

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Mar-15 04:54 AM GMT

My youngest son reported seeing "lots of Brimstones" last Saturday at Leith Hill, which I missed by dint of a visit to Yorkshire where it was cooler and very windy. However, I grabbed an opportunity today to briefly visit Bedfont Lakes Country Park, close to work. I was rewarded with my first butterfly of the year, a Peacock, battling against the breeze.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Mar-15 07:23 AM GMT

Good to see you're up and running again Dave 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Mar-15 03:11 AM GMT

At last! This was the first time this year some sunny weather coincided with me being able to walk round my local patch. It was not particularly warm, but at least the damp cold overcast had given way to blue skies. I set off with my ten-year-old in tow and a somewhat optimistic air. Half-way round and we'd seen nothing, but then Elliot says "I s'pose you've seen that butterfly..." I hadn't, but I soon did – the first butterfly on my local patch this year turned out to be a Small White. This was very unexpected – my eyes were tuned into Peacock/Comma/Small Tortoiseshell mode.



I braved some nearby horses and managed a long short for the record. We had nearly reached the end of the walk when the second butterfly appeared. This was a Red Admiral, sunning itself next to the River Colne.



We saw nothing else, but the dandelions are only just opening – this always seems to coincide round here with the first Small Tortoiseshells, which thoroughly enjoy them as nectar sources, so next time the sun shines... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 23-Mar-15 03:44 AM GMT

There seem to be a few Whites emerging right now. Have to agree that it's odd that Small White turns out to be the year's first sighting though!

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 23-Mar-15 03:49 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

There can't be many years in which your first local butterfly is a Small White.

The dandelions are just beginning to open around her too and the willow and blackthorn is mostly still in bud. With another cool week forecast I reckon it could be the Easter weekend before things really get going around here...weather permitting.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Mar-15 07:00 AM GMT

Good to see you're off the mark Dave 😊 I'm on three species so far with Small White my third which isn't quite as unusual as it being the first species seen for the year but I've normally caught up with a Peacock, Comma and Red Admiral before the SWs 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Apr-15 07:20 AM GMT

Thanks, all. 😊

It's very slow this year – I crept onto four species today when a Small Tortoiseshell appeared in my sister's front garden in Wilberfoss up in Yorkshire. I was halfway down the drive in the car and nearly in the road when I saw it. Much derision and groaning from the assorted offspring in the back as I leapt out with the camera and tracked the windswept butterfly down to a pink hyacinth. The sun was out between showers, the temperature at the dizzy height of ten degrees, and it was still very windy. Not ideal at all, but you had to admire the butterfly's determination.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Apr-15 04:25 AM GMT

After the last two days of greyness, it was splendid to see the sun streaming in this morning. Only one drawback – I had to go to work. However, all was not lost as I managed to leave at around two and with longer days and changing clocks, there was a whole afternoon left to see what was about. I walked home, and before even leaving the office park I had seen a Peacock, a Brimstone and a Small White. Just to the south of the cargo area at Heathrow, I saw further Brimstones and Small Whites, plus a likely Comma. As others have mentioned, it is curious that the Small Whites this year are up and out along with the first emerging hibernators – I wonder what combination of factors has caused this? 😊

Arriving home, I quickly changed and set out for the first proper circuit of my local patch this year in decent weather. Over a leisurely hour and a half, Commas, Peacocks and Brimstones predominated, all very active and tussling with each other, though the Brimstones really weren't interested unless they found a Small White. There were a few of these, and like the Brimstones, they were completely unapproachable.



I found a single Red Admiral, in exactly the same spot as the one I saw on 22nd March, but the photos show a different individual.



Finally, on the approach to home there is a wide grassy area where dandelions and daisies are now emerging at long last. Most years, this is where I see my first local Small Tortoiseshell, and today was no different. I am constantly amazed by nature's ability to repeat itself so precisely year on year in this way.





With further sunshine forecast this week, I am hopeful of Orange Tips, GVW, Speckled Woods and Holly Blues before many more days have passed. There may have to be further short days at work as well... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 07-Apr-15 04:39 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Great report and photos, glad you still had time to get out today 😊

Just hibernators for me so far but a great day today with loads of Peacocks. I still have a couple of days off work so hoping to get out looking again, maybe a Specklie, Orange-tip or White this week, fingers crossed.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 07-Apr-15 05:37 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

It would seem that today it was Butterflies for all !. The first day this year that we're all reporting multiple sightings. Looking forward to more of your posts. But no more open wing Holly Blue shots please 🍷.

All the best
TREVOR.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-15 06:31 AM GMT

I'm really envious of those Red Admiral shots Dave – they've been playing hard to get with me this year – I've only seen the one 🍷.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Apr-15 03:25 AM GMT

Many thanks for the comments, chaps – no Holly Blues yet, Trevor! It's great to get out there again seeing butterflies.

More of the same this afternoon, and a little bit more. I stopped off after work at Bedfont Lakes Country Park, where there were simply dozens of Peacocks. I saw courtship behaviour on the ground and many spiralling males – up to five in a group at one time. There were also a few Commas, and earlier on some Whites and Brimstones. The latter head off to roost between about four and half past – they simply disappear, though can be disturbed from their invisible hiding places.



With some time left in the afternoon, I had another tour of my local patch, which again boasted lots of Peacocks and Commas. However, as the sun started to lose a bit of heat, bumbling along the path came an Orange Tip. It was not flying particularly strongly, and settled several times to bask, eventually landing directly in front of me.





Spring really is here now. 😊 Dave

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 08-Apr-15 05:05 AM GMT

Great stuff, Dave and lovely Orange-tip shots. Spring is definitely here 😊

Mike

Re: millerd

by David M, 08-Apr-15 05:39 AM GMT

Lovely to see your first Orange Tip of the year.....even better is to get a good image!

Well done, Dave.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 09-Apr-15 06:04 AM GMT

Great to see images of your first OT Dave 🍷 , I saw the first for Wiltshire yesterday but no image as I was stuck in traffic 😞
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Apr-15 06:33 AM GMT

Thank you everyone. As ever with these things, luck played a big part in finding that Orange Tip. 😊 It's actually not a bad time of day to find them as

they do tend to have a spell of basking at the end of the afternoon when they cease to patrol as incessantly as they do when the sun is high in the sky. Hopefully there will soon be many more.

On the briefest of walks today around five o'clock, and with the sun mostly behind cloud (it was almost sultry), I saw nearly nothing at all. Nearly nothing – a Red Admiral was guarding the same bridge as two days ago and on 22nd March. It did not open its wings, but I don't think it was the one from 6th. At least two are sharing this spot. Considering the lack of sun, this butterfly was displaying great energy in soaring aerobatics between returns to the same spot to sit.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Apr-15 02:46 AM GMT

After spending yesterday looking at continuous sunshine through the office window, I managed to take today off. A promising start, with a quick tour of the local patch, during which I saw my first Speckled Wood of the year, and managed to get close to a nice fresh Small White. The Commas, Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells clearly weren't up yet.





I decided to drive down to Denbies, just to see if anything was about down there – Green Hairstreaks can't be far off, nor Grizzled Skippers. However, an annoying bank of cloud appeared and persisted, which meant that all I saw was a single Peacock. The forecast air pollution was very much in evidence – the view across to Leith Hill being almost non-existent, so hazy was it. The slopes are covered in violets at the moment, more than I've ever seen, and the grass is relatively short – allowing the ground to heat up and encourage all those blue butterfly caterpillars to get munching. It's worth noting that the car park at Denbies now boasts a very good coffee van which is going to be there on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays from now until October.

I returned home, but went a circuitous route to avoid the M25 and its Friday madness. Of course, within 20 minutes, out came the sun again and Brimstones came with it, plus one or two Orange Tips. Never mind – early days yet. Back at home, I had an more extended amble around my local patch. Much more to see now – though mostly plentiful Peacocks, Commas and now good numbers of Small Tortoiseshells.







I was hoping to see some courtship behaviour, but the closest I got was this case of mistaken identity. The Tortoiseshell was really persistent though the Peacock was having none of it.



After the initial subject of his attention managed to escape, he quickly transferred his misguided amours to another Peacock. He must just like larger ladies... I also found a Tortoiseshell which appeared to be egg-laying, but the nettle bed was too close to the river to examine safely.



I had suspected that some of the whites I had been seeing might well be Green-veined, rather than Small, but all those close enough to check were not – until this one. Another new species for the year.



No Red Admirals seen today, and locally, only a couple of Orange Tips. Overall, though, not a bad day.



View over the River Colne – nettle beds in the foreground, Terminal Five in the background

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 11-Apr-15 05:52 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Love the Speckled Wood and that first Small Tortoiseshell is a cracker. I also like the open wing Orange-tip from Tuesday, a lovely photo 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

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

Great shot of the Green-veined one Dave 😊🍷 Still to get one of those this year though I might try for a Grenstreak tomorrow... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Apr-15 06:09 AM GMT

Thanks, Neil and Wurzel. I'm pleased you like the photos.

After a very blustery and not exactly warm day yesterday up in the Midlands where two separate Small Tortoiseshells was the sum total of the day (one in Solihull, one at Ryton), today back near Heathrow promised a bit better.



Ryton Small Tortoiseshell

It was still windy, and a bit chilly first thing, but the sun was very strong with none of Friday's thick haze. Round the usual circuit I went, with an Orange Tip the first to show, closely followed by a Small White, and then another. It wasn't until there was a bit of shelter that the first Peacock appeared – too windy to bask comfortably I suppose. I wandered into the bit of woodland in the middle of the J14 roundabout, where there is a cleared bit following the line of a gas main, and watched a Brimstone patrol back and forth for a while. It had a routine, always pausing at the same point in its circuit to settle. Not to nectar, either, just to sit still on a dry leaf for a minute or two. I stationed myself near the spot and the next time round managed a reasonable shot.



Progressing on, I saw a few more Whites, one of which was definitely Green-veined, another Orange Tip, a Small Tortoiseshell, a few more Peacocks and two new Speckled Woods.



Still no Holly Blues, or so I thought. Getting right back to the front doorstep, there on a shrub sat... a Holly Blue. I managed to disturb it, but it flew

against the wind to settle back in the same spot. With a couple of quick photos taken, it was disturbed again, but this time by another of the same species. They squabbled for a bit before settling briefly in nearby spots. I managed one more photo before they were blown into the air again.



Species number ten, and the last one for a while that I won't have to travel a bit to see.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Apr-15 06:27 AM GMT

Lovely Holly Blue shots Dave – you've obviously been practising your 'HB Whispering' over the winter months 😊😄

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 13-Apr-15 11:58 PM GMT

Your certainly lucky with your Butterflies Dave, we've had nothing but STS Peacocks, and Comma's no whites, or RA yet, love the photo of the Holly Blue Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Apr-15 05:02 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – there are more HB about every day, but none has been so obliging as that first one!

Thanks, Goldie. The Red Admirals here are almost certainly a few that have made it through the winter – and I'm sure you'll have Whites and Orange Tips galore before too long. 😊

A very late and brief outing today after work – still very warm and sunny after five, but all I saw were a couple of Peacocks, a Speckled Wood, a single battered Red Admiral performing splendid aerobatics above the path, and two more Holly Blues not too far from home. I managed to get close to the Red Admiral down on the path, with the sun now quite low.



Me and my shadow

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-15 06:23 AM GMT

Nice composition and matching comment Dave 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Apr-15 06:27 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. Red Admirals are a favourite – plenty of character.

The forecast glorious hot sunshine came to pass, and I had the day off. However, all three sites I visited away from home today were distinctly unproductive.

Denbies

No Green Hairstreaks, no Grizzled Skippers. In fact, aside from Peacocks and Brimstones, all I saw was a single Red Admiral, and several teasing pyralid moths.



female Brimstone



pyralid moth

Noar Hill

The reports of Dukes being out there yesterday was a particular enticement, but between 1130 and 1400 today, not one was seen. There were three or folk also looking, but none of us was lucky. Again, there wasn't actually much of anything at all, just Peacocks, Brimstones and one each of Small Tortoiseshell and Comma. It was very warm, virtually no wind at all, and the sheltered pits were like ovens. It could well have been too hot for butterflies more acquainted with typical spring weather.

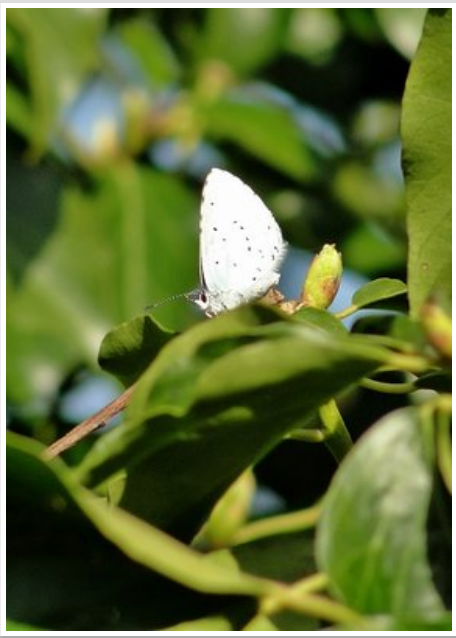
Botany Bay

After the earlier disappointments, I didn't expect to see any early Wood Whites and made a correct guess. Once again, Peacocks and Brimstones were all there were, though the former were numerous along the path with little dark "shark fins" every 20 metres or so.

Home Again

So it was back to base, and a walk around locally. It was around five o'clock and around the 25 degree mark still. Within five minutes, I had seen two Specked Woods, two Orange Tips, a Green-veined White and no less than seven Holly Blues.





high up and over-exposed

I should have stayed home all day! The rest of the walk was equally interesting, with Peacocks, Commas, two more Orange Tips, three more Holly Blues and a variety of White butterflies.



typical Comma pose



GW
I watched one of the white butterflies suddenly descend from the tree tops and start to nectar avidly on low-growing flowers, moving from bloom to bloom in quick succession. Briefly still enough for me to look more closely, it turned out to be a male Large White, the first of the year for me.



Large White tucking in

Lastly on the walk, I approached the bridge regularly patrolled by a Red Admiral. He was there, but today he had his work cut out chasing two Speckled Woods that had emerged close to his territory.



He elected in the end to perch in a small tree, and look down upon the lesser mortals basking on the nettles below. And on me too.



this is MY patch, you know...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-15 06:38 AM GMT

Sometimes Home is best Dave and definitely in this case 😊. I was thinking along the same lines as you, that perhaps it was too hot for Spring butterflies as today we had a little bit of summer. Hopefully nice weather now won't mean a wash out in mid-season 😊

Have a goodun

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Apr-15 01:43 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – a bit annoying to see that someone else *did* see Grizzlies at Denbies yesterday... You can't win 'em all!

After work, I picked my small son up from school. Next to where I parked the car was a castor oil plant with no less than three Holly Blues fluttering round it – a female and two males. However, I had committed the cardinal sin of Not Having The Camera With Me. To be fair, they were a bit active. Very soon afterwards it clouded over and cooled off significantly, but I walked around my local circuit anyway (the exercise is good!). I firstly came across a newly emerged Green-veined White, unfortunately with rather mangled wings. Such a shame. 😞



A little further on, I started looking for roosting Orange Tips. However, their favourite perches (Garlic Mustard) are not yet grown enough, so I had nearly given up when I spotted one down near the ground. Goodness knows what gave it away, as the wonderful underside markings against the background of low growth made for excellent camouflage.



An annual treat, the close-up study of roosting Orange Tips! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 17-Apr-15 04:38 AM GMT

Lovely Orange Tips Dave 🍷 Can't wait to see them Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 17-Apr-15 05:39 AM GMT

Understand your frustration re. the Grizzled Skippers, Dave 😊 that's just the way it is 😊 Lovely Orange-tip shots from your home patch 😊

Mike

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-15 07:04 AM GMT

Those are the type of OT shots that I'd like to be getting Dave 🍷 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 17-Apr-15 04:19 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Sorry to read of your wasted trips to Noar Hill and Botany Bay . That's the trouble with this time of year , most of the Butterflies on the wing can be found anywhere and are plentiful ,but the specialities are still scarce. Roll on May 😊 ,!.

Better luck soon !,
TREVOR.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 18-Apr-15 04:46 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

I remember that you were wondering whether the late emergence of Holly Blues around your way last year would have any detrimental effect on this year. Seems like they are still doing ok 🍷 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Apr-15 06:21 AM GMT

Thank you for your comments on the Orange Tip, Goldie, Maximus and Wurzel - I always like to seek them out in their roosting position. The underside patterning is amazing, and they are very appealing with their soft white furriness - and of course they tend to keep still! Very helpful... 😊

And thanks for the sympathy on the Grizzly front, Maximus and Trevor - it didn't really feel like wasted time, as all the spots I visited looked lovely under sunny skies.

Yes, Neil, no problems with the local Holly Blue population. Just as many as I usually see at this time of year, perhaps slightly up on the average. I'm guessing that the summer (2nd) brood were particularly fecund, and that though some of their offspring appeared in October and November, there were plenty of others to emerge around now. Alternatively, some of the Autumn (3rd) brood actually bred successfully and their offspring are topping up the numbers right now. The weather certainly stayed benign right into the start of December. Who knows?

Interestingly, my late foray today under watery sunshine and much lower temperatures discovered a number of roosting Holly Blues just a couple of minutes from home. Most were perched on ivy, but one was high on a holly bush. I assume the males hang around the ivy, waiting for females to emerge from their pupae deep in the foliage. The females then move off to holly and other potential food-plants. I watched one individual for a while as the sun tried to burn through the wispy clouds. As the sunlight strengthened, the butterfly shuffled around to angle itself just right. Finally, one brief burst was just enough to cause the wings to open - before the butterfly took to the air and ended up on a much higher perch.







Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Apr-15 03:45 AM GMT

Saturday 18th April Part One:

At work this morning, but finished by two. I stopped off five minutes down the road at the southern part of Bedfont Lakes Country Park. This lies on the other side of the railway to the main Park, and is not physically connected to it. The entrance is not signed, and is adjacent to an ugly industrial estate which bounds the Park on two sides (with Feltham Young Offenders Institution beyond to the east). However, this section is far less manicured than the main part to the north of the railway. This was my first visit: I was aware that Green Hairstreaks had been seen here in past years, so it was worth looking on a brilliantly sunny, though breezy, spring day.

Once inside the gate, several Holly Blues made an immediate appearance, patrolling stands of bramble on the sheltered and sunny side, and regularly settling, wings shut tight.





Keeping to the left side of a thicket, off the main path, I passed several gorse bushes and then noticed a yellow broom up ahead, along with some small apple trees. I was buzzed by a Peacock, and then another Holly Blue flew across the top of the broom. A small dark shape darted out after the Blue, and then returned to perch on the apple tree. A Green Hairstreak! A rare sighting for Middlesex, and one I was very pleased to see.



Continuing along the path right up to the side of the railway, I encountered good numbers of Speckled Woods where shrubs and trees provided good shelter, plus the ubiquitous Peacocks and Commas, and various white butterflies too – but no Orange Tips.



On the way back, not particularly close to the first one, I caught a glimpse of one more Hairstreak, but no more than that. Another ten minutes drive, and I was home. A Green Hairstreak almost on the doorstep – what more could you ask?



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Apr-15 05:41 AM GMT

Saturday 18th April Part Two:

Back home after the Hairstreak excitement, another tour of the local environs seemed in order. Once again, it was the Holly Blues that dominated. In a sheltered spot, holly and ivy grow close together, and male Blues were patrolling the latter, with occasional pauses there or on the brambles. However, there was also activity on the holly. I watched a Holly Blue flutter in and out of the spiny leaves and dense branches, stopping frequently on the stems at all angles – underneath, in sun, in shade – but concentrating on the tiny flower buds. This was a female, almost certainly laying.



A couple of males took a brief interest, but she put them off with rapid wing fluttering and a hoisted abdomen – but she took no notice of me less than a foot away. Presumably I didn't identify as a predator, or she was too engrossed in her egg-laying activity. She paused from time to time to rest, which involved some opening of the wings.







I saw good numbers of Holly Blues again over the whole of the walk, but it was noticeable that the males are starting to look a little worn now and decidedly grey in some cases.



What else? Well, it was very breezy, so most activity was confined to sheltered parts. Peacocks and Commas continued to contest the paths and perching places on the brambles, and there were also three Small Tortoiseshells joining them today.



Naturally enough, there was a Red Admiral, but not in the usual spot – a new arrival?



There were a few Speckled Woods and Whites, but only a couple of Orange Tips. There really aren't many about so far.



Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-15 06:16 AM GMT

You're taunting me with your Greenstreaks and Holly Blues now Dave 🍷🍷

I used to think that the only way I'd find Greenstreaks was to have them in the back garden 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 19-Apr-15 06:26 AM GMT

Wow! Open wing spring Holly Blue female is right up there, Dave, on the list of satisfying events at this time of year.

Well done.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 19-Apr-15 07:16 PM GMT

Just catching up with a few diaries and wow, you're certainly having a lot of luck with Hollies at the moment, and Green Hairstreaks!

Btw your little moth from a few days back is *Pyrausta nigrata* I think.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 19-Apr-15 10:53 PM GMT

Your photos are some thing special Millerd, Love the Green Hair Streak and the Holly Blue Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by kevlng, 20-Apr-15 07:43 PM GMT

Dave,

Love the photos of the Holly Blue 😊

I had a similar experience this weekend too, observing a female ovipositing. Only the second time I've witness a butterfly egg laying. What a great start to 2015 for us both.

Regards Kev

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Apr-15 04:57 AM GMT

Thank you all for the very kind comments – I'm glad you liked all the Holly Blues. What a splendid butterfly it is, and well worth all the time spent watching and coming across specific behaviour such as the egg-laying. You're right, Kev – very good so far! 😊 I was particularly pleased with the Hairstreak as well – very much a local rarity.

20th April : Walking along a standard urban street (very close to the Thames) in Staines today, between the town centre and my son's school, I saw well over a dozen Holly Blues. Even the children making their way home were noticing them, not just because Elliot was pointing them out, either. 😊 Back home a bit later, there were more of them, unsurprisingly. There were more Whites about late this afternoon – all three species – plus the usual Orange Tips, Peacocks, Commas and Speckled Woods.





As we reached home, there was the phenomenon of an unusually bright "sundog" or "false sun" to the right of the real one. I thought they were supposed to presage rain, but there's little chance of that for a few days.



21st April: I was able to dash down to Denbies after work today, arriving around four o'clock. I concentrated on the hedgeline at the bottom of the slope which was relatively sheltered from the breeze, and was rewarded with the sight of a pair of Dingy Skippers engaged in a close tussle, eventually seeing them drift over the fence at the bottom and onto the footpath. I saw perhaps another three or four, but was unable to get close (hence poor photos - the camera's autofocus copes badly with small butterflies against a uniform close background, choosing to focus behind the insect. That's my excuse 😊).





Carrying on across the hillside and back again, there were several Peacocks basking on the rabbit scrapes, a few Brimstones (quite late in the day for them) and an Orange Tip. Finally, as the sun got lower, I came across a Grizzled Skipper, and then another. The second one had just perched himself beautifully on an old flower stem when a large bee pretty well knocked him flying. Goodness knows where he went after that!



So – two more species on another lovely sunny day on the almost deserted slopes of Denbies.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-15 06:02 AM GMT

You're raking them in now Dave 😊🍷 I've only just seen my first Specklie and as the weather is set to turn I might have to wait another week for my first Grizzlie...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Apr-15 06:19 AM GMT

It's been very frustrating watching several days of lovely sunny weather through an office window with no chance to go anywhere out in it. Today was hardly in the same category weatherwise, but reasonably warm, dry and with some sunny intervals. I was able to do a tour of my local patch for the first time in five days, and amazingly, didn't see a single Peacock, and just one Comma. However, the Holly Blues were still going strong, with over a dozen again in various places. In fact with the sun shining, it's almost impossible to walk anywhere round here without seeing at least a couple. Their colour is very variable according to the angle of the light on the wings: these photos are all the same butterfly.



Speckled Woods were also evident in most spots.



There were also a lot more Whites than when last I was out, and almost all of them seemed to be Green-veined, though there were a few Small and a couple of Large as well. GVW males vary quite a bit in the amount of black on the upperside, some lacking the spot altogether.





No Brimstones today. I probably saw half a dozen Orange Tips, and the intermittent sunshine proved to be ideal for observing them closely.



They don't fly long with the sun in, so following one in flight as a cloud came across quickly led to it coming down to perch. Then as the sun re-emerged, the butterfly opened up.



I also found a female on a bit of cow parsley, and she too obliged by opening her wings in a brief burst of sunshine.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Apr-15 05:29 AM GMT

Not quite as frustrating as spending all your weekends knocking plaster off of walls whilst others are out seeing Dukes, Greenstreaks and now Pearls or getting great shots of whites and OTs like yours Dave 🍷 😊
That last OT seems to have abnormally large spots? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 27-Apr-15 05:39 PM GMT

Smashing photos Dave, every one, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Apr-15 05:54 AM GMT

Those spots do look large, Wurzel – you can almost imagine a face there with the spots as eyes and the abdomen as a beak/nose. 😲 Maybe that's what a potential predator sees, since the female has none of the warning colouration of the male.

Thank you, Goldie – I'm glad you like the photos. I'm flattered! 😊

Nothing like that today, I'm afraid. After a truly awful morning of cold and rain, sunshine finally appeared and I had an hour on my local patch from five till six. I saw six butterflies only, but as has happened before, all six were different species. First came a Holly Blue, nectaring high up on a crab apple blossom, followed by a Comma darting into the trees when I disturbed its basking. A little later, I spotted a Green-veined White down on the damp path, sucking up salts. I managed a quick shot before a particularly noisy aircraft taking off directly overhead spooked it.



There was then a Speckled Wood, enjoying some dappled sunlight in a spot that is becoming increasingly shaded as the trees gain in leaf almost by the hour. Next to appear was a male Large White, flying higher up and in a more languid fashion than its smaller cousins, finally disappearing amongst some hawthorns just coming into flower. Last of all was a Red Admiral. This was new to the area, and much fresher than those I have seen so far this year. It was nectaring avidly on these low-growing purple flowers, darting from bloom to bloom with interruptions for typical energetic sweeping flights around the clearing. At a guess, I would say it was a recent continental immigrant. It was not worn enough to be an over-wintered individual, and too early to be the offspring of those seen earlier in the month. Incidentally, it was of the variety with the extra white spot in the red band, *bialbata*.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-May-15 05:35 AM GMT

I repeated yesterday's excursion at the same time today. A bit warmer perhaps, but not quite as sunny, and there were fewer butterflies. As ever, a Holly Blue started things off, but I found it uncharacteristically down on the grass, apparently drinking from moisture on a dock leaf. It appeared brand spanking new, too, so they must still be emerging.



