

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Jan-19 11:06 PM GMT

Did we all get to see the lunar eclipse last night? My camera equipment is only marginally suitable for this kind of photography, but I'm reasonably happy with this picture.



Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 21-Jan-19 11:09 PM GMT

Great shot, I got up at the godforsaken hour to have a go and was greeted by cloud, no sign of the moon 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 22-Jan-19 10:51 AM GMT

Great shot essex, I didn't get my shot until morning, when I looked outside at first I didn't see the Moon so I thought it was just cloudy until the news said it could be seen in the North West in-between clouds so I shot out side again and I'd to go out into the Back garden to see it, I'd been looking out the wrong side of the house 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 22-Jan-19 08:28 PM GMT

Great shot Essex 😊 I was in the Cloud Club with Bugboy 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Jan-19 07:07 PM GMT

Well, we are over halfway through winter now, and so far the weather has been fairly quiet- rather dull at times, but mostly mild, and not too wet or wind. Although temperatures have dropped a little recently, and despite what we hear in the press, there is, as far as I know, no signs of any significant cold snap. As the days lengthen, and the first daffodils start to open, we can soon start to think about the spring.

During some brighter weather earlier this week, I headed to the south Essex coast to see the birds-and there were plenty of them! Here are a couple of pictures of dunlins and knots at Two Tree Island, at high tide. Dunlins are slightly smaller and browner than knot, which are the greyer ones.



And at nearby Southend, were these gorgeous little sanderlings, with a few turnstones as well.



Further around the coast, at Shoeburyness, there were plenty of oystercatchers.





Redshank were present in lower numbers.



As the tide receded, plenty of Brent geese came in to feed on the mudflats.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 25-Jan-19 03:31 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Birds essex, Martin Mere was on the the news they were feeding the Swans that come in there every year from Ice Land, we went to see them once, what noise they made . 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Jan-19 11:26 PM GMT

I've been there too, Goldie, and I intend to go again. It's quite a trek from Essex to the Mere, but it is a fantastic place.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-Jan-19 06:01 PM GMT

Cracking birding shots Essex 😊👍 Are there a couple of Grey plover hanging round at the back of the Dunlin and Knot, I'm a bit out of practice with my wader spotting? Love the Sanderling – they're very entertaining birds – as they run out and then run back in with the waves 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Jan-19 09:24 PM GMT

Wow! We get small numbers of oystercatchers on the Swansea coast but I've never seen a flock like that! It's like 'Attack of the Clones'!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-Feb-19 09:16 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, you have eyes like a buzzard! Yes, there are a couple of grey plover in there.

Thanks David, it's the biggest oystercatcher high tide roost I know of.

Well, it's been a few years since I last went to Martin Mere, in Lancashire, but got the opportunity earlier this week. It was a bright, windy day and there was plenty of stuff there. This picture of the 3PM wild bird feed clearly shows this...



In the collection there, I came across the Baer's Pochard, which is critically endangered.



At the wild bird feed, several ruffs were running around. I've seen ruffs before, but not this close or in these numbers. Unfortunately, there were no openable windows in the area, so the image is not the best quality as I had to take it through glass.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-Feb-19 09:52 PM GMT

The London Wetlands Centre is an oasis of calm in the hustle and bustle of west London.



It is not just a sanctuary for people, it gets some pretty good stuff too. If we look carefully, we find something lurking in the reeds...



It's larger, greyer relative is much easier to spot, and they are much more approachable here than where I live. This is one of last years juveniles.



This being Greater London, there were plenty of noisy parakeets present, they are different from the ones I see in Malaga.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 02-Feb-19 10:04 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Well, it's been a few years since I last went to Martin Mere, in Lancashire, but got the opportunity earlier this week...

Been many years since I last went there, Mark (maybe as many as 35). It was always a great day out in winter as there were so many birds taking advantage of the mild climate in lowland NW England.

On the other side of the coin, it still remains quite a culture shock to see those parakeets in the UK. I reckon they couldn't have survived 40 years ago!

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 02-Feb-19 11:26 PM GMT

Great shot of the Parakeet – the Wetlands centre was where I saw my first 😊 They seemed totally out of place, but then I suppose so did Collared Doves in the 50's when they first arrived here 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 03-Feb-19 08:36 AM GMT

I would never have thought to see a bittern in London, Buzzard. That's amazing – and congratulations of getting such a good shot of it.

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 03-Feb-19 08:26 PM GMT

That is a very familiar wide shot of the LWC. I was there last Wednesday and two Bitterns were lurking over on the far side of the reserve but back in December one was nice and close to the very hide you saw you're one from, obscured as always by reeds but clear as day through bins and camera lens so plenty of shots were achieved 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Feb-19 09:54 PM GMT

Thanks David, the sheer numbers of birds at the Mere make it well worth the trek up. Yes, the parakeets in London do seem strange, but continue to increase, unharmed by the coldest weather. Recently, they have started to appear in Liverpool, Sheffield and other cities further north...

Wurzel, parakeets are here to stay. Being associated with the built environment, they so far haven't done much harm, though they are rather noisy neighbours!

Guy, it is a surprise to see a bittern in London, but they do often to the reserve, in winter at least. It's a bit different from Minsmere!

Hi Bugboy, I'm guessing you know the wetland Centre better than me, it just goes to show wildlife will respond to a bit of habitat creation, even in the most unexpected of places!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 07-Feb-19 07:03 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

... the parakeets in London do seem strange, but continue to increase, unharmed by the coldest weather. Recently, they have started to appear in Liverpool, Sheffield and other cities further north...



I had no idea they'd reached the NW of England. Are they the same ring-necks found in the SE area?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Feb-19 11:13 PM GMT

Yes David, they are the same ones as those in London, the ring neck parakeets (though they don't always have rings, confusingly). How they have got to Sheffield, Manchester and the like, which are so isolated from London, is unknown. They have even been seen in southern Scotland, though they have not yet bred there, as far as I know.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Feb-19 01:54 PM GMT

Welney Wash is a WWT reserve on the Cambridgeshire Norfolk border. Been here many times, and it never disappoints. However, something I haven't seen here before was this cattle egret, among the grazing sheep.



Being on a flood plain, it is excellent for wildfowl and, after a dry January flood levels were low, making it even better for birds than normal. There were plenty of wintering whooper swans.





Pochards are more abundant here than anywhere else I've been to, in winter at least. They are gorgeous little diving ducks, with their grey backs and red heads.



Lapwings feed in the damp grassland.



Welney is surrounded by the flat arable farmland of the fens, and the feeders here attract many declining birds, including tree sparrows, which have gone from where I live, hopefully they will remain here. Last time I saw tree sparrows was last winter in Tokyo!



Lastly here is a tranquil scene, as the winter sun sets over the fens.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 10-Feb-19 06:32 PM GMT

Aren't Cattle Egrets the 'new' Little Egrets Essex 😊😄🇬🇧 Love the Whoppers – we only get those down this way very rarely 🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 10-Feb-19 08:11 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Yes David, they are the same ones as those in London, the ring neck parakeets (though they don't always have rings, confusingly). How they have got to Sheffield, Manchester and the like, which are so isolated from London, is unknown. They have even been seen in southern Scotland, though they have not yet bred there, as far as I know.

I am aware of a couple of roosts in South Birmingham parks and I even had a small flock of half a dozen or so pass through my garden here in Solihull last year. A local birder I know has been tracking their spread around the area and he tells me they are now present in most cities in England.

Some great bird photos in your recent reports Mark and I love that last image of the winter sun going down over the fens 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 11-Feb-19 07:52 PM GMT

Great shots, particularly that Tree Sparrow, a species I've only seen the once 🇬🇧. It's strange how they replace the House Sparrow in towns and cities in Asia

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 12-Feb-19 07:47 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, yes perhaps they are, or maybe the great white egret? Both species are visiting more and more, and beginning to breed.

Thanks Neil, for your kind words. I'm sure you will be seeing parakeets in increasing numbers in future. But perhaps you send one of your winter blackcaps my way!

Bugboy, tree sparrows are for me, rather confusing. They seem to come and go from areas, without explanation. At the moment, they are commonest, and increasing, in northern and eastern parts, but disappearing from the south. My experience in Tokyo is that they thrive in the city, perhaps because house sparrows are absent.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 12-Feb-19 10:50 PM GMT

Last week, it was time for a trip to West Wales. There was much pleasure of taking a winter walk around Dinas Hill, an RSPB reserve. By late spring, the stunted old sessile oakwoods here become home to those classic birds of woods in Wales – wood warbler, redstart and pied flycatcher. This is still a long way away, for now I am happy to make do with the splendid surroundings.



Here, the glorious sound of the tumbling river (afon) Tywi is never far away.



Scrambling up through these oakwoods, we can observe the wonderful character of these trees. At the bottom of the hill, they are big and strong, but as one heads up higher, they become smaller.. Then, at the top of the hill, the oaks are scarcely more than twigs, a sign of the tough life they have up here. Here is a view from the rocky top, looking out at the splendid Welsh scenery.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 13-Feb-19 07:57 PM GMT

Thanks for sharing these images Essex – they take me back to my visits there and it's a stunning reserve in a stunning part of the world, although when I was there it was much warmer 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Feb-19 09:00 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. When I go there, it always seems to be late-autumn or winter!

For the nature lover, no visit to west Wales would be complete without a trip to the kite feeding site at Rhayader. Birds have been fed here since the 1990's and, since then, the numbers have greatly increased. It's been dubbed 'the worlds greatest bird table'! We will take a closer look shortly, but here

is some perspective.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 14-Feb-19 08:10 AM GMT

That's quite some spectacle, Mark. I really must get around to visiting one day. They've been doing this for years so there's always a ready supply of kites nearby waiting for feeding time!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Feb-19 11:17 PM GMT

Most of the kites swoop down and snatch food. However, in recent years, more of the kites have learned to land and feed on the ground. There is a pecking order among the birds here with adults feeding first, while the youngsters have to wait their turn. Being largely scavengers, kites have a relatively easy life and, once adults, can hope to live for about 15 years. This must surely have fuelled the spectacular increase in kites in recent years. Here is an adult, with its rich colours and white head with black streaks.



The pale, slightly washed out colours of this kite show it is one of last years juveniles.



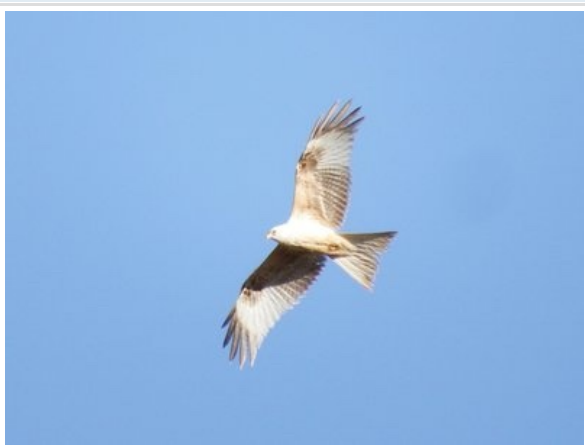
Something which I think is unique to Wales is the 'white kite' , which is probably a result of the once small, slightly inbred population. Two were present. They are not albino, as there is still some colour, but lucistic.



Against blue skies, the kites were wonderfully colourful.



White kite.



by trevor, 15-Feb-19 11:11 AM GMT

Wonderful Kite images, Mark. I have a Sunday job, based on a farm. Red Kites and Buzzards are frequently seen over the vast fields.

Not long now,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 15-Feb-19 03:48 PM GMT

I agree – really wonderful pictures. I've seen black kites in those kinds of numbers but never knew red kites behaved in the same way. What a treat.

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 15-Feb-19 06:24 PM GMT

Amazing sequence, Mark. It's rare to see them on the ground and they look absolutely divine when captured this way (the airborne images are excellent too although I'm more used to these).

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 15-Feb-19 10:46 PM GMT

My favourite UK raptor, you just can't have enough Red Kite images 🇬🇧

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Feb-19 12:09 AM GMT

Thanks Trevor. The kite has recently been added to the Essex breeding list, such is their increase.

Guy, I've seen some of your black kite images! Glad you like the pictures, and you got to see some yourself. Going there is indeed a treat of the highest order.

David, what are you waiting for? If you do go, try to pick a bright winter day, and you will be amazed!

Thanks Bugboy. We are very privileged to live at a time when such spectacular birds of prey are accessible to us all.

More to come...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Feb-19 10:40 PM GMT

Buzzards also come to the food, giving perhaps unique close views. The increase and spread of the buzzard has been even more spectacular than that of the kite. Even in its core range, Wales and southwest England, densities have increased. Being more predatory in nature, buzzards have a tougher life than kites. Although the oldest individuals have survived 20 years in the wild in Britain, many seem pretty much knackered after 10 years. Most, if not all the buzzards that come to the farm are juveniles, and all have a unique breast pattern. They also have pale eyes in their first year. Here are some examples.





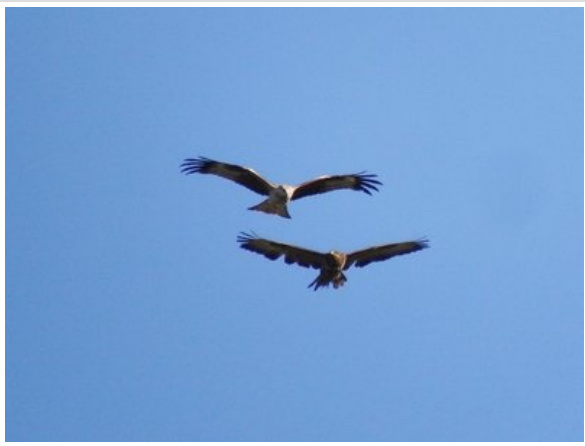
Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Feb-19 10:55 PM GMT

This buzzard has started to develop some of the adult features. The eyes have darkened, and some barring is visible on the lower belly. It is probably nearly two years old.



