on some of them. Because of all the intervening foliage, it was difficult to get any photos of her activities but I will be checking out where she went to see if I can find any eggs.



Brimstone female - Coverdale 14.05.2017



Brimstone female - Coverdale 14.05.2017

With it looking like a decent afternoon was on the cards I asked Jane if she fancied a drive down to Bishops Hill to look for Small Blues.

To be continued when I have sorted though the photos from this afternoon...

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterfysaurus rex, 14-May-17 08:57 PM GMT

Your first photo of the female Brimstone looks like she's resting in a leaf shaped hammock. 😊 Lots of high quality images as usual Neil.

BW's

James

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 14-May-17 10:20 PM GMT

I see what Rex sees 😊😊

Also love the way the second shot has caught that contrast on the top of the fore wing, it goes from lemony-lime to powder white 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 14-May-17 10:28 PM GMT

A very nice Brimstone, Neil. 😊 It's interesting the way the forewings look as if they have been gently nibbled, rather than torn or damaged by a bird strike. Brimstones must have very tough wings as they don't seem to suffer the damage other butterflies do, especially when you remember they live as long or longer than any other UK species.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 14-May-17 11:05 PM GMT

Aaah, an elderly Brimstone! They seem to have gone from my area, but it's always nice to see evidence of them elsewhere as they eke out the last of their pension. 😊

Seems like only yesterday when they were the commonest species. We truly **are** on the cusp of summer.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 15-May-17 10:27 AM GMT

Lovely Brimstones Neil, 🇬🇧 I saw some yesterday at GB but they were elusive so didn't manage any shots. Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 15-May-17 07:51 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments James, Wurzel, Dave, David and Goldie 😊

I am not surprised she was looking a bit worn around the edges watching her flutter about in the depths of the shrubs. This probably explains why her wings look more worn rather than torn, from rubbing against the twigs and branches.

Sunday 14th May-Afternoon.

Sunday afternoon saw Jane and myself doing the 45 minute drive down the M40 to Bishops Hill, hopefully to see Small Blues, this being one of the sites where Jane can usually get some good views of this species from the paths which she has to stick to due to her limited mobility.

Sure enough, on walking up the short lane to the first part of the site we immediately spotted 3 or 4 Small Blues chasing each other about above the long grass just inside the entrance. We spent a leisurely couple of hours here wandering backwards and forwards along the paths on the flatter parts of the site and I also had a look further up the hill and saw easily in excess of 25 Small Blues, mostly males and many looking nice and fresh which indicated that they have not been out long here. It seemed like more but I was undoubtedly seeing many of the same ones as we wandered back and forth.



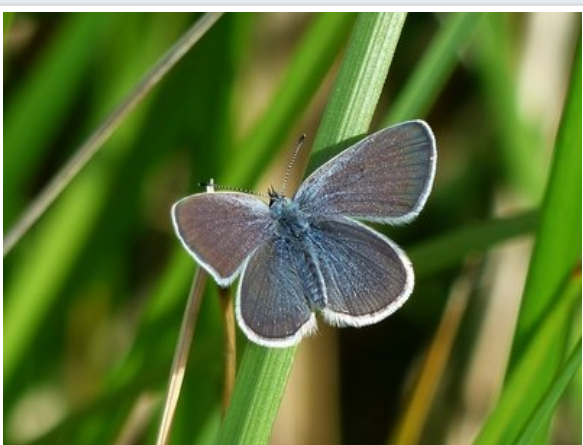
Small Blue - Bishops Hill 14.05.2017



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 14.05.2017



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 14.05.2017



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 14.05.2017



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 14.05.2017



Small Blue - Bishops Hill 14.05.2017

As well as the Small Blues, there were a good dozen or more Common Blues, mostly fresh looking males who were actively chasing each other, and the Small Blues, around in the warm afternoon sun. These were far less amenable today than their smaller relatives to having their photos taken and would insist on settling either with their wings closed or at most part open, whether the sun was out or hidden by cloud.



Common Blue - Bishops Hill 14.05.2017

During one of the times when the sun disappeared behind a cloud for 10 minutes or so I found a Common Blue settled about 5 feet up on some hawthorn blossom, something I had not seen before.



Common Blue - Bishops Hill 14.05.2017

I also spotted a couple of females and found a mating pair swaying about in the breeze.



Common Blue - Bishops Hill 14.05.2017



Common Blues - Bishops Hill 14.05.2017

As well as our main target of the Small Blues, I was also keen to look for Dingy and Grizzled Skippers here. I have seen good numbers of Dingy Skippers at this site in previous years but numbers of these were well down today with just a handful seen of which I only managed a few ropey record shots. There were also a few Burnet Companion Moths doing their best Dingy Skipper impersonations to try and confuse us. Although I have seen Grizzled Skippers here in the past, I failed to find any here last year, so I was pleased to find one zipping about, followed a little later by a second individual in a different part of the site.



Grizzled Skipper - Bishops Hill 14.05.2017



Grizzled Skipper - Bishops Hill 14.05.2017

Other butterflies seen on a very pleasant afternoon were a couple each of Brimstone and Orange-tip plus a single Speckled Wood.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 15-May-17 08:23 PM GMT

The sheen on the second Small Blue image is amazing! Great pics as always Neil 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 15-May-17 09:22 PM GMT

Good to see the Small Blues out up there, Neil – and splendid photos too. I may have to squeeze in a trip sometime soon! 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 15-May-17 10:15 PM GMT

Some beautiful, fresh specimens there, Neil, particularly the Small Blues. You've captured that area of iridescent sheen superbly in a few of those individuals.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 15-May-17 10:45 PM GMT

As Bugboy and David said Neil you've really caught the sheen on the Small Blue superbly, an stonker of a shot 😊📷 You seem to have almost overtaken me now as I only saw my first Common Blue yesterday and you've found not only a female but a mating pair as well - they don't hang about round your way 😊😁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 16-May-17 08:36 PM GMT

Honestly Neil, I turn my back for a minute (well, a few days) 😊 and you're posting more fabulous images. 😊 I love those Green Hairstreaks from the 10th, especially the first one 📷, the Brimstones are great too, as is that wonderful shot of the Small Blue that others have commented on. I have never been able to capture the sheen like that on a SB 📷

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 21-May-17 10:42 AM GMT

Apologies for the delayed response but thank you all for the great comments. That particular Small Blue with the 'sheen' looked like he had only just emerged earlier that day 😊

Some recent garden moths

Last week was pretty grotty weatherwise with heavy cloud and frequent rain, some of it quite heavy, and a generally cool feel. At least the cloudy nights gave some good conditions for putting the moth trap out in the garden, particularly the night of Tuesday 16th when overnight temperatures didn't drop below 15c here. Consequently I saw some nice moths come to the trap although numbers dropped again when the nights turned clear and cold again during the second half of the week.



Iron Prominent - Coverdale 16.05.2017

I was chuffed to get my first Hawk Moth of the year.



Poplar Hawk - Coverdale 18.05.2017



Seraphim - Coverdale 16.05.2017



Spruce Carpet - Coverdale 16.05.2017

I have mentioned before in my diary how variable some of these moths can be which has given me a new appreciation of variation within species and leads to some time spent on confirming IDs. A good example is the darker looking May Highflyer below which had me scratching my head a bit at first.



May Highflyer - Coverdale 16.05.2017

Most of the ones I see of this species look more like this although no two are exactly the same,



May Highflyer – Coverdale 16.05.2017

Micro species coming to the trap are on the increase now, many of which I have been spending some time trying to ID. A couple of the more colourful and therefore easier ones are shown below. It is a pity these are not larger as they would be truly stunning insects if they were easier to see.



Ancylis badiana – Coverdale 15.05.2017



Pseudargyrotoza conwagana – 16.05.2017

All the recent rain has set things growing like crazy in my garden so I need to spend a bit of time on it now. Oh well!, I suppose it needed it.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 22-May-17 08:11 PM GMT

Sunday 21st May.

Well, there is only so much time you can spend in the garden.

Sunday afternoon was rather cloudy but with the air temperature around 17 degrees I decided to pop out for a look around my local spot at Castle Hills near Solihull. Having seen Common Blues at Bishops Hill last weekend I was keen to see if they were out around here yet although going by previous years they tend to appear at my local spots a week or two later than at Bishops Hill which is a warmer limestone site. On top of that we have just had a cool and wet week which I figured might have put the brakes on their emergence a bit.

I was also keen to look for Small Coppers and Small Heath here, two species that have had a couple of bad years locally.

Arriving at the site and wandering down the usual path I almost immediately spotted a small orangy-brown butterfly which proved to be a Small Heath, closely followed by a couple more in the same patch of long grass. I counted seven individuals in this spot but failed to find any more in the other spots where I can usually find them. Hopefully, another visit in a week or so will turn up a few more.



Small Heath - Castle Hills 21.05.2017



Small Heath - Castle Hills 21.05.2017

Carrying on along the paths I came across a tired looking Peacock and a Small Tortoiseshell that wasn't looking too bad considering how long it has been since it would have first emerged last summer.



Peacock - Castle Hills 21.05.2017



Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 21.05.2017

A few Orange-tips were still flying, mostly looking past their best now, along with half a dozen Green-veined Whites in varying condition.

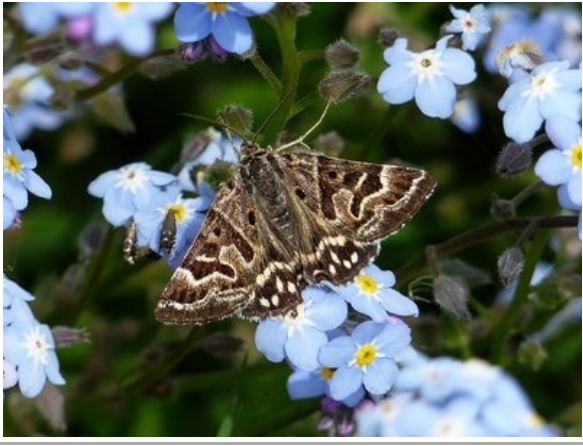


*Orange-tip with Longhorn Moth, probably *Adela reaumurella**



Green-veined White - Castle Hills 21.05.2017

As well as the butterflies I also saw a number of day flying moths including a single Cinnabar and a few each of Mother Shipton, Burnet Companion and Silver-ground Carpet. The latter species is not really a day flyer but is easily disturbed by day when it will often be seen in areas of long grass. There were also plenty of Micro Moths of various species, some of which I unintentionally included in my photos.



Mother Shipton and a couple of unidentified micros



Burnet Companion - Castle Hills 21.05.2017



Silver-ground Carpet - Castle Hills 21.05.2017



Cinnabar – Castle Hills 21.05.2017



A nice little *Micro*, possibly *Aethes smeathmanniana*

After having a good wander about I was heading back towards the car when I spotted a Small Copper basking on the ground in front of me, a nice fresh out of the box female. This was the butterfly of the day for me as I have never managed to find a first brood Small Copper at this site and in fact I only managed to find a couple of local examples all season last year.



Small Copper – Castle Hills 21.05.2017

I watched her for a while as she made her way along the edge of the path, pausing frequently to bask in the cloudy but warm conditions.



Small Copper – Castle Hills 21.05.2017

In the end I failed to find any Common Blues here this time but like I said at the beginning I thought it might be a long shot...maybe next weekend.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 22-May-17 09:23 PM GMT

That's a lovely Small Copper, Neil. 😊 And your Small Tortoiseshell is an ab. (*ichnusoides?*), lacking the two small black spots on the forewing. I saw one once as a child about 50 years ago, but not since: they look really odd! Nice find... 😊👍

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 22-May-17 10:00 PM GMT

I agree with Dave, cracking Small Tort ab Neil 🍷 That Copper is lovely and vivid too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 22-May-17 10:09 PM GMT

As others have commented, Neil, that last Small Copper is beautiful.

In addition, to get any Small Tortoiseshell image at this time of year is an achievement, but an unusual aberrant such as that one above is highly noteworthy.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 23-May-17 08:42 PM GMT

Thanks Dave for spotting the lack of spots on that Small Tortoiseshell 😊 ...I thought that something looked a little 'off' with it at the time but I was so chuffed with the Small Copper that I must admit I didn't pay it much attention afterwards 😊

Wurzel and David, thanks too for your comments 😊

Tuesday 23rd May.

A cracking couple of days...or they would have been if I didn't have to spend them indoors at work. At least the milder nights have brought some new moths out in the garden although there has been a bit of a breeze picking up at times. Curiously, apart from a couple of Shuttle-shaped Darts and Heart & Darts, the moths coming to the trap over the past few nights have all been Geometers and micros although this has meant a good variety of colour.



Common Marbled Carpet – one of many colour forms of this species.



Yellow-barred Brindle – I know it looks green but this is a fresh one and they fade to a more yellowish colour.



Flame Carpet.



Green Carpet.



May Highflyer – another colour form of this variable species. See also the two in my previous post.



Brimstone – I never get tired of that colour

I was pleased with the photo below of a Seraphim that shows the curious folds on the hindwings that males of this species have and which almost look like an extra pair of vestigial wings. I got this shot by gently blowing on the moth from behind...more often than not this makes the moth take off but occasionally they stay put.



Seraphim – showing folds in hind wings.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 24-May-17 01:05 PM GMT

Great Tortoiseshell ab. looks like *Aglais ichnusa* from Corsica and Sardinia. 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 28-May-17 09:30 PM GMT

Hi Buggy, I googled *Aglais ichnusa* as I was previously unaware of this species. It seems there is some debate whether it is a species in its own right or a subspecies of *urticae*. Interesting stuff.

A few more recent Moths.

The warm(hot) sunny days continued last week and although the nights were clear, the temperatures remained up in the low to mid teens which meant that there were plenty of moths flying. This brought my garden tally so far this year up to 53 species of macros and 29 micros that I have managed to identify, with photos of a few more micros still to confirm.



Buff Ermine - Coverdale 23.05.2017



White Ermine - Coverdale 26.05.2017



Grey/Dark Dagger - Coverdale 26.05.2016



Cinnabar – more often seen by day, they also fly at night.



Knot Grass – Coverdale 26.05.2017



Maidens Blush – I love the name of this species



Poplar Hawk – been trying to get a shot that shows the hindwing red patches, this is the best I have managed so far.

Saturday 27th May

I suppose it had to happen...after a few glorious days while I was at work, Saturday arrives, on a bank holiday weekend no less, and the weather goes downhill. After some overnight rain, most of the day here was dull and overcast with some drizzle in the air on the afternoon. Before that happened however, there were a couple of brief sunny spells in the morning, just long enough for a couple of fresh looking Specklies to take to the air.



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 27.05.2017



Not sure whether this one is really fresh or it got a bit damp in the overnight rain.

The forecast for Sunday was looking a bit more promising and as I mentioned in my report from last weekend I was hoping to have another look for local Common Blues.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 28-May-17 09:37 PM GMT

I can see how the Maiden's Blush got its name, Neil – very apt. It's a beautifully marked species. 😊 Your Speckle does seem to have got itself wet in the rain as it looks otherwise quite fresh.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 29-May-17 11:03 AM GMT

Lovely Moth photos Neil, we saw a cinnabar Moth in the Dunes at Southport , it was too quick for shots 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 29-May-17 12:09 PM GMT

Neil Freeman wrote:

Hi Buggy, I googled *Aglias ichnusa* as I was previously unaware of this species. It seems there is some debate whether it is a species in its own right or a subspecies of *urticae*. Interesting stuff. Neil.

Yes in all my old books it's listed as a race or subspecies. That age-old question of when a form/race/subspecies is distinct enough to be classed as a species. In cases like these it can be rather subjective I think. I'm not sure if genetic studies have made the distinction any clearer.

You're doing well with the moths, I love the Maidens Blush

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 29-May-17 03:37 PM GMT

Cheers Dave, there seems to have been a flush of new fresh Specklies around here over the past few days 😊

Thanks Goldie, Cinnabar Moths can also have a habit of settling low down in the grass so getting a photo is still tricky even when you see where they settle.

Cheers Buggy, I often feel that nature is far more fluid than we sometimes give it credit for...all these sub-species, forms, variations and abs are not so easily pigeonholed as we would like them to be. It is our human condition that wants to clearly label everything into its assigned place but nature isn't quite so organised.

Sunday 28th May

Three O'clock on a Bank Holiday Monday afternoon and it is lashing down with rain here. Oh well!, it has given me chance to catch up on a few things, including keeping up to date with this post.

As I mentioned previously, I was keen to check out my local spot at Castle Hills near Solihull again this week in order to see if Common Blues were on the wing there yet, having failed to find any on my visit last weekend.

My son Chris had said he was popping in on Sunday so I hung on until he arrived and we both headed off to Castle Hills on what had turned into a pleasant afternoon with plenty of high thin cloud and some good spells of warm sun.

It wasn't long before we found some male Common Blues in the usual spots and over the next hour and a half or so we saw a dozen or more scattered about the site.



Common Blue - Castle Hills 28.05.2017



Common Blue - Castle Hills 28.05.2017



Common Blue - Castle Hills 28.05.2017

I was pleased to find a few more Small Heath there this week in a few other spots than where I found some last week.



Small Heath - Castle Hills 28.05.2017



Small Heath - Castle Hills 28.05.2017



Small Heath - Castle Hills 28.05.2017

We also spotted a couple of brighter orange little blurs that resolved themselves into a couple of sparring male Large Skippers, my first this year, and we saw another half a dozen or so during our wandering around, all fresh males.



Large Skipper - Castle Hills 28.05.2017



Large Skipper - Castle Hills 28.05.2017

A male Small Copper that looked like he had been around for a while was vigorously defending his spot in one corner which I was pleased to see, as I mentioned last week, I hadn't found a first brood Small Copper at this spot until I saw the nice female here last week.



Small Copper – Castle Hills 28.05.2017

Other butterflies seen were Half a dozen or so fresh looking Speckled Wood, a few Green-veined Whites and a surprisingly fresh looking male Orange-tip that slowly flew past us on his patrol.

Fingers crossed now for the weather for the rest of the week, Jane and myself are heading down to Cornwall tomorrow morning for a few days in a B&B on the Lizard 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 29-May-17 10:12 PM GMT

Cracking set of posts recently Neil, you seem to have caught up with us up there now, in fact you seem to be pulling ahead as I haven't seen a Large Skipper yet 🍀 I know what you mean about the weather – usual pattern – great during the week and then come the bank holiday rubbish 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jun-17 10:35 AM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

... I know what you mean about the weather – usual pattern – great during the week and then come the bank holiday rubbish

😞 ...

Wurzel

Cheers Wurzel...Yes indeed!, Bank Holiday Monday here was shocking 😞

Sorry about the delayed response...I have been down in Cornwall for a few days, at least the weather bucked up for the rest of the week 😊

But before then...a quick catch up on some garden moths.

Monday 29th May

Although the Bank Holiday Monday here was wet and miserable all day, the previous night had been warm with hardly any wind which had resulted in my best night so far with the garden moth trap and the wet day had given me plenty of time to sort and count them – a total of 94 moths of 39 species. Most of these were species I had seen before but there were a couple of nice ones that were new to my garden including Swallow Prominent and Elephant Hawk Moth. I had an Elephant Hawk last year that had emerged from a pupa that had been given to me but this was the first one that had actually come to the trap 😊



Elephant Hawk Moth – Coverdale 28.05.2017



Elephant Hawk Moth – Coverdale 28.05.2017



Elephant Hawk Moth – Coverdale 28.05.2017



Swallow Prominent – Coverdale 28.05.2017

A species that I had a single example of last year and was pleased to see again this year...the Figure of Eighty, no prizes for guessing how it got its name,



Figure of Eighty – Coverdale 28.05.2017

and just because I love green moths...in fact most of the 'green' species don't stay that colour for long and quickly fade.



Green Pug – Coverdale 28.05.2017

That brings me up to date to before I went down to Cornwall...

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 04-Jun-17 11:10 AM GMT

Some beautiful moths there Neil and your photography certainly does them justice 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jun-17 06:24 PM GMT

Thank you for your comment Pauline, the Elephant Hawk in particular is such a photogenic moth it is hard not to get a good photo of it 😊

Cornwall – May 30th to June 3rd part 1.

Jane and myself returned home yesterday (Saturday 3rd) after spending a few days down in Cornwall, staying in a B&B in Mullion on the Lizard. After the wet Bank Holiday Monday, we had driven down on the Tuesday (May 30th) in much better weather although we did go through a couple of heavy showers on the way down and on arrival it was cloudy with a stiff breeze coming in off the sea.

The weather for the rest of the week was mostly dry and warm with some sun, especially on Thursday, but there was also a lot of cloud about and Friday was dull and drizzly up until mid-afternoon. Nevertheless, even under the cloud, the air temperature would feel quite warm which meant that there were plenty of butterflies flying and the cloudy conditions meant that they were settling and basking frequently which made for good conditions for taking photos albeit they were often low down out of the breeze.

My main targets on The Lizard were Marsh Fritillary and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, with a potential secondary target of early Silver-studded Blues if I got the chance for a drive over to Upton Towans on the north coast. With the usual mix of some 'touristy' stuff to keep Jane happy plus an occasional cream tea or ice cream sundae, I managed to get out and see all three of these species during our stay. Reports on these to come over the next few days when I have had time to sort through my photos.

A number of other species were also seen during our stay, the most notable probably being Painted Ladies that were seen in increasing numbers

through the week, most of them coming in at high speed off the sea and looking worn and tired after their travels to our shores. These were often seen alongside Red Admirals and a few Hummingbird Hawk Moths which had probably arrived together assisted by the wind which was blowing in from the south most of the time we were down there.

As usual, I have loads of photos to sort through and some catching up to do over the next few days but here are some random scenery shots of a few of the spots visited.



Wild flowers on the coast path between Lizard Point and Kynance Cove. Overcast but feeling quite warm – 31.05.2017



Looking across Upton Towans and St Ives Bay. Silver-studded Blues and SPBFs seen here – 01.06.2017



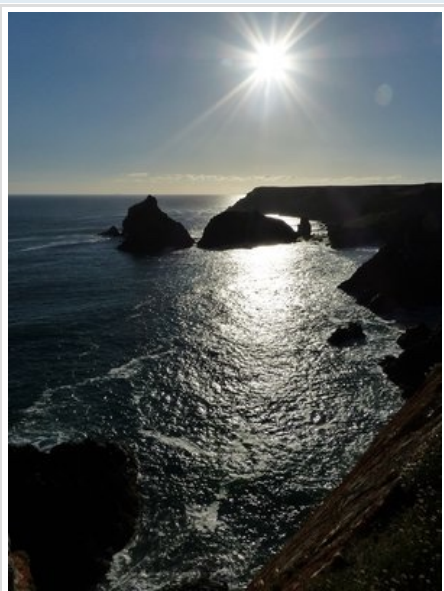
One of a number of patches of valerian at Upton Towans that were attracting Painted Ladies, Red Admirals and Hummingbird Hawk Moths – 01.06.2017



Chinook Helicopter seen showing impressive load carrying capacity over Predannack Cliffs - 01.06.2017



Looking down on Mullion Cove - 01.06.2017



Evening shadows at Kynance Cove - 02.06.2017

By simple virtue of being the first of my main targets seen down there, the next post will be the Marsh Fritillaries.

To be continued...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 05-Jun-17 06:08 AM GMT

I hardly ever get to see any of the Moth 'spectaculars', so your images

of the Elephant Hawk are quite special, a lovely specimen.
A few years back, an old railway carriage I had spent 10 years rebuilding, had just come out of the paint shop, in sparkling olive green. I went outside to admire it, but was horrified to see ,what from a distance, looked like a large paint blister. It turned out to be a Privet Hawk Moth, drying it wings !.
My only encounter with one.

Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jun-17 05:51 PM GMT

Hi Trevor,

A Privet Hawk camouflaged as a paint blister, I like it 😊

I haven't seen a Privet Hawk in the flesh for some years now. I reared a couple from caterpillars found locally back in the 1970s but their numbers declined quite drastically in Warwickshire since then although they seem to have recovered a bit over the past few years.

Since I started running the moth trap in my garden I have been amazed at the variety of moths that are there that I had never seen before.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jun-17 08:36 PM GMT

Cornwall – May 30th to June 3rd part 2

Marsh Fritillaries

A couple of years ago I was on The Lizard at the beginning of June for a family holiday and UKB member Essexbuzzard had very kindly tipped me off about a good Marsh Fritillary site not far from where we were staying. This site was obviously on my agenda for a return visit this time and after breakfast on the Wednesday (31st May) morning I drove around for a look. I arrived around 10.30 under cloudy skies but with the temperature on my car display showing 16c I was feeling fairly confident that I would see something.

As I walked down the site I spotted a few Speckled Wood along the hedges and almost immediately on reaching the area where I had previously seen the Marsh Fritillaries I saw one flying low above the long grass. I soon saw a number of others and as the cloud thinned a bit and the air temperature rose I saw more and more taking to the air around me or basking with their wings open amongst the vegetation to the point where I could stand still in one place and easily count a dozen or more around me.

The males were most obvious with their flying about searching for females but they were also settling regularly and basking to soak up the warmth from the weak sun which was still mostly hidden behind thin cloud. As with my previous sessions with this species I couldn't help but notice the variation with it seeming that no two individuals looked exactly alike.



Marsh Fritillary – The Lizard 31.05.2017



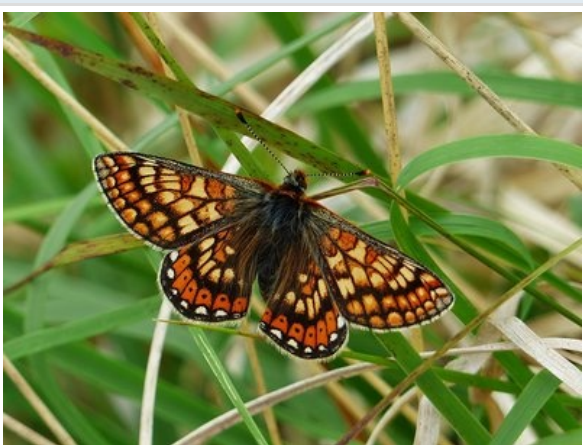
Marsh Fritillary – The Lizard 31.05.2017



Marsh Fritillary – The Lizard 31.05.2017



Marsh Fritillary – The Lizard 31.05.2017



Marsh Fritillary - The Lizard 31.05.2017

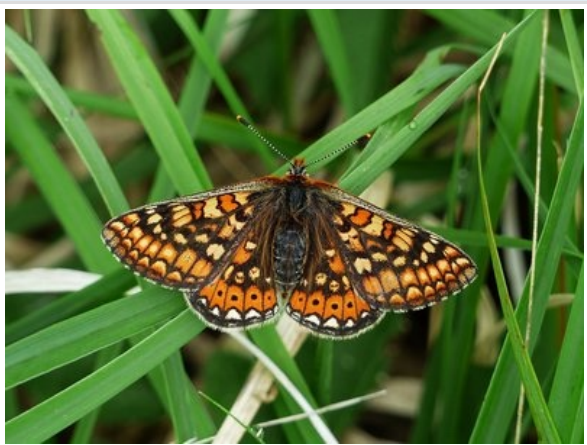


Marsh Fritillary - The Lizard 31.05.2017



Marsh Fritillary - The Lizard 31.05.2017

Once I had my eye in, I also began to see plenty of females who were usually sitting lower down in the tussocks of grass or clumps of heather and who often looked quite fresh with chunky abdomens swollen with eggs.



