

## Re: philm63

by philm63, 01-Mar-19 09:48 PM GMT

Tues 27 February

After a long hiatus I managed to get out for the first time since early January. Heavy involvement in projects at work and the arrival of our third great-grandson had presented few opportunities in the short dark days of winter

It was not all bad, I had a Barn Owl twice in a week in early January, the second time actually on my local patch, a first for me there

I had to use up my remaining holidays for the year so booked off the 27th and 28th, with plans to get out on the 27th which worked well as that was the last of the glorious days we have been having lately

I had two visits in plan, to get up to the moorland edge and then to re-check my local patch, with a hope that a few days of sunshine and warmth had brought out a few butterflies to add to the expected birds

So I headed up to Whetstone Gate, out on Ilkley Moor, though sunny it was still cool in the early morning; made more noticeable by the fresh breeze that was blowing. Getting out of the car, it was very noisy with lots of Red Grouse males calling and fighting over territories. One group nearby had six cocks squabbling as they spilled from the moor onto the access road and back. A few Curlews were bubbling as well, and a single Meadow Pipit must have been an advance party for the multitudes to follow later in the year. No Lapwings on show up here though; nor any sign of the recent Short-eared Owl

Then drove back down the road to Bradup, here in a few hundred yards we have grazing fading into rough pasture fading into moorland proper. Still a few Red Grouse displaying down here, and more Curlews and a few Lapwing around. A few more Meadow Pipts but seemingly no Snipe or Redshank as yet. A Pied Wagtail was also around as were the first singing Skylarks. Moved down a few hundred metres nearer to the few houses that exist around here, hoping for some winter thrushes and perhaps Brambling; but no luck. There were some thrushes and a count of four Song Thrushes was encouraging

It was time to move on, but definitely will be back up here in late March to May for the spectacle that this moorland edge presents when seen in its full glory during a sunny spring day

Drove home and parked up, a coffee and then set out on foot to do my local patch. Just across from the house the Jackdaws are already paired up and spending increasing amounts of time near their chimney nest sites. Setting off proper it did not disappoint with a Little Owl out on the usual wall, the first Curlew and Lapwings of the year on my patch, a Kestrel having a rest in a tree and a nice selection of songbirds in the usual haunts. Walking along towards Eldwick Reservoir the pair of Oystercatchers are back, seen every year now for about 3 or 4 years. Although I have seen no evidence I believe they breed around the reservoir perimeter

The access path, which is an old pack-horse trail, and the continuation of that up past the reservoir were my best hopes for butterflies. Quite narrow with flanking drystone walls on either side, it creates a quiet and sheltered environment near ground level; if the wind is in the right direction of course. It proved to be so, the first butterfly was a Comma just above the reservoir. It was not settling anywhere for long but did settle a few times in a position long enough for me to get some shots

Heading back to the bridleway two more aristos passed in my periphery vision, one into dead bracken and the other over a wall. Neither seen well enough to be 100%, but either Small Tortoiseshells or Peacocks

After arriving home I had two (or the same one twice) Small Tortoiseshells in the back garden within 45 minutes. And later in the afternoon another one over near my Grand-daughter's place

I think that counts as one of the best shows I have had this early in the year, especially considering the latitude and altitude here. Given the expected weather change to come it may be a while before I see those numbers again

Phil







**Re: philm63**

by Wurzel, 02-Mar-19 09:52 PM GMT

Good to see you back Phil and good to see you're in the butterflies 😊😊 Great shots particularly the Red Grouse 🇹🇹 and the always angry Little Owl 😊  
Hopefully things will settle down again and spring can get back to springing 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: philm63**

by David M, 06-Mar-19 08:40 PM GMT

What a way to break your hiatus, Phil! Early spring butterflies and a selection of beautiful birds, of which the Little Owl is undoubtedly the star.