Here are the two species together. The buzzards is a little ragged, but it does show the different profiles of these two, on the face of it, similar birds.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 16-Feb-19 11:07 PM GMT

Great comparison shot Essex – you can really see the difference (one stocky and rounded the other all 'long fingers'). I've not seen (but heard of) the 'White Kites', brilliant shots 📷 😊 📷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Feb-19 10:37 PM GMT

So, while it is easy to be pessimistic about the future of our wildlife, these two birds show the success stories are out there—and they should be grabbed with both hands. Here are the last few pictures from Wales, a brilliant trip.





Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 18-Feb-19 05:10 PM GMT

Fabulous, Mark, particularly the white one. It's hard to believe they're wild birds.

How come they don't chase that crow off though?

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 18-Feb-19 09:23 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Essex again 😊 The White Kite is a stunner 😲😄 Are they leaving the Crow to it as there is so much food around at the feeding station?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 19-Feb-19 07:19 PM GMT

A great selection of Kite photos Mark...great stuff 😊

And the Buzzards...I remember not so many years ago you wouldn't see them around my way but now I see them circling around high above my garden here in Solihull close to the border with South Birmingham...no Kites yet although they are slowly getting closer.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

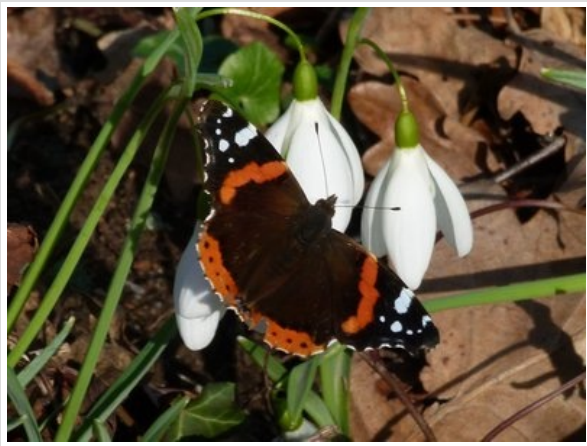
by essexbuzzard, 21-Feb-19 07:44 PM GMT

Hi David and Wurzel, I think that's right. There is plenty of food here for everyone. Buzzards only really turn aggressive if there is a food shortage and they are starving. This happens more often in Europe, where 1963 type winters are more common. Kites often turn pirate at such times, bombarding the crows as they fly off with their pickings, trying to steal their food.

Neil, buzzards have given me great pleasure over the years, ever since my youth in Cornwall. Essex was, in those days, as far removed from buzzard habitat as one could get. Never, in my wildest dreams, could I have imagined they would become a common breeder in the lowland farms of East Anglia,

or that I would live long enough to witness that spread. Kites too, have proved surprisingly successful in modern Britain, and there seems no reason why they can't spread throughout the Country.

I hope we have all been able to enjoy the good weather recently. Most of my sightings have been of Red Admirals, which I wasn't expecting. Could they be early migrants?



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 22-Feb-19 08:13 AM GMT

Great shot, Mark. Especially the rare combination of Red Admiral on Snowdrop.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 23-Feb-19 10:17 PM GMT

That is a great shot Essex and something I can't recall seeing 😊🇬🇧 I was getting my fill of Red Kites last week in Aberaeron – but I didn't get anywhere near as close as yourself 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 23-Feb-19 11:33 PM GMT

Nice, unusual image of the Red Admiral on the snowdrop, Mark.

It's hard to say whether they're migrants or not. Given how mild this winter has been (save for that one short period at the beginning of February), they could easily be home grown!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-Mar-19 10:03 PM GMT

Just back from a few glorious warm sunny end of winter days in Cornwall. No Large Tortoiseshell for me, but there were a few early hibernators around. Never before have I seen them all by the end of winter. Make no mistake, the timing of this trip, we were incredibly lucky.

In Cornwall, the Campbell's Magnolia, *Magnolia campbellii*, heralds the arrival of spring. When 50 blooms have opened on Campbell's Magnolia in 5 'Great gardens of Cornwall', spring is declared. This year spring arrived early, on St. Valentines Day- 14 February.

So we visited several different gardens and sites during these few days, admiring not only Magnolias, but also many Camellias, Rhododendrons and spring bulbs which, down here, were already in bloom. And, of course, keeping an eye open for any butterflies enjoying the lovely sunshine!

TBC...

Re: essex buzzard

by Mike Robinson, 03-Mar-19 11:06 AM GMT

Sounds absolutely wonderful...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Mar-19 12:29 PM GMT

On our first day, Sunday 24 February, we arrived in Cornwall mid morning, and headed down to the Lost Garden of Heligan. Here, the wonderful Campbell's magnolia blooms, and the daffodils were already out, as spring comes early here. Camellias, Rhododendrons and even fuchsias were in

flower, quite remarkable for this time of year! Could post lots of images, put here are just a few, to give a flavour of this great place.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Mar-19 09:53 PM GMT

The next day, we were off to Trengwainton Gardens, near Madron. Undoubtedly my favourite tree in the gardens is the Campbell's magnolia. These glorious trees are a highlight of a visit to Cornwall at this time of year. I used to walk the fields of Madron as a kid, looking for buzzards, and remember seeing them then, though I didn't know what they were those days. So they have some sentimental value as well. This is not the tree for you and me—these large, spreading trees are far too big for the average garden, and it may be 40 years before a flower is borne. Instead, these magnificent trees are one to admire in these wonderful Cornish gardens, especially when there is a blue sky backdrop!



It was while admiring one of these Magnolias that a Peacock landed, my first of the year.



Many Camellias were in flower. Unlike further up country, the flowers are rarely killed by frost here, and they make a great show.



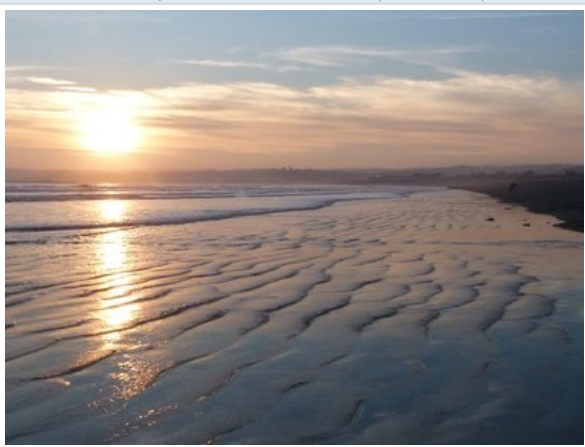
The early Rhododendrons were in bloom, with many more to come between now and May.



Meanwhile, by the tea room, this Comma landed to bask on a wall. A bit tatty, but my first of the year. Also here this tiny fuchsia was in flower. Hard to believe it's still winter!



To finish off the day, we took a walk at nearby Mounts Bay.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Mar-19 09:29 PM GMT

The next day, we spent the morning looking for birds on Penzance seafront. But, apart for a few purple sandpipers, we saw little of note. We did find this Tortoiseshell though. We found several in Cornwall, but this rather tatty individual was the only one we managed to photograph.



So we opted for a pasty in the glorious surroundings of Morrab Gardens, Penzance.



In the gardens was this lovely Comma, sitting on a Magnolia.



Then, after lunch, we went over to the dunes at Hayle. In late spring and summer, the Towans are great for butterflies, but today we found nothing. But the beach here is splendid. Yes, this really is Britain in late winter!



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 04-Mar-19 10:39 PM GMT

Lovely set of reports Essex – and good to see you well in the butterflies 😊 I'm also glad that you were able to make the most of this years summer 😊 – the way the weather seems at the moment it feels like that could have been it 😊😊

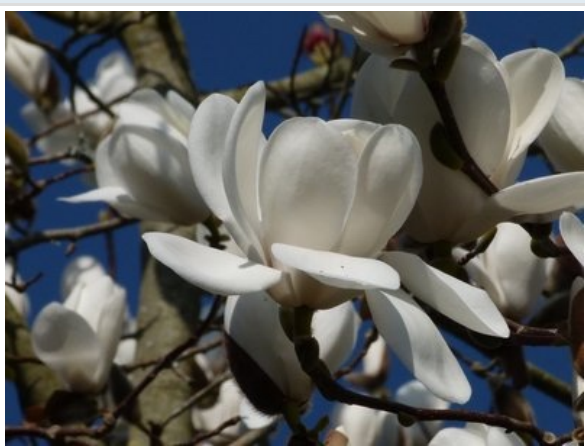
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Mar-19 09:51 PM GMT

The next day we headed of to Caerhays Castle Gardens. This lovely Cornish garden hosts a national collection of Magnolias, as well as a large range of Camelias, Azaleas and Rhododendrons, as well as a slightly more curious collection of rare horse chestnut species and evergreen oaks. As spring gardens go, this place is up there with the best. A worn Painted Lady was to quick for my camera, as were several Commas. The buzzards were active, and were a splendid sight against the blue sky.





Later in afternoon, we spent some time at nearby Mevagissey, a picturesque fishing town.



Another super warm day!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Mar-19 08:20 PM GMT

So, we come to our last day in Cornwall. With the weather now back to normal, a walk on the South West Coast Path was in order. Having never walked it before, I decided on the length between Tintagel and Port Isaac, about 9 miles. This is a quiet section, and the going was often tough, and is especially appreciated by those who relish an empty, arduous and dramatic coastline.



Trebarwith Strand



Port Isaac

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 11-Mar-19 12:48 PM GMT

I bet you never anticipated such glorious conditions when you first made plans to travel to Cornwall at the back end of winter, Mark?

As ever, the scenery around there takes the breath away, although my personal favourite has to be the one of you both in Morrab Gardens. That scene looks more like one you'd expect in tropics rather than the UK.

Good job you didn't leave it till this week. Looks like 50 mph winds all week! 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Mar-19 12:06 AM GMT

Thanks David, and no I didn't anticipate such glorious weather. I actually expected the weather we have had for most of March!

After a cloudy March so far, the sun came out properly today. It wasn't particularly warm but, the sun now has a bit of strength in it, and plenty of butterflies were about, especially, and pleasingly, Small Tortoiseshells. On a south facing nettle bed, I saw 10 Tortoiseshells in 200 yards! And at one point, four of these were engaged in combat, a fabulous sight!





My first Small White was seen, as well as Peacocks, Brimstones and Commas. Also recently emerged were several bee-flies.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Mar-19 12:19 AM GMT

Here is a bit of context, with nettles visible in the foreground.



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 25-Mar-19 08:29 AM GMT

Great to see your Small Tortoiseshells, Mark.

I was pleased to find eight yesterday, they were scarce around here last year.

Can we now quietly whisper ' we're off ' without tempting fate ?.

Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Mar-19 07:27 PM GMT

You're only allowed to whisper it though, Trevor!

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 25-Mar-19 11:48 PM GMT

Ten Small Torts 🐢 My local patch has got some catching up to do 😊 I reckon it's best to not even whisper it but you you have to write it on a bit of paper 😊 Mind you with OTs and Holly Blues as well as the three whites all recorded over the weekend we could well be...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 27-Mar-19 01:03 AM GMT

Well done with the Tortoiseshells, Mark. I'm having difficulty picking this species up so far this year....don't know why, and I hope things will improve (and soon).

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Apr-19 12:16 AM GMT

Torts are doing pretty well round my way, indeed I've probably seen more of them than any other species so far. As the so-called second generation was virtually absent last year, I can only conclude these are the adults that emerged in June, fed, and went straight into hibernation.

It was too cold for butterflies on my Essex walk today. However, the buzzards were up, and gave a spectacular display. The male throws himself through the sky in a breathtaking sky-dance display, accompanied by loud mewing. I see myself in these fantastic birds, as their evident excitement so accurately mirrors my own at this time of year. The buzzards are always very active at this time of year whenever the weather allows.

The hares are also very active now, and they should be enjoyed, for in a couple of weeks, they will disappear under the crops. They remain fairly common in the arable fields near me, and are most visible in March and early April.



Later, I visited Abberton reservoir. There were lots of swallows hawking the flies, and the little ringed plovers have arrived.



In the evening, I had a stop at the Heybridge mudflats. Plenty of Brent geese were yet to migrate, and the black tailed godwits from Iceland are moulting into their wonderful russet breeding plumage.



Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 04-Apr-19 01:50 PM GMT

Wonderful sights from your Cornish trip Mark. And I love that shot of the Hare. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-19 08:47 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Essex 😊 You've caught that LRP really well and you can rally see the diagnostic yellow eye ring 😊🇩🇪 Small Torts do seem (or should that be were now? 😊) to be doing well this spring 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 05-Apr-19 06:33 AM GMT

Good to see you're still enjoying productive trips out during this cool, wet spell, Mark. That godwit is a very striking bird.

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 05-Apr-19 11:52 AM GMT

Love the shot of the Hare essex, I love to watch them, they're mostly in the Dunes at Southport, don't know when I'll get there this year 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Apr-19 11:21 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. No butterflies for me at the moment, which is a bit frustrating! Single figures again today, sun hours 0.00. That glorious spell at the end of February seems such a long time ago...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Apr-19 12:18 AM GMT

My first butterfly outing of the year saw me head down to Sussex. The quiet lanes and meadows around Billingshurst abound with cuckoo flowers. It was damp and misty all morning, but I soon found my first Green-veined White of the year, roosting on the cuckoo flowers, which eventually opened as it warmed up a little. One of two seen.



Nearby was my first Orange Tip of the year, a female. By lunchtime, the cloud lifted a little, and the first of two males came floating by. It was nice to see them, in a very different habitat than I'm used to in Essex.



One of the males flew right over the female without noticing, but when he turned round and came back, he made no mistake.



While in Sussex, it would be rude not to pop in at Mill Hill, where several Grizzled Skippers have emerged. It was also nice to see Alan W down there as well.



Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Hulme, 09-Apr-19 05:27 AM GMT

Well done, Mark. Mating Orange-tips and Grizzles; you can't do much better than that!
BWs, Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 09-Apr-19 09:01 AM GMT

Mating OTs - still on my wish list 🍀😄 The misty start helped with that GVW - beautifully captured and not a spot of bleaching 😊😄🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 09-Apr-19 11:34 AM GMT

Hi! essex, your certainly more advanced with Butterflies .than we are down there 🍀 no sign of Whites here and even Cuckoo flowers are still absent 😞
as for that Grizzled Skipper I've yet to even see one 😞
Next week I'm off to Canterbury do you know of any places near there that I could get to see them 🍀 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 09-Apr-19 05:15 PM GMT

Hello Essex , Not me in Sussex ,I was at work ! (unfortunately) Perhaps you meant Andrew 555 ,think he was down Billingshurst way recently I believe .
Regards Allan.W.
PS; some excellent images ,by the way.

Re: essex buzzard

by John W, 09-Apr-19 05:46 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

While in Sussex, it would be rude not to pop in at Mill Hill, where several Grizzled Skippers have emerged. It was also nice to see Alan W down there as well.

Hi Mark,

I think you mean John W 😊

Nice pictures of Orange Tips btw!

Here's the best of the Grizzlie pics that I got:



Cheers
John W

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Apr-19 09:05 PM GMT

Thanks Neil. It was touch and go for a while, but Sussex came up trumps!

Thanks Wurzel, yes, quite pleased with the mating OT's! Not least because I saw it all happen.

Thanks Goldie, you might struggle to find Grizzled Skippers this early, sadly. Mill Hill is a very early site, frequently with the first UK record of GS.

Oops, sorry Allan! I meant John! 😊

Yes John, yes I meant you! Good pictures of the sleeping Skippers, I wasn't happy with any of mine, though they are always nice to see anyway.

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 09-Apr-19 11:21 PM GMT

Nice shots Essex 😊 (and Alan/John), I must get round to posting my most recent visit into the wilds of Sussex but with a good day predicted tomorrow I think I might be two reports behind this time tomorrow night 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 11-Apr-19 08:49 AM GMT

That's very satisfying for a first outing, Mark. Good to see Grizzlies emerging, but I'm especially taken by that Green Veined White. The forewing spot is very large; most of those I see round my way have an apology of a spot or none at all!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Apr-19 09:52 PM GMT

Yes David, you're right. That's quite well marked for a first brood male.

Thanks buggy, so you've been down there as well. Looking forward to finding out what you have seen.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Apr-19 10:49 PM GMT

Last week, I went on a good long walk through north Essex, about 15 miles. It was appropriate at this time of year, as it incorporates my favourite early spring wood—Stour Wood – with its wonderful carpet of wood anemones, turning the woodland floor white.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-19 08:08 AM GMT

That carpet of Anemones looks beautiful Essex 😊 Surely that ' the only way? 😊 I'll get me coat 😊 ...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 12-Apr-19 08:27 AM GMT

They really are a sight to behold, mark, aren't they. Shame they don't seem to attract butterflies; I don't think I've ever seen one nectaring from them.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Apr-19 11:14 PM GMT

Here in Essex, the bluebell Woods are now at their glorious peak. We have some fantastic bluebell Woods in the county, and they really are a sight to behold. They are something for us Brits to treasure too—nowhere else in the world can boast such a great woodland show. I traditionally thought of bluebells as a May flower, but nowadays they usually flower earlier, in late April. Perhaps because of climate change.



This time of year, of course, has another treasure, in fact many other treasures! Round my way, Orange Tips have been about for a week or two, but they only really appeared in numbers over the warm Easter weekend. These glorious butterflies appeal not only the butterfly specialist, but also to the general naturalist, like no other. They are the ultimate symbol of longer, warmer Spring days, and a countryside full of colour and new life.



They make good use of flowering rape fields. After all, I suppose rape flowers are just yellow cuckoo flowers!



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 27-Apr-19 12:47 PM GMT

Lovely shot of the wood land Blue Bells essex and the Orange Tip's , nothing more beautiful at this time of year 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 27-Apr-19 08:32 PM GMT

Talk about 'carpets' of bluebells! That is a scene that could only be taken in the UK.

I've never seen Orange Tips on rape blooms, Mark. The background colour almost gives a sepia effect. Very nice.

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 29-Apr-19 10:47 AM GMT

That is a mighty fine Bluebell scene Mark. 😊 Love the OT on the rape flower, not seen that myself yet though there are fields of rape at Billingshurst that I walked through recently.

Cheers

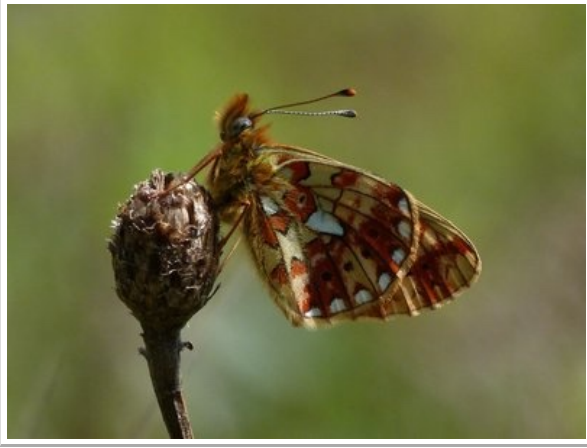
Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Apr-19 10:11 PM GMT

Thanks everyone, the Orange Tips feeding on the rape reminded me of the Provence Orange Tips I see in Gibraltar, which often settle on yellow flowers.

It's been a couple of years since I've seen the Pearl Bordered Fritillary. So, with a last minute change of plan, I got my chance on Monday to head down to Rewel wood in Sussex. It was nice to meet several other enthusiasts on the main east-west ride, including our very own Neil Hulme, who was doing a very successful timed count of the PBF population. But we all got to see many of these lovely spring Fritillaries!





Re: essex buzzard

by ernie f, 01-May-19 08:11 AM GMT

Mark – Nice set of Pearl shots. Not seen them this year so far. Also you've also got a pic of mating OTips. It was my first time getting one this year and yet I see other people on this forum have done the same. The OTips seem to be having a great year and with luck may do next year too. Also – I agree about the Bluebells – I too had noticed them peaking in April rather than in May. A sign of things to come.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 01-May-19 07:45 PM GMT

Lovely sets of Pearl shots Essex – they've started emerging at Bentley Wood but nowhere near the numbers you seem to have seen 😊👍 Not long until the Marshies now 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 02-May-19 03:13 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

..It's been a couple of years since I've seen the Pearl Bordered Fritillary. So, with a last minute change of plan, I got my chance on Monday to head down to Rewel wood in Sussex. It was nice to meet several other enthusiasts on the main east-west ride, including our very own Neil Hulme, who was doing a very successful timed count of the PBF population. But we all got to see many of these lovely spring Fritillaries!

Sounds like a highly satisfying day out, Mark. The numbers Neil H was talking about would be incredible in a location where PBF was long established, let alone somewhere that has only recently been managed for them.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-May-19 07:54 PM GMT

Thanks Ernie, Wurzel and David. The mating Orange Tips were unexpected, as they were my first sightings this year. I too can't wait for mashies. The numbers of PBF are rich reward for all the people down there who help it happen.

Leaving Revel wood, I headed for Chantry Hill, Storrington. Unfortunately it had largely clouded over by then, and not much was about, though I did see my first Greens of the year, and the views very splendid. But blue sky was visible over the coast, so I headed to Mill Hill, by 5PM, and had a great couple of hours in the sunshine, soon clocking up several Dingy and a couple of Grizzed Skippers, Walls and a couple of Greens.



Later, I had the pleasure of watching the Skippers going to roost, a great way to end a rich, successful and most enjoyable day.



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 02-May-19 08:52 PM GMT

That's a very fine ' twin spot ' male Wall Brown (and image), Mark.
I found one earlier this week, but the twin white spots on yours are far more distinct.

Glad you enjoyed Rewell Wood.
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 03-May-19 09:21 AM GMT

Lovely looking Wall Essex and love the behaviour shot of the Dingy 🤔👍 I still can't remember the name of that Wall aberration - I'll need to go and look it up. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 03-May-19 06:39 PM GMT

You've really used your time well and filled your boots, Mark. Lovely Wall Brown with its 'planetary system' forewing ocelli and Dingy, but that Grizzled Skipper is extremely boldly marked, but short of being an ab. A fine specimen!

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 03-May-19 07:26 PM GMT

A great selection of species in your recent reports Mark 🍷😊

Interesting photo of the Orange-tip on the yellow rape flower. Despite there being fields full of the stuff around here I don't see many butterflies on it apart from the occasional white.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 04-May-19 09:24 AM GMT

essex, you've got a load of Greens from me 🍷🍷🍷 lovely Butterfly shots 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-May-19 10:38 PM GMT

Thanks everybody for your comments, which are always nice to read.

The wonderful springtime Orange Tips fly down every Essex hedgerow. Here, the main caterpillar foodplant is garlic mustard. However, being an annual, it's appearance each year is highly variable, depending on a fresh crop of new seedlings, unlike cuckoo flowers, whose population is more stable. Flowering mustard plants are scarce this year—certainly most of the seedlings in my garden shrivelled in last years heatwave—so it's possible we will see a temporary decline in Orange Tip numbers next spring. However, as they can also use other crucifers, including charlock, rocket and honesty, the egg-laying female should be able to find something of interest.

In a couple of weeks, the number of adults will begin to wane, as their all too short season draws to a close. So it's time to have another look at these spring beauties! 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 05-May-19 09:21 AM GMT

Lovely shots Essex especially the open wing shot of the male – could that orange be any more so? 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 06-May-19 10:08 PM GMT

[quote]Here, the main caterpillar foodplant is garlic mustard. However, being an annual, it's appearance each year is highly variable, depending on a fresh crop of new seedlings, unlike cuckoo flowers, whose population is more stable. Flowering mustard plants are scarce this year—certainly most of the seedlings in my garden shrivelled in last years heatwave—so it's possible we will see a temporary decline in Orange Tip numbers next spring.

That's really surprising, Mark, as I was only telling my neighbour the other day that I'd never seen so much of it round my way. I wonder whether the hotter, drier conditions in the SE during last year's heatwave played a role?

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 07-May-19 08:08 AM GMT

There is nothing that heralds the arrival of Spring more than the Primrose, and the Orange Tip. Fortunately they are not a localised species, so can be enjoyed by many.

Great stuff, Mark.
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

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

Well, I hope we all got to enjoy the mad May Day holiday weekend. This holiday has been bedevilled by cold or wet weather over the years since it's introduction in 1978. After last years heatwave, normal service was resumed this time round!

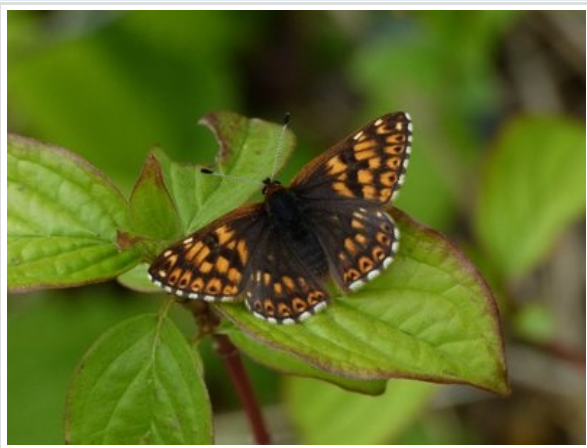
On Monday, we got an early start and headed down to Denge wood in Kent. Thankfully, we had no hold ups, and made good progress. Just as well, for we only managed about 20 minutes of early sunshine before the clouds rolled in, and the action was more or less over. But we made the most of it, and those present all managed to see about half a dozen of this great little butterfly , including UKB'ers Andrew 555 and Allan W, whom it was great to catch up with.

Pictures to follow...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-May-19 12:32 PM GMT

Pictures from Denge wood,





Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 08-May-19 05:16 PM GMT

Some nice shots there Essex ! I think we managed about 4 (maybe 5) Dukes , and we also saw a single female Speckled Wood ,along the entrance track ,but butterfly-wise that was it !,we also saw at least 4 Glowworm larvae along the gravelled entrance track . Glad you found a few Early Spiders at Samphire Ho ! I should imagine that the bulk ,are now past their best . Enjoyed our chat ! Regards Allan.W.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-May-19 07:55 PM GMT

Thanks Allan. We saw a lava on the entrance track, too-I thought it was a ladybird lava, so thanks for the confirmation!

So, after lunch in Canterbury, we headed down, as Allan says, to Samphire Hoe, to look at the large colonies of early spider orchids. Unlike butterflies, orchids still show if it's cold! Some were going over, but there were plenty of good ones around .



This peculiar orchid is the flavescens variety of early spider, which I've never seen before. They were growing at the bottom of the cliff.



Kidney and horseshoe vetch were beginning to flower, and Samphire Hoe is always a pleasure to visit.



Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 08-May-19 08:28 PM GMT

Great find ,with the Flavescens ,Essexwonder if its the same one I found last year ! was it on the chalk bank(landslip) close to the Beach dwelling there ?? We tried really hard to find one ,when we were there a week or two backbut no joy ! once again great find !! Regards Allan.W.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 09-May-19 09:28 AM GMT

{quote} So, after lunch in Canterbury, we headed down, as Allan says, to Samphire Hoe, to look at the large colonies of early spider orchids. Unlike butterflies, orchids still show if it's cold! Some were going over, but there were plenty of good ones around

Those orchids are fabulous, Mark. Samphire Ho certainly has lots to recommend it.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 09-May-19 11:40 AM GMT

Brilliant Orchid shots Essex - 😊 isn't there a form of Bee Orchid that's similar to the Flavescens Spider? 😊 Great shots of the Duke and Duchess, nice to see the images side by side as it were for comparison 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-May-19 07:18 PM GMT

Thanks Allan, yes, that's where they were. Here is another.



It's does, David. If you are ever over this way, Samphire Hoe is definitely worth a visit, especially in spring and early summer.

Hi Wurzel, yes, the bee orchid is called chlorantha. I've seen it a few times, in fact a bee orchid colony on some waste ground near my home used to have a few spikes of this form in some years. However this site is now under concrete—a leisure centre now stands there!

Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 11-May-19 07:39 PM GMT

Excellent Essex ! never managed to find Cholrantha Bee Orchids ,but did fluke a VAR; Cambrensis on Portland a few years back. A t a small local site much used by dog walkers near me (Sellindge) last year I found two spikes of a beautiful "White" (sepals) Bee orchid ,and done the decent thing ,as I thought others may miss them ,I marked them with sticks,returning a couple of days later ,they had both completely vanished and the marker sticks chucked along the path ! Regards Allan.W.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 11-May-19 07:46 PM GMT

Cheers for the confirmation Essex I'm getting to the age now where things in the memory are a little hazy 😊😄 Sorry to hear about the leisure centre 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-May-19 10:12 PM GMT

Last week, we had a short visit to west Cornwall. This was more a family celebration than anything else, but we did manage a visit to the spectacular Kynance Cove. Our first port of call was to see if the first Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries had emerged. They had.



In late April and May, the coast here is a riot of colourful flowers. Here we find spring squil,



Sea campion,



And sea pink, or thrift.



It seems strange to see bluebells on the coast, but they often grow there. These were just past Lizard lighthouse.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-May-19 10:17 PM GMT

And lastly, a scenery shot.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 23-May-19 10:59 PM GMT

Fantastic scenery Essex 😊 Almost as good as Dorset 😊 Great Small Pearl as well 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 24-May-19 03:18 PM GMT

Cracking scenery and flora in that part of the country, Mark. No wonder you make such an effort to visit regularly.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 24-May-19 07:04 PM GMT

Lovely photos from Cornwall Mark 😊

I am planning to be down there again in early August so hoping to catch the second brood Small Pearls.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 24-May-19 08:42 PM GMT

Great shots from the Cornwall coast Essex ,especially Kynance 'can't wait to get back down there next summer !!
Regards Allan.W.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-May-19 01:56 PM GMT

Thanks everybody!

Returning from Cornwall, we wanted to catch up with some spring species again, as the season reaches its peak. With the weather a bit iffy last Sunday, we didn't want to go too far, in the end, we decided on Aston Rowant.

Esther had yet to see a Green, so she was pleased to find this female herself, laying eggs on the dogwood flower buds.



Meanwhile, I was pleased to find my first Common Blues of the year.



Most of the Grizzled Skippers were showing signs of age though, it goes without saying, I was delighted to see them?



Plenty of fresh Brown Argus have emerged and, in warm but rather cloudy conditions, they showed well.



Some nice fresh Dingy Skippers were still present, I love their less than obvious beauty!



Other species were Brimstones, Orange Tips, Holly Blue, and Small Heath.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 26-May-19 03:56 PM GMT

Lovely sequence of shots Essex and a very appreciative report 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

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

That's a Dingy to die for, Mark. Beautiful specimen.

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 27-May-19 06:49 PM GMT

Beautiful scenic views Mark. I have only ever been to Cornwall once many years ago (some Bay near St Ives) but it was lovely – and Esther did well with that Green Hairstreak 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-May-19 08:19 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. It took a while to get going, but was a good day.

Thanks David, Dingy Skippers are exquisite when fresh, especially the females.

Thanks Pauline. Cornwall is splendid of course, but I'm bound to say that! Esther did do well, an extra pair of eyes always comes in handy...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-May-19 08:37 PM GMT

So, that was it. The late-spring bank holiday. For me in east Anglia, it was a weekend wasted. It was warm with sunny intervals on Saturday, while I was at work, and cloudy and windy on Sunday and Monday, when I was off. No rain, no sun, just cloud. Lots and lots of cloud. I do wish the forecasters, both

on TV and online, would tell it like it is, instead of putting such a glossy spin on things! 😏

NO butterflies for me this weekend, then, but I did see some last week, with a trip down to Denbies. This included my first Adonis Blues of 2019.



Several Grizzled Skippers were here, including some surprise fresh ones.



And, again, Dingy Skippers were common. Here is another for David.



Brimstones, Small Coppers, Green Hairstreaks, Small Heaths and various whites were also seen, as well as large numbers of 5 spot burnet moths and a few Mother Shipton.

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 27-May-19 09:28 PM GMT

I concur about the weather, Mark. But it's far worse when it's fine leaving home, then cloud and rain set in 100 miles later. I've got that badge!.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-May-19 08:35 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

...And, again, Dingy Skippers were common. Here is another for David...

Beautiful, Mark....and very envy-inducing.

I'll trump it with a female Violet Copper when I get home! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-May-19 10:29 PM GMT

Hi Trevor, me too. Lots of them!

That's not fair, David! 😊

In afternoon, on to Storrington in Sussex. Unfortunately, it was rather cloudy by now—a familiar story! But it was quite warm, and, in some of the sheltered north-facing coombes, several Duke of Burgundy were found, most in good condition, though the pictures were a bit grainy...



More Grizzled and Dingy Skippers were welcome, in fact this was the best Grizzled site I have visited this year .



Brown Argus were around in good numbers, along with a few Common Blues.



Leaving Storrington, I headed down to Mill Hill. Unfortunately, the weather had really closed in by then, and all butterflies were asleep. But it was worth visiting, to see the lovely horseshoe vetch there.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 30-May-19 11:11 PM GMT

That is a lovely fresh looking Duke Essex 😊 All of those species you mentioned are having a great season in 2019 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 31-May-19 08:02 AM GMT

Cloudy weather can be frustrating, Mark, but it allows you to get better than usual images of the butterflies as you have done there. The Brown Argus in particular is lovely.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 31-May-19 08:42 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

... For me in east Anglia, it was a weekend wasted. It was warm with sunny intervals on Saturday, while I was at work, and cloudy and windy on Sunday and Monday, when I was off. No rain, no sun, just cloud. Lots and lots of cloud...

Pretty much the same in my bit of the midlands although I did manage to get out for a bit on Saturday and we had a few showers of rain on Monday to add to the gloom.

Very nice Duke, Grizzled Skipper and Brown Argus 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-May-19 09:42 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, you're right. The Duke seems to be doing particularly well, long May that continue!

Thanks David. That Brown Argus stood out from all the others with it's particularly fine markings. Like the Dingy, it is not obviously beautiful, but I think it is a rather lovely little butterfly!

Thanks Neil. I have to say, I have struggled a bit this spring. After last years vintage May, both in terms of colour and weather, perhaps this one has been more realistic...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-May-19 10:53 PM GMT

As Allan W knows, there is plenty to interest the nature lover in east Kent at this time of year. Last week, I spent an afternoon down there, visiting the Small Blue colony at Western Heights, just outside Dover. It was lovely to see them, after seeing everyone else's sightings elsewhere!



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 01-Jun-19 10:37 PM GMT

Lovely, pin sharp images, Mark. This species is having a spectacular year, which is surprising given that the kidney vetch must have suffered during last year's heatwave.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-19 10:46 PM GMT

Lovely shots Essex – especially the first one – you can really pick out the individual blue scales on that male 😊👁️🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-Jun-19 10:46 PM GMT

Yes, Small Blue does seem to be doing well this spring. The kidney vetch seems to be doing ok, perhaps the rain last August was enough to save it.

Thanks Wurzel, some lovely Small Blue images coming on to the forums at the moment...

East Kent is perhaps the best area in the whole of Britain for orchids so, after leaving Dover, there was just time to fit in a couple of sites. Thank goodness the days are long! Bonsai Bank is great for lady orchids, with hundreds present. Here is a close up of the flowers,



Arriving around 5.30PM, I was pleased to find a few Dukes still active. Although not the purpose of the trip this time, they are always welcome.



Not too far away, the monkey orchids were coming out at Park Gate Down, a KWT site.



Also at Park Gate, were still some early purples and also fly orchids.



As we move into early summer, more treasures will appear at this great site.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-19 11:01 PM GMT

Those Orchids are stunning Essex 😊 Mind you are they sure about the Lady Orchid, there seems to be something a little male about them? 🤔 😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 03-Jun-19 06:35 PM GMT

Some fine orchids you've got there, Mark, and a few bonus Dukes too! Seems like an excellent early evening.

What's behind the name Bonsai Bank? Surely there aren't miniature trees growing there?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Jun-19 10:16 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, yes there does!

Hi David, well actually, there are! Back in the 60s or 70s, the site was planted with forest conifers. But they failed to grow properly in the dry, chalky soil on the bank, becoming miniature trees, and growing at a snails pace. I think that's where the name comes from. As luck would have it, this probably saved the Duke colony and the orchids, as has happened in so many places. In recent years, many of the trees have been removed, as part of the management plan.

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 06-Jun-19 08:56 AM GMT

Great to see Dovorian Small Blues, Essex. 😊 To think I lived there for years before my butterfly interest re-emerged – I certainly had no idea there were Small Blues up on the Western Heights, for example.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

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

Hi Dave, yes there have been a colony of SB there for as long as I can remember. There's so much going on in east Kent in late spring that I returned a few days later...

It was one of those days, with low pressure heading in from the south-west, so I decided to head as far east as possible. So I headed to Lydden Temple Ewell Downs, where I had a decent morning watching Adonis Blues and others, before the drizzle arrived. This mating pair was a highlight.



Eventually, the female opened up as well.



Here is a habitat picture, with horseshoe vetch in the foreground.



Full list was, Dingy Skippers, Brimstones, Large White, Orange Tip, Small Blue, Common Blue, Holly Blue, Adonis Blue and Small Heath.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-19 09:29 AM GMT

That quadruple page spread shot is a cracker – don't often see that, if at all 🤔👀🌿🌿

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 07-Jun-19 08:18 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Hi David, well actually, there are! Back in the 60s or 70s, the site was planted with forest conifers. But they failed to grow properly in the dry, chalky soil on the bank, becoming miniature trees, and growing at a snails pace. I think that's where the name comes from. As luck would have it, this probably saved the Duke colony and the orchids, as has happened in so many places. In recent years, many of the trees have been removed, as part

of the management plan.

That's as interesting as it is comical, Mark. 😊

Yes, you're probably right about the impact it had on the Dukes. They are very much creatures of sparse tree cover and clearings.

Love the double open-wing mating pair of Adonis. That should be going straight into the species gallery! 🍷

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Jun-19 11:24 PM GMT

Hi David, exactly! Had the conifers grown, they would have swamped the site, plunging it into darkness. Leading to the loss of both species, of course.

Thanks Wurzel, glad you like the pictures.

On Monday, I headed to Grays. This is the only Essex site I know of for man orchids. However, before I got to the orchids I found this lovely Common Blue female, one of the finest I have seen, and reminding me of some of the more exotic European species.



After last year's drought, I thought the man orchids might be small or sparse this year. But I needn't have worried, for they were splendid! I have seen man orchids in several places, but these are the largest and most splendid ones I have found. Some are yellow.



While others are red. The flowers really do look like little men!



This old chalk quarry has lots of legumes-pea flowers- and these support large numbers of Holly Blue, as well Green Hairstreaks.



Then onto Folkestone, where the late-spider orchids are now in flower.



I also saw Adonis Blues, and this mating pair of Dingy Skippers.



All in all, a good day.

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 08-Jun-19 04:48 PM GMT

Another gorgeous blue CB female Mark. Have you seen many brown ones?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Jun-19 08:38 PM GMT

Woke up to the lovely sight of an adult and juvenile great-spotted woodpecker on my garden fat block this morning. Not the best picture, in terms of quality, through a window and it was raining as well. But I've never seen them before.



Re: essex buzzard

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

Cracking sequence of shots Essex 🤩👍 Those Man Orchids actually do look like the thing they're named after 🤩😄 As for the Spider Orchids they're like a Necker Cube illusion - I can see the Spider, legs pulled close in to the body and then it shifts and becomes a very beefy Super Gnome 🤩😄 Brilliant 🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 09-Jun-19 09:18 PM GMT

Fabulous Woodpeckers, Mark, but your mating Dingies are giving me green eyes. I'm pretty sure I've never seen that myself! 🤩

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Jun-19 05:58 PM GMT

Hi Pauline. I haven't seen any brown ones this year yet. The brownest female I've found in recent times was last July, when I found this one at Windover Hill in Sussex.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Jun-19 09:39 PM GMT

With the weather forecast as it is, we might only get one chance to go out this week. So we decided to make it a good one and, on Sunday, headed down to Swanage. Arriving at Durlston Country Park, our first butterfly was this Meadow Brown, warming up in the hazy sun. I've seen several males in the last week, but this is my first female.



It wasn't the last, though, as twenty minutes later we found this pair.



We saw plenty of Small and Common Blues, and Esther spotted this rather nice female Adonis.



Several bee orchid were present.



And here is the habitat.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Jun-19 10:32 PM GMT

Of course, the main reason for going to Durlston was to see the Lulworth Skippers. They took a while to find, but eventually we found several of these tiny little butterflies. We then headed into town to get lunch, which was enjoyed on the beach, before heading back to Durlston late afternoon, and seeing a few more Skippers.





It had been a long, but thoroughly enjoyable day out.

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-19 09:27 AM GMT

Hi! Essex, lovely Meadow Brown, can't believe they're out yet, the Summer seems far a way with this awful weather . Love the Wood Peckers in your Garden 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 13-Jun-19 05:10 PM GMT

Good that you managed to get out successfully during this miserable spell, Mark.

Love the Lulworths and the Bee Orchid but that female Meadow Brown is resplendent. They don't usually pose like that early in their life and that's a particularly well marked individual too. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by kevling, 13-Jun-19 08:29 PM GMT

Hi Essex,

Very nice shot of the female Adonis at Durlston. Glad you found some Lulworth skippers too. They are still on my small list of species not yet seen, but I have been to Durlston Country Park, which is a beautiful site.

Regards
Kev

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jun-19 06:59 PM GMT

Hi Mark, nice Lulworths from Durlston but I really like that female Meadow Brown with the orange patches on her hindwings. I have seen a few like this over the past two or three years and have made a point of looking out for them.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 14-Jun-19 08:02 PM GMT

That is indeed a very bright and attractive female Meadow Brown, Mark. They are so difficult to approach when new, and you still have to persuade them to open up as well! 😊 Good to see the Lulworths too - I hope to pass by Durlston before too long as well, so I trust there will be a few around in their unusually long flight period.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by ernie f, 18-Jun-19 09:59 AM GMT

I just finished commencing on Dave's striking Common Blue female and then I looked back at your one of June 7th - yet another amazing example.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Jun-19 10:02 PM GMT

Thanks everybody for your kind comments. I trust we are all making the most of this rather challenging weather!