Marsh Fritillary - The Lizard 31.05.2017



Marsh Fritillary - The Lizard 31.05.2017

Compared to my previous visit to this site in June 2015 I reckon there were more Marsh Fritillaries than I saw then, I didn't actually count them but a conservative estimate of 100+ seems reasonable and they were spread over a larger area than last time.

After spending an hour and a half or so there I went back to meet Jane at the B&B and then went off to find a cream tea which I had promised her...not that I am averse to one myself of course.

On the afternoon of the Friday (June 2nd) we were driving back up from Lizard village and as we were passing this site again stopped for another quick look around.



Marsh Fritillary - The Lizard 02.06.2017



Marsh Fritillary - The Lizard 02.06.2017



Marsh Fritillary – The Lizard 02.06.2017

This time I also found a few mating pairs hunkered down in the vegetation, only one of which was in a position where I could get a photo.



Marsh Fritillary pair – The Lizard 02.06.2017

Apart from the Marsh Fritillaries seen at the above site, I also saw a couple later on the afternoon of the Thursday (June 1st) when I had walked a section of the coast path from Mullion Cove to Predannack Cliffs. Two years ago I had walked to Predannack Cliffs from the other direction, starting from the NT car park at Predannack Wollas and had found good numbers of Marsh Fritillaries along there. This time I only saw two, maybe three, and only managed to photograph the one individual but he was a nice fresh looking male.



Marsh Fritillary – The Lizard 02.06.2017

Calender wise, my visit this year was only a couple of days earlier than two years ago but I wondered if this time the Marsh Fritillaries were only just getting started at this spot. This is possibly supported by the fact that last time I only saw one worn Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary along here but this time there were a dozen or more still flying along the same stretch, some of them still in good condition...more on these to come in another report.

To be continued...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 05-Jun-17 09:08 PM GMT

Lovely, sharp images, Neil, and those Marshies all look as fresh as a daisy!

We have but a week or so to enjoy them, as they will then disappear for yet another year. 😞

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 05-Jun-17 09:24 PM GMT

Lovely photos of beautifully fresh butterflies, Neil. That looks like a terrific place to visit. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 05-Jun-17 09:56 PM GMT

Great Marshie images, and in particular, great report.
I wonder if the Cornish population is a little later than those in Wiltshire.
By the date of your images the Wilts Marshies would be past their best.

Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 05-Jun-17 10:01 PM GMT

Glad to see that site is still producing the goods this year, Neil. No wonder you went back later in the week. That site is impossible to drive past in season!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jun-17 08:05 PM GMT

Thanks David, this species soon loses its freshness and takes on the 'greasy' look that gave rise to its old name. I was lucky to see so many in good condition.

Yes Dave, it is a great spot. I would never have known about it without Marks (essexbuzzard) tip off.

Cheers Trevor, I have never seen Marshies in Wiltshire so I cannot comment on how the flight periods compare. It probably varies season to season.

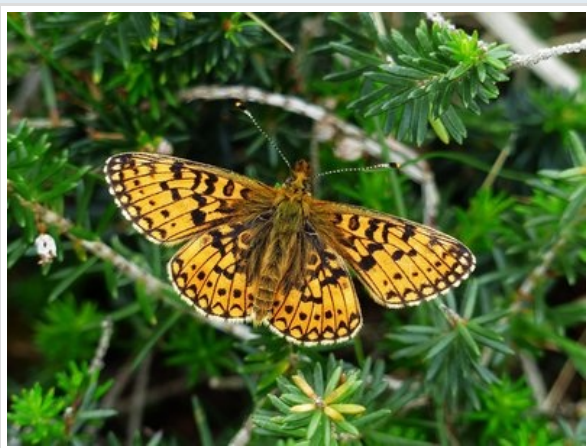
Hi Mark, if anything there were more Marshies there this year than on my previous visit two years ago. Many thanks again for putting me on to the site.

Cornwall – May 30th to June 3rd part 3.

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries.

As I began to write this report it brought back memories of the last time I had seen Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, in early June last year. This was when we went to Scotland, primarily to see my first Chequered Skippers but when I also saw good numbers of SPBFs both up there and during our stays in the Arnside/Silverdale area on the way there and back. It thus dawned on me that I had last seen this species in their northern strongholds and here I was this year seeing them at the other end of their range where they also seem to be doing well.

My first Small Pearls this year were seen later on the afternoon of the Wednesday (May 31st) when I went for a walk from Lizard Point to a spot approximately half way to Kynance Cove. On my last visit here two years ago I had found SPBFs fairly well spread out along the coast path here, but this time they were concentrated mostly in two particular spots alongside the shelter of the stone walls that are a feature of this stretch of coast. As usual, I noticed that I was repeatedly seeing the same butterflies as they flitted back and forth but I reckon I counted at least 15 individuals between the two spots that were separated by a stretch that was more exposed to the wind and where nothing was seen. I believe that Small Pearls are usually on the wing from early May in Cornwall so it was well into their flight period here and I was unsure what condition I would find them in, so I was pleased to find a number in quite good condition although other examples were looking well past their best.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – The Lizard 31.05.2017



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - The Lizard 31.05.2017



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - The Lizard 31.05.2017



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - The Lizard 31.05.2017

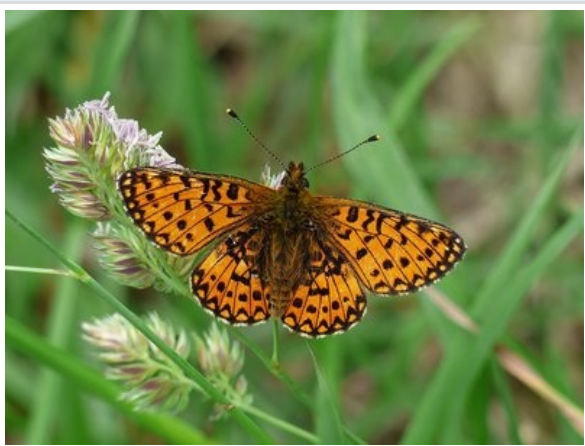


Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - The Lizard 31.05.2017



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - The Lizard 31.05.2017

The following afternoon was when I walked from Mullion Cove to Predannack Cliffs as described in the previous report and saw a number of Small Pearls along the coast path there. Like those by Lizard Point, these were in a mixture of conditions from well tired and faded looking to quite good.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Predannack Cliffs 01.06.2017



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Predannack Cliffs 01.06.2017



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Predannack Cliffs 01.06.2017

I had also seen a number of Small Pearls earlier on the Thursday morning when we had taken a drive over to the north coast and visited the dunes at Upton Towans but those seen there were very flighty in the warm morning sun and the ones that I managed to get a close look at were all worn and faded. I am not sure, but quite possibly these emerge earlier in the shelter of the dunes here than those on The Lizard and had been on the wing for longer.

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries regularly have a second brood in Cornwall which apparently in some years can outnumber the first at some locations, particularly the north coast dunes. I will be down there again in August for a family holiday and hopefully will have a chance to spend some more time with this species then.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 06-Jun-17 08:40 PM GMT

Yet again, Neil, it has paid dividends for you to concentrate on a single species. SPBFs are quite precious creatures...very west-centric, but rarely common.

It's good to know there are parts of both the far north **and** the far south where they are seemingly thriving.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-17 10:16 PM GMT

Fantastic posts from your holiday Neil 😊 The variation in those Marshies is a joy to behold 🍷 Cracking Small Pearls as well – though my favourite has to be the last one – the markings on the hind wing margins look more like like rectangles than spots, I swear one of them looks like the outline of a house with pointed roof and a little chimney(right hand, hind wing, marking closest to the body) 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 06-Jun-17 11:41 PM GMT

A jealous congratulations from me, Neil ! Unfortunately I'm not down there in June this year, so I will just have to admire your pictures and postings! 🌍

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 07-Jun-17 06:40 AM GMT

Brilliant reports and images from Cornwall, Neil.

Looking at your Small Pearl images, I can't see any worn or faded specimens among them.

Images 5, 8 & 9 are paler, beautifully marked females.

I have had some close encounters with some fresh SPBF this year, and noted colour variation.

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 07-Jun-17 07:20 PM GMT

More beautiful images, Neil. 😊 It would be great to see the SPBF in the second brood too.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 07-Jun-17 08:39 PM GMT

Lovely photos of the Marsh and SPB Fritillaries, Neil, and great reports from your Cornwall trip 😊 looking forward to more.

Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jun-17 09:14 PM GMT

Thank you all for the great comments which are very much appreciated 😊

Cornwall – May30th to June 3rd part 4.

Silver-studded Blues.

In a couple of my previous reports from Cornwall I have mentioned that on the Thursday (June 1st) morning we drove over to the north coast to visit the dunes at Upton Towans near Hayle. My main reason for going there was to look for early Silver-studded Blues which regularly fly earlier on the dunes here than on the Cornish heathland sites.

Since returning home I have also seen that SSBs were already flying on the heaths in the south east which does seem a touch early for those sites whereas it is perfectly normal for them to be flying in early June or even late May at Upton Towns.

On arrival at around 10.00am it was already feeling quite warm and with plenty of blue sky it was shaping up to be the warmest day so far down there. Within moments of walking onto the dunes I saw a couple of blue butterflies which turned out to be male Common Blues and it soon became apparent that there were good numbers of these flying all over the dune system. I had seen plenty of these in Cornwall so far but they were not what I had come here to look for.

There are plenty of sheltered spots tucked away amongst these dunes, many of which are the fallen down remains of buildings that were used to manufacture explosives back in the early 20th century, and in which now can be found lots of Birds-foot Trefoil which is the larval foodplant of the Silver-studded Blues here. Checking out one of these areas I spotted a couple of blues having a bit of a territorial squabble, one of which was obviously a male Common Blue, but the other was smaller and a different shade of bright blue. As they separated and went their separate ways I tracked the smaller one to where it settled and confirmed my suspicion that it was indeed a nice fresh male Silver-studded Blue.

Over the rest of the morning, as I got my 'eye in' to separate the SSBs from their Common cousins in flight, I saw a dozen or more, all nice fresh looking males. To begin with they were settling regularly and basking but as it got warmer they became more and more active and when they did settle they were quick to close their wings.



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 01.06.2017



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 01.06.2017



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 01.06.2017



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 01.06.2017



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 01.06.2017



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 01.06.2017



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 01.06.2017



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 01.06.2017

I was aware that I had not seen any females so far and with the males all looking like they had only been out a day or two I figured that the females were still to emerge. I had just started to head back to the car when I spotted a small silvery looking blur that at first I thought was a Brown Argus. I watched as it settled and was pleased to see that it was in fact a fresh out of the box female SSB and a very attractive one at that with bright orange lunules and a smattering of blue scales.



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 01.06.2017

With her darker colour she would have warmed up quicker than the males and I only had time for a couple of photos before she closed her wings, which at least gave me the chance to get some underside shots as well.



Silver-studded Blue - Upton Towans 01.06.2017

I then went back to meet Jane at the car and we headed off for a coffee and ice-cream...just to make a change from a cream tea 😊

This is the last single species report from Cornwall, various other butterflies were seen along with some other 'stuff' which I will probably wrap up in a more general report next.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 07-Jun-17 09:56 PM GMT

Interesting, Neil – I have never been anywhere where there have been numbers of Common Blues mixed with the SSBs, so that you have to separate them. That female is an absolute corker of a butterfly! The extra blue scales and the blue tinge to the sheen of the freshly-emerged butterfly are just amazing. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 07-Jun-17 10:33 PM GMT

Did you see any brown argus at the Towans, Neil?

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 08-Jun-17 08:21 AM GMT

I've noticed something different about your SSB's from Cornwall, compared to those in the South East. On your specimens the grey wing border on the hind wing is divided into separate spots, whereas those from Iping, Thursley and Fairmile have a continuous grey border. This may or may not be significant, but it did occur to me that populations hundreds of miles apart may have evolved differently.

Another great report, Neil,
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 08-Jun-17 09:05 AM GMT

Stunning shots Neil – the contrast between the electric blue, dark margin and the silver/white of the wing margins of the males is just sublime 😊 and that female...nice! 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 11-Jun-17 03:10 PM GMT

Just catching up Neil, those are a lovely selection of Fritillaries and those Blues, especially that 'glowing' female 🍷

I've never been to that part of the world but it's definitely on my list of places to visit 😊!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jun-17 09:48 PM GMT

Hi Dave, In the past I have also seen Common Blues flying with SSBs at Prees Heath in Shropshire but there were many more SSBs than CBs there. It is early in their season at Upton Towns and whilst the Common Blues were more numerous when I visited, that will change in a few weeks as the SSBs reach peak numbers as the Common Blues first brood finishes.

I didn't see any Brown Argus at the Towans this time Mark but I have seen them there before.

Hi Trevor, I have never seen SSBs in the South East so cannot comment on them but everywhere else I have seen them the males have had some degree of spots on the hindwing borders.

Cheers Wurzel, I think that the tone of blue of the male SSBs makes them my favourite blue butterfly...more subtle than the electric blue of Adonis males. It is a close thing though.

Hi Bugboy, definitely a part of the world worth visiting. I would highly recommend the walk between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point, great scenery and a great selection of butterflies, a different cast depending on the time of year.

Now then, I really must get my act together and finish off my last report rounding up everything else I saw down in Cornwall.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 11-Jun-17 10:28 PM GMT

Just spotted that female SSB. She is certainly most unusual.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 12-Jun-17 08:20 PM GMT

Hi David, she certainly was a lovely individual...reminded me a bit of some of the females that I saw on the Great Orme last year.

Cornwall – May 30th to June 3rd part 5.

Round up of the rest.

Shortly after our arrival late on the afternoon on the Tuesday (30th May), after settling into our B&B, I popped just down the road to Poldhu Cove to stretch my legs and have a quick look around. It was cloudy and fairly breezy but a short walk along the coast path here turned up a few Common Blues and Small Heaths plus a flypast from a single Red Admiral which was my first sighting of the latter species this year.



Small Heath – Poldhu Cove 30.05.2017

I also saw a couple of Painted Ladies along the path here, identified as two different individuals by the amounts of wear and damage they had suffered.



Painted Lady – Poldhu Cove 30.05.2017

During the rest of the week Painted Ladies appeared regularly, usually flying in at high speed off the sea. Most of the ones that I managed to get close to were looking worn and faded to some degree which made me think that they had travelled some distance to get here rather than recently emerging just over the channel. The most seen at one location was at Upton Towns where a dozen or more were flying around some large clumps of red valerian on the dunes.



Painted Lady – Upton Towans 01.06.2017



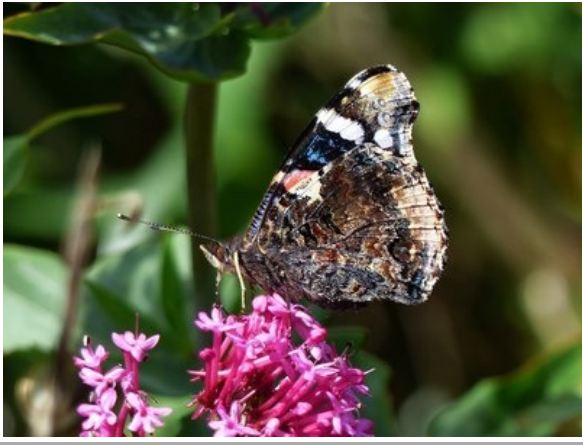
Painted Lady – Predannack Cliffs 01.06.2017

Later that afternoon we stopped off for a coffee and ice-cream at the roadside café at Hells Mouth where we saw at least half a dozen fly in off the sea whilst we were sitting at a table outside.

Red Admirals were seen at a number of places particularly between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point and on the valerian at Upton Towans. For the most part these appeared to be in better condition than the Painted Ladies, maybe they had not travelled so far or had emerged locally.



Red Admiral – Near Lizard Point 31.05.2017



Red Admiral – Upton Towans 01.06.2017

Common Blues were the most widespread resident species, appearing at every location visited apart from the Marsh Fritillary site. These varied from really tired and tatty examples to some that looked to be in nice condition.



Common Blue – Upton Towans 01.06.2017



Common Blue – Predannack Cliffs 01.06.2017



Common Blue – Near Lizard Point 31.05.2017

The walk from Mullion Cove to Predannack Cliffs produced a few Wall Browns, mostly tired and faded looking, but one female stood out as not only being in good condition but in having particularly large forewing eye-spots.



Wall Brown – Predannack Cliffs 01.06.2017



Wall Brown – Predannack Cliffs 01.06.2017

A couple of late first brood Small Coppers were also seen still hanging in there on the coast path between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point and also at Upton Towans.

Other species seen included Large and Small Whites and Speckled Woods that all popped up in ones and twos at most places plus a couple of fresh Large Skippers in the areas of long grass at Upton Towans.

Also at Upton Towans a couple of Hummingbird Hawk Moths were zipping about on the valerian and a Cream-spot Tiger Moth confused me for a bit before it settled down in the grass and I realised what it was.



Hummingbird Hawk Moth – Upton Towans 01.06.2017



Cream-spot Tiger Moth – Upton Towans 01.06.2017

During my short walk at Poldhu Cove on the afternoon of the Tuesday, I had spotted an Adder lying in the grass close to the path. I reckon the cloudy conditions had made it a bit sluggish and I was right on top of it before I saw it but it soon disappeared into the grass when it realised I was there.



Adder – Poldhu Cove 30.05.2017

And finally, on the Friday afternoon at Lizard Point there were a couple of Grey Seals swimming about just off the rocks.



Grey Seal – Lizard Point 02.06.2017

We left our B&B after breakfast on the Saturday morning under grey clouds and drizzle for the long drive back to the midlands. All in all, a great few days spent in a beautiful part of the country.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-17 10:06 PM GMT

Greta stuff Neil especially the Wall, as you say large eyes staring back at you 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 13-Jun-17 10:58 PM GMT

That looks to have been a productive week, Neil. One day, I must visit that area myself – Cornwall is the only English county I've never set foot in!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 16-Jun-17 08:25 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I was particularly chuffed with the Wall Brown as it is a species that has disappeared from my neck of the woods and I often miss it in my travels.

Hi David, I hadn't been to Cornwall for years and then a couple of years back I was tempted after reading Essex Buzzards reports on here. I have been back a couple of times since and fully intend to keep returning 😊

Some recent garden moths

After a week of wet and windy weather following our return from Cornwall, this week has been much better with some warm sunny days and mild nights, although being stuck in work means I can't take advantage of the days. The moth trap has been out in the garden a couple of times with some nice moths coming to it which have brought my garden tally up to 71 macro species and 38 micros so far identified.



Lime Hawk Moth – Coverdale 14.06.2017



Figure of Eighty - I posted one of these before but as they pose so well I couldn't resist posting another.



Grey / Dark Dagger - recorded as aggregate as can't tell the adults apart.



Flame - although I reckon this one should be called 'Stick'

Friday 16th June

A brief Friday afternoon visit to the park by my Mom's house in overcast but warm (20 degrees) conditions produced a dozen or so Large skippers plus half a dozen Ringlets and a couple of fresh male Meadow Browns in the areas of long grass, my first of the latter two species this year. The Ringlets and Meadow Browns insisted on settling low down in the grass which meant that I only managed a few record shots of these. Four or Five new brood Speckled Woods were also flitting about along the edge of the small wooded area here.



Large Skipper - Langley Hall 16.06.2017



Large Skipper - Langley Hall 16.06.2017



Large Skippers - Langley Hall 16.06.2017



Ringlet - Langley Hall 16.06.2017



Meadow Brown - Langley Hall 16.06.2017



Speckled Wood - Langley Hall 16.06.2017

New Specklies have also appeared in my garden this week but I just haven't got around to take any photos of these yet.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-17 08:33 PM GMT

That is a beautifully marked Specklie Neil 😊👍 If you flick through the images quickly you could almost mistake it for a Marbled White...almost...I know I'm pushing it a bit but you get my meaning 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 16-Jun-17 10:30 PM GMT

They do gorgeous ice cream in the Hells Mouth cafe, from Calestick Farm, I trust you enjoyed! In the Mouth itself, grey seal pups are born in September. I'm glad I inspired you to visit Cornwall, Neil. There are plenty of people on UKB that inspire me, so it works both ways, hopefully to the benefit of us all!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 18-Jun-17 03:55 PM GMT

Just catching up Neil, great shots from Cornwall, I'd like to visit either there or Dorset in August Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jun-17 09:05 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments Wurzel, Mark and Goldie...my apologies for not responding sooner, it has been a bit of a strange week.

Like a lot of people I have had trouble sleeping in this heat and, with all the house windows wide open, the dawn chorus has been waking me up before 04.00 in the morning (I usually get up for work at 05.00 anyway). With these early rises, and working in a sweltering office, I have been drained by early evening and been having some early nights to try and catch up on some sleep.

Nevertheless, I have been putting the garden moth trap out a few times and the warm muggy nights have led to some bumper catches and at least the early get ups have meant that I can beat the birds to it in the morning. My early evenings have been taken up mostly by sorting out the catches and trying to take some photos...not easy with the heat making the moths very flighty.

Last year, a female Scalloped Oak Moth left some eggs in a plastic pot and I reared some of these through and in due course had 9 pupae to overwinter. These started emerging on Tuesday night, by a spooky coincidence, the same night I had the first one of these this year in the moth trap so their emergence was bang on time. So far 7 of them have emerged leaving 2 which may well emerge tonight in these conditions.



Scalloped Oak - reared from female trapped in garden last year.

It looks like tonight will be the last warm and muggy one for a bit so I am making the most of it and putting the trap out again.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-17 11:42 PM GMT

Cracking looking moth there Neil 😊 Good luck with the trapping tonight 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jun-17 06:22 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel,

As predicted the last two Scalloped Oak emerged that night...all were released back into the garden.

That night I ended up with my highest number of moths so far this season...225 moths of 53 species including micros, and that is just the ones I have managed to ID so far and does not include the many that escaped whilst examining the trap.

Saturday 24th June

Am I the only person who did not see any butterflies last week during the run of hot days? I was stuck inside all week at work and last weekend was taken up mostly with family stuff and although I did have a couple of hours spare on Sunday afternoon, it was just too hot and I figured the butterflies would either be hyperactive or taking to the shade. Never happy are we, it is either too cloudy, too windy, too wet, or too hot.

Anyway, the past couple of days have been cloudier and cooler although we have not had any rain for over a week and the garden is looking dry. Some more house and family stuff this morning and a couple of hours this afternoon spent pottering about in the garden with my camera to hand as usual in case anything of interest turned up.

As well as a couple of resident male Speckled Wood, both of which were looking a bit tired now, a Ringlet spent most of the afternoon bobbing back and forth along the borders.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 24.06.2017



Ringlet - Coverdale 24.06.2017



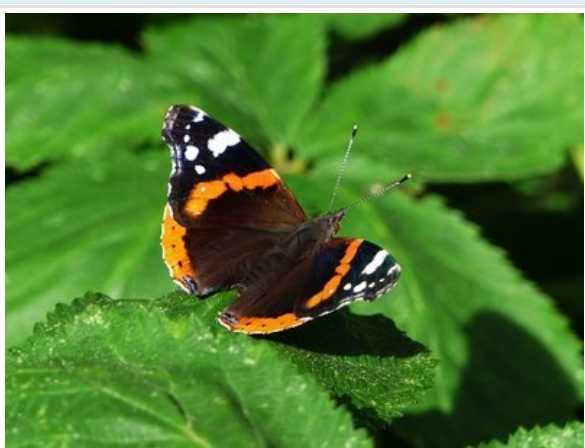
Ringlet - Coverdale 24.06.2017

Down the bottom of the garden where I let the grass grow long, I spotted a female Large Skipper,



Large Skipper - Coverdale 24.06.2017

There is also a large patch of brambles at the bottom of the garden and a Red Admiral had settled in and was chasing off everything that came close, including at one point a second Red Admiral.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 24.06.2017



Red Admiral – Coverdale 24.06.2017

A Small Tortoiseshell also briefly settled on the brambles before it too was seen off by the Red Admiral.



Small Tortoiseshell – Coverdale 24.06.2017

A lot of summer butterflies seem to be emerging a bit early this year which has thrown my plans awry somewhat with time already booked off work and B&Bs booked for our trips. An example of this is I have next week off work and we are going down to the Heddon Valley for a few days which is great in itself but with Purple Emperors already well out it means I will probably miss them again this year.

Oh well!, I suppose you can't be in two places at the same time and that just gives me something to look forward to another year.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 25-Jun-17 09:27 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, I'm in the same situation, I've got a Christening to go to next week-end and to day we're going out with family, I thought I'd plenty of time to see the PE's but won't be able to go when I thought I could. I think it calls for some juggling about. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 25-Jun-17 09:38 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, ah yes!, the art of juggling family and hobby interests...not easy when everything has to be crammed into the weekends

Sunday 25th June

A day which the forecasters usually describe as 'changeable' which meant that it was mostly cloudy with some drizzle and light rain and the occasional brief sunny spell.

We are heading off to the Heddon Valley in the morning for a few days so today was mostly spent keeping on top of a few things around the house and garden.

I hadn't put the moth trap out in the garden since the weather turned on Thursday, my last time being Wednesday night when I had 99 macros of 24 species and 126 of 29 micros giving a total of 225 moths of 53 species, my highest yet this year. That wasn't including the many that escaped as I was examining the trap.

I was undecided about putting it out last night as it was a bit breezy here. In the end I went for it and was glad I did with 119 macros of 35 species and 69 of 14 micros giving a total of 187 moths of 49 species, a lower total than last Wednesday but with more macros and fewer micros, no doubt due to the breezier conditions. At least stopping at home today gave me the chance to sort through the catch and take some photos.

These included my second Elephant Hawk to the trap this year,



Elephant Hawk Moth – Coverdale 24.06.2017



Elephant Hawk Moth – Coverdale 24.06.2017



Elephant Hawk Moth – Coverdale 24.06.2017

...and a selection of other nice moths from last night,



Swallow-tailed Moth – a personal favourite



Scorched Wing – a first for my garden



Common White Wave – had a couple of these



Light Arches and Dark Arches together.



Buff Ermine



Double Square-spot – another new one for the garden

Well, fingers crossed for the weather over the next few days.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 25-Jun-17 10:03 PM GMT

Your pictures are making me want to get more into moths... 😊😊😊 I used to deliberately leave windows open with the light on when I was little to see what I could attract, much to my parents annoyance!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 25-Jun-17 10:04 PM GMT

"not easy when everything has to be crammed into the weekends" – I hear that Neil, and to make matters worse we often end up with a weather pattern of great during the mid week and useless at the weekends 😊 Oh well mustn't grumble (too much 😊) . Great selection of moths, the Scorched Wing is a beauty 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 26-Jun-17 11:05 PM GMT

I really appreciate your moth images, Neil, particularly that last Elephant Hawk moth, which is stunning.

Good luck in the Heddon Valley. Cloudier conditions will mean you will see fewer Fritillaries, but you just might get lucky with a close encounter or two to compensate!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jun-17 04:29 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy, I have done that myself in the past, just left windows open with the light on to see if anything comes in...not always just moths tho' 😊

Cheers Wurzel, I think having a grumble is a national art that must be cherished 😊 That Scorched Wing was a bit worn as well, I would love to see a fresh one.