**Re: philm63**

by philm63, 07-Jun-19 09:22 AM GMT

Catch-up

After the good weather in late February, it all went downhill for a few weeks; with cold and dull conditions. We then had an upturn with better weather alternating with colder spells. It is currently holding as decent, with some nice sunny spells at times, but there is still a lot of time when the weather is overcast and cooler than I would like

The butterflies disappeared after the few February showings and it was April before I started seeing anything of interest. Sightings of the odd Peacock, Speckled Wood and Small Tortoiseshell, followed by a good showing of Orange Tips and the first whites. As April progressed to May, I was visiting Glovershaw a few times and we had a nice assemblage of Green Hairstreaks on the moorland edge there. It turned out to hold a much larger population than I had expected. Orange Tips had a good year locally as well, with 10 recorded on one trip around my local patch, but they were not being photogenic this year

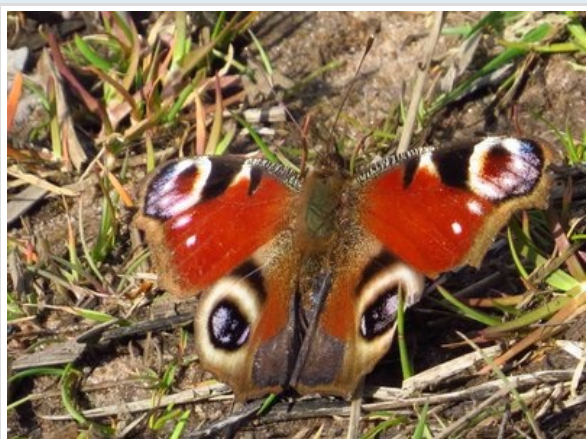
Spring is not really a butterfly heavy period up here, and things only start to improve around mid to late June with the emergence of Large Skipper, followed by Ringlet and Meadow Brown. But overall it has not been too bad, with some good numbers during the warmer spells

This Spring I think the Lapwing numbers are down at all the local sites; but visiting Redshank and Common Sandpipers on my local patch were a compensation. I also saw my first Sand Martins on the patch. A few trips around locally in late April and into May brought the first warblers of the year and a good collection of various waders on the moorland edges, especially Golden Plover this year; a species I have in the past tended to miss.

Stonechats are back on their breeding spots, and Wheatears have been showing at a few sites. Other birds of the Moorland edge such as Pied Wagtail and Reed Bunting have also been evident. An evening trip to a local site also produced some nice views of Barn Owl

Now let us see what the rest of the year brings

Phil







A selection of images from the moorland edges this Spring



*Wren singing in early Spring*



*Redshank in breeding plumage*



*Willow Warbler*



*A much darker Willow Warbler*



*Male Pied Wagtail*



*Meadow Pipit*



*Breeding plumaged Golden Plover*



*Female Wheatear*





*Male Whitethroat*



*Male Stonechat*



*Male Reed Bunting*

**Re: philm63**

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-19 09:42 AM GMT

Cracking bird shots Phil 😊 The butterfly ones are none too shabby either 😊 Especially like the Greenstreak giving a tantalising glimpse of the top side fore wing and the third Peacock down with its two tone hind wing margins 😊🇮🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: philm63**

by David M, 07-Jun-19 02:44 PM GMT

Those are exceptional bird images, Phil. I see many of these species but only fleetingly as they zoom past me.

Nice to know what they look like close up.

**Re: philm63**

by philm63, 10-Jun-19 09:53 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel. It is very quiet on the butterfly front here at the moment  
Cheers David. The walls surrounding the fields and the posts on the moors always seem to attract some species, allowing a closer approach. I have just added another camera to my collection this weekend and tried it out yesterday; it will allow me to take shots at an greater range but with similar results

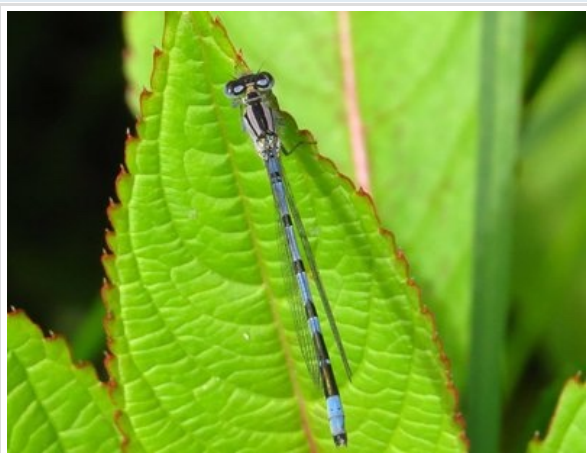
Late May and early June saw a few warm spells but generally, it seemed to be overcast and wet  
On my trips out, I have been limited to only a few butterflies showing, but I am hoping things will improve soon. Luckily, another Holly Blue decided to do the local garden circuit like last year and I got some shots on the second day of attempting when it perched a bit lower down near my front porch



The first dragonflies have started showing so summer is starting proper now here- a trip to Knotford Nook gave me my first three damselflies of the year, and a trip to Bingley Bog North added a dragonfly proper in the shape of Broad-bodied Chaser. The Chasers appear to be recently emerged with some developing the blue abdomen others still in immature colours



