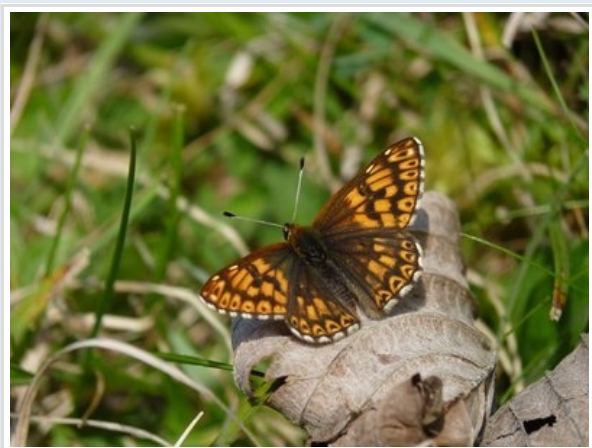
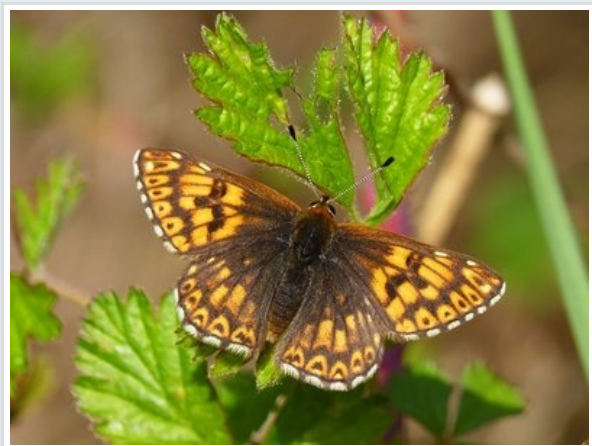


Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Apr-19 04:24 PM GMT

It's April 1st but no fooling about
I had to come back as the Dukes are now out 😊

(Inspired by the book I have just ordered by Richard Harrington 😊😊)



Almost exactly the same time and place as last year but one month earlier!

Thank you all for all your amazing comments last season. Kept me going through a hard winter!

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 01-Apr-19 05:51 PM GMT

Blooming 'eck Dukes already and I'm still stalled on 5 species (in the UK that is). Welcome back from hibernation Pauline 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 01-Apr-19 06:29 PM GMT

"it's April 1st but no fooling about" – I had to check the time on your post just to make sure Pauline 😊😊😊 What a cracking way to come out of hibernation 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 01-Apr-19 06:33 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, glad your back 😊 super shots of the Dukes, what a start 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 01-Apr-19 07:14 PM GMT

Now I know its Spring...Pauline is back 😊

Great start to your season 🍀😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 02-Apr-19 12:13 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, welcome back 😊 well done with those Dukes 😊

Mike.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 02-Apr-19 07:10 AM GMT

Very early Dukes, and a slightly earlier Pauline.
Now we know the season has started!.

Well found,
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 02-Apr-19 12:42 PM GMT

Very nice Pauline, good to see you back. 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 02-Apr-19 06:59 PM GMT

Seeing you return always picks my mood up, Pauline.

Welcome back and I hope you had a productive winter.

PS - I genuinely DID think those Dukes were an April fool at first. 😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 02-Apr-19 08:11 PM GMT

Welcome back to the fray, Pauline - what a splendid way to start things off. I hope your hibernation passed well.

Almost a couple of March Dukes - the first I saw last year was on 2nd May, so quite a difference.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Apr-19 10:39 AM GMT

Thank you all so much for that very warm welcome - much appreciated. Some already know that it has been a tougher Winter than usual due to some extraordinary events but I shall not dwell on that. I have been so looking forward to getting out and about again but my life is currently being controlled by a neighbour's cat!!!! It has already killed my little cockerel Pickle who was just the sweetest little bird. He was brought to me with another cockerel, Popeye, 15 years ago, after being dumped at the side of the road. Popeye had already been hit by a car and his eye had popped out - hence the name 😊

Anyway, Pickle was just sat in his shed, under his heat lamp which was his favourite spot, when the cat attacked him and traumatised him so badly he did not recover. This is Pickle and Popeye about 10 years ago:



The cat has now attacked Petal, one of the hens whilst she was in her nestbox. The result was a visit to the vet for an abscess on her foot and no eggs for a week as she wouldn't go back in the next box. I have spent £100 for pointed plastic to go on the top of the fence – no difference. The owner refuses to keep her cat in. It has been suggested I get a 'super soaker' which can fire water 40' but the cat disappears as soon as I open the door or window. The upshot is that if I want to go out I have to shut the hens in their sheds which I am loathe to do in good weather. When they are free range I have to 'guard' them. Bearing in mind I have a lovely little cat of my own, any suggestions which would enable me to get out to see butterflies would be appreciated.

Hi Buggy, I was pleased to read your op went well and some lovely shots posted recently. I don't want to rub it in but here's a couple of shots from the garden in March:



Hi Wurzel – no fooling! The transect walker also saw it and discussed with MO who had reports of one on 28 March from Wiltshire! You're not looking hard enough 😊😊

Cheers Goldie – not bad for my first outing 😊

Good to hear from you Neil. Just had this emerge from an over-wintered pupa:



Cheers Mike – hope to see you and Cathy around this season, unless you're off to more far flung places 😊

At this rate Trevor I'll be seeing you at Chiddingfold a whole lot sooner than normal 😊

Thank you Andrew. Hope you have a great season!

Very pleased to hear it David 😊 If you've any suggestions on dealing with that cat I'd be delighted to hear them as I've never known cats to attack poultry in such a persistent and determined manner.

Now here's the funny thing Dave. I chat on the phone to Hazel quite a bit and we compare butterfly notes. She remarked to me last week that the earliest she had ever seen a Duke was 9 April. I then looked back at my photos and THOUGHT that I saw them last year on 1 April which was why I went to look. Alan T kindly brought it to my attention that it was actually 1 MAY that I had seen them last year and when I checked my photos again he was right. If it hadn't been for that mistake I would never have gone to Noar Hill. In the event I nearly didn't get there as the road was blocked and I was sent all round through Newton Valance. With my sense of direction! I guess I was meant to see that Duke! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Apr-19 01:51 PM GMT

As Trevor commented perhaps my departure WAS a little premature last year but unfortunately it was unavoidable. I did continue to see a whole lot of interesting things so before we get into the season proper my next few posts will be something of a resume.

Having been witness to the strange behaviour of the Brown Hairstreaks at the start of the season I became a little obsessed with them, and had to continue to monitor them closely, visiting Noar Hill about a couple of dozen times, to learn as much as I could about these elusive insects. There were only 3 visits when I didn't see any despite going at very different times and in all sorts of weather. Not surprisingly, one of the visits where I drew a blank it was teeming with rain!!! I didn't expect to see anything but it was warm and I just needed to convince myself (I have seen PE's fighting in a thunderstorm). I ruined my spare battery as a result of that visit. I was soaked to the skin and on returning home I just stripped off and threw everything in the washing machine. It wasn't until much later, after the washing cycle was complete that I realised the spare battery was still in the pocket of my jeans!!!!

Another time I didn't see anything was early one evening. I have seen them about quite late but not on that occasion. The third time was seemingly perfect conditions so I reckon it was a case of wrong place, wrong time.

On the other visits I saw sometimes up to 7 females, many in very good condition right up until 13th September (the latest I have ever seen one was September 14th but I have been informed that Mark T and Nick L photographed a fairly fresh female here some years ago on 22 September!). I watched them egg-laying from 10.55am until 2.55pm on various days and followed some right across the site as they travelled further than I had expected. Eggs were sometimes laid in what I consider to be atypical places – the middle of a branch was quite common but one was even laid on a dead leaf. Eggs were laid singly and in multiples but only to a maximum of 3 – unlike the 5 eggs I saw a female lay a couple of years ago. I watched one egg being laid a couple of yards from my car down on the road but like many others, it had been predated when I checked 48 hours later. Whilst looking for eggs I came across what seems to be a newly emerged Chinese Character – lovely!



On one of these visits to Noar Hill I bumped into Nick L. who showed me a photo he took of a WLH on 22 July at the exact same spot where I had seen one the season before. That would make it a total of 3 years running that 1 or 2 have been seen here. From memory the one I photographed was a male but the photo Nick has kindly forwarded clearly shows a female:



One visit to Noar Hill will stay in my mind for quite some time. I had recently met someone who did not know a lot about butterflies but she was interested and very keen to learn. I had (almost) promised her that I would show her a Brown Hairstreak but the day of the visit was very dull and overcast. Not many butterflies were on the wing but she was pleased to learn about the Small Heath and Common Blue. Her enthusiasm and optimism spurred me on but when I bumped into Roy Symonds who told me that he had been there for over 3 hours and had seen nothing I began to feel less hopeful. Nevertheless, under leaden skies we traipsed around most of the site and eventually ended up back where we started and prepared to return to the cars. I apologised for not being able to deliver on the Brown Hairstreak front and no sooner had I finished the sentence than a pristine female flew around me and landed on a leaf in front of us allowing her a clear and close up first ever sighting. The timing could not have been better and caused a few chuckles from a couple of others who had joined us!

Anyway, because I saw so many of these gorgeous creatures I must include a very small selection from the hundreds of shots I took.





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Apr-19 04:52 PM GMT

Apart from the Brown Hairstreaks at Noar Hill, a few other notable sightings included a Small Heath (female I think) sitting with its wings parted. There were many Small Heath in the surrounding area but this one was noticeably larger. A couple of times she opened her wings fully but only for seconds and I was too slow to catch it on camera. She moved a couple of times, landing on a leaf and scraping her curled abdomen along it. This is what made me think she was female - I am not sure if the size is significant.





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Apr-19 05:54 PM GMT

I continue to try to improve my bird photography when I am out and about but I have made little progress. Sometimes I don't even need to leave the garden. A Greater-spotted Woodpecker crashed into the conservatory window and when I went to look he was lying unconscious on the ground. When I picked him up I realised he had a massive beak. I wondered whether to use this opportunity to take him to the vet to have it trimmed in case it prevented him from eating - but I reckoned that he had managed well enough up to now and being a wild bird the stress may have killed him. I had left him in an old aviary and in an hour he was fully recovered and raring to go. I took a few quick shots but didn't want to delay his departure or cause him more anxiety :



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-19 08:54 PM GMT

I seem to recall that there were a few partially 'open' winged Small Heath last year - I wonder if this was down to the heat we had - it certainly seemed to affect the Brostreaks, if there was such a thing as a rule book for them they tore it up and into tiny pieces last year 😊😊 Intersting looking GSWoody as the bill looks more like a Hoopoe, I can't see it having much success 'drumming' but it was possibly using it like a Winkle pin? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 05-Apr-19 07:09 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...a few other notable sightings included a Small Heath (female I think) sitting with its wings parted.

I've seen this occasionally, Pauline, including Pearly and Dusky Heaths on the continent. I'm sure it can't be weather related, since if it were then all of them would be doing it.

Amazed to see the woodpecker with the elongated beak....if there was one bird I'd say wouldn't be able to prosper with such a condition, it would be this one. Seems to be otherwise okay though.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 05-Apr-19 11:38 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, your seeing more Butterflies down there than we are up here, it's been so cold here. 😊 Love your shots of the Small Heath 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 05-Apr-19 12:27 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

If you've any suggestions on dealing with that cat I'd be delighted to hear them as I've never known cats to attack poultry in such a persistent and determined manner.

It's unusual for cats to attack poultry; certainly ours have never done it.

I have 3 suggestions:

1. A dog (the cat will think twice once it's been chased off a few times)
2. A Manx cat (notoriously good for defending their territory. We had one when I was a child and she certainly kept neighbouring cats off the premises).
3. Lion dung (I have read that this works, but unless you have a safari park/zoo nearby then getting hold of it will be tricky!)

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Apr-19 01:58 PM GMT

Thank you for your interest Wurzel, David. I had previously watched that Woodpecker eating fat sticks from the birdtable. It was only the upper mandible that was overgrown and he seemed to manage to scoop up some of the suet and mealworms using the lower mandible. I guess he had learnt to adapt as wildlife often do. As for the Small Heath I have no idea – the only thing I would re-iterate was the size which must have been half as big again as the others.

Hi Goldie – the weather's not great here either; very changeable so you have to seize the moment. Hang on in there and before you know it the butterflies will be coming to you.

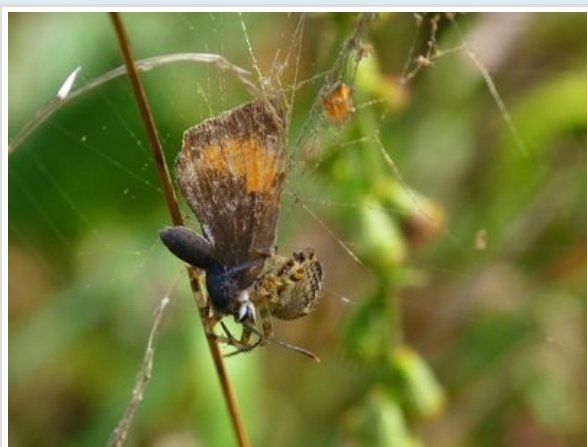
Thank you David. I had considered getting a dog but I wouldn't leave it out in the garden if I wasn't around and I am not totally convinced that just the smell would be enough to deter this cat. I even thought of getting a goose but I reckon I have enough responsibilities and a Manx cat would probably upset Jaffa.

As for the lion dung – that just might be inspired. Perhaps I may try the internet but I expect it will be dried, or just maybe Buggy could get his hands on some of the fresh stuff?????? I'll pay for it Buggy and meet up wherever you like. Buggy, are you reading this??????

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Apr-19 06:13 PM GMT

I continued to monitor the Brown Hairstreaks at Noar Hill and on 10th September I saw a further 3 including this unfortunate creature that flew straight into a spider's web. You might recall a similar occurrence in 2014 when I took shots of a BH in identical circumstances. I would like to point out that by the time I got to the butterfly its fate was already sealed and there was nothing I could do. She was a female in her final days and I can only hope that all her eggs had already been laid. Indeed, in my haste to get to her I stood in a large fresh cow pat which effectively ruined a brand new pair of trainers but in any event I was too late. The sight that met me was this:











As I recall it was a really windy day and everything was swinging around madly in the breeze. From start to finish it took about 6 mins but the main action was over in under 20 secs.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 05-Apr-19 06:51 PM GMT

A fascinating/gory sequence Pauline 🤩🤩 I echo your hope that she had met her biological imperative 😊 but even so I can't help but be impressed by the meticulous way the meal is wrapped 😊
I was going to suggest the Lion Dung to sort out the problem cat – I was aware that in Wiltshire we could get it from Longleat – are you near Whipsnade or Marwell? Both have Lions or other big cats so you could try sending them an email to see if they offer a similar Feline by-product 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 05-Apr-19 07:39 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

You will be pleased to know that this is the earliest the Duke has ever been recorded in Hampshire by a full week – the previous earliest was 8 April in 2017. I guess in the greater scheme of things it possibly sends a more ominous message about the climate in general – but that is another story.....

Hope to bump into you soon

Mark

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 06-Apr-19 11:30 AM GMT

Your woodie might be unusual but there could be advantages in being able to probe deeper into cracks and crevices.

Evolution in action perhaps?

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Apr-19 04:23 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

she was quite some distance from us and at first I thought she had just landed as I couldn't see the web but when she didn't move I suspected the worst. Once I'd fought my way through the nettles I could see she was in really poor condition – quite worn and tatty – so fingers crossed for the eggs but I'm amazed at just how many are predated.

One way or another I shall get some of that dung and let you know how I get on.

Good to hear from you Jack. I hope you are well. I think there are some conditions with some domestic birds where the beak grows too long and I think I have heard it may be down to some nutritional need being absent but I might just be making that up. You are probably right 😊

You might be surprised Mark but I gained little pleasure from knowing that. I appreciate that with the crazy sequence of weather we have been having it is bound to have a strange/adverse effect. When I went to Noar Hill on 1st April (thinking that was when I had seen them last year) I was disappointed in the state of the vegetation. It just did not look ready for Dukes although there were a lot of other butterflies enjoying the sun, including this Comma that wouldn't leave me alone, repeatedly landing on my jeans. With very low expectations I decided to explore the site, looking in all the usual hotspots, not at all surprised to find no Dukes. It wasn't until I was leaving the site, in a small area not far from the gate, that I spotted a single male



Re: Pauline

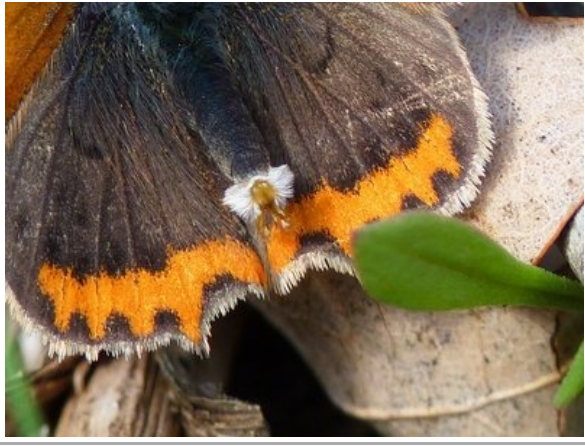
by Pauline, 06-Apr-19 04:32 PM GMT

I spent a little time in the early autumn assessing how well the 3rd brood Small Copper were faring at Broxhead. Without slavishly counting them I concluded that there weren't nearly as many as last year but they were still lovely to see:



I was puzzled by the behaviour of one Small Copper and I wonder if anyone can explain to me what is happening here and what it means as I haven't even got the anatomical words to describe it. It happened over about 10 secs and these shots are heavily cropped:





and then it was back to 'normal' again. I am wondering if it is something a male might do having just mated with a female? 😞😞

Re: Pauline

by David M, 06-Apr-19 05:17 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

I continued to monitor the Brown Hairstreaks...The sight that met me was this...

Awful to see a precious female Brown Hairstreak taken like that, Pauline, but given her worn condition I'm confident that her job for the future generation had been all but completed.

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 06-Apr-19 06:10 PM GMT

Some years ago Chalkhill Blues were having an exceptional season on Denbies Hillside. There were as many (mostly males) wrapped in spider silk as there were free flying individuals.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-19 06:44 PM GMT

Lovely set of shots and linteresting behaviour Pauline 😊 Now this is just an idea (and I've not had much luck with these recently 😊) but could the protrudences be coremata or hair-pencils? I saw a male Crow butterfly (I think that was the one) at Bristol Zoo do something similar and goggled it when I got back. The hair-pencils expel pheromones which attract mates, the hairs waft the chemicals towards the female or catch the breeze. The more toxic the caterpillars food plant the bigger the hair-pencils so this could explain why they're so small in the case of the Small Copper? Just an idea probably wrong but there we go 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 06-Apr-19 09:02 PM GMT

Lovely Small Copper montage, Pauline.

As for the behaviour of the male you depict, see here:

<http://jeb.biologists.org/content/208/18/3433>

Re: Pauline

by NickMorgan, 06-Apr-19 10:13 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

The cat has now attacked Petal, one of the hens whilst she was in her nestbox. The result was a visit to the vet for an abscess on her foot and no eggs for a week as she wouldn't go back in the next box. I have spent £100 for pointed plastic to go on the top of the fence – no difference. The owner refuses to keep her cat in. It has been suggested I get a 'super soaker' which can fire water 40' but the cat disappears as soon as I open the door or window. The upshot is that if I want to go out I have to shut the hens in their sheds which I am loathe to do in good weather. When they are free range I have to 'guard' them. Bearing in mind I have a lovely little cat of my own, any suggestions which would enable me to get out to see butterflies would be appreciated.

I am sorry to hear about your cat issues Pauline. I think that is very unusual. There are a lot of cats in our neighbourhood and so far we haven't had an issue at all. Our run is completely covered over to try to keep the ground dry, but there are places where cats have managed to get in. Earlier in the year we returned home from a weekend away to find six hens and a cat waiting for us at the gate into the run! The cat ran off sharpish as soon as we opened the gate!

All I can suggest is another cockerel with attitude, although Popeye may suffer. Otherwise a live trap and a trip to the cat and dog home may be the best option.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Apr-19 10:13 AM GMT

I can certainly believe that Jack and from personal experience I can confirm that the immature stages are predated in even greater numbers, the extent of which has shocked me even though I had previously read as much.

Thank you Wurzel. How have I never come across this before? Before exposing my ignorance publicly in future I shall send you a PM first 😊

Thank you for your sympathy and suggestions Nick. I went for a lovely meal yesterday with a friend and returned to find the cat had had a female blackbird in the garden. I managed to retrieve the bird and put it in an aviary overnight but sadly it did not survive. I do have a covered run where I can shut the hens but I prefer them to be free range and get a bit of grass and grubs so I shall work my way through the ideas everyone has provided and for which I am very grateful.

What a fascinating report David and some amazing research. It has raised quite a few issues in my mind but I shall do a bit more reading on the subject before I pose further questions. It seems quite surreal to be reading about butterfly seminal fluid and mating plugs over my morning coffee! 😊

David M wrote:

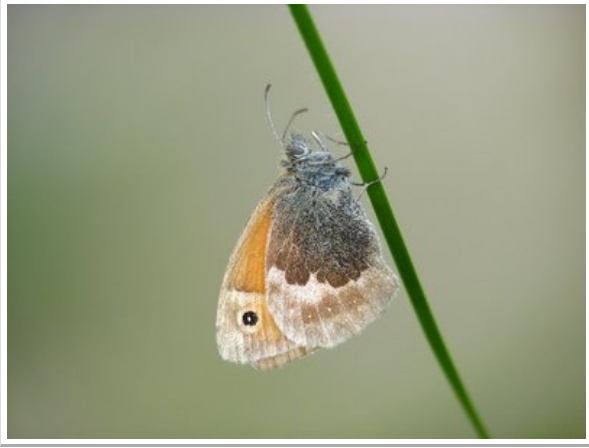
Awful to see a precious female Brown Hairstreak taken like that, Pauline, but given her worn condition I'm confident that her job for the future generation had been all but completed.

It is always distressing to see this David but it is nature I guess. Earlier in the day I had seen half a dozen Spotted Flycatchers (I think) catching all manner of insects including what I suspect was another BH amongst the many other insects in the 'Triangle'. Once the season draws to a close I suspect that the butterflies are less alert, and having done their duty I imagine they are easy picking for the many other creatures that see them as food. Anyway, as the Flycatchers are another first for me I'm including a few of the shots I took. Not sure what the last one is – juvenile?





Around this time (mid September) Small Heath were undoubtedly the most numerous of butterflies and entertained me in between the birds and Brown Hairstreaks. As I don't take many shots of this little butterfly I thought I'd throw in a few for good measure 😊



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 09-Apr-19 11:25 AM GMT

Really good shots of the Butterflies Pauline but that shot with the Spider gives me the shivers 😬 Interesting Small Copper and the responses you've received back about it.

The only thing I think, that could sort your Cat problem is to get a dog 😊 My dog when alive hated cats, she'd only to see one and she went bonkers 😊 Brought up properly they won't bother your Hen's and you can take it with you when you go out. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 09-Apr-19 07:09 PM GMT

[quote]The only thing I think, that could sort your Cat problem is to get a dog. We have two cats. Yes, I am sure they sometimes get birds. So far this

year, just one Robin. But that might even have been a dead bird picked up after a *Robin-Robin* fight – our garden cannot support the number of Robins that want to live here. We feed our birds (expensively) and undoubtedly, bird populations are artificially high. So balancing our love of birds against the love of cats, I suspect that the birds are the winners.

At the moment we have tame Pheasants that eat out of our hands. The cats simply ignore them. So in a strange way, the *Pheasant-Cat* standoff means that smaller birds are less likely to be hassled by the cats.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 09-Apr-19 08:51 PM GMT

I too didn't have a clue about Hair-pencils until I saw these massive, bright yellow things flaying around out the backside of Crow Butterfly at Bristol Zoo 😊 Thank goodness for Google 😊😊
Lovely Small Heaths Pauline 😊, I too am guilty of not paying them enough attention 😊 Your last bird shot is a Wren, the Juvenile Spotted Flycatchers a the same colour/tone as the adults just more streaked and spotty 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 10-Apr-19 06:39 AM GMT

I'm pleased Small Heaths were numerous for somebody, Pauline! They seem to be getting scarcer every year round my way and I hope they're not about to do a 'Wall Brown' and disappear due to a developmental trap.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Apr-19 06:56 AM GMT

Thanks for your input Goldie, Jack. Just to update, I have already contacted Marwell and Buggy and they said much the same thing. Waste product contains meat so classed as contaminated – and apparently the keepers had already had the discussion about its effectiveness as a cat deterrent and came to the same conclusion – tho not sure if they tested it. I can't get near the animal to try any of the more conventional deterrents. Marwell suggested the local Council but given the law and cats I'm not sure what they could do. My little cockerel Popeye is 15 years and almost blind so I don't want to put him at risk, but I am thinking he can't go on much longer? Once he is no longer with us I think Nick's suggestion of a large cockerel with attitude is a practical one. In the meantime perhaps I should work on the owners and become the neighbour from hell in the hope they will move 😊😊

Cheers Wurzel for the compliment and ID. I hope the wren was a young one and not ill as it was not very active – quite sleepy and still in fact.

Good morning David. Lovely to hear from you as always. Like some others I am guilty of not paying these little butterflies enough attention simple because they are so numerous on many sites around here. I shall resolve to change that.

I am trying desperately to 'catch-up' before the season starts properly. I'm paring things back to the bare bones but cannot ignore another first – a Brown Argus egg-laying. I worked really hard to monitor it and was lucky enough to see it hatch but 'lost' it before its hibernation:







Re: Pauline

by jenks, 10-Apr-19 02:42 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I've just seen your second photo posted on 9 April of the bird bending over to feed on the Blackberries. It looks to me that this bird has a pale brown head in which case I think it might be a female (or juv male) Blackcap. These have brown heads and feed up on berries in autumn. Good photos as always !

Jenks.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Apr-19 07:15 AM GMT

Hi Jenks

Good to hear from you and thank you for the ID and compliment. I was delighted when I was told these were Flycatchers as I have never seen them before. I have had both male and female Blackcap in the garden over the years but I have never seen a juvenile so I guess I can still count that as a first 😊

My last major outing of the season came in the form of an invite from Alan to accompany him to Lancing Ring to see Wall Brown. I almost bit his arm off. These butterflies have nearly disappeared from Hants and as a result it is some years since I have seen one. The luxury of being driven was an added incentive. Those who have accompanied me in the past will know that despite my sat nav we invariably take the scenic route 😊 I had never been to this site before so I was looking forward immensely to the day, quite justifiably as it turned out. In total I reckon we must have seen about a dozen Wall Browns along with quite a few other species including the possible sighting of a Brown Hairstreak. Alan has a detailed account on his blog so I shall just cut to the chase – or should I say the photos:







Thanks for a great day Alan.

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 11-Apr-19 11:35 AM GMT

Very nice Wall Browns Pauline, one of my favourites. 😊 I like your Brown Argus sequence as well. 😊

Cheers

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 11-Apr-19 11:56 AM GMT

Great Wall shots Pauline especially the second one 😊 I saw at least one on two occasions at Shipton Bellinger last year so perhaps they're moving back inland? Fingers crossed 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 11-Apr-19 07:46 PM GMT

I had a momentary shock when I saw those Wall Brown images, Pauline. I thought they were from this year (which would have eclipsed even your 1st April Duke).

I guess we've still 10 days or so before 2019's population takes to the air.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 12-Apr-19 07:53 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Just doing some catching up and saw your moth from a couple of pages back, not sure if you have the ID yet but looks like a Mullein to me. Not had one of these yet but my son Chris gets them in his garden in Stratford-upon-Avon.

A great photo of that Chinese Character too 😊.

I couldn't help but smile at that woodpecker and wonder if his elongated beak had been straight before he hit your conservatory 😊

And if it isn't bad enough with Wurzel confusing me with his delayed posts I see that your at it now 😊😊

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqy_czC8Fns

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Apr-19 07:41 PM GMT

Cheers Andrew – much appreciated 😊

Gosh, I remember that now Wurzel. Let's hope you're right!

No such luck David 😊.I'm told that not long ago they were plentiful around the Fort Widley area but not any more it seems.

Neil, you never fail to impress me. At first I thought that was some sort of Prominent (probably wrong time of year) but of course it is a Mullein. I planted the plant a couple of years ago and have had larva on it both years. Honestly, I never meant to confuse you 😊 and I am trying hard to catch up as fast as I can, but what are you lot doing to me????? If I'm not reading about seminal fluid over coffee it's Rocky Horror show!!!! What next!!!!???? 🤔

Now on to the serious stuff. For the last 3 years – yes, 3 years, a neighbour has been cutting down vegetation on her frontage which tends to be covered with OT larva. The first year they got burnt – d'you remember me telling you? I certainly told her, and despite reassurances that it wouldn't happen again and she loves wildlife it invariably does. 😞 Last year I heard the strimmer and was able to save a couple of dozen larva from being cremated. Over the winter they suffered flooding and being frozen. I commented to friends that I thought they had probably died. But no, the pupa emerged, a bit early but off they flew. I've reared these before and so wasn't too fussed about watching them emerge but got a few shots below:





Re: Pauline

by MrSpOck, 13-Apr-19 07:54 PM GMT

i like the order the colours appear in Orange Tip Pupa

male pupae the Orange appears about 3 days before hatching, then the White without the black spot the day its due to hatch and the black spot appears just before it emerges.

female pupae is just the latter 2 colours of course.

hope your livestock rearing goes well this season,

ive been unlucky with BIOFs the last few years [Brought In On Foodplant = BIOF] they have all been male moths of species i wanted to breed, the last few years its been Poplar & Sallow Kittens [egg and larva], Eyed Hawk [larva], Lime Hawk [larva] this is yet to emerge but is a male pupa.

hope to bump into you again this spring.

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 13-Apr-19 09:02 PM GMT

Excellent as ever Pauline ! Nice one !
Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 14-Apr-19 08:54 AM GMT

Just goes to show that people don't change 😊 and b butterflies are much tougher than w give them credit for 😊 Interesting set of shots, strange to think that those little wings stubs will almost triple in size, also interesting to see the under wing markings all 'smudged' together before they get 'pulled' out into their proper fashion 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 14-Apr-19 04:33 PM GMT

Lovely sequence of the emerging Orange Tip, Pauline, and well done for rescuing them.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Apr-19 02:18 PM GMT

I'm sure we'll meet up again this season Martin – looking forward to it 😊

That's really kind of you Allan. Thank you so much 😊

Cheers Wurzel. I think you are absolutely right on all accounts 😊

You know me well enough now David – what else could I have done?! Tell you what tho' – I did learn something from rearing this batch of OT's. When they emerged (mostly males and just a couple of females) the weather was pretty rotten and I had to hold on to them for a couple of days. Now I had always been of the opinion that when a female butterfly emerges it is pounced on by the male and mated sometimes almost before the wings were dry! Obviously I know that a raised abdomen in Whites is a sign of rejection but I had always taken this to mean that they had already mated. I knew 'my' females hadn't mated so I was surprised when they gave this gesture on being approached by the males. I concluded that they were still too immature and not yet ready (for whatever reason) and that when I saw this in the wild it could mean either that they had already been mated or had just emerged. Now, where am I going with all this. Well, it's just to say thank you again for sending me that interesting article which confirms my thinking. As you will know non-receptivity in virgin females can either be because of reproductive immaturity or because the males are not of sufficiently high quality (doesn't just apply to butterflies! 😊). I know a few others have read that article but I hope many more have too as it is very informative.

I did try to improve on my bird photography over the Winter but I don't seem to have made much progress, hence just a few shots below. Obviously I know the Crow, Kestrel and Red Kite but haven't a clue what the other is:



A number of strange and lovely fungi also caught my eye as I wandered around in the Autumn. I have no idea what any of them are 😊 although I suspect they are common. If next door's cat keeps me captive it will give me a chance to look them up 😊





Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 15-Apr-19 04:00 PM GMT

Hi Pauline. Wonderful shots of the phoenix orange tip! And welcome back from me too. 😊

Your mystery bird is a female/juvenile wheatear. Your first fungus is fly agaric and the white one some species of inkcap – I wouldn't like to say which without examining it. The other fungi I'll leave to real fungi experts.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by David M, 16-Apr-19 06:38 AM GMT

Those are very interesting observations regarding the 'rejection' posturing of female Orange Tips, Pauline. Clearly, there's more to it than most of us thought.

Wonderful array of fungi, though I wouldn't chance eating any of them!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Apr-19 06:34 PM GMT

Thank you Guy – and thanks for the ID's.

Padfield wrote:
phoenix orange tip

Love it! I'll be ready this season to pre-empt a replay and shall move any larva to a safer place.

Isn't there always David? Part of the appeal I reckon. Just a few more fungi taken in the garden over the years:



I really am trying to catch up but obviously I got out and about more than I had expected to. I shall try and cover a whole lot of adventures in this post

starting with the Clouded Yellow at Denbies which really gave me the runaround on 7 Oct. This is probably the best shot though I can assure you it didn't stay in this position for long:



At least it wasn't raining which is usually the case when I go there. In no particular order:

Common Blue egg-laying on 27/9





Mating Common Blue at Lancing Ring and the view:



and a few more from local venues:



Starting to bore myself now so I guess I'll leave it there. Perhaps the lesson for this season is to try to hang on in there for a bit longer but it is just so difficult.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-19 11:09 PM GMT

The Clouded Yellow looked pretty pristine Pauline not wonder it gave you the run around 🤔🌿 Great set of Blues 🤔🌿 Is the second Fungus/Fungi down Turkey Tail?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 17-Apr-19 08:05 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...the Clouded Yellow at Denbies which really gave me the runaround on 7 Oct.

😄 I know exactly what you mean, Pauline. Even on the continent, it's hard to find a happily settled one!

Love those fungi, especially the second one, which looks like a collection of oyster shells.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Apr-19 07:32 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – re the fungi I've no idea. I'm going to have to buy a(nother) book!

Do you like oysters David? Personally, I've never tried them but I do like a plate of Moules. Still comes second to fresh crab tho' 😊

So what else did I get up to over the Winter???? Well, A few of my budgies decided to breed:



as did my Finches. Sadly, they persisted in throwing both eggs and young out of the nestbox. One of the eggs was in the process of hatching. I've reared lots of very young birds but never any as small as these. Every night for a week I was up every 30 mins feeding until I was like a walking zombie. Despite my best efforts they failed to thrive. Either the parents were inexperienced or there was something wrong with these babies as the parents have now raised 2 lovely healthy chicks:





In the garden some Blue Tits have taken up residence by the back door:



But what about the butterflies????? Well, today between the heating engineer (my boiler is leaking oil) and the vet, I somehow managed to squeeze in an hour at Noar Hill. It is almost 3 weeks since I was last there and I was expecting great things. Well, I saw my first Holly Blue of the year but only 3 Duke of Burgundy, all males and all in the bottom part of the reserve (because I didn't have time to go any further):





As I was leaving a lady with a camera was entering. She asked me if I had seen any Bee Fly. I couldn't resist asking her what her interest was in the Bee Fly (given the Dukes were out). Turns out she was Heather Angel, marine biologist and photographer, who has written many books on wildlife, the last being for Kew Gardens on pollinators. I mentioned that a couple of years ago I had taken photos of various butterflies with pollen sacs from various plants on their proboscis. We chatted a while longer – she was a very interesting individual – before going our separate ways. I have met some interesting folk through butterflies 😊

Re: Pauline

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

Is that Duke a Duchess Pauline or is it a gracilens as the orange markings really extend over the wing Pauline 🤪 cracking 😊🇧🇪🇧🇪 I'm hoping they last for a while there as this is now the closest reliable site for me – my 'Duke Site' is now just a 'Site' 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 18-Apr-19 11:59 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...Do you like oysters David? Personally, I've never tried them but I do like a plate of Moules. Still comes second to fresh crab tho'...

I like the look of them, Pauline, but not the taste (that goes for all seafood, sadly).

Love the baby budgies. I do miss breeding them after moving from Abergavenny to Swansea.

I'm sure the warm weather will bring the Dukes (and Duchesses) out in force over the next few days. Hopefully you'll find a window in your hectic schedule to catch up with them again.

Re: Pauline

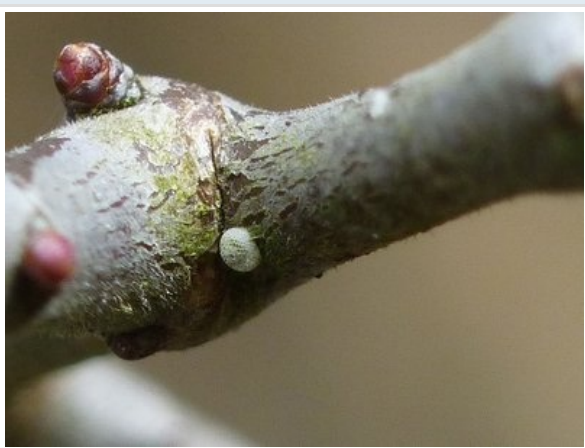
by Pauline, 19-Apr-19 09:07 PM GMT

Blimey Wurzel, I know you're a teacher an' all that but d'you have to keep asking me questions I don't know 🤪🤪🤪 I should know better! My ignorance at this stage is shameful! 😞 I'd assumed this one was male tho' I didn't count the legs. The best I can offer is this shot I took years ago. I believe Pete told me it was an Ab – are they similar? Is it a female? Help!!!! PS. If you are coming all this way please let me know when and drop in for a cuppa.



Why did you breed them David – show? pleasure? profit? (Sorry, I'm being direct again 😊). I do have a problem with what many breeders who show their birds are doing to them – shorter lives, poor vision, reluctance to fly far, feather problems etc etc. I have now heard and seen this from breeders in 3 counties so I do tend to steer clear of the 'show' type. I've seen similar in the gundog world, mostly a result of poor knowledge of genetics.

I haven't been out a great deal this season but very early in the year I came across a site that looked perfect for Brown Hairstreak although they have never been recorded here as far as I know – I resolved to check it out but it wasn't until I read Ashley's posts about discovering the eggs in previously unrecorded locations that I realised time was running out for this year. In 30 mins I found 6 eggs on Blackthorn. I think it is Blackthorn. I think they are BH eggs. I hope I am right. The warden of the site has been informed and I shall return to check:





Re: Pauline

by millerd, 19-Apr-19 11:00 PM GMT

That looks like a lovely *gracilens* female to me, Pauline. The ab only occurs in females I believe. I saw one near the gate a couple of years ago, so maybe they pop up in this bit of the site regularly. Smashing butterfly. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Apr-19 04:07 PM GMT

Thank you Dave. I didn't know that but I'll try to remember it 😊 I know it is not unusual for female Dukes to emerge before the males – it often happens at Noar Hill. Such was the case I seem to remember when Maximus saw that amazing (female) ab along with 2 other females a couple of years ago. I looked hard for it but could not find it. I think it is the one you are referring to so well done.

