

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 26-Mar-18 05:06 PM GMT

At last I'm out of hibernation and so are the butterflies it would seem. Saw these two beauties local to me this morning 😊



Re: Maximus

by trevor, 26-Mar-18 06:06 PM GMT

I had a feeling that I wouldn't be the only one out with a camera today, Mike. Easily the best weather so far. Might be a late season ?. Lovely shots. 😊

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 26-Mar-18 10:50 PM GMT

Good to see your season kicking off too, Mike! 😊 Nice brimstone in particular.

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 27-Mar-18 12:43 PM GMT

Good to see you've emerged Mike and some great shots to kick off your season 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 27-Mar-18 05:29 PM GMT

Nice shots Mike glad your off to a good start 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by David M, 28-Mar-18 09:20 PM GMT

I may have seen my year get off to an earlier start, Mike, but I can't compete with that Brimstone image! Lovely and clear with the perfect level of light.

You did well to capture that!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Apr-18 06:48 PM GMT

Thanks all for your comments.

We managed to get out locally for a couple of hours yesterday, and were rewarded with the following.





Context shot





Looks like things are beginning to pick up as the totals seen were :- 10 plus Brimstones, 3 Peacocks, 2 Commas and 4 Small Tortoiseshells.

Today we went to North Stoke but unfortunately did not see our intended target. The strong breeze was keeping the butterflies down but we did see plenty of Brimstones, Small Torts and Peacocks. If anyone is thinking of giving it a go a word of warning, it's like the Everglades at the moment 😞

Re: Maximus

by bugboy, 06-Apr-18 06:58 PM GMT

Good to see the posts going up now filled with our scale winged friends, it's been a long wait this year but like every year, always worth the wait 😊

Good to know North stoke has woken up now. If I make another visit in the coming weeks (the likelihood is rather high) I won't make the mistake I made two weeks ago and turn up without wellies!

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 06-Apr-18 07:14 PM GMT

Hi Mike,

Good to see you are out and about and seeing some spring butterflies...great photos 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 07-Apr-18 11:31 AM GMT

Looks like you got a hole in one with the species 😊🍀 I've yet to see Small Tort's and Comma. Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-18 08:15 PM GMT

Great sequence of shots Mike especially the first Comma 😊🍀 I'm looking forward to the next wave of emergences now 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 08-Apr-18 07:23 PM GMT

Lovely spring scenes, Mike. Here's to more of them over the coming week or two!

Re: Maximus

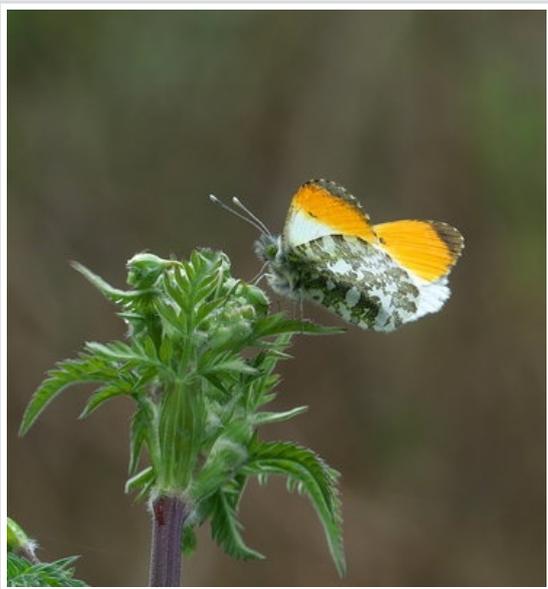
by Maximus, 06-May-18 06:56 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments, its been a bit longer than I hoped for my next post.

5th May

We have just returned from a short break in Kent. The weather during our visit was mostly pretty atrocious, with just a couple of 'passable' days to look for butterflies. (The temperature went down to 4 degrees during the day on one occasion and there was over two inches of rain). We made several visits to Denge Woods hoping that some Dukes might have emerged, and although the habitat looked just right, much to our disappointment we saw none. Last year we saw them here on 22nd of April!

The cool, wet and breezy conditions meant that there were very few butterflies on the wing, and a handful of Orange-tips and a few Green-veined Whites were all we found. I did finally manage a couple of shots of an Orange-tip, my first of 2018, and several shots of Green-veined Whites.



Orange-tip well camouflaged



Green-veined Whites



Bonsai bank Denge Wood

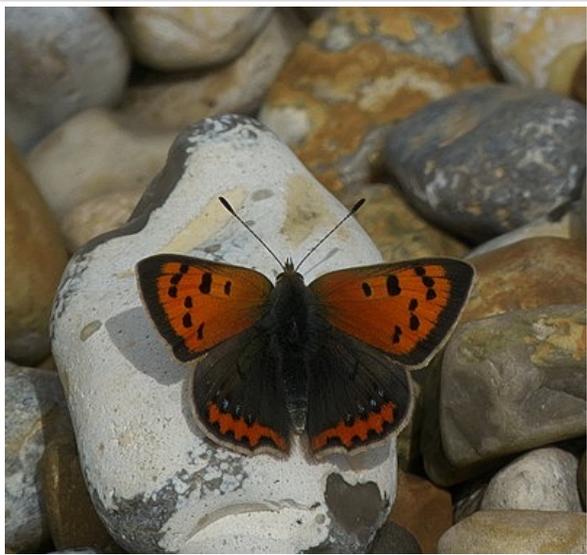
On the 3rd May on our way home we decided to visit Dungeness for a couple of hours, with the temperature set to peak at 12 degrees. Our first impression when walking onto the site was of how abundant the flowering plants are this year, particularly the Sorrel. It bodes well for the Small Coppers.

It didn't take long to find our first Small Copper which was a delight to see and was in lovely condition. Over the next couple of hours we just about made a double figure count, but there was a nice variation of Coppers.





A lovely orangy Small Copper





Degrees of blue spotting





A stunning female

Re: Maximus

by David M, 06-May-18 07:09 PM GMT

Some of those Coppers are to die for, Mike, particularly the one on the white pebble, which is worthy of inclusion in a field guide in my opinion.

The last one is also highly interesting. Surely some form of aberration? Hopefully Hoggers will step in to pass judgement.

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 06-May-18 07:10 PM GMT

Those shots were worth waiting for Mike – Gorgeous!. As soon as I saw all the SC I knew exactly where you'd be 😊 – on somebody else's territory it seems 😊

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 06-May-18 08:48 PM GMT

Wow – beautiful Coppers, Mike. 😊 I hardly ever see any first brood individuals, but Dungeness as ever has them to spare.

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 06-May-18 10:52 PM GMT

A fantastic array of Copper Mike 😊👍 Mind you here in Salisbury we've had quite a variety recently; Warwickshire, Gwent, Surrey etc 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 11-May-18 03:20 PM GMT

Thanks for your generous comments, David.

Thanks, Pauline, you sometimes have to stray a little 😊 It's one of those places that's hard to stay away from 😊

Thanks, Dave, there's more than enough (SC) to go round at Dungy 😊

Cheers, Wurzel, I'm sure that you've had you're fair share(coppers), but weren't those the large variety? 😊

9 th May

Today we headed for Noar Hill as the forecast was for slightly cooler weather than of late, with sunshine and cloud, which would hopefully make for easier butterfly photography.

We were keen to see our first Dukes of 2018, having failed to find any during our recent stay in Kent.

When we arrived at Noar there were already six cars parked in the lane, so it appeared that we weren't the only ones looking for a Duke fix!

We walked up the track and into the site, and when we reached the deep pit just beyond the information board we were beckoned in by a chap who pointed out two Dukes spiralling up into the air locked in combat. We watched as they separated and the victor glided down and landed close by, our first Duke of 2018.







We also found several Green Hairstreaks and Dingy Skippers, our first of the year.



This Pale individual really stood out.



In addition we found these two moths.



Brimstone moth



Burnet companion

It was also our pleasure to bump int Pete Eeles while we were there, it was nice meeting you Pete and also having a good chinwag.

In total we saw twenty plus Dukes/Duchesses, but we didn't cover the whole site by any means.

Re: Maximus

by Allan.W., 11-May-18 05:32 PM GMT

Love that picture of the Dingy Skip ; on the Speedwell ,Maximusterrific shot ! unusual .
Regards Allan.W.

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 11-May-18 06:09 PM GMT

I totally agree - very unusual angle and that pale GH is another great find 😊

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 11-May-18 07:21 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

I totally agree - very unusual angle and that pale GH is another great find 😊

Ditto.

Great stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 11-May-18 09:16 PM GMT

Another great set of shots, Mike - you rarely get to see a Dingy from underneath! 😊

Dave

Re: Maximus

by David M, 13-May-18 11:02 PM GMT

Great Duke shots, Mike (not to mention the Green Hairstreaks and Dingies). Looks like the latter part of spring is going to be quite conducive to our native butterflies!

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 13-May-18 11:53 PM GMT

Ditto ditto 😊👍

And yes they were the large variety – I got a 'North Wales' the other day, something of a rarity 🤪😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-May-18 10:20 PM GMT

Thanks, Allan, Pauline, Neil, Dave and David.

I've not seen a 'North Wales' yet, Wurzel 😊

15th May

We made last minute decision to head for Denbies Hillside in the hope of finding a newly emerged Adonis Blue and to see anything else that might be on the wing. When we arrived at the car park above Denbies although it was warm, the breeze was quite strong. However, as we walked down the path to the main part of the site the breeze was less evident in the shelter of the hill.

We saw nothing until we arrived at the steps area, where we found two Green Hairstreaks locked in combat and spiralling high into the air before dropping back and settling on adjacent bushes. Nearby I found several Small Heaths, our first of the year, fighting with some Dingy Skippers over who was going to claim the best perch.

There were lots of Dingies, a couple of Grizzlies, Small Heaths, Orange-tips, Holly Blues, Brimstones, the 'Whites' and a flyby from a single Common Blue, our first of the year, but we didn't see any Adonis!





Ovipositing female





First Small Heath of the year

As we were leaving we bumped into another UKB member who I recognised from one of Pauline's Chiddingfold photos, it was nice to meet you Dave, (millerd). While we were chatting, Dave mentioned his recent Chiddingfold visit, so back at the car we decided we'd make a detour via Botany Bay, before finally heading home.

Arriving at the Botany Bay parking area we set off down the ride heading for the usual place. It didn't take us very long to spot our first Wood White, which was slowly flying along the woodland edge. By now it was gone 6pm and we hoped that they would be slowing down, however, no such luck, they were not really settling much at all, and when they did it was not for very long. However with a bit of patience, perseverance (and much cursing), we managed a few shots.







Bit of grass in the way!

The upside of all this waiting around was that we were at one point surrounded by perhaps half a dozen singing male Nightingales with a Cuckoo calling in the background, it was the perfect soundtrack to a lovely late spring evening in a beautiful woodland setting.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 19-May-18 09:30 PM GMT

17th May

Today we headed to the Heyshott escarpment after a two year break. We arrived at the parking spot and found no other cars there, so it looked like we had the place to ourselves.

Walking up the lane to the site we encountered a fair number of male Orange-tips, more than we'd seen so far this year, all very active, not allowing us any photo opportunities. After the hard slog up to the first pit we started seeing a number of Dingy Skippers, some settling, despite the hot weather, long enough for a few photos. There was a solitary Common Blue, a few Grizzled Skippers, a couple of Green Hairstreaks and two Duke of Burgundies active in this pit too.

We were about to venture up into the second pit when somebody called out to us from the gate. A couple we'd seen at Denbies Hillside earlier in the week had found some Fly Orchids right next to the path and were kind enough to share them with us.









Up in the second pit we found a couple more Duke's defending their territories, and further up the hillside were several more Duke's and a couple of females. We also found more Green Hairstreaks, one in particular ovipositing on Dogwood.



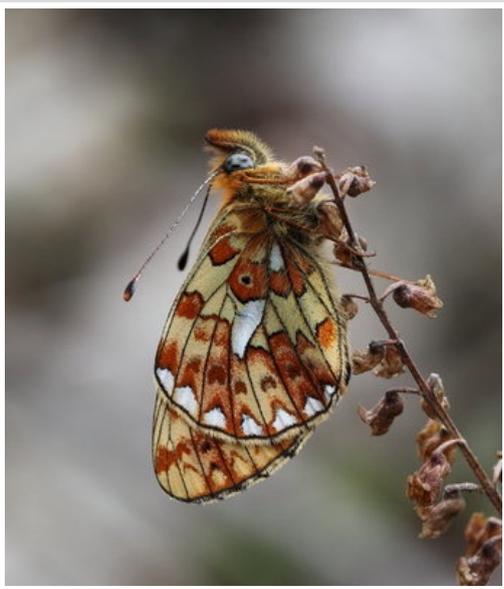


Several fresh Small Heaths

We saw a total of 10 Dukes and 2 females over the whole site.

