

## Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 12-Feb-19 09:44 PM GMT

10/02/2019 – RSPB St Aidans

Another break from the winter silence to relay another remarkable wildlife experience. There has, for the last three weeks, been a male Bearded Tit foraging in full view along the edge of a footpath at the RSPB St Aidans reserve near Leeds, completely unflustered by the passing traffic of cyclists, dog-walkers and photographers. It must be the most-photographed organism in Yorkshire at the moment! I went along on Sunday to see what all the fuss was about.

There is something quite astonishing about finding oneself so close to a Schedule 1 rare bird that it is worth switching from telephoto to macro lens! This amazingly calm individual was foraging for seeds and aquatic insect larvae up and down a stretch of 200m or so where the footpath runs atop a narrow bund between two lakes. By observing some of the other photographers present, I established that although the tit was not entirely prepared to allow anybody to walk right up to it, if you positioned yourself roughly in its foraging route, it would happily approach to as little as a metre's distance.





After a full two hours spent with the bird, the freezing wind finally broke me and I headed for home, and a well-deserved hot chocolate!

### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 13-Feb-19 07:56 PM GMT

Excellent shots of the Bearded Tit/Reddling/Babblers Callum it's been years since I've seen them – as you said definitely worth switching lenses for 🤩👍  
👍 I've never seen one down on the deck before 🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

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

Amazing shots, Callum. Normally, these birds are hidden away in the reeds. I've never seen one display itself so openly.

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 17-Feb-19 11:17 AM GMT

Thank you both 😊

**Wurzel wrote:**

I've never seen one down on the deck before 😊

**David M wrote:**

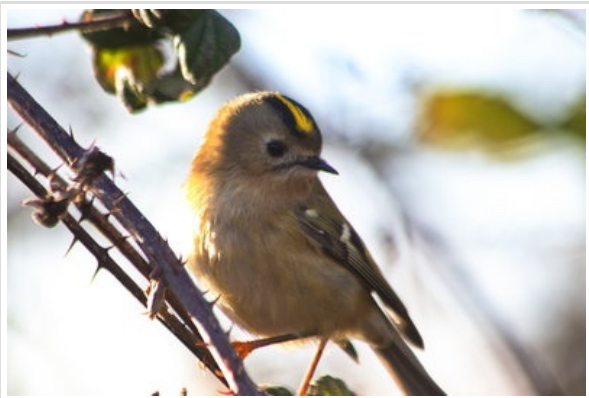
I've never seen one display itself so openly.

Nor have I! I suspect that foraging on the ground is quite normal behaviour for this species when it is windy (which it was, last Sunday - extremely!). But we just don't see it because usually it happens somewhere in the middle of the reedbed, rather than right beside a busy footpath!

A couple more nice encounters with birds to report from the last week -

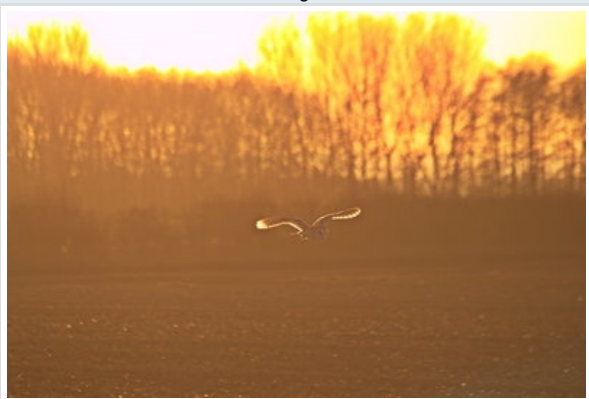
**14/02/2019 - North Cave Wetlands**

...a Goldcrest that approached even closer than the Bearded Tit had!



**16/02/2019 - Tophill Low**

...a beautiful Barn Owl in the evening sunshine.