*Large Red Damselfly*



*Common Blue Damselfly*



*Banded Demoiselle*

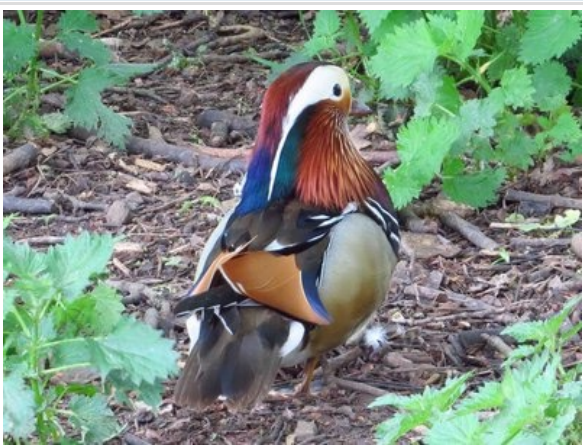


*Immature male Broad-bodied Chaser*



*Male Broad-bodied Chaser acquiring its blue abdomen*

I normally make a trip up into Upper Wharfedale in May to add a few specialist species, and Strid Woods on the Bolton Abbey Estate is a wonderful site. Only managed one of the three target species this year with Pied Flycatcher, but I had a marvellous day with some lovely birds



*Male Mandarin Duck, breeds at this site*



*Female Pied Flycatcher with food for its young*



*Sand Martin*



*Common Sandpiper*

Breeding is in full spate locally with some birds actively feeding their young and in other cases the young have already fledged and are showing well in some places. I had a marvellous encounter with a family of Blackcaps at Bingley Bog North resulting in the image below of one of the two juveniles starting to make its way in the world



*Female Goosander with part of her brood of 7 ducklings*



*Recently fledged Blackcap*



*Meadow Pipit carrying food back to the nest*



*Juvenile Robin*

Hoping to see the first of the next butterfly emergence soon, but there does not seem to be any really good weather forecast here over the next few

weeks

Phil

**Re: philm63**

by Pauline, 10-Jun-19 09:59 AM GMT

Phil I absolutely adore your bird photography – it is an area I struggle with and your images are a delight to view.

**Re: philm63**

by David M, 10-Jun-19 11:08 PM GMT

Quite an eclectic mix there, Phil. Whilst I enjoy any female Holly Blue low enough to capture on film, that image is eclipsed by many of your other shots, especially those goosander chicks, which are positively adorable!

**Re: philm63**

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-19 09:31 AM GMT

So many lovely Bird shots and lots of variety some I've never seen 😊 Goldie 😊

**Re: philm63**

by philm63, 11-Jun-19 07:13 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline, I really appreciate the kind comments. Now if I could get my butterfly images to be 50% as good as yours I'd be very happy

Cheers David. The Goosanders are lovely birds, about 30m from the birds in the shot were another family group this time a female with 11 ducklings. They were showing one of the comical traits of these birds; like Grebes the young try to cadge a lift on their parents back, as shown in the image below of the other group. Personally my favourite is the Blackcap juvenile, so cute!!!!



Cheers Goldie, glad you like them

Phil

**Re: philm63**

by David M, 13-Jun-19 05:18 PM GMT

Fabulous, Phil. That's made my day!! 😊

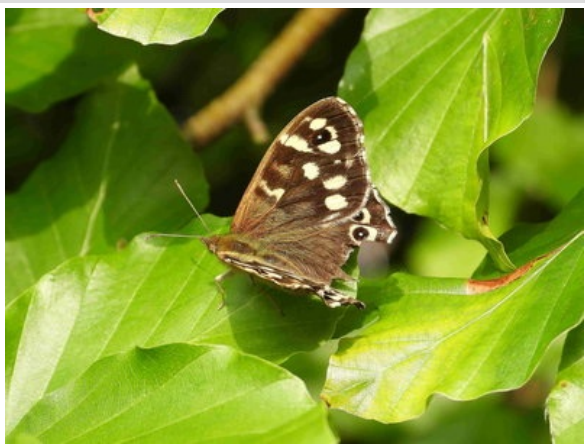
**Re: philm63**

by philm63, 25-Jun-19 11:27 AM GMT

Where has the summer gone, it has been dismal up here; with only the odd nice day. However, in the last week the butterflies have started putting in an appearance. Speckled Woods are doing well, I had at least ten during a short walk yesterday evening. Fresh Small Tortoiseshells have started showing, the first Red Admiral of the year went through the garden yesterday and I have seen two worn, but nice, Painted Lady in the past four days. For a while I was restricted to the odd Green-veined or Small White. I am still waiting for the first skippers, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Wall. Next chance I get to go out I will head to lower ground and may have more luck there, the last few trips have all been on the moorland edge

