

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 01-Jan-19 08:36 PM GMT

Have a great 2019 Bugboy 😊 Hope things go well with the op and you'll soon be up and about 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 02-Jan-19 04:07 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

Well this will obviously be my last post for the year, but my last post for several weeks as far as new photo's are concerned since I shall be welcoming the new year with a hernia operation (this Thursday). Still better to be immobile now rather mid butterfly season eh...

Yes, I suppose every cloud has a silver lining, BB. Better to have it midwinter than mid Orange Tip season!!

I wish you a speedy recuperation and hope you will be back in action for the March emergence.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 04-Jan-19 12:42 PM GMT

Thanks for the kind comments guys, the op went well by all accounts and I'm currently laid up in bed. I should be able to get getting out and about again with my camera in about 6 weeks or so 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 04-Jan-19 07:13 PM GMT

Good to hear Bugboy – looks like you timed it perfectly then, just in time maybe for the first flourish of Small Torts 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Paul Harfield, 05-Jan-19 09:30 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy

Glad all went well with your op 😊. Hopefully you will be back in action before the new season gets underway. Whilst you are laid up you will have plenty of time to plan a new 'Mission' for your coming butterfly year 😊.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 08-Jan-19 11:26 PM GMT

Glad to hear the op was a success, BB, and that you are on the mend.

All the best.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 09-Jan-19 03:52 PM GMT

All the best for the New Year BB, glad to hear you'll be fit and raring to go for Spring 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 11-Jan-19 06:39 PM GMT

Great bird shots BB. Glad the op went well. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jan-19 07:06 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy,

Just caught up with your diary and your op, glad it all went well and you should be up and about in time for the new season.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 31-Jan-19 10:14 PM GMT

Thank you everyone. I'm feeling much better now. Only a few more weeks of 'light duties' and I should be able to get back my normal traipsing over hills and valleys at every possible moment 😊

January 2019

1st January

As most of you will be aware, this month was going to be even more quiet than normal for me, but I did manage a couple of outings. On new years day, just a few days before my op, I popped out to the local patch, once again it was mostly Wagtails of the Pied variety but there were a few pigeons and doves around this time. Still no sign of any of the winter thrushes though.



After that it was a rather frustrating few weeks, being cooped up inside with just the occasional feral pigeon flying past the window, but after three week's I'd managed to gain the ability to walk well enough to pop out again locally for a few hours.

22nd January

was a beautiful sunny day with barely a breath of wind but despite this I saw no sign of any Red Admirals or awakened hibernators. The local birdlife was however out and about, making the most of the pleasant winter's day, and at last some winter Thrushes had finally turned up.



27th January

The day before my return to work from my sick leave and another few hours walk locally. The weather wasn't quite as nice as the previous outing, blustery, cloudy and later hail but there was still enough about to point the camera at. Again doves and thrushes provided the most accommodating targets but at least it was different species to 5 days previously.



30th January

An icy night and clear blue sky in the morning tempted me back out again, this time to Barnes Wetland Centre (I'm still not ready to go gallivanting off on one of my all dayers in the middle of the countryside). Bitterns were once again on show, two of them visible but too far away to bother with photos today. Elsewhere various waterfowl congregated in the ice free areas or huddled against the south facing side of islands making the most of the weak winter sun.



On land the birds without webbed feet had similar ideas.



If I were a twitcher the best spot of the day would go to a Water Pipit but my personal favourites were the Lapwings who positively glowed in the sun



I did notice several Chaffinches with abnormal growths on the legs and feet but this female is the worst case I've ever seen in the flesh. It's called papilloma and is caused by the same group of viruses that cause warts in humans (although I should point out you can't catch warts from these infected birds or vice versa, the viruses are quite specific to their hosts). Mild cases are apparently not fatal but severe cases like this one can lead to secondary infections as well as causing the affected bird general difficulty in getting around. This bird was clearly in some discomfort as it moved around and struggled to perch on anything other than the flat ground. It's spread by close proximity to infected birds so if you have garden feeders make sure you have a regular cleaning protocol in place to to mitigate the spread of this and other diseases between the visitors.



Overall, I'd say this winter has been pretty decent so far, cold enough to keep butterflies asleep and to thin out all those nasties. With no hidden surprises in the coming months we may have another good year on our way, as long as last years drought hasn't had too much of a lasting effect.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 31-Jan-19 11:32 PM GMT

Fingers crossed it's all plain sailing from now to the the start of the season Bugboy 😊 Those are great shots and the best find has to be the Water Pipit 🐦🐦

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 01-Feb-19 08:35 PM GMT

That's a beautifully presented reflection on the first month of 2019, BB. Shame about the plight of the female Chaffinch though. I wasn't aware of this condition wild birds can suffer from.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 24-Feb-19 10:38 PM GMT

February 2019 part 1

9th February

I decided to stay relatively local (although a place I've not explored for a few years), the lea valley Country Park near Cheshunt. Actually part of a larger collection of parkland and open spaces of which my local patches, Tottenham and Walthamstow Marshes, are at the southern end of. The warm spell was still a thing of rumour and hearsay so no butterflies were about but there were plenty of birds around to compensate. I haven't seen Siskin locally for a couple of years so the noisy flock near the station was a welcome surprise and they weren't too bothered by my presence either 😊 .



Out on the water bodies the usual suspects lurked. Various Ducks and Gulls, Coot and Cormorant mingled with some handsome Great Crested Grebe's who were just finishing putting on their flamboyant head plumage ready for courtship.



For some reason, one particular grebe took a dislike to a Coot. I think the Coot was very lucky to get away with just a few ruffled feathers and perhaps a minor loss of dignity, the Grebe certainly meant business 😬!



I had a couple of Muntjac encounters and I just managed to grab a few shots of the second fleeing, although the results have been cropped and processed to within an inch of their lives!



Near the end of my walk I came across more bad-tempered birds, this time a Black-headed Gull had it in for a Tufted Duck for no particular reason 😊 .



My final target for the day was a pair of Goldcrest, no clear shots but I do quite like this one of it peering back at me through the Pine needles.



13th February

A bit of sun tempted me out for a few hours on Walthamstow Marshes today. This was the first day of the promised warm spell, probably too early to stumble across an awakened butterfly but that didn't stop me slowing down at every secluded sun trap that normally comes up trumps in my first local butterflying trips. In the end though I had to settle for birds once again but another Goldcrest put on a good show for me 😊 .





17th February

Sods law had struck. The rumoured unseasonably extended warm spell arrived just in time to coincide with my usual fortnightly 6 day stretch at work. With sightings coming in thick and fast it there was nothing for it than to sacrifice my lunch break and go looking along my transect route. 20 minutes browsing I finally came up trumps 😊. It came as absolutely no surprise to find a Comma was my first butterfly of the year. I rarely see Peacock or Small Tortoiseshell here but there is a very healthy population of Comma. This one sat patiently, even expelling some waste, whilst I crept around it to get the best angle.



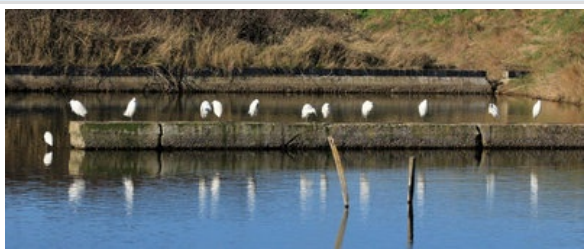
After a few minutes it fluttered off into the sun but buoyed with getting an early sighting I carried on. I found nothing more here so I moved onto my second transect route around the car park. This is a little more exposed to the breeze but just as I was about to give up, I noticed movement at my feet. A Red Admiral was busy soaking up the rays and like the Comma, it allowed close inspection.



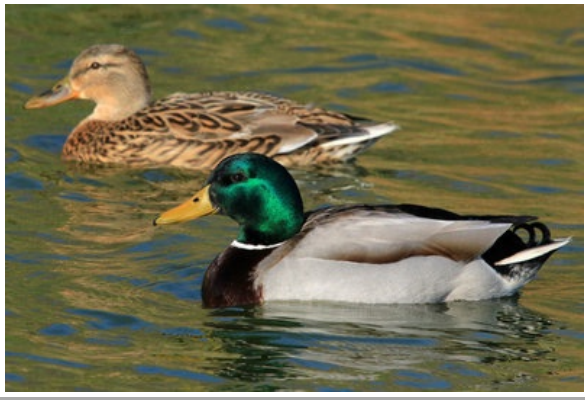
20th February

The warm weather was still with me on my midweek day off so I decided to go for a longer jaunt into Essex. Hadleigh Country Park and Two Tree Island were the destination, a good spot for Comma and Peacock. Also the high tide had finally moved round to peak at a respectable time on my day off, meaning I had a decent back up plan in the absence of any butterflies. It was a good plan too, despite the decent amount of sun there was a chilly breeze blowing which kept a lid on temperatures here so no sign of any butterflies. The birds on the other hand put on an excellent show and made for ample compensation 😊.

Little Egret were out in force:



They maybe common as muck but when a Mallard drake catches the sun, he is still a stunning looking bird!



The waders (in this case mostly Knot and Dunlin with a dash of Grey Plover) put on a spiffing show of their murmuring talents, especially when a Sparrowhawk put in a brief appearance, an incredible sight one can never get tire from watching.



Curlew preferred to stay out on the salt marsh, perching on tufts of vegetation poking out above the high tide whilst the wintering Brent Geese fed close into shore (that's Leigh-on-sea in the background).



Meanwhile another 4 birds had joined the growing gang of Little Egret.



With the warm weather set to stay for at least another week, my weekend off was looking rather promising... 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 25-Feb-19 10:28 PM GMT

Great sequence of shots Bugboy 😊 Beautiful bright Siskin 😊 I remember reading a book years ago about someone who rowed up the Thames to find the source (Boogie Up the River but I can't remember the author) and he classified the Grebe as the Ninja of the water ways, the bad boys that would take on Swans for fun - so it could be that the Coot looked at the Grebe 'funny like' 😊 either that or the males are so pumped full of testosterone that they're getting a bit lairy 😊😊 Good to see you've got into the butterflies too - let's hope it keeps going 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 26-Feb-19 05:47 PM GMT

Good to see you're up and running butterfly-wise, BB. Mind you, you've been getting by just fine with your bird sightings, of which the siskin is my personal favourite.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Feb-19 10:26 PM GMT

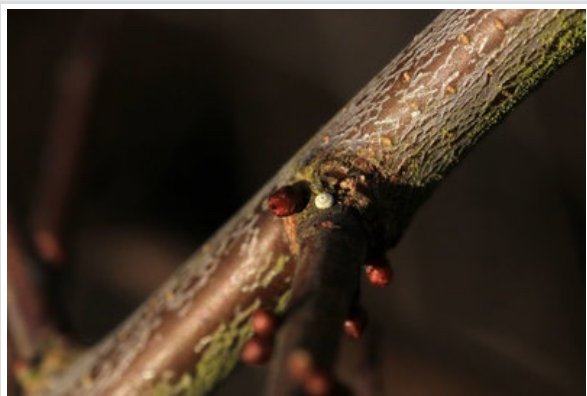
Thanks Wurzel, I'm not sure what the Coot did, although they aren't the most innocent and peaceful of birds themselves so perhaps the Grebe was just holding a grudge 😊

Thanks David, yes I'm very pleased with that Siskin shot, I wish they spent the summer down here too, they're even brighter in their breeding get up 😊

February 2019 part 2

23rd February

I finally felt up to an all day trip outside of London, and Bookham seemed like the obvious choice. With all this silly warm weather around I'd cleared all other plans for the weekend and set out to start the butterfly chasing in earnest. The day started rather grey with mist and fog for the whole journey but thankfully this lifted and burned off when I arrived at the site late morning. Obviously, there was still a bit of a nip in the air whilst the sun got to work so I set about looking for eggs, only managing to locate 3 Brown Hairstreak eggs. The two Purple Hairstreak eggs near one of the car parks I'd found last year couldn't be located, their marker having fallen off in my absence.



I got a bit of a shock when I got to Banks Common. The hedge where Millerd and I find most of our Brown Hairstreaks in late summer had been almost entirely grubbed up 😊. A bit further along I also discovered the Common was now the proud owner of a large pond. I can only surmise the hedge was sacrificed to give access to the heavy machinery that made the pond. Hopefully the hedge will be allowed to grow back but it remains to be seen how the field is to be managed, the newly installed fence line would suggest livestock of some kind.



The grubbed up hedge would have completely hidden the newly installed fence

Birds were plentiful, like the butterflies they seemed to be intent on getting a head start with lots of pairs flitting around and marking out territories. I watched a pair of Long-tailed Tit busy nest building, already halfway to completing their remarkable dome of feathers and cobwebs.



Finally though I came across the first of the real targets for the day and species number three for the year, my first Brimstone of the year quietly warming up.



Half an hour later I had 4 of them flying around the little sheltered sun trap, all males and already wasting no time as they fluttered around searching out still sleeping females. That early find was the last time I saw any of them settled, I saw about a dozen or so in the end but the sight of male Brimstones flying around at the tail end of winter will always remain one of the highlights of the year for me 😊.



I was also rather pleased when a Marsh Tit posed for me, giving me the chance for the best shots I've ever got of one of them 😊.



24th February

I stayed local on the Sunday, the morning on Walthamstow Marshes before moving on to Tottenham Marshes for the afternoon. There was no mist or fog today so things warmed up much quicker but even so I was to come away from the morning session with just one butterfly. On the plus it was a new species for the year, a Small Tortoiseshell, and a particularly fine looking example to boot.



As usual the birds kept me occupied in the absence of the butterflies.

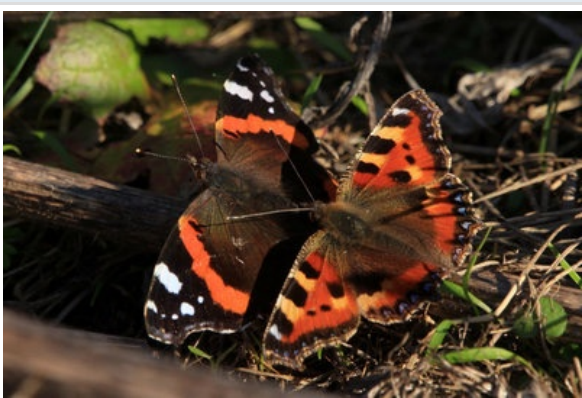


The afternoon at Tottenham Marshes was significantly more successful on two counts, a pleasant combination of more butterflies and less people. I made a bee line for the sheltered sun traps that always come up trumps at either end of the season. The first one was deserted but halfway along the second a Comma flew up from my feet. He circled me a couple of times before settling back on the ground, a little tatty but no less a welcome sight. In this patch I totalled 4 Comma (but no Peacock who they usually share this patch with).





Exploring further afield, a larger open area that Small Tortoiseshells prefer I quickly came across a Red Admiral and from its behaviour it looked to be a female looking to lay. I managed a few snaps before she vanished, only to return a few minutes later with something slightly smaller in tow. A Small Tortoiseshell was trying his luck and even more interestingly, the Red Admiral didn't seem overly bothered and even looked as though it was encouraging her confused and desperate suiter... it must have been a long lonely winter for the both of them 😊! In the end the Red Admiral escaped, or rather the Tortoiseshell got lost in the undergrowth trying to keep track of her.





I finished the afternoon with a return visit to the Commas who were all still enjoying the sun

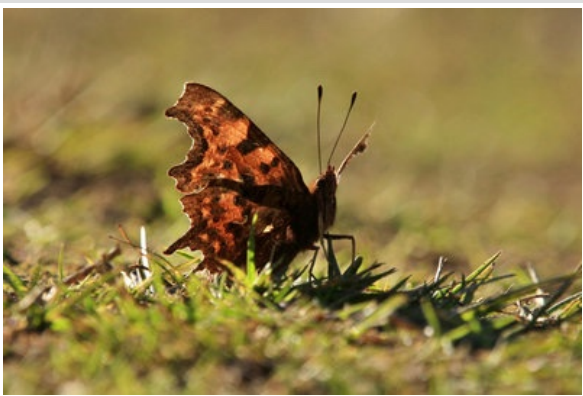


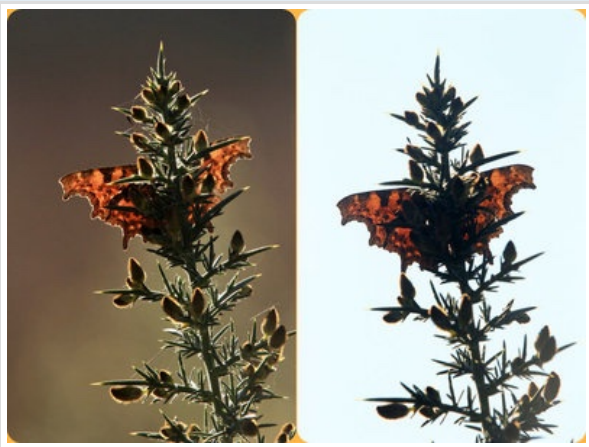
26th February

The day before I'd done another lunch time walk at work, finding a Comma and a Brimstone, neither interested in sitting still but I did nearly step on a Robin doing a bit of sunbathing. I got a look of disdain as though I was being told to watch where I was bloody walking next time!



Anyway Tuesday was my half day so I decided to have a wander round Epping Forest, usually a place crawling with Peacock and Comma early in the season. The train journey there was noteworthy when an unidentified White (most likely a Small) was seen fluttering around on the other side of the tracks at one of the stations, bringing my species list for the year to 6 (I'd had a very brief encounter with a Peacock at work that morning). Epping Forest was however rather desolate and it took around 2 hours before I caught sight of a butterfly. It was another Peacock but it didn't settle in my presence, instead a Comma appeared and took over his spot and proceeded to pose like a pro, well who was I to say no to such a willing subject!





That was it for the day so I went home for an early night ready for my first trip of the season into deepest Sussex the next day 😊.

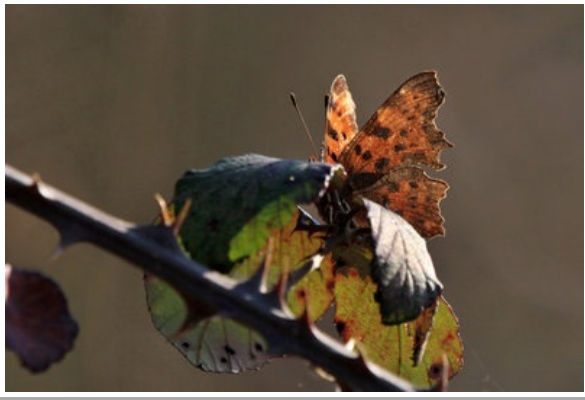
27th February

I'd been chatting to Millerd the weekend before and ended up convincing myself that a trip down to North Stoke would be worth a punt. Not only because of the very slim chance of increasing my yearly tally with another hibernating Nyphalid but also of the reports I'd seen of huge numbers of Brimstone, David Cooks total of 76 at the weekend must be verging on pestilence levels, the local Buckthorns must be petrified 😊. I like to make the most of my longer trips out so I got there quite early, about 10ish, put on my wellies, and went off to wade through the mud. The forecast had predicted cooler temperatures today but this sites steep bank had been catching the sun for a couple of hours already and it felt much warmer than what the apps were saying. Despite the warmth though the sun was obviously just not high enough in the sky to tempt anything out, so once again it was time to point my camera at the local birdlife.



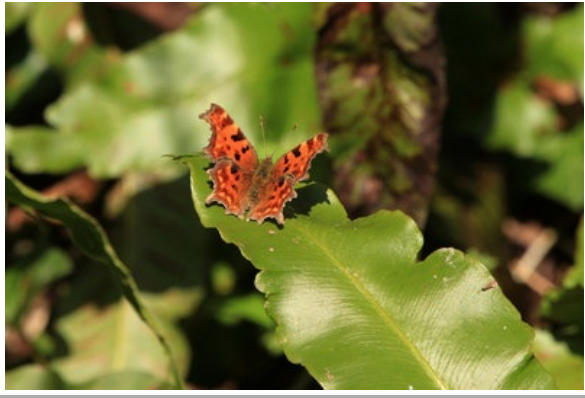
I'm glad the Swan didn't fly directly overhead!

It was an hour before I saw anything, a small orange butterfly halfway up the bank, too small and fluttery to stop the heart though. Not long after I found a more accommodating subject



and then a short while later the first human I'd seen since arriving sauntered up to me, Millerd had arrived to see what all the fuss is about with this site. His arrival seemed to bring out a few more butterflies, Peacocks and Brimstones now joining the occasional Comma. Not large numbers of any of them but all welcome at any rate. It is very noticeable these past week or so how early the butterflies seem to vanish to roost and by 2 it was pretty much show over, still a very pleasant way to spend a day 😊.





Spot the Brimstone

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 28-Feb-19 10:59 PM GMT

A great set of reports Bugboy 😊 Hopefully the hedge will grow back okay – if it's anything like the hedges rounded my way which regularly get ripped to and flayed to shreds then it should be okay.

I had to do a double take of the Comma from the 24th – the leaf it's settled on has a 'comma' like mark on it and I thought that you had a shot of two Commas – possibly in cop 😊 but it is just a leaf but shows the cracking camouflage and teh purpose of the 'comma' 😊🌿

The second Peacock from the 27th – cracking 😊🌿🌿

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 01-Mar-19 10:23 AM GMT

Those Small Tortoiseshell/Red Admiral courtship shots are terrific, Buggy, a great bit of behaviour to capture. 😊 I've been waiting to see those since you mentioned it to me. A very pleasant way to spend the day on Wednesday too, despite the lack of anything particularly exciting. Looking at other reports, I think the initial flurry of Brimstones eased off everywhere, with lower numbers as the days went by despite continuing sunshine. They must disperse quite quickly from their prime hibernating spots.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 01-Mar-19 11:08 AM GMT

Love the shots of the Comma BB and the Marsh Tit 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 01-Mar-19 08:15 PM GMT

A great catch-up report Bugboy with some cracking photos, especially the Small Tortoiseshell/Red Admiral combo 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Bugboys mission

by Benjamin, 02-Mar-19 03:01 PM GMT

Another diary I enjoy keeping an eye on buggers – especially now i've left Clapton and rather miss my favourite spots around the Lea Valley –

Some great reporting – especially the interspecies non standard behaviour – how very modern – I assume they crawled off to find a 'safe space' where further behavioural/gender/species stereotypes could be challenged without judgement....could be an interesting season ahead!

Cheers.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 06-Mar-19 08:27 PM GMT

Fabulous, BB, especially the Red Admiral and Tortoiseshell shot.

It all seems like a long time ago – we've now had a week of gales, rain and cloud. One hopes a window will open again during the next week or so for us to reacquaint ourselves with such delights of nature!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 16-Mar-19 05:09 PM GMT

It's a miserable wet day here Bugboy but I've just caught up with your roundup of last year and the start of this, and it made me feel as though the sun was shining! Glad the op went ok. Hope you have a great year!
Janet

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Mar-19 08:54 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys. I'm afraid the next few posts are going to be a bit further afield **Benjamin**, it'll be a few weeks before I get round to posting any more local butterflies 😊

The sun was most definitely shining for me when you wrote that **Janet** 😊

Spain, March 2019 part 1

16th March

This trip is going to take a while to get through, I arrived home with an image count of over 2000 😊. It was inspired in part by Essexbuzzards trip to Gibraltar a few years back and was booked with a friend who is conveniently fluent in Spanish shortly after my operation at the beginning of January, giving me something nice to look forward too 😊.

An early morning flight got us to Malaga mid-morning where we picked up our hire car and drove down to our base of operations, San Roque, a few miles north of Gibraltar, under a glorious blue sky 😊.



Dumping our stuff we still had a good portion of the day spare so we headed off to Gibraltar to get the lay of the land and see if I could add to my UK species list... only a slight cheat 😊. In the end I managed to add the Geranium Bronze, but it was just a fleeting glance and I hadn't even got my camera in hand anyway, but with the weather forecast set to remain good for the next few days I was sure better results were as good as in the bag!

17th March

After breakfast it was off to the winding roads and paths up the rock again. The steep sides of the Rock mean that it takes a while for the morning sun to reach much of the more accessible western side and it wasn't until about halfway up that I saw my first butterfly, a Red Admiral, quickly followed by a second.



A little more wandering and straying off the beaten track and one of the true targets of the trip casually fluttered by and settled in a little sheltered suntrap. A Festoon, ANY species, has been on my bucket list since I was a young lad and saw pictures of these incredible intricately patterned insects in my books. Well here it was, a Spanish Festoon, a little worn but in no hurry to go anywhere and the books just don't do them justice, what an insect!

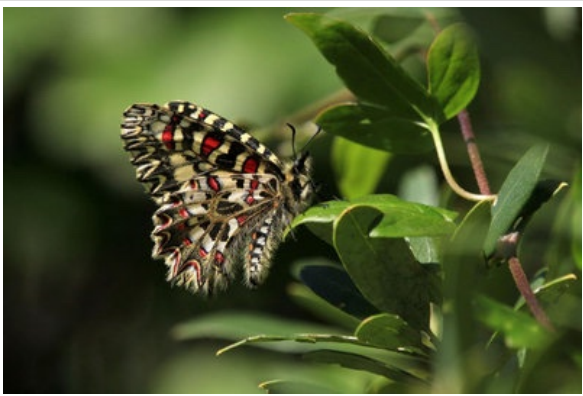


We spent 10 minutes with it before moving on. The odd Large White fluttered by, another Festoon or two fluttered here and there, a handsome Lizard lounged in the sun and then I caught site of an orangy butterfly which my instinct told me must be a Wall. I still needed to reset myself to the continental Speckled Wood. It was too hot now for it to display the uppers so I had to settle for an underside for now.





Nearing the top Festoons started to pop up around every turn, every one getting photographed because well you know, it's a FESTOON 😊😊😊 !!!



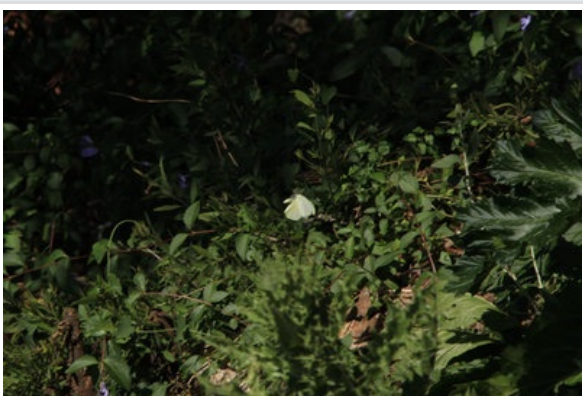
As well as Festoons, the Rock is also full of Yellow-legged Gulls, a recently recognised species which most books say replaces the Herring Gull in southern Europe but genetic studies suggest is more closely related to the Lesser Black-Backed Gull.



After an attempted mugging or two by the local primates we found the steps of the Charles V Wall which has a nice open grassy area next to it all the way down. It was here that a couple more target species finally showed up, both yellow and closely related to some more familiar UK springtime species. I could make out the familiar patrolling of brimstone like butterflies along the far side of the open area, both males and females were present but through my long lens I was able to make out the fiery flash of a male Cleopatra. For now I'd have to settle for a very long-distance grab shot.



Don't be fooled by the casual innocence!



female Brimstone?

Closer to me, but no less mobile, were male Provence Orange-tips. The only one that did settle was on a Cape Sorrel flower that was growing halfway down the upper wall in such a position that the only way to grab a shot was to lean over and aim with my long lens, so I'm pretty chuffed with what I managed to achieve.

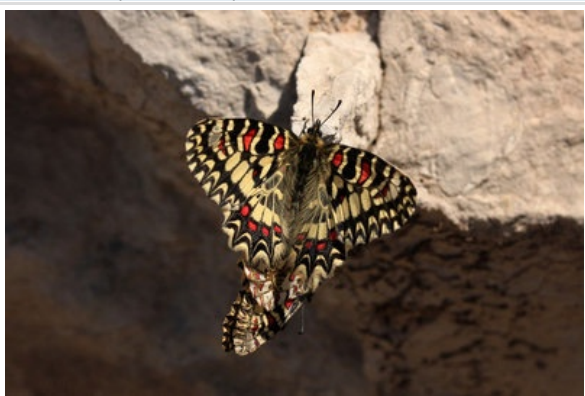


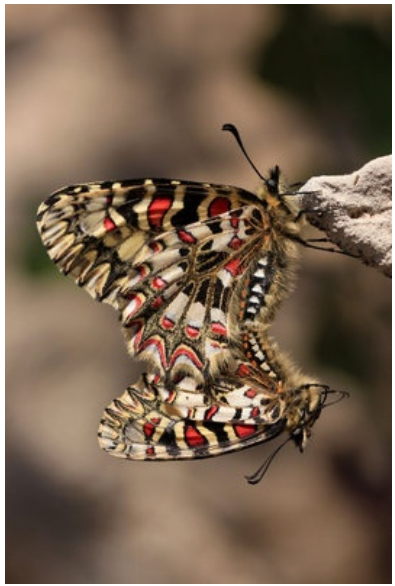
We took the steps all the way down to take a short cut to the bottom and once again found more Festoons and some female Brimstones... or were they Cleopatra's? I'm leaning towards the latter but I need an expert eye to confirm one way or the other.



Female Cleopatra?

Next, as if the day wasn't already full of highlights, as I was pointing out the foodplant for the Provence Orange-tips my friend pointed out a pair of Festoons in cop and close by I found a few Festoon larvae 😊





Well that was a damn good start to the trip and that was only the first part of the first full day 😊



Tbc...

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 26-Mar-19 10:20 PM GMT

Aren't Festoons brilliant, Buggy? Now you know why I love to see them, and how much I want to see them again grr! I'm delighted for you, of course. And they are pretty common on the rock as well. 🇬🇧

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 26-Mar-19 11:44 PM GMT

Splendid Festoons, Buggy! I've seen the Cretan version, but those Spanish ones are just amazing. I reckon that is a Cleopatra – the wing shape is subtly different to that of the Brimstone, a bit less curvy.

I eagerly await the next installment... 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Chris Jackson, 27-Mar-19 07:37 AM GMT

I'm glad you got your Festoon, Bugboy, and it was a nice touch to get a Festoon cat as well. The colours look right for Cleopatra male and female.

Out of interest, I was in Malaga end of February, and the Spanish Festoon was already flying in numbers on the 23rd, whereas in the south of France we have to wait a further 5 weeks before it emerges !! That Provence Orange Tip is emblematic as well – nice.

Looking forward to more.
Chris

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 27-Mar-19 01:28 PM GMT

So glad you got your Festoons Buggy, and in cop has well for a bonus 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 28-Mar-19 12:22 AM GMT

Stunning butterflies Bugboy 🍷🍷😊 I reckon this could be my first retirement trip (in 25 years time mind you 😊). There is something mesmerising about the look of the festoon – I reckon this was the species that inspired Terry Pratchett when he described the chaos butterfly 😊 I reckon your Cleopatra looks good – not a 'pointy' as a Brimstone 😊 but then I've not seen this species either 🍷🍷 so get some salt to take with my pronouncement 😊 Looking forward to the next installment 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 28-Mar-19 09:20 AM GMT

Fabulous, BB! I'm so pleased for you.

Yes, Spanish Festoons are ravishing, aren't they? Funny thing is, they don't look impressive at all in flight; it's when they settle that they really strike you.

As for Provence Orange Tips, they make our OTs seem comatose in comparison! The females will readily settle but the only time I've got close to the males is during cloudy spells....of which there aren't too many in the Gibraltar area!

I shall look forward with anticipation to further instalments.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Mar-19 10:57 PM GMT

They are fantastic butterflies and yes **Essex**, really rather common on The Rock 😊

Yes I was Pretty convinced that settled one was a female Cleopatra **Dave** but there's always that tiny bit of doubt, anyway here's the next instalment 😊 Thanks **Chris**, yes there's no mistaking a male Cleopatra even from a quick glance, the females are a bit more tricky though to the inexperienced eye. Judging the the number of fresh Festoons I was finding I reckon there's still a few more weeks in them yet 😊

Thanks **Goldie**, the in cop pair made great subjects too, very settled and completely preoccupied with other matters 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**. Why wait til retirement though, just do a costa del sol family holiday during the Easter break and leave the family to go wandering in the hills behind the towns, easily doable. If you get lucky with the weather everyone will go home happy 😊. I got some good stuff just a 10 minute drive out the back of Marbella on the last day, and the weather wasn't even that great by that stage!

Thanks **David**, interstingly I didn't find the Provence OT's any more difficult than our ones, enough settled to feed in bright sunshine to keep me happy, I was actually surprised I was getting pictures of them settled on cloudless days!

Spain, March 2019 part 1

17th March (part 2)

After lunch, being occasionally buzzed by an errant Geranium Bronze, (still no chance for a picture), we crossed the border back into Spain where we'd parked the car and went off to take an exploratory drive up to some side roads I'd found whilst browsing google maps. The first one looked promising but didn't come up with anything and sort of ended rather abruptly, turning into a rough potholed track, almost as if they'd run out of tarmac and decided "Oh well, that'll do". Another look on the map showed us it seemed to join up to another proper road at the other end so we headed off to see where that would lead us.

Halfway along there seemed to be a car park of sorts so we stopped and I went for a wander. There was a good covering of flowers, mostly a yellow flowered legume that looked like a cross between Gorze and Broom (I quickly discovered it had thorns like Gorze!) but again no butterflies were around, just lots of small birds, Stonechats and Warblers of some kind. We decided to carry on to the end of this road which again run out of tarmac where it joined the first road/track. Promisingly though we seemed to have stumbled into farming territory and the road verges did look worth a closer inspection, even if it was starting to get a bit late, so again we got out and went for a wander.

A couple of Provence Orange-tip were still around but didn't offer any photographic opportunities. Most of the action though was happening high up in

the sky, we noticed a rather large flock of birds circling and slowly heading off in a northerly direction. I'd decided not to bring my binoculars on this trip to save a bit of weight but using my long lens I could make out it was mostly Black Kite, presumably just crossed over from Morocco, but there were a few other Birds of Prey in the mix I was able to pick out. In total there was probably close to a hundred birds.



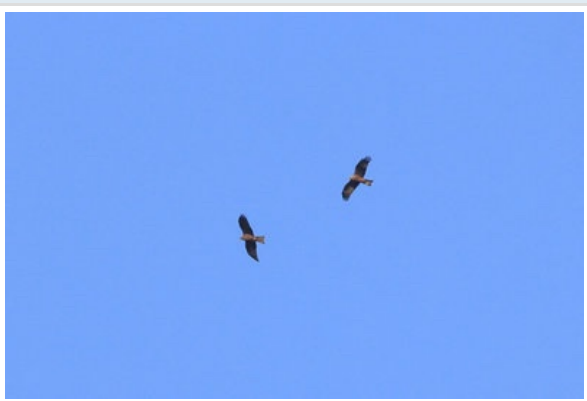
Click on the image to get the full effect of what was visible to the naked eye.



I think this was a female Sparrowhawk



Male Hen Harrier



Black Kites



Short-toed Eagle

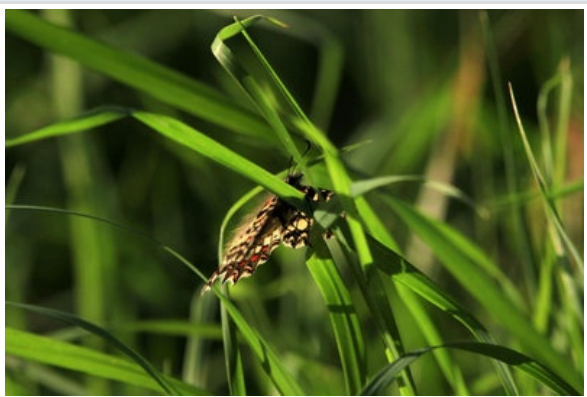


GIF showing a Griffon Vulture drifting through the flock

Once they'd moved off we carried on wandering and found a break in the fence line which looked like it had been broken for some time. Temptation was too much so we ventured in, stumbling across a cattle graveyard and hoping they were the only cattle we would find as we explored.



Finally I found something that was sat still, another Festoon.



After his photoshoot and with the sun getting rather low in the sky we just started to make a move back to the car when I noticed something small and decidedly Lycid-like fluttering a short way ahead. It landed and even from a distance I could instantly see what it was, another target species and another one that's been on my bucket list for as long as the Festoons, a Provence Hairstreak. I was expecting to have to go on a proper hunt for one of these guys but here it was just waiting for me, complete with its winter woollies, just look at that cute fuzzy face!



After he left us I made a new friend and then the final surprise of the day appeared high up in the sky, a migrating Osprey.





Day one down with 4 lifers in the bag already, splendid stuff 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 28-Mar-19 11:43 PM GMT

Provence Hairstreaks, wow! Never seen one of those...

Re: Bugboys mission

by NickMorgan, 29-Mar-19 02:30 PM GMT

You're getting me excited. Only 18 days till we're off to Malaga! 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Mar-19 02:42 PM GMT

NickMorgan wrote:

You're getting me excited. Only 18 days till we're off to Malaga! 😊

I can pm you some specific site details when I get home later if you're interested?

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 29-Mar-19 05:16 PM GMT

Hi! Bug boy, that Provence hair Streak looks like a cross between a Green HS and a Small Copper from a distance 😊 so glad your well on the way with your Bucket list, can't wait for the next episode. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Chris Jackson, 29-Mar-19 07:04 PM GMT

Well done for finding the Provence Hairstreak.

I think they are more common in Spain than in the south of France.

In the south of France they are at the top of the protected species list and their locations are very hush-hush.

Great report.

Chris

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 29-Mar-19 09:27 PM GMT

What a cracking find that Provence Hairstreak was Bugboy – the lovechild of a Small Copper and Greenstreak 😊 Love the fact that it's winter woolies are matching green 🍃🍃🍃 Pretty envious of the Short-toed Eagle, that would have fitted nicely with the other 5 on my list 🍃🍃 As for an Easter Family Getaway I asked and was told "No"...so I'll have to keep working on it 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-Mar-19 11:59 PM GMT

I know **Essex**, a fabulous little butterfly 😊. I love it when something just pops out like that, I was expecting to have to search out a known site. You're right **Goldie**, almost like someones grafted one half to another.

Thanks **Chris**, it would seem so if they just appear like that 😊

And what a beautiful lovechild it is too **Wurzel** 😊. Sorry to hear the Easter holiday idea met with a no, Is there an extension on the house that needs building or something to help amass a few brownie points 😊?

Spain, March 2019 part 2

18th March

Another long day which I shall spread over two posts. I wanted to explore the track from the previous day a bit more so we duly headed off, grabbing breakfast and some snacks at a petrol station on the way. It was another bright sunny day but with a very brisk wind blowing. The butterflies were already up and about when we arrived not long after 9, with a handful of male Provence Orange-tips already on patrol. The first photographic opportunity came with a Festoon, I wasn't bored of seeing these yet so I paid him a bit off attention before moving on.



Rather than going through the broken fence we carried on along the track, following the Orange-tips which did seem to settle with some regularity, if rather briefly, on the Cape Sorrel flowers. We came to a locked gate with pedestrian access to one side and the signs translated as a reserve of some kind but nothing to indicate private property, so we continued through. A little bit of persistence paid off with the Orange-tips and I managed to be close enough to one when it landed for a pit stop. It was getting blown ragged but I managed a handful of shots that stayed in focus.



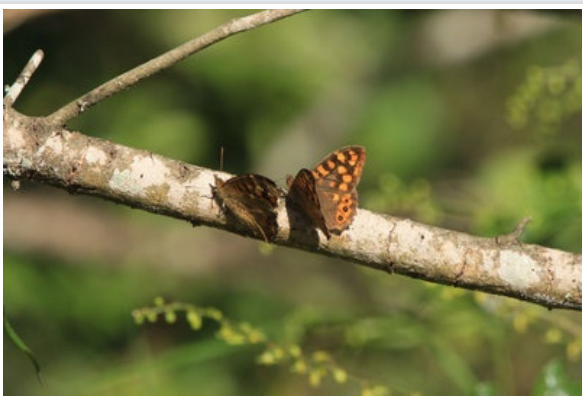


On the other side of the barbed wire fence to one side a couple of more familiar species were found and then another Provence Orange-tip settled near me, they really seemed to like those Cape Sorrels, I had yet to see one show any interest in anything other than these flowers. I managed to catch this one at the moment of lift off 😊 .





A widening of the track and lightly wooded area provided a new species for the day, some Walls..... no, Speckled Woods, I was still having trouble getting my head round how different they looked. There were quite a few flitting around, in various states of wear and tear but the slightly cooler and shadier conditions made them more willing to keep their wings open for me and there was a little bit of courtship to watch as well.

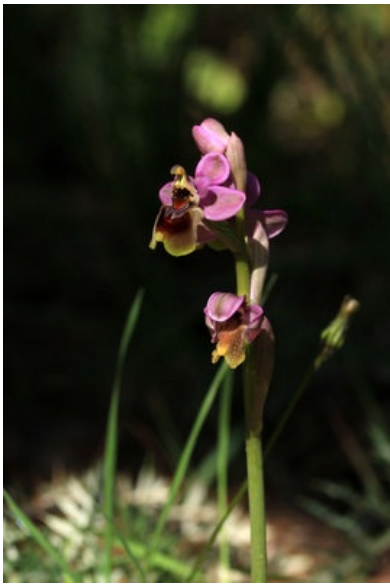


I was chasing a few more when a small black and white butterfly whizzed passed me but as I was trying to relocate it a car pulled up behind me with some official writing on it. My friend had wandered off up ahead and fearing I was about to be berated in Spanish for trespassing or something I gingerly wandered over and managed to remember a few words of Spanish, *Mariposa* as I showed him some pictures and then pointed to my returning friend and said *amigo, espaniol*. He did seem quite a cheery fellow thankfully, and when my friend returned, they had a good old chinwag, along with another chap who pulled over on a very old looking motorbike. Turns out they were very happy to find people interested in the wildlife and were very impressed we'd come all the way from the UK. On a sadder note one of them did say that when he was a kid there were butterflies EVERYWHERE, compared with today when there's hardly any about, it's not just the UK then 😞 .

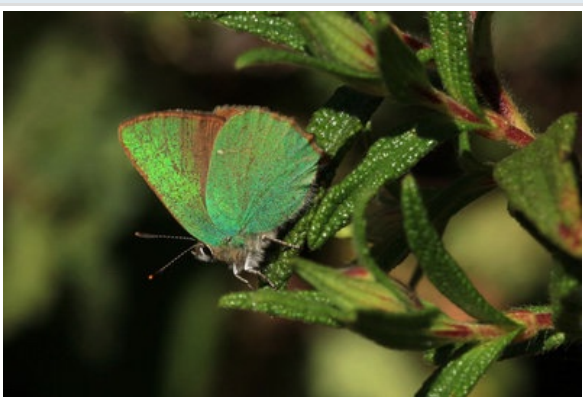
Anyway as they left us to carry on exploring the little butterfly I was looking for reappeared and settled long enough for me to grab a handful of identical shots before vanishing for the second and final time, A Red Underwing Skipper, another lifer 😊 .



A bit further along we found another gap in the fence line on one side which looked rather well used so we decided to use it too. Some rather attractive Orchids caught my eye, Yellow Bee Orchid maybe?



The next butterfly I found deserved some very close examination. Back home it would be very obvious what it was but in this part of the world Green Hairstreaks require a bit of study. Thankfully, as we all know, they are rather territorial and relatively easy to approach and after a bit I was pretty convinced this was the standard issue *rubi* variety.



Tbc...

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 31-Mar-19 05:19 PM GMT

What a brilliant Spanish trip you appear to have had bugboy 😊

Some envy ending butterflies (and birds) 😊 I'm afraid I'll definitely have to go green for your superb Festoons and that gorgeous Provence Hairstreak 🇬🇧 🇬🇧

Looking forward to the next instalment

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 31-Mar-19 06:48 PM GMT

Great stuff Paul, I could get used to seeing those Festoons.
Also, their version of the Speckled Wood and Orange Tip wouldn't go amiss over here.
It's good to go abroad and see what the natives take for granted!.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 31-Mar-19 10:07 PM GMT

Absolutely fabulous stuff Bugboy 🇬🇧 🇬🇧 🇬🇧 Those POTs are so vivid they almost seem faked 🤩 🇬🇧 And I know what you mean about the continental Speckle – you could almost be forgiven for mistaking them for Walls 😊 Looking forward to the next installment in eager anticipation 😊 🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

ps The idea of an extension didn't pass the mustard either, the "No" was quite emphatic and would probably require a small Bungalow for there to be any shift 😊 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 31-Mar-19 11:11 PM GMT

You might want to look away now then Max 😊 😊

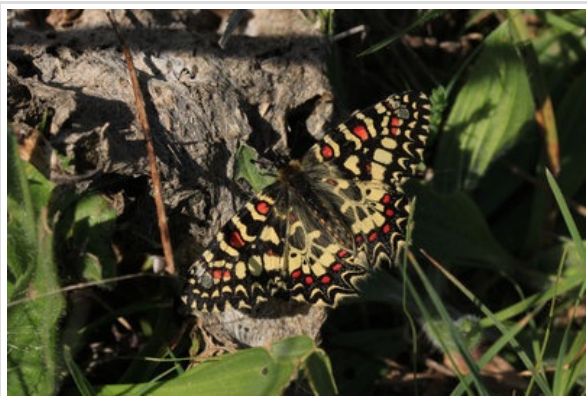
There's some great stuff out there isn't there Trevor, and a great place to go and kick start the season early too 😊

Thanks Wurzel, and wait no longer, here is the next instalment 😊

Spain, March 2019 part 2 cont.

18th March

More Speckled Woods were enjoying the dappled light of the path before it opened out into a meadow with some patchy scrub. Several Festoons frolicked here with occasional skirmishes and Provence Orange-tips patrolled along the edge of the scrubby areas so whilst my friend sat down in the sun and read a book I went exploring. I was hoping for some new species, some Marbled White perhaps or some Blues but none seemed to be around. I did catch sight of my one and only female Provence Orange-tip of the trip but she never sat long enough for a snap. There was however some excellent avian action going on above my head, and unlike the previous day, significantly closer 😊 .







Griffin Vultures are seriously big birds but impressively, barely flap to stay air born.

We stayed here for around an hour or so but it was now getting rather warm and most the butterflies were too active for pictures. Also a group of very frisky horses had appeared who seemed very surprised to find strange people in their field, it clearly was a very rare occurrence for them. I did find a rather large grasshopper nymph before we left though.



We continued along the path which didn't go much further before turning into what looked like some sort of driveway towards some buildings and since we were starting to get a bit peckish for something more substantial than the snacks we had we turned to make our way back to the car. Almost immediately something small flitting to one side caught my eye. Another Provence Hairstreak. This one in very good nick and a right little stunner and easily identifiable as a female, the large orange splotches on the upperside of the female are clearly visible in flight. She sat well and allowed for close approach as she flitted from flower to flower.





After a few minutes I left her but the return journey proved rather fruitful for them with another 3 turning up sporadically. I suspect a more careful walk along this track would find them to be rather numerous.



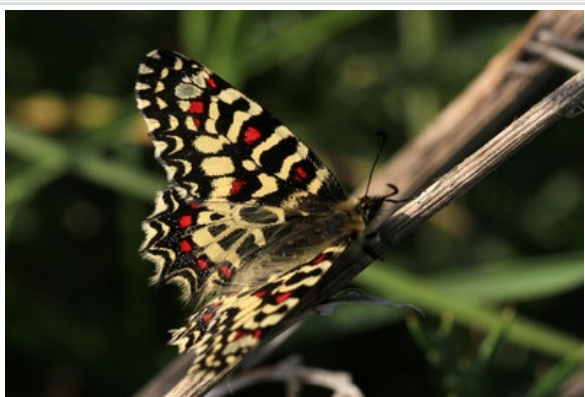


Provence Hairstreak habitat

Also turning up for a brief appearance was my first Blue. It was tiny, about the size of your average Small Blue but I suspect it was just a very small Southern Blue *P. Celina*, still a new species for me though 😊.



We ended the day in Algeciras where, late in the day we found another area that looked worth exploring, Parque del Centenario, which sticks out from the city looking across the bay at Gibraltar. Here, as it seems everywhere else, Spanish Festoons could be found and no, I was still far from bored of them!





There were other butterflies here too, lycids of some kind and perhaps more than one species but I never got more than a fleeting glance of any so no hope of identifying them unfortunately.

I did however manage to stalk up on a couple of Gecko's, I think they were the Moorish Gecko *Tarentola mauritanica*. The little red dots between the toes are mites.



Some odd cloud formations over Gibraltar made it look like it was sending out smoke signals.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 31-Mar-19 11:17 PM GMT

More fantastic and tantalising stuff Bugboy 😊 I was tempted to say that the Griffon 🦁 was the wow factor of this report but then you revisit the Provence Hairstreak 🦋🦋🦋

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 01-Apr-19 11:43 AM GMT

What can I say, BB? Breathless stuff.

The raptor sequence is mightily impressive and you've a couple of other interesting critters there too!

I'm glad you caught up with Provence Hairstreak; it's a fascinating little butterfly, isn't it?

I note Guy Padfield saw Monarchs in southern Spain a few days ago. Did you spot any?

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 01-Apr-19 12:29 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Buggy and I've really fell for that two in one Butterfly, the Provence Hair streak 🥰🥰 Goldie 🥰

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Apr-19 08:08 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, it's impossible to pick a highlight to be honest, there was just too much going on 😊

Thanks **David**, it is a great little butterfly, I'm glad I stumbled across a site where they seemed to be quite numerous 🥰. I couldn't possibly say whether I did or didn't see any monarchs though, don't want to spoil the saga for everyone 😊

Thanks **Goldie**, it's perfectly understandable, they are a very pretty little thing 😊

Spain, March 2019 part 3

19th March

A new day, a new destination. We decided to go into the mountains today and look for the Great Malaga Path. A section passes near a town called Casares so that was where we headed. Vultures were a regular feature in the early morning misty skies and it was decidedly chilly when we arrived, just in time to find the town waking up. The narrow streets proved to be rather challenging as we drove around looking for a parking spot in our rental 4X4 but somehow my friend managed to navigate the maze without a scratch and find a café to have a light breakfast at.



We had seen one plaque on the wall stating the Great Malaga Path was somewhere but where we couldn't say. A look on google maps gave us some ideas but we didn't really know where we were heading as we wandered out of town. After 10 minutes we found what looked like a path leading off to one side and in the absence of anything more obvious we took it. It was still quite chilly so I took to looking for roosting butterflies, finding none but up on some crags the vultures were having a meeting to discuss where best to find some dead things 🥰.



After 10 minutes or so the path opened out next to an orange orchard and diverged in two directions. One path was (sort of) fenced off, the other seemed to climb higher into the hills and had some green and white markers painted onto some rocks along the side. We found out (well my friend found out) from a chap working in the orchard that the owners of the fenced off path hadn't been seen for years and since the fence was in a certain amount of disrepair, we thought we'd have a little nose around up there. Within seconds I noticed a couple of roosting Provence Orange-tips. It was mostly cloudy with the occasional sunny spell and just like our own Orange-tips their wings opened and closed in unison with the ever-changing light levels.