David M wrote:

...Good luck in the Heddon Valley. Cloudier conditions will mean you will see fewer Fritillaries, but you just might get lucky with a close encounter or two to compensate!

Thanks David...prophetic words indeed.

But first...

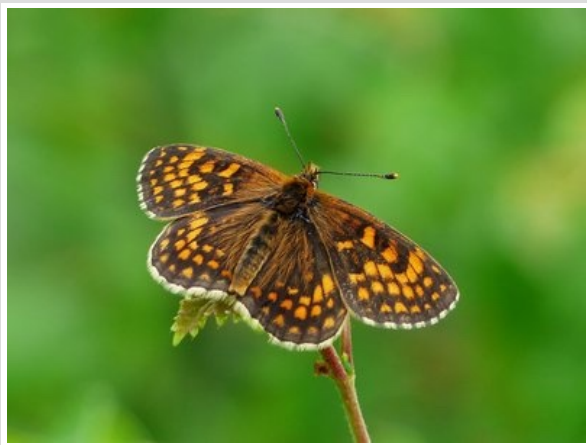
June 26th – Haddon Hill.

On Monday (26th June), we set off heading south-west for a couple of days staying at the Hunters Inn in the Heddon Valley. This would be the third time we had stayed there in recent years, our previous visits being in June of 2015 and 2013 making it every other year that we have returned, this being purely by chance with absolutely no 'cunning plan' behind it
When we had travelled down in 2013, we had stopped of at Haddon Hill to see Heath Fritillaries there, although we did not do so in 2015 as it had rained for most of the journey down that year.

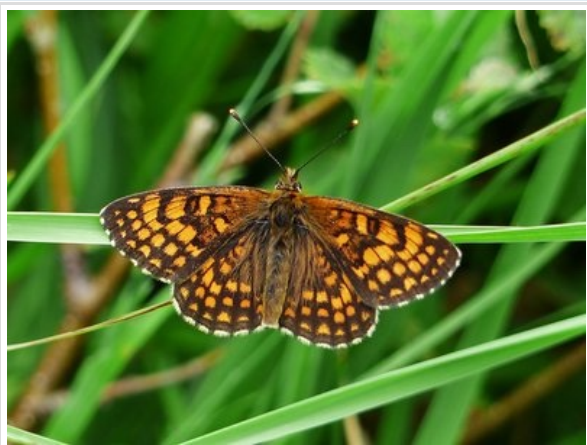
Having set out this time in decent weather e.g. blue skies, white fluffy clouds and 20c, I figured a stop off this time would be in order. The weather was still looking good until we were well past Bristol when the clouds started thickening up and by the time we were heading into Exmoor it was wall to wall grey overcast and the temperature had dropped to 16c.

Anyway, having allowed the time for stopping at Haddon Hill we continued on and pulled into the car park at around 12.30. Although the conditions were borderline at best I toddled off to the spot where I had seen the Heath Fritillaries before, at the bottom of the path down the slope and along the tree line to the right, hoping that it would be just warm enough in that sheltered spot for them to be active.

The first butterflies seen were a few Meadow Browns, Large Skippers, and Small Heaths and on arriving at the spot mentioned above, I soon saw the distinctive flight of a Heath Fritillary. Within minutes this one was followed by a few more and in the time I spent here, about 45 minutes, I reckon I saw maybe half a dozen individuals, some well past their best but at least a couple that were in better condition still.



Heath Fritillary – Haddon Hill 26.06.2017



Heath Fritillary – Haddon Hill 26.06.2017



Heath Fritillary – Haddon Hill 26.06.2017

After a while the skies turned an even darker shade of grey and I could feel a bit of drizzle in the air so I returned to the car and we continued on our way to the Heddon Valley.

Bye for now.

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Janet Turnbull, 29-Jun-17 05:54 PM GMT

Your moth pictures are amazing – especially the elephant hawk moth! 🍷 How big is your moth trap? If you get that many macros in, it must be room sized!

Cheers, Janet

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 30-Jun-17 08:37 AM GMT

Thanks Janet, glad you like the moth photos 😊

My trap is a standard sized Robinson with actinic tubes. The photo below shows it in position at the bottom of my garden earlier in the year. The egg boxes inside the trap provide plenty of hiding places for the moths to tuck themselves in to.



Moth trap in my garden back in April.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 30-Jun-17 09:02 AM GMT

We went to East Blean woods in Kent for the Heath Fritillary on the same day that you went to Haddon Hill for the same species. Nearly all those we saw were quite worn but yours look to be reasonably fresh, maybe Haddon is a later site. The bonus for us was a couple of fresh Purple Hairstreaks which compensated for the tired Heaths.

Great images and reports as usual, and a mrgreen for the Hawk Moths 🍷 .
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 30-Jun-17 09:39 PM GMT

Lovely Heaths Neil 😊 They seem a little hairier than the ones I saw in Kent a fortnight ago – I wonder if that is to do with their more exposed habitat 😊

Looking forward to some HBF action 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 30-Jun-17 10:30 PM GMT

Hi Trevor, I know that the Exmoor Heaths fly later than those in Cornwall due to those sites being higher but I don't know how they compare to those in Kent or Essex. I always assumed they had similar flight times but maybe not. I also know that the south-east has had better weather overall than the south-west so that has probably also had an effect.

Cheers Wurzel, the Exmoor sites are generally in sheltered combs and lower slopes but I believe they are still at a higher altitude than other populations, maybe that accounts for the hairiness...just guessing really 😊

Monday June 26th - Heddon Valley

Later on the Monday (June 26th) afternoon, we arrived at the Hunters Inn and after checking in and getting settled in our room I went for a walk to stretch my legs. The clouds had continued to build up through the afternoon and I didn't fancy wandering too far so just picked up the path from the gardens to the rear of the Hunters Inn that joins the path down the right side of the river to Heddon's Mouth.

About half way along there is a stone bridge and just past it there are a couple of grassy meadows where I have previously seen both Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries. Although it was too dull to really expect to see any Fritillaries this time these meadows were alive with Ringlets and Meadow Browns, both species that will happily fly in dull, cloudy conditions, especially the Ringlets who will even fly in drizzle and light rain if the air temperature is high enough. There were also plenty of Large Skippers and a few fresh looking Small Skippers buzzing about.

I then crossed the river at the stone bridge and returned back along the other side of the river. I did see a couple of large orange butterflies in the distance on my walk back but they were far too distant to identify. The following day would prove that they could have been Dark Green, High Brown or Silver-washed Fritillaries as I was to see all three of these in the meadows along here.

Tuesday June 27th - Big Orange Fritillaries

Next morning the weather was looking far more promising, still cloudy but lighter clouds which occasionally thinned to allow the sun to be glimpsed as a pale disc. After breakfast, Jane agreed that I could make the most of the day and have a good wander around as long as I returned occasionally to keep her supplied with drinks, ice-cream and a cream tea later.

I first set off along the path through Parsonage Wood towards Ladies Mile and by mid morning the temperature was up into the high teens and butterflies were taking to the wing. The first species seen were the obligatory Ringlets and Meadow Browns along with some Speckled Woods in the shadier sections through Parsonage Wood. A couple of Red Admirals were also seen on the bramble patches along here. Arriving at the crossroads of the paths on Ladies Mile I spotted a large orange fritillary which came just close enough to confirm as a Dark Green. I then returned through Parsonage Wood to a particular patch of brambles that had produced good numbers of DGFs and HBFs in the past. There were indeed some Fritillaries here and I managed to confirm my first High Brown of this trip along with a couple more Dark Greens.



High Brown Fritillary male – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017

I then carried on back towards the Hunters Inn but not before I stopped off to check a meadow that had recently had a section of grass cut. I have noted before that areas of cut grass or where it has been flattened by previous visitors are favoured basking spots for these fritillaries and indeed I found a male and female DGF doing exactly that.

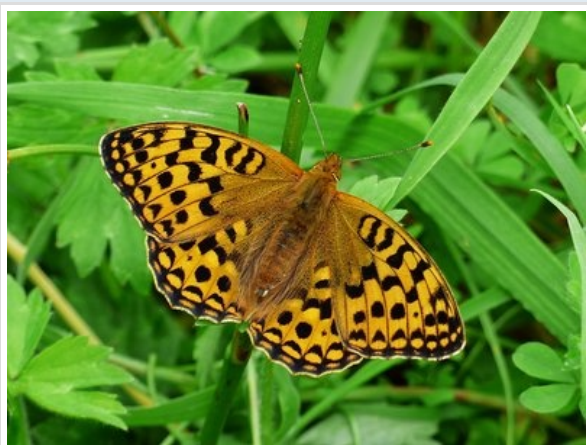


Dark Green Fritillary male – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017



Dark Green Fritillary female – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017

By now it was turning into a pleasantly warm day and meeting up with Jane back at the Hunters Inn we wandered up to the NT shop and sat at one of the tables outside enjoying an ice cream. As we sat there I noticed the meadow a little further up, just past the NT car park and realised that although we had been here a couple of times in the past, I had never checked out that meadow. Finishing our ice creams I wandered over to this meadow and was pleased to see at least two fritillaries flying around. One proved to be a rather tatty looking DGF but the other was a nice almost pristine female High Brown that flitted about the meadow in a nice sedate manner which allowed me to get a number of photos.



High Brown Fritillary female – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017



High Brown Fritillary female – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017



High Brown Fritillary female – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017

A bit later in the afternoon I returned to the meadows past the stone bridge that I had visited the previous day and in the warmer conditions today found a number of fritillaries, Mostly Dark Greens here but with at least one High Brown.



Dark Green Fritillary male – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017



High Brown Fritillary – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017

At one point I nearly trod on a female Dark Green that was settled down in the grass upon which she lazily fluttered a few feet away and pirouetted around a grass stem which enabled me to get a double underside shot.



Dark Green Fritillary female – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017

She then lazily fluttered up onto a nearby cow parsley plant where she fidgeted about a bit which gave me the chance for some more photos.



Dark Green Fritillary female – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017



Dark Green Fritillary female – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017



Dark Green Fritillary female – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017

I am not sure if there was anything wrong with her, or maybe freshly emerged, but she was certainly far less active than the other members of her species which were zipping about the meadow at speed.

In fact at one point I was amused to watch a male DGF chasing a large Golden-ringed Dragonfly up and down the meadow. These impressive looking Dragonflies are quite common here and I saw a good number of them along the river. No doubt the tables are often turned and the butterflies end up on their menu.

There were also at least two, maybe three Silver-washed Fritillaries in these meadows including a nice condition female that spent some time feeding up on the tall thistles dotted about.



Silver-washed Fritillary female – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017



Silver-washed Fritillary female – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017



Silver-washed Fritillary male – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017



Silver-washed Fritillary male – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017

I then wandered down to Heddon's Mouth before crossing over at the wooden bridge and returning again back along the other side of the river, seeing a number of Fritillaries in the meadows along here of all three species although not managing to get close enough for any more decent photos.

My main butterfly target here was obviously the High Browns and I reckon I had seen about a dozen during the day fairly well scattered about in various meadows. Dark Greens were seen in similar numbers although many of these seemed to be looking worn and faded. The Silver-washed Fritillaries were a nice bonus with about half a dozen seen. I have seen these here on my previous visits but they are usually just starting and this was the first time I have seen a female here, no doubt due to the more advanced season this year.

Bye for now.

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 30-Jun-17 11:54 PM GMT

I had an inkling that HBFs wouldn't be far behind Neil 😊 Mind you I didn't expect the Silver Washed as well – you enjoyed a regular Fritillary Fest 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 01-Jul-17 08:30 PM GMT

Beautiful Fritillaries, Neil. 😊 I visited at the exact same time of year last year and saw one DGF and one HBF (it was cloudy) but also a couple of worn SPBF. Had they disappeared early this year? The vegetation last year was armpit high, making things difficult – I imagine it wasn't so tall this year as it's been much drier.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Andy Wilson, 02-Jul-17 11:02 AM GMT

Great pictures of the High Browns at Heddon Valley. I was there a couple of weeks ago, but couldn't get close enough to get any decent shots.

I've made a diary note to go down there next year and book a few nights in the Hunters Inn.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 02-Jul-17 12:12 PM GMT

That really is a lot of big Fritillaries! Great stuff 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jul-17 09:46 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I was expecting to maybe see one or two Silver-washed as I have seen them on my previous visits but there were more around this time 😊

Hi Dave, I didn't see any Small Pearls this time although I have seen them there before. I have seen reports that it was like an oven down there with lots of hyperactive butterflies the week before we went and this may have burnt out the last few SPBFs. I actually found the vegetation to be pretty much as lush as usual...bracken up to the armpits and head high thistles in the lower meadows. I don't think the south-west have had it as dry as the south-east overall.

Thanks Andy, It was the third time we have stopped at the Hunters Inn at this time of year which has meant that I have had time for a good wander around most of the paths. I have found that some of the lower meadows are easier to get close to them in than the higher slopes which can be a challenge.

Thanks Bugboy, it was really good to see them all flitting and gliding about 😊

Heddon Valley – 26th to 29th June.

Of course, there were other butterflies about and I have already mentioned my walk late on the afternoon of the Monday (June 26th) in dull and cloudy conditions when I saw loads of Ringlets and Meadow Browns in a couple of the grassy meadows by the river.



Ringlet – Heddon Valley 26.06.2017

A few Large Skippers were also flying along with a couple of fresh Small Skippers, my first of the latter this year.



Small Skipper - Heddon Valley 26.06.2017

With the brighter weather the following day, a few more species became evident. Common Blues in the grassy meadows and Red Admirals put in a regular appearance all over the place.



Common Blue - Heddon Valley 27.06.2017



Red Admiral - Heddon Valley 27.06.2017

My most unusual sighting however, was on the early evening of our first day - Monday 26th June - when we were in the restaurant at the Hunters Inn. Anyone who has ever had a meal in here will know that there is a large picture window that overlooks the gardens. We had just placed our order when 'something' flew up the inside of the window to the side of Jane and startled her. This proved to be a Hummingbird Hawk Moth and with remarkable speed and dexterity(😊) I caught it in my hand before anyone else had noticed. I then shot upstairs to our room and put it in a plastic pot, of which I had a couple with me, just in case. The following morning I took it outside and took a couple of photos before releasing it back into the gardens.



Hummingbird Hawk Moth – Heddon Valley 27.06.2017

The Wednesday was dull with a mixture of rain or drizzle all day so we headed into Lynton and Lynmouth for a look around before returning to the Hunters Inn later in the afternoon for a cream tea and just chilling out in the bar.

Thursday morning was likewise dull and wet when we checked out and set out for home and although the rain eased off a bit it stayed cloudy all the way home. If the weather had been a bit better I might have been tempted to divert to Collard Hill or Daneway Banks on the way but it was not to be this time.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 02-Jul-17 10:03 PM GMT

Great stuff Neil 😊 You don't often get to see the Hummingbird Hawk moth with its wings closed en repose as it were 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 02-Jul-17 10:22 PM GMT

Lovely Fritillary sequence, Neil. You sure got close to them this time!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 03-Jul-17 08:08 PM GMT

Missed out on your Fritillaries Neil due to lack of PC but you got some really great shots there. Beautiful vibrant colours, fresh specimens and unusual poses. Not quite sure how you managed it as I know how difficult they can be. Definitely fall into the 'wish I'd taken them' category 🍷

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 04-Jul-17 07:51 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, I'll second Pauline on your fritillary's they look great, I've been thinking of going to Gait Barrow, your shots have urged me to go 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jul-17 08:18 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, that was the first time I had seen the HBHM in that pose myself...even if it was induced by my tipping it out of the pot 😊

Thanks David, you must have a crystal ball going by your earlier comment just before I went to Heddon 😊

Thanks Pauline, not quite sure how I managed it myself. It was cloudy but warm for most of the day which helped slow them down a bit 😊

Now, a bit of a catch up report from the weekend.

Friday 30th June

After returning from the Heddon Valley last Thursday in dull, cloudy and occasionally drizzly weather, it bucked up a bit on Friday (30th June). After catching up on a few little household chores we went round to see my mom and as I often do I had a little walk around the park by her house whilst the women were nattering.

It was immediately apparent that there were loads of Large Skippers buzzing about in the areas of long grass and on the nearby patches of brambles,

both males and females, often embroiled in spiraling little furballs of four or five individuals.



Large Skipper female - Langley Hall 30.06.2017



Large Skipper male - Langley Hall 30.06.2017

There were also a couple of fresh Small Skippers mixed in,



Small Skipper male - Langley Hall 30.06.2017

Lots of Ringlets were also flapping about but surprisingly I only saw half a dozen at most Meadow Browns.



Ringlet - Langley Hall 30.06.2017



Ringlet - Langley Hall 30.06.2017

And three different Commas were spaced out along the treeline, two of which kept returning to perches too high up to get photos but the third was more accommodating,



Comma - Langley Hall 30.06.2017



Comma - Langley Hall 30.06.2017

Back home later in the afternoon a nice fresh looking female Green-veined White paused briefly in the garden during a cloudy spell.



Green-veined White female - Coverdale 30.06.2017

Saturday 1st July

The first day of the month and it was shaping up to be a very pleasant one with those big white fluffy clouds that drift slowly across a blue sky. A couple of hours spare on the afternoon saw me popping round to my local site at Castle Hills near Solihull to see if any Marbled Whites were about. This species has gone from strength to strength here over the past few years and seems to be continuing to become more widespread around Warwickshire. I set off along the usual path and soon saw Large and Small Skippers along with Ringlets and Meadow Browns plus a couple of Commas. Amongst the Small Skippers I managed to ID at least one Essex Skipper which is early for this site, second week in July being more usual for the Essex's to show up.



Comma - Castle Hills 01.07.2017



Essex Skipper – Castle Hills 01.07.2017

I also saw a couple of Marbled Whites along this first path which is the first time I have seen them here and indicates that they are spreading further around the site. Walking through a wooded section to the meadow where I usually see them, there were plenty flying along with loads of Meadow Browns in the open meadow and Ringlets along the edges. All these were actively flying on what was turning into a very warm afternoon so photo opportunities were limited to the short spells when a cloud covered the sun and even then they hardly slowed down.



Marbled White – Castle Hills 01.07.2017



Marbled White – Castle Hills 01.07.2017



Marbled White – Castle Hills 01.07.2017

I also saw a couple of pairs in cop, one of which was low down in the grass but the other was higher up,



Marbled White pair– Castle Hills 01.07.2017

A couple of flypasts by Red Admirals and my first Gatekeepers(2)of the year, neither of which came close enough for a photo, completed a cracking couple of hours 😊

Monday 3rd July

Back to work to be greeted by as stack of stuff to catch up with 😞 What better way to lift the spirits than to arrive home later in the afternoon to find a nice female hutchinsoni Comma on the brambles at the bottom of the garden 😊



Comma - Coverdale 03.07.2017



Comma - Coverdale 03.07.2017

That brings me back up to date again.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 04-Jul-17 09:07 PM GMT

The last (female) Comma is a lovely insect - quite pale and more subtly marked than many *hutchinsoni*. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Janet Turnbull, 05-Jul-17 11:11 PM GMT

I love your Marbled White pair, Neil - I have never managed to catch them mating.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 06-Jul-17 07:31 PM GMT

Great Marbled White shots Neil, hope they're still around in Kent next week-end. Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 06-Jul-17 07:51 PM GMT

I have only just seen your High Browns, Brilliant !.
Spotting them when they are flying with Dark Greens must be a challenge !.

Great report,
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-17 09:55 PM GMT

Lovely set of Large Skipper shots Neil 😊 - they seem to have finished around my way already 😞, only to be replaced by multitudes of Smessex 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jul-17 08:04 PM GMT

Hi Dave, she certainly was a beauty, quite large as well as Commas go 😊

Thanks Janet, I have seen mating pairs of Marbled Whites a few times but they usually tend to be down in the grass.

You should see plenty Goldie, I believe they have a long emergence down there.

Thanks Trevor, yes, it can be a challenge to separate them so I click away and get as many record shots as I can.

Cheers Wurzel, still loads of 'Large' around our way, easily outnumbering the smessex still although that will probably change over this coming week.

Friday 7th June.

Another Friday afternoon visit to my moms and another 30 minutes around the park by her house. Almost a repeat of last week with the same species in roughly the same numbers with the only difference being a few more 'whites' in evidence although they weren't stopping in the cloudy but warm and muggy conditions today.



Large Skipper male - Langley Hall 07.07.2017



Large Skipper female - Langley Hall 07.07.2017



Comma - Langley Hall 07.07.2017



Comma – Langley Hall 07.07.2017

The past week has seen some very warm days here whilst I have been stuck in work and the temperature on my car display hit 30c on the way home yesterday afternoon. Ironically, the nights have seen clear skies with temperatures dropping to the low teens which has meant that numbers to the garden moth trap have not been as high as might be expected. Nevertheless, this is all relative and total numbers of 120–150 moth, including micros have given me plenty to sort through and try to identify.

A selection of some of these recent moths that I managed to photograph are below,



Light Emerald – I have had half a dozen of these this week, 4 in one night.



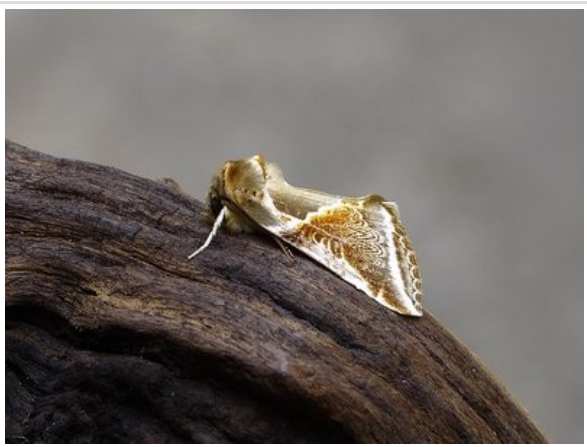
Coronet – a variable moth, this is a nicely marked example.



Early Thorn – a nice fat second generation female.



Scalloped Oak – nice and cute from this angle



Buff Arches – my first of this lovely species this year



White Satin – a new one for the garden

I really must try and get out and track down some of these hairstreaks that everyone else seems to be seeing 🍷

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 07-Jul-17 08:24 PM GMT

Oooh a Buff Arches, one of my favourite moths 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-17 10:53 PM GMT

That Coronet is a real beaut Neil 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jul-17 08:03 PM GMT

Thanks Bugboy, one of my favourites too 😊

Cheers Wurzel, the Coronet used to be considered very scarce and local in Warwickshire but has become far more common and widespread in recent years 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jul-17 08:33 PM GMT

Sunday 9th July

On Sunday afternoon, we decided to nip down to Snitterfield Bushes which is located a few miles north of Stratford-upon-Avon and is just over half an hours drive from home. This Warwickshire Wildlife Trust reserve and SSSI is on the site of a previous much larger mixed woodland that was cleared in the 1940s to build an airfield (RAF Snitterfield) but has since regenerated from seed lying dormant in the soil. Some of the old concrete is still visible and forms part of the paths through the woodland which makes it a good site for Jane to manage with her limited mobility.

It was a pleasant afternoon with plenty of cloud about but also good amounts of sun with temperatures in the mid twenties. As soon as we pulled into the small car park we were greeted by a male Silver-washed Fritillary that buzzed the car before skimming off into the trees. The reserve lies on both sides of the road that cuts through its centre and we spent an hour or so on each side seeing pretty much the same mix of butterflies in both. Numerous Ringlets and Meadow Browns were flying above the long grass to the sides of the paths but the main reason we had come here was to see the Silver-washed Fritillaries. These were present in good numbers, the males being very active in the warm afternoon sun and just occasionally stopping to refuel from various large banks of brambles. Females were also seen in good numbers and although these were spending more time feeding up they were also very flighty and difficult to approach. Many of both sexes were showing signs of life amongst the brambles with rips and tears in their wings.



Silver-washed Fritillary female – Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017



Silver-washed Fritillary female – Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017



Silver-washed Fritillary female – Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017



Silver-washed Fritillary male – Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017



Silver-washed Fritillary male – Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017

On a number of occasions we witnessed the graceful SWF courtship flight including one occasion with two males spiraling around a single female in what looked for all the world like a carefully coordinated aerial display.

There were also a number of Commas spread around the paths and these would often chase off any Fritillary that came close to their perches,



Comma – Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017



Comma – Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017

A couple of Red Admirals were seen, one looking tired and faded but the other looked to be in nice fresh condition and kept returning to a favourite basking spot on a small wood pile.



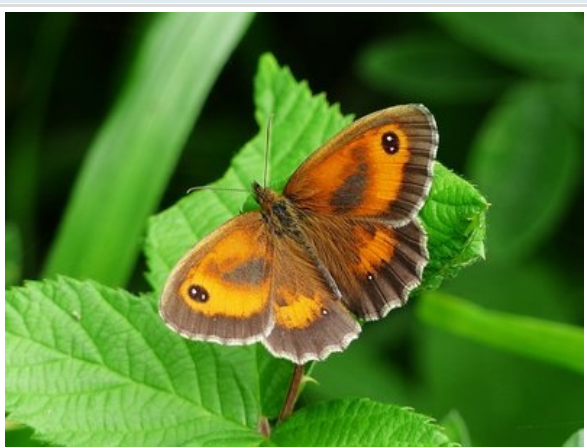
Red Admiral – Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017

A female Brimstone, my first summer one this year, spent some time moving between flower heads on a patch of thistles,



Brimstone female – Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017

A few Gatekeepers were dotted about, all fresh looking males which indicated that they are just getting going here,



Gatekeeper male – Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017

Marbled Whites are usually found in good numbers here in areas of long grass to the side of the wood and although I did not check out these areas today we did see a few Marbled Whites that had found their way along the paths into the wood itself.



Marbled White – Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017

We also had a single sighting of a White Admiral skimming through the trees some distance away.

Large, Small and Green-veined Whites were all seen actively patrolling the paths. A few Purple Hairstreaks were also spotted flitting about high up around some of the Oaks but despite a careful search of nearby patches of brambles, none were seen low down.

And finally, a number of Shaded Broad-bar moths were seen. I often see these but like many night flying moths that are easily disturbed by day, these often settle low down in the grass or underneath vegetation, so I was pleased to get a decent shot of one.



Shaded Broad-bar – Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017

A cracking afternoon in the company of plenty of our summer woodland butterflies 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-17 10:45 PM GMT

Lovely set of shots Neil 😊 I especially like the way you've managed to capture the greenish tinge on the female Silver-washed 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jul-17 09:40 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel...unfortunately I didn't find a proper 'Greenish' Silver-washed Fritillary (valesina) this time although I have photographed a few at this site in previous years.

Friday 14th July

A round up of stuff from my garden this week and today.

I had the moth trap out last weekend and on Wednesday night. Numbers were down a bit from the warmer nights of the previous week although there were still some nice moths including another Poplar Hawk.



Poplar Hawk – Coverdale 07.07.2017



Poplar Hawk – looks like a little dragon from this angle



Early Thorn male – interesting to compare with the female in my earlier post



Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing - Chunkier and more attractive than the usual Large Yellow Underwings.



Dun Bar - getting quite a few of these now.



Brimstone - next generation starting to turn up.



Marbled Beauty - another one starting to turn up in numbers.

This afternoon I spent a bit of time in the garden and when the clouds began to break up a bit around 4.00pm the usual Speckled Wood came out to play, at least three different males in varying condition.