I have spent the last few trips getting used to the new camera, it requires a different handling method than my previous one; especially with macro work. So far I have been very pleased with the results, some of which are shown below. I am still debating whether to continue with a tripod or move onto hand-held. The camera weight makes the tripod unbalanced for carrying on my shoulder, but I would lose too many photo opportunities if I carry it any other way

Phil









### Re: philm63

by David M, 26-Jun-19 06:40 PM GMT

philm63 wrote:

Where has the summer gone, it has been dismal up here; with only the odd nice day....

Same here in south Wales, Phil, although the next few days are supposed to be glorious. Here's hoping.

### Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-19 01:52 PM GMT

I know what you mean Phil - I'm still calling it Flaming June but because I'm tempted to light the woodburner again and not because of glorious sunny days 😊 That shot of the Goosander ducklings burying their mother is brilliant 😊 Mind you it feels odd not calling them Goslings because of the 'Goose' part of their name 😊 The new camera is definitely producing the goods - cracking shots all round 😊 Fingers crossed the weather picks up a little 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: philm63

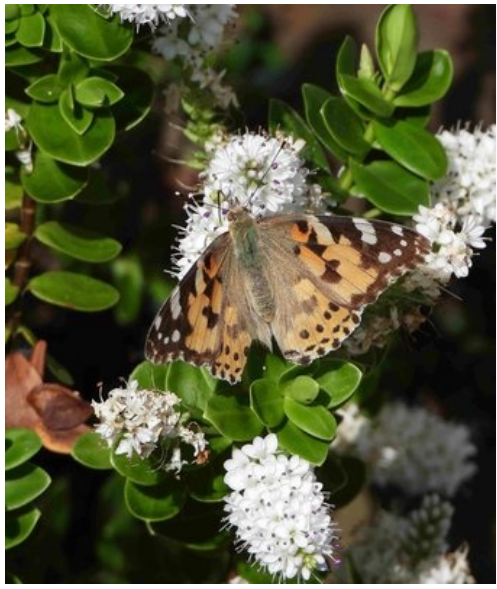
by philm63, 09-Jul-19 08:26 AM GMT

Cheers Dave, Wurzel

Weather wise we have had a bit of an improvement but then it has gone downhill again. Even the longish dry spell was not particularly bright, and (as always) the best days were when I was at work. Having said that I managed to get out a few times and the number of butterfly species about is on the uptake

Small Tortoiseshell is steady with a few each trip, the occasional Red Admiral as well; but no Peacock or Comma at the moment. The star here is Painted Lady, I have probably had more in ten days than in the previous ten years, most were worm but still a pleasure. Hopefully this is a sign of a good spell of fresh individuals later in the summer







Meadow Brown is starting to appear more regular and Ringlets are now frequent in the usual sites. I had a bright day on Saturday and was out and seeing Small Heath everywhere on a local site, got a phone call and then had to head home after only about 30 minutes. I returned the next day but it was overcast and the Small Heaths were not showing, except for a bright 10 minutes when I clocked 5 in about 15 metres. Still to see a Wall or a Gatekeeper this year







I have had my first Small Skipper, even on the hand, but no more since. Large Skipper seen at two places so far, but no real numbers as yet



I have also had my first Small Copper, it was within 20 metres of the first Small Skipper, but again no more since



The occasional white still showing

Other images

Nice to get a chance to take a portrait of a full Coot, this one was at Yeadon Tarn

On the same day, I shot this female Mandarin Duck. They breed at a few spots along the rivers here. She had four ducklings in tow and one is seen in the image

A Carrion Crow looking quite magisterial, I really liked this image taken on Pennythorn Hill on Saturday

When I visited the Strid back in May I failed to see Redstart, so it was nice on Sunday to see a few juveniles moving through the area