It was disturbed by a Large White, the first of three I saw altogether, none of them stopping anywhere. There were a couple of Green-veined Whites as well, and I was beginning to think that was it, until I walked along a sheltered bit of path next to the river. The cow parsley here has grown considerably in the last week or so, and the flowers are out, and of course these are one of the favourite roosting choices of Orange Tips. I found two males, clearly settled for the evening with antennae tightly held together, despite some spells of bright sunshine. The breeze made sharp photos a bit tricky: these are a few reasonable ones out of many dozens taken!





One of my favourite subjects, and all too brief a time each year to see them.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 01-May-15 06:18 AM GMT

Your local area seems to be a real magnet for both Holly Blues and Orange-tips, Dave 😊 very nice images of lovely butterflies. Very few OT's in our area at the moment!

Mike

Re: millerd

by David M, 01-May-15 06:34 AM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

....One of my favourite subjects, and all too brief a time each year to see them.

How true!

We have but a fortnight before they start to seriously disappear.

Make the most of it.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-May-15 07:11 AM GMT

I spent the weekend up in Yorkshire, where I failed to see a single butterfly but did see a large number of bicycles. I returned home today, and with such a promising weather forecast I decided to cut across country towards the end of the journey and visit Ivinghoe Beacon on the Chilterns. Down in the sheltered gully beneath the Beacon itself, I met up with several folk looking for the Duke of Burgundy. No one was disappointed, as there were at least half a dozen new individuals of both sexes to be found, along with Grizzled and Dingy Skippers and several Brimstones – plus a single Peacock.





Dukes and Dingies just do not get along, and there were numerous battles for the right to perch on particular vantage points.











It was also interesting that at around half past one, the Dukes almost all disappeared – they very much seem to be a morning butterfly. A lone Orange Tip back at the car park completed the outing.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 05-May-15 03:46 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

As your many Duke images illustrate, you can never have too many!. Taken in a lovely area too.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 06-May-15 03:17 AM GMT

Hi Dave, a great selection of Duke photos 😊

Duke of Burgundy was one of the species I missed last year, I will have to make more of an effort this year.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 06-May-15 03:53 AM GMT

I've gotten a serious case of 'green eyed monster' with all those stunning Duke pictures 🍷

Re: millerd

by David M, 06-May-15 05:38 AM GMT

Great stuff, Dave.

If the weather ever perks up then Dukes will definitely be top of my list!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-May-15 06:43 AM GMT

A fantastic selection of Dukes Dave, so much so that I think my envy-meter has just cracked 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by kevlng, 06-May-15 05:03 PM GMT

Dave,

Fantastic shots of the Duke Of Burgundy. Love them.

This is the number one species on my list for 2015, having never seen one before. I was anxiously waiting for a report from the Chilterns before setting off from Ipswich (Butser Hill seems too far in a day, so favoured Dunstbale Downs & Ivinghoe). Thanks for the heads up. Prayign for good weather on Sunday 😊

Regards Kev

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 07-May-15 12:58 AM GMT

Lovely photo's Millerd, You should have been in Lancashire not Yorkshire 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-May-15 06:06 AM GMT

Thank you all for your appreciation of those Duke of Burgundy shots. 😊 It's a very easy compact location to see them, they were very approachable and the weather was spot on for once. A great day.

Not so much luck today. I went down to Botany Bay this afternoon, and as mentioned elsewhere, there is work underway down there "improving" the track surface. From a lay perspective, this seems to entail applying a thick layer of mud to the path... I'm sure the recent heavy rain didn't help. I was able to park in the normal place, and walked down to the bridge and up the other side. The verges beside the ride seem to have been cut down this year, and the number of flowers seems very low (aside from bugle). There seems to be more shade as well. I looked for Wood Whites, but they were slow in appearing, despite sunshine, and the first three white butterflies I saw were all female Orange Tips.



In the end I did see two, possibly three of the target species, but none stayed still for more than a moment, and all vanished from the path through the same gap in the bushes and off into the wood. So – no photos this time. There were plenty of Brimstones, and being late afternoon, they were busy nectaring restlessly on bugle and bluebell before disappearing for the evening just before five.



Peacocks were still to be seen all along the path – probably the same ones I saw a few weeks ago. Finally, I also noted one each of Large White, Speckled Wood and Comma, but no Dingy or Grizzled Skippers.



Another trip next week looks in order... Maybe a few more Wood Whites will be out.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-May-15 07:10 AM GMT

I hope you have better luck with the Wood Whites Dave 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 09-May-15 08:18 PM GMT

Hi Dave,
After today I have no problem any more with the stunning Holly Blue images you keep posting. 😊

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-May-15 05:27 AM GMT

Thanks for the support, Wurzel. It was a tad frustrating and a bit disconcerting to see the ride covered in mud as well. I hope it hasn't disturbed the habitat at the edges where I have seen Wood Whites laying in the past and where their patrolling activity usually takes place.

Your Holly Blue female was a corker, Trevor. My turn to be envious! There are a lot around (here at any rate) and I'm glad you had the chance to take advantage.

On Saturday, I spent the day in the Midlands, and was unimpressed with the cold, the cloud and the wind. 13 degrees was all it scraped up to, and an afternoon visit to Ryton proved fruitless aside from one Peacock in the woods. I passed close to Bishop's Hill on the way home, and following directions from Neil Freeman (many thanks, Neil 😊), found what looks like a brilliant site. The sun appeared, but I had very little time to explore, though I did see half a dozen Dingy Skippers in as many minutes as the clock approached half past six.



Arriving home to find the temperature still up at 17 degrees after a sunny afternoon was a bit annoying! 😞

Today (10th) I had an opportunity to do a quick tour of my local patch. It was windy, but increasingly sunny and warm. Holly Blues were everywhere again, and over an hour or so I counted at least fifteen in various places. They were around holly and ivy (naturally enough) but were also cruising stands of bramble, settling in hawthorns and other trees and shrubs, and tussling with each other in twos and threes.



The next most frequent butterfly turned out to be the Green-veined White, again seen often in twos or threes but settling on the bright escaped rape flowers along parts of the path.





They were occasionally disturbed by Large Whites, of which I saw four or five, and by a handful of Orange Tips which were battling the wind and certainly not stopping. Three or four Peacocks still set up territories along the path, and there was one Comma. This I took to be female in that it failed to intercept any other flying insects, including one of the Peacocks. This would be an irresistible target for a *male* Comma.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-May-15 04:33 AM GMT

With after work the only option today, at least the sun was still shining hazily and it remained quite warm. A bit of a breeze remained, though. The local patch was also the only real choice too, but I never tire of Holly Blues and there were still quite a few chasing each other around the hedgerows. I watched a female flying around very close to a holly tree.



She settled briefly, but often, and was persistently set upon by one, two, or even three males. She was having none of it, resisting their advances with violent wing fluttering and retreating deeper into the foliage. I watched her move onto a holly flower, where she initially took some nectar.



She then adjusted her position to curve her abdomen round before moving along a branch to do the same thing again somewhere else.



I was struck by the similarity in behaviour with that of female Black and Brown Hairstreaks, having watched both last year crawl in amongst the twigs and foliage of sloe bushes in identical fashion. If you hadn't seen the butterfly disappear into the bush, you would never know it was there. Holly Blues really do seem to have more in common with hairstreaks than with other blue butterflies.

Now it was getting quite late and the only likely sightings now would be roosting butterflies. I managed to find a male Green-veined White just settling down on some cow parsley.



After that, a little way along the path there was a male Orange Tip on the same type of plant.



I remembered an experiment with flash I tried a few years back and had another go.



I'm still not sure whether I like it... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Willow, 13-May-15 12:18 AM GMT

It certainly adds a dramatic and contrasting effect to the image Dave, always good to see enthusiasts trying out different things 😊

Best Wishes,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 13-May-15 04:00 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

I am glad that you found Bishops Hill ok on Saturday, a shame the weather didn't clear up like it was forecast to do. I still haven't been to Ryton Wood yet this year, ironic really as I only work a couple of mile away now, just that bit too far for a lunchtime visit (I only get 30 mins), and the weather has been against me on the occasions when I could have gone after work. The Green Hairstreaks and Dingy and Grizzled Skippers have only just started there, it tends to be a late site compared with others in Warwickshire, so I must make the effort to visit sometime over the next couple of weeks.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 13-May-15 04:35 AM GMT

I like the last OT picture best, I think the black back ground makes it stand out more or may be that's the artist in me 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-May-15 07:35 AM GMT

Thanks for the views on the flashlit Orange Tip, Bill and Goldie. I'm still not decided, but it's interesting to see how you can vary the photos you get.

Bishop's Hill looks a brilliant place, Neil - whereabouts are the Small Blues? I didn't have time to look far and only found the Dingies (very easily!).

A day off today, primarily for a dental appointment, but luck in the form of brilliant blue skies shone down. There was time to visit Bentley Wood to see the Pearls, so off I trundled. If anything, it was too sunny: the butterflies (there were good numbers of Pearls out) were forever on the move, even when stopping to nectar. However, females going to ground and pausing between laying eggs provided a few opportunities to see and photograph a non-moving butterfly.



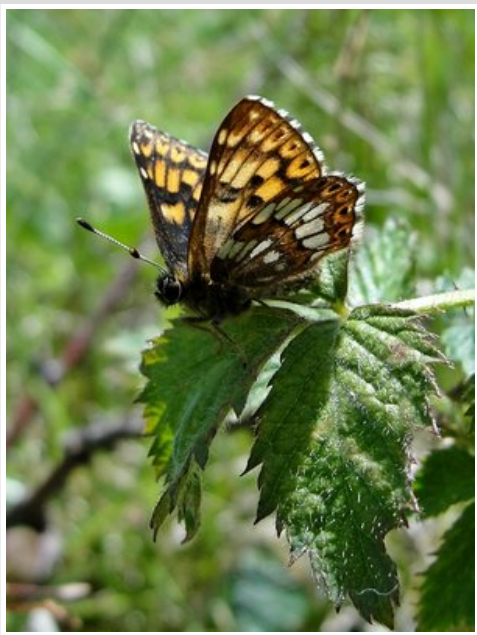


There was quite a bit of egg-laying activity, though the poor females were frequently interrupted by one or more amorous and hopeful males.



As well as the Pearls, there were lots of Brimstones about, a few Orange Tips and Peacocks and nice to see again, a few Dukes. I found a couple in the same area of the eastern clearing as last year, and they were both quite dark specimens – as indeed was the one I saw in 2014. Is this a characteristic of woodland Dukes, as opposed to downland ones?



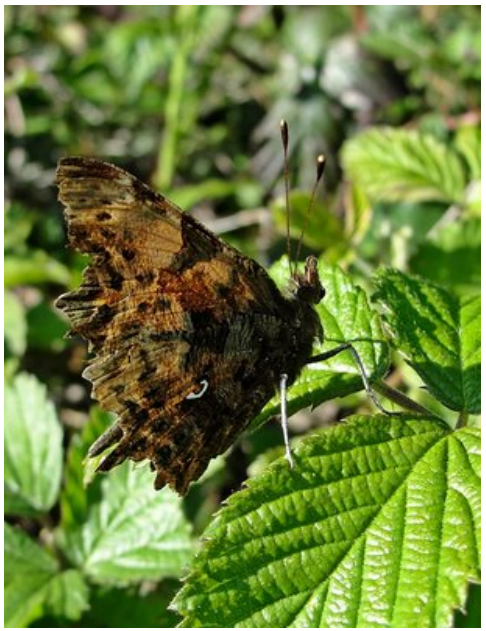


The traffic was also kind today, and I had plenty of time once I'd returned home to look around my local patch again. Small Heaths have now appeared, with three brand new examples chasing each other around.



Common Blues and Brown Argus should follow shortly. Otherwise, it was the usual suspects, with abundant Holly Blues everywhere I went, Whites (Large and Green-veined), Orange Tips of both sexes, Brimstones, a couple of Speckled Woods and Commas, and no less than nine Peacocks.







Three old codgers had set up adjacent territories along a piece of path, and despite their tattered wings and shrivelled abdomens, they were scrapping as energetically as ever and had lost none of their aerobatic abilities.





Amazing really for butterflies now a good ten months old.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 14-May-15 03:03 PM GMT

Great shots of the Pearls egg-laying Dave 🍷🍷 . Much more interesting (and more challenging to achieve) than the straightforward poses of a pretty butterfly on a flower – like the ones I take 😊😊 Re your OT's, well, it's hard to choose between them. A natural background shows the butterfly in its context but personally I quite often prefer a more dramatic, dark, contrasting background, which focuses attention purely on the butterfly. Horses for courses

Re: millerd

by trevor, 14-May-15 04:29 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

I personally like your OT. image, using the flash. Not suitable for use all the time, but it certainly worked this time. My preference is for a sharp Butterfly with a blurred background.

Nice one,
TREVOR.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 15-May-15 05:14 AM GMT

"millerd" wrote:

...Bishop's Hill looks a brilliant place, Neil – whereabouts are the Small Blues? I didn't have time to look far and only found the Dingies (very easily!)

Hi Dave,

It appears that the Small Blues that I saw the other week were amongst the first reported in Warwickshire this year, along with one from the Southam Bypass on the same day. Numbers should be building now and will probably be at their peak in a week or two when it should be possible to see them from just inside the gate and anywhere in the Yellowland part within the fence. If you then follow the path to the left they can be found anywhere along the path up the hill (shown in the views in the report in my diary).

Great report and photos from Bently Wood 😊, somewhere I have never been to...maybe one day.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-May-15 06:22 AM GMT

Great Pearls and Dukes Dave 😊 Was the Duke at the far end in amongst the tussocks and stuff as per Alan Thornbury? By the way the worries about the Marshies site were unfounded – I was there Wednesday night and they were already in good numbers 😊 I wonder where you'll be heading next 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-May-15 06:44 AM GMT

Thanks, Pauline and Trevor – I personally like photos with a bit of context. Sometimes I feel the exquisite poses with uniform backgrounds could be anywhere (even a reared specimen in an artificial environment – you wouldn't know). However, both have their place, and luckily everyone's taste is different. Interestingly, the egg-laying Pearls were relatively easy to get close too – their mission in life was not going to be disturbed by a mere human with a camera. I was able to watch quite a bit of this activity yesterday.

Thanks for the extra detail, Neil. I know exactly where to look for the Small Blues now. 😊

Thanks, Wurzel – I've sent you a quick pm. The Dukes were at the end apparently, but these two I saw on the right hand side close to the trees. As for further trips? Well, no more days like today's 100% washout, please. 😊 Then we'll see... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-May-15 06:44 AM GMT

Saturday 16th May: Another sunny day. A bit of a late start meant shortening the radius of operations, and the need to keep my ten-year-old interested was a factor too. In the end, we drove to Butterfly World near St. Albans, which has a few more things to entertain small boys than just a hillside full of butterflies does. There is also a significant discount off the entry fee for BC members. After a look around the various gardens, and a spell with the tropical Lepidoptera, we set off round the various wildflower banks in search of indigenous species. Unfortunately, it was a bit on the breezy side, especially early on, and what we saw was battling against the wind. After a couple of Brimstones, the next thing I caught sight of was a flash of salmon-pink – and quite a large flash too. Flying strongly straight into the north-westerly wind was a Painted Lady. It briefly grounded (I'm not sure this was voluntarily) and I managed a distant lousy shot of my first PL sighting for 2015.



Hopefully, this is part of the vanguard of many more heading up from the continent which have been seen along the south coast in recent days. Shortly afterwards, we wandered along one of the artificial chalk rubble ridges, looking down into the gully between them. In this slightly sheltered dip, a couple of Small Blues were flying – another 2015 first.



I also spotted a couple of Burnet Companion moths (impossible to approach) in the same area. At the far end of these ridges, close to the area designated the "Music Meadow", a piece of flatter ground with various wildflowers and a bit less wind threw up three or four Common Blues, a Brown Argus and a Small Copper. 2015 sightings: species three, four and five for the day.



Unfortunately the Small Copper, a lovely new individual, was so distracted by constantly chasing the Blues away that I couldn't follow it to a settling point. There were also a couple of newly emerged Cinnabar moths.



Carrying on round and back past the giant ant, I spoke to some people who had seen several Small Blues in a sheltered area along the fence on the other side of which lie the Gardens of the Rose. Other sightings: three or four Orange Tips, more Brimstones, a few Green-veined Whites, a Small Tortoiseshell and a Peacock. Overall, I was impressed to see the good variety of species that have taken advantage of the habitat laid out for them, and no doubt on a less windy day might have seen more. (And five year "ticks" in one day! 😊)

Back home later on, I managed a couple of Green-veined White shots – a much underrated butterfly.



I also saw a Holly Blue, a Peacock and a Comma during the brief time I was out.

Dave

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 17-May-15 06:54 AM GMT

You saw a lot more than I did today, Dave.

I'm particularly envious of your Common Blues and Brown Argus! 🍷

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-May-15 07:01 AM GMT

Seems you had a much better day Dave 😊 Lovely Common and Small Blues 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 17-May-15 06:27 PM GMT

Lovely photo's Millerd, nothing like that here yet. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 18-May-15 04:52 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Those Small Blue images are some of the best i've ever seen. The texture of the wings has been captured to perfection.

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-May-15 06:13 AM GMT

Thank you all again for your kind comments, especially yours Trevor about the Small Blues. 😊

Nothing so exciting today, though the weather behaved better than forecast and the sun shone for most of it. I toured my local patch – each time there are subtle differences with the vegetation, and with what I see. For example, there has been a complete absence of Small Whites recently, but they were back today.





The Holly Blues have started to move from their usual haunts and are now turning up almost anywhere. The first I saw was on a privet hedge next to home.



I later watched one crossing a large meadow area at low level and was convinced that it was a Common Blue until it reached the edge – it flew into the hedge and wandered around inside before reappearing and perching on various bits of foliage. A female Holly Blue, not a male Common Blue.





More Small Heaths were out, and spread over a wider area now.



Small Heath habitat close to the M25 J14 (also where the Holly Blue above was seen)





Peacocks and Commas were still hanging on – just – with one Comma looking almost transparent as well as very ragged.



In surprisingly good nick...



... more than can be said for this one

There were a couple of new Speckled Woods, one of which was quite russet in colour near the body, plus Green-veined Whites and a solitary female Orange Tip.





Every day is different: give it another week and spring will have progressed just a bit more...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 18-May-15 08:36 PM GMT

Lovely photos Dave, that female OT has given me hope 😊 may be I'll see them at HLB now. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Willow, 19-May-15 05:18 AM GMT

Your getting out and about and capturing a really good range of species Dave, and its always nice to see a good range of images too 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-May-15 06:35 AM GMT

Great stuff Dave, the Small Pearls can't be far off now, this might be the year when we finally bump into each other in e field 😲😂 I see you've been doing your Holly Blue whispering again - you need to do a workshop to teach us the tricks 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 19-May-15 06:37 AM GMT

There's been a veritable plethora of Holly Blue shots this spring. I wonder whether, perhaps, they're reaching the peak of their 7 year cycle?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-May-15 04:14 AM GMT

Thank you Goldie, Bill, Wurzel and David - your comments are much appreciated. You never know, Wurzel, we may yet meet at Bentley, rather than miss each other. Those SPBF will certainly entice me back... 😊

I was wondering about the seven-year cycle thing too, David. Holly Blues have certainly been numerous here this spring, but they didn't do badly the last two years either. I'm sure I read somewhere that they are not necessarily in sync all over the country, so that an abundance in one place may run alongside a dearth somewhere else. It makes sense - conditions vary widely between locations, and even if the parasite is the major determining factor it may well not be the only one.

Today (20th), just as I left work at five, the sun emerged and the wind dropped a bit. To follow Bill's ever sound advice, I cast doubt aside and ventured out into the adjacent country park at Bedfont Lakes. The habitat alongside the railway is coming along nicely, with trefoil abundant and in flower, and the big ox-eye daisies nearly so. Given some sun, and more especially less wind, I would expect Common Blues, Brown Argus and Small Coppers to appear any day. However, I had nearly given up today when I spotted a small shape roosting on a plantain flower. Forgetting the length of my shadow, I disturbed it, and a beautiful new female Common Blue sailed off downwind. Luckily, she chose then to bask for a while, before finding another roosting spot on a knapweed bud.



Just the one butterfly, but worth the effort. 😊 No males out yet, though.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-May-15 06:23 AM GMT

A repeat of yesterday's visit to the Country Park, only it was earlier (around three in the afternoon), warmer, sunnier and less windy. There were many more butterflies: Brimstones and Peacocks from the old guard were still frequent, along with a few Green-veined Whites and a single (female) Orange Tip.



The new arrivals were a single Small Heath, plus good numbers of both Common Blues and Brown Argus.





As I left, I spotted a blue that seemed far more worn than the others. Settling on a bramble rather confirmed its identity – a female Holly Blue (again!).



I was also aware I was being watched...



Back home: With late evenings now, and in this case a warm and sunny one, a walk locally after six is still worthwhile. The first two butterflies encountered were inevitably two Holly Blues. The first was a female fluttering around and then perching on dogwood.



The second turned out to be a male basking on brambles, which briefly flashed its wings wide, for once just at the right moment. It was only a little worn, but appeared very pale, more silvery-grey than blue, but the brightness and low angle of the sun no doubt played a part.



Also seen were a few Small Heaths, GWV and a male Orange Tip, plus the first Small Tortoiseshell I have seen for a while.



It was barely recognisable, and was being given a hard time by a Peacock. The latter seemed extraordinarily well-preserved for May, looking to have at least a few more weeks of life left in him.



Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-May-15 06:27 AM GMT

Great stuff Dave – seriously how the hell do you manage to get so many open wing shots of Holly Blues? 🍷🍷 I was wondering about teh Holly Blues being on the up stage of their boom/bust cycle too and I've also seen more Small Heath so far this year than the last couple as well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 22-May-15 06:29 AM GMT

Nice shots of the Butterflies Millerd, the Small Heath, Brown Argus and the Common Blue pair in particular 🍷 We're still waiting for them here 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 22-May-15 06:39 AM GMT

Superb pictures, amazing to think that Small Tortoiseshell is a similar age to the Peacock, he must have grown up on the rough side of town 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 22-May-15 07:06 AM GMT

I haven't seen Small Tortoiseshells for a while now.

Strange how they hang on in parts of the country far warmer than the one I live in.

Maybe our milder, coastal early springs are to blame?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-May-15 01:03 AM GMT

Thanks once again for all the comments, everyone. There's always something different each time I go out, even over the same ground. 😊 It's one of the things that makes this hobby interesting.

Friday 22nd: I had some rearrangement of children to do this evening up at Cherwell Valley services, so by giving myself plenty of time, I managed to build in a side trip just off the M40 to Aston Rowant (N). For once, luck favoured me and there was intermittent sunshine on the hillside and it was warm. I set off along the path at the bottom of the hill, which is rather more sheltered, and before very long it was clear that Brown Argus had been emerging in force.







They were everywhere, little silvery streaks against the green, tussling with each other and attacking the Common Blues that were also around in good numbers.





Brimstones patrolled the hedge line, and there were a couple of Peacocks still lively in the sunshine. Wandering a little up the slope, I started to come across Dingy Skippers, perhaps ten altogether seen. However, the small fraction of the hill I walked over would indicate there might have been quite a few altogether.



Finally, I spotted the characteristically floppy flight of a female Orange Tip, ambling along between nectar stops. If you watch them enough, they become easy to tell apart from Small and GV Whites.



Overall, the particular highlight was finding a mating pair of Brown Argus, which were initially being pestered by two other males. When I sat down to take a few shots, these two decided to give up.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-May-15 04:44 AM GMT

Saturday 23rd started well, and almost tempted me out to more distant parts until I looked at the weather forecast and the clouds heading down from

the northeast. In the end, I made the most of a short window and set off for an extended local walk instead. First to come into view were a couple of lovely new Speckled Woods.



They basked nicely in between sorties after passing Holly Blues – yes, they are still around.



In the increasingly short bursts of sun, a few whites and a couple of Peacocks popped out, only to disappear again with the cloud.



As always seems to happen, I then watched a female Holly Blue settle on a bramble quite close by, and with the fluctuations in light levels, it opened and closed its wings.





It wasn't going anywhere, so I tried the flash experiment – a rather artificial result though it's quite a clear image.



Next, I found a few Small Heaths down on the ground or perched up on stalks – numbers seem to be increasing, and they are well spread out now.





Another flash photo with a better result?



At the point at which I'd decided to turn around, I found myself accompanied (much as yesterday) by Brown Argus and Common Blue.







They were both flying despite the sun being obscured – at this time of year its strength through the cloud can clearly be felt either side of midday. One Common Blue was beautifully new, and of a really deep hue. Unfortunately the only time it chose to open up fully was with an annoying piece of obscuring grass.



Shortly afterward it went off to roost, as the temperature dropped noticeably.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 24-May-15 06:19 AM GMT

Great sequence, Dave. Common Blues and Brown Argus are butterflies I never tire of in spite of their relative ubiquity.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-May-15 04:01 AM GMT

Me neither, David. When fresh, they are as beautiful as anything you might find, and a new Common Blue female can be an absolute jewel.

Sunday 24th: Only a brief excursion locally was possible today before those clouds appeared again. A Brimstone appeared outside the front door, and obligingly stopped for a photo.





Nothing new today, really: Peacocks, Holly Blues, Speckled Woods.



However, it was good to see that Orange Tips are still around: I saw three (2m, 1f).



Of some note was an increase in both numbers and spread of the Common Blues which were much more widely scattered today.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 26-May-15 12:37 AM GMT

Just catching up Millerd on posts, lovely shots of the Common Blues and Brown Argus, I'm hoping the Northern BA will be out when I visit Gait Barrow again, the CB have only just come out here so hope fully they'll be out up there also the elusive Pearls .Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 26-May-15 05:43 AM GMT

Great shots of the blues Dave 😊 Is it just me or do the spots on the OT seem abnormally large 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-May-15 06:23 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie and Wurzel! Yes, another one with bigger than usual spots. Maybe there's a local strain. 😊

I popped down to Box Hill today, mostly to entertain a half-term small boy. For the first time in a very long while, I had the camera, but the memory card was still in the computer. 😊 As it happened, there were few opportunities to take any photos, mostly because we didn't explore that much. Elliot counted Brimstones (reaching six I think) and I counted everything else: one Common Blue, One Small Heath, one Dingy Skipper, and one suspected Grizzled Skipper.

