

## Re: David M

by David M, 13-Mar-18 09:06 PM GMT

Dates of first UK sightings 2018:

1. **Small Tortoiseshell** – 13 March, Swansea Vale
2. **Brimstone** – 13 March, Swansea Vale
3. **Comma** – 16 March, Swansea Vale
4. **Peacock** – 16 March, Swansea Vale
5. **Speckled Wood** – 12 April, Cwm Ivy, Llanmadoc, Gower
6. **Orange Tip** – 19 April, Cwm Ivy, Llanmadoc, Gower
7. **Green Veined White** – 20 April, Castle Meadows, Abergavenny
8. **Holly Blue** – 20 April, Castle Meadows, Abergavenny
9. **Small White** – 20 April, Castle Meadows, Abergavenny
10. **Large White** – 21 April, Cwm Ivy, Llanmadoc, Gower
11. **Red Admiral** – 21 April, Cwm Ivy, Llanmadoc, Gower
12. **Painted Lady** – 21 April, Cwm Ivy, Llanmadoc, Gower
13. **Green Hairstreak** – 5 May, Welshmoor, Gower, Swansea
14. **Grizzled Skipper** – 6 May, Merthyr Mawr, nr. Porthcawl
15. **Small Copper** – 6 May, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
16. **Pearl Bordered Fritillary** – 12 May, Ewyas Harold Common, nr. Pontrilas, Herefordshire
17. **Wall Brown** – 18 May, Kilvey Hill, Swansea
18. **Common Blue** – 18 May, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
19. **Small Blue** – 18 May, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
20. **Small Heath** – 18 May, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
21. **Marsh Fritillary** – 2 June, Fairwood Common, Gower, Swansea
22. **Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary** – 2 June, Fairwood Common, Gower, Swansea
23. **Dingy Skipper** – 2 June, Fairwood Common, Gower, Swansea
24. **Large Skipper** – 7 June, Whiteford Burrows, north Gower, Swansea
25. **Meadow Brown** – 7 June, Whiteford Burrows, north Gower, Swansea
26. **Brown Argus** – 7 June, Whiteford Burrows, north Gower, Swansea
27. **Dark Green Fritillary** – 10 June, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
28. **Ringlet** – 21 June, Old Castle Down, Ewenny, Glamorgan
29. **High Brown Fritillary** – 21 June, Old Castle Down, Ewenny, Glamorgan
30. **Silver Studded Blue** – 23 June, St Govan's Head, Pembrokeshire
31. **Small Skipper** – 23 June, St Govan's Head, Pembrokeshire
32. **Marbled White** – 24 June, Whiteford Burrows, north Gower, Swansea
33. **White Letter Hairstreak** – 24 June, Glanymor Park, Loughor
34. **Hedge Brown** – 19 July, Kilvey Hill, Swansea
35. **Grayling** – 19 July, Kilvey Hill, Swansea
36. **Essex Skipper** – 21 July, Castle Meadows, Abergavenny
37. **Silver Washed Fritillary** – 26 July, West Williamston, Pembrokeshire
38. **Brown Hairstreak** – 16 August, West Williamston, Pembrokeshire

UK butterflies seen on the continent in 2018 but NOT seen in the UK:

39. **Lulworth Skipper**
40. **Adonis Blue**
41. **Glanville Fritillary**
42. **Swallowtail**
43. **Clouded Yellow**
44. **Wood White**
45. **Duke of Burgundy**
46. **Purple Hairstreak**
47. **Black Hairstreak**
48. **Mountain (Northern Brown) Argus**
49. **Large Blue**
50. **Chalkhill Blue**
51. **Heath Fritillary**
52. **Mountain Ringlet**
53. **Silver Spotted Skipper**

UK species not seen: **White Admiral, Purple Emperor, Cryptic Wood White, Scotch Argus, Chequered Skipper, Large Heath**

NON UK species seen in 2018:

*French Pyrenees:*

54. **Mallow Skipper**
55. **Tufted Marbled Skipper**
56. **Large Grizzled Skipper**
57. **Oberthurs Grizzled Skipper**
58. **Safflower Skipper**
59. **Red Underwing Skipper**
60. **Provençal Short-Tailed Blue**
61. **Osiris Blue**
62. **Mazarine Blue**
63. **Green Underside Blue**
64. **Turquoise Blue**
65. **Chapman's Blue**
66. **Chequered Blue**
67. **Baton Blue**
68. **Provence Chalkhill Blue**
69. **Violet Copper**
70. **Sooty Copper**

71. Southern White Admiral
72. Camberwell Beauty
73. Provençal Fritillary
74. Weaver's Fritillary
75. Spanish Fritillary
76. Queen of Spain Fritillary
77. Spotted Fritillary
78. Meadow Fritillary
79. Knapweed Fritillary
80. Spanish Festoon
81. Iberian Scarce Swallowtail
82. Apollo
83. Clouded Apollo
84. Provence Orange Tip
85. Black Veined White
86. Berger's Clouded Yellow
87. Cleopatra
88. Bath White
89. Pearly Heath
90. Large Wall
91. Spanish Gatekeeper
92. Western Marbled White
93. De Prunner's Ringlet

*French Alps – Mercantour, Alpes de Haute Provence & Queyras:*

94. Scarce Copper
95. Purple Shot Copper
96. Purple Edged Copper
97. Ilex Hairstreak
98. False Ilex Hairstreak
99. Sloe Hairstreak
100. Blue Spot Hairstreak
101. Geranium Argus
102. Silvery Argus
103. Mountain Alcon Blue
104. Glandon Blue
105. Idas Blue
106. Alpine Blue
107. Adonis Blue
108. Damon Blue
109. Eros Blue
110. Escher's Blue
111. Poplar Admiral
112. Large Tortoiseshell
113. Southern Comma
114. Niobe Fritillary
115. Weaver's Fritillary
116. Mountain Fritillary
117. Shepherd's Fritillary
118. Titania's Fritillary
119. Marbled Fritillary
120. Lesser Marbled Fritillary
121. Cynthia's Fritillary
122. False Heath Fritillary
123. Grison's Fritillary
124. Dusky Heath
125. Darwin's Heath
126. Chestnut Heath
127. Alpine Heath
128. Great Banded Grayling
129. Woodland Grayling
130. Great Sooty Satyr
131. Northern Wall Brown
132. Alpine Grayling
133. Almond-Eyed Ringlet
134. Common Brassy Ringlet
135. Large Ringlet
136. Piedmont Ringlet
137. Sooty Ringlet
138. Blind Ringlet
139. Dewy Ringlet
140. Marbled Skipper
141. Foulquier's Grizzled Skipper
142. Alpine Grizzled Skipper
143. Olive Skipper
144. Dusky Grizzled Skipper
145. Scarce Swallowtail
146. Small Apollo
127. Mountain Clouded Yellow
128. Mountain Dappled White
132. Mountain Green Veined White
133. Peak White
134. Southern Small White

*Montes Universales – Spain*

135. Zapater's Ringlet
136. Spanish Purple Hairstreak
137. Long-Tailed Blue
138. Lang's Short-Tailed Blue
139. Southern Brown Argus
140. Mother of Pearl Blue
141. Azure Chalkhill Blue
142. Spanish Chalkhill Blue
143. Oberthur's Anomalous Blue
144. Southern Gatekeeper
145. Dusky Meadow Brown
146. Oriental Meadow Brown
147. Black Satyr
148. Rock Grayling
149. Tree Grayling
150. Striped Grayling
151. False Grayling
152. Hermit
153. Southern Hermit
154. Iberian Marbled White
155. Esper's Marbled White
156. Southern Marbled Skipper
157. Sage Skipper
158. Cinquefoil Skipper
159. Cardinal
160. Twin Spot Fritillary

Total species seen in 2018 – 160

Last butterfly sighting – **Painted Lady** – 21st October, Port Eynon, Gower, Swansea

## Re: David M

by David M, 13-Mar-18 10:59 PM GMT

**Tuesday 13th March 2018 – Window of opportunity...**

Things have been positively un-springlike lately, so much so that there have been no real opportunities until today in the Swansea area to get out in mild, still, sunny conditions to reacquaint myself with our winged friends.

Today wasn't exactly ideal; 10c maximum temperatures, but the almost clear blue skies at lunchtime saw me take my camera out round the green areas adjacent to my workplace in the hope that a few butterflies might be about.

I saw two Small Tortoiseshells within a metre of one another nectaring from the celandines on the banks of a stream that has traditionally been a good spot for this species over the years:



This area has been mown earlier than usual which is a little disappointing, as it means that nettle growth is suppressed and will therefore be less attractive to the adult hibernators. That said, it was replete as ever with flowering celandines and dandelions:



Given their close proximity, it was only a matter of time before these two butterflies latched onto one another before they flew away across the stream out of my sight:



I made my way towards the railway embankment and saw two male Brimstones eagerly searching the evergreens for females. Neither came to rest, but a little while later on my way back to the office, I disturbed a female Brimstone in the grass. She fluttered around a hedgerow for some while before coming down on a patch of wood-trimmings where she basked for a while, allowing me to get close:



Nice to be up and running, albeit several days later than normal!

### Re: David M

by bugboy, 13-Mar-18 11:13 PM GMT

Good to see some butterflies at last, I'm still showing a blank. I think it may be my fault that the beast from the east's little brother is paying us a visit soon, I booked myself a 4 day weekend.... 😊

### Re: David M

by David M, 17-Mar-18 05:15 PM GMT

Friday 16th March 2018 - more species appearing....