*Coot*

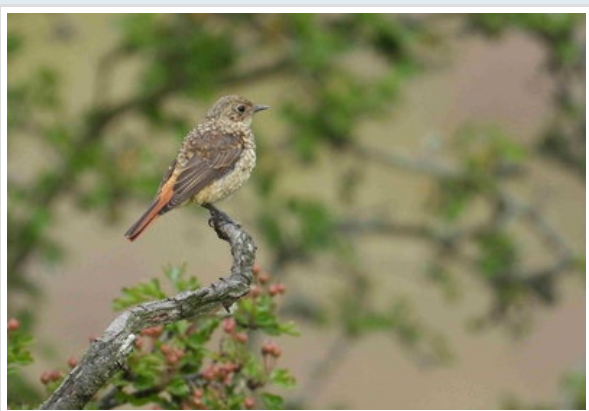


*Mandarin Duck*





*Carrion Crow*



*juvenile Redstart*

Phil

**Re: philm63**

by Goldie M, 09-Jul-19 08:34 AM GMT

Hi! Phil, you've certainly got better shots than I have of the Meadow Brown 🐛 Every time I try to get a shot they bury themselves in the long grass 😞  
Goldie 😊

**Re: philm63**

by David M, 09-Jul-19 03:11 PM GMT

Shame the weather's been a bit grim for you, Phil; hopefully there's still some warm, sunny stuff to come.

I really like your fresh Small Heath above, and the Small Skipper shot is perfection! 😊

**Re: philm63**

by Old Wolf, 09-Jul-19 04:04 PM GMT

Hello Philm63,

I am catching up on diaries. I am loving the photos of all the birds in your area, especially the owls. Such a large selection you have bagged so far. I look forward to seeing what you come up with next 😊

**Re: philm63**

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-19 10:21 PM GMT

Cracking shots Phil – good to hear about the good numbers of Small Torts and Small Heaths 😊 Also great to see the bird shots– especially the like the juvenile Redstart 😊🐛

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: philm63**

by philm63, 11-Jul-19 11:23 AM GMT

Goldie. I find that is the case with Ringlets for me, especially when they have recently emerged. Trying to get angles through all the grass stems is awkward at times

Dave M. Cheers

Old Wolf. I also have a soft spot for owls. It is high on my list to get some decent shots of local Short-eared and Barn Owls at the first opportunity Wurzel – Cheers. I really enjoyed the 2 or 3 juvenile Redstarts as I wasn't expecting them at that time and place. Luckily one or more posed nicely for the shots I got

Phil

## Re: philm63

by philm63, 21-Nov-19 09:56 AM GMT

Part 1

Despite all my well-intentioned plans the year did not pan-out as I had hoped, too many conflicting family v work demands, but enjoyable none the less This is a catch-up since early July. We did eventually have some decent weather, but not as good as 2018 was. It always seemed to deteriorate when I got to the weekend and could get out for longer, but did manage to put in some summer evening walks to make up for lost time

Aristos

By far the most obvious thing locally was the Painted Lady numbers, better than 2009 I think. Most walks produced good numbers, and they frequented the buddleia in the garden on most days. The difference between here and lower ground was evident when I took my great grandsons to Flamingo Land in August; I counted 50 there without even trying. The last one seen by me locally was in early October

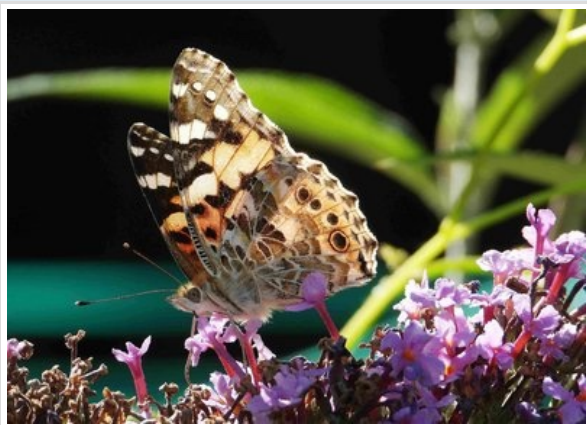
Like 2018 Red Admiral had a good late summer. The buddleia in the garden stayed in bloom till well into October and I had a few most days till the middle of that month

However, both Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell started the summer well but soon sightings tailed off. I think it was one of my worst years for Peacock sightings

Comma is irregular here at the best of times, so I would say it was a poor to moderate year

The image with a Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Comma on the same bush is from the visit to Flamingo Land, where all the aristos were about in good numbers

All of the above results could well have been factored by the reduced number of outings , the weather and the choice of where I went; but the garden sightings were also down and I think that was a reasonable indicator numbers were lower than expected















