

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Jan-18 10:10 PM GMT

Happy New Year to you Dave,Wurzel, and to one and all. For us, 2018 started with a trip to the excellent Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust reserve at Slimbridge on New Year's Day. Lots of people were enjoying the collection of wildfowl from around the world, and we even had Hawaiian and red breasted geese feeding from the hand! In the wild, the star attraction is the Bewick's swans. Numbers of these swans, from the Russian tundra, have declined in recent years, so seeing them so close is very special.



Heavy rain in recent weeks has flooded parts of the site,resulting in staggering numbers of birds, especially lapwings and golden plovers, but including many others.



These coots were having a set-to on rushy pen.



While this handsome adult buzzard looked on.



Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 09-Jan-18 07:50 AM GMT

Happy New Year essex, and all. A great selection, beautiful Tawney. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 10-Jan-18 11:18 PM GMT

Great report Essex 😊 I'm quite envious as I've only been to Slimbridge twice now 🇬🇧 (though the first time I saw Tree Sparrows, Greenland Whitefronts and a wild American Wigeon there 😊). looks like there are a couple of grey geese in amongst the Canadas and some Dunlin too 😊🇬🇧 That was a great way to start the New Year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 11-Jan-18 11:30 AM GMT

Nice to see such an array of birds, Mark. That's one thing the UK is blessed with!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 12-Jan-18 11:26 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, Greenland white-fronts still occur, indeed I think there is one in the picture. But the tree sparrows have gone, as indeed they have from Essex. You're right, David, although some species of birds have declined, others have increased and there is still plenty around.

In Essex, the hawfinches have been present since the autumn, and they continue to be seen. This is a bonus, as there have been a lot of grey days since then. But last Sunday, I at last got to see them in sunshine! 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 13-Jan-18 01:43 PM GMT

Hi! essex, i've not seen any Hawk Finches around here, lovely shots of the Finch . Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 13-Jan-18 06:13 PM GMT

Absolutely cracking shots of the Hawfinch Essex 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 14-Jan-18 03:09 PM GMT

Great images, Mark. They're like little kookaburras. Beautiful birds.

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 15-Jan-18 08:54 AM GMT

Great shots Essex, that's a hell of a beak the Hawfinch has! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Jan-18 11:54 AM GMT

Just back from a cracking few days in Cornwall, where, in contrast to snowy Essex, spring has sprung!



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Jan-18 12:45 PM GMT

My aim for the next few days was to do some walking on the coast path, and also to do some of the scarcer birds down here too. Although very windy at times, the weather was generally pretty good, with sunny spells and showers, and the north-west winds brought wonderfully clear air and visibility. My first day was doing the coast path from the Gannel, around Newquay and onto Porth and back. The recent storms and very high tides here were obvious, with sand pushed up onto the roads, and up to the windows on one of the seaside pubs, while their patios tables and chairs were almost buried by several feet of sand! The ravens were displaying, as they will soon be nesting, and stonechats were seen.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Jan-18 05:40 PM GMT

The next day, I was hoping to walk the Southwest coast path near Bude. However, the wind was blowing a storm on the north coast, so revert to plan B: walking on the south coast. My medium term aim is to walk the whole of the Cornish section of the coast path, and there is still plenty on the south coast I've not done, I opted for the section between Looe and Polperro, and back. Starting at Looe, the path left the road and entered several very muddy fields- they clearly have had a wet winter down here so far, and it was very slippery and progress was slow. But things improved as the path became more rocky and solid as I approached Talland Bay, where there was a short shower, then follows a small road, before it forks left. It now followed the cliffs for a while, and descended into the impossibly picturesque harbour village of Polperro, where, after another short shower, the sun was shining and the sky was blue.



After pausing to enjoy the scenery, and to take pictures, I started to head back, enjoying a few spring flowers on the way.

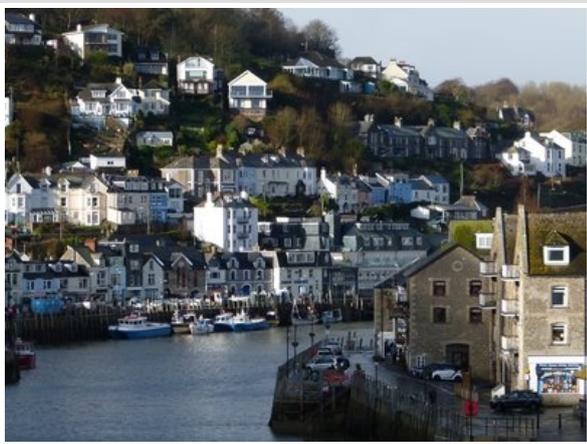




With the sun shining in blue skies, the scenery was spectacular. Eventually, I rounded a corner, and Looe Island came into view.



Heading on, I crossed the muddy fields again, then headed into Hannafore, on the outskirts of Looe, where lots of gannets were fishing offshore. Time for a well earned Cornish pasty!



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Jan-18 10:40 PM GMT

The next day, the wind had eased a little, so I did my walk on the north coast, the coast path from Bude to Crackington Haven. Leaving the historic Bude canal, the path rises up to Compass Point and Efford Beacon, where there are commanding views over the town.



Then, the path drops down to the wide, sandy expanse of Widemouth Bay, and up to Millook Haven.



The path then joins the road, briefly, then leaves again to reach the cliff top at Ravens Beak. A hovering buzzard and kestrel were seen, and raven and peregrine were added by time I got to Dizzard Point, with it's stunted windswept covering of sessile oaks.



The SW coast path then crosses some deep, steep strenuous valleys, and a ridge leads to Castle Point.



Shortly after, the path leads to Pencannow Point, then descends to Crackington Haven, where this section ends. Good timing, as the light was beginning to fade, and the morning sunshine had given way to the first spots of rain on an increasing wind.



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 23-Jan-18 05:27 PM GMT

That view of Crackington Haven takes me back, Essex. I spent a great (cracking, even...) family holiday there back in 1969 at the time of the Apollo 11 moon landing. What I didn't realise at the time was that Large Blues were still hanging on along this bit of coast.

Thanks for that bit of nostalgia! 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 23-Jan-18 07:58 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

That view of Crackington Haven takes me back, Essex. I spent a great (cracking, even...) family holiday there back in 1969 at the time of the Apollo 11 moon landing. What I didn't realise at the time was that Large Blues were still hanging on along this bit of coast.

Thanks for that bit of nostalgia! 😊

Dave

Ahhh 1969, two years before I was born 😊

Some wonderful scenic views there Mark 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Jan-18 10:29 PM GMT

Wow, if only you had known, Dave? You could have been one of the last to see native Large Blues in Cornwall!

Thanks for your comments, Bugboy!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Jan-18 10:55 PM GMT

Overnight rain and gales had cleared by morning, and the new day dawned bright and clear. Here is a mine, near Falmouth:



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Jan-18 11:07 PM GMT

After an excellent few days walking the coast path, priorities changed for the last couple of days. Trebah garden are one of the few that are open in January, and I had a most enjoyable morning in this sub-tropical paradise.



Here, some more spring flowers were getting going.



This is a very pretty setting.



Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 24-Jan-18 11:17 AM GMT

Sounds and looks like a fantastic time Essex. Some lovely scenes. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Jan-18 10:36 PM GMT

In recent years, cattle egrets have been turning up in Cornwall in the early winter, and another invasion has occurred this winter. Having kept an eye on sightings, one area, on the Lizard peninsula, was worth seeking out. So I spent the afternoon here, driving and then on foot. The field took some finding, but once found, the cattle egrets, with their distinctive yellow bills, were present in good numbers and gave a cracking show and ample photographic opportunities, as they fed among the cattle.



As well as the cattle egrets, several little egrets, with black bills, were in the field with the cattle, picking up anything disturbed by them. I've never seen little egrets feeding like this before.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 25-Jan-18 10:20 PM GMT

Great set of reports recently Essex and great to see the Cattle Egrets 😊 The final shot showing both small white Egrets is a cracker 😊🇬🇧 I remember 25 or so years back the massive excitement when 2 Little Egrets turned up at Arne, I mean 2 Little Egrets 😊 Now I see them on my drive to work 😊 ...if only a few more European butterflies would come over and settle...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jan-18 07:33 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. I like that picture too, and it was great seeing both species together like that. Last year, I just saw cattle egrets at roost— distant and at low light. That was fine, as I had never seen them in Britain before. But this time, I wanted to see them, as their name suggests, in a field with cattle. And I succeeded!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jan-18 07:38 PM GMT

I agree with you're other point too- several species of bird, and also dragonflies, have successfully colonised the UK, that no butterflies have come is puzzling-and disappointing.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jan-18 11:07 PM GMT

Friday 19 January. My last day in Cornwall. Today, it was all about white winged gulls. Newlyn harbour often has wintering gulls from the arctic. However, this winters' sightings have been exceptional, and worthy of investigation. Most of the arrivals are usually of juvenile or immature birds,so my first find was a surprise and delight-my first ever British adult glaucous gull.



Several other people were watching the gulls, and one of them kindly pointed out my next sighting, which was more expected-a juvenile Iceland gull in its first year.



After enjoying that,I took a walk around the harbour where, on a roof with some sleepy herring gulls, was an adult Iceland gull, my first ever! Eventually, it flew down to the water, then landed on some rocks, giving good views.



As I was chatting to the other birders, some said they had seen a juvenile glaucous gull, and I soon found it, on the harbour wall.



At one point, the adult glaucous was fighting with a great black-back over food. They are similar in size, but the great black-back had a slightly thicker, stronger bill.



As a bonus, while we were distracted with the gulls, this great northern diver appeared in the harbour.



And finally, behind the Tolcarne, this fine male black redstart was flitting about on the rocks. I've seen them in Europe often enough, but this is my first in Britain.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 27-Jan-18 12:04 PM GMT

Hi! Essex, great shots of the Gulls, I saw a Small Egret at Penn Flash yesterday no yellow beak like your Cattle Egret, at least I'm hoping it's a Small Egret 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 27-Jan-18 12:13 PM GMT

I agree – fantastic gull shots. When I was a young birder it was all binoculars and field notes. To get photos like these would have needed equipment beyond my wildest financial dreams!!

Black redstarts breed commonly in my village but they move out in winter and I don't think I even see them in the valley. I presumed they emigrated to warmer climes. Interesting that you are seeing them in January...

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Jan-18 03:46 PM GMT

First class stuff, Mark! What a wonderful part of Britain that is. It's almost like it's another world, with its early season flowers/blossom and unusual fauna.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 28-Jan-18 06:39 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Essex 😊 I've still to see a British Glaucous (seen a few in Iceland) and I've only ever seen one Iceland so to to see 2 in one day with an adult Glasucous 🇮🇸 🇮🇸 🇮🇸

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Jan-18 10:21 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, yes your egret was probably a little egret which is much more common, but cattle egrets bred in I think Cheshire last year, so they are coming your way! Keep an eye open for any egrets with yellow bills.

Guy, thanks for your comments. It's an interesting question you ask. As you probably know from your time in Suffolk, the black redstart has never really become established in the UK like it has in Europe, with just a thin scatter of breeding records. However, those that do seem to be almost resident, moving just a short distance to the coast, especially the south coast of England and Wales, for winter. Perhaps they are longer distance migrants in Europe, where winters are colder?

Thanks David. Spring comes earlier to Cornwall than anywhere else in Britain, and Cornwall is, of course, first class!

Wurzel, I saw glaucous gulls in Svalbard in 2011, but the only Iceland gull I've seen before this was a juvenile in Scotland a couple of years back. Thanks for looking at my pages.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Jan-18 11:03 PM GMT

After all the gull action, I was rather late for my lunchtime pasty but, after eating it, there was just time to have a walk round Morab Gardens Penzance, where I enjoyed the flowering camellias and saw a firecrest. They are so quick, but it is just visible in this picture.



Then it was up to Madro Carn to enjoy the glorious views, then time to head up country, with memories of a cracking few days in Cornwall!



Morab Gardens



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 30-Jan-18 08:37 AM GMT

Of all your recent, superb, images from Cornwall, it is that Firecrest that does it for me. Not only did you press the shutter at the right millisecond, your camera has frozen it and more importantly the Bird is identifiable. I've given up with the Goldcrests that visit my garden, a blur behind a twig is the best I've achieved.

Those Gull shots are amazing.

Hope to bump into you again this season,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 30-Jan-18 07:14 PM GMT

Thoroughly enjoyed your posts on Cornwall, Essex, we've just booked a week on the Lizard at the end of June, can't wait! Would you recommend a visit to Trebah Gardens? I wonder we're hoping for some Marsh fritillaries and Small Pearls with a bit of luck!

Great shots of the Hawfinches as well ,we've had quite a few down here in Kent over the winter period,with some still about, also loads of Little Egret s, good numbers of Great Whites and one or two Cattle. Once again some great pictures !!
Regards Allan.W.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 01-Feb-18 12:08 PM GMT

The vegetation in Morab Gardens is quite something for this latitude, Mark, and very well done to have been quick enough to capture that firecrest. You certainly had a wonderful trip.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 06-Feb-18 07:18 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Just catching up on your recent trip to Cornwall, interesting reports and photos to give a flavour of what it is like at this time of year 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Feb-18 08:27 PM GMT

Hi Trevor, yes I was a bit lucky with that one, though I missed it several times first!

Alan W, late June is a little late to catch the Fritillaries at their peak, but there should still be some around. And it is perfect timing for Silver studded Blues, so be sure to visit Upton Gwithian Towans, near Hayle! Morab Gardens is a lovely spot for a picnic—perhaps a Cornish pasty! But it is not a butterfly site.

Hi David, yes I had a great time down there. Just shows what the middle of winter can turn up!

Neil, I had the place to myself! But I'm glad to show others what's about, outside the tourist season.

Did we all see the lovely super moon last week? Unfortunately there was cloud on the eastern horizon, so I didn't see it rising, but it was still a beauty!



A flock of redpolls have been feeding on some weedy waste ground this winter, together with linnets and reed buntings. Although redpolls, in Essex, are scarce rather than rare, it's been lovely to see them, and they have afforded great views near my home.



Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 08-Feb-18 05:40 PM GMT

Thanks for that Essex, I thought I was probably a bit late for the small fritillaries at peak, but no matter, I'm there for the plants as much as the butterflies, to be honest! We'll definitely be visiting the Upton towans area for the Silver Studs, and hoping for a stop (on the way down) at Aish Tor for High Browns, didn't have much luck at the same site a couple of years back (mind you the weather was c**p). Really looking forward to our break! Nice Redpoll shot by the way! Thanks again. Regards Allan.W.

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 10-Feb-18 09:24 AM GMT

I've never seen a Redpoll Essex so it was great to see your shot of one 😊
I took some shots of the Moon but I'd to wait until the day after to get a clear shot but it still looked fantastic. Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Feb-18 07:21 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. One of the great things about Essex in winter is the birds of the coast. While the Essex mudflats are undoubtedly less impressive than the spectacular cliffs of, say, Cornwall, they are one giant bird table for waders, ducks and geese, and the sight of hundreds, if not thousands of golden plovers, dunlins, knots and black tailed godwits, with a good few hundred avocets thrown in, is a sight to behold.

Although some species are fairly constant, and appear everywhere, different sites tend to have a different range of birds. I have done a bit more of this kind of bird watching the last couple of years, and I am now fairly confident in my identification skills, given reasonable views.

The most abundant species overall is probably the dunlin,



Almost as plentiful is the knot, here with dunlins at high tide.



Golden plovers are beautiful in the low winter sun, here with lapwings,



Black-tailed godwits have increased greatly in recent winters, while the breeding population has declined. Here with one or two bar-tails.



Bar-tailed godwits tend to favour different areas to black-tailed godwits, but can sometimes be seen together. These were at Maldon.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 17-Feb-18 08:15 PM GMT

Great shots essex, I wouldn't like to try and count the birds like we do the Butterflies 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 17-Feb-18 08:35 PM GMT

Great shots Essex, I've been practicing my Wader ID skills down your way this winter on Two Tree Island. I have many many shots similar to yours now 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Feb-18 10:43 PM GMT

Two Tree Island is a great place for winter waders, especially near high tide. And it's only a short walk from Leigh station!

Avocets can be found at Two Tree Island, and are even more abundant near Tilbury,



Redshanks are usually seen by the dozen, rather than in hundreds,



I have yet to see a grey plover in its smart breeding plumage, but the speckled winter dress is attractive enough.



These cute little sanderlings were at Southend sea front, here with a few turnstones,



Increasing numbers of Mediterranean gulls are breeding in Essex. They are a mixed blessing, for while they are an attractive addition to the country, they are also predators of tern chicks.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Feb-18 11:28 PM GMT

Of the ducks, shelducks are easy to identify, as males and females are the same colour,



The smallest ducks are the teal, again very common on the mud,



Wigeon are one of my favourite ducks, and are just as likely to be grazing the grass as on the estuaries, here with a black tailed godwit.



The shovel-duck tends to be found on the shallow tidal pools, but also turns up inland. It's huge beak is well adapted to sifting through the muddy water.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 18-Feb-18 03:08 PM GMT

Cracking shots of the waders and Med Gull Essex, you can really see the colourful tip to the bill 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Feb-18 11:34 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. The most distinctive thing about the med gull are the white wingtips.

At Abberton Reservoir, near Colchester, the smews have been showing well, and they did so again today. At least seven were present, including three males,



A black neck grebe was also present. I saw it's relative, the slavonian grebe, here earlier in the winter, but this is my first ever sighting of its relative. While I was watching it, a Small Tortoiseshell flew past, but for once it had to take second fiddle to the grebe.



