

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Mar-14 05:19 PM GMT

I can't believe it is already MARCH 2014. After a couple of prompts I have realised that I am long overdue in starting up my diary. I had intended to keep it going throughout the winter this year but the floods and frequent power cuts made this impossible. I was one of the lucky ones – only my garden and the fox compound was under water:



which resulted in a lot of extra washing of bedding.

However, as I am all electric, the long and frequent power cuts had an adverse effect on my poorly tortoise. A neighbour heated pans of water on a camping stove to fill hot water bottles to try to keep him warm.

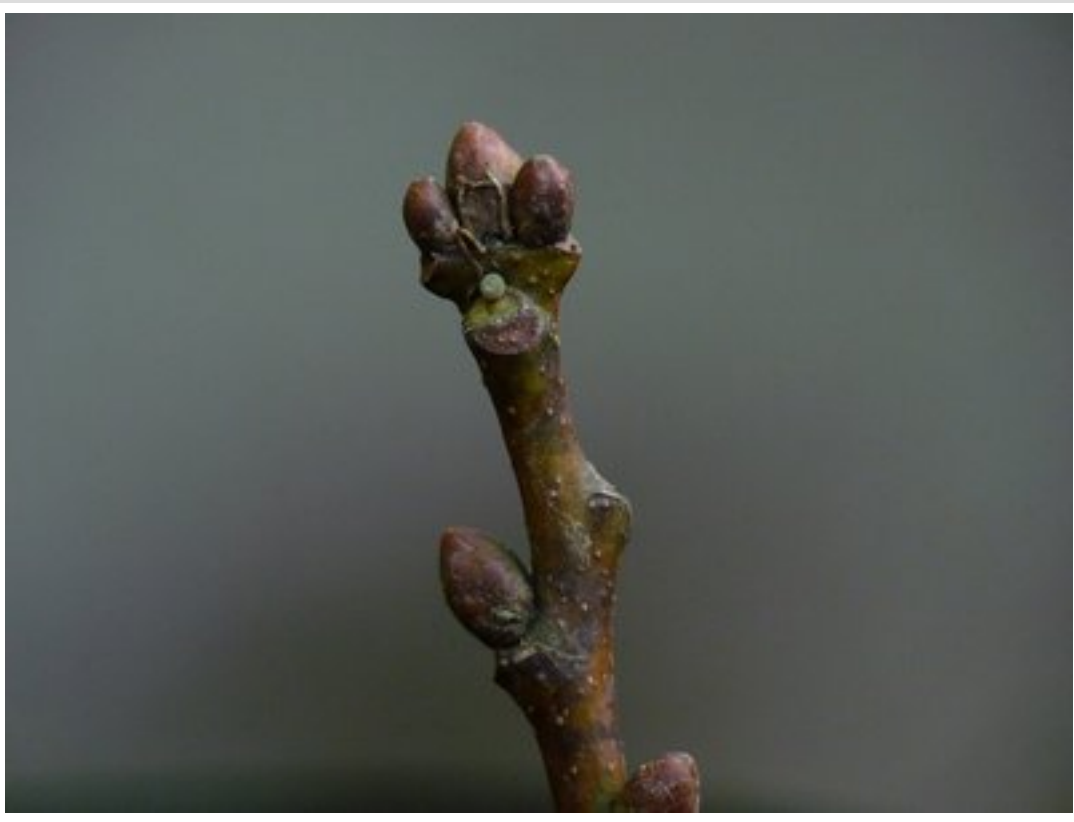
The birds did not desert me and for the first time I have had in excess of 50 Siskins along with the Redpolls;





Against all odds I saw my first butterflies of the year in the last week of February – a male Brimstone and a Red Admiral in the garden.

I have managed to rescue a few more BH eggs and quite a few PH eggs most of which were found only a couple of minutes walk away on old oaks which had come down in the storm. I am really grateful to both Vince and Pete for the ongoing help and advice they are giving me to try to make a go of rearing these eggs – I have never done anything like this before so I am keeping everything crossed. I think I shall HAVE to get out my tripod if I am going to get any photos of these tiny critters but for now these are only hand held images:



I shall keep others informed via this forum.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 08-Mar-14 08:25 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, about time too 😊😊 glad you've started your 2014 diary 😊 Look forward to your updates on your PH and BH.

Mike

Re: Pauline

"Pauline" wrote:

I think I shall HAVE to get out my tripod if I am going to get any photos of these tiny critters but for now these are only hand held images:

I recommend trying out a monopod to steady your photos. These are much more 'flexible' than a tripod, as they are easily moved about, and can be tilted and twisted to get the right viewpoint. Of course, they are not rigid, like a tripod, but I find they give sufficient steadying effect to frame and focus my own macro shots.

Glad to know you coped with the adversities of the Winter and are looking forward to the new season

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Mar-14 06:43 PM GMT

Thank you Mike - looking forward to some cracking shots of your OT emerging soon 😊

Thank you too Mike. I might have mentioned that I have both monopod and tripod so guess I shall have to experiment to see which one feels best.

Like many folk today I took advantage of the gorgeous weather to try to repair some of the winter damage and neglect in the garden and I was delighted to see 3 Brimstones, 2 Male and 1 Female. I had hoped the female at least would settle long enough for a photo but although they reappeared throughout the day they were much too active.

Likewise a Red Admiral which was clearly just passing through but this Peacock stopped high up to enjoy the sun for quite some time:



Whilst looking for something in the garage I lifted down a box from a high shelf by a window and was gutted to find this:



Such a beautiful butterfly and one which I have spent a great deal of time in the past trying to track down. How did I never see it? Why did it not fly out (the garage door is open for some time each day)? So sad 😞



Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 09-Mar-14 09:49 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, hope you are well.

Shame about the Small Tortoiseshell, I have found a number of deceased individuals of both these and Peacocks in my garage over the years. Never known what has killed them, just the way of things unfortunately, still sad when you find them though.

Looking forward to see what you find this year.

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 09-Mar-14 10:20 PM GMT

Glad you got to see some butterflies today Pauline, last year we found a deceased Peacock in our shed, these things just happen 😞

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 09-Mar-14 11:44 PM GMT

Welcome back Pauline – good to see you're off the mark for the year 😊 Sorry the Small Tort didn't make it 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 09-Mar-14 11:45 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Good to see you back 😊 I look forward to reading your diary during 2014 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Mar-14 10:18 AM GMT

Great to hear from you Neil and thank you for your comments. I know you will remember from my diary 2 years ago how hard I worked to find and photograph a ST so it was quite distressing to come across one like this.

I am pleased to hear that your Blackthorn is doing so well Mike – my plants seem way behind although I have taken Vince's advice and used fish, blood and bone so I am keeping my fingers crossed.

Thank you Wurzel. Your diary has kept me entertained during the bleak months – don't know how you do it!

Hi Paul, glad to hear from you – it will be good to compare notes as many of us are doing this hand-rearing thing for the first time. I shall start with my very first photo below of my 'nursery' which is surprisingly roomy and wasn't too expensive. I need to be careful as my hens are free range and I know from bitter experience with my Large White larva from last year that the hens can see and kill the caterpillars through the netting.

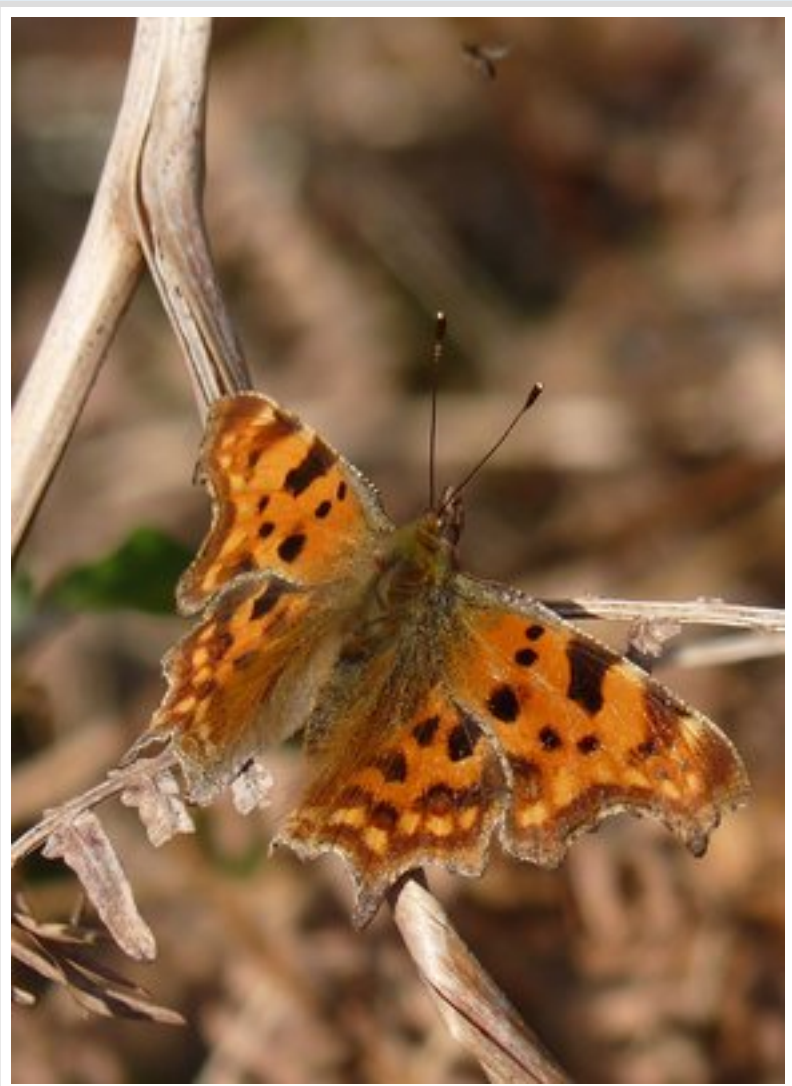


Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Mar-14 06:08 PM GMT

I'd forgotten how magical it is just to stand in the midst of a mass of butterflies with the sun on my back. I have never seen so many Commas in such a small area and found it difficult to drag myself away. Several of the butterflies persisted in landing on my hair – whether the colour attracted them or whether it just needs a good wash I'm not sure 😊 . A few photos from today:





Re: Pauline

by False Apollo, 12-Mar-14 07:37 PM GMT

I have to agree with you there Pauline, I saw around 30 on the Isle of Wight, they are also visiting the garden as well almost daily. It is great to think they have survived the wet winter weather in good numbers and in this spell of good weather should have time to produce a good egg lay. I have

however not seen a Red Admiral for weeks now, I wonder if the rain hit any that stayed over the winter quite hard. Should be good for getting out if you can over the next few days.

Regards
Mike

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-Mar-14 12:21 AM GMT

Great start back Pauline – great shots – you haven't lost your touch over the winter months, I especially like the last shot, lush 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Mar-14 05:27 PM GMT

Great to hear from you Mike. 30 Commas certainly sounds impressive – my total was probably nearer half that but I didn't need to move an inch to watch them all. 8-9 in the air at any one time with many others visible on bracken and bramble, just enjoying the sun and landing on me 😊. I've been reading your diary with interest. I reckon that with your experience the butterfly with the unconfirmed identity was almost certainly a LT – just wish I knew exactly where you were at that time as I have never seen one (great Red Squirrel pic too).

Thank you for the compliment Wurzel. I have to agree that the last shot is my favourite too. Today I took a walk in the sun over Noar Hill – not butterfly hunting as such, just enjoying the sunshine and the presence of the 5 usual suspects. I was pleased to see many ST, all very much alive but this is the 4th time this month I have failed to get a shot of a Red Admiral. A few snapshots from today – everything was too active to get close up.



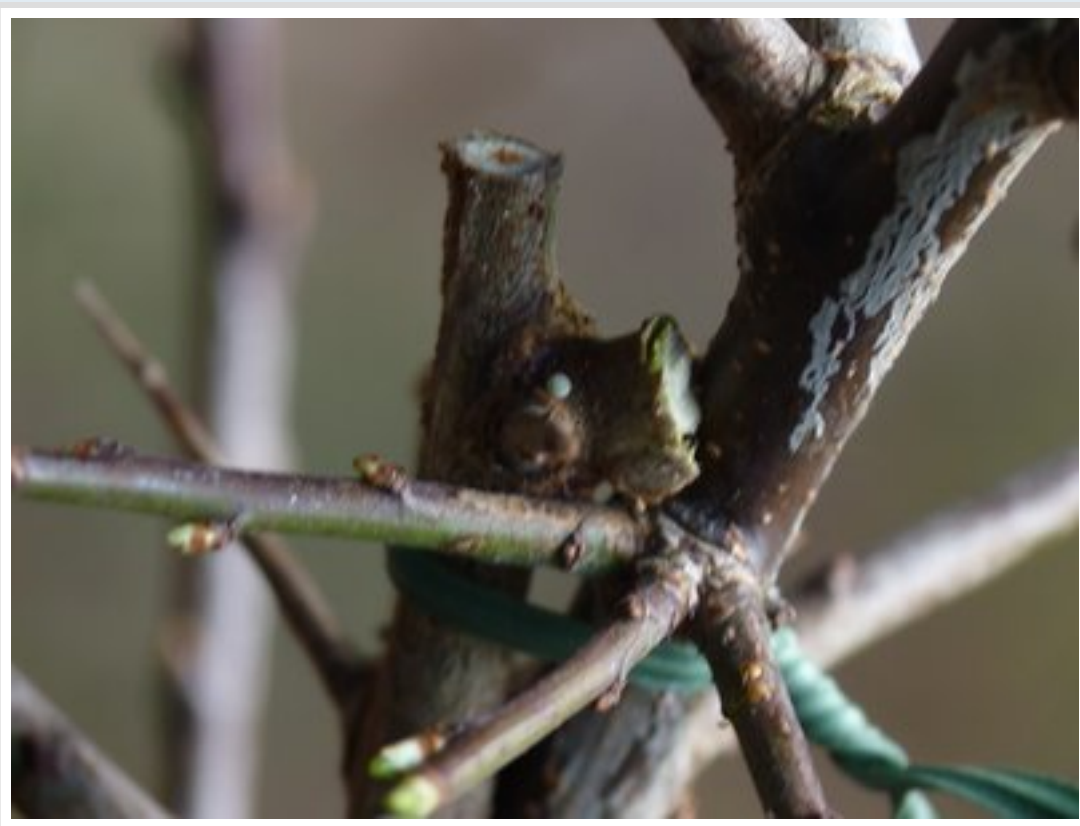


Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Mar-14 12:48 PM GMT

Cold, grey and drizzling here today so time to update my diary. First of all a massive thanks to Vince and Mike who have both been giving me timely and detailed advice to ensure the best outcome for my BH eggs. It would seem some eggs are emerging early and/or being predated so having been urged to take action today I have tied the eggs to Blackthorn. Unfortunately the plants I purchased earlier this year have not developed as well as I'd hoped. However, the plant that Vince kindly gave me at Christmas is most advanced so is now home to 3 eggs. One egg has each been attached to my best two plants; last year I bought and planted a couple of Blackthorn and despite being in total shade, one of them is fairly well developed so 2 eggs have been attached to this and covered with a sleeve. The remaining eggs have been attached to branches of Blackthorn collected this morning from the wild and stood in water – so hedging my bets is the best way to describe it. I don't know if I am doing the right things in the right way but all I can do now is monitor closely, keep my fingers crossed, hope and wait. I have tried to take some photos (either hand held or with a monopod – can't find the little bit that attaches my tripod to the camera, again!). They are nowhere near as good as some photos I have seen recently but are included for the record – and hopefully I can improve on this once the tripod is up and running.





Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 18-Mar-14 04:23 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

This early egg hatch has caught everybody out this year, so I'm pleased to see your timely intervention.

Are you certain that the sprigs in the bottles are Blackthorn?, because they look a bit like Hawthorn to me. Could you post a close-up?, or perhaps someone could supply a second opinion. Also, could I suggest that you trim off all side branches from the **OLD** egg-bearing twigs because this will save the hatching caterpillar from exploring potential dead ends when looking for a leaf bud on the living plant.

Please continue to keep us all updated on progress and don't be afraid to ask for advice.

Vince

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Mar-14 05:56 PM GMT

Thank you Vince – I have never been very good with plants so I hope someone (anyone) can let me know one way or the other whether this is Hawthorn or Blackthorn as I might need to make another quick dash to Noar Hill. Close up below:



Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 18-Mar-14 06:33 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, I am sure that this is Hawthorn, although a second opinion would be welcome from anyone out there. Keep an eye on those particular eggs in case they show signs of hatching before you get replacement plants.

Vince

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 18-Mar-14 06:40 PM GMT

Pauline/Vince, I think that's Hawthorn, the thorns have buds on them on Blackthorn.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 18-Mar-14 09:46 PM GMT

Thanks Mike 😊, but I think I have confused myself and everybody else. The image indeed shows what appears to be a Hawthorn stem, because, as you point out, Blackthorns have lateral buds on their thorns <http://www.wildlifeinsight.com/Insight/?p=3563>. However looking again at the original wide image, there are buds on the thorns (and also on the new image that Pauline has just sent me), so these must be Blackthorns!**

Also, for information, the larger, rounder buds may be flowers while the pointy buds should be leaves. I'm not sure if Brown Hairstreak larvae will feed from a flower bud (but I know that other species do). The only way of avoiding flower buds is to take cuttings from a young plant which is not mature enough to produce flowers.

I think it's now just a question of waiting to see what happens.

Vince

****EDIT**** After viewing both species in the wild the following day I have come to the conclusion that this is actually **Hawthorn**. It seems that the website link that I posted did not fully explain all the possible variations exhibited by Hawthorn and the similarities it sometimes shares with Blackthorn. The round buds are indeed flower buds, but they also contain developing leaves (Blackthorns have separate flower and leaf buds). The final confirmation was provided by Pauline when I asked her to dissect a round bud and describe the contents. Got there in the end 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 18-Mar-14 09:51 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I have no idea if it is Blackthorn or Hawthorn 😊 but good luck anyway, I am looking forward to see what happens.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Mar-14 10:17 PM GMT

Thank you so much guys for your help and input. If my photos had been clearer in the first instance I could have saved all of this debate and confusion. However, a dash back to Noar Hill for more Blackthorn resulted in splendid close up view of an owl (which I haven't seen for years in the wild) so all was not wasted. It's good to know you are looking out for me and the eggs and I only hope the rest of the process goes a bit more smoothly without too many traumas, disasters or panics 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Mar-14 12:44 PM GMT

Needing a break from my poorly executed 'maternal' duties I decided to take a brief stroll in Stanstead forest in the hope that I might see a newly emerged OT or be lucky enough to spot an OT pupa. These were the only butterflies I saw in the short time I was there:



Re: Pauline

by William, 20-Mar-14 07:42 PM GMT

Those are simply stunning Pauline – I've never seen a photo of mating Brimstones before – absolutely brilliant 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 20-Mar-14 08:11 PM GMT

I agree – fantastic pictures. I watched what seemed like a good couple for ages today, waiting for her to say yes (she did seem to be following him, often backwards, rather than flying away) but they never got it together. They disappeared off in a gust of wind. I can't remember even seeing a mating pair of brimstones.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 20-Mar-14 08:18 PM GMT

Brilliant photos Pauline, I think that's quite a rare sight 🍷

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Mar-14 07:56 AM GMT

Lovely to hear from you William and thank you for the compliment.

I appreciate your comments Guy – I certainly have never seen a mating pair before. I am not sure what was dangling from the butterfly and tho' it spoiled the composition a little I was not about to risk disturbing the pair by trying to remove it.

You are most certainly right Mike. It was quite a thrill finding them given the absence of any other butterfly.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 22-Mar-14 01:03 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I am not sure what was dangling from the butterfly and tho' it spoiled the composition a little I was not about to risk disturbing the pair by trying to remove it.

There's always Photoshop 😏

mike

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 22-Mar-14 01:23 PM GMT

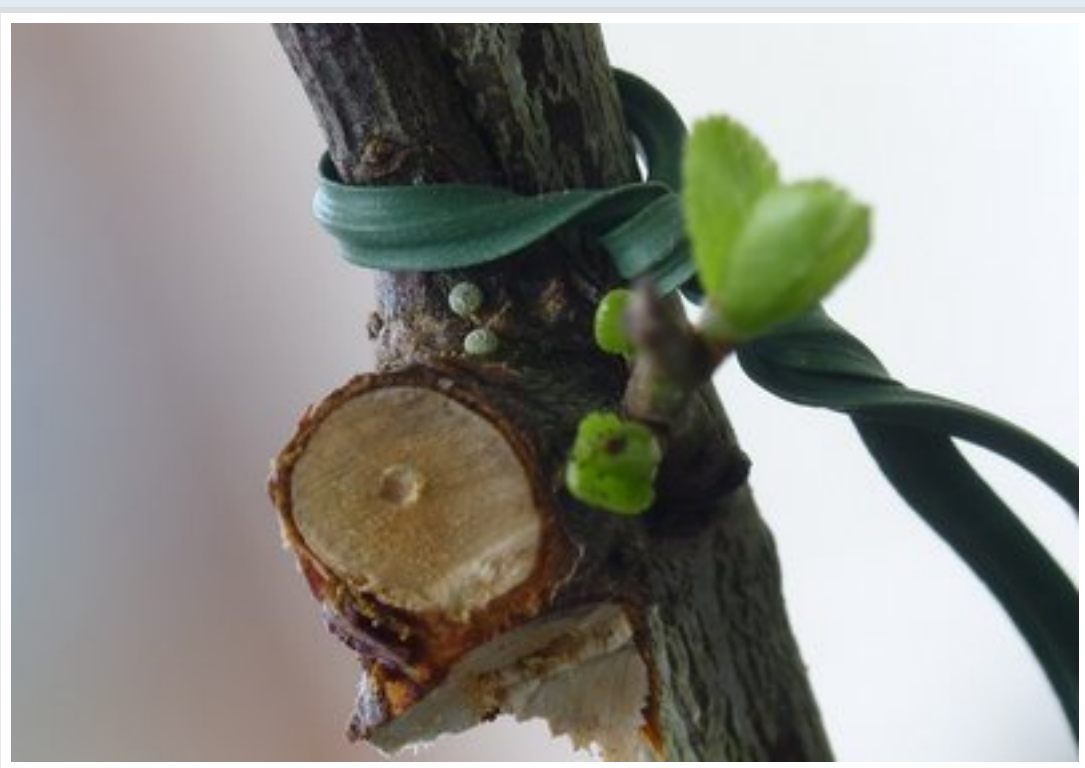
Lovely shots of the Brimstones Pauline, your so lucky to live where you do, we've had really cold weather here, this morning there were even remnants of snow and the bird bath's were frozen, however on the bright side we're nearly in April 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Mar-14 12:32 PM GMT

I'm pleased you think so Goldie. You might recall that I grew up in the cold, windy, industrial North East so I most certainly do appreciate where I live now, so close to so many great butterfly sites 😊

I think I've forgotten how to use even the basic facilities in Photoshop Mike 😞. However, you will be pleased to know that my tripod is now a permanent feature as I practice taking better shots of the immature stages (see below) in preparation for further developments. However, no BH eggs have hatched yet so my fingers are still crossed and my patience is being tested. At least I am now sure they are all tied to Blackthorn 😊



Today I have also taken a few PH eggs out of the fridge as I can wait no longer 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 23-Mar-14 09:25 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Just seen your photos of the mating Brimstones, great stuff 😊

Good luck with the eggs, both BH and PH.

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 23-Mar-14 11:57 PM GMT

Brilliant shots of your BH eggs Pauline, know they will hatch soon 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 24-Mar-14 12:28 AM GMT

You could try hurrying them along but I don't think Raspberry leaf tea/a hot bath/a hot curry would be that effective for them 😊 Looking forward to the big day 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Mar-14 01:21 PM GMT

Thank you Mike. I used the timer as you suggested and I think it has made a big difference.

It's very kind of you to say so Neil, thank you, much appreciated.

Seems like the curry and hot bath worked Wurzel 😊 – the first 2 BH eggs were hatched this morning 😊 – trouble is, I have no idea where the cats have gone and can find no signs of where they might have entered a bud 😞 . It is all very worrying and I shall be keeping a close eye on the others. A couple of early photos showing absolutely nothing, just for the record!





Today I have tied the remaining PH to Oak buds and shall be keeping a close eye on them too.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 24-Mar-14 04:18 PM GMT

Excellent news Pauline (and photos) that your first two BH eggs have hatched 😊 Don't worry they're tucked deep inside leaf buds and you will see them or signs of them in a few days time.

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 24-Mar-14 04:45 PM GMT

Great news Pauline 😊

The leaf buds look exactly the right size for the new larvae, so the timing seems perfect. As Mike says, they will be tucked away at the moment but should show themselves soon.

Vince

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 26-Mar-14 12:29 AM GMT

Glad to see that the remedies worked 😊 I'm sure you'll get onto the cats again – they can't have gone far! 😊

Have a goodun

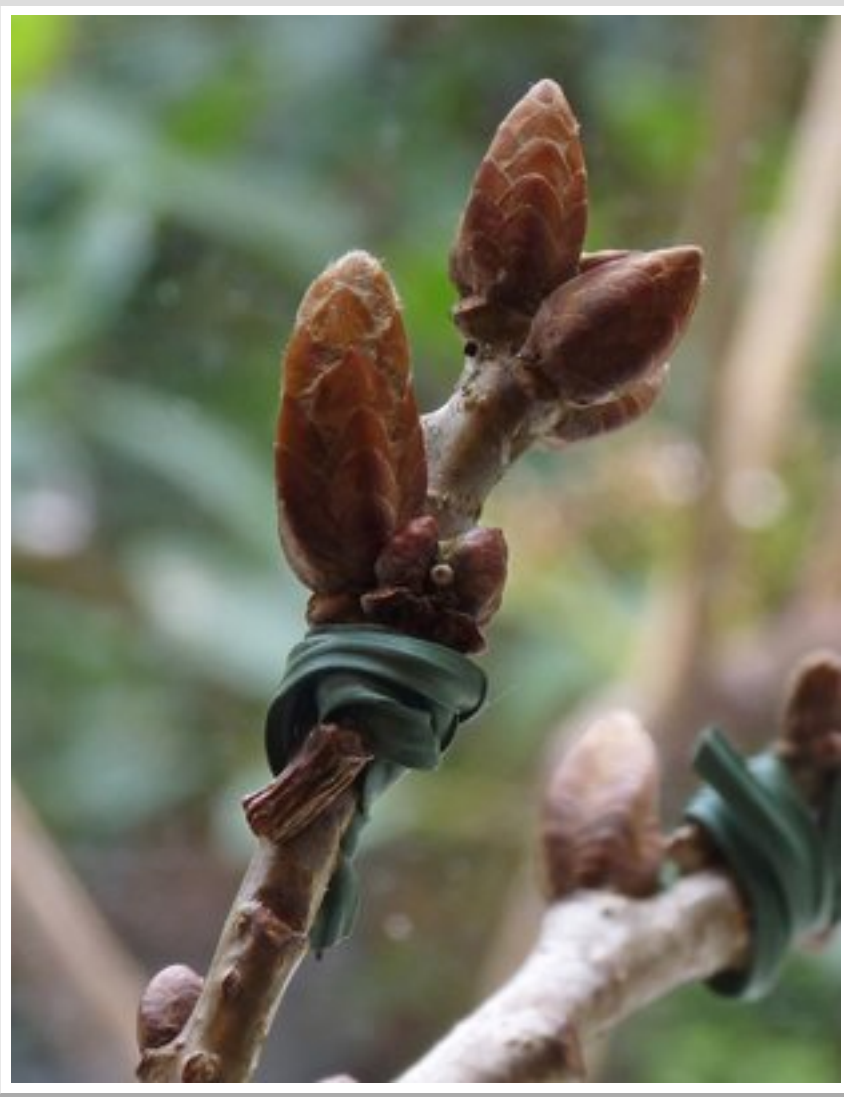
Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Mar-14 11:28 AM GMT

Thank you Mike/Vince for the reassurance but I still haven't seen a single cat and now feeling a bit frustrated.

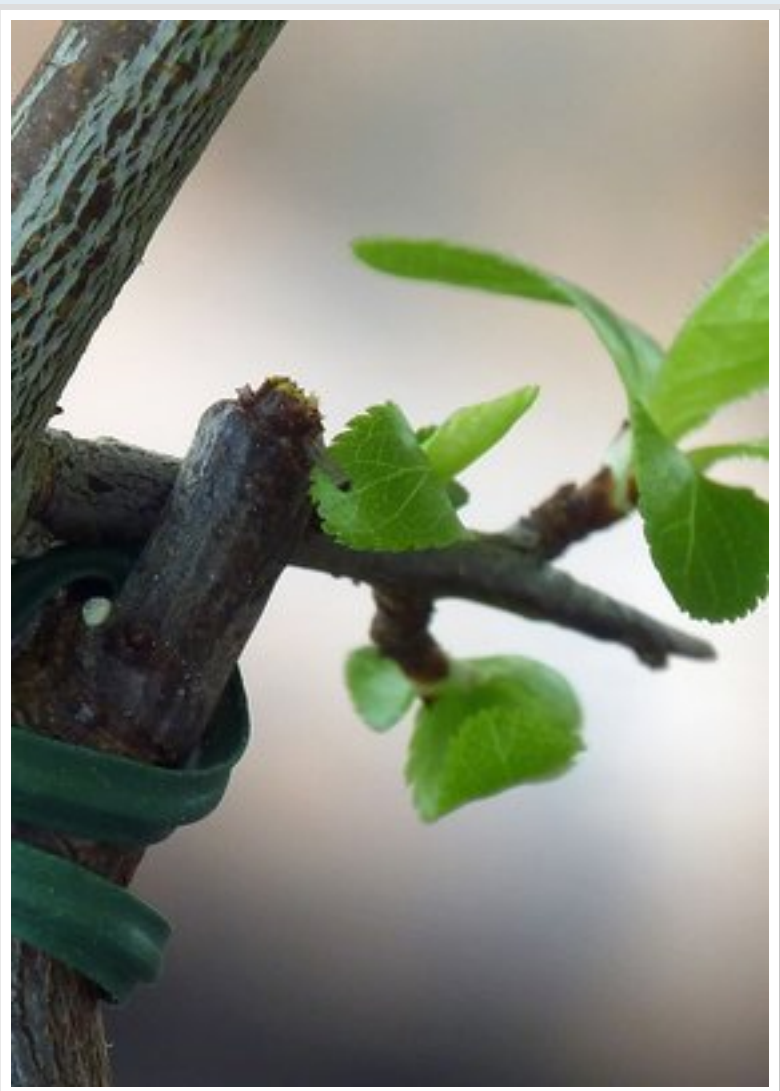
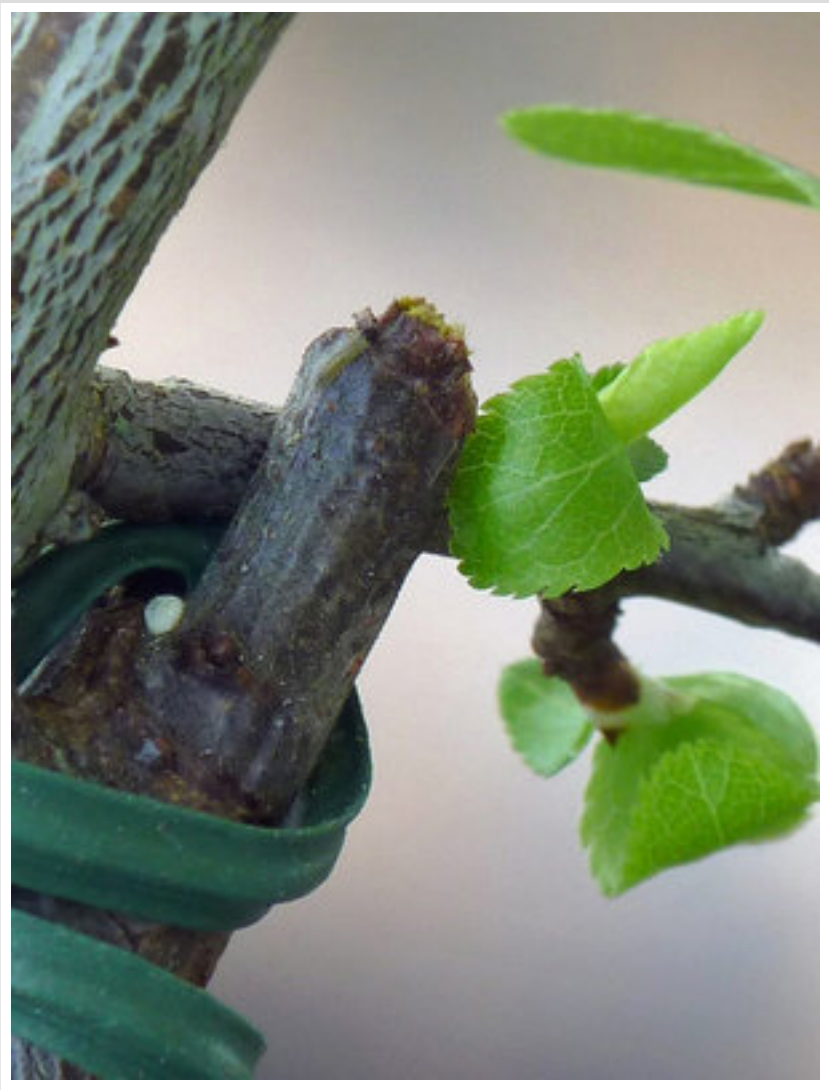
Last night another 5 eggs hatched Wurzel – 2 BH and 3 PH – can't seem to stop them now but I am beginning to despair of ever seeing a cat and my opportunity diminishes with each emergence. Another couple of empty eggshells is all I have to show for now:

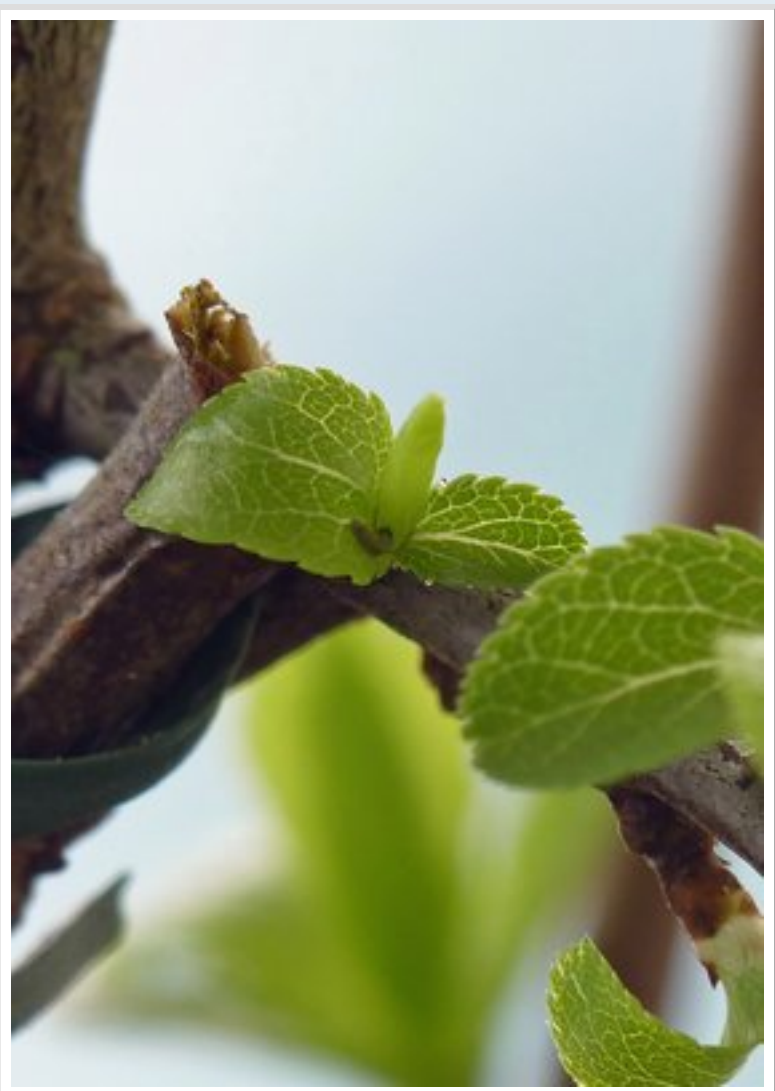
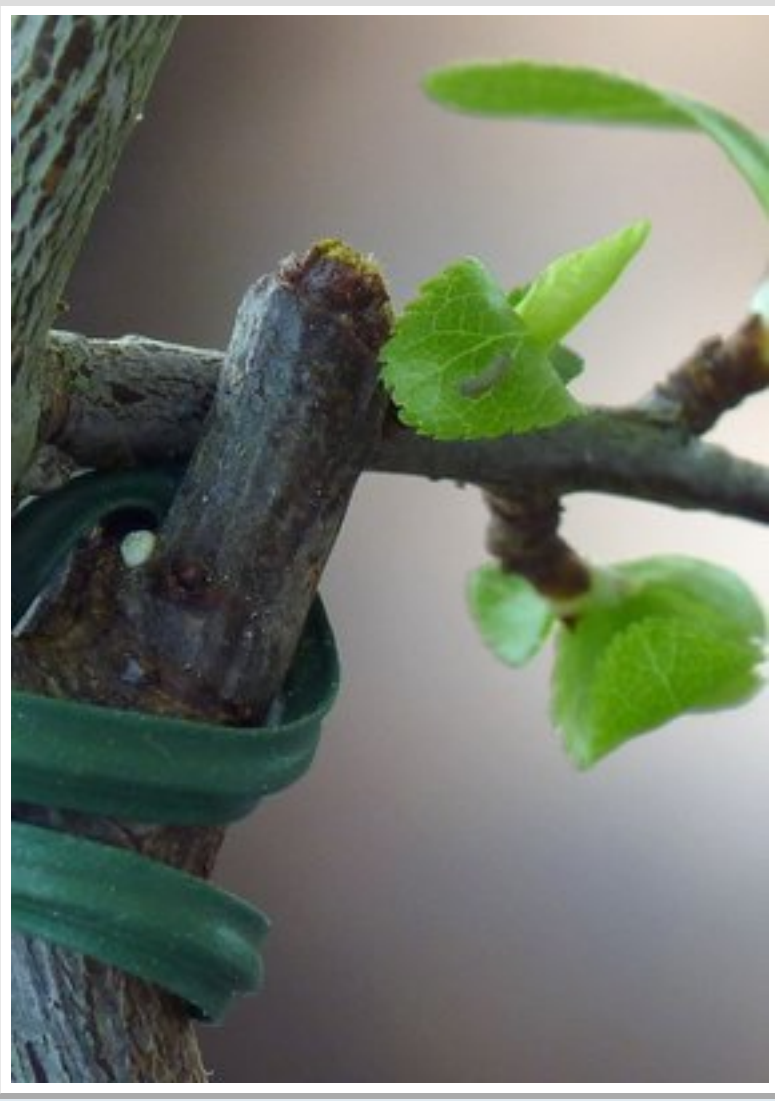


Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Mar-14 07:57 PM GMT

Shortly after my last posting I did a routine check of the eggs and Bingo!!! One of the BH had just emerged. For such tiny creatures they can move surprisingly quickly. Although my shots leave a lot to be desired (and I could list many reasons why, not least my excitement at this first ever sighting) it was just such a thrill to finally see one of these tiny cats. Mostly for my own pleasure the images I managed to capture are included below:







Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 26-Mar-14 08:22 PM GMT

Brilliant! I share your excitement!

Guy

Re: Pauline

by NickMorgan, 26-Mar-14 10:50 PM GMT

Wow, fantastic Pauline. How exciting. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 27-Mar-14 11:19 AM GMT

Glad you got to see a BH cat hatching at last Pauline, great pics too 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Mar-14 03:28 PM GMT

Thank you Mike but trying to get these close up shots has only made me appreciate your expertise in obtaining those crisp images of such tiny creatures.

Thank you so much Guy/Nick – it is certainly a first for me and I am still smiling. However, I hope my next post will be somewhat more interesting (despite the poor images) and will most certainly require the knowledge that I know is available on this site.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Mar-14 10:04 PM GMT

Last night another 3 PH eggs hatched and this morning I was privileged to watch yet another emerge. The first thing I noticed was how much darker it seemed than the BH larva, the latter being almost translucent. It also took a great deal longer to emerge from the egg – approximately 2 hours. At one point I (ever so slowly and carefully) turned the jar slightly for a better view and it immediately withdrew again into the egg presumably sensing the movement. Whilst taking a photo I saw another creature through the lens, somewhat smaller than the larva and much, much faster. I can see now from the photos that this creature was present for quite some time, showing considerable interest in the newly emerged larva, which seemed disconcerted by its presence. I don't know whether there was more than one and/or even whether all my collected Oak branches are host to this insect. I do not know what it is or whether it is predatory. I appreciate it is tiny and the photos are not at all clear but if anyone can shed any light on this I really would be very grateful as I fear my larva is at risk. About half of these eggs are from my local patch so I feel quite protective of them. Lots of photos below as it is unlikely I shall ever record this again.







As close as I can get to aid ID of insect – some sort of aphid perhaps? ... but it was very fast moving:



Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 27-Mar-14 11:14 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Excellent news to see you have had multiple emergences 😊 And you have even managed to photograph both types of emerging larvae, well done 😊 It is great to have several diaries detailing this topic so we can all compare notes. Nothing happening at my end so far 😊

I can not help with your unidentified guest. I think if it were on my Oak twig I would be a little concerned 😬 but there again if it is a predator it is all part of the natural order of things. I look forward to the next instalment 😊

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 27-Mar-14 11:50 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Glad the cats are doing well – great photos too. The intruder looks like some kind of Springtail (Collembola) to me but I am no expert – lets see what others say.

Good luck and look forward to attending your releases later in the year

Mark 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 28-Mar-14 12:33 AM GMT

Brill shots Pauline 😊 I saw the little critter and thought "Springtail?" and then I read Mark's comment so I'd go with that for an ID. As far as I can remember they're herbivores/detritivores so your cats should be fine – so long as they're not too cryptically marked, and it is a Springtail 😊 Try poking it with a twig and it should flip itself away.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Mar-14 01:32 PM GMT

Thank you for your comment Paul – I expect it won't be too long before you see some action at your end and be sure to let us know as soon as you do 😊

Mark/Wurzel – how do you guys know all that stuff???!!!! I really hope you are right. As for poking it with a twig Wurzel, I can't even see it without a magnifying glass and 2 pairs of specs 😊

So far I have managed to keep a list of which eggs are where and when they hatched but I am not sure how long I shall be able to maintain this. What I do know is that whilst routinely checking the plants this morning I spotted signs of feeding on a leaf which led me to one of the cats. This is the cat labelled MPL (Mike's plant left) which hatched 3 days ago. I am astonished at the rate it is growing:



So far 7 out of 12 BH emerged and 8 out of 12 PH.

Re: Pauline

by Paul Wetton, 28-Mar-14 01:56 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

I'd be careful of that little critter as it is fast moving and the head end looks quite wasp like. Perhaps catch him and move him elsewhere just to be on the safe side.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Mar-14 07:12 PM GMT

Hi Paul – great to hear from you again and thanks for the warning. I must admit that my first instinct was to get rid of it (somehow) but it was so small and so fast I could only see it thru the zoom and then it disappeared into the buds. I was concerned as the cat seemed to perceive it as a threat either veering away from it or rearing up at the front end which I failed to capture with the camera. I can only hope that my cats are not all doomed and try to remain vigilant but have yet to see any subsequent PH cats. Another close-up below:



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 28-Mar-14 10:26 PM GMT

Some superb shots, Pauline. You've moved into a world of micro-photography that I haven't attempted yet 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Mar-14 11:30 AM GMT

I really appreciate that Mike. If my photos have improved slightly it is surely a result of 2 factors – firstly, your continued and repeated insistence that I should use a tripod 😊 and secondly, Maximus suggesting I use the timer on my camera. Just to prove that my tripod is now always at the ready, and not just for my camera, my parrots who are never caged have found their own use for it:



Update on eggs: I am currently watching the last of my 12 BH eggs hatch as I type. I have so far located 3 of these cats including the one I shot earlier hatching (VP3 – Vince's plant 3rd down) which I shall post as soon as it is downloaded from the camera.

10 out of 12 PH eggs have hatched to date but sadly no cats seen apart from the one I saw emerging.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Mar-14 04:32 PM GMT

Like Wurzel I am now getting behind with my diary thanks to all these cats. Today I have been looking for MPL who went AWOL during the night. I think I have managed to track him thanks to the trail he has left which led me to the leaves at the very end of the branch. They appeared to be 'stuck' together but with the sun shining on them I could clearly see the outline of a cat moving around. A close up view revealed some white silky strands keeping the leaves sealed and my first thought was that some predator had trapped my cat and he/she was distressed. I began to prise the tiny leaves apart very slowly and gently but the cat did not seem to appreciate this and it suddenly occurred to me that perhaps it is in the process of a moult. I took a couple of shots which aren't as clear as I'd like but are included for the record and I shall just wait and see. This cat must be 4-5 days old now and I am not sure when this happens for the first time.





Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 29-Mar-14 10:06 PM GMT

Hi Pauline – following your other photos I have revised my thoughts about the 'visitor' from being a springtail to it being some sort of braconid wasp – as pointed out by Paul – which are parasitoids that lay their eggs in butterfly and moth eggs and caterpillars 😡

Judging by your description of the cats reaction it knows it too. I think you will struggle to remove it as this group are amongst some of the smallest insects on earth – it seems much smaller than the 1st instar PH larvae – fingers crossed that the cats are sufficiently streetwise and defend themselves at all times!

Like the parrot – mine always preferred my head 😊

Good Luck

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Mar-14 09:01 AM GMT

After my last post several things happened. The leaves containing the cat were quickly sealed up again. The last BH which I had been watching emerged:



I think I am pushing my camera to its limits now!

The colour and behaviour of one of the other cats I have been watching (I have located 5 BH ctas now) changed. He became a more conspicuous colour, not as well camouflaged, stopped eating and remained motionless on his leaf:



After your warning Mark I have been keeping a close eye on the PH as I am sure you are right – and yes, it was less than half the size of the cat. I am frustrated as I feel powerless and very concerned for the cats. I had seen no sign of any larva until I spotted one returning to his chosen bud yesterday:





I have not checked on activity yet this morning but it was interesting to note that this cat took just over an hour to eat his way through this:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Mar-14 05:27 PM GMT

I am not sure what is happening here. Impatient as always I thought my cat had been in his leaf cocoon for long enough (2 days). I wasn't sure if he had died in there or whether he had been predated but I thought this was way too long to shed such a tiny skin and emerge bigger and bolder. I had read the excellent report produced by Vince on the early stages of this butterfly but it did not include any reference to this type of behaviour. I gently teased open the sealed leaves and was able to see the cat in his silvery web, looking much darker and a great deal bigger. At this point I thought I had better leave well alone but during the day he has been emerging from his web and then retreating back again. In a short space of time he has changed from a very dark colouration to a very light colour.





I am wondering if anyone else has experience of this? I have another 2 cats which have now made themselves a similar leaf cocoon and I shall not disturb these, merely record how long the process takes.

I sincerely hope the cats are not cannibalistic as 2 of my BH are coming increasingly close to each other and there is quite a difference in size:



I have now located 6 BH cats but still no PH and the remaining 2 eggs have not yet hatched.

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 30-Mar-14 06:14 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I am not sure what is happening here ...

I could be wrong, Pauline, but that looks like a moth larva to me (in the silk web).

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Mar-14 07:11 PM GMT

You've thrown me into a panic now Pete. You have way too much experience to be wrong but the formation of that web coincided with the disappearance of one of my largest cats. Likewise on a second plant from a totally different source 🤔 I haven't noticed any 'odd' cats during my scrutiny but as this is a first would I even notice the difference? What do you suggest I do? Presumably these are more predators? This is not so much fun anymore 🙄

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 30-Mar-14 07:39 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

You've thrown me into a panic now Pete. You have way too much experience to be wrong but the formation of that web coincided with the disappearance of one of my largest cats. Likewise on a second plant from a totally different source 🤔 I haven't noticed any 'odd' cats during my scrutiny but as this is a first would I even notice the difference? What do you suggest I do? Presumably these are more predators? This is not so much fun anymore 🙄

Don't panic, Pauline!

You've probably had a micro moth lay an egg or two on the blackthorn, and the larvae are now feeding up. I doubt they would be a threat to your Brown Hairstreak larvae, since most larvae aren't cannibalistic. I'm sure your larvae are still in their early instars and burrowed deep into the leaf bases. I think you just need to be patient; your larvae will reappear in their own time!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 30-Mar-14 08:05 PM GMT

One of the things you notice when looking for wild brown hairstreak larvae is just how many other creatures feed on blackthorn! It would be very surprising if you had no other residents and as Pete says, you certainly shouldn't panic! Just think of yourself as Noah ...

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 30-Mar-14 10:52 PM GMT

Looks like you have an unexpected "twofer" Pauline 😊 Looks like you'll have to get into Moths now 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 31-Mar-14 02:52 PM GMT

Thanks for this Pete. I shall try to calm down, honestly 😊 but tho' I have many virtues 😊, sadly, patience isn't one of them.

This monster larva has wrapped itself in some more leaves Guy. It is very tempting to remove it but curiosity has got the better of me and I shall be interested to see what it turns into.

You reckon this is the thin edge of the edge Wurzel 🤔

Thankfully I can still count 7 BH and several are at a stage where I can see them easily with the naked eye and have happily abandoned my hand lens. I am assuming that this one has just moulted:



I took this opportunity of a couple side by side to show the differences in size – and several are even smaller:



The PH are still causing concern as 6 days since the first ones hatched and only one brief sighting. However, I am seeing more of these 😡:



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 31-Mar-14 09:36 PM GMT

Don't let things throw you into a panic, Pauline. Remember that nature will follow its own course and, even if it's not what you were looking for, it will still be marvellous 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Apr-14 05:22 PM GMT

Hi Mike, trying hard not to but becoming increasingly despondent – 22 eggs hatched and at this rate of loss I shall have nothing to show for it except a few twigs in water! First the BH. Now I know these have superb camouflage:

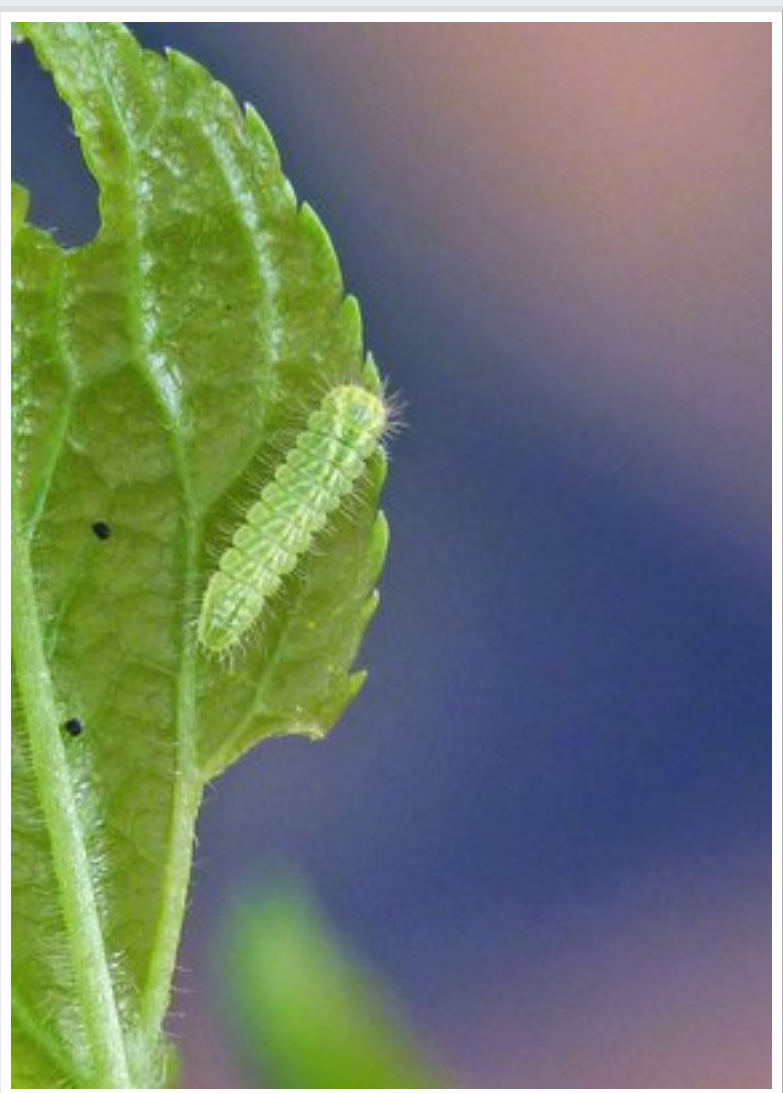


but can you even spot it? Given the time I have spent scrutinising these branches I think I am getting pretty good at it but despite the cats getting bigger each day, the number I am able to locate diminishes. I can now only count 4 out of 12 hatched eggs whereas before I could easily find 7/8 and furthermore, there is no additional sign of feeding/leaf damage (despite the presence of the 'intruder'! The monster intruder was on the plant kindly donated by Maximus which initially held 4 eggs, and on which I have previously counted 3 cats. Now I can't find any cats on this plant. This creature was active at night and each day would find it wrapped up in a different set of leaves so tonight, to be on the safe side, it will find itself in a completely new set of leaves, far away from my plants. Not a good picture but by now my patience had worn very, very thin:



Staying with the BH I have been reading and re-reading the wonderful article by Vince on their early stages. How I admired and envied those wonderful images and beautifully marked cats whilst mine were just green blobs. I have tried hard today to replicate those images without much success, although I believe they are an improvement on earlier photos. I tried different backgrounds and different exposures etc to try to obtain those wonderful markings. I'm not sure which is the most accurate representation but a selection reproduced below:







I am even more disappointed by lack of any sightings of PH as most of these were collected close to home. Despite 10 eggs hatching, 6 of them 6 days ago, I have yet to see a second sighting 😞

Re: Pauline

by William, 01-Apr-14 06:51 PM GMT

That last shot is lovely Pauline, stick at it and don't give up! I'm in a similar situation with some Purple Hairstreak eggs – fingers crossed 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 01-Apr-14 11:19 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Great to see the development of your Brown Hairstreak larvae 😊 There is still no sign of my Purple Hairstreak eggs hatching 😞

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 01-Apr-14 11:56 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, sorry i'm a bit late checking your pages, i've been away!

Don't give up on your PH cats, they may be burrowed deep inside the oak buds, out of sight, feeding on the delicate folded leaves within.

Are your cats on baby oak trees, in a cage? I don't think twigs in a jar will sustain them long term. Forgive me, if you have already explained this i apologise.

Good luck. I kept a cage with a common blue cat inside,in a cold greenhouse over winter. Because it was warming up in there,i decided to put it outside about 3 weeks back. One night,strong winds blew the cage upside down. Plants,soil,cat-just a muddy heap on the side of the cage. Disaster! I tried to put the plant/soil back together,but there's no sign of my caterpillar! 🙄

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 02-Apr-14 06:30 AM GMT

"essexbuzzard" wrote:

I don't think twigs in a jar will sustain them long term.

Just long enough to get them through the early instar(s) and for them to appear on the unfurling bud ... at which point they can be transferred (carefully!) to another twig. I rescued a couple of eggs myself, but they're still kept in the cold because none of the oak trees around here have opened buds - other parts of the country seem to be well ahead of west Berks!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Apr-14 01:37 PM GMT

Thank you for that William - I really appreciate it ...and see below 😊

Thank you too for your comment Paul - I shall pm you.

Lovely to hear from you Mark. I should have said so earlier but the photos from your recent trip are fantastic - and mating Festoons to boot (would have liked to have seen a shot of the monkeys tho 😊). I appreciate your helpful comments and shall certainly bear them in mind now that things have thankfully moved on a stage. Really sorry to hear about your Common Blue.

Thanks for the reminder Pete - you will see I have sent you another load of questions 🙄 Whatever would I do without you guys!

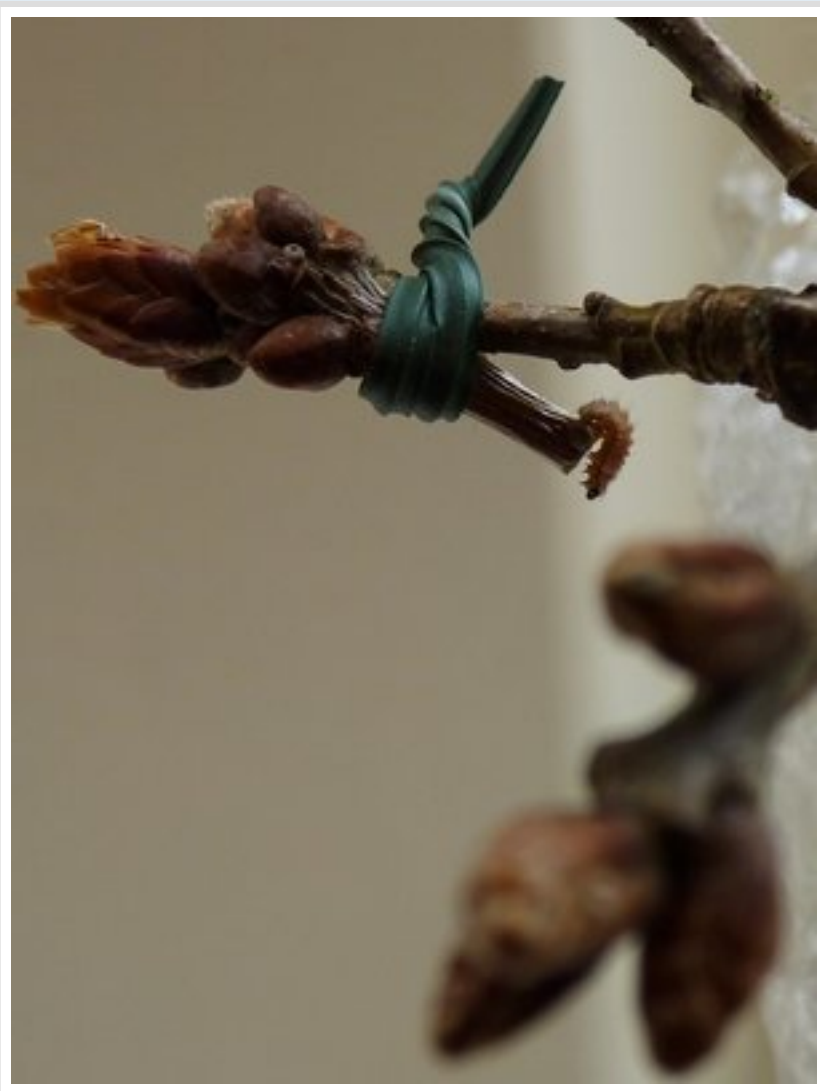
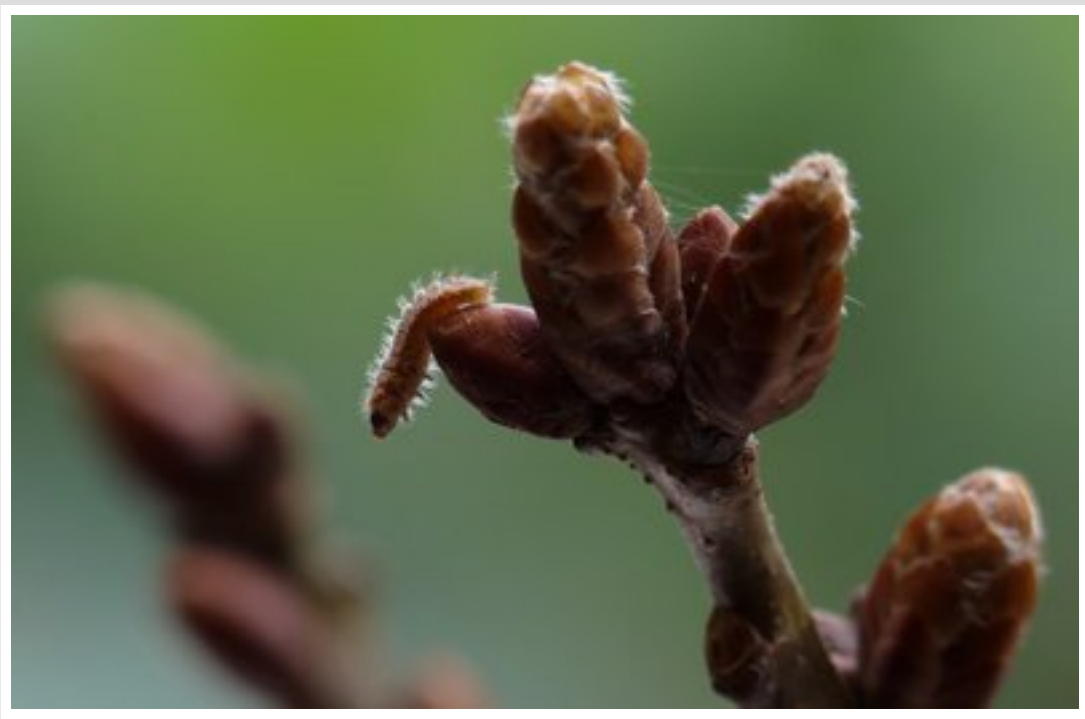
Well, today shall now be known as PH day!!! Late last night I found a PH had emerged and what a size it was:



You just can't imagine my delight and relief followed rapidly by embarrassment for all the fuss I have been making. I went to bed happy knowing I had saved at least one, and best of all, it was one of my local ones (I have them in different labelled pots). This morning was even better as another 4 PH had emerged, a full 8 days after the first hatching, and how well camouflaged they were:



They were lively and curious, exploring their external environment, quite intrepid as they moved from branch to branch:



At one point the largest cat stretched a little too far for the next branch and dropped off, suspended in the air by a silken thread. My immediate instinct was to offer my finger as a 'leg up' but as I watched and waited he successfully managed to get back onto the branch.

Just like the BH these cats are beautifully marked and my photos certainly don't do them justice especially as most of them were backlit, being stood on a windowsill.



Having read the helpful advice by Mark and Pete I examined my branches that were home to the cats and noted that quite a few of the buds seemed to be dying. I wondered whether the activity of the cats was a result of hunger rather than curiosity so I positioned a new branch just touching the branch containing the most active cat. He was onto it like a rat up a drain pipe and when I left him he was still happily munching away. A visit to the woods is imminent!



by Pete Eeles, 02-Apr-14 02:17 PM GMT

That's excellent Pauline – glad to see the youngsters are growing fast!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Lee Hurrell, 02-Apr-14 03:09 PM GMT

What a wonderful story so far, I am hooked!

Good luck, Pauline.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 02-Apr-14 06:34 PM GMT

Great stuff Pauline, I told you there was nothing to worry about 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 02-Apr-14 07:07 PM GMT

Fascinating stuff, Pauline. I shall enjoy seeing how things unfold.

Best of luck.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Apr-14 05:55 PM GMT

Thank you all for your support, encouragement, reassurance and interest. There will definitely be more installments to come but today I needed to escape from the nursery (my eyesight was becoming blurred from continually looking through that magnifying glass 🧐). I decided to risk the toxic smog and make a short visit to Wrecclesham in search of all these Orange Tips I have been reading about. I shall not dwell on the history or use of this site as it has all been well documented in previous posts:



When I arrived at the site it was quite overcast but I thought I would take the opportunity to look for roosting OT's as I have done before at other venues. It wasn't long before I located one.



As I wondered along the track I heard the sound of a Chiffchaff and mindful of Mike's advice to search for them before the leaves are on the trees I think I might have had my first sighting – but it was way off in the distance as this shot shows:



Even over a short space of time the weather was very varied – warm, windy, cloudy, cool – but despite this there was a lot of butterfly activity, initially mainly Peacock, Brimstone and lots of ST:



It would be very easy to start to take all these ST for granted given the current numbers but there is no danger of that for me as I remember the months I spent looking for a single one, just a couple of years ago. It is a pleasure and a joy to see so many of them and in excellent condition too.

But where were these OT's? After all, that is what I came to see. My excitement grew as I saw a small white butterfly coming towards me only to find it was a Small White – not that I was disappointed mind as it was my first of the year:



During the brief warm spells I eventually managed to see 3 males and 1 female which I tried to keep an eye on for those cloudy moments. At one point I couldn't see any of them so decided to walk up the track to the right of the main path which is warm and sheltered. Oh, had I walked up there a few minutes earlier. On a bramble overhanging the path was a mating pair – I can't describe the excitement as I have never seen a pair of OT's mating but as I carefully approached, so did a male Small White. My heart skipped a beat but I was sure that once he realised they were OT he would move on – which he did. Sadly, so did the male OT leaving the female alone on the branch. They could not have been there long as I had walked that path not 10 mins earlier! My first frustrating moment of the new season but I am sure it will not be the last:



I did manage to get a few more OT shots but nothing in the same league as the one that Kipper posted recently so I'll just have to keep trying 😞





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Apr-14 12:49 PM GMT

I am becoming (a little) more relaxed about rearing these cats but no less fascinated by their behaviour and growth. I continue to bombard 'the experts' (AKA Pete and Vince) with very many questions in my quest for understanding and to give the cats the best possible chance of reaching the next stage and being released. I have always been very interested in the camouflage which butterflies employ to improve their chances of survival and longevity but I hadn't before realised just how adept the cats are at this particular skill. I took this shot last night and I was hard pushed to see the cat until it moved – the camouflage is remarkable:



Pete had informed me that the cats would soon make a 'tent' to catch any debris whilst they were out and about and which also would provide excellent camouflage. I imagine that this is what he was referring to:



The cats are becoming much more mobile now and much more adept at roaming around their branches (without falling off). Whilst I see this as being encouraging it certainly makes keeping track of them more difficult and almost impossible to accurately record which one is which. I know for sure that I have at least 6 PH cats (2 of the eggs didn't hatch and I have not yet seen the other 4) and I know which of the 3 locations they came from but beyond that Anyway, a few more shots of the cats exploring:





To change tack back to the BH, I have been astonished how one minute they are impressing me with their stunning patterns and markings and the next I can't see them at all because of the light and the camouflage:



Can you even see it? It's there and it's big enough but a mirror image of a leaf!





Butterflies are different in shape, size, colours and markings so I am not sure why I am surprised to find these cats so individual. Even within a species, eg PH, the cats vary in shade from a medium beige to a pale chocolate brown and I have been trying without success yet to get the 2 together for a photo. They are of similar size so I am ruling out the colour variation being age related and they are in the same pot which means they came from the same location so not geographical or temperature related. Anyway, back to the BH and a few more shots taken either last night or today:





Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 04-Apr-14 07:44 PM GMT

Brilliant photos and great observations Pauline, you've done very well to get the photos of the Brown Hairstreak cats 😊 ours still remain hidden for much of the time 😞

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 04-Apr-14 07:45 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Interesting stuff following the tales of the caterpillars and great photos 😊 Also good to see you have been out and seen some butterflies 😊 . No Orange Tips yet for me but can't be long now, weather permitting.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 04-Apr-14 11:13 PM GMT

Great sequence,Pauline,loving it,you are doing a great job. Keep up the good work!

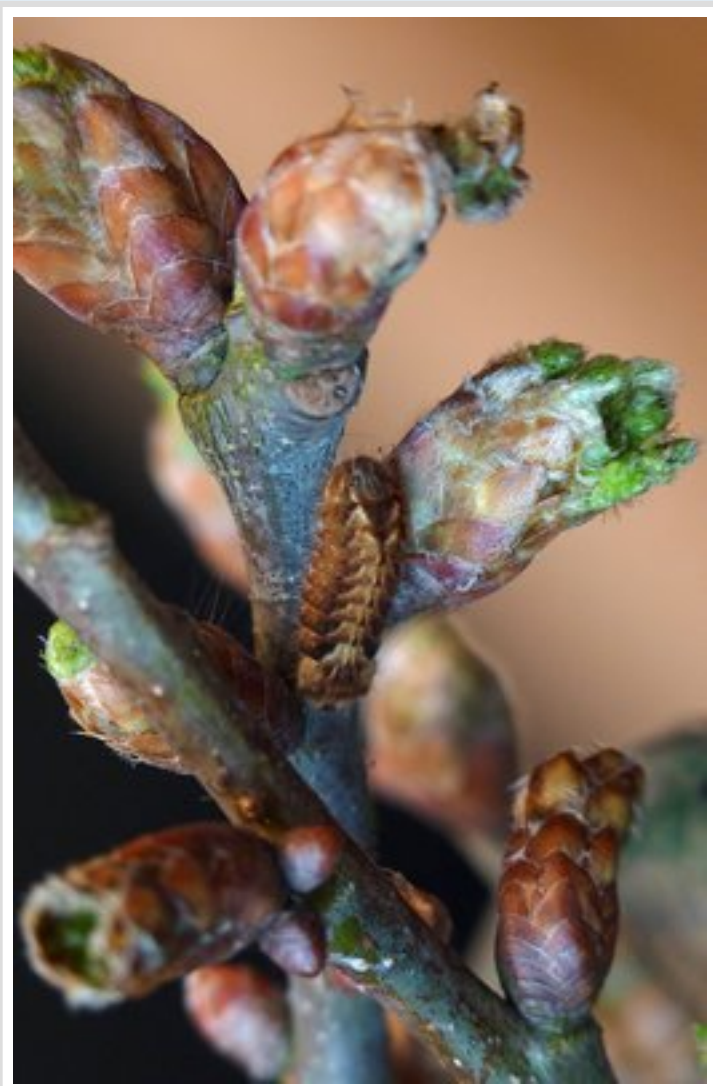
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Apr-14 11:59 AM GMT

Hi Mike, I have found that the BH larva can be located most easily in the evening under electric light when they gleam almost a lime green and provide a much needed contrast with the plant 😊

Thank you so much Mark - I really don't know what I'm doing but I'm getting an awful lot of advice 'behind the scenes' so I'm doing my best, but if any make it I shall consider it a team effort 😊

Great to hear from you Neil. It's grey, wet and windy today here in Liphook so I'm a captive audience of these cats. I have taken a few more shots which I hope demonstrates the excellent camouflage and also the variance in colour which is not a trick of the light - the difference is really that marked. I am wondering if it could be gender related or perhaps it is just a natural occurrence which doesn't mean anything at all.





The cat in the last shot is to the left of the egg.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 06-Apr-14 02:08 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

The cat in the last shot is to the left of the egg.

First task – find the egg! 😊

The shot certainly shows how well-camouflaged these cats are. As others have said, this is a great sequence and very inspiring.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 06-Apr-14 02:51 PM GMT

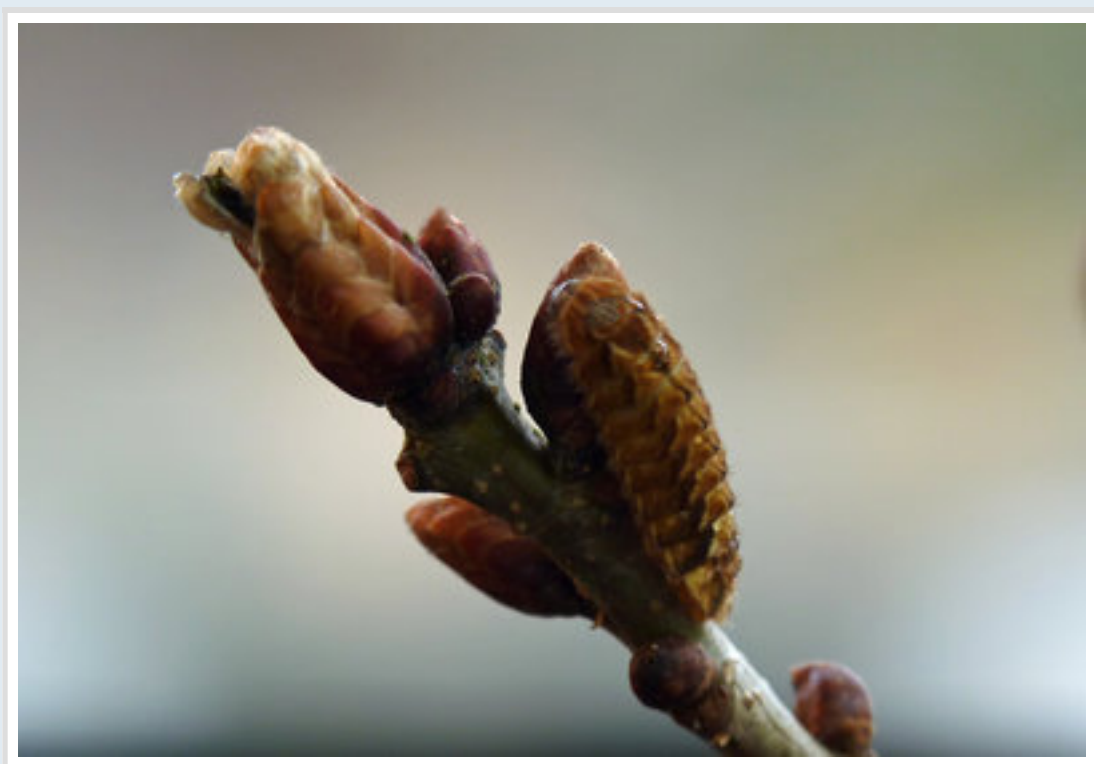
Fascinating stuff Pauline, love the photo's Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Apr-14 12:35 PM GMT

Thank you so much Goldie for your comment and compliment both of which are appreciated.