Hard to believe given the sleet this morning that at lunchtime yesterday I was strolling around in 11c temperatures around the light woodland adjacent to my workplace feeling not in the least chilly!

The south-facing railway bank has traditionally been a haunt for territorial spring Commas, and once again I wasn't disappointed as this sunlit stretch saw one in residence:



I managed to coax him down from a perch beyond my camera lens by throwing a small stone into his airspace, immediately eliciting a quick circuit of the territory prior to landing right in front of me just above head height:



Another Comma had been spotted earlier but whizzed away over the river bank out of reach, whilst the solitary male Brimstone I saw nearly got intercepted by a Great Tit, but the insect just managed to manoeuvre out of harm's way at the last moment.

On my way back, I almost trod on a Peacock, which immediately circled me seemingly in anger before flying away. I walked after it but sadly couldn't find it in amongst the brambly undergrowth so my first image of this species in 2018 will have to wait (probably at least a week given the inclement weather that's descended). 😞

## Re: David M

by David M, 12-Apr-18 07:19 PM GMT

**Thursday 12th April 2018 - Hard work...**

This cool, cloudy weather has gone on seemingly forever and I am very much looking forward to the respite promised for next week. In the meantime, however, the sun **did** burn the cloud back sufficiently this afternoon to tempt me out to Cwm Ivy, near Whiteford Burrows on the north Gower coast.

I was only there for an hour before the cloud rolled back in. Two male Brimstones were seen nectaring from primroses at the edge of the woodland:



Only one other butterfly was seen, but it was a most welcome one - my first non-adult hibernator of 2018 in the shape of this lovely Speckled Wood:



I'm hoping next week will see Whites, Holly Blues and maybe Orange Tips begin to emerge. It sure has been an appalling start to the year thus far.

**Re: David M**

by essexbuzzard, 12-Apr-18 07:33 PM GMT

A slow start to the season for sure, David, but that's a lovely Speckled Wood you have there. And at last, there is light at the end of the tunnel. If the weather improves as forecast, we can expect a good emergence of spring species next week. Can't wait.

**Re: David M**

by Maximus, 12-Apr-18 11:25 PM GMT

Well done with your 2008 tally so far, David, that Speckled Wood was a Great find. I think we're all hoping that next week will see Whites, Holly Blues and Orange-tips begin to emerge after a long grey winter and a really slow start to this season.

Mike

**Re: David M**

by Andrew555, 13-Apr-18 11:39 AM GMT

Well done David, brilliant to see the Speckled. 😊

**Re: David M**

by Goldie M, 13-Apr-18 01:46 PM GMT

Hi! David, I can't wait for next week so I can spot a Speckie and may be an Orange Tip 😊 Goldie 😊

**Re: David M**

by David M, 15-Apr-18 07:39 PM GMT

**Saturday 14th April 2018 - Moving forward....**

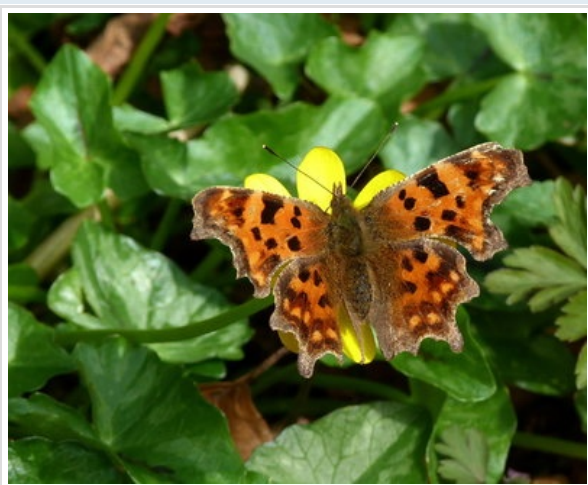
Thirteen butterflies in a near two hour excursion would normally be seen as a poor return, but given this abject spring it still represented my best single day tally of 2018.

I kept local seeing that the weather forecast, even as I was going out, was suggesting cloudy conditions, but in the event skies were relatively clear and I was delighted to encounter 6 Peacocks, 5 Commas and 2 male Brimstones.

I hadn't hitherto been able to capture any images of grounded Peacocks thus far this year, but this individual presented several opportunities as it repeatedly basked on the warm sand at the entrance to the path leading towards Three Cliffs Bay:



The Commas were, as ever, much more willing subjects:



**Re: David M**

by Chris Jackson, 15-Apr-18 08:23 PM GMT

David M wrote:

**Saturday 14th April 2018 – Moving forward....** ... I was delighted to encounter 6 Peacocks, 5 Commas and 2 male Brimstones ...

You do realise, David, that where I live in the "magnificent" south of France (Bouches du Rhone), these 3 species are quite rare ?. Consider yourself lucky. 😊  
Chris

**Re: David M**

by bugboy, 15-Apr-18 08:27 PM GMT

Nice Specklie David, I have a feeling this weeks mini heat wave will bring about a glut of emergents, happy hunting 😊

**Re: David M**

by Andrew555, 16-Apr-18 11:19 AM GMT

Yes I think we were all grateful for what we got on Saturday David, well done on your Peacock. 😊

**Re: David M**

by David M, 22-Apr-18 12:58 PM GMT

**Friday 20th April 2018 – Seismic shift....**

Many years ago I studied at university in Toulouse. One thing I remember is how the season down there seemingly went straight from winter to summer with no real discernible spring in between.

It felt a little like that today, as after months of suppressed temperatures, suddenly I was catapulted into 22c with cloudless skies all day.

Castle Meadows in Abergavenny was looking full of promise:



Small Tortoiseshells were certainly enjoying the conditions, with around two dozen seen:



Peacocks were next commonest with at least 7 sighted. However, I was surprised by the relative lack of Orange Tips. I only saw 6, all males, and each one was flying furiously in the unseasonably hot conditions meaning images were out of the question.



I also saw my first Green Veined Whites of 2018, and was therefore in the strange position of having recorded Orange Tip **and** GWV for the year **before** either of the 'cabbage' whites!! Soon after though, I spotted a Small White and then in the orchard near the castle found this mating pair:



Another first for the year was Holly Blue, with a male descending briefly to *terra firma* to investigate the moist ground before heading back to the trees. The only other species seen was a solitary Comma.

## Re: David M

by David M, 22-Apr-18 10:28 PM GMT

### Saturday 21st April 2018 - Butterfly superhighway....

Abergavenny was glorious again when I got up at 8am, and I was looking forward to spending more time at Castle Meadows in the afternoon before returning to Swansea.

However, it started to rain unexpectedly at midday, even though the BBC had the chance of precipitation at that time in Abergavenny as 0%!!!

The whole sky had gone grey, so I decided to head straight back instead in the hope that sunny skies would still be on offer back home. For most of the journey that didn't look likely, and I had to change my plan of visiting Kilvey Hill at the last moment in favour of Cwm Ivy on the north Gower coast as a layer of cloud seemed to have descended east of Llanelli.

Luckily, after driving through Gorseinon, I emerged back into the sunshine and I'm pleased to say I remained in it for the entirety of my three and a half hour stay at this lovely location.

There were butterflies galore in the specially cleared woodland section, which acted as a superhighway for all kinds of species as they zoomed through looking for nectar, warmth and mates - Speckled Woods were probably commonest with several dozen flying about, but Holly Blues were everywhere, perhaps defying expectations that they suffer population crashes immediately after a particularly good year (which 2017 undoubtedly was).

It's hard to put an accurate figure on the numbers I saw as I largely stayed in the one area but even conservatively there would have been 30+. Several came down to nectar from the blackthorn blossom, such as this male:



Numerous Brimstones and Orange Tips flew by, although unlike last year the male OTs seemed reluctant to settle on the blackthorn, with only this individual alighting for any length of time:



Female OTs, on the other hand, were much more obliging:



Green Veined Whites were almost constant companions:



I also saw my first Large White of 2018, but could only 'capture' him in flight:



Both Red Admiral and Painted Lady turned up too. Sadly, the latter flew strongly by and was not seen again, but the Admiral, after I had initially disturbed it some while earlier, was tempted back and posed for a short while on young nettle growth:



I don't make a habit of remaining on any site till gone 5.30pm but I was mindful to ponder when I would next be able to bask in 22c heat in this part of the world, and in truth that might not happen all summer!! So, a very pleasant afternoon and easily the best 'stats' of the year thus far:

Speckled Wood 30-50  
Holly Blue 25-35  
Orange Tip 20-30  
Brimstone 10-20  
Green Veined White 4  
Small White 2  
Peacock 2  
Large White 1  
Red Admiral 1  
Painted Lady 1

#### Re: David M

by millerd, 22-Apr-18 10:38 PM GMT

That's a very respectable haul for the day, David - good to see a Painted Lady in amongst them too! You're right - there have been whole summers in the past without such high temperatures or such a good spell of weather. It's been exceptional. 😊

Dave

#### Re: David M

by Andrew555, 23-Apr-18 02:29 PM GMT

Very nice indeed David, looks like a great spot. 😊

#### Re: David M

by Goldie M, 23-Apr-18 04:59 PM GMT

Hi! David, I went to my local CP Hall-Lee-Brook and we saw one Butterfly a Peacock, this was after rain on Saturday Morning and to my amazement we never saw another Butterfly, this was after the lovely weather we'd had the days before, so your haul of all those Butterflies deserves a green 🍀🍀  
Goldie 😊

## Re: David M

by David M, 29-Apr-18 01:21 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments, all.