Goosanders were present, too. This male has just caught a fish.



Plenty of people were enjoying birds , and the late winter sunshine.



Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 19-Feb-18 03:19 PM GMT

Some fantastic sights and shots recently Essex, I particularly like the Sanderling group and the Goosander. Great stuff. 🇬🇧 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 19-Feb-18 07:07 PM GMT

Seeing a Tort is great essex even if you didn't get a shot 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 19-Feb-18 10:51 PM GMT

Great shots of the Smew, cracking birds there are I've not seen one for a good few years now 🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 19-Feb-18 11:33 PM GMT

Lovely image of the avocet, Mark. We get hundreds of oystercatchers in Swansea, but I've yet to see an avocet, even though I keep looking out for them! I expect before much longer your lens will naturally turn towards butterflies.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 23-Feb-18 06:58 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

I love that photo of the Avocet with its reflection in the water 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Mar-18 07:02 PM GMT

Coming soon-wild Japan in winter!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Mar-18 09:46 PM GMT

So, I arrived at Haneda airport in Tokyo, and soon met the rest of our Naturetrek group. After checking our bags into the hotel, we then headed to a city park for afternoon. Despite the cold and persistent sleet, this was most enjoyable, and I soon clocked up many new birds. Here is my first dusky thrush, which were common in the area.



The large bill crow is the size of a crow, with the beak of a raven.



Oriental turtle doves were also plentiful. Unlike turtle doves in Europe, here they are present all year.



The Japanese pygmy woodpecker is endemic to Japan. Several were in the park.



Here is a brown eared bulbul. They were common not only in the parks, but throughout Tokyo.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Mar-18 10:03 PM GMT

The odd starling turns up here, but much more common is the white cheek starling. They look different, but behave much like ours. Here with tree sparrows..



Ospreys are found in many parts of the world, and Japan is no exception.



The buzzards here behave exactly the same as our buzzards, but are much lighter, with a uniform white breast. Sometimes considered a separate species, the eastern buzzard.



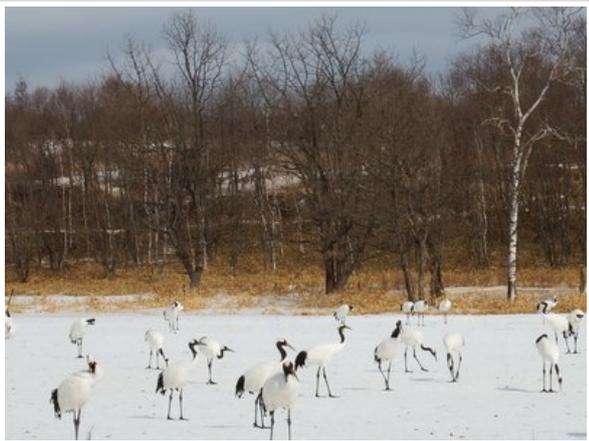
I'll sign off for now with this rather lovely black-faced bunting, part of a small flock roaming the park.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Mar-18 12:01 PM GMT

Next morning, we had an early flight up to the northern island of Hokkaido. Here we arrived to a far more wintry landscape, with deep snow, but also welcome, clear bright conditions. On our morning travels, we saw our first Japanese red-crowned cranes. One field had a good number of cranes present, so we stopped for some views and pictures. Standing 5 feet /1.5 m tall, with a wingspan of 8 feet /2.5m, they provided a fine spectacle against the snow.



Here is an adult, showing it's red crown.



And this is one of last years' juveniles.



We also saw our first white-tailed sea eagles, these were to become a familiar sight on Hokkaido.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 11-Mar-18 03:35 PM GMT

A fantastic array of species Essex 🤔🇬🇧 I'm surprised that the Tree Sparrows haven't been give sub-specific or race status as birders do love their 'splitting' 😊 The Bunting is particularly fine looking bird 🇬🇧🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 12-Mar-18 12:11 AM GMT

After lunch, we headed off to a known site for ural owl. This is the first one I have ever seen in the wild.



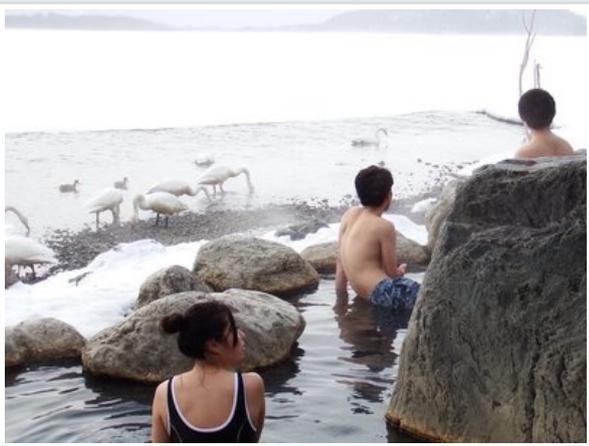
Then we drove a short way to a nearby crane sanctuary, arriving in time for the afternoon feeding. The Japanese crane was thought to have been hunted to extinction. Then, in 1926, twenty were discovered in a marshy field near Kushiro. Conservation has helped the species recover, and there are around 1000 today. The sheer number at the sanctuary made a spectacular sight, and drew in many admirers.



A single common crane was amongst the flock, a rare bird in Hokkaido.



We then made our way to the hotel, but there was still time to stop at lake Kussharo. Here, whooper swans from Siberia had gathered. This is hot spring country—a bath with a view!



This is a spot bill duck.



And here are some whoopers, gathered where the hot springs had melted the frozen lake.





There were even some in the woods, a strange setting for the swans.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 12-Mar-18 05:02 PM GMT

Fantastic shots essex , keep them coming, love the Owl, it looks so cosy in the tree 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Mar-18 12:10 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie, much more to come!

The next day dawned fine and clear. So we headed off at dawn to Otowa Bridge, a known roost site for the cranes.



Black kites were seen here, and elsewhere. Unlike black kites in Europe, here they are resident all year. As Wurzel says, lots of bird species have been split in recent years. Some now believe these kites are different, and have called it the black eared kite, but it is probably just a form of black kite.



Next, we headed back to the crane sanctuary. Feeding the bird here does two things. It supplements their diet, helping them through the herd Hokkaido winter, and it also keeps the cranes here where they are safe, reducing the conflict with landowners elsewhere. With temperatures well below freezing, snow sparkling in winter sunshine, and the sky the purest brightest blue, this made for a magical setting. At a time when Britain is even more sun-starved than usual, such conditions are even more welcome.



Some of the cranes were starting to display, flying upwards, kicking their feet foreward and floating down, as well as various head and bill postures, all while giving their wonderful haunting calls.



After lunch we visited Masshu, known for its volcanic crater lake.



A Fox was present here.



And lastly for the day, we visited a volcanic mountain, where the sight, and smell, of sulphur vents were much in evidence.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 13-Mar-18 10:57 AM GMT

Fantastic shots again essex, it must have been a real treat watching those Cranes display and what a remarkable sight seeing the Volcano against the back ground of all the Snow, I envy your experience 🇬🇧 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 13-Mar-18 04:42 PM GMT

Some beautiful sights essex. 😊 The Cranes look amazing, great shots. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 13-Mar-18 11:35 PM GMT

The splitters strike again Essex 😊 Great Crane shots and the volcanic vents shot is eerily appealing, quite surreal looking in a way:D

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 14-Mar-18 12:50 AM GMT

You sure get to some obscure places, Mark!!

Thanks for sharing those images and I look forward to seeing more. Where is next on your globe-trotting agenda?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Mar-18 10:43 PM GMT

Thanks everyone, yes we had seen some fantastic stuff so far. The holiday bank is running low, David!

The next day, we headed down to the coast. Stopping at Shibetsu, we found the harbour mostly frozen, but any clear areas had a good selection of ducks and gulls. Red breasted mergansers and goosanders were in good numbers, as well as scaups and tufted ducks. These are scaups.



A nice flock of goldeneyes were also here.



We then headed along the coast, arriving at the small fishing town of Rousu in time for an early afternoon boat trip out of the harbour. When fish began to be thrown from the boat, we were soon surrounded by slaty back gulls. We had already seen some eagles from the road, but soon, the first white-tailed eagles started to circle down, and were soon snatching the fish from the water and ice, right in front of us. what a spectacular sight! These are very impressive birds—the fourth largest eagles in the world, with a wingspan of up to 8 feet, the white tails of the adults glistening against the blue sky.



Yet the white tails here are dominated, by the presence of an even bigger relative, and that's what we will be looking at next.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 17-Mar-18 07:33 PM GMT

I am eagerly awaiting the 'bigger relative' Essex 🇩🇪🇩🇪 I've seen a pair in captivity and 'big as a Barn door' doesn't even come into it, more like a Barn 😲

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Mar-18 11:30 PM GMT

We had seen a few around in the last couple days, but it was around Rousu that we got really close to the mighty Stellers white tailed sea eagles. These really are huge birds- the largest eagle in the world, with a wingspan of up to 10 feet, and with a beak and talons to match. They breed in Kamchatka, and spend the winter in Korea and north Japan, with concentrations in eastern Hokkaido. To see dozens of these magnificent birds in and around the town is a sight that will live long in the memory. They, together with the white tails have been coming here for many years but nowadays, they take advantage of fish thrown out for them from fishing boats. This, in turn, attracts many birdwatchers and admirers, in the deep mid winter, to Rousu. For years it has been a dream of mine to come here and see these eagles. Now it's a dream come true!

To start, they circled our boat with the white tails.



But soon they were landing on the ice, and feeding on the fish close to our boat.



Here are a stellers and a white tail, perched, in order of rank.



Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 18-Mar-18 12:06 AM GMT

Even in the pictures you can tell just how MASSIVE those eagles are, I can only imagine the incredible sight of them in the air! 🇩🇪

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Mar-18 11:28 AM GMT

Words can hardly describe how splendid both eagles were, Bugboy!

Back in the harbour, a flock of harlequin ducks had arrived, my first ever!



While the eagles watched on from the harbour wall, waiting for fish, not ducks.



Here are the two eagle species together. A great way to finish the day.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Mar-18 02:36 PM GMT

We had a marvellous time with the eagles in Rousu. So, next day, it was time to head out at dawn, to watch the sunrise over the mountains, and to take another boat trip further out to sea. The pack ice had arrived, and this set the scene for what was to prove a truly memorable encounter.



Lots of pictures to come!

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 18-Mar-18 04:22 PM GMT

Wow! Those Eagles are awesome, 😊 great shots Essex. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 19-Mar-18 02:44 PM GMT

Those Eagles were as I suspected 😊👍👍 And Harlequin Ducks 👍👍👍😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 19-Mar-18 08:45 PM GMT

Fantastic shots essex, I really envy your journey 🍷🍷 looking forward to your next shots 😊 Goldie 😊

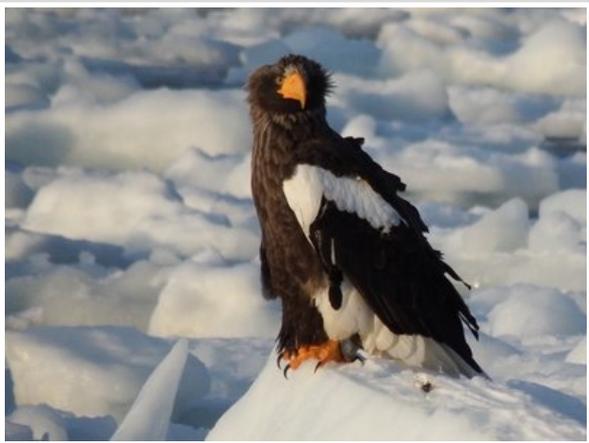
Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Mar-18 08:50 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. This place was in the process of blowing my mind. And there's more to come!

So, we went on our boat trip, heading out to sea, and into the sea ice. What can I say? It was awesome. There were eagles. Hundreds of them. Unlike the previous day, stellers sea eagles outnumbered white tailed, but, as the fish began to be thrown from the boat, both put on a spectacular show. Some of the dedicated photographers, with their expensive lenses, must have got some fantastic images. But for me, it was about trying to capture the scene, and about the memories. So I'll stop waffling and let the pictures do the talking! 😊





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Mar-18 08:54 PM GMT

In case that wasn't enough, here are some more!





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 21-Mar-18 11:03 AM GMT

Absolutely brilliant shots Essex, stunning 🤩👍👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Mar-18 10:21 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. After our boat trip, we headed out a nearby long peninsula. To be fair, this was fairly quiet compared to the eagles, but there were plenty of sea ducks, especially black scoters.



Meanwhile, mammals put on a good show, with lots of sika deer, and several foxes, with their thick winter coats.



Back in Rousu harbour, the harlequin ducks were still present. Here is one taking a dive.



While a large group of pelagic cormorants had assembled.



On the harbour wall, gulls were resting. Here is a glaucous wing gull, with some colour on it's wingtips.



And this is glaucous gull, like I saw in Cornwall the other week. A juv is just visible to the right.



A stream behind the hotel held brown dipper.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Mar-18 01:03 AM GMT

Next day, we were leaving Rousu, but there was still time for a look behind the hotel. Both marsh and willow tit are found in Hokkaido. This was considered to be a marsh tit.



The lovely little Pygmy woodpecker was also here.



In Rousu harbour, the eagles were present again. This is stellers sea eagle adult and juvenile.



Here is an adult white tailed eagle.



And this is a young white tailed.



In the ice-free areas, goosanders and mergansers were present.



We then headed back to Shibetsu, where lunch was taken. But there was still time to have a look around the harbour, where sea ducks were found, watched over by another Steller's sea eagle. They show remarkably little fear of humans, and allow a close approach. Much to my pleasure! 😊😊😊.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 22-Mar-18 11:18 AM GMT

At their size I'm not surprised they show no fear of humans 🤪 More mouthwatering species/shots Essex 🇯🇵🤪 I am surprised they haven't sub-species'd the Marsh Tit as it looks much, much more grey than our 'version' 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 22-Mar-18 02:45 PM GMT

Those Stellers Sea Eagles are beyond impressive, Mark. Must have been a thrill of a lifetime to have them so close to you in such numbers?

The supporting cast isn't to be sniffed at either. I can see why you made this trip for sure.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 23-Mar-18 08:10 PM GMT

Just been catching up on your trip to Japan Mark, some great birds and other wildlife in your photos but those Stellers Sea Eagles really are something special...great stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Mar-18 08:20 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, stellers sea eagles breed in Kamchatka. I don't know if there's any raptor persecution there, but Siberian tigers live nearby and they have definitely become the victims of hunters. So the eagles lack of fear was a surprise. To be fair, the marsh tit may look pale due to the reflection of the snow on the ground, though they do look slightly different to ours.

David, white tailed eagles are truly impressive, even with the distant views I've had before. So to see these and the even bigger species, so close as well, was absolutely spectacular. And will live with me for the foreseeable future, as will the other stuff we saw!

Thanks Neil, yes those stellers sea eagles, as well as the white tails, really were something else. The cranes were pretty awesome, too!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Mar-18 08:39 PM GMT

After lunch, we turned inland, to reach our last Hokkaido hotel early afternoon. Fortunately, the owners had put up some bird feeders, helping to retain birds that it would probably be too cold for, normally. They were British species, but some looked slightly different to ours. This we think is a willow tit.



Great spotted woodpecker.



Nuthatches here are white underneath.



While jays are the form brandtii,



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Mar-18 10:14 PM GMT

There were some Dutch birdwatchers staying at the hotel, and they kindly showed us a solitary snipe they had found by the river, as the light began to fade.



But the best was yet to come, as the river behind the hotel is home to the rare and very impressive Blakiston's fish owl, and we were delighted when it showed for us!



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Mar-18 10:33 PM GMT

The next day was our last day in Hokkaido. It dawned very cold, perhaps -20C, but wonderfully clear and blue. Leaving our hotel, our first stop produced this excellent black (eared) kite, posing nicely by a frozen lake.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 24-Mar-18 05:29 PM GMT

Fantastic shots essex, I've really enjoyed your Journey, Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Mar-18 11:37 PM GMT

More to come, Goldie!

We then went down to the frozen lake Furen. On the edge, it was nice to see our last pair of Japanese cranes.



We then had time for one last experience with the eagles. On the frozen lake, the owners of the lakeside cafe regularly throw out discarded fish, and this brings in large numbers of white-tailed and Steller's sea eagles. Much squabbling and changeover takes place, and it all makes fantastic viewing. Sometimes, a Steller's would watch another feeding for several minutes, then lose patience and try to steal its food. Others would just stomp around, looking very angry! In this situation, these amazing birds are quite comical to watch.





Here is a stomping, angry looking stellers.



At one point, this fox turned up, smelling food.



But he should know better than picking a fight with a stellers sea eagle!



Sadly, it was then time to head to the airport, for our afternoon flight to Tokyo 😞 . We were sorry to leave Hokkaido,as we had had a wonderful time there, and I have been blown away by this amazing place. The landscape, the people, who had been most welcoming, and the truly brilliant wildlife and weather. And our local guides, a big thank you to everyone involved. 😊 . I really hope I can go back someday.A few last pictures of the eagles.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 25-Mar-18 09:11 AM GMT

That Owl was a great sighting/tick Essex 🙌🏻 That fox was lucky that it didn't become the food 🤪🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 25-Mar-18 07:53 PM GMT

I feel quite sad knowing this sequence of reports is coming to an end, Mark. 😞

What a fantastic trip you had, to a fascinating country with even more fascinating wildlife.