Thank you too Mike - watching them indoors is certainly preferable to being out in this weather but it takes some considerable time to find them. Here's one I prepared earlier 😊 , considerably enlarged just to prove I'm not posting images of empty twigs 😊



I had another little panic this morning. I had been cautioned that perhaps my PH were developing too quickly and I should slow down the development. I had noticed that a couple of my larger cats had not moved for a couple of days and I thought perhaps they were so warm indoors they were beginning to decimate 😊 . My intention today had been to spray mist them but as there was a fine light drizzle I decided to put them outside for an hour instead. I brought them back in thoroughly soaked but could not initially find my 2 largest cats - eventually I saw them lying still on the cling film cover, in danger of falling through one of the holes into the water 😱 . I was convinced I'd killed them! However, after a tricky little manoeuvre to remove them from the brink of a watery death they both started to move ever so slowly down the Oak branch that I'd placed them on. Surely they can't be about to pupate? I'm not prepared and not sure what to do so I have now pushed the branches into soil and gathered some dry Oak leaves from the garage floor (everywhere else is soaking!) and placed them around the bottom of the branches. The cats are now about 1cm from the soil and leaves and they have now been netted but because I had no-where else to hand they are sharing a space with some BH - hope that is OK. The earliest PH larva emerged 26 March so I hope I am wrong about preparing to pupate. I am not even sure what instar they are in such is my inexperience 😊 . They look similar to the photos Pete took on 28 April in a previous year. At the moment I am confident that I have at least 7 PH larva out of the 10 that hatched.

So on my left I have the larva and if I look to the right (thru the dirty, rain splattered windows) I can see one of my bird tables. The photos aren't great but I wonder if they are clear enough for someone to identify what type of Redpoll visits or have I got a mixture and how can I tell the difference?

Apologies for all the questions I have been asking recently - I hadn't realised quite how much knowledge I lacked 😊





Re: Pauline

by dave brown, 07-Apr-14 03:24 PM GMT

Hello Pauline,

The Redpoll species can be hard to separate. Some people used to regard them as one species but in general most of the Redpolls seen in Britain are Lesser Redpolls. They are the smallest and most frequent of the 3 species we see. They can look very dull and brown although the male in summer is smart. The other two species are unlikely to be seen on garden feeders and are not really worth considering unless you are at a Migration hotspot. Just for your information the other two species are Common (also known as Mealy) and Arctic Redpoll. Both are Winter visitors and are larger than the Lesser Redpoll. They are best identified from measurements taken when trapped during bird ringing. Both birds also show a whiter rump than the Lesser. The Arctic Redpoll is also a very White looking bird overall and is often nicknamed the Snow Flake.

I have tried to keep the reply very basic as the Lesser Redpoll is probably the only one worth considering for most people. You have to go out of your way to see the Common and Arctic Redpoll. The number of Arctics seen most years in Britain is probably less than 10.

However, if you do get a very white looking Redpoll on your feeder you may have a few hundred twitchers looking over your shoulder.

Dave

Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 07-Apr-14 06:34 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, Great shots of your babies!! Keep them coming. As far as the Redpolls go there was a heavily twitched Common (Mealy) Redpoll at Warnham this winter. I'm sure that Neil H went up to see it and he has photos on his PD.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 07-Apr-14 09:49 PM GMT

Some really interesting stuff there, Pauline. I love the birds all lined up on the feeder. You'd think they'd all be out foraging naturally given the mild weather this year so far, wouldn't you?

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-14 10:25 PM GMT

I was thinking about having a go at the rearing of caterpillars next year but it seems very complicated and it's hard enough trying to rear children 😊
Good luck with all your cats Pauline, I'm sure all your attention and affection will pay off 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Apr-14 07:07 PM GMT

Thank you for that explanation Dave, I am very grateful for it. I had seen the image in Neil's diary Bob and I guess that led to some of the confusion as some of my visitors look quite similar. If I get anything unusual I shall definitely keep quiet about it 😊

Thank you David. My garden is teeming with birds all year round, probably because I have 5 bird tables – you wouldn't want my bird food bill tho!! 😊

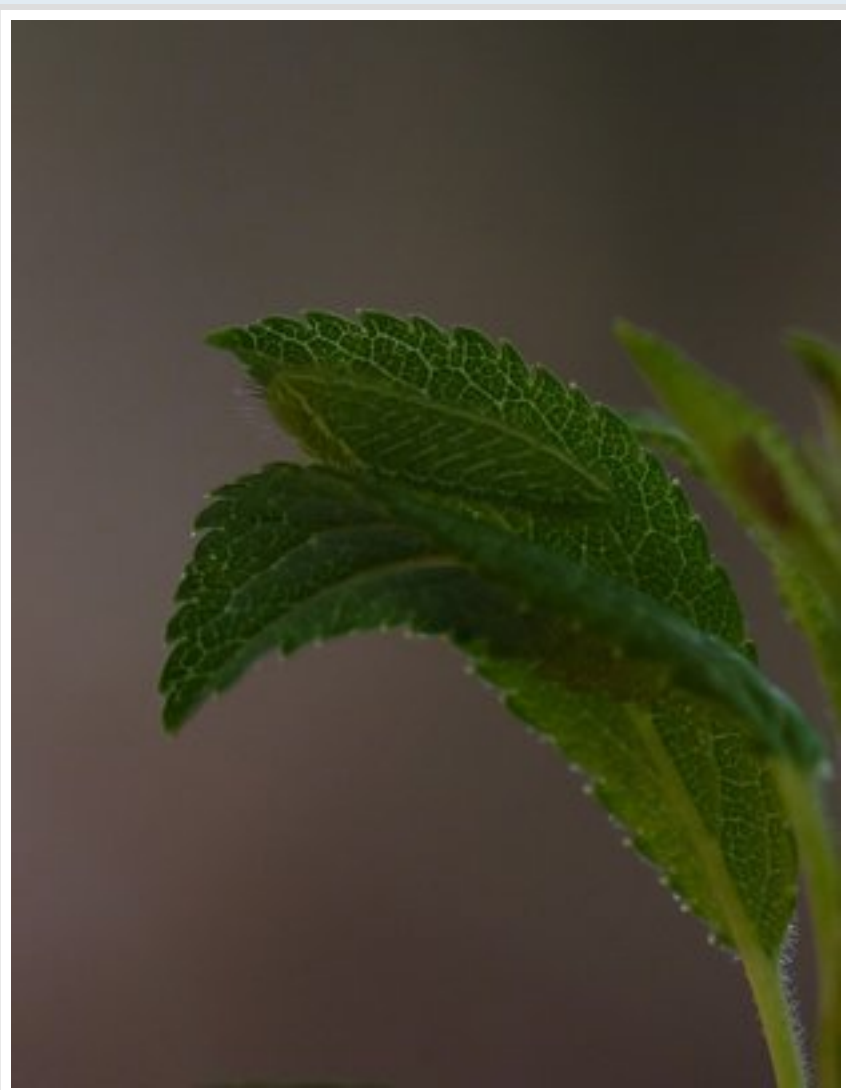
I didn't mean for it to sound difficult Wurzel – but actually it is! 😊

I'm glad you like the photos Bob. For various reasons I have been unable to get out recently so a few more shots below:

I am convinced that several of my PH cats are determined to pupate, despite my best efforts to stop them. I have tried to shove fresh greenery in their faces and encourage them to eat more but keep finding them on the back of dead leaves and one persists in burying itself in the soil. They are just over 2 weeks old – I am not sure how big they should be at this age and I have no idea how big they need to be before they can successfully pupate. Perhaps they're dying 🙄



Problems with the BH too 😞 . I am sure some have disappeared – even one of the plants is dying and I have had to transfer 2 tiny, tiny cats to another plant. Surely they should have grown more than this, even if they were one of the last eggs to hatch. I shall need to be more vigilant and investigate further. I have located a couple of the larger cats but as usual not easy to spot:





Only the hairs on its back give its position away:



Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 10-Apr-14 10:39 PM GMT

Your PH cats may just be changing their skin. They often go off their food for a day or two when they do this. But the i'll leave it to the experts to confirm.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 11-Apr-14 08:35 PM GMT

Nice photos showing how well camouflaged the BH cats are Pauline. I agree with EB that your PH cats are probably moulting and will remain motionless for a day or so before resuming normal activity.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 11-Apr-14 08:55 PM GMT

I hope the others are right - imagine what it must be like when the skin gets tight - like wearing a hyper-tight corset. No wonder they don't feel like eating 😊

(as part of my railway-modelling activity, I've been investigating Victorian fashions and the vogue for tiny waists - see <http://www.rmweb.co.uk/community/index. ... -cat-walk/>)

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Apr-14 03:52 PM GMT

It brings tears to my eyes just thinking about it Mike – I would love to see those figures after you have 'tarted' them up a bit.

Thank you for your helpful comments Mike (Maximus) – much appreciated.

Hi Mark, I am now convinced that all my cats have gone down to pupate. They have shown no interest in staying on the branches, preferring to be in the soil and leaf litter. One thing I have noticed is the relatively large pile of frass (is that the right word?) beside each cat just before it attaches to a dead leaf. I don't know much about larva but before a tortoise hibernates it is important that its gut is emptied to avoid food decomposing during hibernation. Could this be similar I wonder?



There definitely seems to be some disparity relating to how well the BH are doing. Many have hardly increased in size since hatching and still need a hand lens to be seen whilst others seem to be thriving:



At Christmas Philip cautioned me that I was on 'borrowed time' with my old cat whom I love dearly. At 19 years of age and with a multitude of health problems I knew he was right, but we have struggled on for several years with more than one crisis point. Sadly she is now losing weight very rapidly and despite having every test the vet could suggest it would seem that the weight loss will probably continue and remain unexplained. At her age I shall not be going down the road of invasive surgery, endoscopy, tissue sampling etc etc just for a diagnosis when the likelihood is that nothing further can be done. Naturally this has significantly curbed my ability to get out there for the time being. However, unsuspecting, unwary visitors are given a crash course on cat-sitting allowing me to occasionally escape my nursing duties for an hour. Today was one such day and despite the chilly wind and cloudy skies I decided on a quick trip to Wreclesham combined with some food shopping. It was hardly surprising that not many butterflies were on the wing but I did manage to see 7 species, including a first for the year, the Holly Blue. It settled at the top of a steep bank and I scrambled up there just as fast as I could (great way to get fit, this butterflying!). Arriving at the top I failed to see it immediately but just as it was spotted it took off – my 2nd frustrating moment of the season but we've all been there. A few shots from today:



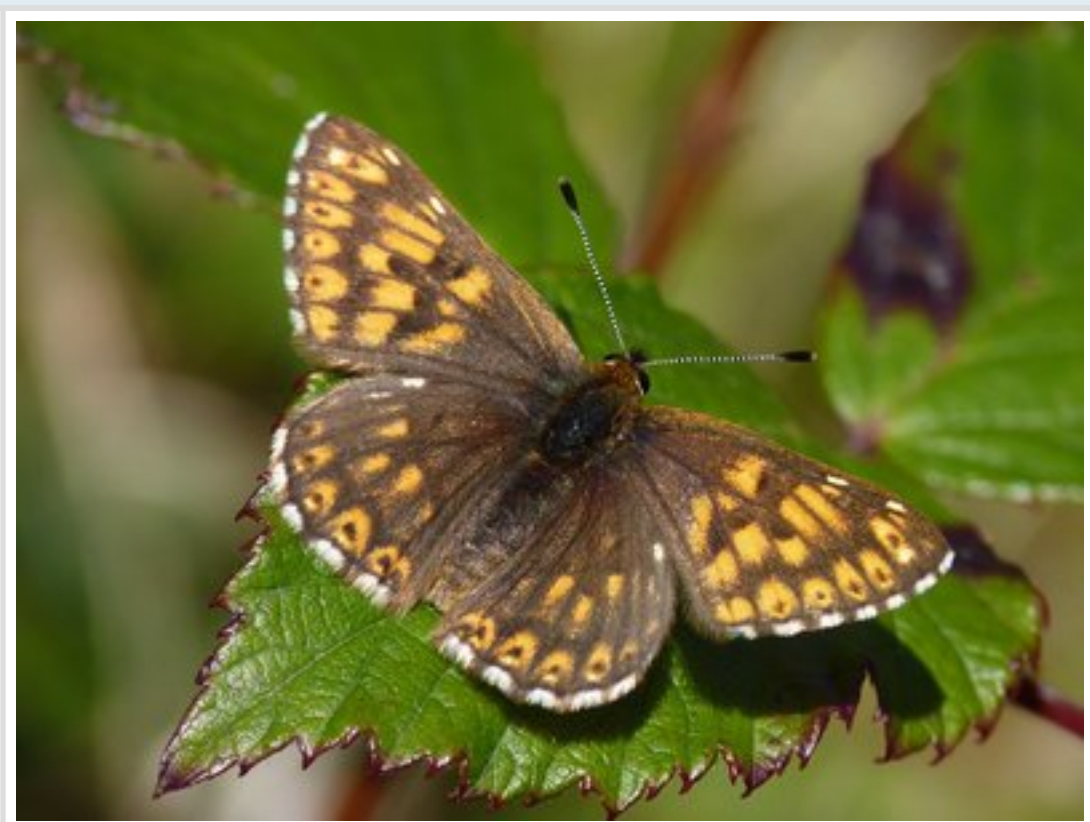
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Apr-14 01:13 PM GMT

I'm lucky enough to be only 10 mins away from an excellent Duke site so I was able to nip over there today to witness what looks to be the start of a mass emergence of Dukes, especially given the weather forecast. There seems to be a lot of diversity in colours and markings this year but I stumbled upon what I initially thought was a Skipper chasing a Duke. It was a very dark butterfly in flight and at best about half the size of a Duke (I have witnesses 😊), very fast also. Certainly smaller than any Duke I have ever seen and tho I was not able to get a clear underside shot, to the eye this looked quite dark too:



I wasn't at Noar Hill long but saw a total of 7 Dukes, all male. A few more shots of 'normal' Dukes:





Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 13-Apr-14 08:56 PM GMT

Well done Pauline, great Duke photos.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 13-Apr-14 09:12 PM GMT

Great Duke photos Pauline 😊

That first one does look dark. This is not a species that I am very familiar with, only seeing it once a year if I make a trip down to Prestbury Hill at the right time and those that I see there look like your other photos. I do not know how much normal variation there is in DoB but I have noticed in the past some examples posted from Sussex that look quite dark to me.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 13-Apr-14 09:28 PM GMT

Wow! I feel I've been instantly transported forward in time by a fortnight.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-Apr-14 09:59 PM GMT

Fantastic Dukes Pauline 😊🍷 Hopefully there will be a few more around by next weekend when I'll be able to 'get at them' 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 13-Apr-14 10:32 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Managed to track down the "micro duke" again after you left and managed to get an estimate of the wingspan against a blade of grass and it was approx 15 mm from tip to tip making it about half the normal size of a male. As you say the insect looked noticeably darker in flight as the ground colour was very dark brown, almost black, making it look like a dingy in flight. The nearest named aberration I can find is ab. semibrunnea, perhaps Pete can shed some light?

Kind Regards

Mark 😊

Re: Pauline

by Butterflysaurus rex, 13-Apr-14 10:40 PM GMT

Very nice work Pauline, Duke of Burgundies on the 13th of April! Somebody fetch the smelling salts 😊

B'saurus

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 13-Apr-14 11:16 PM GMT

"Mark Tutton" wrote:

Hi Pauline

Managed to track down the "micro duke" again after you left and managed to get an estimate of the wingspan against a blade of grass and it was approx 15 mm from tip to tip making it about half the normal size of a male. As you say the insect looked noticeably darker in flight as the ground colour was very dark brown, almost black, making it look like a dingy in flight. The nearest named aberration I can find is *ab. semibrunnea*, perhaps Pete can shed some light?

Kind Regards

Mark 😊

I think the chap is either "within the normal range of variation" or an unnamed aberration. *ab. semibrunnea* is quite distinctive:

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/scientific-resources/biodiversity/uk-biodiversity/cockayne/database/taxon.dsml?nametype=scientific&searchtype=taxon&taxonname=lucina>

Cheers,

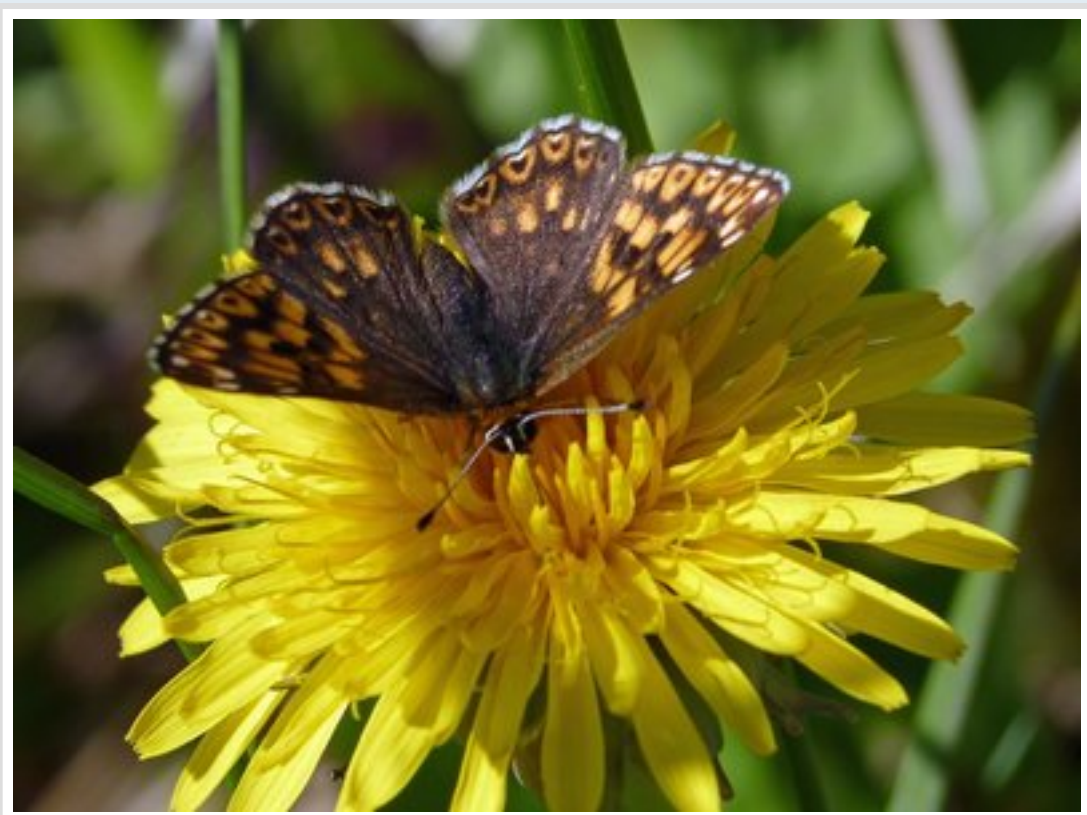
- Pete

Re: Pauline

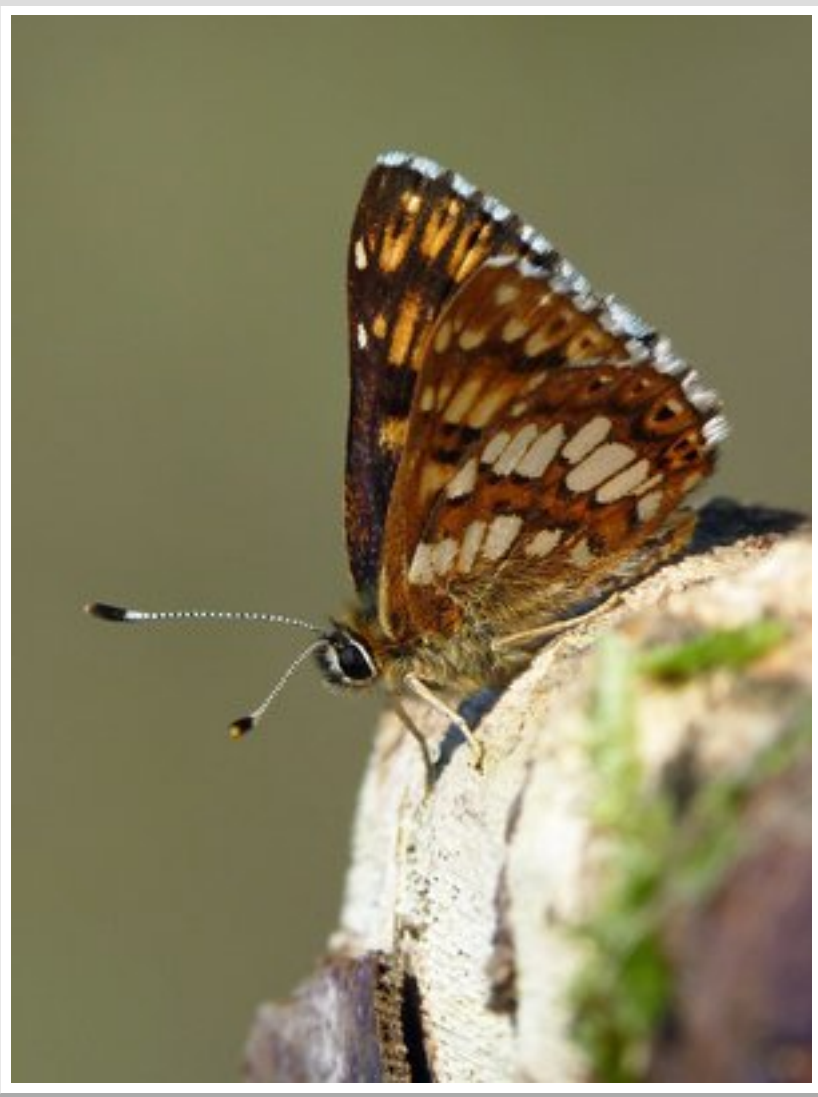
by Pauline, 14-Apr-14 02:19 PM GMT

Thank you all for such fantastic comments; they are all very much appreciated. I would have thought that the tiny Duke with the very dark markings and lack of orange was outside any normal variation, certainly the oddest one I have ever seen, but having looked at the chart Pete kindly enclosed I can see that it is certainly not a named aberration. Perhaps it should be christened *ab. Paulinus* 😊

My brief time out today went even quicker in great company. The early temperatures and wind chill did not deter the Dukes from going about their business, nectaring and guarding their territories in the more sheltered spots. Still no females around but a few shots from this morning:







It was also a pleasure to see my first Green Hairstreak of the season – and not just one!!!



I can't wait to go back.

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 14-Apr-14 02:23 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I would have thought that the tiny Duke with the very dark markings and lack of orange was outside any normal variation, certainly the oddest one I have ever seen, but having looked at the chart Pete kindly enclosed I can see that it is certainly not a named aberration.

Here's a similar critter from last year. I think I see a couple every year so I guess they're not that unusual!



Cheers,
- Pete

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 14-Apr-14 09:21 PM GMT

Ahhhhh - more stunning Dukes and Grenstreaks and I'm in West Wales where nothing is flying and with the weather looking to get bad for my return 🙄🙄🙄🙄

Re: Pauline

by David M, 14-Apr-14 10:03 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Ahhhhh - more stunning Dukes and Grenstreaks and I'm in West Wales where nothing is flying and with the weather looking to get bad for my return 🙄🙄🙄🙄

If you stop off at Old Castle Down/Kenfig Dunes on your way back I'd be confident you might see Dingy Skipper/Small Copper.
Merthyr Mawr is a hotbed for Grizzled Skippers too, and I'm confident they're on the cusp of emergence right now.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 14-Apr-14 10:10 PM GMT

Cheers for the info David - I'd love to follow your advice 😊, but my wife wouldn't 😞 Guess who will get the final say? 😞 Sorry for the hi-jack of your PD Pauline 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Apr-14 06:36 AM GMT

No worries guys - always happy to help 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Apr-14 04:25 PM GMT

Briefly back to the Hairstreaks which are in various stages of pupation, ridiculously early probably due to my mismanagement. I'd like to say that I'll do better next time but I doubt there will be a next time:



I would rather be uploading images of a Swallowtail but that's just the way it goes sometimes

Re: Pauline

by bailey1409, 16-Apr-14 04:50 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Good to see you again on Monday. An enjoyable morning, thanks for your company.
Well done with your shots. I have replied to your PM and I hope the reply gets through.

Back there again today and 10 more Dukes seen, also a Grizzled Skipper, a Green Hairstreak, a Holly Blue and the usual suspects.

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Apr-14 05:02 PM GMT

I've been studying some of the stunning photos on this site and decided I have definitely been slipping. I really need to up my game a bit and try to remember all the good advice and hints I have been given over the last couple of years. What better butterfly to practice on than the Duke. There were good numbers about this afternoon (good numbers of the human kind too!) but I was surprised at how worn some of them looked – the butterflies too!





I couldn't resist this Comma as I was leaving



Back to the BH - I believe I only have 3 left out of the original 12. Not a good result 😞 They are getting quite large now but just wanted to post a comparison of the same butterfly in the same position but in different lighting



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Apr-14 05:05 PM GMT

Must just have missed you Maurice 😞 (tho I wasn't there for long). Still looking for my mating pair 😄 Looking forward to seeing some of your shots 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 16-Apr-14 08:36 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

..I've been studying some of the stunning photos on this site and decided I have definitely been slipping. I really need to up my game a bit...

I don't know about that Pauline, you continue to post some great photos, loving the Dukes and your close ups of the Hairstreak early stages are fantastic 😊 I guess we are always our own worse critics.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Apr-14 03:50 PM GMT

Thank you Neil but y'know, I've been getting a bit complacent over the winter – lack of suitable subject matter and not much practice. However, some of the images on this site are truly inspirational, yours included, and spur me on to try for better results. My latest efforts at Noar Hill required me to gouge this out of my neck afterwards – Yuk!



This morning I decided to visit Rake Bottom armed with the directions kindly supplied by Mark (again!). Having found the green gate I proceeded along the track trying to recall the route from last year. Given that this is supposed to be the 'easy' way in to Rake Bottom I found myself thinking how old and unfit I must be as I strode up the hill a bit short of breath. I recalled a couple of years ago when I was able to scamper up and down that vertical face from the top of Butser and was pleased for the cool morning air, rather than scorching heat. I began to think how strange it was that such an uphill struggle should lead to the bottom of the valley and seizing any excuse to stop I took a photo of this moth:



I continued on and the ground eventually leveled out and the wooded area opened out to reveal Rake Bottom – a good deal below me and to the right. I was almost back to the top of Butser!! 😞 No wonder it had seemed so steep! Retracing my steps I eventually came to the field where Mark saw the fox cubs last year (why hadn't I remembered that!!). A nest box had been put up presumably for owls and although I kept an eye out I didn't see any Ring Ousels 😞



It took a short while for the temperature to rise but when it did the small track was teeming with butterflies. 4 firsts for the season included Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Small Copper, GVW; other butterflies seen included DoB, Holly Blue, Green Hairstreaks (loads), OT, Brimstone, Peacock, Small White, Large White, ST. I was totally spoilt and didn't know what to photograph first, the result being not very many good photos simply because of my exuberance and excitement. I had forgotten how the Green Hairstreaks frequently come down to the ground at this site. I had also forgotten how treacherous it is with the many badger setts and rabbit warrens disguised by foliage and of course the nettles!!! I didn't get out completely unscathed and still tingle as I type. One of the first butterflies I saw was a Grizzled Skipper – they were everywhere:



However, GH's were my main target and I was relieved to see that there were many fresh specimens about, clearly recently emerged. I was surprised at the range of colours, the first one being a lime/yellow colour which I had not seen before. However, as I stood and watched all these Hairstreaks I realised that the colours changed depending on the light, their position and the colour of the plant they happened to be on. I followed my lime green specimen only to see him change to a normal but pale green when on a hawthorn bush. Anyway, a few shots of the Hairstreaks below:







As I was about to drag myself away from this peaceful and secluded site I spotted this cat but no idea what it is:



Hurrying along the track back to the car my attention was drawn to ST on nettles. Having read recent posts regarding egg-laying activity I could not help but stop to watch the spectacle. How time flies I had been there over 30 mins and in all that time, despite all the frantic activity going on with the ST's, the Peacock never moved. I would love to know what is on the underside of that leaf - 2, 3 sets of eggs perhaps. Maybe I'll return and check it out:





Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 17-Apr-14 07:11 PM GMT

Some very nice GH photos. Like you, I always enjoy the range of colours seen in this species, especially when in bright sunlight – anything from lime green to peacock blue! Photos are often disappointing, since the camera struggles to reproduce the intensity seen in the field, but you've captured the various shades well.

I'm no caterpillar expert but think that may be a Fox Moth. Be careful about handling hairy caterpillars as some, notoriously the Brown Tail Moth, have rather nasty, poisonous spines that can cause quite long-lasting skin irritation.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 17-Apr-14 08:52 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Glad you found it OK – eventually 😊

Think your cat is a wood tiger. If you look carefully you will see them quite frequently here – there are good numbers of this pretty day flying moth at this site and they will be on the wing in a couple of weeks. Good that the dukes are flying here now – there has been some good scrub clearance on both sides of the track which should help them – it's a great spot 😊

Kind regards

Mark 😊

Re: Pauline

by Butterflysaurus rex, 17-Apr-14 09:47 PM GMT

Some very nice Green Hairstreak photos Pauline 😊 They look very fresh – like they've only just emerged.

B'saurus

Re: Pauline

by David M, 17-Apr-14 10:25 PM GMT

Lovely spring images, Pauline, the like of which I hope to encounter over the next few days (weather permitting).

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 17-Apr-14 11:17 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I'd like to say that I'll do better next time but I doubt there will be a next time

Hi Pauline

I hope that does not mean you are giving up on rearing butterflies at home 🤔 It does require a little experimentation and patience. I am sure the experts on here would agree with that. It does not always turn out the way you expect and is not always as successful as you might hope. I think you have done remarkably well for a first attempt even if your adults appear early. Don't give up just yet 😊

I know what you mean about Rake Bottom. I also made the mistake of taking the wrong path and ending up at the top rather than bottom when I visited for the first time last year.

Lovely Green Hairstreaks 😊😊 And great group of Tortoiseshells and Peacock 😊😊😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-14 11:56 PM GMT

Cracking shots Pauline 😊 Hopefully I'll catch up with some Greenstreaks soon – I don't like to mention them though else they may become my nemesis again, just when I thought I'd got them beat 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Apr-14 07:51 AM GMT

Thank you Mike both for the warning and for the compliments. Hairstreaks are my favourite group (which is why I decided to rear some of them) and it was lovely just to stand and watch so many of them.

Thanks for your help Mark. I hope I don't have to ask you again next year but you know what my memory and sense of direction is like 😊 . I only saw 2 Dukes btw but it's early days yet.

Thank you too BRex – I am sure there must have been a recent emergence which I was very pleased to see.

Thank you also David. I hope you and others have a great time this Easter with the butterflies and I am looking forward to seeing your shots. The weather is certainly looking promising.

Thank you for your encouragement Paul and the kind comments. Perhaps when I see the final result I may change my mind. We shall see.

Thank you Wurzel. I'm sure you'll see them soon as there seems to be a lot about this year. Good luck.

I was looking through my photos from yesterday, in particular the activity around the nettles. There was a sense of excitement and agitation being displayed by the ST's who frequently nudged or walked over the Peacock.



It reminded me of the behaviour I witnessed a couple of years ago when a mating pair of Meadow Browns generated frenetic activity in another species to the point of bullying and aggression.



I appreciate that the general consensus is that it is likely to be mass egg-laying but it has left me wondering whether there could have been more than one Peacock concealed under that nettle leaf as I have no idea where Peacocks would typically mate. If I return and find no Peacock eggs under that leaf what other reason could it have for staying there for so long?

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 18-Apr-14 04:02 PM GMT

Lovely photos of those beautiful Green Hairstreaks Pauline 😊 stunning butterflies, stunning shots 😊

Mike

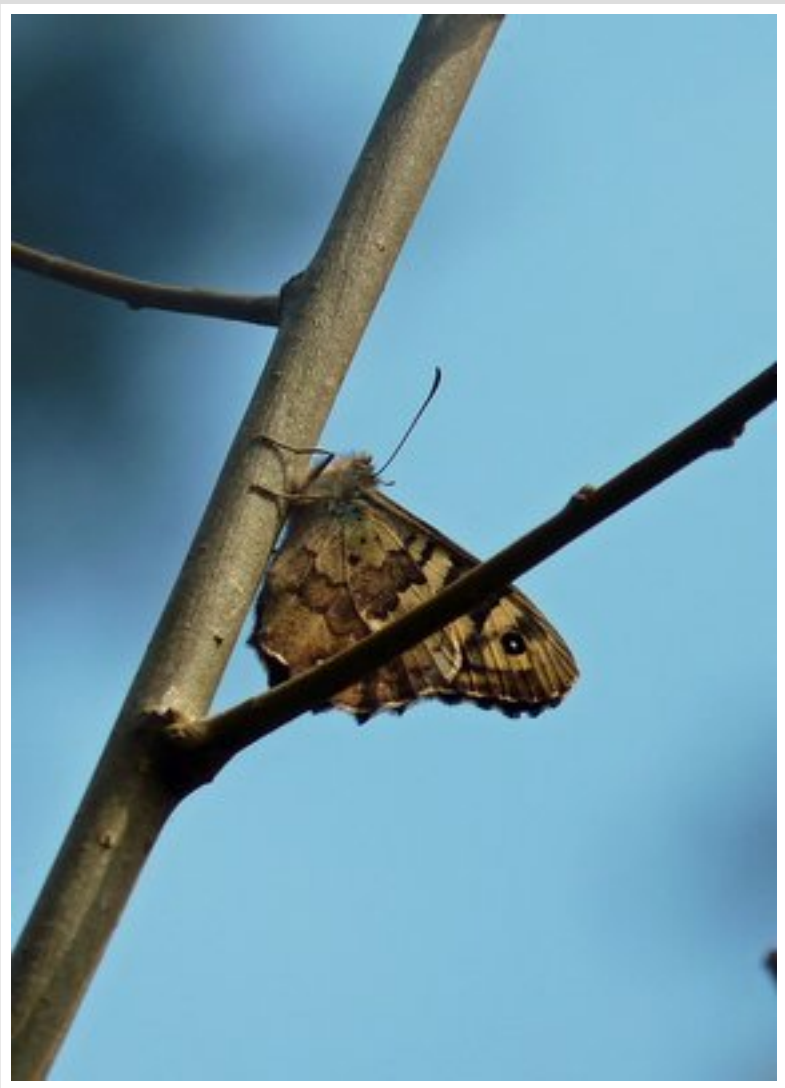
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Apr-14 04:30 PM GMT

Thank you Mike but i don't think my photography can ever do those beautiful Hairstreaks justice. Try as I might I just can't get that vibrancy and iridescence. Doesn't stop me enjoying watching them tho' 😊

Today I have been 'grounded' having offered to help a neighbour whilst they are away. Didn't stop me carrying my camera around tho' and altho' I had to take what I could get, whatever came my way really, I managed a small selection of (very) local butterflies:







Being at home also gave me more opportunity to see the garden birds and with all the little'uns there are more than ever to entertain and amuse me:



This little chap was creating such a fuss but I could not see any parents or siblings. I really hope the nest has not been predated by the dozens of cats round here:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-14 11:12 PM GMT

Great stuff Pauline and good to see you've adopted the policy of carrying your camera with you everywhere – it always pays off 😊 Especially like the Green Veined shot 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Apr-14 08:41 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel – it was my first GWV shot of the season 😊 .

Today I had to go back and check out that leaf! Y'know, the Peacock leaf! So, armed with a print out of my photo (to make sure I could identify the exact place and the exact leaf), some gardening gloves (getting tired of being stung by nettles), reading specs (to make sure I didn't miss anything) I set off for Rake Bottom, despite the somewhat miserable cool conditions this afternoon. Well, I found the leaf and obviously the Peacock had been egg-laying and I was totally wrong about the possibility that she had been mating, just as you all knew but were too polite to say 😞 . No sign of any ST eggs in the surrounding area tho'

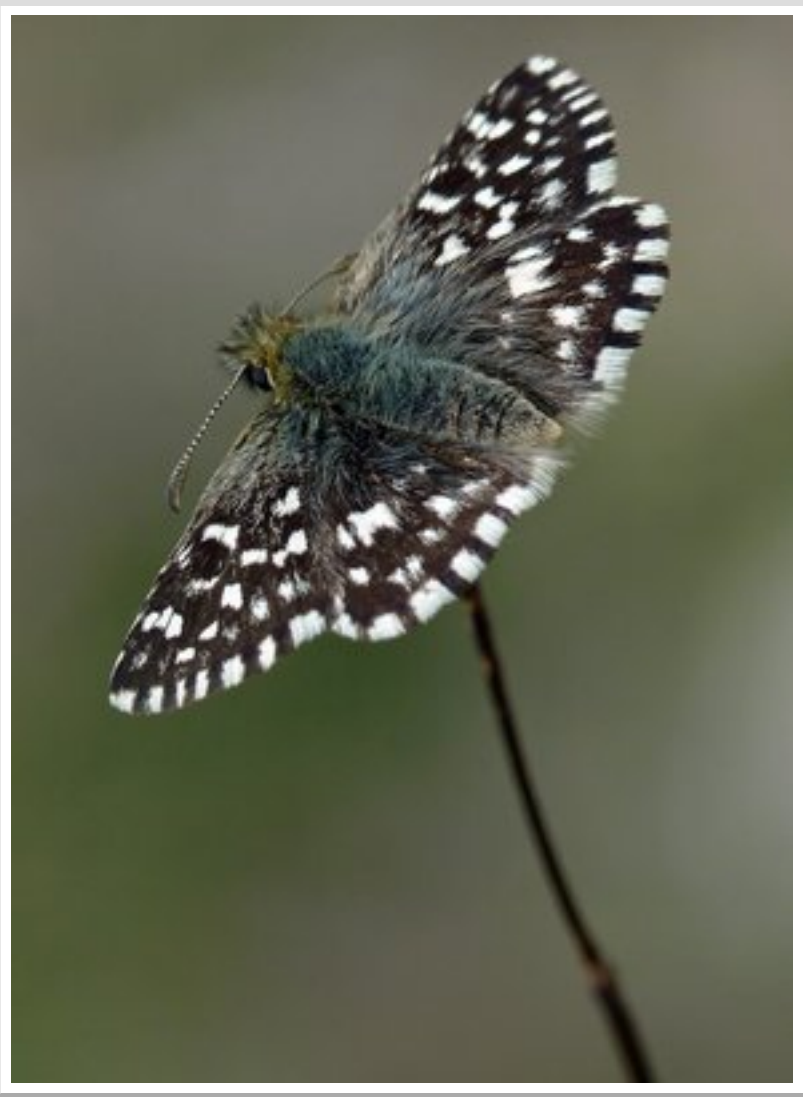


Being in the vicinity of so many Skippers it seemed a shame not to take a few shots before leaving. Most of them were taken in cool, cloudy conditions with brief (very brief) interludes of sun and bright skies:









Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 19-Apr-14 09:23 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Great reports and some lovely photos, particularly like the open wing Green-veined white and those Grizzled Skipper photos are corkers 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Apr-14 10:22 PM GMT

Thank you Neil – it is very kind of you to say so. It has been very wet indeed today with no butterflies in sight but as I read the various diaries I am watching the wildlife in the garden thru' the window:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Apr-14 04:24 PM GMT

Decided to take a chance today and look for the Wood Whites at Chiddingfold Forest despite the unsettled weather. It took quite a bit of legwork to locate them and only when the temperature had warmed up a little, the first one being found in Tugley Wood and then further individuals at Botany Bay and on the border of Oaken Wood. Given the torrential rain the day before I was surprised to find any at all. I can't decide which I like best or indeed which are the best so I am just going to include a wide selection:









Re: Pauline

by Susie, 21-Apr-14 04:50 PM GMT

Beautiful Pauline. I wouldn't be able to choose between them either.

Re: Pauline

by dilettante, 21-Apr-14 05:21 PM GMT

Very nice pictures indeed. The third is the pick of a great bunch for me.

Re: Pauline

by William, 21-Apr-14 06:07 PM GMT

Fantastic Pauline 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 21-Apr-14 06:41 PM GMT

They're all fantastic Pauline 😊 especially the first and last 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 21-Apr-14 07:20 PM GMT

I am not surprised that you cannot decide which you like best Pauline, neither can I. I would have been well chuffed to have taken any of those 😊

All the best ,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 21-Apr-14 07:50 PM GMT

I agree – lovely set of pics. My favourites are 3 and 9 – the latter has that '*je ne sais quoi*' 😊

Unfortunately, my nearest wood for this species lost them a few years ago, when the rides were allowed to get overgrown.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Butterflysaurus rex, 21-Apr-14 09:16 PM GMT

Very nice set of Woodies there Pauline, you must be really chuffed with those 😊

B'saurus

Re: Pauline

by David M, 21-Apr-14 09:20 PM GMT

Delightful stuff, Pauline. A real sign that spring is well into its stride.

Re: Pauline

by Lee Hurrell, 21-Apr-14 10:44 PM GMT

Lovely images Pauline! My favourites are 5 and 9. I love the water droplet on number 5 and the dainty aspect of number 9.

I was at Chiddingfold this afternoon too and saw 7 Wood White. I also walked for miles today (I was at Noar Hill this morning) and got home and collapsed for a 3 hour nap! 😊

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 21-Apr-14 11:00 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Wood White is a species I have yet to see. I might have to make a visit up to Chiddingfold, I think that is probably the nearest place for me. I particularly like your last image, the subject is almost glowing 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-14 11:21 PM GMT

Lovely set of images – I was thinking that the fifth is my favourite, but then I went back and saw the third, then the sixth was pretty great too...so I gave up and went and had a lie down to recover from the envy 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Paul Wetton, 22-Apr-14 10:38 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

As everyone has said they are a fantastic set of photos. I particularly like the third on the violet and the final photo. Absolutely brilliant.

I also love the fox and badger feeding together as I am looking at mammals this year.

Keep it up with the photos.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Apr-14 04:17 PM GMT

Thank you all so much for your comments and compliments which were totally unexpected and which I certainly value. It is a pity I missed you Lee –

after that shower I decided to call it a day. It is certainly worth a visit to Chiddingfold Paul as they are lovely butterflies, quite unlike the other whites. I'm pleased you like my wildlife Paul. You will see the vixen is clearly lactating so hopefully I will see the cubs this year. I usually get Badger cubs but have not had the fox cubs for a few years. I think I agree with you on my favourites Mike ... but then I keep changing my mind 🤔 Lovely to hear from you Susie and everyone else I have yet to mention.

My latest dilemma is my larva. I have been convinced that my BH have been disappearing. In fact I am sure of it. I am down to only one plant as they have been decimated by the cats which then disappear:



2 days ago I could clearly identify 4 cats on my last plant (in a net cage). These cats hatched somewhere between 24 – 29 March. Today, despite scrutiny I can only locate the smallest cat and one of the large cats which appears to have wrapped itself fairly securely in 3 Blackthorn leaves:



The cat is to the very left of the photo and is firmly attached to the leaves. Is this a form of pupation? An alternative to leaf litter? And where are the others? The other plants which were stripped bare had been put outside but these have now been put in a net cage in case cats have pupated in the soil. I really don't know where else they could have gone. I was beginning to wonder if they were in fact cannibalistic.

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 22-Apr-14 06:51 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I hope you are not getting too disheartened. Brown Hairstreak larvae can be difficult to locate at the best of times (even in an enclosed situation), so let's just hope that there are some still hidden away.

The "missing" larvae would not be anywhere near pupation stage yet. I would estimate that they still have at least 30 days to run, so they should still be on the plants. The larva in your photo is either preparing to moult or is just typically resting on its "day leaf". It will venture out to feed at night, before usually returning to its resting point. I have never seen any reports which show that the larvae of this species are cannibalistic, so if they are disappearing, it is not for this reason.

Let me know if you have any other questions.

Vince

Re: Pauline

Another grey, cool, drizzly day today. I wanted to see Dingy Skippers but all the Skippers I could find were quite naturally roosting:





Re: Pauline

by Butterflysaurus rex, 22-Apr-14 09:18 PM GMT

Goodness me that poor Dingy looks very depressed, can't blame the little fellow, I feel like that when the sun doesn't come out too. The Grizzlie on the end looks slightly less peeved but it's a very close contest.

All the best

B'saurus

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 22-Apr-14 09:23 PM GMT

All your photographs are lovely Pauline, I've yet to get a Photo of a Wood White so they all look great to me Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 22-Apr-14 10:46 PM GMT

Sometimes, cool and grey is best, Pauline, when it comes to photography.

Lovely images as per usual.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Apr-14 06:53 PM GMT

I'm beginning to feel exactly like that little Skipper James after another dreary day – thank you for your comment.

Glad you like the photos Goldie – I enjoy reading your diary too.

Just hope it's not going to be a repeat of 2012 David when I spent most of the Summer taking photos in cool, grey and wet weather. Where did the beautiful Spring weather go to?

The rumour is that the Small Blues are out at Paulsgrove but they certainly weren't one of just 4 species I saw there today. I managed to catch a few quick shots of this beautifully bright and vibrant Small Tortoiseshell, which in flight appeared quite red.



Given the lack of butterflies I turned my attention to the many newts in the pond. I was assured by a local that there are 3 species of newt here. I have never tried to take underwater shots before and probably won't again:





Some concern has been expressed about the Peregrines which apparently do not appear to have nested yet this year. Their perch at the very top of a pylon and even higher flight was beyond the limits of my camera as can be seen:



Edit: I have just looked at the close-up of the last photo. Are these actually Peregrines and is that a nest at the top of the pylon as there were some folk with cameras looking for the nesting site presumed to be at the top of the cliff which is in the opposite direction?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Apr-14 07:04 PM GMT

It certainly seems as if my cats are looking to pupate. They have left their little leaf cocoons and have headed South. Perhaps if I am lucky they will return to their food source for a while longer but they are quite large cats now.



Re: Pauline

by FISHiEE, 26-Apr-14 10:29 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I was told by locals last year the peregrines nest on the cliffs and the nest in the pylon is in fact a Raven's nest.

Not been there yet this year but will when the weather is favourable. I was thinking the small blues should be about pretty soon.

Re: Pauline

by PhilBJohnson, 27-Apr-14 07:59 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I like your variety of pictures. They look a bit like Common (or Smooth) newts to me. If you see the larger (and generally scarcer) Great Crested Newt, it's definitely worth another picture although I think they prefer slightly deeper water. They can sometimes be spotted coming up for air if one doesn't want to put waders on!

I hope you don't mind me going off topic (butterflies),

best wishes,

Philip

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 27-Apr-14 08:45 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

Good shots of the newts – looks like one is a great crested.

The nest in the pylon was indeed one started by a pair of ravens last year but as it is in quite close proximity to the peregrine nesting site they drove them off!

Two species I never thought I would see nesting within a hundred miles of here in my youth 😊

Not seen any small blues here yet and given the forecast for next week might be a while yet 😞

Kind regards

Mark

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Apr-14 04:13 PM GMT

Hi John, good to hear from you. I was told last week by 2 locals that they had seen a male Small Blue. Although their main interests were the birds they seemed to know about butterflies – the Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady influx etc so I hope you get lucky. Might even bump into you again 😊

Thank you for the ID's Phil. I have been doing a bit of research myself and don't think the newts I saw were Greater Crested but the differences between the other 2 types seem quite subtle. I read something about the back feet/toes. I wonder if these shots will clinch it:



The fact that you know it is an old Raven nest explains things Mark as there were certainly no Ravens around during my visit but the SB is supposed to be out.

Anyway, back to the main subject. I always like to try to visit one new site each season and I wasn't going to let this miserable weather stop me. I hadn't realised that I was so close to Rewell Wood – just the other side of Chichester, however finding it wasn't quite so easy with the signage and entrance set well back into the bushes. In 2012 I got quite used to walking around with my camera up my jumper to protect it from the rain and today was no different. It was good to see that I wasn't the only one to be searching for Pearls in such inclement weather and given the conditions it was no surprise that I didn't get any open-winged shots. Just as well that I prefer the underside of this cracking little beauty but the dark skies and poor lighting did provide a challenge. A return visit is definitely on the cards but in the meantime a few shots from today:







As an afterthought I decided to include a close up:



Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 28-Apr-14 09:35 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Lovely shots of the Pearls 😊 I notice they are now emerging in the New Forest with one spotted over the weekend 😊 I went out for butterflies with an umbrella for the first time yesterday 😲 I have sent you a PM.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 28-Apr-14 09:43 PM GMT

Fantastic images of PBF there, Pauline.

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 28-Apr-14 09:55 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

The newt pictured looks like it could be a female Smooth Newt and with hindsight some of the others look like males 😊
Mark

Re: Pauline

by FISHIEE, 28-Apr-14 10:06 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Lovely PBF pics. Had planned a trip to Rewell wood after work today myself but the weather never turned out as forecast so gave it a miss. Not had much luck with the weather year when I've had any free time!

Those two newt pics are of a female common/smooth newt. I was quite chuffed to see my first female smooth newt in the quite small pond I dug in our garden last easter. Also had a large red damselfly emerge this morning but was intent on playing hide and seek on the reed it hatched out on so couldn't get a photo 😞 damselflies are a right pain for that!!

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 28-Apr-14 11:20 PM GMT

Superb PBF photos Pauline, your reward for tenacity in these appalling weather conditions 😊

Re: Pauline

by PhilBJohnson, 28-Apr-14 11:41 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Excellent shot of the newt coming up for air. Nice "Pearls"

By the way, my phone has a case that is meant to be fully waterproof but I don't think I would try and use the camera on it underwater. I will leave that idea for someone else.

I wouldn't get many shots of butterflies like that, anyway! 😊

best wishes,
Philip

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Apr-14 03:42 PM GMT

Thank you all so very much for your kind comments which I very much appreciate. I take my hat off to you Paul – I can hardly manage my camera but juggling it with an umbrella has got to be an acquired skill. Perhaps something I need to get to grips with if the current forecast is correct 😊

Thank you for the compliment John. I like your Common Blue and Chalkhill but even better I think are the mating DGF 🍷 . I was about to congratulate you on the newt in your pond but see below 😞

I must try to include some butterfly stuff tho it's not easy with the rain stotting off the ground and thunder crashing 😞 I have already publicly embarrassed myself (more than once) over the rearing of these cats. Vince really does know what he is talking about and I must listen carefully and take more notice of his advice (thank you for your help Vince). I have been checking my PH pupa and I am not sure whether it is my imagination but I do think a couple of them are darkening and I am wondering if this is significant:



As far as the butterflies are concerned I decided to have a (very) quick look at Paulsgrove. As luck would have it the sun shone whilst I was there and many butterflies were on the wing. I guess if the SB had been out I would have spotted it as I scrutinised 3 discrete areas where I have seen it before. Needless to say I was drawn back to the pond. It was teeming with life and on a small corner there must have been at least 50 newts and many tadpoles. Initially I thought I was witnessing a mating event as there was much thrashing about which attracted several newts. I really must get some specs 😞 . Anyway, the breadth and depth of knowledge on this site about all things natural never fails to impress me so I am wondering if anyone can explain the following:





Re: Pauline

by Paul Wetton, 29-Apr-14 04:27 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Could it be that a newt has grabbed an emerging dragonfly for lunch. The pictured insect appears to be headless, possibly due to the newt. It could be a Hairy Dragonfly as they emerge fairly early in the year. Very interesting.

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 29-Apr-14 06:07 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I have been checking my PH pupa and I am not sure whether it is my imagination but I do think a couple of them are darkening and I am wondering if this is significant:

Hi Pauline,

I have to stress that I have never reared Purple Hairstreak, but a sudden darkening of the pupa would generally indicate that the adult should emerge within a few days. However, it is my understanding that the pupal stage for this species should last for around 4 weeks (presumably less under controlled conditions), so keep an eye on them. What I do is to take photos every few days so that any changes can easily be spotted.

Keep up the good work 😊

Vince

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 29-Apr-14 07:10 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Beautiful PBF photos 😊

I also like the newt coming up for air with the ripples on the water surface in your previous post and the series of photos of the newt with what looks like a Dragonfly lunch 😊

I cannot comment on your expertise or otherwise on the hairstreaks, I have never reared any, but it is still interesting to read about your experiences with them. Keep at it 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Hulme, 29-Apr-14 07:21 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Paul is correct. That's a Smooth Newt with a Hairy Dragonfly in its jaws. Great sighting!

BWs, Neil

Re: Pauline

by David M, 29-Apr-14 11:17 PM GMT

You are fast becoming a 'must see' diarist on this forum, Pauline.

The diversity of themes in your photos is simply wonderful.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Apr-14 05:32 PM GMT

First things first! I knew I could rely on you guys 😊😊 . Thank you for the ID's Paul/Neil. I have since looked up the Hairy dragonfly so I now know a little more than I did before.

Thank you for your very kind and encouraging comments Neil. I shall do my best and I am trying to learn as I go.

David, what can I say! One of the best compliments I have received. Butterflies are my passion and to take better photos is my ambition but in pursuit of these there is always so much other stuff to see and wonder at and I just can't help but mention it.

Why didn't I think of that Vince? The simple ideas are always the best they say. I have been keeping a close eye on all of them. After my latest panic about losing some BH (another recent panic as I found a slug roaming round the pot), my head count was back to 5 ... but then I lost 2 of them 😞😞 . I lifted up one of the pots and found this:



It was tucked right up in one of the drainage holes of the pot so I hope it is OK. 2 hours later I took some more shots of it:





Still one AWOL!

Today I didn't have much time (just an hour) but I did have a choice. I have a few great sites within 10 mins of me and it was tempting to go to Noar Hill to see the Dukes. However, I was blown away by the White Admiral larva posted recently and decided that I just had to see one for myself. Thanks to the details in Bob's post it didn't take long to find one:



On the same plant I also saw this but not sure what it is yet:



With regard to the White Admiral, I am wondering if it will stay in the same place, how much longer will it continue to grow, and when and where is it likely to pupate? I have marked the spot and intend to return.



Re: Pauline

by David M, 30-Apr-14 08:55 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Butterflies are my passion and to take better photos is my ambition

I think you've already arrived at your destination, Pauline.

Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 30-Apr-14 09:01 PM GMT

Blimey Pauline, Well done at finding the WA larva and thanks for your comments on my PD. It is great finding these beasties and the WA larva is very odd!! Good to see our interest expanding isn't it!!

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 30-Apr-14 09:04 PM GMT

"badgerbob" wrote:

Good to see our interest expanding isn't it!!

Dead right. Immature stages is "where it's at" 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-May-14 10:58 AM GMT

Thank you Bob. What is the next challenge you intend to set me 😊

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Dead right. Immature stages is "where it's at" 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Speaking of which, friends who have recently returned to their home in Crete purchased some larva for me as a leaving gift, some Black Hairstreak larva. I am not sure how I feel about this (especially given my lack of success with the other cats) but they are indeed pretty little cats and most interesting, changing significantly with each moult. My main concern is will I be allowed to release them in Hants as obviously they are not local?







Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-May-14 06:26 PM GMT

Back to Purple and Brown. The Purple are definitely changing colour and it will be a delight and a relief when/if they finally emerge:



The Brown have been more problematical with a number of losses which at the moment I am attributing to slugs in the base of the plant pots which I assume have been picking them off overnight. Unfortunately the cats have chosen the drainage holes in the base of the pot to pupate rather than the moss and leaf litter which is what alerted me to the problem – too late sadly. I have managed to save a couple but only have 3 remaining in total:





I have been mulling over what I could have done differently/better and have come up with the following:

I've no doubt that there are many publications on the subject of hand-rearing butterflies and I now wish I had read some of them. 'How hard can it be?' I thought, feeling good at the thought of rescuing and 'saving' otherwise doomed Hairstreaks. I have made an awful lot of mistakes and to be honest it isn't an experience I would rush to repeat. If ever there were a next time then hopefully I would be wiser and better prepared and perhaps more successful. For anyone thinking of embarking on this activity I have documented a few 'lessons learnt'.

Number 1 – Know what the food plant is and be sure you can identify it correctly

Sounds obvious but having mistaken Hawthorn for Blackthorn I was lucky that Vince picked up on this from a photo. I thought I knew the difference but dissecting a bud proved conclusively that I had the wrong food plant.

Number 2 – Be sure that you have a ready supply of the food plant to hand.

It is surprising how a few hungry cats can decimate whole plants which may need to be replaced.

Number 3 – keep the cats secure

Even little cats can stray and can be the most difficult to relocate. Those cats looking to pupate might not find the prepared leaf litter to their taste and look for an alternative site. One PH cat found his way down a table leg and wedged himself into some ornate metalwork causing some consternation and a tricky little operation to get him out.

Number 4 – keep the temperature, light and humidity as natural as possible

I have kept my cats indoors mostly for my own convenience in watching them, photographing them and monitoring. However, it was not until Pete commented on the rate of their development that I realised that this was probably detrimental as they would be 'out of step' with their external cousins.

Number 5 – protect the cats from predators

This probably seems obvious but there seems to be a lot of risk from spiders, earwigs, slugs etc. Be aware that in some stages some cats are also cannibalistic.

Number 6 – Prepare the food plants properly before use

There is a lot of advice around on how to do this but I was unaware of the necessity, its importance and how to do it. The purpose is to ensure that there are no nasties lurking on the plant or in the soil waiting to consume the young cats. This is something I had entirely overlooked. I had long suspected that something was happening to my BH cats as their numbers continued to decrease. I convinced myself that they were just well camouflaged (even tho' I spent hours inspecting every leaf) but I now believe there is a strong possibility that slugs (or similar) concealed in the drainage holes of the pots have been eating my cats overnight (only 3 left now).

Number 7 – ask, listen, take advice

There are folk out there who are very experienced and willing to help. My advice would be to use them to try to avoid some of the pitfalls and hopefully achieve a good result.

I am sure that there are other pitfalls which I have overlooked or have been lucky enough to avoid but I would urge anyone considering embarking on hand-rearing to consider carefully whether they are properly prepared.

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 01-May-14 07:56 PM GMT

Wise words, Pauline!

Even if only 3 of your BH survive to adulthood, that would still beat the odds in the wild. I wonder if they can be artificially delayed, either in the pupal stage or after emergence (by keeping the adults torpid in a fridge for a week or two). I'm not recommending this, as I have no experience, but someone else might know. It would be a shame if their genes didn't go back into the pool – and not nearly so much fun for them, either!

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Neil Hulme, 01-May-14 08:24 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

With reference to your comments about releasing Black Hairstreak in Hants, I would strongly discourage you. Releasing species that are not endemic to your area and which are of unknown genetic pedigree isn't a good idea. Next time I see you I'll explain why, to avoid having to write too much here. Do

you have a conservatory or greenhouse you could keep them in? Retaining them in such a manner would give them the chance to be Black Hairstreaks without having to consider the only other responsible option, which I suspect you would find unpalatable. It's always a good idea to consider carefully, in advance, what you would do with any 'alien' (to region or country) species you either purchase or are given. Pathogens etc. are invisible.

Captive breeding does have its wider pitfalls and problems, including 'forcing' emergence times well in advance of the wild population, as many are experiencing at the moment. This means that the well meaning intention to save individual insects doesn't usually benefit the species. Of course there are many other reasons to breed Lepidoptera and I've personally got absolutely nothing against it, as long as it's done responsibly. I used to gain huge enjoyment from breeding hawk-moths as a kid. All kids should be encouraged to breed a few common species and marvel at the butterfly life-cycle. Apart from being an enthralling hobby there are also scientific lessons to be learned.

For those who are more concerned about 'saving butterflies', it will always be more effective to try and help species rather than individual insects. Time can be valuably invested during the winter months by joining work parties run by BC, the Wildlife Trusts and other conservation bodies. Those that do so will testify to the increased enjoyment provided by butterfly-watching when you've had a personal hand in their wellbeing.

In summary, I wouldn't for a moment try to discourage anyone from captive breeding, for whatever reason, but there are some quite tricky issues which may arise from doing so, which are always worth thinking about in advance.

BWs, Neil

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 02-May-14 08:58 AM GMT

"Padfield" wrote:

I wonder if they can be artificially delayed, either in the pupal stage or after emergence (by keeping the adults torpid in a fridge for a week or two).

Good idea! However, I fear that cooling either the pupa or adult for an extensive period of time will ultimately cause the butterfly to perish. I'm unaware of any studies that have attempted this and drawn conclusions. Of the two (pupa or adult), I'd favour keeping the pupa in the fridge – although Brown Hairstreak really isn't designed for this (of course!). And given where we are (start of May), keeping them hanging on until the end of July is, I think, unrealistic.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 02-May-14 09:09 AM GMT

Neil raises some interesting points – many of which have been debated on these forums in the past. Given the number of "rescues" taking place each year (and members undertaking captive rearing in general) I'm intending to pull an article together that answers the many questions that members have (we can discuss on these forums before publishing anything) – both in terms of rearing tips as well as ethics. Vince has made a great start in putting across his advice in the past. But I think it's the latter (ethics) where we probably have as many opinions as members (!). There are at least 6 different themes in Neil's note alone that could be debated:

Releasing species that are not endemic to that area (and there's a relationship to coordinated introductions here)

Releasing species that are of unknown genetic pedigree

Captive rearing and pathogens (bacteria, viruses, disease in general etc.)

Keeping development times in sync with wild populations

The benefits of captive rearing

Captive rearing and its contribution (or not) to conservation

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-May-14 02:01 PM GMT

Thank you all for your comments and ideas. I think pulling together some guidance is an excellent idea Pete as you must all get tired of being asked the same things over again. The 'care' section should not present a problem with all your combined experience and expertise but I wish you the best of luck with the 'ethics' debate. I was talking to a chap at Noar Hill a couple of weeks ago who regularly releases into the wild and last year released a dozen each of Large Tortoiseshell and European Swallowtail on the South coast! As you say, I expect you will encounter many views.

I wish I had been encouraged to do this half a century ago Neil but I have certainly got it out of my system now and am clear that I would rather be out in the wild with my camera. I have a selection of eggs in the garden (Orange Tip, Peacock) which I am monitoring but there they shall stay and will have to take their chance. Perhaps with time my views might change but I have found the experience a bit stressful.

I am astonished at the rate of development of my Black Hairstreak which I have only had for just over a week and they are already pupating. Of all my Hairstreaks they have been the most active – or perhaps it just seems that way as they feed during the day. A few shots from this morning:





Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 02-May-14 03:37 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Perhaps with time my views might change but I have found the experience a bit stressful.

I find that too, now and again ... because I treat everything I rear through as my "children" in that I have a responsibility for their welfare. As a result, it sometimes feels that the livestock gets more attention than my actual children 😊

Cheers,

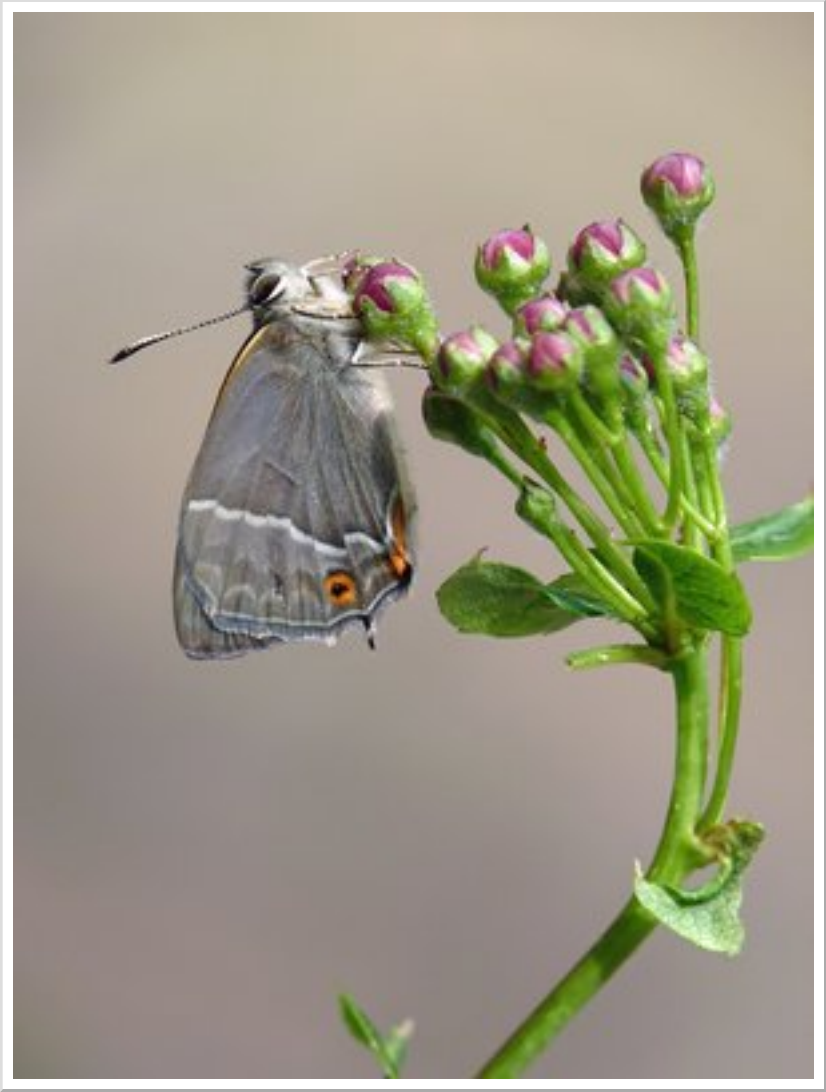
- Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-May-14 06:10 PM GMT





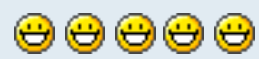




Pity I missed the birth by about 5 mins 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 02-May-14 06:32 PM GMT



Fantastic! You have excelled yourself, Pauline.

I love the ones on plain grey background, especially the second, but they're all wonderful!

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 02-May-14 11:12 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Well done on seeing the fruits of your first experience of rearing in captivity 😊 Excellent pictures especially the fifth one down for me 😊 However, I cant help but feel slightly sorry for this individual being born so prematurely 😬 (that is not meant as a criticism 😊)

Re: Pauline

by David M, 02-May-14 11:48 PM GMT

What joy, even if it is out of sync with its natural cousins.

Well done. You've followed it through from beginning to end and you must feel tremendously satisfied.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 03-May-14 09:09 AM GMT

Fantastic images and huge congrats on the birth 😊😊 I hope the 'mother' is doing as well as the new born 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 03-May-14 09:50 AM GMT

Lovely photos Pauline. Is that a male or female, and do you have others about to hatch? One question comes to mind on this subject; If you were able to release a male and female together, and they mated, I wonder what difference the additional two months would make, i.e. would the developing larvae be able to 'stretch it out' and still overwinter in the eggs as usual, or would they develop faster and hatch out at the wrong time? As you know we also have Purple Hairstreak pupae, a couple of which will hatch in about two weeks, and others to follow in about a month's time, and so would be interested to know if anyone has any thoughts on this?

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 03-May-14 09:59 AM GMT

I doubt that releasing just 2 adults into the wild will result in them finding each other! But assuming they do somehow mate, then any egg-lay would still occur as normal I suspect, but the ova would be prone to predation for a much longer period than normal.

I have 2 larvae at the mo, and the first has just emerged from the oak bud it had borrowed into, so it seems to be in sync with the wild populations.

Cheers,

- Pete

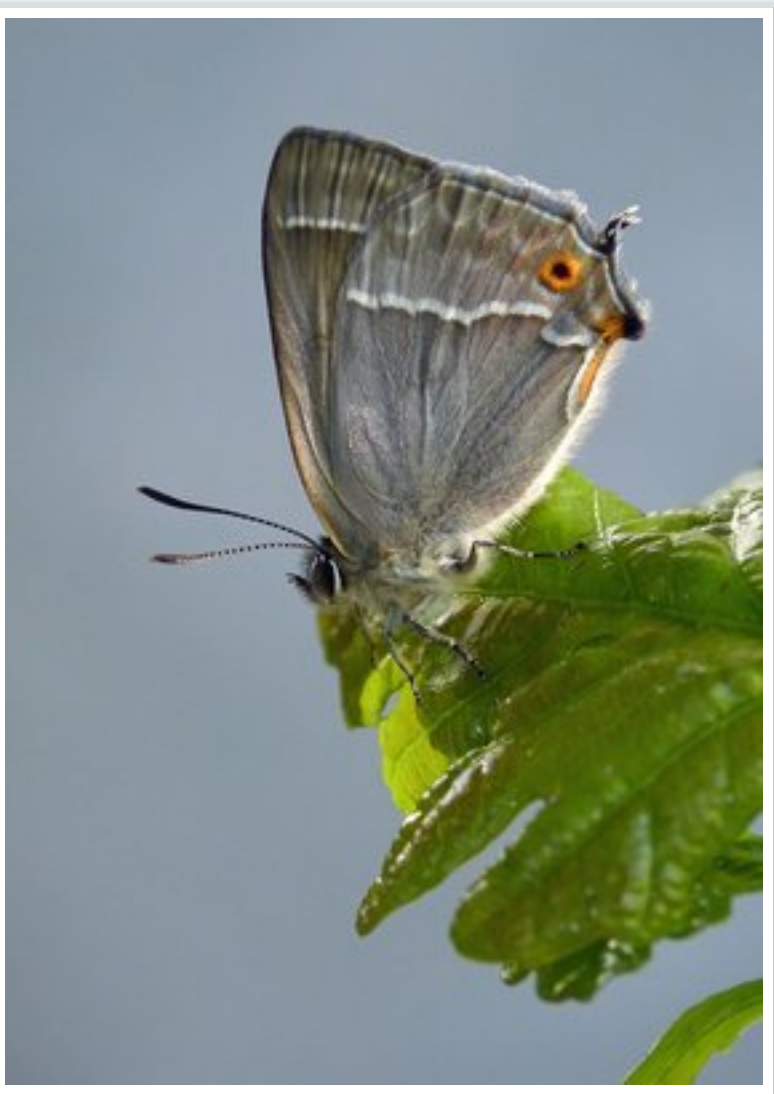
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-May-14 04:38 PM GMT

Thank you so much Mike. I am still trying to improve on my photography and in rearing these cats I have learned the importance of the timer on my camera (thanks Maximus) and the importance of good natural light. I now appreciate how annoying that slight breeze is that gently blows the back wings out of focus and that in the calm of indoors there is no way to capture that beautiful sheen and iridescence of brand new wings that look like they have been scattered with gold dust. I realise that I am lacking in imagination which means my composition is not always as good as it should be so I resort to using plants etc that I have previously seen the butterfly on in my garden to add interest and context. Even when presented with a steady, captive insect I am still not quick enough with the camera controls to get the shots I would like. In summary, I am sure I am learning but not sure the end result is improving 😞

Thank you for the comments and compliments Paul/Wurzel/David. It is a relief that at least one has made it to adulthood, tho' I, too, regret that I didn't get the timing right.

If you hadn't asked that question Mike then I would have done as it was exactly what I was wondering. Thank you for your response to this Pete. This butterfly I believe is a male Mike and I have several others that look like they are ready to emerge. I shall keep in touch on this. I took a few more shots early this morning as I was determined to get an open-winged shot so as the early morning sun streamed through the window





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 04-May-14 09:57 PM GMT

More fantastic shots Pauline, 😊 especially the open wing – it's really tricky to get those in the wild 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 04-May-14 10:39 PM GMT

Congrats from me Pauline. Purple Hairstreaks are not an easy 'starter' rearing species and, although a little out of sync with wild PH, you have given them the chance to go through their life-cycle, which they would never have had otherwise. I think you can be proud of a jolly good job done.

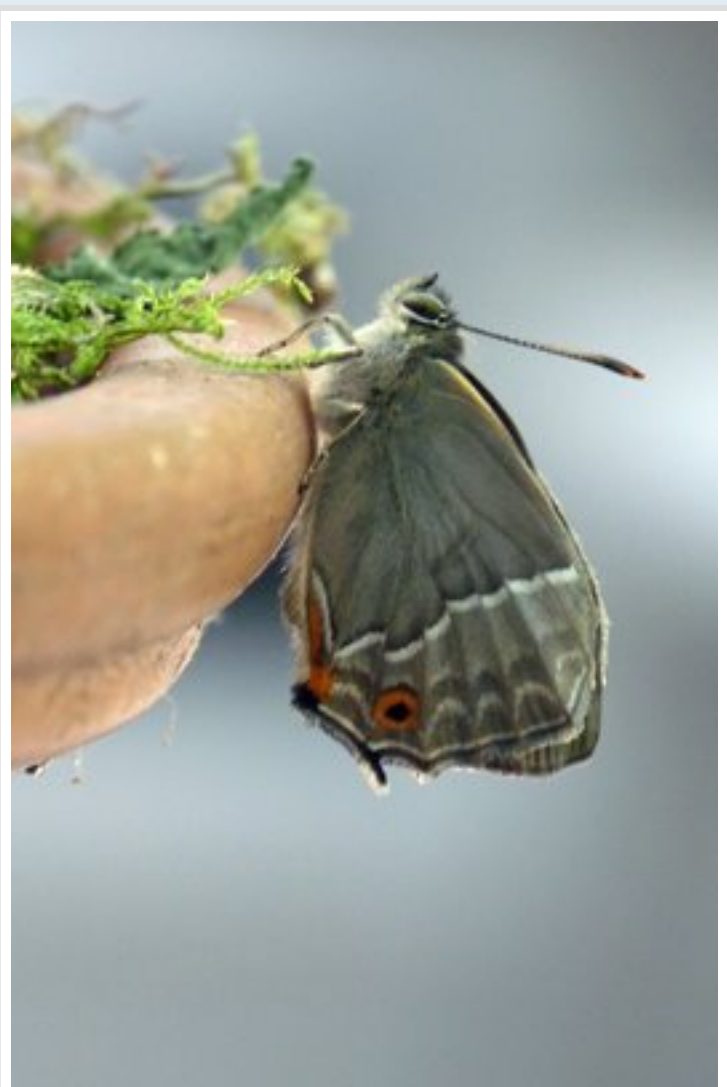
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-May-14 04:42 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel – let me tell you, getting good open wing shots in captivity is not easy either 😊

That means a lot Mark – thank you.