When we got home, he went off to see a friend (computer games being a greater attraction) and I had another look around my local patch. There was bothersome cloud, but it was a worthwhile trip. A small piece of meadow just two minutes from home has recently erupted with flowers, and I was pleased to find Common Blues here today (one male, one female) and a single Brown Argus.





In eight years of walking across this bit of grass, this is the first I've seen here – and it's a good half-mile from the nearest colony I know of.





Elsewhere, a few Speckled Woods appeared, a couple of Holly Blues, plus the usual Peacocks in their usual niches, and a Comma hanging on in there.



I disturbed several Small Heaths from the grass, but found no further Blues – roosting elsewhere somewhere no doubt. I detoured to a sheltered spot between hawthorn, hazel and bramble where roosting butterflies are often found, and was almost cannoned into by a darting flash of orange. This turned out to be my first Large Skipper of the year (a week or so earlier than 2014 and 2013). It remained very active but paused just long enough to be caught on camera.



Always worth making those short trips out! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 27-May-15 06:54 AM GMT

Talk about the old and the new!!

A geriatric Comma in tandem with a newly emerged Large Skipper!

Re: millerd

by Willow, 27-May-15 10:46 PM GMT

Really nice mix of species photos Dave 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-May-15 01:47 AM GMT

There is quite a bit of overlap at the moment, David, with plenty of last year's Brimstones and Peacocks still around, and some of the latter surprisingly well-preserved.



I wonder if some of these could be from a second brood last summer (this was reported) and therefore are only seven or eight months old, rather than ten or more. Some certainly didn't hibernate properly until October around here.

Thanks, Bill. 😊 I try to get a record of all I see, not just the flashy and unusual, which makes for a good variety. And every day is slightly different, of course! 😊

Today, I was out locally, firstly with Elliot and then a bit later without the extra set of eyes. For someone who claims to be indifferent about butterflies, he identified the first one of the day with easy nonchalance - "It's a Brimstone, and I would say it's a female by the colour". Spot on, and I was still at the stage of working out it wasn't a Large White.



He then correctly identified a Green-veined White in the air, plus a Common Blue when 90% of those he's seen recently have been Holly Blues. I was

impressed. We saw a few Speckled Woods and some more Holly Blues, but that was it for the first trip out.



A couple of hours later I went out again, and a bit further. There were a lot more Common Blues out now, with easily 15 – 20 seen of both sexes in two areas, the small patch near home and the much larger expanse near the motorway.





The Brown Argus were also well spread out and in both sites, though not in numbers to match the Common Blues.



Along the path across the main meadow area, I spotted a flash of deep orange, and it briefly settled (unfortunately with wings closed) showing itself to be a brand new Small Tortoiseshell, the first of the next generation.



Small Heaths were common in this area, popping up from the grass at regular intervals. One part of the path, which you take to access the main meadow, has woodland on both sides, and is a favourite patrolling corridor for all pierid butterflies. Today there were Large and Green-veined Whites, plus the odd Brimstone, but none stopped more than a moment in their endless investigation of anything white. However, there were at least two male Orange Tips today, and they did settle to nectar more frequently.





I then returned to the original mini-meadow near home and watched the Brown Argus and the Common Blues for a while. I found a mating pair of the latter (both looking fresh) and also two very blue females.







The edges of this patch have been mown – my worry is that the rest will follow shortly, as this is the usual practice.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 28-May-15 05:06 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

A great selection of photos but I have to pick out the first three Orange-tip shots plus the very blue Common Blue females, lovely stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by kevling, 28-May-15 03:45 PM GMT

Dave,

Nice sequence with the mating Common Blues. I saw my first female of the year this week, that takes on an almost electric blue when the light is just right. Great Stuff 😊

Regards Kev

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 29-May-15 06:00 AM GMT

Good to see orange-tips still hanging in there and those awesome good looking Blues 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-May-15 06:50 AM GMT

That female is a stunning example Dave, almost male looking because of the lack of lunules 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-May-15 06:56 AM GMT

Thanks, Neil – two of those OT photos are the same one, differently cropped, as I expect you noticed. A bit of luck there as with no hope of getting close it was a question of a very quick point and zoom. 😊

Thanks, Kev and Buggy – those female Common Blues can be stunning. 😊

Thanks, Wurzel – she did indeed look like a male in flight, just a bit dark, perhaps. With little in the way of lunules and broad dark borders, she looks like a different species entirely. Almost SSB... 😊😊

Thursday 28th May: I had planned a trip down to see a friend in Taunton for a couple of days. Looking ahead from last weekend at the forecast for Thursday, I hadn't been very hopeful of a side trip, but as the day approached it became increasingly favourable. So, on the day, I set off on a detour from the A303 to Wurzel's Wiltshire hill to see if it still abounded in Marsh Fritillaries. Initially, it was chilly and windy, but the sun and temperature increased and the wind dropped a bit, so by the time I had to leave it was a lovely day.



There were a lot of butterflies, including good numbers still of fritillaries, though most of these were past their best.







The highlight was a mating pair, down in the grass, with the female characteristically showing an abdomen bulging hugely with eggs. Unlike many others, both butterflies seemed pretty new. Interestingly, the wing pattern of the female is somewhat aberrant, with elongated buff patches





Also seen, in very approximate order of abundance, were: Brown Argus, Dingy Skipper, Common Blue, Small Blue, Adonis Blue, Small Heath, Green Hairstreak, Grizzled Skipper and Green-veined White.





Singletons of Small Copper, Red Admiral, Peacock and Orange Tip were also spotted.
Well worth the detour.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 31-May-15 10:05 PM GMT

Lovely Marsh Frit's Millerd, I like the last photo with the Wings spread out very much Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Willow, 31-May-15 11:40 PM GMT

Some very pleasing Marshy images Dave, I can never get too much of MF 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 01-Jun-15 05:25 AM GMT

It's a bloody brilliant site, even with not so perfect weather! The weather in your pictures looks brighter than in mine but maybe thats just a difference in cameras and lenses. I didn't try and count how many Marshies I saw but was definately into 3 figures. Just wish it was a little bit closer so I could visit more often.

Re: millerd

by David M, 01-Jun-15 07:23 AM GMT

Sounds like you had a great day, Dave, and there have been precious few of those this year thus far!

Well done.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-15 07:25 AM GMT

Cracking shots Dave, I'm glad "Wurzel's Wiltshire Hill" produced the goods again 😊 although I don't think the local bracnh will be too impressed with the renaming of the site 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Jun-15 06:25 AM GMT

Thank you everyone – it's gem of a site and impossible to go wrong when you're there. Thanks especially to Wurzel for letting us in on the secret! 😊

It seems like a while since I last looked around locally. In between, there have been at least three miserable days and some hefty winds, so I expected some changes. I had to wait until five today, so that no doubt made a difference, too. Firstly, I came across several Common Blues and Brown Argus doing their best to roost in the breeze – and in two separate locations.





One of the CB females was pretty dark in flight, in contrast to all the blue ones seen before here. And that was pretty well it. There was one dishevelled Green-veined White and one Brimstone looking to bed down in a convoluted mass of ivy. Then I noticed something brighter. A male Orange Tip was flitting excitedly around some bramble flowers. It was looking to nectar, and settled several times on the only two open flowers. However, it was clearly not getting as much as it wanted and kept settling on the unopened buds, frustratedly probing and having to move on. Presumably the smell of nectar can be detected from these buds, and it was causing this butterfly some distress.





It was clearly towards the end of its life – I wonder if I shall see many – or any – more this year?

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Jun-15 06:39 AM GMT

No worries Dave 😊 Despite the wear that is still a very handsome Orange-tip – it's just a shame that they're only around for such a short time...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Jun-15 06:38 AM GMT

Not the smallest glimpse of one today, Wurzel. Two months is about all they manage, sadly – my first this year was on 7th April. 😞 But onward and upward!

A lucky juxtaposition of a rare extra day off work and a favourable weather forecast meant there had to be an excursion somewhere. Car problems dictated that public transport would be the choice (being stranded with an immobile car in Bentley Wood isn't something I would relish. My phone has no signal there for a start...). So, Travelcard in hand, I set off for Croydon and Hutchinson's Bank. South London suburbia actually looks quite attractive at this time of year in brilliant sunshine, surprisingly enough, and the tram ride down to New Addington was very pleasant.

Another ten minutes walk or so, and I was making my way up Farleigh Dean Crescent, through the trees and into the "cutting". My eye was immediately caught by a flash of orangey-pink – a Glanville as quick as that? But no – it was actually a fresh-looking and rather small Painted Lady.



However, a few yards further on there was indeed a male Glanville, with an audience of several folk keen on capturing his likeness. I joined them. Though cooperative, the butterfly chose to lean on a few blades of grass, spoiling the view of its glorious underside somewhat.







Eventually it moved on, and I set out to see what else was out and about.

Small Blues were to be found almost anywhere, with one or two attracted to muddy puddles down on the lower path.





Whilst following one of these I nearly trod on another Glanville Fritillary. Bearing no grudge, it settled again a bit further along and allowed a few photos before taking off into the trees.



Though my two sightings were some distance apart, I am not convinced I didn't see the same butterfly twice!

Brimstones and Common Blues were the most frequent species here today (as on my visit last year), and I saw Small Heath, both Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and a couple of Peacocks.





Others talked of Green Hairstreaks, but I saw none. However, as seems to have happened a lot this year, I came across a female Holly Blue – a very worn individual though.



Having enjoyed this splendid site, I made my way back to the tramstop through the woodland, where Speckled Woods provided a suitable escort in the cool dappled shade.

A couple of hours later I was home, but decided to have a quick look nearby – no surprises, but Common Blue numbers are very good this year so far. By the look of this one, they are still emerging.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-Jun-15 06:49 AM GMT

Great shots of the Glanvilles and your first Small Blue shot is an absolute cracker Dave 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 05-Jun-15 07:01 AM GMT

You definitely made the right decision there, Dave.

Looks like you had a splendid day.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 05-Jun-15 07:18 AM GMT

Nice Glanvilles, they can be very accomodating once settled can't they 😊. I've become very familiar with that tram ride from East Croydon recently!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jun-15 07:13 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – I was pleased with that Small Blue. When you get a shot with one posed like that, you forget just how tiny they are. 😊

It was a very good day, David, and a pleasant change to be on a train/tube/tram/bus than stuck in traffic on the M25 *again*. 😊

I enjoyed the tram in particular, Buggy – a bit of a novelty! 😊

Back to the less exotic today, with just a late afternoon walk around my local patch. The humidity of the morning was being blown away, and the sun shone. It remained quite warm, despite a strong breeze yet again. Common Blues dominated the walk, with at least 20 seen, plus three or four Brown Argus, a few Speckled Woods and a dozen or so Small Heaths.



another blue female

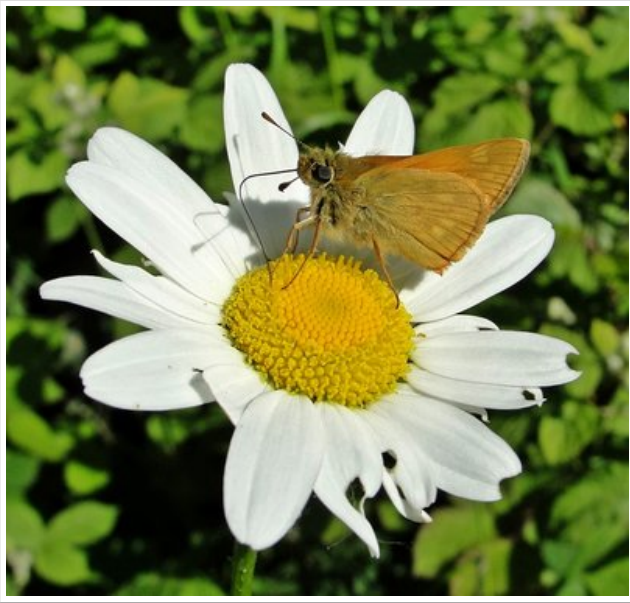
I only saw one white butterfly, which proved to be a male Small White, and just one Peacock – though this was a virtually undamaged one showing its age only in its faded colours and diminished abdomen.



However, I encountered a Large Skipper energetically zipping up and down in the sunlight. In fact I came upon it twice, as I passed through its territory in both directions. (At least I assume it was the same one).







Finally, walking through an open sunny area, I was buzzed by a Red Admiral and then almost immediately by another. The two were constantly scrapping over this bit of ground, soaring and swooping and gyrating together faster than I could track them. When not chasing each other, they showed as much interest in me as I did in them – coming in close then zooming vertically up in front of my face, and then coming in from behind. Their shadows gave them away.



A little later, in a shadier glade by the river, I came across another Red Admiral basking in a sunny spot.



None for a few weeks, then three at once. All were rather worn, so I assume they arrived from points south with today's humid weather.

To finish with, my favourite cute skipper pose:



Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 06-Jun-15 02:04 PM GMT

Fantastic shots of the Large Skipper Dave. I saw my first one yesterday but he wasn't hanging around for photos 😞

Re: millerd

by trevor, 06-Jun-15 02:48 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Fabulous Glanville images. Several UKB enthusiasts have also posted images of Glanvilles at this

site. For me i think seeing this species near Croydon would mess with my head! 😄.

A totally different environment to the beautiful Isle of Wight !.

Is the site far from the tram stop at New Addington ?, might pay a visit.

Super images as usual,
TREVOR.

Re: millerd

by MrSp0ck, 06-Jun-15 04:12 PM GMT

Is the site far from the tram stop at New Addington ?

The site is only a very short walk from New Addington Tram Stop, if you take the footpath between the wooden Bear and the fence, and walk down the

footpath next to the local rubbish transfer site, to Featherbed Lane/ Farleigh Dean Crescent.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Jun-15 06:37 AM GMT

Thank you , Pauline - they are a very photogenic butterfly, but my can they move fast! This one luckily kept returning to roughly the same spot, even with me there. 😊

Thank you too, Trevor. You're right, it does feel a bit odd riding a tram from urban Croydon to see something as exotic as a Glanville. A bit continental, even... 😊 But the site is a splendid one overall, with much else to see, and hopefully the Glanvilles are here to stay and may yet spread along the Downs. As Mr SpOck says, it's only five minutes downhill from the tramstop - worth looking at a map just to check where the footpath starts as though quite close, it's just out of line-of-sight from the tram.

Though mostly sunny, it was very windy today, and my local walk was full of blue butterflies bursting from the grass and diving back down many metres downwind.



There continue to be a few new arrivals in the Common Blue world: this particular female was not quite as blue as some seen here this year, but was the only female to venture above grass level today.



Also see were a handful of increasingly worn Brown Argus, Small Heaths and Speckled Woods.



One Holly Blue put in a brief appearance (I thought they had all disappeared here), and there were two more Red Admirals. One appeared to be a female surveying the nettles with intent to lay – it spent a lot of time inaccessible under the leaves. The other was a relatively fresh-looking individual and definitely not one of the three seen yesterday.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 07-Jun-15 07:28 AM GMT

Great shots of the Common Blue females, and very nice shots of the Large Skipper too Dave 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Jun-15 05:45 AM GMT

Thank you, Maximus. The variety of Common Blue females makes a study in itself, and a relatively easily accessible one too. 😊

Sunday 7th June – only a brief local stroll today. Several swallows were to be seen swooping and skimming the vegetation on the nearest bit of meadow two minutes from home (surprisingly still uncut). Could this be why there was not a single Common Blue here today, and just a single Brown Argus? Food for thought (if not for swallows... 😊) However, all was not lost. A Painted Lady was nectaring on the clover, dancing from bloom to bloom before taking off at speed roughly northward.



A bit later on, I saw another pass straight through in the same direction, and hurtling would have been a suitable word for it. They really can fly. Also bumbling around the grass was a fresh male Meadow Brown – a first sighting for the year for me.



Not easy to photograph down in the grass, it then flew up into some trees (where it disturbed a couple of Holly Blues), and then came down to sit on a bit of foliage. The photo shows that it was sucking up honeydew from the leaf, something I have not seen this species do before – though it is a common practice for some.



Aside from another pair of Holly Blues and a selection of Speckled Woods, that's all the butterfly life I saw on what was a rather truncated walk. I did however come upon a heron sitting on the roadside, ignoring passing traffic a few feet away.



It then moved to take up a strident pose on a rooftop.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Jun-15 05:52 AM GMT

Nice Meadow Brown Dave - it won't be long now til the Marbled Whites and Ringlets are out! 🤪

Have a goodun

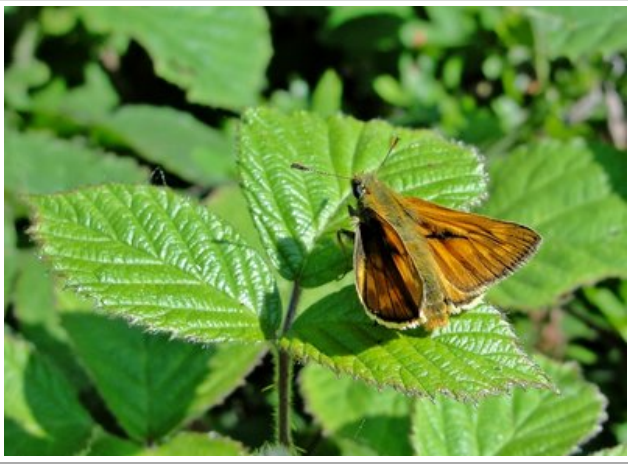
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Jun-15 06:17 AM GMT

True enough, Wurzel. I'm hoping the one Marbled White I saw on my local patch will become more this year. They aren't far away.

Not today, though. I went out late this afternoon, but it was still windy and cool despite late sunshine. I only managed to see one unidentified White, one Holly Blue, and one Large Skipper which had found a sheltered nook in the sun.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Jun-15 05:41 AM GMT

Thursday 11th June: exactly 24 hours after my last wander out – same places, same time of day (1700-ish). Sunny, windy – but a good 5 degrees warmer today, and a different selection to be seen.

Firstly, there were two male Brimstones, nectaring briefly on the bramble flowers coming into full bloom now, followed by a Small White doing the same.



Small Heaths and Common Blues were both still in good numbers over the open meadow areas between the M25 and the River Colne, plus a few Brown Argus. There were still a few fresh individuals of each. The Brown Argus is much more numerous here than it was last year – very good to see.



female Common Blue



male Brown Argus

They have been joined now by one or two Meadow Browns. I also tracked down the Small Tortoiseshell I'd seen the other day (I suspect it's the same one) and was buzzed as usual by a Red Admiral.



To complete the picture, a Large Skipper basked in a sheltered spot beneath the brambles.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 12-Jun-15 04:23 PM GMT

Hi Dave,
Nice selection for this quiet month. The emerging Bramble blossom is a sign of things to come, eg. White Admiral and Silver Washed Frit.
Bring it on !
TREVOR.

Re: millerd

by Willow, 13-Jun-15 06:52 PM GMT

We don't seem able to get any really stable weather conditions, but as Trevor mentions things will (hopefully!) get a little better as we head towards mid-summer 🤔 hard to believe how quickly it goes when your having fun is'nt it Dave 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Jun-15 08:41 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor. It really won't be long before those two species are out - but not on my local patch, unfortunately; though it's only 20 minutes to the nearest reliable location. 😊

I do hope so, Bill - today (13th) is utterly different to yesterday (cool, cloudy, breezy this morning 😞)

Friday 12th June: Once again, I set off out at the same time of day exactly. Very warm, humid, mostly cloudy, but above all very little wind. It was a while before I saw anything at all, but eventually I came across roosting Common Blues.



The sun started to break through, and today's warmth was enough to wake some of them up. Clearly they are still emerging by the fresh look of some I saw.







Also stirring right across the meadow area were Meadow Browns – I saw at least a dozen today, all males, and they were happy to fly even when the sun was in.





Small Heaths were frequent too, but starting to look a bit worn now.



Returning homewards, I reached the last sheltered grassy area where every summer a series of Red Admirals set up a territory. At seven o'clock – which it nearly was – there is little or no sun here, but on a warm evening that doesn't worry a Red Admiral. It didn't today: within a few moments of setting foot in this patch, I was investigated by a brand new Red Admiral. It swooped and soared, barrelling up and down the corridor between the trees and repeatedly trying to perch on grass stems that generally had no chance of bearing its weight.



success!
As I kept still, hoping it would have more success, it landed on my stomach.



I moved, and it set off again, but then came back to land inconveniently on my camera hand. The next time it flew off, I held my other hand out and it came straight down, like a bird of prey returning to the wrist.





After that, I couldn't get rid of it. It landed on my arms and in my hair, and back on my hand again.



It was not sucking up minerals, but just sitting there as if I was some kind of prominent bush. Eventually, after a final landing on my stomach again, I managed to disengage its attentions and escape, leaving it to patrol under the trees in the fading light.



Because of the generally low light levels, particularly with the Meadow Browns hiding in the grass, and with the friendly Red Admiral, I tried a bit of flash here and there as you can no doubt tell.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Jun-15 07:20 AM GMT

Saturday June 13th: It continued cloudy and quite cool until around half past two, when a few chinks of blue appeared towards the south. Following the maxim about venturing out in cases of doubt, I headed for Fairmile Common, near Cobham. The 20 minute journey took twice that (I love the M25), but it did mean the sun was much more in evidence by the time I arrived. I spotted a lady with a camera in the area right next to the car park which I think was cleared last year: she was engrossed in what proved to be reasonable numbers of Silver-studded Blues. I had a look at other parts of the site too, but overall this bit proved to be the best.









To start with, all we saw were male butterflies, but after about five o'clock, females began to appear too. Almost all the butterflies were fresh-looking, the males shining blue – almost silver in some lights, and the females with an iridescent sheen when they caught the sun.



some blue scales on this one





There were a few other species around: a female Holly Blue flying along the bramble hedge caused a bit of confusion for a moment – a very shaky record shot only of this one – there were a couple of Meadow Browns, and also two very energetic Painted Ladies.



Right at the end, my companion (whose name I didn't catch) found a mating pair of Silver-studded Blues. A fine way to wind up proceedings. 😊



However – the postscript to the adventure was that my car wouldn't start. 😞 Green Flag were very prompt, diagnosed a wonky starter motor, whanged it with a hammer and I was home before eight. 😊 Not bad – though it means I won't risk an outing tomorrow and the garage beckons on Monday. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jun-15 05:46 AM GMT

Sunday 14th June: A cloudy day, but enough brightness and warmth to make a walk worthwhile. A Meadow Brown flew up from the grass outside the front door as I emerged – I'd not seen one so close to home before.



I extended my usual route to take in Harmondsworth Moor, a round trip of about seven miles. As it happened, the extension didn't prove very fruitful, with just a handful of Common Blues, Brown Argus and Meadow Browns flying under the grey skies. The Brown Argus had seen better days:



I was hoping for an early Marbled White or a Small Skipper, but neither were out yet.

However, the main part of the walk, both out and back, was much more productive. Plenty of Meadow Browns and Small Heaths again, across the whole meadow area between river and motorway.





Common Blues were everywhere, too, and when the sun did emerge for the odd moment, so did they. There are still new ones emerging, both male and female, with some lovely examples of both. A couple of males:



The females were more interesting, with a great deal of variety:



the flash experiment again: interesting iridescent colour effects

The last of these, a delicate pale brown shade, was tiny – as small as a Brown Argus or even a Small Blue:



I also came across a mating pair:



I also counted five Small Tortoiseshells today, mostly (like this one) settling on the warmth of the path.



However, more notable were the Painted Ladies. Altogether, I had six encounters, but because of their strong flying nature, I may well have encountered some more than once. Nevertheless, I only saw one here during the whole of each of the last few years, so it's good to see them. With improving weather, there will probably be more over the next few days.





Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 15-Jun-15 06:26 AM GMT

That Small Tortoiseshell has incredibly bold markings, very nice individual!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Jun-15 06:49 AM GMT

It was a bit unusual, Buggy. Even taking photos of the more common species throws up lots of variety – one of the things I like about this hobby. 😊

15th June: Back to quick after-work walks again. Today at half past four it was mostly cloudy. I went less far than usual and saw a lot less, but as usual there were different sights to see. The first butterfly was a male Large White – never easy to get close to but the clouds kept this one less active.





Nearby I found a seething nest of Peacock Caterpillars. It's not often you can report attending a black mass without raising eyebrows, but that's what it was: a very black patch against the background of nettles.



A little further along and there on the verge was this beetle. About 3 – 4 cm long, it looked like a female stag beetle, only smaller. A little research tells me that it is in fact the Lesser Stag Beetle. (I should have guessed...)



Moving further on to the meadow near the motorway, I found a Large Skipper along the hedge-line, patrolling and perching as is their wont.



A scattering of Small Heaths, one or two worn Common Blues, and I turned around. Suddenly two larger dark shapes darted across in front of me and dived to the ground. This turned out to be a pair of courting Small Tortoiseshells. They were very lively – every now and again they would go to ground where the female would sit open winged while the male advanced literally quivering with excitement, climbing onto her. Then she would fly off and repeat the same ploy somewhere else down in the grass. I took a few shots, but their constant movement and skittishness, coupled with low light made it impossible to freeze the action. Soon they were beyond reach.



A different sort of walk...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-15 07:20 AM GMT

Fantastic reports recently Dave – those Silver Studs are to draw, especially the females – brill 🤩👍 Plus I see that you still managed to squeeze in a Holly Blue 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 16-Jun-15 07:51 AM GMT

Yes, that Holly Blue is quite a sighting for mid-June.

Nice diversity of species you've seen too.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Jun-15 06:02 AM GMT

Thanks for the encouraging comments, chaps. 😊 It's surprising what variety is out there amongst the commoner species at a quietish time of year.

I did see another Holly Blue today as well, but no photo this time 😞

16th June: a short walk alongside the railway in Bedfont Lakes Country Park today after work. Sunny, very warm and not too much breeze, but not much flying. The first I saw was the Holly Blue mentioned above, patrolling a bramble/hawthorn/blackthorn hedge and finally soaring high up over it. It stopped once – just long enough to confirm its ID. There were also a few Common Blues about, but they emerge earlier here than the patch near home, so the first brood is clearly fading fast. One individual was being pursued by a Small Copper, which unfortunately sharply doubled back and escaped the attention of my camera. I have found this species very elusive so far this year. One reason for coming here today was to look for Small Skippers, but there were none to be seen. A few Small Heaths bumbled about, and a couple of Meadow Browns which included the first female I've seen this year. Finally, I saw one elderly Brimstone, one new Small Tortoiseshell, and posing nicely on a knapweed flower, a single Large Skipper.