However, it appears that several people saw Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells and Brimstones in various parts of East Yorks yesterday, and I hope to be lucky soon - there's only so long that you can plug the butterfly-shaped hole with these feathery things!

**Re: CallumMac**

by Wurzel, 17-Feb-19 06:45 PM GMT

That evening glow Barn Owl is a stunner Callum but I know what you mean about finding the first butterfly of the year, can't be long now 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: CallumMac**

by David M, 19-Feb-19 07:05 AM GMT

Beautiful pair of images, Callum. We get goldcrests around our workplace but they're so fidgety that photographing them must be highly tricky.

As for butterflies, you should only have to wait till the end of this week as it looks as though we're again going to be up in the low to mid teens as far as

temperatures are concerned.

**Re: CallumMac**

by bugboy, 19-Feb-19 10:57 AM GMT

Fantastic Beardy encounter, I've never seen one so 🍷🍷🍷 . Good effort with the Goldcrest too, as David says, fidgety little buggers!

**Re: CallumMac**

by Neil Freeman, 19-Feb-19 07:11 PM GMT

**bugboy wrote:**

...Fantastic Beardy encounter, I've never seen one...

Me neither, great photos 🍷 😊

I have had a Goldcrest hanging around the garden for the past couple of weeks but so far it has eluded my efforts to get a photo.

And I love that Barn Owl in the evening sun, lovely image 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 20-Feb-19 08:35 AM GMT

Thank you all. The Barn Owl was a real delight – one of those species that I often look for but rarely see. "Fidgety little bugger" just about sums up that Goldcrest! Lucky to have good back-lighting for both photos.

**Re: CallumMac**

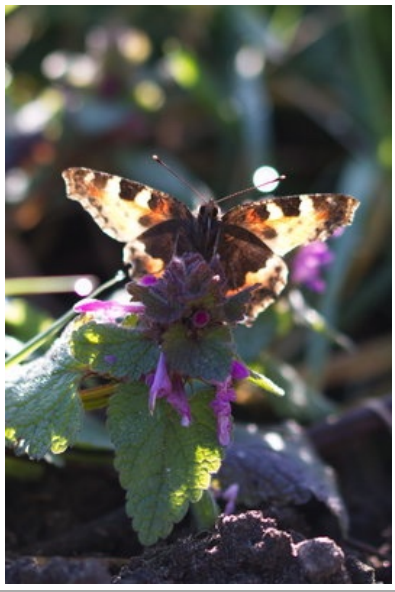
by CallumMac, 25-Feb-19 09:24 PM GMT

**25/02/2019 – Walmgate Stray**

As it turned out, I didn't have very long to wait! I made several attempts over the weekend to track down some butterflies, but to no avail. However, with the glorious weather continuing today, I popped out for half an hour on Walmgate Stray after lunch. One of the features of the Stray is a 3m-high south-facing brick wall forming the boundary of The Retreat (a mental health facility dating back to the late 18th century). Walking along this wall, I noticed that there were many more flowers blooming here than on the wider Stray – probably a sign that the warmth captured by the wall was creating a warmer microclimate in this spot? And it was walking back down the wall that I finally spotted my first butterfly of the spring, a Small Tortoiseshell. As I followed it, it was joined by two more, and I was able to get a few photos of them basking on the wall and nectaring on some of the available flowers.







A nice start to the butterflying year – let's hope we don't get a cold snap now!

**Re: CallumMac**

by bugboy, 25-Feb-19 10:01 PM GMT

Great shots, love the one on the blue wall, wonderfully contrasting colours 😊

**Re: CallumMac**

by Wurzel, 25-Feb-19 10:53 PM GMT

Great shots Callum especially the Tort on the wall – it looks like its landed on its own staging resting on the blue spot as it is 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 26-Feb-19 02:41 PM GMT

Thanks both - I loved that shot as soon as I saw it!