It also shows how lucky we in the UK are to benefit from the jet stream. Japan lies at a more southerly latitude but temperatures of -20c and sea ice demonstrate just what would be in store for us were this atmospheric stream somehow extinguished!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Mar-18 09:26 PM GMT

That huge owl is a great rarity, Wurzel, and we were very lucky to see it.

David, all good things must come to an end, but it's not the end just yet! It's true Japan is further south than the UK, and this is reflected but the fact that, in winter, it gets more daylight than Britain does. Makes one wonder what our climate would be like if the earth went the other way around, with the prevailing wind from the east!

The next day, we visited the gardens of Imperial Palace in Tokyo. In the moat, we found a group of these falcated ducks. I've seen these at collections like WWT Arundel, but these were my first wild ones.



The pied wagtails here had lovely white wings, when they fly it's gorgeous.



The white cheek starlings were here again.



The pine trees in the park and elsewhere are heavily manicured into shape.



Japan is well known for its spring blossom.



It was just getting going in early March. Here is cherry blossom close up.



The Japanese pygmy woodpecker was here again.



Here is a Japanese white-eye.



And this is my only butterfly of the trip, a Comma!



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Mar-18 09:36 PM GMT

Here is a view, showing the trimmed pine trees.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-Mar-18 11:14 PM GMT

More fantastic shots Essex and it was great that you managed to get a butterfly 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Mar-18 11:30 PM GMT

My first butterfly picture of the year, Wurzel!

Then, after lunch, we took the bullet train up to Nagano, for an overnight stay.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 28-Mar-18 10:15 AM GMT

Really enjoyed your Journey essex, some interesting shots of the wild life there and only wish our blossom would arrive 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 28-Mar-18 11:05 AM GMT

Brilliant.

I think your comma is *Polygonia c-aureum*, not *Polygonia c-album* – so presumably a lifer ... 😊

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Mar-18 01:02 PM GMT

Guy, thanks very much! 😊 I thought it looked a little different...

Thanks Goldie, I hope you managed to get out Monday morning, as the weather down here has been pretty lousy since then. In fact, it's better up north...

The next day, we took a short drive from Negano up to hell valley, home of the Japanese Macaques or 'snow monkeys'. After about a two mile walk from the drop off point, through the woods of Cryptomeria or Japanese cedar, we arrived at a clearing and there they were! On dull, cold days they like to bathe in the hot spring baths. But today, while cold, they were warming up on a bank in the morning sun.



They should much of the behaviour you would expect, including much grooming.



They frequently came to drink warm water from the baths.



They show little fear of humans, though you are asked not to feed them.



They can survive colder conditions than any other primates, bar humans. Here's a habit shot.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Mar-18 01:16 PM GMT

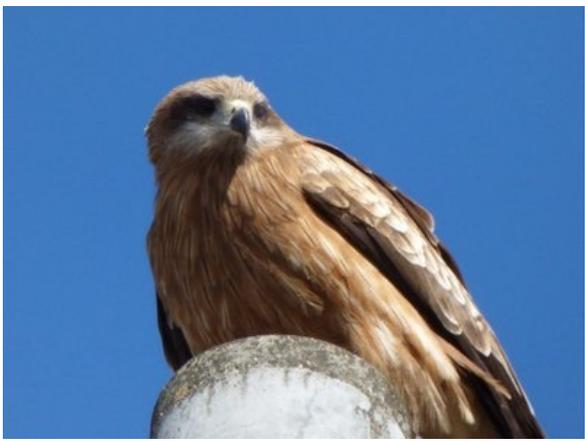
Also briefly showing in the cleaning was this Japanese serow. Once a very rare endemic, it's numbers have recovered though it's still hard to see, so a sighting was a treat.



On the way out of the monkey park, I saw this lovely Japanese varied tit, which stayed just long enough for a picture.



The last thing we saw before leaving was this black (eared) kite, near the car park.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Mar-18 02:16 PM GMT

Our time in Japan was coming to an end, but there was still time for a bit of culture, with a visit to the Zenkoji Temple, one of Japan's largest and most important Buddhist temples and home to the first Buddhist statue ever to be brought into Japan, in the 6th century.



Near the temple, my first ever grey cap greenfinch was singing.



While this brown eared bulbul poked its head up from behind the camellias.



The next day, we caught the bullet train back to Tokyo, in readiness of our flight back to Heathrow, with the 'Land of the Rising Sun' certainly having left it's mark! 😊😊😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 29-Mar-18 10:28 AM GMT

Interesting to see the Japanese varieties of birds we have over here. And good job getting a butterfly in there. 😊
I've very much enjoyed your holiday series Essex. 😊

Cheers

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Mar-18 10:17 PM GMT

Well I'm happy to have had so much to share, Andrew!

March this year, like 2013, has simply been an extension of winter. Cold, wet, sometimes snowy conditions have dominated, and lack of sunshine, in the south at least, has also had an effect. Meanwhile, the highest temperature this March, where I live, is just 13C, registered twice—on 10th and 16th. Tellingly, is temperature was also reached in January, on the 24th.

In the absence of any butterflies, I have been restricted to doing walks, both locally and slightly further afield. Four pictures are all we need to sum up the month. Here is Goring, overlooking the Thames, on the 19th.



And here we have avocets and black tailed godwits on the Essex coast.



I managed to see mad March hares. These are most common on the Essex coastal marshes, but can be found inland, too. Not the best picture on this dull day, but they lifted the gloom.



Meanwhile, this Mediterranean gull at Southend was just coming into breeding plumage.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 31-Mar-18 05:24 PM GMT

That trip to Japan was a wildlife-fest, Mark! I bet you're finding it hard to adjust now you're back home? I'd never heard of a serow, much less seen one, so thanks for bringing it to life for everyone on here!

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 03-Apr-18 07:33 PM GMT

A fascinating series of reports from Japan Mark, I really enjoyed reading them and seeing the accompanying photos...really great stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 04-Apr-18 04:56 PM GMT

Really, Really, enjoyed all your shots of Japan essex, they kept things interesting through this weird weather 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Apr-18 10:39 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie, seems a long time ago now! This spring has been a non event so far. Yet more rain expected this weekend 😞 !

Those memories of Japan have kept me going!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Apr-18 10:31 PM GMT

At last, there was a day of sunshine today. Sadly, I was at work, but a lunchtime walk produced 3 Comma and a Peacock. Not very impressive for April, but a whole lot better than nothing.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 06-Apr-18 11:46 AM GMT

Nice shot essex, Peacocks were certainly out and about yesterday, supposed to be warmer today may be we'll see more Butterflies. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 06-Apr-18 03:06 PM GMT

Nice, all of my sightings so far have come on my lunchtime walks at work.. 😊

Cheers

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 07-Apr-18 09:11 PM GMT

Well done, Mark. Things are moving slowly but they ARE moving, at least.

Hopefully temperatures will eventually move into the 60s Fahrenheit very soon and we'll all be able to forget this very sorry apology for early spring.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 12-Apr-18 12:08 AM GMT

Yet more gloomy skies for Essex today. So it was time to get out of the mist and drizzle, and into the sun! 😊 I arrived at Ferring Rife, on the sunny Sussex coast , by 11AM. This place has all you need, including a cafe and toilets. I didn't even need to leave the car park, as there was a Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock on some three cornered leeks. But much better was to come, for I saw over 40 Small Tortoiseshell alone, plus several Peacock. At one point, I had 3 Torts and two Peacock in a 50 yard stretch of bank. Further on, I saw two Peacock and a Tort spiralling upward, another time, tree Torts were chasing each other. After picture taking, I put the camera down, and simply watched the performance.





My first whites of the year were present. 5–10 Small Whites and my first Large White, a female. After tea and cake in the cafe, I went back for another look. Neil Hulme had arrived, and he spotted a mating pair of Small Whites. We arrived at a final tally of 47 fabulous Small Tortoiseshells 😊😊😊!





So at last I was seeing warm sunshine, and seeing butterflies. And I arrived back in Essex to find it had stayed misty and drizzly all day, with a temperature of just 9C. Magic! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Hulme, 12-Apr-18 08:19 AM GMT

Hi Mark

Great to see you again. I was delighted that your cunning plan to visit Sunny Sussex paid off. Let's hope this season provides many more days like that. BWs, Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-18 06:57 PM GMT

Great report Essex and two species of whites 😊👍 things are certainly moving forward...well in some areas anyway 🍷 Lovely set of White shots as well, they're really tricky to get without glare 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 13-Apr-18 10:53 AM GMT

Sounds and looks like a fantastic day Essex, a great escape. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 13-Apr-18 01:58 PM GMT

Great Shots essex, white's too, things are really moving now. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 13-Apr-18 08:39 PM GMT

That's a very healthy haul, hopefully you wont have to travel so far to see such 'common' species after this weekend 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 14-Apr-18 09:24 PM GMT

You made a judicious choice there, Mark!

At this time of year, all the cards need to fall into your hand. The places where this can happen are few and far between but treasure those you come across, because they will deliver the goods year in year out.

That habitat looks superb for early spring species. A wide expanse of flower-rich grassland with robust nettle growth nearby. What else could a spring butterfly need?

Great that you saw both Large & Small Whites. I'm hoping the rest of us will do likewise in the next week or so.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Apr-18 10:32 PM GMT

Thanks everyone for your comments. Small Tortoiseshells seem to be having a good start to spring, let's hope it stays that way. Well, after weeks of cold, dull weather, the temperature jumped suddenly last week, as I'm sure we all noticed. It actually became too hot for butterflies! Today, after a cold front last night, the weather returned to more typical spring fayre. I have seen several lovely spring Orangetips since Saturday, but they have all raced past in the heat. This morning, while searching a ditch with abundant garlic mustard near my home, I found a roosting OT at 9AM. I had to wait three hours for it to open! Plenty of time to admire it's beautiful mossy underside.



However, at 12PM, it finally opened in the hazy sunshine.



During this brief bright spell, I was delighted to find this female a bit further up.



So, a bit frustrating for a while. But the best things come to those who wait! I hope for much more time with this wonderful butterfly in the next few weeks. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Apr-18 11:05 PM GMT

During the hot spell, I have seen a good number of "small" whites and I thought some might be Green-veined. This was finally confirmed when found saw this mating pair. I can't decide if I prefer the frontlit of backlit picture.



The Green-veined White has the same beautiful dusting of scales as the Orangetip.



I also saw my first Speckled Woods.



Brimstones are fairly scarce where I live, due to lack of buckthorns. So a couple of years ago, I planted a few. Yesterday I checked some, and this is what I found;



And here is the culprit. 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 23-Apr-18 11:14 PM GMT

Very nice GVW shots, Essex. 😊 A very attractive butterfly, much underrated. Interestingly, I found by far the majority of "whites" today were GVW rather than Small. 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Apr-18 12:09 AM GMT

After enjoying my Orange Tips, it was onto Shadwell Wood, near Saffron Walden. This is an oxlip wood, a great Essex treasure, with a very restricted British range. Also here were early purple orchids and herb Paris, as this is an ancient wood.



Then onto Devils Dyke, near Newmarket. Soon this chalk Dyke will reveal its butterfly treasures, but the botanical interest for the spring visitor includes the lovely pasqueflower—the only place I have seen it.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 24-Apr-18 08:47 AM GMT

Cracking close up of the CV White Essex 😊 And that is one weird looking flower – it looks like it should be from some tropical rainforest rather than Saffron Walden 🤔 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 24-Apr-18 02:35 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the GVW's essex, 🇬🇧 not seen any here yet, still hoping the weather will pick up but it's rained all day. Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 25-Apr-18 01:14 PM GMT

Your diary is a kaleidoscope of colour right now, Mark, what with the flower images to complement the butterflies.

Nice to see you got a few decent OT shots. You certainly deserved them after waiting all that time.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Apr-18 10:16 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie, they've only just emerged down south, so they should be with you soon.

Thanks David, I like my flowers as well as the butterflies. Bluebell season is almost here! 😊

Sunny spells, April showers and Orange Tips!

Today started clear and blue. As often happens in April, the strong sunshine soon warmed the surface layers, forming cumulus clouds that eventually towered upwards, with showers breaking out during afternoon.

Behind my house is a hedge and ditch which runs north to south. It is full of garlic mustard. On these lovely cool sunny mornings, Orange Tips warm up here in the sunshine and shelter from the wind.



Also in the ditch, was this glorious fresh Holly Blue!



Later, I was visited in my garden by another beautiful Orange Tip, which spent half an hour feeding on my flowers, especially the garlic mustard which I grow for them!



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 25-Apr-18 11:27 PM GMT

That array of garlic mustard is positively intoxicating, Mark. No wonder Pierids are attracted to that spot. Right now, my area is seeing a mass emergence of wild garlic and for me this is the most enjoyable time of year from a flora perspective, prior to the grasses growing in late May and strangling most other plants out!

PS - well done with the OT open-wing shot. Far too few of those have been achieved thus far this year! 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 26-Apr-18 11:48 AM GMT

Beautiful shots Essex, I like your close ups as well. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Apr-18 07:37 PM GMT

Thanks David. Fortunately, this ditch is only a few hundred yards from home, and, when not working, I can get there anytime. On these cool, sunny mornings, photography is easy. Life doesn't get much better than this! 😊

Thanks Andrew, yes I thought I would try a couple of close shots, just something a little different.

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 27-Apr-18 09:50 PM GMT

Hi Mark,
Good to hear from you, enjoyed your winter adventures.
Also a mrgreen for your female Orange Tip 🍷🍷, that looks like a cracking site for them.

Hope to see you around,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-Apr-18 11:30 PM GMT

When I read that you have an OT site behind your house I was reminded of the Dungeon scene in Life of Brian "you lucky, lucky..."etc 🍷🍷🍷 And then you go and top it all with a blinder of a Holly Blue shot 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-May-18 10:37 PM GMT

Welcome to the merry month of May, the most beautiful month of the year. The bluebells are out, the hedges are full of cow-parsley and Orangetips, and the hawthorn and horse chestnut are coming. Days are long, bright and warm (well sometimes), and the countryside is clothed in fresh green. We now see the emergence of the spring species. Dingy and Grizzed Skippers and Dukes on the downland, and Pearl border Fritillaries in the woods. Later this month, we will see the Blues emerging. Common, Adonis and Small. Times are good! 😊😊😊



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 01-May-18 10:42 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Welcome to the merry month of May, the most beautiful month of the year. Times are good! 😊😊😊

I can only agree! This is very much my favourite time of year and the forecast for the first half of May looks very promising! Fingers crossed... 😊😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 02-May-18 10:11 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the OT's essex, and that shot of the Blue Bells is fantastic, May, is also my favourite time year lets hope it brings more Butterflies for us. Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 02-May-18 11:03 AM GMT

Fantastic shot of the Bluebell Wood Essex, I need to get to mine soon 😊 Tis the season to be really jolly 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-May-18 12:02 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. As I look out at the pouring rain, it seems hard to believe, perhaps. But hang on in there, for this is the month when it all happens. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 02-May-18 05:57 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Welcome to the merry month of May, the most beautiful month of the year. The bluebells are out, the hedges are full of cow-parsley and Orangetips, and the hawthorn and horse chestnut are coming. Days are long, bright and warm (well sometimes), and the countryside is clothed in fresh green. We now see the emergence of the spring species. Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and Dukes on the downland, and Pearl border Fritillaries in the woods. Later this month, we will see the Blues emerging. Common, Adonis and Small. Times are good! 😊😊😊

Couldn't put it better, Mark. May is indeed a joy in the UK. My personal favourite time is that week or so when the horse chestnut 'candles' are in full pomp.

By mid-June, the grasses have strangled out most of the earlier flowering plants and the leaves take on that richer shade of green which isn't as attractive as the fresh olive colours most sport right now.

And, of course, heaps of butterfly species will emerge as adults! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-May-18 09:24 PM GMT

Spot on, David. I was at Windsor on Monday, and the conker trees were already in bloom there, but ours want a few more days. Love it, just love it! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-May-18 10:11 PM GMT

Unfortunately, it was raining again on my day off (Wednesday), and it didn't clear until the evening. Butterflies were out of the question by then, so we will have to make do with an Essex scenery shot.



Re: essex buzzard

by ernie f, 04-May-18 08:02 AM GMT

Hi

Love the shot of the windmill in a field. I hail originally from Essex but more into town rather than this nice rural location you show. The closest windmill I know of to where I lived was near Upminster.

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 04-May-18 11:32 AM GMT

Here's to a great May for us all. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-May-18 11:02 PM GMT

Hi Ernie, yes, Essex has a good number of windmills. Your right, there is one at Upminster though I haven't been to it.

Here's to a merry May to you and yours too. Enjoy it while it lasts! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 05-May-18 08:02 AM GMT

Thanks for the landscape shot, Mark. I daresay you won't have time for any more this weekend given the forecast. Should be a butterfly bonanza!

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 05-May-18 02:29 PM GMT

Whenever I visit Essex (for Heath Frits usually), I am always impressed with how lovely it looks. Typical green rolling English countryside straight out of everyone's imagination. That's a great shot with the windmill. 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-May-18 10:20 PM GMT

Thanks everyone, yes, Essex sure has some beautiful places. Once you get off the beaten track, some people are surprised how pretty Essex is. Never is it more beautiful than in May.