The path didn't go very far and opened out into a mini plateau where I found some rather pretty blue Orchids. During a brief sunny spell a small copper butterfly turned up, just a Small Copper but still nice to see. We also found a roosting Festoon who provided a very amenable subject 😊 .





After a sit down and light snack we set off to explore the other path, stopping halfway down when I spotted a Blue of some sort flitting around an unknown legume. From the behaviour I surmised it was a female but of what species I had no idea. Landing and basking didn't give my inexperienced eyes many clues either, it was only when I got a view of the underside that I concluded I was looking at my first Black-eyed Blue 😊.



Just a few paces down a few Speckled Wood (got it right this time) were busy fighting before both settling up on the bank to the side. I managed to clamber up to get a better look at where they were basking and I'm glad I made the effort when I found this one waiting for me 😊



Tbc (with some more lifers still to come 😊)

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 02-Apr-19 09:53 PM GMT

A cool, misty morning is sometimes just what you need to get close to the flightier species. You were right to check for roosting Provence Orange Tips. They are often to be found on the buckler's mustard plants just like our OTs can be reliably seen on cuckoo flower.

Black-eyed Blue for sure, BB, and that's not a species you'll see in too many places!

I'm looking forward to your next posting....I have a feeling there could be something very interesting!

Re: Bugboys mission

by NickMorgan, 02-Apr-19 10:06 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

NickMorgan wrote:

You're getting me excited. Only 18 days till we're off to Malaga! 😊

I can pm you some specific site details when I get home later if you're interested?

That would be fantastic, if you wouldn't mind. We will be staying at Alora, about 45km north west of Malaga. I was thinking about going to Torcal de Antequera. This will be the first time we have been there at this time of year. We have visited Alora four times previously, but always in July because of school holidays. Now that the kids have left home we have the luxury of choosing when we go away! Previously, I have never found anywhere other than small areas close to the village and, of course, my pilgrimage to the Sierra Nevada!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Apr-19 10:13 PM GMT

Spain, March 2019 part 3 cont

19th March

It had warmed up considerably since we'd arrived and the Orange-tips were now all in full blown patrol mode as we started the climb up the second path. I've done a bit of research since returning and apparently we were on the *Crestería de Sierra Crestellina del Cerro de Las Chapas al Sierra de Casares* (Roughly translated "a walk up the little mountain that sits at the foot of the big mountain next to Casares Town"). In the shadier areas Speckled Wood flitted around and in the open parts we found more Black-eyed Blue, mostly males far too active to photograph, a Painted Lady also too active, and the occasional Festoon.



Layers were shed as we climbed, the day was warming up nicely. Lunch time arrived as we came across a building, *Refugio de Sierra Crestellina*, all locked up but there were some benches in the shade. It was set under a ridge which the ever present Vultures were using to catch thermals, at times they glided in from their 'hunting' over the plains so low you could almost reach up and touch them! Also up on the peak I noticed a tiny dot that kept flitting back and forth. The resulting image has been brutally cropped and severely processed but I'm pretty sure it was a Blue Rock Thrush, an avian lifer for me.



After we'd rested a bit and eaten we continued our climb, aiming for a viewpoint we'd found on google maps, *Mirador de Cosalba*. We were about 2000

feet now, I think our starting point when we left the road was a little over 1000 feet. Anyway the views were pretty damn spectacular now even before the viewpoint!



As we approached the viewpoint a few Specklies bounced along the path in front of us which, when we got to the viewpoint, I discovered were actually Walls, I should have twigged since the habitat was rather Wall friendly 😊.



I hoped this spot would be attractive for a spot of hilltopping, I did see something Skipperish buzz around but never land and then as I approached another Wall something very large and pale wafted up from under my feet. How on earth I hadn't spotted an Iberian Scarce Swallowtail I have no idea but thankfully he wasn't in any rush to leave the place. A few years ago I couldn't have called it a lifer having seen Scarce Swallowtails in Slovenia but now it's a separate species, on the tick list it goes 😊.





Shame he'd been slightly damaged but he was still mostly intact. A second did turn up at one point which led to a brief aerial dogfight but this one was victorious and continued patrolling his domain.

The return walk was much the same with very little settling. A male Cleopatra passed by and settled briefly but was off again before I could train my lens on him, he looked in good nick though.

Back at the Orchard where we had started the walk I wanted another nose around the first path to see if the day had woken anything up. The copper was still lurking where I'd left him that morning but nothing else was around but then on the way back down the path I disturbed a couple of small brownish butterflies who were busy having a tussle. When they landed I realised I had some Green Hairstreaks on my hand, but what flavour were they? It took a while to get close to either of them, and the best conditioned one did a runner after only a few shots but the other gradually allowed me to get closer, and based on the fluffy gingery head I do believe these were *avis*, the Chapman's Green Hairstreak. Feel free to tell me I'm wrong though.





It was time to head back to town to grab something to eat and head off before it got dark but safe to say, another great day walking in the wilds of Spain.

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 02-Apr-19 11:06 PM GMT

Loving your report, buggo! Your Provence Hairstreaks are to die for—I think they have now been elevated to the top of my European wish list! And a blue rock thrush, I saw those on Gibraltar a few years ago so I'm not surprised you have them there. Wish I was there! You get a thousand of these 🇮🇹 .

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 03-Apr-19 09:30 AM GMT

Absolutely stunning close up of the Festoon in the last post Bugboy 🤩🤩🇮🇹 Some of those butterflies are delectable but especially the Scarce Swallowtail – fantastic shots 🤩🇮🇹🇮🇹 – hopefully I can catch up with that species later in the year...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 03-Apr-19 10:03 PM GMT

I've always thought the south of France was a good place to visit in April for spring butterflies, but it's abundantly clear that southern Spain is an option in March!

The joy you experienced transmits itself all through these posts, BB....and there's still more to come!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 04-Apr-19 01:41 PM GMT

Very enjoyable reports BB, what a trip! 🇮🇹🤩 Accompanied by some excellent shots, particularly of the Festoons. 🇮🇹

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 04-Apr-19 07:30 PM GMT

Thanks **Essex**, I know what you mean, I'd happily go back just for them 🤩

Thanks **Wurzel**, fingers crossed for you on catching up with them, and whatever other local specialties that happen to lurk at your chosen destination.

Thanks **David**, The south of Spain does seem to be a good place to start the butterfly season off 🤩

Thanks **Andrew**, it's worth the trip, and out of season nice and cheap too 🤩

Spain, March 2019 part 4

20th March

This post is significantly shorter than previous ones owing to an unfortunate deterioration of weather conditions. The wind had picked up and would be a feature for the rest of the trip around the Gibraltar area. The day was also plagued by thick cloud so to find anything we had to go further afield.

Whilst having a bite to eat before leaving Casares the previous day we got chatting to a local ex pat who recommended a few places to visit should we so desire. Castillo de Castellar sounded like an interesting place, a village set inside a medieval fortress and since it was only a slight detour on the way home from Casares we ended our day by having a wander round.



I was most taken by a colony of Kestrel that were nesting in holes in one of the walls, I had no idea kestrels would colony breed.



Anyway there seemed to be lots of good habitat around so we decided to visit the following day. There were a few breaks in the cloud but nowhere near enough to warm the air for some activity to take place so after an hour or so we decided to visit another recommendation, Bolonia which had some Roman Ruins to look at.



Over here the sun was out but we were still blighted by the strong wind. There were some rather large green lizards lurking but each one scurried down its hole before I could get a shot off. A few Clouded Yellows fought bravely against the wind and a few birds were around but, apart from the ruins, what caught my eye here were some Larks, I'm pretty sure they were Crested Larks rather than Thekla Larks, but whatever species, another avian lifer 😊.



As we were leaving I saw a Festoon and rather than end the day with no butterfly pictures I recorded him/her for posterity. I suspect it was a her as it seemed to sniff out the one sprout of Aristolochia in a sea of dead grass



Don't worry, things do liven up a bit again before we left Spain 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-19 09:03 PM GMT

This was still an enjoyable post Bugboy as it offered a little respite from the envy 😊😂 I had a look at the Lark and at first went for Thekla but then the longer ever so slightly hooked mandible suggested Crested so I'd go for that one, possibly, maybe – either way would be a lifer for me too and it was good to immerse myself in talk about coverts etc 🍷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 05-Apr-19 11:04 PM GMT

That second image is quite an eye-opener, BB. I had no idea it could be so green and lush down there!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 05-Apr-19 11:40 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, sounds like we're on the same page, it was the bill that swung it for me too 😊
I guess that greener spot catches a bit more rain than nearby areas David . The whole aea looked very green, just a shame I didn't have the weather to make the most of it 😊

Spain, March 2019 part 5

21st March

In an effort to escape the near gale force winds in the general area where we were staying we went off to one of the places we'd planned to go from the start, Ronda. Up in the mountains it was decidedly chilly and it wasn't helped by the rather stiff breeze, not quite gale force but still not particularly butterfly friendly. On the plus side we were blessed with a cloudless sky so perhaps if we could get out of the wind I might get lucky. We spent a bit of time being tourists, browsing shops and museums and looking at the spectacular scenery 😊.



The gorge which the town is famous for was particularly attractive to me due to the flock of Choughs which were playing in the wind. These birds would become a permanent fixture for the day. I rarely saw one touch down but I'm pretty sure I never saw one flap its wings once.



As equally at home in the windy gorge were a small flock of Martins/Swifts. I couldn't get close shots but looks like they were Pallid Swift.



Once we'd done the touristy bit we went off to the old town looking for a path down the western side to some green areas. I kept hearing and getting fleeting glances of small yellow finches which, once I finally managed to get my lens on one, turned out to be Serin, and like the Chough they were common as muck too 😊!

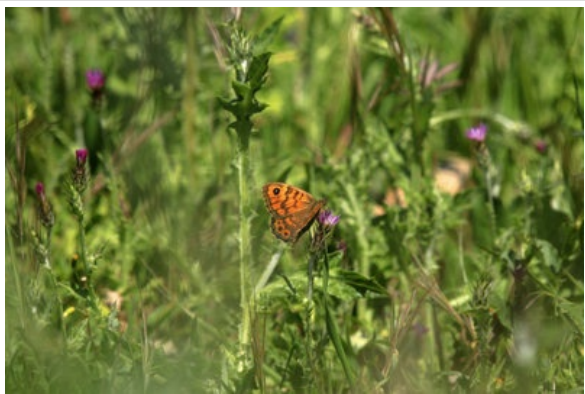


The wind was an easterly and the high cliff upon which the town sits had the desired effect. Out of the wind the temperature soured and butterflies were suddenly plentiful. Whites showed up first in a fenced off meadow, Small and Large positively identified, but I'm pretty sure other species were flying about too, just not close enough to see anything that might narrow down the ID.



Large White

As we walked along a stone wall, something orange darted off and joined the Whites in the meadow. I was pretty sure it was a Wall but what species. I didn't know whether Large Walls go this high but in the end I managed to get a clear view and it turned out to be a female of the standard model.



It was by now the hottest part of the day so finding butterflies that were willing to sit still proved predictably difficult, but there was plenty of activity to observe.



Stonechat

At the top of a steep grassy bank a hummingbird Hawkmoth buzzed me, an Iberian Scarce Swallowtail swooped and floated around and more whites flitted here and there. One in particular caught my eye, flitting close enough for me to know it would be another lifer, I just needed it to settle to know which lifer. And it did, only briefly but long enough to see the very distinctive pattern of a Green Striped White 😊.



At the bottom of the grassy bank I did a bit of off-roading and disturbed a couple of small dark butterflies which turned out to be some more of my old friends, Provence Hairstreak. These little things were just turning up everywhere it seemed 😊! Nearby sat a Small Copper, all it needed was a Green Hairstreak on the other side to give the Provence Hairstreak an identity crisis 😊.





A Small White was also feeding down here so a few snaps were taken, just on the off chance I'd stumbled across a *mannii*. Nope, *rapae* it was 😊.



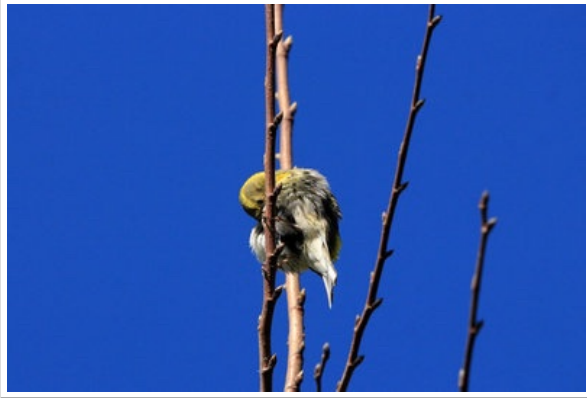
All through the trip so far I'd seen little dark Warblers that reminded a little bit of Dartford Warblers, but I'd never managed to get a clear view until today, they look like Sardinian Warblers if my guide book is to be believed.



Some building work stopped us from continuing our round trip back up to the town so we retraced our steps, finding a couple of worn Painted Lady fighting over a sunny patch of rock face and then my second White lifer of the day a Bath White 😊.



The day ended back in town with more (or rather more likely the same) Serin and Chough posing and playing for my benefit.



Yet another great day in Spain 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-19 03:39 PM GMT

More cracking stuff Bugboy – these reports along with those of Guy and Chris are really helping during this fitful Spring even if I do appear to be running out of MrGreens 😊😊 That would have been a competition winning shot if a Greenstreak had landed on the other side of Provençy 😊 Love the Green-strip too 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

ps Almost forgot a 🍷 for the Pallid, not seen one of those for so long that I can't work out how long 🤔

Re: Bugboys mission

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

Another great continuation, BB. First of all, I have to say that the gorge is almost vertigo-inducing. I'm surprised I've never previously heard of it.

Nice to see you catch up with Green Striped White and more Provence Hairstreaks! What with Guy Padfield posting similar exciting stuff, I'm definitely planning a spring visit to this area within the relatively near future.

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 06-Apr-19 10:52 PM GMT

I've been to Ronda, but couldn't find my way to the bottom of the gorge! If only! More congratulations and 🍷s from me.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Apr-19 11:20 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, glad I am being of some help 😊. I willed a Green Hairstreak to appear but it wasn't to be sadly 😞. The Pallid was a lifer for me 😊

I recommend Ronda David, probably gets quite touristy in season but it wasn't too bad when we were there 😊

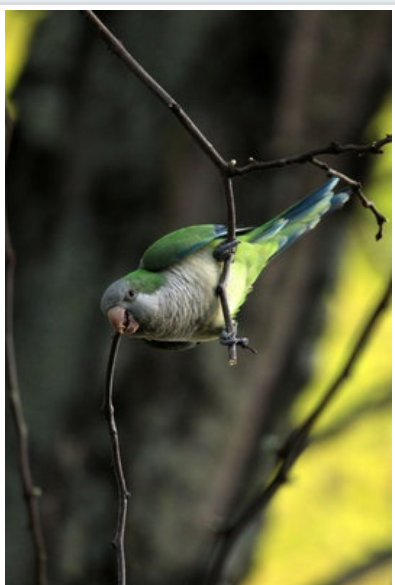
Thanks Essex, they were doing some building work when we were there so you couldn't get everywhere but to get to the bottom we went through the old city

Spain, March 2019 part 6

22nd March

Just two days left in Spain but hopefully still some lifers to get. The winds in the southern tip of Spain were still near gale force, averaging at around 45mph, so we set our destination north again, this time to explore Seville. I'd had a look on google maps the night before and there were some parks that seemed worth exploring. We made good time and arrived before the morning had warmed up properly. Pigeons and Parakeets were the main

occupants of the park but as the day wormed up it became rather clear that butterflies weren't going to show up, indeed insects in general were notable in their almost complete absence. We visited three parks (although the third in the north of the city would seem just to be an abandoned Orange orchard). In total I saw just 3 or 4 Large White, a Red Admiral and a couple of Geranium Bronze. The lack of insect life was also obvious in the birdlife, hardly any insectivores was heard or seen, Wrens, Warblers, Tits all absent. I only came away with pictures of Parakeets in the end. On the plus side it is a nice city to wander round and get lost in so in that respect it wasn't a completely wasted day 😊





Re: Bugboys mission

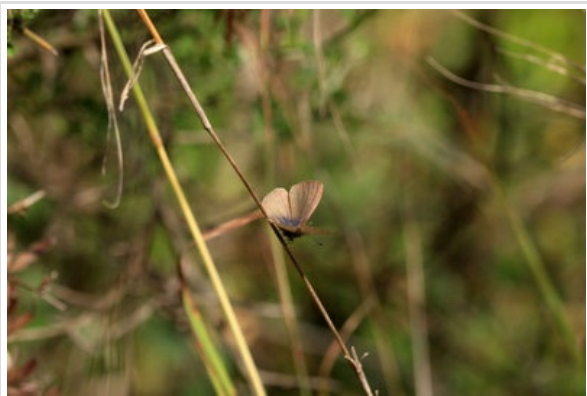
by bugboy, 07-Apr-19 08:57 PM GMT

Spain, March 2019 part 7

23rd March, the final day (a quest for paths)

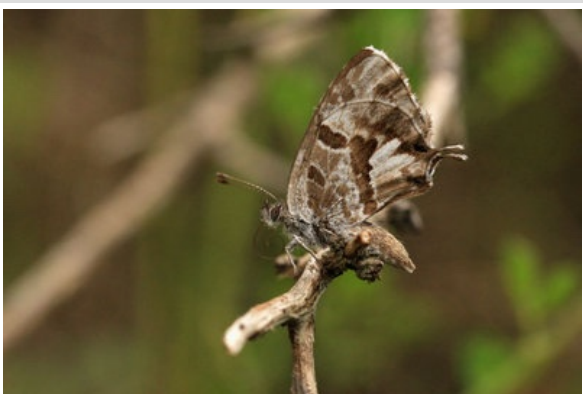
The final day of our trip had arrived and once again we had to do a bit of traveling in order to stand a chance of finding some butterflies. I wanted to have another go at finding the Great Malaga Path, this time where it goes through Marbella where the weather forecast promised at least some sun and the hilly country might give some relief from the strong winds still blowing along the southern coast.

For once we did find the path, actually signposted too, something it would seem the Spaniards take a rather relaxed attitude to 😊. Only 5 minutes worth of the path though, the bit that leads from the beach up to the first main road, from there it's up to you to work out where the path continues, so we wandered up until we found a narrow footpath that seemed to lead off into the hills. It wasn't too long before I came across some small Lyuids flitting around some wild Rosemary and Lavender. I couldn't work out what I was looking at, having no experience with these continental blues and they were mostly old and faded. The one fresh one that allowed me to record him stayed open winged so I still wasn't too sure (I know others reading this will know straightaway what they were). Still whatever they were, they were a lifer for me.





A second darker butterfly was also here which I did manage to identify straight away. After seeing them several times in the towns and failing to get any pictures of one, I finally had a Geranium Bronze at my disposal and allowing me some nice naturalistic images to boot 😊.



Further on up the path where it got a little bit shady Speckled Wood turned up in decent numbers and in good nick too.



My friend had wandered off up ahead whilst I dawdled around with the Blues and when I caught up with her she was getting a local history lesson with a local amateur historian. Whilst they continued chatting, perched on some ruined buildings, I explored a nearby damp area next to the stream that was running alongside the path. Large & Small Whites and Speckled Wood flittered around here, enjoying the Cape Sorrel and Periwinkle that grew here but, no new species though. A male Brimstone flew past without stopping, but a male Cleopatra did. Unfortunately in my haste to grab a shot I didn't check my camera settings (which were set to closeups of Whites) so the resulting images were somewhat underexposed and needed a lot of fiddling with on my computer and so not as good as I hoped, oh well.





We had been confidently told by our new historian friend that the path continued up into the hills. This proved to not be entirely true, it simply ended at a patch of fenced off waste ground next to the Spanish equivalent to a housing estate with no obvious way through 😊. As we explored various options that looked like routes (all ending the same way) I noticed some Blues flitting around a steep slope. More Black Eyed Blues, males and mostly uncooperative. I was about to give up when I saw something a bit different land. A nice fresh specimen which helped to answer my earlier dilemma, no mistaking that underside pattern. A slight thinning of the cloud cover prompted her to open, what a lovely understated butterfly a female Lang's Short-tailed Blue is.



Before leaving one of the Black Eyed males sort of opened up for me too.

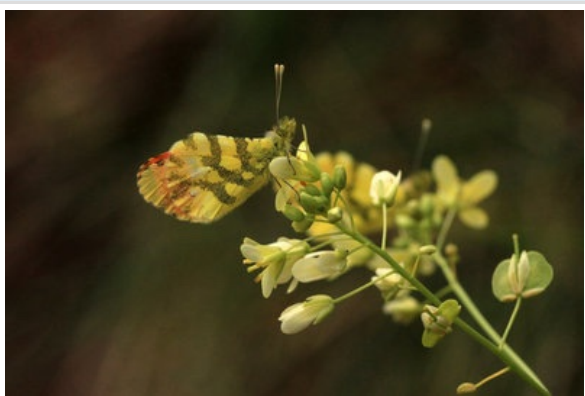


Sunny spells had become a bit of a premium now but we still had a good few hours of the day left so after a quick look of google maps, we made our way back to the car and went in search for the path again, driving round to the other side of the estate. Here we found a nice map full of paths and trails we could spend a whole week exploring... we had 2 hours and a mostly cloudy sky.



We were stood at stage 9 and managed to get to stage 10. The Great Malaga Path is the red line that loops over the top, we were miles off course! Once we'd figured out which path to explore we set off, with me keeping a close eye for roosting butterflies. Patches of Buckler's Mustard grew here and there and finally, climbing up a slope I managed to find a couple of snoozing male Provence Orange-tip. I made the most of this pair as they snoozed and also when a brief sunny spell stirred them from their slumber.





At the end of our walk it opened out into a rocky slope where I found my last two butterflies of the trip, a Small Copper



and a Clouded Yellow.



And so endeth my first foray into the world of continental butterflies, it won't be my last 😊!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 07-Apr-19 10:40 PM GMT

Those little Provence Hairstreaks were everywhere by the look of it, Buggy! what an engaging species it is. 😊

I went to Ronda many years ago in early June – unfortunately the clouds were down and it was cold and drizzly so I missed all those splendid views and certainly didn't come across any butterflies. I always wondered what it looked like...

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 08-Apr-19 09:29 AM GMT

More cracking reportage Bugboy 😊 Those POTs are stunning and you did really well to get open wing views of LST – something I found nigh on impossible to get when I was in Portugal 🇵🇹🇵🇹 Now your trip report has come to an end we need the weather over here to buck up a bit so we can see our own butterflies rather than living vicariously through yours 😊🇵🇹

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 08-Apr-19 10:55 AM GMT

Lovely photos you've posted Buggy, it's been a pleasure to see them all 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 08-Apr-19 12:11 PM GMT

Awesome stuff BB. 🇵🇹 Glad you had a successful trip, love those POT's! 🇵🇹 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Padfield, 08-Apr-19 09:10 PM GMT

Hi Buggy. More amazing pictures. I love the shots of Cleopatra with the wings open. Closed wing shots just don't catch the character of the butterfly.

Your unidentified blues are Langs short-tailed. They're a bit worn but I don't think there's any doubt over the identity.

Guy

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 09-Apr-19 06:23 AM GMT

Padfield wrote:

Your unidentified blues are Langs short-tailed. They're a bit worn but I don't think there's any doubt over the identity.

Indeed. You can just about make out the u/s markings on the first individual.

I've shared your joy throughout this reportage, BB. It takes me back to 2011 when I embarked on my first overseas trip to the Cevennes in France. Now that you have experienced the joy I'm sure you'll be back on the continent fairly soon.

Many congratulations with those Provence Orange Tip shots. They're tricky subjects (certainly the males are), so that image of the pair with wings open is particularly noteworthy.

Sadly, you're now stuck with 10-12 species for the next few weeks! 😞

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Apr-19 10:11 PM GMT

Thanks everyone for the comments and I'm glad you all enjoyed my reports. As Guy stated in his PD, it is easy to do on a budget, especially since it is out of season. £300 each for flights, car rental and accommodation and another £250 each on spending money (including petrol) for 9 days.

April 2019 part 1

April 6th

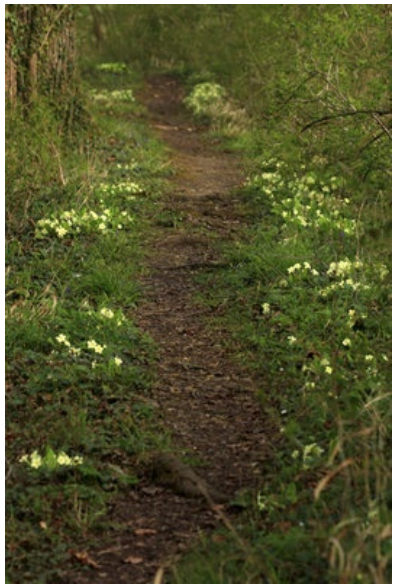
There was a good chunk of favourable weather waiting for me upon my return from Spain, unfortunately I had to spend every part of it at work and so I had to wait until the first weekend of April to get back out into the wilds of the UK. Even then the weather wasn't playing ball (well it is April after all) and to find any sun I had to travel into the wilds of Sussex. With an easterly breeze and Orange-tips top of my hit list I was after a west facing site with a good supply of Cuckoo flower, North Stoke it was then. What started off as a cloudy day ended with an encounter that will probably be one of my highlights of the year, but more about that later. I had to wait for an hour or so for the sun to break through the cloud so I contented myself with the birdlife. A Pheasant scampering through a sea of Cuckoo Flower made for a nice shot displaying why the Orange-tips do so well here



And the Swans I captured flying around on my last visit back in February have decided to start a family, the Pen was sat tight whilst the Cob was on guard, keeping a close eye on me, the fluffy neck and slightly raised wings a clear signal I shouldn't get any closer if I wanted to avoid a trip to hospital!



Thinning cloud gained me a distant sight of species number 6 for the year on my UK list, a Green-veined White. I was wandering around some nearby woodland paths, admiring the Primrose show when the clouds cleared and by the time I got back to the meadow, Orange-tips were already on patrol. It was still early enough in their day for them to need to make pit stops so shots were achieved of species 7.



I took another wander through the Main swathe of Cuckoo Flower, expecting to find more here but instead there were a couple of Peacock and a Small Tortoiseshell gorging themselves silly.



There were perhaps half a dozen OT's on the wing, all males, and all doing their best to stay on the wing even when cloud obscured the sun. Whilst following one of the males he kindly sniffed out a mating pair of Green-veined White for me.





The sunny spell only lasted an hour or so and all the butterflies quickly vanished, but not wanting to waste the rest of the day I went for a wander further afield, exploring some footpaths I'd noted on previous visits. I watched a pair of Buzzards courting in a nearby field, one coming close enough to grab some shots before the path reached the River Arun. It was whilst wandering along here that the afore mentioned highlight happened. Some movement from the opposite shore caught my eye, I didn't quite see the animal in detail, just the top of a head crossing the river towards me. My first reaction was 'Oooh Otter' but surely it had already seen me, why would it be making a beeline for me, not a very Ottery thing to do. I quickly fiddled with my camera settings but looking up again it had disappeared... only to reappear a few feet in front of me.... It wasn't an Otter!



As the Crow flies I was about 10 miles inland, as the Common Seal swims it was probably closer to 15 miles. It looks like a youngster and I suspect it was a bit lost and hungry, the river was very high and murky so fish would likely not be easy to find. I actually thought at one point it was going to get out onto the bank to get closer to me. I contacted a friend who deals with sea life stranding's etc although whether it needed help, or if it did anything could be done I can't say, but I hope it worked out it needed to go downstream.

Whilst all this was going on I had a pair of Peregrines courting above and some Stonechats making a racket behind me! I'm glad I went out for the day





10th April

4 days later it was time to make the most of the predicted wall the wall blue sky on my day off and set off to Mill Hill to find the Grizzled Skippers. The wall to wall blue sky took an age to appear, the cloud cover finally disappearing after 1. I was there from 9.30 though but it wasn't until a brief sunny spell an hour later that I finally found my target and first butterfly of the day.



It was 2 hours of further wandering before I found another one, along with some fellow butterflyers also looking for them. As the day wore on and brightened I think I managed to get four individuals, judging by my images.





The afternoon sun did help to increase the species count too, a single Brimstone wandered by and a fresh female Green-veined White stopped at virtually every flower.



Peacocks appeared in growing numbers as the afternoon wore on, almost certainly many were those second brood insects from last year, at first squabbling over prime territories but later feeding on the Blackthorn blossom. I had a couple of Red Admiral flybys on the upper slopes where I also came across a particularly large Small Tortoiseshell gorging on the Ground Ivy flowers and a single Comma



Despite looking for, and being told they had been seen by others, I still could find any Speckled Wood though. Still, the Grizzlies were good value for money



Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 11-Apr-19 11:05 PM GMT

I think I recognise some of those Grizzled Skippers, buggy! I think I saw four as well, including an egg-laying female.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 12-Apr-19 07:01 AM GMT

Pleased to see you got your OT's Buggy but the shots of that seal are just magical. Do hope he was OK.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-19 08:05 AM GMT

Crickley Bugboy you've been busy 😊😊 Love the OTs 😊😊, pretty 'jel' of the GVW as I've still not seen one this year 🇬🇧 and the Grizzlies are brill 😊😊
🇬🇧 The best shot has to be the Grizzlie number 5, the back view of it buried in the nectar – it looks like a totally different beast 😊😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 12-Apr-19 12:31 PM GMT

No excuse for slacking with the in-flight Orange Tip shots after all the practice you got with their frisky cousins in the south of Spain, BB! 😊

Quite a wildlife fest you've reported on there....it's not often you get a seal popping up on UKB!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 12-Apr-19 07:39 PM GMT

Great series of reports from Spain Bugboy, I don't usually comment on continental reports because I haven't got much of a clue about most of the butterflies but I do like their version of Speckled Wood, like you say, very much like a Wall Brown.

A great selection from back home too, especially the Orange-tips and that seal 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 16-Apr-19 09:56 AM GMT

Lovely selection from your North Stoke visit BB, nice to see a report from an area I've never been to. 😊

And excellent Grizzlies from Mill Hill. 😊

Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Apr-19 10:47 PM GMT

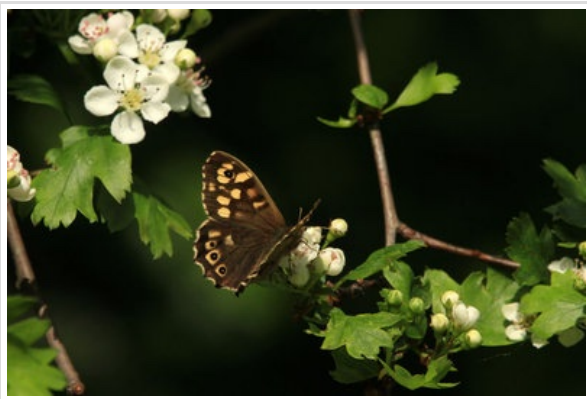
Thanks for the comments. It feels like I've had a very busy April, I've barely had time to get on here recently so I'm way behind everyone's diaries...

including my own 😊

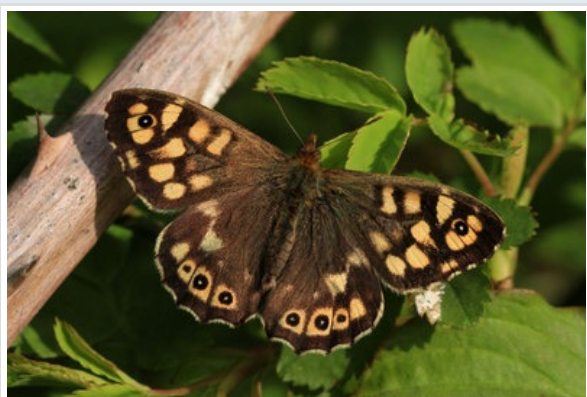
April 2019 part 2

18th April

Warm sunshine and a day off coincided perfectly this week and before the Easter weekend brought flocks of people to my local patches I thought I'd have a look round and see what was about, I still had a few spring species yet to tick off, most notably Speckled Wood. On **Walthamstow Marshes** it was oddly quiet at first and it took about half an hour for the first butterfly to show up, the bright orange of a basking Comma looking very gaudy against the fresh green Hawthorn leaves. Flitting and nectaring nearby was a my first Speckle of the season (UK edition that is).



After this things did slowly start to liven up, but not as much as I was expecting or hoping for. A handful of Whites began their patrolling, Orange-tip's obvious in their absence, and I didn't see any Holly Blue. Nymphalids were also rather hard to come by with just the odd flyby here and there. Only a few Specklies were seen and given they were all in tip top condition I'd say they have only recently started to emerge here.



An hour or so passed by before I encountered another decent wave of photographic opportunities. The Brimstones had awoken from their traditional lay in and were now racing up and down the hedgerows. Despite this being my local patch I'd yet to locate any Buckthorn over the many years of wandering

it. I finally corrected this when I saw a female Brimstone paying particular attention to a small tree. It was in an overgrown corner of the site, surrounded on most sides by nettle and bramble but I managed to find a relatively pain free route to discover it was an Alder Buckthorn littered in eggs 😊.



Nearby, a few Nymphalids were somewhat less active than the majority I'd seen up to this point.



The final species to turn up were the Orange-tip, who like the Speckled Wood I think had only just started to emerge here.



Next it was off to **Tottenham Marshes**. Here, as is usual, Small Tortoiseshell appeared in decent numbers. In the heat they were mostly keeping their wings firmly closed



After getting a few snaps of them I made a beeline for the narrow, sheltered strip of grass that never fails me, where I stumbled into a butterfly war zone 🤔. Several Peacocks in an almost constant squabble over territory, although surprisingly just one Comma was present. Whites, Brimstone and Orange-tip also became victims of the Peacocks brutality, regularly getting sucked into the battles as they 'innocently' fluttered by. I was mostly a spectator here in the heat, which I suspect was several degrees above what my app was saying, so I wandered off to see what else I could find. A few speckled Wood loitered in the shadier patches, avoiding the sun where ever possible and a couple of male Brimstone were busy feeding on some Kingcup.



Elsewhere it was much the same collection of Whites and Nymphalids, some a little worse for wear...



An hour or so passed by and high cloud had turned the sun a bit hazy so I made my way back to the war zone, hoping things had calmed down a bit and would be more willing to sit still. If anything it was even busier, the single Comma had brought in reinforcements with half a dozen now present to do battle with at least seven Peacock (I was watching 3 beat up a Comma when another 4 practically clattered into my head).

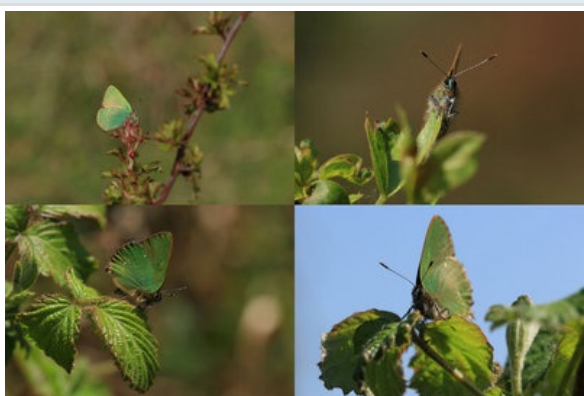


The hazy sun did however create the occasional lull and plenty of photographic opportunities. I caught site of my first Holly Blue of the season (just a passer-by) and managed a record of my first Large White of the season. Some more very fresh Speckled Wood dropped in occasionally and I hung around hoping to see if any of the Orange-tip would slow down too, but that didn't happen, only managing a few distant record shots 😊.



20th April

My weekend off had arrived and the fine weather had decided to hang around, so taking my cue from Millerds report of Green Hairstreaks out and about down **Denbies** way I set off to find some for myself. I did intend to get there early enough to find them warming up but a mix up with the trains (totally my fault for once) meant I got stuck and ended up arriving a good 2 hours later than planned to find them full of beans. Nevertheless they threw a good range of poses for me, not least because it seemed too hot at times for them so there was a lot of fidgeting as they temperature regulated themselves. The walk from Westhumble was, as is usual at this time of year, filled with Speckled Wood (once again, mostly fresh) and Orange-tip, the former happy to pose, the latter not a hope in the heat 😊 !



Although I spent most my time with the Hairstreaks I did take a wander along the hillside, seeing a handful of very active Grizzled Skippers plus two newbies for the season, a Small Heath and a couple of Dingy Skipper 😊 .



Brimstones and Orange-tips were also present in decent numbers but as one would expect, neither were stopping for anyone.

The plan for the afternoon was to wander round the cooler woodland habitat of **Bookham** but this was oddly barren of butterfly life. In the few hours I was there I saw a couple of Peacock, the odd White and a few Orange-tip. I very nearly left without taking a single picture when a female OT stopped near me to lay a few eggs as I was leaving.



21st April

The following day it was off to Essex and **Hadleigh Country Park**, the main target here being Orange-tip... if I managed to get there early enough 😊. I remember coming here last year for OT during the unseasonably warm spring to find them racing around almost from the get-go and today was a similar situation. I had about a 20-minute window from seeing my first few basking to being a mere bystander, I'm happy with what I got though





Once they became impossible to pin down, I switched to the other species that were around which consisted of just three, Peacock, Speckled Wood and Green-veined White.





Mid-morning found me staking out a small, rather lonely patch of Bluebell. A Peacock was busy gorging itself and passing Orange-tips would occasionally stop off for a quick refill.



Just before leaving for a stroll around a new site, another season first dropped by, a female Small Copper 😊 . She quickly found a dock leaf and laid a single egg before promptly flying off out of sight.



The new site was one of the woods where Heath Fritillaries are found. I was after some larvae and after a bit of wandering I found what looked like a likely spot, a recently (but not too recently) coppiced area whose floor had copious amounts of Cow Wheat coming up. I didn't find any of my targets though 😞. The very nature of the search meant it was a bit of a long shot, I was obviously only able to pick my way around the edge of the area, I certainly wasn't going to risk partially destroying the colony just to find one. Elsewhere in the wood I just had a few flyby encounters with Brimstone and Orange-tip and the odd Speckled Wood.

I still had most the afternoon to play with so I wandered back to have a look around **two tree Island**. Here lots more Peacock were staking out the paths whilst Whites and Orange-tip fluttered here and there. The odd Small Tortoiseshell flew by and also a single Red Admiral, the first one I'd seen since February showed up but was quickly seen off by one of the Peacocks. Before leaving I decided to have a quick look at the lagoon where the winter waders flock at high tide, hoping for some hatchling Avocet. I got a bit of a shock when I got to where the hide used to be, it was burnt to the ground, completely reduced to ashes 😱! Still I was here now and I had a small gang of Small Tortoiseshell flying around the nettles here to keep me occupied. It seemed to be mostly females but one male had cottoned on to the fact if he hung around here, he'd guarantee himself some females. Unfortunately for him he'd not cottoned on to the fact the females were all here for a different reason and he was just being even more of a nuisance than your average male butterfly 😏😏



...well that was a slightly longer post than I'd initially intended 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 27-Apr-19 12:58 PM GMT

Wow BB, what can I say 🍷🍷🍷 the Grizzled Skipper shots make me Jealous 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

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

I'm a bit out of breath after reading all those exploits Bugboy 😊😊 Brilliant set of shots especially the in flight make OT cracking that is 🍷🍷🍷 How do you arrange the photos into the four images view like that – does it take less memory? Any tips would be most useful 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 27-Apr-19 07:14 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

Wow BB, what can I say 🍷🍷🍷 the Grizzled Skipper shots make me Jealous 😊 Goldie 😊

Thanks Goldie, I'm quite sure you'll find your Grizzlies soon 😊

Wurzel wrote:

I'm a bit out of breath after reading all those exploits Bugboy 😊😊 Brilliant set of shots especially the in flight make OT cracking that is 🍷🍷🍷 How do you arrange the photos into the four images view like that – does it take less memory? Any tips would be most useful 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Thanks Wurzel, that in flight OT was pure luck but I have to admit I do rather like it 😊. I use a free to download program called PhotoScape X. The images a stuck together by the program and saved as a single jpeg which you can then resize like any other image so I presume it does. It can edit RAW images as well. It's very user friendly and does all the other standard photo editing stuff you'd expect. PM me if you want any more info 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 28-Apr-19 03:21 PM GMT

Cheers for the info I've downloaded the program and I'll try and have a play with it but as things are almost in full swing now it might be a while 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 28-Apr-19 04:30 PM GMT

Superb sequence, BB. Fear not regarding your 'tardiness'; at least you're not posting things that disappeared several weeks ago thus causing a brief heart murmur! 😊

Your Tortoiseshells seem to be doing rather well this spring (wish I could say the same for mine). Great to capture an Orange Tip & a Peacock in the same image too.....not a particularly common 'combo'.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 28-Apr-19 08:11 PM GMT

I also use Photoscape, Buggy, and have done the multiple image thing a few times. Very useful.

Glad you found the Denbies Hairstreaks: nice shots. I must get back down there soon for the Dingies. 😊 Won't be too long before the Adonis appear.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 29-Apr-19 11:24 AM GMT

Epic post BB! I like your Speckled Woods and egg shots best. 😊

Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 29-Apr-19 06:51 PM GMT

You certainly make the most of your days off, Paul. Some great adventures in your reports. I imagine you'll soon be heading for Sussex as we approach the silly season!

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by ernie f, 01-May-19 09:03 AM GMT

Bugboy - I realised I hadn't visited your PD for awhile. I had to go back 5 or six pages! OMG!!!

I have just seen your Spanish visit. A fine line up of Spanish butterflies culminating (in my humble opinion) in your sequence of Festoons. Open wing, roosting, close up, mating and even a larva. But apart from the butterflies, spectacular shots of Griffin Vultures and that Moorish Gecko was a bonus. And that Blue Orchid. I don't know what species it is but it shines out. Simply a wonder.

Back home, Specklies in flight were good too.

You mention Cow Wheat (no pics). I have never seen this plant and to my recollection the book pics are interesting. Are they common round your way?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 08-May-19 05:56 PM GMT

No worries, I look forward to seeing what you can do with it Wurzel 😊

I'm trying to keep up with things **David** but I fear I may slip into 'Wurzel territory' as the season continues, Xmas Purple Emperors maybe 😊 It's only the one spot where Small Tortoiseshells seem to flourish near me sadly 😞

Thanks **Dave**, I heard word that the first Adonis are indeed out now down Sussex way, so they must be only days away at Denbies too... if Spring ever returns that is 😊!

Thanks **Andrew** 😊

Thanks **Trevor**, and yes Sussex is calling (indeed has already called, see below).

Well I hope you had a brew and a few biscuits for dunking before settling down to my Spanish 'novella' **Ernie** 😊

May 2019 part 1

1st May

Just a quick stop off at Tottenham Marshes on the way home from the cinema. A little bit late in the day and a tad too cloudy and cool for there to be much activity but a couple of Peacock and Comma were just getting ready for bed and made sure it wasn't a completely wasted stop off.



4th May

The weekend was a bit iffy, a rather chilly northerly wind was going to put a tight lid on the temperature but there was at least some sun predicted, along with light showers, downpours and thunder storms. It turned out to be a pretty accurate prediction for a change. To avoid the worst of the wind a figured a woodland site would be best and seeing all the Pearl-bordered Fritillaries gracing various diaries, Abbots Wood seemed an obvious choice.

As is traditional for me, I got lost, taking a wrong turn somewhere but I managed to work out where I was and found the small clearing that provided the most amount of shelter from the wind. I hadn't seen a single butterfly until I reached it, but almost immediately upon arriving an orange butterfly flew up from under my feet. There were three or four on the wing and the cool conditions kept them nice and approachable.



10 minutes of chasing was enough to start the day so I went off to see if anything was awake elsewhere. At the large clearing I found just a single butterfly, not a Fritillary but it was in keeping with the days colour scheme.



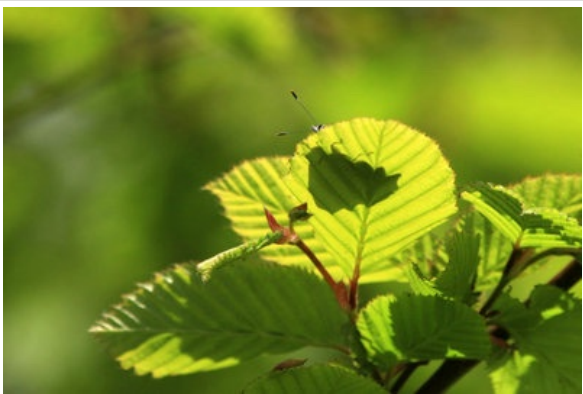
At the third clearing I found just a Speckled yellow moth posing for me.



The return was a little more fruitful. A male Minotaur Dung Beetle successfully distracted me from the butterflies for a while.



A couple of Fritillaries, somewhat friskier than earlier, were searching out females along the sheltered edge of the large clearing. Whilst watching these I could myself be observed from up above, lets play 'guess the butterfly', shouldn't be too hard to work out what this sneaky fellow was 😊. Quite a few bejeweled Longhorn Moths were also doing their best to hide from the wind.

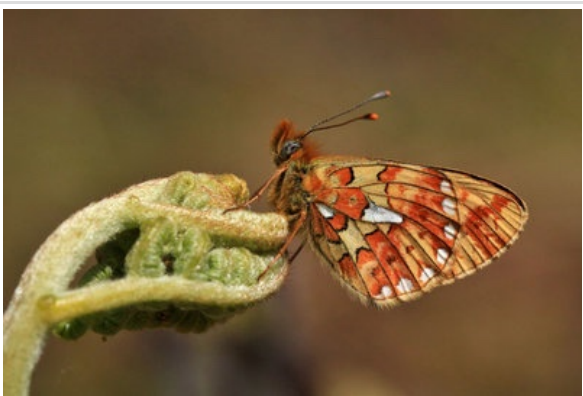




Back at the first clearing several more Fritillaries were now doing their thing in the sun but my eye was drawn to something smaller, I've never seen a Dingy Skipper here before.



It was however sunny spells rather than wall to wall blue skies so there was ample opportunity to hunt for napping Fritillaries.



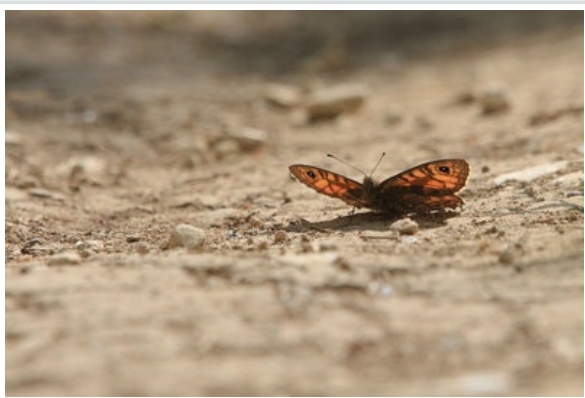


By noon I decided to move on and try for another seasons debut, getting slightly distracted by a small colony of Small Heath, a HUGE Small Copper (the pictures don't do her justice she was at least as big as a Large Blue), and a passing Red Admiral.



Next stop was the South Downs Way in between Eastbourne and Beachy Head and an attempt to find a Wall or two. The path I normally focus on here, Wall Brown Alley, is pretty sheltered even on the windiest day.

I'd managed to avoid the rain all morning but now the showers were appearing much more frequently and there were several anvil shaped Cumulonimbus clouds loitering ominously around on the horizon too. Despite all this and the general nip to the air, a few butterflies were still brave enough to come out to play. First off, a Green Hairstreak threw some shapes as it tried in earnest to gather enough of the suns rays to remain active and then halfway along the path, target acquired 😊 . As befitted the days less than ideal conditions, there were only two or three of these sun worshippers active but like the Fritillaries, at least they were easier than usual to approach.





The day ended with a fluky shot of a Stonechat just taking off.



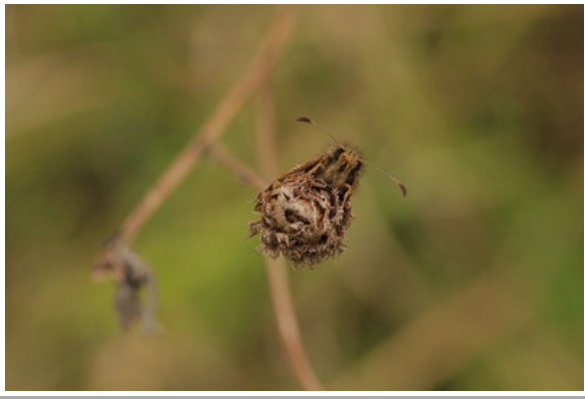
5th May

The following day didn't look to be much better, still cold with less of a breeze but also less sun predicted. There was however enough sun to tempt me out to visit Hutchinson's bank, a warm south facing site so possibly the best chance of finding anything without spending lots of money on train fares. In the end I managed seven butterflies of five species and photos of two species. It was nearly an hour before the first butterflies showed themselves, a couple of active Small Heath enjoying a prolonged sunny spell on the main scrape and a little while later a couple of Dingy Skippers joined them.



I was following the second one when the sunny spell ended and the Skipper seemed to know there was not much chance of the sun returning. He flitted around until he found a suitable resting spot where he settled down.





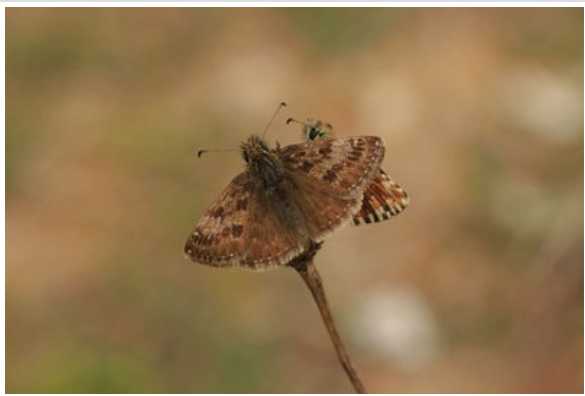
I did another circuit of the site, seeing nothing much else until I returned to the main scrape again to stumble across a freshly emerged Grizzled Skipper, wings still a bit soft. Occasional slithers of sunlight encouraged it to flex its wings but it never got very far. And it soon settled down when the clouds thickened again.

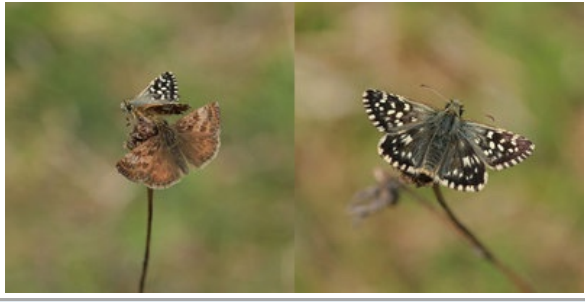


At this stage temptation got the better of me, it wasn't far from where the Dingy was still snoozing so I coaxed it onto my finger and posed them together.



