

Re: Willow

by Willow, 10-May-15 05:04 AM GMT

My first Personal Diary post of the year, last year was so busy I simply could not keep up with my trip reports and fell hopelessly behind, this year I'm going to be far more casual 😊 and only post when I have the luxury of time...like now...!!!

Last Thursday I spent a few hours at the **Kenfig National Nature Reserve, near Porthcawl, South Wales** this lovely coastal reserve is a stronghold for **Small Blue** and naturally the species was my main target during my visit. I was a little disappointed to only see three or four, however the wind was a factor and this tiny insect is not built for such conditions and allowances have to be made.



One of just a few Small Blue seen during visit.



Small Blue sheltering from stiff breeze!

My first **Small Heath** of the year was very unaccommodating and constantly flitted into positions where a reasonable photo was difficult, in the end I just clicked a record shot and told him (or her!) to please themselves 😊



This awkward critter was lucky to get shot!!!

A solitary **Common Blue** appeared on a banking above the area where I was concentrating on **SB** and this species was also a first for the year, earlier than I normally find them and it appeared to have been around for a few days or the poor recent weather had taken its toll 😞 ... nothing to brighten up the day like a **CB** though 😊 (but apologies for the poor quality image!).



My first Common Blue of the year...

During my butterfly forays I've always got my eyes peeled for my other passion Dragonflies, I was not disappointed to see loads of the blue species damselflies emerging and also Hairy Dragonfly and Four-spotted and Broad-bodied Chaser among the dragonfly species 😊



Side view of immature male Broad-bodied Chaser

I saw my first **Small Copper** in early April if memory serves, on this visit I had to content myself with enjoying the company of just two of these delightful little insects, but at least they had better manners than that ignorant **Small Heath** and allowed a decent enough photo to be taken 😊



Small Copper posing on grassy stalk...

My visit produced a list of eleven species, which as well as those already mentioned above included; **Brimstone, Large, Small & Green-veined White, Orange-tip, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock.**

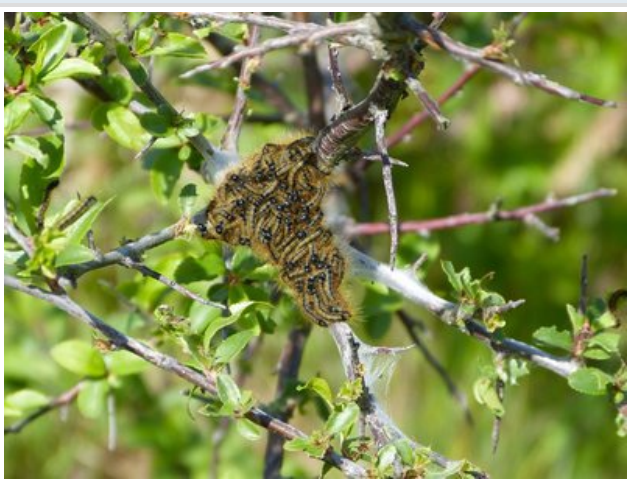


Small Tortoiseshell were counted into double figures.



Green-veined White on Cuckoo Flower

On my way back to the car-park I came across this larval web of the Lackey (Macro Moth) which I'm sure many of you are familiar with, this one was on Blackthorn that was constantly whipped about in the wind, I don't know who was more shaken-up, me contorting while trying to get a record shot or the poor caterpillars bouncing up and down on the branch 😊



The bouncing Lackey web!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Willow

by David M, 10-May-15 06:32 AM GMT

Good stuff, Bill. Nice to see Common Blues are about in our part of the world. I spent half an hour in Kittle Quarry this afternoon looking for them but in spite of the birds foot trefoil being quite well advanced, none were seen.

Re: Willow

by Maximus, 10-May-15 06:39 AM GMT

Good to see you back, Bill 😊

Re: Willow

by Neil Freeman, 10-May-15 06:27 PM GMT

"Willrow" wrote:

My first Personal Diary post of the year, last year was so busy I simply could not keep up with my trip reports and fell hopelessly behind, this year I'm going to be far more casual 😊 and only post when I have the luxury of time...like now...!!!

Hi Bill,

That is the beauty of these personal diaries, it is yours and you can post when you like. There are some who post a report every time they go out and some who only post once every once in a while, each to their own. I enjoy reading all of them and it is always interesting to read what is happening in other parts of the country 😊

Great reports, both here in your PD and in the sightings thread.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Willow

by Goldie M, 11-May-15 01:49 AM GMT

Nice shots Willow, no Common Blues here yet I think most things are a couple of weeks late here Goldie 😊

Re: Willow

by Willow, 11-May-15 05:56 PM GMT

"David M" wrote:

Good stuff, Bill. Nice to see Common Blues are about in our part of the world...

Thanks David, agree...lets hope for lots more 😊

"Maximus" wrote:

Good to see you back, Bill 😊

Thats very nice of you Mike 😊

"Neil Freeman" wrote:

Great reports, both here in your PD and in the sightings thread.

Neil, thank you, you'll remove what little modesty I possess with such well received comments... 😊

"Goldie M" wrote:

Nice shots Willow, no Common Blues here yet I think most things are a couple of weeks late here Goldie 😊

Common Blues are a delight at this time of year, thanks for taking time out to read and reply Goldie.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Willow

by Pauline, 11-May-15 11:40 PM GMT

Good to see you back Bill. I enjoyed your diary last Summer and I am looking forward to more of your postings this year. I am a bit out of touch myself as, due to other commitment, I too have to (sadly) leave this site over Winter, so have a lot of catching up to do still.

Re: Willow

by Willow, 12-May-15 05:16 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Good to see you back Bill. I enjoyed your diary last Summer and I am looking forward to more of your postings this year. I am a bit out of touch myself as, due to other commitment, I too have to (sadly) leave this site over Winter, so have a lot of catching up to do still.

Thanks Pauline, I find that I'm constantly chasing my tail at this time of year, so much to pack into a day...between showers that is 😊 but once that sun comes out...well, who can stay indoors 🙄😓

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Willow

by trevor, 13-May-15 01:22 AM GMT

Many thanks,Bill , that Holly Blue seems to have caused a minor sensation, even those on high have commented!! That site is certainly brilliant for them.

Have a cracking season,
TREVOR.

Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 13-May-15 06:34 AM GMT

A belated 'great to see you're back' Willow 😊 Lovely Small Blues 🍷 I hope you get many times of luxury this year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willow

by Willow, 16-May-15 05:40 AM GMT

"trevor" wrote:

Have a cracking season,
TREVOR.

That's very nice of you Trevor...I'll do my best 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

A belated 'great to see you're back' Willow 😊 Lovely Small Blues 🍷 I hope you get many times of luxury this year 😊

That's also nice of you Wurzel...luxury...one of my favourite words 😊

Kinds regards gents,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Willow

by Willow, 16-May-15 07:10 AM GMT

Last Wednesday I took advantage of the sunshine and Met Office forecast of little or no wind to cross the Severn Estuary into Gloucestershire and a morning at **Breakheart Quarry, Near Dursley** which is a real stronghold for both **Grizzled and Dingy Skipper** the short grasses that surround the old quarry are made for these species, there's also much in the way of Bugle to nectar on in and around lots of bare earth patches which the insects also enjoy sunning themselves on, all in this could be as good as it gets for skippers 😊



Breakheart Quarry scene...



One of several Breakheart Quarry information boards.

I counted at least two dozen **Grizzlies** and easily treble that amount of **Dingy Skipper** during a couple of hours, I'm certain as the day got warmer the count would have been considerably higher, but I took some pics and moved on just after eleven o'clock.



Many Grizzlies enjoyed basking on the bare earth.



Dingy on a stalk, a favoured perching trick...

My days primary destination was **Rodborough Common, Near Stroud** which incidentally is the nearest place to Wales where many 'downland' and 'limestone' loving species are found, I have always made an effort (its not hard 😊) to visit the common several times a year and have never gone home disappointed. Last year I succeeded with a personal record count for **Duke of Burgundy** with more than forty being recorded, my count was less than half that amount on this occasion, with seventeen individuals seen. I will admit being somewhat concerned to find one of the species 'hot-spots' being rather 'trodden-down', obviously visitors seeking the butterfly had ventured away from the several footpaths available in search of a photograph and I only saw one insect in this particular area (where previously there were many 😞), last year I spoke to Matthew Oates (on site) about this problem and I'm wondering what the National Trust could do here to offer more protection for this delightful but highly vulnerable little butterfly 😞



The all important Cowslip with the Duke...



The Duke's profile...



Open-winged pose.

Apart from the **Duke of Burgundy** my search turned up in excess of two hundred **Dingy Skipper** – in fact I lost count at that figure and I think the species is now going from strength to strength nationwide...long may it continue for this lovely photogenic little critter 😊



A posing Dingy on Cowslip...

I was expecting to see far more **Brown Argus** than the ten or so counted, but I probably missed lots because of concentrating on **DofB** 😊



Brown Argus were in rather short supply!

Small Heath is another 'under-valued' species of butterfly and I'm not seeing this species in anything like the numbers of years gone by...am I by myself? 🤔



Small Heath - no longer so plentiful?

Lots of **Green Hairstreak** seen (30+) but most were among the course grasses on steep slopes and I had no intention of chasing down such slopes for a record photograph...I've given up 'grass-skiing'...I went out at the top 😊

A bonus for the day was a solitary **Adonis Blue** which caused confusion at first sight with a near disturbed **Common Blue** but you know an **AB** once that incredible colour catches you 😊 and this is the second year running that I've put up **AB** within yards of the same patch of ground!



Solitary Adonis Blue was seen...

I'm going to close this post with a couple more pics of **Duke of Burgundy** simply because I cannot resist...and also cos' I want to catch up with some kip...early start tomorrow, crack of dawn for Herefordshire and hopefully an adventure with **Wood White** and **Pearl-bordered Fritillary**...yippee 😊



Another wonderful Duke...!!!

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Maximus, 16-May-15 07:29 AM GMT

Lovely photos Bill 😊 the Duke profile shot is a real stunner 😊

Mike

Re: Willow

by trevor, 16-May-15 04:28 PM GMT

Hi Bill,
That quarry certainly came up with the goods !. Lovely set of images too.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 17-May-15 06:14 AM GMT

Cracking Dukes Willow 🍷 Good luck with the Wood Whites and the Pearls 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willow

by trevor, 17-May-15 06:32 AM GMT

Hi Bill,
Thanks for the confirmation (PBF ab).

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: Willow

by Willow, 18-May-15 04:17 AM GMT

Mike, Trevor and Wurz, your comments are much appreciated 😊

Best Wishes,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Willow, 18-May-15 05:05 AM GMT

Early morning start to beat the city traffic through Hereford yesterday morning – destination **Haugh Wood** which is about 5 miles outside the city in some lovely **Herefordshire** countryside. The wood has always been a good location for **Wood White** and **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and yesterday the former species were in reasonable numbers with perhaps 40+ recorded, the **P-b F** are I believe teetering on the brink here, only five seen personally, but some visiting friends mentioned another 2 were seen in an area I omitted to search during this visit, the rides have become too rank with vegetation and Violets are being smothered out, having said that several areas have been coppiced since last year – when I saw just 6 during my visits 😊



Typical Haugh Wood ride



One of more than forty Wood White recorded



Lovely conditioned Pearl-bordered Fritillary

When not actively seeking out potential mates the WW were happy to take some Bugle for refreshment...all this love-making takes energy 😊😄



Woody on the Bugle...sounds good!!!

Big bonus was a lovely female **Holly Blue** found nectaring on Bluebell, she allowed several shots, the wind causing her to open her wings for balance and I took advantage to snap away happily 😊



Female Holly Blue nectaring...



Open-winged pose from Holly...

The woods was quite busy with Speckled Yellow which happen to be a favourite day-flying macro moth of mine, fortune smiled on me once again when a pair decided to practice procreation right under my nose...(no offence taken though 😊)...that type of thing is not to be sniffed at 😊👉



A saucy pair of Speckled Yellow!!!