We are also known for our bluebells, indeed the best bluebell woods I have seen, anywhere, are right here. One of my favourites is Hillhouse wood, near Colchester. So we visited on Bank Holiday Monday- as did many other people- to try to soak up the sight and scent of this place, with its spectacular show. All too soon it will be over for another year. 😊





In some parts of the wood, the bluebells combine with stitchwort, wild garlic and yellow archangel, creating a riot of colour! 😊😊😊



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-May-18 10:36 PM GMT

Later, rather than trying to dodge the Bank Holiday traffic, we kept it local, by spending afternoon at Hylands Park, Chelmsford. A hot, sunny day, it was busy, but it was great to see so many families out enjoying themselves among the glorious flowering horse chestnut trees and hawthorn, and everyone was having a generally good time. The Orange Tips were flying, too. That made this splendid day even better! 😊😊😊





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 10-May-18 11:04 PM GMT

That's a lovely looking OT Essex 😊🇧🇪 I've struggled with them this year as my shots keep bleaching out 😞

Have a goodun

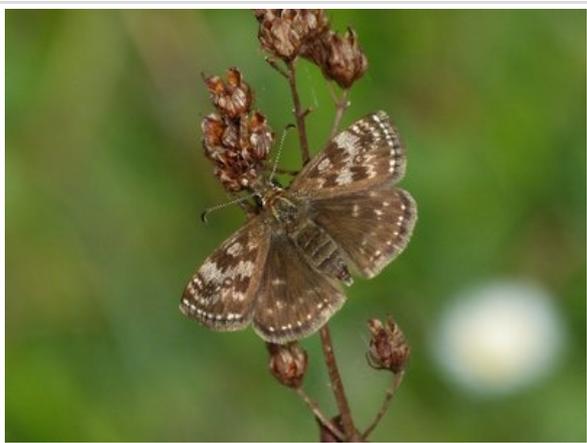
Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-May-18 10:55 PM GMT

I usually turn my exposure down by a couple of stops, Wurzel.

On Wednesday afternoon, we had time to visit Trosley Country Park, on the North Downs in Kent. This is home to the two spring Skippers, Dingy and Grizzled. Much conservation work has taken place here, including grazing by goats, and these have done a good job, helping break up bramble, dogwood and wafering tree scrub, which threatened to overwhelm parts of the site. These conservation efforts have opened up downland, resulting in a fresh crop of wild strawberry plants, and the site now looks in excellent condition. Indeed, one of the Grizzled Skippers I saw was laying eggs right here, in this new area. By late afternoon, high cloud was increasing, bringing an early end to the action, but a managed to watch a few Skippers going to roost. An enjoyable afternoon in the company of these lovely little butterflies. 😊😊😊





Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 11-May-18 11:27 PM GMT

Nice to find different spots for these species, Essex. I do sometimes think I should try a few new locations and see what's out there. Very nice Skippers too – the Grizzlie perched on the hawthorn sprig especially. 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 12-May-18 08:32 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Skipper's essex, 🇮🇪 I visit Kent at the wrong time it seems 😞 Where about in Kent is Trosley CP , if I don't manage the Grizzlies this year I can try for them next year and fit my next visit to Kent earlier in the year. Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by CallumMac, 12-May-18 07:57 PM GMT

Lovely pictures of the Dinky Skippers. A very underrated butterfly in my book! Can't wait for them to appear up in the dry chalk valleys up here – must be any day now.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 13-May-18 10:22 PM GMT

A that's the trick – now I'll have to work out how to do that, I just set it to 'flower' usually 😊 Cracking Skippers, I do think though it's about time that we changed the name of the Dinky to something a bit more flattering 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 14-May-18 10:27 PM GMT

Beautiful skipper images, Mark, especially given that Dingies have somehow eluded me thus far in May, even though I have seen reports of them being spotted in many Welsh locations. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-May-18 11:24 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. Goldie, if you do find your way down here in May next year, let me know, I would happily show you around a few sites. And if you get fed up with butterflies, there are plenty of orchids in Kent.

I agree, when dingies are fresh, they are exquisite. Perhaps we can re name that the exquisite Skipper! Or the cryptic Skipper?

Thanks David, they should be around for a couple of weeks yet, so hopefully you will get your chance.

Next up – Dukes!

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 15-May-18 09:27 AM GMT

Hi! essex, I'll certainly do that because if we don't set off soon to find them they'll be gone this year.

No Dukes at Gait Burrow yesterday so I may have to go back next week but I'd sooner find the Grizzled Skipper first if Possible, love your shots of the Skipper's 🇮🇪 Goldie 😊

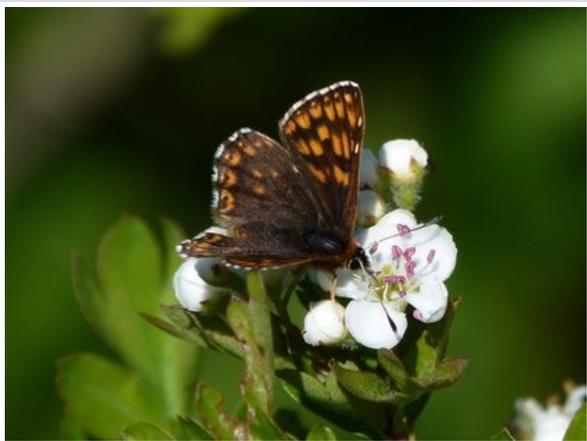
Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-May-18 11:27 PM GMT

Before going anywhere yesterday, I went for a morning walk around my local park. The countryside is full of colour at the moment, and the hawthorn, or May blossom , is absolutely glorious this year!



Then I was off to Bison Hill, on Whipsnade Downs, to see if the Duke of Burgundy have emerged. They had, I'm pleased to say, in good numbers, and I soon began to spot the males. They were holding territory, intercepting any insect that passed.



This one was using cowslip, the caterpillar food plant, as a launch pad.



New adults were emerging throughout the day, and I eventually found a few females, mint fresh.



Soon after emergence, they were found by males, and mating was almost immediate.



Here are another pair, found in an area sheltered from the wind.



To be continued... 😊😊😊

Re: essex buzzard

by ernie f, 16-May-18 08:37 AM GMT

Great Duke pics, Mark. Looks like they are having a bumper year.

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 16-May-18 10:10 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Dukes essex, makes up for me not seeing them at GB 🇬🇧 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 16-May-18 06:45 PM GMT

Excellent Skippers and Duke's Essex. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 16-May-18 06:56 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Dukes Mark. Question for you (or anyone else who has experience of mating Dukes) – have you ever seen one or both open their wings during cop apart from prior to separation?

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 16-May-18 09:50 PM GMT

Great shots of the Dukes, Essex. 😊 They really don't hang about when going about mating, do they? Courtship isn't in their dictionary...

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 17-May-18 01:40 PM GMT

Great set of in cop shots Essex, something I'll like to add to me 'connoisseurs collection' 😊😊👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 18-May-18 05:07 PM GMT

~~quote~~The countryside is full of colour at the moment, and the hawthorn, or May blossom, is absolutely glorious this year!

Isn't it just, Mark. It's been a delightful May thus far and as you say the colours have been vibrant and spectacular. Your first image shows this off to good effect and quite how there are millions of people out there who don't seem to appreciate such beauty (or who at least aren't inclined to go and experience it) will forever remain a mystery to me.

Well done with the Dukes too. Sadly, I'm likely to miss out on them in the UK this year. 😞

Re: essex buzzard

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

Just catching up on your recent reports Mark, some great stuff accompanied by some cracking photos 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: essex buzzard

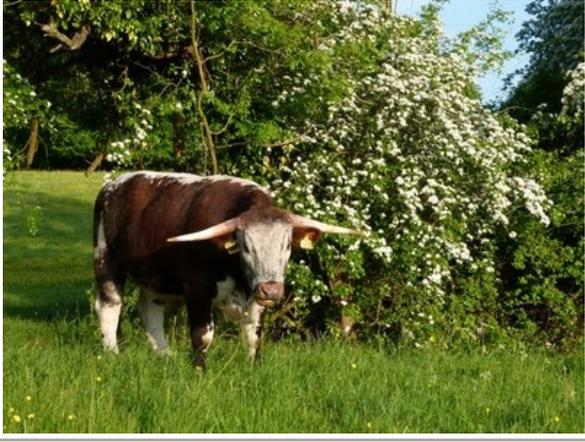
by essexbuzzard, 18-May-18 08:56 PM GMT

Thanks for the feedback. Pauline, no I haven't. Not often have I seen mating Dukes anyway, but when I have the wings have always been closed.

Agreed, David. Many people are bemused by my love of the British country side but, coming from a farming background, it is second nature to me to notice, and enjoy, such stuff. My next pictures follow a similar theme...

As you say, we've had some glorious days recently. 😊😊😊 We all bemoan the British climate, myself included, as well as the forecasters. But when the weather is as good as this, the hedges and fields are full of colour, and the air is full of birdsong, is there anywhere better? 😊😊😊





Re: essex buzzard

by ernie f, 18-May-18 09:03 PM GMT

How close exactly were you to that very horned cow? And did you remember to bring your red-lined cape for defence?

Ole!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-May-18 09:46 PM GMT

Don't worry, this is an English Longhorn. On the face of it, they could do you some damage with those impressive horns, but in fact they are quite placid!

Back to Bison Hill, and I was most pleased to see so many Greens. I normally see a few, but this was my best showing here. Perhaps they were concentrated in sheltered areas on this breezy day, or perhaps they are simply having a good spring!



This little chap was holding territory on the edge of a hawthorn bush. I had the pleasure watching him for a good half hour. He was flying out at any other hairstreak, Duke or other insect that came close. He, and his friends, made a great day even better! 😊😊😊



Re: essex buzzard

by kevlings, 19-May-18 08:22 AM GMT

Essex,

I enjoyed your photos of the mating Dukes, a nice find. I must visit that area and get my fix, it's such a lovely butterfly.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 19-May-18 08:38 AM GMT

Your first Green Hairstreak image is a cracker.
An almost perfectly marked specimen too.

Great stuff, Mark,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-May-18 10:32 PM GMT

Our spring Skippers were also in evidence at Bison Hill. I normally see them here, and it was great to do so again. Add a few Orange Tips and Brimstones, and turned out to be a super May day! 😊😊😊





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 19-May-18 10:52 PM GMT

That is a great example of a punctata Essex 😊🇬🇧 Now I've made my peace with the Green one I love the behaviour that you describe, it's great just watching them fly out to intercept any invaders on their patch 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-May-18 10:54 PM GMT

Agreed, Wurzel. Sometimes it's nice to put the camera down, and just watch the butterflies, and witness their behaviour.

On Wednesday, we headed down to Canterbury, and to Denge Wood. This is home to the largest population of Duke of Burgundy in Kent. Unfortunately, it rather dull and cold when we arrived, but it was expected to brighten up during the afternoon. It didn't. In the four hours we were there, it failed to brighten at all, and remained dull, cold and windy from the moment we arrived to when we left. The accuracy of the forecast has improved when predicting rain, but they still have a long way to go when it comes to predicting sunshine.

Thankfully, there is more to Denge Wood than the Duke of Burgundy. For this is home to many orchids, including one of the best—perhaps the best—colonies of lady orchids in the country. An they are having a good year, with lots of flower spikes. These are variable in size and colour, but make a great display.



In the evening, we headed for Samphire Hoe, beneath Shakespeare's cliff, Dover. When the spoil from the Channel Tunnel was dumped here, it was soon colonised but, among other things, early spider orchids. While these are past their best by mid May, there were still some good ones around. Unfortunately, it was unexpectedly cold here, which we weren't prepared for, so we didn't stay for long!



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 23-May-18 05:17 PM GMT

Those are stunning orchids, Mark, and go some way to compensating you for the lack of accuracy from those who get paid to predict the weather! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-May-18 11:41 PM GMT

Thanks David, to be honest I had my doubts, which is why I went for a site that had other interest as well.

Last Sunday, I went to Mill Hill. With no rush hour I'm Sunday, I arrived early, hoping to catch the Adonis Blues waking up. However, I arrived to unexpected sea mist and, although temperatures rose, I gave up at lunchtime, and headed inland. Having said that, I did find some butterflies there, including Walls, which were easier to approach than usual. And one Adonis was beautifully posed on a carpet of horseshoe vetch, which I love to see.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-May-18 11:57 PM GMT

So I headed to Chantry Hill, Storrington, where glorious sunshine greeted me on arrival. Never been here at this time of year before, but it was excellent. I was amazed at the number of Dingy Skippers, there were hundreds of them! Dukes were also spread around the si, I was hoping, rather than expecting, to see some.



I also saw my first Brown Argus of the year. Lots of them!



Small Coppers were also present, as well as many other species. This is a great place!





Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 28-May-18 09:04 AM GMT

Lovely shots essex, 🍷 No sight of the Dukes for me this week-End 😞 so I've enjoyed your shots 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-May-18 04:18 PM GMT

Your first Brown Argus is an interesting one, Mark, very akin to the Mountain Argus seen in the Alps (as you know).

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 29-May-18 01:08 PM GMT

So many lovely images there Mark it's hard to pick out a favourite but I do like the mating Dingy Skippers and that Adonis on the yellow carpet is a gem 😊 Many, including myself, might have been tempted to zoom in on that one but that composition is so much more effective!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-May-18 10:35 PM GMT

Yes David, he does, doesn't he?

Pauline, I did take close-ups as well, but I prefer that picture!

After Chantry, I headed back to Mill Hill for the evening. Trevor had arrived, as had the sun, and we had a great couple of hours watching the butterflies going to roost. These are Adonis Blues, here in impressive numbers, as they were last summer,





Common Blues were, indeed, common. Here is a brown female, and a male,



Small Heaths had emerged,



And lastly another picture of the glorious horseshoe vetch.



A great evening! 😊😊😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 29-May-18 10:41 PM GMT

Great stuff Essex 😊 The upside blue from Mill Hill is a beaut, lovely contrast with the blue and the dark margins 😊 And that Adonis – woah! 😊👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-May-18 11:27 PM GMT

We have no early summer trip to Cornwall this year, so for Marsh Fritillaries, we decided to go to Wurzel's "the Hill". Traffic was kind, and we arrived in good time. We soon saw a familiar shape. Trevor, who I had seen at Mill Hill a couple of days earlier! Soon our first Marsh Fritillaries were seen, and we went on to see good numbers on the slope.



Although these were our priority, I was pleased to find Grizzled Skippers, which I love to see.



A couple of Orange Tips were, of course, a pleasure. At the bottom of the slope, we found a couple of Small Blues.



Here, the butterflies were feasting on some delicious dog dirt!



All to a backdrop of singing yellow hammers and corn buntings, we had another terrific morning! 😊😊😊 .



Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 30-May-18 01:53 PM GMT

Some really nice shots there Essex, great stuff. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 30-May-18 08:09 PM GMT

Great that the Hill is working out again this year, I was slightly worried when I visited as there weren't that many Marshies around though it seems that they were a little late in emerging 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 30-May-18 08:16 PM GMT

Some great reports and photos there, Essex, from both Mill Hill and then over at Wurzel's Hill in Wiltshire. Both are amazing sites with the possibility of 20 species at either of them. 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 30-May-18 09:54 PM GMT

That's an interesting Small Heath in your last but one report, Mark. Do my eyes deceive me or are there really silvery spots on the hindwing underside?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-May-18 10:57 PM GMT

After lunch in Salisbury—a Cornish pastry of course—we headed to Martin Down for afternoon. We were hoping for more Marsh Fritillaries, and we found some. Not high numbers, but very welcome. I was also pleased to find Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, and many Small Blues.

Some noisy Ravens were on site, and we heard our first cuckoo of the year. More yellow hammers and corn buntings were singing.





Some nice plants are at Martin Down. I always look out for the burnt orchids on Bokerley Dyke. The chalk milkwort brightens the spring turf, with its light blue flowers. A less well known plant, found here, is the field fleawort. It looks a little like ragwort, but flowers earlier, in late spring. A scarce inhabitant of chalk, this is the only place I have found it.

In the evening, it was back to Salisbury for dinner. A super day out! 😊😊😊



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-May-18 10:21 PM GMT

Orchid bonanza!

Last Sunday, it was time to see some of the late-spring orchids of Kent.

One of the best orchid sites in the country is Park Gate Down. Not only does it have the biggest colony of monkey orchids in Britain, but it has a very rich orchid population in general. The monkey orchids reach their peak around the late-spring Bank Holiday weekend and, sure enough, they were at their splendid best when I arrived. Many other people were enjoying them too, including a couple from Newcastle, doing an "orchid weekend".



A single lady orchid grows on site. Normally she is past her best by time the monkeys are out, so I was delighted to find her in full bloom this time. Perhaps this is due to the 'squashed' spring this year.



Fly orchids also occur at Park Gate. They can take a while to find, but once you get your eye in, they start to appear in greater numbers. They are a marvellous example of insect mimicry and, although not spectacular, they have a certain charm.



The greater butterfly orchid were starting to flower. It seems these orchids have evolved to glow in the dark, as they are pollinated by moths. This is not a rare species, but is always sought after.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-May-18 10:38 PM GMT

In afternoon, I headed to the North Downs, overlooking Folkestone and the Channel Tunnel. Here, the late spider orchids grow, one of the rarest and most endangered of our orchids. They flower mainly in June, but on this south-facing slope, they start slightly earlier. I had never seen them here before, so didn't really know where to look. But, after some time searching, I found them in two areas. One site was fenced off, to prevent trampling, as it is next to a footpath. Seeing them gave me great pleasure!