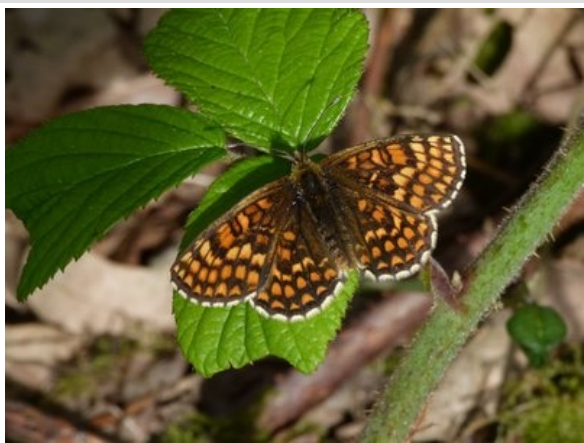
Yesterday, Monday, the sun came out to play, and I at last got the chance to check in at one of my Heath Fritillaries sites in Essex. Hockey Woods has been visited by others, and valuable information has been gathered. So I headed for another site, on the other side of Rayleigh, which is less visited. Arriving at the area I saw them last year, I soon found the first ones, mostly closed winged in the strong sun.



They are probably now nearing their peak, and numbers were reasonable, if perhaps slightly lower than last year. One particular bramble bush had about 15 feeding from it. But I had to wait until early evening for the first adults to settle with wings open. Here is a male.



And here a female, with her more contrasting markings.



This is a very fussy species. In this wood, some coppice areas which we hoped would be colonised by the food plants, and the butterflies, have not a cow-wheat plant in sight, and have just grown over with brambles. In other areas populated with the plant, where clear areas have been maintained, it is growing amongst grass. While cow-wheat can survive this, without bare ground it becomes too cool for the caterpillars. So it is essential to coppice new areas, where new bare ground can hopefully be colonised by the plant. But it has to be visible from current areas as well, for the butterflies usually turn back if they encounter dense scrub or woodland. But if the habit can be created just right, Heath Fritillaries can exist at great density.



Can we ask any visitors to tread carefully, not only to avoid trampling the value cow-wheat, but also because newly emerged adults and mating pairs will be on the ground, perhaps tucked under leaves. Can I also say that all the Essex sites have open access, and visitors are welcome. 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-19 10:59 PM GMT

Great set of Lulworths and Heaths Essex 😊 The last Heath shot is a cracker – a threefer, open wing, closed wing and in cop 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 19-Jun-19 06:15 AM GMT

Your patience certainly paid off there, Mark. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Jun-19 10:38 PM GMT

It now White Letter time. So, earlier this week, it was time to head down to my favourite White Letter Hairstreak site, which is Hadleigh Castle CP, for my annual fest. In reality, I often make several trips there during the season, as it really is a great site for so much wildlife. Being south facing, the Hairstreaks emerge early, and there were already many around. The majority were males.



I rather like this picture, something a little different. Almost as if it is watching me!



The first females are now emerging.



Photography is easy here, as the adults reliably feed low down, within reach. I also saw my first Marbled Whites and Essex Skippers of the year. And the Skippers I managed to identify were this species, I've yet to see a Small Skipper this year.





Many wild flowers bloom here. One of the special ones is the Deptford pink. This is the only place I have found it, in Britain, and I always look for it at Hadleigh.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 22-Jun-19 11:23 PM GMT

Lovely Whitters Essex 😊 Great to see the Essex too Essex, though a little unusual in that normally the Smalls are out before the Essex aren't they? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 23-Jun-19 11:41 PM GMT

When I'm abroad, Mark, I find that Essex Skippers are usually slightly earlier than Small Skippers, so I suspect what you're seeing isn't unusual.

However, unusual to me is the sight of White Letter Hairstreaks nectaring low down. You're lucky to have a site where this is commonplace.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Jun-19 11:16 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, you can't beat an Essex Essex Skipper, can you?

Hi David, yes I am incredibly lucky. I doubt there is a better place in the country to see them. We do struggle a little in the county, in terms of species. We have no chalk downs, where so many brilliant species live. But we do have a few crackers!

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 25-Jun-19 08:48 PM GMT

Both WLH and Essex Skippers are photogenic little creatures, as your shots show, Mark. Your experience matched mine at Hadleigh, in that all those I could positively identify were Essex, not Small. Interesting to hear some detail about the management of the various Heath Fritillary sites in the Rayleigh area. I have visited some of the spots south of the A127 in the past, but they seemed to suffer from a "boom or bust" situation and I'd heard the species had disappeared. However, it's excellent news to hear they have returned.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jun-19 07:45 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, and I'm glad you're trips to Essex were successful. Just seen your pictures, which are great, well done!

Well, I've had three days off in the last week—and each one has been cloudy! Whatever happened to the heatwave they were predicting last week. It's remarkable to think it was warmer and sunnier in late February than it is now. It's also remarkable that, as close as Paris, and in many other parts of Europe, temperatures are in the 30's C!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 27-Jun-19 03:28 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

..Well, I've had three days off in the last week—and each one has been cloudy! Whatever happened to the heatwave they were predicting last week. It's remarkable to think it was warmer and sunnier in late February than it is now. It's also remarkable that, as close as Paris, and in many other parts of Europe, temperatures are in the 30's C!

Be careful what you wish for, Mark. I'll be in the French Alps at the weekend and some parts are forecast to be 44c!!

Even on the cols above 2,000m it's likely to be 27c, which will seem peculiar when standing next to or on some of the ice that occurs up there. 😲

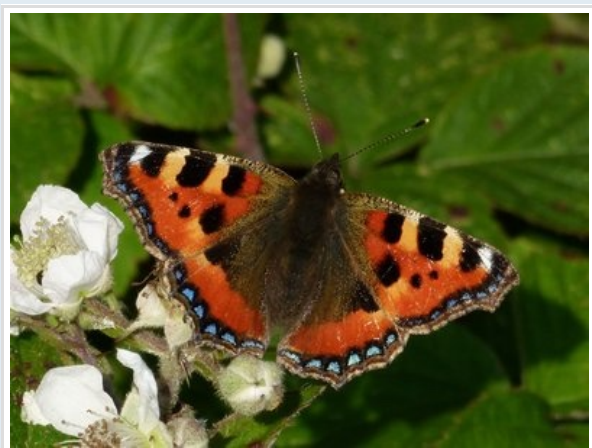
Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jun-19 10:53 PM GMT

Yes, we don't want those sort of temperatures. 18C, light winds and intermittent sunshine will do just fine!

Well, today was a glorious evening so, after work, I found a sunny spot on my local patch, sheltered from the wind, and enjoyed a feast of butterflies! High numbers of Large Skippers were here, as well as a few Small Skippers. I was hoping for my first Hutchinsoni Comma, and there is a certain bramble bush where I find them every year. Bingo, there it was!

I also found Small Tortoiseshells. Aware they are struggling in some areas of the country, I am making sure I enjoy them while they last! 😊





Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Jun-19 09:14 PM GMT

Beautiful Small Tortoiseshell in particular, Mark.

When you say 'in the evening', what actual time did you arrive and leave?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Jun-19 11:40 PM GMT

It was between 7 and 8.30PM, David. I checked at just after 6, but the large Skippers and Comma were still keeping their wings tightly closed then, so gave it another hour. The days are now as long as they ever get, so, even on work days, it is possible to get some butterflies in, if the sun shines.

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 29-Jun-19 05:39 AM GMT

The sight of a Small Tortoiseshell nowadays is something of a treat. Your image evokes thoughts of Summers past, when every French Marigold in the garden would be visited by a Small Tort.

I'm off to Wiltshire next week where they're still regularly seen.

Great stuff, Mark.
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by kevlings, 29-Jun-19 08:04 PM GMT

Essex, always nice to see a Small Tortoiseshell photo. It's a shame they are not as common place as they should be.

Regards
Kev

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-19 10:55 PM GMT

Great to see the H.Comma Essex - is it that time already? 🤪😄 It feels like only yesterday I was watching OTs 😊 Hopefully plenty more butterflies still to come though...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 30-Jun-19 01:20 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

..It was between 7 and 8.30PM, David...

Wow, I'd never considered trying after 7pm, although I suppose it makes sense given that it's light till gone half past nine.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Jul-19 10:28 PM GMT

Thanks everybody, I enjoy reading your comments.

In late June, the Ringlets emerged. These attractive, smokey black butterflies have a very short flight period. Some of the adults are already showing signs of wear, and they will have gone by the end of this month. But for now they can be enjoyed, and they are doing pretty well round here. At the north-facing common behind my home, they were bobbing by the dozen yesterday morning. If the cloud obscured the sun for a slightly longer period, they would start to settle in the grass.





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-19 12:16 PM GMT

Ringlets are one of those 'blink' and you miss them species sometimes Essex – I say sometimes as one year I found a really fresh one in late August while looking for Brostreaks 😊 Lovely shots – especially the velvety open wing one 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Jul-19 10:51 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, as always.

A warm Thursday evening meant, after work, a chance to look again for Hutchinsoni Commas. Several more have emerged since last week. Four were on territory, plus a flyby, compared to just one last Thursday. The usual Skippers, Browns and Tortoiseshells were present, too. Still waiting for Gatekeepers to appear. The joys of warm evenings in high summer!



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 07-Jul-19 04:51 PM GMT

Lovely H.Comma Essex – love the way the white margin highlights the darker sections 🤔🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 07-Jul-19 09:26 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

..In late June, the Ringlets emerged. These attractive, smokey black butterflies have a very short flight period. Some of the adults are already showing signs of wear, and they will have gone by the end of this month....

Really, Mark? That surprises me as I sometimes see the odd tatty one towards the end of August when searching for Brown Hairstreaks in Pembrokeshire.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Jul-19 10:51 PM GMT

I do usually see the odd tattered Ringlet make it through to August, but, where I live at least, they are few and far between. Perhaps it is different in other areas of the country? Likewise Meadow Browns. Here, again, they are fading away by August, yet they continue on the Downs in the south until October, seemingly in just one generation.

I too love Hutchinsoni Commas. They don't last long, just a few weeks. Long enough to breed, and provide a new generation in late September. They should be enjoyed while they last, as time waits for no-one!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 09-Jul-19 02:57 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

..I too love Hutchinsoni Commas. They don't last long, just a few weeks. Long enough to breed, and provide a new generation in late September. They should be enjoyed while they last, as time waits for no-one!

Indeed. They are quite ephemeral and it's easy to forget them once they're gone, only to receive the happy reminder around midsummer the following year!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Jul-19 10:46 PM GMT

We were Aston Rowant bound on Sunday. This was just a short visit, I will take a full trip there in early August. So I wasn't entirely expecting my first SSS of the year!



Much more expected were our first Chalkhill Blues of the year.



Several mating pairs were found.



I was delighted to find wild candytuft, as I always look for it, and failed to find any last year. This is the only place, in Britain, I have seen it.



All in all, a rather splendid afternoon!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Jul-19 09:48 PM GMT

The summer generation of Small Tortoiseshell and Comma is now on the wane. There are plenty of Tortoiseshell caterpillar batches around now, and eggs were still being laid today:



The caterpillars vary, from those just hatched to this one, which is fully grown.



However, some have already been predated. Anyone know what this is?



I just hope some of these caterpillars will survive, to emerge as adults in late summer. Their chances seem slim, as late summer and autumn Tortoiseshell have been virtually absent here in recent years.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-19 11:05 PM GMT

Crikey Essex a Silver-spot already 😊 Great shot 😊📷 Mind you the first of the last was recorded today with Brostreaks at Alners Gorse so we better start making the most of it 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 25-Jul-19 02:04 PM GMT

Nice find with the Silver Spotted Skipper, Mark. I'm hoping Small Tortoiseshell summer brood isn't on the wane near me yet.....!ve barely seen any!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Jul-19 10:42 PM GMT

It's now late July so, on Sunday, it was time for a trip down to Denbies hillside to see the Chalk Hill Blues, and hopefully a few other species too. Numbers of Chalkhills was rather low, in the hundreds rather than tens of thousands that I sometimes see here, but they were still lovely to see.



A few females and mating pairs were observed.



A couple of nice Common Blues were also seen.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Jul-19 11:14 PM GMT

Then off to Botany Bay, for second generation Wood Whites. I saw around twenty.



It was also nice to see good numbers of Silver-washed Fritillaries, as I haven't seen many this year. They constantly flicker their wings, making photographs difficult. This is the best I could manage.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Jul-19 11:27 PM GMT

It was nice to witness the well-known courtship display, a rather attractive scene.



Sadly no White Admirals, but still a successful day!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 04-Aug-19 07:27 PM GMT

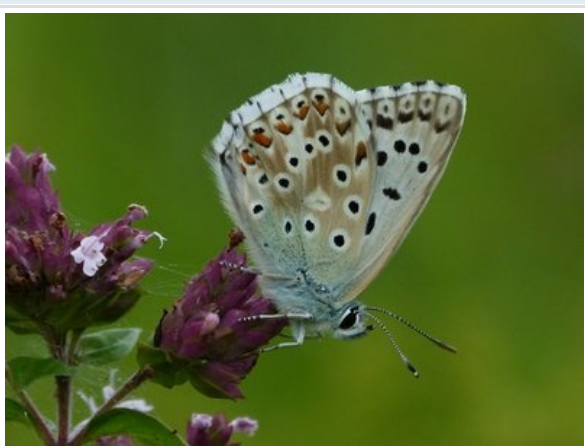
Nice work, Mark. Looks like I'll miss out on UK Chalkhills so I'll have to live vicariously through your images (and others'). 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Aug-19 11:54 PM GMT

Perhaps so, David. I wonder if perhaps you may have seen one or two more exotic kinds of Chalkhill Blues in the last week or so, though...