**Saturday 28th April 2018 - Cool but bright....**

A pleasant surprise in store today – an incorrect weather forecast, only of the right kind! A clear early morning soon gave way to predicted cloud but the north of the Gower appeared bathed in sunlight so I took another trip to Cwm Ivy to indulge myself with Holly Blues, Speckled Woods and Orange Tips.

The blackthorn blossom looks delightful at the moment, but give it a week and nearly all of it will be gone:



Once again there were dozens and dozens of Speckled Woods. I was almost tripping over them in the 2 hours or so I was there. Holly Blues were again numerous too. They seem to fly around their master tree and do battle with one another whilst every so often coming to the blackthorn to take nectar before the whole charade repeats itself! This male basked for a little while with wings open:



Orange Tips were not quite as hyperactive as last weekend, although the 10 degree difference in temperature will have dictated that no doubt. I finally managed to get some images of them whilst settled:





Other species seen were Peacock, Brimstone, Green Veined White & Red Admiral, although the lack of Whites generally is starting to give me concerns. Hopefully numbers will pick up soon.

**Re: David M**

by ernie f, 29-Apr-18 02:28 PM GMT

Lucky devil. It's like winter here in Hampshire. 😊

**Re: David M**

by bugboy, 29-Apr-18 02:49 PM GMT

**ernie f wrote:**

Lucky devil. It's like winter here in Hampshire. 😊

(and in London) What he said!

**Re: David M**

by Andrew555, 01-May-18 01:40 PM GMT

Glad the weather was with you David! Great shots. 😊

**Re: David M**

by Goldie M, 02-May-18 10:26 AM GMT

Great to see Orange Tips isn't it Dave, lovely shots to. Goldie 😊

**Re: David M**

by David M, 05-May-18 09:01 PM GMT

### Saturday 5th May 2018 – What a delight.....

Today was a simply beautiful day. Not just because the sun shone and temperatures rose, but also because it was a reminder of how wonderful this country can be at this time of year.

Driving along the narrow lanes of the Gower this morning was as uplifting as it can be. The hedgerows were simply stunning – the primroses are still out but they are now being joined by bluebells, campion and all the other spectacular flowers that can be expected in May.

I made for Welshmoor in near perfect conditions to look for my first Green Hairstreaks of the year. This is the field margin where they are most reliably found (Marsh Fritillaries are common here too later in the season):



I'm pleased to say I found three, and within a few days I'm sure there will be dozens flying around this site, which is still quite boggy after all the rain lately:



Several other butterflies were seen, including a surprise Small Tortoiseshell. However, the only ones to make me reach for the camera were these two mating Green Veined Whites. I disturbed them as I was following the first Green Hairstreak, and noted that it was the male who carried the female:



I walked further down the shrub line, but when I returned 20 minutes later they were still there in the same place:



I then drove on down to Whiteford Burrows on the coast, where the sea breeze was most welcome (for a change). The Holly Blue show in the cleared section seems to be over now, but there were still many dozens of Speckled Woods, with Orange Tips whizzing by regularly too.

I had to head back by 2.15pm, but for once safe in the knowledge that the next two days are set fair as well, meaning that there is the rare opportunity to take time over things without rushing around before the next Atlantic weather front arrives!!

**Re: David M**

by Katrina, 05-May-18 09:13 PM GMT

Wow, stunning Green-Hairstreak photos 😊👍👍

**Re: David M**

by trevor, 05-May-18 11:10 PM GMT

You've captured that turquoise hue on those Green Hairstreaks perfectly, David.

Glad Spring has caught up with you.  
Trevor.

**Re: David M**

by millerd, 05-May-18 11:19 PM GMT

That sounds like a great part of the world, David. To me (used to seeing them on chalk hillsides) that doesn't look a bit like Marsh Fritillary territory. Lovely Green Hairstreaks – gloriously green against the yellow gorse.

I've noticed before that the male is generally the one that takes charge and flies with mating White butterflies.

Dave

**Re: David M**

by David M, 06-May-18 07:03 PM GMT

Thanks, all.

**Sunday 6th May 2018 – Busy morning....**

I wanted to get my visits out of the way early to fit in some domestic and work tasks as taking three whole days out to indulge myself with butterflies is rather too decadent, especially with a trip to France a mere fortnight away!

So, off I drove at 8.10am in the sea mist from Swansea to the Merthyr Mawr site near Porthcawl. Thankfully, the mist cleared beyond Port Talbot which meant I could get in and out of this site within an hour before the day trippers arrived!

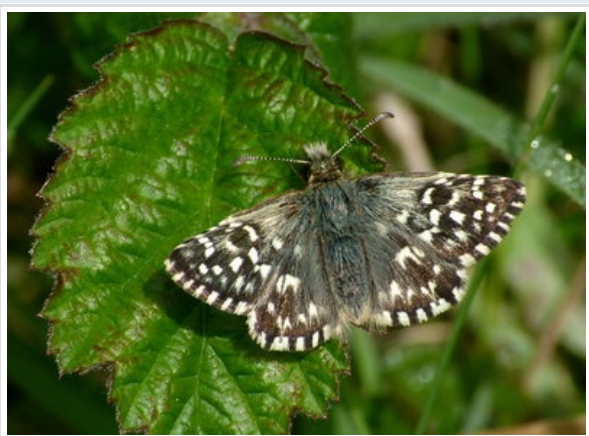
Weather conditions were quite strange. Looking inland skies were largely clear:



However, by contrast, the sea mist towards the coast was dangerously near:



Thankfully, I managed to find 5 Grizzled Skippers within 45 minutes:







I didn't see a single other butterfly on the site; it was only when I returned to my car that I disturbed an Orange Tip resting on garlic mustard.

I stopped off at Crymlyn Burrows on the Swansea coast on the way back, but the mist was still lurking and took nearly an hour to clear properly. Again, few butterflies were seen, but I did stumble across my first Small Copper of 2018, looking as though he'd had a run in with something given the torn state of his left wing:



**Re: David M**

by Pauline, 06-May-18 07:14 PM GMT

That last Grizzled Skipper image is lovely David but I am much more envious of your mating GVW – something I have yet to see 🍷

**Re: David M**

by Maximus, 06-May-18 07:54 PM GMT

You're really up and running now, David, those Green Hairstreaks and Grizzled Skippers are butterflies I am yet to find.

Mike

**Re: David M**

by Andrew555, 10-May-18 04:17 PM GMT

I was thinking to the same thing that weekend David, how lovely the countryside was. Great shots of the Grizzled's and GVW's. Love the green and yellow of that Greenstreak shot. 😊

**Re: David M**

by David M, 11-May-18 07:09 AM GMT

Thanks all.

**Thursday 10th May 2018 - Orange Tips**

Managed to get out for an hour or so to Crymlyn Burrows on the Swansea coast, ostensibly to see whether Dingy Skippers & Small Blues had emerged.

Sadly, there was no sign of either, but there were numerous Orange Tips flying, and the cool, part-cloudy conditions becalmed them regularly giving a rare opportunity to approach them closely:



This battle-scarred male Holly Blue also put in a brief appearance:



**Re: David M**

by essexbuzzard, 11-May-18 08:06 AM GMT

Nothing wrong with Orange Tips, David. You can't take too many pictures of Orange Tips!

That Grizzled Skipper ain't too shabby, either!

**Re: David M**

by Andrew555, 11-May-18 02:06 PM GMT

Lovely close encounter shots David. 😊

**Re: David M**

by millerd, 11-May-18 09:24 PM GMT

Agreed – you can't have too many Orange Tips, particularly as their season is far too short! 😊

Dave

**Re: David M**

by Goldie M, 12-May-18 09:12 AM GMT

I agree David and when you see them you can't resist taking shots can you! 😊 Goldie 😊

**Re: David M**

by Pauline, 12-May-18 02:45 PM GMT

Orange Tips? Bit thin on the ground in my neck of the woods this season so lovely to see your vibrant images David 😊

**Re: David M**

by David M, 14-May-18 12:36 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments. Yes, Orange Tips are always irresistible, yet strangely I've only seen two this weekend!

**Saturday 12th May 2018 – PBF pleasure.....**

In most years, I only get to see Pearl Bordered Fritillaries once in the UK, so a lot depends on both the season and weather conditions.

Thankfully, this year saw both juxtapose nicely at Ewyas Harold Common in Herefordshire. Whilst the flight season is late for this species, there were nonetheless quite a few about (around two dozen in total) whilst weather conditions were near perfect for observing the butterflies, with relatively cool temperatures (14 or 15c) and hazy cloud cover.