MrSp0ck joined me at this stage and we chatted whilst waiting for a patch of blue sky to wake them up properly. It was worth the wait 😊





After they both fluttered off it was time for me to make a move, a glimpse of a male Orange-tip and a fresh Speckled wood encounter completing the days tally. A day of quality over quantity 😊.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Katrina, 08-May-19 06:06 PM GMT

Great Green Hairstreak photo and nice Pearls too!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Chris Jackson, 08-May-19 06:34 PM GMT

A great series of photos Buggy, you're certainly getting out.
Chris

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 08-May-19 07:00 PM GMT

I'm pleased that you had a fruitful visit to Abbots Wood.
By coincidence I photographed the very same Small Copper as you!
The small nick in it's left hindwing is the giveaway.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 08-May-19 08:06 PM GMT

Like the head first pictures of roosting Dingy and Grizzled Skippers . I've taken similar pictures of Silver Spotted Skippers in late summer, but haven't thought of this before. Something a little different.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 08-May-19 08:46 PM GMT

Some good skipper photos there, Buggy – however contrived it might have been, the Dingy and Grizzly together is a great combination.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 08-May-19 10:31 PM GMT

A lovely collection of images Bugboy – Pearls and Greenstreaks, Dingies and Grizzlies – mind you I really like those Walls – something I've yet to see this year 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 09-May-19 07:14 PM GMT

I'm breathless after reading that, BB! It's a real smorgasbord of what's currently flying. You've done a great job given the inconsistencies of the weather this last week or so.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 10-May-19 07:03 PM GMT

A superb selection of species and photos there Bugboy but I am mightily impressed by that photo of the Speckled Yellow on the Bluebell. A very localised species around the midlands, they can be common in the Wyre Forest but very tricky to approach and photograph.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 23-May-19 09:56 PM GMT

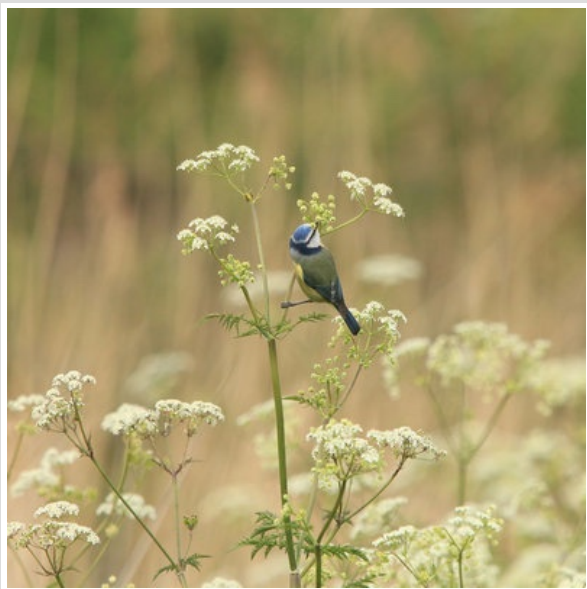
Thanks for all the comments guys. I've struggled to keep up with everyone's diaries this year (even my own as you can see), but I have seen enough to see there's plenty happening out there 😊

May 2019

It's been a while since I've been able to sit down and do some write ups. I booked a couple of weeks off at the beginning of the year in the hope, as most of us do, that the weather will behave. Well it did this time, and of the twelve days I managed to pack in nine day trips out and about with nine season debutantes... I now have a lot of catching up to do 😊!

11th May

The good spell of weather hadn't quite kicked in at this stage but there was a suggestion of some sun further east so it was off to explore Two Tree Island for a few hours. The weather app continued to say sun was going to welcome me right up to the point where the train pulled into the station when it decided to have a rethink and came to the conclusion that it was going to be mostly cloud and rain! Well I was here now so, hoping the rain held off for a bit, I set off concentrating on the birds of which there was enough to keep me occupied.

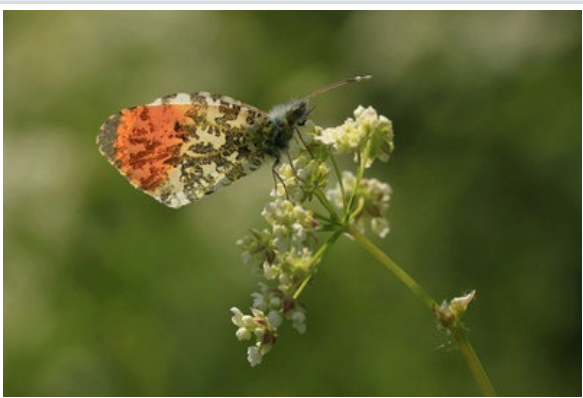


The sun did very occasionally peak out, not for much longer than a minute or two, but it did seem to be enough to awaken the single butterfly I saw, a Peacock who fluttered off before I could get a clear view.



I managed to get an hour and half exploring in before a particularly large dark cloud loomed over the horizon, signalling my departure or risking a drenching.

Arriving back home though, I found the weather had improved drastically from the mornings forecast so it was off out to see what I could find on Walthamstow Marshes. Numbers wise not a great deal was about but with the intermittent sunny spells most of them spent some time sitting about posing for me. A total of three Orange-tip, one male of which was close to becoming just three quarters of the butterfly he started off as, not that you'd have known anything was wrong in flight. The damage certainly didn't hinder him patrolling and harassing any passing White.





Of the other Whites this GVW sat well for me



And so did this Holly Blue, a species I've really struggled to find, let alone photograph this season.



Nearby a Comma was watching me



And over on the Alder Buckthorn that was littered with eggs on my last visit I found just a single Brimstone caterpillar and lots of very black eggs. I'm not sure if they had failed or this is what they look like just before hatching, but I'm inclined to favour the former.



Not a too bad a start to my 12 days off but things were set to improve.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 23-May-19 10:55 PM GMT

Great first report Bugboy 😊 I see you're starting to live in the past too 😊 I was quite surprised that the 3/4 OT was still flying as well as you described as it looks like its wing is peeling off 😊 but then butterflies are nothing is not surprising 😊 I hope someone else can help out with the black egg conundrum 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 24-May-19 02:40 PM GMT

Good to know your patient planning paid off, BB. Looking forward to seeing what you got up to. Meantime, that last reportage got things off to a promising start, and I just love the blue tit on the umbellifer – delightful!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 24-May-19 02:49 PM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, I was wondering where you'd got to 😊 Looking forward to seeing your next post 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-May-19 10:47 PM GMT

Yes Wurzel, it did seem to cope remarkably well but I think it was helped by where the tear was, on the hindwing. I think it's the forwing that does the greater share of the work and due to the overlap, it helped to support the hindwing on the down stroke too.

Thanks David, yes I do like that Blue Tit too, here's another shot 😊



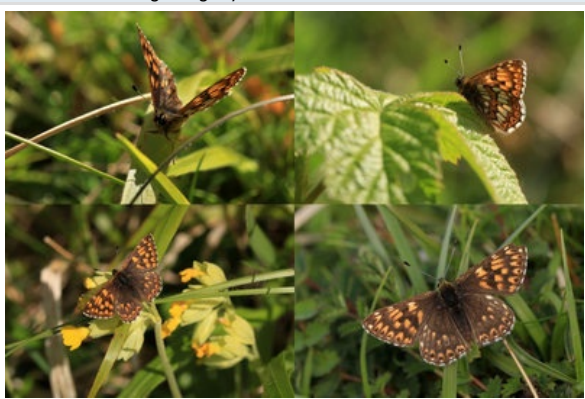
Hi Goldie, yes still here, well I've actually been out and about but I will try and catch up with my reports 😊

12th May

The following day had a much improved weather forecast so it was time to get my first dose of Duke action of the year. A nice early start meant I could have a nice slow meandering stroll across the Chilton's Ridgway walk from Aldbury Nowers Nature Reserve to the Duke colonies at my 'local' hotspot of Ivinghoe Beacon. It was quite cool but the sun was out and so were a few early risers.

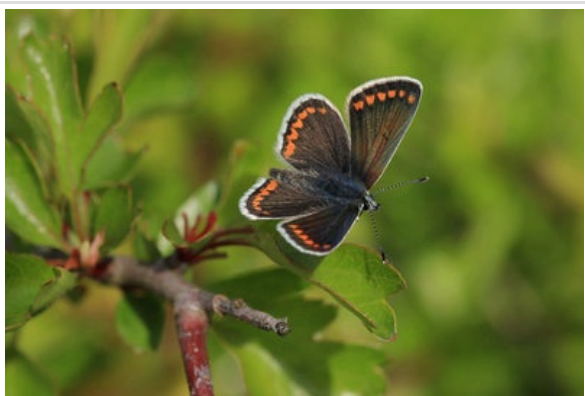


As the air warmed so activity increased along the Ridgeway, with the Skippers being joined by Small Heath and the occasional Green Hairstreak, all becoming increasingly difficult to pin down for a quick shot. I finally arrived at the Beacon at around 11 to find the males setting up their territories and going about the general thuggery to any passing innocents that is their way. They're always a willing posers though and I ended up spending a couple of hours wandering the gully's behind the Beacon.



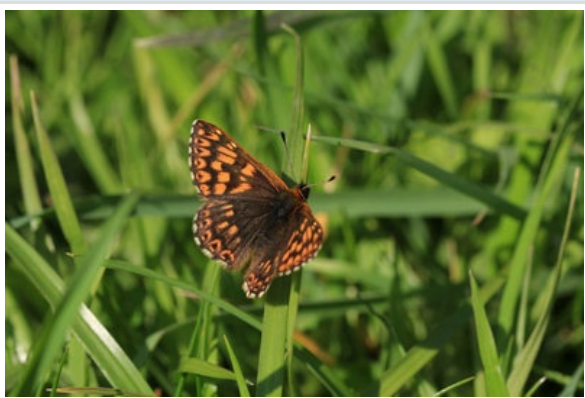
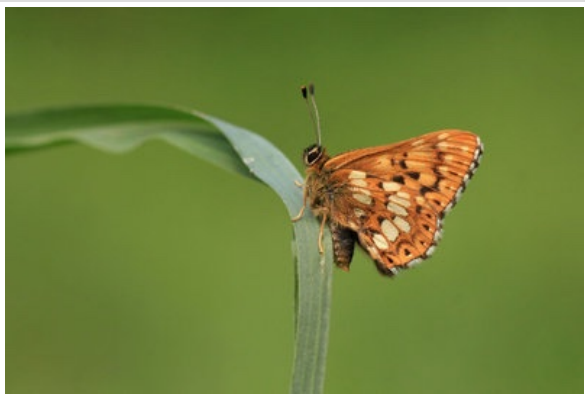


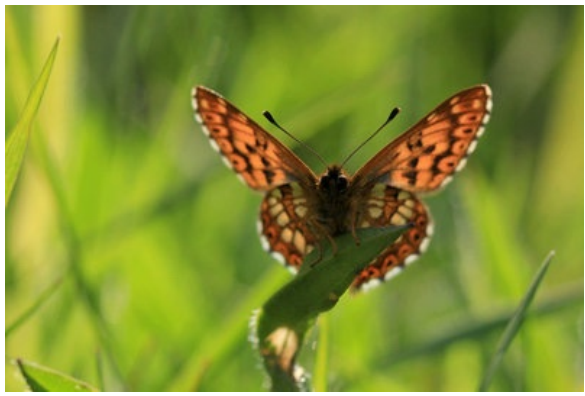
It wasn't just the Dukes that were catching my eye either, all the other regular spring species were putting on an excellent show for me including my first Brown Argus of the year and a very well-behaved pair of Dingies, clearly concentrating on other matters to worry about me.





A slow wander back, taking in some other hotspots on the other side of the car park, gave me plenty more to point my camera at and I bumped into a couple of familiar faces, Rosalyn and Philib who had made camp at one of them. In this spot I also got my first glimpse of the year of a Common Blue, too frisky in the afternoon sun to get nothing better than a distant record shot but others here were worthy of my attention.





A fantastic day filled with oodles of fresh butterflies and some good company who saved my legs from the walk back to the station 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 27-May-19 11:23 AM GMT

Great shots of the Dingy Skippers Bugboy , it takes me all my time to just take a shot of them they never seem to keep still 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 27-May-19 06:13 PM GMT

A splendid set of images of a wide selection of the best the Chilterns can offer, Buggy. 😊 As you know, it's one of my favourite bits of the Southeast as well. That pair of Dingies in particular... 😊 🍷

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 27-May-19 06:44 PM GMT

Some nice shots there Paul especially the mating Dingies – awhile since I've seen that. Hope you're managing to get a bit more time off work.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 27-May-19 08:21 PM GMT

Great montage, BB. Dukes seem to be everywhere this spring, as do Dingies, although that's the first in-cop image I've seen.

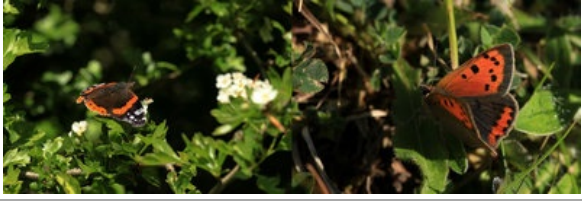
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 27-May-19 10:21 PM GMT

Thanks guys 😊. Still a good few days to go before I'm caught up, today we go back to 2 weeks ago.

13th May

Time to add another species to the years tally, Adonis Blue, so it was a trip to Denbies this time. No mishaps with the trains this time meant I was there nice and early. Before going down to see the first Adonis of the year I explored the edge of Steers field, finding a few Small Copper and something that's been noticeably thin on the ground this year, a Red Admiral.



A couple of Adonis males, sparkling in the morning sun, erupted from the side of the path as I approached the steps where the Green Hairstreaks normally hang out, but today the steps and lecking area was bereft of them. There was however a female Holly Blue and for once this year she sat still for longer than a few seconds. I've barely made it into double figures for these this year so I tried my best to make the most of her. She made things difficult though, to get near her I had to pick my way through Hawthorn and Bramble whilst simultaneously trying not to disturb her. I only had the one angle to work with but I've never tried a stain glass Holly Blue, they look rather nice!



Anyway, the main course beckoned. It had gotten rather warm now though so pinning one down took some doing and even when I did, they were now rather reluctant to open up. Joining them were the springtime Skippers and Small Heath and also lots of 5-spot Burnets who were wasting absolutely no time in sorting out the next generation!





A smattering of Common Blues were also in the mix, and like everything else this morning, they too being rather difficult to get close to. I did managed to sneak up on one whilst he was chatting up a female Green Hairstreak though.



Green Tiger Beetles distracted me as they hunted along the paths, I had to break out the big lens to get the shots of them though, in this weather I didn't stand a chance of getting up close to them!



Incoming!

I normally turn around and wander back up the slope when I reach the far bottom corner but today I decided to carry on and explore further. Turning the corner at the bottom of the slope I found a patch of particularly lush grass where Common Blues and Brown Argus fought for ownership over the best blade to pose on. One Argus was a particularly striking ab. *snelleni*, he could almost not look out of place on the Scottish borders!

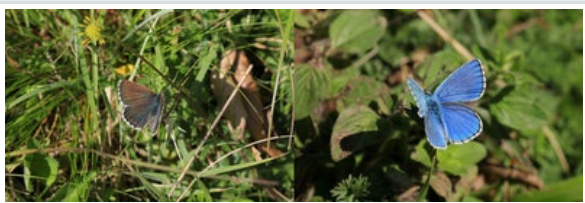




Further on I found a rather barren looking sun baked field, barren except for being occupied by several Brimstones quartering the ground as they drained every dandelion of nectar.



On the return walk up Denbies the butterflies were now mostly impossibly supercharged to pin down, but I did manage a nice pair before leaving the hillside for a quick look around Bookham.



At Bookham there was once again little around. A couple of Small Copper and a few Orange-tip were all that were around for the greater part of my wanderings. I do feel like the Orange-tip season passed me by this year, I really haven't seen half as many as normal.





In the absence of adults I took for looking for youngsters, finding several Orange-tip eggs (no larvae here yet that I could find) and a nice selection of moth caterpillars whilst hunting for Brown Hairstreaks. The target caterpillar remained elusive, so much so I didn't see it even when taking a picture of one...



Spot the BH caterpillar photo bombing this rather splendid Figure of Eight moth cat.

Just before leaving I came across a couple of Peacock and a Comma battling over a patch of bare earth, here's the victor enjoying his spoils 😊.



This really was turning into a splendid week of butterflying 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 28-May-19 06:58 AM GMT

Great stuff, Paul. Quite right, your Brown Argus could pass for a Northern BA. You can have a mrgreen for that one 🍀.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 28-May-19 12:23 PM GMT

Yes, I rather like that Brown Argus too, Buggy - I think I've come across this variety at Denbies before. Interestingly, amongst the dozens flying on my local patch at the moment, I have yet to find one.

Cheers,
Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by NickMorgan, 28-May-19 02:57 PM GMT

Some lovely pictures there Bugboy. I particularly like the Common Blue with Green Hairstreak and your not-Northern Brown Argus. I am also very envious of the species you have there that we don't see north of the border.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 29-May-19 06:56 AM GMT

What a wonderful contrast in colour in your Common Blue/Green Hairstreak image, BB. It's not often you get *rubi* in close proximity to anything!

Re: Bugboys mission

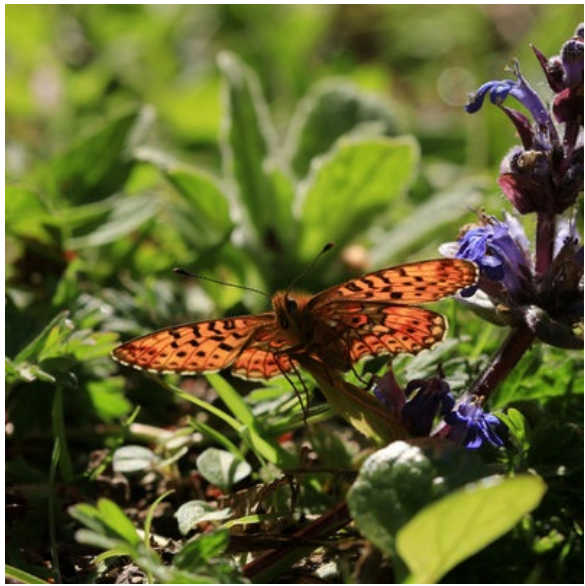
by bugboy, 30-May-19 10:41 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments guys, still traveling back in time at the moment here 😊

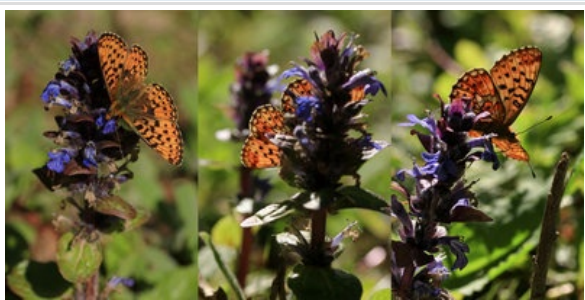
14th May (part 1)

Not wanting to waste another glorious day I decided to pop down to Abbots Wood again. The Pearls had only just begun emerging on my previous visit, so I was hoping the females were about this time. Like last time there was very little around again and I only bothered to get my camera out when I arrived at the first Fritillary hotspot. Here things had livened up somewhat since my last visit, males were still about, looking a little worn around the edges but the females were all looking rather good. During previous seasons I'd only come across the occasional wanderer between the clearings but today the rides seemed just as popular as them 😊.





There didn't seem to be much interaction between the sexes, presumably they were focused on breakfast for now, they certainly seemed to have an insatiable appetite for the Bugle which was out in profusion.



Now I knew the females were out, my aim was to find an egg laying one and hopefully get a shot of an egg. I followed a few females who looked suspiciously like they were in the mood to lay but I had to wait an hour or so before I found one laying. I did get distracted on occasion though as some other species had begun to show.



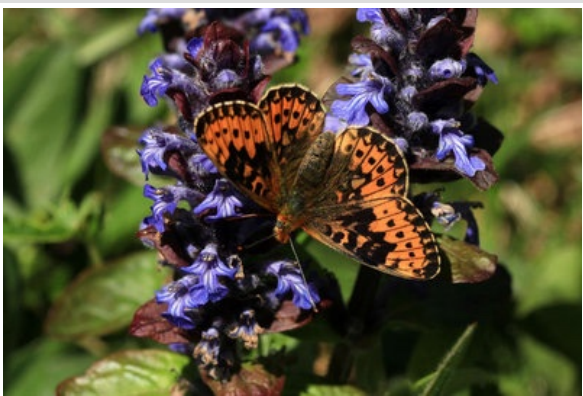
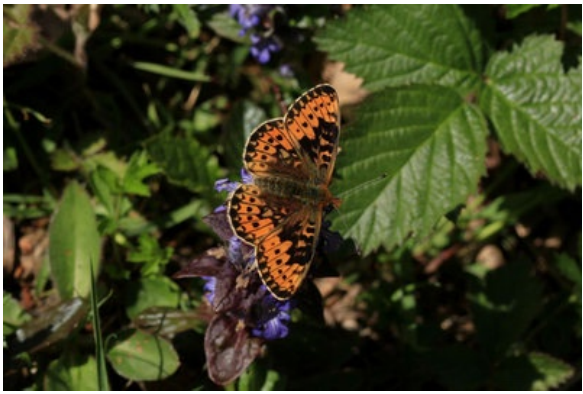


Finally though I found a female Pearl who was busy laying eggs like it was going out of style (inbetween feasting on Bugle or basking). I waited until she chose a spot near the path for me to get in close enough to see the action and as luck would have it she laid on the upperside of a leaf which required minimal manipulation to get a shot 😊 .





My next find was something I last saw two years ago in exactly the same spot, a very nice *ab. nigromarginata*. She too was in the mood to lay, this time on the underside of a Bluebell leaf.



Approaching noon it seemed that every female I came across now was laying eggs, surely a good sign for the future, as long as the current management regime continues 😊.



I planned to move on to another site for the afternoon, but not before getting a few snaps of a Large White, one of several supposedly 'common' species that I've seen very little of this year so far (Speckled Wood, Red Admiral, Small & GV White).



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-May-19 11:16 PM GMT

Great sequence Bugboy 😊 Especially like the stained glass shots 😊 That aberrant is a stunner 🤩🤩🤩🤩 It's almost as if it was supposed to be coloured in black but the person doing it gave up half way through 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 31-May-19 06:36 AM GMT

Some great shots recently Paul. My favourites have to include that unusual BA, the PBF egg and that wonderful Figure of 8 larva - no wonder you missed the BH tucked away!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 31-May-19 12:37 PM GMT

Those photos of the nigromarginata are stunning, Bugboy - and I love the shot of Blue and Green 🤩🤩
What lenses do you use nowadays? - Janet

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 31-May-19 02:05 PM GMT

If any of those female Pearls were egg laying along the ride between the two ' hot spots ', I noticed on my last visit that some of the best Bugle and Violets were located along there. And of course the rides could encourage them to spread further throughout the wood.

Great stuff, Paul,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 31-May-19 08:15 PM GMT

A very nice selection of Pearls, Buggy, especially the melanic ab. Very striking. 😊

The point you made in passing about scarcity of certain species I can echo in full – Large White, Red Admiral, and Speckled Wood have all been thin on the ground so far. The first two may well be topped up from abroad, but the last of the trio might give more cause for concern. Maybe the hot weather last year affected the Specklies – if so, there may be a similar effect on Ringlet and Gatekeeper with their liking for similar spots. I think the renowned summer of 1976 hit the Ringlet in particular, so the similar one of 2018 may do the same.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 31-May-19 08:55 PM GMT

I can echo the lack of Large Whites, I have only seen two so far this year. Speckled Woods are between broods here around my patch with the follow on summer brood only just starting to appear.

I never see Red Admirals here before June, they are simply not a spring species around my patch...yet.

All the species with grass feeding larvae were hit here last year, something that has been highlighted in the Warwickshire BC 2018 report. It remains to be seen how that will translate to this year. We'll soon know.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Bugboys mission

by Padfield, 31-May-19 09:12 PM GMT

Beautiful aberrant pearly, Buggy. Do you know if that form is environmental? I wonder if it has anything to do with that sudden cold spell in early May.

Guy

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 31-May-19 11:06 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, I was channeling my inner Wurzel with those back lit shots 😊😊

Thanks **Pauline**, yep totally didn't see that BH cat looking back at me 😊

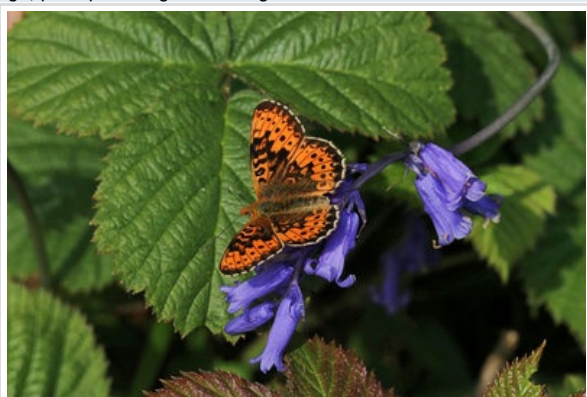
Thanks **Janet**, I'm still using the same lens as I used for Chequered Skippers 2 years ago, my Sigma 105mm 😊

That ride did indeed have a fair bit of activity **Trevor**, although I never actually saw an egg being laid here the females were actively looking.

Thanks **Dave**. Yes that's exactly my thoughts for the Specklies scarcity so far this season. There's plenty of lush grass now though so I'm quite sure they'll bounce back in the coming months. Time will tell how the other grass feeders have fared... 😊

It's not all bad from what I've seen with the grass feeders so far **Neil**, the Small Heath doesn't seem to be have too badly effected. I guess we'll have a clearer picture in the next couple of months.

Thanks **Guy**, I don't know for sure what is the cause of this ab, but given that I came across a very similarly marked individual in the same spot 2 years ago, perhaps it's a genetic thing 🤔



From 2017. Had this one emerged this year it would have been feeding from the same flowers on the same ride as this years ab.

14th May (part 2)

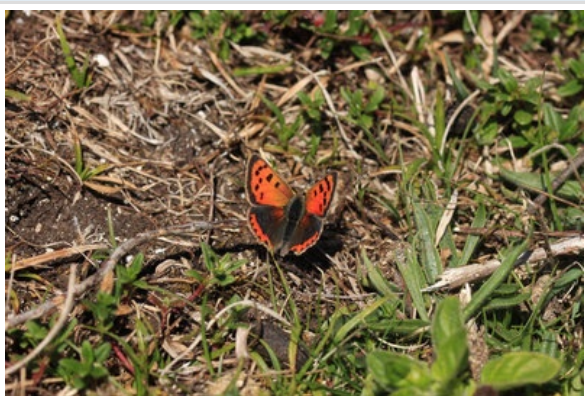
To end the day I decided to take a stroll over at nearby Malling Down, hopefully the Adonis would be out there. The Abbots Wood Butterflies tried there best to stall me, an Orange-tip proved irresistible, but I made it to Malling down by early afternoon.



It was a windy day, the mornings woodland stroll had protected me from the worst of the wind but on the open down I had no luxury and the few butterflies that I saw were getting blown ragged.



I'd started on the northern side at the old chalk pits, the wind was a northerly.... Perhaps not the best plan to start with, but once over the hill on the south facing slopes the butterflies started showing up. Fresh Brown Argus were the commonest to start with but at the bottom of the slope they were joined by many more of the usual suspects, including the first male Adonis.



Out of the wind it was rather warm and everything was very active so when I found a good sitter, I made the most of them. It was sheltered down here but not completely breeze free and this particular Adonis was still swaying a fair bit, it was time for some hit and hope shots. I ended up with quite an interesting range of shots showing how the colour changes depending on the angle



As I was leaving I couldn't resist a female Broad-bodied Chaser



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-19 10:09 PM GMT

Lovely collection of images Bugboy – especially the Adonis – interesting to see the various different shades and hues 😊🌱

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 01-Jun-19 10:55 PM GMT

Another action packed sequence, BB. Seems strange to be seeing Orange Tips from a mere two weeks ago now that they've sadly departed for another year, but when you've got Adonis Blues to replace them things don't appear too bad.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Jun-19 02:16 PM GMT

Thanks **David & Wurzel**, still 2 weeks behind but doing my best to not slip even further behind 😊

16th May (part 1)

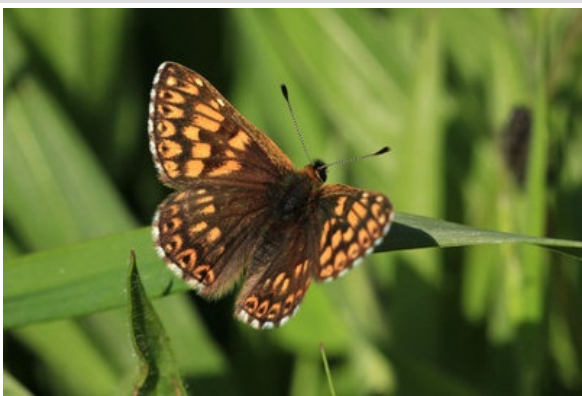
After 4 long days out butterflying I'd giving myself a day of rest (and a chance to catch up on those things that adults are supposed to do), but with fresh legs it was back out to get another dose of the Chiltons Dukes. I wanted to get there earlier than I normally do to catch the first ones waking up so I tried my best to ignore the usual distractions I find hiking across the Ridgway walk, I didn't do too bad but there were a few irresistible encounters including a VERY fresh looking Peacock. I can only presume she'd woken up late from hibernation, it's not often you find a near scale perfect Peacock in the middle of May!



A noisy Skylark also distracted me, he posed well though so he was worth the stalk.

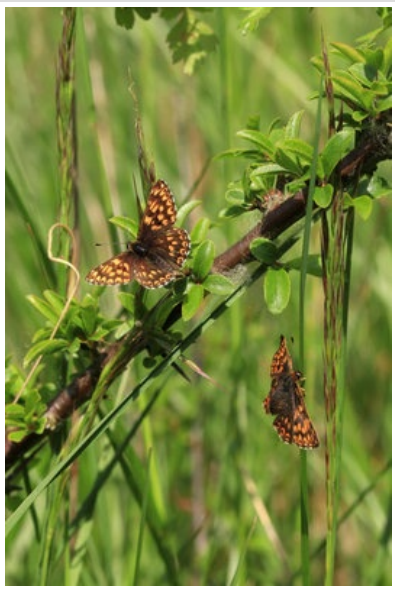


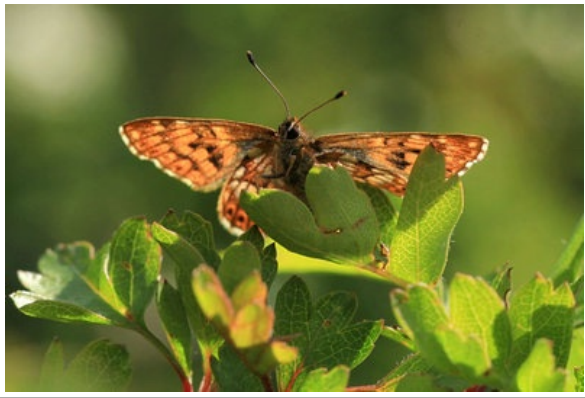
On my last visit 4 days previously I'd only found the one duchess who'd spent most the time being awkward and hiding in a Hawthorn bush. Today they were the first ones I came across, perhaps getting an early start before the thuggish males wake up to pester them 😊.



The males weren't that far behind them though and I soon began to see them setting up territories with frequent border skirmishes sending them swirling skywards.

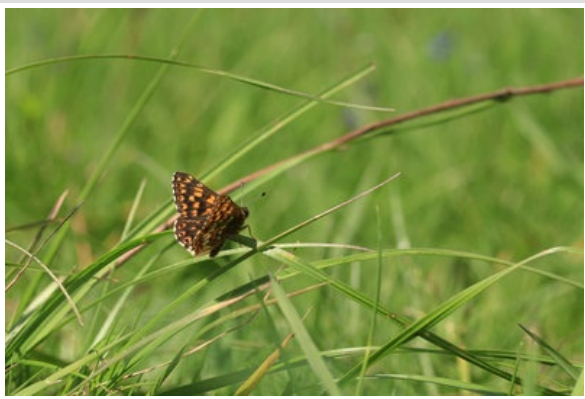
During all this I was following one female who at first glance I thought was freshly emerged (and perhaps yet to mate) but on closer inspection was probably a few days old. It didn't stop an amorous male having a go though, but despite his best efforts and gymnastic moves she remained unimpressed and all but ignored him as best she could.





none the worse for her 'ordeal'

In amongst all this action there was a good variety of supporting cast



"Mine, all mine!"

The plan for the afternoon was to explore a new site for me, which had recently been highly recommended by **Millerd**, more of that in the next post.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Jun-19 06:30 PM GMT

16th May (part 2)

For the afternoon I'd decided to visit Pitstone Quarry to find my first Small Blues of the season which I had on good authority I'd have no trouble at all finding here, in fact they'd probably find me!

The walk over from Ivinghoe Beacon was actually easier than expected and quite pleasant, mostly taking me through a tree shaded footpath, the occasional Speckled Wood glimpsed as it hid from the heat of the sun and the odd Orange-tip patrolling the brighter areas.

Once at the church I followed Millerds directions and quite quickly stumbled upon the scene I'd last seen a couple of days previously in his diary, in all probability made up of many of the same individuals!



It had started to cloud over so I explored further afield, finding a few Dingies and several very generously sprinkled male Small Blues.





After the cloudy spell the cloud began to thin and break up, warming the air and bringing everything back to life again. The Blues were still feasting on their bird poo with more flitting around and basking in the surrounding area so I sat down for a bit to enjoy the experience, only to find I out that I, apparently taste better than bird poo 😂😂 ! Within 5 minutes they had all transferred themselves to my legs, not even the forest of hairs discouraging them 😂 .





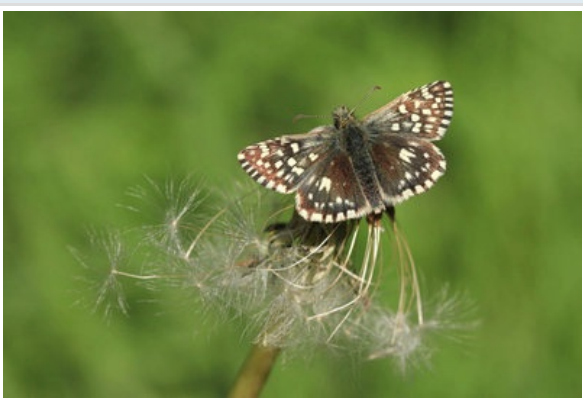
Whilst watching them I caught sight some movement in the grass by my foot, a young Common Toad had been caught out by the return of the sun and was desperately seeking the shade provided by me. He was very lucky I noticed him before he snuck under my foot. At this stage I was beginning to feel like Snow White, would a bird now decide to use me as a perch 😊 .



Another wander before leaving, the Toad safely placed in the undergrowth, turned up a few more species, Green Hairstreaks, Brimstone, Holly and Common Blue, all far too energetic for me to chase down, but the Small Blues were still everywhere.



I finally dragged myself away, but I shall end the post with a couple of shots of a Grizzalie perched on the remains of a Dandelion clock I found on the road verge on the way back.



Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 02-Jun-19 07:05 PM GMT

That is some ' huddle ' in your first image, and the one in your last pic. actually has a sprinkling of blue on it. Like you I only found my first Small Blue on Thursday, and another rather worn one this morning.

Great set of images,
Trevor.

PS. They have a liking for old shoes as well !.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-19 10:42 PM GMT

So many Small Blues – an amazing sight Bugboy 😄😄 Much better to have those little beauties crawling over your legs 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 03-Jun-19 06:26 PM GMT

Wow! That image of the Small Blues on your legs reminds me of a similar incident in France when decent numbers were attracted to a pair of shoes that someone had taken off so they could dip their feet in a lake.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 04-Jun-19 10:19 PM GMT

Thanks guys, Heaven knows what the second brood is going to be like if we have a half decent summer 😊

18th May

The good spell of weather had come to a crashing end, just in time for my planned trip deep into Wurzel country and a fabled hillside. I'd sweet talked my chauffeur into believing a day trip to Wiltshire would be a wonderful idea and we'd been keeping a very close eye on the weekends weather, which seemed to change by the hour. In the end, Saturday was the chosen day to go and see a Marsh Fritillary for the first time in four years. We arrived at the legendary hill under cloudy but warmish conditions at around half 9. Things didn't seem overly promising but I bounced out the car and set off up the path hopefully 😊

A bit of wandering threw up very little but I was encouraged by the sight of a few Brown Argus who had decided it was warm enough for action. Half an hour in and my target was acquired, a freshly emerged male fluttered weakly from under my feet and for the next 10 minutes enjoyed a rich and varied photo shoot 😊.





A background of cloud.



Over the next hour or two the cloud would occasionally thin, awakening various butterflies. Not many individuals but the species count gradually increased. Small Blue, Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, Green Hairstreak, Adonis Blue & Small Heath all putting in appearances.



Obviously I was concentrating on the Marshies who appeared intermittently, perhaps half a dozen in the end but mostly looking in good condition.



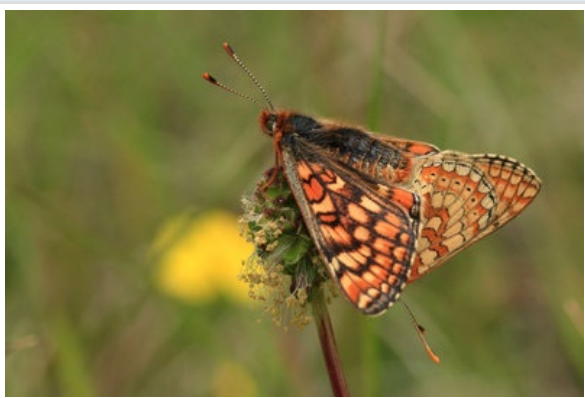
Every now and again though another species would demand my full attention, a Green Hairstreak playing peek-a-boo and what are you supposed to do when a fresh male Adonis plonks himself on the path in front of you and opens his wings wide 😊. It would have taken something like a Camberwell Beauty for me to ignore him 😊!



Hunger pangs told us it was lunch time so we took the short drive into Warminster to find a pub for lunch, ending up in the same corner of the same one as four years ago. Still good portions at a reasonable price 😊.

Whilst eating the weather had decided to brighten up with actual blue sky on display. Rather than going back to The Hill I wanted to browse Battlesbury Hillfort which overlooks the town. I left my chauffeur contentedly reading a book in the middle of the lower meadow whilst I climbed the slopes, adding Common Blue to the day's species list before more Marshies started appearing, making the most of the brighter spell. Courting and mating was going on all around, egg laden females making easy targets for the numerous and sun energized males.



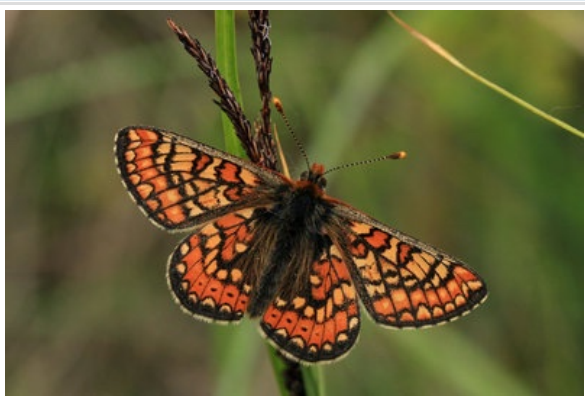




The bright spell ended rather abruptly but not before I stumbled across a small glut of Walls. One female in particular caught my eye, being rather larger than average and particularly well marked. I spent a good 10 mins stalking her but not once did she settle anywhere unobscured by grass.



Although it had clouded over it was still early enough to try another site on the way home, Martin Down. Sadly I've still never seen a butterfly here. A rather stubbing rain cloud drenched us and stayed overhead whilst we sat in the car, drying off and hoping it would clear. It didn't, a rather damp end to an otherwise pleasant trip into Wiltshire 😞





Re: Bugboys mission

by Chris Jackson, 05-Jun-19 05:31 PM GMT

A nice series of Marsh Fritillary photos Bugboy, still in good condition. They will be way past their best in the south of France now.
Chris

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-19 11:31 AM GMT

A great report Bugboy glad the Hill paid off. If you can make a return visit to Martin Down it is well worth it – although on this particular day you wouldn't have added anything different to your days tally. A late summer trip here would be best – Chalkhills, Adonis and blues and browns as well as aged DGFs and the possibility of Silver-spots or Clouded Yellow 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 06-Jun-19 09:03 PM GMT

I've just seen the Pitstone Small Blues, Buggy – what is it with those little beasties? I reckon if you dozed off in the sunshine, you'd wake up covered in them! 😊

The Wiltshire Marshies are a treat as well – lovely and fresh individuals. 😊 That whole series of hills near Warminster is a terrific area.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 07-Jun-19 11:41 AM GMT

Sounds like a super day out, BB. Thanks for the behavioural shots regarding the Marsh Frits. Some interesting stuff going on there.

Your first Adonis Blue is sublime. The light levels must have been just right.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jun-19 07:38 PM GMT

A cracking series of Marsh Fritillary photos Bugboy and I am particularly taken by that female Wall Brown 😊👍

Great stuff,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 10-Jun-19 10:59 AM GMT

Thanks **Chris**, I suspect most of those Marshies were way past their sell by date by the time I posted that though, I'm still behind by 2 weeks!

Thanks **Wurzel**, I may have to sweet talk my chauffeur again 😊

Thanks **Dave**, yes those Small Blues are worse than Purple Emperors aren't they 😊

Thanks **David**, yes the light levels for that Adonis were spot on, and he sat for ages for me, I just couldn't ignore him!

Thanks **Neil**, She was a stunner wasn't she 😊

20th May

No big day out today, a lay in and couple of hours wandering Epping Forest kept me occupied. The weather wasn't brilliant but there was enough sunny spells to start with to create some activity. A few Speckled Wood were active, still way down on the numbers I would be expecting to find though.



On the other hand, moths seem to be having a good year, it seemed to be raining moth caterpillars. Here we have a Small Quaker and some Geometrids.



The woodland rides remained rather barren on the butterfly front though, the June gap arriving early here it would seem. It wasn't until I came to one of the many clearings that things livened up. I can normally come across one or two Small Copper here but today there was a mini glut of them with some of the females looking very nice.





Others weren't in such good shape...



And one had come to a rather sticky end!



Small Heath were also around, this one with a rather diminutive eye spot.



Soon after it began to cloud over again, just a brief sunny spell as I was leaving causing me to pause and admire a freshly emerged Cinnabar.



Re: Bugboys mission

by kevling, 10-Jun-19 06:35 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy. Been away for a couple of weeks and only now catching up with the diaries. I love your set of Marshie photos, they are as vibrant as they get.

As for the Small Blues at Pitstone, I will forgive you for unleashing your hairy legs on us all. Those photos are fantastic 😄

Regards
Kev

Re: Bugboys mission

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

A bit of a 'festival of the ordinary' there, BB, but I experience quite a few of those myself.

Sometimes it's good to just get out and relax without any of the 'highly desirables' on the menu.

Common though it is, it just shows that you struggle to beat a good Small Copper!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-19 09:22 AM GMT

Just catching up on posts Bugboy, you've made my day, I couldn't stop smiling at those Blues on your legs and those Marshie's in a circle looked like they were doing a dance 😄 fantastic shots 😄👍👍 Goldie 😄

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 11-Jun-19 11:52 AM GMT

Catching up with your diary again, bugboy. Love those Marshies and had a laugh over the Blues on your hairy legs! 😄😄😄
Janet

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Jun-19 08:35 PM GMT

Thanks **Kevling**, I think I got perfect light to bring out their colours that day 😄

That's very true **David**, get the sun on a Coppers wing at the right angle and they're close to unbeatable. Just imagine if they were as big as a Purple Emperor, you'd travel the length of the country to see one!

Thanks **Janet** and **Goldie**, I'm glad my legs are keeping you entertained.... I think 😄

21st May

I had two days left of my nine-day break from work, so just time to fit in a few more season debuts. First off, a visit to Hutchinson's Bank to find a Glanville or two. Arriving at the entrance to the lower path I was immediately accosted by the first butterfly of the day, a Small Blue who made a bee line (or should that be a *Cupido* line) to my leg.

Next up was quite a reasonably fresh Green Hairstreak who distracted me from my target for 10 minutes as he played hard to get.



More Small blues were dotted along the path and Brimstones patrolled and flirted but not much else, so I wandered up to the cutting where almost immediately, I found the days target, gorging on Horseshoe Vetch on the bank making for a very easy target 😊.



Another one was enjoying buttercups



A rather nice female Common Blue also caught my eye along with some fresh Small Blue whilst several Brimstone fluttered around and a Small Copper escaped my camera.





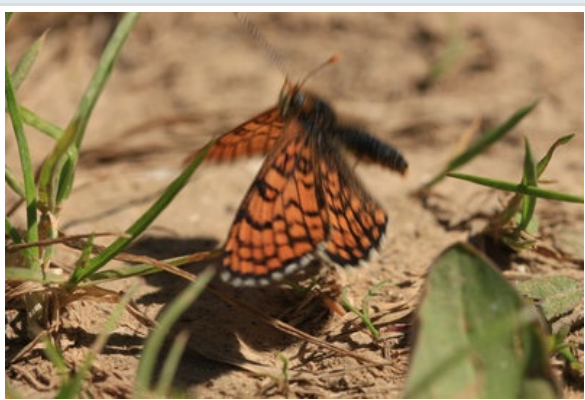
Over at the edge main scrape I found a familiar sight whilst on the scrape they split their time feeding, basking or trying to get up to no good 😊





despite his best efforts he was all but ignored!

No Glanville's were here but making my way back along the lower path I found the third, and freshest looking, of the day. He was flighty, fidgety chap who more often than not waiting until I was down on knees and elbows before darting off a few feet along the path leaving me with lots of beautifully composed closeups of the empty path and blades of grass 😊





Other species seen were singletons of Speckled Wood, Grizzled Skipper, Orange-tip and my first Large Skipper of the year, interestingly a female, some of whom sat still for me.



I also watched a female Green Hairstreak going about her important task of making sure there'll be more next year, adding that species to my 'egg tick list'.



It's been a few years since I've seen a Glanville so it was good to catch up with them again 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 11-Jun-19 08:42 PM GMT

Splendid Small Blues again, Buggy. HB really is the place to go for them. Your freshest Glanville may well be the one I saw in the same spot a day or two later – a very nice butterfly. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-19 11:00 PM GMT

Great to see the HB Glanvilles Bugboy and the numbers of Small Blues 😊😊😊 I echo what you think about the Small Copper – an Emperor sized one of those; a Giant Copper – what a sight to see that would be 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 13-Jun-19 08:50 PM GMT

Nice work with the Glanvilles, BB. You have a bit of spring and summer together in that post. Some soon to be lost and others about to explode....if only the weather would improve.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-Jun-19 06:27 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave**, I think you're probably right, once they find a spot to patrol they don't seem to move very far 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, yes they can reach pestilence levels at HB in good years 😊

Thanks **David**, Those spring species do seem to be hanging on with more tenacity than most years though.

22nd May (part 1)

My last day of my mini break from work and just time for another trip into Sussex to catch up with another species. The first Sussex Small Pearls had been recorded the week before in one of the release sites so I hoped they were out in Abbots Wood too by now.

I was halted in my search shortly after entering the wood, coming across a couple of Green Hairstreaks flitting around some late flowering Bluebells, one of whom was particularly fresh, surprisingly so considering it was nearly June. It also gave me the chance of getting some shots of one on Bluebells, something that I've been unable to get up until now.





Happy with what I'd got I finally managed to drag myself away (I'd spent over half an hour with them) and marched on towards the Fritillary hotspots. At the first two the Pearls were still active and present in reasonable numbers but like last year no Small Pearls were around.



A replacement Small Copper was occupying the same spot as the one both Trevor and I had seen at the beginning of the month



On the way to the third regularly occupied clearing I found what I think is a Pale Eggar moth Caterpillar, a handsome fellow!



The third clearing itself is so far the only place I've ever come across a Small Pearl at Abbots Wood and so it was once again, a fresh male sticking out like a sore thumb. It's no wonder he'd already suffered a bird attack, flaunting himself like that! It had gone a little cloudy and cool so he made a good subject.



When the sun reappeared things livened up a bit, not the plagues that were being seen at the other Sussex sites but I spent a good hour watching both species of *Boloria* going about their business. Male Pearls would follow female Small Pearls only for them to discover their mistake when the female landed, whilst the female Pearls skulked around avoiding the males so they could feed and lay eggs unaccosted. The Small Pearls seemed to ignore each other though, perhaps the males were just too fresh?



PBF



PBF



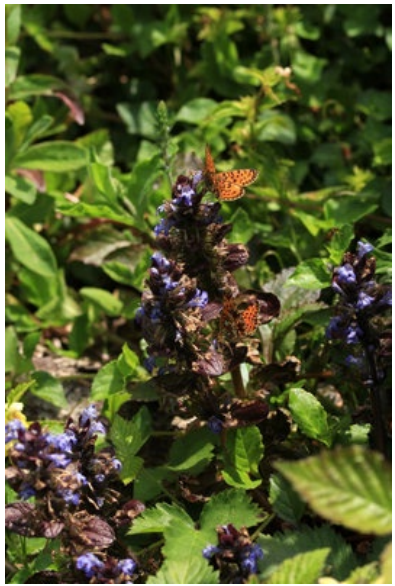
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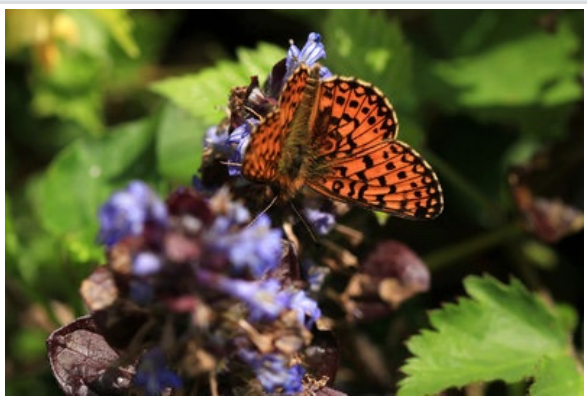
SPBF (the reddish stains on the forewings are probably meconium)



PBF ovipositing



SPBF



SPBF



SPBF, SPBF, PBF

Like my other visits here this year, other species which I would expect to come across were very thin on the ground with no Whites at all and just one or two Speckled Wood and Brimstone. Anyway, that was the morning, the afternoons findings will appear in the next post 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-Jun-19 07:11 PM GMT

22nd May (part 2)

As with my last visit to Abbots Wood I moved on to Malling Down for the afternoon. A large bank of cloud had descended upon my arrival which calmed the Common Blues down a bit, the Adonis though remained quite flighty and still required stealthy stalking. There was also a Beetle which at the time I thought was some sort of Dung Beetle but I now think it's a Tenebrionidae, perhaps *Bolitophagus reticulatus*



After a while the cloud drifted off and along the sheltered foot of the slope there was much the same group of species as before, mostly still in good nick.





As I was leaving I noticed some Small Blue near the gate that takes you past the allotments, I don't recall ever seeing Small Blue here before and I've certainly never noticed any Kidney Vetch here. Nevertheless there were three males jostling with a Brown Argus for prime grass blades.