On Sunday, we headed down to the excellent Lydden Temple Ewell reserve in east Kent. This was to see two of my favourite summer butterflies, the chance to fill my boots with Chalkhill Blues, and to see if the Silver Spotted Skippers have started to emerge. Chalkhill Blues were certainly around in good numbers, and it was a great pleasure to see them at another site.



East Kent, being near the coast, is slightly cooler, especially in spring, than inland sites. So although this is an excellent site for Silver Spotted Skippers, they often emerge a few days later here. But they are definitely emerging now, and will peak later in the month.



Full day list was, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Brimstones, Clouded Yellow, Large Skipper, Silver Spotted Skipper, Small Copper, Small Blue, Common Blue, Brown Argus, Chalkhill Blues, Peacock, Comma, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Speckled Wood, Marbled Whites, Wall, Meadow Brown, Gatekeepers and Small Heath. Six kestrels were on site, as well as buzzards and ravens. I will return at the end of August, to see how things are getting on, as the downland season reaches its grand finale!

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-19 08:02 PM GMT

Cracking set of images Essex – especially like the Silver-spot 🤔🍷 I've been hoping to catch up with them but the weather doesn't look great over the next wee – now when I'm in Wales the week after of course... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 08-Aug-19 09:40 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Perhaps so, David. I wonder if perhaps you may have seen one or two more exotic kinds of Chalkhill Blues in the last week or so, though...



Yes, a couple, Mark. I think you are familiar with them too! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Aug-19 10:31 PM GMT

Good luck with finding them, Wurzel. Still a bit of time left...

Yes David, I filled my boots with exotic Chalkhills last year. I'm looking foreword to more images, though!

I love Silver Spotted Skippers, and August is a busy month, as I try to see as many as possible. They are cracking little butterflies, full of character. So when I had a spare afternoon earlier this week it was a no brainer—another trip to Aston Rowant was in order. There were plenty of males, probably many hundreds, and most in excellent condition, suggesting they are just a few days from their abundance peak. Some females were around, too, but not that many. From the front, all have cute teddy bear faces!



Chalkhill Blues were abundant here, and I can't get enough of them, either. Some of the males were showing signs of wear, the fresh appearance of the newly emerged male lasts only a day or two. Numbers are now probably at or just past their peak, and I had to check through them before I found this glorious fresh male.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 09-Aug-19 10:43 PM GMT

Brilliant shots of a really charismatic butterfly Essex – the cuddliest butterfly in the UK, at least that's what my younger daughter used to say 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 11-Aug-19 09:05 PM GMT

I agree about Silver Spotted Skippers, Mark. Not only are they full of character but they turn up at a good time of year – when virtually everything else is withering away.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Aug-19 10:40 PM GMT

Your youngest daughter is spot on, Wurzel!

Totally agree, David. August is a great month, the grand finale. And we still have the second generation Adonis Blues to come and, for you, Brown Hairstreaks. And SSS will continue throughout! A great way to end the summer.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Aug-19 04:12 PM GMT

It was too windy for butterflies on Sunday, so I decided on something different—a visit to the Minsmere nature reserve in Suffolk. Although quiet at this time of year, as the breeding season has mostly finished, there were plenty of migrant waders, and of course, lots of avocets. I was also pleased to see a spotted redshank, a species which has eluded me for many years.



By the sandy paths, bee-wolves have made their home. These wasps capture honey bees, paralyse them with their sting, then take them to the nest, a small tunnel in the sand. When they have collected five bees, they lay an egg, then seal the tunnel. The larvae then hatch, eat the bees, and pupate, to hatch as a wasp next summer. Isn't nature fascinating, if a little grotesque!



Up on the Heath, to heather was in full bloom. A splendid late-summer sight.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Aug-19 05:02 PM GMT

With limited time, and weather, on Monday afternoon, I headed back to Aston Rowant. Things have moved on significantly in the warm week since my last visit. Chalkhill Blues were fewer than last week, suggesting they are coming to an end and, for the first time, I probably saw more female Silver Spotted Skippers than males. This is not an entirely legitimate comparison, though, as I visited the south side this time, having been to the north side of the M40 last week. The weather was porrer this time, too. But I still feel that Aston Rowant is now past it's best.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 14-Aug-19 06:00 PM GMT

Wow essex, what a list of Butterflies, 🍷🍷 I'm down in Kent end of September hope fully, I will probably miss some of the Butterflies at Temple Ewell but I must certainly try to to go there 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 14-Aug-19 07:41 PM GMT

Lovely fresh Skippers! 😊 One of these days I shall bump into you at Aston Rowant, Mark – I visit fairly often at this time of year. I suspect you're right

about it having past its best, though the Adonis should be appearing on the north side about now, and if there are any Clouded Yellows around, this hillside invariably attracts them.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Aug-19 10:42 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, yes late September is getting a little late, but there could be a few Clouded Yellows around, so worth a look.

Thanks Dave. I have only occasionally found Adonis there, though I know you have been more successful. I will certainly be trying to catch up with Adonis somewhere in the next couple of weeks—if the weather ever relents!

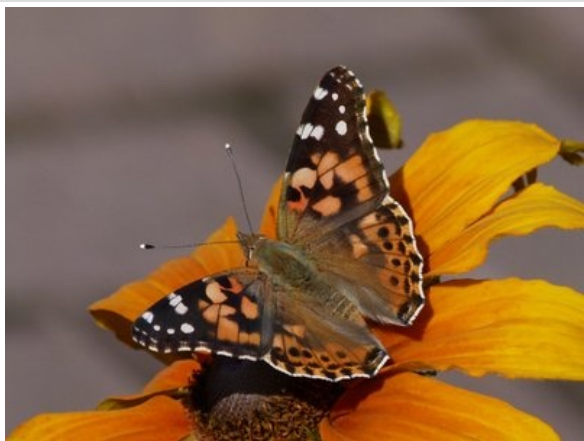
Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Aug-19 11:00 PM GMT

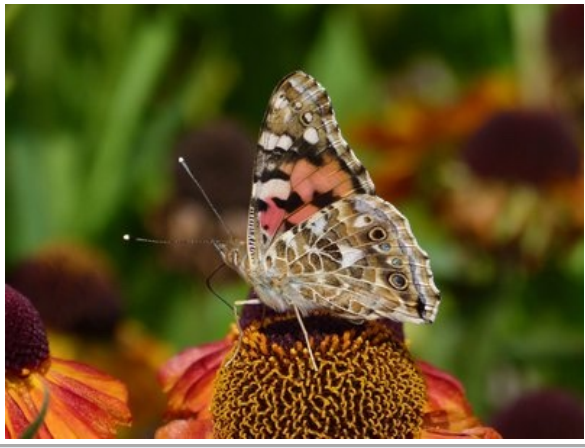
After near absence in the last month, new, second generation Small Tortoiseshell are now emerging. At my local garden centre on Tuesday, three fresh Torts were on Buddleia, and another two on Echinacea flowers. So at least some have made it through the immature stages.



Painted Ladies were also present, and are now common in my area. Probably offspring of the migrants that arrived in June.



With it's exquisite pattern, the underside is surely as attractive as the upper side.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 15-Aug-19 08:59 PM GMT

Congrats on the Spotted Redshank – they can be right pains to catch up with 😊 Great news about the Small Torts – I had five today on one bush so fingers crossed the good times keep rolling 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 17-Aug-19 09:08 AM GMT

Lovely to see those Small Tortoiseshells, Mark. Looks like they're having a better year out east than they are near me. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Aug-19 10:13 PM GMT

Yes David, Small Tortoiseshells are doing just fine with me at the moment. Long may it continue!

Yesterday (Sunday) we headed down to Temple Ewell in East Kent. Unfortunately it was rather damper than expected and, when the sun finally arrived at 3PM, it was accompanied by a horrendous wind.

Plenty of stuff about, then, but photography, as you can imagine, was difficult. But I eventually came away with a few images I was happy with, and there were one or two surprises there.

Firstly, one for Pauline. This young fox was sniffing round the rabbit warren at the Lydden end.



Chalkhill Blues are now well past their best, but this is a good site for late sightings, and there were still some quite good ones around.



I don't think I've taken any Small White pictures this year. That was corrected on Sunday.



Adonis Blues are now emerging. Hopefully, I will get to enjoy many more of these in the next couple of weeks. The rain this summer should encourage a good emergence.



But, it's the Silver Spotted Skippers I really came to see, as their season will soon come to an end. They were tricky to track down, even harder to photograph. Hopefully the lack of sightings was just down to the awful wind, and not an actual dip in numbers at this normally excellent site.



In the evening, I did witness something I haven't seen elsewhere this season, a coupling.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-19 09:02 AM GMT

Great set of shots Essex especially the coupling shot 😊 " as their season will soon come to an end." 😊 Ahhh I still haven't seen one 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 20-Aug-19 12:36 PM GMT

Essex, great shots of the Butterflies , I'm glad to hear the Adonis are just coming out at Temple Ewell but I think I may be a little too late for them, end of September before I can get to Kent 😊

Glad you got your Skipper shots they look great. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Aug-19 09:15 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and Goldie.

On Wednesday, I headed down to Martin Down, arriving early to watch the butterflies warming up on this cool, then warm day. First I found this fresh Adonis Blue, which positively glowed in the early sunshine. Several other were basking nearby.



I was hoping to find Chalkhill Blues still on the wing, and I wasn't disappointed. Most were showing their age, but I also found this fresh specimen, a nice male.



Lastly for now, I found this female Adonis, another nice new adult. Common Blues were present, too. I would return to Martin Down later, for I had somewhere else to go late morning...



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 24-Aug-19 11:08 PM GMT

Lovely set of Blues Essex – were they along the Ditch? 😊 I reckon Alners Gorse was the next stop?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Aug-19 12:04 AM GMT

You're on the right track, Wurzel, but in fact it was another of your sites...

So, then on to Shipton Bellinger. Never been here before, so it took a while to find the best spots, but eventually found a few areas that looked suitable for Brown Hairstreaks. Unfortunately it clouded over shortly after, but this female was disturbed from some blackthorn. A bit damaged but they all count!



In early afternoon I found this male, feasting on blackberries.



I got chatting to a chap who was doing a transect, and he confirmed I had the right area. He also confirmed that Brown Hairstreaks had peaked a couple weeks ago! So I had to make do with the two sightings, but several Brimstones were nice to see.



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 27-Aug-19 07:05 AM GMT

One of each sex can't be bad, Mark. Brown Hairstreak sightings have been few and far between at the regular Sussex sites this year. Despite the damage, your female looks quite fresh.

Beautiful Adonis shot in your previous post.
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Aug-19 07:02 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor. I did some research before I went, to see which Brown Hairstreak sites were performing. The answer was none of them! Worth a visit though, but I must go a bit earlier next year.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Aug-19 09:29 PM GMT

Brown Hairstreaks rarely show after 3PM, so I headed back to Martin Down. The sun had returned and, as I worked my way up the Bockerly Dyke, Adonis and Chalkhill Blues were frequently seen. Several Brimstones were here, too, and I particularly like this backlit shot.



Near the top of the reserve, large clumps of hemp agrimony grows, and this was attracting Painted Lady and Tortoiseshells.



Perhaps surprisingly, several worn DGF's were still around and, by evening, they were beginning to settle.



So that concludes a most successful and enjoyable day.

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 28-Aug-19 10:51 AM GMT

Hi! essex, love your Brimstone shot, we seem to be getting lots of Tortoiseshells at the moment and RA also Peacocks but I've yet to see a Brimstone arrive 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 28-Aug-19 08:47 PM GMT

Great stuff Essex, I wouldn't have guessed Shipton 🤔😄 You did really well not because they've just not there like some places this year but because

you really have to put the work in to get them 😊 Did you manage to find the backhedge that runs near to the Tidworth/Bulford Road – that's the best spot? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 29-Aug-19 04:48 PM GMT

A good range of butterflies there, Mark, including that unexpected Dark Green Fritillary.

That female Brown Hairstreak is wing damaged in a most unusual way. I wonder what caused it?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Aug-19 09:13 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie, looks like you are still getting good things in your garden, hopefully that will continue through September.

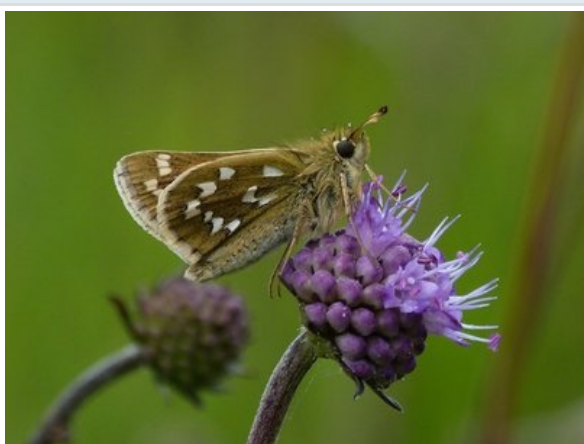
Thanks Wurzel, yes that was the spot where I found this male BH. Several Brimstones were feeding up for hibernation there too, plus several Holly Blues. The female was a bit higher up, near a Scots pine.

Thanks David, you're right, not the usual damage caused by birds, for example. Perhaps it was damaged while egg-laying among all that tangled undergrowth and thorns?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Aug-19 10:50 PM GMT

It's still August, and the Silver Spotted Skipper season is still going. With a spare afternoon yesterday (Wednesday) I headed back to Lydden Temple Ewell in East Kent. I was pleased to find the Skippers were still present in good numbers. Many were now worn, not surprisingly, but there were still some good ones. Unfortunately, I only got about half an hour of suitable weather, as some unforecast cloud and rain arrived by 4PM, making the day even shorter. Several Adonis and a few Chalkhill Blues were also seen though, by time I got to them, the rain had, sadly, returned.



Signs of autumn were present, with autumn ladies tresses and autumn gentian (fellwort) in flower on the downland slope.



