

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jan-14 10:07 PM GMT

2014



Happy 2014 everyone, here's hoping it brings plenty of butterflies 😊 I'm on one for the year so far, good old Bob is still sleeping away 😊
January



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Jan-14 10:34 PM GMT

Where's the Grayling?

I've found and photographed Graylings over three successive seasons and they have a firm place in my Top 10, partly for their stunning camouflage but mainly for the challenge that they present. I've visited the same site for all three years now and as I cross the cricket ground and start the walk down the hill I scan for everything be it Moth, Bee or Butterfly – just in case. I've found that Graylings are like Buses in that I can walk across the heath for an hour without seeing anything and then once I've found one I know that another couple will follow shortly. It's almost as if the initial (usually fortuitous) sighting realigns your focus, scales fall from your eyes and then you're tuned in to observe Graylings. Even then once you've found one you daren't take your eye off it because the slightest glance sideways and they've disappeared from view. There have been times when I know exactly where the butterfly is yet it becomes lost from sight. A few stealthy steps forward and it's still invisible and then it explodes from the precise spot that you've been staring at for 10 minutes without actually seeing it. They really are fantastic creatures. 😊

When I first encountered them three seasons ago I put them in a self published book and made reference to playing "Where's the Grayling?" and this year I put some shots aside in a folder ready for the winter months when I thought it would be good fun and we'd need some cheering up to get through the drear and cold. I got beaten to the punch by Maximus so I've left it a good while since his last selection. Hopefully these will keep our observational skills sharp so come next season we'll be on top form!

Some easy ones to start...



Slightly trickier...





Harder still





Good luck!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 03-Jan-14 10:57 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Great last few posts. As for the spot the butterfly photos, got them all inside a minute, 😊 apart from the last one. I thought, no way is there a Grayling in that picture, and there is `nt, but there is the slightest edge of a wing tip in there. You naughty boy. 😂😂😂

I hope you and your family have an excellent New Year.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Jan-14 11:38 AM GMT

Shhhhhhhh you'll give the game away 😊 Cheers Nick for your other kind comments 😊 the butterflies are harder to find on an iPod touch screen 😊

Have a goodun (New Year that is)

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 04-Jan-14 12:37 PM GMT

Yes, that last one is a bit of a cheat!!!

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 04-Jan-14 05:42 PM GMT

You tease, Wurzel. I think any future 'spot the...' competitions will have to include WHOLE butterflies! 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Jan-14 10:10 PM GMT

Sorry Nick 😊 – in my defence it wasn't really cheating, just bending the rules as much as I could 😊

Fair point David from now on I'll keep it kosher 😊

Can you see what I see?

While waiting for Philzoid or someone else to start the Multi-species thread I started looking through my shots to find a few ready. In the process I found a few which are very similar to my "Find the Grayling" series so I thought I'd compile them to give us all something to do during the down season. Each shot has a range of species and a number of butterflies so get your eyes peeled. Oh and I haven't done any sneaky cropping this time 😊

To get started...

1.

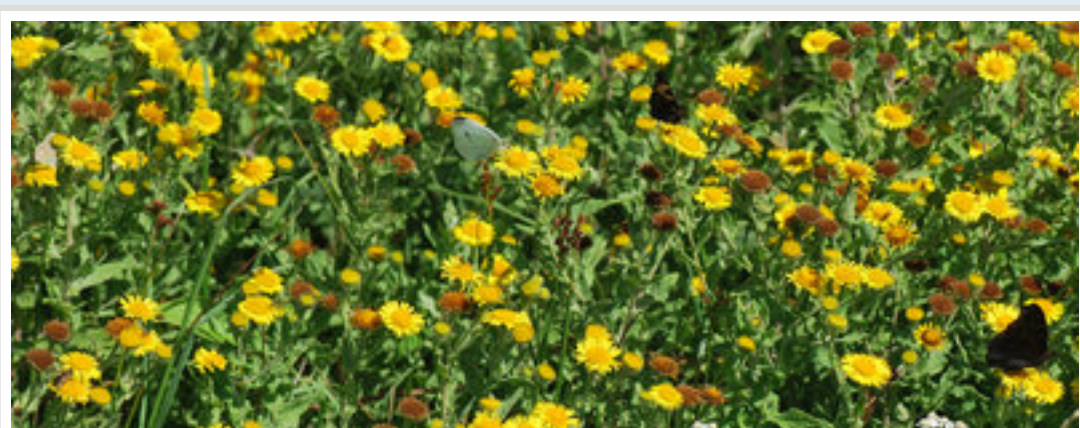


Slightly harder...

2.



3.



4.



5.



Tricksy...

6.



7.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 06-Jan-14 07:19 PM GMT

Sorry Wurzel, I didn't mean to spoil your winter 'Where's the Grayling?' compilation 😞 Its interesting that you produced a self published book on this subject, what a great idea 😊 Their camouflage is fantastic and I too have followed a Grayling in flight, watched it land, made my way to the spot it landed and have seen nothing 😞 Thinking I must have been mistaken, on my first step forward a Grayling explodes into the air, from the very spot i've been looking at for the last five minutes and leaves me cursing 😞 They really are beautiful Butterflies 😊 Nice compilation by the way 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 06-Jan-14 07:51 PM GMT

1. Meadow Brown, Brown Hairstreak and a sneaky female Common Blue.
2. Two Peacocks, a Meadow Brown and (mainly due to it being of similar size to the adjacent Peacock) a Silver Washed Fritillary.
3. Brown Argus, Small White, Small Tort, Peacock.
4. Red Admiral, 2 Small Torties, one airborne Large White, Peacock and....I'll go for a Comma with wings almost shut on the right hand bloom (the cream coloured legs are my main reason for this choice).
5. Tortoiseshell, Peacock, 2 male Meadow Browns and a Hedge Brown.
6. Two Torties, Peacock and a female Meadow Brown at left.
7. Tortoiseshell, Peacock, 2 Meadow Browns foreground right, two probable Small Whites in the background and what appears to be a female Hedge Brown part obscured to the left....oh, and a bumble bee!

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 06-Jan-14 09:13 PM GMT

I can see a fifth individual on no.3 - left hand side between the Blue/Brown Argus and the Small White. Very fluttery - a Silver-Y moth?

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 06-Jan-14 09:26 PM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

I can see a fifth individual on no.3 - left hand side between the Blue/Brown Argus and the Small White. Very fluttery - a Silver-Y moth?

Good call, Dave. That's a nailed-on Silver Y!

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 06-Jan-14 09:56 PM GMT

Excellent stuff Wurzel 😊

In addition to Davids list there is another Small Tortoiseshell in No5

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 06-Jan-14 10:05 PM GMT

"jackz432r" wrote:

Excellent stuff Wurzel 😊

In addition to Davids list there is another Small Tortoiseshell in No5

You're right, Jack! Wings shut just right of centre. Well spotted.

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 06-Jan-14 11:17 PM GMT

Wow, imagine seeing so many species in such small areas!! 2013 was a great year.

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 08-Jan-14 11:01 PM GMT

Without conferring

Difficult opener 🤔

- 1). Meadow Brown; Hairstreak (White Letter?); Female Common Blue
- 2). Peacock (2); Silver-washed Fritillary and Meadow Brown
- 3). Common Blue; Small Tort; Small White and Peacock
- 4). Small Tort; Peacock Large White
- 5). Gatekeeper (3); Small Tort and peek-a-boo Peacock
- 6). Meadow Brown (male); Small Tort (2) and Peacock
- 7). White in flight; Small Tort; Peacock and two Green-veined Whites

Great Fun 😄

Graylings are one of my top 10 too. The number of times I've stood and stared hunched over the where they've landed only only to concede as my patience to runs out or my back to gives way. Crafty characters Graylings. 😄

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Jan-14 11:29 PM GMT

No worries Mike – it was only a brief mention in passing in my first attempt at writing a book and there was some other book featuring a Red and White bedecked person that you had to find before that 😊😊

Cheers Nick it's one of the advantages of living down here in the soft south 😊😄

Cheers David, Jack, Dave and Philzoid I hope it helped pass the time. 😄 Here are the ones that I can see...mind you there could be more in there somewhere.

1. Meadow Brown, Brown Hairstreak and Common Blue
2. Peacock (2), Meadow Brown and Silver Washed Frit
3. Brown Argus, Silver Y, Small White, Small Tort and Peacock
4. Red Admiral, Small Tort (and a second hiding near the bottom of the shot), Peacock, Large White and Comma
5. Hedge Brown, Peacock, Small Tort (2) and Meadow Brown (2)
6. Meadow Brown, Hedge Brown, Peacock, Small Tort (2) and what I think is a Chalkhill Blue on the right hand side, level with the Peacock and side on
7. Small Tort, Hedge Brown, Meadow Brown (2), White (small? X2), Peacock and a Blue with wings almost closed between the Bumble Bee and the whites.

Out and about...

So I don't get ridiculously behind with my PD like I did at the end of last year I thought I better get on and post this one whilst I was at least in the same fortnight. Over the Christmas period the weather was pretty bad bordering on atrocious but there were the occasional dry spells – sometimes only an hour or so long, so I would then make a quick trip to town to get those things we needed to get us through. It also had the added bonus of seeing what was about although photography was difficult due to the dreary weather.

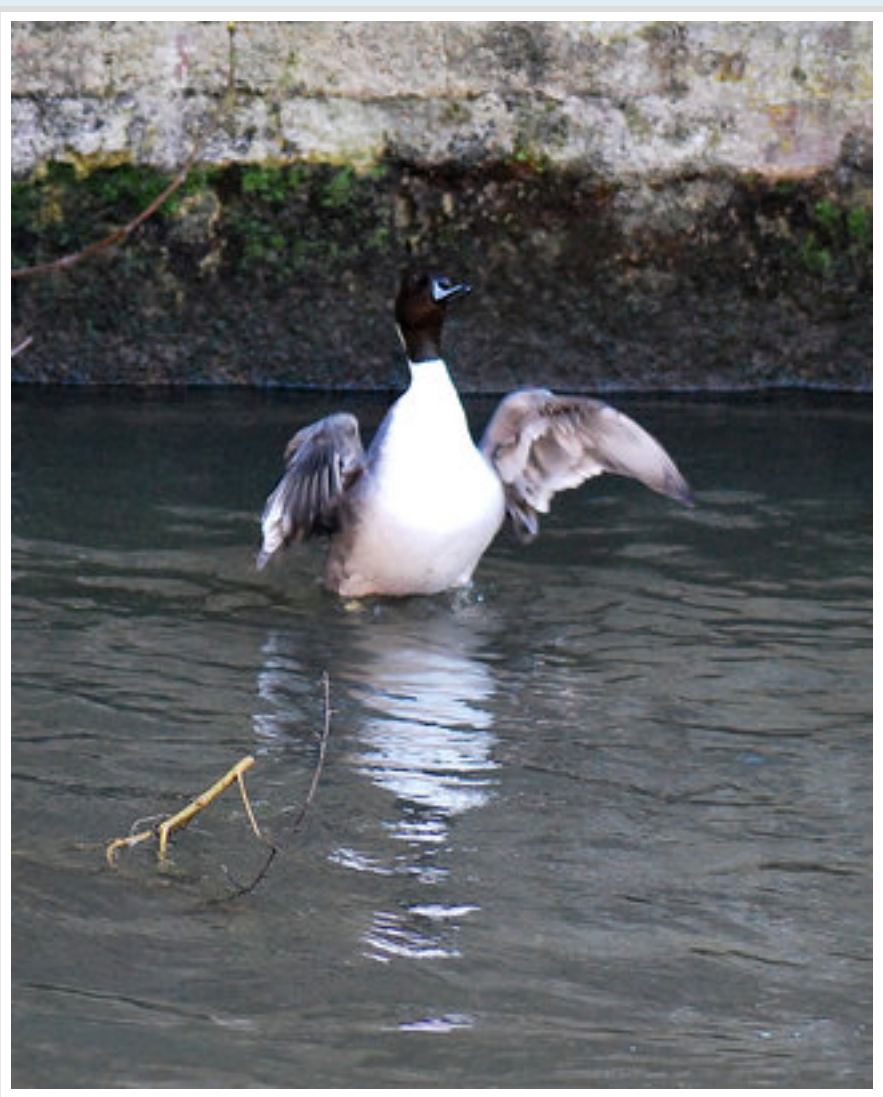
As there were no butterflies around (save for Bob) I trained my lens on the local avian population, setting my camera to 'Sports' mode as I've found that this seems to do the trick with such mobile targets.

On the first trip out I followed the river through the Maltings up towards the library stopping on the way to scan across for Water Voles that frequent this part of the river as well as the usual Black Headed and the less often seen Lesser Black Backed Gulls. Up near the library I scanned up the river as this is a good little area which has previously held Little Grebes and a Wood Duck amongst the Coots, Moorhens, Swans and Mallard. It proved to be a hotspot again as this time a Pintail was present skulking on the other side of the river just within reach of my lens.





Another multi-species shot



The thing about these unexpected sightings in urban environments is that the birds are often closer than they would normally be and so you can really appreciate the subtle markings. In the case of the Pintail I'd never really noticed the greenish tinge on the side of the usually chocolate head or the chestnut. Nor had I appreciated the wonderful patterning along the flanks, from a distance or through a scope it normally just looks grey but here the intricate black and white stood out. It's great to be able to soak up the details.

On a second trip out along the same route I relocated the Pintail slightly further upstream and by crossing over one of the footbridges I managed to get just above it. I was just lining up my shot when some complete t@\$£r chucked a bottle into the river and it set off. Luckily I was in 'Sports' mode again so a few shots, a quick remonstrations at the miscreant and I managed to locate it hiding out in the foliage downstream slightly.



Later that afternoon I took my younger daughter to the park and all the while I was swinging the swing I kept an eye over at the flood meadows and the gulls circling. Once my little girl was all swung out we strolled back home via a circular route so I could have a closer look at the gulls. There was another couple of Herring and Less Backs as well as the ubiquitous Black Headed Gulls. The former were staying further away out on the meadow, using the odd fence post as a perching spot whilst the latter were coming down to bread thrown to the ducks.





On my final trip the light was just superb and everything was shimmering and sparkling in the sun. Up by the library the Pintail had finally come out into the decent light and was also on the right side of the river for me to get a few closer shots which showed off the lovely markings on the bill to good effect. I also managed to capture one of the balletic poses on 'film' as it stretched itself out. As I wandered homewards I watched a group of Mallards braving the raging torrent on the other side of the Mill, thinking better of it and then clambering back up the bank pretty smartish. The waters were flowing faster than I've ever seen before and at times the churned mass looked like ice as it foamed and boiled billowing bubbles everywhere.





Only a few more months now!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 10-Jan-14 01:44 PM GMT

A great post Wurzel and a great way to spend a winter's day outdoors. Love the poseur Pintail shots 😊

Hope the remostration didn't land you in any trouble 😬

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 10-Jan-14 05:21 PM GMT

Pin-sharp images, Wurzel. Lovely stuff!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Jan-14 10:03 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 I didn't get into any strife over the remonstrations, I mean I only questioned whether he would like to try "sex and travel" 😊
Cheers David for your kind comment – it's all in the light I reckon 😊

Out and about some more...

I've used the expression "what a difference a week makes" or various versions of it many times but just recently it's been more a case of "what difference a week makes? Absolutely nothing!" After getting my Pintail shots a little over a week ago I took a little walk to the park with my girls on the Sunday and there was water everywhere. The water meadows were just water, most of the paths were submerged and the slow, clear shallow river of the summer was a raging torrent. Luckily there was one path to the park which was slightly higher than the others and the park itself formed a little island. Once they'd had a swing or three I left them in my wife's hands so I could have a quick mooch.



Out on the water meadows there were a couple of Lesser and a Great Black Backed in amongst the usual gull roost. The Mallards were sheltering in the slower currents along the remaining vegetation but out in the middle of the meadow was something different. As I strained my eyes in the gloom I could make out a streamlined grey body with a white rump patch and the head was a chestnut red, a female Goosander. Further along path (I say path, I mean remaining stretch of non submerged ground) I saw a second darting along the river, bobbing amongst the torrents and eddies like a white water raft. This was my first record of Goosander at Lizzie Gardens and what made it more remarkable is that if I give the county recorder a grid reference it'll be for the middle of a field! 🤪





This weekend things were very much the same – same jobs, park visit, same torrents on the river and same floods everywhere. The only real difference was the timing of our visit, just as the afternoon sun was on the turn. It had been a beautiful clear sunny day and as the sun fell the water started to glow with pinks and ambers. In this light even the usually ugly Black Headed Gulls look lovely.



Last year we had a really long and cold winter with spring not arriving properly until almost May and once they'd caught up the butterflies were fantastic. But should we be concerned this year? Will the floods have destroyed larvae, pupae and habitats? It's been quite mild as well which is good news for parasites and bad for their host species isn't it? I await the spring with baited breath...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 12-Jan-14 10:15 PM GMT

Just doing some catching up Wurzel, nice couple of posts 😊

I know what you mean with the 'different day, same stuff' type comments, this weekend for me was a bit of a re-run of last weekend but in my case it was catching up on stuff around the house 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Jan-14 10:37 PM GMT

Cheers Neil for your kind comments 😊 January and February have always been the same since I've been into butterflies, but catching up on those jobs means that I've already earned two trips out during the season in Brownie Points 😊 Just don't let on to my wife, she'll make me go out birding to use them up now 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Jan-14 12:12 AM GMT

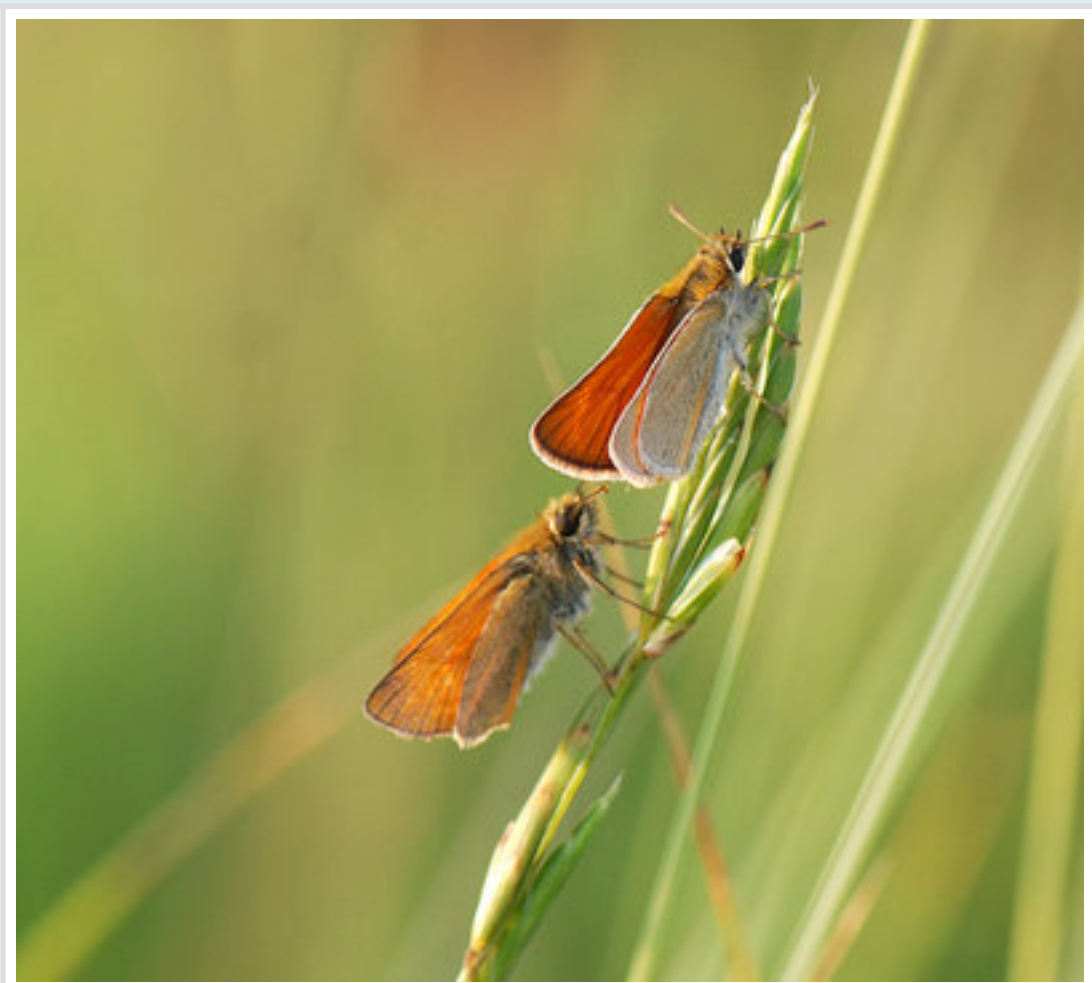
End of Year Tally 2013

Over the past couple of years I have tried to complete retrospectives of the seasons sightings. First I wrote a couple of self published books (one as my attempt at an ID guide/tick list and the other as a Site Guide) and last year I hit upon the idea of a look back, group by group, species by species to remember the highlights, the low points and consider their fortunes over the passing year. It also gave me the opportunity to show case some of my other favourite shots of the various species that I'd taken so that I didn't clog up the Species Specific Favourites thread. Most importantly I really enjoyed working on it and it kept my busy with butterflies for a few months during the dead season.

So this year rather than working on another book I thought I'd carry on my idea from last year hence the start of my Group Posts. Much of my commentary on how well a species has done is based not on hard statistical data but on gut feeling and more of a general sense. That being said this year I can make comparisons with last year which is an improvement. The other thing is that last year I placed the Duke in with the Fritillaries only as a nod to its historical common name whereas this year I've placed the Duke in its own group before the Blues as they're the only representative of their group, the Metalmarks, in Europe.

Any way better get started...

The Skippers



1 Small Skipper, 5th July The Devenish

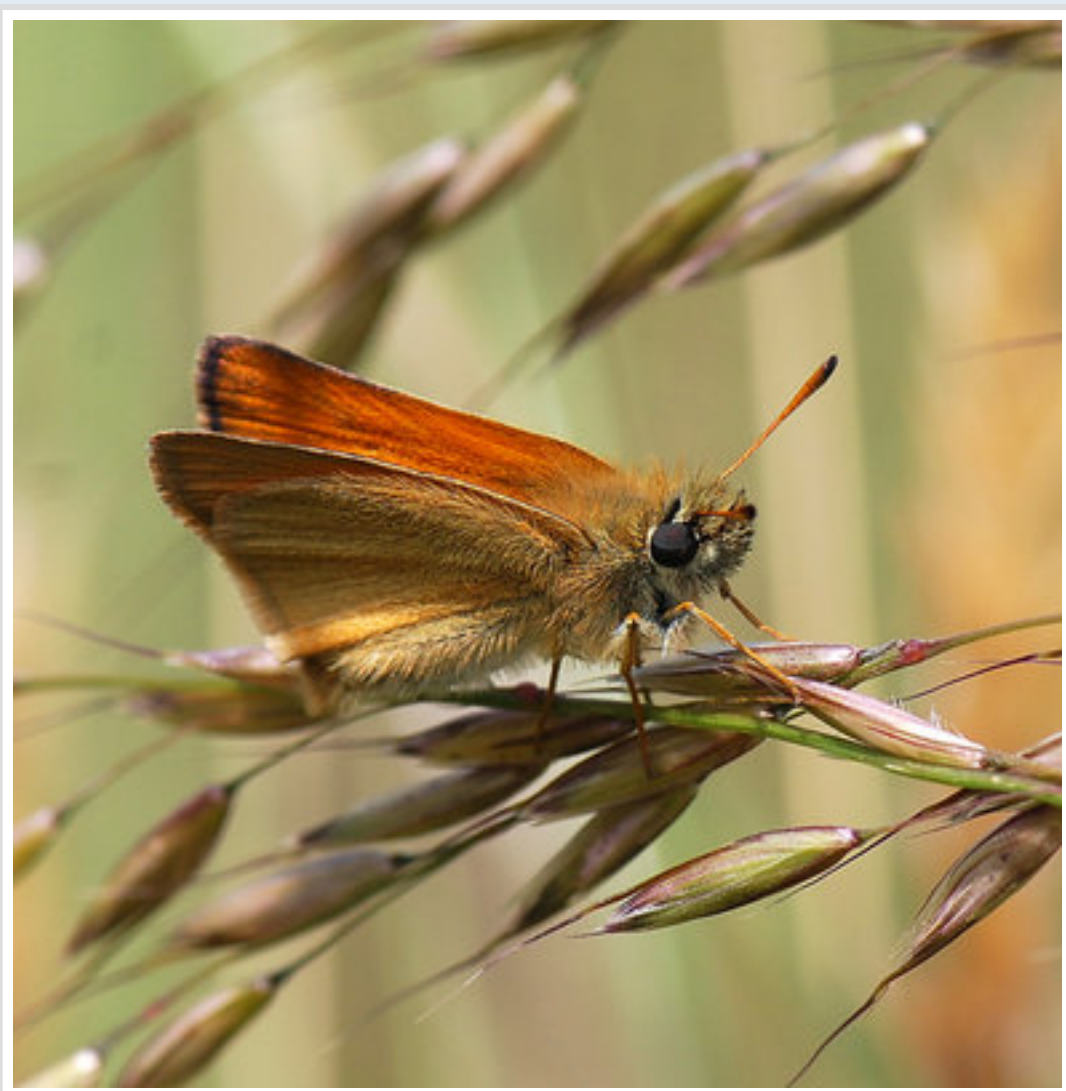
After a delayed and slow start to the year seemed to have caught up by time Small Skippers were around as my first this year was a couple of days earlier than last year. In terms of numbers they seemed to be comparable with last year. My first of the year was very fleeting as it was on a very brief

stop-off at the Devenish. So fleeting in fact that I only got 2 photos! Luckily I located the small population at Middle Street, a short walk along the Town Path from my house and so I could get my fill of this delightful little butterfly. I think I'll need to spend a little more time here next year to supplement Larkhill and at least I won't get into trouble for being late home...



2 Essex Skipper, 10th July Larkhill

I felt a lot better about the plight of the Essex Skipper this year. 2012 seemed to be a tricky year for them with wet spells during their main emergence and the wet weather hampering my visits so much so that I almost totally missed them at Five Rivers. Yet this year they bounced back which I had hoped that they would and they were at all their usual haunts around me including Five Rivers. I also found them at Lulworth Cove which meant that on one visit I saw four different species of Skippers, a regular Smessex-fest and very sore knees from checking 'ink-pads'. This was totally unlike my first of the year as it sat up almost at head height showing off the ink-pads for all to see.



3 Lulworth Skipper, 1st August Lulworth Cove

The main difference for me this year when looking for Lulworths was that as I was heading to Dorset on a camping holiday in early August I didn't make a visit earlier which gave me a skewed impression as both Bindon Hill and the Cove itself seem to be better as early sites. Perhaps I should have visited Durlston this year as the timing should have meant that they were in full emergence? Still lesson learned for next time.

Another lesson learned was how gregarious they are. Last year I was so enthralled to be seeing them for the first time I somehow managed to focus on one at a time. Whereas this year I noticed their behaviour more and they seemed to group together like hoodlums, ganging up on other butterflies that were using the same nectar sources.

My general feeling is that they weren't as numerous this year as last. I am aware that they were still being seen at Durlston into late August (a hell of a time frame for such a small species) but I think that perhaps they suffered from the slow start to the season and never really caught up? Over successive years it seems that they've been emerging earlier and earlier and so perhaps this year they got caught out? It'll be interesting to see if the cooler, later spring this year will mean a later emergence next year? Lulworth Skippers what a question causing species.



4 Silver Spotted Skipper, 10th August Stockbridge Down

This year I somehow managed to see my first Silver Spots on exactly the same day as last year! I would have liked to have seen them earlier in their emergence when they were more lime green but I was otherwise engaged in Wales so had to wait a bit to get to see them. Still they didn't disappoint and whilst they weren't all exactly fresh there were still some pretty tidy individuals around at Stockbridge Down. Was it just me or did they arrive on the scene earlier than usual? I'd only just seen my first Grayling and there were reports of Silver Spots rolling in! I think things had caught up after a relatively dry and warm summer.

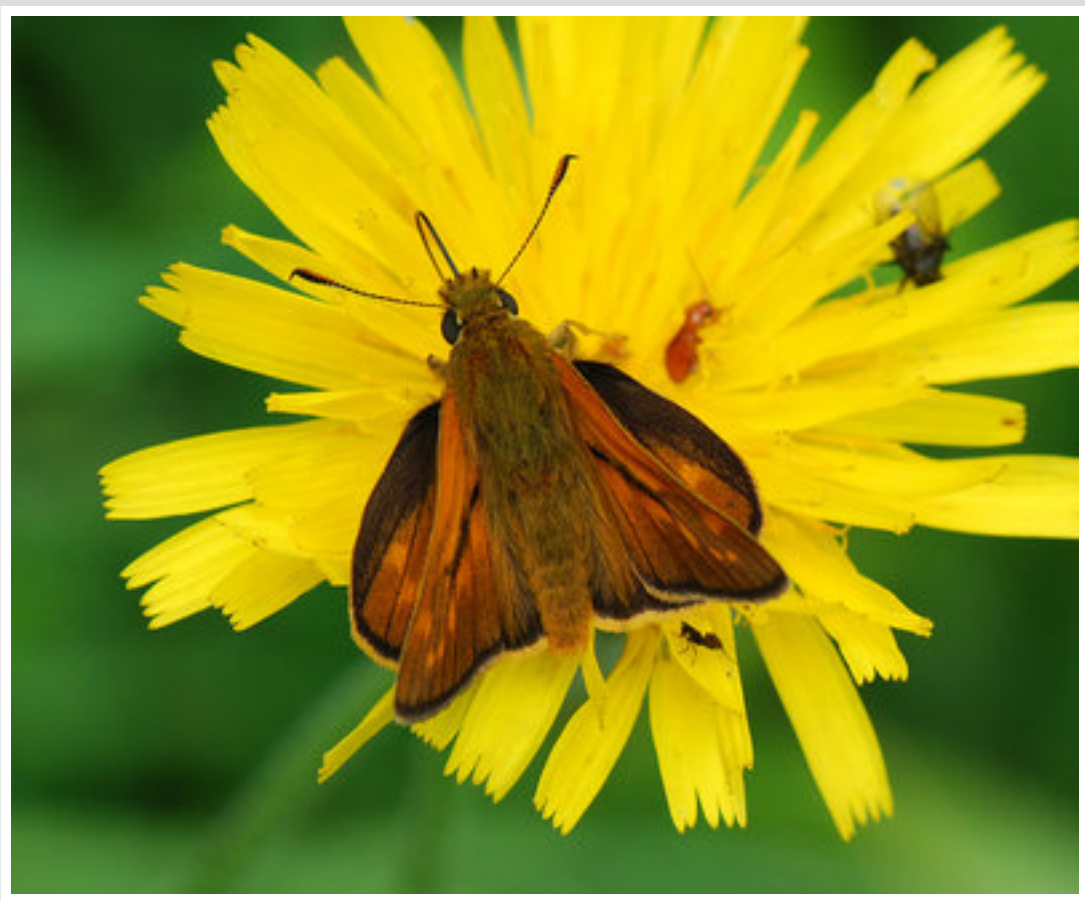
One thing I'm fairly confident about is that for me they had a good year and I saw more at Stockbridge Down than ever before and also over a much wider area of the site. Over the last couple of visits/years I've mainly seen them on the short cropped turf about 100 metres along the path. This year I saw them all over the site including my first ovipositing female.

My best memory however was stumbling over a Silver Spot at Martin Down. My first ever Silver Spots were from here a few years back but over the last couple of years despite searching and searching on numerous trips I didn't locate a single individual. So to rediscover them purely by chance was fantastic and may be why I felt they did well?



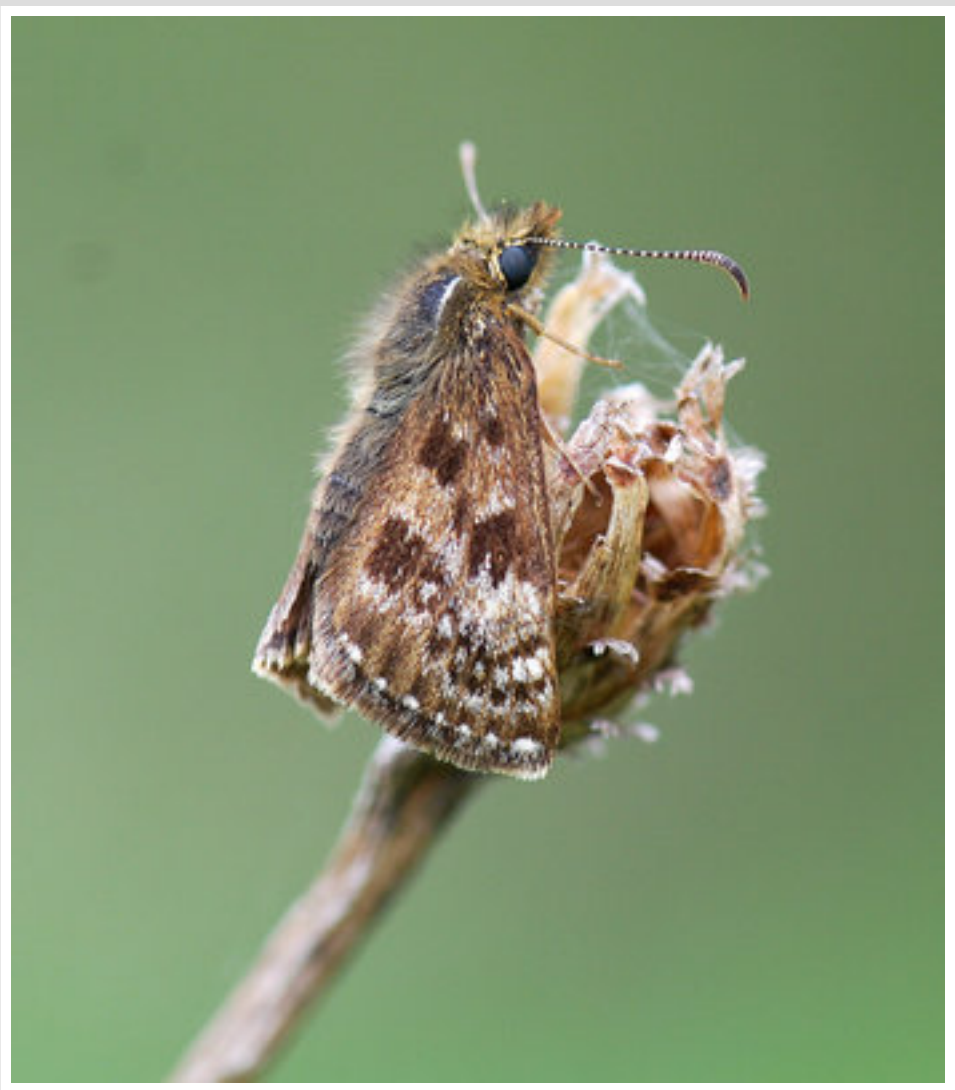
5 Large Skipper, 17th June Larkhill

They seemed to emerge later than last year, possibly about a fortnight later? I saw them pretty much everywhere I went including Middle Street but I had a gut feeling that they weren't quite as numerous. The main time I noticed this was when visiting Bentley Wood. Last year, whilst walking the rides, practically every movement ended with a little golden blob appearing on the foliage. That wasn't the way this year. Perhaps it was just at that site as they seemed to be okay elsewhere or this could be due to my observing behaviour? After the initial find I must confess that I kind of ignored this species unless one was right there and in my face. There was often something else around that was demanding my attention or was more accessible and so perhaps my 'gut feeling' is due to me giving them short shrift?



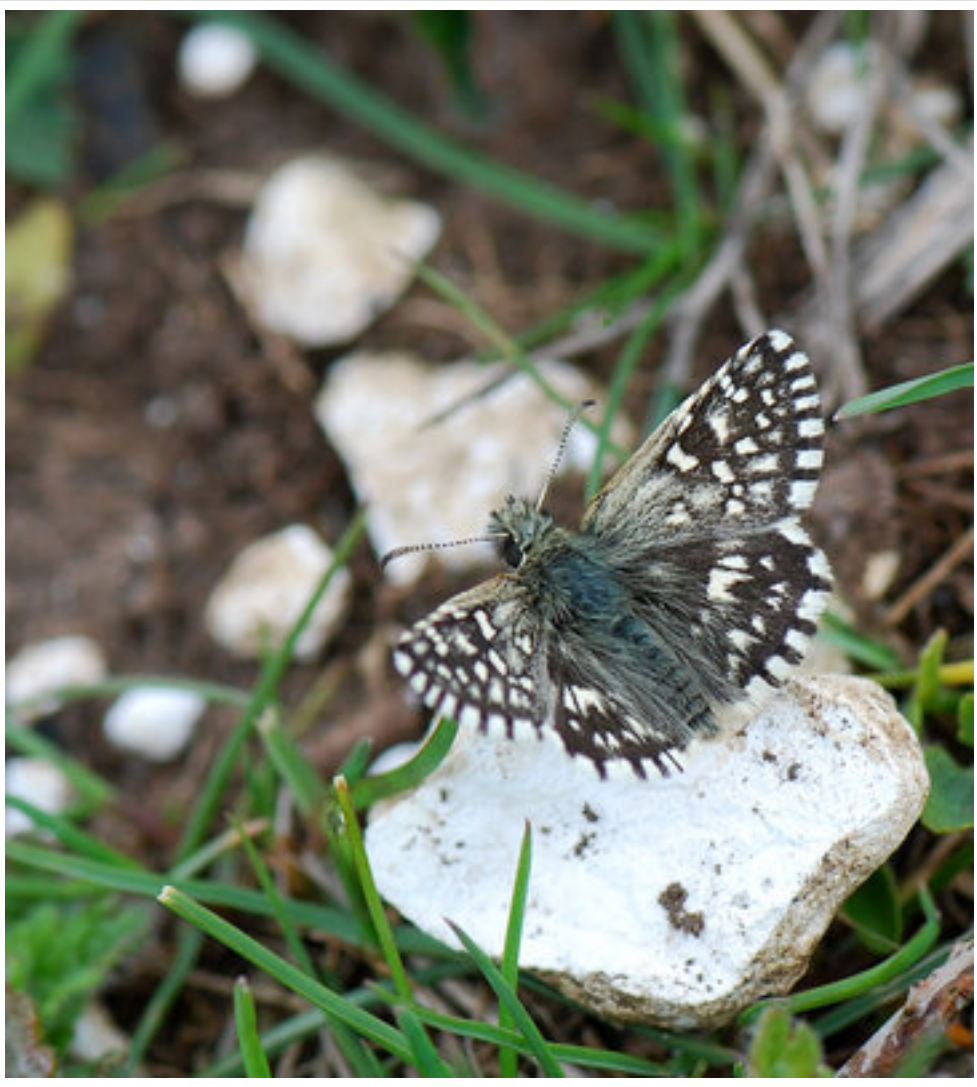
6 Dingy Skipper, 19th May Martin Down

Dingy Skippers were only a week behind compared to last year so perhaps the butterflies were slightly catching up after the slow start. They seemed to be having a good year as I saw them at the usual range of sites as well as at some of the new sites that I visited. My general feeling was that after the first initial emergence they seemed to hang around for longer this year. Even if this hunch is wrong I definitely saw plenty. My Dingy highlight was finding them in the moth like pose when they look like they're almost cuddling the flower heads and the low point was not seeing one at Larkhill. Although saying that I haven't seen them here over the last few years so perhaps the habitat isn't up to scratch or perhaps it's too far from other populations.



7 Grizzled Skipper, 19th May Martin Down

The season started pretty slowly this year with very few sightings until the beginning of May and so I wasn't surprised when Grizzlies didn't make a show until later than last year, almost a fortnight behind in fact... However despite this late start they seemed to do well with good numbers at Martin Down, sightings at Bentley Wood as well as sightings at a couple of my new sites including The Devenish. I was also dead chuffed to relocate another pair at Five Rivers for the second year on the trot so I'm hoping that they should be there this coming year. However the star for me was the first Grizzlie for Larkhill.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 15-Jan-14 04:02 PM GMT

Some lovely images there, Wurzel, particularly your first Dingy.

Although I'm looking at last year's butterflies it's having the effect of making me yearn even more for THIS year's first emergences!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Jan-14 09:52 PM GMT

Cheers David 😊 Sorry to be increasing your yearning but console yourself that good things come to those who wait, last year was a great example of that as the summer emergents did really well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 16-Jan-14 08:25 PM GMT

Great stuff Wurzel and interesting observations 😊

Essex Skippers also seemed to do well around my patch with me seeing more at a couple of sites where I knew they occurred plus finding them for the first time at a new site for me.

Whilst in Dorset in both 2012 and 2013 I have found good numbers of Lulworth Skippers still on the wing at Durlston well into the first week of September. I know that Durlston is a known late site for these but like you say, its a hell of a flight period.

My impression for Large Skippers was that there were fewer on the wing at any one time but they seemed to be around for longer. No actual evidence as such for this, just my feeling around my local patch.

Looking forward to some more 😊

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 17-Jan-14 07:13 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Love the photos in your last few posts, 😊 especially the group shots of the Gulls, the 2nd to last Grizzled Skipper, and the Pintails. Keep them coming. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 17-Jan-14 08:19 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel love your Pic's of the Skipper's, 🍷🍷 I've yet to see the Essex Skipper, Lulworth, and Grizzled, we plan to visit Bently Wood this year looking for the Purple Em and Silver Washed Frit which I've not had a good shot of yet, hope July to August is good for this visit that's when we plan to go.

I'd also love to visit Dorset again, may be we'll have to pick a time for that as well Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 18-Jan-14 11:53 AM GMT

Utterly Skippertastic wurzel! 😊 My favourite one is the Grizzlie on the leaf, they can be tricky to photograph at times.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Jan-14 11:34 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 It will be interesting to see if my gut ties in with your gut over some key species like Red Admirals etc

Cheers Nick 😊 It'll be difficult now I', back at work and entering the next 'busy time' but I'll try to keep getting out there 😊

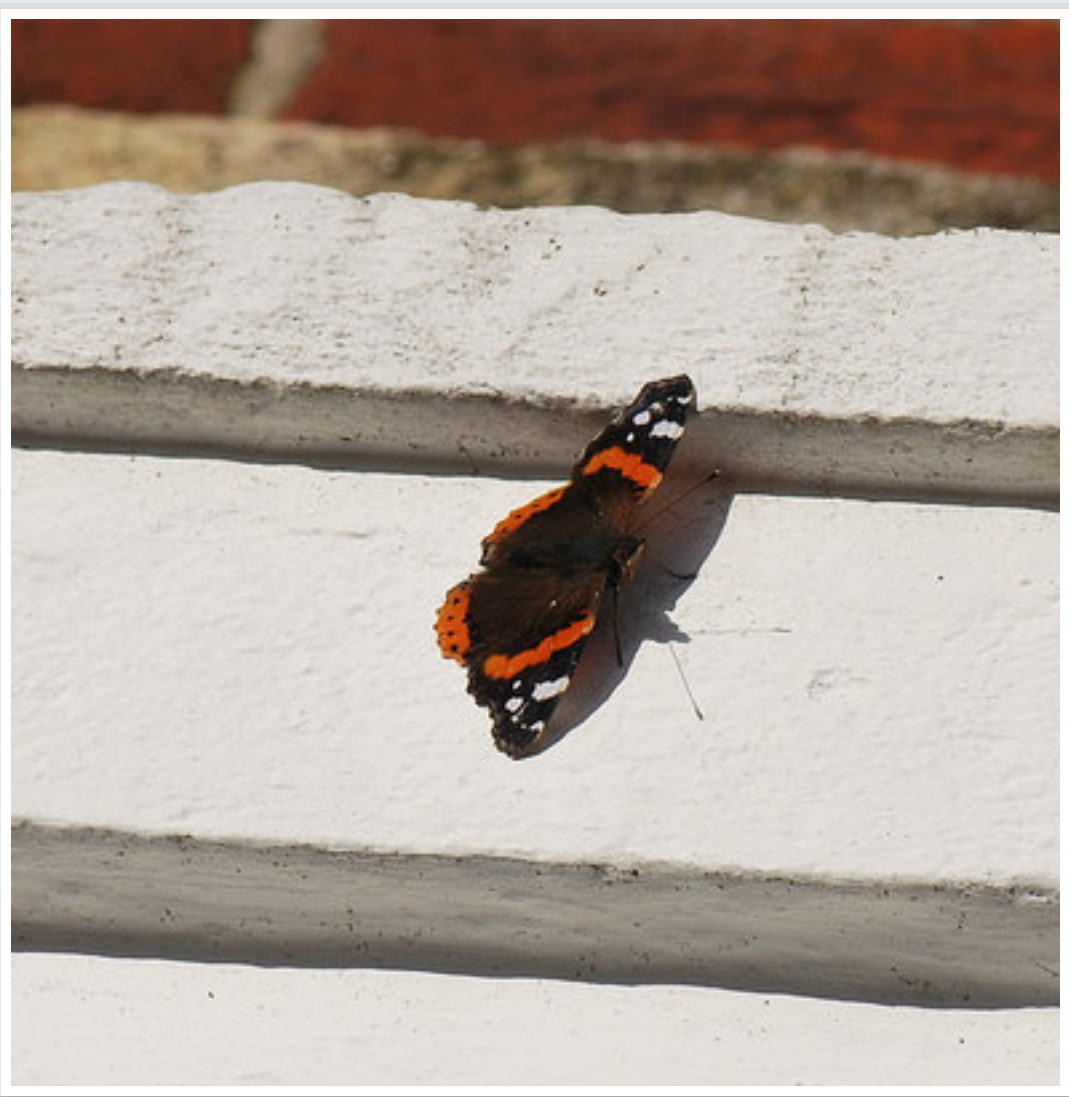
Cheers Goldie 😊 I might see you at Bentley then, I'll have a faded green (lucky) Australia hat on and the password is 'His Nibbs likes Bad Boy Shrimp paste' 🤪😊.

Cheers Rex 😊 I know what you mean about Grizzlies, little supersonic balls of fluff they are 🤪😊

Out and about take 3

After what felt like an eternity the sun finally shone on, appropriately enough, Sunday. As the day drew on I gazed ever more longingly outside and for some reason I just knew that if I went out I would find a butterfly. After the usual chores and work my chance finally came and having dropped my younger daughter and my wife at her sisters for an hour or two my older daughter and I set out for a stroll and a chat. We'd only got as far as the next street down when looking up I spotted a dark mark on the wall that looked out of place. As we got nearer its triangular shape strongly suggested it was a butterfly and then as we drew level it became clear that that was indeed what it was. In fact it was a Red Admiral so doubling my species tally for 2014. 😊

After a few shots it shifted position slightly and started walking towards the edge of the wall, like it was tracking the moving sun and trying to stay in the warmest of its rays. It seemed to be none the worse for wear as I couldn't see any tears on its wings so we left it on its way hoping that should the surprisingly warm sun disappear, it would be able to find its way to a handy crevice.



We skirted the park and had a quick look at the wooden bridge and the flooded Town Path before carrying on to Fisherton Mill. I was hoping to find a few Reed Buntings in range of my lens but the best I could find were distant Goldfinches and various hybrid feral ducks. My daughter was amazed to see gardens submerged but was equally fascinated by the Catkins a reminder of how mild this winter has been.



We then headed back home taking a brief detour to follow the path round to gaze over the submerged meadows. The water still looks as high and the rivers carving past were visible only because of eddies marking the boundary between the fast flowing and deeper waters and the languid and trapped flood.



You know it's bad when even the ducks seek high ground!



After some time admiring the glinting sun we headed for home and behind us the clouds started to build and the temperature noticeably dropped. Unsurprisingly the Red Admiral had gone but it had done its job and lifted both our spirits. How much longer until spring?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 21-Jan-14 12:03 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Lovely shots. 😊 Good to see you have got your second butterfly of the year, but have you noticed the extra white spots on the forewings outside the orange bands, towards the body and, also on the orange bands themselves. Looks like you have an aberration. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Jan-14 12:00 AM GMT

Cheers Nick 😊 To be honest I hadn't noticed that it was an aberrant as I was just pleased to see my second butterfly in January, one to add to the aberrant folder then 😊

The Whites



8 Clouded Yellow, 10th August Stockbridge Down

It was with growing fascination that I kept seeing Clouded Yellows mentioned on the sightings board, fantastic photos in various PD's and having general murmurings of "it'll be one of those years". Having only ever seen one of these lovely canary butterflies before I started looking more intently whenever I saw whites and with each trip I tried to kerb my growing impatience.

Eventually it happened, my second ever Clouded Yellow. I was at Stockbridge Down when a mustard rocket suddenly dropped down into the long grass. After a careful stalk it was revealed to me and I doubled my life tally of Cloudies. In fact by the end of the visit I'd actually quadrupled it! I then went on to see them at various sites. Martin Down held at least 5 on one visit and I could see at least 3 on subsequent visits too. Then there were a couple at my Duke site, 3 or 4 at Alners Gorse (which provide the best shots) and one at Mottisfont which was one of my favourites as I got to see a Cloudy with 2 other generations of Carters. Perhaps the most unusual sighting was on our return from Legoland. I was just stopping at the roundabout that led onto

the M3 when one flew across my bonnet!

My Cloudy folder has gone from a couple of shots of one individual to male and females, worn, in flight, backlit male and females, ovi-positing and eggs. I'm still missing a Helice but then perhaps in a few years time? I know that this was the first good Cloudy year that I've experienced but I'm not sure if it's a 'proper' cloudy year? I've read about "yellow clouds" and heard people recounting tales of fields of them so perhaps we are still to have the Cloudy year proper, this could just be the warm-up act, here's hoping.



9 Brimstone, 5th March Pewsey Vale School

I reckon number wise Brimstones did okay or at least as well as in previous years. I can't say that at any point I was concerned that I hadn't seen any. In fact they were present on pretty much every trip I made.

They were the second species of 2013 for me, a good few weeks earlier so bucking the trend of 2013 and I also saw one on my final day of sightings and this is why it's hard to fathom how they fared overall, they were always around and so easy to forget at times. Saying that there is one individual from 2013 that I don't think I'll ever forget and that was the basking male at Shipton Bellinger.



10 Large White, 1st May Pewsey Vale School

Late in arriving, quickly large in numbers and long lasting; the best way to sum up the Large Whites fortunes this year. At the risk of sounding yobbish in a mid90's style, they were having it Large in 2013.

Perhaps the most memorable Large White event was documented in my 'Favourite' posting for this species - the rescue of the LW from the 5 aside football pitch. I was also quite fortunate this year with the open wing shots probably because when they did start emerging the weather still wasn't brilliant and so it was possible to find them grounded and nectaring with wings slightly open. I recall reading somewhere that butterflies use their wings to reflect heat onto their thoraxes to raise the temperature for flight. So with the cooler temperatures and cloudier weather during emergence those open wing shots were slightly easier to come by.





11 Small White, 25th April Salisbury

Like most of the spring butterflies Small Whites were later emerging this year, by a little over a month in this case. Yet despite being late eventually they were in fantastic numbers and I was still seeing them into October. It was almost that as they were late arriving once here they cracked on with it and in a very short space of time they were ubiquitous. As they have multiple broods, up to 3, in a year this ubiquity really became apparent as there seemed to be an overlap between the first and second brood so there wasn't a noticeable early summer dip that I've experienced in previous years.

Reading back over this while thinking ahead it seems like the Small White is representative of a trend in population dynamics of the early spring species a bit like Punctuated Equilibrium. No Whites for ages and then all of a sudden loads and no more change for an extended time.





12 Green-veined White, 1st May Enford (pull in)

These followed the same pattern as mentioned above and again were about a month later than 2012. What I really noticed this year was the sexual dimorphism displayed on the under wing markings. I was lucky enough to add many species to my 'Copulating' folder this year including the GVW . When I observed the pair it was almost like two different species with the female much more heavily marked and more lemon tinged than the male. I know that females are spotted and more heavily marked on the upper surfaces so I guess that this also reflected on the underside. It could just be that the male was worn, but I found the difference quite striking.





13 Orange-tip, 1st May Enford (pull in)

The late start to spring meant that my first of the year was much later almost a month in fact. But once seen they were around pretty much everywhere I went and in reasonable numbers but I reckon probably slightly down on last year. Whilst I saw them in the usual areas and also at one or two new sites I didn't get nearly as many photos as last year. I think this came down to the weather. The spring of 2012 was early with a three week spell of very warm weather. This was great while it lasted but after that it became much cooler and wetter so those butterflies that had emerged had little choice but to sit it out and hope for a break. This meant that Orange-tips were relatively passive sometimes roosting in the same spot for a day or more at a time so photography was a doodle. Thus year once spring had eventually sprung the weather was very pleasant so Orange-tips were both highly solar-charged and also on a mission to make up for lost time. Hence they reverted to their typical behaviour of patrolling the hedgerows at break neck speed.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 24-Jan-14 02:00 PM GMT

I am enjoying your End of year tally series Wurzel and up to now I largely agree with your assessments in particular that of the Large skipper where it is difficult to generalise in that way on such a common species.

Your photos as ever are fantastic 😊 . I particularly like the second Lulworth Skipper shot and also the Small White on the bramble. I'm not so sure if the Red admiral is an aberrant though. It may have picked up something on one wing then transferred it across after closing them up 😊

The open-wing Brimstone at Shipton was amazing and I doubt we'll ever get to see a one like that again 😲 . If I remember correctly this insect was in semi-shade, possibly recently emerged and therefore trying to warm up in the way that you explained for the Large White. It stayed in that position for some time allowing us to rack up quite a few shots before eventually closing up and taking off 😊

Talking of Large whites; whose finger is the butterfly on and if yours who took the shot?

Keep em coming 😊

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 24-Jan-14 06:01 PM GMT

Some lovely images there, Wurzel, and congratulations on the Red Admiral (I hadn't spotted that post).

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 24-Jan-14 06:15 PM GMT

You 'kept back' some lovely photos for your end of year report Wurzel.

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by William, 24-Jan-14 07:29 PM GMT

Lovely shots Wurzel - if I had to pick a favourite I'd go with the large white on the finger, such a wonderfully fresh specimen 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Jan-14 12:19 AM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 As far as I can remember the first LW is one of my team mates and the second is my hand and I took both shots (using autofocus of course 😊). I think that Brimstone was a once in a life time 😊

Cheers David 😊 It was great to see that despite the lashing that we've taken here in Salisbury there are still butterflies about 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 This year I thought that I should have something to keep me occupied during the close season 😊

Cheers William 😊 I was doubly chuffed with that one as it was a rescue from the five aside football pitch and I also managed to take it with one-handed 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 25-Jan-14 10:13 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

and the second is my hand and I took both shots (using autofocus of course)

DSLR hand-held with one hand and the picture is that detailed 😲 Amazing 🍷 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 26-Jan-14 01:20 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, lovely photos again. 😊 you obviously had a great year with the butterflies in 2013, keep them coming. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jan-14 08:23 PM GMT

Great post again Wurzel with more great photos 😊

Interesting that you feel that Orange Tips were slightly down, I have seen similar comments from others based further south than me. My impression was that around my patch they had a really good year, I certainly had more in the garden than I have had for some years. From what I have seen it seems that they may have done better in the northern half of their range.

I am with you on the Clouded Yellows, I went from no photos to loads, including a couple of helice 😊, mostly thanks to a week in your beautiful home county 😊

Looking forward to the next instalment,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Jan-14 11:49 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊😊 I reckon it was my years of Zen training, you know me 'Mr Chilled out' 😊😊😊

Cheers Nick 😊 There are a few more in the pipeline 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Here is the next installment – I've been marking Mocks, ISAs and various other stuff for pretty much every waking minute recently 😊 so it's taken me a bit of time to get his done.

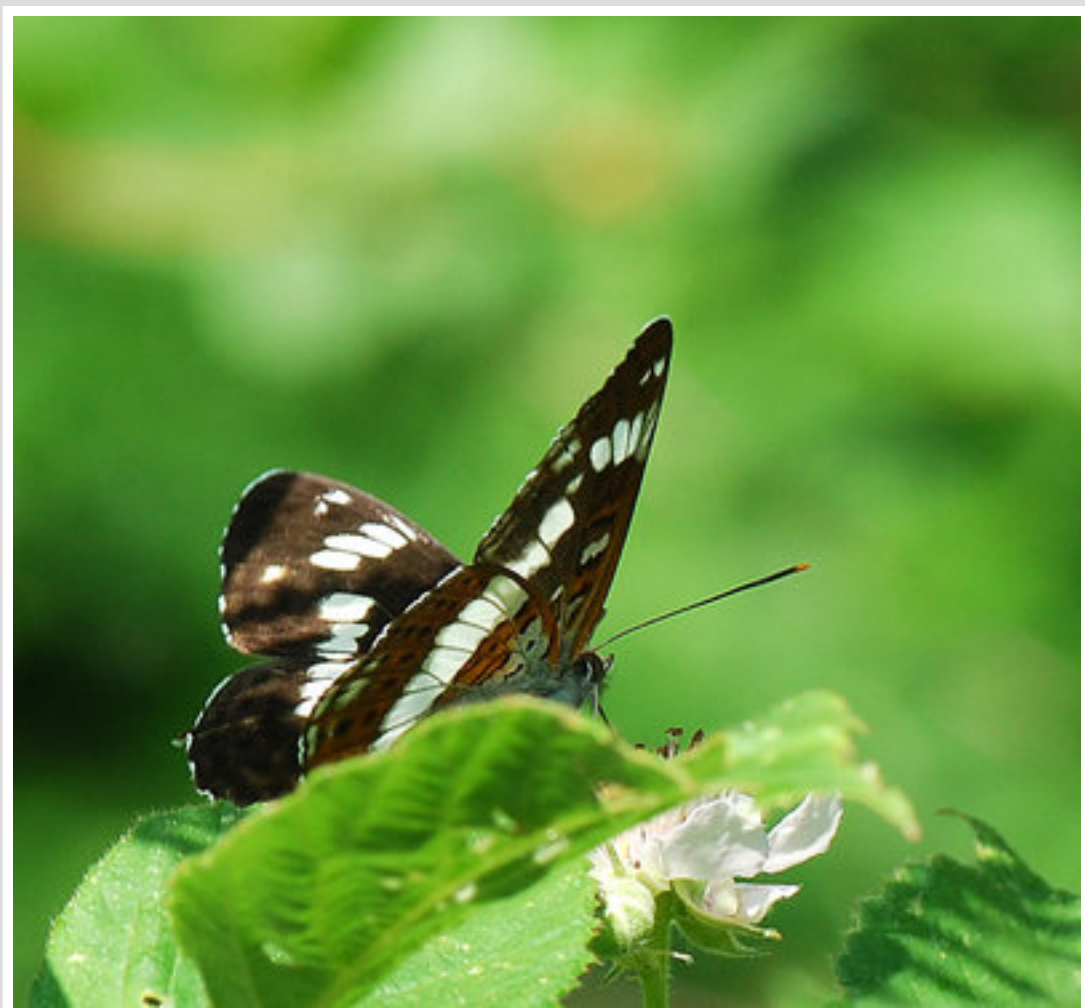
The “Aristocrats”

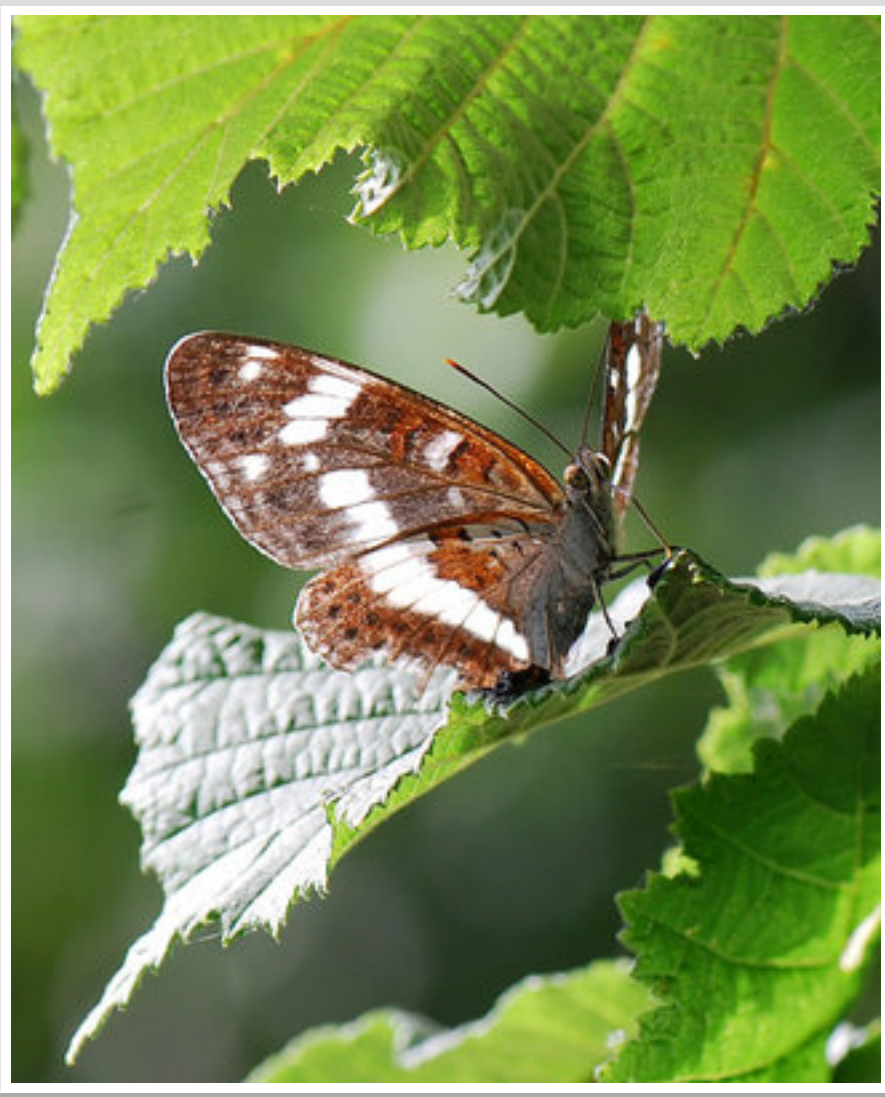


14 White Admiral, 6th July Bentley Wood

It seems a shame to start with the White Admiral; a species that I love to watch as it bombs across the vegetation as if it's doing a strafing run, because I had an uneasy feeling that it didn't do particularly well in 2013. They were present in the usual sites and I also saw them just over the road from Martin Down at Kitts Wood but I can't recall seeing as many of them as over the last couple of years.

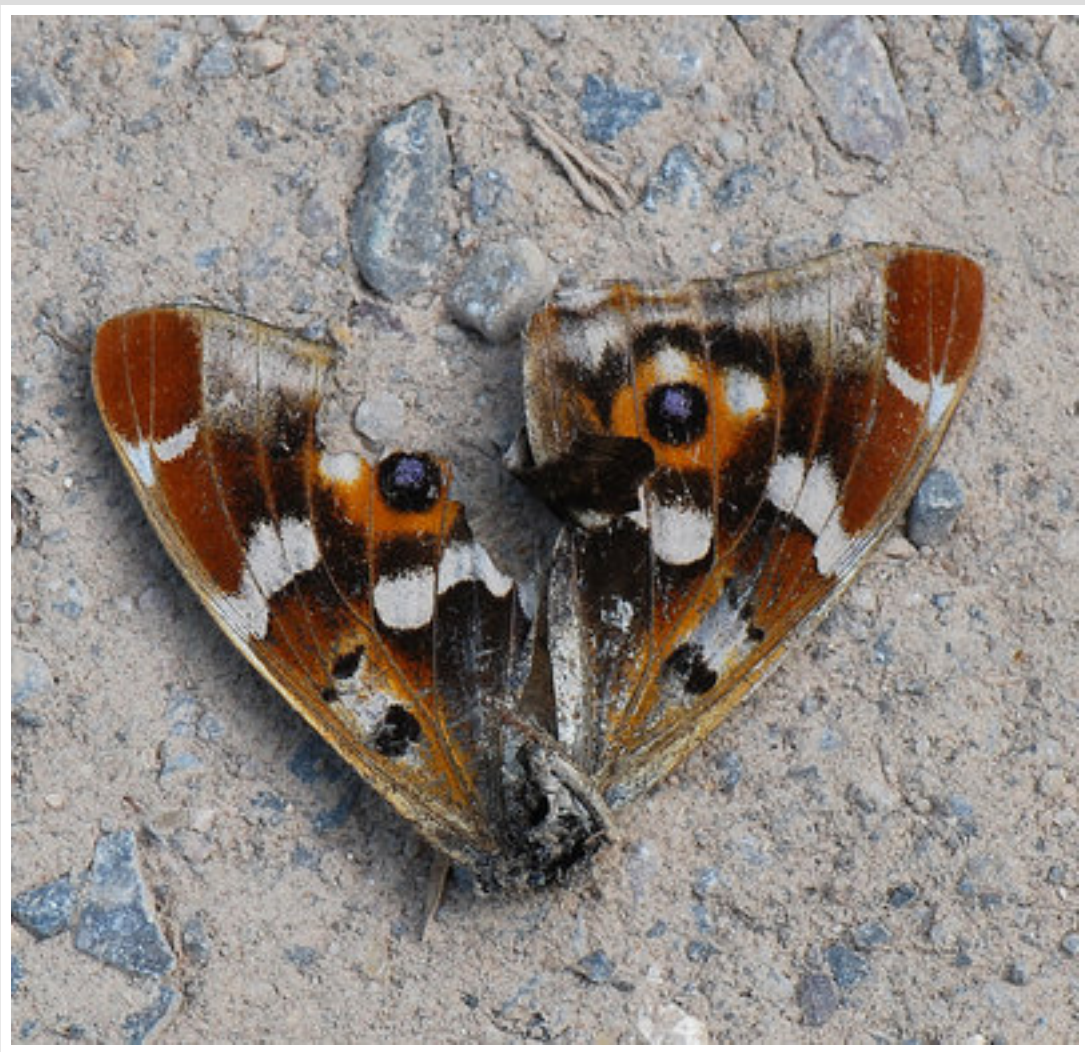
I said at the top “a species that I love to watch” but it's also one which I get very frustrated by when trying to photograph it as whenever I have encountered them they are always so active. Even when taking nectar from brambles they are constantly shuffling round the flower head or tilting this way and that to drain the sweet fluid. I think next year I need to try and get to the sites much earlier in the morning to try and catch them with their wings shut as I'm still lacking a shot of a really fresh individual in such a pose.





15 Purple Emperor, 14th July Bentley Wood

My initial shot below (just wings from a corpse) sums up how 2013 ran for me with His Nibbs. I made a couple of visits to Bentley Wood this year and after seeing a couple in the car park and another couple at Donkey Copse on my first visit I came away slightly frustrated as I only managed to get a couple of distant grab shots. Still there were good numbers as Bentley, probably slightly up on last year even if they were less obliging, unlike Fermyn which was just spectacular it seemed. Still I didn't mind reading all the reports from up north as the following week I was making a return visit... After a fantastic start waiting in the car park for Philzoid my hopes were really high as everything put in an appearance including two Emperors. So setting off we had got almost to the crossroads when we were called back by the girls as there was an Emperor on the path...well a set of wings at any rate. So I took a photo which served to remind me that while we were hunting Emperors for photography others were hunting them for food. After a few hours with Baitman and a few more sightings this proved to be the closest shot that I got all season. So I reckon a good year for His Nibbs even if they had all bu\$\$ered off to Fermyn! Next year I'll be ready...





16 Red Admiral, 1st May Salisbury

There seems little point in comparing whether Red Admirals were early or late as they had such an abysmal year but for the sake of consistency there was almost a three month difference in their appearance. The 16th February in 2012 was quite early for them but I also saw them in March and April in 2012 unlike this year.

I was hoping that they might suddenly pick up as things warmed up or that their numbers would be swelled by migrating cousins but this never really seemed to happen. On a 'good' year I can count on seeing one or two at most sites, sometimes more, but that wasn't to be this year. I was struggling to find any at some sites and when they did put in an appearance there was generally only a singleton. Looking back over my notes three records demonstrated to me how badly they were doing. First was that at Alners Gorse I saw one yet there were 2 Painted Ladies and at least 3 Clouded Yellows. Second it was a similar story at Martin Down with a singleton over three visits yet Clouded Yellows numbering a minimum of 3 and possible maximum of 7. The final record was a paltry 3 in my old garden at the tail end of the season whereas in 2012 I could see 7 in one gaze!

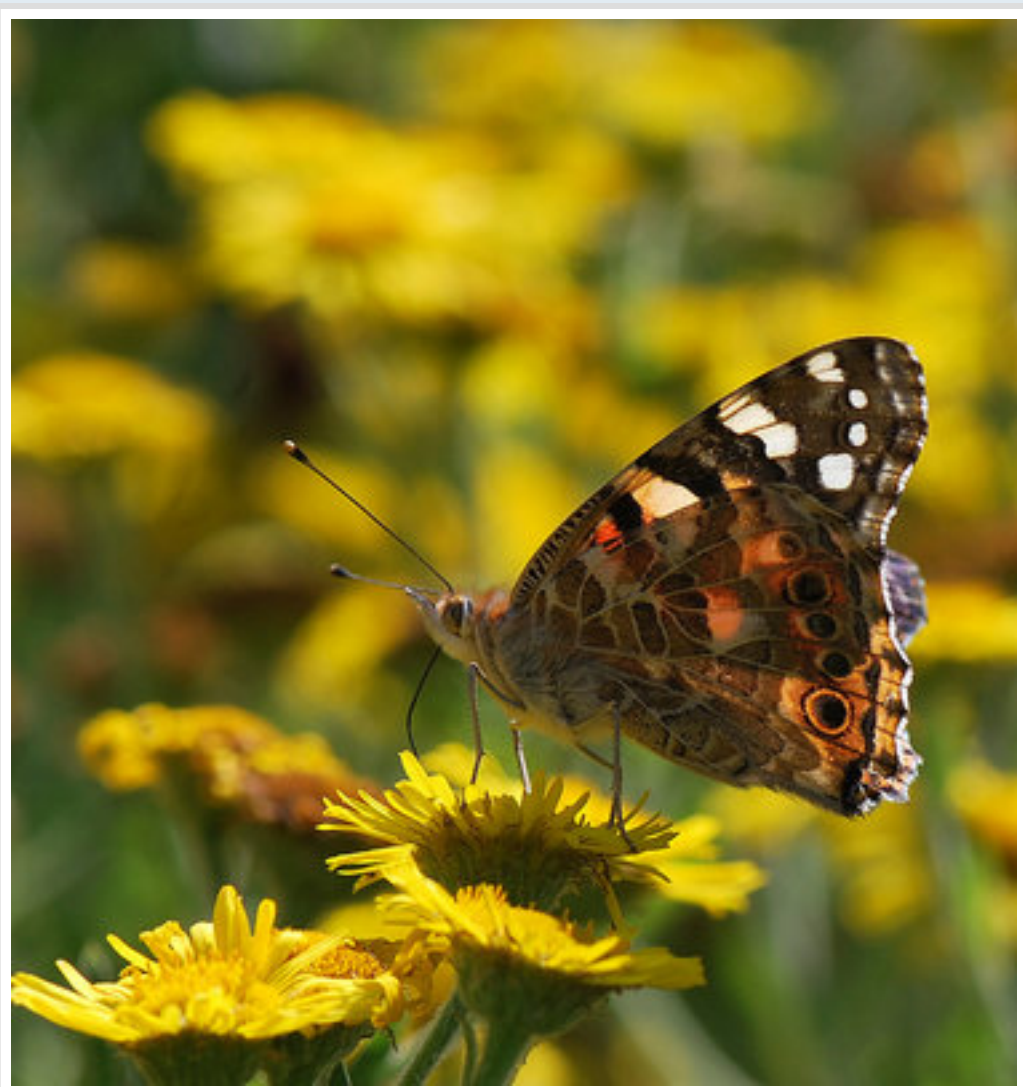
I'm not sure why the numbers were low? The winter got colder as it progressed and lasted into March and April so perhaps hibernators perished, starved or frozen? Alternatively their migration Northwards could have been the key, was there some climatic factor which meant that they just didn't get here? Whatever the reason I only hope that they do a 'Small Tortoiseshell' next year.

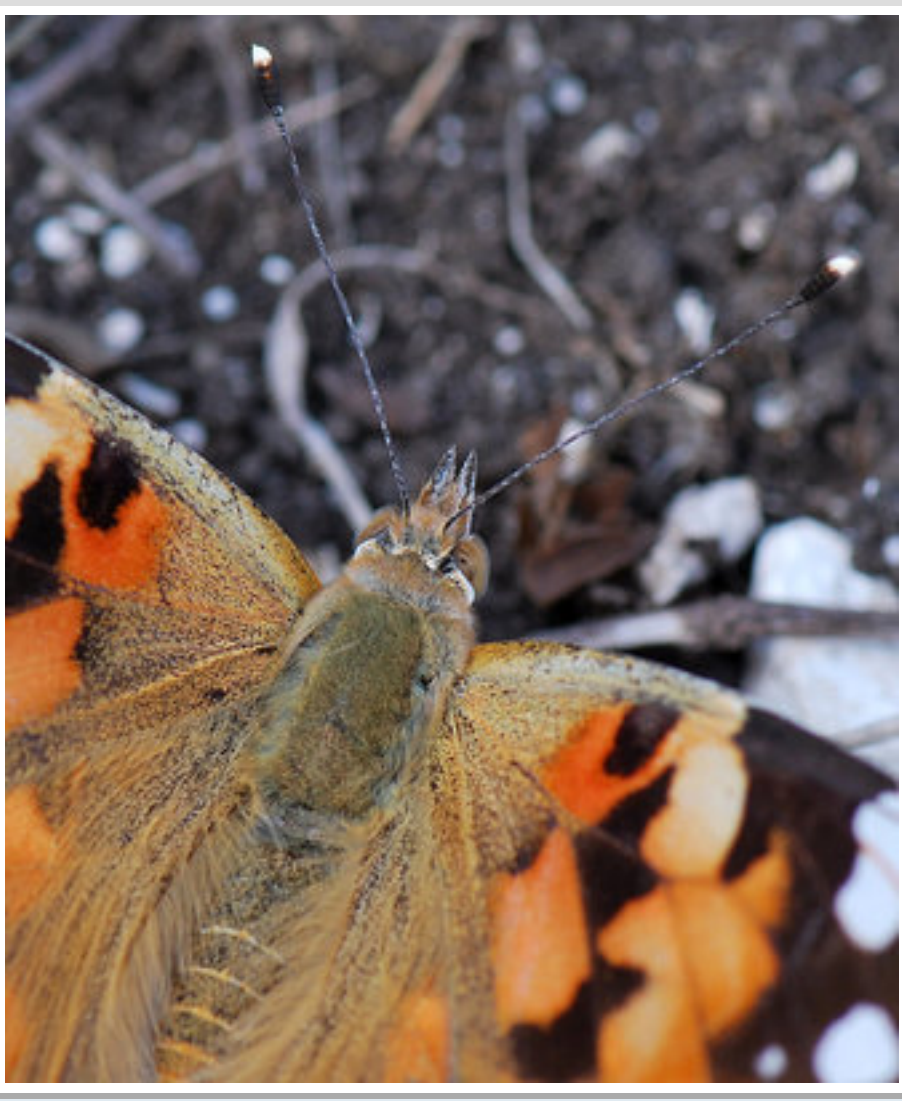




17 Painted Lady, 7th August Ffos-y-ffin

Whilst I saw Painted Ladies at many more sights in 2013 than in previous years I was actually slightly disappointed with their numbers. Don't get me wrong there were still more about than the last few years present but I seem to remember reading somewhere that good years for Cloudies are also good for Painted Ladies. So having seen reports as well as observing bucket loads of my own Cloudies I was hoping for many more Painted Ladies. About 4 or 5 years ago it was a particularly good year and there were present in 10's and more everywhere yet this year despite seeing them at many more sights they were only singles or the occasional pair. Perhaps this was just a taster and there will soon be a major influx year when they'll number in the thousands.

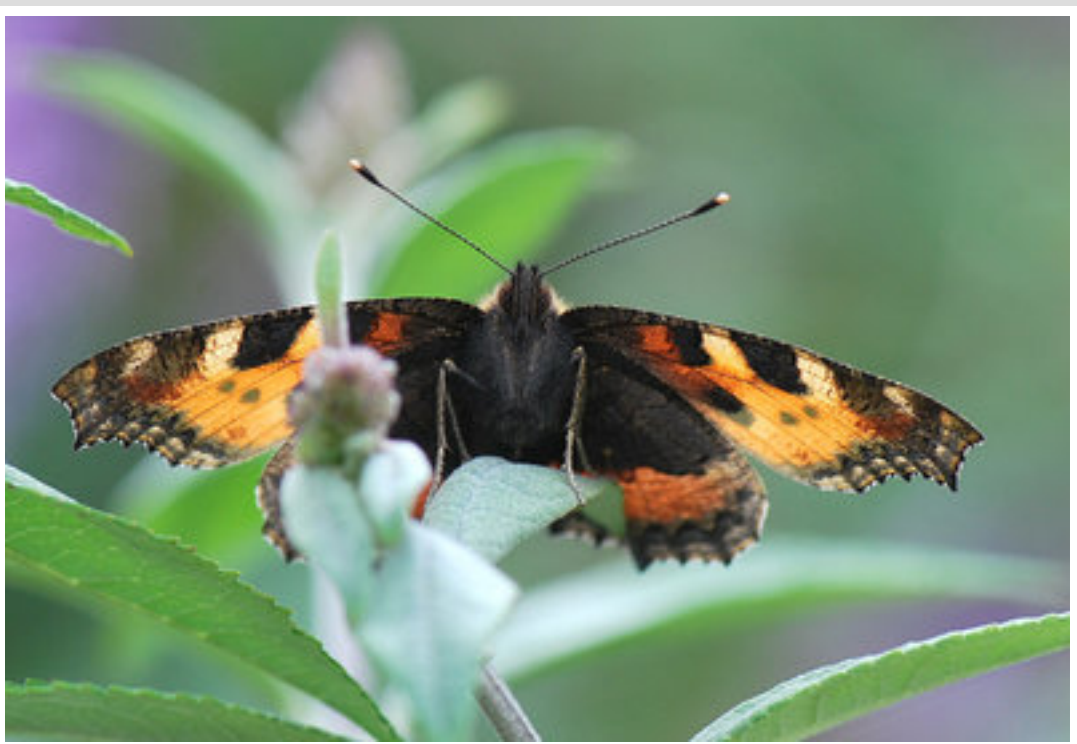


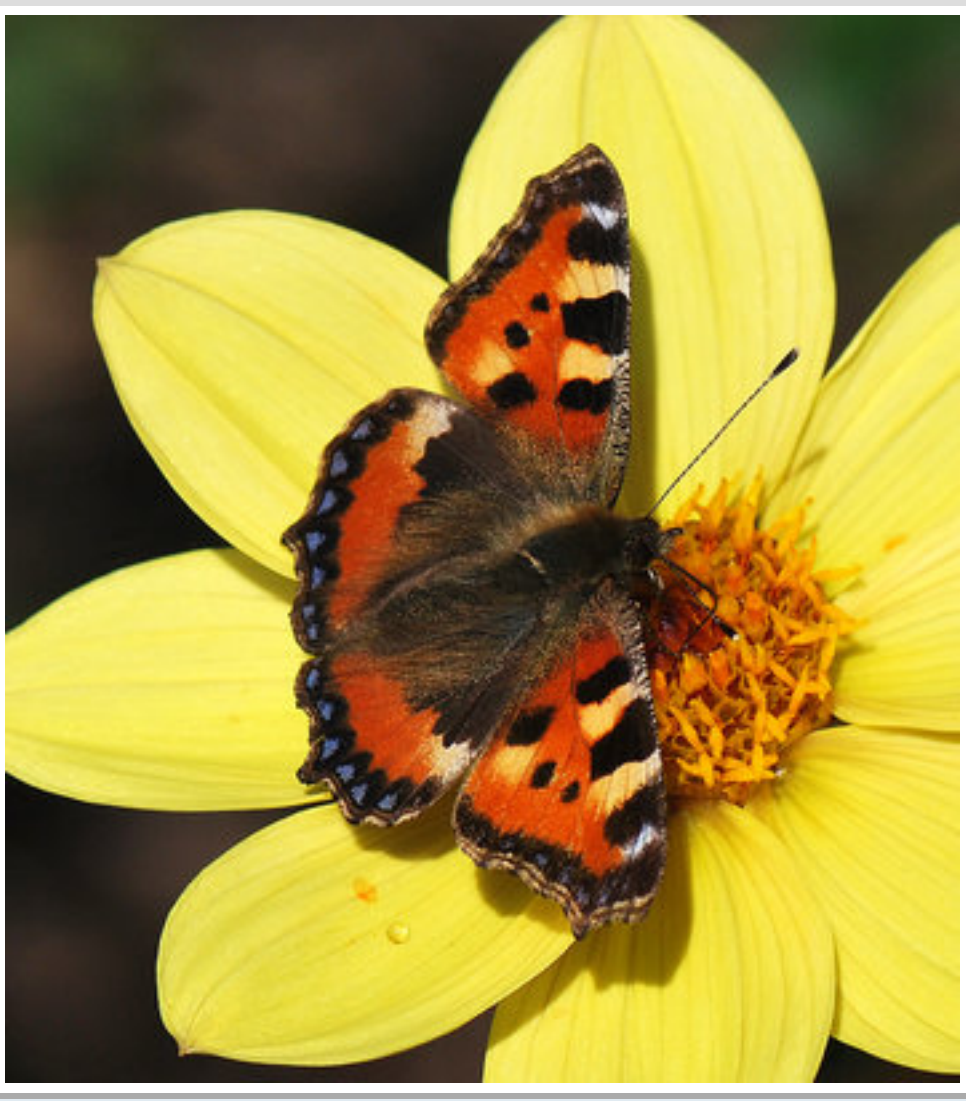


18 Small Tortoiseshell, 5th March Pewsey Vale School

While some will recall 2013 fondly for the good numbers of butterflies in the summer, the Cloudies or the Long Tailed Blues, for me 2013 was the year of the Small Tortoiseshell. For a few years whenever Small Torts were mentioned it was always in a concerned manner, phrases like 'not as many as in my youth', declined by 70% or serious drop in numbers were bandied around. Yet this year I don't think I've ever seen as many. They're never been a real problem to find but instead of seeing 2 or 3 in my old garden it was more like 5 or 6, and I saw them pretty much at every sight I visited. The most notable Small Tort event was on a visit to Five Rivers in May. I visited an area of Bramble hedge and saw plenty of Small Torts as I approached so I thought that I'd try and count them. So I started at one end of the hedge and started counted as I walked to the other end, only to get three metres along its length before losing count as they were fluttering forward and back. I was definitely sure there were 15 as that was the highest number I'd manage to count but there was another eight metres or so still to count from! In terms of numbers an unbelievable upturn of fortunes. Perhaps the long cold spell worked in their favour knocking the parasites on the head?

In terms of first sighting a Small Tortoiseshell at Five Rivers was my first and it was earlier than last year, though I'm not too confident that much can be made of that. With hibernators it isn't really an emergence, if the weather is pleasant they may appear and should it turn they'll disappear as quickly as they appeared, it's more of an intermission, a lucky coincidence. Plus I was raring to go back in early March having been cooped up for what felt like an age so my early sighting might have been just because I was out looking, not that it was any earlier. They were also my last sighting of 2013 and first of 2014...good old Bob 😊





19 Peacock, 14th April Mottisfont

Despite looking earlier in the year for this species I still didn't see it until a few weeks later than in 2012. They seemed to suddenly appear once the weather finally started to pick up possibly because they couldn't hang on any longer.

Overall I feel that they had a pretty good year, obviously not as good as their cousins the Small Torts but still pretty good! For me it was a good year with Peacocks personally as I was lucky enough to see almost the whole gamut; spring butterflies freshly awoken, worn and tatty individuals living out the last of their days, beautifully fresh and newly emerged even various instars of caterpillars thrown in for good measure. I was also surprised with how late into the season I was still finding them with sightings into the middle of October. I think that I may possibly have given up on them a bit too early in previous years.



20 Comma, 06-04 Five Rivers

Through 2013 I never once thought 'I haven't seen a Comma for a while' and so my suspicion is that they just carried on business as usual with no real noticeable increase in numbers. I don't think they saw a downturn but they bumbled along maintaining their numbers. In terms of emergence (or should that be appearance?) they were only a week later than the previous year at good old Five Rivers. A lovely coincidence was that I saw my first Comma of 2013 on exactly the same bank only three metres away from where I'd photographed my first Comma of 2012.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by William, 31-Jan-14 07:34 AM GMT

That Red Admiral Underside is fantastic Wurzel 😊😊!

Re: Wurzel

by philm63, 31-Jan-14 09:09 AM GMT

I agree Wurzel, some excellent shots there. What camera set-up do you use?

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 01-Feb-14 09:25 PM GMT

Lovely photos again Wurzel. 😊 I especially like the Painted Lady on Fleabane, the 2nd and 3rd Small Tortoiseshells and last but not least, the 2nd Peacock. Beautiful photos. 😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Feb-14 10:12 PM GMT

Cheers William 😊, it was one of only a couple that I managed to get all year.

Cheers Phil 😊 I use a Nikon D60 with a 105mm Nikkor lens, set it to Macro and then creep up on them and point and shoot 😊

Cheers Nick you're too kind 😊😊

February



Not long now! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

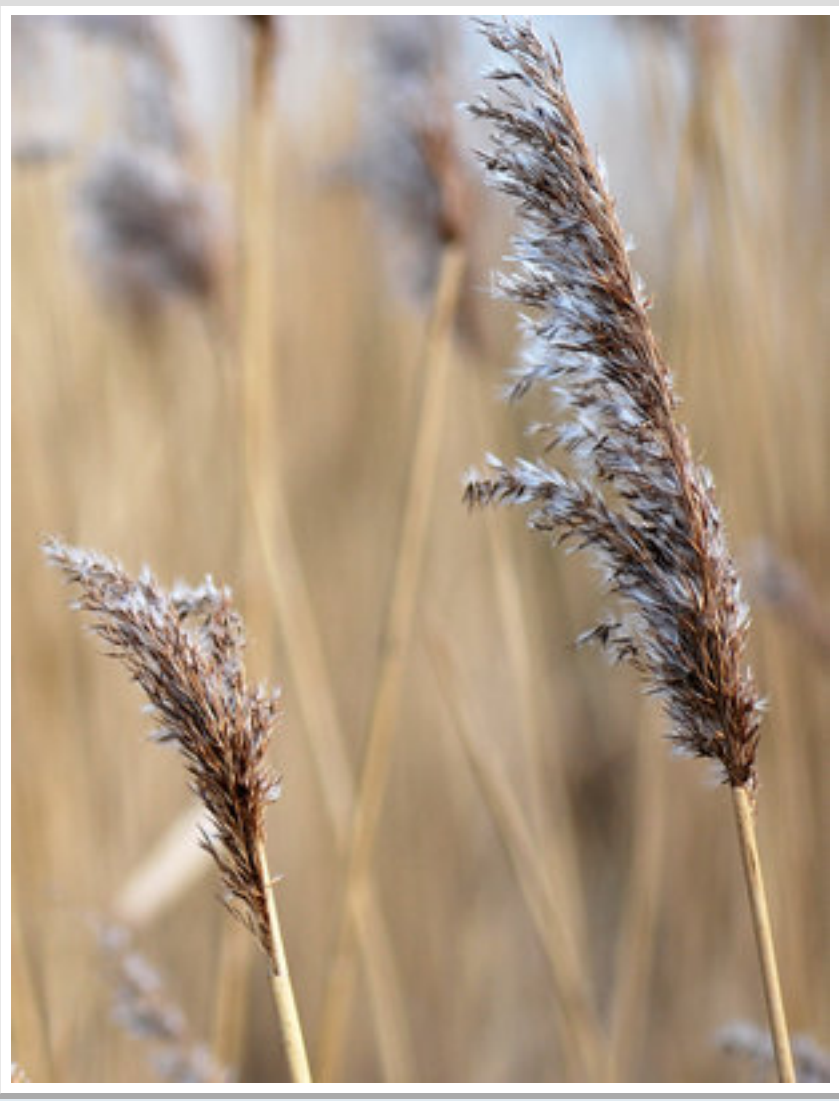
by Wurzel, 03-Feb-14 11:12 PM GMT

Some change on the horizon...

Anyone watching the weather over the last few weeks will might have not bothered and could have recorded the weather once and then just re-watched it again and again as we seem to have had no end of storms and huge amounts of rain. I realized that I've not seen Salisbury on the map since Boxing Day as every time I watch the weather it is covered by blue either as part of a huge blanket of rain or a lone blue blob right over the city while all around is clear! Still this weekend we had some respite and seeing the sun for the first time in what felt like an age I thought I better make the most of it. First I took the family to the local garden centre and hanging around the Primroses and Pansies were a Bluebottle and my first Drone Fly of the year but unfortunately no butterflies hanging around in the warmth of the glass houses.



After lunch it was still dry though the wind was picking up but I headed out to the park and the wooden bridge to what was still about. On the way I noticed that some of the flowers in the local gardens were in bud and when I watched the Black Headed gulls some were sporting more than a hint of their hoods to come, a bit like 5 o'clock shadow for gulls. Also the flood waters across the meadow are starting to drain and now it looks like a flooded field rather than a lake. I'm not sure how long it'll be before it reverts to a lake...





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by philm63, 04-Feb-14 02:40 PM GMT

Wurzel

We have a lot less species than you up here but this winter we have also had a lot less rain it appears. A good bit has fallen but I have not seen any unexpected flooding at all this winter, just lots of bad weather, although the past few days have not been too bad

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 04-Feb-14 06:10 PM GMT

Thats a beautiful Peacock photo in your previous posting Wurzel and the shot of the gull with the spire of Salisbury Cathedral in the background shows a nice touch 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 04-Feb-14 08:56 PM GMT

Lovely photos of the Aristocrats Wurzel 😊

I too only saw a handful of Painted Ladies and not that many more Red Admirals. I would never have guessed at the beginning of last year that I would see more Clouded Yellows than Red Admirals and Painted Ladies put together.

I am also with you on it being the year of the Small Tortoiseshell, at times I saw more together than I even remember in the days of my youth.

I think the numbers of Peacocks around later in the year is a curious one. They usually tuck themselves away fairly early, and indeed around my neck of the woods most had disappeared before the Small Tort numbers really built up. Then later on in September there seemed to be more about again making me think that there was at least a partial second brood last year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Feb-14 11:10 PM GMT

Cheers Phil – I'm thinking that I might need to buy a boat soon we've had so much rain down here 🤔 Still I reckon that around June we'll be having a Hosepipe ban 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 I was pleased with the spire/gull wing symmetry 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Its interesting that you saw a similar pattern up your way as further east people were saying that it was Peacocks that boomed 😊 Perhaps an East/west divide?

The Fritillaries



21 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, 9th June Bentley Wood

These seemed to be later emerging than last year even at the early recording sites. I also remember that they seemed to be recorded first down in Cornwall and then there was a good fortnight before they started appearing elsewhere. Even with my somewhat tardy efforts to see them at Bentley Wood me feeling was backed up by the sightings book. The main thing for me though was that they seemed to be doing well this year and when I strayed from the Eastern Clearing I was seeing them along the rides across the Wood which was heartening.

Over the last couple of years I've noticed that the frits can be variable in the brightness of their underside markings. Over my first couple of encounters with Small Pearls some of the 'panels' on their under wings seemed almost dark red. In 2012 they appeared more uniformly orange with no real noticeable difference in the colour between panels. Yet this year there were definitely some more reddish panels. Could these differences be due to difference in pupation temperature as I've read that some reared butterflies can be thermally manipulated to produce aberrant?



22 Pearl-bordered Fritillary 12th May Bentley Wood, Eastern Clearing

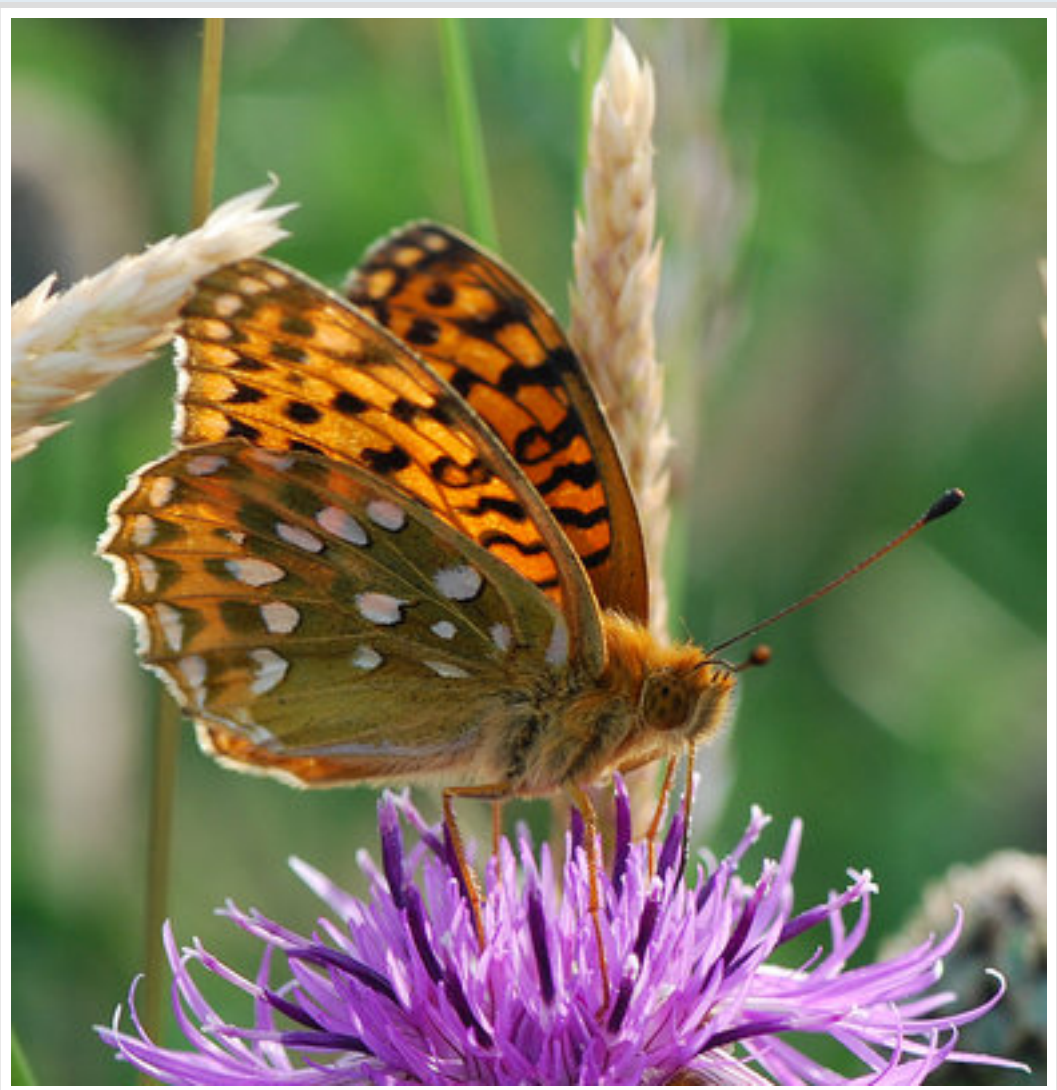
This year they were slightly later than last year at Bentley, by about a week and that is a hell of a lot later than in 2011 when they lived up to their old common name of 'April Fritillary'. My 'later sighting' could have been down purely to when I managed to make my visit but even the first sightings recorded in the book at the site were later.

I feel like they had a good year as although I saw them in slightly smaller numbers on my first visit I then saw them over the successive weeks on three further occasions over a range of areas at Bentley Wood and in good numbers. So while they might have been later they lasted the distance. I'll add the caveat 'at Bentley' to how I think they did as this is the only site that I've ever seen them at so one of the things I want to look at doing over the next couple of years is finding them at a few different sites. That being said; why go further to see the same thing when I can just pop to Bentley and spend more time, use less petrol and get to see plenty of Pearls?



23 Dark Green Fritillary, 17th July Martin Down

I saw Dark Greens one week later this year than last but that was only because I was having trouble getting out and seeing them. In fact it felt like they were actually slightly early judging from the reports at County level? Still when I did get to Martin Down they were in much larger numbers than last year, almost back up to the heights of 2011. From the Blandford Road car park I headed to the dip at the start of Borkeley and worked my way along the bottom of the depression there and for a while I just wandered in wonder as there were so many DGFs around. I'd try to watch one only for it to be disturbed by another and then as I'd settled my eyes on that one another one would buzz it and so on and so on. I also found some over at Kitts Wood but they were a lot less social than the Martin Down crew. It was a memorable evening as I took my fill of photos and made up for lost time. A great year for the DGF so hopefully 2014 will be even better.





24 Silver-washed Fritillary, 7th July Bentley Wood

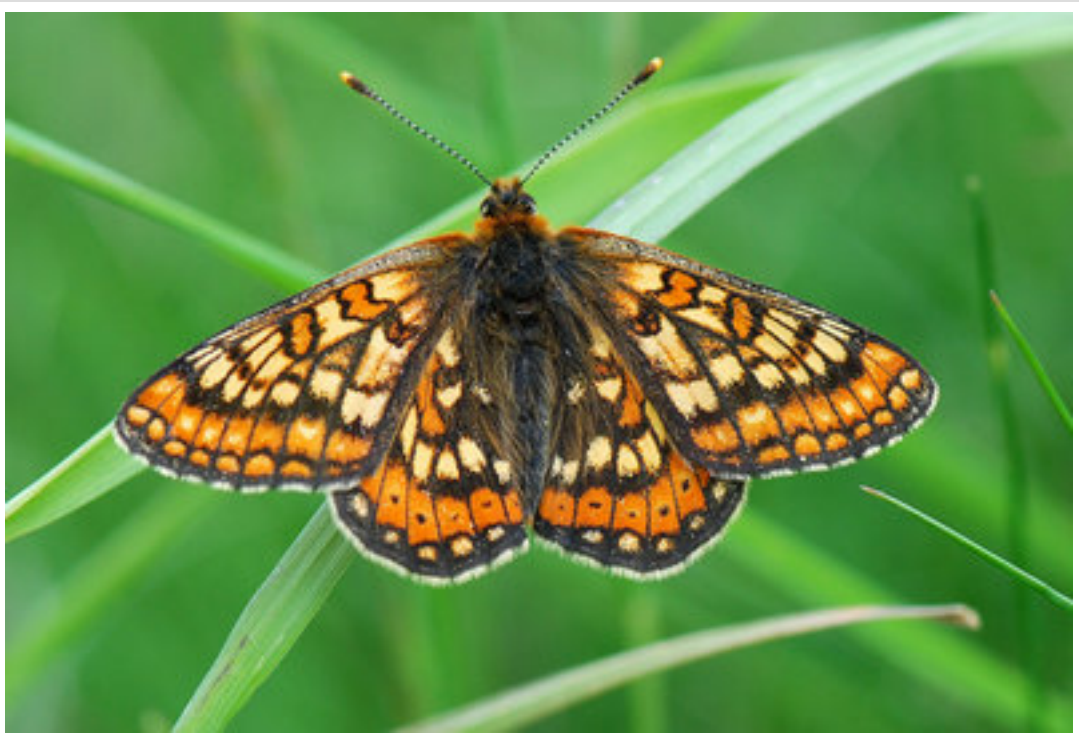
These too were a slight bit later than last year though by this stage of the year things seemed to be catching up. Once I started seeing them they seemed to be having a good year with comparable numbers to last year especially at Bentley Wood. A couple of highlights this year were finding them at Stourhead and Kitts Wood which is just over the road from Martin Down. This means that there are three fritillaries available at this site along with six of the Skippers and most of the blues too! It was also a good year for me for Valesina. Somehow I've been lucky enough to see these every year of my four years butterflying and this year I was doubly lucky as I saw them at both Bentley Wood and a lost wanderer at Martin Down. The Bentley Greenish played true to character, staying further in the wood in the shade and away from the edges of the ride. It was very flighty and very difficult to approach so I didn't get a photo. Yet the Martin Down one was not only in the wrong habitat but also totally out of character as it posed for photo after photo whilst taking nectar at the side of the main path from Sillen's Lane in full glaring sun. Just goes to show that you never can tell.





25 Marsh Fritillary, 25th May Martin Down

If I said that I thought Marsh Fritillaries had a fantastic year it may be because I had a slightly skewed view having only seen one (possibly two) individual through the whole of 2012. This year not only did I read county reports of sightings into the forties and fifties from some sites but I was lucky enough to see them at two different sites myself, one of which held bucket loads! That site is on the 'hit list' for next year as when Philzoid and I took a chance visit there we were stumbling over Marshies left, right and centre. It was a truly memorable morning; scrambling up and down steep chalk hills, finding Walls, Greenstreaks and Small Blues and witnessing a Battle Royale involving pretty much every spring specialist but the main memories of the day are filled by Marshies. The sun would pop out and thirty seconds later there would be Marshies flitting around as far as the eye could see and then as it dipped behind a cloud they would disappear as if playing a solar powered game of hide and seek. I'm not sure how they fared in other parts of the country but round my way they had a cracking year.





Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by philm63, 07-Feb-14 06:54 PM GMT

Lovely shots Wurzel

I envy all of you with Fritillaries nearby, I think the nearest to me will be up on the North York Moors in Yorkshire; however, the Morecambe area might be closer as the crow flies. The shots you and others post certainly make me feel the travel would be worthwhile to see them

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 08-Feb-14 01:39 PM GMT

Great last couple of posts, Wurzel. Both to read and absorb the beauty of your photography. 😊 I particularly like the Black-headed Gull in flight. Great. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Feb-14 11:00 PM GMT

Cheers Phil 😊 I'm exceedingly lucky that I live so close to Bentley Wood which can hold 5 different species (6 if you go with the old name of the Duke) 😊 Saying that...I'd kill for Large Heaths or a Northern Brown Argus 😊😊

Cheers Nick 😊 I'm still working on the Browns but I'm almost there. UI was really happy with the flukey Black Head shot – the wonders of 'Sports Mode' 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 10-Feb-14 10:21 PM GMT

Great post and great pictures Wurzel 😊 . I particularly like the Open wing Pearl on the dead leaf and the underside Dark Green on knapweed (DGF 1 of my top 10 UK butterflies) 😊 The less said about the open wing, open air greenish the better 🍷😊

Despite my limited experience of Small Pearls I also noted your observation on their undersides this year. The maroon patches in front of the pearls look almost black on one of my shots from Bentley. I've not found any specific information about this on the net.

On UKB's Small Pearl page there is mention of a former Scottish sub-species, insularum which is described as "brighter in colour and markings both upper and undersides". However it not thought to be distinct from specimens found at altitude in Wales. With our particularly cold spring last year what we saw might have been a function of the temperature as you allude to 💡 .

Also, the two pictures showing the undersides appear to illustrate perhaps both ends of the colour range. Images on google show a range also.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 11-Feb-14 07:13 PM GMT

Another great post Wurzel, interesting observations and cracking photos 😊

I particularly like the second DGF underside, a beautiful image.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 11-Feb-14 08:46 PM GMT

Some very nice 'held back' 😊 photos again Wurzel and a great end of year report.

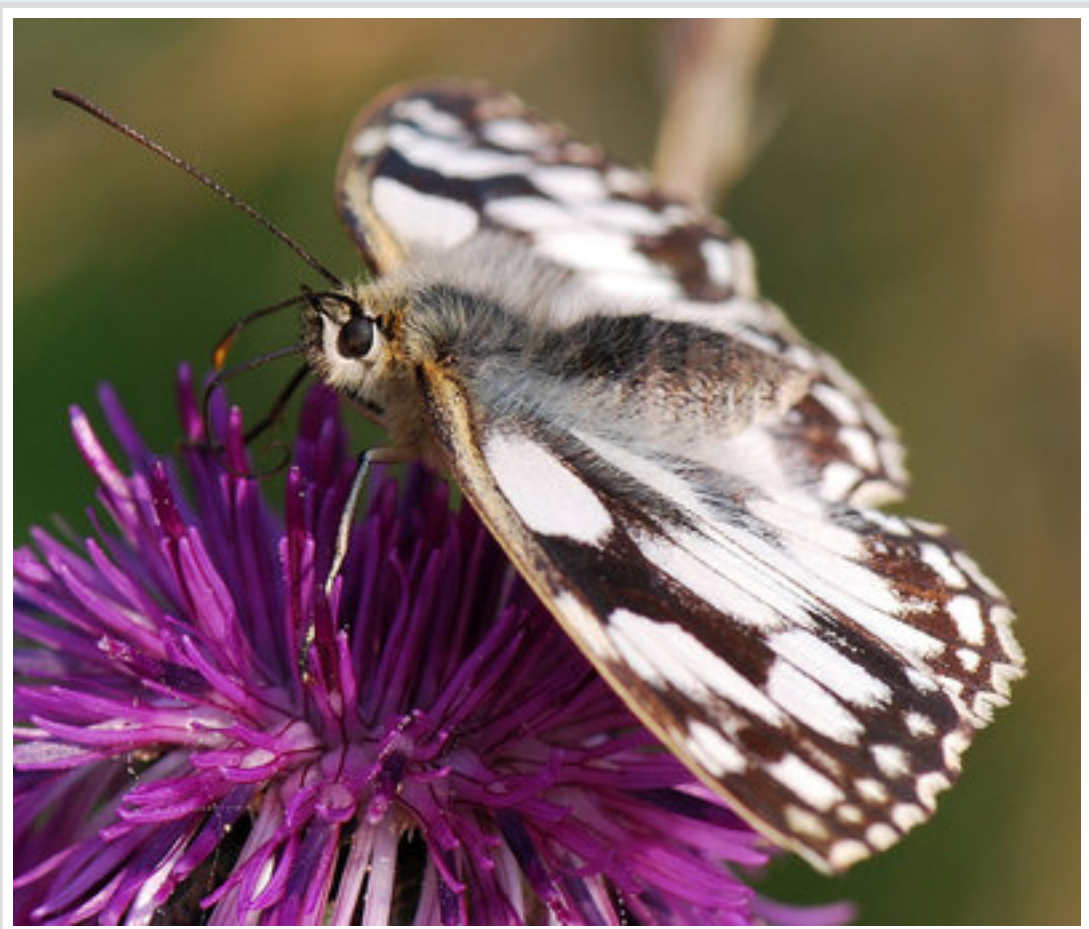
Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Feb-14 11:49 PM GMT

Cheers for your kind comments Philzoid 😊 I'm glad that it's not just me that saw the variation in the Small Pearls. Looking forward to testing out theories this year – it's been quite mild so I reckon that if things stay this way we could have another brownly-orange rather than red Small Pearl year 😊
Cheers Neil 😊 I was made up with the DGF – I've been trying for one of those for a few years now 😊
Cheers Mike 😊 'Just' the Browns, Hairstreaks, Duke and Blues to go now...

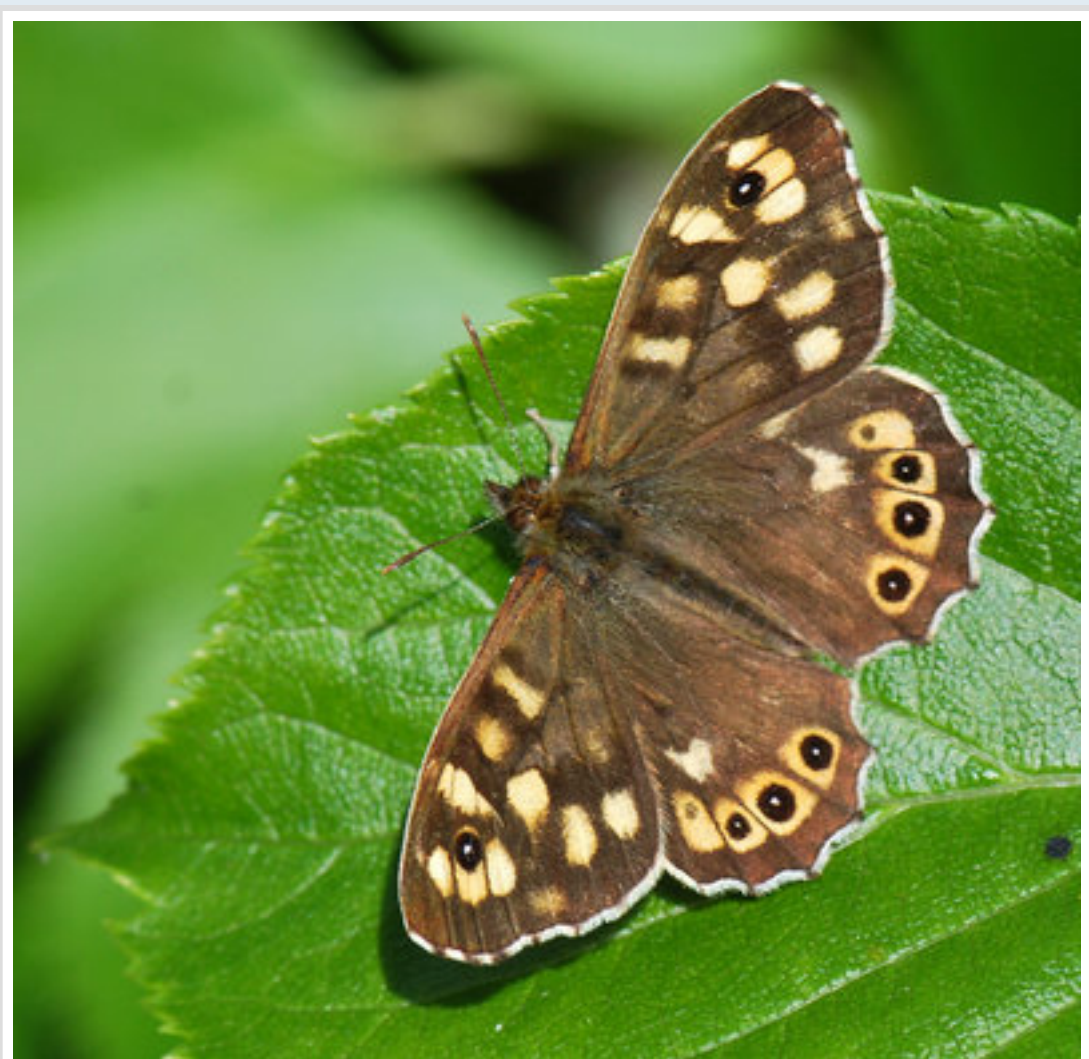
Browns



A tricky group to judge as they often so numerous you can't see the wood for the trees or they are restricted to a particular and not common habitat or even they are very widely dispersed. All these factors mean that best guesses and gut feelings might not match up with other people's perceptions...
26 Specked Wood, 1st May Enford (pull in)

This year was a lot like the last for me with Specklies in that they kind of crept up on me through the year. They were quite sparse during the early part of the year and then in subsequent broods their numbers built steadily though I'm not sure that they were any higher than last year. On later trips at the tail end of the season they were often the most numerous species around with one visit to Bolderwood in the New Forest yielding 6 or 7 over the course of an hour's gentle stroll. I must confess here that after the initial sighting I did tend to ignore the poor old specklies unless one presented itself to me crying out for me to take its photo. Then later in the summer, early in the autumn, while other species were dwindling I was struggling to find butterflies to photograph there were the Specklies. This could be why I felt their numbers built though even though I wasn't always photographing them I was noticing them.

Where the story differed was in that they were later, by a little over a month in fact for me personally so perhaps this could explain the lower numbers in the first brood? They were held up by the weather and then when it turned out nice they prospered a pretty common story for the earlier spring species.





27 Wall, 2nd June Marshie Site

For me this year was an amazing year for Wall Browns, in that I was lucky enough to find them at two...yes two different sites! I can usually scabble together a single sighting but to stumble across two was just unbelievable. I was considering visiting Pennington and Keyhaven later in the summer as well but decided against it as I didn't want to use all my "Wall Luck" up! As usual for me both were total flukes. The first was on the memorable day out with Philzoid surrounded by Small Blues, Marsh Frits and battling butterflies. The second was at Lulworth during a stolen half hour on a family holiday visit. This must be the way for me to find Wall Browns - go looking for something else and one will turn up unexpectedly and try to steal the show! From looking at other reports and sighting records they seemed to do well overall this year but this is one of those species that I find difficult to judge securely as they aren't common and are so widely dispersed. I can only go on seeing them at two sites...I still can't believe that!



28 Marbled White, 1st July Five Rivers

Things were definitely moving on by the time the Marbled Whites were emerging as they were starting to catch up on their emerging dates from last

year, only 5 days later. Also it was another good year for them overall. Saying that I did notice that at some sites they were doing really well and at others they seemed slightly down. For instance they were definitely up at Larkhill and Woodhenge whilst at Martin Down they seemed to have dropped off ever so slightly. This may just be part of the natural rhythms of sites so I'm keen to check this year to see if they have a slight upturn in those areas which I felt were down slightly.

Having discovered the key to Marbled White shots was to make morning visits Larkhill and Woodhenge provided me with the majority of my shots this year including some that I'd hoped for but thought that I wouldn't be able to get - my dew bedecked Marbs. I also noticed that some of the first females that I saw were very strongly marked on the undersides, some appearing almost lemon and cream though I reckon this was just because of how fresh they were.



29 Grayling, 29th July Godshill

I managed to locate Graylings slightly earlier this year than last but I don't put that down to their emergence changing, more likely it was because I was out looking for them earlier. My usual spot - the Triangle at Godshill was the site of my first sighting and whilst there I saw more than I've ever seen before so a good year for the Grayling I think. I don't think I saw such a great range of colouration this year compared to last, most were of the brown or black variety but I didn't find the grey individuals that I saw last year - some environmental response to temperature during pupation perhaps?

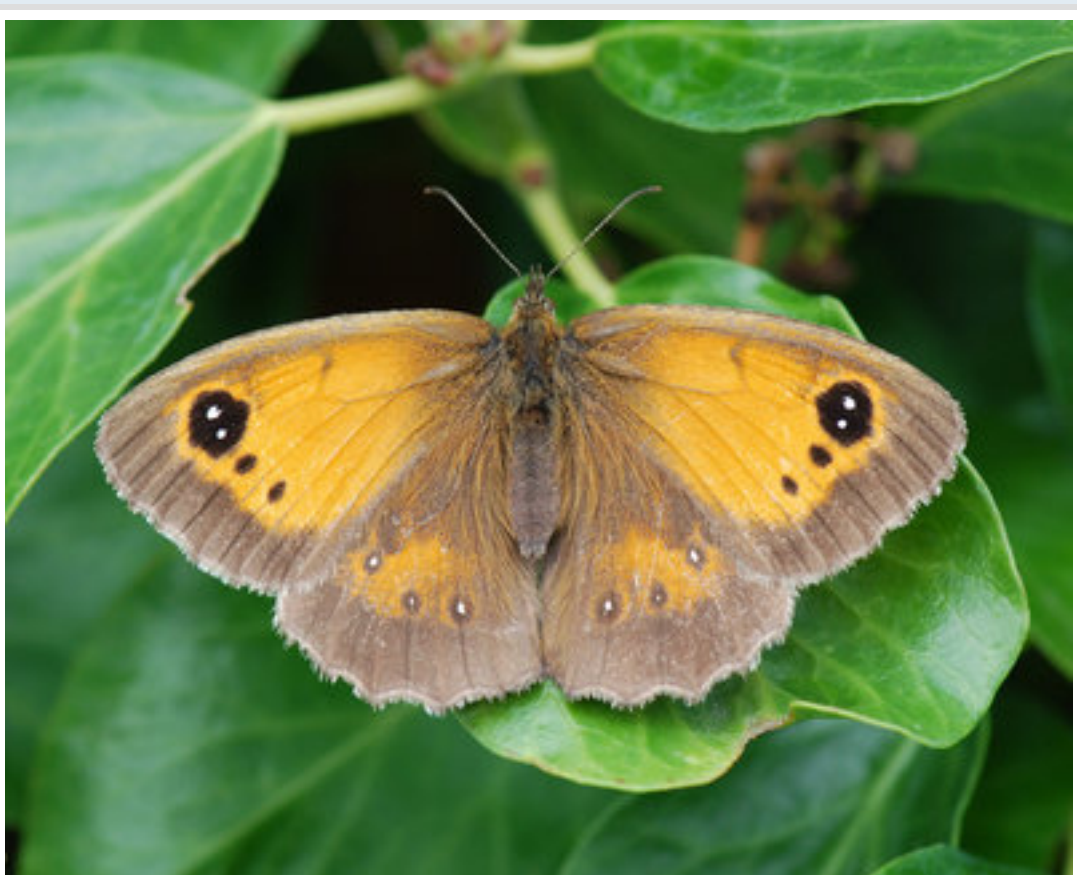
They are serious contenders for my favourite butterfly (though the Lulworth Skipper will probably hold out due to my Dorset roots) as I love practically everything about them - their cryptic patterning, their behaviours, their habitat and the timing of their imago with generally the best weather that this country gets. What made it a good year particularly for me was that quite by chance I saw a couple at Studland whilst on my annual pilgrimage/family holiday. One practically greeted me upon our arrival at the car park and I got a few shots which featured in a 'Where's the Grayling?' post. A second landed on my left arm and then flew off when I tried to stretch it out so I could photograph it taking salts from my elbow. It did return but this time it landed on my right arm so I couldn't get any shots as I can't operate my camera with my left hand - it gets in the way of the lens when I try to press the shutter.



30 Hedge Brown/Gatekeeper 14th July Bentley Wood

Actually two days early than last year and what was quite coincidental was that last year I was looking for Purple Emperors when I saw my first hedge Brown and so it was this year too. They seemed to do really well last year so if felt like they were slightly down on that this year yet they were still doing well.

We generally visit my outlaws over at Ffos-yffin near Aberaeron just as the Graylings and Silver Spots are emerging. To keep my hand in and ward off the envy brought on by reading of others exploits with Chalkhills etc I spend my time chasing down every single Hedge Brown that I can find along the high and ancient hedgerows near their home. It never ceases to amaze me the level of variation that seems to abound in the one little area – it can't be because of isolation as the whole countryside around is interlinked with mile upon mile of hedgerows/wildlife corridors. My best guess is that it comes down to probability – as the habitat is so good and there are plenty of Hedge Browns here there is a greater chance of something more unusual cropping up. If it does I'm there camera at the ready 😊





31 Meadow Brown, 19th June The Devenish

Just under a week later this year and things seemed to be catching up by June – the usual quiet period between broods didn't really seem to happen things just ran into each other and late caught up with those that were on time. It was difficult to tell whether things were on a par or better than last year but my overall gut feeling was that numbers were up. There definitely seemed to be more about but their ubiquity makes anything more than a best guess futile. Highlights for the year included various morning visits to Larkhill to find them dew bedecked and some seemed almost tearful.





32 Small Heath, 1st June Duke Site

I didn't see my first Small Heath until a few weeks later this year than in 2012 though whether that was because I wasn't looking in the right place or just because everything was still catching up from the slow start to the season I'm not too sure? Once they were flying I wasn't in two minds about their numbers. On the one hand I'm fairly confident that they didn't lose ground this year in that I saw them at all the usual sites and where I'd expect to see them and also there seemed to be more of them about. They were almost back to their annoying best competing with Ringlets and Meadow Browns for the role of 'spookiest' butterfly - not scary like, just very good at putting up other butterflies that you're trying to photograph. On the other hand I still don't think that they were up to their full strength so still down compared to where they were a few years hence. Hopefully though they have reached their low ebb and are now on the upward swing.



33 Ringlet, 23rd June The Devenish

Ringlets were a few days earlier this year than last but only because I was lucky enough to find the first for the county (and possibly the country?). That being said seeing the first on the county and it only being a few days earlier than my first sighting last year tells the true story that things were still not

up to the same speed as in 2012. The drier year this year also seemed to slow their emergence and unlike last year they seemed to be around in smaller numbers but also lasting longer into the season. In fact I found a very fresh individual at Alners Gorse in the tail end of August, so fresh it was still a gorgeous chocolate colour and had its white wing fringes intact. I'm not sure if this was a second brood though that seems more likely than a very extended flight period.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 13-Feb-14 04:34 PM GMT

Some very good observations and stylish assessments you've made in your reports Wurzel 😊. The browns are a very difficult group to monitor population trends for the reasons you covered in your overview.

Despite the lack of any real data I would say that Gatekeeper numbers were down on 2013, and I base that assumption on encountering very few "False Hairstreaks" in August when looking for the Brown version on Bookham Commons. Similarly Hedgies didn't seem to show up in good numbers around the Surrey heath land sites I routinely visit in July, but there-again part of that might have been due to focussing too heavily on Silver studs and Grayling the latter of which also seemed down on the previous year.

Other than those two I would say the others fared as well as the previous years with perhaps Small Heath a showing a slight increase.

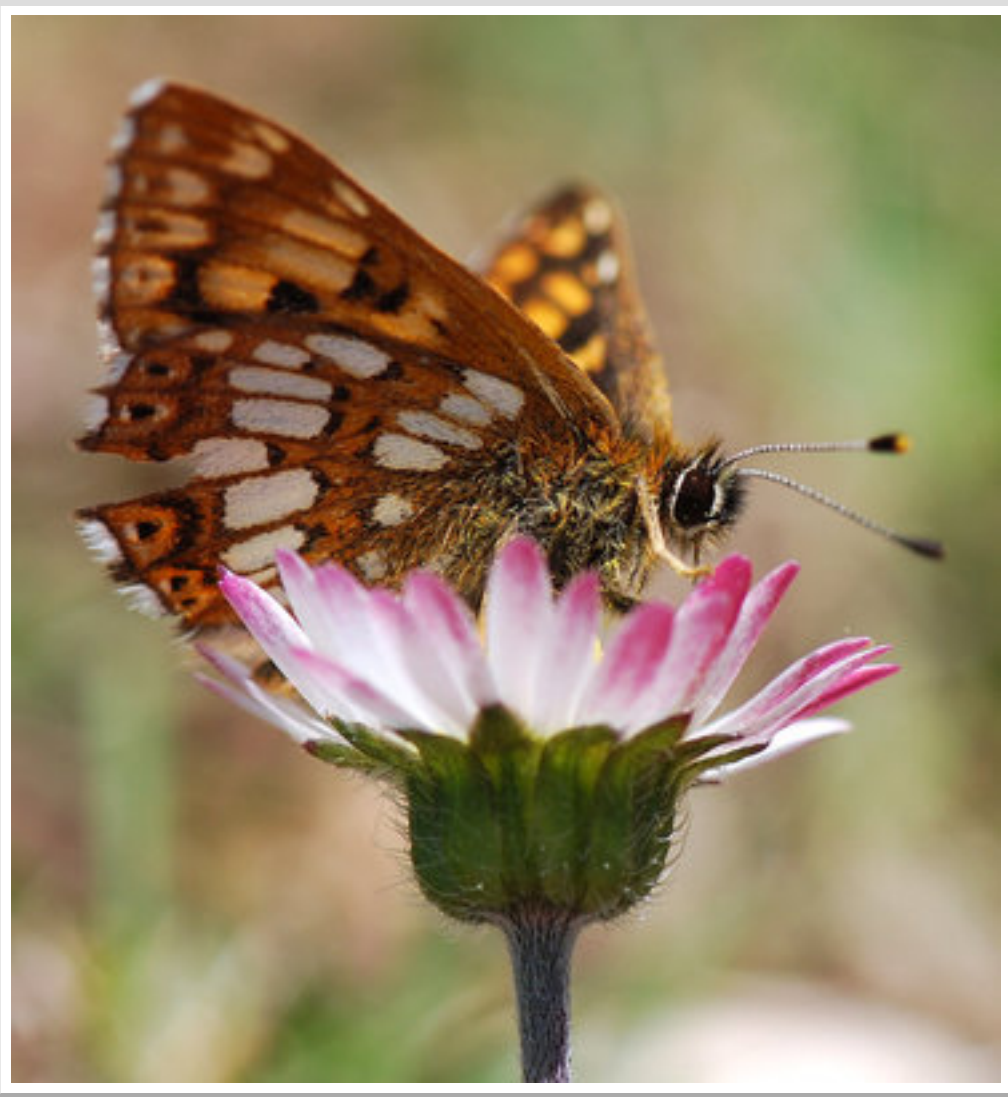
Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Feb-14 10:20 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 Interesting observations about the Gatekeeper I too thought that they weren't as good as last year but still doing well. I guess I was lucky with the Graylings - perhaps seeing them at another sight skewed my perceptions?