Hopefully in a couple of weeks or so, there will be a lot more to see in this spot.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 17-Jun-15 03:29 PM GMT

Just catching up Dave and loving the story and shots of the RA. Some great SSB images there too – my particular favourites ...615 which captures that gorgeous silvery grey colour against a complimentary background and the first mating pair. IMO a really well composed shot. I am also very envious of the Painted Lady – I'm beginning to think I must be one of the few left who haven't seen one yet 🤩👍

Re: millerd

by Willow, 17-Jun-15 08:28 PM GMT

Wonderful **Red Admiral** moments Dave, also enjoyed your other fine images 😊 but I especially liked the **S-s B** shots...just keep em' coming 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 18-Jun-15 04:24 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, fantastic shots of the SSB's which I've yet to see, my list is Quite long on unseen Butterflies I hope to catch up on some this year, (hope is the Word) 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jun-15 05:14 AM GMT

Hi Dave, just catching up on your diary again. Great reports with some smashing photos to accompany them. Hard to pick any favourites but the Red Admiral and Silver-studded Blues particularly stand out 😊

What is your secret with Holly Blues? you seem to be a magnet for them.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jun-15 06:26 AM GMT

Thank you all for your comments, especially on the SSBs and the exceptionally friendly Red Admiral. You're very generous! 😊

The Red Admiral moment is one I will remember, Pauline 😊 – and those SSB are something I never get tired of seeing (as Bill says too!). I hope you get the chance too, Goldie: is there any way you can detour via one of the Surrey sites on one of your trips to Kent? Fairmile Common is only ten minutes off the M25...

Holly Blues, Neil... I've seen a lot locally, but they pop up as singletons almost everywhere I've been. Watch the hedgerows and one will be along shortly! The next brood will be out before long I suppose, as the first eggs were laid in mid-April.

18th June: No HB today, however, though the first of a new brood of something else were flying locally. I went out after work (around five or so) in warm hazy sunshine. Along relatively shady paths near the river, I came across a couple of Speckled Woods flying in and out of the trees, and in three separate locations the sunny patches were patrolled by Red Admirals. I watched one quite single-mindedly pursue a bee for ages back and forth. This species is an almost constant fixture here from February to November and a joy to watch.





Moving nearer to the motorway, the Large Skipper corner now had three or four inhabitants, including a female hiding in the undergrowth which I only spotted by the attention being given to it by the males. I think one of them may have been successful, as they disappeared out of sight deep in the foliage.



As usual, quite a few Common Blues and Small Heaths flew over the meadow area, and as I walked through the grass, increasing numbers of Meadow Browns erupted from under my feet. Every one was a male.

With nothing more interesting around, I returned past the Large Skippers and had one of those moments I have here every year – "that wasn't a Fritillary, surely?" Well, no it wasn't, and it never has been, and probably won't ever be, but it was what it always is, a new Summer *hutchinsoni* Comma. In fact, it turned out to be two of them, which meant the time they spent perching was minimal, because they wouldn't leave each other alone. Their energetic sparring at one point drew the attention of a hefty dragonfly, but this beastie clearly couldn't work out which one to target, and in any case was left far behind when the Commas separated and plummeted to earth. Very entertaining!



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-15 06:50 AM GMT

H.Commas - where is the season going to? Great shots Dave 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Jun-15 08:22 AM GMT

I know, Wurzel – and more signs today with two more species for the year seen.

19th June: After an early finish at work and with far better weather than promised I knew I could take a detour off my trip up the M40 this afternoon: the lanes of Oxfordshire took me to Whitecross Green Wood. Last year I visited this delightful spot on 17th June, so it was interesting to compare. This year I saw only a handful of Large Skippers, compared to dozens seen last year.



One Marbled White appeared today, plus Meadow Browns and Speckled Woods, and a few fading Common Blues. However, this was not the main event. There were at least a dozen Black Hairstreaks at two of the usual hotspots in the wood, though compared to last year they were flying higher and did not come down to nectar at all. Consequently, photos were tricky as the butterflies played peek-a-boo amongst the blackthorn and hazel bushes.



One was clearly sucking up honeydew, with its tongue trailing between its forelegs.



Other individuals were living proof of the value of deceptive tails, with clear bird-strikes to the hindwings.



One more took off at the moment the shutter opened, affording a (rather blurred) view of the orange spots on its upper hindwings.



The Marbled White was a pleasant coda to the visit.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 20-Jun-15 03:31 PM GMT

Excellent Black Hairstreak images, taken in very trying circumstances . The frustration of it all !.

Well done !
TREVOR.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Jun-15 07:30 AM GMT

Thank you, Trevor – yes, there was a touch of the traditional neck-ache watching them flit around the tops of the bushes and then tantalisingly down a bit, only to settle partly behind a leaf, or exactly edge on. 😊😊 However, the shots you get in those circumstances really reflect the afternoon's experience in a way some of the more "perfect" shots don't. 😊

20th June: grey, a bit of drizzle, but muggy and warm. Always worth a wander out locally, though. I had reached the meadow area near the motorway before I saw anything at all, but once there the sky brightened a bit and the grass started to burst forth with Meadow Browns. Overall, there were probably hundreds, the males now being joined by lovely new females. Almost every square metre had a butterfly. The females were much larger and brighter than the males, and if possible even more floppy in flight.







a male underside for contrast

There were more Small Heaths today as well, and plenty of Common Blues with the odd newer one still amongst them.





All three of these species are doing well so far here this year. Other species seen were Small Tortoiseshells (3) and one each of Painted Lady and Red Admiral flying fast over the highest part of the field, plus one Large Skipper to complete the ramble.





Oh, and I did come across some more Peacock caterpillars as well.



I tend not to mention the abundance of day-flying moths that always complicate the butterfly-spotting – here are a few that stood out today.



The first is a Cinnabar, the second I am guessing is a Five-spot Burnet (I can only count five spots...), but the last I have no idea about.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Paul Harfield, 21-Jun-15 07:53 AM GMT

Hi Dave

Just catching up. I have to agree with others comments, your recent reports and pics are superb 😊 I cant single out a specific favourite, but Silver Studded Blues are always a joy 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jun-15 06:04 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Looks like you had better weather than we did yesterday, rained all day again for the second Saturday on the trot.

Great shots of the Black Hairstreaks, better than I managed at Bernwood 🍷 I nearly went to Whitecross Green the other day but lingered so long at Bernwood I ran out of time.

I would go for Narrow-bordered Five-spot for your Burnet moth as the middle pair of spots are well defined whereas in the Five-spot Burnet they tend to merge together although that is not a reliable distinguishing feature.
The Small White moth looks like a Spindle Ermine.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by Willow, 22-Jun-15 12:15 AM GMT

Another set of great images to go with your interesting report Dave 😊 your micro-moth appears to be the Thistle Ermine...nice ain't they!

Oops! sorry Neil I didn't notice your Spindle Ermine suggestion, notice the two rows of black dots and the lack of an upturned slightly feathered wing-tip on Dave's image – Spindle doesn't have two rows of dots, only the one, and it does have an upturned slightly feathered wing-tip...hope I've explained clearly...but I doubt it 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-15 02:21 AM GMT

Oops, that will teach me to dive in before I looked properly 😊 Bill is right. In my defence I only said it 'looked' like a Spindle Ermine 😊, its just that looking at it again it looks more like a Thistle Ermine 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Jun-15 06:30 AM GMT

Thank you Jack, Neil and Bill – very kind. And thank you for the moth ID – I am building up a collection of assorted moths taken rather haphazardly over the years. I don't think I've ever been close enough to a moth like that Ermine to get a picture before.

21st June: An hour or so this morning at Box Hill without a memory card in the camera – how daft! 😊 Marbled Whites were out on Burford Spur, plus Meadow Browns and at least four Dark Green Fritillaries. Just to annoy me I suspect, one landed right in front of me. Later in the day I was near the Hell Fire caves (West Wycombe), where more Marbled Whites were about.

22nd June: After work I thought I'd nip down to Box Hill again, this time with camera fully primed. At four o'clock, I steamed onto the M25, and stopped. The signs didn't say "queue" or even "delays". No, they said "J15 – J9 SEVERE DELAYS". Having joined at J14 and intending to drive to J9, you can imagine my annoyance. Plan B was invoked, involving coming off the motorway again and going instead to Dawney's Hill near Woking. It still took an hour and by the time I got there the bright sunshine was threatened by cloud. However, there were at least a dozen brave Silver-studded Blues battling the stiff breeze, and careful examination of the gorse and heather revealed quite a few more roosting. It's too early for Grayling, but a large female Meadow Brown did a passable impersonation, flying haphazardly into the air and then dropping down suddenly to disappear amongst the ground litter.





I'll have to try Box Hill again later in the week!

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 23-Jun-15 02:36 PM GMT

Morning Dave, that M25 is a nightmare. On 14 July 2003 (the hottest day of that year) I was stuck on it for 7 hours!!!! trying to get a sick bird to the vet – sadly died as a result 😞. You have taken some smashing shots recently, especially those Meadow Browns 🦋. I take my hat off to you and others who have managed to get such great shots of BH 🦋. I have only tried once (and failed miserably) so I appreciate what a tricky little butterfly they can be.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Jun-15 06:20 AM GMT

Thank you for your kind comments about my photos, Pauline, and the sympathy on the matter of the M25. I do object to sitting in a queue almost within sight of my house... 😊 I'm glad others appreciate the Meadow Brown. it is common, much overlooked, but quite tricky to get photos when they are newly out, when the colours can be subtle and rich. The pile of discarded images outnumbered the ones you see by a factor of several dozen! 😊

23rd June: one of those brief late after-work forays this evening. After six, and I managed to see three Red Admirals (all together in the same area), a Painted Lady, two Commas, two unidentified Whites, lots of Meadow Browns, a few Small Heaths and a few Common Blues.





The Comma photographed was neither of those seen a few days ago, though it was flying in the same spot.



There was also one elderly Brown Argus.



I haven't seen one of these for a some time - I wonder where it was hiding.

Earlier, I had seen a Painted Lady flying through Two Rivers car park in the middle of Staines.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 24-Jun-15 06:23 AM GMT

Nice shots from Whitecross Green Dave, I know just how tricky those Black Hairstreaks are!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-15 06:41 AM GMT

Lovely Silver-studs and Red Admirals Dave 🍷🍷 I need to get down to Slop Bog methinks...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Willow, 25-Jun-15 05:18 AM GMT

Hi Dave, I've always found **Red Admiral** a bit difficult to get a good image of, havn't got a clue why, I'm rarely satisfied with the end result...judging by your fine images of the species you don't have any difficulty 🍷🍷 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jun-15 06:55 AM GMT

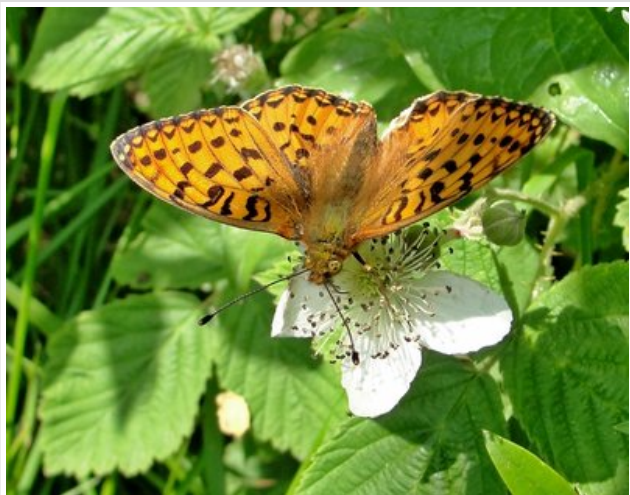
Thanks for your appreciative comments, Maximus, Wurzel and Bill. 😊

I think the answer to the Red Admiral question, Bill, is... lots of practice. I have no shortage of this species locally and you get to know their habits - where they perch and so on. They are a fascinating study, almost a poor man's Purple Emperor.

24th June (part one): Sunshine - and a day off as well. I set off for Box Hill again, and despite an "incident" and a wide load on the M25, I was there in under 40 minutes. I went straight out onto Burford Spur, and was greeted almost immediately by a Dark Green Fritillary.



And then another. And then two more - in fact there were probably a dozen altogether, though it's difficult to be sure because they do commute over the trees at the bottom to the zig-zag slopes (I saw one from the car in this area on my way back). They are still largely new, and are a lovely sight careering across the hill, or pottering around close to the ground hopefully looking for females.





Also out in good numbers as always were the Marbled Whites – quite a contrast to the bright orange of the fritillaries. They were also largely new, and were occupying every knapweed flower, as well as nectaring on the privet bushes.







Other species around: Meadow Browns were ubiquitous, including this female with very scalloped hindwings.



There were lots of Large Skippers, a Speckled Wood or two, a few Small Heaths, a couple of Brimstones, a Common Blue and (in a repeat of my same visit last year) a female Small Blue.



Now to Denbies...

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 25-Jun-15 07:07 AM GMT

Nice report from Box Hill Dave. We must have passed each other, I was there today as well. I would estimate 20 DGF from my wanderings. It was certainly a great day there today 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jun-15 07:13 AM GMT

June 24th (part two): From Box Hill, it's just a short drive to Denbies Hillside. As I set off across Steers Field, I soon encountered a single Dark Green Fritillary. This individual was taking far more rests than its neighbours across the Mole Valley, but was just as new, if not newer.





Continuing down to the gate onto the hillside proper via the path along the hedge on the western side of Steers Field, there were good numbers of Large Skippers, plus the first Small Skippers I have seen this year. There was another first too – a couple of sparring Meadow Browns resolved themselves into a Meadow Brown and a Ringlet.



I saw just the one of the latter, but I'm sure more will follow soon. Down on the slopes, there were more Skippers, more Meadow Browns, lots of Small Heaths, one Brimstone and quite a few Marbled Whites. The last of these species became less numerous as I walked westwards across the hillside. I tracked down to the bottom, where there was a bit of shelter, and came upon a single blue butterfly. It was a male Adonis, and in surprisingly good condition for so late on in the first brood.





Chalkhills will be appearing at any time (but not today). As I returned along the top path, a series of Small Tortoiseshells settled ahead of me, and then behind me as I passed.

Home now – but one detour first...

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jun-15 07:27 AM GMT

June 24th (part three): There was still time to take a detour off the M25 and have another look at Fairmile Common. As others have said, you cannot see too many Silver-studded Blues. There were probably more around than ten days ago, but annoying high cloud had diluted the sunshine, and for the most part the butterflies were roosting. However, some were flying under the warm overcast.





There were noticeably more females around today, and butterflies were to be found in all corners of the site.





Some were still fresh, so this spot is definitely still worth a visit soon with some bright sunshine bathing it.



As I returned to the car, I came upon a basking Small Tortoiseshell, soaking up what warmth it could.



Now it really was time to return home!

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 25-Jun-15 02:29 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

You certainly had a busy day, just how i like them !. Some magnificent images too. Is there anything finer than fresh DGF ?. Considering where you live you have some amazing sites to visit, even if some involve the M25 ! 😊.

Happy hunting,
TREVOR.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-15 05:38 AM GMT

Whoa - I wish I could have had a day like that 🍷 Those DGFs are lush plus I still need to get me some Silver-studs!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Jun-15 07:18 AM GMT

It was a great day, Buggy and Trevor. 😊 I'm amazed I didn't bump into you, Buggy, as I covered much of the same ground as you during the early afternoon. I was lucky with the DGF photos, considering how energetic they were (which I am not!).

Go for those Blues, Wurzel! I'm a bit lucky with SSB sites not too far away and en route to other places... I'm looking forward to you catching up on your expeditions in the long dark evenings before Christmas - very welcome! 😊😊

June 25th: Back to work today, but I engineered a break at lunchtime to pop into the nearby Country Park at Bedfont Lakes. Not a great deal was flying, mostly just a few Meadow Browns, Small Heaths and Large Skippers. However, there was an addition - along the path by the railway at least a dozen Small Skippers were now out.





As I made my way back to the entrance, a rather large white butterfly flopped down nearby. This turned out to be a fresh male Large White – possibly the largest one I've ever seen.



Home by five, so a local walk was in order too. Not a lot new here today: a couple of squabbling Red Admirals high over one of the paths, a couple of Speckled Woods in the shady bits of woodland, another (more reasonably proportioned) male Large White, a vibrant new *hutchinsoni* Comma.



There were more Large Skippers around now, including the first females...



...and once again hundreds of Meadow Browns. One of these seen away from the meadow area may well have been a Ringlet, but I didn't get close enough. Small Heaths were frequent, and in all states of freshness – they are continuous here throughout the season.



I watched one or two nectaring, flicking their wings open tantalisingly as I've seen them do before. I saw several Small Tortoiseshells today, mostly very fresh, but one which was much more worn was hovering in and out of a nettle patch. Finally, as at Bedfont, I found a couple of Small Skippers – the first here this year.



Goodness - what a lot of orange butterflies!

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 26-Jun-15 07:46 AM GMT

Nice Pics there Dave. I finished early today and sneaked of for an hour or so on my local patch, I got Large, Small and my first Essex Skippers 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Jun-15 06:49 AM GMT

Lovely shots Dave 😊 The second from last shot of the Small Skipper shows the most obvious sex brand I think I've ever seen! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Jun-15 07:54 AM GMT

Yes, Wurzel, no doubting the identity of that one! 😊

No Essex here yet, Buggy – it can't be long now, though... 😊

27th June: Limited opportunities today, so a quick walk locally only produced a few Meadow Browns, Small Whites and Speckled Woods, plus a rapidly passing Small Tortoiseshell and a likewise Red Admiral.



I also spotted a Comma nectaring on a large bank of brambles and managed a shot of the characteristic *hutchinsoni* underside.



Later on, I managed half an hour on the north side of Aston Rowant. There were numerous Small Tortoiseshells along both the top path and the one along the bottom hedge – as is common here.



Meadow Browns and Marbled Whites were widespread across the whole hillside.





There were also a few Small Heaths and good numbers of fresh Small Skippers appearing. Of the "old guard" I found a couple of Brown Argus, a Common Blue, and a worn male Adonis Blue, distinguishable by the intensity of what remained of its blue scaling. It looked dark blue in flight.



Finally, a visit to Beaconsfield Motorway Services on the M40 for a bit of refreshment produced a couple of Large Skippers by the very pleasant lake area, which has not been "sanitised" as many of these places are, leaving wild flowers to grow quite widely.



One Large Skipper demonstrated the phenomenal length of its proboscis.



In other years, I have seen Purple Hairstreaks in the oak trees here (but not today – a tad early perhaps).

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Jun-15 06:36 AM GMT

29th June: A very warm and sunny evening, so I had a stroll around some of my local patch, with a final detour to the unlikely spot where Essex Skippers fly every year. I found a couple of Commas in one of their usual haunts, restlessly chasing Large Skippers (or was it the other way round?), and in the same area there were several Meadow Browns skulking in and out of the brambles to get out of the heat a bit.

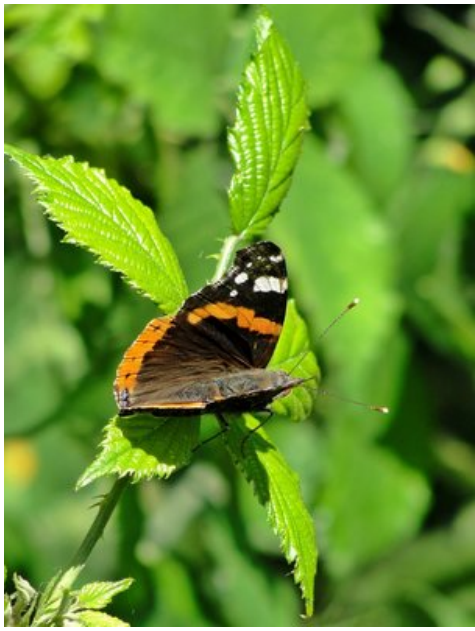




I noticed that a couple of these were bit darker, flew differently and didn't chase the female Meadow Browns – these turned out to be Ringlets, their first appearance here this year. I followed a three-way tussle involving a Comma, a Skipper and something intermediate in size, but also quite orange. The last of these detached itself and tried to hide amongst the brambles. This one was a Gatekeeper – another first for 2015.



I ventured into the meadow area near the motorway, and found the heat had sent most butterflies into the shade or semi-shade around the edges. Lots of Meadow Browns and Small Heaths, a handful of Common Blues were involved. I decided to head off now to the Terminal Four roundabout (A3113/A3044) where there is a reliable Essex Skipper colony on the south-east corner. En route I disturbed two Red Admirals from their squabbling along a shady bit of path, and saw at least one of each type of White.



Sure enough, once at my target area next to the busy road, there were at least eight or nine Essex Skippers in evidence, plus one more Comma nearby on some brambles.



The Skippers were the main attraction and posed nicely – clearly the year-round pollution from the traffic and the airport has little effect on their numbers.









Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 01-Jul-15 04:46 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Skippers, Millerd only got the Large here at present Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Jul-15 05:59 AM GMT

Cracking shots Dave, lovely Skippers and a first Hedge Brown – and a 4 u spot too 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Willow, 04-Jul-15 07:39 PM GMT

What a great range of skipper shots Dave 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Jul-15 07:27 PM GMT

Thank you all 😊 – if it wasn't for the traffic only inches away and the aircraft thundering overhead, it would be an ideal location to observe Essex Skippers. There are no Small Skippers for confusion and the colony occupies a two-metre wide strip by the road which cannot be more than 15–20 metres long at most. You can't lose! 😊

It's been a hot week. Too hot really to venture out after work living as I do so close to Heathrow, so I didn't have a look anywhere until Friday.

Friday 3rd July: I popped into Bedfont Lakes Country Park after work in the slightly less hot sunshine this afternoon. There were good numbers of Skippers, with Large, Small and Essex all represented. The latter two overlapped in places and I have shots in which I struggle to decide which they are. First, some Essex:





Now a few Small:





And finally a couple of undecided:



I found also Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and a few Ringlets along the hedge by the railway line, all generally trying to keep in the shade as far as possible – unless the sun went in.





There were a few Small Whites appearing again, and a couple of Small Tortoiseshells.





Saturday 4th July: Today was one of my periodic visits up to Rugby to see my older boys. With a decent day in prospect, we went to Ryton Country Park. After the storms of the previous night, it was still a bit damp and a bit cloudy. The first thing of interest we saw was this rather splendid frog.



We headed for the woods and in a half-hour or so wandering, saw Speckled Woods, Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Large Skippers.



However, the highlight was when bursts of sunlight came through and White Admirals appeared. They settled but rarely, and even then at a distance away.



The woodland has been opened out a bit in places, and straggly honeysuckle left to grow in quite widespread fashion, so this should suit the butterfly. Returning to the country park proper, there were more of the same (no White Admirals, though), plus good numbers of Marbled Whites.



There was even a single Common Blue, left over from the first brood.



Lots of orchids blooming at the moment as well.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-15 06:35 AM GMT

Great stuff Dave, especially the Hedge Browns 🐛 Saw my first today but they didn't lay ball as well as yours did 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jul-15 07:11 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – I didn't see a single one today... However, I'm sure there'll be more locally soon.

5th July: It was cloudy and quite cool, but the forecast promised better, so I headed off to Denbies. Marbled Whites, Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Small Heaths and Small Skippers were everywhere, battling the breeze and flying even when the sun was in – which it was a lot of the time.



Every other scabious sported a Marbled White, and at one point, the wind died enough to allow some reasonable photos.







I also saw a couple of Dark Green Fritillaries and a Small Tortoiseshell or two, plus a few Small Whites being chased Marbled Whites with poor eyesight. However, I was hoping that the Chalkhills would be just starting... On my first transit across the slopes, I saw nothing, but on the return walk lower down the hillside, the first one appeared. Over the three hours spent there, I saw around seven or eight, with the majority later on. As I have noticed before, at this stage of the season, they rarely open up at all, so most photos today were undersides.







Fingers crossed for another bumper crop here this year, though the dryness of the weather during their larval period may reduce numbers because of the effect on the foodplant.

After Denbies, where better than Box Hill. Here was the same mixture of species, minus Chalkhill Blues, but plus many more Dark Green Fritillaries (including several females). The females were hiding in the grass, including this one which I very nearly stood on. It appears to have a deformed antenna.



I disturbed another, which took off vertically high into the sky, flew along a little and then tumbled back out of the air nearly to ground level before selecting another spot in the grass to hide. The third one I came across was very new – it had been accosted by a male very early in life and the two were in flagrante. Their position amongst the tangled stems made photos nearly impossible, but here they are.





As the sun lowered, the males stopped searching for females and came to nectar on brambles.





Their favoured choice of knapweed was monopolised by the Marbled Whites, and DGFs are far too timid to displace anything else. I saw them chased by Meadow Browns, Large Skippers, Ringlets and Marbled Whites – not a brave butterfly, but fast. None of these would ever catch a DGF.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 06-Jul-15 08:43 AM GMT

Box Hill and Denbies, a visit or two over the coming days is in store for me I think now the Chalk Hills are appearing 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 06-Jul-15 10:28 PM GMT

Cracking shots Dave, hope I don't miss the MW's this year, no Gate Keepers here yet Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jul-15 04:23 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Just catching up on your recent reports, great stuff with lots of cracking photos 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by kevlng, 07-Jul-15 04:32 AM GMT

Dave,

Loving your recent sequence of DGF at Box Hill. Weather permitting I shall be going there in a couple of weeks on my way to Gatwick for the family holiday. You've certainly wetted my appetite.

Keep em coming

Regards Kev

Re: millerd

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

Thank you all – very kind. 😊 I do hope you get to see the Marbled Whites, Goldie – they are lovely at the moment with new ones still appearing.

I think sometimes that Box Hill is a better site for a visit than Denbies, with more to see in a more compact area. You can also walk out away from the main attractions into different areas of habitat and stand a chance of seeing even more. However, if you can do both locations on the same day, it's well worth the extra effort.

6th July: An after-work stroll around my local patch. Today was the day of new broods, with three species contributing their latest round of adults. First of all, as soon as I was over the stile near home and into the partly shaded area where the Red Admiral landed on me a few weeks back, there were Holly Blues. I counted five separate individuals, all male and very active in the sun, avidly searching the hedgerow for females. One paused to nectar on a wild rose quite high up, so this was the best shot my camera could get.



Hopefully their numbers will increase and dare I say that an early July appearance of the second brood bodes well for a repeat of last year's strong third brood here. In the same area were a couple of Small Whites, a Comma and of course a Red Admiral. As I continued along the shaded path by the river, a few Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns appeared, flying more inside the bushes than over them (there seems to be a temporary absence of Speckled Woods at the moment), and a few Small and Green-veined Whites.