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 30-Aug-19 11:25 AM GMT

You can never see too many Silver-spots in my book, Mark, and that one sitting so typically on the scabious is splendid specimen. Lydden/Temple Ewell is a great bit of downland too. 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-19 03:49 PM GMT

I'm with Dave on this one Essex 😊 You managed to capture images of some cracking looking ones there; I too found some really fresh ones so they must have quite a protracted emergence 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 03-Sep-19 10:50 AM GMT

Nice that they're still around...and seemingly in good nick too, Mark. I guess the Chalkhills were rather scruffier?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Sep-19 03:39 PM GMT

Dave, no you can't. These Skippers are full of life and character, and they are part of the grand finale of the downland season.

Hi Wurzel, yes, they do last quite a long time, having started in the last ten days of July. Not quite as long as Lulworth Skippers, though!

Thanks David. Yes, the Chalkhill Blues were looking rather tired. I was down there again on Monday and they had nearly finished, the odd one I saw was on it's last legs.

Sunday 1 September, and something a little different as we start the autumn, as the Suffolk horse society come to Essex for their annual Spectacular. The Suffolk Punch is the oldest breed of heavy horse in Britain. This today is a critically endangered breed, and it is amazing to think that, by the Second World War, most of the agricultural land in Suffolk, Essex and Norfolk, and beyond, was ploughed and tilled by these splendid animals.

As a breed, the Suffolk was renowned for its endurance, good temperament, constitution and long life. Their immense strength, willingness to work long hours and unfeathered (unhairy) legs, unlike a Shire, made them ideal for working the lowland arable farms of East Anglia.

This event, at the Marks Hall Estate near Colchester, was the biggest gathering of Suffolk's in the country. The weather was kind, cool and bright, and it was a most enjoyable day in a lovely setting. Thanks to all, especially those who made the journey to bring their horses here, and to all the event organisers.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Sep-19 11:30 PM GMT

Next day, I was back at Lydden Temple Ewell, for one last chance to see Silver Spotted Skippers this year. In glorious weather, I made my way to the western end of the site. Numbers were definitely on their way down, as you would expect, and most were past their best. But I managed to find a few good ones too, and it was lovely to see them one more time.





Plenty of other stuff was present as well, including a few fresh new Large Whites, a third generation emergence.



Chalkhill Blues were nearly gone, but there were several Adonis, ranging from fresh to tattered. Here is one of the nice ones.



Day list included, Silver Spotted Skippers, Large White, Small White, Clouded Yellow, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blues, Adonis Blues, Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown and Small Heath.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 05-Sep-19 10:29 PM GMT

More cracking shots Essex 😄 That first male is in very fine fettle 🤩🌿 Lovely flash of electric blue on the Adonis 😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 07-Sep-19 07:51 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Plenty of other stuff was present as well, including a few fresh new Large Whites, a third generation emergence

Steady on, Mark. I've only seen one **second** generation Large White this summer! 😄

[quote]Day list included, Silver Spotted Skippers, Large White, Small White, Clouded Yellow, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blues, Adonis Blues, Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown and Small Heath.

Very impressive. It's time I relocated!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Sep-19 10:42 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, the Adonis were not high in numbers, but they were high in quality!

Hi David, don't relocate just yet. No SPBF, Marsh Frits or High Browns for me!

Last Friday, we headed down to Dorset, for a few days away. Weather was a typical mixed bag, but nothing too awful. Friday itself was dull and damp, no good for butterflies, but perfect for a trip to Swanage on the excellent Swanage steam railway.



After lunch, and a look around the town, we headed back to Corfe Castle on the steam train, for a cream tea and a walk up to the castle. From here, the views are fantastic, overlooking the town and the steam trains coming and going.



An enjoyable first day.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Sep-19 10:18 PM GMT

The next day started brighter, so we headed to Osmington. High on our target list were Adonis Blues, and we soon found these. Numbers were rather lower than in some years, but there were still a few good ones around.



A few nice females were about, too.



A few Small Copper were present, near the bottom of the hill.



As will Neil F, a Clouded Yellow put in an appearance. A little battered, but still nice to see.



Another welcome, if unexpected sight, was this Peacock. The first one I've seen for several weeks.



This Comma paints an autumnal picture, as it perches on a withered dock.



Unfortunately, it clouded over again lunchtime, and the days butterflying was finished. Still, a day with Adonis Blues, buzzards and ravens can't be bad. Here is a picture of the white horse of Osmington.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 15-Sep-19 08:51 AM GMT

Great set of shots Essex – you can't beat a female Adonis for subtle beauty 😊👍 The Adonis did seem to be slightly down this year – I don;t know how well the first brood did or it could have been the very hot/dry spell we had? 😊 Hopefully it's a blip 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 15-Sep-19 09:34 PM GMT

Sounds like a great trip, Mark.

that first Adonis is electric, but I also like the castle and the steam train. Perhaps it's my age? 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Sep-19 10:09 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, yes Adonis numbers have been down, certainly in the second, late-summer generation. This I find surprising. Yes, we had the record-breaking heat, but they has been rain too—certainly this grass in my region is still green, where as it went brown last year.

Thanks David, mine too! (age). Yes, we had a good time down there.

The next day dawned fine and clear, so we were out early, to catch the Adonis Blues waking up on Ballard Down. Here too, numbers were rather low—I have seen them by the hundred here in the past—in fact numbers have been down on all the sites I have visited. There is nothing to suggest this is a permanent change. Adonis Blues are doing very well in Britain at present, and there is every reason to hope numbers will recover sooner or later.

Here on the Isle of Purbeck, many on the females have a rich suffusion of blue scales.



Of course, the males are resplendent in colour. I have seen many species of blue in Europe, but none quite matches the splendour of our very own Adonis Blues. Thanks goodness it didn't go extinct in the 1980's. These were enjoyed, as they will be my last Adonis Blues of the year.



Common Blues and Brown Argus were here also, but were faded and not worth photographing. This wasp spider was protecting her nest.



Next, week headed over to Arne. In the damp areas, I always look for Dorset Heath, a kind of heather found only here, and in Cornwall.



Also here, raft spiders can be found on the acidic pools. Raft spiders are the largest British species of spider.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Sep-19 11:50 PM GMT

We considered going up to Fontmell Down for afternoon, but the Sunday roads were very busy, and we could see quite a lot of cloud forming inland as well. So we decided to spend the rest of the day in Swanage, spending as much time as possible outside, not in the car. We had lunch on the beach, and enjoyed the folk festival which was taking place on this sunny afternoon. On a butterfly bush, several Painted Lady were seen, as well as three Red Admiral. A multitude of Small Whites were present throughout the area.



Late afternoon, we headed out, stopping briefly at Ballard Down again, adding Small Copper, Comma and Speckled Wood to the days sightings, before heading on to Cornwall for the night.



Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 16-Sep-19 07:21 PM GMT

Great reports and photos from Dorset Mark, interesting to compare with my experiences a few days earlier.

I have compared photos and your Clouded Yellow at Osmington is a different individual to the one that I saw there.

That is a nice fresh looking Peacock, one species I did not see down there.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 16-Sep-19 10:24 PM GMT

Those are cracking images of the male Adonis Essex – you managed to capture almost the whole range of blues through from the almost pastel to the pure electric on the back end 😊👍 Great to see the Raft Spider as well – they are big 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

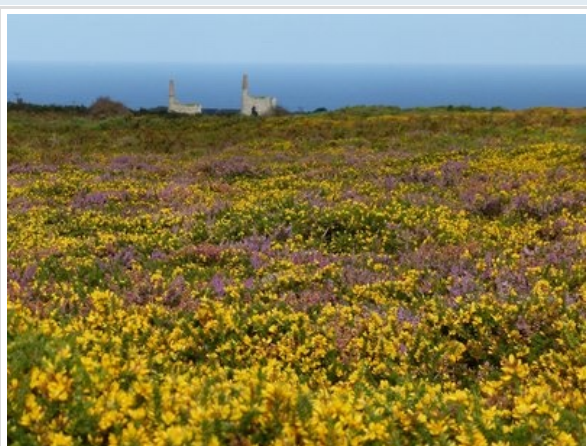
by essexbuzzard, 17-Sep-19 07:20 PM GMT

Thanks Neil, I too have been comparing pictures and notes. You're right, it was looking pretty dry at Osmington and Ballard Down, though I felt not so much as last year. Your pictures of Durlston, though, are very striking.

Cheers Wurzel. The Adonis Blues down there, though not abundant, were excellent.

Our first day in Cornwall, last Monday, was cold, windy and wet, as a cold front arrived. So we went to the Geevor Tin Mine, at Pendean.

The next day the rain had gone through, so we had a walk on the West Penwith moors, enjoying the glorious colours of the heather and western gorse. What a setting!



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 18-Sep-19 03:31 PM GMT

A nice little row of hindwing marginal spots on your 'last' Adonis, Mark. Very attractive.

Equally attractive are those images from West Penwith moors. What an absolute riot of colour.

Re: essex buzzard

by Katrina, 18-Sep-19 10:02 PM GMT

West Penwith Moors look fabulous. Very uplifting photos. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Sep-19 11:23 PM GMT

The West Penwith moors are indeed glorious, and I just had to get here on a sunny day.

With this being the only sunny day of our short trip, we then headed to perhaps the best site- Kynance Cove. I think I have sold Kynance to a few people on UKB! Common Blues were still present here.



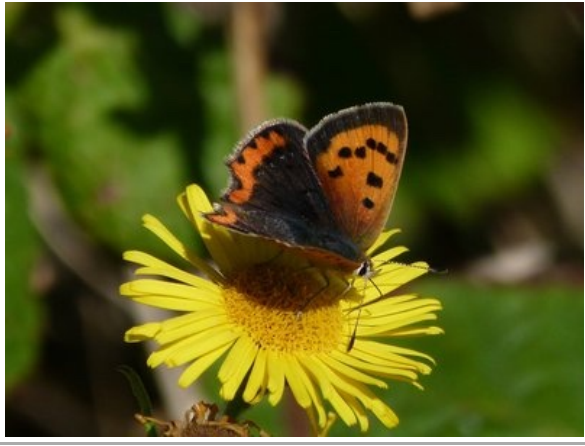
I soon started to see Clouded Yellows. A patch of flowering crucifers, in a dip just before Lizard Point, was especially favoured, with perhaps half a dozen present.



Lots of Small Whites were seen between Kynance and Lizard Point. In far lower numbers, were Large Whites.



In some years, large numbers of Small Copper can be found here in Autumn, but this year, they were few.



But this area has other treasures, not least the serpentine rock. It has floral treasures, too, and it is also home to the Autumn squill, the only place I have seen it.



More to come...

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 20-Sep-19 07:58 PM GMT

Great report Essex – lovely looking Common Blue and Cloudy 😊 The Squill is a cracking looking flower though I think I prefer the unopened buds to the actual flower 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 20-Sep-19 08:12 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

... I think I have sold Kynance to a few people on UKB!...

Yep, me included 😊 I have been there a few times now in recent years and it has become one of my favourite spots.

Great report and photos Mark. I didn't see any Clouded Yellows when I was there in early August but it seems there has been an upsurge in sightings recently.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 21-Sep-19 09:29 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

...we then headed to perhaps the best site– Kynance Cove. I think I have sold Kynance to a few people on UKB!

Yep. You've sold it to me, Mark. I could easily live in the vicinity. It's right up there in terms of UK locations as far as I'm concerned.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Sep-19 11:40 PM GMT

Well, I have heard about many sites from others on here, so if I can give something back, then great!

Cornish Heath, a kind of heather found only here, was still in flower in September, though it peaks in August.



Autumn ladies tresses is uncommon in Cornwall, but can be found at Kynance, if you know where to look.



Late afternoon, this Speckled Wood was found.



And here is the view, which I know some of you have seen before!



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Sep-19 09:19 PM GMT

The next day was cloudy,mild and damp as a warm front arrives,and we spent our last day at the Eden Project, then heading home overnight . So I'll finish off with the glorious sight of sunset at Kynance Cove the day before.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 23-Sep-19 06:53 PM GMT

Love the time lapse transition, Mark. Irrespective of the time of day, that spot is breathtaking.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 23-Sep-19 07:16 PM GMT

Great reports from Cornwall Mark 😊...I'm already thinking about returning again next year 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Sep-19 11:19 PM GMT

Thanks, yes, can't wait to get back down there!

On Sunday, I headed up to Martins Meadows, a Suffolk Wildlife Trust reserve. In the late-spring and summer, many exciting flowers bloom there, including Fritillaries and Orchids. But in September, the meadows bloom again, as the Meadow Saffron flowers. This is a Scarce, crocus-like flower of damp fields and pasture. The rather ugly, poisonous leaves emerge in April, but have withered away by high summer, and the flowers grow naked from the bulb, hence their other name, naked ladies.



Small Coppers are common here, and find the flowers attractive.



Small White, Common Blue, Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Comma, Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood and Small Heath were seen, as well as this Large White.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 25-Sep-19 01:37 PM GMT

Those naked ladies are very attractive, Mark. 😊

There are quite a few in the National Botanic Gardens of Wales, although they have been cultivated and are not growing wild. I've never seen a butterfly on one so it's interesting to know Small Coppers have a weakness for them.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Sep-19 02:46 PM GMT

Thanks David. They can apparently be found at some damp meadows in the Welsh borders and south-west Midlands, though I haven't seen them there myself.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Sep-19 09:41 PM GMT

Walls can be found at several sites in south Essex, but perhaps the most reliable are on Canvey Island. On Monday I headed there, as the third generation is now flying. The first one I saw, was this lovely female.



After a couple of fly-by's, I found this female laying eggs, a bit darker in colour than the first one. Another nice fresh adult.



Nearby, a lovely fresh male briefly landed, but was too quick for a photo. I only saw about five Walls, but I suspect there are more to come. Several Speckled Woods were found.