Now call me daft but I was determined to see one of my PH pupa emerge. Convinced that because they had turned completely black the event was imminent I spent 8 hours yesterday watching the pupa ... and I am not a patient person. However, I collected these eggs from my lane so I have a special interest in them. Needless to say, nothing happened 😊. Having wasted a whole day I decided to get out early this morning with my camera, assuming that the pupa would not emerge until it warmed up a bit. I arrived back shortly after 8.00am to this:



Another male. At least it gave me a chance for a few more photos. Perhaps by the time they all emerge I might have taken a decent one 😊







Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 05-May-14 05:04 PM GMT

Another very artistic series of images – some would make lovely framed illustrations. I like the 'S-curve' of the antennae.

Mike

ps I shall have to design an 'emergence detector' – could make my fortune 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-May-14 06:21 PM GMT

Thank you Mike. I actually like the first one. Having just emerged I do not think they are particularly photogenic as they are not fully 'pumped up' but it is good to record the stunning colours and 'newness' ... if you can 😊

Now this morning I did something I have never done before. I got up at 5.00am (that's normal), I was out taking photos at 6.00am (done that loads of times) and I took my tripod with me 😊😊. I knew where I was going and I knew where my target would be. I was spurred on by the fantastic shots Andy achieved and I wanted to check up on 'my' White Admiral larva. This cat is tucked into the bushes a little so lighting was always going to be difficult. I tried to remember what I knew about the camera settings as it is quite difficult to get it all in focus with all those bends and curves and spikes going in all directions. Depth of field I thought. Large aperture = greater depth of field = small f number but still needed better light. ISO set to 200, couldn't think of anything else. Anyway, these are the results.



I am hoping to monitor this cat regularly and hope to see it pupate. Fingers crossed.

I had a very quick look for other larva (unsuccessfully) but did find this egg?



Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 05-May-14 06:39 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Large aperture = greater depth of field = small f number

Actually, it's "Small aperture = greater depth of field = large f number" 😊 Nice photos all the same.

It looks like the Purple Hairstreak's wings hadn't finished drying before it was moved, Pauline – which is why they look a little crumpled. As a general rule, I never move a butterfly until it's decided to move itself. Yet another tip for the article!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 05-May-14 07:10 PM GMT

Well done Pauline with the Hairstreaks. What chance have I got with my Wall pupa out there in the wild. I've been up to check on it nearly every day for over 3 weeks now. Still not convinced its alive, probably not, but still go up there. If your White Admiral pupates where you can find it beware, the petrol bill will go up because you will want to keep checking it!! It also drives you completely mad!

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 05-May-14 07:27 PM GMT

Just caught up with your Purple Hairstreaks Pauline, superb images 😊

The White Admiral caterpillar photos are great as well, fascinating looking creature 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-May-14 08:29 PM GMT

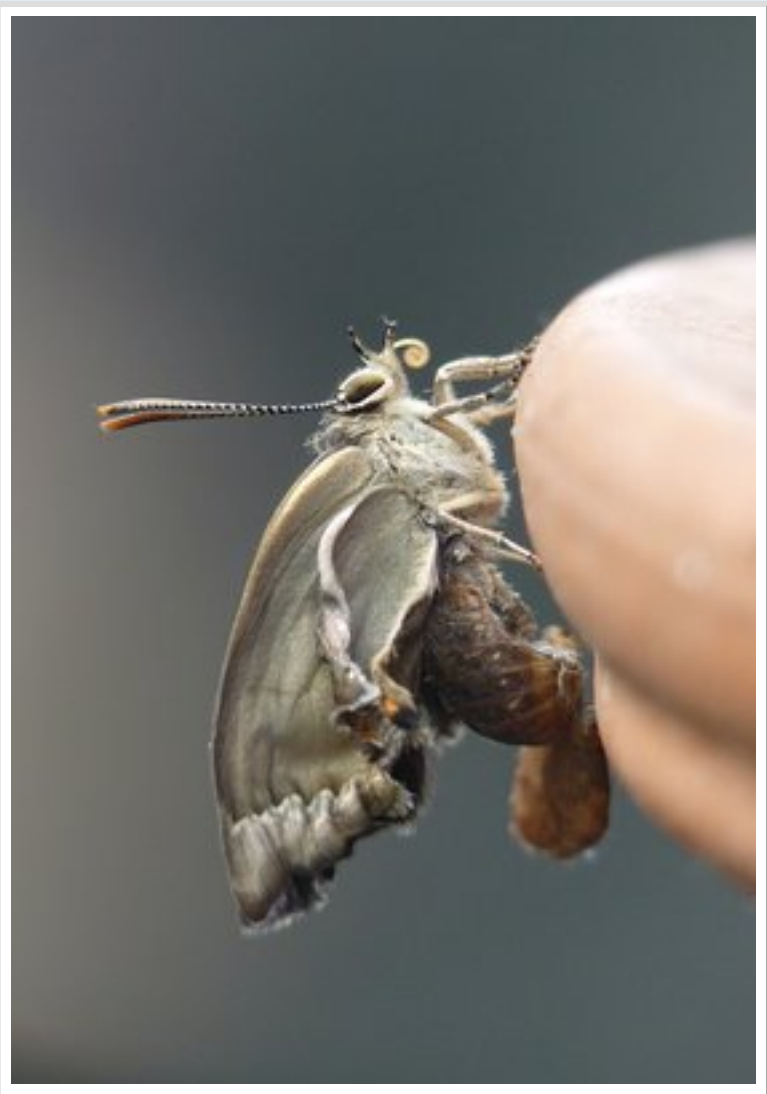
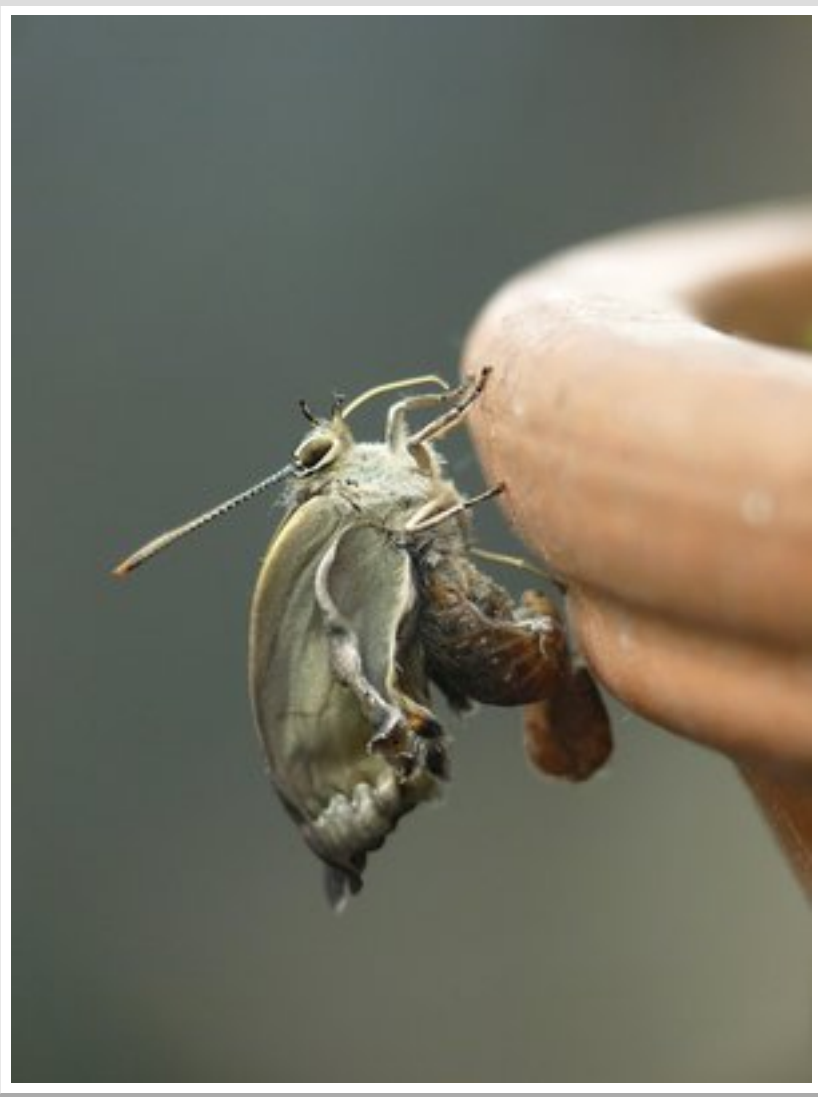
Well Pete, they say you can't teach an old dog new tricks 😊 No wonder my photos are not getting any better 😊 Seriously, thank you for correcting me on this (can't seem to remember from one week to the next!) – as you know I have always invited criticism and advice and shall continue to do so in my efforts to improve.

Never say never Bob! Keep us informed, I shall continue to watch what you've been up to. 😊 I am lucky as my WA larva is not very far away so hopefully the petrol bill won't be prohibitive 😊

Thank you for the compliment Neil – very much appreciated.

A few shots from later today:





Re: Pauline

by Susie, 05-May-14 08:54 PM GMT

Your photos are superb! That ph is amazing 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-May-14 12:38 PM GMT

Thank you Susie but it is so sad that this beautiful female emerged deformed.

It wasn't a great day yesterday which ended with an unpleasant experience at Rake Bottom. I was looking forward to my visit as I had been told it was now teeming with butterflies and so it was. I parked carefully avoiding all the glass that I assume came from Mark's windscreen (you could have at least cleared it up Mark 😊 😊). I don't usually go out on Bank Holidays as places are usually busy but I had assumed (being quite remote) this venue would be OK. I was marvelling at how many Green Hairstreaks were flying around (at one point there were 6 nectaring on the same Hawthorn bush) when my attention was interrupted by a series of calls along the lines of 'oi, you!'. Half way up the bank there were 2 teenagers sitting and calling to me. I am not sure why I felt immediately intimidated. Perhaps it was because it reminded me of a similar experience at Paulsgrove, perhaps it was because I realised there was no-one else about, perhaps it was because they were wearing hoodies (with the hoods up), but more probably it was because they stood up and started making their way down the valley towards me. I started climbing the opposite bank and was briefly diverted by a beautiful Hairstreak egg-laying. I had wanted to look for the eggs but felt very uneasy as the males had disappeared and I couldn't see where they were. I just felt too stressed to enjoy my surroundings and when a family came by intent on a picnic I followed them out feeling angry that I felt forced to leave and relieved to find my car in one piece. Managed a few shots:

Couldn't resist stopping on the way to take a photo of these.



and the Green Hairstreak which was egg-laying:





Lots of fresh Dukes:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-May-14 02:41 PM GMT

Now this is more like it. Today I had another beautiful female PH emerge. I make no apologies for the number of photos as this is my personal record. I make no apologies for the quality of the shots either as it was a case of grab the camera and with shaking hands trying to record an event which I shall probably never see again:



This beautiful creature looked like she was wearing a midnight blue velvet cloak which she eventually wrapped around herself.









Re: Pauline

by Paul Wetton, 06-May-14 03:00 PM GMT

Fantastic Pauline and nothing wrong with the photos.

Well done

Re: Pauline

by David M, 06-May-14 03:13 PM GMT

Truly magnificent, Pauline. The transformation is remarkable. Interesting too to note the slate blue 'sheen' on parts of the underside in the last image. I assume that fades off after a short while?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-May-14 10:25 AM GMT

I value your comments Paul -thank you.

Hairstreaks captivate me David; when fresh the colours are spectacular but do tend to fade. I was lucky enough last year to see a newly emerged WLH in the wild and it just shimmered gold in the morning sun. Thank you for your comment and observations.

I wonder if anyone can answer a few questions:

1. The previous shot of a caterpillar which I could not identify, having looked at Pete's photos on this site I am fairly sure it is a Speckled Wood. However, it appeared to be feeding on Honeysuckle and there is no mention of this as being the food plant of Speckled Wood so I wonder whether it is in fact something else?
2. Likewise, I have been trying to find out what the little golden package is on the silken thread. It looks a bit like an egg but whose egg? Or perhaps it is something completely different?
3. Can anyone identify this which appeared on the Blackthorn where I am rearing the Black Hairstreaks. At first I thought it was one of the cats turning into a pupa but it hasn't changed for some days now:



4. The last PH whose emergence I recorded I assumed was a female because of the vividness of the colours. However, is it actually a male?

Any suggestions would be welcome.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 07-May-14 10:36 AM GMT

Another wonderful series of photos, Pauline, and what a fantastic experience for you. 😊

I've never seen such a freshly emerged specimen but I associate that overall purple with a male. The female only has small purple areas on a mainly brown wing.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-May-14 12:05 PM GMT

Thank you so much Mike (and thank you for the pm). It has certainly been an amazing experience and I have learned such a lot but as I won't be rushing into doing it again just too much of a worry and tbh I'll be glad/relieved when it is all over. However, until that time comes I shall continue to record the photos I have managed to get. At the moment I seem to be having a PH emerge on a daily basis and the photos are a bit tricky as I haven't yet put any of the creatures in the fridge or used any other methods to calm them down. Perhaps I should as I'm always worried they will take off and end up behind a radiator or in a parrot's beak 😬😬 A few more shots of recent butterflies:



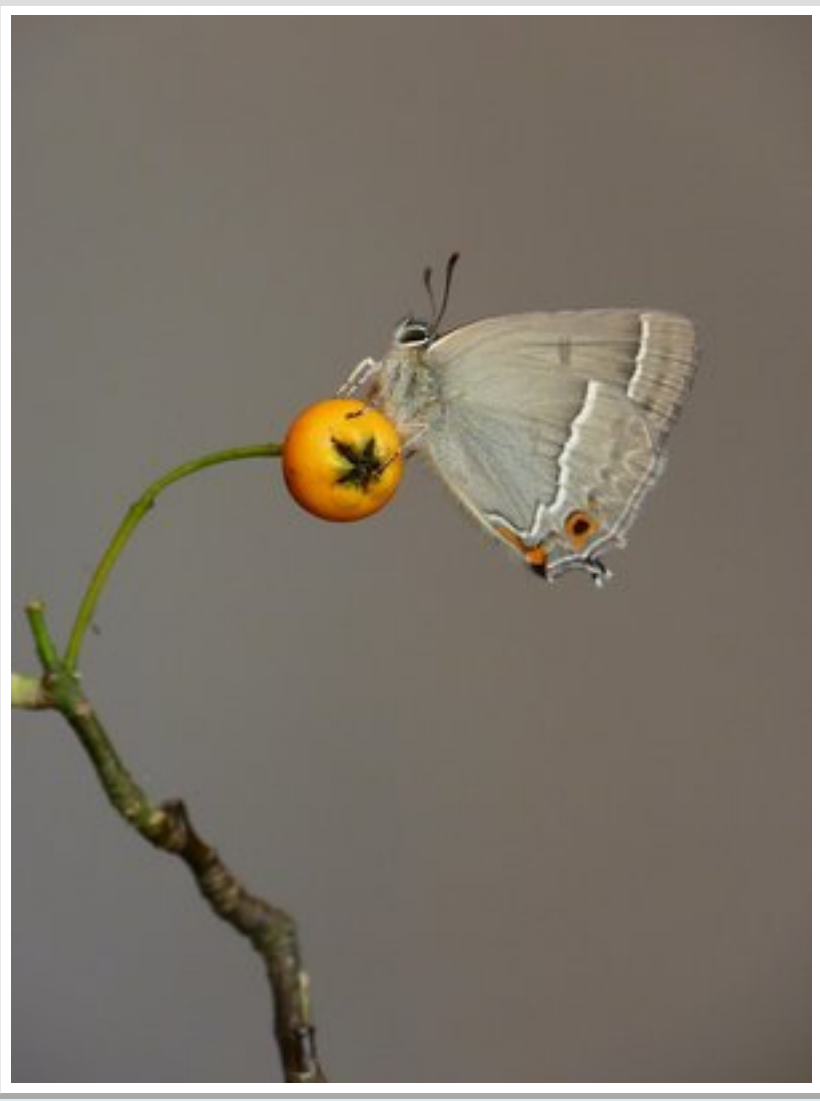




Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-May-14 06:19 PM GMT







Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 07-May-14 06:31 PM GMT

Lovely photos of your Purple Hairstreaks Pauline and the catching the emerging male was brilliant 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-May-14 09:50 PM GMT

Thank you Mike. It won't be long before your ones start to emerge 😊. So far I have only had 5 males emerge (and a poor deformed female) 😞

Most of my Black Hairstreak cats have now pupated and I have been trying to catch the process with my camera as it is quite fascinating. The problem is that it invariably occurs late in the evening which makes photography (for me anyway) quite difficult. The cat chooses a place where it remains motionless for 2-3 days before the pupation process starts and once signs of the change become visible it progresses quickly and is all over within about an hour. I have tried to take a few shots which I hope to improve upon if opportunity allows.





Re: Pauline

by David M, 08-May-14 10:04 PM GMT

Where have you been getting these cats from, Pauline? You seem to have acquired a job-lot!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-May-14 07:22 AM GMT

Try to keep up David, I've already explained all that stuff 😊😊 In summary, having been alerted by Mark to the 'management' at Noar Hill I was able to collect 12 discarded BH eggs which all hatched, but due to a slug problem only 3 remain. Likewise, Mike reported that Oaks had been felled by the Forestry Commission at the Straits and I was able to rescue a handful of PH eggs. At the same time I noticed the storms had brought down a small Oak at the bottom of my lane and a similar number of eggs came from that Oak. I wasn't surprised to find them there as I have a colony in the Oaks in my garden. The BH eggs were a lot easier to find than the PH eggs, the latter being more of a grey colour and frequently coated in mud and on average took me about 30 minutes to find each egg over 3 visits. Anyway, only 10 of these hatched and somewhere along the line I 'lost' 2 of them. Friends thought I was having such a good time with these eggs that they bought me some more - 12 Black Hairstreak, and that will be the end of it although I intend to make the most of the experience 😊

Yesterday a brief walk in the forest in cloudy and quite windy conditions turned up 5 species of butterfly including this GVW and the smallest OT I have ever seen.



Stopping to examine each honeysuckle closely I was surprised at the number of weird and wonderful creatures I encountered, most of which I have never seen before. A few of these below:







Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 10-May-14 09:18 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

Sorry to hear about your experience at Butser – I was there on Monday but parked on the top and walked down to count Dukes in another area. Seems nowhere is immune from anti social behaviour 😞

I have packed my dustpan and brush to clear up the glass next time 😊

Kind regards

Mark

Re: Pauline

by Susie, 10-May-14 11:16 AM GMT

Sorry to read of your bad experience Pauline, I think you did the right thing to err on the side of caution. I feel a lot happier when out now I've got the dog with me as he alerts me to anything that is about which I might not be aware of. Perhaps you should take a butterflying companion with you, being a lone female in the field can be difficult. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 10-May-14 01:40 PM GMT

Just catching up on your posts Pauline, your photo's are great has usual, love the Hair Streaks emerging. I've yet to see Brown Hair streaks or Purple but hope to do so in early July.

I know what you must have felt like when those youths walked towards you, a similar thing happened to me but this guy was abit more exposed (you know what I mean) lucky for me I'd my dog with me at the time, she was running about in the field and this guy mustn't have seen her, I called her, she came running and off went to man running in the opposite direction:lol: She was part German Shepard 😂 Take Care Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-May-14 02:50 PM GMT

They say things happen in three's Mark and you have already had your 3 break-ins so I sincerely hope you won't be needing that dustpan and brush!

You are absolutely right Susie – that would certainly be the sensible thing to do but the practicalities get in the way. Most days I don't know what I am doing from one hour to the next so it is hard to make arrangements. I do on occasions drag non-butterfly friends with me but to be honest they get bored to tears and don't understand how I can spend 40 mins looking at a single butterfly 😊

That must have been a shocking and scary experience for you Goldie – good job you had your dog with you 😊 . Thank you so much for your lovely comment.

Today I have had a lovely female PH emerge ('bout time too after 5 males!!!). I have yet to manage an open-winged shot but a few early shots below:





Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 11-May-14 09:07 PM GMT

Lovely shots of your female Pauline, I'm glad you have one at last 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-May-14 01:13 PM GMT

Thank you for your comment Mike - hope you're having a great time on the island. Lots more PH images to follow (only 1 left to emerge now):









Still struggling to get a decent open-winged shot.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 12-May-14 08:14 PM GMT

Some more lovely PH photos Pauline 😊

Whatever your feelings about raising these, there is no doubt that it has given you an opportunity to make some fascinating observations and take some beautiful photos.

All the best,

Neil.

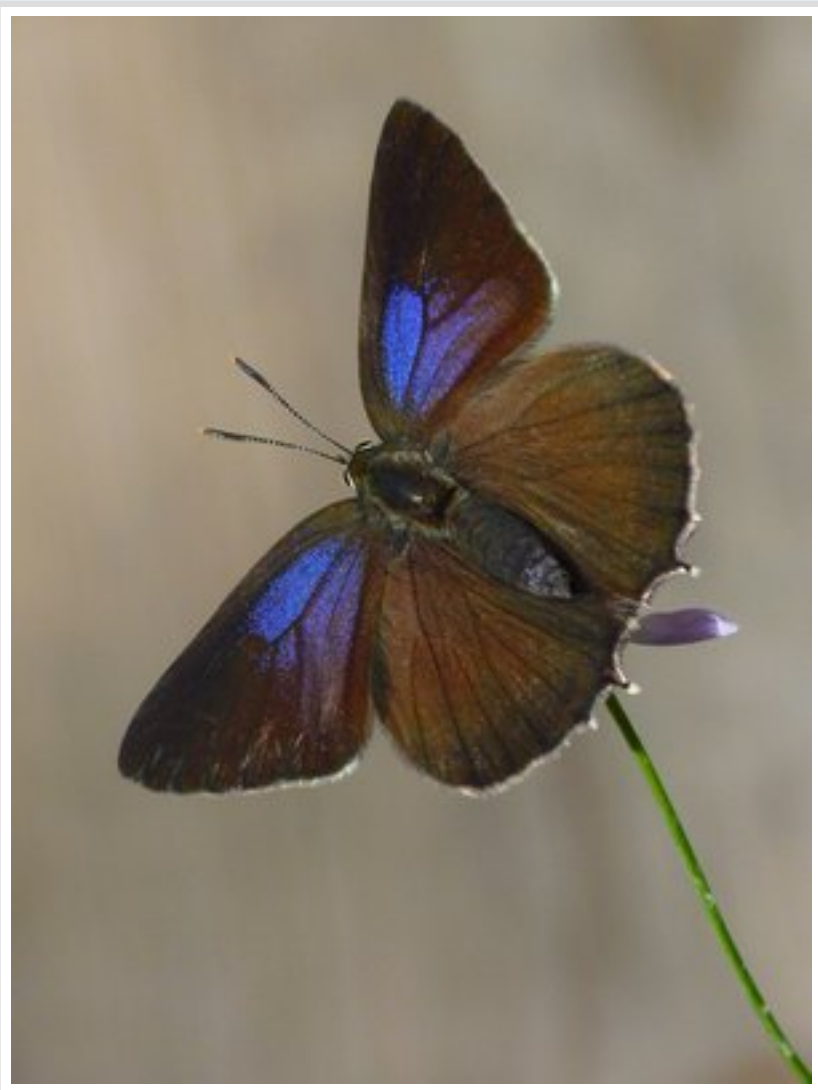
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-May-14 01:23 PM GMT

Thank you for that comment Neil – it is good to know that you appreciate how I feel about the situation. Truth is, I just have too many other things to care for just now but you are absolutely right. So, this will be my last PH post. My female was released this morning and I hope she managed to find a mate. The last of the males were released yesterday and although she spent 24 hours with them (due to inclement weather) if any mating took place I did not witness it. It is now time to move on to other things:





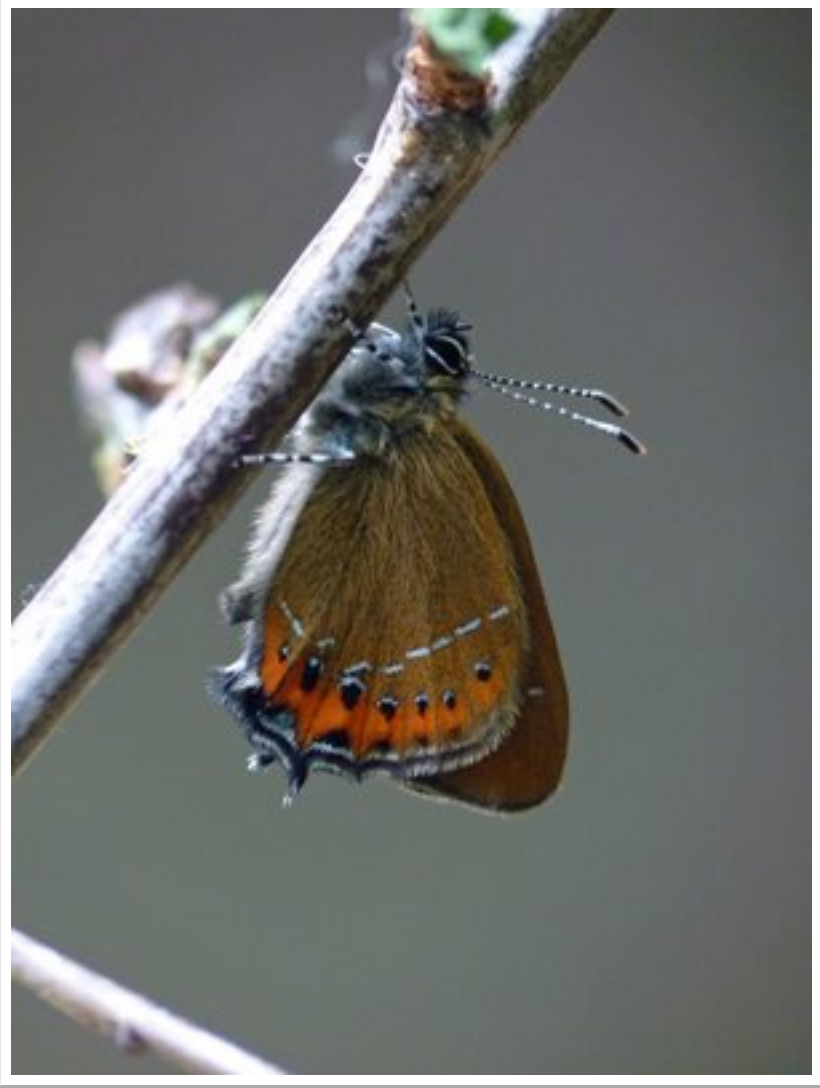


Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-May-14 07:53 PM GMT

It was with a sense of relief that I packed away the large cage that had housed the PH. The plants it held were looking worse for wear and the large cage had dominated room. My youngest cat had been banned from the room as the butterflies were irresistible to her and more than once she had almost pulled the cage over. In addition, they were taking up a certain amount of my time daily – the butterflies refused the nectar sources I supplied which resulted in me 'hand-feeding' them by coaxing them onto branches sprayed with a sugar solution. At last the weather seemed more suitable and the butterflies were free. Interestingly, most flew up into the ivy growing over the top of the house which is opposite my Oak trees. My existing colony regularly fly between this ivy and the Oaks.

I returned indoors and put the kettle on for a cup of coffee, checked my old cat and then went on to have a quick look at the Black Hairstreak pupa. I couldn't believe my eyes – a butterfly!!! Back out to retrieve the other cage and set it up again 🙄. By the time I had finished there was another butterfly 🤩. Clearly it had only recently emerged as its wings were still 'pleated' so naturally I had to take a few early shots. I'm afraid I don't know how to tell the difference between male and female:





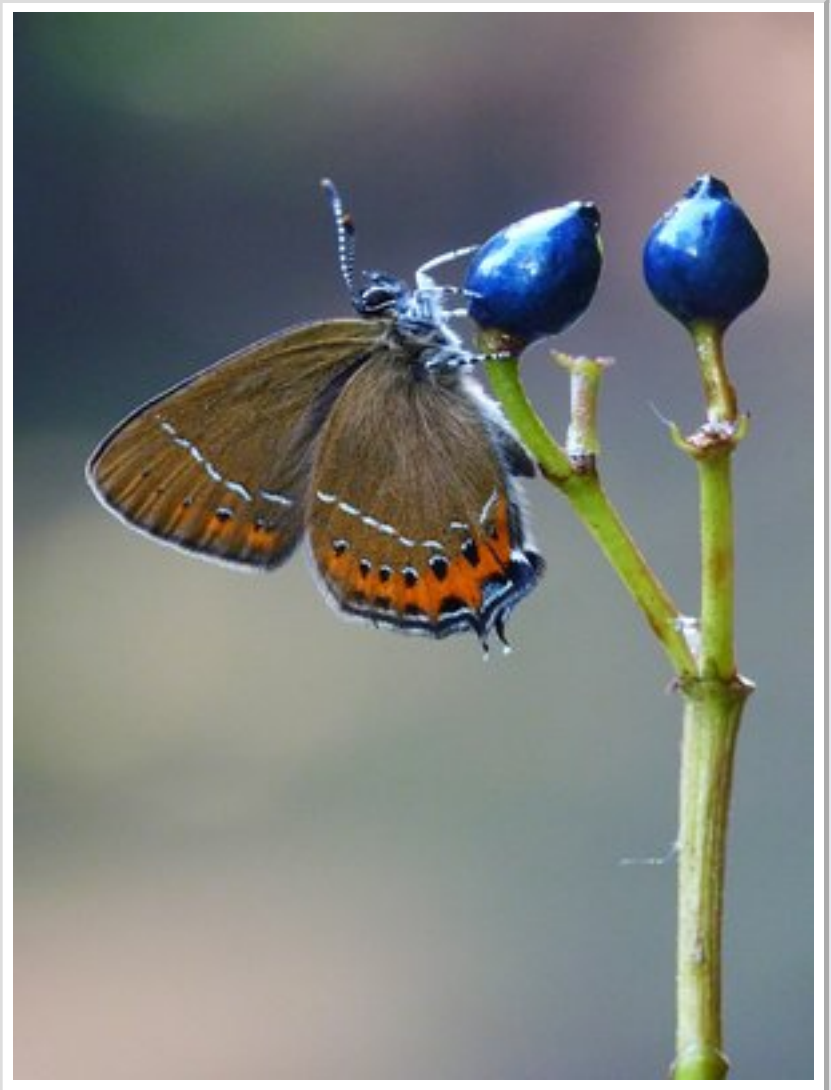
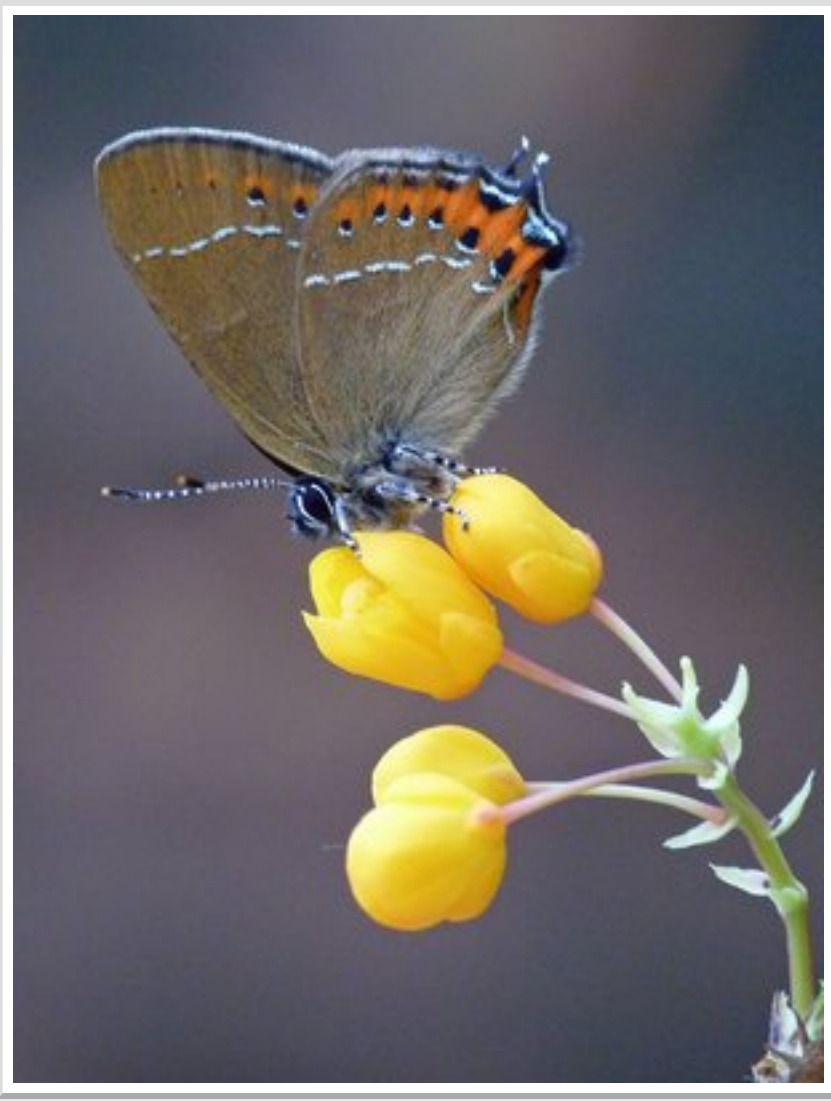
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-May-14 10:03 AM GMT

The subject of my diary today is, of course, Black Hairstreaks. I have been trying to experiment with composition – different backgrounds, positions, plants etc so some of the shots are quite similar. I believe that these butterflies have a fairly short life span but there are still quite a few to emerge. If anyone would like to call in to see/photograph them you would be very welcome. If you don't already have my phone no. just send a pm and we can

sort out times.







Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 14-May-14 10:42 AM GMT

Absolutley fantastic BH's Pauline 😊 I'm sure that I've read this already but as I'm at work and the end of break is fast apporaching...how did you get the eggs and what next for teh BH's imagos?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by andy brown, 14-May-14 12:29 PM GMT

Pauline,

Quality Photo's again not sure i should have spent all the money on the DSLR and should of carried on using my Panasonic 😊, if i am in your neck of the woods friday i may give you a call as i have a few places i want to visit i.e. Wrecclsham just in case and the straits again for the WA larvae but also Bentley again. To many places and not enough time 😞

Thanks

Andy

Re: Pauline

by David M, 14-May-14 03:39 PM GMT

Glorious images, Pauline. The fresh upperwing colours on a female Purple Hairstreak are only rarely seen in the wild.

As for you Black Hairstreak, the comparatively short tails makes it look like a male to me (though I could be wrong).

Re: Pauline

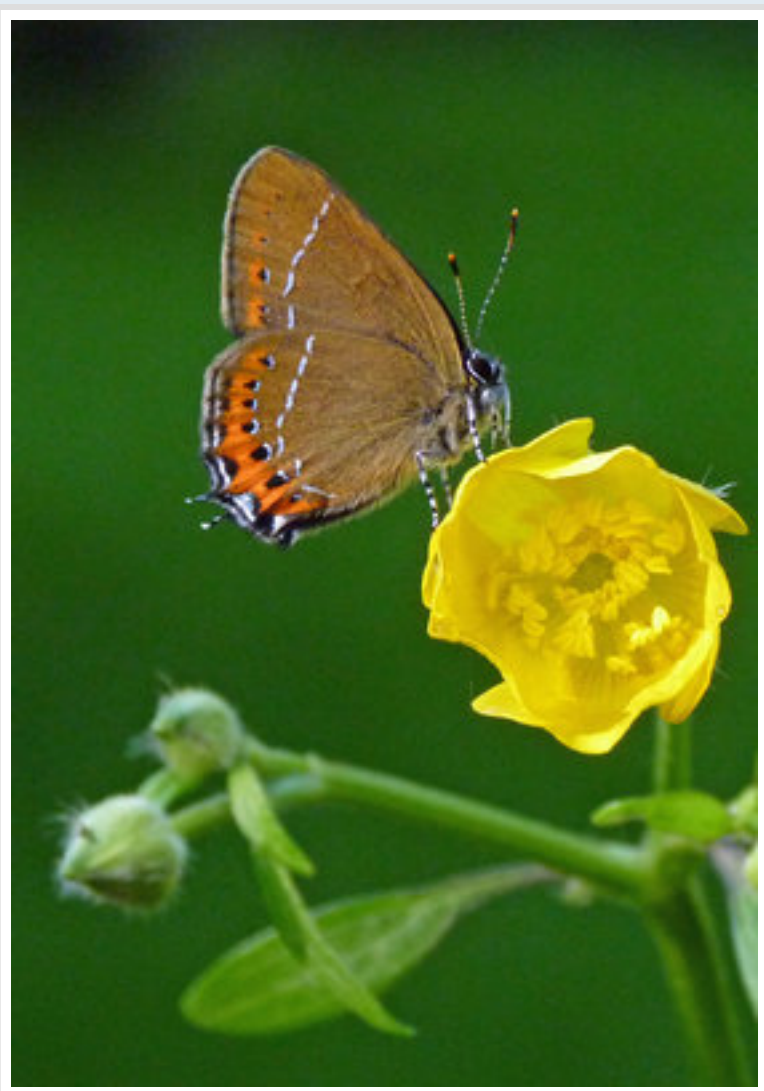
by Pauline, 16-May-14 01:45 PM GMT

Thank you for the compliment Wurzel. I think you will find all the details you need on page 47 😊

Looking forward to it Andy 😊

Thank you so much David. I am sure you are right about them being males and if my experience with the PH was anything to go by then they definitely are!

Trying to enjoy the BH (which was the objective of the gift) but my Tortoise has gone AWOL so much time has been spent looking and photography quite rushed – a few taken today:



Re: Pauline

by William, 16-May-14 02:22 PM GMT

That last shot on the buttercup is lovely Pauline, the Hairstreak looks upright and ready for action, very majestic 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by ABerryman, 16-May-14 05:14 PM GMT

You have done so well with all these Hairstreaks Pauline, you must be so pleased with your efforts! That last one of the Black Hairstreak is fantastic...I must make a trip up to Oxon this year to try and find them.

All the best,

Alex

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 16-May-14 06:48 PM GMT

Lovely photos of the Black Hairstreaks Pauline, your house certainly seems to be 'Hairstreak Heaven' at the moment 😊

Hope you find your Tortoise.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-May-14 07:44 PM GMT

Great News Neil – the tortoise has just been found after 3 nights out. Hope he is OK but I am just so pleased 😊😊😊 Thank you for asking.

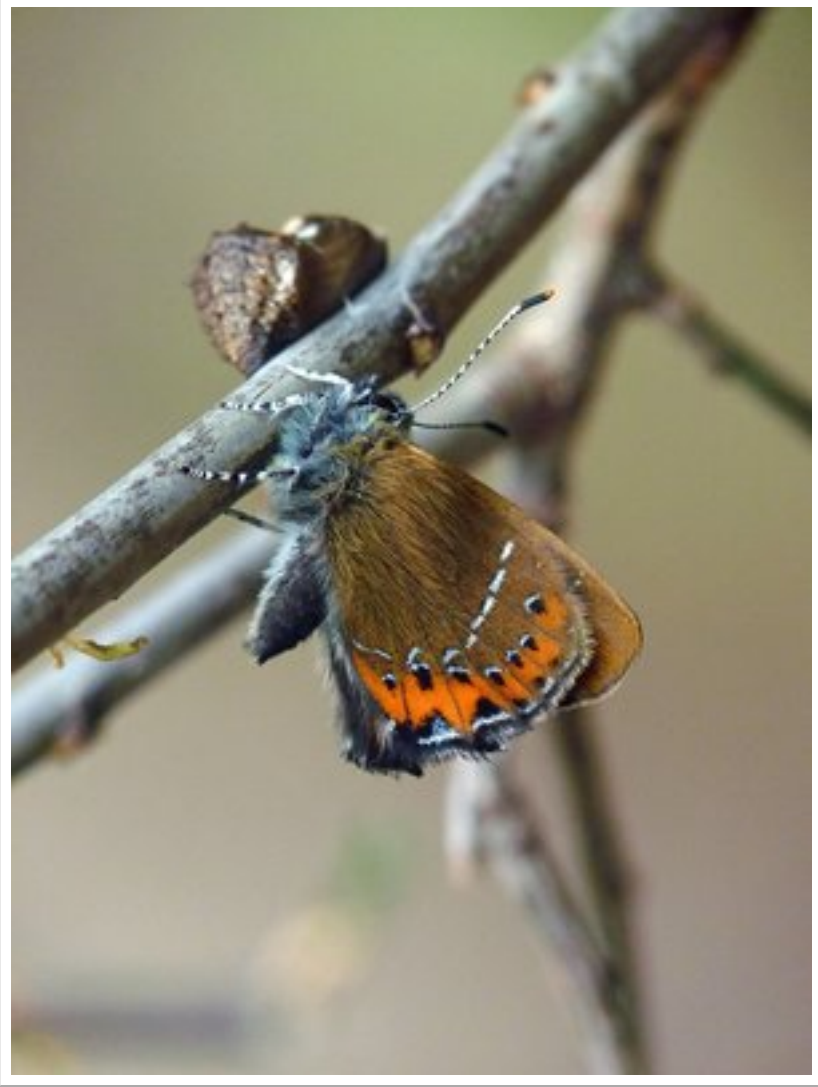
The offer still stands Alex – I could always pick you up from Liphook station until you can get to see them in the wild.

Thank you William – that Hairstreak was certainly ready for action and I am afraid he took off without warning to the top of a 60' hedge 😞!

This afternoon I had an enjoyable and interesting outing with Andy who kindly showed me 'his' White Admiral larva as the one I had previously found had gone AWOL (along with its branch!!!).



We ended up at mine to photograph the remaining Black Hairstreak, the last remaining cat and several pupa. As Andy was taking a few shots of the pupa he suddenly shouted 'one has just emerged'. We took turns getting a few quick shots of the emergence but the whole process was incredibly quick and the wings were 'pumped up' in hardly any time at all:





Re: Pauline

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

I always regard Black Hairstreaks as a local speciality, so it is extraordinary to see your collection of photos.

In the wild, they very rarely visit flowers, so I wonder what the one in your last photo is thinking of the experience 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-May-14 10:19 PM GMT

I totally get where you are coming from Mike but I have been put in a difficult position. I am committed to looking after these creatures as best I can having been advised that it would be irresponsible to release them. I am also finding it difficult to find a nectar source that is acceptable to them so I am trying everything I have to hand – I can't find bramble flowers or flowering privet and buttercups are not always acceptable either. I am really doing my best in a situation I would rather not be in but along the way I hope these butts can give some pleasure to those who have never seen them (like myself). I admit I am also using them to practice my photography and I hope folk can understand this.

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 17-May-14 09:58 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

This is a difficult situation, but in the circumstances the best way of providing nourishment for butterflies of this type is to spray or dab some sugar solution onto the leaves of the plant. Alternatively, place a ball of cotton wool soaked in sugar solution in their flight cage. They will take what they need.

Vince

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 17-May-14 11:51 AM GMT

No criticism intended, Pauline. I really enjoyed your photos and if I had the patience would love to try breeding myself,

It was a light-hearted comment on how different it was, seeing Black Hairstreaks in this context.

in fact, they do occasionally visit flowers, as my photo, taken at Asham Meads, on Otmoor, demonstrates, so I'm sure yours was enjoying the experience



Asham Meads, Oxon - 24th June 2006

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 17-May-14 12:06 PM GMT

Indeed - as well as Honeydew, they do enjoy Bramble flowers and, especially, Privet flowers. Unfortunately, I don't think either is in bloom at this time of year.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-May-14 06:46 PM GMT

Apologies again Mike, I was being overly sensitive due to a difficult week. I have tried those methods Vince and the butterflies seem determined to ignore any sustenance unless I actually coax them away from the net cage and onto the branches. Ah well, it will all soon be over.

Back in the real world I got the chance to nip out to Paulsgrove and I jumped at it. This site is certainly growing on me despite the unfortunate incidents I experienced during a very early visit. It is a cracking little venue teeming with butterflies and I found myself tripping over Small Blues in various states of wear. They're a noisy lot down there with dogs barking, folk shouting and banging, loud music ... but you get used to it 😂. It was too hot to attempt many shots as the butterflies were very active and I only took a couple of Small Blue in action:



There were a good number of Common Blue frequently seen squabbling with the little'uns but of more interest to me was the Green Hairstreaks. I saw 4 in total and they were all showing signs of wear and tear. There was so much gorse and bramble that this was taken without the close-up lens and at maximum zoom so it has been heavily cropped. I just thought the green and blue looked good together 😊 :



There were a couple of Green Hairstreaks egg-laying



and this time there were no interruptions as I checked for eggs, the first ones I have ever seen:





Once back home I decided to check the Orange Tip eggs but more of that later.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-May-14 07:43 PM GMT

It seems like a long time ago now but at the beginning of May I noticed that an Orange Tip had laid 2 white eggs on a particular Garlic Mustard plant.



I resolved to check them regularly but it must have been about a week later before I got round to looking by which time the eggs had turned orange and I was surprised to see that there were another 6 orange eggs on the same plant which presumably I hadn't noticed.



Another few days passed and when I next checked the plant there was an egg on the underside of the leaf which because of the position and the fact it has not changed colour I am assuming it is a GVW – quite a prolific little plant.



I was determined to let these eggs take their chance despite Mike warning me that they would probably be predated. I have also had quite a bit to deal with so did not check the eggs again until this afternoon. With mixed feelings I was able to detect 3 cats – delighted to see them but that meant 5 had been predated. It appeared that these 3 were to be next as I watched the spider take a predatory stance as the cats got closer:



I attempted to knock the spider off and dismantled the web. I hope I succeeded as I didn't see where he went and I have now wrapped the plant in net. Another first for me as I have never seen these cats before and they seem quite cute. I tried to take a few photos (hand held) but the breeze was blowing the plant. A couple below just for the record but it would be nice to get some better ones when time allows (if they do not provide something with an easy meal).





Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 17-May-14 08:00 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Orange-tip larvae are cannibalistic so this might be the reason for losing some of the cats. It would be best to separate them if possible (e.g. use a fine brush to transfer some to their own plant, so long as they're not undergoing a moult).

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 17-May-14 10:35 PM GMT

Great stuff Pauline 😊 Thanks for supplying me with the page number I went back and read it so now I know 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

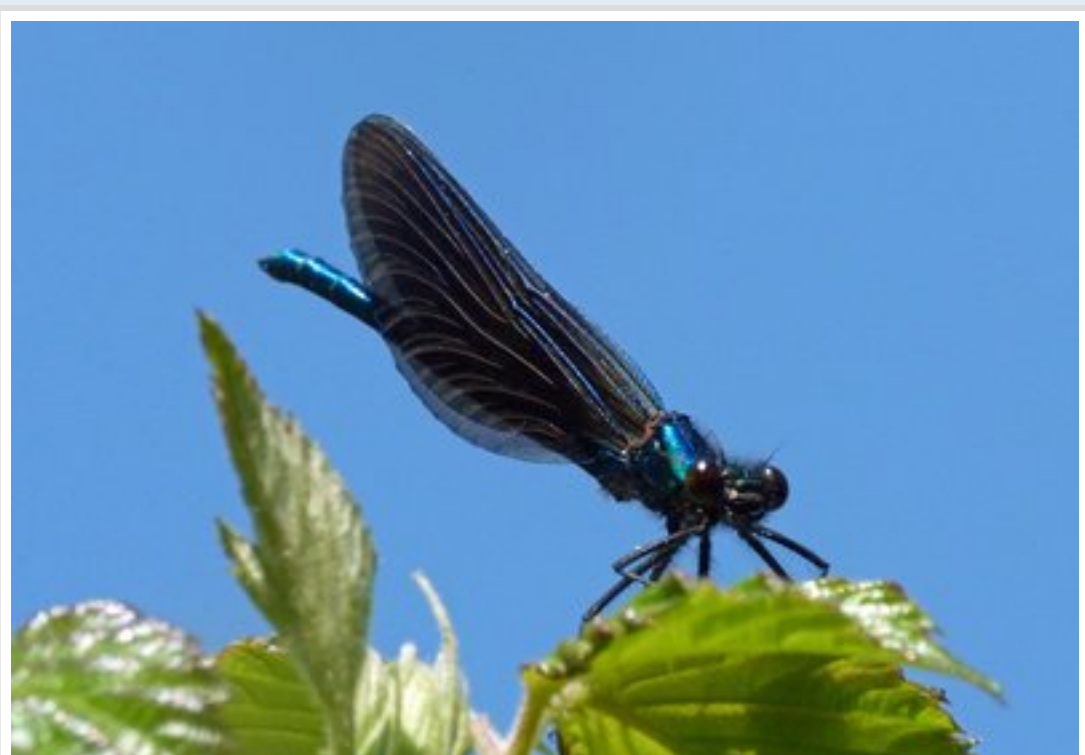
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-May-14 04:56 PM GMT

When I read your advice Pete my first thought was 'Oh, no! here we go again, more work, more worry'. 😞 Don't know why I didn't think it could be cannibalism and my intention this morning was to do exactly as you advised. However, I looked around the garden and on some potted Garlic Mustard there were a few cats on different plants so I have just bunged them all in the net cage, out of the reach of the wild birds and the hens and I'm afraid it will have to be survival of the fittest as I just can't do it any more.

Sorry if I've been grumpy this week Wurzel - a lot on but I appreciate your comment.

I was able to get up to Wrecclisham for a short time today - not much going on there but I took a few photos:



I'm not really sure what any of these are specifically but I guess this is some sort of Demoiselle and this is some sort of spider 🤔



It is a pity that this Dragonfly was a bit worse for wear. I had never appreciated what magnificent hunters they are but it was quite a revelation watching it and I shall take more notice in future:



I did manage to get a photo of a Speckled Wood which I don't think I have posted yet this season but neither it, nor I, could get rid of the pesky flies:



On the way back I decided to call in at the Straits and check up on Andy's White Admiral larva. After 'my' larva 'disappeared', along with its branch he was kind enough to take me to where he had found 2 others – except one of them was missing! We found the other though and carefully marked the exact spot in a way that no-one would ever notice. Sadly, today the cat was no longer there 🤔. Like before I spent a good 20 minutes searching the location without success. I couldn't even find the half eaten leaf we had photographed him on. I suspect that's because it wasn't there. I knew exactly which branch he had been on – it was only 2 days ago we were there – and I noticed that all the Honeysuckle leaves seem to grow in pairs, except for the branch where he had been where a leaf had obviously been nipped off 🤔 I so hope I am wrong!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-May-14 07:00 AM GMT

This morning I am posting my last set of Black Hairstreak photos (unless something remarkable happens like a mating pair!). There are still some left to

emerge but I am running out of plants to photograph them with 😊. The grey and green backgrounds are the moss covered trunks of my massive Oak trees.







Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-May-14 01:18 PM GMT

Well, it WAS going to be my last BH post but with a few butterflies emerging this morning I managed to capture some interesting images. The following is a combination of 2 separate events as I was not quite ready for the first one – it was a case of grab the camera and with shaking hands try to get a few images that weren't blurred. I hope you find them as interesting as i did:











Re: Pauline

by David M, 19-May-14 04:43 PM GMT

You certainly hit the jackpot there, Pauline.

Stunning images.

Re: Pauline

by ABerryman, 19-May-14 10:39 PM GMT

What a great set of images, Pauline. Fascinating to see the sequence of emergence like that, something that would be almost impossible in the wild!

Alex

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 19-May-14 11:07 PM GMT

Extraordinary. Quite beautiful. And a tantalising glimpse of the orange spots on the upperside that you would otherwise never see!

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 20-May-14 09:34 AM GMT

Stunning sequence Pauline 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 20-May-14 11:12 AM GMT

That wing-inflation sequence is wonderful – puts these amazing creatures in a new light for me 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 20-May-14 01:51 PM GMT

Hey Pauline. Great stuff. How long did it take from breaking out to wings fully formed?

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 20-May-14 05:39 PM GMT

Great Photo's Pauline 📷 I really enjoy your posting's , keep them coming Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Lee Hurrell, 20-May-14 09:57 PM GMT

Wonderful stuff, Pauline! As usual, your photos and reports are stunning.

You mention 3 OT cats in an earlier post but I can see 4, so you may just have an extra one 😊

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Pauline

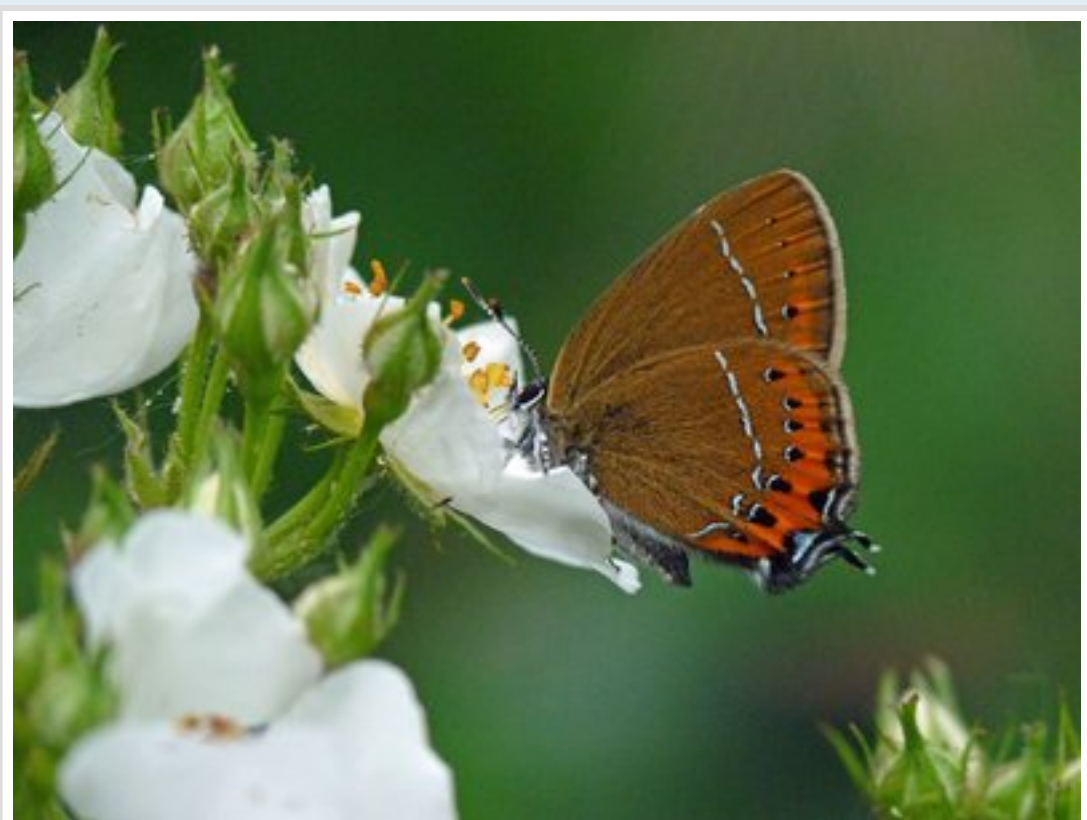
by Pauline, 22-May-14 07:05 AM GMT

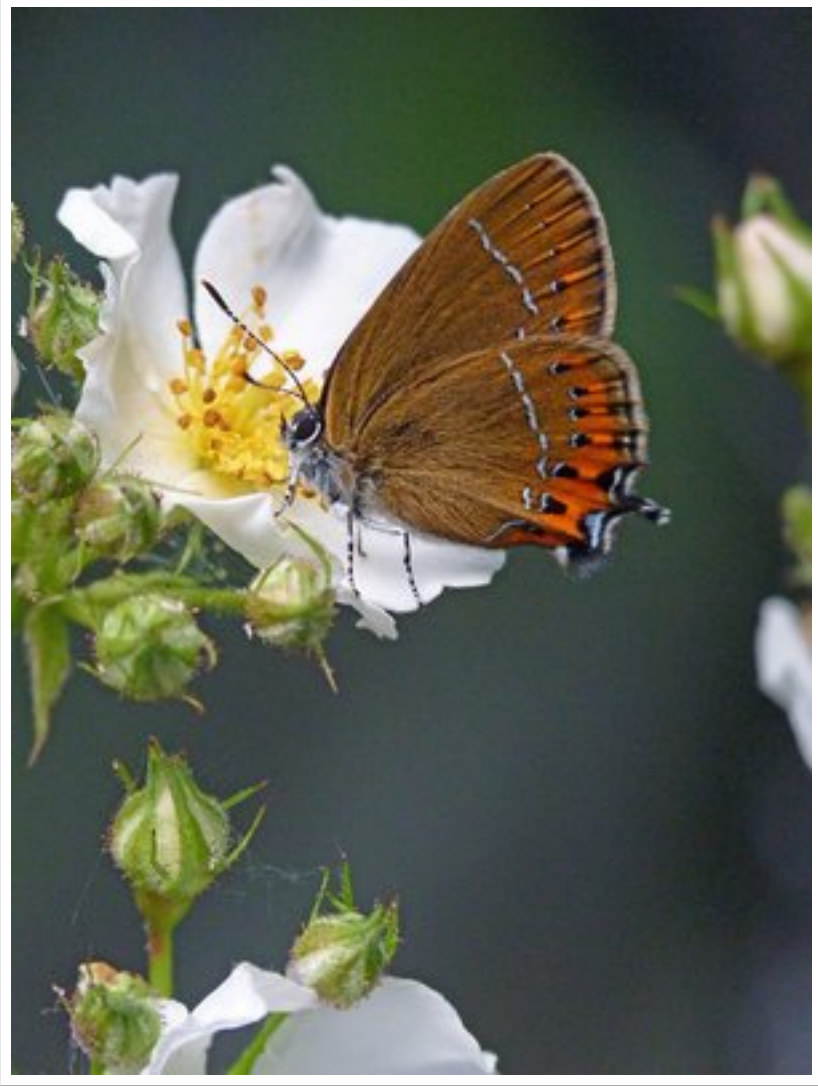
Thank you all so much for your wonderful comments. Your eyes are better than mine Lee cos try as I might I can't spot no. 4. It is all remarkably fast Bob which I suppose makes sense as during this period the butterfly is in a very vulnerable position. It was out of the pupa in a heartbeat and then it took 7 minutes for the wings to be fully operational.

Now in December Philip warned me that, at 19 years of age, my cat was on borrowed time. Well, yesterday that time ran out. My brave little cat, my constant companion and best buddy lost her battle. I am sure there are many on this site who know exactly how I feel about this very special animal who never, ever hurt another creature and was totally trustworthy:



I shall move swiftly on to the butterflies which are proving to be the distraction that I now need. It is with joy that I can report that I have now found something that the BH will happily nectar on – the wild roses growing in my garden. It is now a pleasure to watch them looking so natural and contented as they explore the plant. After the heavy rain last night I was dismayed to find one floating on a puddle at the base of the cage but I was able to rescue him and it would seem that no harm has been done. I shall know for sure when he dries out. I am indulging myself with a few more shots but I can assure that these really are the last 😊





The latest arrival.



Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 22-May-14 08:00 AM GMT

Pauline, what sad news, Stanleigh was a beautiful, calm and obviously much treasured member of your family, as all pets are to their owners. We are so sorry to hear of your loss, but we can only add that you can at least gain some comfort in the knowledge that you did your utmost to make her final months the most comfortable and rewarding, and at 19 years old she had a good long life in which she gave you many treasured memories we're sure.

Cathy remembers well how Stanleigh gave her the privilege of a few moments curled on her lap at your home, which I think you said was unusual for her to do with strangers. Anyway, we will be amongst those who remember her and were witness to how well you looked after her in her state of ill health, particularly trying to get her to eat, offering a myriad of different tasty morsels.

On a brighter note, your pictures of the Black Hairstreaks on the garden roses are stunning 🦋
Mike and Cathy x

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 22-May-14 12:23 PM GMT

Sorry to hear about Stanleigh – she looked and sounded like a wonderful cat 🐾

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-May-14 06:22 PM GMT

Thank you for your kind comment Wurzel – she was truly amazing and befriended every sick, injured and orphaned creature I brought into the house over the years, regardless of species. She has been an excellent role model to my young cat who can now be left unsupervised with free flying birds.

Your comment means a great deal Mike given that you both actually met her. She certainly took a liking to you Cathy and I always found her to be a good judge of character 😊

Needless to say that I have not yet had the energy or motivation yet to go too far afield and the weather certainly hasn't helped. After the thunder and gales today I went into the garden to check on the Orange Tip cats which were in a net cage on a table (out of the reach of hens). Despite being weighted down by heavy pots the whole lot had blown over. I have managed to salvage a few cats and took a couple of shots which wasn't easy in the wind:



Looking at the changes in them since my earlier shots I am assuming they must be in their 2nd instar.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 23-May-14 07:40 PM GMT

Very sorry to hear about Stanleigh but it sounds as though she had a very good life. I'm pleased you found a nectar source for the BH to enjoy – super pics as usual.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 24-May-14 03:20 PM GMT

Sorry to hear about your cat Pauline I know how you feel, I lost my dog, (the one I mentioned the man ran away from) she died of a Brain Tumour, that's the 3rd dog I've lost now I won't be getting any more!

On a brighter note your young cat sounds very much like the one you've lost so take heart from that Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-May-14 09:25 PM GMT

Thank you Mike on both accounts and I appreciate your understanding Goldie.

I am in danger of getting behind with my posts. About a week ago – don't even remember which day it was as it was such an awful week – I needed to get out for a while and decided to take a short walk along Oxenbourne. Despite the fact that it was 4.00pm, unlike recent visits to Wrecclesham and the Straits which had been largely devoid of butterflies, Oxenbourne was teeming. I don't usually provide lists but between 4.00pm and 5.20pm I had seen 16 species. These included a single Duke, a few PBF, at least 5 spanking new Red Admiral one of which was egg-laying, a couple of firsts for the season (Small Heath and Common Blue) and many, many more. It was warm and I was wearing shorts although I stuck religiously to the paths as this site is well known for ticks. Nevertheless, I came back with at least 14 on me and I am still suffering!! I was not in the mood to take any photos so nothing to show for the visit.

Today, having taken a prolapsed hen to the vet I decided to have a quick look at a couple of local sites in between the showers and quite late in the day. I was delighted to see that the WA cat is back and what a big cat he is now:



Whilst I was trying to get some photos this little chap jumped onto my boot. What a cutie:



A quick stop at Noar Hill around 5.00pm meant most butts were settling down to roost tho the weather was now probably the best seen all day:





and whilst examining the nettles came across another unidentified spider 🕸️



Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 24-May-14 09:56 PM GMT

Pauline, may I add my belated condolences for the loss of your friend and companion, Stanleigh. I know just how much you will miss him.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 25-May-14 12:36 PM GMT

Pauline, lovely photo's again 🍃 The only thing I manage to film is grass stalks, there always in the way, how on earth do you manage to get things so green all the time behind your subjects, the only time I've got that is when I'm aiming at green leaves 😂 Goldie 😂

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 25-May-14 12:41 PM GMT

I love the rather disgruntled look on the face of your first toad pic 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 25-May-14 03:52 PM GMT

Hi Pauline sorry to hear about Stanleigh – having been through that process with a number of dogs and a cat I can completely understand how you feel – but I have always taken comfort from the fact that I have given them a good life – and most were homeless before they came to me.

On a brighter note that Toad is wonderful – he looks seriously angry with you– watch out for him when he is bigger – he might do you some damage 😊

Kind Regards

Mark 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 25-May-14 05:17 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Just catching up again and very sorry to hear your sad news about your cat. I remember a few years ago when one of ours passed away after having him for many years, my wife Jane was so upset she could not bring herself to get another one for nearly 12 months. We eventually did get another one, a little jet black kitten with green eyes from a local animal rescue, who has now grown into a lovely 4 year old moggie.

I have to agree about the comments about the expression on the toads face, that's a proper little scowl 😊 great stuff.

All the best ,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-May-14 11:03 PM GMT

I appreciate that Guy. I have been around long enough to remember Asha and of course more recently your kitten Cat. There is a poem by Rudyard Kipling I believe called 'the power of the dog' which warns against 'giving your heart to a dog to tear' but to my mind the sentiment applies to any animal companion.

Thank you so much for your comment Goldie. I think it might be something to do with depth of field and/or positioning yourself in such a way that there is a clear background but of course with some species this is just not possible, as you have found.

I have never seen such a tiny toad Mike – he was gorgeous. I could easily have taken him home but resisted the temptation.

It has seriously helped Mark knowing there are others out there who have been through it and understand so thank you. The sympathy and condolences from so many were unexpected.

Thank you too Neil but you didn't tell me your moggies name – I like to know all the details 😊

It would seem that I am being gently nudged in the direction of moths via the caterpillar route. On the brink of pupation the WA cat has gone AWOL which is hugely frustrating; subsequent searching revealed these:



Blossom Underwing



Unidentified



Lackey moth larva



Unidentified

Back at home the Orange Tip caterpillars are continuing to grow



Re: Pauline

by Lee Hurrell, 26-May-14 11:20 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Your first moth is an Angle Shades (*Phlogophora meticulosa*).

<http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1731>

Superb photos, as usual!

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Pauline

by Lee Hurrell, 26-May-14 11:26 PM GMT

While the second is one of the Footmen, I think Orange Footman (*Eilema sororcula*) going by flight times.

<http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=805>

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Pauline

by Paul Wetton, 27-May-14 12:31 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Just wanted to pass on my sympathies for the loss of your cat. I had my cat Gizmo for 20 years before he was taken away from me due to cancer. I swore I wouldn't have another due to the upset but now have Floss who was unwanted due to being in a road traffic accident. Glad we took her on as she is wonderful.

keep your chin up and carry on with all your good work. The photos are great as usual.

All my best.

Re: Pauline

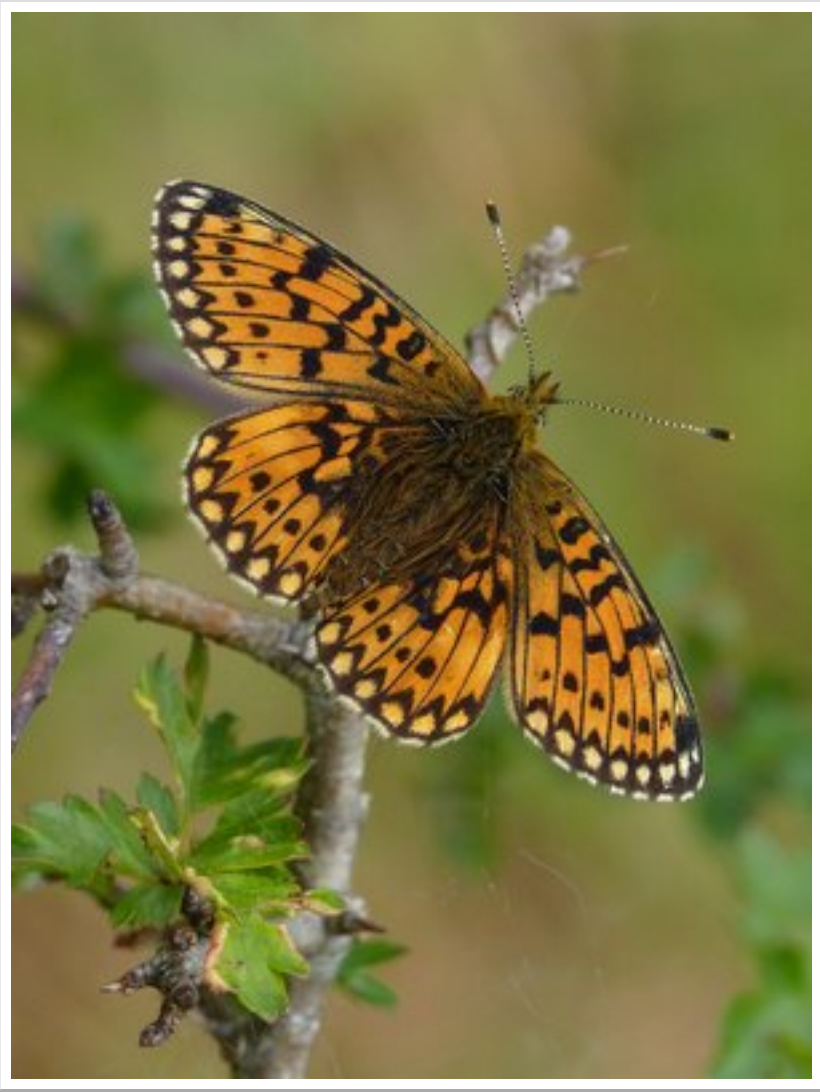
by Pauline, 27-May-14 06:43 PM GMT

Thank you for the ID's Lee. There's definitely some interesting creatures out there. Step by step, one by one, I am trying to learn which is which but there are just so many moths .. 🤔

I appreciate the comment and the compliment Paul. I am pleased to hear that Floss is now OK after her broken pelvis. I remember you both had to rush back from Kent as she was on cage rest so it is great to know she has made a full recovery.

After recent happenings here I decided it was time to do something for myself. For many years I have wanted to see a Swallowtail so arrangements were put in place – animal carer organised, B&B selected, maps printed out etc. Typically, it was not to be 😞. The combination of further animal problems plus a dodgy weather forecast resulted in a change of plan. However, despite the weather today I decided to stray into Wurzel territory. Naturally there was no-one else there – who else would be daft enough on such a grey, cold, overcast day with a rumble of thunder in the background to go out looking for butterflies. I didn't find many – only about 4 worn looking PBF and about the same number of SPBF but it was enough to keep me interested. A few shots below:





As I was on Wurzel's patch I felt obliged to try to take one of his stained glass shots which is no-where near as good as the ones he gets but when looking at it later I spotted what appears to be eggs of some sort on the Bugle. Wish I'd noticed them at the time. Any ideas gratefully received.





There were several Argent and Sable moths flying around (another one I have learnt 😊) but as usual they either wouldn't stop or landed too high up. The only one that allowed me to take some reasonable shots had a big chunk missing out of his wing 😞. I can't remember having seen them land with their wings closed before so that is the one I have elected to post although the composition leaves a lot to be desired:



After a while I decided to check out the MF but by the time I arrived at the location it had turned even colder with more cloud cover and a lot of dampness in the air. Nevertheless, I did see a butterfly which I assume was a Fritillary but unlike the slow and sleepy PBF's and SPBF's I had left behind this one was moving at the speed of light and I simply couldn't follow it with my eyes. It would disappear over the fence or behind a bush without a trace. This happened 3 times so I had more than one chance to at least ID it. It is a while since I have seen MF but I can't remember them covering the area at such a speed. Any recent visitors to that place got any ideas?

Re: Pauline

by Paul Wetton, 27-May-14 06:53 PM GMT

Floss is doing fine and getting up to mischief as often as she can. She still has a little bone growth to go but should all be ok. She'll be going outside soon so I hope I can teach her to behave as well as your cats with regard to birds and other small creatures. Another set of great photos Pauline. Lovely SPBFs.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 27-May-14 07:23 PM GMT

Great stuff Pauline for such perseverance in really grim weather 😊 Lovely photos as usual, very well deserved 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 27-May-14 10:08 PM GMT

I was in Bentley but not in the Eastern Clearing this morning Pauline and so I'm gutted on two fronts – first I missed out on catching up with you and secondly finding some roosting SPBFs as I've struggled to get the closed wing shots this year. Yours are cracking as usual 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 27-May-14 11:05 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

who else would be daft enough on such a grey, cold, overcast day with a rumble of thunder in the background to go out looking for butterflies. I didn't find many – only about 4 worn looking PBF and about the same number of SPBF but it was enough to keep me interested

Hi Pauline

I remembered your advice from this time last year and I also headed out in driving rain over the weekend with an umbrella 🌂 However, I had much less success than yourself 😞

Sorry to hear about your feline companion and also your collection of unwanted guests from Oxenbourne. Better luck with the Swallowtails next time, maybe the next time we will have Swallowtails closer to home 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-May-14 10:34 AM GMT

Thank you Paul – I'm glad you like them. Cats can be trained (against their natural instincts) but it does take time.

I appreciate your comment Mike, thank you.

Thank you for your sympathy Paul – I appreciate it. I am glad you have joined the small select group who are not afraid to venture out in adverse conditions 😊. As I wandered around Bentley yesterday I took this shot of a few deer. They were quickly joined by the rest of the herd (about 30 individuals in total) and stampeded across the track. How lovely I thought and then I thought of all those extra ticks 🤨🤨



I am so sorry I missed you Wurzel; it would have been good to chat. You would not want to take closed wing shots like mine. Because of the weather conditions the butterflies were too closed up which in my opinion spoils the composition. A little while back Neil H posted an Orange Tip which for me is the ideal profile – poised and ready for action 🍷 That breeze easily blew the hind wings out of focus too but if I waited for the perfect photo and perfect weather conditions I would never post anything 😊

A few shots from yesterday which have been cropped slightly differently and which I think I might prefer (still wondering what those 'eggs' are – anybody???)





One of the worn and tatty PBF by way of comparison:



Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 28-May-14 12:24 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

still wondering what those 'eggs' are – anybody???

Hi Pauline,

I don't believe these are eggs,



but more likely to be part of the flower itself, probably immature anthers, which will turn yellow and produce pollen. Those that I have in my garden have nearly all finished, so I cannot check for white structures like these. A bit more information can be found here:

[http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodlan ... ers/bugle/](http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodlan...ers/bugle/)

Really sorry to hear about your cat.

Vince

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 28-May-14 03:49 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I did see a butterfly which I assume was a Fritillary but unlike the slow and sleepy PBF's and SPBF's I had left behind this one was moving at the speed of light and I simply couldn't follow it with my eyes. It would disappear over the fence or behind a bush without a trace.

I had exactly the same experience recently, when looking for MF at a different site!