Into a more open bit of path, and more Commas appeared, chasing each other and everything else, including a monster dragonfly perfectly capable of chewing up a Comma should it have chosen to do so. The Commas were all the *hutchinsoni* form, but were quite variable.





One in particular was strikingly pale, with subdued dark markings, and also large – looking very similar to its close cousin from the Med, the Southern Comma.





Talking of chewing up butterflies, at around the same spot I spotted a Small Tortoiseshell that had clearly met with a dire accident happily nectaring on a thistle. A bird strike? a car? Whatever it was I have no idea how this insect remained alive and so active.



I carried on into the meadow area by the motorway, seeing more Commas and some worn Large Skippers en route, plus another Red Admiral. It was a beauty, but wouldn't open up while at rest.



The field itself had Meadow Browns and Small Heaths as usual, and my other colony of Essex Skippers were now out.



Then something else caught my eye on a large bank of brambles – a new season Peacock. Unfortunately I could not get close enough to record the event. I turned around and headed for home, but was stopped in my tracks by a flash of silver. Flitting along in front of me was a brand new second brood Brown Argus.





This seems rather early, and like the Holly Blues may presage a third brood. It was a lovely finale to the walk.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 07-Jul-15 07:32 AM GMT

Thats an impressive Brown Argus. I had lots of *Hutchinsoni* Commas today and like yours, they were quite variable. I got a nice pale one like you that I shall post when time permits as well as an exceptionally heavily marked one. Unlike you all I saw were first gen Holly Blues though 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 07-Jul-15 10:32 PM GMT

Fantastic shots of the Brown Argus Dave. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-15 06:27 AM GMT

Fantastic stuff Dave 😊 You're about a week/week and a half ahead of us over your way I reckon so I better get out onto the Downs for my Chalkhills soon! I see you're back at the Holly Blue whispering 🗣️ 😊 Is the pale Comma a named aberrant because it's a cracker 🗣️

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 09-Jul-15 04:55 AM GMT

Lovely and prolific butterfly shots in your recent posts Dave and an interesting Comma 🙄

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Jul-15 06:24 AM GMT

Thank you all again – your comments are very much appreciated! 😊 The Brown Argus was unexpected and the Comma really striking. The photos being posted by everyone at the moment show just how variable the hutchinsoni brood can be. In this part of the world, this is when Commas are at their most numerous, too. 😊

7th July (yesterday): In a 20–30 minute window this afternoon, I visited the nearest bit of my local patch in the hope a Holly Blue would oblige with a nice low–down settled open–wing pose. Things started well, with one down on the shady side of my neighbour's box hedge (they like this hedge for some reason).



After that, I saw another five or six, but all were flying fast and high in the ivy–entwined ash and holly trees along the hedgerow. Once or twice one would come down and have a quick slurp of nectar from a bramble, but I didn't get near any of them. One individual was incredibly small – half the size of most of the others and probably smaller than the average Small Blue. In the same area I saw at least one of all the White butterflies, including a Large White which paused to nectar.



There were several Gatekeepers, skulking in the undergrowth again, including one (not very obliging) individual with no less than six spots underneath. Wurzel will know how that scores...



Finally, endlessly patrolling the whole area, was the resident Red Admiral.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 09-Jul-15 06:36 AM GMT

A good tally there for a 30 minute window Dave and some lovely pics to go with it 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Jul-15 06:33 AM GMT

9th July: An even shorter window today – having to go into London for work on a tube-strike day was not my idea of fun, especially with glorious sunshine all day. My short foray locally at around half past six produced a few Whites, of which this GVW stopped for a while.



Other than that – the usual Red Admiral. A little later, my ten-year-old son and I released a dozen Peacocks we had rescued from a dried up nettle bed as large caterpillars. An equal number had succumbed to parasites that emerged before the larvae pupated. A few more chrysalids remain: I hope they hatch at a time I can get a few photos. Those today were fully dried and ready to go when I returned home, and flew off the moment they were outdoors.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Jul-15 05:22 AM GMT

10th July: Another nine Peacocks released today. This is the last of them this afternoon waiting for its wings to dry completely.



After seeing to the Peacocks, I set off for Black Park, next to Pinewood Studios. It was a bit late in the day, but I hoped I might see White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillaries. Typically, cloud moved in as soon as I arrived, but it was not thick enough to subdue the butterflies very much. I saw reasonable numbers of Small Skippers, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Ringlets – though not as numerous as in previous years, perhaps because it

is so dry here.





I spotted one Holly Blue, one Red Admiral and a couple of Large Skippers, and one species I'd not come across here before, a lone Marbled White. I searched the tops of the many oaks in vain for Purple Hairstreaks, which was disappointing. 😞 I had almost given up on the main targets when I spotted something orange swooping around. However, this was nothing but a Comma – but interestingly it was a new one which was not *hutchinsoni* but was a standard Comma of the hibernating sort.



After the false start, I then saw the real thing – a female Silver-washed Fritillary.





In the end I came across a couple of males as well, and all were nectaring on the brambles and unusually ignoring the thistle plants.



The female preferred the shade and frequently sought out shaded sprays of flowers. I disturbed her at one point and she did exactly the same thing as the female DGF I disturbed at Box Hill – a soaring climb high into the sky, followed by an equally sudden plummet to earth and into hiding.



After around 90 minutes I had failed to see any White Admirals at all. 😞

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 11-Jul-15 05:29 AM GMT

Bookham Common's good for WA, saw plenty there today and more SWF than you can point a camera at, I reckon I saw approaching 50 today 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 12-Jul-15 03:32 AM GMT

Lovely SWF Millerd 🍷 Hope I see some next week Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Jul-15 06:11 AM GMT

Thanks, Buggy – I may have to pay a visit to Bookham... 😊

I hope you have some luck with the SWF, Goldie – lovely butterflies. 😊

July 11th Part One: Today dawned sunny, so it had to be the annual pilgrimage to Botany Bay to seek out the Purple Emperor. I arrived before nine, and made my way down the path (which is much more shaded now than it used to be). Ringlets and Skippers darted around the verges, and every now and again Silver-washed Fritillaries came down briefly to nectar on brambles.





Climbing up the hill after the bridge, I was distracted by a splendid Painted Lady.



I turned right down the path towards the Tugley Wood entrance, and was soon rewarded by the sight of a Purple Emperor swooping and soaring over the uppermost branches of the trees. I then came across Mark and Paul, and between us along this path we saw a probable five individuals. The path had been baited the day before, so we planted ourselves at regular intervals to see if one would come down. It was close once or twice, but no luck. We separated, and almost immediately I spotted one at the junction of the paths, circling ever lower until, after a last distraction of a particularly huge Large White, it finally landed. With a few breaks to perch in nearby trees, it was down for 20 minutes or so. It was a nice specimen, its sole blemish a small hole in the middle of one wing.







Mark and I walked up to the high point, and were discussing Holly Blues and their habits. Right on cue, one appeared and proceeded to spend some time indulging in sucking up the noxious substances laid down for the Emperor.





At one point it rested on a bit of foliage and opened up.



Having suitably primed his finger, Mark persuaded it to crawl onto it for a while.



There being no further Emperors, I turned around and detoured through the meadow, where I had seen White Admirals last year. No luck today (though there were a few around in the wood as a whole), but there were large numbers of Ringlets and quite a few Marbled Whites (which weren't here last year).



At this point, it clouded over and cooled down, so I headed back to the car.

Part Two: I decided that a side trip to Dawneys Hill near Pirbright on the way back would be not too far out of the way. I was hoping Graylings might have started to appear, and I was not to be disappointed. The sun re-emerged shortly after I arrived, which was also fortuitous. Near the entrance to the site, I saw Ringlets, Gatekeepers, Large Skippers (including several females laying) and one or two Meadow Browns. Out amongst the heather and gorse, there were still Silver-studded Blues to be seen, rather worn now and seeming so tiny in relation to the large butterflies seen earlier.



Once out in the more open areas with lots of bare ground, I started to disturb Graylings. Every one I saw was a male – no doubt the rather larger females will be out before long. As usual, if I stood still, the butterflies would approach nearer and nearer until they started briefly settling on my boots and trousers. Altogether, I must have seen at least a dozen.





Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Jul-15 06:16 AM GMT

July 11th Part Three: After a bit of shopping and a late lunch, I did a tour of part of my local patch. First to be seen were (of course) a series of Holly Blues, patrolling the bramble hedgerows and rarely stopping at all. One stayed long enough for a quick photo, but had chosen a bright patch of sun and is very washed out. I saw six or seven in all.

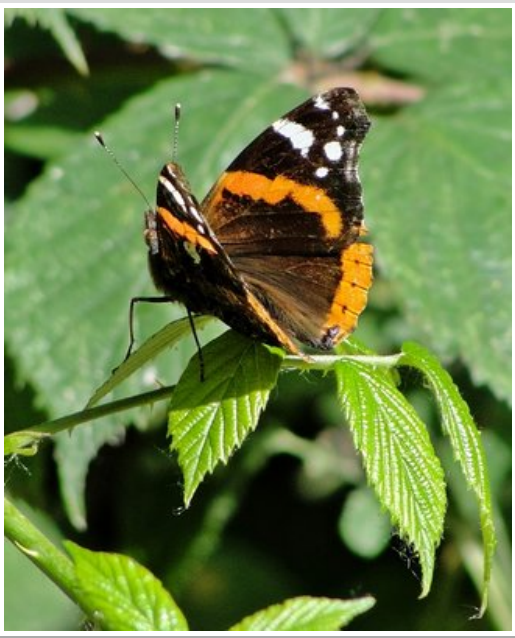


Gatekeepers were now everywhere, the most numerous species here today – and the first females were out too.



I saw all three species of White, with Large Whites commonest – definitely a better year than last year. There were plenty of Commas, all *hutchinsoni* and some strikingly dark, plus at least three Red Admirals in various places.





I also managed to spot three separate new brood Peacocks nectaring on shaded brambles. A scattering of Essex Skippers, one Large Skipper and a few tatty Small Heaths completed the picture.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 12-Jul-15 06:45 AM GMT

Good stuff Dave, you may be jealous of my WLH but I bet my jealousy of your Emperors out trumps that! 🍷🍷🍷

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 12-Jul-15 06:32 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

A great selection of species in your last reports and great photos of them too 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by Butterfliesaurus rex, 12-Jul-15 07:40 PM GMT

An amazing tally of species and wonderful photos Dave! I love your Purple Emperors, and the Holly Blue on the finger hah! You don't see that very often.

All the best

James

Re: millerd

by Willow, 12-Jul-15 10:50 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave...your early compared to my part of the country with **Grayling**...looks time for me to check out their local 'hot-spots' 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-15 01:16 AM GMT

Fantastic PE shots Dave and the HBs are pretty awesome too 🍷😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Jul-15 06:27 AM GMT

Thank you all for the great comments – it was an especially good day out! 😊 It was my only real opportunity to see an Emperor this year, and it all came together. The Holly Blue was a bonus... 😊 I was surprised by the Graylings, Bill, this being a bit of a late season. There was only one at the same spot on 13th July last year, and other years have been later than that.

12th July: A bit of a change in the weather. Overcast, though still quite warm, and I had a walk around the meadows at Runnymede. In the area near Langham Ponds, the grass was alive with tiny frogs, taking advantage of some rare damp weather to head away from their spawning areas.



A few Meadow Browns flew, along with some Ringlets and Gatekeepers, both of which tolerate cloudier skies. There were also both Small and Essex Skippers in the uncut grass near the river.



Small



Small



Essex



Essex



Essex
I also managed to disturb a nice fresh Small Tortoiseshell.



A short excursion at home followed, with more Gatekeepers, a few Commas and not a great deal else.





I found a Gatekeeper in a manic tussle with a darker butterfly, which when finally left alone turned out to be a Ringlet, some way from where I have seen them before. Interestingly, the underside spotting was a little irregular - but the two sides did not match.





Inevitably, there was also one Holly Blue flying up and down over the damp path, settling briefly to take minerals. On one stop, it opened up a bit, but was unfortunately soon disturbed by a passing dog, and did not return.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 13-Jul-15 02:47 PM GMT

Great Emperor shots Dave – a lot of folk have spent a lot of time at that venue without any success so very well done 🍷

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Jul-15 06:13 AM GMT

Thank you Pauline. 😊 I didn't realise Botany Bay was proving difficult this year. The obliging Emperor came down in precisely the same spot as others have in previous years, and several others flying higher up.

16th July: A mostly cloudy week, though it has been very warm. I had my first chance late this afternoon since Sunday to have a look around part of my local patch. Three species dominated the walk – Commas (perhaps a dozen), Holly Blues (the same sort of numbers) and Gatekeepers (probably a couple of dozen). The last of these three had many more females out now than a few days back.





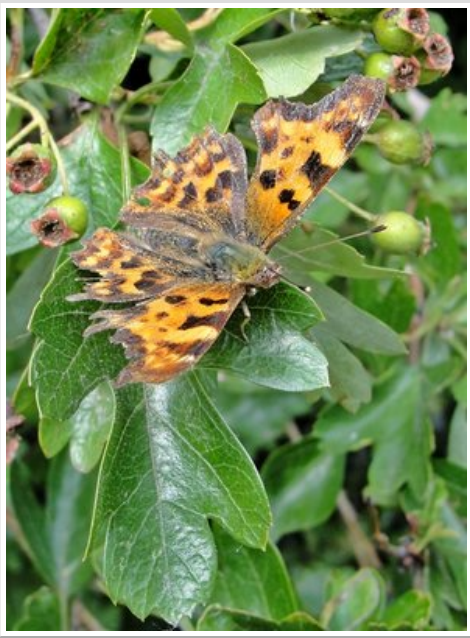
The Holly Blues were mostly flying high and fast along the hedgerows, but occasionally paused to nectar on the brambles. I saw several high around the ivy entwining a sizeable oak tree, and their silvery shapes could almost be mistaken for Purple Hairstreaks – but all came closer to the ground at some point and all could be readily identified as Blues.



I spotted at least one female among them – all of the second brood I'd seen so far had been males.

And then there were the Commas. What an amazing variety of colour, pattern, shape and size – here are a selection. What a glorious butterfly it is in its summer form.







The also-rans today were some Large and Small Whites, plus three-quarters of a Speckled Wood (which was otherwise quite new).





Finally came the customary Red Admiral in the glade near to home. This butterfly settled mostly on the ground, but periodically on me as its predecessors have done. However, it was a bit shy and never stayed long enough for a selfie pose.



However, it was the Commas that stole the show.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-15 06:27 AM GMT

Cracking shots of a nice range of species Dave 😊 That final Comma shot is a blinder and earns a spot in my "I wish I'd taken that" collection 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 18-Jul-15 12:00 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, I love the close up shot of the Essex Skipper 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Willow, 18-Jul-15 12:31 AM GMT

Another great report Dave, your image selection is cracking, your having some super butterflying adventures this summer 😊😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jul-15 06:15 AM GMT

Thank you all once again. 😊 I knew you'd like that one, Wurzel, the moment the Comma settled at head height! Those little skippers are very cute, Goldie - I can't wait to see the Silver-spotted ones as they are the cutest of all. 😊 Not quite as many adventures as I'd hoped this year, Bill, but good nonetheless...

July 17th: Another after work wander locally. Lots more Gatekeepers, and the obligatory Holly Blues of course. I managed to get a bit closer to a couple of these as they nectared on the brambles.





The Commas continue to abound, with many tussles and squabbles – I saw five in a spiralling chase at one point.







There were several Red Admirals, and a couple of new Peacocks.



Out in the large meadow area, I found the first of the new brood of Common Blues, sharing grass stems with a few new Brown Argus and some Essex Skippers.







Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jul-15 06:42 AM GMT

18th July: Firstly a trip to Box Hill, accompanied by all my boys. This was one of those days when the photos just didn't happen, though we saw a scattering of Chalkhill and Common Blues, Marbled Whites, Dark Green Fritillaries and even a brand new male Brimstone. The last visit here was on 5th, and in the intervening couple of weeks the number of Marbled Whites and Ringlets has dropped significantly. The DGF were looking a bit worn too. Summer is moving on...

After Box Hill, Denbies. The boys elected to stay in the car, and I set off down the slope. Almost down to the gate onto the hillside proper, I was hailed by a familiar figure festooned with moth traps - none other than Philzoid. He was in search of five-spot Burnets in particular (I think all those encountered were six-spots...), as well as the usual butterfly suspects. We saw fair numbers of Chalkhill Blues, mostly roosting with wings shut, despite warm hazy sunshine. However, there were nothing like the abundance of recent summers.







There seemed to be rather more Marbled Whites than I'd seen at Box Hill, though.



There were Brown Argus and Common Blues, too, and countless Small Skippers.



It was good to see you, Phil.

As cloud thickened in the west, I managed to get home in time for another local walk. More Peacocks were around with the Red Admirals today, enjoying the teasels.





Brown Argus, Common Blues and Essex Skippers were roosting in the grass.





Gatekeepers were heading into the brambles to roost, and I noticed quite a few new Meadow Browns – a second flush it would seem.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 19-Jul-15 06:03 PM GMT

A lovely selection Dave, I hope i'm not too late to see the MW's when I get to Kent, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-15 06:10 AM GMT

Great selection of Chalkhills Dave 😊 I tried for some yesterday but I don't know if they've emerged yet over this way 🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jul-15 05:05 AM GMT

More great reports and photos recently Dave 😊

You are definitely a week or so ahead of us up here at our end of the M40.

As if its not bad enough with Hoggers...errr...hogging all the Small Coppers, it looks like all the Holly Blues have migrated to you again 😊😂

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Jul-15 08:01 AM GMT

Thanks again, all. 😊 It would nice to see a Small Copper, Neil - I think I've seen only two all year. 😞

Over the last few days, I've been staying with my sister near York. The weather has been dry and quite warm, but mostly cloudy unfortunately. Nevertheless, there have been a few butterflies, including my most northern Marbled Whites.

20th July: The first walk was to Allerthorpe Common, near Pocklington. A few years ago this area of sandy heath abounded with Small Coppers, but there were none to be seen today. However, Small Skippers were frequent, as were Ringlets, and there were a fair few Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns, Large Skippers, Speckled Woods and Small Tortoiseshells. I had to adjust to it being about a fortnight behind everything at home.







There was also a lovely new Peacock.



One highlight was that rarity of the multiple-species photo. I took a shot of a nectaring Ringlet, adjusting the angle at the last minute to take account of a Large Skipper on a neighbouring flower. Reviewing the photo later, I found a Small Skipper was also in the frame.



That's the first 3-in-1 I've managed for a while.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Willow, 24-Jul-15 06:10 PM GMT

Hard to get a three-in-one shot Dave...you just ask any golfer 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Jul-15 09:31 PM GMT

The mind boggles, Bill... 😊 😊

Garden interludes: Over the few days away, I managed to see a few butterflies in my sister's semi-wild garden. With the season running a little late, there were no Peacocks at all yet, and the White butterflies were only just starting to lay on the nasturtiums. A selection:









21st July: Though still largely cloudy, the sun was warm through the overcast, and we had a drive out onto the York Wolds. This is chalk downland, similar to parts of the South Downs with deeply incised valleys and steep slopes. We stopped where the road north east of Millington runs next to the Wolds Way (at SE849540) and had a walk up the nearest bit of hillside.



Almost immediately we disturbed a Marbled White from the grass, and along the path to the top saw perhaps 25 – 30 of these. When the sun peeped through, they roused themselves, getting caught by the brisk wind blowing from the west.







The grass also played host to Ringlets, Small Skippers, Meadow Browns, a couple of Small Tortoiseshells and a single Small Heath.



This is the furthest north I have seen Marbled Whites, and as with the other species they are a fortnight behind their southern cousins. The Wolds are probably the northernmost stronghold of this butterfly, and this is certainly the furthest north I've seen them – it was good to see healthy numbers too. A walk along the length of the Wolds Way in July might reveal whether there is continuity in the distribution of the species. The way they were carried

long distances by the wind would indicate mobility (voluntary or not!).



On the return trip, we dropped into Calley Heath, a piece of remnant heathy grassland where I had seen Small Coppers and Brown Argus in late August last year. All there was flying this time were a few Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns, including this mating pair.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 24-Jul-15 10:43 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, you'd think some of the Marble Whites would visit Lancashire but I've never heard of any being seen here yet which is a pity because they're one of my favourites, love your photos of them, I think they may be a bit shabby when I go South this weekend, especially with the weather forecasting rain Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Jul-15 05:26 AM GMT

More great reportage and shots Dave 😊 That landscape view is lush – if I squint my eyes it's almost as if I'm there 😊 I'm just wondering if NBAs might feature in future posts as well as HBFs and Scotch Argus?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jul-15 05:59 AM GMT

These may actually be some of your nearest Marbled Whites, Goldie – a bit of a trek across the Pennines, mind! 😊 Not sure why they prefer the east side of the country and have ignored Lancashire 😊

If only, Wurzel... This year, a combination of factors (including very iffy weather forecasts) prevented travelling up or back via Arnside, and the possibility of seeing those three species has now evaporated for the year. In fact, the first Scotch Argus was only seen yesterday, so I might well have missed out on that completely anyway, and NBA are also a bit hit and miss at this end of their season. Also, the area of Yorkshire I was in is soundly Brown Argus country – the nearest NBA are some way away. The whole year has been a bit like that. 😊

July 23rd: As mentioned above, the trip back home did not involve Arnside this year and was under cloudy skies all the way, with temperatures only scraping above 20 south of Leicester. Nevertheless, there was the opportunity of a side-step to Aston Rowant towards the end of the journey as the cloud-cover thinned a little. However, it clearly wasn't warm enough to mobilise any Silver-spotted Skippers (if any were out), and barely so to stir the Chalkhill Blues. However, one or two were basking, though the majority were nose down and roosting.



A few Small Tortoiseshells were also disturbed on the paths, and Small Skippers were numerous if you looked closely at the vegetation.



One individual started to vibrate its wings rapidly while sitting on a flowerhead – I've seen this behaviour before, but have no idea why one might do this.



July 24th: Welcome Home! A complete washout – heavy rain all day. 😞

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Jul-15 06:18 AM GMT

Sorry to hear that those three species won't be on your tally this year 😞 Even though I've been lucky a few times most of this year has felt like hard work, a real slog to get any results 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 26-Jul-15 07:52 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

The vibrating wings behaviour is to do with increasing body temperature in cool weather in order to stay active. Same principal of us shivering when cold, a by product of muscle movement being the production of heat. Presumably the skipper didn't want to end up stuck on that flower head so it was making sure it had enough energy to find a suitable roosting spot 😊 .

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Jul-15 08:05 AM GMT

It definitely *has* been hard work this year, Wurzel. The best weather has avoided the weekends, the car played up for a while, and work hasn't been so generous with ad hoc days off. I have the coming week off and the weather forecast promises gales and rain and only improves as we go into August – when I go back to work. 😞

July 25th: Today wasn't too bad, though the wind was a nuisance, as were large annoying banks of cloud. I went back to Aston Rowant in the hope the sunshine might have tempted the Silver-spotted Skippers out. It had, but they were difficult to track down – hiding in the grass when the sun was in and dashing madly about when it was out. The wind didn't help. However, I saw over a dozen, and got a few photos.





The Chalkhills were more obliging, as they were sitting on the ground basking – though this doesn't make for much of an aesthetic backdrop.







I spotted a female in amongst the still largely fresh males too.



I was surprised not to see any Brown Argus yet, and only one Common Blue, which was a dark female.



There were still a handful of Marbled Whites, plus Meadow Browns and Ringlets, and large numbers of Small Skippers.





Along the hedgerow at the bottom (lots of thistles and marjoram), there were a few Small Tortoiseshells, one very mobile Dark Green Fritillary and a single new brood Brimstone.



Returning to the gate, the brambles sheltered a number of Gatekeepers, including this new female.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-15 12:16 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

I am also off work next week, in my case I am heading north and the weather is looking pretty grim up there for a couple of days at least.

Great report and photos from Aston Rowant. Looks like things are running a little late there as well.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-15 05:05 AM GMT

Glad to see that you were able to get out and make the most of the only decent day of the fortnight Dave, great shots of a brill little butterfly, they're teh favourite of my girls 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Jul-15 06:18 AM GMT

Good luck with your trip north, Neil - I hope there are a few sunny spells at least. I am hoping that there will be a bit of sunshine before I go back to work, though it doesn't look very warm. Another crack at those skippers would be good, Wurzel - they are the cutest of a cute bunch of species. 😊

25th July (continued): There was time for a quick look at my local patch for the first time in a week. Commas and Red Admirals dominated the late afternoon walk, with at least 8 of each seen in various places, plus a couple of Peacocks.





There were still good numbers of Gatekeepers and one or two Small Heaths and Meadow Browns. The second brood of Common Blues is well under way, with two distinct groups seen, one of which was next to the river in a spot where none were seen in spring (but where B-FT is growing well). In the other location, there were also a couple of Brown Argus.





The females blues I saw were all dark, like the one at Aston Rowant, and in complete contrast to the majority of blue females seen in spring.



Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-15 06:03 AM GMT

Great range of Commas again Dave, especially the penultimate one 🤔👍 Great to see the next wave of Common Blues and an interesting observation about the Blues and the females finally living up to the 'typical' image portrayed in fieldguides.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Jul-15 06:51 AM GMT

Yes, Wurzel, that really dark Comma almost has an evil look about it! 😬 I'm sure this year's crop of *hutchinsoni* have had more variety than I can remember: a fascinating study comparing the photos. I suppose that this is the sort of thing the old collectors used to get obsessed about (though Commas were a bit of a rarity in those days I believe). Yes, good to see dark female Common Blues again, the sort you really can think "Brown Argus" about for a moment... 😊

27th July: After another complete washout yesterday, it failed to rain at all today. However, cloud ruled for most of it, but there were two bright intervals, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. I made the most of both, dashing out from home onto my local patch. The morning sudden burst of sun brought out lots of active White butterflies, none of which were in the least bit approachable. There were also quite a few Holly Blues patrolling the brambles, stopping to nectar, though mostly high up. There will hopefully be more of this – I would guess all the honeydew has been washed off the trees by now!



I saw only three or four Commas today (plus a Peacock and a single Red Admiral), but one was a relatively fresh example.





A close-up of the underside shows the normal "comma" mark is subtly split, almost turning it into a "?".