Plenty of butterflies fly here, including Dingy Skippers and Adonis Blues in good numbers, as horseshoe vetch is plentiful. In the bare areas were Walls, and I nice sparkling Painted Lady was perhaps an arrival from France, visible across the water. But by then my camera battery had run out! 😊 But a super May day it had been. 😊😊😊



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-18 12:53 PM GMT

Woah where to begin Essex 🤔🍷🍷 Those Orchids are great and some class Adonis, Small Blue and Marshie shots 🤔🍷 I also reckon that I know where you were at Martin Down as I photographed (possibly exactly the same) Field Fleawort 🤔😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Jun-18 10:49 PM GMT

Yes Wurzel, you're right. High on the Bokerley Dyke!

On Bank Holiday Monday, I had commitments in the morning, but then there was time to visit the Chilterns.

The military orchid is one of our rarest and most spectacular orchids. It occurs naturally at only three sites regularly, though odd plants turn up elsewhere from time to time. It is one of the "manikin" orchids, each flower resembles a soldier, complete with helmet. Thankfully, at the site at Homefield Wood, visitors are welcome. It's been several years since my last visit, and I'm pleased to say, the military orchids here have gone from strength to strength. Much work has been done by volunteers to increase their numbers, so the population becomes viable. Their efforts should be congratulated!



Other orchids are here, such as fly and greater butterfly, which we have seen. In the shady woods, grow white helleborine.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Jun-18 11:31 PM GMT

Then it was off to Aston Rowant for the evening. I was pleased to see Grizzled Skippers here, these, sadly, are probably my last for the season.



Also here were Common Blues and Brown Argus.



Lastly, Dingy Skippers were here. Many were indeed dingy, but there were still a few good ones around. They were enjoyed for, again, they could be my last for the season.



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 02-Jun-18 06:16 AM GMT

Your Butterfly images are always enjoyable, Mark, but those Orchids are something else, stunning.

Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 03-Jun-18 12:46 AM GMT

Your PD has been a kaleidoscope of colour lately, Mark. The butterflies add animation to those wonderful flowers, most of which will be strangled out by the start of July. 😊

This is perhaps the finest time of the year.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jun-18 08:57 AM GMT

Just catching up on your recent outings Mark, you certainly get about a bit. Some great reports and photos as usual, I really like the variety in your reports 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 04-Jun-18 01:56 PM GMT

Some great shots of both butterflies and flowers Mark. 😊
Very nice to see you on Sunday. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Jun-18 10:32 PM GMT

Thanks Trev, and great to see you a couple of times recently!

Thanks David. May has been so glorious this year that I had to show it off in my pictures!

Thanks Neil. Glad you like the images, I certainly like to get out and about!

Thanks Andrew. Hope you managed to see some SPBF action later on Sunday.

Now we are into June—early summer— I wasn't intending any more spring trips out. But following reports on UKB and BC Sussex, of big Adonis Blue action at Anchor Bottom, I really couldn't resist a slice of blue action. Leaving my Essex home just after six on Sunday and no rush hour traffic, I made good progress. I was hoping to see the Adonis warming up, and some were, but most were already active, a turf shimmering with blue. A couple of distant people turned out to be Katrina and Andrew 555. A UKB social! Great to see you both! By 9AM, the Adonis were pairing up, and soon there were mating pairs by the dozen, and probably many hundreds over the whole site.



We made made out way very slowly, to give any mating pairs we hadn't seen on the path time to escape, enjoying bee and fragrant orchids along the way. The Meadow clary is a much rarer plant in Britain, though common in Europe.



The first Large Skippers were about, and we were surprised to find a couple of Small Blues, as we hadn't seen any kidney vetch. A closer look did reveal some though.



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 05-Jun-18 10:39 PM GMT

Just catching up with your adventures, Mark – you've picked some brilliant spots and there have been some terrific butterflies out there, especially the Adonis at Anchor Bottom. If the weather continues even half-decent, goodness knows what it will be like in August... 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Jun-18 10:42 PM GMT

I had commitments lunchtime, but the days are long now, so there was time to head to Folkestone, where I had another look at the excellent late-spider orchids from last week. More flowers were out this time, but still plenty to come, they will be good for a couple of weeks yet. Butterflies were more worn than a week ago, but I was delighted to find a female Clouded Yellow, my first since November.

Yes Dave, if we get anything like reasonable weather this summer, there could enormous numbers in the second generation. Here's hoping!





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 05-Jun-18 10:44 PM GMT

I found some White Heleborines last weekend – do their flowers open out any more? Some cracking hots recently especially the final Dingy from Aston 🤪 Brill!! 😊🌱🌱 Then you go and top it with a Cloudy 🌧️🌧️

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Jun-18 10:57 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, no. White heleborine flowers hardly open at all, the one in my picture was at it's peak!

Re: essex buzzard

by Katrina, 05-Jun-18 11:16 PM GMT

Was great to meet you again and to meet Andrew 555. Good spotting of the small blue and thanks for sharing your knowledge of flowers!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 06-Jun-18 06:05 PM GMT

Lovely first image of the mating pair of Adonis, Mark, and well done with your relatively early Clouded Yellow. Let's hope quite a few head north to escape the generally poor French weather. The month of May has seen a role reversal between there and the UK.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Jun-18 10:57 PM GMT

Thanks Katrina, lovely to see you again. David, that Clouded Yellow is not the only butterfly trying to escape the European weather, judging by the numbers of Painted Ladies I've seen this week...

So, we move into early summer. What a strange spring? It took a long time to get going but, with an abundance of colour, generally good weather, and a good emergence of spring butterflies, May was an absolute belter!

Gone are the Orange Tips for another year. My OT season ran from 21 April to 27 May—a total of 37 days. What a short season they have? But the countryside had come alive in that time, when you think at the start of that period most of the trees were still bare.

Although we are now into June, my last "spring" outing last Monday was to Mount Caburn, near Lewes. Here, a strong colony of Adonis Blues is found and, like colonies of AB elsewhere, there has been a good spring generation this year. Also at Mount Caburn, the burnt orchid occurs in good numbers. Many were beginning to fade, but there were still a few good ones around.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-18 11:03 PM GMT

Cheers for the Heleborine info Essex 😊 Cracking Adonis shot, it fair leaps out of the screen 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Jun-18 10:59 PM GMT

It's been a few years since I saw a Black Hairstreak, and the last few days I have been keeping an eye on sightings, and of course the weather forecast! Today was glorious and sunny and I had a spare afternoon, so I was off to Northamptonshire, to visit Glapthorn Cow Pastures. Despite the roadworks on A14, I arrived in just over an hour, hoping an afternoon would be long enough for a few sightings, and hopefully some pictures.

I needn't have worried. For, after an hour, I had seen good numbers, and had all the photos I could want. Several other people were there too, and they confirmed what I had already noticed, that there had been a fantastic emergence this year. The best for many years! We collected around some bramble bushes, that had several Black Hairstreak feeding on them. We then simply took turns to get our images, and we all had plenty of chances for this.



One adult had clearly just emerged. It's was crawling up a grass stem, and the wings were soft. Lots of pictures were taken. Then, after about half an hour, a male flew down, knocked her off her stem, and she flew off into the hedge.



However, it was the sheer numbers that was most impressive. After the photos, I had a walk around the site. Every hedge and clump of blackthorns had several flying around it, and the Hairstreaks were virtually ever-present throughout my visit. Here is a male.



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 12-Jun-18 06:15 AM GMT

Good to see your Black Hairstreak images, from a traditional, known haunt. Several factors had always put me off going to see them, a horrible journey, reports of only one or two being seen, and not knowing exactly where to find them. Yesterday was a problem solved.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 12-Jun-18 08:18 AM GMT

Sounds like a dream afternoon Mark. Brilliant stuff. 🍷 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-18 10:49 PM GMT

Absolutely cracking images Essex 😊 🍷 🍷 I can only look on in envy as, for similar reasons as Trevor, these to me feel like one of the hardest species to see, plus I have the extra disadvantage of only being able to make a visit on a weekend. So thank you for posting and letting me enjoy this cracking butterfly through those cracking images 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by kevlng, 13-Jun-18 10:31 PM GMT

Nice set of photos from Glapthorn Essex. The freshly emerged one with the soft wings is a delight. I had a nice day with them last year, but they seem to be even stronger in 2018

Regards Kev

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Jun-18 09:25 PM GMT

Yes, they are having a great year, across their British range. Here is one last picture, to show Wurzel what he is missing...



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 14-Jun-18 10:05 PM GMT

Great shots of the Hairstreaks, Mark, and I'm envious of the Clouded Yellow from Kent last week too! A female too – come August there could be a few of her progeny around... 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-18 10:44 PM GMT

Thanks Essex 😊 ...I think? 🤔 🤔 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 14-Jun-18 10:48 PM GMT

Nice work, Mark. I've never seen so many images of Black Hairstreaks on here as I have lately. Of course, most of those have been from the SE-centric region, so credit to you for going into this insect's traditional home.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-18 10:21 PM GMT

Thanks everybody. Seeing the Black Hairstreaks was a pleasure, if slightly overshadowed by the earth-shattering news from down in Sussex!

On Wednesday, we had a look around the flowery meadows at Langdon. Buttercups and Common spotted orchids everywhere, and lots of fresh Meadow Browns, too.



We then headed off to the Heath Fritillary Woods, near Rayleigh. BC are keeping low-key about sightings again this year, so I won't broadcast exactly

which wood it was. I'm not sure how effective this is, judging by the number of visitors the wood is getting. We even met a couple of chaps who had come all the way from Newcastle! They had never seen the Fritillaries before, so it was our pleasure to show them around.

The Heath Fritillaries are highly variable, this dusky adult reminded me off the False Heath Fritillaries in Europe.



Good numbers of Fritillaries were present, and more areas were cut back last winter, which will hopefully spread the available habitat, as other areas become overgrown, just two to four years after clearance. Any visitors should just try to be careful not to trample the caterpillar food plant, common cow-wheat. If anyone intends to see Heath Fritillaries this year, either in Essex or elsewhere, now is the right time so enjoy!





Re: essex buzzard

by Janet Turnbull, 16-Jun-18 11:23 AM GMT

Great shots of the Heaths, Essex – I especially like the one of the pair in cop with a third one basking nearby! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-18 07:53 PM GMT

Cracking set of shots Essex particularly the first rally dusky, almost partial melanistic individual 🤩🌍 Makes a nice change from Blackstreaks 😊🤩🌍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 17-Jun-18 09:38 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

The Heath Fritillaries are highly variable, this dusky adult reminded me off the False Heath Fritillaries in Europe.

Yes, Mark, it certainly does remind one of False Heath, and it's notable that such individuals rarely crop up in France. Perhaps given the more northerly latitude of the UK, these kinds of individuals are more commonplace here than they are nearer the Med.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Jun-18 12:30 AM GMT

Yes, I think it's a response to low temperatures, though that's surprising this year. Several other species, including White Admirals, are prone to it.

Although Sunday was rather cloudy, a late afternoon visit to Lullingstone CP in Kent, produced my first Dark Green Fritillaries and Marbled Whites of the year. It was a pleasure also to meet up with Andrew 555 again.





Earlier in the day, I had seen my first Ringlets of the year.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 19-Jun-18 08:27 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the DGF 🍷🍷 Essex and the Ringlet is great too – they always look a bit velveteen when fresh 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 19-Jun-18 11:45 PM GMT

I'm getting envious now, Mark, so much on my radar and so little time to see it prior to my fortnight in the French Alps.

Luckily, next weekend is set fair so I think I'll have to get a few early nights to do justice to what has been, so far, a very encouraging early summer period for UK butterflies.

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 20-Jun-18 08:55 AM GMT

Good to see you again Mark. 😊 Nice shots. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Jun-18 11:15 PM GMT

To some extent, the White Admiral has eluded me in recent years, so on Monday afternoon, I visited Belfairs Woods, near Rayleigh. White Admirals are just emerging here, with a handful of fresh adults seen. This male was holding territory in a woodland clearing.



Nearby, another colony of Heath Fritillaries is found. Numbers were slightly lower than the site I visited last week, with about 50 seen, and some were beginning to show their age as well. But it was great to see the Fritillaries at another, Essex, location.





Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 21-Jun-18 10:20 AM GMT

That's a cracking ab you found, Mark. Good to see you managed to nail down White Admiral too. Possibly the best UK species of all to see when gleaming fresh! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-18 02:01 PM GMT

As David says that is a cracking ab - I'm almost 'used' to see the melanistic abs so to see one so devoid of markings is really interesting 😊🌱

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Jun-18 09:33 PM GMT

Thanks David and Wurzel. The Heath Fritillary, in Britain, is variable enough, but seems especially so this year. Considering it has been dry and warm throughout it's chrysalis and adult stage, this is surprising, to me at least. One of the many fascinating aspects of our wildlife!

Has a fleeting visit to Hadleigh Castle Country Park, near Southend, to see if the White-letter Hairstreaks has emerged. They have, mostly males, in good numbers. Plenty of Marbled White now, too. There is a lot of other stuff here, worthy of a much longer visit. I shall return....





Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 21-Jun-18 11:19 PM GMT

That's not a bad combination, Mark, White Letter Hairstreak and Marbled White; two species that are tricky to observe easily in south Wales.

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 22-Jun-18 06:38 AM GMT

I struggled for half a morning Mark and couldn't get a shot of a WLH anywhere near as good as that. How did you get it to pose so nicely 😊 Some lovely shots recently, especially the WA, BH etc and that Frit ab was a great find 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-18 07:02 PM GMT

Some more great photos in your recent posts Mark, especially that Heath Fritillary ab. and the WLH, but for me the Dark Green Fritillary underside stands out, a cracking shot 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Jun-18 07:24 PM GMT

Thanks David. Essex does have its treasures

Thanks Pauline. You're right, such views don't always come easy. But Hadleigh Castle CP is a special place.

Neil, the DGF is a fine insect, found throughout Europe but sadly not in Essex, so I have to travel to see it. Not far mind you- just over the border in Kent! The underside is quite as attractive as the upper.

Re: essex buzzard

by Janet Turnbull, 23-Jun-18 08:38 PM GMT

That WLH is a cracker, EB 🍷 😊 ! I have been searching the elms around Somerton but haven't seen any butterflies. The leaves look eaten though.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-18 10:35 PM GMT

That Whitter has the longest tails I've seen 😊 It looks like one of the more tropical species 🍷 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Jun-18 11:29 PM GMT

Thanks guys, yes not bad for a brief visit. I'll be heading back to Hadleigh tomorrow or Monday, for a more intensive search of the area, and hopefully a few more images...just need to decide which forecast to believe. Met Office says cloudy, BBC says sunny 😊 Or perhaps I'll just look out of the window in the morning!

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 24-Jun-18 09:52 AM GMT

Hi! Essex, I'm trying to catch up with posts etc, 😊 Love the shots of all your Butterflies especially the Hair Streak, the Heath Frits variation is a good find too, I'm hoping the HF's may still be about in East Blean Woods when I'm there in a couple of weeks, Fingers crossed. Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Jun-18 11:31 PM GMT

Well I looked out of the window, and it was hazy blue. So it was time to go get out at dawn today, to visit my nearest Marbled Whites in south Essex, and see them warming up in the morning sun. Lots of Meadow Browns were doing the same.



Re: essex buzzard

by ernie f, 25-Jun-18 07:33 AM GMT

Meadow Browns are so common its difficult to get "interesting" pics of them but you seem to have achieved it. I love the markings on the first pic and assume the concertina-shape of the hind wings of the second are because it was super-fresh.

Cheers

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Jun-18 10:36 PM GMT

That's right. Despite being our most abundant butterfly, getting decent pictures of them can be tricky! The scalloped hindwing is deeper in females.

Sunday continued. Then on to Hadleigh Castle Country Park. This was a vintage day. I've been coming here for many years, but this was probably my best ever visit. I soon found the first White-letter Hairstreaks, many flying around the bushes, but several low down as well. I think this is a female, which tend to come lower than the males, but there were males down as well.



Here is another, on the same bush but slightly further back.



Re: essex buzzard

by Janet Turnbull, 25-Jun-18 10:49 PM GMT

That first WLH looks beautifully fresh EB - do you have to get out at dawn for them too?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jun-18 09:53 PM GMT

Hi Janet, those pictures were taken at around 9AM, on a warm sunny day. But they were still coming down at 5PM.

Further on, in the ponds and drainage ditches, lots of noisy marsh frogs were found, as well as scarce emerald damselflies and small red-eye damsels.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jun-18 10:30 PM GMT

Nearby, a small clump of thistles had several WLH feeding on it. Later, I met a chap down from Cumbria. He had been to Knepp and various other places during the week. Here he had seen plenty of Hairstreaks, but just out of reach for really good pictures. So I took him to the thistle patch, and I think he went home happy!





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-18 11:16 PM GMT

More supremely tailed Whitters Essex 🤔👉 B the way which forecast did you go with and was it reasonably accurate? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Jun-18 07:11 PM GMT

Fabulous White Letter Hairstreak shots, Mark. I can only dream about getting THAT close.

That's one hell of a frog too. Are these the ones that make all the noise during the late evening after it's gone dark?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Jun-18 11:37 PM GMT

I went with my own forecast, I E I got up early and looked out of the window! But the BBC was nearest.

Hi David, yes, Marsh frogs are very noisy at night—and sometimes by day! And the noises they make are most peculiar.

White-letters are also attracted to wild privet. These are males.



This super day ended watching Marbled Whites, Essex and Small Skippers going to roost. This is Essex Skipper,



Small Skipper.



And, of course, Marbled White.



While Purple Hairstreaks spun around the oak tops, and Hutchinsoni Commas looked on.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-18 11:46 PM GMT

I like your forecast method – it seems that it was more reliable than the Beeb 😊 Great set of Essex Skippers Essex buzzard and of course the Whitters 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 02-Jul-18 05:38 PM GMT

Nice sequence again, Mark, especially the White Letter Hairstreaks.