I know a few folk are at Noar Hill today so I hope you had great success. Me? Well I have started cutting down this hedge:



I could have done with a bit of help Wurzel 😊😊 (hope you got the pressie sorted). Whilst doing this I have been keeping an eye on a pupa which I found on one of the garden gates. At first I thought it was GVW as they tend to breed in the garden. Now I am not so sure. It is quite a small pupa and I have looked at the amazing shots that Vince takes but I can't quite decide. Can anyone confirm what it is and whether I should be watching more carefully for emergence?



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 20-Apr-19 06:56 PM GMT

Sorry I didn't make it to give you a hand and partake of a cuppa and chinwag Pauline that hedge looks like a beast – I reckon you could do with a bit of TNT on that 😂😂 Noar was great and really starting to kick off; I managed to get 3 Greenstreaks and 15 Dukes and totally lost track of time with them as they were so beguiling 😊 Luckily my sense of survival kicked in and broke me free from the reverie and I got back just in time to take my wife out to choose her present phew! 🙄😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 21-Apr-19 10:04 PM GMT

[quote]Why did you breed them David – show? pleasure? profit? (Sorry, I'm being direct again). I do have a problem with what many breeders who show their birds are doing to them – shorter lives, poor vision, reluctance to fly far, feather problems etc etc. I have now heard and seen this from breeders in 3 counties so I do tend to steer clear of the 'show' type. I've seen similar in the gundog world, mostly a result of poor knowledge of genetics.

Just for pleasure, Pauline. Like you, I had an aviary with enough room for 6 nesting boxes and I just let the birds get on with it, making sure all the boxes were at the same height, of course!

Female budgies can be remarkably aggressive with one another over this.

We were able to sell the surplus birds both privately and to pet shops.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 22-Apr-19 12:02 PM GMT

WoW! Pauline, that's a fairly high edge for you to cut, get out while the weather's good and leave the edge until Autumn 😊 Look at me with this foot you can never tell !!!!!!! Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Apr-19 06:38 PM GMT

Wurzel, no worries – If I'd been in your shoes I would have done exactly the same. Y'know what they say – happy wife, happy life 😊

Hi Goldie, The prep had to be done as the fence panels are arriving at the end of the week. Don't worry, I have help for that as I'm not much good with concrete posts and 6' panels. I've done all I can now tho'.

I decided to take your advice David and give myself a break. I wanted to see some Green Hairstreaks. I have often heard folk commenting at Noar Hill that GH are a 'morning' butterfly. I have never found any difficulty locating them in the afternoon and early evening but they tend to be females egg-laying low down. So where do the males go in the afternoon? Reckon I found out today between 2.30 and 3.30 – they are traveling around the site presumably looking for females and going at quite some speed. I saw 7 before I saw one that landed only just long enough for a single photo – that was all I wanted 😊😊



On my travels I saw about a dozen Dukes. I wasn't really looking for them but some were posing so nicely that I couldn't resist:





I also saw about 6 Dingy Skippers and a couple of Grizzlies:



Holly blues were numerous including what appeared to be egg-laying females. I feel my season hasn't really started yet. I've been quite bogged down by so many other issues my time out has been even more limited than usual but hopefully it won't be too long before all that changes 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-19 10:43 PM GMT

That's my mantra Pauline 😊😌

Lovely Greenstreak and those Dukes are impossible to resist 😊🍷 I too have been told that Greenstreaks are a morning butterfly but I've found them throughout the day at several sites now but generally earlier in the season when its cooler so I reckon that you've solved the ,mystery of the disappearing Greenstreaks 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 23-Apr-19 12:05 AM GMT

Glad you got out, Pauline....and I bet you were too after seeing all those species.

That Dingy Skipper is to die for. I've paid lip service to this species for a few years now so I'm determined to give them some proper attention this year....if only they'd emerge round my way! 😞

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 23-Apr-19 08:31 AM GMT

You've made me 🍋🍋🍋 with envy Pauline, you may not be getting out much but when you do your going to the right places 😊
I think this year I'll miss out on quite a few Butterflies, so it's great to see your photos of the ones I'll miss 😊 keep them coming, Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Apr-19 02:22 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – one just for you in the next batch. Can you guess which one 😊😞

I really am David. I'd forgotten what I was missing and as there's loads of work just around the corner I thought I'd make the most of it and go out again today! 😊

Such a pity I couldn't get you up Noar Hill when you were here Goldie but time was against us – and we did visit 2 different sites which is about all I can manage in a day. But never say never

I had a splendid couple of hours this morning in really lovely company. It was a pleasure to meet you Keith and Maurice, well, we really must do this more often. As before my main target was the Green Hairstreak and as before I saw at least half a dozen, all of which refused to descend to lower levels – apart from one which was in the middle of a large patch of brambles. I fought hard to get this shot:



Yet again, the Dukes were a little incidental but a few shots including the one I took specially for Wurzel 😊 (apologies Wurzel that half of it is out of focus. I shall try to do better next time 😞)





Inspired by my last meeting with Heather Angel (would you believe it I met her again today and what a lovely lady she is) I tried some shots of the Bee fly:



and last but not least a shot of a sleepy Orange Tips. I would have had some great shots as it opened it's wings but sadly Maurice I had the exposure compensation on the wrong setting 😞😞



Re: Pauline

by trevor, 23-Apr-19 02:32 PM GMT

Love the Duke on the Early Purple Orchid, and your Green Hairstreak has an almost complete arc of white spots. I worked hard to get a GH yesterday. I always lose sight of them when they take off!

Lovely stuff,
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 23-Apr-19 07:14 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...Yet again, the Dukes were a little incidental...

Oh! to live somewhere where I could say that. For me Dukes are a species that I have to travel to see and there are many years when I miss them.

Great photos though Pauline...and the Green Hairstreaks 🍷 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-Apr-19 08:57 PM GMT

I had an inkling which type of shot it was going to be before I'd even checked the photos Pauline 😊 I wasn't disappointed, only slightly envious 😊 🍷
🍷 You did well with the Greenstreak - that one looks like a 'punctata' as the streaks carry on along the forewing 😊 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 23-Apr-19 11:10 PM GMT

You certainly did right getting out again, Pauline.

That image of the Duke on the orchid was worth several hours out of your day alone!

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 24-Apr-19 08:41 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, lovely Green Hair Streak shots, I'd love to see them, they're one of my favourites, so delicate and cute, I know where they are at home but I haven't a clue where they are here, may be I'll get lucky like I did with the Wall 😊
I also like the first Duke shot showing the under wings it makes a change, it's lovely. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 24-Apr-19 01:36 PM GMT

Quality set of shots Pauline. 🍷😄 I enjoyed a day at Noar myself on the Sunday. Good job with the Bee Fly. 😊

Cheers

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Apr-19 02:58 PM GMT

Right back at you Andrew. I have seen first hand how you achieve your wonderful images 😊. Glad you enjoyed another one of my local sites.

Thank you Trevor. I know exactly what you mean about them disappearing in front of your eyes!!!!!!

Cheers Neil – I know it sounds like I take Noar Hill and the Dukes a bit for granted but I really don't. It's just that I'm becoming just a teeny bit obsessed with the Hairstreaks. You know what I'm like – like to be out in all weathers and at all times to see first hand how the butterflies behave. Take yesterday, I got another soaking standing under a tree watching Green Hairstreaks. We've not played this game for a while – can you find it?



Don't worry, already cropped it:



Cheers Wurzel – I'm pleased you keep reminding me of the names of these Abs as one day I might actually remember 😊

I'm trying to make the most of it David as it may be a little while before I can get out again 😊

Thanks Goldie. As you know I try not to take the same shot over and over again and look hard for something a bit different. The local forecast today said there would be a 'moderate breeze'. I'm not sure exactly what that means but up Noar Hill it was blowing a gale 😲. I left home shortly after mid-day and about 20 mins later I was taking this shot:



I'm not going to moan about the wind making photography difficult. It does. End of! I was there to see how the butterflies were behaving and any photos were a bonus. There wasn't another soul there but the weather wasn't stopping the butterflies. They were staying low down as one might expect in these conditions but as ever it was a joy to see them. My attention was caught by a particular Duke which looked in good condition but was a really odd colour. A bit reminiscent of the colour of a very pale Speckled Wood. I got a few shots and having now looked at this site I believe it might be an Ab. Leucodes. If anyone could confirm or otherwise I'd be grateful 😊





By way of comparison here is a 'normal' Duke and a shot with both of them in:



Furthermore, it seemed to be having a little problem with its proboscis. I seem to remember Martin telling me that when they first emerge it is split in two but soon welds together. If it doesn't it can starve. I do hope it wasn't in trouble:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 25-Apr-19 08:56 PM GMT

That is an interesting looking Duke Pauline – tricky one as the fringes and tear in the wing suggest that it's not as fresh as the comparison one but at the same time it's a consistent paler colour 😊 I'd go with it being an aberrant but my record for being right when making suggestions is roughly 50:50 😊😊😊 Either way it's great because it's something a little different but also because it's a Duke 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 26-Apr-19 12:03 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

....My attention was caught by a particular Duke which looked in good condition but was a really odd colour. A bit reminiscent of the colour of a very pale Speckled Wood. I got a few shots and having now looked at this site I believe it might be an Ab. Leucodes.

Certainly looks a good candidate, Pauline.

<https://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/aberrations.php?species=lucina>

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Apr-19 12:32 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel, David. I have seen a lot of worn Dukes in my time and this one just didn't seem to fit the bill. As always I am happy to be guided by more expert opinion and as the consensus seems to be an AB I am happy to go with that.

Thank you also to Vince for confirming that the pupa I posted was indeed a GVW. I say 'was' as Vince thinks it might have died and I agree with him. I am sure it was alive initially so it is such a shame it has got to this stage and not made it. I can't help thinking it may have been from one of the eggs laid in the garden last year.

I'm afraid this weather is keeping me in – it is not just windy it is freezing! – so I thought I would take this opportunity to post a few shots of critters I have found recently that I haven't yet identified just on the off chance



Odd looking pupa on heather – perhaps some sort of wasp?



There must be loads of green moth larva on heather at this time of year but these were quite large and I found about 10 of them.





I initially thought that this was a moth. It had a strange habit of jumping when disturbed and then flying so I am now thinking it is some sort of fly or other bug?

Let's hope this weather improves soon.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 27-Apr-19 12:59 PM GMT

Interesting critter – I saw one similar to this a few years back and posted thinking it was a moth only to find out that it was a type of Caddis Fly 😊. I'm not sure if there's if this is a Caddis Fly I think it's an Alderfly 😊 Mind you I was right about the Duke last time so according to the law of averages I might be wrong about this 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Apr-19 01:23 PM GMT

Blimey Wurzel, that was quick! I've since come across this which suggests that it may be a Ichneumon wasp of the Hyposoter genus?

<http://tristram.squarespace.com/home/2009/9/3/black-and-white-pupa.html>

Hope you can see this.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 27-Apr-19 01:47 PM GMT

Yep that looks good for the pupa 😊 I was having a go at IDing the final bug 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Apr-19 02:25 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, yeah, I got that just after I'd posted 😊😊 I've now looked up Alderfly and you are spot on. Funny little things they are! Just the larva left now then I'll shut up and go away 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 27-Apr-19 09:03 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...I'm afraid this weather is keeping me in – it is not just windy it is freezing!.....

Keeping plenty of us in, Pauline. Feeding the chickens at 8.00 this morning was a Labour of Hercules – wet, blowing a gale, and having to tread over all the fallen pots from the previous night's high winds.

Hard to believe five days prior it was 20c with hardly a breath of wind. I guess that's the UK for you.

Hopefully it will brighten up soon so we can all get out for the Common Blue emergence!

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 28-Apr-19 08:28 PM GMT

Just catching up with your sightings, Pauline – it seems I need to get back to Noar Hill again as things have moved on apace since my last trip! I don't think I've ever seen a Grizzlie there, so that would be good to see. Incidentally, I saw a pale Duke like the one you saw, but a couple of years ago up at one of the Chiltern sites – it was markedly paler than others of the same vintage, and I hummed and ha'd about whether or not it was *leucoides*... I still haven't decided!

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-May-19 04:13 PM GMT

If you're coming back to this area Dave please let me know as it would be good to meet up again.

Hi David, the good news is I now have all the chickens together. They are free range when I am there and they can now all go in a large roofed enclosure which surrounds their (heated) kennel where they roost. This means that when I can get out I can do so without worrying about the cat:



That little patch down the side of the house is still a 'work in progress'. The fence is now up and I will have finished by the weekend. Every bit of me aches 😊



As of this afternoon I also have heating and hot water 😊 so it's all coming together, except that my bed collapsed last night 😊 I'm not very big (honest!!!). I may be sleeping on the floor tonight 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 03-May-19 11:26 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Hi David, the good news is I now have all the chickens together. They are free range when I am there and they can now all go in a large roofed enclosure which surrounds their (heated) kennel where they roost. This means that when I can get out I can do so without worrying about the cat:

Sounds like a decent compromise, Pauline. With those marans and legbars you must be getting eggs of different colours? Is that a Black Rock or a Welsummer at the front?

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 04-May-19 09:29 AM GMT

Pauline, sorry but I had to laugh at your bed collapsing 😊 You get things right all going for you and then that happens 😊 I thought I was troubled 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 05-May-19 01:07 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

Pauline, sorry but I had to laugh at your bed collapsing...

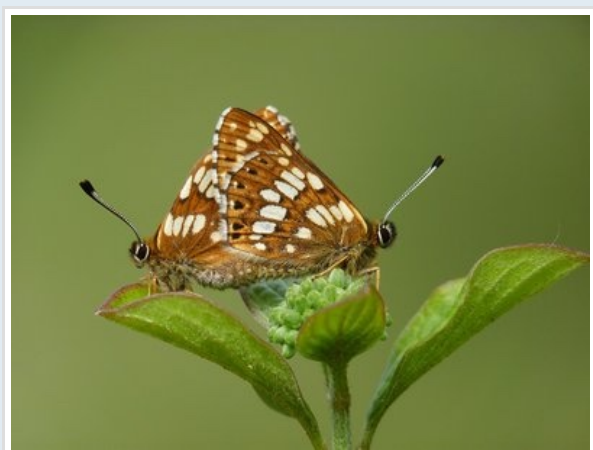
I hadn't spotted that! Do you ever get a run of good luck, Pauline? God knows you've earned one.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-May-19 02:45 PM GMT

Hi David – yes, I get some gorgeous eggs. You wouldn't believe the colours. In particular the Wheaten Marans (Candy and Flossie 😊) produce huge dark brown eggs splattered with almost black spots and the Cream Legbar (Bramble) produces blue. A cream egg from Petal (Swedish Flower) and I am told Olive is a French Black Maran? Anyway, light brown egg from her. I think I do deserve a quiet patch David. D'you know, a few years ago I was in bed and there was an almighty crash – a huge lump of the ceiling had fallen down – just missing the parrot cages 😊 There's not much that surprises me now 😊 😊

Goldie, I'm pleased it gave you a laugh, really. I can laugh myself now that it's all sorted. I hope you are improving but I'll be in touch soon. I could have dealt with some emails this morning but I hope you'll understand that I just couldn't resist the pull of Noar Hill. It seems like ages since I was out and the next couple of days are looking a bit unlikely. Anyway, there were not just one, but three pairs of mating Dukes. Just to prove I don't take them for granted this is all about the Dukes so here they are:





So much for courtship! I wouldn't put up with that! 😊





The pair of Dukes that I monitored were in cop for 1 hour and 20 mins. In the past I have timed them usually around 45 mins. I am assuming that the additional time was due to the weather which was overcast and cool for some of the time. There were a couple of Red Kites around and I think that this might be one of them but I didn't see it fly off:



Re: Pauline

by andy brown, 07-May-19 08:11 PM GMT

Hi, Pauline its a buzzard 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-May-19 09:01 PM GMT

Thanks Andy – I can only ever tell by the tail when they're flying 😊 Still waiting to be introduced to the new puppy!

I have to say it – as much as I enjoyed the Dukes this morning they were 'incidental' , the reason for my visit being once again the Green Hairstreaks. I watched several fly around one of the usual trees, noting that a couple had gone down low, presumably to escape the strong breeze. I thought of you Trevor as I lost sight of them time and again. I decided to climb down the bank and look in the more sheltered area below. I stood quite still as I scanned all the foliage at every level without success. I glanced down again and about 6" from where I stood a brand new Green Hairstreak was lying on a bramble leaf. This wasn't a Hairstreak lying on its side to warm up. This was a soft, floppy Hairstreak trying to dry and harden its wings. It certainly hadn't been there before. It was only yards away from the mating Dukes I was monitoring so I was able to watch as it turned itself over to dry the other side and gradually adopt an upright pose. I have reared these a couple of times now but I have never, ever seen this in the wild. I watched it for 90 minutes and unfortunately I missed the maiden flight as that happened in the 30 seconds it took for the Dukes to part company.



There were also numerous Dingy Skippers around:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 07-May-19 10:53 PM GMT

Blinding shots of the Dukes in cop Pauline – a species I need in my X Rated collection 🤩😁, though I recently added Pearls so I mustn't be greedy 😊
That is a stunning Greenstreak, immaculate 😊🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 08-May-19 06:54 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Hi David – yes, I get some gorgeous eggs. You wouldn't believe the colours. In particular the Wheaten Marans (Candy and Flossie 😊) produce huge dark brown eggs splattered with almost black spots and the Cream Legbar (Bramble) produces blue. A cream egg from Petal (Swedish Flower) and I am told Olive is a French Black Maran? Anyway, light brown egg from her.

I'm sure you do get some spectacular eggs, Pauline. Marans probably lay the most attractive ones of all....and they have beautiful plumage too.

French Black Maran? Not heard of that breed, nor the Swedish Flower, but that's a lovely, eclectic little flock you've got.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 08-May-19 10:41 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, love all your lovely shots 📷📷 wish I was taking photos like that , the Green Hair Streaks are a favourite of mine 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 08-May-19 11:05 AM GMT

Fantastic shots of the Dukes Pauline, 3 pairings as well! And well done finding that beautiful fresh hairstreak. I love the last shot of the Dingy with it's wings fully spread, don't think I've ever seen one looking better. What a great day, greenie's all round. 📷📷📷😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-May-19 01:48 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel. I was really excited about that Hairstreak and had to call John from Winchester over to have a look at it 😊 Well done with the Pearls.

Thank you David – They all have such nice temperaments. I have no plans to get any more tho'.

Thank you Goldie – Before you know it you'll be properly mobile again – your photography is coming on in leaps and bounds. You wouldn't believe how many of mine goes in the bin! 😊

I'm so glad you like them Andrew. I know your standards are high. For me a lot of the challenge is finding something just that little bit different which is perhaps even more difficult than the photography 😊

I have Paul to thank for my outing this morning and his very precise directions (you can tie grass better than me Paul!). I have reared WLH before (well, how could anyone forget????!! 😊😊) but I have not photographed larva in the wild. Not only did I find the 2 that Paul directed me to I found a couple of others as well – despite the volunteer warden telling me that there was no Elm on site! It never ceases to amaze me how some folk can give such precise and helpful directions. I remember once that Mike (Maximus) directed me to a particular cowslip on Noar Hill and I was able to walk straight up to it – that takes some doing! Anyway, I was a bit stressed out as one of my finches had just died, it had started to rain and there was this weird guy behind me with a long white beard asking what I was doing – turns out he was helping with the sheep. The wind was strong but I couldn't hang around as the carpet fitter was coming so I couldn't explore the wider area. These are the best of the shots I managed under the trees and overcast skies:





The last one seemed to be on the move and like tortoises (I have 2) it is surprising how far they can travel in a short time.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 09-May-19 11:04 PM GMT

Whilst I love your images of the Dukes and Green Hairstreaks, it's your Dingy Skipper sequence that stands out. I've neglected this species for a few years and hope to pay them more attention this year....if only I could find any!

Re: Pauline

by David M, 10-May-19 11:52 PM GMT

[quote]..I have reared WLH before (well, how could anyone forget????!! 😊😄) but I have not photographed larva in the wild.

Yes, your rearing went awry that time, Pauline, but you did it with best intentions and gained an intimate insight into the early stages of this elusive butterfly.

Glad to see you got an audience with those wild larvae. It must be the most overlooked species in the UK, and those who study it carefully can not only make it look easy but can provide pointers for those like me who would like to learn more about this species and its lifecycle.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-May-19 06:36 PM GMT

Thank you David. I was told some years ago that every Dinky is a unique looking individual and when you eventually find some you will have the opportunity to test out that theory. It was good to see the wild WLH larva (thanks to Paul) and I agree that having reared a species before looking for the wild counterpart does make the task easier. Today I stumbled across what I believe to be a SWF larva which I have reared once before:



Today was really all about the Wood Whites tho' and despite the hailstones and heavy showers enough of these delightful little butterflies showed themselves in the intermittent brilliant sunshine to put on a good show. It was also good to bump into Andrew and John – I can't believe it is almost a year since we last met 😊 I shall start with a few 'pretty' shots and I should add that these shots were not in any way manipulated:





...and now on to the more interesting stuff. I still cannot work out what the 'courtship ritual' is all about. I am not sure it is about courtship at all but that makes it no less fascinating to watch. As I pointed out in 2017, the male does not just use his antennae but gives the female a good tongue lashing with his proboscis until she adopts a more submissive posture. I have seen it last from about 30 seconds to about 15 minutes. A few shots from the many taken:





When the male flew off the female resumed the egg-laying she had been engaged in before he accosted her:





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 11-May-19 06:50 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Pauline really interesting to see this behaviour 😊 I can see why the antennae are used but ca't fathom why the tongue lashing happens – could the male be using his proboscis to douse the female in a pheromone? 😊 Still great to see, something else to look out for 😊 Sorry I can't help with the cat ID all the app says is 'green with a purplish head' – if only there was a book coming out around October time that had all the larval stages 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 11-May-19 07:32 PM GMT

Lovely Wood White pictures, as always from you, Pauline! Don't entirely understand the behaviour either, but it is a pleasure to watch. Hopefully we'll get a chance later this month to witness it ourselves!

Re: Pauline

by David M, 11-May-19 09:19 PM GMT

Fabulous, Pauline. You've captured that courtship behaviour extremely well, and then played a Joker with the ovipositing and the freshly laid egg!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-May-19 06:22 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel. It's interesting, isn't it? Would the male waste precious pheromones on a female that was clearly egg-laying? Maybe. I guess the first step is just more observation, in particular the behaviour/actions of both butterflies prior to and immediately after this particular ritual which may offer up some clues. There is so much we still don't know!

Thank you so much Mark – missed you at the social this year (first one I've been to in a while). Enjoy the Wood Whites and see if you can work out what is going on here.

Cheers David. If at all possible I'll be back for another visit once those eggs have had a chance to hatch 😊

Aside from the Wood Whites there were plenty of other butterflies around yesterday including a very fresh Holly Blue and this GVV:



I was entertained by a couple of Brimstone and as they flew into a clump of vegetation I was convinced this would end in a pairing. Wrong again!! Having rejected the male, the female cleverly gave him the slip and disappeared over the hedge. He seemed unaware of this and to my amusement spent the next few minutes frantically flying in and around the clump of plants looking for her:



Re: Pauline

by kevling, 12-May-19 08:58 AM GMT

Pauline,

A fantastic and thought provoking sequence of Wood Whites. It's always nice to see something a little different.

Regards Kev

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 12-May-19 05:45 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, you've brought back some good memories with those Wood White shots, Lovely photographs Pauline, Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-May-19 06:48 PM GMT

Good to hear from you Kev. Thank you for your kind words. If I don't try to keep searching out something a bit different then it all becomes a bit stale and repetitive. I'd love to know what's going on with those Wood Whites tho'.

Pleased to hear that Goldie and thank you for your kind comment.

Last year I was visiting a friend and whilst there I watched Purple Hairstreaks egg-laying on her neighbour's Oaks. I resolved that this year I would have a great time monitoring them in the wild. Buggy was kind enough to show me my first wild PH last season but I was determined I would find my own. I have a colony in my own Oak trees but these trees are huge and not very accessible. You can imagine how disappointed I felt when my friend told me earlier in the year that at the end of the season her neighbour had chopped all of the lower branches from her Oaks. However, many of the branches had just been discarded and a quick search revealed about 20 eggs. I took them home and eventually tied them to fresh oak branches. Some haven't emerged but some have. Although kept all together some seem more advanced than others. I do hope they are in step with the wild larva which I shall try to locate soon:





Re: Pauline

by MrSpOck, 12-May-19 07:13 PM GMT

Caterpillar is Silver Washed Frit.

It looks like they will be early this this year.

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 12-May-19 08:25 PM GMT

That SWF caterpillar is a magnificent beast, Pauline - I'd love to find one of those. 😊

I missed you at Chiddingfold yesterday as I didn't get there till about four or so. It's quite a good time of day to see the Wood Whites, and there were still plenty around. That "courtship" display is a strange thing - a few years back I was observing a couple indulging, when a fellow enthusiast joined me and pointed out that both the butterflies were males... 😊 The whole thing needs investigating fully as you say.

Lovely shots too - they do make good subjects when sitting on flowers. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by David M, 13-May-19 06:35 AM GMT

Good luck with those Hairstreaks, Pauline. Judging by their corpulence, they've got off to a positive start! 😊

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 13-May-19 07:03 AM GMT

Lovely Wood White images, Pauline.

I was there on Friday, and it would seem that more had emerged for your visit.

I saw a maximum of eight and as it was early afternoon they were quite active, apart from the mating pair!

I was also lucky enough, like you, to see Brimstone courtship/rejection behaviour.

BB magic again!.

Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 13-May-19 07:48 AM GMT

Fantastic Wood White images, better than anything I've ever managed!

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 13-May-19 10:58 AM GMT

Great to see you again Pauline, time does indeed fly! Very well captured Wood White sequence, interesting stuff. Fingers crossed for your PH's. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-May-19 12:39 PM GMT

Thanks Martin. I didn't immediately recognise it (altho' it looked familiar) but I've reared these before as you'll probably remember and it eventually dawned on me what it was.

You probably missed the hailstones too Dave! Yes, I mentioned to Andrew that I too had seen 2 males engaged in this behaviour but it was several years ago and I can't remember if the proboscis was involved. I shall need to check my old photos and pay more attention in future.

Thank you David. The wild eggs I checked have hatched but I can find no sign of the larva yet.

Cheers Trevor and well done with the mating pair. It has been a few years since I saw that and this should probably be in your diary but I think you captured the Brimstones way better than I did. Today I found my first (quite large) tick biting me which I imagine came from BB - possibly the only downside to that venue, apart from the traveling distance!

I appreciate that very generous comment Paul - even if I don't quite believe it 😊

Thanks Andrew. I am looking forward to seeing your images of the Wood Whites. You were right - I had reared those larva before which is why it looked so familiar. I probably told you when we were looking at SSB's that for the last 3-4 years I have searched for their larva. Well, yet again I have failed miserably, despite looking in 2 completely different environments (at frequent intervals). However, whilst searching I have come across a number of interesting critters including this larva which I believe is the Garden Tiger Moth - tho' as usual I could be totally wrong. It was a very attractive creature but my word, I've never seen a caterpillar move so fast 🤩 I honestly didn't know they could move like that:



A lot of the heather at the Broxhead site where there were a number of SSB's last year seems to be dying off - not sure why this is or whether it will

impact on this year's brood as they seemed to favour this patch for egg-laying:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 15-May-19 07:07 PM GMT

Not sure about the moth larvae myself Pauline – I made a right howler over a Scarlet Tiger larvae earlier in the year 😞 so I keep schtum now 😊😞 I used to live on Canford Heath and would often see what appeared to be dead Heather only for there to be fresh growth growing from the centre of the dead patch the following year – mind you you if it's like this over large parts of the site it could be a problem – possibly a 'controlled burn' would sort it out? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 15-May-19 09:39 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...whilst searching I have come across a number of interesting critters including this larva which I believe is the Garden Tiger Moth – tho' as usual I could be totally wrong. It was a very attractive creature but my word, I've never seen a caterpillar move so fast 😲 I honestly didn't know they could move like that..

Pretty sure it's garden tiger, Pauline. It certainly checks out:

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/moths/garden-tiger>

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 15-May-19 09:42 PM GMT

Its a Garden Tiger caterpillar, these are rare site these days, you wont have trouble with the foodplant, a friend used to use them in his compost bin, if its green they eat it, including cactus. Green material to frasspost in days. I found 3 in my garden a couple of years ago all got at by flies 😞 If its a female she will call in a male hopefully.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-May-19 03:30 PM GMT

Hi Guys – thanks for the confirmation. I'll never know the gender Martin as I just left it there but hopefully there will be others in the area. Now Wurzel, are you suggesting I become an amateur arsonist 😊😞 I'll keep an eye on this area and see what happens.

Now what were you saying David about me needing some better luck? Well, my car has failed its MOT – in quite a spectacular way I should add. It is now in the garage and I have a courtesy car which got me to a physio appointment as I have hurt my back 😞. On my return I found that my frontage fence has been demolished by an oil delivery lorry 😞 – thankfully witnessed by the landscapers next door. A small section of the damage:



As a result I have only one of 'my' GWW to offer up today. I am sure things will improve and I shall get back to posting properly 😊



Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 17-May-19 06:55 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, I am struggling to keep up with diaries lately with so much going on.

Just seen your great photo of the SWF caterpillar, lovely 😊

And the PH cats, and the Wood Whites and particularly the Garden Tiger cat ,the good old Woolly Bear of my childhood. Sadly they are no longer common in the midlands and to see one here is quite notable.

Sorry to hear about your run of bad luck, hope it changes for the better soon.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 17-May-19 11:02 PM GMT

"Wurzel, are you suggesting I become an amateur arsonist 😊😂"...There's normally a couple of kids around that can do that, or a careless smoker 😊
I know your luck hasn't been good recently but that only means that you're due some great times as the Karmic balance realigns itself, fingers crossed I can get away from work when you find the Scarce Tortoiseshell 😊😂

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 18-May-19 11:40 AM GMT

[quote] Now what were you saying David about me needing some better luck? Well, my car has failed its MOT – in quite a spectacular way I should add. It is now in the garage and I have a courtesy car which got me to a physio appointment as I have hurt my back . On my return I found that my frontage fence has been demolished by an oil delivery lorry – thankfully witnessed by the landscapers next door.

I henceforth resolve to refrain from commenting on any kind of fortune, good or bad, that you might experience, Pauline 😊

Beautiful Green Veined White by the way (surely that can't tempt fate?)

Re: Pauline

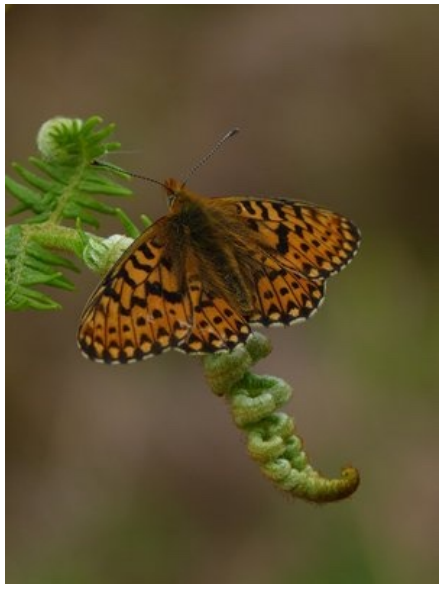
by Pauline, 18-May-19 02:23 PM GMT

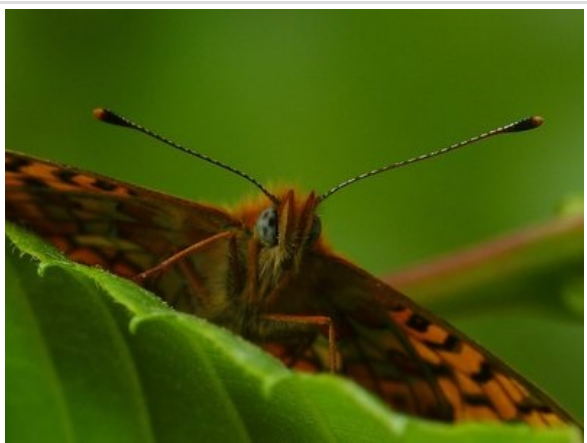
Thank you Neil for your kind words and encouragement. I am ashamed to say I have not yet had the moth trap out this year (just no time) but I hope that will change soon, so watch this space 😊

It's not the Tortoiseshells I'm after Wurzel – it's the Camberwell Beauty, and I'll send you a text when I find it 😊 Thinking of you earlier as I always do when I'm trying to get shots that are a little bit different so I hope you appreciate my efforts on your behalf 😊😊

Thank you David for your generous comments as I struggled through this bad patch. Fingers crossed, unless something else untoward occurs (god forbid!) I now have everything under control and I'm raring to go. That said, I couldn't go far today and with a cool breeze and much cloud cover I was a bit sceptical as to whether I would find my 'target'. I was pleased to see 3 or 4 flying – one looked a bit worn, the others quite fresh but from memory this is quite a 'late' site. I have not been here for a few years even tho' it has the advantage of being quite close. Anyway, without more ado here are the pics. I imagine many are saying 'thank goodness for some shots of butterflies at last instead of b****y chickens and fences!' 😊😊







Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 18-May-19 04:30 PM GMT

Definitely very appreciative Pauline – lovely set of shots 😊 Aside from the close-ups and great stained glass shots there are a couple where the 'Pearls' really ping 🤩👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 18-May-19 10:29 PM GMT

They are in fine condition for so late in the season, Pauline. Great pictures, too.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-May-19 03:44 PM GMT

I think that was something to do with the light Wurzel – nothing to do with my skill with the camera!

Cheers Mark – I was afraid I might have been too late for fresh individuals but I got there just in time I reckon 😊.

I feel I have a lot of catching up to do and today I thought I would seek out some Small Blue. Honestly, you never know what you are going to find. A few of the 'pretty' shots first which I always take immediately on arrival:





There were more Small Blues at this venue than I have ever seen in one place before. My companion guesstimated hundreds but they were also more widespread on the site than I have ever seen them. At times I worried I might stand on one. There were 17 on one clump of vegetation. It was inevitable that at least one would come to a sticky end and when I noticed one thrashing around on the ground I stopped to take a closer look. In the past when I have seen a spider catch a butterfly it has been neatly packaged up. I don't know what type of spider this was but it eventually dragged the butterfly down into it 's web:









Once it had pulled it as far as possible down into the web it was off out looking for the next victim 🤨

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-May-19 05:37 PM GMT

After the spider incident I was relieved to see that the females were doing their best to ensure the success of the next generation with much egg-laying and mating, and on one occasion a third male was quite persistent causing some disturbance to one couple:





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 19-May-19 07:20 PM GMT

Lovely set of images in the second post Pauline 😊 As for the one prior to not quite so lovely but even more interesting – looks like a tunnel web spider cracking sequence 😊👍

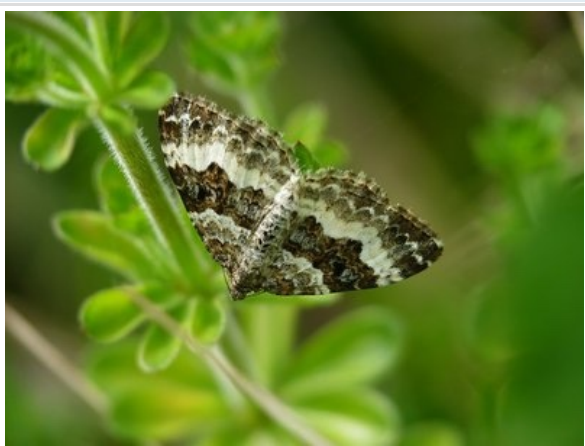
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-May-19 10:19 AM GMT

As you might imagine Wurzel it was the spider that interested me most as I hadn't realised that different species used different techniques (thankfully I haven't seen this many times). I think you are probably correct in the identification as the web was tunnel shaped and the butterfly was just dragged down there. It also looked as if another (different type) of spider had been caught in a similar fashion. For some reason I had imagined (presumably wrongly) that spiders wouldn't eat each other 😊 There was plenty of interest at this site including many day flying moths – my first Mother Shiptons of the season and what I think is a Common Carpet moth. I also offer up a tentative ID of a Bag Moth larval case:





I had to chuckle at all the birds taking a bath in the pond even though it wasn't all that warm. You all know my bird photography is pretty awful but this might give you an idea. I obviously know the Goldfinches but is that a Linnet?



Re: Pauline

by jenks, 20-May-19 02:24 PM GMT

Yes, Pauline, 3 Goldfinches and a cock Linnet. Could almost be a title for a film, (or a song from Music Hall days).

Cracking photos of PBF and Small Blues. I'd be quite happy with the birds as well seeing how difficult it is to get close enough to them for a shot. As others posting on here have said, let`s hope your luck has changed for the better.

Jenks.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 20-May-19 07:59 PM GMT

Lovely set of shots Pauline, I'm going to miss out on quite a lot this Spring so it's great to see your shots 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 21-May-19 08:11 AM GMT

That's a highly interesting, if macabre, sequence involving the spider and the unfortunate Small Blue, Pauline. Given their numbers so far this spring though, I'm sure they can take a few losses.

Nice Mother Shiptons by the way; an honorary butterfly in my opinion.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-May-19 05:48 PM GMT

That's very kind of you to say so Jenks and thanks for the ID. I have another one that you (or someone) might be able to help me with (just don't dilly dally 😊 😊). She was just sat in the top of an Oak tree seemingly collecting bugs as they came within reach. She had a very sweet voice and was still there when I left:



I saw quite a few butterflies today but they were all worn and ragged. The ground and plants are parched and desperately need some rain. The only other creature I found worth taking a shot at was this female Broad Bodied Chaser:



and a GVW in the garden which just refused to pose nicely:



You might have missed out on the Spring butterflies M but there will still be plenty for you to see. Once you're fully mobile you'll feel heaps better I'm sure - I am pleased you like my pics tho' and I appreciate your comment 😊

I certainly thought so David. I couldn't have rescued it even if I had wanted to - one of the many reasons I really don't like spiders. Have you ever been to Mother Shipton's grotto?

Re: Pauline

by David M, 22-May-19 07:32 AM GMT

The bird has a bit of a look of a chiffchaff, Pauline, although I'm in no way an expert on these things.