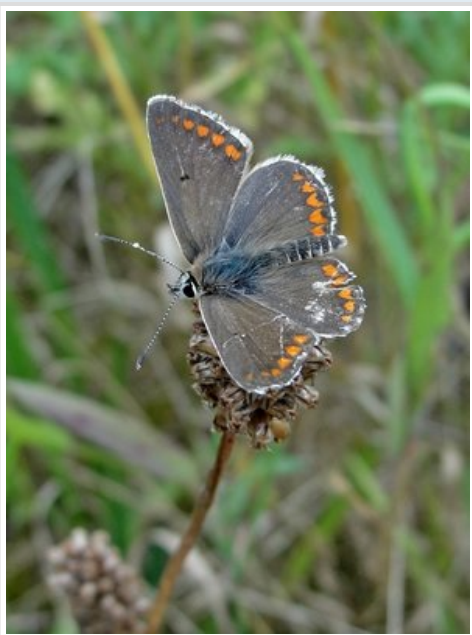
The late afternoon excursion was different, in that the sun appeared while I was in a different area. The butterflies that were energised were Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns, a few Small Heaths, a single Essex Skipper, a Brown Argus and several Common Blues. One Gatekeeper sported a pale area on one side, enough to stand out clearly in flight.



A Meadow Brown found basking was really rather worn and quite well camouflaged against the ground.



The Brown Argus had also been in the wars, with the damage mostly on one side and with distinct lines of missing scales characteristic of an encounter with a spider's web.



The Blues were surprisingly fresh, though with a few splodges caused by water damage – hardly surprising, given yesterday's weather.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Willrow, 28-Jul-15 11:37 PM GMT

From the Yorkshire Wolds to the Oxfordshire hillsides your comprehensive reports make for very interesting reading Dave, I've also enjoyed your great range of species images 😊

I commiserate on the poor weather your having to deal with, same here in south Wales, it hasn't been a very kind July 😞 Hope August improves matters for us 😊

Oh! and thank you for your recent input on my PD, much appreciated.

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Jul-15 06:58 AM GMT

Thank you Bill - for your kind comments and commiserations on the weather. There are some hints of an improvement. 😊

And going back a little way, thank you Buggy for your info about the shivering skipper. I watched a Red Admiral do it today as it tried to bask in some non-existent sunshine.

28th July: More of the same weather - almost constant cloud and just the briefest hints of sun. In a very short walk relatively close to home, I saw eight or nine Holly Blues. They were to be found nectaring on brambles or just sitting uncomfortably on wind-buffed leaves. What brightness there was didn't tempt any of them into opening their wings.





As usual, the cloud didn't put off the Red Admirals, and when turning away from a Holly Blue, I found these two sitting pretty well behind me.



I saw at least two others elsewhere, a few Whites, and a handful of Gatekeepers.



Dave

Re: millerd

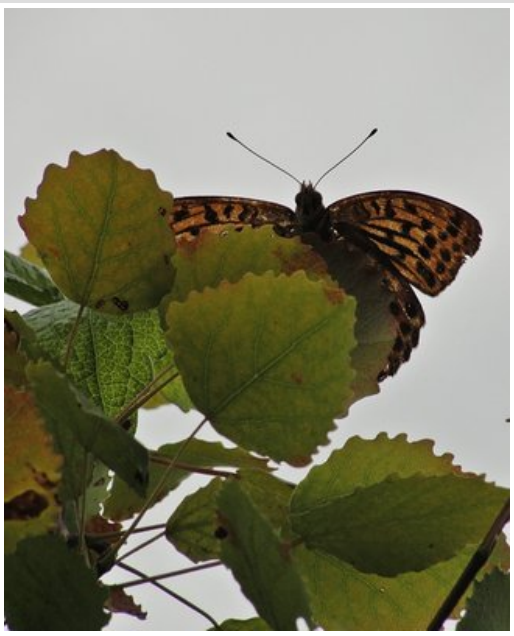
by millerd, 30-Jul-15 06:18 AM GMT

29th July: Another cloudy day, but I needed to go out somewhere – I chose Box Hill, but instead of choosing the usual open slopes, I elected to follow one of the walking routes recommended by the NT. Along the path to Broadwood's Folly, the sun did come out briefly, enough to entice a female Silver-washed Fritillary down onto an extensive bank of brambles.





A Comma joined it for a short while before disappearing into the trees. On the path, a Holly Blue tried vainly to settle on the damp ground, but was disturbed by there being too many feet around, some human, some canine. The route passed a viewpoint over the open zig-zag slopes (only Meadow Browns here) before heading down the other way to Juniper Bottom. Down here, a single male Silver-washed Fritillary was sat in a tree, vainly waiting for the sun to reappear.



The walk took in part of Headley Heath on its way back over to the southern slopes at Brockham, but no more butterflies were seen until I'd reached the easternmost part of Dukes, where I found some roosting Chalkhill Blues.



Once into the last area of open ground before getting back to the viewpoint slopes, another burst of sun energised a Silver-spotted Skipper which dived down into the grass in front of me. It was well-concealed, and the grass spoiled the photo somewhat.



One or two other butterflies took advantage of the momentary sunshine, and I found a nice Brown Argus and a rather worn female Common Blue amongst the Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers.





The sun then went in, and that was it. A repeat of the exercise on a better day would be a good idea, but a plan to try this on Sunday has been thwarted by yet another cycling event at Box Hill, with associated road closures. 😞

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 30-Jul-15 08:03 AM GMT

Once again we missed bumping into each other on box hill!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-15 06:17 AM GMT

Cracking stuff Dave 😊 I know what you mean about the need to 'just get out there'...I experienced it on Wednesday and so took off for Botany Bay, a journey well worth making 😊 In fact I can feel the need coming on again...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 31-Jul-15 06:35 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

It's good to see that you're keeping up with the Holly Blues. I once thought that you had a monopoly on them !. I was even thinking it might be the Kerosine fumes from the airport that made the open their wings for you 😊. Seriously though, i've been watching the second brood very closely and the males, when newly emerged, fly close to the ground searching it would seem for Bird droppings. After indulging they then fly onto low vegetation to warm up, and sometimes open up. How long this behaviour goes on for i'm not sure, but older males are always flying high and seldom come down low. I expect they are then searching for females. I have yet to find a second brood female so far this season.

Keep up the good work,
TREVOR.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 01-Aug-15 04:14 AM GMT

Hi Dave, just catching up on your latest excursions, great reports and photos 😊

Back home today after my few days up north and there are some fresh Holly Blues passing though the garden, just need to find one settled now...and with open wings 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Aug-15 06:46 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments, everyone. As always, much appreciated. 😊

Missed you again on Box Hill, Buggy – one day we'll be on the same bit of the hill at the same time, though it's a big place. 😊

I take it the second round of Wood Whites are out, Wurzel – I may try Botany Bay on Sunday as my favourite bits of the North Downs are being cycled over. 😞

I see you've also had luck with the Holly Blues, Trevor, and I'm sure you will too, Neil. They are tempted by flowering brambles, though not many of us have this in the garden... 😊 More of them coming up...

30th July: At last! The sun actually shone properly today, and I had a tour of my local patch. The main Holly Blue area is two minutes from home, and they didn't disappoint. The sudden sunshine had seven or eight out on the brambles, and they obviously felt like I did and several of them basked partially open-winged. As Trevor observed, no females as yet.





Another particular highlight was a selection of newly-hatched Brimstones.





At one point I watched a male and female encounter each other, and for a couple of moments, they nectared alongside one another on a teasel. Clearly not spring! I also noticed that the moment the sun went in, they would dive for cover. Brilliant camouflage – spot the butterfly.



Alongside the Brimstones on the teasels and wild buddleia were several Red Admirals.



One in particular was very new in brilliant scarlet and black, an absolutely beautiful creature.







Second brood Common Blues are in full swing now, and I came upon a mating pair ensuring there will be more next year.





Overall, examples of all the following species were seen during my tour:

Meadow Brown

Gatekeeper

Speckled Wood

Small Heath

Peacock

Red Admiral

Comma (both normal and *hutchinsoni*)

Large White
Small White
Green-veined White
Brimstone
Holly Blue
Common Blue
Brown Argus
Small Skipper
Essex Skipper

16 species is not bad at all: a selection of the rest follows in Part Two!

Dave

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 01-Aug-15 06:49 AM GMT

Great reports and images from up north and locally recently, and nice set of images, I didn't realise Marbled Whites could be found as far north as that. The Brimstone shows its camouflage well, too.

I comiserate with you regarding the weather. What a miserable month it's been! That one hot day on the 1st seems such a long time ago...

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Aug-15 06:57 AM GMT

30th July (continued): a selection of some of the other species seen today:











Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Aug-15 05:51 AM GMT

Thanks, Essex – the July weather really hasn't been that great, and the butterfly moments have been snatched rather than leisurely enjoyed. That hot day on the 1st was far too hot as well – 37 degrees is not comfortable for man nor insect.

31st July: However, the last day of the month proved to be pretty good. My youngest son had been hinting that he would like a day at the seaside, so with a good forecast ahead, we set out today for Studland. We should have left earlier, and the local traffic down in Dorset was very slow. However, we were on the beach soon after midday and enjoyed unbroken sunshine, a light breeze and around 21 degrees or so. As Elliot played in the sea and on the sand, I watched a whole variety of butterflies waft along the shoreline – Red Admirals, Small Tortoiseshells, Large Whites, a Painted Lady, a Meadow

Brown and a Grayling. By four, we decided move on, and trudged back through the dunes and heather to the car park. There were lots of Gatekeepers here, but only one more Grayling – other suspects turned out to be Meadow Browns. The buddleia bushes behind the visitor centre had only one or two Red Admirals and a Peacock.

We drove through Swanage and up to Durlston Country Park, where we had a cup of tea at the Castle. This is a fascinating building, now full of information about local wildlife, geology and all things natural. On this glorious afternoon, the views were stunning. Just below the café balcony, there were several large buddleia bushes. These were playing host to Red Admirals, Peacocks, Large Whites and more surprisingly, a couple of Silver-washed Fritillaries.



There was also a single Humming-bird Hawkmoth, which pretty well defied my ability to photograph it...



Curiously, my only other attempt at this feat was in exactly the same spot a good ten years ago. After tea and a good explore of the Castle, we ambled along the coast path and then up to the Country Park itself. There were dozens of Marbled Whites around – they seem to fly late here (I've seen a couple right at the end of August).



There were also high numbers of Gatekeepers, and a variety of Skippers. Here was an added conundrum – not just telling Small and Essex apart, but remembering that there would be Lulworth in amongst them too. In the end, I am certain I saw Lulworth and Essex, and there is one I am pretty sure was a Small Skipper.



Small



Essex



Essex

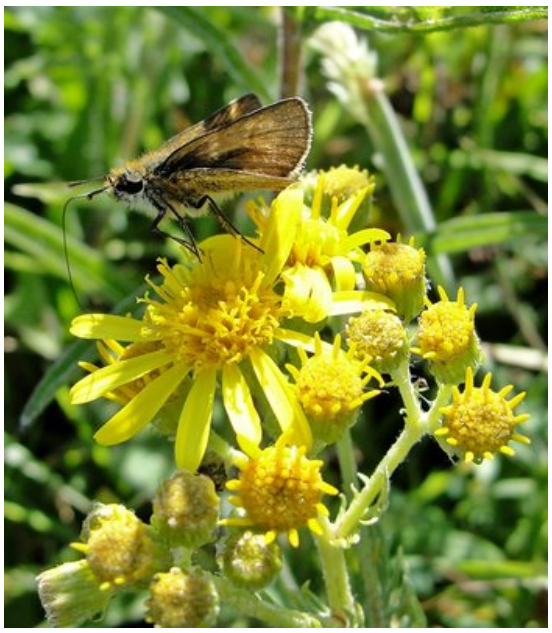
In the relatively short time we spent in the park (we had to get back on the road at some point), we also saw a Painted Lady, a female Dark Green Fritillary, a possible Wall (but it could equally have been a Small Tortoiseshell). However, the Lulworths were what I'd hoped to see.



Not entirely sure the one above is Lulworth... Could be Small



Male Lulworth



Male Lulworth



Male Lulworth



Female Lulworth



Female Lulworth



One of each sex



One of each sex



Female Lulworth

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-15 06:57 AM GMT

A timely report Dave as I'm heading off there tomorrow and Monday as well so it's good to know that they're still flying, they do look a bit tired though – hope they last another couple of days 🙄😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Aug-15 04:20 AM GMT

I hope you had a good day or two, Wurzel – the weather seems to have done the right thing, certainly. 😊

1st August: A day up in the Rugby area with all the boys. After a shopping expedition in the morning, we visited Ryton Country Park in the afternoon. There were fewer butterflies than a month ago, with no Marbled Whites and only tired looking Ringlets and Meadow Browns. Both Small and Essex Skippers were still going strong, as were Gatekeepers.



Common Blues were just beginning to appear, but strangely all I saw were females – and dark ones at that.





There were also a couple of Commas.



On the way home, the sun was shining hazily, so I stopped on the Southam Bypass to see if any second brood Small Blues were around. There were a few – including a mating pair – but they were otherwise mostly females.





Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Aug-15 04:59 AM GMT

2nd August: Part One.

Following Wurzel's suggestion, and with the North Downs inaccessible today, I set off for Botany Bay. Arriving around 1100, immediately inside the gate I was greeted by a selection of butterflies on a stand of thistles by the path: Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns, plus more showy Silver-washed Fritillaries and White Admirals.



The latter two were looking tired now, but still able to put on a display of graceful aerobatics in the sunshine.







I followed the path and once over the bridge and just climbing the hill on the other side, I spotted a pile of fresh horse manure adorned with Wood Whites. There were five altogether, but only three remained for a rather unusual photo.



It became quickly apparent that the woods were full of Brimstones. There are always a lot here in the spring, but there were hundreds today all avidly nectaring.



Sharing that pursuit were a good number of Peacocks, as well as more SWF and White Admirals.



I had mainly come to see the Wood Whites, but before that, a run down of what else was about in addition to those already mentioned:
Holly Blue
Common Blue



Purple Hairstreak
Marbled White



Speckled Wood
Ringlet
Large Skipper
Small Skipper
Small White
Large White



Green-veined White
Comma (both types)
Painted Lady



However, the Wood Whites were the main attraction, and they deserve a separate entry.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Aug-15 05:11 AM GMT

2nd August: Part Two. Botany Bay Wood Whites.

There were good numbers of Wood Whites, both males and females, pottering up and down the paths. Females were egg-laying, assiduously seeking out the tiny vetchlings they prefer. Following one male, I saw him settle for no apparent reason. In fact he had been attracted to a mating pair that I would certainly have otherwise overlooked.



Some other photos of this delightful little butterfly.









And finally that initial trio again.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 03-Aug-15 05:14 AM GMT

hi Dave;

You had a good day then !!.

TREVOR.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 03-Aug-15 05:48 AM GMT

Looks like you've had a busy few days and definately come up with the goods! 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Aug-15 05:50 AM GMT

Hi Trevor and Buggy – yes, and there's more (as you might have guessed from the posting in the August sightings thread...) 😊

After Botany Bay, there was just enough charge on the camera battery for one other shortish trip somewhere. Dawney's Hill (Pirbright) is on my M25 avoidance route home, so that's where I went. It took a while to find where the Graylings were lurking in the heat, but in fact they found me. Suddenly three appeared from nowhere and kept flying at my legs. The inevitable trousering happened shortly afterwards.





After seeing half a dozen or so, I made my way round the far side of the site, and spotted several more. I followed one down to the ground, and realised it had been attracted to what appeared to be a mating pair. Being a Grayling, and not known for subtlety in these matters, it immediately tried to muscle in, with much wing flapping from all involved. It was at this point I realised that the pair it had found was in fact a threesome. Expecting one of the three to be another opportunist male, it was a surprise to see that all three were locked together, abdomens conjoined. At one point, the attentions of no. 4 caused them to fly – the female carried both her consorts, but not far. It is extremely tricky photographing this activity – three butterflies at 120 degrees to each other does not an easy picture make. However, the situation did provide some open wing shots, and some of the upperwing colours were amazing, especially when caught by the sun at certain angles. The scent scales on the male are also really prominent.



These shots are in chronological order – the quality is not great as there was a lot of movement.







I got a couple of closer shots of the butterfly abdomens – you can make out the fact that three are involved, though anything more is beyond the capability of my camera.



Anyway, this all provided a rather bizarre conclusion to a very successful day.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-Aug-15 06:19 AM GMT

I was all set to comment on the ace Wood Whites Dave but those Grayling shot are real showstoppers 🍷🍷🍷😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

ps - the Lulworths were still in fine fettle today 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 03-Aug-15 02:50 PM GMT

Hi Dave;

Fabulous Grayling shots , the open wing capture especially stunning and rare. Definately worth avoiding the M25 for. I'm afraid you must take a few mrgreens 🍷🍷🍷 .

All the best,
TREVOR.

PS. A few female Holly Blues have been reported.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Aug-15 05:12 AM GMT

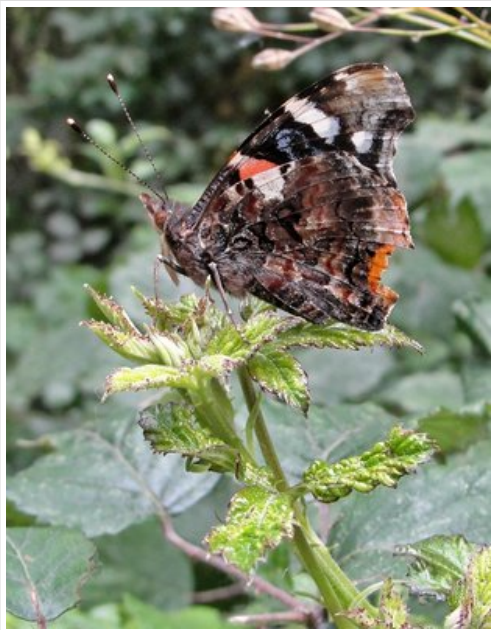
Thanks, chaps. I am certain that is something I'm never going to see again. I'm grateful to the fourth butterfly for leading me straight to them, and for trying to get in on the act - there would have been no open wing shots without it! 😊

3rd August: After that kind of day yesterday, anything would seem like a bit of a letdown. Going back to work after a fortnight off certainly didn't help. Nevertheless, after work and under warm but overcast skies, I had an amble around my local patch. Inevitably, two Holly Blues appeared immediately.

The reason for their almost constant presence in this spot is probably a large holly tree, overgrown with ivy, which has brambles all around its base and hawthorn hedge to either side. No Holly Blue needs to travel any distance at all at any time of year to keep the species going.



Moving on, I encountered several Red Admirals patrolling the path as usual – another near constant and reliable facet of this walk throughout the year.



There was also a single Comma. I reached the large meadow/field/open space between the M25 and the River Colne before seeing anything else. Here were good numbers of roosting Common Blues: every now and again one would open up when the wind dropped a bit, the cloud thinned and the sun shone feebly through.





Meadow Browns were disturbed as I walked along, plus a few Gatekeepers. Others of this species had taken to the trees to roost and sit out the weather.



I also put up a Small Heath, which soon plummeted back down, unusually ending up on a plant above grass height instead of buried in a tussock. It appeared newly emerged, with lovely subtlety of colouring and an amazingly bristly face.



At this point, though there were signs of a bit more sun, it started to spot with rain and I turned back – it was after all around half past six and it's started to get late noticeably earlier these days. However, as I passed the J14 roundabout, the sun strengthened a bit and I glanced up at the young oak trees at the side of the link to Terminal Four. Dancing around these, and a large sycamore next to them, were a selection of Purple Hairstreaks – half a dozen or more.



I watched them for a while, and very entertaining they were too with their aggressive aerobatics and madcap chases. Every now and again, one would bask with its wings open. I could just about make this out (I had no binoculars with me), and cranked the camera up to full zoom, pointed and hoped. The results, heavily cropped, are recognisably male Purple Hairstreaks.



That's as far as I would go in describing these blurry photos! 😊 On a suitable evening soon, I may take my life in my hands and find a way up to the roadside, which is on a level with where the butterflies were basking (though still below treetop height).

As ever, it was worth going out – there is always something worth seeing! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 04-Aug-15 08:02 AM GMT

Amazing Grayling shots Dave and open wings too 😊 Nice shot showing the scent scales on the male.

Mike

Re: millerd

by Butterflysaurus rex, 05-Aug-15 12:04 AM GMT

I agree with Mike, Dave. Amazing behavioural shots of the Greyling! Quite a thing to witness. 😊

Best Wishes

James

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 05-Aug-15 04:27 AM GMT

Hi Dave, I am playing catch up yet again. Some great recent reports and photos but that is a brilliant series of Grayling images, amazing stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Aug-15 05:31 AM GMT

Once again, many thanks everyone for your enthusiasm for my highly unusual encounter with the Graylings. It's the sort of pure chance event that makes this hobby so rewarding. 😊

4th August: Still well and truly back on terra firma with another day at work with not a lot of sun. I had a look at Bedfont Lakes Country Park after my day of toil, an hour or so around five o'clock. When the sun peeped through, the hedgerows seemed full of Gatekeepers, and the grass held lots of Meadow Browns. A couple of Holly Blues flew up and down the brambles, and the path next to the railway also hosted a few Skippers – both Small and Essex – and a solitary Speckled Wood.



There were reasonable numbers of Common Blues, but considering the amount of BFT growing here, nothing like as many as I would have expected.





Finally, there were a few Brown Argus, including a couple of females – the second one of which was very fresh and a splendid little insect.







Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 05-Aug-15 04:53 PM GMT

Just catching up Dave. Fantastic shots of both the Wood Whites and the Grayling. Really interesting and well captured shots 😊👍👍

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-15 06:45 AM GMT

Lovely BA shots Dave, the penultimate one is a real corker 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 06-Aug-15 11:39 PM GMT

Lovely shots Dave I Like all your Photos, their so clear and sharp, Graylings are usually very hard I find to capture, at Gaits Barrow they blend in too well with their surroundings, your photos pick them out good Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Aug-15 06:37 AM GMT

Thanks, Pauline – the Wood Whites were lovely and this is the first time I've really had time with the second brood. They are subtly different – softer, somehow. 😊

Thank you, Wurzel – brand new Brown Argus are little gems if you catch them just right... 😊

Thank you too, Goldie, for your kind comment. I've seen Graylings up at Arnside and they just disappear against the scree there, and all my photos were awful. Your reports from the Dover area are bringing back memories too! 😊

6th August: Nothing new or noteworthy to report from my local patch around 5.30 today. There were a lot of Common Blues about, but with the wind blowing them around and grasshoppers in swarms scattering at every footstep and disturbing them, I was limited to a few photos only today.





One individual had very pale marginal spots underneath – yellow instead of orange: compare the one above.



Other species spotted: Essex Skipper, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Holly Blue, Small Heath, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Red Admiral, Comma.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 08-Aug-15 12:07 AM GMT

That does seem rather unusual Dave. It will be interesting to see what others make of it. Well spotted.

Re: millerd

by MikeOxon, 08-Aug-15 02:20 AM GMT

According to my 'South's British Butterflies' T.G Howarth, 1973: "Occasionally the orange spots are replaced by yellow ones (ab. *flavescens* Tutt)" My guess is that this applies to your specimen.

In **Tutt** 'British Butterflies Vol. IV' edited by George Wheeler, it states on p.133 (referring to the underside markings) : "The usual fulvous lunules vary in tint, sometimes, in their richest forms, being bright vermilion in colour (ab. *rufescens*), orange-red (ab. *aurescens*), orange-yellow (ab. *latescens*), pale yellow (ab. *flavescens*), or grey (*suffescens*), differing only, in intensity, from those of the upperside."

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 08-Aug-15 04:56 AM GMT

Great shots Dave, there doesn't seem to be many Common Blue Females truly Blue here ,nearly all Brown Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Aug-15 06:34 AM GMT

Thank you for the detailed info, Mike. It would seem to be an ab., then. 😊

I didn't really notice in the field, Pauline, so it was sort of spotted after the event... 😊

There definitely seem to be more brown female Common Blues in the second brood than in the first, Goldie.

7th August: I finished work a bit early today, and headed up to Aston Rowant, reaching the hillside around five. Despite sun all around, within ten minutes a large cloud settled itself right over the hill and persisted until I left at seven. In some ways this was an advantage, as it didn't really stop the butterflies from flying, it just slowed them down a bit. However, during the latter part of the visit, the light levels dropped, making good photos harder to come by.

What was flying? There were lots of Chalkhills out, with quite a few females in there as well, though they are hard to spot and follow compared to the males.





Common Blues were also around, though fewer in number than the Chalkhills, and surprisingly I saw just one Brown Argus.

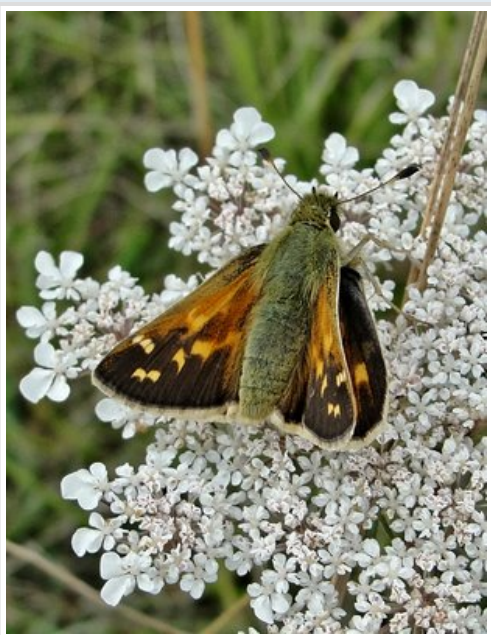


There were also Gatekeepers, Small Skippers, the odd Small Heath and good numbers of quite fresh Meadow Browns (another flush in their protracted emergence).



The stars of course were the Silver-spotted Skippers. This is always a reliable site, and there were lots of them today in every part of the hillside.









Finally, today's bonus was disturbing a female Clouded Yellow from somewhere on the ground. With the sun feeble at best, it didn't take long to settle again.



A first for the year, species no. 45 for 2015. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 08-Aug-15 06:42 AM GMT

Good stuff Dave, and lucky with that Clouded yellow. I've been keeping an eye out for them this year but not a sniff. I've got 44 species so far

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Aug-15 06:44 AM GMT

Plenty of time for a Cloudie, Buggy – they are one of the things that can turn up as late as October. 😊

8th August: A rather warm day, but I only had opportunities for a couple of quick walks locally. In the middle of the day, Common Blues were predominant, with a few Brown Argus turning up in a wide variety of places.