Metalmarks



34 Duke of Burgundy, 1st June Sidbury Hill

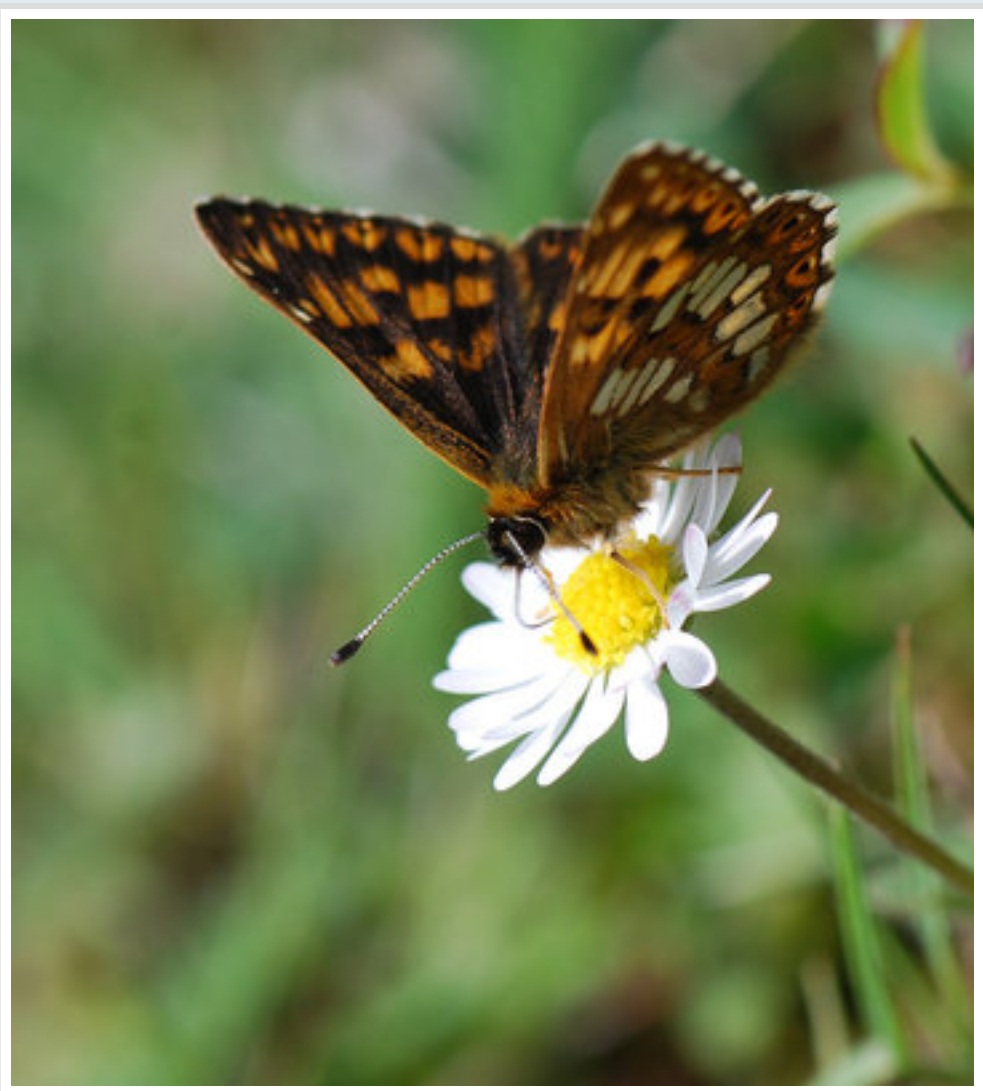
The early spring butterflies all seemed to be affected adversely by the long cold winter which carried on through March and into April. But the Dukes seemed to buck this trend and it felt like they had a good year. 😊

After my first, very brief encounter with a Duke at Martin Down I've been relying solely on the small and fragile Bentley population. This year however I got a tip off from Rob H and visited a new site which paid dividends. As it was a Downland site they appeared earlier than the woodland population at Bentley Wood and also the place was crawling with them. They were fairly well distributed across the grasslands but one stretch of path in particular held more Dukes than my previous cumulative life total! This actually made photography harder as they were constantly squabbling with each other. Two would be involved in a brawl and then one would break away and start on a new victim. Even the admonishments of my younger daughter didn't get them to behave. 😲

Seeing them in greater numbers than I was used to meant that I witnessed much more variation in their colouring and markings which was surprising. I know that the females/Duchesses are more heavily marked but some individuals had orange chequering across most of their wings. Also the ground colour ranged from the darkish brown to a rich chocolate through to almost black.

I was also lucky enough to catch up with a Bentley Duke later in the season so should the powers that be decide to 'split' them and make a taxonomic distinction between the two habitat 'forms' I've got both shots in the bag ready. The Woodland populations seem to emerge later which may eventually lead to temporal isolation triggering speciation...possibly.

So a really good year for Dukes let's hope that 2014 proves to be equally as successful - it should after all the effort being put into this species from other areas.







Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by William, 16-Feb-14 04:54 PM GMT

Those shots of the Duke on the Daisy are magnificent Wurzel 😊😊

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 16-Feb-14 05:38 PM GMT

"William" wrote:

Those shots of the Duke on the Daisy are magnificent Wurzel 😊😊

That reminded me of 'Daisy Duke' from the 'Dukes of Hazard' William 😊 They are lovely shots Wurzel.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 16-Feb-14 09:01 PM GMT

Another couple of great posts Wurzel 😊

Interesting comments on the 'Browns,' mostly broadly in line with my impressions.

Great Duke shots, I just saw them at Prestbury Hill on the one visit last year but my impression was they were doing better than 2012.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 17-Feb-14 09:58 AM GMT

HAPPY BIRTHDAY Wurzel! 😊 have an extra good goodun 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 17-Feb-14 09:00 PM GMT

Many Happy Returns Wurzel 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 17-Feb-14 09:38 PM GMT

Have a great birthday Wurzel, have a real goodun 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Susie, 17-Feb-14 09:39 PM GMT

Happy birthday! 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 17-Feb-14 09:53 PM GMT

Many happy returns of the day Wurzel. Have a great one. 😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Vince Massimo, 17-Feb-14 11:06 PM GMT

Have a goodun (birthday, that is) 😊

Vince

Re: Wurzel

by Lee Hurrell, 17-Feb-14 11:17 PM GMT

Crikey...is it your birthday? Hope it's a been goodun 😊

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Feb-14 11:53 PM GMT

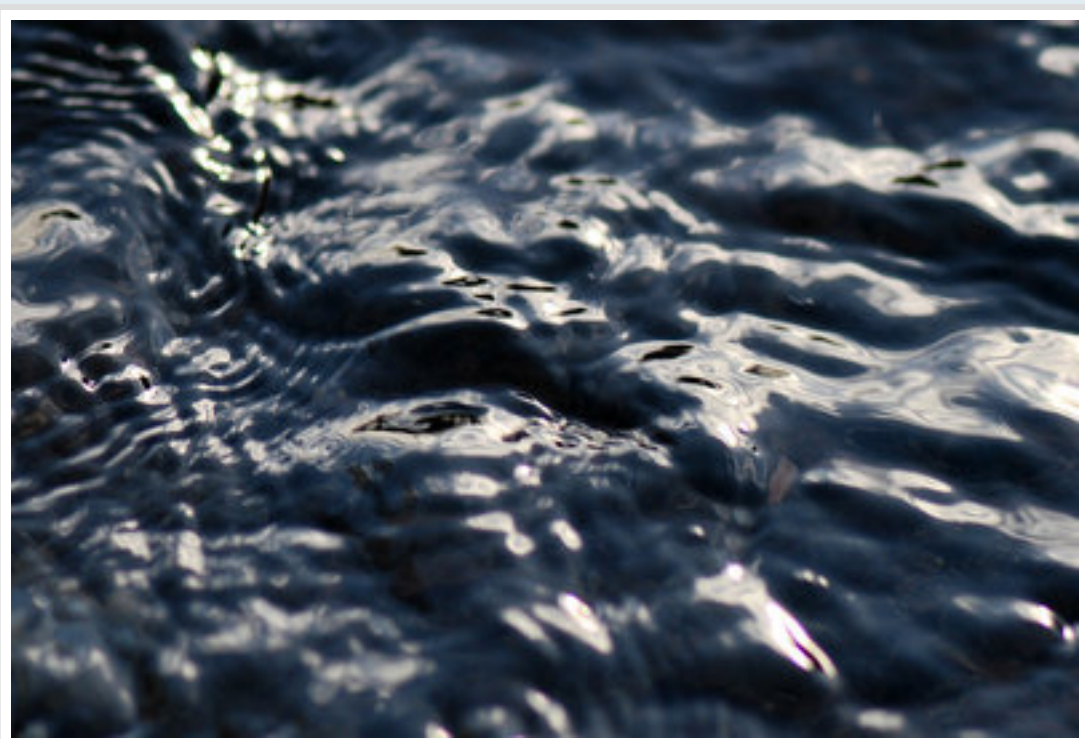
Cheers William 😊 They were a right pain to get as the breeze would catch the flower and send it rocking back and forth like something from a kiddies play park. 😲😲

Cheers Rex 😊 That image stayed with me all day - Daisy Duke and THOSE shorts 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I liked your report on the Specklies it seemed to tie in with my impressions 😊

A huge thank you to Rex, Neil, Mike, Susie, Nick, Vince and Lee for the Birthday Wishes - they certainly helped me to have a 'goodun' both then and since 😊😊😊

Out and About Some More...



Last weekend we took a trip over the border to visit my folks. After a spot of lunch we geared up in waterproofs and boots and ventured out to get some fresh air. It soon became apparent that Sixpenny Handley hadn't escaped the winter storms as some of the shots below show - it may look like a stream but it's actually the road to Garston Wood. Yet despite the wind damage and the saturation everywhere there were signs of spring as Snowdrops tried their hardest to push through.



The Road to Garston Wood...apparently



This weekend we also had a brief respite from the wind and the rain and so once again I ventured out for a quick walk around the local area. The path across to Harnham was submerged and the water ran across it at quite a speed.



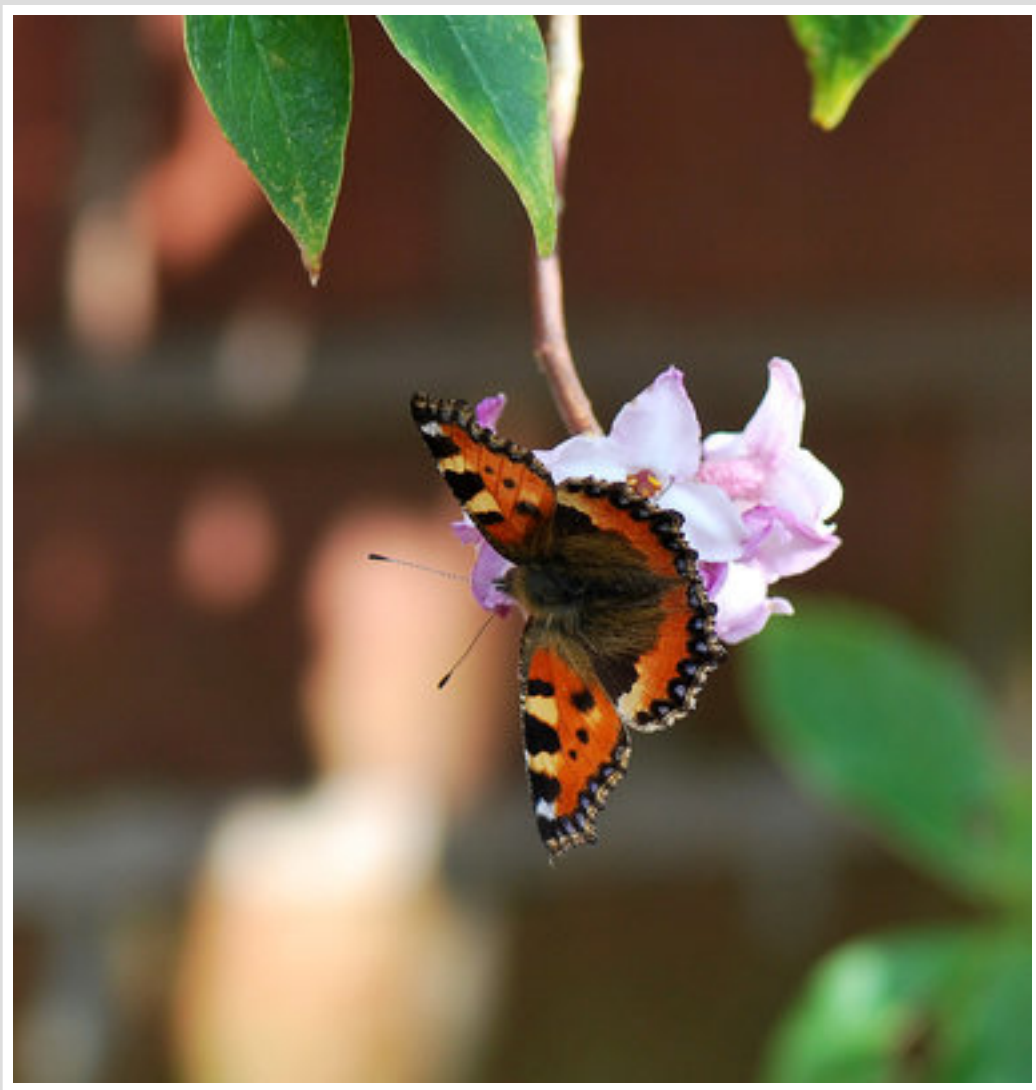
Further on round at Fisherton Island there was a problem at the bridge as a large tree was stuck and couldn't get under so a group of locals were wading in with chainsaws to dislodge it and stop it damming the bridge. Rather than me and so I stayed warm and dry and tried to find some butterflies. I had a feeling that I might be lucky but this part of my walk wasn't the best habitat wise - all the buildings for butterflies to bask on were on the other side of the river so I settled for the spring flowers. There were Violets (I think), Snow Drops, Daffs and a Primrose too. All in February which just goes to show that all the wind and rain has masked how mild it's been. Whether this is a good thing for butterflies I'm not too sure?





I was almost home just about to turn the corner onto my street when a movement in a garden caught my eye. I approached expecting it to just be a large brown leaf, which is what it has been the previous hundred times I've checked a similar looking movement this year. Yet this time it was a Small

Tortoiseshell fluttering around in the garden. I was very cheeky and made as if to head down the path to ring the doorbell, crouched, took a few shots and then swiftly beat a retreat with a huge smile on my face. Looks like my gut feeling that there would be butterflies paid off – perhaps it was an early Birthday Pressie?



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 19-Feb-14 11:40 AM GMT

Happy Birthday Wurzal, it was mine last week 😊 another Aqua person 😊

Love your photo's of the flowers and STS lets hope we see more of them.

I was wondering about the affects of the weather (being so mild this Winter) on those Long Tailed Blues and hoping maybe we'd see them again this year, hoping really that they just may have got through our Winter this time, that would be great.

At the same time wondering about the Large Blues in Somerset and if the floods have affected them in any way, I suppose we'll soon find out. Goldie 🤔

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 19-Feb-14 08:01 PM GMT

Nice one Wurzel, really liking that first Small Tortoiseshell photo 😊

Too busy building up the brownie points lately to get out anywhere myself, maybe this coming weekend if the weather is not too bad.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 19-Feb-14 08:36 PM GMT

Lovely Small Tortoiseshell, Wurzel! I'm envious – my excursion in bright sunshine at the weekend was cut short as a key part of my usual walk locally has disappeared beneath the River Colne...

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 19-Feb-14 09:23 PM GMT

Looking at your photos spring really has gone "boing" Wurzel 😲 I'm still waiting to see my first butterfly of 2014.

Re: Wurzel

by Lee Hurrell, 20-Feb-14 12:38 PM GMT

"nfreem" wrote:

Nice one Wurzel, really liking that first Small Tortoiseshell photo

I agree with Neil, the first ST is a lovely image!

Best wishes

Lee

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 20-Feb-14 05:24 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I agree with Dave, Neil and Lee, a great sighting and lovely shots of the Small Tort 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by philm63, 20-Feb-14 07:23 PM GMT

Great stuff Wurzel – a fascinating look back at 2013, with some great shots and a 20104 butterfly already. Lets hope all that water doesn't limit you efforts to get out and about – enjoy

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Feb-14 11:55 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I too was hoping for some LTBs in 2014 but after the weather we've had I'm not too hopeful 😞

Cheers Neil 😊 I've been busy building the Brownie points too – I think I'm up to three trips now 😊 Shhhh in case the wife is reading 😲😲

Cheers Dave 😊 I hope the waters fall soon – the weather report for your area looks good for his weekend 😊, over my way however...same old same old 😞

Cheers Rex 😊 It won't be long for you now I reckon – perhaps this weekend 😊

Cheers Lee 😊 It was serendipitous 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 I didn't know what I was going to say if the front door had opened 😲

Cheers Phil 😊 I think I might invest in some waders so I'll still be able to get out – or perhaps a wet suit and scuba gear 😲😲

The Hairstreaks



35 Green Hairstreak, 25th May Martin Down

A successful year for both myself and the species. Up until this year this was my nemesis, my bogey butterfly so a comparison of their emergence seems foolish. Also in 2012 they were ridiculously early due to the insane weather in a 3 week period during March – which was when they were first recorded.

Despite (or possibly because of?) their more usual timing of emergence they seemed to be in very good numbers. I found them at Martin Down and subsequently saw them there on two or three other occasions in different parts of the reserve – at Sillen's Lane end, the hotspot and also right at the top of the hill along the ditch. Plus I saw them at two other sites – my Duke site where one actually crawled onto my finger and also at my Marshie site. Again they were spread across the reserves and not just concentrated in one spot. I was especially happy as after speaking to some members of the Wiltshire branch I discovered that the Marshie site colonies are generally much earlier in the timing of their emergence. So next year I can try there and overcome this stumbling block of a species as once you've seen one you often find them all over the place. All I need now is to find some at Larkhill and I'll be in Greenstreak heaven!





36 Brown Hairstreak, 22nd August Shipton Bellinger

Only a couple of days later than 2012 but as in a lot of cases that was down to me and not them. Overall they had a great year. I've heard of reports of decreasing numbers from Noar Hill just recently but this was countered for me by other reports of egg laying females at my Duke site. Plus I personally found five different females at Shipton Bellinger on my later visit there, the most I've seen at one time at the site.

My first visit for Brostreaks was with Philzoid and it was fantastic with "The Brimstone" and a fantastically crisp and fresh male and female Brostreak who both worked the crowd. The 11-3 rule worked a treat for me this year and on all of my visits come 2:55pm there was a sudden dearth of Brostreaks.

As well Shipton I also visited Alners Gorse where I missed the females as I was distracted by the Cloudies but got onto another male. I always thought that the males were supposed to be harder to see as they weren't supposed to come down to the lower levels but at both sites I've seen males feeding down on Brambles. Last year at Shipton the males outnumbered the females 3:1 and this year Shipton visit one was 1:1, visit 2 was 0:5 and Alners was 1:0 which suggests that they come down more commonly than the literature would suggest.

Another observation I made this year was the difference in the timings of the emergence of the two sexes. Usually when I visit I see fresh males and there aren't any females around as they seem to emerge a week or two later than the males who have been scraping while they wait for the girls to arrive. If I do time a visit and find both sexes present it's usually the case that the males are pretty worn with patches of scales scraped away, tears in and chunks missing from their wings; whilst the females look immaculate and pristine. This year however on my first visit I saw both sexes and both were in fine fettle, not a tear visible, wing margins intact and not a scale out of place. I think this was probably down to a later emerging male and an early female more than a great temporal shift. Whatever the reason it was great to be able to make the textbook like comparison between the two different hues of the genders - the blaring in your face orange of the female with the more subtle honey tones of the fresh male. Lush. 😊





37 Purple Hairstreak, 6th July Bentley Wood

By the time the Purps were emerging the summer had hit and things were pretty much caught up so I actually saw my first Purp a couple of days earlier this year than last and again it was at Bentley Wood. It must have been a good day for Hairstreaks as I'd already seen Whitters at another site. Again this year was hard work for Purps - there did seem to be more about but nowhere near the numbers of previous years. A case of doing better but still not doing great and nowhere near up to their full strength.

It was also another hard year photography wise. The best opportunity came when I had rescued one from a drowning at Legoland. But because of where I was I didn't have my camera and just as I'd managed to fumble my iPod out of my pocket it had gone. Also those that I saw at Bentley Wood (which gave me the impression that they did a little better this year) were flying high over the tree tops, bombing along lower down or were almost beyond the range of both my lens and zoom/crop facilities when 'processing' the images. Mind you I did actually manage to get a few snaps and they my first ever Purps actually on Oak! Hopefully this year will bring me some lower encounters - perhaps I'm looking at the wrong time of day and need to go earlier before the dew has evaporated?



38 White-letter Hairstreak, 6th July Secret Squirrel

This is a very hard species to judge numbers of or whether it's early, late or on time as I have very little experience of it. Also it is one of those hard to see and under recorded species so making comparisons in terms of numbers is difficult to make with any degree of confidence but the best guesstimate I can come up with is that they seemed to have a good year. I certainly saw more than I've ever seen before.

This will be the third year that I've managed to photograph it. The first was a very worn individual late in August and was a total fluke. The second was another fluke, this time at Alners Gorse and although it was in much better condition it was too distant to really appreciate so I was beginning to despair at ever getting any half decent shots of a half way decent individual. Luckily some networking by Philzoid put me onto a good site which I've since named "Secret Squirrels".

When we turned up on the 6th July (a whole month earlier than last years' 'first sighting') the heat was building and after a few distant views and fly-bys nicely showing off their rectangular wings thongs weren't looking particularly hopeful for them coming down. Perhaps we were too early in the season we wondered as they all seemed to have their minds on nookie (or at least fighting each other to get some)! Having completed a few circuits and arrived back at the first 'Master Tree' I tried the old 'turn me back on 'em and pour a coffee' trick - which worked a treat.

Not only did we see two or three individuals low enough down for a few shots but I found a mating pair which meant we were able to drink in the butterfly; the blue eye on the hind wing margin, the long tails and the eponymous white lettering. I also noted the beautiful golden hairs and the striped legs which were new to me. So a sight worth the three year wait!





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Lee Hurrell, 22-Feb-14 12:47 AM GMT

Love that last image Wurzel.

WLH remains a bit of an challenge to me; despite seeing them locally when I was in west London, I've never satisfactorily taken a photo of one. I have one bad image taken on an old mobile phone.

So, if anyone knows of a reliable site in Surrey...

Best wishes

Lee

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 23-Feb-14 08:43 PM GMT

Great reports and photos again Wurzel 😊

I missed out on both BH and WLH last year. That is in both cases I had a couple of possible sightings high up but nothing that I was confident enough to claim as a definite sighting. Oh well, more to look out for this year 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 24-Feb-14 08:51 PM GMT

Superb photos of the Hairstreaks Wurzel, we too found both male and female Brown Hairstreak at Shipton seemed to be in sync this year, with beautiful examples of each sex seen together at the same time. This was very likely due to the reasons you have highlighted in your excellent report 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Feb-14 11:20 PM GMT

Cheers Lee 😊 I hope you find a good site in Surrey 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Good luck with the Hairstreaks in 2014 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 Shipton is a cracking Brostreak site 😊

It seems weird that I'm still sorting photos from 2013 at the same time as sorting new ones from 2014 so better get on with "out with the old"...

Old Garden

Having moved out of our rented house last February I really missed my old garden as over the last couple of years it had provided me with a great range of species to photograph. Luckily my wife's twin bought the house and so I was able to drop in now and again. Over the summer when I was asked if I wanted to pay a visit I grabbed my camera and jumped at the chance. Little did I know that it would entail some pretty heavy work over many weeks...



First up was root ripping in the circular border. It felt weird ripping up the vegetation and digging out the bulbs which had offered roosting spots for Orange-tips. Then we attacked the Ivy bush over the wooden archway (no more Red Admirals or Comma on here then 😞) which was a necessity as it was collapsing. During the occasional break I would grab my camera and have a quick mooch about while the others drank tea or juice and I struggled to actually use my camera as after the repeated shocks of swinging a pickaxe my fingers wouldn't work properly. I spent most of my summer holidays while I was growing up working on building sites and this little stint reminded me that pretty much anything can be achieved with a Pick 😊. Fence posts – easy. Concrete – no chance! Hazel stool? Gone! Something worth considering by the Heyshott crew 😊

Over the course of a few days work and a few occasional breaks various butterflies graced me with their presence. I was glad to see my first female Common Blue in the garden, but also disappointed that it hadn't occurred during my tenure and also because it didn't stop long enough for a photo. A male however did, all be it a bit distant. While up the top of the garden a Peacock basked on our second visit. On our third visit a few days later we were greeted by a Peacock on the front of the house



Over the next few weeks we visited at least once, sometimes twice and eventually I started work on the concrete path which ran up the garden. It was back breaking work having to clear the border on one side, break out the path and then dig out the hardcore. It was made even harder when I had to then go back over it and sieve all the topsoil a second time. Due to my close proximity to the fence and the next doors Buddleia I kept inadvertently spooking the butterflies but I did manage to grab a few Bees, Hoverflies and the occasional Brimstone or white.



During one break I made a foray up the garden to an overgrown area with much longer grasses. I saw something fluttering around and so I quietly crept up on it. It was a Meadow Brown so I crouched down and started to take a few shots. It was quite patient but after a few shots I could feel my knees and elbows starting to stiffen so I left the butterfly in peace and headed back down the garden to start swinging the pick again and get my muscles warmed up and working. As the chips flew and the path disintegrated I detached myself from the work and got to musing. At one point I remembered the Meadow Brown that I'd just seen and something didn't feel right about it. So I went and checked my shots and then I noticed that it was one of the unusual ones with two 'pupils' in the eye.



Once I started on the path it turned into a mammoth task but there were a few more breaks to be had...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 25-Feb-14 10:49 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

I have so far had no success at all with any of the Hairstreaks except the Green variety (and a little head start with the Purples of course 😊). They are all near the top of my list for 2014. Yours are all fantastic 😊, I particularly like your White Letters 😊 and I believe these are not too far from me. I will be paying a visit to this site in the summer. There have been trees down in that area in the last few weeks, whether they were Elms or not I do not know. In fact the main road was shut as a result more than once. Unfortunately I could not find enough time to investigate 😞 Hopefully the WLH have not been too badly affected.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Feb-14 11:52 PM GMT

Cheers Jack 😊😞 Good luck with the the Whitters – I always reckon that almost all Hairstreak photographs require a large slice of luck but if you get the timing and the site right the slice diminishes 😊. Shipton Bellinger is great for Brostreaks though Noar Hill might be closer for you?

First Five Rivers

There was something about the weather on Saturday that made me think “Five Rivers”. It could have been the fact that when I woke up the sky was clear and blue or that the sun was pouring in through the windows for the first time since I can’t remember when. Whatever the reason (possibly a sudden rush of Serotonin?) I suddenly had a hankering to get out looking for butterflies.

So jobs finally done and children happily enjoying a play date with their cousin I set off to visit my first proper site of the year, the tried and tested and always reliable Five Rivers. As I wandered past the uprooted trees the weather started to change, the wind would pick up and it was keen and the sun would disappear for short times behind the clouds. Because of this and also because of the dearth of flowering/nectaring plants in bloom I headed straight to the Banks. Yes they were exposed to the wind as it blew across from the river but they caught the sun and there were likely to be some nettles poking through.

I generally just focus on this area during the earliest part of the season walking backwards and forwards along the thin path of the banks scanning downhill hoping for some movement which I’ll try (often in vain) to follow or head down watching the path for basking butterflies which seem to prefer the thinner well trodden path. And so it was today occasionally, I’d stop as the wind played with a leaf or to marvel at the noticeable increase in temperature close to the ground. I’d almost finished my first walk along and was almost at bench which serves as my marker to turn around when I

caught sight of two leaves which instead of moving horizontally were spiraling upwards and interlocking – a pair of butterflies. They broke apart and one shot off down the hill and vanished across the river while the other landed close by just off the path. So I carefully approached taking single steps and waiting between each one so as not to spook it and working around in a large circle so I could try and get behind it. Then came the painful part; kneeling down and feeling the sharp prickle of the nettles through my jeans. Still it was worth it as my second wild Small Tort of 2014 was captured on ‘film’.



Having carefully repeated my approach manoeuvre in reverse I thought that I would give the banks a chance to attract a few more butterflies so set off across the fields to the small spinney that usually has a Brimstone. It must have been a bit too early here for them but instead I found my third Small Tort.



The sun started dipping into the clouds more and more so I thought it best to head back to the banks and resume the circuits. Time was ticking by and while the mixed tit flock that was accompanying me was nice to see I was starting to think that I'd had my fill of butterflies for the day and so I decided to make my next circuit my last. Again as I was approaching the bench a pair of spiraling butterflies erupted like a miniature tornado from the dead grass stalks. I tried to follow them but they were gone and no matter how much I strained my eyes I couldn't relocate them. Even more time ticked by and I took the first three steps of my return journey when there were the two again. I think I was witnessing courtship as the chased butterfly was larger and when it would land the smaller chaser (male) would also land and would then approach wings quivering until it was almost on top of the chased (female). It would then take off and the male would follow after her. I saw them do this a couple of times and each time the female would land in a relatively bare patch amongst the dead grass stalks quite close to some new nettle growth. I was able to approach three times without disturbing them and on the fourth I think the male had finally lured the female as the final time I saw them they headed up the banks and into a secluded gap amongst the Bramble bushes. I couldn't follow them but having already approached three times and gotten plenty of shots I left them alone.



Third time



As I rushed back home (can't be late or it'll be negative Brownie points) I had a huge grin on my face. I just hope that the year continues in this vain.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 27-Feb-14 10:42 PM GMT

A great report there Wurzel 😊 . Mind you kneeling down in nettles ..isn't there anything you won't do for your art 🤪? Those pictures were worth it:- rich and colourful in the winter sun, and as detailed as ever. Its a reminder for me to start getting out and about my local area and not just the butterfly house 😊 .

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Wetton, 28-Feb-14 08:35 AM GMT

Enjoying your reports Wurzel.

Your Bee thing is I think a hoverfly called *Syrirta pipiens* which has a thickened hind femur that can be seen on the photo.

Excellent stuff.

Re: Wurzel

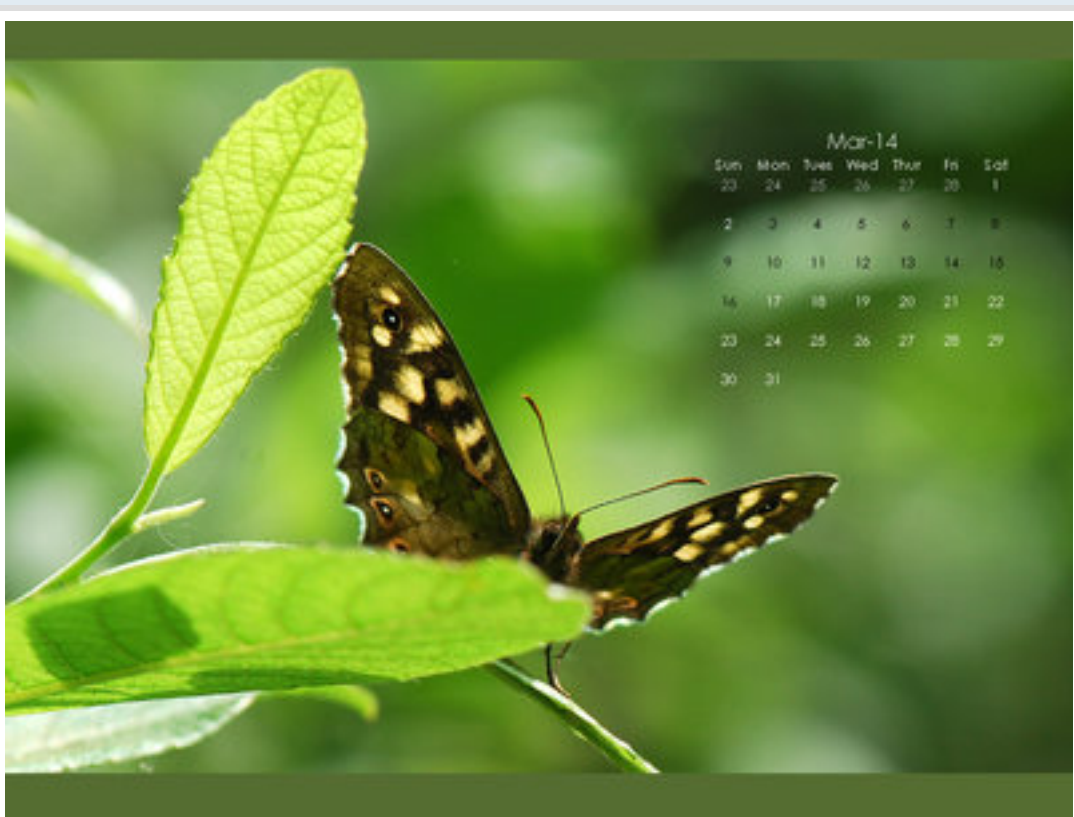
by Wurzel, 01-Mar-14 12:08 AM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 After those trips to Wisley you'll already have your eye in so you'll be racking up the native species soon 😊

Cheers Paul 😊 And cheers for the ID too 😊

March 2014

Let's hope the weather keeps moving forwards towards spring and doesn't go backwards...



Have a goodun

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Mar-14 11:09 PM GMT

The Blues



As there are so many I've been a bit cheeky and I'm covering the Blues in two parts so without further ado...

Part 1

39 Small Copper, 25th May Martin Down

Small Coppers seemed to be slightly later this year but only by a week or so and is probably a reflection of their early emergence last year. When I think back over the year my main feeling about Small Copper is relief. After a run of bad years they seemed to be back to their best. True the earlier broods still seemed a bit sparse but by the second they were really coming on strong. I was seeing them right into the middle of October and in very good nick too suggesting to me a third brood.

I also noticed this year the variation in the length of their tails. Most have a little nubbin poking out from the hind wing margin but I personally saw at least three where this was much more pronounced (though not quite as much as Mikhals). I'm not sure why this could have been though I know they can show this variation. Possibly because once I saw it I started to notice it more as we humans are very good at picking out patterns/anomalies from the norm (possibly explains our superstitious natures).





40 Small Blue, 25th May Martin Down

My first Small Blues were from Martin Down again this year and this seems a good 'early site' for them. They emerged a couple of days earlier than last year but I think that has more to do with when I started looking in 2012 - as that year I was almost in danger of missing them.

I saw them at a couple of new sites this year - both my Duke and Marshie site and also added them to my Larkhill List which was my Small Blue highlight. But despite these apparent successes I was actually quite concerned for them as a species. After the initial joy of seeing them 'elsewhere' I started thinking back over the sightings from Martin Down - my main site for this species - and realised I hadn't seen anywhere near as many. Whilst this could be down to me missing out on seeing them once their numbers had built to the peak my gut tells me that they were down. Chalkhills and Adonis also seem to be struggling at this site so it could be due to grazing or the vegetation management?



41 Silver-studded Blue, 29th June Slop Bog

Back in 2012 the Silver Studs were a right pain as the cool damp spring held them back from emerging so I made several futile trips to Slop Bog before they finally started emerging in July. With the long, cold, seemingly never ending spring of 2013 I didn't expect anything different. However things started to perk up and so I saw my first Silver Studs at Slop Bog a week or so earlier this year, again at Slop Bog. They'd been reported from several other sites earlier than this and so I think that I'd actually gotten to Slop Bog a bit late - although saying that I didn't see many females?

When it comes to thinking about how well they did in terms of numbers I find myself wavering between holding their own and perhaps being down slightly? At the Bog itself I saw some males but there wasn't the "Blues puffs of smoke" which I've encountered on previous visits, when small parties of males erupt in a fight and then drift lazily across the heather dispersing like smoke. This made me feel that they were slightly down though with only one visit it's difficult to make a firm comment. What also makes it difficult to judge is the fact that my judgement may be slightly skewed as I found a few Silver Studs at Godshill while looking for Grayling. One thing's for sure - I need to either make a few more visits next year or find some other sites and that way I can make a more reliable and accurate guesstimate of their success or failure.



42 Brown Argus, 2nd June Marshie Site

Unfortunately I saw my first Brown Argus at about the same time as last year on the memorable trip to my Marshie site. I say unfortunately because I love seeing this delightful little butterfly and the first sighting is one of those times that I look forward. Yet because of all that was going on during this trip; Small Blues, Wall Browns, Marshies everywhere, Marshies mating, ovi-positing Greenstreaks, Battle Royale etc, my first Brown Argus kinda got passed over. In fact I'm rather embarrassed to say that I didn't recall seeing one until I got home and started looking through the photos from the day 😞.

They seemed to start slow and I was worried that they were in for a bad, low numbers year but they seemed to rally during the later broods. I wouldn't say that they bounced back after last year but experienced a gentle bob up. They also seemed to last longer this year and I was seeing them at Larkhill on into September. However I didn't see one on my sorties to Five Rivers and I'm hoping that this was just me getting my timing wrong and missing them rather than the miserable alternative.

I was lucky enough to find a couple of unusually marked B.A.s this year one of which had straw coloured lunules rather than orange and I wasn't sure if this was pathogenic or genetic? The other couple both showed a similar degree of variation as the lunules were huge, making them really strongly marked. One was from the Devenish and the other Martin Down though I haven't been able to find out whether they're named aberrants.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 02-Mar-14 09:27 AM GMT

Great reports again Wurzel, jealous of your Small Torts at Five Rivers 🍷.

Small Coppers definitely bounced back around my patch last year 😊 after a dismal showing in 2012. Good numbers at all my usual sites although I didn't find any third brood, the last ones that I saw were a couple of well faded examples in mid September.

I found good numbers of Small Blue at Bishops Hill last year and apparently they did well at their other Warwickshire sites. I also found them all over the slopes at Prestbury Hill in Gloucestershire where they seemed to be having a particularly good year 😊.

I completely missed out on Silver-studded Blues, just wasn't in the right place at the right time, one for this year perhaps...

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 02-Mar-14 01:28 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, first of all congrats on the Small Torts you found and photographed at Five Rivers 😊 Secondly, lovely shots in part 1 of the Blues 😊 did you really take double the amount of photos as the rest of us, in order to have some like this to post now 🤔 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 02-Mar-14 04:18 PM GMT

Fantastic photo's Wuzal, I plan on going to Bently Wood this year, your pic's from there have got me on the go for Summer 😊 Roll on! 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Mar-14 12:01 AM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 Glad to hear that Small Blues did well somewhere else, good luck with the Silver Studs this year 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 The photos are just carefully selected recycled photos used in a different context 😊

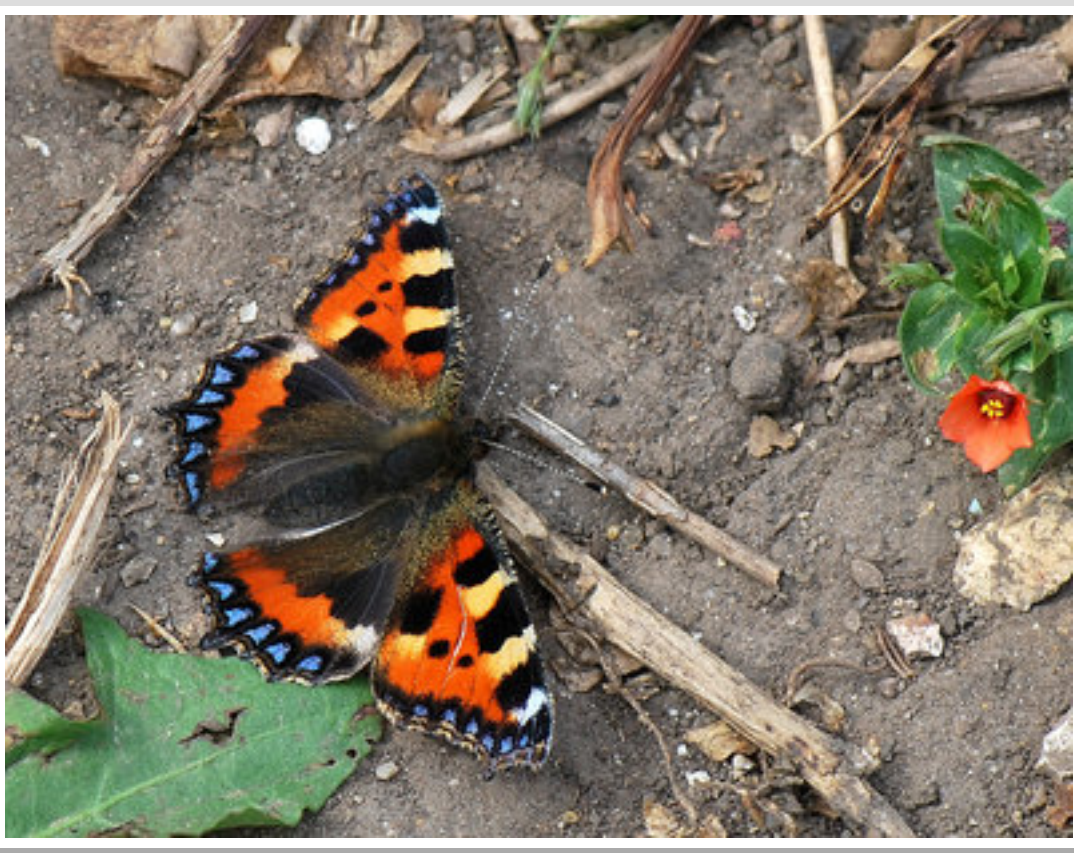
Cheers Goldie 😊 Good luck at Bentley this year, I might even see you there 😊

Back to the Old Garden 2 (from end of summer 2013)

Over the next couple of weeks we visited the garden very regularly, almost every other day and I set to work on the path which ran almost the entire length of it. I'd put my boots on, place my camera on their picnic table and start work on the next section of the concrete swathe. First would be digging up the roots from the border and then forking through the topsoil before piling it up in a bank along the fence so it didn't mix with the hardcore. Then I'd break the concrete with the trusty Pick and lift the pieces out before raking through the hardcore with the Pick and then shoveling it into rubble bags. Then it was leveling the top soil back out before starting on the next section.

On one memorable day I had to take a few more breaks than usual because the girls were playing in the garden but also because we were visited by a several butterflies. As well as the usual Whites around the Buddleia we were also visited by five Small Tortoiseshells which scattered themselves across the garden while I sat and enjoyed a cuppa on the picnic table. One was on the topsoil, another clung to the fence with a third, fourth and fifth on the rocks around the greenhouse. As there were so many in such a small area it was actually surprisingly difficult to get any photos of them. Each time I'd approach one it would stay there indifferent until one of the others just out of view would spook for some reasons and it would spook the one I was after. In the end I resulted to elbow crawling across the lawn and then gradually lifting myself up when I was in range. This technique seemed to work pretty well and in one case I managed to stand directly over the Small Tort.





Then there was a Painted Lady which was on the (bl**dy) path at the top of the garden. After a few quick snaps it did a few tours round the garden before landing and basking down on the recently leveled border. It was here for a good while so I managed to elbow crawl up for some nice close-ups. Looking at it now it kind of reminds of a Tiger face on through a distorted lens (?). Another Painted Lady bombed down the garden, landed briefly on the fence before flitting over and into my neighbours' garden. I had a quick peak and then green with envy wished that I hadn't as the three or four Buddleia were heaving with butterflies – the odd Red Admiral and Peacock as well as ubiquitous Whites and Small Torts.





This memorable afternoon was finished off with a white plume moth which my Moth expert in residence, Philzoid, identified as "1524 Emmelina monodactyla" although these are tricky (aren't most moths?).



After this little purple patch things seemed to quieten down, I suppose the butterflies had discovered the Buddleia next door. So cold cuppa drunk I had to spit on my hands and start wielding the pick again.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 04-Mar-14 10:44 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

When I first read of your Small Tortoiseshells at Five Rivers I had assumed that it was one of your retrospectives 😊 I have to echo others comments and say that I am very envious of some excellent early Tortoiseshell action 😊 They certainly seem to be getting on with it nice and early 😊 At this rate they could perhaps fit in three broods 🤪 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Mar-14 12:06 AM GMT

Cheers Jack 😊 The Small Torts were great value for money and were certainly very intent in meeting their biological imperative 😊 I really do need to get my arse in gear and get all the stuff I'd stockpiled for the winter posted so on that note...

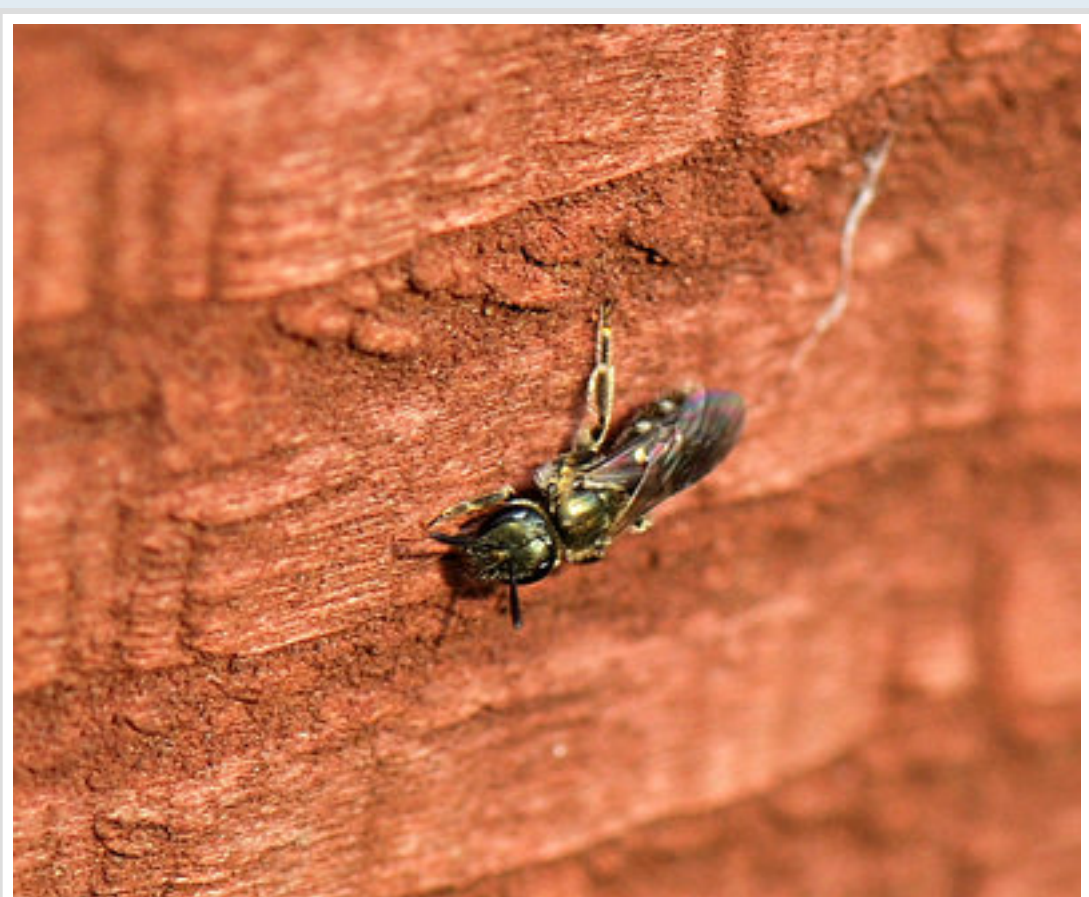
Old Garden 3

Over the final successive visits things began to quieten down on the butterfly front, possibly because it became cooler and wetter but also because we were nearing the end of the season. As I was approaching the end of the path and as various little things kept cropping up that took more than the usual head down and press on method, I didn't really keep too much of an eye out for butterflies but during a few of the tea breaks I took the odd walk around.

On one such occasion I was lucky enough to witness a Hummingbird Hawk Moth in action, feeding on a Buddleia floret that hung over the fence from the neighbours' garden. As I was side on I didn't see the usual black and white marking on the abdomen, instead the orange wings really stood out. It looked a lot like a jet fighter taking fuel in mid air. Absolutely brilliant to watch but unfortunately it kept working higher and further into the Buddleia and eventually it was lost from view.



On another occasion I'd downed tools was just walking down the garden and working out in my head that another afternoon should see the job done when a tiny bee landed on the fence. It glinted in the sun and as I cautiously approached I realized it was an *Osmia* species in fact *Osmia caerulea*, the Blue Mason Bee. This was a male as it was golden as if it had been dipped in a pot of gold Humbrol. I'd encountered these cracking little bees in the same place the year before and I hope they'll continue so I can find them in future visits.



I completed as much of the path that I could by the next visit, after that my niece was ill and since she has recovered the winter is upon us so that was it for visits to the Old Garden, apart from a quick one at the end of October – which has already been posted – actually in October 🤪 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 06-Mar-14 10:03 PM GMT

I love watching Hummingbird Hawk Moths Wurzel, it's great fun trying to get a good shot of them in action isn't it. For years I've been dying to see a Narrow or Broad Bordered Bee Hawk Moth, maybe this year? 😊

B'saurus

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Mar-14 12:40 PM GMT

Cheers Rex 😊 I would have replied yesterday but was at the Options Evening – who said teaching was 9-3? 😡 The Bee Hawk Moths are at Bentley Wood and one is at Martin Down – bit of a trek but they are so eye catching they'd be worth it. I've seen them at Bentley Wood three years on the trot and every time I'm so stunned that I forget to actually get any shots 😳😳

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Mar-14 10:55 PM GMT

Part 2



43 Common Blue, 2nd June Cotley Hill

The Common Blues this year started to actually live up to their name. After a few difficult years they seemed to show the start of an upturn in their fortunes. It was a slow start from when they finally emerged a couple of weeks later than 2012 and for a while things weren't looking good again. Then they caught up and there wasn't the noticeable drop in numbers that we usually see in June as the first brood overran into the second.

They then became widespread and I saw them at almost every site – with only Bentley Wood (wrong habitat) and Slop Bog (competition with Silver Studs?) the exceptions. On one notable visit to Shipton Bellinger they were doing their best it seemed to try and outnumber the Meadow Browns and at Larkhill they were keeping me busy right up until mid September.

That being said I still don't think that they had reached their best or the numbers that we saw back in their 'glory days'.



44 Chalkhill Blue, 24th July The Devenish

With this species it was almost a tale of two sites, though I found a cracking third, as my usual two sites saw very different fortunes. At Martin Down for some reason they seemed down again this year. There still seemed to be plenty about but I don't recall seeing as many as last year and then I didn't see as many as in 2011. A worrying trend. Yet at Stockbridge they were probably about the same as last year and were around in very good numbers. However for me the real success was finding them at The Devenish. Indeed my first of the year was from here, at the same sort of time as last year, after an exasperating journey from work for a quick stop-off. On a later visit in August they were all over the steep hillside almost like low level powder blue clouds though by this time they were past their best. It was brilliant to find them here as it's only 5 minutes drive from home which means more time on site enjoying them than I'd get at Martin Down or Stockbridge.





45 Adonis Blue, 8th June Martin Down

At Martin Down they like the Chalkhills also saw a decrease in numbers whilst I visited Stockbridge between broods so missed them there entirely. I managed to find both broods at The Devenish though and they seemed to do better during the second brood than the first though this could have been due to catching them at either end of the first brood rather than during their peak.

That's one of the inaccuracies in some of my judgements - counting them at their peak. If I find them before this I can't always get back later in the flight to judge them at their peak due to other commitments or because something else has emerged - a drawback of having to work for a living, there's only so much butterflying you can cram in!



46 Holly Blue, 5th May Warndon Villages Worcester

Last year I was worried by the dearth of Small Coppers but they bounced back this year in a fantastic fashion. So when I started considering the plight of the Holly Blue I'm hoping for a similar turn around in fortunes for them in 2014. 2013 was a pretty dismal year for them. I never see them in large numbers but I see them in lots of places but not this year. In fact I saw them at only 5 sites and I saw only 10 or 11 over the whole season. Also I saw my first almost 6 weeks later in 2013 than in 2012 and after this very late emergence they never seemed to recover. They were one of a group of early spring species that were really hit hard by the late start to spring. Others managed to catch up in later broods and benefited from the great summer but Holly Blues never seemed to get anywhere so I'm hoping that enough eggs were laid and survived ready for an upturn in 2014.



So ends the Tally of my 2013, it was a funny old year really and went from the ridiculous to the sublime, with the never ending winter eventually becoming a glorious, if short lived summer and so looking back over all here is a round-up of my 2013.

First up the lows...

No Glanvilles despite visits to the Isle of Wight and a main land site as well as crossing fingers, toes and arms for Wrecclesham which never happened, Missing Wood Whites twice which was really disappointing after the delights of my first Wood Whites in 2012, Not getting my target species despite research and planning, Getting moved on by the Police at Larkhill! LTBs and the less said about them the better as I was one of the few that didn't get onto them. It seems that the Jungle Drums don't sound in Wiltshire, out here in the sticks we're left to our own devices. 😊

Enough maudlin on with the Highs!

Greenstreaks and Dukes a plenty at a cracking new site, Marsh Fritillaries aplenty at another new site, Cloudies all over the place – males, females, worn pale ones, egg laying and back lit beauties. Brimstone basking at Shipton!! Will I ever see that again? White Letters at Secret Squirrels mating and at lens level.

The best trip of the year for me was difficult to choose and my Duke site came close as did Lulworth during my camping holiday but in the end it had to be the Marshie site as it was as close to perfect as I've ever experienced and it also had the highlight of the year – the Battle Royale.

Targets for 2014...

- 1.) Large Blue
- 2.) Heath Frit (if I write it down enough it might happen)
- 3.) More Greenstreaks – I love em now! 😄
- 4.) Start my next sets of books – butterflies in cop 😞

So that was 2013...

Have a goodun (2014 that is!)

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 07-Mar-14 11:33 PM GMT

Thanks for the info on the Bee Bordered Hawk Moths Wurzel 😊 I might have to try and get to Bentley wood at some point to try my luck. I believe that they are seen at Park Corner BC reserve but despite having been there many times over the last few years I've never encountered one, Maybe this year 😊

Yet more lovely photos in part 2 Wurzel 😊

B'saurus

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Mar-14 12:09 AM GMT

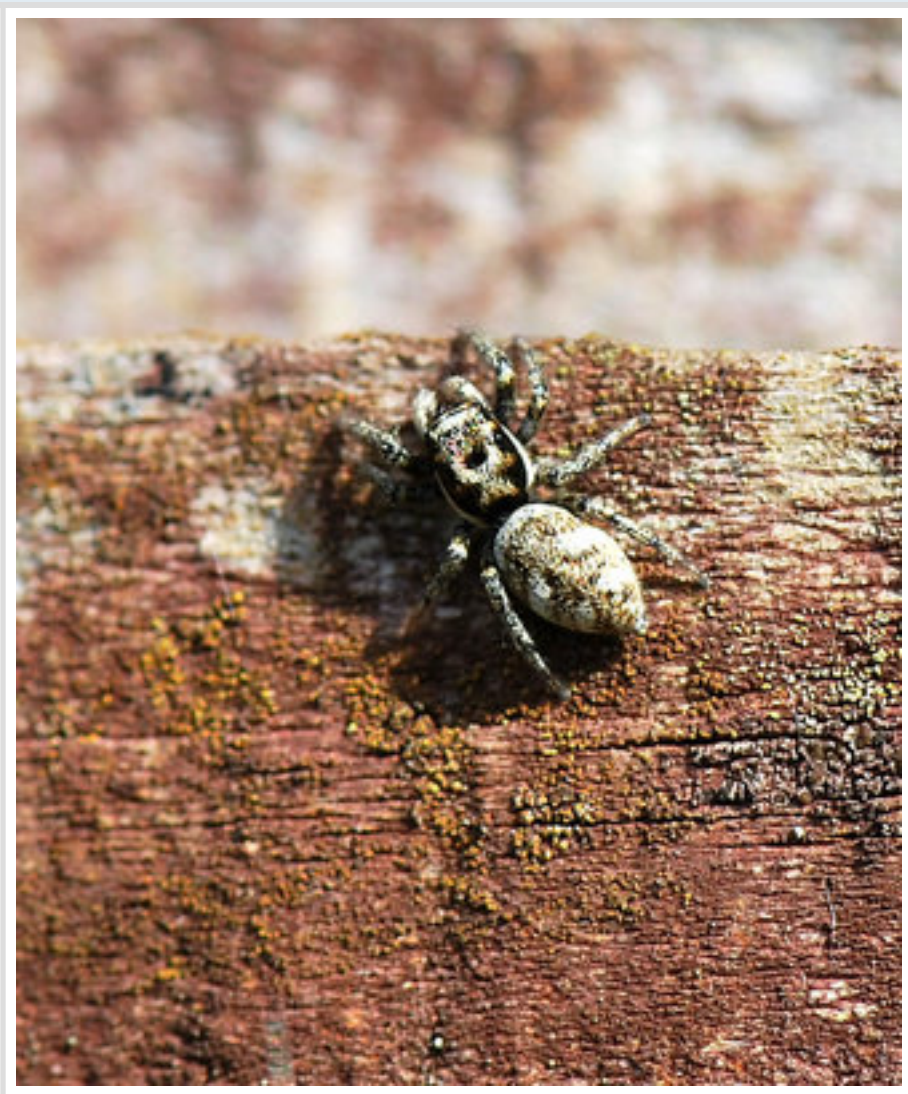
Cheers Rex 😊 Bentley is a great site so let me know if you do plan a visit. Good luck anyway 😊

Start of Super Saturday – 08-03-2014

Having finally caught up with my retrospective posts (for butterflies) here goes something new... 😊

Saturday began almost as usual with the mad rushing around that happens almost every Saturday morning so I can get the girls to their Swimming lessons over at Five Rivers. This Saturday however we had an electrician working in the house, I had to do some banking and also we had to head over to our old house to help my sister in-law with a bit more gardening – so it was even more chaotic than normal. I dropped the girls off at Five Rivers and then walked into town along the tow path to the banks. On my return I was just passing the ‘Avon Valley’ sign when a scraggly brown butterfly zipped by – my first Comma of the year! Unfortunately it was gone so quickly I didn’t get a shot.

Once up at our old garden I had a quick look around while working out what to do and it was apparent that things were starting to happen as there were flies and spiders out, midges and bees and eventually butterflies too – with my first Brimstone bombing by. They never seem to stop at this time of year and the best I could manage was a distant ‘sports mode shot’. Still you can see it’s a butterfly (just) so it still counts.

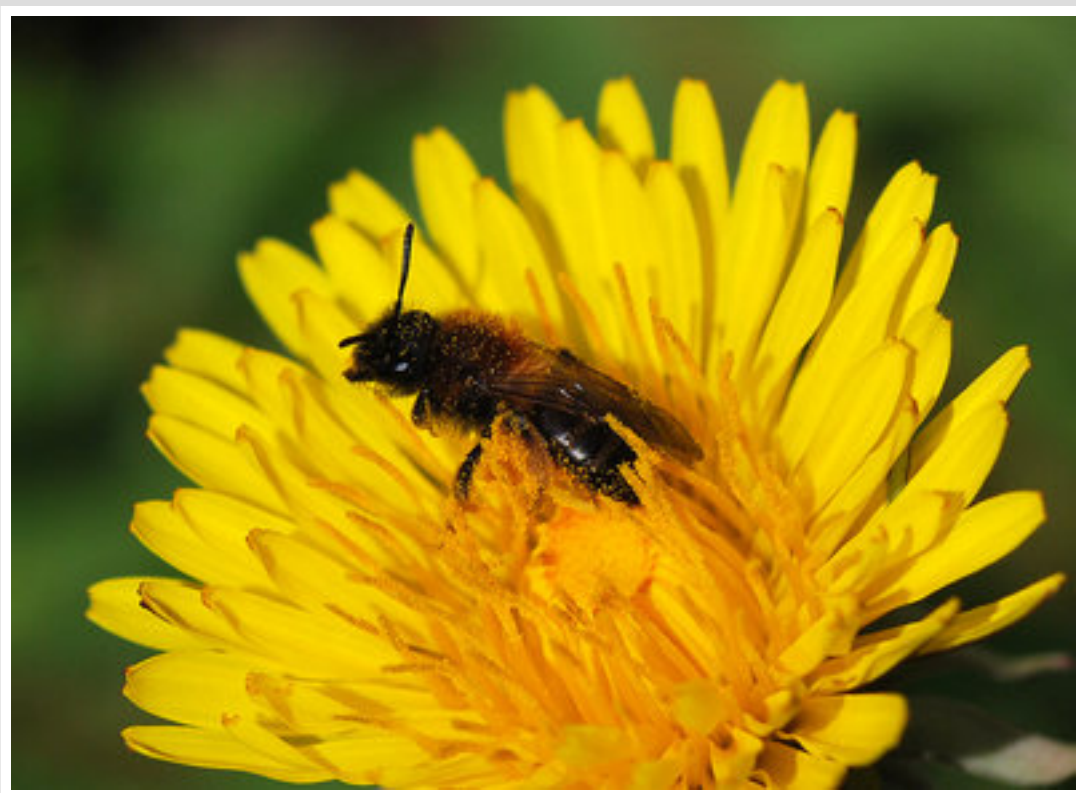




I set to work uprooting a dead Plum tree from next to the fence and the odd Brimstone would fly by every now and again and taunt me as I worked. During a break from chopping (my Brother had found an Axe in the tool shed 😊) I had another mooch around the garden and by the large rubble pile which is all that remains of the concrete path and hiding round the corner was a Small Tortoiseshell.



After that I worked on and the root was soon history and the soil dug over and levelled. Another quick saunter around produced more bees, an Andrena and Osmia though I wasn't quick enough to capture the Hairy foots. Plus I had a few more attempts at Sports mode Brimstones , most of which feature a lot of greenish scrubby looking stuff and very little in the way of yellow butterflies!





Work done my older daughter and I loaded ourselves into the car and set off to try and find some butterflies, but where to go Five Rivers or Middle Street...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Mar-14 12:40 AM GMT

Middle Street 08-02-2014

So my older daughter and I were in the car, we'd reached the T-junction and had a decision to make - Middle Street which was a risk as I didn't know how it had fared after the flooding or Five Rivers which would be a safe bet? In the end I let my daughter decide - so it was off to the unknown and Middle Street. On the way we saw a few more fleeting glimpses of Brimstones and even had to wind the windows down as it was so hot in the car! It was almost like a summer day and I had to check my calendar on my iPod to reassure myself that it was March and not May.

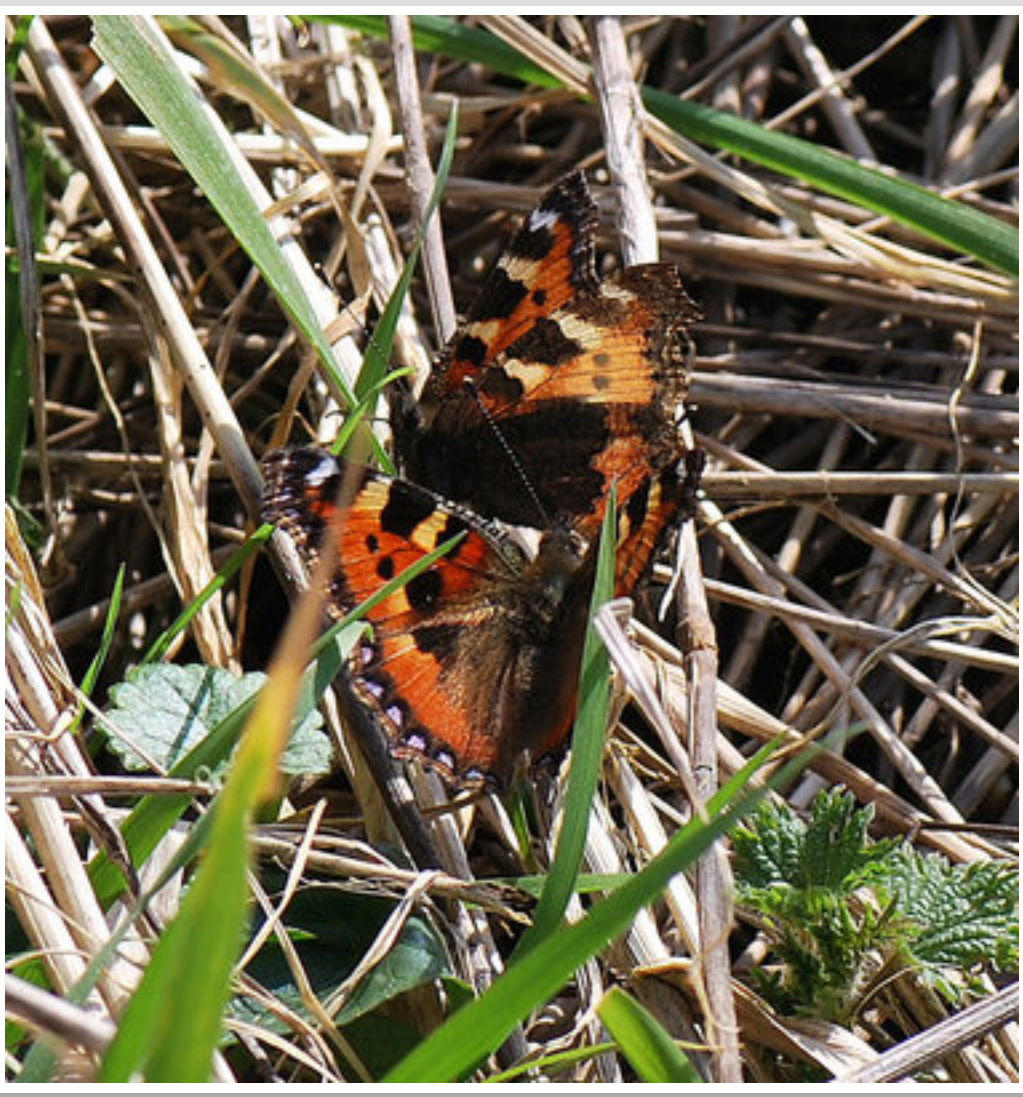
Once on site it was apparent that the floods hadn't done too much damage here - a few trees were down and the ground was still very damp under foot but in a month or two that will lead to some pretty good vegetative growth and hopefully there will be Damselflies and butterflies everywhere. Indeed there were plenty of butterflies here today and a tattered and tired looking Small Tort with half a wing missing greeted us almost as soon as we'd started walking along the main path. Having buzzed us it bombed away towards the goal posts and put up a Red Admiral. A couple more bombed about as we made our way to the pond and the soak away by the houses and they were joined by a couple of male Brimstones floating by but never stopping. One Small Tort flew up and alighted in a small birch tree sitting on the end of a small twig - something I'd not seen before, whilst others basked on the side of the path and banks or edges of the ditches. A fair number seemed paired up... well one of them wanted too I don't know how willing the other member of the pair was.



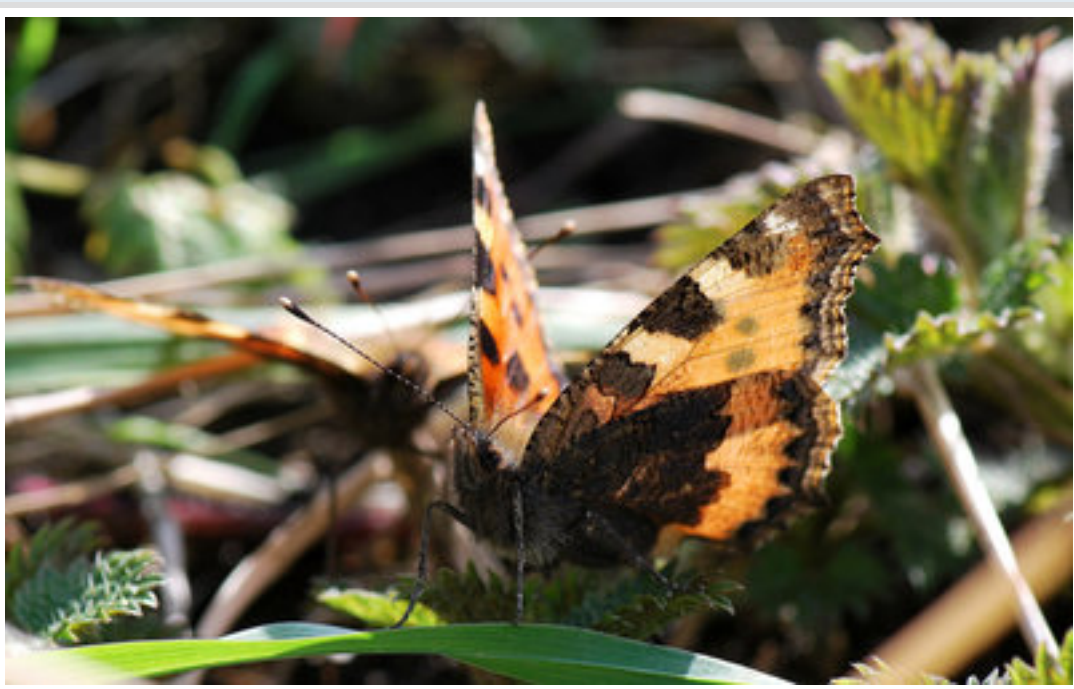
I tried counting but this proved futile as I'd see 6 or 7 but one would bomb over the reeds to be quickly replaced lower down and moving in the opposite direction by another – but was it a different individual or a double count? I just couldn't keep up with them they were literally everywhere and in the end both my daughter and I didn't even point out or make an utterance when yet another Small Tort hove into view. After the good year last year this one seems to have started even better! There were all sorts to see from pairs courting to fresh looking to worn, torn and tired Cassanovas basking before trying for their next conquest. One pair seemed so excited that they crash landed in amongst the long grasses as the 'chase' became too frenetic!



"Just let me get me breath back"



Crash land!



All too soon we'd completed our slow circuit around the pond and slightly dazed I tried to work out how many butterflies we'd actually seen. Three Brimstones was a conservative estimate, there was definitely one Red Admiral but I'd lost count of the Small Tortoiseshells. In the end I went with the minimum count of 7 as that was the most I saw at any one time in one field of view as it were, but here were probably many, many more than this. It was absolutely fabulous and such a welcome break after a fortnight since seeing my last set of butterflies.

As we made our way back towards the car we realized that we'd only used up about an hour of our allocated two. I looked at Kitty and she looked back and I suggested; "A quick trip to Five Rivers?"

"Good idea dad let's go"

So we did, well I wouldn't want to let my daughter down would I? 😊

Have a goodun

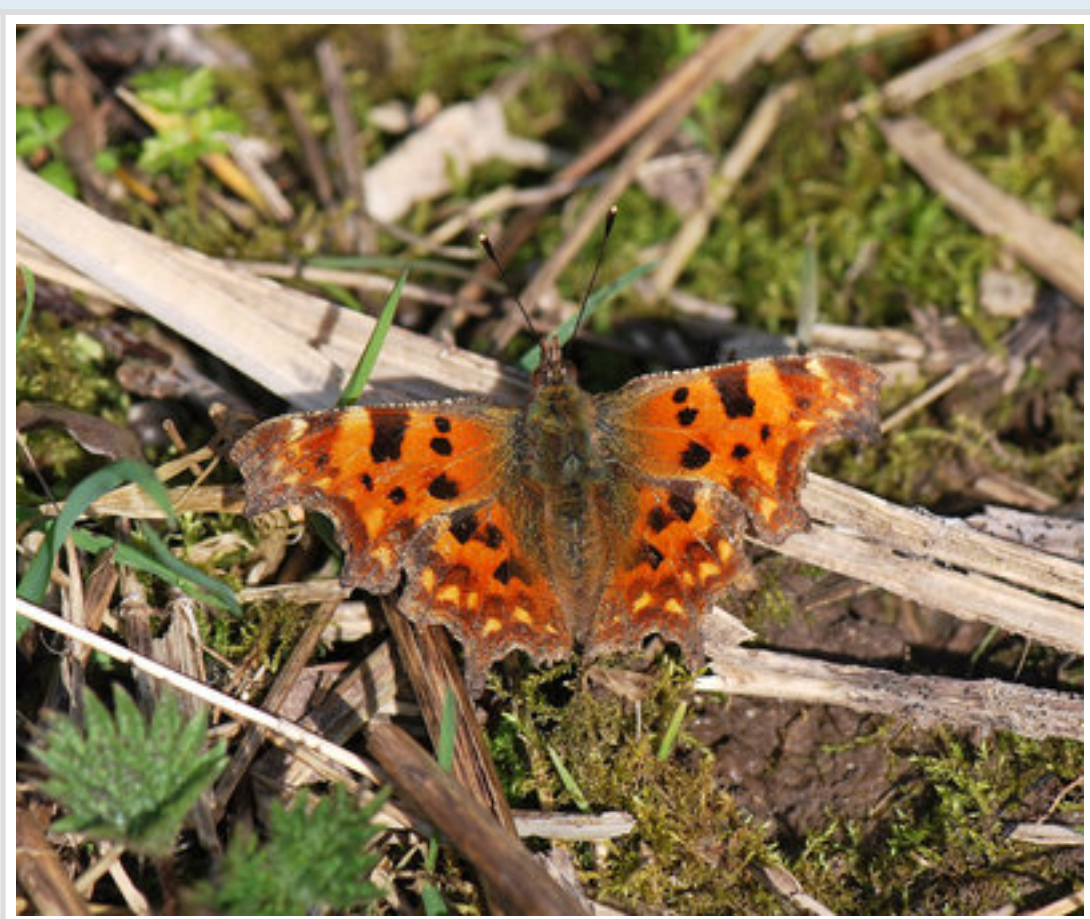
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Mar-14 12:54 AM GMT

Five Rivers 08-03-2014

With our allocated two hours ticking away we passed as quickly as we could through the cross town traffic to the other side of Salisbury. Having already seen my first Comma of the year here during the morning I was hopeful of catching up with one. So we quickly gathered our things - no coats or jumpers as it was so warm - and headed to the corner of the banks by the spinney. This area has produced my first photos of Commas for the past two years so I was hoping to make it a third year on the trot. After a very quick stop off for a lovely fresh looking Small Tortoiseshell we rounded the corner and I gave my daughter instructions to keep a look out for orangey butterflies and there was one flying towards us. It landed and so I took my shots creeping closer and closer and trying to ignore the stings of the nettles through my jeans. Happy to have something in the bag I slowly backed up and we headed off along the banks - what a start.



And it got better as a few steps along a Small Tort flew up from almost directly under my daughters feet and put up a larger almost completely black butterfly - my first peacock of the year. We followed it with our eyes and once it landed so we both slowly approached, nonchalantly so as not to spook it but it was very flighty and was flicking its wings so it was nervous and after only two shots it took off at speed. Still now my yearly tally had gone from 2 to 5 in the space of a few hours and I had seen 5 species in one day - not bad for this early in March.

We carried on round and there were a few more Small Torts basking along the path and again it got to the point of where they were coming so quickly that I couldn't be sure of not double counting so I reported my minimum count to county.



If it had been great so far it just got even better as upon on way back along the banks to our starting pint we followed the patrolling Comma until he stopped and perched on a large dead grass stalk. While I was concentrating on the Comma my daughter had found a courting pair of Small Tortoiseshells and so did a great job of stalking them to get some video on my iPod. Once she was happy we swapped places and I focused on Torts. And so we kept alternating for the next 10 minutes or so. The Comma during this time adopted a Praying Mantis like pose. The Small Torts seemed to be prolonging their courtship and it seemed like the male was copying the females poses, so when she would close her wings so would he, if she orientated herself differently he would move to align himself directly behind her still. Eventually we realised that time was almost up so we reluctantly left the butterflies where they were and took the small path up the side of the bank towards the spinney.





As we were heading back some movements caught my eye and a couple more Small Torts flitted here and there along the edge of the spinney one of which pout up another butterfly that looked different. Whereas the Small Torts looked orangey with chocolate bodies this was ginger all over – a second Comma. A careful approach and I found it trying to hide amongst some nettles. It seemed much brighter and lighter in colour than the one patrolling the banks and the markings seemed much reduced by comparison. In fact it reminded me almost of an H.Comma rather than the spring form though obviously it isn't that.



Somehow we managed to make it back with 1 minute left to spare of our allotted 2 hours and as we walked up the drive to pick my wife and younger daughter up from our old house my older daughter asked "where are we going next weekend dad?" Where indeed? I don't know whether today could be topped until a lot more species start emerging...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 13-Mar-14 02:52 PM GMT

Great reports wurzel 😊 . A bit of nice weather and it all happens. It must be great to have places like 5 rivers so close to your doorstep 🏡 . Good to see Kitty getting stuck in with the filming. It doesn't look like she needs much encouragement 😊 . Also I like the first two pictures from 5 rivers which illustrate the double take similarity of the comma to the Small tortoiseshell very nicely.

Last Sunday was good for us in Surrey too as both I and my girls saw small tortoiseshell in separate locations around Woking 😊 . Small Torts have been rare around my way these last few years so hopefully this is a sign of good things to come.

WRT your comments on the Blues I have to agree that the Holly Blue was somewhat scarce last year and this may be the result of cyclical parasitism of this species by the wasp *Listrodomus nyctemerus* 🐛 . And while on the subject of parasitism I expect you've noticed the hitch-hiking mites on the bumblebee 🐝 .

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 13-Mar-14 08:48 PM GMT

You pack an awful lot into the the time available to you Wurzel (I don't mean 'awful'). You also pack some gorgeous and prolific photos into both your current posts and last years 😊 Nice to see your daughter's interest in all things lep. 😊 I'm sure you will reach and surpass your 2014 targets and will derive much pleasure in doing so 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Mar-14 01:06 AM GMT

Work at lunchtime 12-03-2014

On Wednesday as I was in trapped in the lab a Brimstone floated agonisingly close to the window before lifting and disappearing up and over the roof. Then as I walked across the Quad to get my lunch a Red Admiral flew towards me and then shot over my head...so I decided then and there that the Butterfly Gods were telling me to get out and check my work environs. So this meant nipping out and checking the fields. After the briefest saunter I found a Small Tortoiseshell up by the old high jump pit basking on the sands in amongst the rubbish.



As I was just finishing up with one another one flitted by and passed just through the hedge landing on the surround margin of the neighbouring field. I could just poke my camera through and focus on it as it was taking salts from a waste bag.



When heading back I noticed that just off site (literally a single step) on a tiny bank by the old garages there were 6 Small Tortoiseshells busy bumbling into each other and feeding. The bank they were on is only a couple of metres long and about 45cms high yet it had 6. I tried really, really hard but the best I could manage was to get 4 in one shot. They were quite an assortment ranging from those that were fresh out of the box to those that looked like they were not long of this world, in fact I was tempted to look around for a few nails to ensure they didn't shuffle of their perch while I was

watching them 😊



They were quite an assortment from fresh looking to torn and tatty including one tired looking stalwart



All too soon I was walking back into the lab for the afternoon stretch. Still maybe tomorrow will be even better - it would be nice to get a decent Brimstone shot...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 16-Mar-14 03:40 PM GMT

Lovely shots Wurzal, hope the weather is better where you are, it's pretty grim here right now , Drizzle and the forecast not much better tomorrow, still at least I did get started.

I'm still trying to find out which is the best setting for my camera, may be I'll have worked it out by the time the weather is better 😊

Mean time I'll have to look at your great photo's and enjoy Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Hoggers, 16-Mar-14 05:54 PM GMT

Four Small Tortoiseshells in one photo, Wurzel! Marvellous!

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Wurzel

by William, 16-Mar-14 07:11 PM GMT

"Hoggers" wrote:

Four Small Tortoiseshells in one photo, Wurzel! Marvellous!

That's a particularly fine achievement at this time of year – superb! 😊😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 16-Mar-14 08:01 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Wurzel 😊

Those Small Tortoiseshells bring back memories of early September in Dorset last year 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 16-Mar-14 08:10 PM GMT

Lovely Tortoiseshells, Wurzel – none of the ones I've seen seem to stop for very long and certainly not in clusters like that.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Susie, 16-Mar-14 08:42 PM GMT

Gorgeous pictures 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Mar-14 12:05 AM GMT

Sorry for not remarking on your comments Philzoid and Mike – it had been a long day (and an even longer Friday night – ripping down ceilings and clearing it all up – 150 years of dust 😲) so to remedy that...

Cheers Philzoid 😊 I did notice the mites I can never work out how they manage to carry so many of them around on them? Good news on the Small Torts and Five Rivers is a cracking little site – so much so that the local branch are thinking about holding a 'butterfly family day' there – which you're more than welcome to attend – there may be some moths as well 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 Necessity is the mother of invention – especially when you have two girls and a wife to look after and endless books to mark 😊 Here's hoping for the targets 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I always set my camera to Macro and let it do all the hard work – I mean fairs fair I have to stalk the butterfly why can't the camera take care of it's side of the business? 😊 I think the weather is going to get bad all over by next weekend 😊 Still I might be able to wring a little bit more of it 😊

Cheers Hoggers 😊 I was hoping for a couple of butterflies but this was quite a shock to the system after the dreadful spring last year 😊

Cheers William 😊 Right place at the right time, if only that would happen for a Camberwell Beauty 😊😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Small Torts seem to be doing well again this year the hardest thing is trying to count them 😲

Cheers Dave 😊 If only they'd clumped together a bit more I might have managed all 6 in shot 😊😊

Cheers Susie 😊 It's all down to the light I'm sure.

More lunch time shenanigans 13-03-2014

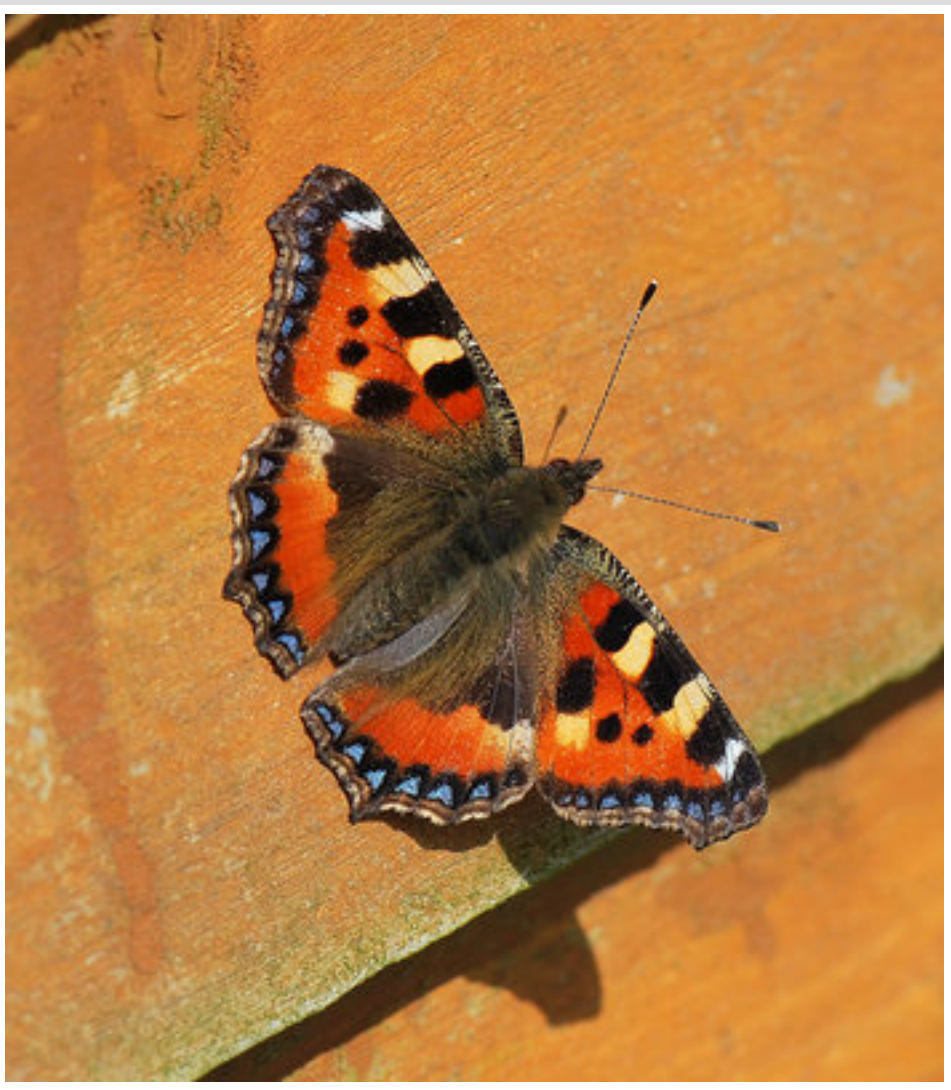
After a great lunchtime spent watching Small Tortoiseshells yesterday I thought that I should make hay while the sun shines – remembering the way the fantastic spring of 2012 turned cold and then wet for pretty much most of the summer. So I headed out with my camera and headed straight back to the bank. This time instead of the many butterflies swarming over it there was a single solitary Peacock but I didn't mind the lack of numbers as I hadn't caught up with this species properly yet this year. Hence I went for a few close ups while it was busy feeding.



Having a few shots I left the Peacock in peace and worked my way along the fence bordering the playing fields. Eve yow and then I'd have to stop to investigate a butterfly that would take off. It was invariably a Small Tortoiseshell so I started to think about the types of shots that I hadn't managed to take of this species this year yet. Almost all have had their wings wide open (apart from the nervous wing flicks they do just before they take off) so I was thinking about trying for some closed wing shots.



As I carried on along the fence I noticed that many were starting to show a bit of wear and tear, some had scales missing whilst others had rips and tears in their wings. Saying that, every now and again there would be a resplendent one that would make all the stalking worthwhile.



I didn't have it all my own way and I was annoyed with myself as I startled a Brimstone that was taking nectar and I was convinced that I would have been about to approach it if I had been paying more attention. Plus there was a Comma that was a little too far away in a neighbouring garden and just wouldn't move that extra metre closer. In the end the count numbered 1 a piece of Peacock, Brimstone and Comma and a great 14 Small Torts - not a bad half hour. Mind you this is 6 times longer than I usually spend at Larkhill so I better start sharpening up ready for when I make my morning stop-offs there in a month or two's time.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 18-Mar-14 12:58 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel

It is so fantastic to see everybodys diary full of Small Tortoiseshells. I do not think you can ever have too many of them:D You seem to have found some particularly stunning ones 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Mar-14 08:38 AM GMT

Cheers Jack 😊 I The Small Tortoiseshells are everywhere, in fact they seem to be pretty much all I'm seeing at the mo, though they are a fantastic sight 😊

Making the most of Friday 14-03-2014

As the good weather continued I thought that I should make the most of it so I headed out to walk the fences and hedges that border the playing fields. I started off by the small bank but today there was only a single Small Tort and so I carried on round the rest of the new route I've adopted however through the course of my 20 minutes or so I saw only one species the ubiquitous Small Tortoiseshell. On the walk there I counted 34 but they had an annoying habit of flying off from the path only to land a little way ahead or even more tricky was when they'd veer off into one of the gardens possibly to reappear further along the path! So having found so many in the full range of livery I added a rather nice example to my 'butterflies on poo' and

reached the end of the path.

on the return journey I was suss to their tricky ways and so noted the butterflies and tried to watch where it landed before counting it and still I reached a count of 27. I can't remember seeing that many ever - this is one hell of a comeback.



On the way home I drove the back way hoping for a glimpse of a white at my little stop off but as I edged the car slowly along the road scanning the verges there was nothing - so I'll have a bit to wait I reckon for the Whites to really get going. All that faced me when I got home was sealing rooms and ripping down some ceiling - lathe and plaster which is 150 years old - so I thought I was due a little distraction and relaxation before starting work all over again. Hence I pulled into the 'tank stop' near Coombe and had a quick mooch around.

Again the only species present was Small Tortoiseshell and what they lacked in numbers here, a paltry 9 they made up for range of behaviours. Over the course of 5 minutes I witnessed spiraling battles and courting behaviour which quickly moved up into the trees. Plus I saw a Small Tort hanging bat like from a branch and further exaggerating their superficial resemblance to 'Flying Foxes'.



All too soon I had to head home and pull on the overalls, face mask and goggles but at least I had the memories of the day to brighten up the inky blackness of 150 years of soot and dust!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Hoggers, 18-Mar-14 05:44 PM GMT

Some really lovely Small Tortoiseshells there, Wurzel. There's such a difference in the condition you can find them in at the moment. Most seem roughed up to varying degrees but if you're lucky there are some that look perfect.

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 18-Mar-14 09:04 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, like you I am thinking back to early 2012 and wondering what the next few weeks will bring with the weather this year. It does seem to be that the best summers often follow on from long drawn out winters like last year and that nice early spring weather is often followed by wet summers. I know that is a bit of a sweeping generalisation, guess we'll just have to wait and see.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Mar-14 11:39 AM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 It has been concerning me but it luckily it hasn't got stupidly hot yet like it did in 2012 when it was reaching 20 regularly over the three week period (even 25 in Scotland) so hopefully if the summer isn't too crash hot it won't be a complete washout 😊

Cheers Hoggers 😊 The Small Torts are a regular smorgasbord at the moment. In bad years it can be disappointing when you you find a worn Small Tortosieshell but this year that isn't a concern – just take a few more steps and you'll see another one, which will probably be in better condition 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Mar-14 01:02 AM GMT

Because of the fact that I'm not even a week behind with my PD, which I can't get used to 😬, I was thinking about not posting for a bit. But then I remembered that I'd already written a few posts to get me through the winter months and now with the change in the weather I reckon perhaps I should get on with it...

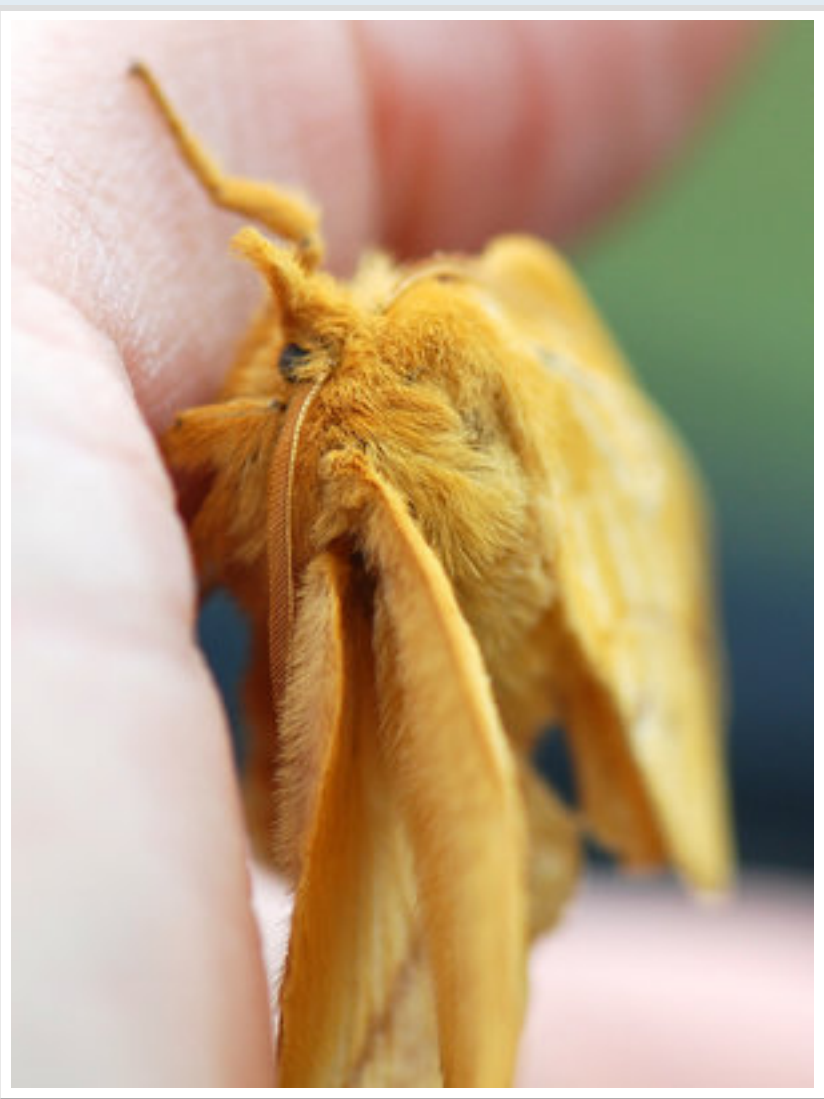
Moths of Downshay

Way back in the summer I took the family back to my old stamping ground on the Isle of Purbeck. I lived in Poole for my formative years and so spent a huge amount of time here; from beach days with my parents, driving the by-ways with friends, birding throughout the year to completing my A Level coursework counting *Patella vulgata* on the rocky shores of Peverill. Because of this I love getting back to this area and showing my girls all the glorious sights and enjoying the experiences I had when I was growing up.

Over the last couple of years we've camped at the same place, Downshay, which affords views of Ballard Down, Corfe Castle as well as the steam railway. The facilities are rustic but good and one of the shower blocks is a converted small barn. As the lights are on all night and the high roof space is still accessible it attracts plenty of moths. I've noticed this before but carrying my camera down to the toilet block didn't seem appropriate so previously I just noted down what I thought that I saw and left it at that.

This year however I came up with a new plan. We use toddler sippy cups for the girls when camping to avoid spills etc. These have a lid with air holes and so are great for transporting moths. Once I'd carefully coaxed them in I'd carry them back up the hill to the car which served as my moth photography studio! Some of the little blighters stayed out of reach but others practically walked into cup.

The first one I tried the capture and release technique on was a large yellow moth that had been hanging around for two days previously. Once I checked on my app I identified it as a female Drinker (*Euthrix potatoria*) due to the two large white spots on the wings. I was quite lucky to find a female as the males are more strongly attracted to lights when flying at night. I'm often surprised by the odd names given to moths and this is one of the more unusual but apparently it's because the larva has a fondness for drinking dew droplets. It was a huge specimen and was surprisingly placid, just sort of hanging around like a winged version of Alf.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 20-Mar-14 09:18 PM GMT

What a beautiful moth that Drinker is Wurzel. We've often talked about getting a moth trap, as we used one in the Dordogne in 2012, and its really great seeing what you've bagged, the following morning 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 22-Mar-14 07:50 AM GMT

Don't get me started with moths Wurzel! Don't you think I've got enough to do 😊 Lovely photos tho'.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Mar-14 12:41 AM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 Several "Moth-ers" I've spoken too have told me that having a trap is a bit like Christmas morning everyday, I don't know if I could handle the anticipation 😊😊

Cheers Pauline 😊 Sorry I'll try not to mention the "M" word again...for a while 😊

This is more like it - I'm a week behind on my PD, being up to date was starting to freak me out a little 😊

15-03-2014 Five Rivers

Last weekend I thought I better make the most of the good weather and also the peace and quiet that comes from having two girls who are at their Nanny and Dad-Dads. Having waved them off after their swimming lesson and then spent a good few hours clearing up the last of the mess from the ceilings I was ready for a break and more importantly a breather in some clean and dust free air.

I found myself at Five Rivers again as I often do during the early part of the season and headed straight to the banks hoping to get straight onto some butterflies and a White in particular as well as adding to my haul of Comma shots. As I rounded the line of bushes that runs right along the middle of the banks an orangey butterfly flew up and circled a few times almost as if greeting me. It was a Comma which landed in almost exactly the same position as I found my first last weekend



Happy at an early win I thought that I better do the serious bit and attempt to count the Small Tortoiseshells before moving on to my personal targets. So I lazily strolled along the path on the banks scanning the path ahead and the dead grass on either side for basking Small Torts. They came in a whole array of states of wear but the majority were looking well past their best now. The first walk along and count amounted to 17 Small Torts and there was the occasional nice one still a round to brighten the stroll.



But I was here to try and find Whites and so I walked the length and breadth of Five Rivers; along the banks, through the copse, down and around the 'amphitheatre' and around and across the central grasslands. But I had no joy, not even a Brimstone so the hard job of counting Small Torts over and whites postponed I settled down for some serious Comma watching along with the occasional bees that buzzed the path.



Away from the banks I found the third Comma of the day. This one was brighter, fresher with nicely rounded markings. So with the final Comma in the bag I realised that I needed to make a move home. As I grabbed my gear the final butterfly of the day flew by but didn't stop like most of my Red Admirals this year. So despite almost two hours I'm still on five species for the year and only 4 seen today - so I'm going backwards...



Hopefully Five Rivers will host a Butterfly Family day this year if the local branch can get the go ahead. Part of me hopes that it happens and is a great success so that others can see for themselves what a little gem this site is. Another part of me hopes that it doesn't as then I can keep it to myself.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 25-Mar-14 09:22 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

I have occasionally thought about a moth trap but really have too much on the go as it is, its difficult enough to find time to get out in daylight let alone looking at what is around in the hours of darkness.

Good to see that you are behind again on your posting, gives me something to catch up on even when it has been a rainy day 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

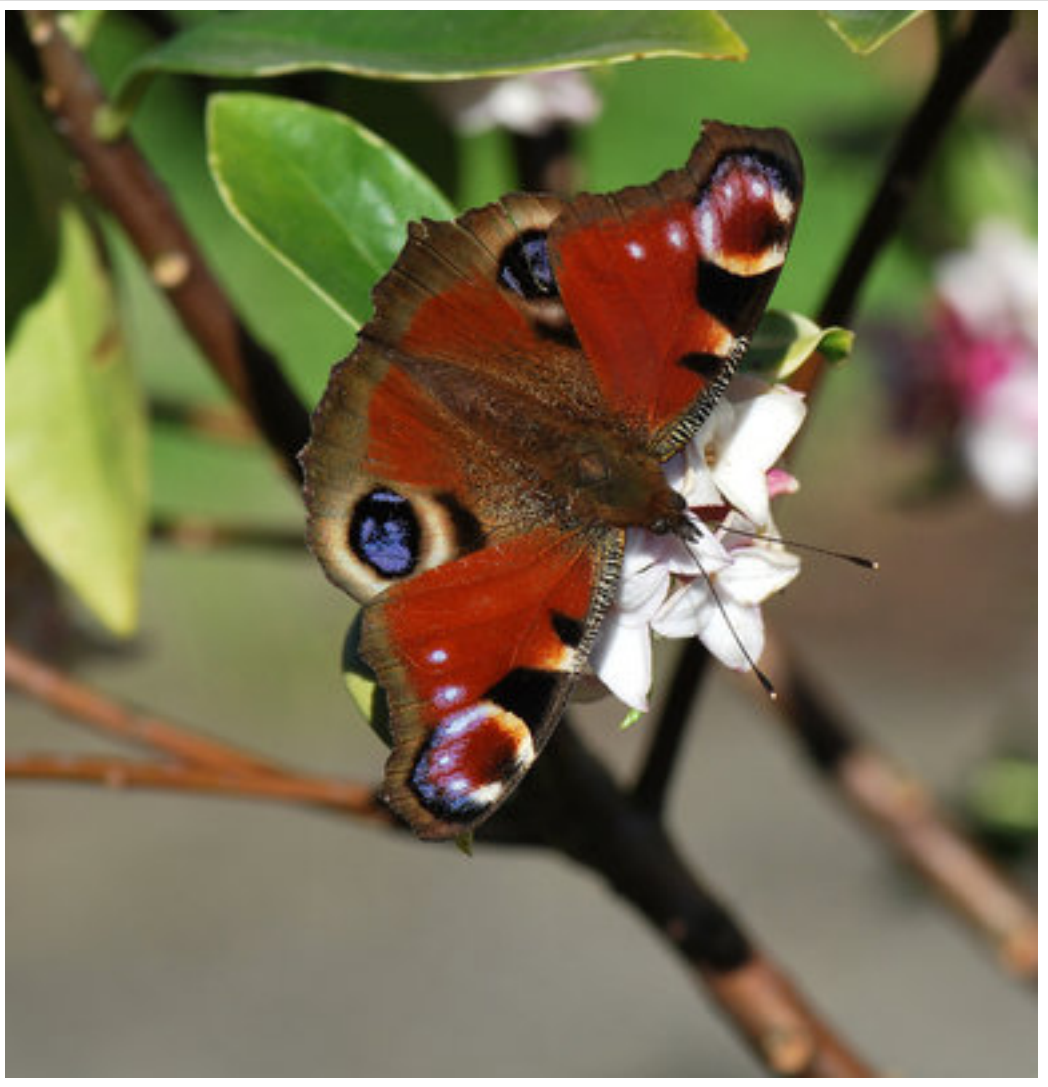
by Wurzel, 26-Mar-14 01:01 AM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 I'm glad that my tardiness at posting is serving a purpose 😊 I haven't succumbed to the Moth trap yet - I just leave the bathroom light on and the window open 😊

03-16-2014 Lazing on a Sunday

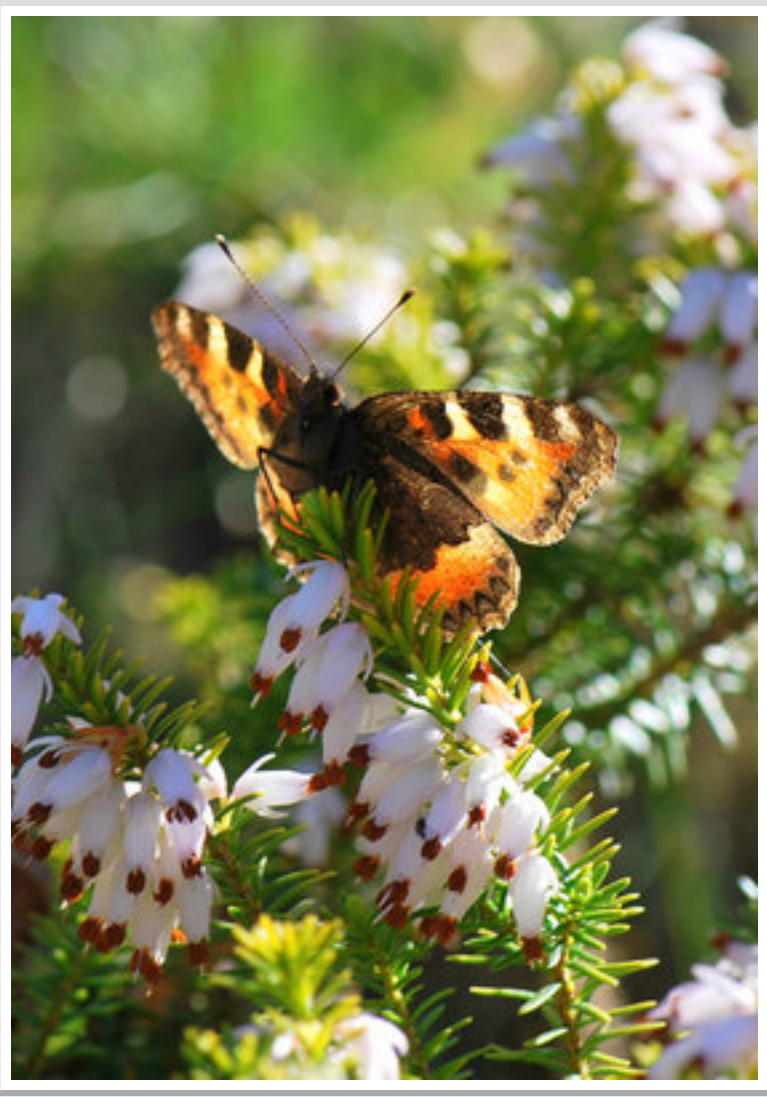
After the rigmaroles of cleaning the extra dust that had settled over Friday night yesterday and with the girls still at Nanny and Dad-Dads Sunday morning arrived and so I had a bit of a laze. In fact I decided that I would just spend the day doing the things that I had to do and see what I could see butterfly wise without really trying. And so my day of lazy butterflying began...

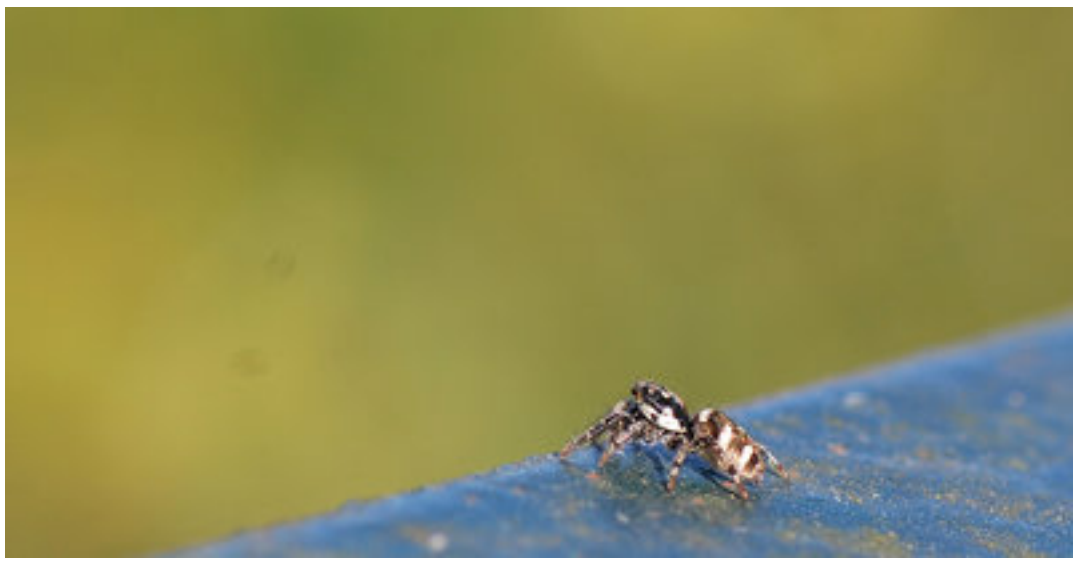
With no food in the house we went to Waitrose to do the shop and on the way to the car saw a Peacock in a garden. Unlike the last time I didn't have to walk up the garden path as the shrub it was on was right at the edge of the drive way. So a few shots and I was away.



Having loaded the trolley with the food my wife and I took advantage of our 'My Waitrose' cards and sat outside in the cafe. Whilst drinking a delicious coffee (free ones taste even better) a couple of Brimstones flitted by providing me with another lazy butterfly sighting. Then when I was lugging the shopping back to the house from the car afterwards I noticed that one small plot of heather in a garden. The bush was about the size of two footballs and was quite literally crawling with butterflies. It held 10 Small Tortoiseshells whilst there was another one basking on the path and the twelfth was hanging off the wall. Chuffed with more lazy sightings I headed back with the shopping and a Brimstone bombed by across the gardens whilst the Peacock was still hanging around on the same shrub.

We had arranged to meet my mum and dad at a local restaurant to pick the girls up and also have a meal to celebrate my dad's birthday. After a 4 course lunch we retired to the patio and gardens for coffee and while the girls ran around I had a look. A Brimstone flew by down near the river and there were two Peacocks and 7 Small Tortoiseshells all around the heather by the lower patio and sun chairs along with my first Beefly of the year. I'd brought my camera so I tried for some shots but in a lazy way, only getting in close if I thought the shot was different from usual and most of the time I was happy just sitting back and watching the action unfold before me. Eventually while enjoying yet more coffee and the feel of the sun on my back a Jumping Spider briefly joined us.





So ended my lazy day, with three different species seen in good numbers for March and without even trying. Back to work tomorrow and I have a nagging feeling that the weather will turn and I'm sure Countryfile will confirm my fears...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 26-Mar-14 02:23 PM GMT

That Small Tort on the muscari is a real cracking photo Wurzel 😊👍

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 27-Mar-14 11:36 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Part of me hopes that it happens and is a great success so that others can see for themselves what a little gem this site is. Another part of me hopes that it doesn't as then I can keep it to myself.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Hi Wurzel

I know what you mean about having your own special places. It nice to share them with others but it is also nice to feel that you have somewhere that nobody else knows about 😊

If Wurzel is already a week behind in his Personal Diary in March then that probably means this season is going to be a 'goodun' 😊

I agree with Philzoid that Small Tortoiseshell is a cracker 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Mar-14 01:00 AM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 I'm quite chuffed with that one 😊

Cheers Jack 😊 As the whole fate of 2014 now rests on me staying behind with my PD here's something from 2013 😊

Moths of Downshay 2

Once I'd developed my technique of moth capture I'd take the cup with me whenever I headed down to the toilet block for subsequent "sampling". There were more moths about during the evening and the night but getting shots back at my studio (the inside of the car) was next to impossible with only the dash light and flash so I restricted my collecting to the daytime trips. During the evening I'd spy out the new arrivals and the ones that were at about the right height to capture and then hope that they'd still be there later the next day when I'd have some free time. One or two species evaded me as they were too high up for me coax them into the cup or I'd spy them out on one visit only for them to have moved when I went back to capture them.

On the second day I got really lucky and it all went a bit Moth mad. It started with a Moth that I was sure that I'd seen before, the Buff-tip. Once I got it out of the cup into the front seat I quickly realized that I hadn't seen it before as this one was huge. I've found out since that the females are bigger but this was twice the size and also more silvery than the buff-tip I remembered seeing in my youth, I'll have to check my App to try and work out what it was now. Apparently it's quite common but I've not seen them before. A stunning Moth perfectly disguised as a broken twig, my favourite view was looking down the length of its body from the head end as it showed off the glorious golden crop of fluff like a stylized afro.



just stretching my wings now I'm out of that cup





About 45 minutes later I walked back down to the toilet block to have a shower as experience has taught me that then you can avoid queuing. I was performing my ablutions and was just reaching for the shampoo when I noticed an old twig on the top of the shower. As I carried on showering it would keep catching my eye and the more I saw it the more wrong it looked. One end was all splintered and frayed and there were sign of charring on it so I couldn't make up my mind whether it was a twig or the butt of an old roll-up. So once I was dressed and just prior to leaving the cubicle I reached up to the top of the shower to prod. It moved! Luckily I'd brought the cup with me and so in it went for examination back in the car.

I couldn't work out what it was as I didn't have much battery on my iPod so couldn't scroll through all the species it could be hence I took some photos, returned it and when I got home I sent it to my Moth expert in Residence, Philzoid. He got back to me almost immediately "It's a Flame". I'm sure this happens to others to; you can't work out what something is and then when it's pointed out it's bleeding obvious and there is a "Doh!" moment. It's another one of the cryptic Moths that likes to pretend to be a broken bit of twig, hence the frayed and splintered wingtips, the marks where its been broken from the rest of the branch.





I thought that was it but then I had to do some washing up after tea...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 28-Mar-14 01:57 PM GMT

Thanks for the credit Wurzel 😊🙄 You beginning to build up quite a good selection of shots and i'll expect there will be quite a few more when the light in the bathroom with open window gets going. 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Mar-14 12:39 AM GMT

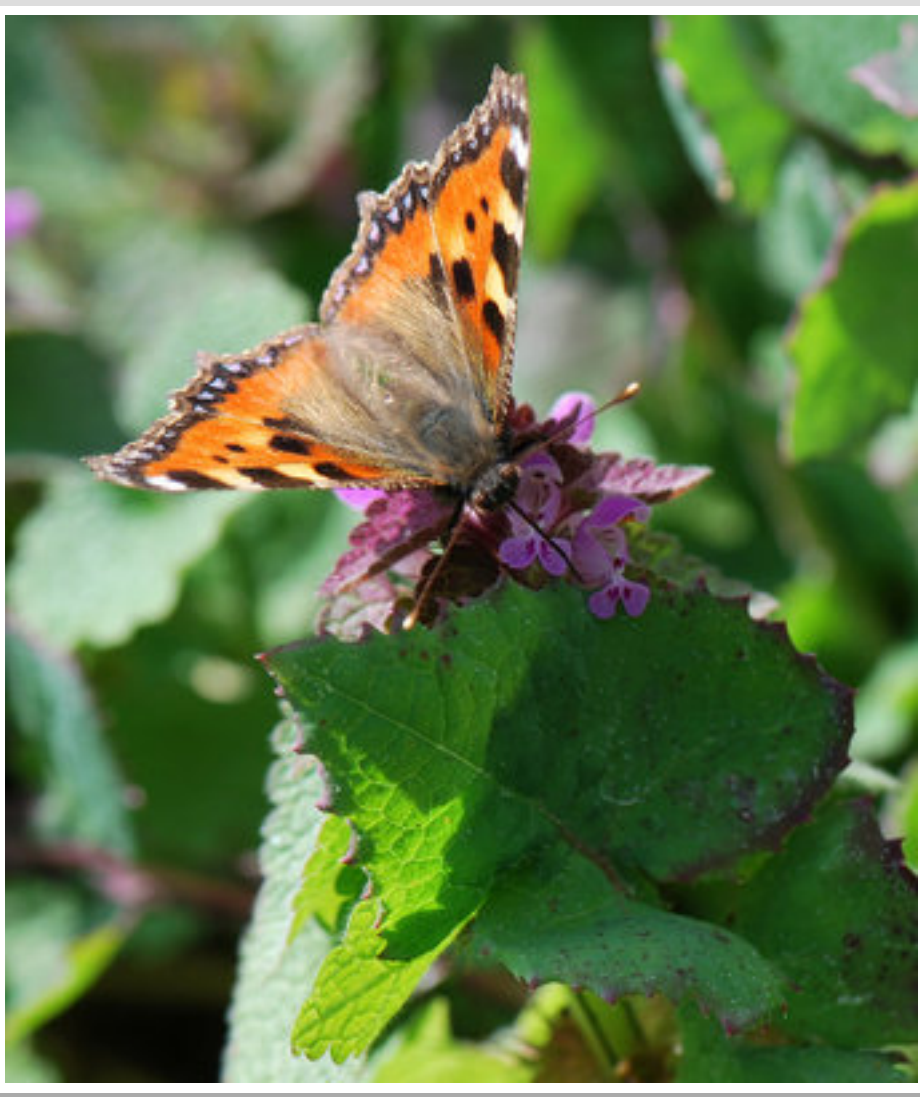
Cheers Philzoid 😊 Hopefully my Moth tally will grow – but my younger daughter has now decided that she needs total darkness to sleep 😬, so no bathroom light at the moment, though I'm sure she'll change her mind again 😊

I'm getting further and further behind – work and ceilings keep getting in the way so I need to get my skates on and start catching up...

17-03-2014 Wringing it out at work

Almost as soon as the great weather started I had a suspicion that it wouldn't last and so I decided to wring as much out of it as possible. This meant taking my camera with me wherever I went and making regular checks of the habitat available to me. So once again I set off across the field to walk the usual route. It was noticeably cooler and slightly windier along the main bit of path but despite that there were Small Tortoiseshells everywhere. Once at the end I turned round and made my back counting and watching were individuals went to try and avoid double counting. By the time I was back at the banks the count stood at 21 – slightly down on last week but still pretty respectable.





I had a little time so I thought I'd have a little look around the Wildlife area to see if there were any bees around. The large wood chip pile has gone but there were still some Solitary Bees around as well as a Buff Tailed Bumblebee and a Spider Wasp. As I approached the end of the Wildlife area I saw that the boundary gates were open so I had a little mooch around and quickly found another Small Tortoiseshell bringing the lunchtime total to 22.



I took the back way home scanning the verges as I went and stopping off near Coombe but I didn't see any other butterflies and most importantly - still no whites!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 30-Mar-14 09:56 AM GMT

I've also found it very difficult to get out & about Wurzel. I've been enjoying a virus of some kind so the best I managed for a while was a Peacock in the garden. A brief walk yesterday produced several Peacocks some Small Torts and a Comma, I'm still not seeing many commas! In the unlikely event that you find yourself with some wine left over, you could try using some wine ropes in the garden. Not as good as a bathroom or a Moth trap but better than nothing. 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 30-Mar-14 10:43 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cheers Philzoid Hopefully my Moth tally will grow - but my younger daughter has now decided that she needs total darkness to sleep, so no bathroom light at the moment, though I'm sure she'll change her mind again

That's a shame 😞. I have a similar problem with my neighbour 😞. Interestingly Izzy used to need the light left on ... kids eh 😊 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

Small Tortoiseshells everywhere. Once at the end I turned round and made my back counting and watching were individuals went to try and avoid double counting. By the time I was back at the banks the count stood at 21 – slightly down on last week but still pretty respectable.

That's the understatement of the year 😊 .. you've got them coming out of your ears in Salisbury, not so in Woking, it's Peacocks over here.

"Wurzel" wrote:
and a Spider Wasp.

Do you have any pictures? I'd love to see it. 😊

"Butterflysaurus rex" wrote:

In the unlikely event that you find yourself with some wine left over, you could try using some wine ropes in the garden. Not as good as a bathroom or a Moth trap but better than nothing.

That's a great idea of Rex's. Half a pint of Speckled Hen should do the trick 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Mar-14 11:12 PM GMT

Cheers Rex 😊 Sorry to hear that the lurgy still persists 😞 I'd like to try out the idea of a wine rope but unfortunately there never seems to be any left 😊

Cheers Philzoid 😊 I reckon the Small Torts are starting to wane a little now. Unfortunately the Spider Wasp escaped my lens. I was going to try out Rex's and your idea so I got a bottle ready but the Crafty Old Hen was gone almost as soon as the bottle was opened 😲 😊

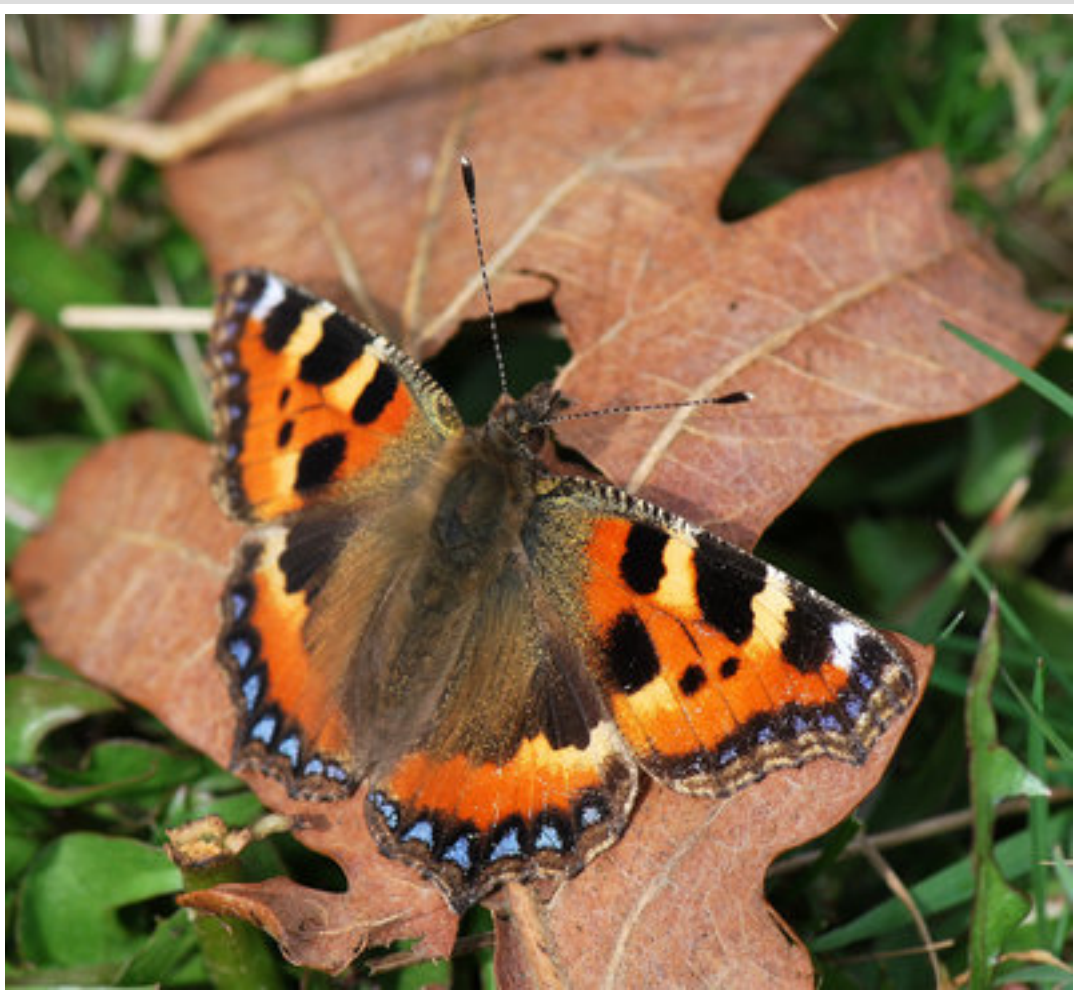
Still trying to catch up – but at least the posts are written up ready now...well that was until I went out yesterday. Better get back to it but for now...

19-03-2014 More Lunch Please

Yesterday (this was Tuesday) was much cooler with a stiff breeze but I couldn't get out anyway as I wasn't at work – I was at home looking after my younger daughter who had just had pulse laser treatment on her leg. Mind you today wasn't that much better with the weather still cooler than it has been of late and the wind was much colder. However I'd just about caught up with all the work that I'd missed yesterday and so at lunch I headed out to walk my usual route.

I didn't have to go too far before I spied my first Small Tortoiseshell which was on the bank in amongst the nettles. In fact I didn't get any further on the walk as this little area had up to five Small Tortoiseshells and my first Oil Beetle of the year. I think it's a female as it had a massively engorged abdomen. Usually they're just blundering along through the grass yet this one was having a good chow down so I tried to get some shots of the feeding behaviour.





Again I drove home the back way eyes peeled for fluttery white jobbies – but still no joy...

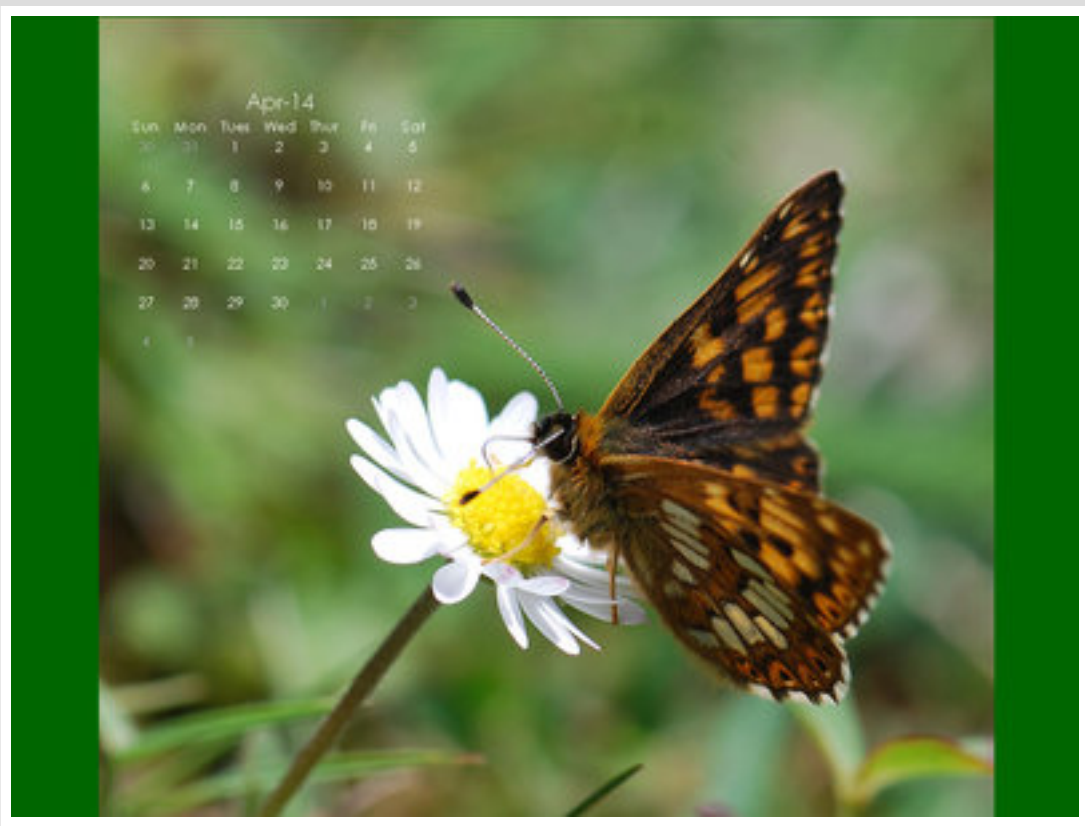
Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 31-Mar-14 11:48 PM GMT

April 2014

This is the month when things start kicking off, enjoy everyone.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by robpartridge, 01-Apr-14 08:38 AM GMT

That middle Small Tortoiseshell is beautifully coloured and it's a quality photograph, too,

Rob

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Apr-14 11:38 PM GMT

Cheers Rob 😊 They've certainly made it easy so far this year 😊

22-03-2014 Middle Street

Somehow or other - I really can't work out how - I managed to wangle a free hour on Saturday afternoon. With the sun coming in fits and starts I had my first race against the weather; cursing traffic lights and dawdlers that can't get in the correct lane while watching the cloud roll in and the sky grey. At the fore mentioned traffic lights a couple of Brimstones and a single Small Tortoiseshell flew by but I was hoping for more Peacocks and perhaps my first whites of the year over at Middle Street.

Once on site I breathed a massive sigh of relief and eased the tension out of my legs by walking over the football pitch to the other side of the reserve. As I got to the best bit of the unmown field the cloud swallowed the sun. Luckily it reappeared after about five minutes and I saw a couple of Small Tortoiseshells before the sun disappeared again.



This was the pattern for the whole afternoon. I remembered how I worked similar weather conditions last year and so while the sun was in I'd walk to the next likely looking spot and wait, the sun would come out and there would be butterflies. First there were three Small Torts all sitting in a row which I spied from the top of the ridge way which traverses the site. It was a bugger to get all three in shot with my macro lens and I almost fell off the ridge way as I had to stand back so far.



I then found another three later over by the reeds so I reckon they were the same three but there seemed to be Small Torts everywhere and on the way back they were fluttering all over the place, erupting from the grass and the reed edges. That being said I couldn't be sure that I wasn't double counting them so I revised my count down 11. As I got back to the car the cloud seemed to win its battle with the sun and swallowed it up so I had timed it just right.



So still fewer Small Tortoiseshells with only a conservative count of 12 – are they being to wane? Still no whites either and to make matters worse I'm kicking myself that I still can't remember how I 'earnt' the afternoon off so now I won't be able to earn a repeat performance and it's back to old tried and tested earning of Brownie points.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 02-Apr-14 01:33 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzal, sounds like we've had better weather here because there are loads of Tortoiseshells about and I've even seen a Brimstone so I'm pleased first I've seen around here.

No Whites though yet and no Lady Brimstones either yet but I'll keep going to Hall-Lee-Brook hoping to see some, chin up Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by William, 02-Apr-14 05:35 PM GMT

You're building up quite a collection of Tortoiseshell shots Wurzel 😊 😊 – superb stuff! That last one seems to have a bit less yellow on it, but maybe that's just the light?

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 02-Apr-14 07:23 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

So still fewer Small Tortoiseshells with only a conservative count of 12 – are they being to wane?

I may be wrong, but my experience of Small Tortoiseshells is that they tend to converge in favoured areas soon after emerging from hibernation. In fact, in some years the most Torties I ever see in a single day are on those warm days in March when they're courting like crazy. Afterwards, they seem to 'thin out', as if they know they've done their essential business and can henceforth get on with pottering around nectaring.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Apr-14 11:39 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Salisbury does seem to have it's own weather – if I'm not sure where Salsibury is on the weather map I just look for the blue blob 😊
Cheers William 😊 I know what you mean about that Small Tort it does seem more uniform orange than the others.
Cheers David 😊 I reckon you could be right although I saw 31 on the same route yesterday 😊 .

24-03-2014 Lunch (I'm slowly catching up!)

Things seem to have gone backwards weather wise this week as I looked at the forecast and saw that we were due some cold winds, heavy rain showers and even some wintry showers. In fact today looked like the best day of the week so at lunch I bolted down the Sweet and Sour Chicken and headed out along the route.

I checked all the usual haunts – the bank, the fencing, the old stump, the big shrubs and even dog turd alley but all to no avail. In fact I thought that I was going to walk the entire route to my turn around point and back without seeing a single butterfly...

As I approached the dead 'reeds' something took off. I don't care that I've seen multitudes of Small Tortoiseshells already this year I was still thrilled to see this one. It certainly was a hardy little critter bravely basking while the wind whipped across the field and buffeted it all over. A few quick shots and I left it in peace.

I soon reached the turn-around point and started my way back, almost stepping on an Oil Beetle along the way and jogging past the still pathetically basking Small Tort.





So that was it one Small Tort and one Oil Beetle and surprisingly cold ears! I didn't even attempt to look for Whites on the way home...well maybe the odd peek at the verge but still no joy.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-14 11:14 PM GMT

30-03 Kingston Lacey

Last weekend arrived and it looked like being a great one so I had to make the most of Saturday as Sunday was going to be spent up in the loft knocking more ceilings down and then clearing up behind. So once the girls had gone swimming we rushed back and headed off to Kingston Lacey accompanied by numerous Brimstones along the verges for most of the journey.