Re: Pauline

by jenks, 22-May-19 10:59 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Two birds immediately come to mind; Willow Warbler and Chiff chaff. WW is more olive green than CC which is greyer. WW also has a more pronounced supercilium and generally pale legs, those of CC are generally black. Looking at your photos you can see a distinct eye-stripe, olive green colouring and yellow tinge on the breast and just make out pale legs and feet. The guiding factor though must be the voice. You said the bird had a sweet voice. WW has a pleasant descending warble whereas CC's is just a collection of "chiff" and "chaff" in no particular order. No-one would rightly say that was a sweet song! So Willow Warbler it must be.

I spent yesterday morning at Cwm Claisfer, on the southern fringe of the Brecon Beacons. This is an example of the hanging woodlands that cling to hillsides in Wales and holds birds that love the mixed woodland, fields and stream at the bottom of the valley that typifies this habitat. I was not expecting any butterfly surprises but the first sighting was a Green Hairstreak that landed on a Gorse bush a yard from my car. Bright green on bright yellow. Wonderful!. The woodland held Speckled Woods and the field and stream produced Orange tip and Green veined White. The woods were full of birdsong; Redstarts (3 pairs), Pied Flycatcher (2 pairs) and Wood Warbler (2 singing males) seen. Tree Pipits were numerous and I had one chasing a Cuckoo. I would guess protecting its nest and territory from that egg-laying imposter. Red Kite, Buzzard and Goshawk were seen overhead. A long walk across the moorland top produced sightings of one Red Grouse (very small population in S. Wales), displaying Snipe, Wheatear and Whinchat. On the way back home I stopped off at Aberargoed Grasslands. This is the site of the Ty Fry colliery, closed after the strike of 1984, the land being turned into a nature reserve. The grassland holds Marsh Fritillary and it was time for me to check for these as they seem to be appearing everywhere at the moment. The weather was now cloudier but I counted 12 MF's mostly down on the grass or on the mass of Bluebells here. When the sun appeared the Marshies became hyper active. 5 Small Heath also counted here. The old coal tip remains, with varying vegetation, and this gave me Small Copper 2, Dingy Skipper 3, Common Blue 6 and singles of Green veined White, Large White and a very tatty Peacock. The bare earth here is good for Wall Brown but I didn't see any today and Grayling later in the year. So a return visit will be made in July. I got back home at 5 pm, having left the house at 8 am. My app showed I had walked 6.2 miles and it certainly felt like it!

Jenks.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-May-19 03:35 PM GMT

Thank you David and Jenks. I have now looked at both and can see just how similar they are but the sweet, melodic little song, well, I could have listened to that all day. Prior to this I have heard a Chiff Chaff but have never seen one. Reckon I need a mentor! 😊

That sounds like a fantastic day out Jenks. Love the sound of that Green Hairstreak against the yellow background. My back is still not 100% so I'm having a bit of trouble bending and moving quickly to get the shots I want. I missed some great opportunities today including a couple of Green Hairstreaks as a result. However, I'd just like to slip in something a bit different for those who enjoy all wildlife. I was fortunate enough to be invited to a friend's flat in the middle of Guildford which overlooks the garden of the flat below where a vixen had decided to have her cubs – all 9 of them!! Sadly, 2 of the cubs have died over the last 48 hours but it was an absolute delight watching them romp and play. Unfortunately, the management company contracted to keep the garden tidy inadvertently disturbed them and the vixen has now moved the remaining cubs but is still returning for the much needed food now being put out for her. Looking at the debris near the den it seems she has been scavenging in bins trying to support this unusual number of cubs. I wish them all the best of luck. The shots were taken from a distance at dusk and are a mixture of my own shots and those of my companion:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-May-19 06:51 AM GMT

Yesterday I decided I would check on the WLH larva at OWH. They were initially found on a discrete clump of relatively small Elms but I could find no sign of any of the 4 larva seen previously despite an hours careful search. I assume they have either been predated or have gone up or down to pupate. I am convinced from my rearing activities with this species that they pupate in a variety of places including the soil and their choice of location is probably influenced by several factors including the size and type of Elm. Paul has already demonstrated that even on the tree they are not consistent in where they pupate whether it be leaf or bark. It was disappointing not to be able to locate them but not unexpected and those who have attempted to track immature stages in the wild will know exactly how much time and effort is involved for (very often) little return.

A consolation prize was seeing the Adonis on this site both male and female. I struggled to see whether the females were egg-laying or just newly emerged as several were crawling around in the grass. I hope my physio can work his magic on my back as it is still quite painful to bend but that is my punishment for lifting stone benches and fence panels 😊 A couple of females had a lovely sprinkling of blue:



A couple of Dingy Skippers appeared to be egg-laying on a grassy bank. Now this was more interesting. The tendency was to land on the larval food plant with wings fully open. After a few seconds like this the wings would be half closed as the abdomen scraped along the food plant and the butterfly went to the nearest energy source before repeating the process. It was frustrating not being able to locate an egg (more bending!) but neither did I have

my hand lens which is becoming increasingly necessary 😊





There were lots of other butterflies around – vibrant Common Blues, Holly Blue, a single Small Blue, Grizzled Skipper and Green Hairstreaks to name just a few but even better for me was my first ever shot of a Green Woodpecker. It flew past me and landed in trees so far away I couldn't even see it. I just pointed the camera at the trees and hoped for the best. The shot is massively cropped but at least it is just about identifiable:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-May-19 04:17 PM GMT

It is good to have Pearls so close to home but for the Small variety it is necessary to travel a bit further – worth it tho' for my annual look at this lovely butterfly. They were hard to track down and in the wall-to-wall sunshine in the 2 hours I was there were even harder to photograph.





I think the colours of this butterfly are amazing:



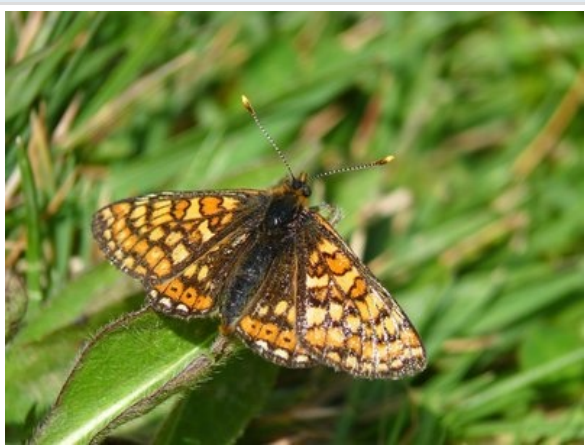


There weren't that many Pearls about compared to previous years but those I saw ranged from very worn to relatively fresh. I witnessed 3-4 failed courtship attempts:





I also saw a couple of Marsh Frits but the one I chose to point my camera at was probably the most worn:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 23-May-19 08:00 PM GMT

Nothing wrong with your last batch of shots Pauline, love them 🍷

I hope I see some Adonis when I'm on the holiday that will suit me, also a Grizzled Skipper if I'm not too late 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-May-19 08:56 PM GMT

I agree with Jenks and David Pauline – it was the song that did it, a "sweet fluid descending lilt" is how I saw it coined when I was starting out birding many, many moons ago – strange the stuff that sticks 😊 Loving the Adonis and did you find the Small Pearls at Bentley? I only ask as I was a bit worried that they might not have been there after the poor showing last year and so I've been trying to find out about a 'back up' site?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-May-19 07:04 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie – I'll keep my fingers crossed for you and you can let me know how you get on.

Cheers Wurzel, yes, I only saw 3 but they had just emerged. If this weather continues hopefully there will be more by the Bank Hol.

The last time I saw a Broad-bordered Bee-hawk moth was in my garden in 2008:



However, yesterday I was lucky enough to see a second individual and this time I made the most of it 😊 :





....even if it wasn't best placed for photos 😊

.....and despite seeing several Argent and Sable moths they really aren't the easiest critter to catch up with:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 24-May-19 11:19 AM GMT

Alright Pauline – lovely set of Moff shots 😊 I'm wondering if you've captured a Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk Moth? 🐝🦋 Your one seems to have two black bars across the abdomen separated by golden hairs and not the single reddish/purplish band of a BBBHM? 🐝🦋

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 24-May-19 11:20 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, a nice mix of 'different' and more traditional photos in your diary too 😊 Those Fox cubs are delightful and the Small Pearls really stand out, such a lovely little butterfly.

Hope to bump into you too, maybe this weekend 😊

Mike.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 24-May-19 03:09 PM GMT

Great shots Pauline, I would have thought for sure that was a Bee and not a moth if I'd seen it Pauline 😄 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-May-19 03:50 PM GMT

Wow! You did supremely well to capture it when it was grounded. I've only ever seen this species in flight. 🍷

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-May-19 03:54 PM GMT

I really need some help here and I apologise in advance if this is something I really should already know. I have inadvertently brought this larva in on Oak - from my trees (food for the PH) but it doesn't seem to be eating it and my first thought was perhaps a Comma? It could be a moth I suppose but it looks like it could be a butterfly. I hope someone can positively identify it so I can make sure it is put on the correct food plant.



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-May-19 04:01 PM GMT

What are you going to do with me Wurzel 😊😄. That'll teach me - whilst I was taking the photo someone said it was a Broad-bordered BH moth and at the time I had no reason to think otherwise BUT when I posted my earlier photo I should have seen that they were both quite different. I'm well pleased as it turns out as I have never seen a Narrow bordered BH moth 😊

That's what I try to aim for Mike so I'm glad you like them. You would have loved these fox cubs. Hope we get a chance to chat soon.

I reckon I got lucky David as it was in immaculate condition too but not very well positioned. Aren't you the ID 'go-to' David? Have you any idea about this little one?

I'm not sure you would, y'know Goldie - there's something quite different about them and they are bigger than you would expect but can also be really well camouflaged and hidden.

Re: Pauline

by MrSpOck, 24-May-19 05:36 PM GMT

I think the caterpillar is a moth, and you should try a mixture of leaves

I would try Oak, Sweet Chestnut, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Sallow, Willow, etc until it is identified, moth larvae tend to have a wider foodplant choice than butterflies

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-May-19 05:45 PM GMT

Aah, thanks Martin. If it is a moth perhaps its food plant IS Oak and if it is a moth that may be why no-one has suggested an ID. I'll keep an eye on it and bear in mind your advice. After all my other woes I don't want a death on my conscience 😊 but you more than most know how I worry about all these creatures. Good to read the Glanvilles are out in your neck of the woods. If I see any locally I'll let you know.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 24-May-19 07:01 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Well done on spotting that Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk Moth, I have never seen either species 🍀🍀🍀
I have to say though that your photo from 2008 of the BBBHM is superb...probably a once in a lifetime shot to catch it in flight like that in front of the pansies 🍀🍀

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-May-19 08:54 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Aren't you the ID 'go-to' David? Have you any idea about this little one?

You're right about me being first point of contact, Pauline, but I would have had to pass this on as I have no idea. Probably a moth of some sort.

Re: Pauline

by MrSpOck, 24-May-19 10:00 PM GMT

You should look for frass in the container.

if it doesn't eat any of the trees shrubs try some well known flower/low growing plants.

I would rule out a geometrid and most of the Noctuids, and I will check further in the caterpillars book, if you have the Margaret Brooks moth book look through that as well as it has photos of all stages of certain species. Yes would like to see the GFs in West Surrey.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-May-19 06:23 AM GMT

Thank you all so much for your help and responses – really very much appreciated. I am delighted to be able to say that it has started to eat the Oak and I shall let you know in due course how it progresses and what it turns into. If Allan is correct in his ID – and Sycamore looks like a distinct possibility – this larva may well turn into quite an impressive cat. I read that Sycamore moths eat Field Maple so as I have some in the garden I put a few leaves close to the Oak but it hasn't touched them. I also looked for larva that eats Oak but didn't get much a result from that so thanks again for all your efforts.

Thank you Neil – it is almost a relief to know there are some moths you haven't seen 😊 as the variety you get in your moth trap is impressive and much more diverse than anything I seem to get. Inspired by your latest set of moths my trap will be dusted off this weekend for sure!

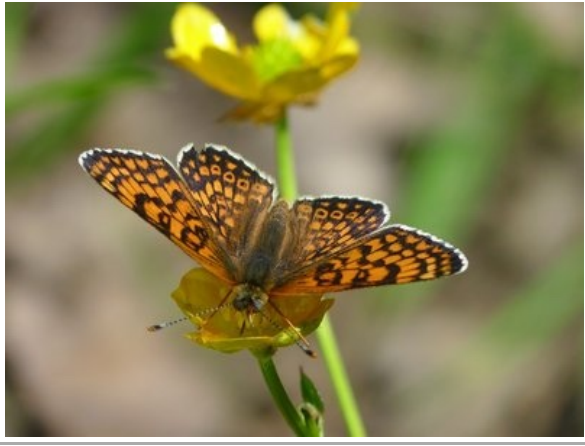
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-May-19 03:49 PM GMT

As the Glanvilles are out at HB I decided on the spur of the moment to pop up to Wrecclesham for a little recce. The place was alive with butterflies – worn Green Hairstreaks, fresh Brown Argus, Small Copper, vibrant Blues several Whites and of course the Glanvilles which are thankfully hanging on in this area. I only saw a definite 3, possibly 4 but I would love to know what the state of play is within the 'reserve'. A few shots from today:







Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 25-May-19 04:17 PM GMT

Just briefly stopping by to catch up (had to go back a few pages). I'm procrastinating at work but it looks like you've been having a pretty damn good spring so far and it's good the Glanville's are still hanging on there, great shots of them 😊. Like you say, it would be very interesting to see how many are on the other side of the fence!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 25-May-19 05:20 PM GMT

Great shots Pauline 😊👍 I was talking about whether they were still there with Philzoid the other weekend, and now I know 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-May-19 06:16 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – not sure it's worth a trip for 4 but there may be more yet (fingers crossed).

Now here's the thing Buggy – I have a wonderful physio who doesn't just give me the best massages, he actually tells me that as an aid to my recovery I must get out more with my camera and keep moving 😊 Well, who am I to disobey orders! 😊 Unfortunately I am not allowed (yet) to make any sudden movements or do anything which stresses the muscles until the injury heals so the following photos are a bit below par – many are massively cropped and whereas normally I would be down there photographing the egg-laying at the moment I am watching from a distance. You will have to bear with me for a couple of weeks. Anyway, as well as the Glanvilles, today I saw my 3rd ever pair of mating Brown Argus (2007, 2012, 2019):



There were a lot of them about:





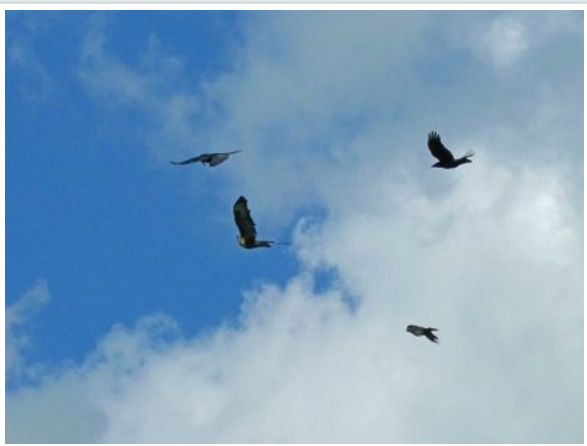
along with about 8/9 Green Hairstreak (this was always a good site for them):



egg-laying Blues:



and a commotion overhead but I dare not even guess at Buzzard or Red Kite (or something else 😬) being mobbed by crows:



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 25-May-19 08:42 PM GMT

Very nice Glanville shots, Pauline. I did wonder whether they persisted at Wrecclsham when I drove past on my last visit to Noar Hill. I may have a look on one of the coming days – after all it's not as far for me as it is for Wurzel! As you mentioned, it's always good for other species too.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by David M, 25-May-19 09:13 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

As the Glanvilles are out at HB I decided on the spur of the moment to pop up to Wrecclsham for a little recce. The place was alive with butterflies – worn Green Hairstreaks, fresh Brown Argus, Small Copper, vibrant Blues several Whites and of course the Glanvilles which are thankfully hanging on in this area. I only saw a definite 3, possibly 4 but I would love to know what the state of play is within the 'reserve'.

Amazing that they're still going. I think it was **eight** years ago when I headed out there after it all became public. Seems such a long time ago but I'm glad they're hanging in even though they weren't there naturally to begin with.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 26-May-19 03:37 PM GMT

Great in cop shots Pauline 😊 I'll keep an eye out some other sightings from there before making the move, if I get on with it I might be able to pick a few up on the way for some Wood Whites – mind you it seems that some of my previously earned Brownie points have gone past their use by date 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 26-May-19 05:59 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Thank you Neil – it is almost a relief to know there are some moths you haven't seen 😊 as the variety you get in your moth trap is impressive and much more diverse than anything I seem to get. Inspired by your latest set of moths my trap will be dusted off this weekend for sure!

Oh, there are plenty I have never seen Pauline including some I am never likely to unless I make special pilgrimages to far flung parts of the UK. I also seem to remember you having a fair few in your trap that I don't get around my neck of the woods.

That open wing shot of the female Brown Argus is beautiful, definitely one I wish I had taken 🍷😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 26-May-19 06:24 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Glanvilles, pauline 😊 and the mating Brown Argus 😊

Mike.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-May-19 07:41 PM GMT

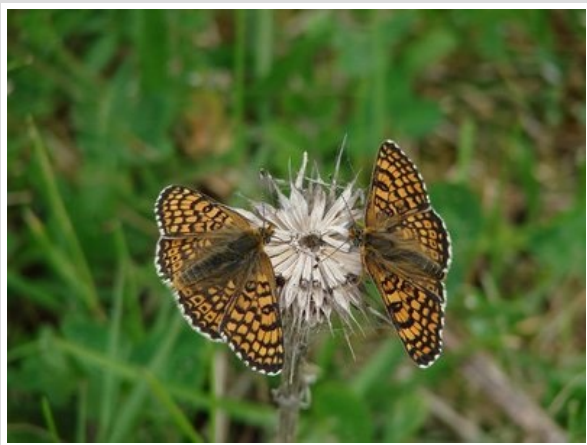
Cheers Mike – whenever I am up there with the Glanvilles it reminds me of the helicopter – an experience we sort of shared, but I shall say no more 😊😊

Hi Neil – that's very generous of you to say so. I took this one today but have no idea what it is. You know my views on micros and this was mini micro. I shall look it up eventually unless someone can enlighten me:



Thank you Dave – worth a visit if you don't have to travel far for sure.

That's a co-incidence David. I took my first shots of Glanvilles at Wreccllesham 8 years ago on 18 May 2011. I was there quite a bit that year so we may even have been there on the same day!



Cheers Wurzel – now re Wood Whites, here's a question for you. Who would go looking for Wood White Butterflies late on an overcast, thundery, showery day?? No, not even me. I have seen WW flying late on warm summer evenings but my business today was to check up on those eggs and see if I could spot any larva. I didn't even imagine I would see any butterflies as I was once told that they roosted in the trees – not so. For those who know the area from the BB car park I had seen about 20 flying half-heartedly and/or attempting to roost and that was before I even got to the 'hot spot'. I had just crossed the little bridge and was in the same ditch where I met Dave when I heard voices. There had been no other cars in the car park when I arrived. To cut a long story short, a guy appeared on the bend and once he saw me he started to call to the boy who was with him, quite urgently although I couldn't hear what he said.

Now I know we have had this debate before and I am sure nets can be quite innocent but as they approached me the conversation went something like this:

ME to the boy (non challenging) – 'that's a very large net for such a small butterfly?'

ADULT 'Oh, he only uses it with the moth trap – y'know, some don't actually go into the trap so he catches them as they fly around to identify them then let's them go'

ME 'You don't sound like you are from around here'

ADULT 'I'm from Scarborough but I've been here 20 years. A friend was telling me about the WW here so we thought we'd come to look at it'

ME 'Have you come far then?'

ADULT 'Only from the Camberley area'

ME 'I didn't expect to see any WW in weather like this at this time of the day'

ADULT 'Yes, we've been lucky with just a shower'

As they left they made a big show of actually counting all the WW they could see. I hope someone on here can reassure me. After all, most if not all the eggs must have been laid now but he seemed to have a lot of stuff with him (back pack, case hanging from his wrist, no camera that I could see). He hadn't explained the use of the net. Why would someone be out looking for WW at a time and in weather conditions when there was unlikely to be anyone else there? I left about 4.40pm but he still had not returned. On my way out I took a shot of the only other car in the car park. I had also taken a quick shot of them with the net.

So my point is Wurzel, if this is in any way dodgy, best get there whilst there's still some left to see!!! I'm including the shots just in case Tuts or anyone else may recognise this individual. Wouldn't it be great if he was reading this and told me I had it all wrong:



Re: Pauline

by meiga, 26-May-19 09:31 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Your micro moth could be *Glyphipterix fosterella*. Such a big name for such a small moth.

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 27-May-19 06:21 AM GMT

Makes you wonder, Pauline. I can honestly say, in all the sites I've visited over the years, I have never seen anyone with a net (in the UK). So thankfully netting seems to be largely a thing of the past.

Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-May-19 06:41 AM GMT

I reckon you're spot on with that Maurice – thank you. Another reason I'm not keen on micros – I can neither see them nor pronounce them! Why the name change Maurice?

I didn't see any larva yesterday but I re-found a couple of the eggs I watched being laid so perhaps I'm just a bit early:



So what did I learn yesterday? Well, I discovered that at Chiddingfold at least, WW do not roost in trees. Like the Blues they have a penchant for communal roosting with groups of 4-6 quite common and they quite favour Dandelion Clocks on which to do this:





Now as regards their little 'ritual', are these 2 both the same gender (2 males?) as they were both using their proboscis, taking it in turns:



and neither was adopting a submissive posture which is usually the norm as below:



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 27-May-19 08:46 AM GMT

My experience with Wood Whites matches yours, Pauline – they roost in little groups by the side of the paths, low down in the foliage. I've watched them late in the day unerringly seeking out their fellows after a last quick slurp of nectar and settling down companionably.

I'd forgotten about the ditch meeting, Pauline! 😊

As for the net... That chap seems to have been unable to give a credible explanation – that bit about moth traps sounds garbage to me. The most likely explanation would probably be the correct one, unfortunately. I've encountered people with nets a few times: one unspeakable individual taking Long-tailed Blues at Kingsdown in 2013, a suspicious chap up at Fen Bog last year eyeing up the Large Heaths, and a couple of others who were undertaking genuine surveys as part of their university courses and had documentation to back this up. Oh, and the two chaps conducting a broader entomological survey on my local patch a couple of years ago linked to the Heathrow expansion. Legitimate users always seem to be able to prove this. Hmm... 😞

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 27-May-19 08:59 AM GMT

Lovely Wood White sequence, Pauline. I was a bit early this year and only saw about eight. It won't be long before we are at the same location looking for something larger and more purple!.

Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 27-May-19 09:19 AM GMT

Lovely Wood White sequence, Pauline. Our experience of their roosting behaviour is as everyone else, they roost communally low down next to the paths.

We've encountered people with nets on a few occasions, and none when challenged gave a convincing answer. We found a bloke with a net at the Straits, said he was surveying Skippers, no note book etc. just a net. He cleared off straight away after being challenged! Hope that chap doesn't return to Chiddingfold when PE are about, they'd be like sitting ducks, worrying 😞

Mike.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 27-May-19 09:36 AM GMT

A great sequence of shots Pauline, loving the Dandelion clock shots 🤩👍👍

As for the netters...their story sounds like a load of rollocks to me 😞 If he used the net for around the moth trap then why would he need to take it out where there was no moth trap? Oh well hopefully the adults have done their thing and there will be a fine second generation that I might be able to get over for, fingers crossed 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 27-May-19 09:50 AM GMT

Lovely sequence, Pauline. You seem to have good numbers there, now. I'm pleased about that, for previous reports from there seemed to suggest numbers of WW were on the low side .

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 27-May-19 10:58 AM GMT

Beautiful butterflies Pauline 🍷🍷 especially the ones on the Clocks, wish I was there 😊

I've seen them at Gait Barrows with nets, different individuals, usually young, I just hope that's not why the Dukes are disappearing, still only a few seen this year. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by meiga, 27-May-19 02:07 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

It helps getting an i.d. when the images are as good as that one, showing its markings/features. It looks like it is freshly emerged, Yes they are small. I took a stab at it being closely related to one of the Cocksfoot Moths.

Can't say anything about name changes, I don't follow micros too closely.

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-May-19 02:09 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor. Probably the reason you don't see any guys with nets is the ridiculously early times you are out there – they're probably all still in bed! 😊😊 Looking forward to seeing you soon.

I reckon you're right Dave. I, too, have seen several in the past and one was collecting female PE – and being quite open about it 😊😊 Another was collecting Glanvilles (years ago) to take them into schools for educational purposes! I could go on but possibly even worse is the fact that youngster will probably grow up thinking it's OK to do that!

Trouble is Mike, what can you do? I don't know how Neil managed to secure that prosecution for the Large Blues but good on him – I think they searched the guy's property to get a conviction? All I managed was the car number plate!

Cheers Wurzel – that was exactly what I was thinking!

Thank you Mark. I didn't go far at all so yes, I'd say numbers are pretty good. I fully intend to return (yet again) so I'll let you know if there are any left 😊

Thank you Goldie. Perhaps the Clocks were soft on their feet, y'know, like a cosy pair of slippers on a cold night 😊😊 They definitely favoured them out of everything available.

Now, back to the little larva – the one I had a little panic over 😊 Well, he's doing fine. In fact I thought I had a second one until I looked more closely and saw it was his skin that he'd shed so I guess he is now 2nd instar:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-May-19 02:16 PM GMT

The night I was concerned about this little Sycamore, for the first time ever I inadvertently left the door open on the mesh cage outside which holds the immature stages. Would you believe it, that was the night both my Sallow Kitten and Puss moth chose to emerge. When I discovered it the next morning the Sallow Kitten was long gone but I managed a few shots of the Puss moth and the pupa from which they emerged (which I also posted last year):





Re: Pauline

by millerd, 27-May-19 04:15 PM GMT

I popped into Chiddingfold today, Pauline, and saw at least thirty Wood Whites between the bridge and the top of the hill, including that clearing on the left. Much egg-laying was going on. I'd guess that between there and the Oaken Wood entrance there would have been many more, though perhaps not as many as Bugboy and I counted last August in the second brood (a conservative 120 or so...). The population seems fine to me!

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 27-May-19 06:32 PM GMT

The Sallow Kitten was probably a male, as it would have called in a male [if one was around] if it were a female and you would have found a pair or the female alone, the next morning.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 27-May-19 08:29 PM GMT

Wow! That's an enchanting Wood White sequence, Pauline. It's almost like fairies frolicking about in some childrens' story.

Good to hear numbers are encouraging, though not so good that people are around with nets.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-May-19 06:13 AM GMT

That's good to know Dave. Hope you manage to find the Glanvilles (see latest pm).

I never thought of that Martin. Just my luck to get a male that couldn't wait to get away! 😊

Thank you David. I hope you are having a lovely time wherever you are. I had a very nice time yesterday looking at Common Blues close to home. I rarely put shots of these in my diary simply because I have never been able to do them justice with the photos I take. My images seem lacklustre when compared to that vibrancy and depth of colour that is so attractive especially in fresh individuals - and there was plenty of them about. Not so many years ago all of the females that I saw were of the 'normal' variety but various shades of Blue now seem to dominate. I have been looking at the many Common Blue Abs on a well-known web-site but I am not sure if these butterflies fall into any of those categories. What I am sure of is that it was a delight to see them and that all 6 females I saw were Blue:







Re: Pauline

by millerd, 28-May-19 12:19 PM GMT

Lovely blue female shots, Pauline. 😊 There is such variation in this butterfly between extremes that I would hesitate to call any aberrations as such, or attempt to match them to any particular named variety – almost every single one is subtly different. They are all beautiful, especially when fresh like this.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-May-19 07:13 PM GMT

Thank you Maurice for your very kind words 😊

Cheers Dave. I popped up to Wrecclsham this afternoon in between showers – I hadn't meant to, but y'know I just couldn't stay away 😊 I was pleased that I did as the first butterfly I saw was a newly emerged Glanville just drying her wings. She couldn't even fly properly and her maiden flight was something of a disaster as she fell down into the grass. Within seconds she was approached by a very amorous male. She tried to wriggle into the undergrowth but he persisted until he found her. She made further attempts to escape whilst in cop but after 3 short flights she gave up and settled down on a bramble leaf. I spent the next 50 mins watching them (this is becoming a habit 😊) and taking shots from every possible angle whilst the weather went through several changes of sun, showers and cloud. It's good to know that there will be Glanvilles again next season:

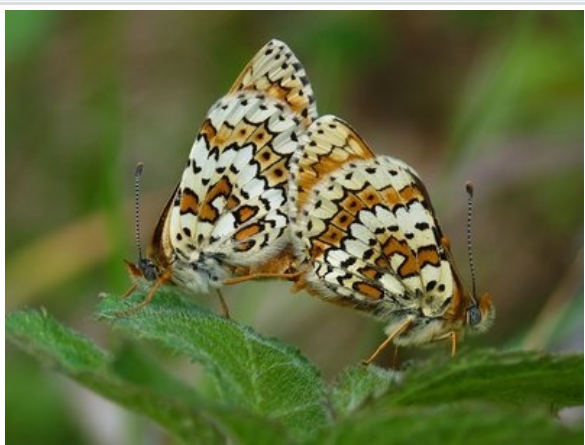


She didn't even have time to sort out her proboscis!





Just before they separated they became a little restless, shuffling around a bit. She put a hind leg on his wing - I am not sure whether it was to tell him to stay still or push him away!

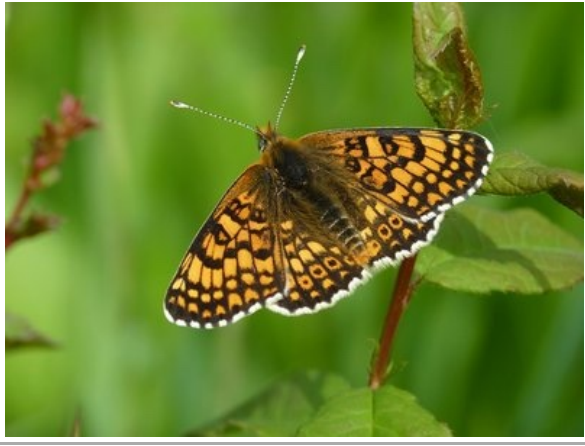


The moment of separation:



On my way out I saw another couple:





Worth an hour out of anyone's day. My physio is going to be sooo pleased with me 😊

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 28-May-19 07:41 PM GMT

Good to know the Glanvilles are still hanging on at Wrecclsham. I've never been there but understand the colony is long established, despite stories of sand extraction, and other disturbances.

Lucky Lady to get those shots, Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 28-May-19 08:49 PM GMT

Looks like you made the right decision to pay a further visit, Pauline. Those undersides are absolutely stunning. How I wish this species was commoner and more widespread in the UK.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 28-May-19 09:26 PM GMT

Really good to see, Pauline, great shots of the mating pair 😊 I had a feeling that the females were yet to emerge. Good news for the future, as you say 😊

Mike.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 28-May-19 11:01 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Pauline 😊 Good news that there should be some there next year 😊 Lush undersides 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-May-19 05:38 PM GMT

Very lucky Trevor 😊 I seem to remember reading once that this species actually needs a degree of disturbance – but I could be wrong!

You may remember David that the Wrecclsham site was as good as a nature reserve with a wide range of creatures. I've probably posted this before but this is where I took this shot:



What a waste! 😞 (no pun intended).

Cheers Mike – you need to get up there if you haven't already been. Just behind the marble bench (preferably a weekend 😊).

Thank you Wurzel – tho I have to say I do enjoy a trip to the IOW 😊

Just recently I have spent a bit of time watching Common Blues and those amazing Blue females. Interestingly, in the time I have spent with them the males have shown little or no interest in the blue females (although there are lots of them). Today I was determined to find a Brown female and the 2 that I did find were both in cop. The other thing I have noticed is that the blue females behave quite similar to the males (at least on this site), traveling large distances and skirting the ground as though they are looking for emerged females. I am not sure of the genetics. I had always assumed that the Blue females were the result of a recessive gene as they used to be less common. I am now wondering (in view of the fact that the males didn't seem interested in the Blue females) whether it is a dominant gene carried by the males. I am sure one of our scientists will put me right here. Anyway, here are the photos. I won't tell you how many I had to take today in the 'moderate breeze' to get a few in focus:





On returning home this was swooping over the garden sending the birds into a panic. I am 99% certain this time that it is a Red Kite:



Just a sneaky little update for the gardeners on that little strip of garden where I chopped the hedge down:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 30-May-19 06:56 PM GMT

"I am 99% certain this time that it is a Red Kite:" and you'd be 100% correct 😊

Lovely shots of the blues and some interesting ideas though I'm not up to speed on butterfly genetics. Saying that my money is on the blue females being caused by a 'gene complex', a set of genes working together as there aren't just blue or brown females but lots of graduations in between 😊 Just a guess mind you 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-May-19 08:14 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel. I am afraid the only genetics I have studied in any depth relates to 'Coat colour in dogs' many years ago but I'm not sure that translates to butterfly scales!

This morning I met up with a friend for a cuppa and a natter in her garden which is almost a wildlife reserve in itself. Various Demoiselles and Damsel Flies flitted around her various ponds whilst I examined all the Mullein larva on her plants:



We noticed her cat had something dangling from her mouth and thankfully this slow worm was rescued completely unharmed:



Whilst there I also took a couple of shots of larva on blackthorn. I wouldn't expect anyone to recognise the first but the second is very distinctive – if you look close up it is very colourful and quite a large beast. Any ideas?



Re: Pauline

by David M, 30-May-19 08:47 PM GMT

You always manage to post something that bit different, Pauline. Practically every time I read your diary I am taken slightly outside my comfort zone.

Good to see the slow worm escaped unharmed, and nice to see that corner of your garden that has undergone a personality transplant.

All we're missing is an update on your chickens! 😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 30-May-19 09:59 PM GMT

More splendid Glanvilles, Pauline! That looks like a weekend adventure for me, and this time I'll find the magic entrance behind the fur coats or whatever it was... 😊😊

I've also noticed how male Common Blues seem to ignore the blue females – it seems to show they rely a lot on sight to find a mate, rather than smell.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 30-May-19 10:18 PM GMT

Hello Pauline ,
I think larvae number 2. is Green brindled crescent.
Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 30-May-19 10:47 PM GMT

Lovely Glanville pictures from Wrecclesham, it must be at least ten years since I visited. I had no idea they were still there!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jun-19 04:18 PM GMT

All in good time David – got to keep something for a rainy day! 😊

millerd wrote:

it seems to show they rely a lot on sight to find a mate, rather than smell.

I believe so Dave – we have all seen a variety of butterflies land on flowers, discarded rubbish, clothing, etc as long as it is a similar colour to that of a prospective mate. There were a lot of blue flowers about (Speedwell?) but just like the Blue females they were ignored by the males. I mentioned earlier that from personal observation these blue females also seem to behave in a similar fashion to the males. What I am also seeing (after quite a few visits to this site) is that the blue females seem to have emerged first and it is only now that I am seeing brown females quite regularly (and quite often in cop). So it seems that the blue females share certain characteristics with the males that the brown females do not. I shall keep watching. A few more shots from recent visits:





You certainly know your moths Allan. It seems you are spot on. Thank you for taking the trouble to provide the ID for me. After a few little hitches the Dark Arches larva is also doing well.

Thank you Mark. They are not exactly where they used to be (well, they probably are but we can't get in there) but in a corner of an adjoining meadow where, I'm reliably informed, they resided prior to their existence on the main site.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jun-19 06:44 PM GMT

Whilst I am waiting for the explosion of posts which must surely come after this wonderful weather, including I hope some lovely piccies of the glorious Glanvilles to entertain me (well, there's nothing on TV tonight 😊😄), for my own records I shall add a few more from today which include a worn Small Copper and 4 Green Hairstreaks egg-laying:





So easy to walk past it without even knowing it was there which I did several times:



and all the while I was being watched:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-19 10:32 PM GMT

A lovely sequence of shots Pauline – especially like the last Greenie – it looks literally 'spotless' 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 02-Jun-19 12:03 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

All in good time David – got to keep something for a rainy day!

We might have a couple this week so I'll look forward to the update. 😊

Love the Small Copper images. They DO always seem drawn to asters.

More interestingly marked female Common Blues too. Are the ones with blue suffusion becoming commoner or is it that we're all paying more attention to them and neglecting to photograph the brown ones?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jun-19 06:13 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – there are still a few half decent ones around but obviously most are getting worn now. And yes, this lady was spotless 😊

Thank you David. I would like to think my observation skills have improved over the years but they haven't improved that much! I remember as recent as 3–4 years ago seeing a blue female up at Noar Hill which caused much excitement. We knew then that they occasionally cropped up but never in these numbers (although I can only speak for the sites that I frequent). Even now I can remember how active that female blue was compared to her brown counterparts. As of today I can state quite categorically that there are still many more Blue females than Browns on my local site. It is possible that because the brown females tend to be more sedentary than the blues I may have missed some but not to that extent. Another example from this morning:



In the interests of equality I thought I would turn my attention to the males, many of which are in fine condition. I fear I shall need a lot more practice before I can do them justice:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jun-19 06:29 PM GMT

Possibly the only person who may be interested in this post is Paul H. If I had found anything of interest Paul I would have emailed you but I spent an hour this afternoon scratching around in the leaf litter under specific trees at OWH without any success - not that any was expected but one has to try 😊😊 Needle in a haystack - and some!! It had come over quite cloudy and breezy but before I left I thought I might as well check out the Adonis (can't seem to do them justice either 😊):





This one was an Ab with a damaged wing but he took off before I could get better shots:



One thing I did find under an Elm leaf in a dark area (hence the rubbishy blurred pic) were these – I can't even tell if they are eggs, pupa or what?:



Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 02-Jun-19 06:34 PM GMT

Not so rubbish or blurred that I can't make out that those things are the pupae of something Pauline. Pupae of what I don't know but definitely pupae of some sort of insect, perhaps a micro moth 🤔

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 02-Jun-19 08:51 PM GMT

Those are lovely Adonis, Pauline! You've managed to capture that shining pale turquoise colour beautifully. 😊

Managed a morning with your Glanvilles: pictures to follow in about a week or so... 😊 There were getting close to 20 flying today, which was quite impressive. 😊

Thanks for the detailed directions.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by David M, 02-Jun-19 11:50 PM GMT

That's an absolute wall of blue, Pauline. I feel thoroughly ashamed to have been virtually ignoring Adonis in the Pyrenees last week, so common were they.