Speckled Wood #1 - Coverdale 14.07.2017



Speckled Wood #2 - Coverdale 14.07.2017



Speckled Wood #3 - Coverdale 14.07.2017

A couple of Large Whites passed through and one male stopped for a brief rest...



Large White - Coverdale 14.07.2017

A Red Admiral had taken up position on the bramble patch from which he tried to chase off the Specklies and also a second Red Admiral at one point.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 14.07.2017

My first summer brood Holly Blues also put in an appearance this afternoon, maybe two or three although it may have been just one doing a circuit, either way it/they didn't stop.

Anyone who followed my diary through the winter may remember that I posted a number of photos of foxes in the garden. Over the past few weeks I have seen some cubs, usually early in the morning from the kitchen window before going to work. Earlier in the week I was in the back room and happened to look out of the window and spotted a couple of these cubs snuffling about in the grass under where the bird feeders are, presumably hoovering up bits that the birds have dropped from the fat blocks. I managed a couple of quick shots through the window before they sensed me there and shot off down the garden.



Fox cubs - Coverdale 12.07.2017

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jul-17 08:55 PM GMT

Friday 21st July

Another week passes by with the best of the weather being whilst I was at work. Last Saturday was dull and drizzly for most of the day here and Sunday didn't brighten up until late in the afternoon and was quite breezy so I just stopped at home and did some jobs around the house and garden to keep the brownie point account topped up.

As soon as it brightened up on Sunday afternoon, the butterflies came out to play in the garden with Ringlets, Speckled Woods, Gatekeepers, Large and CV Whites, Red Admirals and Holly Blues all putting in an appearance.



Ringlet - Coverdale 16.07.2017



Gatekeeper male - Coverdale 16.07.2017



Gatekeeper male - Coverdale 16.07.2017



Holly Blue – Coverdale 16.07.2017



Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 16.07.2017

On Monday afternoon after work, I was a bit surprised to see not one but two male Large skippers in the garden, I know there were two different males because they kept scrapping with each other. I have seen Large Skippers in the garden before but only usually one at a time.



Large Skipper male – Coverdale 16.07.2017



Large Skipper male - Coverdale 16.07.2017



Gatekeeper male - Coverdale 16.07.2017



Green-veined White - Coverdale 16.07.2017

Monday to Wednesday was hot and muggy but overnight into Thursday we had the band of heavy rain and thunderstorms that swept across the country and heralded the much cooler and wetter weather we have had since.

This afternoon, there were a couple of brighter spells to break up the dull grey clouds and drizzle and a female gatekeeper and female Speckled Wood fluttered about for a while trying to avoid the attentions of two male Specklies.



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 16.07.2017



Gatekeeper female – Coverdale 16.07.2017

As I write this it is lashing down again outside and the weekend looks to be what the forecaster call 'changeable' with rain and sun both predicted to be seen at some point.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-17 08:14 PM GMT

It's nice catching up with the doings in the garden Neil – nice array of species there as well 😊 especially the final 'excessa' Hedge Brown 🇮🇪 The Large Skippers are note worthy as well as they are all bu got round my way 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 23-Jul-17 08:25 PM GMT

Somehow missed your last couple of posts Neil but some very nice moths there. My favourite however, unsurprisingly, is the Fox cubs 😊 Hope we'll see more of them.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 23-Jul-17 08:37 PM GMT

Yes, great images of the fox cubs, Neil, and the Large Skippers are welcome too – they seem to have disappeared round my area. 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jul-17 08:38 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel ,the Large Skippers usually hang on until late July around here but most are looking well past it by then.

Hi Pauline, thought you would like the Fox cubs, I have seen them a few times but that was the first time they were out in the open like that...must be getting more confident.

Thanks David, I was chuffed to see the Large Skippers in the garden. First time I have seen more than one of them there.

Saturday 22nd July

Well, the weekend weather was certainly 'changeable'. Saturday morning started off quite pleasant with some nice sunny spells but by early afternoon the rain showers had moved in and became more persistent through the afternoon.

Before the rain moved in however, I had seen the usual butterflies in the garden including 6 separate Gatekeepers. This was the most of these I have ever seen at one time in the garden as they usually turn up one or two at a time.



Gatekeeper male - Coverdale 22.07.2017



Gatekeeper male - Coverdale 22.07.2017



Gatekeeper female – Coverdale 22.07.2017



Gatekeeper female – Coverdale 22.07.2017

More garden moths

At least the rain on Saturday afternoon gave me chance to sort through some of my photos I had taken of the moths that had come to the garden trap during the week.



Mint Moth (Pyrausta aurata) – Coverdale 15.07.2017



Mother of Pearl – a good sized female of the largest of the micros.



Mother of Pearl – male showing the sheen which gives this species its name.



Anania coronata – another large micro, a close relative of the Small Magpie Moth



Yellow Shell – can often be seen when easily disturbed during the day



Chequered Fruit-tree Tortrix (Pandemis corylana) – Coverdale 19.07.2017



Argyresthia goedartella – a tiny but attractive little micro

Sunday was forecast to be the better day of the weekend so I was hoping to get out to one of my local spots...

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-17 10:54 PM GMT

Loving the Hedge Browns Neil especially the third shot those are more 'splodges' than spots something I've not gotten in my collection 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 25-Jul-17 08:31 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, that Hedge Brown shot is the underside of the female in the next shot...which is the same female that I took a photo of and posted in the previous report.

Sunday 23rd July

After a lot of rain on Saturday night it was very wet outside on Sunday morning but with some warm sunny spells it soon started to dry up. With my free time over the past couple of weeks coinciding with wet and dull weather, I had not been out to visit my local spots for a while and with this being the time of year when I am usually looking for Essex Skippers and also on the lookout for the re-appearance of the summer vanessids, I was keen to get out.

So it was then, that after the usual Sunday morning household stuff I was free for a couple of hours in the afternoon and headed round to my local spot at Bickenhill, just to the north of Solihull.

There were some good patches of blue sky but also some dark looking clouds heading over and I had just set off down the first path when I felt some drops of rain. I sheltered under the canopy of an oak tree whilst a short but heavy shower came down, luckily only lasting about five minutes before the sun came out again. Wandering along the path past the first hedgerows and meadows I soon started seeing the expected Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers along with a few faded Marbled Whites, plus Small and Essex Skippers.

I began to try for the head on shots to try and confirm the IDs of the Small and Essex Skippers and after confirming half a dozen or so of each species it seemed that both were flying in roughly equal numbers, although it must be said that neither were as numerous as I have seen here in the past. Also,

many examples of both species were looking tired and worn and it seemed that they had both emerged here a bit earlier than usual and seemed to be getting towards the end of their season at this site, no doubt due to the warm weather we had earlier this year (mostly whilst I have been stuck in work 😞).



Small Skipper female - Bickenhill 23.07.2017



Essex Skipper (worn) male - Bickenhill 23.07.2017



Essex Skipper male - Bickenhill 23.07.2017



Essex Skipper - Bickenhill 23.07.2017

At first I was a bit concerned by what I wasn't seeing, no summer vanessids...but after a while I spotted a Comma, then a Red Admiral, and then a few more of each.



Comma - Bickenhill 23.07.2017



Comma - Bickenhill 23.07.2017



Red Admiral - Bickenhill 23.07.2017



Red Admiral - Bickenhill 23.07.2017

Moving into a sheltered spot behind some trees in the next meadow I checked out a large patch of thistles and found where the Peacocks were hiding. At least 6 of them were actively flitting from flower head to flower head in the warm afternoon sun, although checking my photos afterwards it appears that I most of my better photos were of the same individual.



Peacock - Bickenhill 23.07.2017



Peacock - Bickenhill 23.07.2017



Peacock - Bickenhill 23.07.2017

There were also a couple more Commas and Red Admirals on this patch along with some of all the other species already seen, making it the most productive spot of the afternoon.



Red Admiral - Bickenhill 23.07.2017



Comma - Bickenhill 23.07.2017

Large and Green-veined Whites were regularly seen patrolling the hedgerows but I don't believe I saw a single Small White. Small Tortoiseshells were also notable by their absence which surprised me a bit as this has always been a reliable spot for them. Likewise I did not see any second brood Common Blues or Small Coppers, both of which I would have expected to be flying here by now.

There were also loads of moths which were easily disturbed from the grass, mostly Shaded Broad-bars and various micros plus a few Latticed Heath and Silver-Ys.



Latticed Heath - Bickenhill 23.07.2017

Overall, it seemed a strange day compared with visits in previous years at or around the same date. Some species seemed to have been early and almost over, some seemed to be at flying as usual, and some expected species were not seen at all. Still, it was a cracking couple of hours 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 25-Jul-17 09:00 PM GMT

A nice selection, Neil. 😊 I agree that the season seems very mixed up at the moment. Small Tortoiseshells have disappeared again near me, but there have been lots of larval nests (at least before the strimming and mowing armies ripped several to shreds), so I expect another brood to appear any time soon.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jul-17 12:03 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, I am not sure if the Small Tortoiseshells have disappeared here or if the summer brood has just not got going yet...some comments I have seen on midlands based groups seems to suggest the latter.

Friday 28th July.

A very unsettled week of weather with some sunny spells and some heavy rain, both as showers and also some prolonged periods. All I have seen in the

way of butterflies this week is the occasional Speckled Wood and Large or Green-veined White passing in the garden after work.

Friday afternoon, despite it being dull and occasionally drizzly, there were a couple of Whites fluttering about which looked to be a male Green-veined White pursuing a female. I spotted them settling and on approach saw that it was in fact a male Small White and a female GV White. I took a few photos, trying unsuccessfully to get them both in focus, before the male Small White must have realised his error and fluttered off.

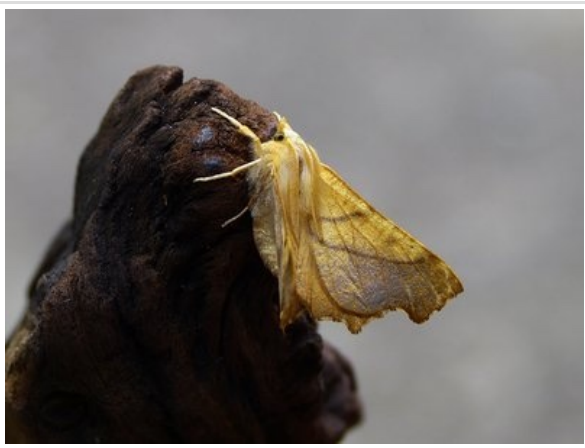


Female Green-veined White and male Small White - Coverdale 28.07.2017

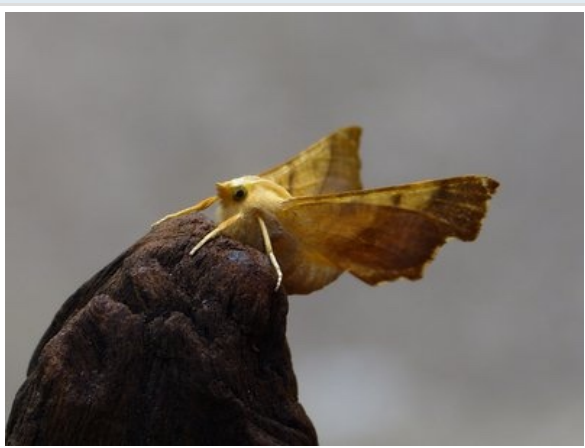
After he had gone I realised that this was the first confirmed summer brood Small White I had seen this year.

This weeks moths.

With the wet and blustery conditions on most of the nights over the past week, I had only run the moth trap in the garden on two nights, last Sunday and Tuesday. Numbers were well down on previous weeks, no doubt due to the cooler temperatures and blustery wind that we have had here recently, but nevertheless a few nice moths turned up.



Dusky Thorn - A new species for the garden on Sunday night.



Dusky Thorn - head on view



Ruby Tiger – Five of these in the trap on Tuesday night.



White Satin – Coverdale 25.07.2017



Vapourer male – Coverdale 25.07.2017

I won't be going out anywhere today (Saturday)...checking the car over and getting stuff ready for a run up to Arnside/Silverdale in the morning for a few days 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 29-Jul-17 04:29 PM GMT

Smashing moth shots Neil. I particularly like that Ruby Tiger – very striking. I don't know whether you (or anyone) can shed any light on this. After my last trapping session I released the Poplar Hawk moth and some 9 days later it is still there – alive 😊 Is it perchance similar to the Emperor – a female hoping to call in a male with pheromones (which are probably exhausted now!). I really do feel guilty if I have unknowingly interrupted the life cycle 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-17 09:39 PM GMT

Some great 'definite' Essex Skippers from a while back Neil and lush undersides of the Red Admirals 😊 A great set of moths as well – my favourite is the Ruby Tiger what a stunner 😊 The Vapourer though is a different matter – I've developed many a crick in the neck/whiplash when one of those blighters has bombed by whilst looking for Brown Hairstreaks or other butterflies 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 02-Aug-17 07:44 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, apologies for the delayed response, I have been away for a few days and missed your comment before I went. Female Hawk moths do attract males with pheromones and it is not unusual for them to sit tight when the weather is a bit iffy. As far as I know pheromones don't become 'exhausted' and are produced as long as she requires them.

Cheers Wurzel, I know what you mean about the Vapourer Moths Brown Hairstreak impressions...same size and colour in flight, same habit of flying high up around trees. I am convinced that a lot of spurious sightings at this time of year are down to this species.

Anyway, some catching up to do again.

Arnside/Silverdale – July 30th to August 1st part 1.

At this time of year over the past few years we have often spent a few days up in the Arnside & Silverdale area, primarily to see Scotch Argus on Arnside Knott but also to visit a few other sites in the area to see what is about.

So it was that on Sunday 31st July we set off around mid-morning for the drive up the M6. Just over three hours later we were pulling into the car park at Wharton Crag which is a site we have often stopped off at first in the area. On the way up, the weather had been quite reasonable with plenty of blue sky and white clouds dotted about with the temperature on the car display drifting between 18 to 20 degrees. As we got closer to our destination, the clouds thickened up and turned grey and the temperature had dropped to 16 degrees by the time we reached Warton Crag. Getting out of the car it immediately became evident that a cool breeze was also blowing so Jane decided to stop with the car and read her kindle whilst I had a walk up the crag. Higher up the crag, the breeze that could be felt in the car park was a blustery wind blowing straight in off Morecambe Bay which made it feel quite nippy up there. A search of some sheltered spots turned up a few Meadow Browns and Small Skippers but that was all that was braving the conditions and they were soon whipped away in the wind if they ventured out of shelter. A single Red Admiral was also spotted and a couple of Speckled Wood were along the path through the trees to the car park.

We then decided to carry on into Arnside to grab a coffee and with a couple of hours spare before checking into our B&B, go up to Arnside Knott for a look...

Scotch Argus.

It was still mostly overcast and windy as we carried on up to The Knott, plus there was a bit of occasional drizzle in the air, but nevertheless I felt confident that I would be able to find some Scotch Argus tucked away in some of the sheltered spots where they can usually be found. I have often read that this is a species that requires full sun to fly but my own previous experience here has shown me that as long as the air temperature is reasonable – around 16c or more – then they can often be found flying, although admittedly not in the same numbers as on a sunny day.

From the car park I made my way around to one of the sheltered lower slopes on the higher part of the knot (if that makes sense) where the air temperature felt a bit warmer and sure enough within minutes spotted the distinctive, almost black, shape of a male Scotch Argus lazily flapping about above the grass. This first individual soon settled and I got a couple of underside shots before he was up and away again and I lost him over a large patch of brambles.



Scotch Argus male – Arnside Knott 30.07.2017

After this first one, I soon spotted a few more and during the course of the next hour or so that I spent around this spot, I reckon I saw between 20 to 25 in total, both males and females in all sorts of conditions.



Scotch Argus female – Arnside Knott 30.07.2017



Scotch Argus male – Arnside Knott 30.07.2017



Scotch Argus male & female – Arnside Knott 30.07.2017



Scotch Argus male – Arnside Knott 30.07.2017



Scotch Argus female – Arnside Knott 30.07.2017

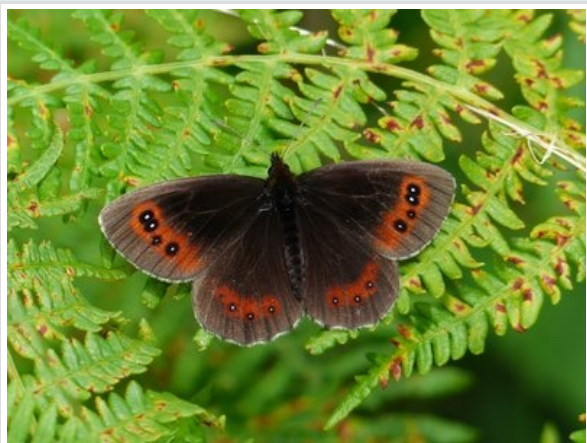


Scotch Argus female – Arnside Knott 30.07.2017

We then carried on to check into our B&B.

After some heavy overnight rain, the following day (Monday July 31st) started off cloudy and windy again so we spent the morning at RSPB Leighton Moss. By late morning, the cloud had started to break up a bit and although it was still breezy, with some nice sunny spells developing I decided to go back up the Knott for another visit.

This time I checked out some of the other spots where I have previously seen Scotch Argus as well as the lower clearings where High Brown Fritillaries can usually be found (more on these to come). Whilst looking around one of these lower clearings I was surprised to see a male Scotch Argus, never having previously seen one in these lower meadows before. Quite possibly he had been caught up in the wind and been blown down here.



Scotch Argus male seen in the lower clearing – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017

Moving back up to the higher part of the knot and with a few decent sunny spells, more Scotch Argus were on the wing and they were far more active than the previous day.



Scotch Argus female – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017



Scotch Argus male – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017



Scotch Argus female – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017



Scotch Argus female – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017



Scotch Argus 3 males – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017



Scotch Argus male – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017

My final visit to The Knott was late on the morning of Tuesday (August 1st), again to take advantage of a spell of reasonable weather. This time I was mostly on the lookout for Graylings which I had not yet seen here this time, but of course I also kept an eye out for Scotch Argus.



Scotch Argus female – Arnside Knott 01.08.2017



Scotch Argus female – Arnside Knott 01.08.2017



Scotch Argus male – Arnside Knott 01.08.2017

As well as similar numbers to the previous days I also spotted a mating pair which flushed from the grass right next one of the paths as I was walking past. I watched as they fluttered a short distance and came to land on a bramble leaf with the male just hanging there, which gave me a good opportunity for a couple of photos before the female must have decided she didn't like being on view and flew off again dragging the male behind her.



Scotch Argus pair – Arnside Knott 01.08.2017

I find Scotch Argus can be a tricky butterfly to take photos of. They are easily found at Arnside Knott, especially when it is sunny, but in these conditions the males especially never seem to stop flying. Also, the combination of bright sunlight and rich dark brown butterfly can be tricky to get right and this is one species that I find looks much better in cloudy conditions and softer light.

As well as the Scotch Argus I saw another 15 species of butterfly in the area. More details and photos of these to come when I have sorted through them.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 02-Aug-17 09:22 PM GMT

Great images of the Scotch Argus, some of the best I've seen. The female in particular is a stunning Butterfly. One day I must make the pilgrimage !.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-17 09:37 PM GMT

Absolutely fantastic shots Neil of a species I'd love to see 🤩🌍 I like Trevor really need to make the pilgrimage 🤩🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pete Eeles, 02-Aug-17 09:52 PM GMT

Excellent report, Neil. I was wondering just how far into their flight period Scotch Argus were at Arnside, and now I know 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 02-Aug-17 10:12 PM GMT

Great report Neil, brings back memories of my trip up there last year 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 02-Aug-17 10:44 PM GMT

Wow! You sure filled your boots there, Neil.

What a selection of *aethiops*, from the pristine to the – shall we say – slightly scruffy! 😊

Unlikely I'll get there this year, so it's nice to see a full on report from someone else.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 04-Aug-17 08:36 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor and Wurzel, if either of you do make it up there one day I would highly recommend staying 2 or 3 days to do the area justice.

Cheers Pete. Over the past few years I have found that the last few days of July and first couple of August are consistent in providing good condition examples of both sexes. I have been there a little earlier and found only males flying and leaving it later means that most are starting to look past their best.

Hi Bugboy, I remember your report from last year...I bet it won't be long before you are tempted back 😊

Hi David, glad you liked the report 😊

Arnside Knott – July 31st

Faded Fritillaries.

As mentioned in my previous report I returned to Arnside Knott on the afternoon of Monday 31st July and this time spent some time checking out the lower clearings for both Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries. Both of these species can often still be found flying here at this time although being late in their flight period the examples seen are often well past their best.

Speaking to our hosts in our B&B and also a couple of locals that I bumped into on the Knott it appears that this part of the country had a decent spring and early summer although it had been nowhere near as warm and dry as down south. Also, like back home, the past month or so had been very wet and windy.

Apparently, despite a lot of local habitat management focused on High Brown Fritillaries, numbers have suffered around here in the past couple of years due to some bad summers. On my visits here in previous years I had never failed to see at least a couple of High Browns, so with this in mind I was interested to see if I would find any this time and if I did, what condition they would be in.

From the car park I made my way down the path through to the lower clearings and had just seen a couple of Gatekeepers when a large faded orange butterfly flew across in front of me and settled on a patch of bracken just as a large cloud came over. This enabled me to sneak up and confirm it as my first High Brown of this visit. With a bit of sun peeking out from the clouds occasionally, the HBF fluttered about a bit but didn't warm up enough to go far and kept settling again which gave me the chance to get a few photos.



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017

I then carried on down the path through the trees to the lowest clearing where I have seen both High Browns and Dark Greens in previous year but without any luck this time. I then retraced my steps and had just come back out of the trees when I spotted an orange butterfly come down in the grass between patches of bracken. Creeping up to the spot where I saw it land I found it was a High Brown which had landed next to another more ragged looking one.



High Brown Fritillaries – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017

They both took to the air and went in opposite directions but luckily I managed to track both of them to where they settled again. As mentioned above, one of them was a faded and tatty looking individual but the other one was in better condition albeit still worn. I watched the better looking one for quite a while hoping for an underwing shot but it would not play ball and kept flitting about between basking and occasional nectaring on the many low growing wildflowers.



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017



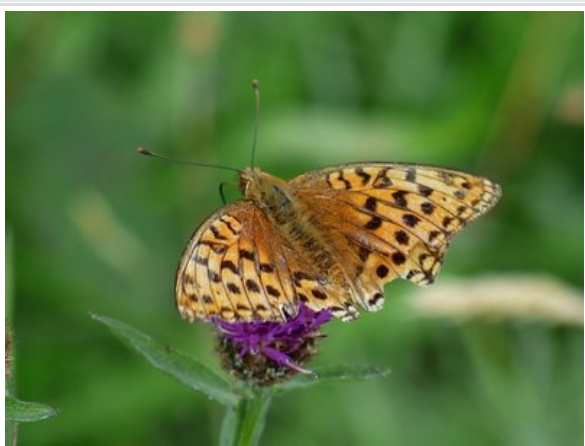
High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017

I then headed back up the path and wandered towards the path down towards Heathwaite, this being another spot where I have previously seen both DGF and HBF. Moving slowly through the first meadow along the path I spotted a Fritillary which at first I thought was a male Dark Green but looking more closely at the photo afterwards reckoned is a female High Brown.



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017

A little further along this path I found another High Brown, again looking like it had seen much better days.



High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017

In my wanderings I also spotted a couple more fritillaries in different spots but couldn't get close enough to confirm their ID.

So then, I managed to get photos of five different High Browns and saw another couple of unidentified Fritillaries scattered around the Knott. I cannot say for certain what the other two were but given that the ones I photographed were all High Browns, I reckon that on balance there is a good chance these were also, which meant that for the second year running I had not seen a Dark Green Fritillary here at this time of year.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by kevling, 05-Aug-17 06:57 AM GMT

Neil,

I enjoyed your report and photos from Arnside Knott. I particularly like the females, whose white spots seem more pronounced to me. Very beautiful. Also good that the HBF were still hanging on for you too.

I should have been there myself last week as we had a holiday booked for the Lake District. Unfortunately family issues dictated a cancellation. Your report has made my even more determined to hang on to that dream and get there as soon as I can. Although I have seen them abroad, the Argus and HBF are still on my list of lifers for the UK.

Regards Kev

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 06-Aug-17 02:53 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, great shots of the SA and Frit's , I was up there myself yesterday and on the lower slopes the SA were plentiful, they were even on the slopes near the path through the trees near to the car park, no need to climb, that was of course after the Sun came out. 😊

I find them very hard to photograph but did my best they seemed to land in the grass all the time because of the weather 😊 Your right about them flying when the weather is bad, it was bad when I got to the Knot but took up after wards.

I was also lucky like you with the HBF but their weathered a bit now.

I took shots of Dark Green Fritillary on the Knott on the 22nd of June so that's probably why you didn't see any, they like the slope near the small gate which goes into the meadow, not the meadow where you exit the car Park the other one where you've to go through two large gates and there's a small bench. hope that's helpful Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 06-Aug-17 07:00 PM GMT

Hi Kev, Thanks for your comments, I am sorry to hear that you had to cancel your holiday, I hope things are ok.

Cheers Goldie, the Fritillaries are always a bonus when I visit at this time of year, to catch them at their best a month earlier would be better time to visit. Mind you this year I was seeing them in the Heddon Valley around that time so I can't really complain 😊

Arnside/Silverdale – July 30th to August 1st

Shades of Brown.

Apart from the Scotch Argus which were the most numerous butterfly seen on some parts of Arnside Knott, the next most commonly encountered butterfly species was the Gatekeeper. These were seen in good numbers all over the Knott itself and in all the lower meadows and also in smaller numbers at Trowbarrow nature reserve and Gait Barrows. Strange as it may seem to some who are used to seeing this species all over the place down south, it is a relatively recent arrival in this part of the world having spread into the Morecambe Bay area in the 1980s and continuing to expand since then. It is still not as ubiquitous as it is in the southern counties but at some sites such as Arnside Knott it is now one of the commonest butterflies in late July and August.

I have previously found that the Gatekeeper population on Arnside Knott contains a large variation, not only in the size and number of spots on individuals but also in size with some of the males here in particular being the smallest I have seen anywhere. On the other hand some of the females are impressively large examples of the species. Unfortunately, size doesn't really come across in photos.



Gatekeeper female – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017



Gatekeeper female – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017

In one of the lower clearings at Arnside, I spotted a male Gatekeeper that stood out as having one hindwing a paler colour. I think I have read that this kind of aberration is caused by temperature fluctuations whilst in the pupa.



Gatekeeper male – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017

A few minutes later I spotted a female with one forewing that had a large white patch.



Gatekeeper female – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017

It was interesting to note that both of these individuals were seen in the same corner of the same clearing.

As well as Gatekeepers there were plenty of Meadow Browns about although up on Arnside Knott itself the Scotch Argus seem to replace them as the common butterfly in the grassy areas.

During the past few years I have been seeing quite a few female Meadow Browns with increased areas of orange on all four of their wings, mostly further south but I found just such an individual on Arnside Knott.