We'd decided to visit Rewell Wood as well as Heyshott, so headed off mid-afternoon to Fairmile Bottom where we knew we'd find a parking spot. It was quite a climb up the hill to the woods, and fortunately we bumped into the same couple we'd seen at Heyshott who let us take a photo of their OS map so we could find the East-West Ride where the Pearl Bordered Frits had been seen. When we found the spot there were a few PBF's busily nectaring on the abundant Bugle along the edge of the ride. There were a number of fresh looking Pearls alongside a few worn ones, and although they were making it difficult for a decent photo as some of the Bugle was hidden in the grass, we did manage to capture a couple out in the open nectaring.





As we didn't see any roosting Pearls I have added a shot of one taken several years ago.

Re: Maximus

by ernie f, 19-May-18 10:15 PM GMT

What a great selection of butterflies in a single day.

Nice crisp PBF shots too.

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 19-May-18 10:36 PM GMT

Lovely Pearls, Mike. They positively glow in those shots. 😊 Good to bump into you the other day at Denbies, by the way! You got some terrific Wood Whites at Chiddingfold later on I see. 😊

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 19-May-18 10:57 PM GMT

Wow what a couple of days you've had Mike 😊👍👍 I wouldn't know where to start with the compliments with such a fantastic selection of shots, corkers all 😊👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

ps Humberside and Essex on Friday – quite an unusual combination 😊

Re: Maximus

by David M, 23-May-18 05:04 PM GMT

As others have said, Mike, that's a nice range of butterfly species but for me the stand out image is that of the stunning Fly Orchid. What a delicate and intricate feat of Mother Nature.

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 29-May-18 12:55 PM GMT

I'm struggling to keep up with my own diary Mike, let alone others so I have just seen your last few posts. What smashing shots of the Wood Whites – the dark background provides quite a striking, dramatic effect emphasizing how delicate those little butterflies are. Love the 2 together also, mirroring each other 🍷. Another great image of the Green Hairstreak ovi-posting – my only criticism would be: where's the shot of the egg 😊😊 If this weather keeps up I'll see you both next season 😊😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 29-May-18 08:28 PM GMT

Thanks, ernie, it wasn't a bad selection, but involved a lot of walking.

Thanks, Dave, good to meet you too. The Wood Whites were very lively, even at that late hour 🤪

Thanks, Wurzel 😊

Yes, David, Fly Orchids are so small and delicate and are easily overlooked.

Pauline, I'm also struggling to keep up with my diary, and others 😊 Things are now speeding along at quite a pace 🤪 Yes the Wood Whites were difficult due to the strong front light with the dark woodland background, but hopefully they turned out alright in the end. In reply to your comment regarding the Green Hairstreak egg (or lack of), I plan to rectify this omission shortly 😊

29th May

We have just returned from a short break on the Isle of Wight where we were hoping to find some Glanville Fritillaries. We need not have worried, however, as Glanville Fritillary numbers were perhaps the best we have seen in the five years we've been visiting the island.

We normally head straight to Wheelers Bay as it's a really reliable spot for Glanvilles, but this year we decided to go to Compton Bay first. We parked up and set off along the cliff top and immediately began to see lots of frits flying low, just above the abundant thrift. We reached the steps to the beach and as we descended we were totally blown away by the numbers of Glanvilles that were flying along the Undercliff, there were hundreds of them! Getting a photograph however was almost impossible, as due to the very warm weather conditions virtually none were stopping, so we decided to head elsewhere and return when it was cooler.

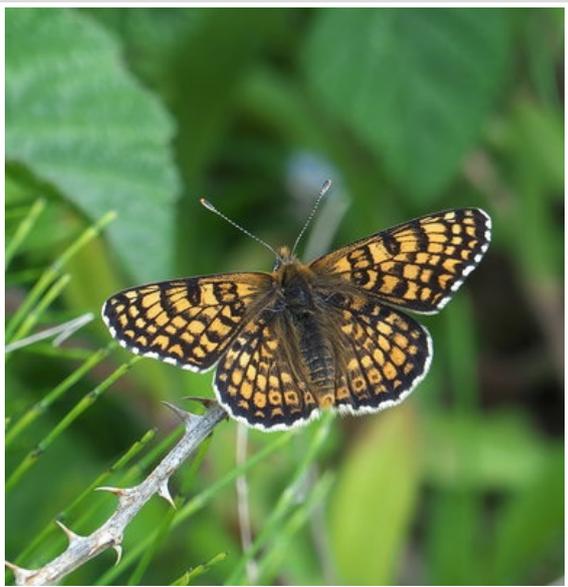
We visited several sites over the week, in particular Wheelers Bay, Bonchurch Down, Afton Down and a few of the Chines along the south coast of the island. On each of these sites we encountered Glanville Frits, and on several of them the numbers were high, which, for us, has not been the case in previous years. So this appears to be an exceptional year, it seems, for the population of this beautiful little butterfly.



Male



Female







Female with an ab underside, didn't see her upperside!



Glanville territory



Poor shot of our only mating pair!



tbc..

Re: Maximus

by Allan.W., 29-May-18 08:52 PM GMT

Great Glanville shots there Maximus..... A few years back ,think it must have been a poor year,just about managed half a dozen along the cliffs near Freshwater ,seeing your pics makes me think a return visit is in order !
Regards Allan.W.

Re: Maximus

by Janet Turnbull, 29-May-18 09:30 PM GMT

Superb shots of the Glanvilles, Maximus! 🍷🍷 It looks like an excellent year for them. We were there last year and saw quite a few but nothing like hundreds!

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 29-May-18 10:56 PM GMT

Wow! 🍷🍷🍷🍷 I need to get over to the Isle of Black again 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by essexbuzzard, 29-May-18 11:44 PM GMT

Wow, that is amazing numbers of Glanvilles. We were there for a couple of days a few years ago and we only saw three!

Re: Maximus

by trevor, 30-May-18 06:33 AM GMT

A very worthwhile (and enviable) trip to the IOW, Mike.
Plus some of the best images I've seen of this species.

I think a Glanville fix is on the cards !.
Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by bugboy, 30-May-18 12:53 PM GMT

Fantastic images 📷📷📷. I used to go on family holidays to the the Isle when little but it was always during the summer holidays, so I've still never seen a true wild Glanville in their last remaining truly native colony.

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 30-May-18 08:38 PM GMT

A wonderful set of images of this lovely species, Mike. It makes a trip over there very tempting indeed, though I suspect it'll have to be accomplished pretty quickly this year now! 😊

Dave

Re: Maximus

by David M, 30-May-18 09:57 PM GMT

Well done, Mike. Nice to see the Glanvilles thriving in their natural home.

They've had great conditions during their flight period this year. Let's hope it helps their populations to increase.

Re: Maximus

by Andrew555, 04-Jun-18 02:25 PM GMT

Love your Glanville shots Maximus. 📷 Great to hear about the numbers. 😊

Re: Maximus

by Neil Freeman, 05-Jun-18 07:47 PM GMT

Great report on the Glanvilles from the IoW Mike and some lovely photos 😊

You have got me thinking about plans for next year already 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 07-Jun-18 06:29 PM GMT

Thanks everyone for your kind comments.

...During our stay on the Isle of Wight we found that like the Glanville Fritillaries, Adonis Blues were also having a good year. We found very good numbers of males on the upper slopes of Bonchurch Down (the lower ones were far too overgrown), supported by a luxuriant growth of Horseshoe Vetch.





Bonchurch Down with male Adonis in centre foreground

Common Blues and Brown Argus also appeared to be doing well, and we found plenty of fresh examples among the tall grasses along the lower part of the down.



Dark Female Common Blue





Fresh males



Female Common Blue



Male Brown Argus



Female Brown Argus



I watched the female Brown Argus ovipositing

..

Re: Maximus

by Pauline, 07-Jun-18 07:48 PM GMT

Good to see the egg this time 😊😄 Some seriously good images there Mike – pin sharp and showing the gorgeous colours to perfection 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 07-Jun-18 07:51 PM GMT

..We didn't find any Small Blues on Bonchurch Down this year but we found them in good numbers at Wheelers Bay, Compton Bay and Afton Down.



Mating pair with three male interlopers!

Dingy and Grizzled Skippers also appeared to be more abundant this year and we saw them at all the sites that we visited. We also found some lovely Small Coppers at Compton Bay and saw plenty of Sorrel growing there. There were also some lovely Bee Orchids just coming into flower.





Our first Large Skipper of the year





Brading Down is a great spot for Holly Blues and we found plenty of Females egg-laying on the prolific Dogwood. We used to see Wall Browns here in the past but saw none on this occasion.



Brading Down looking a bit overgrown.



Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 07-Jun-18 07:52 PM GMT

Thanks, Pauline, and another egg to finish 😊

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 07-Jun-18 08:34 PM GMT

Lovely shots Max, I particularly like the little Holly Blue in the flower 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-18 10:14 PM GMT

Cracking set of Blue shots Mike (as always 😊 😊 🍷 Three interlopers 😲 She must have been the Helen of Troy of butterfly world 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 09-Jun-18 01:36 PM GMT

That's a proper Small Blue melée going on there, Mike. Some lovely colours in those images. The orchid is stunning.

Re: Maximus

by Katrina, 09-Jun-18 05:36 PM GMT

I like the Grizzled Skipper on the flower too 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 13-Jun-18 07:12 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie 😊

Thanks, Wurzel, Helen of Troy indeed 😊

Thanks,David, a right melée it was too!

Thanks, Katrina 😊

13th June

Spent a lovely day in the sun at Ditchling Common today photographing the recently discovered Black Hairstreaks, and also met up with a few UKB members. It was nice to put a few faces to the names, at long last 😊





Re: Maximus

by Vince Massimo, 13-Jun-18 07:44 PM GMT

Good to meet you today, Mike. It was a great day out 😊

Vince

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 13-Jun-18 09:37 PM GMT

I recognise those butterflies, Mike! 😊 Very nice shots indeed.

It was a very good day and a very sociable one as well – great to meet everyone and chew the fat.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Maximus

by trevor, 13-Jun-18 10:34 PM GMT

Great to meet you at last Mike.

Your visit to Ditchling common was obviously worthwhile, with some quality shots. The day was a bit like a UKB social event !.

Best wishes,
Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by bugboy, 13-Jun-18 10:38 PM GMT

I heard there was a 'gathering' down in Sussex today, great shots 😊. If I hadn't already made plans I'd have been there too!

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-18 11:07 PM GMT

Fantastic set of shots Mike, 🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔 nuff said really 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Katrina, 13-Jun-18 11:12 PM GMT

Nice to meet you today, and great sharp photos!

Re: Maximus

by David M, 14-Jun-18 09:38 PM GMT

Fabulous shots, Mike. Seems like this new site has been a 'free-for-all' for many UKB members lately. Thanks to Neil H for flagging it up.

Shame the weather's about to take a turn for the worse otherwise I might have been tempted myself, as this is one of a handful of species I'm unlikely to see in France (along with Purple Emperor, Scotch Argus & Large Heath).

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 15-Jun-18 07:52 PM GMT

It was nice to meet you too, Vince. It was a brilliant day out 😊

Yes, they were very photogenic, Dave. It was a great day and it was nice to meet everyone 😊

It was great to meet you too. Trevor. Nice site, stunning Hairstreaks and good company 😊

It would have been great to have met you, bugboy, but you did 'alright' elsewhere 😊😊

Thanks, Wurzel, I feel your frustration 😊

Thanks, Katrina, nice to meet you too 😊

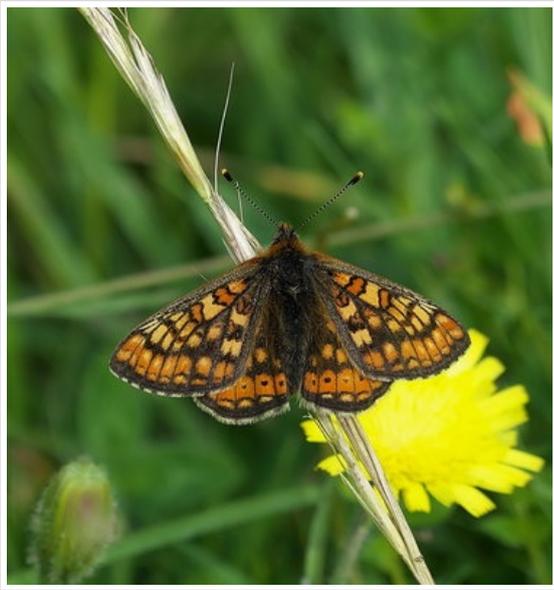
There were a few UKB members there, David, but it was all very orderly, pity you can't get to see them it's well worth a visit.

I think that's the first time I've posted on the same day as the sightings and in doing so I've jumped ahead of myself. However it's not every day that you get to see Black Hairstreaks in Sussex .

4th June

Today we headed off early to visit a Wiltshire site in the hope that there might be a few Marsh Fritillaries still about. We arrived at the site to find we had it to ourselves. The weather was dull but warm, and walking up through the site we didn't see any butterflies, roosting or otherwise. It was a little

overgrown in places and we thought this may be the reason why. We were about to move on elsewhere when it brightened up, and with that a Marsh Frit took flight out of the long grass nearby. As we followed it we found more, some of which were in good condition. In all we saw about twenty or so Marshies.