Your first image is yet another significantly blue female *icarus*. I'm actually going to try to take time out to search for the brown ones during this summer! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jun-19 06:55 PM GMT

That's fascinating Buggy. Wish I'd taken more care with the shot now. I've heard of gregarious larva but never heard of anything that pupates in a little cluster like that!

Thank you Dave. Glad to have been able to help. Looking forward to seeing your shots.

Isn't that just the way of things David? If something is relatively common it often tends to get ignored. Now I think I'm becoming obsessed!!! I had promised myself that I definitely would NOT post any more shots of blue butterflies..... but I was there again today as many of these females were waking up and catching the early rays of the sun on the bracken. Honestly, my photos don't do them justice – some absolute stunners:





...and what I think might be a Whitethroat?



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jun-19 07:51 PM GMT

As the sun was still shining, earlier this evening I decided to take a walk down my lane to check on the couple of dozen Orange Tip eggs I had previously noted. I was disappointed only to find one larva:



However, I was surprised to find 15 Brimstone larva in various stages of development:





I also spotted 3 Brimstones roosting only inches from the ground under bramble leaves and very well camouflaged they were:





Not sure what these eggs are but I guess time will tell:



... and a couple of other critters including several different Ladybird larva:





Back home just in time to see my Black Arches shedding his skin again to become a third instar:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-19 08:58 PM GMT

Cracking array of Blues and caterpillars Pauline 😊 Some of those females are more blue than brown 😊 You're right with the Whitethroat ID 😊 Great to see the Glannies at Wrecclesham 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 03-Jun-19 11:15 PM GMT

Your eye for blue is matched only by your eye for larvae, Pauline. Excellent set of images featuring the Orange Tip and Brimstone early stages, although it's sad that you could only locate one *cardamines* caterpillar.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Jun-19 04:22 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – glad you enjoyed your time at Wrecclesham 😊

Now here's the thing David – with the weather being a bit iffy I didn't want to go far so I thought I'd stroll down the lane and have a better look at those Brimstone larva. In under an hour I'd counted 62!!!! I probably missed many and there were more bushes to check but I gave up at that point. Don't worry, I'm not going to post all 62 but here's a few more:



They appear to be a sun-loving caterpillar that seem to 'sun-bathe' in full sight whilst being completely camouflaged – even the final instars could sometimes only be found by looking at the feeding damage, surprising me when I actually located it. On the topic of feeding damage it is surprising how much a tiny cat can do! The larva is in the background in this shot – that fly was paying it far too much attention for my liking and it wasn't easy to scare!:



I was pleased to discover several more OT larva away from the area where I had located the eggs:



I think this one had just shed its skin:



There were quite a few other interesting critters in this little patch – loads and loads of Ladybird larva, many of which I suspect might be Harlequin. In fact, having just looked at a website about Ladybirds I think those eggs I posted recently might be Ladybird eggs. Here's one having his dinner I presume:



and some sort of moth which I shall look up shortly if my pc decides to speed up 😊 :



Finally, a few which only the likes of Buggy might be able to shed any light on:





Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 05-Jun-19 06:05 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, I went to Wrecchlesham today to see what all the fuss was about, lots of fresh Glannies around still 😊.

Best guess of your micro moth is *Nematopogon* sp. (possibly *metaxella*)

Your Ladybird larvae is I think a 7 spot, that one is definitely not a Harlequin 😊

The two maggoty looking things are hoverfly larvae (another critter that feasts on Aphids)

The green fly is a Sawfly. A google search for green sawfly always comes up with *Rhogogaster viridis*, but there are similar species.

The Damselfly is an male Azure Damselfly, the black 'U' at the base of the abdomen is diagnostic with them 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 06-Jun-19 08:14 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Now here's the thing David – with the weather being a bit iffy I didn't want to go far so I thought I'd stroll down the lane and have a better look at those Brimstone larva. In under an hour I'd counted 62!!!!

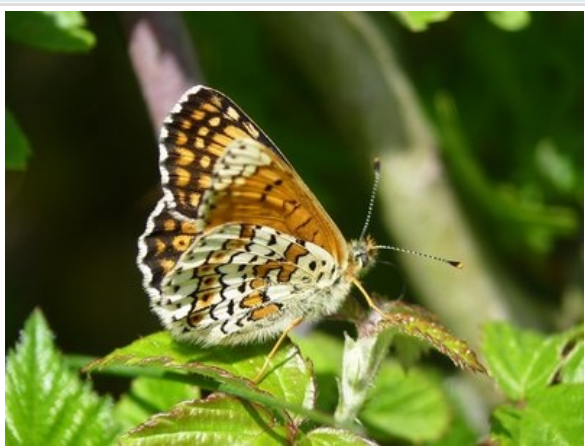
That's amazing, Pauline. They've had an excellent year (I saw a male yesterday even though they've been active since mid February). If I come across a patch of buckthorn I'll be sure to check myself.

Re: Pauline

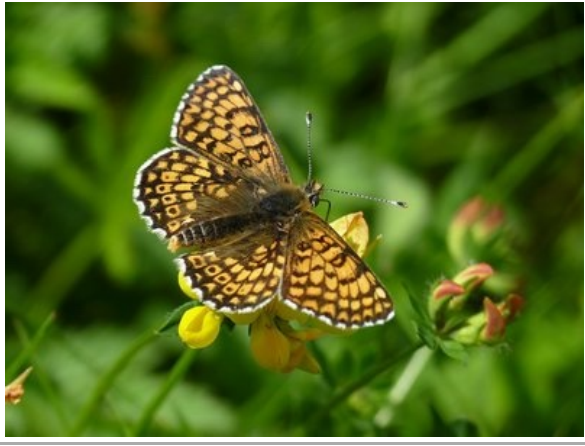
by Pauline, 06-Jun-19 05:31 PM GMT

It certainly surprised me David as it's only a little stretch of land. I think I might try to fit in a weekly visit and count again to see how many are being predated etc. I would like to be able to find a pupa in the wild.

I knew I could rely on you for those ID's Paul – thank you 😊 Wish I'd known you were at Wrecchlesham. I could've met you up there and we could have gone on to Noar Hill or elsewhere. I was up there again myself today. The weather was changeable but quite hot when I arrived and it seemed that the males were all having a feast – and then it all went quiet for a while. I spent over an hour watching one particular butterfly which I think was a female and almost certainly very fresh – but where were all the males? Having an after dinner snooze? Here's a few shots to begin with:







Now here's a view with a difference. Can anyone explain why there is a difference? Does it signify male/female or mated/unmated or age?



...and just a few more and then I have to jump in the bath!





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jun-19 08:35 PM GMT

I've read that article again that David kindly sent me but I am not sure that they are hair-pencils. It was certainly a male (and the other close-up I believe was a female). There were no females around at the time and they seemed to be a permanent fixture – when I first noticed this in the Small Copper he was able to retract them. Looking at previous photos they always seem to be present but I just haven't noticed it before 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jun-19 08:50 PM GMT

I am surprised that the Silver studded blues do not seem to have emerged yet at Bramshott. Looking back at my previous first sightings at this location for the last few years goes as follows:

2018 – 29/05
2017 – 30/05
2016 – 04/06
2015 – 05/06
2014 – 03/06

So a few more shots of the Common Variety whilst I wait:



Several mating pairs spotted but neither of these seemed to be in the first flush of youth:



Whilst I watched a Blue female, a blue male landed beside her but showed no interest and made no attempt to approach her:



Conversely, for 5 or 6 minutes I watched and followed as 2 males repeatedly made contact with each other. There was no territorial squabbles or spiraling into the heavens, just moving a few feet along the ground with one trying to land on the other:





and a few other random shots including this poor individual – always saddens me to see this:





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-19 09:17 AM GMT

Lovely set of blues Pauline 😊 Interesting that the blue female was ignored by the male can't fathom out why that would be? 😊 Some things have been later this year – we certainly don't seem to be having a standard 'June Gap' 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 07-Jun-19 10:57 PM GMT

With all these blue females around, perhaps the males are getting confused, Pauline? 😊

Could it be a situation akin to valezina Silver Washed Fritillary females, which are generally overlooked by males in favour of the nominative form?

Perhaps the male Common Blues prefer brunettes? 😊

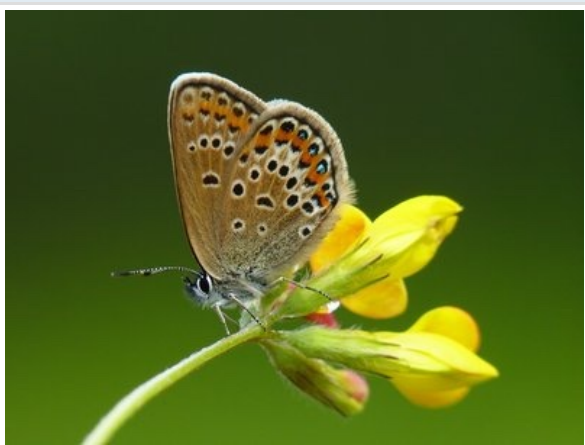
As for your individual with the damaged wing, surely he was able to fly? I've seen butterflies in a far sorrier state than this which were able to get about relatively normally.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jun-19 04:15 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, David – thank you for your comments. I couldn't even begin to try to interpret this strange behaviour I am witnessing. All I can do is to say what I have seen. The blue female and male clearly weren't interested in each other for whatever reason, but I have never seen such behaviour between 2 blue males before – very odd.

I have spent a lot of time recently watching the Common Blues – more than I would have done normally – as I was waiting for the emergence of the SSB which are now 10 days later than last year at this site. At last they have emerged! 😊 Well, actually all I managed to find between the heavy showers was one newly emerged female (unusual in itself as the males are usually first at this site). She still had that lovely oily immaculate glow which I was unable to capture as after a few shots my battery went dead 😡 Will I ever learn!!!! 😊 This was all I got:





Re: Pauline

by David M, 08-Jun-19 06:47 PM GMT

Interesting that your first SSB was a female, Pauline. Same happened to me late March with Orange Tips.

Good to know they're out, though. Such a photogenic species and I'm sure you'll be back (with suitably charged battery) to do further justice to them.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-19 03:11 PM GMT

I'm wondering if the two males had recently mated and in the process picked up the scent of a female – so they were checking each other out only to realize that the other was a male. Purely conjecture this of course but I've seen similar things in Blues and also cross species before? 😊 As for the SSBs – excellent news tat they're out and excellent shots to boot 📷📷📷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jun-19 07:29 PM GMT

Yes, I remember that David. I'm sure I'll be back before long.

Cheers Wurzel – that's a feasible suggestion especially if you have seen it before. They kept 'interacting' for quite some time before I eventually lost them in mounds of bracken.

Well, I'm sitting here with a large Sambucca!!!! Yes, that is unusual for me but Trevor knows why I am drowning my sorrows – and Andrew, and Mark and all the other familiar faces it was so good to meet up with. Every season I get at least one of those days – you all know the sort. Couldn't have been more frustrating – wrong place, wrong time, seconds out, poor decisions etc etc. What on earth am I talking about I hear you saying. Well, it's those Black Hairstreaks. The only ones I could find down low – 3 different individuals – were well worn and really tatty. This was the best of the 3:



It's quite possible this one is already famous as I have seen a similar shot elsewhere!

I did manage some shots of the pupa:





I also watched some bees mating – something I have never seen. I have no idea what sort they are:



I did manage loads of other shots including aerial and distant views but quite honestly they are not worth the space they would take up. All I can say is well done to Trevor, Andrew and the others and thanks for trying to help. I am now trying to work out when and if I can manage a return visit but it is looking a bit doubtful.

On my return I found this in the garden. I am not yet sure if there is a problem but it definitely shouldn't be out in the afternoon so I'll monitor tonight.



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-19 08:17 PM GMT

Fair play Pauline if that was the only shot I'd got I'd be joining you with a drink (though Sambucca isn't really my thing). Not drinking in consolation but celebration as I've never seen Black Hairstreak before 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Jun-19 05:51 PM GMT

Hey Wurzel, after 3 hours driving and a 4 hour search am I not allowed to indulge in a bit of self-pity for 10 mins? 😊😁 Just to make me feel better I am posting a few shots 'that I took earlier' – quite a bit earlier as it happens 😊





Re: Pauline

by trevor, 10-Jun-19 06:05 PM GMT

Although you didn't do too well on Sunday with the Black Hairstreak.
All I can say about your earlier effort is WOW! 🍷

Best wishes,
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 10-Jun-19 07:02 PM GMT

3 absolutely brilliant Black Hairstreak images there Pauline ,particularly like the middle shot !
We,re off to Ditchling area next week ,and I,ll settle for just seeing one or two on the wing ,that,ll do me . A picture would be a bonus ,
one of my missing 4 species . Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by John W, 10-Jun-19 07:27 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I'm sorry that you didn't have much luck with the Black Hairstreaks on Sunday. I had to leave early (about midday) but it sounds like I didn't miss much.
Strangely, it was much better for them on Saturday, despite the cold wind.

Cheers
John W

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 10-Jun-19 08:02 PM GMT

That Black Hairstreak is actually quite a fresh one – it's just really annoying a bird got to it before you did! It just shows the value of those tails and the false "head" they create in a bird's mind. Otherwise you wouldn't have seen a butterfly at all! 😊

Good to see that SSB are just starting to appear. Those shots showing brilliant turquoise studs are terrific. If we see some sun again after today's effort that resembled January more than June, I imagine they'll be out all over. Interestingly I think my first sighting two years ago was of a female with no males around.

Cheers,
Dave

Re: Pauline

by David M, 10-Jun-19 11:27 PM GMT

Mating bees? I'm certain I've never seen that before.

I was sure that only the queen could reproduce and that such activity took place in the hive?

No need to feel short changed regarding your wild Black Hairstreaks, Pauline. Just having them a 3 hour drive away is compensation, although that doesn't detract from those near perfect shots you achieved with your earlier specimens.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-19 09:14 AM GMT

Pauline, at least you got one shot which is better than none 🍷🍷🍷 I've never even seen one yet!!!!
Love the shot of the Hedge Hog but look out for Flea's, the last one I saw and took in was covered in them, that was it's problem,
let me know how you get on with it, e-mail 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jun-19 01:13 PM GMT

Thank you all so much for your comments. I eventually steeled myself to look at your diary Trevor – you did amazingly well under those conditions.

Good luck at Ditchling Allan. I imagine the females will be out when you get there and they seem to be much more placid than the males so I rate your chances of a photo quite highly. Please let us know how you get on.

Thanks for that John but there will be other times. It was just good chatting to yourself and the others I haven't seen for a while which is what makes the day really.

Yes, lots of SSB now 😊

Thank you David. I shouldn't think many folk have seen mating bees. The female was quite large, presumably the Queen and they were still there when I left after about 10 mins.

You know what I'm like Goldie – if I see damaged I want perfect, if I see a male I want a female, if I see a female I want a mating pair, if I get a mating pair I want 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jun-19 01:23 PM GMT

Given the relentless, unremitting rain yesterday I thought it was time to provide an update on the immatures. The PH have now pupated – a couple below:



and the couple of Brimstone I 'borrowed' out of the 62 I found are now also looking to pupate. I took the largest I could find so that when I look for a pupa in the wild I shall have an idea of what I'm looking for:





(this one seems to have a couple of tiny insects on it but I do not intend to interfere in case I damage it as this crucial stage)

Conversely, the Puss moth eggs have now hatched and both are eating well:



The Black Arches has today shed his skin yet again so I reckon he is now in his 4th instar. I have been loathe to disturb him just for the sake of a photo so that will follow. He rests in a vertical position on the twig and seems to become invisible!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jun-19 04:58 PM GMT

On the way to Sainsbury's this morning I couldn't resist the temptation of stopping off to see how the SSB's were doing. There were plenty of them about and I started by trying to compose a few nice shots but the strong breeze and the lack of time meant that I resorted to taking a few snapshots of them going about daily life. In no particular order:











A bit of help needed now – question for all the expert photographers. I assume this is a depth of field problem. Rubbish shot I know but I tried to grab a shot of CB and SSB together, one behind the other. There was no way I could get the 2 of them in focus. The camera was probably set to about f4 but only goes up to f8. Would it even have been possible to get these 2 in focus (assuming I had managed a half decent composition)?



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-19 06:48 PM GMT

Simply beautiful shots Pauline of the SSB's 🍷🍷 wish I was there again with you, lovely memories of our trip to see them Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jun-19 01:15 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie – SSS have to be my favourite of the Blues and so photogenic.....apart from these fascinating multi-coloured female Common Blues. I saw a few more yesterday including this stunner: not sure she should be described as blue, brown or pied!



and the 4th instar Black Arches:



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 12-Jun-19 02:10 PM GMT

Beautiful SSB again, Pauline - I will have to go and find some now, just as soon as the sun actually comes out for a bit longer... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jun-19 07:08 PM GMT

Cheers Dave - today I toyed with the idea of going back to Bramshott to take shots of them covered in rain drops. However, days like this are perfect for looking at immature stages and other bugs so I thought I would go and re-count those 62 (well, actually 60 now as I have 2) Brimstone larva as it's almost a week since I saw them. It's not far to go. A 30 second walk down the lane past 4 other houses, across a little road and you're there! Here it is for those that like scenic shots. Locals tend to use this area as a communal compost heap and I have had several nice plants from here that were obviously surplus to requirements and just dumped. Some have rooted and there are several very nice little patches of garden plants. But, it is the Alder Buckthorn we are mostly interested in. You can see that those down the centre of the 'ride' are small and discrete and although there are larger bushes/

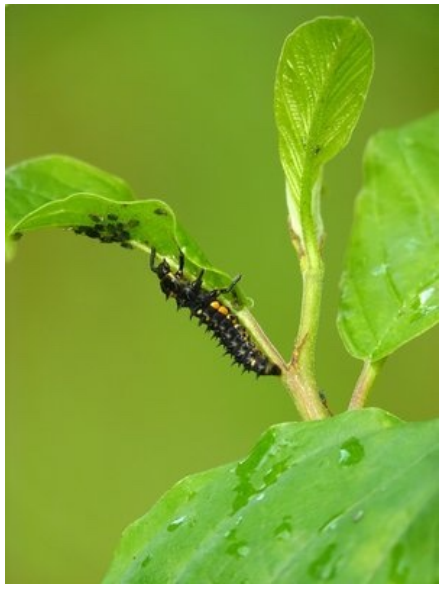
trees at the side of the woodland, it is these smaller plants that the Brimstone seem to favour.



I was disappointed but not entirely surprised to find many fewer Brimstone larva than I did on the previous visit and those that I did find were mostly considerably smaller than the ones I had counted a week ago. In fact, there were only 3 sizeable individuals and one of them looked diseased. Having seen a recent image in Guy's diary I initially thought it was a fungal problem but then I saw another (unidentified) larva which seemed to have little insects on it.



Clearly these cats don't have it easy as the Alder Buckthorn was also host to a mass of other creatures including spiders, aphids, Ladybird larva and a multitude of other insects – bees, flies, beetles and even the odd butterfly!





(Don't know what it's got hold of!)



(Don't know what the moth is but if you look carefully you can see the spider's legs holding its head!)

The eggs I had posted previously are almost certainly Ladybird eggs as I suspected, as I found some newly hatched larva just polishing off the last of their eggs together with several new batches of eggs and a multitude of different Ladybirds.





The mating Shield bugs were a bit of a surprise as I haven't seen these before. Orange Tip larva were also much in evidence ranging from really quite tiny to some looking ready to pupate. I still have not found a pupa. Not an OT pupa or a Brimstone pupa. Now here's the thing - today I could only count 29 Brimstone larva and I spent 90 mins searching both for larva and pupa. I find it difficult to believe all those advanced larva have pupated and I failed to find a single one. Having read how high the predation level is for all species it was not until I conducted this little exercise that the significance really hits home.





I shall be back to check on the new batch of Brimstone but with a lot less hope. Aside from all the bugs there are a lot of sharp eyed birds out there with lots of hungry little mouths to feed.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 12-Jun-19 11:12 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

..... A bit of help needed now – question for all the expert photographers. I assume this is a depth of field problem. Rubbish shot I know but I tried to grab a shot of CB and SSB together, one behind the other. There was no way I could get the 2 of them in focus. The camera was probably set to about f4 but only goes up to f8. Would it even have been possible to get these 2 in focus (assuming I had managed a half decent composition)?

One way of tackling this problem is by the process of 'stacking'. This can be a sophisticated process involving special software to combine several images focussed at different distances.

In your example, however, it is possible to take just two shots – focussed on each of the two subjects in turn. If you are careful not to move the camera between the shots, you can then select the sharp version of one of the butterflies, with the lasso tool in a photo editor, then cut and paste it over the out-of-focus butterfly in the other photo. Providing you do the selection carefully, while viewing at 1:1 magnification on the screen, this method can be very successful.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-19 11:23 PM GMT

Fantastic SSBs Pauline – you really got the oily sheen of the female 😄👍 Looks like I better get out there – but I'm finding this year that everything seems to be coming at once 😄😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 13-Jun-19 09:14 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...However, days like this are perfect for looking at immature stages and other bugs...

They are indeed, Pauline, and you have made a fine job of it.

Those Brimstone larvae are particularly interesting with the bugs attached. I wonder what's happening there?

Re: Pauline

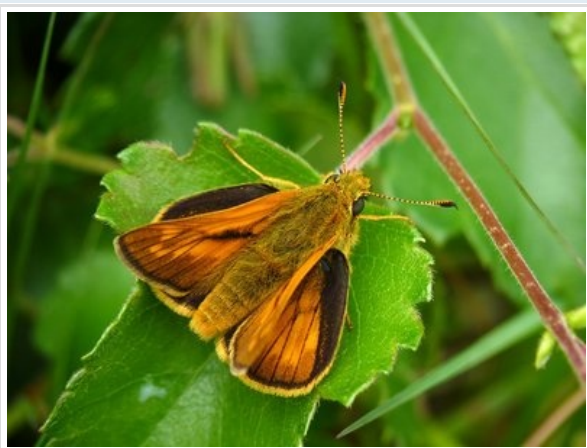
by Pauline, 14-Jun-19 05:07 PM GMT

Hi Mike – Hope all is well with you and Ros. Thank you for that suggestion. If the opportunity presents itself again I shall try to give that a go.

Cheers Wurzel – no June gap down here and yes, everything is starting to come at once (and you say that every year 😄😄)

Thank you David. I checked again today and more of the Brimstone larva have disappeared including the 3 that looked ready to pupate. Presumably, like Brown Hairstreak larva, they are quite capable of moving from plant to plant even though there is a fair distance between them. Nevertheless, I couldn't find any large cats anywhere 😞 Will I ever find a wild pupa?

We've had some rain this week for sure down here in Hants and my physio messes up a large chunk of the day so I only had time to nip up to Bramshott. I was pleased to see my first Large Skipper of the season (d'you know what Andrew, John – I just nearly typed Large Copper 😄😄😄 That's your fault 😄). It has been so long since I've seen one I'd forgotten what they looked like especially when they are fresh and very gold. Lovely!



A lovely fresh Brown Argus was another surprise:



Loads of Meadow Brown were hidden precariously in the grass and although they always move away I was cautious where I put my feet.

More of those beautiful females that I just can't ignore:



and of course what I'd come for – the SSB. These must be one of the easiest butterflies to photograph:





Re: Pauline

by trevor, 14-Jun-19 06:58 PM GMT

Lovely Silver Studs, Pauline. Hope I can get to see them this year. But I'm really looking forward to a much larger subject!.

Regards,
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 14-Jun-19 08:14 PM GMT

After your lovely photos, I am now itching to get out with my relatively local populations of Silver-studs, Pauline. The consistent grey cold and wet has been getting me down! 😊 Fingers crossed for the days ahead.

It's interesting reading about the Brimstone larvae you've been following. I have never yet found a wild pupa (nor an Orange Tip one for that matter) despite seeing a fair few larvae. I assume that they hide themselves pretty thoroughly, but also unfortunately I also suspect that the process of pupation renders them rather vulnerable to predation. A fat juicy morsel for someone... 😞

Cheers,
Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jun-19 08:55 PM GMT

I wonder what on earth that could possibly be Trevor??? 😊 Something bigger than a SSB but still blue??? I just can't imagine! You'll have to give me another clue starting with BB 😊

You need to get out there Dave – never mind the weather! They'll still be there I promise you! I'm really going to put in a bit of effort with these Brimstones. I mean, an easy count of 62 for starters and plenty more little'uns coming thru. How hard can it be?????? 😊 The 2 I 'borrowed' are pupating. This is a recent shot:



and my dear little Puss moth cats have both shed their skin at exactly the same time making them 2nd instars. I know I have done this before but I am fascinated by these little guys:



Puss moth beside shed skin.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 14-Jun-19 10:16 PM GMT

More lovely SSB's Pauline , I must admit though those lovely Female Common Blues take some beating 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 15-Jun-19 07:36 AM GMT

Is there a more photogenic butterfly in the UK than Silver Studded Blue? Such a delight to see those images, Pauline?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Jun-19 05:35 PM GMT

Thank you M. Have you noticed how many other folk are also seeing very blue CB females? Some stunning images have been posted recently.

Perhaps David – but this has to be the most approachable. I'm pleased you are enjoying them as there is more to come. Today I thought I would look for a mating pair or perhaps even an Ab. but all I found was Andrew!! 😊 Seriously, good to see you again A. but pity about the weather 😊. Together we shared an umbrella for 20 mins (AKA a Sycamore tree) and chatted about butterflies until the rain eased a little. You were interested in my backgrounds Andrew. Well, today I decided to experiment a bit. Tired of that garish green, after you left I started to strip off 😊 First was the black jacket which I laid on the grass (no wonder you're always covered in ticks I hear you say!). I'll leave the rest to the imagination and just post the shots:







Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 15-Jun-19 09:27 PM GMT

With regard to where Brimstone pupate, last year I found an empty case half way up Box Hill which even for me was a fair old trek from the nearest scrub/hedge where any Buckthorn would be. I initially assumed it was a Clouded Yellow until someone on here pointed out my error!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-19 07:33 AM GMT

Interesting seeing them on the 'grass' and flowers (I didn't do Botany at Uni 😊) as apart from one errant female I find all of mine on heather 😊 Nice idea with the background though my faves are the 'twofer' and the penultimate one 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 16-Jun-19 11:40 AM GMT

Lovely shots Pauline 📷📷 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Jun-19 07:16 PM GMT

Wish you could have been there Goldie! ... but you've been taking some great shots.

Hi Wurzel - there is little to no heather on this site so the SSB's are always on bracken or 'grass' (shall we call that Bird's foot trefoil? 😊). Interesting how personal taste varies. I like the 2 together also but my favourite is third from end as the background is natural but complementary.

Appreciate that Buggy. You might have saved me a lot (more) legwork. I've done a fair bit of searching but if they're not on the plant it's needle in

haystack time! I still think a fair few have been predated and I have found several more which seem to be diseased:



At 5.45am yesterday morning I was out there looking – I did not expect to see the number of slugs and snails which were roaming around these plants but in such wet weather I guess I shouldn't have been surprised:



There were half a dozen assorted damsel flies around:





and I THINK that this ladybird larva may have been shedding his skin. He appeared to be fastened to the branch by threads. Unfortunately I didn't have time to watch as the animals needed to be fed but I returned later to find a very fresh looking individual on the next branch and the 'threads' had been vacated:



One good thing to come out of this little exercise is the fact that I have seen numerous OT larva at various stages – some really small, some preparing to pupate and for the first time ever in the wild, not one but 3 pupa 😊



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Jun-19 08:00 PM GMT

Ooops! I forgot to mention. I noticed this fungus on one of my Oak trees. Tried to google it but could find no info. D'you think I should be worried?



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 16-Jun-19 10:13 PM GMT

More lovely Silver-studs, Pauline (I've been and found some now, so feel more relaxed about them! 😊). However, finding those Orange Tip pupae just causes another set of 🤔 ...I've never seen one, despite much looking over the years. Brilliant.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by David M, 17-Jun-19 06:47 AM GMT

I just love those SSBs, Pauline. 😊 Pretty sharp-eyed work with the other sightings. As you say, that ladybird larva looks to be moving to a new instar.

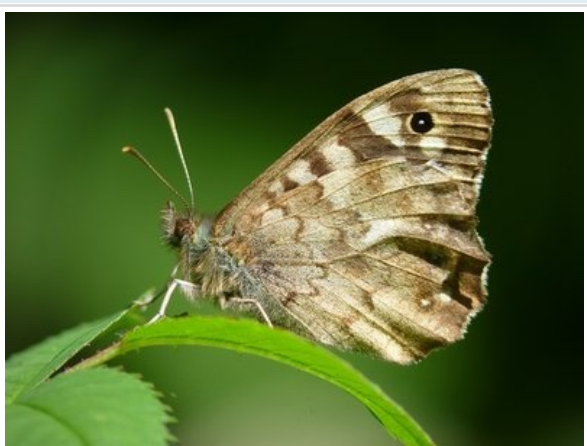
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jun-19 06:31 PM GMT

Pleased you've now had a chance to see them Dave. I'm sure the OT pupa is only a matter of time – but this is a good time (to look).

Thank you David. I would have liked to have stayed to watch that Ladybird larva but my whole day seems to be prioritised.

Today I thought I would have a (short) break from the immatures and look for WLH. I visited 2 sites. Nothing at the first but at the second I missed chance after chance 😞😞. At one point a fresh female landed in the grass in front of my feet but I STILL couldn't get a shot. The last time that happened was near Brighton in my first year of butterflying (I didn't get a shot then either!!!). I saw a second one land near a nectar source but couldn't see where and ended up accidentally spooking it. Honestly, I should be shot for the (lack of) performance today 😞 The WLH were very active – about 5 but as the season moves on they will calm down and it will get easier. As a result I shall just post a medley of the other lovely butterflies that were around and which really saved the day:





D'you see the pollen sacks on the proboscis?:



I believe monochrome is the latest in fashion decor - that being the case these Marbled Whites are just bang on trend!



I haven't seen many Small Torties this year hence the reason for including this:



and although this Ringlet was my first for the season it wasn't in the best of condition:



I believe this is what is known as a 10 pixel photo as it was taken from afar and severely cropped:



and last but not least a lovely Bee Orchid:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 17-Jun-19 06:39 PM GMT

Again great shots Pauline, I just love to get shots of Marbled Whites they're such an elegant Butterfly, hope I see some who I go to Kent. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Jun-19 04:25 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie - I'm sure you will, but mind, in weather like this you've got to grab what you can get. Not dissimilar to June 2012 when it rained here every single day and I remember standing under trees in a thunderstorm watching Purple Emperors fly!!!

It has been really torrential here with very few breaks so I think it is high time for a quick update on those hens (as requested 😊😊). For some reason unknown to me the other 3 hens have started to pick on my 2 Wheaten Marans (Candy and Flossie). I can only think it may be because they haven't got quite the space and freedom they had before 'the cat' 😞 I don't want injuries, bullying or stress on my patch so for the time being I have separated them out. The cat in the shot is my dear little Jaffa who is 100% trustworthy with all birds, domestic or wild 😊





On the butterfly front, I was returning home from physio at 3.45 and it was tipping it down. As I crossed the garden a Comma came whizzing past my shoulder so close I could hear it wings. It circled the kennels and I lost site of it.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-19 10:54 PM GMT

I feel your frustration Pauline – I had a day like that at Daneways last year 😞😞 – strangely the Ringlets and Marbled Whites saved the day on that trip 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 19-Jun-19 06:24 AM GMT

Wheaten Marans can be too docile for their own good, Pauline. They usually aren't interested in fighting back when they get bullied which presumably encourages **further** bullying.

You did right to give them separate space. Hopefully with time they will all get on better.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jun-19 04:29 PM GMT

I'm sure you're absolutely right David. It's more work having them separate but they can take as long as they need.

Cheers Wurzel – I expect to have a day like that once in a while but not 3 days virtually on the trot. First, the Blackhairstreaks, then the WLH and today the Purple Hairstreaks. Why did I ever think that Hairstreaks were my favourite group!?? 😞😞 To be fair it was the very strong breeze. At the start of the season I said I wasn't going to moan about it but I've changed my mind! It was really hard going today just to keep the butterflies in the frame, let alone trying to get them focused. Unlike some species, I have found over the years that Purple Hairstreak resent having their branch moved, however carefully. Whether it is trying to hold a branch steady in the wind they seem to detect this and fly off. Likewise, if there is an attempt to try to gently lower a branch for a better shot they also take off tho' who would be daft enough to try such a thing I have no idea! 😞😞 (I am STILL sorry Mark even tho' I say it every year). The changeable weather would have been perfect if it hadn't been so gusty as the butterflies would start to open their wings during a sunny period only to close them or have them blown shut. When I arrived at Browndown today it looked like this:



The shots aren't as good as they should have been and some are blurred but in the challenging conditions it was the best I could do:







As I was leaving the site I saw some pretty blue flowers quite close to the ground and thought I would take a shot to try to identify it. It is only now, looking at it more closely that I see there is something on it. Could it be that I have inadvertently captured the extremely rare Gilkicker Weevil? Anybody know?



Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 21-Jun-19 07:27 PM GMT

Considering the challenging conditions, Pauline, those Purple Hairstreak shots look pretty good to me 😊😄 Lovely job. That first one certainly could be classified as a hairstreak 🤔

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 21-Jun-19 07:29 PM GMT

Hi Pauline - you know you are forgiven after all these years - just! That looks like a beetle of some sort and the Gilkicker weevil is only found on Birds Foot Trefoil to the best of my knowledge? Worth looking out for at Browndown as its its only known UK site - or even Europe I think?

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 22-Jun-19 04:53 PM GMT

A full 10 points for those Purple Hairstreaks, they're firmly on my agenda(if they come down low this year). Also seeing your Chickens reminded me of two Bantams I had as a boy, named Noe and Neaves, after two female, dragon like, teachers at school.

Trevor.

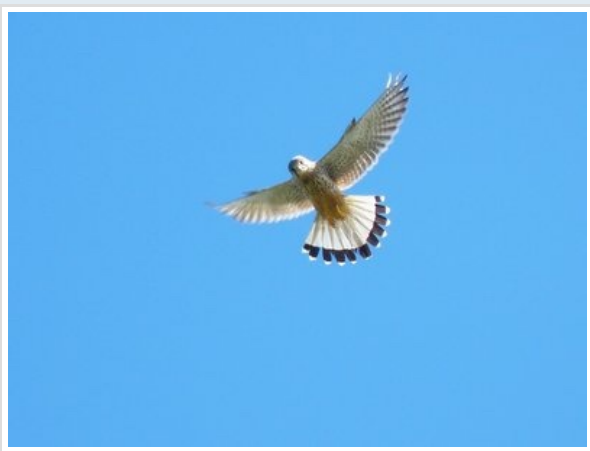
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jun-19 05:07 PM GMT

That's very generous of you Mike but I can't help feeling that without the wind I might have got something a bit special with all the wing opening that was going on.

In that case I shall never refer to it again Mark, but I was so mortified at the time I know I shall never forget it – an important lesson (or 2) was learnt that day! Yes, you are right about that weevil and next time I am there I shall make an effort to search some BFT.

I did find a few other things of interest there one of which was the birdlife. I am fairly confident in saying the first is a Kestrel and I THINK the second and third may be Skylark. I have no idea what the last one is:





These eggs are possibly Shield Bug eggs (seem to remember seeing similar in Guy's diary):



...and the Mullein plants were covered with Mullein larva:



This one appears to have just shed its skin:



My time was up, oh, so fast and I had to return, but early evening it was still so nice I thought I would wander down the lane and see how the Brimstone and OT's were doing. I didn't get very far as the midges were troublesome. I still haven't found a Brimstone larva though I searched various vegetation although the OT pupa were still there:



and these mating Shield bugs:



Back home the Black Arches has moved to the next instar:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 22-Jun-19 08:39 PM GMT

Those Purps still look mighty fine Pauline 😊👍 I reckon your unknown birdie is a juvenile Stonechat 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jun-19 09:25 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel and thanks for the ID – I think I know what the adult looks like and I would never have imagined that to be a juvenile Stonechat.

I'm pleased you like them Trevor. I am sure you will find your target if past experience is anything to go on. I, too, hope to see more of them at different sites but today was all about the WLH. Don't have time for the full report tonight – just a taster:



Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 22-Jun-19 09:56 PM GMT

Hi Pauline. Going back a few posts (!), I don't think your ladybird larva (eyed ladybird, *Anatis ocellata*) is shedding its skin in that first picture – or I can't see the skin, anyway – though it does look very fresh in the second picture. My experience of this so far is limited to exactly one instance, so I'm hardly an authority, but I suspect the silk is from something else. The one I watched (a harlequin ladybird) had white legs during ecdysis, hardening up to black in the air. I don't know if this is general.

Wonderful orange tip pupae. I hope I'm lucky enough to find some this year. And a really beautiful blue-tailed damselfly, with that metallic green thorax. The more I study these creatures the more I am drawn to them.

A lot of the pictures on this page don't load even though I keep reloading it, but the batch of shieldbug eggs does, and I can confirm that is what they are.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jun-19 06:42 AM GMT

Thank you Guy. Strangely, I, too, frequently find it difficult to view your photos which either don't load or only partially load. I wonder if anyone else has

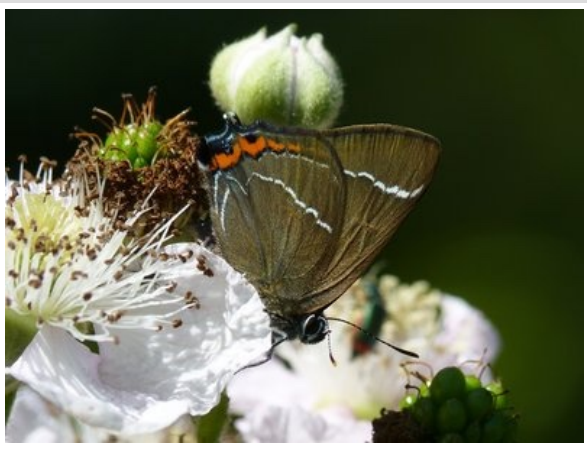
similar issues? Re Ladybird larva, I think you may well be right about the silk belonging to something else but the other reason I thought it was shedding was because the skin seemed to have started to 'split' which I hope is more visible in this blown-up shot?:

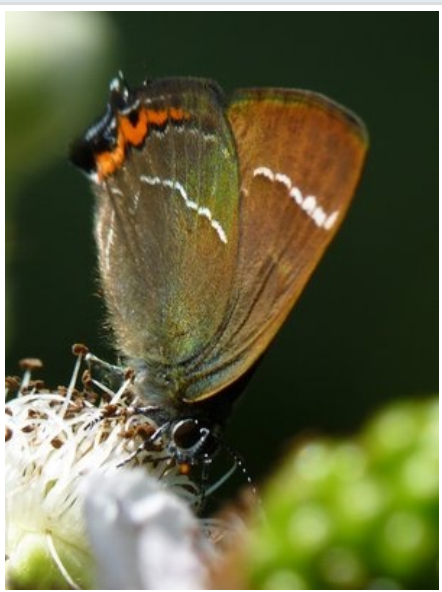


Yesterday I had a wonderful time at a local WLH site where I saw a great deal of close-up activity during the whole time I was there. I had to drag myself away as there were frequently 3-4 WLH at close range at any one time. My guess is that they had only recently emerged as there was no sign of any 5 days earlier and the weather in between hasn't been great. A conservative estimate would be half a dozen males and a couple of females, many with that oily sheen so indicative of a newly emerged butterfly. The WLH repeatedly came down to nectar on the daisies and although I have seen this before it is usually at the end of their season when the bramble has gone over. Marbled White and Meadow Brown were egg-laying all over the site and I was pleased to see both 3 Painted Ladies (in various states of wear and tear) and my first Essex Skipper of the season. Other butterflies included Red Admiral, Common Blue and a single Ringlet. If anyone is planning to visit this very small site, please, PLEASE try to stay to the couple of 'tracks' that have already been established to avoid spoiling the butterflies environment.