Once inside I saw my first butterfly of the day which was a Small Tortoiseshell. As I got a few photos I wondered whether I was actually going to see anything else this year as I seem to be seeing nothing but this species at the moment.



Is this all I'm going to see?

As we were having lunch I clocked a few Brimstones bombing around the place and once the picnic was over a quick trip to the bins meant that on the way back I could try for a few closer Brimstone shots. I always find my first ones are nigh on impossible to get photos of and then as the year wears on they become easier to approach until you can almost sit on the autumnal Brimstones. Luckily I'd seen plenty recently so I'd obviously reached my quota and so was able to get in reasonably close. The pair of males seemed to like this particular spot, favouring it over other areas of the border and would repeatedly come back to it.



After lunch we started out around the grounds proper to look at the various different gardens first stopping in the Fern area. I didn't find a Holly Blue or a Specklie like I was hoping for here but there were more Brimstones around and they posed nicely amongst the Daffs and Primroses.

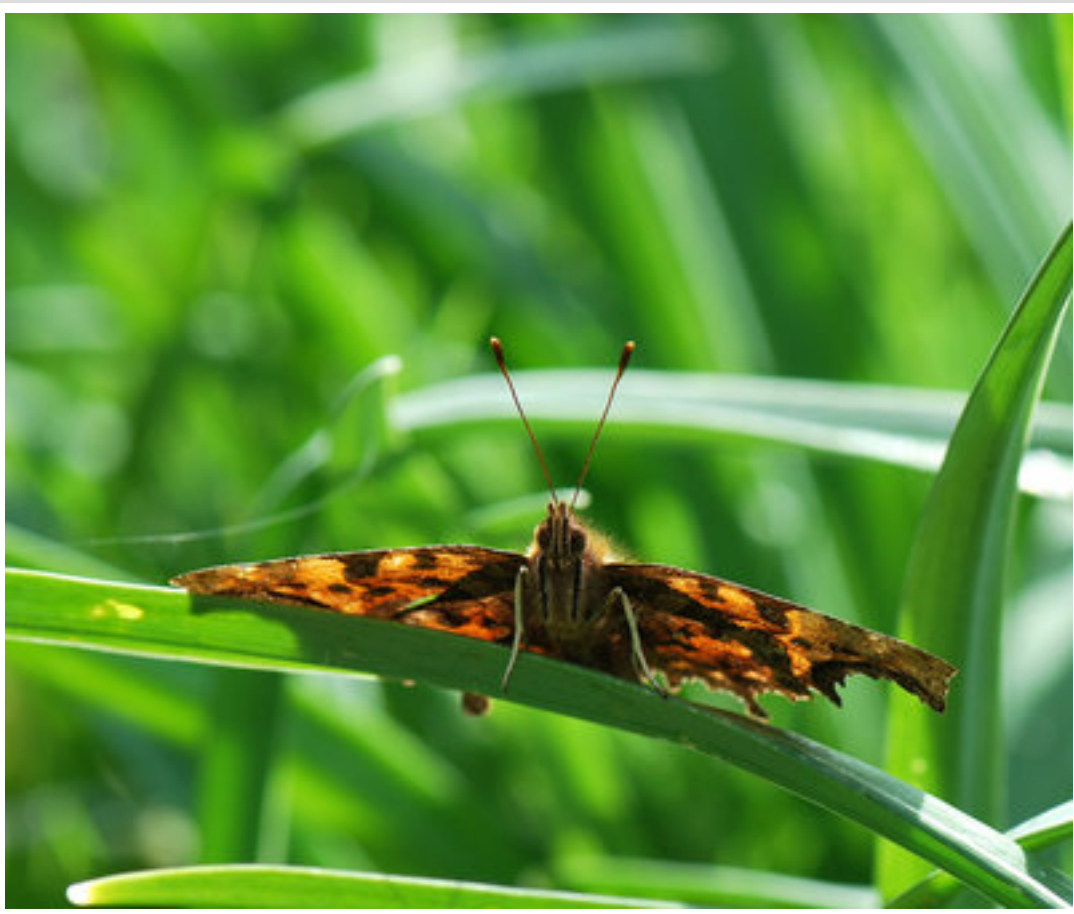


Then onwards across the lawn, down the Woodland Avenue (no Orange-tips or Whites) through the Wood (no Specklies still) to the Kitchen garden. Here the girls went off and drove Tractors (all John Dere and not a Massey in sight!) and my wife lazed in the sun on a swing chair so I had a bit of a mooch around. A few Brimstones flew around including my first female of the year which had somehow got caught in the Chicken cage? A Peacock sunned itself on the border gaining heat from the sun above and the decaying manure below and then disappearing as soon as I'd focused my lens on it! I didn't mind too much as when we left the Kitchen garden on crossing the road back onto the estate proper we were greeted by another Peacock and this one seemed unusual. There were a few extra blue flecks on the hind wing and the eyes seemed to really stand out - it was beautifully marked.

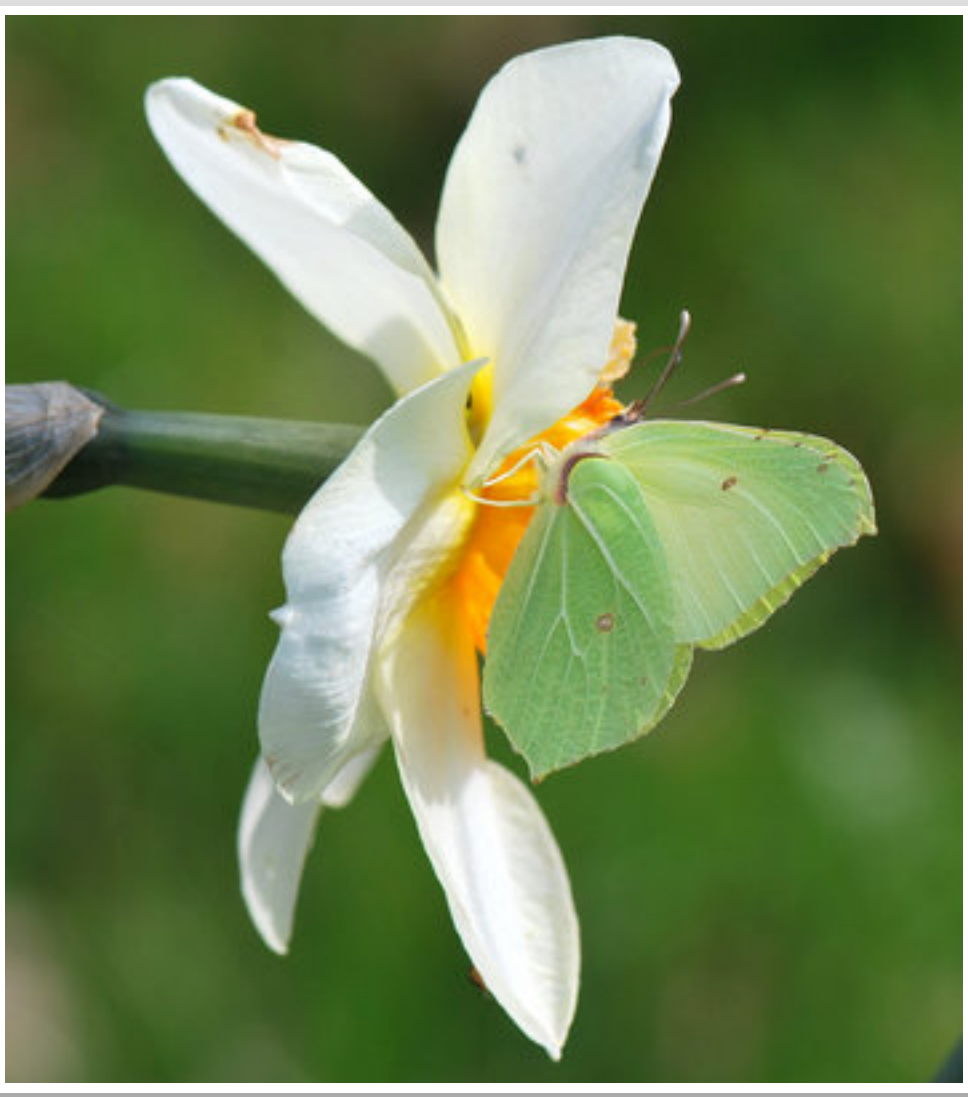


We then ended up in the Pacific Garden with the small thatched shelter and this is probably my favourite part of the whole estate as the small shrubs and woodland edge offers a nice mix of habitats and produces the best range of species over the whole estate. Once again it didn't disappoint with a worn and tired Peacock sparring with a Comma, a further pair of fresh looking Peacocks also sparring both full of vim and vigour and a few other Commas and Peacocks around. One Comma seemed more settled than all the other butterflies but every now and again it would take off to go and have a go at one or more of the Peacocks and then the pair or trio would slice through the air locked in a miniature dogfight. This would end with them either landing back pretty much where they started or all turning the combined efforts on a hapless Brimstone that had inadvertently wandered into their airspace. At one point whilst enjoying this spectacle my joy quickly turned to frustration as a Small White (finally seen one!) landed briefly on a Dandelion and as I cautiously approached the Peacock/ Comma battle re-erupted and in the melee that ensued the White was off - no shots taken!





Eventually we made a move accompanied back towards the house by yet more Brimstones. On the journey home a did a quick tot up – singles of Small Tortoiseshell and Small White, 3 Comma, 6 Peacocks and Brimstones too numerous to count. All in all a fantastic day even if I didn't get my Small White shot and one that would see me through the next day of toil and grime.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 05-Apr-14 12:14 AM GMT

Excellent report Wurzel and superb photos 😊 I understand how you feel in missing the Small White shot, we've all been there 😊 thats a beautifully marked Peacock indeed 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by William, 05-Apr-14 07:34 AM GMT

That Brimstone on Primroses and the subsequent Peacock Wurzel, just superb!!! 😊😊

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 05-Apr-14 09:56 PM GMT

Brimstone on a daffodil – what a shot!!

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 06-Apr-14 06:34 AM GMT

I have primroses in the garden aplenty, Brimstones too – how come I have never seen the two together? 😞 . That certainly is a beautiful Peacock Wurzel.

Re: Wurzel

by jasonbirder, 06-Apr-14 12:28 PM GMT

Superb day and some great photo's...I'm still waiting on my first "Cabbage White" (i'm not proud...I'll be happy with any one of the three) of the year!

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 06-Apr-14 03:00 PM GMT

Lovely shots again Wurzal, I love the Brimstone on the Daffodil Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 06-Apr-14 10:52 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Your Brimstone pics are great 😊 I particularly like the half open wing shot on Primrose 😊😊 I have not managed any Brimstone pics yet this season. I do not think I have ever seen a butterfly on a Daffodil/Narcissus, very unusual.

Re: Wurzel

by robpartridge, 07-Apr-14 08:11 AM GMT

Hi, I've photographed hundreds of peacocks and never had one come out like that – great shot,

Rob

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-14 10:40 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 Still waiting for a Small White – but I'm sure one will turn up soon, I'm off to Wales next week and the hedgerows near my in-laws ususally hold a few.

Cheers William 😊 The Peacock did play hard to get to start with but was soon surprisingly willing to show off 😊

Cheers David 😊 That was my 'throw away' end of the day shot, total fluke 😊

Cheers Pauline for your kind comments 😊 Cheers Jason 😊 I feeling like that about my first Orange-tip it's still evading me 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I almost didn't put that one in 😊

Cheers Jack 😊 I was chuffed with that one as it didn't actually see if when I took the picture, it must have just opened them lucky or what 😊

Cheers Rob 😊 It was certainly eye catching 😊

Moths of Downshay 3

(Back in August)...As I finished the washing up I saw one, then two and then three moths all within cup height. As I'd just washed and dried the cup I was ready so as I finished the rest of the drying I kept an eye on the moths and then captured one and carried it back up to the tent with the bowl of cutlery and crockery. Then releasing it in the car I had to run back up and down the hill twice more to collect the other two. By the time I'd finished my car looked like a miniature Moth house so I got on with photographing them while the strong evening sun lasted and while I would have enough time to return them to the shower block before dark.

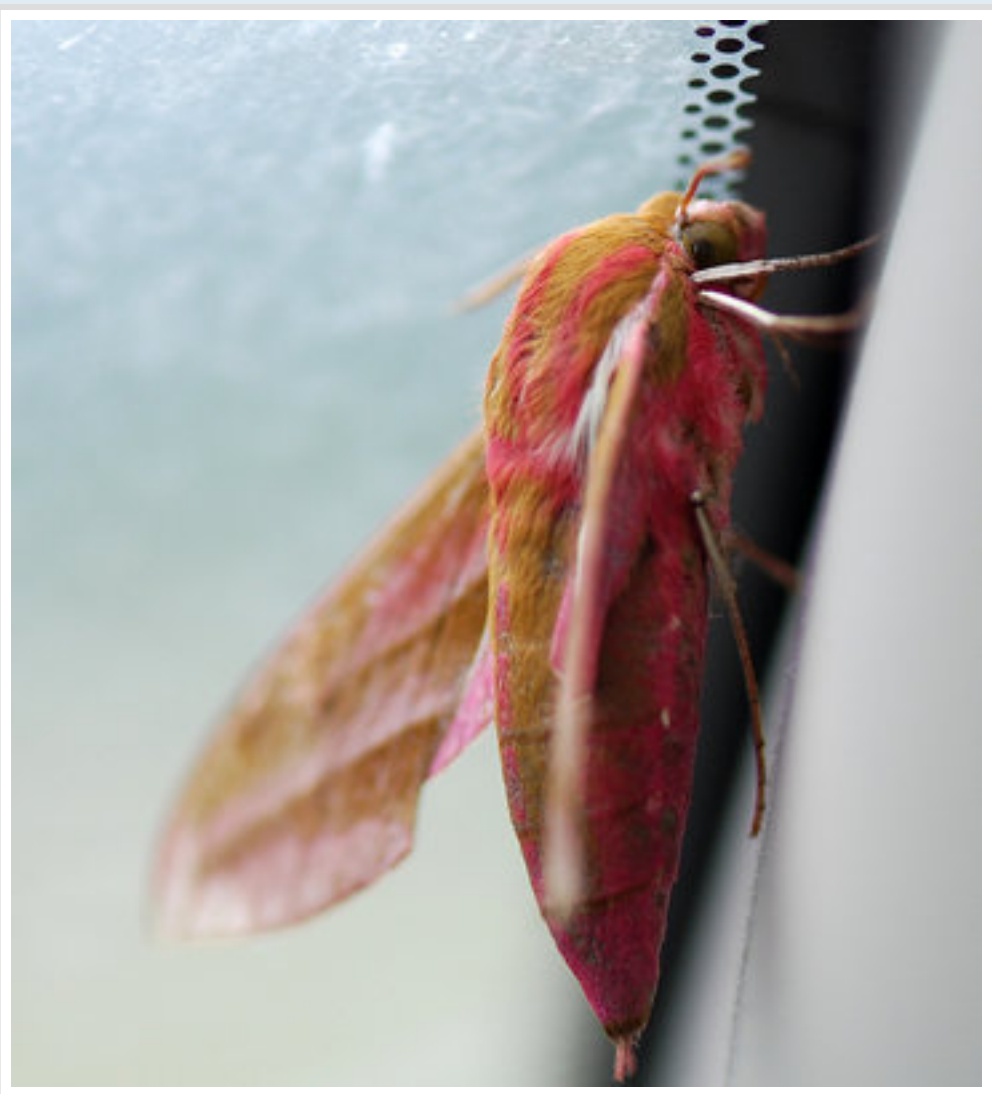
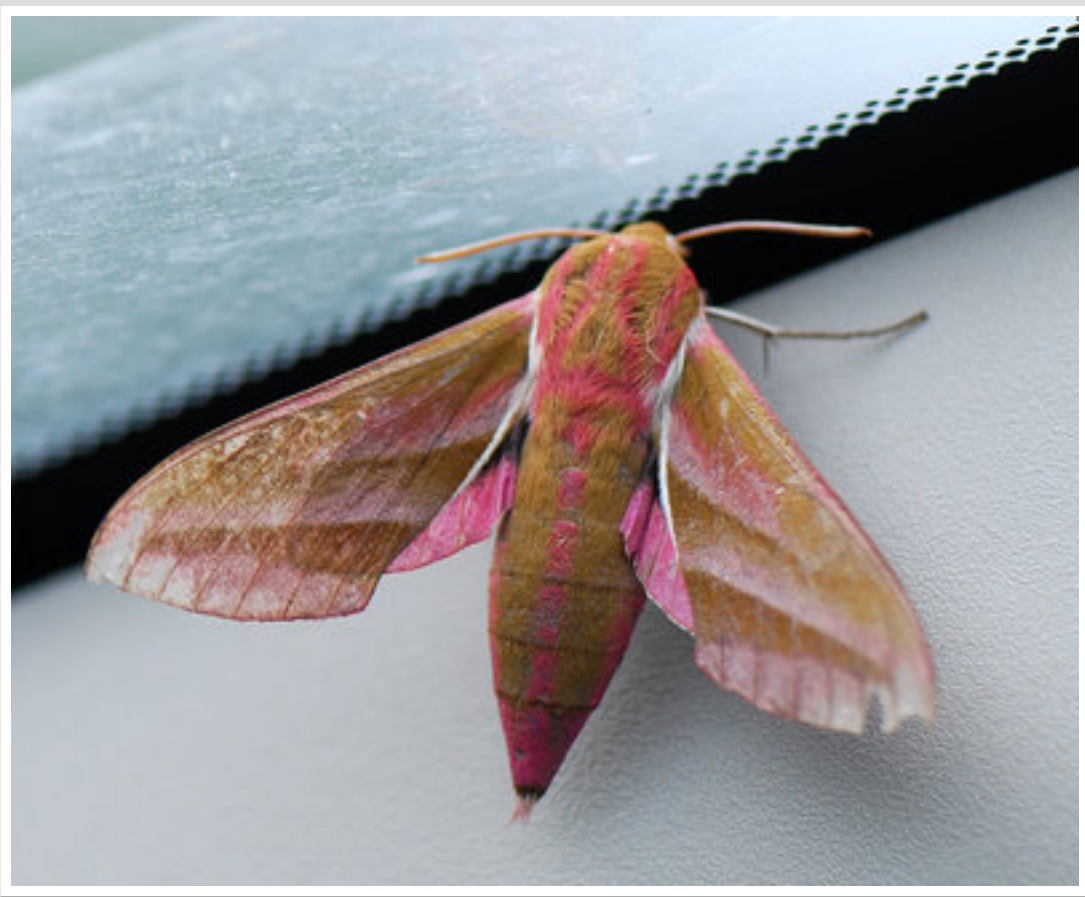
The first moth was instantly recognisable as a Small Magpie due to the yellow body and black and white wings. I seem to recall seeing this in a section on moths in one of the Butterfly Conservation magazines and thinking at the time that it was an attractive little blighter and gives a lot of butterflies a run for the money in the attractiveness stakes.





The second was a species that I had always wanted to see and to photograph. It was one of those species that you see in the field guides and you're drawn to and so because you want to see one you go looking and end up seeing lots of other fantastic things. It's like the melodic hook of a song that makes you want to listen, only instead it makes you want to go and find one and observe it. The livery of lime and bright pink makes it almost instantaneously recognisable though I suppose it must act as some form of camouflage? Perhaps it's so daring a colour scheme that no self respecting predator would be seen dead anywhere near it, the clash would be too much 😊 or perhaps in the grey world with 'cones' it blends in?

Anyway I had my first Elephant Hawk Moth and so I spent some time just admiring it before realising that there was one final species so I had to move on, but only after finding out that they like Honeysuckle as a nectar source, worth remembering.



The final species was one that I had found a few times before; a Buff Ermine. Checking my App to confirm its ID I noticed that they 'often come to artificial light' so one I could try for in my bathroom at home.



So those were the Moths of Downshay...well there were a few more but I was starting to get strange looks down at the washing up/shower block so I thought it best to knock the Moth collection on the head. Still hopefully we'll return this year and possibly at a different time of year so I might find a different range of species.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

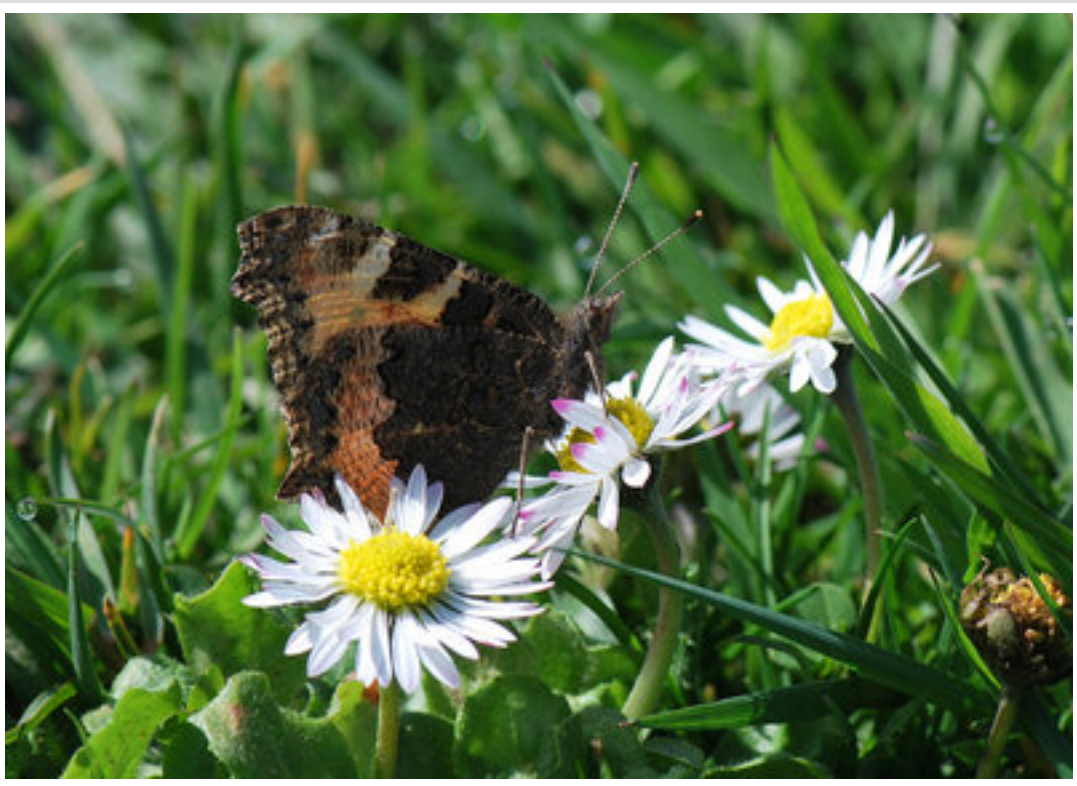
Re: Wurzel

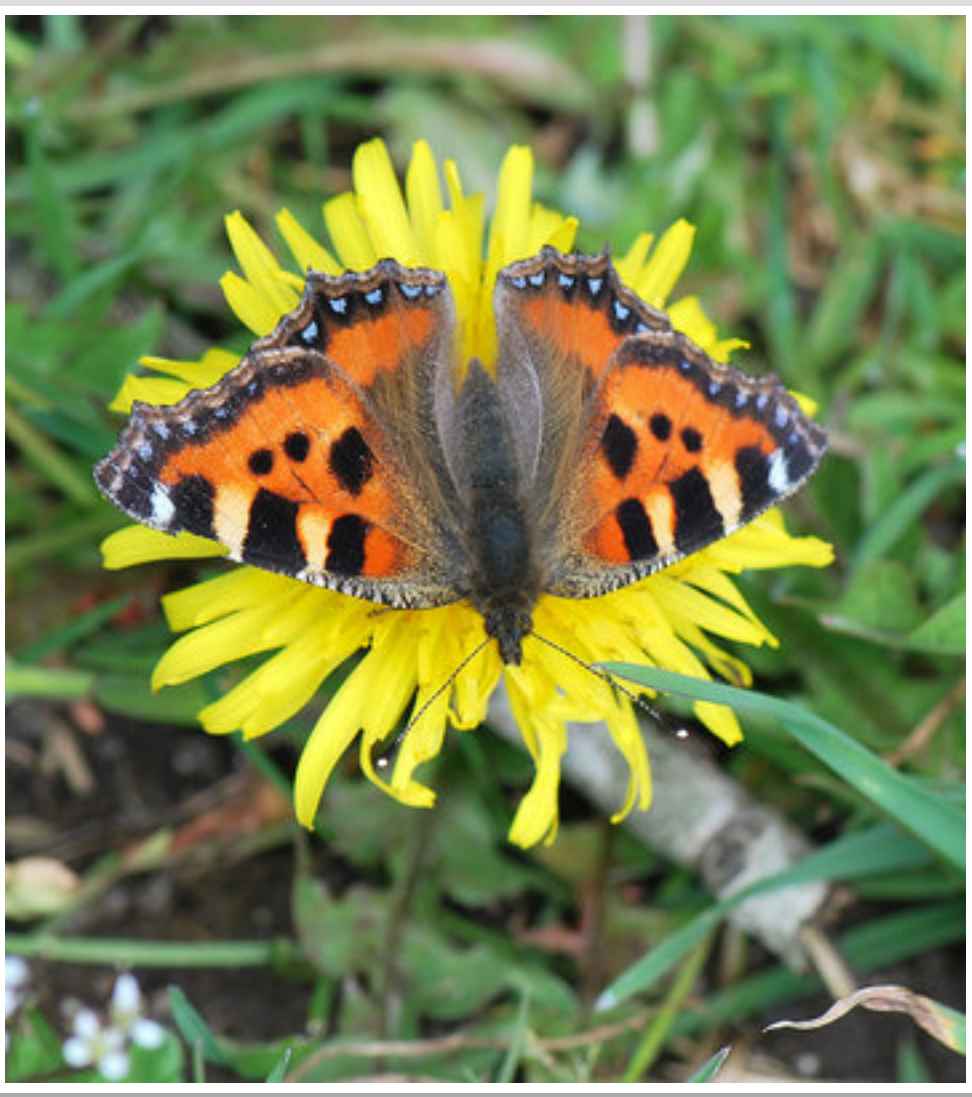
by Wurzel, 08-Apr-14 11:37 PM GMT

01-04 Lunch

Having spent a glorious Saturday wandering the grounds and gardens of a large country estate in glorious sunshine and surrounded by butterflies Sunday came and couldn't have been more different. I spent the morning moving furniture from the girls' bedroom into ours and then moving fibreglass around in the loft before knocking the old lathe and plaster ceiling down. It was a good job too as one part a single hammer blow was enough to bring down a sixth of the ceiling! Occasionally I would glance out of the window from above and I saw a Brimstone and then a Small Tortoiseshell fly by outside which looked heavenly. Having spent all day in the dark, then dust, then grime and then in the shower it was with some annoyance that I succumbed to a bought of Metitis and checked all my weather Apps along with the Countryfile forecast only for all of them to show the nice weather not lasting and a return to wintery showers for the start of my holiday. Typical! 😡

So on Tuesday when it was reasonable I headed out anyway full of hope and it paid off. I walked the usual route to the end of the path and then turned round and came back. There were Small Torts everywhere - perhaps the final batch had finished their hibernation due to the nice weather of the weekend or perhaps they sensed the cooler and wetter weather ahead so thought they better stick up? I favour the latter option as they were very frantic and antisocial in their efforts; there was none amorous activities that I'd witnessed previously. It was also heartening to see a nice range of Bees about with several Andrena species, Bumble bees and my first Tawny Mining Bee of the year.





Back at the bank there were Small Torts filed along the length bring my tally to a great total of 31 and also my second Small White of the year. It erupted from a Dandelion before I even knew it was there as I was approaching the bank from the top, flew around the car park three times, each time getting lower and then veered off across the football pitch never to be seen again. I wouldn't have minded so much if only it hadn't of done those three teasing circuits around the car park! Grrr!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

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

Just catching up on your last few posts Wurzel, particularly liking the Brimstones 😊

Nice Elephant Hawk Moth, I haven't seen one of those for a while. I used to find the caterpillars regularly many years ago and reared them through a number of times, absolutely beautiful moth when freshly emerged 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

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

You may not have caught up with any Orange Tips yet Wurzel but you're overachieving with the rest! Those Orange Tips had better watch out when they do arrive in your neck of the woods! I'm looking forward to seeing some amazing photos when they get within range of your lens. 😊

ATB

B'saurus

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-14 08:16 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 That was my first Elephant and even though it was a bit lack lustre from hanging around a barn roof it was still a thrill finding it 😊
Cheers Rex for your very kind comments 😊😞 Still no OT's – but I'm getting closer, I missed one by five minutes yesterday apparently 😊 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by maverick, 10-Apr-14 09:53 PM GMT

Looking at everybody's post just recently I think that the small torts are in for a really good year, I must have seen over 30 individuals in less than an hour yesterday

Re: Wurzel

Indeed Maverick, the Small Tort rise and rise continues! 😊

01-04 Way Home

As Tuesday wore on it actually turned into quite a nice day despite the best efforts of the weather persons and the 'Doom with intermittent showers of Gloom'. I felt that I needed to get out in the clean air as upon my return I had to rearrange the fibreglass back in the loft so that it covered the new ceiling boards and sealed the edges plus I felt like I needed to catch-up having missed a great day on Sunday. Because of this I risked the wrath of my wife and made a brief 5 minute stop-off on the way home. The question was where? It is still a bit early for Larkhill as the grasses are best for Browns and Skippers, likewise for Woodhenge and The Devenish and with only one or two Orange-tips reported in the whole county the Woodfords was out too. So that just left heading home the back way with a stop off at the tank pull-in near Coombe.

Once I was there it was still bright and the sun felt good warming my back. As I got the camera from the boot (it's still a bit early for it to ride on the passenger seat) a movement caught my eye. The tank tracks tear up the side of the concrete drive leaving deep gouges in the mud. These catch the water eventually providing mineral licks or dry out hard making great basking spots and that was what the Peacock that had caught my eye was doing now - basking in the afternoon sun. It took off as a second Peacock flew along the edge of the bank and they both spiralled away up over the side of the hill. I didn't have to wait long for something else to catch my eye as a male Brimstone alighted on a catkin looking gorgeous in the sun. However like the Peacock before another male arrived on the scene and the two of them took off in an aerial battle.



I then took a stroll down through the nettles and along the side of the river and here Small Tortoiseshells were basking, though with the growth of the vegetation they're becoming harder to spot and also the warmth of the sun had charged them fully so they didn't stay still for very long. I did find another Peacock basking on the dead reeds and it was very haughty but again a second Peacock appeared, quartering the reeds and so I counted down before the inevitable happened. I'd gotten from 10 to 3 before both erupted in a spiral.

Almost back at the car another flitting movement caught my eye but this was smaller and more orange - a Comma. I only managed a handful of shots before, yep you've guessed it, a Peacock appeared and another scrap broke out!



In the end the totals I reported came to 1 Comma, 2 Peacocks, 2 Brimstones and 6 Small Tortoiseshells. When I looked at my watch before driving away I realized that I'd taken 10 minutes. Ten minutes?! Shocking! I'm well below above my personal best so I need to make some drastic improvements before the Larkhill season begins!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 11-Apr-14 08:41 PM GMT

Excellent Brimstone shots Wurzel and that Elephant Hawk Moth earlier was a real stunner 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 11-Apr-14 09:25 PM GMT

Love the Brimstone on catkin photos Wurzel 😊

I know what you mean about Peacocks disrupting nicely posed shots, at least with them, Commas and Small Torts they tend to return to favourite basking spots. Once a Brimstone is disturbed, its off...

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

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

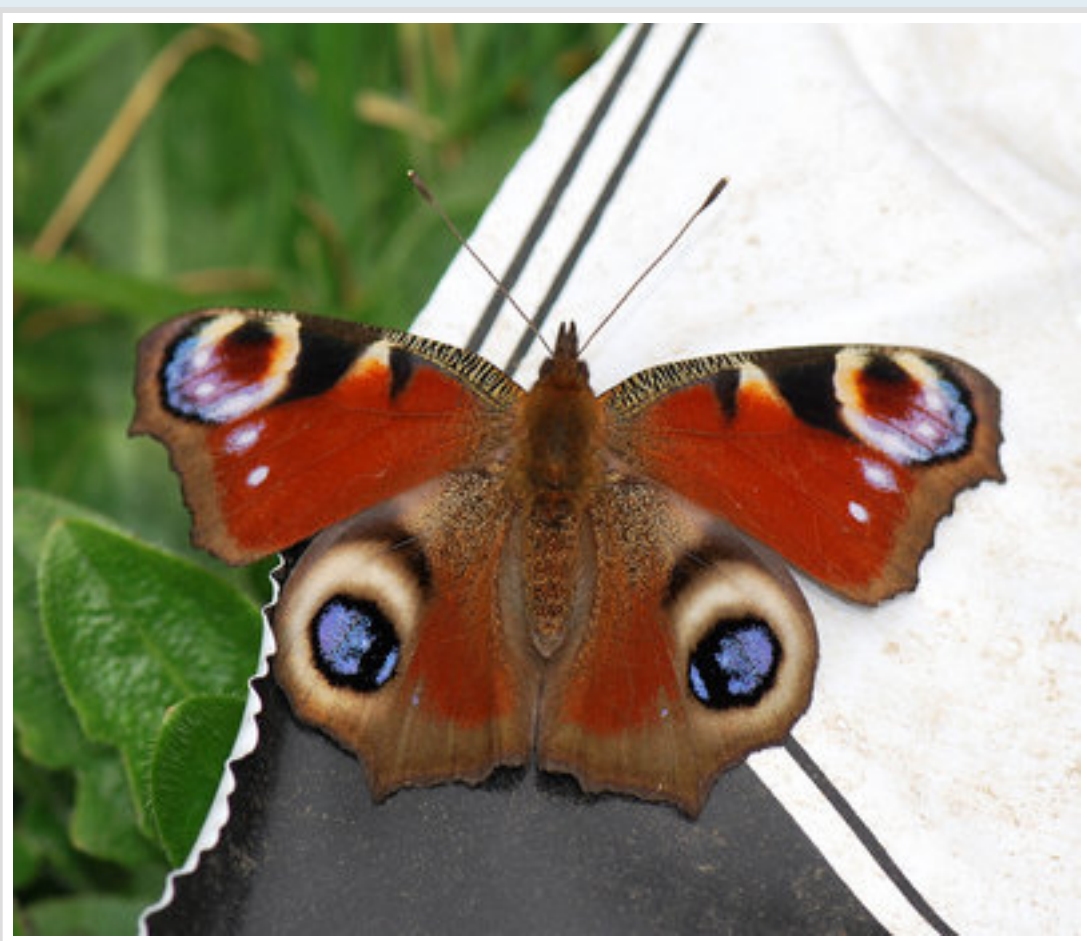
Cheers Mike for your kind comments 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I had the same thing happen today – a Peacock and Comma kept setting each other off and then returning which as fine until a Brimstone appeared and they took off once and it was gone! 😊

02-04 Lunch

I thought that I would push my luck again as the weather continues to deteriorate. Everyday it's feeling a little cooler, looking a little cloudier and today

the wind had picked up so I wasn't surprised when the usual route held only 9 Small Tortoiseshells. As the wind was ripping across the fields and over the most of the butterflies that I saw were either hunkered down amongst the vegetation or were whizzing by whipped along by the wind. Feeling that this was a bit pointless I cut back to the start of my route across the housing estate and back to the garages and the bank. Once here things felt better as the houses and gardens sheltered the back from the wind so as I rounded the corner I trod stealthily. It seems that some of the local kids had recently burst their football as it was now laid disconsolately draped over the bank. Unusually I didn't mind this littering as their basking on it was a resplendent Peacock.



A further mooch around didn't produce anything else apart from a (presumably) male Oil Beetle so I left the Peacock in peace and headed back into work.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 11-Apr-14 11:26 PM GMT

Those are beautifully clear images of that Peacock, Wurzel.

This species is enjoying a bonanza spring in my part of the world....augurs well for later in the year.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-14 10:29 PM GMT

Cheers David 😊 The Peacock like the Small Tort is making a great come back – hopefully other species will follow suit 😊

03-04-2014 Lunch

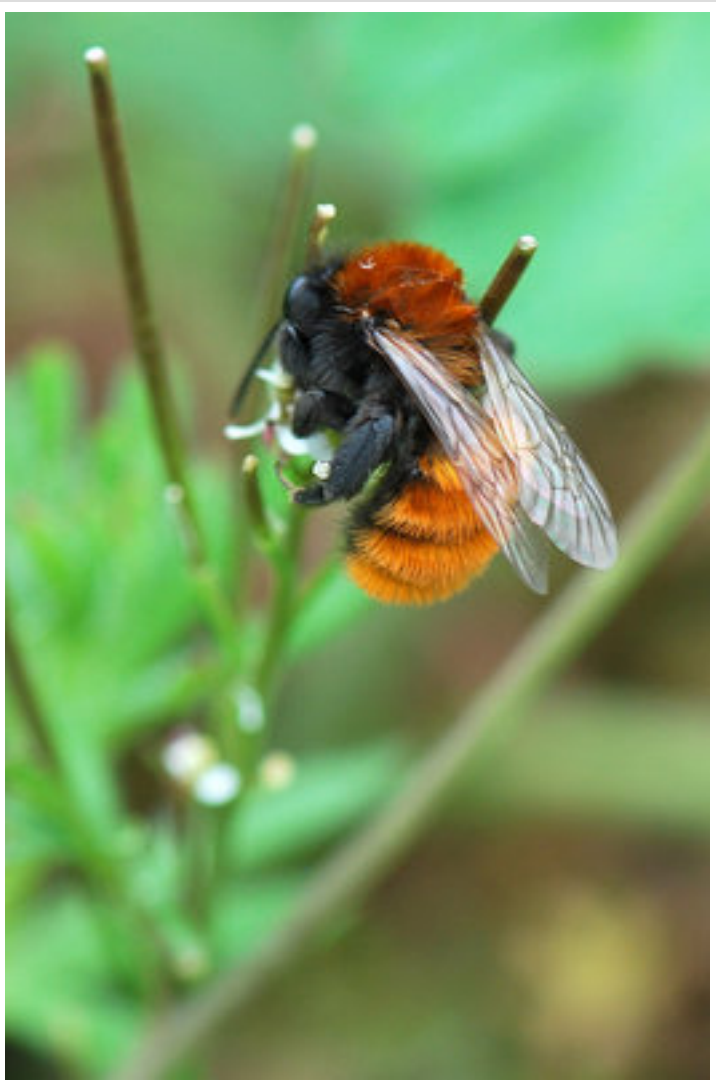
It was slightly cooler, cloudier and windier still today. So I started my walk around by the allotments instead hoping for a Small White amongst the shoots but alas even this sheltered little spot didn't hold any butterflies. It did have a Song Thrush though and it was making ever such hard work out of collecting snails. Who would have thought that slow moving Molluscs would have been so tricky?



I cut across the housing estate reasoning that if there would be butterflies anywhere then the bank round by the garages would be the place. As I rounded the corner stealthily I espied the burst football and as I gingerly stalked across the car park towards it a Small Tortoiseshell landed on it disturbing the Peacock that had been in residence which promptly flew off and with it my first opportunity of a multispecies shot!



Leaving the Small Tortoiseshell in peace I set my sights on the Bees that were still flying, aiming for Tawny Mining Bee but settling for anything that allowed an approach – it was one of those days when anything would do. In the end I found my target after a few runs ins with a range of Andrena species.



So the weather people were spot on for this week and so once again as the holiday approaches the weather takes a turn for the worst. I wonder if this will hold up the emergence of the Pearls and Orange-tips?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 12-Apr-14 11:47 PM GMT

Forecast for Easter is decent right now.

We 'working people' have 4 days to indulge ourselves.

Hopefully we'll be able to do justice to mid-April from a butterflying perspective.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 13-Apr-14 09:22 AM GMT

Cracking Peacock photos on the football Wurzel 😊

I also like the Tawny Mining Bee 😊 these have shown up in my garden over the past couple of days, slightly later than usual. I guess the past couple of weeks of cool cloudy weather held them up a bit.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Apr-14 10:15 PM GMT

Cheers David 😊 Here's hoping we can get out to make the most of the weather – there's nothing worse than being trapped at work during the great weather, reading others reports and then when you're able to get out the weather going downhill 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Things have been a bit quiet down our way and I've had to watch on with growing envy as the rest of the country seemed to suddenly wake up – still the OT's and Greenstreaks are emerging now so we're starting to catch up – hence my frustration when i find myself in Wales for the next four days 😞 I'll try and make the most of it though, I might even be able to catch up...

08-04 Middle Street

It felt like an age since I was last out and with the cooler, dull and grey weather behind us and also the final upstairs ceiling down, cleaned, boarded and insulation laid I grabbed my camera and older daughter and made a break for it!

On a previous outing to pick up Rubble sacks I'd driven past a field with a lot of tall spindly white flowers that was on the other side of the woodland path from Middle Street and so that's where we headed. However it would be rude not to stop in at Middle Street itself as we were there and so we made our way in through the second entrance behind the football pitch. The small field within a field of rough grass was sporting various wild flowers as well as a solitary patch of Cuckoo flower so we checked that out first. There were good numbers of the ubiquitous Small Tortoiseshell flitting around along with a pair of Peacocks and then hopefully the first white of the day – a male Brimstone. It was obviously trying to be subtle as it was nectaring on a brilliant yellow Dandelion behind a curtain of large green leaves.



From this end we walked off site and along Harnham Meadows Walk through the wooded glades and spooked a Peacock at the entrance. However as we walked the burgeoning leaves shaded out the path and there wasn't an obvious break into the fields that I'd seen from the other side along the road. This was slightly 'off site' and there was no chance of an OT as the sun went in but we walked and chatted to the bridge and back and it was a pleasure just being with my little girl who is growing up so fast. Apart from Butterflies the other topic of conversation was how she wanted to develop a Hover car so we could get to places more quickly and without roads and so I could stop wherever I wanted too to see butterflies. We did stop a couple of times for a Comma which looked like it was ovipositing and to watch 'Ratty' for a short while and then we were back at Middle Street.



As we were back by the same entrance we were at previously we walked back through Small Tortoiseshells and this time along the bank towards the pond at the other side of the reserve. About half way along something landed briefly on the path and then started to bask. My daughter and I stood and waited and then it flew up and down the path towards us, circled us a few times and landed on some nettles where I got a few snatched shots before adding some more on its' second sitting. It was a Red Admiral - something of a rarity this year but I was pretty sure that a couple have been knocking around the Salisbury area as I'd recorded them a few times. Unfortunately I hadn't been able to get them on film so I was more than made up with this little beauty.



Round by the pond there were more Small Torts all basking or flitting up from the long grass like Meadow Browns will in a few months time. And then we were back at the car; all in all not a bad visit – with five species seen and photographed (1 Brimstone, 1 Red Admiral, 1 Comma, 3 Peacocks and 12 Small Tortoiseshells) and then onto Five Rivers – well as I'd finally escaped I had to make the most of it.
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 13-Apr-14 10:43 PM GMT

Cracking Brimble shots Wurzel. I've not managed a single decent photo of one yet this year.

B'saurus

Re: Wurzel

by robpartridge, 14-Apr-14 08:45 AM GMT

Good to hear of a Red Admiral – it seems to be entirely absent from Cambridgeshire at the moment after good spring sightings in recent years. I wonder whether the mild, wet winter did them no favours at all,

Rob

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 14-Apr-14 11:05 AM GMT

Interesting to see a Comma ovipositing. That is something I would like to see and then follow the development of the caterpillar. Great that you saw a Water Vole as well. They have become very scarce here, but I remember them being very tame when I was a ranger at a site near here. Sadly I think that too much disturbance caused their disappearance. I think they are only known to be in two areas in East Lothian now. Today looks like it could be the first decent day of the year, so hopefully I may add to my species tally later, when it could be warm enough for me to do my transect. 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Pete Eeles, 14-Apr-14 12:42 PM GMT

Good work Wurzel – it would be tempting to suggest that your Red Admiral is also ovipositing! Like many others, I'm also amazed at the number of Small Tortoiseshell about. I wonder if there will be as much effort into understanding their recovery as their demise!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Apr-14 09:56 PM GMT

Cheers Rex 😊 I'll swap you a Brimstone for an OT 😊

Cheers Rob 😊 I reckon it was that and the fact that there weren't that many that made their way here last autumn 😊 Still they're here now so lets hope for a recovery like the Small Torts are showing 😊

Cheers Nick 😊 Good luck on the transect, my daughter loved seeing Ratty 😊

Cheers Pete 😊 Probably not, once something is deemed 'common' it generally seems to be left to its own devices 😊

09-04-2014 Five Rivers

Having left Middle Street we headed over to Five Rivers for a quick wander around. As we rounded the copse and headed to the banks a couple of Small Torts flew by together starting to court, alighting briefly and then taking off in a heartbeat. Still there would be plenty more around and the little area on the other side of the copse a Peacock went up under our feet and spooked a Comma. It was great seeing all these butterflies but if they were going to keep fighting and frightening each other then I wasn't going to have much to photograph! Luckily by now we were at the banks and so there were butterflies amongst the longer dead grasses wherever we looked. A few Brimstones fluttered by traversing the banks and not stopping and there were several Small Torts buzzing each other continuously.



As well as the usual presence of Small Tort I also noticed that there were definitely more Peacocks around with a couple on the banks which would have the occasional scrap with each other before settling down and clamping their wings firmly shut. I didn't really mind as it gave me a chance to study the fine markings on the under wings – a bit like a charred newspaper.



There were a further couple down on the path at the end of the Banks; one of which was obviously having a crisis of confidence and was concerned about its battered appearance. So much so that it decided to land at my daughters' feet and wanted me to take its photo.



However whilst all this was very nice I was really hoping for something different, and having seen my first Small White a week or two previously I was hoping to catch up with one here and get some photos. So we left the ever productive Banks and headed to the far corner of the reserve near the housing estate entrance. My daughter slumped down on a bench and said “we aren’t going to see one are we?” when something small and white caught my eye, gently fluttering a long by the Dandelions. Over the last few months I’d forgotten how small they were and compared to the Brimstones and Peacocks I’ve been seeing recently this one was tiny. All too soon it set off, bumbling along the hedge and then over it and into the allotments but that didn’t matter as I’d got my first Small White photo of the year and this time there wasn’t anything to spook it.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Brimstone 3
Small White 1
Small Tort 9
Peacock 6

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 15-Apr-14 07:04 PM GMT

Great reports and photos again Wurzel...and more cracking Brimstone shots 📷

Thinking about it I have not seen a Red Admiral since early last September, and that was a couple in Dorset.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-14 11:16 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 – the Red Admirals didn't have a good year last year and so there don't seem to be many about this spring. I was glad with the shot as the county recorder made a comment that "you seem to be the only person still seeing Red Admirals" so it was good to get some photographic evidence to back up my reports 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-14 11:27 PM GMT

10-04 The Woodfords

I was up a ladder stripping a strip of wallpaper around the top of bedroom walls when I looked outside and caught a glimpse of a gorgeous blue sky. Job done and cleared away I sat downstairs and my wife told me that I should head out so not needing telling twice I grabbed my camera and drove over to the Woodfords to a little spot that I know where the Cuckoo Flower is blooming.

As I strolled/waded through the damp grass I scanned the fields for anything white fluttering by but alas there was nothing to see. Still I'm getting closer to catching up with an OT as I'd missed a male by five minutes one of the local fishermen informed me. As it was I settled for the usual Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks – six of the former and 3 of the latter who seem to be catching up their smaller cousins. There were also a few Brimstones quartering the hedgerows and I managed to catch up with one of those.





I then headed over to the Devenish and made the most of the lack of traffic tooting along at Sunday Driver pace (about 22mph) and scanning the verges and hedgerows as I passed. One of the two Peacocks I saw almost got flattened as it chose to land on one of the few Dandelions growing in a pothole in the road. By the time I'd reached the Devenish the tally was at 2 Peacocks, 11 Brimstone and a Small White. So in to the Devenish and I was hoping for a Speckled Wood or Holly Blue so eagerly I checked all the likely looking areas in the woodland. In the end I cut up across the Down stopping briefly to witness the local butterfly bush. I held 5 Peacocks and a Small Tortoiseshell with the occasional Brimstone landing briefly before carrying on its way. Unfortunately I could only get one of two butterflies in shot.





The wood at the top of the hill held a few Brimstones but that was it so after introducing myself to the Warden (nice to meet you Richard) I drove home without any of my three target species. I'm not sure what's happening as there seems to be a very sporadic and patchy emergence so far this spring - with some areas recording Green Hairstreaks, Dukes, Skippers and Specklies whereas others seem much further behind. Still hopefully the weather will be kind and soon the spring butterflies will have sprung in this neck of the woods too...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

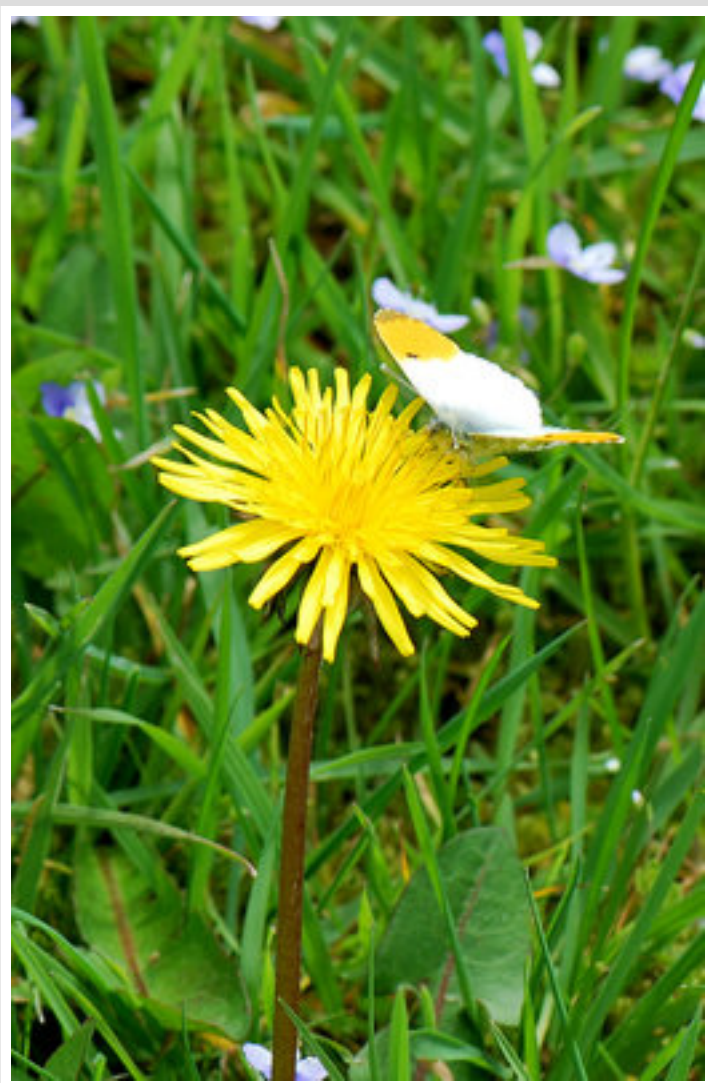
Re: Wurzel

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

11-04-2014 Garston Wood

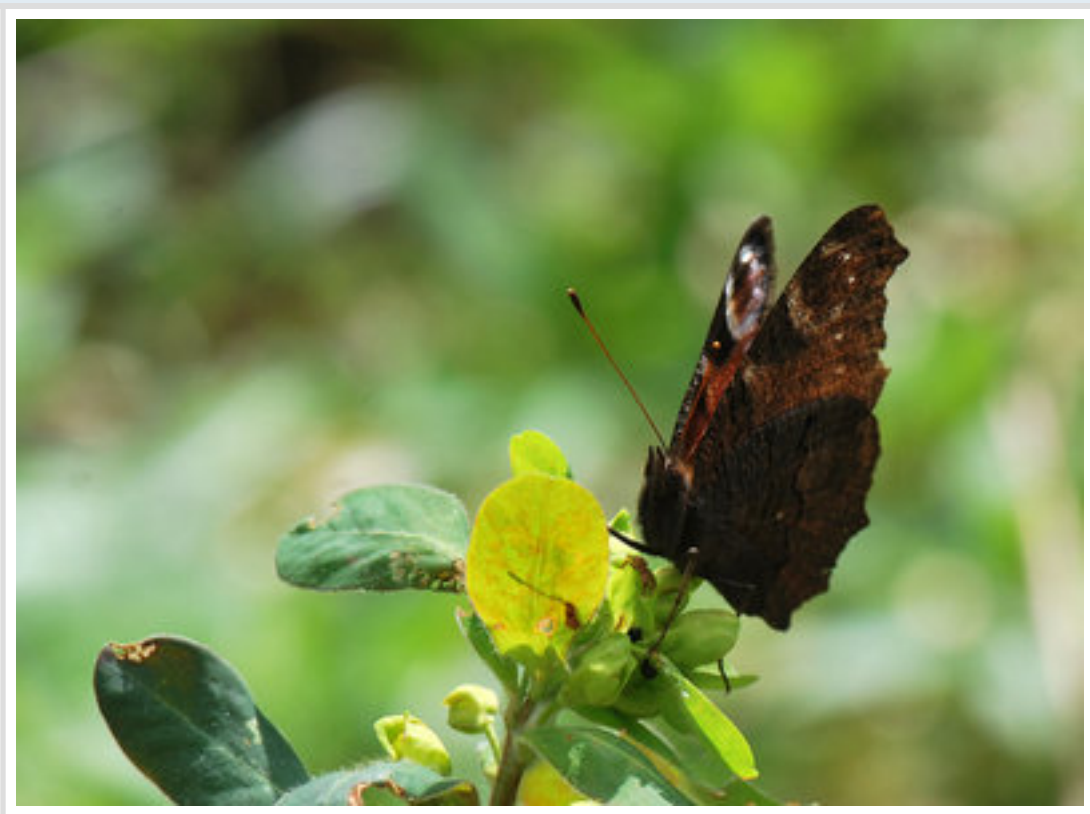
This was a hell of a day which started the night before. My wife had had a cold all day and then as I was heading up to bed she came downstairs unable to breathe properly as her throat was so inflamed. So instead of collapsing into bed I spent the next hour getting her to steam her head. The morning came and with it more looking after my wife, making the beds, getting the girls breakfast and lunch doing some washing, the washing up and drying, stripping some wallpaper and clearing that away before dismantling beds and moving furniture. I then took the girls out to give my wife some peace once she was bedded down.

On the way we made a brief stop at Broadchalk to watch my first Orange-tip as it flew up and down the hedges, crossed the road and disappeared into a garden. Slightly further along the road I pulled over again as a pair of Brimstones flitted along on patrol and another Orange-tip joined the rank and file. It stopped briefly and so I got the briefest of shots - it's pretty terrible but I don't care - now I've gotten at least one there should be some more hopefully.



Once at the wood proper we took the back route and then to the main path across the back towards the Pearl Pen. We didn't see anything for the first part of the walk but just enjoyed the sun, the different shades of green and the various wildflowers. Then as we set off down the main path the sun came on strong and suddenly there were butterflies. They seemed to like the little scallops cut and coppiced along the side of the path. In one a couple

of Peacocks kept settling and then hassling a Comma which was just trying to have a little peace. A few Brimstones flew by and also a male Orange-tip.



Later round the other side of the reserve we met a Dutch couple who were very keen to show us the “Orchis” which I think are early Purples?





After the female Brimstone the girls took another rest stop and I tried to follow a male Orange-tip. It was nigh on impossible as after doing so well for 15 metres or so it flew behind a bush and didn't reappear. So I crept around the back of the bush ready to see it nectaring and it just wasn't there. It had vanished. However while I was there I did find a gorgeous little micro. Later on we found some more Orchids and then we were back at the car park.





We then headed back to the invalid and we needed tea so I took the girls into town to pick up some food – a Peacock was in one of the gardens on the way and very briefly a resplendent male Large White – my second first of the day. I couldn't get a shot though as I spooked it when telling my younger daughter that it was okay to lean over into someone else's garden. The street also had two more Brimstones. Once back at the house I made the girls their tea and we had a picnic over in the park before finishing up the day by putting the girls to bed. All in all a really busy day but amongst all the madness two firsts for the year whilst earning enough Brownie points for another day visit!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 18-Apr-14 10:06 AM GMT

Great report as usual Wurzel, I hope your wife doesn't have the same lurgi we've all had down this way. It's really nasty and lasts for ages. Hopefully it's only a common cold. I hope to see a terrific Greenstreak photo in your diary soon. Have a great Easter 😊

All the best

B'saurus

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-14 11:46 PM GMT

Cheers Rex 😊 My wife is now on Unclebiotics so she should be better soon. I'm working on the Greenstreak shots 😊

13-04-2014 Ffos-y-ffin

The journey to Wales started well, no real traffic and the occasional Brimstone and male Orange-tip accompanying us. I even had a time for a brief mooch near Bathampton when my girls used the facilities at 'The George' which threw up a Small Tortoiseshell and a male Brimstone. However when we crossed the bridge a massive queue at the tolls put a dampener on my spirits. They didn't get any better as once off the motorway we drove past fields with scatterings of Cuckoo Flower and left them behind. In fact I didn't see a single butterfly once we'd crossed into Wales...

Once we had unpacked and settled into my in-laws the girls went to play in the garden and I went up the Lane for a stroll – to stretch the cramp out my legs after the long drive 😊. I'd barely started the walk when a Small Tort bombed by me and headed up the Lane. "I'll catch up with it later" I thought but I didn't and I'd walked for a good 20 minutes up the Lane before the ancient banks and hedges yielded the sight of another. It was a Peacock that was sunning itself on one of the roads of the main Lane but it evaded me too.

I'd almost given up when something made me continue down the farm drive, I was sure I'd seen a white motion? As I walked down there on the bank of the drainage ditch there was something white fluttering about. It was my first Green Veined White of the year and a right little cracker, pristine and fresh out of the box.





Happy with my greeny I thought I better get back and be sociable though I did make a few stops on the way back for a few bees of the multitude of bees. The Small Tort bombed by again just to wind me up but it didn't work - another species on the yearly tally! 😊





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 18-Apr-14 11:59 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

My wife is now on Unclebiotics so she should be better soon.

Nice turn of phrase, Wurzel. I like it.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 19-Apr-14 09:36 PM GMT

Cracking Green-veined White undersides Wurzel 😊

I have started sniffing and sneezing myself, look like I've copped a cold for over Easter, in my case I am giving the germ killing qualities of Whisky a go 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Apr-14 11:16 PM GMT

Cheers David 😊 That's a favourite of my Father's 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I hope the cold didn't set in - I hear that Whiskey is indeed a preventative of colds and flu - so drink a dram or two for your health 😊

Llanachaeron 15-04-2014

On our first day at Foss-y-ffin we toddled around doing a lot of the things that we normally do. First up there was the trip to Aberaron and the parks but it was too chilly for butterflies. This was followed by another quick walk up the Lane after lunch but there was only a single Peacock to greet me. Then a brief look around the Cei Bach locale produced 3 Peacocks, a Red Kite over the beach but no Orange-tips despite the presence of lots of Cuckoo flowers.



Tuesday was looking to be the best day weather wise of our stay...so to Llanachaeron we went. This is a great little National Trust site with Walled gardens, Woodland walks, a nice picnic area by the car park alongside the river as well as the gardens around the house. So with the temperatures rising and this range of habitats I was hoping for something good. In fact it started well enough with a Peacock in the car park, a Comma in the Walled Gardens, a pupa in the barn and then a Small Tortoiseshell near the sheep pens - but everything was very flighty and most shots were 'grab shots'.



Once the girls had fed some Lambs we thought it was about time that we got fed so we headed back to the benches for lunch. I had only just sat down with my sandwich and bemoaned the dearth of Orange-tips when what should I spy, resting on a Bramble leaf? It didn't stay there for a slow approach unfortunately as it was quickly mobbed by another male and then they both joined forces on a Small White. This somehow evaded them and then it spent the next 5 minutes ceaselessly following another Small White which I took to be a female. So I thought I ought to let the National Trust know that Llanachaeron also offers 'dinner and a shot (dinner not provided)'. It was so great to watch I didn't mind that I'd only gotten one decent shot from the whole episode.



After lunch we took the Woodland walk which saw us accompanied by the odd Orange-tip or white and was splendid due to the carpet of wild flowers. The walk ended in a field with a spread of dead Bracken and nestled in amongst these were two 2 Peacocks and a Small Tort. On the way back down I stopped to try and follow a white with my eyes. It would flutter around, dip down behind a stump and not reappear – just like I'd witnessed in Garston Wood.



Then while waiting for the girls to try all the dressing up clothes as we visited the House itself I waited by the bushes. Over the next 10 minutes or so I saw several different species of Bees (Bumbles, *Andrena* sp, *Osmia* and my first *Nomadas* of the year), Bee Flies and a rosy Shield Bug. There was also a Green Veined White which I got within a Gnats breathe of getting a shot of before someone else kids spooked it. Honestly after all the efforts I've gone through to train my kids for butterflying 😊 . I had more luck with a proper Welsh Comma before it got mugged by my first Holly Blue of the year. It appeared from nowhere, buzzed the Comma and then flew up high staying out of range of my camera.





The girls were pretty spent by now so we headed home and while putting the boots in garage something small caught my eye - a 20 Plumed Moth.



So an excellent day -lots going on, lovely spring weather, family around me, a better Orange-tip shot and my first Holly Blue of the year! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 21-Apr-14 11:13 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

That 20 Plume Moth is an unusual one. I do not think I have ever seen one of those before 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-14 11:44 PM GMT

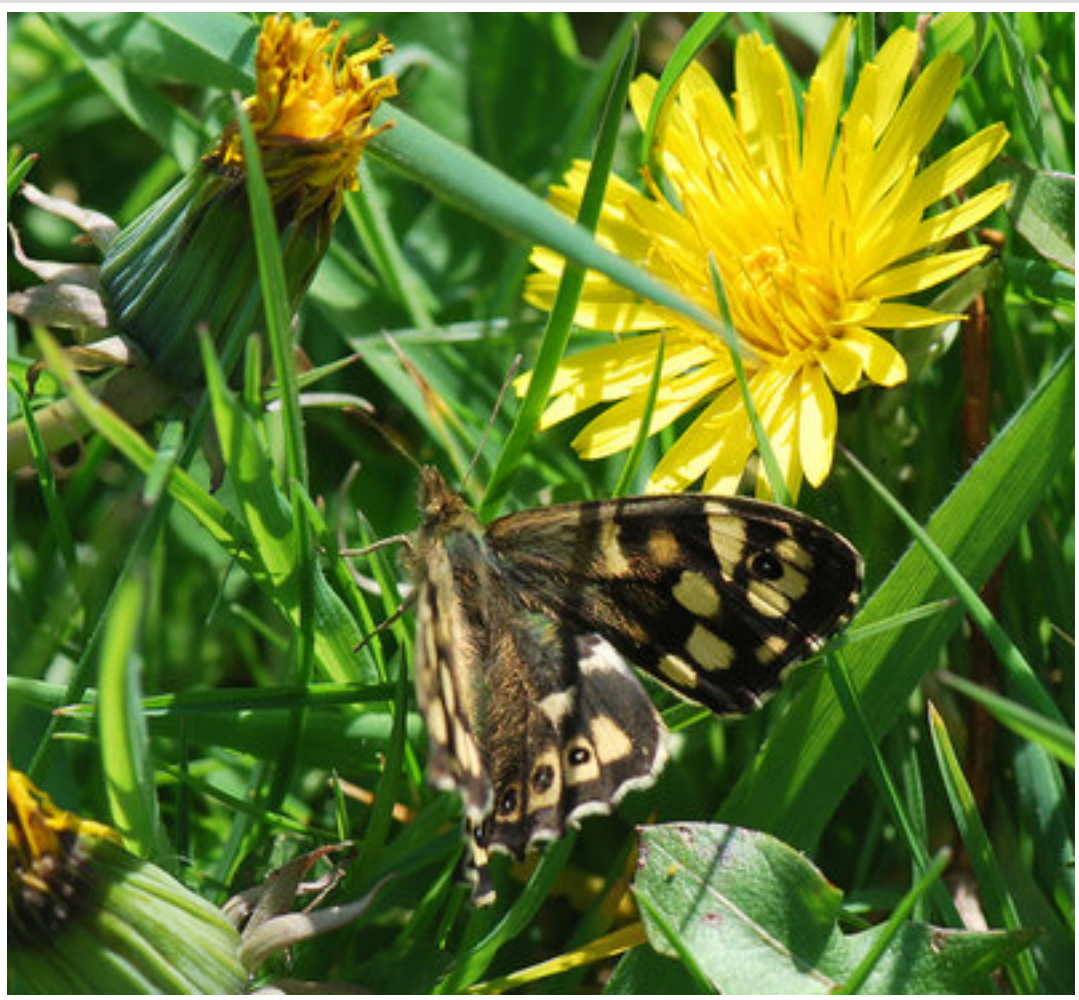
Cheers Jack 😊 I saw my first one last year and it was such a weird looking thing that I've kept my eye open for another one since. 😊

Out and About in Aber 16-04-2014

After the delights of yesterday we had a visit to Aberystwyth planned and so having gotten to the town before my in-laws we parked and waited. While waiting I had a quick check out of the nearby drainage field - there are several of these all along the new town path ready to hold the waters should the Ystwyth swell during the winter. It was sunny but as it was early the temperature hadn't risen I didn't expect much so three Small Tortoiseshells was a nice bonus.

Once my in-laws arrived we headed straight into town and I saw at least 3 Speckled Wood on the inward journey and managed only a single grab shot as they were either flying low and not stopping or were up high amongst the branches beyond the range of my lens. Still those were my first for the year!

After we'd visited the usual shops, had lunch on the seafront and I'd paid my respects to Duncan I walked back to the car on my own while everyone else wandered over to the swimming pool. I managed to make the majority of the journey in 20 minutes so I had about a quarter of an hour to spare before driving over to the pool to meet them. It didn't take me long to catch up with some Specklies. In total I saw about 5 all told as well as an unidentified White and another Small Tortoiseshell (they really are everywhere this year).





I got to the swimming pool a few minutes early so a quick walk around threw up a Peacock and a few more Specklies - had they been here all along or was this the day of mass emergence? Looking at the tears and damage to the wings of some I reckon it could be a bit of both as the few here were very fresh.



On the journey back there were numerous Orange-tips and Brimstones flying along the verges so I headed out up the Lane almost as soon as we'd gotten back. The first thing I saw was beautifully patterned moth which was fluttering along the banks and every now and again it would tunnel its way into the grass only to emerge a minute later and flutter weakly some more. Looking at it now I think it is a Water Carpet?



Leaving it tucked up I carried on up the hill to the farm drive where once again there was the/a Peacock and also a Green Veined White which was unusually relaxed. Another one appeared and after a brief squabble they both headed off in separate directions - one down the farm drive and the other further up the Lane. I followed this one as it ascended the hill hoping that it would stop and take nectar. It would fly in its fluttery fashion (almost as if it would stall and drop at any moment) along the bank, nip into investigate a flower and then carry on, nip in and investigate and then carry one. After 50 or 60 metres it would turn around and work its way back along the route it had already taken for about 20 metres and then it would turn again and fly in the same fashion for 50 or 60 metres. It had stopped once very briefly during this whole sequence and I was about to give up when it dropped down into the drainage ditch and stayed there wings wide open for a full two minutes. I couldn't believe my luck and so getting wet knees I crawled along the ditch until I was almost on top of it.



Very brief stop...



A car went by and the spell was broken, the Greeny flipped its wings and disappeared over the hedge – gone! On the way back the Water Carpet was out in the open (possibly sunning itself) for some reason on a manhole cover so I was able to get a close up shot of one of its wings showing off the markings to good effect and a Small White flew by with a much more purposeful, less fatty flight.



Home tomorrow, Wales did me right with three firsts – Green Veined, Holly Blue and Specklies, I just hope the weather holds as I'd like to try and find the other Greeny...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 22-Apr-14 07:34 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

...I hear that Whiskey is indeed a preventative of colds and flu – so drink a dram or two for your health 😊...

The Whisky(Scotch) seemed to do the trick, the sniffles lasted a day and then fizzled out 😊 Not sure if Whiskey(Irish) 😊 works the same. I'll have to conduct a bit of a practical experiment some time 😊😊

Great reports on the Welsh Trip.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 22-Apr-14 09:24 PM GMT

Wales turned out to be pretty good then Wurzel 😊 I've been to south Wales, there's some beautiful countryside there. I visited in late September many moons ago. I don't remember seeing many butterflies. I did see a few Welsh Dragons of course, a few Commons and a Migrant Hawker or two. 😊

Best Wishes

B'saurus

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 22-Apr-14 09:27 PM GMT

Has I said in my diary Wurzal great photo's 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 22-Apr-14 10:36 PM GMT

Do you know, Wurzel, I don't think I've ever seen a Speckled Wood nectaring on dandelion before?

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Apr-14 09:29 AM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 Glad to hear the remedy worked – your practical experiment sounds like one I'd like check myself – don't forget though that in order to ensure reproducibility you need repeat readings 😊😊

Cheers Rex 😊 I think it was because I lowered my expectations to practically nil and as often happens when you give up something turns up 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 My camera seems to work better on brighter days – I think it suffers from SAD 😊

Cheers David 😊 I seem to be having the luck with species on the wrong species at the moment – if only I could get a Swallowtail on a pine cone 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 23-Apr-14 10:52 AM GMT

Just been doing some catching up! In your post of 17th April, the first orchid is indeed an Early-Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*).

The pink plant towards the end of your post is, however, that rather strange and uncommon plant, the Toothwort (*Lathraea squamaria*). It's a parasite on the roots of Hazel and Elm, and gets everything it needs from the host plant. It has no chlorophyll and is below ground for most of the year, except when it pushes up the 'ghostly' flower spike in the Spring. I've a photo on my website at <http://home.btconnect.com/mike.flemming...ml#picttop> of one I found in a local BBOWT reserve.

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 23-Apr-14 03:20 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel
Just got back from Easter oop North with some visits to Durham Whitby and the Yorkshire Dales. Some lovely weather and lots of Small Tortoiseshell ('Scarce Tortoiseshell' in Surrey 😞) Not much else apart from the odd fly by Small White.

Glad you got a 'topside' shot of the Water Carpet as the head-on underside was not diagnostic. It's a species I've not seen before 🍷 .

The little micro (Garston Wood 11/04/14) is (Dys)ericroania subpurpurella I think. Excellent photos and reports as ever plus you're two up on me now (Red Admiral and Large White) 🍷 😊

Is Mikes' Toothwort similar to the Broomrape I found on Stockbridge Down ?

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 23-Apr-14 07:36 PM GMT

"Philzoid" wrote:

Is Mikes' Toothwort similar to the Broomrape I found on Stockbridge Down ?

Similar, in that it is also a parasite with no chlorophyll in the family *Orobanchaceae*. There are many different species, which parasitize different plants.

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Apr-14 11:26 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 Thanks for the ID's I seem to recall seeing those plants before and someone saying something about teeth but now I know 😊
Cheers Philzoid and welcome back 😊 Thanks for the ID, the micro was spot on, though I think I may now be 2 more ahead 😊 ...

Duke Site 18-04-2014

Part 1...

I'd watched with growing envy as report after report came flooding in featuring Green Hairstreaks and so having got everything sorted out after our return from Wales the day before I headed out and used up one of my Brownie point days. There were two places I thought about visiting and after much internal debate I decided to leave off on a visit to my Marshie site until they start emerging and so it was off to my Duke site. The journey there was a sombre one as I didn't see a single butterfly the whole way and once on site despite the sun shining strongly the temperature was still low and being kept down by a cutting, gusty wind.

There were no Dukes on the path which last year had held 15 or more so it's still too early possibly - this area seems to be anything up to 2 weeks later than the eastern counties in terms of emergences. There was my first butterfly of the day though can you guess what it was? Yep as usual it was a Small Tort - so my unofficial target of seeing a Small Tort at every site I visit is still within my grasp. 😊

I took to wandering about and something very small and grey shot away - possibly my first Grizzlie - but it was too quick and despite heading to where it had appeared to land I couldn't relocate it. Then a brownish thing bombed away which I did manage to follow. I had high hopes but it was a Burnet Companion Moth...

Finally my wandering paid off as just under a Spruce I found one of my target species- Greenstreaks! I managed to get right up close to one of them observing it cleaning its antenna by dragging/combing its leg along it.

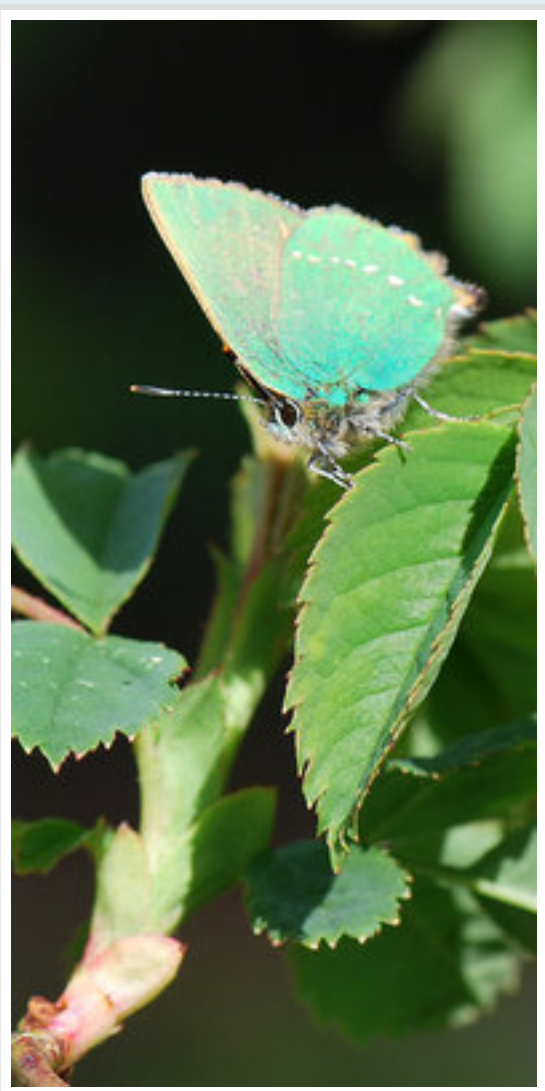


cleaning antennae



Then I sat back and had a bite to eat while they bustled around me. I was surprised that they all stayed pretty low to the ground which I thought was a trait of the females but every now and again one would land low down in the spruce right at the end of the branch and would then fly out and intercept another passing 'male'. There was a constant soap opera going on in front of me; one would settle and then another would turn up and off they would go, upsetting another one or two along the way. I also observed them angling their body to the sun and I couldn't work out whether this was to warm up or blend in more with the vegetation?





Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 24-Apr-14 01:30 PM GMT

Excellent shots of the greenstreak 🇩🇪 I see i'm going to have to play my joker and get off to Denbies this weekend 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 24-Apr-14 07:54 PM GMT

Glad to see you have got your Greenstreak Wurzel 😊🇩🇪 none for me yet. Plenty of time yet though, its still early days in the midlands, we are well behind the South-East.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 24-Apr-14 10:10 PM GMT

Nemesis totally tamed now Wurzel 😊 Some great photos as usual. I hope you locate some Dukes soon, they are next on my wish list.

B'saurus

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 24-Apr-14 11:22 PM GMT

To think that this species once threatened to push you over the edge!!

Looks like redemption to me, Wurzel!

Re: Wurzel

by PhilBJohnson, 25-Apr-14 06:02 AM GMT

I like the Green Hairstreak shots, Wurzel. I don't think I have ever seen one!

I must stop walking around with my head in the clouds and eyes closed 😊

Best Wishes,

Philip

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Apr-14 08:50 AM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 Good luck at Denbies, don't see anything I wouldn't see 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 As I'm on such good terms with the Greenstreaks now I had a word and a few set off - they should be there any day now 😊

Cheers Rex 😊 I expect the Dukes will be added to your tally very soon now 😊

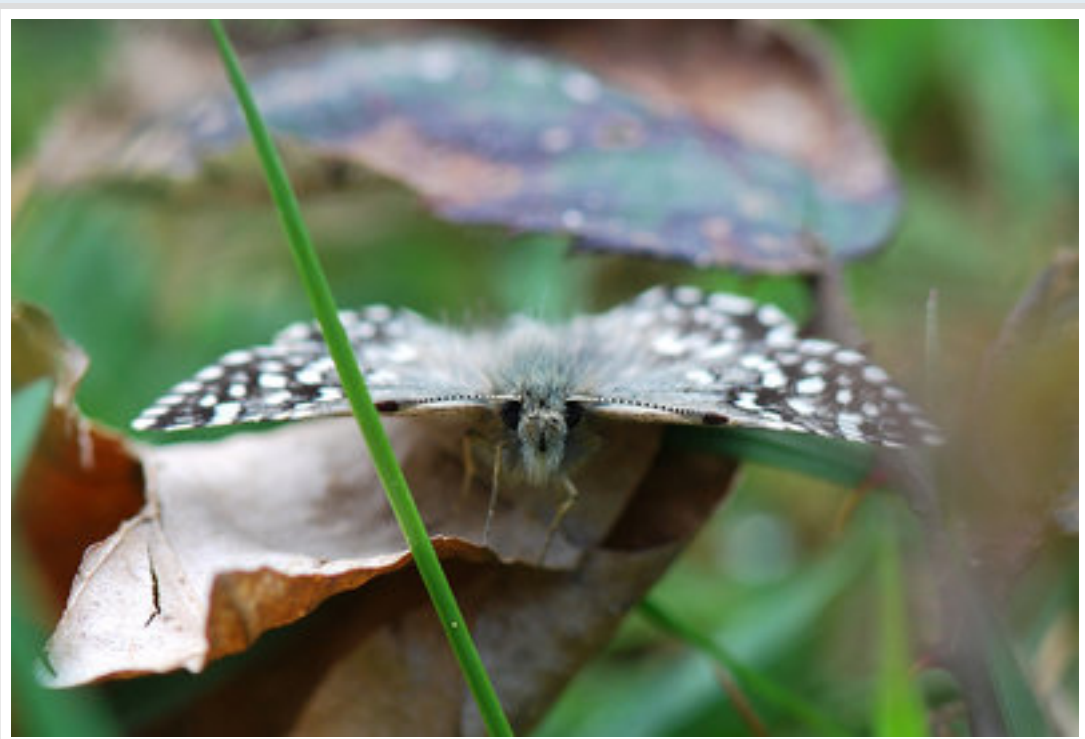
Cheers David 😊 It came down to finding a good site, and they were like buses as last year I found 3 reliable sites - now I have the Greenstreak on the tally anything is possible 😊

Cheers Phil 😊 I'm sure you'll have more luck with finding them than I did at first 😊

Duke Site Part 2...

...Eventually I had to leave this fantastic little spot and went off in search of some other species further up the hill. I was unaware how strongly the sun had come on and it seems that the optimum flight temperature had been reached as all of a sudden the once barren vegetation was throwing up butterflies. A male OT led me up the hill where it was replaced by a Small White and whilst trying to follow this something tiny and grey shot off in veering flight; "a definite Grizzlie" I thought. Somehow I managed to follow it with my eyes and then as the sun went in so it went down and I was able to get close enough for some shots.



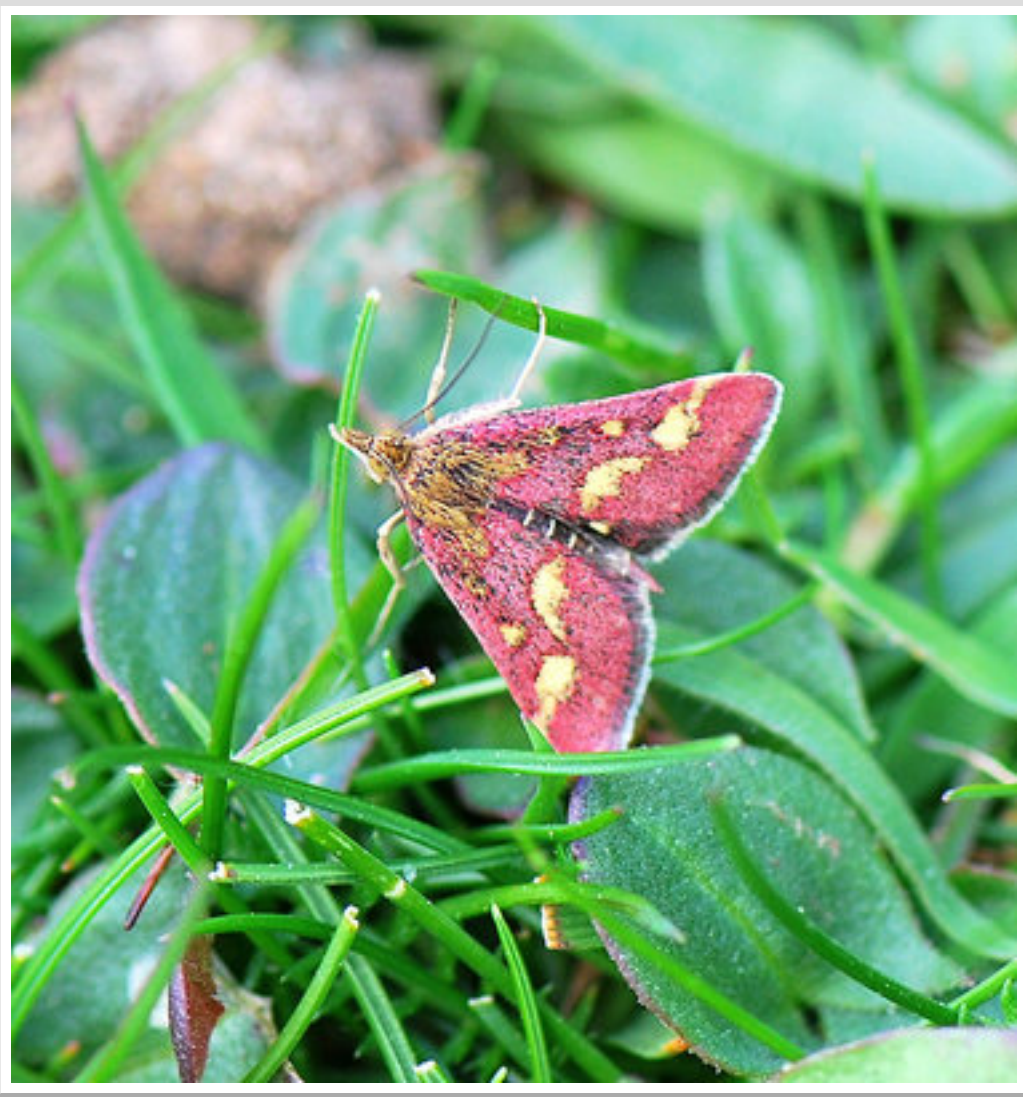


It took off as the sun came out and then when the sun went in again it dropped, literally, ending up in a small tree where it looked like it was trying to be a Greenstreak.

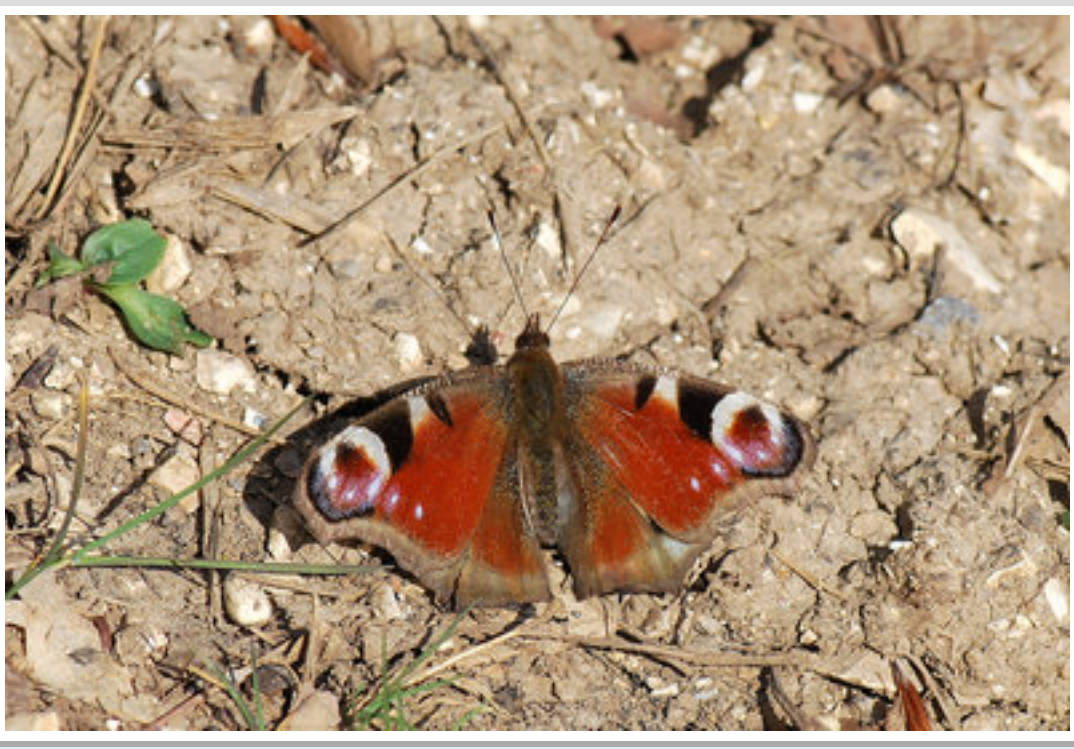


I hung around this little valley which was crawling with Greensteaks – again all on the deck and another male OT arrived, there was a Peacock, another Grizzlie as well as two Green Veined Whites. It was great seeing all of these butterflies but as the temp rose slightly further they got too active and they weren't making any stops so I was able to make just the merest of snap and grabs.

Slightly lower down the hill back towards the Greenstreak area the vegetation was very springy and another Grizzlie stopped briefly. There was also a fly-by Small Tort but the real reason for staying here was the micro Mint moths.



After this I spent a good hour or so just walking the dusty paths around the area where the Dukes had been last year but all I got for my efforts was a female Green Veined and another Peacock.



So I headed off home, planning another visit here in a week or two when hopefully the Dukes will have arrived. I took the back way home so I could make a brief stop off at the Woodfords to see how the Cuckoo Flowers were doing...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 26-Apr-14 08:51 PM GMT

Nice shots Wurzel, glad you got to see your Grizzlie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 28-Apr-14 09:47 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Well done on the Green Hairstreaks 😊 I am still looking for mine 😞

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 28-Apr-14 10:28 PM GMT

A great selection there, Wurzel. Still to see my first Green ones and Grizzlies... The weather has been a pig when I've been free!

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Apr-14 11:56 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 I managed to wrestle one 😊 I think this was the first from this site as only a handful have been reported in Wiltshire so far this season.
Cheers Jack 😊 I could PM you the site details for where I saw mine but it would be a bit of trek and as it's in Wiltshire you'll need your passport 😊
Cheers Dave 😊 I know what you mean about the weather – the best days of the week have been Thursday or Fridays recently – this weekend for me was a complete waste of time weather/butterfly wise. 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Apr-14 09:55 AM GMT

I hardly got out last week and this week doesn't look too hopeful either – it feels a bit like 2012 again over here in Salisbury – we had a few good weeks at the end of March beginning of April and since then it's been cooler and much wetter with low pressure dumping rain and blustery winds on us 😞 . It's been a right pain as things were coming along nicely with Greensteaks and Grizzlies out and the first reports of Dingies coming in too. I was hoping for the first Dukes and some Pearls to be reported last week but the weather has put paid to that and they still haven't been reported from the county. Hopefully the weather will improve and they'll come out quickly and in good numbers. In some ways it's been quite handy as work has been pretty hectic and being trapped there in poor weather is much better than being trapped there in great butterfly weather, there's been more work to do on the house and it's allowing me to catch up with my posts and on that note...

Woodfords 18-04-2014

I still had a bit of time before I had to get home so on the way back from visiting my Duke site I took the back road and cut along to the Woodfords. I stopped briefly on the way for a male Orange-tip which was patrolling a sizable patch of Cuckoo Flower all on its own. I pulled in and lent against a gate to watch it as it circled and zigzagged over the flowers. It would occasionally land and take nectar but would be up and about in such a short time that it was almost as if it hadn't stopped at all. It was getting quite frustrating to watch as every now and again it would pass agonising close to the flowers near the hedge but never stopped. Unfortunately for me I think the field it was in is privately owned land so I couldn't just hop over and stalk it

properly. My patience was rewarded eventually as it finally deemed to stop on one of the flowers right in front of me and so leaning through the hedge I fired off a couple of shots accompanied by a few 'beeps' from an 'oh so hilarious' passing motorist. "What a wit" I thought, or at least a very similar word.



Once on site proper I wandered over to the boggy ground getting quite wet feet and scanned around. A male Orange-tip patrolled along the fence but didn't stop once, as did a male Brimstone and a Small White and female Orange-tip passed into the field, took a few gulps of nectar and then swiftly moved on. The next field along also had fly-by butterflies; a Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell both of which were just 'passing through'. It was getting on into the afternoon and it was nice and warm so I thought I would give up and head on home as nothing seemed to be stopping. One final scan across flowers and a fluttery white butterfly hove into view.

As I edged closer it became apparent that it was what I was hoping for - a female Orange-tip that was intent in refuelling. She would pause at each clump of flowers, would visit some, shun others and would then weakly fly to the next clump where the process would be repeated. I second guessed correctly and so was waiting by the next clump that she visited and so was able to get some close up shots and observe the different behaviour that the female shows. I seem to have more luck with the female Orange-tips than the males probably due to their less aggressive habits. The males seem like butterflies on a mission, which they are of course, whereas the females linger more and are more content to take their time.







I decided that I had bothered the female enough as I'd photographed her at three different fuelling stops and so when she set off to the next set I stayed where I was and then quietly backed away and set off for home. My feet and knees were cold and wet as whilst I'd been kneeling capillary action had been happening on my trousers soaking them from the knee down and the feet up - but who cares after such a peaceful time 😊 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 29-Apr-14 03:47 PM GMT

I see you are still trying to seduce me Wurzel with your lovely moth photos. I can see it won't be too long before I am hooked.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 29-Apr-14 07:18 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

.. it feels a bit like 2012 again over here in Salisbury...

I was thinking that myself the other day, its been a bit gloomy here for a while now. We may not like the long drawn out winters like last year which made us feel like spring was never going to arrive but they do seem to be followed by better summers. Lets hope that this year is not as bad as 2012...but having said that I did manage to see a lot of butterflies that year, although I did take my broly out with me a lot 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 29-Apr-14 08:35 PM GMT

It does feel a bit like 2012, lets hope it isn't 😞 Nice Orange-tip shots and nice report 😊 I guess the Dukes and Pearls are delaying emergence in Wilts due to the c*p weather as 2012 🤔

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 29-Apr-14 11:08 PM GMT

Don't be too downcast, Wurzel. Whilst the forecast suggests things will become cooler over the Bank Holiday weekend, daytime maxima are still expected to be 13-15c. What's more, winds will be light and sunshine will predominate.

These spring species of ours are accustomed to such meagre returns, and I personally welcome it as it might give me (and others) a better chance to approach and photograph Dingy/Grizzled Skippers/Pearl Bordered Fritillaries, etc.

I'd much rather this than 17c and wet!!

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 30-Apr-14 09:22 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel just catching up with the posts, I love the photo's of the Grizzled Skipper's I've yet to see them so I'm envious 🍷 😊 I've got a book that shows places where they are and they looked to be very close to Gaits Barrow, I'm sure though, I'll have to find out.

I Also like your photo's of the female Orange Tip, I've been taking lots here but not one female yet, even the Males are going dizzie flying at every Green Veined White they see only to be Disappointed 😊 poor things 😊 Like you i'm waiting to see the Duke now and the PBF ,lok forward to your Pic's Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-May-14 12:16 AM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊 I'm keeping my eyes open for Moths especially now 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Yeah I saw a lot of butterflies in 2012, it was just hard work trying to fit visits in and around the weather on top of everything else. 😊

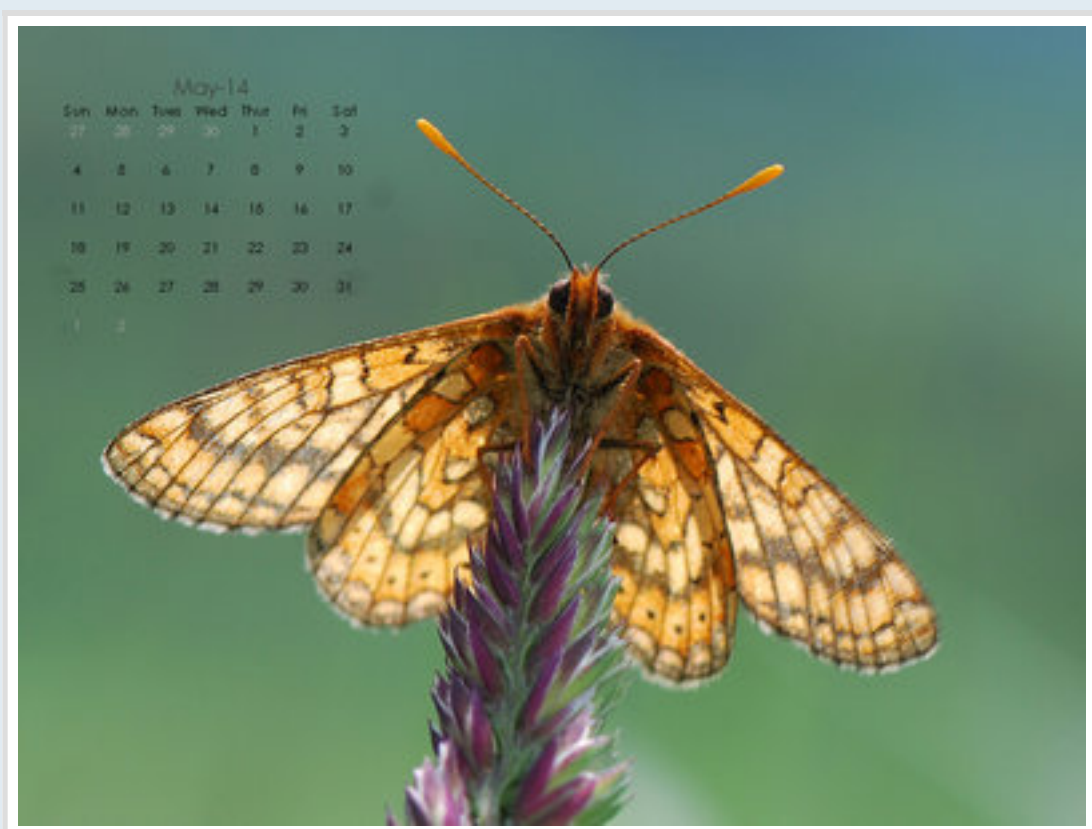
Mind you perhaps I was getting a little too dispondent too quickly 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 We certainly seem to be behind other parts of the country – no Dukes and no PBF's reported – still hopefully this weekend 😊

Cheers David I've pulled myself together and remembered that it's still early in the season 😊 I'd forgotten how frustrating it is seeing reports rolling in while the area I live in is dawdling behind which is exacerbated by the dodgy weather we've had recently. Still PBFs don't mind a drop of rain and coolish temps so here's hoping for this weekend, it's about time, 2weeks later than the first emergers in Sussex.

Cheers Goldie 😊 Good luck with the Dukes and PBF's I'm going to try for some this weekend.

May 2014



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 01-May-14 09:15 PM GMT

Just catching up on your diary Wurzel. Some lovely Orange Tip photos there. I notice that there is a high pressure system due to arrive over the UK for next week. That should get the remaining species we've been seeing here for a while emerging down your way. 😊

B'saurus

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-May-14 12:04 AM GMT

Cheers Rex 😊 I' hoping the high gets here in time for my trip out on Sunday to Bentley Wood 😊

Stourhead 19-04-2014

After the great day yesterday with Greenstreaks and Grizzlies added to the yearly tally and some better Orange-tip photos I had high hopes for the weekend so we duly headed off to Stourhead as soon as the girls had finished their swimming lessons. I set off hopefully after seeing a Small Tortoiseshell bombing along the hedge of the car park.

The girls took part in the Easter Egg hunt but despite walking through some of the best habitat that Stourhead has to offer I didn't see a single butterfly – it was just too cold and cloudy? Later on we walked down and round the circular walk and the temperatures remained cool with the cloud lingering and holding the warmth back. During one brief spell when the sun finally cracked through I saw a Green Veined White flutter by, but it set off across the lake before I could get anything.

Whilst I didn't see very many imagos I did find some eggs whilst looking at a clump of Cuckoo Flower. Because of the plant species I'm guessing that these are Orange-tip eggs? Confirmation gratefully received. 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pete Eeles, 02-May-14 08:53 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Whilst I didn't see very many imagos I did find some eggs whilst looking at a clump of Cuckoo Flower. Because of the plant species I'm guessing that these are Orange-tip eggs? Confirmation gratefully received. 😊

Hi Wurzel - nice, colourful shots! Yes, I think these are Orange-tip eggs since they're laid on or near the developing seedpods; Green-veined White would lay on the leaves, typically. It would be worth revisiting if you want confirmation, to see if the eggs have "oranged up"!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 02-May-14 09:18 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, nice shots of the Orange-tip eggs 😊

Good luck on Sunday, I've never been to Bentley Wood so not too sure where it is but the forecast earlier seemed promising, especially the further towards the south-east you go.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-May-14 09:21 AM GMT

Cheers for the ID Pete 😊 I'll have a look next time I visit – hopefully that'll be sooner rather than later 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I'm just hoping that the Pearls think "stuff it, I need to get out of this chrysalis" 😊

Kingston Lacey 21-04-2014

A very frustrating day for me butterfly wise. I spent the whole drive to Kingston Lacey thinking that I should really have been back at my Duke site tramping the dusty paths and watching Dukes scrap it out. Despite seeing lots of Brimstone and Orange-tip along the roadside verges on the journey there was very little activity as we started our walk around. There was a female Orange-tip that decided to briefly sup nectar on the wrong side of the fence and whenever I saw any other butterflies they were head down and gone! It only got harder as the temperature rose.

I briefly slipped away from the group while the girls went on the tractors and took the old footpath that runs parallel with the road and then into the wood. Over this small stretch there were 3 Peacocks, 2 male Orange-tips, 2 male Brimstones, a couple of Green Veined Whites and a Comma. Yet there was not one single Speckled Wood and not one butterfly paused long enough for a photo.

Back in the Kitchen Gardens the odd white fluttered across the allotments but again nothing was stopping so I resorted to trying for some Nomada Bees and watching a Honey Bee dry out after it had had a dip in a water trough. Why it had gone in I don't know but there several floating carcasses of other bees that had ended up in the drink.



After lunch we ended up round by the Pacific Garden and the little thatched shack but even here the butterflies weren't playing ball. A Small White or Green Veined would fly across the grasses, investigate the flowers tantalisingly close and then just as I thought it would land it would be gone. Even the Peacocks weren't posing nicely – perhaps they'd been suffering constant disturbance due to the large number of people passing through the gardens? So I changed tactics – I got on and enjoyed the afternoon and should any thing just present itself to me I'd have a go at shooting it. Almost immediately a male Orange-tip plopped down on some wild Garlic.



We settled back on the main lawn and along the borders I watched a white fly along and then disappear. I've seen them do this before so I craned over the plant and there was my second Large White of the year (a female) and also the explanation for the vanishing act. It was hanging upside down from one of the larger leaves, hidden by the shadows. Now I know where to look in future when a white does a disappearing number. It then showed itself a couple of times but I could only get record shots.





While the baby was fed I took one last stroll back towards the Oriental Gardens as I'd noticed a small clump of Cuckoo Flower when we'd previously walked by. I stood by and watched as a male Orange-tip patrolled the edge of the woodland and then it flew towards me, over my head, doubled back around and landed on the Cuckoo flower. I was made up and this was well worth the ear ache I got for doing my own 'disappearing act'



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-May-14 11:49 PM GMT

Larkhill begins 24-04-2014

By Thursday I'd had enough of the rubbish weather and with more of the same forecast for the weekend I took a chance to try and see some butterflies and made my first proper stop-off at Larkhill. I was hoping that there might be a Grizzlie or possibly my first Small Copper but that wasn't to be as it was still a bit cool and they've only just started being reported in county. Still I examined the grass stalks and flower heads just in case and wandered up and down both paths.

Something fluttered by and there was a Brimstone making the stop worthwhile, I'd wanted to get a butterfly fix and here was a butterfly. I was more than happy as I've seen Brimstones here but never managed to photograph them as they've either been fly-bys or I've been after something else. The shots are a bit 'record' but now that I've gotten a Larkhill Brimstone I can work on them.



29-04-2014 Larkhill 2

Cheered by my success last week today was the first chance since to make a quick top-off at Larkhill. Today the weather was on my side for a change and when I pulled in for the five minute stop-off it was pretty warm, sunny and the wind was a mere whisper. I checked out the Western path first and since the decimation last year it doesn't seem to have recovered. The nectar sources haven't returned and the main stretch of the path is sparsely covered in grass like a green comb over. However 4 male Brimstones flew by overhead, alongside, veering over the scrub towards the road and finally bombing straight down the path on a collision course!

I'd only gotten a short way along the Northern path when a white hove into view ahead of me. It looked a bit 'fluttery' and not direct so I thought it was a Green Veined White. I was able to confirm my idea when it passed me by and landed briefly to take nectar. I thought that would be it but it landed a second time for longer so I managed a couple of shots.



So the tally now stands at 2 for Larkhill which is a start but getting photos in the 5 minutes is hard work as the butterflies are sparse and prone to motoring by rather than stopping. Still things can only improve and by the time the Marbled Whites are on the scene I'll be faced with the problem of which deciding which butterfly to photograph. I can't wait!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-May-14 11:17 PM GMT

30-04-2014 Work at lunch

Mid week the weather started to improve despite what the Met App was telling me and so I headed out at lunchtime and completed my usual route. The bank was my starting pint but there was nowt there as the flowers seem to have gone over already and so I carried on across the field which was a blaze of yellow. I think there were more Dandelions than grass plants and skimming across the flowers tops was a Peacock.



Another couple joined him and at the end of the field by the footpath a white flew by and then landed in amongst the Dead Nettles and the Dandelion seed heads. One minute it was easy to watch and follow and then it was gone and despite knowing where it had landed I still couldn't see it. It took off again and fluttered over the barb wire fence and seemed to be investigating the Dandelion seed heads looking like it was inspecting flowers as nectar sources a behaviour Nfreem has commented on.



Also along the path were another couple of Peacocks and I was starting to get concerned that for the first time I wasn't going to see a Small Tortoiseshell and then one popped up juts over the fence and accompanied me all the way along the path.



Further down near the end of the path the fence has been banked up and there is a good growth of nettles with dead grass stalks poking out and in the earlier part of the season it was where I would see the most Small Torts yet today there was only one, looking lonely, dejected and a bit tired to be honest.





On the walk back a female Brimstone and a Small White stopped just long enough to confirm identification but not long enough to get my lens on them and before I knew it I was walking back into the lab. The weather held during the afternoon and so I thought it would be a good idea to check the progress of The Devenish...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-May-14 09:42 AM GMT

The Devenish 30-04-2014

Having had some success at lunchtime and as I couldn't seem to get any of y wether Apps to reach an agreement I thought it best to go back to old fashioned weather forecasting; I drove and looked ahead for blue sky and breaks in the cloud.

Luckily as I bombed along the winding hedgerow lined road to The Devenish the sky remained clear and so I ran from the car park through the wood, across the field and half way up the steep side of the Down. The only problem with this approach was that I was just getting my breath back when I spotted a Grizzlie. So I had to try and hold my breath in order to steady myself to get any shots.



With something to show for my trip I traversed the Down and saw another two Grizzlies to add to my first. One caught the light just right making the forewings glow a purple-brown colour which really highlighted the contrasting black and white chequers along the wing margins.



Shots in the bag I made my way back down the Down and into the lower field. Here a male Brimstone, male Green-veined White and two Orange-tips all patrolled along boundary of the field. At one point the male Orange-tips approached from opposite directions, almost collided with each other and then spiralled in a battle upwards and high over the Beechs. All in all I'd been out of the car for about 10 minutes - I think I'm getting back into the groove of quick stop-offs 😊.
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 08-May-14 12:13 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Just catching up on your diary. I love the colours in your close ups of the Orange Tip eggs on Cuckoo Flower a few posts back, beautiful 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 08-May-14 10:14 PM GMT

"jackz432r" wrote:

Hi Wurzel

Just catching up on your diary. I love the colours in your close ups of the Orange Tip eggs on Cuckoo Flower a few posts back, beautiful

I agree with Jack on that one and also that male Orange-tip on the Cuckoo flower is just brilliant 🍷

I take it you've noticed the Drinker moth larva on the nettle leaf at Larkhill. Looking at this one he's still got a lot of growing to do 😊
Just eggs and pupa now and you've got the set 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-May-14 10:36 AM GMT

Cheers Jack 😊 They were a lucky find on a very uneventful butterfly day 😊

Cheers Philzoid 😊 Thanks for the ID, I had indeed noticed it but as I didn't know what it was decided not to draw attention to it 😊 I'll now add that to my Moth Collection 😊 We missed Marshies at Bentley by a day 😊 though there haven't been any imago records from the main Marshie site yet – just a larvae and pupae so I'll keep you posted, maybe next weekend?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 09-May-14 12:54 PM GMT

Nice stuff Wurzel, lovely Grizzled Skipper pics 😊 hope to see your Pearls soon... 😊 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-May-14 06:54 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 I've still got two posts to do and then I'll be on my Pearls – and then there's three more to do after that and I might finally have caught up 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

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

Your'e not the only one,Wurzel,i still have my Cornwall report to finish,and i'm just back from Surrey and Sussex...

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-May-14 11:55 PM GMT

We'll get there Essex 😊 and then there will be other trips to write about 😊

The Devenish 02-05-2014

After the success of my quick stop-off at the Devenish a few previously I looked at the skies and decided to race the clouds and make another quick stop-off. I'd usually just restrict my stops to Larkhill but it's been very quiet so far there this year and after one of the paths was levelled last year I'm not sure how productive it'll be this year? I'd like to be proved wrong so I'll call in a few times to keep an eye on the place but for now The Devenish is my number one stop off.

As I pulled into the car park there was a Green-veined White and the Warden and so I completed his questionnaire on the hoof as we made our way through the wood and the small field to the side of the Down. The Warden hadn't seen any Grizzlies so I hoped that the couple from the other day

would still be around. A Brimstone floated along the top of the Down as we started our ascent but we only needed to walk up a third of the way as there was Grizzlie flying low across our path. It landed to my right and behind me and the Warden managed to spot it as it landed. I approached it cautiously and then realised that I was photographing a different Grizzlie than the one I had been directed too!



Grizzlie No 1



Grizzlie No 2



Back to No 1 again



Photos taken, much needed break from work taken and questionnaire completed we headed back across the field lingering long enough to watch a male Orange-tip do a few fly-bys on patrol.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 10-May-14 06:24 AM GMT

They are lovely shots of Grizzlies Wurzel, especially no 2. It is pin sharp and nicely composed. I certainly haven't managed to get one as good as that.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 10-May-14 02:04 PM GMT

Love the latest pictures Wurzal, I've not had a chance yet to visit Gaits Barrow the weather has been so bad, so had to take photo's of what ever landed in my garden which wasn't very much 😞 So it's a pleasure to look at yours 😊 Goldie

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 10-May-14 04:54 PM GMT

Great Grizzlies Wurzel, I too like the second one, a cracking shot 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-May-14 09:02 AM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊 The butterfly itself adopted a pose that was perfectly perpendicular so all I had to do was kneel and click 😎

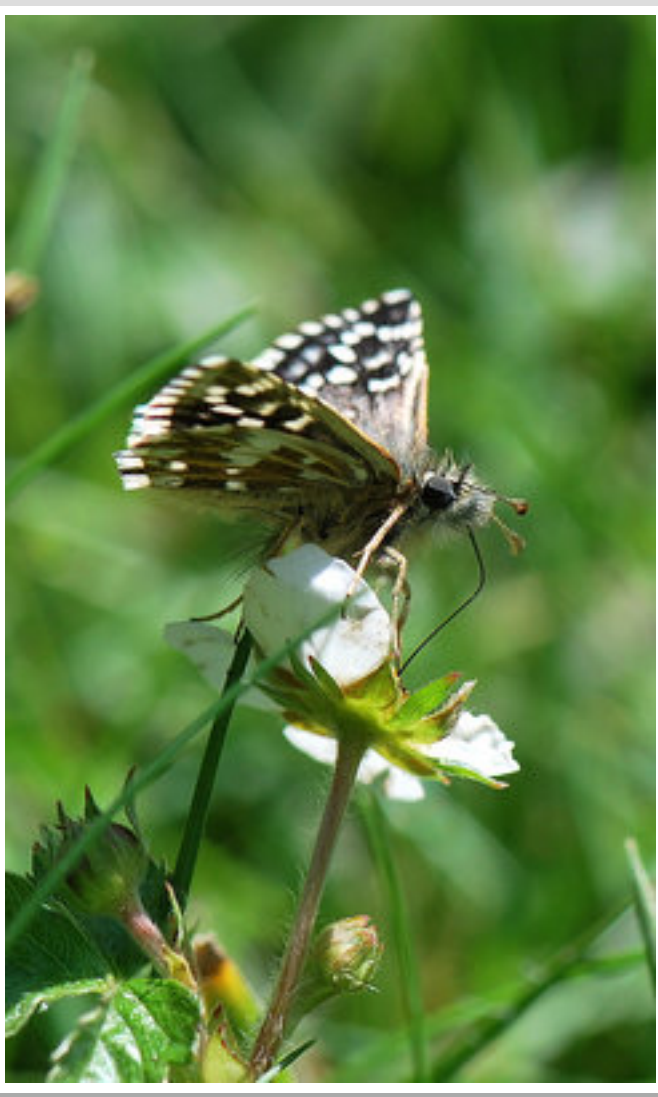
Cheers Goldie 😊 Hopefully the fortnight of high pressure will turn out to be more than a rumour, fingers crossed 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 That's one of the advantages of not having a garden - you have to make those sneaky stop-offs 😊 Another method of sneaky butterflying is detailed below...

Martin Down 03-05-2014

I'd planned to meet Philzoid on the Sunday for our now annual meet up at Bentley Wood for Pearls and so when I woke up to wall to wall blue skies on Saturday I wondered how I would wangle some butterflying? That's the thing with this time of year - everything seems to emerge at once and you have to work around the unpredictable weather. Come August pretty much everything has emerged and there is a more relaxed feel to my trips. Then I remembered that I had already arranged to visit my parents in the afternoon and so we were stopping off for a picnic at Martin Down on the way - such foresight! 😊

We pulled into the main car park on the Blandford Road and made our way along the path heading towards the rifle butts. As you come through the scrubs there is a little haven just off to the left of the main path which we've visited before and as it offers shelter form the breeze and springy, spongy grass that's where we headed. While we ate various butterflies passed by just within my vision and every now and then I'd take a brief break from eating, saunter a few steps and take a few shots before returning to the rug to continue my lunch. So over the course of lunch I saw 2 Grizzlies, a male Brimstone and my first Dingy of 2014



While my wife relaxed in the sun I took a quick stroll with my older daughter and investigated the edges of the large island of scrub and Hawthorns that we'd set up camp in. On the left hand side there was another couple of Grizzlies and a pair of Brimstones and on the right hand side more Brimstones and also my first Small Copper of the year which didn't stop. One male Brimstone did and it acted as a perch for a Nettle moth. A second thought about

joining the first but as it settled the Brimstone had had enough and took off scattering butterflies and moths in all directions.



I headed back and swapped daughters and after finding my second Dingy we both set off to the right hand side again hoping to relocate the Small Copper. Back at the scallop where the Brimstones had been there were a few whites and another pair of Brimstones, both males who started to pursue a female as she arrived. She wasn't having any of it and quickly saw them off and the reason became clear as she started ovi-positing.

The Small Copper did a fly-by so I left the female to ensure the next generation and tried to follow the Copper. I'd forgotten just how active they can be as my last encounter before today was back in October when they were tired, cold and aged. Luckily this one settled pretty quickly but I could tell that it was nervous because it didn't close its wings fully but propped them three quarters open for a quick take off. I think I can detect small faint blue spots on the hind wings?





We then packed up and made our way back to the car and on way a Speckle landed on the path. It looked quite washed out suggesting that it has been out for a while yet this is only the second time that I've seen them this year. Have they been there all along just keeping their heads down while I've been to other sites or trapped indoors by renovations or the weather?



Bentley tomorrow – will there be Pearls?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 11-May-14 02:01 PM GMT

Love the Copper shots Wurzal, not seen one here yet.

we've just booked a cottage in the South Downs for the first week in July, I want to go to Bently Wood to see the PE, hope fully I will, is that a good time to go 🤔 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 12-May-14 01:33 PM GMT

Another great read. 😊 I particularly like the comment about the Brimstone sending butterflies and moths in all directions 🤪 It's a bit like us having a fly the size of a bat land on us ...we'd be somewhat vexed to say the least. 😂

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Hoggers, 12-May-14 03:36 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I've just caught up with your diary and those Grizzled Skippers are stunning! Absolutely beautiful!

Best Wishes,

Hoggers.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 12-May-14 08:02 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cheers Neil 😊 That's one of the advantages of not having a garden – you have to make those sneaky stop-offs :wink...

Ahh! yes, for me its my garden and for you its your sneaky stop-offs 😊 Unfortunately for me, my route home from work is through typical sub-urban streets so there is nowhere really for me to stop-off, however briefly. There are a couple of local spots not far away but that would mean going in the opposite direction and take a lot longer which would be pushing my luck a bit.

Great reports, keep 'em coming 😊

Neil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-May-14 02:33 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I normally visit Bentley for PE's during the last week of July (as that's when work finishes) but they might be about from the start of July

Cheers Philzoid 😊 It was slightly vexed indeed 😊 The Marshies are now building 😊

Cheers Hoggers 😊 Those shots were down to the butterfly deciding that it wanted to pose, mind you not a patch on a Taras ab 🍷

Cheers Neil 😊 The sneaky stop-offs are in full swing now that the weather is improving. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

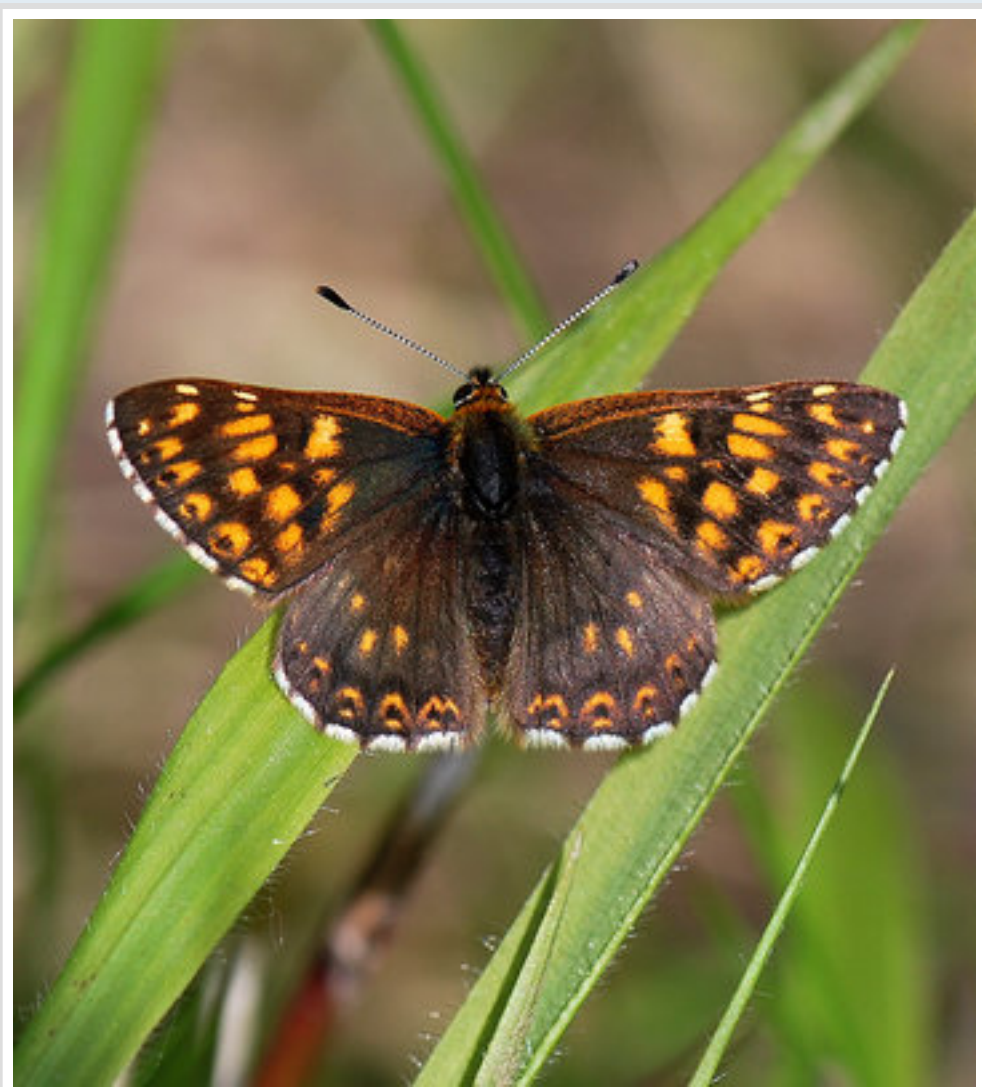
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-May-14 11:05 PM GMT

Bentley Wood 05-05-2014

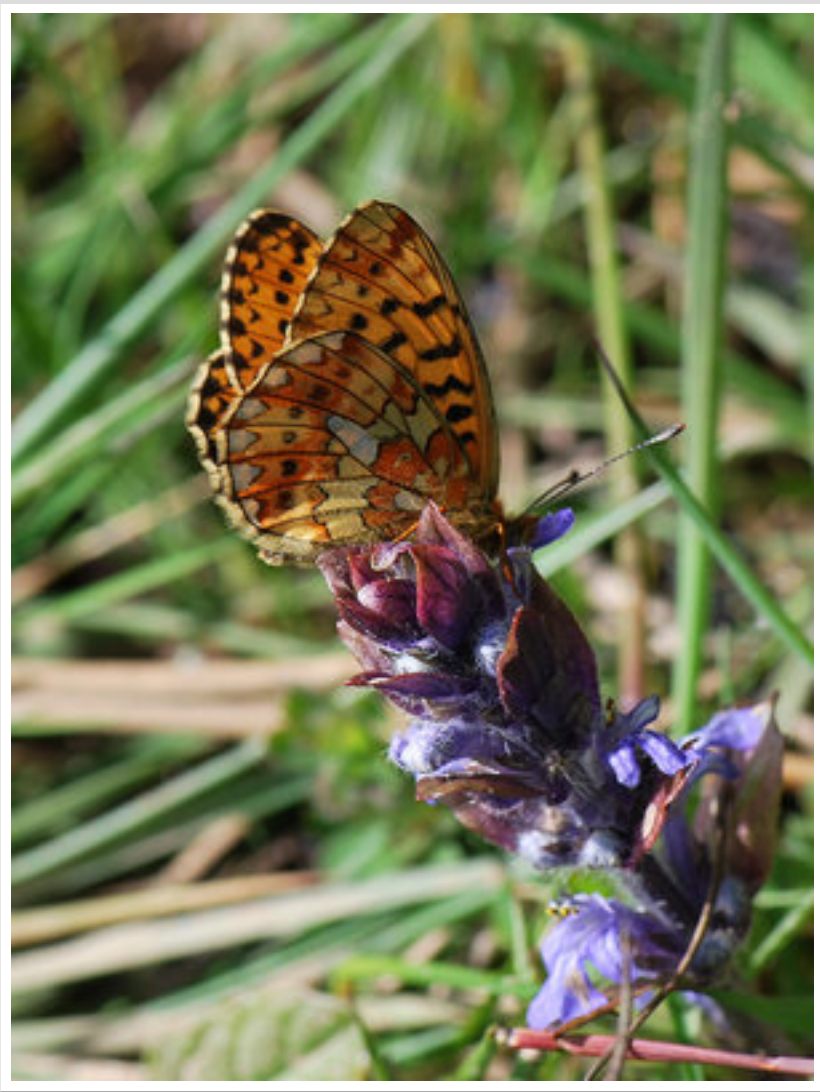
I'd been watching reports of Pearl Bordered Fritillaries coming in from first the east of the country with envy. Then the colonies in the South West started emerging and my envy grew but also the anticipation. The Wiltshire colonies are always about a fortnight or more behind the first emergers so I eagerly checked the county site and Alan Thornbury's blog. All was quiet and the weather reports ranged from not really favourable to miserable but Philzoid and I are made of sterner stuff so we arranged to meet at Bentley Wood on the Sunday anyway.

The morning came and the weather was much better than they'd said - shock horror the Met gets it wrong but even more shock horror - it's better than they predicted! As my older daughter and I got there first we thought we'd have a quick mooch around the Eastern Clearing to see what we could find. On the way I bumped into Jenks and a few Pearls flitted around while we chatted and caught up and then something small a dark buzzed by. We watched as it settled, it was a Bentley Duke. As Jenks didn't have a camera I made a cautious approach and got a few shots. It would move about a metre away and then it settled perfectly. It then took a longer flight and we pointed it out to a few other people and I took a few more photos. It seemed to like this little area and so I left it be and a sudden shriek of joy from my daughter informed me that Philzoid and his daughter had arrived. Also around was False Apollo - who'd I'd met before but not as his UKB nom de plume - good to meet you again/for the first time Mike! 😊





We tried to relocate the Dukes but it was proving elusive so we had more of a walk around and focused in on the Pearls. They were around in very good numbers but as it was fast approaching lunchtime and the temperature was rising none were stopping for very long and definitely not in the classic closed wing pose that shows pearls off to the best effect. However I found them in a nice range of postures. I've seen really heavily marked individuals here before and this year I managed to get shots of the heaviest marked individual that I saw and it wasn't that strongly marked. However one stood out as it had finer markings on the forewings.





Slightly darker



Slightly lighter

By now we must have covered most of the ground in the Eastern Clearing and the girls were getting hungry so we headed to the 'new' bench for lunch.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

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

Lovely pictures from your Bentley expedition – and that's not the same Duke as the one we saw the next day. If anything ours was darker with less orange on the hind wings... But those Pearls positively glow! Beautiful. 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 15-May-14 01:38 PM GMT

Alright Wurzel.

It was a great day and i'm looking forward to going back in a week or two's time 😊. just a shame I missed that nice fresh duke who definitely looks browner than the ones I encountered at Noar Hill the ay before. I wonder if that is something to do with their different habitats 😊

I will check my pearl shots again but from memory most of mine fit into the 'light category'

Phil

Re: Wurzel

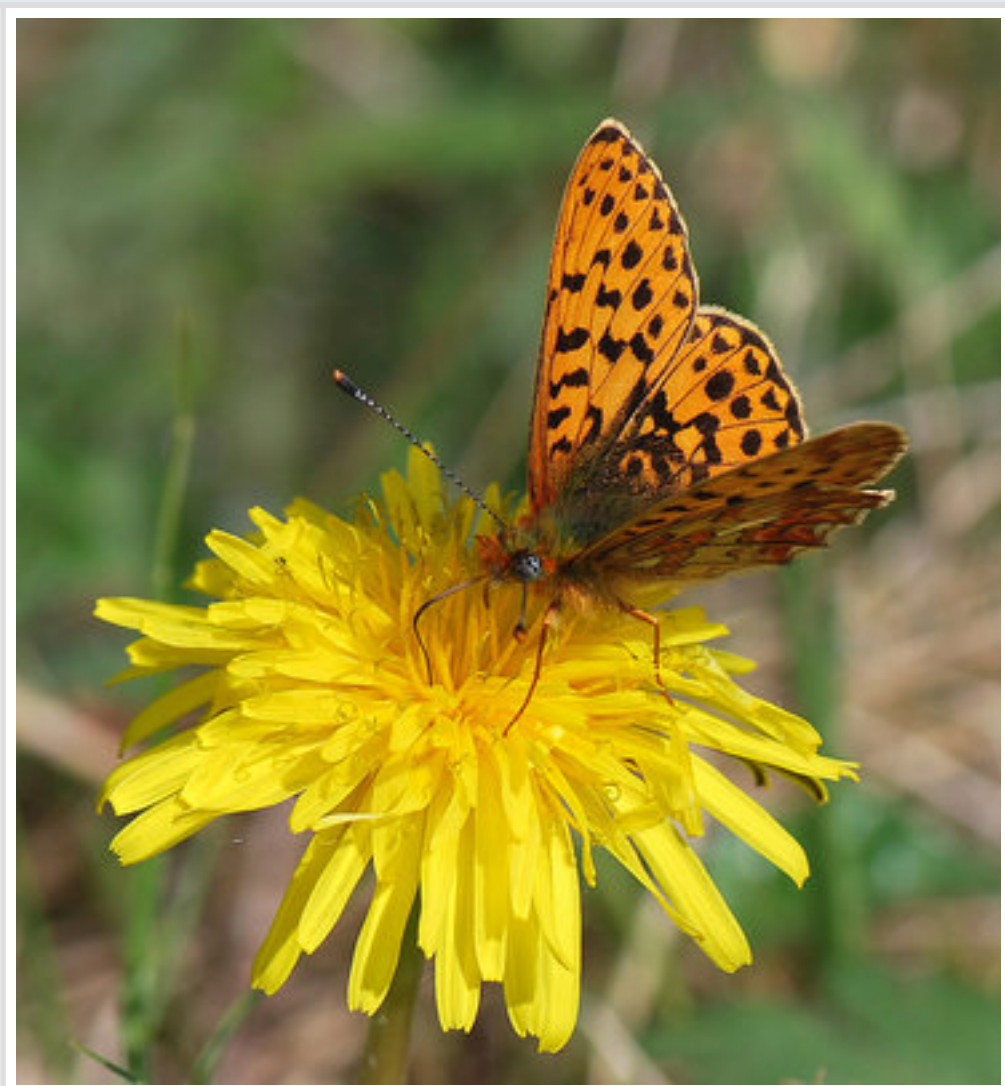
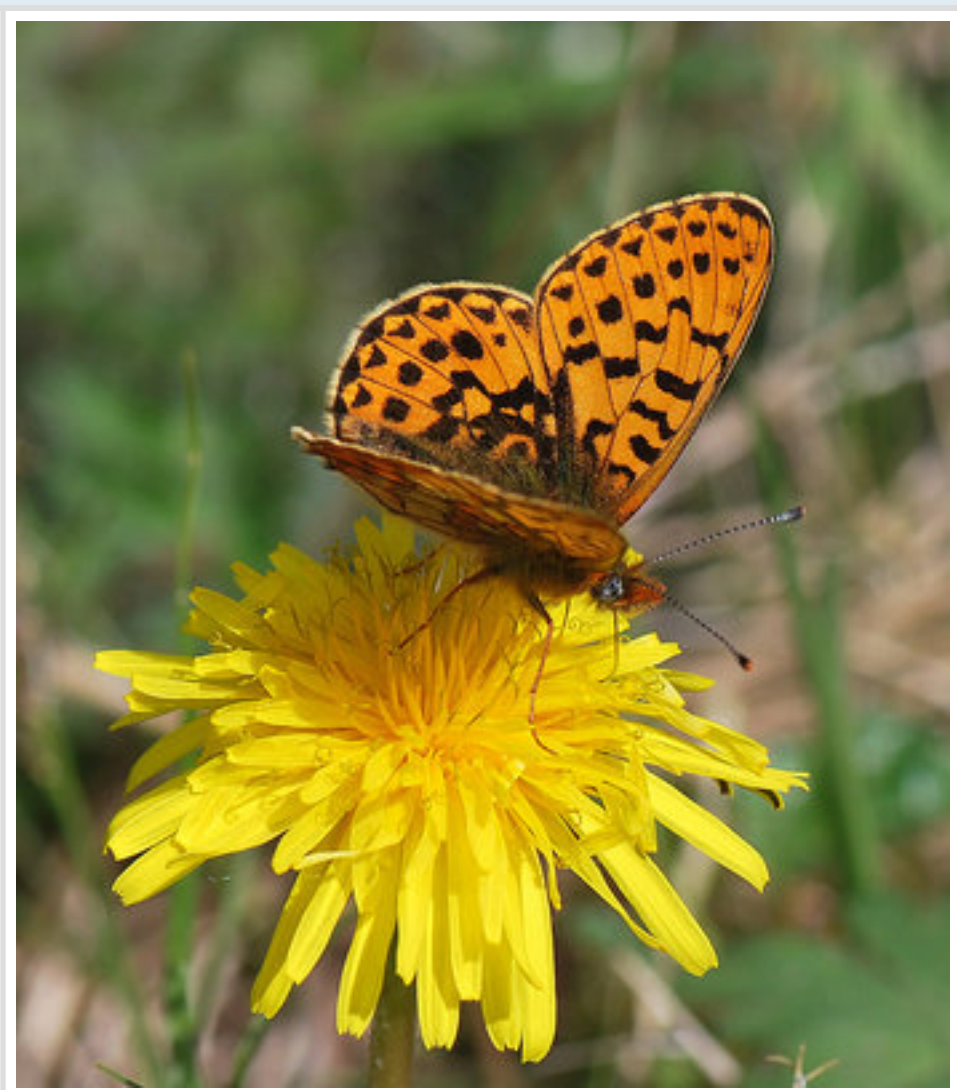
by Wurzel, 15-May-14 11:51 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 The light was just spot on that day – but that meant that the Pearls were well hyper 😊

Cheers Philzoid 😊 Soon be Small Pearl time there – I'm sure I saw a report from Cornwall. 😊

Bentley Wood Part 2

After lunch we had another walk around the clearing and despite more searching we couldn't relocate the Duke it was looking like a needle in a haystack. So it was back to the Pearls. False Apollo had been busy photographing them egg laying so Philzoid and I decided to have a go as well while he went back to searching for the Duke. After a few shots of nectaring behaviour I settled down to try and catch some oviposting. The female would flutter around low to the ground and would make circuits around a likely looking patch. She would drop down and settled on the ground with her wings three quarters shut. After a short while she would shut her wings entirely and then would curve her abdomen round between her legs and would thrust it towards the area she was laying at. What was strange was that sometimes the target of her thrusting wasn't a violet but a random twig or broken bit of Bracken? After the thrusting there would be a moment of recovery before she would take off and flutter slowly to the next likely looking area.