We also found some very fresh looking Adonis and Common Blues.



Adonis Blues



Blue Female Common Blue



Common Blues

And some nice Brown Argus.



We also saw Small Heaths, Grizzled Skippers, some small Blues, some Small Whites and some worn Green Hairstreaks.

After a few hours here we decided to head off to Bentley Wood.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-18 06:37 PM GMT

Great to see there were still some Marsh Frits around they've had a cracking year everywhere and you got cracking shots 😊 Hopefully you found more than a couple of Small Pearls at Bentley as I'm really worried about the survival of the species at this site 😞, I'm waiting with bated breath for your next report...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 16-Jun-18 06:58 PM GMT

Fantastic Adonis shots Max 🍷 you've really captured their Blueness 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

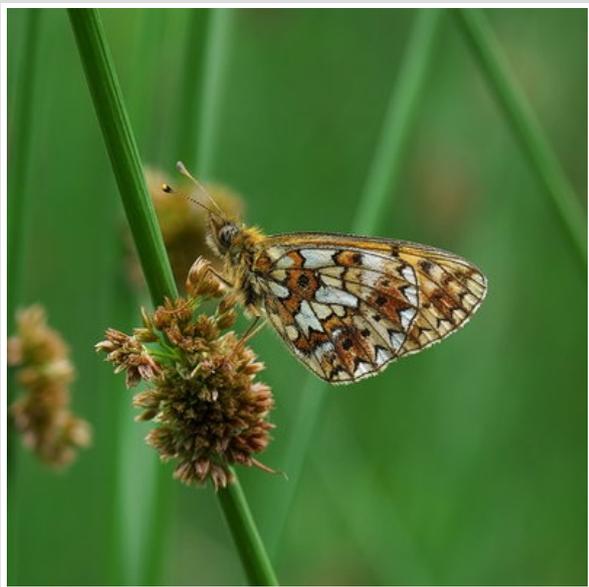
by Maximus, 16-Jun-18 08:20 PM GMT

It was good to see some Marsh frits, Wurzel, as it was in 2015 that we last saw them 😊 Now for the Small Pearls.

Thanks, Goldie 😊

[4th June continued](#)

We arrived at Bentley Wood quite late in the afternoon and it was cool and overcast. There was only one other person there when we arrived and he was just leaving. A quick chat revealed that he had seen two SPBF! On entering the eastern clearing through the new gate (new to us) our first impression was that it appeared a bit overgrown compared to our last visit in 2015. We soon spotted the first SPBF which flew a short distance before settling long enough to get some shots of it. It warmed up slightly after this and we began to find a few more.





We saw a total of six SPBF, but I would imagine that our visit was near the end of their flight period, I wonder what the peak count was. The only other butterfly we saw was a female Large Skipper posing nicely on some bracken.



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-18 10:33 PM GMT

Great set of shots 🤩👍 I (think I) saw the first one there on 27th May and then on 2nd June saw one or two so 6 a few days later isn't a really high total 😊 Hopefully they're elsewhere in the Wood as well...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 17-Jun-18 09:50 PM GMT

Lovely stuff, Mike. This last couple of weeks has proved to be a bonanza for butterfly enthusiasts. There have been some fabulous sights on offer, and I just hope that we don't now have to endure several successive 'poor' years as punishment!

Re: Maximus

by Andrew555, 19-Jun-18 10:35 AM GMT

Lovely selection of Blues Mike, and great Fritillaries. 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Aug-18 05:14 PM GMT

Sorry for the delay in replying, Wurzel, a total of six SPBF is terrible 😞 hopefully there were more hidden away in the wood 😊😊

We had no idea what was going to happen regarding the weather when you wrote that, David! We now may have to endure a very poor year in 2019!

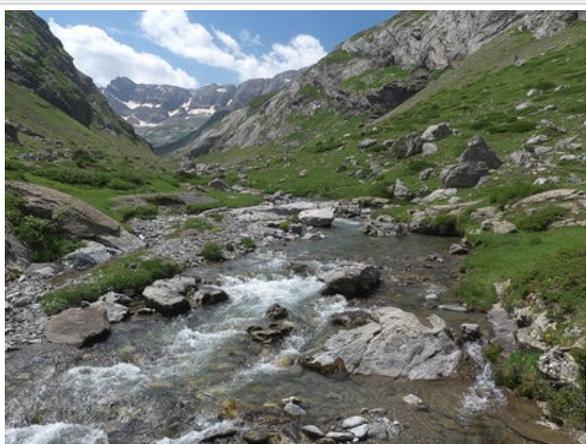
A very belated thank you, Andrew 😊

Pyrenees 2018

We have recently returned from a three week camping trip to France. We left the UK on the 6th July and headed for the Pyrenees and after a couple of overnight stops we arrived at our campsite in the Pyrenees on the 9th July. We spent a wonderful week in the Pyrenees (apart from the nightly thunder storms and gale force winds), visiting some beautiful locations and finding some stunning butterflies, many of which were new to us. The problem was that during our week of searching we had not had any sightings of the one little butterfly that we really hoped to see. We therefore decided to spend one more day in the Pyrenees and head to an area that we had not yet visited. And to our amazement and joy that's exactly where we found them, after an 850 mile drive from the UK and eight days of searching, we found eight beautiful examples of *Agriades pyrenaicus*, or the Garvarnie Blue butterfly! To say we were overjoyed would be a massive understatement!



Garvarnie Blue



Habitat shot, 1670 mtrs (approx)

More to follow at a later date when I've sorted some photos and checked some ID's.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-18 08:35 PM GMT

You've set my salivary glands into overdrive with those lush shots Mike, what a lush looking butterfly, not showy but still stunning, can't wait for the

next installment 🤔🤔🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 06-Aug-18 08:44 PM GMT

Wow - those are wonderful shots, Mike. 🤔 Worth the effort I'd say... 😊

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 07-Aug-18 12:35 PM GMT

Yes Wurzel, Garvarnie Blues areright little stunners 😊 We found eight males but no females even though we spent plenty of time looking, they must have been well hidden away.

Don't salivate too much, as we were told by both French and English butterfly enthusiasts that we met during our trip, that it was not a good year for Pyreneean butterflies 😊 We were disappointed that we saw no Apollos, a species that was high on our wish list 😊

Cheers, Dave, it's always worth the effort for an end result like that 😊

But we did find this lone Glandon Blue (*Agriades glandon*), mixing it in with the Garvarnies, the only one we saw during our week in the Pyrenees.



Glandon Blue

Re: Maximus

by David M, 07-Aug-18 10:24 PM GMT

Fantastic, Mike. Gavarnie Blue is a species I've yet to see, and has a very restricted range in France so you did well to locate it.

Shame about the storms. France has had a fairly miserable time of things this year up till the last week of July. One hopes normal service will be resumed in 2019?

Re: Maximus

by ernie f, 08-Aug-18 07:31 AM GMT

Mike - love the shot of two Gavarnie Blues. Also the Glandon Blue.

I have to ask - did any of them wing-roll?

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 10-Aug-18 06:42 PM GMT

We thought that we had missed it, David. The extra day paid off.

Thanks Ernie, and no, not the slightest twitch 😊

One of the species of butterfly that we were hoping to see was the Black-veined White. This Butterfly was once found in the UK but sadly became extinct here by the mid 1920's.

On our first full day in the Pyrenees, our first stop was in a small gravel layby along a twisty lane with flower filled verges. As we pulled in, the first thing I saw from the car was a pair of Black-veined Whites in cop on a large Scabious flower.



During our week in the Pyrenees we saw reasonable numbers of Black-veined Whites at most of the sites we visited.





At one site I found a female who appeared to be looking for an egg laying site and watched as she finally settled on the underside of an apple leaf and deposited a batch of eggs.





Habitat shot. The eggs were laid on the top of the far left hand upward curving apple branch of the fallen tree in the foreground.

It's a lovely big, bold, strong flying butterfly and it was a delight to see it for the first time.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-18 07:43 PM GMT

Lush Black-veined Whites Mike 🍷🍷🍷 The Glandon is mighty lush too 🍷🍷 a bit like a more completed version of the Garvarine, they'd stopped the colouring in about half way through 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 11-Aug-18 01:37 PM GMT

I'm surprised you'd never seen Black Veined Whites before, Mike. They're pretty common in many parts of France and extremely so in the Pyrenees & Alps.

Lovely, photogenic species though, easy to spot and very approachable. It'd be nice if they recolonised the UK (though I'm not sure the fruit farmers would agree!)

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-Aug-18 07:44 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel, yes the Black-veined Whites and the Glandon Blue are very lush indeed, and I see what you mean about not finishing the colouring in of the Garvarnie Blue 🍷

I've just never bumped into Black-veined Whites during previous trips to France, David. I agree, it would be nice to have them back in the UK.

Another butterfly we were hoping to see for the first time during our trip to the French Pyrenees, was the Scarce Copper. We need not have worried as we found some beautiful examples of this stunning looking butterfly. We did not see a large number, and those that we saw were all males, not sure where the females were hiding?





This butterfly had his forewing stuck behind the hindwing. It didn't stop him flying though!

Purple-edged Coppers appeared to be more common than the Scarce, and we found good numbers of them, including some lovely females. The Purple-edged Copper is another beautiful butterfly.



Purple-edged Copper male



Purple-edged Copper male



Purple-edged Copper male



Purple-edged Copper female, showing a hint of blue



Purple-edged Copper female



Purple-edged Copper female

We saw only one stunning example of the Purple-shot Copper, a male, of which we got just two shots of before it took flight and disappeared towards the horizon. I'm not sure why they're so scarce, did someone get the names mixed up?



The grass stem could not be removed or it would have been no shot at all!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-Aug-18 07:55 PM GMT

Almost forgot, this is a shot showing the typical habitat where we found the Coppers (and others)



Re: Maximus

by bugboy, 18-Aug-18 12:13 PM GMT

Those coppers are all stunning, impossible to pick a favourite. They are all high on my to see in the flesh list 🍷🍷🍷

Re: Maximus

by ernie f, 20-Aug-18 10:39 AM GMT

A Copper Bonanza, all the pics are fantastic – its so good to see other species that I am not familiar with and in such wonderful countryside too.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 21-Aug-18 09:58 PM GMT

Aah! That looks like heaven on earth to me, Mike!

Yes, female Scarce Coppers live up to their name. They keep themselves to themselves, unlike the males which can be very common in good years.

2018 was a BAD year for them, and I saw just three males and NO females. Shame because it is my favourite Copper of the ones available in SE France, and your images are extremely good so you should be well satisfied.

Re: Maximus

by Andrew555, 23-Aug-18 11:44 AM GMT

Fantastic shots of some beautiful butterflies Maximus. Love it. 🍷 😊

Re: Maximus

by trevor, 23-Aug-18 02:13 PM GMT

Lovely Scarce Coppers, Mike. That orange has been seen to be believed (see page 72 of my diary).

We came across some very fresh ones, including females, in the French Pyrenees last year.

No Purple Edged Coppers though, so it's good to see yours. 🍷 .

Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by Janet Turnbull, 23-Aug-18 05:50 PM GMT

A stunning set of photos of French lovelies, Maximus – I'm tempted to book a holiday there for next year!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 23-Aug-18 07:07 PM GMT

Thanks, Bugboy, I'm not surprised those Coppers are on your see in the flesh list. I need to see them again too, this could well become addictive 😊

Thanks, Ernie, it's really great to see stunning new species in beautiful surroundings.

It is heaven on earth, David, and you've visited a few others too. It's interesting what you say about the females. Lets hope that next year's a good one for French Scarce Coppers.

Thanks, Andrew, I hope you can get to see them too sometime 😊

Thanks, Trevor, I've just looked at page 71 and 72 of your diary, stunning shots of stunning Scarce Coppers both male and female 😊 looks like 2017 was a good year for them. I like the shot of the two males on the flowerhead. I somehow missed those posts! I guess you'd have to be on this site 24/7 to see everything during the peak emergence months 😊

Thanks, Janet, it's well worth doing 😊

I've now reached the point where I begin to run into a little bit of difficulty in our Pyrenean trip species report with the skippers. The reason being is that I understand that correct identification of some species of Skipper is not always straightforward, and having only upperside shots compounds the ID issues, as certain Pyrgus species appear quite similar on their uppersides.