I arrived early and it was slow going at first, so I took an overview shot of what I deem to be the best hotspot on this site for this precious insect:



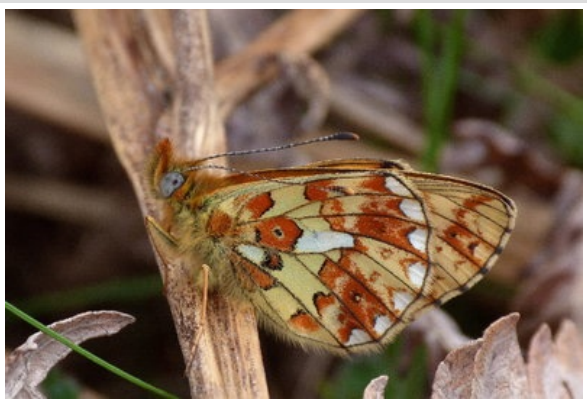
I only spent an hour or so in this area as there were two guys with very professional looking equipment and I didn't wish to unduly disturb them. I did manage this image of a PBF which was attempting to warm up during a cloudy spell:



I wandered over to the other choice area on this site and was rewarded with at least another dozen individuals to add to the 10 or so I'd seen earlier:



I stumbled upon a couple of females, which is always a good thing, as they are far more docile and prone to afford the much sought after closed wing poses:



On a few occasions, whilst observing these females, they were accosted by males looking to mate:



I'm pleased to say that sympathetic management has been much in evidence at this site over the last couple of years, and this time round the main area for PBFs has been cut back significantly, which will undoubtedly encourage the butterfly to increase its presence on the site.

Given that the only other species I saw in over two hours were singleton Large and Small Whites, it would be an understatement to declare that continued management is imperative, as if PBFs were to be lost from here, then in spite of the excellent general habitat, there would be precious little to mark this place out as anything other than a dog walker's exercise yard!

### Re: David M

by ernie f, 14-May-18 07:22 AM GMT

David: The closest PBFs to me that I know about are over an hours drive away at Bentley Wood near Salisbury so I don't get to see them every year. Your batch are great. Love that underwing shot and the m+f encounter.

### Re: David M

by Art Frames, 14-May-18 07:30 AM GMT

It is lovely to see your PBFs. Like Ernie I am a very long way from any sites. I also find the first time I go to any new site I need a revisit to get anything.

So I have instructions to get to Wyre Forest but have never been and it is a two hour trip. But, hopefully next week..... 😊

I agree the Undersides make the nicer image.

### Re: David M

by David M, 18-May-18 05:53 PM GMT

Thanks both. This species is definitely worth travelling to see.

**Friday 18th May 2018 - Fourth time lucky....**

Wall Browns aren't particularly common in the Swansea area, but one place they seem well established is on the upper slopes of Kilvey Hill, just east of the city centre.

This late season has given my legs lots of exercise, as this morning was the **fourth** time I've hiked up to the summit, and this time I was rewarded with two males cavorting around their favourite spot - the ruins of the old windmill at the top.



I stopped to take a few scenery images on the way down. This is looking west towards the Gower:



This area is the track just before the steep path back down to the tree line, but I got a shock today. I've been to this site at least 30 times since moving to Swansea in 2010, but this is the very first time I've ever seen a Green Hairstreak here:



In fact, I saw two, both in this small area. I've heard reports that they used to be present at this location, and there's plenty of bilberry growing so the habitat seems right for them. However, until today I had assumed the colonies had died out. I was clearly wrong.



Towards the base of the hill, there was, as ever, much activity, with several Large Whites seen including this resting male:



This fresh Speckled Wood was irresistible:



Other species seen were Holly Blue, Green Veined White and Orange Tip.

### Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 18-May-18 06:40 PM GMT

#### David M wrote:

...I've been to this site at least 30 times since moving to Swansea in 2010, but this is the very first time I've ever seen a Green Hairstreak here:..

Just goes to show how under recorded this species probably is.

Great Orange-tips in your previous post too 😊

...and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, not sure if I will get to see these this year...everything is now happening at once and with limited time available you can't be everywhere. Oh well, better to have too many options than none.

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: David M

by David M, 19-May-18 09:41 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil.

#### Friday May 18th 2018 - From Kilvey Hill to the coast...

After heading down from Kilvey Hill, I stopped at Crymlyn Burrows where despite Orange Tip numbers falling off considerably since last week, general numbers of butterflies were pretty good, especially Whites.

I also saw my first Common Blues of the year, about a dozen in total, including this immaculate specimen:



I fancied Small Blues would be out in force, but in the event I only saw about ten:



In fact, I saw around as many Small Coppers, which was most pleasing:





Brimstones still about (1 male, 2 females seen) but I couldn't find any Dingy Skippers at all, and I only saw this solitary Small Heath:



No Brown Argus either, although they always seem a few days behind Common Blues round these parts. Still, 13 species in a day isn't something to complain about!

**Re: David M**

by Andrew555, 20-May-18 03:59 PM GMT

Great shots David, that Common Blue is indeed lovely. 😊

Glad it worked out for you with the PBF's. 😊

Cheers

**Re: David M**

by Allan.W., 23-May-18 06:02 PM GMT

Nice Common Blue shots David ,and also your Grizzles from a few days back (cracking little beasties aren,t they !)  
Regards Allan.W,

**Re: David M**

by David M, 02-Jun-18 08:18 PM GMT

**Saturday 2nd June 2018 – Fritillary fest...**

Whilst away in France this last fortnight, I've kept up with what's been going on back here in the UK and was anxious to see what effect the balmy conditions during late May have had on butterfly populations.

Today I got my answer. I spent just over an hour on the prime spot on Fairwood Common and counted 32 Marsh Fritillaries:



Even more satisfying were the incredible numbers of Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries. I usually see a few, but this time they easily eclipsed the Marshies with around 50 seen, the majority being within this damp area:



There were several in the air in all directions, mostly males searching for females. However, they regularly stopped to take nectar from the ragged robin blooms:



With time to spare, I took a walk along one of the drier paths on the Common, and eventually recorded my first UK Dingy Skipper of the year:



Around 30 Common Blues were also seen, some fresh, others faded. Green Hairstreaks were about too in small numbers whilst Speckled Wood, Large and Green Veined White singletons were recorded as well.

**Re: David M**

by Pauline, 02-Jun-18 08:27 PM GMT

Lovely images of the Marsh Fritillaries David 😊 Hope you have some interesting shots from France to show us?

**Re: David M**

by Andrew555, 04-Jun-18 01:21 PM GMT

That looks and sounds amazing David, fantastic stuff. 🍷 😊

**Re: David M**

by kevlng, 04-Jun-18 07:50 PM GMT

David,

Lovely shots of the Marshies and SPBF. Glad there were plenty to go round. Looking back through your diary, I also like the Orange Tips. This is the first year I have failed to see one settle, wings open. A big disappointment as it is my favourite Butterfly. Your photos have made up for it.

Kind Regards  
Kev

**Re: David M**

by David M, 05-Jun-18 06:52 PM GMT

Thanks, all.

Kev - shame you haven't had a proper audience with Orange Tips this year. You should consider searching for them on a cool, largely cloudy day. That is when the best opportunities present themselves.

**Re: David M**

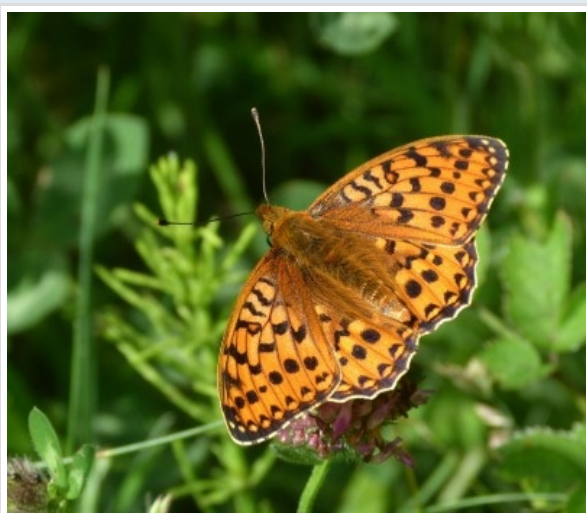
by David M, 10-Jun-18 06:11 PM GMT

**Sunday 10th June - Dark Green delight...**

I had a hunch that Dark Green Fritillaries might be about today so I drove down to Crymlyn Burrows on the Swansea coast this morning and was delighted to find about half a dozen of them flying around powerfully and duelling with one another when they crossed paths amongst the grassy dunes:



They all looked freshly emerged:





Here's the habitat, and the warm weather with the odd wet day has made it grow prodigiously; certainly more lush and long than I've hitherto ever seen it:



There were plenty of other species flying – Common Blues & Small Heaths numbered several dozen, whilst Large Skippers are on the increase; I saw around 10:



Nice to see three Brown Argus as well, even though they were past their best:



Four Small Blues (fewer than I expected), but no Vanessids and only one Pierid – a female Large White. I was also surprised at the absence of Meadow Browns after seeing four last Thursday on the Gower coast.

**Re: David M**

by ernie f, 10-Jun-18 07:25 PM GMT

Dave – That fourth pic really has a VERY dark green colour. Its a beauty.

**Re: David M**

by trevor, 10-Jun-18 08:04 PM GMT

Gorgeous Dark Green Fritillaries, David. It's a great feeling when a hunch pays off. I always look forward to the female DGF's, as they are often beautifully coloured and marked. You've prompted me to check out my local site for them.

All the best,  
Trevor.

**Re: David M**

by Pauline, 10-Jun-18 08:11 PM GMT

Oh David, what truly, lovely shots. Those DGF are certainly very fresh and you have captured their gorgeous colours perfectly. I'd be happy to swap you a few handfuls of SSB for a couple of them! 🍷 I just can't seem to get anywhere near them.