Egg laying



I watched this behaviour with growing interest as I realised that as they were so active for the most part the field guide-esque closed wing shot wouldn't happen unless I could catch a female just as she'd finished egg laying. Finally I got the shots I was after observing several more ovi-positing sequences and lots of annoying pieces of grass falling across my shot...





However Pearls (possibly 20+) and Dukes weren't the only things that we saw - the species tally for the day featured Green-veined and Large Whites, Brimstones and Orange-tip, a Comma and a couple of Peacocks. There were also Long Horn and Green Tiger Beetles and Tree Pipits performing their parachuting songs. The main surprise was the absence of any Specklies 😊 ...
Peacock



All in all an absolutely cracking day back at brilliant Bentley! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

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

Lovely photos of the PBF 😊 I am very much looking forward to my first trip to Bentley this year!

All the best,

Alex

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 16-May-14 06:59 PM GMT

Great reports from Bentley Wood Wurzel 😊

Regarding your observation on egg laying on random twigs and stuff, I watched similar behaviour last year in the Wyre Forest. I believe that these Frits often lay their eggs close to the violets as well as on them.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-May-14 10:44 PM GMT

Cheers Alex 😊 You'll love Bentley it's a great site start in the Eastern Clearing as this the main hotspot 😊
Cheers Neil 😊 I wish I'd looked more closely now, I'll have to dig out my old hand lens for just such occasions 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 17-May-14 11:20 PM GMT

I'm very envious of your PBF undersides, Wurzel. 🍷 They just weren't playing when I was there!

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-May-14 11:42 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 They were very active when I was there too but in the end it took kneeling down in brambles and waiting for them to egg lay before I got those shots – my knees are still sore now!

Duke Site 05-05-2014

Almost a fortnight ago I was still basking in the afterglow of finding some cracking Pearls and my first Duke of the year at Bentley Wood the day before on a cracking meet up with Philzoid. As I had done all the chores and was up together with work my wife turned to me and suggested that I might like to take a visit out to make the most of the weather. In three seconds I was pulling away and heading to my Duke site!

I was racing the clouds and also the clock and so it wasn't surprising when I got stuck behind one of my nemesis – the driver that insists on going 11 miles below the speed limit. After much gnashing of teeth, below breath cursing and the occasional exasperated "Oh come on" I pulled off the road and onto the tank trails. I headed straight to the path where there had been so many of them last year and found a Dinky and the 3 Dukes – just like that – I'd been on site for about three minutes.





By now I'd reached the top of the path and so I made my way over to the Cyprus tree and there was a Greenstreak doing what I think was egg laying? No matter how I tried I couldn't get onto the other side of it. I would try to approach it from it would turn around pirouetting on the leaf. Still I smiled to myself as it was going to be one of those afternoons where butterflies just landed in your lap.

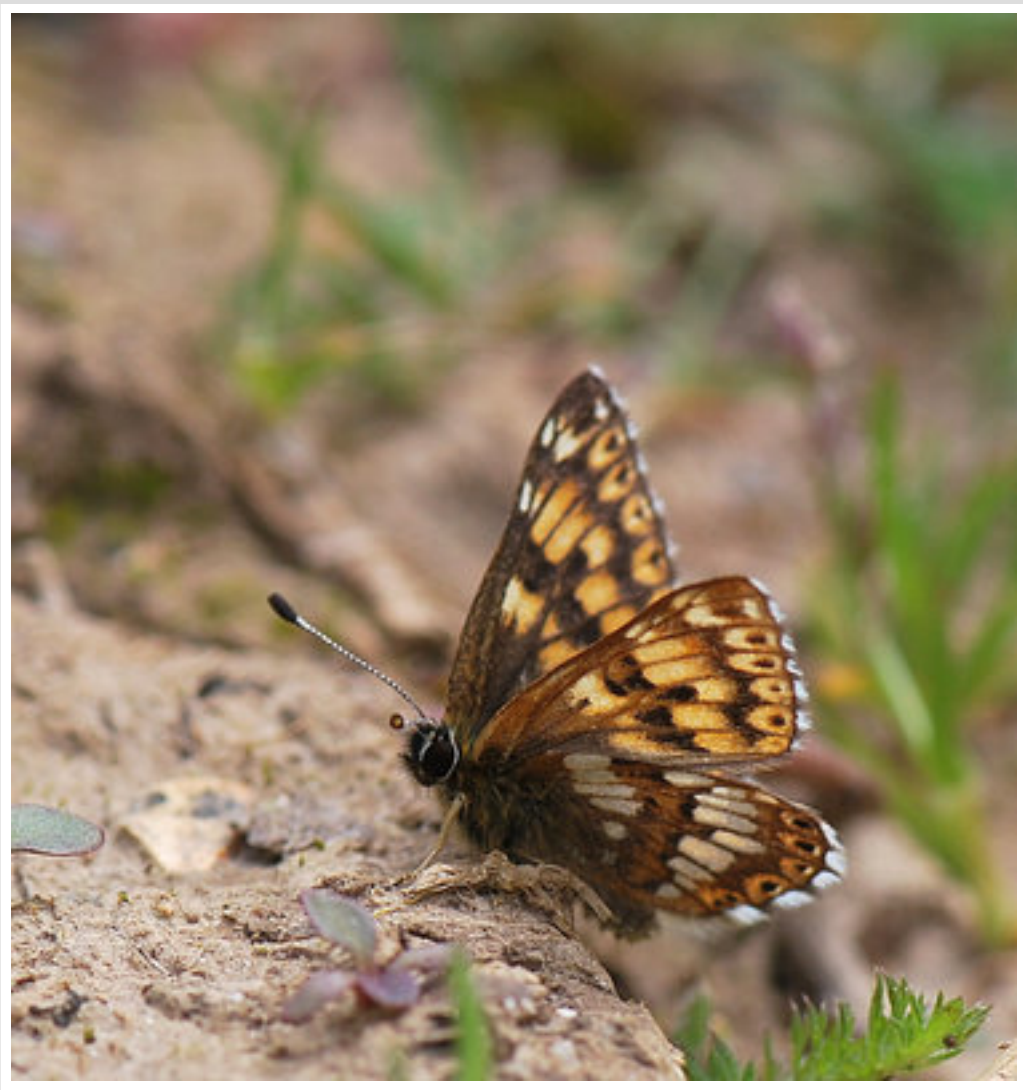


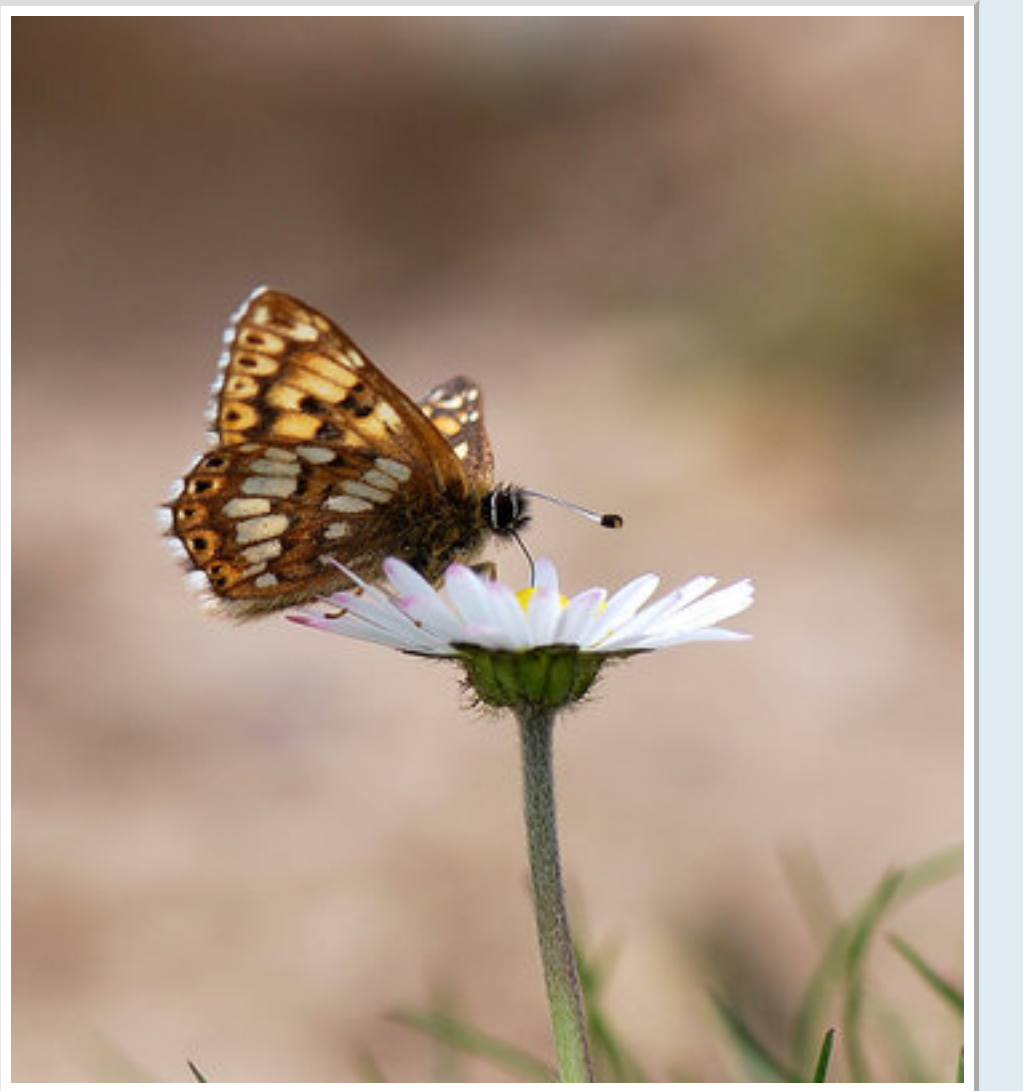
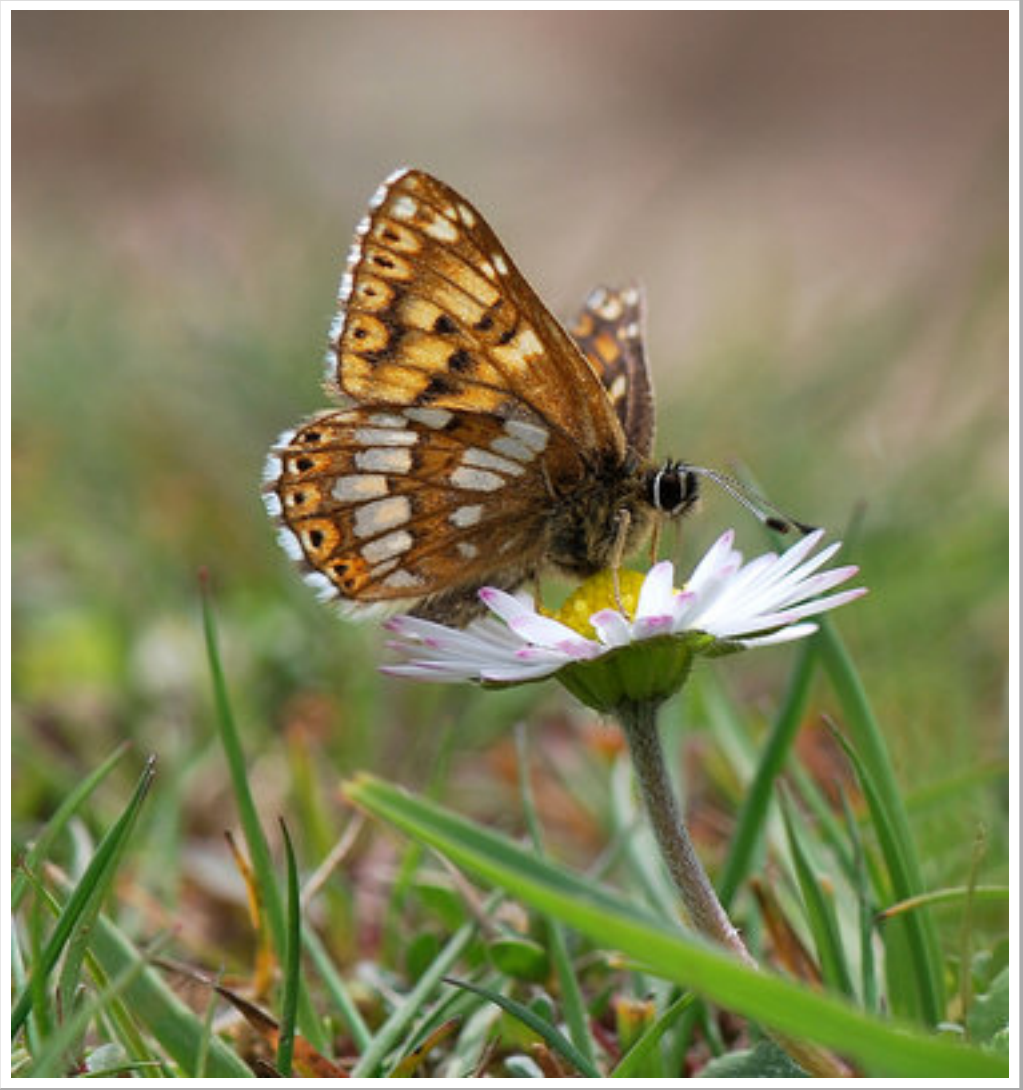
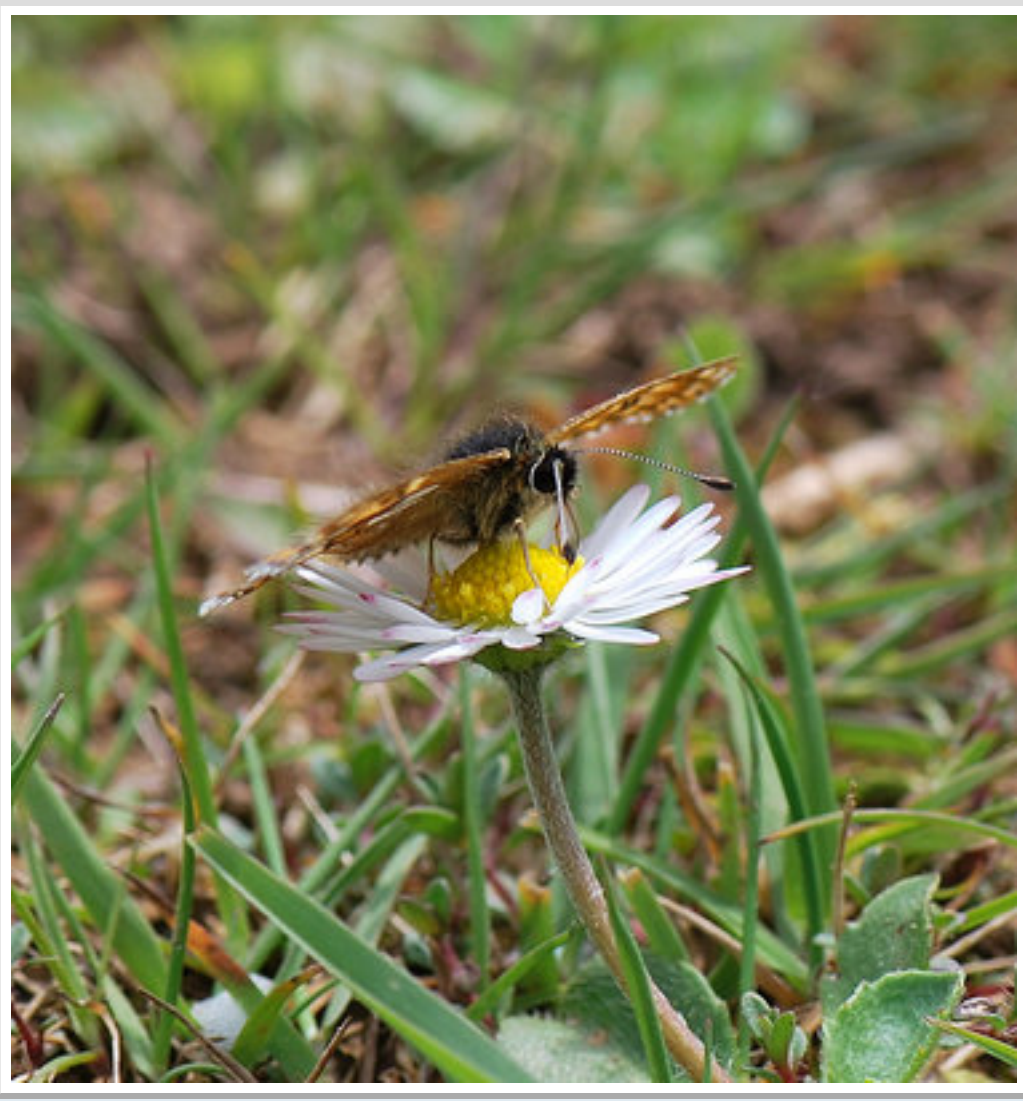
I carried on up to the spongy grass before there was the odd dingy and Grizzlie on the way fluttering off the path but up on the spongy turf proper there seemed to be Dinghies everywhere! Some looked a bit torn or chipped and others seemed quite pale though amongst them were some lovely fresh ones. Also here was another small group of Greenstreaks and a very aged Grizzlie. Slightly further up the hill the same groups of butterflies were also present but something tangerine cream shot by, dipping and ducking as it cut its way through the air across the hillside - a possible Wall Brown? I didn't count it as it was such a fleeting view but since then I've seen them at another site and this one showed an almost identical flight pattern.

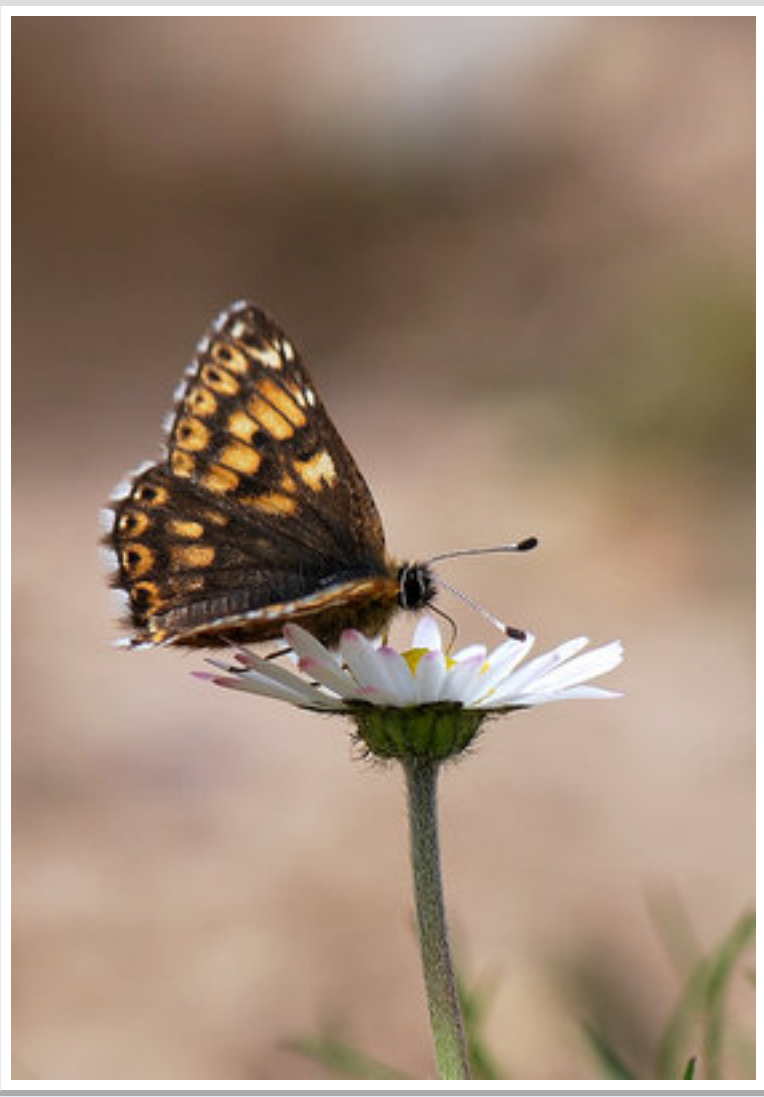




The afternoon was rolling on so I made my way back to the starting path to spend some time with the Dukes. I re-found the three from earlier and located a fourth and so settled down to enjoy these delightful little insects.







Somehow I managed to tear myself away from watching their antics and had another quick mooch around to see what else was a round here – a few more Dinghies and the odd Grizzlie and my second Small Copper of the year which looked slightly unusual. Something silvery and a similar size to the Dukes shot by, another fleeting glimpse which to me said Brown Argus but I again didn't count it though I know that they're found here.





All too soon my time was up and I was back in the car heading home but what a cracking couple of trips.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 18-May-14 10:31 AM GMT

Stunning Duke of Burgundy shot in your Bentley report Wurzel 😊 superb Pearls too 😊 . When I was there it was difficult to get a closed wing shot as they were not stopping 😊

Lovely Duke, Grizzlie and Dingy photos in your latest post 😊. To get the duke on the Daisy shots, you must have been flat out, great shots 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 18-May-14 12:51 PM GMT

I've just been catching up with your epic diary Wurzel. I really admire how much you manage to pack in! Not to mention editing all of those photos too. I know what you mean about getting sore knees. I've thought about investing in some knee pads before but I don't want to look like a grown man who's lost his skateboard 😊

Best Wishes

B'saurus

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 18-May-14 09:53 PM GMT

I agree, lovely shots on the daisy!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-May-14 11:03 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 the only way to get those Duke shots was to lay down across the path, luckily I was the only person on site 😊

Cheers Rex 😊 I've found that I have to take my chances otherwise I wouldn't see anything – but it does take it's toll on my eyes and sleep pattern 😊

Cheers Katrina I was lucky with those shots 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 19-May-14 06:32 AM GMT

Just catching up on your diary Wurzel. You've taken some great shots in the last couple of posts – the nectaring and ovi-posting Pearls, that gorgeous Dingy but the Duke on the daisy has to be the best photo you have ever taken imo. I love it and wish I had one like that in my collection.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-May-14 09:43 AM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊😄 I had to suffer for that one 😊

The Devenish 06-05-2014

After a busy day back at work after the holiday I made a quick stop on way home. In fact it's getting to the time of year now when I'll try and stop most mornings. They man that I arrive refreshed and alert for work or calm and relaxed once home. This stop-off was at The Devenish and coming out of the woods I saw a Small White fluttering along the tree line but I was after something else. I'd previously met up with the Warden of the site and we'd chatted about whether there were Dinghies here. I'd found Grizzlies, Adonis, Common and Chalkhill Blues as well as Small Coppers and other grassland species so surely there would be Dinghies here too?

So I made my way across the small field and started up the side of the Down and there was my first Devenish Dingy feeding for all it was worth.



A brief scout around at the base of hill meant that I found a pair of Grizzlies, another Dingy and I watched as a Brimstone fl along the hilltop. A male Orange-tip teased me for a bit near the car park before flying up and over the tress and then I got back on the wagon and got out of there. I'll have to keep checking this site as the Adonis should be emerging here soon.

Larkhill 09-05-02014

This was a very brief stop-off on the way home from work. My afternoon stop-offs are usually a lot quicker than the morning ones as I want to get back and see all three of my girls, though I've got to get my butterfly fix.

I walked down the eastern path and where the soil was more exposed a Grizzlie was sunning itself on the path. It shot off like a veering bullet but I didn't mind that I didn't get a shot as I've seen good numbers this year and I was just glad that seeing them here last year wasn't a fluke or one-off. As I wandered back to the car a small orange butterfly cut across the path and landed amongst the long grass - my first Small Heath of the year. It was more flighty than some I've seen and I spooked it once or twice and then left it be. Luckily the last time it landed it caught its fore wing on a blade of grass and so didn't shut them properly exposing the upper side.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 19-May-14 07:36 PM GMT

Just catching up on your diary again Wurzel, every time I check it out you seem to have stuck another couple of post up 😄😄

Some great report and photos, especially the Dukes.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-May-14 09:43 AM GMT

Cheers Neil 😄 I'm still about a week and a half behind - but maybe if the weather stays grotty for a few days I'll be able to catch up...that's me always looking for the upside 😊

Martin Down 11-05-2014

Having notched up my first Pearls, Dukes and then Small Heath I thought that it was about time that I checked for Small and indeed other, Blues. However the weather was conspiring against me as was the penultimate ceiling. The job got done and cleaned up on Saturday and I even had time to say a quick hello to my sis who had returned from Down Under for a visit. So when on the Sunday I knew we were going out to see my sister and her folks I thought a brief stop-off at Martin Down, Sillens Lane might be manageable.

Unfortunately on the day the cloud kept drifting over, the wind was vicious and the temperatures were kept to barely over those for flight. Still I pressed on hoping that during one of the brighter, warmer and more settled breaks I might find something. I started by walking down the tunnel which has yielded plenty of Small Blues in the past but all that was amongst the shelter today was a Speckled Wood. I couldn't get a decent view of it down between the grass but I include the photo anyway as it's something of a rarity so far this year.



I then ran on and tried the 'hotspot' where this path transects Bokerley. This drew precisely nothing as the wind was forced down into and along the ditch. The small field on the other side of the Hawthorns however was quite sheltered and here I started seeing butterflies – a Dingy, 2 Grizzlies and a Small Copper as well as a female Brimstone fluttering the scrub and occasionally poking its head above the parapet.



I then cut across to the island of scrub in the centre of the down as again I was hoping that the butterflies would congregate here away from the whipping wind. On my entrance a Greenstreak darted out from the Hawthorn but as it rose just higher than the top branches it was immediately ripped away by the wind. I settled in the end for a few shots of a couple of Grizzlies.



My final foray was back along the hedge that lines the reserve over by the tunnel. A Green-veined white grimly fluttered low down to the ground and a Small Copper also stayed down. I checked my watch and realised that we would be late so I legged it back to the car and headed over to Sixpenny Handley. After a spot of lunch we took a quick stroll around the village and we were briefly joined by a Small Tort - which I was quite surprised to see as I thought that by now we'd be just seeing larvae.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 20-May-14 05:36 PM GMT

Lovely shots again Wurzel, 🍷 I've still to see quite alot of Butterflies they don't seem to want to come out up herel, any way off to Southport and the Dunes tomorrow maybe I'll see some there.Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-May-14 02:25 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 🍷 Believe it or not I know how you feel as most things I'm seeing are emerging anything up to a fortnight later than on the eastern side of the country 😊

Another set of Stop-offs...

13-05-2014 The Devenish

I made a very quick stop-off to The Devenish on the way home as I wanted to check up on the Dinghies. This time rather than a sprint through the wood I made my way over the gates and straight onto the Down proper, to the less grazed side. Almost immediately I fell over a Grizzlie and then there was a Dingy. But rather than the usual defensive manoeuvre that they pull (where they veer off and double back on themselves) this one flew up high and landed in a tree. Obviously this felt a bit wrong so it dropped off the branch and then flew to another tree where again it landed high up silhouetted in the afternoon sun. This seemed like a bizarre behaviour and I can't recall observing it before?





I left it to its own devices and headed over style spooking the Red Admiral that is hanging around the site. I made my way up the down but there were no Brown Argus or other Blues about but I did come across another Grizzlie and another Dingy but time was ticking by so I couldn't hang around here.



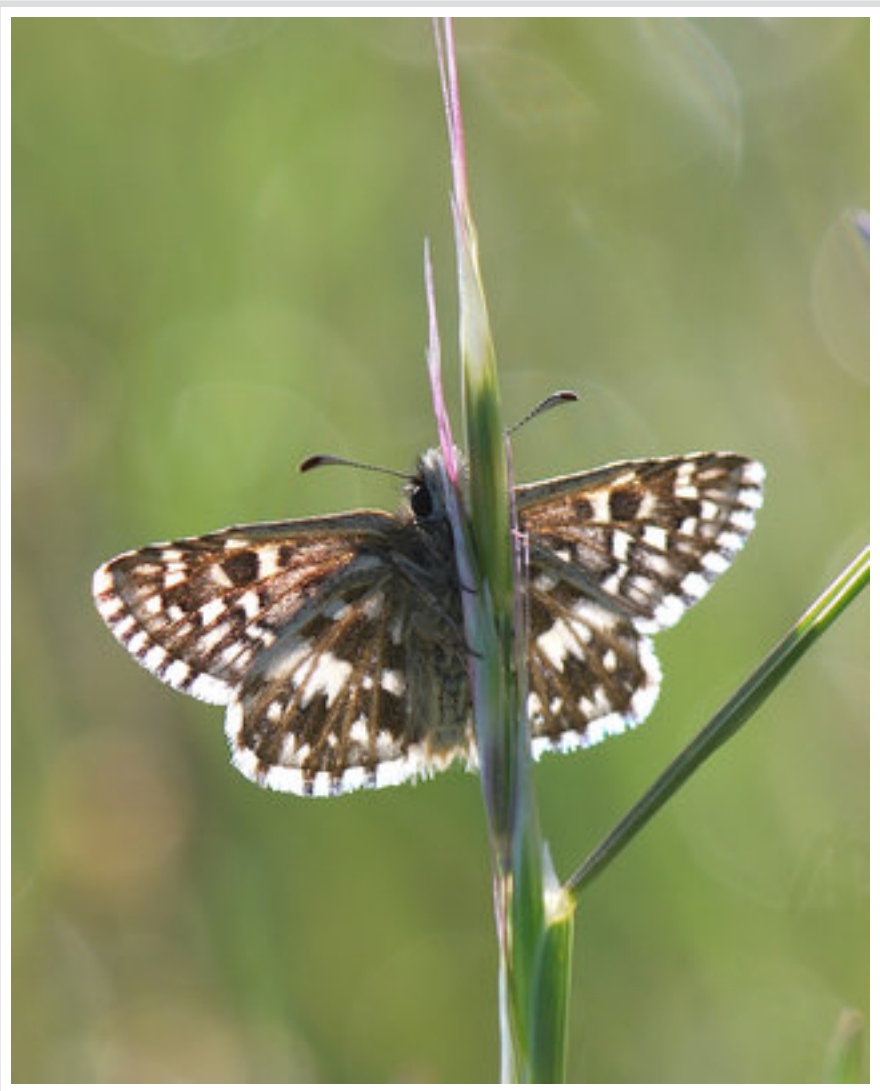
Time up it was back to car and home.

14-05-2014 Larkhill

I'm a great believer in making hay while the sun shines because with the British weather you can never really be sure when you'll be able to get out next. So when I awoke to a glorious sunny morning last Wednesday I pulled in at Larkhill and made my way down the Western path. Since the scouring last year the growth has been slow but the wild flowers are starting to creep across from the edges and on the plus side it's produced a great habitat for Grizzlies. As the path dipped down about 30 metres from the car park I found my first which quickly buzzed off to my right into the long grass. My second was a few steps further on and made a couple of poses before buzzing off to be replaced by my third of the morning which was in much better fettle.



Then I started to make my way back and a little 'flag' caught my eye flapping amongst the long grass. A gentle approach and there backlit was Grizzlie number 4, possibly my favourite of the day. I managed a few shots before Grizzlie number 5 disturbed it and landed on a nearby grass seed head.



And so on to work...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 21-May-14 10:27 PM GMT

Lovely glowing Grizzlies Wurzel 😊 I really like your 1st & 2nd Dingy photos too, they are quite unusual.

B'saurus

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-May-14 12:35 PM GMT

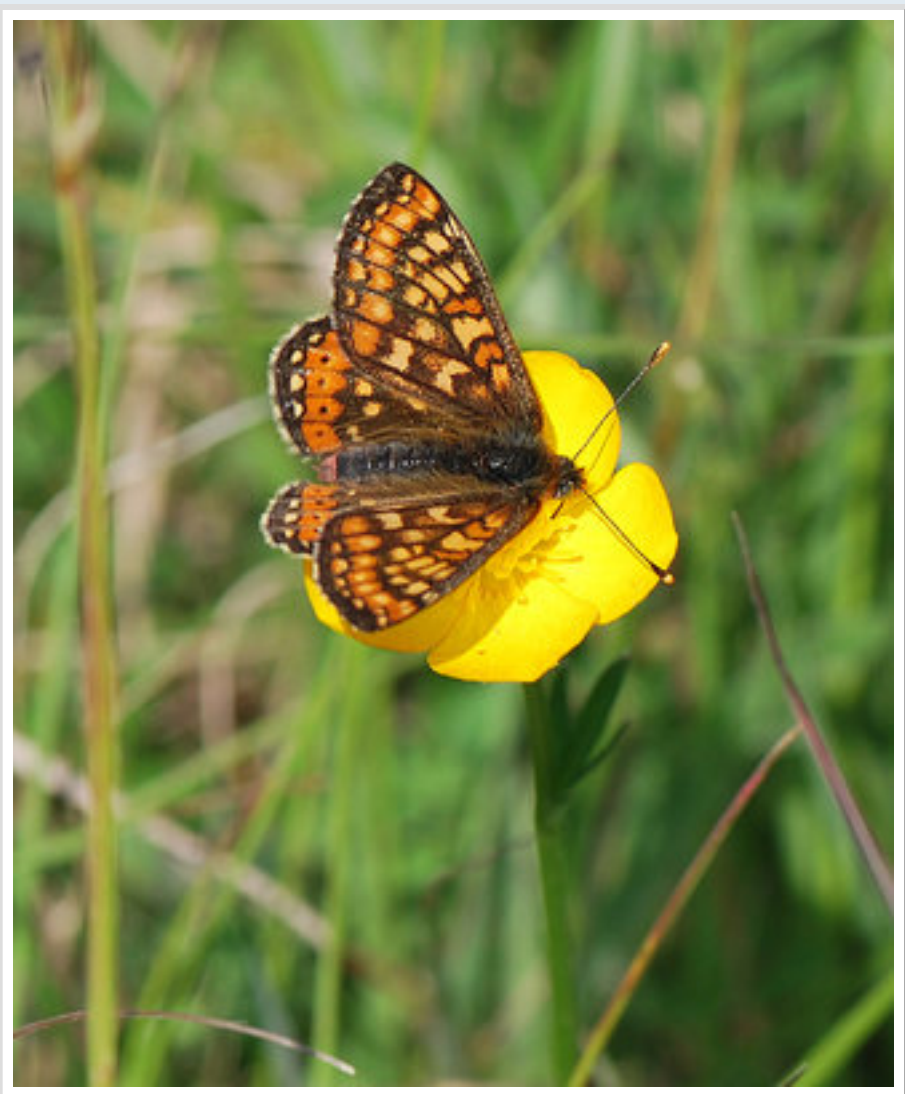
Cheers Rex 😊 I think the Dinghy got a bit confused and thought it was a Hairstreak 😊 I'll try and get that PM to you tonight 😊

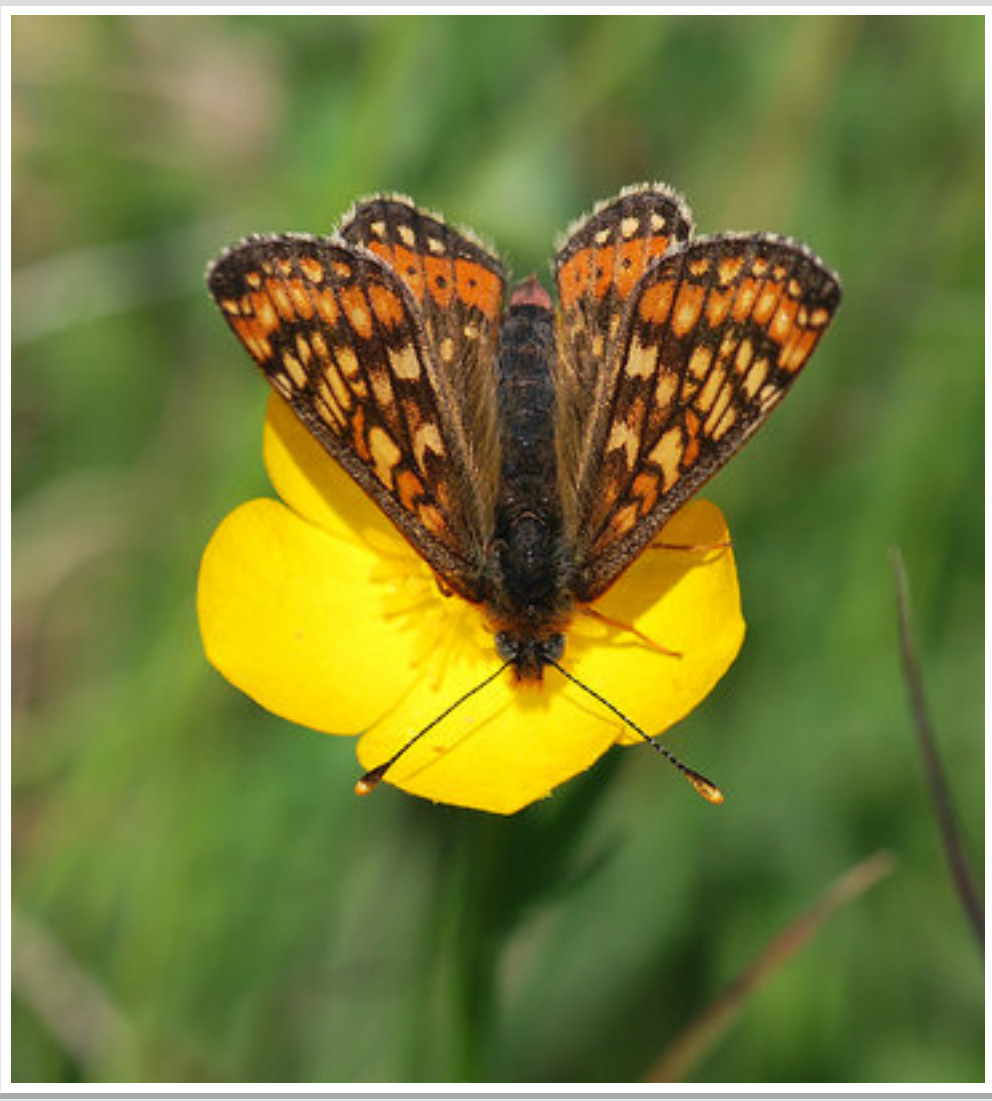
Marshie Site (15-05-2014) Part One

Over the weekend my sister had arrived from Down Under and so I realised that chances to get out butterflying for the month of her visit were going to be few and far between. Add to that the usual stresses of work, the house and the fact that the weather was forecast to stay good to reasonable right up to my holiday, come Tuesday night I was acting like a 'Grump'. So much so that my wife told me that I should "take an evening and go and see those Marsh things!" 😊 Well I didn't need telling twice so I made my plans for Thursday evening to travel down to my Marshie site straight from work.

As I drove down I anxiously watched the sky and was cheered that the Met Office had got it wrong again as instead of the forecast cloud the sky was clear and blue! 😊 It wasn't long before I was pulling into the car park and making my way up the hill through the tunnel of trees to the side of the Down. Once I'd broken through the tree line I scanned the side of the hill and there gliding over the tops of the grasses was a Marsh Fritillary, and then another one and another and over there were two etc etc. They were literally all over the hillside. Every now and again a small moth would fly up or a dark blur which would become a Greenstreak when it landed but the most common butterfly was the Marsh Fritillary. After standing and watching gobsmacked for an age I shook myself and woke from my wonder and started in at getting some shots. 😊

The first problem I found was selecting my target, I didn't know where to begin! Then approaching head on proved difficult as the lengthening shadows would spook the butterfly which would spook a further three or four so I'd have to walk a few paces to find the next one. They really are stunning butterflies and I settled down to wonder at the variation of their markings.







After a while I'd worked my way over to the bowl and so I started looking for other butterflies and there was my first (and still only) Common blue of the year 😊, a male with only one antennae. After a while with this little chap I moved on around with more Marsh Fritillaries everywhere and then a tiny purple butterfly caught my eye – my first Small Blue of the year 😊





There were a few Dinghies and the odd Grizzlie around as well as the ubiquitous Marshies. At one point a cloud passed over and the Marshies all dropped down into the grass with wings firmly closed. I took this as my opportunity to try for a few closed wing shots which also proved difficult as there was so much grass in the way but in the end I managed to clear some of it aside from one of my targets.



The sun came out again and all the previously hidden Marshies popped up from nowhere and started flying but there was a slightly larger, more orange butterfly flying along so quickly it was ripping up the side of the hill...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 22-May-14 11:24 PM GMT

Fabulous photos Wurzel 😊 particularly like the Marsh Fritillaries 😊 but also great Dingy and Grizzled Skipper shots 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-May-14 11:40 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 It was a great few weeks – if only the weather had lasted a little longer...

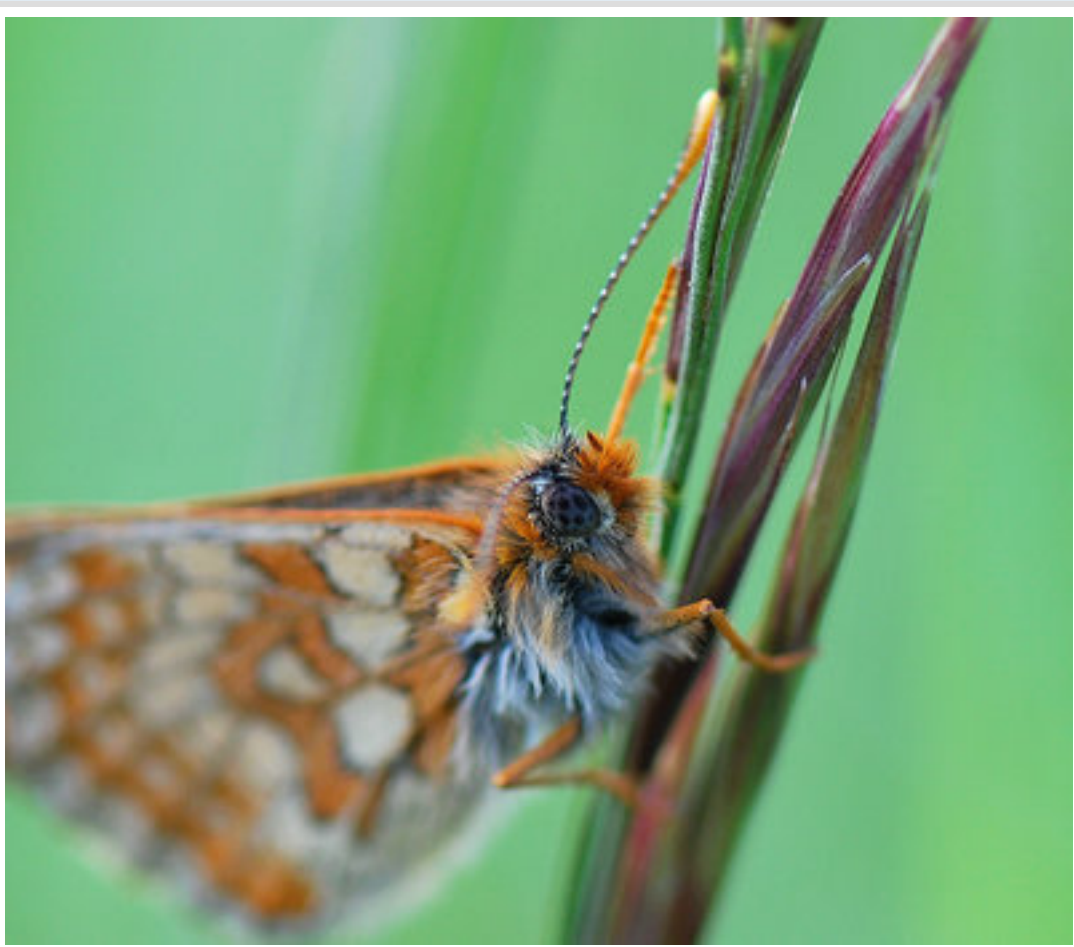
Marshie Site (15-05-2014) Part Two

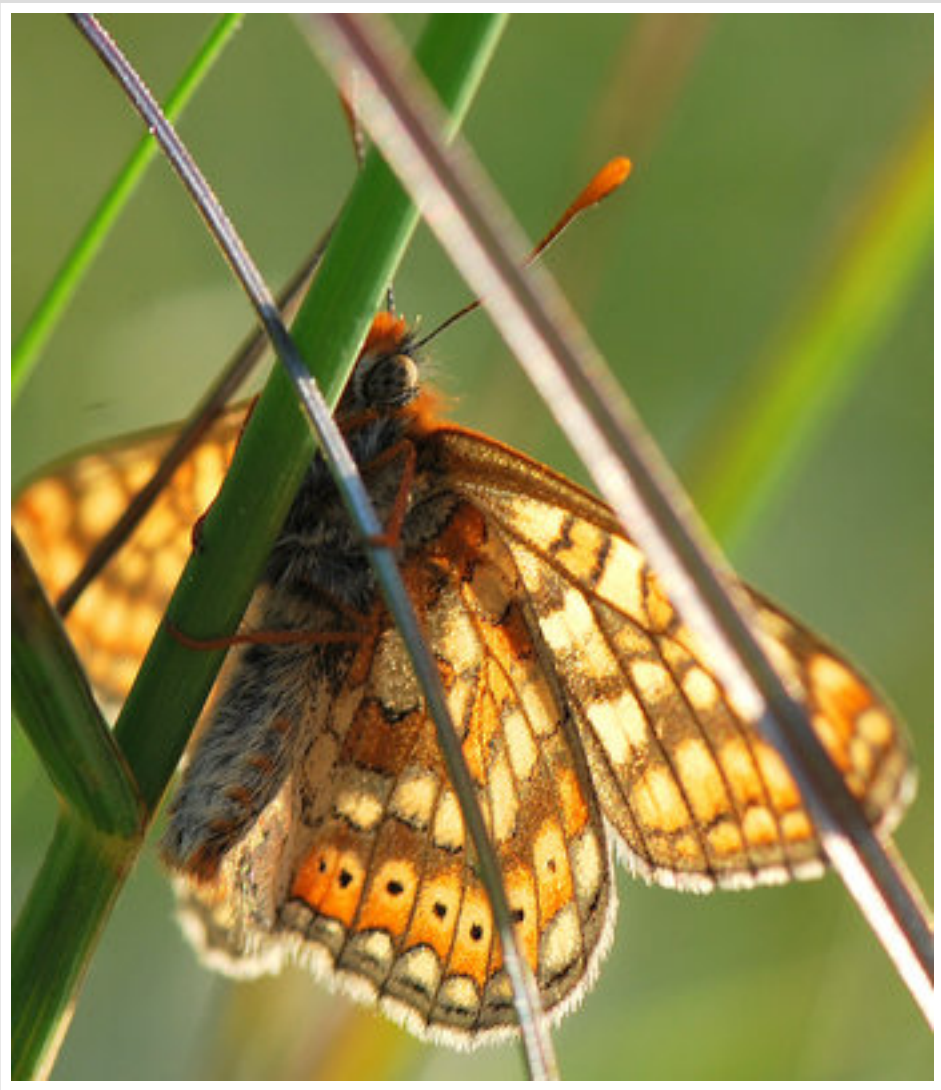
...I somehow managed to follow the butterfly with my eyes as it tore along the side of the hill, lopped upwards and then dropped like a ton weight before banking off to the left. With a final Stukar dive it disappeared from view down the side of the hill. I cautiously worked my way round and down to below where I thought the butterfly had landed and there it was, sitting on a little chalk ledge, my first official Wall of the year. I was doubly chuffed as this find confirmed for me that the UBLO from my Duke site was indeed a Wall. After a few choice shots I carried on round the hillside reaching the end point with a few more Dinghies and the odd Grizzlie amongst the many Marshies. Also here were a couple of Peacocks as well as a couple more Walls including one which seemed much darker than the other couple but unfortunately it didn't stop long enough for a photo.





I then set off back along the narrow tracks that traversed the side of the Down back towards the Bowl stopping every now and again on the way for a quick peek at a Marshie taking nectar or another just basking in the final rays of the evening sun. My second Small Heath dropped in before disappearing up and over the Down and I was almost back at the Bowl when the kept flitting behind a cloud so again I tried for a few closed wing shots and the odd close up. Then I was back at the start of the Down and I was starting to feel saturated by the sheer number of Marshies but still I pressed on as one Marshie after another presented itself before my lens.





Eventually I somehow tore myself away from the Down, the sun starting to wane and my shadow stretching almost back to the car park but one final Marshie, possibly my favourite from the whole visit popped up before me, posed almost as if wishing me farewell. As I stumbled back to the car when I shut my eyes I could still see it emblazoned across my eyelids. A stunning butterfly at a stunning site, I am coming back here soon!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Species count for the day...

SB 1, CB 1, GH 23, MF 60+ (a total underestimation this), SH 1, LW 1, B 1, GS 3, DS 4, WB 4, P 3 and OT 1

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 23-May-14 11:50 PM GMT

Superb photos Wurzel, the second and third Wall shots are stunners 😊 I really struggled with these on the IOW 😬 great Marsh Fritillary shots too 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 23-May-14 11:51 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Your Marsh Fritillaries look fantastic 😊 Wherever this site is it looks like a smashing place, I might have to pay a visit. I also like your unusual Dingy on a branch shot 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-May-14 01:01 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 It was an early to late evening visit so I think they were starting to settle down which was why I was able to get as close as I did. My normal shots are from about 100m away 😬

Cheers Paul 😊 It's a cracking site I hope to get back there this weekend 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 24-May-14 03:07 PM GMT

Lovely shots Wurzel, 🇮🇪 it sounds a really good site there Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 25-May-14 05:31 PM GMT

Catching up on your diary again Wurzel, cracking Marsh Fritillary photos 😊

It looks like I will be missing Marshies this year after seeing them last year for the first time, my plans for this year have me in the wrong place for when these are flying.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-May-14 10:28 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 It's a right cracker of a site indeed 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Sorry you're missing out on Marshies but I bet you've got something else lined up – Chequered Skipper, Swallowtail? 🇮🇪 😊

Larkhill and the Devenish 16-05-2014

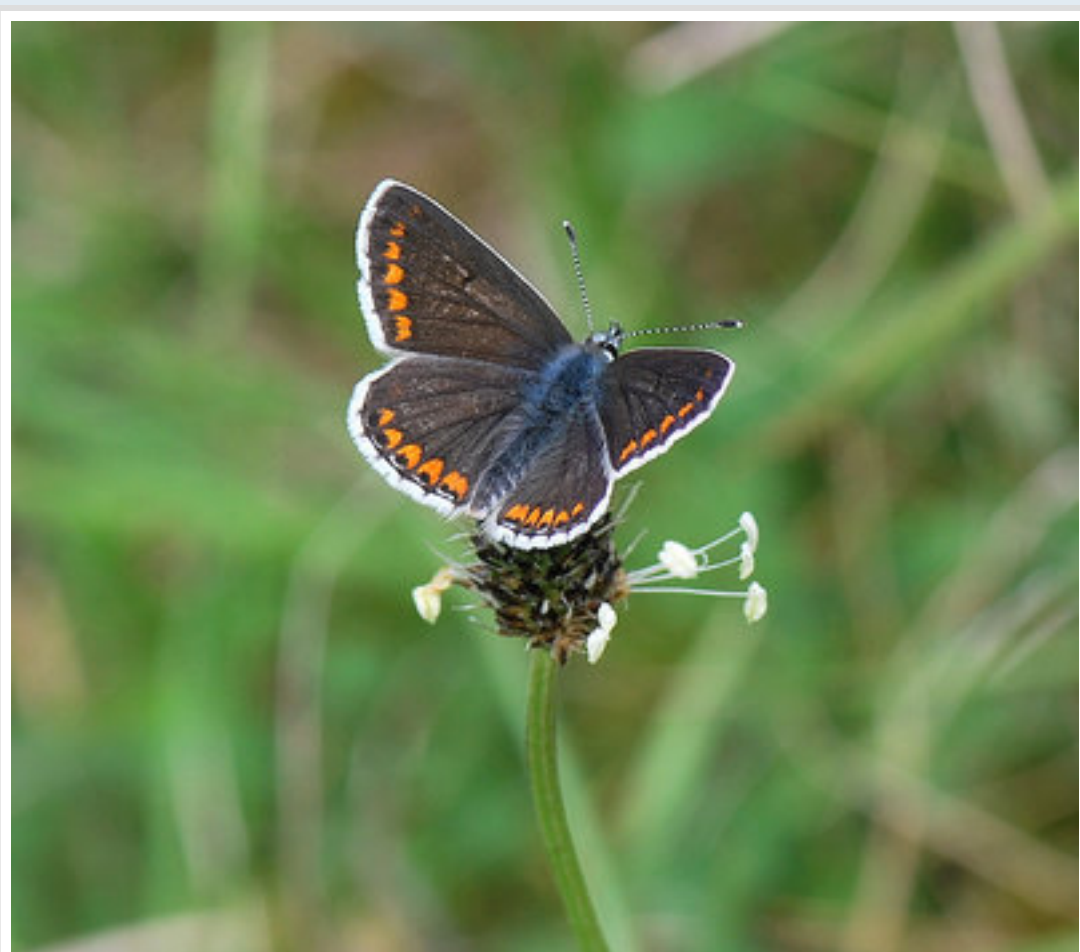
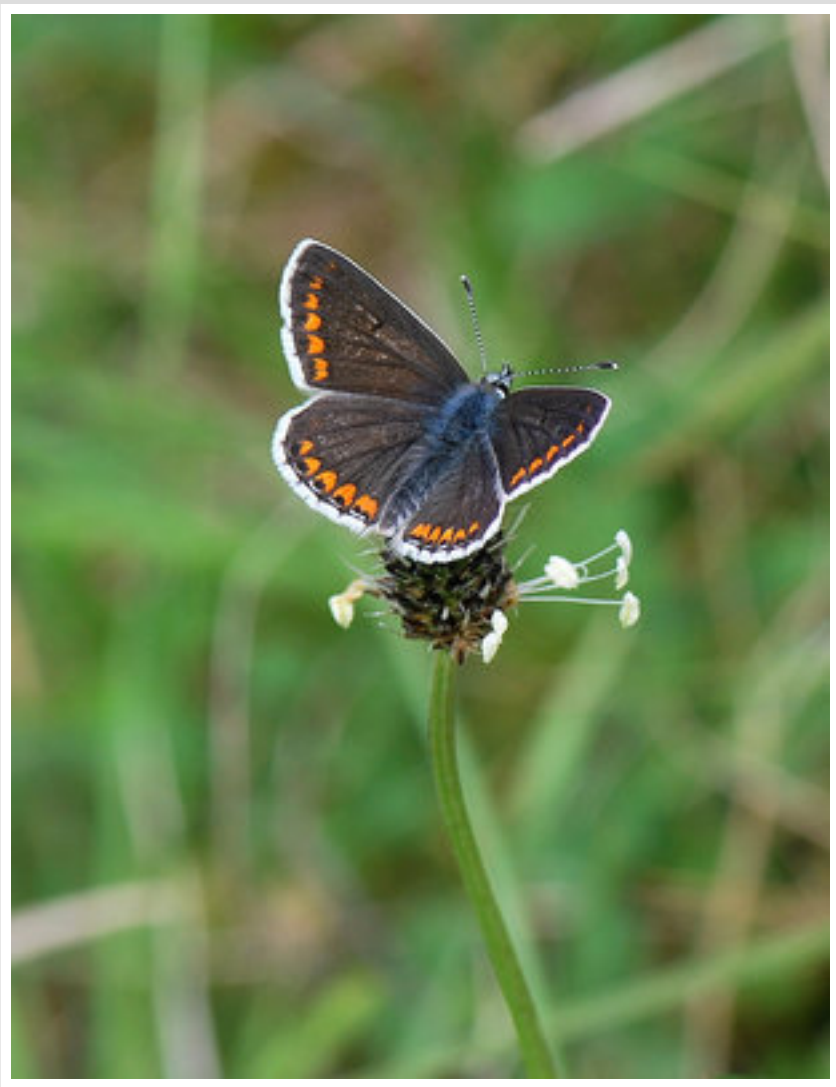
Today was a tale of the two ends of the season with a real early spring butterfly and one which I associate with the end of spring and the beginning of summer.

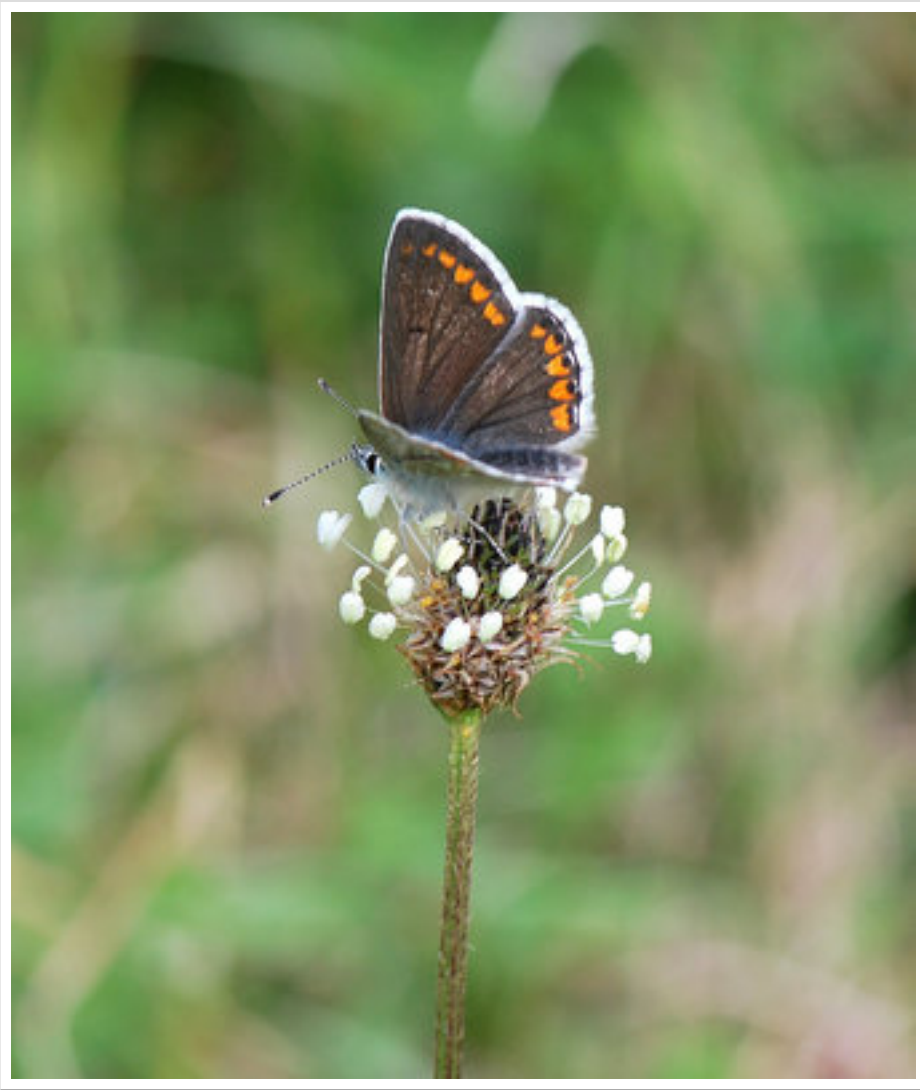
I stopped off on the way to work amongst glorious blue skies and a surprisingly warm sun. Having discovered the Grizzlies seemed to like hanging out further along the bare parts of the Western path that was where I headed straight away. It was quite quiet this time with only the odd one or two butterflies about – both of which were grizzlies.



After work the weather was still holding and so I headed out onto the not so open road towards the Devenish. I've got a route sorted now and also timings so for instance I know that I have to be at Netheravon by 3:50 and High Post by 4:05 in order to get 10-15 minutes on site and still be home on time. Today the world and his wife seemed intent on winding me up and making me late for my on route deadlines 😞 but somehow I managed to make it to each one of the staging posts on schedule and so when I pulled into the car park I still had about 10 minutes 😊.

As I made my way up the side of the down a Peacock flushed from basking on some of the old wood left decomposing. On the side of the Down there were the usual couple of Dinghies and Grizzlies and a Brimstone made its usual pass across the top of the hill. And then something silvery shot by me. I knew straight away what it was, not so much by the colouration or the flight but by the fact that it was a belligerent little buggèr as it went onto hassle a Grizzlie and then Dinghy before settling down to take nectar for the briefest of fuel stops. It was then off to go and pick on someone bigger than it. The initials of the Brown Argus are also the same as those of a mohawked character from one of my favourite childhood TV programmes. In the case of Mr Baracus they stood for Bad Attitude, very apt for *A. agestis*!





I left it being a little bully boy and tried the down on the other side of the style spooking a Red Admiral and only adding another Dinghy to the list. All too quickly time was up so I made my way back to the car at a sprint. I'll have to keep checking here as I know that there is a population of Adonis Blues which I'd like to see.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-May-14 10:29 PM GMT

Upton Country Park 18-05-2014

This was a family trip out to one of our old haunts. I grew up in Poole and visited Upton Country House on numerous occasions so it's full of memories; mad Peacocks, the old tree that was hollow and so a great hidey hole, completing 'Monkey Challenges' in the Rhododendrons as well as learning to differentiate Song and Mistle Thrush, seeing my first Pied and Spotted Flycatchers and collecting a prize for my YOC birding log books 😊. So pulling into the car park was quite a shock as even this part has changed so much. 😞

We eventually found a shady spot and settled down to lunch. While the girls played and others let their food go down I had a quick stroll around and in a little glade along one of the walks I found a pair of Green Veined Whites fluttering about. Also a Speckled Wood and Holly Blue flew through the camp while enjoying a cuppa.



Throughout the rest of the day we did various walks - down to Holes Bay, through the Walled Garden as well as the Play Trail as well. There were a few butterflies about but they were few and far between and they were mainly Whites apart from two Peacocks which were right down near the beach. On the Play trail a neighbouring field boosted a huge amount of Cuckoo Flower and there were about 4 or 5 Orange-tips fluttering over the flower tops. Occasionally they would fly into each others' paths and then they would spiral upwards locked in battle and I could only spectate and watch from the wrong side of the fence. On the way back there was a Small White but it didn't stop for very long.

I was almost giving the day up for lost butterfly wise and so once back at camp and a cup of coffee I espied a fluttery white that was actually in reach and also seemed to be feeding up. So I grabbed my camera and gently approached it and managed to get a few shots.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 27-May-14 11:13 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

I have not managed to catch up with BA 'Baracus' yet, yours are great. Thanks for the Marsh Fritillary advice. I did not venture into Dorset in the end, but I did manage to find my own Marshies 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-May-14 11:21 PM GMT

Cheers Jack 😊 – if you're after a BA look out for a Black van with a red stripe 😊 Glad to see you got your Marshies 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 29-May-14 05:53 AM GMT

Some lovely shots of MF there Wurzel – they look nice and fresh.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-May-14 09:52 AM GMT

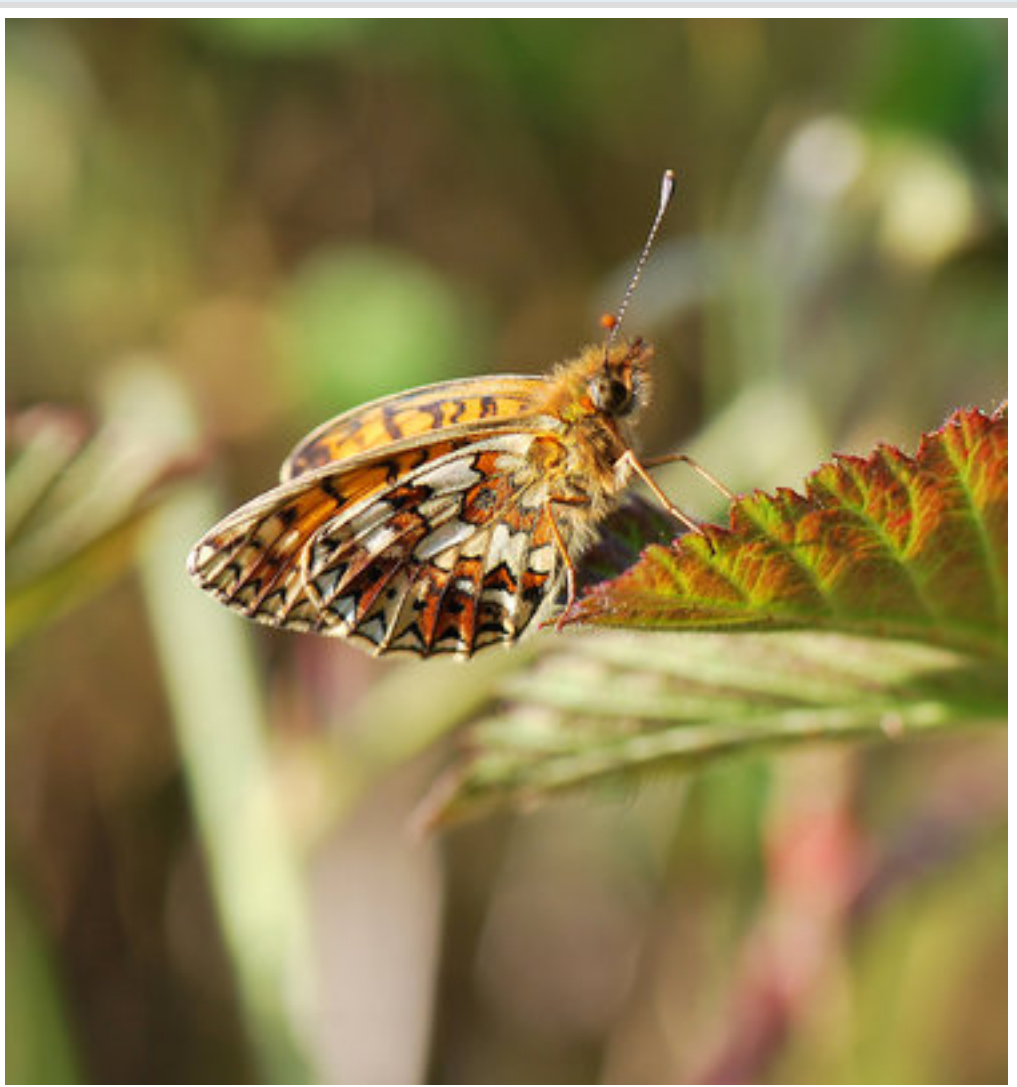
Cheers Pauline 😊 They'd only been out for a few days back when I first visited, since then I've returned and they're looking a bit more worn now although there are still plenty of fresh females and latecomers 😊

Bentley Wood 18-05

Having gotten back from the family outing and gotten in the girls in bed I headed over to Bentley Wood to make the most of the weather and then golden evening light. Small Pearls had been reported so I was hoping to find at least one and also hoping that it would be roosting, wings closed for the definitive shot.

As I mooched on down to the Eastern Clearing a couple of Pearls flitted by, looking pale and slightly past their best and I espied something which is always a good sign when out butterflying – grown men standing around and peering into a Bramble bush and occasionally leaning in with their cameras. 😊😊

In amongst the thorns and prickles was a Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary. I followed the usual etiquette of waiting for them to finish before checking whether it was okay to move in for my own shots and there you go job done. I came for my first Small Pearl of the year and I'd gotten it. It was in great nick, positively glowing in the evening sun. It tentatively closed its wings from three quarters open to almost shut and then relaxed he back to slightly open. Once or twice it shifted position possibly to move out of the spreading shadows and to make the most of the falling sun. It definitely wasn't because of disturbance from us as we'd be talking and the butterfly would move so then we'd shift with it, take a few more shots, resume talking and it would move again. Perhaps it was trying to regain our undivided attention?





Eventually I said my thanks and then looked around the rest of the site but apart from a GS Woody and a battered old Peacock it was surprisingly empty. I would have said quiet but the multitude of birds singing made that phrase erroneous. I ended up back where I'd started and now had the Bramble bush to myself but the Small Pearl had moved to the reedy looking grass so I knelt down getting wet knees to try for some stained glass shots.



Another quick saunter around didn't produce anything much - plenty of Speckled Yellow moths and also what I think was a Fox moth; large, fast moving and reddish in colour? By now much of the site was in shadow so I decided to have one last look in on the Small Pearl which was by now back on the Bramble. So parting shot in the bag I bade farewell to the Small Pearl wishing it some more company in the coming days when hopefully I'll be back...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by jasonbirder, 29-May-14 11:15 AM GMT

Beautiful Small Pearl Bordered...

Lovely photo's

Hope to see some SPBF's this weekend

Re: Wurzel

by Willow, 29-May-14 03:08 PM GMT

You put a great deal of time and effort into your sightings and reports Wurzel, always very interesting to peruse!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 29-May-14 05:37 PM GMT

Good stuff, Wurzel. SPBFs aren't the easiest of subjects in warm, sunny conditions.

Re: Wurzel

by Lee Hurrell, 29-May-14 07:56 PM GMT

Your wet knees were worth it, Wurzel. Lovely underside shots.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 29-May-14 08:07 PM GMT

I agree lovely series of photos!

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 29-May-14 08:08 PM GMT

Great SPBF images Wurzel, lovely stained glass shots 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-May-14 09:59 AM GMT

Cheers Jason 😊 Good luck this weekend 😊

Cheers Willow 😊 My wife thinks that perhaps sometimes I put too much time and effort into my butterflying 😊😊 Oh well, that's what boxes of chocolates and bunches of flowers are for 😊

Cheers David 😊 First and last thing are the best times for SPBFs

Cheers Lee 😊 My knees still don't think they were worth it 😊😊

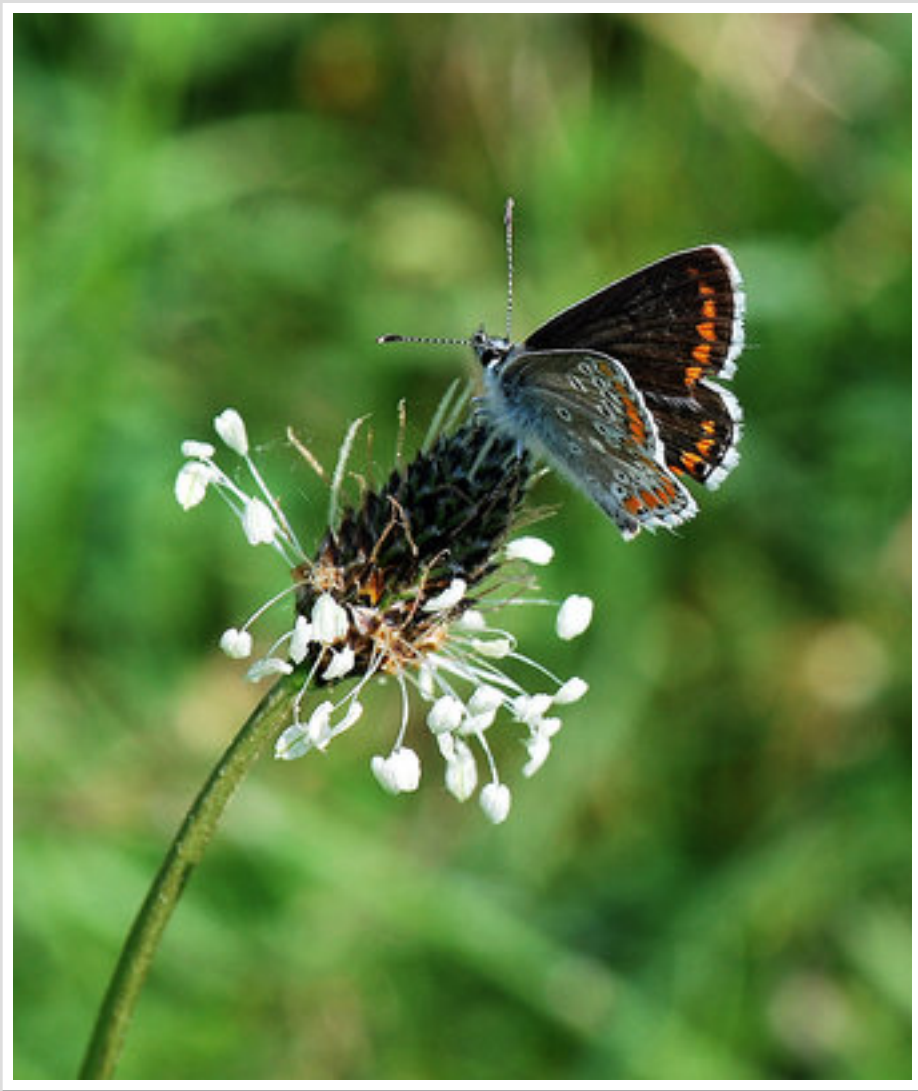
Cheers Katrina 😊 Having such photogenic species makes it easier 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 I try to get those of most species, another one of my book ideas, I really will have to retire early and start writing them 😊😊

The Devenish 19-05-2014

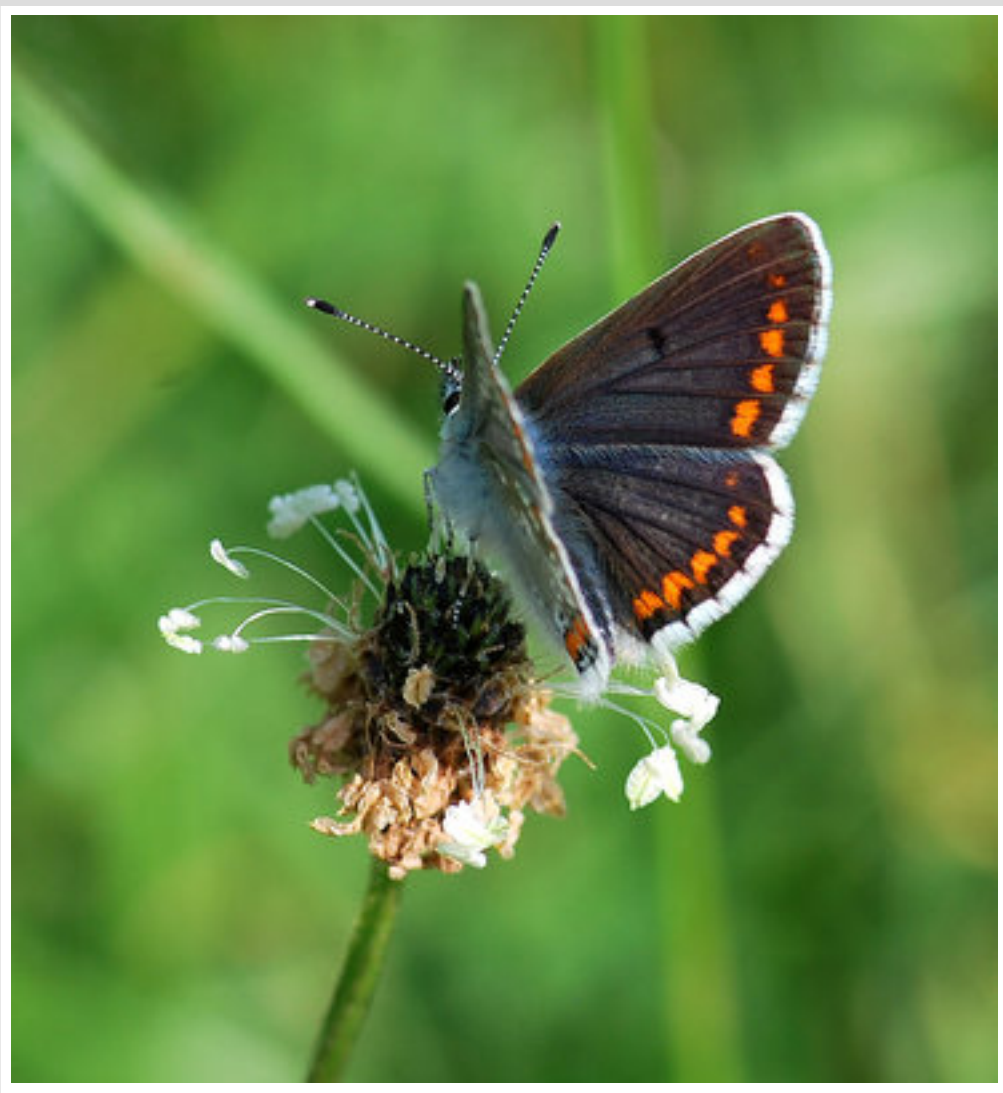
Having seen my first (official) Brown Argus of 2014 at The Devenish on a mad stop off I thought it was about time to get back there and see if the arrival of the Brown Blue meant their showy cousins would be emerging soon. Even if they weren't I was also anxious to catch up with some more Brown Argus as they're in my top five butterflies. I have waxed lyrical before about their sublimely matched palette and their boisterous nature so any chance to spend time with them is always special.

So having negotiated the various stages of my usual rally drive home I pulled into the car park and hared up the first side of the down. Straight away there was a miniscule silver streak bombing across the side of the down on its way to hassle a poor defenceless Grizzlie. After a few minor scuffles it finally landed and so I was able to get a few shots.

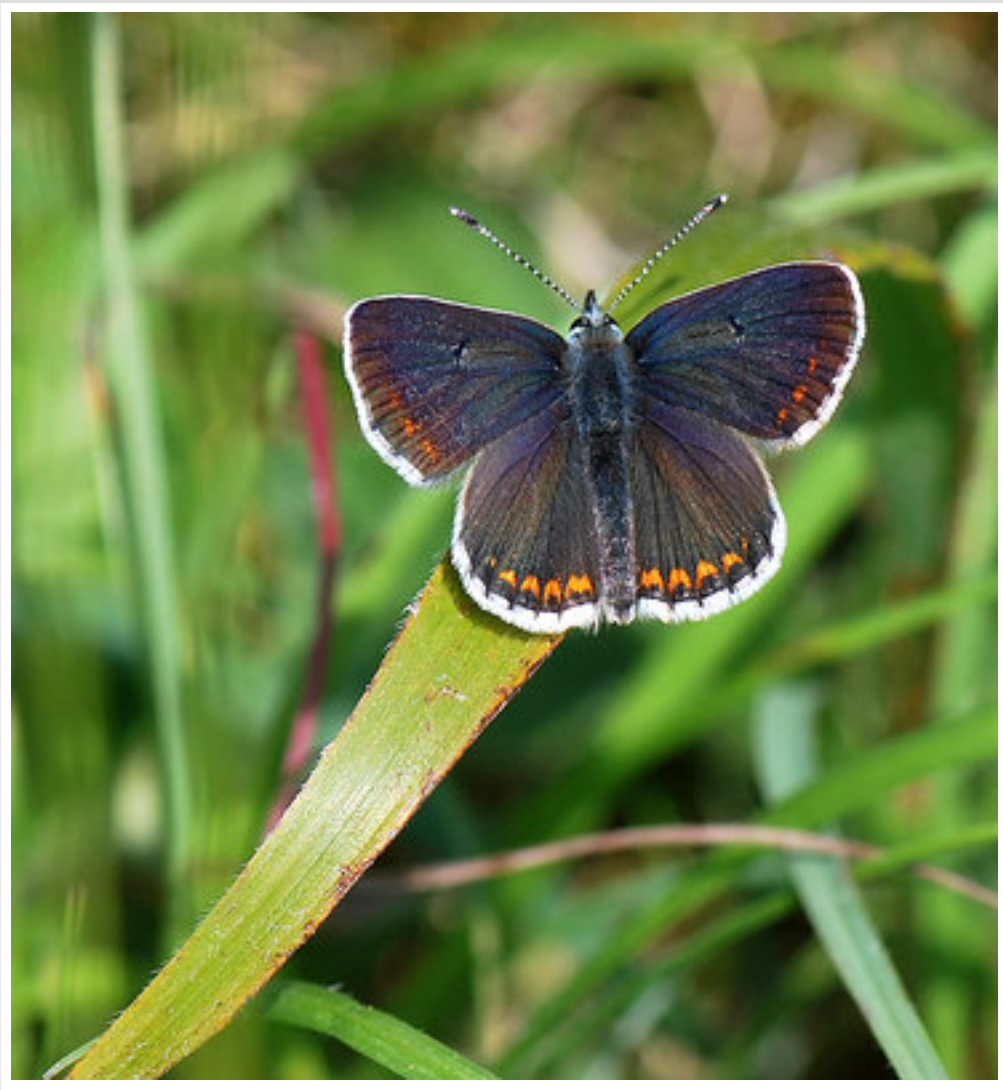


As well as the Brown Argus a couple of Dinghies also messed me around for a while and then a second Brown Argus arrived on the scene scattering other butterflies in its wake. It was in much better nick, almost pristine.





Over the stile there were a couple more Dinghies and Grizzlies which were trying to keep a low profile and were more flighty than usual. I hazarded a guess why and sure enough just off of the steps cut into the chalk was my third Baracus of the 10 minute stop-off. This one was less heavily marked with the orange lunules on the forewings and the chocolate brown had a luscious purple patina.



A fourth was in the meadow hassling another Grizzlie but time was gone. As I burnt rubber on the final stretch home I mused that there were still no Adonis emerging here?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

BA 4, DS 5, GS 4

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 30-May-14 02:44 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the SPBF Wurzal, 🍷 It's great when you get Photo's of them with out all the grass etc .

I've to make another trip next week or the week after to look for them at GB 😊 Last year I missed them completely. 😞 I was pleased with some of the shots I took of the PBF but frustrated because they only opened their wings when in deep grass, if I'd got on my knees I probably wouldn't have got up 😊 not as young as I used to be 😊 I also want the Northen Brown Argus, fingers crossed I'll get both. 😊

Your photo's of the Brown Argus are fantastic keep them coming Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Willow, 30-May-14 02:52 PM GMT

Many of us find **Brown Argus** tough to photograph, but I think you've nailed it here Wurz 😊 super stuff!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 30-May-14 03:12 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cheers Neil 😊 Sorry you're missing out on Marshies but I bet you've got something else lined up – Chequered Skipper, Swallowtail? 🍷 😊

Oh I wish...no, not these two this year, maybe next, I have seen Swallowtails before but not Chequered Skipper yet. My main target for this year was Glanville Fritillary which I have just seen in the IOW. Anything else will depend on if I can make the most of family breaks as usual 😊

Great Brown Argus and SPBF photos 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 30-May-14 09:48 PM GMT

Some fantastic shots there Wurzel ..lovely Green-veined, stained glass Small Pearls and that underside shot of the Brown Argus with the lunules like glowing embers ...beautiful 🗨️ 🍷

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 31-May-14 08:29 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I always try for morning or evening shots of SPBFs and for PBF Philzoid and I try to find them freshly emerged as then they play ball! 😊

Cheers Willow 😊 The trick is to inject a sedative while it's attention is diverted 😊 – am I taking the A-Team analogy too far 😊😊😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Congrats on the Glanvilles – stunning 🍷

Cheers Philzoid 😊 I'll have to show you The Devenish next time you're over this way, hope you got your Glanville today 😊 , actually strike that as then you'd be two up 🗨️ 😊

Larkhill 21-05-2014

Having made more and more stop-offs at The Devenish I felt like I was neglecting my old favourite Larkhill. I have been making stops in the morning but this site really seems to get going when the Ringlets and Marbled Whites arrive. By then it's generally warmer, drier and the sun is up earlier so I can get some shots with a nice 'glow'. Still I stopped off this morning just to check on how things are progressing. As I expected there wasn't much butterfly activity, the cloud and mists had seen to that but a few moths were flying. I also came across a cat still active even though it was carrying a litre or more of water!



Later on the way home I stopped in and conditions were a bit more favourable. There were plenty of medium sized and micro moths and then I almost stumbled across a Small Heath. It seemed to be slightly worn and whenever I can get up close and personal to a Small Heath I'm always reminded of a grizzled old man, possibly a Gold prospector. This one had a tiny second black spot on the forewing.



A quick saunter down the Westbound path didn't throw much else until I started to make my way back to the car with the time ticking away. There off to my right was a little 'flag' swaying with the breeze. It was another Small Heath and this one was fresh out of the box and beautifully marked with an arc of five little eyes on the hind wing. I got a few shots and then stood back for my remaining minute to enjoy it before legging it back to the car and flying home.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

1 GS, 2 SH

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 31-May-14 08:50 PM GMT

Just had to login when I saw your cat photo Wurzel – fabulous 🤩🤩

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 31-May-14 08:58 PM GMT

Great Brown Argus shots Wurzel, but the cat shot really takes the biscuit 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 31-May-14 09:38 PM GMT

Agreed. That dew covered caterpillar is intoxicating.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 31-May-14 10:13 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline, Mike and David 😊 It was adequate pay-back for soaking wet shoes and strange looks from my boss when I walked into work 😬😬

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 31-May-14 10:53 PM GMT

Intriguingly beautiful caterpillar photo. It looks like it had just come out of a freezer and is defrosting. Great shot Wurzel!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-14 08:57 AM GMT

Cheers Katrina 😊 Hopefully when the Marbled Whites emerge I'll be able to get some of them in a similar state 😊

June 2014



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 01-Jun-14 09:58 AM GMT

Ditto on all the comments on your caterpillar image Wurzel, great stuff 😊

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-14 12:02 AM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 I've fallen out of love with Larkhill as when I stopped this afternoon someone drove a caravan into my car – then said it was my fault – I wasn't even in the car!! 😬😬

Bentley Wood 25-05-2014

Finally I was on holiday and I all set to enjoy one of the two days that I had been allocated for butterflying. So it was with great relish that I pulled into the car park at Bentley Wood and started the wade across the Eastern Clearing. I had a quick mooch around to try and find stuff so that when Philzoid arrived we could get cracking. There were a few Pearls about, some still roosting but then as the morning wore on they started flying. Despite one or two that still seemed in good nick most were pale shadows of their former self.



When Philzoid arrived we set to finding some Small Pearls. They were easy to locate and tell apart from the Pearls as they were brighter and much faster moving. What was harder was trying to catch them with their wings closed for the classic field guide shot. The sun had made them too active and we could only watch as they bombed around. Occasionally they would stop for nectar and then for the briefest of moments they would not care that you were there as they took nectar before moving on again. It was a total contrast to my last visit here - today they were about in en masse but they weren't stopping. As we wandered looking for the occasional feeding Small pearl which we might be able to approach a Pearl plonked itself on a Bugle right in front of us. It was quickly joined by a Small Pearl and so I managed a few record shots of the two species together for direct comparison!

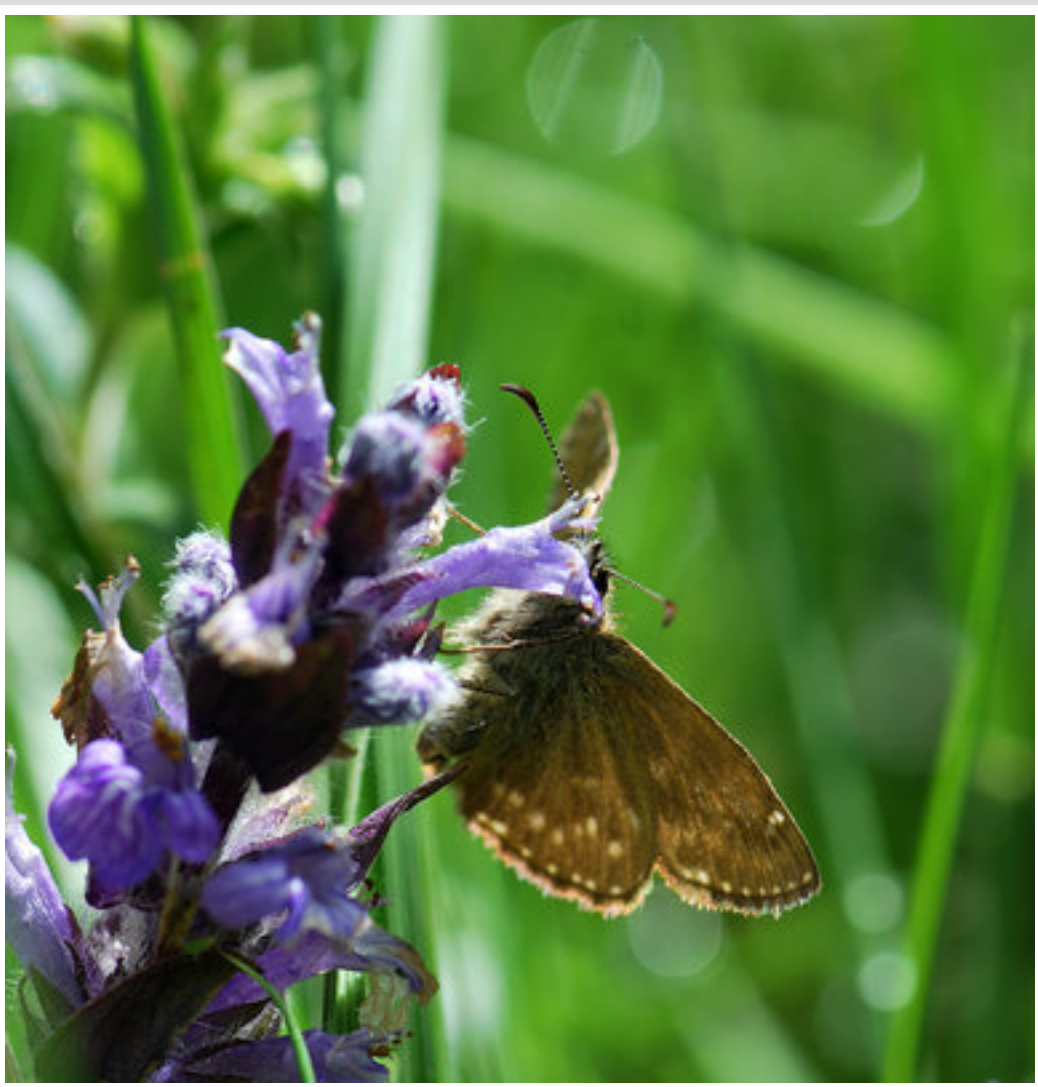


Once they'd fed enough they went their separate ways and something ghostly dropped down amongst the grass. It was a Speckled Wood, old and tired with the cream spots all washed out and now looking white. A few Brimstones flew by and we started to get to get our timing sorted so the Small Pearls that before were unobtainable now started to fill up our memory cards.





Philzoid was after a 'Woodland' Duke so we checked out the areas of the Eastern Clearing that they seemed to like, looking through the longer tussock grasses and managed to unearth a Dingy but no Duke. So we reverted back to Small Pearls. I'd watch and watch and slowly follow one, it would land and then I would lean in clicking away as I got closer and closer and then when it would fly I'd follow another individual. Eventually one stopped and settled for a good 5 or so minutes.





From here we loaded up the wagons and headed Westwards to my Marshie Site...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Jun-14 12:01 AM GMT

Marshie Site 25-05-2014

From Bentley we set off back to Salisbury in order to drop off Philzoid's car so we could head on to the Marshie site in mine. Apart from meaning lower Carbon Dioxide emissions this had the added advantage of annoying my old neighbour as Philzoid was able to park in "his space" 😊😊 . So off we set off West!

On arrival it seemed that the butterflies had been awaiting us as a nice looking Green-veined White fluttered by and landed as we pulled up. From there we made our way up the hill, through the tunnel of trees and then pushing our way out into a butterfly haven. First there was a Green Hairstreak, then Marshies flying around including an aberrant one. Up near the shorter turf by the path Common Blues, Small Blues and Brown Argus were visible and then we carried on further into the little hollow at the bottom of the Down. We stayed here for a little while as everything seemed to be here. More Green Hairstreaks, Small Blues, Brown Argus, Common Blues, an Adonis Blue did a fly-by, Marsh Fritillary and the odd Grizzled and Dingy Skipper. All this and we'd only been here for 10 minutes. We'd take a step and call out the name of another species that had appeared, get a few shots, take another step, call out the name of another species, get another few shots etc etc. I don't think I've ever been anywhere quite like this before 🤩🤩





By now we'd reached the end of the little hollow (a whole 20 metres from where the path broke through the trees) and we bumped into Brian from the Wiltshire Branch. Good to put a face to the name and chew the fat Brian! Around this area some of the Marshies were looking a little tired but others were fresh out of the box. One female in particular was very pristine looking we kept coming back to her in order to see her with her wings open as she was beautifully marked.

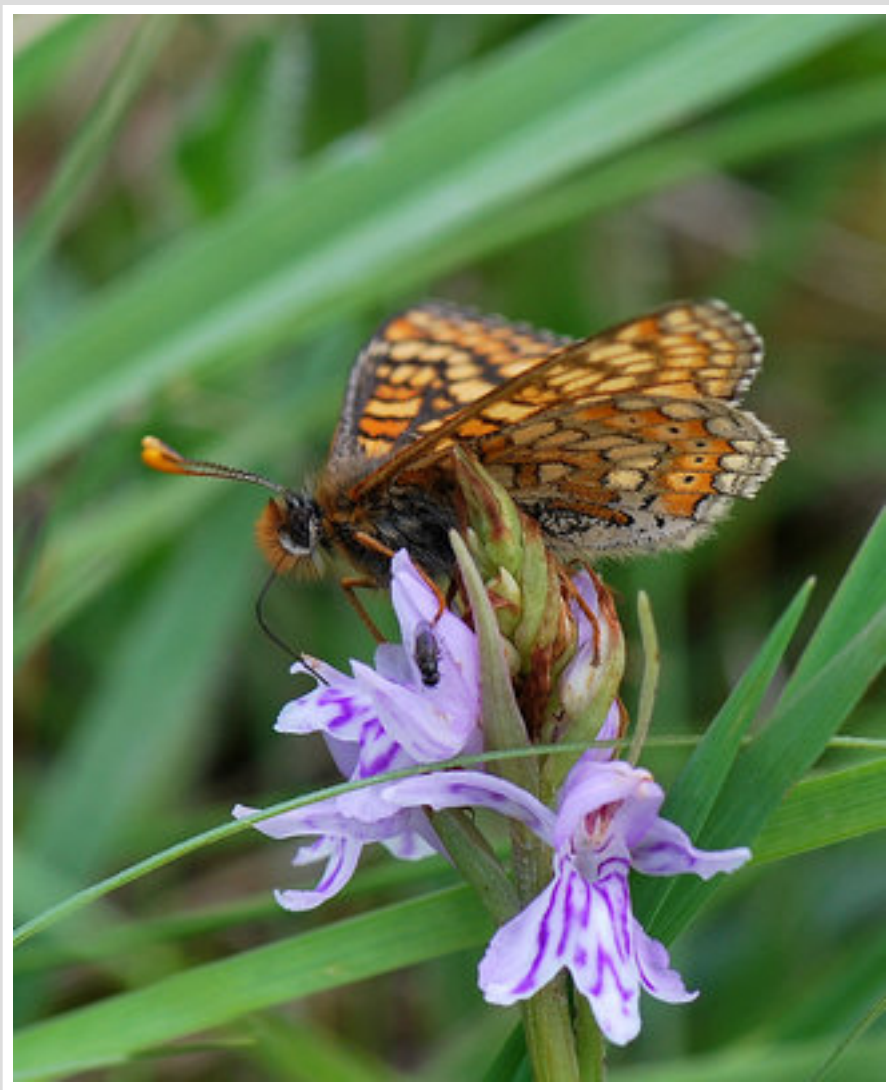
Also very approachable was an unusually calm BA. As the sun had gone in briefly behind the clouds it was content to roost and then walk along a blade

of grass before having a bit of a stretch as the sun came back out. It meant that I was able to get so close that the butterfly took up the whole of the viewing screen.

Also present here was another Marshie that I thought looked unusual. It was fresh as it had the flecks around the margins of the wings. Yet it lacked the contrast seen in other individuals which show a range of colour markings with reds, dark oranges, yellows and creams; this individual was pretty much brown and orange?



Greasy







The fresh female...





Orange ab?

By now we'd spent a measly forty minutes on site in this one little area so we thought we'd better get and explore a bit more.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by badgerbob, 04-Jun-14 04:57 PM GMT

Only just caught up and seen your very wet cat. Love it. We haven't had a decent dewy morning for ages here, possibly too near the sea.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jun-14 07:23 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, that second Green Hairstreak has got a impressive line of spots across both wings, looks like a classic example of *ab. punctata* (I think I am getting the hang of these Greenstreak abs now 😊)

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 04-Jun-14 08:24 PM GMT

Nice Marshie underside shot!

Re: Wurzel

by Willow, 04-Jun-14 09:59 PM GMT

Great report Wurz...can't get enough of Marshies 😊 just luv' em!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 05-Jun-14 09:39 PM GMT

2 nice abs there Wurzel – great find 🍷 Certainly seems like a great site.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 05-Jun-14 09:50 PM GMT

The variety of Marsh Fritillaries there is amazing – and those aberrant ones are just the cream on the top. 🍷

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 05-Jun-14 09:51 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

I just had to comment on your photo of the larva covered in dew drops. The best photo i have seen for a long time. Brilliant. 😊😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 05-Jun-14 10:11 PM GMT

Five-spot Burnet larva f. saturata wow 😲

Think I'll bring along a hand held mist sprayer as part of my butterflying kit with me next time as there's no way I can make it that early in the morning 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-14 12:31 PM GMT

Cheers Bob 😊 The only problem getting that shot was that I got soaked from the knees down and so when I arrived at work I got a few disapproving looks 😊 Stuff it, it was worth it 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I thought it was an ab. thanks for ID 😊

Cheers Katrina 😊 I was lucky in that as I found it the sun went in so it closed it's wings, perfect timing 😊

Cheers Willrow 😊 There are a few more Marshies to come 😊

Cheers Pauline 😊 It is a great site indeed, if you can get here then do! 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 With your aberrants as well this seems to be a pretty good site for them, mind it's a pretty great site overall 😊

Cheers Nick for your very kind comment 😊😊 Good to hear from you again 😊

Cheers Philzoid 😊 It's getting close to that time of year when you need some foul smelling liquid in that mist sprayer 😊

Marshie Site, Part 2

Venturing forth from the hollow we worked our way up the side of the down and started making our way round to the bowl. The side of the down held all the usual suspects and many more Green Hairstreaks all of them low down in the turf. We reached the Bowl which is another great part of the site as last year it was the site of a Battle Royale. It all kicked off again this time and again it was a Brown Argus that started it by scraping with a Grizzlie and then a Dingy. A Small Heath did a few defensive runs and Marshies fluttered by and took evasive action to avoid the BA. All the while Small Blues were keeping a low profile.

Having enjoyed a frenzied five minutes of activity it all quietened down and we carried on round the side of the Down. We discussed that it was around here last year that we started seeing Wall Browns and sure enough there was another basking on the path as the sun had gone in. I clocked that it was a female straight away which was doubly good news for me as I've struggled to get decent shots of a female in the past. Just off to one side of the Wall was a pair of Marshies in cop. So now we'd had our Battle Royale, Walls and also our mating pair of Marshies – I was starting to experience de ja vu.





We checked the side of the down and the bowl again and then worked our way back to get lunch and also to try to find some Adonis to photograph. As we got back in the hollow the sun came out again and everything started flying. Again it was hard to know where to look first but amongst all the little grey and blues blobs, the larger reddish and definite Blues something fast moving and golden caught my eye. It land amongst a pile of dead wood and Brambles and there was my first Large Skipper of the year (and possibly the first for Wiltshire).



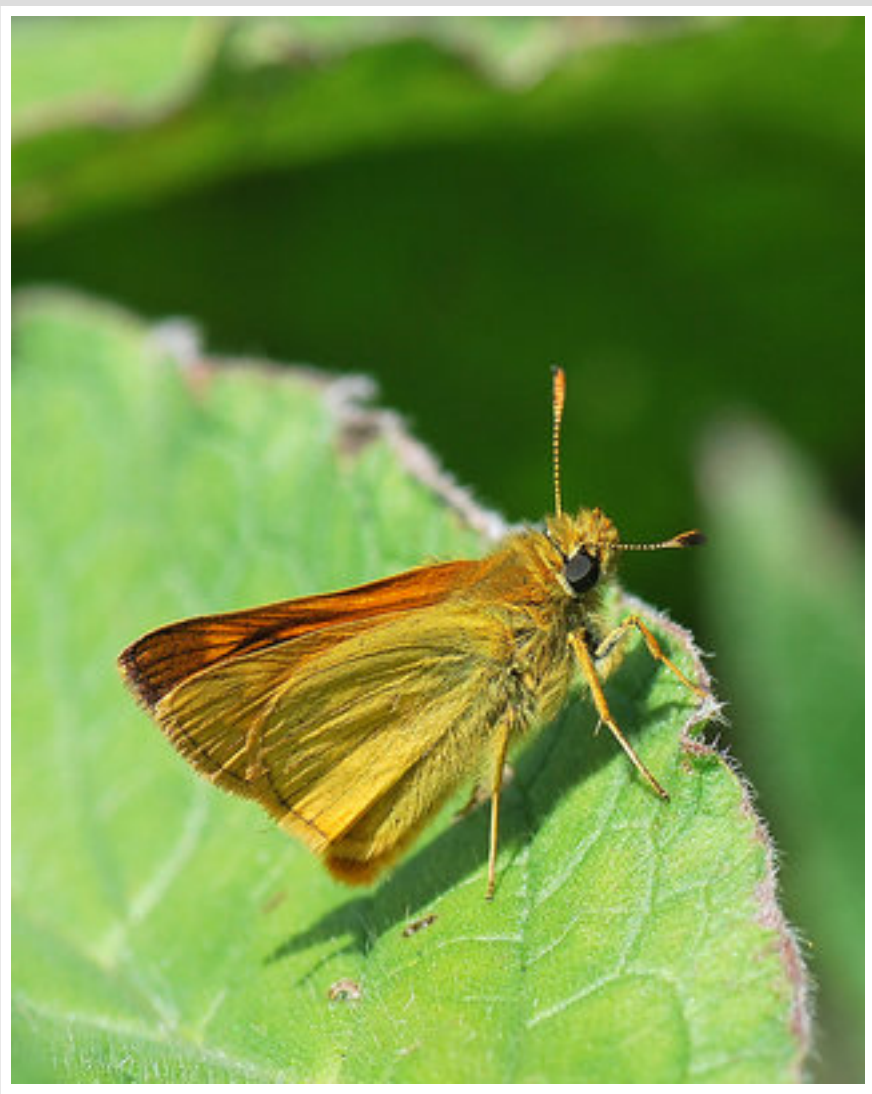
Further along in the hollow there were some CB masquarding as AB only to be upstaged by the real McCoy came along. It was totally obvious that this was the muscle bound cousin of the more common stick and it was vibrant. As usual there were the ever present Marshies and also a small grouping of Small Blues.





All of these butterflies held the rumbling of my stomach at bay but a man can't live on butterflies alone so we headed our way back to the car for lunch. Mind you it did take 5 or 6 attempts as every time we'd decided to start back down the tree tunnel to the lay-by something else would appear and we'd 'just have to get a few shots of that'. Luckily there were some added bonuses to having a break for sustenance especially for Philzoid as a Red Admiral put in an appearance - a first for Philzoid and taking him one ahead! There was also the second Large Skipper of the day but we were eager to get back up to the Down, so much so that I drank my coffee as I climbed the hill.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 07-Jun-14 12:14 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I think the correct expression one should use is, "just catching up on your diary", 😊 somehow I seem to have missed out on quite a bit, starting from **Bentley Wood 25-05-2014** 😊

Magnificent photos all the way through including Marshie and Greenstreak *abs* 😊 I'll try to keep up in future 😊 Lovely Marshie *ab* in the SSA 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Willow, 07-Jun-14 03:02 PM GMT

Your getting out to some lovely places and seeing some lovely stuff Wurz, and your images are not half bad either 😊 much enjoyed...Oh! and super Marshy *ab* finds too!!!

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 07-Jun-14 06:18 PM GMT

Love the second shot of the mating Marshies. Looks like the little guy has got the big girl 😊 .

"Wurzel" wrote:

Further along in the hollow there were some CB masquarding as AB only to be upstaged by the real McCoy came along.

You know I'm still baffled by that 'Scarlet Pimpernel' Common Blue 😊 . The following week I went to Hutchinson's Bank and saw plenty of male CB's all of a 'typical' hue i,e their blue had that lilac tinge. Admittedly our example didn't have the chequered fringe and the underside did look like Common.

Is there a 'blue' aberration/form of the Common Blue 😊

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 07-Jun-14 07:47 PM GMT

Wow, what a great selection of butterflies you have seen.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 07-Jun-14 11:28 PM GMT

MORE Marsh Frits, Wurzel?! You're right though, you cannot have too many. Lovely shots, too. 😊 And the elusive Wall as well – I didn't manage to see any on my trip to that Wiltshire hill, and I often miss out on them altogether.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 07-Jun-14 11:33 PM GMT

You've done well to see so many Marsh Frits in your part of the world, Wurzel.

I reckon you're ahead of me, in spite of me having them close by.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-14 11:52 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 Those abs were the icing on a fantastic cake 😊

Cheers Willrow 😊 Just following your advice/maxim 😊

Cheers Philzoid 😊 They like a big girl in Wiltshire 😊😊 I reckon we have a look at that Blue again later in the year when we have more time there was something different about it for sure 😊

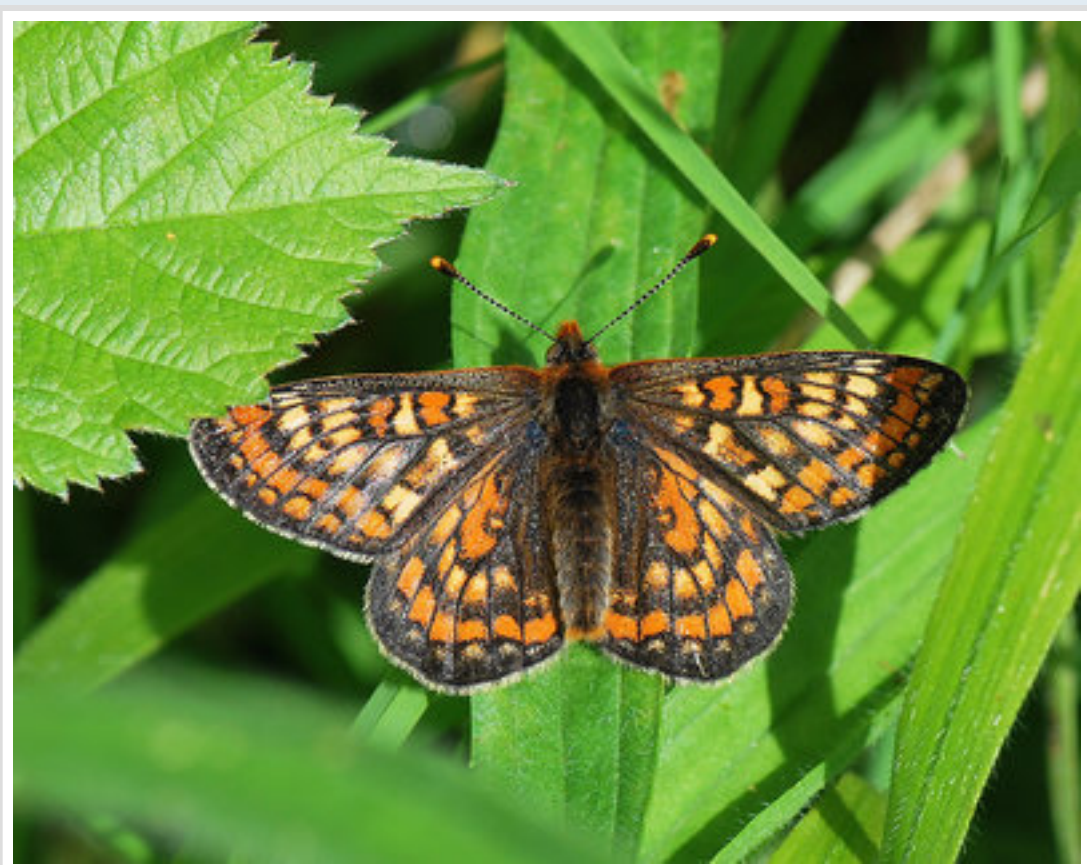
Cheers Nick 😊 I was really lucky latching onto the existence of this site last year, it's brill 😊

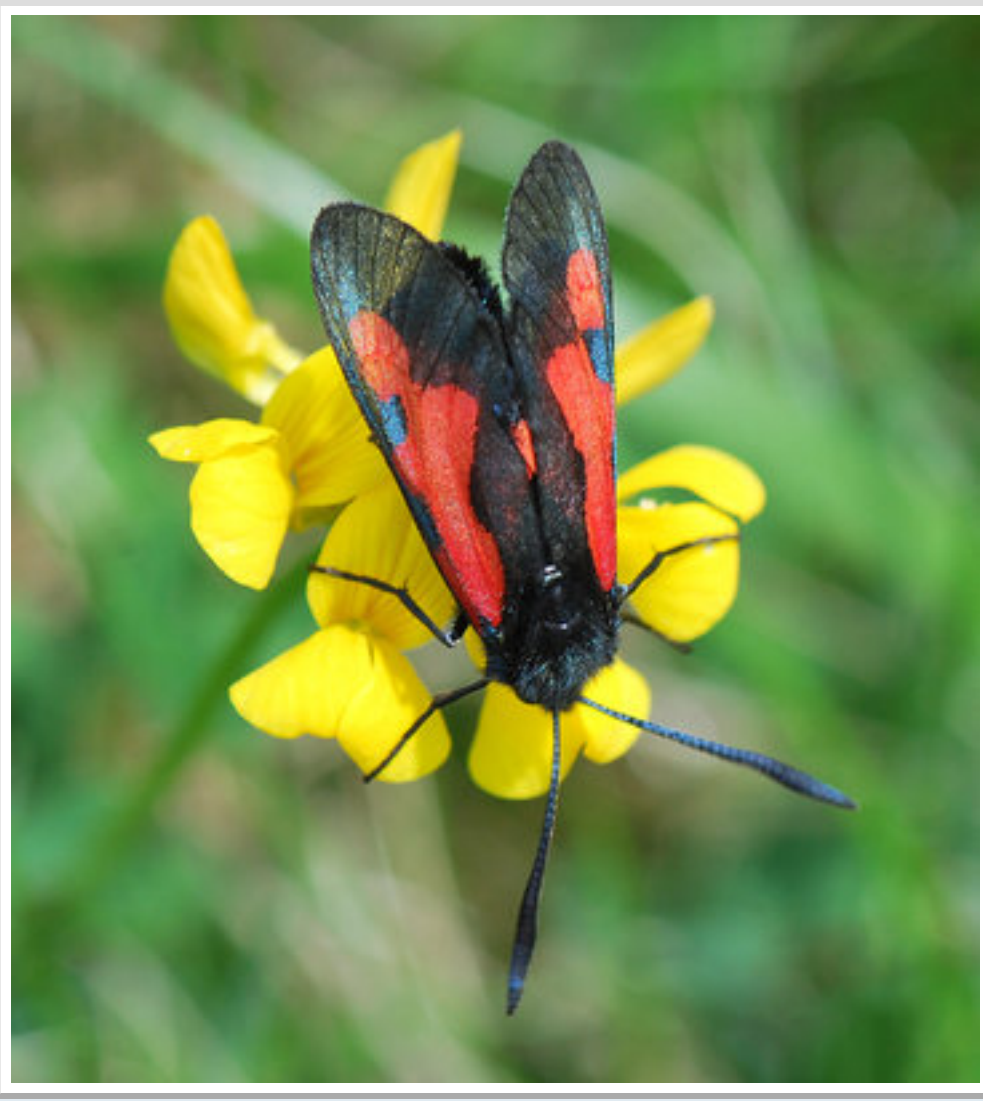
Cheers Dave 😊 There are a few more still to come, as for the Wall I've described whereabouts they are below so if you visit again hopefully you'll find them 😊

Cheer David 😊 This was only from two visits to the same site, it's just such a great site 😊

Marshie Site Part 3 (the last part) 25-05-2014

After our lunch we tried to avoid the hollow for a third time – cutting up across the down proper with all manner of things to keep us interested and Marshies everywhere. If one flew off that didn't matter as four more would be around to take it's place! Also around in good numbers were 5 Spot Burnett Moths including an aberrant with all of the spots linked together into single large blobs on each wing. After enjoying this we both remarked on how many Green Hairstreaks were about and also how they were keeping low to the ground. As if to prove the point a couple of Greenstreaks did a few fly-bys and one landed and started rotating around the foliage. I've seen this behaviour before and so we watched it intently and once it was finished and had flown away there, left behind was a tiny green blob which I think is an egg?







We headed across and down the side of the Down to the lower slopes and eventually the path which runs parallel to the farmers' field. Here the side of the down has slipped and exposed bare soil and chalk which has made a prime habitat for Walls it would seem - I say this as on my previous two visits and also on this one Wall Browns were found here. They seem to like hanging on to the side of the slips or basking on the exposed chalk and flint. There were at least three here and I followed one as it zipped along the bottom of the Down every now and again veering of sharply at right angles and cutting through the hedge or up the side of the Down. Eventually it settled and I was able to make a very cautious approach, but not very close as they are probably one of the most skittish species in the UK. An inconsiderate Mashie floated by and it was gone, a Tangerine blur!



As well as Walls and the ubiquitous Marshies there was also the odd Dingy and Grizzlie as well as Common Blue floating about and then a sudden golden blur caught my eye - the third Large Skipper of the day. We hung around here for a while walking forward and backward along the bottom of the Down and it paid off with at least a couple more Wall Brown sightings and eventually one landed and started basking allowing us to get close enough for some proper shots.





Alas time was up so we made our way back to the car, doing our best to not get too distracted on the walk back. But this is a site which mesmerizes you, it's the site that just keeps on giving and so almost back at the car something caught my attention and there was my third Holly Blue of the year. Even better we managed to grab a few shots - they're having such bad fortunes that this probably has greater value than the Marshie aberrant! 🤪





What a site! 😊😄 This is now a confirmed annual visit in my book and combined with Bentley the day total for me was 19 – bettered by Philzoid who stopped in at Bentley again on the way back and added a ‘Woodland Duke’ to the day list!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

BA 5, HB 1, RA 1, SmW 1, GVW 1, GS 4, DS 11, MF 50+, CB 3, AB 1, SB 6, 12 GH, SH 4, LS 3, WB 4, B 4

Re: Wurzel

by Pete Eeles, 07-Jun-14 11:59 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

As if to prove the point a couple of Greenstreaks did a few fly-bys and one landed and started rotating around the foliage. I've seen this behaviour before and so we watched it intently and once it was finished and had flown away there, left behind was a tiny green blob which I think is an egg?

Nice job! Yes, that's an egg alright – and looks like it's been laid on Common Rock-rose.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jun-14 09:47 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

...this we both remarked on how many Green Hairstreaks were about and also how they were keeping low to the ground. As if to prove the point a couple of Greenstreaks did a few fly-bys and one landed and started rotating around the foliage. I've seen this behaviour before and so we watched it intently and once it was finished and had flown away there, left behind was a tiny green blob which I think is an egg?

I have watched female Green Hairstreaks doing this before, seems to be typical behaviour looking for a suitable foodplant and testing it before laying.

Great reports and photos again Wurzel, I almost feel as if I am there with you 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Willow, 08-Jun-14 02:59 PM GMT

Agree with Neil, I too have watched GH doing this, they seem rather choosy.

Well observed and captured Wurzel, quite a site you have there...enjoy 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-14 12:04 AM GMT

Cheers for the confirmation Pete 😊 I'm glad I hadn't photographed a random blob 😳😳

Cheers Neil and Willow 😊 They are very balletic when choosing where to lay and then once they've decided it's the total opposite as they don't stand on ceremony 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-14 11:05 AM GMT

The Bentley Area 27-05-2014

This was making the most of the hand that I'd been dealt as I was supposed to be over Philzoids way looking for Glanvilles at H Bank or Wood White in Chiddingfold. However the previous few days of family activities had worn my wife out and she suffers terribly from tiredness so I needed to be on hand to help out. In between various bits of house work I managed to duck out for an hour or two. The weather forecast for the morning wasn't great - with drizzle and thick cloud but the temperatures looked okay so I made a very short trip out to do some investigation into different areas of Bentley.

The first area that I visited yielded not a single butterfly although the habitat looked very good and I can imagine Pearls, Small Pearls, Marshies and Dukes all fly here so it will be worth checking back here in more favourable conditions. To keep me occupied there were plenty of moths (Mother Shipton, Brown Silver Lines, Yellow Shell, Speckled Yellow etc) including a very striking micro which Philzoid very kindly identified as *Olethreutes arcuella* - he's my 'go to Moth man' 😎 .



From there I headed into Bentley Wood proper and headed to another area of the wood hoping to see some Pearls and Small Pearls outside of the EC. In

hindsight this was a mistake as at exactly the same time Pauline was in the Eastern clearing with a fantastically posed Small Pearl, but I wasn't to know this at the time 😊. So I pressed on amongst the damp and gloom, my trousers sucking up water from the ground and grasses by capillary action so by the time I reached the clearing I was aiming for I felt a couple of stone heavier! Never mind at least here there were butterflies as the sun had started to make very brief glimpses through the cloud. After about 20 minutes I had found a whole pair of Specklies! 'Oh well' I thought and trudged on. I started checking the Bracken and a few bushes checked I found Pearl roosting and not looking too shabby either.



Chuffed I made my way back towards the car with one of the Specklies for company.



Later that same day the girls were due to attend a play date at my sister in-laws and so I dutifully dropped all three of them off and stated to drive back home - with more housework awaiting me. Some sort of reflex action occurred probably because I was heading home and it was the afternoon and

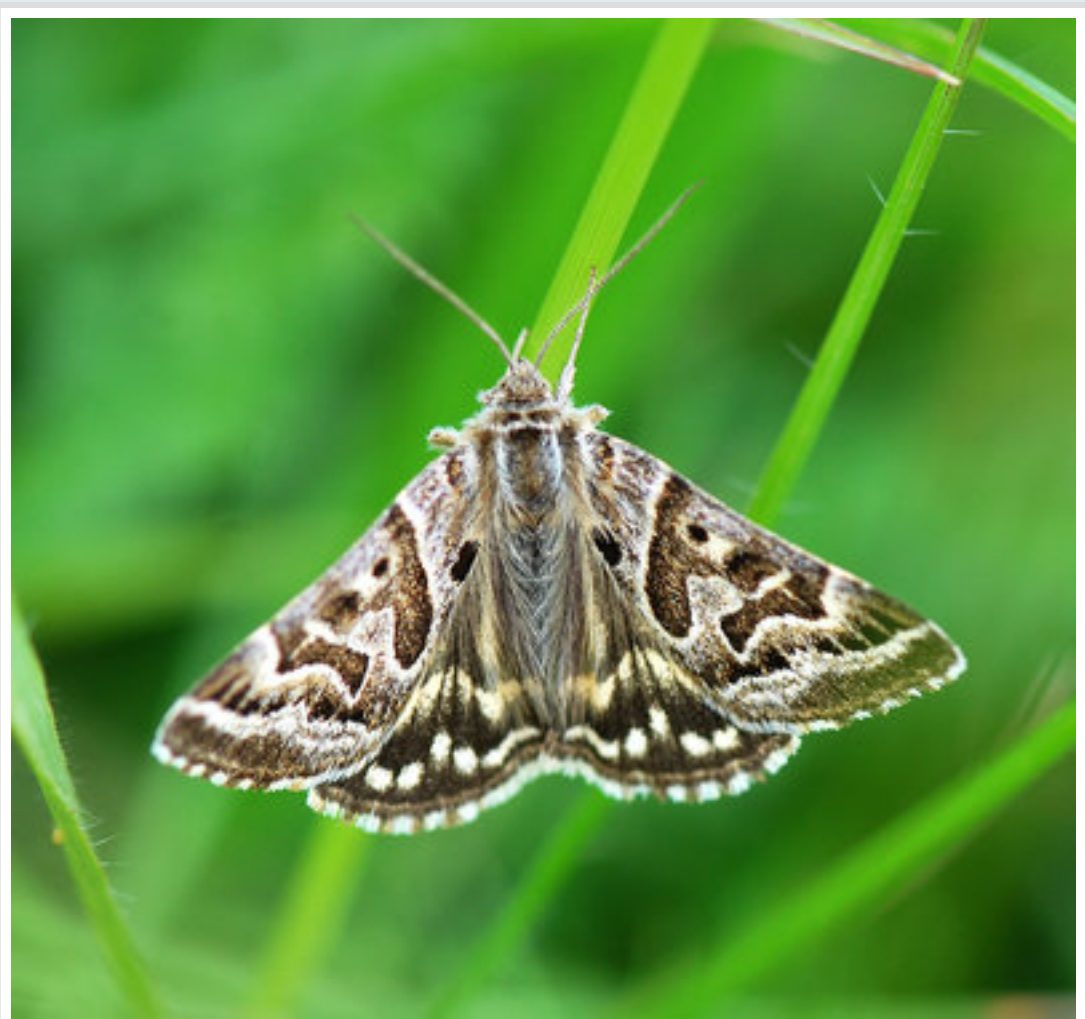
somehow I ended up parked at The Devenish 😬😬 “Why should stop-offs on the way home only happen when travelling from work?” I reasoned and so decided to have the usual 10 minutes, although as this was the holiday it turned into a bit longer.

I started off in the lower meadow and a nice looking Common Blue met me. After a few shots I carried on, over the stile and up the Down hoping that today would see the first Adonis here. It wasn't looking hopeful as again the cloud covered the sun and it felt cooler than of late. Realising this I set myself to looking for roosting butterflies and so set out looking for little flags flapping in the breeze. First up was a Grizzlie and then I found a Brown Argus, both clinging grimly on and sitting out the weather.





Things were on the move across the side of the Down but unfortunately they were of the moth variety. There was the odd larger Yellow Shell amongst the micros and every now and again a Mother Shipton would land and then promptly fly again just as I'd focus on it. In the end I stood still and watched it land before making a rapid approach and clicking away as I got nearer. I think this confused it as it then sat still for quite a time!



I then checked the Down on the other side of the fence and that also had one each of Brown Argus and Grizzlie but the BA on this side was much feistier and wasn't stopping for photos. The Grizzlie however seemed content on its grass head.



A quick wander around the far side of the meadow yielded a lot more of the same moth wise as well as a few Banded Demioselles and a Common Carpet but I needed to make a move as laundry waits for no man! So I beat a hasty retreat from The Devenish - I just wish the Adonis would arrive here...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 09-Jun-14 01:49 PM GMT

I'm a bit late to your diary but nice shot of the of the Marshie and Large Skip on the bramble 😊. There was a lot more bramble flower at that site yesterday and the Marshies were taking to it along with lots of fresh Small Tortoiseshell 😊. I didn't get to see any wall nor Green Hairstreak but plenty of pukka Adonis Blues. Getting an underside Wall shot like you got is a real challenge, something for me to aim for in the future.

BTW your I reckon your number of species in a day count should be 20, if like me you counted the Small Tort larvae 😊😊

After some more Marshie site magic me and Izzy headed to Bentley's eastern clearing. Our arrival we'd barely got out of the car park when two gunshots went off somewhere in the clearing 😲! After steadying ourselves we made our way in but saw no-one about 😊. Worse still we saw no fritillaries either: Pearls or Small Pearls 😊. Surprising bearing in mind how fresh that Pearl of yours is taken on the 27th 😊.

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Mike Robinson, 09-Jun-14 05:13 PM GMT

You have some very impressive pictures &c.