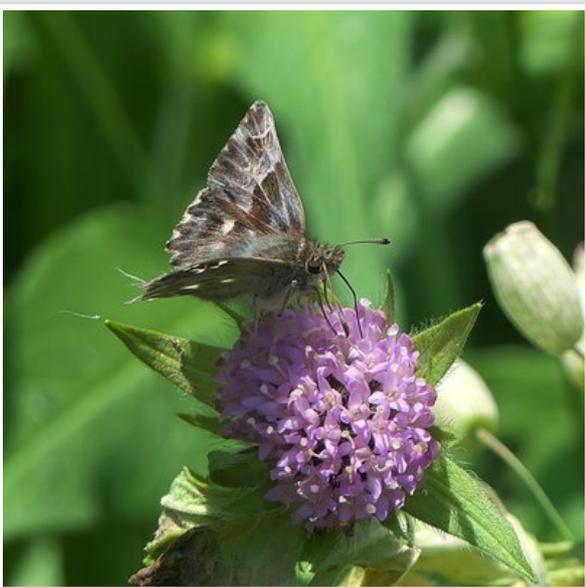
Tolman and Lewington and several web sites have been of great help, but it has taken me a while to establish what I *believe* to be the correct ID's. I have added the approximate altitude that we found each species, where appropriate (and have checked their flight times) as this may add relevance to the ID's.



Red Underwing Skipper



Marbled Skipper. 1700 mtrs.





Tufted Marbled Skipper. 1540 mtrs.



Large Grizzled Skipper. 1540 mtrs.



Grizzled Skipper (P.m malvoides) 1700 mtrs.



Carline Skipper, 2 facing each other in the shot. With Marbled Skippers, Mazarine and Turquoise Blues. 1700 mtrs.



Large Skipper



Small Skipper



Essex Skipper



Marbled Skipper Group with 2/3 Oberthur's? And 2x Turquoise Blues. 1700 mtrs.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 23-Aug-18 07:23 PM GMT

This is one of the locations at 1700 mtrs. where we found Skippers.



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-18 07:40 PM GMT

A fantastic array of Copper and Skippers Mike, my cup filleth over with Mr Greens 🤪🤗🌱🌱🌱

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 23-Aug-18 10:54 PM GMT

I just love the multiple butterfly shots, Mike. 😊

Dave

Re: Maximus

by David M, 24-Aug-18 12:09 AM GMT

Hi Mike,

Lovely sequence of images. Looks like you had a productive time.

Your Oberthur's looks more like either Olive or Large Grizzled Skipper, depending on size, which is something I can't gauge from an image.

Any undersides?

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 24-Aug-18 01:34 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel, I'm sure you've a few up your sleeve for a later date 😊

Yes, Dave, it's was nice to see lots of butterflies in one small space 😊

Thanks for your input, David, no underside shots unfortunately. I originally thought Large Grizzled as I remember thinking at the time it was a relatively large Skipper.

I've had a look this morning at 'Butterflies of France' website and found a page showing broadly typical *Pyrgus* upperside photos. large Grizzled and Olive both appear to have obscure upper hindwing markings, as does the Skipper in my shot, whereas Oberthur's appears to have slightly stronger markings in these areas. The ground colour of 'my' skipper seems closer to the Large Grizzled than Olive, which appears paler, but I appreciate that these points are variable. The author does say that *alveus* is perhaps the most difficult of the French *Pyrgus* species to identify with any degree of confidence!

I also looked on Guy's European Butterfly site and the second shot down in his Large Grizzled Skipper section looks a pretty good match to the one I photographed.

Mike

Re: Maximus

by trevor, 24-Aug-18 03:25 PM GMT

You have done well naming those 'Grizzled type' Skippers.

We saw many different Grizzled Skippers, some similar to our own.

But none would be seen in the UK, and some could easily be confused with other types.

I gave up !.

Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 25-Aug-18 11:58 PM GMT

Maximus wrote:

Thanks for your input, David, no underside shots unfortunately. I originally thought Large Grizzled as I remember thinking at the time it was a relatively large Skipper.

If it was noticeably large, Mike, then with those markings I think it has to be *alveus*. The only others of similar size are Safflower and Oberthur's, and it's clearly neither of those.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 28-Aug-18 04:17 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor, Identification of these Skippers is not clear-cut and there seems to be plenty of variation, even within the same species.

Thanks for your help, David, much appreciated. Can someone please advise me how to edit the caption under a photo 😊

During our week in the French Pyrenees, we probably only saw about half a dozen or so Large Blues. We only ever saw one or two individuals in any one day, possibly because their habitat is so vast and their numbers low. They must cross paths sometimes however, as one day we found a female egg

laying.



This was the female egg laying 30secs before this shot.

We also only saw singles of Turquoise Blue, all males, but what a stunning looking butterfly it is, a first for us.



Mazarine Blue was another first for us, what a pity they don't now fly in the UK as they're a gorgeous shade of blue.





I think this is an Amanda's Blue female.



This a shot contains half (of the eight) Garvarnie Blues that we saw during our week.



Garvarnie Blue, a very sociable butterfly

Also seen in most places were Common, Small, Silver-studded and Adonis Blues.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 28-Aug-18 06:24 PM GMT

More cracking Blues Mike 😄👍👍 That last shot is a real cracker as are the Mazarines – I wish I'd gotten shots like that of the one I saw 😄👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 28-Aug-18 07:14 PM GMT

I agree with your statement regarding Turquoise Blue, Mike. It is possibly my favourite in this family.

Like you, I find that they usually crop up singly, although in the Pyrenees last May I saw many dozens at a single site so they can be communal when they want to be.

Re: Maximus

by Andrew555, 30-Aug-18 11:41 AM GMT

Great Skipper selection Mike, love the group shots. 😄 And some stunning Blue's. 👍😄

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 30-Aug-18 04:52 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel, glad you got to see a Mazarine Blue in the Dordogne, we didn't find any there 😞

It must have been fantastic to see dozens of Turquoise Blues at one site, David.

Thanks, Andrew, groups of butterflies mud-puddling are amazing to see, pity this doesn't happen much in the UK.

Fritillary-wise in the Pyrenees, we didn't see that many different species. Perhaps we didn't visit the right places or perhaps we were there at the wrong time. The most common by a long way was the Heath Fritillary, closely followed by the lovely and numerous Spotted Fritillary.





Heath Fritillary



Spotted Fritillary



False Heath Fritillary





Lesser Marbled Fritillary

These were the only species of Fritillary that we saw in the Pyrenees.

Re: Maximus

by trevor, 30-Aug-18 07:10 PM GMT

I have been enjoying your Fritillaries from the Pyrenees.
Your image of the Spotted Fritillary underside is stunning !.

Keen to see more,
Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 30-Aug-18 08:11 PM GMT

I agree with Trevor that Spotted Frit underside is a cracker 🤩👍 Mind you the Marbled underside shot is none too shabby 😊😄👍👍 Having just about worked out how to separate Heath, Meadow and Kanpved Frit from each other how do you go about the doing the same for False Heath?
:shock:Is it because on the underside working in from the leading edge is goes creamy yellow and then white whereas Heaths have the same creamy white in both those layers? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 31-Aug-18 12:03 AM GMT

Glad you're enjoying them, Trevor. The Spotted Fritillary is a stunning and very variably marked butterfly.

Yes they're both stunners, Wurzel 😊 The way I understand ID's for the Heaths, is:-

The False Heath Frit. hind wing u/s, row 2 lunules (from the edge) shaded with red, **have a black spot** inside. Also the amount of orange t/s hindwing is reduced - more brown.

The Heath Frit. hind wing u/s, row 2 lunules (from the edge) shaded with red, **have no black spots** inside. The outlines of the lunules are very black too.

You can certainly see this clearly on the underside shot of the Heath - **no black spots** inside red shaded lunules with heavy black outlines. If you look closely at the underside of the False Heath, you can see **it has** black spots.
Not sure if my terminology is correct?

It takes a lot of time determining ID's of some continental species when you've not seen them before 😊😄

Mike

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-18 12:26 PM GMT

Brilliant as soon as you pointed it out I could see it straight away 😊 Cheers for the tip I'll store that little gem away for the future and hopefully I'll get to use it 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by ernie f, 01-Sep-18 07:49 AM GMT

Yep – It's the Spotted Frit for me too. Its a beautiful thing and a brilliant, sharp shot of it too. Wonderful stuff.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 01-Sep-18 09:22 AM GMT

I'm surprised you didn't see more Frits in the Pyrenees, Mike. Even so, those are good images of the Lesser Marbled Fritillary. These critters are normally very unhelpful to photographers with their propensity to fly around endlessly and settle for short periods only.

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 01-Sep-18 10:13 AM GMT

My vote is for the Spotted Fritillary too, Mike – ever since seeing fresh males in Corfu in 1971 (!!) I have thought them stunning, and that one certainly is too. 🍷 😊

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 01-Sep-18 05:39 PM GMT

Glad it's of help, Wurzel 😊

Thanks, Ernie, it's a lovely looking frit for sure 😊

Me too, David, I thought we might see Weaver's or Queen of Spain.

Thanks for your vote for the Spotted frit, Dave 😊 Corfu 1971 eh 😊 😊

Old Winchester Hill – 21st Aug.

A visit to OWH today found us walking along the top path from the carpark. In previous years we've seen Silver-spotted Skippers and Adonis Blue along here, but not today! We did however find two nice Painted Ladies and a few small Heaths.

Making our way to the hill fort we passed through the gate into the south meadow, noting that sheep were already grazing here. At the top of the meadow it appeared that the sheep had grazed off a lot of the wild flowers, leaving little nectar for insects. Further down The slope we found more flowers, including plenty of Scabious and Marjoram, and that's where we found our first Adonis Blues and some Silver-spotted Skippers, mainly males of each.

When I reached the bottom of the meadow I bumped into the guy walking his transect. We got chatting about the Adonis Blues we had seen and he informed me that these were a result of a 2012 introduction. Previous introductions had apparently taken place in 1981 and 2002, which had both failed. Apparently with the 1981 introduction the butterfly had at first flourished with it's numbers building quickly but then just as quickly it dramatically declined until in 1988 there were no recorded sightings. This pattern was also repeated with the second introduction. Apparently since the 2012 introduction numbers have been building slowly, for reasons unknown, and there was hope that this time a stable population would result. His parting words were that if this introduction did fail it may be the last attempt!

By this time it was getting late so we made our way to the bottom of the car park slope, seeing a flypast by a single Clouded yellow along the way. Here we found more Adonis males and some Chalkhill Blues in reasonable condition, along with several mating pairs. We also found two mating pairs of Adonis which was good to see and bodes well for their future. What really surprised us however was the amount of Silver-spotted skippers in this area. Along with many males were some very fresh looking females, some egg-laying in the grasses.

Numbers wise we saw twenty Adonis Blue males and a single female in the south meadow, and eight Silver-spotted Skippers.

At the car park slope we saw ten Adonis males and two mating pairs. Silver-spotted Skippers numbered at least 30 plus, but that's right up the slope of the hillside to the gate at the top, however they whizz around so fast that counting them is far from easy!



Painted Lady No.1



Painted Lady No.2



Meadow Brown



Common Blue



Adonis Blue Male



Adonis Blue Male



Adonis Blue Male



Adonis Blue Female



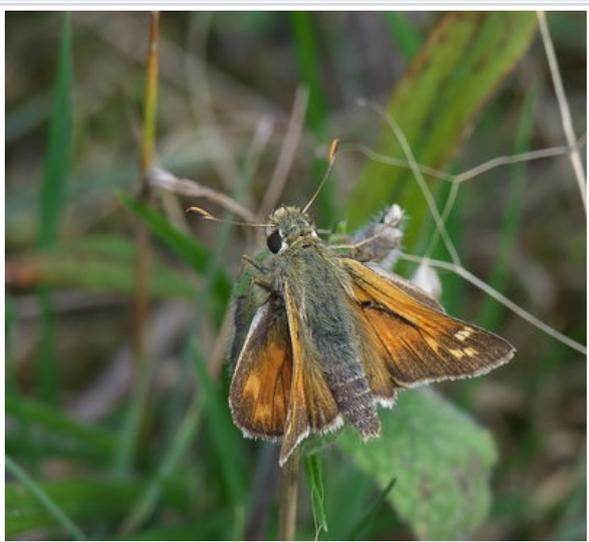
Adonis mating pair



A quite fresh looking Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill mating pair



Male SSSkipper



Fresh female SSSkipper

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-18 05:46 PM GMT

It's easy to see that those are two different Painted Ladies Mike; the first looks a bit swarthy and the second has blue spots in the hind wing spots 😊👍 Great set of images as always but that final one of the SSS is a beaut 😊👍 Fingers crossed the Adonis hold on...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 02-Sep-18 10:01 AM GMT

Well done, Mike. You got an Adonis with the black spots on the hindwing margins.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 04-Sep-18 05:22 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel, fingers crossed indeed.

Thank's for pointing that out, David, I think that's a first for me.

Hautes-Pyrenees - July 2018

Although we didn't see many different types of ringlet in the Pyrenees, trying to identify those that we did see has been quite challenging. Some appear at first glance to be quite similar and there also seems to be a fair bit of variation within each species, just to make identification a little bit more difficult! So if I've got any wrong please feel free to correct me.



Piedmont Ringlet.



Bright-eyed Ringlet.



Brassy ringlet.



Yellow-spotted Ringlet. (form constans).



Mountain Ringlet. (Form fauveau)?

This one I'm not sure of unless it's Bright-eyed again?