Broad leaf everlasting pea grow in abundance on this site, but, despite much checking, I failed to find any evidence of LTB. So it looks like a trip south will be necessary. Small White, Clouded Yellow, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Walls, Speckled Wood and Small Heath completes the butterfly sightings. Meanwhile, a pair of ravens were a nice sight. Although becoming more common in the county, these were my first Canvey Island sightings.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Sep-19 11:38 PM GMT

After, ahead of the incoming rain, there was just time for a visit to Bedfords Park. This is where Essex meets London and, being on high ground, many of the city landmarks can be seen. It is also home to good numbers of Small Coppers. The foodplants were looking a little shrivelled, this weeks deluge will have helped the sorrels regenerate.





A fresh Painted Lady put in an appearance.



Commas are very common here, and feed on both blackberries and devils bit scabious.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Sep-19 11:43 PM GMT

Opps, pressed the wrong button 😊 ! Here they are,





And lastly, here is another Speckled Wood.



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 26-Sep-19 08:13 AM GMT

Congrats for that lovely 3rd brood female Wall Brown, Mark.
Really enjoyed the Meadow Saffron too, never seen them in the wild.

Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Sep-19 07:07 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor, when I see Walls, I often think of you as I know you like them!

Keep those LTB reports coming in! 🇧🇪

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 26-Sep-19 08:04 PM GMT

Lovely set of posts recently Essex – especially like the Walls – that first female shot if gurt lush 😊🇧🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Sep-19 10:26 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. Yes, she was a belter. I hope she hasn't been washed away by all the rain!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 27-Sep-19 01:34 PM GMT

Great that you've got reliable late season Wall Browns, Mark. I'd love to take a look round my way this weekend to see if there are any here on the south Wales coast. Sadly, the weather forecast for both Saturday & Sunday is yet more storms. 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 27-Sep-19 08:18 PM GMT

I love the Wall Browns Mark 🍷 We just don't get them in Warwickshire these days, and to think that when I was growing up they were more common than Speckled Woods around here. Mind you Specklies were a rarity here in those days, we lost one species and gained another.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Sep-19 12:06 AM GMT

Hi David, yes, the weekend is not looking favourable. Saturday might be your best chance.

Hi Neil, Walls, even in Essex, are now restricted to the coast, having gone from inland sites. But at least we still have them. You're right about Speckled Woods, too. They were scarce in East Anglia until the 1990's, and even Commas weren't that common. Now both species are everywhere, a positive change for sure.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 30-Sep-19 08:03 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Hi David, yes, the weekend is not looking favourable. Saturday might be your best chance.

Afraid it was a washout, Mark. 😞 Things don't look good for the foreseeable future either. Such a shame after the earlier, settled spell during September.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-Oct-19 11:36 PM GMT

Wednesday 2 October. At last the sun had returned, so I was Sussex bound today. It was too cold for butterflies when I arrived, so I took a walk on Shoreham beach to see the lizards, which were basking on the walls here.



A short walk at nearby Mill Hill produced not a single butterfly, so it was now time to head for now famous Whitehawk mast. Here, after getting to know the site, I came across a good gathering of people, including some familiar faces! So I knew I was in the right spot. Neil had already seen a Long-tailed Blue, and eventually we re-found it, a cracking fresh male. It didn't hang about long, but I think everyone got some shots.



It was discouragingly cold on the windy hill top, so, after an hour with no sightings, apart from a Speckled Wood, we gradually departed, and I headed back to Mill Hill, choosing the more sheltered lower slope this time. This was more productive, and much warmer too! Two, possibly three Walls were present.



Several other species were seen, including a Clouded Yellow, but they were mostly showing their age. Here is one of several Meadow Browns.



Day list includes, Small White, Clouded Yellow, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood, Wall and Meadow Brown.

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 03-Oct-19 07:46 AM GMT

Well done, Mark. I would say that your journey was worthwhile!
A glorious male LTB, and a bonus female Wall Brown.

Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Oct-19 08:23 PM GMT

Definitely well worthwhile, Trevor! It was great to get about again, after all the recent rain.

Hoped I might see you yesterday, oh well, another time.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 03-Oct-19 08:36 PM GMT

That's a cracking LTB Essex, mint condish 🤤🤤🤤🤤 What your day list lacks in quantity it certainly makes up for in quality – Walls, Cloudies and LTB 🤩🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 04-Oct-19 09:06 PM GMT

Good for you, Mark. So pleased you got a result. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Oct-19 11:39 PM GMT

Thanks both, it was a great day, and nice to see so many familiar faces! Hopefully more to come, although with the weather at the moment, who knows???

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Nov-19 06:10 PM GMT

For me, this autumn has been a bit of a let down. Back in late August, eggs were laid, and the scene was set for a bumper crop of late sightings and extra broods. I imagined spending my late September and October days chasing Clouded Yellows, Long-tailed Blues, Walls and others. Perhaps I was guilty of getting a little carried away! In reality, apart from one LTB in Sussex, I have seen very little worth the mention since the last decent sunny spell in mid September.

So, with the butterfly season coming to an early end this year, thoughts turn to other things. On consequence of all the cold, wet weather this year is there is a fantastic crop of mushrooms. There are many kinds, of course, but my favourite is probably the red, poisonous fly agaric. They are easy to find at the moment.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 10-Nov-19 02:50 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

For me, this autumn has been a bit of a let down...

Agreed, Mark. It was shaping up to be something special until that awful three week long period of storms arrived in late September. 😞

I suppose we must remember that we live more than 50 degrees north in latitude, so these things must be expected.

Nice fly agaric specimens....don't fancy a mushroom omelette made with those. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Nov-19 11:50 PM GMT

Lol!

You're right, of course. Seeing butterflies all through October, and even into November in recent years, this years early end has come as a shock, though it was quite normal in the past. With it's early start, we could have a long winter in store...

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 12-Nov-19 11:24 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

...With it's early start, we could have a long winter in store...

I don't mind a bit of cold weather in all honesty, Mark. It's the rain and wind that gets me down...and it seems we have plenty of that on the menu over the next week or two, unfortunately. 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Nov-19 11:01 PM GMT

In Essex, the autumn colours are now at their peak, and are one of the few things to look forward to in November. Our autumn leaves are usually pretty bland compared to those in other countries, even in Europe. Germany, for example, receives a far more spectacular show than Britain does, despite, on the face of it, a broadly similar climate. But Europe gets slightly warmer summers, and certainly colder winters, so autumn is shorter there. It seems our mild, damp, slow autumns simply do not lend themselves to vibrant colours.

However, there are a few places where autumn colours are more reliable, and, near me, one of these places is Epping Forest.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 13-Nov-19 11:20 PM GMT

Lovely autumnal shots Essex 😊 Stourhead near me is one of those reliable places for autumn colour but it also comes down to the light and time of day. The other morning the usually dreary leaves were almost aflame in the early morning sun 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 18-Nov-19 10:26 AM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

...Our autumn leaves are usually pretty bland compared to those in other countries, even in Europe. Germany, for example, receives a far more spectacular show than Britain does, despite, on the face of it, a broadly similar climate. But Europe gets slightly warmer summers, and certainly colder winters, so autumn is shorter there. It seems our mild, damp, slow autumns simply do not lend themselves to vibrant colours.

Thanks for that, Mark. I'd never thought of it like that. I suppose you're right though – the UK has an autumn that drags on forever compared to most other countries. It starts in late August and only really finishes on the cusp of December when the leaves have finally fallen.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Nov-19 10:32 PM GMT

It's just my opinion, mind. I'm sure someone somewhere could come up with a far more scientific explanation. Of course, our wind and rain quickly blows the leaves down as well, more so than elsewhere in Europe.

As you say, Wurzel, a bit of late-autumn sunshine certainly helps!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Nov-19 11:05 PM GMT

The autumn leaves are now in decline, and it is fairly quiet on the bird front as well. So it's time to venture further afield, with a trip to north-east Norfolk.

The long, sandy beach at Horsey is popular with day trippers on warm, sunny days in summer. But, for the nature lover, it has much greater interest at this time of year, for the local grey seals gather here to have their pups. Not surprisingly, it is also very popular with people!

Seal pups are tended by their mothers for about three weeks, and gain around 2kg weight daily, due to the high fat content of the mother's milk. It is then abandoned, and it moults its fluffy white fur which takes another three weeks. The pups must then learn to swim, feed and fend for themselves. This is a tough process, and only around 40% survive their first year. However, the grey seal is doing very well at the moment, and the number on the beach increases each year.





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 25-Nov-19 11:31 PM GMT

Crickey Essex 2kg daily doesn't seem possible 🤔 And then only a 40% survival rate – nature can be astounding and harsh at the same time 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Nov-19 07:44 PM GMT

Wonderful stuff, Mark. Those seal pups are beyond cute.

I never knew there were places in the UK where you could get so close.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 29-Nov-19 07:10 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Nice shots of the seals at Horsey 😊 I have never visited at this time of year but when we were in Norfolk a couple of years ago in June for Swallowtails, we paid a visit there and saw the seals up on the beach although there were no young pups at that time of course.

I was told that Dark Green Fritillaries and Wall Browns can be found on the dunes along there but when we went we were too early for the former and too late for the latter. Lots of Small Heath and Common Blues though.

Cheers,

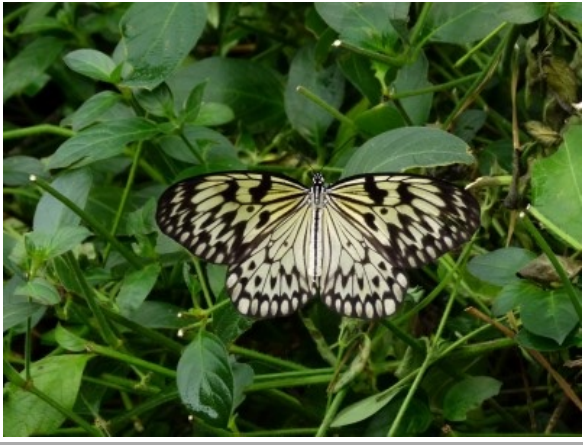
Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Dec-19 05:48 PM GMT

It's been a long time since I saw any butterflies, and it will be some time before I see any again. The autumn and early-winter have also been pretty quiet on the bird front, too. So it's time to venture a little further afield, with trip up to Stratford upon Avon.

Stratford is perhaps best known as the birthplace of Shakespeare. But it also home to the Stratford butterfly farm– just what one needs to beat the winter blues! Here are a few pictures, with more to follow. Firstly, a tree nymph.



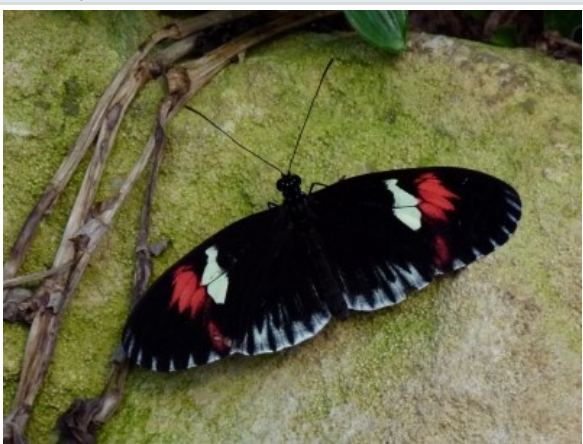
A Blue morpho.



Narrow-banded Green swallowtail with Scarlet Peacock



And a couple I'm not sure of





Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 30-Dec-19 10:27 PM GMT

Hi Buzzard. *Heliconids* are particularly difficult – especially in a butterfly house, where there might be any amount of hybridisation – because there is so much mimicry. There is often much more variation within a species across its range than between species evolved to resemble each other in a particular area. Mr SpOck has more insider knowledge than I do on this, but I would suggest your first unknown is quite probably a form of the infinitely variable *Heliconius melpomene* (possibly a hybrid), while the second one is most likely *Eueides isabella dianasa*. As ever, I'm quite happy to be contradicted!

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by downland boy, 31-Dec-19 10:00 AM GMT

Hi Essex,

Guy modestly neglected to mention that he has a very useful webpage at <http://www.guypadfield.com/butterflyhouse> which I have found helpful in identifying butterfly house species on my past trips to Wisley.

Downland boy.

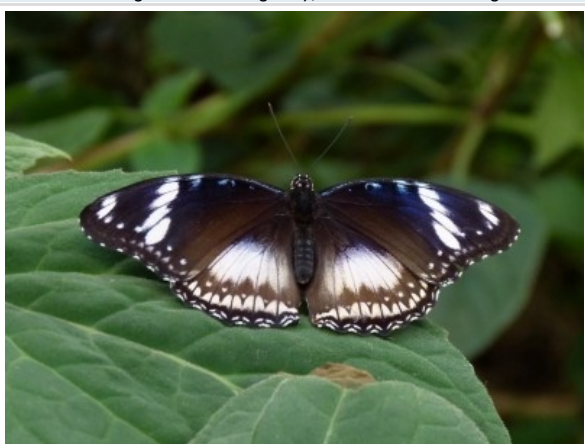
Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-Dec-19 03:25 PM GMT

Thanks Guy. I know you have had some experience with tropical house species, so your advice is much appreciated.

Thanks Downland Boy. As we all know, Guy is a gentleman of many talents! I will take a look at his site.

Some of the images are a little grainy, a result of the low light levels at this time of year. Next, we have this, which I'm not quite sure of.



This I'm quite sure of, the Mexican Blue wave.



The Gulf Fritillaries are present here.



The Flame is well named.



As is the Indian Leaf, with a Jazzy Leafwing behind,



Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 31-Dec-19 04:30 PM GMT

I think that first one is a female *Hypolimnas bolina*. It has a wide distribution and the females vary widely in appearance, mimicking various different species across their range.

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 31-Dec-19 06:20 PM GMT

Thanks for mention of my page. There are a few you've seen there, Buzzard, I haven't photographed yet. Sadly, I can't continue my regular jaunts to the Papiliorama until I return to CH - I miss them.

I agree with Buggy for the *H. bolina*. The unusual *Heliconid* I provisionally identified as a variety of *H. melpomene* is, I now think, *H. melpomene cythera*. There are several photographs of this subspecies on the web showing forms very like yours.

Guy