On Friday it was the wind which was troublesome. Today it was the light. The position of the brambles means it is often necessary to shoot into the sun so the contrast issues of the dark butterfly on a white flower were magnified by the glare. As usual I did my best.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 23-Jun-19 07:27 PM GMT

That's a real Hairstreak-fest you've enjoyed lately, Pauline.

I only wish I had a site near me where the WLHs come down to nectar like those in your post. Sadly, my local ones seem permanently wedded in the tree canopy. 😞

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 23-Jun-19 07:31 PM GMT

Terrific White –Letter shots Pauline ! a species that I struggle with in my neck of the woods,we have a regular site closeby but they nearly always stay from mid-way to the top ,of one huge Wych Elm ,they are occasionally seen lower ,on a few Elm Suckers ,but not often and I,ve only seen one on a Bramble by the tree ,just once. Add Purple Hairs to the equation (they also seem to like the tree !) which makes id that bit more challenging ! Thanks for comments re;Black Hairstreaks..... I got lucky !
Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jun-19 08:57 PM GMT

Thank you Allan. It must be incredibly frustrating – well , I know it is – to see Hairstreaks that won't come down but you really did amazingly well with the Blacks. Yes, an element of luck but don't forget the field craft and observation and photography skills involved 😊

I'm enjoying it so much David that despite the overcast and humid weather today I just had to go back for more. I got there early-ish and was amused to see a couple of WLH down on the daisies lying on their sides in the same way as they do up on the Elms to soak up the first bit of available sun. I didn't see any females on this visit but there was still plenty of activity. The Painted Ladies had moved on but there were a couple more Essex Skippers, mating Meadow Brown and a host of other things including a stunning metallic green beetle which I believe is a male Flower Beetle. I was hoping for a mating pair but it was not to be 😞 . A few extra shots of these lovely creatures:



The Essex Skipper – such a charismatic and photogenic little creature:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-19 11:18 PM GMT

A cracking set of Whitters Pauline 🤔🇩🇪 I have limited experience of this species so is the double white line on some of the 'W's' usual? As for the photos not loading I suffer it too – I either have to click and load each image individually or click to make a reply and then all the images seem to show up?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-Jun-19 06:40 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...I'm enjoying it so much David that despite the overcast and humid weather today I just had to go back for more...

I don't blame you, Pauline. I'm enjoying it too (albeit vicariously)! 😊

Interesting to see their 'warming up' technique. I've seen Brimstones doing this but never any of the Hairstreaks.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Jun-19 02:41 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – good to know Guy and I aren't the only ones to have that problem. I believe that extra white line is normal Wurzel but what I haven't seen before was this one which hasn't really got the white W:



Pity you weren't closer David – but as you have said before, it's swings and roundabouts. You will see species I never will. I have seen the 'warming up' positions many times when they are high in the trees but I have never seen it down low before. Usually when they come down to nectar they are fully charged up but perhaps with the weather being so changeable they got caught out?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Jun-19 03:01 PM GMT

I've only gone and done it and I admit that I'm feeling pretty pleased with myself 😊. In the last couple of days I have found a wild Brimstone pupa on Buckthorn and another preparing to pupate along with a further 5 fat cats which I shall try to monitor. It has taken a bit of effort and persistence but with a starting point of 62 larva I always thought it might be possible. Buggy reminded me that he had found an empty pupal case half way up a hillside but over the years I have come to realise that butterflies (in all stages) can behave differently depending on a number of factors and a one-off experience shouldn't be taken as the norm. Vince kindly gave me the benefit of his experience which was that more than 50% pupate away from the food plant but I reckoned that still left a few to be found. I also found that fact interesting given my belief, which I have held since rearing WLH, that the WLH larva vary in where they pupate ie soil, branch, leaf – something which Paul is working hard to prove. It was interesting to hear of another species which does this. Anyway, the photos – which I am still excited about 😊😊:



Just look at how beautifully camouflaged it is. I have checked these bushes over and over again and either I missed it or it wasn't there at the time. This is the bush it was on:





I should add that if it hadn't been for rearing 2 which are still in the pupal stage I might have found the task quite a bit harder:



Never let it be said that I don't like a challenge 😊😄

Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-Jun-19 11:57 PM GMT

A challenge it may be, Pauline, but you've put the effort in so you should expect some rewards.

Brimstones have had an amazing spring this year, so I'd like to think there'll be plenty about when the current crop of second brooders emerge next month.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jun-19 11:24 AM GMT

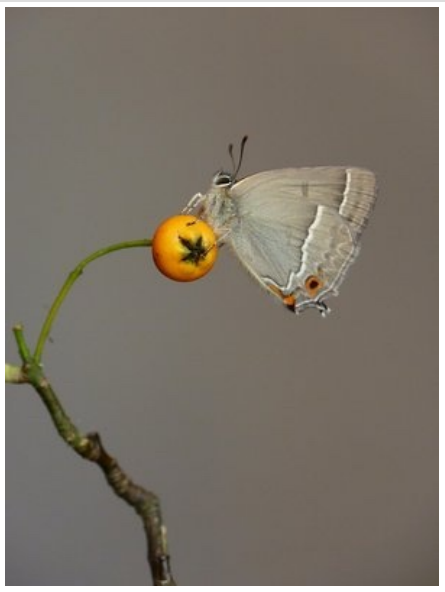
Thank you David. Effort doesn't always guarantee success with these creatures but I reckon I'm getting better at finding them 😊

My reared Purple Hairstreaks are starting to emerge bang on time so I reckon it's time for a few more piccies. I haven't seen any of this batch emerge so far but unlike 5 years ago I haven't spent a lot of time watching. Is it really 5 years ago! 🤔





and a few from before:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jun-19 02:38 PM GMT

Re: monitoring of 5 fat cats – yesterday on my evening check I discovered this :



1 down 4 to go 😊

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 25-Jun-19 06:40 PM GMT

Congrats on your reared Purple Hairstreaks, and the resulting images.
In the wild it is very difficult to photograph the overall purple sheen of the male.

Great stuff.
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 25-Jun-19 08:20 PM GMT

Terrific shots of the WLH, Pauline. They really do perform colour-changes depending on their angle to the sun, and like you say they have an annoying knack of silhouetting themselves against the light, so you did really well.

Your shots of the shiny new Purple Hairstreaks are excellent too – it would be great to encounter a fresh male like that in a wood one morning... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jun-19 06:56 AM GMT

That's very gracious of you Trevor as I know how much you want that 4 purple-wing shot. These were all taken post-release and I didn't have very many seconds to get in the right position for the shots once the wings opened – spun round once and then they were off. Had I had time to 'set-up' the shot I would have chosen a background that was more pleasing.

That's very kind of you Dave. I guess it's the challenges that keep us coming back for more!

Yesterday I popped up briefly to Bramshott to see how the SSB's are faring. I didn't spend much time with them as it happens as I was distracted by another 3 Painted Ladies – that's 6 now which is more than I saw in the whole of last year. At one point they were all in this bush together:



and this one was nicely camouflaged among the rabbit droppings:



I saw this egg being laid by a very blue female common blue so obviously they manage to attract the males at some point, but can anyone hazard a guess at what laid the egg next to it or even the plant it is on??:



Anyway, there were plenty of females around, none of which looked particularly fresh, but as yet no mating pair:





Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 26-Jun-19 08:47 AM GMT

Lovely series of shots of the White-letter Hairstreaks, Pauline 📷🌿 a butterfly that I've yet to see at close quarters!

Mike.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jun-19 04:53 PM GMT

Thank you Mike. Good to hear from you 😊

Guess I've moved on to the woodland species:

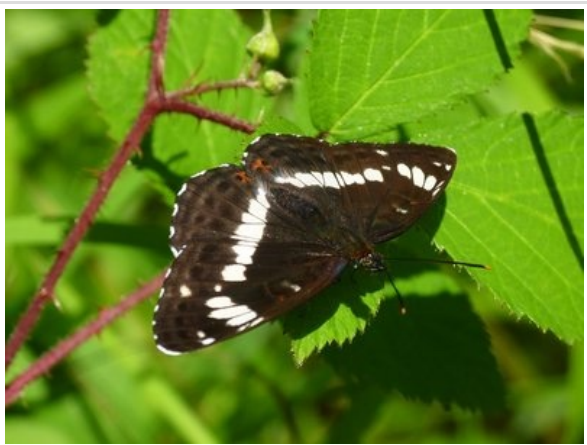


It was quite accidental. I thought I would make a further trip to Chiddingfold to see if I could find a Wood White larva (still flushed from my success with the Brimstone pupa 😊). It was not to be but I did find the adult:





I saw a very fresh SWF which just passed by but this White Admiral was more accommodating:





and another 3 Painted Ladies bringing my total up to 9. These were in much better condition than the previous ones. I watched one egg-laying on some thistle but my shots are blurred – I could weep 😞



There were lots of other butterflies:



.... and 3 frogs and 1 toad!



Note to Trevor: I kept my eyes peeled but not so much as a glimpse of PE.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 26-Jun-19 07:33 PM GMT

Thanks for that, Pauline. Had the weather been better I would have gone to BB today. As it was, I went to my local woods and had a fabulous time, despite wind and cloud!.

Checking various websites, PE's are now slowly emerging.

All the best,

Trevor.

PS. Wonderful WA shots, saw four today.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-19 02:08 PM GMT

A cracking haul of shots Pauline 😊 Now you've ventured forth to the woods it must be about time for me to too 😊 Judging by the loss of some scales etc I take it those are still first brood Wood Whites? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Jun-19 04:29 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor – I was quite pleased with that WA shot myself 😊

Definitely first brood Wurzel. I'm waiting to see Trevor get one in the same shot as a PE 😊 😊

At last I got my mating pair – I just ran out of time today following several unexpected incidents so had no choice other than to stay very local. This is the site near me where the SSB's are to be found. It is very different to their usual habitat:





Re: Pauline

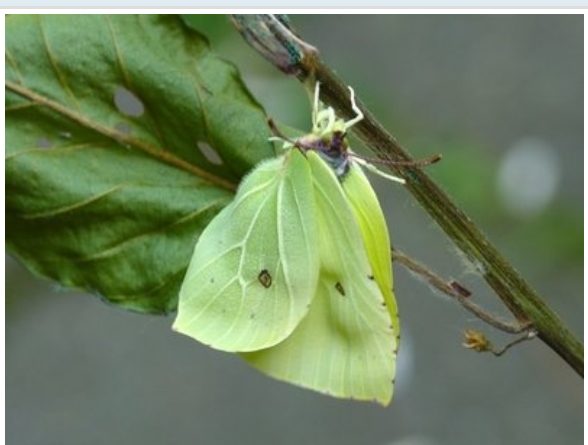
by Pauline, 27-Jun-19 05:18 PM GMT

This morning, having checked my captive Brimstone pupa which had started to colour up, I sat down with a cup of coffee to decide whether I should risk leaving it for a few hours. As I was mulling it over I noticed an almost imperceptible movement so I ran to get my camera. By the time I returned it was obvious the emergence had started but with a strong gale and the spinning of the butterfly well, both me and the camera struggle to cope. I've never seen this before and it is fascinating how one species differs from another. This was the pupa 40 mins before emergence:



.... and the shots as it moved down the casing, emerged and pumped up its wings:







It's wings were so soft and floppy for such a long time that I brought it indoors for an hour as I worried the strong wind would blow it away. It took almost 4 hours before it felt ready to take its maiden flight.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Jun-19 06:22 PM GMT

Just been looking at a few shots of that Brimstone. The 6-7 black markings on the rear wings – are they defined enough to qualify this as the Ab. Hoefnagoli?





Re: Pauline

by millerd, 27-Jun-19 08:25 PM GMT

Lovely sequence, Pauline. 😊👍

It's amazing to think that this butterfly could still be around in twelve months time... 😊 Let's hope so.

No Emperors at Chiddingfold today either, but there were still half a dozen first brood Wood Whites gamely fluttering along in the sunshine.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 27-Jun-19 08:56 PM GMT

Stunning Brimstone and Purple Hair ; sequences there Pauline ,expertly captured ! The Hairstreak on the berry (?) is superbNice one ! Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-19 10:44 PM GMT

Fascinating sequence Pauline 😊 Those marks do make it the unpronounceable aberrant that you reckoned 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 28-Jun-19 11:29 AM GMT

Great shots Pauline, 😊 you always seem to pull some thing out of the hat 😊 I took the plunge with your phone call 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Old Wolf, 28-Jun-19 03:03 PM GMT

Hello Pauline, I am catching up on diaries and yours is nothing short of amazing!!

The PHS shots are incredible. It must have been a sight to behold, have a few of these 📷📷😊

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 28-Jun-19 03:16 PM GMT

I have to be honest here. There are a lot of diaries on ukb and I can't possible look at all of them. You Pauline don't seem to post much on general forums (such as sightings) and I hadn't bothered with your diary (sorry!) That has changed.

Your writings are informative and the photos are equal to the very best on ukb. I didn't realise what I had been missing - I am now a fan.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jun-19 07:51 PM GMT

Blimey Pauline, I didn't realise how far behind I am getting with other peoples diaries until I saw what I have missed in yours. I don't know where to start but suffice to say you have posted some stunning images lately, and 'stunning' is a word that is often overused these days and one I don't like to use myself.

Lovely stuff 😊

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 28-Jun-19 08:49 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Brimstone emergence, Pauline 😊 great to see. And you got the White Admiral too 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jun-19 09:46 PM GMT

Thank you Dave - I'm now seeing Brimstones from a different perspective.

Really appreciate your comments Allan - glad you liked the shots.

I'll take that as a given then Wurzel - never too sure about claiming to have seen an ab. with so much variance around. Thank you for the confirmation.

Thanks M. Chin up - that boot will soon be off.

Good to hear from you Old Wolf but you're making me blush 😊 I just try to do the best I can.

Hi Jack, no need to apologise. My diary is primarily as a reminder to myself (my memory is shocking these days 😊). Glad you like the content tho and hope to hear more from you.

That's really kind of you Neil. In fact I feel overwhelmed by all the lovely comments.

Glad you found your target Mike 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jun-19 09:56 PM GMT

Ab. Obliterae???





Re: Pauline

by millerd, 28-Jun-19 10:30 PM GMT

I wouldn't like to give it a name, Pauline, but that is an amazing Black Admiral... 🤔👍👍👍😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 28-Jun-19 11:02 PM GMT

Yours looks darker than an *obliterae* that I photographed in Fermyn Wood in 2010 but the white bands are not completely absent, as in *nigrina*. I'd suggest it's *obliterata* as described at <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/aberrations.php?species=camilla>

An interesting and unusual find 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 29-Jun-19 09:04 AM GMT

Don't know what it's called Pauline but what a great find 🤔👍👍😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 29-Jun-19 01:28 PM GMT

What a stunning Black Admiral. It *almost* has a bluish sheen.

Your camera and set up please Pauline.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 29-Jun-19 03:10 PM GMT

Nice Black Admiral Pauline, I suspect there are a fair few around this year. Dave and I have already seen two and they've only just started flying. That cold spell in June is most likely the cause, I wonder if will have a similar effect on its Purple cousin.... ?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jun-19 06:53 PM GMT

It's about 8 years since I have seen one Dave so I was really quite excited. It was pristine too 😊

Thank you Mike – I think you could be right. The last one I saw was found not by myself but by Colin Baker I believe – he was one of the nicest of folk and a real gentleman.

Cheers Goldie – just goes to show, you never know what might turn up!

I hope both you and Dave got some good shots Buggy. I shall look forward to seeing them idc. I have been told that these butterflies can be difficult to photograph as they heat up quite quickly due to the colouring and retreat to the shade/bushes. That was certainly the case here as I couldn't get anywhere near and had about 3 seconds at most for each shot. From memory it was a similar scenario last time one was seen at this location with many photographers waiting many hours for a brief appearance of the butterfly.

Let me tell you exactly how it was Jack as you are quite right, there was a definite blue/purple sheen and it even circled round me in the manner of a PE. In fact that's exactly what I thought it was initially and my heart started to pound (don't think I'm really cut out for this as I get excited too easily 😊). I soon realised it was too small for a PE and the next ridiculous thought which came to mind was Purple Hairstreak (because of the colour you understand). I quickly dismissed that again on size and eventually realised exactly what it was. I had the pleasure of it's company only for about 10 minutes as it was getting late in the day. I tried again early this morning but no sign of it – or any PE's! Oh, and by the way, my set up is exactly the same as Neil's and many others on this site.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jun-19 07:01 PM GMT

It has been so hot today I thought I would take the opportunity to post what is probably the worst photo I have ever taken – yes, it is that Painted Lady egg-laying. I don't know what went wrong but I only had the one chance – she didn't lay again. I took a photo of an egg I found in the place where she had briefly settled. It was ever so small and embedded into the thistle – if indeed it is a Painted Lady egg as I haven't seen one before and imagined they would be larger. Mind, I had also always assumed the stalk of a thistle was cylindrical until I looked closely and it really isn't. There's lots of channels and indentations where eggs can be hidden away:



😞😞😞



Re: Pauline

by kevlng, 29-Jun-19 07:50 PM GMT

Wow Pauline, that's a fantastic *ab* admiral you found. You don't see many photos of them.

Regards
Kev

Re: Pauline

by Neil Hulme, 29-Jun-19 08:12 PM GMT

Hi Pauline
Just to confirm that you got an *ab. oblitterae*. Very nice!
BWs, Neil

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 29-Jun-19 11:19 PM GMT

Some really nice pictures recently, Pauline! Love the Brimstone sequence. And for your black White Admiral? You get one of these, or possibly two. 🇮🇪

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-19 11:22 PM GMT

That is a fantastic aberration Pauline 🇮🇪🇮🇪🇮🇪🇮🇪 I met Colin once and I echo your memory of him, a real gent 😊 I don't know about the egg but there's only a few more months until a book that will have all the answers comes out 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 30-Jun-19 01:23 PM GMT

I don't really know what to say about that 'Black' Admiral. other than it is quite extraordinary.

What a find, Pauline.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 30-Jun-19 06:12 PM GMT

Just echoing what other have said about that 'black Admiral' Pauline.

It kind of reminds me a bit of one of the Asian 'Crow' butterflies.

Lovely stuff,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 30-Jun-19 07:20 PM GMT

ab. oblitterae.

Does anyone know if this is genetic or the result of environmental condtions (eg period of cold or extrme heat at a critical time)?
I suspect the latter.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jul-19 02:17 PM GMT

Thank you Kev. I tried to re-find it a few times but without success.

Cheers Neil – good to Know.

Really appreciate that Mark. I've gone off Brimstones somewhat 😊😊 – you'll soon understand why!

I was really quite excited Wurzel. It's one thing when someone finds it for you but just a little more special when you've spotted it yourself.

The photos don't do it justice David. When flying it had a really lovely blue sheen to it. I wanted a second bite of the cherry but it wasn't to be.

Thank you Neil. I have no idea what they are so I shall look them up in a minute.

Hi Jack, I'm GUESSING that it is environmental conditions but there are folk on this site who will know better than me.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jul-19 02:22 PM GMT

Better late than never. Good to see some familiar faces and a pleasure to meet Terry:





Reckon that'll do for starters.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M., 01-Jul-19 04:22 PM GMT

Pauline!! your a lucky so and so, from Admiral's to Emperor's 🤔🌿🌿 wish I lived nearer to you, you've an Aladdins cave right next door 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 01-Jul-19 06:47 PM GMT

Great find with the "obliterae " Pauline ! Nice One ! I was lucky to find an "Obliterata" in Orlestone forest (Kent) in the mid-80.s ,and apart from a couple of possibles (at distance) since ,I,ve never seen another !
Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 01-Jul-19 07:26 PM GMT

First the 'Black' Admiral and now the lovely shots of his nibs, you're certainly on a roll, Pauline 😊👍

Mike.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 01-Jul-19 07:33 PM GMT

Well found Pauline, so their off !.

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 01-Jul-19 10:10 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, I think the consensus is that cold nights can contribute to the emergence of dark White Admirals, especially chrysalis that have formed in frost pockets. It may be the contrasting high day to cold night temperatures as well. Such conditions are common during late spring early summer- the time WA is at the large caterpillar and chrysalis stage.

Whether I am correct or not, it is a fabulous specimen, and nicely photographed by your good self!

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 01-Jul-19 10:40 PM GMT

[quote]I think the consensus is that cold nights can contribute to the emergence of dark White Admirals, especially chrysalis that have formed in frost pockets. If that same logic applies to mammals - ie being born in particularly cold weather results in exceptional specimens - then in my case, (I recall that it was snowing on 7th December 1938), it explains why I am such an impressive example of *Homo sapiens* 😊

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-19 10:44 PM GMT

Great to see the Emperors down on the deck already Pauline 🍷😄 The Silly Season has started 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

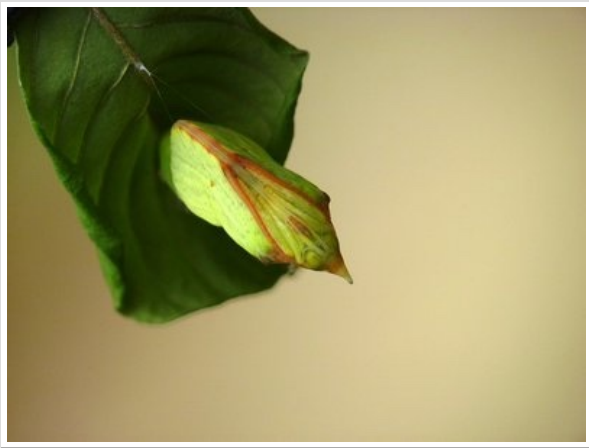
by David M, 02-Jul-19 07:40 AM GMT

Emperor season at last! We're not really used to waiting till July anymore. Now they're here I'm sure there'll be plenty more action to come.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jul-19 06:35 PM GMT

Thank you all so much for your very generous comments which I appreciate a great deal. I did suspect as much Mark but it is good to have it confirmed that others share that opinion. You do make me chuckle Jack and I am certainly not going to argue with you 😊😄 I referred to my recent (and very temporary) dislike of Brimstones. I have thoroughly enjoying the rearing experience and the male was plain sailing - one of the easiest butterflies to rear and judge emergence times. Not so the female. I was fooled into thinking it would be similar to the male and when the pupa started to colour up I began my vigil. I was convinced emergence would be within the hour but as one hour turns into two and then into three 😊 The trouble is, having invested so much time, it is then difficult to walk away. In the end I watched this pupa for almost 8 hours before giving up 😊. In comparison, watching paint drying would have been exhilarating and taken only a fraction of the time! I took hundreds of images of the pupa (to pass the time 😊😄)



It eventually emerged sometime overnight as very early the next morning I found this waiting for me. I notice she is another *Ab. Hoefnagoli*. They are clearly not uncommon but I have never noticed it before:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jul-19 06:59 PM GMT

I have always found DGF difficult to photograph and today was no different. I have seen some wonderful images on this site of beautifully posed butterflies and I'd love to know how it's done. I guess I should try early morning but the grass would still be a problem. At this site most of the Knapweed(?) is considerably shorter than the grass so even when it is possible to creep up on them there is still a mass of stems to sift through for a half decent image - by which time the butterfly has moved on!



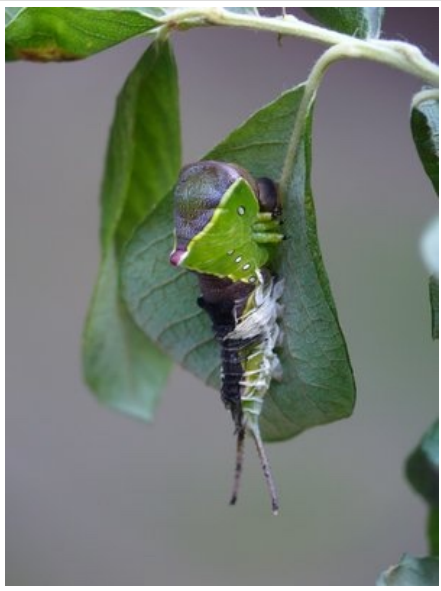


Fieldcraft, fieldcraft and then more fieldcraft!

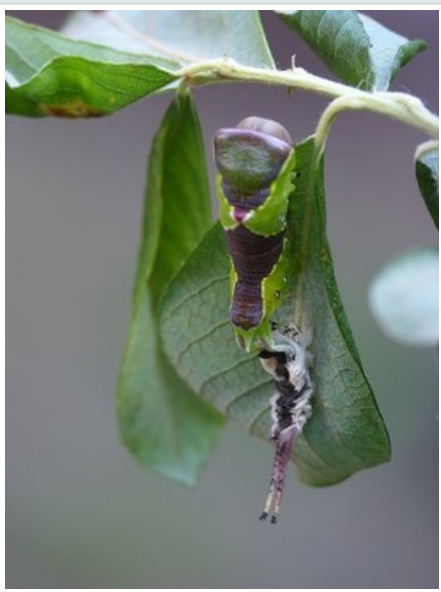
Re: Pauline

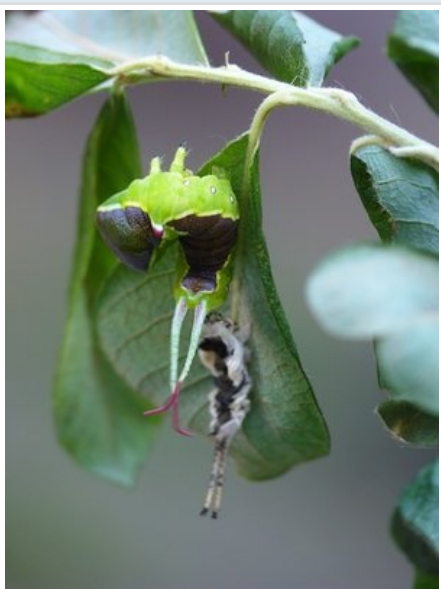
by Pauline, 03-Jul-19 11:09 AM GMT

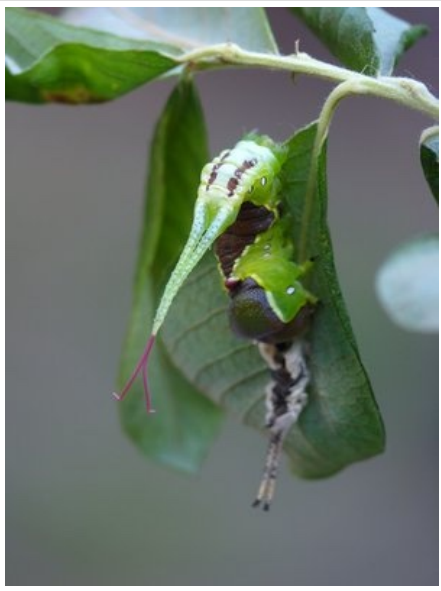
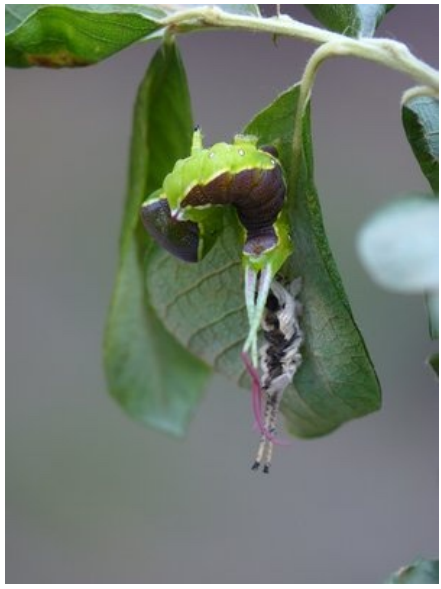
Yesterday when I checked on the Puss Moth larva I realised this one was shedding his skin. This sort of stuff fascinates me and it is at times like this that I wish my photography was better. I took 86 shots in the short time it took - here are some of them:

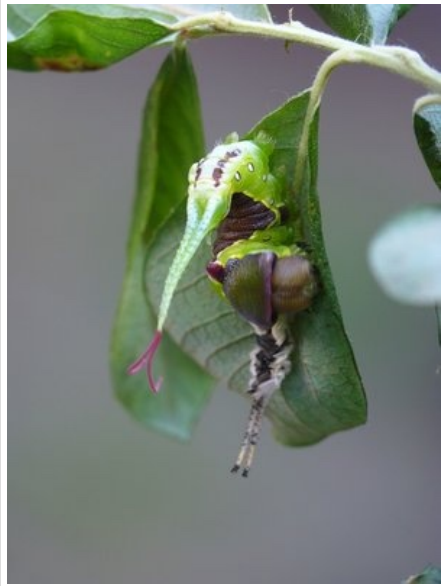












Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-19 07:05 PM GMT

Fascinating moult and emergence sequences Pauline 😊 Your DGFs are mighty fine in my book 🍷🍷 I reckon you could try for them in the evening when they come in to roost, try finding a site like Martin Down where the Knapweed they use grows as tall as the grass?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 03-Jul-19 07:22 PM GMT

Pauline.

I am told in personal e-mails from someone who knows you that you are passionate about all animals and in our ukb context, breeding butterflies.

I am aware of course that Pete Eeles is shortly to publish a book about the life cycles of British butterflies. But you seem to have considerable expertise in *rearing* them. Maybe it's worth thinking of writing a complementary book about home rearing techniques. My own skills are limited to easy species such as Orange Tip but I would love to learn how the experts breed, for example, Purple Hairstreaks.

Despite my penchant for juvenile humour, for once I am being serious.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 03-Jul-19 09:19 PM GMT

Some great shots and sequences lately Pauline, you've certainly got the patience and no how 😊🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Jul-19 09:41 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – thank you for the compliments. I THINK the DGF at this site roost in the trees. Do they roost low down elsewhere?

Jack, I'm massively flattered but honestly, with the butterfly rearing I am just a novice. I have made a couple of mistakes and many will recall I attracted a certain amount of criticism (unfairly in my opinion) when my WLH emerged early. I am learning. Your source is quite correct and I am in the process of writing a book about foxes having kept them for 10–12 years. I can't let the opportunity pass to show you a couple of shots of these delightful, amazing creatures which are so mis-understood:



Just right place right time Goldie. Lovely to see you posting again.

The Straits, Alice Holt used to be an amazing place for butterflies. I keep hearing that the numbers of SWF and WA are building. Perhaps they are but it depends where your baseline is. It seems the days are long gone when there were dozens of SWF on every patch of bramble and thistle head and WA everywhere. I remember MO calling me over to look at the spectacle which included a mating pair of SWF. A visit today revealed a very few SWF and I left with a feeling of disappointment, despite the number of 'Black Admirals' seen here.

I have never been to Chiddingfold Forest late afternoon or early evening but that was where I headed later. Several enthusiasts were still about and told me that they had seen 5/6 PE but they had been there all day and covered a lot of ground. I only saw 2, possibly 3 PE but as on my previous visit they were very skittish so no great shots – almost a repeat of before:





Good on ya Katrina for getting such cracking shots from this venue.

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 04-Jul-19 09:49 PM GMT

[quote]"Pauline" I THINK the DGF at this site roost in the trees. Do they roost low down elsewhere?

I have found DGFs roosting amongst Common Blues head down on long grass stems, at Hutchinsons Bank.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 05-Jul-19 06:00 AM GMT

There's always a plethora of different themes running through your diary. Pauline. You know that I love to see your domestic pets but even they take a back seat to that puss moth larva sequence – absolutely fascinating.

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 05-Jul-19 07:51 AM GMT

You say:^[quote]butterfly rearing I am just a novice. I have made a couple of mistakes and many will recall I attracted a certain amount of criticism (unfairly in my opinion) when my WLH emerged early. I am learning. Your source is quite correct and I am in the process of writing a book about foxes having kept them for 10–12 years. Well there you are Pauline – perfectly qualified. Already writing about foxes (presumably under the nom-de-plume “Foxy Lady”) so you’re obviously happy as an author. Your butterfly breeding experiences, including the failures, are exactly what I for one want to read about. I hadn’t heard about the too-early WLH but that is a common problem with captive rearing: it’s why I use the fridge to overwinter as it keeps them dormant until the appropriate time.

So do think about it. You can be assured of at least one sale 😊

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-19 12:14 PM GMT

Still cracking shots even if they were a bit skittish Pauline – I’ve still to find His Nibbs – he’s been a bit slow off the mark this year 😊
The sites round here that I know of for DGFs are pretty much grasslands so they roost down in the sea of grasses although I don’t know about Bentley – I guess that they find the nearest and most ‘secure’ place? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Jul-19 09:20 PM GMT

Cheers Martin – another example of butterflies behaving differently at different sites.

Cheers Wurzel I have been wondering how the PE has been doing at Bentley. Guess I’ll find out around September 😊😊

Perhaps a project for the future Jack when life is a little less hectic as I do need a few hours sleep each night 😊 I do like the nom-de-plume of Foxy Lady though – Perhaps you should refer to me as that from now on 😊😊

Your views and comments are always appreciated David.

It was good to see Gatekeepers today among the Meadow Brown and Ringlets, one of which was quite accommodating:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Jul-19 09:24 PM GMT

Just as an aside – my adapter and camera seem to have parted company due to a problem with the thread. Does anyone know where I can source an adapter for a close-up lens for my lumix FZ38. The part number I believe is DMW-LA3 but I believe these have now been discontinued?

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 06-Jul-19 02:03 AM GMT

The Panasonic adapter is an expensive piece of kit for attaching a filter or close-up lens. You don't really need that adapter.

The filter thread is 52 millimeters and it is easy to simply screw in a supplementary lens or filter lens of that size.

You are in effect giving the camera the equivalent of reading spectacles.

Ideally a close-up lens should be an "achromatic", ie made of two pieces of glass cleverly designed to deal with different wavelengths of light. It might be difficult to source an achromatic (and in any case, they aren't cheap) but almost as good results can be had from a simple single element lens. (plano). Unfortunately, these are usually sold in sets of three or four of different strengths. For example for around £10

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Polaroid-Optics-Piece-Close-Filter/dp/B003UI0194?th=1>

The +4 and especially the +10 are next to useless (too much distortion) but come with the package. However, the +10 makes a useful hand held magnifying glass.

Your existing lens (that you use with the adaptor) is probably a +2 achromatic (+2 is also known as a 500 D – slightly technical way of stating the focal length). It might be possible to fit that lens directly to the camera but I don't know. Although I have owned some of the Panasonic FZ range, I have never used or handled the official expensive adapter so don't know the design details.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Jul-19 07:23 AM GMT

Thank you so much Jack for those helpful suggestions. I did eventually manage to find the exact same item in America for 8 dollars – but they don't ship to the UK. I found several others in America who do ship to the UK at a cost of 85 dollars. I kept looking and found someone in the UK who claims to do a compatible item for a tenner so I thought I'd start with that and see how it goes.

Still thinking about the dreadful lack of SWF and WA in the Straits, I realised that this is the first year for many years that I have had neither in the garden. The Skippers seem to be doing well though and I watched this one egg-laying yesterday – the Small variety:





The eggs are quite different to those of the Essex as can be seen in this shot from a couple of years ago:



I know I say this each and every time I post a shot of these eggs but I am not going to apologise for repeating myself. If you ARE tempted to check out the eggs, please, please be ever so careful – these eggs are not fixed with anything, they roll about and it is just so easy to lose them.

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 07-Jul-19 08:19 AM GMT

One point about supplementary close up lenses. Don't be put off if the blurb says "For Nikon, Canon" or whatever. The model of camera makes no difference to how "close up specs" work but make sure you have the correct 52 mms thread.

In practice, the +2 (diopters) is probably the most suitable for butterflies. With that, you would be working at a distance of 50 centimetres and perhaps (depends on camera's auto focus) down to about 35 cms. It wouldn't focus beyond 50 cms. However, a +1 would give you an operating range between about 65 cms and 100 cms. Of course at greater distance, the subject would fill up a smaller part of the frame.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 07-Jul-19 05:23 PM GMT

Interesting shots Pauline 😊 They do look different from each other, the Essex look more like Tic-Tacs than the Smalls my eyes 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Jul-19 07:00 PM GMT

Hi Jack

I'd like to say that I'll bear that in mind but I am in no way 'technical' and will probably have forgotten it by tomorrow. Instead, if I have a camera (technical) problem I'll just come to you direct, if that's OK?

They're very different Wurzel but I had never thought of tic-tacs 😊

Today I found myself surrounded by White butterflies. Because this is both unusual (at least this season) and because I have neglected them for the past couple of years, I thought I'd better take some shots. There were GVW, Small White, Marbled White and Large White. I never managed to catch up with the latter but here are a few shots of the others. Literally just snapshots with not much thought to composition and still depth of field issues tho' I pushed the F number up as high as poss. (that's right, isn't it?):





Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 07-Jul-19 09:10 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I love your Marbled Whites, I think they make a great photo taken from any angle, it's good to see the Gate Keepers too they don't seem to have arrived here yet and I don't think the Ringlets are this side of the River Ribble 😊
Any way hope fully I'll be coming south shortly so I hope the MW are still around 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 08-Jul-19 05:47 AM GMT

[quote]I'd like to say that I'll bear that in mind but I am in no way 'technical' and will probably have forgotten it by tomorrow. Instead, if I have a camera (technical) problem I'll just come to you direct, if that's OK?MikeOxon is much more technical.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by David M, 08-Jul-19 05:24 PM GMT

Fascinating Skipper sequence, Pauline. Sorry to hear of the paucity of SWFs and WAs, although those are nice 'Whites' in your last post (even though one is a 'brown').