Bright-eyed Ringlet?

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 04-Sep-18 07:53 PM GMT

Whilst they are right pains to identify they certainly are subtly attractive butterflies and those shots are lush Mike 😊👍👍👍
I only have very limited experience of this group so I wouldn't even know where to begin to start identifying them, sorry I can't be much help..

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by trevor, 05-Sep-18 08:37 AM GMT

One Ringlet that can't be mistaken is the Brassy Ringlet.
All the colours of a Rainbow can be seen from certain angles.
Getting near one is a challenge though !.

Great reports from the Pyrenees,
Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 05-Sep-18 08:36 PM GMT

I agree with your IDs, Mike, but that Yellow Spotted Ringlet is most surprising. I'm aware there is a form where the markings are scant (or even absent) but it's quite a surprise to see one staring me in the face like this.

Excellent find.

Re: Maximus

by Andrew555, 06-Sep-18 02:40 PM GMT

Great shots of those beautiful Fritillaries and Ringlets Mike. 🍷😄 And a very nice selection from OWH. 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 06-Sep-18 06:45 PM GMT

A pain to ID but I agree with you about their subtle beauty, Wurzel 😊

They do live up to their name, Trevor, and they are a bit flighty.

Thanks, David, that form of Yellow-spotted Ringlet was a surprise to us too.

Thanks, Andrew, for your comments regarding the Pyrenees and OWH 😊

Hautes-Pyrenees - 2018

The following are a few of the other species seen during our stay.

Pearly Heath was seen at most sites and is a lovely looking little butterfly.



Large Wall Brown we encountered a few times, mainly at higher altitudes.





This was the only Southern White Admiral of our visit.



We only saw a handful of Marbled Whites!



A single Comma and Small Tortoiseshell!



Wood Whites and male Orange-tips were encountered reasonably often. The latter never stopped anywhere very near, but it was novel to see them flying in mid-July.





Record is all I could get!

It was great to see Owl flies and Black Redstarts, too.



Poor shot, but I couldn't get any closer.

During our week in the Hautes-Pyrenees we saw a total of 55 different butterfly species. Although this may not seem a great total given the amazing and varied habitat available, 23 of these species were lifers for us 😊

On reflection we should perhaps have spent another week in the Pyrenees exploring habitat such as this stunning glacial valley pictured below, but I suppose you have to save some for the next time 😊



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-18 10:36 PM GMT

Another fantastic selection Mike – I wouldn't know where to start with the compliments 🤩 😊 🍷 I know what you mean about having to leave something for next time the only problem is the next time doesn't seem to come quickly enough 😞 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 07-Sep-18 07:12 PM GMT

Excellent reportage, Mike. I've thoroughly enjoyed it. I only get to the Pyrenees in late spring so it's interesting to see what species are around later in the year, and you've a couple that would have been lifers for me too!

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 08-Sep-18 11:36 AM GMT

Lovely shots Mike, I particularly like the Southern White Admiral with all the Blue colour which reminds me of the Emperor BF 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 08-Sep-18 06:17 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel 😊 and yes I agree with you that next time is too far away 😞 😞

Glad you enjoyed the Pyrenean reports, David, the trip was a real eye-opener for me!

Thanks, Goldie, it's a shame the SW Admirals weren't more common 😞 😞

7th Sept.

Dave's (millerd) recent report of his trip to Dawneys Hill prompted me to pay a visit to this site today. I spent a very pleasant couple of hours there on a sunny afternoon in the company of some lovely butterflies. It didn't take long to find a Grayling but it was very tatty, so I moved on and soon found another and in much better condition.



They're so good at camouflaging themselves against the background.





In all I found in the region of 12 to 15 showing various states of wear and tear. I'm not sure how long they've been out here but it must be a fair while. But at least they're hanging on in there!

In the past I've seen the occasional Small Copper here, but today I saw at least eight different individuals. Most were in very good condition, showing good variation in their markings, and several really stood out.





This female wasn't interested in the males advances.



But he eventually gave up and she moved away.



So he resorted to basking.

These two were the pick of the bunch.



Stunning blue badge club member.



This Copper had the most amazing iridescent colours and had the appearance of being freshly emerged.

There was plenty of Sorrel growing there, but I didn't find any eggs.



The site is recovering from the 2016, restoration work, but we've not seen an Adder here since 2015!



March 2016



September 2018

Small Copper numbers appear to be good in many parts of the country at the moment, as reported in other PD's. Although I did keep a look out for possible SSB's, I saw none.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-18 10:52 PM GMT

Great to hear that the Grayling are still going...well not exactly strong but still going Mike 😄 Great game of spot the Grayling as well 😊 and the Coppers look fantastic 😊🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by trevor, 09-Sep-18 08:27 PM GMT

At the time of my visit to Dawneys it looked like your 2016 image.
I'm pleased to see that the site has recovered.

Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by David M, 09-Sep-18 08:58 PM GMT

More Small Coppers!! What is happening with this species this autumn?

Thanks for posting the before/after pics, Mike. I always like to see the contrast between the austere pre-season look and the green landscape when summer has had a chance to impose itself.

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 10-Sep-18 09:39 AM GMT

Love the Grayling shots Max, I always find them very hard to take photos of, there usually the same colour has the rocks 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 11-Sep-18 08:05 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel, I know what you mean 😊 glad you enjoyed STG 😊 the Coppers 'were' stunning 😊

Yes it's recovered quite well, thank goodness, Trevor 😊

Small Coppers appear to be ubiquitous at the present time, David. Glad you like the comparison shots.

Thanks, Goldie, Grayling blend in well (with their surroundings) and you normally have to get down low for shots of them on the ground.

This post is also from a visit to Dawneys Hill, but this particular visit was in the middle of June. I didn't get round to posting it then as we were in the middle of organising our trip to the Pyrenees.

This seems to be a later site for SSB and we had only seen a couple of males on a previous visit a week or so before. This time however our timing was spot on and we soon found plenty of Silver-studded Blue males, and a sprinkling of females, which had emerged since we were last here.

The males.





This male was a very small.



A pale individual.



And some females.





Re: Maximus

by millerd, 11-Sep-18 08:26 PM GMT

Just caught your Dawney's Hill report, Mike (and now the flashback to June with those lovely SSB shots). Looks like the Graylings will hang around a little longer, but those Coppers are splendid butterflies. I wonder how many more will appear? 😊

Incidentally, I saw the first Graylings there on 27th June, which means a season so far of around ten weeks at this site. Not bad at all. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-18 11:05 PM GMT

Stunning set of Silver-studs Mike 🤩😄🍷 The third female is a real cracker in particular; the wing margins look scalloped slightly like a Chequered Blue 🍷 or is that just my wishful thinking running away with me 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 11-Sep-18 11:26 PM GMT

Those are beautiful SSBs, Mike. Suddenly, I feel as though I've been transported back to the Alps! 😊

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 12-Sep-18 09:43 AM GMT

I've not seen the SSB's for a couple of years now Mike, your shots are fantastic and make me sure to go and find them next year 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by essexbuzzard, 12-Sep-18 09:52 AM GMT

Great report from the Pyrenees a couple of posts back. I've been there a couple of times, and your excellent images bring back happy memories of Gavarnie Blues, Purple-edged Coppers, Black-veined Whites and Apollo's!

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 13-Sep-18 06:25 PM GMT

Thanks, David, I'm more than happy to oblige.

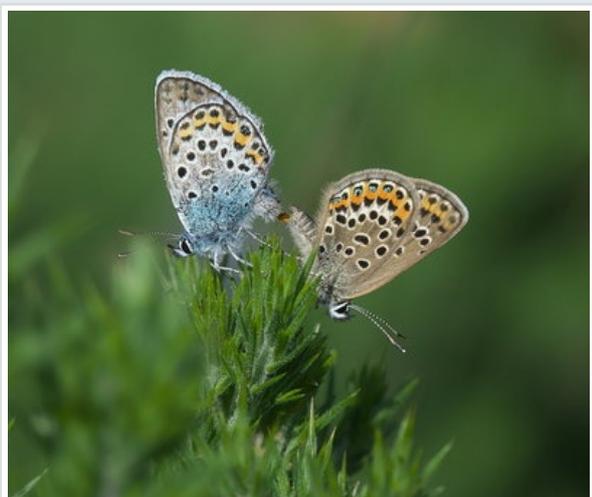
Thanks, Goldie, I really hope that you get to see them next year.

Thanks, Mark, you're lucky to have been to the the Pyrenees twice, as it's a stunning part of the world with some lovely butterfly species. Glad my report brings back some fond memories for you. It's interesting that you have seen Garvarnie Blues there too, our experience was that they took a bit of finding.

During my June visit to Dawneys Hill I was lucky enough to find four mating pairs of Silver-studded Blues. It's interesting to see quite a bit of variation between individuals here. While some have no silver studs at all, others have a full house!



This female had no silver studs.



whereas this female had almost a full set.



This female kept her wings open while in cop.

And something I've not seen before, this female in cop was certainly well tended by ants.



I also found this bee which had fallen victim to this female Heather crab spider, (*Thomisus onustus*). The females are able to change their body colour to match that of the flower they are using as an ambush point.



This shot shows how well she blends in with the Bell Heather.



The previous year I found a male Silver-studded Blue which had met the same fate.



Re: Maximus

by trevor, 13-Sep-18 06:34 PM GMT

Absolutely first rate images of the mating Silver Studded Blues, Mike. I completely missed them this year.

Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 13-Sep-18 11:16 PM GMT

Brilliant and interesting images Mike 😊👍 I'm not sure whats going on their with the female Silver-stud and Ant attendee – she looks a little too worn for them to still be tending to her? 😊 I've seen ants attacking Silver-studs before so was that what was happening here? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 14-Sep-18 09:34 PM GMT

Great observations, Mike, tempered with a little apprehension over the crab spider. 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 16-Sep-18 06:26 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor, it's a long wait until next June 😊

Thanks, Wurzel, you may well be right regarding the ants as the male didn't seem to be very settled 😊😊

Thanks, David, I appreciate that spiders aren't everyone's cup of tea 😊

Returning through France after our week in the Pyrenees we decided to stop for a couple of days in the Dordogne. We stayed near the town of Lalinde which is right on the Dordogne river.

Due to our late arrival the previous evening we were not out early the next morning. Not knowing exactly where to head for, we set off driving east along the lanes parallel to the river. Soon the road became steeper and after a bit of a climb we finally emerged onto a plateau high above the Dordogne river. We parked next to an old water tower as there seemed to be some good looking habitat nearby. It wasn't long before we saw our first butterflies, Scarce Swallowtails, soaring around the hilltop. They're so gracefull, just like paper darts gliding around, with hardly a wingbeat. We watched as several Common Swallowtails hove into view and the inevitable battle commenced. Two pairs locked together, spiralled high above us in combat before finally separating and swooping rapidly earthward. This is where I saw my chance of a photo as one of the Scarce Swallowtails swooped down and landed on a small shrub twenty metres down the hillside. Fortunately it was well settled and I managed to reach the spot without mishap and was rewarded with several shots.



High point above the Dordogne River.



Scarce Swallowtail.

The Common Swallowtails tended to land quite high up.



Common Swallowtail.

Near where we were parked was a small lane which we followed for a while. The heat was a searing 30 degrees plus, but we spotted a couple of Dryads, a new species for us. One of them took a liking to me and landed on my leg. I persuaded it to climb onto my finger where I got a shot, before relocating it onto a twig.



Dryad.



Dryad.

We also found this Woodland Grayling sitting on a tree trunk.



Woodland Grayling

And this amazing looking Cricket which I have not been able to ID.



Unknown Cricket.

Back at the car for a much needed drink, I noticed a grey-blue butterfly in the small roadside meadow. On closer inspection I found it to be a Large Blue and managed a couple of shots.



The roadside meadow



Large Blue.

There was also a Clouded Yellow which was stopping to nectar on clover flowers. My first thoughts were helice, but remembering where I was, realised that this was a female Berger's Clouded Yellow.





Berger's Clouded Yellow female.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 16-Sep-18 07:09 PM GMT

Brilliant stuff Mike – I was starting to feel a little homesick but then I realised that wasn't correct, I was feeling 'holiday-sick' 😞😞😞 I didn't see any Large Blues during my trip to the Dordogne, nor a Berger's 🙄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 16-Sep-18 10:32 PM GMT

Oh, you're teasing me now with that glorious French scenery, Mike....even more so with your Dryad, which is a species that continues to elude me. 😏

Re: Maximus

by ernie f, 17-Sep-18 10:22 AM GMT

Great Scarce Swallowtail and Woodland Grayling, Mike and I love that weird looking cricket.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 17-Sep-18 06:01 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel, I didn't mean to make you feel holiday-sick 😞 – I think I'm making myself feel that way too, with these posts 😞😞
I'd imagine that the Large blues were over before your mid-August holiday. We were there a month before you and most Large Blues were starting to look a bit worn then. I'm surprised you didn't see a Berger's though 🙄

Sorry, David, I don't mean to tease you 😊 and sorry about the Dryad 😊 France is a glorious country and you're so lucky to get there as often as you do.