**Re: David M**

by Andrew555, 13-Jun-18 03:41 PM GMT

Beautiful DGF's David, great shots. 😊

**Re: David M**

by Gary.N, 18-Jun-18 07:52 PM GMT

Love those DGF's, David. 😊 Specially the one in amongst the leaves. It blends in so well. Haven't see a DGH yet this year. I'd better hope for some good luck there next. 😊

Gary

**Re: David M**

by David M, 20-Jun-18 11:24 PM GMT

Thanks all. Hopefully this promising weather forecast for the next few days will see me able to get equally close to High Brown Fritillaries, which have been on the wing for a week or so now in south Wales.

**Re: David M**

by essexbuzzard, 20-Jun-18 11:29 PM GMT

You'll have us all drooling then, David!

**Re: David M**

by trevor, 21-Jun-18 02:03 PM GMT

Hopefully we can rely on you, David, to sort out the Dark greens from the High Browns when they are flying together. You are lucky to have High Browns nearby.

All the best,  
Trevor.

**Re: David M**

by David M, 21-Jun-18 06:36 PM GMT

Sorting these two species out can be tricky, Trevor, especially early in the flight season.

**Thursday 21st June - Midsummer Madness.....**

It was carnage on the slopes of Old Castle Down, Ewenny, today, with numerous large Fritillaries whizzing about the bracken covered hillside. Last year's hotspot seems to have been retained for 2018:



It was hard to put a count on them in this sheltered area with so many buzzing around, but around three dozen would be a decent estimate. The majority I saw settled were Dark Greens:



The DGFs seem to prefer the marsh thistles and the High Browns the bramble, so my senses were alerted when I saw one come down on the latter, and although I only got this one image, it was enough to confirm it as an HBF:

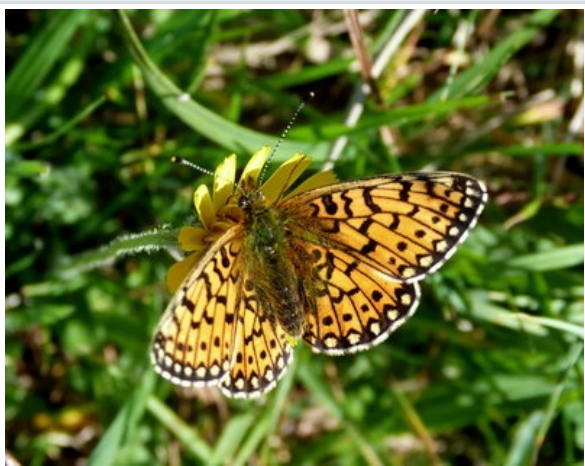


There wasn't anything like so much activity on the other side of this vast site, so I was grateful for being able to snatch a couple of images of one of just two other High Browns that I was able to definitively identify:





Small Pearl Bordered Frits are still hanging on, with around a dozen seen, mostly faded females though this one looked in decent nick:



In even better nick was this stunning summer brood Small Tortoiseshell, one of the most beautiful specimens I've ever seen:



Plenty of Speckled Woods, Small Heaths, Large Skippers and Meadow Browns, but surprisingly few Ringlets – I reckon about a dozen or so:



One dilapidated Common Blue was also seen, along with a couple of Whites which were either Small or Green Veined.

**Re: David M**

by Maximus, 21-Jun-18 08:19 PM GMT

Great shots of the Dark Green Frits, David, and nice to see the High Browns among them in your latest post. That Small Tort is a real stunner 😊

Mike

**Re: David M**

by essexbuzzard, 21-Jun-18 09:40 PM GMT

Good that you've managed to get a few High Browns in before you go to France. When you get there, you'll be seeing them on the thistle patch next to the hotel. But that's cheating!

**Re: David M**

by David M, 24-Jun-18 02:24 PM GMT

Thanks, folks. Yes, Mark, it's cheating a bit, I suppose, but when in Rome...

**Saturday 23rd June 2018 – Just perfect...**

It was a perfect day to go to the coast today, so I invited my neighbour to join me at St Govan's Head in Pembrokeshire, which is the only site in south Wales for Silver Studded Blue.

Arriving just after 9.30am, we didn't take long to see the first SSBs, but prior to that there was a bit of a surprise – this female Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, a species I've never seen here before:



In total, about 30–35 Silver Studded Blues were seen, with the overwhelming majority being males:



Females numbered around half a dozen:



One mating pair was seen:



The other eye-catching species was Dark Green Fritillary, with at least 30 seen, mostly males looking for females, and watching them go about their pursuit led me to finding this newly emerged female:



There were plenty of Meadow Browns about, and quite a few Small Heaths. The odd tatty Common Blue would turn up and Large Skippers seemed to be holding territory every 50 yards or so. A couple of new brood Small Tortoiseshells were about as were my first handful of Small Skippers of the year:



This is one location where butterflies are not the main attraction; the sheer cliffs, clear waters and general views are all absolutely stunning:



My neighbour was pointing out dozens of seabirds on one of the stacks – Razorbills, I believe:



There are plenty of choughs too:



All in all, a superb morning spent at a delightful place.

### Re: David M

by ernie f, 24-Jun-18 05:37 PM GMT

Nice to see some birds making an entry, Dave. Especially when its seabirds and especially Choughs too!

### Re: David M

by Pauline, 24-Jun-18 07:27 PM GMT

I'm so pleased you caught up with the SSB's David but that fresh FEMALE DGF is to die for 🍷. Where can I find one????????? It isn't for want of trying 😊  
You'll be posting shots of mating pairs next 😊

### Re: David M

by David M, 25-Jun-18 07:26 PM GMT

Thanks, ernie. Pauline – I've just been lucky with DGFs this year. Of course, it helps if you visit a site where there are plenty of them, and I'm rather spoiled for choice round my way. 😊

#### Sunday 24th June 2018 – Mustn't miss out.....

I toyed seriously with the idea of visiting Cors Caron for Large Heath today, but remembered that when I went there last year in similarly sultry weather I ended up just watching them bob about continually in the marshy grassland where I couldn't get to them. 😞

So, with my sojourn to France imminent, I decided I'd go down to Whiteford Burrows on the Gower coast, which is a good site for Marbled Whites.

There were plenty about, but even at 9.15 in the morning they were hyperactive. I bided my time until I spotted a female and, eventually, she came down to rest in an opportune spot:



The dune system here was positively alive with butterflies, convincing me that unless we have a serious turn for the worse weatherwise, we are going to see serious numbers by late July. Meadow Browns were everywhere....hundreds of them. Surprisingly, this male basked briefly with wings open:



Even more surprisingly, he spent a good ten minutes trying to court this poor Ringlet, who just wanted to be left alone:



Still dozens and dozens of Small Heaths about, including this mating pair:

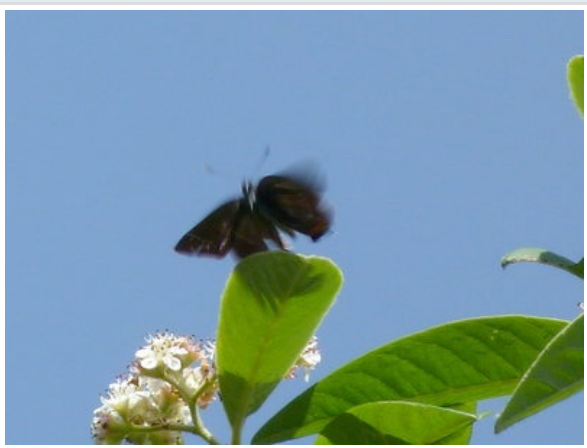


Small Skippers have eclipsed Large Skippers in numbers, although there was no sign of any Graylings, which are also recorded at this site.

At 10.50am I moved on to a site in Loughour, where there is a healthy elm copse with White Letter Hairstreaks. Within seconds, I spotted some activity although they remained resolutely at the top of the canopy, so distance shots were all I could manage:



They were strongly attracted to the tree in these images, but I don't know which species it is. If anyone does, I'd be interested to know:



I didn't see the Hairstreaks actually nectaring from the blossom, but this Comma was (one of three fresh specimens seen):





**Re: David M**

by ernie f, 25-Jun-18 09:11 PM GMT

Distance shots of WLH's maybe – but good distance shots David!  
The ones I have seen so far this year just won't sit still.

**Re: David M**

by Andrew555, 26-Jun-18 11:17 AM GMT

Your DGF's continue to impress David, good to see your High Browns as well.  
Great stuff from some lovely locations. 😊

**Re: David M**

by David M, 28-Jun-18 07:05 PM GMT

Thanks, both. Shame I'll miss out on the 'acme' period for High Brown Frits but from what I've heard they are going to be around in serious numbers at the Welsh site.

**Re: David M**

by bugboy, 29-Jun-18 07:29 AM GMT

I can't be sure without a better look at the tree but it looks like some sort of *Cotoneaster* those WLH are sitting on David.

**Re: David M**

by David M, 19-Jul-18 03:56 PM GMT

Thanks for the shrub ID, BB.