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jul-19 06:43 PM GMT

Now don't go getting all pedantic on me David 😊 Am I not allowed a little poetic licence? 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-19 08:41 PM GMT

Lovely sequence Pauline 😊 The second brood Whites are generally much more approachable 😊 I don't know about you but I'm finding the Browns much harder work this year – they are really twitchy and zoom off after the slightest movement 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 09-Jul-19 07:52 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Now don't go getting all pedantic on me David 😊 Am I not allowed a little poetic licence? 😊

Bien sur, Pauline! Just don't put Dukes in with the Fritillaries! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jul-19 11:58 AM GMT

Thank you Goldie – I agree they are very photogenic. Hopefully you'll have that boot off when you next come South and will be much more mobile 😊

Hi Jack – I am indebted to both Mike and Maurice for all the help they have given me in the past. Good to know I have a great team I can turn to 😊

Cheers Wurzel – my problem has been purple this year!

Bien sur que non David! I wouldn't dream of putting the Metalmark in that category 😊 (and please don't try your 'basic German' on me as I didn't even study that at school! 😊)

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jul-19 12:16 PM GMT

I think it is time for a quick update on the immature stages I have been following/rearing. The 5 wild Brimstone fat cats I was following have now all gone one way or another. You might recall that one pupated on the plant and one was eaten by a spider. A further 2 went AWOL, either predated or wandered off and the last also pupated on the bush. It is all very time-consuming:



My Puss moth cat continues to grow at an alarming rate and I don't think it will be long before he pupates. A real eating machine this one:



It is hard to believe that on 10 June they looked like this:



That tiny Black Arches cat that I had a panic about and which both Allan and Vince correctly identified for me has only just pupated. These are the last few shots I took of him before he/she turned into this strange looking pupa:



.... and the little Common Blue is doing just fine, although as far as camouflage is concerned he is already a master of the art:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jul-19 12:21 PM GMT

Yesterday I visited a friend and took advantage of her location to check out the PH in and around her garden. I easily found a couple of dozen, many in fair to good condition but it was too cloudy for them to descend. Each time the sun briefly came out I could see them opening their wings but could not get anywhere near - very frustrating! The next couple of shots are illustrative shots only as they were taken on full zoom and very heavily cropped as you can easily see by the quality:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jul-19 06:51 PM GMT

It's good to see the Chalkhills out on my patch:



but it isn't just purple I'm struggling with at the moment – it's Dark Green (Fritillaries, no Dukes anywhere 😊😄) and every colour in between it seems. I watched a couple of females egg-laying today and I was surprised at just how deep they go into the vegetation and how long they stretch their abdomen down to deposit the egg. I have seen and photographed this before but I was so involved in watching and didn't want to disturb so didn't get a shot of the actual deed:



I very nearly got the shot I have always wanted to get. I was just waiting for her to turn a bit more towards me when a male spooked her:



Quite a few mating pairs around - many on the tall grasses and with the slightest bit of breeze it became impossible so I gave up - well, I had just done an hour of Pilates!



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-19 10:44 PM GMT

Crikey are the Chalkhills out already 😲? Soon it'll be the Brostreaks 😲😬 Love the DGF almost in alignment shot Pauline - it makes the whites spots look all silvery 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 09-Jul-19 11:11 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, love your shots hope fully I'll see some Chalkhills soon myself 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 10-Jul-19 07:55 AM GMT

Chalkhill Blues on the wing? That means summer is half done. 😊

Nice to see them though – such attractive butterflies.

Unlucky with the DGF, Pauline. Hopefully you'll get further opportunities with this species soon.

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 10-Jul-19 08:36 AM GMT

I knew a human couple like your Marbled Whites. She was about ten foot tall; he was a mere five foot.

I've always thought that Marbled *White* is a poor name. It should reflect the fact that it is a "brown". Old names like "Chessboard Brown" are much more useful.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by David M, 10-Jul-19 05:30 PM GMT

I wouldn't like to see the word 'brown' incorporated for obvious reasons. 'Checkerboard' would do just fine! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Jul-19 07:02 PM GMT

Keep up Wurze! 😊😊 Yep, 3 weeks til BH 😊 – those DGF have to be one of the hardest butterflies to photograph!

Thank you Goldie – I'm sure you will and I shall look forward to seeing your shots.

The size difference is quite marked isn't it Jack? Re names, I have a book somewhere I'm sure that lists the old names – I must look it out.

More than half done for me David 😊. Don't forget I started early this year on 1 April with that Duke – the short time I have with the butterflies goes so quickly that I try to cram as much in as possible. Take today for example, once he'd tasted me there was just no getting rid of him 😊 :







Reckon I've been well and truly 'purpled' despite all the Jungle formula 😊 Only the second time ever that I've had 2 down at once and not another soul around 😊

PS I shall book in for a manicure first thing tomorrow 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 11-Jul-19 07:38 AM GMT

Excellent, Pauline. Can't be many things greater than having an Emperor all to yourself!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-19 12:06 PM GMT

Absolutely fantastic Pauline and so far removed from my audience this year (one flying up high for about 7 seconds) 🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jul-19 01:40 PM GMT

Thank you David – Mmmmm, I can think of 1 or 2 things perhaps 😊😊

I don't think you're alone on that score Wurzel – it has been a difficult season for them. I just got lucky – had to go to Tesco and decided to spend 30 mins just on the off-chance 😊

I have Graylings within a couple of miles of me in several directions but what better excuse for a morning near the coast:





The sun was harsh and this lovely bleached shot taken into the sun shows how bad the glare was 😊😓 (Well, there was nothing of interest in the opposite direction 😓)



How I miss the long, wild, deserted sandy beaches of the NE where I grew up 😊

Enough nostalgia! On my return I couldn't find a Gilkicker Weevil but noticed that there were webs covering a lot of vegetation. I think they are spiders and many will know that I really don't like spiders. I hope the birds eat them all!



Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 12-Jul-19 03:10 PM GMT

I've just seen the shots of the PE on your hand, Pauline, fabulous, you did very well taking those shots with one hand, while the Emperor was on the other 😊

Now it's Grayling time already 🤩 summer is moving along at a fair lick 😊

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 12-Jul-19 03:30 PM GMT

Graylings, Small Blues as well as Purple Emperors will land on **smelly** clothes – *so I am told* 😊

Jack

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 12-Jul-19 04:39 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, I think your 'spiders' are actually *Tetranychus lintearius*, the Gorze Spider mite. An Arachnid but not actually a spider and they won't get any bigger than what you saw. They are species specific to Gorze.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 12-Jul-19 04:51 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Pauline, especially the Emperor on your finger, your shots of the Grayling are out standing, I never seem to get good shots of them 😊 I like that shot of the beech, where was it Pauline ,? your weather seems much better than ours, I'm off to Kent on Monday so fingers crossed I'll be in East Blean Woods looking for the Purple Hair Streaks next week 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by jenks, 12-Jul-19 05:27 PM GMT

I agree with the others; great shots of the PE, Pauline. And speaking of His Nibs, does anyone know if they are flying at Bentley Wood yet. I feel a trip down there looming up.

Jenks.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 13-Jul-19 06:56 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...I have Graylings within a couple of miles of me in several directions but what better excuse for a morning near the coast..

Sounds like a plan, Pauline. I love coastal sites and I must check one or two of them for this delightful species real soon.

Shame you can't let your chickens loose amongst those spiders' webs for an hour or two.....they'd put a dent in the population. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jul-19 07:09 PM GMT

I've had plenty of practice using only one hand Mike – hanging onto trees with the other mostly! Glad you liked it but y'know what it's like – just being in the right place at the right time 😊

I don't have any problems in that department Jack. After mucking out a variety of animals I dread to think what my clothes smell like – I'm just puzzled why I don't get more landing on me 😊

Cheers Paul – anything that looks like a spider, a mite or even the hundreds of tick larva that I find on me – well, the birds are very welcome to them 😊

Thank you Goldie and good luck for next week. I was at Browndown near Lee-on-solent – hope the weather holds for you.

That's really kind of you Jenks. I think Wurzel is the one to ask re Bentley.

Let me know how you get on David – I imagine the coastal sites you visit would be to my liking 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jul-19 07:22 PM GMT

One of the best bits of advice I was ever given was by another consultant I was working with which was to be true to yourself. I would normally save these shots for a rainy day or a quiet period but I was so excited to see this fox cub in the garden from 5.30am until 8.00am that I just have to post these shots even tho' we are in the middle of the PE season. They are not the best of shots (taken thru' glass) but I expect he will be back:



Some of the birds watched him warily (I am trying to practice my bird photography) – a young Robin and Blue Tit





but to try to keep on topic a bit, I missed the emergence of the wild Brimstone by not very long I reckon. It surprises me how long it takes them to take their first flight as they must be very vulnerable during this period which amounts to some hours. Another Ab - the third - which makes me wonder whether it is more common than the norm:



The Common Blue seems to have tripled in size since yesterday so I assume he has shed his skin given the colour change:



Last but not least, rounded off the day by cleaning out Magnet and Hope and giving them some fresh herbs. Back to butterflies tomorrow hopefully:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jul-19 01:15 PM GMT

Well, I promised butterflies today but the only one I can deliver, given the weather, is this dismembered Meadow Brown – a tunnel spider again!





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jul-19 06:16 PM GMT

Am I the only person who didn't know what a Ladybird pupa looked like? 😊 I have been seeing strange orange/yellow and black 'beetles' wherever I go as well as many in the garden on a variety of plants. I googled 'orange and black beetles' and a variety of bugs came up but not this one. Today I watched one emerge:





and lots of empty pupal cases all over the garden:



I still haven't managed to ID these tho'. I don't think they are shield bugs but they were quite attractive when the silver caught the light:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-19 08:45 PM GMT

Interesting shots Pauline - I'd not seen Ladybirds emerging before 😊 And in the defence of the tunnel spider I like the way that it keeps it's tunnel nice and tidy 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 15-Jul-19 06:45 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Am I the only person who didn't know what a Ladybird pupa looked like?

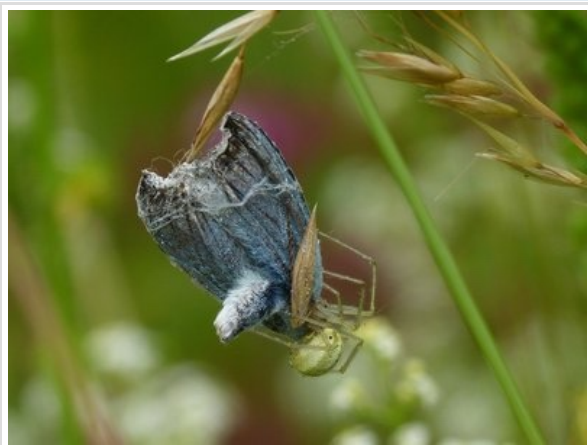
Nope. I didn't either.....until I saw your post.

Love the rabbits, by the way. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Jul-19 02:30 PM GMT

Wurzel, are you kidding? 😊 The entrance is littered with butterfly wings and goodness knows what else is down there out of sight 😊 I hope you've got a good defence for THIS spider which I watched today when looking for Chalkhills:



If I ever need a good lawyer I'll give you a call Wurzel 😊😊

Perhaps you and I are the only ones David! 😊 . Magnet and Hope are rescues. The little girl (foreground) was used repeatedly for breeding and had cervical cancer when she came to me which was removed just in time (we think). I should add that I believe about 80% of female rabbits get that type of cancer by the time they are 3-4 if they are not spayed. Rabbits are best kept in pairs but some folk think if the buck is castrated there is no need to have the doe spayed. Perhaps Philip or others will correct me if any of those facts are incorrect.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Jul-19 02:38 PM GMT

I was puzzled and a little annoyed when I tried to access Oxenbourne today. Locals will remember that broken old gate at the top of the steps. Well, it has been securely tied shut making entry – at least by that route – impossible without a pair of scissors. Perhaps it is a health and safety issue as the gate is literally falling apart. I did manage a few shots of the Chalkhills but could not find any females:





and this very fresh second brood mint moth:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Jul-19 06:40 PM GMT

Had to stay very local today because of various appointments but took the chance to photograph this Large White simply because it was there, because I haven't taken any shots of them this year and because there was nothing else to excite me:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-19 10:38 PM GMT

"Wurzel, are you kidding? 🤔 - there really needs to be a sarcasm emoji Pauline 😊😄 Fantastic shimmering topside Chalkhills 🤗🌿🌿"

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 18-Jul-19 10:42 AM GMT

You did right to spend time with that Large White, Pauline. It's a butterfly that has been distinctly thin on the ground this year. Even when abroad I've only seen a handful. 😞

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 18-Jul-19 11:47 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, lovely Chalkhill's, watch out for that Fox though are you'll have no Chicken's or Rabbits that's probably why it's visiting you. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Jul-19 05:04 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie. When I had my 'tame' foxes they used to roam amongst the hens (except for Foxy who was scared of the cockerels) and the hens got used to them. That probably saved their lives as during the day a wild fox came into the garden and they were totally unconcerned. If they had made a run for it they would probably have been killed. I am now very careful.

I wonder why there are so few of them David? Hope you had a lovely time 😊

That wasn't me being sarcastic Wurzel - that was me being totally astonished that you could try to find a redeeming feature for a spider! The only one I can think of is as bird food. For me, they're down there with rats and ticks and flies 😊 Glad you liked the Chalkhills 😊

I've been to a few local sites in the last few days so I'll just roll them all into one and pick out the most interesting bits. I've seen several PE but the closest I got was this:



Worryingly I have had reports of a guy with 2 nets in the Alice Holt complex, hanging around Sallow where females have been seen. The only description I have is chubby and in his 50's! Perhaps some discreet photos if anyone sees him?

Quite a few PH still at all sites and I was pleased to show these to Chris C whilst we waited for the PE:





Fresh Brown Argus are now also about locally:



On the home front the Puss moth has indeed pupated. I thought he was about to as he turned an olive shade of green and then I found him

constructing his pupa:



I have a patch of nettles which has been regularly visited over recent weeks by both Comma and Red Admiral. I have checked the nettles frequently for eggs without any success but today I noticed some feeding damage. On checking I was pleased to see a tiny RA larva:





Don't know how I missed it!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Jul-19 05:51 PM GMT

Today I had my new car back by lunch time – my new used car that is. I was having some gloopy stuff put underneath it to stop it from rusting which the other car had started to do. Some of you already know what it is 😊 Anyway, that meant I could nip over to Bramshott which is my nearest site. I was surprised to see how many SSB were still around and not in bad nick either given that this is an early site for them:





There were loads of Skippers around and although many were looking worse for wear, for me they have lost none of their charm:



However, the most numerous by far were the gatekeepers and Meadow Browns:





I watched several of the female Meadow Brown egg-laying and I was pleased to get this shot of one of the eggs given that my little camera was hand held in poor light:



Can you tell I'm just marking time until the last 2 make an appearance?

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-19 07:53 PM GMT

No I was being sarcastic Pauline – there were so many wings and things the web was far from being tidy 😊😂 I have been racking my brain and have come up with a redeeming feature of Spiders – they eat flies, flies which can parasitize butterfly caterpillars, mind you then they go and ruin their hard work by munching through the adult butterflies 😞😞
Nice shots of the hidey-hole Purp 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jul-19 10:28 AM GMT

Yep! I'd agree with that Wurzel 😊 I think the PH was looking for somewhere to egg-lay but she was on the wrong sort of tree so I was waiting to see what would happen. Unfortunately my companion accidentally spooked her when trying to get a few shots.

It has been suggested that the RA larva may be a Painted Lady but it now looks a little more like a Comma? I hope it is a PL as that would be exciting and keep me occupied until the BH emerge 😊



I was thinking about getting rid of those nettles but they may just have earned themselves a permanent place in the garden 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 19-Jul-19 03:21 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I've saved some Nettles in my Garden, nothing to see yet though, those SSB's bring back some happy memories Pauline!!!. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 19-Jul-19 07:35 PM GMT

Trying to catch up a bit again Pauline, an interesting variety of stuff in your diary lately accompanied by great photos 😊

Pauline wrote:

...Worryingly I have had reports of a guy with 2 nets in the Alice Holt complex, hanging around Sallow where females have been seen. The only description I have is chubby and in his 50's!...!

Well, that's narrowed it down a bit 😊😊

Of course, he may have a good reason for carrying a net in which case he will not mind being approached but in this case it does sound a bit suspicious.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jul-19 04:28 PM GMT

Keep the nettles M – they're worth hanging onto 😊

Neil Freeman wrote:

Well, that's narrowed it down a bit 😊😊

Well, got to start somewhere Neil 😊 Actually I now know that this guy is a regular and catches females every year. I know the car he drives and I know part of the reg is YOR! Just call me Morse from now on 😊😊

The jury is still out on that tiny larva tho Comma seems to be favourite at the moment. I shall post some more images as and when. Couldn't get far today but managed to catch this Large White ovi-posing on one of my plants (I know not what). If it hadn't been for the stiff breeze



I have been bemoaning the fact that I have had neither SWF or WA in my garden this year. Well that was 50% rectified today by the appearance of 2 SWF (males) taking advantage of the buddhia:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-19 08:16 PM GMT

Cracking views of the SWFs Pauline – oh to have them as a garden 'tick' 🍷 , mind you for me it's a case of 'oh to have a garden' 😞 😞 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 20-Jul-19 09:42 PM GMT

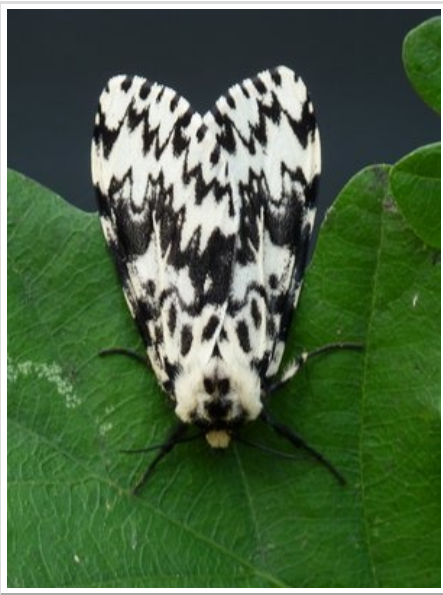
Fabulous to have Silver Washed Fritillaries as garden visitors, Pauline. How often do you get White Admirals *chez to?*

Re: Pauline

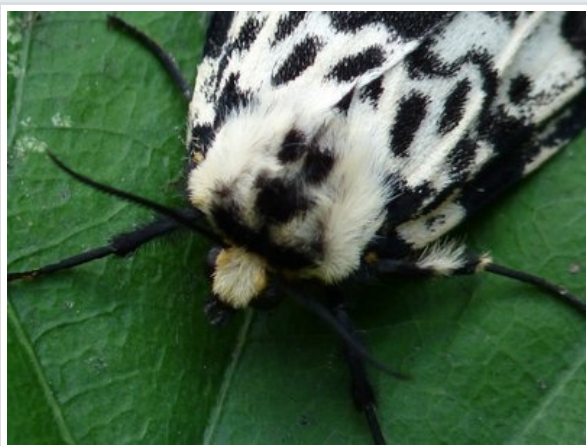
by Pauline, 21-Jul-19 07:56 AM GMT

un ou deux ans la plupart des années David 😊

Thank you again to Allan and Vince for the ID of the tiny larva brought in on branches for the PH. You may be interested to know that as of last night it is now back in my Oak tree:



Interesting 'face' with tongue poking out 😊😄



Empty pupal case - one of the more interesting ones I have seen:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jul-19 04:21 PM GMT

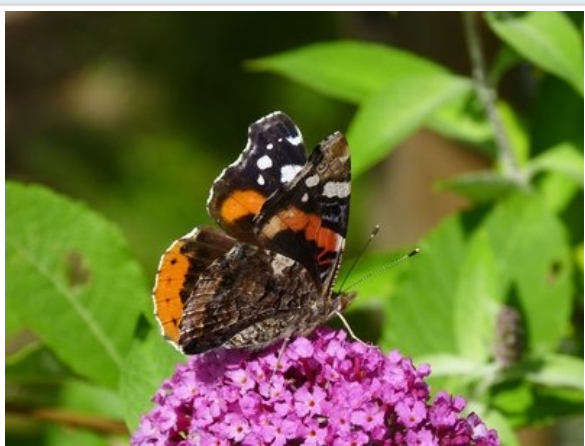
Just had this moth on the window. It was very attractive and not one I've seen before so once I'd grabbed a shot of the underside I rushed outside to see the upperside which was fairly similar. Unfortunately it took off a split second too soon but I have read that it is *CYDALIMA PERSPECTALIS* (Box-tree moth) which apparently was first recorded in this country in 2007. I cannot find out much about it except that it is considered something of a pest to Box – that's if I've got the ID right! I wonder if it will come to light. If it doesn't rain the trap will be out tonight.



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jul-19 07:06 PM GMT

I'm glad you liked the SWF Wurzel. Apologies for overlooking your comment – that's the trouble with changing pages 😊 Today the SWF was replaced by this RA:





Today I visited Oxenbourne just to see if there was any sign of SSS. Everything looked right – exactly as it always is when they emerge. There were loads of Chalkhills including females and mating pairs, worn female DGF cruised around looking for places to lay their eggs, Small Copper were about along with masses of other butterflies. The Devils Bit Scabious was in bloom and plenty of Creeping Thistle. It all looked perfect except there were no SSS's – or none that I could find despite them being out here by 22/7 for the last few years:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 21-Jul-19 07:37 PM GMT

Lovely set of Chalkhills Pauline 🤗🍷 – things do seem to be running a little later this year, mind you I've only just caught up with Graylings so a bit of a breather will be welcome 🤗🤗

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 21-Jul-19 08:25 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Just had this moth on the window. It was very attractive and not one I've seen before so once I'd grabbed a shot of the underside I rushed outside to see the upperside which was fairly similar. Unfortunately it took off a split second too soon but I have read that it is CYDALIMA PERSPECTALIS (Box-tree moth) which apparently was first recorded in this country in 2007. I cannot find out much about it except that it is considered something of a pest to Box – that's if I've got the ID right! I wonder if it will come to light. If it doesn't rain the trap will be out tonight.

Oh dear.

Two years ago, Pauline, this moth turned up in the Mercantour Park in France where I visit at the beginning of July every year. They have quickly reached pestilent levels and they have destroyed most of the box trees upon which their larvae feed.

There are clouds of the things everywhere you go, and they fly both during the day and at night.

I believe they arrived from SE Asia a few years back but they certainly seem to have made themselves at home in the Alpes Maritimes.

I suspect only when all the box trees have been destroyed will their numbers diminish. 😞

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jul-19 11:16 AM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

things do seem to be running a little later this year

Surely not Wurzel! I think you're only about 7 weeks behind in your posts 😊😊😊 Just teasing wurzel – it has been a funny old season hasn't it? Hey Wurzel, I have another one of those very tidy tunnel spiders for you 😊😊 – this time it is littered with Marbled White wings 😊 I caught up with the original one as well – that has what looks like some sort of Burnet moth this week:



It is a bit worrying David – personally I only have one large, untidy clump of Box that I was thinking of digging up so they're welcome to it. I have read that the Asian Hornet is a natural predator but I gather they are not welcome either if all the notices I see pinned up on my travels are anything to go by. I think they eat our bees 😞 I certainly didn't get any in the moth trap last night – just a million micro moths and a very impressive Elephant-hawk moth:



This is where someone will tell me it's the Small variety - I HAVE looked. Yellow forewing or olive green? Personally I'd say it was light brown but that's just my opinion 😊 There were a couple of little moths that caught my eye. I took a shot whilst they were still in the trap as I suspected they might fly which is exactly what they did. I believe the first one is *Catoptria Pinella* but the second one has defeated me despite looking at half a dozen websites:



The last one I am not even going to guess at! but if I was forced to I would say True Lover's Knot although there are about 4 very similar, all with much variety within species.



As usual I had a large number of wasps within the trap. They all left except one who was most reluctant. I shook him out (none too gently I might add) and the ungrateful creature landed on my leg and stung me!!! 🤨

Re: Pauline

by meiga, 22-Jul-19 05:59 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Your micro looks like *Rhyacionia pinicolana* and the last one is a True Lover's Knot

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-19 11:09 PM GMT

You'd think that the spiders would keep the trap clean so as not to give the game away? 🤔🤔 You're right with the Elephant, the Small had blockier markings on the wings whereas the Elephant seems more striped if that makes sense? 🤔🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jul-19 03:07 PM GMT

Hi Maurice – great to hear from you. How are you? Thanks for the ID's. I can't believe that I got 3 out of 4 correct. I reckon it was more good guessing than anything else!

Thanks for help with the ID's Wurzel – did you get that:3 out of 4 😄 Almost a gold star? Re spiders, I would be really worried if I thought they had that much intelligence 😊

Haven't been able to get out (yet) as it is almost a full time job trying to keep all these critters cool and comfortable (hose pipes, wet sheets, water sprays etc). The garden however is alive with butterflies – possibly more than I have ever seen at any one time. Gatekeepers are chasing Skippers, Green-veined Whites and Small and Large are egg-laying, a Meadow Brown is trying to get under the eaves or into the window, a Red Admiral had just landed on one of the patio sets and a Holly Blue has flown past whilst I'm typing. To name only some. Trouble is, whenever I dash out with my camera they have moved on to something else!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jul-19 03:17 PM GMT

I've been monitoring a Glanville larval web for a few weeks now:



Unfortunately, when I last checked it seemed to have been destroyed. Could it have been those heavy rains? Could they have eaten all the Plantain and starved? There didn't seem to be any more within about 18" so would they have migrated en masse to somewhere else? Perhaps they had been stood on as the site is accessed regularly by locals? Is it worth checking again in the vicinity to see if they have 're-built' the web?



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jul-19 03:23 PM GMT

I should add that the little larva found on nettles has now been identified. It is not a RA, nor a Painted Lady (sadly), but has shown itself to be quite conclusively a Comma:



Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 23-Jul-19 07:07 PM GMT

I was wondering if your moth trap had been out much recently Pauline.

Nice Elephant Hawk Moth, I usually have a few of these but not had one yet this year.

Those two little micros are crackers as well. That *Catoptria Pinella* shows that it is worth paying attention to some of those little grass moths.

Regarding the Box-tree Moth, I have seen quite a few reports of them turning up around the midlands and I believe they have reached much further north now as well.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 23-Jul-19 10:37 PM GMT

Of the 2 Glanville Webs i found at Hutchinsons Bank, both have moved from where they were laid in the last week, [Web 2] they are 3 ft away and now spun the hibernation web for the winter, low down in the scrub. [Web 1] have done a runner in the last 2 days, although i found a smaller larva on it today, the others were hibernation size last time i looked, their ex-web looks a bit like the one in your picture now its empty. Glanvilles spin the hibernation web the last week of July, so they are due to vanish from the webs. The larva seen today was racing about at high speed too.

They tend to move to longer growth for the hibernation web, so if its on a path, they will be some distance away now.

We have an Openday at Hutchinsons Bank Wednesday 24th July, so i will photograph the hibernation web.

2nd Brood Small Blues are also out.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-Jul-19 05:43 PM GMT

Those Glanville cats prove that not all webs are bad, Pauline! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jul-19 01:32 PM GMT

Not as much as it should have been Neil but it's just been down to time and other priorities. I'm sure you will get an Elephant Hawk moth and plenty of other lovely moths before the season is over so please keep posting them. I do enjoy seeing them even if I don't have time to comment 😊

That's really interesting Martin and something else new that I have learned. I hadn't realised that they had a web specifically for hibernation (heavy duty is it, to withstand the weather? 😊😊). Seriously, do other species do that as well, eg. Marsh Fritillary? I had just assumed that they stayed in the original web and expanded it as they grew. I must admit I only had a cursory look around but it might just be worth another look.

Those Glanville webs are not easy to find David (which is why I am finding so many spider's webs). I had imagined they would look like a spider's web but they seem much finer, much less obtrusive, much smaller and well hidden low down in the vegetation. Finding one felt like a triumph!

Re: Pauline

by MrSpOck, 25-Jul-19 01:44 PM GMT

The other reason they might have left is the temp may be too hot at the moment, in our scrapes its well over 50 oC at the moment, with their thermo propeties they can increase their body temp by another 20 oC which would make it far too hot. So probably like a lot of other insects have gone into deep shade.

Ive only ever found two larval webs at Hutchinsons Bank, so they are not easy to find. Web hunts are normally done in the spring, when they are much easier to find.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jul-19 01:46 PM GMT

Today I have had a Hummingbird Hawk moth in the garden – 2 days earlier than last year. It was gone before I had picked up the camera but if previous shots are anything to go by that is no great loss.

On 25 July last year I was taking shots of BH on the ground trying to get moisture. Today I watched a number of species on a damp piece of ground – Holly Blue, Common Blue, Green-veined White, Comma, Red Admiral. I half expected a BH to join them having caught what I thought was a glimpse of one yesterday. Many butterflies seem to be seeking shade or moisture in this intense heat so it would not surprise me if the BH have emerged but are keeping a low profile. To pass the time, in their absence, a few shots of other species:



These little ones (and some really are quite small this year) have given me a few heart-stopping moments!



Not quite the shot I've been wanting but nice to see a couple around.



Another one desperately trying to find a way to cool down.





Lovely fresh Peacocks all over the place but I have so far failed to capture that gorgeous shimmer.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jul-19 01:54 PM GMT

Thank you again Martin – something else that hadn't occurred to me. Perhaps I'll leave it until the Spring then as I would hate to accidentally stand on them and the vegetation is so lush at the moment I expect they are hidden quite deep. I wouldn't want to create any disturbance. After your comment I feel even more pleased at having found it. This is probably a daft question but does the female lay all her eggs in the one batch or can a single female be responsible for more than one larval web?

Re: Pauline

by MrSpOck, 25-Jul-19 02:05 PM GMT

Like the other *Melitaea fritillaries*, the female lays in batches upto 200 eggs, after 2 days she can lay another batch although they tend to be smaller in size about 60–100 eggs.

The winter web is stronger dense silk as it has to last the winter, there is a mass of black larvae in the middle.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jul-19 06:49 PM GMT

I suppose that makes good sense as a survival strategy Martin – not putting all your eggs in one basket (or web as in this case). If I forget to look in the Spring can you try to remember to give me a nudge (by email) please.

I did not set out to take more shots of Chalkhills today. I was rather hoping I might spot a SSS but it was not to be. I almost trod on the first mating pair I came across in the middle of the path. I carefully moved them to some vegetation at the side and thought I would see how the females were faring. That was the first mating pair of many – possibly 10–12 pairs. At one point I could see 5 mating pairs from where I stood. I did not see a single female that wasn't already in cop and the many males in the area were barging in on these couples in between searching for their own female. I assume the females are still newly emerging and are being pounced on just as soon as they do.



There are 3 butterflies in this photo:





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-19 07:56 PM GMT

Great set of reports Pauline - I'm trying to catch up and stay on top of reading other people's PDs but it's quite difficult as there's so much going on 😊
Love those Chalkhills 🤔🇬🇧 I know what you mean about the Hedgies - at this time of year I think "False Hairstreak" would be a more fitting name for them 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jul-19 01:23 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel - that's a great name. I shall call them that from now on 😊

Just a quick question in case anyone should know. Doing some stuff in the garden I noticed one of my roses had been eaten by something tho' I couldn't find the culprit. It is a very distinctive feeding pattern across most of the leaves. Any ideas?:



and a quick update on the Comma larva who has gone through another couple of instars. I just missed him shedding his skin but still got another chance hopefully:





The Common Blue has now pupated:



Re: Pauline

by meiga, 28-Jul-19 02:31 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

The holes are caused by a leaf-cutter bee.

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-19 10:42 PM GMT

I was going to suggest the same thing as Meiga Pauline 😊 Love the posture in the penultimate Comma shot 😊😎

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jul-19 08:30 PM GMT

Thank you Maurice and Wurzel – I have so much to learn but it is fascinating. I have spent some time today watching bees in the garden and I wonder if these are the leaf-cutters? I have yet to catch one in action.



I have looked online but cannot find the difference between male and female – or a positive ID. My roses are taking a hammering as I have now noticed various other insects on them including several of these – saw fly?



The RA which replaced the SWF has now been replaced by a couple of Peacocks:



Can you tell I'm not getting out much? 😊😊 I couldn't go far as the animals were suffering from the heat especially poor little Magnet who now seems to be OK:



I did manage to get to Shipton today and saw a few BH high up but nothing low down except 3 Wall Brown. This is another first for me. I have never seen them at this site although I know they are present. I never managed a shot of the 2 pristine examples, only managing to catch up with the tired battered individual - so like myself 😊😊



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 29-Jul-19 09:55 PM GMT

Love the Shots of the Chalkhills Pauline , lovely 🍷😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by False Apollo, 29-Jul-19 09:57 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, after I saw you at Shipton Bellinger today I managed to see a male and female Brown Hairstreak down together (not on the same flower), which I have never seen before. They were nectaring on a sprig of creeping thistle from around mid-day. This was on the other side of the track from

the main hedge. Pretty lucky to have seen them as they were the only ones I did see!

Regards
Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Jul-19 06:10 AM GMT

Morning Mike, good to see you again. Thank you for letting me know (she says thru gritted teeth 😊😬). Seriously, I knew if anyone could find them it would be you. I left the site round about mid-day having been there for several hours, so either I walked past them or they weren't there when I passed by. 😊 I may have to pay a return visit if Noar Hill doesn't start producing the goods soon!

Re: Pauline

by False Apollo, 30-Jul-19 06:26 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, I was very lucky to find the Brown Hairstreaks down as I could not see any others even though conditions were very good. My guess is that they are emerging slowly and could be easier to catch up with during the next fine weather spell. I spoke to someone who had seen some around a week ago here, but no others were seen by other people I met. Noarhill could well be a better bet as you know it well. They seem to be showing well at Alners Gorse if you fancy a trip into darkest Dorset.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 31-Jul-19 01:13 PM GMT

You're being too modest Mike 😊 I have never been to Alners Gorse so who knows? But for now I think I'll take your advice and give Noar Hill another try.

Cheers Goldie – glad you like the Chalkhills. Hope you like these little beauties too. It was good to see half a dozen SSS in overcast conditions this morning. It was even better to bump into 4 volunteers from QECP who were doing a transect and monitoring the number of SSS as one of them told me a great deal of work was planned for October to clear the scrub. Apparently machinery is available that would clear the whole lot but they want to adopt a more sympathetic approach and be a bit more selective. Whatever they do, let's hope it isn't too little too late!





Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 31-Jul-19 02:32 PM GMT

Lovely little Skippers Pauline, wish I was there 😊 Hall-Lee-Brook near me could do with a good shrub cut back the Blackberry.s have completely taken over there, I think that's probably why my GARDENS get all these Butterflies, I shouldn't grumble , hope they keep coming. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Aug-19 04:29 PM GMT

Glad you like them Goldie – hopefully there will be more to come. I'm very envious of all the Painted Ladies in your garden 😊 I saw one today (well, half of one) and it was so ragged and paper thin it was hardly recognisable – but I took a shot anyway 😊 Goodness knows how many birds have had a go at it!



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Aug-19 04:32 PM GMT

At last! But worth waiting for 😊 Glad I took your advice False Apollo!



Hopefully there'll be more where that came from 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Aug-19 05:01 PM GMT

..... or is this a better crop? - probably!



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 01-Aug-19 05:06 PM GMT

Again! lovely shots Pauline, those Hair Streaks have eluded me for years , 😊 One day perhaps!!!! 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Aug-19 09:23 PM GMT

OMG!!! If you want to see a REALLY stunning BH you should look at the BC Sussex website. What a fantastic insect. He could raise funds for BC by selling tickets 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Aug-19 10:10 AM GMT

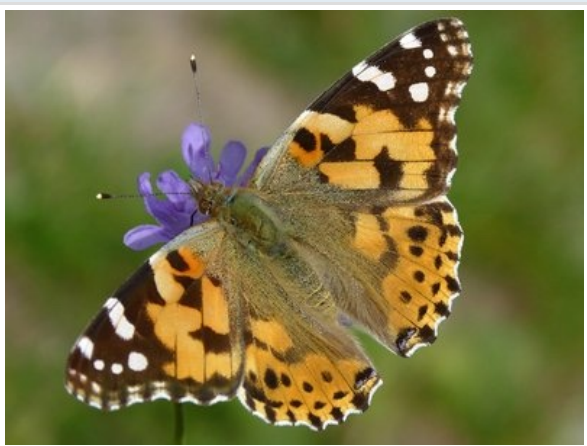
I'm sure you'll catch up with them eventually M 😊 😊

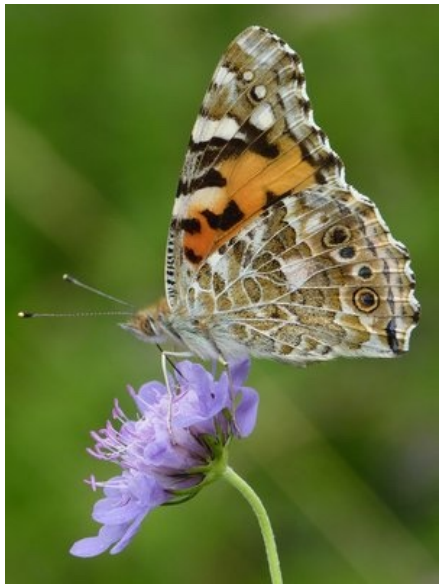
My brief trip out yesterday was a welcome break from the 3 trips to the vet and the worry of a budgie that had prolapsed. After some urgent and complex surgery she is now home but still not out of the woods. The various Painted Ladies I saw were a welcome distraction if only for a short while. In total I saw 4 in varying condition ranging from this:



to these:







.... but still not a single one in the garden 😞

Re: Pauline

by David M, 03-Aug-19 02:35 PM GMT

Love the Brown Hairstreaks, Pauline. They will give me something to look forward to when I get home from Spain.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 03-Aug-19 05:50 PM GMT

Looks like they're on their way though Pauline 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 03-Aug-19 06:08 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

.... but still not a single one in the garden 😞

I've had a couple hanging around my buddleias for a couple of days now, joined by a third this afternoon. From their condition (good) I reckon they are home grown, the offspring of the earlier influx, although I didn't see any of those locally.

Nice Brown Hairstreak photos 📷😊 Now that is a species I really must try and catch up with.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Aug-19 07:09 PM GMT

Wondered where you'd gone - not been the same without you. Wouldn't get too excited about the BH just yet if my experience anything to go by 😞

Haven't reached my garden yet Goldie 😞

Neil Freeman wrote:

Nice Brown Hairstreak photos 📷😊 Now that is a species I really must try and catch up with.