Apart from the infernal clouds of midges my visit was much enjoyed and we must hope that the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** survive at Haugh Woods with good habitat management more vitally important now than ever...cos'!... **'when they're gone they're gone'**

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 18-May-15 05:12 AM GMT

Nice report, Hope those Pearls make it through. Great shot of the Speckled Yellows. I saw hundreds down in Abotts Wood earlier this week when I was after Pearls, only managed a distant shot of one, they never seemed to settle!

Re: Willow

by Willow, 19-May-15 05:32 AM GMT

Thanks for the response Buggy, Speckled Yellow can be challenging critters to photograph 😊 all you need is a bit of luck 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by trevor, 19-May-15 05:54 AM GMT

Hi Bill,

It was your turn for an open winged Holly Blue !. Lovely shot 😊.

TREVOR

Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 19-May-15 06:56 AM GMT

Great stuff Bill I'm pretty jealous of those Speckled Yellows never seen them like that before 🍷 It's always struck me as odd that Wood White aren't found at Bentley Wood as the habitat seems right, a lot like Haugh Wood from the look of it. And it does have Pearls and Small Pearls 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willow

by essexbuzzard, 19-May-15 07:10 AM GMT

Couple of nice reports there,Bill-nice to see you have been out and about. The Dukes were fantastic as were the speckled yellows. And the holly blue on bluebells? 🍷

Re: Willow

by Neil Freeman, 20-May-15 04:40 AM GMT

Great reports and photos Bill 😊 I have not been down to Rodborough Common for a couple of years now, seeing your report is tempting me to make a visit soon.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Willow

by Willow, 20-May-15 06:33 AM GMT

"trevor" wrote:

Hi Bill,

It was your turn for an open winged Holly Blue !. Lovely shot 😊.

Nice coincidence Trevor...thanks for the response 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

It's always struck me as odd that Wood White aren't found at Bentley Wood as the habitat seems right...

Thanks Wurz, yes it is rather unusual, hard to understand why really 😊

"essexbuzzard" wrote:

Couple of nice reports there,Bill-nice to see you have been out and about. The Dukes were fantastic as were the speckled yellows. And the holly blue on bluebells? 🍷

Cheers Mark, trying to make the most of things...in the wind that is... 😊

"Neil Freeman" wrote:

Great reports and photos Bill 😊 I have not been down to Rodborough Common for a couple of years now, seeing your report is tempting me to make a visit soon

Time for another visit then Neil, it's a smashing place 😊...appreciate the kind words!

Best Wishes Gents,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Willow, 25-May-15 05:55 AM GMT

Rodborough Common & Selsley Common, Gloucestershire. Myself and that other superb UK Butterflyer David M 🤓😊 met up yesterday in wonderful sunshine 😊 to spend the day at these two species rich locations. The special thing about these locations are that they offer most of the limestone/downland butterflies that are absent from Wales; in the case of **Adonis Blue** perhaps it's at the most northerly point of it's range in the UK (I stand to be corrected on this point though!).

The first session was at **Rodborough** where we saw 16 species - this provided both of us with our best single day species count of the year, the species seen were as follows:- **Dingy Skipper, Brimstone, Large, Small & Green-veined White, Orange-tip, Green Hairstreak, Small Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Duke of Burgundy, Peacock, Speckled Wood, Small Heath.** Please see David's sightings post if you want to know the numbers of each species counted at these locations.

Interestingly our second mid-afternoon session at **Selsley** proved very productive for **Duke of Burgundy** but the terrain may prove rather difficult for the less active visitor. This location is similar to **Rodborough** and the views towards the Severn are wonderful and merit a visit, however I personally believe the latter common mentioned is more interesting and diverse.



Portrait of Duke of Burgundy



One of the 60+ Dukes seen during our visit



We found a pocket of Adonis Blue...



These Adonis Blue posed for pics during a love-in!!!

Adonis Blue happen to be one of David's favourite butterflies and he pushed me aside in his haste to get a photo of the superb creature 😳😳 the sheer excitement was all too much for the poor chap 😅 he apologised profusely once he had come to his senses...ahem!



Hundreds of Brown Argus are on the wing at the commons.



Paired contortionist's...Brown Argus!

Brown Argus out-numbered all other species, it was good to see them in such robust health and their good condition suggested a recent mass emergence.



Several Mother Shipton were seen.

Mother Shipton, Forester and the rare Cistus Forester were among the day-flying moths seen. Burnet Companion was also in fair numbers, however Silver Y were conspicuous by their absence – they often arrive with **Painted Lady** which I've yet to see this year!



Common Blue in fine fettle...

We also counted good numbers of **Common Blue** and also three **Holly Blue** which also appear to be having a good first generation.

A much enjoyed day out...thanks for the company David 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Willow

by David M, 25-May-15 06:03 AM GMT

Not quite sure that I was so extreme in my eagerness to 'push you out of the way', Bill, but I confess that Adonis Blue is an almost heavenly insect in my opinion, and well worth yomping up and down sheer slopes to get close too!

Sixteen species in mid-May is decent going, and I was particularly pleased with the numbers of Dukes flying. Clearly, this area is a strong one for them and long may that continue!

Re: Willow

by Willow, 26-May-15 04:10 AM GMT

Aberbargoed Grasslands NNR, Gwent (Monmouthshire.) Having the morning free I decided it was a good opportunity to check my local nature reserve for the latest on the **Marsh Fritillary** and although cloudy it was less breezy than of late 😊 and I managed an approximate count of 30, only half a dozen of those seen were actually flying, the remainder stayed down in the moor grass conserving energy, one did nectar on a Heath-spotted Orchid and I managed a few shots.



Marshy on Heath-spotted Orchid



Marsh Fritillary resting on lush grasses...

Among those photographed was one with a deformed upper-wing, I didn't disturb the unfortunate critter to see if it could fly properly 😞 but I've seen loads over the years with such problems that hardly seem to affect them 😊



Note the deformed wing on the above Marshy

I was delighted to note my first two **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** of the year, these two were happier down in the grasses, I was hoping they would nectar on the adjacent Bluebell's, it was not to be on this occasion – perhaps next time!



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary



There were more **Common Blue** on the reserve today than I've seen for several years, I counted 10+ in a small area that had very little in the way of food plants apart from a small patch of Bluebells and one briefly posed for me on this appropriately coloured plant 😊



Blue butterfly on blue flowers...nice!!!

Not all Bluebells are blue...here is a photo of a white Bluebell...🤪



Blue & White



Male Common Blue having a rest...

Its still too soon in the Marshies flight season to predict what type of season they will have, the fascination of butterflying is often about the success or failure of habitat management, fortunately at Aberbargoed we have a very good warden who manages the reserve to a very high standard and recent years have proved the habitat management works; the **Marsh Fritillary** have thrived here at Monmouthshire's only remaining location for the species! Lets hope this is yet another successful year 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Maximus, 26-May-15 04:37 AM GMT

Smashing photos Bill. My favourite has to be the Marsh Frit. on the Orchid 😊

Mike

Re: Willow

by Neil Freeman, 26-May-15 05:10 AM GMT

Hi Bill,

Another couple of great reports with some cracking photos that really give a good feel for the places described 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Willow

by David M, 26-May-15 05:12 AM GMT

Excellent stuff, Bill.

Nice to know SPBFs are starting to emerge. Hopefully by next weekend the ragged robin will be in flower so I can find a spot and let **them** come to **me!**

Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 26-May-15 05:58 AM GMT

Great Marshies Willow and at last the Small Pearls are out - yay 😊😊 Look's like a trip to Bentley is on the cards 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willow

by Goldie M, 26-May-15 10:18 PM GMT

I also love the shot of the Marsh Frit on the Orchid best although the Common Blue on the Blue Bell will take some beating Goldie 😊

Re: Willow

by Willow, 27-May-15 05:57 AM GMT

Your all very generous with your comments 😊 and I'm feeling a bit guilty about falling behind with viewing all of your wonderful PD's...but I will - does'nt time just fly by when your having fun 😊

"Maximus" wrote:

Smashing photos Bill. My favourite has to be the Marsh Frit. on the Orchid 😊

Mike

Lots of Heath-spotted Orchid appearing at the reserve now Mike and the Marshies luv' em 😊

"Neil Freeman" wrote:

Another couple of great reports with some cracking photos that really give a good feel for the places described 😊

The beautiful critters help too don't they Neil 😊

"David M" wrote:

Nice to know SPBFs are starting to emerge. Hopefully by next weekend the ragged robin will be in flower so I can find a spot and let them come to me!

Of course they will David...by the dozen 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

at last the Small Pearls are out – yay 😊😊 Look's like a trip to Bentley is on the cards 😊

Bentley Woods...I just love the place...go for it Wurz 😊

"Goldie M" wrote:

I also love the shot of the Marsh Frit on the Orchid best although the Common Blue on the Blue Bell will take some beating Goldie 😊

Yeah Goldie...two lovely flowers, always hard to chose 😊

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Willow

by Willow, 28-May-15 04:31 AM GMT

With the sun shining and little or no wind I decided I had to go back to the [Aberbargoed Grasslands NNR](#) yesterday afternoon and do another count (see earlier post above) of the **Marsh Fritillary** and my efforts were amply rewarded with a very healthy 100+ butterflies counted, this improved my last count (on Monday) by more than 60% – what a difference the sunshine makes 😊 I also saw at least 4 **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** that are always hyper in warmth, yet I still got a shot of one resting deep in the grasses, the species is as much at home in marshy conditions as it's relative.



One of many Marshies counted yesterday



Marshy sunbathing in the open...

With masses of bluebells available to nectar-seekers I was able to take advantage and get some of **Marsh Frits** having a snack 😊



Marshy at lunch...

My apologies if this image has been seen on the Sightings thread but I had to put it here in my Personal Diary because I doubt I'll ever get another of a male **Common Blue** on a white bluebell, a solitary white among countless thousands of bluebells...one single shot and the insect was off onto bluebells 🤪 just about managed to get at least a reasonable record shot 🤪 😊



Lucky to get this shot...!!!

My other good fortune was managing to find the fast declining micro moth *Anania funebris* the White-spotted Sable for the third year running...but its like trying to pin down a 'whirling-dervish' to get a photograph and the image produced here can never really do this little beauty justice...cos' it's a really stunning little moth 😊



The rather flashy named White-spotted Sable...

Just after my adventures outlined above I noticed a male **Brimstone** come down to rest, he was probably knackered after chasing a determined female for miles 😊😊 and getting absolutely nowhere...and we've all been there ain't we lads 😊😊 and I crept up on him and took a few shots, he recovered his strength and resumed his amorous intention, seeking out her scent trail among the grasses and bluebells 😊



One knackered Brimstone...!!!

Finally my day concluded with the discovery of a resting **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** that allowed me the pleasure of a side-view shot...a nice ending to a very rewarding afternoon 😊



Side portrait of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 28-May-15 04:49 AM GMT

You're jealous of my Glanvilles, I'm very jealous of your Small Pearl Bordered! 🍷

Re: Willow

by Neil Freeman, 28-May-15 05:11 AM GMT

"Willrow" wrote:

...and I'm feeling a bit guilty about falling behind with viewing all of your wonderful PD's...but I will - does'nt time just fly by when your having fun 😊

Tell me about it Bill...I am trying to read a couple each time I log on but the time just disappears on me 😊.

I love the Marsh Fritillaries and that Common blue on the White Bluebell is an unusual sight for sure 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Willow

by David M, 28-May-15 06:07 AM GMT

Great stuff, Bill.

It appears that the forecast for this Saturday has gone from being very ordinary indeed to highly promising.

If things stay that way, I hope to be catching up with my local Marshies (and maybe SPBFs too).

I noticed the first blooms of ragged robin this afternoon on my way home from work so I'm keeping my fingers crossed that conditions hold until the weekend.

Re: Willow

by keving, 28-May-15 03:38 PM GMT

Bill,

Oh to be living in South Wales right now. I'm not jealous, really 😊

I love the Marshie on the Bluebell and the earlier Common Blue too.