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 09-Jun-14 05:25 PM GMT

Beautiful photos esp the Brown Argus. 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 09-Jun-14 07:43 PM GMT

Smashing report Wurzel and some great photos, hard to say which I like best but that micro is a little stunner 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Jun-14 12:06 AM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 I'd not counted the Small Tort larvae, so I'll add that to the count 😊 Glad you both got back safely 😊

Cheers Mike for your kind comment 😊

Cheers Katrina, I was dead chuffed with the BAs 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 It was some consolation for not seeing a single butterfly and getting soaking wet 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Jun-14 09:47 AM GMT

Duke Site 31-05-2014

Part 1

With my sister and brother in-law looking after the girls for the day I handed them over once they'd had their swimming lesson and disappeared camera and flask in the boot of the car, lucky hat on the passenger seat and cheese and extra hot Lime pickle sandwiches corroding my lunchbox. I'd decided to try my Duke site as there might be some late Duke action as well as a few Adonis and Small Blues - maybe even a Marshie or two...

Once I'd navigated the tank tracks I parked up and started scanning for suitable habitat. Also immediately I saw a female Adonis Blue on some Kidney Vetch amongst the really short turf. So I headed over and there was a Grizzlie, a Greenstreak and another couple of Adonis including some showy males. I was equally impressed with the females as they were gloriously bedecked with glittering blue flecks showing off the slate blue of the ground colour to nice effect. Others were more tired and wore the standard "brown" blue female attire. It was obviously easier to count the males and a scan around produced 14 males.





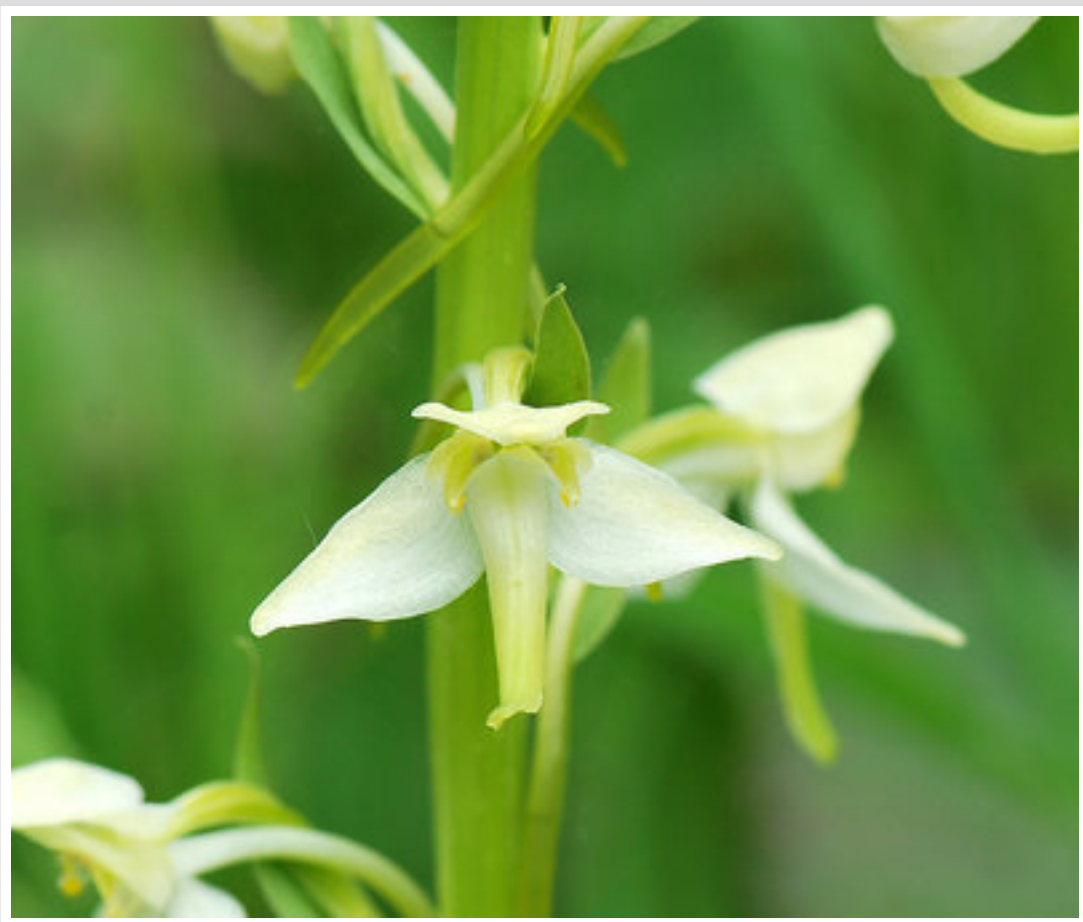
Pleased with the haul I decided to head up the main track which is the hotspot for Dukes. As I started up a Dingy and Duke had a little spar. The Duke seemed a little tired looking but I was pleased to see it none the less and so I carried on up the hill as I remembered that the top part was better for Dukes. And so it turned out with another very pale individual, the orange replaced cream. A Large Skipper made an nice addition to the day list and then I was almost stunned as a small orange butterfly landed on the path. At first I thought it was a Small Heath, then when it opened it's wings I thought it could have been a Burnet Companion Moth. But it was neither it was the most orange Duke (actually a Duchess) that I have ever seen. Stunning!





From there I wandered in a bit of a daze over to the area cleared area which was now a sea of Forget Me Nots. There were lots of Cistus Foresters and the odd Greenstreak around as well a Small Copper. The Forget me Nots looked enticing so I made a mental note to come back and 'have a paddle' once I'd reached my main objective. This was actually getting to the top of the hill to explore the other side. The springy turf area had more of the Cinnabars and Foresters but the Dinghies had now been replaced by Blues with a few Brown Argus two rouge male Common Blues and a pair in cop. Further up the hill I was into uncharted territory and there standing proud were a couple of Greater Butterfly Orchids.







Upon reaching the top of the hill I was looking forward to finding what was on the other side, Marshies, Wall Browns more Dukes? So as I started making the descent I looked across the Plain and there making the ascent were a collection of butterfly enthusiasts – I'd gate crashed a county walk 🙄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Willrow, 10-Jun-14 12:31 PM GMT

Lovely lively report Wurz 😊 the butterflies are all looking as fresh as our countryside right now and your images capture that...nice!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Jun-14 02:19 PM GMT

Cheers Willrow 😊 I particularly pleased with the Duke as all the rest were pretty past it 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 10-Jun-14 04:00 PM GMT

Your photo's are always some thing special Wurzal, I love the Adonis photo's, they will have gone I think by the time we get down there, I'll have to wait and see if we can get a way again in August Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-14 09:45 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Hopefully you'll be able to make another visit 😊

Duke Site 31-05-2014

Part 2

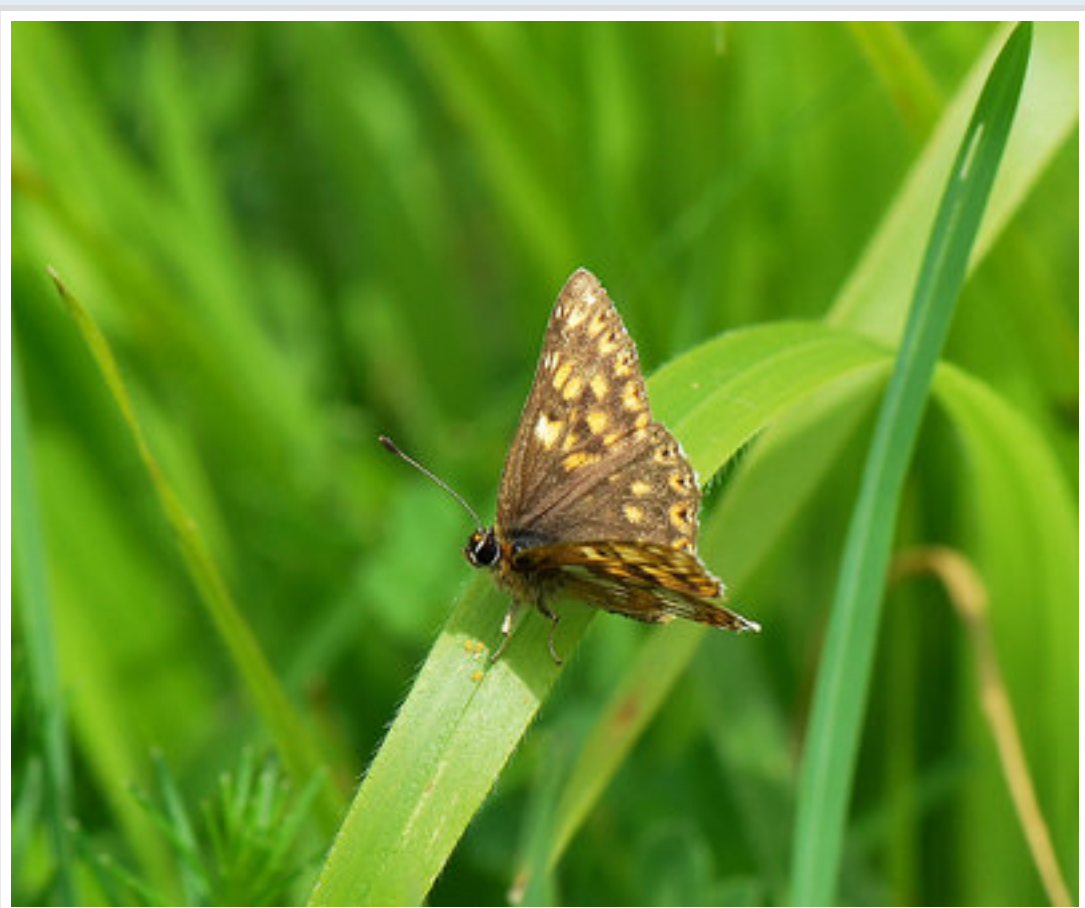
So having bumped into the county group we swapped sightings; County Group Wall Brown and 2 Marshies vs Wurzel 3 Dukes, Adonis Blues and Butterfly Orchids. I think I won on goal difference 😊 so I offered to show them the Duke hotspot and I made my way back the way I'd come, vowing to come back next year and actually complete the circuit. The Orchids went down well, as did the spongy turf area and then one of the group showed me a Birds Nest Orchid in the shade of the wood. A strange looking thing I missed it at first and when it was pointed out to me I almost asked "what behind that dead plant?", not realising that that was actually it.



Next on the agenda was the Forget Me Not sea which held Small and Common Blues, Brown Argus, Greenstreaks, a Small Tortoiseshell, Small Copper, a Peacock, a few whites fluttering by and a few pink Forget Me Nots. It was well worth a paddle but you couldn't get very far as every step something would go up and then land. But as you'd lean in for a photo something else would fly up and then you'd follow that. In the end I slung the camera over my shoulder and just enjoyed seeing so many butterflies, it was a spectacle to savour.

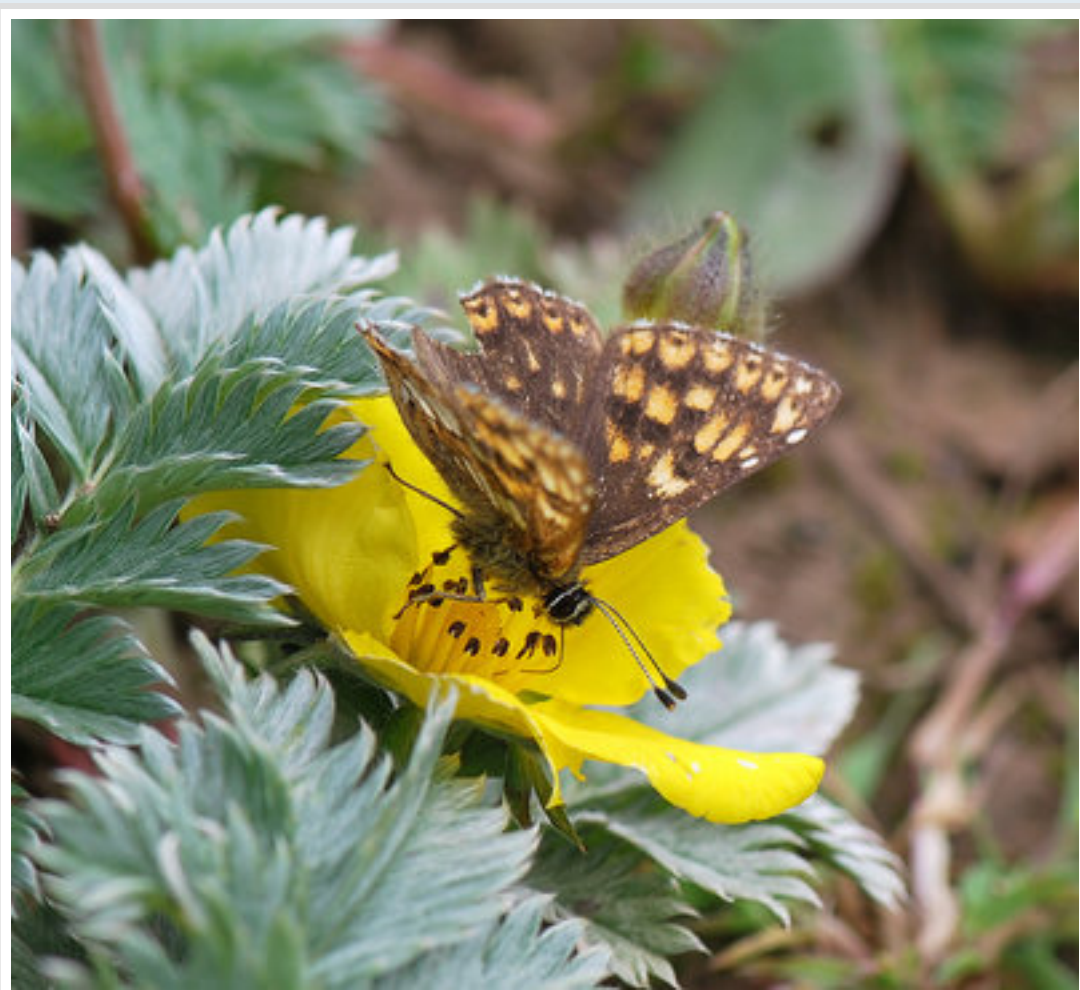


Once back at the path a blue spot Small Copper greeted us and then we settled down to search for Dukes. There was one with a chunk missing from its hind wing and then a fresher but still not mint individual. Another Large Skipper shot by followed by a more faded orangey Duke. Next was a blue spot Small Copper and then it all went a bit crazy with everything flying up and down the path. At one point two Dukes were mobbing a Dingy when a Small Heath got in the way and the Dukes split, each chasing their 'foe' away successfully before coming back to the path to continue their personal scrap! Despite the wear it was still great to see so many Dukes and all three of the individuals I'd seen were different from the three I'd seen earlier meaning a total of six for the day.





Job done and having successfully guided the group to some Dukes I checked the time and I realised that I wouldn't have enough time to get back round the hill so I bade them farewell and headed back towards the car to sue my remaining time to look at some more Adonis. At the bottom of the track I bumped into the same first Duke of the day and then I was back and surrounded by Adonis. There were turquoise flags scattered through the long grass and rather than finding them the hard part was deciding which to photograph first.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

LS 2, DS 6, GS 12, B 2, SB 3, GH 52, SC 3, CB 7, BA 12, ST 1, P 1, SW 2, AB 19, SH 12, DB 6

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 11-Jun-14 04:49 PM GMT

Lovely female Adonis Wurzel – certainly very fresh. I haven't seen a female this year yet.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 11-Jun-14 07:24 PM GMT

Agreed – the female Adonis are splendid. I rarely seem to encounter the very blue ones. That sounds altogether like a wonderful site to visit. 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-14 11:47 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊 I thought it was quite unusual to see the the females out so quickly as ususally they emerge later than the males 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 It does seem that here are more blue females around this year. This site is another little known cracker 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-14 03:19 PM GMT

The Devenish 03-06

So on Monday I fell slightly out of love with Larkhill. I'd pulled in hoping to catch up with the Blues and as I pulled up and got out of the car the other occupants of the lay-by seemed to be loading up their wagons. I took a few footsteps up the North path but something didn't feel right so I turned round and looked back towards the car. As I turned around one bloke got into a flat back Transit van with a semi-demolished caravan hanging off the back. As he pulled away another bloke walked across the lay-by shouting "watch the turning circle or you'll hit that car". Scrape, bang, scratch all the way down the drivers side 😬😬. He got out, admitted liability and kept wanting to take me to a panel beaters that he knew. So I got his details (illegible address and as it turned out later, a mobile number with a digit missing) and they got out of there, noting the reg number just in case. Dam it! 😡

Hence on Tuesday I stopped at The Devenish. Straight up the side of the Down, I must be getting used to this stop-off now as I get to the top of the down at a run. The intermittent cloud wasn't helping things but I did manage to spot a little flag waving in amongst the long grass heads which became a Brown Argus. I headed back down the Down joined by a couple of Grizzlies and when I reached the stile a, or should I say the Red Admiral took off.



In the meadow were the usual micro moths flying up with every footfall plus another little flag. This too was a Brown Argus and it angled itself so it was almost lying horizontal on the seed head looking like it was being orbited by little tiny planetoids.



The next day (Wednesday) I also stopped at The Devenish and conditions were much more favourable, warm and sunny. Surely today the Adonis would be flying as I've seen them at two other sites? I raced through the car park and slowed down as I went through the meadow to enjoy a Brown Argus and one of two Grizzlies - still flying the hard wearing little butterflies!



I then made my way up the Down hoping to see electric blue flashes and there was one. It was low down amongst the grasses but that made approaching it unobserved easier. When I was close enough I fired off a few shots and noticed that it had a notched forewing, almost like it hadn't finished developing. Further up a few more were flapping about - probably only four more but it's a start!





Sated and relieved to have finally seen The Devenish Adonis I made my way back down the Down and cut across the meadow. Another couple of Brown Argus were having a scrap and flushed a female Brimstone whilst in the canopy of the trees a Specklie zigged and zagged through the air. There were also a couple of Common Blue males around looking more worn than the Adonis.



Oh well next thing to look out for here will be a Large Skipper or Meadow Brown.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Mike Robinson, 13-Jun-14 03:59 PM GMT

I find these Personal Diaries fascinating. Easy to read and with lots of very fine pictures. As we have here. I hope all goes OK with the car; fancy giving the wrong details but at least you got the car number.

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 13-Jun-14 04:47 PM GMT

Great photo's again Wurzel 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 14-Jun-14 12:19 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Just catching up 😊 There is an awful lot to catch up with after missing your diary for a few days, how do you find the time 😊 As others have mentioned your female Adonis is stunning 😊 There is nothing wrong with your Mother Shiptons but yes they are a bit tricky, always settling at the wrong angle down in the grass and with a bit of 'wing quiver' I also found plenty of Green Hairstreak egg laying activity at the weekend 😊

I hope your car is not too badly damaged. I suppose it is one of the perils of leaving our cars in narrow lanes with not much parking in isolated spots 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-14 08:51 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 He was definitely trying to pull a fast one 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 It's that time of year again when the light is great 😊

Cheers Jack 😊 Because of work, family and UKB I'm finding that I'm sleeping less and less these days 😊 😊 If only my car had been parked down a narrow lane I could have understood better, but where I was parked has previously held 2 Police vans, 4 Traveller vans, my car and there was still room to drive right the way through 😊

Larkhill 05-06-2014

By Thursday I'd missed stopping at Larkhill so I bit the bullet and pulled in on the way to work. Just in case I took a photo of my car and when I started walking down the paths I'd start every time a car would loudly pull out onto the main road. Eventually I was far enough away not to hear this and then I started seeing butterflies. First was a Small Heath and then a Grizzlie.



This was quickly followed by another Small Heath and another Grizzlie and I was wondering if I was going to end up seeing more of the same. Something brown looking flew across the path and landed amongst the grass where it stopped before moving onto a scrub bush. I couldn't believe it! Last year in my look back on my sightings of this site I made a wisecrack about finding Green Hairstreaks here and there was one now! Somehow I managed to get some shots despite my hands shaking.





So I drove on to work with the largest smile on my face ever, all the anger and annoyance of the last week vanished in an instant and wiped from my memory by a little green butterfly. I stopped off briefly on the way home but couldn't relocate it. Instead I made do with a couple of Small Heaths and what I was fairly convinced was a Fox Moth.



Larkhill 06-06-2014

Come Friday afternoon I was more than ready for a few butterflies and so I pulled into Larkhill, checking the lay-by for itinerant Transits and

demolished caravans. As I left the car a female Brimstone bombed by followed closely by a male. Within two steps a Small White fluttered by and a couple of Small Heath had shot up from the grass and shot off up the path.

As I peered around the bush at the edge of the lay-by a male Orange-tip seeming surprisingly fresh flew by at a great pace off on patrol. After all this excitement seconds having gotten out of the car I was quite disappointed when my walk up the North path produced only one Small Heath so I gave up and made my way back to the car. As I got nearer something silvery landed on the flowers at the edge of the long grass patch - it was my first Larkhill Brown Argus.



The final butterfly of my stop was a larger Tangerine thing a Painted Lady. Unfortunately it didn't stop but Larkhill is now back in my good books!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 14-Jun-14 09:10 PM GMT

LOL! Green Hairstreaks **still** raise your pulse to this day, Wurzel!!

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jun-14 10:24 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, just catching up again after a trip up north.

Sorry to hear about the incident with your car but glad you got the Green Hairstreak. Isn't it strange how a little green butterfly can suddenly put a different perspective on things, and we try to convince people that we are not a little touched 😊😄

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Mike Robinson, 15-Jun-14 07:48 AM GMT

Some more nice pictures

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 15-Jun-14 05:25 PM GMT

Very nice Adonis shots Wurzel and you have my sympathy too about your car – hope you get it sorted out.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Jun-14 10:18 PM GMT

Cheers David 😊 After the torture Greenstreaks put me through a few years ago they are always special to me now. When I find them in a new place it's better than finding a Long-tailed Blue 😲 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 When I tried to convey my joy about that Greenstreak to my work colleagues the looks they gave me worried me greatly, so much so that I spent the whole day nervously watching out for the 'men in white coats' 😊 😊

Cheers Mike for your kind comment 😊

Cheers Pauline 😊 The garage told me that my excess has been waived when they came to assess the repairs needed so hopefully that's it sorted 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-14 10:26 AM GMT

08-06-2014 Martin Down

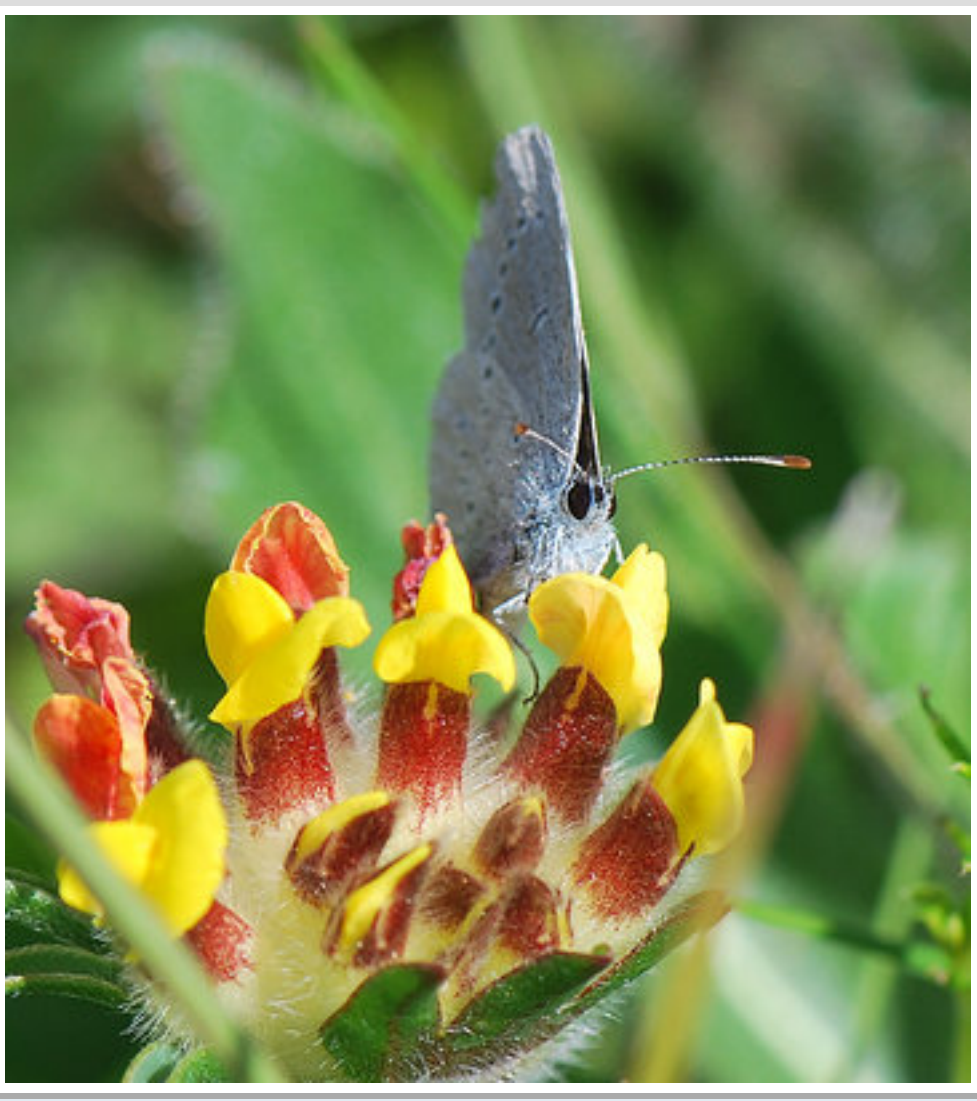
Things conspired against me over the weekend. My sister was heading home and once she'd gone my wife finally succumbed to the tiredness so Philzoid and I had to scale back our plans. Well I did, Philzoid made three trips in one day! Anyway we all ended up at Sillens Lane car park and set off along the path which transects Bokerley. A Green-veined White flew by and a Blue as we walked along and then up near the tunnel things started appearing with 4 Small Tortoiseshells nectaring and chasing each other about.



As we entered the tunnel hoping for Small Blues four male Common Blues bundled into each other annoying the hell out of a territorial Brown Argus and then it went all quiet on the butterfly front. There were plenty of moths about but it wasn't until we'd gotten to near the far end of the tunnel that we saw any more butterflies – a bevy of Speckies.



Once out of the tunnel we revelled in the heat and started seeing more butterflies with Small Blues around, a few more Brown Argus and Red Admiral which shot by carried on the stiff breeze. We soon reached the hot spot and so set the girls camp up so that we could head off and have a look around. There were butterflies around everywhere we looked with Small Blues, Brown Argus, Small Heath, Common Blues, a Green Hairstreak, a Peacock and Brimstones. There were also some nice orchids - with white Spotted, Butterfly, Bee and Pyramidal.





I then confessed to Philzoid why I'd suggested both Martin Down and also this hotspot. Last year this little area proved great for Cloudies, with one little area in particular serving as a basking/roosting space. Also I'd seen Cloudies laying eggs on the site so as Cloudies had been seen at a few other sites I reasoned that this would be a good place to start trying to catch up the Yellow one. As I moved towards that great little spot I clocked a mustard yellow butterfly, the black wing tips visible as it motored forward and back at the edge of the small terrace. Somehow we managed to follow it and there were a few fleeting, hopeful and in the end lucky shots of my first Clouded Yellow of 2014. Hopefully it'll be the first of many 😊 .



Quick grab a record shot!



After this encounter I wandered round more content to get shots of the Orchids and the odd Small Blue as I was still elated to find the Cloudie right where I reckoned one would be. The girls kept pointing butterflies out to us as they'd gone on ahead so it's obvious that we're training them well.





All too soon it was time for us to say our goodbyes and leave the Philzoids to return to the chores and a rested wife. Hopefully the Large Blues will start flying soon so that we can make another proper big trip!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-14 11:14 PM GMT

Larkhill 09-06-2014

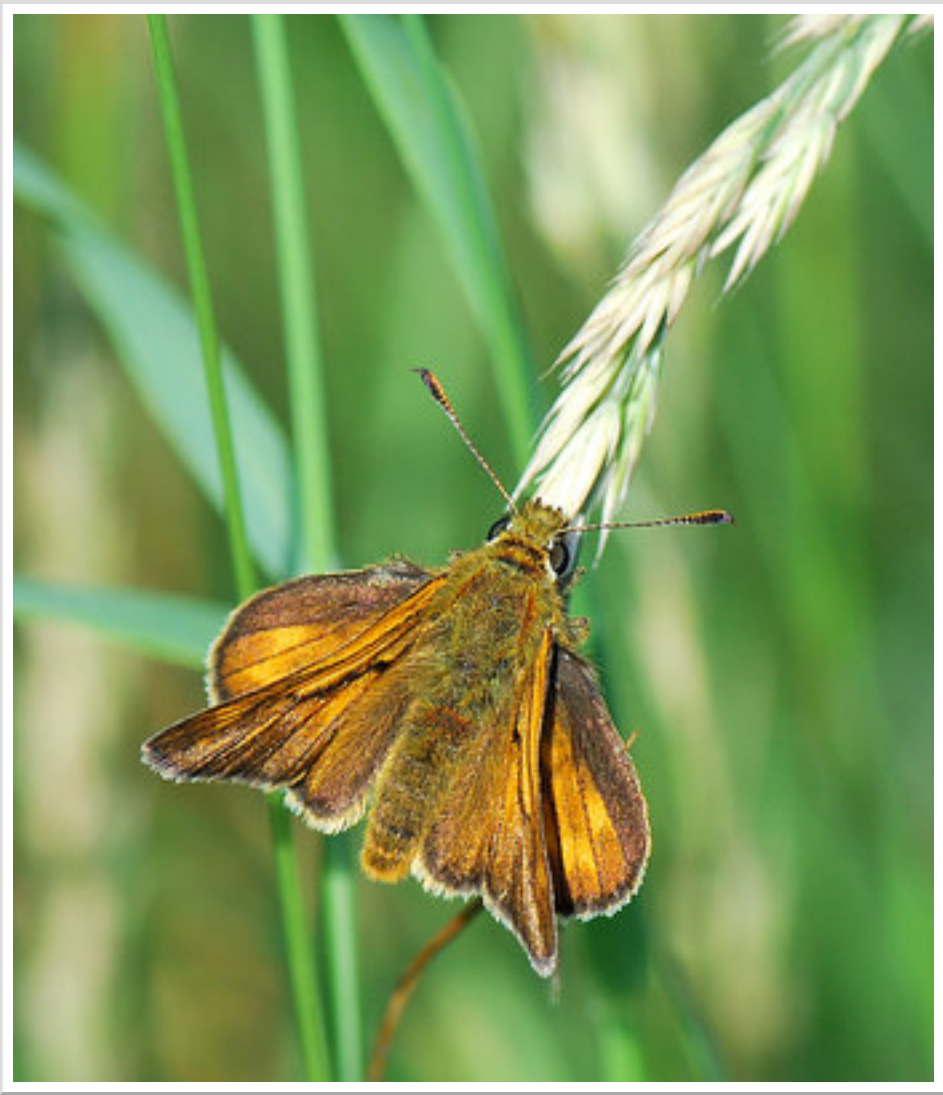
After finding my first Larkhill Brown Argus here last week I thought I'd better stop in and see if I could find any more. As I wandered down the Westbound path I couldn't see any little flags flying in the breeze although a Small Heath did it's usual trick of flying across the path, landing in the long grass and disappearing totally from view. I followed this one when it went up a second time and discovered how they manage their disappearing act. After landing amongst the long grass as I approached it just let go of the stem and dropped down amongst the deep cover of the long grass. As I headed back to the car my first Larkhill Large Skipper hove into view and landed just long enough for me to fire off a few shots.



Later in the afternoon I stopped in on the way home to see if the warmer temperatures would have brought out the Brown Argus. It definitely seemed to - I didn't need to even head up either of the paths as the little area around the flag pole held 3 Small Heaths, two Large Skippers and four Brown Argus. They were a delight to see and must have freshly emerged as the contrast between the fresh chocolate brown and the vibrant orange was delightful.



A quick stop off in the morning saw a bit more of the same that I've been seeing recently with a brace each Small Heath and Large Skipper. I didn't try for the Small Heaths as they were either disappearing into the undergrowth or were bombing away up the path never to be seen again. However the blue skies and gorgeous light meant that I was finally able to try for the golden glow Large Skipper shots. There is something about the morning light that just seems to bring out the range of colours on Large Skippers that greyer weather hides.

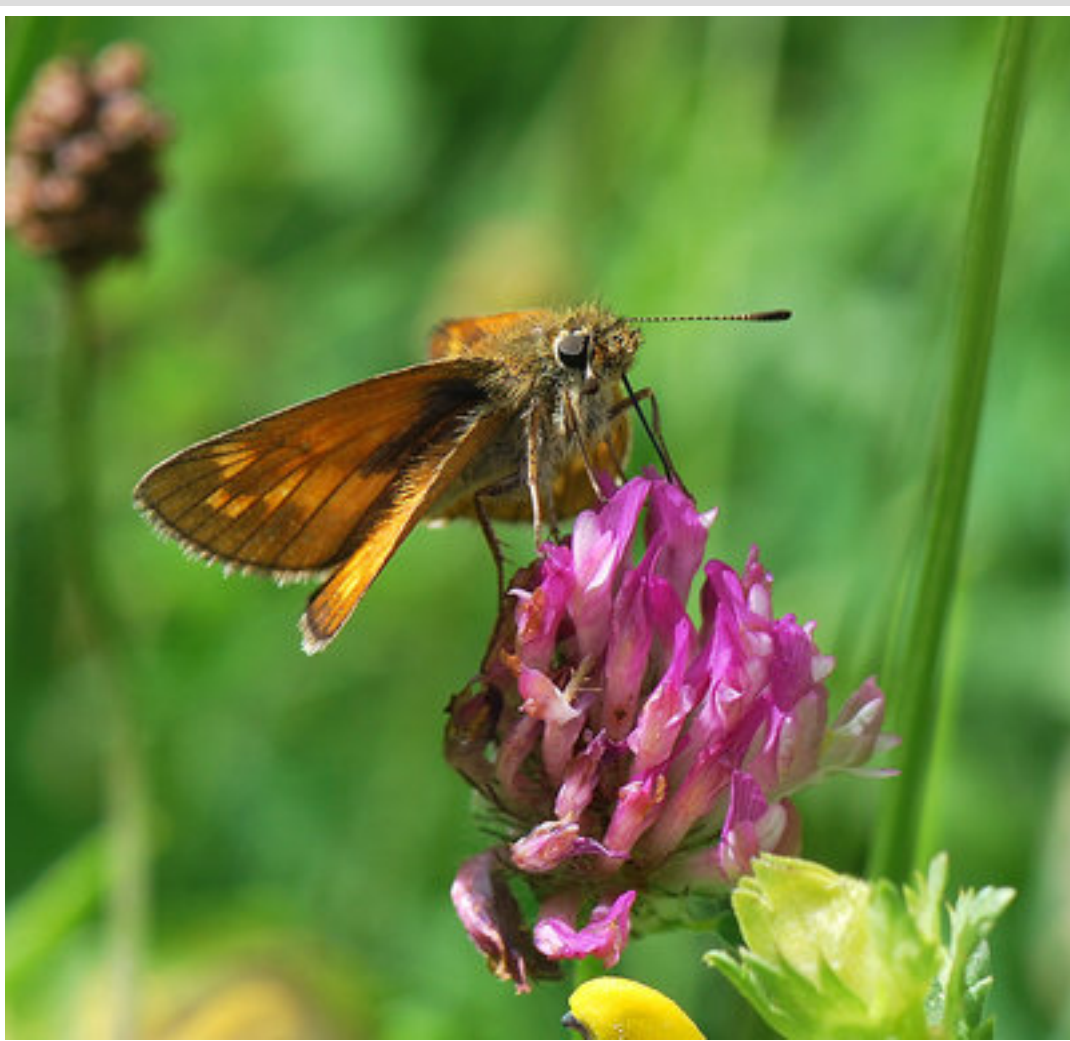


The Devenish 10-06-2014

On the way home I headed to the Devenish as I've noticed that others have seen their first Meadow Browns so I thought it was about time that I did too. A Red Admiral was sunning itself in the car park and from a distance it looked doped out by the sun - but it wasn't, as soon as I actually took a step on the gravel it was gone. Still, nice to see though. I made my way up to the meadow and started scanning around. A few grey blurs turned out to be a Grizzled Skippers. They were pretty worn but still feisty scarping with other for a certain spot in the sun. I waited for the fight to finish and then took a shot of the victor.



Also in the Meadow were a Dingy and a couple of Small Heath, erupting from the grass and zipping away towards the far end of the meadow. My first Meadow Brown flapped up lazily and then gained height and was gone up the hillside. Instead of chasing it I settled for watching a Large Skipper as it was taking nectar.



Up on the slopes a couple more Small Heath were in evidence as well as two very worn Adonis. I'm always surprised how quickly they go from looking resplendent to dishevelled, it must be moving around amongst the long grasses rubbing against the stems and leaves. I didn't get to the Brown Argus

side as I was getting short of time so I thought that I better get back down to have a crack at the pesky Meadow Brown. I managed to relocate it, at least I thought it was the one I'd previously seen as shortly after getting my first record shot a second Meadow Brown took off. They are so hard to pin down at this time of the year when they're looking their best.



Well job done I headed back to the car park and briefly watched a Specklie having a flick around. Another tally mark made Marbled Whites and Ringlets can't be far behind now...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 17-Jun-14 12:40 AM GMT

Great Clouded Yellow shots Wurzel and lovely shots of many other species too, looks like Wiltshire is the place to be at the moment 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-14 10:28 PM GMT

Cheers Mike - it's all starting to kick off here now! 😊

Larkhill 11-06-2014

My PD may get a little out of sync as after this stop off at I went on a road trip which will take another post and so doesn't really fit in with the next stop off posting. So get to get to it...

This was quite a quiet stop off in glorious early morning sunshine. As usual up the Northbound path I was greeted by a brace of Small Heath erupting from the longer grass. I decided not to challenge them and left them to disappear off. A male Large Skipper was sunning itself and was so intent that he didn't even flick an antenna.



On the way back to the car I found a female Common Blue, probably only my second female Common Blue of the year and the first that I've seen that hasn't been attached to a male in mid cop. This lady looked a little tired so hopefully all her kids have left home and then next year there will be more blue boys and girls.





Larkhill 12-06-2014

After the busy, busy day yesterday (not posted yet) it was nice to get back into the usual routine of just strolling along the North and West bound paths in the cool morning air. After the huge range of species I saw yesterday I came down to earth with a bit of a bump as I saw only three butterflies from 2 species this morning. One was a Large Skipper and the other two were Small Heath who were at either ends of the spectrum of wear. The first along the North path was a real old timer with the fine graduation of markings gone, scales missing and nicks in the wing tips. The second on the West path was fresh out of the box and was a joy to see it was vibrant by comparison.





Once at work I thought I'd have a bit of a look around and get back to my 'transect'. So I walked the grounds at break time and as the year 11's have gone I can keep a closer eye on butterflies and not the smokers. However the butterflies don't seem to have realised so I managed to see only a single Small Tortoiseshell and a Green-veined White.

At lunch I walked the usual route and I saw my first Small Tortoiseshell about half way along the field. It wasn't until I got to the back path that I started adding to the total. First up was a Green-veined White and then a "Work" first, a Brown Argus just over the wire fence in the neighbouring field. I couldn't get too close but managed to lean over and hold the camera in roughly the right direction and click.



Further along the path a Brimstone flew by and then a Red Admiral but I didn't see any more butterflies until the end of the path when I encountered 5 Small Torts in quick succession, possibly the offspring of some of the huge numbers that I saw here in early spring.



I was glad to have reacquainted myself with the work transect again, especially adding a new species to the list. I couldn't get out on the way home as I was facing a two hour meeting 😞 still there's always tomorrow 😊 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 18-Jun-14 10:50 PM GMT

I really like the Brown Argus snapped in "lean over the fence and point" mode. Lots of context and atmosphere and much more to remember the day by. Great stuff, Wurzel – I really mustn't neglect my "work" patch either. 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Jun-14 12:54 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 You'll have to let me know how you manage to get to all the different sites as well as keeping up with your local patch and keeping up to date with your PD! I'm finding that there aren't enough hours in teh day at the moment 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 19-Jun-14 11:20 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I wish you and Philzoid the very best for tomorrow 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

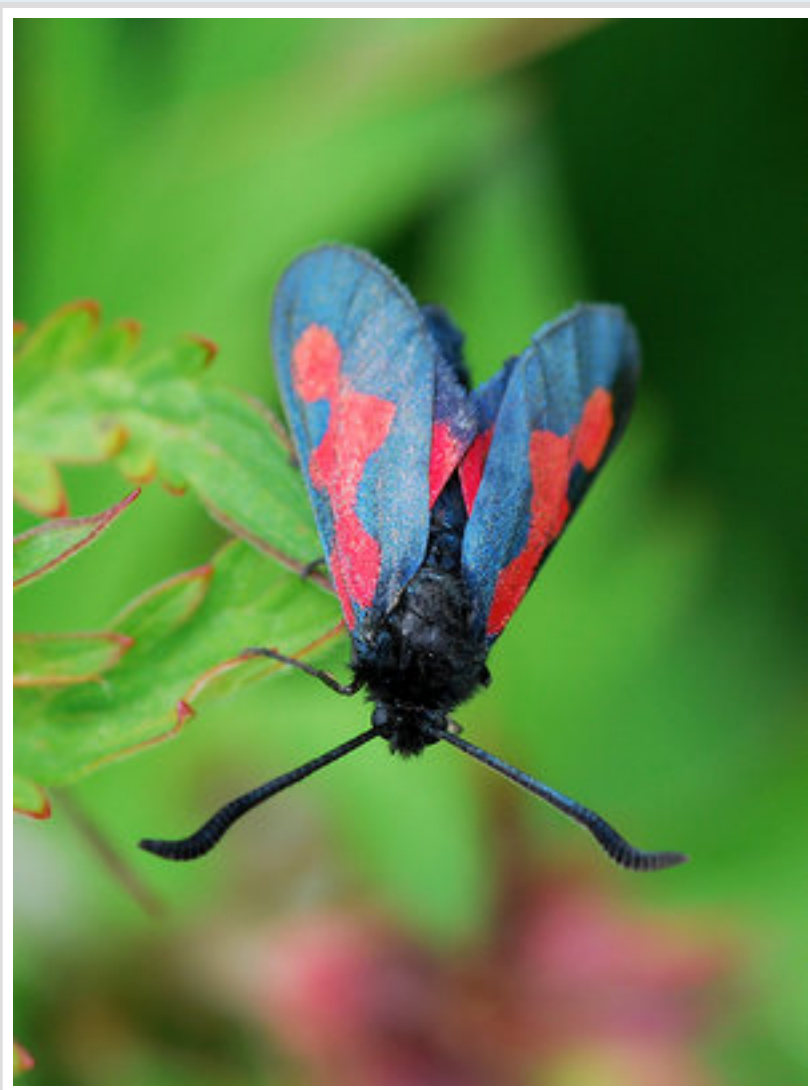
by Wurzel, 19-Jun-14 11:21 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 I think Sunday is the day we're going for Large Blue, I've never seen one before so it'll be interesting to make some observations of something different, that's if we see one...

11-06-2014 The way to Bath

A little over a week ago I had to make my final trip to Bath University for the last ever PGCE Science Mentor Meeting. Due to the wonder that is Gove 😡 and a University that is hungry for exposure this fantastic course which was deemed as Outstanding by OfSTED, brought money into the University and had a fantastic staff was to be shut down. It was a case of "it's definitely ain't broke so let's destroy it" 😞😞. In short it was a sad day but it was to be made bearable by a last get together with the Uni Tutors – a chance to say farewells and wish them well.

So I made my preparations for being out for the rest of the day and set off across the Vale of Pewsey. I'd gotten as far as the outskirts of the first village outside of Pewsey when I realized that there as somewhere that I'd forgotten to visit before my departure so spying a lay-by with a track leading away from the road and prying eyes I pulled in. It looked like a promising track and so I grabbed my camera just in case and set out to find a bush away from the road. On the way I spooked a Green-veined White but I had for once had more pressing matters to attend to. On the return trip to the car I did stop once or twice – the first time for a confluent 5-Spot Burnett and the second time as I'd stumbled across my first female Large Skipper of the year.





Relieved I set off again and made surprisingly good time through Devizes and then Melksham and as I wasn't going across Bath but to a venue at Bathampton I turned the SATNAV on. It was showing that I was going to arrive 15 minutes or so early and so at a likely looking spot I pulled in and had a quick walk around. I'd found myself by a gold course so took a brief stroll up and down the public footpath paying particular attention to the 'Rough'. A Red Admiral did a fly-by as did a Clouded Silver moth. I found one of the Long Horn beetles that Jack/Paul recently featured in his PD and there were Spotted Orchids (I think they are) all over the rough. The Large Skippers seemed to like them but not my second Meadow Brown which was very frustrating as it would flutter around looking like it would land, only to pick up speed again and then disappear deep into the cover. I was getting dangerously close to 'trespassing' so grumbling about "bl%dy Meadow Browns" I got back into the car and then set off.





The venue had a fantastic garden so before I went in and greeted everyone I had a quick look around but despite eh great look there was only a single Speckle on view amongst the multitude of Banded Demoiselles and the occasional Large Red Damselfly. One of the male BDs had a white marking on it's wings which made t even more striking when in flight.





I felt quiet sombre on the way home as I've worked with Bath Uni for the last 7 years now the era had come to an end 😞 . On the way back I reached a very familiar roundabout so I made a quick stop-off to cheer myself up 😊 ...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 20-Jun-14 12:18 AM GMT

Can't imagine where you mean, Wurzel! 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Willow, 20-Jun-14 11:41 PM GMT

I just don't know how you find the time to produce such good PD reports and also manage to produce such good photographs to support them Wurz....I'm going to book you up for some tips on how to do it 😄

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Wurzel

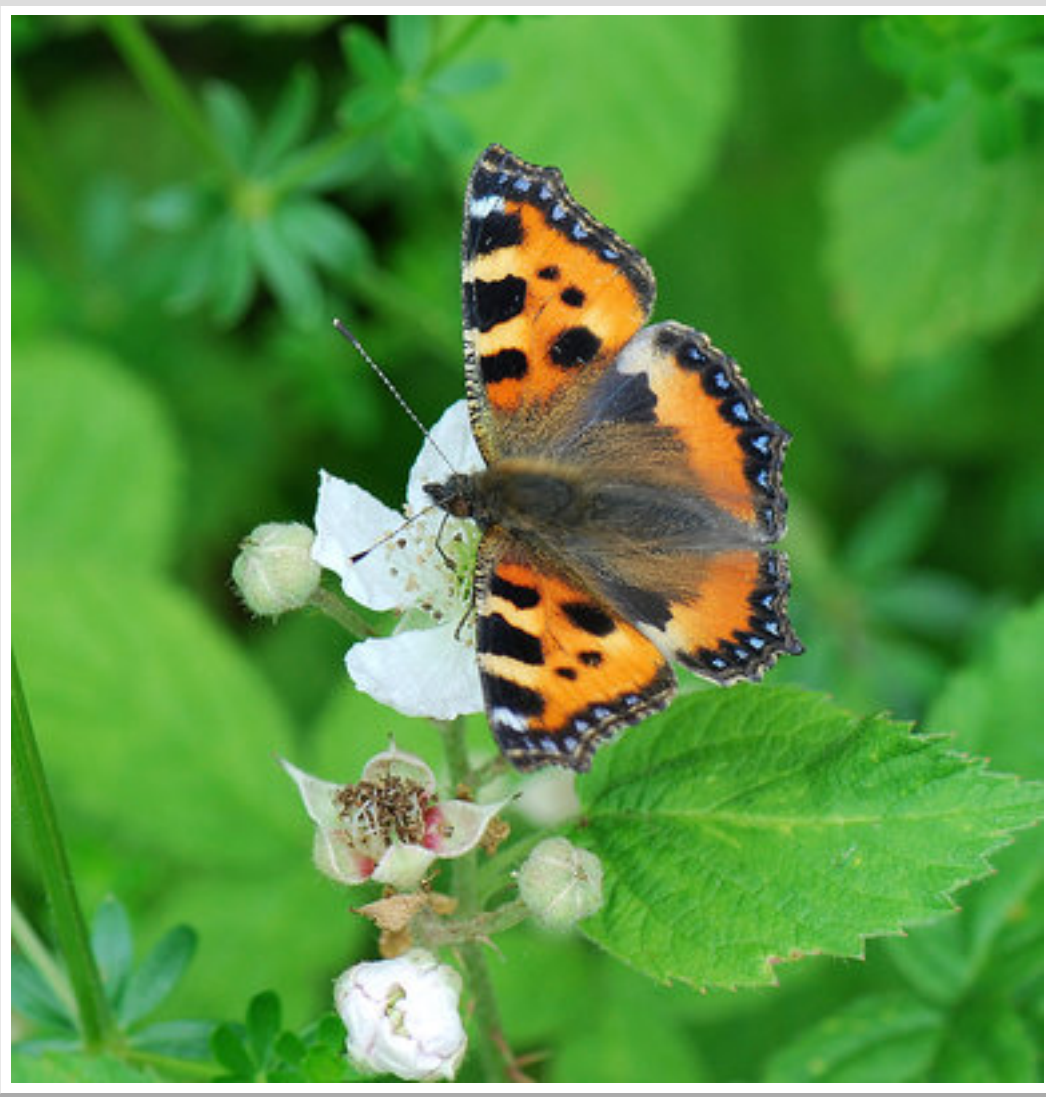
by Wurzel, 21-Jun-14 08:00 AM GMT

Cheers Dave - I think you'd guessed right 😊😄

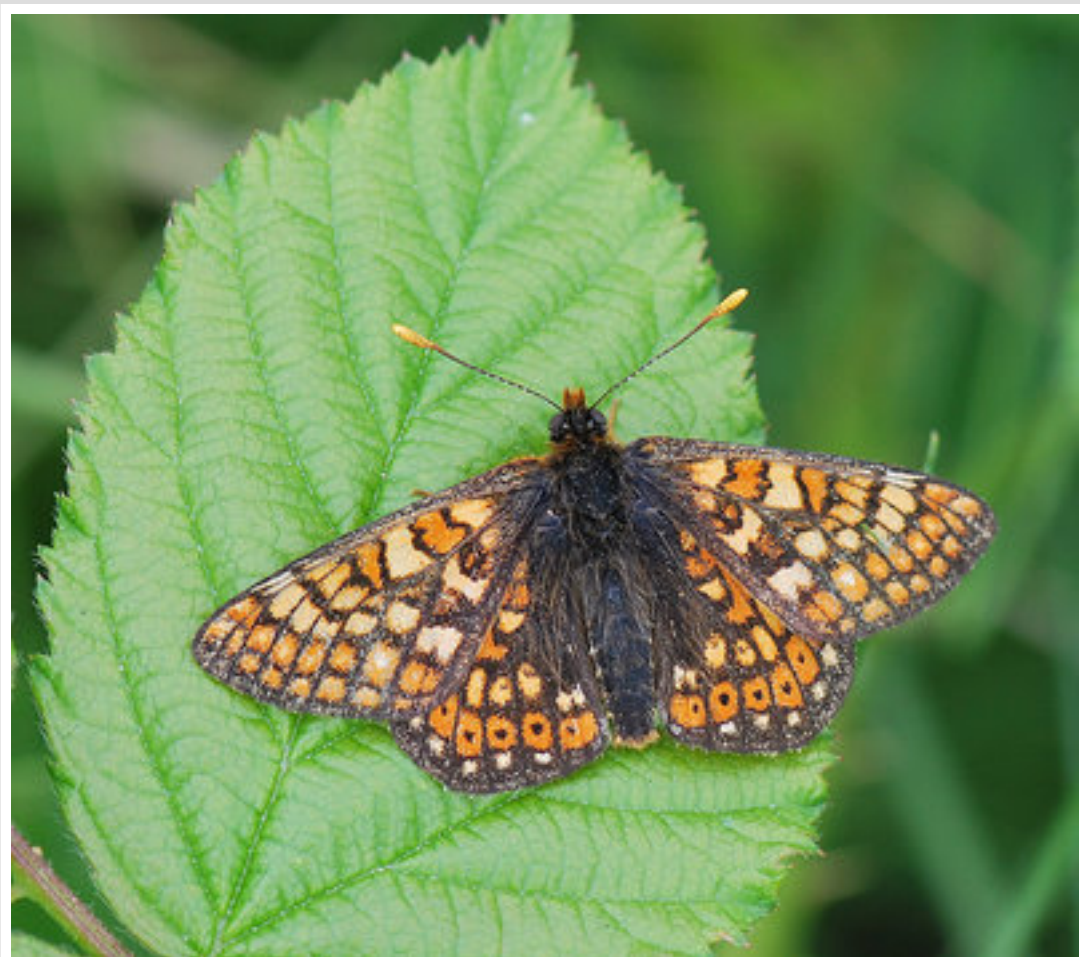
Cheers Willow 😊 I'm not sleeping much and it seems that when I'm not working or behind the lens I'm in front of the screen 😊😄

11-06-2014 Marshie Site

As soon as I got out of the car I felt my mood rise and it went up even more when a lovely fresh Small Tortoiseshell flew along the hedge and beckoned me to follow it. I approached cautiously as I thought it would be flighty but it just got on with taking nectar.



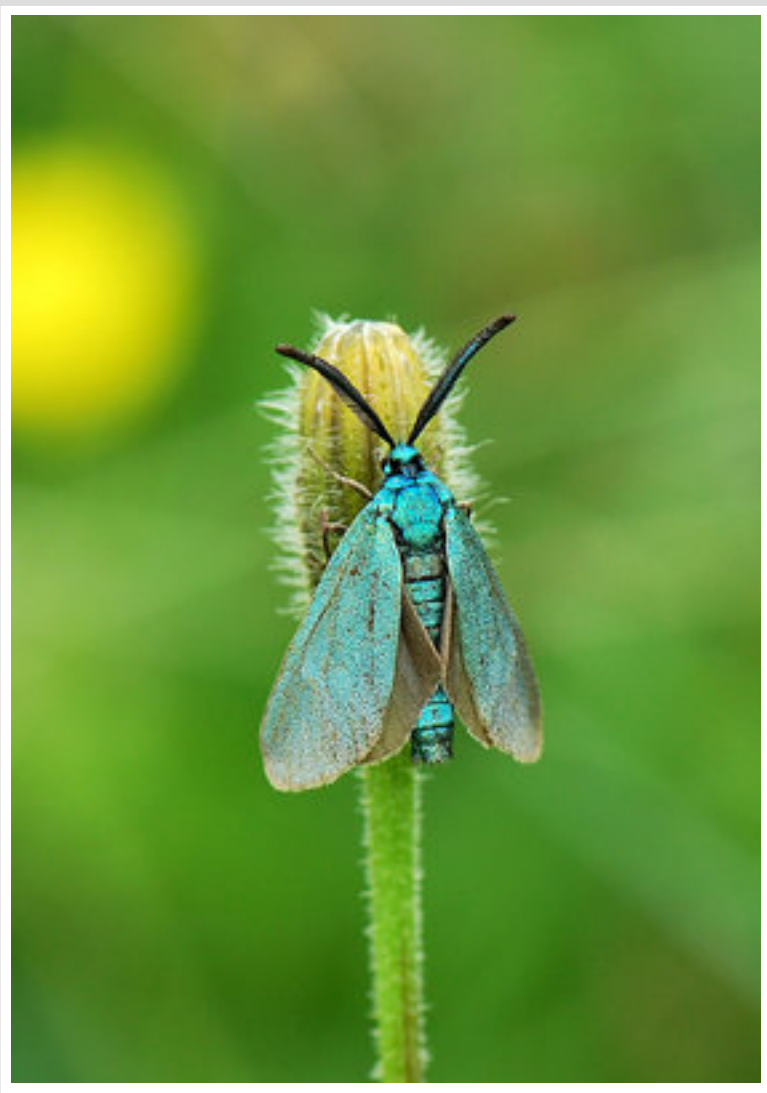
I then ran up the side of the hill to get to the hollow and once there it was a similar scene to what had greeted me on previous visits although by now things were looking past their best. The Marshies in particular don't age well and most were living up to their old name of Greasy Fritillary. It was interesting to note that the larger rectangular block near the inner edge of the fore wing seems to become two or three smaller blocks as it wears first. Also they lose scales from the blocks of colour giving them a pixelated appearance at times. Others that have passed through this stage look translucent and gleam when the light catches them and they seem even more intent on taking nectar than when freshly emerged.





Further on round there were all the usual suspects with Large Skippers replacing their tired Grizzled and Dingy cousins and looking the freshest of all the species. Even the blues had frayed edges and didn't seem to glow as much. But even though they appeared worn and torn the sheer biodiversity of the site still astounds. I found yet another confluent 5-Spot Burnett and added Foresters to my mothing. Walls were absent from this visit, they must be between broods and instead any fast flying, zipping orangey butterflies turned out to be more Small Tortoiseshells.





I realised that I better make my way back to the car and then home and bumped into a fellow enthusiast on the way back at the hollow so stopped for a quick chat. Every time I went to go something would appear to entice my attention and so it was actually a god deal later than expected before hitting the road proper. This road trip was fun although next time I need to try it with work being sandwiched in the middle...
Have a goodun

Wurzel
9 ST, 4 CB, 14 AB, GS 2, 3 LS, 40 MF, 5 SH, SB 1

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 21-Jun-14 08:27 PM GMT

Love the Tortoiseshell Photo's Wurzal, looks like you've been really busy great Pic's Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-14 11:38 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Everything seems to be happening at once now ti's a job in itself trying to keep up with it all 😊😊

Five Rivers 14-06-2014

I managed to find a spare hour on Saturday between the usual madness of swimming lessons, shopping and helping break up concrete in my brother in-laws garden. So having gotten this wonderful 60 minutes in front of me I didn't know where to go - Middle Street, The Devenish or Five Rivers. I went for the later as it's that time of year when the banks could be awash with butterflies.

I parked and rushed across towards the small spinney to check out the thistle patch which held 4 Small Tortosieshells but I was after other things so numbers noted I made my way to the first of the banks. As I walked up the hill everything felt right for lots of butterflies and there on the first bank were indeed lots of butterflies. It was a glorious sight - in one glance I'd added three more species to my Year Tally - Small Skipper, Marbled Whites and Ringlets. The whole bank was covered in butterflies; one would take off which would upset two others, some would land which others didn't like and so all would take off and spiral upwards or chase each other across the side of the hill. A tired old Brown Argus was having a hard job sorting out the upstart Small Skippers and for once the butterfly that erupted from in front of me wasn't a Small Heath but now could be a Meadow Brown or Ringlet. I felt joyous and after 10 or so minutes in awe and wonder I shook myself out of my rapture and got on with the job in hand, first up Ringlets.



I love the way that they appear all velvety early in their flight and also the way that they appear to be black when in flight, brown when their wings are closed and grey/purple when their wings are open and they're basking. Whilst I was focusing on the Ringlets a golden blur became my first photographed Smessex of the year which was pretty obviously a Small (Essex's won't be far behind though). There were an interchangeable pair - one would buzz off elsewhere to be replaced by the second which didn't have a nick in its wing.





I then turned my attention to the Marbs though I wasn't too concerned about them as now I knew that they were about I'd be stopping at Woodhenge over the next week or so where they are easier to photograph.



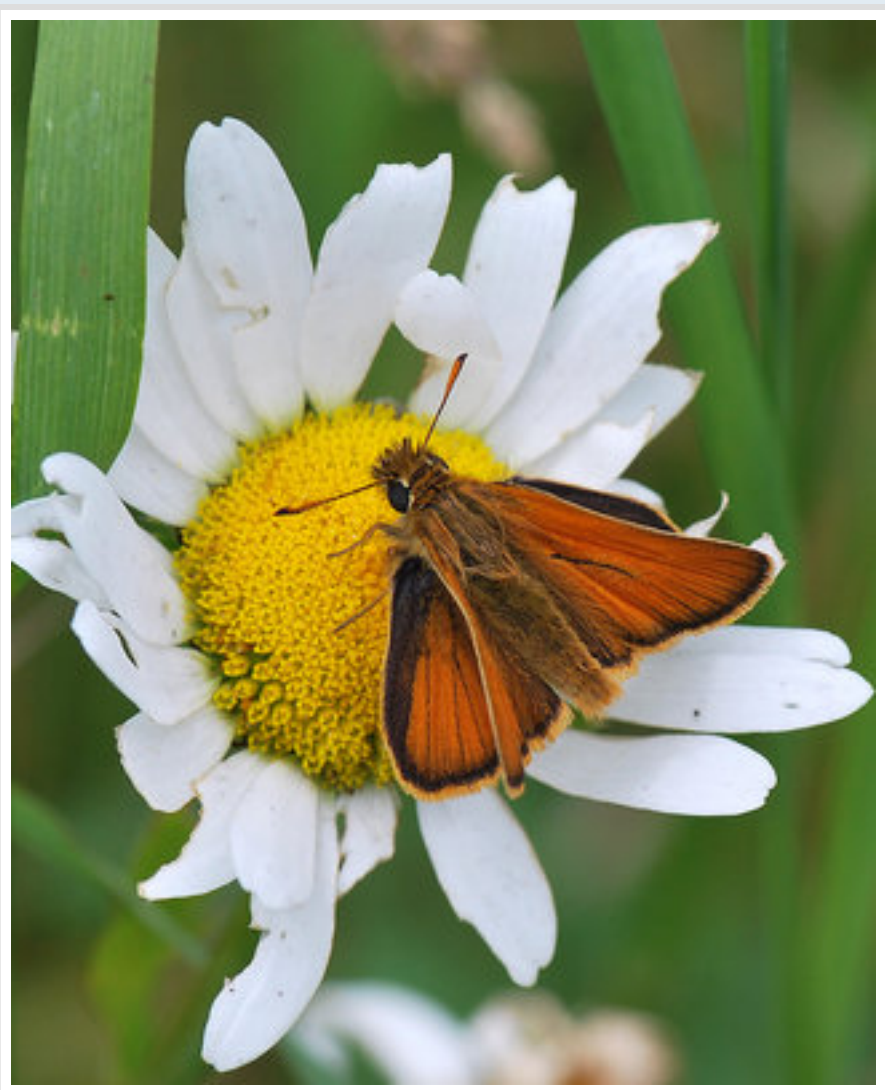
There were also Small Heath, Common Blues (3 males and a female), a solitary Brown Argus and Meadow Browns a plenty but I focused on the three key species I'd come to see so I decided to check the second bank which had more of the same.



The lower edges of the banks were more shaded and cooler and the grasses were reaching over my head but there were the occasional Ringlet or Meadow Browns here as well as Banded Demoiselles.



I then checked out the banks again and it seemed that the best place was the first bank that I'd come to - whilst everything else was present on the other two they were in greater numbers on the first. This will change during the late summer when the second bank becomes the most productive due to the large Buddleia which has fed 7 different species in one sitting before now.





Time up I wandered dazed and happy back to the car, an afternoon of hard labour awaiting me. I just can't get enough of the Smessex Skippers so perhaps tomorrow I should go for a second Thymelicus?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 22-Jun-14 12:54 AM GMT

Gorgeous skipper photos! 😊👍

Re: Wurzel

by CJB, 22-Jun-14 10:08 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Your reports are as enjoyable as ever!

My tally at home now is up to 16 species which I can't believe are all in the garden, with Ringlet and Large Skipper being the new arrivals. Keeping my fingers crossed for a DGF.

I just wanted to say that after you were kind enough to point me towards Bentley Wood, that if you can make the trip, you really should go to Daneway Bank at Sapperton; it is amazing. If you do plan to go let me know and I will give you some pointers 😊

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jun-14 10:10 PM GMT

Great reports as usual Wurzel, I too have a soft spot for fresh Ringlets, love the white fringe against the soft velvety brown 😊.

Nice Small Skippers, almost glowing orange 😊 Saw my first one on Sunday, just the one so just getting started by me, the Essex are usually a week or two behind them around here. We are going to be in Weymouth for family hols with my daughter and grandson next week so by the time I am back I should be having trouble telling them apart again 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-14 11:24 PM GMT

Cheers Katrina 😊 They were lovely and fresh 😊

Cheers CJB 😊 Cheers for the offer of info about Daneway I'll have to look into which is closer Collard or Daneway 😊 Good luck with the garden list 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I hope you have a great time in Dorset and enjoy a spot of Grockling 😊 It will soon be time to crick your neck and search out the Smessex 😊

Slop Bog 15-06-2014

Having been out and seen three new species for the year yesterday and also recently completed a bit of a road tour I planned to use Father's Day to combine both of these things to do a bit of 'mopping up'. I'd read on the Dorset Branch website that Silver Studs had been reported from Slop Bog, Lulworth Skippers had been out for a few weeks and Dark Green Fritillary had also been notched up by others so I set out to hopefully bag all three.

Once we got to Ferndown I reminded the girls about the need for Tick checks as I remember that this site is crawling with them and then we set off

through the wood, towards the boardwalk and on to the open heather. On arrival the first butterfly of the day was a Silver Stud fluttering lazily across the Cotton Grass strewn bog which is normally home to the Dragonflies. Excellent we'd been on site for less than 2 minutes and I was already one up for the yearly Tally. It's actually quite hard to write about the morning in the proper chronological order as it's such a small site. A brief saunter round and then you'd end up back where you started encountering the same things and possibly the exact same individual. So in no order...

After the first sightings once we go to the aptly named 'Silver Studded Heath' they were all around us. The girls set up camp and I sauntered around reacquainting myself with these delightful little butterflies. When fresh they look so tidy and smart like they're dressed in a tuxedo and the colours that appear as they shift in the light are a joy to see. There were one or two slightly scruffier ones around with either margins frayed and worn or the smooth greyness of the ground colour of the under wing looking more flaky even though they'd only been reported recently. Mind you hanging around on the scratchy heather can be particularly good for scale maintenance.







We only saw one other species of butterfly the whole time we were there mainly that I have failed in my personal Target of seeing a Small Tortoiseshell at every site I visit. It was the now ubiquitous Large Skipper although here were only a couple around.



Near the base camp I found a freshly emerged or emerging Silver Stud which I kept coming back to throughout the course of the morning. I saw it low down nestled deep in the Heather and at first I thought it was a female as another older looking male was trying to barge into it as it climbed up the stem to the top of the heather. Then when I realised that it was a male from the glimpses of blue as it moved it's wigs I realised that my hypothesis was

wrong. I then noticed that the wings seemed folded and ridged so thought that it was still drying it's wings. Once the other male had gone and left it be (perhaps it was trying to help out a pal?) it sat at the top of the Heather until just before I left giving more evidence to it being a new emergee.





Towards the end of our visit I finally saw two females. Only one of them wanted to stop and so I followed the 3 disturbances and leave it maxim. Luckily during the times between flying it posed quite nicely first showing off the livid blue studs, then the oily sheen of the open wings before finishing off with a nice backlit "stained glass" shot.





Also around were various Dragon and Damselflies and despite being n a butterfly road trip I did take s bit of time out to try and get some shots of the 'monster of Slop Bog' which I think is an Emperor Dragonfly?





So one species in the bag we packed up and headed off to Lulworth Cove...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-14 11:43 PM GMT

Lulworth Cove 15-06-2014

Once we got down to the Cove I herded the girls down the main street straight towards the Bindon Hill path. I was looking forward to the girls seeing the Bucket Tree again - but that was gone! As was the path to Bindon Hill, the one by the ice cream kiosk. There had been a cliff collapse and now it wasn't deemed safe - mind you if I hadn't of had the girls I might have given it a closer inspection but as it was didn't want to drag them all the way back up the hill to the Heritage Centre to then make them climb the hill.

So instead we worked our way along to my usual site approaching it from above this time as it was easier to get down to the little hotspot than climb up from the beach. Almost as soon as we got there two males started having a scrap. Brill the second target species for the day sorted. They seem to be highly territorial as after seeing off any other butterflies that flew too far into their airspace they kept returning to the same blade of grass to perch and watch out for the next invader.



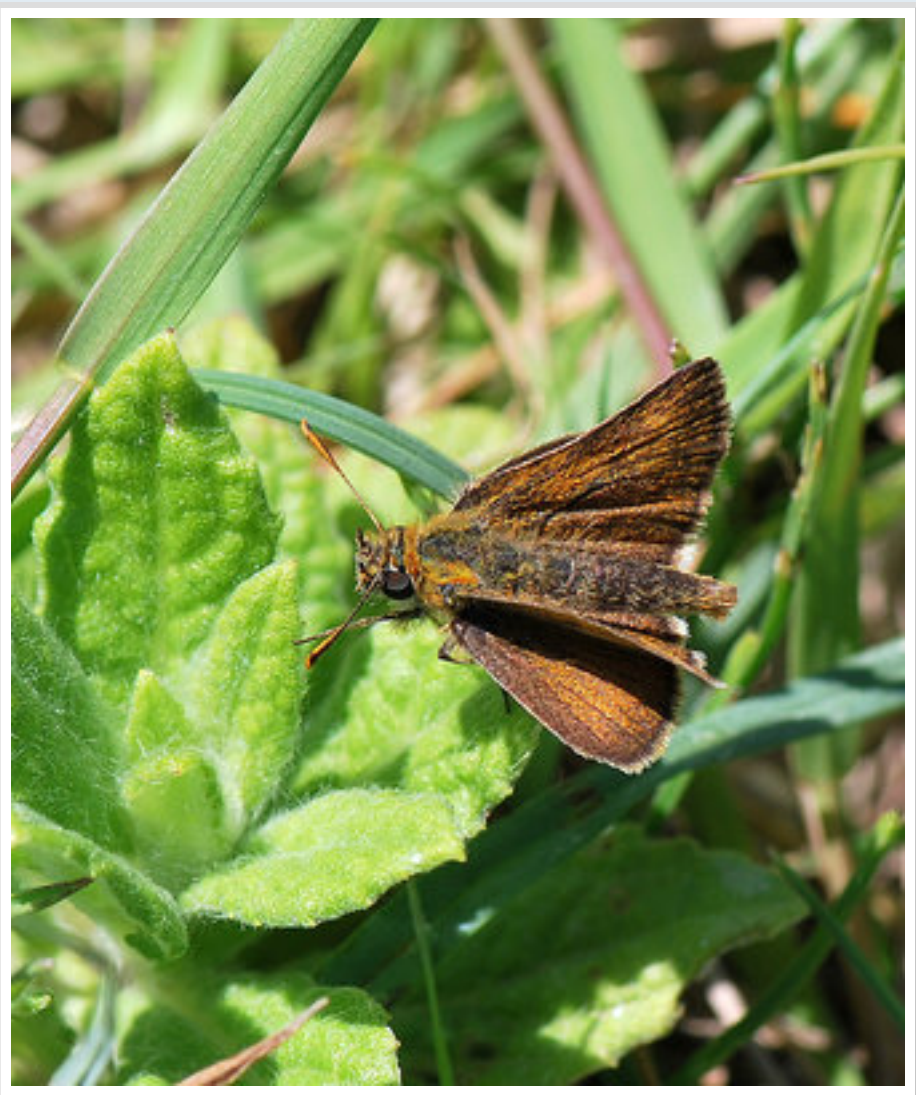


I had a quick walk up and around on the little paths that criss-cross this side of the Cove hoping for Wall or (even better) a DGF but it was so hot nothing was about apart from the odd mad Large or Lulworth Skipper. In fact some butterflies were actively seeking shade 😊



Once back at the hot spot things started happening the two males were still occupying their territories but they were joined by a Dingy Skipper, a Small Tortoiseshell as well as a few Blues going by. Occasionally the odd Meadow Brown and Marbled White would drift from over the cliff top and tumble down much to the annoyance of the Large Skippers that seem to be everywhere at the moment. There was also a bee/wasp species that I haven't encountered before which I think is a Spider Wasp plus a fantastically calm Mother Shipton.





There was also a Smaworth Skipper – it could ‘just’ be a Small but seems to have very faint traces of the crescent moons which mean that it could be fresh male Lulworth?



We then decided to head back to the car park so I could check around the area at the base of the Durdle Door path. We took the longer route so that the girls could see Stair Hole and there was another Small Skipper round here.



After a brief pit-stop at the car we made our way past lines of Grockles 🤨 (though both my girls are Wiltshire born they are Dorsetian by descent 😊), through the gate and had a bit of a mooch around the lower slopes of the Durdle Door path. There was a nice array of species here with Adonis and Common Blues, Brown Argus, Small Heaths, Meadow Browns, Ringlets, Marbled Whites, Small Torts, Large Skippers and of course good numbers of Target number 2 including a few females.



The girls were by now getting a bit foot sore and tired so I loaded them into the car and we set off home. Hopefully I'll be able to get back here slightly later in the season or possibly try Durlston when we come away camping as I love watching this Dorset speciality! As I drove the familiar by-ways home I suddenly remembered that we would be passing Martin Down... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Willow, 25-Jun-14 08:18 PM GMT

Another couple of fantastic reports Wurz, its great to see you can combine your hobby (obsession 😄) with family days out, your girls will always remember these magical summer days spent butterflying with their Dad 😊 ...as of course will you 😊

Best Wishes,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-14 02:36 PM GMT

Cheers Willow 😊 The great thing about taking my girls out with me, apart from obviously spending time with them, is that I'm out butterflying and earning Brownie points for further butterflying at the same time 😊

Martin Down 15-06-2014

I'd pushed my luck today - both girls, on a road trip, 80 odd miles and in the end I thought I'd push it even more just to see how far I could. So as we

were passing I pulled in at Martin Down for DGFs. After a brief refuel the girls were up for it and so we headed straight off to the hollow and ridge at the start of Bokerley. We waded through the long grass to reach the ridge, my younger daughter as almost totally submerged in a sea of grass and I was nervously scanning around for purple flower heads among the beige. The Knapweed was actually looking scarce so I wasn't too hopeful that there would be any DGFs around, perhaps I'd pushed my luck too far? Still we enjoyed the numerous Large Skippers (seem to be having a really good year) and the Ringlets although Marbled Whites didn't seem as numerous here as elsewhere.

Hold the phone what was that big ginger bugger? Yep my first DGF of 2014, unmistakable - three for three! 😊 There were two here and every now and again a Small Tortoiseshell would have a go at one and off they would both go careering across the grass tops. Eventually after what felt like an age one would return and would move between the small clumps of Knapweed flowers feeding in a frenzied manner and never staying still for an instant. At this time of day the textbook closed wing shot was out of the window so I just enjoyed the fiery glow of this fantastic species.





A short walk along the Ditch also threw up a tired looking Small Copper and another couple of DGFs but there wasn't anything else to add to the day list, just more of the same so we made our weary way back along the ridge to the car, stopping on the way for the occasional glimpse and quick photo of any passing DGFs





There were probably 4 DGFs all the time we were here so it's still early in their emergence and the Knapweed is still thin on the ground- I'll give it a week or two and hopefully there will be many, many more! As for the day a roaring success with three new species for the year tally and so stunning habitats from subtle and cryptic Lowland Heathland to the majesty of Lulworth and on to the gentle rolling Downland - fantastic 😊 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by badgerbob, 26-Jun-14 05:47 PM GMT

Great stuff Wurzel. Regrettably I will be missing many of the species from the West this year again. Hoping you got your Large Blues!!

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jun-14 08:39 PM GMT

Cracking reports and photos Wurzel 😊

Hoping for a few Lulworth Skippers myself next week when(if) I can pretend I am not a Grockle 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 26-Jun-14 09:04 PM GMT

A great set of adventures, Wurzel! Do you ever pop across the road at Martin Down and look for SWF and White Admirals at Kitt's Grave? I visited a few years back with success, but haven't been for a while. I'm pleased your girls are more tolerant of your escapades than my boys are: William in particular can't understand why a 2014 Lulworth Skipper is just as important as the 2013 version. 😊 It's good those Lulworths have such a long season - plenty of time yet to go looking for them. 😊

Can't wait for the next episode...

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Willow, 26-Jun-14 09:56 PM GMT

I think you must be on some type of 'nectar' yourself Wurzel 😊 the amount of butterflying you do you need it 😊

Lovely report as is usually the case.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Wurzel

by CJB, 27-Jun-14 09:01 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,



DGF's galore! I can't seem to find them at the moment but as we are relatively early I am hoping that they will start to appear.

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-14 11:54 PM GMT

Cheers Bob 😊 I'm a fair bit behind on my PD so I can't reveal about any success or lack of on the Large Blue front. 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Good luck with the Lulworths and if you get any hassle for being a Grockle tell them I've made you an honorary Dorsetian for your stay 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 I know where you mean and I went there last year but I haven't been back since, I guess I get spoiled by Bentley Wood 😊 Good luck with the Lulworths, I'm sure you'll pick them up

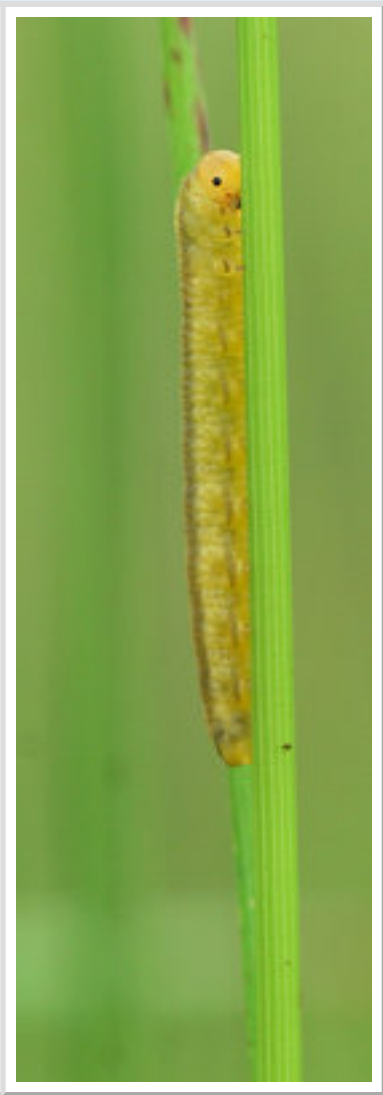
Cheers Bill 😊 I don't know if it's too much coffee or my extra hot Lime Pickle sandwiches that pep me up and keep me going:wink:

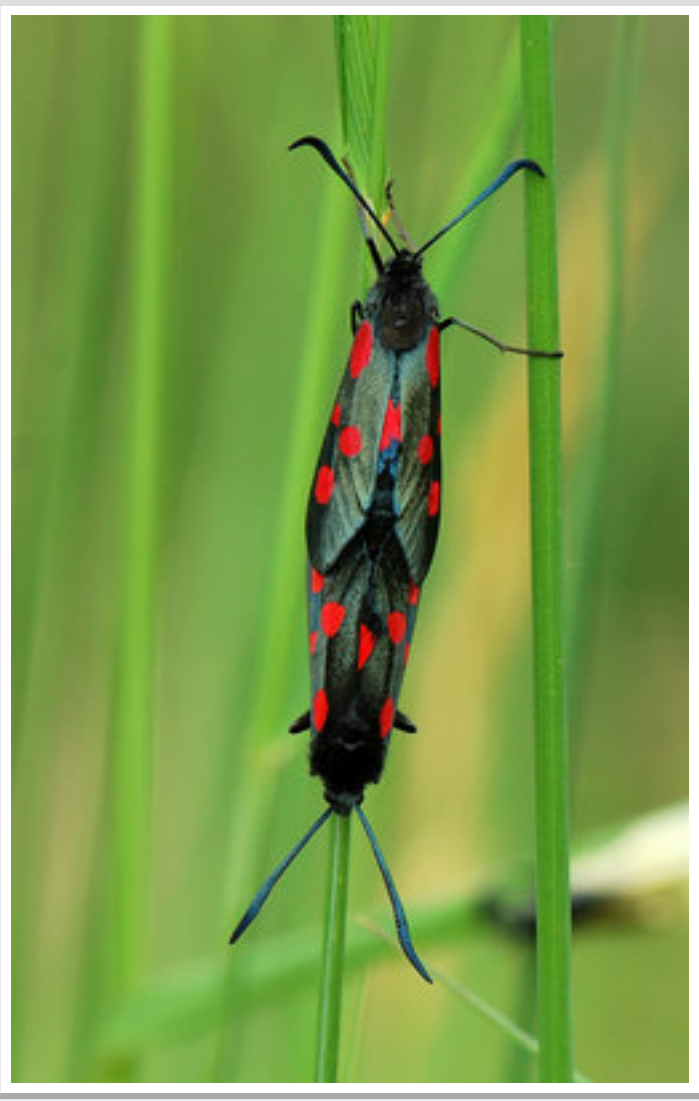
Cheers CJB 😊 I'm sure you'll get bucket loads of DGFs soon

Larkhill 16-06-2014

I realised that midsummer was fast approaching this morning when I found a few vans parked in the lay-by at Larkhill. I remember that last year they were friendly and interested in the wildlife of the area and when they left the place was totally rubbish free - in fact I think they'd taken some of the rubbish that had already been there with them and I was quite looking forward to re-aquainting myself again.

This morning though they were all still tucked up so I had a look around as quietly as possible. The first thing I found was what I think is a Marbled White cat as it had a 'smiley face' which I recall seeing on Badger Bobs PD. Then there were a few 5-spot Burnets locked in a love embrace.



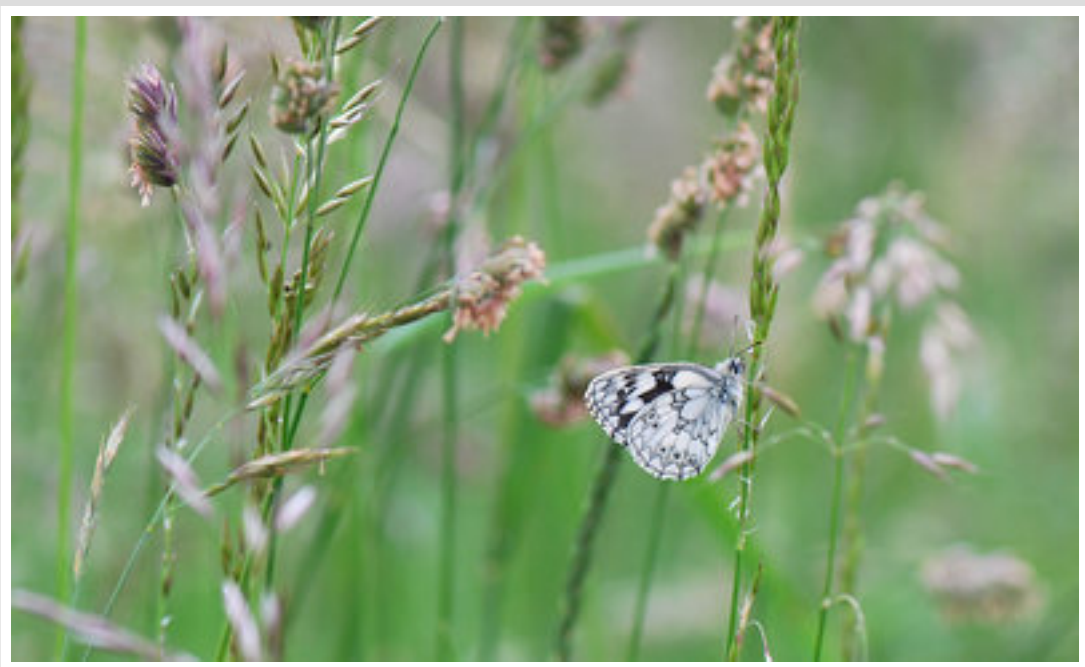


A little way on the path I got a nice two species shot and while I was photographing them I got a little distracted by a neighbouring Ringlet though when I caught the Brown Argus opening her wings out of the corner of my eye I soon paid more attention their way. Especially as the female BA had such pronounced orange lunules.





When I called in on my way home briefly there were now two Large Skippers, five ringlets and no sign of the BA. Instead a Marbled White flapped in amongst the long grass and as it was my first for the area I concentrated over my limited time on that.





I expect that over the next few days the number of vehicles here will start to increase and by about midweek I'll have to think about stopping at another site for a day or two...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 28-Jun-14 05:00 PM GMT

It is hard enough to keep up with the butterflies Wurzel and even harder to keep up with the diaries so apologies that I am a bit behind. You have taken some great shots in your last few posts, in particular I think both Marbled White shots are great and I really enjoyed your account and shots from Lulworth 😊😊

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 29-Jun-14 06:29 PM GMT

I agree with Pauline, everything is moving so fast, emerging butterflies and posts on PD's, which makes it difficult to keep up 😬 I too enjoyed your report and shots from Lulworth 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-14 11:58 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline and Mike for your kind comments 😊 Everything has started to go a little bit crazy at the moment 😬 I just hope that the butterflies don't burn out too quickly...

Larkhill 18-06-2014

After a day spent nursing a migraine with the occasional painful and wistful peep outside of the curtains I was more than ecstatic to wake with only the mildest of twinges in my head. Not because it meant that I could go to work, but because I could stop off on the way to and from work. As I pulled into the lay-by at Larkhill I noticed that the number of Traveller vans had increased to 4 or 5 in preparation for the Solstice at the weekend. As I started up the walk up the North path I was greeted by a comment of "I haven't seen any of those small purple butterflies this year" in a Wolverhampton twang. It was the traveller that I bumped into last year so. He was easy to remember what with all his piercings and facial tattoos but how he remembered me I don't know? Still it was nice to catch up with him again and then I set off up the Northbound path. There were good numbers of 5 Spot Burnett moths emerging and sitting clinging to the grass stems.



A few more steps in and I found a couple of Ringlets, at least 3, the best posed one of which was sitting at perfect kneeling height in a Hawthorn.



Time was ticking by too quickly so it was on to work - honestly one day off and I slip out of practice. On the way home I was informed that they'd seen some of the small purple butterflies which I thought were Small Blues so I set about trying to find them. First butterfly as a Small Tortoiseshell and then I spotted a male Brimstone and Small Heath sitting quite close to each other, both looking tired and worn.





Walking further up the path I came across a female Common Blue but I couldn't get a decent shot as she seemed to be sheltering or hiding in the shade under a leaf. There were also about 8 Ringlets, 4 Large Skippers, a Marbled White and a Mother Shipton that were not stopping for love nor money, completely solar charged. A blue Damselfly actually stayed still longer than the butterflies which is an unusual occurrence.



Wishing all "Have a goodun" I headed off, I think I'll stop off somewhere else in the mornings for the next few days to give them some peace, the last thing anyone wants first thing is to have someone wandering around their garden with a camera. So possibly Woodhenge for Marbled Whites tomorrow...

Then when I got home I had to get my camera out again as a Riband Wave was resting on my door.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-14 10:43 PM GMT

July 2014

Seems to be a bit late now...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Jul-14 01:00 PM GMT

Woodhenge 19-06-2014

I decided to give the travellers a break from my prying lens and turned my attentions towards Woodhenge. The little field there next to the car park always holds good numbers of Marbled Whites and having seen them at Five Rivers and now a Larkhill they should have emerged at this site too. As I pulled off the main road I saw that the car park housed two large Camper vans so it seems that the travellers were here too although it was less populated and they hadn't experienced a bow-tie wearing butterfly photographer yet so I had a few days before the novelty wore off and I became an annoyance.

I headed across the field and the first butterfly of the day was a Small Tortoiseshell which took off from the short grass and then glided across the tops of the taller grass which dominates the second half of the field. Once walking along the thin tracks previously trodden down there were butterflies everywhere with a conservative count of 30 Ringlets and Marbled Whites and about 20 Meadow Brown which don't seem to be as numerous this year as last - or is it that they're just getting going? Before I'd realised it time was almost up I'd been so busy just enjoying the experience. So I leant in took a few snaps to serve as a reminder of the morning.



I also made a quick stop off on the way home after a Parents Consultation Evening to take advantage of the stunning evening light. Despite the later hour it was still pretty warm when I left the car and strolled across the cut grass to the longer grass on the second half of the field. The butterflies weren't really flying and seemed to be settling down for the night. I'd spy one surprisingly well camouflaged amongst the stalks and approach cautiously only for 8 or 9 more Marbled Whites to take off from the same area a bit like a slow motion eruption. This happened two or three times and then I found a way to counter it. I searched my kneeling down on the edge of the path so that my line of sight was the same height as the grass heads, looking for a solitary roosting Marbled White. It was actually quite tricky as they seem to like to roost communally so I 'changed up' again and decided to try and pick off one of the Marbs that was on the edge of the roost. This plan paid off and so I bagged a lovely vanilla and cream female.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

ST 1, R 30, MW 30, MB 20

Re: Wurzel

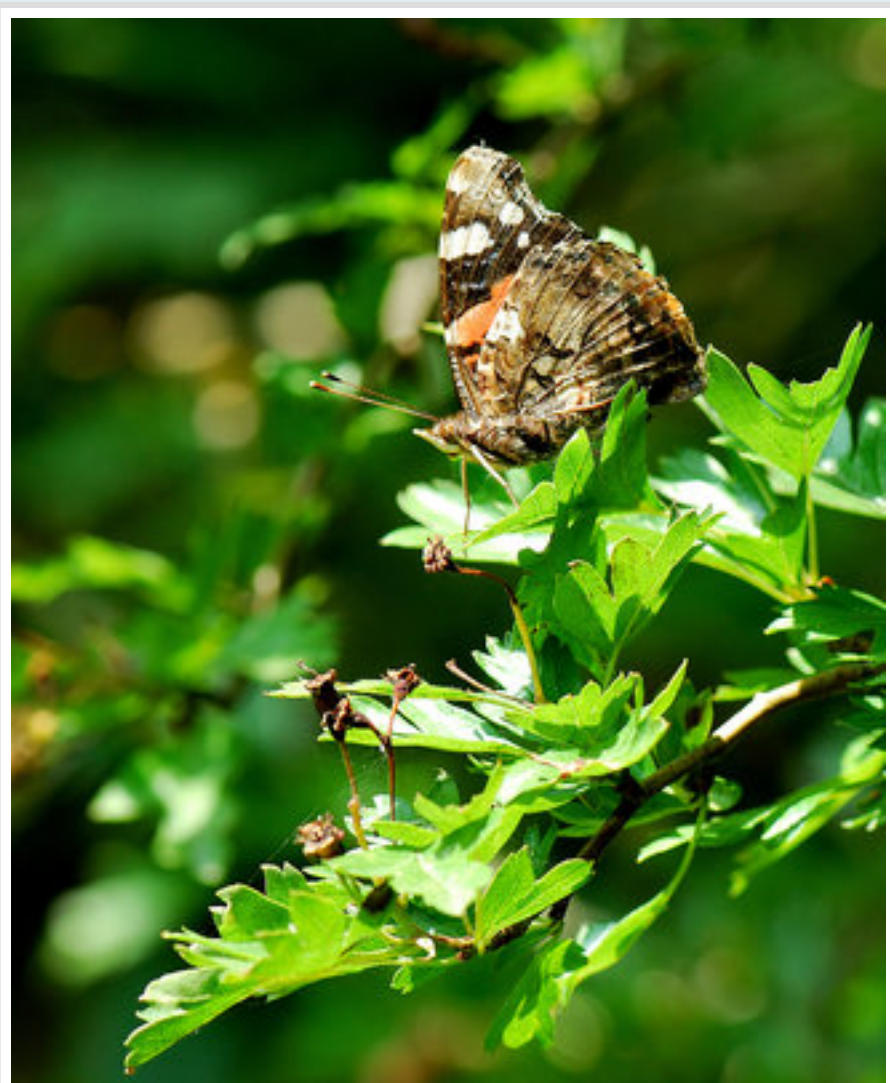
by Wurzel, 03-Jul-14 08:11 AM GMT

Bentley Wood 21-06-2014

Somehow I managed to wangle a quick visit to Bentley Wood this afternoon and so I drove over wondering if I'd be able to pick up my first Silver Washed or White Admirals of the year. Once I'd parked a quick look around the car park area yielded nothing which was a bit worrying as before now I gotten out of the car, leaned against the door and seen Silver Washed Frits, White Admirals, Purple Hairstreaks and Purple Emperor. Yet today nothing so it was either too early or more likely, far too hot.

I decided to try my luck up at the Memorial for White Letters and so set off down the main drive. There were Ringlets, Large Skippers and Meadow Browns around but nothing larger. Down near the first hotspot by the Bramble Bush a Red Admiral put in an appearance but this area has been cleared and the Bracken field is no more, the Bramble bush lies under a fallen tree and the small Sallows that once held Hiss Nibbs have gone too. Slightly further along a White Admiral and Hummingbird Hawk Moth both put in an appearance and I couldn't work out which moved faster? It was a bit like comparing a jet plane (the White Admiral soaring and gliding) with Airwolf. Whilst I didn't get a photo it was nice to see my first WA of 2014.

Eventually I got up to the memorial, poured myself a coffee and sat and waited for the Whitters to play ball. I didn't have to wait too long until I saw a few square winged little butterflies flitting around the top of the Wytch Elm but they only played ball very slightly, staying very high up in the tree. I had a bit of mooch around and the second Red Admiral did it's best to put off a Silver Washed from landing so I saw a first but again didn't get a photo.





Time ticked away and apart from a few more sightings I just didn't have the time to wait it out until the White Letters deemed to land on the surrounding Bramble so I headed back along the baking stone pathways. Ringlets and Meadow Browns and Large Skippers were everywhere and it was nice to have seen at least 6 Speckled Wood during the walk back to the car park. Due to the dearth of butterflies I actually arrived back at the car park early and so I checked the ride nearest the car park on the edge of the Eastern Clearing. There were actually butterflies flying here and I'd soon added Small Torts and another Red Admiral to the day tally as well as another White Admiral and a pair of Marbled Whites.



Time was finally up and so I headed home happy with the haul of firsts (three more on the tally) but frustrated with the lack of photos. Still you have to leave something for next time...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Willrow, 03-Jul-14 12:41 PM GMT

Your reports from Dorset/Wiltshire will make you a local legend Wurz...some really nice stuff 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-14 11:31 PM GMT

Cheers Willrow 😊 I'm more of a 'foot' than a leg-end at the moment... 😊😊

Collard Hill 22-06-2014



I don't know why but I'd not visited Collard Hill before. For some reason I'd gotten it into my head that it was quite a trek. Yet today Philzoid and I made the journey in just over an hour. This was more of a hopeful visit, taken before the Woodland specialities arrived in real numbers and divert my attentions. The reports weren't brill but the hot weather meant that they would be down on the deck trying to keep cool. So we set off through the throng towards the site.

Once there we were surprised how quiet it was as we scanned the small pockets of Thyme on the terraced lower slopes. Practically our first butterfly of the day appeared - a female Clouded Yellow which sent us scrambling back up the hill after it. A great start usually but it was hard work getting a shot and I suspected that that was how the whole day was going to pan out...hard work. 😊



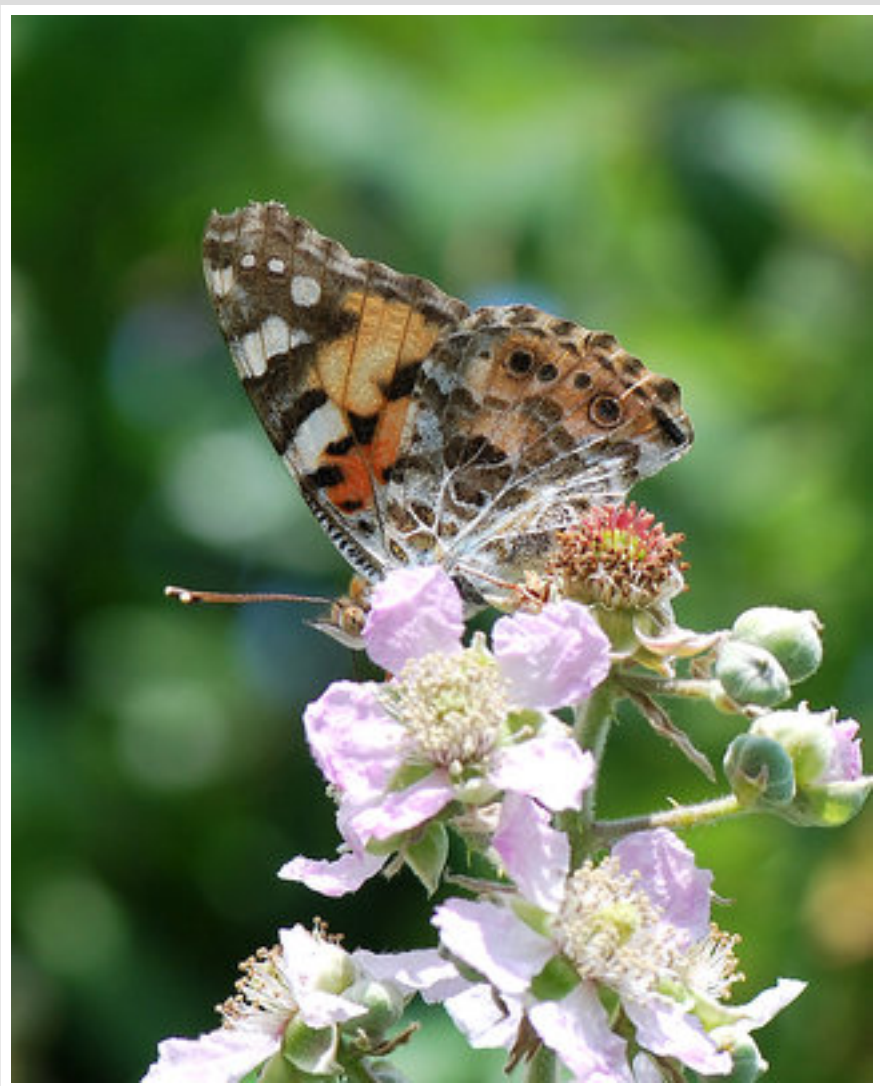
We carried on down to the lower slopes adding Large Skipper, Small Skipper, Ringlet, Marbled White and Meadow Brown to the day tally but everything was either hiding away or zipping out of sight. By now we'd reached the middle of the site where a group of people let us know that a female had been seen earlier and it felt like I would dip so I mooched moodily round the Gorse bushes and Philzoid found a blue. Unfortunately it was a tatty and worn female Common and so not was I was hoping for.

I was tempted to pour a coffee when a volunteer Ranger popped by; "They've got a Large Blue back there". So we headed back to where we'd been 5 minutes previously and "Is it still here?" I asked as I rounded the Gorse bush. "What do think" was the reply as the gent indicated the group crowded round what seemed like a random patch of ground. But there was a small grey flag amongst the grass. I took some distant record shots and then queued up to wait my turn. I ended up getting a good position at the front and side on to the butterfly. That's one of the advantages of youth; I might have work and family commitments restricting the amount of time spent butterflying but when I'm out I can still bend, scrunch and develop a posture

so as to get in for the shots. 😊



After a few I crawled out to let someone else take my place and found a Painted Lady on the Gorse before heading back to the Large Blue from the other side. Then it was back to the queue and the Large Blue from the first side and back and back again etc so as to ensure that I had enough shots. During this whole time it hadn't moved once so Jono the Ranger suspected that it was newly emerged. After a further chat with Jono about the reasons for the low numbers we said our thanks and headed over to the Eastern Glades.



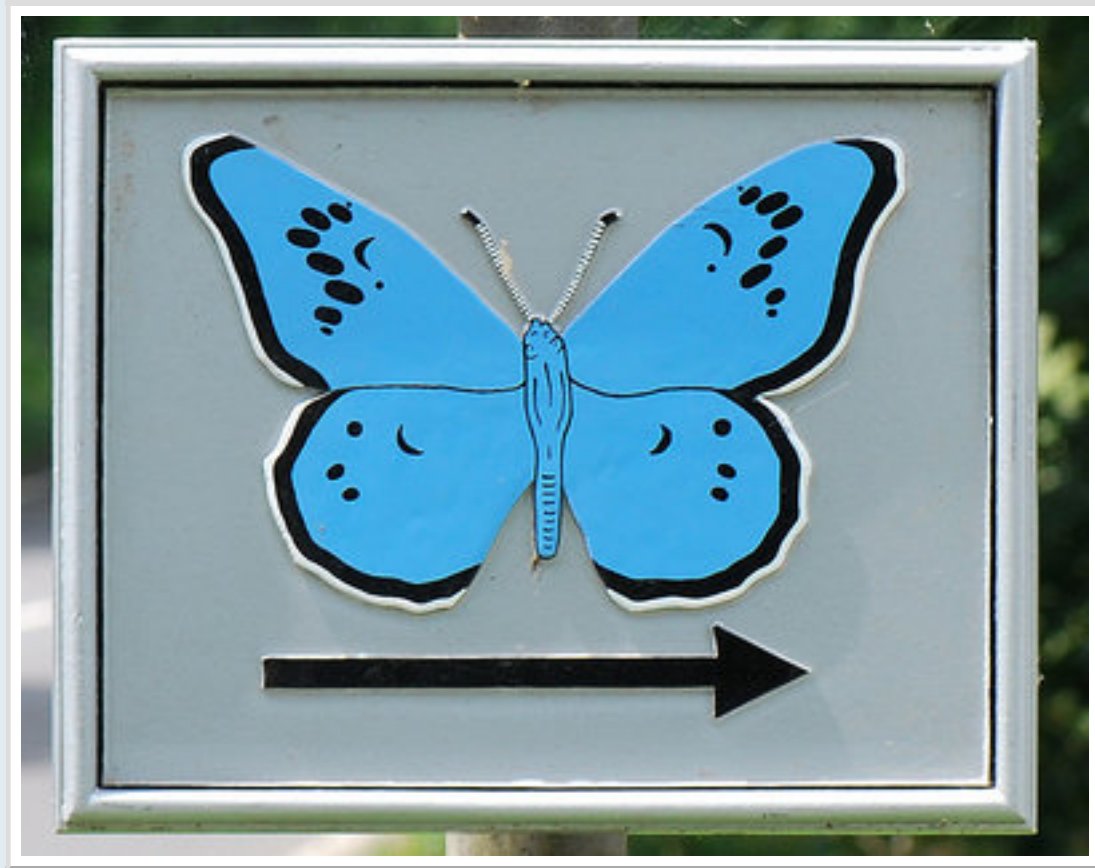




Once there Philzoid had one of my coffees and I was just about to pour myself one when another Large Blue turned up. This one was acting much more like expected and would fly and fly. Then it would dip down and land just long enough for me to approach and raise my camera. Then it would take flight again. A few brief shots suggested that it was egg laying. Also around this area was a Specklie. It made a slightly incongruous sight, a woodland butterfly in the middle of Chalk Down.



By now the heat was really on. Up near the top of the hill in the wind it was cooler and here were a few Small Torts and a couple of Common Blues. But that was it for the Large Blues. For whatever reason they've had another bad year at Collard but at least we managed to see two. Mind you I did eventually get an open wing shot...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 03-Jul-14 11:49 PM GMT

I believe that's a 'first' for you, Wurzel.

Well done!

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 04-Jul-14 12:07 AM GMT

Great Large Blue shots Wurzel and love the open wing pic 😊😄 Queuing to take photos of butterflies is ok, so long as the person before you doesn't scare it off 😊😄

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Willrow, 04-Jul-14 10:09 AM GMT

Some real crackers among your **Large Blue** images Wurzel 😊 and a tidy little bonus with that **Clouded Yellow** – bet that now you realise how close you are to Collard Hill annual visits will become the norm 😊

Enjoy it all!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Wurzel

by CJB, 04-Jul-14 10:41 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel!

Congrats on the Large Blue and as ever some great pictures. I love the open wing shot! 😊😄

With all that taking it in turns malarky, I cannot recommend enough that you and Philzoid make a trip to Daneway Banks at Sapperton. I know I keep going on about it, but it really is an amazing place and you will never ever have to queue! 😊

Speaking of Philzoid, I hope he is well and that he will post some more reports, as I always enjoyed his posts.

I am going to make a trip to Ashton Rowant tomorrow if the weather allows to try and get a DGF!

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 04-Jul-14 05:07 PM GMT

Very nice Large Blue shots, Wurzel, very nice indeed! 🍷🍷

Re: Wurzel

by William, 04-Jul-14 07:09 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

I was tempted to pour a coffee when a volunteer Ranger popped by; "They've got a Large Blue back there".

Think that was me – great stuff Wurzel 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 04-Jul-14 08:39 PM GMT

Well done Wurzel – lovely large blue photos!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-14 11:02 PM GMT

Cheers David 😊 Indeed it was a lifer, my first for two years and having seen how easy it was to get to Collard I can't for the life of me work out why I left it so long 😳😳 Cheers Mike 😊 I know what you mean about scaring it off one of the people there suggested shading it with a hat so it opened it' wings – I think they're still looking for his body now 😳😳

Cheers Willow 😊 Indeed I've already penciled it in for next year 😊

Cheers CJB 😊 I'd like to check Daneways next year but I'll have to check with the boss 😊 Good luck with the DGFs 😊

Cheers Pauline for your kind comment 😊

Cheers William – and thanks again for the heads up 😊

Cheers Katrina 😊 Those shots were four years in the making 😊

Larkhill 23-06-2014

Solstice over I expected the Travellers to have moved on so I called in at Larkhill to inspect the site for any damage. Patches of the longer grass had been laid flat, there was a small fire pit but as for most of the previous years the site looked in fine fettle. In fact all the rubbish that had been scattered about the area had gone. Picked up I presume by the Travellers before they headed off. Only one area was really 'trample damaged' and that was because a French camper van was parked on it. 😊

Inspection complete I spent a few minutes scanning round and seeing all the usual suspects. It seems that Small Heaths are on the way out to be replaced by Marbled Whites whose numbers are building nicely. Ringlets are very numerous and are having a really good year here but I'm still not seeing the masses of Meadow Browns so perhaps they're having a gentle build this year? 😊





When I visited in the afternoon the heat was on and everything was turbo charged so wasn't stopping along the edge of the car park or the Northbound path. During the course of the day there must have been an emergence of Small Tortoiseshells as the Westbound path was alive with them. They were difficult to count as they were highly mobile and active and so would explode forth from the path, fly round you a couple of times and then possibly land a couple of metres ahead of you. Butterflies it seems would rather know where the threat was and watch it than fly behind you and then you strike them unawares. I persevered with the counting and in the end made a conservative count of 9 with one Red Admiral. I went for 9 as this was the most I could see at any one time in a single view.





The following morning despite cooler temperatures there was no change in the level of activity of the butterflies and they were still motoring about like demons. I was worried that they might burn out too quickly and we'd experience a second dearth. It seems that the Small Torts has dispersed as now there appeared to be only three. They were joined by a couple of tired looking Large Skippers and Small Heath as well as my first Chimney Sweeper of the year. Ringlets and Marbled Whites were everywhere.



Unfortunately I couldn't stop for long as I was still driving the Go Kart...sorry Hire Car. In fact it was even more disappointing than that with a distinct lack of 'go' and not enough space for 'cart'! 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jul-14 11:19 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Congrats on your Large Blue, great report and photos 😊

I have a similar thing with Black Hairstreak, still not seen one and yet they are only 90 minutes or so away from me, just always seem to be doing something else during their short flight period. Maybe next year I will make a special effort.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Willrow, 06-Jul-14 10:53 AM GMT

Looks like **Small Tortoiseshell** are appearing in good numbers now Wurz, I noticed a bit of a slow start here in South Wales...nice images of them too...such beautiful insects 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Wurzel

by Pete Eeles, 06-Jul-14 11:36 AM GMT

Congrats on the Large Blue, Wurzel, especially given the paucity of sightings this year from Collard!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-14 10:54 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 I'm sure you'll be able to fit them in next year 😊

Cheers Willrow 😊 Their numbers seem to be building nicely as are the Red Admirals which is good news after their poor showing last year 😊

Cheers Pete 😊 It was nice to get a lifer but I think I used up all my luck getting it... 😊

It seems a bit odd posting this with all the fantastic shots of His Nibbs rolling in but I need to catch up so here goes anyway...

The Devenish 24-06-2014

This was just a quick stop on the way home and it was broiling. Usually it's nice to get out of the car as it's cooler but today I got out and the heat hit me like I was stepping into an oven - absolutely roasting! I sought refuge in the shade of the woods as I walked towards the meadow. As I looked over the gate it was busy with little golden blurs as a Smessex would stray in to the air space of a Large and then battle would ensue. It's also getting to that time of the year when Browns dominate and today butterflies would fly up with every footfall. The side of the Down held more of the same with an additional pair each of Large and Smessex as well as a Small Tort and a Brimstone.

The most productive spot today was the Bramble that lines the edge of the path between the meadow and the side of the Down as it paid host to host of butterflies. I'll have to check this more thoroughly the next time I'm here as I'm sure that the Red Admiral hides around this area. Once I've seen it off it darts and disappears around here somewhere.

I didn't stay as long as usual as I couldn't stand the heat it was really oppressive...





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 06-Jul-14 11:33 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

great reporting as usual, with lovely photos but, your fresh Small Tortoiseshell photo taken at Larkhill with the white wing edges is a beautiful specimen. I have never seen one quite like it. Excellent. 😊

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by badgerbob, 07-Jul-14 11:15 AM GMT

Only just caught up!! Great pics of the Large Blue and well done on getting this one. You did have a good un!!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-14 11:16 PM GMT

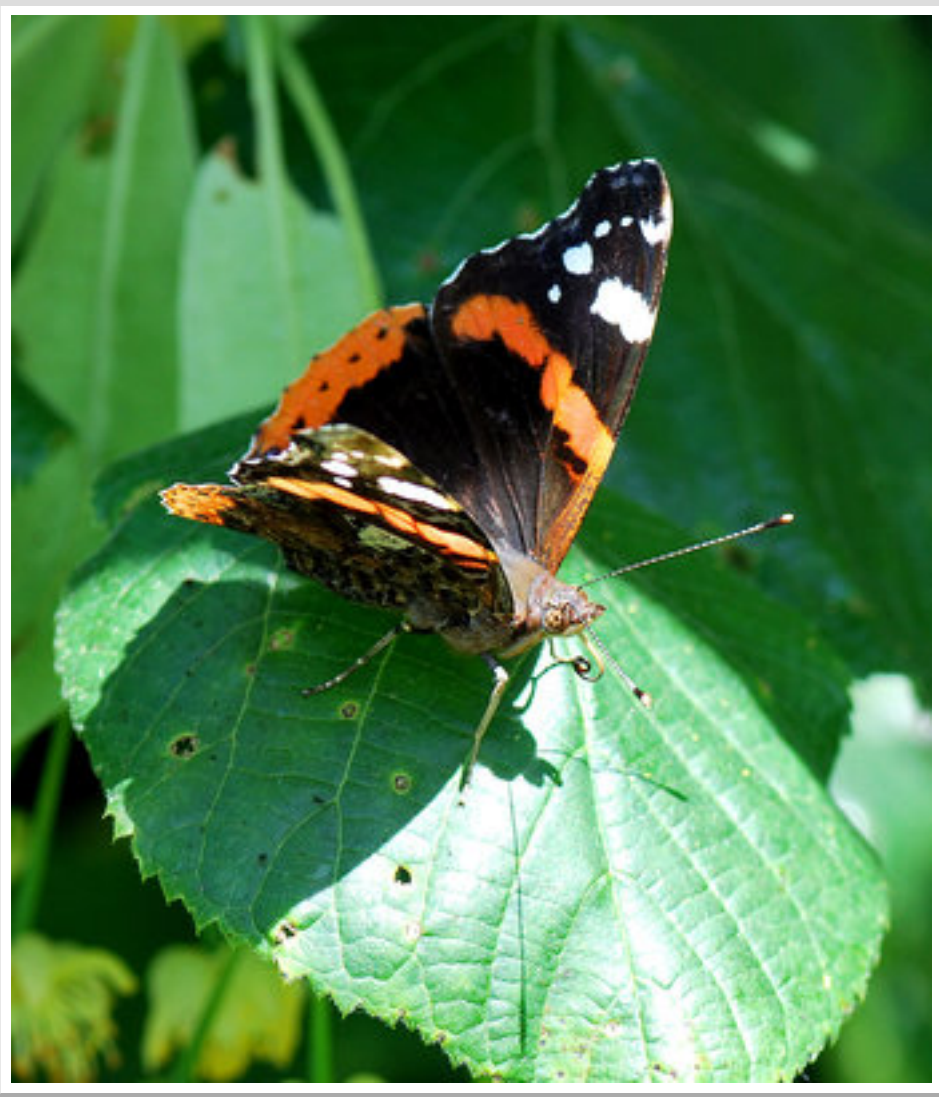
Cheers Nick 😊 That was one of my fave Small Tort shots of the year as it was in such good nick 😊

Cheers Bob 😊 I did indeed 😊

Lunch Small Field 25-06-2014

With the weather remaining hot and dry I decided to check out the small field in the housing estate near work. It generally produces a nice range of butterflies and hopefully I'd be able to track down a Smessex or two. As I approached the field up path I could see some activity on the Brambles at the edge of the field so I headed there first and there were Aristocrats to greet me. First was a lovely fresh H.Comma which was quickly replaced by a Red Admiral. This was a bit more skittish although it seemed to like playing hide and seek with me. A few Small Torts made up the trio of Aristocrats who were being ably served by numerous Ringlets and Marbled Whites.





I then moved into the grass lands and there were Small Tortois in each direction I looked but today I noticed that the Meadow Browns seemed to have arisen to dominance finally overtaking their Marbled and ringed cousins. There was also the occasional golden blur which usually transformed into a Large Skipper if I managed to follow it but was occasionally a Smessex. These never stayed still long enough to check for distinguishing features, not even the sex brand on the males.

One Ringlet really caught my eye as it didn't appear to have any spots on the fore wing and the pair on the hind wings were really reduced. It also caught light to give a gorgeous purple sheen to the wing margins. I've seen this on Meadow Browns before but not on Ringlets and added yet another aspect to their subtle beauty.





Nearer some of the thinner grass I finally managed to catch up with a Smessex for long enough to approach and have a closer look to try and make an ID one way or another. At first glance I thought it was an Essex but by tilting my head I could see the indicator lights so it went back to being a Small.





Time was ticking by and I realized I've taken hardly any Meadow Brown shots this year. As I was scanning round to try and find some to remedy this transgression one female really stood out. Over the few years I've been butterflying I've seen lots of darker Meadow Browns but this was a real blonde. She also had two 'pupils' on the fore wings but she was very coy about showing these.



All too soon time was up and it was back to work, man it was good to get out for a little bit of 'R and B'.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Wetton, 09-Jul-14 12:21 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Love the diary and the great shots. The background on your first ever Large Blue at Collard is wonderful.

I notice your Ringlet on the 24th is upside down and in the clutches of a dastardly Crab Spider.

Re: Wurzel

by Willrow, 10-Jul-14 07:18 PM GMT

The confounded Smessex Skipper...how many times have we been there Wurz 😊 lets do our own new personal reclassification and 'lump' em' both together 😊

Very enjoyable latest report.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt...venture out"

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Jul-14 11:29 PM GMT

Cheers Paul 😊 I got lucky with that background, I thought I'd include the Ringlet like that too – if I could have found some eggs I could have had the whole circle of life going 😊

Cheers Willrow 😊 I'm developing a crick in my neck trying to peer round and underneath the Smessex blighters to positively ID them 😊 Oh well they're worth it 😊

Grovely Wood 29-06-2014

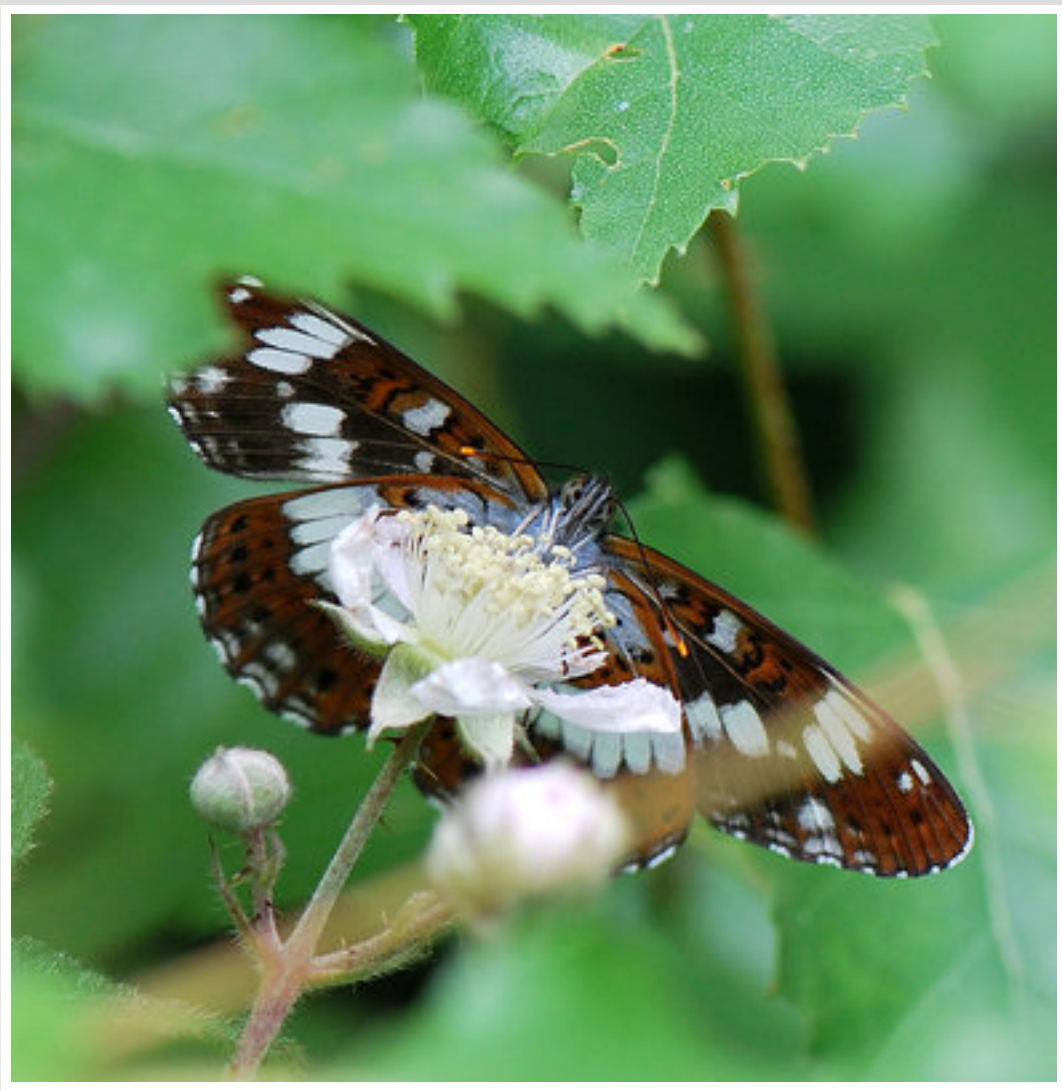
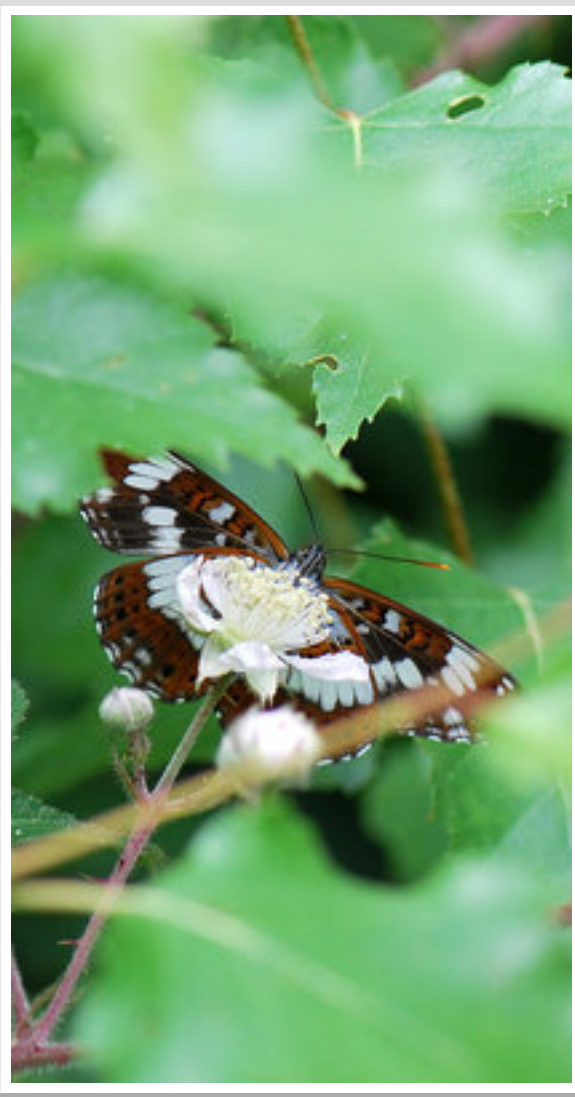
This is an area of woodland that I've seen a number of reports from on the County website and as it's so close its somewhere I've been meaning to get too for a while now. Unfortunately there grid reference on the website always leads you to the very middle of the wood so I've never been sure where to park or even from which direction to approach it let alone where the 'hotspots' are. Also with my time so limited I've always preferred to head for a safe bet when looking to reacquaint myself with a particular species. However today I had barely two hours to play with so I took a gamble and went to Grovely more for a recede than with any great expectation.

Having driven through Wilton and approached the Wood from the Ditchampton end I set off up the hill through the Beech Avenue. A Red Admiral put in a tantalising appearance and kept me interested until the path split and I took the right hand one which was enclosed by two tall hedges. There were the occasional breaks in the green walls leading to fields on either side and here there were numerous Meadow Browns, Marbled Whites, Ringlets (slightly fewer) and the odd Small Skipper. What was really striking were the large numbers of Small Tortoiseshells. I counted 14 at one point but there were more around as they were behind me and hiding on the hedge tops.



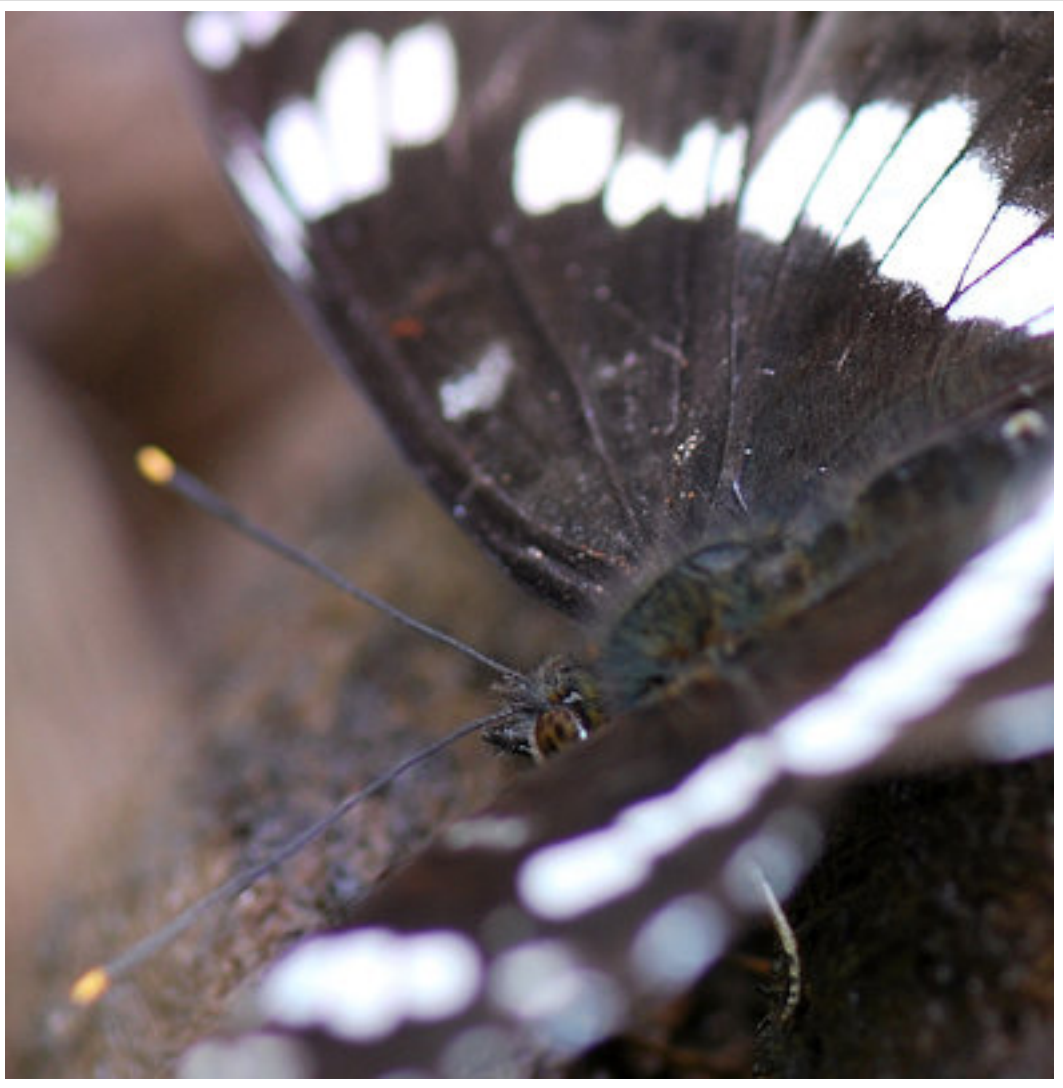
Once in the wood it was really dark with the mature trees, mainly conifers blocking out the sun from the canopy down. This particular area didn't look promising so I crossed back across and joined up with the left hand track which had run into the wood from the Beech Avenue. This was more open and the paths were lined with deciduous trees and Brambles, Bracken and the odd Honeysuckle. I opted for the widest of the paths and set off further into the wood. Almost immediately something silvery caught my eye as it sliced its way through the air. As the white caught the sun it dazzled and then disappeared as it flew and the black melted it into the shadows. Excellent better than I'd hoped for so I pressed on further along the path stopping just once to work out how much time I had left before I needed to turn around and make my way back.

The path widened slightly more and an intersecting path at right angles to it made it more of a miniature clearing than woodland ride so I decided to spend some time here and see what would turn up. This turned out to be a great move as a few moments of stillness from me and the butterflies arrived carrying on as if I didn't exist. Over the next 20 minutes or so I saw Large and Small Skippers, Green Veined Whites, Large White, two Small Torts, 7 Red Admirals and 3 White Admirals with of course Ringlets and Meadow Browns in ubiquity. The White Admirals were pains as they just didn't want to stop and when they did they were always in the centre of the Brambles, partly obscured. One in particular was infuriating as it fed with both under wings face on though slightly cropped by the blessed Brambles it was feeding amongst.