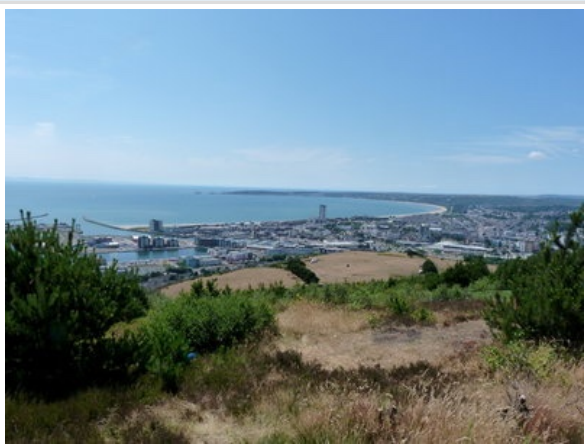
**Thursday 19th July 2018 – Hot, dry and parched.....**

As a Swansea resident, I can't really believe I've typed those preceding words. This is one part of the UK which attracts rain in abundance, but like most other areas, south Wales has seen virtually none for weeks now and it shows in the landscape.

For example, this is the entrance to the track which goes up Kilvey Hill. Normally it is verdant and damp....not at the moment though:



Similarly, these fields beneath the summit are usually very green, with all the water which normally drains down from the top:

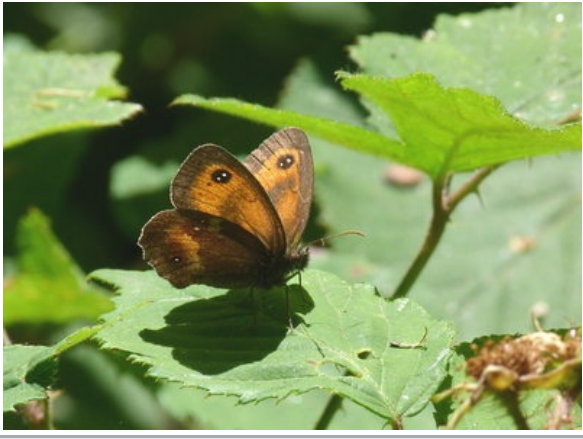


Whilst there were plenty of butterflies about, even they seemed to be struggling with the temperatures, with all species closing their wings once alighted and many fluttering round the shadier parts.

I saw my first Hedge Browns of 2018. Here's a female:



.....and one of many males:



My main reason for coming here was to find Graylings. Sadly, there were only two, and this was the best image I could get (maybe the rest had decided to have a siesta):



A couple of male Wall Browns were about too at the summit:



This male Brimstone was irresistible on buddleia:



Common Blues, Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Small Coppers, Speckled Woods & the three Whites were also about, and I saw a single Painted Lady on the same buddleia as the Brimstone as well as a fly by Red Admiral.

**Re: David M**

by ernie f, 19-Jul-18 04:31 PM GMT

David – A Wall Brown and a Grayling, can't be bad.

**Re: David M**

by David M, 22-Jul-18 11:27 PM GMT

**Saturday 21st July – Bits and pieces.....**

Visited Abergavenny this weekend and took a trip out to Castle Meadows in the mid morning.

Visual confirmation of how hot and dry this summer has been came with the following image:



This is in direct contrast to the same image at a similar time in 2017, where the grass hadn't grown anywhere near so long and was nowhere near as parched:



There were lots of butterflies about, particularly Small Whites, which have exploded in number. I was looking for Essex Skippers, and found several, although the habitat was impossible to penetrate without disturbing the butterflies so images were hard to come by.

I took this one in bright sunshine, and thought I'd nailed *lineola*, but now I'm not so sure (it gets harder the more faded the butterflies become). Whilst the sex brands look good, the antennal tips seem a little ambiguous:



other species were about too: Large & Green Veined Whites, Peacock, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Hedge Brown, Meadow Brown, Small Skipper, Common Blue, Ringlet, Small Copper & Holly Blue. There were also a few Commas, including this one which had a hindwing missing (was still able to function properly though):



**Re: David M**

by trevor, 23-Jul-18 06:07 AM GMT

I like your pre heatwave comparison David.  
Around here the long grass has gone from brown to blonde.  
Worse, as in 1976, I've seen a few mature trees in full leaf, but dead, including an Oak.  
It would seem that we are going to get the full 1976 treatment this week, 30c +.

Best wishes,  
Trevor.

**Re: David M**

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jul-18 08:08 PM GMT

**David M wrote:**

...I took this one in bright sunshine, and thought I'd nailed *lineola*, but now I'm not so sure (it gets harder the more faded the butterflies become). Whilst the sex brands look good, the antennal tips seem a little ambiguous:...

That's a definite Essex David, I am finding that the male sex brand is often a more reliable indicator than the antennae, many of which seem to share features of both species unless you get the right angle from underneath.

Your shots of the site in 2017 and this year could have been taken around my local patch, most of which is parched to the point of dying off. Still no rain in the forecast for the foreseeable future...very worrying for the rest of the season and next year.

Cheers,

Neil.

**Re: David M**

by David M, 24-Jul-18 06:17 PM GMT

**Neil Freeman wrote:**

That's a definite Essex David, I am finding that the male sex brand is often a more reliable indicator than the antennae, many of which seem to share features of both species unless you get the right angle from underneath.

Yes, I don't really think it can be *sylvestris* given those androconial scales/antennal tips but when these butterflies are elderly and worn, identification gets harder.

We had welcome rain in Swansea last night and it was muggy and damp till early afternoon today. I don't think I've ever been so grateful to see such conditions! I despair for much of southern England though. I fear this is going to have implications next year (and maybe beyond).

**Re: David M**

by Padfield, 24-Jul-18 06:23 PM GMT

I agree: that can only be *sylvestris*. When the sex brand is visible, all else is academic.

Guy

**Re: David M**

by Padfield, 24-Jul-18 07:02 PM GMT

My mistake! I meant *lineola*! Replying in haste in a Swiss bar ...

Guy

**Re: David M**

by essexbuzzard, 24-Jul-18 07:45 PM GMT

If you think your grass is brown...

I couldn't believe your images of the verdant countryside in France, as I thought it had been dry everywhere in West Europe.

Thank goodness we had a wet summer last year, and a wet winter and spring- unlike in 1975 and 1976.

## Re: David M

by Old Wolf, 24-Jul-18 09:01 PM GMT

Your images mirror exactly the state of the area where I live too. Everywhere is parched and the grass is practically straw. I never thought I would say it but we really need some rain. Normally it is the other way around and I am wishing for it to stop.

I love the image of the Comma. I find it amazing when butterflies soldier on with such incredible damage. They are lovely when intact but I also find the damaged ones charming as well.

## Re: David M

by David M, 26-Jul-18 06:36 PM GMT

Thanks, all. I reckon we'll all see rain very soon....maybe quite a lot of it if the predicted thunderstorms arrive!

### Thursday 26th July 2018 - Change of scenery....

I drove down to the West Williamston site in Pembrokeshire this morning, hoping that the first male Brown Hairstreaks might be about. Well, if they were they remained very discreet - I saw none!

However, there were good numbers of other butterflies, including 20 or so Silver Washed Fritillaries, the first I've seen in the UK this year:



Most of the action was in this meadow, which was absolutely teeming with insects:



Hedge Browns were particularly numerous, but once again they kept their wings firmly shut whilst basking/nectaring due to the heat. So did the many Common Blues seen buzzing around, though this female's underside was irresistible:



I probably hit double figures with Small Coppers, which doesn't happen very often. These two got me off to a good start:



Even more interesting though was this next little jewel. I don't encounter many *phlaeas* aberrants so this one was a real joy:





Nice to see a handful of Small Tortoiseshells too. Hopefully there'll be lots more over the next few weeks:



Other species about were Large, Small & Green Veined Whites, Small Skipper, Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood, Comma, Peacock & Red Admiral. Ringlets have clearly met their maker in this location!

**Re: David M**

by Allan.W., 26-Jul-18 08:20 PM GMT

Excellent find with the Small Copper AB; David .....Great find !!  
Regards Allan.W.

**Re: David M**

by Pauline, 30-Jul-18 06:00 PM GMT

My thoughts exactly Allan! 🍷 I rarely see Small Coppers tho' so the chance of one of them being an ab seems quite remote. I'm quite envious of that Wall Brown too – it's been years since I saw one. Must try to put that right before too long.

**Re: David M**

by Andrew555, 08-Aug-18 01:59 PM GMT

Love the two Coppers together David, and a great ab. 😊

**Re: David M**

by David M, 16-Aug-18 10:43 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments, everyone.

**Thursday 16th August 2013 – Withering on the vine....**

Yet again, August has a distinctly autumn feel to it.

I arrived at the West Williamston reserve in Pembrokeshire at 10.30 this morning to find vegetation that had largely gone over and very few butterflies.

Incredibly, in a 3 hour visit in mid-August, I saw just 4 Hedge Browns. It's difficult to reconcile myself with how quickly things seem to be petering out so early but in spite of that there were a few notable things to report.

Just one female Brown Hairstreak was seen:



Common Blues numbered around 30 or so, and Small Whites stretched just beyond a dozen, but no other species reached double figures, which is pretty lamentable at this time of year at this site.

Four Painted Ladies were seen on the foreshore:



No Peacocks or Small Tortoiseshells, but there were a small number of Red Admirals:



Just three Silver Washed Fritillaries hanging on, two females and a male:



Other species were Speckled Wood (8), Green Veined White (4), Small Copper (2), Large White (2), Meadow Brown (1), Comma (1) and two Holly Blues, with this female posing with wings open for a few, brief seconds:



**Re: David M**

by essexbuzzard, 17-Aug-18 12:12 AM GMT

It has certainly been autumnal so far, so it's good to see your Brown Hairstreaks showing. One of them at least.