I think the ultra-fast critter may have been a Fox Moth. The males fly in the afternoon and zoom over the ground searching for females. As you say, they are almost impossible to follow and suddenly zoom high into the air without warning. I first encountered one several years ago and was totally mystified. Needless to say, I have never got a camera anywhere near one, despite much trying 😊

Mike

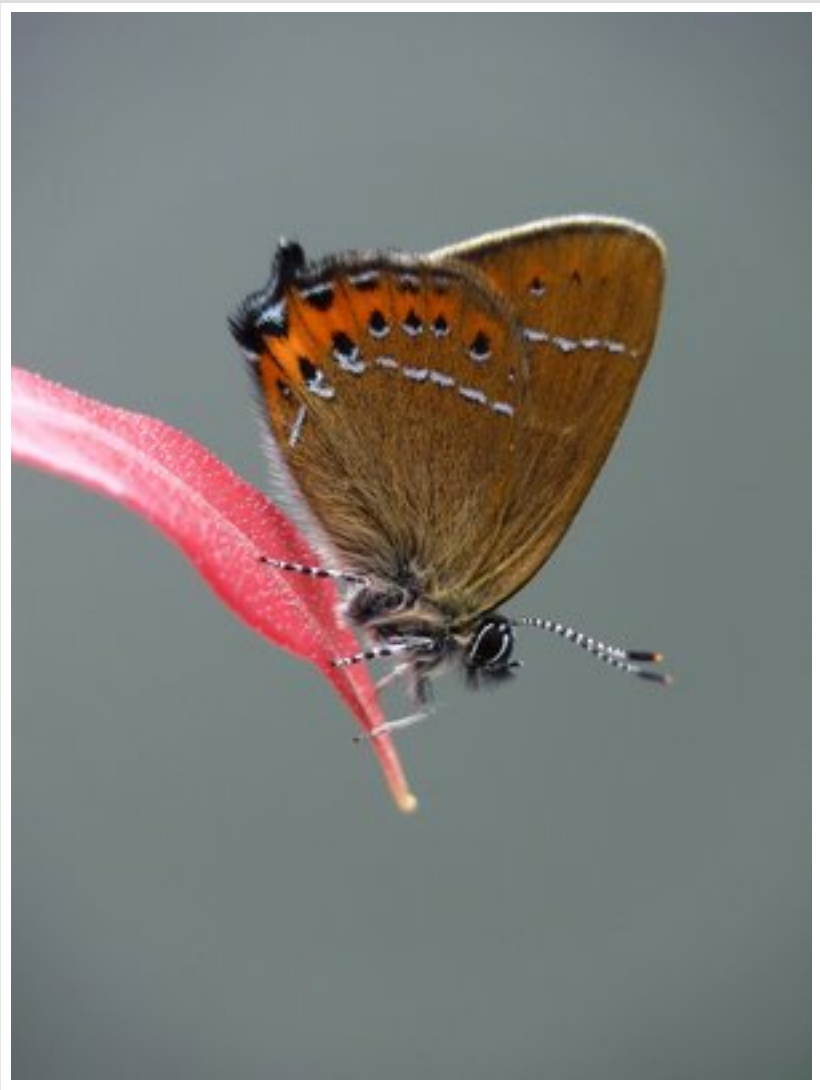
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-May-14 06:12 AM GMT

Thank you on both counts Vince. I am actually relieved that they are not eggs as I would have regretted not seeing them at the time.

That sounds like a plausible explanation Mike. I was beginning to think I was losing it 😊 as I just couldn't keep my eyes on the critter.

I know I said I wasn't going to do this but I blame Andy 😊😊 On seeing that my BH pupa were emerging indoors he suggested I move them outside to increase the humidity. Naturally, with the cold, wet weather experienced recently any subsequent emergence was delayed so I am now having the pleasure of watching the remaining butterflies emerge. They certainly brighten up these dreary days:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-May-14 06:23 AM GMT

Ooops, forgot these!!!



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 29-May-14 09:43 AM GMT

More stunning Black Hairstreak shots Pauline 😊🍷🍷 All the moral/ethics/anxiety aside it must be nice to have some butterflies on hand to photograph during the inclement weather. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 30-May-14 12:19 PM GMT

Your photos just keep getting better 😊 I love the third 'blue mood' one.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 30-May-14 02:51 PM GMT

Lovely photo's Pauline 🍷 I really am quite jealous 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 30-May-14 03:04 PM GMT

I'm just salvating Pauline...simply stunning images of an iconic species!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-May-14 03:38 PM GMT

Thank you for the compliment Wurzel. I can't find a Swallowtail so just have to make do with boring old BH 😊 Seriously tho, I know your views on this and I agree with you. One day we will get to catch up and I can put your mind to rest.

Thank you too Goldie. I have a post coming soon which might be of interest to you.

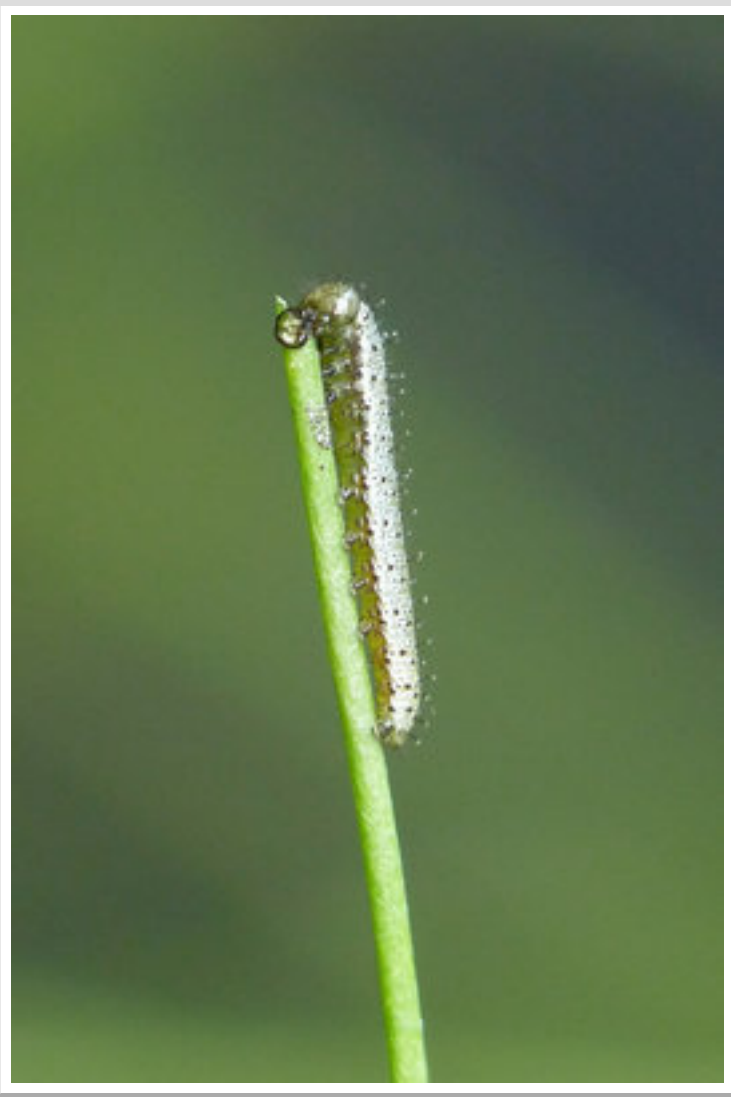
I appreciate that Mike. I am using the BH not just to improve my photography but to experiment with colours and shapes as I am definitely not artistic or creative, so don't yet know what works well and what doesn't. Hope you can bear with me and please feel free to criticise.

I'm so pleased I haven't bored the pants off you yet Bill. Thank you for the comment.

Yesterday I checked my Orange Tips and they are still quite tiny so I am still struggling to get a decent shot – not helped by the poor light and the fact they are housed in black netting. I took shots throughout the day and was surprised how the appearance of the cats changed with the light. They are such pretty little things and seem to have a metallic appearance to them:







Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 30-May-14 08:45 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I am definitely not artistic or creative

Yes you are – the proof is in this thread.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-May-14 08:46 PM GMT

I try to learn from photos others have taken which I admire. At Southwick last year Mud-puddling took a photo of a LTB sat close to black berries which perfectly complemented the butterfly's markings (I believe it is in the gallery somewhere) and it was that photo that caused me to think more about plants, background, positions etc. which enhance the butterfly rather than detract from it. When Goldie mentioned backgrounds recently, I recalled the problems I used to have getting an uncluttered background. At Denbies a couple of years ago I took a photo of a pair of mating Chalkhill Blues which just happened to be in front of an old grey metal animal water trough and I found the result quite pleasing. That got me thinking! The grey metal became a pale grey which perfectly complemented the blue of the butterflies. Sometimes I find certain green backgrounds too harsh though I realise that this is subjective and down to personal preference. I was amused recently to read Pete's admission that he sometimes uses a green jacket for his background. I thought I would try out some different backgrounds for the BH as I have been experimenting with complimentary and contrasting colours. I would be interested in any views/opinions.



Plain grey background which is actually the garden path.



Just having fun now and the background is a Sainsbury's plastic carrier bag 😂

This background is the tarpaulin covering the garden furniture.





This is the lawn and the hedge and my least favourite background.

So, I guess the moral of the story is to get a bit inventive with the backgrounds; look around and use what is to hand as even different trees provide more subtle shades of green.

To finish with the BH I would just like to include a shot which I think includes both male and female given the size difference and the difference in size of the tails which David alerted me to earlier



Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 30-May-14 08:50 PM GMT

You can also see the male sex brand in relief in the left-hand butterfly (the oval spot in the top corner of the cell) while the female, on the right, is quite flat there.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Lee Hurrell, 30-May-14 09:47 PM GMT

Well I think they're all beautiful Pauline!

Lee

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 30-May-14 10:11 PM GMT

The plain grey works best for me.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by David M, 30-May-14 10:16 PM GMT

Superb images again, Pauline. Your diary includes some breathtaking images that have no equal on this site or any other.

You should feel very proud of your work.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 30-May-14 11:22 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Thank you too Neil but you didn't tell me your moggies name – I like to know all the details 🐾

Hi Pauline,

I have got some catching up to do after a few days on the Isle of Wight, nearly missed this, our moggies (I should really say Jane's moggy) name is Benjy.

Some interesting background colours for your BH images. I usually prefer a natural look but there is no denying that some of them work really well. Some lovely images 😊

With regard to Pete's comment about using his coat, I have seen a few things whilst out and about over the past few years ranging from bits of clothing, large leaves and sheets of coloured card placed behind the photo. I have also seen some quite inventive little gadgets and clamps used to hold grass stems and twigs and suchlike with butterflies at just the right pose.

Each to their own I suppose but for me when the result starts to look like it has been taken in a studio it begins to lose its appeal a bit. That's probably the difference between a proper photographer and myself who just likes to take photos of butterflies as I see them, in their natural surroundings.

Having said that I will usually look for the best background I can get from the natural surroundings for any given shot. I remember last summer taking some photos against a background of dry grass which gave a pleasing pastel yellowish/beige effect.

Keep up the experiments, it's always interesting to see the results and follow your thoughts and above all keep on having fun doing it 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 31-May-14 07:52 PM GMT

More stunning BH shots Pauline 🐾🐾 My fave is obviously the pair together, simply fantastic 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Susie, 31-May-14 08:22 PM GMT

Oh Pauline, I don't know what to say about your BH images, they are simply stunning!

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 31-May-14 09:04 PM GMT

Beautiful shots of your BH Pauline 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jun-14 02:51 PM GMT

Thank you all so much for your amazing comments.

I would never even have noticed that Guy if you hadn't brought it to my attention so I have learned something new today 😊 .

I think Benjy is a grand name for a cat Jane and from Neil's description he sounds a very handsome chap indeed. I, too, like the more natural shots Neil which is why I read your diary, and William's and Guy's oh, I've started now and there are so many more I could mention! However, I do think there is a lot of skill goes into those shots – as you say, getting the best background, the best composition etc. I try to take more natural shots from time to time but I am not very good at it and instead of coming out like a beautiful painting you would want on your wall it just comes out a cluttered mess.

Perhaps I should try harder! I am sure I remember that dried grass shot – in fact I think I asked you how you had managed it – but for the life of me I can't remember the butterfly (was it a Small Copper perhaps)?

David, I think I shall print out your comment and frame it for those days when I can't even get the butterfly in focus 😊 Thank you.

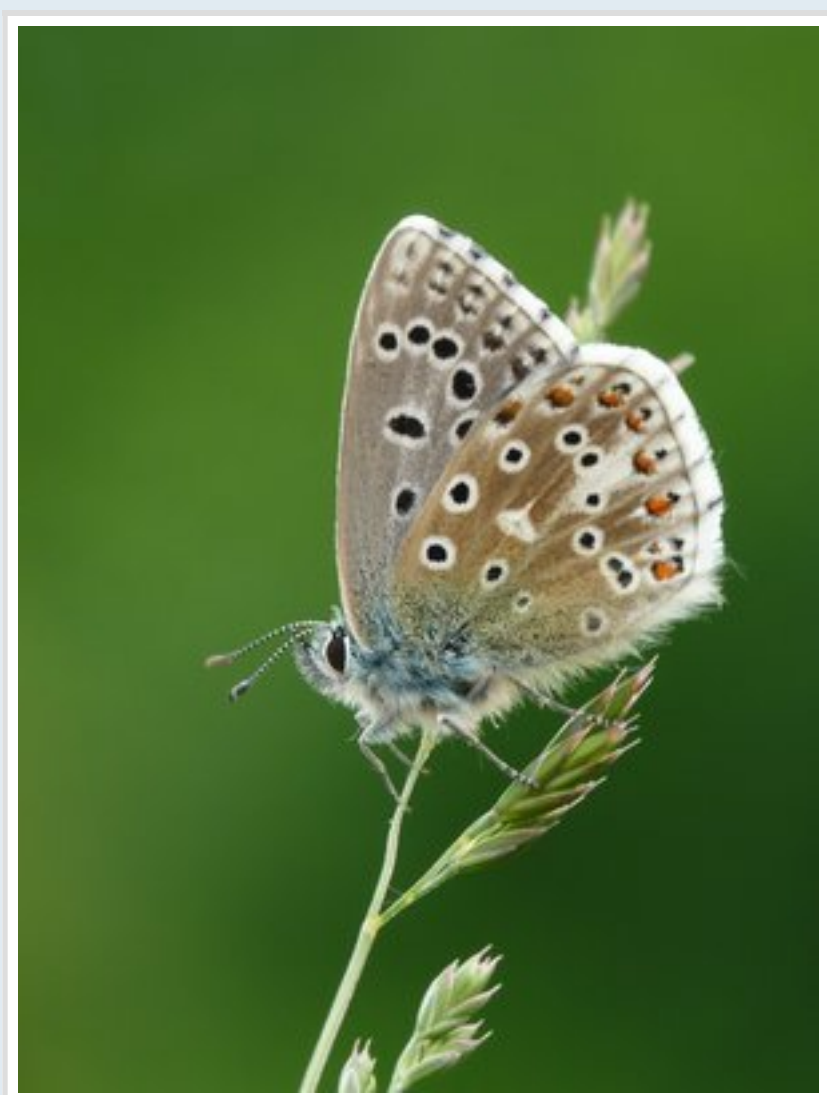
I am pleased you like my photos Susie – thank you for taking the time to let me know.

My favourite would have been the orange one Mike if the orange had been slightly paler and less blotchy – but that was the white writing, the brand name, on the carrier bag. Having searched the garden for a leaf which was the exact colour of the butt I wanted to match the orange markings 😂 . Generally speaking tho' I think a pale grey/neutral background works quite well.

I was pleased to get that shot Wurzel. I was hoping that I might be able to but with them both moving around it was more luck than judgement 😊

Thank you too, to both Mike and Lee. I appreciate you taking the time to comment and I am pleased you enjoy my diary.

Late afternoon yesterday I was told that Adonis Blues were just emerging at Old Winchester Hill. Although it was late in the day I was at a bit of a loose end so I decided to take a quick look. It was quite breezy on that hill – isn't it always!??? – but sure enough, despite the clouds there were a few Adonis hunkered down in the grass (I always thought they roosted on stems as several Common Blues were doing. I managed some closed wing shots but I was hoping and praying for just a little early evening sunshine to get those wings open and reveal the beauty of the upper side. At last it happened 😊 . A few shots from yesterday:







As can be seen, I tried from all angles and positions to capture that beautiful turquoise sheen but I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible.

Re: Pauline

by Katrina, 01-Jun-14 03:02 PM GMT

The last photo is a beauty - I like the way the blue goes from darker to lighter from front to back.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jun-14 04:20 PM GMT

Thank you so much Katrina, I appreciate that, but check out Andy's diary - he has some cracking shots 📷

Yesterday whilst doing a bit of gardening I found this:



I assume it is some sort of moth. It is massive 🤩. For size comparison this is a Brown hairstreak pupa:



It moves too! I sincerely hope it is an impressive, colourful moth and not some plain or ugly brown thing – any ideas? The collection in my net cage is steadily growing 😁😁

I was also pleased to find a few of these on the garlic mustard. I can't think how I haven't seen them before as I have been checking but I guess they just blend in too well. I am assuming they are GVW and have moved them to a more protected area:



Whilst out and about I also came across these. I've no idea what they are but I thought they were interesting anyway:



Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 01-Jun-14 06:07 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

The red pupa is of the moth Angle Shades <http://www.ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=3367> I dug up a couple from my flower bed as well today.

My gut feeling on the larva is that it is Green-veined White. It looks like it is just about to moult, so should not be disturbed. After the moult, diagnostic markings will be visible which will either confirm my theory or show it to be Small White.

See http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/reports_..._4tc1yjb4_w and http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/reports_..._4tdZyjb4_w for more information.

Vince

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jun-14 09:57 AM GMT

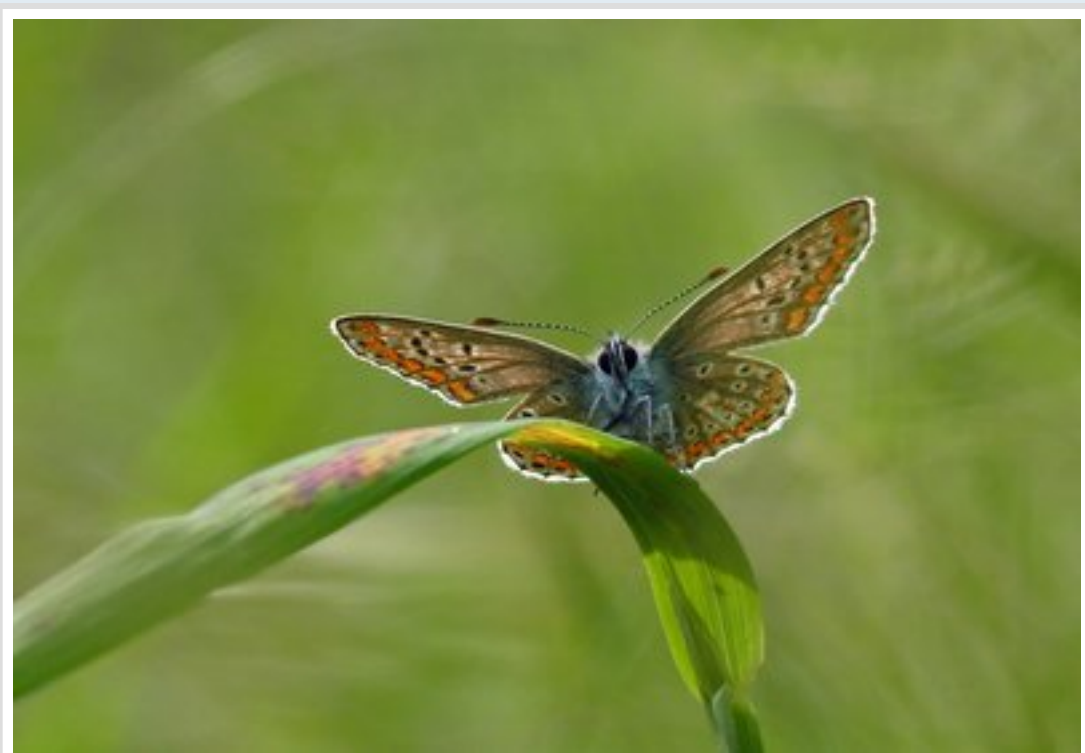
I didn't even consider Small White Vince but I can see now how similar they are. Fantastic reports and photos as usual. I'm a teeny bit disappointed at Angle Shades – it is an OK moth I suppose but I had hoped it was going to be something more like a hawkmoth. Perhaps I might even end up with a moth trap to see just what is around here at night 😊

Thank you for the compliment Mike – nearly missed it as our posts were simultaneous.

Last week I saw my first Large Skipper of the season and since then I have seen a couple more:



Whilst out and about I came across a very worn Brown Argus who looked better from underneath:



and an Orange Tip enjoying some fast food:



A female and male Common Blue complete the list:



I checked out a Southsea site just on the off chance of a Swallowtail but the only photos I took were these:



Re: Pauline

by Willow, 02-Jun-14 02:29 PM GMT

Another lovely report Pauline, I guess there's always something to inspire the curious naturalist in any wind or weather, capturing it to share is quite another matter...and on this particular matter your pretty good you know 😊

Best Wishes,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 02-Jun-14 03:13 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I love your Photo's, I'm a bit late replying I know because this weekend we decided to clean all the flags around the bungalow, it took us two days 😊 But we're off in three weeks to Salisbury(think that's how you spell it) and in between that I'm want to go up to the Lakes again.

You asked for an opinion on colours well I like all the Photo's but the 1st one is my favourite one followed by the 5th I think the 2nd one has too much orange, and the green both pale and dark don't make the BF stand out like the Grey back ground . (listen to the expert) 😊 Pauline, really, your shots are all fantastic 🍷🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-14 11:22 PM GMT

Great underwing shot of the Brown Argus Pauline 😊 Good luck with the Swallowtail next time 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jun-14 07:07 AM GMT

Thank you Bill – that's really kind of you. I must confess I am easily pleased – show me a patch of nettles and I can entertain myself for ages 😊

I appreciate your opinion Goldie and I hope your have a great time at Salisbury – let us know how you get on 😊

Hi Wurzel. Thank you for the comment – I think a Swallowtail is a long shot but I definitely won't see one sitting at home so I'll keep getting out there when possible 😊

Yesterday for example I spent a good chunk of the day looking for White Admiral in any shape or form at various known sites. (I know, I need to get a life 😊). Either they are going to have a very bad year or I'm rubbish at finding them – probably the latter! There were loads of Speckled Woods about and little orange moths together with some very fresh looking Brimstone (but seem to have lost that photo somehow)



I enjoyed watching this little lizard for a good 15 minutes but despite repeated attempts and several opportunities I failed to get a shot of him catching his lunch:





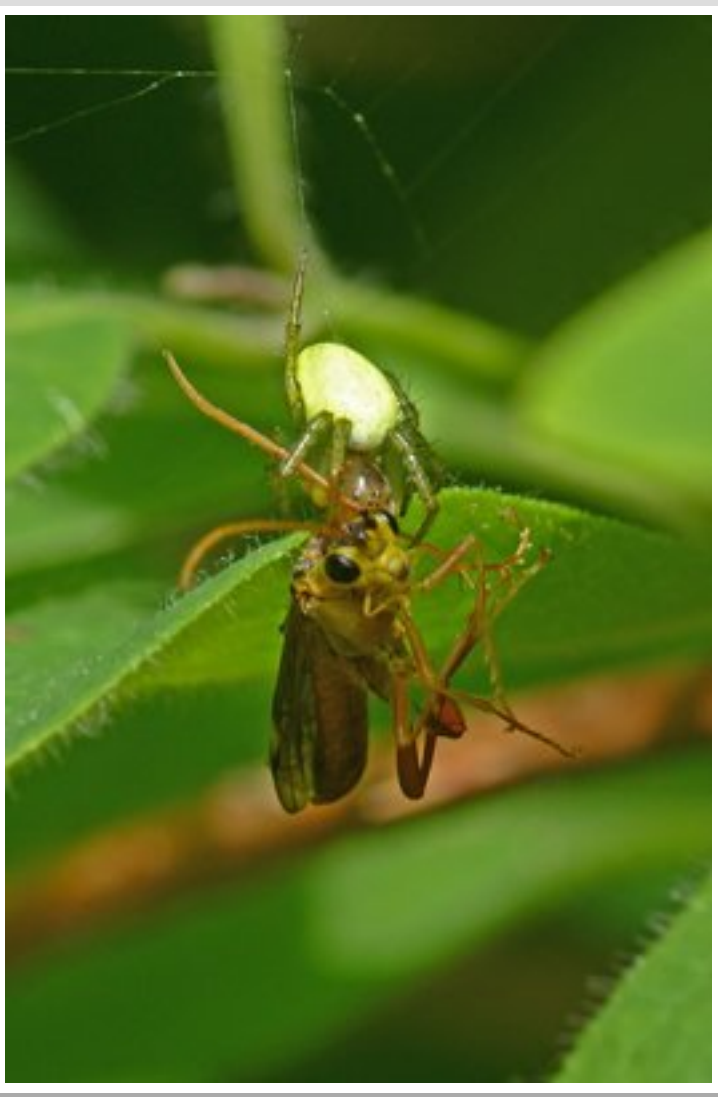
Whilst foraging in the woods I found some interesting critters and as usual I have no idea what they are. It has been suggested that this could be a ladybird larva but I have done a little research and think it might be a moth called *Sitochroa Palealis*?



Even more curious was this little cocoon which seemed to have a little face poking out – no one seems to know what it is but I really can't keep bringing stuff home to see what it turns out to be (not least because I'd have to go and put it back again 😏😊).



I witnessed some life and death struggles and saw some evil looking creatures:



and saw a few plants (field maple?) covered in these red spots which was very pretty but presumably a type of fungus?



Lots of questions and no answers. No WA either. I initially looked in places where there was loads of Honeysuckle thinking it might give me a better chance. It didn't! I then looked in places where there was very little honeysuckle (and where I know there are imago in the summer) on the basis that the butterfly would have less choice of where to lay and therefore easier to find. Still no luck. I looked very high on the plants and very low on the plants, on the upper leaves and underneath. Ah well, shall just have to keep searching as I would really like to see a pupa in the wild.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jun-14 04:38 PM GMT

Despite the persistent and sometimes heavy rain this morning I thought it was about time I checked out the Silver studded blues locally. In the past I have recorded these as early as 24/25 May and today I was not disappointed. Neil, this could not be called a studio photo by any stretch of the imagination but I am trying to develop a different set of skills. It was also the first one I espied:



I crept closer following my record shot, crept being the operative word, down and dirty in the wet grass and mud, to get a closer view:



The weather was very humid, warm but very wet and I realised many of my shots looked like this:



I guess moisture must have got into the lens and I had to unscrew it and try to dry it. It got difficult to dry things out as by this time I was soaked to the skin – completely sodden and squelching along. Thankfully, there were a very few brief intervals where open wing shots were possible. I shall definitely be back.





I always find it incredibly difficult to get decent shots of blue butterflies whatever the weather but I shall keep trying



Whilst I was preparing these photos for the website there was a massive crash against the window, much louder than the usual young Starling which just seem to bounce off the glass. I went out to check and found a young Woodpecker lying face down in the soil; not a great photo but I was in a hurry to get him into the hospital cage to treat for shock and concussion:



It's not the first time this has happened and I'm not really surprised as there are about 10 Woodpeckers in the garden right now. Thankfully, this baby recovered quite quickly – it is always best to get them back out there as quickly as possible because of the stress but I have had one that took 8 hours to regain consciousness. I placed him in the old apple tree and watched whilst he became more alert. The last I saw of him he was eating peanuts from one of the feeders 😊



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jun-14 05:39 PM GMT

Whilst looking at SSB my attention was caught by a comparatively large, pale blue coloured butterfly, which turned out to be a female Common Blue. It never ceases to amaze me how the colours and sizes can vary so much.



Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jun-14 07:27 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Great photos, not a studio shot amongst them 😊😄 I really like the second SSB with the raindrops on the grass stem 😊

There does seem to be a lot of very blue female Common Blues around this year, more than I have noticed before.

That first woodpecker shot give the impression of how things probably looked to him 😊, great story and well done on nursing them back to health.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-14 11:31 PM GMT

Great Silver Studded Blue shots Pauline 😊👍 I'll have to look out for them in about two weeks time as that seems to be the time delay between the rest of country seeing something and it emerging at my local sites 😊 There have been plenty of female blue Blues around this year but that is the bluest by far 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by FISHiEE, 04-Jun-14 06:04 AM GMT

Great set of SSB shots Pauline. I was just debating whether I should go check for these tomorrow as they must be due out about now and your report has now confirmed my plans for tomorrow! 😊

Re: Pauline

by NickMorgan, 04-Jun-14 10:09 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Blues, Pauline. Personally, I like to see a bit of background in a picture of a butterfly. It gives a bit of context to where they were seen and for me a photo is a record of a moment in time which reminds me of when I saw a particular butterfly.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 04-Jun-14 08:43 PM GMT

Lovely SSB shots Pauline, great stuff finding them in the rain. As already noted, not a studio shot in sight 😊👍

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Jun-14 09:18 PM GMT

Thank you for the comment Mike. I had a lot of practice in 2012 finding stuff in the rain so hope we're not going to have a repeat of that 😊

I'm glad you like the SSB's Nick. If I can get a pleasing background then I will gladly include it but it's not something I find easy to achieve. A bit of a mixed bag below.

I appreciate that John. Yes, get out there quick as the females are now out. See you at 5.00am 😊😊😊

Thank you Wurzel. Yes, there seems to be more blue females than brown ones this year which I think is very odd. 😊

Your last remark made me chuckle Neil as you are probably spot on. I'm glad you like that shot as I can promise you that I ended up a great deal wetter than any of those butterflies 😊👍

I hadn't intended to go out today, mainly because of the weather, but by 4.30pm I needed some fresh air and exercise and as the SSB are so close, that was where I headed. I almost didn't take my camera because there was quite a fierce wind and the sky was overcast but in the event I'm glad I did. The first female I discovered looked as if she had just emerged and was still drying out her wings but a lack of sun deprived me of a better shot:



It wasn't long before the butterflies looked as if they were settling down to roost, showing off their stunning studs, but the wind was so strong I had to take about 10 shots to get one that was even remotely in focus:



There were a few brief sunny intervals and I took full advantage of them to try to capture the lovely iridescence on the newly emerged females:



I am puzzled that there does not appear to be any sign of ants or ant hills at this site as I had been under the impression that they have a close relationship with the SSB:



The females were so fresh that I felt sure that, if the sun continued just a little while more, it would not be long before I witnessed a mating pair. I was not wrong.



Re: Pauline

by Willow, 04-Jun-14 09:55 PM GMT

Wonderful array of subject matter Pauline (as is usually the case 😊) and those lovely photo's do them all proud, I'm never anything but pleased after visiting your PD!!!

Regards,

Bill 😊

When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Pauline

by David M, 04-Jun-14 10:43 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff, Pauline. Summer MUST be here if SSBs are out (although we Swansea residents wouldn't know it – it's been 14c and tipping with rain all day here; I've even put my heating back on tonight!!).

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jun-14 08:14 PM GMT

I'm really pleased you like my diary Bill. Thank you so much for the compliments.

Thank you too David. I have to tell you that today's weather has been lovely and yesterday was OK but the rest of the time it has been grim here too and having a wooden house I have to keep the heating on too 😓 (Apparently it is not good for the wood to keep expanding and contracting!).

Today I had a choice of whether to chase after Swallowtails in Sussex (which seem to vanish into thin air after an initial sighting) or stay closer to home. I recalled that last year there were 2 sightings of Swallowtails in Selbourne and it is quite possible that this butterfly may have been under-recorded in Hampshire. I opted for a look round one of my closest sites and am pleased to be able to post the following photos:





Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 06-Jun-14 08:55 PM GMT

Really superb photos Pauline 😊 perhaps it's going to be another Clouded Yellow summer 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 06-Jun-14 10:56 PM GMT

You clearly made the right decision, Pauline. This all looks promising for a Clouded Yellow summer.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Jun-14 06:22 AM GMT

Let us hope so David – I know you have already seen and photographed one this year but they are such a beautiful butterfly I could never tire of seeing them. Thank you for your comment.

Thank you too Mike. It was indeed the same site and good to know your individual was a male. You might recall that there were several there last year (I personally saw 3 in the same small area, 2 of them females) so I am wondering if it is possible/feasible that they have successfully bred and managed to over-winter here? If so, perhaps we shall be seeing a few more locally 😊 . With 140 seen at Thorney Island, many mating pairs at various locations and the mild winter, there has got to be a good chance surely.

I make no apologies for including a few more shots as it was a delight to see her:



Re: Pauline

by PhilJohnson, 07-Jun-14 07:17 AM GMT

Nice pictures of the Clouded Yellow.
(Good morning Pauline).

All I can see outside at the moment is a clouded sky!

Best Wishes.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Jun-14 10:33 AM GMT

I'm glad that you like them Phil. Thank you for taking the time to let me know. Here, too, the skies are grey and the thunder is rumbling, providing a suitable background to the relentless rain. Needless to say my plans for today have been scuppered. I shall, instead, post a few shots of a very pretty female blue which I found irresistible whilst looking at the Clouded Yellow:





The photos, as usual, do not do justice to the stunning markings and colours of this particular individual.

Re: Pauline

by Willrow, 07-Jun-14 03:29 PM GMT

Wonderful **Clouded Yellow** photo's Pauline, and you very nearly got a rare open wing shot as a bonus 🤩😊 keep the reports and images coming 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-14 11:09 PM GMT

Fantastic Clouded Yellow shots Pauline 🍀🍀 Fingers crossed for another good year – this could be one of the advantages of climate change.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by PhilBJohnson, 09-Jun-14 04:01 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

As a composition, I like the second shot of the Blue the best & when it comes to "blues" I have some "identification issues"

Best Wishes.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jun-14 05:19 PM GMT

I'm so glad you like them Bill as I was pleased with them, and even more pleased to see her. Open-winged shot? I have tried but I fear neither me nor my camera are up to it 😞.

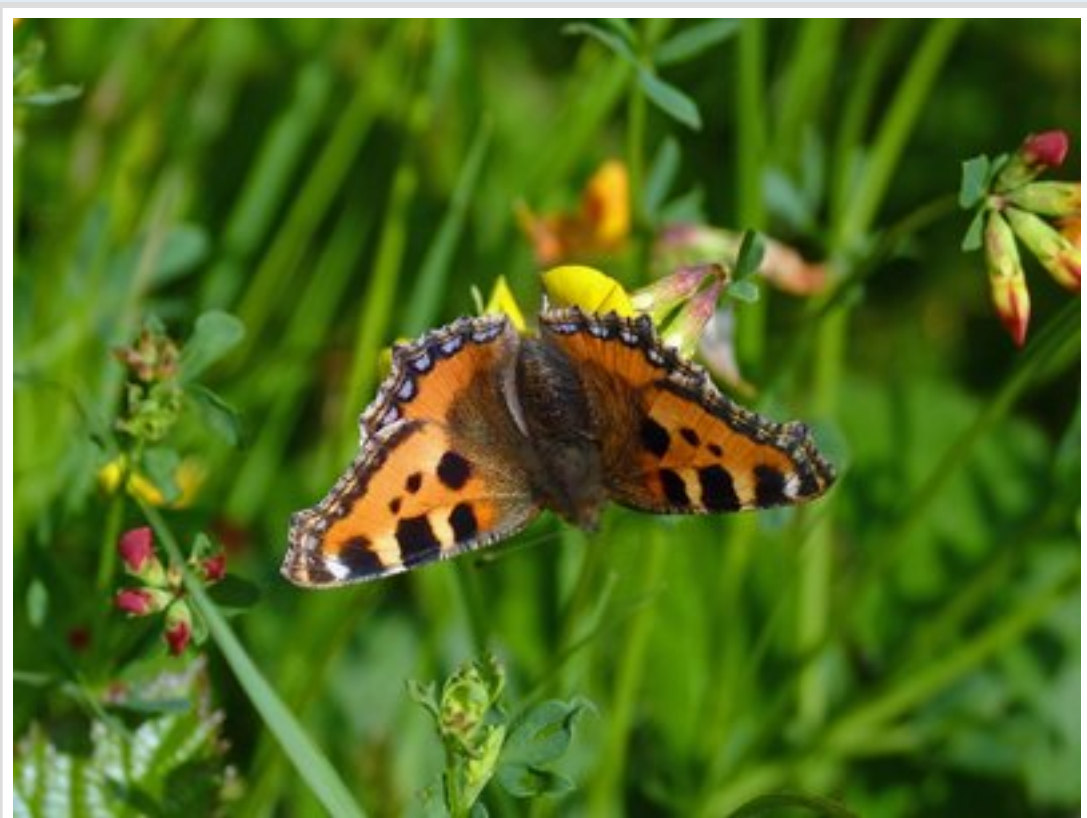
You could be right Wurzel – I saw another 2 today at a different site. Thank you for your comment.

Good to hear from you Phil. As you might know by now I am always up for constructive criticism so thank you for that. When it comes to 'identification issues' I can assure you that you are not alone, especially where the females are concerned.

I belatedly picked up a message to alert me that Painted Lady had been seen at a local site. I thought I would take a look anyway and I was not disappointed. I did not see the Painted Lady but the site was teeming with butterflies. The Silver Studded Blue had become more widespread and were interspersed with Common Blue. One of the first butterflies I saw was a feisty Green Hairstreak. In his hey-day I expect he had been a very handsome chap, the first I have seen with the extended white markings. He still had a lot of fight left in him and spent much time squabbling with the Common Blues, at one point sharing a branch with one of his adversaries, which I failed to capture on camera.

A couple of Dingy Skippers in remarkably good condition sparred with each other and a Brown Argus, whilst male and female Large Skippers spiraled through the air. Two pairs of Silver Studded Blues were mating whilst several females ferreted through the grass, egg-laying. I was distracted from the mating pairs by a Clouded Yellow which flew past at great speed (the first of 2) – it was midday and everything was very active, allowing only record shots. One of the Clouded Yellow was striking as in flight it seemed to be deep orange, so deep that when I first saw it I did not recognise it immediately as a Clouded Yellow. Surprisingly the underside was quite a normal colour. I managed a couple of long distance shots before it took off

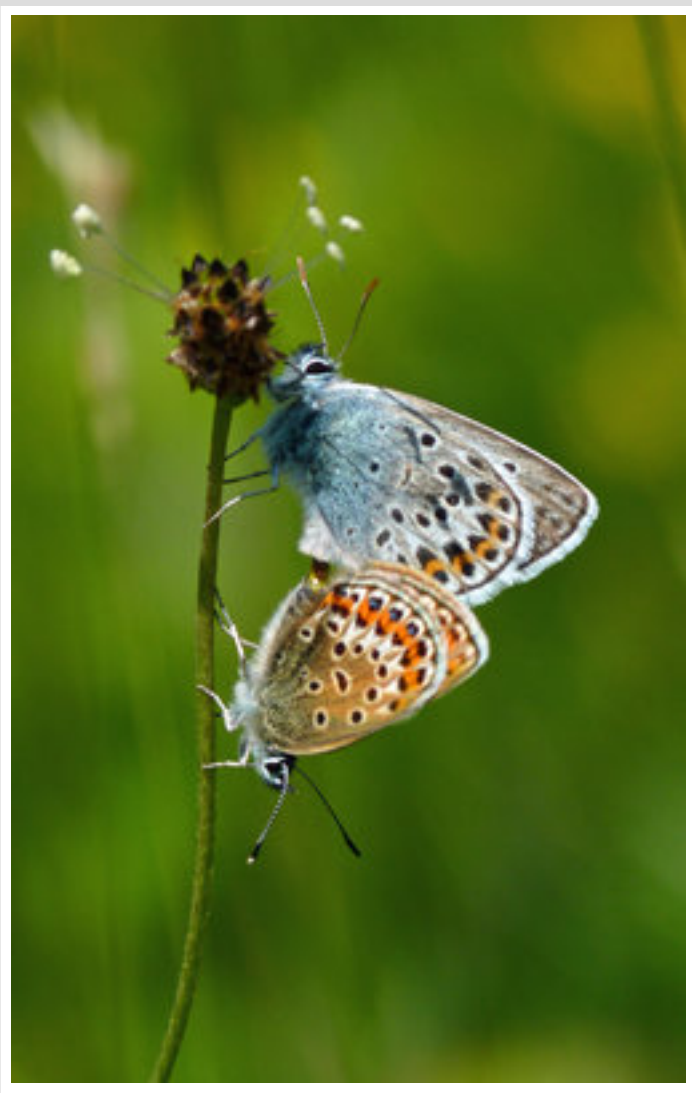
again. There was much, much more to enjoy. I looked around and a fresh Small Tortoiseshell was taking nectar and a lovely female Brimstone was moving from one flower to the next. I was spoilt for choice and didn't know what to photograph next. I only moved a couple of yards the whole time I was there but saw 10 species. A very enjoyable 90 minutes on a lovely summer's day. So, this is the spot, and these are the butterflies:











Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 09-Jun-14 07:35 PM GMT

Just catching up again Pauline, some great Clouded Yellow and 'Blue' photos, I particularly like the 'sheen' on the female SSBs 😊

That looks like a lovely spot there in your last post

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 09-Jun-14 08:09 PM GMT

Lovely photos Pauline, it does look a beautiful place, and beautiful studs on the female in the first mating pair 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-14 11:39 PM GMT

Stunning shots Pauline and that habitat looks lush. 🍀 😊 Your Greenstreak is a punctata ab isn't it? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 10-Jun-14 12:49 PM GMT

Delightful images taken in some stunning countryside Pauline.

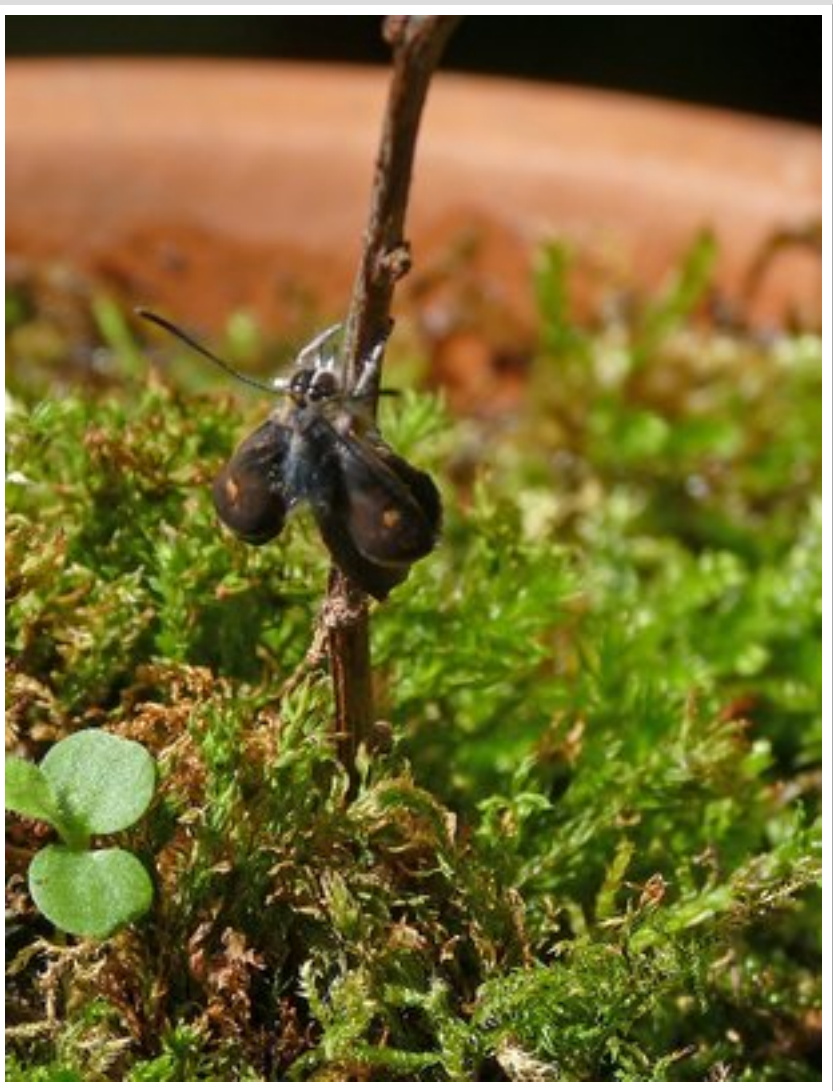
Re: Pauline

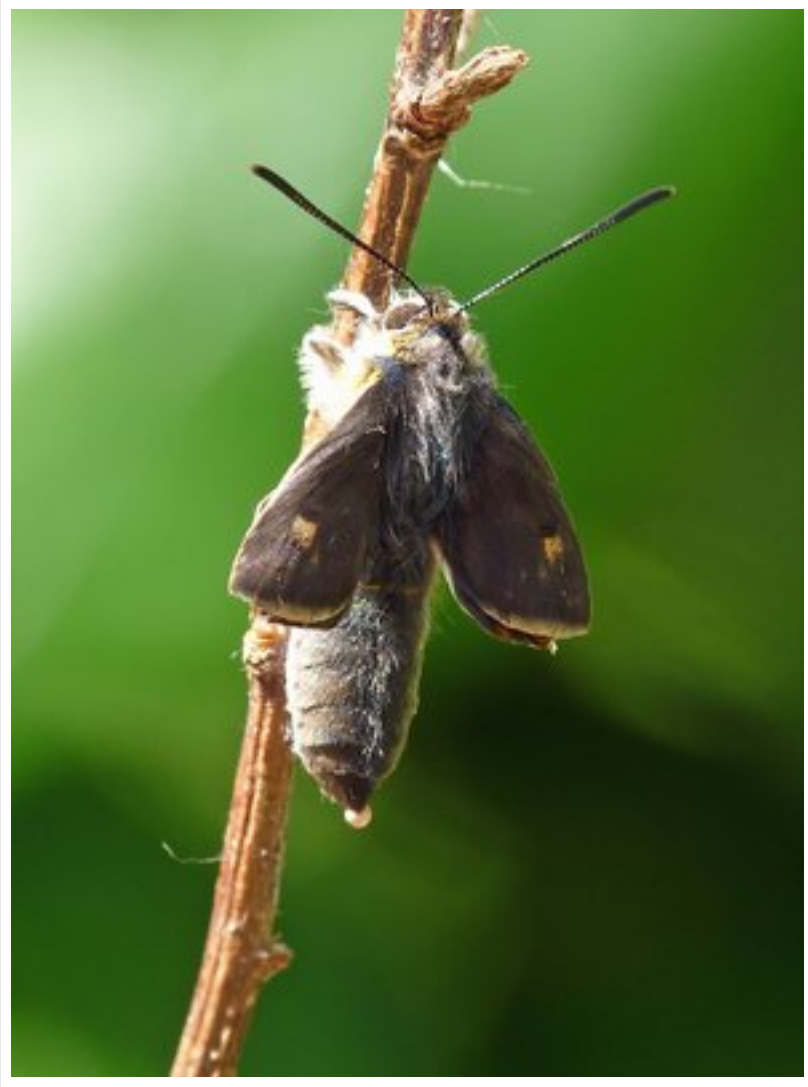
by Pauline, 11-Jun-14 06:58 PM GMT

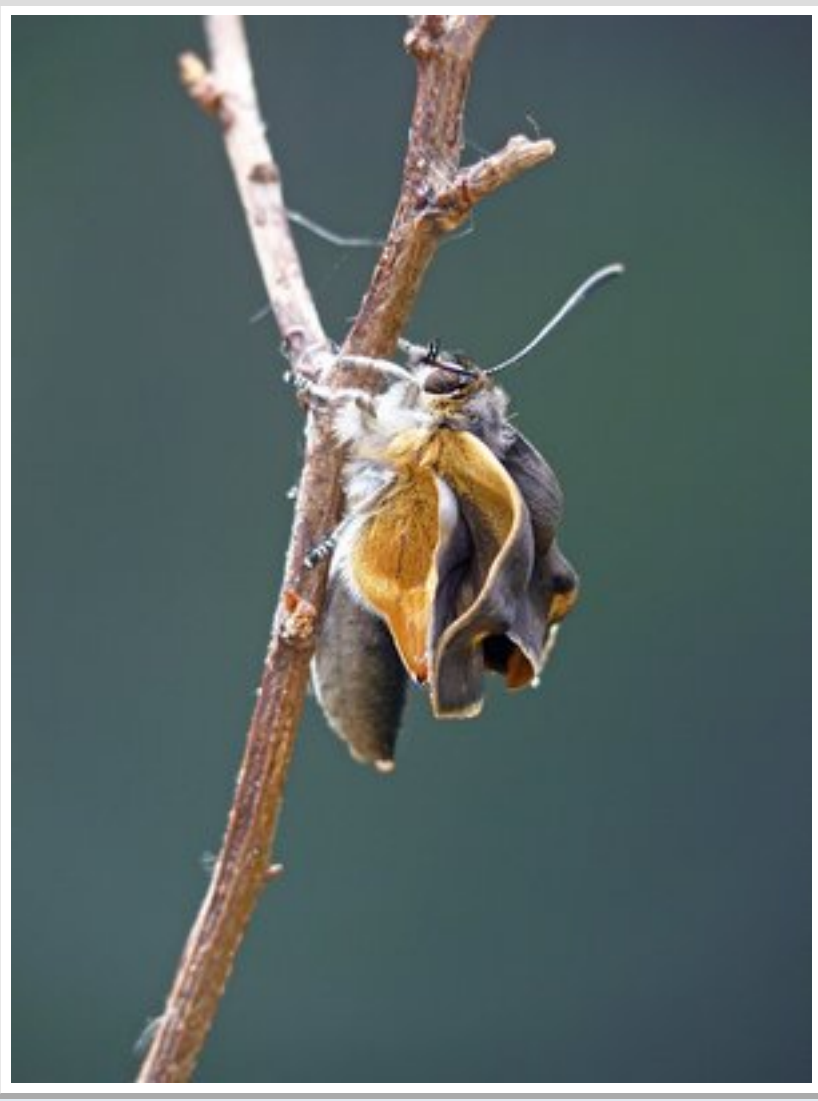
Thank you all so much for your lovely comments. It is indeed a smashing site, only 7-8 minutes away from me and I was totally unaware of it until a friend introduced me to it last year. It is now one of my favourite places. Thank you for the information on the Green Hairstreak Wurzel – I had a feeling it had a name but couldn't for the life of me remember what it was 😊

I have been following the debate on captive rearing with some interest (given that I have been directly involved this year with the Hairstreaks). I cannot say that I have totally enjoyed the experience, although I can see no reason why enjoyment shouldn't be the primary motive (as indeed it is for some other activities 😊), providing the insects are well cared for and treated properly. I would openly admit that I had no idea what it would involve, no idea just how little I knew, and no idea I would make such a mess of it. I worried and stressed throughout the process (as I'm sure Vince could confirm) – when the caterpillars disappeared (eaten by slugs), when I was advised the development was too advanced (moved them outside immediately), when they emerged too early (felt sooo guilty about that), and when I accidentally squashed a caterpillar that had gone walkabout I was gutted. I had total responsibility and I got it wrong. So, I post the following images not with a sense of pride or achievement but out of interest. Today, a Brown Hairstreak caught me out – I had the camera to hand but by the time I picked it up and switched it on and tried to zoom in (another example Mike!) the event was almost over. I just kept clicking away. Many of the shots are not great but the sequence of images recording the emergence are below









Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 11-Jun-14 07:22 PM GMT

Another splendid series, Pauline. It is always fascinating to see how the crumpled wing unfolds to its beautifully marked pristine condition.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Katrina, 12-Jun-14 02:17 PM GMT

Great photos (as usual)! 😊

Re: Pauline

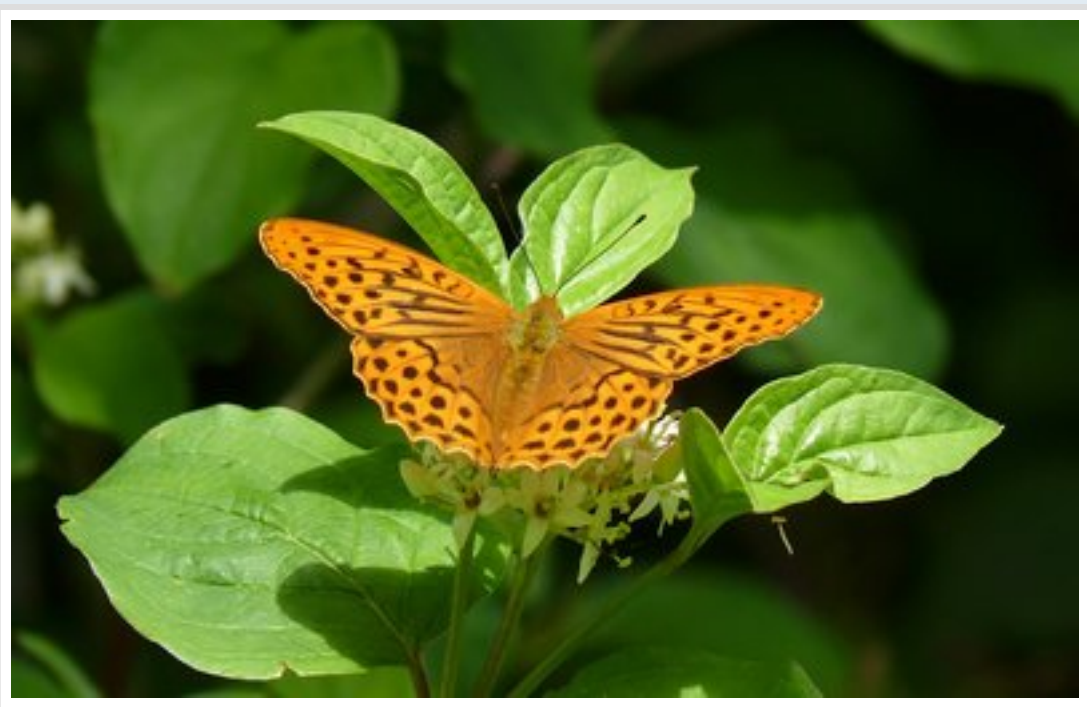
by Pauline, 12-Jun-14 04:26 PM GMT

D'you know Mike, there was a point where I was convinced that this butterfly had emerged deformed as the wings took some time longer to develop properly than the Black Hairstreak. I felt really despondent and deflated and left it to do something else. When I next looked I was delighted to see that all was well. Thank you for your comment.

Thank you too Katrina. I have to tell you that I delete many, many photos they are just so bad sometimes 😞😞

Today has been a day of 'firsts for the season'. My first 'first' is the SWF which emerged at the Straits today.







Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jun-14 04:44 PM GMT

The second 'first' was the WLH at Cosham. There were half a dozen males defending their territories, all of which seemed to be at the top of the Elms (which seem quite a bit taller than last year). They would jealously guard their patch which they repeatedly returned to and once I had identified where these were it was easy to see and count the various individuals. It was a joy to see them but in the mid-day heat there was no way I was going to get a close-up shot as they returned to their look out posts and the resultant photos were either silhouettes against the sky or tiny images even on full zoom. In the hour I watched them I was not aware that any came down to nectar. So for the record (and amusement) the best of my photos 😊



I shall be back!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jun-14 05:04 PM GMT

I shall take a break from my 'firsts' to post a few shots taken quickly this morning prior to, and during, the release of my male Brown Hairstreak :





Re: Pauline

by David M, 12-Jun-14 05:59 PM GMT

Lovely images again, Pauline. Nice to know SWF and WLH are now emerging. With fine weather forecast hopefully numbers will build up over the next few days.

I must now start my annual exercises to guard against 'Hairstreak neck'. 😊

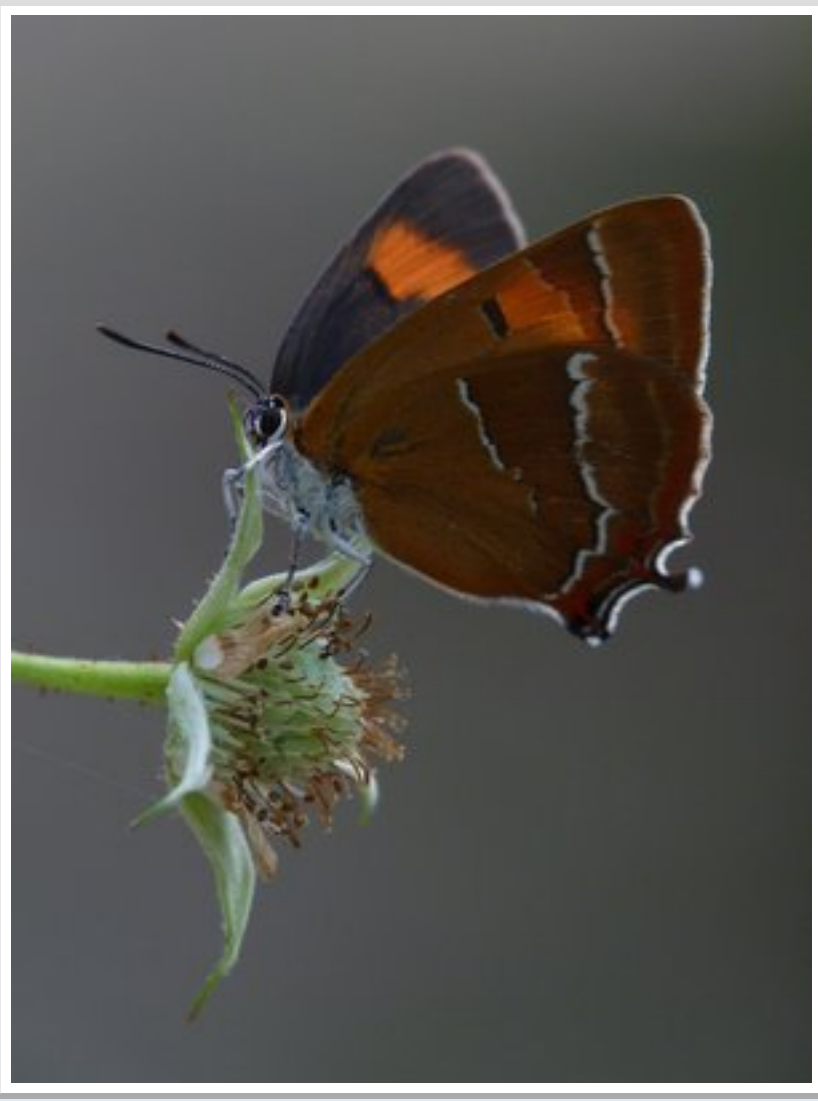
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jun-14 09:27 PM GMT

I've had a pretty rubbish week David and your comment made me chuckle. Thank you. I'd be interested to know how to guard against Hairstreak Neck as I suffer from it every year! 😊

A few shots of the gorgeous female which was released with the male:





Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 12-Jun-14 09:42 PM GMT

Beautiful images Pauline of your male (inflating his wings), and your female Brown Hairstreaks 😊 Great pics of the Silver-washed Fritillary too 😊
Brilliant that you saw the White-letter Hairstreaks 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 12-Jun-14 10:59 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I'd be interested to know how to guard against Hairstreak Neck as I suffer from it every year!

I'm **not** joking. Every year at this time I resolve to roll my head around my neck as often as possible to make myself as flexible as possible.

Last year I spent about 3 hours under a single elm tree at Alun Valley, Glamorgan, looking skywards and the human body simply isn't designed for this type of folly! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-14 11:43 PM GMT

Absolutely fantastic shots Pauline and now you have the complete set of Hairstreaks 🍷🍷 So much is emerging I don't know where to go first! 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by PhilJohnson, 13-Jun-14 06:57 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Great posts and pictures. I have a day off work today and there is plenty of inspiration here in your diary for me (particularly with the first sightings).

I do hope "Hairstreak neck" doesn't turn into "Purple Emperor neck" in a few weeks time 😊

Best wishes.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jun-14 04:15 PM GMT

Thank you Mike - your own shots haven't been too shabby recently either 😊🍷 . PM on its way to you soon.

If you are deadly serious about it helping David then I am all for giving it a go myself as I have every intention of returning to Cosham to give my neck yet more punishment 😊

I hope you have had a great day Phil - I shall look forward to seeing the results. Thank you for your comment on my diary.

I'm pleased you liked my latest posts Wurzel.

"Wurzel" wrote:

So much is emerging I don't know where to go first!

-

you're not wrong there Wurzel. I am in exactly the same position myself and certainly haven't had time to notice the usual 'June Gap'.

I haven't actually recorded all of my 'first' sightings yet and I am getting a bit behind as I am seeing them faster than I can record them 😊 (I am not complaining). 8.00am this morning saw me on Butser Hill and what a glorious morning it was. The view was wonderful, the skylarks were singing their hearts out, and although it was warm and sunny the slight breeze was refreshing and welcome, even if a little frustrating for taking photos.



I am ashamed to confess that this site is only 10 minutes away from me and yet I think it is 3 years since I have visited. The car park which used to be £1.00 is now £3.00 and many of the old rustic stiles seem to have been replaced by gates. Overall, the place looked more 'managed' than I remembered it. There were few folk around and the many species of butterflies were all becoming active. I was greeted by several fresh Small Tortoiseshell which seemed to glow in the morning sun and the whole area was peppered with Common Blues fluttering low down, but what surprised me was the number of fresh Grizzled and Dingy Skippers. I scrutinised a couple of Small Coppers but no blue spots 😞 (will I ever find one!) but most plentiful were the Small Heath which seem to be having another good year. Skippers whizzed past me and in the distance I could see a larger, pale coloured butterfly which turned out to be a female Brimstone. The butterfly I spent most time with this morning was a joy to behold but never still for long. In the past I have traveled a considerable distance to see this species but have always found them difficult to photograph and today was no exception. I managed to snatch a few shots as he stopped briefly to nectar:





There's always a blade of grass where it's not wanted 🙄

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 13-Jun-14 04:41 PM GMT

Pauline fantastic photo's as usual, I can't pick and choose I like them all Goldie 🍷🍷😄

Re: Pauline

by Mike Robinson, 13-Jun-14 09:43 PM GMT

Interesting commentaries and some wonderful pictures.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 13-Jun-14 10:39 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

There's always a blade of grass where it's not wanted 😏

Tell me about it! 😞

It's an occupational hazard where fritillaries are concerned.

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 13-Jun-14 11:53 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Just catching up with your diary, you have been busy 😊 It is lovely to see the summer fritillaries, hopefully I can find some early ones this weekend. White Letter Hairstreak was a must see species last year and this, yet I have still to see one. I drive past the Cosham site nearly every day but it never seems to be at the right time to drop in. I find it always a compromise this time of year picking a good site to visit when I only have one day in the week (if I am lucky) to do it. You seem to have quite a few good sites close by. I am thinking of perhaps heading over your way at the weekend, your local Silver Studded Blue site looks fantastic. Your Brown Hairstreaks are beautiful, no sign of my Purple one emerging yet but I am sure it will not be too long.

Keep up the good work 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jun-14 02:49 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie – I appreciate your comment. Cracking shot of the Large Skipper by the way, with the uncluttered background that I think you were aiming for. Well done.

Thank you too Mike. I always find it difficult to get a decent shot early in the season as the newly emerged males are usually just too frantic and focused on finding a mate.

Not just Frits David in my experience anyway. Just wish I could do more than cropping and brightening with photoshop 😏

Great to hear from you again Paul. I have been waiting for news of your PH so it is good to know all is still on track. I have 2 local sites for SSB's Paul – Bramshott and Broxhead, both totally different types of environments. The latter is some way behind the former in terms of numbers and I haven't seen any females at Broxhead yet. I am certainly lucky to have around 10 good sites really close to me so I am spoilt for choice.

Much to my surprise, yesterday afternoon, a gorgeous female BH emerged from a pupa I originally thought had died. I had to revise that opinion when the pupa started to darken of course, but the emergence was still unexpected as all of the other butterflies had emerged in the morning. As it was quite late in the day the plan was to release it early today, weather permitting, after the usual couple of photos. Despite being in a reasonable sized net cage containing plenty of Blackthorn and nectar, like a few of the others before her she opted to roost by hanging from the net roof. At 1.30am this morning I was woken by the overhead crashes of thunder and lightening which was soon followed by torrential and prolonged rain. My first thought was for the butterfly, so 2.00am this morning found me out in the midst of the storm, wearing very little, rummaging around the garage for some plastic sheeting to cover the cage. I am so pleased I did despite the drenching I received as this morning there must have been at least a bucketful of water collected in the plastic and I dread to think what bedraggled state the little insect would have been in otherwise. The couple of shots I managed to get before her departure:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jun-14 04:48 PM GMT

Despite the changeable and unpredictable weather today I opted for a mid-day walk on Chalton Down, another local site and a little gem. Best known for the Chalkhill Blues but today, despite unfavourable conditions it still had a lot to offer.



Once again I was greeted by the song of the Skylarks and the mewing of the Buzzards but I soon became aware of the purring of a pair of Turtle Doves. Try as I might I could not see them until they flew out of the tree and whilst I was 'stalking' them I flushed a very fresh Ringlet – my first of the season, but to my frustration it flew over a patch of brambles and was lost. Nevertheless, there was plenty of other butterflies to focus on, not to mention the many moths which flew up at every step. The Common Blues ranged from reasonably fresh to really quite worn but the brand new DGF (2 individuals) ranged across the site.

I was happy to be able to photograph another first for the season, the Marbled White, which I found hunkered down amongst the grass:



The changeable weather worked in my favour as I was able to take the following shots, although it wasn't always an easy angle and involved lying in the wet grass at times 😊





Whilst on site I stumbled across this caterpillar and would be grateful if anyone could provide an ID.



Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 14-Jun-14 05:00 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Looks like six spot Burnet to me 😊

Kind regards

Mark

Re: Pauline

by Mike Robinson, 14-Jun-14 05:23 PM GMT

There is so much more to Butterfly Watching * than just looking for Butterflies!

* I go Bird Watching but Butterfly Watching doesn't really sound right. Butterfly Spotting? Not really either.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-14 08:27 PM GMT

Great shots of the DGF Pauline – another species that I'm still waiting for 🍷 I know what you mean about the blades of grass – even if you can hold the camera so the grass isn't in shot the wind will blow it into shot 😊 I'm tempted to take a pair of shears with me when I venture out onto the grasslands 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Jun-14 05:07 PM GMT

Thanks for that ID Mark – there must be so many of them around I'm surprised I haven't noticed one before. On the subject of ID's, I'm sure you were right about the WA as there were 2 there today.

I'm not really sure what us butterfly folk should be called Mike – mad, probably 😊😂 . I do know that most of us are interested in lots of other creatures and when butterflies are thin on the ground you will find photos of birds and plants and a whole lot more creeping in.

You wouldn't be the first to carry a pair of shears with you Wurzel (well, scissors actually) 😊 . Thank you for your comment.

Today I decided to pop up to the Straits as Mark had reported a possible sighting of WA from there. I was sure he would be right – and so he was. Not far from the entrance, just past the first track on the right which leads to Camilla Corner, I almost trod on a White Admiral. I was taken by surprise as it was only 9.00am and it was really quite chilly but I got a good look at it as it fluttered up to the trees. Deja Vu! Exactly what happened with the Ringlet the other day. I decided to hang around the area to see if it would come down when the sun came out and in the meantime I was able to get some shots of a few different Ringlets, one of which looked quite worn.





The sun did eventually come out and I looked up to see 2 White Admirals sparring in and around the canopy. A couple of times one came down and landed on branches about 12' high but before I could get a record shot it flew off again. It wasn't long before the cloud came over again and they disappeared from sight. Watch this space!

Re: Pauline

by Chris Jackson, 16-Jun-14 06:42 PM GMT

I have an easy life in my South of France butterfly paradise, but your Brown Hairstreak photos from June 14th do leave me in awe Pauline. Bravo!
Chris

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 16-Jun-14 07:17 PM GMT

Some really great photos in your last few updates Pauline, it is getting difficult to keep up with things with everything that is beginning to fly now...what a great problem to have! 😊

All the best ,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-14 10:33 PM GMT

Lovely Ringlets Pauline 😊 Looking forward to when you do catch up with the WA's 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 17-Jun-14 12:24 AM GMT

Lovely photos in your recent posts Pauline, Dark Green Fritillaries, your beautiful Brown Hairstreaks, Marbled Whites and stunning Ringlets 😊

Re: Pauline

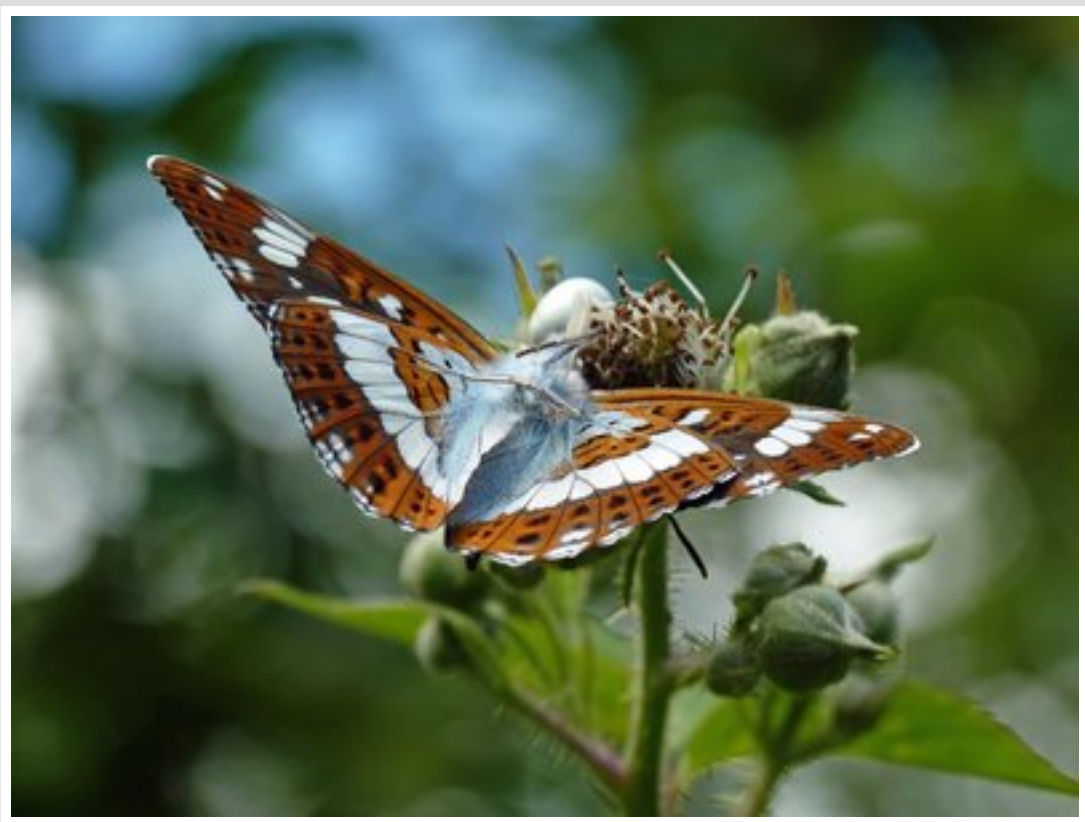
by Pauline, 17-Jun-14 02:23 PM GMT

It's very kind of you to say so Chris and I very much appreciate your comment. I do read your diary but the stunning array of species tends to leave me speechless. I particularly enjoy your lovely images of the Hairstreaks that we don't get here as they are my favourite group.

Thank you Neil – yes, it's a little bit manic here but lovely being spoilt for choice.

I must return the compliment Mike as your Ringlets are lovely and you did incredibly well to get such a great shot of the WA as the weather was definitely not conducive to that species yesterday.

Thank you Wurzel. I might have managed a photo yesterday but had to spend a couple of hours in the docs as they think I may have Lyme's disease and are arranging blood tests. Anyway, I set off this morning determined to get a photo of a WA – just for you 😊 😊 . After a brief search I did indeed find one but I was not prepared for my first photo to be of a life and death struggle:



Naturally, my first instinct was to 'rescue' this beautiful butterfly whose short life was ending so tragically without the opportunity to mate. However, I had heard that once a spider gets hold of a butterfly it injects it with some sort of toxin which paralyses it before death so I was obliged to let nature take its course and be satisfied with recording the event.



I did go on to find another WA which was very much alive and would only allow distance shots (and the SWF was also very much in evidence)



(Note the spider in the background!)

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jun-14 03:51 PM GMT

I settled down last night to watch the programme on hand-rearing tigers thinking I would probably do an awful lot better with them than I have managed with the butterflies. I had breathed a sigh of relief when my last butterfly emerged. However, I have to admit that I have not confessed to all of my mistakes. My porch has a very large wooden door made of 400 year old Oak, as is the floor. It is a cold and drafty area and was the first place I moved the cats after Pete's warning they were developing too fast. The old oak has cracks and knots and allows entry to a range of creatures including slugs, earwigs, wood lice etc. (I even had a bat managed to get in there!) It was here I accidentally lost a caterpillar and despite an hour searching every nook and cranny I could not find it. I resigned myself that it had found some hole to pupate in and would probably be predated. Just in case it managed to survive I kept an eye open for a butterfly not wanting it to emerge and get trapped. So, I was watching the programme when I realised a butterfly was flying around the light in the living room. I quickly caught it up and removed it to the outside cage before releasing it this morning:





Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 17-Jun-14 08:51 PM GMT

If only these would flutter round my light-bulbs 🍷 Beautiful photos of a beautiful insect.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Mike Robinson, 17-Jun-14 09:48 PM GMT

Some lovely pictures

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Jun-14 06:08 PM GMT

Thank you very much to both Mikes – your compliments are very much appreciated.

I am aware that this is a fairly new page in my diary so I very much hope that those folk who kindly took the time to comment on my previous set of images picked up my messages of thanks and appreciation.

On the topic of previous images, I wonder if anyone can confirm whether the spider that killed the White Admiral in my last post is a crab spider? Is this a particularly lethal type of spider as I noticed that in one of the other shots there is a different type of spider which didn't seem so intent on killing the second butterfly??