Eventually it left the confines of the middle of Bramble and after a few exploratory circuits it landed on some horse manure and started taking salts. It was so intent on feeding that it didn't even mind when I knelt down and clicked away like mad. I love the subtly in the 'black' upper side with the markings towards the rear margin showing through and the odd little orangy red dots on the fore wings.







On the way back I stopped to investigate the edge of one of the fields which had plenty of wildflowers growing on it. Here there were the usual grassland suspects but the Meadow Browns were actually basking with their wings open and were still in good nick.





As I walked back to the car I reflected that this looks like a cracking site but next time I'll approach it from Stoford and then I'll be in the middle of the Wood and investigate some different areas.

Have a goodun

Re: Wurzel

by Mike Robinson, 11-Jul-14 12:30 AM GMT

Interesting Commentary and some super Pictures

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 11-Jul-14 11:44 AM GMT

Great marbled white photo!

Re: Wurzel

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

Cheers Mike 😊

Cheers Katrina 😊 Always the way – you spend ages with one species getting loads of shots and then the final grab shot on the way back turns out to be a real cracker 😊 😊

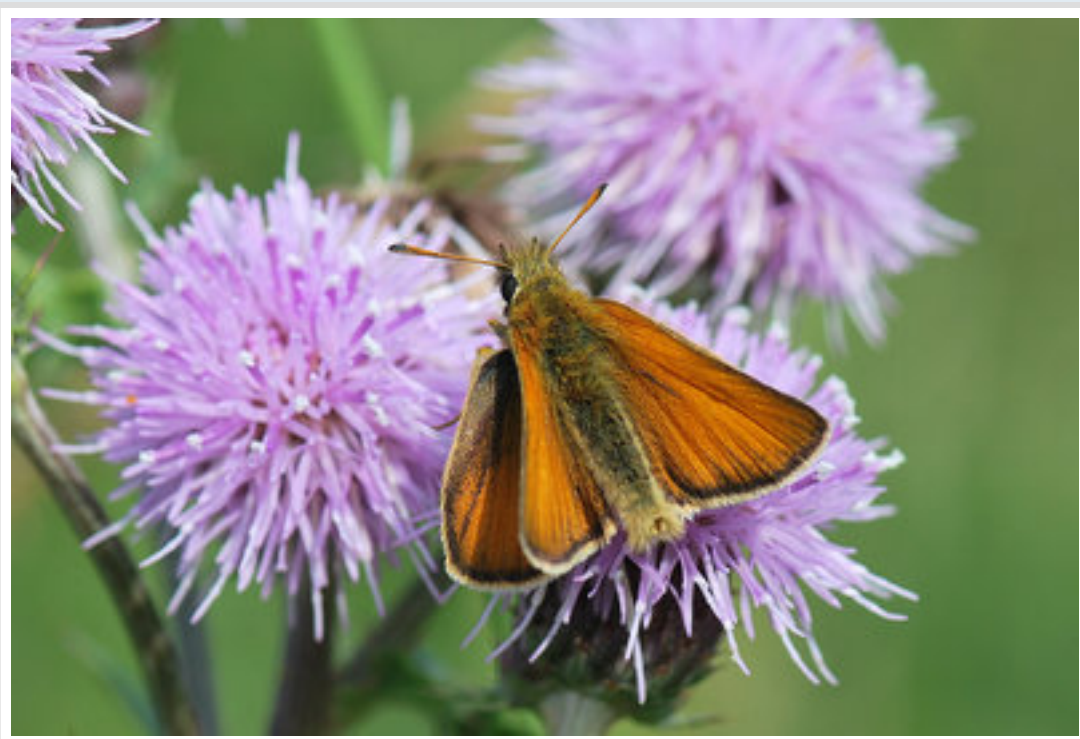
Five Rivers 30-06-2014

What seems like an age ago now but is actually only less than a fortnight I was supposed to head out to visit another school. They suggested I arrived at 10:25 which I was more than happy about as I could spend some time at Larkhill looking for my first Essex Skippers as they were about due.

Having got everything ready I had the joy of dropping the girls at school and then I stopped off at Five Rivers on the way to Laverstock. When I found my first proper Smessex Skippers here a few years back they were located in the longer grass in the central field so that was where I headed checking the large Thistle patch on the way which housed a couple of Small Torts and a few Meadow Browns. There seem to have been on the increase on the quiet recently and are now starting to outnumber the Ringlets and Marbled Whites that are on the wane though their numbers are still high. The Knapweed sprouting like islands amongst the sea of grass had Marbled Whites, more Meadow Browns and loads of Small Torts. There were also a few golden blurs so I set to checking their antennae. In fact I was in danger of developing 'Smessex Crick' and despite all my contortions all the Smessex where Small, indicator lights flashing cheekily at me



I made my way up towards the banks and something made me wander in the tall Thistles on the near side where I don't normally check. There buzzing in and around a little group of Smalls was my first Essex Skipper of the year the dabs meaning I had it bang to rights!

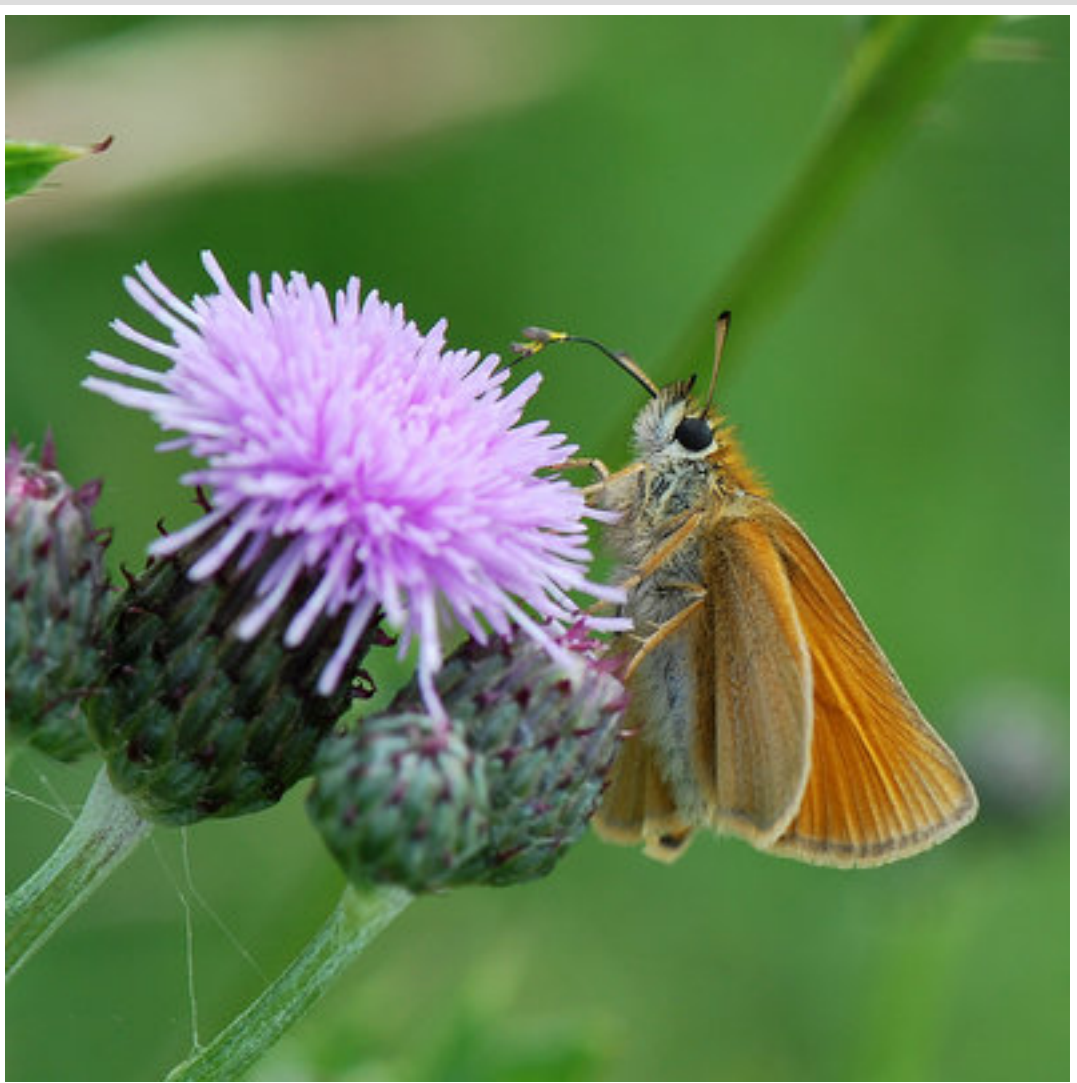


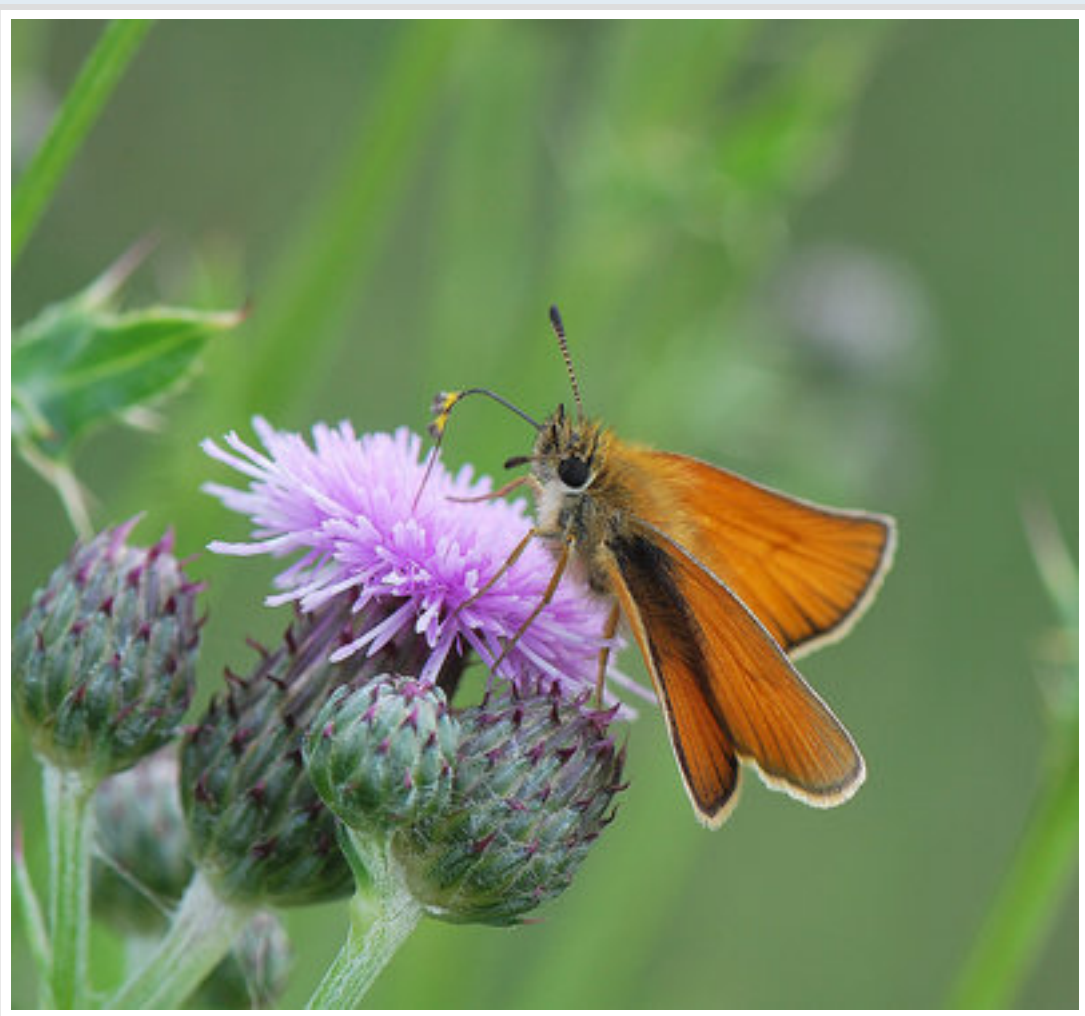
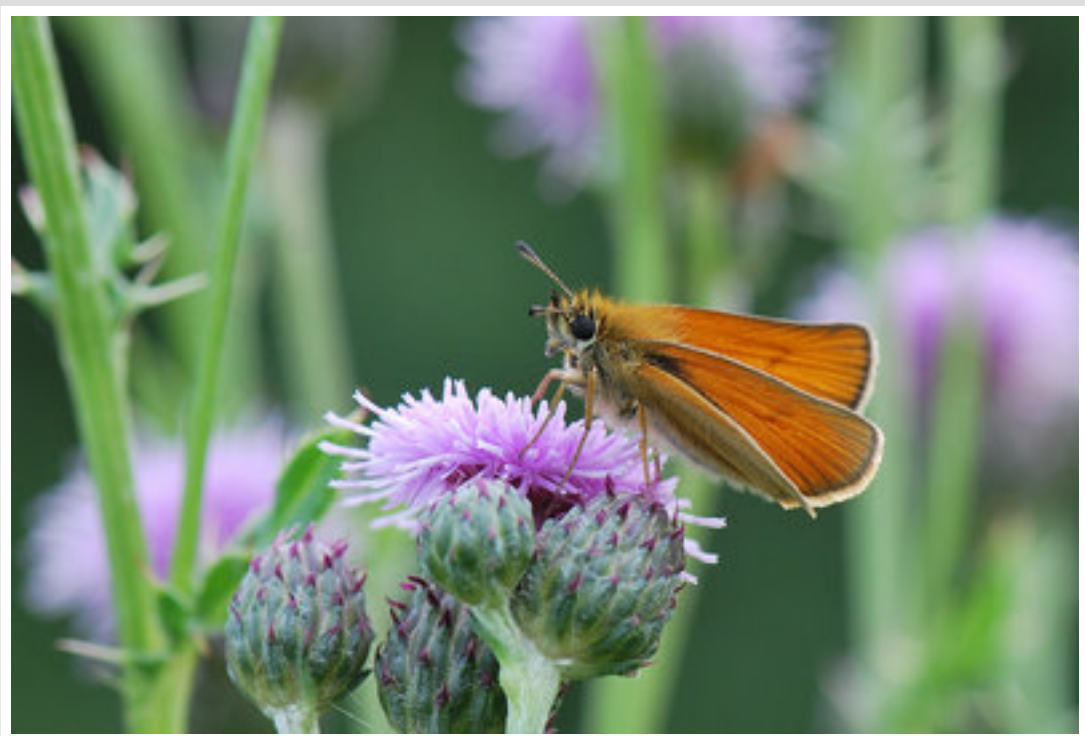
Over on the banks there was more of the same. The odd Small Tort would put in an appearance, Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns and Ringlets would all erupt from the grass with each footfall and there were Skippers everywhere. They would buzz each other and then zip here, there and everywhere before landing on a blade of grass or flower for a quick drop of nectar before zipping off again to repeat the actions. Eventually on the middle bank I found a female Common Blue which was the first different species that I'd encountered since my foray into the long grass sea. I also found a male but he just wasn't interested in letting me get any shots. Yet again there were the three browns and the Golden Skippers all over the place. So it was a case of even more of the same. I obviously missed something in the week or two since my last visit because the Skippers have been crazy busy in emerging.





In amongst all these butterflies I somehow made my way back to the where I'd found my first Essex in a bit of a daze. I just didn't know where to look next or what to train my lens on first as there was so much going on. Somehow I forced myself to focus just on the Essex that I'd come to find. So it was back to the neck wrenching and peering over the top of the butterflies to try and spot their antennae tips; indicator lights "thanks but no thanks", ink pad dab "you're nicked".





Eventually I had to head onto my away day meeting but it was fantastic and such a luxury to have so long for a stop off before work.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-14 10:30 PM GMT

The Devenish 30-06-2014

So work over I popped over to The Devenish – well I was on my way home so it was inevitable despite approaching it from the other direction. Once in the car park I decided to approach the down from other side which has more scrub and more of the tussock grasses. Butterflies were flying up at every footfall with Meadow Browns being the most numerous then Marbled Whites with Ringlets seemingly past their peak in terms of number. What was nice was that here seemed to be just as many Smessex Skippers here as at Five Rivers with the odd Large still hanging on in here and trying their best to bully the Johnny come lately Small and Essex Skippers.

For a while I just mooched around loving seeing the sheer number of butterflies on the wing. Suddenly something medium sized flitted up looking

much more orange than the Ringlets and Meadow Browns. My first Hedge Brown of the year and an excess to boot. Once I'd seen my first I found another and then another. In fact I pretty much kept seeing them all over the site.





My meanderings had led me to the top of the hill and then over the stile. The goats had been grazing this and so the grasses were finer with more flowers interspersed amongst the stalks. The same species would flutter up and flit across the grass tops but there was still a distinct lack of Chalk Hill Blues.



I then made my way down to the meadow but on the way I got way laid by the Brambles a long side the path and before the stile. All the browns were present on this one bush with some occupying the same buds. It was mesmerising to watch as a Hedge Brown would take off and be replaced by a Ringlet which would then be nudged off by a Meadow Brown and then another Hedge Brown would barge his way in. It was a lot like watching a soap opera.



Whilst watching the Brown show I finally caught up with the Red Admiral that has been hanging around this part of the path. Normally when I arrive here the Red Admiral bombs away never to be seen again but this time I spied it trying to hide behind an old tree stump. It seemed to realize that the game of hide and seek was over and so it took off but instead of disappearing it landed on the Bramble and started nectaring.





As I made my way home through the meadow I made plans to return here and keep a close eye out for the Chalk Hills...watch this space.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 14-Jul-14 06:38 AM GMT

Great Gatekeeper shots Wurzel - I just can't seem to get close to them 😞

Re: Wurzel

by PhilJohnson, 14-Jul-14 07:48 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,
I am loving those skipper photos. Some of those I think are superb compositions.
Even I have seen a gatekeeper this year, now. 😊
Best Wishes,
Philip

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 14-Jul-14 01:53 PM GMT

Excellent reports and photos from summer meadows Wurzel (and a good to see you're got your Essex too 😎)

Love the open wing Ringlet and detail on the Red Admiral 😊

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jul-14 08:07 PM GMT

Some more great reports and photos Wurzel 😊

Nice Red Admiral, I am seeing a fair few but most of them are a bit worn and faded if not downright tatty.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

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

Hi Wurzel

Just catching up. The Essex Skipper with the outstretched proboscis is great 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-14 11:30 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊 For every Hedge Brown shot I get at least 3 disappear before I get within 6 steps of them 😲 That's the great thing about digital click away and see what you got later:wink:

Cheers Phil 😊 Hedge Browns are coming on strong now 😊

Cheers Philzoid 😊 They were all over the place, I love it when my local patches deliver 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I reckon I'm seeing the second wave so they'll be in your neighbourhood soon 😊

Cheers Paul 😊 I was chuffed with that one 😊

Larkhill 01-07-2014

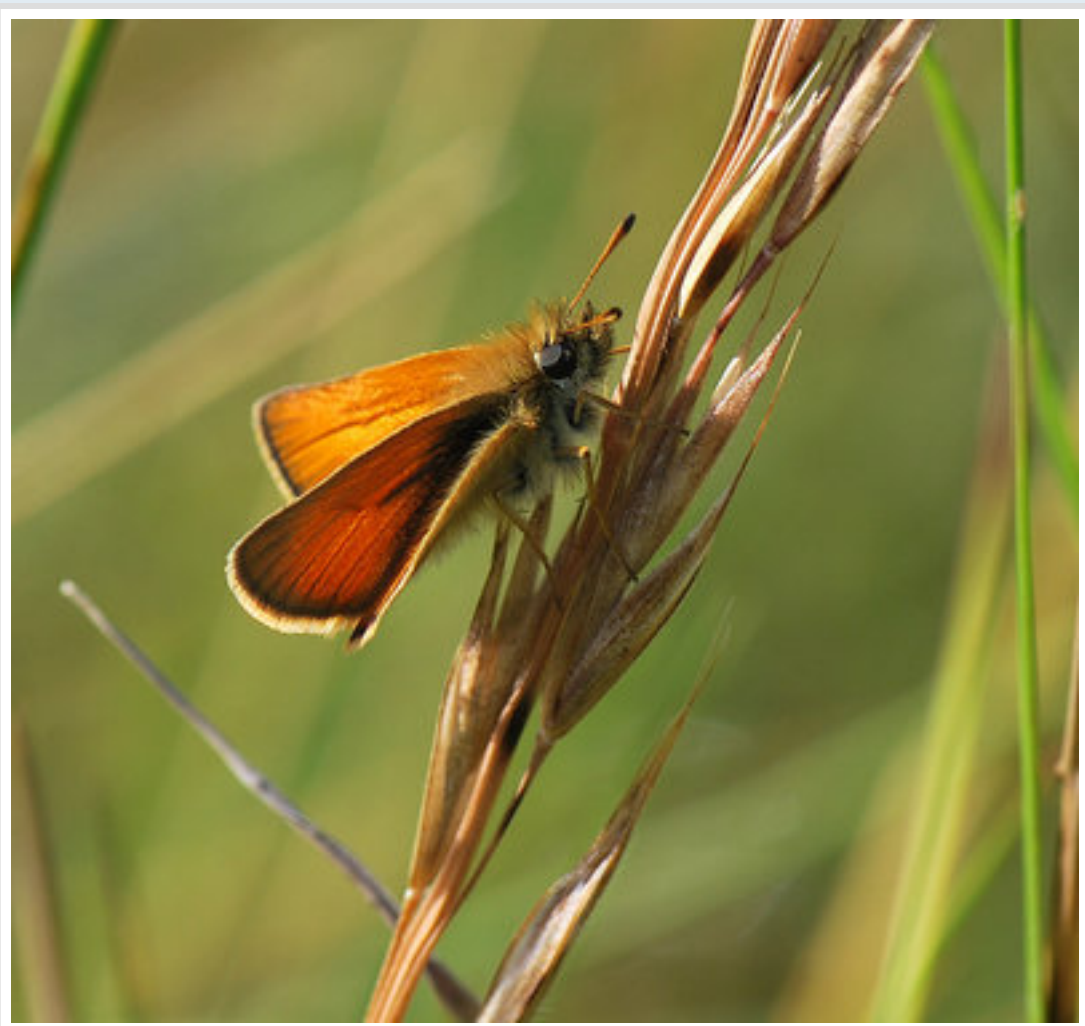
So it was back to work proper and I was a bit worried that having so much time for my before and after work stop-offs yesterday would spoil me today. So I went about it in a much more frenetic manner today as if to make sure that I didn't go over my budgeted time...

I checked the North path first and it's still well trodden and the area where the French camper van was is still ruined whereas the areas that the Travellers used are bouncing back. Right by the start of the path I found a Common Blue balancing on the top of a grass head. There were still a few Marbled Whites and Ringlets about, probably more than I saw and also many more Meadow Browns now.





On to the West path and I added a few more each of Marbled Whites and Ringlets and a single Small Heath. Is it just me or are they not having a very good year? I mean I've seen them at plenty of sites but in nowhere near the numbers that I have in previous years. However I did find good numbers of Smessex including a definite Essex.



I was late on this morning and so it became very, very brief run around with more of the same like yesterday.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Mike Robinson, 16-Jul-14 08:32 PM GMT

Some absolutely super pictures. I do enjoy reading these Personal Diaries.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Jul-14 11:39 PM GMT

Cheers Mike for your kind comment 😊 They're fun to write and hopefully to read to 😊.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

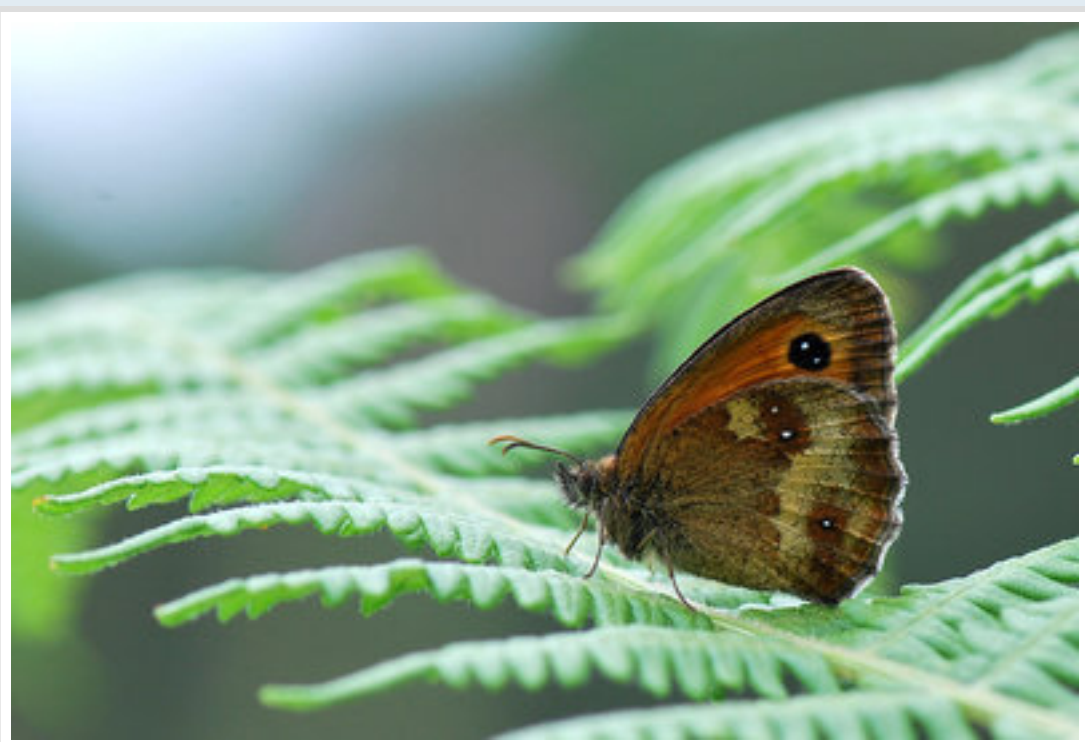
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-14 09:31 AM GMT

Bentley Wood 06-07-2014

With reports coming in from further East about sightings of His Nibbs I thought it was about time to check out Bentley to see if there were any there. My visits here for Emperors have been a bit hit or miss over the years with nothing but brief sightings from my first two years, then a blinder with three on the deck plus an Empress on my third year and last year distant shots. Hopefully this year will be another blinder.

There seemed to be very little activity in the car park but it was still a little cool so I headed round to the ride just before the Eastern Clearing. A few others had had the same idea and while I was there things started to move with a Ringlet then a Hedge Brown and eventually a single Marbled White and a few Meadow Browns in amongst the Brambles. While I was investigating towards the top of the path I heard a whining noise which was really high pitched and was getting higher and higher. I looked round and round and eventually located it by closing my eyes and moving slowly towards the sound. It turned out to be a Hoverfly revving the engine and warming up the flight muscles. I just wish I'd had some way of recording the sound as it was awesome. 😲



Things were still quiet and cool so I made my way back to the car park and then down the main ride towards the hotspot Bramble bush. A few Ringlets fluttered up and a Red Admiral flew by but it was still quiet. The hotspot didn't deliver as the fallen tree that crushed it has ruined it. The Oaks further on had some small grey looking butterflies which would fly across the path to neighbouring trees in the jinky zig-zag flight characteristic of Hairstreaks - my first Purps of the year. It'll be worth checking this area another time and hopefully they'll have come down to a lower level but they didn't this time so I was glad I brought my bins.

I carried on down the left hand track at the cross roads and kept on going towards the break and the small fields in the middle of the Wood on past Donkey Copse and New Berryfields. On the way I found my first Clouded Border, saw White Admiral, Silver Washed Fritillary plenty of Large Skippers and the odd Smessex. There were even more of the Skippers and Meadow Browns along with Marbled Whites alongside the cleared track near the "field". But my target species were playing really hard to get.

Working my way back into the Wood I suddenly started coming across butterflies...First was a gliding White Admiral and then a couple of male Silver Washed taking nectar from the low Brambles along the track. They were also joined by another Red Admiral and a Comma.





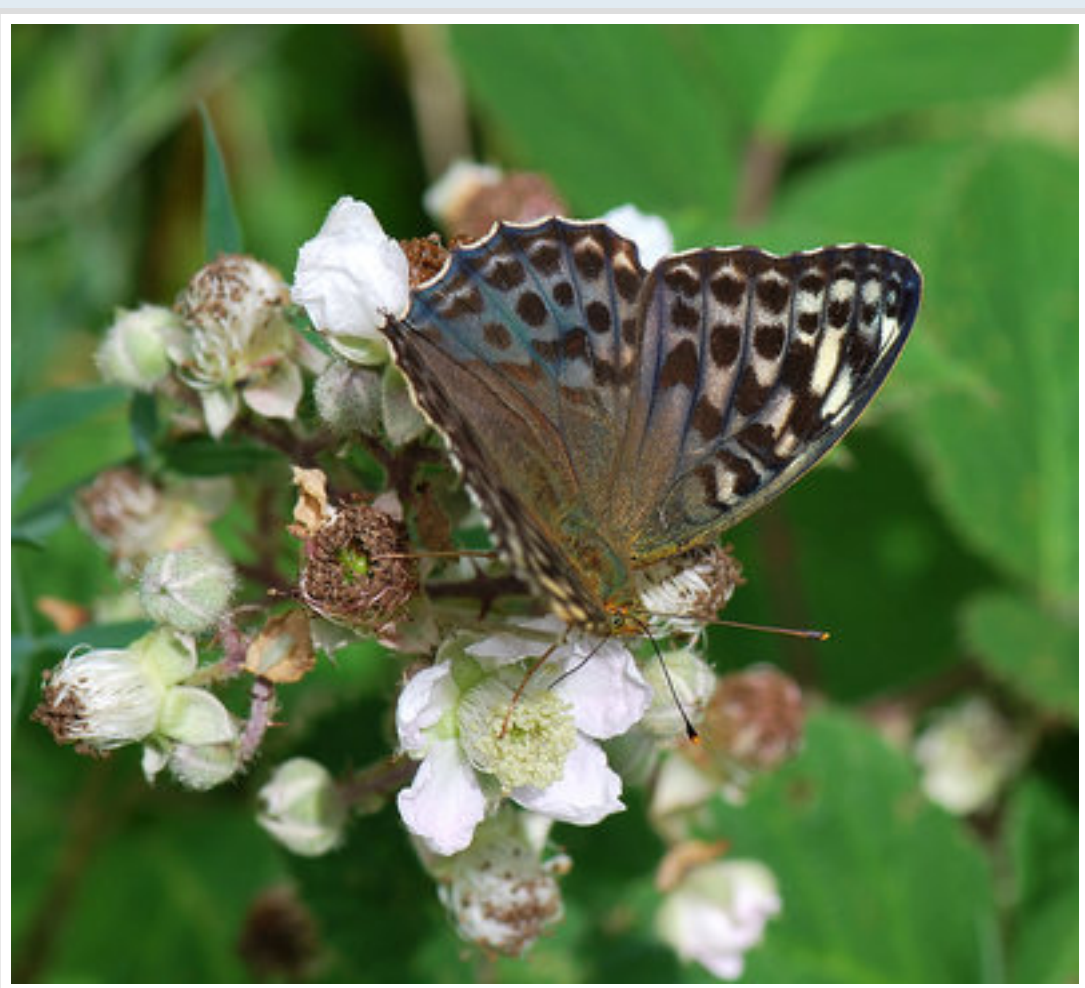
I continued back and had almost reached New Berryfield when I stopped on a corner by a single patch of Bramble. Some of it was in shade and when I saw my first female SWF on the bush I stopped with the hope of a *valesina* appearing. Chuckling at my optimism I set out trying to capture a shot of the whole range of species that used this little bush.







The Green-veined White and Hedge Browns escaped my lens and I was just trying to capture the second HB when something darker caught my eye and I cautiously snook forward...it was a *valesina* in mint condition. I couldn't believe my luck it was stunning. 😊





I wandered back to the car park barely noticing any other butterflies and just scanning for his Nibbs. Everywhere I went people would ask if I'd seen one but luckily I wasn't missing out as they hadn't either. I wondered if I'd used up my luck quotient for the day on the Greenish Silver Washed? Mind you to be honest it was so spectacular that I think it was probably a better find than an Emperor. 😊

The hotspot held another WA and I ended up back at the ride near the Eastern Clearing where I'd started the morning before I even knew it. Whilst here for the final ticking by of my time allowance a White Admiral played hard to get and an Emperor did the briefest of fly-bys from one tree to another. It was enough for the Tally but not really enough for me personally. So I'll have to come back...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Hoggars, 17-Jul-14 12:17 PM GMT

Fantastic valesina, Wurzel! I've never seen one. Congratulations!!

Best Wishes,

Hoggars.

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 17-Jul-14 12:49 PM GMT

Have just 'caught up' on you PD Wurzel, stunning shots of the *valesina* 😊😊👍 great SWF and Smessex shots too 😊
Skippers seem to be doing really well this year and we are seeing them in amazing numbers at most locations.

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-14 12:07 AM GMT

Cheers Hoggars 😊 I'm lucky in that Bentley Wood has produced me one for the last three years now 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 I know what you mean about the Skippers when I stop off at Larkhill they're buzzing all over the place 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-14 12:13 PM GMT

07-07-2014 Larkhill

So with the briefest of glimpses of His Nibbs still playing through my mind I grumpily set off for work grumbling to myself the whole way about how many Purple Emperors would be seen whilst I was tapped at work. It was suggested to me recently that when it comes to Purple Emperors "fortune favours the brave" - if only fortune favoured the hard working, family man with both time and financial constraints 😊😊 . Oh well only 30 more years until retirement and then I can send my days butterflying to my hearts' content - grumble over.

This morning seemed to be the Smessex day as there seemed to be loads of them everywhere I went along the West path. They'd buzz around my feet and zip of as my shins brushed the longer grasses along the edge of the path. At one point they were even joined by an aged Large Skipper. In the end I

forsook the neck wrecking manoeuvres for identifying female Smessex either way and instead settled for finding and photographing a few males instead. After previous Smessex identification adventures I've experienced cramp in the neck - I didn't think that was possible 😬



I carried on down the track slightly further than usual with the sun warming me already even this early in the morning. I found a female Common Blue displaying herself nicely. For some reason I've not had much luck with female Common Blues this year as I've not seen a fresh one yet. Hopefully I'll catch up with a fresh one in the final brood.



The antics of all the butterflies, the sun and warmth had all cheered me from my earlier grumbles and the return journey saw me cheered even more as I discovered my first Larkhill Hedge Brown! 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 18-Jul-14 12:58 PM GMT

I've been doing some catching up and reading a lot of your diary at one go! I always enjoy browsing through pictures and think you did remarkably well at Collard in view of the queues – I think I'd be too nervous to take anything reasonable under such conditions. I also like your 'indicator lights' method with Skippers. 'Smalls' can be very deceptive but when you see a 'real' Essex, the inky blackness of the tips is usually pretty definitive. It's a bit like Adonis Blues: "is it one, is it one?" until you actually see one, and then it's obvious!

I'm also impressed by the trouble you take in assembling your posts. Do you have a secret method for adding a large number of photos – I always restrict the number of images I post, because of the faff of loading them all!

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jul-14 09:28 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Another couple of great reports with cracking photos, I really like the first Hedge Brown from Bentley Wood and that valesina is a stunner 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Wurzel

by badgerbob, 19-Jul-14 06:42 PM GMT

Wow Wurzel. Just seen your valesina. Stunning butterfly and photo!! I've also never seen one either.

Re: Wurzel

by PhilBJohnson, 19-Jul-14 08:14 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

I am also loving that Valezina. I have never seen one at Bookham Common, Surrey although the female SWFs do vary in colour a little.

I think they reckon up to 5% of SWFs in some southern woodlands are of this form,

best wishes,

Philip

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 19-Jul-14 11:28 PM GMT

Lovely SWF valesina, Wurzel – I join the others green with envy as I haven't ever seen one either! 🍀

Nice one. 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 20-Jul-14 06:31 AM GMT

You hit the jackpot there Wurzel. Fantastic Valesina 🍷 and I join the queue of folk who have not yet seen one 😞 Just wish I'd known about the sighting 10 days earlier and I would have been straight up there 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-14 11:49 PM GMT

Cheers Mike for your kind comments 😊 If in doubt with golden Skippers call em a Smessex 😊 The main cheat that I use when posting is to write the text in Word and then cut and paste it in. As for the photos I haven't found a short cut yet so I either take sups of beer while waiting for each photo to upload or if I'm feeling fit I do 20 press-ups between them 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I was struggling to choose my favourite from those two myself and the valesina won out...just 🤔 😊

Cheers Bob 😊 I got lucky with that one 😊

Cheers Phil 😊 I remember reading somewhere that they can be as high as 40% in a population 🤔 Cheers Dave 😊 They can be found at Bentley Wood most years often further in around Donkey and New Berryfields Copses.

Cheers Pauline 😊 I saw a report today from Black Dog Woods of 5 Greenish Silver Washed ST 824488 if you fancy a trip out 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pete Eeles, 21-Jul-14 08:25 AM GMT

I agree with the others, Wurzel – excellent *valesina* photos!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Wurzel

by Pete Eeles, 21-Jul-14 08:27 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

As for the photos I haven't found a short cut yet so I either take sups of beer while waiting for each photo to upload or if I'm feeling fit I do 20 press-ups between them 😊

Apparently, the next "release" of the forum software (phpBB) allows multiple file uploads. Not sure *when* it's being released though.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Jul-14 11:07 PM GMT

Cheers Pete – Bentley has been pretty good for Valesina over the last few years 😊 WRT the update I'm slightly concerned that it won't be good for my health – far fewer press-ups 😊

07-07-2014 Lunch

Buoyed by my morning perambulation I headed out during lunchtime and took my usual route encountering a couple of Small Tortoiseshells by the fences on the way to the back path. Once there I was surprised how tall the grasses have grown over the last couple of weeks. They're so tall they almost covered the path rendering it invisible. It was handy for finding the butterflies as they weren't aware where the field ended and the path started.

I saw about 8 Smessex along the path with the additional of one a piece of Essex and Small although only the Small Skippers posed for me. Also on the walk were good numbers of Meadow Brown that would drop down onto the path and then flutter up in surprise as I approached. The Brambles further along held lots more Small Torts which ranged from really fresh to showing signs of wear and tear.



On the way home I stopped off at The Devenish to search for Chalk Hills. As I was on a mission I tried to ignore most things whilst scanning the hillside for the ghostly blue of the Chalk Hills. Alas it was still not to be as they haven't emerged yet - I'll have to keep checking as I would really like to see my first Chalk Hills at this site. In the end I couldn't help but ignore all the butterflies that were flitting around me and so I succumbed and bagged myself my first female Hedge Brown of the year.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 21-Jul-14 11:10 PM GMT

Not seen a female Hedge Brown yet. I always think this heralds the beginning of the end of summer. 😞

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 21-Jul-14 11:14 PM GMT

Those Chalkhills can't be long, Wurzel – they're out in droves on the Downs over this way 😊
Nice to get a female Hedge Brown – there's hundreds hereabouts but the heat is keeping them mostly tightly closed. And no abnormal spots on show either: I'm waiting for your post with this year's crop! 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

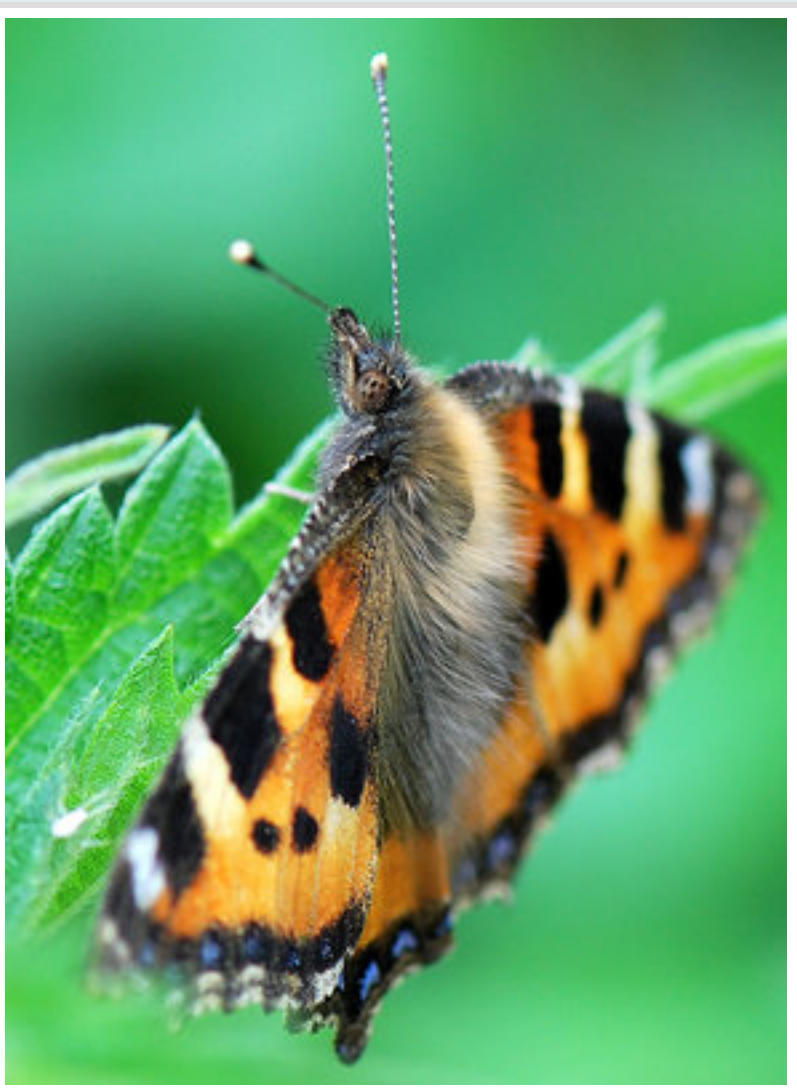
by Wurzel, 23-Jul-14 11:24 AM GMT

Cheers David 😊 I know what you mean about the end of the season I always feel the same when Silver Spotted Skippers are reported – mind you there's still another month or two to go yet and maybe we'll get lucky and have an Indian summer with 3rd brood Walls 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 I'm still looking at every Hedge Brown I see but the best ones are always up at Ffos-y-ffin at my Outlaws – but I'm visiting them soon 😊

09-07 2014 Field and The Devenish

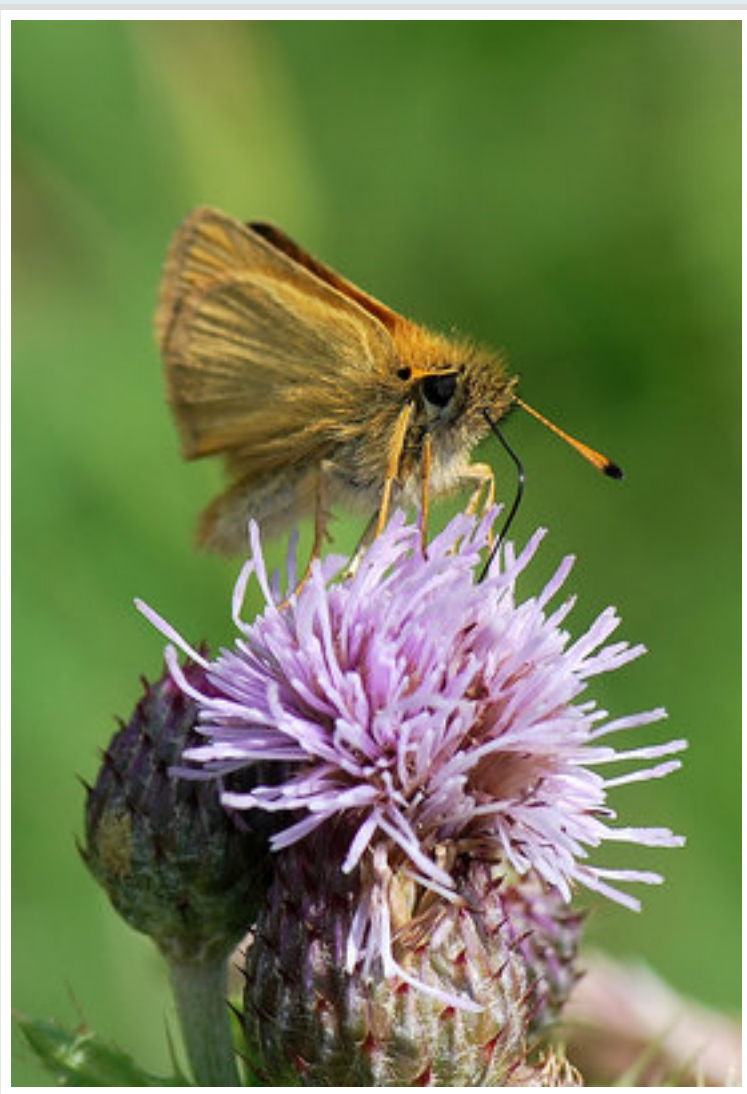
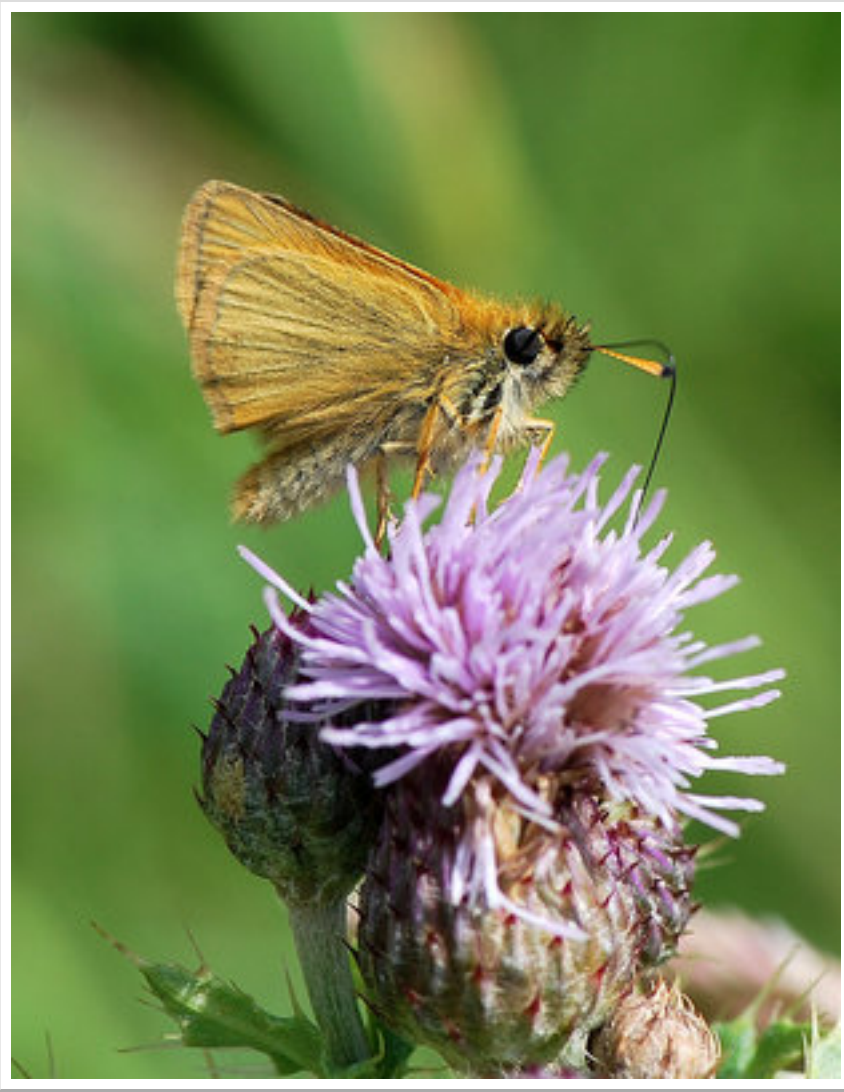
I took advantage of the good weather and headed out to have a look at the small Field in the local housing estate as by now the Smessex should be out in good numbers. As I walked up the path towards the field a Small Tort caught my eye as it was in an unusual posture. I approached it half expecting it to nip off as I'd gotten too close to quicker but it stayed there appearing to cling on for dear life. Eventually it moved on and approaching the nettle leaf all became clear as there was a lovely clutch of eggs.



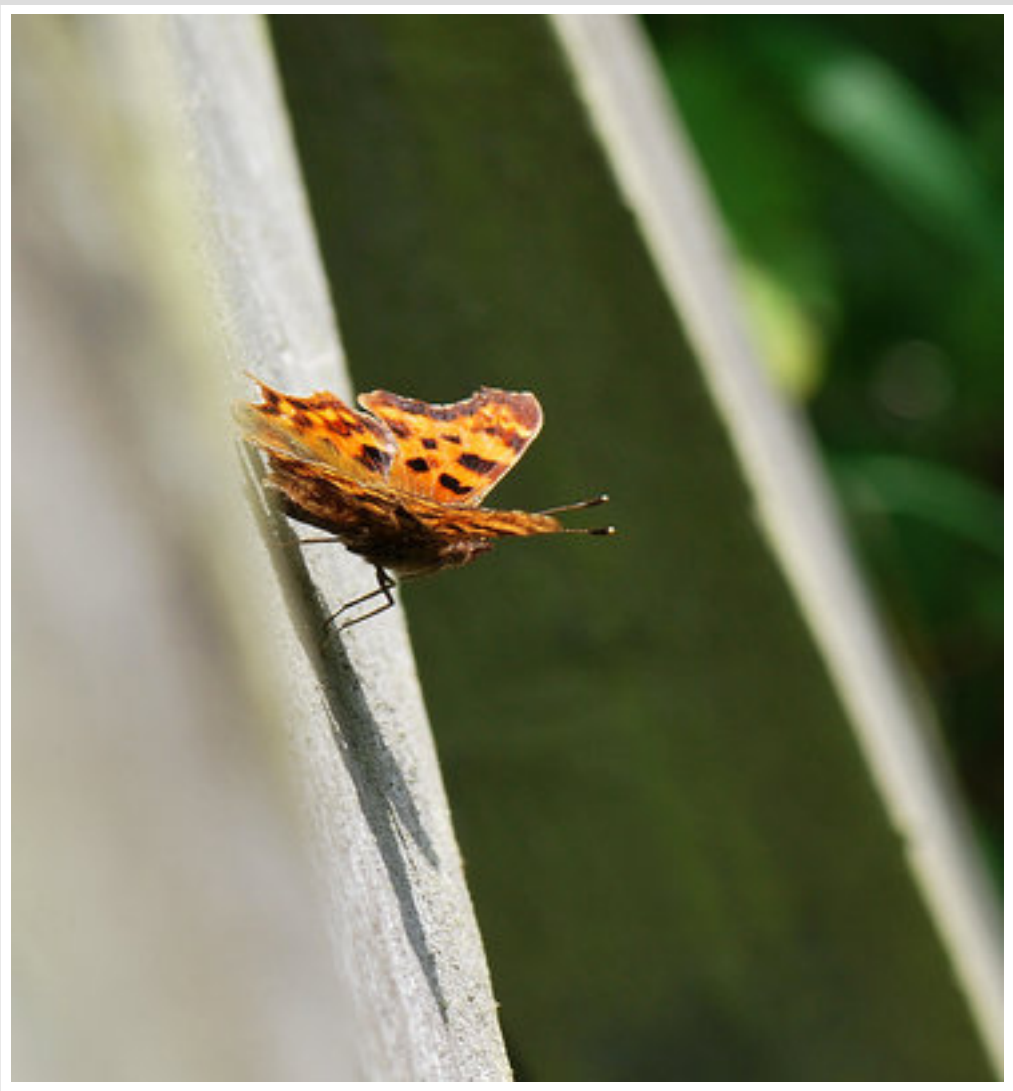


On the field proper there were all the usual suspects but I eschewed most to focus on the Skippers and over the next 20 minutes I managed to find members of all three species. Although the odd other species did slip through the net. The Large Skippers seemed to be well past their best apart from the odd female which still looked in reasonable nick. Next in terms of wear were the Small Skippers with the thick dense orange colour fading and scales missing. The Essex are the best looking glittering if they caught the light just so. Happy with the Skipper haul I headed back to work ready to face the next onslaught.





I also made a quick stop off at The Devenish on the way home. It was a hive of activity with Browns all over the place. When I walked through the Meadow they would explode from the grass in front of me and then fly around before landing a few steps ahead, to then repeat the procedure as I continued to make my way to the large Bramble just over the stile. This was entertaining but frustrating as it meant making an accurate count pointless. I checked out the Bramble and Ringlets, Meadow Browns, marbled Whites and Hedge Browns were all feeding and flitting about never sitting still long enough for me to select a target. A quick run up to the top of the Down still didn't produce a Chalk Hill but I'll persevere. On the way back to car my way was blocked by the H Comma which had decided to take on the role of Gatekeeper.



Have a goodun

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-14 10:17 AM GMT

10-07-2014 Martin Down

Having seen my first DGFs I was looking forward to catching up with them again so I again got changed at work and after the meeting flew over to Martin Down to make the most of both the good weather and also the evening light. Loading up in the car park I decided to try the hollow at the start of Bokerley first and so off I set. There were some bits and bobs flitting around, the odd Smessex and Meadow Brown as well as the obligatory Small Tortoiseshell.

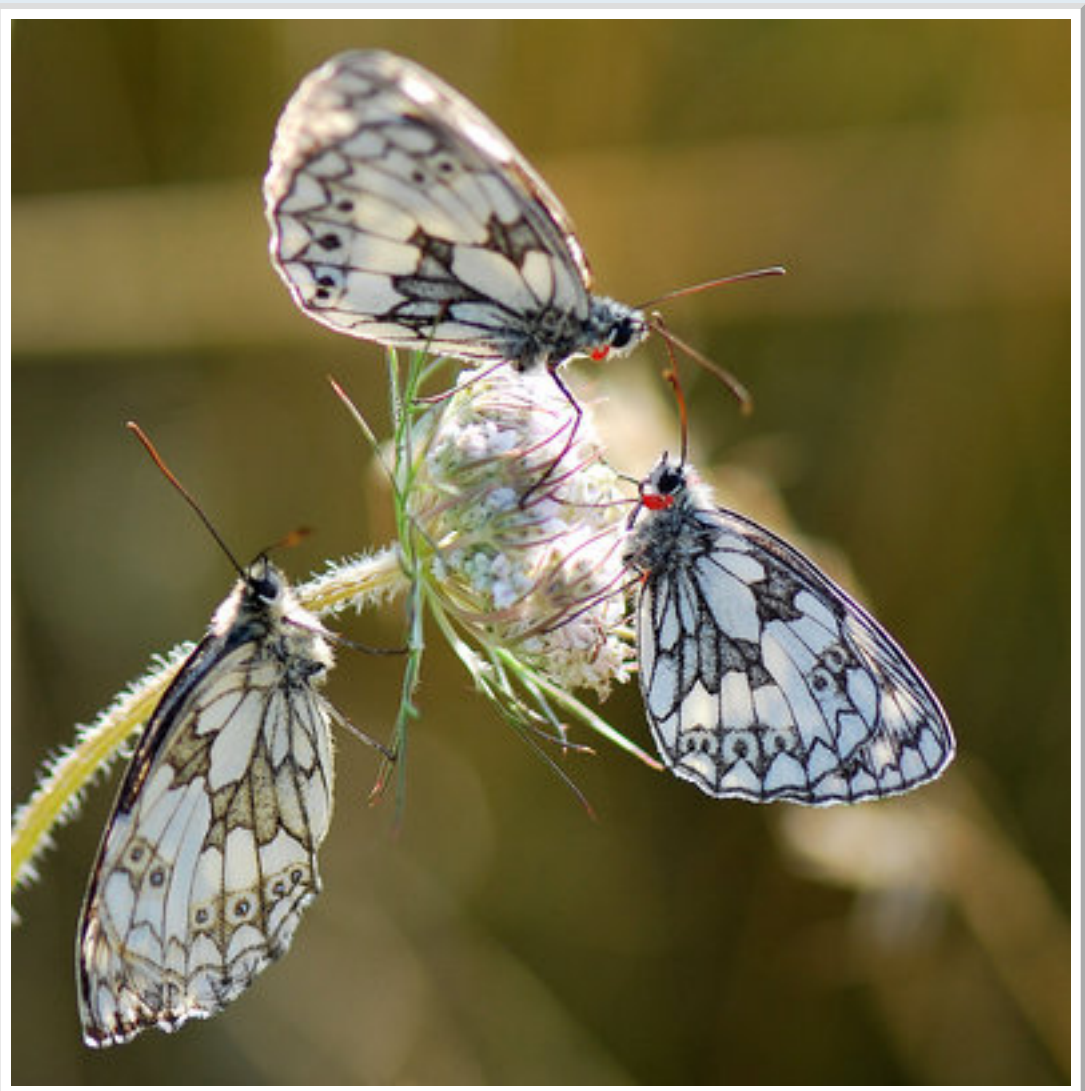


I carried on down into the hollow where swathes had been laid flat by previous visitors. So to avoid further disturbance or damage I tried to stick to the paths through the swathes of grass or use the paths already trampled down. It was tricky work as the butterflies weren't hampered in the same way as me and they would float lazily above the grass heads like a ship on the ocean. Meadow Browns, Smessex and Marbled Whites were all around and so I tried to get my eye in on some Frits as that was what I'd come to see and more specifically to see if I could get a good closed wing shot.





Cursing both the wind; which would always seem to catch the butterfly just as it was closing it's wings sending it rocking all around and the blades of grass that would always suddenly appear across my shots I took a bit more of a wander round in the hollow. I was impressed with the sheer numbers of Smessex that were around buzzing up all over the place. Butterflies were also starting to congregate and flower tops would hold three Smessex or 2 Meadow Browns.



Slightly less irked I got back to DGF mode. As if to welcome back into the game a fantastic smoky female appeared. When she caught the light there was a purplish and then greenish sheen over the wings so at times I thought I'd discovered a Green Dark Green Fritillary. She was simply stunning!



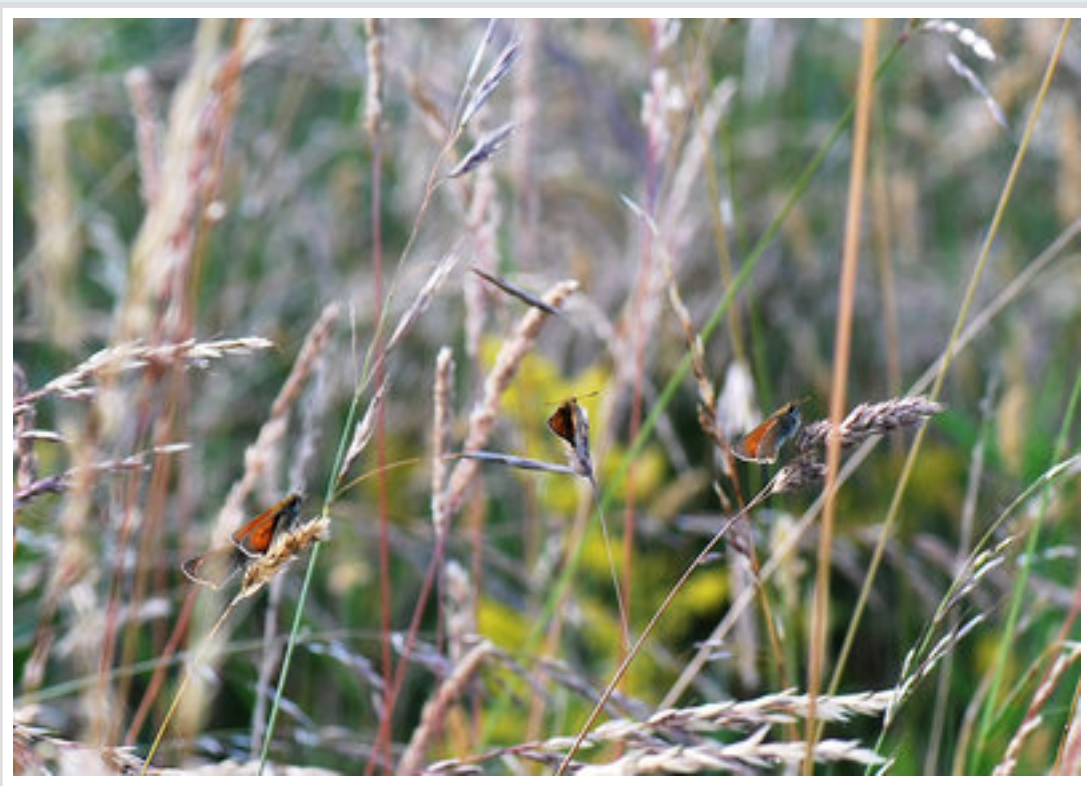


But my “wait by a Knapweed and see” technique whilst allowing close ups wasn’t effective for the under wing shots. Mind you I was happy with what I was getting...if only they’d close their wings a bit more.

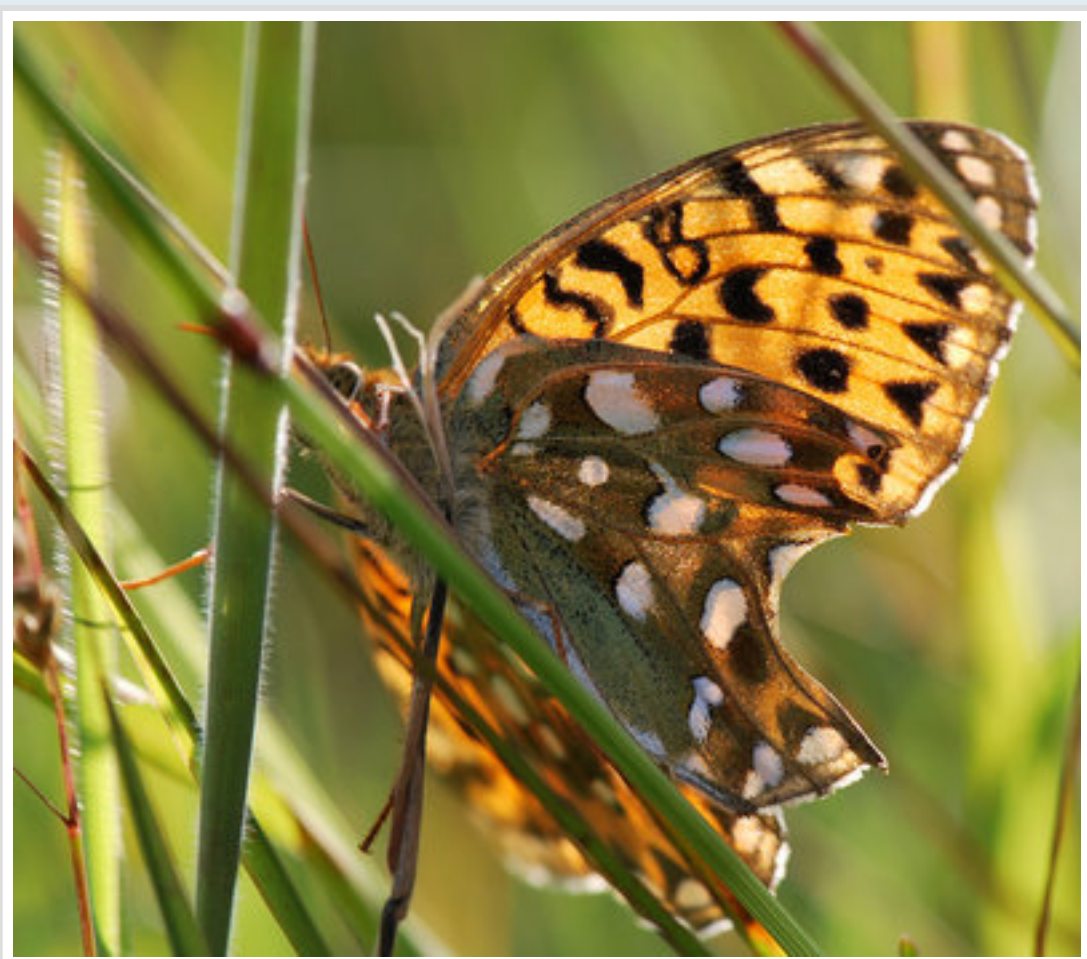


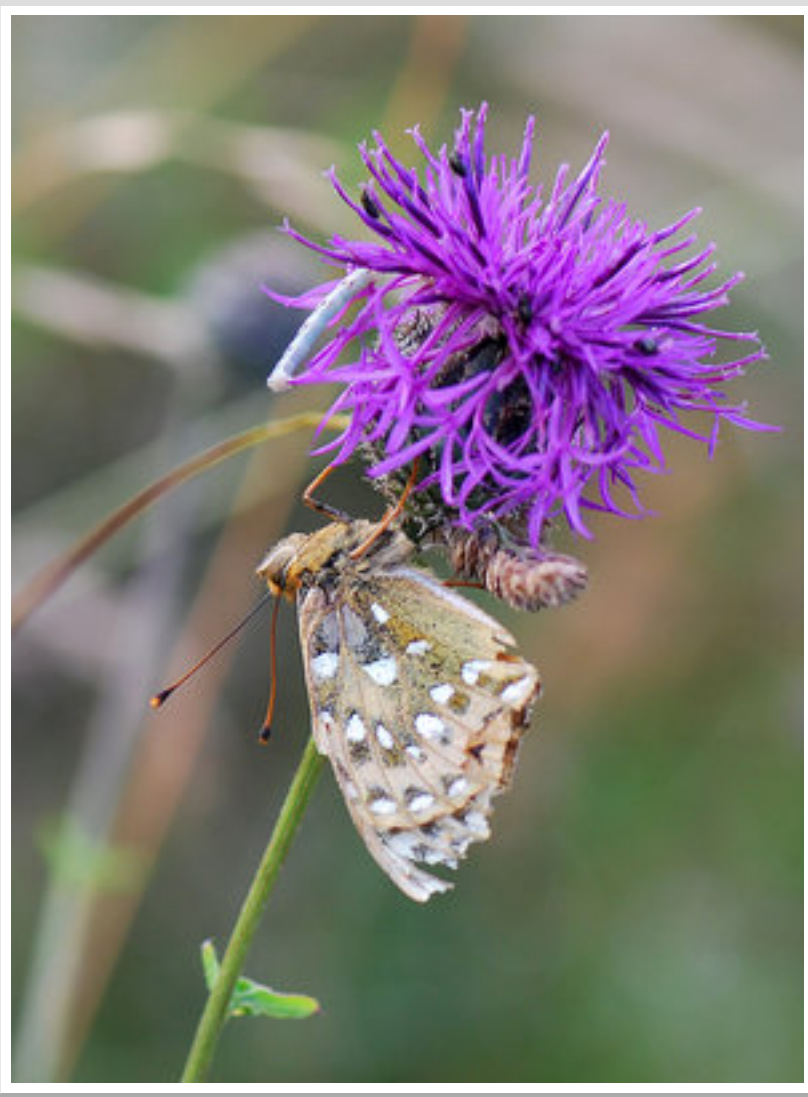
Again I was struck by how many Smessex there were around. And now as the evening wore on I would come across groups of 20+ Smessex all clustered

together among the grasses. Safety in numbers I suppose as the darkness is no friend.



The wind was a now more of a pain than ever as it was starting to get really gusty plus it was blowing clouds that were blocking out the sun. All butterflies would disappear down into the grasses to suddenly erupt once the sun would reappear. So I took to waiting and snapping and managed a couple of under wing shots. It was just unfortunate that the individuals I happened across had nicks in the wing or were really old and tired looking.





It was getting to the time of the evening when most activity had ceased and the butterflies were all bedding down. I noticed that the DGFs would disappear down low amongst the grasses and were rendered invisible. I was getting tired and hungry now so was just thinking about giving up when the greenish tinge on one DGF stopped me short.



Finally I got a semi decent under wing shot just as I was packing up for the night and I was actually winding my way homewards. There must be an easier way of getting those gorgeous closed wing shots regularly rather than just relying on getting lucky? I need to get a method sorted for next year...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

p.s. - extra points for spotting the 2 Groundhogs songs...

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 24-Jul-14 09:55 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

I love your Dark Green Fritillaries from Martin Down 😊 The female and the last 2 male open wing in the grass shots are superb. I am very envious as this is one of my favourites, I seem to have missed best of them this year 😞 Your Marbled White threesome is also great 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 25-Jul-14 08:45 PM GMT

Catching up again Wurzel 😊 lovely shots especially the DGF's 😊

'Darkness is no friend' is the only one I know 😊 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 25-Jul-14 10:39 PM GMT

Female DGFs are just amazing in contrast to the males - the one I saw at Denbies the other day was huge - easily as big as a SWF and dwarfing the Chalkhills around it. Lovely shots, Wurzel - and the other song is "like a ship on the ocean"? 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-14 04:57 PM GMT

Cheers Jack 😊 Sorry you haven't caught up with DGFs this year, but that's one of the good things about butterflies - there's always next year 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 I sometimes wonder what would happen if I ever actually catch up with my PD 😊 One point for "Dark..." 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 DGFs are massive ginger beasts 😊 Excellent knowledge of the grandfather of Grunge 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-14 11:52 PM GMT

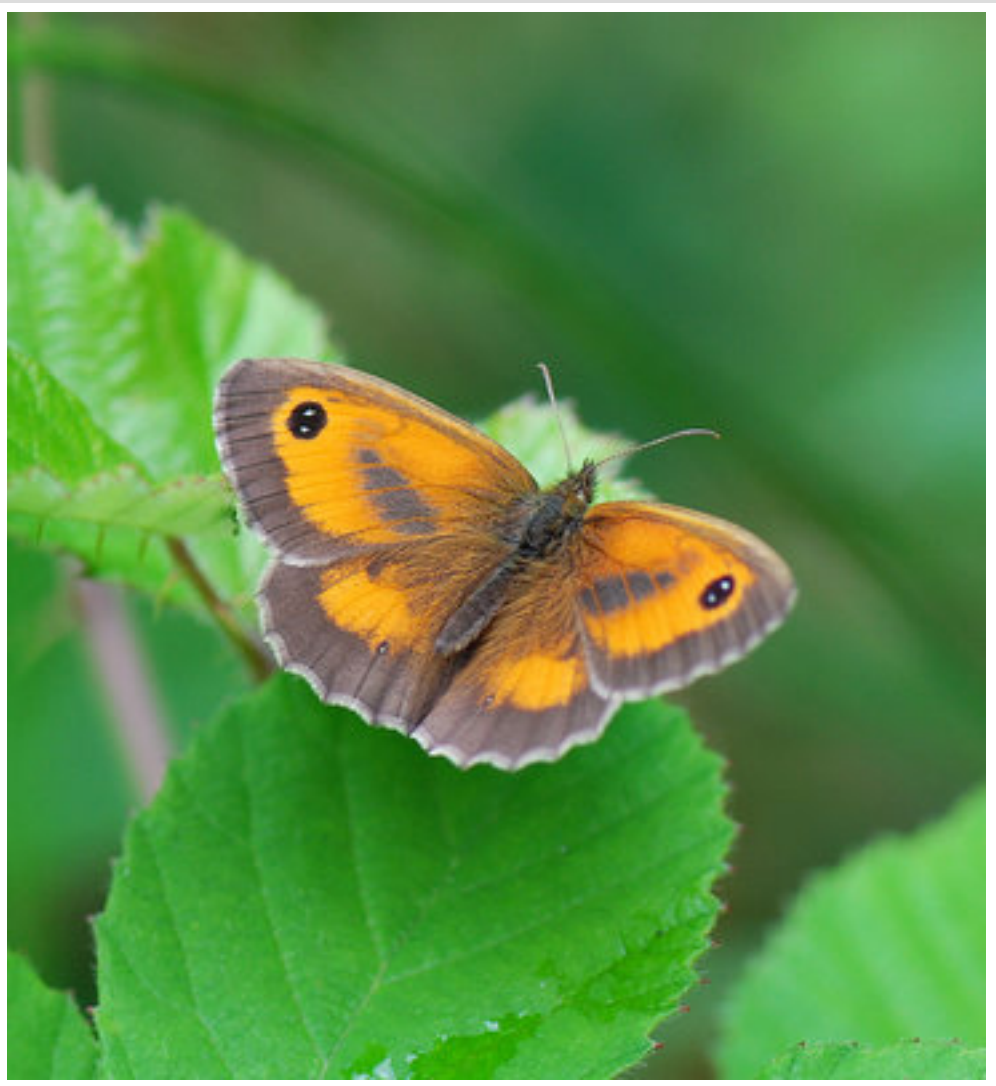
Bentley Wood 13-07-2014

Having only the briefest if glimpses of His Nibbs last weekend I thought I better have another try for Purple Emperor so off I headed to Bentley Wood again...

Once again it was quiet in the car park and so I made off down the main ride towards the cross roads. I'd arrived early and it was pretty cool so I was fairly confident that I wouldn't see much until I was further into the wood but I still switched constantly from scanning the path ahead and the tops of the trees. I'd gotten down to just past the hotspot and couldn't understand what had happened as huge swathes of Bracken had been trampled down flat. It was quite shocking to see and saddening especially when a Ringlet forlornly fluttered across the gap. There were some butterflies here amongst the devastation; a few Large Skippers, Ringlets and Meadow Browns as well as Hedge Browns and a couple of Silver Washed Frits.



At the cross roads I headed left down towards Donkey Copse noting a fresh Peacock, White Admiral and another couple of Silver Washed on the way. A familiar figure was up ahead, Jenks, and so we caught up and then settled to down to keep a look out for His Nibbs on the corner. Various bits and pieces passed by – a White Admiral, Silver Washed and eventually some Purple Hairstreaks jinked around forward and backwards higher up. Meadow Browns and Hedge Browns were all over the place and kept me occupied while we waited for an audience with Him. A brief foray further along the track produced more of the same with the addition of another Peacock before I arrived back at the corner to be informed that He had out in an appearance. Eventually with the clock ticking onwards towards 'home time' the unmistakable figure cut across the sky as He flew from one side of the track to another and disappeared among the tree tops. This may have been only a brief view but the bat like cut of His jib made it confirmation of my previous sighting and so a definite addition to the Yearly Tally. No shots but there's always next year.



Wishing Jenks well I made my way back to the car park stopping very occasionally for anything that caught my eye. I was back on the main track just beyond the trampled area when I saw a female Silver Washed behaving oddly. She was flying low to the ground, staying in the shade and tightly circling the trees occasionally perching on them. I eventually sussed out what she was doing as I was able to stalk up to her. She would land wings perpendicular to the trunk and then swing her abdomen round to lay eggs in the cracks and crevices of the tree. I'd always assumed that they'd lay them on the ground on or near Violets as they're the larval food plant so I'm guessing that the first thing the cats do is crawl or abseil down to the ground once hatched? Witnessing this behaviour for the first time made my day and any lack of Purple shots was soon forgotten.



In the afternoon I took the girls to the park and the little wild area held a Smessex and a Small White landed on the Lavender that lines a neighbours garden. And so ended a rather enjoyable day.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 27-Jul-14 10:02 AM GMT

Wow, interesting to hear about the Silver Washed Fritillary. I would have thought they laid their eggs directly on violets, too. I wonder if this behaviour is normal and if any other Fritillaries do the same. Great pictures of it's under wings, too!

I have been looking at your pictures of Smessex Skippers. I am going through the same dilemma with some I saw in Spain. I am erring towards Essex, but the antennae aren't as obvious as on yours.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-14 10:04 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, cracking photos of the female SWF 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

Bentley Wood 13-07-2014

... I'd always assumed that they'd la them on the ground on or near Violets as they're the larval food plant so I'm guessing that the first thing the cats do is crawl or abseil down to the ground once hatched?

Wurzel

The first thing they do after hatching and eating the eggshell is go into hibernation on the tree. The caterpillar doesn't come down looking for violets until the spring.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 30-Jul-14 07:27 AM GMT

Great photography in the egg-laying shots SWF Wurzel. By comparison my ones are indistinct and blurred. They are so fast and furtive, usually laying in the shadows that you did exceptionally well to get those shots 🍷

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-14 10:37 PM GMT

Cheers Nick 😊 When it comes to Smessex I'm pretty confident about the ID's, but not confident enough all the time to actually say what I think it is 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 That's interesting to know I'll have to do a bit more reading up 😊

Cheers Pauline 😊 If I had been using film that would have been a very, very expensive shot to get – the bin would have been full! 🤪 😊

This has been a long time coming as I was behind with my PD but catching up and then disaster struck – I had to go on a family camping holiday to the Isle of Purbeck with the possibility of Wall Browns, Graylings and Lulworth Skippers – oh the torture 😊 😊 However that means that I'm even further behind on my PD 😊

14-07-2014 Larkhill and The Devenish

This week started as pretty much the rest of the week progressed. Where possible I'd stop at Larkhill in the morning and then do a mad rush to The Devenish in the afternoon...

This morning I checked the end of the Western path first and stumbled across a lovely second brood Green-veined White, it looked glorious in the morning sun. A few Marbled Whites still hung around looking past their best now but otherwise it was quite quiet.

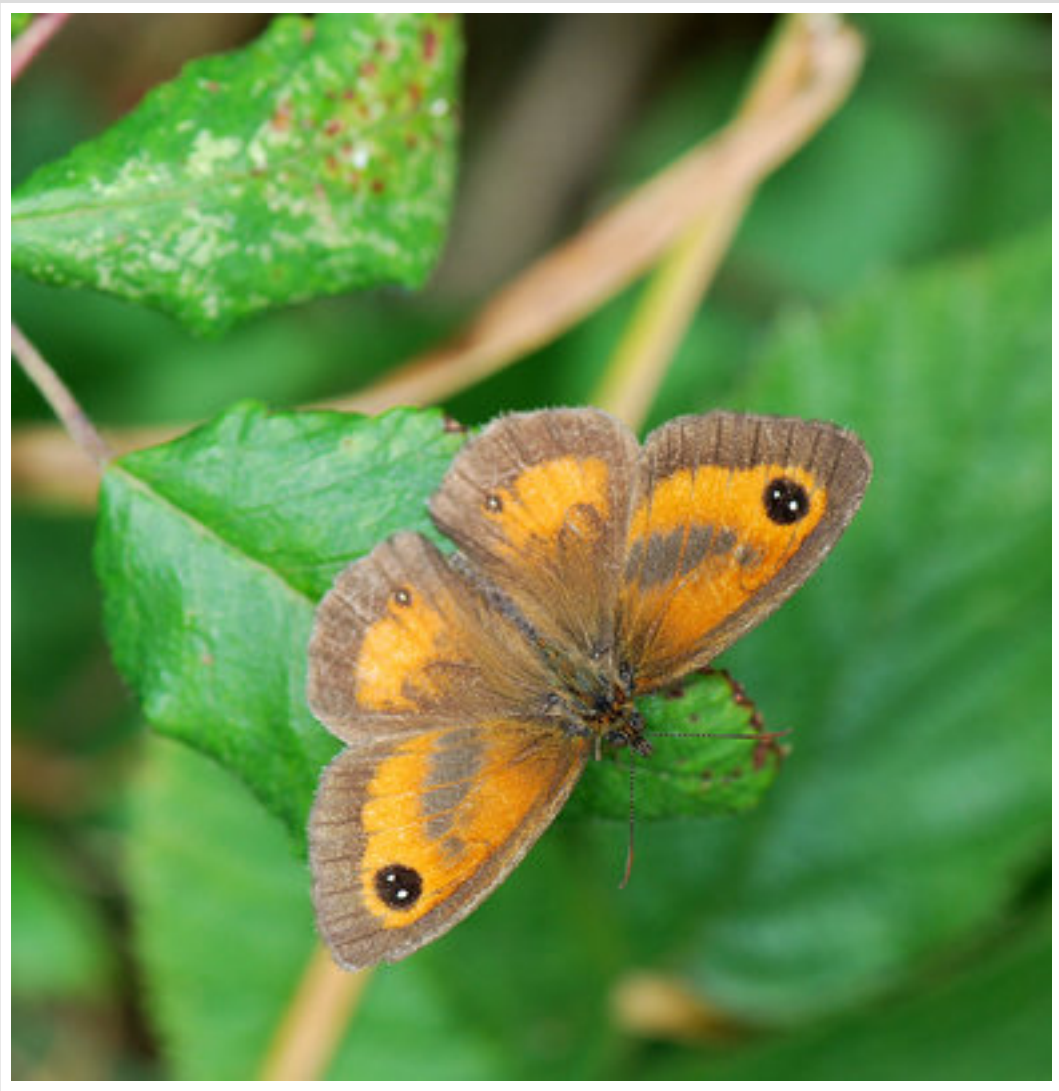


Hence I moved over to the Northern path which was quieter still apart from the very entrance which held a few Hedge Browns. Both males showed some nice variations with the first having more of a figure of 8 than an eye on the fore-wing. The second was an 'excessa' (I think that's what they're called) only this had 2 dots on the left fore-wing and only one on the right. I headed onto work ready to face the day after my 5 minute stop-off.



The journey to The Devenish gets more and more torturous each time I make it. I always seem to have a smooth run at the start which lulls me into a sense of false security only for something to slow me up on the later stages. Today it was a Pole driving at 10-15 mph below the speed limit from Upavon to the Countess Roundabout (almost 2/3 of the entire journey). I sussed out why - I think he thought the speed limit signs were in kph!

Once at The Devenish I had reduced time so set off at a pace up towards 'The Down'. I practically ran it with my eyes closed - only to get to the top of the Down and scan around...and not see any Chalk Hill Blues. No matter how hard I looked, stared, willed them to appear I didn't see a single ghostly blue Chalk Hill. So I worked my way back down the Down and started noticing what was around. Mainly it was the Meadow Browns and surprisingly large numbers of Hedge Browns as well as a stunning Peacock.



15-07-2014 Larkhill and The Devenish

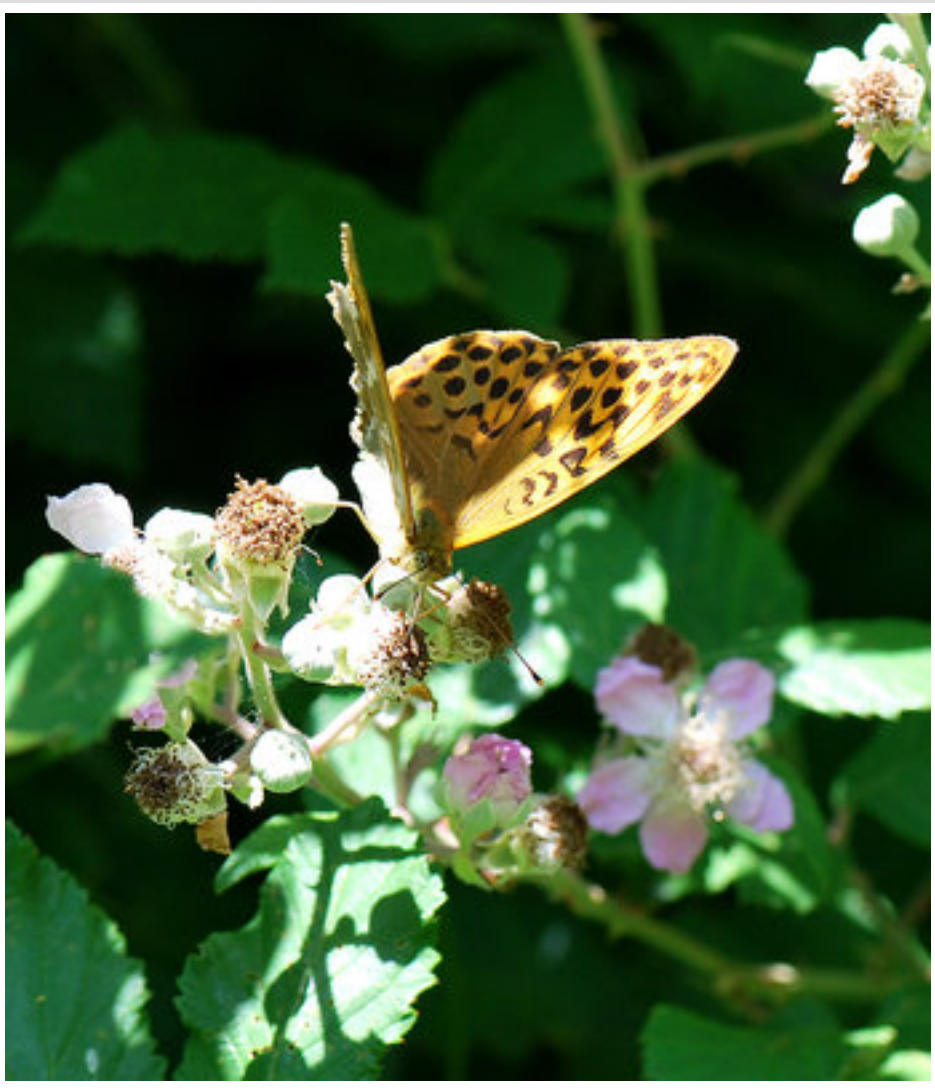
The stop-off today was briefer still and all I really had time for was a quick once over near the car park and enough time for a female Hedge Brown and a Meadow Brown to settle. The Meadow Brown was looking disturbingly worn. If they keep up at this rate there mightn't be any butterflies left by September!



The move to The Devenish later was again fraught. Today it was the turn of the 'old biddy' to slow me down, dawdling along and just when the opportunity to overtake appeared another car would rush towards me snuffing any hopes of getting past. I don't mind driving slowly but it would have been nice if she'd found an extra couple of mph as then I could have stayed comfortably in fourth gear...

Still I got my rewards in the form of my first Devenish Silver-washed. It was up on the patch of Bramble which is proving to be something of a hotspot. The only drawback is that it reaches back so far that the butterflies are never really 'close'. Still I didn't mind as you can clearly see what it is so is good enough for photographic 'proof' purposes.





Up on the Down - yep - still no Chalk Hills! So I scurried back down and through the Meadow and there was the Silver-washed to wave me off.

Have a goodun

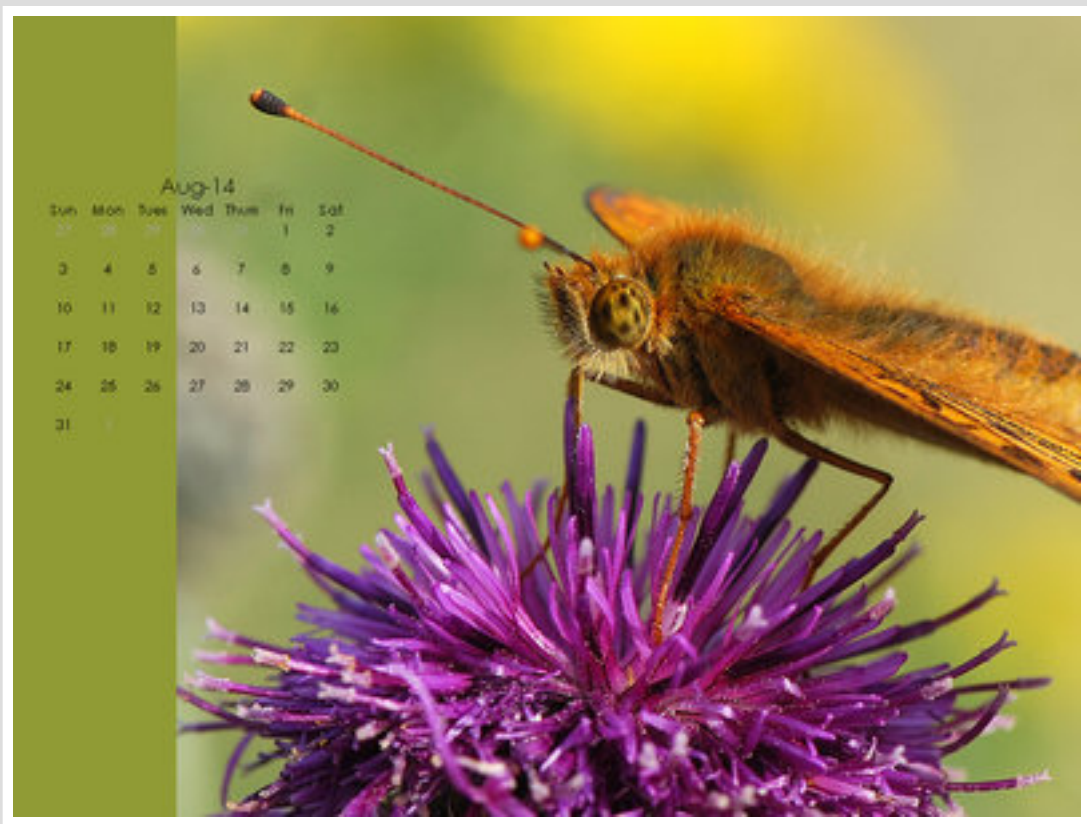
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Aug-14 01:42 PM GMT

August 2014

This time of year is great but also slightly depressing as the end (hopefully a good way away yet) of the season is in sight.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Aug-14 05:07 PM GMT

Larkhill 16-07-2014

I had slightly longer this morning as I'd made it in good time from home which was just as well as the butterflies were playing hard to get. Despite the early hour it was already dam hot so the butterflies were already on the wing. Meadow and Hedge Browns were all over the place including when I set off up the Westbound path...

After much waiting (a whole 2 of my 5 minutes) a Green-veined White finally deigned to settle. It then decided that it would look better on a different flower and hence moved off.



A large dark butterfly took off from basking on the well trodden path and landed in a nearby tree. It was revealed as a Peacock and watched me quizzically as I gently approached. It must have considered me a non-threat as it then read my mind and turned round so I could get a nice closed wing profile shot.





Time was up and I risked being late for work to make one last stop-off for a strangely light Gatekeeper - more of a Hedge Blonde than Brown.



The Devenish 16-07-2014

So I've had the foreign driver mistaking mph for kph, then there was the old biddy that could barely see over the steering wheel. Well tonight it was a double act; the over considerate driver and caravan tower 🙄. As I approached the 90degree bend at Upavon behind the same slow driver I'd been following since Pewsey instead of carrying on round the corner as we had right of way flashed another driver waiting at the junction letting him pull in front of us - with his massive caravan trailing behind. Why he did this I don't know - there was nothing behind me so the caravaner would only have had to waited a further 10 seconds or so? Then later on I would have been able to overtake my slow nemesis but "Mr aren't I nice" had made my journey even more excruciatingly painful with the added little twists of the knife as; a - I wouldn't be able to overtake both cars and caravan, b - the over considerate driver would be enjoying the smug and self satisfied glow the whole way! 😏

Needless to say my stop at The Devenish when I eventually reached it was the most frenetic yet. I only stopped sprinting twice the whole time I was on site, even up the Down (my calves were on fire after that). Once for a Peacock on the path and the second for a 6-spot Burnet which was evading the reach of a cab spider - just! The rest of the species seen can be summed up as 'pretty much the same' and still no Chalk Hills...



I think I need some Zen training to deal with this daily butterfly grind. 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 01-Aug-14 06:46 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Well tonight it was a double act; the over considerate driver and caravan tower 😬.

...and I thought these things only happen to me 😊

On my last visit to Otmoor, I'd driven all the way down the lane to Beckley, to be met by a 'Road Closed' sign, so a long detour back to the main road for the alternative route to the Moor!

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 01-Aug-14 09:37 PM GMT

You should try dealing with the M25, Wurzel – most of my trips out away from home involve this ghastly road. A catalogue of extraordinary driving... 😬 Those Chalkhills must come soon – I keep forgetting we're looking back in time a fortnight in your diary at the moment. This also explains the vibrant orange colour of your Hedge Browns (mine are fading fast 😞)!

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 02-Aug-14 10:35 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

.... the over considerate driver and caravan tower 😬. As I approached the 90degree bend at Upavon behind the same slow driver I'd been following since Pewsey instead of carrying on round the corner as we had right of way flashed another driver waiting at the junction letting him pull in front of us – with his massive caravan trailing behind. Why he did this I don't know – there was nothing behind me so the caravaner would only have had to waited a further 10 seconds or so? Then later on I would have been able to overtake my slow nemesis but "Mr aren't I nice" had made my journey even more excruciatingly painful with the added little twists of the knife as; a – I wouldn't be able to overtake both cars and caravan, b – the over considerate driver would be enjoying the smug and self satisfied glow the whole way!

A few years back I passed my advanced driving test with my work and this sort of situation was discussed at length during the training in the run up to the test. It is known as 'misplaced courtesy' and can actually lead to accidents. In your case, what if a cyclist had come past the inside of you and the car that flashed and the other car had hit him/her. Or the caravaner pulled out into the path of a car coming the other way (purely hypothetical of course as I don't know the road). Guess who would get the blame ?.. he wouldn't be so smug and satisfied then.

It is a lovely relaxing hobby we have 😊😬

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-14 11:38 PM GMT

Cheers for the empathy Mike – and it's always when you're so looking forward to going somewhere 😬

Cheers Dave 😊 I did get the Chalk Hills eventually but it took some doing 😊 I'm trying to catch up with my PD but every time I get another post written I go out the next day – so have another one to write 😬 By the way isn't the M25 one of Dante's Cricles of Hell? 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 It's good to have an official name for one form of the annoying driver, it will drastically increase the quality of my 'in-car' rants' 😬

17-07-2014 Larkhill

This morning was a funny one as despite having plenty of time (the full five minutes) it was pretty quiet and there was almost an end of the season feel in the air as the next brood of blues haven't arrived yet and the earlier browns are waning fast.

As I headed off up the Westbound path I was surprised as I didn't see any Hedge Browns and it felt like I'd gone back in a time machine as there were 5 Smessex, 3 Ringlets, 4 Marbled Whites and 7 Meadow Browns – all past their best. All species which I've been encountering for just over a month now yet the later emergers were nowhere to be seen.



17-07-2014 Break Duty

As I had the joys of a Staff meeting after work I wouldn't be able to make my usual stop-off at The Devenish (some respite from the car mania I guess) so instead to make up for it I took my camera on my break duty. It has the added benefit of freaking the smokers out a little bit more as they think I don't need to creep up to catch them out I can use my 'telephoto lens', I haven't explained that my lens is a Macro nor that when carrying it the lens cap is on until I see something interesting insect wise as the camera makes for an easier duty time. 😊

First up was round the back of the Sports Centre and the diesel store and a Small Tortoiseshell did a brief fly-by and landed for a fraction of a second on a the diesel tank. I carried on round to the allotments that back on to the school grounds and a couple of whites (a large and 2 small) were flying and eying up the greenery much to the chagrin of the morning gardeners. Also flying were a couple of Smessex and a Ringlet keeping low to the small fence and down among the grasses. Luckily the butterfly posed between the gaps in the wire fence so I could get a shot.



I carried on off site to check on another few haunts round the local estate. A Small White landed for a while on a hedge so I managed to creep up for a few final shots. The garage area was quiet both in terms of butterflies and smokers and the walk back to the main block across the field threw up about 4 Meadow Browns and 2 more Small Tortoiseshells. I'd missed out on my daily Chalk Hill check but it was nice to see some local butterflies and not have the added hassle of dealing with those pesky kids.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 03-Aug-14 11:51 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel, catching up again 😊 loads of lovely recent shots 😊 and great shots of the ovipositing SW Frits 😊
On our travels we also see some appalling and sometimes dangerous driving, where's the plod when you need them 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Aug-14 11:46 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 The Plod are generally waiting with their little speed guns to catch you when you do 1 mph over the speed limit rather than getting the dangerous drivers off the road 😊

08-07 2014 Larkhill

Things were a bit more active this morning and I headed from the car park about a 100m along the Westbound path. There were a few Smessex on the way and the local Peacock went up from the path where it seems to have set up its own personal basking spot. A few aged Marbled Whites and Ringlets put in a late turn. there were also good numbers of Meadow Browns although the real star of the day for me was a gorgeous and very relaxed female Hedge Brown. All too soon I had to tear myself away and back to work.





18-07-2014 The Devenish

At the other end of the day I had to steel myself, took a deep breath and set off in the car wondering what would delay me on my journey to The Devenish tonight? As it turned out today was one of those freaky days when I made it without a single car in front to slow me down and so I arrived at The Devenish relaxed and with my full complement of time.

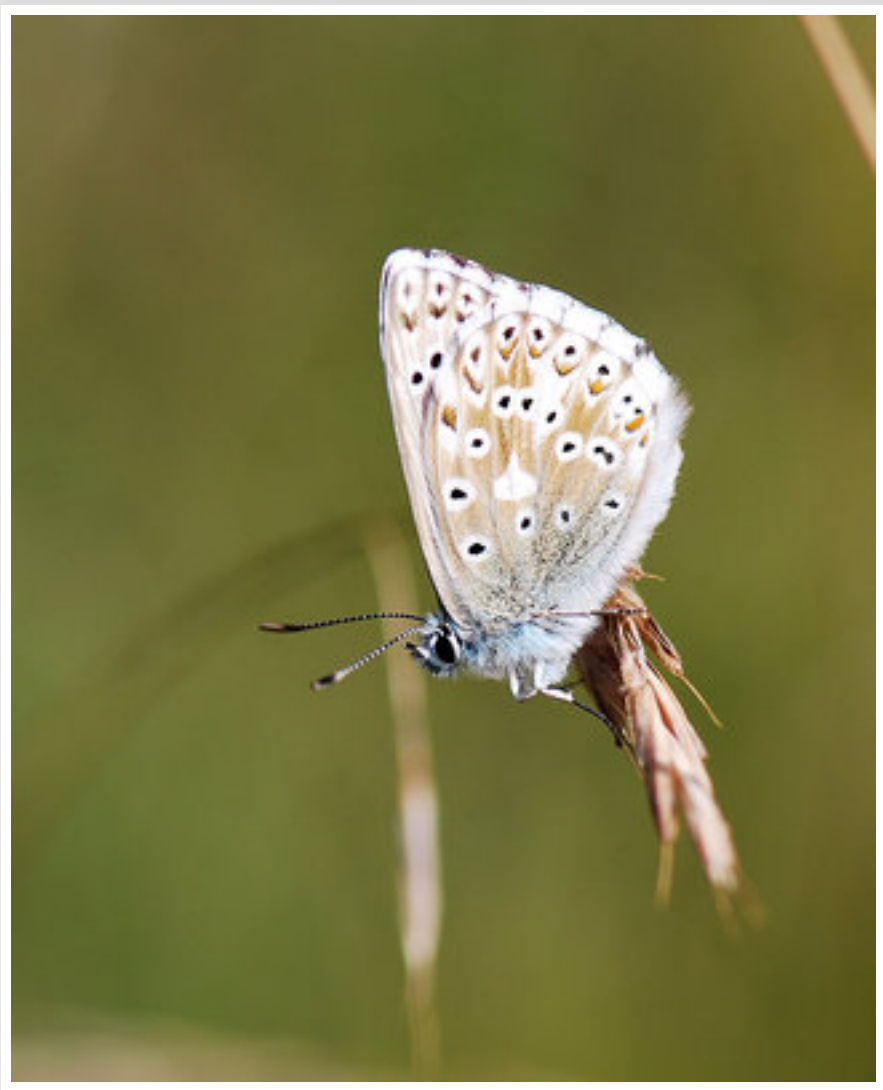
The car park was busy with the Comma taking up guard in the trees above the path and a Green-veined White and Peacock fed on the Hemp Agrimony amongst the flitting orange and brown flashes of the Hedge Browns.



The Meadow was alive with butterflies all flying no higher than waist height apart from the pair of Specklies having a mini battle by the gate. A few Marbled Whites would dash by as numerous Meadow Browns would erupt with each footfall as well as the occasional Smessex buzzing off in a wide arc skimming the grass tops. The only butterfly here that was up high was another Peacock feeding on the small clump of Bramble near the same gate that was causing such a problem amongst the Specklies.



Up by the stile the Brambles held a Red Admiral, 2 Peacocks and there were Hedge Browns all over it. After several successive visits and no sighting of a Chalk Hill I was tempted to stay by the Brambles but I braved more disappointment and headed up the side of the Down anyway. I was about half way up when something ghostly blue passed by in front of my eyes and carried on down the side of the Down. I scurried after it sticking to the narrow paths and tracks until it finally settled. My first Chalk Hill of 2014 finally.





As I was savouring the moment I got another surprise, an aged DGF whizzed past me my first from this site but it didn't stop for a shot so I said goodbye to the Chalk Hill and headed back down the Down stopping just long enough to marvel at the Whites all clustering around a small patch of flowers near the Bramble bush. In a moment there was a Brimstone, Small White and 2 Large Whites all feeding from the same few flowers.



Finally I had my Chalk Hill and it was from The Devenish so perseverance finally paid off, as did the sweat, blood and cursing!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-14 11:47 PM GMT

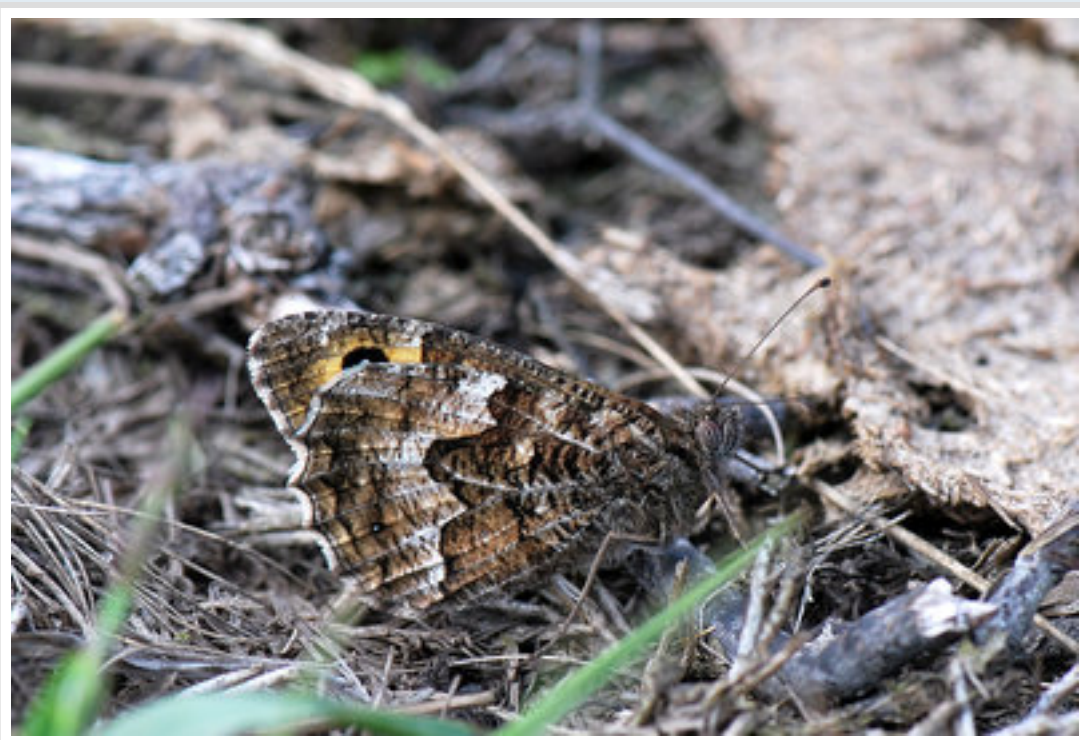
Godshill 20-07-2014

Having ticked off Chalk Hills on Friday I realised that I really only had four more species that I could realistically see this year. So on Sunday morning I had a decision to make. Wood Whites were too far, Brown Hairstreaks need another week or three before they'll be around in good numbers and Silver Spots are only just out and I only had 2 1/2 hours to play with so I went for Graylings at Godshill.

After a great drive with some Leafhound cranked up 😎 I pulled into the car park and raced across the Cricket pitch. Having reached top of the hill there was a real contrast in habitats; behind me Oak trees reached to the sky over the road and there was the lush, short turf of the cricket green yet before me lay the desolate waste of heath land and bogs, bare patches exposed where the wind whipped up the sand and the sun baked the earth, spiky and scratchy dry plants clung on bitterly - brill I couldn't wait! I cast around for Grayling (the butterfly not the fish - unfortunate use of metaphor) and saw two straight out the bag along with a Small Tort (that's one at every site bar Slop Bog).

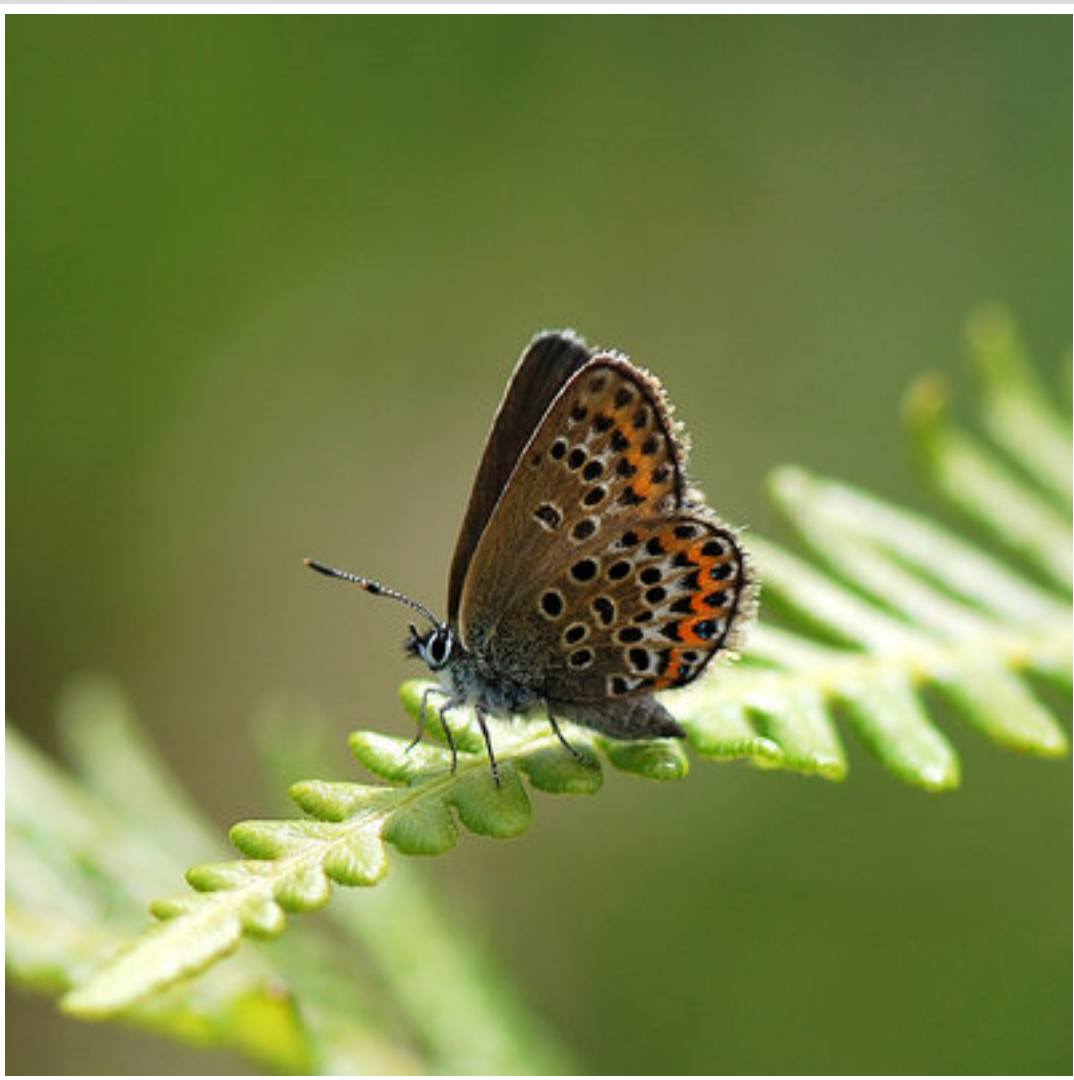


Target reached I carried on down the hill towards the triangle hotspot where I was hoping to find plenty more. I saw a couple more and soon got my eye in so I was able to distinguish between them and the false Grayling, the Meadow Brown. The later seems more 'flappy' flying more round the houses with a slower flight. Also they seem slightly smaller and contrast between the orange and dark brown can just be made out. The Grayling is more direct at times, less round the houses, jinking and much stronger. It appears larger, appears almost grey and has a interesting flight behaviour of gliding with wings held in a shallow V. The area just over the stream held a few more as well as a male Silver Stud and a Peacock.





On the point of the triangle I started up the path and there was another Peacock, a Large Skipper and 3 Small Heaths. I hung around this spot for most of the time and saw 4 G in one view so there were definitely more to be found. After a while I'd notched up another couple of Small Heaths, numerous Hedge and Meadow Browns including one lovely blonde MB and a female Silver Stud. But mainly I was just enjoyed the Grayling. They really are entertaining butterflies and I spent almost an a good 40 minutes with them, stalking them and watching them tilt their wings etc. What was really good fun was watching them settle and then seeing them disappear in front of my eyes only for them to erupt from my feet 15 cm away from where I was sure they'd landed (do they crawl through the heather?).







It seems that after saving my trousers from the washing machine for Purple Emperors the Grayling's appreciated my efforts as at least two Grayling showed interest in them and I was 'trousered' by two different individuals.



Eventually I had to head back but I stopped here and there on the way. There was another Silver Stud Blue (female) near the stream along with an Emperor Dragonfly flying like a freelance fiend. Half way up the hill I stopped again this time for a male Silver Stud, another 3 different Grayling, a male Brimstone, fresher Small Tortoiseshell and a lovely fresh Small Copper. They all turned up one after the other and I'd watch one, it would fly out of view or have its photo taken and just as I'd turn to leave the next butterfly would arrive, land or pop up in view.





My final shots of the day were of a Grayling which came to see me off showing up nicely on the white stones just before the cricket pitch. It rested there almost saying 'please take my photo'. And so ended an excellent adventure, most triumphant! 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 05-Aug-14 06:41 AM GMT

Entertaining report Wurzel and smashing shot of the in flight dragon fly 🦋

Re: Wurzel

by badgerbob, 05-Aug-14 01:19 PM GMT

That Silver-stud female is particularly nice, and a little late as well.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 05-Aug-14 06:26 PM GMT

Lovely Grayling pictures, Wurzel and good to find a Silver-studded Blue too – long vanished from near here now till next year. Is it my imagination but do Meadow Browns on Grayling sites do their best to imitate their bigger relatives? Quite different to how they behave in the fields and hedgerows.

By the way, is that spot Godshill near Fordingbridge? That's the only one I could find on the map, very close to a spot rejoicing in the delightful name of Sandy Balls... 🤔

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 05-Aug-14 08:11 PM GMT

Some nice Graylings and Silver-studded Blue Wurzel but my favourite is that in-flight Emperor Dragonfly 🦋🦋 . I tried for something similar the other day but your shot puts my attempts to shame.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Aug-14 11:50 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊 I was pretty chuffed with that one myself 😊

Cheers Bob 😊 The Silver Studs do last a fair old while at Godshill and I've seen them overlap with Grayling the last couple of years there now.

Cheers Dave 😊 Godshill is a late site for Silver Studs and it is near the wonderfully named Sandy Balls campsite – I used to wind people up telling them that it was a naturist camp site and so was aptly named as that's what you'd end up with... 😊 Many, many people fell for it 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 That was taken using Sports Mode and also making sure I had plenty of room on my memory card 🤪😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by kevling, 06-Aug-14 08:43 PM GMT

Great shot of the Emperor Draogonfly Wurzel. I've have been trying to get some shots of dragonflies in my local park. There are literally dozens of them, but do you think they will come below 7ft for the butterfly paparazzi?

Kev

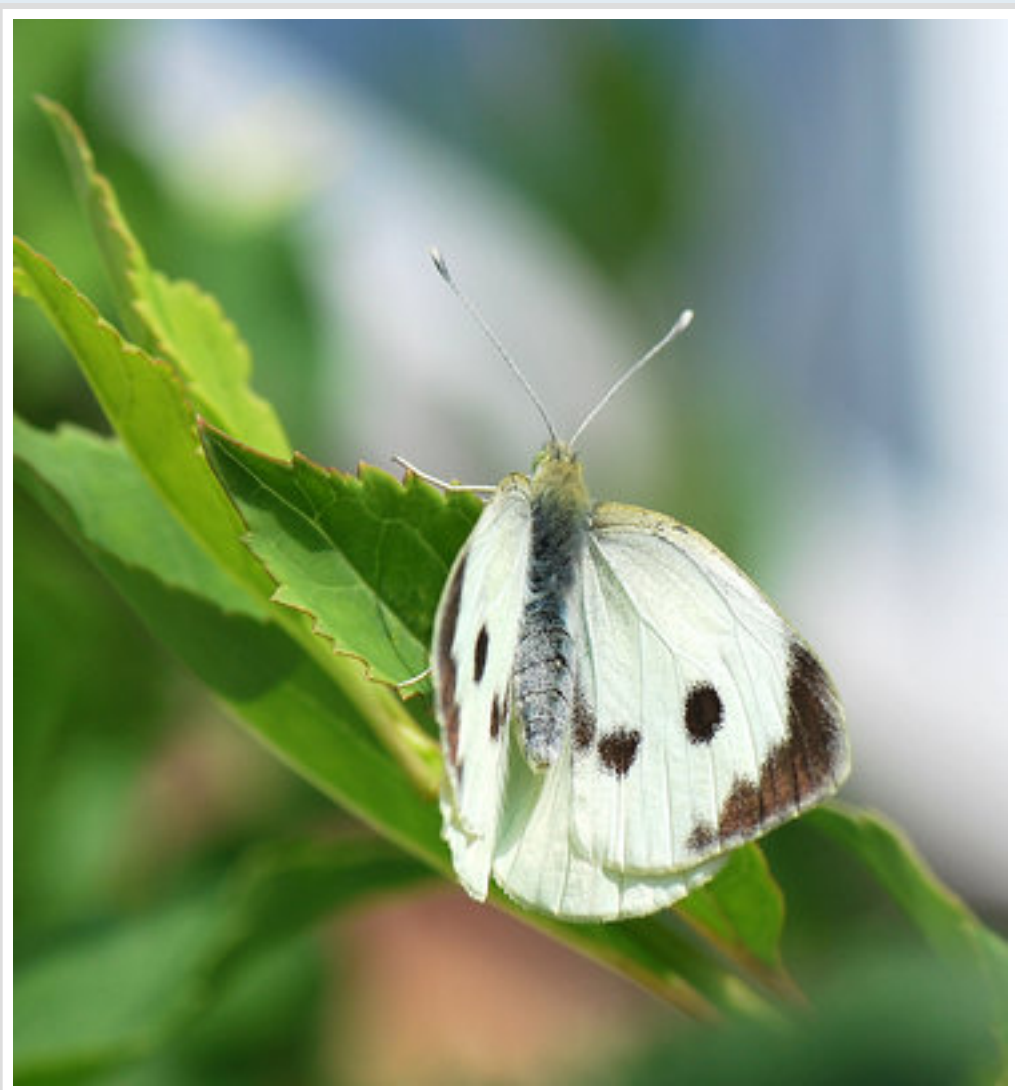
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-14 10:53 PM GMT

Cheers Kev 😊 They are a bu\$er to capture with a camera – my shots always come down to luck in the end 🤪

21-07-2014 The Devenish

I was going to be so busy at work today that I didn't get a chance to stop off at Larkhill. So between preparing assessments, timetables and changes to the curriculum I did manage to nip out to admire a female Large White and take a few shots.



Due to my lack of butterflying during the morning I was raring to go come the afternoon. I had a free last lesson so by 3:29 the car was packed and I was sitting in the staffroom waiting for the hands to tick to 3:30. When it did it was like the start of an old fashioned grand prix as I ran to me car, jumped into the seat and tore off with Reef blaring out today. The journey was again pretty good and so I arrived in good time, my Zen relaxation techniques certainly seem to be paying off and I healed my body with my mind. The car park was butterfly busy with a Small White, Comma and Peacock all fluttering round and two Speckled Woods taking up guard positions by the 'tunnel' from the car park to the Meadow. Once in the Meadow there were a couple of Skippers still hanging on in there and a Peacock feeding amongst the many, many Meadow Browns. There were also several Whites flitting forward and backward around the margins of the woods including a female Brimstone. The Bramble itself was alive with butterflies again numbering 7 Hedge Browns, 6 Meadow Browns, 3 Peacocks, 2 Ringlets and a Red Admiral – but it was too early in the year for a Partridge in there somewhere 😊



On the way up the Down some Marbled Whites glided by traversing the Down despite looking tatty their flying skills were still first rate as they nipped in amongst the darker, more bumbling Meadow and Hedge Browns. Half way up and a third of the way across the Down I found 2 male Chalk Hills. One would take off and then upset the other so I had the devils own time trying to follow them although perseverance did eventually pay off and I got a few nice open wing shots. As I made my way back towards the main path and the stairs cut into the side of the Down I found a pair in cop which was a nice bonus.





Back at the Bramble the single Peacock had increased to 4 and eventually three occupied the same flower head. The Brambles also had an odd looking biscuit coloured butterfly flitting about and taking nectar here and there. It turned out to be a discoloured Meadow Brown which had white patches on its hind wings. I don't know whether this was pathological or a genetic aberrant?



So from one there came four; it's great to see the numbers of Chalk Hills building at this great little site. Have a goodun

Re: Wurzel

by CJB, 07-Aug-14 09:37 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

The dragonfly picture is one of your best ever! Amazing picture.

Glad to see 'Reef' getting a mention: 'Oh place your ha aa aands..... on my so oo oul!'

To date the DGF's have eluded my mobile although I have seen a few zipping past me like the perfect paper airplane. 😡

Hope you catch up with a clouded yellow and painted lady; I am off to Cornwall and hoping to catch up with both.

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-14 10:22 PM GMT

Cheers CJB 😊 Glad to know that there are still some Reef heads out there 😎 Good luck capturing your target species 😊

22-07-2014 Larkhill

I didn't get to stop at any other sites today as after work it was the farewell tea party for one of my colleagues who retired after teaching at the same school for 30 years. This would mean that I had to forego the afternoon stop-off at The Devenish and instead guzzle back tea, salmon sandwiches, cakes, Tiffin and scones and jam...it was a hard job but it needed to be done. 😊

Because of this I savoured each second at Larkhill more especially as I realised that I'd been neglecting the humble Meadow Brown. So I set out from the car park up the North path to rectify this. Each Meadow Brown that I saw on the way I scrutinised for unusual markings but it wasn't until the large patch of flowers that I started seeing anything differently marked. First up though were a lovely pair of Hedge Browns posing nicely together side by side which is not something I've seen before. The female looked pretty resplendent and I couldn't help but check her for the number of eyes and spots - these totalled two per hind wing and an extra spot on the left hand fore wing.



I then carried on watching the Meadow Browns. One female had orange markings reminiscent of the blue marks on a Peacock wing under the eyes, little dashes getting smaller and fading as they worked towards the margin of the wing close to the body. Another had two pupils in each eye like a Hedge Brown which is something I have seen before but not quite as well marked as this. The different markings were also visible on the underside of the wings with one showing lighter dashes on the hind wing and another which had a lighter band running across the whole hind wing splitting the wing up into three colour bands almost.



orange dashes under eye



two pupils



light dashes on hind wing



light band

Come the afternoon I had a little time before the tea party began and so I took a brief stroll from the car park to the wildlife area and back to the lab. The entire walk took only a couple of minutes but in that time I notched up 1 Smessex, 2 Small Torts, a Peacock, 2 Hedge Browns, a Large White, a Green-veined White, 2 Small Whites and 3 Meadow Browns. A pretty good haul for a short walk and so as a reward I got over to the Tea Party and got to guzzling! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 08-Aug-14 11:30 PM GMT

A nice selection of Gatekeeper and Meadow Brown photos 😊

Your shot of the m & f side by side shows the size difference very well. Like you, I seem to be seeing more 'twin spot' Meadow Browns in recent years – it seems that this old simple discriminator between the species is no longer valid!

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 09-Aug-14 11:10 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, nice shots of the GK and MB, I think they get neglected by most people when taking Butterfly pic's but when you take close up shots like you've done showing the differences and colour their really an interesting species.

I keep trying with the Wall's, I'll have to go to Southport Dunes again (weather permitting storm tomorrow) and see if I can see any more, they're suppose to be at Gaits Barrow but I've not seen them there yet.Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-14 10:34 PM GMT

Cheers Cheers Mike 😊 I wondered about the Meadow Brown twin spots too but are there more or are more being seen?

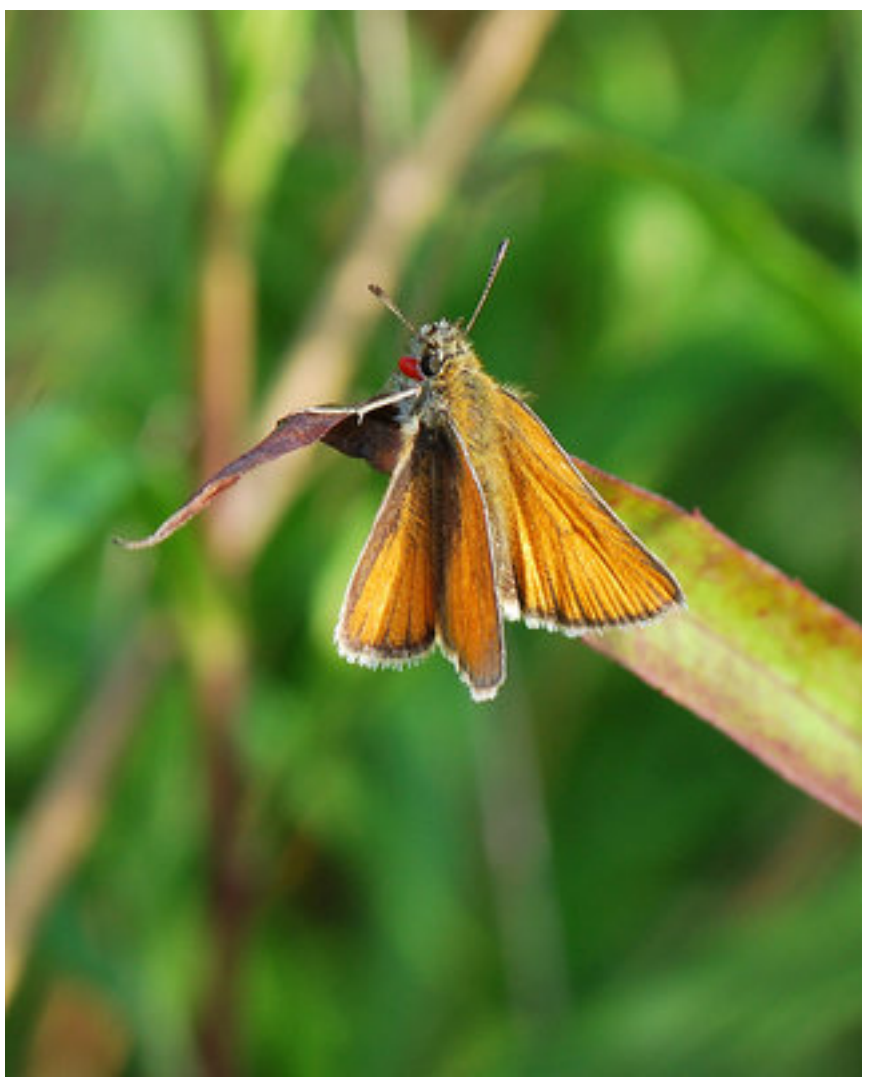
Cheers Goldie 😊 There does seem to be a lack of Meadow Brown shots at the moment – mind you what with Map, Chalk Hills, Brown Hairstreaks etc etc who can blame anyone 😊 Good luck with the Walls 😊

23-07-2014 Larkhill

I was back on form after the tea party, if carrying a bit too much cake, and so planned to make the usual two stop-offs. The first at Larkhill had to be very brief as I really needed to get everything wrapped up today ready before the last official day tomorrow. As it turned out this didn't matter too much as the Meadow and Hedge Browns had decided to hang out along the edge of the car park and there with them, showing of its stunning livery was a Peacock (possibly the resident?).



Further up the northbound path a ways there was a single Smessex and up by the flower patch a group of four Hedge Browns. The males are now starting to look pretty ragged but the females are still in great nick. There were also a few Marbled Whites fluttering around looking well past their use by date. And then I had to rush off to work.



The Devenish

On the way back home I pulled into The Devenish and cut straight up and across the meadow noting Green-veined and Large White and a Peacock and Red Admiral on this stretch. The Meadow seemed more quiet than usual with just the expected Meadow Browns and another Peacock and then I headed up the path over the stile. The usual shower was crawling over the Brambles including a further three Peacocks and then I broke through onto the side of the Down. I stopped briefly at the edge of the Down as a Silver-washed Frit was flushed from the side of the Brambles and disappeared down in amongst the Beech trees. This little stop meant that I saw the 5 Brimstones that were making merry around here. A quick walk around the down side threw up only 3 male Chalk Hills but unfortunately I don't think I'll be around to witness them reach their peak.



Time ticked ever onwards and I had to cut short my angled wanderings and scurry back down to the car park. A Peacock, Green-veined White and a Silver-washed Frit all put in brief appearances under the watchful eye of the Comma from its vantage point on the edge of the car park.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-14 09:41 PM GMT

More of the same... 24-07-2014

Brief stop off at Larkhill, probably the last this side of the summer as the break is starting today. In one way this is great as I can make more longer trips out but on the other hand almost everything has emerged already and I won't be able to make my daily stop-offs. If only they'd alter the start date of the holiday perhaps moving it back to the last week of June? Then over the five weeks (don't believe the hype the summer holidays have already been drastically reduced) I'd be able to spend time looking for His Nibbs, watch the first Chalk Hills emerging and possibly see Brown Hairstreaks before stating back for the new term.

It was quite quiet when I arrived and the Red flag flying but my butterflying makes me bulletproof. The area by the car park had a single solitary Meadow Brown. The reason soon became clear as the cooler temperatures had kept the butterflies roosting in the patch of untrampled long grass. As I approached they soon erupted.

Further along the Western path things were much more awake. A Peacock flitted along disturbing my only Marbled White of the visit. A Small White played very hard to get before eventually rising and disappearing over the trees. As it turned out it didn't matter as one was waiting for me at work, stuck in my lab and feverishly pawing at the window.



Hard to get





On the way home I couldn't resist a quick pull in at The Devenish... see how times have changed now it's no biggy - I've been practicing my Zen techniques 😊 . Plus it helped that work had finished early so I had more time. I strolled through the Meadow just enjoying the butterflies for once now pressure and anxiety of "are they or aren't they here?" of the Chalk Hills has passed. There were Meadow Browns and Hedge Browns everywhere. The edges which were still in slight shade were where the Whites would play and there was a nice scattering of blues including a couple of Chalk Hills here too.

The Bramble housed all the usual suspects and was bountiful and up on the Down there were still a few Marbled Whites flying. Whilst up there and enjoying the sun and butterflies something much larger and Ginger shot by a Dark Green Fritillary and it was swiftly joined by another. I don't know if it was due to its age but one actually stopped long enough for a swift and stealthy approach. Unfortunately it refused to turn around and insisted on only showing me its closed wings at an angle. Still I've now got a slightly better Dark Green Devenish!