**Re: David M**

by David M, 26-Aug-18 04:41 PM GMT

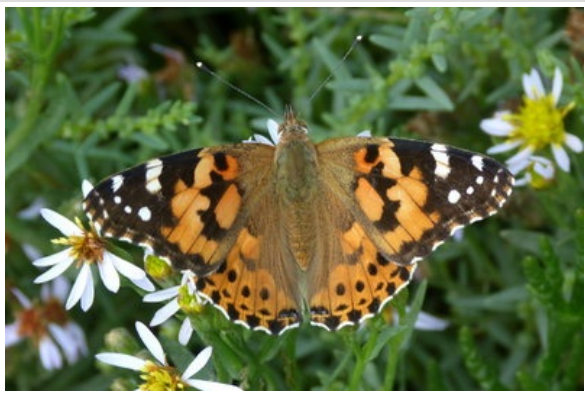
**Saturday 25th August 2018 – Good and bad....**

Last time I visited the Brown Hairstreak site in Pembrokeshire 9 days ago, I was alarmed by the low numbers of butterflies generally. That continued today, although whilst some species have become even scarcer, others bucked that trend.

Meadow Browns have gone, whilst Hedge Browns were practically absent, with just two seen (one faded female and one washed-out male). Common Blues look on their last legs although there were still two dozen or so about.

Worryingly, I saw just one Small Tortoiseshell (they seem to be having an appalling late summer) whilst there were no Red Admirals at all!

Four Painted Ladies were seen, all of them on the sea asters by the high tide line:



Just one Comma was encountered, although it was in impeccable condition:



On the plus side, Speckled Wood numbers have risen appreciably with several fresh looking specimens seen:



Small Whites were plentiful too, with 30+ around:



Just two male Large Whites, including this one nectaring on buddleia:



On the same buddleia was this extremely bedraggled Silver Washed Fritillary. I saw six in total, all males, which was a surprise as I hadn't even anticipated seeing late females:



Small Coppers seem to have had a fresh emergence, with seven seen, including this one which just about qualifies for a blue badge:



Better still though was when I stumbled upon this mating pair:



This act of coupling lasted well over half an hour and was occasionally interrupted by a third Small Copper trying to get in on the act.

As far as Brown Hairstreaks are concerned, it was a decent day, with 6 seen in total. Surprisingly, two of these were elderly males, both of which were settled low on vegetation. I'd only hitherto seen one male below head height at this site in 9 years visiting here (usually, they remain ensconced in the ash trees), so it was quite a shock to observe two within an hour of each other:





Four females were spotted. This is the first one and also the one that was in best condition:



Here's one of the others:





Apart from the two eggs I saw being laid, I couldn't locate any in spite of a good deal of searching. I don't know whether that's indicative of a poor season or whether the females haven't got going in earnest yet. If I can get down here again in September I'll have another go and form my own conclusion.

**Re: David M**

by millerd, 26-Aug-18 11:34 PM GMT

That's not a bad selection, David, though as you say as noteworthy for the absentees as for anything else. Seeing SWF as late as this is interesting, though for some reason males seem particularly durable – really late individuals I see are nearly always males. Unusual to see those male Brown Hairstreaks as well – I wonder what brought them down? I suppose the fact they are still around means there could be more females still to be seen. 😊  
Nice Small Coppers as well. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

**Re: David M**

by Matsukaze, 27-Aug-18 12:41 PM GMT

The vanessids are having a terrible summer here in Somerset too – the buddleia has been bereft of them, though the whites are doing their best to make up the numbers. I haven't seen a Peacock in the garden since 6 May, and only two Small Tortoiseshells in early July. I come across the torts easily enough on the Levels and there were a few around on Exmoor on Saturday, which suggests to me that they have survived well enough in especially damp habitats but the drought has hit them hard elsewhere.

**Re: David M**

by David M, 30-Aug-18 05:35 PM GMT

Thanks, both. Yes, it's been a strange year, and hasn't quite panned out how I expected.

Brown Hairstreak females continue till early October at this site. I regularly see between 3 and 6 on those occasions when I visit in September.

**Re: David M**

by trevor, 30-Aug-18 06:57 PM GMT

I envy your male Brown Hairstreak, even if he is a battered old warrior.  
As with your site, the males in Sussex remain elusive ( except last year ).  
There is life left in this season, lets make the most of it.

Trevor.

**Re: David M**

by Maximus, 30-Aug-18 08:10 PM GMT

You've also been enjoying some lovely Small Coppers recently, David, that's a very nice radiata that you found. As you say Small Tortoiseshells are having a terrible year, I've not seen one since the spring in the UK, and we only saw one in France!

Mike

**Re: David M**

by ernie f, 01-Sep-18 08:26 AM GMT

David - I've been going back through your diary entries and discovered I missed the 2nd brood female Holly blue pic you took with the wide black edge but somehow beautifully faded overall. Lovely.

### Re: David M

by David M, 01-Sep-18 09:39 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments, all.

#### Thursday 30th August 2018 - Painted Ladies....

I nipped down the road in the afternoon to Port Eynon on the Gower coast. It was one of those days where the thin cloud allowed just enough sunshine through to keep butterflies active, and whilst walking through the dunes I soon started disturbing Painted Ladies basking on the sand every few steps:



They were all over the valerian blooms too, and in just three quarters of an hour I counted an impressive 77.

I was also delighted to find 13 Small Tortoiseshells doing much the same thing as the Painted Ladies:



Small Whites were fairly numerous as well (around 50 seen) but there were no Green Veined, nor Large Whites, and not a single Red Admiral, which is unusual here.

Half a dozen tatty Common Blues were observed along with a similar number of Small Coppers. Two Meadow Browns and a faded Brown Argus were the other species seen.

### Re: David M

by millerd, 01-Sep-18 10:05 AM GMT

77 Painted Ladies is an enviable count, David. 🍀 I imagine they are locally grown - you must have had an influx of migrants in the hot weather at the start of August and they went on to produce lots of offspring. I've not heard of anything matching that elsewhere, but they could be popping out all over and feeding up prior to their southward migration. Good to see Small Tortoiseshells as well. 😊

Dave

**Re: David M**

by Goldie M, 01-Sep-18 04:14 PM GMT

WoW David 77 Painted Ladies, I've seen two this year 😊 Your shots or lovely of the Small Tort and the PL 😊 Goldie 😊

**Re: David M**

by Andrew555, 07-Sep-18 11:55 AM GMT

77 Painted Ladies.. 😊😊 Glad you saw some Small Torts as well David. Great report and shots from your Brostreak site. 😊

**Re: David M**

by David M, 08-Sep-18 11:12 PM GMT

Thanks, all. Yes, 77 in 45 minutes is pretty good going, but I suspect I simply timed things right (unintentionally). I doubt there'll be anything like as many from here on in as I suspect many if not most will be heading south now.

Still, it was great to see such a presence and with any luck there'll be a few more migrants on display before the season is over.

**Re: David M**

by Maximus, 08-Sep-18 11:40 PM GMT

Wow, David, 77 Painted Ladies in 45 minutes is totally amazing anywhere, let alone in the UK, even in the 'Painted Lady years'.

Mike

**Re: David M**

by ernie f, 09-Sep-18 10:01 AM GMT

Let me add my comment of amazement re the 77 Painted Ladies. You just never know what you are going to find do you?

**Re: David M**

by bugboy, 09-Sep-18 03:08 PM GMT

I wonder how many females it took to produce that lot? Given the relative scarcity this year there could of been one very busy female last month!

**Re: David M**

by trevor, 09-Sep-18 07:57 PM GMT

Your Painted Lady can only be hours old, what a stunning Butterfly.  
Swap you for some Clouded Yellows 😊 .

Trevor.

**Re: David M**

by Old Wolf, 14-Sep-18 02:50 PM GMT

Hello David, I am catching up on diaries and have been going over your latest trips.

Love the Holly Blue with open wings. This is something I am yet to see myself so I am glad you captured such a lovely picture for me to look at.

77 Ladies in 45 minutes 😊 that is an impressive count. Similarly I have only seen a few Small Torts this year!

**Re: David M**

by David M, 15-Sep-18 09:14 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments, everyone.

**Saturday 15th September 2018 - Autumn closes in....**

Paid a visit to the National Botanic Gardens near Cross Hands today. The weather was cool and largely cloudy but there are many sheltered areas within this site and the organic walled garden hosted plenty of Small Whites, which are enjoying a very good late season this year.

After bemoaning the relative absence of Red Admirals lately, I'm pleased to report that I saw half a dozen or so:



Five very welcome Small Tortoiseshells were also seen, including this individual with a slightly deformed right forewing:



In the scrubby area behind the walled gardens, several Small Coppers were seen, whilst other species were Large & Green Veined Whites plus a solitary Speckled Wood.