This aged Holly Blue also gets a mention simply on account of how thin on the ground they seem to have been for me this year 😊.



Green Hairstreaks bookended my day, I followed this female around as she looked to lay eggs. I never saw any eggs actually being laid but I did manage an accidental upperside as she took to the air mid shot... nearly in focus too 😊!





So it was back to work for the next six days but the following weekend was to become another highlight of my year, so I may get a tad self indulgent... 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 15-Jun-19 07:31 PM GMT

Very nice Adonis, Paul, and a mrgreen 🍷 for the Green Hairstreak action shot showing the upper side. Never seen a photo of this, only illustrations in books. It's good to know there's a camera out there that's quicker than they are !.

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-19 07:42 AM GMT

Great reports Bugboy – cracking Pearls/Smalls and the comparison shots are great 😊🍷 As for your dearth of Holly Blues – it's cos Dave has been whispering them all over his way 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 16-Jun-19 11:38 AM GMT

Your getting some great shots Bugboy, of lots of species 🍷 keep them coming 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 17-Jun-19 05:05 PM GMT

That Holly Blue has seen better days, BB! Love the Green Hairstreak in-flight shot. Those images can only ever occur accidentally. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Jun-19 08:23 PM GMT

Thanks **Trevor**, nothing other than pure luck that shot 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, yes, that Dave and his Holly Blue hording ways 😊😄

Thanks **Goldie**, I had another 4 new species for the year yesterday, in less than ideal weather. I'm still 2 weeks behind in my posting but don't worry, I'll keep posting 😊

Thanks **David** a pleasant accident though 😊

1st June Norfolk...

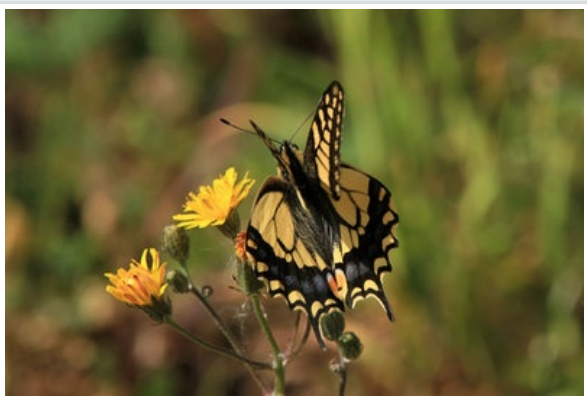
Well, what could I possibly be doing in Norfolk... at the beginning on June... on a sunny day? Time for a slightly self-indulgent post... 😊😄

I'd sweet talked my now regular chauffeur a few weeks previously into the idea of this road trip, and it's only a two-hour journey from north east London so easily done in a day. We arrived shortly after 9, to find the car parks at Strumpshaw already packed and gaggles of photographers enjoying the already active Swallowtails. My only other time seeing Swallowtails was on a rather cloudy day three years ago when I saw four or five all day. This time proved to be far better with 15+ seen over the course of the day. The first couple of hours were spent at Strumpshaw, then stopping off for a pub lunch before heading off to Hickling for the afternoon and finally a brief stopover back at Strumpshaw again before heading home. All in all managed to take close to a thousand images, nearly as many as my 9 days in Spain, so whittling them to a select few to post has been excruciating! I could whither on about with more details about what I did and saw but let's face it, it's all about one species so here they are 😊.

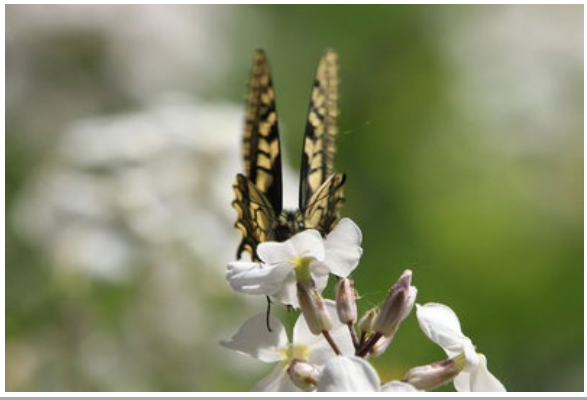
Outside Strumpshaws visitor centre there was plenty of action..



The hill past the Doctors Garden was rather busy too..



Meanwhile back at the visitor centre it hadn't slowed down 😊



At Hickling it had clouded over and, with no specially planted areas they were harder to come by, but oh so worth it when they were found





Just the one lone Swallowtail and a few attendant photographers were at Strumpshaw at 6pm (plenty of room to park the car though) but still worth the 10 minute stopover before heading home 😊



What a fantastic day 😊😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 17-Jun-19 09:58 PM GMT

I retraced your steps at Strumpshaw almost exactly on Monday the 3rd. It was something of an occasion seeing all those Swallowtails nectaring, and just watching them in action.

Trevor.

PS. Good to see you today, hope the visit was worthwhile.

Re: Bugboys mission

by ernie f, 18-Jun-19 02:00 PM GMT

Wonderful Swallowtails, Bugboy. Some magazine cover quality in there too.

Also, looking back – a topside shot of a Green Hairstreak. I tried all season to get that but without success.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 18-Jun-19 07:05 PM GMT

Suitably envious, Bugboy! Your pics are fantastic and I especially like the ones from Hickling. We are here a fortnight later in exactly the same spots and having stayed 4 days in case of poor weather we've enjoyed sunshine every day! But far fewer Swallowtails. However, since I have not previously seen our ss Britannica I'm still thrilled (must book an earlier holiday next time!) Janet 😊😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-19 10:25 PM GMT

A fantastic set of images Bugboy 😊 My cup runneth over with 🍷🍷🍷😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 19-Jun-19 06:05 AM GMT

Sounds and looks like a fabulous day out, BB. In years gone by very few UKB members have posted images of *britannicus* Swallowtails but this year quite a few have made the effort to go and see them. They're always good to see. I find the Norfolk race more attractive than the continental *gorganus* variety.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jun-19 07:22 PM GMT

A cracking selection of Swallowtail images Bugboy 😊 I particularly like the ones from Hickling, as you say, harder work but so much more satisfying for that.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by keving, 20-Jun-19 07:58 PM GMT

Bugboy,

A little behind on your diary, but worth the wait, Cracking SPBF from Sussex and I particularly like your shot of the Green Hairstreak in flight. Very unusual to see it's top side in a photograph. I think we must have been following each other about, as I was in Sussex the same week visiting Malling Down amongst others places and then at Strupshaw Fen for the Swallowtails (of which your photos are excellent).

Regards

Kev

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 22-Jun-19 07:45 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments 😊 I'm glad you found your Swallowtails **Janet**, like **David** says, a far superior beast to *gorganus* which looks like a washed out version to our one 😊. I believe the nominate race in northern Europe, *P. m. machaon* looks more like *britannicus*

June 1st (Brucie bonus post)

Although there were plenty other other butterflies around, they sadly barely got a look in with all the Swallowtail activity. At the visitor centre the Swallowtails were joined by numerous Brimstone, the occasional Orange-tip and, so I heard on the grapevine, a Clouded Yellow.



Out in the meadow there were a lot of Common Blue, the only one I payed more than scant attention to was this striking female.



Along with the Swallowtails, the fens are also home to many species of Odonata, some of them rather rare and localised. I only got a fleeting glance at a Norfolk Hawker, it had seen me first, but there were lots of the more approachable Scarce Chaser (anything but scarce in this part of the world)



At Hickling I pretty much doubled my years tally of Red Admirals, with several looking freshly grown.



I was then stopped in my tracks as I tried to return to the car park to meet up with my chauffeur. A cob Swan casually walked out from the reeds at the side of the path, took one look at me and hissed aggressively, and was followed onto the path by his four cygnets who set up camp. Fearing a messy end to my day I found another path to return to the car park 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 22-Jun-19 08:49 PM GMT

That is a striking Blue Bugboy 😊

"Fearing a messy end to my day I found another path to return to the car park 😊" – a wise decision as they can be really aggressive, you only have to watch Hot Fuzz to know that 😊😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 23-Jun-19 07:17 PM GMT

Wonderful, BB. You clearly had an excellent visit, and that additional wildlife enhances the experience still further.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 23-Jun-19 11:20 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and David it was indeed a memorable day 😊

3rd June

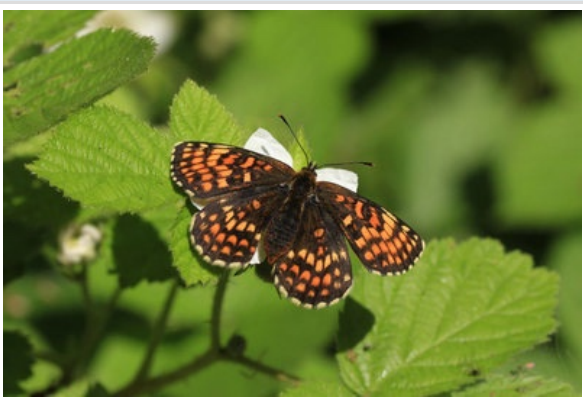
I gave myself the Sunday off from butterflying after the highs of Norfolk, apart from anything else I had 950 images to sift through! Anyway, by the Monday, which I had sneakily booked off a few days previously, I was ready to go out again and find another new species for the year, a more leisurely day looking for the Heath Fritillary at Hockley Wood in Essex. There's certainly no need to chase these friendly little critters, especially since it was a more cloudy day. Also, no need for a crack of dawn start, being relatively close to them as I am.

Although all the books suggest this butterfly is very much a sun worshipper and will only be active in bright sun, a warm cloudy day is probably a better day for photography. They may be not particularly active, but there are still plenty hanging around in small gangs, just waiting for a break in the cloud.





The occasional breaks did happen from time to time leading to feeding and the usual flirtatious shenanigans.





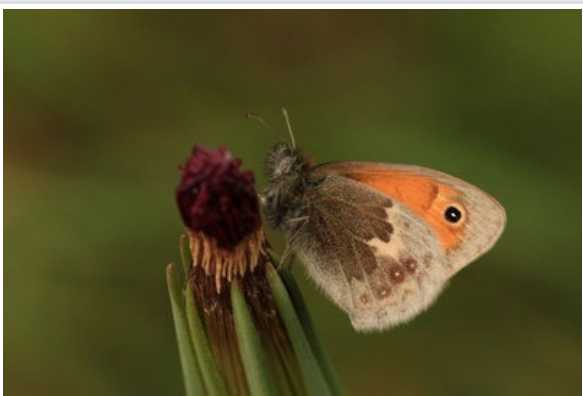
A very brief visitation from a Holly Blue gave me just a single chance of a shot. A shame since I'd have liked a better look at him since he seems to be missing most of his underside spots



Having got my fill I decided to head south to see if the White-letter Hairstreaks were out at Hadleigh Country Park. They weren't but wandering wider afield I did find my first Meadow Brown of the year.



Also seen were a few extremely frisky Common Blue, a tatty old Brown Argus and a Small Heath settling down for bed



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-19 11:33 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Essex 😊 "I had 950 images to sift through" that is the only draw back to a fantastic day butterflying 😊 but still worth it in the end 😊 A cracking set of Heaths 😊🇬🇧 I've seen them in the UK twice - the first time was solid cloud and I mostly got undersides, the second was mostly sunny and most of my shots were of topsides so 'a bit cloudy' seems the best all round 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 24-Jun-19 06:00 PM GMT

Wow, you really are hard at it, BB! How many images did you use up for all those Heath Fritillaries?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 24-Jun-19 10:49 PM GMT

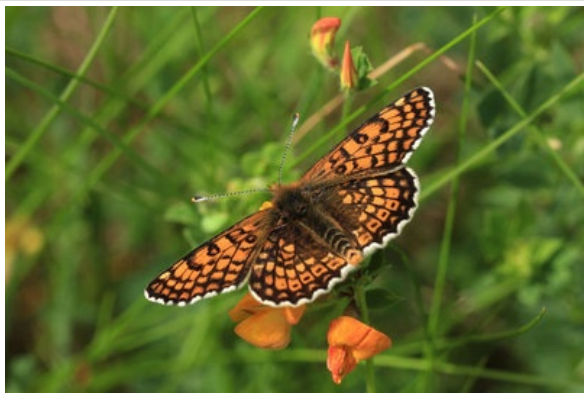
Thanks **Wurzel**, I reckon that end of day total image count is a record for me, I did manage to whittle it down to just a mere 270 though 😊
Thanks **David**, it looks like I was a few shots shy of 400 pictures of those Heaths by the time I left Hockley 😊😊

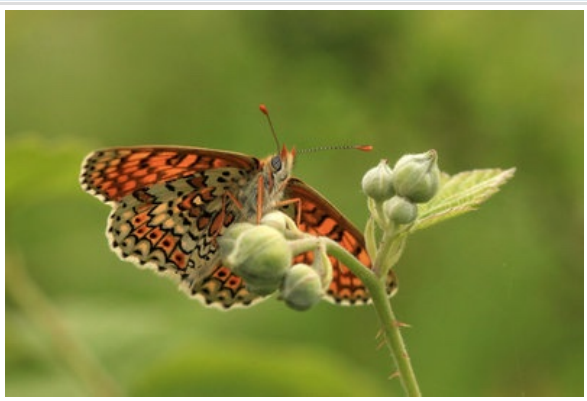
5th June

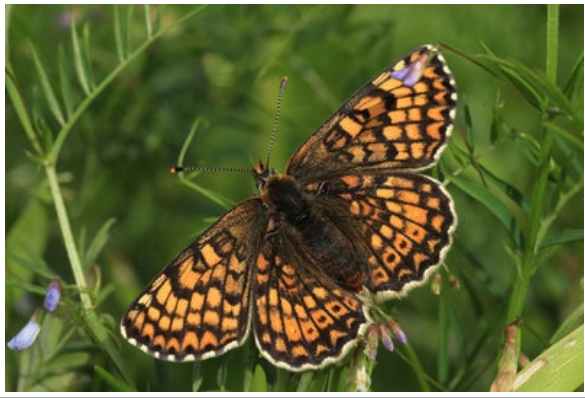
Another day out, this time somewhere new for me, the 'legendary' Wreccllesham. After hearing about it for so long I thought I'd see what all the fuss was about and see if the Glanvilles were still on the wing. **Millerds** precise directions lead me straight to the unassuming patch of waste ground. It didn't take long for the target to appear, a slightly aged one fluttering around and feeding on the Bird's-foot Trefoil in the mostly overcast conditions.



Thinning cloud and sunny spells soon made the trip wholly worthwhile with several more, mostly fresh individuals found, all relatively easy to approach with the regular cloud cover giving me ample opportunities to record the glorious underside 😊.





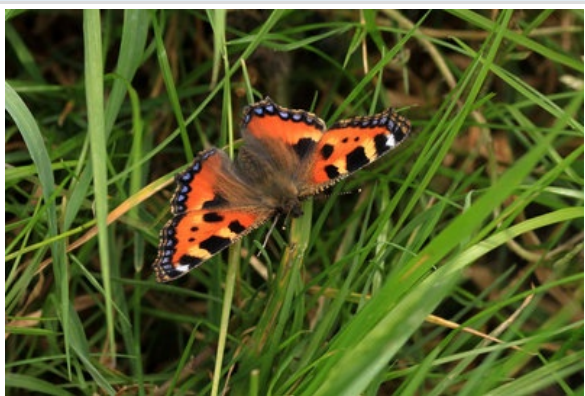


It's a rather small site with not much variety in the habitat so even with such a scarce insect at my disposal, I'd find it difficult to spend an entire day here. After an hour, with plenty of shots in the bag, it was time to move on and explore the wider area.

Google maps sent me on a few wild goose chases, green spots either clearly marked private or simply impossible to reach but after an half an hour I found a cattle pasture with a stile access point next to the river Wey. Lush nettle growth instantly put Small Tortoiseshell in mind here. The sunny spells had all but vanished now and at first all I found was a single Small Heath and an interesting dead tree which to me looked rather like a giant fossilised duck head with antlers and a Triceratops style neck shield.

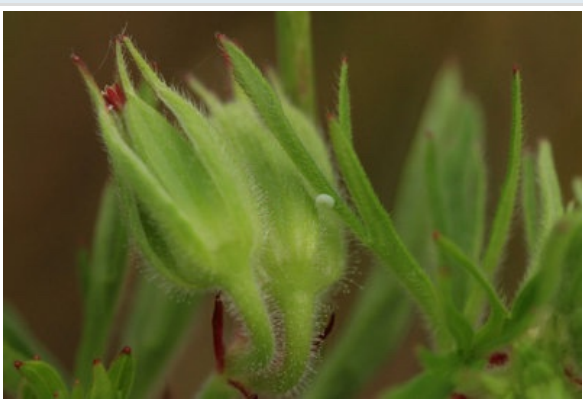


After not too long though I hit the Small Tortoiseshell jackpot (a sad statement for the state of this species that I get excited whenever I come across this once 'common as muck' species 😊), a trio of very fresh emergents plus 3 larval webs, at least four females had concluded this field to be the perfect nursery.





Still with most the afternoon going begging I continued back towards Farnham train station looking for a patch of greenery I'd noticed that morning. A bit of digging on the internet found that it is known locally as Brambleton Park and is an old landfill site that nature has been allowed to reclaim. It was now completely overcast and half an hour's exploration threw up just three subjects, a Small Copper who had clearly lead a very eventful life, an ovipositing Brown Argus and a Mother Shipton.





It would be very interesting to explore this space in brighter weather, there's a rich variety of plant-life here so I imagine insect life must surely be as equally as varied. Quite an eventful day all in all and another place to escape the from the big smoke to 😊.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-19 11:10 PM GMT

I reckon you can guess which is my favourite shot from the delightful collection Bugboy 😊😊🇬🇧 I know what you mean about the site at Wrecclsham. I found that this time apart from a few Blues and some Greenstreaks there wasn't much else, it used to be much better – with large areas of open grassland and a large pond with all the attendant wildlife 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 24-Jun-19 11:46 PM GMT

I can tell by how much you're falling behind just how busy you've been lately, BB.

Great result with the Glanvilles. It's good that there are thriving colonies of them inland. With warming temperatures I would expect them to feel ever more at home in the south of England at least.

Re: Bugboys mission

by ernie f, 25-Jun-19 08:18 AM GMT

Glad you had a successful time at Wrecclsham, Bugboy. Not a place that is easy to find and on seeing it for the first time most people would wonder what the fuss was all about.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 25-Jun-19 08:37 PM GMT

Just catching up with all your trips out, Buggy.... not sure where to start, with brilliant Swallowtails, plus both Heath and Glanville Fritillaries looking beautifully fresh. The Glanville underside has to be the most striking of of all the Fritillaries in the UK – great shots.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-Jun-19 09:57 PM GMT

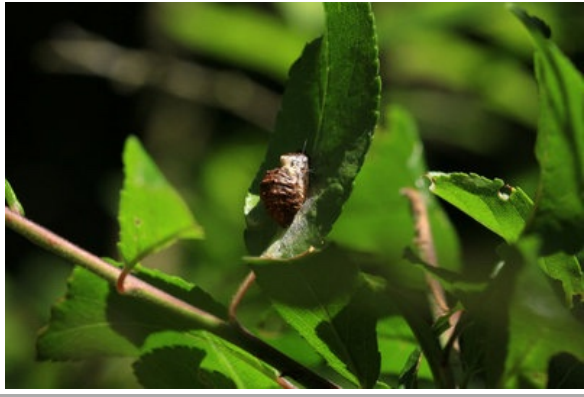
Thanks **Wurzel**, Yes, I have a fair idea what picture caught your eye 😊

Thanks **Ernie**, I did see some Common Blue and Brown Argus there but little else tbh, but yes, a very easy place to wander past without realising it's even there.

Thanks **Dave**, I agree about the Glanville underside, I was glad of the persistent cloud cover that day 😊

15th June

Believe it or not **David** I do also hold down a full time job! So now we fast forward 10 days and a trip up to find some Black Hairstreak at Monks Wood. I'd arranged to meet Rosalyn at Huntingdon station and then catch up with Philib at the wood. The signs were good as we parked, one or two welcoming us here before we even entered the wood as the sun tried to peek out from the clouds. The sunny spells kept the air warm enough for some fresh Speckled Wood to be active as we wandered into the wood, arriving at one of the rides that has proved quite productive this year by all accounts. Rosalyn searched out and found one of the pupae that she and Phil had found earlier in the season, now just an empty shell, the occupant presumably flitting around somewhere above our heads.



We were joined by a few other avid Hairstreak hunters and one female was located who willingly posed for her small gathering of admirers.



Rosalyn, Phil and I moved on to the regular hotspot and watched bouts of activity whenever the cloud thinned enough for them.



Sunny spells were becoming a thing of the past and this seemed to put an end to most of our fellow Hairstreak hunters day. The Hairstreaks themselves however didn't let a bit of cloud to put them off, they seem as comfortable in cloudy weather as a Meadow Brown, and over the course of the next few hours enough settled low down to make the day more than worthwhile. It was only the prospect of rain that finally put an end to my day.





A mugshot parade shows that (including the first one of the day along the first ride) I managed to get six individuals



Apart from the Hairstreaks and Speckled Wood other butterflies included my first Painted Lady of the year and a VERY old Comma (I think this is the latest I've ever seen a post hibernator)





A Cinnabar also stopped by and flashed us a bit of red hindwing.



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-19 02:00 PM GMT

Blooming fantastic shots of the Blackstreaks Bugboy 🤩👍👍 I keep chickening out with this species as i can't justify the travelling for a 'no show', maybe next year...cluck 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 28-Jun-19 06:46 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

Believe it or not **David** I do also hold down a full time job!

I believe it, BB. 😊

It's a bummer, isn't it? I'm looking forward to retirement because my work is often getting in the way of my butterflying, like it is with you. 😞😞

Great Black Hairstreak sequence. This species is getting far more coverage than it used to. Long may it continue.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jun-19 07:47 PM GMT

David M wrote:

bugboy wrote:

Believe it or not **David** I do also hold down a full time job!

I believe it, BB. 😊

It's a bummer, isn't it? I'm looking forward to retirement because my work is often getting in the way of my butterflying, like it is with you...

Oh! I hear that.

Some great Heaths and Glanville Fritillaries there Bugboy 🍷🍷😊

Well done on checking out some other spots in the area too, it is always good to see stuff from places other than the well known sites.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 28-Jun-19 08:45 PM GMT

Some lovely images in your diary recently, Bugboy 😊 From the UK Swallowtails, through the Heath Fritillaries, 'mainland' Glanvilles and those stunning Black Hairstreaks 🍷🍷

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-Jun-19 07:41 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, that's not the end of my Black Hairstreak adventures this year, but more of that in a later post. When you finally get round to it I advise choosing a less than perfect day to get them. You'll get much better returns on a day with a fair bit of cloud and varying light levels, cooler temperatures and a bit of occasional drizzle won't do any harm either 😊

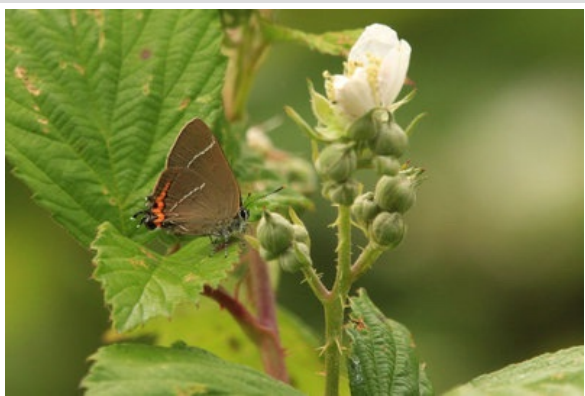
Thanks **David** although it is a double edged sword, we shouldn't be wishing our lives away to reach retirement age, whenever that will be when I reach that age range 😊

Thanks **Neil**, I will probably do another trip in better conditions when the June gap has finished to see what else is there 😊

Thanks **Max**, lots more to come, still several posts behind and with two weeks off coming up soon, I think I'm heading into Wurzel territory!

16th June

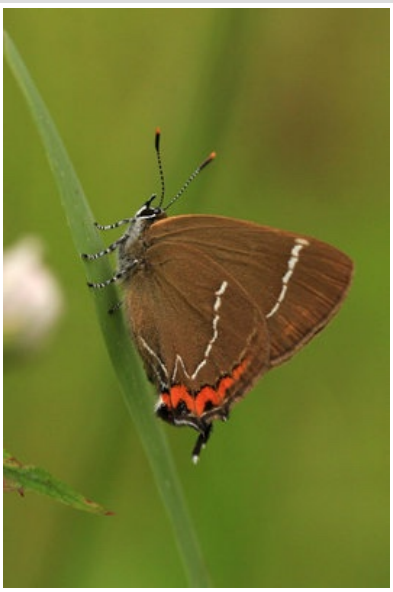
Another trip into Essex, this time the main target was the White-letter Hairstreak. I knew they were out but with an iffy day's weather I wasn't sure just how successful the day would be. The forecast was insisting some breaks in the cloud would appear at some point but I wasn't convinced by the grey sky that greeted at Leigh-on-sea. Rain was also in the offing. I was quite early too so I was pleasantly surprised to find a few WLH active in the cool gloomy conditions. Some Holly Blues were also here, being much more Hairstreaky than the actual Hairstreaks!



I went for a wander, hoping things would brighten up, finding a caterpillar, not sure what he is.



Things didn't brighten up much, occasional chinks in the cloud cover were nullified by occasional light drizzle but this didn't seem to bother the Hairstreaks, more had awoken.



Whilst watching them move around on the Bramble blossom, I couldn't help noticing how the white tips of the tails shone out like beacons, and when combined with the red spot underneath them they really do draw the eye, a perfect false head to distract a hungry bird.



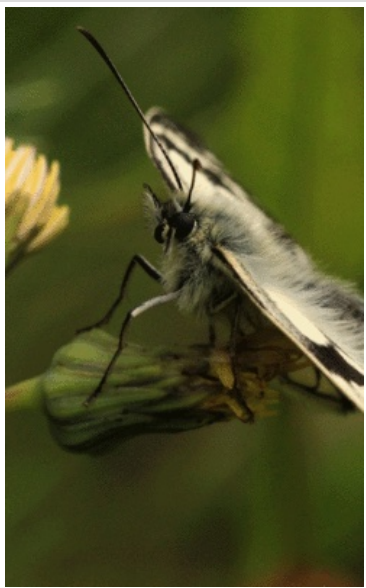
I also managed to sneak up on a Holly Blue!



After half an hour I wandered off again. I planned to go to one of the Heath Fritillary woods again, more in hope than expectation since it would only be the second time I've been to this particular wood and I had no idea where they were. I didn't get very far though, I got a bit waylaid by another season first, a Marbled White.



Whilst getting up close to him I noticed him doing something with his palps, opening and closing them (doing a pretty good impression of The Predator from the films). I presumed this was something to do with being freshly emerged, perhaps making sure everything was all tickety-boo and in full working order?



I managed to drag myself away and got to the wood, where if anything the weather had deteriorated to the point where my raincoat was needed. Still I

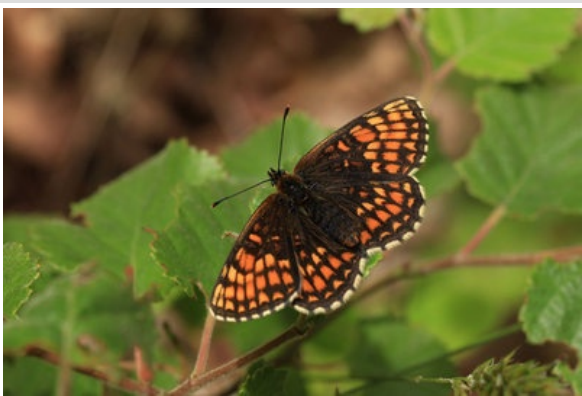
was here now so I might as well have a look around again. The last time I was here I was looking for Heath Fritillary larvae. I failed to find any but I did find a patch of what looked to be suitable habitat, which is the spot I went looking for today. The trouble was things grow a lot in the spring and the place looked completely different! I ended up walking around aimlessly, completely losing my bearings and finally, accidentally stumbled on the clearing. It was still rather gloomy but to my surprise I found a small gang of Heath Fritillaries loitering around.



As I looked around I saw more..... and more. This colony, by all accounts, isn't doing as well as the ones over at Hockley but on the basis of the 50-60 I saw they seem safe for another year as long as the habitat doesn't deteriorate. During the course of my time with them there were sunny spells and more showers, I really wasn't expecting to get such good returns on what was a pretty dreary day. Interestingly the drizzle didn't put many of them off and plenty stayed with their wings wide open in the rain.



The female of this mating pair looked rather pale, reduced marking near the body perhaps making her a slight ab.?





I spent about an hour with these friendly guys before making my way back to Hadleigh Country Park. Obviously I got lost in the wood again.

tbc

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-Jun-19 08:01 PM GMT

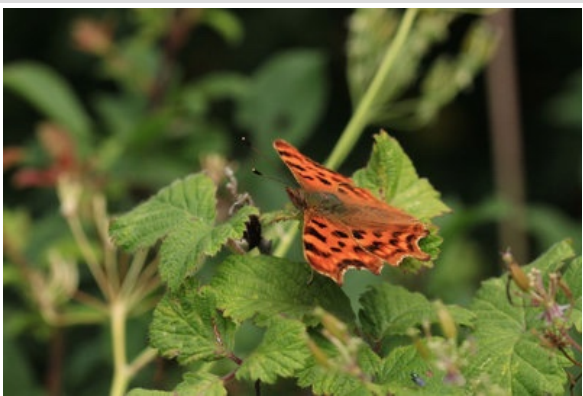
16th June (part 2)

Back at Hadleigh the weather had taken a surprising turn for the better, the gloom had moved on and the Hairstreaks were out in numbers enjoying the sun (Hairstreaks, they're just so addictive 😊😄!)





Joining them were the Holly Blues and some Large Skippers and another wander gave me another season debut, a Ringlet and my first hutchinsoni Comma of the year.



Further afield more Marbled White had woken up, there had been a mass emergence of some Meadow Brown including my first female of the year, already firmly attached to a male, a few Common Blue and in a small corner of a field I found another season debut, it was alive with Small Skippers (as well as some Large). Oddly no Essex were seen (and I did look closely at everyone I could), which were the only *Thymelicus* seen by Millerd the following day. I can also add the Small Skipper to my 'in cop' collection.







I really wasn't expecting the day to turn out so good 😊!

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 30-Jun-19 08:51 PM GMT

You've been in Hairstreak Heaven recently, Paul. Lovely shots of the Black variety. A birdie told me the other day that you have a rather sickening image of a Purple Hairstreak. Can't wait to see it! 😊

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-Jun-19 10:43 PM GMT

Fantastic Hairstreak action again Bugboy 🍷🍷 - your might need to change your name to Hairstreak Harry or some such 😊🍷 Cheers for the info - stored away for when I can get the cojones to go for them 😊 It says something when the Heaths almost get forgotten 🍷🍷

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 02-Jul-19 07:38 AM GMT

Nice to see both White Letters and Black Hairstreaks, BB.

Bring on the Purple ones now!

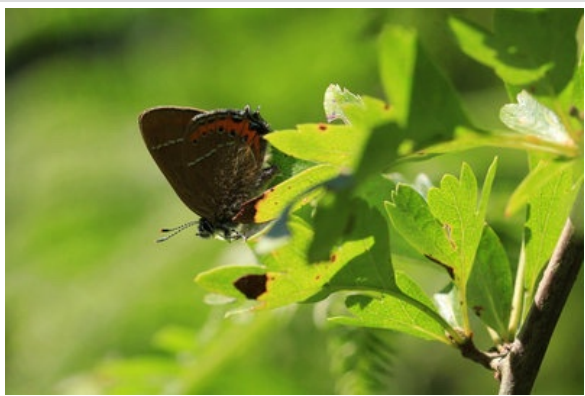
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Jul-19 08:42 PM GMT

I do love a Hairstreak (who doesn't) Trevor, I can't think who that little birdie is who's giving away my secrets is though... 😊
Thanks Wurzel, here's some more 😊
There might be some purple in the coming weeks David.... maybe 😊

17th June

Another day and more Hairstreaks to chase. I wanted to go and see the Sussex Black Hairstreaks but wanted to wait until after the weekend tours in the hope of having a nice quiet day with them, but it seemed that half of Sussex had the same thought! Thankfully us butterflyers are a friendly, good natured bunch. I was one of the first to arrive, bumping into Gary N and Neil Hulme. In the end there were probably 20 or so enthusiasts staring longingly up into the blackthorn. Other familiar faces amongst the throng included Trevor, Mark Colvin, Benjamin and James (B'rex) making it a bit of an impromptu UKB gathering. Several others had travelled a fair old distance to see these little butterflies. I missed the first few that appeared, I think they were females, but as the day warmed, activity increased. If anything the weather was too good, too warm and sunny given the Hairstreaks little need to come down low to find pockets of warm air. Nevertheless a few males did come down, more than enough to keep me happy. These ones were very well behaved and sat patiently while every photographer waited in a very British queue system, I'm pretty sure no one went home disappointed.





By the afternoon it became clear that the best of the activity had happened, it was just too hot, indeed the Hairstreaks were showing signs of overheating and seeking shade.

I attempted to make a move but got slightly side-tracked when I found another footpath on the other side of the road that seemed worth exploring. At first, I found nothing, probably just a case of June gap since the habitat looked fine, but flitting around a bramble patch I found a couple of Small Tortoiseshell. A female busy feeding and ignoring a lovesick male using every chat up move in his repertoire (mostly head butting 😊). She did manage to lose him once but since neither moved from this patch of bramble she couldn't stay hidden for long. Anyway, here's some action shots:





"Don't go!"



"Wait for me, wait for me"

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-19 06:49 PM GMT

Cracking Blackstreaks Bugboy 🤔🤔🤔 I've been in one of those butterfly queues before (for a Brostreak) and they are very orderly and civilised 😊
Not like Twitchers 😊

Love the "Don't go!" shot - brilliant that you can still see the undercarriage before it's been raised 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 04-Jul-19 09:16 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, as so often with those type of shots, 99% luck, well for me anyway 😊

18th June

I had two days left before returning to work but the weather was going to beat me too it, a few hours this morning was all it was allowing me, just enough time to meet up with millerd to find some Silver-studded Blue at fairmile common. Dave had already managed a Small Tortoiseshell by the time I made it. I found a Common Blue when I arrived but other than that it was all SSB on the butterfly front.



The sky was already turning milky and clouding over, a precursor to the predicted rain that was due to arrive late morning. The Blues were mostly taking things easy and made easy targets, the varying light levels and cloud cover making for some nice variations in the tones of blue, some almost steely. I never found any females but most of the males we saw was rather fresh so the majority of the females were most likely still waiting to emerge.



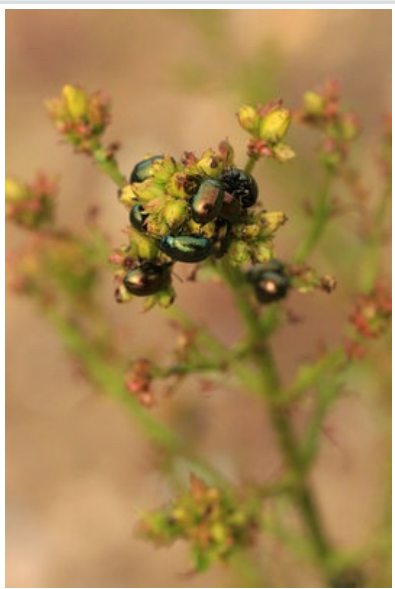




A few other bits and pieces that caught my eye were this spider, who as I went in for a closer look, got himself a couple of meals as I inadvertently disturbed a couple of grasshoppers



And these beetles who were stripping much of the St. John's Wort that was trying to grow here. I think they are *Chrysolina hypericin*, the apply named St. John's Wort Leaf Beetle



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-19 12:10 PM GMT

"hanks Wurzel, as so often with those type of shots, 99% luck, well for me anyway 😊" However you get them they're still cracking shots 😊😊🌍 That is always the way for me when I look for Silver-studs – when I went on Tuesday I saw only three species of butterfly – 1 Meadow Brown, 2 Large Skipper and at least 150 Silver-studs 😊😊 And as you say your shots show a fantastic spectrum of blue 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 06-Jul-19 05:34 PM GMT

I can't keep up with all this, BB! 😊 Breathless.

I dread to think what you've been doing since midsummer's day!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 06-Jul-19 05:56 PM GMT

Some lovely shots Bugboy 🌍 love the Blues 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 07-Jul-19 10:19 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**. Yup, SSB really do like their own company don't they 😊

Well **David**, wonder no more 😊 !

Thanks **Goldie** 😊

26th June (part 1)

Time for my first effort of the year to find the Purple One at Bookham. The past two years have been rather good here compared to previous years, not the dozens that come down at other Emperor meccas but then you only need one to make your day really. I'd heard word that the first had been seen the previous week so now seemed like a good time to try my luck

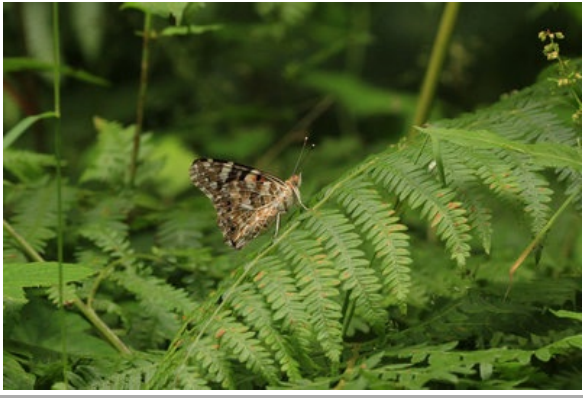
It was quite a gloomy start to the day but not cold and there was the promise the gloom would lift for a sunny mid-morning. In the meantime I passed the time with a few critters who aren't bothered by a bit of gloom.



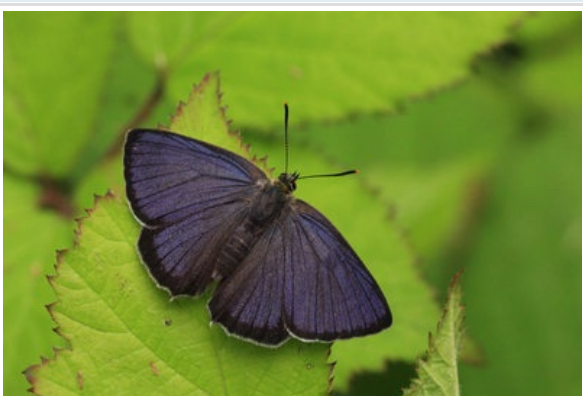
Spot the Spider? The fly didn't!



Upon reaching the most well-known Emperor master trees (should be called arenas really in my book) a largish butterfly shot past me, did a few circuits and landed on the bracken just long enough for a couple of distant record shots before shooting off again to the other side of the clearing. Just a Painted Lady but still worth following in the absence of anything else, until that is I caught sight of something out the corner of my eye which instantly made me forget all about the Lady.

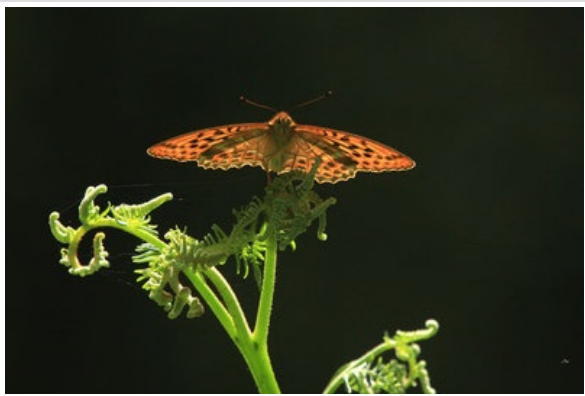
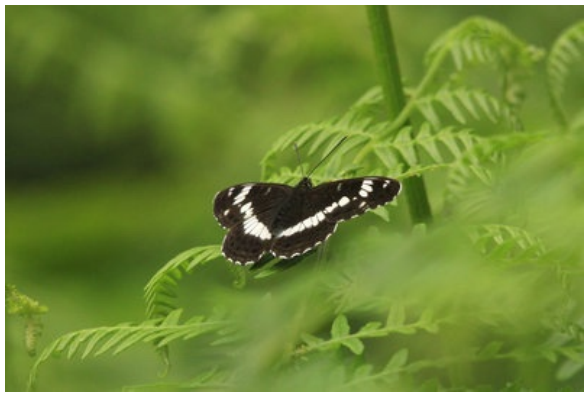


He sat there like a true star, doing his best to warm up. Occasionally a bit of breeze caught him, causing him to close his wings giving me the chance to get both sides.



I'd just messaged Millerd who said he was on his way and to not let him get away when.... when he got away. I slight brightening in the light levels sent him up to join his buddies, sorry Dave 😊.

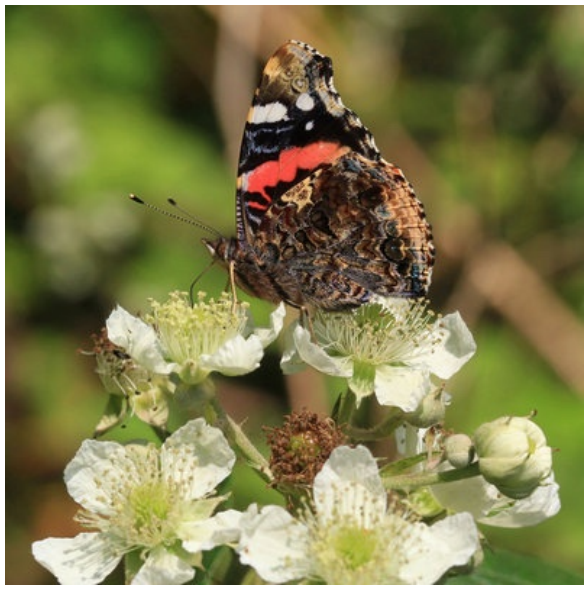
By the time Dave arrived it had brightened up enough for a bit more activity. Silver-washed Frits and White Admirals were now awake, along with good numbers of Large Skippers.



A few tatty, exhausted Painted Ladies were around but our attention was drawn to a much fresher individual, if it wasn't home grown then it emerged not far over the Channel for sure!



At the next sunny glade we found both White and Red Admirals worthy of our attention. Later in the day we would be cursing this particular Red Admiral!



Also here was a White Admiral that seemed to be lacking somewhat in the white dept. It never landed unfortunately so we were left wondering what it would have looked like. We hadn't yet had a sniff of an Emperor, and since it was now well into the afternoon we decided to head back to the master trees, getting another even briefer glimpse of a Black Admiral. It looked to have even less white markings and it was a fair distance from the other one so we surmised it was a second insect, no photo evidence though 😞 .

Tbc

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 07-Jul-19 10:37 PM GMT

Lovely shot of the Purple Hair Streak Bugboy unusual to find one with it's wings so bright and opened 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 08-Jul-19 06:16 AM GMT

Those shots of your male Purple Hairstreak are enough to make one feel quite unwell. 🤢🤢🤢

Re: Bugboys mission

by Old Wolf, 08-Jul-19 04:45 PM GMT

Hello BB.

Just catching up on diaries and yours is a cracker. Where to begin....Swallowtails, BHS, Frits and loads more all beautifully photographed. Many thanks for sharing 😊

First time I have seen a green hairstreaks uppers that isn't a drawing 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 08-Jul-19 05:08 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the PH Paul 😊 Reckon Trevor would have paid good money to be there 😊😊😊 Still waiting to see these SWF abs.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-19 08:14 PM GMT

Cracking shot of the PH, that's a mighty bit special 😊🤢🤢 Still to see one this year all y hopes rest on this coming weekend 😊
"but then you only need one to make your day really" I totally concur 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 08-Jul-19 09:45 PM GMT

Excellent work with the male Purple Hairstreak, BB. That second image is worthy of the species-specific gallery on here.

Re: Bugboys mission

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

Thanks **Goldie**, the trick is to find one early in the morning that's freshly emerged 😊

I'll take that as a compliment **Trevor** 😊

Thanks **Wolf**, it's a pleasure to share what I find on my rambles in the countryside 😊

Thanks **Pauline**, there's still a bit of a backlog so you'll just have to be patient I'm afraid 😊😊

Thanks **David**, just a case of being in the right place at the right time 😊

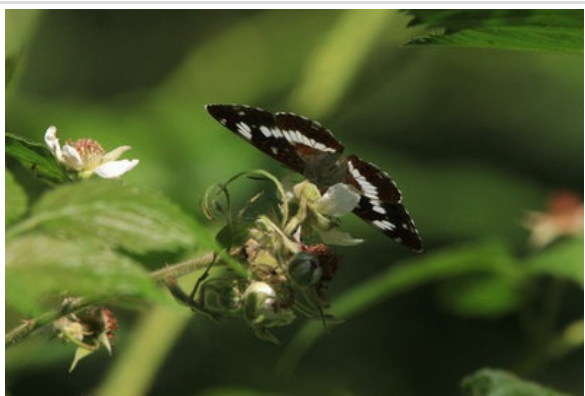
26th June (part 2)

On the way to the Emperor master trees we bumped into a chap who had just seen a Yellow-legged Clearwing Moth. It had given him the slip and he'd failed to get a picture but the thing with these guys is that they only lay their eggs on freshly cut wood, usually Oak, anything older than a year just won't do. Just one more reason why a properly managed woodland increases biodiversity.

Anyway, the chap also mentioned the Emperors had been seen at the master trees so off we went and after a few minutes a couple of males revealed themselves. Obviously, they didn't come down so we were left to gaze up at them and for me to break out my big lens.

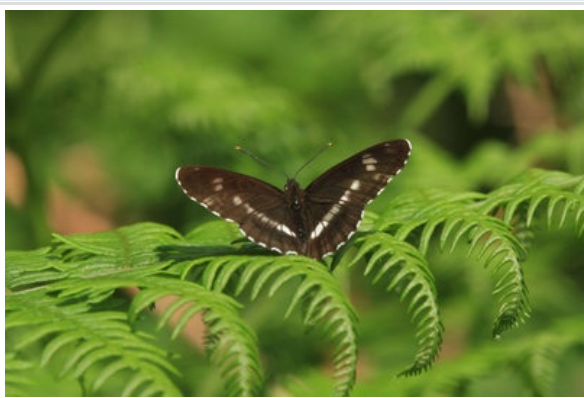
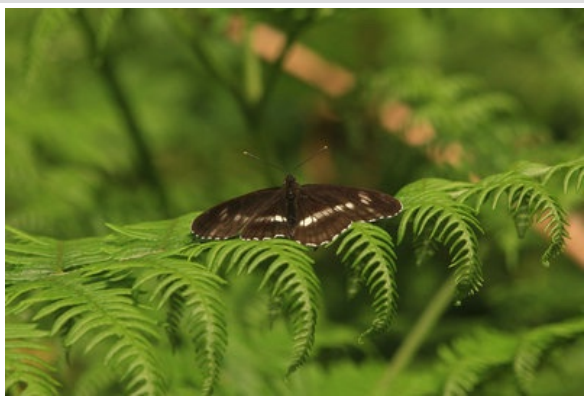


We moved on to do a final circuit when our necks had had enough. With the heat of the day now at it's peak there was very little willing to sit still but we did manage a few bits and pieces as we wandered back to the spot where we had seen the first White Admiral ab.





The WA ab was still about, just making fleeting flybys. The fact that it was still here confirmed we had seen two during our wanderings. I can't remember what I was focusing on at one point but I was suddenly told to stand still by Dave, that pristine Red Admiral from earlier had decided to annex me. I'm not entirely sure where he landed, we'll have to wait for Dave's post for that. Anyway, the two sweaty middle-aged men seemed to be irresistible to him, we were both annexed into *atalanta* territory. A couple of minutes passed as we enjoyed his company when I suddenly caught sight of the White Admiral ab on a nearby Bramble blossom take flight. The whole thing had been a ruse, Red distracting us so White can sneak in unnoticed to feed 😊😁😁! Well thankfully White relented, after doing a few circuits it settled somewhere within reach, not perfect but enough to show the much reduced white markings.





Well that was a long day, over 9 hours spent wandering around Bookham, it's a good job I like this place. Throughout the day I couldn't help but notice that Dragonfly numbers are also building, these are females of Ruddy Darter and Black-tailed Skimmer.



Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 13-Jul-19 06:19 AM GMT

bugboy wrote:

...that was a long day, over 9 hours spent wandering around Bookham, it's a good job I like this place.

Wow. That's a real marathon, BB. Mind you, it's no wonder you like the place with such a great array of species on offer. I wish I had somewhere similar locally.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 14-Jul-19 07:22 PM GMT

29th June

The forecaster's had predicted this to be the hottest day of the year so far and for once they were spot on 🤖. Sensible people would be looking for shade, taking things easy and perhaps supping on something cool. Not me though, I was up at the crack of dawn trying to beat the heat of the day... and failing. At 7.30am the slopes of Box Hill were already alive with hundreds of Marbled White



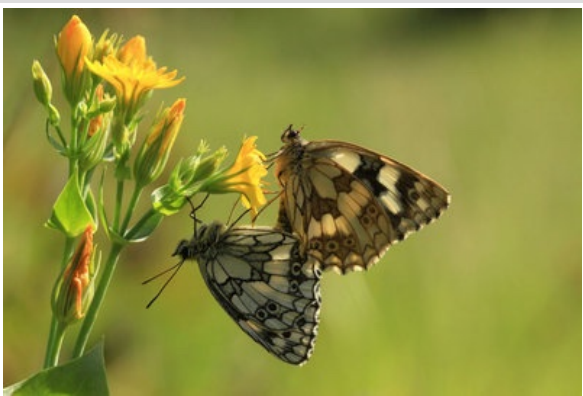


Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Skippers were also all very active and so was my other target, Dark Green Fritillaries. Even this early in the morning the males were already far too active for any settled pictures and I was left to try and catch them as they fluttered through the grass in search of virgins. There was no shortage of targets though, perhaps as many as 30 were on the wing.





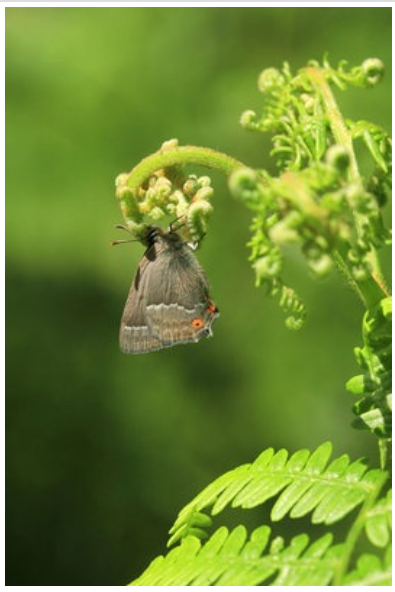
It's not surprising with so many Marbled Whites that I found a mating pair, what was surprising is that I only found the one pair! At least they provided a sitting target.



By 10 it was becoming unbearably hot and I had arranged to meet up with Millerd at Bookham, so I left the Butterflies of Box Hill for the cooler woodland habitat. Being so hot it was inevitable that I had become a tad sweaty, hopefully enough to tempt something down from the treetops 😊 . As it turned out it was probably too hot for most of Bookhams butterflies, with not a great deal visible.