Meadow Brown female – Arnside Knott 01.08.2017

Having already found and took photos of Scotch Argus and High Brown Fritillaries on my visit to the Knott on the Sunday and Monday, I spent more time on my visit on Tuesday looking around the scree slopes which are the usual spots favoured by Graylings here and which I had not yet seen this year. These areas are more exposed than the more sheltered spots and there was a blustery breeze blowing but nevertheless I found a few, mostly worn examples, and managed a few photos.



Grayling – Arnside Knott 01.08.2017



Grayling – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017

Numerous Speckled Woods were seen at just about every place we went to...every lane and bit of hedgerow seemed to have one or two in residence.



Speckled Wood male – Arnside Knott 30.07.2017



Two male Speckled Wood – Arnside Knott 31.07.2017

There were also some Ringlets still hanging around, mostly looking well past their best. The one below with reduced underside eyelets – not sure if this qualifies as ab. arete? – was seen on Arnside Knott on the Sunday afternoon.



Ringlet – Arnside Knott 30.07.2017

Some nice fresh summer vanessids were also flying...

To be continued,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 06-Aug-17 07:31 PM GMT

Great to see your High Browns. Presumably the High Brown and Scotch Argus emergence

is such that it is not possible to find fresh specimens of both species in one visit, or in one holiday.
As I said before I must make the pilgrimage one day.

Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-17 09:59 PM GMT

Two or three days butterflying 😊 On the trot 😊 I don't think that would go down very well with Mrs Wurzel 😊😊
Mind you the chance to rack up Scotch Argus and HBF...
Nice set of excessa there including one with 'pathological' paling 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 07-Aug-17 12:34 AM GMT

Arnside Knott simply has to be the best butterfly location north of the Midlands. It has an incredible array of species compared to all others at this latitude in the UK and, of course, iconic species such as Scotch Argus, High Brown Fritillary and NBA.

It's interesting that the other site for *aethiops*, Smardale Gill, which isn't that far away, lacks Hedge Browns, but I daresay they'll arrive there in due course given their recent history of expansion.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 07-Aug-17 10:31 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, for got to mention I also saw Purple Hair Streak at Arnside in the Oak Tree just after the second gate, they didn't come down for a shot though although we waited for ages. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 07-Aug-17 09:13 PM GMT

Hi Trevor, I believe the High Browns are usually at their best in early to mid July at Arnside with the Scotch Argus starting towards the end of July. A few years ago I found fairly good condition (but not fresh) High Browns still there in the last few days in July and the Scotch Argus had just started although I only found male SAs on that visit. I suppose a few days around the third week of July might possibly get you a fresh High Brown and an early Scotch Argus but it would be chancing it.

Cheers Wurzel, a nice B&B for a few days and going out for a meal each night while we are there keeps Jane content as long as I don't disappear for too long 😊

Hi David, I believe that Gatekeepers (Hedge Browns) have extended their range northwards along the coast here and have not got so far north further inland – yet.

Cheers Goldie, I didn't see any Purple Hairstreaks myself but it was a bit blustery most of the time whilst I was there and they were probably tucked up out of the wind.

Arnside/Silverdale – July 30th to August 1st part 4.

As well as the Scotch Argus, High Brown Fritillaries and 'Browns' already mentioned in my previous reports from Arnside, I also saw some nice fresh looking Peacocks, Commas and Red Admirals.

The Commas were scattered about over most of Arnside Knott and I saw one or two on each of my three visits there, mostly fresh looking 'standard' types but also one or two *hutchinsoni*.



Comma - Arnside Knott - 30.07.2017



Comma - Arnside Knott - 31.07.2017

On my visit to the Knott on the Monday (31st July) I wandered down the path to Heathwaite and found half or dozen or so fresh looking Peacocks in one of the meadows down there. These were flitting around a couple of small straggly buddleias on which they were alternating between feeding on and basking on some nearby logs. Curiously enough I did not see any Peacocks anywhere else around the Knott and this reminded me of when I saw some Peacocks a couple of weeks previously at one of my local sites where they were concentrated on some thistles in one corner of a field with none anywhere else at that site.



Peacock - Arnside Knott - 31.07.2017



Peacock - Arnside Knott - 31.07.2017

During my wanderings over the Knott I also saw a few Red Admirals but these were flypasts that didn't settle anywhere near me.

On the Tuesday afternoon I went round to Gait barrows for an hour or so on the off chance that I might find a Brown Hairstreak following reports that these are now being sighted there. I wasn't really very hopeful of finding a Brown Hairstreak as it was the wrong time of day really and I hadn't got a clue where to look but I did find another half a dozen or so Peacocks there along with a couple more Red Admirals and another couple of Commas.



Peacock - Gait Barrows 01.08.2017



Peacock - Gait Barrows 01.08.2017



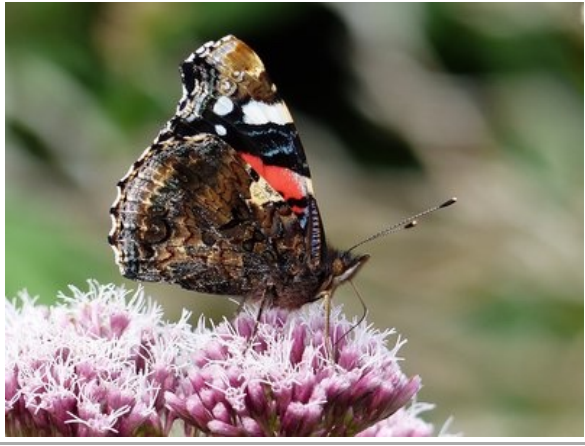
Peacock – Gait Barrows 01.08.2017



Red Admiral – Gait Barrows 01.08.2017



Red Admiral – Gait Barrows 01.08.2017



Red Admiral – Gait Barrows 01.08.2017



Comma– Gait Barrows 01.08.2017

One more part to come to wrap up the various odds and sods...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 07-Aug-17 09:23 PM GMT

It's always wonderful to welcome back the spring aristocrats, Neil, but it is tempered by the knowledge that the season is drawing to its close.

Make the most of the Peacocks whilst they're about – by late August most will have disappeared and we'll be moving into the final phase of the natural calendar!

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 07-Aug-17 09:32 PM GMT

Stunning Peacocks, Neil. I've often wondered what sort of crowds they would draw, if they were as rare and elusive as some of our other species. Fortunately there's plenty of these beauties for everyone !.

Trevor.

PS. Thanks for the Arnside info.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 08-Aug-17 08:24 PM GMT

Thanks David, from reports that I have been seeing it seems that Peacocks have already mostly disappeared into hibernation around the midlands, can't say I blame them with the weather here this week.

Cheers Trevor, lets hope that there continues to be plenty, although they have been a bit scarce around parts of the midlands this summer.

Arnside/Silverdale – July 30th to August 1st part 5.

Everything else.

In total, I saw sixteen species of butterfly whilst up in the Arnside and Silverdale area, ten of which I have included in my reports so far. The remaining six species included good numbers of mostly 'unidentified whites' which were usually seen from a distance patrolling the hedgerows, but which

occasionally came close enough to identify at least a couple each of Large, Small and Green-veined Whites.

A single Brimstone was seen at Gait Barrows sharing some Large stands of Hemp Agrimony with Red Admirals and Peacocks.



Brimstone - Gait Barrows 01.08.2017

Small Skippers were seen at Arnside, Trowbarrow and Gait Barrows and also a few were braving the blustery wind at Warton Crag on the Sunday when we briefly stopped there.



Small Skipper - Arnside 01.08.2017

In previous years I have seen good numbers of Common Blues at a number of sites around this area but this year they were in short supply. The few that I did see, one at Arnside along the Heathwaite path, one at Gait Barrows, Two at Trowbarrow and one at Warton Crag by the car park, were all males in new or nearly new condition. This indicated that perhaps they were only just getting going here, possibly held back a bit by the cool and wet weather they had been having for a few weeks around here.



Common Blue - Gait Barrows 01.08.2017

I had a good look for *salmacis* Northern Brown Argus but without success, not surprised really as this species usually peaks around the end of June around here with some individuals occasionally lasting to the end of July. I have seen a few before in the last week of July, at Gait Barrows and Arnside Knott but have never yet seen one in August.

The butterflies here are obviously my primary reason for visiting this area but we often also visit RSPB Leighton Moss when we're here and this time was no exception. With the weather being a bit unsettled on the morning of the Monday (31st July), we decided to go to the hides which overlook Morecambe Bay. Despite visiting Leighton Moss a few times in the past, we had never been to these hides before as they are a little way from the main reserve and we had simply just not got around to them before. There are two hides along the path here, the Allen hide and the Eric Morecambe hide, both of which afforded good views of numerous gulls and waders including Black-tailed Godwits, Redshanks and Greenshanks (I think I have got these

right but happy to be corrected). There were also a few Oystercatchers and a couple of Avocets occasionally waded through.



Waders seen from the Allen Hide - 31.07.2017



Avocet and juvenile in amongst the rest.

At one point something spooked all these birds and I got a quick glimpse of a small Hawk or Falcon flashing through the flock. One of the other guys in the hide who was equipped with a large scope and camera fitted with a massive lens managed to get a photo of this and declared the bird to be a Merlin which he had specifically been trying to photograph for the past couple of hours.



Spooked flock with Heysham nuclear power station in the background

We returned to Leighton Moss on Tuesday morning and this time went to the main reserve and the public hide on the causeway hoping to see the Marsh Harriers which are one of the stars attraction here. We were soon rewarded with good views of two individuals soaring across the reed beds albeit too distant to get any decent photos with my Lumix FZ200.

One thing I did notice was that the water level on the main reserve was much higher than I have seen it in previous years and I also noticed the rivers and streams in the area were all running high. Talking to our hosts at the B&B and a few other locals around and about revealed that they have had a lot of rain here again this year, and not just in the previous few weeks. Although they seem to have had a fairly good spring and early summer, apparently it was nowhere near as warm and dry as the south of the country. This indicates that there seems to have been a definite north-west/south-east split in the weather again this year with the driest and hottest weather very much in the south-east. I know this split is fairly normal for this country but over the past few years it seems to be becoming more pronounced.

A couple of scenery shots to finish off with.



Looking north over Arnside from the Knott.



Looking south from the Knott over Silverdale and Morecambe Bay with Heysham power station in the far distance.

So that's it then...another few days in one of my favourite parts of the country and one I hope to return to many times.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 08-Aug-17 09:10 PM GMT

You're right Neil, I am tempted to go back again, perhaps next year 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-17 10:05 PM GMT

Great set of shots Neil – plenty of Redshanks and Godwits and I think I could make out a Greenshank 😊 That final Comma from a previous post is really dark particularly on the hind wings 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 09-Aug-17 03:36 PM GMT

What a brilliant few days you had up at Arnside, Neil. 🍷 I had hoped to visit there on 2nd en route to York, but the weather was so poor I decided not to risk the long detour. I now wish I'd rearranged things to fit in a visit on the way back back, but the schedule didn't allow for it! Never mind – your Scotch Argus shots are excellent and an insight into what was missed. 😊 Good you got to see High Browns as well – ideally, one should spend the month of July up there and see NBA and fresh HBF and DGF as well as the Scotch Argus at the end. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 14-Aug-17 07:46 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy, with a bit of luck I will be back again next year 😊

Cheers Wurzel, that Comma looked nice and fresh too which made it really stand out.

Thanks Dave, we drove back down on the morning of the 2nd and it was raining when we left and a wet and murky drive all the way down the M6.

Sunday 13th August.

Since returning from Arnside, a combination of work, scabby weather and family stuff has meant that I had not been out anywhere to see any butterflies, the only ones seen being a few Speckled Woods and various whites occasionally in the garden.

With a bit of reasonable weather on Sunday afternoon, I finally managed to get out for couple of hours to pay a visit to my local patch at Castle Hills near Solihull to see what was about.

After a warm and sunny morning, the clouds had built up by the afternoon as they so often seem to do these days, but it was still feeling quite warm and for once there was not much of a breeze and so it felt very pleasant as I wandered along the paths here.

A short distance along the first path are a number of wild growing buddleias and these were playing host to at least four Peacocks that were alternating between feeding and basking on the ground nearby.



Peacock - Castle Hills 13.08.2017



Peacock - Castle Hills 13.08.2017

Further along, where the path passes through a couple grassy fields, my eye was quickly drawn to a number of male Common Blues chasing each other about. Some of these were quite worn but there were also some fresher looking examples.



Common Blue - Castle Hills 13.08.2017



Common Blue - Castle Hills 13.08.2017

There were also some females which varied from very brown to very blue,



Common Blue - Castle Hills 13.08.2017

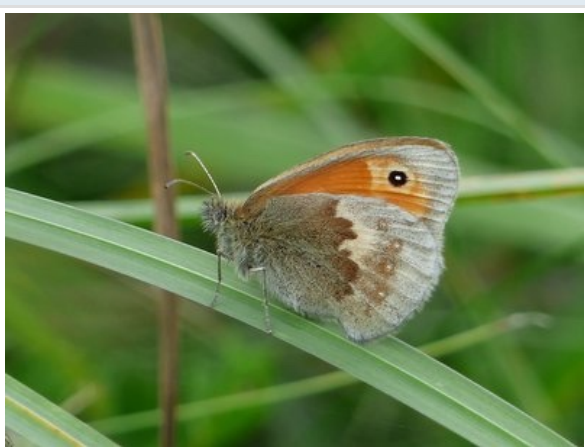


Common Blue - Castle Hills 13.08.2017

I was also pleased to see at least a dozen or so Small Heath. I have mentioned before that there is concern over this species in Warwickshire with numbers falling quite drastically in recent years so whereas in the past I may have taken these for granted a bit, I am always on the lookout for them now.



Small Heath - Castle Hills 13.08.2017



Small Heath - Castle Hills 13.08.2017



Small Heath - Castle Hills 13.08.2017



Small Heath - Castle Hills 13.08.2017



Small Heath - Castle Hills 13.08.2017

Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers were still very much in evidence but most were looking well past their best now.



Gatekeeper – Castle Hills 13.08.2017

Other species seen were all three 'common' whites and some fresh Speckled Woods.



Speckled Wood – Castle Hills 13.08.2017

All in all, not great numbers of anything and with no late season specialities around my local patch it had a definite winding down feel but nevertheless it was an enjoyable couple of hours.

Bye foe now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 14-Aug-17 10:37 PM GMT

Nice to see the variation in spotting on those Small Heaths Neil 😊 Really nice fresh Common Blues as well 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 14-Aug-17 10:45 PM GMT

Very nice Small Heaths, Neil. You have a similar variety as I have on my local patch, but yours are fresher! 😊 The Gatekeepers have all disappeared here now and the Blues are getting quite faded.

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 15-Aug-17 10:17 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, great shots from my part of the world, 😊 I'm hoping to visit Gait Barrow if the weather get's better this weekend, the Brown Hair Streak has taken up residence there now which you know already ,(fingers crossed) Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 15-Aug-17 07:36 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, like a lot of our butterflies, they can be surprisingly variable when looked at closely.

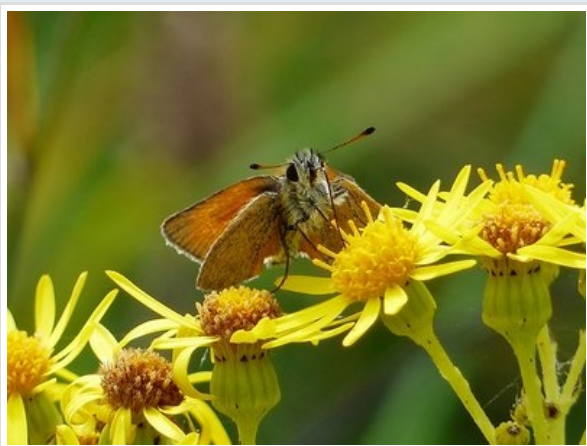
Thanks Dave, I have noticed before that your local patch seems to run a week or two ahead of mine, surprising the difference just a couple of hours up the M40 can make.

Yes Goldie, I did visit Gait Barrows but only for a couple of hours and didn't find any Brown Hairstreaks. I have since seen a couple of photos on twitter taken there during the past week or so.

One thing I forgot to mention in my previous post was that there were also a few each of Small and Essex Skippers still buzzing about, maybe half a dozen or so of each and all looking worse for wear now.



Essex Skipper male - Castle Hills 13.08.2017



Essex Skipper male - Castle Hills 13.08.2017



Small Skipper female - Castle Hills 13.08.2017

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 15-Aug-17 10:53 PM GMT

A couple of nice reports there, Neil, including images of two supposedly common species I haven't see too often this year – Small Heath & Small Skipper.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 16-Aug-17 08:18 AM GMT

They're still in reasonable nick for this 'late' in the season, I say late because it feels like everything's coming to end, though hopefully there's still a good while to go yet 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 18-Aug-17 07:54 PM GMT

Hi David, I haven't seen that many Small Skippers myself this year although I am not sure if that was partly down to me being caught out by this season and not being in the right place at the right time. Small Heaths are certainly far less numerous around my local patch than they were just a few years ago.

Cheers Wurzel, hopefully there is still some life left in the season...still got a couple of trips to look forward to 😊👍

Recent Garden Moths

Over the past few weeks, the moth trap has continued to go out in the garden on suitable nights...and also a few which turned out to be less suitable with some blustery winds and sudden showers that have turned up regardless of what the forecasts predicted.

Now we are into August, the nights are drawing in and the mid-summer species are giving way to those late summer and early autumn which also include second generations of many species. Typing this I have just realised that butterflies tend to be referred to as having broods whereas moths tend to be referred to as having generations...wonder why?

Large Yellow Underwings are turning up in increasing numbers, the most I have had so far on one night is 41, still less than last year when I had double that on some nights. Anyone who has ever had a trap full of these things will know why they are often called blunderwings.

Anyway, a selection below from the past couple of weeks, all fairly common species but nevertheless nice to see in my garden.



Least Yellow Underwing – smaller relative of the Large Yellow Underwing and a first for my garden.



Latticed Heath – another first for the garden, I usually see these at my local sites in the daytime.



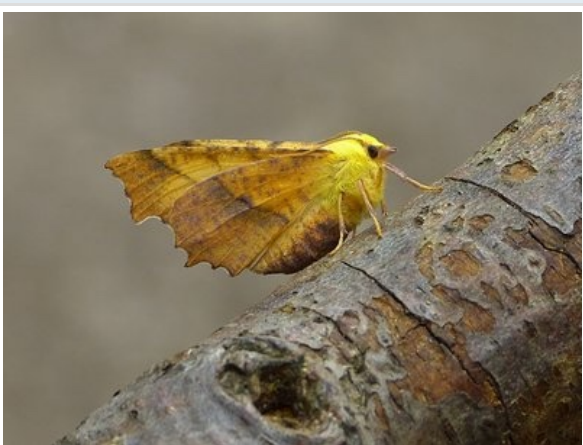
Square-spot Rustic – a late summer 'trap filler'



Orange Swift – lots of these over the past week or so.



Carcina quercana – a nice attractive micro.



Canary-shouldered Thorn – probably the most attractive of the 'Thorns'



Canary-shouldered Thorn – is this the cutest moth in the UK?



Poplar Hawk – presumably second generation at this time of year.

Off to finish some packing now, we are heading down to Cornwall in the morning for a family holiday with my mom, daughter and grandson...and hopefully a bit of butterflying...

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 18-Aug-17 08:18 PM GMT

Good luck Neil and enjoy. Not so many coppers about, but plenty of other stuff down there, especially at Kynance Cove. 🇬🇧

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 18-Aug-17 10:30 PM GMT

Neil Freeman wrote:

Canary-shouldered Thorn – is this the cutest moth in the UK?

I'd have to say yes, Neil. That little moth is absolutely adorable. Never seen one myself, sadly, but I'd very much like to now you've posted that.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 19-Aug-17 10:26 AM GMT

Definitely the cutest Moth Neil 😊 The Lattice Heath must fall into the 'most attractive under wing' category 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 24-Aug-17 06:57 PM GMT

Hi Neil

Apologies for the late comment but just wanted to say that I love those shots of the Canary-shouldered Thorn. I had one in the trap last year but I really need another shot at getting images as good as yours 🐞 Burying beetles just don't do it for me! 😞

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 26-Aug-17 11:39 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Good luck Neil and enjoy. Not so many coppers about, but plenty of other stuff down there, especially at Kynance Cove. 🐞

Thanks Mark, just got back this afternoon...yep, loads of stuff about, not just Kynance Cove either 😊

Cheers Wurzel and David, that head on shot also has an almost cartoon like look to it too 😊

Thank Pauline, fortunately they a docile moth and easy to tease onto a bit of stick for a photo 😊

Cornwall - August 19th to 26th...part 1

I have just spent a cracking week down in Cornwall where Jane and myself took my Mom and our daughter Sarah and grandson Frankie to stay in a caravan at Kennack Sands on the Lizard. This was the second time Jane and myself had been to the Lizard this year having spent a few days in a B&B in Mullion back in early June and also the second time we had stayed at Kennack Sands, the last time being in June 2015.

With this being primarily a family holiday, any butterflying had to work around what the women and Frankie wanted to do but fortunately I had an ally in Sarah who has recently been getting into photography (mostly landscapes and 'arty' type stuff) and who was keen for me to show her some good locations.

After arriving late on the afternoon of Saturday 19th by the time we were settled in it was too late to do much and as we were all feeling a bit peckish we headed to Lizard village and the most southerly fish & chip shop in Britain.

The following day (Sunday 20th) was wet and horrible all day with persistent drizzle punctuated by spells of heavier rain. Luckily, that was the only wet day we had and from Monday morning the weather improved though the week with some good warm sun and although there was sometimes a fair bit of cloud about the temperature was consistently in the high teens or low twenties...apart from one notable occasion when I had just arrived at Kynance Cove at around 4.00pm on Monday afternoon just in time for a bank of low cloud to roll in from the sea. Still, it had an attractive quality of its own and there were still some butterflies about.



Low cloud over Kynance cove - 21.08.2017

My tally of butterfly species for the week was 19. Some of these were in large numbers and were seen just about everywhere (Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood, Common Blue, Red Admiral), some were more localised and seen in lower numbers although often well into double figures (Small Tortoiseshell, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Painted Lady), and others were seen in ones or twos up to a total of maybe half a dozen or so (Small Copper, Clouded Yellow, Grayling, Wall Brown) or just single worn and tatty examples (Small Skipper, Silver-washed Fritillary).

I visited Kynance Cove a couple of times and had a drive over to Upton Towans on the last Friday (25th) afternoon but in truth I actually found the area and coast paths around Kennack Sands to be as productive as anywhere and actually saw all the species seen within a 20 minutes or so walk from our caravan.

As usual, I have loads of photos to sort through so reports on these to come over the next few days.



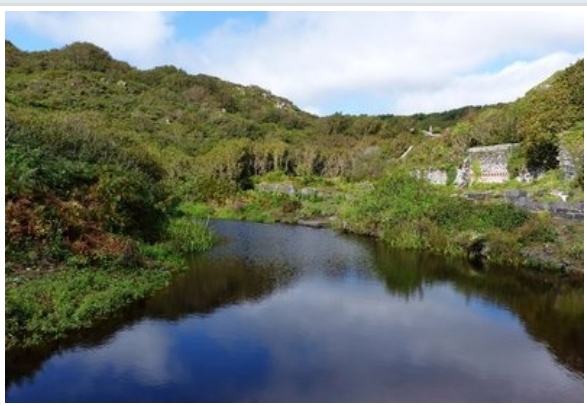
Morning sun over Kennack Sand 21.08.2017



Kennack Sands – looking the other way to the previous shot and taken about 20 minutes later.



Kennack Sands – SPBF and Clouded Yellow seen in the area in the foreground here.



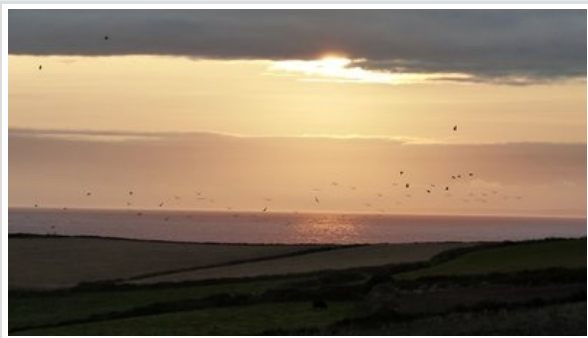
Cove by Poltescu – 21.08.2017



Sarah between Lizard Point and Kynance Cove – 22.08.2017



Looking toward Kynance cove – 22.08.2017



Sunset from Lizard Point – 23.08.2017

To be continued...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 27-Aug-17 09:30 PM GMT

Cornwall – August 19th to 26th ...part 2.

When we booked our holiday in Cornwall earlier in the year, the dates were set by a combination of my available time off work and also when Sarah and Frankie were available. Butterfly flight times were not the prime consideration but of course I was aware that **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries** usually have a second brood in Cornwall around this time. I was also aware that the best time for these is usually in early August and that as we would be there in the third week of the month that they would probably have been on the wing for some time. Last year I had seen a couple of worn and tatty Small Pearls still hanging on at Upton Towans in the first week of September so I was hopeful that I would find some in not too bad condition.

As it turned out I saw probably 20-30 during the week, usually in small numbers at any one spot and in varying condition from nearly fresh to really tatty and faded. As well as being in the latter stages of their flight period, I reckon that the day of rain that we had on the Sunday had also taken a toll on their numbers and condition.

During the week I was pleasantly surprised to find a number of Small Pearls at Kennack Sands, including a few in a sheltered south facing bank right behind the beach. We had stayed here in early June of 2015 when despite a careful search I did not see a single first brood SPBF at this location. (although there were plenty on the wing at Kynance Cove at that time) but had thought that the habitat looked 'right'. Given how easily I found them this time I don't think I overlooked them on the previous occasion so perhaps they simply weren't there then. I also found a few individuals along the coast path a little way to the north of the beach and also scattered along the path going south towards Cadgwith Cove.



Kennack Sands – showing area where a number of SPBF were found



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Kennack Sands 21.08.2017



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and friend – Kennack Sands 21.08.2017



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Kennack Sands 22.08.2017



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Kennack Sands 21.08.2017



The same male as above seen again 3 days later – Kennack Sands 24.08.2017



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – seen between Kennack Sands and Cadgwith Cove 24.08.2017

I walked the coast path between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point twice, first on the afternoon of the Monday when the low clouds had rolled in off the sea as described in my previous post. The second time was on the following (Tuesday 22nd) afternoon when I returned with Sarah in much better weather. Due to the damp and misty conditions, no Small Pearls were seen on the first visit but the second walk produced half a dozen or so worn and faded examples in the usual spots.



Kynance Cove – Graylings at the top, SPBFs and Clouded Yellow at the bottom.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Kynance Cove 22.08.2017



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Kynance Cove 22.08.2017

I also popped over to Upton Towans for a couple of hours on the Friday (25th) afternoon when I saw another half a dozen or so Small Pearls scattered about across the extensive dune system there.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Upton Towans 25.08.2017



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Upton Towans 25.08.2017



A nice darkly marked female - Upton Towans 24.08.2017

I mentioned in my previous post that I saw 19 species in total during the week so plenty more to come.

to be continued...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 28-Aug-17 07:29 AM GMT

Well done with the Small Pearls, Neil, Excellent views of the Cornish coastline too. I wonder which one of next year's broods these late SPBF will contribute, as the lifecycle of some Butterflies takes a whole year. The SPBF's released earlier this year in East Sussex have also had a second brood.

