

## False Apollo

by False Apollo, 10-Nov-13 06:33 PM GMT

Having just joined UK Butterflies, I thought I would post from time to time on Butterflies from the Christchurch and Bournemouth areas. Living in an area which is very good for late butterflies, it is certainly possible to see certain species into December (in areas sheltered from frost). On the sunny 4th November, Red Admirals were all around Christchurch from east to west, all were singles, but were very active. I'm lucky to have two yellow buddleias currently in flower and Hebe Great Orme which they seem to enjoy nectaring on. There have been 5 Red Admirals in the garden from late October, when they also visited our mature Strawberry Tree. Currently 2 have been in sunning themselves on the white wall of the garage in the mornings.

Getting back to the 4th November we had a female Speckled Wood nectaring on the yellow buddleia, which I was pretty chuffed about and at nearby Southbourne Undercliff there was a female Clouded Yellow busy egg laying on the slopes.

Today 10th November I visited Southbourne Undercliff and saw 5 Clouded Yellows, all males. Three of these were very fresh and bright, and I would think have recently emerged. The other two were not that badly worn either. I also saw female Painted Lady nectaring on Seaside Daisy. The day was crowned by a Long-winged Conehead cricket on Seaside Daisy as I was leaving.

It will be interesting to see how long butterflies are on the wing in this area. A friend of mine had January records of Holly Blue and Small White in 2013 at nearby Stanpit. Unfortunately the Holly Blue was found dead, but must have only recently emerged, I got a photograph of it after I received the phone call.

So I am hopeful of a long long season with Clouded Yellows and Red Admirals to keep me warm over the winter, at some stage of their life cycle.

Regards  
Mike Gibbons

## Re: Clouded Yellows and Red Admirals

by Pauline, 10-Nov-13 07:05 PM GMT

Hi Mike

Welcome to the site. Soon as I saw the reference to Christchurch I wondered if it was you. Great that you're seeing so many butterflies around still.

Best wishes

Pauline

## Re: False Apollo

by False Apollo, 11-Nov-13 03:53 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Nice to hear from you. Will probably catch up with you in 2014 to get that perfect Purple Emperor pic. I will be hoping for a few mild sunny days in December as I have seen Clouded Yellows flying well into that month. I will keep everyone posted on any sightings

Best wishes  
Mike

## Re: False Apollo

by ChrisC, 11-Nov-13 07:49 PM GMT

welcome from me too Mike. Just up the road in Verwood.

Chris

## Re: False Apollo

by Pete Eeles, 11-Nov-13 08:06 PM GMT

Welcome to the website Mike – good to see another familiar face signing up 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

## Re: False Apollo

by False Apollo, 11-Nov-13 09:15 PM GMT

Thanks to everybody for the warm welcome. It is interesting to know that there are members near me, whose faces I may well know, but not always their names. Nice to hear from both Chris and Pete.

I must take this opportunity to thank Pete for the wonderful Photographic Courses he runs. I learned a lot from Pete and the other photographic experts on the courses I attended. I had been on general digital photographic courses but they never understood about my passion for butterflies. So although I got a lot from those courses, it was Pete and the other photographers on the Butterfly Photographic courses that filled in the missing pieces on macro, composition and other lenses to use. Probably the most important thing I took away from the course was to try to use a tripod/monopod which certainly improved my results. So many thanks again Pete for organising the events as they were a great social get together as well.

Regards  
Mike

## Re: False Apollo

by Pete Eeles, 11-Nov-13 09:42 PM GMT

Thanks Mike – I'm hoping we can run another event next year (if I can get time to organise this!), although the focus (pun intended) won't be on photography (this would be just one element of the day).

Cheers,

– Pete

## Re: False Apollo

by Wurzel, 11-Nov-13 10:14 PM GMT

Alright Mike welcome 😊 Looking forward to your postings as I might be able to take advantage of your inside information and pop back across the county border to pick up some late butterflies or some early ones next season 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: False Apollo

by Maximus, 12-Nov-13 06:27 PM GMT

Hi Mike, its welcome from me too. Its interesting that you have a Strawberry Tree, our neighbour has one which has been attracting Red Admirals and Peacocks. The flowers are now starting to fade however, but a good late nectar source while it lasted.