The most notable find was a Purple Hairstreak in the middle of the path as I was walking up to the car park to meet Dave. He didn't attempt to fly off so I coaxed him onto my finger with the intention of popping him to one side so he didn't get squished but there seemed to be something rather wrong with him. He couldn't sit up straight and could only walk in tight circles. Anyway since Dave had missed quite a few Purple Hairstreaks so far this season I thought I'd meet him bearing gifts.





We spent an hour or so wandering around but what we did see was all temperature regulating and there was little if anything keeping its wings open.



Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 14-Jul-19 07:32 PM GMT

Great image of all those Dark Green Fritillaries, Paul. Such a scene could once be seen near me at Birling Gap, but that site is much quieter these days. And my comment on your male Purple Hairstreak, was indeed a complement!.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 14-Jul-19 07:49 PM GMT

Thanks **Trevor**. It's my understanding that the DGF population at Box Hill has been growing for some years now. This year does seem to have been particularly bountiful and I know they are found over a much wider range than that I explored, so I wouldn't have been too surprised to have found they numbered into 3 figures across the whole site!

I still have plenty more Purple Hairstreak action awaiting in the wings 😊

30th June

The following day I planned a similar series of events. A cooler day with a bit more cloud predicted might mean I'd have better luck with the DGF and there may be more on the wing at Bookham. It was cooler but it was still warm enough for the Fritillaries to be rather frisky. They did however settle more frequently and with a bit of careful stalking and perseverance I managed a few closeups





I also managed two mating pairs of Marbled White and as I was leaving, I found a Lime Hawkmoth.



The day unfortunately ended rather abruptly then since trains on the Bookham line had come to a grinding halt. I could have gone back to Box Hill but I chose to go home for a relaxing afternoon sifting through the growing backlog of photos 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-19 08:50 PM GMT

Good work with the DGFs – they can be tricky little blighters 😊 They're adept at flying for an absolute age and then they either pull a sudden turn (so sudden that if they were a plane their wings would rip off) and they're gone from sight or they drop down and disappear completely from view 😞 " but I chose to go home for a relaxing afternoon sifting through the growing backlog of photos 😊 Know that feeling 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 18-Jul-19 10:19 AM GMT

Wonderful to see so many DGFs flying, BB. Sooner or later you stumble across a torpid one when numbers are so great.

Same with Marbled Whites, although this is a butterfly that DOES seem to get up earlier than the rest (Wall Browns excepted). They're always up and about before breakfast when I'm in France, and they seem to keep going all day too, unlike many other species (no wonder they're always gorging themselves on thistles, scabious, etc)!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 18-Jul-19 12:07 PM GMT

Catching up on your posts Buggy, what fantastic shots you've posted lately and such a variety of species 🐛🐛 especially the coupling ones of the Marbled White 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 18-Jul-19 12:13 PM GMT

Thanks **David** and **Wurzel**. I should know by now not to try getting DGF in hot weather 😊

Thanks **Goldie**, you're not doing to bad yourself, I hope your stay down south continues to be good to you 😊

1st July

I took a break from Bookham today and went east into Essex for the afternoon, hoping for a final audience of the year with the WLH at Hadleigh Country Park... and also to try and find some Essex Skippers which seem to be avoiding me at the moment!

I was too late for the Hairstreaks though, the few remaining bramble flowers were lacking the distinctive mini shark fins of the Hairstreaks, their season here was either over or there just wasn't the incentive to bring them down anymore. A few *Hutchinsoni* Comma made up for it though, after a poor spring they seem to be having a healthy resurgence 😊.

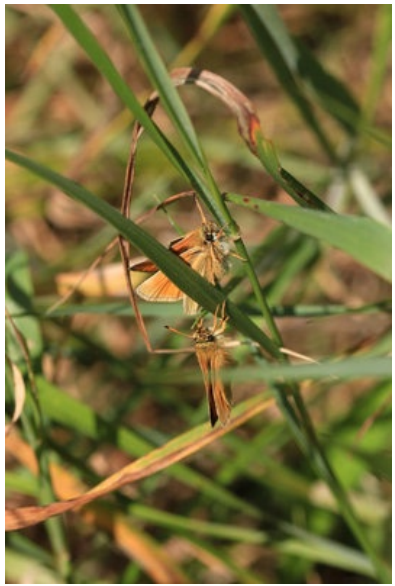


Marbled White seem to be having a rather good season too, even turning up in places where I've not seen them before.



SmEssex Skippers abounded, and in the afternoon sun were particularly difficult to pin down for any length of time, but enough sat still for positive I'd's of both species, at last I could tick of Essex Skippers for the year.





Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Large Skippers were also rather active, and all mostly well past their best, but fresh Commas continued to pop up with a comforting regularity.



After an hour of wandering around I made my way to the Heath Fritillary wood, managing not to get completely lost for once. Where on my last visit there was upwards of 50 I now found just a couple of hangers on, looking particularly lonely.



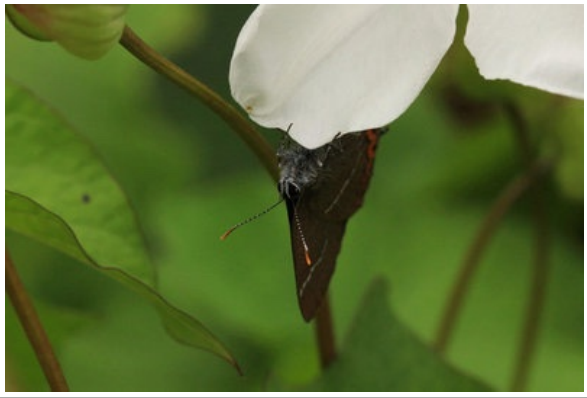
Exploring the wider area around the original overgrown clearing I was buoyed to find a few others flitting around some fresher, more recently cleared areas. It looks like they'll be here for another year at least 😊



Other than a few Ringlets and Meadow Browns there was little else here and by the time I'd returned to Hadleigh Country Park it had clouded over. It was however still quite warm so the Skippers were significantly easier to pin down for a photo shoot.



Before leaving there was just time to have a final look for some Hairstreaks, finally managing to see two or three, mostly out of reach or lurking in the shadows. Oh well, I'll see their children next year I'm sure



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-19 02:33 PM GMT

Great set of shots Bugboy 😊 Love those Heaths – another one of the very variable butterflies 🤔🇮🇪 Seeing your Essex images makes the identification seem so easy, they're so obviously Essex...in the field though it's still a different matter 😊, I'm thinking in investing in some knee pads 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 18-Jul-19 09:21 PM GMT

Shame about the WLHs, BB, but Heath Fritillaries are more than adequate compensation not to mention the *hutchinsoni* Commas and the Essex Skippers).

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 19-Jul-19 07:44 PM GMT

I am trying to catch up on a few diaries, some great reports and photos in your recent reports Bugboy. I am particularly impressed by that male Purple Hairstreak a few posts back, a superb image of a beautiful fresh example.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 20-Jul-19 05:23 PM GMT

I'm thinking of investing in a private osteopath Wurzel 😊

Thanks David, there's always something new about to keep me occupied 😊

Thanks Neil, you did pretty good recently with one of those too 😊

3rd July (part 1)

Normal proceedings were resumed today with return to Bookham, still on the lookout for an Emperor on the ground... I had to make do with one of these though.



I was however to be more than compensated by the local Silver-washed Fritillary population. This first one to settle was somewhat dusky, a marginal ab.



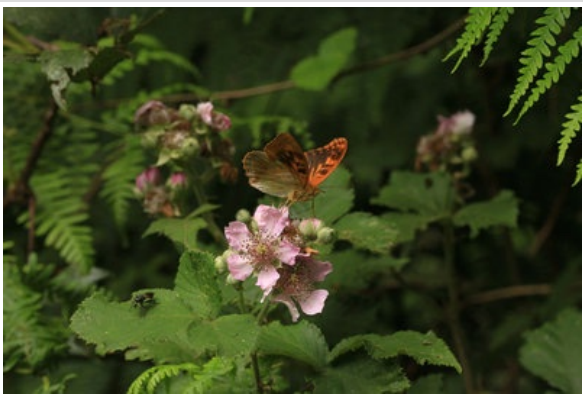
Several normal also posed when this particular one caught my eye, a fresh *confluens* ab.



Who, when it clouded over for a bit decided to show off his beautiful underside abiness too 😊



He fluttered off when the sun briefly popped out but when I looked up, I found yet another SWF ab flaunting himself as if to say, call that an ab, I'M an ab!





They weren't the only ab's around today either, I saw no less than four black Admirals in various corners of the wood, all far enough from each other to safely presume they were separate insects. Not one of them presented itself for a photo though, only one settled but not in a place where I could train my camera on it even for a record shot, oh well, you can't win them all.

Red Admirals were, as usual, doing reasonable impressions of Purple Emperors but none of that particular target were seen, even around the master trees. A couple who were doing some sort of wildlife survey stopped to chat briefly and mentioned that they were coming down in the afternoon here this year. I got the impression this came from word of mouth rather than first-hand sightings but just on the off chance the Emperors had decided to ignore their routine behaviour this year I decided to come back later. There was plenty of other activity here this morning, the usual suspects of Skippers, Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Purple Hairstreaks, Comma and the odd Painted Lady all keeping me company, although the only Hairstreak that sat for me today really didn't have any choice in the matter. It might well have been the same one from my previous visit here that could only walk in tight circles.



tbc

Re: Bugboys mission

by Padfield, 20-Jul-19 06:50 PM GMT

Fantastic shots, Buggy. You've been working on your abs and it's paid off!

Guy

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 20-Jul-19 08:01 PM GMT

Very nice SWF abs, Buggy – there must have been some chilly nights in the depths of Bookham back in June to produce such a selection of dark specimens. Good to see the underside of one of them as well: something that gets a bit overlooked when you have a striking upperside.

I've also just seen your splendid Purple Hairstreak images – I think you may already be aware of the degree of 🍷 I feel about those! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-19 08:22 PM GMT

Lovely set of abs Bugboy – a proper 6 pack 😊😁 The first one looks like the black paint has run slightly from the leading edge of the wings and the second one – well he's just showing off; I bet he listens to The Cure, a bit of a Goth that one 😊😁🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 20-Jul-19 08:23 PM GMT

Very interesting male SWF ab. Great upper and underside shots.

Keep up the good work,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 20-Jul-19 10:06 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys, it was a particularly fine morning, and was followed by an equally fine afternoon 😊

3rd July (part 2)

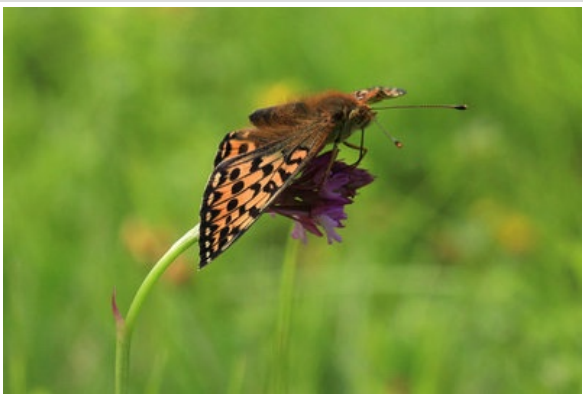
For the afternoon I moved off to Box Hill once again. The slopes were as I expected alive with Satyrids with Marbled White dominating. Dark Green Fritillary were also still out in significant numbers, perhaps second only to the MbW in numbers. Whilst no longer in tip top condition they were still worthy of my attention, especially when a few stopped for lunch. I also managed one quick shot of a very fresh female but she scarpered before I could get any clear shots.



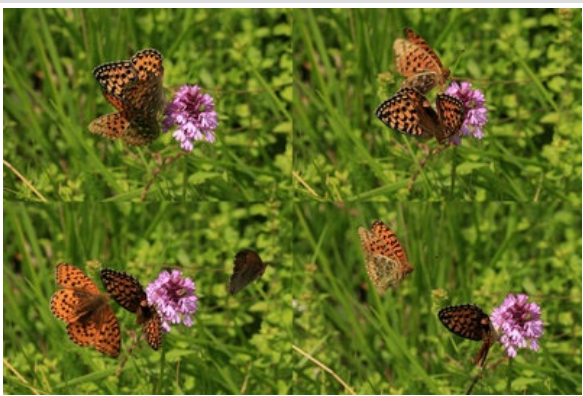
My favourite image of this session though has to be this Marbled White chasing one, a little bit like a mini chasing a formula 1 car 😊



The earlier missed female was rectified when I found another one further down the slope. Despite being very fresh she had still managed to mess up one of her forewings but she was such a good poser all was forgiven 😊 .

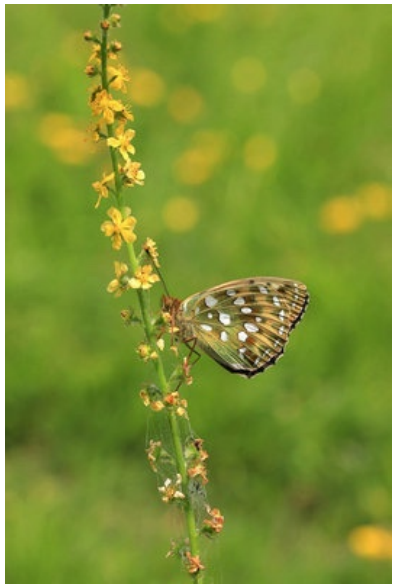


With so many males around I hoped I'd see a mating but when one did find her it was clear she had already mated, perhaps the reason for the wing damage.



Anyway, I spent half an hour with her, taking a rather large selection of images....





Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 21-Jul-19 07:26 PM GMT

Brilliant DGFs Bugboy 🤔🤔🤔 The female do have a tendency to look a little dusky - I've noticed that teh males have a tendency to go the other way being even more ginger 🤔🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 22-Jul-19 06:47 PM GMT

Wonderful stuff, BB, and like Guy says, you've sure been pumping those abs.

Beautiful array of DGFs as well, especially that dark female. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

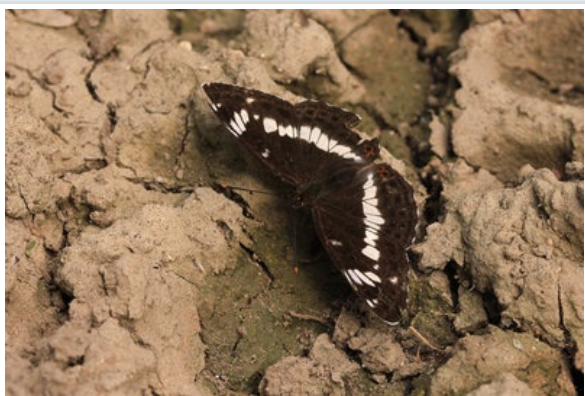
by bugboy, 22-Jul-19 08:33 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I couldn't get enough of that female 😊

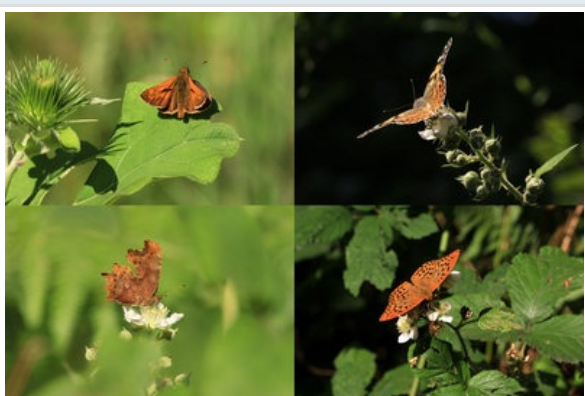
Thanks David, Just being in the right place at the right time with those abs. The thanks goes to that chilly blip back in June I reckon 😊

3rd July (part 3)

For the last hour and half of the day I went back to Bookham, on the off chance that what I was told about the Emperors coming down in the afternoon was true... I didn't see any but I did see, unsurprisingly, several White & Red Admirals on the ground.



Elsewhere it was the usual suspects enjoying the late afternoon sun and feeding on the few patches of Bramble flowers that were still catching the rays.



Another long, but very good day. I went home with a camera full of abs and DGF shots

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 22-Jul-19 09:05 PM GMT

Just seen that female DGF, Buggy – what a lovely specimen and splendidly cooperative too. 😊 They are great butterflies, a very entertaining species. Being chased by other butterflies is par for the course – and watching them at Box Hill recently, I noticed they wouldn't nectar on a knapweed flower if there was another butterfly on an adjacent one – even if the suspect was a tiny Small Skipper. 😊😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-19 11:21 PM GMT

Great set of shots Bugboy – especially the female Meadow Brown – they only normally pose like that when they're past their best and they're all tatty 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 23-Jul-19 10:23 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

...The thanks goes to that chilly blip back in June I reckon..

Yes, I think you're right, BB. Too many species within that tight emergence period have been affected for it to be anything else.

Nice array of species in your last post, particularly the White Admiral. 🍷

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Jul-19 09:04 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave**, She was a beaut and every so accomodating, it was difficult to tear myself away from her!

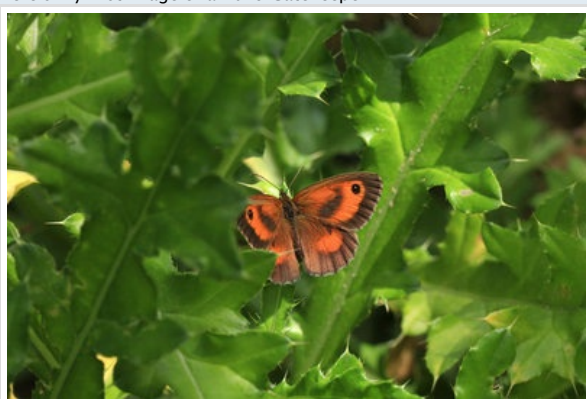
Thanks **Wurzel**, I reckon that MB was freshly emerged so still taking things easy, plus it was quite late in the day 😊.

Thanks **David**, it's always a nice treat when these fidgety species sit still long enough to get a few shots away 😊

5th July

The day before I had done my transects at work, most notable for two things: finding my first Gatekeepers of the year and also finding a corner buzzing with SmEssex Skippers. This was a first, I've only ever found the odd one or two of either species in previous years. Anyway, I didn't have my camera with me and could only positively ID one of the dozen or so, a Small Skipper. So I brought my camera in today with the intention of trying to get a better handle on how many of each there was. My only opportunity to get close was lunch break, when they were nice and active but I was pleased to find it was a mixture of both species, with perhaps a bias towards Essex at 2:1.

Here's my first image of a 2019 Gatekeeper.



Studying my Skipper images proved quite interesting and shows just how difficult the two species can sometimes be to separate if you catch them at the wrong angle. At first glance these next three all look like Essex



but with a bit of computer tweaking and witchcraft I can bring out the diagnostic Small Skipper antennae of the first two., the third is most definitely an Essex.





Every day's a school day!

Re: Bugboys mission

by MrSp0ck, 26-Jul-19 09:33 PM GMT

The Antennae stalk is orange nearly all the way up on an Essex, and Black banded on a Small, whatever the tip is, as the orange often wears off on the Small Skipper leaving the black tip.

you can clearly see this in your photos.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jul-19 11:03 AM GMT

A great illustration of the difference in antennae in the Small and Essex Skippers.

I am seeing a lot of skipper photos recently on social media described as 'Essex' on the basis of the end of the antennae being dark, but in a graduated way and not the clearly defined 'dipped in black ink' look. As you say, a closer look often shows the underneath of the tip of the antennae to not actually be black.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 28-Jul-19 11:33 AM GMT

Great shots of the Skipper's Bugboy, the Essex is definitely one Skipper I always get mixed up. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-19 10:21 PM GMT

Interesting set of shots Bugboy - just shows that my habit of crawling around to get a view from underneath 'to be sure' pays off 😊 does cost a lot in trousers though 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-Jul-19 10:43 AM GMT

Ahhh but the point is **MrSp0ck**, none of the Skippers were worn, it was just the angle they were in relation to the sun was putting the tips of the antennae in shadow giving the illusion of a dark underside. If an observer was just using the colour of the tip of the underside of the antennae as a diagnostic feature (which every book since around 1900 tells you you should do) then they could easily be fooled.

Thanks **Neil**, I too am seeing this, sometimes even when the males sex brand is clearly visible!

Thanks **Goldie**, I still can't always work work out what I'm looking at sometimes, I have a fair few SmEssex Skipper images in my back catalogue 😊

Thanks **Wurzel** and right in the middle of tick season too, the things we do for our hobby 😊

8th July

Back to Bookham! I was still hopeful of an Emperor grounding, although since the first sightings of a couple flying around the master trees, I'd not seen hide nor hair of one. Still as the last visit showed, there's always something here to keep me entertained. A gloomy, muggy start to the day meant it was mostly Browns and Skippers lazing around with the odd white disturbed here and there.



Further into the wood the first Silver-washed Fritillary were up and I rescued a struggling Hornet who wasn't yet warm enough to get airborne and was struggling on some Yorkshire Fog. I moved her to a nearby tree trunk where she seemed a lot more comfortable 😊.



The morning continued to warm up, with occasional breaks in the cloud helping to wake more stuff up, mostly more Browns, Skippers and Fritillaries



But also the Purple Hairstreaks had awoken too. These were mostly to be found coming down in the clearings, flitting around and occasionally landing the bracken, but never long enough or in a place that made lining up a shot a possibility. That was until I caught sight of this one crawling around in the grass, mopping up any moisture it could find. It was so preoccupied it didn't seem to mind me getting down in the grass with it for a few closeups 😊





Late morning found me gazing up at the master trees once more, still no sign of HIM though so I changed tack and went to see if I could find any White Admiral cats, It's been a few years since I've tried to follow some. One reason why I've not is the patch of Honeysuckle that was conveniently positioned around a dead Silver Birch had fallen.. well the Birch had taking the Honeysuckle with it. Anyway, things have recovered now, a nearby tree now hosts a nice growth of Honeysuckle and it was here I found a couple of eggs. It's good to know this patch is still suitable.



Spot the eggs



More butterflies popped up as I returned for one final look around the master tree, including a few Speckled Wood, signs are that they are finally starting to recover after a dire first half of the season.



Nearing the master trees noticed a familiar shape in the middle of the path.



After taking a few shots I went to coax it onto my finger so it didn't get squished and discovered why it wasn't flitting around in the tree tops 😲!



Bizarrely, other than the small detail of missing body parts, she was behaving perfectly normally.





On the way back to the station I couldn't help but notice significantly more Marbled White than I've seen here before. In previous years I've seen the odd one here and there but today there were several and mostly in mint condition, strong signs that they are colonising Bookham Commons



Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 30-Jul-19 11:45 AM GMT

A few mrgreens 🍃🍃🍃 for those brilliant Dark Green undersides in your earlier post. How I missed them earlier, I don't know!.

Some of your best images there, Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 31-Jul-19 03:11 PM GMT

I agree with Trevor, you can't always get the under sides too well. 🍃🍃🍃 I also envy your Purple Hair Streak shots, I went to Blean Woods a lot whilst I was in Kent and never saw one. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 03-Aug-19 08:55 PM GMT

Thanks **Trevor**, most of the credit goes to the butterfly, she gave me ample time to get the shots!

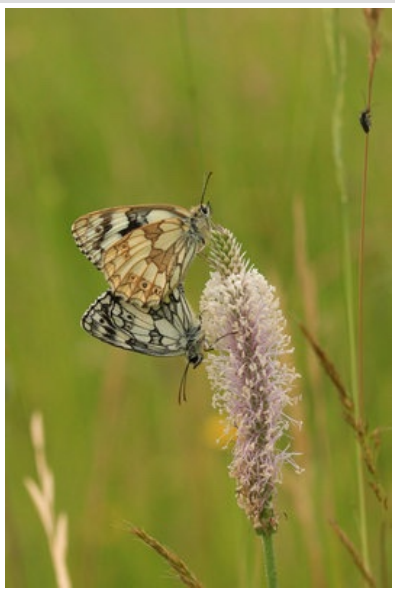
Thanks **Goldie**, purple Hairstreaks are a tricky species, you need to catch them early usually and like some of the other Hairstreaks, different colonies seem to behave differently with some routinely coming down year after year and others just remaining in the tree tops 😊

10th July

The first reports of Chalkhills appearing sent me off to Box Hill today to see if they were out there yet. It was mostly overcast but still warm enough for some life to reveal itself, the Marbled Whites were still out in considerable numbers, some starting to show a bit of wear and tear but females were still emerging and being pounced on by the nearest male.



Position closed!



A few Gatekeepers and skippers were braving the gloom but keeping themselves low down in the grass making photography tricky, this is a Large Skipper.



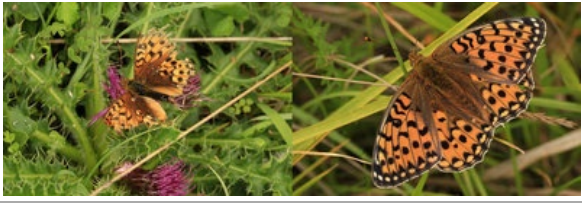
The now rather tatty male Dark Green Fritillaries were getting themselves fueled for another long day looking for females.



Half an hour after arriving, on the upper slope above Zigzag Road and encouraged by a few glimmers of sun through thinning cloud, my mornings target was found. It was very much early days here for them with probably no more than ten on the wing and all very fresh.



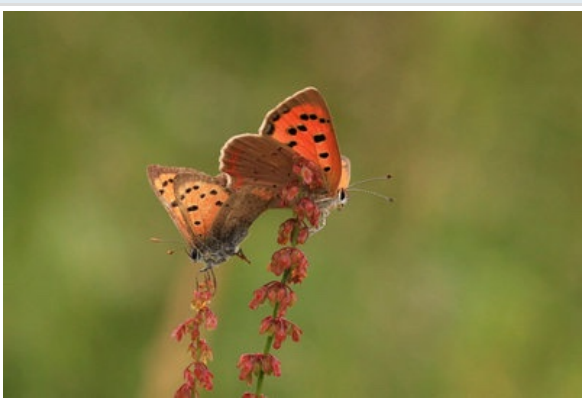
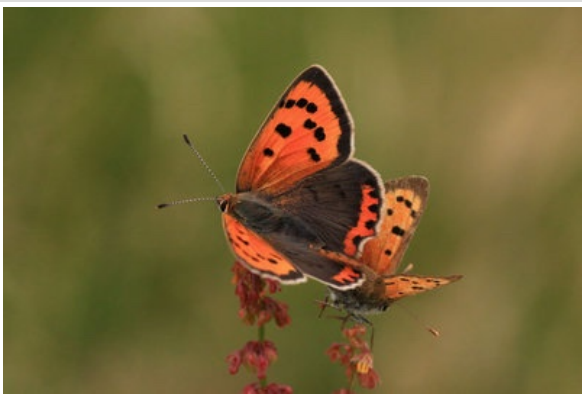
The thinning cloud and warmer conditions had worked it's magic, making the return trip a much slower event with much more to side track me. A fair few more male DGF were now active, some barely able to get of the ground, and I found another nice female, albeit having lost half an antennae in her short life already.



Oh and here's a little something for Wurzel 😊😄.



An hour later I was at Bookham. The sun was trying it's best to brighten things up but it was still a bit on the gloomy side with not a great deal on the wing, a mating pair of Small Copper did make a welcome appearance though. The female, as you would expect, was a fresh out the box individual, the male however had certainly put a few miles on the clock.





Over the course of the next hour conditions improved and enough blue sky appeared to wake up Bookham's resident Purple Hairstreaks



And this very crisp female Green-veined White caught my eye.



The sunny spell didn't stay long though so a return to the overcast conditions sent me over at the White Admiral nursery. The two eggs I'd found were still eggs but I also found two larvae I'd missed last time, I think both second instar.





I hung around for a little longer in the hope the sun would reappear but I was out of luck today, still a nice selection in the bag 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 07-Aug-19 10:04 PM GMT

Lovely sequence of images again, BB. Amazing that the female Purple Hairstreak was still behaving relatively normally, given she was only half of what she once was!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 08-Aug-19 07:15 PM GMT

Thanks **David**, yes she just seemed content to bask 😊

11th July

The following day I took another break from Bookham and went east again for another wander on the outskirts of Leigh-on-sea for the afternoon. I normally stick to Hadleigh Country Park for butterflies so I thought I'd see what's about on Two Tree island at this time of year. Unfortunately there was a particularly stiff and persistent easterly breeze blowing so I had to seek out some sheltered spots. It was also rather warm and much of the activity was taking place in the shade as the butterflies tried to stay cool. As I searched out these places various Browns, Skippers and Whites fluttered (or rather were blown) past. The first photo opportunity came with a hutchinsoni Comma nectaring on some bramble blossom.





I managed to corner a few Small Whites as they nectared on some Black Horehound but not much else sat, or was able to, long enough to get any snaps.

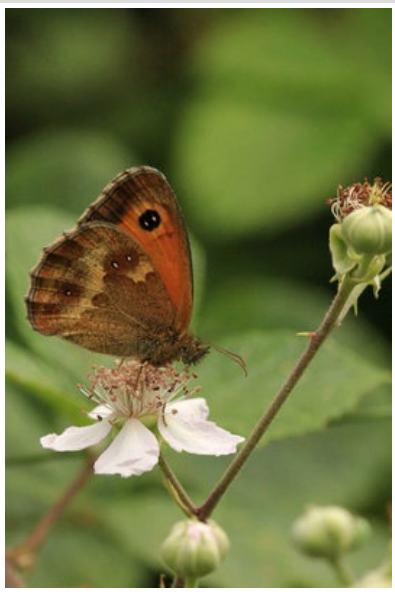


After an hour I decided to wander over to the Country Park. As I was walking past the car park, I noticed a Comma fly up into an Ash. At first, I just assumed in an attempt to hide from the sun but when I trained my big lens on it, it seemed to be feeding on something. I watched it for a few minutes as it climbed around and worked out it seemed to be concentrating on the buds. I'm not sure what it was getting from them, they were dry to the touch.



Anyway, over in the Country Park I managed to find myself some relatively sheltered bits of Creeping Thistle and at last some butterflies willing to sit for me. Skippers seemed to be made up mainly of the Essex variety, some Peacock were busy fattening up for winter and more Commas were sat around defending territories and nectaring on more usual fare.







Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-19 08:42 PM GMT

Just catching up after a week or so away – cheers for the excessa – I've only seen one this year 🤪 though I've still to visit my Outlaws 😊 Your other one looks good for an aberrant as well – you don't often see the spots demarkated as celarly as that or drawn into 'streaks' 🤪🌍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 09-Aug-19 06:50 PM GMT

That's a beautiful colour on that Small White, BB. Love the Commas too!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 10-Aug-19 07:55 PM GMT

Looking forward to your Portugal pictures **Wurzel** 😊

Thanks **David**, it shows it's always worth taking notice on the common species 😊

12th July

Meanwhile, back at Bookham: Yup it really is that time of year I might as well pitch up a tent at this place 🤪! I was still living in hope that a Purple Emperor would pay me a visit to the woodland floor. The protracted emergence they seem to be experiencing, no doubt due to the cool June, should mean there's still some fresh males looking for minerals but once again I was left wanting, not a sign of them was seen. Purple Hairstreaks on the other hand were yet again tumbling from the treetops in serious numbers, another warm day was bringing them down looking for moisture.



The usual suspects were also up and about, mostly too active to sit still, some freshly emerged butterflies did allow me to approach though.



The White Admiral cats from the last visit were enjoying themselves, one posing on the end of its poo pier, the other looked like it had been playing in its aerial latrine, or perhaps on its way to top it up. The two eggs had still to hatch.





Just around the corner is a small clearing which only catches the sun for a short time each day. A couple of Purple Hairstreaks were here. A female stopped to bask briefly before ascending back into the Oaks but a male seemed rather addicted to some Bramble Blossom. I disturbed him a couple of times trying to line up shots but each time he fluttered back onto the same flower. I think this is only the second time I've ever seen one nectaring from a flower, the last one being when I was still using slide film! He was still gorging when I left him to it.



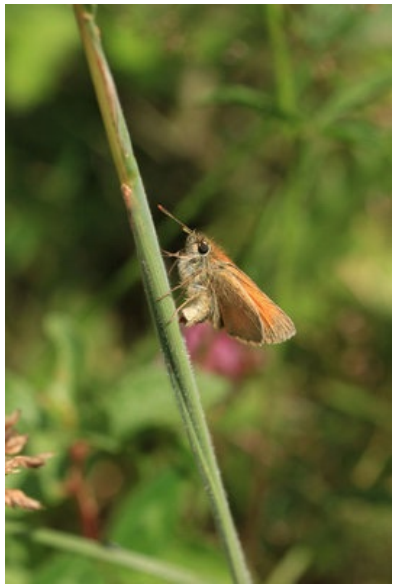


Some striking Vanessids were brightening up the place and a few fresh Satyrids lounged around.



I was only here for the morning, I wanted to leave early and get an early night since I had a long day lined up the next day chasing a national rarity, but before leaving I noticed a Skipper taking a keen interest in some grass. There was no need to check it's ID with a close inspection of the antennae, the foodplant choice, Yorkshire Fog, was enough to pin this one down to a female Small Skipper. No eggs were actually laid but it was still fascinating to watch as she searched for the gap in the blade with the tip of her abdomen.





Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-19 08:58 PM GMT

I hope they live up to the wait Bugboy as they probably won't be ready until Christmas 🤔😄 Cracking sets of Purp shots – love the one at an angle where it shimmers metalically 🤔🌱🌱

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 10-Aug-19 09:36 PM GMT

Been catching up on your diary, Bugboy – you've had a great summer and it's not over yet! Wonderful to see your pics, especially those Purplestreaks 🌱🌱. Keep them coming 😊

Janet

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 12-Aug-19 10:38 PM GMT

Good observations, BB, with a distinct contrast in the behaviour of the 'colour purples'. It seems the Emperors have been rather reluctant to display on the ground this year whereas the Hairstreaks have behaved with irregular abandon!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 14-Aug-19 01:13 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, he gave me plenty of time to get every conceivable angle 😊

Thanks **Janet**, There's still plenty to go yet, I'm a month behind now.... Wurzel is snapping on my heels 😊

Thanks **David**. Yes there's been relatively few HIM reports this year compared to previous, even Neil had to resort to Chiddingfold for his fix of groundings this year from the looks of things! This is the third year in a row that the Hairstreaks at Bookham have been bountiful and they seem to go on for ages, I had a reasonably fresh one just three days ago there!

13th July

I'd left adding the Large Blue to the years tally a little late this year (I'm normally at Daneway late June or Early July) but one thing or another had meant I'd not managed to see them yet and with July running away already I wondered whether I'd be too late. Under my own steam Saturday is the only day of the week I can get there (train fares being scandalous during the week and the bus service to Sapperton doesn't run on a Sunday) and since I work alternate weekends as well, my opportunities are very limited! Anyway the 13th looked like my last chance to get lucky this year, the forecast seemed good and Daneway is late site for them so fingers crossed there'd still be enough on the wing to make the trip worthwhile.

After getting the train to Stroud and then the bus to Sapperton it's just a short 15 minute stroll along the Wysis Way which pops out at the bottom of the Daneway Inn. The footpath in this part of the world roughly follows the River Frome and is quite a pleasant walk.



A short stretch of the river (barely a trickle to be honest) was canalised at some point and decorated rather extravagantly!
Despite the prospect of Large Blues mere minutes away I still couldn't resist stopping to record some of the many butterflies here.



Daneway Bank was almost empty of people, I imagine a fortnight previous it would have been crawling with enthusiasts, but within a couple of minutes of walking through the gate a Large Blue flew past me. I managed to keep eyes on it until it settled, unsurprisingly past it's best but a good sign that I wasn't too late, it's unlikely I'd stumbled across the last individual of the year!



Being later than usual many of the other butterflies that I'm used to seeing fresh out the box here, Skippers, Browns etc, were also past their best but this beauty stopped me in my tracks 😊.



I also had a go looking for some eggs but all I found was this cute lady looking back at me 😊.



I bumped into a chap who had been surveying for Large Blue eggs who confirmed there were still plenty on the wing, mostly at the far end of the site and it was here that another gave me the run-around. It looked quite fresh from what I could see but it never settled within range of my camera. Another one did though, quite often. A few shots taken then I'd lose it as it flew behind a bush or up the slope faster than my legs could follow it, a few minutes later and it would turn up again. four times I re-found it, instantly recognisable from the reduced forewing spotting.



Before taking a well-earned break for lunch at the Inn I managed another one who was most definitely living out her twilight years!



An hour later I back on the slope, finding the prize of the day 😊. The hazy sun that caused her to open up really made her glow. At one point she opened her wings flat and quivered them, I thought perhaps this was an attempt to attract the attention of a passing male. Being late in the season it's fair to surmise that males were now a bit thin on the ground, so perhaps she hadn't yet mated.





This presumption was put to bed when I followed her to some Marjoram and watched her lay.



One last slow meander around the site threw up just one more aged Blue and a few other fresh butterflies that were worthy of my time and a grasshopper sitting rather proudly atop an Orchid.



Well worth the visit in the end



Daneway Banks as viewed from the Wysis Way

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 14-Aug-19 06:13 PM GMT

Love your shots of the Blues Bugboy their colour really stands out 🍷😄 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 14-Aug-19 07:35 PM GMT

My goodness, that last female Large Blue was certainly worth the wait. 😊🍷 Absolutely immaculate – to see one without even any slight damage to the fringes is amazing. I imagine those tired-looking males would have come alive when they found her... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 15-Aug-19 08:48 PM GMT

I'm with Dave on this one that's a cracking final Large Blue, well worth the wait 🤔👀 Could she have been shivering to get her flight muscles 'warmed' up? Your second looks good for an aberrant 😊 Well I better get back to trying to catch up with you 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 15-Aug-19 08:57 PM GMT

I have to agree with Dave and Wurzel, what a stunner that female Large Blue was 🤩😊

Max/Mike 😊

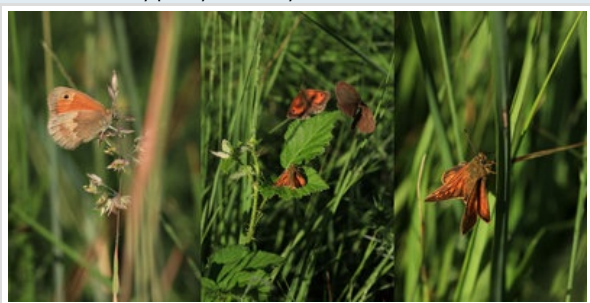
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-Aug-19 09:34 PM GMT

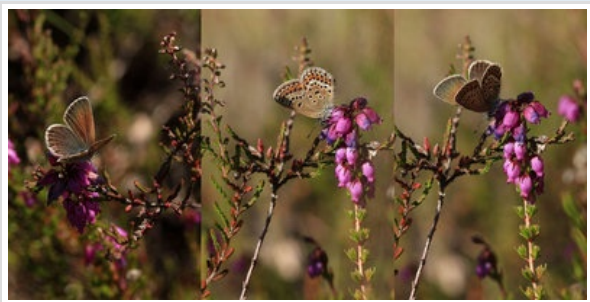
Thanks guys, that Blue really was a stunner and luckily I had her for a good 5 minutes so plenty of time to fill my boots with her 😊. I'm not sure she needed to warm up Wurzel, as I recall it was pretty warm even when the sun was hiding. Being freshly emerged perhaps she was flexing her flight muscles?

16th July

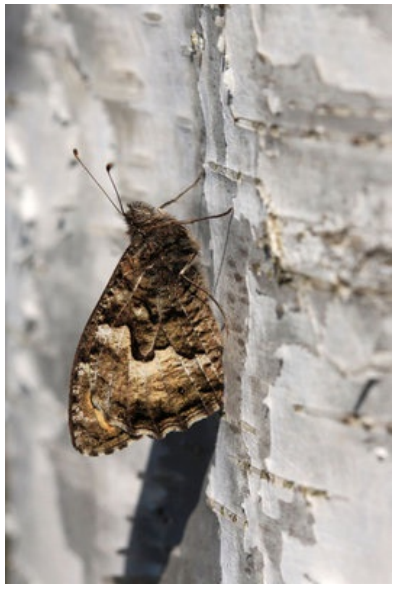
A warm day with sunny spells in mid-July sounded like a good time for a first visit of the season to see Chobham's resident Graylings. On any summers day you can probably add a few extra degrees to the predicted temps here so it was an early start in an attempt to avoid the harsh afternoon heat. There was already plenty of activity when I arrived at 8.30



When I got to the usual hilltopping area the Graylings were at first obvious by their absence but I did find a few fresh female Silver Studded Blues



The target didn't stay absent for long though, I was accosted by one who had claimed possession of an old Silver Birch, making a mockery of the old 'spot the Grayling' game! As did one trying to hide behind some green grass 😊!



More males soon began to appear as I explored, putting a bit more effort in the camouflage malarkey. It was clearly early in the flight here, they all looked fresh and I didn't notice any females lurking and avoiding male attention.



More SSB were dotted around, some males not looking too shabby.



A final attempt at a feeding Grayling lead to an interesting blur, who'd have thought a Grayling in mid take off would bear a passing resemblance a feeding Hummingbird Hawkmoth (or maybe I need to put my reading glasses on...!)



In all the years of visiting this place I've never actually ventured across the M3 to the southern half of the Common. You've probably guessed from the inclusion of that sentence that today I did venture into new territory, stopping off here and there when various butterflies distracted me. A rather nice Peacock slipped through the net but some Whites caught my eye.





I also followed a Marbled White around, willing it to settle. This is the first time I've ever seen one here, they are definitely spreading at the moment. Sadly it didn't settle for me.

On the south side there seemed fewer butterflies, perhaps due to it being rather warm now, but I did come across some more SSB



And a small (and in the warm spell, diminishing pool) was alive with Odonata. Small Red and Azure Damselflies were busy sorting out the next generation and a Four Spotted Chaser sat whilst a couple of Hawkers hawked over the water.



Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 16-Aug-19 07:28 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy,

Just caught up with your report from Daneway Banks. I had my first visit to the site this year and was there just over two weeks before you and many of the Large Blues were already looking worn, both males and females. That female was a great find and the hazy sun you describe would have been much better conditions than the full and hot sun I had all day.

Yep, you are right, a fortnight earlier it was crawling with enthusiasts.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 17-Aug-19 02:18 PM GMT

I'm so pleased you found those Large Blues, BB, given the effort you put in just to get to Daneway.

That female is surprisingly fresh-looking. I wouldn't have thought that possible given the date. Also nice when they open up, and it seems the weather was ideal for this.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Aug-19 10:36 PM GMT

I'm normally one of those hoards on the slope Neil 😊 I was there last year in the middle of the heatwave, 35+ degrees was not pleasant and we stayed over and returned the following morning at 7.30...it was still too late to get them waking up!

I guess I just got lucky with that female **David**. Unlike other species this year I don't think we can blame the cool June blip for causing any delayed emergences, ants are very good at keeping the nests at optimum temperatures, they came up with air conditioning many millions of years ago!

17th July

After a five day break it was back to Bookham. This time though only for a short time, I'd arranged to meet Millerd and go on to Chiddingfold for Wood White and perhaps, just maybe, something of a purple persuasion 😊.

I was however at Bookham long enough to see a few bits and pieces, some Silver-washed Fritillary were still not looking too shabby, the Gatekeepers were now getting into full swing and a Small Copper posed.



Dave found me lurking in the bushes as I tried to get a clear shot of a nice Comma 😊



At Chiddingfold the few Wood Whites that had decided not to wait until next May were flitting weakly around, only one of the ten or so actually settled so I will end the year with just half a dozen images this year. I imagine the cool June encouraged the majority to wait until next year.



There was a fair bit else about (but nothing purple). This leaf seemed popular for some reason



And some Silver-washed Fritillary put on a decent show.



Over at the Oaken Wood end Marbled Whites could be found and not long before leaving a White Admiral made for an interesting angle



Also seen here were other Whites and Brimstones, Red Admirals, Ringlets and Skippers

We still had most of the afternoon left to play with so we plumped for one more site before calling it a day, Denbies to see how the Chalkhills were doing. It was a bit breezy, as always, but the Blues weren't as numerous as we hoped for, and what was around made it tough going but a bit of determination made the final stop worthwhile.







A female Dark Green Fritillary made a nice bonus end to the day



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 18-Aug-19 08:22 AM GMT

"Being freshly emerged perhaps she was flexing her flight muscles?" – that's what I meant Bugboy – warming up like a professional cross country sprinter ready to lead unsuspecting butterfly enthusiasts on a merry (and sometimes dangerous on those slopes) dance 😄😄
Cracking set of Chalkhills and I really like the 'incoming' Silver Washed 😄😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 19-Aug-19 06:47 PM GMT

That's a great post, BB, embellished nicely with the moving 'gif'. I have to say those Chalkhills look absolutely superb, and the lighting must have been perfect for you to get both those Meadow Browns to open up simultaneously.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 19-Aug-19 08:56 PM GMT

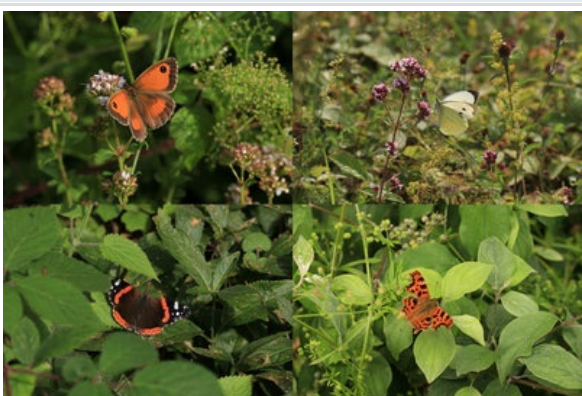
"ready to lead unsuspecting butterfly enthusiasts on a merry (and *sometimes dangerous* on those slopes) dance 😄😄" The far end **Wurzel**, where the upper slope meets the lower one, ninja mountain goat skills are needed at that end 😄
Thanks **David**, Those Meadow Browns just happened to be sitting there as we walked past 😄

21st July

Today had the makings of one of my long trips, taking in a number of sites, one of which would be new for me, starting and ending at Tring station. First stop was Aldbury Nowers Nature Reserve a place I've not visited at this time of year for a few seasons. I was hoping for a good session with Chalkhill Blues and the odd Dark Green Fritillary... I was also hoping the weather forecast, sunny spells for most the day, would come to fruition. It was a hatrnick of fails 😄. The sun all but vanished by 10, SWF were the only Fritillaries present and it was hard going to find just one Chalkhill.

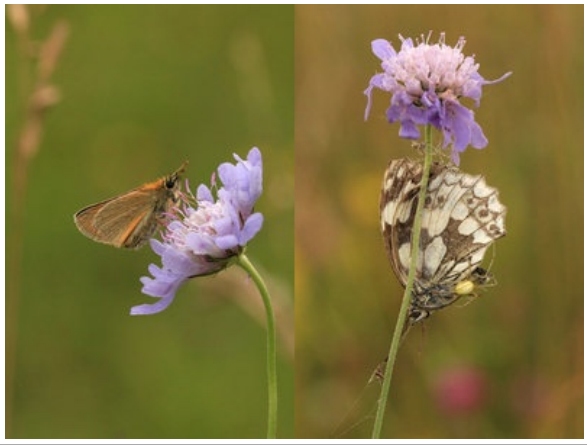


Gatekeepers were very much king on the Satyrid front, the few remaining Ringlets and Meadow Browns looked like they were only just clinging onto life. Not much else was around but what did sit for me was worthy of my attention.



A few Large and Small Skippers, also living out their final days, completed the species list here.

Moving out onto the windswept slopes of the Ridgeway Walk, butterfly life was rather more difficult to locate. Finding sheltered spots out of the wind was the only course of action and considering the conditions proved relatively fruitful.





Ultimately though the Ridgeway was just a means to get to the next site on the day's agenda, Pitstone Quarry. Here I caught sight of some blue sky again which warmed the air enough to awaken a few more species to add to the days tally. I was primarily after second brood Small Blues here, which I found, but only a handful. I suspect once again June was to blame, the cold snap curtailing the second brood numbers.

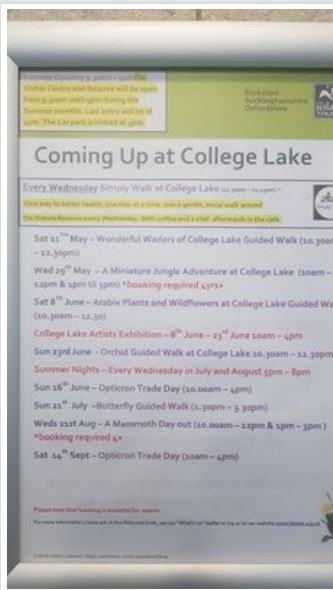


Gatekeepers were once again the most numerous species but I also found a few other fresh butterflies here and there.





My next stop was the new site for me, Collage Lake Nature Reserve. This is one of the old chalk quarries which litter this part of the world and is primarily a birding site from the looks of things but they do seem to cater for people with other interests and a quick look at the months events I found I came on the right day 😊!



I decided to give the guided walk a miss and go it alone, managing fifteen species during an hours circular walk of the site, helped by a reappearance of the sun (at times).





The final part of the day was a walk along the Grand Union Canal back to the station. By this stage the sun had given up but I imaging if it was out there would have been plenty to point my camera at. Still a pleasant end to a nice day out despite the weathers best efforts.

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 19-Aug-19 09:18 PM GMT

I feel your pain, buggy. The wind in particular has been horrendous this month. It's due to improve later this week for some, though this is too little to late for many species.

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 19-Aug-19 10:59 PM GMT

You'd better get a season ticket to the Sussex coast in October!.

How I missed it I don't know, but a mrgreen 🍷 for your penultimate Large Blue shot.

Not only open wing, but glowing blue too.

Bad luck with the Brown Hairstreak, hope you get to see some. Maybe try Burgess Hill, look for ' Humanist burial ground ' on a map, a very good area for BH

Bound to see you soon,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-19 09:00 AM GMT

"The far end Wurzel, where the upper slope meets the lower one, ninja mountain goat skills are needed at that end 😊"been there, got the bruises 😊
😊 I know you saw only one Chalkhill but a great one at that 😊 It's been a funny old season this 😊 The weather forecasting this year has probably been the worst that I can remember 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 20-Aug-19 10:14 PM GMT

Indeed it has **Essex**, and persistently from the same direction which is particularly annoying when whistling along the best south facing sites!

I'd need to remortgage my flat to get a southern rail season ticket **Trevor!** Those bloody BH were showing today at Bookham.... I was in Sussex 😊

Thanks Wurzel 😊 . I totally agree with the forecasting, utterly pointless at times this year!

24th July

The weather was really starting to heat up now so on my midweek day I decided hide from the worst of it, plus I had a few things that didn't concern butterflies to do. Nevertheless I managed to squeeze an hour and half in the morning for a wander locally before the day really heated up.

At Tottenham Marshes it was already getting a bit warm at 8.30 with most butterflies already fully charged for the day and unapproachable. Having said that there wasn't a great deal around. There were plenty of Whites, Mostly Smalls from the ones that drifted close enough to ID.