## Re: philm63

by philm63, 21-Nov-19 10:02 AM GMT

Part 2

Browns

Ringlets had a good season and showed well during the flight period, however Meadow Brown numbers were definitely down in places I expected them I only managed to get out a few times during The Wall period, but the numbers seemed stable in the expected places

Speckled Wood, certainly from my perspective, did not do well. Odd singles on days I expected good numbers, and the first year I have not had one in the garden for years













#### Blues and Coppers

I am limited to Holly Blue locally and it was an average year, 2018 had spoilt me I think

Small Copper did not feature too well either, but the best periods usually for me to see them were times I could not get out





#### Whites

Was this a backlash from 2018, because the numbers of both the Large and Small White locally were very poor? Green-veined White did a bit better but still down on the past few years





**Re: philm63**

by philm63, 21-Nov-19 10:10 AM GMT

Part 3

Skippers

Another mixed bag with on the whole I suppose average numbers. Again I was not out at the best time locally, but did catch the start and end of the flight season





#### Fritillaries

The highlight of the year, and certainly not something I expected to talk about. I was out in the garden on the 8 August and shooting some aristos on the buddleia when an unusual butterfly landed on the buddleia, I managed to get two shots before it took off, not to be seen again. Initially I had no idea what I had seen, could not wait to download the shots. Looking through my various guides I am sure it was a Dark Green Fritillary, unless someone can point me at another choice. This was my first fritillary ever and was totally unexpected. After rooting about on the internet I can see they have appeared on the borders of Leeds but could find no references to them being seen recently in the Bradford area. Had I gone out 10 minutes later I would never have known they could occur locally



Other images

Have included a selection of local bird shots from the period



*Cormorant in Myrtle Park*



*Study of a Dunnock*





*Juvenile Goldfinch*



*Greenfinch*



*Study of a Grey Heron*



*Local Little Owl*



*Male Blackcap*



*Late Meadow Pipit on the moors*



*Nuthatch*



*Spotted Flycatcher on passage*



*Swallow*



*Whinchat on passage*



*Red Grouse*

Phil

**Re: philm63**

by Wurzel, 21-Nov-19 10:20 PM GMT

So much stuff Phil it's hard to know where to begin 😊😄 Interesting assessment of the numbers – particularly the Small Torts and cracking photos – Spotted Fly, Red Grouse, Whinchat from the birds and the Small Coppers and mixed bag of Aristos caught my eye. As for the Frit – it must be greta to add DGF to your garden list 🐛🐛🐛🐛

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: philm63**

by David M, 23-Nov-19 01:19 PM GMT

What a riot of colour in those sequences, Phil! Thanks for sharing. Of the butterfly images the one of the Small Copper on the creeping thistle stands out, whereas amongst the birds it has to be the Cormorant standing very incongruously on a tree branch. 😊

**Re: philm63**

by philm63, 24-Nov-19 07:17 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, Dave

I would love to know where the DGF came from. is there a small colony around here somewhere, was it a release, did it hitch a lift on a passing vehicle. It was so unexpected, and if not seen that day I would never have looked for that species locally

Phil

**Re: philm63**

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

Interesting report, if slightly different from my own, more southern observations. Peacocks , Small Tortoiseshell and Small White did well here, but Large Whites were well down, and Painted Lady, though common, were not in the same league as 2009.

Fascinating stuff!

**Re: philm63**

by philm63, 27-Nov-19 10:55 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments essexbuzzard

We seem to buck the trend up here with both Small Tortoiseshell and Wall doing well when they were fading in numbers elsewhere. Some compensation for the much reduced number of species on offer. It will be interesting to see if the reductions for some species this summer are reversed next year. A number of the better sites locally for Small Copper and skippers have now gone under development, and a new housing development down in the valley has got the go-ahead despite a lot of local opposition. When that starts a large area of fields next to the canal will disappear entirely

Phil

**Re: philm63**

by essexbuzzard, 27-Nov-19 07:11 PM GMT

An all too familiar story, Phil. Where I live, the pressure for development land is immense. Apart from nature reserves, almost nowhere is safe.

**Re: philm63**

by David M, 29-Nov-19 11:06 PM GMT

**philm63 wrote:**

..A number of the better sites locally for Small Copper and skippers have now gone under development, and a new housing development down in the valley has got the go-ahead despite a lot of local opposition. When that starts a large area of fields next to the canal will disappear entirely

That's disappointing to know, Phil. For all these 'pledges' by the politicians, nothing seems to stop the encroachment of human dwellings on green space. 😞