Another brown female CB





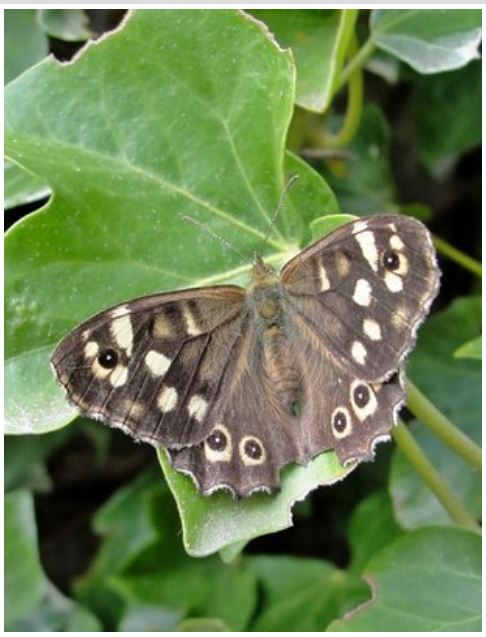
They seem to have spread out considerably. As ever, there were plenty of Holly Blues as well, and I did see a few females flying in and out of the ivy, settling on buds and apparently laying. The males prefer just to nectar.



Lots of Whites and a few Brimstones and Commas were also seen, plus very worn Gatekeepers, fresh Meadow Browns and Small Heaths, and one decrepit Essex Skipper.



Speckled Woods are also on the increase again.





I went out again later, after six, to see if I could find a way of looking *across* at the Purple Hairstreaks, if not actually down on them. I found that it is possible, but the butterflies themselves did not appear until after seven, coinciding with the arrival of a cloud. In the interim, many Holly Blues ambled past at mid-tree height or higher. When a Hairstreak finally put in an appearance, it was clearly a larger butterfly, and it flew entirely differently. One individual appeared, and then promptly flew across a wide gap between trees, passing very close to me in the process. The result of all this effort was yet more very distant blurry photos.





Spot the butterfly! I'll try again...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 09-Aug-15 06:54 AM GMT

Great Photo's Dave, lovely Holly Blue, they're usually still after Landing when I've shot them. 😊
I got my first Clouded Yellow today , What a prize 😊 But no luck with the SSSkippers, or Adonis, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-Aug-15 08:28 PM GMT

I empathise with you, Dave. Just when you think you're in position for a decent Purple Hairstreak shot the bloody thing twists round so it's facing you directly!! 😞

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Aug-15 06:47 AM GMT

Yet more Holly Blues today, Goldie – there really are lots round my way. 😊

Yes, David, I've rarely got anywhere close to a Purple Hairstreak, and they seem to sense where you are so they present the smallest profile possible... 😞

9th August: With other things to do again, only a short local expedition today again. However, a Holly Blue stole the show today. Without counting various Whites, of which there were many, Holly Blues were probably the most frequent and widespread species today. An emergence of Small Heaths might have pushed them in sheer numbers, but they were much more localised.





Nectaring Holly Blues usually turn out to be males, and they have a preference for pink bramble blossom.



However, they also have a great liking for the flowers of the snowberry, often found in ornamental hedges. Passing one such hedge (which has a mix of this bush, hawthorn and elm, and which was full of Comma caterpillars a couple of years ago), I found a female Holly Blue on a snowberry flower.



It moved to a sunlit leaf, but refused to open up before disappearing over the hedge.



A metre or so further along, I noticed another female butterfly sitting in the shade.



It was quite dark and the photo wasn't good, but it soon moved to a more sunlit spot and then to the snowberry flowers.





Very obliging, if a little worn, but the first second brood female this year that I've seen to open its wings even a little.

Dave

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 10-Aug-15 07:49 AM GMT

Shame i missed you on Friday Dave, but great set of images. You did well with the Cloused Yellow, i kept an eye but didn't see any all day. There were a lot more Brown Argus at the north-west end of the site, in the gullies, roosting among the blues.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 11-Aug-15 04:05 AM GMT

Lovely Holly Blues Dave, it's such a delicate little Butterfly and you've caught this image in your photos Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 11-Aug-15 06:07 AM GMT

You shouldn't care much that it's faded, Dave. Any open wing Holly Blue shot, especially if it's a female, is a precious thing!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Aug-15 06:28 AM GMT

Thanks, all. The Clouded Yellow was a lucky find, certainly.

Well, what a lousy week down here it's been. Wednesday was the only day any sun appeared, and all I could do was make a brief nip out to Bedfont Lakes Country Park near work at lunchtime and a short wander locally later on.

12th August: At lunchtime, Bedfont produced Common Blues in quite reasonable numbers, plus a few Brown Argus.







One Common Blue female had a very washed out appearance, but was actually pretty fresh.



There was also one Small Heath and quite a few faded Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns. No sign of a Small Copper – I suspect they have gone from here.

Near home, later, things were similar, though there were many more Small Heaths.





Naturally enough, despite a lack of sunshine, there were Holly Blues nectaring and Red Admirals patrolling in the gloom.





I found a Red Admiral caterpillar, which was in danger of imminent strimming, and it has come home with me. Here it is, with a leaf shelter under construction at the tip of its nettle stalk.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 15-Aug-15 09:22 PM GMT

Love the photos of the Small Heath, especially the one with it's head nearly in the bud 😊 I always find them hard to photograph Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Aug-15 05:56 AM GMT

I was lucky, Goldie – they were relatively inactive because it was cloudy. I can just about creep up on them. 😊

15th August: At least there was a bit of sun today, but no opportunity to venture beyond my local area. The only addition to the usual mix of species was not just one, but two Painted Ladies. One was pretty new, but the other had been out long enough to have suffered a bit of damage.



I also saw the smallest Common Blue I've ever come across. A tiny insect, smaller than many Small Blues I've seen.





I spotted a female Common Blue close to the ground, and watched her lay a minute egg on a clover-like plant.





This is the butterfly responsible.



A selection of the rest:











Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Aug-15 05:53 AM GMT

16th August: With some reasonable sunshine this morning, I strolled down to the local garden centre café for a coffee. Alongside the pavement at one point there is a healthy stand of nettles, quite luxuriant after the recent rain, backed by a tall fence. I have seen Small Tortoiseshell nests here before, but unfortunately the nettles always seem to get cut down before the caterpillars pupate.



I decided to have a closer look today, and was amazed by the number of folded leaves betraying the presence of Red Admiral caterpillars. There were a good couple of dozen in this stretch of nettles – here are a few examples, showing the variety of construction used.







It is interesting to see how close to severing the leaves the caterpillars are when they construct these – many seem to be hanging by a thread. While photographing these "tents", I came across one Red Admiral caterpillar out in the open – I think from it's somewhat bloated and dull appearance it was about to change its skin.



Then I spotted another caterpillar on the outside of one large folded leaf: closer examination showed that this was in fact a Comma. Presumably these normally solitary creatures don't worry about the proximity of other species.



I have my fingers crossed this nettle bed is not for the chop soon – it is getting to the height when that is likely to happen. When they cut the grass verge, they'll cut this too. A rescue mission would fill the house with caterpillars... 😊😄

Of butterflies seen around the limited area I walked today (mostly suburban housing), there were a lot of various Whites, a Red Admiral or two, a Small Tortoiseshell on a garden buddleia, and the inevitable selection of ever more worn Holly Blues.





Speckled Woods are also now increasing in numbers quite noticeably. A spot of extra variety was this impressive moth, which I believe is a Red Underwing.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Aug-15 06:16 AM GMT

Lovely find with the Red Underwing Dave 🐛 Great Cloudy too 🐛 – they seem to be in shorter supply this year than last 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 18-Aug-15 05:30 AM GMT

Nice array of images there, Dave.

Sadly, in a couple of weeks this variety of fauna will seem like a distant memory. Best to capture it all while we can!

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 19-Aug-15 11:52 PM GMT

That moth is so well camouflaged I couldn't spot it at first, great shot. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 21-Aug-15 02:15 PM GMT

A great selection of shots recently Dave. I particularly like that moth which I most probably would not even have noticed.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Aug-15 06:26 AM GMT

Thanks, everyone – I was lucky with that moth. I spotted it flying behind the tree so it wasn't as hard to track down as you might think. 😊

I've been up in Yorkshire again for a few days, and it seems I didn't miss anything good in the way of weather. It might have been better up there if anything.

Saturday 22nd August: A hot day forecast in London. Before heading north, I hopped over the stile to the nearest part of my local patch. I was greeted by a Holly Blue (of course) and a Painted Lady warming up on the brambles.





Then it was off onto the motorway. I decided the schedule had time for a circuit of the north side of Aston Rowant (it's difficult to drive past on a sunny day), so the brief detour was made. Plenty of Chalkhills were still flying, as were Silver-spotted Skippers and Brown Argus, but the warm sun and stiff breeze had them all dashing madly about.







Most were concentrated at the bottom of the slopes today, where I also came across my first Small Coppers since May and only the second spot I've seen them this year.





There were a few Common Blues, various whites, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, Small Skippers and a single Clouded Yellow bowling along at high speed. One of the female Chalkhills lacked underside spots, no doubt qualifying as an ab.



aberrant underside



upperside of the same butterfly

Pressing on northwards via Rugby and Holmfirth and no opportunities to look around more, we eventually came off the M1 and onto the A64 amidst

torrential rain. Astonishingly, it grew darker and darker, wetter and wetter, until it was almost impossible to see. As we took refuge with others in a layby, the hail started, along with the lightning show. The temperature plummeted from 22 to 14 degrees. It was phenomenal – though it probably lasted 15 minutes at most. Arriving at our final destination 20 miles further on, it wasn't even wet...

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Aug-15 07:06 AM GMT

Yorkshire

Sunday 23rd August:

Part One – Wilberfoss

After yesterday's rain, it was a beautiful really warm sunny day. However, despite the warmth, a strong wind was blowing from the south east. This seemed a bit incongruous, really, but it did not deter the butterflies from gathering on the buddleias in my sister's garden. Peacocks were much in evidence: last year they were all around three or so weeks earlier and had disappeared by the end of August.



There were also a sprinkling of Small Tortoiseshells, lots of all three species of White, and a Red Admiral or two.





One Small Tortoiseshell insisted on settling on my stomach for a while.



However, the most surprising sight of all was a very late male Large Skipper nectaring on the buddleia with everything else.



Part Two – Wolds Way

Making the most of the day, we went out up onto the Wolds, close to where we had walked a few weeks ago near Millington. Surprisingly, a couple of Marbled Whites were still around, being blown madly around in the wind, plus a few Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks, a Comma and the odd Meadow Brown.



To continue a theme started yesterday, a Small Copper appeared, followed by a male Small Skipper in surprisingly good condition.





One of the boys managed to see a Common Blue, and track it to the spot where it sheltered from the wind.



Another photo of the view from this area, looking the other way to last time.



Part Three – Calley Heath

On the way back, we popped into Calley Heath, on the A1079 between Wilberfoss and Pocklington. We found half a dozen each of Brown Argus and Small Copper, all rather worn.







The damper parts of the sandy heath, close to the ponds, had a carpet of rock rose, so it is not hard to see how the Brown Argus has colonised it. No doubt the sorrels required by the Coppers are here too.



rock rose



view across Calley Heath

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 28-Aug-15 02:13 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Lovely report. You fail to mention the five- in -one in your first image !. Talk about modesty. 😊

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 28-Aug-15 10:57 PM GMT

Great photos Dave love the Holly Blue , no sign here of Small Coppers yet. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Aug-15 07:41 AM GMT

Thanks, Trevor – didn't like to mention it as four of them were the same... 😊

Thanks, Goldie – it was quite a nice Holly Blue for late in August. If the weather ever picks up I have my fingers crossed for a third brood again this autumn. 😊

Monday 24th August: A sunny start at least, and the Peacocks were out in numbers on the garden buddleia as usual.



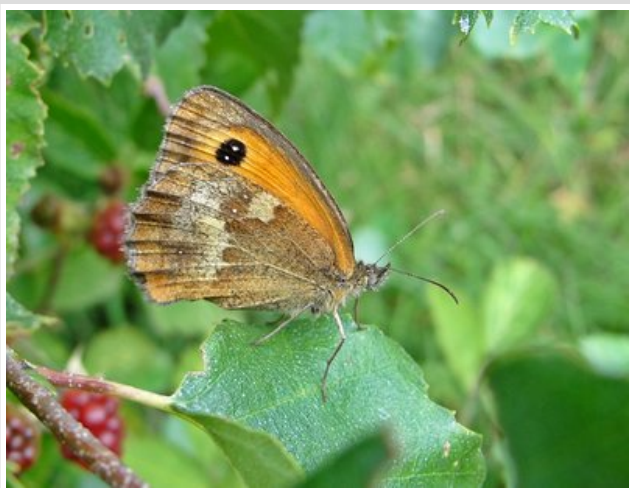
The second of these looks as if it has charred the edges of its hindwings – very dark fringes.



With the likelihood that the sunshine wouldn't last, we headed off out to another favourite spot not far away, Allerthorpe Common. Overall, we saw 13 species:

Meadow Brown

Gatekeeper





A worn example, rather than pale I think

Speckled Wood



Small Skipper



a very elderly male individual

- Large White
- Small White
- Green-veined White
- Brimstone
- Small Copper



Peacock



Small Tortoiseshell



Red Admiral

Painted Lady



None were in high numbers, though the Coppers, Tortoiseshells and Peacocks were most numerous. Having previously seen so few Small Coppers this year, to see them on four sites in three days was very welcome.

We also came across several examples of this pale and unmarked moth. After looking at the photos later, I also noticed the tiny orange geometrid moth caterpillar below the moth – like Pluto, it moved against its background...



Finally, we stumbled upon this splendidly warty toad, shortly before it clambered off the path and down a hole.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 30-Aug-15 02:44 AM GMT

Hi Dave, some nice shots there esp the Painted Lady (and the toad 😊) Dare I suggest that your moth might be Dingy Footman? Or then again, perhaps it is a Buff Footman? Either way, I am sure someone will correct me and then we'll both know 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Aug-15 05:59 AM GMT

Thanks, Pauline – looking at the images I've found, Dingy Footman comes closer. There were several of these, and I also failed to mention that the heather was full of Silver Y moths. 😊

Tuesday 25th/Wednesday 26th August: Not much sunshine on Tuesday and we travelled back down on Wednesday. Curiously, almost all the Peacocks had disappeared from my sister's garden on Tuesday. Maybe the change to cooler weather had been the trigger for them to look for hibernation sites.



A few Red Admirals remained, plus the White butterflies.





Large White caterpillars had installed themselves on the abundant nasturtiums and could be found in various sizes.





On Wednesday, the show was stolen by a particularly splendid Red Admiral – there was nothing else around.





Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Aug-15 06:31 AM GMT

Home again.

Thursday 27th August: I had a walk around my local patch for the first time for a few days (several days of rain apparently – things were better in the north it seems). Most noticeable was the lack of Holly Blues – I only saw one, and a pale and feeble individual it was too. Gatekeepers had also almost vanished, though Meadow Browns persisted as they do well into Autumn, and the paths were home to quite a number of Speckled Woods.



Here too were the usual patrolling Red Admirals, and one brand new autumn Comma perching on a sign.



There were still good numbers of Common Blues, even a couple of fresh females, and in amongst them flitted a few Brown Argus and Small Heaths.







One Small Heath appeared in the meadow area nearest home – a first for this spot I think.



All three Whites were in evidence, and down low by the path I found a mating pair of Green-veined Whites. Both seemed fresh and the female was a beautiful lemon colour on the underside.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 30-Aug-15 06:45 AM GMT

A fantastic set of shots Dave especially the Small Torts, Red Admirals, the Small Heath and the 'Access Comma' 😊🇬🇧 At least I know where all the Small Tortoiseshells are – they're up North 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Aug-15 07:24 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. There were certainly Small Tortoiseshells around up there, and seen just generally in the countryside too. I wonder if the southern ones have just taken one look at the weather and hidden themselves away till next year. The Peacocks round here certainly have.

Friday 28th August: My rescued Red Admiral caterpillar emerged from its chrysalis today, and was placed outside not far from where it was found. I left it waiting for a sunny interval in which to stretch its wings.



During the brief trip out, I saw two others of the species, a few Speckled Woods, plus a Comma. The latter showed its uniformly dark underside – such a contrast to the late spring *hutchinsoni* version.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Aug-15 11:11 PM GMT

Saturday 29th August: Unexpectedly sunny this morning, so I decided to have my annual look at Bookham Common for Brown Hairstreaks. Taking the path west of the Hundred Pound Bridge car park as usual, I was somewhat taken aback to find that further on the path has been widened considerably, very much to the detriment of the blackthorn that bordered it. Not so much pruned a bit, this has been cut right back, dug up even, and the detritus just thrown back onto the remaining blackthorn behind it.



The hedge where I saw hairstreaks last year, and watched an egg being laid, simply no longer exists. A fair bit of blackthorn remains elsewhere, but I do wonder how many eggs were destroyed in doing this, and the opportunities for laying this year have been greatly reduced. I can understand the need to maintain paths and prevent them being completely overgrown, but this all seems a bit drastic. Anyway, suffice it to say, no hairstreaks were seen at all. However, there were other butterflies. A few Gatekeepers remained, and large numbers of Meadow Browns were nectaring on the abundant water mint and fleabane that flourishes in the open areas. A few Specked Woods patrolled the path.



The Small Copper colony at the edge of the field towards the far end of the path produced several individuals, and there were also Common Blues amongst them.





Unusually, I saw no Nymphalids at all – normally the mint attracts a variety at this time of year.

With the sun still shining, I headed back to the M25 and carried on down to Denbies Hillside, which I surprisingly hadn't visited since the middle of July. Things then improved... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Aug-15 06:45 AM GMT

Saturday 29th *continued...*

After the disappointment of Bookham, I carried on to Denbies, which very rarely disappoints. The first butterfly to appear (at the bottom of Steers Field, before even going out onto the hillside proper) was a male Adonis Blue. Though not in great shape, this one turned out to be the first of many seen, some of which were pretty fresh. There were also quite a few fresh Chalkhills as well, and I would be hard pushed to decide which were the commoner. The weather became more overcast, but stayed warm, and this proved ideal, as the butterflies were less active and opened up a great deal more than on a hot sunny day. There were little blue jewels all over the hillside, some pale sky blue, some brilliant turquoise. It was difficult to decide sometimes which to get close to. There were good numbers of female butterflies around as well, particularly towards the top of the slope, and both species were observed. Their similarity makes estimating numbers and proportions tricky, but I'd say that there were more female Chalkhills than Adonis.

Male Adonis:









Female Adonis:



Male Chalkhills:





Female Chalkhills:





I concentrated on the Blues, but in the course of gentle perambulation across the hillside, I must have seen a good dozen or so Silver-spotted Skippers.





They mostly appeared when chasing other butterflies, which was often. Mixed dogfights of both Blues, a Silver-spotted Skipper and a Meadow Brown happened at least once. Meadow Browns were everywhere too. I also came across Small and Large Whites, a few Small Heaths, several Brown Argus, and just one solitary Common Blue. This seems very odd – I have more Common Blues a stone's throw from home than I ever see at Denbies.

One particular aggregation of butterflies was notably eye-catching, but is unfortunate for the setting. In past years, I have seen large numbers of Chalkhills gather on dog droppings; today it was group of four Adonis and two Chalkhills gathering minerals.





Lovely to see the two closely-related species together 😊 – shame about the setting. 😞

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 31-Aug-15 09:20 PM GMT

Love the Adonis shots Millerd, dog Poo and all Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-15 05:51 AM GMT

Cracking Blues Dave 😊 Glad they compensated for the lack of Brostreaks 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Sep-15 04:41 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie and Wurzel. 😊 The Blues put on a great display and it was an enjoyable afternoon. The Adonis in particular were mostly fresh and I would guess that given a bit of sun another trip down there soon would be well worth it.

Sunday 30th August: More unexpected sunshine, though not for as long as Saturday. I stayed local today and saw some more Blues, but of different types. I counted four Holly Blues in various spots, worn and looking rather smaller than they do when fresh. The brambles have all but finished flowering now so the butterflies were not enticed down from flying high over the hedgerows. Speckled Woods were now more frequent than at any time this year, which is quite usual, and they popped up almost everywhere.



Heading out onto the main meadow area between the M25 and the River Colne, Small Heaths bounced up from the grass every few metres, their best showing this year as well. This area is where they are mostly found:



There were also quite a few Meadow Browns, mostly females, with some really fresh individuals amongst them.



Common Blues were also in good numbers, mostly worn, but clearly there are odd ones still emerging.





One posed obligingly at several angles.





The odd Brown Argus was still flying too.



The season is definitely winding down...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 02-Sep-15 06:08 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, looks like the Small Tortoiseshell has come over the Pennines, 😊 not in my garden though 😞 I saw them yesterday together with a Red Admiral and a Peacock next door, I managed a few shots Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 04-Sep-15 06:31 AM GMT

I can't believe how fresh that Meadow Brown looks! They've all but expired down here in S. Wales.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-15 06:08 AM GMT

That is a particularly fresh Meadow Brown a Dave, all the ones round her are looking pretty ragged 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 06-Sep-15 06:13 AM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

That is a particularly fresh Meadow Brown a Dave, all the ones round her are looking pretty ragged

You're lucky to have them at all, Wurzel. They've expired down here in Wales and Hedge Browns are on their last legs.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Sep-15 07:19 AM GMT

Thanks, all. I still find it difficult to understand that Meadow Browns have one long emergence rather than two broods. The first ones emerge in May, the last in September or even October some years. As they spend the winter as caterpillars, how is it that some take only a two or three months after the winter to become butterflies, yet others take twice that time and more. Anyway, it's good to see some fresh ones at any time.

What a lousy week of weather again. There were virtually no opportunities to go anywhere at all. The only interest was this large hedgehog found on my doorstep on the evening of Bank Holiday Monday.



It wouldn't budge, the reason being that it had found a supply of maggots somewhere near a rubbish bin, and was happily chomping them. On 1st September, I had a brief walk as there was a bit of brightness late on. Nothing flew, but for some reason I was looking up and spotted a Red Admiral settled up in a tree.



It was Saturday before I went out again. On today's excursion I managed to rescue three more Red Admiral Caterpillars from the chop.



There has been a good deal of mowing round here this week, including the area where the Small Heaths fly. Compare this with the photo I took last week.



The only butterfly I managed to photograph was a Green-veined White.



Sunday 6th September: As forecast, but hard to believe, a sunny day. I've just changed my car, so I decided to give it a spin and go somewhere new. I therefore headed for Steyning and the chance of Brown Hairstreaks eager to lay after being grounded by cloud and rain. With surprisingly little traffic about, it took only an hour and a half (if that). As I didn't really know where to go, it was lucky that there were little signs pointing to some kind of event at the Rifle Range: I followed those. Almost as soon as I entered the main field from the appropriately marked gate ("Welcome to Butterfly Land"), a bright orange butterfly flew across in front of me and down the slope. It settled on the ground for a while, first basking and then apparently sucking up moisture from the dew on the grass. It then headed for the hedgerow and disappeared. A Brown Hairstreak within minutes!



I then approached the main stand of blackthorn (and other prunus – some of the little dark plums were delicious), and over the next couple of hours, I must have seen half a dozen Brown Hairstreaks.



Several were seen flying low across the slopes, landing on the small scrubby blackthorn just outside the fence and then disappearing the bushes inside to lay eggs. They seem to almost fall out of these bushes when they leave them, and it is unsurprising that they damage their wings in the process. Most inelegant. I walked around the top of the slopes as well, but saw nothing up there except for a worn female Common Blue, and elsewhere there were numerous Speckled Woods, a couple of Holly Blues, a few Meadow Browns and a Brimstone.



The downside today was that in the middle of proceedings, the screen on my camera gave up the ghost. 😞 I carried on taking pictures, but most were out of focus, or of half a butterfly. The fact that any came out at all is astonishing.

Just as I returned to the car, I bumped into Neil Hulme and family on their way to the event up the hill. All looked very well, and Neil said there might be a slight detour of a hairstreak-related kind at some point... As ever, good to see you, Neil! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by peterc, 07-Sep-15 04:08 PM GMT

Well done on the Brown Hairstreaks, Dave. If you don't mind me asking what time did you get to the site at Steyning yesterday? I am wondering when I should set off today to do some Brown 'Hairstreaking' locally.

ATB

Peter

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Sep-15 06:10 AM GMT

Thanks, Peter – sorry I didn't pick up your question until this evening. In case you plan other trips this week in promising weather, I was there between about 1100 and 1400 on Sunday. it wasn't very warm at the start, but if mornings this week are warmer, the Hairstreaks may fly earlier.

After Sunday's outing, I had a look around locally with a different camera. It was late really, with the sun much lower at an earlier time – one of the depressing things about autumn I find. However, I did see four Holly Blues altogether, with a male coming down briefly to pose at head height – a match for the female I'd seen at Steyning.



There were a few Whites, flying up into the trees when I disturbed them basking amongst the brambles, though I also found a Large one nectaring on a wild buddleia.



Despite the haircut suffered by their field, a few Small Heaths were chasing each other around, pausing for refreshment on the clover which was the only remaining source of nectar after the trim.



I didn't see a Red Admiral, which is very unusual for this walk, but did find three Commas. In fact, there were four sightings, but two were of the same individual, an hour or so apart.



One flew quite differently to the others, wafting and swooping gracefully around and showing a pale underside. When it landed, I decided that unlikely as it might seem, it was a very late leftover *hutchinsoni* rather than the darker normal form that I'd expect to see now.



Finally, the most common species was the Speckled Wood, inhabiting every shrinking patch of bright sunshine.



Dave

Re: millerd

by peterc, 08-Sep-15 04:28 PM GMT

Thanks, Dave. I was just curious when you said that you saw a BH apparently imbibing dew on the grass.

As it happened, I arrived at my local site in glorious sunshine at 1030 but by 1100 it had completely clouded over. Not a single butterfly of any sort seen 😞

ATB

Peter

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 08-Sep-15 09:35 PM GMT

It's still good to see the Butterflies wether they're few are for between though isn't it Dave 😊
Nice Comma's as well Dave Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 09-Sep-15 04:56 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Lovely glow on those Autumn Commas, not seen any myself yet. Speckled Wood numbers seem to have taken off big style around here over the last week or so, I am seeing loads of them.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Sep-15 05:44 AM GMT

Shame you missed out, Peter. The weather has been a complete pain lately. The Brown Hairstreak I saw first on Sunday was definitely taking moisture from the grass - here's a closer crop of the photo where you can see its proboscis extended between its front legs. I've not seen this species do this before.