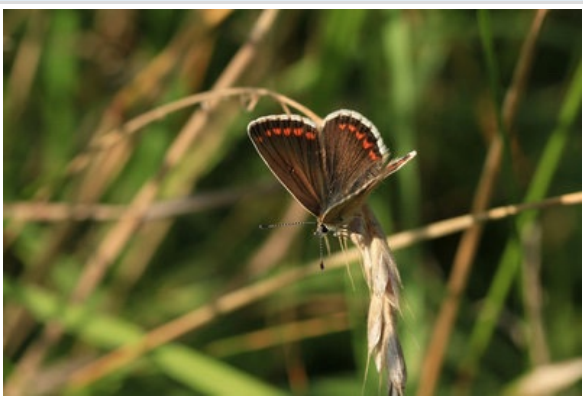
A few Speckled Wood were around, already trying to keep cool, either sticking to the shade or keeping their wings firmly closed at rest.



Gatekeepers were out in okish numbers but I only managed to pin some down when I found some Scabious they were enjoying. In the same corner I also found the only skippers I was to find, a single Large and a Small who escaped the camera.



It was here I found the best butterfly of the jaunt, a rather attractively fresh Brown Argus who was missing the usual diagnostic spotting on the underside, both sides were the same.





Elsewhere a slightly worn Comma turned up for a while and a few Green-veined White eventually settled. The final species to appear was a Red Admiral, who sat up high in a Buddleja.





By 10, with the temperature already nudging high twenties, I decided it would be a good time to take my leave and find somewhere cooler to spend the rest of my day

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 21-Aug-19 08:30 PM GMT

Lovely sequence of shots Bugboy 😊 That is an interesting looking Brown Argus, it's missing that one extra spot – where did it lose that too? 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 22-Aug-19 10:02 PM GMT

All seems like such a long time ago now, BB, even though it's only been four weeks!

That's a beautifully marked Green Veined White. The second brood is always more striking than the first.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 24-Aug-19 09:46 PM GMT

You did well for that spell of very hot weather, Buggy. Most things seem to disappear or bumble around in the shade where it's tricky to get decent shots. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Aug-19 07:58 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, she must have been at the back of the queue when spots were being handed out 😊

Thanks **David**, yes I've seen some very nicely marked GWV this summer 😊

Thanks **Dave**, although to be fair, all those shots in my last post were taken before 10am!

28th July

I took a trip down to Mill Hill today to see what was going on there. The hot spell had broken and it was a cooler, cloudier affair than my last day out with a bit of a stiff breeze. It was still warm enough for stuff to be on the wing though. My usual route around the horse field threw up several fresh Red Admirals, most saw me first but I managed to creep up on one as it nectared.



Also of note here were a couple of Walls. Only one sat for me and only on the other side of the barbed wire fence, probably sticking his tongue out at me!



On the hillside the dominant butterfly were the Chalkhills, with lots of fresh males around and mostly rather active.





A few rather attractive female Common Blues were found on the upper slopes, along with a ghostly, barely recognisable Painted Lady.



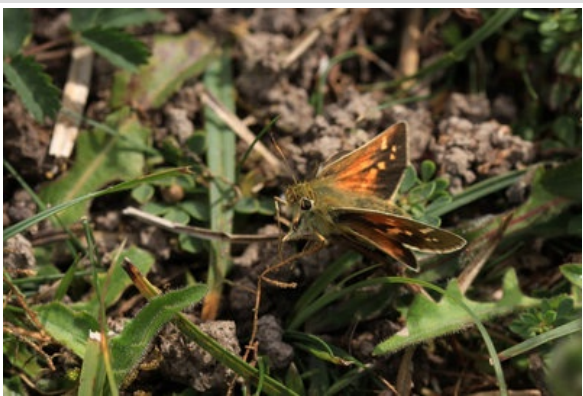
The dark mottling is shadow from overhanging flowers.



As I wandered the slopes I came across the odd Wall, and all but the tattiest of females behaved exactly as expected!



The biggest surprise of the day came in the form of my first Silver-spotted Skipper of the season, they really weren't on my radar here but two or three were active.



As I left near I was distracted near the bottom car park, as I often am, by more butterflies. This time a particularly vibrant male Common Blue, a Brown Argus and a SmEssex Skipper perched on some Bindweed.





I still had a bit of time on my hands so I popped down to Southwick Harbour before heading home, finding not much. Just a Peacock and a couple of Red Admiral on the Buddleja near the storage tanks amongst the usual selection of Whites.



A tatty Small Copper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, Speckled Wood & Holly Blue completed the species list for the day.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 28-Aug-19 08:37 PM GMT

That's a standout Common Blue Bugboy 😊 Congrats on the LTB 🍷 I reckon that could have been karma paying you back for a less than profitable Dorset trip 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 29-Aug-19 04:30 PM GMT

That's a great image of the mating Chalkhills, BB – the male with his wings open and the female displaying her dark undersides. Nice that you got Wall Browns too.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Aug-19 10:23 PM GMT

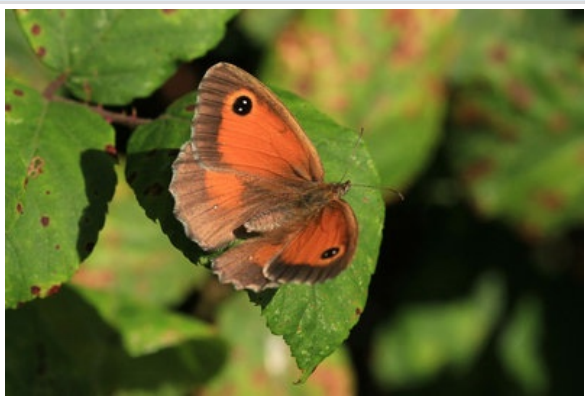
Thanks **Wurzel**, yes I like it when karma works that way round 😊

Thanks **David**, they couldn't have posed better if I'd stuck them there myself 😊

29th July (part 1)

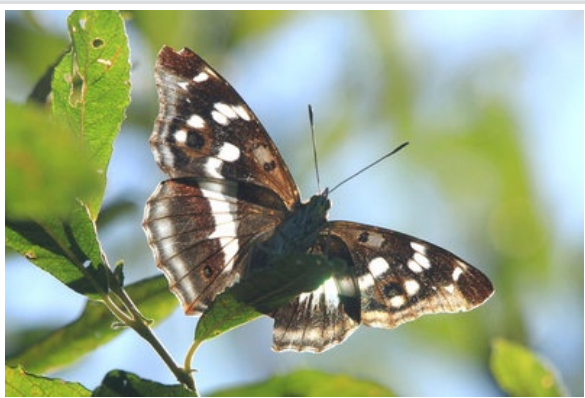
This was a two site day, Bookham for the morning on the off chance of an early Brown Hairstreak and then off to Box Hill to see if the Silver-spotted Skippers were out there.

It was a bright and warm morning and the Browns were out and about at Bookham, no early BH were lurking in amongst all the Gatekeepers though.

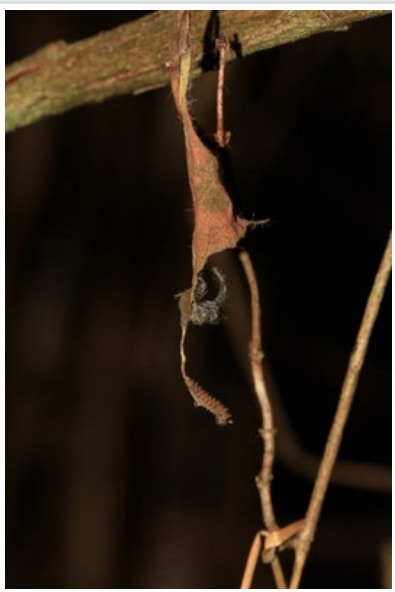
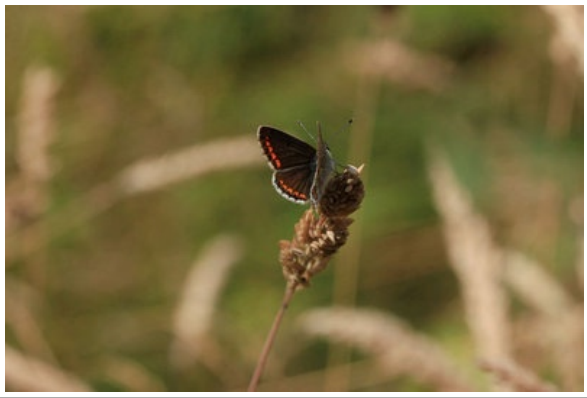


A resplendent Peacock also caught my eye, glowing in the morning sun and one of this year's rarities was also pinned down for a quick photo, but the real surprise of the day came as I rounded a corner. Keeping my eye's peeled for a Brown Hairstreak, a large black and white butterfly soared off from the bracken, glided around, inching ever higher until it settled in the nearby Sallows and there she sat 😊. Only one thing for it then, time to crack out the big lens 😊!





After that I felt things had probably peaked at Bookham for the morning but there was still time to check on the White Admiral Caterpillars, who were all getting rather large and fat, snapping a few other inhabitants on the way.





Next stop, Box Hill...

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 30-Aug-19 10:46 AM GMT

Well done with that Empress, Buggy! 😊 A very welcome and unexpected surprise I should think. Also good to see the WA cats still thriving in the honeysuckle jungle...

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-Aug-19 07:56 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, she certainly was, just kicked myself for not noticing her whilst she was settled lower down! Not sure if those WA cats are still thriving though bearing in mind how far behind I am this was a couple of days before I introduced them to you 😊

29th July (part 2)

By mid-afternoon I was at the foot of Box Hill. I hadn't appreciated the strength of the breeze in the relative shelter of Bookham, that would make pinning down a Skipper extra difficult. Chalkhill Blues greeted me straight away along with the usual array of late summer Browns.



Marbled Whites had long gone, though Dark Green Fritillary were still around. I watched a faded but still full of beans male chase a female through the turf, something they really don't seem to be designed for, and really would have benefited from the Benny Hill chase scene soundtrack 😊.



The first Silver-spotted Skipper appeared near the top of the slope, a spot where I often find the odd straggler when I'm here in season. When I reached the main spot, the lower slope in-between the zig zag of Zigzag road, they soon started popping up. Mostly fleeting orange streaks as they zoomed past, the stiff breeze making it impossible to follow them for more than a split second. Some careful stalking worked though and I soon managed to fill my boots with some gorgeously fresh Skippers.



Also here are one of the UKs rarest moths, the Straw Belle. I see one or two most years, today I found five, including for the first time a female, identifiable by the filamentous antennae as opposed to the male's feathery attachments.



The upper slope usually also has a few Skipper stragglers but at this time of year is normally the domain of Chalkhills. The pick of the bunch here being the female half of a mating pair with a set of studs that would make a Silver-studded Blue green with envy. I've seen these before but never such a strikingly marked individual!



The odd wing position here was due to the strong breeze.



The odd Common Blue also turned up.



Back on the lower slope I once again turned my attention to the Skippers. A female, like the earlier Chalkhill, being particularly striking in the underside dept.







A very successful and satisfying day out. As a reward to myself I wandered up to the visitor centre for an ice cream and finished the day with a couple of Red Admirals enjoying a sunlit clearing.



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-19 04:06 PM GMT

"just kicked myself for not noticing her whilst she was settled lower down!" – at least you managed to get some shots 📷 I saw 2 or three of His Nibbs on three occasions and didn't get a single shot 😞

Cracking images from the most recent report especially the female Silver-studded Chalkhill 😊📷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Sep-19 10:35 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, yes I was lucky she didn't fly off straight away 😊

31st July

The sun, indeed, any form of butterfly friendly weather was playing hard to find today. My best chance of finding any meant heading south into Sussex and keeping my fingers crossed that the forecasters had inadvertently made some correct guesses.

At least it was warm even if it was mostly cloudy to start with. I decided Abbots Wood, a place I rarely visit outside Pearl season, was worth a pop. It was a bit early but I thought I might get lucky with a second brood SPBF. The warm air and occasional brighter spells were enough to wake up the usual suspects, Browns and Whites, with the occasional tired looking Silver-washed Fritillary and some fresh Common Blues mixed in for some variety. No SPBF showed up but I wasn't overly surprised. I also wasn't overly surprised when it started to rain since I had been promised a rain free day 😊!



The forecast was however quickly forgotten when a large, dark silvery Fritillary lazily fluttered past in the light drizzle. I've only ever had two encounters with a *valesina* before, both times frustratingly long distance, so despite her age and the inclement weather I followed her around persistently, getting as many shots as I could. Then the heavens opened and we both took shelter, me making a mental note of where she was hiding before I darted under a tree.



Thankfully it was just a passing shower and ten minutes later the sun was threatening to break out. My *valesina* stirred from her spot and sailed down just in time to catch the sunny spell and posed for a short time before heading for a shady area to feed.





After she bid me farewell, I moved on, planning a couple of hours on nearby Malling Down, although it was another 2 hours before I finally managed to leave, increasing sunny spells leading to increasing reasons to become distracted 😊.



A distinctive feature of July and August this year has been a persistent wind and with Malling Down being rather exposed, most the targets here were huddled down in the turf.



There was however plenty to point my camera at 😊





I also couldn't help but notice how much Round-headed Rampion was growing here, there were carpets of the stuff in places!



A good way to end July 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 05-Sep-19 03:35 PM GMT

Those Chalkhills and Silver Spotted Skippers are well worth making the effort to get down south – something I haven't been able to do this year. Lovely close up of the Valezina! 😊
Janet

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 05-Sep-19 10:08 PM GMT

Cracking Greenish Bugboy 😊😍 They are a breathtaking sight when they appear on the scene, often favouring the more shaded areas I've noticed. Brilliant shot of the Wall as well, a really interesting pose really well captured 😊👍😍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 06-Sep-19 05:31 PM GMT

Lovely feast of colour, BB. I think this is the time of year when I'm most envious of those who reside in the SE of England – your Chalkhill & Adonis Blues, Silver Spotted Skippers and, of course, the migrants.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Sep-19 09:50 PM GMT

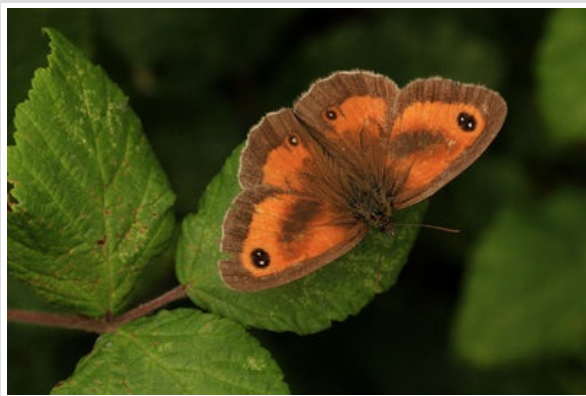
Thanks **Janet**, I think you've more than made up for it by your foreign travels 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, yea Valesina have a tendency to overheat so they prefer to keep out of the sun. That Wall shot was just a lucky one, catching her as she took off, pretty typical shot really 😊😊

Thanks **David**, fingers crossed I can keep the season rolling on for a good more few weeks yet 😊

1st August

August arrived and so did my first realistic effort to track down a Brown Hairstreak at Bookham. An early start wasn't particularly sunny but I hoped this may help in keeping any freshly emerged at a reasonable height. Gatekeepers were out in force despite the lack of sun, keeping me on my toes, and a freshly emerged Small Copper with a wonky wing made me look twice.



Once again there was a bit of a breeze blowing and the master tree was getting a bit buffeted. Up high I could see some small butterflies flitting around, some of them may even have been the target but most flashed silver in flight and seemed to be Purple Hairstreaks. I've noted this in previous years here, just when the Brown Hairstreak season kicks off the Purples seem to switch from Oak to Ash. A few snaps confirmed the ones in view were mostly Purples



although I'm not sure about the one on the left in this image, I didn't see it until I looked at the image on my camera.



I wandered on, keeping a close eye on the hedge and bumped into **Millerd** who had just arrived. Our combined forces didn't bear fruit so we went into the wood to check on my White Admiral cats. Dave's never seen one before and on the way to the nursery hotspot I saw one by the side of the path, for such a tiny animal they really do manage to make themselves stick out like a sore thumb if you know what you're looking for. Anyway, since this is the first one he's seen, I named this one Dave 😊 .



At the nursery there were a few MIA but a couple were still to be found. One was all wrapped up in his hibernaculum, meet Pete 😊 .

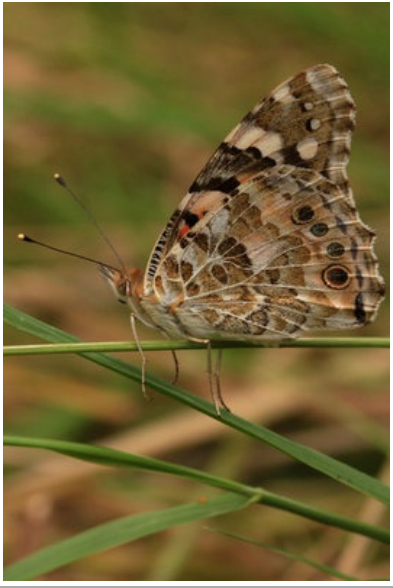


Nearby Wurzel was having lunch 😊 .



Things had begun to brighten up a bit and a few old Silver-washed Fritillary joined us as we made our way back to the car park where we parted

company, Dave to continue the days butterfly hunt elsewhere in Surrey, me to head of home to catch up with some other bits and bobs. My walk back to the station was, as always, a slow meandering stroll with a few pleasant distractions (no Hairstreaks though).



Looks like a painful landing!





Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 07-Sep-19 06:23 PM GMT

I'm glad you've made in into August Bugboy as now I can start making progress towards July 😊😓 Great shots especially the first Painted Lady shot, that made me wince a bit 😬 and there's something about that Hairstreak that's a bit beguiling 😊 I hope I make it through the winter 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 08-Sep-19 09:38 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, yup just trying to keep myself not much more than a month behind! If your namesake hurries up and sorts it's sleeping bag out like Pete then he stands a decent chance of seeing spring, time will tell 😊.

2nd August

The following day I had another go at getting a Brown Hairstreak within range of my camera... or at least my eyes. But just to mix things up, and to catch the little blighters by surprise I went to a different site, Ashted Common. This is somewhere I've been meaning to visit for a couple of years and I've no idea why it's taken me this long, it's two stops before Bookham on the same line and like Bookham, it conveniently backs onto the station. Also I'd seen some images on social media already of some Hairstreaks here, so I knew there were some about.

Anyway the day promised to be a bit brighter than the previous one, although no less windy. It didn't take me long to find some suitable Blackthorn to explore, complete with a decent amount of nearby nectar sources. Unfortunately it wasn't being sheltered from the wind but I could see where paths had walked through the long grass to reach the Creeping Thistles by fellow enthusiasts. A few Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and a very old looking Marbled White were all that kept me company here though. A little bit of exploring soon found some more sheltered paths were more butterflies slowly started to appear, just no sign of the intended target for the day.



I did spend some time with this marvellous insect though 😊



From the infrequently seen and very striking underside alone you might struggle to identify it as a Jersey Tiger at first. These seem to have had a very good year locally in the south east, if this site were called UK Moths I'm sure there would be several threads full of them!



Another moth that caught my eye was this Rosy Footman, a species in the same family as the Tiger Moths.



Having not had a sniff of a Brown Hairstreak by 12.30 I decided to go off and get myself a second dose of Grayling action for the year, and all things considered I made pretty good time, arriving at Chobham Common not long after 2. As always, Large Skippers were still around, no longer fresh but in significant numbers to suggest they still have a week or two before vanishing for another year.



The Grayling soon started appearing as I got close to the hilltopping hotspot, this one gets a 2/10 for camouflage effort



7/10 for this one



And I award this one 8/10



But top prize goes to this one, smashing the rest in a master class of effortless camouflage technique.



Whilst feeding though, the eye spot stays on show keeping hungry eyes away from the body



Elsewhere there was some flirting going on, giving me the chance for some upperside shots, such a beautiful butterfly.





There were still a few tatty old Silver-studded Blue around and just before leaving a Painted Lady stopped by



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-19 10:34 PM GMT

I've not seen that view of a Jersey Tiger before – wow 🤩😄 it's like an fake mock up of a moff 😎🌍 I had fun with the spot the Grayling – I covered up most of the screen with a bit of newspaper to hide the 'reveal' shots 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 09-Sep-19 08:41 AM GMT

10 points for the open wing Grayling shots. I missed the same opportunity a few years back, too slow with my camera and it was gone !.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 09-Sep-19 06:54 PM GMT

Fair play, BB, you've done superbly with that open-winged Grayling.

The tiger moth is pretty impressive too. It's not often you see the underside like that. I had no idea what it was until I read your text beneath.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 09-Sep-19 08:12 PM GMT

Those sort of shots really make you wish Graylings opened up more often. No wonder they keep them for special occasions (like courtship!). 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 10-Sep-19 07:32 PM GMT

Great shots of the Jersey Tiger Moth. I have seen quite a few reports this year from down south. It has not reached the midlands in any numbers yet but I suspect it won't be long.

Well done with the open wing Grayling shots too. I struggled to get a closed wing shot of one last week in the blustery wind in Dorset.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 10-Sep-19 09:33 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, can't beat a few 'spot the Grayling' pics can you 😊

Thanks **Trevor**, it was very much point and shoot and hope for the best with those courting Grayling, the sun had gone into hiding at that point and I didn't have time to fiddle with settings to get a faster shutter speed so there was a good helping of luck there too!

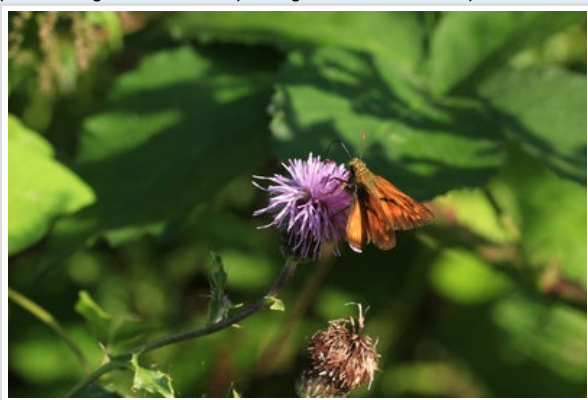
Thanks **David**, it took me an embarrassing amount of time to work out that Jersey Tiger too from the first view of the underside 😊

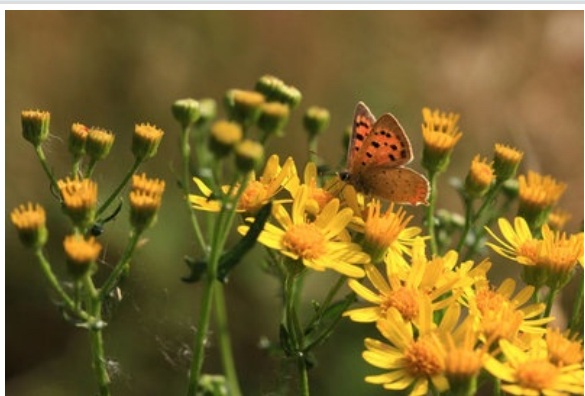
You're right **Dave**, but then it's all the more satisfying when you get those shots 😊

Thanks **Neil**. I reckon it's only a matter of time before you'll have Jersey Tigers frequenting garden. It wasn't that long ago when seeing one on the mainland was a big deal, this year I've had several none butterfly friends telling me about this brightly coloured moth they've seen. I think the 'heat island' effect of cities is helping them get through the winters and then the hotter summers allows them to spread out and colonise new locations.

7th August

Brown Hairstreaks seemed to be proving rather illusive at many sites for one reason or another this season but that didn't stop me having another go at tracking down my first one of the season. Having found plenty of suitable looking habitat at Ashtead Common on my last outing I decided to give that place another shot. The weather looked set to be a mixed bag, mostly sunny to start but with increasing risks of heavy showers as the day progressed. The brighter conditions certainly made for a better start than my previous visit with plenty of activity, minus the target once again. I was particularly pleased to get a female Holly Blue given how scarce they've been for me this year.

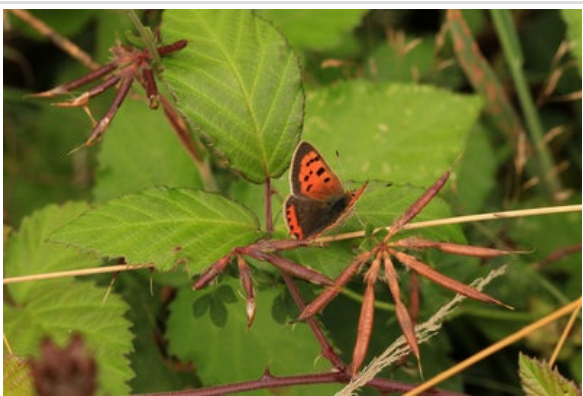




The biggest surprise was the appearance of a Chalkhill, presumably a wanderer (or possibly blown over, it was yet another breezy day) from the nearest colony, wherever that is.



Along with the many reasonably fresh butterflies a few, shall we mature specimens were also around, some of the Silver-washed Frits must surely have been on their last tarsi.





By midday the weather seemed to be deteriorating somewhat, the earlier sun becoming just a memory but I had enough time to catch the train a couple of stops down the line to Bookham, mainly to check on the progress of the White Admiral larvae. The only butterflies I came across here were a few Speckled Wood braving the now rather gloomy conditions.

At the nursery I was pleased to find Pete still snoozing, just his spiky butt on show 😊



Wurzel was unfortunately the first of my named cats to go MIA 😞, presumably coming to a sticky end in the tummy of the vary many Tits that can always be heard here.

Dave was loitering on his pier over the aerial latrine and looked to have recently moulted into third instar.



I was heading off to look at some other patches of Honeysuckle that often has larvae when my luck ran out and the heavens opened. For 10 minutes I did my best to shelter, more worried about the camera than anything else but all seemed good when it cleared and at the honeysuckle I found another larvae taking a dip. As this one looks to be happy out in all weathers, I christened this one Pauline!



And then it was time to scurry of home before I got another drenching.

Re: Bugboys mission

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

Good to catch up with those tiny White Admiral caterpillars, Buggy – I know I'd never find them again if I looked! 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-19 08:41 PM GMT

Good job the WA Cat was just one of my many Horcruxes Bugboy 🤪🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 12-Sep-19 05:25 PM GMT

Nice work with those White Admiral cats, BB. The female Holly Blue is rather desirable too. 😊🍷

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 12-Sep-19 10:45 PM GMT

Thanks guys, here's the next installment of the WA cats along with the continuing saga of me 'V' Brown Hairstreaks (clue, they're still winning 😊)

11th August

I decided to revert back to type with my next hunt for Brown Hairstreaks with another trip down Bookham way. It looked set to be a decent day, a warm sunny start bringing out plenty of butterflies, mostly browns of various species, with some of the Meadow Browns being rather eye catching.





this one was particularly dark and male-like.



A couple of hours searching all the likely spots though left me wanting once again, not even a flyby or a glimpse around the master trees of anything remotely Hairstreak like. If I'd hung around a bit longer things may have been different, but frustrated I wandered off to see how the WA cats were doing. Pete was still safe and sound and hadn't moved and Dave was inspecting the latrine... 😊



On the way to see how Pauline was I noticed a tendril of Honeysuckle hanging down in the middle of the path and perched on the only cluster of leaves was a new one, meet Trevor 😊 .



Higher up I noticed another one which could only be reached by holding my camera at arm's length, this one is James (B'rex) ... at this rate I'm gonna run out of names 😊 !



Anyway Pauline was safe and sound, this time enjoying the sun.



Male Speckled Woods loitered around in every sunny patch and I found a fully grown Comma larvae on the return back to Brown Hairstreak territory.



Eventually I did find a Hairstreak, just not the right species 😊



and I also came across a Millerid who showed me some pics of a freshly emerged female he'd found whilst I was with the cats. I smiled through gritted teeth 😞😞.

We joined forces to see if we could find another and we did, a female took off from some Blackthorn. We both watched helplessly as she flew across the path and vanished a little way further down, oh well at least I'd actually seen one at last 😞!

A nice fresh Comma cheered me up a bit though



Still time and I had had plans this year to broaden my range in the hunt for a Brown Hairstreak!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 13-Sep-19 08:40 AM GMT

Pleased to see you're taking good care of me Buggy 😊😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 13-Sep-19 07:58 PM GMT

"at this rate I'm gonna run out of names 😞!" You could always resurrect Wurzel, the new and improved Wurzel Mark 2..."I'll be back!" 😊
I know it wasn't a Brostreak but a Hairstreak of any species is always welcome 😊 besides I know that you got some in the end 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 14-Sep-19 09:53 PM GMT

That's a great image of the larva undergoing an instar change, BB. Not often we get to see that.

The Meadow Brown is interesting too – looks like either a well marked male or a scantily clad female! 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-Sep-19 07:28 PM GMT

Not sure about taking good care **Pauline**, occasional checking in is the best I can do 😞

Unfortunately **Wurzel**, I think I peaked with the WA cats on my last visit!

Thanks **David**, pretty sure that MB was a female based on the abdomen and the underside, see below.



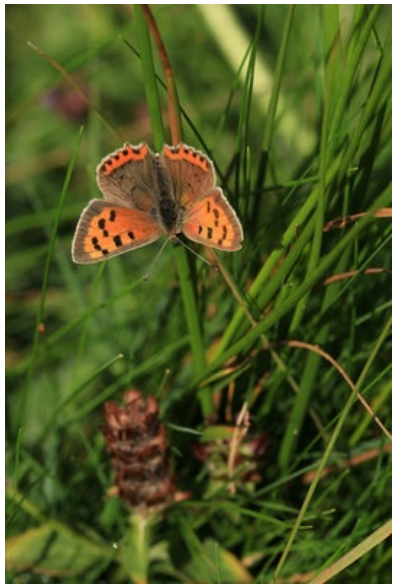
19th August

Over halfway through August and all I had to show for my numerous efforts on the Brown Hairstreak front was one brief sighting. Today was the first day of a week long break from work with the last 4 days set aside for a trip into Dorset. Day 1 though was spent at Bookham (obviously), well the morning was, I had a few things to catch up on in the afternoon to make sure the rest of the week was free.

The day started warm and bright with a few speckled Wood flitting around in the shadier areas. There was however very little to be had here today. Gatekeepers were very much on the wain with just a few tatty stragglers left with the odd Meadow Brown mixed in, but nothing much to tempt me to point my camera at, until something smaller and brighter orange caught my eye. Wishful thinking made my heart briefly leap into my throat but it was too small and bright and its flight was just a little too erratic.



Well at least I had a few photos in the bag! For the next couple of hours I wandered around but despite decent weather there remained very little to show for my efforts, in fact in first two hours I took pictures of just four butterflies and my total seen probably only just crept into double figures. I'm beginning to think the shift in flight patterns has now created an August gap.



With not many adult butterflies on show I figured I should check on the youngsters. Unfortunately it would seem they had suffered since my last visit. Pete was still safely tucked up for the coming winter but Dave was missing, just a half-eaten leaf and empty pier was all I could find.



Pete



Where's Dave!?

Trevor was still looking healthy but James was also missing and further on I could find no sign of Pauline either, it's a harsh world out there! (worth noting that both James & Pauline were living above head height making it impossible for me to get a closer look at any dead leaves, there's still a glimmer of hope they live on...)

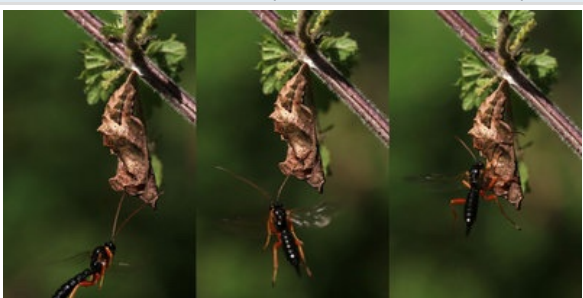


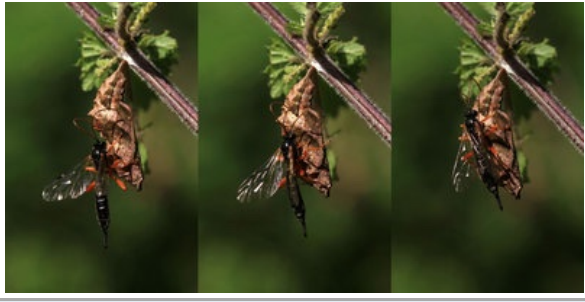
Trevor

Last time I was here I also found a full-grown Comma larvae. It didn't take long to relocate it, now transformed into a pupae. They're very confident in their camouflage.



As I admired it I noticed something else drifting silently through the undergrowth (at this point a sinister horror movie tune should be beginning to play in your mind). It drifted closer, obviously looking for something, that something being what I was admiring and the camouflage is useless in this scenario. Her intentions were very different from mine but I captured the whole event.





A gruesome but no less fascinating event to unfold just inches in front of me 😱.

One last wander through Brown Hairstreak territory gave me a few more butterflies and one more day without a Brown Hairstreak to add to my years tally 😊. It's looking increasingly like I shall be placing all my BH eggs into one basket on one day this year!



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 16-Sep-19 01:18 PM GMT

The drama of the Comma Chrysalis meeting its nemesis is an amazing sequence, Buggy. 😊 To be there just at the right time to record the moment is a great piece of luck – mostly you just find the little hole after the event when the butterfly fails to emerge. That wasp is a spectacular beast as well – any idea which species it is?

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

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

Fantastic if gruesome sequence of images Bugboy – I reckon that would make a worthy addition to Pete's next book 😊 Looking forward to seeing the following days shots 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 17-Sep-19 01:53 PM GMT

Dave has taken all the words out of my mouth! My comments would have been exactly the same – great shots and do you know what the wasp? is?

Re: Bugboys mission

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

That predator sequence involving the Comma pupa is quite extraordinary, BB. Very impressive, even though it surely means that no butterfly will emerge. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 18-Sep-19 09:00 PM GMT

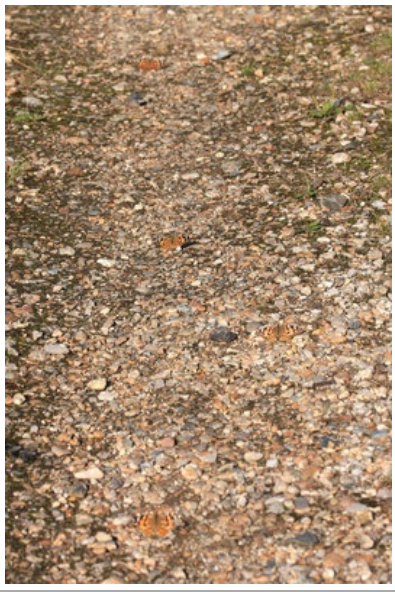
Thanks for all the comments about the dramatic Comma pupae 'V' wasp scenario 😊, I was very lucky to be there to see it unfold. The wasp is I believe a member of the *Pimpla* genus which specialise in lepidopteran pupae. I've done a bit of reading up on them. It seems they aren't fussy over the species, it just needs to be big enough to feed their larvae. I think I witnessed her judging the size of the pupae too. She spent a bit of time fussing around on it with her antennae curled over so just the tips touched the pupae (you can see this most clearly in the second set of images). Looking back she seemed to be using them like a pair of calipers, judging the size and giving herself a 3D image of the pupae before she actually laid the egg. Unfortunately for the Comma, it was judged good enough for her baby 😊. A very useful technique when pupae are often hidden amongst foliage.

20th August

I still had two days before heading down to Dorset and with nothing planned but chasing butterflies all I had to decide was where to go, back to Bookham or Ashted looking for these damn Brown Hairstreaks or heading further south where reports were now coming in thick and fast of Long-tailed Blues. The latter won out, to be honest it wasn't much of a competition!

Shoreham and Southwick were the chosen destinations. There was a slight autumnal nip in the air when I arrived at Southwick, a little before 9, but this wasn't putting the local butterflies off, Small Whites were plentiful but it was the Painted Ladies that caught my attention. So far, I've not really had the pleasure of experiencing the major influx of them this year. They have turned up more often than average but no more than three or four in a day, now I had the pleasure of at least fifteen and probably more in varying degrees of age and wear & tear. A few were feeding on the knapweed on the slope at the centre of the site, but the majority, along with a couple of Red Admirals, were gorging themselves silly on the Buddlija's near the oil storage plant at the eastern end.





4 in this image





As the sun continued to warm the air a female Clouded Yellow appeared, my first on UK soil this year. She allowed a few shots before vanishing over the fence.

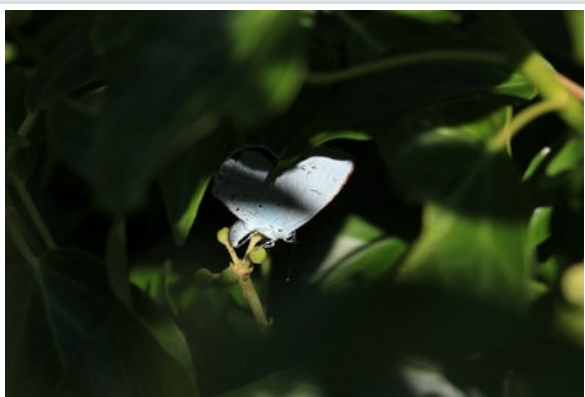


Obviously, I also spent a fair bit of time picking through the BLEP, where it was clear I wasn't the first person, judging by the trampling around it. It had mostly gone over with well-developed seed pods far outnumbering flowers and buds, but hopefully there's some hungry LTB larvae munching away inside. A male Common Blue did cause a minor cardiac arrest and a couple of male Clouded Yellows provided a bit of exercise for me. The only other species seen here was a female Meadow Brown.



Next it was on to Mill Hill. My usual route around the horse field providing me plenty of reasons to stop and point my camera at things. Fresh Red

Admirals invariable saw me first and darted off but there were also oodles of Holly Blues today who were much more cooperative. They seemed to be mostly females and there was a fair amount of ovipositing going on.

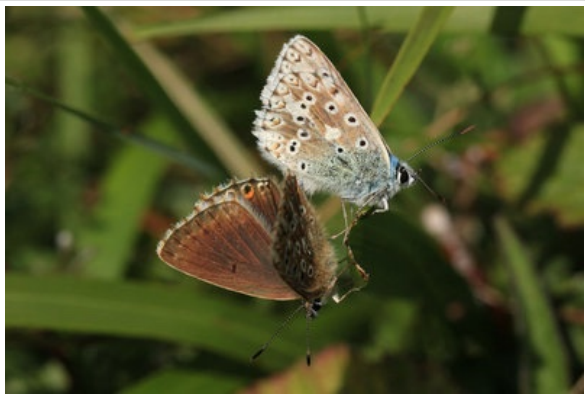


Once on Mill Hill other Blues hogged my attention, some not too shabby Adonis with the occasional shabbier Chalkhill.





I disturbed a mating pair, the male doing all the flying work so it was clear he was a Chalkhill but with fresh female Adonis around it was worth checking to see if I could ID the female, from a distance she looked in good nick, did I have a hybridisation in front of me? A closer view showed she wasn't as fresh as I had first thought but I needed an upperside view to be sure of what she was. To my surprise, almost as if she could read my thoughts, she obliged as I was thinking this and showed that she was indeed a Chalkhill female.



Meadow Browns and Small Heath were both rather frisky and just a single tatty female Wall was seen, basking here and there in-between helping to sort out the third brood. I caught this Small Heath during a cloudy spell practicing some sort of yoga move.



I sometimes wander further afield when I'm in this part of the world if I have time. A lane which runs under the underpass is lined with bramble and nettles with a couple of large Buddlija is always worth exploring if time allows. There wasn't a great deal here today but a Painted Lady and a couple of Commas meant I didn't leave empty handed.



Still with a bit of time on my hands I headed back to the harbour to see if anything else had turned up. Nothing new was seen but the Painted Ladies were still out in numbers and with increasing cloud cover they were willing to pose nicely for me



So no LTB but no less a good day 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 19-Sep-19 09:01 AM GMT

Very nice Clouded Yellow, Paul. I remember the Painted Ladies near the fuel tanks, and noticed how much smaller some specimens were.

You had good value from your 'Southern' ticket that day!.
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 19-Sep-19 10:30 PM GMT

Another cracking report Bugboy 😊 The difference in the wear and tear in your selection of Painted Ladies is interesting – with one looking 'greasy' winged 😊 That is a cracking Cloduy shot – nice and fresh and 'pinging' out of the screen 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 21-Sep-19 09:25 AM GMT

Thanks for expanding on the wasp v pupa battle, BB. Very interesting, if a little sad for the latter.

You've caught that Small White beautifully too. It's not often you get to see the spot on the hindwing upperside.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 22-Sep-19 10:37 PM GMT

Thanks **Trevor**, yes I certainly made the most of my ticket that day, at those prices though you've got to!

Thanks **Wurzel**, they certainly weren't all particularly fresh those Painted Ladies, a right old mixed bag of individuals. Quite pleased with that Cloudy shot too, it was just a reflex grab shot, I managed just three shots before she was gone 😊.

Thanks **David**, it's gruesome I know but I do find parasitism totally fascinating at the same time.

Oh and I have another Small white for you below 😊

21st August

The following day it was off into deepest Sussex again, this time Newhaven Tidemills. As I approached from the train station, I was a little concerned, the construction works here to build another bridge was well underway and a sizable chunk of the site had been fenced off. Thankfully all the Everlasting Pea was still accessible. I spent a bit of time looking for Long-tailed Blue eggs (as well as keeping an eye out for any adults). None of the latter were seen but the former was rather easy to find. Much of the Pea is inaccessible, clambering over and through a bank of Bramble so what I found here is likely to be just the tip of an iceberg.

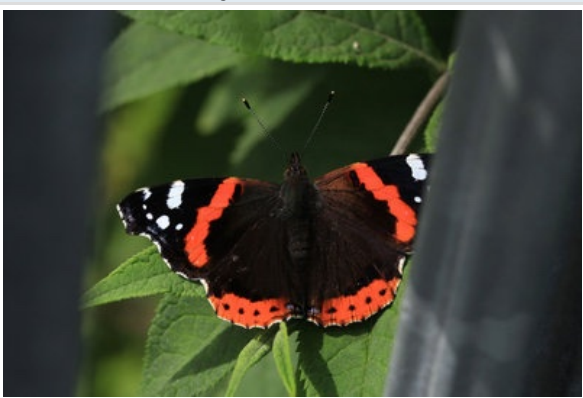




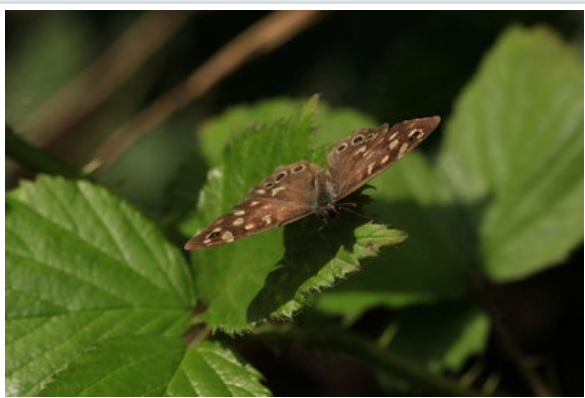
Butterflies in general were rather thin on the ground across most of the site, apart from Small Whites, there always seems to be loads of them here. The odd Green-veined can also be found if you pay a bit of attention.



The Buddleja next to the recycling/scrap yard did have a fair bit of activity, Red Admirals and Painted Lady, but were mostly rather frisky and spent most the time on the wrong side of the fence or in the shade.



With nothing much to keep my attention I took a wander over to the other side of the River Ouse and the nature reserve around Newhaven Fort. It was rather windy and the exposed southern tip was taking the brunt of it. There is plenty of shelter here though, either around fort itself or the dense shrubby thickets and it was in the sunny patches where I found a few butterflies.





This old male seems to have lived his life with part of his pupal exoskeleton still attached to his antennae.



I had an early start the next day but there was still just enough time to re-visit Tidemills before heading off where I found a bit more activity. The Painted Ladies had taken to warming themselves up on the paths, Small Heath flitted here and there and a rather nice Brown Argus was busy laying eggs on dead leaves. I wish I'd taken more interest on what she was laying on since it doesn't look like any sort of Cranesbill, the green leaves look very much like Tormentil.





Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 23-Sep-19 08:16 PM GMT

That mass of BLEP does look extremely promising, and I can see that the seeds have been sown for something interesting in a week or two. Fingers crossed the weather calms itself down again for a bit. It was perhaps a bit early when we looked on Saturday.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

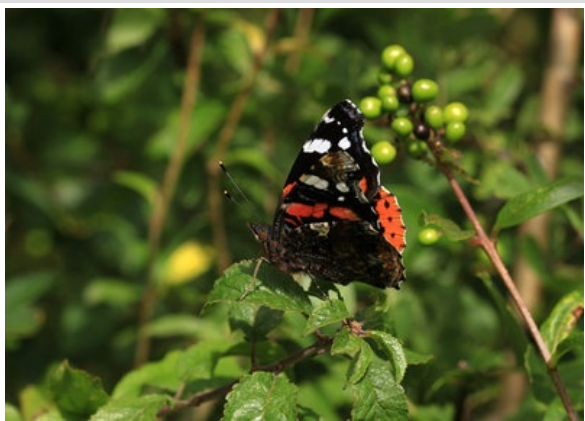
by bugboy, 24-Sep-19 05:12 PM GMT

This breakdown in the weather is just adding to the suspense isn't it **Dave**, Saturday was good but hopefully is just a little taster of what's on the horizon 😊

22nd August

Day one of my little foray into Dorset, later in the season than I had hoped but that was unavoidable. The primary target was that Dorset specialty the Lulworth Skipper, hopefully I'd find a few stragglers at some of the later sites. On the other hand the late season jaunt did mean I could try and improve on my so far dreadful Brown Hairstreak season, Shipton Bellinger isn't a major detour and I'd arranged to meet up with Wurzel. My chauffeur arrived bright and early and of we set. Glorious sunshine lighted our way virtually the entire journey until we approached Shipton Bellinger where there seemed to be a very unhelpful greyness covering the sun, well that's just sods' law taking the P!

It was about 10ish when we arrived, a little breezy with some patches of blue sky and with only the odd dog walker around time to do a quick recce before more Brown Hairstreak hunters arrived. A few butterflies were seen, a couple Common Blues and several Whites plus a decent looking Red Admiral but for the most part it seemed rather quiet.



It didn't remain quiet for very long though, unbeknownst to me there was a BC outing here today and suddenly the place was awash with butterfly hunters, in fact more people than butterflies were present. Not long after they turned up so did Wurzel and Philzoid, and there was a collective sinking of hearts as we all imagined having to form an orderly queue to photograph our target. I think the weather may have put them off though since they didn't hang around for very long, leaving just us three and a few other more determined Hairstreak hunters working the hedgerow (my chauffeur had settled down with her nose in a book, the usual pose she adopts when I'm doing my thing).

We walked the length of the main hedge but saw very little, mainly due to the persistent cloud cover, sunny spells appearing and vanishing far to briefly. Suddenly a call was heard from the corner of the hedge "*Hairstreak!*" one of the other enthusiasts had found one and we hurried over to find a worn male settled low down. But he didn't sit long enough for me to get a snap (I'm not sure if Wurzel or Philzoid managed any) but we followed him southwards up the slope as he toyed with us. Whether it was the same one or another one that settled briefly I'm not sure/can't remember but I just managed a couple of pics as he took off.



We continued up the slope where we came across a few more of both sexes, all playing hard to get 😊. Time to bring out the big lens!





Also of note here were a few Walls who gave Philzoid the run-around 😊 .



I had intended to just stay the morning but with so little to show for my efforts so far I hung around a little bit longer, checking in on my chauffeur to make sure she hadn't died of boredom. After the earlier excitement the cloud cover had returned and a slow walk along the main hedge gave us very little action. Brimstones entertained us for a while and at the north end near the road we found a few Common Blues looking rather nice in the overcast conditions,





but things really weren't looking promising for any improved Hairstreak action, the cloud cover stubbornly refusing to clear properly... tbc

Re: Bugboys mission

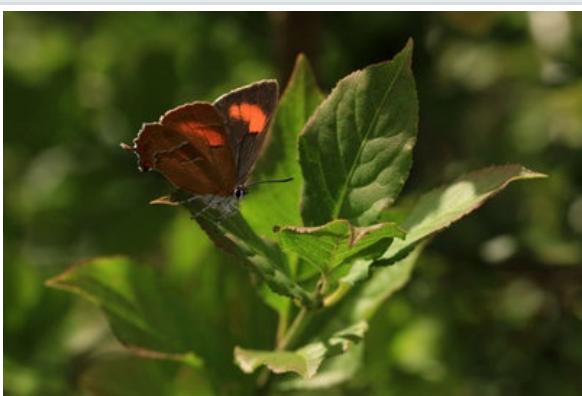
by bugboy, 24-Sep-19 06:45 PM GMT

22nd August (part 2)

On the return walk back along the hedge we had another teasing appearance of the Hairstreak kind, a decent looking female who stubbornly refused to come down from the top of the hedge. A short while later a male decided to behave in a similar manner, the day was becoming more and more frustrating.



Toying with the idea of calling it a day for the nth time there was a sudden reappearance of the sun which prompted us to give it one more go and I was so glad we did, Shipton Bellinger finally relented and gave up her goods 😊😊. One did escape our clutches, vanishing off across the field, but we needn't have worried.





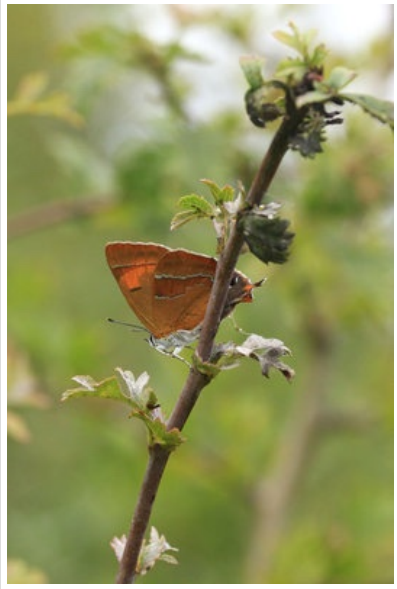
As we admired her chocolate orange markings of one, Wurzel noticed another one a foot or so away behind us, possibly the one who had tried to escape across the field, also supping on some Blackberries , suddenly they seemed to be everywhere 😊 . After so many failed efforts this year it did feel a bit like Christmas 😊 !





It took a while, 4 hours in fact, but I finally left with a camera full of Brown Hairstreak pictures, leaving Wurzel and Philzoid to give the place another whirl 😊 .





Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 24-Sep-19 07:16 PM GMT

Those Hairstreaks really did make you work for your shots, Buggy! Definitely worth it in the end I'd say. 😊 They have certainly shown a liking for blackberry juice this year, as that's what was on the menu when I was there as well. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

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

A fantastic set of images Bugboy 🤗👍 You won't be surprised to hear that I've still got to sort mine out 😊 Your report really sums up Shipton this year; hard work and patience were finally rewarded, I can't recall another year like it, they basically ripped up the rule book 😊😊 Though that did make them all the sweeter in the end 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 25-Sep-19 01:23 PM GMT

Lovely *betulae*, BB. You don't get long with them in that condition and they were very elusive indeed during their early flight period this year.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 25-Sep-19 08:12 PM GMT

Love your shots of the BH Buggy – well worth all the effort. In particular, the one on the blackberry – falls into the category of 'one I wish I'd taken!' I've tried over the years but never succeeded 🤞

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Sep-19 09:51 PM GMT

You're right **Dave**, it was worth it in the end though 😊. I think their choice of Blackberry's was forced upon them, there was very little if any else for them to feed on!

Thanks **Wurzel** and you're right, not the slightest bit surprised 😊. It was good to finally bump into you in the field!

Thanks **David**, yes they were particularly elusive this year although the previous two years we were spoilt a bit I think.

Thanks **Pauline**, it was relatively easy to get them on Blackberries (when they did eventually appear) there was nothing else to feed from!

23rd August

Leaving Shipton Bellinger to Wurzel and Philzoid, we made our way down to where we were staying in Dorset, a pleasant little campsite with an onsite restaurant, how very civilised! Anyway we arrived with enough time to sort ourselves out and have a very nice evening meal, countryside portions are very generous and get an early night ready for the next days adventures.

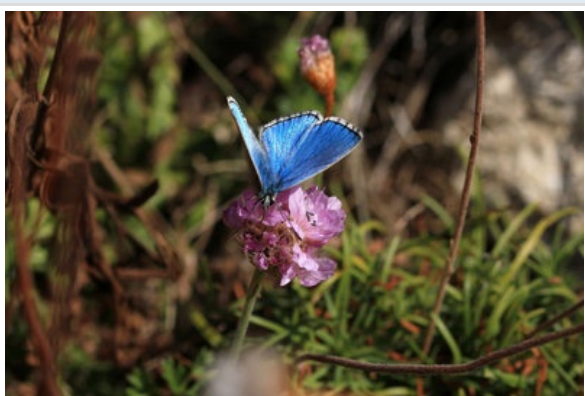
We set off for Alners Gorze the following morning, taking a detour into Dorchester to grab breakfast, under glorious sun. But conditions quickly changed to thick fog which really didn't look like it was going to lift any time soon, so a quick change of destination saw us heading east to Durlston

Country Park. This is my 'regular' Lulworth Skipper site (if once a year for the last three years can be called regular) and being known as one of the late sites I was hoping I'd find a few stragglers, but this is by some way the latest in the season I've visited.

We arrived around 11 and made our way down the path past the visitor centre. The first patch of green on the right half way down the slope is where I found my very first Lulworth and in successive years one or two have always lurked here, but not today. The only butterfly to tempt me here was a Small Copper.



Further along the path I can usually find more Lulworths but once again, not today, just a few very tired looking Painted Ladies flitted around. Worse was to come. When we reached the open field, I was somewhat disappointed by what greeted me, parched brown, lifeless looking grass. Here we parted, Chauffeur off to find a quiet spot to read and enjoy the weather leaving me to look for some butterflies, any butterflies. At first all I found were a handful of tatty Meadow Brown and Small Heath but nothing that made me raise my camera and not a sniff of any Skippers. I quartered the slope heading for the gully, surely there'd be something down there. There was but it was still single figures of species, three or four each of Common and Adonis Blues, a couple of Brown Argus and a single Small Heath who was somewhat fresher than all the others I'd seen... and that was it! I came away having taken around 30 pictures, possibly a new record for me, I don't think I've ever taken less on a day's butterflying trip.





Don't be fooled by the greenery in the pictures, you just have to look at Neil Freeman's images of the site to see just how dry it really was.

Butterflies were then put on the back burner after that since I then spent the next 2 hours searching for my chauffeur. I knew roughly where she said she was heading for but with no mobile signal in the area there was no way of either of us letting the other know where we were. I eventually found her sitting nonchalantly at the visitor centre enjoying a coffee and cake!

We ended the day having a wander round Swanage and planned to have another go at Alners Gorze the following day.

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 26-Sep-19 10:24 PM GMT

Oh dear! I don't think it's been a good summer for Dorset's butterflies. We were down there a couple of weeks later, and numbers were low for us too.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 27-Sep-19 12:58 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Adonis male Bugboy - really electric blue that one 🤩🤩🤩 Hopefully the Isle of Purbeck will bounce back next year though to be safe I'd make a visit for Lulworths earlier in their flight - I generally try around June time 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 27-Sep-19 08:13 PM GMT

Some great Brown Hairstreak photos there Bugboy 🍷 😊.

Interesting to compare your experience at Durlston with mine a few weeks later. I reckon that it was the driest site I visited down there and, along with Ballard Down, produced the lowest numbers of butterflies. I found the best spot at Durlston this year was at the more sheltered top end of the gully, the bottom end was practically devoid of butterflies which I put down to the parched condition plus the fact it is more exposed to the wind which was blowing almost constantly whilst we were there.

As in recent years, curiously, I found other sites that are not 'official' reserves to be more productive.

I have had a look at the Dorset BC sightings pages and it appears that overall it has not been a bad summer down there.

<https://www.dorsetbutterflies.com/sightings/archive/annual-summary.php?year=2019>

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 28-Sep-19 03:40 PM GMT

Shame about the Lulworths, BB, but the Adonis Blues must have provided some compensation.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Sep-19 10:47 PM GMT

Thanks **Essex**, I reckon it was just a case of poor timing tbh, win some, lose some!

Thanks **Wurzel**, I reckon I'll be reverting back to June/July on my Dorset trips in the future!

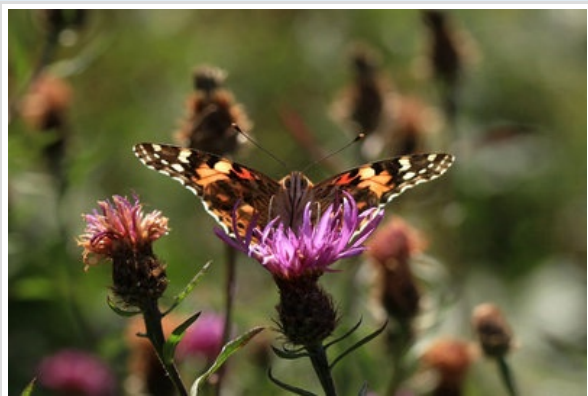
Thanks **Neil**, yes it looks like a decent season down there, I think flight periods have changed so much that it's all over bar immigrants down there these days 😊

Thanks **David**, some compensation but just two males wasn't really anything to shout about and with Neil's visit a few weeks later not finding many more it's more of a worry than anything else 😊

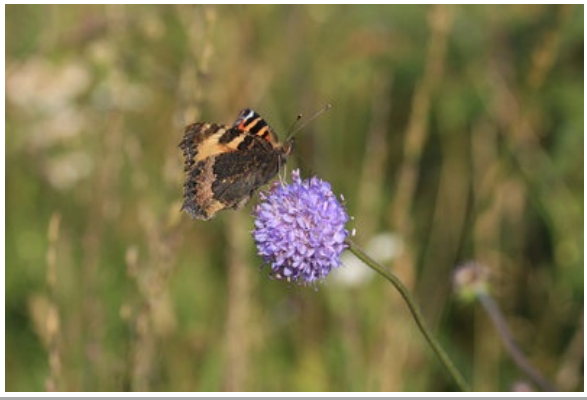
24th August

Another early start and this time no fog to get in the way. Once again we detoured to Dorchester to grab breakfast and something for lunch and arrived at Alners Gorze a little before 10. Wurzel had given me some tips as to the best places to look for Brown Hairstreaks here so down the slope and to the left it was. At first all I saw were Small Whites. Unlike Shipton Bellinger there was still a fair bit of nectar sources around, some of the bramble was still in blossom and plenty of Fleabane and Knapweed around. The Whites were for the most part ignored, partly because it was already rather warm and they would have been difficult to pin down but mainly because I was keeping my eyes peeled for the Hairstreaks. You could see the areas where Blackthorn was being rotationally managed for them so there was no excuse for them not to be around!

A Common Blue was the first butterfly who sat long enough for a picture and a short while later a couple of Painted Lady were busying themselves on the Fleabane and Knapweed but no sign of any Brown Hairstreaks.



I did a slow meandering circuit of the site, coming out into a sea of purply-blue where the Devils-bit Scabious was in full bloom. Here was a bit more variety with several Small Tortoiseshell and a couple of Peacock gorging themselves silly. At one point I had more Small Tortoiseshells in sight than at any time since my family home Buddleja 35 years ago 😊!





I was being very careful, picking my way through the Scabious, sticking to the paths that wended through them so I didn't trample them and more importantly any Marsh Fritillary nests. Of the latter I did find one nest, something I've never seen one before so that's another life tick.



The Hairstreaks however proved as elusive as ever and we left without ever getting a glimpse of one 😞.

Since my friend was chauffeuring me around it seemed only polite to suggest a destination which might be of interest to her as well, and Corfe Castle might just give me a sighting of a Lulworth Skipper. When I'd booked the time off work I hadn't taken into account it was a bank holiday weekend (I work bank holidays so they don't generally register on my radar), so the journey ended up being frustratingly longer than anticipated and off course, Corfe on a sunny bank holiday Saturday is rather busy 😞. We managed to squeeze into a parking spot and I quickly had a scoot around the car park (trying not to look too dodgy creeping around behind all the parked cars 😞😞). No Skippers here unfortunately, in fact there was precious little of anything. Exploring further afield didn't bring me much more luck on the butterfly front, just a flighty Red Admiral and a sign suggesting I'd walked further than I thought!



When I returned to the car park to find my friend (we'd separated earlier), Dorset's dodgy mobile coverage struck again. It turned out she was under a tree on the other side of the car park but it took an hour to get hold of her 😞. My only company during that time was a flighty female Grayling who was busy laying eggs.



A return visit to Alners Gorze was sadly a little too late in the afternoon to find any Brown Hairstreaks, just a few Brimstone and Painted Lady were still active and it was here we decided to call the trip a day. I'm just not familiar enough with this part of the world to have suggested any other destinations, and given the lacklustre results so far, even if I was I wouldn't have been overly confident about seeing much. I've said it before on here, I really do think the June gap has now been replaced by the August gap! Whilst the scenery and company was as good as ever, not exactly the trip I was hoping for in the end.





Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 30-Sep-19 06:20 PM GMT

That's a shame, Buggy. I really would have thought Alners would have turned up a few BH, despite it being a poor year elsewhere. However, all those Nymphalids must have been some consolation, in the cold light of day at least.

Shame you didn't find your way to Osmington, which I'm sure would have turned up some good stuff. And there is a farm opposite which does cream teas!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-Sep-19 08:09 PM GMT

Sorry that Dorset didn't produce the goods Bugboy 😊 I feel that my home county really must do better! 😞 Mind you Alners Gorse has got earlier and earlier and often produces the first Brostreaks of the season so they may have already been over? Earlier in the season it's possible to pick up 3 Hairstreaks! It's a similar story for the Lulworths at Corfe Castle – that's often the 'first sighting' site.

" At one point I had more Small Tortoiseshells in sight than at any time since my family home Buddleja 35 years ago 🤩!" – they do seem to be faring better over this way than on the Eastern side of the country – long may that continue 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 01-Oct-19 07:03 AM GMT

bugboy wrote:

...You could see the areas where Blackthorn was being rotationally managed for them so there was no excuse for them not to be around!

Yes, they're incredibly frustrating butterflies, BB. There are times I see hardly any (or none) in ideal conditions and then I'll visit in cool, part cloudy weather and see several. 😞

At least you had impressive numbers of Small Tortoiseshells to make up for the lack of Hairstreaks.

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 01-Oct-19 09:31 AM GMT

Sorry that Alners Gorse was a waste of time as far as BH were concerned. Had I been with you I would have been just as thrilled with that Small Tortoiseshell, a butterfly I took for granted until recently. My East Sussex total is five for this year.

That Shipton BH was worth the trip, however!.

Good luck at Whitehawk!
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 01-Oct-19 11:41 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments, looking back the trip did indeed have some highlights, Brown Hairstreaks at Shipton Bellinger (eventually) and all those Small Tortoiseshells weren't to be sneezed at. At least I know not to leave it so late in the season for Lulworths now 😊!

28th August

In 2013 my love for butterflies had yet to be reawakened so the Long-tailed Blue invasion that year passed me by completely unnoticed. By 2015 however I had caught the bug again and I spent many days down in Sussex in late summer/early autumn looking for the things, normally turning up the

day before or after they were seen. It's been a long four year wait for the next invasion to try and actually see one.

The most reliable place in Sussex seemed to be Whitehawk hill, with daily sightings popping up all over social media, so with a slightly dodgy forecast in the offing that was where I set off to. I arrived in Brighton in torrential rain which I was promised would clear up (I've been promised that before!) so I found myself a coffee shop to sit it out. Thankfully, for once the forecasters seemed to have made a lucky guess, the rain eased and it looked to be brightening up in Brighton.

At Whitehawk Hill I wandered around for a bit, looking for any suspiciously worked area that would signal the 'spot' to lurk... suspiciously. It was easy to find, a good few people had been here the previous week or two and the trampled grass stuck out like a sore thumb. For the first half hour I was the only one there, the cloud cover thinning frustratingly slowly but the brightening conditions did awaken some fresh Painted Ladies, a Small Heath *impupillata* ab. (the forewing eyespot missing it's pupil) and a rather nice Speckled Wood.



As the morning progressed various faces began to appear, some familiar in the form of Dave 'Good' Cook and a certain Mr Hulme, and I discovered that there was a BBC news crew also on the way to do a local feature 🤪 .

We still had to wait awhile though as distant blue sky inched slowly in our general direction but finally my 5-year wait came to an end with a fleeting flyby. We didn't have to wait long for him to flutter back and soon he started to settle in between patrolling his little territory 😊 .





He may have been a tatty individual but he was certainly a frisky little bugger, seeing off anything that came past and as time went on, we worked out at least three males were here. One of these others settled just long enough for me to grab a couple of distant shots, my first sighting of a LTB with tails still intact!



While all this was going on the film crew followed us around and did a few interviews (I wasn't asked thank god!)



However the day belonged to this old chap, I was still seeing pictures of him cropping up on facebook a week later too, what a trooper!



With the sun out there were several other species about to annoy the LTB's, lots of Whites and the 'blind' Small Heath ab. had hung around too.



Things seemed to quieten down after noon and with numbers of enthusiasts dwindling, I decided to catch the train over to Newhaven to see if anything was about there. No adult LTB's were found and all the eggs seemed to have hatched. Whilst looking for eggs I think I also found a larval borehole in a developing pod, a hatched egg nearby a clue to the possible culprit.



As for adult butterflies, only Painted ladies and Red Admirals posed for me.



I very good day though, now the wait for the homebred LTB's began 😊 .

Re: Bugboys mission

by Old Wolf, 02-Oct-19 02:44 PM GMT

Hello BB,

Just catching up on diaries and glad you got your Brown Hairstreak.....finally 😊 Also, congrats on the LTB, was this not part of your 'mission'?

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 02-Oct-19 08:34 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Bugboy – glad you got your LTB – good things come to those who wait 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 02-Oct-19 10:22 PM GMT

Well done on your first LTB sighting, Buggy. It's a real thrill, isn't it, scruffy individual or not! 😊 There have been a few more as well since then I believe, and who knows what the next week or two may bring... 😊😊

Oh, and that Small Heath ab. is a good find as well – it looks really odd with a "blind" eyespot. 🍷

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 02-Oct-19 11:22 PM GMT

A bit of a party at Whitehawk today by the sounds of it.
One butterfly does make a day out!

Trevor.

PS. Another good value rail ticket.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 03-Oct-19 08:44 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

...While all this was going on the film crew followed us around and did a few interviews (I wasn't asked thank god!)

😊 Yes, best to leave it to the professionals, BB. Neil has plenty of broadcasting credits to his name and does it with aplomb.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 04-Oct-19 07:22 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

... Mind you Alners Gorse has got earlier and earlier and often produces the first Brostreaks of the season so they may have already been over? Earlier in the season it's possible to pick up 3 Hairstreaks!..

Indeed, I have only visited Alners Gorse once during our late season visits to Dorset and that was back in 2013...and I failed to find a Brown Hairstreak then.

This year the first BH sightings I saw reported were from there and there seemed to be good numbers being reported in late July/early August.

Congrats on catching up with the LTBs. They are out of reach for me unfortunately due to distance and lack of opportunity due to work and other commitments. One day perhaps.

Cheers,

Neil.

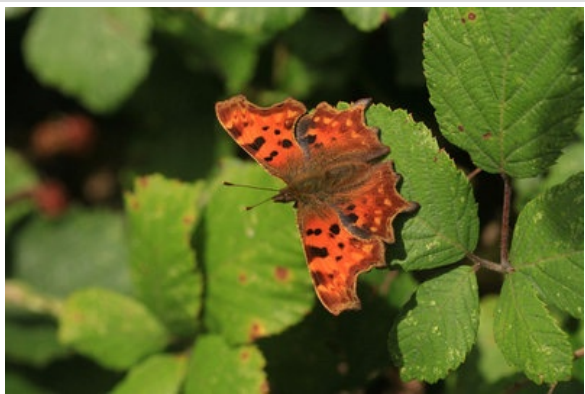
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 05-Oct-19 09:18 PM GMT

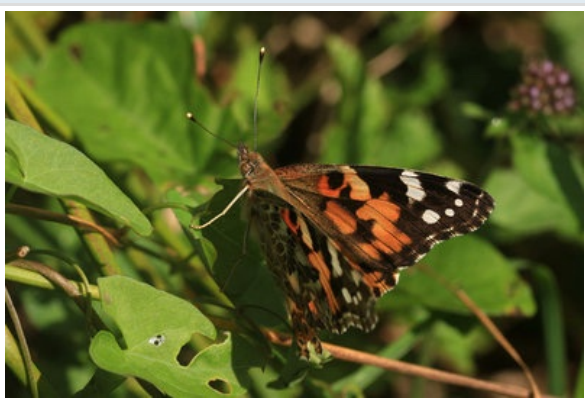
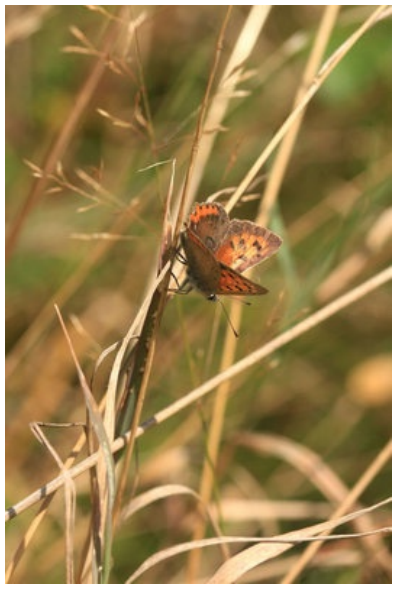
Thanks everyone, so good to finally bag a LTB although things did get even better on that front, but in the meantime...

4th September

September arrived, heralding the beginning of the season winding down here, but whilst I waited for the end of season flourish in the form of homegrown brood of Long-tailed Blues, there is still other stuff to chase at some of my regular haunts.... like Bookham for example. The day promised plenty of sunny spells and not long after arriving I was greeted by a bright orange Comma shaped splodge basking on the hedge along the side of Banks Common.



Speckled Wood, Small Coppers, another Comma and a Painted Lady kept me occupied as I walked along, always keeping one eye on look out for any Brown Hairstreaks that may be loitering around.

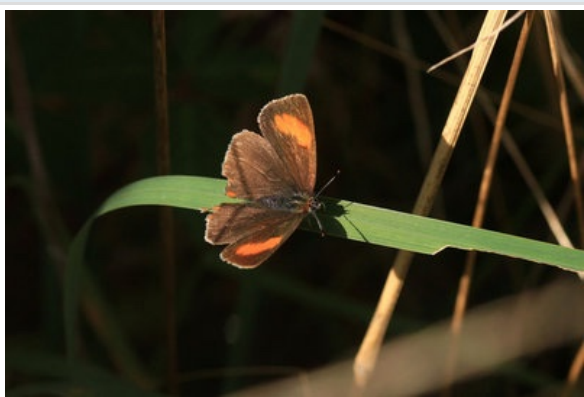


Once again non turned up but I did bump into Millerd coming the other way so we joined forces walking back along the hedge to try and flush some of these Hairstreaks out. We made it nearly the entire length of the hedge seeing much the same collection of species when something caught Millerds eye, at last a 2019 Brown Hairstreak at Bookham who was willing to sit still for me 😊! Still a draw despite her age, we followed her as she flitted around and posed. Oddly her first pose was under a leaf, seemingly hiding from the sun but after that she behaved quite normally.





then a second one showed up and this was quickly followed by a third. Like the proverbial buses, waiting weeks for one to sit and then three show up within 5 minutes of each other 😊 !



It all went quiet again after that so Millerd decided to leave on a high, leaving me to go and check on some babies. Last time I looked I had just the two remaining White Admiral larvae, Pete in his hibernaculum and Trevor still out and about with James, Pauline and Dave all having gone AWOL.

Having read the White Admiral section in a certain recently published book I can say with some confidence that Pete chose the 'partial cut and fold' hibernaculum design.



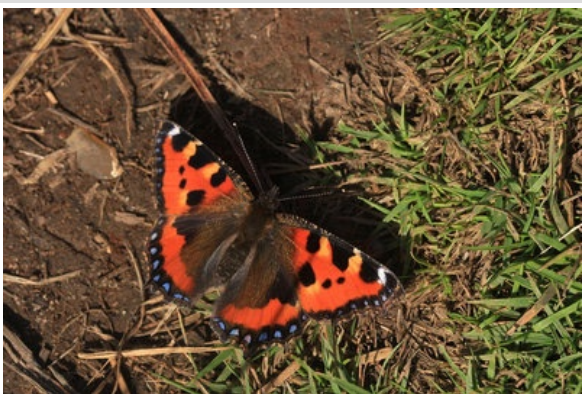
Next to look for Trevor, no sign but he could very well be nestled somewhere in this cluster of dead leaves which incorporates his last feeding leaf.



Although Dave had gone AWOL last time, I wandered down to have another browse where, low and behold, there he was. There had been no sign of any other larvae in the vicinity of this particular clump of Honeysuckle so I can only presume this is indeed the long-lost Dave who had wandered some distance from his last feeding leaf and had decided to construct the 'Symmetric fold' hibernaculum design... or perhaps was in the process anyway since the sides don't seem to be stuck together just yet. Anyway It's good to have re-found one of my babies 😊.



After that I wandered back, the increasing cloud cover leading to a reduction in butterfly activity but a stunning Small Tortoiseshell demanded my attention, a fitting end to a successful few hours 😊.



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 06-Oct-19 06:02 PM GMT

Great report Bugboy 😊 That did seem to be the way with Brostbreaks this year - a lot of waiting and then they're all over the place 😊 I think next year no-one should turn up until about 2pm to miss out all the hanging around 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 06-Oct-19 07:18 PM GMT

I remember that day – for about 20 minutes the pesky things were in all directions! Still, you have to hope that as they were all distinctly worn, they had been leading long and fulfilling lives laying eggs all along the remaining bits of hedgerow, and that next year their offspring will be numerous and amenable!

Good to see the progress report on the White Admiral cats too, and to tie it into the descriptions in Pete's book. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 09-Oct-19 08:20 PM GMT

Hi **Old Wolf**, sorry I missed your comment earlier. No the LTB wasn't part of the 'mission', that was to photograph the 59 recognised residents and regular breeding summer migrants. However if things continue the way they are the LTB may well become an official 60th species. I've actually managed 62 species over the past five years so I reckon I did ok 😊

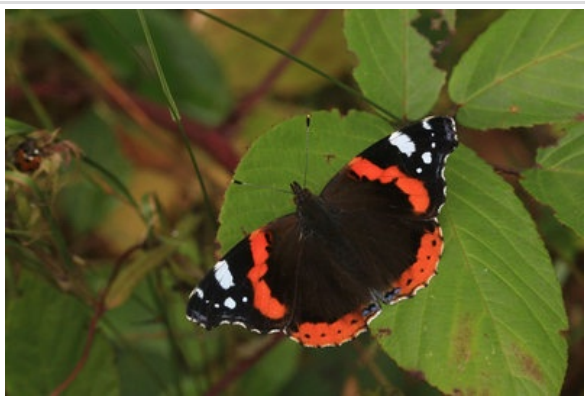
Thanks **Wurzel** bloody BH 😊 still, the chase and waiting is part of what makes them such a prize when you do get the buggers 😊!

Thanks **Dave**, I can confirm the females have been doing their job, I found several eggs on my last visit there last weekend 😊

7th September

Just a few hours spare today, which coincidentally was all the weather allowed me anyway at Hadleigh Country Park and the surrounding areas. Mostly overcast conditions meant that just the odd White was disturbed as I walked through the grass at the country park so I decided to wander off to the wood where I'd seen Heath Fritillaries and have a go at finding some larval nests there.

I failed in that respect but the sheltered clearings in the wood were warm enough for some Red Admirals. They mostly looked quite fresh if rather frisky despite the absence of the sun, but one did allow a close approach.



Not a great deal else was about so I returned to the Country Park where slightly thinning cloud had warmed the air a fraction and more Whites were about plus a tatty looking Meadow Brown.





Over on Two Tree Island a few patches of blue sky helped to wake a few more things up. The centre of activity was a Buddleja where Small and Green-veined Whites jostled with a handful of Red Admirals





The day, which had a distinct end of season feel about it, ended with a few light showers and some approaching dark rain clouds.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 09-Oct-19 11:02 PM GMT

Great stuff Bugboy – great final close up of the Red Admiral but for me the first Green-veined is the 'piece de resistance' beautiful 🤩🌿 I remember a month ago there was a certain end of the season feel but then the weather seemed to rally so I'm wondering what comes next for your PD? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 11-Oct-19 05:56 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:
..4th September

You summed things up nicely during that post, BB. Good to know that you caught up with a late Brown Hairstreak, and to be fair, she's in reasonable nick for the time of year.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 12-Oct-19 08:17 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments, I'm still a month behind so a good few posts yet to come and who knows, if the sun reappears next week (I'm off all week) maybe I can fit a few more in before winter finally closes the season down.

8th September

This was my last chance to get out for a bit but where to go? A few options popped into my head but the winner was Ashted Common. After a few visits I was pretty confident I knew where the Brown Hairstreaks would be lurking, and since the females were now well into egg laying duties, I should surely be able to track one or two down here. Typically the weather forecast didn't live up to much, the predicted clear blue skies rapidly clouded over to around 50/50... despite the app steadfastly insisting cloudless skies. Notice how they were hedging their bets though with a 2% chance of rain, this was accurate, there were a couple of light sprinkles 😊 Still, a day of sunny spells is usually better than a full sun day.



The two images were taken either side of 11am

In between the cloud cover and showers I did find some action, a few Whites, Meadow Browns and Speckled Wood.



I'd been wandering round for over two hours and was beginning to think it would be another failed Brown Hairstreak day when finally I caught sight of the familiar fluttering around a Blackthorn. Like Bookham the day before, I hadn't seen a single Gatekeeper so this could only be one thing. She stayed tantalisingly up in the Blackthorn and on the surrounding Bramble so it was a case of camera at arms reach job and hope the auto-focus knew what I was aiming for...

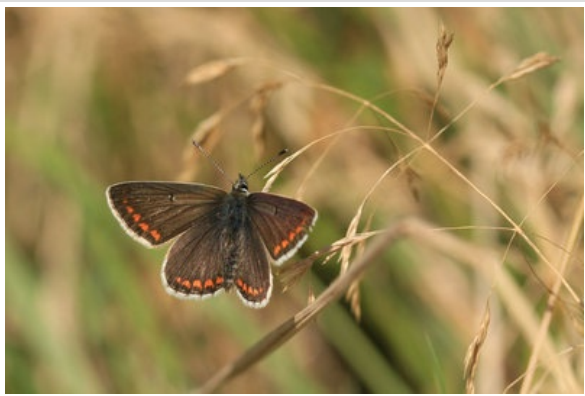


She didn't hang about for long and I lost her over the hedge but sitting nearby was a rather lovely Comma

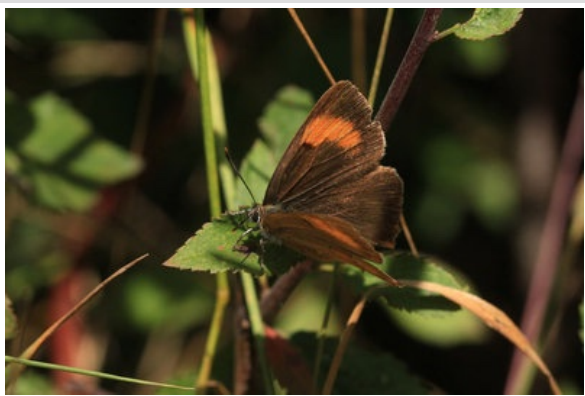


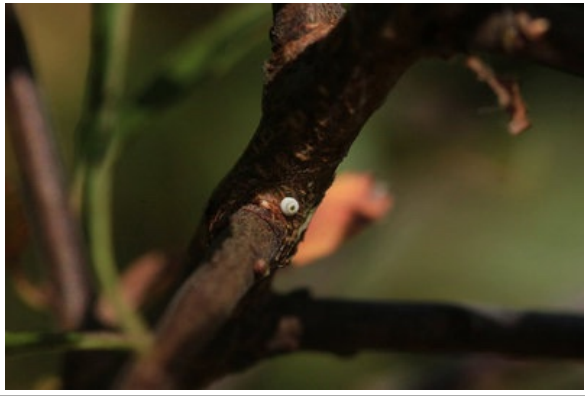
Another 45 minutes passed and with temperatures still creeping up I had enough to keep me occupied but no more Hairstreaks.





I was thinking about heading off but gave in to temptation with one last circuit of the most likely spots. 30 seconds later I turned the first corner and there she was, darting out the hedge and fluttering along. She was a good poser and not in too bad shape considering her probable age. During my time watching her she laid a single egg but she most the time just sitting around 😊.





After she finally gave me the slip I spent another half hour or so looking for more but it would seem that was it for the day as far as Hairstreaks were concerned. A very nice looking male Green-veined White did get my attention though.



The day wasn't quite over, at Ashted station was a Buddleja positively heaving with Whites, Red Admirals and Painted Ladies and during the cloudy spells the railings seemed to be the place to hang out.





So after a dodgy start I didn't do to bad with the Brown Hairstreaks in the end 😊.

I had a long two week wait for my next chance to get out but it's pretty fair to say it was going to be worth the wait 😊!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 12-Oct-19 09:17 PM GMT

Glad to see you found another spot for the Hairstreaks, Buggy, after the trials and tribulation of Bookham this year. There was a good showing of other stuff as well, by the look of those photos. 😊 Some of the forecasts have been distinctly unreliable lately – this is apparently because of "very mobile weather patterns". Not helpful when planning a day out at a distance – though if the next adventure is the one I think it is, they got that one spot-on quite a bit in advance (thank goodness! 😊).

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 13-Oct-19 05:54 PM GMT

I can see why that Green-veined White caught your attention Bugboy – it really stands out 😊😊 Glad the Brostreaks started playing ball after playing hard to get for so long, they certainly kept us waiting this year 😊🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 14-Oct-19 03:06 PM GMT

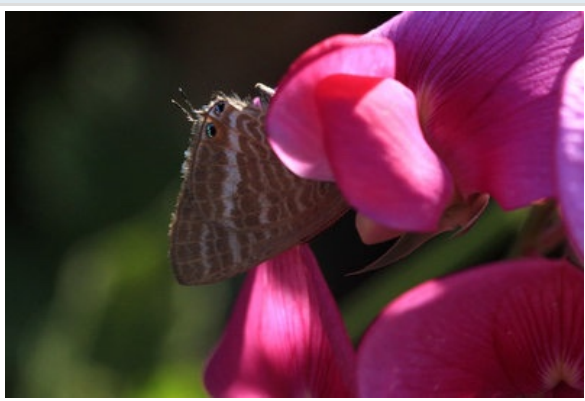
Hmmm, '*very mobile weather patterns*' sounds like a bit of a cop out. My real bug bear though with these forecasts is that fact that the now casts are equally as inaccurate 😊. Anyway lets see if your guess is right eh Dave 😊

They certainly did but it's all part of the fun with that particularly species isn't it 😊😊

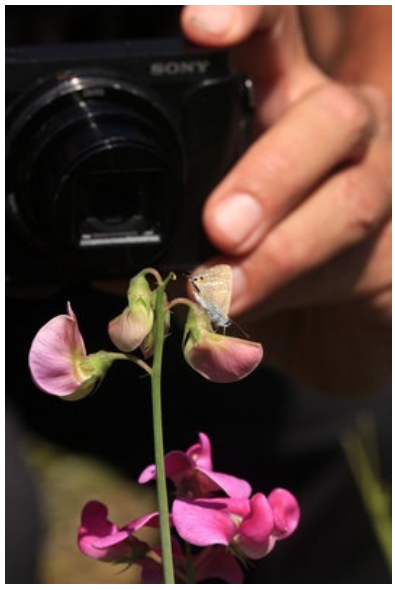
21st September

It was a long two weeks before my next chance of butterflying presented itself, work getting in the way mostly. The Saturday looked like the last day of a warm spell of weather and with the imminent prospect of a home-bred generation of Long-tailed Blues appearing it was a trip down to the south coast that inevitably beckoned. I'd arranged to meet up with Millerd down at Newhaven Tidemills, where it was easy for him to find a parking spot, have a wander and if nothing appeared to then move on to Whitehawk Hill via train. There was a stiff breeze blowing and with very little in the way of shelter here there was precious little on the wing, so after doing a circuit of the site we decided to cut our losses and move on to Brighton where sightings seem to be almost guaranteed! It was as we were leaving we caught sight of the familiar figure of B'rex, also perusing the BLEP. Like us, he had drawn a blank too, but after chatting he did suggest another site he knew that might have some action that wasn't too far away. Well it would be silly to ignore a bit of local knowledge so off we went 😊.

It didn't take long for our day to improve drastically, within a minute of arriving we saw the first LTB 😊. It was here that we ended up spending the day (joined by Neil H after an hour or so) with several LTB's keeping us on our toes and providing a good workout on what was a rather steep (and at times slippery) site. There was a good mixture here too, from freshly emerged to older immigrants still laying eggs making up the total of nine insects that seemed to be present. Anyway, enough waffle, here's what we saw from my perspective 😊.











Numerous other species did turn up in one's and two's, Clouded Yellow, Common Blue, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Small & Large Whites, Walls but they all barely got a look in, the only other thing I took a picture of was this friendly Lizard, which found my bag a very convenient place to soak up some rays.



A real highlight of the year 🤔😄 Big thanks to James for suggesting we checked out the site 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 14-Oct-19 09:22 PM GMT

Great to relive that day again, Buggy, but from a different perspective – literally! How we all weren't more in each other's shots I don't know... 😊 You did rather better than I did for butterflies with their wings open, but still managed a few with their noses buried in the pea flowers I see. Their favourite pose... 😊😄 Brilliant.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 14-Oct-19 11:08 PM GMT

A cracking array of images Buggy 🤔👍👍👍 I'd not noticed before how variable their under wing patterning and eye spots can be 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 17-Oct-19 12:51 PM GMT

That LTB report was well worth the wait, BB. Excellent sequence.

The male Green Veined White is superb too. I don't think I've ever seen one with such enlarged forewing spots.

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 17-Oct-19 04:41 PM GMT

That's just plain greedy, Paul, two LTB's on one BLEP flower stem 🍷🍷.

Pity the LTB party was cut short by the weather, it seems to have cut the season short too. 😞

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Oct-19 11:19 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave**, it's interesting reading reports from different viewpoints 😊. I think it helped that there were so many flying around to keep us from stepping on each others toes 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, I reckon that one with the reduced underwing eyespot might be good enough for an ab ?

Thanks **David**, I've seen a few unusually well marked GVV's this season, I put it down to the up and down weather.

Sorry **Trevor** 😊. Yea it's a shame the weather has collapsed in such a dramatic manner but I am still seeing butterflies, just have to pick the day and site with care and hope a big dollop of luck accompanies you 😊!

2nd October

Well after that Long-tailed Blue fest it would seem my season had well and truly peaked... or had it! I had to wait another 11 days before I was able to get out again (bloody work and adult life!). The prospect of a homebred generation of LTB had prompted me to splurge my last days of annual leave in the first half of October, figuring it best to spread my options as wide as possible given it is October and there didn't seem to be an Indian summer on the way. Having already seen a good few now though the pressure was off but that didn't stop me wanting to go back and try for some more leading to today starting off as a carbon copy of my last day, meeting Dave at Tidemills again. The weather wasn't quite as agreeable as 11 days previously, significantly cooler and with a stronger breeze. A female Common Blue caused us both a minor coronary but even a wander up to the site where we had seen so many before drew a blank, in fact there were no butterflies of any species there.

So with nothing going on here it was time to switch to the plan B and head off to see if anything was going on over in the hills of Brighton. As we took one last wander through the BLEP Dave saw a Cloudie, I didn't see it but then over one of the ridges we re-located it. The cool, windy conditions aided us as it took breaks from feeding to bask giving us both something at least to take home if Brighton came up with nothing 😊.



A small fly decided to use his wing as a basking spot.

An hour later after an invigorating climb from the train station we arrived at Whitehawk Hill to find a significant gathering, including several familiar faces, slowly pacing around as if they'd lost something rather valuable, which indeed they had. A quick chat with Katrina told us that less than a minute before our arrival a pristine male LTB had been lost. Everyone was spread out trying to re-locate it but it was a cry from EssexBuzzard (who had arrived shortly after Dave and I) that caused everyone to scarper to one corner and gather round a small brown butterfly hunkered down in the grass.



Everyone got snaps but being hunkered down there were the inevitable annoying blades of grass, so EssexBuzzard was given the honour of being a hero for the second time by clearing away the offending blades and giving everyone a clear view.



I think the gathering of people that almost completely encircled him must have warmed him up slightly by sheltering him from the cool breeze, and with a flurry of whirring camera and gasps from his adoring fans, he opened up again before 10 minutes after re-locating him he took flight and was lost once again.





Only two butterflies photographed all day but still worth the day trip down to the south coast 😊😁!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 17-Oct-19 11:38 PM GMT

Definitely worth the trip, Buggy – and good to see that LTB from a better angle and sitting the right way up... 😊😁

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 18-Oct-19 08:13 PM GMT

For just two butterflies, they certainly made the trip worthwhile. Nice one 🍷😁

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 19-Oct-19 06:00 PM GMT

Definitely quality over quantity Bugboy (I think I said something similar on other peoples PD's but then it's so apt so repetition be damned 😊) an absolutely blinding/dazzling butterfly and quite easy to see how this single butterfly could make the day 😊🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 20-Oct-19 09:10 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments 😊, quality over quantity was definitely the theme for that day!

5th October

I'd been off work since my last outing, five days with the intention of making the most of the expected LTB emergence, but the weather had decided to well and truly mess up those plans. Today was a rather cool cloudy affair so I used it to check up on the Bookham babies. Both Pete and Dave were still safe and sound in their respective hibernaculums, although I think Dave does need to put in a bit more effort to seal his up, he does look a little exposed!



Pete



Dave

No adult butterflies were seen, as expected for such a gloomy day in October but I did have a good search around for other youngsters. I paid particular attention to the Sallows where I'd found Padfield the Purple Emperor larvae last year (which is close to where I'd photographed the Empress earlier this year) and whilst I didn't find any larvae I did find some nibbling which does look suspiciously like they have been here. Guy if you're reading this, does this feeding damage look like PE activity?





Also I found my first Brown Hairstreak eggs of the season without too much struggle, so I suspect despite the lack of sightings, numbers must have been not too bad.



With more days booked off in the coming weeks I just had to cross my fingers and toes that the weather predictions of weeks of rain and storms weren't going to come to fruition, and I would be able to put at least some of my time off to good use!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 21-Oct-19 08:38 PM GMT

Good to see those Hairstreak eggs, Buggy - I feel a bit more hopeful about next year now. 😊 They are certainly a resilient species - I wonder how many more there would be if we didn't keep flailing and otherwise ruining blackthorn hedges... 😞?

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 22-Oct-19 09:07 PM GMT

We'd be looking at pestilence levels **Dave**, but a very welcome pest in my book!

6th October

The following day we were blessed with a bit of sun so it was off to the south coast to make the most of it. Newhaven Tidemills was, despite the sun, pretty much devoid of butterfly activity (it was rather windy to be fair) but the birdlife provided plenty of target practice. The Stonechats in particular, with their preference for sitting atop exposed perches, made excellent subjects.



By 11 though it seemed wise to move on to another site to see if I could find any butterflies. I decided to head over to the fort on the other side of the Ouse estuary, bumping into B'rex on the way who was on the lookout for LTB. We both wandered over to the base of the fort where another patch of BLEP was found to be peppered with eggs some weeks previously. Now however the sun was just a little too low in the sky to light up this patch properly and the surrounding area, although sunny, was rather windy and like Tidemills, similarly devoid of butterflies. Time to switch to plan C! I bid farewell to James and caught the train over to Southwick to explore that tiny strip of green that so often comes up trumps at this time of year. Today was no different and I was soon watching three Clouded Yellows as they flew back and forth along the central slope, stopping regularly to feed on the few Knapweed flowers that were still present.



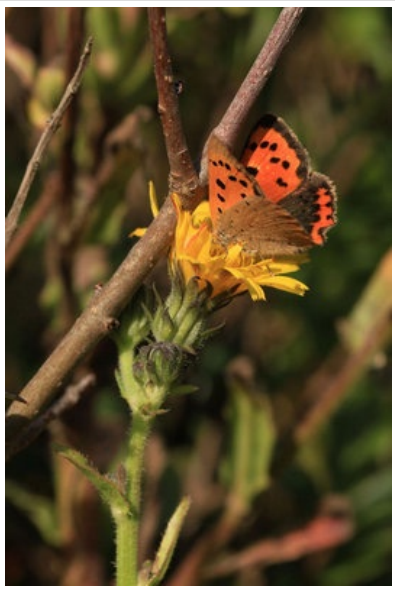
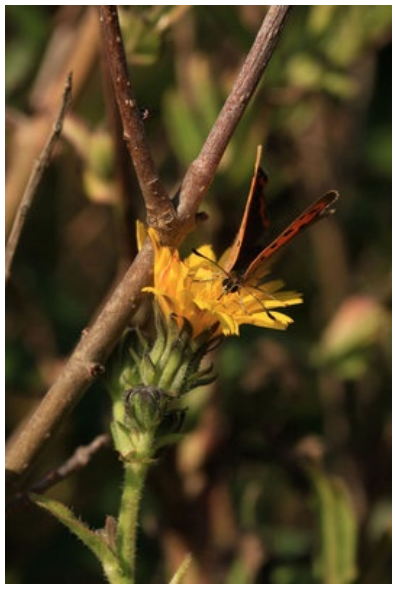


Small Whites were around in good numbers further along the path and a single Large White also did a flyby, but my attention was drawn to the lazy flight of a medium sized orangey butterfly... A Wall, I wasn't expecting that!



Although I only stayed here an hour before cloud cover sent everything to an early bed, my species count rose to a respectable six species with singletons of Small Copper and Common Blue also found. A not too shabby end to the day







Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 22-Oct-19 10:07 PM GMT

That Southwick site really does come up with the goods when everywhere else fails, Buggy. 😊 Glad to see the Cloudies in particular continue to favour it – you do wonder if they'd consider making it a permanent base considering how sheltered and warmed by the proximity to the sea it is. 😊 The female Wall was a nice surprise as well – hopefully ranging out to look for suitable egg-laying sites, so worth a look in the spring.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 23-Oct-19 08:54 PM GMT

That really is a cracking late season site Bugboy – fresh looking Common Blues, Small Coppers in great nick and those Cloudies 🤩😊🌿🌿 Great to see the Wall – must be a third brood surely? They used to have those at Keyhaven which might be a similar habitat?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 25-Oct-19 08:20 PM GMT

Nice to be able to find Small Coppers, Wall Browns and Clouded Yellows on an October day, BB. Long Tailed Blue in addition would simply have been decadent! 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Oct-19 08:28 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, I've said it before but that little patch really does hit above its weight. It will be interesting to see if any Walls turn up in the spring 😊 Yes Wurzel, it is a great little spot and that will certainly be a third brood Wall. Many of the nearby populations (where she undoubtedly wandered from)

routinely third brood now.

True David, Wasn't gonna stop me from looking though 😊

9th October

I had another run of three days, provisionally booked off with LTB in mind but the weather had other ideas, a mixed bag of cloud, sunny spells, troublesome showers and a pesky wind. Heading east seemed like the best chance of avoiding getting a drenching today. Initially I took a wander along the south facing paths on Hadleigh Country Park on the lookout for some Clouded Yellow but the strong westerly soon put paid to that. Even if I did find one it's unlikely I would have been able to pin it down for an image so I headed of to see if I could find some shelter from said wind on Two Tree Island. I had good late season results here last year where there are large areas of Ivy, I just needed to find a patch that was facing East but still catching a bit of sun. With the wind blowing the clouds along at a fair old rate, sunny spells came and went in the blink of an eye so whilst waiting for a decent sunny spell I did a bit of birding. The tide was out so waders were out of the question, being mostly several miles away out on the mud flats but It was time well spent because I managed by far my best Kingfisher image to date 😊 (they're normally just a blue or orange dot in the centre of the picture!)



Anyway, back to butterflies, In the perfect sunny sheltered patch of flowering Ivy I found myself three Red Admirals 😊





Who were joined after a while by a (probably second brood) Peacock 😊



And then a surprise appearance by a female Wall 😊 . Surprise for two reasons, I've never seen one here before (although I know they are present on nearby Canvey Island) and I've never seen one nectaring on Ivy either.





On a nearby log a couple of Lizards were making the most of the autumnal sun



After around 2 hours with the sun getting lower in the sky, sunny periods were becoming few and far between so I took that as my queue to make a move, stopping only to grab a couple of shots of a passing Small White.



Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 27-Oct-19 08:04 AM GMT

Superb stuff, Paul.

A mrgreen 🍷 for the Kingfisher, and a further one for the female Wall. 🍷
Your experience with the wind mirrored mine at High and Over. Could hardly stand up in the car park, yet only yards into the dense shrubbery there were many Red Admirals on the Ivy, and in calm sunshine.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 27-Oct-19 09:51 AM GMT

Always good to find an unexpected surprise like that Wall, Buggy. some great shots there. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 27-Oct-19 02:37 PM GMT

Lovely shots BB, especially the Wall 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 28-Oct-19 01:35 PM GMT

Cracking shot of the Kingfisher Bugboy – you really managed to capture the electric blue on the back 🤩👍 Lovely looking Wall as well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 29-Oct-19 01:23 PM GMT

That last post is a riot of colour, BB. Very nice. It's only 3 weeks ago but it may as well be 3 months, as things are looking pretty bleak for any continuation of the season. 😞

Re: Bugboys mission

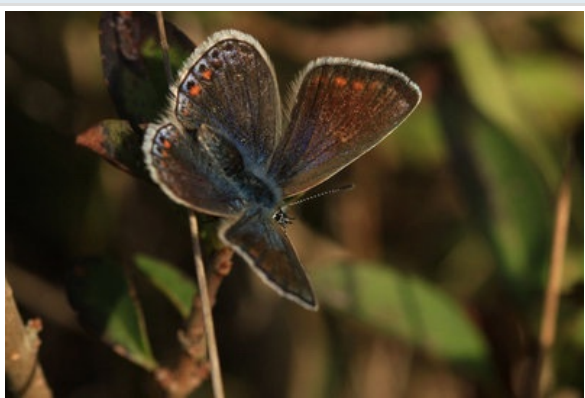
by bugboy, 29-Oct-19 11:34 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments. I'll have to keep a close eye out for Walls there next year. I got very lucky with that Kingfisher, just two grab shots before she flew off, the other one had far more grasses obscuring her.

10th October

The following day I was out again. I'd booked the whole of the next week off too in the hope of seeing some more LTB's but the current weather forecast (and they're generally more accurate when predicting dodgy weather) was saying it would be a week of rain so it was a case of making the most of what sunny weather was available and today it looked like there'd be plenty down on the south coast and quite possibly my last day butterflying of the year.

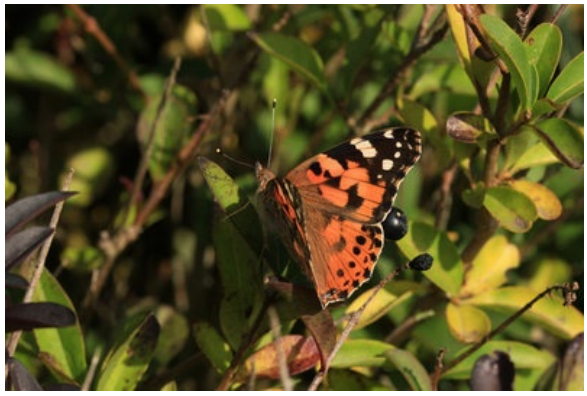
It was actually pleasantly calm, barely a breath of wind, when I arrived down at Southwick. Still a bit cool and early for any Clouded Yellow that may still be present here but a rather nice female Common Blue kept me entertained for a bit.



I wandered up and down the length of the site a few times, noting a few Small Whites and after half an hour a distinctly butterfly shaped yellow leaf basking on some privet, possibly one of the same individuals I'd seen on my last visit which was only four days previously.



When he'd warmed up a bit he flew off to begin the days patrolling but was replaced by a very fresh Painted Lady.



The next hour was spent mainly chasing Clouded Yellows around, I think I had three again, and it remained cool enough to encourage them to settle at regular intervals. The female Blue hung around the same corner too.





As is almost obligatory these days in this part of the world, I had planned to head over to Mill Hill before heading home to see if there was still something in that bottom corner but I got a bit distracted by a couple of noisy Kingfishers flying around the marina. They came quite close a number of times but I was too slow to grab anything as good as yesterday.



Well anyway I finally managed to drag myself away but I'll continue this in the next post...

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 30-Oct-19 12:17 AM GMT

Once again a very nice array of butterflies from that sheltered haven by the sea, Buggy. 😊 The female Common Blues as well as the Cloudies! 🍷🍷

Cheers,

Dave

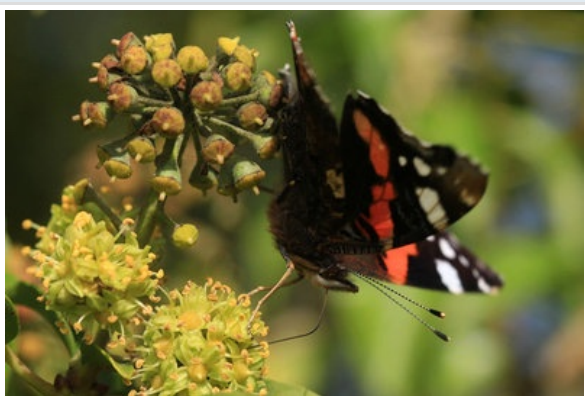
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-Oct-19 07:42 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave**, yes that little spot is amazingly reliable. If I lived locally I'd be there every day I think!