Thank's, Ernie, it would be nice to know the identity of that critter.

On the way back to Lalinde we couldn't help stopping at a promising looking small field next to the road. We spent a happy hour there in the company of these beauties. Four lifers in one day, when you include the Dryad and Woodland Grayling 😊😊



Sooty Copper male.



Sooty Copper male.



Sooty Copper male.



Sooty Copper male.



Sooty Copper female.

There were quite a few Sooty Coppers, but we only found one of these.



Provencal Short-tailed Blue.

Re: Maximus

by bugboy, 17-Sep-18 07:28 PM GMT

Lovely Copper Max, particularly that female 🍷. I need to start thinking about branching out to the continent!

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-18 10:38 PM GMT

Cracking Sooty Coppers Mike, pristine – I don't think that I saw any in that good a condition 🍷😄 I might have seen a Bergers but out it down as a Cloudy as it was a male so I'll have to check it out 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Andrew555, 21-Sep-18 10:38 AM GMT

Lovely SSB's from Dawneys Mike. And more great stuff from France, particularly like your Sooty Coppers. 🍷😄

Re: Maximus

by David M, 21-Sep-18 10:37 PM GMT

Sooty Coppers pose better than almost any other butterfly, so for you to get such great underside shots is more than creditable, Mike. Fabulous, gleaming specimen.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 26-Sep-18 06:36 PM GMT

Thanks, bugboy, perhaps you should check it out 😊

Thanks, Wurzel, I'm surprised by that, but you were there later than us. Having to check ID's makes for more fun – and frustration 😊

Thanks, Andrew, on all counts 😊

I agree with you, David, Sooty Coppers are very well behaved indeed 😊

Dordogne 19th July

Today we headed south across the Dordogne river bridge at Lalinde. Once on the other side we turned off the D660 onto the first small lane we came to which headed south, and continued along this lane until we found a likely looking spot to pull over. We arrived at a small pull-in where the road verges were full of wild flowers, which we soon discovered were host to some lovely butterflies.



Roadside verges.



Scarce Swallowtail with just a small piece of tail missing!



Painted Lady.

There were also Sooty Coppers, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Large Skippers and Large and Small Whites. We spent an enjoyable couple of hours exploring the verges.

One thing that was wonderful to hear so often in France was the 'purring' of Turtle Doves. I'm not sure if France sanctions the hunting of them or if there's a ban in place, but we heard them at most of the field/woodland sites that we visited in the Dordogne, and also in other parts of lowland France we visited.

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 26-Sep-18 06:53 PM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Mike 🍷🍷 I wonder if we keep on having Summers like this one that maybe we could see more Butterflies from France settle here , I've not heard of any one seeing a Long-tailed Blue here this Summer which surprises me, may be I've not been reading all the posts when I should 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 26-Sep-18 10:56 PM GMT

Cracking shots Mike 😊 The roadside verges in France are amazing, if only they were left to their own devices in this country just think of the plethora of butterflies they could support 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 27-Sep-18 08:56 AM GMT

That all sounds positively idyllic, Mike....a sunny day in France, Turtle Doves, wild flowers and butterflies. 🍷

It's amazing the number of species often to be seen in just a small strip of flowers like that. It's a bit like the lavender people have in their gardens; there can regularly be 6 or 7 different different types of butterfly nectaring at the same time.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 30-Sep-18 12:26 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie 😊 I'm surprised that there's been no Long-tailed blue influx this year too 😊

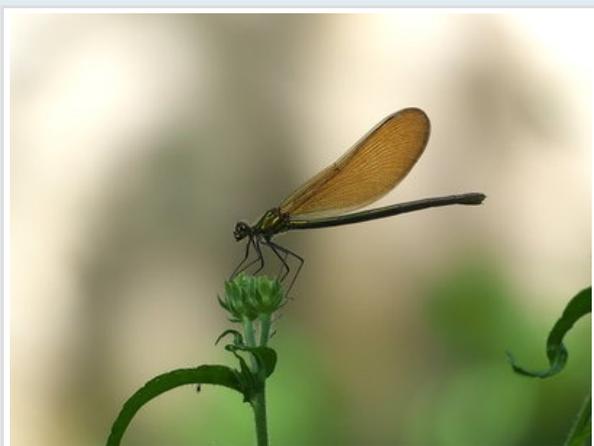
Thanks, Wurzel, yes the road verges are amazing for butterflies in France, you never know what you may find 😊

It was idyllic, David 😊

Dordogne 19th July cont...

Our next stop, a bit further along the lane, was by a bridge over a small stream. The first thing we saw as we got out of the car was a Kingfisher, with it's distinctive shrill whistle as it flew under the arch of the bridge and off downstream.

There were a few Gatekeepers, including a mating pair in the area beside the stream, and plenty of Demoiselles, which I think were Beautiful Demoiselles.



Female.



Male.

We then found a small path which led up through some scrub and onto a small elevated meadow where there was lots of wild Marjoram growing. As I stood there looking across the meadow a blue/grey butterfly flew past me and landed on some Marjoram nearby, a Large Blue. A search of the meadow revealed a dozen Large Blues, all females engaged in egg laying.



The small meadow.





We moved on and stopped near an old church (which we later found out was twelfth century), where there were some tables and benches set in some much needed shade. Along the edge of the seating area were some buddleia bushes, one of which was of the white variety. These had attracted many insects including quite a few Broad-bordered Bee and Hummingbird Hawk-moths. These proved to be the usual challenge to get decent shots of, I managed a couple but the limitations of my Lumix is very apparent.





Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth.



Hummingbird Hawk-moth.

There were also Painted ladies, Small Whites, Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns, several Scarce Swallowtails and a Silver-washed Fritillary on the buddleia.



Silver-washed Fritillary female.



Scarce Swallowtail.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 30-Sep-18 03:41 PM GMT

Mill Hill 27th Sept.

We decided on a trip to Mill Hill (Sussex) as it's a site that we've never visited. We also couldn't resist the possibility of seeing some of the lovely Vanessids that have been reported from there recently. Once there it didn't take us long to find a certain patch of Hemp Agrimony which was in full flower, replete with it's attendant stunners.





Red Admiral ab.bialbata.







After filling our boots we headed off down the path to the bottom of the hill. Here there were some Clouded Yellows, never stopping, along with Wall Browns doing likewise, it was great to see them, no chance of any shots though. There were also some Common Blue males and females and they too were very active in the hot sun. The climb back up to the car park via the giant steps was better than any gym workout.

We headed off very satisfied with what we had seen here, and, as it was still quite early, decided to stop off at Cissbury, as it was on our route home.

Re: Maximus

by essexbuzzard, 30-Sep-18 06:01 PM GMT

Your pictures of the bee and hummingbird hawk moths on the buddleija are quite acceptable, Dave. Looks like you had a good time down there. And I'm pleased you heard some turtle doves, none for me this year 😞

And it looks like you and everyone else has been enjoying that patch of hemp agrimony at Mill Hill, I might be tempted to join you all...

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 30-Sep-18 07:25 PM GMT

Mill Hill was obviously well worth the trip for you as well, Mike! Great shots of those Nymphalids, some of which look a bit familiar... 😊 That hemp agrimony patch has plenty of days left as a nectar source too.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Maximus

by trevor, 30-Sep-18 07:36 PM GMT

I could tell instantly, without reading your text, that you had been to Mill Hill, Mike. The much photographed Hemp Agrimony looks as though it was host to the same Butterflies too. A fantastic spectacle to end the season with.

Great shots,
Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 30-Sep-18 10:40 PM GMT

Fantastic shots both from this post and the last Mike 😊 The Painted Lady looks fabulous and also quite dusky/dark 🌑🌒

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 01-Oct-18 06:38 PM GMT

Thanks, Mark, sadly, I believe that the Turtle Dove population has really crashed over the last few years. You should get along to Mill Hill, it's a real treat to see those butterflies.

It was well worth the trip down there, Dave, and yes, some of those butterflies must be like old friends to you 😊

It must have been a real giveaway, Trevor, and I agree with you, what a fantastic sight to finish the season with 😊

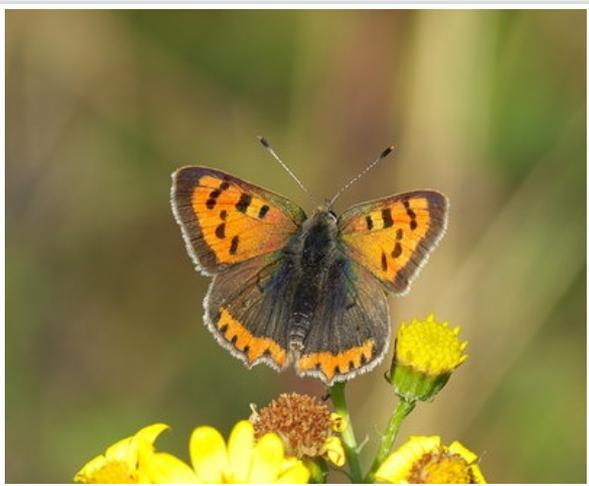
Thanks, Wurzel, those Painted Ladies were stunning, my photos just don't do them justice.

It didn't take long to reach Cissbury, which is only ten miles from Mill Hill. There were plenty of Joggers, dog walkers and cyclists already there. We climbed up the path onto the hillfort and set off around the perimeter ditch in a clockwise direction. We soon found some Small Coppers, with one female being particularly striking.



We did a complete circuit of the fort, which, given it's size took a while. Most of the butterflies appeared to be around the southern side, which was more sheltered and contained some Ragwort, which the Coppers and some Common Blues were nectaring on. There were also good numbers of Wall Browns and a handful of Clouded Yellows.





It was not easy to get these shots of the Male Wall and was the only opportunity of the day.



This also was the only chance of a shot of a male Clouded Yellow, which took flight just after the photo was taken.



Numbers wise we counted about 30 Small Coppers, 12 Walls and three Clouded Yellows. The Walls and Clouded Yellows were very difficult to get shots of as they rarely stopped, and when they did it was not for long. Many of the Small Coppers appeared quite worn, but there were a few fresher individuals. We only walked the perimeter, not venturing onto the hillfort itself, due mainly to it's massive size and the limited time available to us. Therefore our numbers only account for the perimeter

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 01-Oct-18 07:30 PM GMT

Some great shots there, Mike, particularly of the Coppers. Walls and Clouded Yellows are both really tricky to approach, especially in sunshine – quite

annoying really since that's what we all want to see more closely! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 01-Oct-18 08:05 PM GMT

More fantastic shots Mike 🤖👁️👂👃👄👅👆👇👈👉👊👋👌👍👎👏👐👑👒👓👔👕👖👗👘👙👚👛👜👝👞👟👠👡👢👣👤👥👦👧👨👩👪👫👬👭👮👯👰👱👲👳👴👵👶👷👸👹👺👻👼👽👾👿👀👁️👂👃👄👅👆👇👈👉👊👋👌👍👎👏👐👑👒👓👔👕👖👗👘👙👚👛👜👝👞👟👠👡👢👣👤👥👦👧👨👩👪👫👬👭👮👯👰👱👲👳👴👵👶👷👸👹👺👻👼👽👾👿

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 03-Oct-18 12:01 PM GMT

Maximus wrote:

...Numbers wise we counted about 30 Small Coppers, 12 Walls and three Clouded Yellows...

That's beyond impressive, Mike. I don't think I've seen 12 Wall browns all year in the UK, and I'm afraid Clouded Yellows have been absent this autumn from south Wales. I'll definitely give things another go before the cold weather sets in but in the meantime it's nice to know others are seeing them elsewhere.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 10-Oct-18 05:11 PM GMT

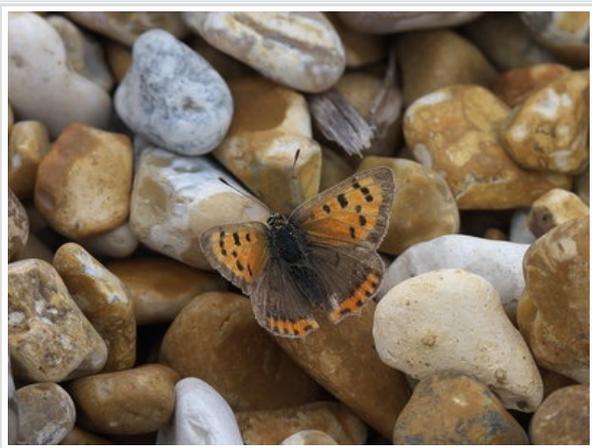
Thanks, Dave, yes they're tricky when it's warm and bright and probably only slow down when we are on our way home 😊

Thanks, Wurzel, as you say, as striking as 'The Fish Slapping Dance' 😊

Sadly, I don't think Hampshire has any Wall Browns now, David, so we have to take a drive to Sussex!

Kent - October 18.