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 02-Jul-18 08:22 PM GMT

Love your Frog essex, 😊 it looks like it's grinning 😊 Those HS shots are great too, hope you didn't get bitten whilst taking them, we took our shots of WLH's at about 4pm and all the flies seemed to be on the same bush, Horse Fly's UGH! Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 12-Jul-18 09:53 PM GMT

Just back from our trip to Cornwall. In reality, this was not really a holiday to look for butterflies. Given the choice. I would have come a month earlier, and most of the butterflies I saw were the Skippers, whites and Browns I see at home. However, I was staying at Hayle Towans, so it would have been rude not to have a couple of mornings and evenings on the sand dunes. I was pleased to find numbers of Silver-studded Blues present. They have been going for six weeks already, but there were still some good ones around. I saw them at several other places, too, but they were all worn and tatty, and not worthy of pictures. So these were at Hayle.





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-18 10:44 PM GMT

They are in good nick for this time of the season Essex 😊🇮🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 13-Jul-18 06:50 AM GMT

Quite surprising to still see them in such good condition at this time of year, Mark. To be honest, I thought they'd all have vanished by now having emerged early.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Jul-18 10:55 PM GMT

Yes, I was pleased to still find them at all!

Also on the Towans, were plenty of Dark Green Fritillaries. I saw them at several other places on the coast path, but Hayle was the only place I got close enough for pictures, and even there, early in the day, they were difficult to approach, and they also tended to land deep in grass. Here, good views were difficult to come by. But this male showed nicely.





Sometimes a gust of breeze would cause him to close his wings briefly, showing the silver spots.



Here he is with a view, with the sea and St. Ives beyond. Still have a way to go master Guys technique!



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-18 08:12 AM GMT

That has been one of the disadvantages of the heatwave – the butterflies are very, very flighty, even more than normal in some cases like the DGFs 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 14-Jul-18 07:06 PM GMT

That's not a bad effort Padfield-wise, Mark. 😊

It clearly shows how parched the landscape is. Coming back from a green France to a brown southern Britain is quite a culture shock!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Jul-18 11:15 PM GMT

Yes the dry summer so far has certainly taken its toll on the vegetation, both in Cornwall and where I live. But it's St. Swithin's day tomorrow, and the School holidays start next weekend. So the weather's bound to change!

One day, we went to the Isles of Scilly. We flew out from Lands End airfield, and got the Scillonian boat back to Penzance. While there, we visited Tresco, and went to the Abbey Gardens.



A ten minute walk from the gardens is Pentle Bay, where the beach, with its white powdery sand and clear blue sea, looks like something out of a Caribbean holiday brochure. I just had to take a swim there!



Then it's was back to the main island, St. Mary's, for the boat trip home which, on this glorious day, was most enjoyable.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 15-Jul-18 06:03 PM GMT

Did you see a Scilly Specklie Essex?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jul-18 10:56 PM GMT

Just one, Wurzel, being between broods. In the Abbey Garden. But it wasn't a good view, and didn't really look any different. A visit in August or September would probably be more productive.

Re: essex buzzard

by CallumMac, 16-Jul-18 08:51 PM GMT

Lucky you Essex. The Scillies are my favourite place on Earth, though I haven't been since October 2014 – when I spent most of the week chasing reports of a vagrant Monarch from island to island, regrettably without success!

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 16-Jul-18 09:20 PM GMT

Nice DGF Essex, the Scillies look pretty sweet! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 17-Jul-18 12:03 AM GMT

Hard to believe that beach is in the UK, Mark. It looks positively tropical!

A dip in the sea in the SW of the country is a rare treat and I hope you enjoyed it. Glad to see you're practicing survival in hot temperatures – you will need it in a couple of weeks time! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Jul-18 11:30 PM GMT

Thanks everybody. Yes, you're right David. If we think it's hot here...

Hatfield Forest is one of my local sites. In July, the woodland rides are patrolled by Silver-washed Fritillaries and, in recent years, Purple Emperors have spread in. Plenty of Gatekeepers are now present and, on a cloudier day last week, I managed to find some settled.



Large numbers of whites have emerged this summer, of all three species. Large cabbage Whites are not loved by everyone, but are large, attractive insects, and it would be a duller world without them. They are now being joined by the first emerging Brimstones.



I was pleased to see a couple of Brown Argus. They are not really a woodland ride species in Essex, but this place is special. The first Common Blues were in the more open areas.



The abundant Ringlets are already coming to the end of their flight period.



The Silver-washed Fritillaries were active. These too, were showing their age, but were still an attractive sight.



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 17-Jul-18 11:39 PM GMT

I'm very envious of the South Sea Island shots, Mark – extraordinary. 🇹🇩 Even when things are hot here in the south east you often hear that the Scillies are foggy or damp. Not so in this case! 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Jul-18 11:46 PM GMT

We were very lucky, Dave, as you have to book these trips well in advance. So you have no control over the weather!

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 19-Jul-18 10:11 AM GMT

You've captured that Large White just right, Mark. Light and shadow showing up the finer detail of the wing structure.

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-18 02:30 PM GMT

I agree with Trevor about the Large White 😊 Those side one Blues/Brown Argus are mighty fine too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Jul-18 06:51 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor and Wurzel. Trevor, I was down your way yesterday!

Wednesday afternoon, I had the opportunity to head down to Sussex. Arriving at Windover Hill at 3.30PM, it was hot, and many butterflies were already going to roost, sitting out the heat.

Reaching Deep Dean, I soon spotted the first Grayling, just a couple of hundred yards through the gate. So, I had high hopes of finding a good number of these rarities. In reality, it took another hour of zig-zagging on the slope to find the next one. In the end, four individuals were seen , plus a fly by probable.



Large numbers of Chalkhill Blues were present. Most of these I was disturbing from the ground as I walked the site. But, in the evening, a few opened their wings, and they were the first of the season for me.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-18 10:16 PM GMT

You've done a cracking job at catching the almost metallic sheen of the Chalkhill Blue Essex 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 19-Jul-18 11:32 PM GMT

Great to see Chalkhills in such concentrations, Mark. I suspect there'll be multi-thousands over the next few weeks.

You did better than me with your Graylings, although in your previous post your Ringlets look to be on their last legs. Here in Wales, they are still looking in half-decent nick.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Jul-18 10:11 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, yes they are in pretty good nick. I had to be patient though—I didn't really get any Chalkhill images until after 7PM!

Thanks David, it just shows the difference from one side of the country to the other, never mind north to south. The Graylings here are very special. Not only are they a little inland, but the colony exists on chalk, and I think they are the last in SE England. Of course, they also occur on chalk on the south coast—they are common around Lulworth Cove for example. Here is a grab shot of the eye-spots, after a couple of seconds the fore wings are lowered out of sight.



Common Blues and Small Coppers were seen here, at the bottom of the slope.



Here is a female Common Blue, of the brown form. Very similar to the Brown Argus.



Lastly here is a habitat shot. Again, not quite up to Guys standard!



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 21-Jul-18 10:44 AM GMT

Like the two Blue species shot Essex 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 21-Jul-18 09:44 PM GMT

Thanks for the commentary on the Graylings, Mark. It really is a species I need to pay closer attention to. Most years I see them in small numbers whilst looking for other things. That's not good enough!

I also like your final image, which gives an indication of just how dry Britain has been over the last few weeks, 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jul-18 08:31 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

...it just shows the difference from one side of the country to the other, never mind north to south...

It does indeed, being in the midlands I tend to go north nearly as often as I head south and see many differences in flight times, broods and behaviours.

essexbuzzard wrote:

...The Graylings here are very special. Not only are they a little inland, but the colony exists on chalk, and I think they are the last in SE England. Of course, they also occur on chalk on the south coast—they are common around Lulworth Cove for example...

As well as around Lulworth Cove, I have also seen good numbers on the slopes above Durdle Door and going west above the chalk cliffs towards Bats Head.

Seeing various comments about the Graylings at Windover Hill being the last chalk based population had me wondering if it meant the last in Sussex or if they were somehow different to those on chalk in Dorset.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Jul-18 10:46 PM GMT

That's my point, Neil. Chalk Graylings are common on many parts of the Dorset coast, but perhaps these are genetically different to those in Sussex. Certainly, the ones in Sussex are very important, as they now occur in small numbers at this isolated SE England site, having been fairly widespread there as recently as the 1990's.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 24-Jul-18 09:43 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

That's my point, Neil. Chalk Graylings are common on many parts of the Dorset coast, but perhaps these are genetically different to those in Sussex. Certainly, the ones in Sussex are very important, as they now occur in small numbers at this isolated SE England site, having been fairly widespread there as recently as the 1990's.

This is a much overlooked demise, Mark. Neil H has very kindly posted his views as to why the species has declined so markedly in this habitat, but perhaps it's time we all paid attention to it, because amidst all the moves to improve things for a myriad of species, the humble Grayling seems to get ignored.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jul-18 10:19 PM GMT

Yes, this one seems to have gone relatively unnoticed, until now. But we have Neil H on the case, so there's hope.

The Chalkhill Blue is the classic butterfly of the Downs in High summer, and I love it. However, the heatwave has made photography more difficult than usual, restricting opportunities to a short period in early mornings and late evenings. Devils Dyke, near Newmarket, is my local site, and our conservation work has seen a big increase in numbers in recent years. Here are a couple of evening shots.



Even these were difficult to get, so I decided to try a morning. However, even at 7AM they were very active, even those in the shade when the sun hadn't yet reached, flew off when approached. But there were plenty of them, making a splendid sight, and this one showed well.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-18 11:15 PM GMT

Cracking Chalkhills Essex 😊 I know what you mean about the frenetic way butterflies are behaving at teh moment Essex 😊 Things are set to freshen up/cool down next week so hopefully the butterflies will slow down a bit 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 27-Jul-18 09:19 AM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

..However, the heatwave has made photography more difficult than usual, restricting opportunities to a short period in early mornings and late evenings.

Indeed, Mark. Things are never straightforward, are they? Even at 9am yesterday Hedge Browns were 'closing up'. It's best if you can get around 40% cloud cover to give the butterflies some relief.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jul-18 10:31 AM GMT

With things now running well ahead of schedule, it was time to visit Aston Rowant. Another hot day, it was essential to get there early, which I did. A handy bit of patchy cloud slowed things down a little, giving me valuable extra minutes. Here are some Chalkhill Blues.



Then m attention turned to the Silver Spotted Skippers. I saw a few early on, but as the day warmed up, more and more of these little beauties appeared. Some were already showing their age, remarkable for the third week in July. But most were excellent, and will probably peak next week.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jul-18 11:26 AM GMT

All the usual butterflies were seen, including Common and Holly Blues, Brown Argus and Dark Green and Silver-washed Fritillaries. Overall, numbers of butterflies were probably higher on the northern (motorway) end of the site rather than the quieter southern section. Here is a freshly emerged SSS, which showed nicely.



By lunchtime, it was getting hot, and was time to finish. So I'll sign off with a couple more SSS pictures.





Re: essex buzzard

by ernie f, 27-Jul-18 11:36 AM GMT

Essex B, all three pics of SSS's in your last post were SSSstunners!

I have never seen such a white marking on the sex brand as you captured in your last pic. Is this an ab, or have I just not been observant enough in the past?

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 27-Jul-18 12:57 PM GMT

Some lovely shots of the Chalkhills and SSS's there Mark. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-18 10:52 PM GMT

Brilliant Silver-spots Essex 😊 That last one is a real cracker 😊😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 04-Aug-18 11:29 PM GMT

That last SSS image is quite intriguing, Mark. The sex brands of the male appear very pronounced with a 'waxy' sheen. Is it just the angle from which you've taken it?

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 05-Aug-18 11:31 AM GMT

Very nice Silver-spots, Essex, especially that last extremely new one. 😊 Time for another visit up there I think - there may even be some Adonis out by now, and hopefully even a Clouded Yellow...

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Aug-18 10:11 PM GMT

Thanks everyone for your comments. The last SSS was freshly emerged, and it was also quite early in the day, so I think that's why the sex-brand is more pronounced than usual. Dave (millerd), you need to be quick, as the SSS were in full flight a couple of weeks ago! Good luck!

Just back from a week in Spain, to the Montes Universales, sort of south-east of Madrid. As you can imagine, it was hot, and in many places very dry by late summer. Yet the butterflies here were remarkable, both in variety and number, and having never visited this area before, I had many firsts, lifers.

Much more to come on that, but for now I'll finish with some Silver Spotted Skippers, which were putting on a good show during a short visit to Lydden Temple Ewell on Sunday afternoon. The first new late-summer brood Adonis were also on the wing. 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 07-Aug-18 10:25 PM GMT

I hope to get to East Kent too before the end of the month, Mark... It's looking good. I have been to Aston Rowant again (on 5th), and as you say the hillside was teeming with Silver-spots. 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 07-Aug-18 11:08 PM GMT

More cracking Silver-spots Essex 😊🇬🇧 Looking forward to the Spanish butterflies 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by ernie f, 08-Aug-18 07:39 AM GMT

Nice to see the Adonis is out round your way, Mark. They have yet to appear near me.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 08-Aug-18 06:46 PM GMT

Lovely to see there are still fresh specimens in the UK after several weeks of dry, baking weather, Mark.

Looking forward to your images of mariposas de espana! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Aug-18 11:20 PM GMT

It's going to take a while, David! 😊

MONTES UNIVERSALES.

For a country where summers are hot sunny and dry, the variety of habitats we visited in Spain was surprisingly diverse, even quite lush in places, which to me, was most unexpected. So perhaps I will separate my pictures into habitat groups though, it must be said, some species were found in more than one area.

Several dry, stony river beds were visited. Here is a picture.



Spanish Chalkhill Blues were common here, my first ever. Paler than our Chalkhill Blues, but the same size, and using the same foodplants, horseshoe vetch.



Among the many Gatekeepers present in this habitat, I was pleased to find Southern Gatekeepers, another lifer for me.



Spanish Gatekeepers were also found, but their flight-season is earlier than the others, so I only saw faded females. But they were most welcome!



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-18 11:26 PM GMT

Essex with these Gatekeepers you're really spoiling us 😊🇬🇧🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Aug-18 12:16 AM GMT

That's the aim, Wurzel

Southern Hermit were found at several locations, usually where it was dry and stony.





This, I think, is Southern Marbled Skipper.



Oberthur's Anomalous Blues were everywhere, in many different habitats.



With lots of Phlox Sage plants around, in dry sites of all kinds, Sage Skippers were common in many areas.



Striped Graylings were hard to spot, among the stones. They were seeking shade by the middle of the day.



And lastly, for now, the Black Satyr. Fairly common in hot, rocky areas. This is a male.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 09-Aug-18 09:14 PM GMT

Great stuff, Mark. You concentrated on some of the species that I was rather guilty of ignoring.

I'm no expert on Hermit/Southern Hermit, but your second 'Southern Hermit' might well be an 'ordinary' Hermit. Who cares? Both were seen in decent numbers and they are lovely butterflies.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Aug-18 11:53 PM GMT

Sorry for late reply, just back from (wet) Dorset. Checking the Paul Browning book--sorry David, teasing you there!-- the second Hermit picture is the f. uhagonis variety of female Southern Hermit. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Aug-18 09:38 PM GMT

Also abundant in dry habitat, in fact grassland of all types, were Iberian Marbled Whites.



And Bath Whites, though in much lower numbers.



A few Tree Grayling were seen during our week, their dark markings confused us for a while.



Dusky Heath were fairly common, mostly in dry, stony areas.



I think this is Tufted Marbled Skipper.



And lastly for now, a Hermit.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Aug-18 10:31 PM GMT

Despite the hot, dry weather in Spain in summer, the grasslands in places was surprisingly damp and lush. Here is an example of the damp grass and woodland edge habitat that we visited. Butterflies in such surroundings were abundant, in both numbers and diversity.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 19-Aug-18 10:41 PM GMT

Happy memories, Mark (even though they are less than three weeks old).

That last spot was quite remarkable, and I could happily spend several hours every day there for a couple of weeks without getting bored!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Aug-18 11:46 PM GMT

Azure Chalkhill Blues were one of the pleasures of the trip. We were excited to find the first one, but as the week progressed, they were seen in greater numbers.



Marbled Fritillaries were found in low numbers here.



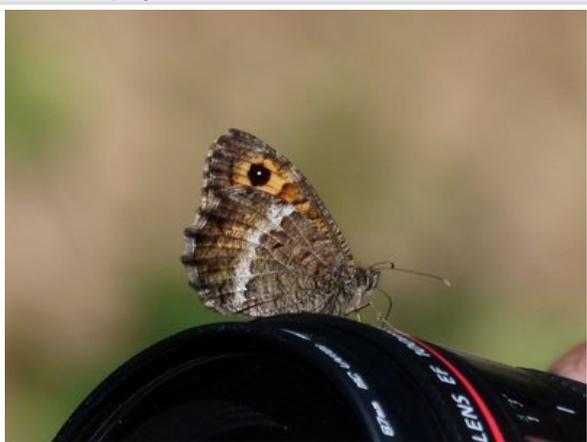
Dusky Meadow Browns were seen throughout the week.



It wouldn't be Spain without the Queen of Spain Fritillary. They turned up in ones and twos in many sites.



The False Grayling was seen in the second half of the week. This one got a bit too close to one photographer!



Although mostly fairly worn, Southern White Admirals were seen in decent numbers.