Regards Kev

Re: Willow

by Willow, 01-Jun-15 12:36 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments Kev, David, Neil and Buggy, as always – **much appreciated** 😊

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Willow

by Willow, 01-Jun-15 01:24 AM GMT

The past week has been happily spent at the **Aberbargoed Grasslands NNR, Gwent (Monmouthshire)** which as I may have mentioned here before is my local patch 😊 the **Marsh Fritillary** numbers are edging towards a peak, I would think the middle of next week or thereabouts, yesterday 70+ were counted in breezy conditions, I discontinued the count and moved on to check some of the other types of habitat in less well trodden parts of the reserve, I was very pleased 😊 to 'rediscover' a colony of Chimney Sweeper macro moth and by happy coincidence having spoken about (their loss from the reserve) only a couple of hours earlier with the Monmouthshire (Vice County 35) Butterfly and Macro Moth Recorder – Dr Martin Anthony – I know he will be absolutely delighted to know it's still to be found on the reserve.

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary are also making their presence felt with at least 8 individuals on the wing, one of them tired of fighting the breeze and decided to get down on the freshly emerged bracken, I think that the plant at this stage of growth and the fritillaries compliment each other perfectly...don't you 🙄 ...whatever, I took advantage and some of the shots taken can be viewed below.

Other species seen in order of appearance excepting those previously mentioned were as follows:- **Dingy Skipper, Large & Green-veined White, Small Heath, Common Blue, Brimstone and Peacock**. The day-flying moths were represented by:- Mother Shipton, Latticed Heath, Burnet Companion, Common Carpet, Brown Silver-line and of course the rediscovered Chimney Sweeper 😊



Bracken and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary



S P-b Frit



Open winged pose S P-b Fritillary



S P-b Frit



The elusive Chimney Sweeper



Marsh Fritillary on Heath-spotted Orchid



Happy to pose Small Pearl...



Another happy to pose Pearl shot....

So June now beckons and I'm keeping my fingers crossed for **Silver-studded Blue** on the Great Orme in North Wales...just need the sunshine now 😊😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 01-Jun-15 02:14 AM GMT

Those SPBF pictures are gorgeous Bill, making me envious 🍷.

And yes I do love Marshies now, they are just full of character, lovely little things. So glad the weather played ball with me 😊

Re: Willow

by David M, 01-Jun-15 07:11 AM GMT

That penultimate SPBF image is probably the best you've ever posted on this site, Bill.

Superb effort.

Re: Willow

by Goldie M, 01-Jun-15 06:56 PM GMT

Fantastic photos Willow, I really couldn't pick which I like the best 🍷 😊

I also saw the White Spotted Sable Moth at Gait Barrow so it's not doing too badly, I got a glimpse of it last year as well. Goldie 😊

Re: Willow

by Pauline, 01-Jun-15 11:03 PM GMT

I have to agree with David - again!! 😊 (you keep taking the words out of my mouth 😊) That's also a great shot of the Chimney Sweeper moth - I am not really 'into' moths Bill (tho I could be persuaded by shots like that) but that is one I would love to see - not even sure if they are in Hants.

Re: Willow

by trevor, 02-Jun-15 05:40 AM GMT

Hi Bill,

Two more Red Admirals today. I live near the South Coast so i am sure that the RAs. in this area have flown in from the Continent. None are in pristine condition, so they are not fresh specimens, nor could they be ex. hibernators by now, surely too late for them. Hope you get to see some soon. Lovely images in your diary.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-15 07:41 AM GMT

Cracking Small Pearls Willow 😊 You'll have to teach me the secret phrase to get them to behave like that for me 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Willow

by Maximus, 02-Jun-15 06:51 PM GMT

Superb SPBF shots Bill 😊 also another Marshie on an Orchid 😊 and the Chimney Sweeper's a lovely looking moth.

Mike

Re: Willow

by Willow, 10-Jun-15 01:13 AM GMT

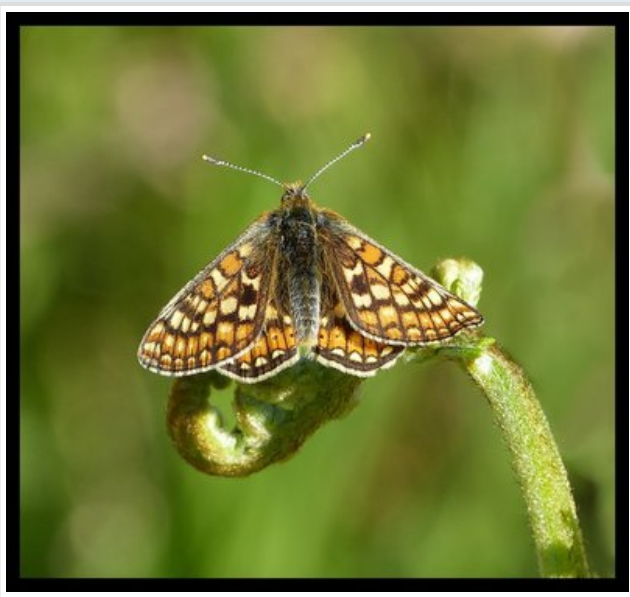
Returned home on the weekend from a short break in North Wales where I had hoped to visit the Great Orme and check out the **Silver-studded Blue** but sadly on this occasion it was not to be owing to unseen circumstances 😊 perhaps next time.

On Sunday I had pre-arranged to meet Phil Bromley and Rosalyn who most of you know from their posting and lovely images on **UK Butterflies** - they are having a 'Fritillary year' this year and travelled down from Peterborough especially to see **Aberbargoed Grasslands** wonderful **Marsh Fritillaries** 😊 with **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** thrown in as a little bonus...how generous is that 😊 Our session went into evening and we watched several of both species going to roost and took the opportunity to get some nice images...and as Phil & Ros are both Canon DSLR 'big-shots'...(aghh...I'll get my coat 😊 😊) I'm sure we'll see some of those images posted over the next few days once they get time...and let me say here I'm expecting big

things...competition stuff at the very least 😏😄 the only thing I will concede to effecting top quality image quality was that it was a bit breezy...but I won't accept that as a convenient excuse **Phil Bromley**... 😏😄 and that will teach you for calling my trusty Panasonic FZ150 'Mickey Mouse'... 😏😄



Settling Marsh Fritillary



Marsh Fritillary

We decided to return earlyish on Monday morning to perhaps catch some late rising frits, but I know from past experience that **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** are on the wing as early as weather conditions permit – usually in advance of the **Marsh Fritillary** and as I entered the core pasture just before the arrival of Phil & Ros at about 7.30 the first **SP-bF** was seen. **MF** were still having a bit of a sleep-in (similar to someone else who will remain nameless 😏😄) still when we checked out the same roosting area as the evening before we discovered a **Marsh Fritillary** still in-situ!



Late rising Marshy on bracken bed!

I've had a bit of a play around with one of the evening session images taken of a **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** for fun, I've just left the butterfly on a portion of bracken frond for effect, the question is does it appear too 'edited'...is it realistically acceptable 🙄



Does this image of a SP-bF look too unnatural?

Mid-morning Phil & Rosalyn had to leave for their long journey home and we said our farewells, another thoroughly enjoyable time spent in the good company of two knowledgeable and avid butterflyers...but I hope to spend another few adventures with them both before the summers over...so watch this space 😊😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by MikeOxon, 10-Jun-15 02:02 AM GMT

Hi Bill,

Something's gone awry with your captions, as that first pic is clearly a Marsh Frit!

That last SPBF is a wonderful specimen but the bracken does seem to be suspended on 'sky hooks'. Perhaps just an indication of support would make it seem more realistic. A lovely shot, nevertheless 😊

Mike

Re: Willow

by David M, 10-Jun-15 02:05 AM GMT

Are you taking the image from directly **above** the SPBF, Bill?

Re: Willow

by kevling, 10-Jun-15 02:19 AM GMT

Lovely photos of the SPBF Bill.

Thanks for your post to my PD. Your trip to Norfolk would almost be as far as mine to Aberbargoed, but looking at what you see there perhaps it should be on my wishlist for next year.

Regards Kev

Re: Willow

by trevor, 10-Jun-15 02:27 AM GMT

Hi Bill

Your last image of the SPBF is both unusual and beautiful.

As for your camera, you won't get ' DSLR neck ' from carrying around all day !. A friend of mine has one and it weighs a ton.

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: Willow

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jun-15 03:25 AM GMT

Great report and lovely photos Bill 😊 , I am really envious of you having Marsh Frits and SPBF so close to you 🍷

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Willrow

by Maximus, 10-Jun-15 04:15 AM GMT

Great shots of the Marsh Fritillaries and Small Pearl-Bordered Frits Bill 😊 The last image is superb 😊

Mike

Re: Willrow

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-15 06:23 AM GMT

I don't know about natural or not more absolutley cracking Small Pearl Willrow 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willrow

by Katrina, 11-Jun-15 06:34 AM GMT

Excellent photos!

Re: Willrow

by Willow, 12-Jun-15 10:54 PM GMT

Mike (Oxon), David, Kev, Trevor, Neil, Mike (Maximus), Wurz and Katrina your all very kind with your positive comments and thank you for taking time out to visit my Personal Diary 😊

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willrow

by Willow, 13-Jun-15 12:17 AM GMT

After a little consideration late on Tuesday evening I decided on an early start Wednesday and visit **Haddon Hill** on the **Devon/Somerset border** the weather forecast being reasonably favourable for the warmth loving **Heath Fritillary**. This lovely little fritillary is close to my heart and I love visiting the combes of Exmoor National Park to see the species. I arrived at the hill just before 9am and was rather surprised with the strength and edge to the north-easterly wind, it mean't wearing a fleece for the first couple of hours...flaming June 😊😊 On site I located my first HF within twenty minutes and I'm glad the insect knows what location provides the most shelter and warmth 😊 by lunch time my count had just reached double figures. I spent a magical hour sat watching them nectaring on buttercups in an area no bigger than 10 sq ft, they seemed absolutely unboverred 😊 by my presence, literally at my feet...a delight 😊



Haddon Hill with Exmoor ponies - Wimbleball Lake is in background



Heath Fritillary at rest



Closed wing shot of Heath Frit...



Perfect pose of Heath Fritillary on bracken frond

The views from Haddon Hill are very pretty, one hamlet with it's old church spire always captures my attention...



Typical Exmoor scene



Heath Frit perched out of the wind

I checked out areas of potential for other HF on the way back to my car for lunch and although they looked suitable, not a solitary insect was seen, **Heath Fritillary** have distinct and particular needs for habitat and Jeremy Thomas gives a fine overview of this habitat in his classic book ***The Butterflies of Britain & Ireland*** and I recommend reading it should you want further information about the species.

Here are a couple more HF pics I could not omit from this trip report 😊 My final tally of **Heath Fritillary** was around 14, this butterfly still needs every help we can possibly provide, the colonies left on Exmoor are precious!



Heath Fritillary on Whortleberry (Bilberry/Whimberry).



HF reclining on sapling

Green Hairstreak seem to enjoy the same habitat as HF on Exmoor and I saw at least twenty during my visit, when they are not engaging in aerial warfare with others of their tribe they present themselves for the odd photo-take or two...do take advantage...I always do 😊



There's no flies on this Green Hairstreak...!!!

Apart from a couple of dozen **Small Heath** the only other butterfly species I saw was a **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** not even a white was seen otherwise 🤪



Bramble flowers are in bloom now and SP-b Frits take advantage...

Before my visit came to a close I came upon a Pollination Experiment being carried out by the University of Bristol, it might be of interest to read the notice board pic rather than me explaining, its encouraging to know that things *are* being monitored 😊



Pollination monitoring info...

I left Haddon Hill at 6.30 with a feeling of happy satisfaction, how could I feel otherwise having spent a lovely June day in the company of such special critters 😊 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by kevlng, 13-Jun-15 01:41 AM GMT

Bill,

Lovely pictures of the Heath Frits. I'm hoping to get my fill of them during the next week.