Hope you find it easier going than me Neil 😞

It has not been for the want of trying but I have so far only seen 2 BH. Reports I have had indicate that I am not the only one who has failed to find any/much. I have to ask if they are just emerging late, emerging in a sporadic fashion or whether the numbers are low for various reasons. This time last year I was watching many females egg-laying. Today I checked many Blackthorn where I can normally see eggs at this time of year again without success, meaning that the females are not coming down to lay yet. I recall 10 years ago when it was unusual to find BH before the 4-5 August but after that date sightings were usually reliable. In recent years it seems we have got used to seeing them at the end of July. I looked back at my records for last year when I visited Noar Hill to look for them close on 3 dozen times. Sometimes I visited twice daily, sometimes 3 times - at different times of the

day and in different weather. Over the period of 6 weeks or so I saw many BH despite the drought which caused their unusual behaviour at the start of the season. Many visits I saw 2, 3 even 4 BH and there were only 3 visits when I failed to see any. Some of the earliest BH I saw looked as if they had emerged at least a couple of days earlier. The successful visits were:

24/7
25/7
27/7
31/7
2/8
13/8
14/8
17/8
21/8
23/8
30/8
3/9
9/9
10/9
13/9

It will be interesting to see how this pans out over the next few weeks. I am sure a number of folk will have a number of theories but I very much hope that this does not turn out to be a downward trend. In the absence of any more shots so far this year I shall leave you with an individual from last September:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Aug-19 12:34 PM GMT

Thought I'd include a couple of shots of the site where I've been spending so much time recently:





Today I am monitoring Violet (budgie). The prolapse has recurred a couple of times and if this happens I have to manipulate it back in again until the various treatments she is getting start to kick in, including hormone injections. In between that I am trying to keep an eye on the Common Blue pupa. I'll be lucky if I get to see it emerge. Any guesses on when that might be?





Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 07-Aug-19 01:16 PM GMT

The fact you can see the blue wings through the skin of the chrysalis, I recon within the next couple of days, Pauline!

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 07-Aug-19 08:28 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline , a great shot of the Hair Streak 🍷 I hope your Budgie is okay and getting well 😊
You seem to have the knack for finding the unexpected Pauline 😊 but it's an ugly chrysalis 😊 Hope the Butterfly looks better 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Aug-19 02:56 PM GMT

Hi Goldie

I'm going to have to beg to differ on this one 😊 . I find the pupal stage of butterflies (and some moths) fascinating (and attractive). Just to labour the point 😊 I'm going to post another few of the same pupa as I watched it change this morning as the butterfly prepared to emerge:





Just be thankful I'm not posting all 300 shots I took! 😊😊😊 Look how the colour and shape changes though as the butterfly peels itself away from the pupal case and moves down in preparation for emergence. It leaves a kind of translucent effect which seems to reflect the light and I find that really hard to cope with photographically.

BTW, thank you for asking after Violet. She is at the vet again tomorrow for last hormone injection. Still on Baytril (antibiotic) and both food and water are being loaded with calcium. She is obviously depleted after laying all those eggs but I hadn't realised that muscles need calcium to contract so until she has absorbed sufficient the cloaca will continue to prolapse. Working my socks off for this one 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Aug-19 03:11 PM GMT

Thanks Mark – you were spot on. The Common Blue emerged this morning. After waiting for quite a few hours it is all over ever so quickly (under a minute) and you don't get any second chances. I'll just post the whole sequence I took this morning and let others tell me how I could have done it better – I always welcome constructive criticism. The first indication I had that something was about to happen was a slight lifting of one wing and a tremble in the antennae:













Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 08-Aug-19 08:19 PM GMT

I think you have done a pretty good job there, Pauline, no constructive criticism from me! Congratulations—a new addition to the family!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-19 08:37 PM GMT

Good to see the Brostreaks have finally started emerging at Shipton Pauline – cracking image – I tried a couple of times before Portugal but no luck, and now I'm back the weather looks shocking – typical 😞 Oh well may see you staring at a hedge next week 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Aug-19 09:07 PM GMT

No BH images from Shipton from me Wurzel – all from NH. Hope you had a great time in Portugal.

That's really kind of you Mark. I couldn't let him go without taking a few more shots after release. I had hoped HE was going to be a SHE as I saw this egg being laid by a gorgeous blue female and wanted to know what the offspring would look like. I confess I felt a little protective as he was still dripping meconium when released even tho it was several hours after emergence. Another male had a go at him. He didn't retaliate but hid under a leaf – the only open wing shot I have of him.





Re: Pauline

by David M, 09-Aug-19 06:15 AM GMT

Thanks for sharing those fascinating images of the Common Blue emerging from its pupa, Pauline. What a beautiful insect.

Fingers crossed that Violet makes a full recovery.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 09-Aug-19 06:23 PM GMT

Yes! the butterfly is much better looking than the Pupal 😊 Fantastic series of shots Pauline 😊

I still feel amazed that the caterpillar changes into a chrysalis and then into a Butterfly, Nature is wonderful!!!! Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 09-Aug-19 07:46 PM GMT

"No BH images from Shipton from me Wurzel"...I missed the bit in Mike's reply where he reckoned Noar Hill would be a better bet 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 09-Aug-19 09:14 PM GMT

Fascinating emergence shots Pauline. I must admit I thought you had the wrong species with the first few shots after emerging, he looks uncannily like a Chalkhill at first!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Aug-19 02:37 PM GMT

Pleased you liked them D. I'll report back on Violet idc when outcome is more certain but thanks for that.

Glad you liked the butterfly M but another pupa on the way 😊

No worries Wurzel – don't know how you keep up as well as you do 😊

Cheers Paul – no Chalkhills on the site he came from so I had no doubt on that score but there are SSB and if I hadn't seen the egg being laid I would have wondered given the colours/markings showing at the pupa stage.

The gales here are bending the plants double and blowing away anything that isn't tied down but as I type I have a Large White fluttering helplessly round the flowers trying to find some refuge. Unlike the butterfly I haven't yet ventured out so just a quick update on the RA/Painted Lady/Comma 😊
The Comma has now pupated but whether he will emerge in time to appear in this years diary remains to be seen.

One butterfly I would love to rear is the LTB so if anyone knows anyone who knows someone who may just have an egg-laying female in their garden please do get in touch 😊



Re: Pauline

by David M, 11-Aug-19 01:35 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

..The Comma has now pupated but whether he will emerge in time to appear in this years diary remains to be seen.

I think you'd have to make an exception for such a thing, Pauline. 😊

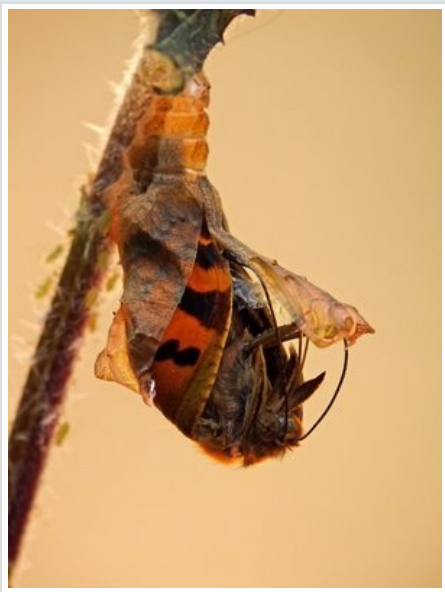
That would be a fascinating sequence of images.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Aug-19 04:53 PM GMT

Nice try David 😊😊

You should know that I've done this sequence before, 2017:



and 2015:



...added to that I returned home today to find this:



Re: Pauline

by trevor, 11-Aug-19 07:29 PM GMT

Great Comma sequence, Pauline. they don't come fresher than that!.

Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 11-Aug-19 08:11 PM GMT

I'm with Trevor on this – a fantastic sequence Pauline 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Aug-19 08:14 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor – much appreciated 😊

Today I was unable to find any sign of 2nd brood Glanville but managed to locate 2 further webs – not easy as they are tucked securely away. The first was very active with dozens of larva – the difference in the second web was marked. Clearly a 'hibernation' web with the larva securely inside. I tentatively touched this web and was amazed at just how robust it was. I had imagined it would feel like a spider's web but it felt more like tarpaulin. Fascinating!!!





The 'hibernation' web was not near any Plaintain and the grasses around it had been pulled together like a mini wig-wam. I am assuming that in the Spring the larva will abandon this winter tent and construct a new web near a food source?

Re: Pauline

by David M, 11-Aug-19 09:27 PM GMT

Nice observations with the Glanville larval webs, Pauline.

Your latest Comma looks to be a *hutchinsoni*, which surprises me given the time of year.

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 12-Aug-19 08:42 AM GMT

Was the Hibernation web near to the web that was abandoned, as that may be where the larvae moved too, they do like to go into longer growth to hibernate, with the strong web and protection from wind. They were flying later at Wrecclisham, so probably will all hibernate, if its a mild winter and warm spring again it looks like a good year for Surrey Glanvilles next year. Hopefully there will be no major works in that field.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Aug-19 04:03 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – it was the last of the reared to emerge!

Mmmm, now you mention it.....but please don't ask me to explain it! Your input is always valued D.

Hi Martin, it was about 20-30 paces away – seems a long way for a little larva?

As I type the rain is torrential and there is a massive thunderstorm. I really need this weather to dry up to help me sell my car as unfortunately I cannot drive 2 at once. I am told there are only 49 in Europe. My old car:



My new (old) car:



Actually, the weather wasn't all that bad this morning – calm, warm with periods of sunshine. There were a couple of other observers searching for BH at Noar Hill but none of us had any luck. I still can't find a single egg which is a little worrying. I couldn't find Mike's Chalkhill either but there were 4 Painted Ladies in the top pit and someone pointed out a Spotted Flycatcher to me?? A few from this morning:





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-19 08:40 PM GMT

My girls would love your car(s) Pauline that would get them a score of two out of three in "Yellow, Mini, Soft-top" 😊😄 Looks good for a juvenile Spotted Fly Pauline, you can make out the ever so slightly upturned bill 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Aug-19 09:32 PM GMT

I can't believe how quickly the time has gone –from finding that first Duke of Burgundy on 1 April until seeing the Brown Hairstreaks in early August and everything in between. Before I go I must (as usual) reflect on the season from a personal perspective.

Rearing – I hadn't intended to rear Purple Hairstreaks again this season but after finding so many eggs on felled branches I decided to do it for a third time as they must be one of the easiest Hairstreaks to rear. I hadn't intended to rear a Black Arches moth either but as it came in on branches for the Hairstreaks I felt I had no choice. Thanks again to Allan and Vince for providing the ID. The Puss moth is one I have reared before and no doubt will do again as I enjoy watching them progress through the stages. My first attempt at rearing Brimstone was successful and coincided with the finding of several wild Brimstone pupa having spent an absolute age monitoring the larva. It was during these searches that I found my first wild Orange-tip pupa – the first of several. Rearing a Common Blue was another first for me and another success. It was suggested that the Red Admiral larva I had photographed was possibly a Painted Lady. I have wanted to rear one of these for some time now so put it in a place of safety with that intention. Turned out it was in fact a Comma which has since emerged and has hopefully found a place of shelter in this dreadful weather.

Immature Stages



Immature Stages



Immature Stages - 3



Common Blue emerging from pupa





Sightings – It was exciting to see the 'Black' Admiral this season as it is about 10 years since I have seen one and even more exciting to discover that it was one of several. Following a 'tip-off' from Paul I was also able to discover and photograph my first wild WLH larva. In Sussex the mating Bees were a first for me and likewise the Narrow-bordered Bee moth at Bentley Woods. I have included several of the more ordinary sightings in this review because they were taken on outings I particularly enjoyed for various reasons. A collation of colour and wing patterns highlighting the beauty and diversity of these insects.





I have not had my moth trap out a great deal this season – simply a time issue but I have continued to enjoy the shots posted by others in particular the wonderful variety Neil has shared with us. I have however taken a more than usual interest in the moths I have encountered from day to day leading to the identification of that Box–tree moth which was introduced to this country in 2007 and appears to be a real pest. I was happy to provide details to Colin Pratt who is collating them for his next book.



Earlier in the year I spent a considerable amount of time at Bramshott Common which is a very atypical site for the Silver-spotted Skippers but it was the Common Blues that caught my interest. All but 2 of the females I was able to find on this site were various shades of blue – some quite amazing combination of colour and patterns – and having spent a great deal of time over many visits just watching them it was apparent that the behaviour of these blue females was very similar to that of the males; they were active, territorial and the males initially seemed quite disinterested in them. Very different behaviour to that of the Brown females who tend to be more sedentary. It goes without saying that the behaviour of these insects is one of the main reasons I continue with this hobby and probably why I find the immature stages so fascinating.



My interest has extended beyond butterflies and I have spent time looking at both various immature stages in the wild as well as other insects. I have learned more about the life cycle of the Ladybird and have unintentionally discovered a little about spiders – due to the various species I saw killing various butterflies.



These were all highlights of my season – a wonderful array of butterflies despite the season being something of a strange one for some of the species, in particular the Purple Emperor. Nevertheless, I was pleased to be able to get some close up views and shots on several occasions including having 2 grounded Emperors at once – one on the ground and one on me to be precise. It is quite some years since that has occurred. There is not much I don't enjoy about the butterfly season as it is great to meet up with like-minded folk but the chap with the net at Chiddingfold disturbed me as did reports of a couple of guys with nets searching out female PE at Alice Holt – not to mention the one collecting eggs in a plastic tub!

The emergence of the Brown Hairstreak also seems to be delayed and sporadic at least in Hampshire. I believe it to be the smaller concentration of butterflies around at any one time which has resulted in fewer sightings to date.

With the Hairstreaks being my favourite group it was a little disappointing and quite frustrating to see so many Black Hairstreaks at Ditchling Common whilst only getting shots of worn or damaged individuals. However, that frustration was balanced by the pleasure of finding Brown Hairstreak eggs at a site where I have been told they have not been recorded before.



Before I go it just remains for me to thank those of you who have taken an interest in my diary this year, whether actively contributing or just looking at my shots. If the latter then I hope you enjoyed them and it would be lovely if you just 'popped in' to say Hello – or Cheerio!. If the former, then a very big thank you as it is lovely to get your comments and views as I am always looking to improve and try to keep things fresh and interesting. I wish you all the very best for the rest of your season.

Au revoir.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 12-Aug-19 10:51 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

..As I type the rain is torrential and there is a massive thunderstorm. I really need this weather to dry up to help me sell my car as unfortunately I cannot drive 2 at once. I am told there are only 49 in Europe. My old car...

You're full of surprises, Pauline. I would never have associated you with that kind of vehicle. 😊

How long have you owned it?

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 12-Aug-19 10:53 PM GMT

Gosh, end of your season already 😊 A wonderful series of fascinating posts illustrated with splendid photographs. I loved your 'collection' of wing patterns. While I've not seen much that I felt worthy of reporting – apart from the Scilly sub-species – I have enjoyed following various diaries and posts. I was up at Bald Hill at the Eastern end of the Aston Rowant reserve a few days ago (it's much quieter than the better-known section by the M40) and was surprised by how few Silver-spotted Skippers there seemed to be but plenty of Chalkhill Blues and several Frog Orchids.

until next year 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 12-Aug-19 11:14 PM GMT

Goodness, is it really that time already? As ever, your diary is a fascinating read, Pauline, and includes an enviable level of detail that I know I would never have the patience to achieve. I shall miss dipping into it in the coming months, but I hope you are blessed with a few more butterflies this season – a Clouded Yellow or two maybe?

All the best,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 13-Aug-19 06:46 AM GMT

~~#Quote~~ Wurzel:

My girls would love your car(s) Pauline that would get them a score of two out of three in "Yellow, Mini, Soft-top" [/i>You Pauline have the perfect car. I have an [almost] identical Skoda (VW clone) in that same stunning yellow but mine is a hard top. Wife has an open top Silver Mini Cooper S

Open top cars are fun, perfectly practical but the wind noise level is high. Although we do drive each other's cars from time to time, I much prefer my Skoda. Fortunately Stella opts for the Mini so no clashes. Moreover, the yellow car is much more economical (perhaps my driving style is to an extent responsible 😊) and if I get below 60 mpg, I am disappointed.

Mind you, the Mini can reach absurd speeds before you can blink – but what's the point 🤔

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 13-Aug-19 09:13 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I hope you sell your car , if I lived nearer I'd love it 😊 My Daughter has a mini and I've offered to swap her , (my car for her's,) no takers though 😞
You've certainly been busy this year, your photos are always excellent , It's always sad to see you Finnish off it means nearly the end of the season keep in touch .Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-Aug-19 10:24 PM GMT

I hope all goes well during your hibernation Pauline 😊 Perhaps we can tempt you out for the Social? 😊😊 If not see you next year some time 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 15-Aug-19 08:51 PM GMT

That's a lovely photographic summary of your season, Pauline 😊 and I can imagine how long it took to put it together 😊 Great stuff, see you next year 😊

Mike.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 16-Aug-19 07:19 PM GMT

Blimey Pauline, that time already 😊

That is a great look back on your season with some interesting comments and cracking photos 😊 and thanks for the mention on my moth photos 😊

Hope you have a good hibernation and looking forward to you resuming your diary next year.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 30-Aug-19 12:02 PM GMT

As ever, that is a wonderful sequence of images showcasing your butterfly year, Pauline (though I can live without the 'Spiders & Butterflies' presentation).

I especially like the 'Butterfly Wings' image - it almost has a stained glass window effect.

Good luck with all your pets this autumn/winter and I will look forward to seeing you return on here next year...to coincide with the emergence of Dukes hopefully!

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 30-Aug-19 08:05 PM GMT

I missed your summation of your hectic year a few weeks ago, once again it looks like you've had a busy season. Happy hibernation and look forward to your return next spring, maybe see you at the social again?

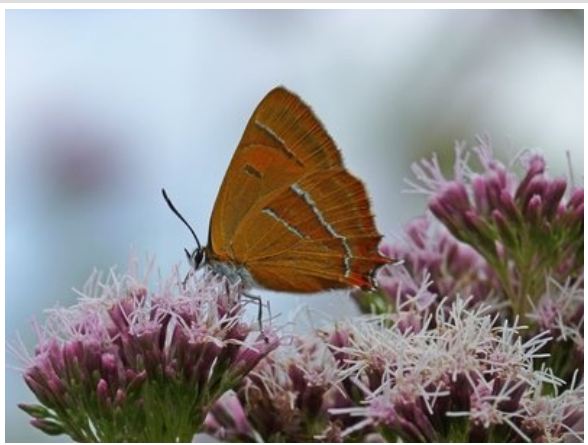
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Sep-19 05:39 PM GMT

Never having been known for being predictable but always willing to admit I was wrong I have decided I was indeed a little premature in ending my season - there is still too much going on. I'd like to thank everyone for your very VERY generous comments and rest assured, I shall not expect them to be repeated. When I have finished posting I shall just fade away this time..... I have managed to keep reading a few diaries. Paul, I am honoured to have a WA larva named after me 😊 Mark, you already know how much I loved the fox; I enjoyed the Marsh Frit larva David and Neil, that shot of the Wasp Spider was very reminiscent of shots I have taken recently. There are probably many more but I'm just working from memory now. I have made some notes so for the next however many posts I shall just do a cut and paste job.

13 August

Sods Law! The day after I closed my diary was the day that the Brown Hairstreaks showed themselves at Noar Hill (13 August). I was trying to get a shot of the Chalkhill originally spotted by Mike. It was being a bit skittish, leading me a merry dance but it led me right up to a nectaring female Brown Hairstreak - and then another - and then another!!! For about an hour I watched them laying eggs (at last!) Co-incidentally, it would seem that they were seen in some numbers at Shipton on the same day.





Re: Pauline

by millerd, 12-Sep-19 06:00 PM GMT

The old adage proved right again, Pauline – expect the unexpected! You chase one thing that leads you to another... Great Brown Hairstreak shots: I'm pleased they finally appeared at Noar Hill for you. 😊

You can probably hibernate happily now!

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Sep-19 08:43 AM GMT

Thanks Dave – sadly the eggs had disappeared just 48 hours later. I shall be very interested in the results of the egg count for this season. If I can fit it in I may return to look again.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Sep-19 09:08 AM GMT

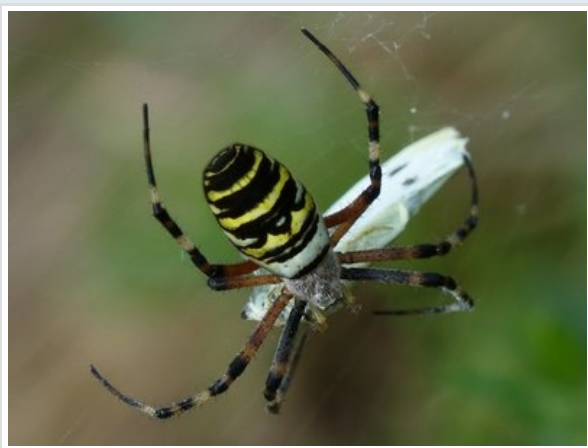
15 August

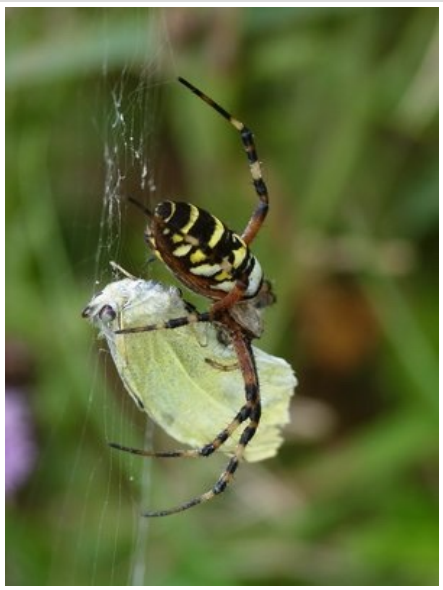
Today, 15 August, was probably the best outing I have had this season so far. I hadn't yet managed to visit a new site so when I saw reports of lots of butterflies from Thorney Island I thought it was time to pay a visit. I have been to Thorney Island before but only to one small area and never to West Thorney where there is a lovely old 13thC Church. It is a tricky area to navigate given the MOD presence and I had to stop at the checkpoint. I was not allowed through but a guard gave me some rough directions as to how I might get to West Thorney. As he was talking to me a fresh Green Hairstreak????? flew past. *** I was tempted to give chase but with another couple of guards conspicuous with weapons I decided against it. It eventually landed on some grass behind a guard with a gun. Lost again I had to ask a postman for further directions which led to a dead end. I had been informed that my destination was about a 20 minute walk but because I kept stopping it was more like 1 hour and 20 mins.

I had expected that the numbers of butterflies would perhaps have been exaggerated but quite the opposite. There were hundreds and hundreds of Whites, (if not thousands) mostly Small but all 3 were present and the report of 32 Painted Ladies was very understated. I probably saw at least double that. There must have been about 20 around the Church yard and on the buddleia there. What I didn't see were the Clouded Yellows that had been reported from the area.

With so many Whites it was almost inevitable that I would see one in a spider's web. I had stopped to photograph an impressive looking wasp spider but then was distracted by a Common Blue (well, I had to check them all just in case!). When I turned back to the spider it had already neatly wrapped up the poor butterfly.

I'm really going to try to get back here before too long!





Great camouflage!



*** I should clarify that the question marks against the Green Hairstreak are not there to express any doubt about the identity but because I couldn't believe I had just seen an immaculate Green Hairstreak at that time of year.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Hulme, 13-Sep-19 10:50 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

That's a rare but not unique sighting of an August Green Hairstreak. Here's the text I wrote for *The Butterflies of Sussex*:

"Flight Period

Nowadays this species flies from early April to early July, with a peak lasting throughout May. The average flight period recorded between 2010 and 2014 was 13 April to 10 July. During the previous atlas survey period the species generally emerged in early May, so the flight period has moved forward by about three weeks.

In 2013 the Green Hairstreak was recorded at Mill Hill (Shoreham), Fore Wood (Battle) and Cross in Hand during August, with the latest sighting on 28 of the month. This suggests a small second brood and it will be interesting to see whether a trend develops over future years."

BWs, Neil

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 13-Sep-19 11:13 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, glad to see you're still posting, 😊 A Green Hair Streak in August, that would be great if they did start having second broods, if I miss them up here I could catch them down there in Kent. 😊

That poor Butterfly Pauline, I don't like to see that happen, West Thorney sounds great to visit, it must have been amazing seeing all those Butterflies at once 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Sep-19 04:24 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie – it really was quite spectacular not least because they were all in the same small area.

Hi Neil – perhaps I need to invest in that book – I'm sure I've seen it referred to before somewhere 😊 Seriously, that is extremely interesting and also good to know. I shall expect to see my sighting mentioned in your next book! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Sep-19 04:31 PM GMT

18 August

A return visit to West Thorney today did not disappoint. Amongst the masses of Whites and dozens of Painted Ladies a few Clouded Yellows made an appearance. A few of the butterflies had a bit of damage but, hey, they've been around for a while now. Others were very fresh including a Holly Blue which I watched egg-laying. Unfortunately, the shots of both the ovi-posting and the eggs were blurred due to the strong wind. Despite the numbers of Painted Ladies here I was still unable to find any of the immature stages. A distant shot of Lapwings on the water:





Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 13-Sep-19 04:45 PM GMT

I'm pleased to see that you do not stick too firmly to arbitrary rules, Pauline. If you stay around, you might find some Long-tailed Blues next 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-Sep-19 08:03 PM GMT

What with the Heatwave starting today it's good to see you're out of hibernation Pauline 😊😄 Cracking shots of the Brostreaks and Cloudies so no wonder you got the itchy feet and had to get back out 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 13-Sep-19 10:28 PM GMT

Good to see you back, Pauline! As Mike says, don't go into hibernation just yet, for things could get interesting at the end of this month...

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Sep-19 05:49 AM GMT

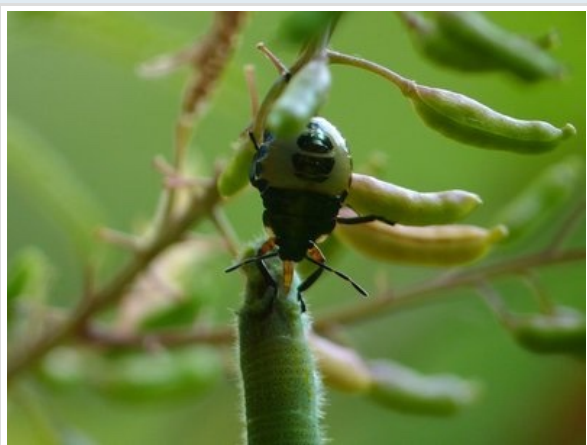
I reckon you could be absolutely right Mike 😊 . Good to hear from you.

Cheers Wurzel – not sure how long it will last but we'll see.....

Thanks Mark – I certainly hope so 😊

19 August

Earlier in the season I watched a Small White egg-laying in my garden and posted a shot of the egg on my diary. The eggs hatched, the caterpillars grew but I was surprised to find they had pupated on one of my potted plants – a Daphne I think! The camouflage is superb – I shall keep an eye on these. Sadly one of the larva got eaten by this bug which I have so far been unable to identify (some sort of Cabbage Bug?):





Re: Pauline

by trevor, 14-Sep-19 07:52 AM GMT

A well timed break from hibernation if I may say so, Pauline.
As others have said, the very end of this season could be very exciting.

You mentioned that Thorney Island was heaving with Butterflies, and is also M.O.D. land.
A site I visit regularly on Salisbury Plain is M.O.D. and a superb butterfly site.
I think this is down to such land being left alone, ie. little Human interference where nature can get on with it, and of course the land has always been free from pesticides, and fertilisers.

Perhaps we should join the Military! 😊 .

Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Greenie, 14-Sep-19 08:11 AM GMT

Hi Pauline ,

I think your ' Cabbage bug ' could be the early stage of the Pied Shieldbug – Tritomegas bicolor , but don't hold me to it .
Glad the Brown Hairstreaks eventually turned up for you . Here on the Kent / Surrey border where we had to rescue eggs from the flail last autumn and wire them into receiving sites and the original site after the flail had done it's worst , we have had 37 sightings over 3 of the 4 sites , with plenty of egg laying too , boding well for next year . But it has been a very strange year for the species .

Cheers Greenie

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Sep-19 12:53 PM GMT

Hi Trevor – how do I sign up? 😊😄 I think you could possibly be right about MOD land. Time yet to meet up over a LTB 😊

How ya doing Greenie? Good to hear from you. Yes, I've been following your posts about the Kent BH – well done! I think you are correct about Shield Bug too (presumably Cabbage bugs are vegetarian?). Definitely immature stage as I watched it grow and change after those photos.

I'm going to jump forward a few weeks now just to stay on topic. I did keep an eye on those Small White Pupa so here are a few shots of one.

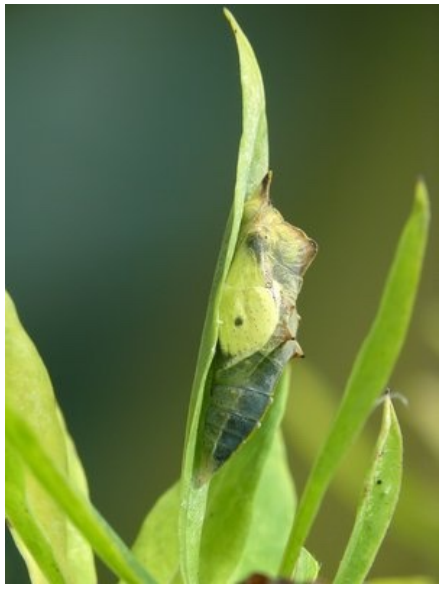
31 August:



1 September
10.13am:



11.30am



12.30pm:



12.45pm:



Not a great deal of difference in them as far as I could see but then it happened at 13.00pm:









Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-19 07:50 PM GMT

Cracking sequence again Pauline 😊 As you're out of hibernation are you going to be able to make it to the Social this year? It was good to see you last year but we didn't get o have a proper chin wag 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Sep-19 09:04 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel –afraid I can never be sure about the Social until a couple of days beforeand I might be hibernating again by then 😊😄

Whilst taking these shots above I was aware that several Small Whites were in the garden and kept returning to the Plum tree where I could see a Small White was resting and rejecting their advances. It wasn't until slightly later that I realised it was a mating pair. Strange as it might seem, this is the very first time I have seen Small Whites mating and was particularly pleased to get my first shots in my garden:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 14-Sep-19 11:21 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...As he was talking to me a fresh Green Hairstreak????? flew past.



Amazing sighting, Pauline. I don't think I've ever heard of one being spotted in August before.

Re: Pauline

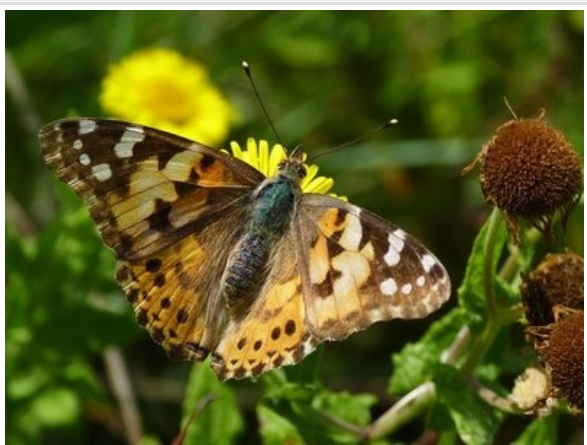
by Pauline, 15-Sep-19 10:02 AM GMT

Me neither!!! It was almost a relief when Neil informed that there had been records of a second brood in 2013 in Sussex. Interestingly that was also the year that a number of LTB came to our shores. Perhaps the same climate suits them both but if we get any more 'LTB years' I shall certainly be on the lookout for 2nd brood GH – just wish it had settled on my side of the checkpoint 😊

20 August

A final trip Thorney to look for Painted Lady eggs or larva – again without success. Nevertheless, it was a joy just to stand for a couple of hours in one small area and watch the activities of dozens and dozens of butterflies. I took a few more shots of the Painted Ladies as it might be a while before the opportunity returns to view them in such numbers and GVW mating.







The second Wasp Spider I have seen this week - thankfully this one didn't have a butterfly in its clutches.



As I wanted to know more about them and their strange web construction this is an extract I found:

'Wasp spiders are a very distinctive looking species. They have black and yellow stripes across their bodies, looking like no other species of spider found in the UK. Their colour and pattern mimics the colouration of a wasp, which is where the Wasp spider gets its name from. Their appearance is actually a defence mechanism, as by disguising themselves as wasps, predators leave well alone believing them to be a wasp and not a spider. Their bright appearance may seem dangerous, but don't be fooled as these mesmerising little creatures are actually harmless! And in fact are related to the Common garden spider.

To match their unique look, Wasp spiders also have a unique web. They are orb-shaped, like a Common garden spider, but they have a single zig-zag

pattern of silk through the centre rather than all over. Their webs aren't always like this. When Wasp spiders are young, their web is a circular zigzagging design. When the spider grows older, it makes both the circular and straight zigzag pattern through its web, until it eventually only makes the straight zigzag pattern.

The zigzag design is created to reflect UV light and attract pollinating insects like flies, bees and moths!

As is the case with many spider species, the females rule the roost!-Or web in this case! Female Wasp spiders are much larger than males, measuring in at an impressive 14-18mm, whilst males only reach up to between 4 and 6mm. When it comes to mating, males play a daring and dangerous game. Males will wait at the edge of a web until the female has moulted into a mature form then will dive in to make their move. Females actually eat males whilst they are mating, so doing it at this precise moment is key to the hopeful survival of males as the female's jaws are still soft. However, luck isn't on their side much and the females still eat the males alive, soft jaws or not!

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 15-Sep-19 08:44 PM GMT

Well it was certainly worth coming out of hibernation, an awful lot of envy inducing images and a second brood Green Hairstreak to boot! 🍷🍷🍷

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Sep-19 09:30 AM GMT

Aaaw, thanks Buggy - appreciate that 😊

21 August - Noar Hill

Possibly the last visit of the season to this site given the lack of Brown Hairstreak sightings. Great to see Mike and Cathy again whose sharp eyes spotted the only BH found that day - a lovely female who stayed with us for ages. If only it hadn't been for that strong breezeThanks both for cheering me up (never laughed so much in ages).





and a lovely fresh Small Tortoiseshell put in an appearance:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Sep-19 09:35 AM GMT

22 August

A trip into Surrey today and another Brown Hairstreak seen egg-laying:





I believe several more were seen after I had to leave. Good to see you again Martin and thanks for your recent help.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Sep-19 05:07 PM GMT

23 August

Sussex provided another change of scene and welcome views (albeit distant) of several LTB. Looking quite tatty now but hey, who cares?! It was just good to see and photo a few of the primary immigrant adults:



A large caterpillar seen moving rapidly – given its size presumably searching for a place to pupate. I'm pretty sure it's a Buff-tip moth larva.



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Sep-19 05:18 PM GMT

24 August

You might recall that earlier on in my diary I threw out a request along the lines of 'if anyone knows anyone who has a friend that has LTB eggs in their garden please ask them to get in touch'. Well, a friend of a friend actually did find LTB eggs in his garden and generously allowed me to rear one. Yesterday, 23 August I saw the egg hatch:









Re: Pauline

by Chris Jackson, 16-Sep-19 05:42 PM GMT

A great series of LTB hatching shots, Pauline. Well done. Did the cat eat the chorion? Chris

Re: Pauline

by David M, 16-Sep-19 11:10 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...Sods Law! The day after I closed my diary was the day that the Brown Hairstreaks showed themselves at Noar Hill (13 August)...

They had to turn up sooner or later, Pauline... 😊

At least you got to see a few. They've been reluctant to show themselves in many parts and I have only seen 4 myself, sadly.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Sep-19 07:45 AM GMT

That's really kind of you to say so Chris, but blimey, 'chorion'???? I had to look that up 😊 On the off-chance there just might be someone else reading this, who like me hadn't heard the term before, here's the definition I found:

'In reptiles, birds, and monotremes, the chorion is one of the four extraembryonic membranes that make up the amniotic egg that provide for the nutrients and protection needed for the embryo's survival. It is located inside the albumin, which is the white of the egg. It encloses the embryo and the rest of the embryonic system. The chorion is also present in insects. During growth and development of the embryo, there is an increased need for oxygen. To compensate for this, the chorion and the allantois fuse together to form the chorioallantoic membrane. Together these form a double membrane, which functions to remove carbon dioxide and to replenish oxygen through the porous shell. At the time of hatching, the fetus becomes detached from the chorion as it emerges from the shell. '

I'm not going to forget that in a hurry 😊 – oh, and the answer is no, it didn't 😊

Hi David – strange isn't it. Not sure that it's connected but I've seen more spiders this season than I can recall seeing. Perhaps other predators are having a good year too? I've only seen 6, possibly 7.

25 August

Thought it was about time I checked on those Glanville webs. The hole in the hibernation web had been sealed up and it looked like the whole structure had been reinforced. I remember thinking that it must be quite hot inside there in the record-breaking temperatures. The active web from my last visit had been discarded and close by were 2 smaller active webs with seemingly smaller numbers of larva inside – perhaps this again was temperature related. Also in the vicinity was yet another web which had clearly been used as it contained what appeared to be many tiny shed skins?





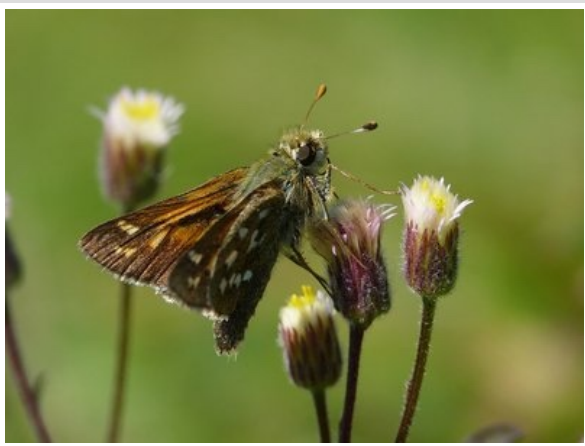
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Sep-19 02:31 PM GMT

26 August

I realised that I had neither seen nor photographed a female SSS this season – my favourite Skipper – so off I set to Oxenbourne before the heat became unbearable (on this August Bank Holiday) when temperatures were set to break all previous records!). I only recorded a definite 5 individuals (3 males and 2 females) and as expected they all looked worn in varying degrees. Thankfully, both females were seen egg-laying so I really hope the promised management of the site takes place this Autumn as scheduled as these butterflies are hanging on by a thread here.

I was quite pleased with this shot. I have taken shots of them egg-laying before and subsequent shots of the eggs but I don't think I have managed before to capture the moment the egg is actually being laid.