Best wishes,
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 28-Aug-17 07:06 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, great shots of the Pearl's, we're short of the Spring ones up here very few having been seen this year compared to other years, we don't get second broods here either as far as I know. love the shots of Cornwall 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 28-Aug-17 07:36 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor, I have noticed that your Sussex Small Pearls have had a second brood, a great reward for all the hard work that Neil Hulme and the team has done down there.

Cheers Goldie, the Small Pearls in the Wyre Forest here in the midlands don't do a second brood either, at least not regularly and not since 2009 according to the *Butterflies of the West Midlands* book.

Cornwall - August 19th to 26th ...part 3.

One species that I always look out for when I am down south is **Clouded Yellow**. Living in the midlands I tend not to see many of these locally and have only ever seen the odd one or two around my patch, the last time being a couple of years ago now. During my times down in Cornwall (and Dorset) in recent years I have found that there are some locations which can usually be relied on to produce a Clouded Yellow or two in most years. One of these spots is at Kynance cove and sure enough when I was there on the Tuesday (22nd)afternoon there were at least three flying around there. One was at the spot in the photo in my previous post, this one stopped occasionally to nectar which gave me the chance for some photos.



Clouded Yellow - Kynance Cove 22.08.2017



Clouded Yellow - Kynance Cove 22.08.2017

A little later I saw two in the air together some distance away towards Lizard Point and who were chasing each other around the steep cliffs...needless to say, I was not equipped for rock climbing and so these two stayed out of reach.

I also saw a couple at Kennack Sands, in the same area just to the back of the beach which had produced Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. I saw two different individuals here late on the afternoon of the Wednesday (23rd) and singletons on a couple of occasions later in the week. I am not sure if these were the same as already seen or different individuals, quite possibly they were the same ones hanging around this spot.



Clouded Yellow - Kennack Sands 23.08.2017



Clouded Yellow - Kennack Sands 23.08.2017



Clouded Yellow - Kennack Sands 23.08.2017



Clouded Yellow - Kennack Sands 23.08.2017

A few single examples were also seen along the coast path both to the north of Kennack Sands and to the south towards Cadgwith Cove. These were usually fly pasts without stopping but one did settle to feed on some fleabane just long enough to get another photo.



Clouded Yellow - between Kennack Sands and Cadgwith Cove 23.08.2017

Painted Ladies were also about in slightly higher numbers than the Clouded Yellows, maybe a dozen or so scattered about during the week.



Painted Lady - Kynance Cove 22.08.2017

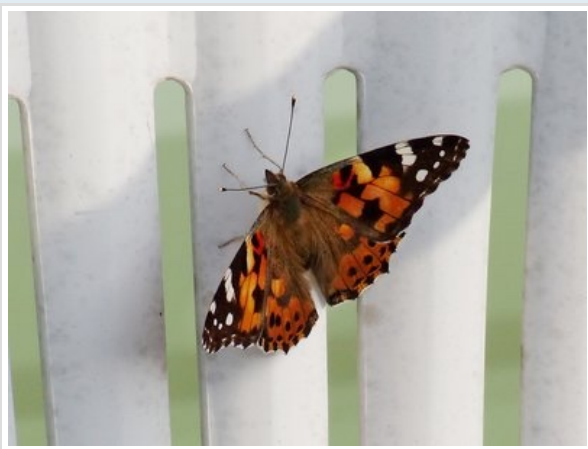


Painted Lady - Kennack Sands 24.08.2017

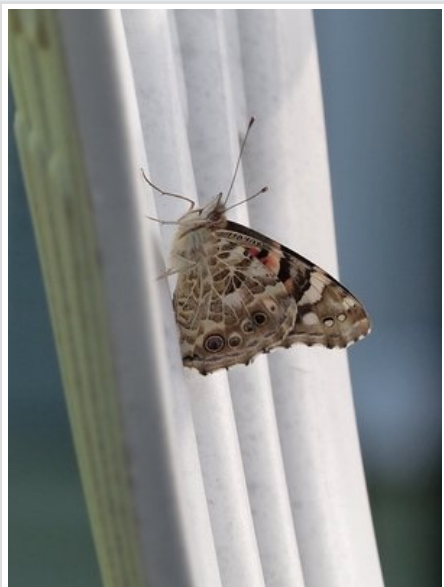


Painted Lady – Kennack Sands 24.08.2017

On the morning of the Thursday (24th) we were just having breakfast when I noticed the shadow of a butterfly flying around on the decking outside the caravan. During the week we had noticed that Red Admirals would often bask on the caravans and decking, especially early in the morning and again later in the afternoon between feeding on a number of nearby buddleias. On this occasion the butterfly turned out to be a Painted Lady and I just managed a couple of photos before it was off.



Painted Lady – basking on plastic chair outside caravan – 24.08.2017



Painted Lady – taken through caravan decking railing 24.08.2017

During the week numbers of Red Admirals increased to the point where I was seeing them everywhere, these and more still to come.

To be continued...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 28-Aug-17 09:54 PM GMT

Great reportage and shot from your break in Cornwall Neil, especially the Cloudies 🍷🍷 It seems wierd rading a report of SPBFs just by the beach 😲 and seeing them in a wood enclosure is so ingrained...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 29-Aug-17 10:55 AM GMT

Great shots of the Cloudy Yellow's Neil, I had a Painted Lady in my garden this Weekend, it was lovely and fresh, it always seems strange to me that they fly all the way from Africa and we see them here, yet the Clouded Yellow don't visit so far north very often and when they do it's mostly up the coast in the Lakes area they're found. Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 29-Aug-17 08:23 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, Having seen SPBFs in Cornwall a number of times now I am used to seeing them in that kind of habitat.

Hi Goldie, I saw a Clouded Yellow at Arnside a few years ago...like you say, not far from the coast.

Cornwall - August 19th to 26th ...part 4.

From when the weather started to improve on the morning of the Monday, I started to see a few **Red Admirals** and as the week progressed I saw more and more until by the second half of the week I was seeing them everywhere we went.

During the day these were mostly actively flying around at high speed but during my wanders along the paths around Kennack Sands later in the afternoons I would find good numbers feeding up on the many clumps of hemp agrimony that were dotted about.



Red Admiral - Kennack Sands 24.08.2017



Red Admiral - Kennack Sands 24.08.2017



Red Admirals – Kennack Sands 24.08.2017

On the holiday park itself there was a children's play area that we could see from our caravan and which little Frankie enjoyed playing around with a little gang of new found 'mates'. There were a number of 'islands' of shrubs dotted around this play area and in each of these was one or two buddleias. We could keep an eye on Frankie at the play area from the decking of our caravan and whilst sitting there I soon noticed some butterflies flitting around these buddleias which would usually prove to be Red Admirals. On a couple of early evenings I did a quick circuit around these shrubs and a rough count produced over 30 Red Admirals and about a dozen **Small Tortoiseshells** each time, either feeding on the buddleias or basking on the adjacent shrubs.



Red Admiral – Kennack Sands 25.08.2017



Red Admirals – Kennack Sands 25.08.2017



Small Tortoiseshell – Kennack Sands 25.08.2017

Small Tortoiseshells were also seen in good numbers through the week, albeit not as numerous as the Red Admirals and during the late afternoons could usually be found alongside them on the clumps of hemp agrimony.



Small Tortoiseshell – Kennack Sands 21.08.2017



Small Tortoiseshell – Kennack Sands 23.08.2017



Small Tortoiseshell – Kennack Sands 23.08.2017



Small Tortoiseshell – Kennack Sands 24.08.2017

A couple of Peacocks were still feeding up at Kennack sands and another one was doing likewise at Kynance Cove.



Small Tortoiseshell – Kennack Sands 21.08.2017

On the Thursday (24th) afternoon, whilst the women were on the beach at Kennack Sands with Frankie, I sneaked off for a little wander and had just started down the path behind the beach when a large faded orange butterfly settled on some hemp agrimony at the side of the path. This turned out to be a raggedy looking Silver-washed Fritillary, probably the latest example of this species I have ever seen. I just managed the one shot before it was up and over some trees.



Silver-washed Fritillary – Kennack Sands 24.08.2017

I think the other critter in the shot above is a Hornet Mimic Hoverfly, I saw a few of these around and they have been turning up in my garden for the past couple of years. Another species that seems to be creeping northwards with climate change.

To be continued...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 29-Aug-17 10:17 PM GMT

After humble beginnings as the early August weather turned out awful, things seem to be progressing in a promising way.

Like you, Neil, I'm suddenly seeing Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshells quite regularly, with a few Painted Ladies thrown in.

All I need now are a few Clouded Yellows and I'll feel like I belong!

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 29-Aug-17 11:14 PM GMT

Interesting you saw SPBF at Kennack Sands. Although I've walked the coast path there, I don't know the area as well as I know Mullion-Kynance-Lizard area. I know Neil Hulme saw them there as well. I'm glad you picked up some Clouded Yellows, I saw some there at the beginning of August. Great pic's as well!

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 30-Aug-17 12:25 PM GMT

Just catching up on a few diaries in my lunch break. Cornwall is still a part of the world I need to make time for. Perusing your recent reports makes want to visit even more. 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 30-Aug-17 07:47 PM GMT

Hi David, it seems that happily the season has a bit of life left in it yet 😊

Thanks Mark, I didn't see Neil's report until I returned so was unaware he had seen the SPBFs at Kennack Sands, must admit they were a pleasant surprise 😊 as, like I mention in my previous report, I didn't see any there on my previous visit.

Hi Bugboy, it is the other way around for me, I haven't been to the south-east for years. I must make the effort one of these days with all the Long-tailed Blues, Queen of Spain Fritillaries and such like that have been turning up in recent years.

Cornwall – August 19th to 26th ...part 5.

There were a number of species that were seen everywhere and usually in large numbers, these being **Meadow Brown**, **Gatekeeper**, **Speckled Wood** and **Common Blue**.

It looked as if Meadow Browns were still emerging with some very fresh examples seen, both male and female, although getting a decent photo was difficult with most of them being either very active or settling with wings closed. This species is known to fly in cloudy conditions and sometimes in light drizzle and sure enough they were still quite active on the Monday afternoon when the cloud and mist rolled in from the sea at Kynance Cove as described in my earlier report.



Meadow Brown – Kynance Cove 21.08.2017

Over the past few years I have been seeing more and more females with extended orange forewing patches including quite a few with orange patches on their hindwings. I am now in the habit of looking out for these and found a number amongst the population between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point.



Meadow Brown– Kynance Cove 21.08.2017



Wish I had got a better photo of this one – Kynance Cove 22.08.2017



Meadow Brown – Kynance Cove 22.08.2017

Equally as numerous as the Meadow Browns were Gatekeepers and these also included some in remarkably good condition considering the time of year. I always think of these as a butterfly of hedgerows and woodland rides and I was surprised to see how many were on the wing along the cliff top paths and more open areas that I visited, as well as flying in the more usual spots.



Gatekeeper – Kennack Sands 23.08.2017

Speckled Woods were also ubiquitous along every path I walked along, again in all conditions from old and tired to nice and fresh.



Speckled Wood – Kennack Sands 21.08.2017

It was good to see Common Blues living up to their name, in fact to the point where they were the most numerous butterfly seen during the week. The males were the most obvious, chasing each other about in almost every patch of grass, but there were also plenty of females who varied from very brown individuals to almost totally blue ones.



Common Blue – Kennack Sands 21.08.2017



Common Blue – Kennack Sands 23.08.2017

As well as the species mentioned above there were also a few species seen in much lower numbers. These included **Small Heath**, **Grayling**, **Wall Brown** and **Small Copper**, all of which were seen in ones or twos scattered about around Kennack Sands and on the coast path between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point. Apart from the Small Heaths which looked quite fresh , the others were all looking faded and past their best but no less active for that.



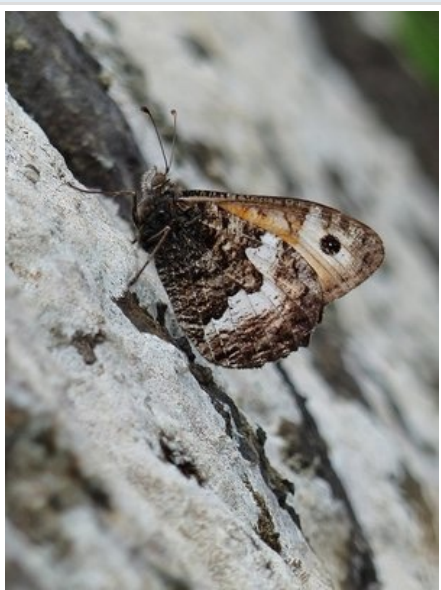
Small Heath – Kennack Sands 24.08.2017



Wall Brown – Kynance Cove 22.08.2017



Wall Brown – Upton Towans 25.08.2017



Grayling – between Kennack Sands and Cadgwith Cove 23.08.2017



Grayling – Kennack Sands 24.08.2017



Small Copper – Kennack Sands 21.08.2017

I got the impression that the few Small Coppers that I saw were the tail end of the previous brood. I saw loads of them between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point last year but that was in the first week of September and I was just that bit too early for their next emergence this year.

Large, Small and Green-veined Whites were all seen flying with a few of each stopping long enough to be positively identified and at Kennack Sands a single worn female **Small Skipper** made up the final tally of 19 species seen during the week.



Small Skipper – Kennack Sands 23.08.2017

Just one more report to come from Cornwall...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 30-Aug-17 09:56 PM GMT

Interesting variation in those Meadow Browns Neil – one of them could almost be a Hedge Brown 😄😄 That Small Skipper is in very good nick for the time of year as well 😊 Looking forward to the next installment 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 30-Aug-17 10:33 PM GMT

Your third Meadow Brown is an amazing creature, Neil. I don't think I've ever seen one so liberally splattered with orange in the UK!

Well done with the Small Skipper too. They disappeared quite a while back near me.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 31-Aug-17 01:04 AM GMT

Looks like you had a good trip to Cornwall, Neil 😊 and those Meadow Browns are simply stunning 😊

Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 01-Sep-17 10:34 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Wurzel, David and Mike. It is easy to overlook the Meadow Browns when there is more exciting stuff about but they certainly warrant a bit of time, especially when there seems to be so many with the extra orange on them around lately.

Cornwall – August 19th to 26th...part 5

Before going down to Cornwall, Sarah had seen something on the TV about the **Lost Gardens of Heligan** and asked if we could go there. Jane and my Mom also liked the sound of these gardens and so it was that on Thursday morning after breakfast went to visit them. They are located not far from Mevagissy which was about a 90 minute drive from where we were staying at Kennack Sands.

The Lost Gardens of Heligan were 'rediscovered' in 1990 after being neglected and forgotten about for decades, apparently since the end of WW1 when so many young men were lost that there was a shortage of labour to look after this kind of estate.

<http://heligan.com/the-story/introduction/>

As well as the restored gardens there is also a farm and walks around the larger estate that consist of woodland and meadows and a farm that has some rare breeds. Whilst Jane and my Mom kept to the better paths around the flowers gardens and farm, Sarah, Frankie and myself explored further afield around the estate which consisted of some quite steep paths through woodland.



Giants Head – Heligan 24.08.2017



The Mud Maid – Heligan 24.08.2017



Hay Meadow - Heligan 24.08.2017



Sarah and Frankie on Rope Bridge - Heligan 24.08.2017



Woodland path - Heligan 24.08.2017



Boo! - Heligan 24.08.2017

Of course, I had my eye out for butterflies and spotted a number of species including all three Common Whites, Small Tortoiseshells and Red Admirals around the grounds, particularly in the flower gardens plus numerous Speckled Wood along the woodland paths.



Flower gardens - Heligan 24.08.2017



Large white - Heligan 24.08.2017



Small White - Heligan 24.08.2017



Small Tortoiseshell - Heligan 24.08.2017



Flower gardens - Heligan 24.08.2017

During the week I also saw plenty of birds about including lots of Swallows that were gathering before migrating south. Others included Wheatears, Stonechats, Ravens, Kestrels and Peregrine Falcons. I spotted one particular Peregrine regularly at the northern end of Kennack Sands where the path goes up and over the top of the cliffs but it was always too fast or too far away to get a photo.

I am not really a birder but I think I have got the IDs of the two below right but if I haven't would welcome corrections.



Wheatear - Kynance Cove 22.08.2017



Stonechat - Kennack Sands 24.08.2017

The Little Egret below was one of a pair that were just other side of the rocks to the south side of the Beach at Kennack Sands, just yards from the crowded beach.



Little Egret - Kennack Sands 21.08.2017

That's the last report from our holiday in Cornwall, a great week that was thoroughly enjoyed by all of us. Sarah and Frankie are already asking when they can go back.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Hulme, 01-Sep-17 10:58 PM GMT

Hi Neil,
Great reports from a fantastic part of the world. Shame I missed you by a day!
BWs, Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 01-Sep-17 11:13 PM GMT

What a brilliant set of photos from your Cornish trip, Neil. 😊 As Buggy said earlier, definitely on the wish list of places to visit next year, possibly more than once! 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 02-Sep-17 09:35 PM GMT

Cracking set of images from the Lost Gardens Neil – it looks like a brilliant place to visit 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 02-Sep-17 10:32 PM GMT

Thanks Neil,

Yes, it was a shame we missed...I didn't realise you had been down there until I came back and read you own excellent reports.

Thanks Dave,

I have been fortunate to have been down there twice this year, first in early June (Marsh Frits, 1st brood SPBF and more) and then again for this family holiday. I would certainly recommend a visit around either time.

Cheers Wurzel,

The Lost Gardens are well worth a visit, you can easily spend a good day wandering around the grounds.

Just before I continue, one more photo from Cornwall that I forgot to put in the last report.

On the Wednesday afternoon I was walking down the lane from the caravan site to towards the beach at Kennack Sands when something shot out of the verge to my left and landed on the tarmac in front of me. At first I thought it was some grass that had been blown across but when it moved I noticed it looked like the biggest grasshopper I have ever seen. It was in fact a Great Green Bush Cricket, the first adult version of these I have seen although I have seen smaller nymphs before. Those living down south may see these thing regularly but we quite simply don't see these around my patch and I was impressed by the size of it.

I took a couple of photos before moving it back into the vegetation before it got squashed by a passing car or possibly became a tasty snack for one of the many birds around.



Great Green Bush Cricket – Kennack Sands 23.08.2017

Saturday 2nd September.

Back to work for the past week, or rather 4 days because of the bank holiday which was spent mainly catching up on job around the house and garden. My butterfly fix for the past week has come in the afternoons after work in the garden with Red Admirals, Comma, Large and Small Whites, Holly Blues and Speckled Woods all being there at some point.



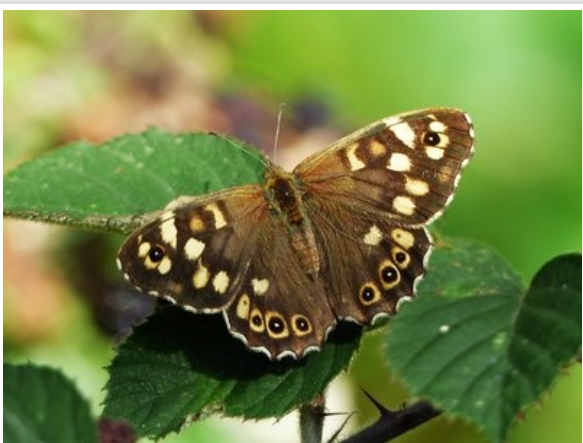
Red Admiral - Coverdale 27.08.2017



Red Admiral - Coverdale 27.08.2017



Large White - Coverdale 02.09.2017



Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 02.09.2017

The same Comma has been hanging around for the past few days feeding up on the overripe blackberries at the bottom of the garden.



Comma – Coverdale 01.09.2017



Comma – Coverdale 02.09.2017



Comma – Coverdale 02.09.2017



Comma - Coverdale 02.09.2017

Right then, off to Dorset in the morning for a few days 😊

Bye for now,m

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 02-Sep-17 11:11 PM GMT

Great garden shots Neil 😊 Looking forward to your Dorset report 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 03-Sep-17 07:11 AM GMT

I've thoroughly enjoyed reading your reports from Cornwall Neil (can I come next time? 😊😊) and seeing your lovely photos. Looking forward to the Dorset ones 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 03-Sep-17 11:32 PM GMT

Me too. And yes, you have the bird id's correct. The wheatears are preparing to migrate south, but the stonechats stay.

So you found the lost gardens of Hellegan? Esther rather likes it there...

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 04-Sep-17 08:19 AM GMT

Those gardens in Cornwall look beautiful, Neil, as do the butterflies, especially that Comma posing face down on the tree trunk.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterflysaurus rex, 04-Sep-17 10:08 PM GMT

You're bringing back some lovely memories of our family holidays in Cornwall there Neil, it's been a very long time since I was last there. Great images as usual. Now that you're heading off to Dorset you'll be stirring up even more great memories, I lived there for several years during the 90s. Looks like you're all having a fantastic time. 😊

Best wishes

James

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-17 07:37 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Wurzel, Pauline, Mark, David and James 😊 We all did indeed have a great week. 😊

Dorset - September 3rd to 7th part 1.

Jane and myself returned home yesterday from our last trip of the season, a few days spent down in Dorset staying in a B&B in Lulworth Cove. Anyone

who has read my diary over the past few years will know that we have been down there around the end of August and beginning of September a few times previously, although we didn't make it last year, choosing a week in Cornwall instead.

Having missed our Dorset trip last year I was determined to spend a few days there this year and although we also had our family holiday in Cornwall booked for August, I had also managed to sort my time off work to give me the opportunity for a few days in the first week of September. We usually aim for around this time as it coincides with the kids first week back at school after the summer holidays and so it is a little bit quieter...and of course Adonis Blues usually peak here around this time. Mind you, given the season this year with many species seeming to have been flying a bit earlier, particularly down south, I was wondering what we would find.

So it was that we arrived at our B&B on Sunday (3rd) afternoon after a gloomy drive down through almost constant rain. The forecast for the next few days looked to offer a mix of mostly cloud with some sunny spells but one of the staff at our B&B told us not to take any notice of the forecasts as they were never right for the Lulworth area...what a surprise!

As it turned out, Monday (4th) wasn't too bad, mostly cloudy but warm. We popped into Weymouth on the morning so that Jane could visit a couple of shops that she likes there and then stopped off for an hour in Osmington before heading back to Lulworth where I had a walk up Bindon Hill later on the afternoon.

Tuesday (5th) was cloudy and drizzly which turned to proper rain in the afternoon before clearing to a nice sunny early evening. We had a drive into Swanage on the morning and then went round to spend most of the of the day at RSPB Arne. Back at Lulworth later in the afternoon and with the skies clearing, I had a walk over Hambury Tout to Durdle Door.

Wednesday (6th) was the best day weather-wise with a mix of cloud and decent sunny spells. After breakfast I went to Durdle Door again for a couple of hours before returning for a cream tea with Jane. We had already agreed that if the weather was ok that I could make the most of it and go off butterflying again for the afternoon so I took the opportunity to go to Osmington again which in previous years has proved to be one of the best butterfly sites around this area, and so it happily proved to be again.

A total of 16 species of butterfly were seen, most of them across all the sites visited. More details on these to come but to start with...

Adonis Blues.

Living in the midlands, this is a species that have to travel to see and over the past few years I have enjoyed them in good numbers at various sites during my late season visits to Dorset. Missing our trip last year meant that I missed seeing this species in 2016 and so I was keen to catch up with their glorious shade of bright blue this year. In truth, I was unsure how long they would have been on the wing this season with some early emergences of many species being reported, but as their normal flight period here usually extends through September, I was hopeful to find some in good condition still.

I was well chuffed to find loads, in all sorts of conditions from well worn and faded to nice and fresh looking still. The first ones were seen on the Monday during the short stop at Osmington on the way back from Weymouth, followed later in the afternoon by some more up on Bindon Hill. On both of these occasions it was cloudy and quite breezy but nevertheless around 15-20 Adonis Blues were seen at each site.



Adonis Blue - Osmington 04.09.2017



Adonis Blue - Bindon Hill 04.09.2017



Adonis Blue - Bindon Hill 04.09.2017



Adonis Blue - Bindon Hill 04.09.2017



Adonis Blue - Bindon Hill 04.09.2017

On one occasion on Bindon Hill I watched a male chase a female into the grass and after a quick couple of seconds the male moved into position and they joined together. I must admit, I was quite surprised at how quickly it all happened with hardly any courtship as such.



Adonis Blue pair – Bindon Hill 04.09.2017

My second visit to Durdle Door on the Wednesday morning produced more butterflies than the day before including more Adonis Blues with maybe 30+ seen on the slopes and sheltered hollows above the famous rock arch.



Adonis Blue – Durdle Door 06.09.2017



Adonis Blue – Durdle Door 06.09.2017



Adonis Blue female - Durdle Door 06.09.2017

In previous years, the slopes along the path from Osmington Village to White Horse Hill have produced good numbers of Adonis Blues and so it proved to be again. My second visit on the Wednesday afternoon saw me seeing them all over the hillside, easily 100+ and probably many more as I find doing an accurate count when they are flying all over the place next to impossible and I would much rather just enjoy the experience of seeing them.



Adonis Blue - Osmington 06.09.2017



Adonis Blue - Osmington 06.09.2017



Adonis Blue pair – Osmington 06.09.2017

As at all the sites visited, males outnumbered females but there were plenty of the latter flying, most of which were predominately brown with a variable but light scattering of blue scales. The example below being typical of most of those seen.



Adonis Blue female – Osmington 06.09.2017

One particular female at Osmington caught my eye by having much more blue on all four wings, probably the bluest female Adonis I have ever seen.



Adonis Blue female – Osmington 06.09.2017



Adonis Blue female - Osmington 06.09.2017

Chalk Hill Blues.

My past visits to Bindon Hill have often produced some Chalk Hill Blues and during my last visit at the beginning of September 2015 there were plenty of surprisingly fresh examples still flying there. I was curious therefore to see if any were still around this time and sure enough there were a few individuals still hanging in there, no more than 5 or 6 at most. It seemed like a few more but it was a bit breezy up on the hillside and I am sure I counted the same individuals more than once as they were blown some considerable distance across the hill if they ventured far above the grass. Most of these were well past it and looking really tatty and faded although there were a couple of 'middle-aged' looking individuals still flying.



Chalk Hill Blue - Bindon Hill 04.09.2017



Chalk Hill Blue - Bindon Hill 04.09.2017



Chalk Hill Blue female – Bindon Hill 04.09.2017

More to come in the next report with some of the other species seen...

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 08-Sep-17 09:38 PM GMT

That's a proper kaleidoscope of blue, and that is a real stunner of a female Adonis!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-17 10:45 PM GMT

Agreed Bugboy, I can't recall seeing that much blue on a female Adonis 😊 Durdle Door is, in my humble/biased opinion the greatest place on Earth so any reports from anywhere remotely near there always pique my interest 😊 Good to see you're living up to the county motto; 'Who's afeard' and ignoring the forecast and getting out there, I think we should offer you honorary Dorsetian status 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 08-Sep-17 11:27 PM GMT

Beautiful Adonis, Neil, especially the blue females. 🍷 That last one is stunning. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 09-Sep-17 12:23 AM GMT

Wow! That Adonis female looks almost *ceronus*-like. Beautiful specimen.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 11-Sep-17 07:43 PM GMT

Thanks all for the comments 😊...that blue female certainly stood out from the crowd

Wurzel wrote:

... I think we should offer you honorary Dorsetian status 😊 :lol

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Cheers Wurzel, I feel truly honoured 😊😊

Dorset – September 3rd to 7th part 2.