Regards Kev

Re: Willow

by William, 13-Jun-15 01:57 AM GMT

Hi Bill,

Excellent photos as ever, from a site I always enjoy visiting (just 15 minutes from me 😊), I too reached a total of 14 on Sunday! The Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillary is a notable record, they're found at the BC reserve down the road (Haddon Moor) and seem to be making a return around the Reservoir below, but I don't think they've been recorded from Haddon Hill proper. I'm sure David Ayling (the county recorder) would love to know!

BWs,

William

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 13-Jun-15 03:36 AM GMT

Lovely report with some gorgeous pictures. I'll be getting a dose of Heath Frits next week hopefully which will be my first experience of them. After reading your report I'm looking forward to meeting them even more 😊 !

Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-15 06:02 AM GMT

Fantastic Heaths Willow 🍷 I'd love to visit Haddon Hill as it's about 100 miles less of a round trip than East Blean but I wouldn't know how to get there - blooming library has every map under the sun apart from that one plus my SatNav only uses postcodes...oh well

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willow

by David M, 13-Jun-15 07:16 AM GMT

Oh, how I wish I had days off during the week!!

This year is fast becoming a write off for me, but I derive encouragement from posts such as yours showing that whilst I may not be personally available to travel like in years gone by, the butterflies are still there.

Re: Willow

by Willow, 13-Jun-15 07:45 PM GMT

"kevling" wrote:

I'm hoping to get my fill of them during the next week

You can never get your fill of **Heath Fritillary** Kev...but I know what you mean...good luck 😊

"William" wrote:

Hi Bill,

Excellent photos as ever, from a site I always enjoy visiting (just 15 minutes from me 😊), I too reached a total of 14 on Sunday! The Small Pearl – Bordered Fritillary is a notable record, they're found at the BC reserve down the road (Haddon Moor) and seem to be making a return around the Reservoir below, but I don't think they've been recorded from Haddon Hill proper. I'm sure David Ayling (the county recorder) would love to know!

BWs,

William

Thank you William, Haddon Hill is indeed a super location. Some years ago I sent the Somerset County Recorder a Jersey Tiger record from Taunton (highly notable then) I never had the courtesy of a reply 😊😊 – that apart I shall do as you suggest and send David Ayling the SP-bF record. Thank you for your local knowledge and I would have been left unaware of the species status until your informative comments 😊

"bugboy" wrote:

I'll be getting a dose of Heath Frits

I hope you realise there is no known cure Buggy 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

I'd love to visit Haddon Hill as it's about 100 miles less of a round trip than East Blean but I wouldn't know how to get there

It's simple Wurz, across country to Taunton for you and then up towards Dulverton...just check your maps. It will be less costly for you in travelling expenses too, although it's the same distance for both of us, I have to pay £6.50 to get back into Wales over the Severn Bridge 😊...modern highway robbery 😊

"David M" wrote:

This year is fast becoming a write off for me, but I derive encouragement from posts such as yours

It has been a bit frustrating David, but take heart my friend, you have an impending butterflying adventure to look forward to...

Thanks everyone for your comments, I really appreciate it and want you to know that I always take time out (when it allows!) to read your Personal Diaries too...cos' they're so enjoyable...three cheers for butterflies...hip hip... 😊😊

Best Wishes,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Willow

by Pauline, 14-Jun-15 02:47 PM GMT

Some wonderful images posted recently Bill. I particularly like the HF, esp. 630 🌿 and the scenery shots add context (I could actually imagine them

as paintings hung on my wall 😊) and I, too, liked the last PBF shot 😊

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 14-Jun-15 07:13 PM GMT

"Willrow" wrote:

"bugboy" wrote:

I'll be getting a dose of Heath Frits

I hope you realise there is no known cure Buggy 🙄

I'm quite happy to live with the addiction, some addictions are very good for the soul! 😊

Re: Willow

by Maximus, 15-Jun-15 05:30 AM GMT

Wonderful images of the Heath Fritillaries Bill 😊

Re: Willow

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-15 06:50 AM GMT

A great set of pictures there Bill,makes the expensive bridge toll worthwhile i'm sure you'll agree.Glad you met up with Phil and Rosalyn again. We have Heath Frits in Essex,i can feel a visit coming up this week or next...

Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-15 07:00 AM GMT

Cheers for the info Willrow - luckily I made a trip to East Blean at the weekend so I now have my Heaths 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willow

by Willow, 18-Jun-15 12:07 AM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

Some wonderful images posted recently Bill. I particularly like the HF, esp. 630 🌳 and the scenery shots add context (I could actually imagine them as paintings hung on my wall 😊) and I, too, liked the last PBF shot 😊

Many thanks Pauline, I'll make a modern day John Constable yet 😊

"bugboy" wrote:

some addictions are very good for the soul! 😊

Agreed Buggy...butterfly addiction...has a nice ring to it 😊

"Maximus" wrote:

Wonderful images of the Heath Fritillaries Bill 😊

Thank you Mike, **Heath Fritillary** make lovely photo subjects...

"essexbuzzard" wrote:

We have Heath Frits in Essex,i can feel a visit coming up this week or next...

I can sense you may now have recovered from your holiday enough to enjoy your local stuff Mark 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

I made a trip to East Blean at the weekend so I now have my Heaths 😊

Glad to hear you made it Wurz!!!

Cheers everyone,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Willow, 18-Jun-15 01:35 AM GMT

Okay lets catch up a bit...last Sunday I decided on a whim to ignore the rather poor weather forecast and venture down to the **Alun Valley, Near Bridgend** which is likely to be the last remaining colony of the nationally threatened **High Brown Fritillary** in Wales. Arriving mid-morning I got soaked walking through tall grasses and bracken 🙄 and was rather surprised to find some Heritage Coast staff and volunteers cutting 'corridors' through the bracken, this cutting is usually done earlier and is essential site management as it provides flightways and exposes lots of Spear & Marsh Thistle for **HBF & Dark Green Fritillary** to nectar on. Within ten minutes of arriving in prime frit habitat I saw my first 2 **DGF** feeding on the purple 😊 this was quickly followed by disturbing my first three **Meadow Brown** of the year, all of them probably taking their maiden flights. A couple of **Large Skipper** also put in a brief appearance before skitting off into the rank grasses.

My morning search for **HBF** was unsuccessful, but several other **DGF** and **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** were encountered as was my first sighting of **Red Admiral** which has somehow eluded me up until now, thinking about it I cannot remember going almost halfway through June before seeing the species 🙄 it was to be the first of five seen during the day. I spent some time exchanging information with the volunteers then had lunch and headed up to the prime 'hot-spot' for the frits and bumped into DavidM...yes! the very one...**UKB's** very own 😊 Myself and David spent until early evening generally checking every frit in the hope of recording our first **High Brown Fritillary** of the year, we both agreed we were probably a little early, the Alun Valley is often a few days behind the Devon sites (where they were seen towards the end of last week) but I would think the first ones are now out on the site.

I counted 14 species during my visit and apart from those already mentioned there were also the following:- **Brimstone, Large, Small & Green-veined White, Common Blue, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock** (and larval webs) plus several **Speckled Wood**. My tally for **Dark Green Fritillary** was around twelve, the highlight being a freshly emerged female that I narrowly avoided stepping on...I'm so relieved that David managed to warn me in time...phew! just imagine how I'd have felt 🙄🙄 never mind the poor insect 🙄



One lucky insect - female Dark Green Fritillary



Female Dark Green Fritillary



Dark Green Fritillary fully displayed

Six **Painted Lady** were seen during the day and I'm wondering if this could possibly be the vanguard of an imminent invasion to rival 2009...doesn't that sound good 😊 Incidentally just like the **Red Admiral** mentioned above these were the first I've seen this year, surprisingly I've had a rather sparse Vanessa year up until this past few days, even **Comma** have only been counted on one hand 😊



One of six Painted Lady counted during the day

Even though **High Brown Fritillary** were probably absent it was still a very interesting day and as always I enjoyed David's company and our usual banter 😊😊

For those interested there is a public access site on **Old Castle Down** and I would advise anyone visiting the area for the frits to check around Grid Ref: SS903 760 and park up at SS8984 7630 – this info is provided here hopefully to save me with a deluge of requests for information which takes up precious summer time answering – you know how it is this time of year don't you folks 😊 but I sincerely hope the grid refs help if needed.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 18-Jun-15 02:28 AM GMT

Those Dark Greens are exquisit, I've never seen freshly emerged animals, just worn from days of activity.

Re: Willow

by Goldie M, 18-Jun-15 02:45 AM GMT

Hi! Willow, I'm catching up on postings and after a rather fruitless search for Fritillaries at Gait Barrow Tuesday I was amazed When I saw your cracking shots of the Dark Green Frit . 🍷
Every thing is so slow getting moving here, I think we'll have to wait another couple of weeks before we see even the Meadow Brown I'm really glad I saw one whilst on Holiday. Goldie 😊

Re: Willow

by David M, 18-Jun-15 07:20 AM GMT

Excellent reportage, Bill.

Yes, High Browns will be flying there right now, and with Thursday and Friday set fair, I fully expect the first ones to be formally identified (perhaps by your good self?)

Unfortunately, I'll be at work before the weather breaks **yet again** for the weekend. 😞

2015 is turning into a virtual write-off for those bound to their desks Monday to Friday. It's such a contrast to last year where practically every weekend provided ideal conditions.

Re: Willow

by Willow, 19-Jun-15 07:58 PM GMT

"bugboy" wrote:

Those Dark Greens are exquisit, I've never seen freshly emerged animals, just worn from days of activity.

Always a treat to stumble (literally on this occasion 😊) freshly emerged insects Buggy.

"Goldie M" wrote:

I was amazed When I saw your cracking shots of the Dark Green Frit . 🍷

Thanks Goldie, I'm sure your frits will appear soon and you'll enjoy them all the more when they do 😊

"David M" wrote:

Excellent reportage, Bill.

Yes, High Browns will be flying there right now, and with Thursday and Friday set fair, I fully expect the first ones to be formally identified (perhaps by your good self?)

I'm very tempted to pop down after lunch David, this weather is too good to waste...trouble is my feet havn't touched this week and there are some domestics that have to be done - its not all play David 😊😊

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-15 06:52 AM GMT

Fantastic Dark Greens Willow 😊 Oh to be able to "just pop in over lunch" for a High Brown 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willow

by Willow, 20-Jun-15 07:26 AM GMT

Having to cancel a visit to the Great Orme in North Wales for **Silver-studded Blue form caernensis** a couple of weeks ago, I decided to head down to **St Govan's, Pembrokeshire** last Monday to re-visit southern Wales only other location with colonies. Knowing that the military ranges at Castlemartin would place the core area for **S-sB** out of bounds (during weekdays) I concentrated my visit in an area that myself and DavidM surveyed all to briefly last year yet discovered a small amount of insects, this year I wanted to define the area and habitat during a more detailed search and I was not to be disappointed with my findings, the short cwm (Welsh for valley) faces north-easterly and is not usually the aspect preferred by the species, so naturally the limestone that prevails in the cwm offers sufficient heat from radiation to suit.

Below is an image of the entrance to the coastal cwm where the **Silver-studded Blue** are found, it's far from typical of the species more usual habitat, in fact this particular colony is fascinating because of it's difference, I only wish it was closer than the 100+ miles from home - then I could really do it full justice!



Silver-studded Blue location

It took me best part of half hour to locate the first butterfly, a very active insect that flitted among the many varied flowers on the valley floor, but my search was rewarded by at least a further twelve males, all were in rather nice condition which suggested a recent emergence 😊



Male Silver-studded Blue



Another male S-sB showing half n' half

My search provided at least three certain female **Silver-studded Blue** but with many **Common Blue** also sharing the site I could have missed a few...well so could have you 😊



One of the female S-s Blues?

The warmth generated by the limestone mean't the insects were constantly moving from one nectaring source to another, I took one photo and decided to add another species to the British list; the Silver-studded Blur 😊



Rare image of the Silver-studded Blur!!!