This afternoon I found some time for a repeat visit to Cosham. There were still only about 6 males flying about high in the canopy but a little further along the track I was lucky enough to see a pristine female nectaring on privet. I am not quite sure why I am posting these images as I am very unhappy with all of them. The result looks flat and dull and not properly in focus 😞😞 I suppose they serve to illustrate the difficulties I still experience in such situations. She didn't make it easy for me either, twisting and turning, quite high up, and quite some distance away so not one photo shows off the beautiful colours or captures that amazing sheen. Consequently, the shots were taken at full zoom, using the screen rather than the viewfinder and with my arms outstretched (very shaky position!). The sun was very bright, bleaching the sky and the white flowers but adjusting the exposure compensation to highlight the butterfly just accentuated this effect. Is there a way to address this stark contrast of colours? Spot metering has been mentioned to me

in the past as a way of ensuring that the butterfly is properly exposed but if I understand it correctly the sky will still be bleached? 😊 Anyway, looks like a third visit is on the cards at some point 😊😊





As I was leaving the site a very fresh Ringlet flew past me and out into the road straight into the path of a van which knocked it into the gutter. I managed to snatch it up before a lorry thundered over it but although it was still alive and made some sign of recovery before I left, I fear its future is bleak 😞



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 18-Jun-14 06:38 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Is there a way to address this stark contrast of colours?

One approach is to use the 'auto bracket' function on your FZ38. You can set this to take three exposures in quick succession: under, normal, and over-exposed. You can set how great the steps are: 1 stop is usually sufficient. If you are really clever (😁), you can replace the bleached sky from an over-exposed shot with a better sky from one of the others. I explain how to do this, using Photoshop, on my website at <http://home.btconnect.com/mike.flemming/layers2.htm>

My FZ200 has a function (HDR mode) that will automatically combine the three exposures to produce a well-balanced result (sometimes!). It's actually best for reducing over-exposed highlights.

If you get a DSLR (*hint*) and shoot in RAW mode, then there is usually enough spare dynamic range in the RAW image for you to correct dark areas without them going too 'blotchy'.

Mike

ps you could also try fill-in flash, which can work well in these situations.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jun-14 08:52 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, the spider with the WA is definitely a crab spider, I saw a very similar one with a Pearl-bordered Fritillary in its jaws at the Wyre Forest last

year. I believe you are right about once the victim has been bitten it is finished, spiders inject venom when they bite so even if you had 'rescued' the WA all you would have achieved would be to deprive the spider of its meal, the WA would still have died.

I have recently been using fill in flash whenever I take a photo of a butterfly from its shaded side, especially against bright backgrounds, like Mike says, it can give good results.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-14 09:55 PM GMT

I'm glad that you did post the images Pauline as the second on in particular is brill – you captured something of the spirit of the butterfly 😊 I'm also glad as I don't think I'll have time to "go for Whitters" myself this year as Large Blues are calling me 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jun-14 06:46 AM GMT

I appreciate those suggestions Mike and your very clear advice (your 'hint' made me chuckle – I am sure it will happen at some point 😊). I shall read up on that in the manual and give it a try.

Thank you too Neil. I am not sure what fill-in flash is 😊😊. Is that just the ordinary flash on the camera or does it involve carrying more kit around?

You're very kind Wurzel – I agree with you that no. 2 is the best of a bad bunch as it goes a little way to showing the behaviour and colours, but hey, surely I can do better than that – or maybe not 😊 Good Luck with the Large Blue Wurzel 😊

Whilst I was checking out the WLH I saw the most gorgeous female Marbled White. She had the most beautiful markings on her underside which sadly I was unable to get on camera:



A lovely fresh Comma was a delight to see:



....and just to catch up on my 'firsts' a Small Heath which I saw 'a long time ago' – or so it seems!



My final 'first' was a Meadow Brown hunkered down in the grass at 6.00pm one evening when I was looking at SS Blue but I am not about to post another rubbish shot just yet 😂😂

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 19-Jun-14 11:58 AM GMT

Fill-in flash just uses the normal pop-up flash on the camera. Simply set the flash so that it always fires, even if it's bright and sunny. Some people have suggested that flash is, in fact, most useful in bright sunshine, since it reduces contrast and puts some light into the shadows. It can be very good for portraits in sunshine. Don't get too close though, or the flash may be over-strong.

Glad to see you've included a Small Heath – I think they are attractive, feisty little butterflies.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jun-14 03:19 PM GMT

Thank you again, Mike. Still so much to learn and so many things to try out. Today I missed another butterfly shot purely and simply because the camera can't respond quickly enough. By the time I'd switched it on, adjusted the exposure compensation and zoomed in the butterfly was gone 😡

I'm trying hard to keep up with my 'firsts' as I don't like to get behind with my posts but it is not easy with everything emerging so quickly – and today I saw my first Small Skipper bringing my total to 35 species so far (not including the 3 hand-reared species).

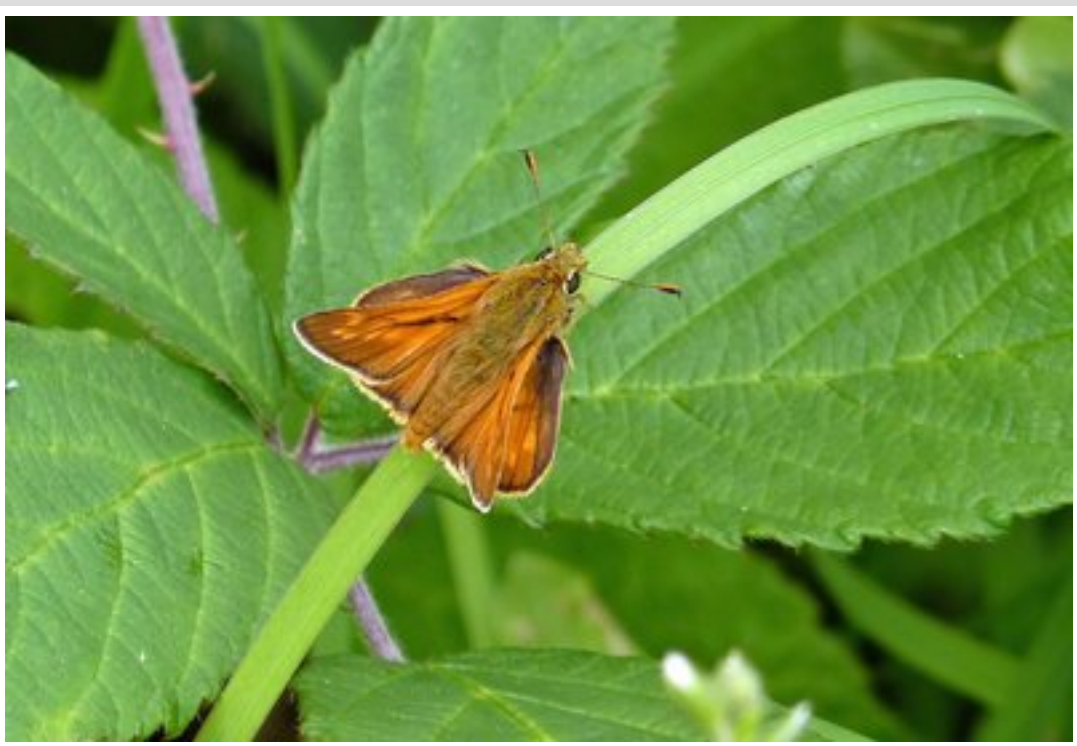




Is it an indication that the butterfly has just emerged when these droplets of fluid are produced? I have to ask this but what is it and why do they do it?



A couple of Large Skippers by way of comparison:





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 19-Jun-14 11:01 PM GMT

Cracking Small Skipper Pauline 😊, I reckon that you're right about that milky fluid being indicative of it being newly emerged – it's called meconium I think 😊 I saw a report of a Gatekeeper in Wiltshire today 😲 so things are really flying onwards now.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 21-Jun-14 08:34 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Small Skipper Pauline, (no sign of them here yet) also the Marbled White, I love that butterfly, it always seems to pose for pictures 😊 I hope to see some when we come on Hol's , keep the pic's coming Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Willrow, 22-Jun-14 07:56 PM GMT

Just catching up with your lovely reports and images Pauline, wonderful stuff 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jun-14 10:08 AM GMT

Thank you so much for your lovely comments Goldie/Bill, they are greatly appreciated.

I now know that meconium is 'a metabolic waste product from the pupal stage and can vary in colour depending on species' so thanks for that Wurzel. Thank you also for the map and directions 😊

Having missed out on a couple of days at Norfolk I managed to get out for a (whole) day to Lulworth yesterday to see the Lulworth Skippers. I had seen them before at Durlston but have never been to Lulworth Cove so that's where I was heading at 6.00am yesterday. It was already very warm when I arrived with many butterflies on the wing and the lack of people did not prepare me for the later crowds 😊 . The scenery was stunning and I took almost as many shots of the view as I did of the butterflies.

The view of Lulworth Cove from just above the car park:



Higher up on the grassy slopes:



Wurzel had kindly provided me with some information about places where Lulworth Skippers could be found so I made my way out of the car park and headed up the grassy slopes. I had wanted to visit Durdle Door, a natural limestone arch along this Jurassic coastline so I followed the path along the coastline, keeping an eye out for the butterflies as I made my way up the steep slopes. Some of the magnificent views along the way:



It was well worthwhile making the effort to see more of this Jurassic coastline:



So, this is where the Lulworth Skippers live. They were in various states of wear as I had expected. The males, in particular, were quite worn but others, especially the females, were remarkably fresh.



In addition to the heat keeping the butterflies active, the sea breeze when they did perch made a sharp image difficult to obtain, especially when holding the camera with one hand whilst being positioned precariously up a steep slope and holding on with the other hand 🤪.

Another female I believe:



A very worn specimen but quite charming none-the-less:



These little butterflies seemed to be everywhere and I had a thoroughly enjoyable few hours watching them – instead of having to watch the clock as usual:



By now the place was teeming with tourists both British and Foreign and I was quite astonished at how much interest my activities generated. I did not venture far from the main path initially and there must have been in excess of 30 folk asked what I was doing and why. I began to think I should have prepared leaflets to hand out 🙄 Folk who had previously walked past this butterfly suddenly became incredibly interested when there was a camera being pointed at it and many couldn't understand why it was taking me so long. One couple shouted up at me (I had moved further up the slope at this

point for some peace) ' you have been doing that for 2 hours - could you tell us what you are doing? I was obviously being monitored closely as another (foreign) couple approached and said 'we have seen you taking photos of butterflies for about 4 hours - is it anything special?'. They seemed very interested and to be fair they probably thought it was a bit odd. Mind, I found it odd to watch tourists taking video of the stream by the Mill Pond and the ice-cream parlour!!! 🙄

I decided to go for a bite to eat and on the way spotted a DGF nectaring in a garden. I couldn't resist a photo even though it was taken at quite a distance:



On my return I watched several of the worn male Lulworth Skippers trying their luck with females that had clearly already been mated and were intent on making this apparent to their suitors:



The best my camera could achieve:



There were butterflies all over the area but probably the most common was the Large Skipper, most of which seemed really fresh, the females appearing almost totally gold in the overhead sun - beautiful.



I did stumble across a mating pair of Large Skippers but it was at this point that my battery ran out 🙄 By the time I got to the car for my spare and returned I only had time for one shot before they separated:



However, females were egg-laying all over the slopes.





It was difficult to get a shot of the butterfly depositing the egg as it all happened very quickly but it was remarkably easy to spot the eggs. After finding half a dozen I gave up looking:



Anyway, back to Lulworth Skippers which were my main target:



(a fresh male I believe)





I don't usually take too many shots of worn butterflies but these seemed to have a charm and elegance that was irresistible, or perhaps I just wanted to portray the scene as it really was, or perhaps the unrelenting sun had gone to my head ... 😊



– it is difficult to confuse these butts with either Large Skipper (which is much bigger) or Small Skipper (which was bright orange with no sunburst pattern). The Lulworth Skipper seemed much smaller than either of these and had an almost olive gold colouration. Small Skipper below:



There were an amazing number of other species which didn't get the attention they deserved, including worn and fresh Brown Argus, various Blues, DGF - I had almost expected to see a Clouded Yellow, but no.





Not sure what this pupa is which I spotted as I was leaving. These are just a small selection of the several hundred photos I took during the course of the day and together with the memories will provide a reminder of a fantastic day out.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jun-14 10:02 PM GMT

Great report and photos from Lulworth Pauline, one of my favourite places 😊 I have been there the past couple of years whilst on family breaks in early September, I usually go on to Bindon Hill above the cove itself, far fewer people up there. The Lulworth Skippers are usually finished by then at Lulworth Cove but still on the wing at Durlston.

We are going to be in Weymouth next week for family hols with my daughter and grandson, will almost certainly find time to get to Lulworth 😊

Your cocoon is a Burnet Moth , can't tell which species though.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 23-Jun-14 10:06 PM GMT

Yes, Lulworth Cove has to be one of the most serene yet spectacular locations in the British Isles – the fact that it has a rare species of butterfly named after it only makes things better!!

Excellent, comprehensive array of images, Pauline. Thanks for sharing.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-14 10:59 PM GMT

Glad you got the Lulworths Pauline – I beat you to site but you beat me to the post 😊 Fantastic shots of my favourite butterfly in one of my all time favourite places. Love the shot of Durdle Door which is my number one place ever 😊 the only problem is it made me feel homesick. 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Jun-14 01:54 PM GMT

Thank you for your kind words Wurzel and the directions. It certainly is a spectacular location and if you grew up around here then you were a very lucky lad indeed 🍷

I appreciate the ID Neil and I'm glad you liked my post. Wurzel actually suggested Bindon Hill also but tbh, by the time I'd been to Durdle Door and climbed a few of those slopes in that scorching heat I was cream cracked 😊😂 I'm sure you'll have a great time there next week – looking forward to your posts.

Thank you for the compliment David and your comment is spot-on. I could have posted several dozen more shots of the magnificent scenery and the butterflies but folk would probably have nodded off by the time I'd finished 😊😂

Late yesterday afternoon I stopped by a local site and within minutes had seen my second Purple Emperor of the season. Despite thundery clouds he was flying between overhead cables and a Sweet chestnut tree. My first sighting had been at Chiddingfold Forest last week, a disappointing visit despite the PE seen at the Triangle, not least because the butterflies were few and far between and for various reasons I missed photo opportunities. My early arrival was greeted by a White Admiral which I took as a good sign but despite the warm weather he was the only one I saw. This held true for a number of species including Silver Washed Fritillary, Small Skipper and Wood White. My camera refused to respond for some reason and despite searching for the latter for at least an hour I never saw him again. I covered a large area ranging from Oaken Wood, Tugley Wood and Botany Bay. I was able to positively identify 2 DGF at Oaken Wood and Tugley Wood, but again no photos. I left feeling quite frustrated as this venue usually has a lot to offer, the few shots I took can be seen below:





Re: Pauline

by William, 24-Jun-14 06:35 PM GMT

Great Lulworths Pauline, but that Crab Spider and White Admiral is something else – superb 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 24-Jun-14 08:21 PM GMT

The 'Jurassic Coast' is fabulous, isn't it 😊 I enjoyed your collection of Lulworth Skippers. In my experience, the males are always darker than the females – they seem to like an olive drab 'military' look! Perhaps it makes them feel more at home on the firing ranges, East of Lulworth.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 24-Jun-14 09:00 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

After a brief search I did indeed find one but I was not prepared for my first photo to be of a life and death struggle

Superb image Pauline! I must have missed this when you first posted!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jun-14 06:54 PM GMT

I loved the Lulworth's too William and the scenery was just splendid. I am pleased you like the WA and spider but I thought it was just so sad – all that time and effort invested in getting to that stage and then wiped out before it had a chance to have any sort of life. Thank you for your comment.

Thank you Mike – I reckon you are right about the males having a darker colouration but whether it is a deliberate 'military' look I am not sure 😊 Thank you for your email – the difference is remarkable and I shall certainly give it a try.

I appreciate your comment Pete but found the situation a little tragic. My recent insight into the difficulties that all stages of the butterfly encounters and my heightened awareness of some of the perils they face, has only increased my wonder that any of them actually survive at all!

Another outing by the sea today – very different from the Jurassic Coast but very pleasant nevertheless:



Whilst enjoying the sun and eating my fish and chips I stumbled across this newly emerged Meadow Brown and had to hang around for a while whilst she got her wings sorted out:



I think I saw my first Essex Skippers today too but need to check the photos first to be sure.

Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 25-Jun-14 07:12 PM GMT

Hi Pauline. I had also missed the WA with the spider. Nature in the raw, and a fantastic record of the event. That Meadow Brown is one of those with the bleached effect on the wings, so another fine find.

Re: Pauline

by Willow, 25-Jun-14 08:30 PM GMT

Lulworth Cove...ah! the memories your lovely report evokes Pauline...thanks for sharing 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jun-14 08:45 AM GMT

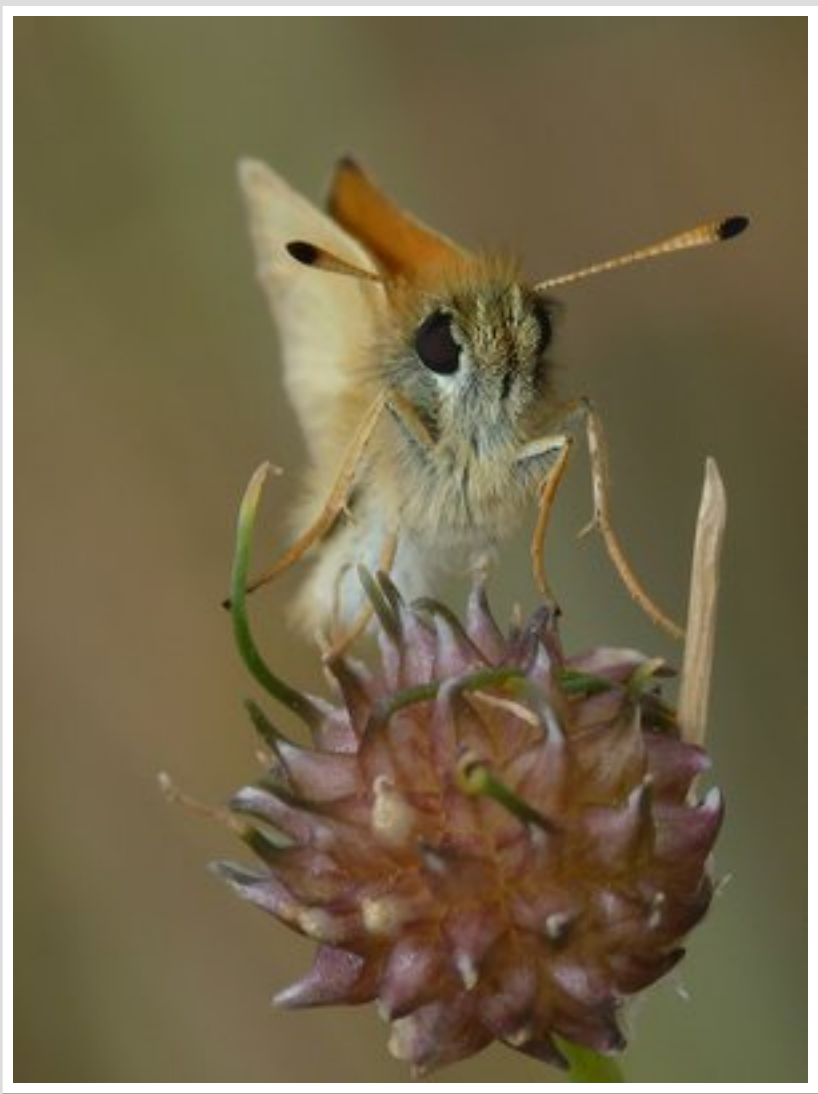
I'm pleased you enjoyed it Bill. Thank you for your comment.

I appreciate the compliment Bob – you have had some great finds yourself this year. I thought the meadow Brown was very pretty.

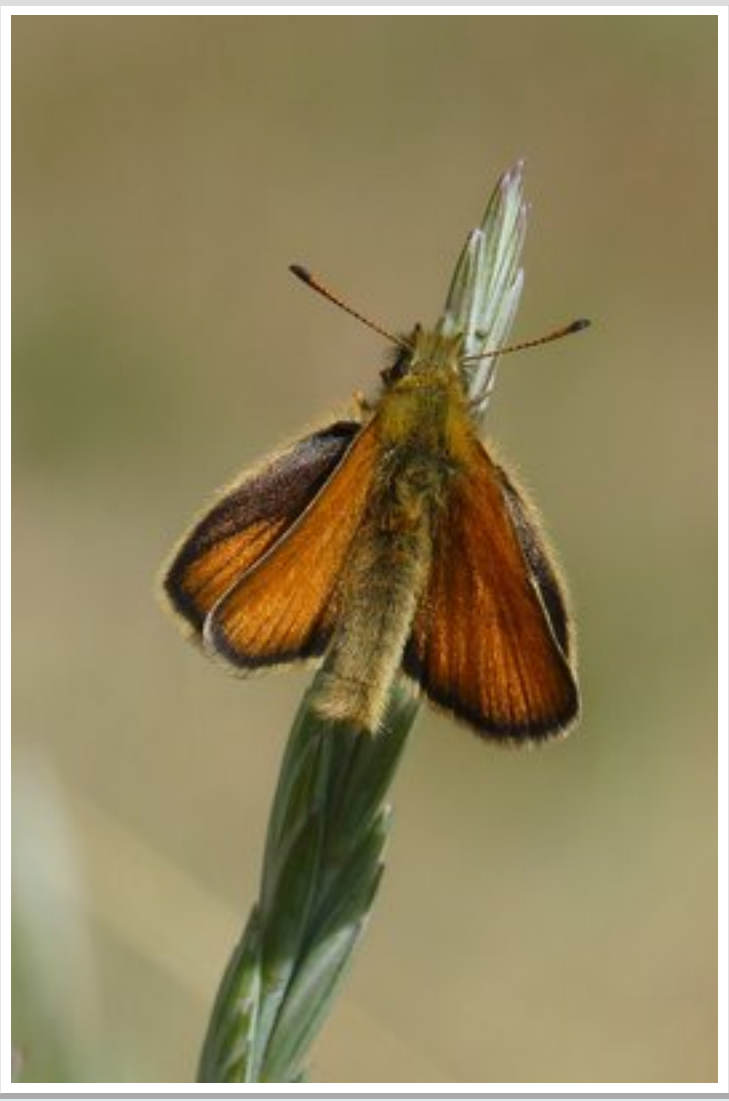
During 'Purple Emperor season' I sometimes do not give the other butterflies the attention they deserve. However, I think that Skippers are a feisty, charismatic insect with bucket loads of attitude and as I found myself surrounded by them yesterday I decided to make the most of it. I am embarrassed to admit that after all this time I still struggle with the Small/Essex identification, but I checked the antennae and the sex brand and I THINK that all of these are Essex. If they are not I would be pleased to be corrected.



There were some great grasses at this venue which provided some nice backgrounds.









Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-14 02:19 PM GMT

Fantastic Essex Skippers Pauline 🍷 With those "dabs" it look like you've got them bang to rights 😊

Have a goodun

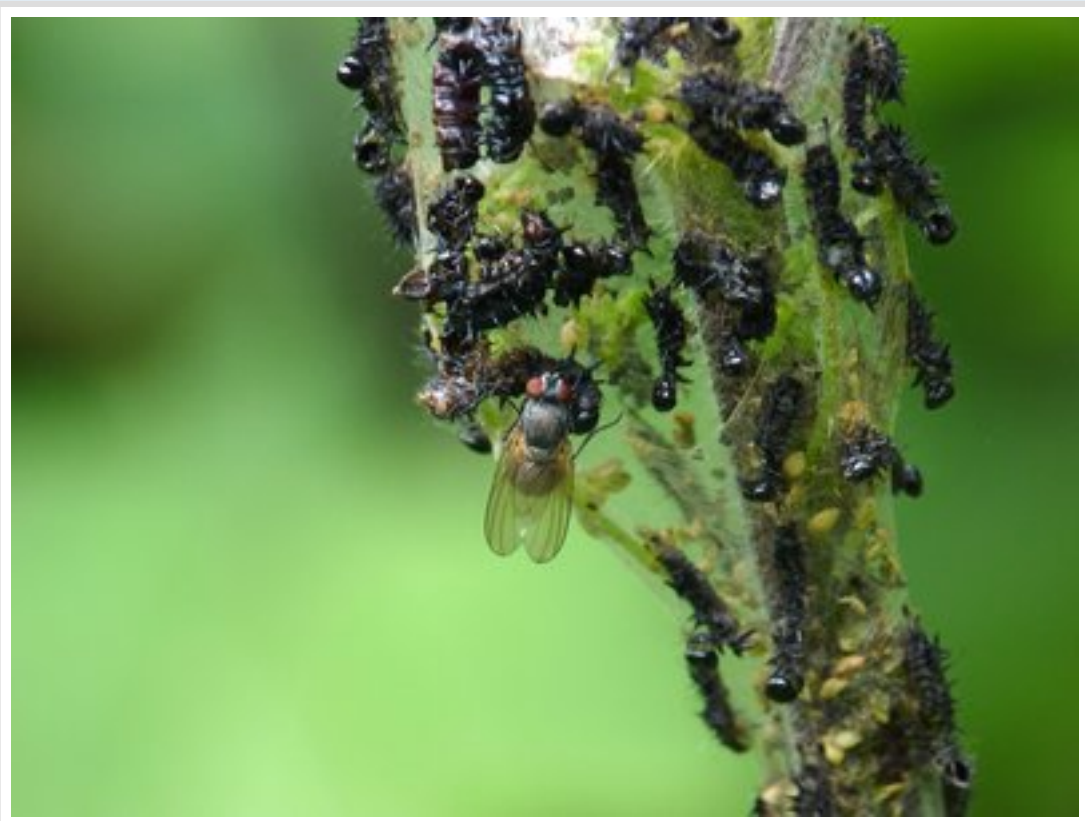
Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Jun-14 07:15 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. I appreciate the confirmation – it was the sheer numbers which put doubts in my mind (despite the Small Skippers amongst them) as this would seem to indicate that they have been out for quite a few days.

Yesterday I thought it was high time I had a look locally for PE. Despite the cloudy, overcast conditions it was quite warm and a good number of butterflies were on the wing. The weather doesn't usually deter me these days as in 2012 I saw 2PE's sparring in the rain (altho' they probably didn't have any choice that year!). I headed for Alice Holt and just by the entrance, on the nettles, were several nests of what I assume to be Peacocks (I have never seen them as cats before 😬). Sadly, 2 of these nests appeared to have been attacked by some sort of fly which seemed to be systematically killing the butterflies. Between plundering the cats he would take a break, wipe his face, then start again 😬 I was horrified:



I walked slowly along the track, looking both at the ground and the canopy, but no sightings of PE. I came to a colony of Small Skippers. Not only do I find these butterflies extremely photogenic, I also think they are very obliging, and I enjoyed several minutes taking various shots of them:





On leaving I took a last look at the remaining Peacock nest which seemed to be thriving but for how long?



and at the same time spotted this very attractive moth:



I decided to check for PE across the road at the Straits but despite a lot of butterfly activity, yet again, I could not spot a single one. The number of SW (including females) is gradually increasing and White Admirals were aplenty, although getting close to them was another matter. Where did they all come from??? Where were the cats and pupa hiding??? I shall need to try harder next year 🤔 Some very nice Large Skippers along the route:





The morning was still young so I decided to make a detour on the way home and check out the DGF's which I had been told were flying at Noar Hill. It was also an opportunity to try to find the DoB cat as I have never seen one before and was intrigued by Ashley's recent posting. Sure enough, there were about 5 DGF and they were very active. There could have been more but photos were almost impossible and this is the best I could do:





Noar Hill was looking particularly attractive so it was no hardship to spend time here looking at Cowslip leaves



Whilst looking I came across a couple of caterpillars - i have no idea what either is but neither were my target:





I focused on the areas where I remembered the density of the imago to have been the greatest and I found many leaves 'peppered with gunshot' but not a caterpillar to be found. A few of the leaves had what looked like a moulted caterpillar skin on the back but that is as close as I got and whether it was a DoB I have no idea:



I was starting to feel a bit peckish and decided to return for lunch. On my way back to the car I saw my first Hummingbird Hawk moth of the season. It was impossibly fast and this photo is very blurred but I shall keep it as it is the only one I have 😊



Re: Pauline

by bailey1409, 27-Jun-14 11:56 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

The moth is a Clouded Border.

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-14 11:23 PM GMT

Great report and shots Pauline 😊 Looks like you're slipping into Moths... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by PhilBJohnson, 28-Jun-14 02:54 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, I love the photos as usual.

I did a quick web search.

Does that parasitic? fly look like *Sturmia bella*?

Here is one link: <http://chrisraper.org.uk/blog/?p=283> Here comes Vince.....(edited message 😊)

best wishes.

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 28-Jun-14 10:13 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I don't think the fly is one of the parasitic species, but just taking advantage of a food source. It has alighted on an old larval web of shed skins (and possibly some parasitised individuals). The mystery yellow and black larva is of one of the Burnet moths and the hairy caterpillar looks like the classic Ruby Tiger "woolly bear".

PM to follow regarding photos 😊

Vince

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 29-Jun-14 06:21 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, lovely recent images, however your photos of the Small Skippers are simply stunning 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jul-14 01:07 PM GMT

Thank you for the ID Maurice. It is my turn to be distracted by painting gates but if you are going to be up here for PE I hope you will let me know.

You could be right Wurzel 😊 – thank you for your comment.

I appreciate you taking the time and trouble to do that Phil, so thank you. It certainly does look like that insect but so many look so similar I really don't know. Shall be replying to your pm asap.

Thank you for your help and the ID's Vince – and also the links. Much appreciated.

Ah, Mike, how can you praise my Small Skippers when you are posting fantastic images of ab. Large Blue, egg-laying, and lovely purple PE. Don't think I can keep up with you this year but thank you anyway.

Having missed out by 30 minutes yesterday Mike, I decided to try again this morning. Freshly charged battery in camera, checked as usual (you know what's coming now, don't you!!!). Didn't bother to take the spare – will I ever learn????!! Anyway, nice to meet the guys there – Doug, Trevor, Robert, and lovely to catch up with you again Colin, pleased you're on the mend (hope you all got lucky). After a couple of hours I saw PE flying low down in Tugley Wood area and then another. Whilst waiting I went to take a shot of SWF but battery was not holding its charge and camera useless. I returned home which was just as well. My pupa had emerged so I was able to gently remove her from the cage and onto a nearby plant where she spent an hour before flying off over the house. It was not unexpected as the pupa had been changing colour so just as well I returned. Every cloud and all that

Pupa on 19th June:



Pupa on 29 June:



Butterfly after emergence:





Re PE - 3rd time lucky 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-14 10:29 PM GMT

Beautiful shots Pauline - they need to rename the whites as their underwings always look a beautiful lemon colour. 😊 Good luck with the PE 😊, the first was official reported from Bentley Wood yesterday, I've bought my fish sauce, arranged to pack the girls off to the Grandparents for the weekend and then I check the weather App - rain all weekend, let's hope the Met has it wrong 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

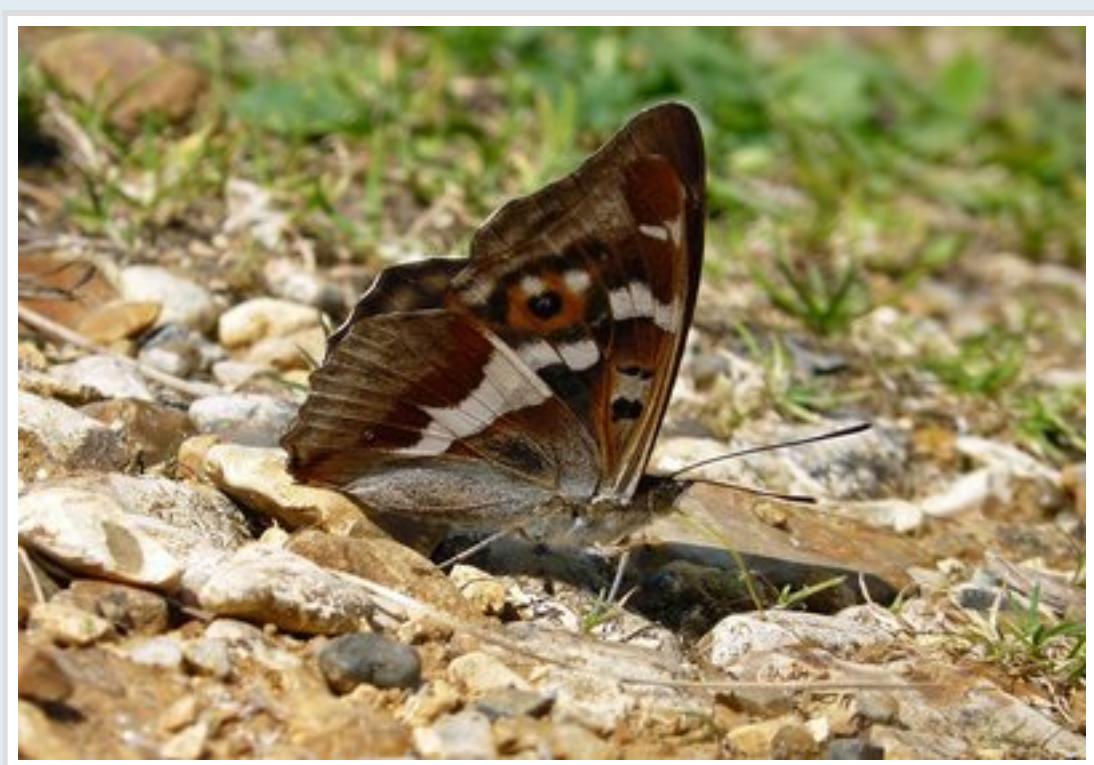
by Pauline, 03-Jul-14 02:20 PM GMT

I hope so too Wurzel. Please let me know how you get on – I wish you the best of luck. Thank you for the compliment 😊

After the debacle of the camera/battery, and in particular having received the fantastic shots that Colin emailed to me, I resolved that I had to try again at Botany Bay. It was an afternoon visit and although PE was seen by others, despite being there for 3 hours I was only able to manage a distant shot shortly before I left – a PE 60' up a tree in windy conditions, spotted by Mark and Ian (lovely to chat to you both again, perhaps catch up later in the season):



It was reminiscent of the WLH shots but this only had the effect of making me more determined so the following day I set off nice and early feeling optimistic and hopeful. The weather was perfect and I was in great company. We were only there a couple of hours but saw a conservative estimate of 6/7 PE, 4 different individuals coming down for minerals. The first individual stayed down for about 45 minutes but steadfastly refused to open his wings despite our best efforts to encourage him, which included providing shade. He was not at all perturbed by the dozen or so admirers and totally ignored a group of about 20 walkers who carefully moved past.



He did occasionally give us a brief flash of his upper side but opportunities were limited by the number of observers and the direction he happened to be facing at the time:





However, there is only so many under wing shots that one can take so when another PE came down at the Triangle it immediately attracted attention. This was a larger butterfly, and very fresh, unlike the earlier specimen. Excited photographers were posed for their shots when walkers allowed their dog (not on a lead) to run straight at the butterfly causing him to return to the canopy. We got neither a glance nor an apology from the owner as we all stood and stared in shock and disbelief. It was not long before a third individual came to ground but this was a very flighty, skittish insect and took exception to some photographers getting to close, returning to the canopy yet again without opening his wings.



We had been there a couple of hours and other commitments called so we started the trek back to Botany Bay. We didn't get far! Twice our return journey was interrupted as we were intercepted by a PE coming briefly onto the track and how many folk can walk away from a grounded PE? Even when we got to the car, whilst having a much needed cold drink, a PE came down, briefly settled on one of the other cars and then attempted to get moisture from one of the puddles. It was repeatedly disturbed by passing cars and eventually sailed over the canopy across the road. A couple more shots from an enjoyable couple of hours:



So, many under wing shots but do I return for the full monty??? We shall see 😊

Re: Pauline

by Hoggers, 03-Jul-14 03:36 PM GMT

Smashing photographs of the Purple Emperor, Pauline. I haven't seen one this year and as for past years I've never seen one close up, they've always been way up in the great blue yonder!

Perhaps I need to ask Neil where he buys his moleskin trousers?

Best Wishes,

Hoggers.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-14 11:08 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Pauline 🍷 I'm glad you managed to take advantage of this weather while it lasted 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 03-Jul-14 11:33 PM GMT

Good to see you got your PE, Pauline, Lovely shots, but will you return for the full monty? You can keep your hat on 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by PhilJohnson, 04-Jul-14 04:34 AM GMT

Excellent Pauline,

I am really pleased you got the Purple Emperor shots on the ground in the end. 😊 As you can see, I am green with envy! The weather isn't looking "too clever" for the weekend so I hope you can make the most of Friday 4th July. I have to work in sunny Lewisham 😞

Best wishes,
Philip

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Jul-14 05:47 PM GMT

You might be surprised to know Hoggers that there were no moleskin trousers in sight 😊 . In fact, the bait that some were using proved to be very successful but I couldn't possibly say more in public, if you get my drift 😊 . Seriously, thank you for your comment as those shots were not easy to come by.

Thank you Wurzel – If the forecast is to be believed there is more to come 😊

We shall have to wait and see Mike 😊 Thank you for your comment.

Thank you too Philip. It has taken a great deal of perseverance, patience and persistence this year to get any sort of PE shot. The 'f' numbers relate to depth of field btw.

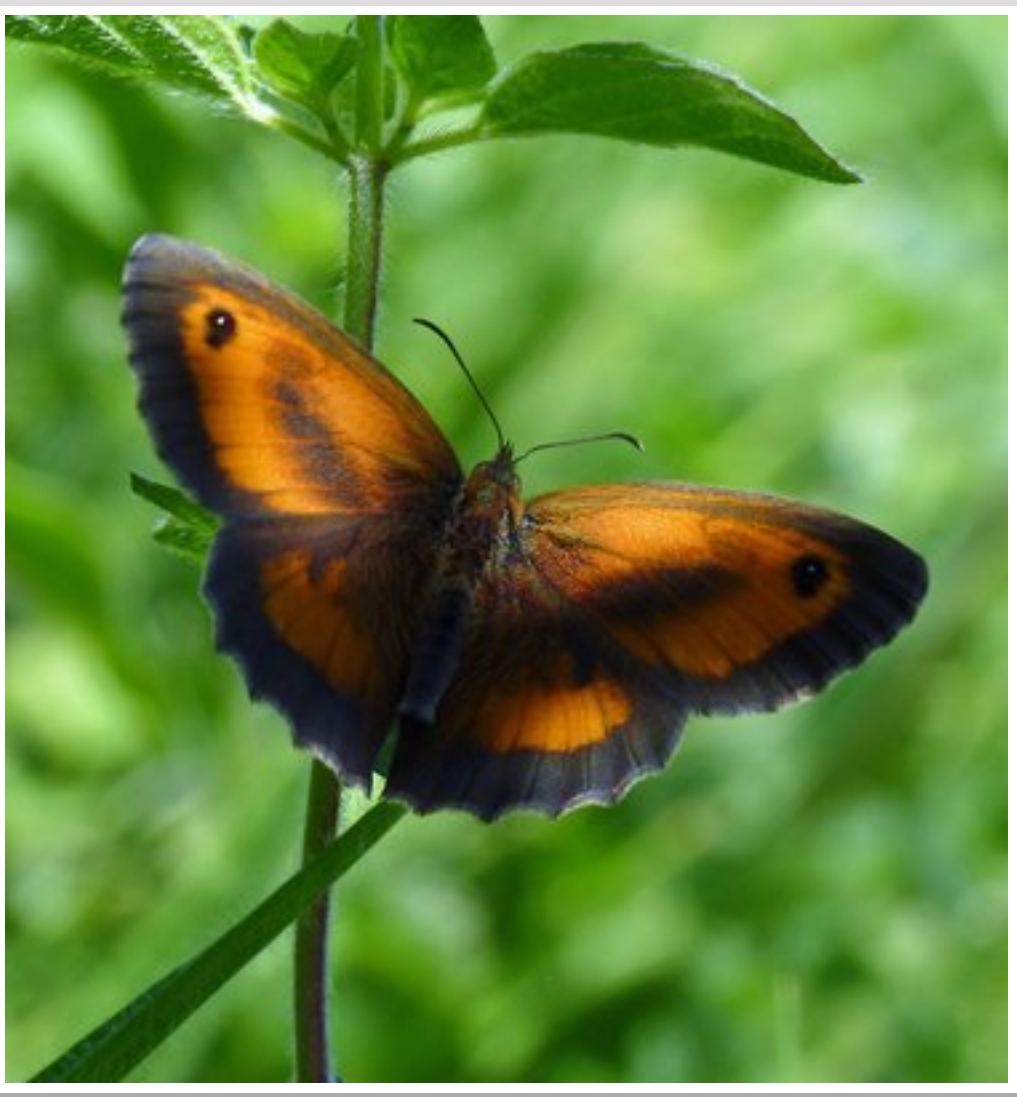
Today I really needed a temporary change of direction – a change of venue and a change of colour. I was getting a little bored constantly looking at Oak trees so I decided to look in briefly at Chalton Down. If you should happen to read this Mark (T.) it has to be one of the best venues you have ever given me directions to. Not huge but teeming with butterflies (16 species today) and wildlife and never another soul in sight. There were several mating pairs of Meadow Browns around today and though the fresh females were stunning it was difficult to get open-winged shots as they hunkered down in the grass. If I inadvertently flushed them a nearby male would pounce!



I accidentally stumbled upon a sleeping fox, sending him into a panic and spoiling any chance of a photo but great to get so close. Another first for the season was a Gatekeeper which had seemingly just emerged. I have never seen them this fresh – he was really lovely.



It was difficult getting these images as he was on a slope with the light in the wrong direction but I wanted to try to achieve at least one open-winged shot:



Eventually I spotted what I had come for – my first Chalkhill of the season, and what a gorgeous butterfly. I didn't have the pleasure of his company for very long as he was fully charged up, raring round, picking fights with anything and everything. His upper wings were beautifully marked, the colour so deep and vibrant but the only shot I managed was blurred so until I return I shall have to be satisfied with these:



How time flies when one is having fun! It was lunchtime already. I couldn't resist trying out the picturesque village pub and I can certainly recommend their food and service 😊 : 😊 . A delicious seafood salad and I was ready for the off.



Re: Pauline

by Willow, 04-Jul-14 08:01 PM GMT

Another set of great reports on your adventures Pauline, your one very busy lady 😊 but I'd avoid the moths if I were you...cos' then you might just be a bit too busy for the butterflies 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jul-14 01:52 PM GMT

Thank you Bill – you've been posting some great stuff yourself recently (lovely DGF and WA). In fact, there have been so many great posts from folk recently I feel rather embarrassed to offer these paltry images of the more common species – seen today whilst looking for the less common species 😊







Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jul-14 07:04 PM GMT

No need to be embarrassed with any of those Pauline, I especially like the Ringlet pairs and the Comma topside 😊 The more common species are lovely creatures in their own right and are too often overlooked when the 'stars' of the season are flying.

I only manage to get the less common species when I go on one of my trips or make the most of family hols, like Weymouth last week 😊

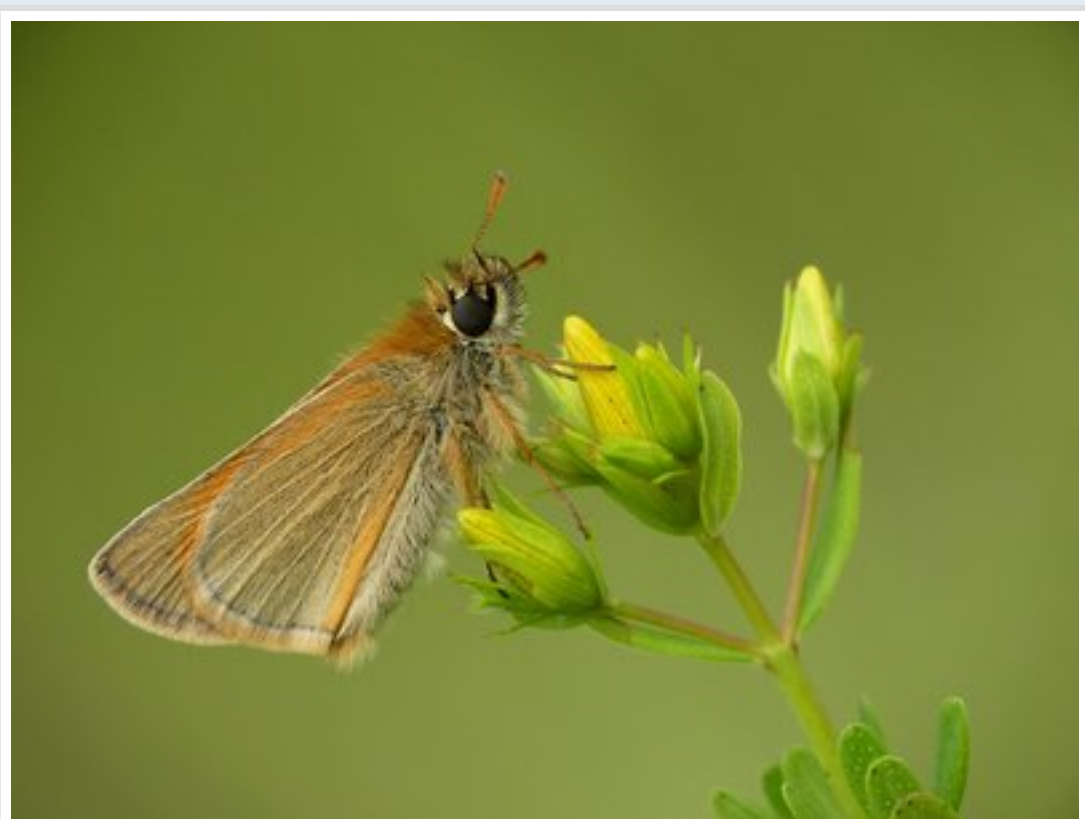
All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jul-14 09:24 PM GMT

Thank you so much for your comment Neil. Skippers are a common species which I just love to photograph and I can get quite carried away with them. Such was the case today when I watched a Small Skipper responding to the changing weather conditions. It was just a single butterfly but I found him so captivating I couldn't stop taking photos 😊







Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-14 10:37 PM GMT

Great shots of the Skippers and HComma Pauline 😊 There's nothing wrong with the bread and butter species especially when you can capture them in different postures 😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jul-14 06:29 AM GMT

Thank you Wurzel. I hope Bentley was kind to you. A little bit more bread and butter below, taken in windy and sometimes drizzly conditions:



If it's at all possible I like to try to 'colour co-ordinate' my shots and one of the ways I do that is to look for a butterfly on a plant that picks out a colour or shape on the butterfly's wings. I think the images above do that nicely.



I wanted a shot of a butterfly on a dandelion clock (or similar) so I attempted to coax a butterfly onto one, but without success. I had just moved away when I saw one already perched on top of one nearby 😊





The gorgeous Commas were not deterred by the poor weather conditions and were a welcome splash of orange and gold as they zoomed around, settling only briefly, and never allowing an under wing shot:





I'm sure I've been told what this is in the past so I shall look it up and edit the post later.



For some reason I have had to work harder than usual for my shots this season – even the wet conditions of 2012 were a great deal easier. Certainly the numbers of some species on my patch are down, in particular the SWF and White Admiral, but this can't be the only factor 😊 Perhaps it is just old age catching up with me 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jul-14 08:21 PM GMT

Could this be the thin edge of the wedge ? 😊😊 Today I was out looking for Puss moth larva (now that is my type of caterpillar) and tonight I have taken these shots of a moth on the window. I am guessing it might be an Angle Shades?





Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 08-Jul-14 08:32 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I think your moth is a mottled beauty, *Alcis repandata*.

<http://www.ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=5655>

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jul-14 09:10 PM GMT

😂😂😂😂 Might have known I'd be wrong – one of the reasons I've so far been reluctant to 'get into' moths. Thank you so much for the ID Guy and the link to that website.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jul-14 09:17 PM GMT

O Pauline, beware the slippery slope. I found myself looking at moth traps a little while back.....must resist, not enough time as it is 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-14 10:41 PM GMT

Loving the bread and butter Pauline 😊 I think that you've gone past the thin end of the wedge – better go and buy those Moth ID books 😲😂, cracking shots, especially the underside 😎

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 08-Jul-14 10:57 PM GMT

A very difficult wedge in my opinion!

I knew it *wasn't* an Angle Shades but had no idea what it *was*, so held back for the experts. I believe that there are around 2,500 moth species in Britain and, from skimming a few books, it seems that around 2,400 of them have mottled brown wings, like yours 😊

I did like your backlit shot – very unusual 😊.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Jul-14 07:07 AM GMT

Thank you all for not making me look totally stupid – I seem to do a real good job of that all by myself 😎😂. I have read a bit about the mottled beauty

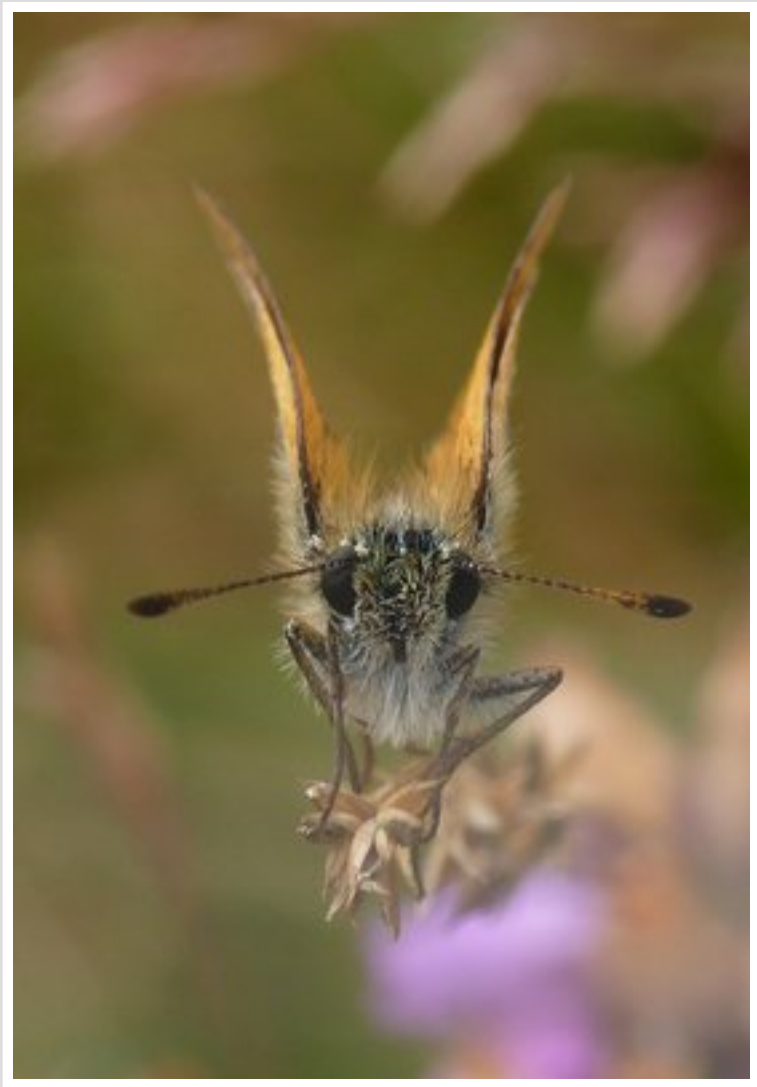
and the wide variety of colours so from now on, until I learn another new name, all brown moths will be referred to as Mottled Beauty 😊😍

You're absolutely right about the moth traps Neil – there would never be enough hours in the day! You are correct too Wurzel as a great moth book has already been suggested to me and is on my birthday list 😊. Thank you for your comment Mike. I think it is the sheer numbers that I find so overwhelming ... but when I am literally tripping over them I can't help but be interested. I have now reminded myself that the yellow and black cat in the last post is a Burnet moth – thanks again Vince.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Jul-14 09:24 AM GMT

I am always up for an outing by the coast so when I heard that Graylings were out at Brown Down it gave me the perfect excuse. According to the local weather forecast, Wednesday was to be the best day of the week, so I downed my paint brush and set off. The weather didn't live up to expectations – it was probably cooler, cloudier and a great deal windier than the forecast but that hardly seemed to matter as I was greeted by many butterflies on the wing despite the early hour. There were many Small and Essex Skippers, clinging on to the shingle in an effort to avoid being blown to goodness knows where and many, many Small Coppers (but no blue spots!!!).



The terrain here is very different to what I have been used to recently. Instead of magnificent views from hill tops or lush meadows filled with wild flowers, it is somewhat stark and harsh. The shingle under foot makes the going difficult (especially when wearing Sketchers tone-ups) so the work-out was a bonus!



It wasn't too long before I saw my first Grayling – it was quite a distance from the usual hotspots so took me by surprise. The shingle under foot made it difficult to sneak up on these butterflies who seemed to use it as their own personal alarm system!





In the past I have waxed lyrical about the camouflage abilities of this butterfly. I shall not go there again except to say 'how many butterflies can you spot in this shot?'



It is not easy to get a decent shot of Grayling as this is a more typical pose:



I was on my knees watching the butterflies when I heard the staccato of gunshot fire. This is MOD land but there was no red flag flying. However, I was a little disturbed to look up and see about a dozen guys with guns prowling round the bushes. The gunshots got louder and were accompanied by shouts and what sounded like explosives, smoke filling the air. I was not the only one startled as a family of Green Woodpeckers took to the wing in fright. It was a relief to realise that they were just cadets on a training exercise (hopefully!).



It was time to leave and I was on my way back when I spotted a couple of PH in the small Oak next to me. I stopped to watch for a while and managed a couple of record shots. Given that I had already taken many photos of my reared PH I was more relaxed about the sightings than I might otherwise have been.



As I returned along the shingle I couldn't resist a photo of this Black-headed Gull on his seaweed tower.



Recalling Bill's great shots of the Chough I tried to get some detail into this photo but just succeeded in bleaching the gravel.

It is disappointing that my local colony of Grayling is now very small and unreliable but seeing them at this venue more than makes up for it. Great morning, great views and great butterflies.



Re: Pauline

by Willrow, 10-Jul-14 07:07 PM GMT

Pauline your **Small Skipper** shots are absolute portraits 🍷 its possible to get such wonderful shots when you take care and time, I'm already looking at skippers in a different light (if you get my drift 😊)... 😊

Lovely set of recent reports allied to your usual fine photo-taking...a real joy 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 10-Jul-14 10:57 PM GMT

Great Grayling shots Pauline 🍷 I'm still in catch up mode over here so it'll probably be a week or two until I get to see Graylings 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Mike Robinson, 11-Jul-14 12:36 AM GMT

I think Black-Headed Gulls to be among our most elegant birds.

Some very interesting Commentaries and Pictures.

Re: Pauline

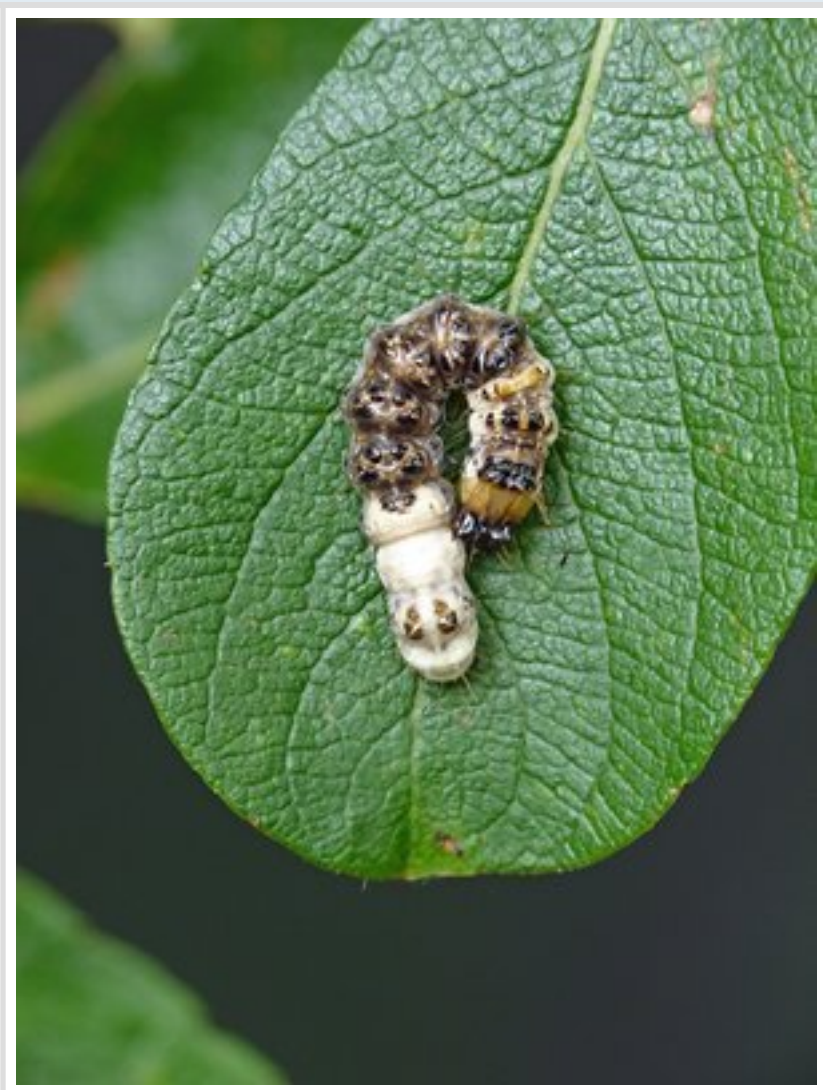
by Pauline, 11-Jul-14 11:26 AM GMT

I really appreciate that Bill – thank you. I have to confess I actually like a couple of those shots myself 😊.

Good luck with the Graylings Wurzel – always a difficult one for a decent shot but I'm sure you'll get one (you usually do!). Thank you for the compliment.

Thank you too Mike. This bird was so confident and it was almost like he was posing for me ... so how could I refuse 😊

Well, I have learned another moth 😊. I am coming across all sorts of things whilst looking for a Puss Moth cat. Yesterday, I was searching Sallow and Willow in my local park, carefully turning over half eaten leaves to check for cats, when I almost put my thumb on a bird dropping 😊. Well, at least that's what I thought it was until closer inspection revealed a cat! I had no idea what it was so decided to take it home to identify it (and photograph it of course 😊).



I spent about an hour on Google – I had no idea how many thousands of moths have cats that look like bird droppings 😊. I shall never again pass a bird dropping without checking more closely. Anyway, a couple of hours later I went outside to check on it and was faced with a completely different

larva 🤪 . What a lovely caterpillar:





The ID which I eventually managed to find is the Alder Moth – has a larva 'which resembles a bird dropping and when mature is highly distinctive being black and yellow with a number of club-like hairs'. 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 11-Jul-14 04:54 PM GMT

Fascinating cat! I have loads of moth photos that I take while out in the field and then stick in a folder labelled "day flying moths". You are making me feel that I must sit down with a field guide and work out what they all are 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jul-14 06:36 AM GMT

It certainly is Mike. I am enjoying looking after it and hoping to get some better shots but don't want to disturb it too much. It seems to be eating well after its moult so that is good. Visiting my local park was an eye-opener as there was a board at the entrance informing that water voles and kingfishers (amongst others) could be found there. A return visit is definitely on the cards even tho' surprisingly I saw few butterflies.

Yesterday I visited another community park near Eastleigh and here the butterflies were varied and many. It was a very well managed area, catering for the whole community. In one area there was a playground for younger members and a purpose built skateboarding area entertained a few teenagers, whilst many areas had been left uncut and were rampant with wild flowers and insects. Bird and bat boxes had been erected and an area set aside for reptiles. Well done to the council! It was here that I continued my search for Puss Moth cats and with the help of a friend we soon found 4 (Well, Andy found 3 and I found one!). I was totally gobsmacked at my first sighting. Even when pointed out to me I couldn't see it. I had been looking for something the size of a WA cat and this beast was massive!!!! 😲 What an impressive insect. It was really windy and even with the help of a clamp to try to hold the branches still these shots do not do justice to this creature:







The earlier stages of this cat appear to be equally interesting but it would seem that I shall have to wait until next year to record them. However, we did find a tiny, tiny cat which is assumed to be a Sallow Kitten.

Whilst searching we discovered a nest of Buff-tipped moth cats – a moth I have long admired but didn't know its name or what the cats looked like:



I also spotted several Ladybird larva:



As a bonus, just as we were on our way back, Andy spotted another great caterpillar, which I am reliably informed is an Eye Hawk moth (if I remember rightly!):



Naturally, I couldn't ignore the butterflies as there were many grand specimens so I shall conclude with this unblemished beauty:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-14 07:57 AM GMT

Glad to see you're still putting the odd butterfly into your posts Pauline – I think we can officially class you as a 'Moth Head' now 😊😄 Those Puss moth cats are quite astounding looking things, cracking shots 😎

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jul-14 07:15 PM GMT

I'm glad you like the shots Wurzel. If you've never, ever seen one before you need to add it to your bucket list 😊😄 . They are truly incredible,

formidable creatures (they spit formic acid at you when they are upset!! 😬) but you need not worry about my commitment to butterflies. I have seen and photographed 44 species of butterfly this season (so far) and I am just filling in time, waiting for the Wall Browns and Silver studded Skippers to appear. I finished my last post with a Peacock as they are very much on my mind at the moment. Back in June (ages ago), I saw 2 nests of Peacock cats, both of which I believed had been predated. (It was later suggested that they might have just been old moulted skins). However, a third nest appeared healthy and so that it wouldn't suffer the same fate, I snipped a couple of nettle leaves off the main plant, together with the attached cats, and put them on nettles in a cage at home. This is where it all started:



This time I was determined not to become emotionally attached to them, and apart from the protection of the mesh they were left outside to face the elements and they were not counted or monitored closely, except to ensure they had a good food supply. I took the occasional photo and admired them as they grew. Just for fun some serious effects of 'hand shake' when taken in dull conditions with a slow shutter speed:





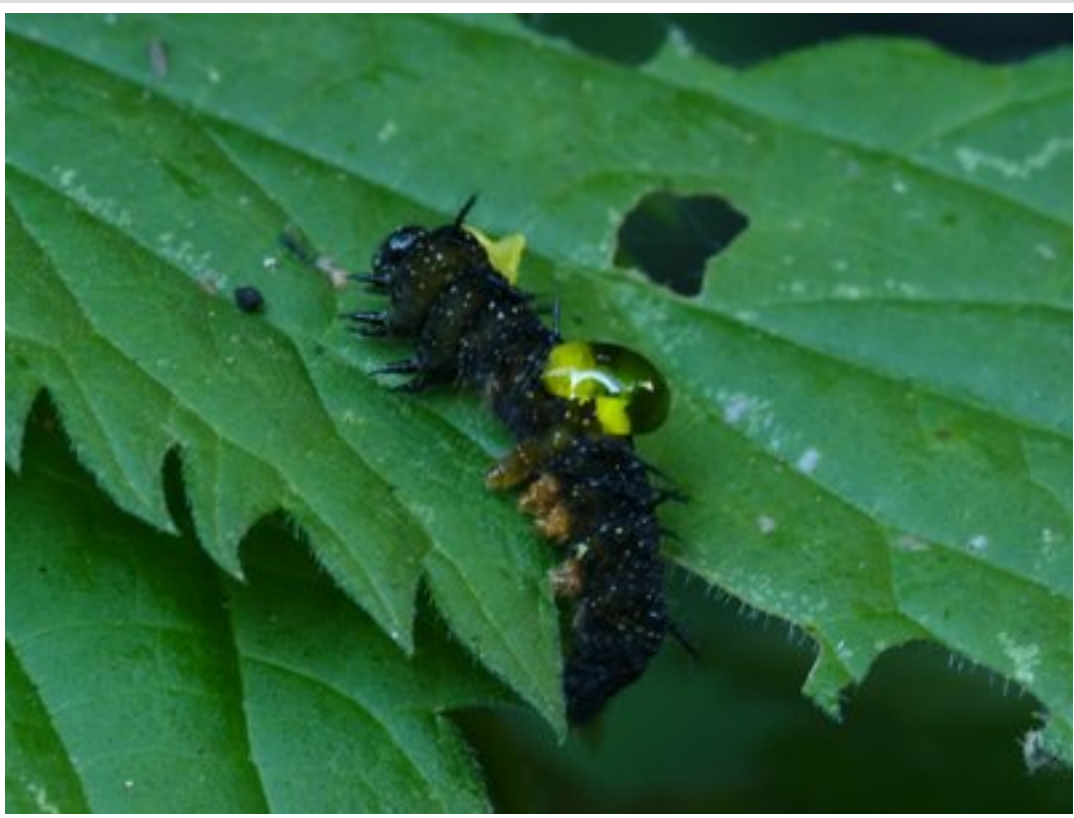
I shouldn't laugh – I used to take photos like this 😳😂 This was the size of the cats less than a week ago – fully grown:



..... and then they started to pupate. I have never seen a cat pupate before. Within the space of about 24 hours, almost as one, they hung themselves up in various places. Some chose the nettle leaves but many chose the roof of the cage. Some were suspended in a straight line, others adopted a curved posture like this:



Sadly, the first one I watched had become detached and was lying on the floor of the cage. His skin had split in places and the green casing of the pupa showed through. I gently placed him on a leaf and watched as his little body contracted and convulsed, trying to remove the outer skin. How I wanted to help him 😞. I thought that perhaps he was struggling as he had no contact point to brace himself against – it was so tempting to try somehow to hang him up again but I feared that if I interfered I would only make matters worse. I did not know what was normal as I had never seen this before but when droplets of liquid began to emerge from his body where the skin had split I feared the worst.



Sadly, he didn't make it but just a couple of minutes later, another cat which was hanging in the cage started his transformation. I was transfixed - it was just like someone had 'unzipped' him as in a very short space of time his skin had split open to reveal the pupa and the old skin was shrugged off.



The brilliant green outer casing rapidly faded to either a duller green or a greyish colour, the latter being more numerous and applied solely to those hanging off the roof of the cage. Another panic set in! Had I done something wrong and killed them? A quick look at this site reassured me that there can be 2 different colours but I wonder what this depends on. Temperature (ie the height at which they pupate) or light (those under the leaves stayed green).





Anyway, the upshot is that if I am lucky, in a few weeks I shall have Peacock butterflies adorning every corner of the garden. For now, a few shots of the cats in various stages of pupation, although all but a couple have pupated now.



Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jul-14 09:47 PM GMT

Ahh!, memories of last year when I watched a female Peacock lay a batch of eggs on nettle in out back garden. I kept a few final instar larvae in a cage just for the pleasure of watching them pupate and then emerge before releasing them back into the garden. This was the first time that I had done anything like this since I was a nipper back in the 1970s and brought back many fond memories 😊
I also found it fascinating to think that some of the Peacocks in the garden this spring may have been the very same individuals that I had released last year, guess I will never know for sure but I like to think so.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-14 10:06 PM GMT

Great report Pauline the changes in the cats is remarkable, I look forward to the end results 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 13-Jul-14 11:26 PM GMT

Can't wait to see pictures of your Silver Studded Skippers as species number 45 😊

Kind Regards

Mark 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jul-14 07:24 AM GMT

For various reasons I was not able to do stuff like this when I was a child Neil so I am finding it all fascinating, seeing it for the first time and I am looking forward to releasing the adults. Thank you for your comment.

Thank you too Wurzel. I shall certainly report back on this.

They're actually very rare Mark, but not unlike their more common SPOTTED cousins, except for the beautiful blue on the upper sides of the males 😊😊

A brief early evening walk around Bramshott Common revealed that there are still a few Silver STUDED Blues about which surprised me a little as I first recorded them here on 3rd June, this being an early site in Hampshire for SSB's:

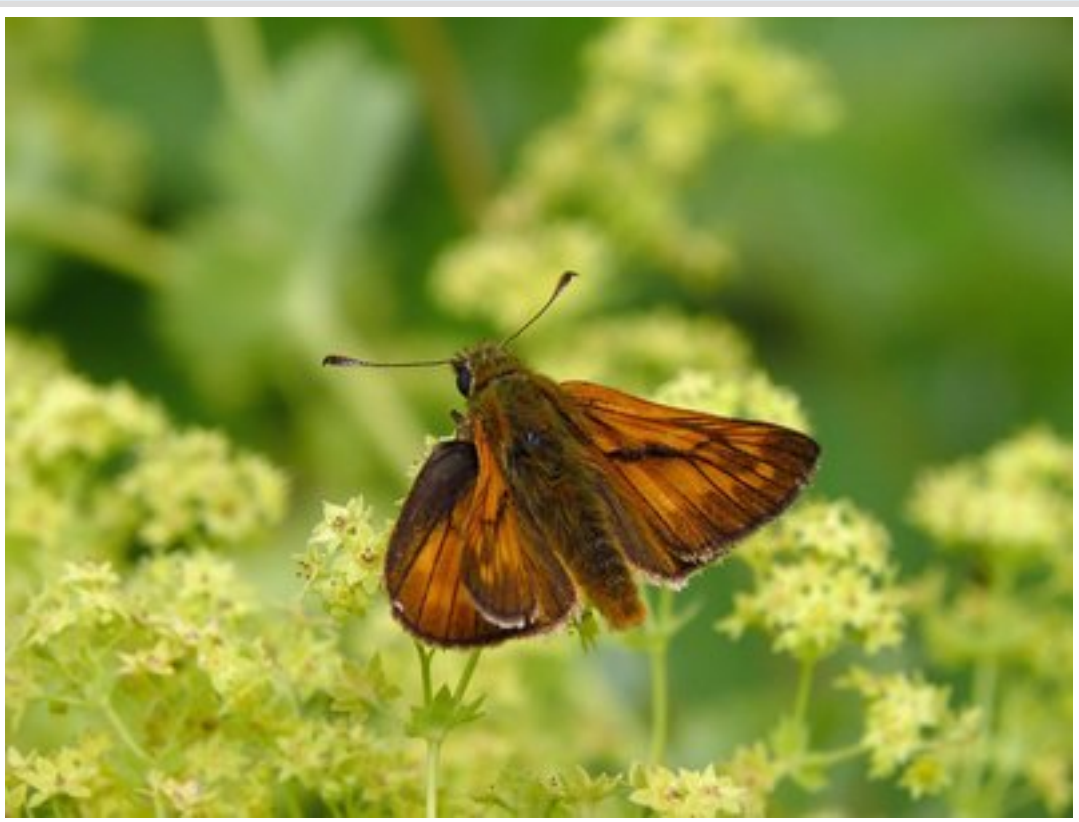




The area is still looking lovely and is obviously a lot bigger than I realised as I have recently become aware that there are ponds at this venue which I haven't yet fully explored:



There were lots of butterflies still on the wing but this Large Skipper attracted my attention as he posed on a cloud of yellow flowers:



I have been taking a leaf out of the PE book and have been doing some Sallow searching of my own as it is surprising what can be found – a couple of Shield bugs of some sort on this occasion:



I feel very lucky to have this site so close and it is now always my venue of choice when time is short.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 14-Jul-14 11:45 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

For various reasons I was not able to do stuff like this when I was a child

I found your post on the caterpillars pupating rather inspiring – I must try it myself since, like you, I never did this sort of thing when a child. My parents had no interest in natural history, which is a pity, since I now realise what a fascinating place we lived in, by the dunes on the Lancashire coast.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by David M, 14-Jul-14 11:57 AM GMT

Some lovely images there, Pauline. I hope you get to see one or two emerge from the pupa.

Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 14-Jul-14 09:31 PM GMT

Hi Pauline. Great to see the Puss larvae. Never seen one, but would love to. Had an adult in the trap before though and that is also very impressive!!

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 14-Jul-14 11:29 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Just catching up. Good luck with your Peacocks, they are unbelievably beautiful when newly emerged 😊 You are right about Sallow being a particularly rich hunting ground for anything with six legs. Our neighbours once let one grow outside their kitchen window until it became a bit of an eyesore. However, it was always covered in the summer with all sorts of life. There was plenty of greenfly on it accompanied by lots of Ladybird larvae of several different varieties as well as sawfly larvae and Comma larvae seemed to enjoy it.

I note that Silver Spotted Skippers are already out in Sussex. I was thinking of trying my luck for an early one at Oxenbourne this weekend, what are my chances 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Jul-14 06:54 AM GMT

Thank you Mike. Do please try it for yourself as it is quite fascinating.

Wouldn't that just be the icing on the cake David. It is a pity so many have chosen the roof of the cage as it makes photography a little awkward but it will be great to release them nevertheless.

Good to hear from you Paul and thank you for your comment. You may be lucky with the SSS as many species are early this year and I think it was 23rd when I saw them last year. That little colony seems to be dwindling though but I had intended to check them out later this week. If I find anything it will be in my diary.

They are really amazing Bob. I wanted to see them again and take some shots in less windy conditions but when I returned about 36 hours later they had all gone, presumably to pupate. The cocoon they make is almost as interesting as the cats as they chew bits of wood and mix it with saliva which then hardens like concrete and it is very well camouflaged indeed. The moth has to use some type of acid I believe to break through the casing – perhaps the formic acid that the pupa uses as a defence mechanism?



On the same branch where I found the Puss larva I found what I think is a Pebbled Prominent larva – another strange looking caterpillar:





Some of the Buff tipped cats were already starting to disperse and as I got close to this one he threatened me by lifting up his back end and presenting me with a fierce looking face:



I had the pleasure of watching a female second brood Holly Blue egg-laying but this was too high up for any photos. The activity was interspersed with rest periods deep in the bramble but I managed a couple of shots for the record:



Back home, the reared Alder cat is doing just fine but I now need to determine the pupal needs as I don't think it will be long before I (hopefully) witness another transformation:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Jul-14 06:59 AM GMT

I was passing Southsea yesterday and on the spur of the moment decided on a quick stop to check the fennel (well, you never know! 😊). It was good to see that Mark and/or other person(s) have been doing a good job of monitoring it as there were well defined tracks up to and around each clump of fennel and buddleia. This made my visit considerably easier as I was wearing shorts and the long, spiky stems had been flattened. Despite a fairly thorough look I was only able to find one cat – I have no idea what it is but I am pretty sure it wasn't the one I was looking for!