The numbers of other species had dropped since my last visit but the Chalkhills were still going strong. This worn male probably couldn't believe his luck at finding this beautiful fresh female:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-19 10:17 PM GMT

Great shot of the egg laying SSS Pauline – you can see that's she's really stretching her abdomen out 😂😂 I reckon that Chalkhill was the talk of the Down 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 18-Sep-19 03:35 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...You might recall that earlier on in my diary I threw out a request along the lines of 'if anyone knows anyone who has a friend that has LTB eggs in their garden please ask them to get in touch'. Well, a friend of a friend actually did find LTB eggs in his garden and generously allowed me to rear one. Yesterday, 23 August I saw the egg hatch...

Excellent, Pauline. You mustn't go into 'hibernation' without letting us see how things develop though! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Sep-19 02:41 PM GMT

Thank you David. What can I say? 😊 You'll just have to wait and see 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Sep-19 02:49 PM GMT

I was also fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to rear some Clouded Yellow and although it is early days I have already learned so much. A few early shots:



27 August

The largest of the Clouded Yellow larva has now pupated and I was lucky enough to catch him in the act. It was quite amazing to watch as he wriggled and gyrated out of his old skin and into a new form, not stopping until he had completely thrown the old one off.







Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Sep-19 04:13 PM GMT

9 September

Jumping forward again a couple of weeks found me watching this same pupa as it appeared 'coloured up' and ready to emerge.

I had always thought that once a pupa started to 'colour up' then emergence was fairly imminent. I now know better – at least where Clouded Yellow are concerned. Today I am still recovering from a 3 day vigil of a Clouded Yellow pupa which 4 days ago I was convinced would emerge 'in a couple of hours'!!!!!! If you're not interested in pupa I suggest you move on now as I'm going to relive the whole boring, frustrating saga through photos of the pupa.

Day 1 Photos To relieve the sheer boredom – I experimented with different angles and background colours and practised constructing a variety of makeshift wind breaks from rubbish in the garage because of the strong breeze! It is amazing what you can achieve with some bamboo canes and bubble wrap! I pulled out some unused carpet under felt and found a Buff-tip larva attempting to pupate in there so I moved him into what is hopefully more appropriate accommodation.





Day 2 Photos – losing the will to live now. Having assured myself that it was indeed still alive and having invested so much time there really wasn't any choice other than to carry on. Keeping fingers crossed at this point that it doesn't emerge over night! Slightly distracted from time to time by repeated visits from a couple of Hummingbird hawk moths. After I'd taken this shot I realised that the dial had been moved to Shutter Priority.



Day 3 Photos – had to draft in help with the other critters. Another distraction was a couple of my doves which shouldn't have been out but were making the most of one of the bird baths. A large Comma which actually glowed and a brand new Red Admiral were making the most of the nectar on offer but I didn't dare stray too far to record their antics. In the end it was a short, sharp shower that stirred the pupa into action. Perhaps I should have gotten the hosepipe out a couple of days earlier!



Emergence!!!!!!! Rather than feeling elated and excited as I usually do at this point I just felt drained, absolutely exhausted despite having done very little for days. Would I do it again???? Watch this space 😊

Bearing in mind that these shots have taken 3 days of my life a few more images than usual:

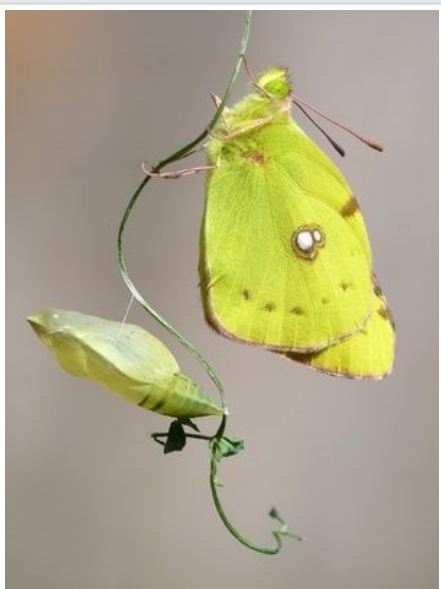












Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 19-Sep-19 06:55 PM GMT

Lovely sequence, Pauline. I have reared CY myself a few times. They are not too difficult, but slower than some, indeed I have to take them into a greenhouse in the end, to speed up the process. They emerged late October, having been collected as eggs in August.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 19-Sep-19 07:37 PM GMT

Great Clouded Yellow sequence, Pauline.
Great to catch up with you yesterday, they had slightly better luck today.

Best wishes,
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 19-Sep-19 10:30 PM GMT

That's a great series of images, Pauline – you have astonishing patience, but my goodness the results are worth it. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 19-Sep-19 10:39 PM GMT

That is a cracking sequence Pauline – and the colours of the fresh Cloudy – stunning 😊😁👍 I'm glad that you 'stayed up' past your bedtime' this year 😊😁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Sep-19 01:26 PM GMT

Thank you Mark. As a learning experience there is nothing like doing it yourself, is there? 😊

Cheers Trevor – appreciated. Good to see both you and Katrina again and as I went with few expectations I wasn't too disappointed.

Hi Dave – as you get to know me better you'll realise I really don't have the patience you credit me with but I am so pleased that you like the end result 😊

Cheers Wurzel – quite a bit more to come yet 😊 Here's a clue to the next post. I totally agree with Tony's comment about Red Admirals:



Re: Pauline

by Tony Moore, 20-Sep-19 03:01 PM GMT

The C Y waiting was worth it – terrific images (I once stayed up all night waiting for a Dingy Skip egg to hatch – and who says that butterflies are off their collective heads?)

With the Red Admiral, even the underside is amazing – that flash of metallic blue...
Bring it on...

Tony M.

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 20-Sep-19 07:39 PM GMT

What can I say Pauline? Superb sequences photographed to perfection.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 20-Sep-19 08:15 PM GMT

Great to see you still posting Pauline and an amazing sequence of the Clouded Yellow.

That Red Admiral is a cracker of a photo, lovely stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 21-Sep-19 09:49 PM GMT

Even by your standards that Clouded Yellow sequence is quite exceptional, Pauline.

Be wary of raising the bar too high for fear that expectations will rise commensurately! 😊

The pair of doves inserted mid-stream only adds to the effect.

9.9/10 (only because perfection can never be achieved).

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Sep-19 11:13 AM GMT

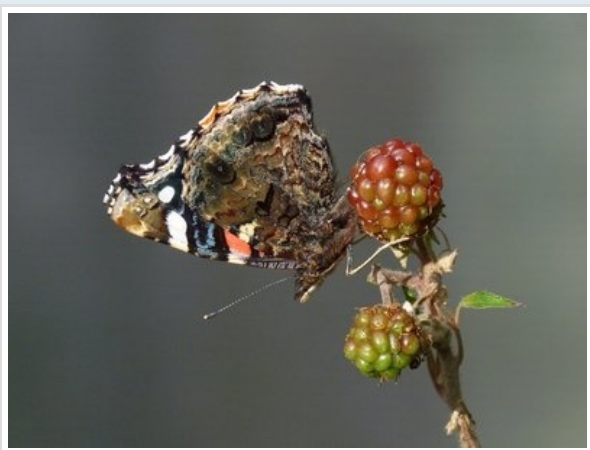
Thank you so much Tony.

Tony Moore wrote:
who says that butterflyers are off their collective heads?

– I prefer to call it dedication or determination or any other flattering term that comes to mind but it probably is just sheer lunacy 😊😂 Seriously, it's good to know that others have shared the pain 😊

Cheers Jack – that's really kind of you to say so – sometimes it just all comes together as planned 😊

Hi Neil – yes, my return is only temporary and strictly a one-off 😊. D'you know, when some (non-butterfly) friends saw that shot of the RA they didn't even recognise it as such as they had never really looked at the underside and so were quite amazed when I told them what it was. I had almost forgotten myself just how gorgeous the colours were even tho' I reared them in 2014 – a shot from before:



That's very kind of you David. I do strive to do the best I can but more consistency is needed. Having said that, I was quite pleased with the SSS caught laying her egg 😊

30 August

For what seems like weeks now I have been checking my little patch of nettles a couple of times each week for possible eggs or larva but all I have found (since finding that little Comma cat which I thought was a RA) is lots and lots of spiders and some feeding damage which I attributed to slugs – until this morning. The nettle patch is expanding rapidly and on noticing some frass I lifted up one of the larger stems which revealed this little tent. By now I had seen both Red Admiral and Painted Lady hanging around this area so I was quite excited as I carefully investigated not knowing what type of larva I would find within.

Distant shot of PL in garden:



I was even more surprised to discover there was no larva – just this pupa which I am pretty sure IS a Red Admiral.



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Sep-19 11:27 AM GMT

Jumping forward again to 10 September I watched as a gorgeous Red Admiral emerged from this same pupa:















Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 22-Sep-19 01:41 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, fantastic sequences, I'm really glad you decided to keep posting for a while 😊 Love the Doves having bathing 😊
I thought you'd like to know I've finally got my Gate fitted, so that should keep the creeps out 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Sep-19 02:08 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie - you will feel safer now that gate is done.

31 August

I was beginning to give up hope of ever seeing the LTB again but today the first appearance of a larva was a welcome sight:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Sep-19 05:11 PM GMT

3 September

Having searched and searched on both Thistles and Nettles at various sites where I had previously seen many Painted Ladies I had no success in finding a larva. Eventually I stumbled across the entry in Paul's diary where he had found some in Otterbourne on Mallow. I hadn't even thought to look on Mallow but I didn't fancy going all the way to Otterbourne - yeah, OK, I'll go there for the social at a push but it's a fair old trek for me. I remembered that I had seen lots of Mallow at Broadmarsh in the car park so that was my search area today. I very quickly found three larva of various sizes but try as I might I could not locate an egg - not even a hatched one. A couple of the larva were almost squashed as I watched. They were close to the ground on an area that had been mowed to allow for walkers and having located them I moved away to look for more. As I looked up a dog walker with 6 dogs (yes, 6, but they were all on leads thankfully) were heading straight for them. I shouted out for her to stop which she did and I was able to move them out of the way. Needless to say I didn't leave them there and I'm looking forward to rearing them.







Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Sep-19 05:24 PM GMT

I cherished those little cats and followed their development as they grew and matured, looking forward to the time when they pupated and I could eventually watch them emerge into their adult form. I hadn't prepared myself for what actually happened. As the first larva approached maturity and looked to find a place to pupate I found this:





Worse was to come 😞 The following day I found the second larva:



This time I sliced open the mass. It looked like cotton wool but it was a gel-like substance. A bit like silicone glue and this is what I found:



Worse still, it seemed like the PL was still alive – squirming around. I decided to hold onto these parasites – they soon sealed up the damage I had caused and today (23/9) I have dozens of something???? Not quite sure what but I don't think I'll be releasing them any time soon:



Re: Pauline

by trevor, 23-Sep-19 05:59 PM GMT

A real dilemma Pauline. Those (what I assume are parasitic wasps) could be released to breed, and their offspring allowed to consume more butterfly larvae, or not!

Wrestle with your conscience, do we interfere or let nature take its course ?.

Good to see you the other day,
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 23-Sep-19 07:39 PM GMT

Fascinating stuff, Pauline, though it's a real shame you didn't end up with a lovely new Painted Lady for all your efforts. At least parasitic wasps often have a beauty all their own (some are exquisite in form and colour) and that little batch might struggle now to find any more butterfly larvae to lay their own eggs on. They could well end up as bird food! 😊 On the other hand, the parasitic tachinid flies that also infest nymphalid larvae are ugly little so-and-sos which you instantly feel should not be given the benefit of the doubt!

I know, subjective criteria based solely on aesthetics, and which would be sneered at by a true naturalist I'm sure. 😊 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-Sep-19 10:29 PM GMT

A gruesome and yet fascinating set of images Pauline 🤪😬 I suppose one way to look at it is that those cats could have been squashed on the very day that you rescued them but it doesn't make nature seem 'red in tooth and claw' any the less 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Sep-19 01:23 PM GMT

It may have been before your time Trevor but many years ago I received a certain amount of criticism for not rescuing a Brown Hairstreak from the clutches of a spider even tho' it would have been way too late by the time I realised what was happening and so chose to photograph it instead. I'm afraid I judge each case on its merit and in this instance my conscience is clear – the wasps will not be released but will be disposed of. They didn't originate from this area which was just one of the considerations when making this decision. Perhaps not everyone would agree but then they rarely do 😊

I believe it is not uncommon for this to happen Wurzel but thankfully it is only the second time I have seen it. The first was a Comma I was rearing in 2014. I did not think at that time to secure the parasite with a view to identifying it later:



Hi Dave – thankfully the 3rd and final PL cat made it thru. I hope you like the images.

Re: Pauline

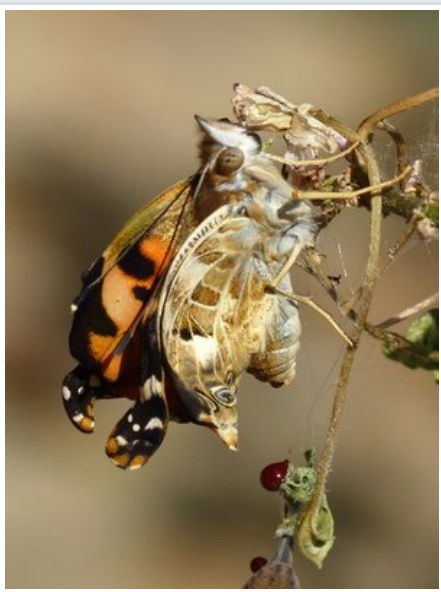
by Pauline, 24-Sep-19 01:43 PM GMT

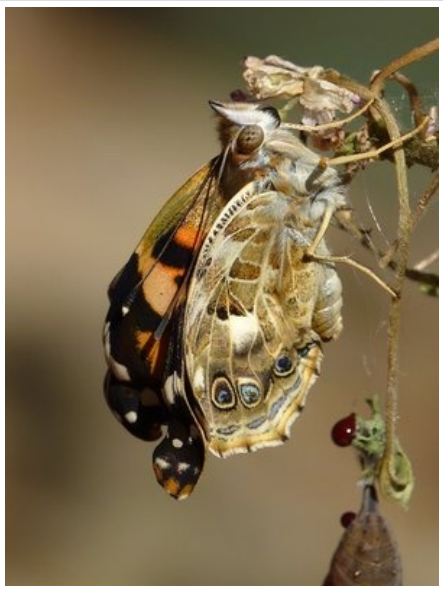
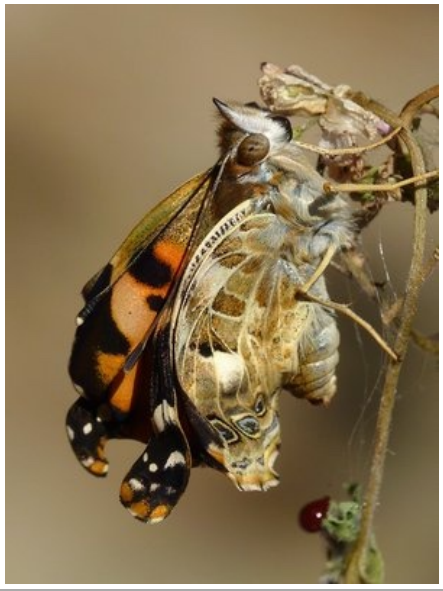
Success at last with the 3rd PL larva. What surprised me about this one – and I don't know if it is typical of the species – is the amount of meconium produced by the butterfly. It was dripping out of it for so long and in such quantities that I thought initially there must be something seriously wrong. Even the empty pupal case was full of it but the butterfly seemed no worse for the experience. At the mercy of the elements again when taking these shots 😊



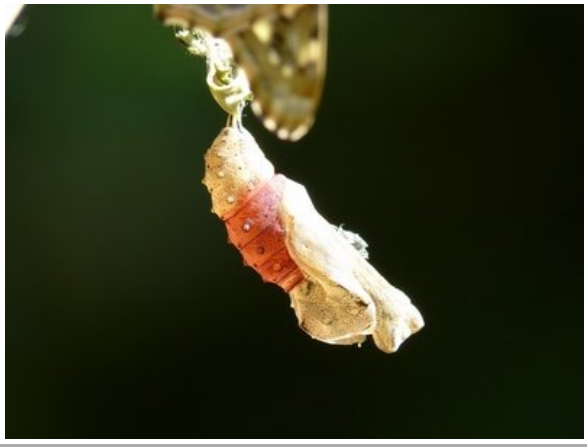














Re: Pauline

by millerd, 24-Sep-19 07:28 PM GMT

That's a lovely butterfly, Pauline, and a great sequence of pictures. The markings are absolutely exquisite when they are as new as that. Congratulations on your success this time! 😊

On the one occasion I reared a few Painted Ladies (some years ago now) I remember them leaving big red splodges of meconium everywhere. I only managed to track down the whereabouts of one escapee because of the unmistakable telltale stain spotted on a worksurface. One caterpillar had somehow found its way to the kitchen ceiling and pupated there. 🤔😅

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 24-Sep-19 10:17 PM GMT

Another cracking sequence Pauline 😊 The wings when seen through the pupal case almost ave the look of a Scarlet Tiger Moth 😊 A fantastic 'end result' 😊😄👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 24-Sep-19 11:33 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, I don't blame you for not releasing your parasites. It's bound to invite a bit of criticism, don't take it personally. As Wurzel says, it's one of those 'do you or don't you' moments.

Lovely sequence again of the hatching PL chrysalis. At least one made it through!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Sep-19 06:46 PM GMT

Thank you Dave and interesting observation (perhaps all PL produce copious amounts of meconium). I had to chuckle at your tale having followed a trail of frass across my conservatory in the past! 😊

Cheers Wurzel – it was certainly something of a relief after the first 2 😊. Forgot to include this image:



Thank you for your kind words Mark. I reckon my skin's getting thicker with each passing year 😊😂

I hope this isn't getting too repetitive but because I enjoyed watching it I shall post another sequence of a second Clouded Yellow larva shedding its skin to take the pupal form. I caught this one a bit earlier in the process so it is a little clearer how the skin splits and is subsequently shed:





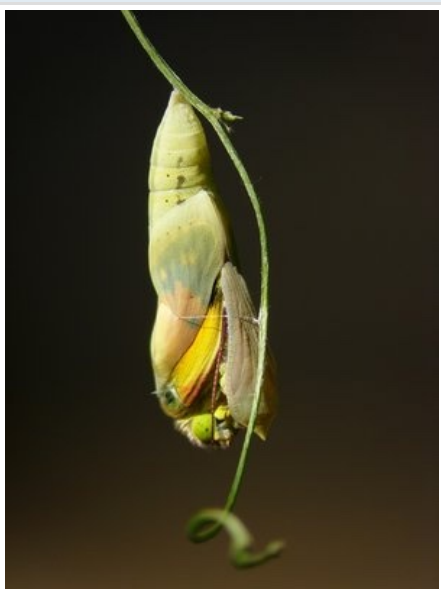


Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Sep-19 07:41 PM GMT

Probably the last 'sequence' I shall post before going back to the chronological stuff. Having reared 16 Clouded Yellow only 4 of them were female. This is one of them as can clearly be seen from the pupa. By the time this one emerged I almost had it down to a fine art timing-wise. The first shot of the pupa was taken 90 mins before emergence:

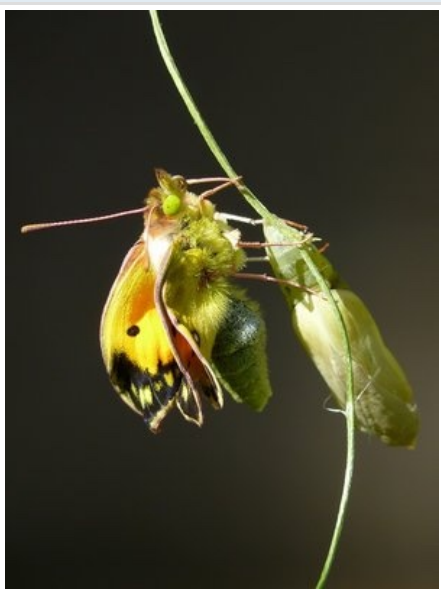
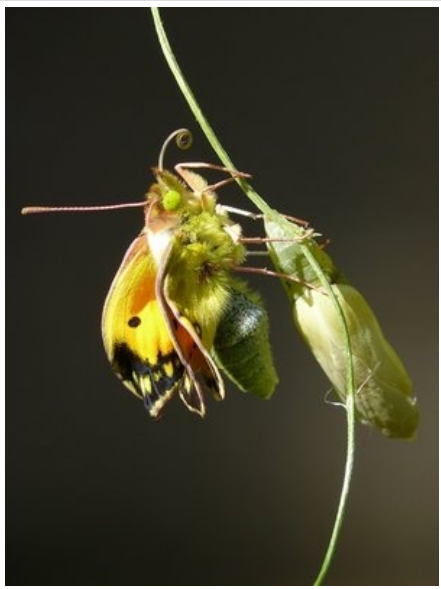
















Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 26-Sep-19 08:07 PM GMT

Another fantastic sequence Pauline 🤩🌱 The colours when fresh – just beautiful 🤩🌱

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Sep-19 10:58 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – much appreciated. To relieve the tedium and mix it up a bit, before I start on the next lot I thought I'd post some of the critters that kept me company (and distracted me) whilst watching all those pupa. First up was a young Woodpecker who came daily for a bath:



A couple of Hummingbird Hawk moths were back and forwards every 15 mins or so for a few weeks. I couldn't see where they came from or where they went to but I must remember to check the Bedstraw I planted a couple of years back – just in case:



The Grey Wagtails come most years and I watched with pleasure the Tree creeper but failed to get a shot.





My little cat Jaffa was keen to get involved and once the cage was empty decided to investigate why I had been paying it so much attention:



Lots of butterflies around and I still wish I'd taken a shot of that gorgeous Comma but got a few Red Admirals instead:



Last but not least a quick update on Violet. After some VERY expensive treatment she seems to have made a full recovery although it is likely she will need more hormone injections before the Spring (seems a long way off!). Here she is with one of her mates, Cloud - Violet is on the right:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 27-Sep-19 01:38 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Jumping forward again to 10 September I watched as a gorgeous Red Admiral emerged from this same pupa

Outstanding yet again, Pauline. How many UK species have you now observed emerging from the chrysalis?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Sep-19 12:44 PM GMT

That's a very interesting question David – one you may regret asking 😊 I didn't know the answer so I had to look back over the years. I have reared far more than I have observed emerging from the pupa. I thought it might be worth pulling one out from each species primarily for my own interest:

Black Hairstreak:



Brimstone:



Brown Hairstreak:



Clouded Yellow:



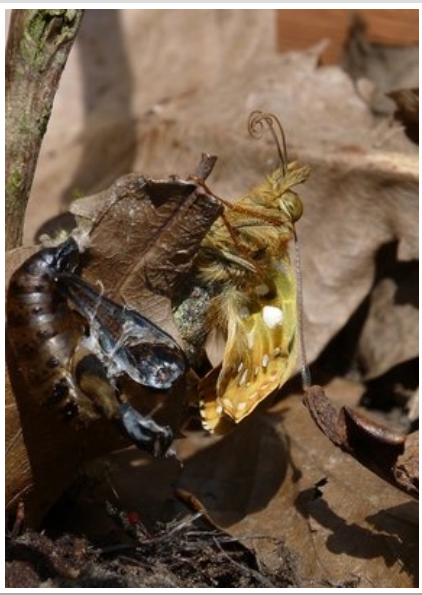
Comma:



Common Blue:



Dark Green Fritillary:



Glanville Fritillary:



Green Hairstreak:



Holly Blue:



LTB:



Orange Tip:



Painted Lady:



Peacock:



Purple Hairstreak:



Red Admiral:



Small Copper:



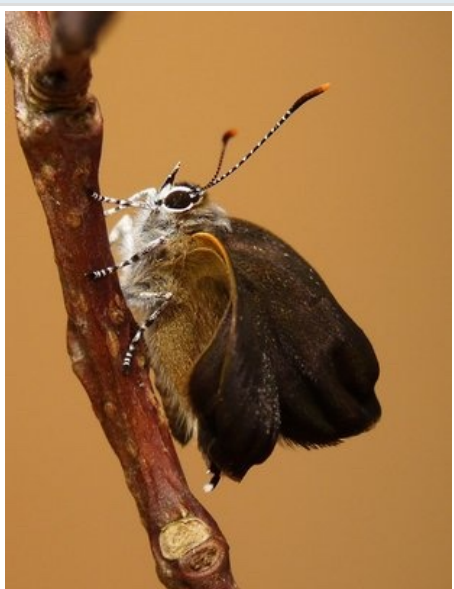
SWF:



White Admiral:



White letter hairstreak:



Re: Pauline

by Chris Jackson, 28-Sep-19 03:36 PM GMT

Great photos Pauline, from the parasited PL cat to the freshly emerged WLH.
Did you get the parasites identified? Could be *Cotesia vanessae* or *Cotesia vestalis*.
You set the bar high 😊
Chris

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Sep-19 11:26 AM GMT

Lovely to hear from you again Chris and thank you for your very kind comment you do like to make me work tho' 😊😊 Briefly, having spent a fair bit of time looking at various reports and videos I have discovered just how many types 'Cotesia' there are. Having looked at the NBN Atlas without any joy (in respect of photos or notifications) I turned to the first report of *Cotesia Vanessae* in North America (having already established that *Vestalis* seems to demonstrate a preference for Diamondback moths). Comparing description and photos of my now dead Ichneumonid wasps I am fairly sure they are *Vanessae*:



Incidentally I counted 172 dead wasps. Have I nothing better to do on a Saturday night? Apparently not 😊 Looking forward to my next challenge 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Sep-19 11:28 AM GMT

Just one for today:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 29-Sep-19 11:39 AM GMT

Cracking image Pauline 🍷🍷😄 I wondered how long it would be before a LTB graced your PD 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 29-Sep-19 01:28 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

..Last but not least a quick update on Violet. After some VERY expensive treatment she seems to have made a full recovery although it is likely she will need more hormone injections before the Spring (seems a long way off!). Here she is with one of her mates, Cloud – Violet is on the right

Excellent news, Pauline, and well done for looking after her so well. She's looking perky and in good health in that image. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 29-Sep-19 09:45 PM GMT

I have to ask you Pauline – and please don't misinterpret my query as implying doing anything wrong – how do you get your early stages? They can't all be those saved from footpaths. Do you take wild eggs, larvae? I would have thought that DG or SW Fritillary for example, would be quite a challenge. Watching the eggs being laid perhaps? Certainly you must have considerable patience. I for one am so pleased that you share your results. I stick to easy species such as Orange Tip: OT eggs are very easy to find.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Sep-19 09:31 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – a few more images still to come 😊

Thank you David – it is always such a worry if one is poorly.

No worries Jack – I'd anticipated this question when I replied to David and if it hadn't been you it would have been someone else! I could go through each and every species and explain where it (legally) came from! However, I'm not going to – not least because much of it is explained in my diary at the time of rearing. I shall however pick a few out to illustrate the diversity of their origin. Many did indeed come from roadside verges and my garden (a surprising number, and it might surprise you to know that I get SWF and WA in my garden regularly). A few were obtained from various sites having received permission from the appropriate authorities to collect a couple of eggs (I try to take 2 so I have a spare if anything happens to the first). An example of this was the Small Copper. Just in case the butterfly police come calling I have records of the permissions given. Most of the Hairstreaks were indeed found on fallen branches – a thankless task searching for the eggs in bleak weather as I am sure Paul H would confirm. The exception would be the Black Hairstreak – a handful of pupa were purchased for me as a gift from the internet by a well-meaning friend many years ago. The DGF was indeed found crossing a road looking for somewhere to pupate and as I said recently the LTB came from 'a friend of a friend' having been laid in his garden. I am not going to name him but I have been told he reads this diary and if he wishes to comment that would be welcome. I think that is explanation enough Jack. Suffice to say there is no single source and yes, it can be difficult and time-consuming so I am pleased you like the end results.

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 30-Sep-19 10:28 AM GMT

Very much as I might have expected. I have no guilt taking Large White caterpillars from Nasturtiums (a hotel manager was delighted when I asked him

if he minded) or Orange Tips by the roadside. But we would all draw the line at protected species. I wouldn't take Swallowtail caterpillars in UK (illegal in any case) but I used to in Malta where the butterfly is widespread.

As they say, keep up the good work.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 30-Sep-19 04:35 PM GMT

A wonderful series of posts since you decided to break your 'hibernation', Pauline. I also see that my prediction from 13th Sep., that you would show LTB photos, has come to pass 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 30-Sep-19 05:36 PM GMT

Mike:[quote]...come to pass Sounds as if you've been reading some ancient texts Mike.

Jack

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 30-Sep-19 09:11 PM GMT

Prophesy, Jack

Re: Pauline

by David M, 01-Oct-19 12:41 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

That's a very interesting question David – one you may regret asking 😊 I didn't know the answer so I had to look back over the years. I have reared far more than I have observed emerging from the pupa. I thought it might be worth pulling one out from each species primarily for my own interest..

Wow! That's far more than I anticipated...a third of UK species roughly.

Which of those left would you most like to rear?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Oct-19 03:33 PM GMT

Cheers Jack, I'll do my best 😊

Good to hear from you again Mike and yes, you were absolutely right 😊

That's something I'd need to think about David but it's often just a case of 'if the opportunity presents itself'. Perhaps DofB but I'm not sure I'd get permission.

Well, I'm really starting to run out of time now which is the case every Autumn. I'm currently dealing with a domestic oil leak (the insurance company wants to dig up 3 solid floors to find the leak!) and someone drove into my car yesterday in Tesco's car park. She said she didn't hear my horn and even tho' I was stationary she claims it is my fault and was quite abusive so police now involved. Anyway, the upshot is I have been mostly house bound so only have this to offer at the moment, both from the garden. In the Spring I bought 2 new Apple Trees which are loaded with apples – all being eaten by hornets!!!!



Re: Pauline

by Old Wolf, 02-Oct-19 04:06 PM GMT

Hello Pauline,

Sorry to hear of your current strife. I have been catching up with your diary and your emergence sequences are outstanding. I have been thoroughly enjoying them so thanks for posting 😊 When I look back on all of your postings since entering hibernation, I really am glad that you managed to shake it off and stay awake a bit longer 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 02-Oct-19 08:40 PM GMT

Sorry to hear of your woes Pauline 😞 Car prangs are a right pain and the guilty party never owns up! 😡 Mind you if the Police are involved then at least the insurance companies can't say there are now witnesses and get away with 'knock-for-knock' which counts against your No Claims 😞 Hope fortune favours you soon 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 03-Oct-19 12:42 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:
Just one for today...

Just one would do nicely, Pauline! Do you think you'll be getting to see a few more over the next couple of weeks?

Re: Pauline

by David M, 04-Oct-19 08:47 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:
...That's something I'd need to think about David but it's often just a case of 'if the opportunity presents itself'. Perhaps DofB but I'm not sure I'd get permission.

No, probably not, but interesting to note nonetheless.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Oct-19 11:39 AM GMT

I'd like to think I might get a chance to see a few more David but who knows? There's an awful lot going on here and I'm even struggling to find the time to update my diary. I still have several outings I haven't covered and not sure I will.

Cheers Wurzel – things must start to improve soon 😊

Thank you for your lovely comment Old Wolf. It really cheered me up after a rotten week. It's hard to believe I've only been out of hibernation about 3 weeks with all that has happened. I hope folk are not bored yet by all the emergence sequences, but I can't get out much at the moment andthere's no Clouded Yellow on this page – yet! I missed this one emerge as I went indoors to grab a drink and as I came back out I saw the flurry of movement:











Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 05-Oct-19 05:10 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Pauline, keep it up a bit longer 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 05-Oct-19 05:28 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

.....there's no Clouded Yellow on this page – yet! I missed this one emerge as I went indoors to grab a drink and as I came back out I saw the flurry of movement...

Feel free to include those on any page, Pauline. I'd never get tired of them – a big ray of sunshine on an otherwise gloomy day. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 05-Oct-19 06:11 PM GMT

You were obviously stationary in the wrong place in the wrong car park. May I suggest Sainsbury's instead? 😞

Pauline: I have to say that your photos really show the advantages of a bridge camera (now there I am starting an argument with those who have spent ££££ on DSLRs and want to justify that outlay).

As I write this, on my desk is a BC branch bulletin. The front cover has a superb photo with all wingtips and antennae sharp. Clearly it has been taken with a small-sensor camera.

But DSLR's do have advantages in many situations. A birder in a hide with me yesterday was getting far better photos. Mind you, that is probably because his lens (*I nearly said **equipment** but I am aware that this is a lady's diary*) was so long that he was almost touching the target 😞 But we both missed the fly-by Kingfisher 😊

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Oct-19 08:50 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie – I'm doing my best 😊 but you know how it is here 😞😞

Thank you David 😊 – others can rest assured that I'm not going to post all 16 emerging! 😊

I needed something to put a smile on my face so thank you for giving me something to chuckle about Jack 😊😞 ...and yes, you're right: wrong place, wrong time 😊

Catch-up

28 August

A little bit of time to spare today so I managed to fit in a final visit to Noar Hill. No sign of any BH in any shape or form – the eggs I had seen laid previously appear to have been predated 😞. The grand total of BH I have seen here this season amount to just 6. I bumped into a couple of members

of the Wildlife Trust who said they had also struggled to see any. Much work has already been done here clearing the Hemp Agrimony and much more is planned. Further scrapes will be created to 'get rid of all the Horseshoe Vetch'. I pointed out that many Small Blue had laid eggs on those plants but not much concern was shown. It will also involve getting rid of some of the blackthorn but I was assured that the plants will be checked for eggs, 'especially the young ones'. Time will tell.

I was surprised to see a very lively SWF - so lively that I was unable to get close for a shot despite only having half his wings remaining. Even more surprising, it was still there a couple of days later! A very fresh Silver-y moth refused to remain still whilst I got a decent shot and although this Brown Argus tried his best to pose nicely, by now the breeze was picking up. I did see a few lovely Common Blues egg-laying but was it worth the 10 min drive? - I'm not sure.





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Oct-19 05:50 PM GMT

30 August

A last trip to Thorney Island to see the Painted Ladies. In the same small area as before Painted Lady numbers had reduced since my last visit from a couple of dozen to only about half a dozen or so. A couple of Clouded Yellow were present ever so briefly and the strong breeze from the sea seems ever present, making photography that little more bit difficult. Several Wasp spiders seen - both male and female I believe - one of which held the remains of a Painted Lady in its web.







Male Wasp Spider or different species?







Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 09-Oct-19 11:27 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, love your shots of the Painted Lady but I like the Clouded yellow on the Daisy best 🍷🍷 the back ground and fore ground fit's it perfectly, if you know what I mean? Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 09-Oct-19 10:39 PM GMT

Cracking set of shots Pauline – fantastic Cloudy and Painted Ladies 😊🍷 I'm not sure about the male Wasp Spider as they're quite spindly and have a longer and less rotund abdomen than the one you've got images of 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 09-Oct-19 11:25 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

Hi! Pauline, love your shots of the Painted Lady but I like the Clouded yellow on the Daisy best..

Agreed. There's something rather attractive seeing a yellow butterfly on a yellow flower. Nice Painted Ladies too. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Oct-19 05:12 PM GMT

Cheers M – I'll be in touch soon 😊

You're probably right Wurzel – Ah well, at least I'm learning 😊

Thank you David for your encouraging comments.

One to finish with:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-Oct-19 05:58 PM GMT

That's a blinder of a shot Pauline 🤩👍👍👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 13-Oct-19 08:26 PM GMT

Smashing shot, Pauline. 🤩👍 I love the way LTBs seem to bury themselves in flowerheads like that – especially on their favourite pea blossom. If that's your final *final* photo of the season, it's a great way to conclude things. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 13-Oct-19 09:18 PM GMT

Great shot to finish with, ive done some lovely ones too recently. Everything other than CYs and LTBs now seems to be ending, a few Red Admirals still around though. Will anything be left after 4 days of rain.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 13-Oct-19 09:27 PM GMT

Fantastic recent posts, too many to pick out a favourite image! Your 'male wasp spider' is actually a female garden spider *Araneus diadematus*.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 18-Oct-19 08:21 PM GMT

Some great reports accompanied by lovely photos Pauline 😊

I was interested to read your earlier reports from Thorney Island. My daughters partner is in the Army and is based there, he currently comes up most weekends but they are planning on getting married in 2021 which means that she will most likely be moving down there with the grandkids. By then I am also planning to have taken early retirement which will mean that we will should have plenty of opportunity to visit them...and of course allow me to check out the area.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 19-Oct-19 12:13 PM GMT

Lovely shot Pauline, so unusual to see one so clear 🤩👍 I'm hope fully wishing to see one some day 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Oct-19 04:40 PM GMT

I keep trying to get away – honestly – but you keep drawing me back with your generous and interesting comments.

Cheers Wurzel – if I'd been quicker I could probably have got more, better, etc, etc 😊

Thank you Dave – it WAS supposed to be the end but I just have to say that your LTB shots have been way better than anything I have managed to achieve this year so well done to you.

Thanks Martin and thanks for your advice. For me it was quite exciting to have the ID confirmed and I think you are right about it being female.

Cheers Buggy – I shall track down a male Wasp Spider eventually!

Thank you Neil. If you visit Thorney in the future it would be lovely if we could meet up there. I hope you will let me know in due course.

Cheers M. – it seems they are becoming more regular visitors so I reckon you have every chance if you're in Kent at the right time.

The other day I was cleaning out the rabbit run (all 14' of it!) raking up soiled hay, droppings etc and being quite rough so I was astonished when the largest pupa I have ever seen was raked up from one of their tunnels. Hoping I hadn't damaged it I placed it in a container and Martin was good enough to identify it as a Privet Hawkmoth. I was so excited (I know, sad isn't it but it was such a welcome change from all the problems here). I have never seen one of these in any of their stages – how come I didn't find the cat I keep asking myself. Not far from the run is a large lilac tree and I assume this is where it came from. Maybe I should put the moth trap out more often! I really hope I can see this through but in the meantime:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 20-Oct-19 07:04 PM GMT

That's a wonderful Long Tailed Blue image, Pauline. As I know from experience, this species isn't the best in terms of approachability as it is usually quite frisky, especially the males.

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 21-Oct-19 08:36 AM GMT

Hello Pauline ,
Just catching up on a few diariesand Pauline ,those emergence images ,in particular the Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady are quite superb !! As a matter of interest ,do you use a tripod for those sequences ? Pleased that you decided to keep posting for a little longer this season.
Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-Oct-19 09:07 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

The other day I was cleaning out the rabbit run (all 14' of it!) raking up soiled hay, droppings etc and being quite rough so I was astonished when the largest pupa I have ever seen was raked up from one of their tunnels...

That's one hell of a pupal case, Pauline. I hope you will keep us informed as to its progress.