Male Silver-studded on old bracken litter

So just to recap, my tally was *at least* 13 males and 3 females. I reluctantly left the small cwm in mid-afternoon having lost myself in time for over five hours 😊 I wanted to spend some time taking in the beautiful scenery and just generally mooching...you know how it is, so many discoveries to enjoy...here are a few in picture form 😊

Below is a mystery creature or thing, can you see the circular disc, perhaps it's an alien spacecraft and the occupants have legged it after a crash landing...note the footprints 😊 there could be little green men running around the Welsh countryside...then again we might have to come down to earth and accept it's just one of the many large (2feet plus Diameter) Jellyfish washed up on Broadhaven Beach...oh! the disappointment I hear you all saying 😊



Alien or Jellyfish...you decide!

I also had a quick looksee around Bosherton Lily Ponds before my journey home and got a few pics of a young pike, these voracious predators can remain absolutely motionless hidden by their incredible suit of camouflage in the weeds and rushes then when an unexpected alien pops by...its oops, swallow...next 🤪🤪



Freshwater shark hidden among weeds



Super Fulmar on cliffs

Before I finish this report, I must mention I finally saw two Wall while sat enjoying the Fulmar's and a Kit-Kat 😊 I've not had any success with the butterfly this year until going coastal, sadly the species is becoming more coastal as time and climate change dictates, both insects were wragged and there will probably be a break now before we see others, neither critter offered photo's worth taking...in fact they were both scruffy sods 😂

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willrow

by David M, 20-Jun-15 07:34 AM GMT

You did well to find 15+, Bill, given how late this year has been regarding emergencies.

I believe we visited on the last weekend of June in 2014 when we saw over a hundred, so if that represented their apogee last year, I suspect 6th-9th July will do likewise this year, so to find a fair few three weeks prior to that point is good going!

Re: Willow

by Willow, 20-Jun-15 07:46 PM GMT

Thanks David, these 15+ insects were only from Cwm Mere (or should I phrase it merely from the cwm 😊)...ahem! I doubt that time will allow for another visit to Pembrokeshire this year to survey the species core area 😞

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Pauline, 20-Jun-15 08:42 PM GMT

Just seen your shots of the DGF Bill. Aren't they just amazing when they are fresh 😊 Your lovely images really do them justice 😊 Great photo of the Pike and Kittiwake too - certainly adds a bit more interest and variety and paints a more complete picture of the outing.

Re: Willow

by Katrina, 20-Jun-15 09:18 PM GMT

Beautiful female DGF photo. I haven't seen any yet this year but your photo has certainly encouraged me to go looking! 😊

Re: Willow

by Willow, 20-Jun-15 09:57 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

:D Great photo of the Pike and Kittiwake too

Apologies for any confusion Pauline, I got my photo file names mixed up (again!) and lumped all the seabird shots I took under Kittiwake, it's actually a Fulmar 😊 I often mix things up like that...it comes easily to me 😊

Thank you for viewing and your nice comments 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Willow, 20-Jun-15 10:05 PM GMT

"Katrina" wrote:

Beautiful female DGF photo. I haven't seen any yet this year but your photo has certainly encouraged me to go looking! 😊

That's very kind of you Katrina, when you do see **Dark Green Fritillary** the wait will have been undoubtedly worth it 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Paul Harfield, 21-Jun-15 07:37 AM GMT

Hi Willow

Just catching up with your diary 😊 Seeing your beautiful Dark Green Fritillaries has given me some Oomph to get out and find some, hopefully they are

out at my local site.

Re: Willow

by Willow, 22-Jun-15 04:42 AM GMT

"jackz432r" wrote:

Hi Willow

Just catching up with your diary 😊 Seeing your beautiful Dark Green Fritillaries has given me some Oomph to get out and find some, hopefully they are out at my local site.

Thanks Jack, they certainly are beautiful butterflies...lets hope they are now out on your local site...and your in full Oomph mode 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Willow, 22-Jun-15 06:22 AM GMT

Last Thursday promised good weather and I took advantage by heading over to [Danesway Bank in Gloucestershire](#) and the chance to enjoy some time with **Large Blue**. Now as many of you know this is one of the few public access sites for the species ongoing re-introduction project, one of the major benefits of going public here has mean't some visitor pressure has been taken off Collard Hill in Somerset - which is to butterfly enthusiasts what Glastonbury is to music lovers 🤪 😊 - on Thursday I was surprised at how many other enthusiasts would be on 'the banks' most if not all toting digital camera gear hoping to get that defining shot of the lovely blue insect. The weather really was too good (is that possible 🤪) because the males were hyper, zooming up and down the banks seeking out females to have their wicked way with 😊 I decided not to waste time trying for any pics - well I had some crackers last year 😊 and so I decided to just relax and enjoy the lovely location, that was until a mating pair of **LB** were discovered and then it was interesting to watch enthusiasts taking photos from all angles and when they had sated themselves I got a few record shots...I was so cool about the whole business I surprised myself 😊 just a few years ago I would have been in there with the best of them for that top-shot 😊



Just a momento shot of the paired Large Blues

I was pleased to add **Marbled White** and **Ringlet** to my year list, the former was also hyper active in the sunshine and frustrated many would be photo-takers, that's the beauty of occasional cloud cover - the sun gets em' up and the cloud puts em' down...just as we like it eh! folks 😊 Other species of note were **Green Hairstreak**, **Brown Argus** and several **Painted Lady**. I'm afraid the banks became a bit too crowded for my liking and with the imminent arrival of a group from Butterfly Conservation (Gloucestershire Branch) I headed on to a more peaceful location for the afternoon and early evening.

[Swellshill Bank, Bownham Common, Near Stroud](#) is usually a good place for peace and quiet and so it proved a sensible choice after the hustle and bustle of Danesway. Here I enjoyed just the company of crowds of **Marbled White** and took the opportunity to watch and photograph these lovely butterflies that simply epitomise our summers...here are a few pics 😊



Full pose Marbled White



Side view of male Marbled White



Getting ready to roost in the tall grasses

Before my day in sunny Gloucestershire came to an end I added another seasons first when a freshly emerged male **Small Skipper** was noticed among the tall grasses that the **MW** were using to roost in, the breeze decided to put in an appearance though and the insect was buffeted about but I finally nailed a few images...and from a butterflies perspective its better to be photographically nailed than pinned 🤪 well thats how our earlier 'butterflying enthusiasts' got their records isn't it 😊😞



Male Small Skipper



Still for just a while...



Side-on view of the same Small Skipper

Mid-summer is now with us and its time to enjoy our other summer butterflies, hopefully in similar weather conditions as my visit to 'the banks' allowed, however its now 10 pm on our longest day and although its cloudy and raining I'm only just closing the curtains...cos' I can no longer see the keyboard to finish off this post 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Willow

by Pauline, 22-Jun-15 02:34 PM GMT

A great read Bill. I'm loving your sense of humour 😊 – Smashing shots too especially the SS – and yes, it's raining here too 😊

Re: Willow

by Willow, 22-Jun-15 09:48 PM GMT

"Pauline" wrote:

A great read Bill. I'm loving your sense of humour 😊 – Smashing shots too especially the SS – and yes, it's raining here too 😊

Thanks Pauline, always nice to get a bit of positive feedback...and its also good to share a bit of fun and friendly banter 😊😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Willow

by Willow, 22-Jun-15 10:23 PM GMT

Well! well!...believe it or not I've almost caught up with my Personal Diary 🙄😊 this report is a rather short one...Oh! thank goodness for that I hear all you long sufferers sighing... 😊

Alun Valley, Near Bridgend, South Wales Hasty decision to check out the **High Brown Fritillary** site after lunch last Friday proved worthwhile and justified the 35 mile journey down to the coast. At least twenty frits were seen, those nectaring on Marsh Thistle I edged my bets towards **Dark Green Fritillary** while those seen nectaring on bramble were probably **High Brown Fritillary** in either case I tried to get a positive ID and I confirmed 5 **HBF** – this site is one of the few where binoculars can prove very useful, the two near related fritillaries found here together can pose the best butterflyers problems, especially in windy conditions and it was very breezy last Friday.

One of the **High Browns** came down out of the wind and rested long enough in a 'fern-cut corridor' to allow me to sneak up (sneaky is best 😊) and get a sequence of shots and this proved to be the only good chance I had of any record shots, the bonus being the butterfly was a nice conditioned female.



Lucky to get this HBF at rest

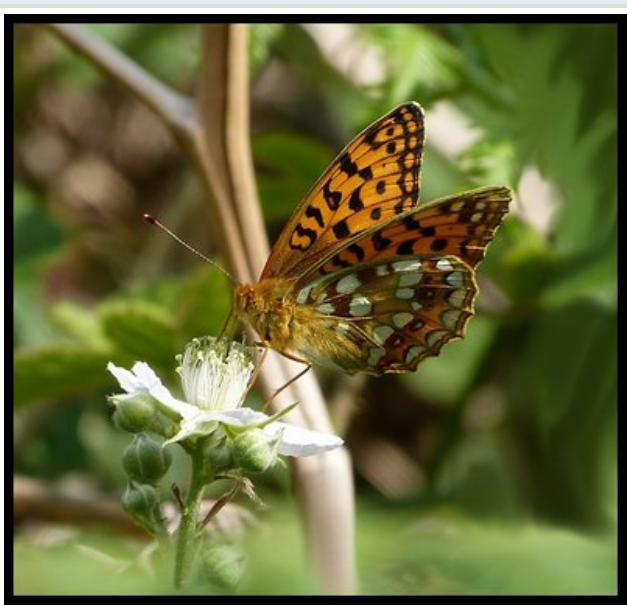


Female HBF brambling

High Brown Fritillary have a great preference for bramble blossom and if their nectaring contently you can often get close enough for good pics and obviously a positive ID 😊



High Brown Fritillary nectaring on blackberry flower



Slightly different pose...

Said it would be a short post didn't I...and for now I'm up to date... 😊 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 23-Jun-15 05:15 AM GMT

Well High Brown Frits and Large Blues in two consecutive posts, someones just showing off now!!! 😊

Re: Willow

by David M, 23-Jun-15 06:06 AM GMT

We are clearly on the same wavelength, Bill. I too look for Fritillaries which favour bramble blossom. They are usually High Browns.

Dark Greens prefer the marsh thistles and rarely (at least early in their flight period) descend to imbibe on bramble.

Right now, unless you are lucky with weather conditions (or can locate a female HBF), your chances of getting a close approach with an HBF are minimal.

Give it a week or two though and all that will change.

Re: Willow

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jun-15 04:30 AM GMT

Great reports recently Bill with smashing photos to accompany them 😊

"Willrow" wrote:

...I'm afraid the banks became a bit too crowded for my liking ...

I remember seeing quite a few reports from Daneway Banks last year and thinking then that it was likely to get busier this year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Willow

by Willrow, 24-Jun-15 06:27 AM GMT

"bugboy" wrote:

Well High Brown Frits and Large Blues in two consecutive posts, someones just showing off now!!! 😊

Your probably right Buggy...good innit' 😊 😊 😊

"David M" wrote:

We are clearly on the same wavelength, Bill.

Great butterflies usually are David... 😊

"Neil Freeman" wrote:

I remember seeing quite a few reports from Daneway Banks last year and thinking then that it was likely to get busier this year.

Could just be **Large Blue** fever Neil...but I certainly wouldn't *bank* on it...okay okay I'll get my coat 😊 😊

Thank you fellas,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-15 06:45 AM GMT

Great HB's, definitely on my "wish list" for next year 🍷 And you've 'caught up' with your reports, what does that mean? 🤔🍷
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willow

by Willow, 25-Jun-15 05:32 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

And you've 'caught up' with your reports, what does that mean? 🤔🍷

It means I'm telling porkies Wurz 🤔🤔🤔

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Willow, 27-Jun-15 04:42 AM GMT

Cors Caron NNR, Tregaron, Powys on Tuesday 23rd June One of the earliest visits I've made to this super site to search for **Large Heath** at the species most southerly British location.



Welcome to Cors Caron...