In general, numbers of the other species of butterfly were not as high as I have seen in previous visits to this part of Dorset but this can be accounted

for by the weather which had turned wetter and cooler just before we went down. Also, for most of the time the wind was coming from the wrong direction for migrants which would explain my lack of sightings of Painted Lady and Hummingbird Hawk Moth, both of which I usually see down there. Mind you, I did see both of these the other week in Cornwall.

Nevertheless, as well as the Adonis Blues, some species were flying in good numbers, particularly on the Wednesday (6th) when we had some decent warm sunny periods.

Small Whites were easily the most numerous of the three common species, being seen everywhere in all conditions except when it was raining. I was surprised at how many I saw still flying in really quite dull cloudy weather although it often felt warm and muggy still.



Small White female - Lulworth Cove 04.09.2017



Small White male - Lulworth Cove 06.09.2017

Large Whites were also seen just about everywhere but not as numerous as the Small whites.



Large White female - Lulworth Cove 04.09.2017

There were usually a few around the clumps of valerian at Lulworth cove including in the small (and getting quite overgrown) wildlife garden by the visitor centre where the female below was seen. She spent some time adopting this rejection pose even though the only other butterflies around her were a couple of male Small Whites that did not show the slightest bit of interest in her. I guess just seeing their colour was enough to trigger the response.



Large White female - Lulworth Cove 06.09.2017

In one of my previous posts from Cornwall, I mentioned that over the years I have found some sites that are usually reliable in producing **Clouded Yellows**. Two of these sites are at Durdle Door and Osmington and sure enough they produced the goods this time with single examples at both. I saw the first one at Durdle Door on the Tuesday when I walked to the slopes above the rock arch in the late afternoon when the skies cleared after a wet day. This one was flitting about fairly slowly and settling regularly on the patches of bramble there, perhaps looking for a spot to roost up for the night. I have noticed before that underneath bramble leaves is a favoured roosting spot for this species where their underside markings blend in remarkably well.



Clouded Yellow - Durdle Door 05.09.2017



Clouded Yellow - Durdle Door 05.09.2017

When I went back to Durdle Door the following morning there was a Clouded Yellow flying about far more actively. I suspect that this was the same individual from the previous evening but couldn't get close enough to confirm one way or the other. There was also at least one and possibly two Clouded Yellows flying at Osmington on the Wednesday afternoon but in the warmer conditions they were much more active and kept well out of reach.

Brown Argus were seen at Bindon Hill, Durdle Door and Osmington, just a few at each site and mostly worn and faded. It wasn't until I saw the first of these that I realised that this species had somehow passed me by this year and that these were the first I had seen this season.



Brown Argus – Osmington 04.09.2017

Common Blues were also present at all three sites, again mostly worn and faded but a few fresh looking females were amongst them, particularly at Osmington where it could be difficult to tell them from the Adonis females without a good close up look.



Common Blue female – Osmington 06.08.2017

I am always pleased to see **Small Coppers** and these also showed up at all three sites. Some were looking worse for wear but there were some nice fresh examples amongst them.



Small Copper – Osmington 04.09.2017



Small Copper - Osmington 04.09.2017

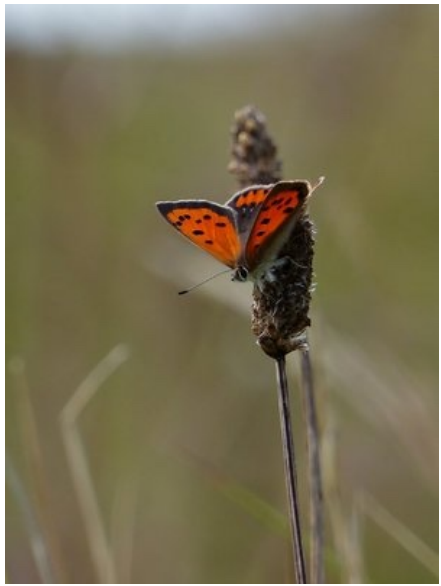


Small Copper - Durdle Door 06.09.2017

I spent some time watching one particularly nice fresh blue spotted female as she moved around the hillside at Osmington.



Small Copper - Osmington 06.09.2017



Small Copper - Osmington 06.09.2017



Small Copper - Osmington 06.09.2017

A few **Graylings** were still around at Durdle Door although not as many as I have seen here on previous visits and I didn't find any on Bindon Hill this time.



Grayling - Durdle Door 06.09.2017

Meadow Browns were flying at all three sites in good numbers, including some fresh looking examples. I have commented before about seeing increased numbers of females with extended orange patches on all four wings and found an example like this at Osmington.



Meadow Brown female – Osmington 06.09.2017

A couple of nice fresh looking **Commas** were seen at Osmington patrolling along the first part of the path through the hedgerows before it opens out across the hillside.



Comma – Osmington 06.09.2017

Other species seen but not photographed (or in some cases I just got really ropey record shots) included a few each of **Green-veined Whites**, **Speckled Wood**, **Small Heath**, **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Red Admiral**, all of which were seen at all three sites visited, and a single **Peacock** was seen at Osmington.

I mentioned in the last report that I had seen 16 species but I must have miscounted or forgotten about one 😊 because, including the Adonis and Chalk Hill blues in the previous post, I have just counted them up to 17.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 11-Sep-17 07:56 PM GMT

Another nice (and increasingly autumnal) selection, Neil 😊 That second Large White seems more strongly marked than usual, and the Common Blue female is attractively patterned – this species has pretty well disappeared round here now, so it's great to see a fresh one. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-17 10:26 PM GMT

Great report again Neil, really envious of the Cloudies 🍷 Need to get to the coast and hope that the storms haven't finished them off 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 11-Sep-17 11:02 PM GMT

Your first Large Cabbage White on the red valerian is just the shot I strive for—and usually fail! And your blue-spotted Cooper? That just gets 🍷

Funnily enough, I did consider going to Osmington myself last Wednesday, would love to have met up with you. Just about doable in a day. But the forecast wasn't reliable, so one for another day. We went to Dungeness instead.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 12-Sep-17 07:13 AM GMT

millerd wrote:

...That second Large White seems more strongly marked than usual..

Indeed. It's very bold, and reminiscent of the ones I see in the south of France. A highly attractive specimen.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 13-Sep-17 10:17 AM GMT

Hi! Neil. love your reports from Dorset, those Small Copper's shot's are great but that Grayling on the Blackberries get's my vote 😊
It's so unusual, Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 15-Sep-17 08:30 PM GMT

Thanks again for all your comments Dave, Wurzel, Mark, David and Goldie, very much appreciated as always 😊

essexbuzzard wrote:

...Funnily enough, I did consider going to Osmington myself last Wednesday, would love to have met up with you. Just about doable in a day. But the forecast wasn't reliable, so one for another day. We went to Dungeness instead.

Yes, it would have been great to meet up Mark. As you say the forecast was all over the place and even at that end I was very much playing it by ear depending on what the weather was doing at the time.

Dorset – September 3rd to 7th part 3.

In my earlier report from Dorset I mentioned that the Tuesday (5th Sept.) was a mostly dull and wet day so we decided to drive into Swanage and then decide what to do depending on what the weather was looking like later. If the weather had been a bit better we would probably have carried on to Durlston Country Park but with the grey skies and drizzle looking to be set in for the day we decided to go and have a look at **RSPB Arne** which was somewhere we had not visited previously.

We pulled into the car park at Arne and I went to the visitor centre to ask about the paths and if there were any that Jane could manage with her limited mobility. I have mentioned in the past that Jane had a stroke, nearly seven years ago now, which left her left leg and arm very weak and she needs to use a walking frame to walk any distance and the effort tires her out very quickly. A very helpful lady assistant gave me a map of the reserve which showed some easy access paths further in the reserve and gave us a pass so that we could drive along a track to where there are a couple of disabled parking spaces (Jane has a blue badge) closer to these paths.

Parking up, we set off along one of the paths which passed through some nice mixed woodland with lots of moss covered rocks underneath.



Moss covered rocks – Arne 05.09.2017

The drizzle had stopped for a bit and although there was still a grey overcast it felt fairly warm and humid and a few Speckled Woods were seen dancing about along the sides of the path. We headed towards a hide which overlooked some reed beds and Poole Harbour and where we spent a little while watching various birds which included a couple of Curlews, Little Egrets, Oystercatchers and Redshanks(I think...as always, I would welcome any corrections on the birds).



Curlew, Oystercatcher...and Redshanks? – Arne 05.09.2017



Curlew – Arne 05.09.2017



Little Egret – Arne 05.09.2017

After a while we left the hide and carried on on along another path which looped around though more woodland and an area of heathland to take us back to where we had left the car. Along the way we spotted what looked like a family group of Japanese Sika Deer...back at the visitor centre later in the afternoon I was told that all the deer around the reserve are this introduced species.



Japanese Sika Deer – Arne 05.09.2017

We then went back to the main car park and Jane said that she would stop in the car and read her kindle for a bit if I wanted to have a look down any of the other paths. I decided follow the path across Coombe Heath to see if I could spot any Ospreys, apparently three had been reported that morning. Earlier in the year a number of young Ospreys were translocated to Arne as part of a project to establish a population on the south coast and some of these were still around before leaving for their long journey to Africa. It is hoped that these birds will return to the Poole Harbour area and form the nucleus of a south coast breeding population.

Anyway, I had just set off down the path when the drizzle returned...and soon after turned to proper rain, just as I was walking along the most exposed part of the path across the heath. Reaching a viewpoint which overlooked the channel and reed beds which are apparently one of the best places to see Ospreys here, there was a chap with a large scope on a tripod who pointed out to me an Osprey huddled up in dead tree across the opposite side of the reed beds. This was far too distant for me to get a shot with my FZ200, especially through the squally rain which was now blowing in, but I did manage to get a reasonable view through my binoculars, not brilliant in the conditions but the first Osprey I had ever seen so it was good enough for me.

I then went back to Jane at the car and we decided to head back towards Lulworth Cove where it finally started to clear up late in the afternoon and turn into a nice early evening.



Rain clouds receding to the east and the sun out over Lulworth Cove and Bindon Hill – 05.09.2017

and a few more random shots to finish off...



Lulworth Cove and Stair Hole - 04.09.2017



Durdle Door - 05.09.2017



Looking back towards Osmington village - 06.09.2017



Lulworth Cove - 04.09.2017

So then, a real mixture of weather, some good, some less so, but overall a great few days in another one of my favourite parts of the country 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 16-Sep-17 12:11 AM GMT

One of my favourite parts of our country too, Neil. And some very nice images there.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 16-Sep-17 10:51 AM GMT

I love Dorset Neil, if we could afford to move it would definitely be to Dorset. Goldie 😊 Lovely shots , Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 16-Sep-17 10:05 PM GMT

Lovely shots of my favourite part of the country as well, Neil. Looks like we could between us all found a thriving butterfly-loving community down there! 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-17 07:45 PM GMT

Yep to the Redshanks Neil 😊 Beautiful images Neil, the Citizenship documents are in the post 😊😊 Great news about the Osprey, I've seen a few round the harbour but they've always been 'lucky chances' s it would be nice to go knowing they're definitely about in future years 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 17-Sep-17 09:43 PM GMT

Mightily evocative landscape shots there, Neil. That part of the south coast is iconic and I envy those who live there. I'm sure it still looks gorgeous on a sunny winter's day!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 19-Sep-17 08:46 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments Mark, Goldie, Dave, Wurzel and David 😊 I reckon that part of the Dorset coastline between Weymouth and Swanage is one of the top locations for late season butterflies.

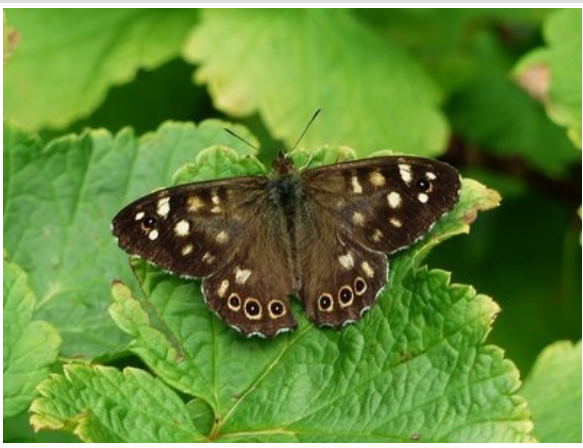
That was my last trip this season and since going back to work last week it has certainly turned into Autumn proper around here. I am now driving to work in the dark at 06.00 and by the time I am back home again in the afternoon most of the garden is covered in long shadows, that is when it has not been lashing down with some heavy rain.

I didn't get out anywhere last weekend, Saturday was wet and windy and whilst Sunday was a bit better I had too much stuff to catch up with around the house.

Nevertheless, I managed to see 6 species of butterfly in the garden on Sunday. Large and Small Whites passed through as did a rather forlorn looking Holly Blue. The Speckled Woods are still there and at one point there were 4 males chasing each other around. A single Comma and Red Admiral spent some time on the Ivy flowers although only the Red Admiral came low enough to get a photo.



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 17.09.2017



Speckled Wood - Coverdale 17.09.2017



Red Admiral - Coverdale 17.09.2017

Since returning from Dorset I have only put the moth trap out in the garden on one occasion, last Saturday night when I had 29 moths of 9 species. Most nights have been either clear and cold or wet and windy, none of which make for good trapping conditions. There are a number of species that don't appear until around this time of year, one of which is Lunar Underwing of which I had 8 in the trap on Saturday night. This species comes in a number of colour forms which could easily be taken for different species. This variation in some species can be a challenge for identification but is one of the aspects of moths that I find so interesting.



Lunar Underwings – three different colour forms in the same trap on the same night.

I am hoping to be able to get out to check out one of my local spots this coming weekend so fingers crossed for the weather.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 19-Sep-17 09:26 PM GMT

The weekend isn't looking too bad, Neil, so best of luck with your trip. Meanwhile, those Speckled Woods are impeccable. I love the chocolate brown ground colour when they're fresh.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 20-Sep-17 10:04 AM GMT

Hope you get a few blues and maybe a Copper to add to the 6 species from your garden. 😊 Unfortunately it seems the season is going to be 'early to bed' 😊 Interesting to see such variation within a species, a bit like the range you can find in Heath Frits 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 22-Sep-17 08:41 PM GMT

Hi David, I have seen fresh Speckled Woods described as looking like chocolate and cream which I think is spot on 😊

Cheers Wurzel, the range of variation in some moth species has given me a new perspective on that in butterflies and once you start looking you realise that many so-called named abs can be quite common and actually seem to fall within normal variation as well.

Friday 22nd September

My car was booked in for a service today and after dropping it off I went for a walk, heading for a recreation park that I know that is about fifteen minutes walk away. This park is typical of similar ones found everywhere with large areas of short grass and children's play areas and with trees and shrubs around the perimeter with large patches of brambles. It was a beautiful early afternoon with plenty of sun and picking the side of the park where the sun was shining on the bramble patches I started to slowly wander along to see what I could find.

Coming to one particularly sheltered little spot I spotted a Comma feeding on some over ripe blackberries and stopped to take a couple of photos. I soon noticed another one and then a Red Admiral a little further back. During the next 30 minutes or so I saw at least 5, maybe 6 Commas and 4 Red Admirals along this one stretch of maybe 20 yards or so and took a few photos.



Comma - Hillfield Park 22.09.2017



Comma - Hillfield Park 22.09.2017



Comma - Hillfield Park 22.09.2017



Comma - Hillfield Park 22.09.2017



Comma - Hillfield Park 22.09.2017



Comma and Red Admiral - Hillfield Park 22.09.2017



Red Admiral – Hillfield Park 22.09.2017



Red Admiral – Hillfield Park 22.09.2017



Red Admiral – Hillfield Park 22.09.2017

I carried on my slow wandering, seeing another couple each of Commas and Red Admirals plus a couple of Speckled Woods but these were all on the move along the tree line and not stopping.

By this time it had been about an hour and a half since I had dropped my car off and I had a call on my mobile to tell me it was ready so I wandered back to collect it, spotting a distant 'white' along the way which was too far off to ID.

A cracking little walk, all the more enjoyable as I hadn't planned it, just decided to head that way on the spur of the moment to kill the time whilst the car was being serviced and had taken my camera 'just in case'.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 22-Sep-17 08:57 PM GMT

Just shows you should always take your camera wherever you go, just in case. Lots of commas round my way too, Neil. At least when the sun shines, which I hasn't much lately! But the small Torts seem to have gone.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 23-Sep-17 10:40 PM GMT

Beautiful sequence of images Neil, especially the really evocative two species shot 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 24-Sep-17 09:23 PM GMT

Splendid autumnal images, Neil. Commas and Red Admirals getting sozzled on the blackberries just epitomises the season. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 26-Sep-17 05:51 PM GMT

Nice to see others getting an audience with Commas, Neil. After an excellent spring, I wasn't sure that they'd be about in good numbers in late summer but there seem to have been plenty just about everywhere within their range.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 27-Sep-17 05:45 PM GMT

Love the Comma on the Blackberries Neil, real Autumn shots 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 27-Sep-17 07:46 PM GMT

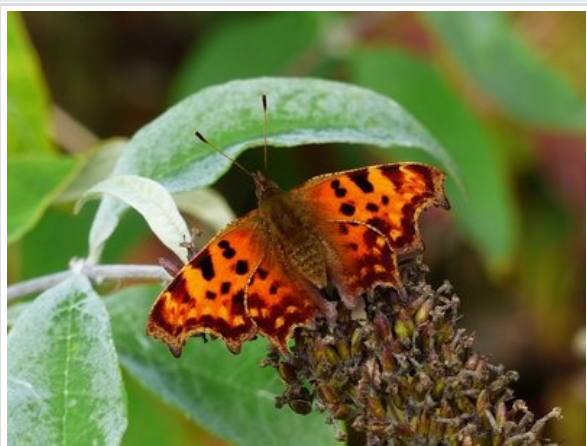
Lovely images Neil, very autumnal 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 01-Oct-17 10:58 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments Mark, Wurzel, Dave, David, Goldie and Bugboy 😊

Red Admirals and Commas have both been around in good numbers over the last couple of weeks which has been a good job really as apart from the ever reliable speckled Woods and a few Whites, I have seen nothing else for a while now. My local patch seems to have fizzled out for the season and a walk around my spot at Castle Hills last Sunday (24th Sept.) on a reasonably sunny afternoon only produced the species mentioned above. I was hoping for late Common Blues or Small Coppers but despite a good search of the usual 'hot spots' there was no sign of either.



Comma - Castle Hills 24.09.2017

There has also been a steady flow of Red Admirals visiting the Ivy flowers in my garden.



Red Admiral – Coverdale 24.09.2017

I was interested to see that the blue markings in the corner of the hindwings on this individual have been taken out by what appears to be a bird strike which makes me wonder if they function like eye-spots as a defence mechanism.



Red Admiral – Coverdale 24.09.2017

I have been continuing to put the moth trap out in the garden, on average twice a week through September. Overall numbers have been steadily reducing but with some Autumn specialities now turning up my count for this year is now up to 236 species of which 144 are macros and 92 micros.



Dusky Thorn – Coverdale 20.09.2017



Red-green Carpet – Coverdale 20.09.2017



Lunar Underwing – Coverdale 20.09.2017



Ypsolopha sequella – an attractive little micro and a new one for the garden 23.09.2017

As I write this it is raining again outside and loads of leaves are being blown off the trees...Autumn proper is here.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 02-Oct-17 10:31 PM GMT

Lovely looking Comma Neil, I love it when they pull that pose 😊 Interesting comment about the marks on Red Admirals, definitely on to something there as I've witnessed similarly attacked Admirals 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 03-Oct-17 11:00 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, I've noticed the marks too on the Admiral's, we've had such a lot in the garden and quite a few were like that! Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 03-Oct-17 11:21 PM GMT

Love your moths, Neil, especially the Red-Green Carpet. I suppose it's that time of year when one can pay more attention to them, given the relative absence of their butterfly brethren.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 06-Oct-17 09:19 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel and Goldie, I would hazard a guess that the blue spots maybe attract the attention of birds in much the same way that eye spots do.

Thanks David, there are a number of moth species that don't appear until the autumn and a few that are winter specialists. The Red-green Carpet flies from September to November and overwinters as an adult and may occasionally come to light on mild winter nights, I had one in my trap last December.

It seems that Red Admirals are still around many parts of the country in good numbers and I have spotted a few from my car on the way home from work this past week although I have not seen any more in the garden.

The only other butterflies I have seen have been a couple of Large whites passing through the garden...or maybe the same one hanging around, and a few Speckled Woods. A couple of males are still holding their corners although they are looking well worn now and I spotted a nice female basking in a sunny spot earlier today before the clouds rolled in this afternoon.



Speckled Wood female - Coverdale 06.10.2017

I see that Wurzel has posted that the favourite photo threads are to start soon so it is time to start looking back through my photos 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 06-Oct-17 10:14 PM GMT

Great looking Specklie Neil 😊

"the favourite photo threads are to start soon so it is time to start looking back through my photos" - this is my favourite 'onerous task' 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wutrzal

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 07-Oct-17 08:41 PM GMT

Love your Speckie Neil, it's great to see the green colour coming through in your shot some thing that's not always caught in Speckie shots 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 09-Oct-17 12:05 AM GMT

Normally, we take Speckled Woods for granted, Neil, but at this time of year they are precious so well done for capturing such a fresh example.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 13-Oct-17 08:35 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Wurzel, Goldie and David 😊

Still a few Speckled Wood hanging on here but mostly looking to be on their last legs now and apart from a couple of Red Admirals last Sunday that has been it for me this week. By the time I get in from work the shadows cast by the trees and shrubs around my garden are lengthening and any Specklies seen are usually fluttering about high up where the higher branches still catch the sun when it has been out.



Red Admiral – Coverdale 08.10.2017

Back in mid August, I had a nice fat female Poplar Hawk Moth in the garden moth trap where she laid a small batch of 15 eggs. Poplar Hawks are usually on the wing from May until July but there is often a partial second brood in August/September, particularly down south, and this phenomenon has also been occurring more regularly further north in recent years.

The eggs consequently hatched and I have been rearing the resulting caterpillars, 12 of which are still surviving, 3 having died shortly after hatching for some reason. Apart from Poplar and Aspen, they will also take Willow and Sallow, the latter being what I am feeding these on, simply because it is easier for me to get hold of.



Poplar Hawk Moth Caterpillar 4th instar – 07.10.2017



Poplar Hawk Moth caterpillars showing 2 different green colour forms



Poplar Hawk Moth Caterpillar 4th instar - 07.10.2017

As well as the Poplar Hawks, I also have some Yellow-tail Moth caterpillars, again from a batch of eggs that a female left in the trap. These hibernate as small caterpillars and continue feeding in the spring.



Yellow-tail Moth caterpillars - 07.10.2017



Yellow-tail Moth caterpillars - 07.10.2017

Looks like we may well be having a bit of good weather over the weekend so it may be that I can fit in a wander around a local spot for a look...fingers crossed.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 13-Oct-17 08:52 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, your Hawk Moth reminds me of a dinosaur ,it's a lovely colour of green too.Goldie 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 13-Oct-17 08:55 PM GMT

Lovely chunky hawk moth caterpillars, Neil. I hope they get through ok. Best of luck with the weekend weather too – let's hope we get sun with the warmth that's promised. 😊

Dave

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 13-Oct-17 11:18 PM GMT

Good luck over the weekend Neil 😊 Interesting to see the two colour forms, do they show a preference for different feed sources to match their colouration?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 14-Oct-17 09:03 PM GMT

Beautiful, high quality images of those moth larvae, Neil. The hawk moth in particular looks impressive, although the Yellow-Tails are attractive in their own right too.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 24-Oct-17 08:40 PM GMT

Thanks all for your comments, greatly appreciated as always 😊

The Poplar Hawk caterpillars recently started wandering around which is the usual behaviour when looking for somewhere to pupate so they were moved to a plastic tub with a few inches of soil and leaf mould to burrow into.
The Yellow-tail caterpillars have joined some leaves together with silk and gone into hibernation in small groups within these little shelters.

The other weekend didn't turn out anywhere like the forecast, grey and breezy, and then we had Ophelia which livened things up around here a bit, although not as much as a bit further west.

The last butterfly that I saw around here was a solitary Red Admiral last week and although there is always the chance that I may see a hibernator tempted out again by a sunny spell, I am not expecting to see any more butterflies now until next season.

As is usual this time of the year, increasing numbers of birds are coming to the garden feeders including regular visits from a couple of Great Spotted Woodpeckers.

The photo below was taken through the window whilst I watched the activity on the feeders from the comfort of my back room 😊



Great Spotted Woodpecker – Coverdale 20.10.2017

I don't know what has been happening to the time lately but the past few weeks have shot by. Lets hope that the winter flies by likewise.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 25-Oct-17 09:04 AM GMT

Great shot of Woody Neil 😊 Fingers crossed for a 'good' winter and a prompt return to March 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Andrew555, 25-Oct-17 10:24 AM GMT

I like your caterpillars Neil, I always try and get a pic and an id if I see one.

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 25-Oct-17 10:15 PM GMT

Nice Woodpecker, Neil.

Keep your eyes open for developments on the butterfly/moth larva front. In a couple of weeks we may have little else to cheer us.

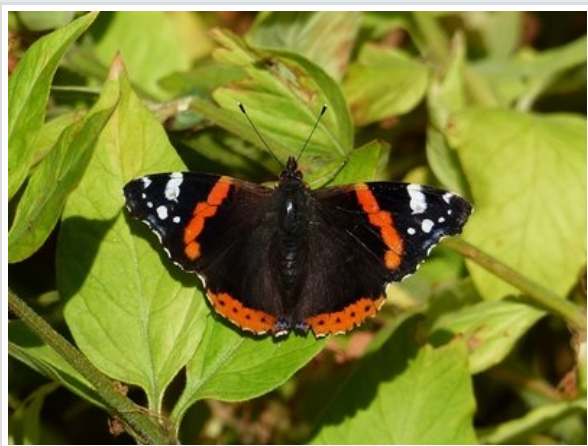
Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 30-Oct-17 08:49 PM GMT

Thanks for your great comments Wurzel, Andrew and David 😊

Sunday 29th October

A pleasantly sunny Sunday morning here tempted me out to do a bit of gardening, although with the lower sun at this time of year casting a large part of the garden into shadow it did feel a bit nippy with the temperature struggling into double figures. Even so, there are still a couple of sunny patches and I was pleased to see a Red Admiral had staked a claim to one and spent most of the morning chasing away anything that came close before returning to bask.



Red Admiral - Coverdale 29.10.2017



Red Admiral - Coverdale 29.10.2017

Recent Garden Moths

The moth trap has been out in the garden a few times on the milder and less windy nights through October with some nice autumn species turning up.



Green-brindled Crescent - Coverdale 13.10.2017



November Moth - One of a few closely related species that are difficult to tell apart.