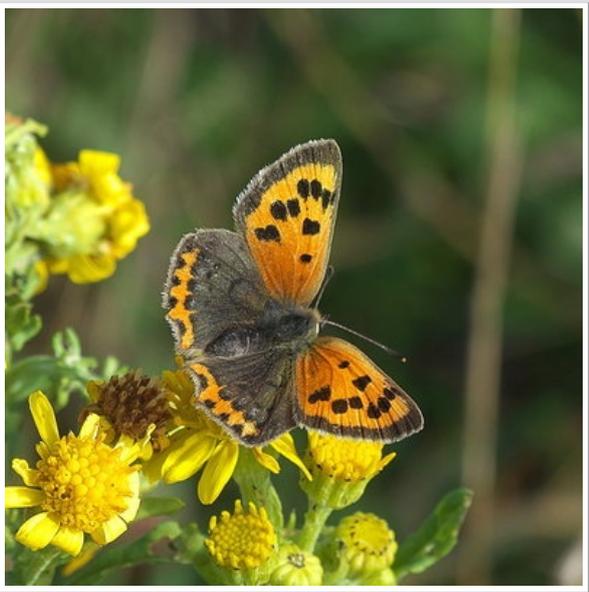
We have just returned from a week long family break in Kent. Although it was a family break, we still managed to fit in a trip to Dungeness on Thursday afternoon (4th Oct.). During our visit it was mainly overcast but we still managed to find a dozen 3rd Brood Small Coppers, displaying varying degrees of wear, ranging from very ragged to not too bad.





Dungeness is one of those places where Small Copper abs. turn up reasonably frequently, and it was very pleasing to find this female nectaring on some Ragwort. I think she's ab. *extensa* + *caeruleopunctata*.





I've just seen that Hoggers photographed an *ab. extensa* at Dungeness on Sunday 7th October.

There were several Common Blues in reasonable condition.





We saw a total of 12 Small Coppers, 2 Common Blues, 3 Red Admirals, 6 Small Heaths and a Hummingbird hawk-moth.

Just as we were leaving, a steam locomotive of the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch railway was pulling out of Dungeness station, on it's half hour journey across Romney Marsh to Hythe.



Re: Maximus

by millerd, 10-Oct-18 06:50 PM GMT

That blue-badge extensa Copper is a striking butterfly, Mike. You've almost out-Hoggers Hoggers on his own patch there! 😊 Lovely shots.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Andrew555, 11-Oct-18 09:17 AM GMT

Love the Swallowtails Mike, and I think your Hawk-moth shots are more than acceptable! 😊

Also like the Coppers, especially the ab. I've yet to make it to Dungeness, one for next year. 😊

Cheers

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 11-Oct-18 08:26 PM GMT

What a cracking aberrant Mike 😊🍷 Good to see you managed to fit in a trip on on a family getaway 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 14-Oct-18 11:30 PM GMT

That's a very striking *phlaeas* aberration, Mike. Beautiful specimen.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 16-Oct-18 06:31 PM GMT

Thanks, Dave, it was a great find but it disappeared just as quickly.

Thanks, Andrew, definitely one for next year for you.

Thanks, Wurzel, we managed to sneak in another one too.

It was very striking, David, and was a joy to see.

When we were in Kent recently, one morning I found these female Commas in the garden where we were staying, they looked to be freshly emerged. They were really stunning.



Enjoying the fallen fruit.



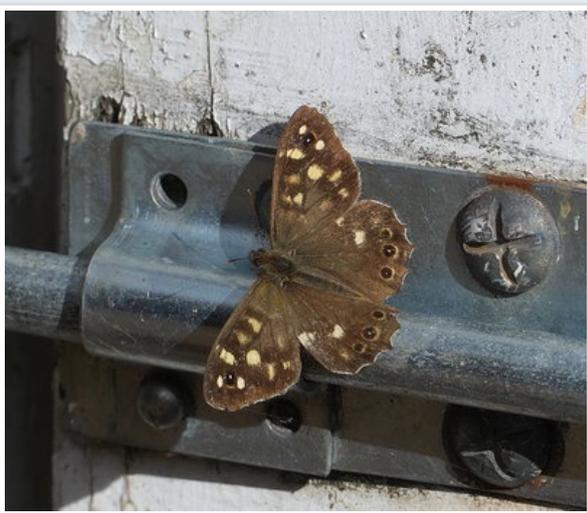


This one had lost a 'tail'.





There were also several Speckled Woods enjoying the sunshine, and landing in some unusual spots.



Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 16-Oct-18 10:19 PM GMT

Lovely autumnal Commas Mike 😊 Like me them seem to enjoy a drop of Cider :wink: Perhaps the Specklies had been partaking too which was why they were turning up in the unusual places? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 18-Oct-18 09:26 AM GMT

Lovely Commas, Mike. I can't remember the last time I saw one – very possibly back in August. I don't know where they've all gone round here. 😞

Re: Maximus

by bugboy, 18-Oct-18 06:18 PM GMT

What a lovely surprise to find 😊. They do all look rather fresh. I saw a few rather late *hutchinsoni* this year so maybe you had a female down there laying eggs in August?

Re: Maximus

by trevor, 18-Oct-18 08:53 PM GMT

As others have remarked, lovely Commas.
I particularly like the one on the apple.
I have only recently started seeing them again, since the hot Summer.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 19-Oct-18 12:13 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor, these were the first Commas I've seen for at least a couple of months!

It was a nice surprise BB 😊 and they were very fresh. I think you could be right about the eggs being laid in August.

From my point of view also, Commas have been a bit 'thin on the ground' for a while now, David.

Thanks Wurzel, I'm partial to a cool-un myself after a hot day's butterflying 😊 I think you're right about the specklies 😊

I took this shot of a Small White in our garden on 13th Oct. By it's manner and appearance it was probably freshly emerged, still displaying that creamy, almost lemon shade, which seems to fade within a day or so.



Re: Maximus

by trevor, 19-Oct-18 04:01 PM GMT

Your Small White is certainly brand new, Mike.
To see fresh Butterflies at this stage is remarkable.
The retail trade is pushing Christmas like mad, and I'm seeing fresh Common Blues,
and fresh Clouded Yellows !. Something doesn't fit somewhere.

Trying to stay sane,
Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by bugboy, 19-Oct-18 04:27 PM GMT

I had a freshly emerged Small White today 🤪

Re: Maximus

by millerd, 19-Oct-18 07:39 PM GMT

That's a nice Small White. 😊 Having seen one on Tuesday at home, I saw another down at Shoreham today – there is definitely a new round of emergences, Mike. I suspect some of the chrysalids that normally hibernate have been prompted by the warm sunny spells to emerge instead. Maybe the short bursts of cold and wet have fooled them in some way. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 19-Oct-18 10:41 PM GMT

That is a mint Small White Mike 😊 They lose that lovely lemony lustre very quickly 😊 so to catch one that fresh is a great find, doubly so at this time in the season 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 19-Oct-18 11:13 PM GMT

That Small White is as fresh as fresh gets, Mike. It's quite remarkable that this is still happening in late October. I've never known a year like it.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 21-Oct-18 02:23 PM GMT

Your comment brought a smile to my face, Trevor 😊 and what you say is true!

Amazing that you saw one too BB, the good weather seems to have extended the season 😊

Thanks, Dave, I think you're right about the decent weather prompting new emergences, when they would normally stay put until next spring. Amazing that you've seen a couple too 😊

That's the first butterfly we've seen in our garden for some time, Wurzel 😊 lucky we spotted it 😊

It is remarkable, David, I also don't remember a year quite like this one.

During our recent family break in Kent we took the opportunity to visit Kingsdown for a walk along the clifftop. Although there have been no LTB'S sighted this year(as far as I am aware)we weren't the only ones looking! Although we drew a blank LTB wise we did encounter a few other species during our walk on a lovely sunny October afternoon.



Clifftop footpath with a cross channel ferry heading for Dover.



Brown Argus – not as fresh as some recently posted, but nice to see.



Common Blue.



Fresher Common Blue.



Small Copper.



Small Copper - nectaring on Hawkbit - I think.



View from The Leas, looking north, with Deal Pier in the centre distance.

Other species seen were, Wall Brown, Male Brimstone and a very fresh looking Green-veined White. These proved far too lively to photograph, but this wasn't through a lack of trying! (Seeing today's post regarding the LTB seen near Bexley yesterday, perhaps we weren't so daft having a look!)

While we were there we observed large numbers of House Martins (and a few Swallows) hawking for insects in the early October sun. They were most probably preparing for their migration south, I understand that it's still not known exactly where in Africa they spend the winter!

Re: Maximus

by trevor, 21-Oct-18 07:06 PM GMT

Long Tailed Blues may have been nearer than you thought, Mike. A fresh one was spotted by the Thames, near Erith, yesterday, alright wrong location, but right County!. And another in Ipswich last week.

I there's more chance of winning the lottery than finding one though!. Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 21-Oct-18 10:47 PM GMT

Sorry you didn't get the LTB – mind you the Blues and Coppers surely made up for it, I'm down to Specklies and Red Admirals now 😊🌍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 22-Oct-18 09:16 PM GMT

Those are nice views, Mike, and I'm glad you saw a few late species during your visit. Brown Argus, Wall, Brimstone & Green Veined White is quite a haul for late October....even if you missed out on the Long-Tailed Blues.

Re: Maximus

by Andrew555, 23-Oct-18 08:34 AM GMT

Love the Commas Mike, those unexpected finds are great. 😊

Cheers

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 28-Oct-18 10:15 PM GMT

I saw that, Trevor, LTB's not that far away. Given this summers weather I'm surprised we didn't get a real influx! However I'd imagine there are other factors (apart from the weather) that influence their arrival (or not) to these shores?

It was worth a look, Wurzel, and it was a lovely afternoon walk, plus the Blues and Coppers

It wasn't a bad haul for October, David, and it's a lovely stretch of coast, LTB's or not.

Thanks, Andrew, the unexpected is always a nice bonus.

Dordogne 20th July

Today we headed east to the Vallée de la Grande Beune, and an area of damp riverside meadows. We spent the morning exploring these, and in the afternoon visited the Chateau De Commarque, which has extensive water meadows, just beyond the ruins of the chateau. I understand that earlier in the year the Large Copper can be found here, but we were unfortunately too late for these. We found a few species, but overall it didn't appear to be particularly butterfly rich, perhaps it would have been in May/June! However it was a nice day out in the French countryside.



Gatekeeper pair.



SW Fritillary caught by crab spider.



Not a brilliant shot, but an unusually pale Dingy Skipper which flew just after this was taken.



Chateau De Commarque.



Wall Lizard on Chateau woodwork.



Juvenile Black Redstart.



Marsh with Chateau De Laussel behind.



Golden-ringed Dragonfly.



Male Beautiful Demoiselle.

We also saw Scarce Swallowtails, Meadow Browns, Small, Large and Green-veined Whites, Large Skippers and Speckled Woods.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 30-Oct-18 05:21 PM GMT

A cracking sequence of shots Mike - that does look like prime Large Copper habitat - or at least how i imagine it should look having only ever seen one possibly two... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 30-Oct-18 05:22 PM GMT

A cracking sequence of shots Mike - that does look like prime Large Copper habitat - or at least how i imagine it should look having only ever seen one possibly two... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 31-Oct-18 11:14 PM GMT

Fairytale scenery, Mike. Looks like excellent butterfly habitat too.

Re: Maximus

by Paul Harfield, 01-Nov-18 03:05 PM GMT

Hi Mike

Just catching up with your diary 😊 . I always love the vibrancy of colours and crispness in your shots, superb. I particularly like the Gatekeeper pair and those Commas from a few posts back. And those images from Kingsdown Leas brought back some pleasant memories 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 02-Nov-18 07:38 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel, it was Large Copper habitat, unfortunately we were too late to see them 😞

Lovely scenery, David, and good habitat at the right time of year, I would imagine.

Hi Paul, and thanks, I have pleasant memories of Kingsdown too 😊

Dordogne 21st July

Today was to be our last full day in the Dordogne, and so we wanted to make it count. This time we headed North, driving along a network of minor roads looking for suitable habitat. We pulled over several times at likely looking spots, but only found a few Common Blues. A bit further up the road however we spotted a disused field full of clover, thistles and some tall yellow flowers. We parked in a small track opposite the field, and, as we got out of the car, noticed a Budleia growing just down the track. Walking towards it we noticed a large white butterfly nectaring on the only flowering stem remaining, a Scarce Swallowtail. I managed to get one shot before it flew off and landed on some brambles nearby. Fortunately it stayed long enough for me to get closer and take some shots. It was in good condition, and as a nice bonus both tails were intact.





Scarce Swallowtail.

Crossing the road I saw a butterfly settle in the ditch bordering the field. As I got closer I could see that it was another first for us, a Mallow Skipper. I got several shots before it took flight and disappeared into the field.



Mallow Skipper.

While I was trying to relocate it I noticed a Clouded Yellow settle on a thistle to nectar. Looking around I could see that there were at least six, both male and female, nectaring on various flowers.