Bog pools at the Cors Caron reserve

The butterfly had been reported last week from it's Shropshire strongholds so I knew it was likely to be out here 😊 my journey was well worth it with at least 14 individuals seen and the plus of a mating pair, these insects were 'in-cop' for 15 minutes which seems rather brief, however I witnessed the engagement and it was instant and detachment was equally quick (little bit like modern human society I suppose folks 🤔🤔). This **Large Heath** race is

known as *polydama* and interestingly the race was once thought to be a distinct species known as Marsh Ringlet. At **Cors Caron** the species is thinly spread with meta-populations spread over the two distinct raised bogs, one large area of the reserve is frustratingly out of bounds during the butterfly's flight season owing to a cattle grazing regime and I've been unable to check-out the insects current status on this area of extensive bog 😞



Nicely posing Large Heath on heather



Paired Large Heath...a brief attachment!

The reserve has an incredible 2 miles of board-walk 🤪 and it makes visiting a pleasure for the less mobile visitor, especially those in wheelchairs or families with buggy's to push 😊 the scenery is wonderful, only the raised-bog areas appear rather drab, however, don't be deceived for among the ground flora is a wonder of plants and critters, such as the insect eating Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* and the **Large Heath's** favoured Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*. Common Lizard abound as do Adder, the former love to bask on the boardwalks and I'm always aware that their aware of me too 🤪😞



Round-leaved Sundew – increasingly rare now.



Cross-leaved Heath



Here's looking at you kid...

During my day long visit I also saw the following:- **Large Skipper, Green-veined White, Green Hairstreak, Common Blue, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Dark Green Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown & Ringlet.**

For those interested **Cors Caron NNR** has recorded 24 species of dragonfly and this ranks the reserve among the top sites in Wales for those wishing to see these incredible insects all in relative comfort from the boardwalks. Another great day at a really spiffin' nature reserve, I thoroughly recommend a visit to anyone visiting the area 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 27-Jun-15 04:54 AM GMT

Large Heaths, another species for mrgreen to appear from my end 🍷. I'm already thinking about planning some longer distance trips next year now!

Re: Willow

by David M, 27-Jun-15 06:17 AM GMT

That's quite a return of species, Bill. I presume you walked around the drier parts of the site too?

On the bog itself, I usually only see Large Skippers and the occasional White or Vanessa.

Re: Willow

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jun-15 06:50 AM GMT

Ahh, Cors Tregaron. I used to visit this area in winter to look for buzzards and kites. Know it well. On the bog itself, I saw my first hen harriers, including a male.

Bringing back the memories, Bill! 😊

Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 28-Jun-15 06:59 AM GMT

Cracking shots of the Large Heath Willow 😊👍 My Out-laws live up that way but I haven't yet successfully planned a visit at the correct time of year...yet 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willow

by Willow, 01-Jul-15 11:10 PM GMT

Sorry for the belated replies to your comments gents 😊 it's summertime and time is in short supply 😊

"bugboy" wrote:

Large Heaths, another species for mrgreen to appear from my end 🍷.I'm already thinking about planning some longer distance trips next year now!

Cors Caron is the most southerly location for **Large Heath** so it could be just the place to wash that 🍷 off Buggy... 😊

"David M" wrote:

That's quite a return of species, Bill. I presume you walked around the drier parts of the site too?

This species list includes the lane from the main car park David, however, the **Green Hairstreak** was seen on the raised bog 😊

"essexbuzzard" wrote:

Ahh, Cors Tregaron. I used to visit this area in winter to look for buzzards and kites. Know it well. On the bog itself,i saw my first hen harriers,including a male.

Bringing back the memories,Bill! 😊

Still a great site for birding Mark, several Hobby hawking insects during my visit 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

My Out-laws live up that way but I haven't yet successfully planned a visit at the correct time of year...yet

Come on Wurz, no excuse *not* to visit this wonderful reserve, take the 'outlaws' with you...I'm sure they'll love it same as they (probably!) love you... 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Goldie M, 02-Jul-15 04:09 AM GMT

Your Large Heath photo is what I set out for yesterday, your photos are great Willow, at least I saw them for the first time as they went whizzing passed Goldie 😊

Re: Willow

by Willow, 02-Jul-15 05:11 AM GMT

Twelve days ago I was a bit surprised to visit [Danesway Bank, Gloucestershire](#) hoping to spend the day with the recently emerged **Large Blue** only to find the place alive with lots of other visitors 😊 so I had to curtail my visit with a promise to return...and that's exactly what I did on Monday 😊

Arriving at 9am I devoted an entire day to studying the beautiful butterfly that's **Large Blue** following the males as they searched the banks for females,

watching the mating process (polite is right 😊) and also the incredible precision involved with the female in egg-laying. During last years visit (with DavidM) I was surprised to notice females egg-laying on Marjoram because I had not read or heard mention of Marjoram as a food plant, this then begs the question; does the female only egg-lay on Marjoram and the larvae leave the plant for ground and then the association process with *Myrmica sabuleti*? On closer inspection I did notice ants on the lower plant stem, I'm uncertain of whether or not they were *M sabuleti* but its got me wondering 🤔

Below is a female **Large Blue** egg-laying on Marjoram which has not yet fully broken bud.



Owing to the heat many of the butterflies stopped to do a bit of sun-bathing 😊 the temperature reached 24c and the bank was in need of some refreshing rain, drought is always of great concern on the fast draining friable soils that limestone seems to sit with, under severe drought all three symbiotic friends suffer; butterfly, thyme and ant.



Taking a whiff from all that busy egg-laying!



Female Large Blue on thyme!



Fully open-winged pose...just beautiful!



Large blue on flowering Marjoram

My final tally for a day that lasted until 7pm was approximately 25 (knocking my tally for both visit's up to 35) I stayed until the butterflies were going to roost, I was interested to see their chosen roosting habitat (would it be similar to that on Collard Hill), the **Large Blue** captured below seemed happy on this seed-head with the backlight outlining both the hair filaments on the seed-head and the wing-fringes of the butterfly, I left it in peace ready for

sweet slumber 😊



It's always sad to see a beautiful butterfly at the end of its short life and in the case of the **Large Blue** I believe the average lifespan is about five and a half days 😊 The insect below was cursed with mites and was badly tattered yet still got about, I watched it investigating several red clover during the ten minutes or so I observed it, perhaps it wasn't fully aware of its circumstances 😊



Battered but not bowed!!!

The banks were awash with both flowers and butterflies on this glorious summer day, the other species seen were as follows:- **Large & Small Skipper, Brimstone, Small Blue, Common Blue, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Ringlet & Small Heath.** I include a few images of other species below 😊 but do take a closer look below at the *Oedemera nobilis* telling the **Marbled White** that it's sat on its toes...you shouldn't do that to nobility 😊😊



Note the small green critter struggling...



Male Meadow Brown



Paired Meadow Brown (female on left).

My revisit was certainly worth it, I learned a little more about one of our most iconic British butterflies in reasonable peace and quiet 😊😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 02-Jul-15 06:21 AM GMT

Cracking shots Willow, and that fully opened wing is the Creme de la Creme and worthy of a least two greens 🍃🍃😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willow

by Pauline, 02-Jul-15 02:26 PM GMT

Great shot of the egg-laying Bill 🍃 Did you manage to see the eggs? I love the Meadow Brown shot too – how come I can never get one to look like that 😞

Re: Willow

by Maximus, 03-Jul-15 05:16 AM GMT

Great recent photos Bill 😄 High Brown Frits, Large Heath and Large Blues, beautiful images 😄 In answer to your question, I have it on good authority that when the time is right the Large Blue Larvae throw themselves from the top of the wild Marjoram to the ground, where they are then (hopefully) collected by the ants.

Mike

Re: Willow

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jul-15 05:54 AM GMT

Hi Bill,

Catch up time for me again, doesn't it fly by at this time of year. Great Reports and photos of the High Browns, Large Heaths, and Large blues 😄 and all on the same page of your diary too.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Willow

by Willow, 03-Jul-15 06:27 AM GMT

"Goldie M" wrote:

Your Large Heath photo is what I set out for yesterday, your photos are great Willow, at least I saw them for the first time as they went whizzing passed Goldie 😄

😄😄 at least you got to see them Goldie 😄 thanks for the nice comment 😄

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cracking shots Willow, and that fully opened wing is the Creme de la Creme and worthy of a least two greens 🍃🍃😄

Wow two greens...! I'm utterly gobsmacked Wurzel...thank you 😄😄

"Pauline" wrote:

Great shot of the egg-laying Bill 🍃 Did you manage to see the eggs?

Yes, I did Pauline, problem was I would have probably disturbed the egg by trying to handle the plant into a position for a photo, something I was not prepared to risk. Thank you for the kind comment 😄

"Maximus" wrote:

I have it on good authority that when the time is right the Large Blue Larvae throw themselves from the top of the wild Marjoram to the ground, where they are then (hopefully) collected by the ants.

That's the kind of feedback I wanted, thank you Mike it's much appreciated, another piece of the puzzle put in place 😄

Kind Regards to you all, please accept my apologies for not commenting on your more recent PD posts, I want to read them all in full when time allows.



Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Willow

by Willow, 13-Jul-15 05:51 AM GMT

I spent Thursday and Friday of last week at the UK's premier **Purple Emperor** place [Fermyn Woods, Northamptonshire](#) where so many other enthusiasts visit to coincide with the peak emergence, whether my own choice of date hit the peak remains to be seen, but I don't think its far off.

This is the first time I've stayed over and I made the right choice, the butterfly in question was seen in good numbers, more than enough to sate the appetite of the most hungry *iris* hunter. Fermyn is a place where the hard baked gravelly rides brings the butterfly down to take in minerals among other assorted delicacies 😊 and once the butterfly is content with what's on offer chances are your going to see some super purple flashed by the males 😊



One of the many PE males seen flashing...!!!



Side view of HIM...His Imperial Majesty!!!

Thursday was much the cooler of the two days with intermittent sunshine, and I had pre-arranged to meet fellow UKB's Phil Bromley for an early 8am start, this mean't leaving home at 4.45am to hopefully miss the worst of the morning traffic in and around Birmingham & Coventry...huh...dream on 😊 the M42 and M6 were bumper to bumper for a good 40 miles, but I still managed to arrive at Fermyn for the kick-off 😊...just!!! Phil had arrived from the opposite direction taking in a good 3 mile walk through excellent habitat, habitat that he showed me during the evening and I had a bonus male Brown Hawker there that I managed to photograph (the species is very scarce in south Wales).



Male Brown Hawker finally resting up...

The amount of **Comma's** seen throughout Fermyn was exceptional, everyone we met seemed to think they had never seen more, I know I never have and I counted half a dozen down on minerals on one patch alongside two **Purple Emperor** and what a contrast these species produced when photographed in 'synchronised sipping' mode 😊



Who needs exotics???



Another superb PE showing off...

One of the pleasures of Fermyn during the **PE** season is meeting other enthusiasts and exchanging information on species, photography etc, on Thursday Phil and I spent some quality time with Iain Leach and his good friend and fellow photographer Mark Johnson, Iain is well known to **UK Butterflies** for his superb images and needs no introduction, Mark is a full pro photographer and it was great to watch them at work (if you call it work 😊) many thanks for your time and company lads 😊



PE on minerals

Friday dawned bright and clear with hardly a cloud in the sky, the woods alive with all that mother nature has to offer on such a wonderful mid-summer morning. Arriving from my B&B at 9am the Lyveden Gliding Club car park was already full and the roadside verges were quickly filling up 😲 I headed through the main access ride to meet Phil and his old butterflying 'side-kick' Nick Ballard (it must be great to have a mate you can kick in the side when you miss that special shot 😊) and on turning a corner I bumped into the one and only Andy Dyball who was almost sat on a **PE** begging to have it's photo taken...so I did 😊



Begging for a picture...

There were many other Emperors also on the wing on this very hot day, not of the butterfly kind though may I hasten to add, these superb critters were our largest British dragonflies and one posed nicely during the morning for some images, while several passing enthusiasts also took the chance of getting a record shot 😊



The other Emperor of the woods...

Before the day ended Phil and myself said our farewells to Nick and headed back to our cars, but first the **White-letter Hairstreak** Wych Elm we had seen during previous visits warranted a 'look-see' and sure enough we saw perhaps three females egg-laying, but by now the breeze had come up and the insects were also hyper-active, this combination proved very frustrating and study and photo's proved difficult, below is a couple of record only shots.