It is good to still be seeing butterflies, Goldie. 😊 Last year they went on into November – it would be great if that happened this year, but I don't think it will. 😞

I've been waiting for the Specklies to pick up, Neil, and for the annual treat your diary provides! 😊 I shall be watching out...

Tuesday 8th September: The sun struggled through around five this evening, which gave little time to see much at all. Worth a look, though at first all I thought I'd find was this Red Admiral larval tent. It was definitely occupied too, as was one other found a bit later on. Some of the smaller ones I've come across have had evidence of parasitic cocoons inside – quite a percentage must be lost this way.



Out in the recently mown field, there is an oasis that the machinery couldn't get at. Here in the late sunshine I found two or three Meadow Browns, a Small White and a single Small Heath.





After that - nothing, though it was six o'clock and despite the low sun, not especially warm. I caught a glimpse of a scrawny fox up ahead on the path, but it made a quick getaway into the bushes.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Sep-15 05:01 AM GMT

Some great reports recently Dave, glad you saw your Brostreaks - interesting behaviour as well, I've seen them supping on fruit but not down on the

ground taking moisture 🤔🌿 Great Commas too 😊 I hope to get out at the weekend possibly but Mrs Wurzel has mentioned 'painting' 🤔🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 10-Sep-15 06:04 AM GMT

That's a highly interesting observation regarding the BH taking fluids from the grass, Dave.

None of us here in Wales really know how our local *betulae* sustain themselves, but given that nobody has ever seen them nectaring then we assume that they're doing precisely what your photograph has demonstrated.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Sep-15 01:47 AM GMT

Thanks, chaps. There's always something new to learn... I have seen a Black Hairstreak down on the ground apparently taking moisture, but I think that might have been honeydew washed off trees above it. The Brown Hairstreak at Steyning just had the morning dew. 😊

Thursday 10th September: by clever manoeuvring and trust in the Met Office forecast earlier in the week, I managed to take the day off and have hours of glorious sunshine. Denbies seemed a good bet, and it proved to be so. After a fast-flying Red Admiral in the car park as I drank a coffee from the refreshment van, Steers Field seemed rather quiet. However, the main slopes proved otherwise, and after only a few metres in, various blues and plenty of Meadow Browns appeared from the grass.



There were still reasonable numbers of both Adonis and Chalkhill Blues, with the most surprising aspect being that there were some nearly new male Chalkhills, as well as a lot of faded ones.





In fact these were fresher than any of the Adonis males, all of which were wearing and taking on the intense electric blue shade characteristic of this.



There were undoubtedly females of both species, but to be honest, even with the excellent help available on UKB, there were some I struggled to definitely identify. The first two photos are the same butterfly, and the fourth and fifth are the same as well. Any ideas which they are?



1



2



3



4



5

My feeling is 1,2 & 3 are Adonis and 4 & 5 are Chalkhill. I did find a couple of "blue" females, one unfortunately with a large piece missing from a forewing - these are both Chalkhills, I think.





I also came across two mating pairs of Chalkhills, an unusual facet of this late season.



Once again, I didn't see anything I could confidently say was a Common Blue, but did find a few Brown Argus here and there, as well as goods numbers of Small Heaths.



Finally, there were still one or two Silver-spotted Skippers.



I returned to the car park, and about thirty metres short of the gate I had to leap sideways off the path to avoid stepping on an adder. The snake was extended right across the path and was not moved by my balletic movements, so I went back to it and took a couple of photos.



At this point it gave me a disdainful look and slithered slowly into the longer grass. In all the years I've been coming to Denbies, this is the first snake I've seen – what a lovely creature.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 13-Sep-15 03:51 AM GMT

Ok I'll have a stab! This is based solely in looking at the outer side of the hindwing lunules: 1+2 Adonis and the rest are Chalkhill, but having been there recently and seen both flying together I know exactly how difficult it is. I've been surprised how late the Chalkhills seem to be flying this year, seen fresh males at 3 sites over the past 10 days or so. Maybe the dodgy May we had has staggered the larval stage and extended their flight season?

Gonna have to watch my step next time I'm there with Adders flaunting themselves on the paths like that 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Sep-15 07:51 AM GMT

Yes, Buggy, it does seem odd to see so many fresh male Chalkhills. If the weather doesn't wipe them out some might linger into October.

Still **Thursday 10th**: After Denbies, I popped into Box Hill. Very little flying, even on Dukes, where all I saw was one each of Common Blue, Brown Argus and Small Heath, plus a little cluster of male Meadow Browns.



Over on Burford Spur, there was nothing at all aside from a few Speckled Woods amongst the bushes at the top. Great views today, though – this is west, over towards Denbies Vineyard.



Finally, the day would not be complete without a local walk. Very quickly, I saw several Holly Blues, maybe five or six in all. The bramble flowers have all but gone, but a few remain for them to nectar on, and the ivy is coming into bloom as an alternative.



A few whites were flying, but even as early as four o'clock they were looking for roosting spots. The sun was far too bright for my photo skills with a CVW I spotted on one of the remaining brambles.



I found a Comma supping on some fermenting blackberries: it seemed to have overdone it somewhat, as it kept falling off into the brambles and then hauling itself out again unsteadily. It eventually settled half in and half out of the sunshine.



Finally, in the recently mown field area, there were still one or two Meadow Browns, and rather more Small Heaths. I encountered a mating pair, amazingly the first I've seen here considering how high their numbers can be.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Sep-15 08:13 PM GMT

Friday 11th September: more sunshine today, and an opportunity this afternoon to drop into Aston Rowant on the way to collect my middle son from halfway up the M40. As I worked my way across the top of the hillside on the north side of the motorway, there were quite a few windswept Meadow Browns (some in good condition) but nothing else.



However, heading downhill at the far end, then through the gate and onto Beacon Hill (as reported by MikeOxon the other day), the wind was lower and there were more butterflies. In particular, there were a selection of Adonis Blues which were perhaps not quite as worn as those at Denbies the previous day.





A few Chalkhills remained as well, though these were definitely in the worn category with a few virtually scaleless and translucent.



For the third time here this season, I was passed by a Clouded Yellow. It headed up the hill, and it was not easy to follow – I managed a distant shot, but the scabious it landed on was blowing around a bit as well, so it's a trifle blurred... It was then up and away out of sight.



Whilst getting my breath back from the uphill pursuit, I spotted a tiny flash of orange on the ground nearby. A Small Copper was also taking a breather.



Other species seen along the bottom of the slopes were Small Heaths, worn Brown Argus and Common Blues, and a few Silver-spotted skippers.



Here's a view from back near the gate just down from the viewpoint – there are still plenty of flowers around at the moment.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Sep-15 04:55 AM GMT

Saturday 12th September: I was passing Bedfont Lakes Country Park after dropping one of my sons at Feltham Station today, so I popped in for a while. As with most sites I've been visiting, both Meadow Browns and Small Heaths featured prominently here, all along the path beside the railway.



At the far end of the path, I found a couple of Brown Argus squabbling.





After two or three of these tussles, a third butterfly joined them – this turned out to be a Small Copper. I've looked here all season for this species, and here it was towards the end.





A few Speckled Woods and Whites completed the picture – no sign of any Common Blues, though a moth which looked blue-grey in flight made me pause for a moment.



Can anyone identify this one?

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-15 05:35 AM GMT

I'd go for Lesser Treble-bar for your Moth Dave, not one I've seen 😊🍷 and a Cloudy as well recently 🍷 Looking forward to the Social already 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Sep-15 05:20 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – I shall add it to the steadily growing list of moths I have seen. Not long to the Social now...! 😊

Saturday 12th September (a bit more): I had a local walk a bit later as the sun carried on shining. A few Commas were around, eye-catching deep orange blazes amongst the fading green of the hedgerows.



A Red Admiral had taken up a traditional autumn pose on the ivy, which is just coming into flower. Judging by the number of caterpillars I've seen recently, there could be a few of these in a couple of weeks if the weather is kind.



Speckled Woods flitted in and out of the shadows and various Whites were nectaring on any remaining yellow flowers.



However, the star of today's expedition was a Painted Lady, basking on the same bit of gravelly path as the last one I saw round here a few weeks ago.



With a bit of context:



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Sep-15 06:07 AM GMT

Sunday 13th September: totally unforecast sunshine today and with the rest of the week looking dire, I had a quick scurry around my local patch again. The usual suspects: Holly Blues, various Whites, Speckled Woods, Commas and Small Heaths. The last of these species seem to still be emerging here as there were several that looked new.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Sep-15 06:32 AM GMT

Great shot Dave, that Painted Lady looks smoky and the penultimate Specklie is brill 😊👍 And is that a double pupil-ed Small Heath 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Sep-15 04:36 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. The Small Heath did seem to have an extra spot, though curiously this was not present on the other side. Another backlit perching Specklie coming up... 😊

Nothing much else in a half hour of warm sun around five this afternoon on my local patch. A single Comma flying around and basking high amongst the brambles, and the aforementioned Speckled Wood.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Sep-15 06:08 AM GMT

Brill Dave 😊👍

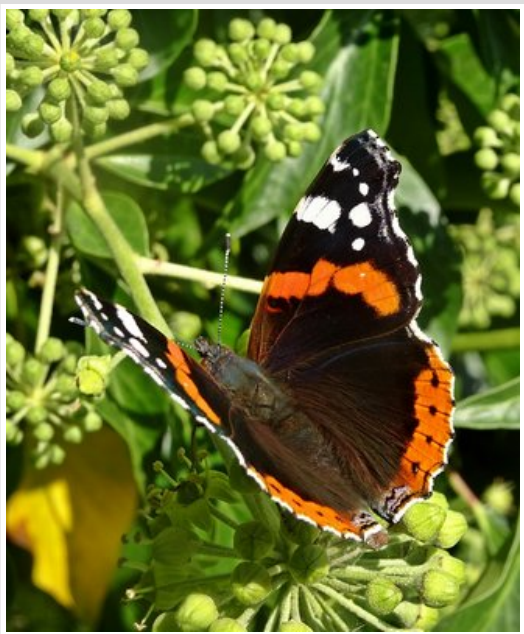
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

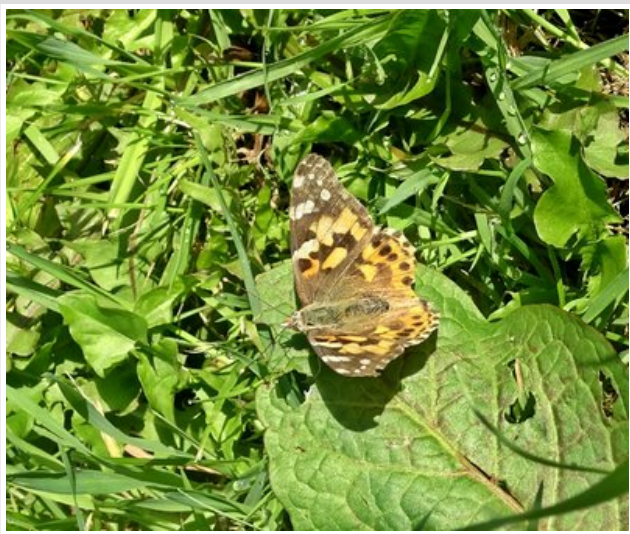
by millerd, 20-Sep-15 06:15 AM GMT

Saturday 19th September: Much more sunshine today. A look first locally at around 1100 reinforced the Autumn feel. There were a few new Red Admirals around, and a couple of Commas too.





Small and Green-veined Whites were nectaring everywhere on various yellow flowers, a few Speckled Woods perched in the shrubs and there were still a few worn Small Heaths in the grassy areas. No Holly Blues any more, but a very pale Painted Lady put in a brief appearance (heading south now?).



This afternoon, the clouds built a bit, but it looked clearer to the north, so I went up to Aston Rowant. There were still Blues around, and I saw males of all three species, and probably females as well, but the latter sex were so worn I had virtually no chance of telling them apart.





Chalkhill I think...



Not sure about this one at all

Probably the commonest species was the Meadow Brown, with quite a few large females flopping around the hillside and stopping to nectar. With less strength in the sun now, they were much more inclined to open up to absorb as much energy as they could.



One female Brimstone was also avidly feeding up, flying from flower to flower without a break.



Finally, I saw three Silver-spotted Skippers, including this surprisingly fresh female.



Still a bit of summer left here 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 20-Sep-15 06:26 AM GMT

I'm getting more and more intrigued about the life-cycle of Meadow Browns. In general, they've disappeared in south Wales, although a visit to coastal Pembrokeshire on 10th September saw a few very fresh-looking individuals. Are there places where this species either has an additional brood or undergoes an extended emergence?

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 20-Sep-15 08:42 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, I really like your shot of the under side of that Speckie, in your post for the 18th, it's some thing different, also like the Red Admiral's they're very fresh up here at the minute Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Sep-15 06:58 AM GMT

It is a bit of a mystery about the Meadow Browns, David. It does makes you wonder what the caterpillar of a mid-September emerging butterfly has been doing all spring and summer... 😊

Thank you Goldie - it seems Red Admirals are coming out round here too. Lovely to see them. 😊

Sunday September 20th: Very limited opportunities today, just a half hour or so at Denbies on the way to pick up my son from cub camp, and about the same at home later on. A cloud sat over Denbies when I was there, which didn't help matters, and my sightings were restricted to Meadow Browns and Small Heaths. One of the latter was newly emerged, with floppy wings being blown around in the breeze.



At home, I did glimpse a couple of Holly Blues high in the ivy before being accosted by the latest incumbent of the Red Admiral glade. It came close to landing on me, but was more timid than its predecessors.



There was another sunning itself in amongst the brambles and ivy - a white-spot variety like the one I saw yesterday (but not the same one).



I caught sight of what appeared to be a pair of sparring Speckled Woods, but as they came out of the tussle, one butterfly looked a very pale orange-brown rather than the usual colour. It settled within sight, and turned out to be an ancient hutchinsoni Comma.



In sunlight

This extremely late to be seeing one of these, since they usually appear at the end of June and do not normally have the staying power of their overwintering cousins. It just shows what the vagaries of the British summer can do.



Under clouds

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Sep-15 06:19 AM GMT

An H.Comma this late is certainly noteworthy Dave, lovely colours on the Red Admiral. 😊 I reckon the late emerging Meadow Browns are the 'students' of the of the butterfly world, sleeping in until September 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 23-Sep-15 05:12 AM GMT

You can see why Meadow Browns are such a common and widespread species, their extended emergence maximises their survival chances by making sure that some of them avoid periods of bad weather. Even around my patch there are a few still hanging in there.

Cheers,
Neil

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Sep-15 03:55 AM GMT

Thanks, Neil - I didn't see any Meadow Browns today, but then I didn't go very far.

It's by far the latest "summer" Comma I've ever seen, Wurzel. They've usually long gone by the end of August. And talking of lovely colours on Red Admirals...

One of my Red Admiral chrysalids opened this evening (you can tell it's been cool and dull around here, as this has taken over three weeks to emerge since pupation). I took a photo with a bit of flash before I released it round the corner where the caterpillar was found. The colours are astonishing.



More Red Admirals later.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 26-Sep-15 04:28 AM GMT

Beautiful colours and patterning on the Red Admiral underside Dave 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Sep-15 05:35 AM GMT

Beautiful colours on the Red Admiral underwing Dave 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 27-Sep-15 06:35 AM GMT

They really are amazingly cryptic when you get that particular view of them.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Sep-15 07:36 AM GMT

Thanks, everyone – they look pretty exotic like that and I don't think I've really had such a detailed look before. No doubt the type and intensity of the flash adds something that natural daylight couldn't. Quite beautiful nonetheless.

Friday 25th September: before returning to find the hatched butterfly, I had just been out round my local patch in the late afternoon where there had obviously been a parallel emergence of Red Admirals in the wild. I saw five or six individuals, all nectaring on the now profusely flowering ivy. Apart from these, there were one or two Whites, a few Speckled Woods and a couple of Commas.





As I photographed one of these as it sat on a branch overhanging the river, a Kingfisher flashed by a foot or two above the water in midstream. Very distracting! Here is a view of the river, complete with Comma in there somewhere, moments after the Kingfisher had whizzed through.



The Red Admirals were the star turn, though.









Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Sep-15 03:16 AM GMT

Saturday 26th September: Up in the Birmingham area today, and was able to have a walk around the lake at Ryton Country Park near Coventry in the afternoon. Not much to be seen aside from a few Commas and Speckled Woods taking advantage of the overripe blackberries.



A small sheltered bit of garden could be seen through the cafe window, and a Speckled Wood and a Meadow Brown could be seen nectaring.





I'm not sure what these flowers are, but they would seem to be a great source of late season nectar.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 28-Sep-15 03:35 AM GMT

Thats a very late meadow Brown. That plant is *Verbena bonariensis*. I've seen it in a number places (there's some been planted in a 'nature garden' at my work) and it's always got various nectar feeding insects on it. If I had a garden it would definately be on my list of plants to get. Has quite a long flowering season, from June til october and is hardy enough for our winters.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Sep-15 06:05 AM GMT

Thanks, Buggy - I've several times wondered what it is as it stands out at this time of year when other things are dying back.

Sunday 27th September: Another local foray today in the late afternoon - there were the usual Red Admirals, Speckled Woods and Commas.







However, I saw a magnificent female Large White which completely failed to stop, plus three Holly Blues (2m, 1f). One of these did stop a couple of times, both times high above my head, so all I could do was to zoom and hope for the best.



I found one shot had been photobombed by a Speckled Wood – the chances of that happening just as the shutter opened are a bit remote, but the brown blur is unmistakable. At least the Blue was not obscured.



I would assume by their worn appearance that these were late second brood individuals – though a third brood appeared last year in early October and into November, the weather has been quite different in 2015 and I doubt there will be a repeat.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Sep-15 06:30 AM GMT

Great Comma Dave and still Holly Blues 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Oct-15 06:36 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – no Holly Blues today 😞

Saturday 3rd October: Despite a week of sunshine, today was the first chance I've had to get out even just locally since last weekend. Not a great deal to see; there were just four Commas, two Small Whites, a Red Admiral and a single Speckled Wood. I didn't get close to the last of these, but all the others appeared newly emerged.

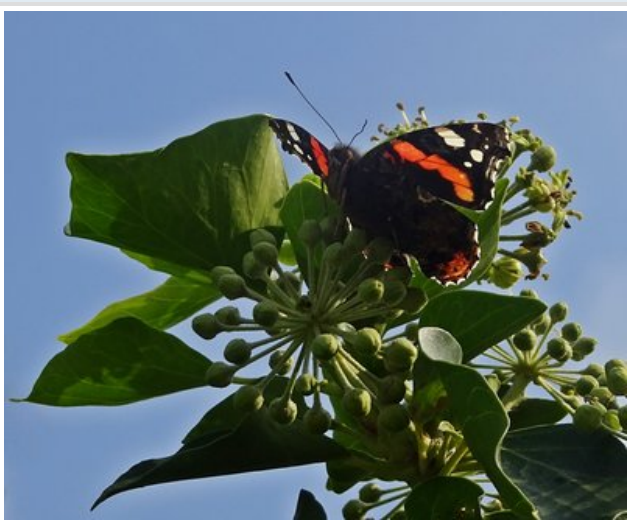








The Red Admiral had a damaged antenna, but this appeared to make no difference to its behaviour.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 04-Oct-15 07:05 AM GMT

They look very fresh, Dave especially the Commas, it's great to see such freshly emerged butterflies at the beginning of October 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 04-Oct-15 05:50 PM GMT

Lovely shots Dave, the Comma's seem to be doing well this October Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 05-Oct-15 04:40 AM GMT

Hi Dave, nice fresh looking Small Whites there. Finally saw a few more Commas myself this afternoon, they have been a bit thin on the ground around my patch so far this year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-Oct-15 04:42 AM GMT

Those Small Whites look mint Dave, they even have the marginal hairs 😊 Did you check them in case they were Southerners – I've been doing that loads recently 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Oct-15 06:18 AM GMT

Thanks for the kind comments, all. 😊

Another week gone now, and there are still some fresh butterflies out there. On Friday, I spotted a Speckled Wood and then a Small White close to my son's school when picking him up, and then on Saturday despite cloudy conditions there was a Red Admiral high up on some ivy close to home.

Sunday 11th October gave me the opportunity for a proper wander round my local patch in some decent sunshine, though as promised it was a bit cooler than recently. I saw four Red Admirals and three Commas, plus one Speckled Wood in flight. All but the Speckled Wood (which was really too difficult to judge) were new-looking specimens: in fact one Comma may have been very newly emerged if the spots of liquid on its leaf are meconium shed after leaving the chrysalis.





One of the others was very much darker than average, unusual as there is normally nothing like as much variety in the winter brood.



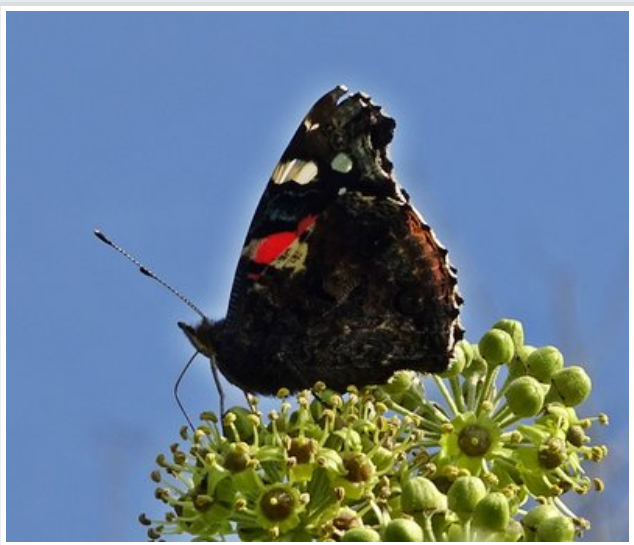
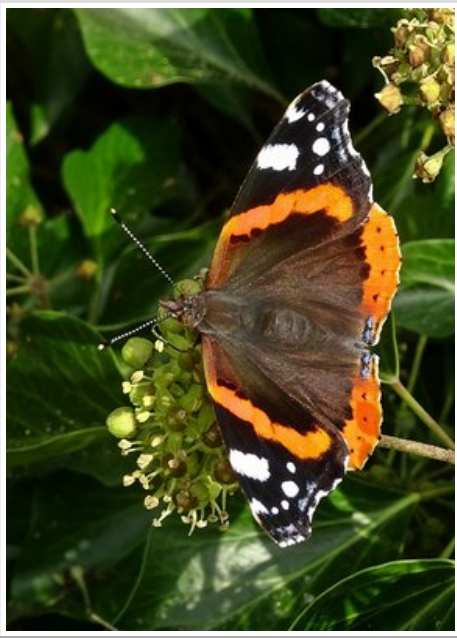
One Red Admiral was initially spotted on the ground, apparently taking moisture from the path.



It then flew up to bask.



The others were nectaring on ivy, as they will no doubt continue to do in sunny weather until the flowers go.





Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 12-Oct-15 06:59 AM GMT

Great that you're still seeing Commas, Dave. They seem to have disappeared in my neck of the woods.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 12-Oct-15 07:15 AM GMT

"David M" wrote:

Great that you're still seeing Commas, Dave. They seem to have disappeared in my neck of the woods.

Great that you're seeing anything since it all seems to have disappeared from my neck of the woods! 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 12-Oct-15 09:10 PM GMT

It's still happening round here too Dave loads of RA's , I think your Comma must be a fresh one, it was only about 3/4 weeks ago I saw some Comma Cat's they were quite large and since then I've had some in the Garden 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Oct-15 06:12 AM GMT

Great shots Dave especially the proboscis curler 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Oct-15 11:32 PM GMT

Thanks, everyone. 😊 Only a week ago, but it seems a world away... It's been a chilly and mostly cloudy week.

Sunday 18th October: Despite some fairly warm sunshine today, I scanned the ivy for Commas and Red Admirals and saw nothing. However, with my eyes pointing upwards, I overlooked a Small Tortoiseshell nectaring on a dandelion by my feet. I haven't seen one here for about three months, so it was a pleasant surprise. It didn't stay put and led me a merry dance across the field, disappearing completely when the sun went in. So sadly no photo. With luck, it will appear in the same spot in spring – where I normally see the first ones of the year.

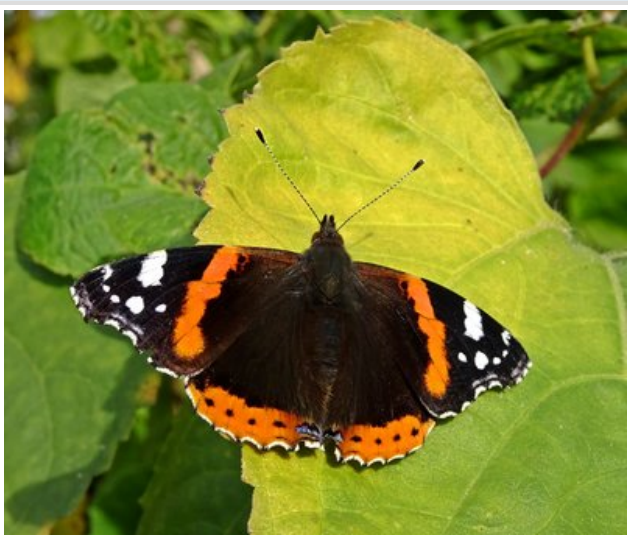
Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Oct-15 04:58 AM GMT

With all the excitement down on the south coast, where have I been over the last few days? Yorkshire... However, it's been great to catch up with all the splendid photos of LTBs that others have taken, and it would be terrific if the weather kept them coming for a few more days. Anyway, Yorkshire was also sunny and mild, and there were a few butterflies to be seen nectaring on the ivy in my sister's garden.

On **Saturday 25th October**, there were a couple of Red Admirals.



I also found a few white butterfly chrysalids in the front porch.



Large White top left, Small White bottom right?



Large White?

On the following day, it was the turn of a Comma and another Red Admiral. A Peacock was also disturbed from an outhouse, but was too flighty for a photo.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 31-Oct-15 06:11 AM GMT

Nice to see the Red Admirals and Comma Dave 😊 Looking forward to your LTB 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 11-Nov-15 04:12 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

I love those Commas against the blue sky, especially the second shot.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by trevor, 07-Dec-15 01:55 AM GMT

Hi Dave;

'Spotting when they ease those wings open'

That's a good description of how the Holly Blue does open up. Rather like the Brown Hairstreak, very slowly. The tense moment comes as you wait, camera ready, will it open up fully before flying off !. Very often only a partial opening is all you'll get. A frustrating but interesting little Butterfly.

All the best,
Trevor.

PS. Coming to Windover Hill next year ?.