Re: essex buzzard

by ernie f, 20-Aug-18 10:21 AM GMT

For some reason I find that Dusky Heath rather attractive and of course the Queen of Spain Frit – but you captured on camera so many lovely butterflies on your trip you must be well-chuffed.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Aug-18 11:36 PM GMT

I am well chuffed, you had to see it to believe it, Ernie!

Also in this habitat, Rock Graylings were very abundant!



In contrast, just one Meadow Fritillary was seen.



Lesser Marbled Fritillaries were more common, especially in the second half of the week.



Spotted Fritillaries are a spectacular species, and I always hope to see them when I go to Europe.



Mother of Pearl Blues were one of our target species for the Montes Universales, and I'm pleased to say they were fairly common.



Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 21-Aug-18 11:58 AM GMT

What a brilliant selection Mark, lovely stuff. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by NickMorgan, 21-Aug-18 12:31 PM GMT

What a great variety of butterflies. I have enjoyed looking at your pictures. What dates were you there? We always go on holiday to Spain during the first two weeks in July and I usually see the same species each time. Maybe, now the kids are grown up we can go on holiday a little earlier or later to see some different butterflies! (I am sure my wife wouldn't mind!! lol!)

Re: essex buzzard

by Old Wolf, 21-Aug-18 01:34 PM GMT

What a great haul of species and all brilliantly photographed. What a brilliant trip it looked like.

I am especially envious of you managing to capture the silvery, electric blue colour of the Chalk Hill which is something I failed to do recently, albeit with their cousins found here.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Aug-18 10:06 PM GMT

Hi Nick. We were there from 28 July to 4 August. I would wholeheartedly recommend a trip there at this time. I am astonished at the stuff we saw there and, with virtually guaranteed weather as well, few places would be more productive!

Thanks Old Wolf. The Chalkhill Blues, as well as the other species, were most impressive!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Aug-18 10:20 PM GMT

Damon Blues were new for me. They became more common as the week progressed.



Oriental Meadow Brown was also a new one for me.



Lang's Short Tailed Blues were present in low numbers.



Sticking with the Blues, Turquoise Blues were seen in ones and twos in several places.



And, in the same family, Spanish Brown Argus were fairly common. They are similar to our Brown Argus, but have richer markings.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 22-Aug-18 07:55 PM GMT

Wow - looks like I need to book the family holiday to Spain next year Essex 😲 Some truly stunning butterfly species 🇪🇸 🇪🇸 🇪🇸

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Aug-18 08:06 PM GMT

You should, Wurzel. I'm sure Mrs. Wurzel would love the hot sunny climate as well. But you'll have to be good!

Zapater's Ringlet was a big target for the group. We were at the very beginning of the flight season and it was touch and go whether we would find it. We only saw a couple, and I snatched a couple of pictures. Very similar to the Scotch Argus.



Blue Spot Hairstreaks were seen in low numbers throughout the week.



A few Knapweed Fritillaries were found, mostly worn individuals. They are usually double brooded, so were probably coming to an end.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 23-Aug-18 11:13 PM GMT

Great that you got the Zapater's Ringlet, Mark. This is a butterfly I need to study in greater detail. We now know that it 'puddles', so sooner or later they should be found in numbers around a water course!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Aug-18 11:17 PM GMT

Thistle patches, both large and small, were a magnet for feeding butterflies in the Montes Universales. Large thistle beds were dripping with familiar and unfamiliar species, so this is the habitat we will look at next. Here is the habitat.



Thanks David, yes, I just managed it. A visit a week or so later would be productive, though this might be at the expense of other butterfly species.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-18 11:49 PM GMT

More fantastic sights Essex 😊 really looking forward to the next instalment 🍷🍷🍷
Have a goodun

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Aug-18 10:10 PM GMT

Coming right up, Wurzel!

When I took this picture I thought it was Bergers Clouded Yellow, but it may be helice CY.



Great Banded Grayling were seen in many places, but reached their greatest numbers on the thistles.



Esper's Marbled White were much scarcer than Iberian Marbled White, with only a few seen.



We've already seen Rock Grayling but here is another, feeding from the thistles.



Black-veined Whites were coming to the end of their flight period, so I was pleased to find a couple, their wings almost transparent.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 24-Aug-18 10:31 PM GMT

More cracking stuff Essex 🤔👍👍 I reckon your Cloudy could be a Berger's as I was under the impression that Helice looked white on the fore wing and yellow on the underside whereas your one seems to have the same tone top and bottom as it were? 😊 But then I accept that I have very limited experience of this species 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Aug-18 10:37 PM GMT

The magnificent Cardinal Fritillary was here in good numbers, giving plenty of photo opportunities and completely dwarfing the nearby SWF's and High Browns.



Here is a Twin-spot Fritillary.



I always like to see the Cleopatra, and a couple were feeding here, among many Brimstones.



The Spanish Chestnut Heath was here, too, as well as in other places.



And lastly for now, a Swallowtail. We saw them most days, but this one briefly paused for nectar.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 25-Aug-18 11:21 AM GMT

Lovely Butterflies essex, great shot of the Swallow Tail, Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-18 07:42 PM GMT

More class butterflies Essex 😊👍 I like the fact that the Twin Pspot Fritillary has been given a sensible name, a Cuprinol name even; twin spots with twin spots 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Aug-18 11:01 PM GMT

The last habitat in Espana is the watery one. Ponds, lakes, rivers and streams. One of the greatest pleasures of butterflies in Europe is the gathering of mud-pudlers. Whites, Blues and Skippers in particular do this, but Fritillaries, Browns and others sometimes gather at damp mud as well. Here is one of the sites we visited.



Here is a group picture, showing Oberthur's Anomalous Blues among others.



Chapmans Blues were common at some mud sites.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Aug-18 11:30 PM GMT

Here is a group of mud-puddling Azure Chalkhill Blues.



And these are Scarce Swallowtails, now given specific species status by some, the Southern Scarce Swallowtail.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 26-Aug-18 09:09 AM GMT

Just when I think the envy-o-meter can't go any higher... 🍷 😊 Love the shot of the Chapmans', there's even a sneaky Common in there to allow comparison of the underside 🍷 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 26-Aug-18 09:32 AM GMT

WoW! essex, fantastic shots, Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 26-Aug-18 04:22 PM GMT

Where did you see that Twin Spot, Mark? All the ones I got close to looked way past their best.

Nice Cardinal too. It's a tricky species to photograph because it's so huge it fills your viewfinder!!

I reckon your 'possible' *helice* is Berger's, as the former has distinctive hindwing margins that aren't visible on this particular specimen.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Aug-18 05:53 PM GMT

You must go there, Wurzel—you'll be amazed. All you have to do is persuade Mrs. Wurzel it's in her interest, too...

Thanks Goldie, we had a fabulous time, glad you are enjoying the pictures.

I agree, David. *Helice* CY is usually off-white too, this was lemon yellow so I think a male. The white spots in the black wingtips threw me.

The Twin-spot was at the Zapater's site, but further down the track to the left, in those meadows.

So, we come to my last round of pictures from the Montes Universales. To sum up, this little known area was not on my radar until recently, but if anyone is thinking of going I would thoroughly recommend it. Quiet roads, peaceful surroundings and reliable weather make it a great destination for the butterfly lover and sun seeker alike!

Here is a Long-tailed Blue, seen in low numbers in places.



Here is a mud-puddling group of mainly Cinquefoil Skippers.



And, to finish off, here are a few more mud puddlers. Enjoy! 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 26-Aug-18 11:47 PM GMT

Ah, now you've come to the crux of the problem Essex 😊😄 Mind you with scenes like those I'm going to have to come up with a pretty good sales pitch 🤔👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 27-Aug-18 12:15 AM GMT

Fabulous, Mark. What a week it was! I don't think I've ever seen so many butterflies 'puddling' and I guess that's down to how few and far between damp sites occur in this part of Spain.

There was so much going on I couldn't even justify taking an image of Long Tailed Blue (mainly because Spanish Purple Hairstreak was around simultaneously).

A few more Zapater's Ringlets would have been nice, but you can't have everything!

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 27-Aug-18 08:07 AM GMT

How many Butterflies can you cram in a frame ?. A question you've just answered !.
Love the Chestnut Heath shot.

Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Aug-18 04:45 PM GMT

Thanks everyone, and I'm glad to have given just a glimpse into what is available in this part of Spain. It was certainly a fabulous week! In contrast...

DORSET 2018.

Shortly after returning from Spain, we headed off to our annual trip to the isle of Purbeck, Dorset. The weather could hardly have been more different to ESP, and in recent years our holiday there has been bedevilled by cloud, rain and low temperatures. We even went a month earlier last year in an attempt to break the cycle, but it was little better then!

This time, of the six days we spent in Dorset, the first three were washed out by wind and rain. Staying just five minutes walk from Lulworth Cove, I usually like to take an early morning walk up Bindon Hill. But this year, only one day was remotely suitable, and there was precious little up there, though this lovely Chalkhill Blue lifted my spirits.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 27-Aug-18 07:23 PM GMT

That's a lovely Chalkhill Blue essex, 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-Aug-18 08:22 PM GMT

That is indeed a cracking Chalkhill Essex 😊 I know what you mean about the 'come down' from the holiday, it's not only the weather though I reckon you're suffering from butterfly-lag 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Aug-18 10:33 PM GMT

On another day, on the hill opposite Bindon, I found a couple of Common Blues.



Re: essex buzzard

by Janet Turnbull, 28-Aug-18 12:21 PM GMT

The female looks nice and fresh, Essex – or else well preserved! – Janet

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Aug-18 07:15 PM GMT

I share your pain, Mark! Lovely though those butterflies are, it's hard to readjust to the UK scene, particularly when the weather reverts back to 'Atlantic Front Mode'. 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Aug-18 11:05 PM GMT

Thanks Janet and David. Visiting Europe makes one realise the sobering reality that Britain has a very impoverished butterfly fauna.

OSMINGTON

With the weather back to normal for Britain, and the resulting lack of time, we only got the chance to visit two butterfly sites in Dorset this year. The first was Osmington. In recent years, this has proved one of the most productive sites we have been to, but this year, it was most disappointing. The site was being heavily grazed, which meant there were no flowers for any butterflies to feed on. This is not the farmers fault, as the fields have probably been grazed out during the dry weather earlier in the summer. We did find some Adonis Blues, but very little else, and they had nothing to eat. It should soon recover, but we quickly left, as we couldn't afford to waste any good weather.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-18 06:49 PM GMT

A great Green-veined White shot Essex 😊 I know what you mean about how we compare to the continent in terms of butterfly diversity 😞 Why are we so impoverished though – can the channel really be that big a barrier, does it or maritime position significantly effect our climate? 😞😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 29-Aug-18 09:49 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Interesting comments from your time in Dorset. I am heading down there on Friday for a week and was wondering what to expect given the dry summer. I saw some photos some weeks back showing Bindon Hill and Durlston CP looking very parched.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Aug-18 09:54 PM GMT

Wurzel, I think it's a combination of both of those things. I don't believe it's climate alone, as much of northern France, and even northwest Spain, have a climate not so very different to southern England, but a much greater butterfly diversity.

Neil, I wish you well in Dorset, I will be most interested to see what you find there.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Aug-18 10:43 PM GMT

BALLARD DOWN

After our failure at Osmington, we hot footed it to Ballard Down. Although a bit lacking in diversity, this was much more successful, with reasonable numbers of Adonis Blues present. A few common Blues and Brown Argus were also seen here. This was our most successful Dorset site, though not so

good as in the past.



Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 31-Aug-18 09:55 AM GMT

Loved your reports from Spain Mark, jaw-dropping stuff. 🇩🇪 😊

Sorry about that Dorset weather, but you still managed some cracking shots. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-18 12:15 PM GMT

Some lush Adonis there Essex – the last shot should carry a 'Danger High Voltage' warning as it's so electric blue 😊 🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by ernie f, 01-Sep-18 08:12 AM GMT

I have just been going through your Spanish holiday experiences. Its just one wonder after another. I can't imagine what it must have been like.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 01-Sep-18 08:56 PM GMT

Nice array of Adonis images, Mark. For some reason the colour always appears more vivid when they perch with their heads facing the ground.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Sep-18 11:26 PM GMT

Thanks everybody. On the path between Lulworth Cove and Durdle Door, I found this Grayling resting on the chalk chippings.



While this picture shows a slightly different than usual view of Durdle Door.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 02-Sep-18 09:49 AM GMT

Great Grayling Essex and an interesting shot of the best place in the world 😊 In all the years I've visited the Lulworth area I've never seen a Grayling along this stretch of coast 🇩🇪 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Sep-18 11:41 PM GMT

Dorset was full of people, the busiest I've ever seen it. And they all seemed to be having a good time, despite the weather.

LATE AUGUST IN KENT.

So, to end the month, it was back down to Lydden Temple Ewell. The recent rain had certainly freshened up the local plant life, and there were plenty of flowers for insects to feed on. Here is eyebright.



Autumn ladies tresses were now in flower, a sign of the season.



Blues were well represented, with still a few Chalkhills. Here is a Common Blue.



And this is Adonis.



Small Heath are having a bumper year, with hundreds present—easily the most abundant species here.



There was a surprise, when I found this Dingy Skipper during a cloudy spell.



What I was really hoping for were some Silver Spotted Skippers. Well I'm pleased to say there were, including some fresh ones. This is a highly charismatic butterfly, a great late-season favourite of mine, and anything that can be done to extend their season can only be good.





Re: essex buzzard

by CallumMac, 06-Sep-18 08:16 AM GMT

Great set of pics essexbuzzard, I especially like that first SSSk showing off the underside! I think that Dingy would have completely thrown me – not just the rare second gen, but it also looks like quite a pale individual, and in an unusual posture to boot!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 06-Sep-18 10:25 PM GMT

Lovely Silver Spotted Skippers, Mark. Enjoy them (and all the others) whilst they last. In another month's time we'll be left with just a few Whites and the adult overwinterers. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Sep-18 10:25 PM GMT

KENT EARLY SEPTEMBER.

Early September, and it was back to Lydden Temple Ewell in east Kent. Signs of autumn were clear to see, with a rich crop of hawthorn berries.



I was pleased to see some Small Coppers, as it seems everyone else is seeing them!



Adonis Blues were common, many still in fine condition.



Here is a female Adonis Blue with a view.



More to come...

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-18 11:07 PM GMT

Looking forward to the 'more to come' Essex 😊 That final shot is mighty fine 🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Sep-18 11:28 PM GMT

As before, Small Heaths were abundant, probably outnumbering all the other species put together.



Small Whites have been common everywhere, but here is a Large White, which have been far fewer in number.



Here, Silver Spotted Skippers continue into autumn, and I was pleased to find several in good condition.



Here is a shot of an underside. I didn't notice at the time, but danger lurks under this flower head...



Meadow Browns were still present, in low numbers.



Buzzards bred at Lydden this year, and the noisy juveniles, with their smart new plumage, were much in evidence. Kent was the last county to be recolonised during their recent expansion. Just a month after leaving the nest, they can fly, soar and hover as well as their parents. But, although equipped with a hooked beak and powerful talons, they take much longer to perfect their hunting techniques, and it is likely many exist on worms, insects and chance carrion finds through winter, once the adults stop feeding them at the end of September.

Juvenile kestrels were also on site, hovering and dropping down to catch insects. Kestrels are in decline, so it was good to see them here. Their breeding success seems to be holding up, so the survival rate of these juveniles, and therefore the recruitment into the breeding population, could be the problem.

Thanks Wurzel. Yes, it's always nice to keep the season going that little bit longer!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 11-Sep-18 11:29 PM GMT

I'm drawing this in as best I can, Mark. In a few short weeks it'll all be gone and we'll be looking forward to what 2019 has in store.

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 12-Sep-18 09:32 AM GMT

Hi! essex, I really envy your visit to Temple Ewell 🍷🍷 I'm always there too soon and miss the Adonis, so good to know there's still lots about now. great shots of all the Butterflies, it really is one of the best spots to them. Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 12-Sep-18 03:41 PM GMT

Good to see everything continuing nicely down in the southeast corner of the country, Mark. They all look reasonably fresh too! 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 12-Sep-18 10:36 PM GMT

Those Silver-spots are looking mighty fine for the stage of the season Essex 😊 I hope the less observant one got away 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Maximus, 13-Sep-18 05:44 PM GMT

I enjoyed your recent report from Montes Universales and your mouth watering photos of some stunning species. Looks like a fabulous place to visit.

Re: essex buzzard

by ernie f, 17-Sep-18 11:10 AM GMT

My favourite recent pic of yours is the "female Adonis with a view". Brilliant.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Sep-18 02:15 PM GMT

Yes, the Montes Universales is a truly great place for a butterfly holiday, as David M will testify. I would recommend it to anyone.

Hi Earnie, I like that one,too. When taking photos like this, I take inspiration from Guy Padfields pages.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Sep-18 07:32 PM GMT

MALAGA

Just returned from a few days in Malaga. The main reason for going was to enjoy one last blast of hot, sunny weather, sample some culture–the Picasso museum for example– and enjoy warm evenings in the beachside cafes and restaurants. Here the sun in late September is still stronger than it is high summer in Britain, so it was necessary to avoid it during early afternoons. However, we kept an eye open for butterflies, and having been here at the same time a few years ago, we had some idea where to look. Clearly, there would not be a great diversity of species in autumn on the Costa del Sol, but those seen would be very different to anything seen in Britain.

African Grass Blue.

This was a butterfly I wanted to seek out, as we only saw one during our visit in 2015. But I needn't have worried, as they were common in several places in Malaga, and were also found at Fuengirola. Some were worn, but several good ones were found, showing best for pictures on Monday when it was cloudy, though still 80 Degrees F.