Mike

## Re: False Apollo

by False Apollo, 12-Nov-13 07:00 PM GMT

Thanks for the welcome message, Wurzel and Maximus. The lovely tall Strawberry tree came with the house along with a mature tall sungold type yellow buddleia. The strawberry tree can hold Red Admirals into double figures, but only for a short period when it is flowering. As the fruits appear, numbers steadily go down. It seems to be a pretty old tree and is 25 to 30 feet in height. Red Admirals are only seen during the morning, around 9.00am to 12 or rarely 13.00pm after which the sun has moved.

I have buddleias dotted around the garden with Hebe Great Ormes and Midsummer Beauty (which are all still flowering), but it is now the back of the garage which is painted white which attracts Red Admirals and bumble bees to warm up during the mornings.

Regards

Mike

## Re: False Apollo

by False Apollo, 13-Nov-13 06:29 PM GMT

Super day in the garden and down by the seaside. I had to wait in for a parcel, so had plenty of time to search for Red Admirals in or near the garden. There were certainly 3, maybe 4. One was quite tatty but the rest were all intact and quite bright. I've posted some pics of Red Admirals and their preferred warming up spots.

In the afternoon, I went to Southbourne Undercliff where I met Mike Skelton who had seen 7 Clouded Yellows, mainly females, including 2 helice. These were in a slightly different spot to where I saw my males at the weekend which makes me wonder where they may have gone. These were all slightly worn, but had earlier been active. Mike kindly took me to a couple of spots where they had settled and I managed to snap the a couple, including a helice.

Regards

Mike





## Re: False Apollo

by False Apollo, 14-Nov-13 06:04 PM GMT

Today was a fantastic day to go chasing Clouded Yellows. After getting the formalities out of the way, like photographing the latest Red Admiral on the back of the garage, I drove off to Southbourne to stroll along the prom and see what was about. With a keen wind but wall to wall sunshine and a Raven overhead, I was very hopeful as I had arrived earlier than yesterday.

As I made my way towards Hengistbury Head scanning the slopes, I found a male flying low down. I went over to get some photographs as it was nectaring on seaside daisy and as I approached I put up a helice female which really got him going. She held her wings wide open after he approached, but nothing happened. I don't know if she was spurning his approach or not, they both went their separate ways and settled as the temperature was still

a bit low.  
I carried on walking and found another typical female and a beautiful fresh male on seaside daisy, very nice!!!  
Now WHAT HAPPENS TO CLOUDED YELLOWS IN WINTER????? I think I've found out why they suddenly disappear. Apart from the weather, I was reminded and shocked when I was watching a Dartford Warbler and Stonechats back at the place I saw my 5 males at the weekend. I could not see any Clouded Yellows until I suddenly saw a female Stonechat with a male Clouded Yellow in her bill. It must have been hiding in the grass somewhere, but stood out like a sore thumb to the keen eyed Stonechat. I have seen a Stonechat with a Clouded Yellow in it's bill before many years ago in early December here. So altogether I saw 5 Clouded Yellows from 11.00 to 13.00.  
A very eventful morning.



*Nice to see the upperside*



*A closer view of lunch*



*Helice and sutor?*



*Red Admiral starting the motor*



*Lunchtime for Stonechat*



*A lovely lady*



*Male Clouded Yellow*

## **Re: False Apollo**

by Padfield, 14-Nov-13 06:12 PM GMT

Fantastic picture of the stonechat.

My favourite autumn butterfly spot is frequented by black redstarts, fattening up before they head off south – though I think they've all gone now. When

I visit I make a point of keeping as low a profile as possible. I know the butterflies will all die somehow as winter approaches and what better way to go than helping to keep a migrating bird alive?

Guy

### **Re: False Apollo**

by David M, 14-Nov-13 06:41 PM GMT

Great photos for a mid-November day!

I'm sure with insect numbers on a continuous decline, brightly-coloured Clouded Yellows are targeted with particular zeal by hungry birds.

### **Re: False Apollo**

by False Apollo, 14-Nov-13 07:02 PM GMT

Yes Guy and David I agree that they are helping the local bird population out, but I rarely ever see Clouded Yellows being caught. I have been watching this area for many years so I guess they catch them when I'm not looking. It is interesting though that the areas I saw the majority today were not frequented by Stonechats as there is little or no scrub like gorse. So maybe they will be safer for longer. Clouded Yellows here are struggling when they do fly in these low temperatures if they fly at all. However the male was very keen on the helice and certainly moved sharpish chasing her around the slopes. I've added another pic with her wings open.

Regards  
Mike

### **Re: False Apollo**

by Pauline, 14-Nov-13 08:41 PM GMT

Great shot of the Stonechat Mike.