Brick - Coverdale 15.10.2017



Feathered Thorn – 23.10.2017



Large Wainscot – 25.10.2017



Silver-Y – More often seen during the day, this was the first one this year to come to the trap at night.



Shoulder-striped Wainscot – a very late example of this species which normally flies in a single brood from late May to Late July

This morning we had the first proper frost around here and I had to clear my car windscreen when I set off for work at 06.00. Looks like the rest of the week is going to be bit nippy too.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 30-Oct-17 09:03 PM GMT

That Green-brindled Crescent is a right little stunner!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-17 10:59 AM GMT

I thought exactly what Bugboy thought Neil 😊 Cracking shot 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 02-Nov-17 10:36 PM GMT

You certainly make up for your relative lack of butterflies with your fabulous array of moths, Neil. Some real crackers in there.

Re: Neil Freeman

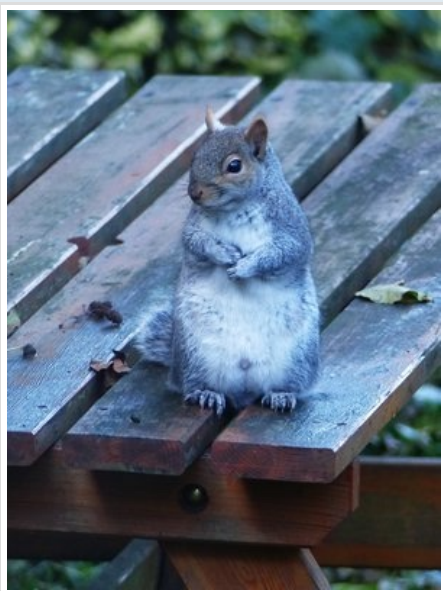
by Neil Freeman, 06-Nov-17 08:01 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, Bugboy and David 😊

The moths do help at this time of year although their numbers are also dwindling with the recent cold nights and frosty mornings. Nevertheless, the trap is still going out occasionally as there are some species I would like to see that only fly at this time of year, and a few that are winter specialists and have yet to appear.

Nothing much else to report this past week, we have had some overnight temperatures down to zero and some frosty mornings with daytime temperatures even in the sun not often rising above single figures.

A few random shots below from the garden, taken as usual through the window from the comfort of my back room.



I know some people call them tree rats but I couldn't resist taking a shot.



Woody is still visiting...at least I think it is the same one.



A trio of Blue Tits



Great Tit, Coal Tit and Blue Tit.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Andrew555, 07-Nov-17 09:40 AM GMT

Nice shots from your garden Neil, and great moths too. I've got quite a few pics of them taken 'in the wild', but I'm no expert and some remain stubbornly unidentified, there are so many of them!

Cheers

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 08-Nov-17 07:26 PM GMT

The three Tit shot is a great one Neil, especially as you've captured the stripe down the back of the head on the Coalie, they're often the most nervy at the feeders but the one seems to have gotten stuck in 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 08-Nov-17 08:11 PM GMT

Love all the birds, Neil, especially the woodpecker. Must admit, our local birds have been hammering the feeders for the last few days too. I'm sure they can sense cold weather's on its way.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 17-Nov-17 08:59 PM GMT

Thanks Andrew. I have only really been looking at the moths for a couple of years and started running the trap in my garden in spring 2016. With over 880 species of macro moths and 1600 plus micro moths there are plenty to confuse me 😊

Cheers Wurzel 😊 yes, those Coalies are usually very quick to dart in to the feeders and out again. One of my favourite Tit species, more subtle colours than the Great or Blues.

Thanks David, That woodpecker is a daily visitor at the moment and is demolishing the fat blocks 😊

With some cold nights and frosty mornings it is actually feeling like a proper November now although there was a milder spell mid week when I put the moth trap out in the garden to see what was about.

Just two species of macro came to the trap, a worn and slightly late Lesser Yellow Underwing and a couple of Red-green Carpets which is a species that overwinters as an adult and will often come to light on milder winter nights.



Red-green Carpet - Coverdale 15.11.2017

There were also half a dozen of a couple of species of micro moths in the trap, interestingly enough both species which have arrived in this country as accidental imports on plants from Australia. The first of these is the Light Brown Apple Moth (*Epiphyas postvittana*) which is believed to have first arrived here in the 1930s and rapidly spread across the country, becoming very common in some areas, including my garden where I catch these in every month of the year.



Light Brown apple Moth – A typical male of this variable species



Light Brown Apple Moth – a larger female

The second introduced micro species is *Tachystola acroxantha* – sometimes called the Ruddy Streak – which apparently was first recorded in Devon in 1908 but remained a localised southern species until recently when it has rapidly expanded its range northwards to Lancashire and has become common in some areas. I get loads of these in my garden from around late April onwards through the year and it seems to be common around Warwickshire although I do know of some local moth trappers who have yet to see one.



Tachystola acroxantha – Coverdale 15.11.2017

And a few garden bird photos from last weekend,



Nuthatch and Blue Tit



Great Tit in the bushes.



Robin



Coal Tit and Blue Tit.



Nuthatch



Goldfinch – first time I have seen one of these on the peanuts...they usually go for the black sunflower seeds.

Looks like another cold weekend ahead but apparently it might turn a bit milder again next week...we'll see.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 18-Nov-17 02:12 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, lovely shots of the birds, 😊 We've got a Squirrel in the garden that's always on the peanuts 😊 my Husbands tried all sorts of ways to stop it from taking them all but it started to dig the bulbs up then 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 19-Nov-17 08:26 AM GMT

I'd heard that about the Apple Moth – wasn't it accidentally imported from Australia? Perhaps they were getting their own back but much in a much more subtle way? 😊
Great Nuthatch shot – one of my all time favourite birds they are; great colours, great calls, great behaviour and they also have a cheeky look about them 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 19-Nov-17 10:16 AM GMT

Your garden is a proper little wildlife haven, Neil. Butterflies, moths and birds aplenty. There looks to be plenty to keep you interested through the winter.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Andrew555, 20-Nov-17 01:08 PM GMT

Lovely sights Neil, and interesting info. 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 20-Nov-17 07:33 PM GMT

Very jealous of your garden: Coal Tits, Nuthatch, Woodpecker's and Bullfinch to add to the more common visitors 🌿 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 20-Nov-17 07:43 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, I have one of these on my feeder which is effective at stopping the squirrels climbing the pole and it is too far for them to jump from the nearest shrubs.

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Garden-Universal-Squirrel-Baffle-Accessory/dp/B06ZYXHV9X/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1511205300&sr=8-2&keywords=squirrel+baffle

They used to try but seem to have learned they cannot get at the feeders and seem content with the stuff that the birds drop to the ground.

Cheers Wurzel, yep, LBAMs were introduced from Australia as mentioned in my report in the paragraph above the shots of them 😊

Thanks David, just a mature suburban garden that is not tidied up too much 😊

Thanks Andrew, glad you like them 😊

Edit; Just spotted your comment Bugboy. Thanks, there is certainly plenty to keep me interested 😊

The shot below shows a typical November scene in my garden, taken from up by the house. the feeders usually contain a general mix of seeds, black sunflower seeds, peanuts and a fat block. You can also see the anti-squirrel baffle...which looks like it needs cleaning 😊



This is the time of year when I am supposed to be catching up on all those jobs that don't get done in the summer when I am out and about. Trouble is I am easily distracted and even when working inside am always looking out of the windows to see if anything is about...such as this chap on Sunday.



One of the local foxes lurking about down the garden.

Also on Sunday, I had a go with the video function on my FZ200 and took this short clip of the Great Spotted Woodpecker that has been visiting lately.

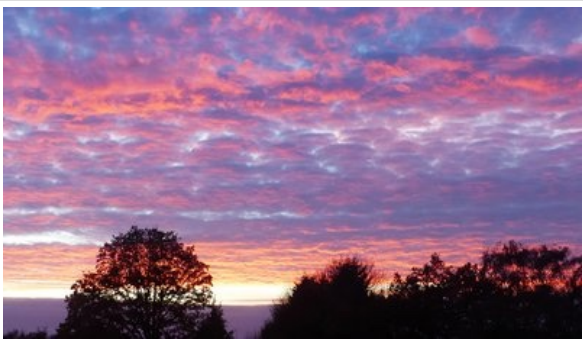
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmAQk_NFJ-s

And finally there was a nice sunset to be seen from the garden yesterday evening. The first shot was taken from in the garden...



Fire in the sky - Coverdale 19.11.2017

and this one was taken upstairs from a bedroom window to get a different viewpoint.



Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 20-Nov-17 10:26 PM GMT

I knew I'd read it somewhere Neil 😊 That's the danger of reading through PDs and not answering immediately, coming back to them later, oh and also having 15 million other things on your mind at the same time 😊😊
Perhaps the Fox will act as a Squirrel deterrent? 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 21-Nov-17 11:14 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, we've got a stand like that, never thought to get a globe to go with it 😊 I showed it to my Husband so it's all systems go 😊 Lovely shots of the Sunsets , nothing but rain here lately 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Andrew555, 22-Nov-17 01:45 PM GMT

Nice little clip Neil, trying out the video on my camera is something I've been meaning to do. 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 22-Nov-17 03:02 PM GMT

Great garden images, Neil. Looks pretty 'dapper' for November!

Lovely sunset too. The colours are most unusual.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 24-Nov-17 08:03 PM GMT

I know what you mean Wurzel, I often skim through a few threads with the intention of returning to them when I have more time...and then forget where I was 😊😊

Good luck with the Squirrel baffle Goldie, I have had mine a few years now and it works a treat 😊

Thanks Andrew, I must admit I have never bothered much with the video function on my camera...something to try out on some butterflies next season perhaps.

Thanks David, the colours of that sunset in the two photos actually looked very similar to my eye at the time I took the photos. Just goes to show how a digital camera can capture the colours differently at different times depending on lighting conditions and viewpoint. I have noticed this before with photos I have taken of the same butterfly but from different angles which have sometimes made it look like different individuals.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 01-Dec-17 08:12 PM GMT

Friday December 1st

The first day of meteorological winter and in common with many parts of the country we have seen our first snow. In fact we had our first snowfall last Saturday when we had a couple short flurries during the morning, not much but good sized flakes for about 15 minutes each time. After a slightly milder start to the week it then went cold again with frosty mornings and a biting north wind for the rest of the week.

Not only has it been cold, but it has now reached the time of year when not only do I go to work in the dark but it is getting dark on my way home as well which means that I don't see much daylight until Friday lunchtime when I finish for the weekend.

Consequently, not much to post apart from a few birds from the garden last weekend. Given that Pete is trying to reduce the files on UKB I am not sure if I should be posting these but some members seem to find them interesting during these cold and dark months when there is not much else about.



I am getting more Goldfinches in the garden than recent years



Long-tailed Tits always show up in little gangs



The female GSW is still visiting.



*One of a pair of Song Thrushes (I think) that were taking the berries from a deciduous berberis
I must start thinking about putting a post or two together on looking back on my season.*

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 03-Dec-17 10:03 AM GMT

Looking forward to your look back if that makes sense 😊😄 Good spot of the Song Thrush, they're much neater and browner than Mistle Thrushes I always think 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Andrew555, 04-Dec-17 08:58 AM GMT

Damn I wish I had a garden! Good stuff Neil. 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 04-Dec-17 06:55 PM GMT

I envy your Bird feeder, with images like those, Neil.
But I have a Cat, so any encouraged Birds in my garden would become bait.
Fortunately most are too quick for him !.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 08-Dec-17 07:52 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I know what you mean about the Song Thrush looking neater than the Mistle Thrush. I also look for the shape of the spots, they seem to be a bit more elongated on the Song Thrush.

Thanks Andrew, the garden certainly helps to get through the winter months, at least at the weekend as it is dark when I get in from work in the week.

Thanks Trevor, we have a cat too. The feeder is out of his reach and he always wears a collar with a bell on it.

Friday 8th December

A couple of (relatively) mild nights earlier in the week tempted me to put the moth trap out to see if anything was about. The answer was 'not much', just two moths on Monday night, one Light Brown Apple Moth (micro) which is a species I see every month of the year, but a male Mottled Umber was the other one which was a first for the garden which made it worthwhile. This is a common and widespread species which has a single generation from October through to January so is a true winter species. The males are very variable but this is also a species that has completely flightless females
<https://www.ukmoths.org.uk/species/erannis-defoliaria/>



Mottled Umber – Coverdale 04.12.2017

It has been a bitterly cold day today with a daytime temperature that didn't rise above 2 degrees and as I write this there is a light covering of snow outside. We didn't get as much snow here as they had just a little further west but according to the forecast our turn is on Sunday.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 09-Dec-17 09:19 PM GMT

Yes, I think many of us can expect a bit of the white stuff tonight and tomorrow. No moths this weekend!

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 10-Dec-17 05:42 PM GMT

Cheers Mark, we did indeed have some of the white stuff...in fact rather a lot of it 😊

Sunday 10th December

Well, the weather forecast was bang on for around here, it started snowing sometime in the early hours and by the time I got up just after 08.00 there was already a good covering of at least a couple of inches. Since then it has not stopped, only varying from light stuff to periods of larger flakes and as I write this there is a blanket of at least 6 inches over everything. Furthermore it is forecast to continue snowing until around 04.00 in the morning so tomorrow's journey to work is looking like it could be 'interesting'.

There have been loads of birds in the garden today, I guess their natural foods are covered with a blanket of snow so they come into the gardens looking for sustenance.

As usual, in between the household stuff, I took a few snaps through the windows from the comfort of inside the house.

First off, some general views taken through the day...



And some of the birds...



Great Spotted Woodpecker



Blue Tit in the snow.



There is something just 'right' about a Robin in the snow.



Another Blue Tit in the bushes



Chaffinch



A pair of Chaffinches picking up seed dropped from the feeders above them.



Male Bullfinch



Two male Bullfinches



Bullfinch pair.

With freezing temperatures forecast for the next few days and maybe some more snow on the way later in the week, looks like we could be in for a bit of proper winter...at last.

Bye for now,

Neil

Re: Neil Freeman

by MikeOxon, 10-Dec-17 06:52 PM GMT

I envy you the Bullfinches in the garden 🐦 Nothing unusual here yet but if the cold snap continues, we'll probably see an invasion of Winter thrushes.

Very nice set of photos.

Mike

Re: Neil Freeman

by Andrew555, 11-Dec-17 08:48 AM GMT

Nice shots Neil, a bit of snow fell here on the SE London / Kent border but nothing like you have.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 12-Dec-17 08:40 AM GMT

Brilliant Christmas Card shots Neil – especially those Bullfinches – I'm seeing a few more of them about now but still haven't managed to capture them on film 🐦🐦😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 12-Dec-17 10:49 PM GMT

Fabulous array of winter garden birds, Neil. Your garden is Christmas card worthy! I think Swansea must be virtually the only city to have escaped even a dusting of the 'white stuff'.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 15-Dec-17 08:09 PM GMT

Many thanks for the comments Mike, Andrew, Wurzel and David...very much appreciated as always 😊

We had a bit more snow last night, not much and then it turned to rain...and then it froze making for treacherous conditions early this morning on my way into work.

Anyway, this is UK Butterflies so I suppose I had better post something to do with butterflies 😊

So what did I think of my 2017 season? As always my impressions are based on what I saw around my local patch plus various trips around the country. Other people may have different thoughts depending on where they live, for example the south east appeared to be a lot warmer and drier than my patch here in the midlands, particularly during the first part of the season.

Looking back at 2017 part 1 – Spring.

My own personal season started in late March which is fairly normal for me with the past few years all producing my first sightings during the last week of the month. I have still not yet seen a Red Admiral early in the year although there is beginning to be some evidence that they are occasionally successfully overwintering in the midlands as they already seem to be doing in the south.

My first butterfly this year was a Comma in my garden on the afternoon of Friday March 24th, followed the next day by a few more seen at one of my local spots along with a few Small Tortoiseshells.



Comma – Bickenhill 25.03.2017



Small Tortoiseshell – Langley Hall 31.03.2017

I was surprised not to see any Peacocks during this visit as they are usually one of the first species seen, but they did start showing up from the following week albeit in fairly low numbers. In fact all three of these hibernators seemed to be in lower numbers than previous years.



Peacock - Bickenhill 02.04.2017

The first weekend of April produced my first Brimstones plus singles of Orange-tip and Small White, both these latter two species being a bit early for around here, mid-April being more usual for these to start showing up. Speckled Woods, Holly Blues plus Large and Green-veined Whites soon followed during the following week or so. By mid April I was seeing all the species that I would expect to see around my local spots with Orange-tips in particular seeming to be having a good year although numbers of most other species were just average at best.



Orange-tip - Castle Hills 18.04.2017



Large White - Coverdale 15.04.2017



Green-veined White – Castle Hills 18.04.2017



Speckled Wood – Coverdale 15.04.2017



Holly Blue – Coverdale 30.04.2017

The good weather in the first half of April wasn't to last and by the second half of the month there were plenty of dull cloudy days although there were still some nice warm ones and I managed to get out and see plenty of butterflies around my local Spots. So far, most species that I had seen were appearing slightly early albeit not as early as I was seeing in reports from down south.

Early May saw me taking a trip over to the Wyre Forest to see Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and a bit later in the month I visited Ryton Wood Meadows for Green Hairstreaks and Bishops Hill for Small Blues, all of which I seem to have caught early in their flight period this year before their numbers had built up and with most examples seen being nice and fresh. The visits to the Wyre Forest and Bishops Hill were both in cool, cloudy and showery conditions which were becoming much more frequent through May.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 01.05.2017



Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017



Small Blue – Bishops Hill – 14.05.2017

At Bishops Hill I was pleased to find couple of Grizzled Skippers which I had failed to see in 2016, but numbers of Dingy Skippers were well down on what I have seen at this site before, although I had seen better numbers of these at Ryton Wood Meadows a few days previously.



Grizzled Skipper – Bishops Hill 14.05.2017



Dingy Skipper – Ryton Wood Meadows 10.05.2017

I had also seen some fresh Common Blues at Bishops Hill and by the end of May these were also flying in good numbers at a couple of my local spots.



Common Blue – Castle Hills 28.05.2017

Small Heath is a species that seems to be suffering around Warwickshire in recent years so I was pleased to find quite a few flying locally. On the other hand Small Coppers were again few and far between locally with only a few scattered first brood examples seen.



Small Copper - Castle Hills 21.05.2017



Small Heath - Castle Hills 28.05.2017

Also, by the end of May the first fresh Large Skippers were showing up, a species that for me always marks the transition from the spring species to those of early summer.



Large Skipper - Castle Hills 28..05.2017

A reasonable spring overall which started off with some good weather before it started to show signs of going downhill later in April and into May. The hibernating species had started to appear around their normal time for around my patch although some of the following emerging species were showing up a bit earlier than usual. Apart from Orange-tips which seemed to be doing well, numbers of most species so far appeared to be about average or even slightly lower than usual.

Bye for now,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freman

by trevor, 16-Dec-17 07:06 PM GMT

Your summary of Spring species gives me something to look forward to. Some great images, especially the Orange Tip, Green Hairstreak and PBF.

All the best for 2018, Neil,

Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 17-Dec-17 06:45 PM GMT

Great start to the Season look back Neil, great set of images 😊 Interesting that your first butterfly was a Comma – that's normally my second or thirds with Small Tort usually taking pole position 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 17-Dec-17 09:42 PM GMT

Lovely spring sequence, Neil, and something I didn't expect following so shortly after your local images of winter conditions.

Hopefully in another 3 months we will all be able to revel again in the presence of our winged friends. Meantime, we must negotiate our way through several weeks of cold, dark and dreary conditions. 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Andrew555, 18-Dec-17 08:01 AM GMT

Beautiful selection Neil, great report. Hard to choose a fav, that Copper looks particularly fine, but hell, they're all good! 😊

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 22-Dec-17 08:32 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor, Wurzel, David and Andrew. Putting these 'looking back' reports together always helps to pass the dark nights at this time of year...especially on those evenings that Jane is glued to soaps on the tele all night 😊

Looking back at 2017 part 2 – Summer.

At the end of May we went down to Cornwall for a short stay on The Lizard. This took us into the first couple of days of June and the weather had now settled into the typical early summer pattern of recent years with plenty of cool and cloudy days with the occasional bit of warm sun to brighten things up. My main targets on this trip were Marsh Fritillaries and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, both of which I found in good numbers.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Lizard 31.05.2017



Marsh Fritillary – Lizard 02.06.2017

My first Red Admirals of the season were also seen in Cornwall along with quite a few Painted Ladies, most of these looking a bit worse for wear, probably due to having flown some distance to our shores. A few Wall Browns were spotted along the coast paths along with good numbers of Common Blues.



Red Admiral – Lizard 31.05.2017



Wall Brown – Lizard 01.06.2017

A drive over to Upton Towans on the north coast also produced some nice fresh Silver-studded Blues. It is perfectly normal for these to be flying in late May on the dune systems of north Cornwall but from reports that I read this year it appears that they had already been on the wing at a number of sites in the south-east as well which does seem a bit early.



Silver-studded Blue – Upton Towans 01.06.2017

Back home, Large Skippers were now on the wing in good numbers and were soon joined by loads of Ringlets at my local sites. Meadow Browns were appearing by mid June although numbers of these were well down from the hordes of a couple of years ago. On the other hand Marbled Whites again increased in numbers at my local spots after first appearing there a few years back.



Ringlet – Langley Hall 30.06.2017



Marbled White – Castle Hills 01.07.2017

A trip down to the Heddon Valley for a few days in late June produced High Brown and Dark Green Fritillaries plus a few early Silver washed Fritillaries, although apparently we had missed the best weather the week before and it was mostly dull and cloudy with a fair bit of rain when we were there. I has also managed to see a few Heath Fritillaries during a brief stop off at Haddon Hill on the way down.



Heath Fritillary - Haddon Hill 26.06.2017



Dark Green Fritillary - Heddon Valley 27.06.2017



High Brown Fritillary - Heddon Valley 27.06.2017



Silver-washed Fritillary - Heddon Valley 27.06.2017

The theme of cool cloudy weather continued into early July with a few better days including when we went to Snitterfield Bushes, just north of Stratford-upon-Avon, where we saw good numbers of SWFs and my first fresh Gatekeepers of the season. This visit also produced my only White Admirals this year with a couple seen flitting about amongst the trees. The first summer brood examples of a number of species were also seen at Snitterfield including Brimstone, Large & Small Whites, and Comma.



Gatekeeper - Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017



Brimstone - Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017



Comma - Snitterfield Bushes 09.07.2017

I had been seeing Small Skippers locally from late May and Essex Skippers from around the second week of June but both of these seemed to be down in numbers from previous years, probably due to the early summer weather taking a turn for the worse.



Small Skipper - Langley Hall 30.06.2017



Essex Skipper - Bickenhill 23.07.2017

Red Admirals were appearing in good numbers locally, as were Commas, but both Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells seemed to be having another poor year around here.



Peacock - Castle Hills 13.08.2017

We then had a trip up to Arnside at the end of July and into the first couple of days of August. Not only was it yet another few days of cloudy and cool weather but it was apparent that they had been having far more rain up there than we had seen in the midlands. I know that there tends to be a north-west / south-east split in our weather patterns but this seems to be becoming more pronounced in recent years with a run of poor summers in the north-west. My main target was Scotch Argus and these were seen in good numbers up on the Knott, but like last year they were not so numerous as I have seen here in the past.



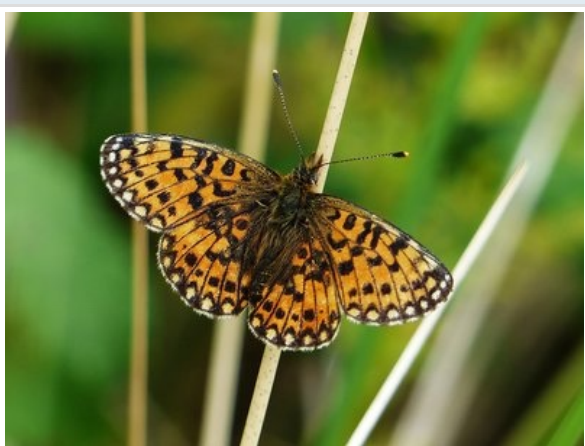
Scotch Argus – Arnside Knott 30.07.2017

All the other usual species were seen on and around Arnside Knott including loads of Gatekeepers and a few Graylings plus around half a dozen mostly faded High Brown Fritillaries were still flying.



Grayling – Arnside Knott 01.08.2017

The third week of August saw us down in Cornwall again, this time for a family holiday but of course I managed to squeeze in some butterflying. Highlights of this visit included second brood Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, Clouded Yellows and Painted Ladies, along with increasing numbers of Red Admirals and loads of Common Blues. I was also pleased to see good numbers of Small Tortoiseshells at last, having only seen a handful of summer brood so far this year.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (2nd brood) – Upton Towans 25.08.2017



Clouded Yellow - Lizard 22.08.2017



Painted Lady - Lizard 24.08.2017



Small Tortoiseshell - Lizard 24.08.2017

Meadow Browns also seemed to be doing much better in Cornwall than they had been around my local patch. I have commented in my diary before that I have been finding increasing numbers of female Meadow Browns with large orange patches on their wings, including the hindwings, and I found a number like this at various sites again this year, especially in Cornwall.



Meadow Brown – Lizard 21.08.2017

So then, on the whole the summer developed into another mostly cool and cloudy one. It wasn't particularly wet around my part of the midlands although when we did get rain it tended to be heavy. I also noted that it had been a lot wetter up around Arnside, particularly just prior to our visit. Some species seemed to have been hit by the deterioration in the weather in early summer with Small & Essex skippers, Meadow Browns, and Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells noticeably down in numbers around my local patch. There had also seemed to be a general shortage of Large and Small Whites during the summer although I saw plenty of Green-veined Whites locally. Common Blues seemed to do well this year at many sites, particularly in Cornwall where they were the most numerous butterfly seen during our week down there in August. Gatekeeper and Speckled Wood seemed to have a good year with both species showing up in good numbers at most places that I went to from early July onwards.

That takes me up to the end of August which is another convenient place to end before I look at what the tail end of my season was like.

Wishing everyone a Very Merry Christmas and hope that you have all been good and Santa brings you all that you asked for 😊

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 23-Dec-17 06:36 PM GMT

Another great look back Neil – what a cracking year you had – seeing all the British Fritillaries, Clouded Yellows and Scotch Argus 🍷🍷 Looking forward to the next installment 😊 Have a Happy Christmas and New Year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 29-Dec-17 10:02 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel...not quite all the British Fritillaries, I didn't see Glanvilles. Still, like you say, I had a good year although it was challenging at times.

A Happy New Year to everyone on UKB and lets hope that the coming butterfly season is a good one.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 30-Dec-17 09:26 AM GMT

A beautiful Summer selection, Neil. I don't think it's possible to obtain a better High Brown Fritillary image than yours. Superb stuff !.

Wishing you a fruitful, happy 2018.
Trevor.

Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 30-Dec-17 03:36 PM GMT

"Cheers Wurzel...not quite all the British Fritillaries, I didn't see Glanvilles"...They don't really count in my book as you have to get on a boat to see proper, truly wild ones now, you'll soon need to take your passport to tick them off 😊😊😊
Have a cracking New year!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 31-Dec-17 09:45 PM GMT

Beautiful reportage, Neil, and one that makes me yearn for the first signs of spring.

May I wish you all the best for 2018.