Re: Pauline

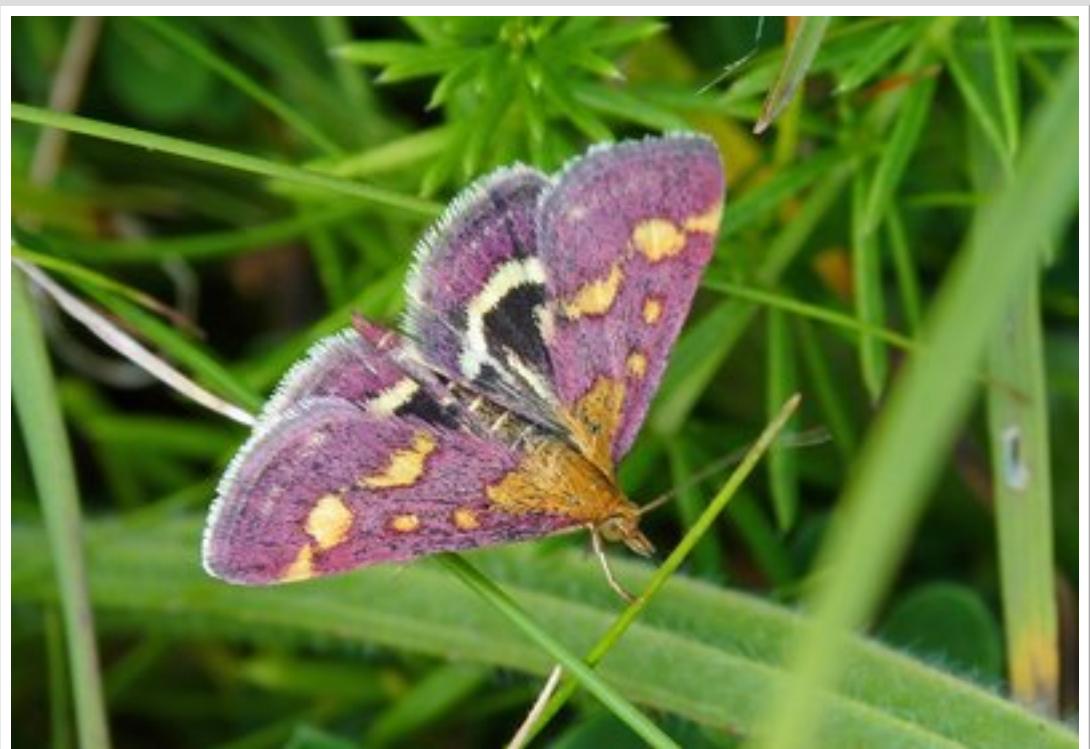
by Pauline, 15-Jul-14 04:39 PM GMT

What exciting times these are – reports of a Yellow legged Tortoiseshell invasion, sightings of large Tortoiseshell, European Swallowtails and a gorgeous rare Painted Lady aberration. I wish I could clone myself and be in 3 places at once but domestic duties have to be done some time and between food

shopping and vet visits I could only manage a quick visit to Oxenbourne, prompted by Paul's enquiry about SSS. I am fairly sure they are not out yet Paul (but could well be by the weekend). However, there was a lot of butterfly activity with many fresh (only male) Chalk Hills and lots of fresh Small Skippers, the females of which seemed to be almost totally engaged in egg-laying. I watched a few before taking a few shots and then I carefully examined the blade of grass. I wasn't surprised to find a few eggs so I continued to examine other blades and the next 3 also contained eggs. I had expected these to be firmly fixed to the surface but beware if you decide to look because these little pearls seem to roll about freely and great care should be taken to ensure none are lost:



I also saw a couple of pretty moths but no idea (again!) what they are:



This one looked black and white in flight but had a strange pointed snout:



A lovely fresh Small Copper caught my eye as she searched for a place to deposit her eggs, totally oblivious of my presence. I crouched down to get some shots probably getting covered in ticks again in the process – this is one of the worst sites I know for ticks and biting things so don't forget Jungle formula max strength tho' I have never found it very effective in these situations.





As I left her she was still laying eggs and kept returning to the same small area. I have noted the area of both the Small Copper and Small Skipper eggs and may well return to monitor them



As I left the site I took a couple more shots of things I should know the name of but have forgotten – must be a senior moment 😊





Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 15-Jul-14 06:07 PM GMT

Another fascinating series of photos and, for once, I think I can identify most of the moths!

The very pretty little purple moth is one of the Pyralids: *Pyrausta purpuralis*. Your photo shows the wings spread sufficiently to show the inner spot on the hind-wings, which differentiates this species from the similar *P. aurata*. The 'football jersey' caterpillar is a Cinnabar moth and your other pair are 6-spot Burnets *Zygaena filipendulae*. The other will need a 'real' moth expert! It's one of the 'grass moths'.

Since you don't mention it, I assume that your Small Copper does not have the blue spots that you are keen to find.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Jul-14 08:34 PM GMT

Thank you Mike, both for the compliment and the ID's – I am slowly learning and have ordered a couple more books on the cat/moth subject so hopefully won't need as much help once they arrive. As for the Small Copper, well, I think those with blue spots are just a myth 😊😄 – after all, I've been looking for 3 years now and you'd think I would have seen one by now if they existed so I think some folk are just having a bit of fun with photoshop 😊

I don't much like this hot humid weather and was in desperate need of a bit of a cool breeze which meant either the coast or the hills. I opted for Old Winchester Hill and I was not disappointed. As usual there was quite a breeze but this time it was very welcome. The place was teeming with butterflies, in particular lots of fresh Red Admirals and Small Tortoiseshell at every step:





The nettles were covered in cats of all sizes and I assume they are ST but I am still not too good on my cat ID's:



Smashing views as always:



Lots of Skippers about and the Chalk Hills were just starting to emerge:



I'd like to be able to say that I'm looking forward to my next visit but with so many other stunning sites to see I don't seem to get here quite as often as I might.

Re: Pauline

by Mike Robinson, 16-Jul-14 08:39 PM GMT

It looks very steep there.

I was at Fackenden Down (Kent) yesterday; it's very, very steep there. But the walk back to the car is thankfully downhill.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 16-Jul-14 08:42 PM GMT

This is perhaps the most exciting time of year, where the emergence of Nymphalids allows many sites to harbour 20+ different species.

It only lasts two or three weeks so make the most of it!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 16-Jul-14 10:10 PM GMT

Beautiful Chalk Hill Pauline 🤩🇬🇧 I'm checking my local site everyday with still no sightings 😞 I might have to try somewhere else 🙄 Your unidentified moth is I think *Crambus perlella*? Hope this helps?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 17-Jul-14 01:11 PM GMT

Lovely photos in your recent posts Pauline 😊 stunning shots of the amazing moth larvae and great shots of the Small Skipper and Small Copper ova 😊 you're really 'getting into' early stages 😊😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jul-14 03:03 PM GMT

It is indeed very steep Mike and what some folk don't know is that at the very bottom of the very steepest bit you can find Small Blue at the right time of the year – but I have never seen anyone down there.

I only managed 15 species this morning David but then I didn't wander very far, staying in the SSS hotspots. I'm confident I could have made it into the twenties if I'd wandered around the site.

Thank you for the ID Wurzel. There are lots of Chalk Hills about now so yes, try another site 😊

Thank you Mike. I can tell you that the early stages are a damn sight easier to photograph and just as interesting as the imago – if you can find them 😊 and I guessed right about your recent visit, so come on, get some more shots posted, pronto! 😊😊

My posts are now getting a little out of order but just wanted to report that SSS is now out at Oxenbourne. I had a smashing couple of hours there this morning, apart from being eaten alive by horrible black flies if I so much as stopped to take a photo. I am not exaggerating when I say that within seconds anywhere between 50 –100 landed on my shorts and legs so instead of just standing and watching the action I had to stay on the move.

The egg-laying Skippers and Small Coppers continued egg-laying and were now joined by Chalk Hill Blue and Common Blue also egg-laying – the first time I have seen the females:



Half a dozen DGF skimmed around the site, including 2 pairs (2 of which were worn and 2 fresh). The closest I got to one of these was to find it tucked away (briefly) when the sun momentarily disappeared. It is always difficult to know how fast to move in such situations – too fast and you scare them off but if you're too slow they're off before you get the shot – which is what happened here:



There were some lovely fresh Brimstone which were happy to pose:



but the SSS DID take some finding. I thought I saw one the other day but I wasn't sure. Today I am confident that there were 2 but getting close was another challenge as they were focused on finding females. Let us hope this site has more success than the last couple of years. The first shot:



The butterflies seem intent on really making me work for my shots this year – it has definitely not been easy. Now here's the big ask! I really like this photo – except for that branch. I love the freshness of the butterfly and the way it shimmers in the sun. I might not get better at Oxenbourne. Is there anyone out there with photoshop skills good enough to remove the branch? It would be much appreciated.



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 17-Jul-14 04:23 PM GMT

Any better?



If you like it, you owe me a beer at the next social 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jul-14 07:05 PM GMT

That seems like a very fair deal to me 😊 I'll be seeing you in December then! Thank you so much for doing that Mike – it's certainly a massive improvement 😊😊

A couple of days ago I went up to the Straits to see what was out and about – and found there was quite a lot going on. The small entrance bay was packed with cars so I parked along the road and was met at the entrance by a forest ranger who advised me (with an apologetic smile) that there were about 30 people along the track and it 'was quite busy'. I decided to give them a wide berth and worked my way along to the watch tower via the less used tracks. By the time I reached the brambles the majority had made their way back to their cars and I had the place largely to myself. There were many butterflies on the wing including SWF and WA – though not as many as in recent years. I was pleased to see 3 mating pairs of SWF all together but right in the middle of the bramble patch. They were all still quite active alternating nectaring with flying up to the trees so trying to get photos of any pair was quite difficult and all shots were from a distance:



During the early part of the year, and more recently, I have searched this part of the forest, both alone and with others, for violets – the larval plant of this butterfly. We have found very little and none of it within crawling distance of a tree! So, it is a mystery to me where these butterflies are laying their eggs and seems like it will remain that way for a little while. I was also keen to see if I could find any WA eggs given my disappointment over the disappearance of the larva earlier in the year. It was surprisingly easy but I wonder how many of them will make it as one of those I found had already been predated (thanks to Pete for his confirmation of the egg status). A couple of shots below – the first, a viable egg with the larva just showing, the second is a predated egg which looks like it has had its middle sucked out (the good egg can be seen in the background) and the third is yet another egg.



Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jul-14 08:37 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Some great recent posts with an interesting variety of subjects, especially the early stages.

Great stuff, keep it up 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 17-Jul-14 08:56 PM GMT

You certainly seem to be in the egg hunting mode. Very interesting pictures of the Small Skipper eggs. I took some pictures of a SS egg laying

yesterday. I didn't like to open up the grass to see inside, now I wish I had!! Great stuff.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-14 11:47 PM GMT

Fantastic sequence of shots Pauline and a Silver Spotted Skipper already 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Jul-14 04:17 PM GMT

I am not sure what has ignited my recent interest in the early stages Neil but it has certainly added a new dimension to butterfly watching. Thank you for the compliment.

You've still got the chance Bob but be very, very careful when unrolling the grass as those little eggs are quite mobile – you need a steady hand for sure. Thank you for your comment.

Thank you Wurzel. SSS is also out at Stockbridge Down which is a bit closer to you – and probably other sites too by now.

Only mad dogs and Englishmen etc. Well being none of them I opted for a day in today, not least because I was up half the night due to the ferocious thunder storm here but it is way, way, too hot to be out there. At 12.45 am, I was out in the worst of the storm to cover over the cats and in the dark I accidentally knocked over a small glass of water in the cage. This contained a couple of stems, a WA egg on each, which I had brought home yesterday to take some photos of the eggs out of the breeze. My choice was then either to return them to the wild or allow them to over-winter, safe from predators, in the cage, and monitor their development.

I couldn't really see what I was doing and I was getting drenched, so I brought them indoors temporarily, intending to deal with them this morning. However, as I picked them up this morning to put them back outside I was astonished to see a larva emerging from one of the eggs. By the time I had retrieved my camera from the car and managed to get it to focus (after a fashion – I was after all still half asleep!) the larva had managed to emerge and these are a few of the shots I achieved as he ate his first meal and explored his leaf. I have now read that WA can have a 2nd brood which I was totally unaware of.







Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 18-Jul-14 04:33 PM GMT

More marvellous photos, Pauline! I like the one of the tiny larva reaching into the void from the end of its leaf. Hopefully, one day, it *will* be able to launch out in to the air 😊

The storm was pretty spectacular here, too, and we enjoyed watching it but, thankfully, did not have to venture outside.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 18-Jul-14 06:37 PM GMT

Hi Pauline – WA overwinter as larvae in a "hibernaculum" (a shrivelled honeysuckle leaf attached to the stem with silk). They need to be kept outside and in the shade 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jul-14 06:00 PM GMT

Thank you Mike – I am fascinated by all this stuff!

I appreciate the information and advice Pete – cats are now in the shade.

Talk about building bridges my second cat has now emerged and even at 1 day old he is intent on building a little walk way (or should that be 'crawl-way' 😊) to get somewhere, probably to the next branch 😊😊 !! It is fascinating watching the work in progress:



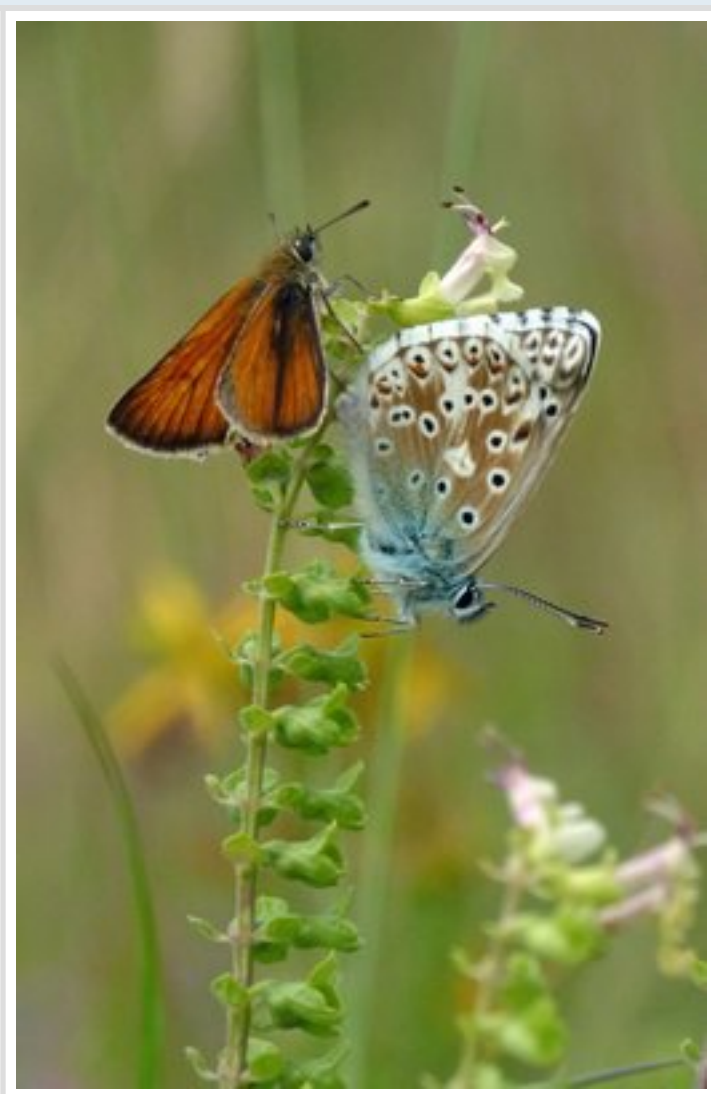
I'm really pushing my little Lumix to the limit now!

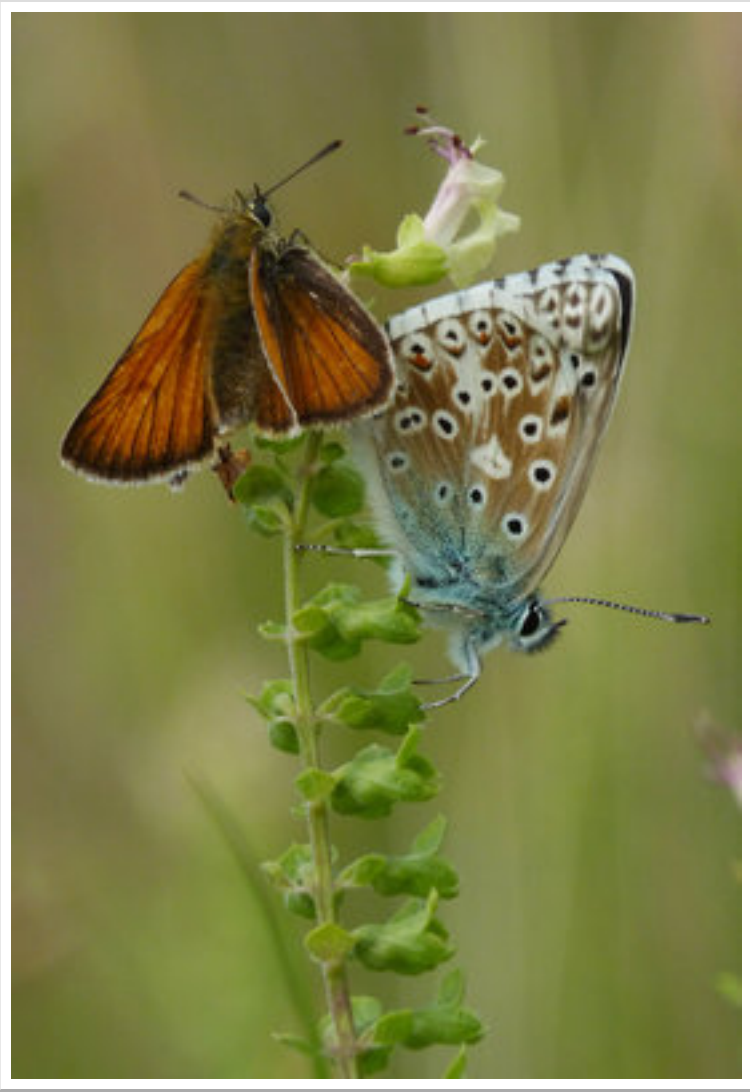
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jul-14 06:49 AM GMT

A brief early evening walk around Oxenbourne failed to produce any female SSS although I know one has been photographed there oviposting which is

excellent news as I fear for that tiny colony. However, the previous 2 males were again seen, either squabbling or hunkered down in the grass or hollows and I was pleased to point them out to another enthusiast who had never seen them before and had made the visit for just that purpose. In return he showed me a pair of mating Chalk Hill Blue he had stumbled across. The Small Skippers were still egg-laying – I checked the previous eggs and was pleased to find them intact but no emergence yet (I am not sure how long it takes). It occurred to me that for the size of the butterfly the eggs are relatively large; some much bigger species seem to produce quite tiny eggs. As I left a few of the Blues were settling down to roost but at 6.00pm a remarkable number were still on the wing.





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jul-14 04:25 PM GMT

Yesterday I visited a site just a few minutes away for only the second time. It is usually frequented by birders and often has restrictions applied because of the Natterjack toads.



A single orchid-like flower nestled amongst the bracken and heather and whilst I was taking a shot for later identification I noticed a small colony of Essex Skippers amongst the heather. The Gatekeepers now seem easier to approach but are not quite as fresh looking as previously:



It is really only a single track, used by cyclists and runners as well as the birders, but there were a huge number of butterflies, with gatekeepers in their hundreds. Like every site I have visited recently there were lots of very fresh Peacocks:



Whilst doing a bit more sallow searching I came across these – and not for the first time, so whatever they are, they are clearly not rare. I would appreciate any ideas.



I had a little chuckle to myself whilst taking some shots of a different insect as a birder came over to enquire if I had found a nest. When I told her it was just a beetle she obviously had doubts (probably about my sanity 😂) and scrutinised the bush anyway. Not finding anything she asked me what my interest was and when I replied caterpillars she looked quite unbelieving 😂 Anyway, this is the beetle. It looked like a giant Ladybird (it was very big and moved very fast) – I know their marking can vary considerably but I have never seen one like this



Being close to the water there were various types of Damselflies, darters and Dragon flies. I watched a mating pair of Damselflies sail through the air only for a bird to snatch one of them and the other returned to the ground alone. I have never seen that before. This one didn't fare any better:





As I was leaving there were half a dozen Whites taking minerals from the track they were too far apart for my close up lens. One male persisted in trying to mate with a female and she was equally adamant that she was having none of it:





A nice walk right on my doorstep 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 21-Jul-14 05:07 PM GMT

I believe that your orchid is a Broad-Leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*). Recently, I watched a Grey Wagtail catching damselflies. It somehow managed to hold one in its beak while catching another. I saw it carrying three at once, presumably to feed its young.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jul-14 09:53 PM GMT

Thanks for the ID Mike. How do they do that? Just a short post tonight and I am getting way behind but my first ever Valesina – not in the best condition but still up to egg-laying 😊



Just missed the underwing shot but I'll keep trying>

Re: Pauline

by William, 22-Jul-14 10:18 PM GMT

Lovely Valesina, and that's a magnificent Helleborine Pauline, very jealous 😊, I shall check on my local one(s) in a few days.

BWs

William

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jul-14 07:02 AM GMT

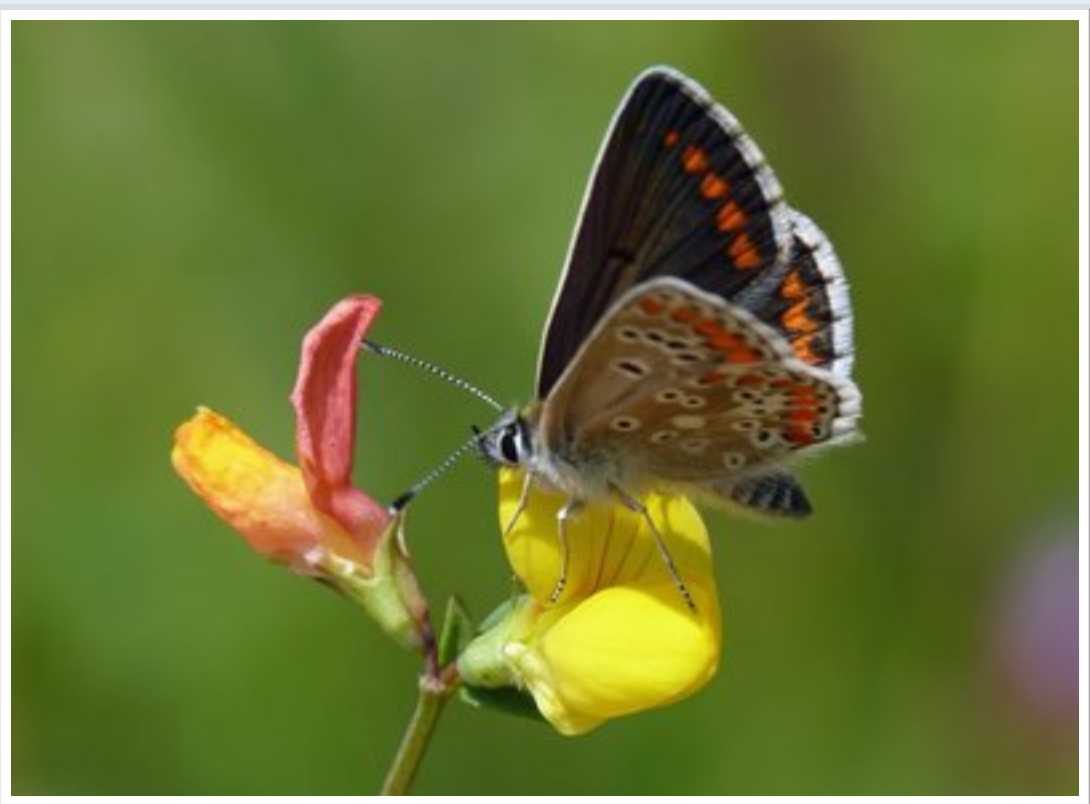
Thank you William. It wasn't as pristine as some of the lovely examples recently posted but it mattered little to me being my first ever sighting 😊

On Monday I decided to visit Beacon Hill to try to find Silver spotted Skippers. I have only visited this venue once before at the start of my butterflying days and I had forgotten how narrow those lanes are. I had also forgotten how very pretty it is once up there, both with the views and also the carpet of colourful and scented flowers, not to mention the clouds of butterflies with each careful step.



Most of the butterflies looked very fresh, a lot obviously the result of a second brood but my attention was gripped by the beautiful Brown Argus which seemed to accompany me throughout my walk and which received most of my attention. I became a little impatient waiting for this one to pose nicely so decided just to take a few shots anyway:







On my way back I could not pass this couple without a photo before making my way back down the hill. I did not find the SSS but that hardly seemed to matter and provides the perfect excuse for a future visit. I had not forgotten my last visit to the delightful Shoe Inn and I was not disappointed as I sat

by the river watching the ducks and Dragonflies enjoying a cool drink and a delicious lunch 😊



Re: Pauline

by Mike Robinson, 23-Jul-14 09:45 AM GMT

These diaries can be both interesting in helping me learn about Butterflies &c. but also entertaining. As is the case here.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-14 10:40 AM GMT

Congrats on the Valesina – where did you find it in the end? 😊 Love the unusual pose of the first Brown Argus – cracking 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Jul-14 08:39 PM GMT

Thank you for the compliment Mike and also for taking the time to comment.

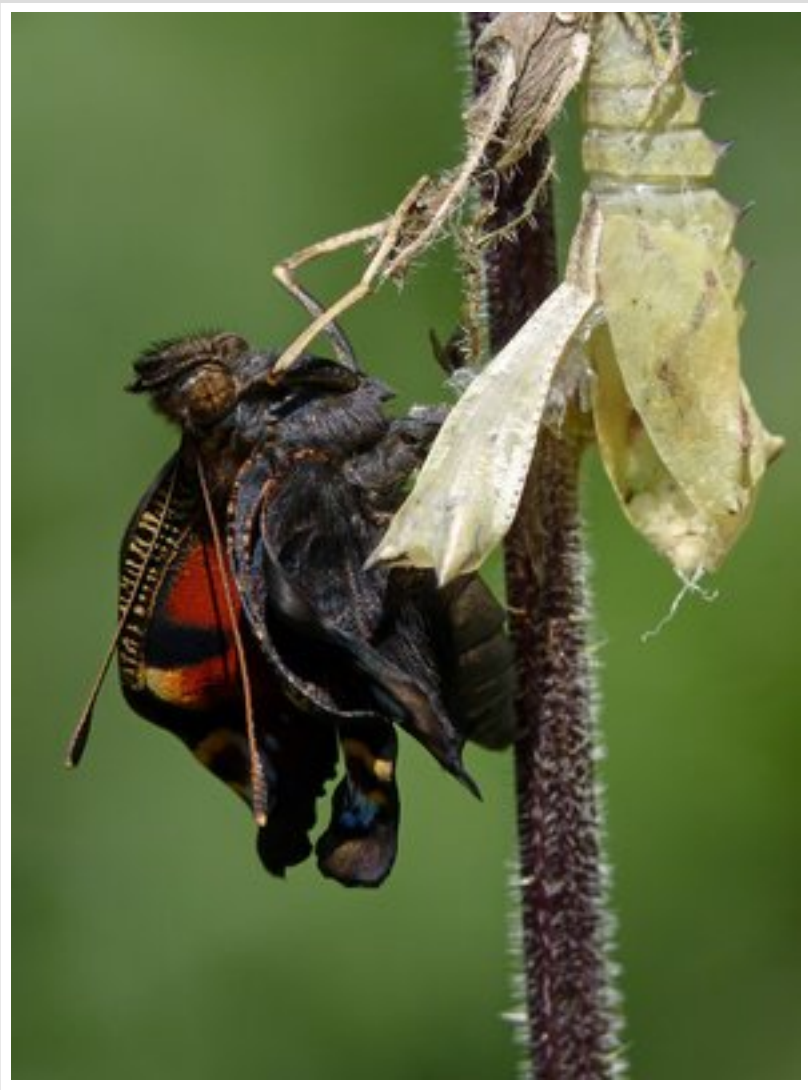
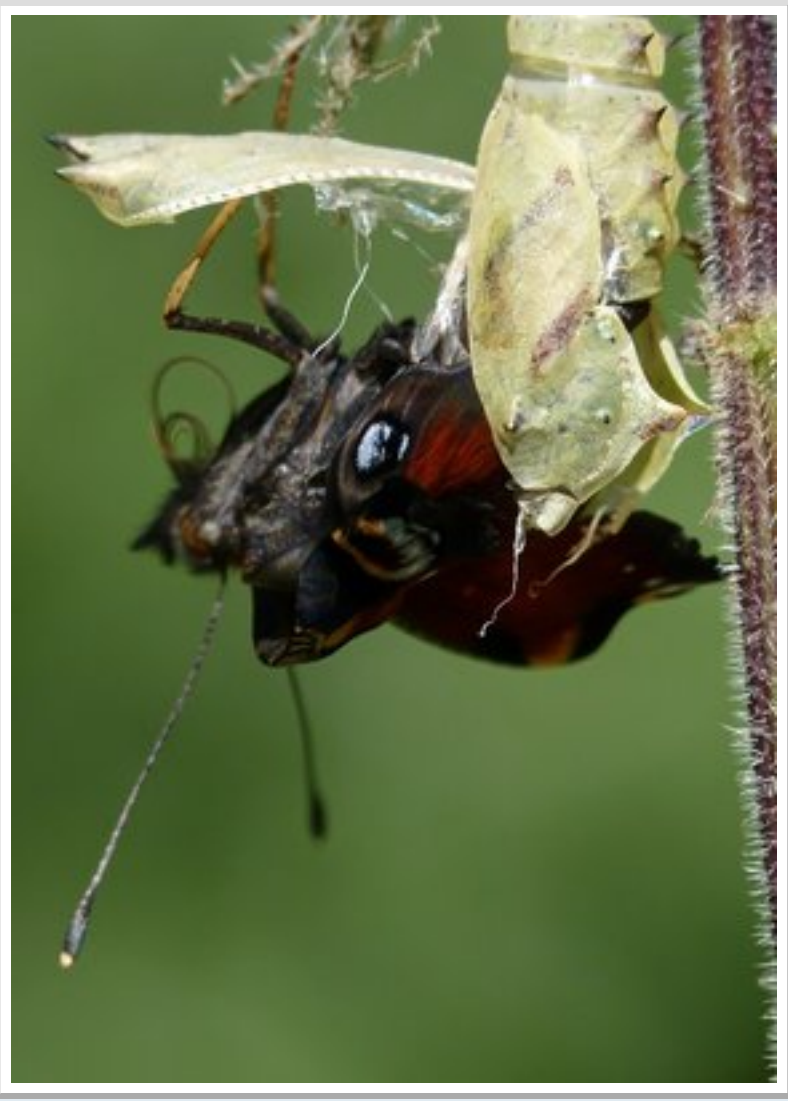
Surprisingly (for me anyway,) just up the road Wurzel, at Alice Holt. I'm glad you liked the BA – a bit quirky I thought 😊 Hope you like these ones.

Well, as caterpillars they hung themselves up as one, waiting to pupate, which happened again largely as a group. Such was the case this morning when I was overwhelmed and overawed by a mass emergence of beautiful Peacock butterflies. Today I released over 20 individuals but there are still a few stragglers biding their time. Lots of photos have been taken today but I shall start with this small sample. The photos speak for themselves:

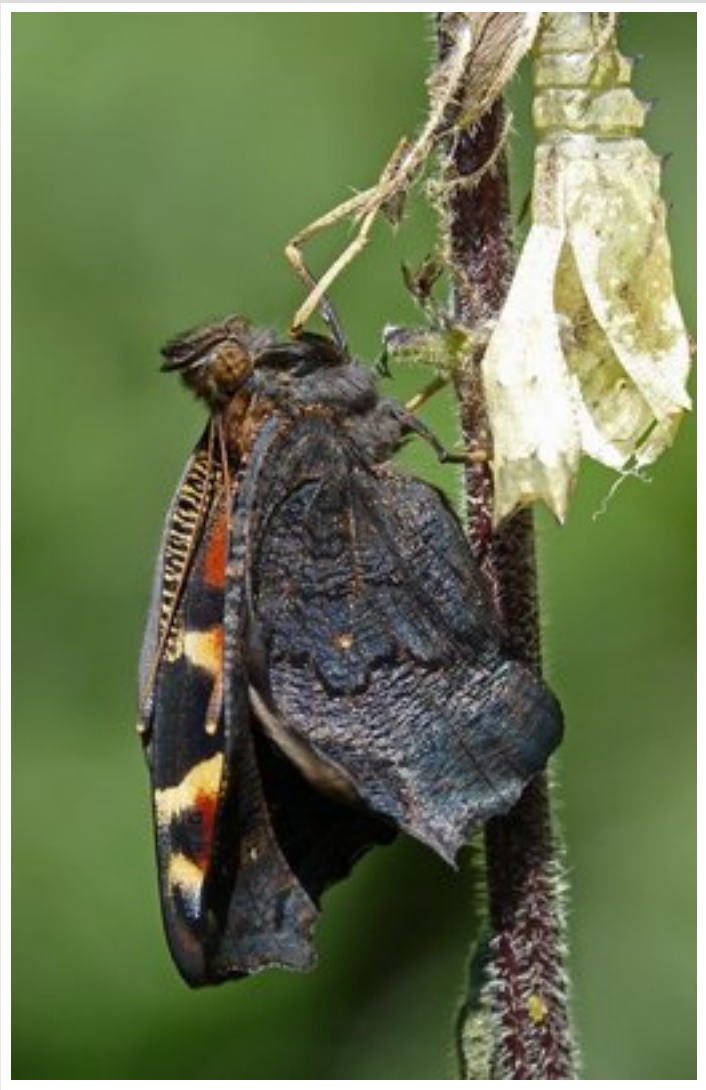


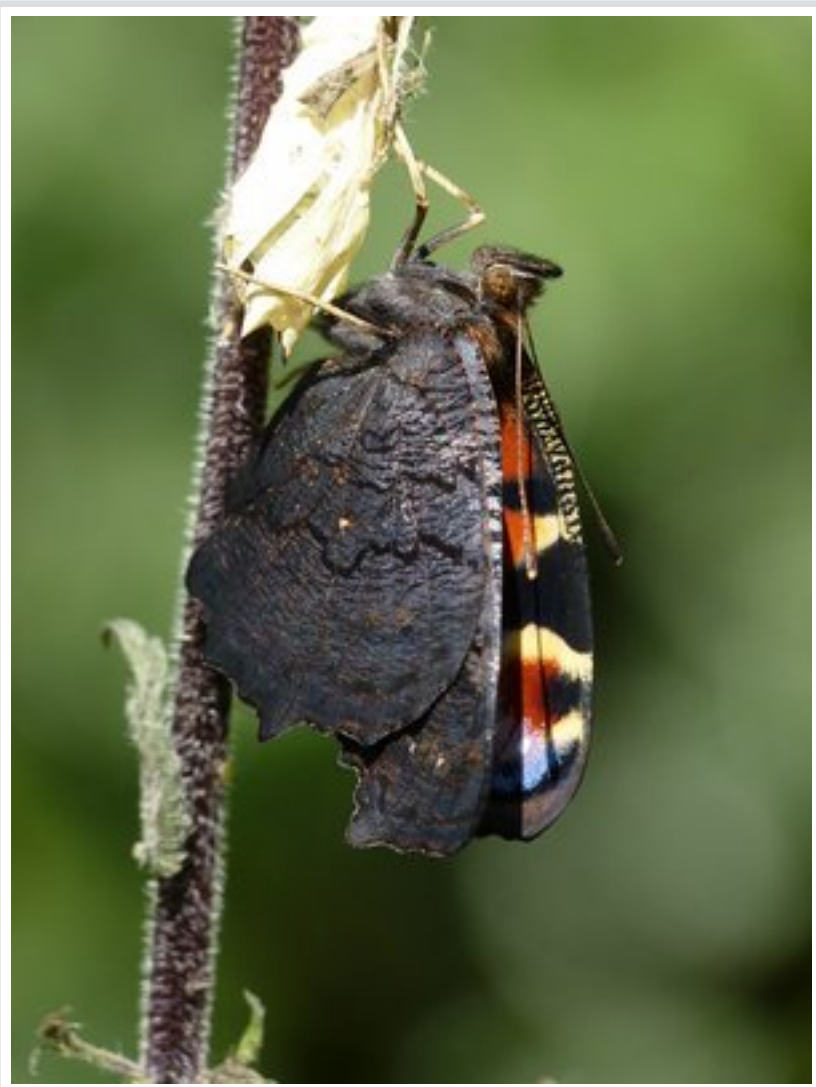


A final flurry and all was revealed 😊









Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 24-Jul-14 09:43 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Your Brown Argus is lovely and you are right about Beacon Hill being a superb spot 😊 I have not visited this year but in the past I have had some of my best butterfly days there 😊 Great sequence of Peacock emergence as well they are so vibrant when fresh.

I was over your way on Monday, there were a few Silver Spotted Skippers out at Oxenbourne Down but no females seen. I should think they might have appeared by now though. I was at Alice Holt as well but unfortunately did not see the Valesina.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jul-14 06:47 AM GMT

Morning Paul

thanks for your comment. I was at Oxenbourne last night and the females are indeed out but even at 7.00pm they were way too active for anything more than snatched shots. I doubt that you would have stumbled across the Valesina – see below. As you have said there is a great deal of insect life on Sallow and on 22nd July I was wondering through Alice Holt searching their leaves for moth caterpillars. The first I found is what I believe to be a Pale Prominent:



I was asked by several folk whether I was looking for PE eggs so I decided to wander deeper into the forest, along little used tracks and into shady areas with sunny glades where I was unlikely to be disturbed. As I quietly rounded a clump of trees I was met by the most extraordinary sight. 5, possibly 6, SWF were gliding round egg-laying on the same couple of tree trunks. I sat and watched for about an hour, completely transfixed by what I was seeing. Recently I had tried to find places where these butterflies ovi-posted and failed – but I had imagined they did it individually. The whole time I was there not a male was seen. I tried to get some shots but they were very quick and very furtive, often deep in the shadows.



I returned later, early evening, and the activities were still on-going. This time they were joined by at least one other butterfly, the Valesina, which was also egg-laying. I am kicking myself as I just missed a shot of her lovely underside as she deposited her eggs but her behaviour definitely differed from the others – she was more skittish and roamed more widely. I took the opportunity to examine the 2 tree trunks and they were covered with eggs –

dozens, tho' only about 6 in this shot.



I returned the following morning, mostly to try to find the Valesina and was astonished yet again to find – absolutely nothing! Weather conditions etc were favourable but despite spending over an hour there, not a single SWF was seen. I looked around plants where I hoped they might be nectaring and other likely resting places but all that was left to convince me I hadn't been dreaming was all the eggs!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jul-14 01:57 PM GMT

I don't have a lot of experience in rearing butterflies and still have many questions and have made many mistakes so I am eagerly awaiting the Guidelines. I thought I had killed my little WA cats (slugs? Heat?) as when I checked the little Honeysuckle sprig the other day I could not find them (...and how often do you have to replace the food plant if it is not planted? – that might seem obvious but one day the leaves look OK and the next day they are dead and shrivelled!). Anyway, after my initial panic I realised that the cats had decamped to other leaves! Now, why would they do that??? The original leaves looked perfectly OK and they had invested a lot of time and effort into creating their little platforms, and had to start all over again. ... so why do they even do that??? I can only assume it is a survival strategy – either a camouflage (which certainly works very well as when they lie there with all that frass on their backs it is incredibly hard to see them as they blend in so well, and yes, that is how they seem to carry it around and can be seen picking it up in one of my shots). An alternative could be to provide some safety from predators – after all, if they have eaten all the leaf around them and are isolated on this little platform I would imagine certain predators have only limited access. One final dilemma is whether these tiny cats should be exposed to the forecast thunderstorms or should they have a measure of protection. A photographic update below:





Re: Pauline


by Cotswold Cockney, 25-Jul-14 02:26 PM GMT

They go into hibernation when still very small, usually in mid-August but in this exceptional year, maybe earlier and that could mean reduced numbers come next summer.

They prepare a leaf turning it into a short small dry tube with their jaws and silk. They will stay inside there come rain wind or shine until late winter

early spring when feeding activity resumes. Best to overwinter them on growing foodplant. Honeysuckle is easy to propagate from cuttings . Even placed in water until roots appear then transferring to pots of suitable compost. Garden soil will do.

I grew Honeysuckle up around the wire frame of large pots netted over. The design like those in the bottom right of this picture only larger. I have overwintered numerous species of butterfly in this simple design which is very successful with close on 100% survival of occupants provided you check regularly all is well and be ever watchful for predators which are still about even in the cold depths of winter.

[url=http://smg.photobucket.com/user/MGJohn/media/Greenhouse/Various21stSeptember2013009_zps13faf9b3.jpg.html:1zz1s23z] 
[/url:1zz1s23z]

The above picture is a digital image taken of a 6" x 4" Print from the 1970s hence iffy quality.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 25-Jul-14 08:10 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, I am playing catch up again. Congratulations on your *valesina* SWF 😊

Reading about you Peacocks brought back memories of last year when I reared a dozen from larvae from my garden. I missed the emergence of mine, 9 out of 12 emerged whilst I was at work and the remaining 3 were out when I got up the next morning. I released them all back into the garden and couldn't help wondering if any of the ones that I saw there this spring were any of those individuals. No way of telling but I like to think so 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 25-Jul-14 08:25 PM GMT

I'm playing catch-up too Pauline, great *valesina* 😊 and great sequence of your Peacock emerging, you've also captured some great early stages shots as well 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jul-14 09:14 PM GMT

I very much appreciate your helpful advice CC but what about thunderstorms and torrential rain whilst they are still tiny cats? Cover them up or let them take their chance?

Thank you Mike. The Valesina was quite exciting.... as was the other stuff actually 😊

Evening Neil – given that I have probably just released close on 30 Peacocks I reckon I had a better chance than you to see them emerge – and today the last one did just that 😊 . It might be a common butterfly and it might be a totally unremarkable event to some, BUT, to me, it was anything but common and totally remarkable. The last emergence:

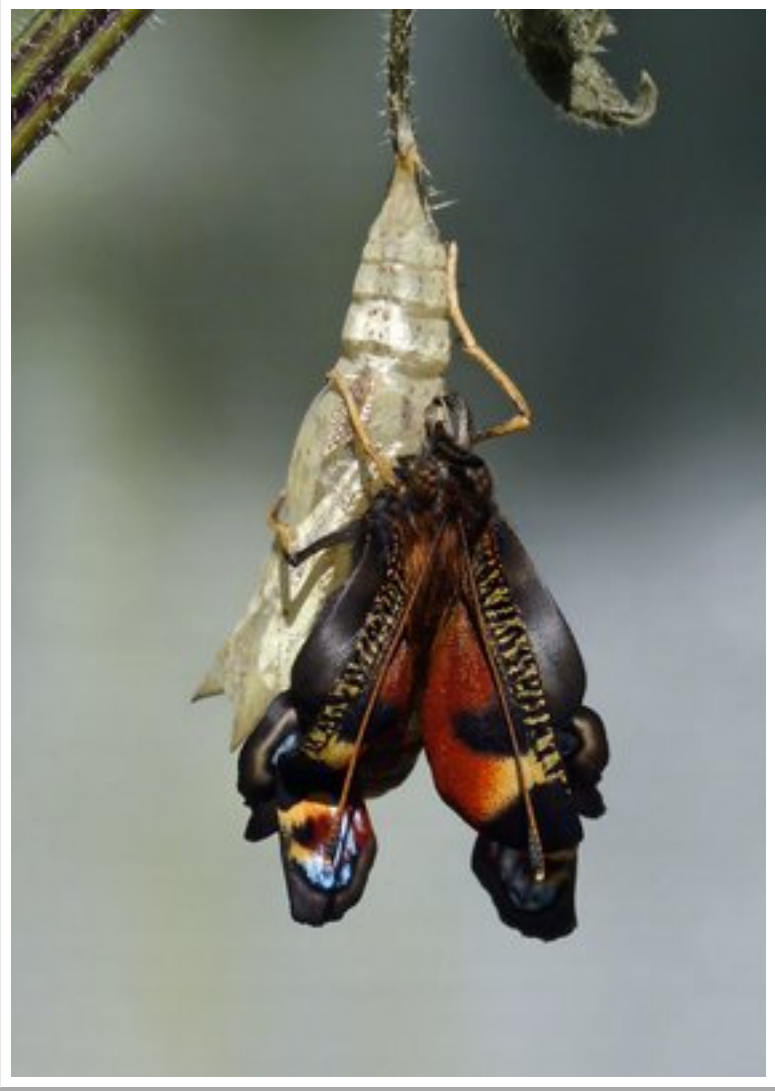


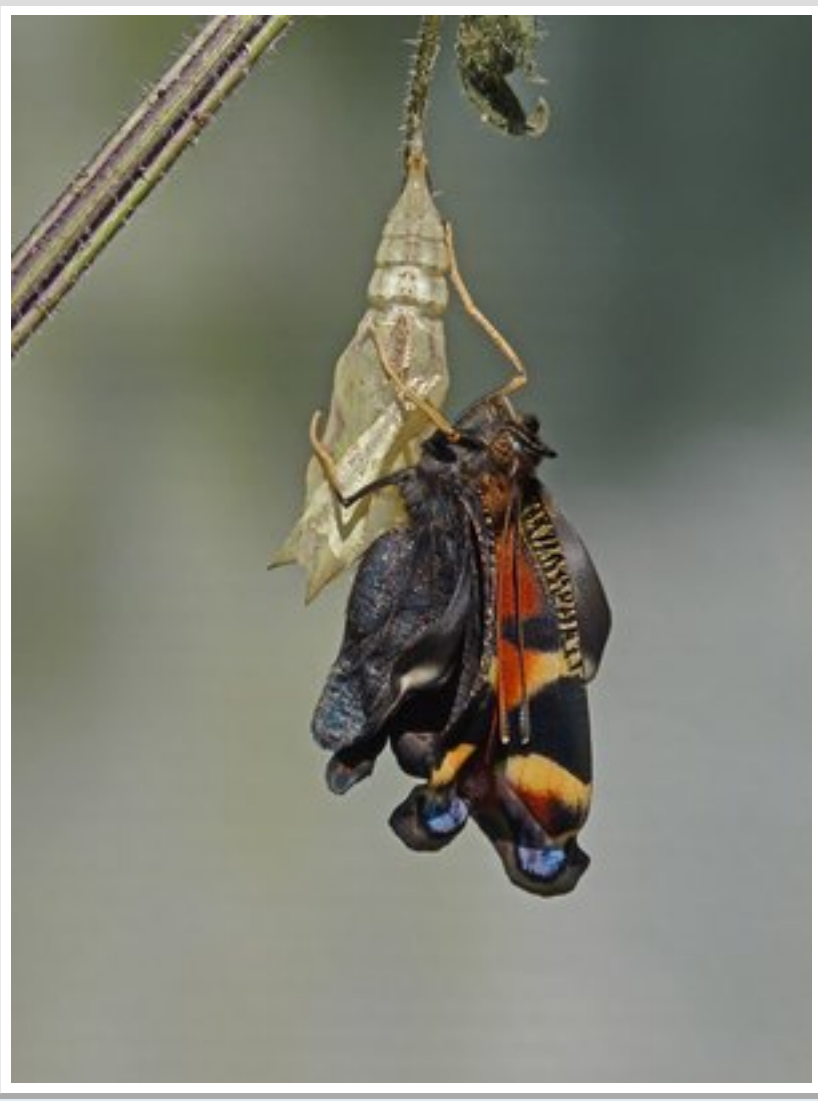














I shall not forget this experience – nor shall I repeat it. As beautiful and engaging as the Peacocks are there is still so much out there that I have yet to see.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 26-Jul-14 09:25 PM GMT

Lovely sequence, Pauline. I reared Peacock as a child but I obviously never captured them on film when they were emerging.

Looks like may thousands have successfully pupated given the numbers I saw at Aston Rowant today,

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 26-Jul-14 11:18 PM GMT

Wonderful sequence, Pauline. I share your sense of wonder 😊 The first shot reminded me of some sort of tribal mask!

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-14 11:38 PM GMT

Stunning sequence of shots Pauline 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Jul-14 03:46 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel and David. I have thoroughly enjoyed rearing them – not that I actually did much except to watch and record 😊

Thank you too Mike – yes, it certainly does look like a mask tho' I hadn't noticed 'til you pointed it out.

Today I met up with a friend for a spot of caterpillar hunting and although we found a few they weren't the one I wanted to find. They were very interesting none the less and I had not seen any of them before. First was the Grey Dagger which was a very impressive looking cat:



Next was a cat which I have yet to identify but which mimics a twig:



However, we were both delighted to see a spanking new Painted Lady. Although she didn't settle in any spot for long it was a joy to see her, immaculate in every respect:





Last but not least, on our way back we were pleased to find a couple of WA cats:



.... very much out on a limb!!!

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 27-Jul-14 09:01 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

.....given that I have probably just released close on 30 Peacocks I reckon I had a better chance..... to see them emerge – and today the last one did just that 😊 . It might be a common butterfly and it might be a totally unremarkable event to some, BUT, to me, it was anything but common and totally remarkable.

Superb Peacock hatching sequence, Pauline 😊.

You adopted a different camera angle to the usual side view, which added another dimension to the event. Lovely clear, well focused shots. Expect a PM with a list soon 😊

Vince

Re: Pauline

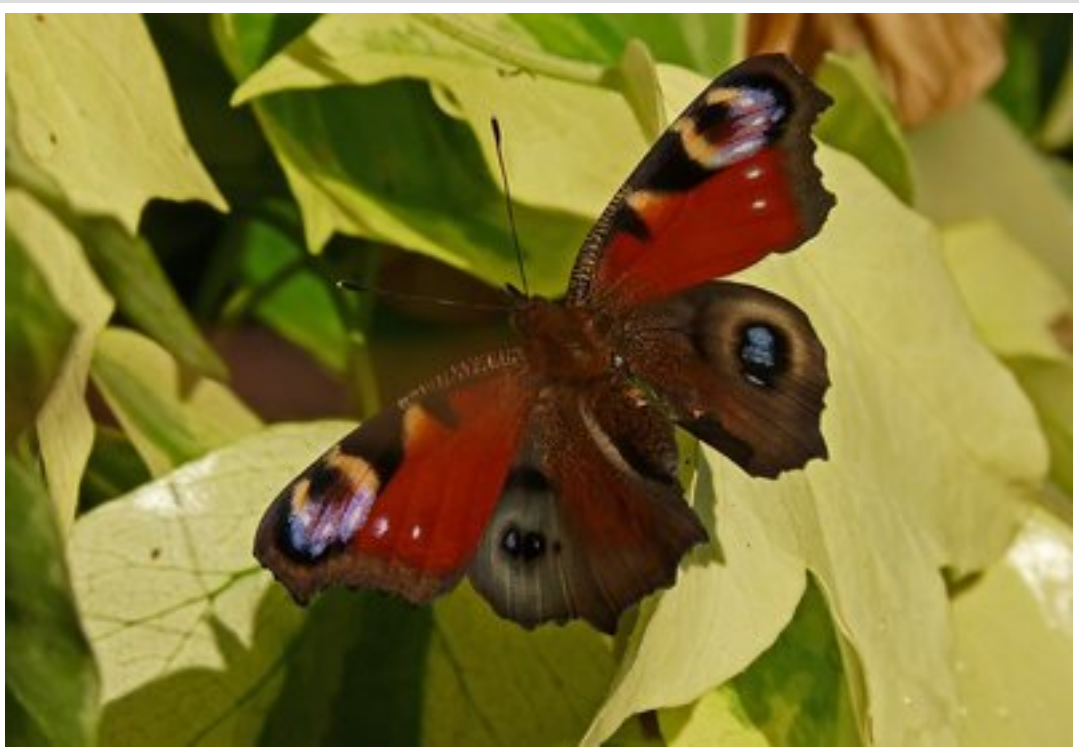
by Pauline, 28-Jul-14 10:00 AM GMT

It is very kind of you to say so Vince but I was using a tripod on this occasion, rather than the usual hand held shots I usually take! I deliberately chose that angle but I wish I'd cropped the shot where the butterfly is kicking his legs out of the membrane as I thought that was an interesting one.

It would be remiss of me to finish with the Peacocks without posting some shots of the imago – after all, that's what it was all about. It was remarkably difficult however to get open-winged shots because as soon as the butterflies had dried, almost without exception, they just took off. Consequently, I just took the photos on whatever plant they happened to land on. They are incredibly beautiful when this fresh and for me that includes the underside also.

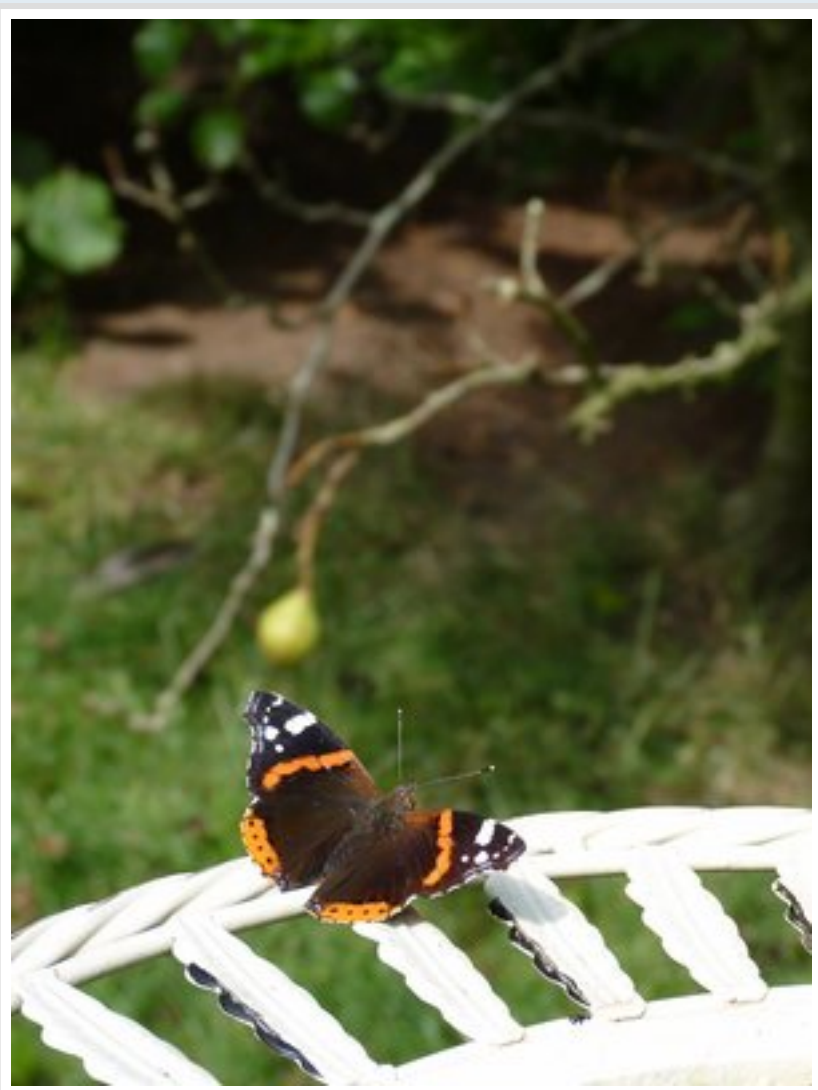


Is this some sort of aberration or something else I have done wrong?





Interestingly, whilst the Peacocks were drying their wings, a Red Admiral spent some considerable time in a state of excitement trying to land on one – it was unfortunate that I couldn't get them both in the same shot but the Peacock was on a nettle in a jar on this table:



On the same day that these Peacocks emerged, I recorded more butterflies in my garden (both species and numbers) than I have ever seen in all the years I have been here. Many Gatekeepers and Meadow Brown, a single Comma, SWF and a tatty White Admiral along with the usual Whites. However, what surprised me most were the 4 or 5 Small Skippers whizzing round the front garden, especially when one female stopped to oviposit on the grasses in the pond!!! My front lawn now looks very interesting as I have mowed around all the clumps of grass where I felt there was a possibility of more Skipper eggs 🤔



Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 28-Jul-14 10:48 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Your aberrant Peacock looks like somebody spilt water on it before the paint dried 😄

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jul-14 06:44 AM GMT

A bit like those 'tie-and-dye' t-shirts that used to be the rage many years ago 😄 – or are you too young to remember them Paul? 😊

I was delighted to see 4 Clouded Yellow flying together yesterday at MHD. For some time I despaired of getting a shot of any of them as they continued to torment me by settling for only a second or two. In fact, I resorted to some aerial shots as 'proof' but I could only get 2 of the 4 in this shot (just on the skyline by the bush) :



At last I managed a few snatched shots but even when the sky blackened with thunder clouds their frantic activity continued. I think there were 2 females, 1 male and I am not sure about the other:





I did not see the Long Tailed Blue that had been reported from there earlier but it was nice to see the second brood Small Blue:





Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 29-Jul-14 10:30 AM GMT

Really nice Small Blue shots and well done at getting some Yellow!!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jul-14 07:36 PM GMT

Thank you Bob. I was very pleased to see this one today too 😊 . Mindful of the need to get a backlit shot to aid identification I think I have done that even tho' the consequence was bringing home lots of ticks 😬 . Can someone please confirm it is a Helice?







Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jul-14 07:58 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Nice Clouded Yellows and Small Blues, I rather like the shot of the CYs above the flowery hillside, very evocative of summer days 😊

Assuming that it is not a Bergers or Pale Clouded Yellow 😊, then you have a nice helice there (this is where one of the experts comes in and corrects me 😊).

All the best ,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Jul-14 02:23 PM GMT

Thank you Neil – it is a pity about the pylon. I reckon you are right about the Helice tho'. Guy must get sick and tired of being asked the same questions so I looked up the last time he explained the difference between Pale and Helice, and I'm pretty sure it's the latter. Today I am grounded as I have an anaesthetised fox in the kitchen and I have instructions to monitor him until he comes round although his future is very uncertain and dependent upon the results of blood tests later today. Chance is probably about 11 years old now and becoming very frail but he will be missed badly by his mate Foxy:

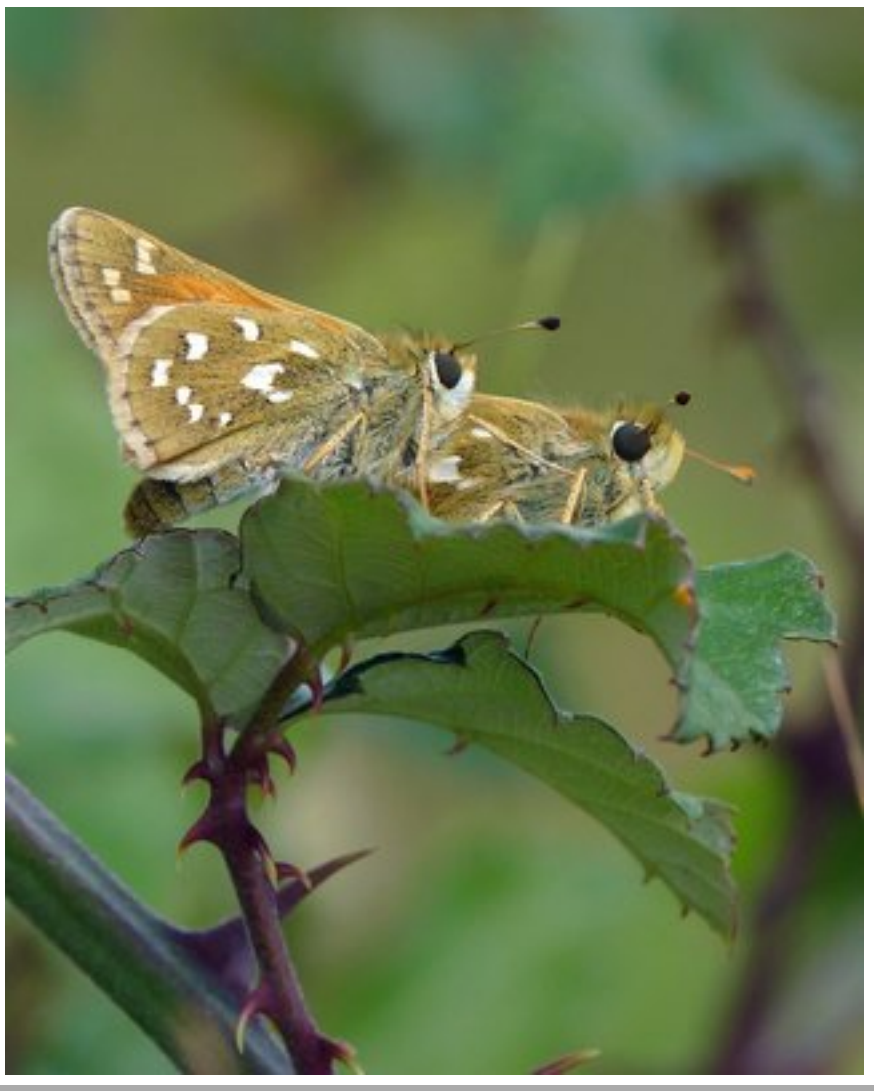


Whilst I watch him I shall continue with the next installment of my diary. I have resolved not to visit Oxenbourne again – at least not this year. Having knelt down to photograph an egg-laying SSS I found myself covered with sheep tick larva – I'm talking hundreds 😱. My clothes looked like they had been sprinkled with black dust which moved of it's own accord and quickly spread all over my body. I tried to shake them off, pick them off – I almost stripped off there and then 😞. Having removed a couple of hundred I quickly returned home and stripped off there before removing dozens more (goodness knows how many I'm still feeding 😡). All my clothes were washed at a high temperature and dried for an hour so I was horrified to find them still crawling with these ticks when they were removed from the dryer! I expect they will be binned!

Anyway, I saw more SSS in a short time than I have done for years, including 3 really fresh females which were all egg-laying which is great news 😊



Given the fresh females there was a lot of excitement and courtship behaviour and I was not surprised to see a mating pair – my first ever. I did not recognise them as such initially, thinking they were simply sitting side by side, but I have seen WLH mate in this position. Not as tidy or photogenic as Bob's recent sighting but I was very pleased to witness it:





This is also the first time I have seen a SSS ovi-posting and I was also able to find several eggs. I also reckon this is when I picked up all the tick larva!!



I think a coastal location is on the cards next – or at least a venue where ticks are less likely!

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 30-Jul-14 10:45 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

I was born in the 60s if that helps 😊

It is encouraging to hear Silver Spotted Skipper numbers are increasing at Oxenbourne. I was there again on Sunday and only saw perhaps half a dozen males and no females.

I spent several hours there sitting, kneeling down etc and also wading through shoulder high vegetation down in the valley and saw no ticks whatsoever. I am obviously not trying hard enough 😊 In fact I can only ever recall seeing one tick there ever. You obviously have something I dont 😊
.....

Which is maybe why you get all the best shots. The pair of Silver Spotted Skippers on Bramble are lovely 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-14 10:02 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Pauline – I go away for a few days camping and it all kicks off over your neck of the woods 😊😊 Your Peacocks are stunning – partially blind? Silver Spots brill but the Helice is a right "envy inducer" 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 03-Aug-14 11:32 AM GMT

Great Helice photos Pauline 😊 also great that you saw your first mating SSS and ovipositing females, plus eggs 😊 Your reared peacocks are real stunners 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 03-Aug-14 12:12 PM GMT

Great to see you got your mating SSSs Pauline. They always seem to be doing the courtship bit but its not that often that the male gets his way!!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Aug-14 07:24 AM GMT

Thank you for your very kind comments Wurzel and Paul – they are very much appreciated. You have been taking some great shots yourself Mike so thank you for taking time to comment (so favourably) on mine. All these 'first' experiences are so exciting!

Thank you too Bob. I almost didn't recognise it as such but having seen WLH like this a couple of years ago I took a second look 😊 . I was thinking about you yesterday and wished I had taken you up on your kind offer re Wall Browns but this year (with current commitments) I decided it was just a little too far. Perhaps next year if the offer still stands?

Events conspired against me yesterday and my plans for an early start to track down a few Wall Brown at Keyhaven didn't come to fruition until nigh on mid-day, following a nightmare-ish journey. Consequently, instead of ending up in the pub, that is where I started out, with a delicious crab sandwich and a cold drink.



Refreshed, I set off along the track and was surprised at how strong the wind was. I was able to lean into it and it buffeted me about as I tried to take a few early shots. It reminded me of growing up in South Shields where it was always, always windy, the sound roaring in your ears, but then it was a cold wind which numbed your whole face whereas today it was baking hot. I was surprised at how dry the site was, the water levels lower than I remember.



The views were just as stunning as I remembered but as I made my way towards Lymington I was disappointed by the lack of butterflies. I had seen more in the pub garden where a Red Admiral seemed intent on sharing my crab and continually landed around me.



I know little about the birds in this area but in the absence of the butterflies I resorted to taking a few shots.



One particular little bird totally captivated me. I don't know what it was about him but I was completely enthralled and took about 100 photos though I don't even know the species. He was quite small, all alone, and very entertaining.



As I made my way across some land which I believe used to be the site of an old tip I flushed a Clouded Yellow which was hunkered down in the grass, away from the wind. What surprised me was how small he was - to my eye he was no bigger than a Chalk Hill Blue and for that reason I am including a shot I took from a distance in the hope that someone who knows about plants may be able to use them to gain some sort of size perspective and

confirm his size. It is only now I am remembering Mark's (Tuts) method of using a bit of grass or similar as a measuring tool!



I think the lack of butterflies must have been due to the strength of the wind as I looked in all the usual places for Wall Brown without any success. I kept looking. I looked for 2.5 hours and by now now I was regretting not taking Bob up on his kind offer to point me in the direction of Wall Browns in East Sussex. A little disappointed and disheartened at the total lack of my target species I decided to call it a day. As I made my way back to Keyhaven, trying to keep out of the worst of the wind I eventually spotted my target. I took a quick shot and then the butterfly flew out over the reeds.



Not long after I spotted it again flying up and down the track. It was really quite difficult to get any sort of quick snatched shot and it was only on my return that I realised that I had in fact taken shots of more than one butterfly.





So much for being observant! Nevertheless, a great afternoon out as it always is at this venue.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-14 11:25 PM GMT

Brill shot of the female Wall Brown Pauline 😊 As your little wader was on it's own I'd hazard that it could be a Curlew Sandpiper – it's the right time of year for them but I haven't see one for a few years now and without the size comparison with other species I can't be too sure – so it could turn out to just be a Dunlin 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Paul Wetton, 05-Aug-14 08:44 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

The little wader is a Dunlin. Not quite slim and smart enough for a Curlew Sandpiper.

Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 05-Aug-14 01:15 PM GMT

Well done on the Wall Browns Pauline. They are now a little past their best here now although numbers still pretty good. The 3 larger waders on their own are Godwits, almost certainly Black-tailed Godwit. Bar-tailed have shorter legs!!

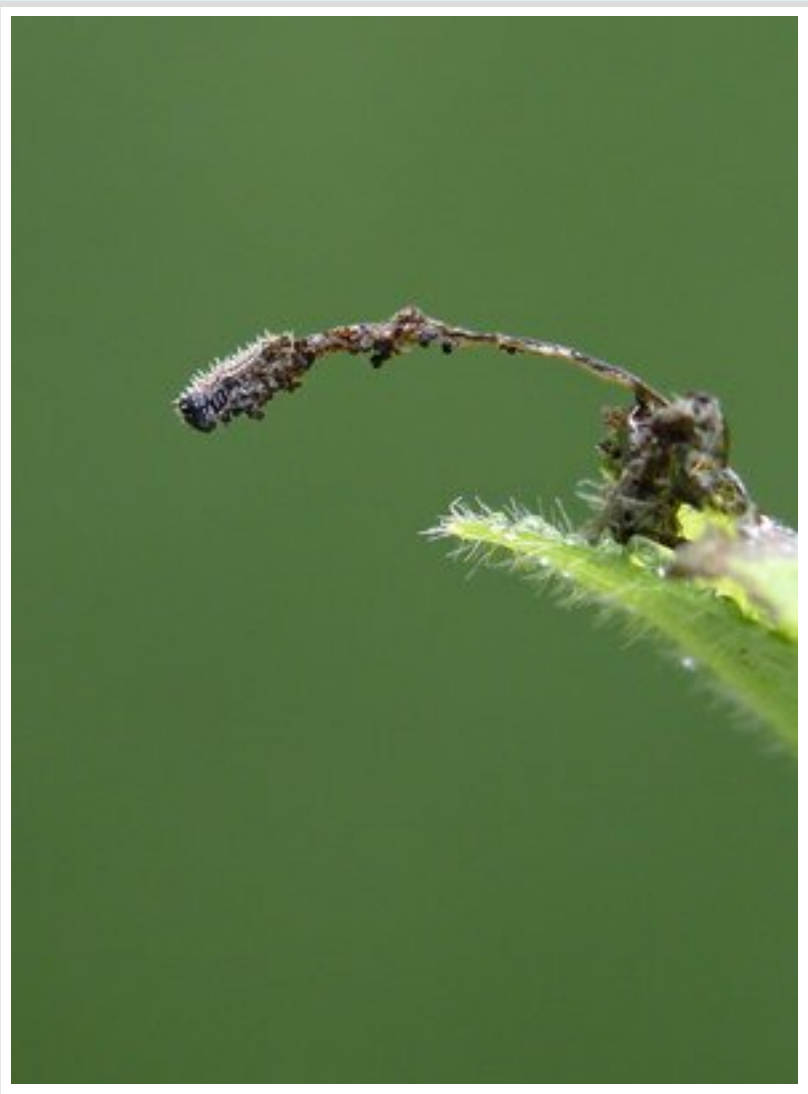
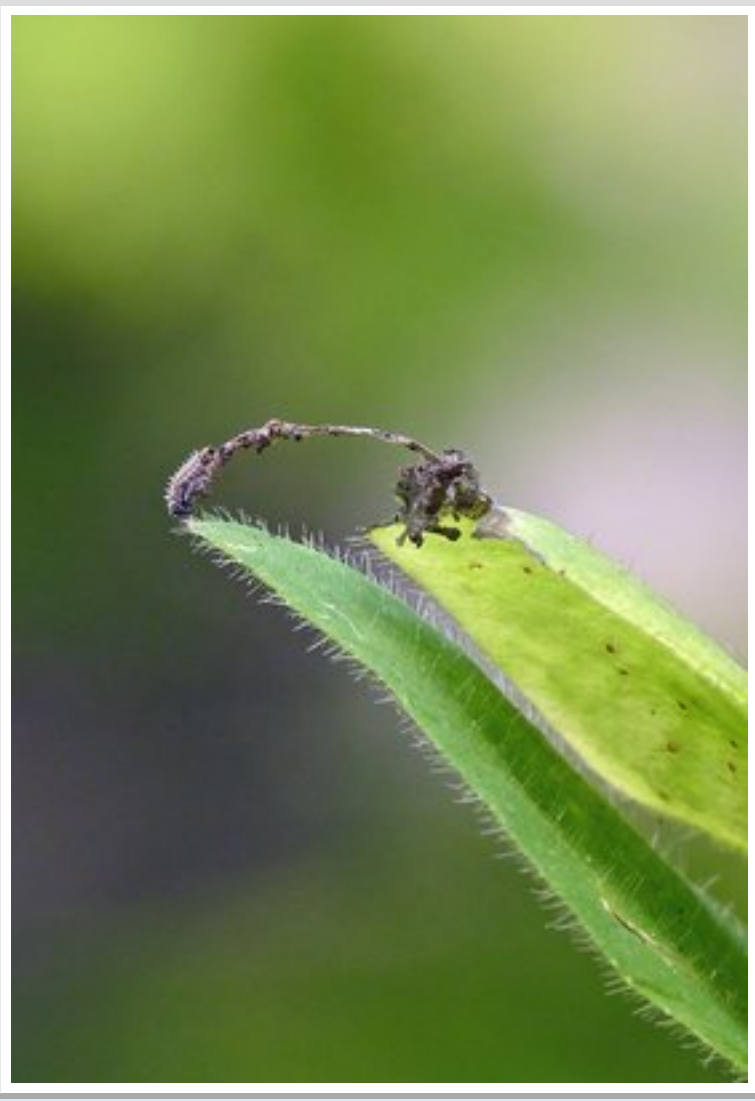
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Aug-14 05:48 PM GMT

Thank you guys for your comments and the ID's – really appreciated. Just a quick update tonight on my White Admiral cats. The good news is – I haven't killed them yet 😊 . The bad news is – there is still plenty of time yet 😞 . I am coming to the conclusion that these tiny creatures only really need 3 things:

1. Protection from predators
2. Plentiful supply of fresh food plant
3. Temperature/environment to be as natural as possible.

Put concisely like that it sounds quite simple but in actual fact it is really quite difficult. I have been mindful of the lessons I learnt from the Hairstreaks (eg slugs, not indoors, etc) and I am doing my best to give these cats the best chance of survival. In return they are providing me with a great deal of interest and educational opportunities. A few shots taken over a period of time:



It would seem that this little chap has decided it is time to retire for the Winter but he seems ever so small and I'm not sure what to do when his leaf drops off 😊 :



It has been a nightmare feeding these little guys as they were just on little branches and as the leaves started to die – to the point that the leaves they were on dropped off – I tried to replace the branches and/or coax them onto a potted plant I had. They refused point blank to leave their leaf or their little platform, steadfastly refusing to budge and throwing their heads around in disgust when I tried to introduce fresh nourishment. It was really hard work.



Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 05-Aug-14 08:06 PM GMT

Amazing pictures, Pauline.

It doesn't surprise me they don't like being moved. They keep track of exactly where they are with silk threads and secure their chosen leaves with silk. They have their 'set-up' – which costs them the energy of making the silk – and don't want to be plonked somewhere else.