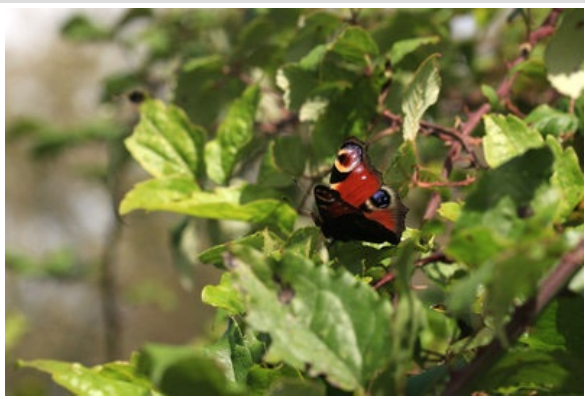
10th October (part 2)

The wind had picked up considerably by now but my usual route around the horse field afforded plenty of shelter and fresh Red Admirals popped up regularly, mostly flying out of reach, but a few hung around to feast on the Ivy and made for good targets. This one has the extra blue scaling in the black dots along the hindwing border, as also noted by Millerd in his recent posts, making in an ab *caerulocellata*. However having looked through my back catalogue, I've seen that this is rather common and like Neil Freeman, I'm reluctant at best to call it an ab. Much like *bialbata*, it seems quite contradictory to call such a commonly occurring variation an aberration. Regardless of that though it made for a very good subject 😊.

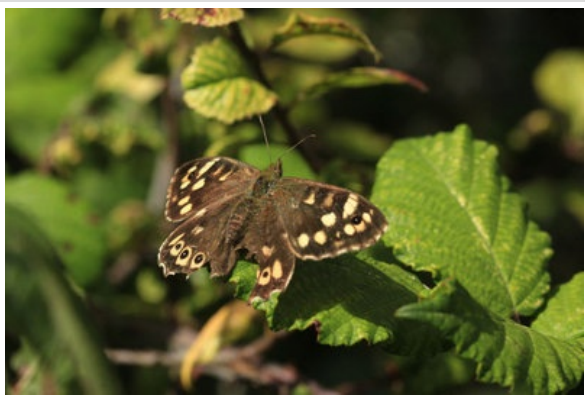




Leaving them to their feasting I moved onto Mill Hill proper where I found the hillside to be completely devoid of butterflies, not so much as a fleeting flyby. Considering the recent deterioration of the weather though I wasn't particularly surprised by this, plus it was rather windswept now the wind had picked up. Things did improve somewhat when I made my way to the sheltered paths along the northern edge that border the farmland leading up to the top car park. Once again sheltered patches of flowering Ivy gave me a reason to stop and point my camera and I added another species to the days tally, a couple of Peacock had joined the Red Admirals, the freshest of which must surely be a second brood insect.



In the wooded area at the top some Speckled Wood were to be found, bringing me to a respectable seven species for the day.



Nothing else was seen here so I made my way back down the path, stopping of once again to watch the Red Admirals and Peacocks.



The walk back along the slope was unsurprisingly uneventful again but near the bottom car park species eight was waiting for me 😊.



It was still quite early so I did go back the Southwick for a second go with the Clouded Yellows, but by the time I arrived it had clouded over quite a bit sending everything to an early bed.



On the plus side it did give me an excuse to leave early and miss the London rush hour. All things considered, if this was going to be my last day butterflying of the year, it was a rather successful one 😊.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 30-Oct-19 07:58 PM GMT

If that is the end of your butterfly year, Buggy, that's a great way to finish. 😊 I think there must be a few second brood Peacocks around this year – let's hope they have time to feed up successfully. At least their fat reserves won't need to last as long as those of their first brood relatives which took to their beds in July and August! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-Oct-19 11:48 PM GMT

That's certainly the way to end the season Bugboy – finish with a flourish 🍷🍷 What was that Peacock doing out so late – the dirty stop-out 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Nov-19 01:15 PM GMT

Thanks guys, It wasn't quite the end of my season in the end, although the next few outings definitely made me work for my quarry! In recent years it's becoming pretty standard to find a few late Peacocks suggesting second broods down here are becoming a routine event in small numbers.

15th October

Ok so in my last post I may have suggested it looked like being my last chance to do some butterflying for the year. When those pictures were being taken it did indeed look like that may be the case, the following week that I had booked off with mass LTB emergence in mind looked like being completely rained off from start to finish. As the week got closer though, there did seem to be a few windows in the rain appearing, and since I'd booked the week off with the sole intention of cramming in as much end of season butterfly chasing as I could, I spent the week carefully picking my way through the hotchpotch of weather, with varying degrees of success. Monday the 14th was indeed rained off but the following day was more a case of heavy showers but with a good chance of sunny spells.

Newhaven was the destination since if the butterflies didn't show I'd still have plenty of birdlife to keep me company. The morning was a rather drab and dreary affair with occasional drizzle so it was all birds, many of whom were having a good old preen after the morning rain.

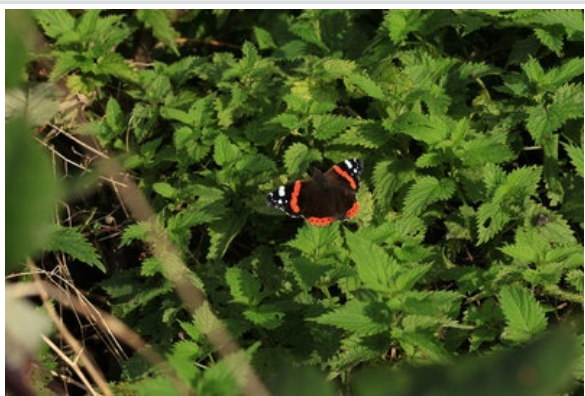


Above me a flock of Curlew circled before settling in the creek and a passing Peregrine caused a small amount of commotion.





By the afternoon the cloud finally started to break up but the rather strong breeze tempted me to wander over to the nature reserve surrounding the fort where I finally found myself a few butterflies in some of the more sheltered areas. Only three species in total, a handful each of Speckled Wood and Red Admiral plus a single Small White who didn't stop.



Not the best weather in the world but a lot better than mooching around inside all day!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 03-Nov-19 10:24 PM GMT

Great shots Bugboy especially the Peregrine in flight – you can really see those yellow legs 🤩👍👏

Have a goodun

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 05-Nov-19 09:50 AM GMT

I admire your persistence, BB. Taking a week off in the hope that there may be a few drier interludes shows great resolve!

Lovely bird images. I don't think I've ever seen a flock of curlew. If I'm lucky I get to see the odd individual around Swansea or in Pembroke.

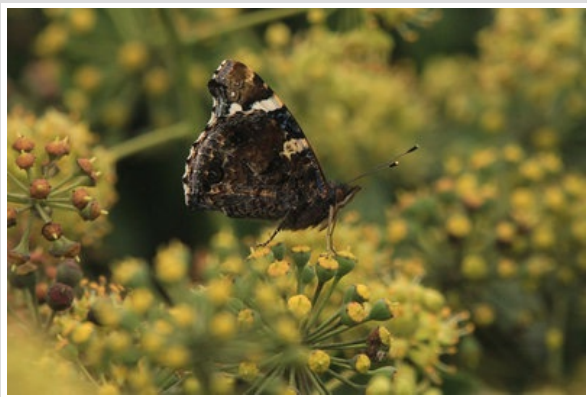
Re: Bugboys mission

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

Thanks Guys. I booked this week off back when the LTB's were busy laying eggs so I was hoping for a bit of an Indian summer **David**. As we now know the wetaher had other ideas and I was left to make the best of a bad situation instead. Still things could've been worse 😊

17th October

The 16th was another washout but the following day looked to at least be dry for a good portion of the day, although sun looked to be at a premium, so I didn't really expect much in the way of butterflies. I decided to go back to Two Tree Island to see if I could get any more shots of that Kingfisher but I was quite surprised to find not one, not two but three Red Admirals avidly feeding on the Ivy in the cool overcast conditions. Other than a split down the length of a forewing of one, they all seemed to be in good condition.



After half an hour I moved the short distance to the hide that overlooked the Kingfisher's home. All I saw was the flash of electric blue as she darted off to the far secluded corner and out of sight. A little Egret was busy hunting something though.



I moved on for a bit, hoping the Kingfisher would return to her perch, and discovered the Brent Geese have returned for the winter in good numbers.



Curlew on the flats with Wigeon and Brent Geese on the water
A return to the Kingfisher haunt found more Egret coming in to sit out the high tide and a lone Redshank wandering around in the shallows.



With the tide being in there was quite a bit else to see too.



Black-headed Gull



Curlew



Oystercatcher



Redshank, Dunlin & Avocet



Avocet, Redshank, Black-tailed & Bar-tailed Godwit



Grey Plover & Redshank

An hour later I returned for a final attempt to catch the Kingfisher and once again all I got was the flash of blue vanishing into the far trees. The Egret's had multiplied a fair bit though with over 30 dotted around in the trees surrounding this patch of water whilst a couple were causing trouble on the water's edge, maybe I had stumbled across some sort of Little Egret fight club 😊



Styling out the advance



Bit of a tidy up before the main event



here comes trouble...



looks more like ballet than a fight in still images

I stayed for a bit longer watching the local birdlife do it's thing, a Little Egret threw a comical pose as it's larger cousin flew by 😄



I should have been a keeping a closer eye on a rather large dark cloud that snuck up on me though, I got completely drenched to the bone on the walk back to the station 😓😓.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 05-Nov-19 11:09 PM GMT

More cracking shots Bugboy – it seems to have been a good autumn for Red Admirals 😄 Were those birding shots taken with your telephoto – they're brill 🤩👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 07-Nov-19 10:50 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel** 😄 Yes they do seem to have a good end of season rally don't they. Yes they were all taken with my big lens, and so were the Admiral pics who refused to come close that day.

19th October

The 18th wasn't too bad a day and had my walking boots (only 6 months old) not decided to spring a leak I would probably have gone back out but I ended up shopping for some new ones. Anyway the weekend was now upon me, just two days left and both a bit iffy, but armed with nice new walking boots at least my feet would (hopefully) stay dry. In keeping with the theme of my week off I went back to Newhaven where my new footwear was put to good use, rain clouds passed overhead one after the other whilst blue sky could be seen tantalisingly close inshore and further west. The rain, which wasn't particularly heavy, just persistent, didn't put the birdlife off though.



Male Stonechat



Female Stonechat in the rain



Goldfinch, still raining.



Redshank in between showers

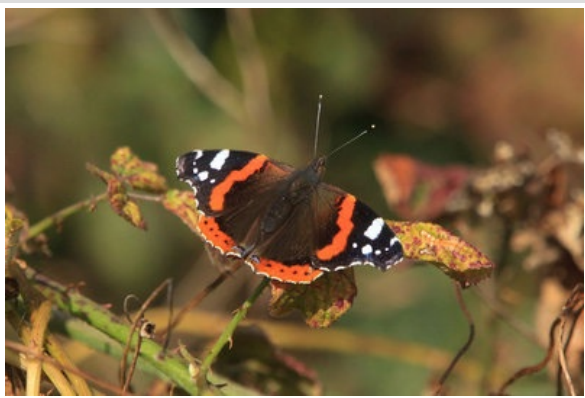


Meadow Pipit on the beach

The clouds however were very persistent and after an hour I decided to try and reach the distant blue sky, heading over to Southwick. On the train I spied the first butterflies of the day, Red Admirals and Painted Ladies feeding on Buddleja by the side of the tracks. Even though at Southwick I finally had the luxury of some sunny weather, butterflies were hard to find.



A wander along the length of the site didn't turn up so much as a single Small White. It was only on the walk back that I caught sight of a Red Admiral flitting around some flowering Ivy. I couldn't get particularly close but as I stood and watched I realised there was actually five Red Admirals here, not always visible due to the amount of bramble between me and them but with the help of my long lens I managed a few shots to take home with me.





I was in two minds as to whether to return to Newhaven or go straight home from here but in the end I plumped for another wander around Newhaven, this time around the fort, not least because this was where Neil had found a fresh male LTB the week before. The sun had arrived here too, although it was getting rather low in the sky now, but there were still a few Red Admiral flying, a nice fresh one being the pick of the bunch!



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 07-Nov-19 11:08 PM GMT

That last Red Admiral is particularly whole and nicely marked, Buggy. As Wurzel mentioned they do seem to have had a better year in 2019. 😊

Fascinating shots of all those waders too – I might make a start on telling them all apart now with your helpful labels!

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 08-Nov-19 08:26 PM GMT

I'm with Dave – cracking images especially the final one – the blue extends into the next spot along as well – nice 😊📷 I need to get me a telephoto 📷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 08-Nov-19 11:33 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave**, I'll try and remember to label my birdy pics more often, I forget not everyone on here can tell what is what 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, we can have a chat about lenses in a few weeks over a pint 😊

20th October

I wasn't sure whether I was going to go back out the following day, the weather looked no better than the 19th and the wind was also set to pick up a bit but when I got home Saturday evening I saw reports of Ring Ouzel a few miles up the coast from Newhaven which is a bird I've yet to see. Maybe one of the many Blackbirds I'd glanced at but taken little notice of the previous day was an Ouzel? Anyway the weather was in some ways marginally better, much less rain, but the sun was at a premium and the wind was indeed stronger and was now coming from the north, making the day noticeably cooler. Bird life was much the same (no Ring Ouzels about though).



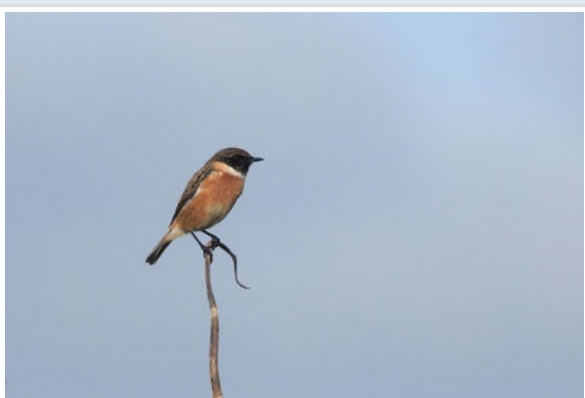
Goldfinch



A Meadow Pipit caught 'mid turn'



A Redshank with muddy feet



Male Stonechat



Greenfinch

But butterflies were nowhere to be seen apart from a single fleeting Red Admiral flyby, oddly flying determinedly north into the strong breeze. After an hour I headed over to the fort where I knew I'd find a bit of shelter from the wind. A few birds were around but very few sat for a picture (and I didn't see any Ouzel again)



Dunnock

but the most noteworthy thing over here were the amount of Red Admirals seemingly coming in from the sea and flying north, mostly without stopping. Occasionally one would get blown sideways but as soon as it could, it would power on northwards. Only a couple settled within but barely long enough to grab a single distant shot but from what I could make out they seemed to be freshly emerged insects.



I later found out there had been similar sightings of this along the south coast and there is supporting evidence that insects in general have a preference for migrating into the wind.

And there endeth my rather rainy, windy week of butterflying. Of course it goes without saying that the weather started to settle down after this with several nice days taunting me whilst I was at work!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 10-Nov-19 06:03 PM GMT

Ring Ouzel used to be one of my 'Bogie Birds' Bugboy and like you I often wondered if I'd been staring at one and not realised – but when I finally saw my first it was a strong reminder of the old adage 'when you see it you'll know it' 😊 Interesting that butterflies migrate into the wind – I;d of thought a tailwind would have been more beneficial 😊?Great shot though 😊 Only a couple of weekends to go 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Nov-19 10:49 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, looks like I'll have to wait another year to try and catch sight of one now, time to switch to the winter visiting birdies, never seen a Waxwing or a Hawfinch... or a Snow Bunting...

22nd October

Well as you would expect, my return to work signaled a calming down in the weather, less wind and rain and more sun, such is that law we all know so well

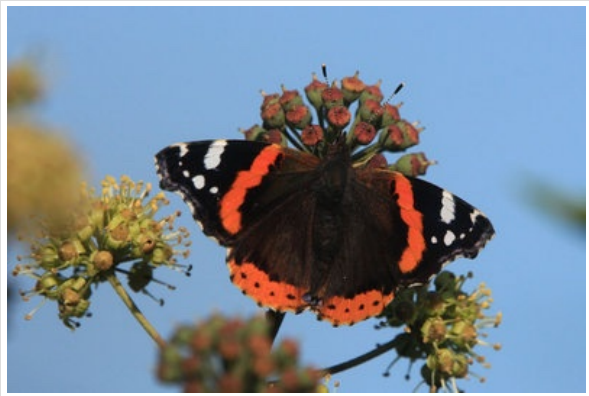
All my holiday had now been booked and used up so I had to squeeze in any last chances for butterflying to days off, or in this case my half day. I had enough time to shoot off to Two Tree Island to hopefully find some sunlit flowering Ivy. The amount of Ivy here means that the area has a long flowering period, from Sept right through to early November so It's a good place to find late season butterflies as several of my previous posts show.

It didn't take me long to come up trumps today too, three Red Admiral and a Comma enjoying the first patch of Ivy I found 😊



A little wander around found that most the other patches had now gone over or were in shade. A few birds distracted me for a bit but I spent the greater part of the afternoon watching the butterflies I'd originally found, finding a new and pristine Comma had replaced the earlier one. I'm going to be slightly self-indulgent with the images here since this is the last time I managed to get out and so these are likely to have been the last butterflies I will see this side of Christmas 😊 .









My diary is now up to date... for now 😊!

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 11-Nov-19 11:40 PM GMT

I know this was a few weeks ago, but any butterflies in mid to late autumn should be treasured, especially this year.

As you know, Two Tree Island is a great place, even when there are no butterflies.

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 12-Nov-19 07:29 AM GMT

A great end of season selection there, Paul.
I think we all got used to the calm, sunny Autumn's of recent years.
This year the weather collapsed just as things were getting interesting!
Have a great Winter break!.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 12-Nov-19 10:32 PM GMT

That's a great end to the season Bugboy 😊 That Comma looks like it was having a bit of bad hair day 🤪🤪🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 13-Nov-19 06:28 PM GMT

I know I shouldn't, but I absolutely love these autumnal posts where the principle attractions are birds rather than butterflies.

That said, Commas and Red Admirals in mid to late October are always welcome so keep posting them if you see them, BB.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 18-Nov-19 09:05 PM GMT

Thanks **Essex**, it won't be my last visit there this winter I'm sure 😊
Thanks **Trevor**, you're right though, we have been spoiled. At least we had time to catch up with the first emergents 😊
Thanks **Wurzel**, I expect it'll be a few months now before I see one of them again 😊
Here you go then **David**, this was a very Autumnal/Wintery day 😊

16th November

Now it looks like we are definitely in the grip of the 'off season', my jaunts out and about switch as usual to birdlife (but off course keeping an eye out for any hibernating lepidoptera I can find). Today's trip was very much for the former though, a few hours down at Barnes Wetland Centre.

It was rather quiet, no Waders around as far as I could see or hear but enough of the usual suspects were around.



Cormorant, Gadwall pair, Great Spotted Woodpecker male, Mute Swan



Lapwing

The main attraction during the winter here are the Bitterns with up to six visiting most winters and it's probably one of the best places in the country to get decent views of them. News on the local grapevine was that three are currently in residence, skulking around in the reed beds, here's one doing it's best skulk (nothing skulks like a Bittern skulks!)



Spot the Bittern.

Elsewhere I found a pair of Jay sorting themselves out after a morning bathe



Some other bits and pieces



Female Sparrowhawk, Blue Tit, Ring Necked Parakeet, Goldfinch
And a second Bittern (or maybe the same one) being slightly less skulky.



Re: Bugboys mission

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

That's another great place, having been there a couple of times. I agree, my best ever views of bittern were had there.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 18-Nov-19 10:20 PM GMT

Great set of bird shots Bugboy - especially like the posing Bittern - you don't often see them like that 🤪😄👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 21-Nov-19 08:18 AM GMT

Impressive line up of birds there, BB, although it's a little strange to see a parakeet amongst them. 🤪

How big is the population round there?

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 22-Nov-19 07:19 PM GMT

A great selection of bird photos recently Bugboy, always interesting to see what is about in other parts of the country.

David M wrote:

... although it's a little strange to see a parakeet amongst them. 🤔

How big is the population round there?

I believe they are now widespread in the south-east and there are quite a few around south Birmingham these days. I know a local birder who has been keeping count of their roosts in some parks around here.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 22-Nov-19 10:25 PM GMT

It is a good place isn't it **Essex**, and surprisingly easy to forget you're in the middle of London too 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, that Bittern was particularly posey, I think he knew he had an audience 😊!

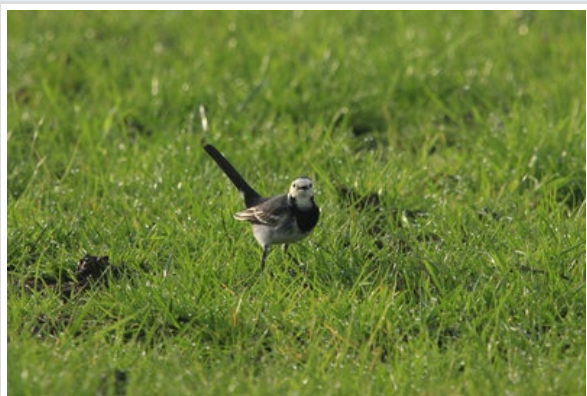
Thanks **David**, the Parakeets down here now are about as common as Feral pigeons with several communal roosts numbering into the thousands I believe. You can go into Hyde park with food now and instead of having Pigeons landing on you, you get the parakeets. The RSPB website states there's 8600 breeding pairs in the UK..... a report I found in the Daily Mail gives a figure of 50,000 🤔 whatever the truth is, there's a lot of em!

Thanks **Neil**, I shall continue with the birds until the butterflies return, hopefully only a few months... but not too soon like last spring, 20 degrees in February just isn't right!

November (continued)

As much as I've wanted to, I've been unable to make a trip to Bookham to check up on the hibernating White Admiral larvae and do some Hairstreak egg searches, so my recent trips out have continued to be primarily birding.

I stayed local with on the **17th November** with a couple of hours wandering around Walthamstow Marshes. Now winters arrived there's a lot less people around and I feel a lot more comfortable walking around pointing a camera in various directions. Bird wise there wasn't a great deal around, many of the winter visitors don't seem to have arrived yet, no winter thrushes around but there might have been a few White Wagtail mixed in with our resident Pies.

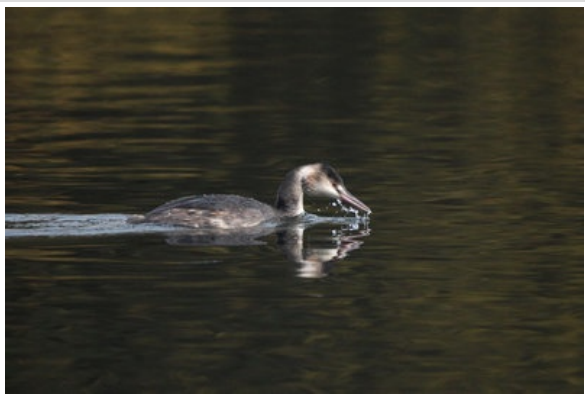


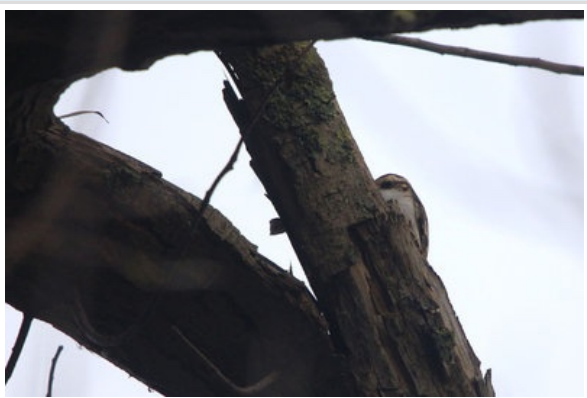


Elsewhere the only thing that sat (or didn't swim to fast) for me was a Dabchick (or Little grebe in new money).



On the 19th I went up to Chestnut for a couple of hours exploring the lea valley wetlands up there. Again there wasn't a great deal around. Great-crested Grebe were in their less flamboyant winter dress, the odd cormorant would get spooked as I walked round a corner but the best spot of the day was a pair of Trecreeper. Sadly I was losing the light by then so the resulting cropped pics aren't the best in the world!





On the 20th I had a dentist appointment so once again I had to stay local. Another wander round Walthamstow Marshes gave me a few more targets to point my camera at. A Song Thrush enjoying it's morning bath





The Pied/White Wagtails were still around but today had been joined by a flock of Linnet.



Before leaving for the horrors of my impending appointment I had enough time to pop my head into the adjacent Walthamstow Wetlands. It's a popular hangout for the resident population of Cormorant (their big feet really aren't made for perching)



And a Heron took off at the wrong moment, immediately being mobbed by a particularly persistent and angry looking Black-headed Gull.





I'm also happy to report my day had a happy ending, the appointment was swift and pain free 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 22-Nov-19 10:34 PM GMT

More great bird shots Bugboy 😊 Pick of the bunch for me is the second Treecreeper – bloody hard to capture on film they are as they're so small, seem to spend all their time in the canopy and are so mobile 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 24-Nov-19 02:45 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

...the Parakeets down here now are about as common as Feral pigeons with several communal roosts numbering into the thousands I believe...

Wow! I bet the local orchard owners aren't amused. Funny that they haven't spread to south Wales yet; our winters are very benign.

Nice work with the Treecreeper, by the way. 😊

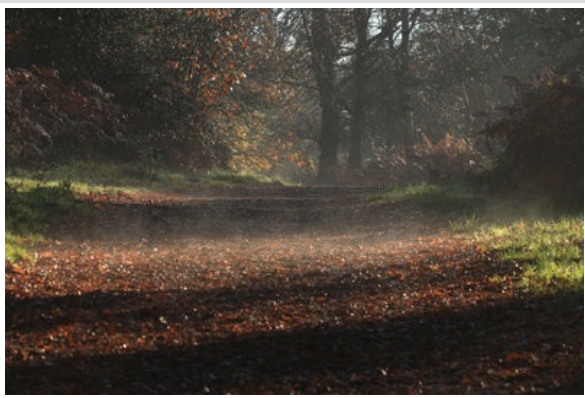
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 05-Dec-19 09:03 PM GMT

Thanks guys, I think I got lucky with that Treecreeper, it seemed to have found something rather interesting in a crevice and stayed there pecking away long enough for me to move around and find the clearest view. It's mate was as fidgety as normal 😊

4th November

Finally a day off with good weather and the opportunity to get down to Bookham to check on some immature stages. It certainly had a wintery feel out in the sticks, Jack Frost had been doing the rounds and Brown Hairstreak egg searching had to be left until things had defrosted a bit.



Wandering through the wood, heading for the White Admiral nursery, a few birds were getting ready for the day and the Holly was looking very Christmasy.



Blue Tit



Jackdaw



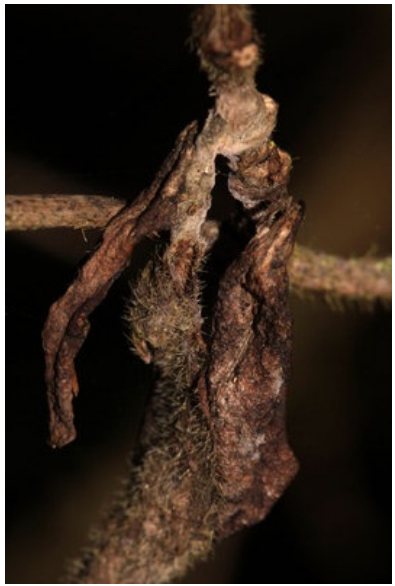
Great Tit



Good news awaited me, both Pete and Dave were safe and sound, little spikey butts still on show.



Pete



Dave

It's interesting how they don't seem to retreat fully into the hibernaculum. Nature doesn't do anything by accident and my own theory is that contrary to what one may think, it protects them from being discovered by hungry birds. If they retreated fully inside then they might leave a dark hole, perfect for a hungry Tit to go nosing around in. The spiny rear end seems to avoid this and blends in with the general dead leaf look.

Now things had warmed up I wandered back to see what eggs I could find, stopping to catch a few more birdies on the way.



Great Spotted Woodpecker



Coal Tit

Eggs were rather thin on the ground though. I couldn't find any Purple Hairstreak eggs and only four Brown Hairstreak eggs. My searches are however very much of a casual affair and I've realised I really need to have my reading glasses with me now to do these searches, old age is creeping ever closer 😊!



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 06-Dec-19 12:27 PM GMT

Good to see my namesake is surviving the winter so far, though I definitely keep myself *completely* under the duvet, unlike that caterpillar... 😊😄

Cheers,

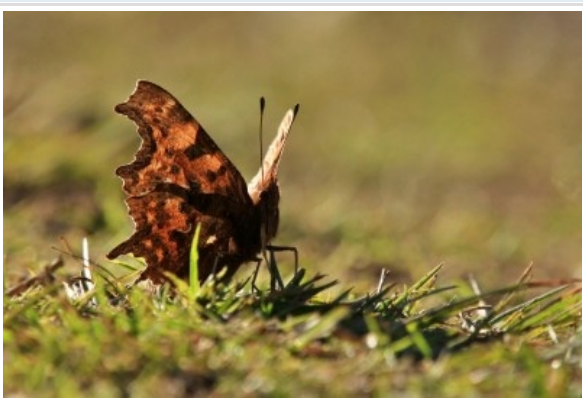
Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 09-Dec-19 10:00 PM GMT

2019 highlights (part 1)

This year I planned to slow down a bit on my travels. Well I failed with that, once again I was out at every opportunity that (the weather) God gave me. Whilst recovering from minor surgery back in January I'd cheered myself up by booking a short break in southern Spain in March to kick start my season. Global warming/climate change had other ideas though and ridiculous temperatures of 20 degrees in February woke stuff up and I was already up to six species before the end of the month! (although the Peacock and Small White would escaped my camera for a few weeks)

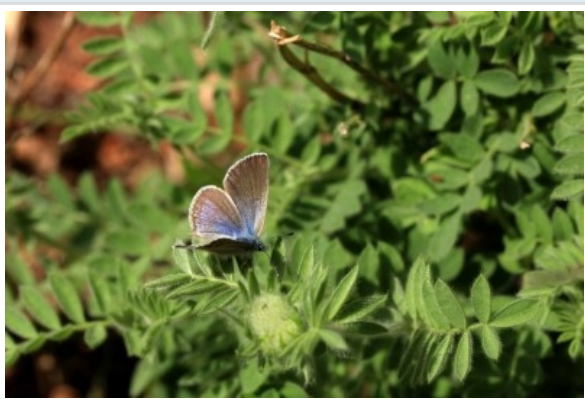




Spain however didn't disappoint. This was my first foray into continental butterflying and my nine days away gave me lots to point my camera at. twenty two species of which twelve and half were lifers 😊 (the half being the southern form of the Speckled Wood 😊). I thought I had 23 but my Chapmans Green Hairstreak was unfortunately relegated to Green Hairstreak by people far more knowledgeable and experienced than me!



Bath White



female Black-eyed Blue



male Black-eyed Blue



male Cleopatra



Geranium Bronze



Green Striped White



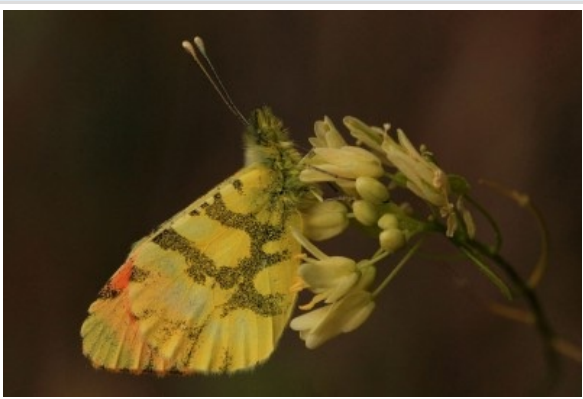
Iberian Scarce Swallowtail



Female Lang's Short-tailed Blue



Provence Hairstreak



male Provence Orange-tip

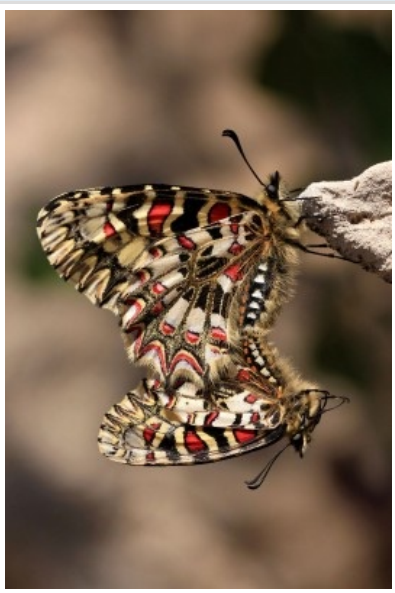




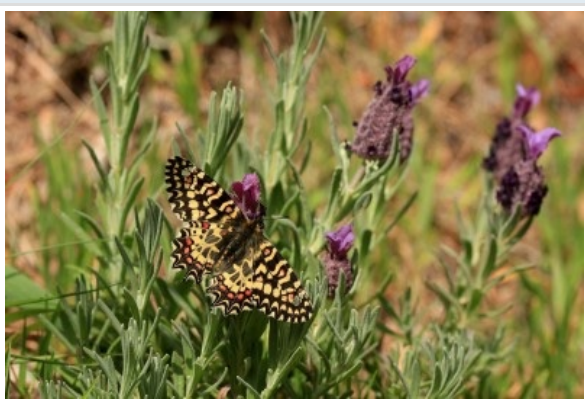
male Red Underwing Skipper



male Southern Blue



Spanish Festoon





Speckled Wood (continental edition)

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 09-Dec-19 11:01 PM GMT

Those Festoons and POTs 🍷🍷🍷🍷 Continental butterflying is brilliant 😊 I'm glad you counted the 1/2 - that will make my tally (when I get round to it) slightly more respectable 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 10-Dec-19 09:26 AM GMT

Love your bird shots Bugboy, I've had trouble in my garden feeding the birds, three cats have been a nuisance , plus three young Squirrels taking the food and a couple of Sparrow Hawks circling round haven't helped, they've kept the birds really spooked 😞
Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pete Eeles, 10-Dec-19 08:53 PM GMT

I think that is the most orange Speckled Wood I've ever seen! Very nice 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

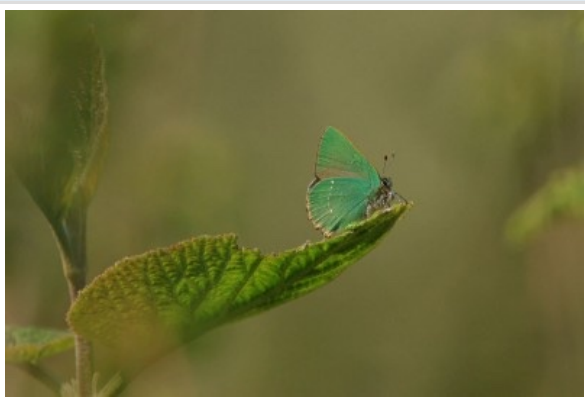
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Dec-19 09:59 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, those continental Specklies look so different they fully deserve the half point 😊
Thanks **Goldie**. Unfortunately Squirrels and Sparrowhawks are both very quick to learn about a free lunch when we put food out in the garden 😊
Thanks **Pete**. They were all that orange down there, took me a few days to get my head round, kept thinking I was seeing Walls flitting around woodland edges and glades for the first couple of days 😊

2019 highlights (part 2)

Back in Blighty **April** arrived and so did some more UK species, adding another nine species to the yearly tally. Local trips gave me plenty of opportunities to catch up with the adult hibernators whilst further afield the springtime Skippers and Green Hairstreaks drew my attention, all with a sprinkling of Pierids and Speckled Wood.

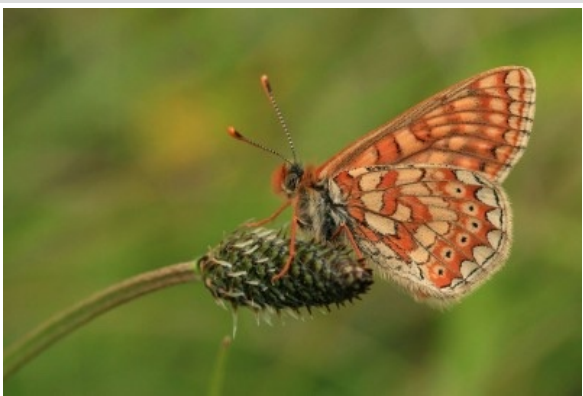




A real highlight though was coming face to face with a young Common Seal on the River Arun. A youngster who had most likely got lost swimming upstream, silly sausage!



May welcomed the silly season. Another eleven species gathered to the tally as I galivanted across southern England. Highlights were swarms of Small Blue and a trip to a legendary hill in Wiltshire to see Marsh Fritillaries for the first time in 4 years.







Of course no May is complete with some Dukes and Duchess's



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 11-Dec-19 11:00 PM GMT

Another cracking set of images Bugboy – all of those Small Blues 🤪😏 a right festival that was 🍷 Good to see the hill still producing the goods – hopefully 2020 will be a slightly better for them so they'll be even easier to see 🤪😏 Is the Wall the ab. anticrassipincta? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 12-Dec-19 12:22 PM GMT

A delightful couple of sequences there, BB. I'm hoping to get out to southern Spain myself next spring and your images provide further incentive.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-Dec-19 09:51 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, I think the Wall is an *ab. alberti*, *anticrassipincta* is apparently restricted to females.

Thanks **David**, good luck in Spain if you make it 😊

2019 highlights (part 3)

Moving into meteorological summer, **June** ended up being a rather cool and somewhat damp affair. Despite the weather I still managed to rack up another fourteen species though. June gap? what June gap! it's becoming more of an extension of the silly season these days. Amongst the commoner species I once again caught up with the Essex Heath Fritillaries, a couple of species of Hairstreaks and the Silver-studded Blue.





The meadow-land butterflies started to emerge en-force and a trip to Wrecclisham found plenty of fresh fresh Glanvilles

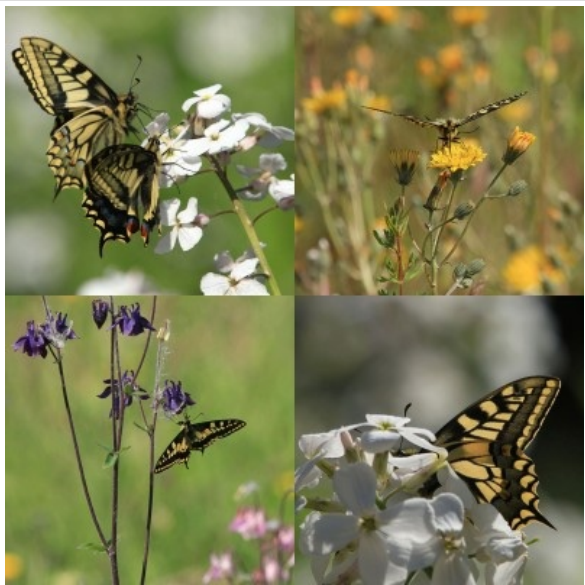




And by the end of the month the woodland butterflies were starting to show well too.



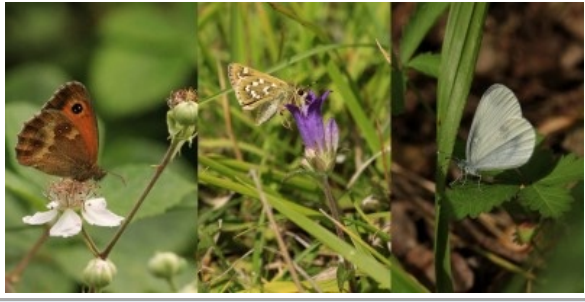
However the standout highlight of June was on the 1st when a day trip to Norfolk provided oodles of British Swallowtails to point my camera at. A few evenings were spent whittling over 900 images down to 250 to keep but that still makes for a brain frying choice to pick out any favs though.





By July the number of new species to find was running out, only 6 more but the woodland species continued to put on a good show. In particular the Purple Hairstreaks were once again raining from the treetops in the mornings at Bookham, and later broods of the multibrooded species also made their presence felt.





Purple Emperors on the other hand (after a couple of vintage years) played hard to get and I only saw males in the treetops. I did however catch up with an Empress loitering around some Sallows towards the end of the month.



other highlights included a visit to Daneway, when a later than usual trip gave several worn females and a single pristine stunner.

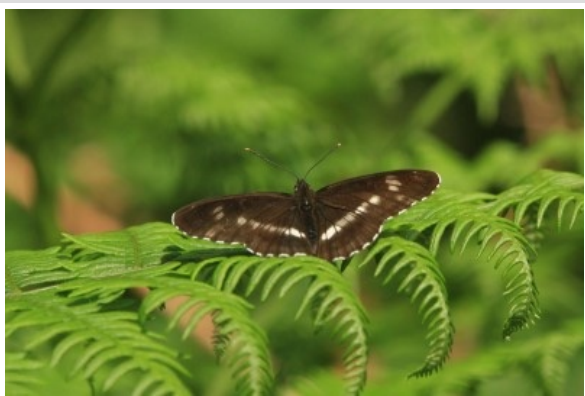


A wonderfully placid fresh female Dark Green Fritillary





And the many SWF and WA abs, most likely caused by the cool, damp spell in June.



Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 16-Dec-19 05:08 PM GMT

I think the Swallowtails were the highlight of 2019, we hit them just right. But the mrgreen is not reserved for them, but for that gorgeous open wing male Purple Hairstreak shot 📸. I saw one posing like that, but it was the one that got away!.

Have a great Christmas, Paul,
and a happy new Decade.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 17-Dec-19 01:02 PM GMT

Love your Swallow Tail shots, it's a few years since I've seen them, they brought back lots of Happy memories Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 18-Dec-19 11:17 PM GMT

Another cracking selection Bugboy – those abs at the end just seal off the selection – but those Swallowtails 🐞🐞🐞🐞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 19-Dec-19 11:38 AM GMT

Wonderful, BB. You've seen some good stuff this year in the UK, so much so that you must surely be yearning for another trip to the continent in 2020 to further diversify your sightings.

I wish you all the best with it.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 20-Dec-19 08:11 PM GMT

Great roundups Bugboy with a cracking selection of species 🐞

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 20-Dec-19 08:57 PM GMT

Thanks **Trevor**, yes Swallowtails 🐞. Bookham seems to have had a good run with Purple Hairstreaks, three years in a row now and long may that last 🐞

Thanks **Goldie**, it was indeed a very memorable day. If you can make it again I highly recommend it 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, it's about time you took the plunge and did an east coast trip, how many years brownie points would that need in the bank? 🐞

Thanks **David**, not sure if I'm gonna make it to the continent next year but I have a few UK trip in the pipeline, fingers crossed 🐞

Thanks **Neil**, Here's the final selection 🐞

2019 highlights (part 4)

Although the last 3 species of the year were added to my tally in August, the butterfly season in general seemed to be winding down rapidly. With the moving forward of the season and traditionally high summer species all but ending by the end of July, August felt rather bereft of butterflies, but there was the prospect of Brown Hairstreaks in the coming weeks plus the possibility of something even more exciting the finish the season off with a nice blue flourish!

I'd managed to catch up with some early male Grayling in mid-July but a trip to Chobham at the beginning of August gave me the much sought after upperside shots when I found a courting pair. Earlier that day I'd also had a mothy highlight with a very amenable Jersey Tiger Moth giving me some more unusual views of this stunning moth.





Elsewhere many of the species I'd been chasing just a few weeks previously were fast vanishing. The likes of the golden Skippers and Gatekeepers dwindling fast, and others that I would normally expect to see in decent numbers like the Common Blue, Speckled Wood and Small Copper were still struggling like they had been all season. Even the second brood Adonis weren't as numerous as in previous years. As seems to be the norm though, the Large Skipper was still to be found on Chobham Common in the middle of the month. However, one thing I'd missed out so far was the Painted Lady invasion which seemed to have bypassed the southeast corner of the country. My best encounter was down in Southwick in the second half of August where I found around 15 gorging themselves on Buddleja. On the same day I also found my first (UK) Cloudie of the year.





I'd left finding the Lulworth Skipper very late this year, too late as a trip to Dorset at the end of the month would show me, another 'victim' of the changing butterfly season, but on the first day of the trip I took a detour via Shipton Bellinger to try and find the even more elusive than normal Brown Hairstreak. Luckily some extra pairs of eyes in the form of Wurzel and Philzoid helped make the stop over well worth it and it became the best part of what was otherwise a rather lacklustre trip.



An encounter with a Small Tortoiseshell is fast becoming a highlight of any year these days so finding several feeding together at Alners Gorze did provide some consolation.



My last species of butterfly for the year (no. 50) turned up a few day later and will of course come as no surprise to anyone that it was a big highlight.

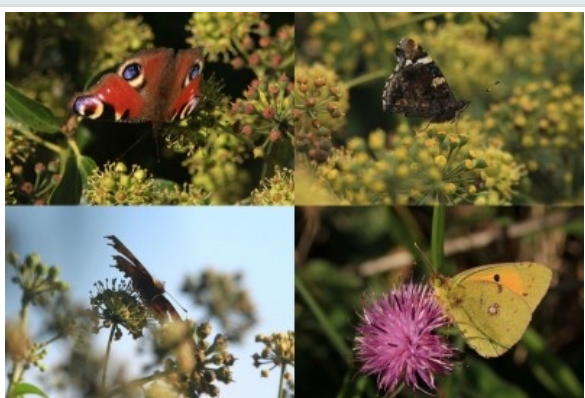
My first ever Long-tailed Blue. He may have been a rather tatty individual but that didn't matter a jot.



A month later I was adding to my catalogue of LTB images with some proper fresh home-grown insects before the weather put a premature end to what was shaping up to be a real explosion.



The final part of the season was spent picking my way through a mixed bag of dodgy weather. Red Admirals came into their own, another very special encounter with a freshly minted LTB, some more Brown Hairstreak and a Wall at a new site for me, Two Tree Island.





The 22nd of October seems like a long time ago but was my last encounter with butterflies this year. Now it's already nearly the new year and the countdown for the new season is almost upon us, I wonder what 2020 has in store for us all 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 23-Dec-19 10:29 AM GMT

Cracking stuff in the Highlights Part 4 Bugboy 🤔 🍷 😊 The Brostreaks certainly did make us work for the shots this year – hopefully next year they'll be in a more sociable mood. Good to see the West is still producing the goods when it comes to Small Torts – fingers crossed it continues 😊 As for the Tiger Moth – they are so bright they don't look real – it's like a child with a paint-set was let loose on them – that underside 🤔 😊 🍷 As for the East Coast trip – at the current Brownie point rate I might be able to make it by about 2030 😊 😊

Have a goodun – and a Merry Christmas and New Year if I don't get to say before 😊

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 24-Dec-19 08:03 PM GMT

[quote=bugboy post_id=149884 time=1576875428 user_id=13753]...Although the last 3 species of the year were added to my tally in August, the butterfly season in general seemed to be winding down rapidly. With the moving forward of the season and traditionally high summer species all but ending by the end of July, August felt rather bereft of butterflies, but there was the prospect of Brown Hairstreaks in the coming weeks plus the possibility of something even more exciting to finish the season off with a nice blue flourish!

That's a sentiment I'm totally in agreement with, BB.

It seems like the butterfly season consistently loses momentum during August these last few years, and I suppose if spring is getting progressively earlier then something has to give at the latter end of the season too.

Thank God for Brown Hairstreaks, as in the absence (in Wales) of Adonis Blue and Silver Spotted Skipper, this is one of the few rarities that emerges fresh during this increasingly autumnal month.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Dec-19 08:44 PM GMT

Sounds like you need to start work on the east wing of the Wurzel mansion to get those brownie points accrued 😊

With the way things are going I can see August becoming busier in the decades to come David, with traditionally univoltine species trying to cram in second broods, although they will probably fall into the same trap the Wall fell into to start with 😊

December 2019.

As you may expect given the recent weather, I've not been out much with the camera and when I have been out there's not been a great deal to point my camera at, certainly not much in the way of winter birdy visitors.

On the 11th I took a wander round the Lea Valley up near Cheshunt again, Finches and Tits could be heard high in the canopy, far out of reach (and for

the most part out of sight) so I was left with a few water birds, a rather chubby looking, sunbathing Squirrel and an inquisitive (and seasonally appropriate) Robin.



On the **15th** it was off to Two Tree Island. Rubbish Sunday trains meant I didn't arrive until well past midday so I only had a few hours before the sun was gone. Although it was a high tide (very high at 6 meters) the waders weren't flocking in the lagoon, perhaps the very high tide had pushed them further up the estuary? I did Manage a Reed Bunting and few Curlew were sitting it out on the few bits of salt marsh greenery still above water level.





I caught an Egret doing some ballet moves to an unimpressed audience of one 😏



I stayed local on the **18th** with a wander on Walthamstow Marshes. A few Meadow Pipits were mixed in with the regular Wagtails.



A sizable flock of Chaffinch contained no Brambling and there was still no sign of the winter Thrushes which would normally be seen on the horse paddocks here. The resident Linnets were hanging around though, a passing Canada Goose gave me a quizzical look and there was another chubby, sunbathing Squirrel.





The smaller woodland birds were more obliging today, there was an acrobatic Blue Tit and a great Tit posed briefly in a shaft of sunlight.



This Herring Gull didn't seem very impressed about having its picture taken though 🙄!



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 27-Dec-19 02:29 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy 😊 I think perhaps not finishing the first phase of the renovation work is what's holding me back with the accruing of Brownie points 😊
😂 Cracking set of bird shots – you did especially well with the shot of the Meadow Pipit as usually they find the only tuft of longer grass to sit behind
😂😂

Have a goodun and a cracking New Year in case I don't get to wish it later 😊😂

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 31-Dec-19 06:01 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, That was the only pic of the Pipit I took where he wasn't mostly concealed. He did however pose much better next time I saw him... 😊

29th December.

My final outing of the year, prompted by a rare sunny day. Once again it was a rather barren day on the bird front with not a great deal about other than the regulars on the horse paddocks. Just Wagtails, Feral Pigeons, Starlings, Linnets and Chaffinches.



Moving onto the Waterworks Nature Reserve things livened up a bit. Teal had finally turned up here but could be heard rather than seen. Coots were causing trouble, sqabbling and fighting amongst the other waterfowl which included Mallard, Gadwall and Little Grebe/Dabchick.



Dabchick

It was amongst the other waterfowl I found my best birdy spot of the day, a couple of female Scaup, It's been several years since I've seen these winter visitors that normally stay near the coast.



Scaup (with a Tufted Duck in the foreground)
A pair of Swans were also having a good old bathing session.



My favourite shot in the series (I just pointed and left my finger on the shutter button) is this one, perfect for a caption competition.



"I BLOODY LOVE BATHS"
On the return walk I caught up with a Meadow Pipit (probably the same one as last time) who posed like a star this time.





Here's hoping we get a nice cold snap in the coming months to set us up for a good productive 2020, **[color=#BF0040]Happy New Year everyone 😊**.