### **Re: False Apollo**

by False Apollo, 19-Nov-13 05:08 PM GMT

16/11/2013

Today was such a good day sunwise, I could not resist another visit to the undercliff. I counted 7 Clouded Yellows and 7 Red Admirals. There were no helice seen, but I did see an unusual female which I thought at first was an aberration. When I first saw it I thought it was a male paired with a helice, but on closer inspection I could see the left hind wing resembled a helice hind wing. It was particularly noticeable in flight.

I photographed it nectaring and at rest but spent an hour or so trying to get a photo of the open wings (somewhat unsuccessfully).

Studying the photos I now think it is not an aberration but a worn individual, the like I have not seen before. Looking closely the scales had been lost, possibly due to being exposed to the elements. This female really stood out in flight and could easily be separated from another which passed close by. As I was taking the photos my close companion was a Dartford Warbler that was never that far away flicking it's tail before disappearing into cover for short periods.

Regards  
Mike Gibbons



*Dartford Warbler, my constant companion*



*Looking right*



*Looking left*



*In flight again*



*Another flight view*



*Odd Clouded Yellow in flight*

### **Re: False Apollo**

by False Apollo, 19-Nov-13 05:24 PM GMT

Today 19/11/2013, I saw 5 Clouded Yellows at Southbourne Undercliff. There were 4 females and a very active male. Considering the low temperature, they were very active, especially the male. The females behaviour consisted of either resting, nectaring or possibly egg laying (not a lot else they could do really except fly I suppose, which they also did). Another great day by the beach searching for butterfly gold!!!

### **Re: False Apollo**

by David M, 19-Nov-13 10:28 PM GMT

This must be an exceptional micro-climate, False Apollo.

Most of the country has had it's first proper winter's day yet you're still seeing Clouded Yellows!!!

Maybe they DO survive our winters in these most sheltered, southern coastal locations after all.

### **Re: False Apollo**

by False Apollo, 19-Nov-13 11:49 PM GMT

Hello David,

Yes it is an exceptional micro-climate. In fact it must be one of the few places where (to a point) a northerly wind is the best because it blows over the cliff and does not affect the butterflies below, so long as the sun is shining of course. I am keeping my eye on this site because adults have been seen during December on sunny days. Today it was quite warm around 13.00, however the temperature will plummet with the slightest bit of cloud cover. I must confess I did photograph one just after midnight one December using night vision on my camcorder after watching it settle down for the night earlier, just in case it was the last one recorded here that year, it wasn't though! The Isle of Wight is similar climate wise to Southbourne on the southern part of the island. Sheltered areas along the coast are certainly worth searching.

It is well known that Clouded Yellows overwinter here with larvae being seen and followed through the winter in past years. They have been found basking on days like this, not venturing very far from the foodplant where the egg had been laid.

It has had November Common Blue, Small Copper and Large White in the past.

Regards  
Mike

### **Re: False Apollo**

by Pauline, 20-Nov-13 07:23 AM GMT

Morning Mike - your post made me chuckle. It never ceases to amaze me the lengths that some of us go to to record/watch/photograph butterflies. I was chatting to Adrian on the phone very late one evening and he admitted he was in Stanstead Forest looking for Orange Tips by moonlight!! Are we all mad??? 😊

### **Re: False Apollo**

by False Apollo, 20-Nov-13 01:52 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Yes stark raving bonkers and proud of it!!! However I would say that it is people like us who care about the natural world and want to conserve it for the future. The message is getting through to the masses through people like Matthew and his Purple Emperor exploits, which is brilliant for the future of butterflies. I think enthusiasm for butterflies rubs off, but yes I do agree it does look a bit odd, someone clambering around near the beach with a camcorder at midnight!!!`

Mike



## Re: False Apollo

by Wurzel, 20-Nov-13 11:21 PM GMT

Great shots Mike 📷 I did post before that I think my favourite is the Dartford. I had a similar worn individual at Martin Down earlier in the season, kinda like a Helice in reverse 😞 I might have to try and make back gown that way soon, any micro habitats on the Poole side?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: False Apollo

by False Apollo, 22-Nov-13 06:21 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

The best coastal places near Poole I would say would be along the Purbeck coastline, especially Durlston Country Park near Swanage. I have not heard of any butterflies seen recently though, so really the Bournemouth coastline would be your best bet.

I have recorded an apricot coloured Clouded Yellow some years ago here which was a real beauty. My best find though was a freshly emerged half normal female half helice Clouded Yellow found on 17/11/2000, which was featured in Atropos magazine. I was taking slides then, so I will have to find these out. I was blown away.