They hibernate in the second instar, when they measure 3–4mm, and make themselves a hibernaculum out of a leaf, folded or rolled up around them – as I'm quite sure you've read all about. The chosen leaf will be secured with silk and will not fall off – but again, they will expend a lot of energy doing

this. Once the process has started I wouldn't move the caterpillar.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 05-Aug-14 08:13 PM GMT

Interesting stuff Pauline and great images as well 😊

All the best,

Neil.

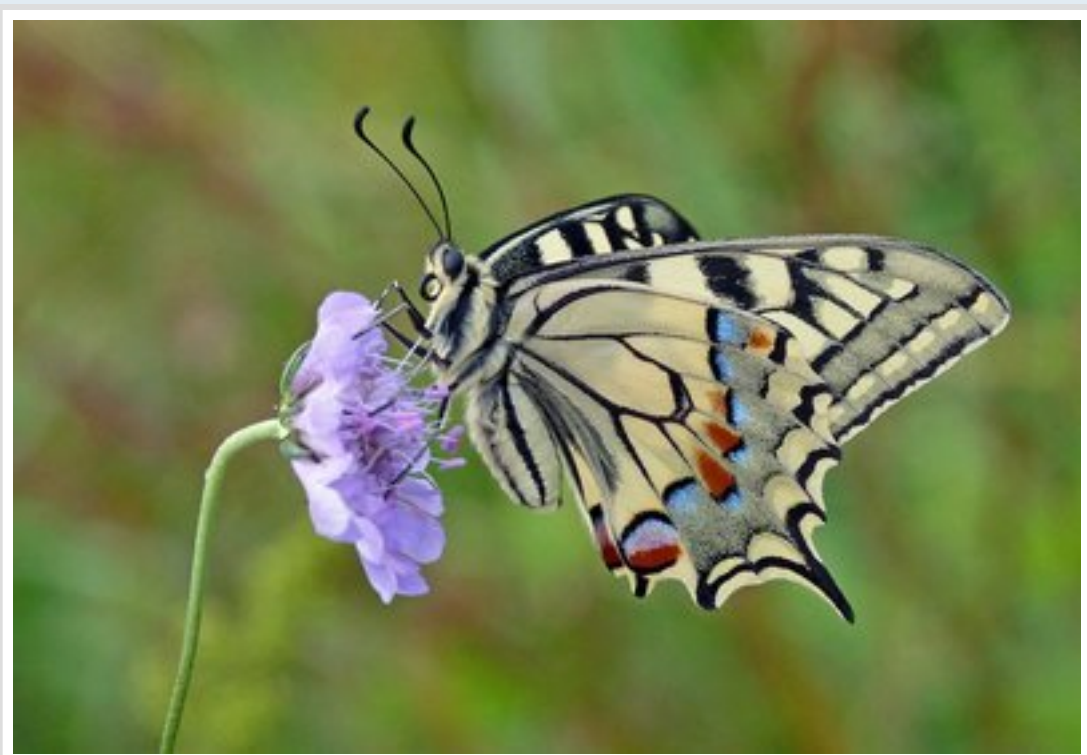
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Aug-14 05:32 PM GMT

I very much appreciate your comment and advice Guy. I was surprised when both cats abandoned their leaf/platform initially for no apparent reason (at least not one that I could see), simply because of the effort involved in recreating it elsewhere. I am now convinced it is a protection against predators. It is also interesting that this, their 3rd platform, is now made from the actual leaf, rather than frass. Presumably, this is because they were so small to begin with they couldn't actually eat enough leaf to make a platform? I am fascinated by the whole process, take photos every day and check up on them several times daily. At 2.00am I was out (again!) in the storm making sure they were OK 😊

Thank you too Neil – let's hope I can keep them alive cos that would just be the best thing, to see them go as adults. There is much that can go wrong I am sure between now and Spring.

I have at last had the chance to see and photograph a Swallowtail. What a magnificent butterfly it is – better than I had even imagined. It was a reared specimen – not by me I hasten to add – but I was pleased to be given the opportunity to spend some time with it, even if I did not have the pleasure of seeing it fly as the owner took it home with him. It has spurred me on to become even more determined to see them flying free. A few photos for my diary and memories for me:





Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 06-Aug-14 09:37 PM GMT

Lovely early instar photos of the White Admiral larvae Pauline 😊 you can now see them beginning to look more like the final instar cats. Amazing observations and images of their early life 😊 Beautiful photos of the Swallowtail 😊

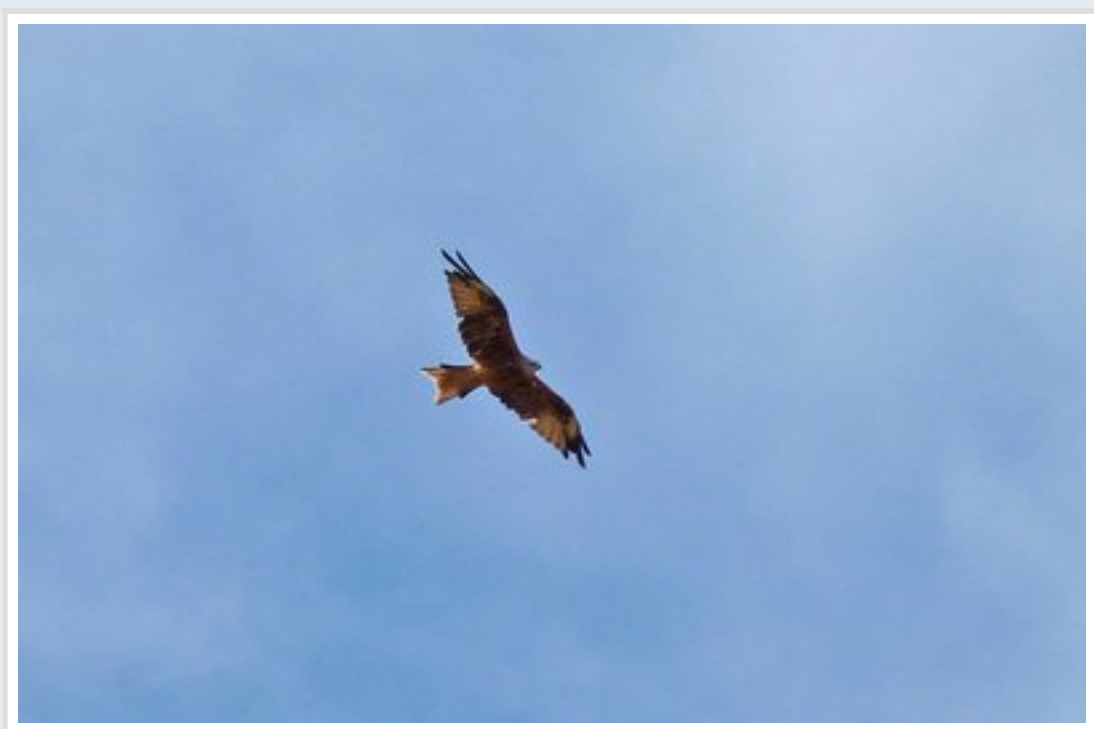
Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Aug-14 04:13 PM GMT

I'm finding the WA development fascinating Mike and I will be gutted if anything happens to them thru my mis-management cos I am such a novice. I'm glad you liked the Swallowtail – I thought it was magnificent and I was pleased that I got a phone call to go and see it. I note more are emerging in Sussex. Look forward to seeing you both again – somewhere 😊

This morning Noar Hill was looking better than I can ever remember it. My primary aim was just a pleasant walk in lovely surroundings with the chance, perhaps, of another Clouded Yellow. In a couple of hours I saw 20 species and thousands of butterflies. My first sighting however was a bird – a Red Kite soaring upwards on the thermals but by the time I got my camera sorted out (wish there was a quick release button for that close-up lens) he was quite a distance away, but probably my best shot of one to date:



The first butterfly of interest was a very large, fresh Common Blue which was a brilliant blue. Because it was so large I stopped to take a closer look and realised it was a female 😊. Just as I was about to take a shot a male barged in and they both flew off giving me a chance to compare the two at close quarters. The female was twice the size of the male but exactly the same colour on the upper wing! Small Tortoiseshells were literally everywhere:



My next sighting of note was an old faded, really tatty, Large Skipper – poor b***er I thought, hope he had a good life. As I made my way towards the triangle (well, you never know) I came across another Painted Lady which wasn't quite as fresh as the last one I saw but very welcome all the same:



I was desperately trying to get an underwing shot when a female Brown Hairstreak was spotted, hunkered down in the grass. Thoughts of the Painted Lady were immediately forgotten. No doubt I am again covered in ticks as I lay down to try to get a shot of her:



She didn't stay in one place for very long but stayed really low down and was behaving in a way I haven't seen before, landing on flowers and stems:



She began egg-laying on Blackthorn branches that were literally inches from the ground before flying into a small Oak tree:



I carried on exploring the site and was pleased to see a female Clouded Yellow taking nectar from flowers. Although I didn't stay with her long she was still there an hour later when I passed by on my return - not on any one plant but continually flitting from one to another in the scorching heat:

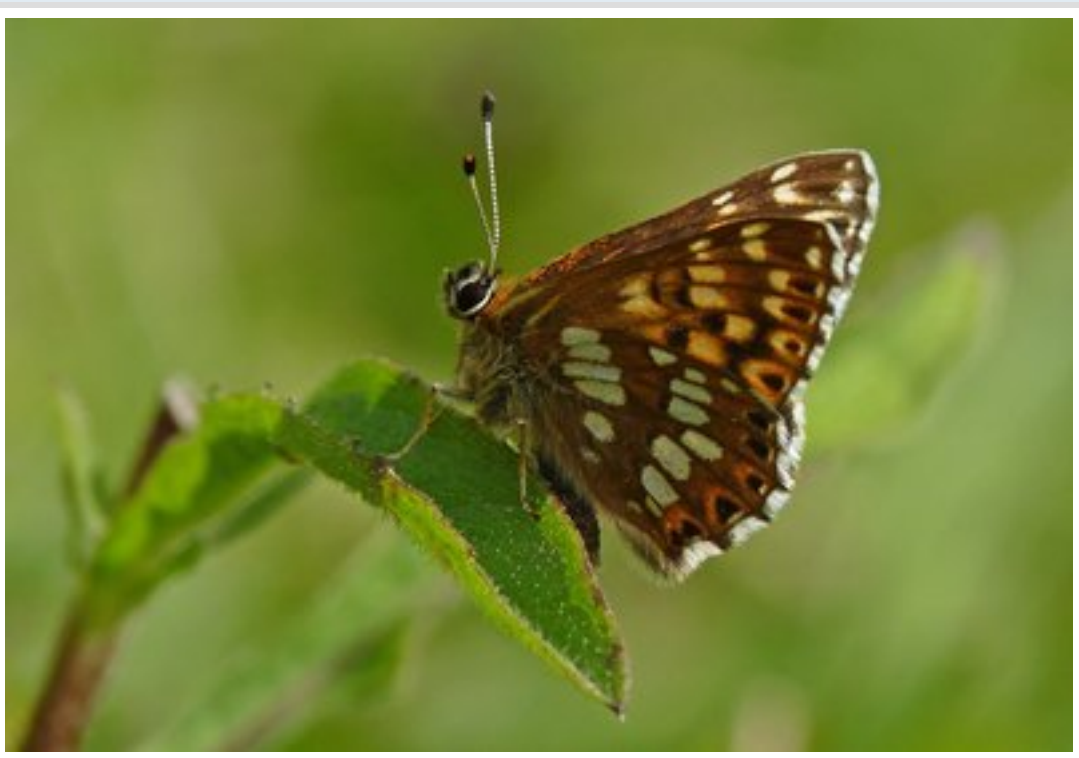


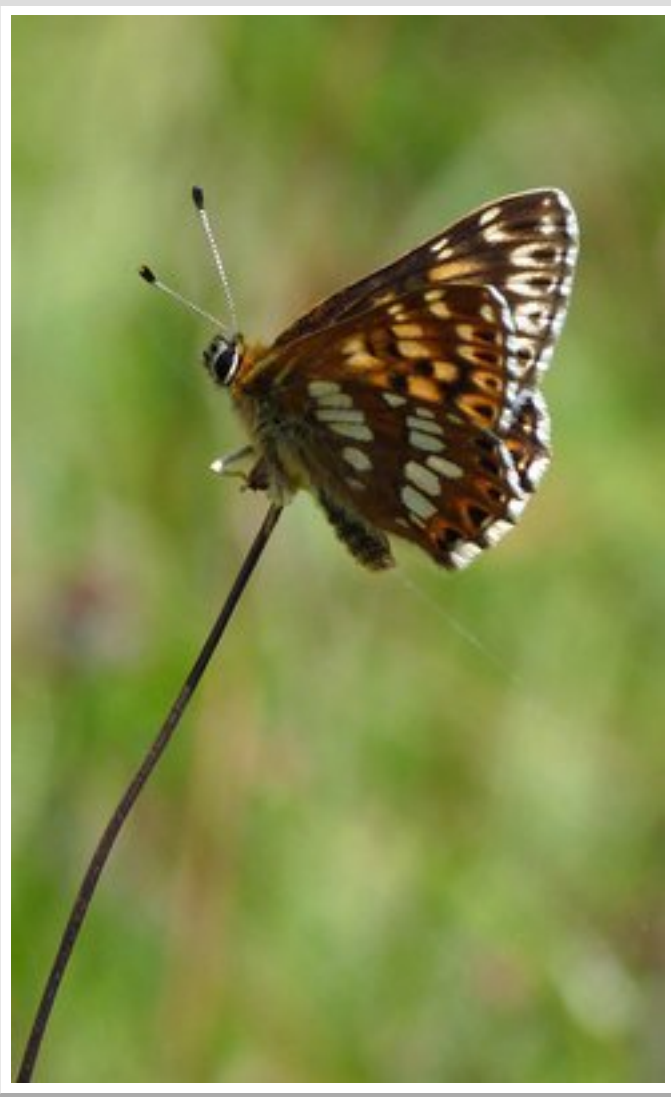


😂😂 not a great effort!



I never did get to the top 2 chalk pits as right by the Clouded Yellow there were 3 second brood Duke of Burgundy:





On my way back I was pleased to see more of both the Painted Lady and the Clouded Yellow:





A smashing morning. What more could I ask for – a Scarce Tortoiseshell 🥰🥰

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 07-Aug-14 07:25 PM GMT

What a wonderful (and possibly unique) selection and splendid photos, Pauline. Brown Hairstreak and Dukes in the same spot – now that would make a good two species photo... 😊

Dave

Re: Pauline

by William, 07-Aug-14 07:27 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

A smashing morning. What more could I ask for – a Scarce Tortoiseshell 🥰🥰

You might well get one at this rate – an incredible variety of species! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 07-Aug-14 08:16 PM GMT

Scarce Tortoiseshell, here you come 😊 What a great day out, and great photos Pauline. Second brood Dukes must be pretty rare but to get the other three species as well 😊 Returned earlier this evening from another Hampshire site, the heat was gruelling and we only saw two of those species and was not easy to get decent photos, due to the heat and strong breeze. We were at Noar on Tuesday and didn't see any of those four species, although we looked for them 😱😓

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-14 09:49 PM GMT

Fantastic shots and report Pauline 🥰🍷 Does this mean that you won't be heading over to Shipton this year?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Aug-14 08:33 PM GMT

Good to hear from you Dave and thanks for the comment – I'll give it a go next time I'm there and throw in a couple of LTB just for good measure 🥰🥰

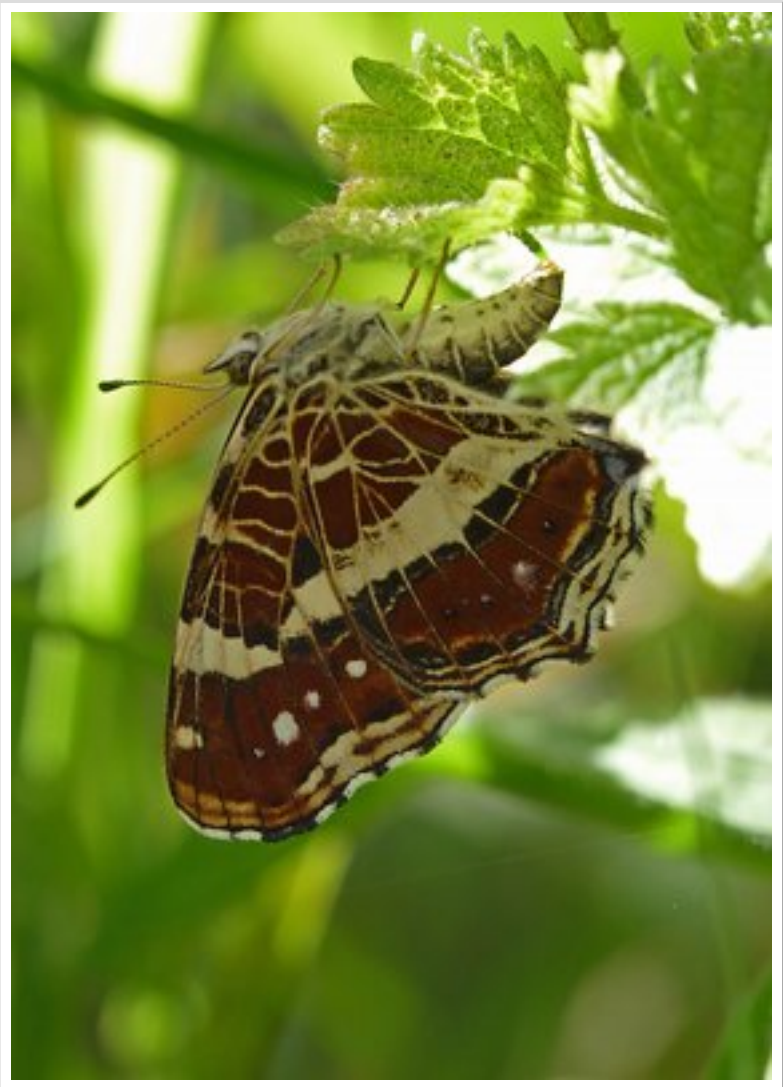
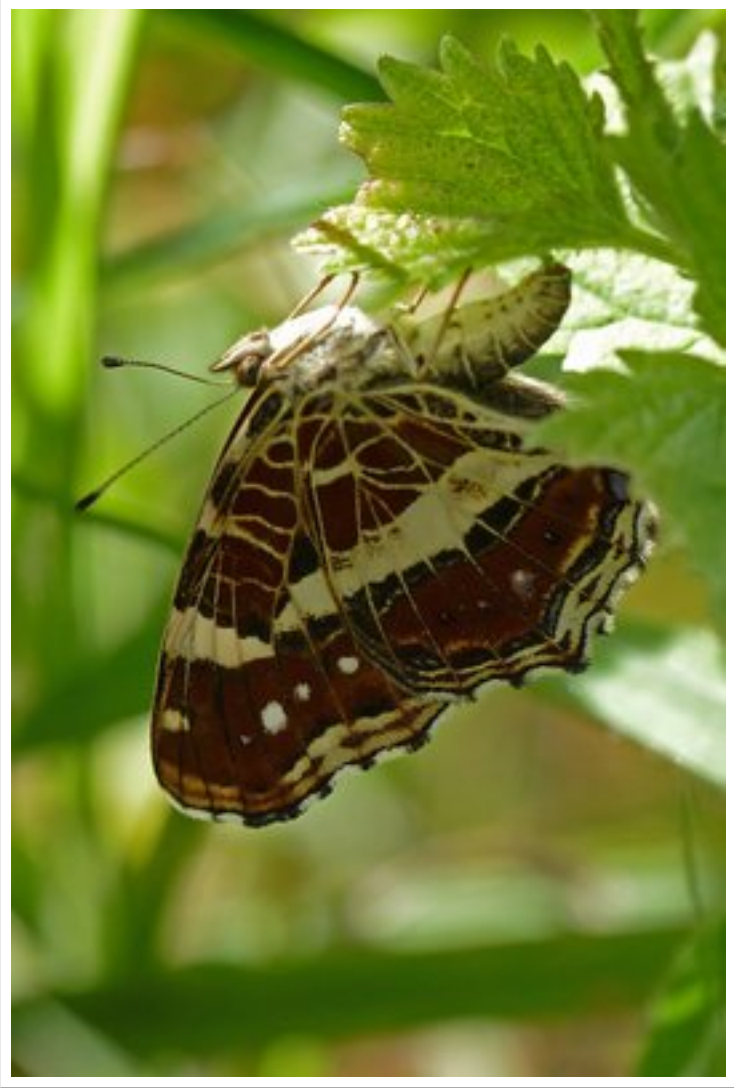
Thank you too Mike and I'm so pleased that you caught up with the Duke – some great shots there!

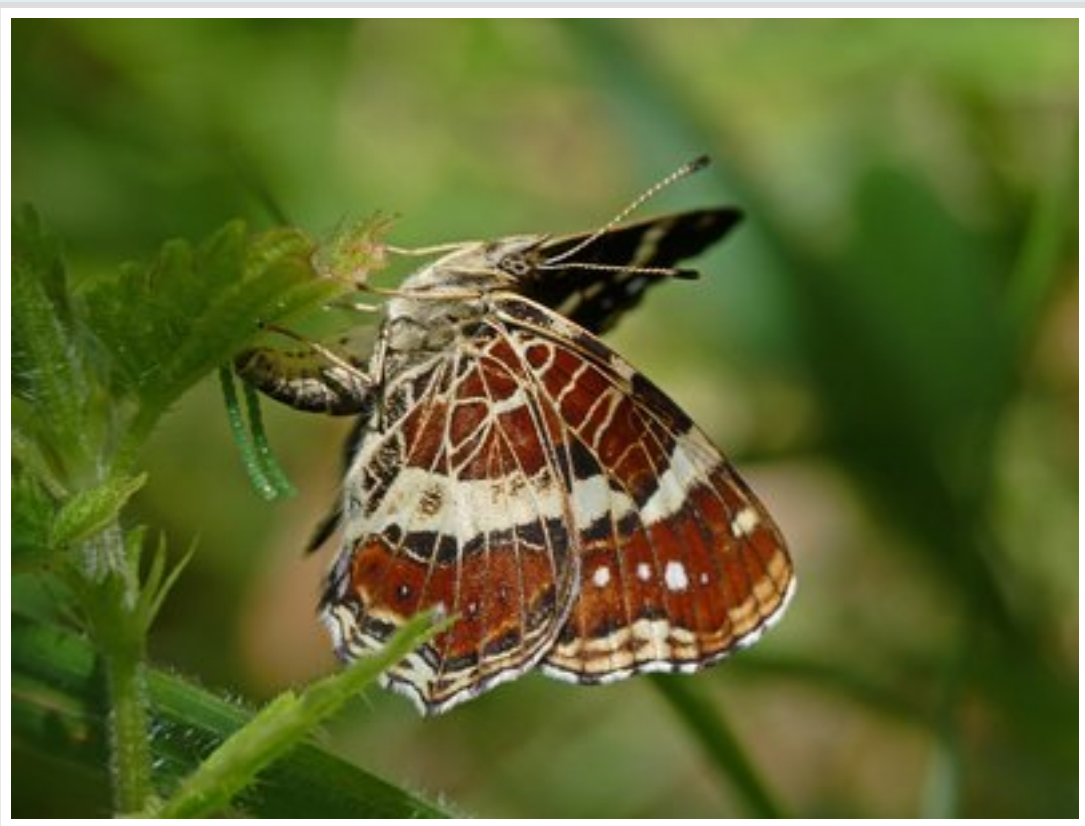
Wurzel, you have Shipton all to yourself this year but you've always done better than me there – smashing BH shots last year and open wing Brimstone so now you have to live up to the standard you have set yourself 🍷🥰

Thank you too William but who needs Scarce Swallowtail when I have this (see below).

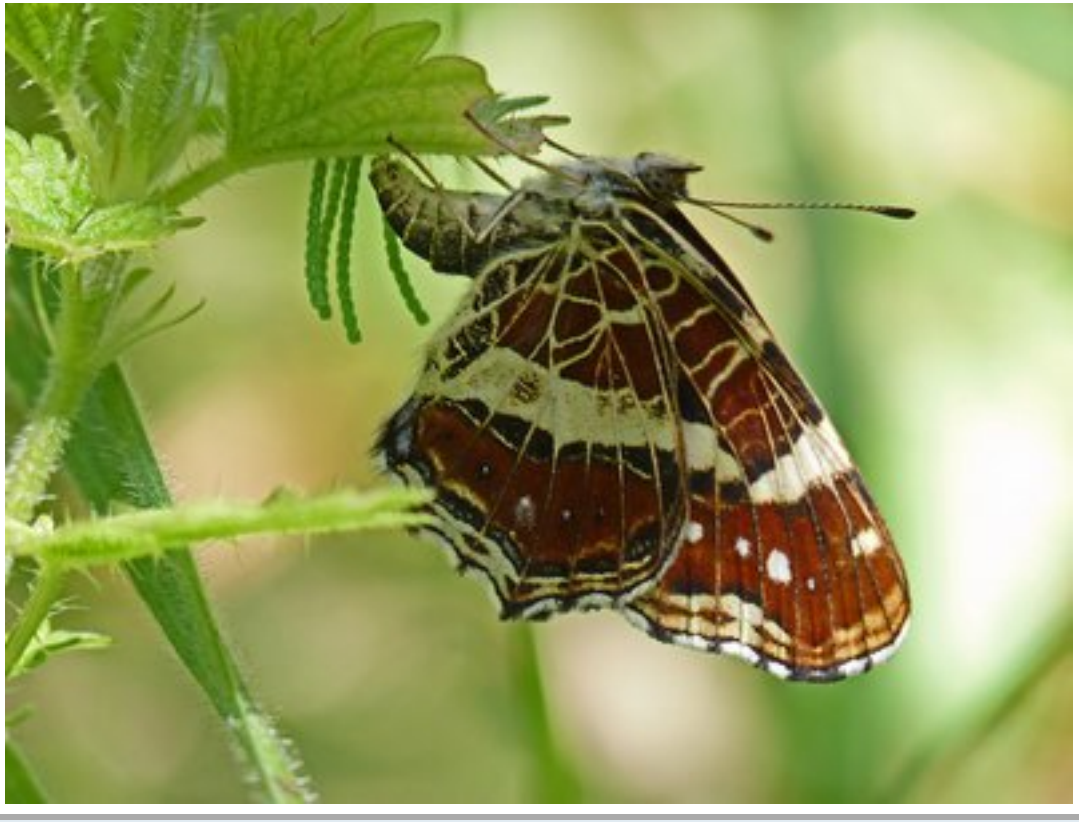
I am grateful for being pointed in the right direction to this location. Am I becoming a twitcher??? Perhaps!!! But I could not resist the lure of the reports on these Map butterflies. I am not usually able to be so spontaneous so I owe a lot of people a lot of drinks. To cut to the chase I had just the best

morning - I saw a butterfly I have never seen and will never see again, I met some smashing folk, in particular Steve and Brian who I doubt will ever read this, but they were just so friendly and helpful. Anyway, I don't usually post in 2 parts but so much happened today I shall make an exception. This first installment will focus on one of the highlights for me where I watched a lovely fresh female spend 20 minutes egg-laying and was able to record the event. I won't go into too much detail now but will post below the sequence of events showing her ovipost 5 strings of eggs:











More later 😊😊😊

Re: Pauline

by William, 09-Aug-14 09:06 PM GMT

Superb images Pauline – I'm very jealous, some people have all the luck! 😍😍

BWs

William

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 09-Aug-14 09:20 PM GMT

What a wonderful record of a remarkable event 😊 The expertise you gained while recording the early stages of the butterflies you reared has certainly paid off here.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by David M, 09-Aug-14 09:45 PM GMT

Fascinating stuff, Pauline, and well done for getting these images.

Can Map butterflies survive southern English winters?

Re: Pauline

by Neil Hulme, 09-Aug-14 11:05 PM GMT

Historic images! Great capture of an event which may prove to be very significant.

Re: Pauline

by andy brown, 10-Aug-14 09:04 AM GMT

Great pictures again Pauline and yes you are becoming a twitcher 😄, lets hope they were a genuine migrant and that they do go on to colonise

Catch up soon

Andy

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 10-Aug-14 10:16 AM GMT

Brilliant Pauline, great photos 😄 I agree with Andy, lets hope they are migrants, they're a lovely little butterfly.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 10-Aug-14 10:31 AM GMT

I spent a lot of time hanging around nettle patches last year, Pauline, hoping to catch a female at it! Those are brilliant egg strings – something I've long wanted to photograph. Maps don't fly in my part of Switzerland so I thought I had an excuse, but as you've achieved it in the UK my excuse looks a little flimsy ...

This is one species I think has a real chance of getting a foothold in the UK, though it is more fussy and less opportunistic than other nettle feeders, that typically hibernate as adults. Spring 2015 is going to be very exciting, with first brood maps and yellow-legged tortoiseshells to look out for!

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 10-Aug-14 11:23 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, I was going to comment on the range of species you saw at Noar Hill and the great photos from there 🍷 ... and then you go and post those photos of the egg laying Map, fantastic stuff and superb images. 🍷🍷😄

I remember seeing a picture of Map Butterfly egg strings in a book years ago and wondering at the time if they hatch out in sequence, last one first.

What happens if the first one on the leaf hatches first 😄😄

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 10-Aug-14 09:08 PM GMT

Wonderful Map pictures Pauline.

Re: Pauline

by Susie, 10-Aug-14 09:52 PM GMT

Superb photos!

Re: Pauline

by David M, 10-Aug-14 09:58 PM GMT

"Padfield" wrote:

This is one species I think has a real chance of getting a foothold in the UK, though it is more fussy and less opportunistic than other nettle feeders, that typically hibernate as adults. Spring 2015 is going to be very exciting, with first brood maps and yellow-legged tortoiseshells to look out for!

I'm interested to know why you should think that, Guy.

In fact, I'd love to learn which continental species you feel have the best chance of colonising the UK in the next decade or so.

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 10-Aug-14 09:58 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Lovely photos of the Map 😊 I reared this species many years ago, they are a delightful little butterfly. Hopefully we will be seeing more of them and not a million miles away 😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 10-Aug-14 10:04 PM GMT

Just amazing. 😊

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-14 10:24 PM GMT

Absolutely fantastic stuff Pauline 😊👍 – how do you get your information 😲👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 10-Aug-14 10:54 PM GMT

I was wondering that–wish they had told all us as well 😊 But then again,probably best not.

Given the colonisation of several dragonfly species in GB in recent decades,i for one am suprised that no new butterflies have colonised–yet.

I hope this is the start of something special. Great pics as always,Pauline. 😊

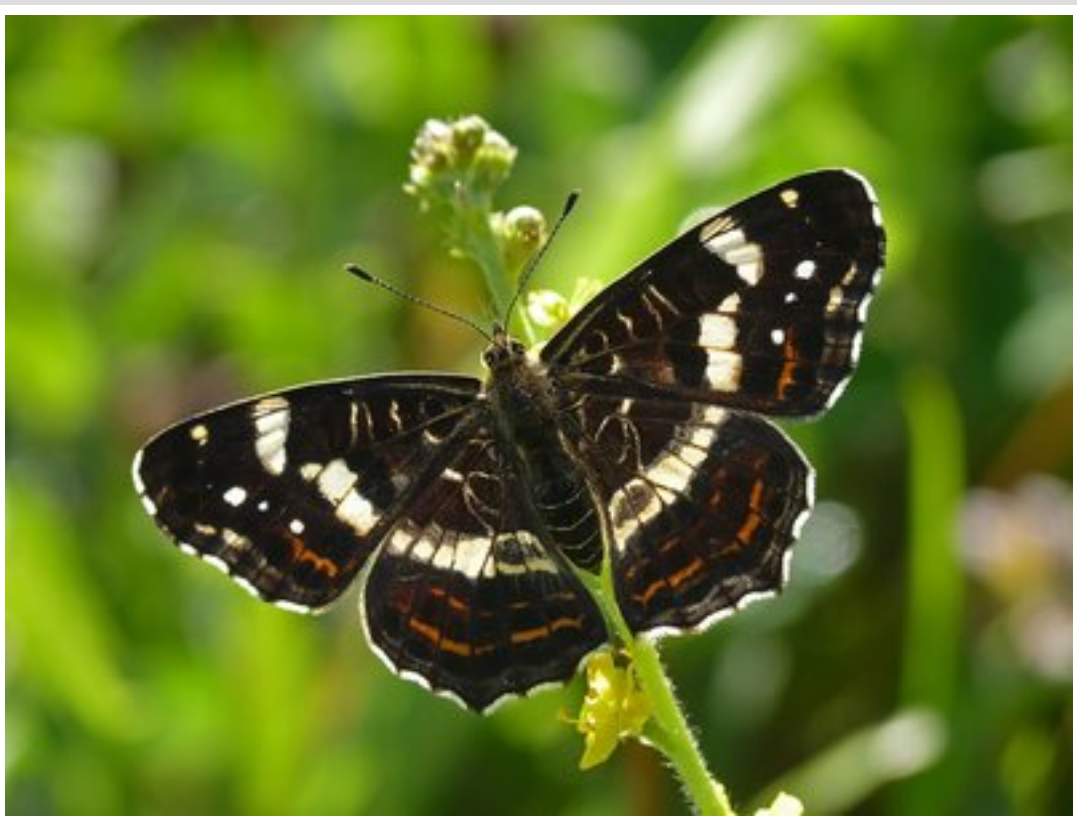
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Aug-14 07:34 AM GMT

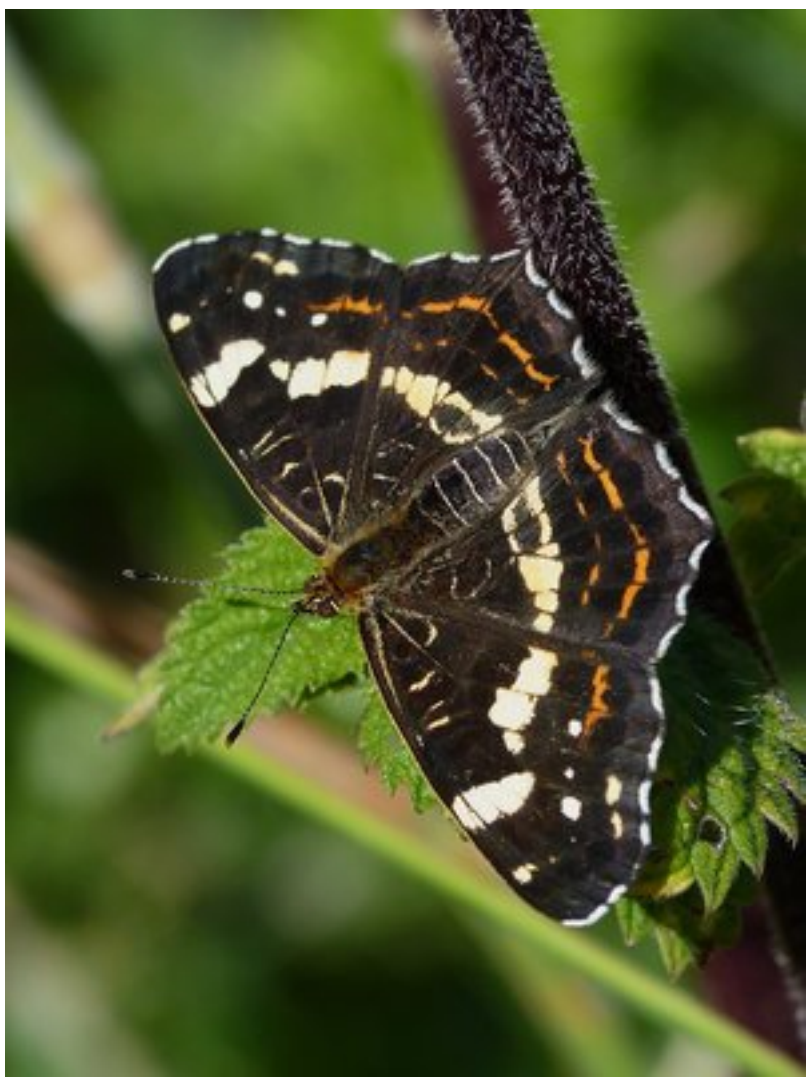
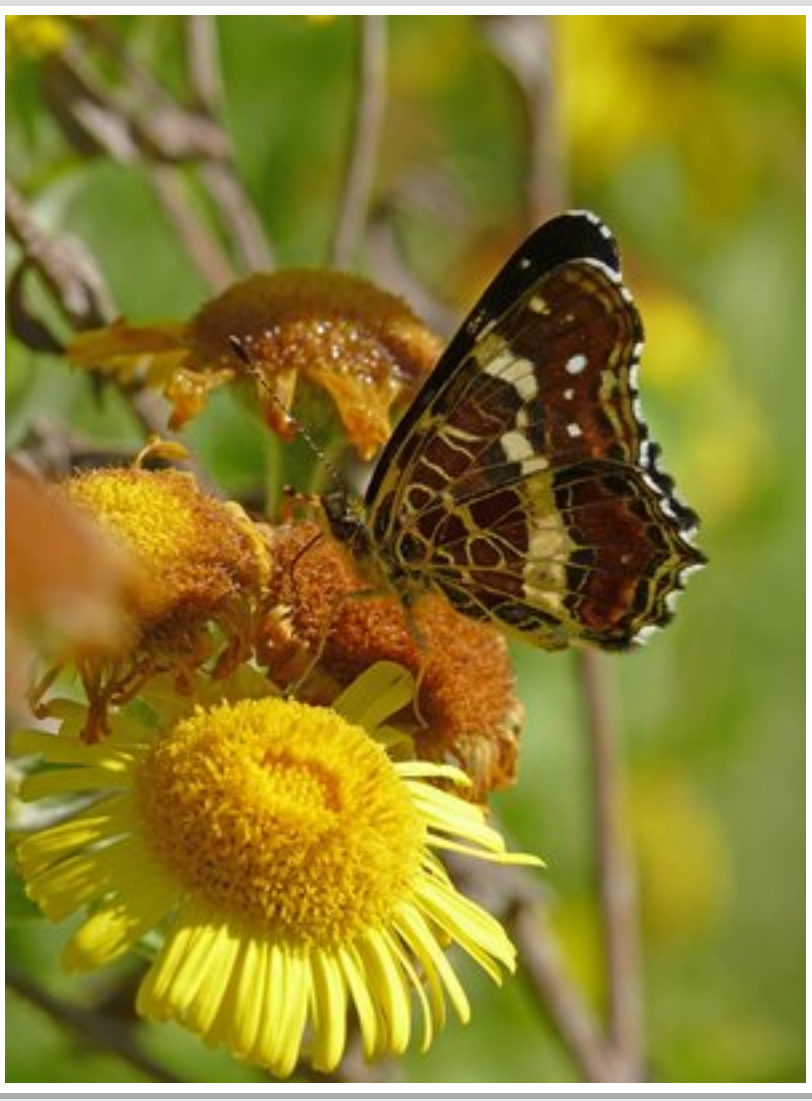
Thank you all so much for your amazing comments – too many to respond to individually on this occasion. I feel very privileged to have witnessed such a remarkable event. I have just read that Map *'eggs or larvae have never been recorded in the wild in the UK'* although I don't know if this information is up to date and accurate. Obviously it isn't now!

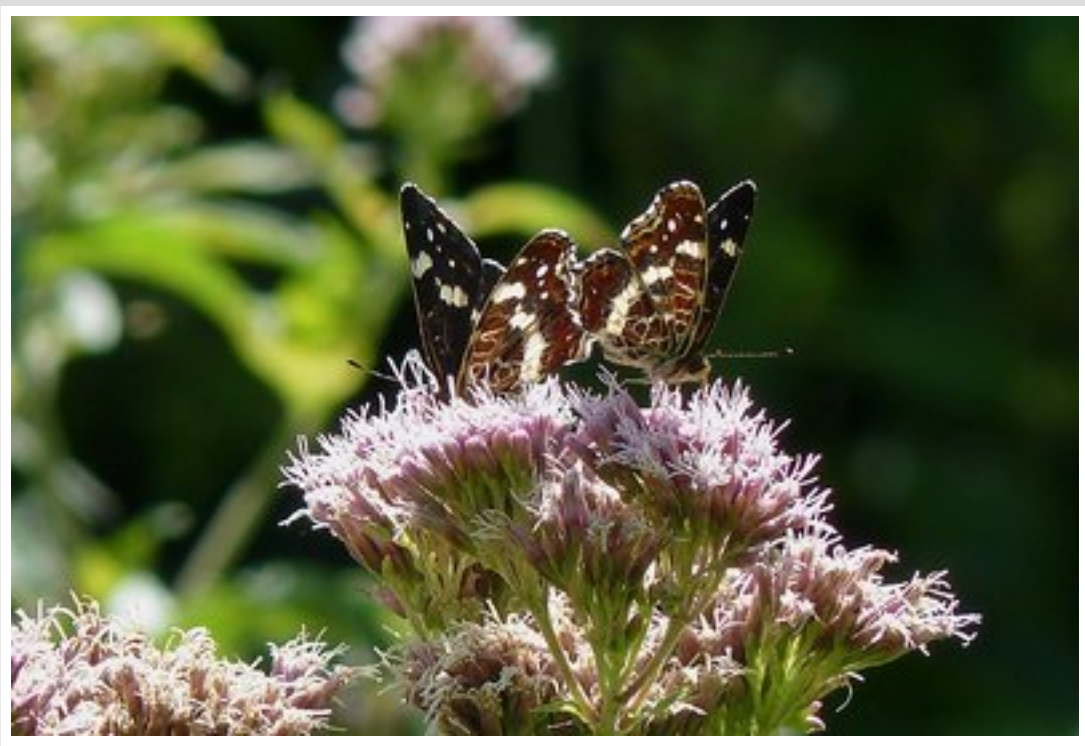
When I saw the female only inches from the ground, low down in the nettles going from leaf to leaf, it seemed to me that she was searching for a place to deposit her eggs . I wasn't wrong! I am still suffering as I had to lie face down in a bed of nettles to get those shots but to my mind it was worth it. I did wonder why she kept flicking open her wings but looking at those shots now it would seem a spider was pestering her.

Once I had managed a few shots of both male and female Maps, the latter being far more obliging, I moved away from the central area and wandered to a different area to fully appreciate all the other butterflies. I am so pleased that I did as I chanced upon another half dozen Maps. I was treated to some wonderful aerial displays of 2/3 butterflies at a time and at one point I thought I was about to witness a mating pair. Quite often there were 2 or 3 butterflies sharing a flower head. It was hard to tear myself away from this amazing spectacle but my time was up. I have kept this report brief and may expand on activities at some point in the future but for now a few more shots of those gorgeous butterflies, the colours of which varied considerably with the frequently changing light levels:









The female has a double broken orange line on the hind wings whereas the male only has one.

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 12-Aug-14 07:46 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I have just read that Map *'eggs or larvae have never been recorded in the wild in the UK'*.

Well - I suspect they have been, since there was a population in the Forest of Dean for 2 years (1912 - 1914) until they were all collected up. I think that sentence (from Wikipedia) is in relation to attempts to introduce this non-native species, and doesn't even mention that the Forest of Dean colony had become established and states that the introduction "failed" which is clearly wrong!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pauline

by NickMorgan, 12-Aug-14 01:04 PM GMT

Wow, what an amazing series of posts. It is as though you live on a different continent from me! So many butterflies that I have never seen!

So, I take it that the Map butterflies are ones that have managed to fly over to the UK and establish themselves here? From what you say there were a few which would indicate at least a second generation. This is really exciting!

I suppose I shouldn't be surprised as we have had five new species move up into East Lothian in the last few years, so if this expansion is due to climate change then I would presume other species from mainland Europe could be showing a similar movement. I wonder if their southern range is contracting? There is always so much to learn with butterflies.

I would also be interested to hear how Clouded Yellows and Long-tailed Blues are doing in England. If they came over in good numbers last year and have been breeding, then with the mild winter I would expect them to be doing well.

Your pictures of the egg-laying are fantastic, by the way!!

Re: Pauline

by Chris Jackson, 12-Aug-14 01:23 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I can imagine you're "very privileged to have witnessed such a remarkable event".

I'm chuffed even when I see a Map in France – I imagine your sighting in the UK is the equivalent of seeing little green men getting out of a spaceship.

Whatever will turn up next?

Chris

Re: Pauline

by Katrina, 12-Aug-14 01:49 PM GMT

Brilliant photos Pauline 😊😊😊

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 12-Aug-14 05:48 PM GMT

Superb photos of the Maps, Pauline 😊😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 12-Aug-14 05:52 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

"Pauline" wrote:

I have just read that Map *'eggs or larvae have never been recorded in the wild in the UK'*.

Well – I suspect they have been, since there was a population in the Forest of Dean for 2 years (1912 – 1914) until they were all collected up.

Thanks to Mark Colvin for letting me know about another colony that lasted at least 1 season in the wild, having been "put down" at the site shown on the data label. Sorry to clutter up your diary, Pauline – happy to remove these if unhelpful!



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Cheers,
- Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Aug-14 07:14 AM GMT

Thank you for the compliments Mike, Katrina - much appreciated. Great to hear from you Chris, and yes, I am still thrilled, despite much discussion and debate on their provenance. It is certainly worth keeping eyes open these days.

Morning Nick, uncertainty surrounds the provenance of these butterflies but my opinion (and it is just my opinion), these butterflies have not been released recently and for various reasons it seems to me that they are currently emerging on that site. This seems to point to a female arriving there (somehow) in the Spring. Apparently, in the wild, the 2nd brood is more mobile so if they are not the result of a release I am wondering if it could be feasible that a female arrived last summer and the spring brood simply was not detected. As I said elsewhere, we shall probably never know.

Certainly not clutter Pete - extremely interesting and thanks to Mark for bringing it to our attention. I took the 'recording' phrase as meaning 'seen and noted, photographed, documented' and I was certainly not disputing their actual existence - just trying to establish whether this is the first time they have actually been photographed.

I am soon to move on with a report closer to home and with that in mind I am posting this shot (taken a little while ago now) but worthy of note because she became the 20th species to visit my garden. Hummingbird Hawk moth entertained me last night but as usual my photos of this insect are now in the bin! 😞



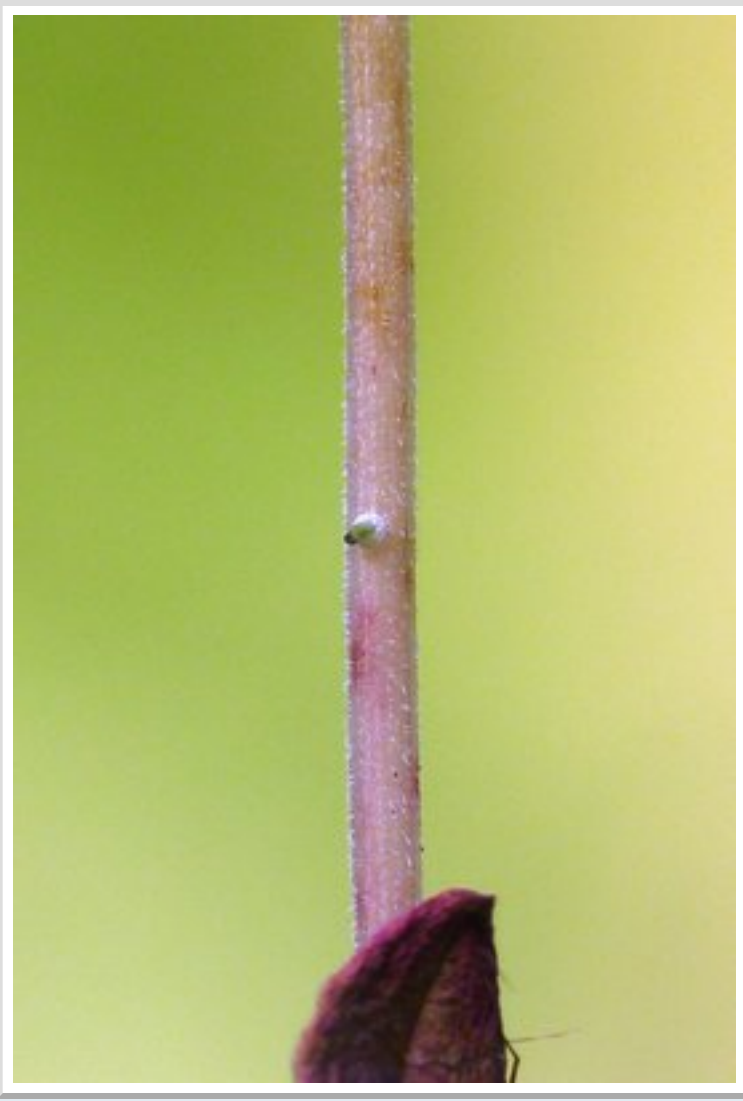
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Aug-14 03:44 PM GMT

The first set of photos of 2 Small Copper I am rearing:













Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 14-Aug-14 01:18 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, lovely photo sequence of the Small Copper larva hatching 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Aug-14 01:27 PM GMT

I should have said previously – just to clarify – that these 2 eggs were indeed taken from private land. Not only did I seek permission from the landowner but I met with him to discuss the situation and I have his approval and permission in writing. Obviously if I succeed the butterflies will be released in the same place.

The previous sequence was the emergence which I was lucky enough to witness but in all the excitement I somehow managed to get the garish background and no matter how much I 'tweak' with Photoshop I don't know the package well enough to make any noticeable improvement – a target for next season. I have become fascinated with these cats and I am trying to take the best care of them that I know how to but I am still learning and have so many questions still. Anyway, the following sequence is of the larval stage to date stretching over 18 days:





Showing the typical and characteristic leaf damage from feeding - doesn't go right through the leaf but looks opaque from the top. Cats sleep in the hollow created.



One of the cats seems more developed than the other – well, actually he is by 2 days (I missed the emergence of the 1st larva).







A different perspective!





I hope I have not been too cautious with these cats, perhaps slowing their development by keeping them in the shade to protect from the intense, harsh sun. At one point it occurred to me that not only were they in the shade but they were not getting much daylight either so they were subsequently moved. I was also getting a little weary from getting up at 2.00 am in thunderstorms so their cage was moved to an aviary with some roofing. Their appetite seems to have improved since which has brought its own problems as much of the Sorrel was initially scorched and brown. I have resorted to growing my own but they have almost consumed all the new fresh leaves. I can't imagine it will be long now before they want to pupate and one of them has already started wandering off down stems. I dread 'losing' them amongst the leaf litter or have them wander even further afield. If they make it through, wouldn't it just be wonderful if one of them had blue spots 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 14-Aug-14 02:16 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I can't imagine it will be long now before they want to pupate

Hi Pauline – I think you should not only check food plants before taking things from the wild, but also the phenology, since your Small Copper may be looking to overwinter as a larva. Unless, of course, your larvae have had an accelerated development and push out another brood. If they are overwintering, then you need to retain some of the old leaves, since this is where they'll typically go to overwinter. The pot also needs good drainage.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Aug-14 02:47 PM GMT

I'm so looking forward to seeing your guidelines Pete as I imagine they will be a massive help. I had to look up phenology – 'the science dealing with the influence of climate on the recurrence of animal and plant life' 😊. Well, of course I knew from this site that SC can have 3 (and sometimes 4) broods depending on climate. I also knew that they over-winter as larva but I had hoped, given the weather, that I would be seeing the butterflies this year. Perhaps not! I had assumed that if the butterfly was ovi-posting then food plant would be available for the larva (but again perhaps that is an incorrect assumption). However, I have managed to keep them fed – and they seem to be doing OK. The pot containing the food plant is fairly small and I have put some small dead leaves on the soil so hope that is OK. Why is good drainage important – it is under shelter? I am finding this incredibly fascinating and learning a great deal so your input is very welcome Pete.

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 14-Aug-14 03:00 PM GMT

Hi Pauline – I'm not intending to document a species-by-species account when I finally get around to it ... probably just a set of guidelines / common sense 😊 There are a couple of good books out there ... "Breeding the British Butterflies" by Peter Cribb is my favourite.

Small Copper larvae need good drainage because that's what they get in the wild (dry and sunny heathland, downland and meadows).

If you put some leaves in, then they'll either be used by the larvae to overwinter, or the larvae to pupate if they don't use the growing food plant (leaves or stems).

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Aug-14 07:27 AM GMT

Thank you for the good advice Pete and the book recommendation.

Thank you too Mike for your comment (almost missed it as posts crossed). I have to say that my camera struggles when critters are this small. I wish I knew of some device that would increase its magnification/performance for the early stages but don't know if anything is available for bridge cameras.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 15-Aug-14 05:26 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I wish I knew of some device that would increase its magnification/performance for the early stages but don't know if anything is available for bridge cameras.

You could use a stronger close-up lens. I think you already have the Lumix accessory, which is +2 strength, so the Hoya +10 – see <http://www.wexphotographic.com/buy-hoya...-10/p12074> – would give more magnification, at the expense of very shallow depth of field. I haven't used one on a Lumix but others may have.

After that, if you are seriously into photographing early stages, you need a microscope, which you can couple to your camera but that's a whole new game!

mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Aug-14 06:29 PM GMT

Thank you for those details Mike. If I decide to do this again I shall almost certainly give that lens a go so I would be interested to hear if anyone has tried it. I assume with a small aperture I'd have a slow shutter speed which would mean use of a tripod – good job I'm (slowly) getting used to using one.

Yesterday I decided to drop into Noar Hill to see if I could find any Duke larva – a long shot as there haven't been many second brood Dukes seen to date. As I entered the site, the Red Kite was circling above (again) and as I reached the triangle area there was a Brown Hairstreak in the grass – again! (which I didn't see until I'd flushed it 😊). This was beginning to feel like Deja Vu – even a bit spooky. I looked round expecting to see the Painted Lady. It wasn't there of course; neither was the Clouded Yellow and by now thunder clouds had started to gather so I didn't even see the Dukes 😞. Optimistically I did have a look for Duke larva but the typical feeding damage on the Cowslip leaves I am sure was the result of the 1st brood. I did see lots of Common Blues including females egg-laying and more Brown Argus than I have seen for a while – and of course I had the cows for company 😊





Female resting after much ovi-posting:



Back at home the WA cats continue to prosper:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Aug-14 11:16 AM GMT

I have a question/concern relating to my little cats which I could ask privately but I have chosen to air it publicly in case it helps anyone else in a similar situation. My WA (and possibly SC) are likely/hopefully going to overwinter as larva. If we have an incredibly freezing time of it should I treat these little critters as tender plants and cover with fleece or similar – or should I just let them freeze solid and take their chances? Common sense dictates that I should provide some protection but would that be the natural way of things? Perhaps they are equipped to deal with extremes of climate?

Yesterday I had a great morning in great company and I was delighted to see and photograph my first Comma cat:





This was spotted by my companion but I found a few cats to return the favour:



Grey Dagger moth cat.



Vaporer moth

and a few cats which have an amazing ability to camouflage themselves as twigs and which I haven't yet identified:



OK, so there was a bit of rivalry and A. spotted his fair share so I shall just include a few of the others including this lovely Shield bug:



This unusual creature is a Pebble Prominent:





An incredibly large Buff tipped moth cat:



and last but not least, a lovely lime green iridescent cat which I have yet to identify:



A great morning despite the incredibly frustrating breeze.

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 16-Aug-14 12:33 PM GMT

Let your cats freeze, Pauline! A British winter is very mild compared to what their cousins on the continent live through. Some winters, the temperature in my local woods stays below -12°C for weeks on end, dropping to nearer -20°C at night – and yet the purple emperor and white admiral cats make it through. I imagine it is more important to protect them from direct sunlight and undue warmth, but others will know better.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 16-Aug-14 12:56 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I assume with a small aperture I'd have a slow shutter speed which would mean use of a tripod – good job I'm (slowly) getting used to using one.

A tripod or some other fixed mount will be essential, in my opinion, because of the very shallow depth of field. Everything will have to be held firmly in order to maintain focus.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Aug-14 01:17 PM GMT

Thank you Guy – I shall take your advice.

I shall definitely use a tripod Mike if I am taking photos of early stages at home as I don't have to carry it about which is most of the problem. Thank you for the tips.

There was a definite feeling at Noar Hill this morning that the butterfly season is drawing to an end. Energy levels are beginning to wane (mine, that is, not the butterflies 😊!). The frenetic activity, so apparent at the start of the season has been replaced by a more relaxed and laid-back attitude – one of simply enjoying the butterflies.... and today there were plenty to enjoy, some really fresh and others quite worn, and although I only counted 11 species the overall numbers more than made up for that.



One of the first butterflies to greet me was a female Clouded Yellow as she zoomed around the site despite the early hour and the slight chill to the air. Lovely fresh Tortoiseshells adorned the paths and a couple of smart Red Admiral added yet more colour to the scene, along with large numbers of Blues.



Despite several Brown Hairstreaks having been seen in the last few days I did not encounter any but whilst looking I was entertained by the antics of several Buzzards who had replaced the Red Kite seen on previous visits. I had an interesting conversation about the butterflies, in particular the Brown Hairstreak, with a local farmer who was planting Blackthorn in an endeavour to encourage these butterflies on the advice of Dr Dan Hoare.



I was also introduced, by a fellow enthusiast, to the Ladies Tresses orchid which seem to be prolific on the site in several specific spots and have been given precise locations of various types of Fly Orchid for the spring.



Apparently, Autumn Gentian can frequently be found growing alongside these orchids:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Aug-14 01:31 PM GMT

After the successful release of my Peacock butterflies I had discarded the pot of nettles on which they had thrived, leaving it neglected and ignored, as by the time the Peacocks had finished with it, it was something of an eyesore. However, the other day I checked it and not only had it grown somewhat but there were 2 cats on it. I know that one of them is a Comma but I am not sure what the other is and wonder if it is some sort of moth? It is probably too much to ask for a definite ID if it is a moth but can anyone confirm that it is NOT a butterfly larva? Not a great shot as it is partially under a leaf:



Having recently become very interested in (large) moths and their caterpillars I cannot resist posting a few shots of the Pine Hawk moth larvae from yesterday which I personally think are extremely attractive. The Hayling Billy Trail is obviously a good site for them:





Re: Pauline

by FISHiEE, 19-Aug-14 02:11 PM GMT

I can't think of anything other than Peacock for that caterpillar. Maybe a straggler you missed that was less advanced than the rest you had on it?

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 19-Aug-14 03:55 PM GMT

I would go for a Red Admiral. The larvae are variable in colour and often appear quite plump, with medium sized spines. This one may also be in the process of constructing a new tent. Another image should confirm it either way 😊

Vince

Re: Pauline

by FISHiEE, 19-Aug-14 05:19 PM GMT

Oh yes I suppose it is a bit chunky for Peacock. Didn't know you got Red Admirals that dark, but I am far from a caterpillar expert. Had my first red admirals this year on some 'introduced' stinging nettles in the garden and they were a range of browns and greens!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Aug-14 08:03 PM GMT

Thank you John and Vince for your suggestions. To try to clarify the situation I went out a little earlier with the intention of taking another photo to try to help with ID. I thought I would check the Comma cat at the same time although I had taken a cursory look at him this morning and saw that he was hanging under a leaf. I wondered if he was about to shed his skin as I have little experience of these matters. Looking more closely I was shocked and horrified to find the poor little mite had been parasitised 😱😱. The 'thing' beside him was huge and I could see something moving inside and all that was left of him was an empty shell - he was completely hollow 😞



I was so looking forward to watching this cat develop and emerge, so if anyone has a spare Comma cat (John??? 😊)???

Anyway, I took another shot of the unidentified cat which is not much better than the first one. I am concerned that it may have met a similar fate as this photo seems to show body parts littering the leaf 😞



Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 19-Aug-14 08:22 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Anyway, I took another shot of the unidentified cat which is not much better than the first one. I am concerned that it may have met a similar fate as this photo seems to show body parts littering the leaf 😞

Sorry to hear about the Comma, Pauline! That's some sort of tachnid fly I believe, and its pupa will be inside the cocoon.

As for the other larva – I'm with Vince on this and agree it's a Red Admiral and I'm pretty sure it's just moulted (hence the head capsule and larger spines).

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 19-Aug-14 08:44 PM GMT

Hi Pauline. That Pine Hawk cat is brilliant. Looks like it has bought clothes from Carnaby Street!!

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 20-Aug-14 09:10 PM GMT

Very, very interesting recent posts, Pauline, the Coxcomb Prominent is an amazing looking beastie 😊 The Pine Hawk moth larva is brilliant, as are the Comma cats, great shots too 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Aug-14 08:03 AM GMT

Thanks for your comment Pete. I had been hoping to get a photo of the RA cat but it never seems to come out of its tent. Yesterday it had moved and created another tent and whilst looking for it I found another one!!!!!! I am so frustrated that this has happened on my doorstep on a tiny pot of worn nettles and I didn't even get to see/photograph the eggs! Talk about staying close to home 😞😞!

Thank you too Bob. I am finding some of the moth cats fascinating and this one was dressed better than me 😊😊

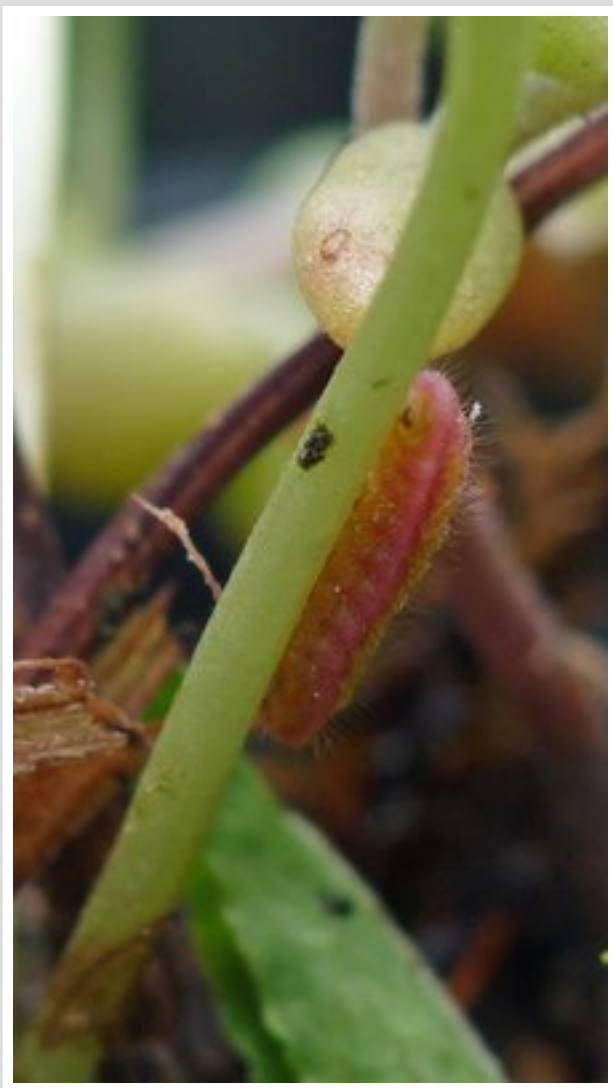
One of the reasons I avoided moths for so long Mike was the ID difficulties and it seems I have indeed made a mistake. I believe that the Coxcomb Prominent is in fact a Pebble Prominent and I shall amend earlier post. Thank you for your positive and encouraging comments.

Yesterday a brief visit to Noar Hill failed to reveal any BH although I did find a few eggs (well, you have to do something when the clouds come over 😊) as well as a Silver Y moth, one of very few I have seen this year:





Back home I think the Small Comma cats are now looking for a place to over-winter – they seem to have stopped eating and are wandering away from their food plant. These shots were taken on 20th August:





Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 23-Aug-14 08:50 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Back home I think the Small Comma cats are now looking for a place to over-winter.

A hybrid new to science - can't wait to see the adults 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pauline

by andy brown, 23-Aug-14 09:20 AM GMT

And what is more amazing is that Comma Larvae are disguising themselves as Small Copper Larvae 😊😊😊

Andy

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-14 09:58 PM GMT

Brill Coxcomb Pauline 😊🍷 – I managed to photograph an adult this summer, just like a splinter of wood 😊 Love the colours on that Small Copper cat too 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Aug-14 03:06 PM GMT

😊😊😊 OK guys, you spotted my deliberate mistake – let's just call it a senior moment 😊 (actually, it was just one too many interruptions as I tried to post and I lost the thread – or the plot 😊 !)

Thanks for your comment Wurzel – much appreciated. I must amend my earlier post as the 'Coxcomb' is in actual fact a Pebble Prominent. This is one I currently have pupating:



An adult Coxcomb, which had been trapped in the garage, looks like this:



On a recent (unsuccessful) visit to Noar Hill I was given some information as to where a sizeable colony of Grayling could be found on the Longmoor ranges, quite close to where I live. Despite being given specific directions I could not even find the tumulus, let alone the Grayling 😊 . Given recent experience it will come as no surprise to you A. that I spent a couple of hours wandering round these tracks, totally lost 😊😊 . I saw lots of lovely fresh

ST and lots of brand new RA, a total of 11 on this buddleia at one point.



A faded worn Blue looked (almost) as lost as me.



Probably the most exciting thing I saw with wings was this whilst admiring the view:



The world's only flying Avro Vulcan XH558



However, it was a pleasant walk and I eventually found my way back to the car. At this point I was remembering Alan T's recent comment relating to the law of diminishing returns whilst trying to decide whether to go on that bit further to Noar Hill, especially as the clouds seemed to be gathering. I decided to take a risk. I had not been at the Triangle for long when another enthusiast arrived and together we scanned the trees for Brown Hairstreak whilst admiring the fresh RA here also. It was great to meet you Hazel and I'm glad you were able to share such an amazing experience.



We soon spotted our first Brown Hairstreak which flew over our heads and away into the distance and were chatting about the Grayling when I saw another female come down and land on a low plant.



She was not there for very long, flying up onto a higher branch, out of reach. At this point we were joined by another couple who had only recently moved to Alton and had joined the local wildlife trust. They were just out for a walk but as they had never seen a BH before we pointed her out to them.



As we all watched she flew down onto a low flower, allowing a couple of photos before flying onto a low Blackthorn to lay a couple of eggs.





What happened next stunned us all 😲

Re: Pauline

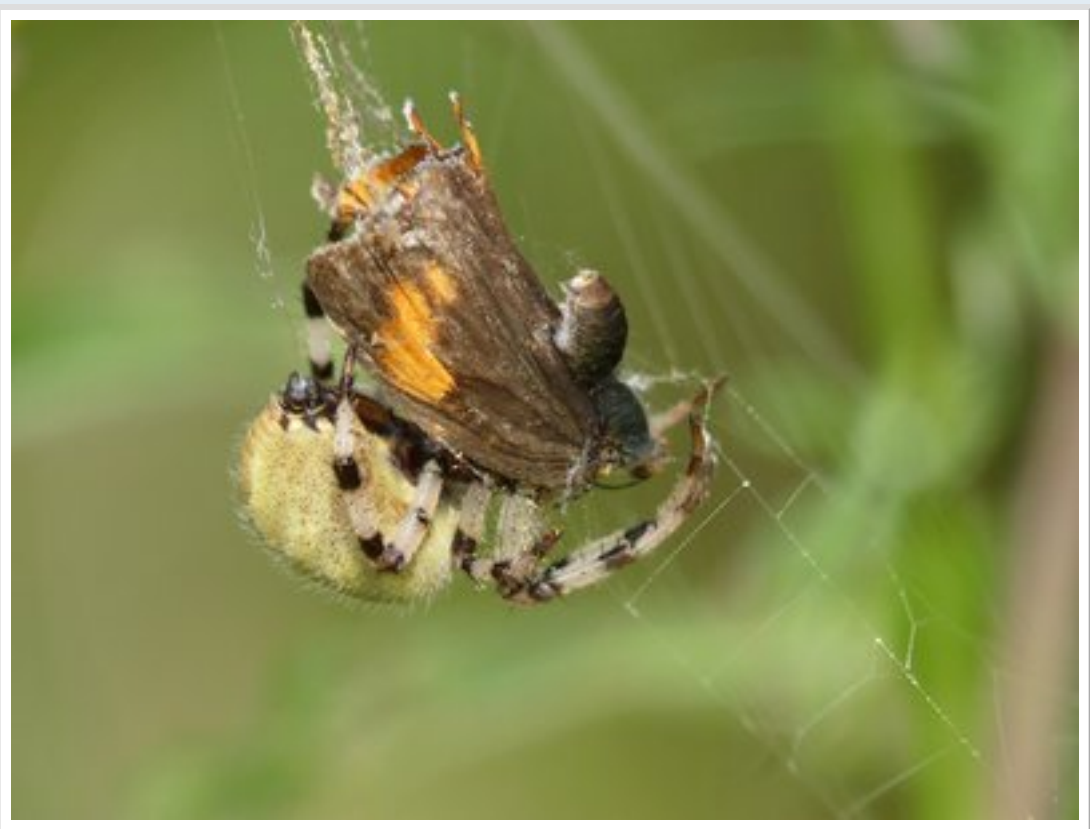
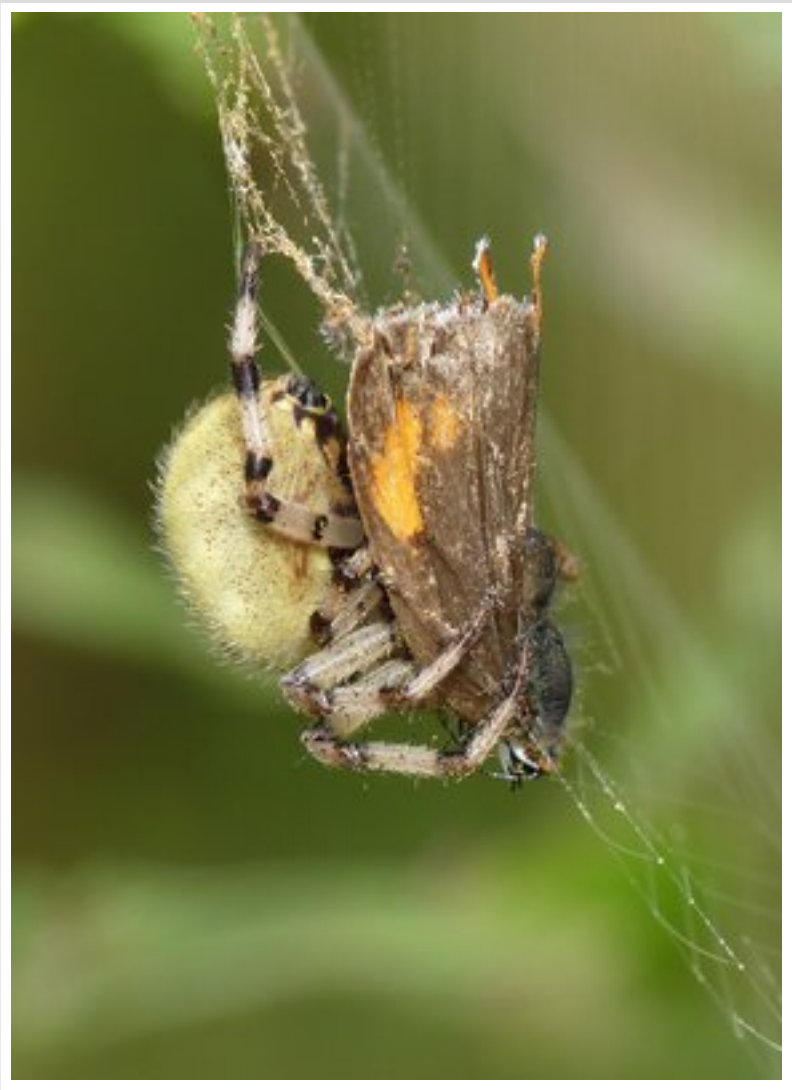
by Pauline, 25-Aug-14 12:36 PM GMT

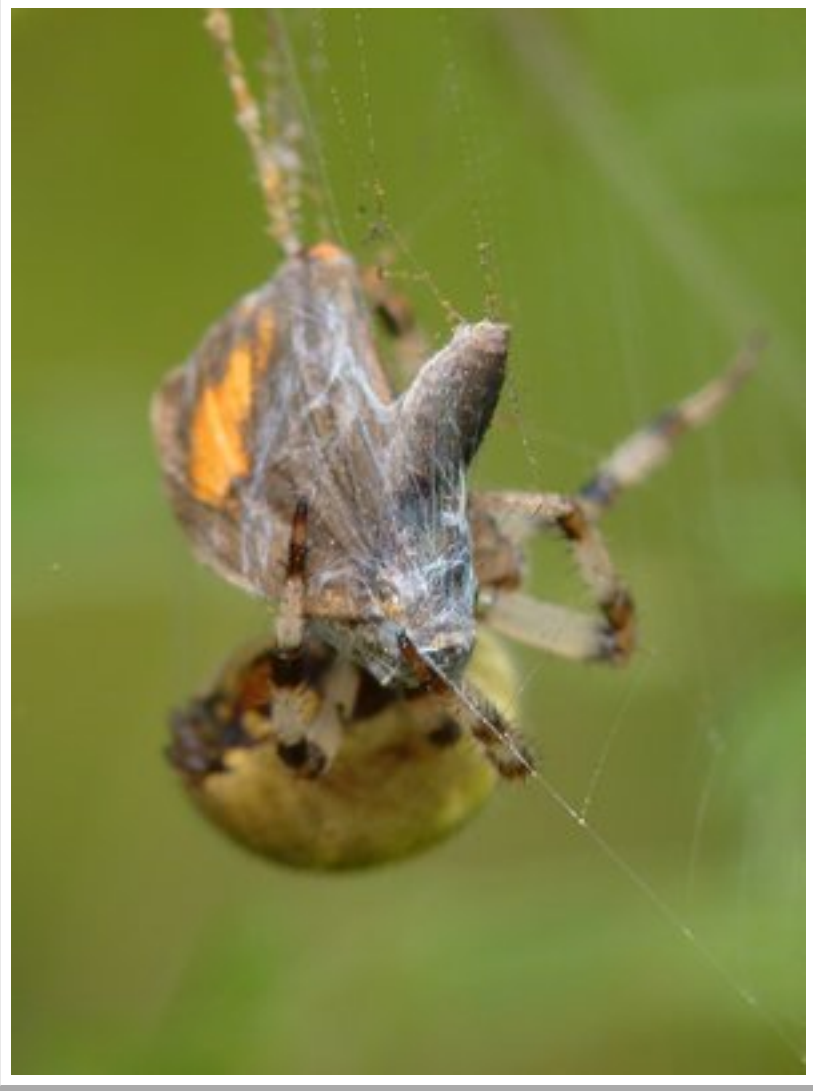
The original small spider which disturbed the butterfly:

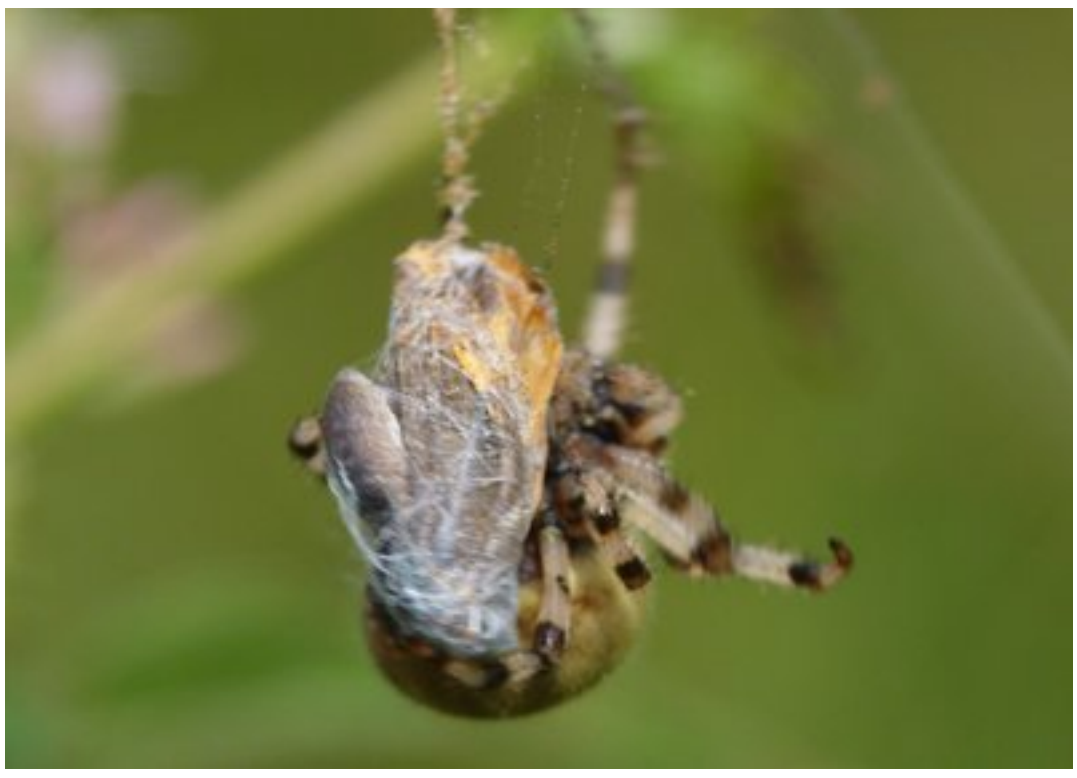


The following sequence of photos was taken in less than 20 seconds. Everything happened incredibly fast and there was a great deal of movement so some of the shots are not as sharp as I would have liked but are included anyway.