Berger's Clouded Yellow female.



Berger's Clouded Yellow Male.

I wonder about this one, Berger's or possibly PCY, forewing shape might fit PCY (and paler yellow colour) and the backlit shot could fit PCY. It's apparently almost impossible to tell them apart, and they both fly in the Dordogne. Most probably, it's Berger's 😊





There was a raised area in one corner of the field which appeared not to have been ploughed. Here there was plenty of wild Marjoram in flower, so it was no surprise to find several Large Blues, including a female ovipositing.



Large Blue female.



Large Blue female.

The real surprise, however, was to find a female Duke of Burgundy nectaring on the Marjoram, and also several males nearby, one of them looking very new.



Duke of Burgundy female.



Duke of Burgundy male.



Duke of Burgundy male.



Duke of Burgundy, dark male.

Last day tbc...

Re: Maximus

by trevor, 03-Nov-18 09:06 AM GMT

I've been following your trip to the Dordogne with interest, and I have to say that you have saved the best till last. What a beauty that Scarce Swallowtail is, and the heavily marked Clouded Yellows are impressive.

Lovely images,
Trevor.

Re: Maximus

by bugboy, 03-Nov-18 10:37 AM GMT

That looks like a glorious first part of the day, Dukes, Large Blues, Clouded Yellows and Swallowtails all flying together and some fantastic images to illustrate it 🍷

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 04-Nov-18 09:28 AM GMT

Fantastic stuff Mike 😊 I got there too late for the Large Blues and Dukes 🍷 I was also chuffed with my Scarce Swallowtail shots – until I saw yours 🍷 absolutely pristine 🍷 And you saw a Mallow Skipper 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 07-Nov-18 05:16 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor, the best day just happened to be on our last day in the Dordogne. Scarce Swallowtails were scarce and we only saw a handful. Clouded Yellows were common but were real blighters to get shots of, as they didn't spend long nectaring on each flowerhead.

Thanks ,bugboy, that's the great thing about France, we found that you get a real mix of species flying together, wherever there's suitable habitat. We just drove randomly through the countryside looking for any interesting looking habitat. Since returning I've done a bit of research and have found that there are 'listed' sites in the Dordogne, which appear to have a greater concentration of species, in greater numbers, including some we didn't see! That's one for next time.

Thanks, Wurzel, it's a pity you missed the Large Blues and Dukes. I was lucky with the Swallowtail and that was the only Mallow Skipper that we saw. I know the ordinary countryside has plenty of butterflies, but I think that had we visited some recognised sites, we would have seen more – Mallow Skippers for instance. But I didn't know where the sites were until after our return.

...Last day continued.

After a spending an enjoyable couple of hours at the first site, we headed off, driving for a couple of miles along the lanes without finding very much, until we arrived at this likely looking spot.



It was just a small scruffy corner of a large field containing horses, with another grassy area on the other side of a small lane. During our stay in the Dordogne we had only found Dryads in one location, but we soon found that this area contained a few. We only saw females but they appeared very fresh!



Dryad female.



Dryad female.



Dryad female.

We spent two hours exploring this site, which also revealed the following species.



Sooty Copper female.



Common Blue female.

We only saw two Hairstreaks during our time in France, a Green Hairstreak in the Pyrenees, and this Purple Hairstreak in the Dordogne.



Purple Hairstreak.

This was the only Mazarine Blue we saw in the Dordogne.



Mazarine Blue.

This site was also host to a colony of Large Blue, which appears to be a common species in the Dordogne.



Large Blue female.



Large Blue female on wild Marjoram.



Large Blue female.



Large Blue female, with bold markings.



Large Blue female, with bold markings.

There were also plenty of Clouded Yellows, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers here too.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 07-Nov-18 10:52 PM GMT

Cracking shots of the Dryads Mike, especially the open winged one 🤩👍👍 Also that Large Blue ab is a right stunner 🤩👍👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 09-Nov-18 08:02 PM GMT

That does indeed look like a prime spot, Mike, and I'm not surprised you saw quite a range of species.

Well done with the Dryad, a species I have yet to see given that its emergence is generally after I have returned to Blighty following my two weeks in the Alps.

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 15-Nov-18 07:35 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel, that was the only chance of an upper wing shot of a Dryad 😊 The Large Blue really stood out 😊

Thanks, David. Dryads do appear to emerge quite late in the season.

After leaving the Dordogne on 22nd of July we headed to Le Dorat, where we stayed with friends for a few days. As the temperatures were in the mid-thirties we just 'chilled out' by the pool 😊

While we were there they showed us some bats which were using their barn as a roost. There were at least a dozen present, which I think are Greater Horse-Shoe bats. I took one quick shot as I didn't want to disturb them, as they are a protected species in France, just as they are here in the UK.



Cropped

Re: Maximus

by Goldie M, 17-Nov-18 01:25 PM GMT

Great shots of the Bat's Max, they even look cute 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 17-Nov-18 03:29 PM GMT

Brill Bat shots Mike 😊👍 If I recall correctly bats have up to four different residences over the course of a year so this must be their summer retreat/holiday home 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 18-Nov-18 07:33 PM GMT

Yes that's correct, Wurzel 😊 that was their summer residence 😊

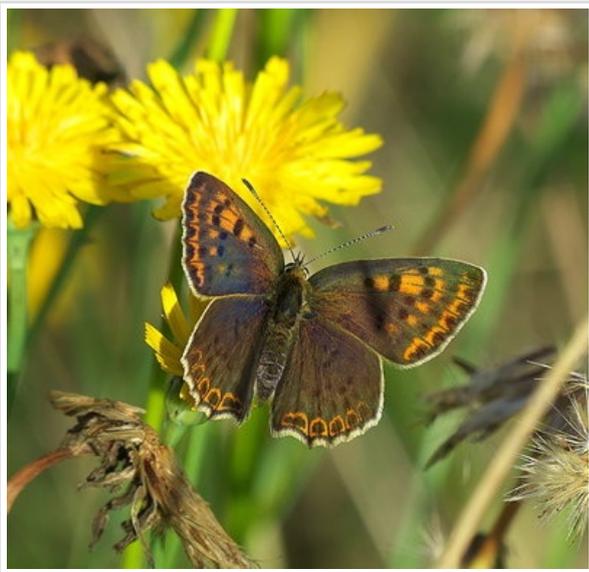
Thanks, Goldie, they are cute 😊

On the 25th now well rested, we said our goodbyes and headed north to the Brenne, where we had decided to stop off for one night. With the high set to be 35 degrees the following day, we knew that our only chance of finding and photographing any butterflies, was to get out early the following morning. We set out reasonable early the following day, and, not being familiar with the Brenne headed for the Maison du Park, as we had been informed there were walking trails around this area. We parked the car and headed off along a woodland track and it wasn't long before we arrived at the promising looking area shown in the following photo.



The overgrown field on the woodland edge – mid dist. R/H side.

We spent an enjoyable hour in this location, which we discovered contained a nice variety of different species.



Sooty Copper female.



Sooty Copper male.



Small Copper.



Spotted Fritillary female.



This Brown Argus didn't open it's wings, unfortunately!



Emerald Damselfly, not sure which.



Southern White Admiral, imbibing on blackberry.



Dingy Skipper.



Darter, Common/Vagrant? Not sure.



Worn Short-tailed Blue.



Common Blue male.

tbc...

Re: Maximus

by bugboy, 18-Nov-18 07:55 PM GMT

great shots Max, looking forward to the next instalment 😊. I'm far from an expert on the continental Odonata but the damselfly looks good for a male

Southern Emerald, *Lestes barbarus*. I can't help with the Darter though... 😊

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 18-Nov-18 11:21 PM GMT

A lovely selection indeed Mike 😊👍 Love the shot of the SWA on the Blackberry 😊👍 Looking forward to the next installment as well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 20-Nov-18 10:56 PM GMT

Fabulous, Mike. That does indeed look a promising spot for butterflies. The female Sooty Copper is particularly lovely.

Re: Maximus

by Old Wolf, 21-Nov-18 12:11 PM GMT

Hello Maximus,
What a beautiful place you visited and what a great haul of Butterflies you have snapped.

I particularly like the roosting bats. That is something you don't see every day 😊

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 24-Nov-18 06:12 PM GMT

Thanks BB, and thanks for the ID.

Thanks, Wurzel, the shot of the SWA was taken through a hedge, as I couldn't easily get around to the other side without disturbing the butterfly.

Thanks, David, yes the female Sooty Copper was very fresh.

Hi, Old Wolf, France is a beautiful place to visit, with astounding numbers and diversity of butterfly species. Seeing the roosting bats was amazing, something I've not seen before.

Brenne continued

While I hung around in the first field, Cathy had moved on along the track and was no longer in sight. After about fifteen minutes she returned, out of breath, to tell me that she had found another field further along the track, which was full of butterflies. We both hurried along and were soon standing at the entrance to the field shown in the following shot.



It was actually the bed of a dried up lake, and it was covered with the tall flowering spikes of Purple Loosestrife. Nectaring on these flowers were dozens of Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moths, I couldn't believe just how many there were (but very difficult to photograph)! In addition I could see that there were plenty of various butterfly species enjoying the nectar of both the Loosestrife, and the clusters of the small pinky-white flowers on the sagging stems of Pale Smartweed - a member of the Knotweed family.



Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth.



Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth.

I then spotted a larger moth nectaring nearby, which on closer inspection turned out to be a Jersey Tiger.



Jersey Tiger Moth.



Jersey Tiger Moth.

There were lots of Brimstones, Green-veined Whites and Clouded Yellows.



Brimstone female.



Green-veined White.



Clouded Yellow.

Glanville and Spotted Fritillaries.



Glanville Fritillary.



Spotted Fritillary.



Spotted Fritillary male.

And some lovely fresh female Holly Blues.



Holly Blue female.



Holly Blue female.

All too soon it was time for us to move on in order to reach our final overnight stopping point in Normandy. In any case the harsh midday sun was

making the butterflies hyperactive and there was no shade for us in the 30 degree heat. So we headed back to the car for a drink and, nectaring in the Buddleia next to the car was a Southern White Admiral.



Southern White Admiral.

The Brenne is such a stunning part of France that it really needs more time to explore it more fully. Next time for sure.

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 25-Nov-18 06:17 PM GMT

More great reportage Mike cracking shots as always and another brill SWA 😊🇫🇷 I'd love to have driven through France and seen various different areas as you did 🇫🇷😊 I need to get back to France...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 28-Nov-18 06:11 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel, you're always very generous with your comments 😊 I'd like to drive through France again, but be a bit more informed about where to visit, and decide exactly what species I'd like to see 😊 Like the Woodland Brown and Alcon Blue, for example 😊

After leaving the Brenne we drove to Lower Normandy, reaching our overnight stop-off point quite late. The following morning we set off to a reserve that we'd previously only visited in the winter, when we went to see it's Red Squirrels, which are found in the deciduous woodland that borders it. When we arrived at the gate we met the warden, who was checking on the grazing animals who keep the reserve in shape. When he found out we were interested in butterflies, he quickly produced his copy of the Lafrancis 'Papillions De France', to kindly show us what we could expect to see. After a quick chat, we thanked him and set off into the beautiful meadow shown in the following photo.



The guardians of the meadow.



We soon began to see plenty of butterflies, but, as it was very warm they were mostly quite lively.



Weavers (Violet) Fritillary.



Swallowtail.



Swallowtail.



Silver-washed Fritillary, male.



Wood White.



Gatekeeper, female.



Ringlet.



Meadow Brown.



Silver Y Moth.

A great morning spent in a beautiful French meadow full of butterflies – but now we had a ferry to catch.

Re: Maximus

by Andrew555, 29-Nov-18 10:15 AM GMT

Absolutely fantastic selections from France Mike! 🇫🇷 😊 What a beautiful range of species, and all very well captured. 😊

Cheers

Re: Maximus

by Wurzel, 30-Nov-18 11:40 PM GMT

Credit where credit is due Mike 😊 I like the sound of Alcon Blue and Woodland Brown 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Maximus

by David M, 01-Dec-18 06:57 AM GMT

That meadow looks very appetising, Mike. Wouldn't it be lovely if we had Swallowtails fluttering around ours?

Good luck with your aim to see Woodland Brown. This is one of the fastest disappearing species in France, sadly. 😞

Re: Maximus

by Maximus, 31-Dec-18 05:03 PM GMT

Thanks Andrew, Wurzel and David.

A Fieldfare in the garden

When the beast from the east struck in March this year, we were privileged to have the company of this lovely bird for the three days that the snow lay on the ground. We provided him/her with a diet of apples which were readily consumed. Any other birds that ventured into the garden were quickly chased out by this winter visitor. He was however very easy going with us and would stay put in the bush when we were replacing the apple halves.



He spent the nights roosting in a bush at the bottom of the garden.



When the thaw came he moved on, and we were sorry to see him go.

As this is my last dairy entry of 2018, I would like to wish everyone on UKB a very happy, healthy, and butterfly filled 2019.