If anyone is interested, the photo of the newly emerged female Clouded Yellow with crumpled wings (unfortunately) and a description of how I found it features in Atropos magazine number 12, January 2001.

Today 22/11/13 I saw 3 Clouded Yellows on the undercliffs. They spent a lot of time resting but made the odd dalliance over a short distance before settling down again. I think they consisted of 2 females and one male and they were all close together in one area.

Regards

Mike

## Re: False Apollo

by False Apollo, 23-Nov-13 04:51 PM GMT

Another superb day on the south coast. Between 13.00 to 13.40 I walked along the undercliff in bright sunshine after a cold start in the morning. I was very surprised to count 8 Clouded Yellows including two pairs in the air at once. At one point one of these pairs was down in front of me, the female had her wings open with upturned abdomen, the male nearby, which I believe indicates she is not interested. Again they were very active in this weather window. One male away from these pairs did look very fresh and may have only recently emerged.

However the biggest surprise was while I was watching a Clouded Yellow on the ground resting, a nearby male Stonechat dropped down and caught it. I thought, that's it, but while it was attempting to eat the struggling insect, the struggle paid off and it managed to escape. A bit disorientated, it flew across the beach where I lost sight of it.

At the moment it is very difficult to be sure of how many Clouded Yellows are present here as a 2 flew up well away from where the two pairs were and a spot where I have not seen any for a while. So incredibly (sighting wise) numbers have gone up instead of going down and it looks increasingly likely that a December sighting is on the cards.

Regards

Mike

## Re: False Apollo

by Wurzel, 23-Nov-13 11:54 PM GMT

Cheers for the info Mike 😊 I see that there's gold still on them there...er...cliffs(?) 😞 I'd love to get back there and have a look but don't know if I can earn enough brownie points 😞 Oh well maybe next year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: False Apollo

by False Apollo, 26-Nov-13 06:43 PM GMT

I managed to find one female Clouded Yellow along the undercliff today around 13.00. She seemed totally intent on egg laying by her behaviour at the top of the slope. I could not get nearer for a better look.

On a different note I was one of the lucky people to get Monty Python tickets for the first date on the 1st July 2014. Incredible in that this show sold out in 43.5 seconds. I will be taking time off, combining Purple Emperors with silly walks.

Nudge nudge, wink wink,

Mike

## Re: False Apollo

by David M, 26-Nov-13 08:30 PM GMT

Mike, have you ever known any of these Clouded Yellows to get through a complete winter?

## Re: False Apollo

by False Apollo, 26-Nov-13 09:17 PM GMT

Hi David,  
No, they cannot survive the winter as adults, but they certainly can as larvae. I have watched a large larva basking in the winter sunshine in the past. It largely depends on the weather if they can make it through or whether the Stonechats get them. It is assumed any Clouded Yellows seen in March/April at this locality have emerged locally. These are thought not to be immigrants as sightings do not (as far as I am aware) coincide with arrivals elsewhere. They seem to leave here soon after being seen though.

Mike

## Re: False Apollo

by David M, 26-Nov-13 09:57 PM GMT

### "False Apollo" wrote:

Hi David,  
No, they cannot survive the winter as adults, but they certainly can as larvae. I have watched a large larva basking in the winter sunshine in the past. It largely depends on the weather if they can make it through or whether the Stonechats get them. It is assumed any Clouded Yellows seen in March/April at this locality have emerged locally. These are thought not to be immigrants as sightings do not (as far as I am aware) coincide with arrivals elsewhere. They seem to leave here soon after being seen though.

Mike

Thanks for that, Mike. So, given a reasonably mild southern English winter, Clouded Yellows CAN survive (at least at the larval stage).

## Re: False Apollo

by Mikhail, 27-Nov-13 07:53 AM GMT

Mike, you might like to know that I saw a fresh male briefly in flight east of the Bistro at 1400 yesterday, and also several eggs on Common Bird'sfoot Trefoil. Most of these have yet to assume their orange colouring, indicating that they were laid quite recently.

M.

## Re: False Apollo

by False Apollo, 27-Nov-13 07:58 PM GMT

Hi Mikhail,  
Nice to know the Clouded Yellows are being well monitored. The area you described is where I have been seeing them mostly. As I have said, it is very difficult to estimate numbers because at this time of the year they fly so infrequently unless you are lucky. I'm quite excited that you have found some eggs which I hope you can keep an eye on. They seem to cram in as much egg laying as is possible in the low temperatures and brief sunshine. I will have to keep an eye out for eggs/larvae. Keep in touch, I may bump into you down there.