The caterpillar foodplants are various medics and trefoil, so I was surprised to find this female laying eggs on a fat-hen type plant, growing in damp, irrigated areas.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 23-Sep-18 11:22 PM GMT

Great shots Essex 😊 An interesting looking species 🤔🌍 – a little like a duller female Holly Blue from the topside, I wonder how closely related it is? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 24-Sep-18 08:17 AM GMT

You sure get about, Mark. 😊

Good choice at this time of year. As you say, we won't be seeing those balmy temperatures here for quite some while.

Nice images of the African Grass Blue. There are quite a few species down there that are on my radar. It's an interesting part of Europe for sure.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Sep-18 10:13 PM GMT

Probably closer to Small Blue, judging by size...

Thanks David. One species you might expect, but doesn't really occur in the Malaga area, is Two Tail Pasha. Still never seen one.

Geranium Bronze. We saw the odd one in several places, often well away from any Geraniums, suggesting they are wide ranging. This helps to explain why they have been such successful colonisers, in areas geraniums survive the winter. But, at the marina in Malaga, there were some ivy-leaf geraniums, and this was the only place we saw several Bronzes together. Here is the habitat.



Here is an adult from Malaga Hill Fort, on our first full day.



One from Fuengirola.



And one at the geraniums at Malaga marina.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 26-Sep-18 05:20 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Thanks David. One species you might expect, but doesn't really occur in the Malaga area, is Two Tail Pasha. Still never seen one.

Me neither, Mark. It continues to elude me which I suppose is largely because most continental areas I visit are at altitude. One day...

Not surprising there were several Geranium Bronze in that area. I guess the climate is pretty similar to that of coastal South Africa.

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 26-Sep-18 10:25 PM GMT

Good to see the shots from Málaga, Buzzard. I did in fact see two-tailed pasha there last summer, in the hills above the town (<http://www.guypadfield.com/images2017/jasius23jul2017a.jpg>). I don't know where the strawberry trees are – I always look for them in the hope of

avis.

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 26-Sep-18 10:33 PM GMT

Great open wing shot Essex 😊🇩🇪 The last Geranium Bronze I saw was on Clover 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Sep-18 10:49 PM GMT

Thanks David and Guy for your response. It seems Two Tailed Pasha is more common in the western Costa Del Sol, past Gibraltar, and into Portugal. It's numbers appear lower towards Malaga, perhaps due to lack of strawberry trees. As Guy knows, it is a hill topping species, so perhaps that's where I need to look next time!

Lang's Short-tailed Blue.

As previously, there is a large colony of Lang's up by the Hill fort above Malaga, and this extends into the gardens below. Although numbers were high, they were buggers to photograph! Constantly chasing each other about, every on the cloudy, though still hot, day, they rarely landed even for a few seconds. The distinctively average shots below took some time to achieve!





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 26-Sep-18 11:08 PM GMT

They're still great pretty fine images Essex, especially the open wing shots as I found them really hard to get 😊👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 27-Sep-18 06:09 PM GMT

I know exactly what you mean with those Lang's STBs, Mark. Unless you can find an ovi-positing female, they are frustrating little critters, and their small size means you need that bit more time to achieve a clear image.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Sep-18 10:32 PM GMT

Long Tailed Blue.

This is another Hill-topping species. We didn't visit any hill tops this time, and the only LTB we saw was this attractive and fresh individual, photographed at Fuengirola.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 29-Sep-18 05:58 PM GMT

Surprised you only saw one of this species, Mark. I'd have thought September in southern Spain would have been the ideal time/place to see dozens. Maybe they're having a bad year?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Oct-18 06:12 PM GMT

A little surprising, perhaps. Perhaps LTB numbers build up later in autumn, at they erupt out of the rest of Europe.

Saving the best 'till last!

When we last came to Malaga in 2015, we found, by complete surprise, the Desert Orangetip near the hill fort. So coming back this time, I was really hoping we would find it again. But, despite looking for it all week, including where we last saw it, there were no sightings. So it seemed we would be leaving empty handed. However, on our last morning, there was time for one last try, up by the fort. The views from the top are splendid , and makes you realise what a big city Malaga is.



Also at the top we saw this little fellow, burying cones from the Aleppo pines.



We spent a hour searching the site, and had a couple of false alarms–Small Whites, but no Orangetips. But it had been worth the try, and the views made it worthwhile. We headed back down, through the gardens. Suddenly, something small and white fluttered by. In a split second, a hint of Orange was detected. Desert Orange Tip! It land briefly a couple of times, allowing a few quick shots, then it was gone.





Finally, on the beach, some irrigated palm trees had abundant clover underneath and here, Clouded Yellows were laying eggs. Here they should survive, to provide next years migrants.



Re: essex buzzard

by Maximus, 01-Oct-18 06:21 PM GMT

A great find in the Desert Orangetip, Mark, and on your last morning too. What a stunning butterfly 😊

Mike

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 01-Oct-18 08:02 PM GMT

What a cracking way to spend the last morning of your holiday 🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 01-Oct-18 08:36 PM GMT

That Desert Orange Tip is a new one on me, a really lovely Butterfly, well done. Good luck if you visit Sussex.

Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-Oct-18 11:10 PM GMT

Canvey Island, 1 October.

A good selection of autumn butterflies were seen on Canvey. There is a good colony of Walls, mostly they were showing signs of age, but I found this fresh male. Clearly they are still emerging. Just one female was seen, basking between bouts of egg laying.



I was pleased to find several Speckled Wood, including this nice specimen.



Several Small Coppers and third generation Common Blues were found.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-Oct-18 11:23 PM GMT

But the day really belonged to the Clouded Yellows. Several were present, and gave a cracking display. This one was nicely perched.



While this fresh male was unusually co-operative.



The star was this gorgeous helice female, watched for several minutes as she fed on flowers.



Later, after lunch, I found this Comma, just before it clouded over.



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 03-Oct-18 09:13 AM GMT

Good to see third brood Walls are showing well somewhere other than Sussex, and those Clouded Yellows are terrific. A definite 🍷 for the shot of the helice in particular! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 03-Oct-18 10:20 AM GMT

Love the Desert OT Mark, well done. 😊 And a cracking selection from Canvey Island, love the Cloudies. 🍷 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 04-Oct-18 12:05 PM GMT

Wonderful Cloudies, Mark, especially the *helice*. Great you're seeing Wall Browns and Common Blues too.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 04-Oct-18 08:06 PM GMT

Cracking shots of the Cloudies Essex 😊 especially like the Helice, I've still to find one of those 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Oct-18 10:56 PM GMT

Thanks everybody. That Helice was a real beauty, let me tell you!

Mill Hill, 3 October part one—the Nymphalids.

With Trevor, Katrina and others posting photos from Mill Hill recently, I have been waiting for the chance to join in the fun. That chance came on Wednesday. The forecast was a little unpredictable regarding sun amounts, but in fact it turned out better than expected.

I soon found a good patch of flowering hemp agrimony, and at one point this had two Red Admirals, four Peacocks and a Painted Lady feeding on it! I have seen precious few of these butterflies this year, so I enjoyed every moment. Here is a Red Admiral.



Next, a couple of Peacock.



And lastly the Painted Lady. The underside is surely as beautiful as the upper side.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 04-Oct-18 11:02 PM GMT

She's a very dusky Painted Lady Essex 😊 I totally agree the underside is just as beautiful as the top, if not more so 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 04-Oct-18 11:21 PM GMT

That area of hemp agrimony is a real treat at the moment, and those are lovely Painted Lady shots, Mark. Another locally hatched individual I would say. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 05-Oct-18 07:17 AM GMT

You hit the jackpot spot at Mill Hill, Mark !.
Like you I saw species there that I had not seen for months,
better still they weren't at all bothered about the people present.

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 05-Oct-18 09:28 PM GMT

Good to see yet another UKBer enjoying the late season hotspot that is Mill Hill 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 06-Oct-18 11:57 AM GMT

Mill Hill is definitely the place to be, it seems! That Peacock positively glows, Mark. It must have momentarily made you think it was August!

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 06-Oct-18 01:19 PM GMT

That does it for me essex, all the Butterflies have moved South, love the Helice, Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Oct-18 10:40 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. Goldie, you are seeing more Red Admirals than me at the moment, so don't loose heart just yet!

Dave, Bugboy, Trevor, I thought it was high time I got a slice of the Mill Hill action, after all your brilliant photos the previous week.!

David, Mill Hill is a brilliant site, both early and late in the season, and that patch of flowers makes it even better!

Wurzel, that PL was a cracking find, as were the Peacocks!

Mill Hill pt2.

After enjoying those wonderful butterflies on the hemp agrimony, I had time to walk elsewhere on site, seeing several other species. Common Blues were indeed, common, and I found a Small Copper. I was also pleased to find a Brown Argus, a most welcome October butterfly.



Several Clouded Yellows were patrolling the slope, as was a Brimstone. I was hoping to find a Meadow Brown, and I saw several.



However, this mating pair was a surprise.



I also saw Small White, lots of worn Walls, Small Heath and Speckled Woods. A super day down there.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 07-Oct-18 11:07 PM GMT

Great stuff Essex especially the 'two spot' Meadow Brown and a mating pair 😊🍷 they're leaving it a bit late aren't they 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Oct-18 06:17 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. I have to say, not for the first time, that I'm a bit confused by Meadow Browns. Both the adults in that pair were worn and tattered, and I can't believe they were mating for the first time. I've heard it said, that perhaps these late pairings are to transfer nutrients, allowing the female to lay her last few eggs.

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 08-Oct-18 06:59 PM GMT

That's an interesting theory, Mark. Meadow Browns do persist here, and in some other places, well into October, and there do always seem to be mating pairs. It's fascinating behaviour for a species whose single brood first emerges at the end of May, nearly five months earlier. 😊😄

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 09-Oct-18 11:49 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

...I was also pleased to find a Brown Argus, a most welcome October butterfly...

Quite an understatement, Mark. I'd be pretty pleased to see one myself in late May!! They have been very scarce in south Wales this year.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Oct-18 11:44 PM GMT

Off to south east Kent today. Despite some warm sunshine, butterflies were few. Being near the south coast, I expected some Clouded Yellows, for example. But I did see a few Red Admirals, mostly out of reach, but this one came lower.



A couple of faded Speckled Woods put in an appearance.



Autumn colours are now getting going. Perhaps surprisingly, ash has been one of the best performers so far, with many taking on a lemon yellow, almost luminous appearance.



At least I saw a bit of sunshine today, any sunny days at this time of year must be grabbed with both hands!

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 18-Oct-18 07:42 AM GMT

Go for it Mark !. Southwick has some life left yet.
But yes, do choose a decent day.

Good luck !.
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 18-Oct-18 11:08 PM GMT

Some good autumnal fair there Essex 😊 – does it seem that the end of the season has arrived a bit earlier this year? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 19-Oct-18 07:02 AM GMT

I'm surprised you didn't see any Clouded Yellows, Mark. They seem to be everywhere else in the south right now. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Oct-18 10:30 PM GMT

Trevor, I did indeed go for it!

Wurzel, still a bit of life left in the season, but you have to search for it now...

Plenty of Clouded Yellows where I went today, David...

Today was probably my last butterfly day out of the season—and it was a belter!

Visited several sites in the Shoreham area, including the beach, harbour and up at Mill Hill. Most abundant were Clouded Yellows, with 40–50 seen across the sites, and Red Admirals, 20+. Others were Small White, Small Copper, Common Blues, Brown Argus, Comma, Painted Lady, Meadow Browns (some surprisingly fresh, clearly still emerging!), Walls, Speckled Woods and Small Heath, two at Mill Hill. Twelve species, fantastic for this time of year! 😊😊😊

Also lots of lizards on the walls at the beach. Here are a few pictures, more to come!





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 21-Oct-18 11:00 PM GMT

"Wurzel, still a bit of life left in the season, but you have to search for it now..." Serves me right for still listening to the BBC long range weather forecast 😊😂 Twelve species in October 😊 And is that a Helice? 😊 Have of these even if it ain't 🇫🇷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 21-Oct-18 11:27 PM GMT

From what I've seen already it looks a 'belter', Mark....I don't need to wait for Part 2 but will willingly read it with interest when it appears!! 😊

Can't be often that anyone sees 40-50 Clouded Yellows in a single day on UK soil - I struggle to do that in the south of France most years!!

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 22-Oct-18 08:02 AM GMT

I got 11 species on the Saturday down there, didn't get any painted lady. In all likelihood we were seeing the same individuals, still a remarkable tally for late October though, especially with so many fresh emergent around!

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 22-Oct-18 10:32 AM GMT

I was there Sunday as well Mark. Didn't rack up quite as many species as you, but still had some great sights.

Lovely stuff. 😊

Cheers

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Oct-18 10:25 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, and yes it is a helic. I actually saw two, one at the beach and one at Mill Hill which was laying eggs, albeit with little chance of survival.

Thanks David, just a few more pictures to come.

Hi Buggy, yes many of the individual butterflies could have been the same ones.

Hi Andrew, we certainly couldn't have asked for better weather on Sunday!

Here are some of the lizards from Sunday.

And here are a few more butterflies. 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Oct-18 10:28 PM GMT

One more from Mill Hill.



Re: essex buzzard

by Maximus, 24-Oct-18 12:07 AM GMT

Stunning butterflies, Mark, and some in amazing numbers too, pity the weather's going to change just when I have some free time!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Oct-18 08:37 AM GMT

Yes, that's a shame but don't give up. Given sunshine, butterflies can fly at quite low temperatures so you may yet get a chance.

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 24-Oct-18 08:59 AM GMT

Some terrific shots from the south coast, Mark - I'm particularly envious of the *helice* female as in all my visits down there this year, I haven't seen one.



Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Oct-18 09:42 PM GMT

That's a shame Dave, I think you have been slightly unlucky as there have been a few helice females around. There is still time though-just.

Here are some of the many lizards on the Shoreham beach walls.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 24-Oct-18 11:38 PM GMT

Lovely set of images Essex 😊 Especially teh Painted Lady with the blue ocelli, aother one I've looked for but not seen yet 😊🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 25-Oct-18 09:58 PM GMT

That's quite a range of fauna you've seen lately, Mark. I expect by this time next week all these heat loving creatures will be taking cover! 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 26-Oct-18 08:29 AM GMT

Very nice helice, from a few days ago, Mark.
Only seen one this year, had three in one day last year!.

Keep warm!
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 26-Oct-18 07:55 PM GMT

A great late season selection there Mark 😊🇩🇪 Almost tempts me to look at moving south...almost 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Nov-18 09:54 PM GMT

For me, the butterfly season has now finished. But, as one door closes...

In the last week, I have made several visits to Epping Forest, where the autumn colours are now at their peak. Although it has not been a great autumn for colours, a walk here is one of November's greatest pleasures. On a bright day, the low slanting sun filters through the leaves, settled off the colours.



One tree I haven't paid enough attention to in the past is the aspen, whose leaves turn a glorious butter-yellow in autumn. This happens particularly in Scotland, and also in the USA and Canada, where it also grows. But a few trees in Southern England turn as well. The leaves have long thin stalks so they flicker in the breeze, and the tree was called the 'trembling poplar'.



The beech tree always has lovely autumn leaves. Beech dominates the higher parts of the forest, as it prefers dry soil. In the lower areas, where heavy clay is found, hornbeam takes over as the main tree. The beech in particular are now resplendent, but the leaves are falling fast in the strong winds.



Oak trees are common throughout the forest, and their leaves are now changing too. Oaks, especially English oaks, hold onto their green leaves until November, but they then change quickly. English oak is commonest on heavy clay, whereas sessile oak prefers acid soil, though there is considerable overlap, where both species grow together. Picture shows sessile oak.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 17-Nov-18 10:45 PM GMT

Lovely colours, Mark, and a sure sign that butterflies are behind us for 2018 (apart from those lucky few in favoured locations).

Let's hope for a cold and largely dry winter this time! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Dec-18 11:59 AM GMT

Merry Christmas everybody!

December is the quietest month of the year, and there has been very little to report. But, when the sun shines, even these very short winter days can produce a bit of magic. One such day was yesterday, 24 December.

The shore lark is a rare winter visitor to Essex, with only one or two sightings a year, and they are often seen by only one observer, before moving on. However on Mersea Island, on the Essex coast, one has been present for a couple of weeks and yesterday, I finally got the chance to catch up with this lovely bird.



The Brent Goose is now amber listed, so we are privileged to have big flocks on the Essex coast. These are the Dark bellied form which breed in Russia. However yesterday they were joined by a light bellied Brent which are much rarer, indeed this was my first Essex sighting.



The wigeon is, to my mind, one of the prettiest ducks to spend the winter on the coast. They are a grazing species, spending most of their time on grassy fields. Wigeon are very common, but that doesn't stop me taking pictures of them.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 25-Dec-18 01:05 PM GMT

Cracking shots of B.b.bernicla and B.b.hrota Essex 😊 You're just missing the B.b.nigriceps now 😊 That Shore Lark is a cracking species, and one that is sadly lacking from my British List 🙄🙄🙄🙄

Have a cracking Christmas 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 30-Dec-18 06:31 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

December is the quietest month of the year, and there has been very little to report. But, when the sun shines, even these very short winter days can produce a bit of magic.

I envy your interest in and knowledge of birds at times such as these, Mark. It fair plugs the gap when butterflies are absent. Okay, there aren't any Steller's Sea Eagles in your line up but you did indeed experience a bit of magic there.

Maybe if we ever get any truly cold weather there could be a few more moments like those?