Back at the Meadow I spent some time with the Blues and even a couple of Smessex. Amongst the 2 Brown Argus and 4 or more Common Blues a couple of Chalk Hills had popped over to visit their cousins and were making themselves at home on the nectar sources. This made photography much easier as the flowers were above waist height and quite sturdy so weren't easily thrown around by the breeze.



I left feeling relaxed and calmed today and waved goodbye to the Comma on guard over the car park as a Silver Washed whizzed by. I don't know when I'll be back to this site, possibly not until September though I'll have to try and pop in.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 12-Aug-14 10:14 PM GMT

Nice Chalkhills, and I do feel sorry for the poor Small White gazing at its own reflection... no doubt it was swiftly liberated soon afterwards 😊😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 13-Aug-14 12:28 PM GMT

Really like the shots of the Small White and it's reflections, Wurzel 😊 Pity the DGF didn't turn round just a tad more for you 😊😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by kevlng, 13-Aug-14 01:02 PM GMT

Wurzel,

I too like the Small White shots at the window. I never knew they could be so vain. Or perhaps he was happy to escape the cooler temperatures outside.

Regards Kev

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Aug-14 10:34 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 It was swiftly liberated, somewhat reluctantly on it's part, it kept flying back in 🤪

Cheers Mike 😊 Yeah it was giving me the run around and then the cold shoulder as well 😊😊

Cheers Kev 😊 I reckon you're right there as it kept coming back in once I'd set it free 🤪

Stockbridge 25-07-2014

As it was the first day of the holiday I couldn't really face marking the two sets of Assessed practical work, or re-writing the Biology KS3 Schemes, or preparing all my assessment folders and set lists, making the 6 sets of Exam Based Assessment booklets, planning my lessons for the KS3 changes and neither could I start the GCSE analysis as the results weren't published. All of that work could wait for the other five weeks of the summer break and so instead I took the girls for a bit of a run out at Stockbridge.

As we walked across the reserve following the diagonal path the bisects the site there were Meadow Browns and Chalk Hills flying everywhere but no Silver Spots flew up to greet me along the path as they have done on my previous visits. We reached about half way in and set up camp in the shade of a stand of Hawthorns and so while the girls read and played I strolled up and down the hill within earshot of their cries of "Wurzel" should any unleashed dogs appear. I scanned the bare patches amongst the turf and the scabious plants along the main path and quickly found my first Silver Spot of the year but it did that annoying thing that they do and zipped off diagonally and then jinked here and there before flying off in a wide arc so I kept losing sight of it.

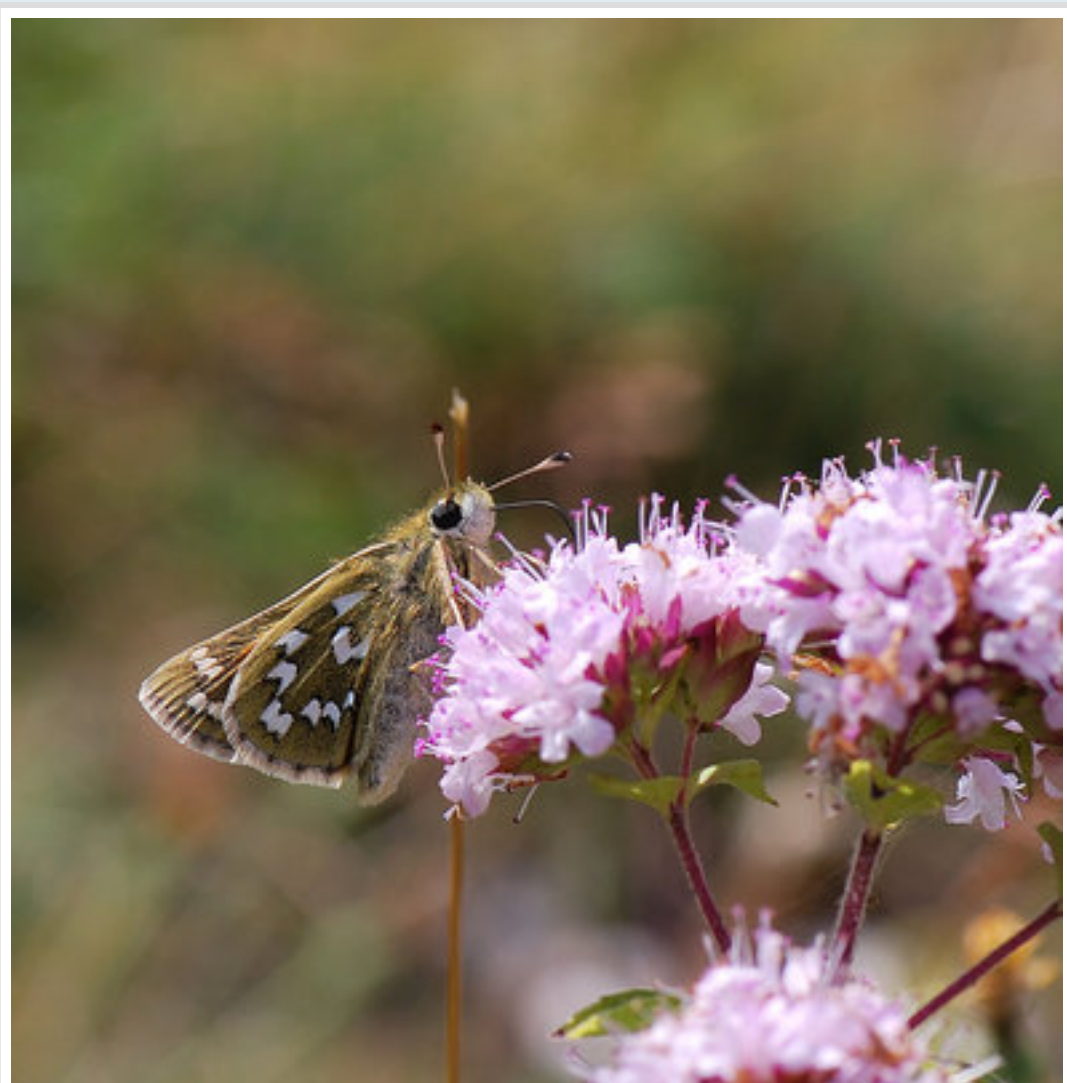
I settled for Chalk Hills in place of the Silver Spots as I had managed to grab a quick "proof of sighting shot" and I got an added bonus at the top of the hill amongst the trees. A "tuurr, tuurr" put me onto a Turtle Dove and a careful approach led to me getting some great views of this cracking little bird. Coming back down there were plenty of Chalk Hills including the "suave" aberrant that I first found out about from Dave/millerd's posts. The shot is slightly out of focus but the orange shots are there to be seen.







So after a good thirty minutes or so we moved on to the other side of the Hawthorns. As we followed the bare chalk path down towards the road and there was another Silver Spot. It seemed quite intent on taking nectar and so just to make sure I reeled off a few shots just to make sure and then gradually inched around on my knees until I was side one. It looked lovely and fresh as it still had that lime green colouring and the hairs would glitter like gold when they caught the light. The girls loved it but soon wanted to try and find another one.





We carried on around down the diagonal path towards the main car park and then started our way back when the Hawthorns on either side started to enclose us. A good job really as the numbers of butterflies were starting to dwindle as the shade increased and also time was ticking by. It's also a good idea not to walk too far when with the girls as they like to set up camp and potter about around this area (they probably walk three times as far doing this than walking the reserve but they can't be told!). We settled once again and this little patch was pretty good - with a Smessex, Hedge Browns, Peacock, Chalk Hills, Common Blues and Brown Argus all about as well as a couple more Silver Spots. One landed on a large piece of flint which was a blessing as normally grounded ones are surrounded by blades of grass.



Also keeping to this little area was a Clouded Yellow but it was nigh on impossible to approach and I couldn't get any closer than five or more metres as it would soon be off. I wasn't spooking it just didn't nectar for more than a second or two and was really flighty. Still the girls appreciated it almost as much as the Silver Spots.





I managed a few more Silver Spots as my younger daughter attempted to catch some butterflies in her hat! I know that this was a futile task but it kept her happy and amused for a while so I could focus on the butterflies. After I'd encountered another Silver Spot looking slightly darker than the others I'd seen so far we realised that time was running out. I always try to get back a bit earlier than expected which puts me firmly in the 'good books' with my wife and so we packed up and headed for home with my little girls regaling me with tales of the ones that got away.



The walk back threw up two Small Coppers - one with blue spots that I couldn't get any decent shots of as the wind was tearing through the low turf. The other was trying to egg lay; turning around and around in circles and placing her abdomen round and touching the leaves of the vegetation she was on. I didn't see any eggs but that could have been because I didn't want to get too close so as not to disturb her.



Happy all three of us carried on back to the car park with Chalk Hills erupting beneath our feet. A great start to the holiday and another species on the tally – which just leaves Brostreaks from the regular crew.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 14-Aug-14 03:58 PM GMT

Great report Wurzel, and a great shot of the Turtle Dove 😊 which is now becoming a rare sight in the UK, I've not heard or seen any this year 😞 Lovely shots too of the SS Skippers 😊

I understand how you didn't want to disturb the ovipositing Small Copper, I would have done the same 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 14-Aug-14 09:06 PM GMT

I agree – lovely Turtle Dove and some interesting shots in the last few reports Wurzel, in particular the Small White and reflections and the lovely SSS shots. The other shot I am finding interesting is the Small Copper egg-laying as it looks to me as if those Sorrel leaves might already have larva on them given the marks on them, tho I can't tell if it is just discolouration of the leaf (and I am unsure whether a female would lay on the same plant as a previous female). Great shot tho 😊😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Aug-14 10:06 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 The Turtle Dove was a real bonus as normally the only sign of their presence is the "turring" from deep in the leaves 😞 I thought with the Small Copper it was a case of leave it today and photograph Small Coppers in the next brood 😊

Cheers Pauline 😊 I couldn't tell if there was another larvae there as I wouldn't know what to look for 😞 WRT your PM – no worries 😊

Downshay 27-31 July 2014

As the good weather continued my wife and I packed the camping gear and the girls into the car and headed off to Downshay our usual camping site near Corfe on the Isle of Purbeck. Various days out were planned as we drove down in glorious sunshine and at the back of my mind I cross referenced the various outings with possible butterfly sightings 😊 .

Despite staying for several nights I only really walked the camp site twice although I did see various things while travelling down to do the washing up etc. The Wash Blocks were also great for moths and I caught about 30 different species in my cleaned out Waitrose take-away coffee cup – but that will be a post later in the year during the down season.

27th July

Having arrived and worked through all the setting up procedures; got the tent up, freezer blocks in the freezer, bedding out and tent tidied, had a brew etc I decided to check out the site for the first time. I looked around for the girls but they'd already made friends and had disappeared to the rope swing 😬😬 so I set out to work my way around the various hedges. There were plenty of Hedge Browns and Meadow Browns flitting around as well as the odd white. Half way along this hedge which bisects the main field it breaks down and there is a patch of longer gasses. Here a gorgeous male Common Blue was feeding and looking stunning.



The other path concreted and leading up to the top grazing fields had a much smaller hedge along most of one side but on the other it was supplemented by a good growth of Brambles. It was here that I found a fantastic Comma. It would hover around the tops of the Brambles and Nettles and then suddenly lift off, soaring and gliding high, before disappearing from view for a minute or two. Then it would finally pop up somewhere further along the Hedge and repeat the procedure. I stood stock still and watched this and once or twice I was included in its gliding circle as it checked me out. I must have passed scrutiny as after the third fly by it landed right next to me.



The following day we visited Corfe and Wareham and I was occupied with such pressing matters as drinking tea and reading though occasionally gazing contently round I would see a butterfly flying by, a Small Tortoiseshell also flew into the tent for some respite from the sun but I didn't get out during the afternoon.

The following day was Studland but as I still had plenty of battery I risked a walk around once we were back and the sand and salt had been washed off. Unfortunately for me everything was turbo charged beyond belief but it was still nice to see them getting on with things. It all started with a Wall Brown which was basking on the stone walls between the two wash blocks. I must have caught it at the end of its basking session because I'd only just seen it and it was off! Over the course of my ramblings I made it along the central hedge and up to the top of the path and my tally stood at 2 Red Admiral, 2 Small Tortoiseshell, 8 Hedge Browns, 14 Meadow Browns, Marbled White, Large White, Common Blue, 3 Small White and a female Brimstone – not bad for 10 minutes or so! Coming back down the concrete path I reached the same Bramble patch which a few days before was the stamping ground of the Comma. Today it was replaced by a lovely fresh Small Tortoiseshell which was playing on the Thistles using them as a rocking horse.





The penultimate day was Lulworth Cove and so I didn't get an opportunity to wander the site properly again but I don't think I could have added anything to the list. A great Camping site and a nice relaxing butterfly site, only another 50 weeks until I can visit it again! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

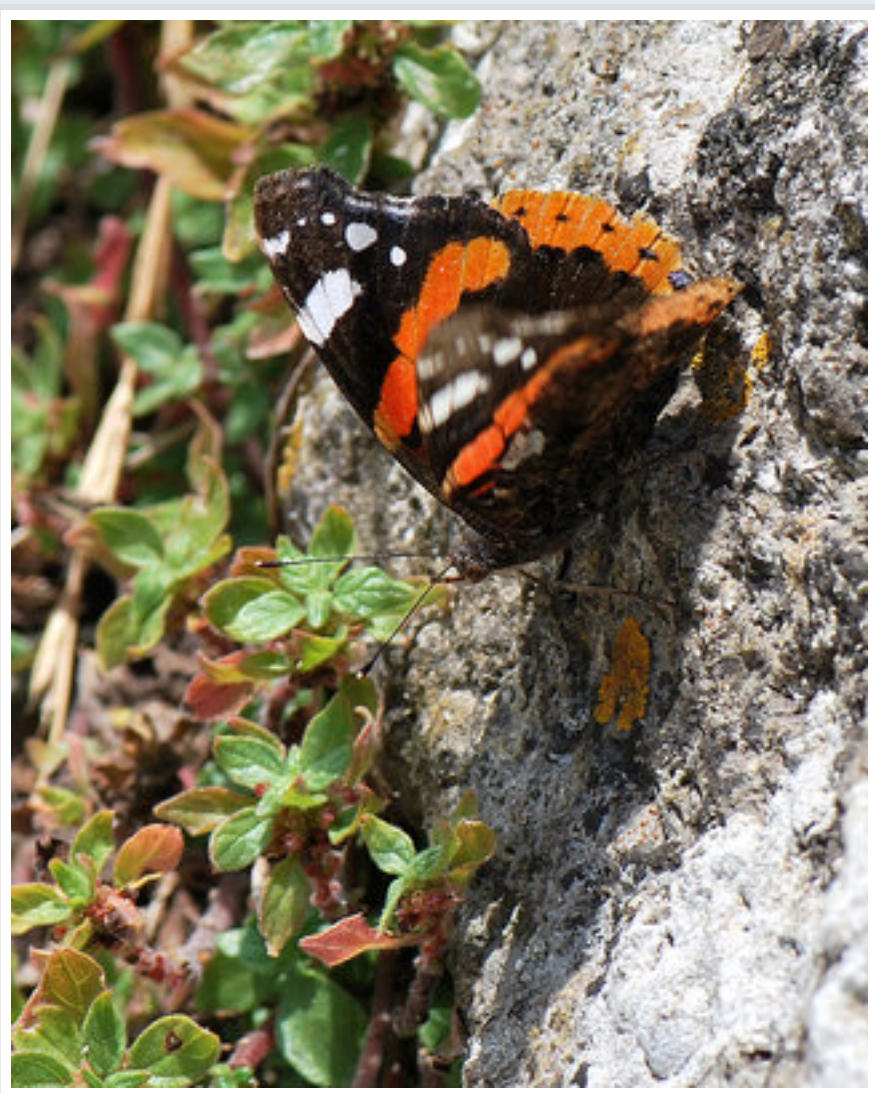
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Aug-14 10:47 PM GMT

Corfe Castle 28-07-2014

Our first trip out away from the camp site was to Corfe Castle. It was nice and sunny as we walked from the car park up the hill but the hide from the overhanging trees kept the butterflies away. 😊

Once in amongst the battlements at the outer Bailey the girls were entranced with the 'Medieval Diet' talk and running around trying to find shields in order to complete the Castle Challenge. Therefore it wasn't until we reached the top and the inner ward that I started seeing butterflies. As like last year it was a Red Admiral that got the ball rolling, feeding on Marjoram. It didn't stop for long though but it or another one appeared as we worked our way back down to the inner Bailey. In fact this was a great little spot and the flowers in amongst the fallen and derelict stones threw up a Small Tort, Hedge Brown, 2 Meadow Browns and a Wall as well, in within a distance of 2 metres! 😊





We made our way back through the bastions and gatehouse and a Common Blue flew up the steep hill towards the Keep so I wondered what else this area of the Castle could produce? Luckily once back down in the outer ward my older daughter became enrolled in 'Knight School' so while learning the basics I nipped off for 5 minutes back up to the likely looking spot. Again the Wall was about amongst the Hedge and Meadow Browns, flitting along the iron fence and curtain wall (where it was still in one piece). The hill leading to the Keep housed another Common Blue and also a lovely fresh Brown Argus.



Back at the fence the Wall Brown again played hard to get and instead I settled for a different type of Wall - possibly a Wall Lizard? As I was sneaking up on the Wall Brown this little head peeped out at me, scrambled over the stone and then settled down to bask, all the while keeping my eye on me.



My allotted time was vanishing fast and so I climbed back over the boulders and set off down the path. A golden blur paused on the hillside and I just had to check it out. As I got nearer to it I could clearly see the crescent moons on the fore wings – a lovely lady Lulworth – and not in too bad a nick either.



I got back and my daughter was busy slicing and dicing. The Knights finished up with what they called a French manoeuvre where everyone dropped their swords and ran away 😂😂 . Ace although my chuckling did take some explaining as my daughters didn't get the joke 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 17-Aug-14 10:57 PM GMT

That settles it – on one of our summer trips to Studland, I shall persuade the boys that a sidetrip to Corfe is necessary! 😊 It's a spectacular spot anyway, but that selection of butterflies makes it a must. And a splendid lizard as well – that would certainly clinch the deal with Elliot... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 18-Aug-14 01:39 PM GMT

That second shot of the Wall lizard is just sublime 🍷👏

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 18-Aug-14 08:08 PM GMT

Some more great reports Wurzel, you really make me feel I am there with your descriptions 😊

I will be down in Dorset again in a couple of weeks 😊😊 , I really must stop off at Corfe Castle instead of passing through like we usually do, either in the car or on the steam train.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 18-Aug-14 08:36 PM GMT

Great shots, Wurzel 😊 brilliant Wall Lizard 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 20-Aug-14 04:56 PM GMT

I know it's a butterfly site Wurzel but I just love your lizard shots – something a bit different. Great report. 😊

Re: Wurzel

Cheers Dave 😊 Don't forget Knight school when selling it:shock: 😊

Cheers Philzoid 😊😊 I got lucky with that shot, it must have decided to let me photograph it 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 It's a fascinating place and so much more than just a back drop to a Disney film 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 That was my first UK Wall Lizard so I was quite chuffed 😊

Cheers Pauline 😊 I was quite taken with the little critter as it played hide and seek with me 😊

Knoll Beach 29-07-2014

Day three of the holiday and we had our beach day and headed off to Knoll Beach at Studland. We had five or so minutes by the 'Discovery Centre' as the girls wanted to play on the rope swing so I set about recording the butterflies that were basking and feeding on the little clumps of heather and a small Buddleia. There were a couple of Hedge Browns but the most numerous species as the Grayling with 6 or 7 flitting around this tiny little area. There was also a Small Tort staying well out of the way, seeking shade high up on the building.

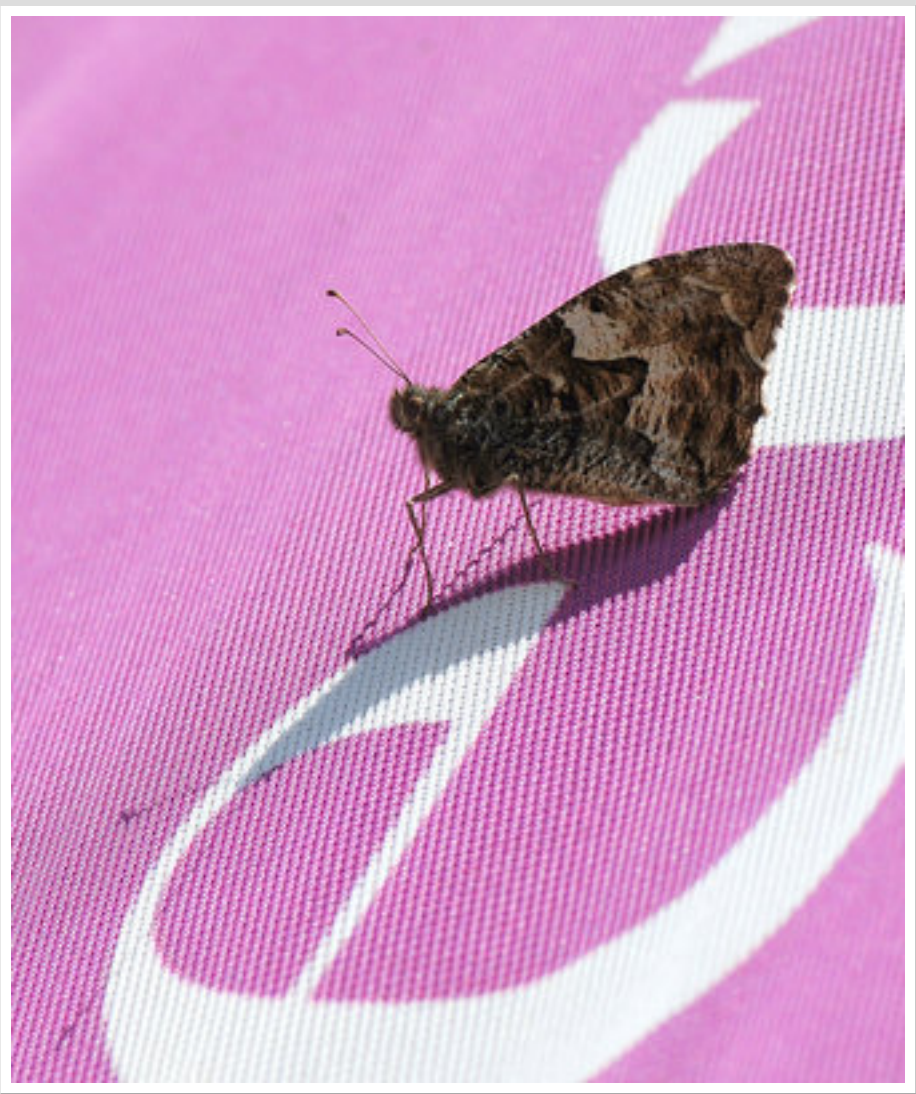
One Grayling in particular was quite placid and so stayed in the same place allowing me to get comparison shots, first without flash, then with and finally with highlights added by Picasa (although not processed in this order).



no flash



with flash



Once down at the beach the girls ran off to paddle and start building castles while us remaining adults found a shady nook at the top of the beach to set up camp in. A few whites flitted by, a Peacock put in an appearance and there were a few Hedge Browns. There were also a few Darters.



After a few hours of the usual beach activities; paddling, splashing, crab hunting, castle building and walking along the beach to searching for Pearls and Sinking Sand (my younger daughter was adamant that we should give it a go - there were none of the former and plenty of the latter) we headed back in land to the Discovery Centre and lunch. I kept a shifty eye on the Buddleia again and there were still plenty of Grayling hanging around it. At one point a Fritillary bombed past and as it headed into the woods I'm guessing that it was a Silver Washed.

After lunch while my wife dozed and the girls swung I checked round the back of the Discovery Centre as I remembered that there were a couple of Buddleia bushes round there. And they still are. This time there was a Small Tort, 2 Red Admirals, a Peacock and a Wall Brown all feeding on them. The Wall hung around whilst the Vanessids did a bunk so I got one of two shots of it. I also found some interesting moths clinging to the back of the building in the shade...but that's another post.





All too soon we had to pack up and head off to the Camp site to wash the sand from between our toes and have a brew, still at least I could check out the wash block to see what moths were about. I couldn't resist another quick shot of a Grayling before we left.



This is turning out to be quite a good year for Wall Brown – first one at Corfe and now here. I wonder where else they'll turn up??

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 20-Aug-14 11:51 PM GMT

Knoll Beach – our favourite sea-and-sand spot! we were there a few days before you Wurzel, but it was really too hot for butterflies. Those are great Grayling photos and I envy you the Walls, as I still haven't seen one this year, despite having been in several spots (including this one) where they must have been around. 🍷 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 21-Aug-14 07:58 PM GMT

Great Grayling shots, Wurzel 😊 and the last one is a real cracker 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 23-Aug-14 10:22 PM GMT

I hope you are right about Wall Browns doing well. About 35 years ago, I remember photographing one on my drive at home and then they seemed to disappear quite suddenly, only holding on at coastal sites.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-14 10:31 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 It is a great spot but you have to be careful which direction you walk along the beach with a camera (Sandy Balls and all that) 😊 I seem to be having a great "Wall" year this year 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 I was chuffed with that one, and I hasten to add that the bottle top was not mine, but I did put it in the bin when the Grayling was finished with it 😊

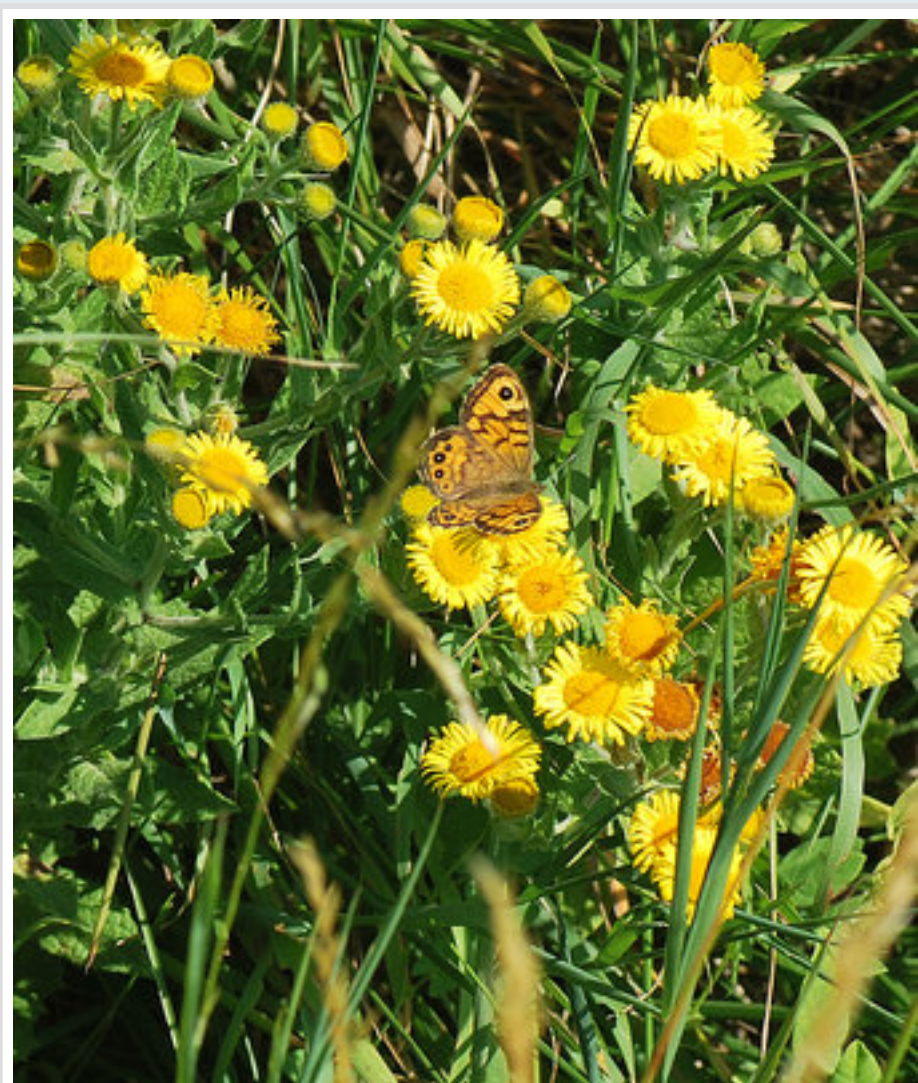
Lulworth Cove 30-07-2014

On the third day of our camping trip I was slightly more relaxed as I still had three bars of battery left so the trip to Lulworth Cove couldn't have come at a better time. The girls needed to use the facilities upon our arrival so I had a quick scan around the butterfly garden. There were 22 Small Tortoiseshells crawling all over the bush, which I think is Verbena, right next to the gate, a Peacock was on the Buddleia, a Small White fluttered by and further up on the thistles was a great H.Comma. Not bad for a 2 minute loo break! The walk down to the beach threw up a Large White, 3 Small Whites, 2 Red Admirals and a further 12 Small Tortoiseshells. As we reading the notice explaining the absence of the Bucket Tree a peachy grey butterfly was jinking and swerving up the road. It was about the same size of a Red Admiral and as it drew nearer it revealed itself as a Painted Lady but it didn't stop just kept on powering on inland.



Once on the beach we slapped on the sun cream and the girls set off to play. My older daughter went paddling and in search of Sea Glass while my younger set about to make a castle and moat, lugging great big rocks across the beach to make the footings which would then be rendered in sand and harrumphing when I didn't get the walls level! 😊 Once the castle was to her satisfaction I was sent off and so I grabbed my camera and headed to my hotspot. This is basically the path at the end of the beach on the right hand side of the Cove. On my first visit here for Lulworths I dutifully clambered up Bindon Hill but no longer as this little spot has pretty much all the same species as Bindon without the climb and with closer proximity to ice creams. For those of you that haven't visited Lulworth before another easy site is to walk to the top of the car park, go through the gate to Durdle Door and then have a mooch around here. 😊

Once again my little spot didn't disappoint. The first butterfly I came across was actually two, Lulworth Skippers scrapping it out in the same area that I saw a male holding territory earlier in the year. Along the path there were Meadow Browns, Hedge Browns a couple of Common Blue and Brown Argus as well as the usual accompaniment of whites. What really caught my eye amongst the plethora of Lepidoptera was a more orange butterfly. Too small to be a Frit eventually I relocated it and it was a female Wall. Three for three, three sites three Walls brill! I took a record shot thinking that that would be all I could get but it stayed around this patch of Fleabane(?) and I was lucky enough to get some close ups which revealed that it was called Ed, at least those were the letters that I could see on the hind wing underside.

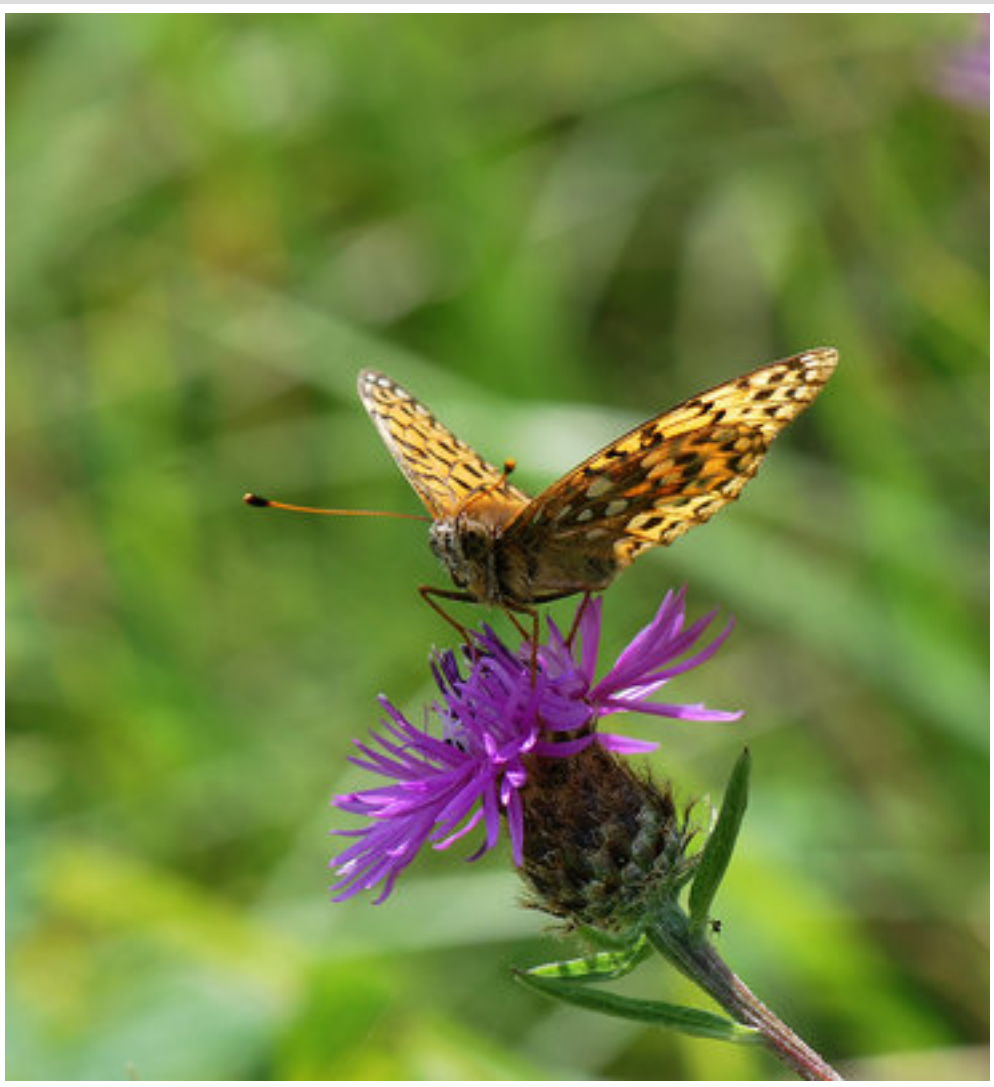






After this nice catch up I headed back to the to see if my building services were required and instead we set off rock pooling even though the tide was a little high still...

Once the girls had returned to their previous activities I had another quick check around up at the Hotspot. There was the same smattering of species and just as I was deciding what to photograph first a DGF plonked itself down in the middle of the scrub. I had to approach it cautiously as I was skittish but also because in my haste I hadn't put my shoes back on and was still shod a la beach. Still with thistles and spikes ripping at my feet the main problem was the wind which decided now to blow down the side of the cliff, just as I'd finished my trepidatious approach. Oh well I grabbed a few shots anyway and then consoled myself with a Small Copper and more Lulworths once back on firmer and less spiny ground. Just as I was marvelling at how productive this visit had been a Clouded Yellow zipped down one side of the hollow, up the other and then on round the Cove.





I wandered back to the beach chuffed with the success. We packed up and made our way over the pebbles back towards the road, washing our feet in the freezing steam on the way and me keeping an eye out for the Painted Lady. It didn't show but I didn't mind as while we had a lunch admiring the view from the top of the Cove another Clouded Yellow flew by and a Small Tort was waiting by the car to wish us farewell when it came time to leave. 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 23-Aug-14 10:52 PM GMT

Great Wall photos!

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 24-Aug-14 03:07 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, you sound to be having a great time. Your pic's of the Wall are great 🍷 hopefully in time I'll get a good one too 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 25-Aug-14 04:43 PM GMT

Great Wall shots, Wurzel 😊 🍷 I've not really managed any this year. I somehow just can't seem to see 'Ed' on the underwing 😊 😊

Mike

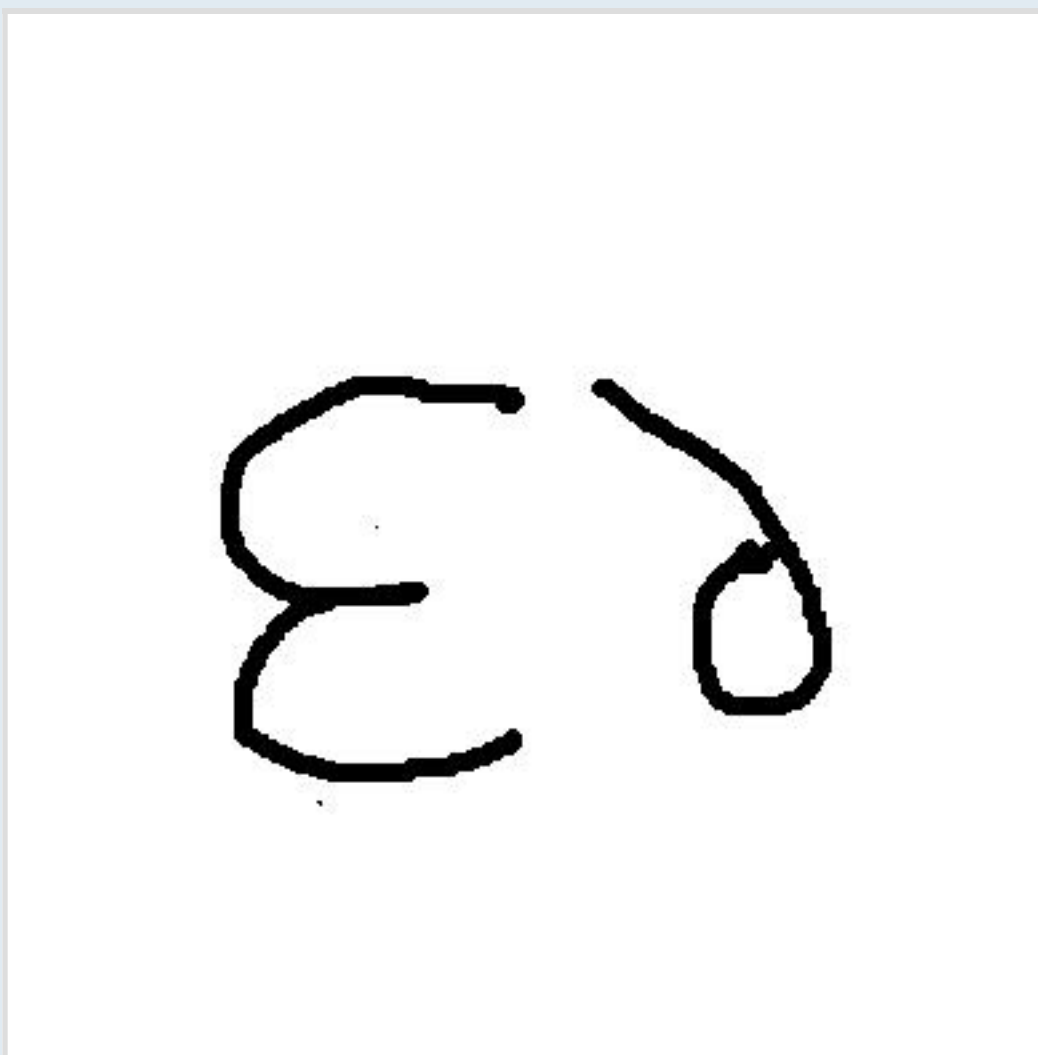
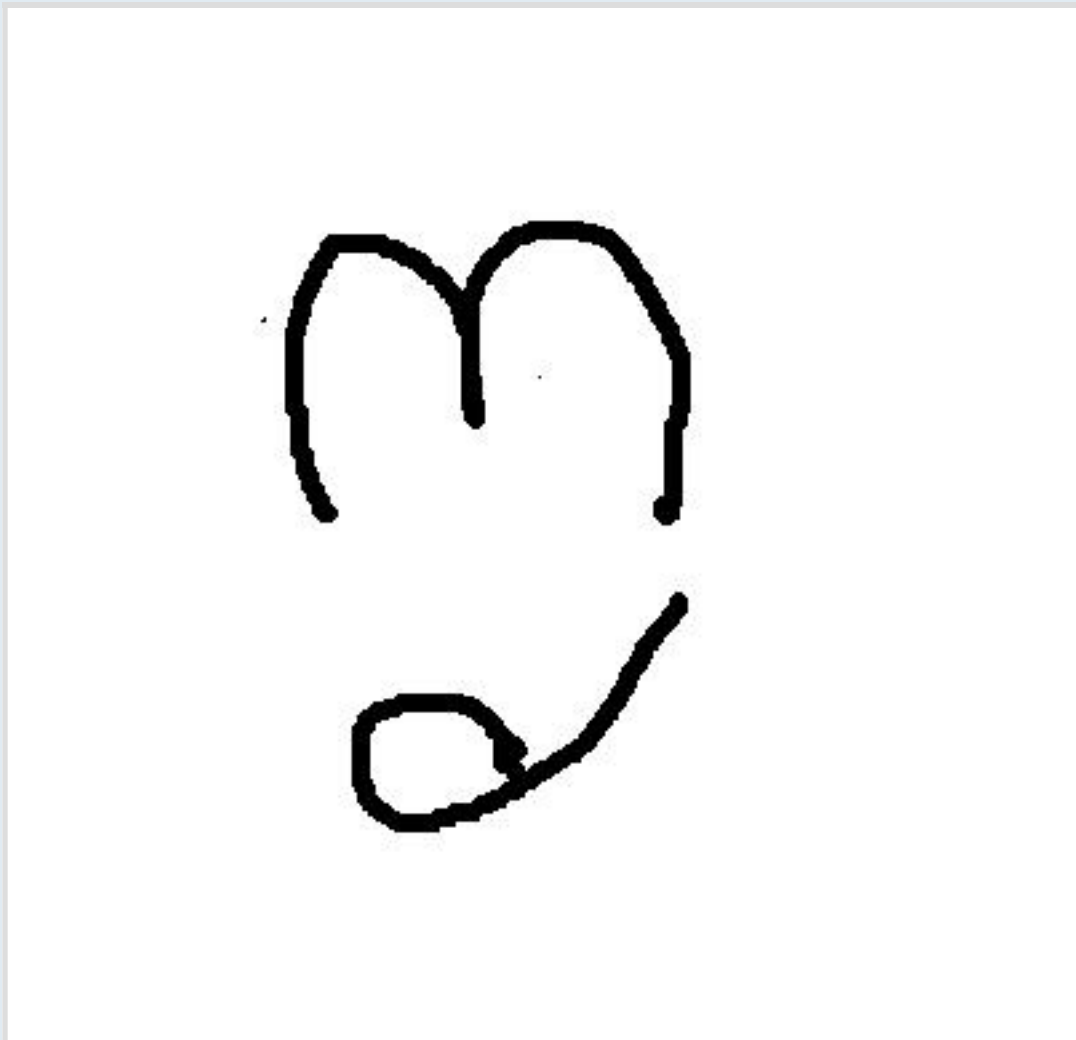
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-14 11:13 PM GMT

Cheers Katrina 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I'm sure that you will 😊

Cheers Mike for me 2014 will be the year of the Wall 😊 The Ed mark is very fine and probably just something I can see, we humans are very good at seeing patterns when we want to 😊 But so as to prove to myself that I wasn't going mad(er) I had a little play with Paint, here's what I see...



The Outlaws Part One...

As is always the way during the summer holiday we headed up to Wales to visit the Outlaws. I have mixed feelings about taking this trip; on the down side I'm missing out on opportunities to catch up with the summer blues, Brostreaks, Silver Spots and make the most of the Grayling yet on the plus side there is often a Painted Lady and the hedge rows offer up a surprisingly wide range of Hedge Brown variation. After the arduous journey which seems to go more and more slowly as our destination draws ever nearer we unloaded and I had a much needed caffeine boost. We then checked the weather for the days ahead and started planning where we would be visiting and when. In amongst all these outings I knew that I would be able to take a stroll up Lane or just round the corner to the Post Box (it's surprising how many letters I write during my stay 😊) and when planning my posts I decided to deal with these smaller trips over the first few days and then look at the main outings separately. So here goes...

03-08-2014

On the first day it was a quick walk with everyone up the Lane to the Telecom aerial and during the odd break from pulling my younger daughter along on her Scooter I managed to check along both sides of the tall hedges. Apart from some not very good shots of my first ever mating pair of Hedge Browns it was very quiet for the first half of the walk up the hill. After this the sun finally emerged from the cloud and the butterflies started to emerge. First up, rather like my visit here earlier in the year was a Green-veined White which was fluttering along the ditch at the side of the road stopping every now and again. Further along it was joined by a Meadow Brown which showed the lovely Peacock style orange marking on the fore wings. Slightly further on there was yet another Green-veined White and also a Small White which was adamant that it wanted to perch wherever the Green-veined wanted to! There were a few more Hedgies as well as a Peacock and a Small Tortoiseshell.

Once back at the house I had a little check round the garden and a Holly Blue did a brief fly-by from a neighbours garden whilst a Red Kite was overhead, that's Wales for you. Round the corner the Verbena housed another pair of Small Torts and a Peacock.





So ended the first day the butterflies didn't exactly set the world on fire but at least I'd walked the cramp off from my buttocks!

04-08-2014

Shock horror - the really productive field behind my Outlaws house is now gated off and even worse it's been drained so the rough Rhos grass has been replaced with the more usual turf. So after our trip out to Llanachaeron I headed out to the post box instead checking along the hedges once more. This small section of hedge only about 5 metres produced a god mix of butterflies with a Red Admiral and then a strongly marked Green-veined White. Also here was a Meadow Brown, Large and Small Whites quartered along the hedge. Not much of this was landing and so I started looking more closely at the Hedgies as this spot has produced some great variants over the years. Today it only threw up a three and five spot under wing although one of the three spots on the former was more of a streak than a spot. Whilst I was enjoying these something drifted down from the trees and started nectaring, it was an ethereal and ghost like Hairstreak, and then metamorphosed into a Holly Blue.





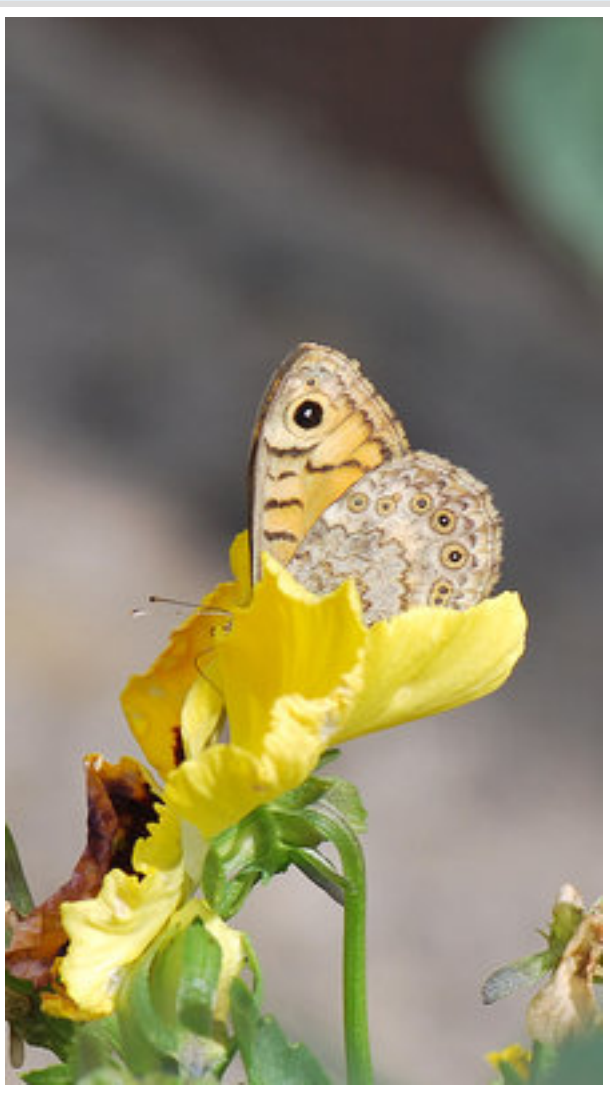
05-08-2014

After a full on day before we were going to have a quieter one today and just head to the little beach at Cei Bach. The girls decided to make the most of the sunny weather and were playing in the garden so I had a quick mooch around, camera in one hand, coffee in the other and when I saw a butterfly within range I'd put the coffee down, take my shots and then have a nice slurp of the black gold. There wasn't too much hanging around the Verbena just the odd Red Admiral or Small Tortoiseshell so I wandered back across the lawn when something small and orange staggered in. I almost dropped my coffee as it was an unexpected Small Copper. It was a little deformed and seemed to be struggling to fly but after a breather on the lawn it moved to the potted flowers and put on a nice show for both myself and my younger daughter who watched it fascinated as it went from pale creamy orange to striking and stunning chocolate and vivid orange by dint of opening its wings.





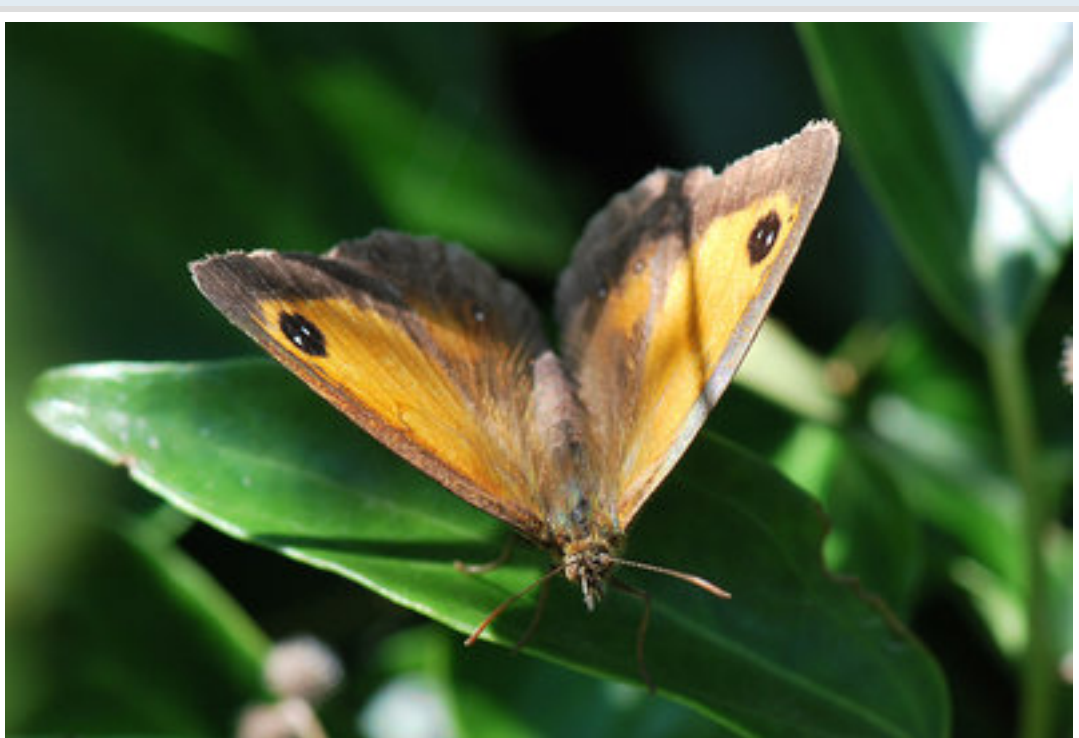
Pleased with this I went to head back to get ready for the beach when I had my second “coffee drop” moment of the day when a male Wall blitzed across the garden, down the side path and over the low fence where it rested briefly. A couple of shots and it was gone leaving me wondering if it had really been there at all.



06-08-2014

After a cracking day at Newquay beach I felt like I was on a roll butterfly wise and so once back and with the girl happily playing in the back garden I went to the Post Box to “drop off some Lovefilm DVDs”. You won’t see that as one of their selling points on their website, plenty about no late return fines and great buffering speeds bit nothing about “offers a perfect excuse for a bit of butterflying” 😊 ! This time I got past the initial hedge and worked my way down Ruw Goch. I was on the hunt for slightly different Hedge Browns so barely noticed the numerous peacocks, Small Torts and Red Admiral all feeding on some large Buddleia, nor the many whites flitting here and there in each direction I looked when I occasionally tore my gaze away from between the ground and three feet up the hedge.

As I said I was hoping for some unusual Hedge Browns and so really nice ones turned up. The first three were subtle; a female with a single extra dot on the left fore wing but on the right, another female with small dot under the “eyes” on the fore wings and another with some very clear white spots on the underside.





I as pleased witht these but not as much as the next which was the boldest marked excessa that I've personally encountered. It was fantastic to see and reaffirmed my passion for the humble Hedge Brown.



After this stunning invidual it was back to more subtle variants and even when I found a nicely marked female Common Blue (one of two) further along the path I still couldn't get the excessa out of my head and I had to keep checking back at it.



One extra dot on the hind wing

Eventually I realised that I'd been gone so long I could have been to Preston and back to have handed the discs over personally so I turned and walked back only stopping to capture an extra excessa which had it not been so aged would have been as stunningly marked as the one earlier.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 26-Aug-14 12:27 AM GMT

I believe you on Ed, Wurzel 😊😄😄 very nice Gatekeepers 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 26-Aug-14 08:19 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, more great reports and accompanying photos 😊

Seeing your shots of Wall Browns has made me realise that is another species I have not seen yet this year, maybe next week when I am down in Dorset again if there are any still around.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Aug-14 09:46 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 What with my ongoing obsession with Hedge Browns and a burgeoning obsession with Meadow Brown markings I am starting to get slightly worried about my state of mind – not only have I seen "Ed" but the other day there was "56" on another species...ho hum pass the sedatives matron 😊😄

Cheers Neil 😊 I'm not sure on the timing of Walls but there is the possibility of a third brood though I feel that's still a little early. Essex was down our way recently and the Walls he saw were worn but he also found some nicely new Chalk Hills so maybe...good luck with your quest 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 27-Aug-14 11:09 PM GMT

That variant Gatekeeper is a stunner. Never seen one like it. 🍷

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-14 10:06 PM GMT

Cheers Essex I was dead chuffed to find it, mind you I had to examine a huge number before I came across it, oh well 😊

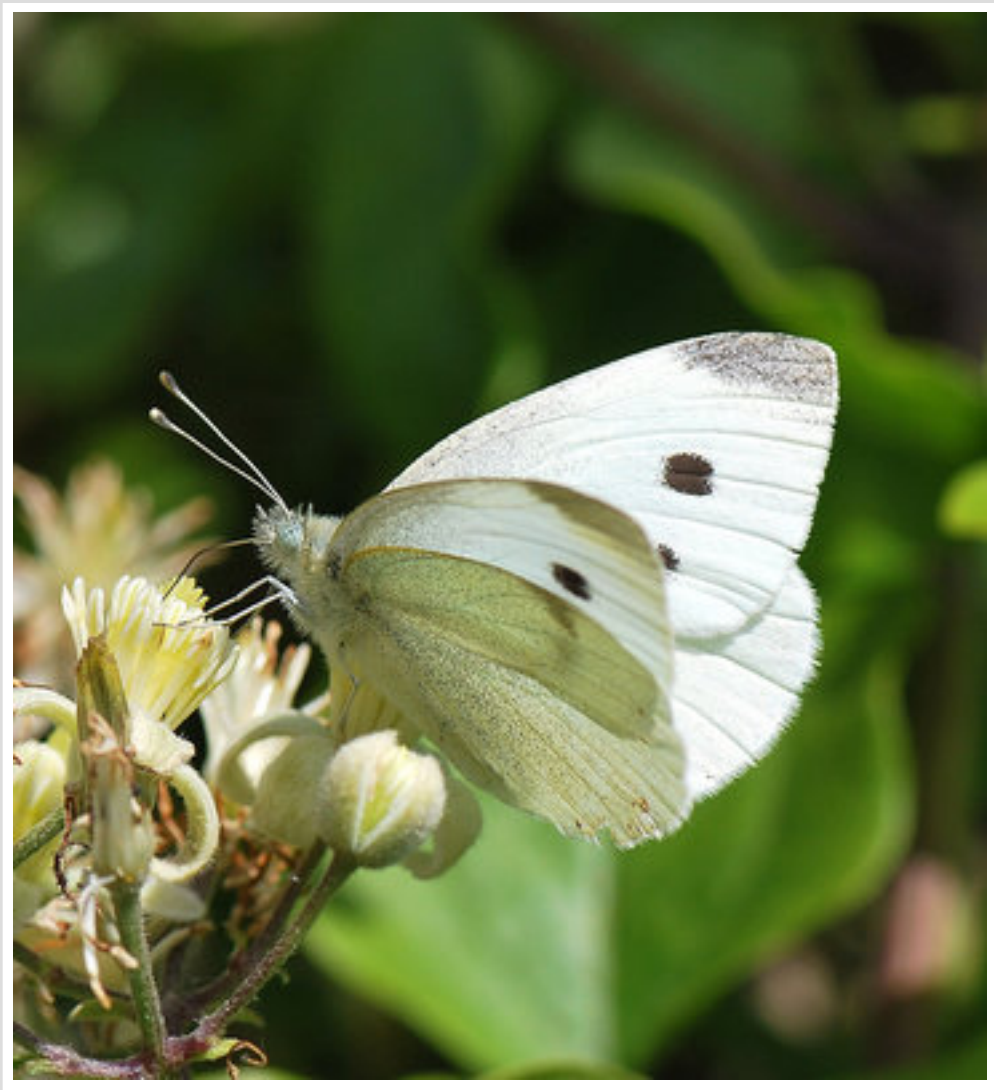
Llanerchaeron 04-08-2014

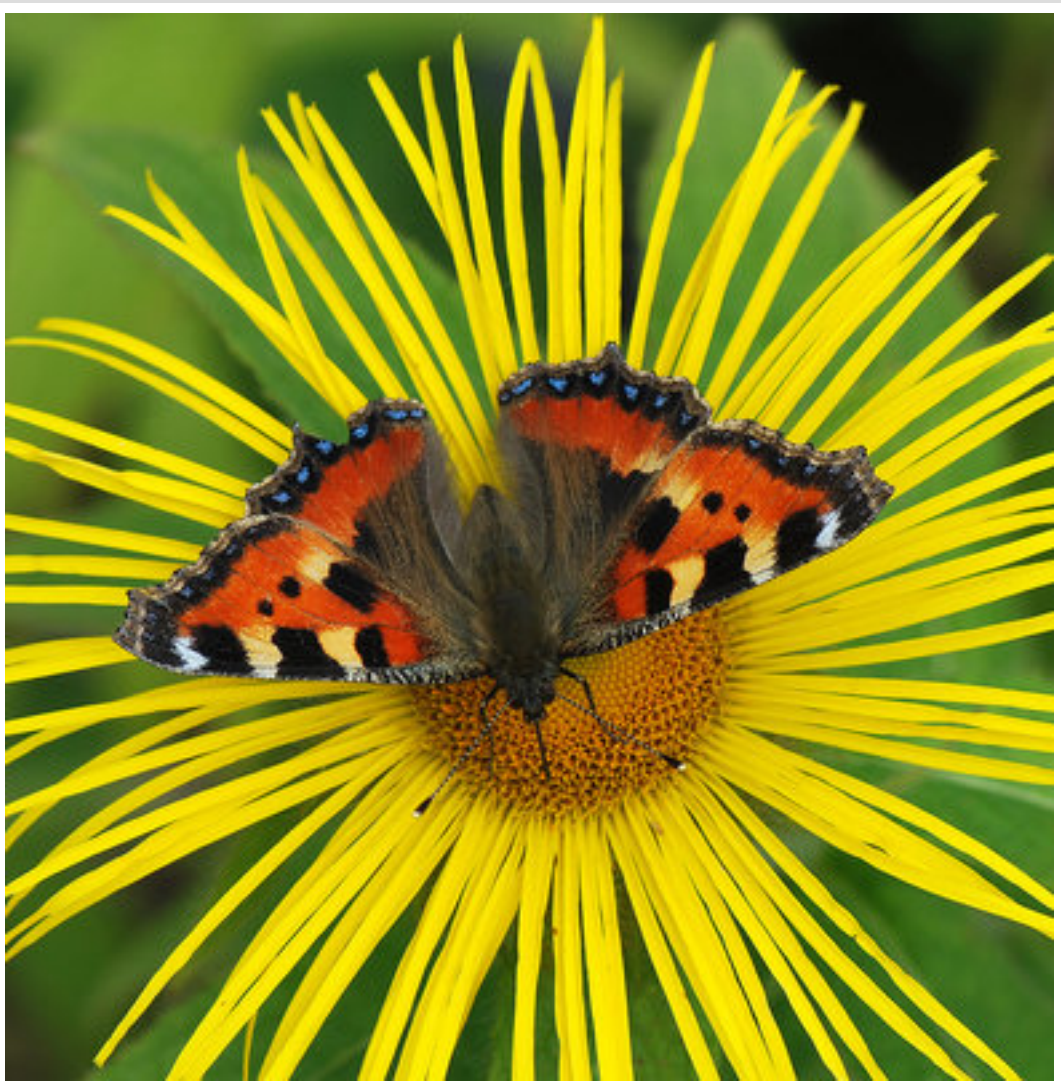
This wasn't supposed to be the best day of the week weather wise so it was decided that we would visit Llanerchaeron as we could visit the house when the rain came over and enjoy the gardens when the sun shone. The day started cloudy and cool and it felt more like an April morning than August, especially as the only butterflies flying were Small and Green-veined Whites. Still the Met promised that there would be some brighter weather

eventually...at some point...maybe...there was a fifty percent chance... 😬

Anyway we let the girls of their leash and they ran off to look at the pigs, the sheep and the Chickens. The highlight of the farm area for me wasn't the fly by Small Tortoiseshell or the Peacocks but was actually the farm sheep dog. It was so eager to work that it spent it's time rounding up the sheep - which were already in the pen! 😊

As we walked through into the walled garden the sun finally appeared and with it the butterflies. Whites abounded everywhere with representatives from four species in amongst 2 or three Red Admirals, a Comma, Small Tort and two Peacocks. They were at their frustrating best as they would land just long enough for you to approach, line up your shot, start to focus...and then they would take to the wing. In the end I managed some shots using two distinctly different methods. One was the "wait and see" routine of just getting comfy by a likely looking flower for a few minutes and the other involved just strolling along minding my own business and then suddenly swinging the camera round and clicking away. When I used this second method when the butterflies did eventually fly they always seemed to do so with a look of annoyance of having been caught out.





A Holly Blue did a brief run through the Apple trees in the mini Orchard section. In the Vegetable garden a Comma was exceptionally flighty and the total opposite of a stunning Red Admiral backing on the leaves of a Globe Artichoke.





As we headed back to the cafe area to enjoy our picnic lunch we sent the girls on ahead to grab a picnic table and they chose one with an umbrella. Which was a good job as we'd barely touched down when the rain arrived; an event which had not even a 5% chance according to the MET. Luckily it only continued until we'd finished our repast and so with the final drops dripping from the leaves we entered the house and once again the rain hit. The showers passed and we'd finished looking around so I checked out the little area which produced my first holly Blue of 2014 back in April. There was no sign of a repeat performance today but instead a second brood Specklie was around and about to provide the point of interest for my lens. After a brief bask it started feeding on the juice of over ripe Blackberries, something I'd not witnessed before. It also served as a gentle reminder of the passing of the year as it was so Autumnal, I had to remind myself that we were only just into August despite feeling like it could have been Spring all morning; I was half expecting an Orange-tip to come patrolling by 🧐.



Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 30-Aug-14 07:18 AM GMT

Interesting and funny reports Wurzel (butterflies with names and BH turning into Holly Blue)– and yes, you are quite mad 😄😄 That Gatekeeper was a great find. I must start to look more closely. Nice closed wing shot of the Small Copper too.

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 31-Aug-14 09:43 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Just catching up. It was good to see you the other day, I hope the dogs did not get you 😊 Your obsession with the Gatekeepers is paying off with some great variation. I have been looking at Speckled Wood recently in the hope of finding something interesting, but so far there appears to be little variation in that species. I shall keep on looking 😊

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 31-Aug-14 09:56 PM GMT

I've just been catching up with your exploits, too, Wurzel – and that many-spotted Hedge Brown is amazing. 😊 I checked dozens round here and they were notable only for the sensible numbers of spots they had... 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-14 10:56 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊 I prefer eccentric to mad, but mad it is 😊

Cheers Paul 😊 The dogs didn't get me...I got them ggrrrr 😊 Good luck with the Specklies 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 I think there's something in the water in Wales as this little area always seems to produce excessa.

September 2014



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-14 11:33 PM GMT

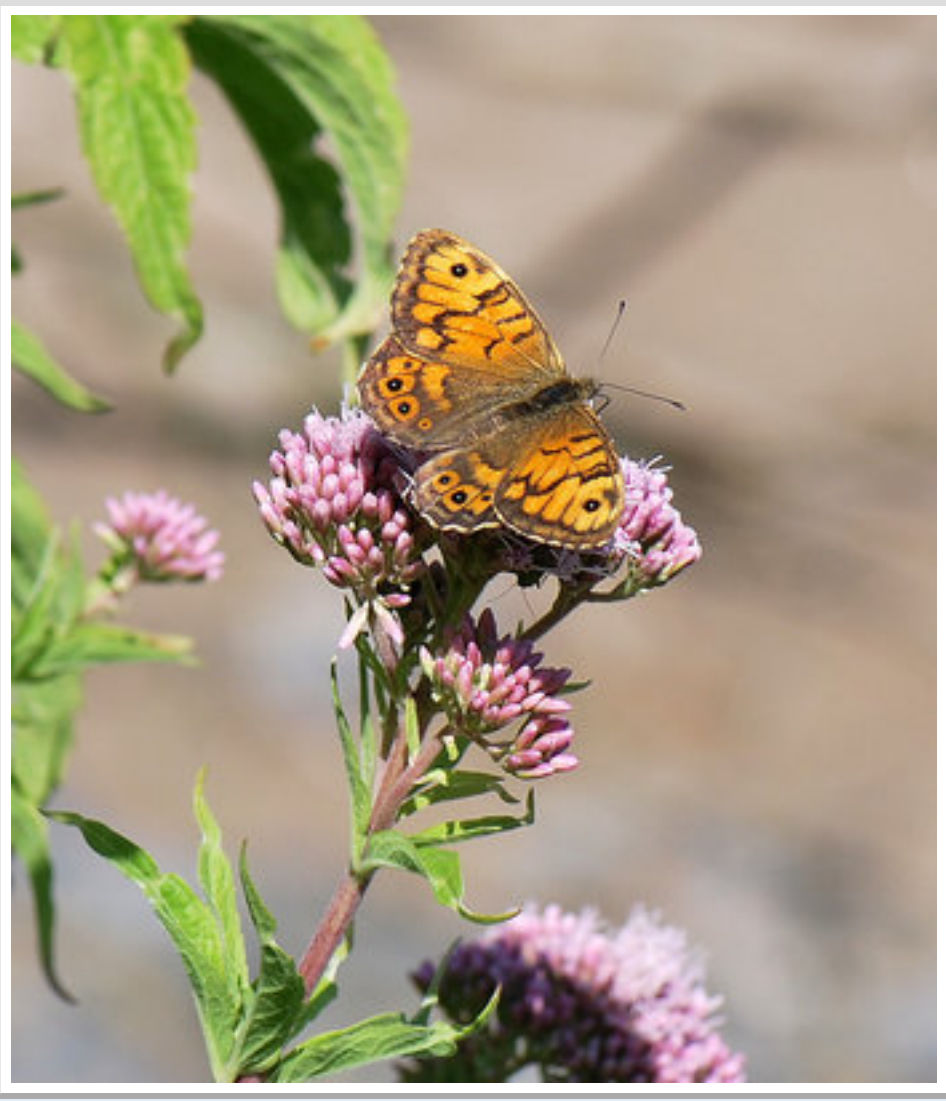
Newquay 06-08-2014

Despite the grey skies the weather App was sure that it would brighten up later, the sun would come out so we set off towards Newquay. On the way down the slope I spied the odd Hedge Brown and various Whites as well as 2 Peacocks, a Small Tortoiseshell and a Red Admiral on some Buddleia.

As we sat on the beach below the Black Lion, the favourite watering hole of Dylan Thomas, the girls disappeared off to make friends. This was my cue to grab my camera and nip off to look for some butterflies. I worked my way round to about half way towards Cei Bach before reaching part of the cliff that I could scramble up. Once there and in an 'unreachable' little spot I started looking round for butterflies. There was a very faded Ringlet almost translucent in the sun. A brilliant Common Blue flitted by and became embroiled in an argument with another male. Due to the slope I couldn't follow so just watched them as they spiralled upwards and then one darted off with the other in hot pursuit. Their actions put up Specklie, Smessex (probably an Essex this late into their season – if they've reached this far west that is?) and a scattering of grass moths. Eventually they broke apart and I managed a few shots of the combatants at rest.



I started working my way back towards Base Camp across the clay cliff face. A Peacock landed warily and too briefly for a shot and somehow I'd ended back on the beach so I started up the cliff again aiming for a patch of yellow flowers. There were other Common Blues and a Hedge Brown as well as another aged Smessex. Unfortunately for me nothing seemed to be landing and I was just giving it up when something whizzed by. It was slightly larger than the nearby Hedge Browns and the occasional glide in its fast flight suggested Wall Brown to me. And so it turned out to be, a female which actually stopped several times to nectar and then a bask as well - which was where I left it.





What a great trip to the beach! 😎
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 01-Sep-14 11:44 PM GMT

What a splendid Wall – and great photos, too. I'm sure you posted that just to annoy me... 😊👍

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 01-Sep-14 11:54 PM GMT

Great Wall photos Wurzel 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by CJB, 02-Sep-14 09:53 AM GMT

As ever Wurzel, your pictures push me to get a proper camera, but being a stubborn mule I won't do it until I have taken all the UK species on my iPhone. I managed to increase my tally with the Large Blue this year, but still no DGF or WLH this year. 😡

At the rate I am going it seems as though the list will grow while I try to keep up!

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Wurzel

by kevlings, 03-Sep-14 12:49 PM GMT

Wurzel,

Playing catch up with the personal diaries after my return from holiday. Great shots of the Wall Brown (dead jealous that I did not encounter one myself this year. Ah well there's always 2015. Trouble is there are quite a lot of others species I've said that about too).

My particular favourite is the Small Tort on the yellow flower head. Great stuff

Regards Kev

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Sep-14 11:06 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 Sorry perhaps I should have held off posting this until you've returned from your trip to Dorset when doubtless you'll return with shots of Wall, Lulworths, Camberwell Beauties etc etc 😊😊😊

Cheers Mike I was chuffed with those 😊

Cheers CJB 😊 I reckon you could get both DGF and WLH next year, there are some great sites detailed on this website for both of those species, keep heart 😊

Cheers Kev 😊 You never know you could pick up a 3rd brood Wall 😊

The Outlaws continued...

After a busy few days of trips out and wandering up and down the Lanes today was the day that we were heading to Aber. We kept to the usual routine;

walk along the river path into town, look round the shops, stop at Yr Popty for a pastry lunch and then sit on the seafront eating and guarding our food. After this I'd pay my respects to Duncan at the Bay and then head back the way I came to eventually meet up at the swimming pool while the girls would take the more scenic route stopping at the park on the way.

This time however the memorial was gone and there were only a few butterflies around – a Red Admiral and couple of whites at the Police station along with a Common Blue and a few Specklies on the way back. Once I'd parked at Plascrug I checked out the little patch of rough ground between the car park and the neighbouring back gardens. This was packed with all colours of Buddleia and unlike more that I've seen almost all the florets were in bloom. I now worked out why I had seen so few butterflies – they were all over here enjoying a nectar bonanza! Amongst the mauve and purple I sighted 2 Peacocks, 3 Red Admirals, and up to 8 Small Torts. But the best find was a Painted Lady which breezed in, fed for a frustratingly short time before breezing out again. Still I managed a couple of shots – literally 2! A cry of "Wurzel" informed me that the girls had arrived so I packed the camera away and donned my swimming togs.



Once back home I sorted the car and swimming things out while the girls went mad in the garden. Jobs done I then took my last trip down the Lane to see if I could add to the earlier Painted Lady or the unusual Hedge Browns. It was actually quite quiet with the Hedge only throwing up a few whites and one or two 'normal' looking Hedgies. Further on along one of the Blues had gone but in its place was a nice Silver Y looking old and grey (I'm wondering if this a gammina?). One of the final butterflies I saw on my stroll was a lovely female Hedgie that was totally normal.



So a day of finals - final trip, final stroll down the Lane, final nights stay in Wales and so before that the final check of the Verbena round the side of my Outlaws house. There was the usual Peacock and Small Tort and a very unusual Hedgie! 😊 . It was a female and she played hard to get only revealing her upper wings briefly - when she did I could see an extra spot below the 'eye'. However what was interesting was that when she moved the fore wing upwards with her wings closed two spots were revealed which both had pupils in them. I'm not sure whether this is a named aberrant but it was a great finale to the Wales visit.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 04-Sep-14 12:15 PM GMT

Brilliant Gatekeeper ab Wurzel 😊 looks very similar to female *ab addenda*, NHM Cockayne Collection.

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Sep-14 11:55 PM GMT

Cheers for the ab ID Mike 😊 I'll have to check it out against the Cockayne Collection when I get a bit more time this weekend, that's one of the joys of going back to work – everything has to be crammed into twos days out of the available seven 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-14 08:23 AM GMT

Shipton Bellinger 09-08-2014

During my week at the Outlaws I'd watched reports of Brown Hairstreaks coming in and the lush shots with ever increasing envy. I'd also been watching the weather with growing trepidation as the remnants of a hurricane swept across the Atlantic and headed for us promising to wreck the Jet Stream and plunge us all into unseasonal cool, wet and windy weather. As soon as I was able I was off to Shipton Bellinger to bag a Brostreak before the untimely end of the season

In amongst sun and cloud and slightly cooler weather than I've been used to I set off up the stone path up the hill. Almost as soon as I started the walk a Small Tortoiseshell flew by and landed on the path to ensure my near perfect record was maintained – that's one at every site bar one still!



Eventually I reached the hotspot hedge right at the other side of the site with only a few whites and Specklies and blues and browns on the way. Plenty of Specklies had done their usual trick and impersonated Hairstreaks and a few Hedge Browns also got in on the act but despite any a crick in my neck and the occasional twinge of whiplash caused by a jinking, fleeting, orange Hedgie, on reaching the Hotspot I was still 'Brostreak-less'. There were a few others peering into the bushes but they weren't having much luck either. One such hedge watcher was Craigbirdphotos and so as we chatted we scanned and worked our way along the hedge and round to a few other spots along the road. There were good numbers of Meadow Browns around as well as blues fluttering amongst the flowers on the hedge margins but still no Brostreaks. Holly Blues were around and whilst getting a photo of one another decided that it wanted it's photo taken as well and so they had a bit of a set-to.





After trailing around for about an hour a small butterfly fluttered down from somewhere and started feeding high up on a Bramble. The shark fin look of the closed wings suggested a Hairstreak and so I added a *betulae* to the yearly tally. It was a male but he was a bit shy, staying up quite high and only just in camera range and when I did manage a few shots they were bleached as I was taking the shots into the sun. We decided to leave him to see if he'd come down a little lower and I was able to enjoy the odd false Hairstreak as well as a very distant view of a female. She was even more camera shy than the male, refusing to step away from the Ivy right at the back of hedge and surrounded on all sides by a sea of Bramble.



Craigbirdphotos had to make his way homewards and so I had a further mooch around on my own. Luckily the male Brostreak decided that he'd teased me enough and so came down to a slightly lower level on the Bramble. He was pretty tired looking and had a sizeable chunk taken out of one hind wing but at least now I was able to get a few shots for proof 😊 .



Unfortunately for me my time was running out too and so I made to set off. I'd reached the end of the hedge where another couple were staring at the ground rather than into the hedge itself and so I asked what they'd found. It was another Brostreak and clearly another individual, the honey colour showing it as a male. It was in prime condition with its tails nice and pointed and hardly a scale out of place. "A fitting finale" I thought and indeed so it turned out to be despite a mud-puddling Holly Blue. During possibly the slowest walk back to the car ever I didn't encounter another Brostreak!



Luckily the forecasters had erred and the weather was nowhere near as bad as they and certain Tabloids make out but I still had my Brostreak with several weeks of holiday remaining, a nice situation to be in!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 06-Sep-14 05:14 PM GMT

Lovely photo's Wurzal, it's so strange here at present, I've been to Southport, all the usual places and nothing seems to be flying much here except the Speckled Wood. Just a few Common Blue are about (most of those are really worn) Red Admirals are about but not as many as previous years.

Gate Keepers are none existent so your very lucky 🍀🍀 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Sep-14 12:02 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Autumn certainly seems to have come early this year, though saying that I did find a couple of really fresh Small Coppers today, perhaps there's more still to come?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-14 10:11 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I am playing catch up yet again. Some more great reports and photos. I particularly like your Wall Browns and the Small Tort on the yellow flower a couple of posts back 😊 .

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-14 10:47 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 I think we crossed over on comments earlier 😊

Weekend in Worcester 15-17th August

We didn't get round to visiting my sister in-law that lives in Worcester earlier in the year so with camping trip and visit to the Outlaws ticked off the "to-do" list we packed a few things and set off up to the edge of Midlands. I was hoping to 'suggest' a trip to Grafton after some advice from Nfreem but I wouldn't be too worried as my sister and brother in-law cater to everyone needs.

After the drive we took a stroll along the canal to walk the cramp out of our legs and the girls were fascinated by the locks offering to help push the gates open and waving at the passengers as the narrow boat rose up from the depths of the lock below. Despite this being the middle of August it was quite cool and it was only on the return journey when the sun came out that so too did the butterflies. First was a Small Tortoiseshell which was investigating a small Buddleia and this was closely followed by two whites which were rather annoyingly on the other side of the canal. There were a couple of interesting Crickets around and once we'd left the canal side behind and were wandering thought the tree bedecked housing estates Specklies

and Green-veined Whites became much more approachable.





The next day (Saturday) we went out to Hampton Court Castle. The weather was a bit hit or miss again but there was plenty to keep me occupied while the sun was in. Walking round the ornamental gardens a few whites fluttered by but never stopped. After the tour of the castle we had a picnic lunch on the lawn and it was freezing. It felt more like early spring than midsummer and the darting Swallows could have been feeding up to replenish their stocks rather than stocking up for the trip ahead.

In order to warm the kids up we all headed off on the woodland walk towards the Rope swing. On the way one side opened up to a small field and I noticed a few Browns fluttering about. The others went on and as I watched what turned out to be a multitude (well 8 in this little patch actually) of Specklies the sun burst forth from the cloud. So began a small 'purple patch' with a Red Admiral flying by, a few Meadow Browns hanging around the edges of the field and a cracking Small Copper. It put on a really good show for me; allowing close ups, closed wing, open wing and walking head first down grass stems. But I had to leave it and run back to find the rest of the party who were all swinging or pushing the aforementioned swings. The occasional White would fly by to distract me from my work and would then disappear again as the sun went behind a cloud and it would feel deceptively cool.



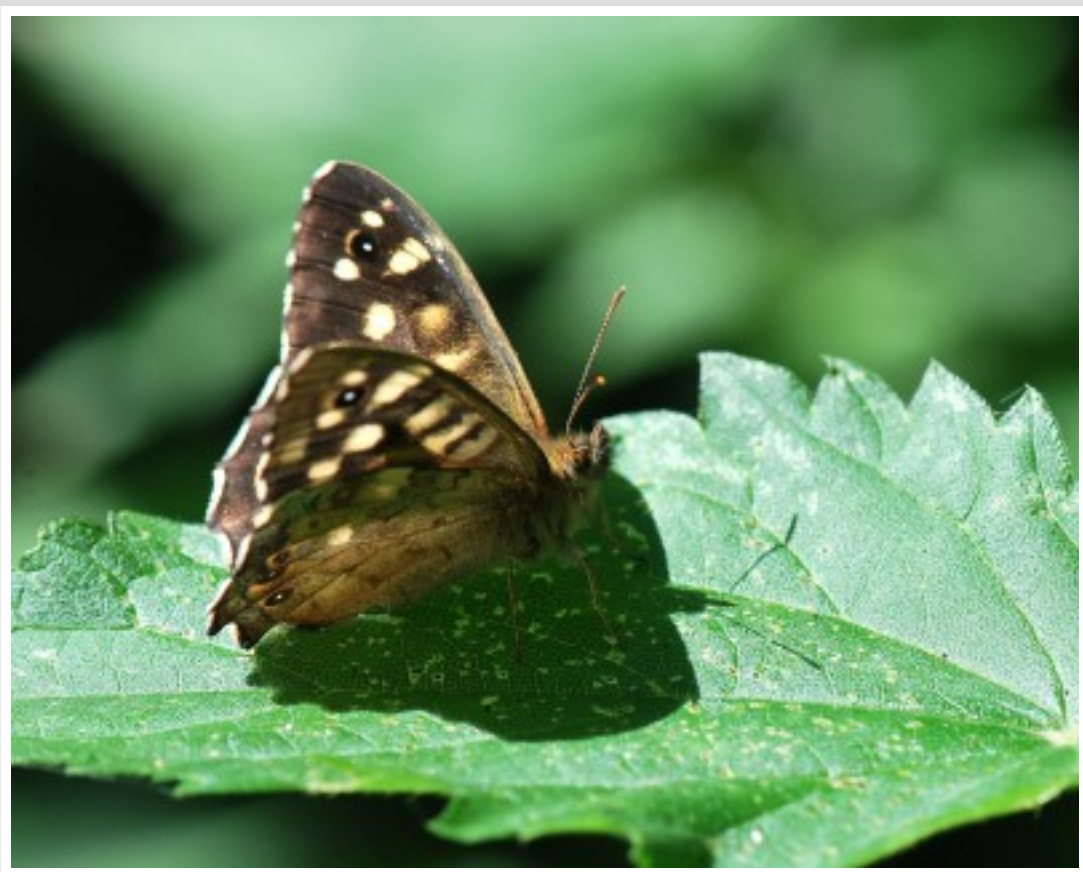


After the children had almost worn themselves out on the rope swing we headed back down the path and across the lawn to try out the maze and then it was back through the ornamental gardens to the exit. First though I managed to grab a few shots of a couple of the many Small Torts and whites that were occupying this small part of the garden. I don't know which I was more pleased about - the Small Copper (which was a cracker) or the Small Torts (maintaining my almost flawless record of sightings)?





On the final morning of our stay my brother in-law and I took the children out to the local Country Park to let off steam. A Small Tort as soon as I climbed out of the car was great and then we started off with a walk through the woods. The odd white fluttered through the dappled light just out of reach and never stopping and at one point a Red Admiral erupted from the bark strewn path before I could get any shots. There were also a couple of Purple Hairstreaks (smaller, grey, square winged and high in an Oak) in one of the Oaks on the very edge of the Wood. Unfortunately they didn't come down so I had to console myself with a few grabbed shots of a Speckle before my younger daughter wrenched my arm out of my socket in her excitement at having spied the massive 4 person swing!





On the way back home feeling relaxed after a great few days away I wondered if the weather would get any better or whether summer had been and gone...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 09-Sep-14 01:42 PM GMT

Nice report and pictures wurzel 😊.

Speckled Bush Crickets require their own a special technique to frame them. You have to stick em in the corner to accomodate the incredibly long antennae 🤪 (which I see you've just managed to do 😊)

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 12-Sep-14 09:39 PM GMT

I'm playing catch-up too Wurzel. Great Holly Blue, Specklies and Small Copper shots (among others) in your recent reports 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Sep-14 11:38 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 I was struggling to decide what to do about that Cricket, looks like I made the right call 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 I too need to do some catching up, work has been getting in the way of butterflies recently, all work and no butterflies makes Wurzel an unhappy chappy 😞

The Devenish 18-08-2014

As my older daughter was starting a week of Musical Theatre it left my younger daughter at a loss for whom to annoy/wind up/fight so she took to wandering around the house disconsolately 😞. I packed us a lunch and took her out to The Devenish for a picnic and sweetened the thought of butterflying literally with a few choice penny sweets and also the promise of a swim later in the afternoon. I'd been trying to get back to The Devenish for a quick check up throughout the holiday and this seemed like the perfect opportunity as well as offering me the chance to bag a few extra Brownie points to use later in the week for some Brostreaks 😊

Once on site we wandered through the car park hand in hand and came upon our first obstacle - the first of many gates. As she's so short the gate towered over her but I showed her how to clamber over and she then seemed to climb over all the others on the site with relish. We reached the Meadow just as the sun broke through the clouds for a brief spell. It was if someone had flicked the switch; all of a sudden there were butterflies. Whites fluttered along the wood margins, and there were fading Meadow Browns, Common and Adonis Blues, Brown Argus, Red Admirals all flying and feasting on the Hemp Agrimony. The occasional Speckled Wood would also announce its presence by fluttering upwards back into the trees and of course there were a couple of Small Torts maintaining their ubiquity.





From here we moved on up to the side of the Down. The Brambles bushes that lined the path have now born fruit and been picked clean so there were no butterflies here. The swathes of Hemp Agrimony lining the base of the Down before it rolled into the Beech wood were where most of the butterflies were. As well as the three species of Blue already seen we also added Chalk Hills and a Brimstone to the tally. I was most impressed with the number of Brown Argus, they seemed to be everywhere although my little girl was more wowed by the 8 or so Red Admirals knocking about the place.





All the hill and fence climbing meant that by now my little girl was starving and so we quickly moved up to the very top of the Down and started looking for somewhere to settle down and eat our picnic. Just as we reached the top a Clouded Yellow bombed by, my first at this site and then we got waylaid by a couple of "cute" (her words not mine) Small Heaths. While we were enjoying these the Cloudy or another appeared and as the sun was masked by the clouds it settled more frequently so we tried approaching it carefully and succeeded a few times. It seemed much more placid than the usual Clouded Yellow and so I gambled that I might be able to encourage it to crawl onto my hand, which it did! After a while the sun came back out and it returned to its usual frenetic self and we returned to searching out a suitable spot for lunch.





Spot found we settled back and gleefully munched whilst spread before us was the whole of the Woodford valley. While I watched a Cloudy and Chalk Hill fly by my daughter read me "The Three Little Pigs" and then we both lay back and watched the clouds and rain fall while lunch went down. It was one of those occasions that is securely anchored in my memory as it was just blissful... 😊

Eventually we made our way back down and through the Meadow with more of the same everywhere and in great numbers despite the autumnal feel to the day and the weather. We also checked out the opposite field where there is a lot of clearing going on. There was very little here but we did find a couple of Brown Argus and Common Blues roosting. I even handed my camera over to my daughter so she could take a few shots; well I had to hold it for her as it was "too heavy dad".





My little girl's shot

About 20 minutes later and I was being drowned in the local swimming pool, such is life! 😂😂
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 14-Sep-14 12:04 PM GMT

Fantastic photo's again Wurzal , what can I say, I think they're all good can't pick one out I like the best 🍷

You sound also to be enjoying your daughter's company , make the most of it they grow up too quickly Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

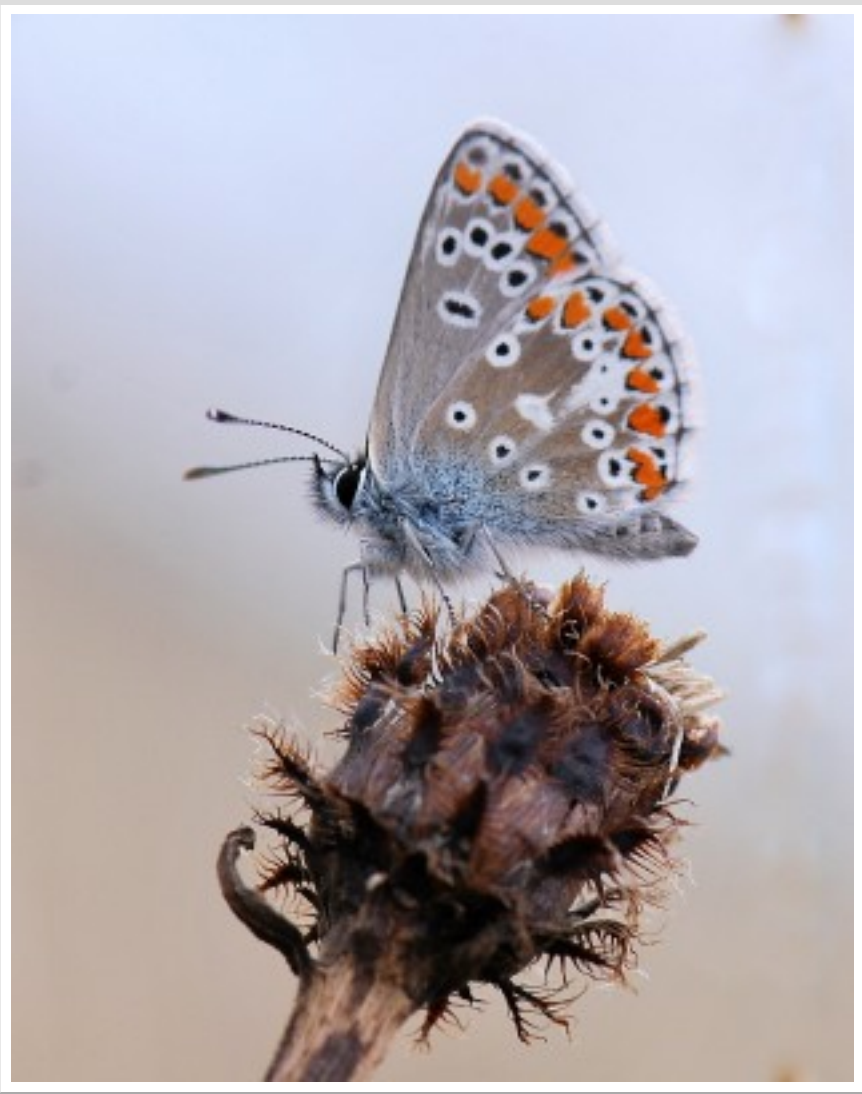
by Wurzel, 15-Sep-14 10:51 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie you're too kind 😊😄 My younger daughter is growing up fast – it seems like only yesterday when I was pushing her round the Eastern Clearing at Bentley Wood in her Mountain buggy looking for PBFs – and that was four years ago 😲

Larkhill 21-08-2014

This was just a quick call in as I was passing by on my way to collect the GCSE results 😞 . The weather wasn't really favourable with only the slightest break in the cloud and some fleeting drizzle at times. Still it was nice to get back to old place and see how it's come on over the summer. Truth be told I was slightly nervous at first as it seemed quiet and I had to walk a good way up the Northbound path before I came across my first butterfly, a Meadow Brown.

I then got my eyes in and started scanning across the grass tops looking for little white flags and all of a sudden I started seeing them. I don't know whether they'd been holding onto the grass stems lower down and had crawled up as the drizzle abated but they literally started appearing as if from nowhere. I'd scan from right to left and then turn and make the same sweep with my eyes and there would be butterflies. I carried on slightly further than usual and I was still seeing Blues all over so I started taking their photos.





As I drove away I thought that seeing this multitude of Blues was quite appropriate as after looking through the exam results this would probably be how I'd be feeling! 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 16-Sep-14 01:55 PM GMT

Nice Cloudie Wurzel, and on your finger too 😊😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 16-Sep-14 05:01 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzal hope your results were okay, I say "Yours" because if like me you took them later 😊

It was great of you to tell me about the Comma's, do you know any thing about Red Admiral's ! 😄 My Posting! 😊

The Blues look great , lovely photo's, the only thing we've got here at present are Admiral's, ST, Comma, (saw one today, very tatty) and loads of Speckled Wood, they've had a great season . Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 16-Sep-14 08:12 PM GMT

"Goldie M" wrote:

...You sound also to be enjoying your daughter's company , make the most of it they grow up too quickly Goldie 😊

Don't they just, it seems only yesterday that my daughter was a little girl and now she is all grown up with a son of her own. Mind you they will always be 'your little girl' 😊

Great reports and photo again Wurzel, you really bring your trips alive with your entertaining style of writing 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Sep-14 11:14 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 I was chuffed with the atypical Cloudy 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 Unfortunately I'm not up on my Red Admirals 😞

Cheers Neil 😊 I'm struggling a bit at the moment, work keeps getting in the way 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 18-Sep-14 11:31 PM GMT

Wurzel, that first blue in your last post seems to have unusually large underside forewing spots... Did you get to see any more of it?

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 19-Sep-14 12:05 AM GMT

I agree with Dave, Wurzel, the underside forewing spots on that blue do seem to be large and also elongated.

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Debbie, 19-Sep-14 12:32 PM GMT

I often pop in to your diary and as always super – Debbie

Re: Wurzel

by False Apollo, 19-Sep-14 08:03 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Particularly liked the Clouded Yellow and Speckled Wood pictures. I saw a pair of Speckled Woods in the process of pairing up by my feet in the garden at lunch time, they were lovely and fresh like yours. Fresh Speckled Woods are really eye catching with their deep brown velvety appearance, it's an overused phrase I know, but they are stunning. Thanks for your comments on my Sweden trip.

Regards

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Sep-14 10:10 PM GMT

Cheers Dave and Mike. I did manage to get a few shots of the other side but only one was any good. I did think at the time that it was quite heavily marked, but then another butterfly appeared and distracted me...



Viewed from the other side...

Cheers Debbie for your very kind comment 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 I know what you mean about fresh, just out of the box Specklies. I really enjoyed your report – I visited Poland many years ago and always remember the sowing machine call of the River Warbler 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 20-Sep-14 12:15 PM GMT

I agree about the large spots Wurzel, your photo's are so distinctive though that I put it down to that 😊 On a second look how ever they are larger than normal I'm sure Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Sep-14 10:03 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 The thing with variation is you can never really tell if it's outside of the normal range, so I hedge my bets 😊

Shipton Bellinger 24-08-2014

Despite the weather not being brill and the Husky trials still waging war on the peace and tranquillity on one of the best Brostreak sites in the country I packed my camera and headed to Shipton Bellinger for the second time this year. As I strolled up the path and it was quiet until a Red Admiral put in a piratical appearance. From the initial path I opted for the right hand path at the fork and as I wandered slowly up it there were loads of Specklies doing their best to trick me into thinking I'd found a Brostreak.

At the cross path I thought about checking the other side of the hedge and bumped into Paul. He'd not had much luck either and while we were chatting something smaller than the Specklies and much more orange jinked by. I was pretty sure it was a female Brostreak but it shot by and jinked so much I couldn't be 100% convinced. We followed it to an Ash tree and set to damaging the musculature in our necks. There were again a few Specklies around that would catch your eye and trick you into following them just in case they metamorphosed Tansformer style into a Brostreak when they landed. Alas none did but every now and again a smaller butterfly with more square-cut wings would enter the fray and intercept the larger Specklies. After it had harried the large butterfly away it would gain height and settle at the top of the Ash tree but only until the next Specklie dared to enter its air space. This territorial behaviour suggested a male Brostreak and a few heavily cropped shots would also seem to back this up with the paler patch showing on the fore wing and square wings.



I hung around for a bit but they didn't come down any closer. Paul needed to make the most of his remaining time and I wanted to risk running with the wolves over at the hotspot so we bade each other farewell and slowly went our separate ways. I took to checking the Blackthorn and other bushes all the way to the end of the path and the cacophony of yowls and howls grew ever louder. I encountered plenty of Meadow Browns and a few Blues/Brown Argus as well a Small Heath on the way towards the back hedge. These were probably displaced from their main play ground on the field. Most were pretty tired looking but despite their aged looks were full of vigour.



I tried to edge my way along the main hedge but the tents and awnings were right up against it plus it appears that Huskies would make very good guard dogs! I could get to some bushes but was fearful of losing my hearing 🙄. Instead I made my way round to the back to a few smaller stands of Blackthorn where there was more of the same and no Brostreaks. The walk back to the main path threw up plenty of Specklies, the odd Blue and Meadow Brown and a couple of Small Heath but that was it.



So apart from the catch-up with Paul pretty disappointing - I've just got to hope for some good weather at the end of next week so I can try one last time here...and then it's back to the grindstone! 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 21-Sep-14 10:56 PM GMT

Still keep forgetting you're using your time machine, Wurzel! 😊 Hoping your next trip worked out better...

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 23-Sep-14 04:00 PM GMT

Nothing much to be seen around here Wurzal at present, just the Red Admirals that are still looking good, and of course the Speckies : your shots are always good I like the Common Blues Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

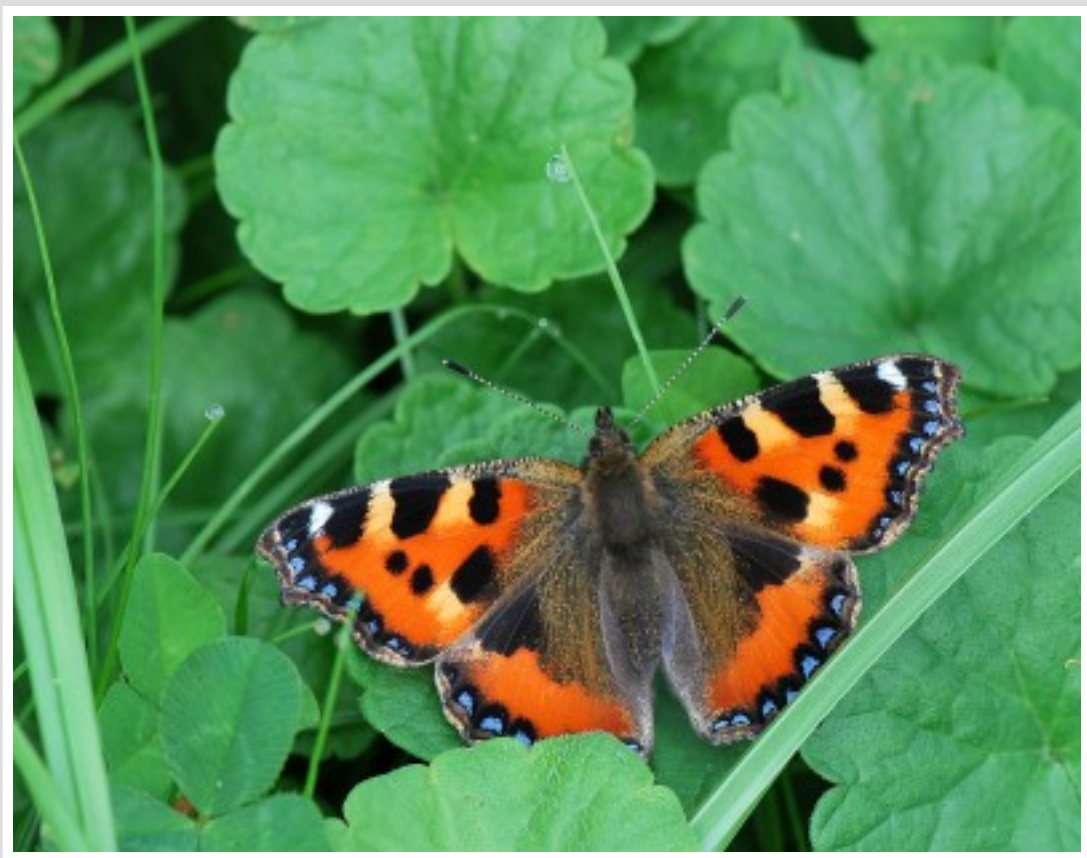
by Wurzel, 25-Sep-14 10:49 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I'd like to say that getting behind on my PD is a ploy to keep posting until the next season but it's actually just far, far too much work 😞

Cheers Goldie 😊 It's gone pretty quiet round this way too – I didn't see any butterflies on my stop-off at Larkhill this morning – but I did see two Great Bustards 😊

'Mottisfont 28-08-2014

"So where the hell has the summer gone?" This is what I wondered as I drove the family towards Mottisfont for a picnic to celebrate my nieces birthday. Gone was the sunny weather and the warmth and today felt more like April than August, with very patchy sun and a cool breeze rustling the tree tops. This time last year when I made the same journey there were Whites practically lining the route yet today there was not a single one. It didn't get much better once we'd arrived and we had to wait for my sister in-law and brother in-law to arrive with their girls in tow. I had a mooch around the car park area but I counted only 4 butterflies in the 25 minutes I was waiting – 2 Small Whites, a Specklie and a Small Tortoiseshell. The final species was some consolation as it maintained my near perfect record and it was hassled briefly by a large blue Dragonfly and also my younger daughter.



Once the rest of the gang arrived we entered and headed straight to the picnic area, I didn't even get wards in a battle to the death but the route did take me along the Lavender hedge where a battered old Blue was ecking out it's final days/hours. Nearby to the bench was a large group of shrubs featuring a large Buddleia and I managed to catch sight of a Peacock, 2 Red Admirals, 2 Brimstones and a Comma all while I was making polite conversation and munching lunch. Once the cakes had been eaten and Happy Birthday sung I grabbed the chance to 'stretch' my legs and so wandered back to work my way up and down the Lavender hedge. Again it was disappointing compared to last year with a single solitary Large White braving the dull and cool weather. Not a patch on last years plethora of Whites (Small, Large, Brimstones all in good numbers and even a Cloudy). Back near the island of shrubbery yielded a Green-veined White to add to the days tally.



As we'd eaten we thought it only fair that the Brown Trout should have a bite or three plus it wouldn't be a visit to Mottisfont without trying to get some shots of the Trout. I set my camera to Sports mode, pointed it at the surface and tried to anticipate when the fish would strike. Most of my shots came out as splashes but there was the occasional one which was okay as the largest of the Trout would drift lazily towards the piece of bread like a surfacing submarine; safe in the knowledge that no little upstart fry was going to have its snack!



We all made our way over to the Walled garden with the cloud thickening and a fine drizzle fell. Despite this the garden came up trumps for the day with another Peacock, Meadow Brown on Buddleia, 4 Red Admirals and three Small Torts. All of these made counting easy but the whites were constantly on the go, never stopping so it seemed and so counting was difficult, especially when they would disappear over the walls before you could positively identify them. I reckon that most were Small with the occasional noticeable Large amongst them.





There were other delights for the girls to witness and so we let them have a run around on the lawn, mess around in the stables as well as letting them

visit the exhibition in the main house. In a very short space of time there were a lot of tired little legs and so we thought it best to make a quick visit to the Wild play area (lots of mud and climbing branches) before heading for home. As usual the sun now came out but we were around long enough for me to catch a glimpse of another Red Admiral, a few Specklies and Whites and a nicely marked Meadow Brown before we left



Hopefully the weather will buck up a bit soon, probably just in time for my return to work 😞

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by CJB, 26-Sep-14 09:53 AM GMT

Good morning Wurzel and fellow Reef Fan! 😊

At the risk of being pedantic your trout is a stunning Rainbow Trout! The bright pink is the give-away, Brownies tend to be more golden with red and black spots.

V impressed by the Meadow Brown, which has vanished from my garden patch and having read reports it seems that I have a 3rd brood Brown Argus! 😊 My wife photographed a tatty Brimstone (sounds like a sub-species!) this week. Fingers crossed for the weekend and that the October 'heatwave' delivers.

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 26-Sep-14 08:29 PM GMT

Lovely Red Admirals on the Verbena and Buddleia Wurzel 😊 I agree with CJB, a great big bread munching Rainbow Trout too 😊😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 27-Sep-14 05:27 PM GMT

I love Rainbow Trout Wurzal, to eat that is 😊 Great shot Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by CJB, 29-Sep-14 02:04 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

I am relieved to have my trout identification backed up!

This evening I am going to be eating this beauty who I caught last night and shows you the main differences between Brown and Rainbow.



Brown Trout

Apologies Wurzel for replying and not mentioning butterflies but I will put that under September!

Flutter on!

CJB

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Sep-14 11:39 PM GMT

Cheers CJB and Mike 😊 Thanks for the ID and photos – I've caught both before when I was a nipper but that was a long time ago and I'm not used to seeing them from above (only flat on a plate 😊) and so hence the mis-ID 😞

Cheers Golide 😊 I agree totally – that one would have been great for at least three sittings – it was huge 😲

Shipton Bellinger 31-08-2014

This was probably the last joint visit that Philzoid and I would make this year (apart from the social of course) and so with the weather looking favourable and everyone loaded into my car we set off. After visiting Shipton twice before already this season I made a subconscious decision that I would try and focus just on the Hairstreaks and so after a few Small Tortoiseshells on the Buddleia at the bottom of the path we eagerly set off. Almost as soon as the hedge had started thickening something orange hove into view – the first Brostreak of the day and the first for the year for Philzoid. This is the closest that I've encountered them to the car park and I couldn't believe how easy our search had been. The only slight disappointment was that it wasn't the first species seen on the day as that would have made the narrative slightly better 😊



Further up the path is divided by a tall hedge so we took the left hand side reasoning that this had more young growth and so would be better for egg laying. Within 10 or so metres we had more Brostreak action with a couple of fly over females but it wasn't until we were almost at the end when the paths converge again that we found a stationary one. It was a male quite high up and almost out of range and without the wonders of cropping I wouldn't have had any images. We'd been watching a Specklie that was in great condition when a little shark fin caught my eye. It was so worn that it looked almost grey at times.



Unfortunately it seemed to like it high up and our hopes of it coming down lower were dashed when the dog incident occurred. A few years back an overzealous dog, off the lead bounced up to my daughter on the beach slobbering all over her and nearly knocking her off her feet. When she started crying in fear and pain (from the scratching claws) the dog started growling. Needless to say she now has a fear of dogs which wasn't helped by what happened next at Shipton. Someone said "there is no such thing as a bad dog..." well it seems that no-one had informed this canine 😊 . It was aggressive and threatening, growling and baring it's teeth and most importantly off the lead with the owner trailing behind saying all the old platitudes "he won't hurt you, he's just saying hello, nothing to be scared off etc" 😊 . Once the dog and eventually the owner had passed (the later giving us dirty looks like we'd done something wrong because we didn't love her "pooch/hound from hell" 😊) everything calmed down although my girls were still a little twitchy. We carried on joining the main path and continued the search for more Brostreaks. Straight away we found an ovi-posturing female, creeping around in the shady part of the hedge and dragging her abdomen along the Blackthorn twigs but not laying. She flew across the path and landed briefly with the sun shining through her wings.



Cheered we all carried on up the path, the sun shine and ease with which Brostreaks were appearing buying us up. As we cut across to the Hotspot Hedge there were a few worn blues and Brown Argus with the odd Small Heath and Meadow Brown thrown in for good measure. There seemed to be a few other butterflies around but they soon turned into Blackberry hunters and so we had all the butterflies to ourselves. It wouldn't have mattered if there were ravening hordes here as there was such a lot to see. There were the Brimstones flitting among the taller grasses and flowers at the edge of the path which would set off the occasional Small Tortoiseshell, Meadow Brown or Common Blue. Then the Aristocrats made sure that they were the centre of attention for a while with Red Admirals and the odd Comma frequenting the Brambles whilst Holly Blues stayed out of the way right at the back of the tree line amongst the stands of Ivy.

It felt like I was wearing my "Brosteak-vision Goggles™" as over the next hour we found another five Brostreaks. We'd walk along the hedge, look over the brambles and "there's one" a few steps in either direction and: "there's another!" It has to have been the easiest ever Brostreak finding session. The first one we came across just sort of popped up amongst the Bramble and started feeding on the over-ripe Blackberries.



Better leave it there as I need some sleep...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 29-Sep-14 11:55 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Just catching up on your reports from Shipton Bellinger 😊 which seems like ages ago now. Looks like you had a much more productive visit with Philzoid the following week. I never did manage another visit, but there is always next year I suppose. I am hoping for a few weeks more butterfly watching yet. I have been told there is a heatwave coming for the next few weeks of October 😊

See you at the Winter social 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 30-Sep-14 05:31 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, I bet your girls were very nervous of the dog, I go to Hall-Lee-Brook near where we live and when on my own I get frightened of the Dog's , the owner's don't seem to care. I've had a dog but I was always careful and held her collar when people went by and when butterflying my Husband held her and she wasn't allowed to roam.

I'm envious once again of your Brown Hair Streaks 🍷 but keep the photo's coming it will make the Autumn go quicker Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 30-Sep-14 07:22 PM GMT

Really pleased you got to see a good hairstreak selection second time round, Wurzel – and on the same day as I saw mine at Bookham. I always bump into Philzoid down there and wondered why I didn't see him this time – Now I know where he was! 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 30-Sep-14 10:12 PM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

I saw mine at Bookham. I always bump into Philzoid down there and wondered why I didn't see him this time – Now I know where he was!

True Dave. 😊 I'd put in three visits but drew blanks. In retrospect I think I went a bit too early this year 😊 . Glad you got to see them and to know for sure that the 'local' ones are still there 😊 . Will time it better next year.

Shipton was brilliant Wurzel so will make it a must next year 😊 . Hopefully I'll contribute a few more than the 2 out of the 11 spotted 😊 😊

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 30-Sep-14 10:28 PM GMT

Interesting images, Wurzel.

I've never seen Brown Hairstreaks taking fluids from blackberries before.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Oct-14 12:11 AM GMT

Cheers Jack 😊 Luckily the law of diminishing returns didn't apply to my final visit to Shipton 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 It would be alright if the owners just kept them on the lead or restrained them, or failing that could actually control their animals 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 Luckily it all panned out well in the end, a definite case of third time lucky 😊

Cheers Philzoid 😊 Shipton is a "must visit" for me now, I was lucky this year in that I had my Brostreak goggles firmly fitted 😊

Cheers David 😊 I'd not seen it before either so I was glad to get those shots, there are a few more but work has kept me away from the computer tonight 😊

October 2014



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Oct-14 10:32 PM GMT

Shipton Bellinger Part 2 – 31-08-2014

...Back to the start of the Hedge for the next one which was low down. I'm not used to kneeling to get shots of Brostreaks – usually I have to stand on tips toes or hold the camera up at arms length.



Another was higher up overlooking the path and therefore in a much more usual setting. I was quite chuffed to find this one as at the same time as I was taking the shot I was also successfully calming the girls down after another dog incident. The girls were still spooked from their earlier trauma and the blackberry hunters had a pair of dogs. But this time things were much better; the dogs were quite away a way and off their leads but when they started to wander over to investigate us their owners merely called their name and they both returned to his side instantly. Possibly the best behaved/trained dogs I've ever seen.



With the girls in the shade Philzoid and I set back and worked the hedge again and found a one tailed lady who started ovipositing. This was the first time that I'd witnessed this and so felt privileged that she'd chosen to lay before our eyes. From a Bramble leaf she flew about a metre to a small Blackthorn sucker and then hung upside down from one of the leaves. She then righted herself and slowly crawled down the twig and started to drag her abdomen along the twig. As she progressed in this fashion she started to curl her abdomen and then upon reaching a fork in the twig she seemed to shake and then flew off back to her original perch on the Bramble where she remained for about the next 10 minutes. It seems like they lay one egg and then fly off somewhere for a bit of a breather before coming back down.







Again we were slightly distracted by the odd Holly Blue, Peacock, Red Admiral, the Brimstones but I tried to hold firm to my original plane of focusing solely on the Brostreaks until a Comma came around looking stunning in its autumn livery.



Even further along the hedge I found the fifth Brostreak. I'd found a likely looking spot (ie trampled path into the Brambles) and spent a few minutes staring into the vegetation and over the top and round and along the hedge and back into and over the top etc etc. For some reason I looked down and to my right and there next to me about 20 cm away was a female. She seemed to unfold herself from the leaves...



After this find I was distracted a few more times, by a few Red Admirals a Comma and a worn Flounced Rustic but by now we were nearing the end of the Witching hour as the afternoon crawled round to almost 3pm. The same walk along the hedge and techniques we'd employed with such success earlier in the day yielded nothing now. It was as if the Brostreaks were Cinderella and all had to rush home from the ball so we called it a day and headed back to Salisbury. Once there I realised I was back early and so we went to the park over the road - which cheered the girls so everyone had a great day! Sure there will be butterflies lingering on through September and into October but for me this felt like the fitting finale to the season. Going out with a BANG! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 04-Oct-14 01:07 PM GMT

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 04-Oct-14 08:23 PM GMT

Hi,Wurzel,

Many thanks for your welcome to this site.

I note that you hail from Salisbury.In order to bag some Marsh Fritillaries for the first time ,the Wiltshire BC.website sightings page was reporting good numbers of said Butterfly at Cotley Hill.So off i set,and with 110 miles on the clock, DISASTER! as I was passing through Wilton my engine management light came on. Now what to do! turn back so near to my destination or risk carrying on. Happily as it turned out I chose the latter,and on arrival at Cotley Hill I was treated to the sight of many Marsh Fritillaries and some lovely shots.Also there were more Green Hairstreaks than ive ever seen in one location before.But worried about the car and my journey home i had to cut my visit short.

I arrived home without incident,and that light has never come on since !.

I might pay a return visit next year,might see you there!

All the best TREVOR

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Oct-14 08:49 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was happy with those shots, the only problem was that this trip usually signals the beginning of the end...of the season 😞
Cheers Trevor – next time you're heading this way let me know and I could give you a lift – then if the car does break down you can at least get to a train station 😊 It is a cracking site and worthy of at least three days I reckon 😊😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 05-Oct-14 09:49 PM GMT

Hi,Wurzel,

Glad you enjoyed my shots of HIM.I have heard that Bentley was a bit dire for Emperors this year.But i most sites have bad years,2012 was awful at Botany Bay.Here's to 2015!.

TREVOR.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 06-Oct-14 03:31 PM GMT

Yes Bently Woods was awful for Emperor's this Summer, I went there nearly every day for a week starting from the 5th of July to the 12th nothing, although I was disappointed I was thrilled to finally get some good shots of the SWF and at getting a shot of the scarce female SWF so I won't grumble just wait for next year now. 😊

Glad your starting next week Wurzal with the "Favourite Photo's" it pass's the Winter on with some thing to look forward to doing and also hope you get your photo's sorted soon Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Oct-14 11:31 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 When I first started butterflying I struggled to see His Nibbs at Bentley and it took three years to get a grounded Emperor and now I've had 2 poor years so I reckon next year should be great! 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 Just got to sort through all those photos now 😲

Larkhill 02-09-2014

After the fantastic time at Shipton over the weekend I came down to Earth with a bump on Monday 1st September as it was back to the grind stone and to make matters worse the weather was decidedly iffy. I did stop but nothing was about so it wasn't until the second day back that I got back into the quick stop-off habit.

The weather was still not great but at least the drizzle and cooler temperatures of the previous day were history. I wasn't expecting much and almost gave up until a Common Blue appeared out of the grass...



Larkhill 03-09-2014

The next morning was misty and so I went looking for dew bedecked butterflies. It was hard work scanning the grass tops and flower heads while the dew soaked through my trousers and shoes. I knew there had to be one here somewhere and so I checked both the north and West bound path but to no avail. It was only when I checked around the Golden Round that I found a glittering white flag floating in the grass.



In the afternoon it was a totally different kettle of fish, it's funny the difference a couple of hours of sunshine can make... There were blues everywhere and probably the odd Brown Argus thrown in for good measure though I couldn't be sure until the final one or two which were definite as they very kindly showed me their closed wings. Amongst these Blues and Browns a couple of Small Heath and Whites did fly-bys. One of the Small Heaths was still looking very smart.



Not too bad for a September stop-off.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 07-Oct-14 04:45 PM GMT

Hi, Wwurzel,

You mentioned that you first went to Bentley Wood on July 5th. That may have been a little late this year as they were grounding at Botany Bay in the last week of June. My first visit was on the 1st July and some were showing signs of wear.

And they only come down for a few days after emerging to probe for minerals/salts.

This year was a little early. His Majesty only favours his subjects if they're on time!

All the best TREVOR.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Oct-14 11:42 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I think I did get there a little late although we seemed to be about a week and a half to two weeks behind the east of the country over this way

Larkhill 04-09-2014

Over the last few days the weather had been a bit up and down and today it was definitely on the downturn. My morning stop-off was made between cloud bursts but after the briefest of searches amongst the patch of Golden Rod I found what I was looking for - namely a butterfly and one covered in dew. This one was a Small Heath hiding quite low down amongst the foliage and wearing the dew drops like jewellery. It was my only butterfly of the

day as this being Thursday I wasn't able to stop on the way home.

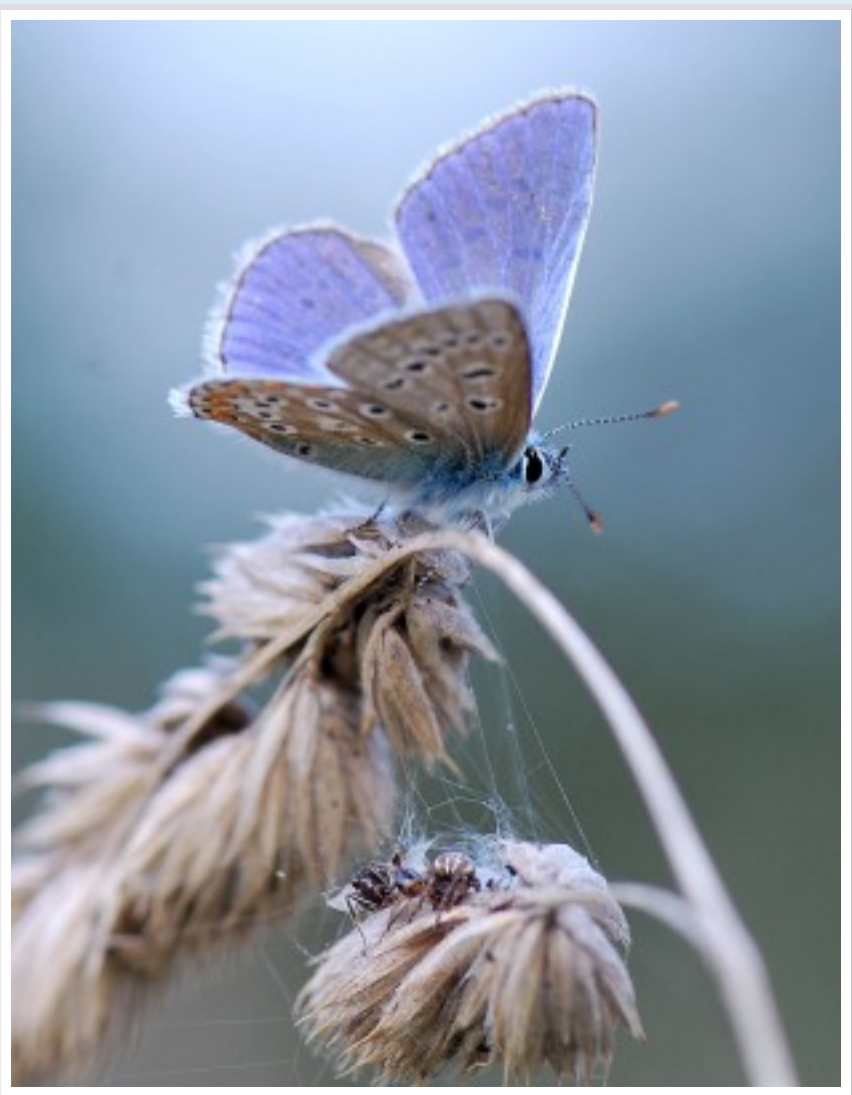


05-09-2014

The dew bedecked theme didn't continue as today I found only one butterfly on my morning stop-off. This time it was a Brown Argus that was the early riser but unfortunately it lacked the early morning bling.



On my afternoon stop-off the sun had come out, the temperatures had risen and the dew and mist had dispersed. It actually felt surprisingly warm so much so that I could literally feel the heat. Again the warmth had brought the butterflies out although it still only amounted to a Small Heath a Brown Argus and two Common Blues. I was hoping for more but with the season drawing to a close I'll take whatever's available.



Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 09-Oct-14 12:28 AM GMT

Great shot of the Small Heath covered in dew Wurzel 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 09-Oct-14 08:46 PM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

Great shot of the Small Heath covered in dew Wurzel

Agreed. Just goes to show the hardships butterflies must endure.

Re: Wurzel

by Butterflysaurus rex, 09-Oct-14 09:49 PM GMT

Goodness me! 😲 Every very year your diary just gets more and more epic Wurzel!

How much did you pay that Clouded Yellow to sit on your finger? 😊 At the rate your going to you're going to wear out your camera. It will be more than worth it of course, you've taken some fantastic photos again this year. And your writings are always interesting and very entertaining.

P.S

Leave a few left for me next year won't ya. 😊 😊

All the best

B'saurus

Re: Wurzel

by Jenks, 10-Oct-14 10:21 AM GMT

Hi Trevor,
a belated welcome to the site from me !. I was at Bentley Wood on Sunday 13 July and saw HIM (2 males) fluttering around the canopy at Donkey Copse. Wurzel was there too, although he had headed down the track at one point so his sightings were probably not as good as mine (and they weren't good !). My records for PE at Bentley read as follows.. 22/7/01 1 male, 5/7/03 3 males 10.00 to 10.30 hrs , 19/7/04 1 male 11.15 hrs, 16/7/06 2 males 11.00 to 11.30 hrs, 4/7/10 1 male 11.00 hrs, 2/7/11 1 male 10.00 to 11.00 hrs, 11/8/12 (!) 1 male 17.20 hrs above the canopy by the crossroads. (I hadn't gone to Bentley wood for this & certainly wasn't expecting this sighting. I think I was the only person wandering around at that time). 20/7/13 4 sightings between 10.00 to 12.30 hrs. So only one thing is certain, times and dates can vary !

Incidentally, I have a Ford Focus & my engine management light comes on at times. I discovered this was when the petrol gauge indicator showed less than 100 miles of petrol in the tank. Stop at a garage, fill up with some petrol, start the engine and the light has gone out. Oh for Morris Minors and mechanical simplicity !.

Jenks.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 10-Oct-14 12:19 PM GMT

Lovely shots Wurzel , nothing here to report on 😞 It looks like I just missed out at Bentley Wood , I left there on there on the 12th July 😞 missed them by a day Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 11-Oct-14 04:34 PM GMT

Lovely dewy butterflies Wurzel – really like that last Common Blue shot too 🍷

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Oct-14 07:15 PM GMT

Cheers Mike and David for your kind comments 😊 I'm working my way through the dew covered shots – possibly another book there? 😊

Cheers Rex 😊 I might be able to leave you one or two... 😊 😊

Cheers for reminding me Jenks 😊😊
Cheers Goldie 😊 There's not much round here either 😊
Cheers Pauline 😊 I was happy with that one too 😊

As I've used all my Brownie points for the year my entire weekend has been spent shopping 🛒 or marking 🛒 with only the odd glimpse of a fly-by white as we drove to the shops 😊 Still maybe there is still time to squeeze in one last trip 🛒 And if not – I'm only a month behind on my PD so I might actually catch up 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Oct-14 10:55 PM GMT

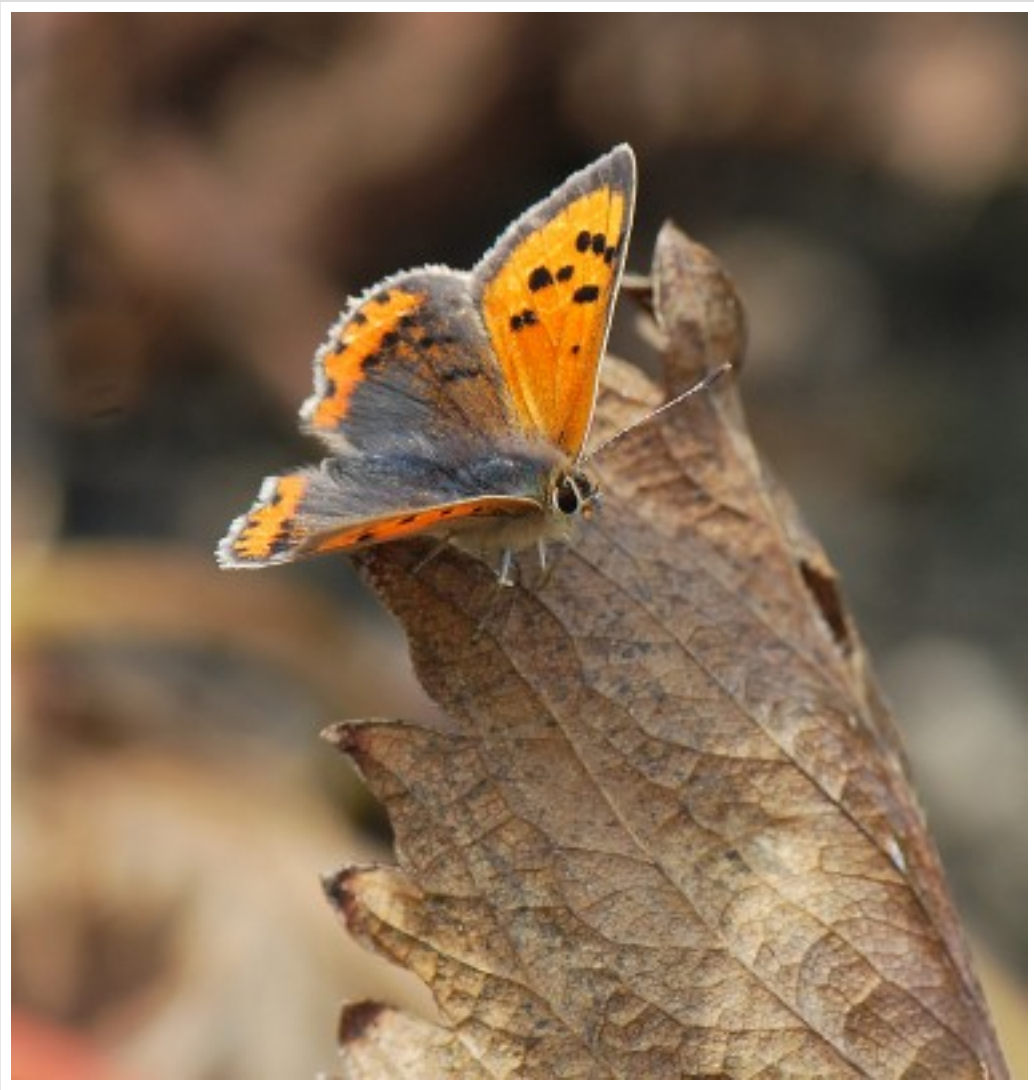
Old Garden 06-09-2014

This was a quick visit up to our old house (which my sister in-law bought) in order to use our old tumble drier (which they also bought) while we awaited the arrival of our new one. While the various articles of clothing went round and round I took the chance to have a look around my old garden. Over the years that we lived here I took many photographs of a range of species but over last summer I helped break out over 14 tons of concrete and now it looks like a barren wasteland as my in-laws are starting the garden again from scratch. So I wasn't hopeful of finding any butterflies despite remembering it's former glory.

As I walked up to the top of the garden a few Whites did fly overs looking tantalisingly like they'd land on the deck but they never did. The barren look of the garden was exacerbated by the dead grass and dry and dusty soil so I almost gave up and then I spied a Small Copper. Even better than that as I approached it closer I could see it was in the Blue Badge club.