Regards  
Mike

## Re: False Apollo

by False Apollo, 30-Nov-13 04:48 PM GMT

Although today was sunny, it was more difficult to find Clouded Yellows today. I could not find any in the usual place. However trying a different part of the undercliff I was rewarded with 2 up together and very active around 13.30. Again they were in good condition, one was certainly a male, the other probably a female. The Clouded Yellows made the most of dropping down and warming up on bare earth areas of the slopes, making the most of the sunshine. There was also a Red Admiral and Silver Y moth as a supporting cast. Looks like December Clouded Yellows are on the cards!

Regards  
Mike



*Male Clouded Yellow at rest*



*Look Closely 2 CYs in flight*



*Male Clouded Yellow in flight*

### **Re: False Apollo**

by Wurzel, 01-Dec-13 09:42 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Mike – I reckon you could definitely be in for some December sightings at this rate, looking forward to more "dashes of yellow" to brighten up the winter months 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: False Apollo**

by False Apollo, 06-Dec-13 06:01 PM GMT

Anyone who is following my diary will know that I was hoping to see a December Clouded Yellow and today looked like a good bet. I arrived at Southbourne at 12.50 and at 12.55 I was watching a very active male Clouded Yellow zooming around the slopes. What I find remarkable is that the last decent day was 30th November, so it is possible that this male had been dormant for 6 days. This did seem to be the only Clouded Yellow about, but as they can be quite mobile and so active they could be found anywhere along this stretch of coastline. This male looked quite bright so it could

conceivably have recently emerged, it is difficult to be certain, but the weather has not really been favourable for any to emerge in the last few days. I wonder how many December sightings there will be, one thing is for sure, numbers are going down and unless the sun is shining any still about will be inactive and difficult to locate.

No wind, no rain, sun out and I'll be back down there!

Regards  
Mike

### **Re: False Apollo**

by Pauline, 06-Dec-13 08:26 PM GMT

That's great news Mike and I'm quite envious even tho I saw a butterfly myself today. Mine, I think, was the Red Admiral again but as I was on the phone and cleaning the windows at the same time I only caught a fleeting glimpse.

### **Re: False Apollo**

by David M, 06-Dec-13 09:16 PM GMT

Wow, a Clouded Yellow at any time is something to be treasured, but a December sighting is pure gold! Well done.

### **Re: False Apollo**

by Wurzel, 07-Dec-13 08:55 AM GMT

The Butterfly Conservation e-zine mentioned December Moths but they obviously have nothing on a December Cloudy 🍄 Is this a case of Christmas come early?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: False Apollo**

by False Apollo, 09-Dec-13 06:27 PM GMT

Another sunny December day another successful day to see a Clouded Yellow. Again seen around 13.00 and hurtling all over the slopes of the undercliff. It was almost bucket and spade weather today, sunny with a slight breeze as opposed to yesterday when it was far too windy. The male Clouded Yellow was in the same area as on the 6th December. It did eventually land on the bare ground briefly before continuing to patrol along the slopes.

Having not seen one yesterday, I did snap some other cliff residents. The fox was particularly fascinated by my search for any butterflies on the wing.

Regards  
Mike



*Being watched*



*Kestrel*



*Black Headed Gulls*

### **Re: False Apollo**

by Nick Broomer, 09-Dec-13 09:31 PM GMT

Lovely photos Apollo. 😊 I have been following your exploits concerning the Clouded Yellows with great interest. Must be wonderful to see them at this time of year, [i have never seen a butterfly in december] flying in the warmth of the early afternoon sun. Brilliant. Maybe you will reporting the findings of a December Clouded Yellow larva shortly. Now that would be something....

All the best, Nick.

### **Re: False Apollo**

by False Apollo, 09-Dec-13 10:05 PM GMT

I will be looking out for larvae, but now I know who 'Mikhail' is on the Forums, as we met and confirmed we knew each other anyway, I'm sure if larvae are to be found, he will find them. He is already keeping his eye on some recently laid Clouded Yellow eggs. I'm sure that eggs have been laid all along the cliffs so there is a good chance of an early sighting next Spring. Mikhail is of the opinion that they are most vulnerable in the pupal stage when they overwinter, so although larvae may be found in various places, it is anybody's guess how many will make it through to the adult stage.

Regards  
Mike