Having laid a couple of eggs in the depth of the Blackthorn the butterfly came out to rest, pausing by a small spider. She immediately fluttered out of its way, her intent being to rest on a nearby flower only a few inches away. Unfortunately, as she landed she was trapped in the web of a much larger spider. If I had re-acted a split second faster I could have rescued her but I hesitated very, very briefly and that fraction of a second was long enough for the spider to appear and grab her. 20 seconds later, after a brave and frantic bid to escape, she was neatly parcelled up and taken to the 'nest' the spider had created from the plant leaves.







Part of me felt elated and triumphant at having witnessed and recorded the event but there is a huge part of me that is filled with guilt and enormous sadness. I could only feel pity for the butterfly in her desperate fight for freedom and survival, the only saving grace being that the whole episode was over in seconds. If only I had acted faster

Re: Pauline

by nomad, 25-Aug-14 01:32 PM GMT

Wow. That's a truly amazing series of images. I never would have guessed that is what happened next. 😲 Although sad for this female Brown Hairstreak, I guess this is nature and imagine how many of the early stages and other adults fall prey to insects and birds. So we are extra lucky when we do see this lovely butterfly as an adult.

Regards Peter.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 25-Aug-14 01:41 PM GMT

Great photos of the female Brown Hairstreak, Pauline, but what a sad ending 😞 At least she had a chance to lay some eggs 😊 and spiders have to survive too 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 25-Aug-14 02:56 PM GMT

You seem to be doing ok at taking Quick shots Pauline 😂 Your photo's are great, but boy how I hate that Spider.

Goldie 😊 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-14 10:16 PM GMT

Sad state to see a Brostreak 😞 in but at least she laid a few eggs so continuing the line – to that end she was an evolutionary success 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 26-Aug-14 08:26 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, sad to see the end of the female Brown Hairstreak but life must go on for the spider as well. At least she had done her bit towards the continuation of the species before her tragic end which you captured so well with your great photos.

A nice shot of XH558 passing by as well 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 26-Aug-14 10:23 PM GMT

That Brown Hairstreak female has a plump abdomen, which may have been full of eggs! I know the spider had to live, but if only the butterfly could have laid another 20 or 30 eggs. If only...

Re: Pauline

by David M, 26-Aug-14 10:46 PM GMT

Tragic viewing for me, I'm afraid. The female Brown Hairstreak is the most precious of UK butterflies and it's hurt to see the demise of one of that number.

Re: Pauline

by Paul Wetton, 27-Aug-14 11:15 AM GMT

Looking at the butterfly, she is not totally fresh and hopefully had chance to lay that 20 or 30 eggs before being captured. Attractive spider as well. Great shots Pauline.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Aug-14 09:20 PM GMT

Thank you all for your kind and consoling comments. If only I hadn't waited that fraction of a second to see if she could free herself (as I have seen Common Blue and Meadow Brown succeed in doing recently) then perhaps I could have saved her, and if the spider had been visible (rather than under the canopy of leaves it had created) I think my instinct would have been to intervene immediately.

Would I do the same thing again? Probably not! I know that one is not supposed to interfere in nature and on that basis alone I could never be a wildlife photographer as I find it distressing to watch any creature suffer. However, once the spider had her there was nothing I could do except take the photos. I also know that the spider has to eat but I found this short episode quite traumatic to witness as would have been the case regardless of species although I recognise the Brown Hairstreak is a bit special, so I reckon overall I'm with Mark and David on this one.

I remember feeling like this years ago when one of the many Sparrow Hawks which visit my garden brought down a Collared Dove under my apple tree. I kept thinking I should try to save it and then thought it probably wouldn't survive the trauma and shock as I have tried to intervene many times before with only very limited success. However, as the Hawk plucked the bird and started eating the head, the little mite was still alive and struggling – it took 20 minutes to die 🙄



Thank you for your comment Paul as I am still feeling full of guilt and remorse. I so hope you are right about the eggs.

I'm not sure what sort of spider it was Goldie but it was huge - seemed to match the size of the butterfly. I can't recall seeing one quite like this and would be very interested to find out what it is.

Thank you too Neil. I missed the shot of the Vulcan as it banked due to having to remove the close-up lens and re-focus but it was good to see nevertheless. Not sure where it was going but it has been at Farnborough Air show just up the road.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Aug-14 09:37 PM GMT

Quick update on the little'uns. A couple of days ago I had my first view of the Red Admiral cat out of its tent. I hadn't realised that they spent so much time there. Surely it can't be long before they pupate:



As far as the Small Coppers are concerned it would seem they have settled down for the Winter as larva. I hope this is normal behaviour as they don't appear to be very well 'wrapped up' so I hope they are not dying on me. One way or another it seems like I have done all I can, for now at least:



Likewise, I have not seen the WA cats for a while now. They appear to be in the little pockets they have created out of the leaves, both of which can be seen in this shot, one on each side opposite each other:



I have avoided disturbing them so I hope they are OK as they seemed very little when they stopped eating. A close up view:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Aug-14 06:58 PM GMT

I thought the season was slowing down a bit until I went to Old Winchester Hill this morning. I was not there as early as I had hoped as I have had no heating or hot water for over a week so the engineers were here sorting it out. By the time I arrived the warden had just finished his round and confirmed he had not seen a single butterfly. We looked up at the grey, leaden sky and he predicted that rain was on the way. Undeterred I headed off down the slope away from the car park and was delighted to see 3 Meadow Brown before I had gone very far. A few steps further and Blues started to fly up, startled by my disturbance. It seemed that they were certainly around, just hunkered down in the grass to avoid the strong breeze. I cursed the breeze as I anticipated the difficulties it would create when I wanted to take a few shots. I then remembered how it always seemed to be very windy where I grew up in the North which made me wonder how on earth the folk on this site from more Northern areas manage to get such cracking shots.

By the time I had reached the bottom of the slope the sun had broken through and the place immediately came to life. The first butterfly to catch my eye was an unusually dark female Common Blue. She looked almost black in flight. At first I thought it was because she was very fresh but she was certainly very attractive. The breeze made it difficult but I took a few shots – doesn't do her justice tho'!





A Clouded Yellow patrolled back and forth the whole time I was there so I assume he had been fitted with some of those long life batteries. I only managed a couple of shots when it paused briefly and there was always a bit of grass in the way!!!



The next butterfly to catch my attention was an oddly marked Meadow Brown. I had taken a couple of record shots when I realised that I had 'lost' my close-up lens in the grass somewhere and spent the next 15 minutes looking for it!!



When it came to the Blues, well, they were plentiful but in various states of wear and tear ranging from this:



To these:





A pair of really rather tatty Common Blue were mating as were several pairs of Meadow Brown:





Realising that this might well be one of the last days of the season where I was surrounded by more than a dozen species, including Small Copper (no blue spots!!!) it was hard to leave the site. As I made my way back up the slope I said cheerio to the Stonechats (I'm guessing here and presuming that is a female in the background) and cheerio to the sheep (note the kestrels in the background) for another year.



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 28-Aug-14 07:09 PM GMT

Interesting range of wear in those Blues Pauline 😊 Great shots of the Meadow Brown too – aren't those type of variations pathological? Also I'm probably wrong but I think that those Stonechats might be a Redstart and the one hiding could be a female Pied Flycatcher 😊 I'll have a proper look after I've eaten my tea as I'm so hungry I may be hallucinating 🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by jens, 28-Aug-14 08:01 PM GMT

Hi Pauline.

Great photos as usual ! I agree with Wurzel. The bird in the foreground is a male Common Redstart with a (possible) female Pied Flycatcher in the background. Our summering birds are moving out of their breeding areas now ready for migration. There have been 2 juvenile Common Redstarts feeding in hedges in the Newport wetlands reserve for weeks and Whinchats have been seen here too. Its a wonder there are any berries left !. The breeding areas for these 2 species would be some 20 miles further north and inland. Another reminder that autumn is here !.

Gareth

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 29-Aug-14 02:59 PM GMT

Pauline that Hawk story is quite gruesome UGH! I've had them in my Garden has well and although I know they've to kill to Live, it's still an harrowing experience to people like us who love Animals etc, to go on to a Brighter note, great Pic's , I hope when the weather is brighter next few days we'll both see more Butterflies. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 31-Aug-14 07:38 PM GMT

You make me chuckle with your comments Wurzel but you aren't the only one to hallucinate. Several of us today were suffering from hallucinations 😂 . Seems like you were absolutely right about the Redstart. 😊 . I have to admit I am not sure what would have caused that colouration in the Meadow Brown 😞

Good to hear from you Gareth and thank you for confirming the ID. I have never knowingly seen a Redstart (or a Pied Flycatcher) so that is a first for me. Mind you, I am still not sure how to tell the difference between that and a Stonechat.

Thank you for the compliment Goldie. I did see more butterflies today but came back to a pile of Collared Dove feathers on my front lawn 😞😡

Today I was joined by several others at Noar Hill in my quest to see my first male BH of the season after recent sightings had been reported. During the first hour the only sightings had been BH flying around the top of an Ash. We were becoming desperate by now and convinced ourselves that a variety of other species were actually BH 😊 but a Small Heath was doing quite a good job of mimicking one, flying up around the Ash before coming down to land. Folk were tending to disperse. It was at this point that I spotted my first female fly down and begin to egg lay. I was pleased to be able to show her to a couple of observers who were still around and had not seen a BH before. They were even more pleased and didn't seem concerned about the chunk out of her wing. As we took a few shots Mark called to say he had found another female in better condition. On closer examination she had one of her tails missing but that didn't stop her laying 2 eggs on a branch where there was already an egg. In between egg-laying the females took some well-earned rest:





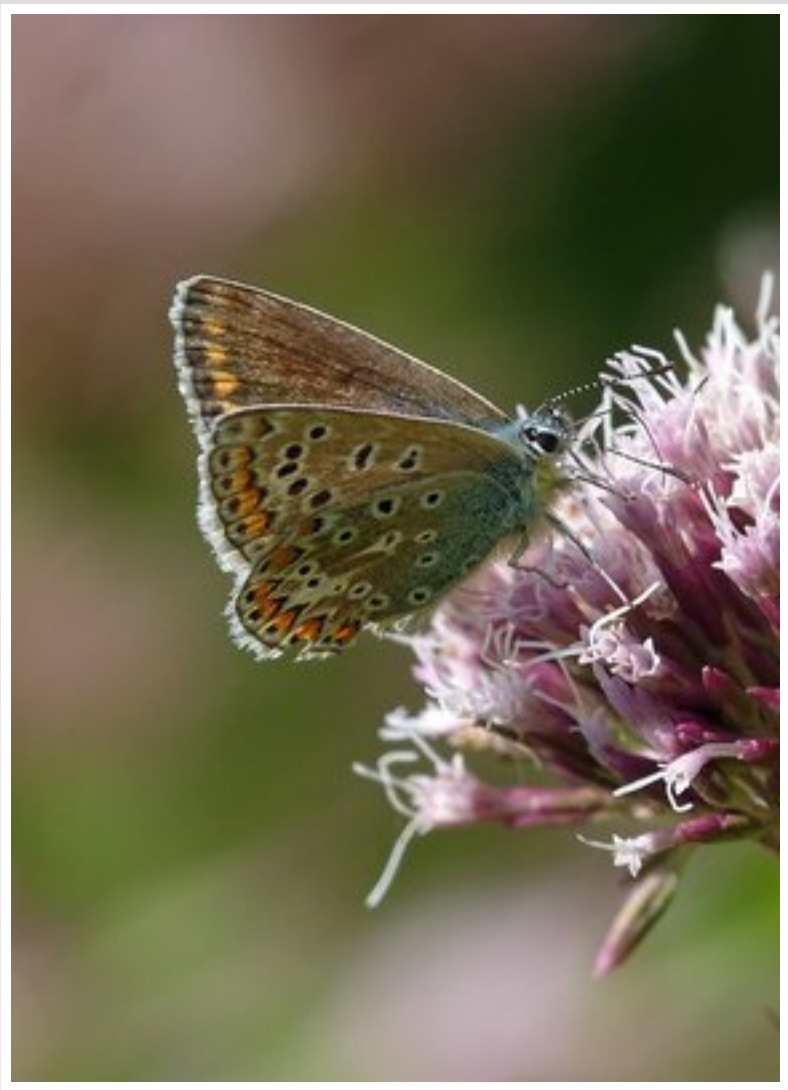
After a while the butterflies flew up high and most folk left to get some lunch. I decided to stay a little longer and wandered a little way along a track where I found a third female, also intent on ovi-posting. I had my 'Brownie' pin with me and tried to get a photo of the 2 together with only limited success. I shall keep trying.



Not wanting to ignore the other butterflies I had to take a few shots of this stunningly vibrant Comma:



and a slightly faded but attractive Common Blue:



As I left the site I found a fourth BH – another female!! An excuse for yet another visit to search for a male 😊



Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 31-Aug-14 09:48 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Great work with the Brown Hairstreaks 😊 It looks like Noar Hill is coming up with the goods this year. I struck lucky with my first visit to Shipton Bellinger a couple of weeks ago, but did not manage any photos. I have never seen one at Noar despite several visits over the last couple of years. Perhaps I should try again 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-14 10:38 PM GMT

Great shots from Noar Hill Pauline, love the Comma and the penultimate Brostreak is a cracker 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Sep-14 02:57 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel – I thought of you when I took that shot, thought you might like it 😊 . It's quite bizarre how many of you guys I think about when I am out and about. Whenever I see 'wobble-wobble grass' I think of Mike, or if I am at a particular site that Mark has directed me to I remember to be grateful, 'stained glass' and it's you Wurzel etc etc 😊

Hi Paul, with the good weather forecast for the end of the week you should try to make it to Noar Hill. I haven't seen a male there yet but several were seen recently and females are still egg-laying. The Triangle is still the most reliable place but a bit of patience might be required.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 01-Sep-14 08:48 PM GMT

Great BH photos from Noar Pauline 😊 seems like they are doing reasonably well this year, at Noar Hill, in spite of the egg losses during the winter 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Sep-14 06:40 PM GMT

Thank you Mike. More seen today (still all females!) – I obviously collected all the male eggs 😊 . Been thinking about that. If it needs to be done again (ie chopping down the Blackthorn) I wonder if it would be feasible to organise a working party of sorts to sift through the branches, clip off the eggs and wire them onto other Blackthorn. I'd spend a couple of days doing that if it was thought to help.

Anyway, 12 species seen today whilst waiting in vain for BH and hoping for sight of a male (butterfly that is! 😊). The first was a SWF – well, half a SWF really:



I was also pleased to see this male Holly Blue as I have seen very few of them this year:



The Small Heath from Sunday was still masquerading as a BH but we were all wise to him now. Common Blues, both male and female were everywhere:





A couple of Blackcaps entertained us along with a family of Marsh Tit whilst a lovely fresh Brimstone and GVW stayed for a while and helped to pass the time whilst still waiting for BH:



Other species noted were lots of Speckled Wood, a couple of fresh Red Admiral, ST, Meadow Brown and Brown Argus and all this without moving more than a few yards, but still waiting for BH 😞 . A couple of us decided to call it a day and as we approached the entrance of the site a female BH flew past. As she went behind some low bushes we lost her and couldn't relocate her. Half way down the track we parted company and I continued down to the 'car park'. I decided to check the blackthorn on the corner and in doing so I flushed 2 female BH from the thicket which I assume had been egg-laying despite the now cloudy conditions. The BH went in different directions but I was able to see where they landed (quite high up). I took a couple of shots on max zoom and this is the result. Your challenge today is to find the BH – she is there, I guarantee 😊



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 02-Sep-14 10:39 PM GMT

I find that last photo fascinating, since it shows how well the BH mimic brown autumnal leaves. I can see half a dozen 'possibles' but am sure most are leaves! It's also nice to see all that blue sky.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by David M, 02-Sep-14 10:51 PM GMT

"MikeOxon" wrote:

I find that last photo fascinating, since it shows how well the BH mimic brown autumnal leaves. I can see half a dozen 'possibles' but am sure most are leaves! It's also nice to see all that blue sky.

Mike

I've clocked this myself lately. Blackthorn leaves, once they've started to change colour, reflect the brown and orange markings of female Brown Hairstreaks very markedly.

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 03-Sep-14 07:00 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

I am fairly sure I can see just down from the top bit of foliage in the centre with wings flat?

It is doing a remarkable imitation of a pair of Field Maple seeds – nice spot!

Kind Regards

Mark 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Sep-14 07:45 PM GMT

An interesting and productive day today but more of that later. In the meantime you were spot on Mark 😊 (see below). I agree Mike/David – it is not just the Blackthorn but Ash leaves and others are now sporting brown patches which are easy to interpret as a Hairstreak. Their camouflage at the moment would give the Graylings a run for their money!



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 03-Sep-14 10:33 PM GMT

That was good fun playing spot the Brostreak Pauline 😊 There have been several times when I've been caught out by leaves whilst looking for Brostreaks – that gaudy orange makes it surprisingly difficult to locate 😎

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Sep-14 04:48 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – more camouflage below and one shot just for you 😊

Today I set off to find (with a little help) not just the tumulus, but also the Grayling, at the site 5 mins away from me, this being my 3rd attempt 😊. I had not only clarified directions and printed them out but had taken them with me. Despite checking the weather forecast which seemed favourable, it was a little cool and misty when we set out with a lot of cloud cover so I was preparing myself for failure – again!.

I hope Ernie is reading this as we found the Irish Harp tree in his directions 😊 and literally paced the 200 steps and at last – success 😊 – we had found the tumulus:



Whilst searching amongst the heather we stumbled across some strips of corrugated iron which appeared to have been used by the military for lighting fires, but on turning it over it was apparent that it was providing shelter to a number of Peacocks:



Eventually the sun appeared, and with it about a dozen Grayling, one of which landed on me. Courtship behaviour was witnessed but the female eventually rejected the male, preferring instead to nectar on the heather. As usual the Grayling were incredibly well camouflaged, whether soaking up the warmth of the sandy tracks or climbing around the heather:





This was the lovely environment being enjoyed by the butterflies:



As well as the Grayling we saw a few Common Blue, ST, Meadow Brown, a White of sorts and a number of moths and cats. As we were leaving we also saw this attractive Small Comma (or should that be Copper 😊) but STILL no blue spots:



.... and this 'Dalmation' Copper is just for Wurzel 😊



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 04-Sep-14 06:47 PM GMT

Sometimes, Pauline, you just *have* to use Photoshop 😊



Ab. Caeruleopunctata in excelsis

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 04-Sep-14 11:51 PM GMT

Great late Grayling shots Pauline 🍷 And thank you for my Small Copper, that would look great in my photo collection 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 05-Sep-14 12:36 AM GMT

Lovely Graylings Pauline, which look in great condition for the time of year 😊 As we have also seen, they seem to have a long flight season 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Sep-14 04:50 PM GMT

😊😊😊 I shall treasure that image Mike as it seems likely that it is the only one I shall get 😊

Consider it part of your collection Wurzel 😊 Thanks for the compliment 😊

It was something of a relief to find them at last Mike and they were in very good condition. I reckon Ernie was right and at peak season I imagine there will be loads of them as he recently witnessed. SSB too so that is a new site for me for them – if you see what I mean?

I am getting behind again and losing track of time so postings may not be chronological. Another visit to Noah Hill the other day failed again to find any male BH – think they are probably finished at this site now but hope someone proves me wrong. As I approached the site along the narrow lanes with passing places a raptor flew past my car and landed on a nearby roof. I stopped the car and remembered to turn off the engine before taking any shots (I have made this mistake before which only resulted in blurred images!). I believe it is a Kestrel?

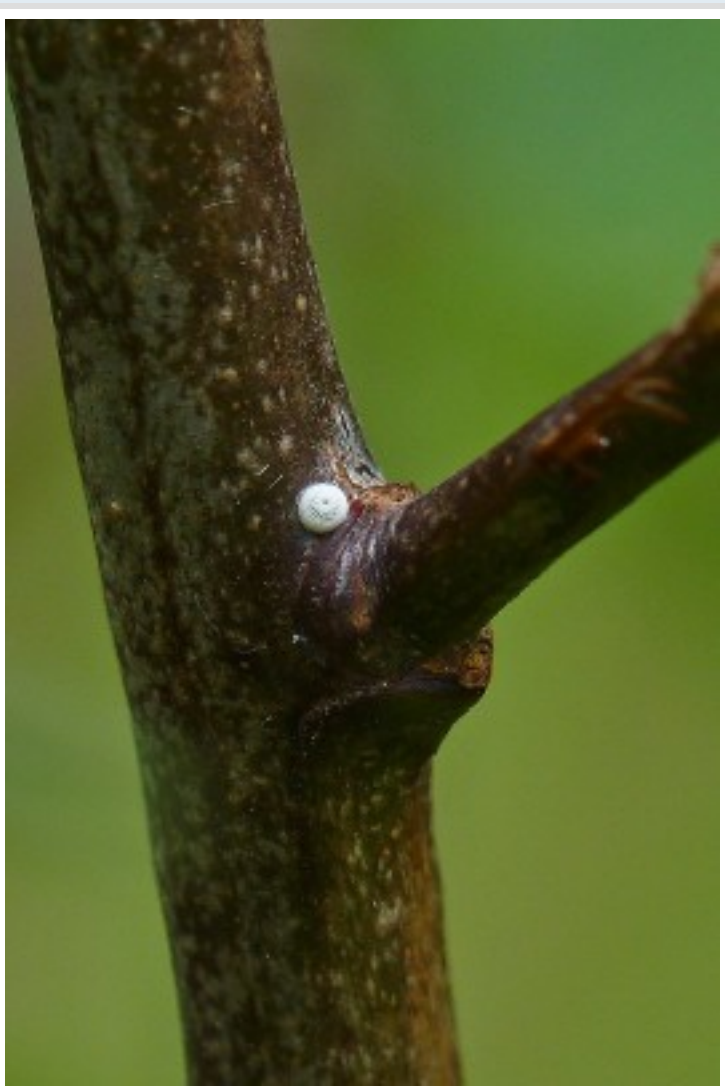




There was the usual mix of butterflies at Noar Hill in varying condition but whilst checking the eggs from previous visits it seemed that some had already been predated, either having disappeared completely or no longer looking intact like this one:



as opposed to this:



Common Blues were the most common/frequent butterflies encountered:



I also found an interesting caterpillar (but I think that might have been on a different visit) – a Chinese Character, and it is easy to see why it has been named such:



On the way back, almost at the same place I saw the Kestrel, I had to stop as a small rabbit was in the road. I initially thought it might have had myxi but on getting out of the car it was apparent that wasn't so, although it had multiple injuries. Holding up traffic in both directions I scooped up the poor little mite which has since cost me a small fortune in vet fees with no guarantees of a happy conclusion. Lucky, as this little girl has been named, is not out of the woods yet, so whether the name is appropriate remains to be seen!





Re: Pauline

by nomad, 07-Sep-14 05:05 PM GMT

Very nice Grayling images 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 07-Sep-14 06:20 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, I am playing catch up again. Some great reports and photos in your diary recently. Love the blue-spotted Small Copper 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 12-Sep-14 09:18 PM GMT

Hi pauline, nice shots from Noar, hope Lucky is ok? We've only visited Noar once recently, no BH, but plenty of other butterflies to be found, must update my PD 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Sep-14 09:41 PM GMT

Thank you Peter – comment much appreciated. It is good to have found a sizeable colony so close to home.

Thanks Mike, especially for asking after Lucky who has needed 24/7 care and is not out of the woods yet so butterfly activities have been severely restricted.

I appreciate the compliment Neil and I have to say that you are not the only one who loved the Blue spotted Small Copper – others have commented to me too so a big thanks must go to Mike for his efforts. I cannot quite match that but today I saw a few Small Coppers and I was delighted to note that one of them had a smattering of blue – perhaps not quite enough to be considered the 'real deal' but hey! it was good enough for me 😊 (for now anyway!).







Next time I want to find a particular butterfly I shall simply ask Mike to do a 'mock-up' using Photoshop as it has obviously brought me luck 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 12-Sep-14 11:18 PM GMT

Congrats on the Blue Badge Coppers 😊 Good idea about asking Mike to do a lucky Mock-up, I'll ask for a Swallowtail I think 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 14-Sep-14 04:23 PM GMT

You do some lovely photo's Pauline and wouldn't I just love to see a Brown Hair Streak, hope fully next year , I said that at the beginning of this year but still I was in the wrong place again at the wrong time 😞 not too worry I'll get there yet 😊

I hope the Rabbit's doing well Pauline, you deserve a medal for what you've done, but I couldn't leave any thing injured either,(keep us informed about it's progress) Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Sep-14 07:36 AM GMT

Thank you Wurzel. I hope you have as much luck with your Swallowtail 😊😊

You are very kind Goldie. Lucky is continuing to make progress, putting on weight but still on a lot of medication. Here she is relaxing in the garden:



As a result, most recent outings have been short and sweet. I was pleased to see my first ever Wasp spider:



At home the Red Admiral cats have pupated, frustratingly on the roof of the cage and some of the moth cats are also looking to pupate. This Pebble Prominent:



has recently turned into this:



A few more cat shots:







Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 18-Sep-14 07:07 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, nice to see Lucky looking chilled in the garden 😊

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 18-Sep-14 10:36 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Just catching up with your diary. A very nice collection of larvae there 😊

Strangely I too saw my first Wasp Spider at the weekend! I am not too hot on spiders, Is that just coincidence or a sign of something more significant? 🤔
Maybe they are taking over 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 20-Sep-14 04:48 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline glad Lucky is doing so well, it will take time for him to get over the shock of the accident , that 's the killer some times , he looks to be well on his way to feeling better.Goldie, 😊

PS Can't stand spiders, I'd a run in with a Tarantula when I was in Haiti, when I say run I mean it 😊 I found out they can jump 9ft, I did just that 😂

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Sep-14 07:30 PM GMT

Thank you Mike - fingers crossed she is on the mend as she is costing me a small fortune 😞 .

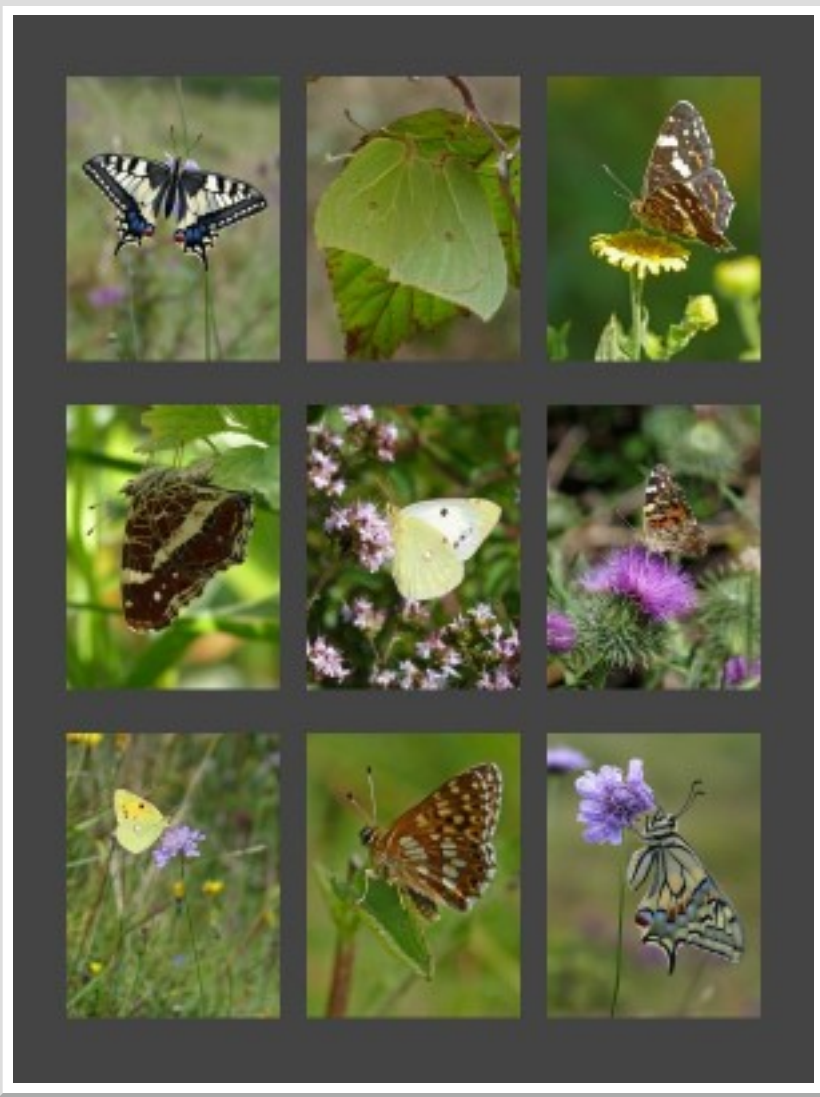
Thank you too Paul - I bet you can hazard a good guess where I was and who I was with 😊 but the other set of photos are much better quality than mine 📷 . I'm feeling fairly safe as I think all the Wasp spiders are in your part of the county 😊 .

I'm definitely with you on that one Goldie - terrified of spiders (even tiny ones) so don't even mention tarantulas. 😡

It is that time of the year when butterfly activity slows down a little and allows me to reflect on the season, what I have done, seen, and what I have learned.

For several weeks I have intended to produce this review/summary but I was undecided how best to present it photographically, until I saw the amazing summary that Mike produced in his diary. With a little help and advice from Mike I have produced the accompanying photographic record which is similar to his own but grouped in a different way. My summary is not chronological and does not include every species I have photographed but rather groups together those shots which are related in some way, and/or have a special memory or meaning for me. Only the immature stages are labelled.

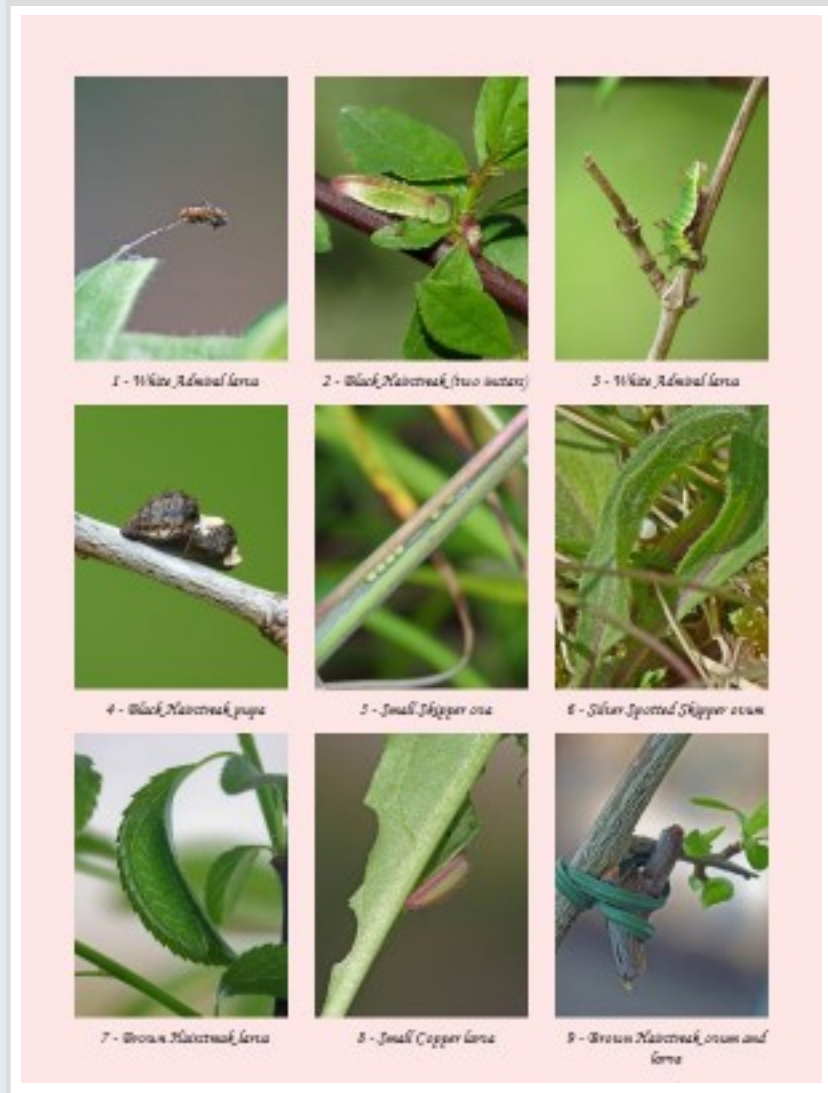
For me, the season started off at a fairly slow pace as I had my poorly cat to care for which resulted in missing a couple of species, including the Glanville (no regrets tho'). Nevertheless, I didn't do too badly and overall I was able to see and photograph 49 species. I was also able to meet my personal objective of visiting a couple of new sites, namely Rewell Wood for PBF and the beautiful Lulworth Cove for Lulworth Skippers. I was able to see species I have never seen before and probably never will again, including the impressive European Swallowtail, the fact that it had been reared not detracting from its beauty. The highlight for me would have to be seeing and recording the Map ovi-posting especially as Butterfly Conservation HQ subsequently confirmed to me by email that it was indeed the first time it had been recorded in the wild in the UK and I was able to photograph the whole event. Other memorable moments include seeing my first ever mating pair of Brimstones as well as stumbling across a number of Silver-washed Fritillary all ovi-posting on the same tree. Seeing the 2nd brood Duke of Burgundy for the 3rd time in recent years is also worthy of note.



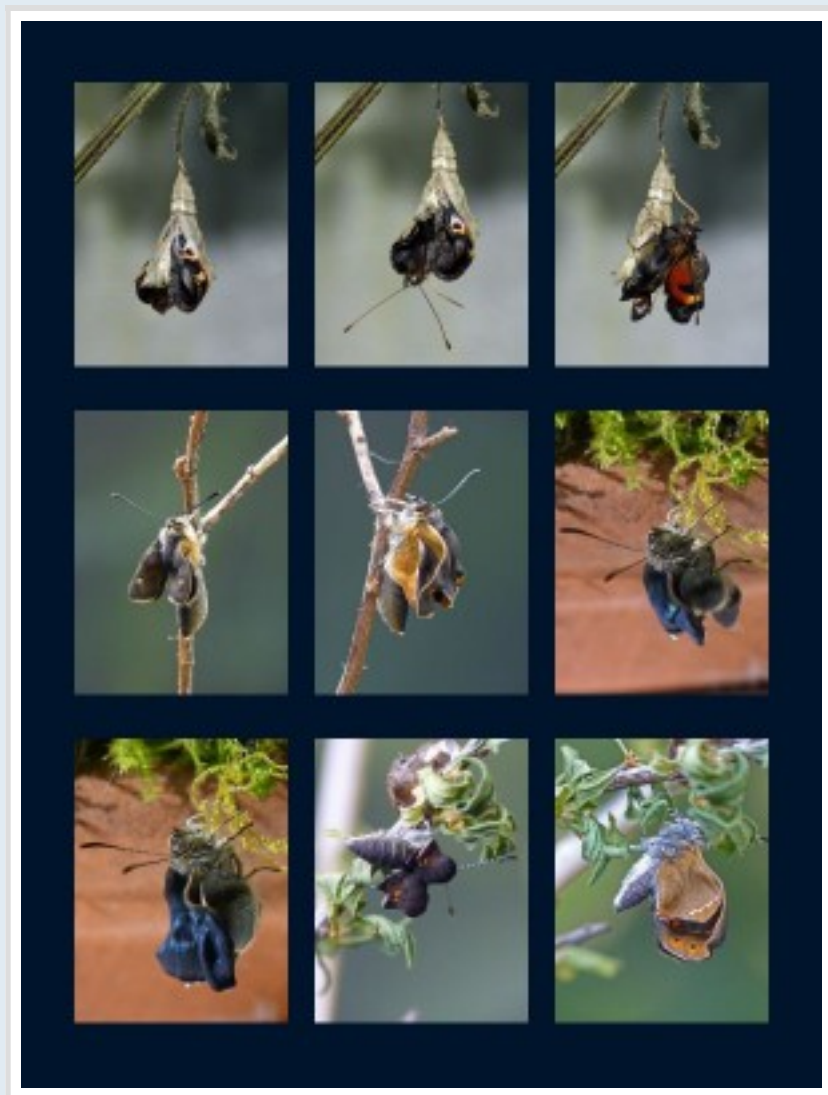
I have tried to pay more attention to the behaviour of butterflies this season and in doing so I have probably seen far more ovi-posting by more species than I ever have before. The size and shape of the various eggs has been a surprise – it often seems that there is little correlation between the size of the egg and the size of the butterfly. The Green Hairstreak eggs I saw being laid at Paulsgrove were tiny whilst the Small Skipper eggs ovi-posted near my pond were relatively large.

I have had some limited experience of rearing butterflies this season including Purple Hairstreaks and Brown Hairstreaks which I considered ‘rescues’ but they ignited my interest into the immature stages of all butterflies.





These were followed by the Black hairstreaks (a gift), and then the Peacocks, Orange-tips, Small White (accidental), White Admiral and Small Copper (from choice and interest) and lastly the Comma and Red Admiral which appeared of their own accord. Sadly the Comma had been parasitized, the 'writhing sac' which burst from the caterpillar leaving it an empty shell. I can't imagine that I shall ever tire of seeing a brand new butterfly emerge from the pupa. It is a truly wonderful and remarkable sight and very exciting and rewarding:



My newly acquired interest in caterpillars eventually expanded into the moth larvae leading to the rearing of Puss moth cat, Alder Moth and Pebble Prominent which are currently all in the pupal stage. This was followed by Sallow Kitten and Poplar Kitten.



With the help of experts on this site I feel I have learned a great deal this season and have had some brand new experiences, combined with seeing new places and meeting some smashing new people. I am hoping my photography skills have improved but I recognise I still have a long way to go there. However, I have thoroughly enjoyed the season and although I had intended to keep my diary going this year, other activities are now strongly completing for priority, so time will tell. In the meantime, a few more of my favourite shots from 2014.



Re: Pauline

by badgerbob, 20-Sep-14 08:24 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Pauline. My favourite montage from these is the Moth Larvae as there are many there I haven't seen but would love to!!

Re: Pauline

by David M, 20-Sep-14 10:06 PM GMT

Excellent presentation, Pauline. There doesn't appear to be much wrong with your photography skills (albeit to my untrained eye). Well done!

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 21-Sep-14 12:37 AM GMT

Great presentation of your 2014 work Pauline 😊 and your photos are stunning, as always 😊

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 21-Sep-14 11:38 AM GMT

Lots of beautiful photos and you have clearly thought quite a lot about the layout, too. Superb 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 21-Sep-14 09:36 PM GMT

A stunning sequence Pauline 😊🍷 But the looking back doesn't mean that you're heading off for hibernation does it? 😬

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 23-Sep-14 04:11 PM GMT

Great photo's Pauline, try to keep your diary going please, Winter months are long and boring, it would be great to see some of your photo's, weather, animals, birds, etc. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by PhilBJohnson, 23-Sep-14 06:17 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Excellent montages and interesting how you fitted them together in portrait. Sometimes I have a "Mr Bean" moment and am scared to turn my camera through 90 in case my pictures are all downloaded needing to be rotated! 😂

Best Wishes,

Philip

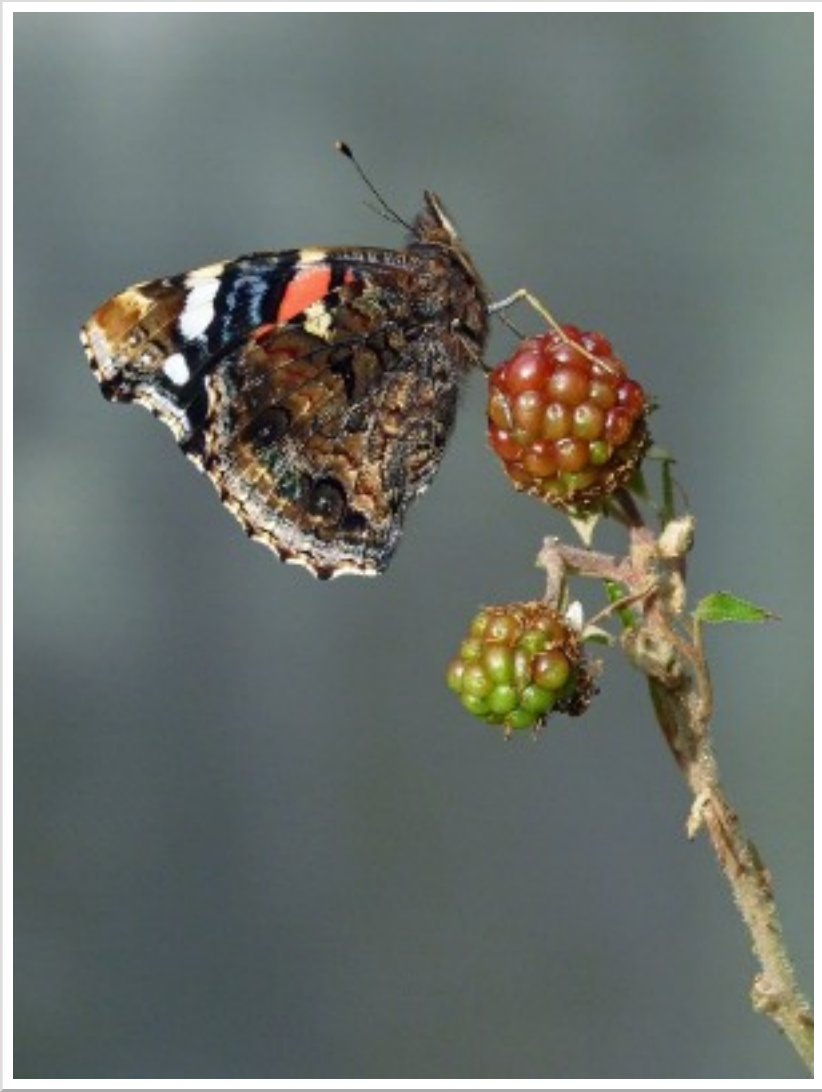
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Sep-14 04:59 PM GMT

I appreciate all the support and interest that has been shown in my diary this season. It is reassuring to know that whatever the issue – an ID, technical problem, photography question – there are folk out there who are able and willing to help. Thank you all for your kind comments. I could not have produced the above without guidance from Mike. I cannot promise to keep my diary going Goldie as things are manic here with 2 poorly foxes but I shall try to fit it in as and when I can. I don't think it will be a total hibernation Wurzel tho' I could do with a good sleep as I have spent too many nights in the kennels recently! I resisted the 'moth' thing for an awful long time Bob as they tend to overwhelm me but I have some good mentors and I am now hooked – you can expect more of the same. Thank you too David, Mike and Phil – your comments are always appreciated.

Yesterday was probably one of the worst days weather-wise that we have had for quite some time and it was also the day that my first Red Admiral chose to emerge. I did not witness the event – I was not even expecting it as lack of sleep has turned me into a zombie with no track of time 😊😂 It was not until later in the day that I noticed it hanging forlornly from the roof of the cage with some damage to an antennae sadly. I provided B&B and today, in lovely sunshine, she made her way off before I could even get an open-winged shot. I hope she'll be back and I shall try to keep a closer eye on the other one.







Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 25-Sep-14 10:21 PM GMT

Glad to hear that you'll still be around Pauline 😊 Those Red Admiral shots are lush and the second one almost seems to jump out of the screen 😊👍
Looking forward to the Social now, hope to see you there.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 26-Sep-14 08:38 PM GMT

Lovely Red Admiral shots Pauline 😊 from 'our' experience a damaged or missing antenna does not seem to be a problem.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 29-Sep-14 07:43 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, some lovely Red Admiral images there 😊

I agree with Mike about a missing antenna not seeming to be too much of a problem, I have seen a couple like that this year and they were behaving perfectly normally.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 29-Sep-14 08:49 PM GMT

Quality shots of Red Admirals are not normally given too much attention, but at this time of year, they perfectly reflect the situation that we are all in.

Everything is dying back right now and in 6 weeks very few of us will be posting any butterfly images at all, so we should all profit while we can before the frost sets in and we all have to suspend our favourite pastime until the first mild days of early March.

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 29-Sep-14 09:30 PM GMT

I agree with all the comments – you've caught the colours of the red admiral underside just perfectly, Pauline.

What's happened to your white admiral caterpillars? Are they still sitting around on the protruding mid-veins of leaves like my wild ones or have they made their hibernacula yet?

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 30-Sep-14 04:49 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, fantastic shots of the Admiral 🍷 😊

There's a program on tele tonight or tomorrow night that reminds me of you, it's all about the beginnings of "Chester Zoo"

I wondered if you've watched it 🤔 It's been great , it's a true story as well Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Oct-14 11:37 AM GMT

Thank you Wurzel – I hope to see you at the Social too but it is very much dependent on the animal situation at the time. Sadly, I shall have to give the show this weekend a miss 😞

I appreciate the reassurance Mike/Neil. I would have blamed myself (obviously) if she had been compromised in any way tho' I have no idea what happened to the antennae.

Thank you too David – there have been some lovely autumnal butterfly shots posted recently so I guess looking back over them will help get thru' the Winter.

I appreciate that Guy. Re WA, I am not too sure. They wrapped themselves up in leaves which have since died and gone brown so I am unsure whether the larva have perished too. I have not wanted to disturb the situation but I feel sure that in this mild sunny weather they would have made an appearance if all was OK as the rest of the plant is still growing 😊

You do make me smile and cheer me up Goldie 😊 . I have not seen that programme but I have read about it – all I can say is that I haven't got any bears – yet! 😊 😊 Lucky (rabbit) is doing great – gone from 610gms to 930gms (just hope she's not pregnant 🤔). A poor photo of her in her temporary run and my cat Jaffa in one of the rabbit's new toys 😊



Foxy has had a stroke and needs regular attention so I have been confined to the garden. I have not even had time to photograph the selection of butterflies appearing daily including Red Admirals, Comma, a Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell and several Speckled Wood. The last 2 have regularly been landing on the lawn, perhaps for moisture? I have managed a few shots of the resident moth larva. There has been some debate as to whether they are poplar or sawfly kittens – or one of each. Perhaps this might aid identification?



One has now pupated and had I not seen this happen over the space of a few hours, I doubt whether I would even have recognised it as a pupa – hence I have marked the spot.





I had hoped to see the Starfish fungi this year but that is looking very unlikely too. However, I have noticed a variety of interesting fungi in the garden this year, but below is the only shot taken so far:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 04-Oct-14 01:23 PM GMT

Pauline your cat as stolen the show for me 😂 That picture should be entered into a competition 😊

Hope the animals get better soon Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Oct-14 03:43 PM GMT

Thank you so much Goldie – wish we could meet up sometime.

I am struggling to keep my diary going now (sleeping in kennels, no hot water 😬😬😬) but a few images from today:





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 08-Oct-14 11:16 PM GMT

Stunning images Pauline 😊👍 You kept those ones quiet 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 09-Oct-14 12:31 AM GMT

Yes Pauline, lovely images 😊 you did keep them quiet 😊 whats the story behind them 🤔

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Oct-14 12:10 PM GMT

Thank you both. I didn't deliberately keep them quiet. They were part of the original gift (the Black Hairstreaks) but I had given up hope of receiving them as it is so late in the year. It is such a pity as the Everlasting Pea I had grown in anticipation has died back and I am having to beg some from neighbours – the weather also leaves something to be desired. More of them later.

Prompted by Guy's recent query about my WA cats I thought I should take another look. I am delighted to report that at least one of them is alive altho' it is still ever so tiny:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 10-Oct-14 12:57 PM GMT

Those photo's are great Pauline, you really are Zoological 😊 I'd love to see your place and animals, who needs Butterfly houses, you've got it all 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Oct-14 04:38 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie. Most of the time it is chaotic and unpredictable here (as I'm sure those who have visited could confirm) but if you are ever anywhere near (I am on the borders of Hants, Surrey and Sussex) you would definitely be most welcome.

I have checked the Honeysuckle yet again and can still only find one tiny little WA cat the leaves they wrapped themselves in are still there so who knows???



Still on the subject of 'little'uns' I was fortunate to witness one of the LTB emerge. Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, this was on one of the darkest days indoors, with thunder crashing outside and rain lashing down. With such poor light I needed to adjust settings on the camera, try to grab my tripod, work out how to use the flash, whilst trying to get a few shots before the event was well and truly over. I didn't do it justice but it was great to see - just like a little alien emerging 🤩 For the record:







Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Oct-14 04:48 PM GMT

It has been difficult in this weather to get any half decent shots of the LTB - still trying, but the best of the bunch so far







Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 11-Oct-14 06:11 PM GMT

I'm very interested to see your white admiral caterpillars, Pauline. You call them 'tiny' – but from their appearance they are at least fully grown second instar, so 8mm or so? In the wild, many of the caterpillars I have been following have disappeared and I am not sure if it is because they have snuck off to hibernate or because they are dead. That should become apparent in the winter, when the leaves have fallen.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Oct-14 12:06 PM GMT

Thank you for your interest Guy. The WA cat is approx. 3 mm (if that). You might remember that I posted a photo on 4 August this year of them beginning to construct their hibernaculum:



A few days later they disappeared and their little shelters turned brown. Despite checking from time to time during the recent warm weather I did not see them again and had assumed they had perished. Prompted by your recent query I resolved to check again but it was not until I was covering up the LTB in the recent thunderstorm that I spotted the cat. The brown shrivelled leaf was sodden and looked in danger of being washed away so I brought the pot in for a few hours and it was then that I noticed all the slugs – the pot had not been given any protection. Given the tiny size of the cat (which is clearly way behind 'wild' individuals in terms of development) I am wondering if I should take any action such as keeping the plant indoors for a while – tho' I am not sure if potted wild honeysuckle will thrive indoors. I am mindful of the Hairstreaks and how they developed too fast. If I am responsible in some way for the WA retarded development should I try to rectify this? Any advice would be appreciated.

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 12-Oct-14 02:59 PM GMT

I don't know the answer to your questions, Pauline (though my instinct is to say don't bring them in!), but if it puts your mind at rest, there are still some wild cats in my woods that are only about 4mm long. The cats will have chosen their hibernating leaves with an eye on various factors – including aspect, shade &c., and if you go moving the pots into different situations you risk changing all these things.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 12-Oct-14 06:55 PM GMT

Fantastic Long-tail Blue shots Pauline – even if you're not too sure about them, I am 😊🌱 WRT the Cats – I reckon (obviously with no knowledge whatsoever) that it would be best to leave them out as that's what they're used to? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

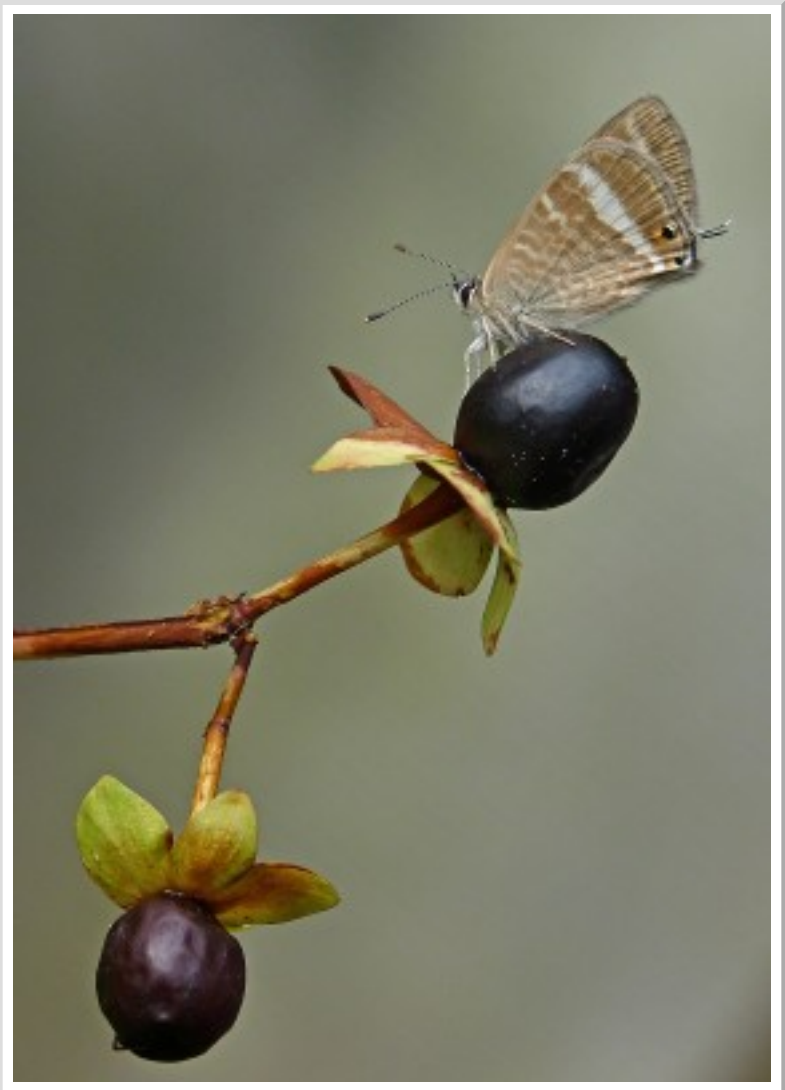
Re: Pauline

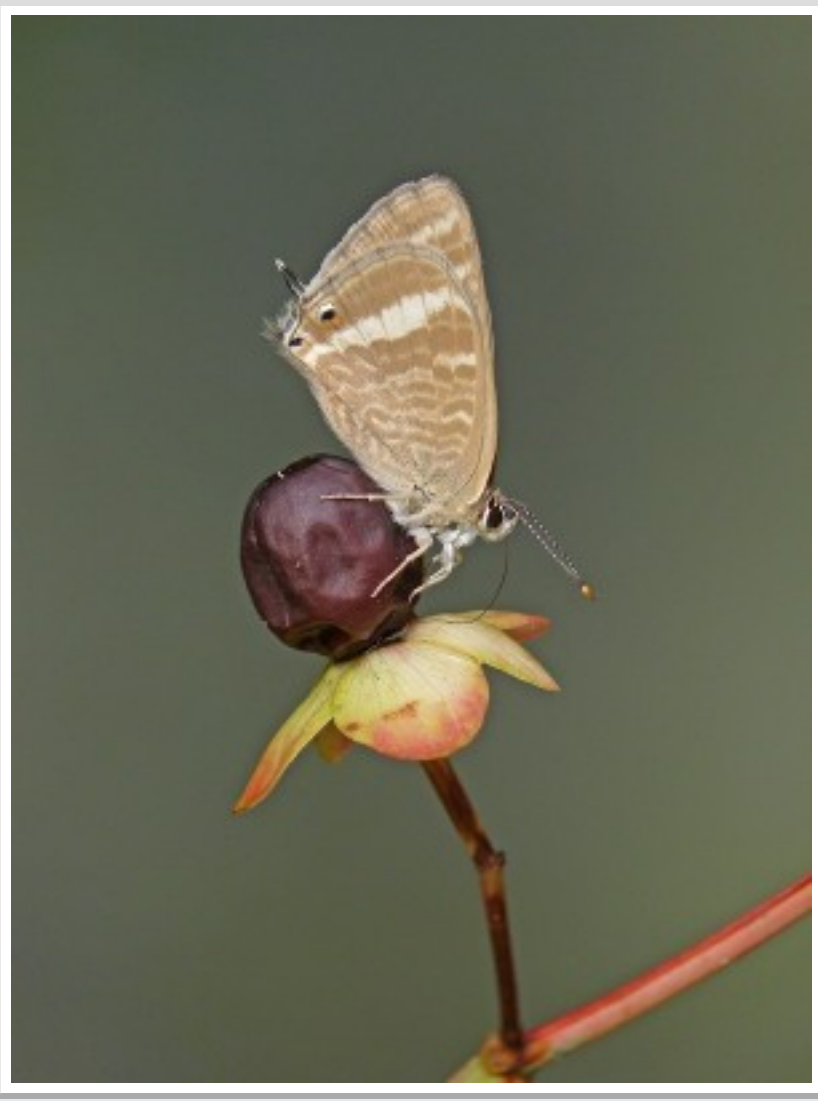
by Pauline, 13-Oct-14 12:44 PM GMT

Those are certainly good points to remember for the future Guy but I seem to remember that this potted Honeysuckle has already been moved several times as I was given advice about how/where best to keep them, eg. keep in shade, not too much sun etc. The pot was also moved from the protective cage when I had doubts about the survival of the cats so for about 6 weeks it has been tucked under a hedge. Nevertheless, the recent ongoing rain totally saturated the hibernaculum causing it to 'collapse'. As there is now no cavity for the cat to retreat into, having had a bite to eat he returns and sits on top of it, totally exposed 😞 I'm out of my depths yet again 😞😞

You are very kind Wurzel and I appreciate your advice. I am still trying to get some decent shots when I have time which seems to be most days now, as I am STILL trying to get some hot water. It has now been 3 weeks and the 3rd plumber is due today, the previous 2 having given up!!! (You were right A.). So here goes, in no particular order:







Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 13-Oct-14 08:07 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I'm out of my depths yet again 😞😞

We all make mistakes, Pauline, but if you're out of your depth, then why don't you release your cats back into the wild where they have a chance of surviving?

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Oct-14 09:10 PM GMT

Are you suggesting that I uproot the potted Honeysuckle Pete and replant it somewhere else or simply transfer the cats to Honeysuckle growing elsewhere? It has been left in natural conditions for weeks and the storms seem to have wrecked the hibernaculum. I am still looking forward to seeing your guidelines on rearing 😊.

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 13-Oct-14 09:17 PM GMT

From what you've written, it seems like the plant isn't up to the job, although I'm not sure if it's the plant itself or its position. If the former, then a new plant is needed. Either way, since we don't know, the best chance of survival for them might be putting the cats back from whence they came.

I'm writing the captive rearing article right now, but it won't go into species-specifics and may not, therefore, answer your questions.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 13-Oct-14 10:03 PM GMT

IF you follow Pete's suggestion of returning them to the wild – and I have no opinion either way on that – it will be important to recce any potential new home very carefully. In my woods, honeysuckle more exposed to the sun is already largely wilted/leafless and any cats that used to be on it are no longer in evidence – presumably in hibernation. However, in shadier areas there are still lush leaves and some quite small cats. I would suggest (a) only moving them to a plant where there is already evidence of *camilla* cats, so you know it is appropriate in general, and (b) going for the lush plants in more shade, so your little cats can feed and get their strength back before expending their energy on hibernaculum building again. I think that if you do this it would have to be very soon. My main reservation is that the cats shore up any leaves they rest on or intend to hibernate in with silk to prevent them dropping (and I think they also have a kind of silk road map of their local patch) – so there's quite a lot for them to do before they can bed down safely. The low temperatures at this time of year mean they do everything very slowly and it's a bit of a race against time.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Oct-14 12:43 PM GMT

Thank you Guy for your constructive and thoughtful comments – much appreciated.

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

We all make mistakes, Pauline,

I am not sure that I have made a mistake Pete – I have followed your earlier advice to keep plant and cats in the shade and purchased the booklet you recommended but it does not go into the level of detail I clearly need.

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

it seems like the plant isn't up to the job,

The plant (to my inexperienced eye) looks quite healthy albeit only about 15" high (see below)



I have marked the area of the 'failed' hibernaculum and where the cat currently is.

Given Guy's comments regarding the size of some of the wild cats it would seem that I should not be concerned about the size of my cat but I AM concerned that the inclement weather seems to have destroyed his shelter and as Guy has indicated the cats are moving ever so slowly now – it is still raining heavily here hence I have brought the pot indoors. I am assuming that this could happen 'in the wild' in very inclement weather and may not be the result of anything I have done.

So, my dilemma was/is – do I keep the pot indoors for a little while to give the cat a chance to feed up and create a new home or let him take a chance outside with no shelter, low temperatures and totally exposed? Added to that, I don't know how the plant will cope indoors, albeit in a cool-ish conservatory.



"Pete Eeles" wrote:

why don't you release your cats back into the wild where they have a chance of surviving?

we all know the perils faced by cats in the wild Pete so it is disappointing that you seem to think I can't do better than those odds especially with the help and support of the UKbutts members. I am really only trying to do my best, learning as I go with support from yourselves and totally fascinated by the process.

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 14-Oct-14 01:03 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

we all know the perils faced by cats in the wild Pete so it is disappointing that you seem to think I can't do better than those odds especially with the help and support of the UKbutts members.

Because you said that you were out of your depth – simple as that.

– Pete

Re: Pauline

by andy brown, 14-Oct-14 01:15 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

The links below (first page of my diary) are of two White Admiral Larvae from earlier this year (May), as you will see both are at different stages and both obviously made it through the wet windy winter OK, I would just make sure the Plant with its larvae are somewhere out of the worst of the weather and let them take their chances it is after all what evolution has made them to tolerate and they see a lot worse weather on the continent than they do here.

<download/file.php?id=48182&mode=view> <download/file.php?id=48183&mode=view>

Cheers

Andy

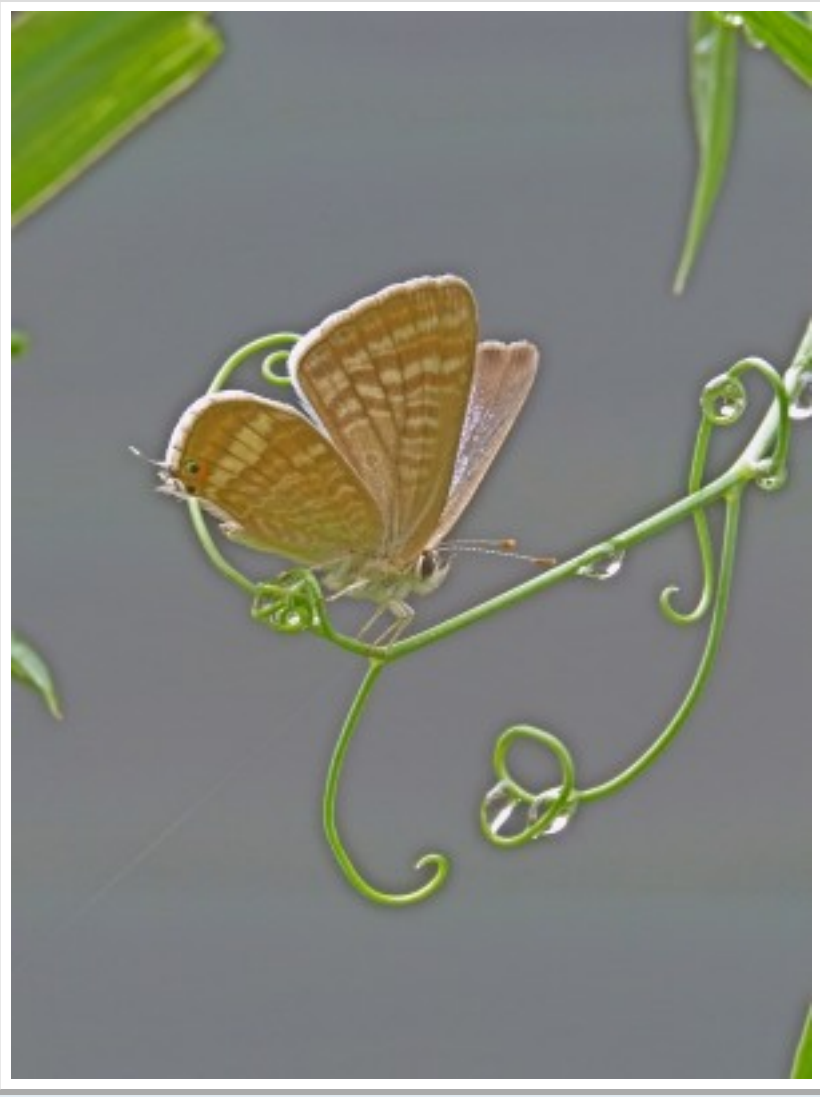
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Oct-14 08:19 PM GMT

I am so often out of my depth Pete – when I have to inject fluids hourly into a dehydrated rabbit, sort out a prolapsed hen, give pain relief injections to foxes, trim a parrot's beak, tube feed a tortoise etc, etc..... and when I'm faced with a hibernaculum that has collapsed 😞😞. However, I always carry on and try to do my best to give each critter a better chance than it would otherwise have had – and that goes for the WA cat. I can understand now why he was up and about in that dreadful storm as presumably he had no-where else to go. The other hibernaculum still seems to be intact and I am hoping the other cat is still in there. It is STILL raining here and to try to buy the cat some time to sort himself out I have brought the pot indoors temporarily. He appears to be making no attempt at any reconstruction of a shelter and my lack of knowledge hampers my decision making. Will he survive the winter without a shelter? How long can the plant survive indoors? Lots of questions. I am being largely guided by Guy's sound logic coupled with his observation of the wild cats so I will do my best, use my judgement and hope all turns out well.

In between the heavy showers today I managed to squeeze in another brief photo session. Many of the shots are similar, some boringly so, but I shall include them anyway as there are subtle differences. Unlike the Hairstreaks, the LTB seem happy to nectar on a variety of garden plants – which is just as well as the Everlasting Pea is now long gone!







Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 15-Oct-14 09:25 PM GMT

Pauline take care, hope things pan out 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 15-Oct-14 09:42 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

I was just enjoying your Long Tailed Blues 😊 Reminding me of the enjoyable times we all had with this species almost exactly a year ago 😊

I am certainly no expert with regards to White Admiral larvae but my opinion, for what it is worth, is that you should leave them outside and let nature take its course. In my general experience what sometimes looks, from a human perspective, like larval/pupal problems will often sort itself out without human intervention 😊 They more often than not seem to do better with as little human interference as possible.

Good luck 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pete Eeles, 15-Oct-14 09:52 PM GMT

If you intend to keep hold of the WA cats, then all I can suggest is that you keep them outside, in the shade, with some shelter from any torrential rainstorm. When I've found eggs in the wild, they've always been on honeysuckle that is under some protective covering, whether this is a tree canopy, a large bush etc.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pauline

by David M, 15-Oct-14 10:03 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

I am so often out of my depth Pete – when I have to inject fluids hourly into a dehydrated rabbit, sort out a prolapsed hen, give pain relief injections to foxes, trim a parrots beak, tube feed a tortoise etc, etc..... and when I'm faced with a hibernaculum that has collapsed 😞😞. However, I always carry on and try to do my best to give each critter a better chance than it would otherwise have had – and that goes for the WA cat.

I've read all this in isolation but to see the collective in a single paragraph just makes me so grateful that there are people like yourself out there that are SO devoted to the well-being of an entire plethora of creatures.

You have my total respect.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 16-Oct-14 10:50 PM GMT

More fantastic LTBs Pauline – the one in the yellow flower is brill 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Oct-14 03:12 PM GMT

Thank you for the advice Andy – and great photos as usual 🎁

I have taken your advice Pete (as always) and the pot is now outside, under cover, in protective mesh cage. My concern now is, I know for a fact that there are snails/slugs eggs in the soil that I failed to remove so I am effectively locking the cat in with its predators 😞. The PH cats come to mind – you will recall it was slugs getting them at night. At that time Vince's advice was to isolate the plant but I am not sure how to do that. The sleeve I have is way too large and there are numerous stems of honeysuckle growing across the whole of the pot – I need a demo video 😂. As a temporary measure I have used cling film to wrap round the pot and over the soil carefully weaving it between the stems but I am not sure how/if that will affect the plant. Alternatively, perhaps someone could suggest a means of safely destroying these eggs without harming plant or cat? Incidentally, slugs are having a great year, even coming into the house 😞. Yesterday I removed in excess of 50 from my potting shed 🤪

I'm glad you are enjoying the LTB shots Paul as I am about to post a few more 😊 Thank you for your advice which seems to be the general consensus.

That's really kind of you Mike. You've seen how it is here 😞 The good news is I am back in my own bed (just getting up a few times to check on them) AND I have hot water 😊😊. Life is looking good. How long either of those situations continue remains to be seen 😂 Don't forget, if you and Cathy are passing

Wow! That has got to be one of the best comments I have ever received David 😊😞 I'm thinking of printing it out and pinning it up in the kitchen so I can read it when things get bleak. Thank you so much.

Thank you Wurzel – the flower is a nasturtium. Please tell me when you are getting bored Wurzel as the LTB are all I have to post at the moment. Hope you like these ones. A big thank you to Nick L who kindly brought the flowers as mine have died back.









Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 17-Oct-14 04:06 PM GMT

You could try copper slug tape – e.g. [http://www.amazon.co.uk/Slugit%C2%AE-co ... B001DRJNSY](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Slugit%C2%AE-co...B001DRJNSY) – wrapped around the pot, where they would need to climb up.

From reviews it works for some people but not others. I do use it myself. but for electrical purposes not slugs. The description on Amazon about static charge playing some role is rubbish, since copper is a good conductor and cannot hold a charge.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 17-Oct-14 05:43 PM GMT

You sound like you've taken a lot onto yourself Pauline, don't let it get you down , you can only do your best with the animals and butterflies I just wish I'd your patience , all the best and hope the animals are doing ok Goldie 😊

PS I go out when it's dark at night that seems to be the way to catch slugs and snails and give them a taste of salt they soon melt a way 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 19-Oct-14 08:02 PM GMT

I can't get enough of these LTBs as I've never seen one – wasn't in the know last year until too late 😊 The open wing shots are fantastic showing the black eyes 😊 Keep em coming...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Oct-14 12:36 PM GMT

Thank you for the suggestion Mike – I shall give it a try.

Please don't worry about me Goldie – I am used to dealing with all this stuff. I have appreciated all your comments this season but I am kidding myself if I imagine I have the time to keep my diary going 😊

I am so sorry you didn't get to see these these lovely butterflies in the wild Wurzel but I shall end my diary for this season with a few more images of them – just for you 😊





Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 20-Oct-14 12:54 PM GMT

An excellent *finale* to the season, Pauline. All the best with your Winter activities.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 20-Oct-14 07:21 PM GMT

Lovely photographs Pauline, good luck with the animals do let us know if the Rabbit and Fox's are ok, we'll miss you Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 20-Oct-14 10:32 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline they were cracking too 😊 See you at the Social hopefully 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 21-Oct-14 12:23 AM GMT

Glad things are not too bad Pauline and hope that all works out really well 😊 The animals in your care are lucky to have you 😊 If we are in your area we will call in.

Mike and Cathy x

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 21-Oct-14 08:09 PM GMT

Some lovely series of photos to end the season with Pauline 😊

I hope everything goes well for you and all in your care.

All the best,

Neil.