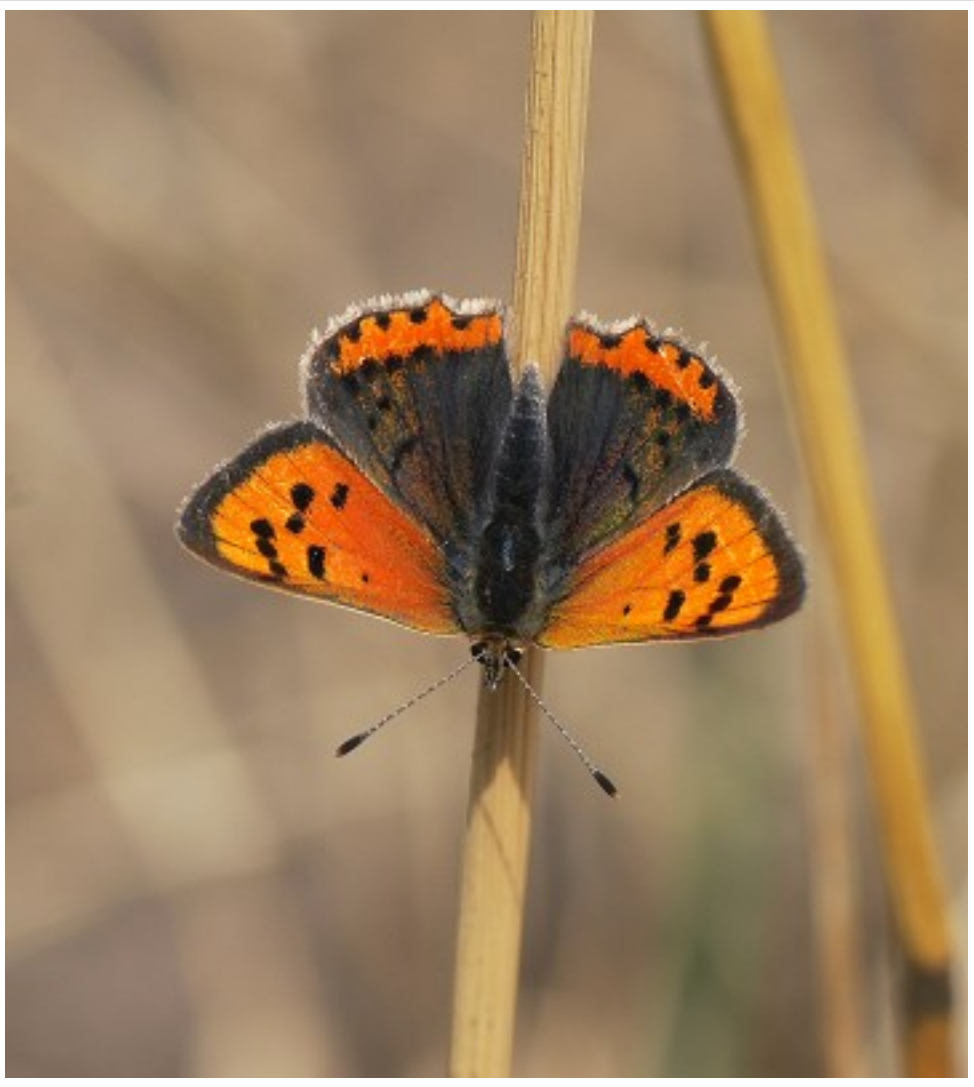


While I was focused on this individual another Small Copper appeared and after a brief tussle they separated and I was able to approach this one which was more normal looking.



I then alternated between finding Blue Badge and non-Blue Badge enjoying watching their antics and the different poses and postures they'd arrange themselves in. It was almost as if they realised that they had centre stage in front of a captive audience and so wanted to make the most of their moment.





Eventually I had to tear myself away and head in to help with the now dry clothes and as I did so a Red Admiral and Small Tort both flew over, completed a circuit and then went back to the neighbours Buddleia. So in the end it didn't turn out to bad.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 13-Oct-14 11:03 PM GMT

Aaah, you're taking us back in time again, Wurzel.

Oh to see a Small Copper right now in the midst of this stormy October!

Re: Wurzel

by jens, 14-Oct-14 10:58 AM GMT

Didn't mean to rub it in Wurzel ! I always enjoy reading your entries and viewing your photos. Look forward to meeting you again some place next year.

Jenks

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Oct-14 06:21 PM GMT

Sorry David 😞 I will get caught up soon, promise 😊

No worries Jenks 😊 I view any sighting of His Nibbs as a privilege no matter how brief. I too look forward to catching up with you somewhere next year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 15-Oct-14 08:09 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Sorry David 😞 I will get caught up soon, promise 😊

Don't panic, Wurzel. I'm used to it.

Whenever I enter your PD I always subtract a month!!

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 15-Oct-14 08:55 PM GMT

Very nice 😊 Small Coppers Wurzel, and regarding posting dates 😊 I agree with David, we all know you 😊 😊 I'll call you David and raise it to minus five weeks 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

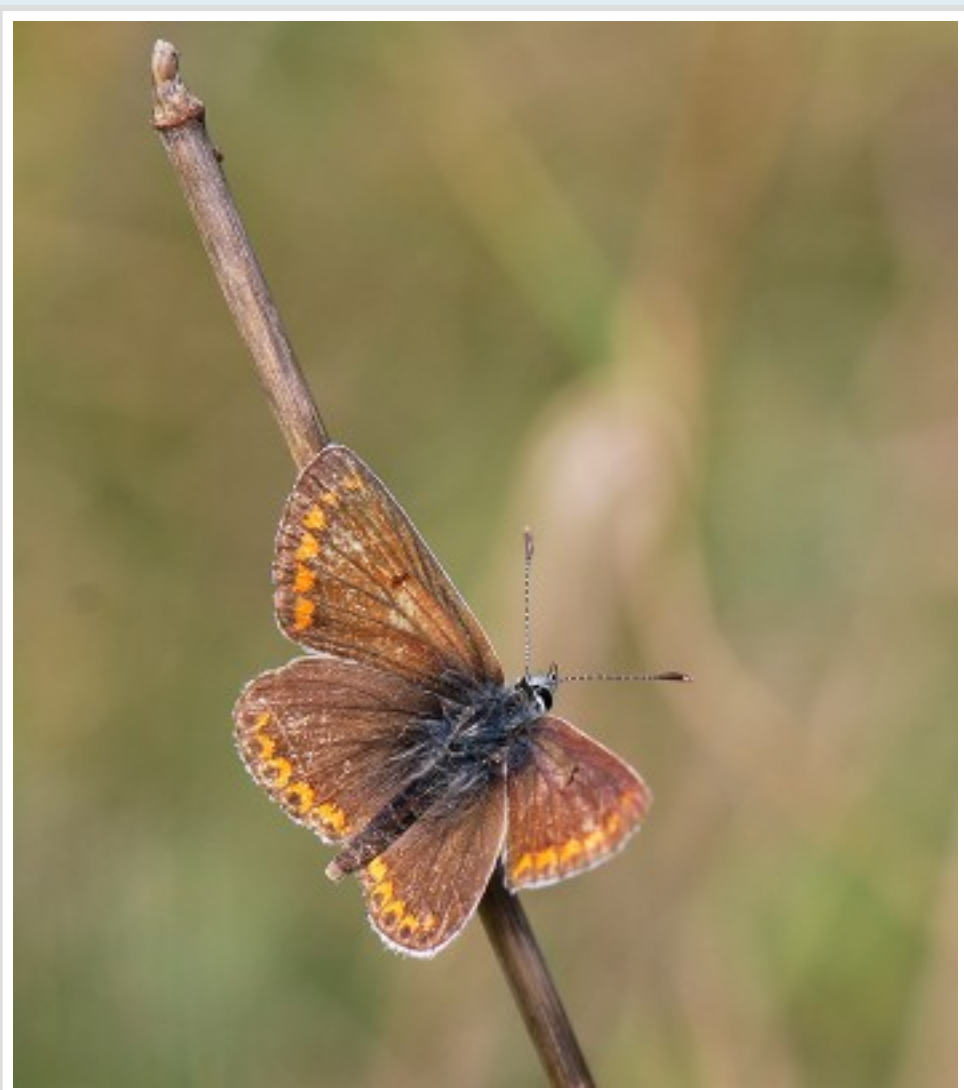
by Wurzel, 16-Oct-14 11:05 PM GMT

I'm desperate to catchup now but I can only type so fast 😞 Hopefully by the start of next week I'll be back to only four weeks behind 😊

Five Rivers 07-09-2014

I find that when I head back to work I have to take every available opportunity to get out for some butterflies and today was no exception. With the balmy weather continuing I took my chances and while the girls went swimming wandered over to my Five Rivers. I generally start season here as it's really good for the early hibernators but then Bentley and my Duke and Marsh sites along with The Devenish seem to take precedence. However by the summer and into the autumn I find Five Rivers back on my mind. 😊

Today I headed straight to the banks and found a BA and three Common Blues all involved in a huge scrap. All looked slightly worn and so I would have thought their territorial urges would have calmed slightly as they passed into their dotage – but not so. The feisty little Brown Argus seemed to be the main instigator never settling for long and then zipping off at a moments notice to hassle the large Common Blues.



The second bank was quieter holding only a male Common Blue and a single Red Admiral on the Buddleia which was a little disappointing as I had hoped for a Painted Lady or at least another species of Aristocrat. The third bank was totally devoid of butterflies but instead plenty of different species of birds flew by including my first Spotted Flycatcher from this site. There were a few more whites flitting around at the far corner of the reserve and walking back across to the third bank the trees were weighed down with Swallows and House Martins perching all over them. One would take off and then all the rest would follow in a swirling wave before settling down again once more. There was also another Spotted Flycatcher here.



I needed to make my way back so again called in at the second bank on the way back. The Red Admiral was still present on the Buddleia and the Common Blue (if it was the same one) hung around in the longer grass and both were joined by a vivid male Brimstone and a pair of Bullfinches. These were whistling their soft, sad call and gave a stunning few of their white hind markings when they dove together into the Hawthorns. At the first bank I settled down and watched them (CBs and BA) fighting for a bit and then I checked the other side of the bank. There was a stunning Wasp Spider and I crawled in closer to get a different view of it and one a butterfly would not want to experience! Here the whites were actually stopping all be it briefly so I was able to identify both a Small and Green-veined White. The Brambles here at the bottom of the bank back onto the Spinney and on the other side of this were a final Common Blue and my first Specklie of the day. I was quite surprised by this as I'd expected to see plenty more of this species and to see only one seemed somewhat strange - perhaps they're between broods here?





Pleased with my haul from a quick check up I packed the camera away and headed in to help get the girls changed. Typical but almost as soon as the camera was in the bag a Large White flew by and landed on the flowers just outside the pool entrance.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 16-Oct-14 11:31 PM GMT

Hi,Wurzel,

Yes you are right,and what's more i took that shot without eye protection 😊 !!!.
All the best ,TREVOR

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 17-Oct-14 05:25 PM GMT

Weird Spider Wurzal, great shot of it, I'm chasing them out of the house at present, scooping them up I don't like to kill them Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Oct-14 08:47 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor, my eyes have recovered slightly now 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 Be careful in case they're False Widows as they bite 😬 Glad you liked the reverse shot of the Wasp Spider it's not a usual view as people generally focus on the topside view 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Oct-14 11:03 PM GMT

Larkhill

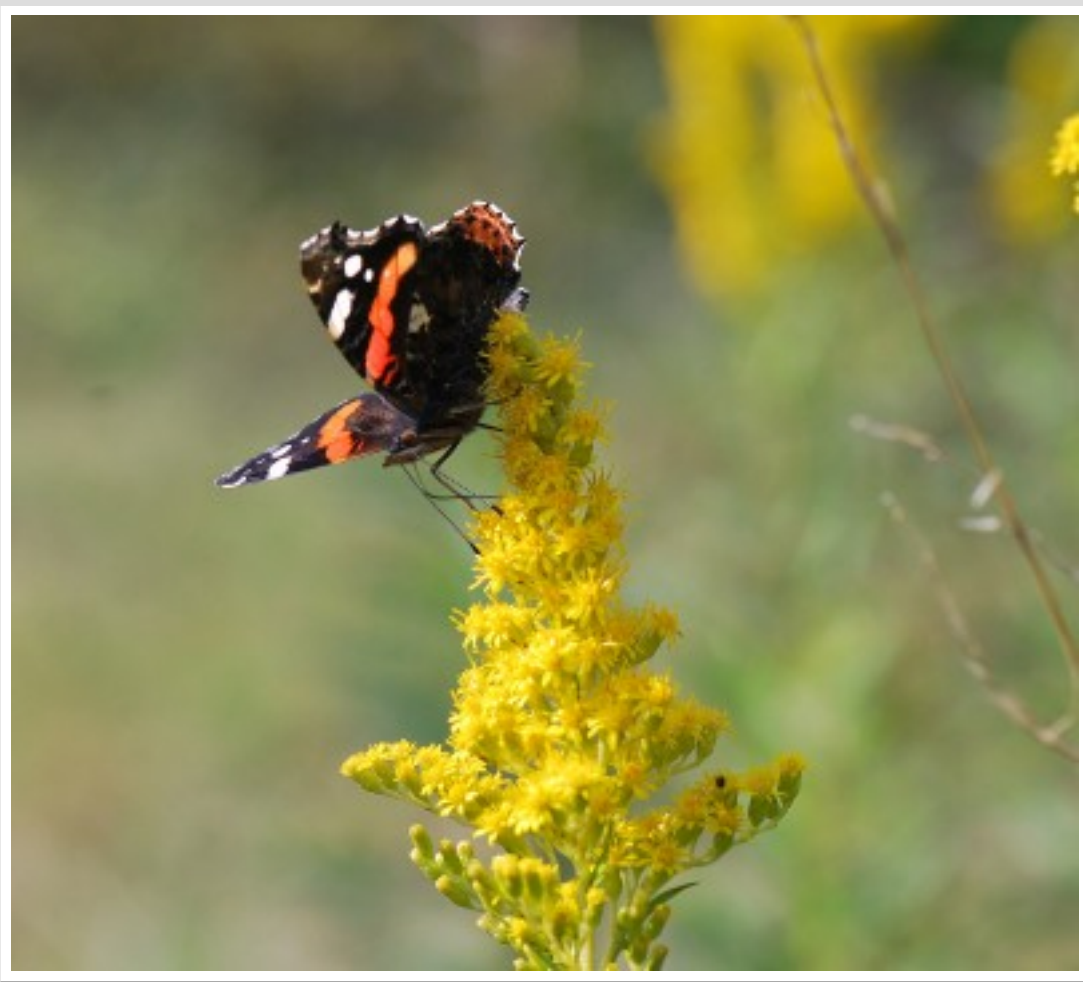
08-09-2014

As September progressed I began to lower my expectations from Larkhill as whilst it is really fantastic during the stage of the year when the season is waxing, the lack of decent nectar sources mean that as the seasons wanes butterflies are harder to find. In fact on some days rather than being pleased about the range of species or the numbers see I'm just glad to see any. That being said sometimes the final part of the season can still produce the goods. And so it felt today...

The morning wasn't particularly great with the mist hanging round and only a single Brown Argus but my afternoon stop-off was much better with the main activity centring around the Golden Rod. I thought it would be good as there were plenty of Whites fluttering along the hedge on the drive there as well a Red Admiral by the Enford bus stop and a Small Tortoiseshell at Durrington. So I pulled into the car park and eagerly scanned around.

A quick walk up the Northbound path didn't produce anything so I made my way back to the car and went straight back to the Golden Rod. A Red Admiral and a UFW both fluttered by, the former skimming over the tops of the tall yellow flower heads almost to draw my attention to the other butterflies that were all very busy feeding here. A Brown Argus was acting in its usual boisterous and rum bumptious manner hassling what appeared to be about 5 Common Blues that kept nipping into its airspace. Also here were a couple of Small Heath still clinging on later than I thought they would.



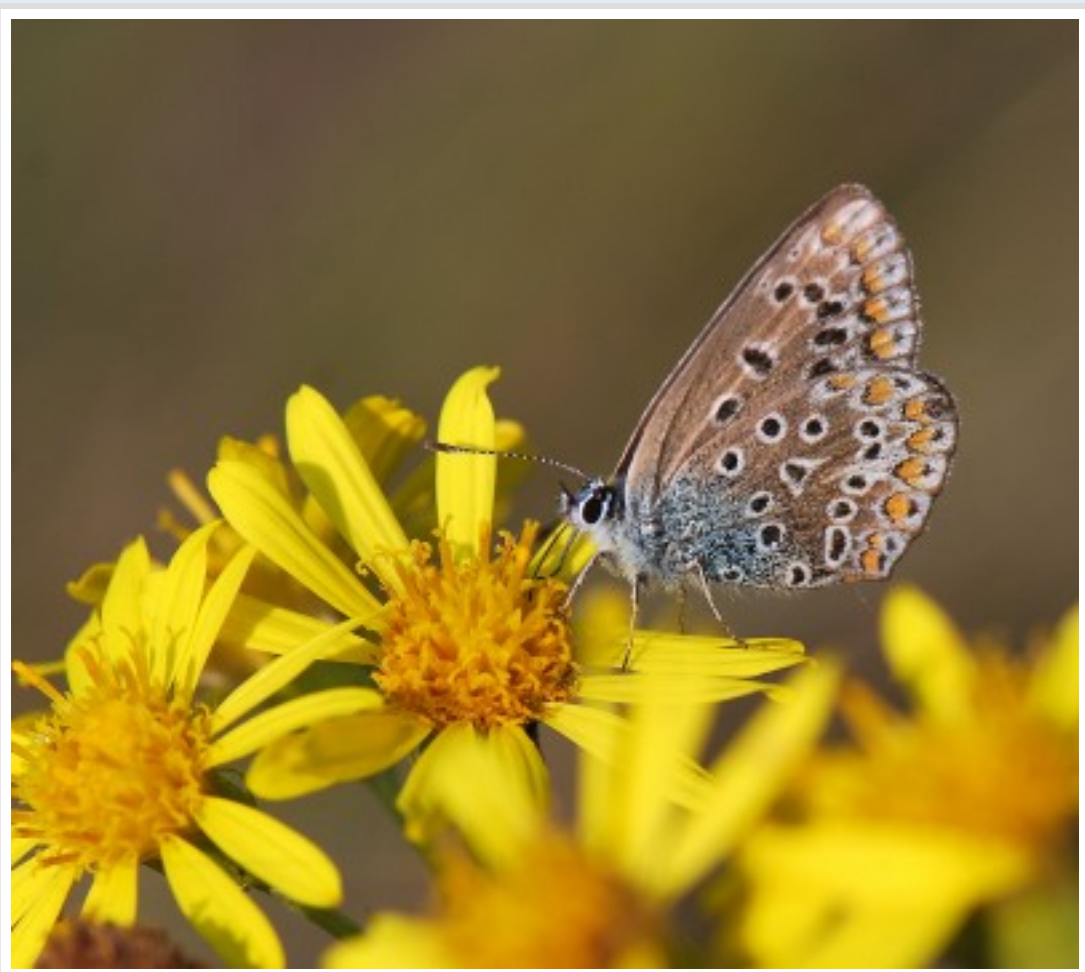


09-09-2014

Again the morning stop-off didn't produce anything and I'm tempted to stop these but I was hoping to see something in the afternoon. I tired the Northbound path again willing the patch of Michalmass Daisies (I think that's what they are) to flower but it looked like I would draw a blank again. But there on the way back was a gorgeous female Common Blue clinging to the dead grass stems and glittering in the sun. She was stunning to look at and I almost used my full allowance of time in her company.



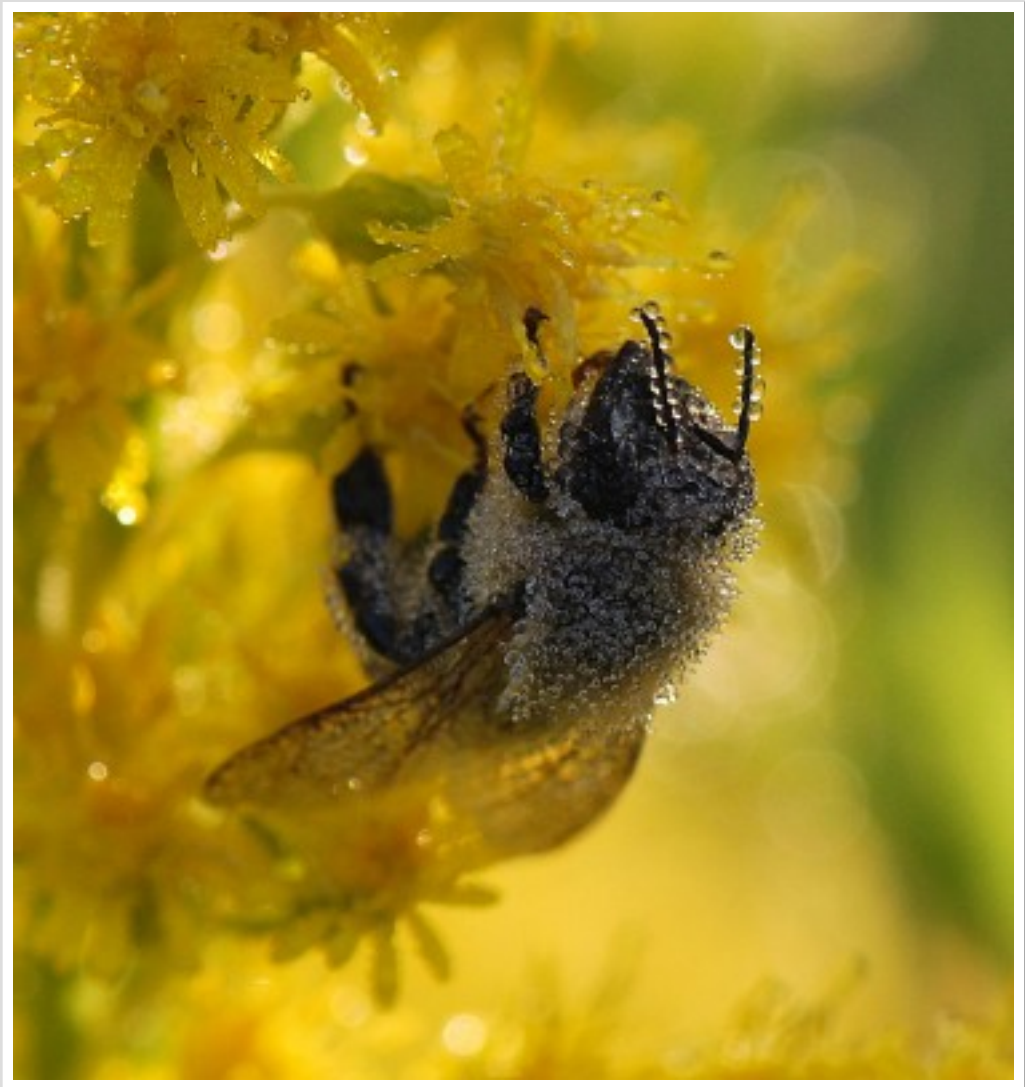
Over by the Golden Rod (I risked being late for a quick check) there were a further 3 males and 2 females all flitting about and taking on nectar as if there was no tomorrow. I suppose for these insects there could well be no tomorrow so I didn't mind that all I was seeing was closed wings.



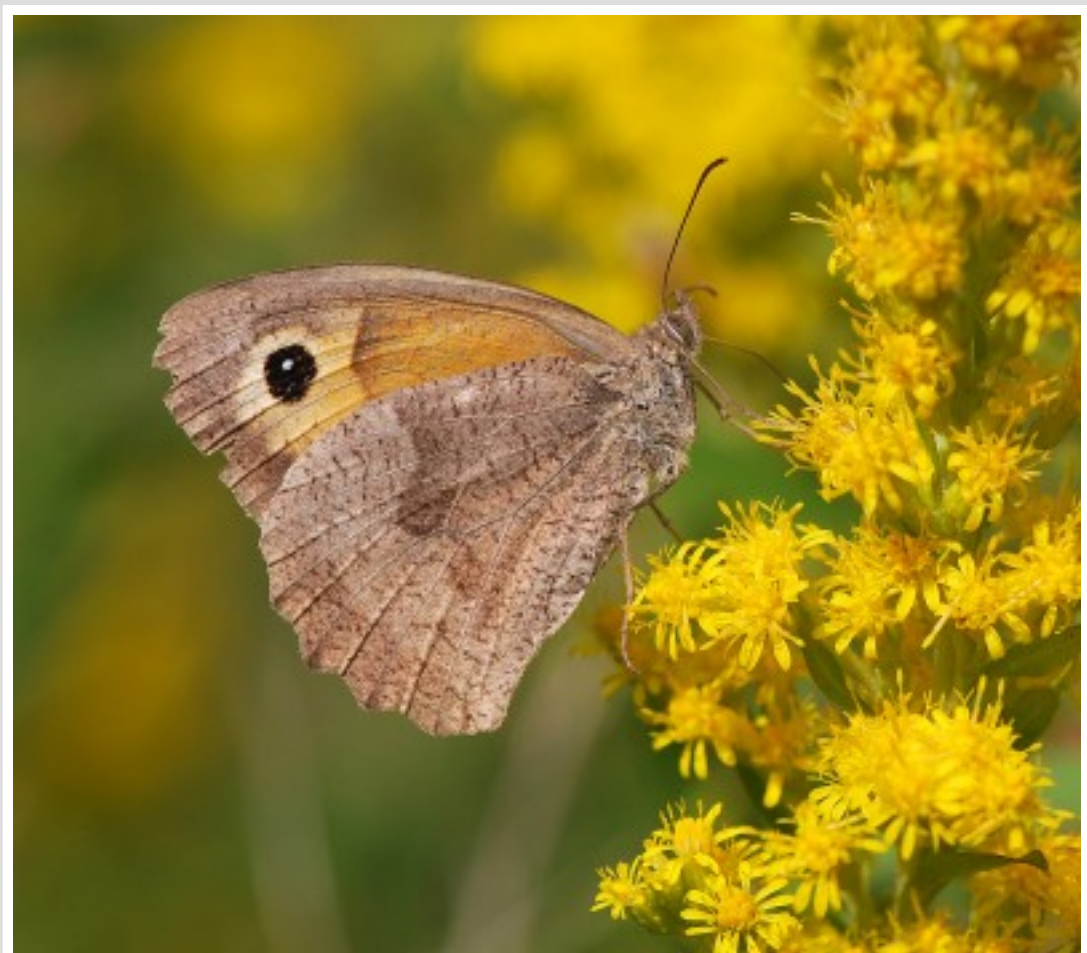
To finish up I cut across to the Westbound path and then back to the car and here there was only Small Heath today...

10-09-2014

Again there was nowt around during the morning stop-off but the dew covered spider webs looked stunning in the pale morning sun. There was also a jewel encrusted bee clinging to the Golden Rod which would hopefully thaw as the morning warmed up.



The afternoon visit was much better as things had warmed up nicely. The Golden Rod was focus of most of the activity and produced a nice surprise with two Meadow Browns still looking good for September. Flitting around them were 4 Common Blues (3 males and a female) and a Brown Argus was holding its own as usual. I did check the Northbound path and it added a further two male Common Blues and a fly over Brimstone as well as a Red Admiral. I was just making my way back to the Golden Rod when something caught my eye - a Specklie which for Larkhill is quite an unusual sighting.





11-09-2014

I was driving towards Larkhill trying to decide if I should make a stop-off or not and as I'd just pulled off the mini roundabout I was travelling slowly enough to glance out of the passenger side window at the wire fence. This has had Wheatears, Goldfinches, Corn Buntings and on one memorable occasion a Merlin sitting on it. But today it wasn't the birds on the fence that grabbed my attention but a pair of massive ones in the field. I pulled over as soon as I was able to, grabbed my camera and trained it on the brown blobs amongst the green.

As I focused in the blobs became a pair of Great Bustards (the Wiltshire bird). I checked the wings for orange tags and one was the number "15" so was part of the re-introduction programme. Even more interestingly the smaller one lacked wing tags – could this be a Wiltshire born Bustard? Whatever the providence it was great to see these colossal birds back in their former range.





I felt kind of guilty that I had neglected Larkhill that morning and so I stopped on the way home. Despite looking in all the usual haunts I could only muster an aged Common Blue female on the Golden Rod. So a quiet end to a topsy-turvy week.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 20-Oct-14 11:12 PM GMT

That's a nice female Common Blue, Wurzel – one of my favourites. Really striking when they're fresh and have that much blue on them.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 21-Oct-14 12:35 AM GMT

Great Bustards, Wurzel 😊 the butterflies are not bad either!

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 21-Oct-14 07:52 PM GMT

Wurzel, I think you should start writing a book, a childrens book, 😊 I simply loved your posting and explanation of what you saw, it was full of colour from the Bee full of Dew, to the Common Blues flitting around and the Photo's made it all perfect, can't wait for the next Installment Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 21-Oct-14 07:58 PM GMT

Just catching up on your catching up Wurzel 😊, I have had a busy couple of weeks but at least I am only behind on reading other peoples diaries 😊

Looking forward to the rest of your catching up 😊

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Oct-14 11:35 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I don't think I've seen a Brown female Common Blue this year or last 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 I still need to do some digging about the provenance of the untagged one 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 So as not to disappoint I pulled my finger out and got another post written 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I feel like BR – I'm getting there 😊

Larkhill 15-09-2014

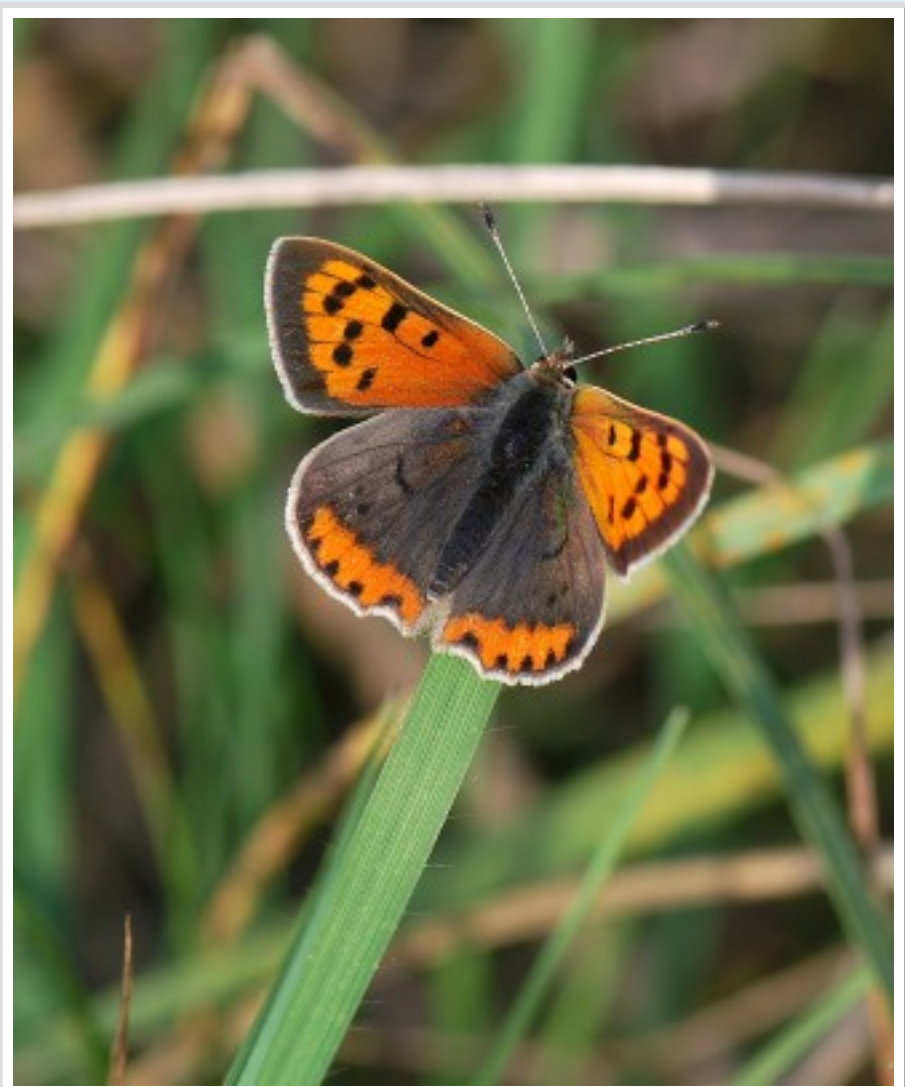
So I'd been reading about the Small Copper emergence but despite checking in at Larkhill whenever I wasn't having any joy at this site even though last year they were probably the final species of the year here for me. Mind you I'm not really one for giving up so I continued to stop at Larkhill whenever work or weather permitted. On this afternoon we were still enjoying some sunny intervals and so I figured it was worth a quick stop – off even though I didn't expect much. I started off at the patch of the Golden Rod as this usually holds something and is a good indicator of how the stop-off might pan out. It was surprisingly busy with plenty of Hover and Drone flies buzzing around as well as numerous Blues which after a bit of watching turned out to be 2 males and 2 females. The grass along the side of the path around the Golden Rod also housed a Brown Argus. So already it was proving to be a

productive stop.



I continued slightly farther round and came out onto the West bound path which I followed for about 20 metres or so. There was a small patch of longer grass on the left hand side and a flash of Blue caught my eye so I investigated the area in a little more detail. Scanning around a flash of vivid orange shot by and landed. A beautiful Small Copper. I managed to make a close approach and it spent several minutes flitting from one roosting spot to another - always on the lookout and ready to attack any other butterflies that hove into view - which in this case was the single battered Common Blue male.





Chuffed to have finally got my Larkhill Copper I headed back to car realising that I was running out of time fast. But just as I was trying to leave a Red

Admiral enticed me back away from the car park and promptly vanished as I approached and a Meadow Brown followed suit; landing all too briefly as I made first footfall on the stony car park deck and then vamoosing as soon as I trained my lens on it. Still the Copper was great and cheered me after yet another dire day at work.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 23-Oct-14 08:37 AM GMT

I really like the Small Copper perched on the haws, Wurzel. 😊

Interesting too – it appears to show how butterflies may have started to evolve from having six fully functional legs to having four (with two non-functional ones). It clearly isn't using the front pair.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 23-Oct-14 10:59 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel love the Copper on the Berries, I like shots like that they're more interesting than sticks and grass Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 23-Oct-14 11:45 AM GMT

I agree with the others –that is a splendid Small Copper shot 😊

As Millerd noticed, it is interesting to see how the front legs are raised, out of use. The soft lighting and superb sharpness make for an exceptional picture.

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by essexbuzzard, 23-Oct-14 11:50 PM GMT

Wow! Great Bustards! 🍷🍷🍷

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Oct-14 08:49 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I think the Small Copper is, like you say, exhibiting that wonderful aspect of evolution which can be summed up as "use it or lose it" 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I do like getting something different 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 You're too kind 😊😊

Cheers Essex – I managed a few closer shots in the coming weeks– but such is work I haven't gotten round to sorting them yet 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

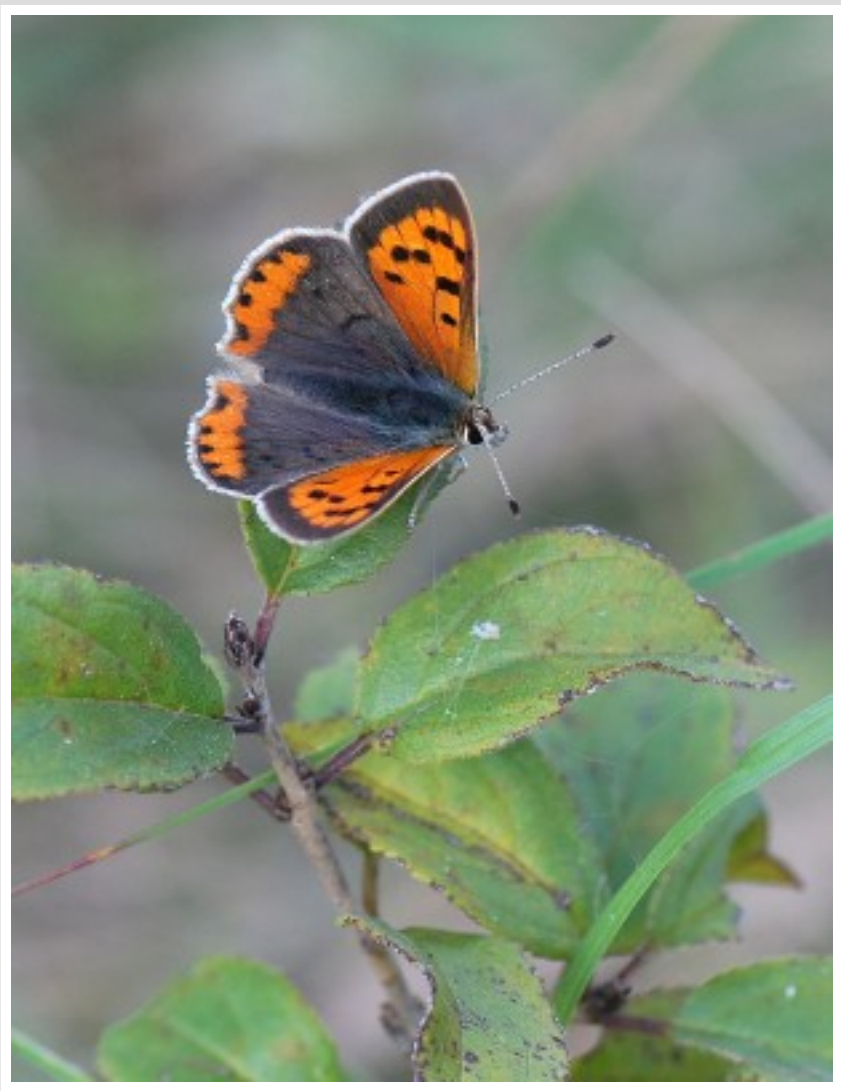
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Oct-14 12:06 AM GMT

16-09 Larkhill

After the joys of yesterday I decided I should definitely make a stop-off on the way to work. But unfortunately the stop amounted to nowt as I couldn't locate a single butterfly roosting.

I didn't think that the afternoon was going to be up to much as the sun only poked out now and again so most of the time it was just grey. Surprisingly the Golden Rod was devoid of life barring a few Cluster flies and the Westbound path was quiet all the way down to the little patch on the left (which I think I might name Copper Corner). Once again there were a small collection of Blues – 2 male Common and a/another Small Copper. The Blues were well past their best with patches of scales missing and torn edges of the wings so I focused my efforts on the Small Copper which again flew from perch to perch.



As I headed back to the car in good time I couldn't shake the nagging suspicion that this could be it for Larkhill this year... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 28-Oct-14 12:14 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Cant believe you are still on September 😊 Great Small Coppers 😊 Have sent you a PM

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 28-Oct-14 12:15 AM GMT

I do hope it wasn't, Wurzel! That's a lovely Copper to finish on if it was, mind... 😊
(Though this was six weeks ago, and there have been a few things around since then!)

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 28-Oct-14 09:54 PM GMT

Loving the Small Coppers Wurzel 😊

I echo Dave's comment about it being a cracker to finish on....but hope it isn't. Mind you, I've seen nothing for about a month now with the only bits of decent weather being when I have been at work.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 30-Oct-14 09:37 PM GMT

Superb Small Copper shots, Wurzel 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Oct-14 09:39 PM GMT

Cheers Paul 😊 I was doing so well earlier in the year and then I had a manic summer and now work keeps getting in the way, but I will get there in the end 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 As it turned out it wasn't quite the end and there were one or two more little delicacies to come 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I was in the same boat as you Neil with almost a month between butterfly photos, until a couple of days ago 😊 Just as I was catching up...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 30-Oct-14 09:53 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

...As it turned out it wasn't quite the end and there were one or two more little delicacies to come...

I knew it! I shall wait with bated breath, Wurzel! 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 30-Oct-14 10:58 PM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

I knew it! I shall wait with bated breath, Wurzel! 😊

Me too! I normally get frustrated by late reports, but at this time of year, one has to latch onto everything one can get!!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-14 01:04 AM GMT

Cheers Dave and David 😊 There's only a few – but while I was sorting them out I discovered a few more from much earlier in the season when it was really busy as well – so it might see me through until Xmas 😊

November 2014



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-14 09:01 AM GMT

Larkhill 17-09-2014

Once again I made a quick stop off on the way home hoping for another Small Copper incident. As I pulled into the car park a Small White flew by and then something small and orangey fluttered past and disappeared as I got out off the car (a Small Copper?). A quick stroll up the North bound path revealed nothing so I headed back and along the West bound path. I stopped for a worn male on the edge of the path and it was quickly joined by a female. She was fluttering low down near the edge of path and I wasn't aware of why until she then fluttered to another piece of vegetation and did the same crawling around. This time I knelt down and watched more closely and then I saw her curving her abdomen round and laying an egg.

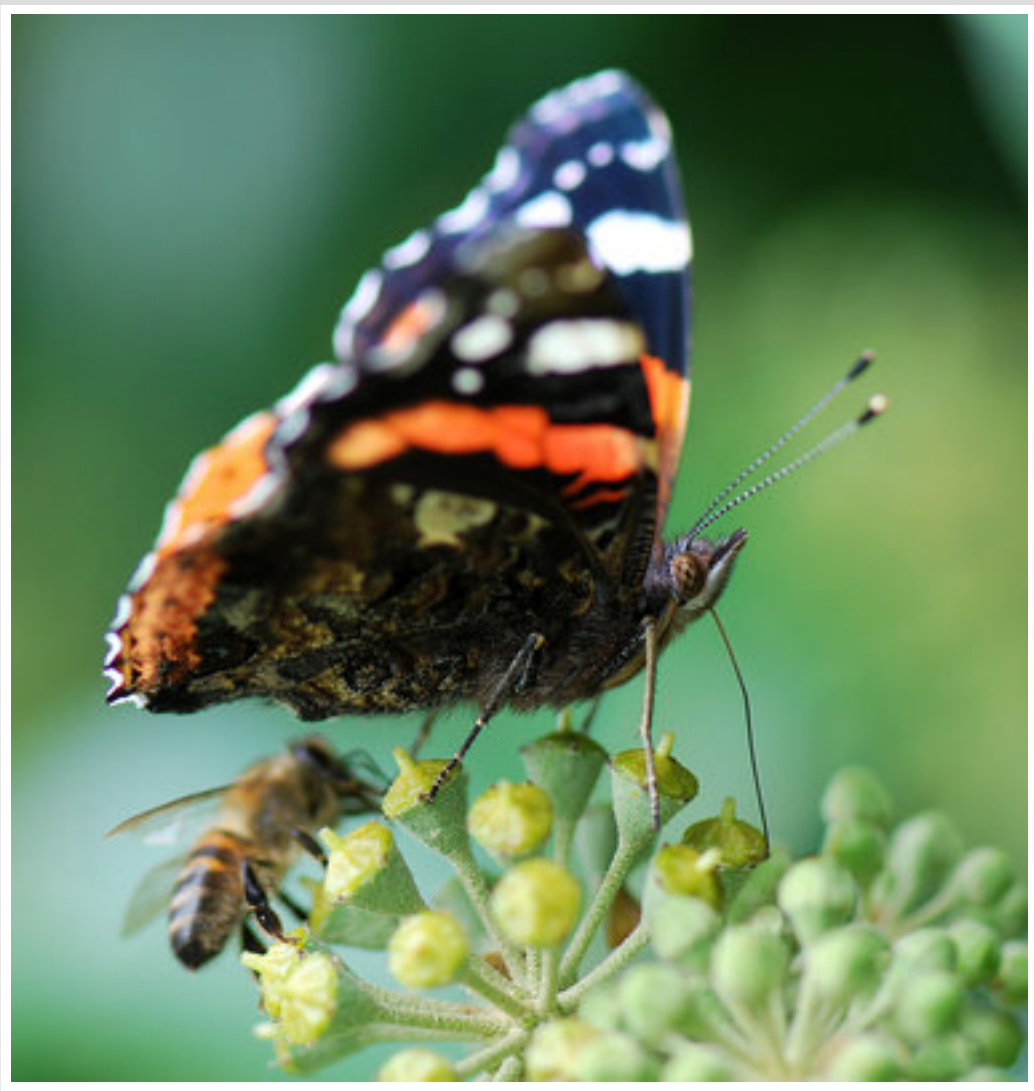




Later down at Copper Corner there was another worn male but instead of a Small Copper today there was a Specklie but it didn't stop for any photos.

Work 18-09-2014

Having been successful at Larkhill I felt that something would have to give at some pint and so it was this morning with another 'no-show' during my morning stop-off. I carried on to work, planning to get out and see what I could find at break time. Unfortunately I didn't catch any smokers but I did manage to confiscate 2 mobiles, an iPod, 3 different sets of earrings and also get a few shots of a Red Admiral. It was feeding on some Ivy near one of the Smokers Hang-outs.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 01-Nov-14 02:23 PM GMT

Just catching up with the posts, I've had my daughter here this week and we were out every day, unfortunately not for Butterflies 😊

Your Copper shots are great Wurzel 🍷🍷 nothing to report here , not even a fleeting glanceGoldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

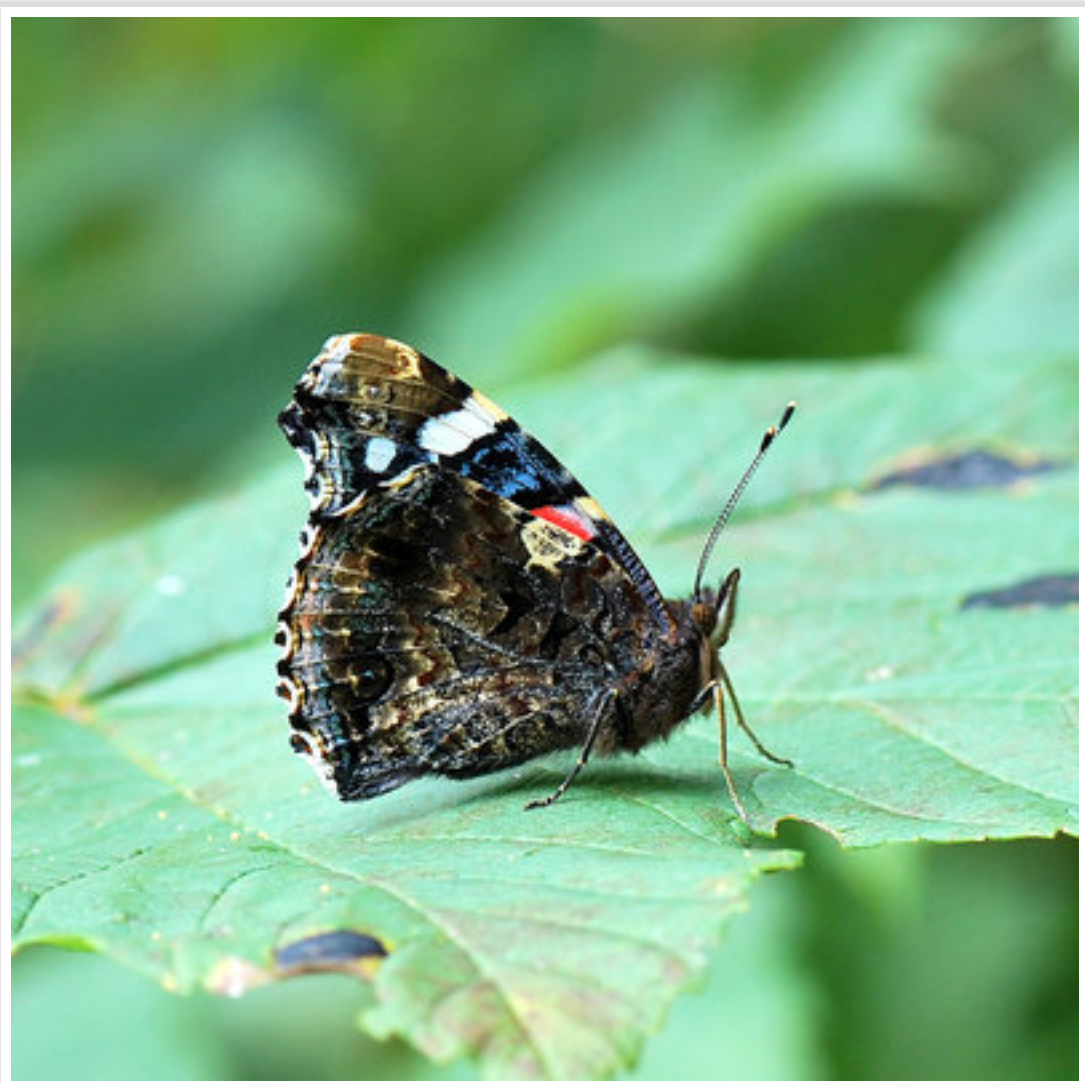
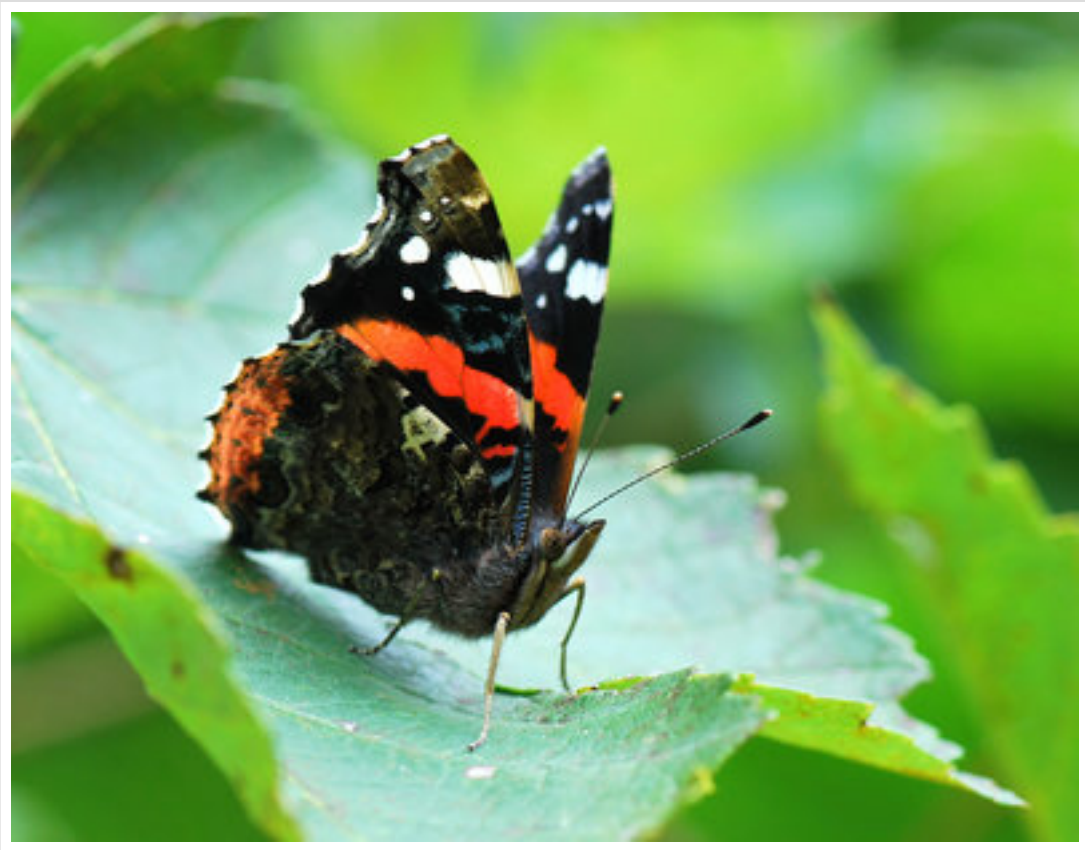
by Wurzel, 03-Nov-14 11:17 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 It's all gone quiet down this way too 😊 Good job I'm behind on my posts 😊

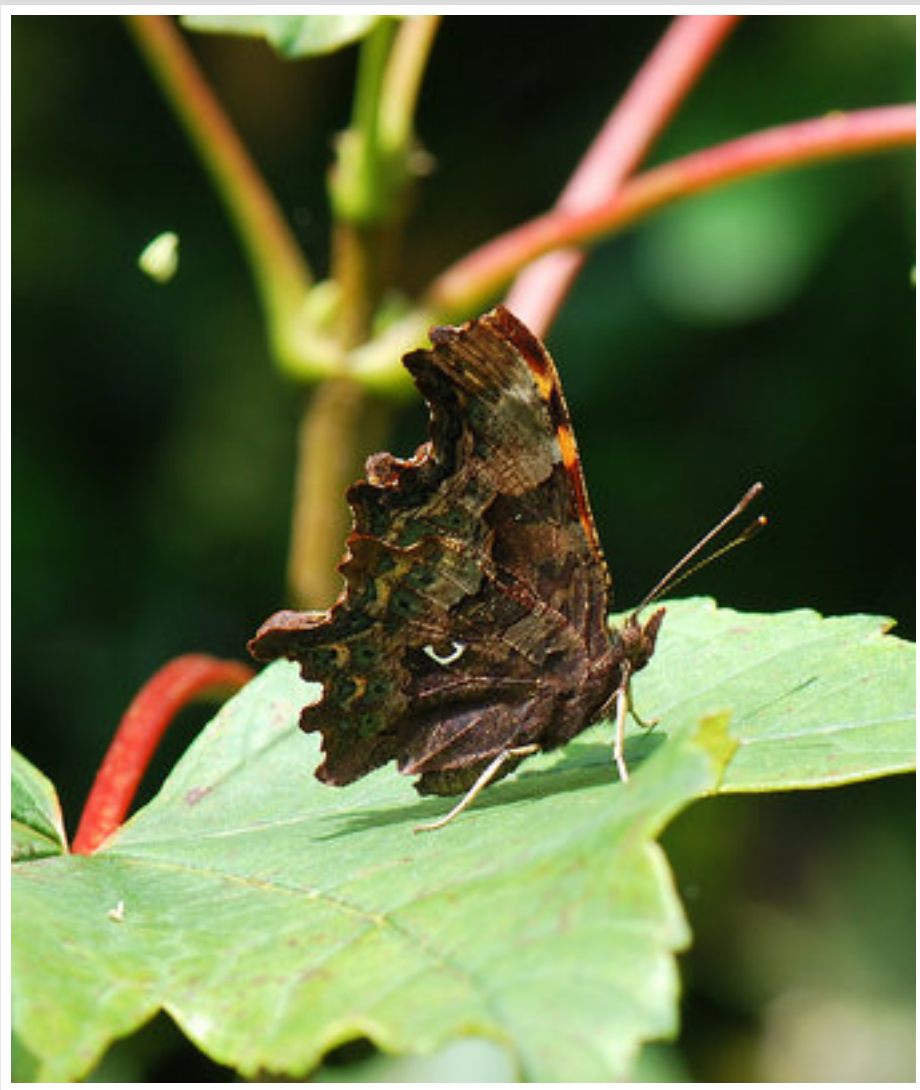
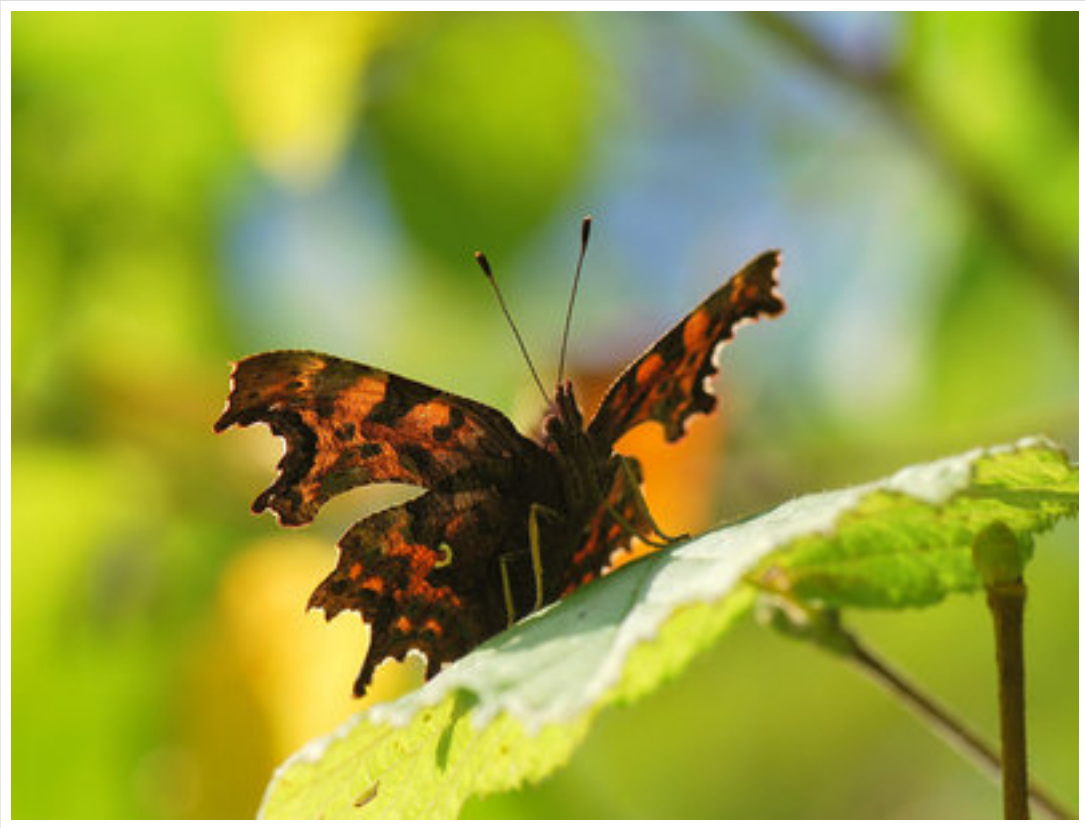
The Devenish 21-09-2014

This was one of those stolen hours of peace in a hectic and full on weekend. What with eczema creeping up my arm and one eyelid also cracked and itchy/sore I really needed a break from all the stress of endless marking and planning that comes from work during the first term back. So I was lucky enough to escape for an hour or so over the lunchtime to The Devenish.

Once there I headed up the short path and over the gate to the small paddock area. Straight away I found some butterflies with both a Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell doing a brief fly by. The Peacock landed but only long enough for a quick approach a couple of distant shots and then it was away again. Something higher up in the surrounding tree caught my eye which became a Red Admiral and when I stood back it was suddenly apparent that the one was actually three!



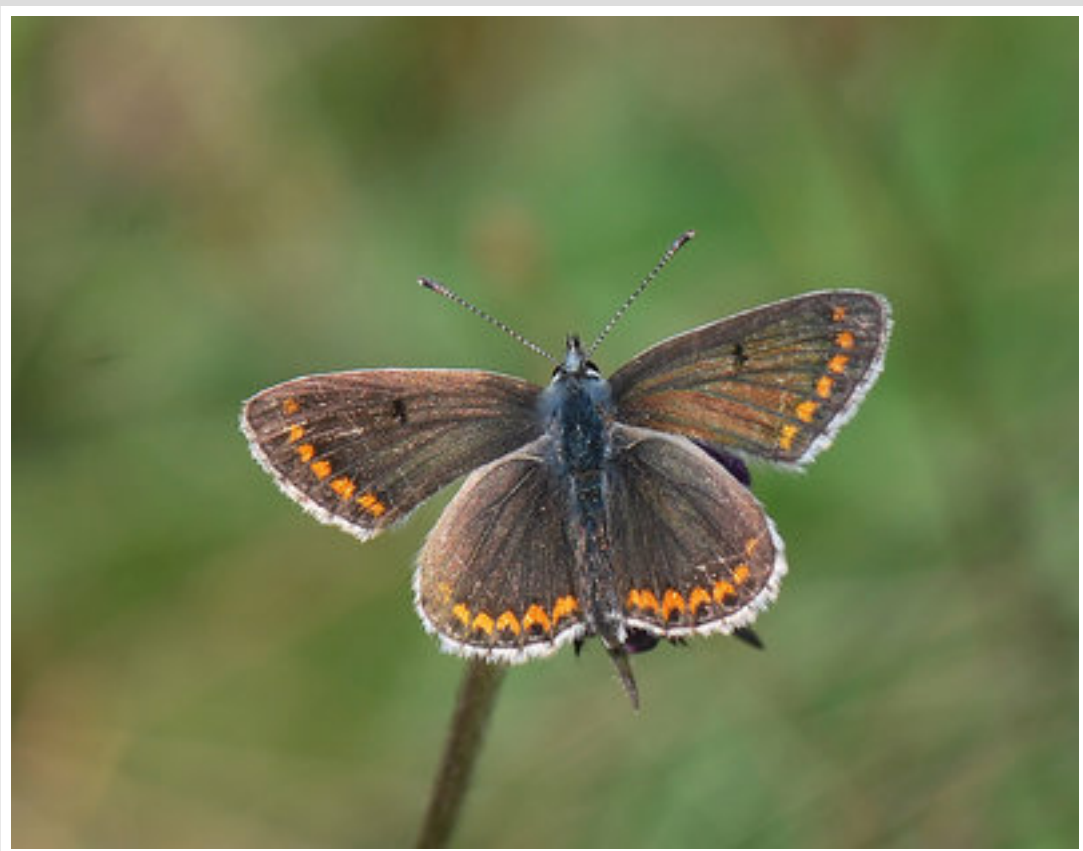
As I was enjoying the trio of Red Admirals an orangey butterfly bombed in and disturbed one of them – a Comma. It landed and then standing back and craning my neck to see it in repose again revealed another, this one slightly higher up and overseeing his lair below. Slightly lower down a Red Admiral was also watching over it's airspace it was almost as if they'd divided the column of airspace up into chunks – airspace partitioning. Over at the gate there was a third Comma which was much lower down and just in reach if I balanced on the gate, locking my feet around the bars. Luckily a Specklie hove into view, hassled the Comma and made it take off so it landed even lower down and much more in reach.



From the Paddock I moved up through the tree covered tunnel and over the gate into the Orchid Meadow. An angry orange blur metamorphosed into a Small Copper and a Blue Badge one at that. Also here was a worn Common Blue which despite putting on a good show of nectaring didn't appeal as it was so worn and faded I kept finding my lens being pulled back to the BB Small Copper



I carried on up to the Bramble area which was very quiet now 😊 and on up the Down pleased with the days tally; six species and counting although there was very little flying. I skirted along the lower slope along the edge of the taller vegetation and the sun came out and with it the butterflies. There was one and then another Small Copper which would settle for a few moments before one would take off and hassle the other, a pattern which continued until all the time I was there. Whilst here a Small Heath and Large White both flew by and a Brown Argus stopped for a while, catching the light on its fading wings. Up on the very top of the down yet another Small Copper was fluttering by, ragged wings tips hinting at its vintage and it then raced down the side of the hill, possibly to hassle the pair below.







Old timer

Back in the Orchid field as I headed homeward there was yet another Small Copper a Brown Argus, possibly the same as earlier (although the Blue Badges seemed different?) and all too soon I was back in the car and heading back to reality...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 04-Nov-14 12:46 PM GMT

Lovely shots once again Wurzel, some times it's good for us when your late with your postings we're still getting your Butterfly shots when there's nothing much to see other wise 😊 Love the Small Copper shots.

My daughter is also a teacher so I know what you mean about hassle, she came up here to us for a break. Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Nov-14 11:50 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I'm starting to run out of my backlog of postings believe it or not, but there might be a few extra hidden away on the hard drive 😊

Larkhill 22-09-2014

Another week and another quick stop off at Larkhill although it really feels like the season is almost at an end here, plus as the workload mounts I won't be able to stop as frequently. This afternoon there were no more Small Coppers they seem to have been and gone. Instead there were only a couple of Common Blues remaining on the Golden Rod. They were certainly getting on a bit and so I was tempted to wonder if they had some sort of wing crutches 😊 .





Larkhill 25-09-2014

I didn't get back to Larkhill until later in the week and that was only for a very brief stop on the way to work as there were some more large blobs in the field just past Airmans Cross. Once again they were the pair of Great Bustards, but this time I think they must have had a bit of a bust up as although they were in the same field they were emphatically facing in opposite directions.



Hopefully there may be a few more visits left and I might be able to get some closer views of these magnificent birds.
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 06-Nov-14 07:06 PM GMT

Interesting, Wurzel. So as to get some idea of what I'm looking at, just how big is a Bustard?

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 06-Nov-14 08:53 PM GMT

Once again very nice Small Copper shots, Wurzel 😊 and it's nice to see that the Great Bustard reintroduction programme is going well 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Nov-14 11:10 PM GMT

A Great Bustard could be considered as possibly the heaviest living flying animal, the male can be up to four times heavier than the female and can stand between 2'11" and 3'5" tall and a wingspan between 6'11" and 8'10" – so pretty huge 😲

Cheers Mike 😊 If the untagged one is Wiltshire born then it's going great guns 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 07-Nov-14 09:20 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

As i only joined UKB. in Sept.this year's postings have to be retrospective.Next year i hope to be on time. i've still to get the hang of posting pictures!.i'll pester my Daughter to post some of my Cotley Hill shots.

There is even one of a Green Hairstreak on my shirt! 😊

Best wishes TREVOR.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 08-Nov-14 01:28 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzal, don't think I've ever seen a Great Bustard, must be interesting to watch them take off Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Nov-14 10:38 PM GMT

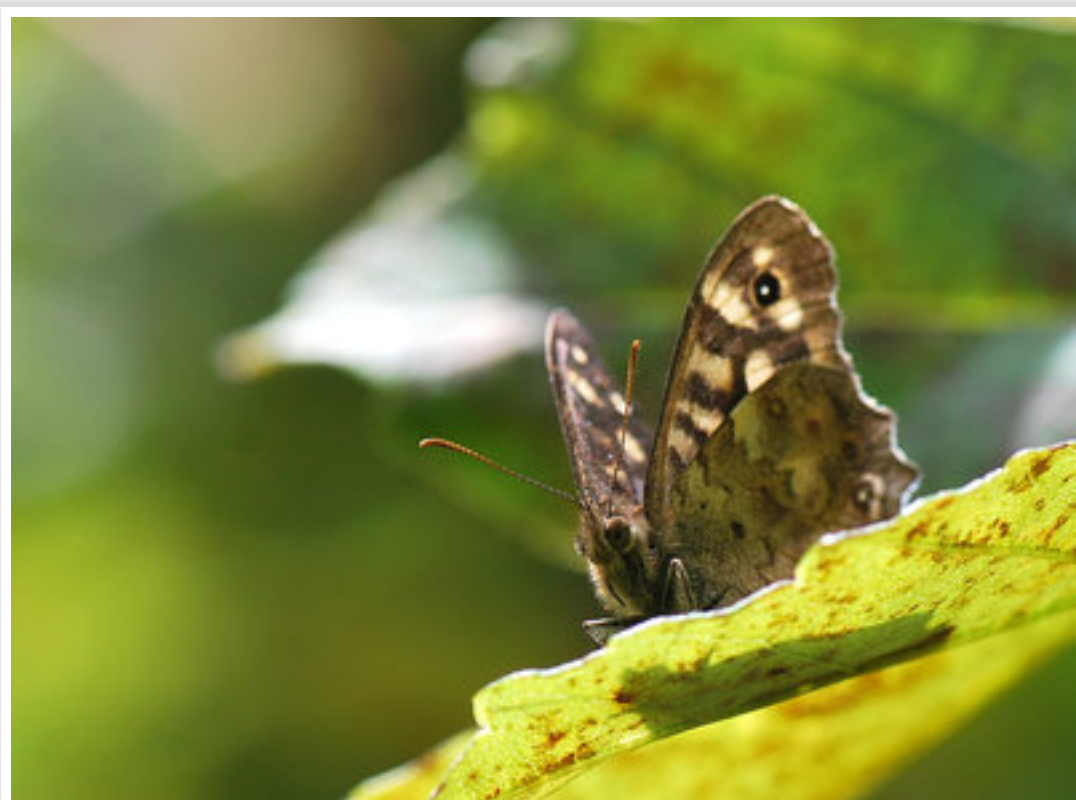
Cheers Trev 😊 I look forward to the Greenstreak T-shirt 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I've only ever seen them in flight once, generally they just leg it 😊

28-09-2014 The Devenish

What with the house work done and clement weather I took a brief lunchtime trip out to The Devenish just to see what I could see or if there was actually anything left as there is a definite feeling of the end of the season being in site. I didn't hold any great hopes as Larkhill has been getting quieter and quieter and most species there are now in a very worn state.

I started off at the Paddock area as the bare soil and Ivies there might have held a vanessid or three like the last visit. I was proved right almost immediately as when I clambered over the gate a small orange blur was there to greet me. A Small Copper which was basking on the bare earth where I thought I might find one. I think it was a different individual from my previous visit here a week ago as it was in very fine fettle. Over along the tree-line there was a Comma high up and a Specklie in a much more accessible elevation.



I moved on through the tunnel and out in the Orchid Meadow and a Mustard yellow colour had my heart in my mouth. t followed the usual Clouded

Yellow procedure and took off almost as soon as I spied it. Luckily it didn't fly too far and so I was able to approach to within a metre before i started getting my shots. I was surprised at how fresh it appeared and I also got to wondering whether it was an immigrant or a local hatching? My musings were cut short as it had obviously refuelled and so was off again, they can really motor!

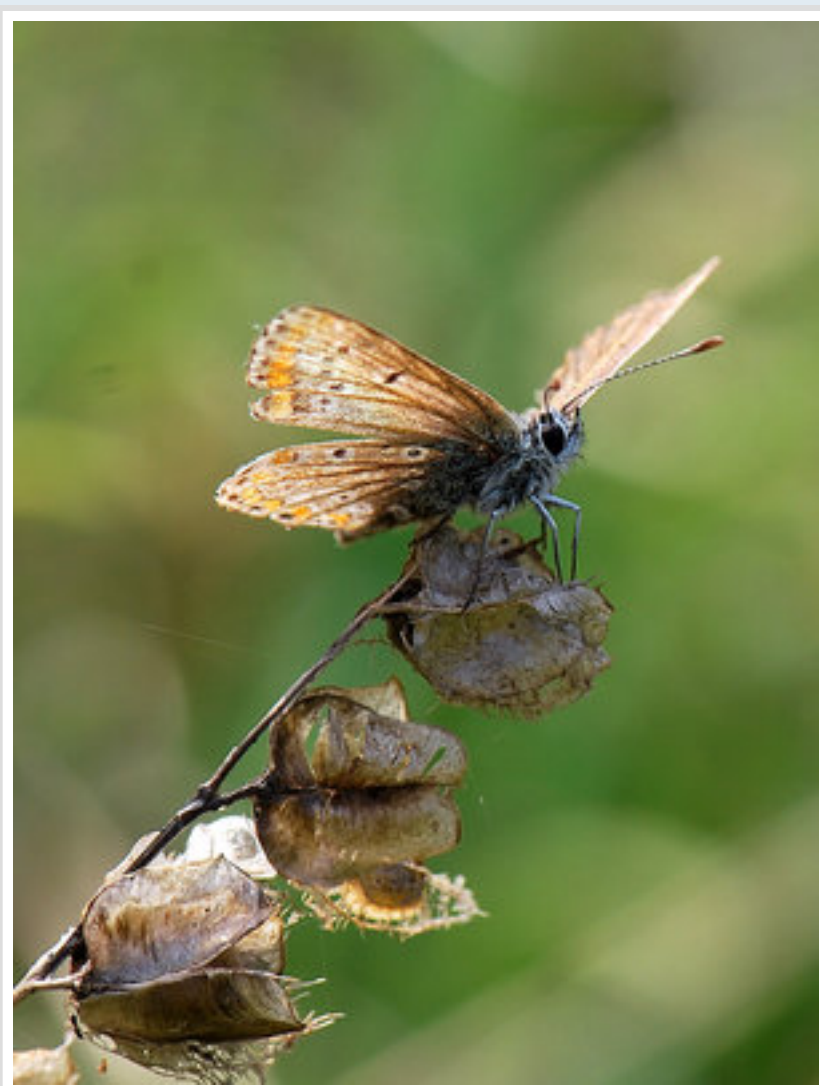


Up on the side of the Down a female Brimstone posed nicely; backlit with the abdomen in shadow between the closed wings. As I took a few shots I again got to musing and I realised that I hadn't taken any shots of a Brimstone for an age, possibly not since the mad rush during my first sightings in the spring. I had another look around the side of the down, checking the tracks that cut across diagonally and the remaining nectar sources but this part of the reserve has gone from one of the busiest to the quietest. The Bramble had also been quiet on the way up by now housed a cracking Comma with a practically perfect 'C' lying on it's side.



Back in the Orchid Meadow there was another Small Copper with blue badges – possibly the one I'd seen here on my last visit? There was also an even

more aged Brown Argus, which climbed towards the top of a twig and posed nicely amongst the dead leaves looking like it had just climbed the stairs and reached the top.



A final check back at the Paddock added a male Brimstone high up in one of the Ivy trees. It was trying to blend in and look like one of the leaves only while it was on the upper side it stuck out like a sore thumb, bright yellow on a dark green background. There were also a couple of Red Admirals and a further 2 Commas. All in all a pretty good haul for almost October...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 09-Nov-14 10:46 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Your Brimstone is particularly nice 😊 It looks like my season has pretty much finished now so I look forward to your October intstallments 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 10-Nov-14 08:03 PM GMT

Nice ones Wurzel 😊

Between work, catching up on domestic stuff, and the autumn weather, my season has been over for some weeks now. The weather around here has not been quite so benign as it apparently has been in some other parts of the country, although there has been a bit of sun, usually when I have been at work (at least I am now in an office with a window so I can see what I am missing 😊)

With a couple of proper ground frosts last week it has begun to feel proper nippy in the mornings....Winter is Coming 😊.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Nov-14 11:56 PM GMT

Cheers Paul 😊 My October installments were few and far between as work took over, it's a pain when that happens 😞

Cheers Neil 😊 It's been very quiet down this neck of the woods recently so I think it could be all over here too, good job I have a few posts still left in reserve.

30-09-2014 Larkhill

Autumn marches on and my visits are starting to become less frequent and much less rewarding. Morning stop-offs are virtually pointless as the weak morning sun isn't hot enough until I've been at work for a good few hours so butterflies are roosting well out of sight.

This brief afternoon visit was also looking really bare until I'd decided to call it quits and head for home. Then I looked at disgust at a piece of littered paper. Only it wasn't paper it was a pair of Small Whites in cop!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 14-Nov-14 08:25 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Your part of the world sure makes for a great Butterflying day out.i will return !! 😊 TREVOR

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 15-Nov-14 11:11 AM GMT

Hi! Wuzal, I love the the Comma's on the Blackberries and the Brimstone shot's look forward to more if you have some Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Nov-14 06:56 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 Next time you're planning a visit PM and we may be able to coincide 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 Unfortunately October was pretty mean to me in terms of butterflies 😞 although there were other things to see and photograph...

Bits and Bobs - or "my October"

From the end of the month I wasn't too hopeful for my chances at finding any more butterflies on my morning or afternoon stop-offs. So as September moved into October I settled for just grabbing my camera for interesting or different shots. The first came while bringing in some logs from the store to feed our new Woodburner (29-09-2014). While I was wrestling with the tarp top and trying to balance odd shaped logs along my arms one log in particular caught my eyes. Right at the top of the pile was a log with an unusual marking which looked slightly like the UK and Ireland.



A couple of days later (01-10-2014) the weather was slightly brighter and so I thought about stopping at Larkhill one last time. On the way the sun had brought out the Great Bustard pair again. I don't know if they're occupying this area or whether this is just part of a much larger territory which they stop in and visit occasionally? This time they were slightly closer in, still nowhere near as close I'd like them to be in order to get some really class shots, but close enough for semi-decent record shots. These aren't too bad as they clearly show that only one of the birds has the wing tags as well as giving more of an idea of the scale - those are some pretty hefty legs 🤪.



I did make the stop at Larkhill but it was definitely my last of the season unless there are some interesting landscape shots in the offing as the shot below shows the typical scene from my local stop-off at the moment.



On the 3rd October one of my pupils brought in a mushroom to identify - it was the easiest job ever as it was a Giant Puffball. Unfortunately for me it was the last from their field and plans had been made for cooking it but hopefully next year there will be more of the fruiting bodies so I can have a fungal feast.



And that was that pretty much it for October - there was the occasional sighting of butterflies at work but a lot of my time is taken up with marking, report writing and planning and at home the arrival of Teddy (actually Damien Noble Angel Doll) has kept me entertained and busy. He's a 5th generation Seal Bicolour Ragdoll and we got this breed as they are very docile and also indoor cats - so there's no risk of this pussy terrorising and depleting the local bird/small mammal populations or annoying the neighbours in the various ways that cats can.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 16-Nov-14 07:49 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

The White Letter Hairstreak site is not near you unfortunately, its at Hollingbury Park on the outskirts of Brighton. There was nothing there this year when I went, but who knows next year.

If you want to give it a try ,let me know nearer the time.

All the best

TREVOR

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 16-Nov-14 10:03 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, lovely looking cat...the total opposite to our jet black 'moggie'.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 18-Nov-14 08:53 PM GMT

Love your cat Wurzal, thank goodness it's an indoor one for your neighbour's sake 😊 we've two cats on our Ave that I chase out of my garden every day their always after the birds and hide behind my evergreen's also they do their mess on the lawn ugh! I've got my trusted water pistol for them 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Nov-14 11:32 PM GMT

Cheers Trev for the info 😊 It does sound a bit too far for me unfortunately 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 He is running amok in the house but I wouldn't have it any other way 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 Teddy is more than happy enough to "kill" a pair of slippers but that's about it. 😊

27-10-2014 Moors Valley

The Family Trip was down in numbers to only 15 today as one sister in-law and nephew had returned to the big smoke. Even so it was pretty hard work keeping tabs on people and also the surrounding wildlife. On top of which hoards of screaming kids running amok and generally doing all those things they should be doing rather than staring at a screen means wildlife is very hard to track down. Saying which the day started off cool and damp with the vague hope of some sun later so I took my camera with me anyway and right by the entrance was a tent with some Owls. They were there to pose for photos with the children and so I managed a few shots while the 'models' were waiting. It was interesting to see the different Barn Owls with American and the two forms of Eurasian; the paler British form and the much darker European form.



American Barn Owl



Eurasian Barn Owl - light British form



Eurasian Barn Owl - dark European form





Eagle Owl



After this brief respite we set off along the Adventure Trail accompanied by hollers and shouts emanating from the woods originating at the various stops along the trail. There weren't any butterflies so I trained the lens on whatever I could find - a caterpillar, an unusual Ladybird (probably a Harlequin but could it possibly be a Pine Ladybird?) and a nice range of fungi.







Later while we were in the proper park the sun finally came out so I took a brief walk in the neighbouring field near to the pond where the gulls out on a nice show and a stumbled across a dragon fly. A few of the gulls were hanging out on one of the wooden sculptures and as they squabbled and squawked at each other I took a few shots. It felt like I was watching the poseur of the gull world as it took off and did a quick circuit before hovering back above the sculpture. All it got for it's efforts were disdainful looks which shouted out "bloody show off"!





And so we came to the end of the day and there were still no butterflies 😞 Still something might crop up soon...
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 21-Nov-14 09:36 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Some lovely Owl photos you've taken there. Is the Eagle Owl a Bengal Eagle Owl 🤔

Initially thought the caterpillar was a Brown-tail moth but now I think it's a Knot Grass moth.

The Brown coloured Hawker dragonfly (not Brown Hawker) has got me baffled 😊😊 Looks like an Emperor without the colour.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 22-Nov-14 12:36 PM GMT

Beautiful Owl photo's Wurzel , we don't hear them a lot here but when I'm at my Daughter's house in Kent we hear them I love their sound Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Nov-14 11:34 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 The Eagle Owl was probably a Bengal as that seems to be the most common subspecies in captivity. The moth larva is a new one for me so I can add another folder to the iPod Photos album 😊 I like you am still in the dark as to the Dragon fly though...

Cheers Goldie 😊 If you love the sound they must be Tawny Owls (Kerwick is the female, tawhoo is the male answering) as Barn and Little sound quite horrendous 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Mikhail, 23-Nov-14 07:40 AM GMT

I think your dragonfly is most likely an elderly female Common Darter.

M.

Re: Wurzel

by PhilBJohnson, 23-Nov-14 04:22 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

I like that Gull picture which helps tell a storey.

When visiting the coast I am always looking out for that comical moment when an experienced gull steels a sandwich or something similar from an unsuspecting tourist,

kind regards,
Philip

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Nov-14 11:48 PM GMT

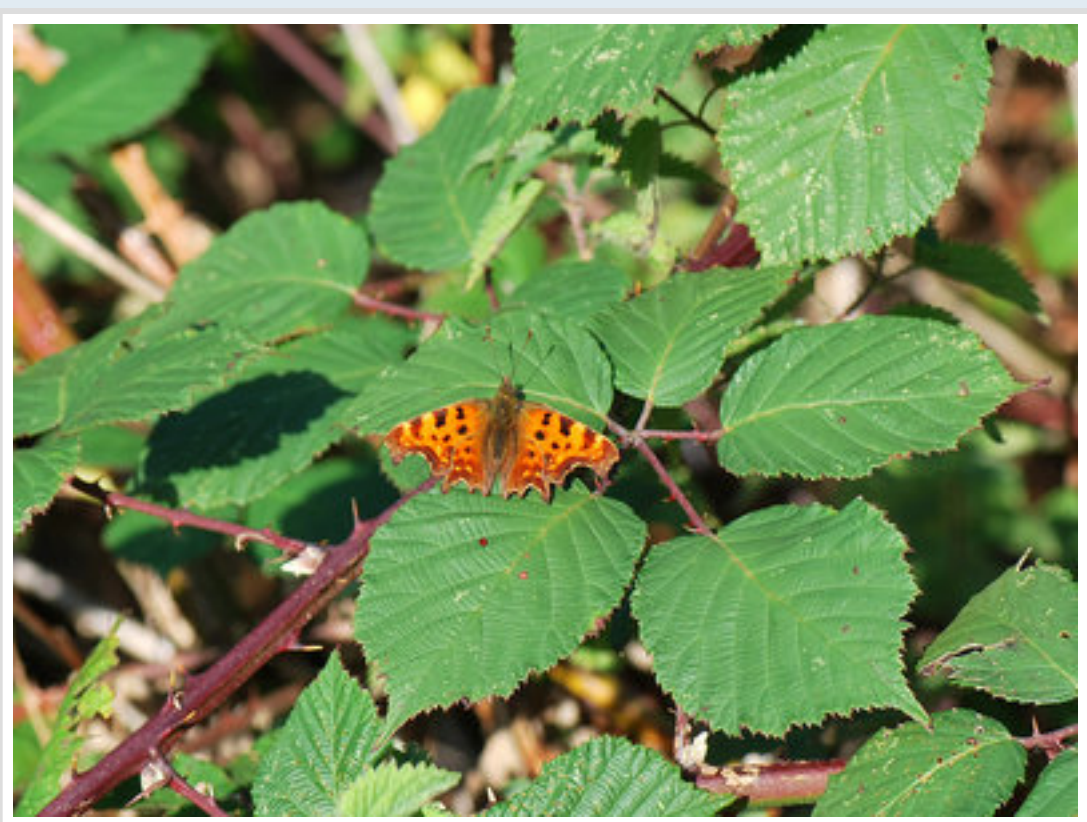
Cheers for the ID Mikhal 😊

Cheers Phil 😊 Gulls seem to be just about the right size for my lens 😊

28-10-2014 Five Rivers

While the family visit continued I managed to steal away for a brief check of Five Rivers while the remaining 14 visited the swimming pool. I was caught out by the weather but in a positive way for once. I'd worn my jumper thinking that the sun wouldn't get too powerful and after I'd covered the distance to the start of the reserve proper past the football field I was rolled up shirt sleeves and jumper round the waist mode. In the full glare it was "mighty w" as my dad would say! Still this would mean butterflies and so I wiped the sweat from my brow and rubbed my hands together in excited anticipation.

It all started with a *Bombus humilus* and then round the corner was a Comma. I stalked it, taking slow footsteps towards it and stopping every now and then as it would close and open its wings nervously. I was just within range and I got one distant shot when a dog off its lead barged through the bushes and spooked it. Cursing I turned back towards the path and a Clouded Yellow shot by and away over the football pitch. Again double curse - not only in interrupted Comma but also my first Cloudy from this site and it didn't stop once the whole time I watched it. Was this how the visit was going to pan out - a series of 'almost got the shot'?





I carried on round and up towards the Banks but they were bare. The leaves are really starting to fall and as another leaf I'd catch it out of the corner of my eye and so glance round almost giving myself whiplash each time. Yet each time it wasn't a butterfly just the wonder of Apoptosis/tree excretion. At the corner where the path swings round I checked out lower down nearer to the river but the Common Darter that was there refused to allow me an approach. An odd coloured leaf caught my attention and this time it actually turned out to be a Red Admiral. I thought at first it was going to go the same way as the Comma, Cloudy and Common Darter when it took off and I was wording the "here we go again" line for my mental PD but it must have been wanting to continue its bask as it landed down on the path. This was great news for me as a slow approach meant I could get in close enough for plenty of shots. In the end I left it basking there and slowly backed away and up the hill.





Further round at the opposite corner another Red Admiral flew by and this one almost took my head off. It was joined by another dragonfly, and backlit it really stood out with the wings almost aflame in the autumnal afternoon light. It darted forward and back with brief hovers in between like an irate Tinkerbell!

Time was starting to run out so I made my way back to the corner of the spinney and the Comma was back. This time there were no disturbances and I had my choice of shots with this individual really pulling all the poses. Most of the time it perched on a branch looking like it was floating in mid air.





With time almost up I begrudgingly headed back half expecting the Cloudy to reappear and allow me a few shots of it...it never did but at least it's on my Five Rivers Tally now. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 26-Nov-14 12:44 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Comma Wurzal, roll on next year Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 28-Nov-14 01:31 PM GMT

Nice report and photos Wurzel 😊 ...a shame about the cloudie 😞 . The warm weather peaked on Halloween (23C in Surrey apparently) so perhaps you've still got us some surprises in store ?

Unfortunately I couldn't take advantage of the warm weather because like you, I had my own family get-together (up in Sunderland for 3 days). No time to go butterflying or moth-ing for that matter ... and there would've been plenty of moths judging by the number my car headlights picked up on my way home from a day out in Barnard Castle 😞

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Nov-14 10:33 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Indeed roll on 2015...

Cheers Philzoid 😊 Yep October came and went far too quickly 😞 Still there was plenty throughout the rest of the year and I needed to catch up with my PD 😊

After the members of my wife's clan had all returned to their various destinations the holiday returned to relative normality and I settled down to chop firewood, play with the cat, write reports and mark an endless sea of books. Luckily my wife had arranged a play date at the swimming pool and so dropped them off early and called in at the vets as Teddy had learnt the hard way that the Woodburner can get quite hot! 😬 The blisters on his pads had healed nicely so once Teddy was at home and settled down I headed straight out as I had about an hour and a bit of free time left? I'd already visited Five Rivers recently so tried The Devenish again...

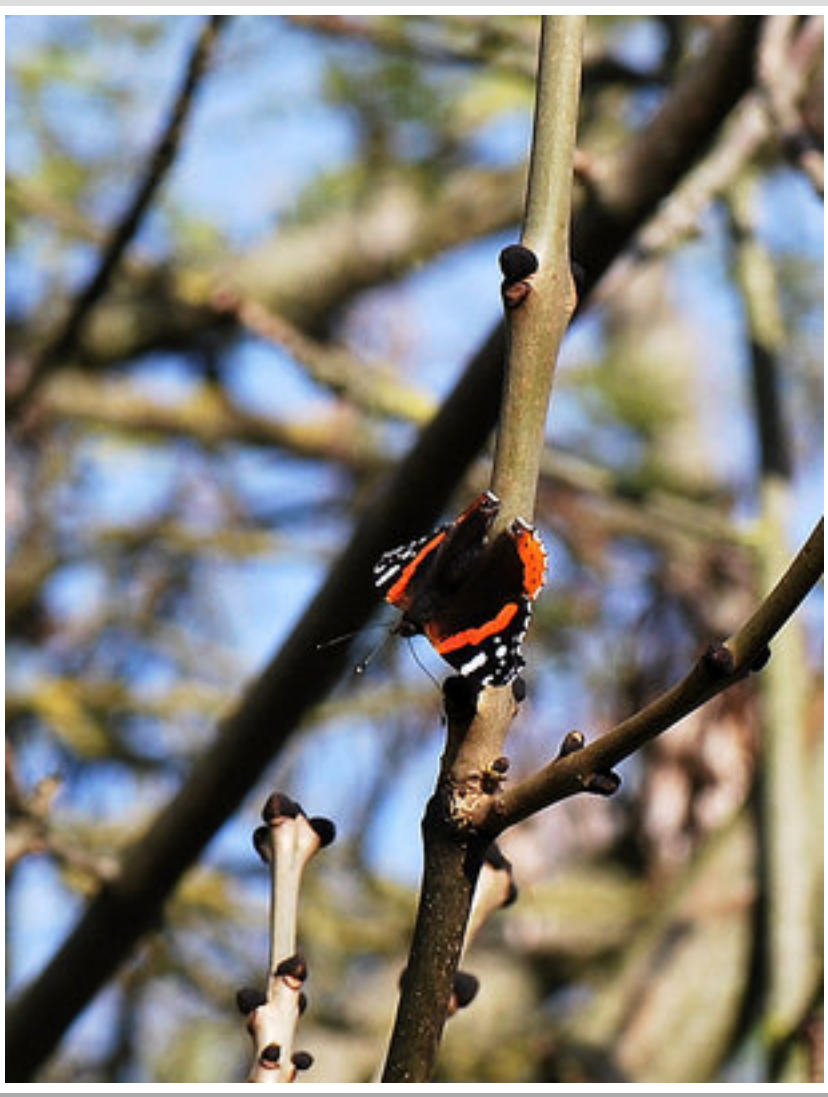
The main area I thought would be the Paddock and so it turned out – and it was an easily spooked Specklie that got the ball rolling. After the initial eruption from the grass it landed back on the deck amongst some even taller grass and I couldn't relocate it. I moved on and through the Orchid Meadow and stopped near the Bramble Bush as I heard a soft whistle call that was slightly mournful. I scanned around for Bullfinch and caught a flash of white rump from a female and next to her were three males. They looked stunning in their fine livery set off against a turquoise sky.

Up on the Down all was quiet apart from what looked like the Beast of The Devenish 😬. The unusual profile amongst the pale grasses was actually one of the sheep herd but for a fraction of a second I was heading off into Crypto-zoology territory. The dearth of butterflies continued but I did find a nice looking moth and also vainly attempted to follow a larger one which I think was a Silver Y?



By now my meanderings across the side of the Down had brought me to the scrub at the edge of the tree line. I was contemplating giving up as even though the temperature was continuing to rise and the sun was burning off the mist and dew in some parts the majority of the reserve was still cool and cast in the morning shadow. As I made my way along the scrub line something fluttered by and landed amongst the bare branches. I approached where I thought it had landed and after stepping over, round and lifting off various Bramble branches I found a Red Admiral – one of the butterflies I'd come hoping to find. She remained in this spot until I'd finished photographing her and after I'd worked my way back out of the Briars she took off and landed higher up in the tree. She seemed to be feeding from the area around the buds – possibly taking on sap?





Taking on sap?

Once safely back down the Down and in the Orchid Meadow another Red Admiral fluttered around the in Orchid Meadow keeping itself to the trees which demarcate the field. Unfortunately it didn't come down so I made my way back to the Paddock hoping to relocate the Specklie. It was there but again was playing hard to get as was a Comma. However I climbed up the gate and twisted my feet around and through the top two sets of bars locking myself in position to attempt a few shots. This precarious and potentially fatal balancing trick paid off with one or two distant shots but I was running out of time so untying my feet I jumped down and made my way back to the car park. As I did a second Comma put in a brief appearance but I didn't have time to go searching for it further into the Paddock.



I made it back to the Swimming Pool just in time to pick my girls up and on the way back home I wondered if I could get a November butterfly?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by David M, 29-Nov-14 11:45 AM GMT

I see you're finally catching up, Wurzel. 😊

That sheep image **does** look a bit concerning at first. Trick of the light, I suppose.

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 29-Nov-14 09:02 PM GMT

A bit of a belated posting from me but what a handsome cat – lovely eyes!

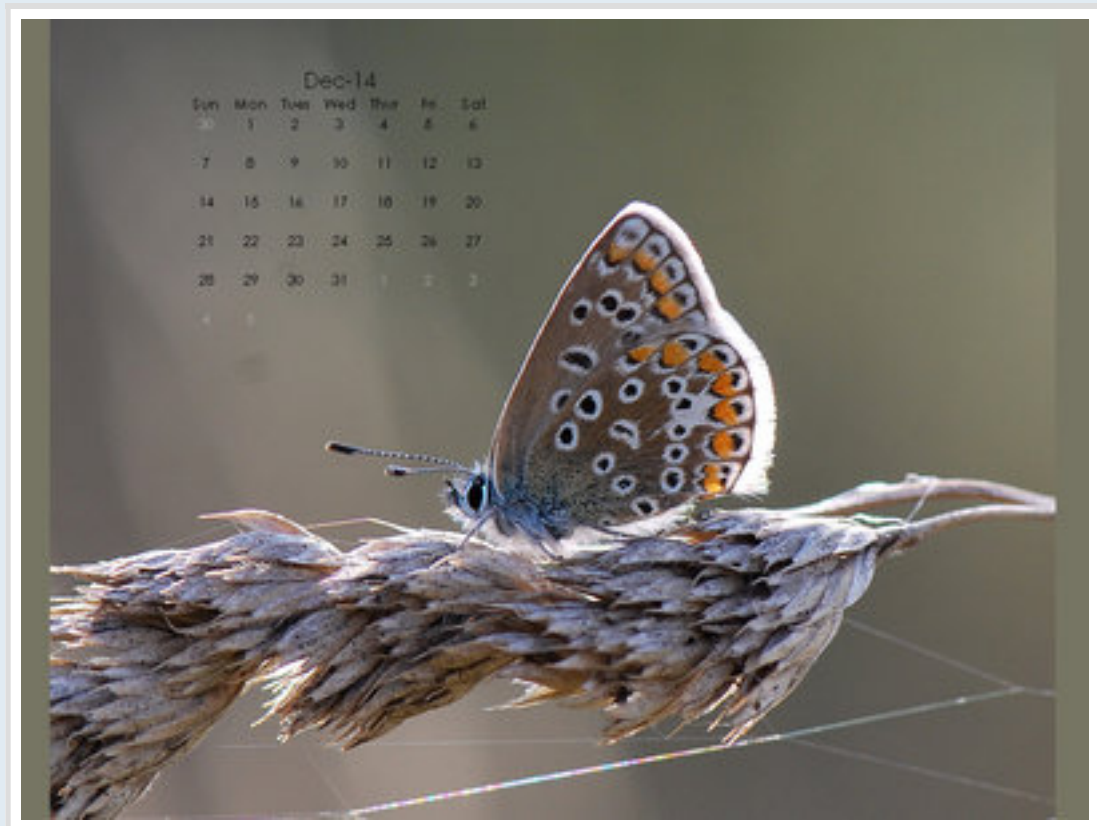
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Dec-14 10:38 PM GMT

Cheers David 😊 I'm glad that I'm not the only one that saw the likeness 😊

Cheers Katrina 😊 Teddy is now lording it over us, honestly he's better fed than me 🤪 His 'mask' has got a little darker now so he's looking quite bandit like 😊

December



Better start on next years calendar...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

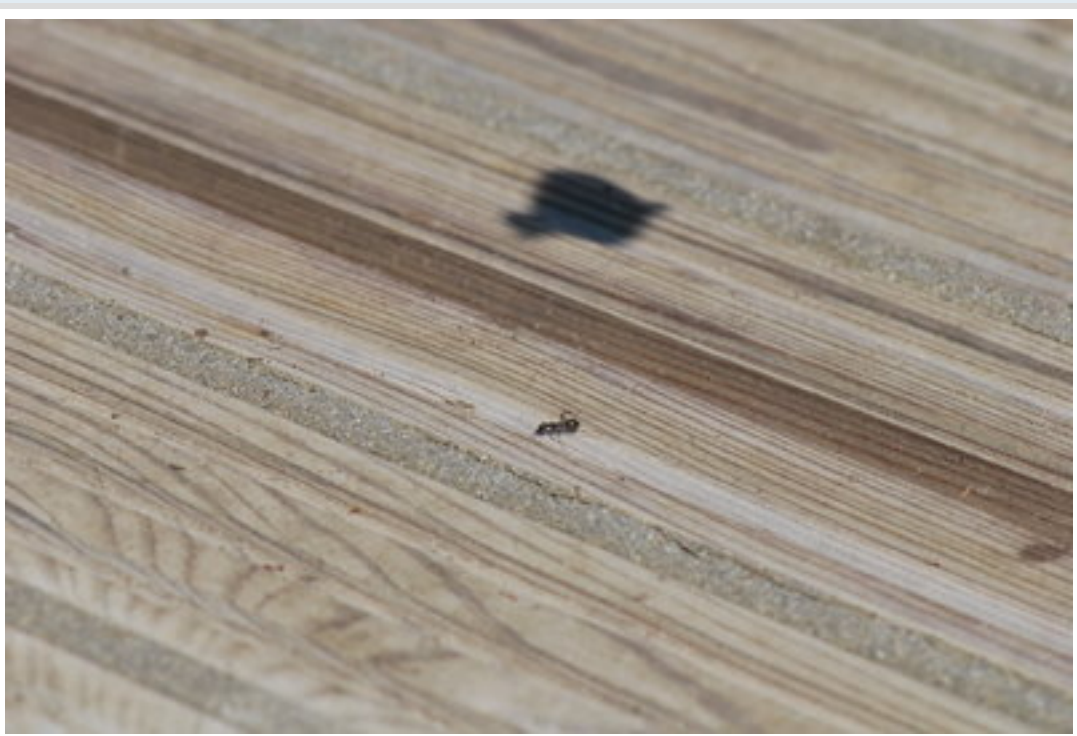
by Wurzel, 03-Dec-14 11:42 PM GMT

Where's the Grayling?

Every year I take a visit to at least one site for Grayling and because of the particular behaviour of this species I always seem to end up with a huge number of shots some of which leave me perplexed. Often the first sighting of a Grayling is as it erupts from under your feet. I then try to follow it's erratic zipping flight until it drops down and lands. I try and fix the position that it hit the deck and then stealthily stalk towards it. As I approach I swing the camera round and take a shot and then start looking in earnest reasoning that should the butterfly disappear again I might be able to salvage and crop something from a scenic shot. However when I get home and start sorting through my images I'm presented with lots of heather and gorse shots and so "Where's the Grayling?" was born.

I was holding off on this year's shots as I still have one more 2014 post to go but as it's been mentioned on other posts I thought I'd crack on and post anyway as it seems the time is right. I have been accused of not playing fair in the past 🤪🤪 so this year the shots show whole butterflies 😊 . Enjoy! 😊





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 05-Dec-14 03:16 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, I love your Red Admirals, but I'll pass on the Graylings 😞 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Dec-14 11:06 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 The Grayling shots aren't too bad, you should be able to get the last one 😊

November Butterfly! 14-11-2014

I had been hoping for a November butterfly this year as I was going to try and see a butterfly in every month of the year (what with Bob and a Red Admiral in January and another Small Tort in Feb). But things weren't looking good as I'd missed the boat during the first couple of days of the month before the weather deteriorated - it was like a switch had been flicked, October ended with record highs and then in November the rain had been turned on and the heating off! In the end I'd given up all hope and so had even stopped carrying my camera to work. So imagine my mixed feeling of joy and annoyance when on Children in Need day a Red Admiral stopped to bask on the Stocks which were to be used for Sponge the Teacher. In desperation I used the camera on my iPod touch to get a record shot but it wasn't up to the standard that I can get with my usual set up.



iPod

Luckily the Science Department has a little digital camera which we use on trips etc so I cranked that up to Macro and tried a few with that. Again, not brilliant but slightly better than the iPod. The thing that was most annoying was that the view from the viewfinder didn't correspond with the actual framing of the shot. I'd have to make the usual approach, zoom in and check the image through the viewfinder and then move the camera down slightly to get the butterfly in frame. It was all a bit hit or miss and the focus wasn't great as to get the butterfly in shot I had to guess where to hold the camera and it didn't actually focus on the butterfly.

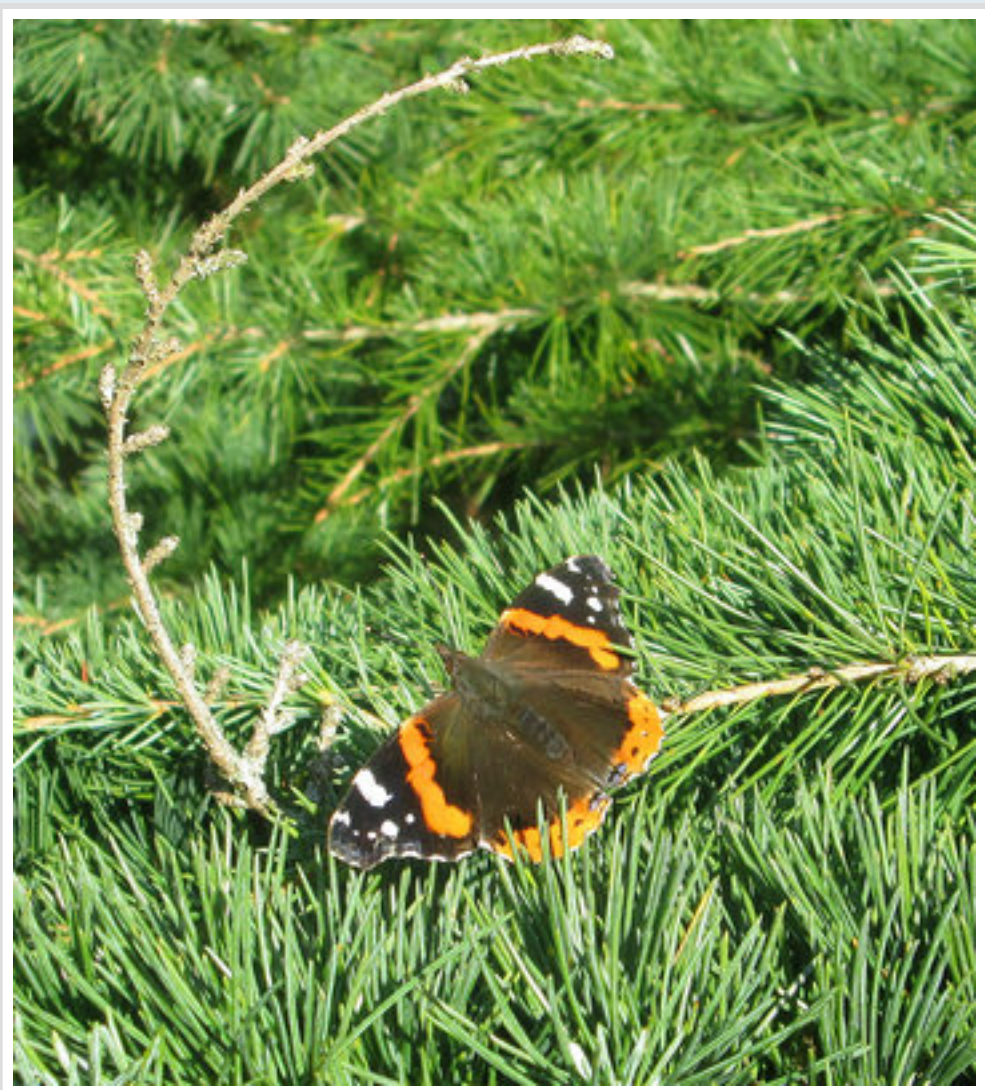




Later on a second Red Admiral (wing damage) landed in the neighbouring pine tree and here it remained whilst I was able to try out yet another different camera - a Canon Powershot belonging to the ICT department. This at least produced an image which corresponded with what was on the viewing screen/viewfinder but it still wasn't as crisp as I can get with my Nikon.



"Science" camera



School Canon

In the end I gave up ruing the fact that I'd left my camera at home and since then it make the journey to work with me every day. Mind you my November butterflies didn't end there with a Small Tortoiseshell on Thursday 20th November again at work. This time I did have my camera, but it was in my lab and I couldn't leave the main hall and go back and get it. Then there was a Red Admiral on 28th Nov in the train station while I was buying my ticket for the Social 😊 Mind you fourth time lucky and hopefully that will be in December!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 10-Dec-14 09:45 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Glad you liked my Wood White shots. As you missed the Purple Emperor and Wood White this year maybe a trip to Botany Bay in 2015 would be worthwhile. I know it's about 100 miles from you, but could be worth the trip. Good luck with the Dec/Jan Red Admirals. Best Wishes ,TREVOR

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Dec-14 09:31 PM GMT

Cheers Trev I might have to make that trip – but I've Heaths to get next year 😊

Every year there are one or two posts that slip through the net – either because I've been to other different places or have seen something new for the season so the post with 'old stuff' gets put t one side. So here are some of my 'Lost Posts' the first of which is actually from 2013 😊

Identifying Cats?

I was having a bit of a sort through some old files and I came across some shots of various unidentified cats probably all Moths. All of them were taken back in 2010 when I was just starting out and so I can be fairly confident that they're from Martin Down as that was the main site that I visited back then. Any help would be gratefully received.

First up was a multitude in a web from the 17th April. The smaller shrubs along the path were diggled in these webs.



Next from a return visit a few days later on the 20th. Are these the same species as they both have the dorsal orange spots? I'm not sure as they appear much bigger and can they have gained that much mass in a few days?



Number three is from the 6th June and was merely labelled as 'eh?'.



Finally from 13th August a large caterpillar which looks like an inverted Cinnabar, black with orange stripes and not the other way around.



They're not great shots but if I can get them identified and in my Moth collection that would be great for the sake of completeness. Cheers in advance.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Nick Broomer, 12-Dec-14 10:16 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

how are you and your family, i hope you all are well.

no. 1 and 2 look like Brown-tail, at different stages of it`s life-cycle, and no. 4 could be a Fox moth larva.

All the best, Nick.

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 12-Dec-14 11:51 PM GMT

Agree with the Brown Tail and Fox Moth ID's, number 3 is The Satellite, *Eupsilia transversa*

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Dec-14 10:32 PM GMT

Cheers for the IDs Nick 😊 My clan are all well, growing fast and what with the addition of Teddy the cat and our woodburner this could be the cosiest Chimble in chez Wurzel yet 😊 I hope you and yours are all well too 😊

Cheers for the IDs as well Bugboy – The Satellite is a new one for me 😊

Lost Post Number 2 – A Quick Visit to the Park 30-05-2014

As part of the itinerary of my sister's visit from Oz we were supposed to be heading to either Stourhead or Mottisfont today. However yesterday for my older daughter's birthday treat we'd all visited Splashdown and after a day of riding the flumes we were all in a pretty fragile state. I personally had gotten up and had a stretch and was quite worried when almost every one of my vertebrae clicked, it sounded like a skeletal zip! 😬 So instead we were having a quiet day at my Mum's at Sixpenny Handley.

After lunch the girls were getting restless so we took them up to the local park. The weather had improved over the course of the morning and now there were the occasional breaks of sun amongst the cloud. In between watching my wife nearly brain herself on the "zip slide", my sister come flying off the normal slide so fast that she landed in a neighbouring field and pushing my younger daughter seeming forever on the swings I stole off for five minutes.

The local football pitch has finally been leveled, cutting it down into the chalk in the process creating banks down one wing and behind one goal. These were covered in wildflowers and so I reasoned that any butterflies would ultimately end up there. So I wandered along behind the goal but it was only when I got the corner flag that butterflies appeared - a Green-Veined White. Slightly further on was a Large White. I chose to go for the Large first which turned out to be the right decision as it was quickly gone whilst the Green-veined settled for the remaining 4 minutes of my park time out.





It was still there when I was called back to swing duty.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 15-Dec-14 09:21 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

Sounds like a mini break to Canterbury then !. But do take a Sat.Nav ,Canterbury's one way system/ring road is even worse than Salisbury's to a stanger 😊 .

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 15-Dec-14 01:04 PM GMT

Nice to see the White and Green Veined White Wurzal they remind me of Spring 😊

I'm off to Canterbury for Christmas can't wait (Hot Chocolate with cream or Marsh Mellows in down town) a visit to the cathedral for carols ,best though is to be with family like you Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Paul Harfield, 17-Dec-14 09:22 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

I like the sound of your local football pitch, if only ours were surrounded by wildflowers 😊 At the moment of course ours are surrounded by mud and I seem to be regularly roped in as linesman 😊 Roll on summer 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Dec-14 10:49 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor for the info 😊 I'll fire up the SatNav and might even get an update then 🤖

Cheers Goldie 😊 I'll be supping on a bucket of Hot Chocolate on Xmas Eve myself – most of it will end up on my beard though 😊 Have a great Xmas.

Cheers Paule 😊 I hear that, only a couple of months to go now though and things will be starting to kick off.

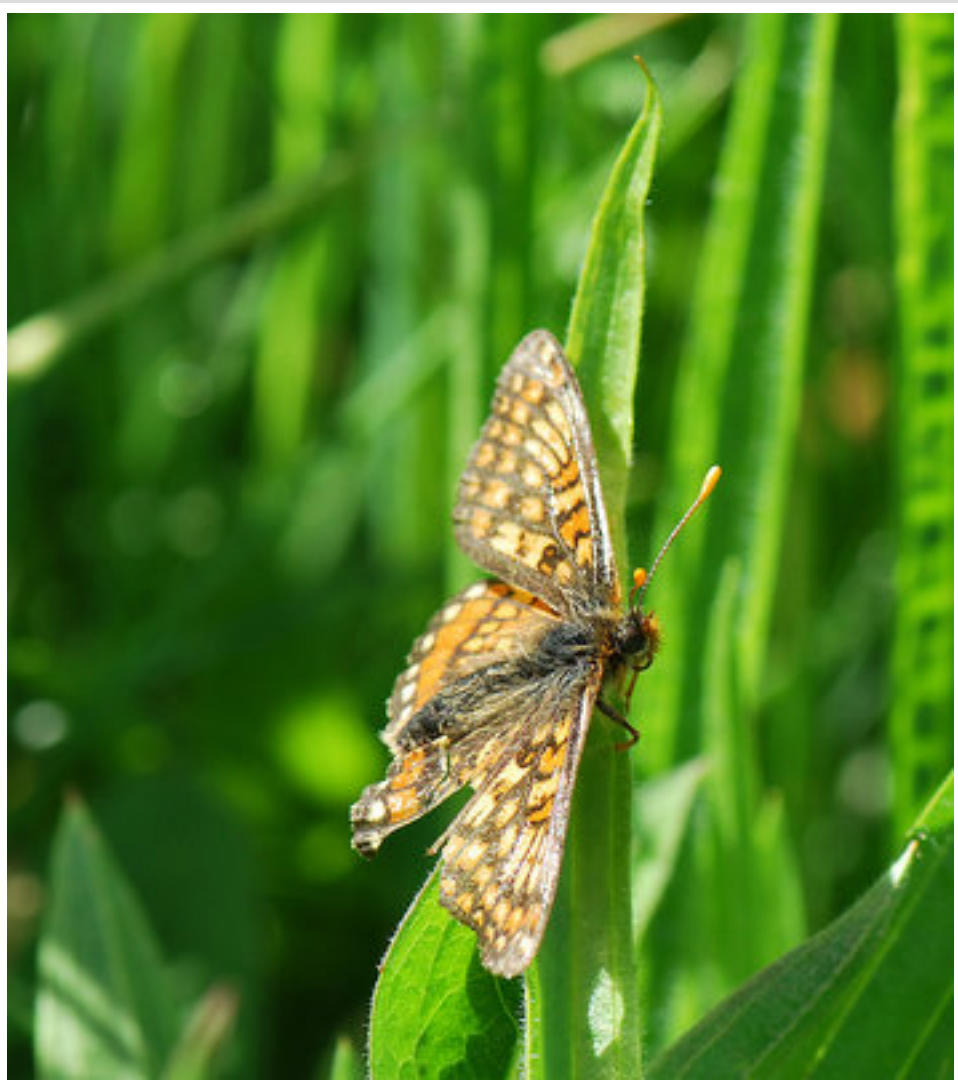
Hampshire Marshies

This falls under the 'I didn't want to post as I didn't want to give the game away' category...

Back in early June I took a trip across the border into Hampshire to look for a few Marshies. I'd already seen bucket loads at my Marshie site and so I was hoping to add a few more from out of county. Plus I'd seen them here for first time last year and so I wanted to check up on them. Eventually I found them away from the areas they'd preferred last year but then this is a big site so they have the option to range in source of nectar. Just like last year they seemed to like travelling in groups and so once I'd found one another couple were quickly found as well.

Being the start of June they were all pretty greasy winged and the first individual I found had chunks missing from its hind wings but I wasn't concerned about the state of their dress, I was just glad that they were still here. In fact as I saw at least four together this late in the season for them it must have meant that there were more around at the start of their emergence so they seem to be on the up here after a few dodgy years.

As they were a bit careworn I tried to focus more on attitude than on wing markings and hopefully the first shot shows their inquisitive nature.



I also noticed that sometimes when nectaring they seem to have a little check first, uncoiling the proboscis to take on nectar, recoiling the proboscis to sample the flavour and then if it's good getting their head down in the trough!





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 22-Dec-14 10:56 PM GMT

Glad to see they were still there, Wurzel. 😊 If this is where I'm guessing it is, I've seen one or two most years, but never in any numbers.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 24-Dec-14 06:08 PM GMT

Lovely clear shots of the Green-veined Whites on the Oxeye Daisies, Wurzel 😊 also great to see Hampshire still has some Marshies 😊

Have a brilliant Christmas and a great 2015.

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 24-Dec-14 07:23 PM GMT

I really must try and see more Marsh Fritillaries in 2015, only seen them once so far, in North Devon a couple of years back.

Hope you have a great Christmas and New Year Wurzel.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Dec-14 11:44 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 It is indeed the same site but mum's the word 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 Below is a not so sharp image – but the best my iPod can manage 😊 Have a great Xmas 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I hope you and yours have a great Xmas too 😊 I know a cracking Marshie site if you want to try for them next year 😊

After a Red Admiral on the 20th I was hoping for another today but no joy 😞 Instead I made do with some Xmas cheer at home. Santa will be enjoying some 'Poper Job' this evening, I hope it keeps him going 😊



Have a goodun, A Great Christmas and and a brill New Year! 😊

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Dec-14 10:45 PM GMT

This was one of those posts that got lost after a manic weekend. Over the weekend I made trips to Five Rivers (first Small Skippers, Marbled Whites and Ringlets of the year), Slop Bog (first Silver Studded Blues), Lulworth Cove (first Lulworth Skippers) and Martin Down (first Dark Green Frits)! So The Devenish got put on the back burner – until now.

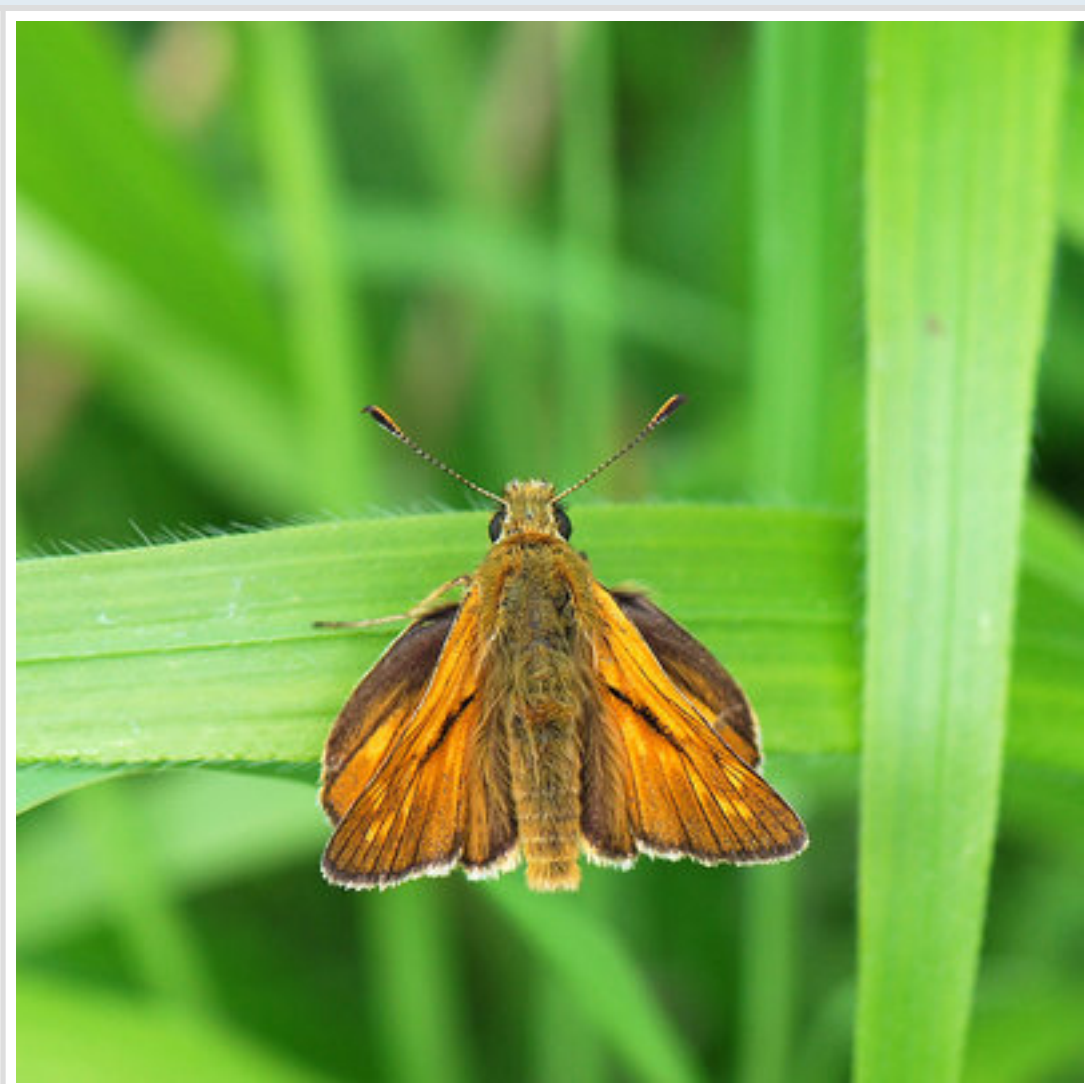
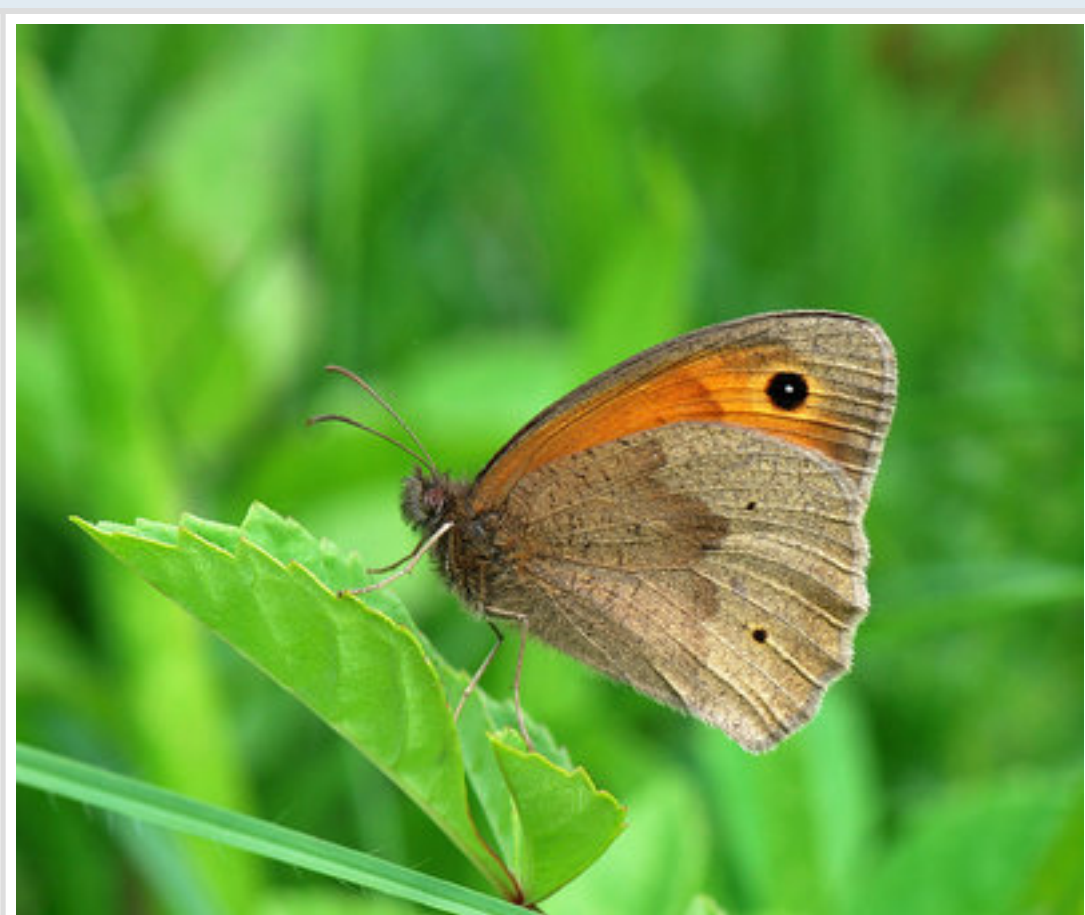
Freaky Friday 13-06-2014

I was in the groove by this stage of the season. Stopping off on the way to work and then nipping out once the lunchtime revision session was completed before rushing back to stop off at The Devenish on the way home. Today started in a similar fashion with the morning break in my journey but it was at Woodhenge rather than Larkhill. Unfortunately the hoped for Marbled White weren't emerged yet and so I had to make do with a single Small Tortoiseshell. It had some interesting markings with the markings on the forewing starting as white and then becoming lemon coloured along with a lemon spot showing against the ground orange colour of the forewings. Still after a couple of minutes it was back in the car and onwards to work – so I could get through my morning of lessons and get out at lunch...



...But that didn't happen as I was saying goodbye to my student teachers with some excellent pizza and cake to follow! 😊 Instead I took some more time at the end of the day and arrived at The Devenish slightly later than usual. As I walked through the Orchid Meadow there were the usual suspects

and so I didn't venture up onto the side of the Down and just stayed in this small field. As I hadn't focused much on Meadow Browns yet I spent some time re-acquainting myself with them whilst taking in the antics of the various other butterflies that were about including a pair of Grizzlies, a Dingy, Large Skippers and a collection of Blues and Browns (4 Adonis, 2 Common, Brown Argus, 2 Small Heath and a Speckled Wood)

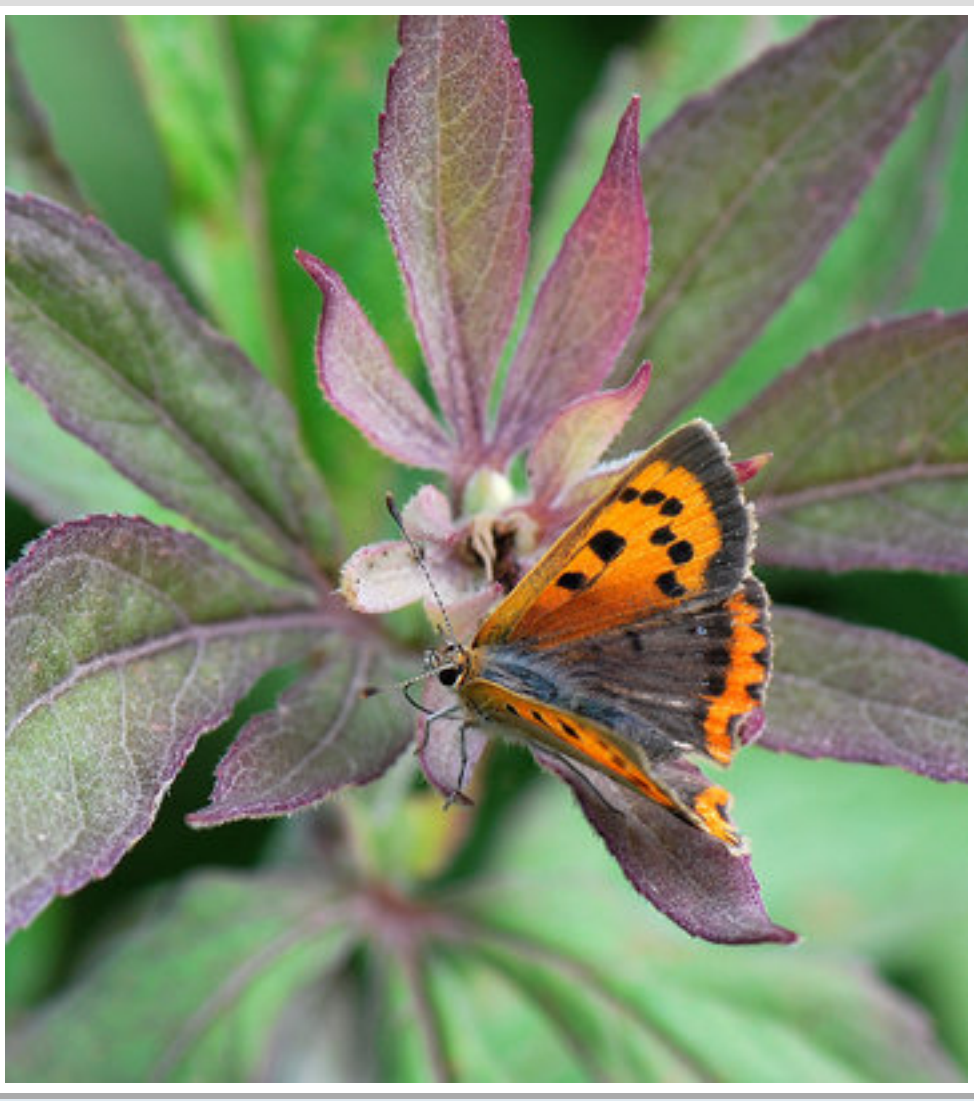


I found my fifth Meadow Brown right at the other end of the field where the vegetation is longer and denser, almost scrub like. It was nestled down amongst the vegetation as a pair of Small Tortoiseshells were flapping around and about. Time was passing and so I started to make my back towards

the other end of the meadow and the car park beyond.



As I stopped now and again for flies with crazy looking eyes and one of the worn Common Blues I wondered to myself where the second brood Small Coppers were? Just as the thought had been constructed in my mind a tiny orange flower unfolded itself revealing that it was actually the very same butterfly I'd just been imagining. Not only that but it was a blue badger too!



So I arrived home later than usual but slightly happier, especially as I got away with the lateness and unscathed on this auspicious day!

Have a goodun

Wurzel