Egg-laying White-letter Hairstreak



This ended another great Fermyn Woods adventure, I'd like to thank Phil for his much enjoyed company once again and finally just add that among the other species seen were:- **White Admiral**, **Silver-washed Fritillary** (with reports of a couple of *valezina*) and **Purple Hairstreak**.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by David M, 13-Jul-15 05:55 AM GMT

Great report, Bill. One of the great sadnesses of being away in France is that I had to miss out on the Purple Emperor azimuth. 😞

I may make a pilgrimage this coming weekend if the weather is fair, but I suspect the 'main course' will be over by then.

Re: Willow

by Paul Harfield, 13-Jul-15 06:10 AM GMT

Hi Willow

Great selection of Purple Emperors from Fermyn Wood 😊 it looks like a wonderful place. I especially like that image of grounded Comma and Purple Emperor together, superb 😊😊

Re: Willow

by millerd, 13-Jul-15 06:38 AM GMT

Lovely Emperors, Bill, and I have to agree that the shot with the Comma supping in synch stands out. You actually see what a size the Purple Emperor is beside lesser mortals! 😊

Dave

Re: Willrow

by Pauline, 13-Jul-15 02:39 PM GMT

Great report Bill and stunning photos too. I have seen WLH egg-laying and know just how difficult it is to catch them in the act. A place I would love to visit 🍷

Re: Willrow

by Maximus, 13-Jul-15 08:48 PM GMT

Great report and stunning photos from Fermyn, Bill : that's a great shot of the PE and Comma together 😊

Mike

Re: Willrow

by Goldie M, 13-Jul-15 10:41 PM GMT

Fantastic shots of the PE Bill, 🍷🍷 I was due to go to Fermyn but the weather s not too good for next week so it will have to be another year I think , mean time Ill enjoy your photos and drool Goldie 😊

Re: Willrow

by IainLeach, 14-Jul-15 01:11 AM GMT

Great to see you again Bill, glad you had a good couple of days at Fermyn

Re: Willrow

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jul-15 03:50 AM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

Great report and stunning photos from Fermyn, Bill : that's a great shot of the PE and Comma together 😊

Mike

I was going to say that but Mike has beaten me to it. Great stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Willrow

by Katrina, 14-Jul-15 04:18 AM GMT

Emperor 🍷 Very Purple Emperor 🍷🍷 Emperor with Comma 🍷🍷🍷

And topped off with dragonflies and WLHs 🍷🍷🍷🍷

Superb photos!

Re: Willrow

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-15 06:39 AM GMT

Fantastic Purple Emperors an I echo what everyone else has said 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willrow

by Willrow, 15-Jul-15 12:46 AM GMT

*David, Jack, Dave, Pauline, Mike, Goldie, Iain, Neil, Katrina and Wurz...*whew 😊...my mouse finger is playing up now 😊 **Thank you** for all the nice comments and taking the time to read about my couple of days in the wonderful Fermyn Woods, your all very kind 😊

Best Wishes,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by trevor, 15-Jul-15 02:29 AM GMT

Hi Bill,

I must add my congratulations on your year so far. High Browns and your Fermyn visit reports make excellent reading. Some stunning images too!

TREVOR.

Re: Willow

by jenks, 15-Jul-15 03:28 AM GMT

Hi Bill.

I must echo the sentiments of others; great report and fabulous pictures (as usual !) from you. I must take inspiration from your motto and " venture out " this weekend. Now if you could inspire the weather to behave it would make all the difference.

Regards,

Jenks.

Re: Willow

by trevor, 18-Jul-15 01:42 AM GMT

Hi, Bill,

I'm afraid you have had your magic this year. The Large Blue 🦋, the Large Heath 🦋, High Brown 🦋, and then all purple shots at Fermyn. 🦋

The first three are hundreds of miles from me, and i've never seen any of those three ever.

Keep up the good work,

Best wishes,

TREVOR.

Re: Willow

by Willow, 18-Jul-15 05:22 AM GMT

"jenks" wrote:

I must take inspiration from your motto and " venture out " this weekend. Now if you could inspire the weather to behave it would make all the difference

I have arranged for tomorrow to be very kind for you Gareth 😊 and thanks for the nice comments.

"trevor" wrote:

Hi, Bill,

I'm afraid you have had your magic this year. The Large Blue 🦋, the Large Heath 🦋, High Brown 🦋, and then all purple shots at Fermyn. 🦋 The first three are hundreds of miles from me, and i've never seen any of those three ever.

In time you will see all of those species Trevor, with just a bit of planning, perhaps next year 😊 ...and my thanks for the positive remarks 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Willow, 19-Jul-15 09:27 PM GMT

Last Wednesday I finally fulfilled a promise I had made to myself years ago, to spend a day at Whixall Moss, Shropshire primarily for one of our rarest and most threatened dragonflies - the White-faced Darter and I wanted to see one on the Welsh side of the reserve, because this is the only location in Wales where the insect exists...so it wasn't asking much to find one 😊 Secondly, I also wanted to see the **Large Heath** form *davus* for the first time, my only other experience with LH is *polydama*. I'll get straight to the point, on both counts I was not to be disappointed 😊



Regarding my quest to see White-faced Darter in Wales, for those wondering that if **Whixall Moss** is in **Shropshire** how can the darter be in Wales? Well the answer to this little riddle is quite simple – the Wales/England border runs right through the reserve, so if I couldn't find the darter in the Welsh section, I would have to chase one over the border from the English side (the reserve is co-managed by Natural Resources Wales & Natural England) whatever, I *did* manage to find this fascinating little dragonfly in the Welsh section I'm delighted to say and managed to get some good photographs of males and paired insects too



Male White-faced Darter



Paired White-faced Darter

In the case of the *davus* form of **Large Heath** the butterfly was in reasonable numbers throughout the reserve I spent time in, however, I would like to emphasize here that *both polydama* and *davus* forms can be found in Wales, I had never read or heard of this important fact before, and the thought only struck me on the journey home, but I will need to pour over the literature I have (during the winter) to find out more regarding this interesting point.



The dark davus form of Large Heath

The brisk wind caused some frustration with both butterflies and dragonflies, once disturbed by other critters they often flew over and onto the bogs...where no man dare go for fear of ending up in the future as a preserved 'peat bog body' 🤪🤪



Large Heath on Cross-leaved Heath

I spent over eight hours with these moss loving species and during that time I became so engrossed that the only other butterfly species I photographed were **Small & Green-veined White** and the latter appeared to be enjoying the Cross-leaved Heath just as much as the **Large Heath**.



Green-veined White nectaring on Cross-leaved Heath



Basking Small White

Whixall Moss covers a vast area and is flanked by Fenn's & Bettisfield Mosses, its impossible to do justice to this rich habitat area without spending lots of time there, something I would love to do, however the reserve is a three hour drive from my home, so when I return (hopefully next year) it'll mean doing a B&B 😊 and then I'll also take in the **Silver-studded Blue** at Prees Heath which is just down the lanes...(read - many lanes 😊).



Looking towards the distant Welsh hills from the vastness that is Whixall Moss

I discovered what appears to be a July Highflyer hidden away up on a timber joist in a small display information structure on my way out of the reserve, this is a very varied species of macro moth from the 'carpet/geometrid family' and can often cause even the most experienced 'moth-ers' ID problems...oh! and incidentally most 'moth-ers' hate to be referred to as 'mothers'... 😊



July Highflyer

Finally I can't resist posting one further image of a White-faced Darter...cos' I've fallen in love with em' 😍😄



Nicely posing male White-faced Darter

Got home at 10 o'clock after a great day in a great place, I highly recommend **Whixall Moss** to anyone that wants to see **Large Heath** it's among the nearest places to see the species if you coming from either the midlands or the south of England. If your travelling from the south-west then Tregaron, Powys is a better option.

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-15 06:14 AM GMT

Cracking shots and cheers for the info Tregaron it is for me (hopefully next year) 😊 Those Darters are some of the best looking I've seen I can easily see how you've become enamoured 🍷😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willow

by Goldie M, 21-Jul-15 01:13 AM GMT

Hi! Bill, you had better luck with your photos than I had 😊 Great shots of the Large Heath, when I went to Meathop I couldn't leave the boardwalk either I'd have gone up to the ankles in the bog, one side of the bog wasn't too bad but wouldn't you know it they always landed on the other side 😊 I don't have any shots of the S S Blue yet and the fact you say Whixall Moss is near to it, means I may be able to visit both next year with luck, I'll put it on my todo list and may be I'll get some good shots of both. Goldie 😊

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 21-Jul-15 01:22 AM GMT

Never seen White-faced Darters, they are lovely insects. I'll keep an eye out for them when I go looking for some of the lepi regional specialities! I couldn't help but notice you have a GV White labeled as a Small White in that same post, school boy error 😊

Re: Willow

by Willow, 21-Jul-15 05:56 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cracking shots and cheers for the info Tregaron it is for me (hopefully next year) 😊

You said that last year Wurz...and I think I suggested you take your 'outlaws' along 😊

"Goldie M" wrote:

I may be able to visit both next year with luck, I'll put it on my todo list and may be I'll get some good shots of both. Goldie 😊

Kill two birds with one stone that way Goldie...Oops! that doesn't sound too good does it... 😊😊

"bugboy" wrote:

I couldn't help but notice you have a GV White labeled as a Small White in that same post...

I had it down as a summer generation **Small White** Buggy 😊 but now you've got me wondering 😊 I've seen loads of confusion caused by going on the veins alone - I've just had a quick check in Wildguides Britain's Butterflies and the **Small White** summer generation male photographic illustration there is very very similar, if you have the 2nd edition of this book check it out...cos' I'm right confused now 😊😊 ...help 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 21-Jul-15 07:53 AM GMT

I've had a look at that book and I think what you're seeing is the shadows caused by the folds in the wing. Comparing your picture to those illustrated in there I reckon yours is a female GV White. Definately GV though 😊

Re: Willow

by Willow, 21-Jul-15 05:26 PM GMT

"bugboy" wrote:

I've had a look at that book and I think what you're seeing is the shadows caused by the folds in the wing. Comparing your picture to those illustrated in there I reckon yours is a female GV White. Definately GV though 😊

Agreed Buggy 😊 and at this point I will admit to being ready for my annual Specsavers appointment 😊😊 well-spotted and thanks for pointing such an elementary error out - cos' I really need reminding that my eyes are not what they used to be 😊😊 ...the post has now been duly edited.

I'm glad someone is paying attention...how many of you missed that 'deliberate' mistake...ahem! 😊😊😊 Be very aware cos' I'll be testing you all out again... 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Goldie M, 21-Jul-15 08:05 PM GMT

That's Okay Bill, Buggie pointed out to me that my Caterpillars were not Burnett but Cinnabar cats so your not on your own, I've just had my eyes done has well 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 21-Jul-15 08:59 PM GMT

Oh god, I've become the identification police! 😞 if it's any consolation my eyes are starting to go as well! Always had 20:20 vision until recently I've found myself holding my phone further away to use it

Re: Willow

by Vince Massimo, 21-Jul-15 11:25 PM GMT

"Willrow" wrote:

"bugboy" wrote:

I couldn't help but notice you have a GV White labeled as a Small White in that same post...

I had it down as a summer generation **Small White Buggy** 😳 but now you've got me wondering 😊 I've seen loads of confusion caused by going on the veins alone – I've just had a quick check in Wildguides Britain's Butterflies and the **Small White** summer generation male photographic illustration there is very very similar, if you have the 2nd edition of this book check it out...cos' I'm right confused now 😞😞 ...help 😞

Bill 😊

Hi chaps,

If this is the photo you are both referring to, then I would say it's a female Small White (summer generation)



Can we have a third opinion from someone please 😊

Vince

Re: Willow

by Philib, 22-Jul-15 12:18 AM GMT

You should stick to your guns Bill, it looks 100% Small White to me.

p.s. I love those White-faced Darters.