In the butterfly house, there was a new and very impressive inhabitant – Atlas Moth:



They have also now got Owl Butterflies, although this seemed to be the only one actually on the wing:



As ever, Malachites proved irresistible:



...and then there was this one, which I have never seen before so if anyone knows what it is please let me know. The body had a *danaidid* look to it, especially the head, but it was much smaller than a Monarch (probably the same size as Plain Tiger):



**Re: David M**

by Goldie M, 16-Sep-18 02:12 PM GMT

Hi! David, I've seen one of those Atlas moths, their very impressive, also I found at first I couldn't make out what it was people were staring at 😊 Goldie 😊

**Re: David M**

by ernie f, 17-Sep-18 10:52 AM GMT

David. Now you've done it. Now I want to go to a butterfly house too. I haven't been to one for years.

## Re: David M

by David M, 17-Sep-18 11:33 PM GMT

Thanks, both. Yes, a local tropical butterfly house can provide solace between October and February for we butterfly starved people!

### Saturday 15th September – continued...

Whilst this isn't butterfly related, I think it merits inclusion on this PD merely because of the enjoyment factor.

Unbeknown to me prior to my visit, the Botanic Gardens have now got a permanent Bird of Prey Centre. The first session was at 11.30am so me and my neighbour duly went along. We were glad we did.

First up was a Hobby. Sadly, this bird was constantly chasing a lure, and try as I might, I couldn't get a clear image – it was simply flying too fast.

Far easier were the Kestrels that followed:



Next up was a Buzzard:



The pièce de résistance however was a 28 year old female White Tailed Eagle called Atlantis. This majestic bird was in full control of her environment, flying adeptly within two metres of the assembled audience's heads:



I defy anyone not to be moved by birds such as these. It was a fabulous experience.

### Re: David M

by Goldie M, 18-Sep-18 09:38 AM GMT

Hi! David, we get regular visits from Sparrow Hawk's and other birds of prey, I always rush for my camera 😊 I don't like to see them killing small birds but I suppose that's natural, nature at work for survival. 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: David M

by Andrew555, 21-Sep-18 11:28 AM GMT

Lovely exotics David, I agree with Ernie! 😊

The birds of prey look and sound very impressive. 😊

### Re: David M

by David M, 23-Sep-18 09:39 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie/Andrew.

Yes, birds of prey are deadly and beautiful in equal measure, but there's something irresistible about them and it's good to know there's now a place I can go and see them whenever I need a fix...and only half an hour down the road! 😊

### Re: David M

by Padfield, 23-Sep-18 10:26 PM GMT

Hi David. Just getting round to catching up on your diary. That's a super picture of the white-tailed eagle – what a magnificent bird.

Your unidentified butterfly is a female of the almost infinitely variable *Papilio dardanus*. She will have been pleased you thought she was a Danaid – that's what she wanted you to think! 😊

Guy

### Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 25-Sep-18 07:12 PM GMT

Wonderful images of the birds of prey, David. As you know, I have a deep fondness for buzzards and kestrels. But that white-tailed eagle, in full adult plumage, is truly magnificent.

Nice pictures from the butterfly house, too. In the months to come, you will need to make visits there, to get your butterfly fix.

### Re: David M

by ernie f, 26-Sep-18 08:23 AM GMT

David – Not only have I not been to a Butterfly House in years I haven't been to a Hawk display for ages either. As you say its really exciting at times. I remember when they made the birds fly right over the audience's heads. One of them was a Peregrine who stooped and then crashed past us at breakneck pace a couple of feet above our heads in level flight. They followed that with the slow, silent and beautiful Barn Owl. I'd recommend such a show to anyone.

### Re: David M

by David M, 28-Sep-18 08:48 PM GMT

Many thanks for the comments, folks. Yes, a tropical butterfly house and a bird of prey display area within 200m of one another is irresistible! Long may it continue.

Thanks too, Guy, for your ID regarding the 'Danaidid'. I had a look at a few links and it proved to be compulsive and educational reading. 😊

### Re: David M

by Matsukaze, 28-Sep-18 10:03 PM GMT

After reading the last couple of posts, I can't resist posting up this photo of a juvenile(?) Kestrel. Rhossili, July 2017.



### Re: David M

by David M, 30-Sep-18 11:21 PM GMT

**Thursday 27th September 2018 - Egg hunt...**

I always like to spend a few hours every year searching the blackthorn for Brown Hairstreak ova so I travelled down to West Williamston in Pembrokeshire in quite heavy mist which had not lifted by the time I arrived at 10.40am.

Overall, I could only find 23 eggs which was a bit of a disappointment as I've previously hit three figures here. The bulk of them were found in the field next to the car park:



By 11.25 the mist suddenly and rapidly faded away and with a near absence of any wind, conditions were extremely pleasant. Sad to say that butterfly numbers did not respond; I saw only 10 in total prior to leaving the site at 1.05pm.

Four of those ten were Small Coppers, with this one in the best condition:





Two Speckled Woods, a female Small White and a Red Admiral were seen, but most surprising was this Peacock, the first I've seen for several weeks:



The other butterfly was joyous though - a female Brown Hairstreak, still pottering around, inspecting the blackthorn and basking on the shrubs. I've only ever seen one later than this, and that was on 5th October 2013:





The curtain is definitely coming down here in south Wales.

## Re: David M

by David M, 07-Oct-18 11:27 PM GMT

### Sunday 7th October - Slowing down....

A mild, sunny afternoon tempted me out to the Gower coast at Port Eynon with the hope of seeing a few vanessids feeding on the ivy flowers prior to their impending hibernation.

Sadly, I saw but one - a Red Admiral, and not much else in spite of temperatures of 17c and plenty of valerian still in flower:



There were still (surprisingly) a few Small Whites buzzing around - I saw nine in total, all of which were males:



The other butterfly seen was this Speckled Wood:



The rest of October might be a lonely place with Small Coppers now seemingly gone and the paucity of aristocrats this year. Normally I see a butterfly or two round here in November (and even December occasionally) but that looks a long shot this time round.

### Re: 7 Oct 2018

by jenks, 08-Oct-18 09:23 AM GMT

Took a walk around Lavernock NNR, between Penarth and Barry on the South Glam coast, yesterday from 10.30 to 14.00 hrs. Good numbers of Small White still about (10 at least), 2 x Large White, 2 x Speckled Wood, 1 x Red Admiral and 1 very faded Small Copper. Also 2 Common Darters whizzing around the pond. Best sighting was a female Sparrowhawk which shot past me and dropped into a flock of c40-50 Goldfinches feeding on the Thistle and Teasels in the meadow. I walked to within 6 feet of the area and the Sparrowhawk took off with a young Goldfinch in her talons. Sunday lunch; one Goldfinch, served rare. Jays were prominent too, collecting nuts to store in their larder.

Jenks.

### Re: David M

by David M, 21-Oct-18 07:22 PM GMT

#### Sunday 21st October 2018 - Dying a death....

Not for we in Wales this spectacle of additional brood Common Blue, Brown Argus, Wall Brown et al....in fact, all that remains are the species you'd expect at this time of year, only this time round Vanessa's are particularly scarce.

With sunny skies appearing around midday (in spite of the cloudy forecast) and temperatures around 16c, I spent an hour on the dunes at Port Eynon on the south Gower coast between 12.40 and 1.40pm.

For half an hour, there wasn't a butterfly to be seen but I then saw two simultaneously - a Painted Lady looking for warmth on the dunes as well as a passing Red Admiral.

A diversion up the path that leads to the headland afforded me this pleasant view:



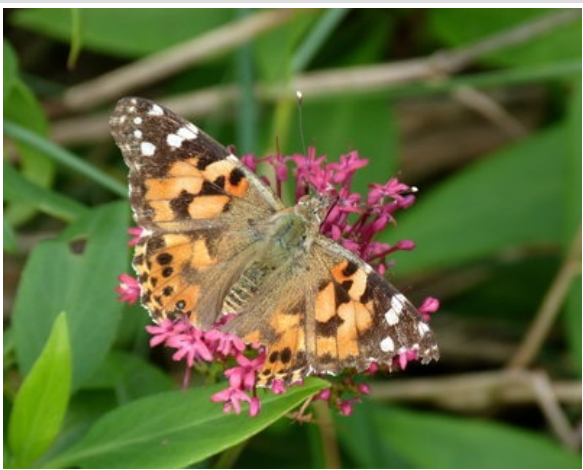
I then saw two Speckled Woods within 20m of one another. This rather tatty one was the only individual to alight:



Feeling rather short-changed, I diverted off the more direct path back to the car so I could search for the Painted Lady I'd briefly seen earlier again. Sure enough, I found her feasting on the best patch of valerian on the site:



She was in no mood to leave, but with my car park ticket fast running out I had to say my goodbyes, and with temperatures set to drop to single figures by next weekend, I have to ask myself (rather prematurely perhaps) whether I've seen my last butterfly of 2018:



#### Re: David M

by Allan.W., 21-Oct-18 09:07 PM GMT

You seem to have had a very similar trip to my own today David ,I also had the feeling that I was watching the last few butterflies of the season ,they were hard to come by ! spent a good half hour following a female Small Copper busily crawling around looking for the perfect Sorrel to lay an egg or two.

I,d liked to have seen your Painted Lady when she (think its a she !) was fresh ,I reckon Ab;Ocellata , found one At Dungeness on Friday. (see sightings ) Regards Allan.W.

#### Re: David M

by Andrew555, 22-Oct-18 11:00 AM GMT

Great Brown Hairstreak find David. And I hope that PL is not your last butterfly of the year! 😊

Cheers