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 22-Jul-15 12:39 AM GMT

Nope, I was referring to the underside shot in the same post. The one above is obviously a small white 😊

Re: Willow

by Willow, 22-Jul-15 01:35 AM GMT

"bugboy" wrote:

Nope, I was referring to the underside shot in the same post. The one above is obviously a small white 😊

Hope that clears up any further ID confusion 😊...bl**dy **Small White** stealing the thunder from both **Large Heath** from *davus* and those super White-faced Darters...what is **UKB's** coming to 😊😊😊...and I'm off to my Specsavers appointment now 😊 but just before I go... 😊!...

"bugboy" wrote:

Always had 20:20 vision until recently I've found myself holding my phone further away to use it

..... 😊😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 22-Jul-15 02:34 AM GMT

Those Darters are bloody fab creatures 😊 definitely gonna have to hunt them down (might post them on here labeled as Common Darters to see if anyone's awake 😊)

Re: Willow

by Pauline, 22-Jul-15 03:54 AM GMT

Loving this thread. It's good to have a laugh 😊😊😊

Re: Willow

by Willow, 24-Jul-15 10:20 PM GMT

Agreed Pauline 😊 a bit of banter makes the world go around 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by MikeOxon, 24-Jul-15 11:18 PM GMT

Just catching up. I'm sure your two whites are correctly labelled! There must be a jinx on the place, since I once mis-identified a meadow brown as a ringlet there 😊

I agree with you about the many small lanes around Whixall. I got totally lost until I remembered my laptop, with OS maps and a GPS dongle! SatNav was useless, as I didn't know exactly where I wanted to go on their simplified maps.

Re: Willow

by Willow, 24-Jul-15 11:55 PM GMT

On **Thursday 16th** I headed down to [Kenfig NNR, near Porthcawl, Glamorgan](#) which is a coastal location, the weather was breezy but all importantly fine. First species seen were **Gatekeeper** tucked away just out of the breeze down on the bracken, I spent a short time taking a few record pics before moving on towards the pool, which is rather mis-named as it's actually a fair sized lake which attracts a good number of visiting birds and migrant dragonflies, but I was not expecting to bump into a Great White Egret 😊 and with a little sneakiness 😊 I managed to get a few long range shots, including one of the bird trying to perch rather awkwardly on a fence post 😊 and most of the local crows that witnessed the affair are reported to be still in a state of shock 😊😊



Fresh looking Gatekeeper on bracken



Gatekeeper



Big bird on fence!

Once I had recovered from my attack of sneakiness I checked out a nice big clump of stinging nettles for a chance of vanessid larvae and on cue a goody number of Peacock cats were seen, several looked well advanced and posed nicely for their portraits 😊 I will admit to having found them on this patch in the past.



Peacock larva

While checking out the bracken on the pathway my eye was attracted to a small lemon coloured beetle, my first reaction was one of...well, what a coincidence! this is the same insect that Andy Dyball (fellow butterflying enthusiast) had shown me a photo of on his digicam in Fermyn Woods just a couple of weeks ago! My research tells me that this predatory beetle *Cteniopus sulphureus* has a distinctly southern distribution with a preference to sandy places, this makes Kenfig and it's extensive dunes perfect, I'm surprised I have not seen it there before, it's hard to miss really...lovely little beetle 😊



The lemon coloured Cteniopus sulphureus

The summer brood of **Small Blue** were evident albeit in small numbers 😊 I watched one taking minerals from the sand on the lake margins, strangely it dipped it's abdomen into the sand as if egg-laying while at the same time it tongued the sand, I watched wondering why it should be doing this...another ponderable butterflying moment 😊🤔



Small Blue taking minerals



Small Blue

After much pondering on the sands (sounds like one of those quaintly named English villages 😊) I decided it was time for home and headed back to the car and stumbled into a superb example of Emperor Moth caterpillar crawling along the middle of the footpath, now there was no way I was going to let this wonderful example of larvakind get trampled by some unaware, thoughtless, uncaring non-butterflying pedestrian 😡😡 so just as any real hero would - I rescued it, yes, I moved it to safety onto the pathside herbage and after taking a few pics and getting it's autograph I went home a happy hero for my tea 😊



The rescued Emperor Moth larva

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by Wurzel, 25-Jul-15 05:28 AM GMT

Cracking Small Blue Willow but the best shots are of the Hedge Brown – that's a 6 spotter 🤪 I've not got one of those in my 'collection' 🇩🇪 🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Willow

by Willow, 27-Jul-15 12:28 AM GMT

"MikeOxon" wrote:

I agree with you about the many small lanes around Whixall.

Complete maze Mike, but once your finally at **Whixall Moss** all the confusion is happily forgotten...until you try to get back out 🤪 🤪

"Wurzel" wrote:

Cracking Small Blue Willow but the best shots are of the Hedge Brown – that's a 6 spotter 🤪 I've not got one of those in my 'collection' 🇩🇪 🇩🇪

Well *spotted* 😊 Wurzel, I hadn't noticed...but now I've officially become a 6 spotter spotter 😄 😄 😄

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: Willow

by Willow, 27-Jul-15 09:00 PM GMT

The past week has been very frustrating with weather here in south Wales, we've had far too much rain for July 😞 but I've stuck firmly to my mantra ...and "ventured out"...the results however have mean't spending time with some of our more common butterflies, but that's no real hardship 😊 . On Saturday 18th a visit to [Magor Marsh NNR](#) on the Gwent levels produced a very pleasing welcome in the form of an apple eating Water Vole 🐹 I had to be very careful in trying to get a record photo and just managed to capture one before it became aware of me and 'plopped' into the water from it's raft. This lovely little semi-aquatic rodent has been introduced to Magor Marsh over the last few years by the Gwent Wildlife Trust, the animal was exterminated by Mink on the levels many moons ago, the rafts incidentally are used in the reens (small canal type waterways) for feeding and monitoring etc.



My lucky capture...the original Ratty...a Water Vole!

After the excitement with Ratty the visit became a little showery and weather restricted with only **Small Tortoiseshell, Small & Green-veined White, Small Skipper, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Speckled Wood** seen during the morning, I took just a single photo of a nicely conditioned **Peacock** when the intermittant sun came out – before settling down to spend a bit of time with dragonflies.



The beauty that is the Peacock...

It was 'rain stop play' until last Thursday, then there was respite (thank heavens 😊😊) and I decided to head into the Brecon Beacons National Park and do a walk around [Llangors Lake](#) which happens to be the largest freshwater body in southern Wales. I've spent many happy hours in this nature rich setting over the years, but today was to be a casual walking visit and what turns up...turns up...no particular species to find, no rarities to search for on this visit, just enjoy the lovely scenery and a bit of sunshine on one's back 😊



View from Llyn Llangors

I passed through a wet meadow that was alive with **Green-veined Whites** eagerly nectaring on Meadowsweet and Marsh Thistle, we probably all take this common butterfly for granted, but I think it's a super looking insect when fresh and many I saw were exactly that, I took a few pics.



Green-veined White on stinging nettle

Now the next image had me head-scratching for quite a while before I decided on whether it was a male **Small White** or **Green-veined White** I only saw the upper-wing shot you see below, does this particular individual have an unusually yellowish head? whatever, I decided on **Green-veined White** owing to the wing-tips being more tri-angular black than **Small White** the actual size was of no help at all, and if you think it's the other species please explain why...cos' I never want to stop learning 😊



Which White is wight (right)? lol

At the far end of the afore mentioned wet meadow I saw four **Commas** either feeding on Marsh Thistle or flying onto bramble leaves to bask, I'm never short of wonder regarding the incredible shape and colours of this insect, folded up it's a camouflage expert, open-winged it's an advertisement for a birds take-away meal 😋 Once upon a time the **Comma** was a very scarce British butterfly and it's only real stronghold was (perhaps locally) within this area and the neighbouring counties of Radnorshire and in particular Herefordshire.



A fine specimen of Comma

You don't usually find too much Ragwort in such highly farmed areas, I was rather pleased to note a delightfully well advanced Cinnabar moth caterpillar happily enjoying life on a plant that escaped the local farmers attention 😊 I've never agreed with the DEFRA policy of total eradication of Ragwort 😞 and yes I also know its a highly contentious issue, but I strongly believe there should always be a place for Ragwort (and Cinnabar!) in our countryside.



Cinnabar larva in it's rugby jersey outfit!!!

Its not just Cinnabar that needs Ragwort, further along my walk I came upon several other plants and many held nectaring butterflies including a nice **Small Heath** - its apparent that the plant is absolutely full of the goodies that butterflies and other insects both tolerate and enjoy 😊



Note Cinnabar larvae behind the nectaring Small Heath

Walking through the near lake-side buttercups I disturbed the pretty micro moth *Pyrausta purpuralis* this little critter can be found in lots of different types of habitat and is a proper 'show-stopper' when its uniform is fresh and tidy 😊



What a colour scheme...moffy flower power!!!

My visit ended on the lakes shoreline near to good stands of Reed Mace, a **Small Skipper** with curious flight took my eye and landed on the reeds, this gave me a decent background to outline the wings, one appeared to fold in on itself, probably hindering the little insect and creating the unusual flight.



Note the right side wing...

Another most enjoyable visit to Llangors and undoubted proof that you don't always need the rare and threatened butterflies to make a good day...mind you such butterflies can help 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by millerd, 27-Jul-15 09:17 PM GMT

A nice set of images, Bill - as you know I like the commoner butterflies too and your two Whites are lovely examples. The first is as you say a Green-veined White, but the second is a splendid Small White. I do sometimes struggle to differentiate between the males of these species, but the rule of thumb I use (which seems to work) is around the black wingtip scales. On the GVW, these seem to concentrate around the veins, with distinct "bulges" towards the edge of the wing. On the Small White, the black is evenly spread across the surface. I'm not sure if this is true or not, but it also looks as if on a GVW the black spot is in a space between veins, but on the Small White it straddles a vein. I'm really no expert, mind!

Dave

Re: Willow

by bugboy, 27-Jul-15 10:25 PM GMT

I agree with **millerd** with the ID of the second white. I've always found with fresh individuals that the 'shade' of the white itself helps me. GVW in my experience tend towards a 'pure snowy white' whereas SW are a more 'creamy, milky white'. The black markings on the wingtips tend to follow the veins on GVW (as Dave says) as well which you can see clearly on your first picture arising to a few black spots along the edge of the forewing. I've never seen this in a SW. 😊

Re: Willow

by Willow, 28-Jul-15 12:19 AM GMT

Thank you Dave...

"millerd" wrote:

I'm not sure if this is true or not, but it also looks as if on a GVW the black spot is in a space between veins, but on the Small White it straddles a vein. I'm really no expert, mind!

I've looked closely at this very thing in the past Dave, I'm sure its a valid ID point, in fact during my head-scratching with this one I considered this point and as is often the case changed my mind, now can anyone else add to this specific ID point 🤔

"bugboy" wrote:

GVW in my experience tend towards a 'pure snowy white' whereas SW are a more 'creamy, milky white'.

Another useful observation Buggy, thank you, these ID pointers are important when differentiating between **Green-veined & Small White** and I think there is too much emphasis on the differences between **Small & Large White** in the fieldguides when very often the problems occur more often between ID with **G-v W & SW** as this particular instance illustrates 😊

It would be interesting to have any further ID pointers anyone can offer, we can all learn much more from each other on such personal

observations...most butterflyers have their own little ID 'tricks'...please share them!

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Willow

by PhilIB, 28-Jul-15 03:25 AM GMT

"Willow" wrote:

It would be interesting to have any further ID pointers anyone can offer

Bill

Probably the best ID tip is well described on this website in the relevant species pages. Look towards the bottom of each page in the 'Similar Species' section.

Re: Willow

by Willow, 28-Jul-15 06:07 AM GMT

Yes, indeed Phil, a timely reminder of the very useful 'Similar Species' section, which I admit to occasionally referring to, and this is yet another instance of not backing my first inclination, these two white species are providing me with loads of fun 😊...I don't think 😊

I intend taking a great deal more notice of the spots in relation to the veins as Dave (Millerd) has already referred to above, I know on occasions spots can actually be absent, but if this theory can be confirmed its another great help with ID separation between these whites, and lets be honest few butterflyers havn't had problems with them at some time or another.

Thank you for your valued input 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"