26/02/2019 - Walmgate Stray

On a lunchtime walk today, I saw another 3 Small Torts (at least 2 likely to be different to yesterday's, as they were on a different part of the Stray), and also added Comma and Brimstone to my year list. No photos though - nothing stopped to pass the time of day!

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 26-Feb-19 08:04 PM GMT

...and a further Small Tort upon leaving the office in the early evening. Unless I'm imagining things, they seem to show a clear preference for the graffiti'd sections of the Retreat wall - perhaps the paint is a better absorber of heat than the bare bricks?



**Re: CallumMac**

by Wurzel, 26-Feb-19 10:52 PM GMT

Another cracking Small Tort Callum 😊 Will this one be going on Insta as well?:wink: 😊😏

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 27-Feb-19 12:15 PM GMT

**Wurzel wrote:**

Will this one be going on Insta as well ?

Ha ha, maybe not this one, it's good to keep my literally TENS of followers hungry for more! 😊

**Re: CallumMac**

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

"Ha ha, maybe not this one, it's good to keep my literally TENS of followers hungry for more! 😊"...I hear that and know the feeling 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: CallumMac**

by David M, 01-Mar-19 12:02 PM GMT

Early in the year is the best time to catch butterflies resting on stonework. I guess the temperatures are fairly marginal so any additional warmth available is at a premium.

It's interesting to see them favouring certain colours though. I presume some absorb more heat than others.

**Re: CallumMac**

by Neil Freeman, 01-Mar-19 07:47 PM GMT

Hi Callum,

Just seen your article in the latest issue of 'Butterfly'...interesting stuff, nice one 😊

Cheers,

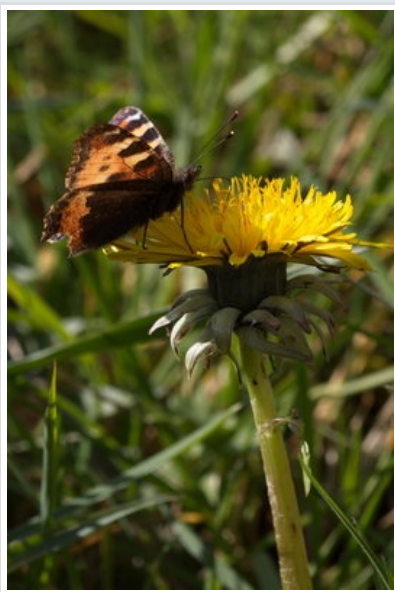
Neil.

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 21-Mar-19 07:47 PM GMT

20/03/2019 (am) – Walmgate Stray

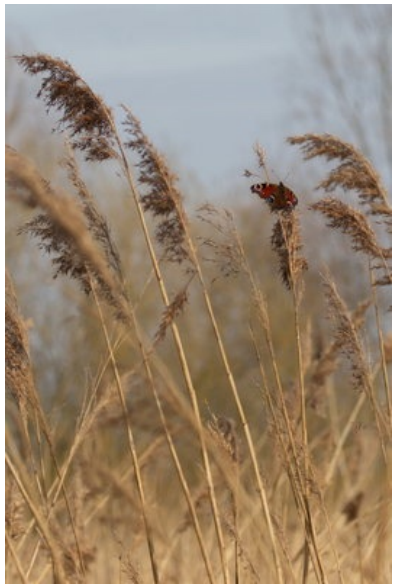
Here we go – for real this time? The sun is back and with it, the vanessids! I popped out at coffee-time yesterday onto the Stray and was quickly able to find Small Tortoiseshells in the usual spot along the cemetery wall. There was a supporting cast of Brimstones and (unlike in the February rush) a Peacock or two – though neither of the latter stopped for photos!



20/03/2019 (pm) – RSPB Blacktoft Sands

I had a bit of time in the bank and that sunny morning walk was enough to convince me that this was the afternoon to cash it in! I finished a few urgent jobs whilst wolfing down sandwiches at my desk, and hopped in the car towards the Humber. Blacktoft is one of the RSPB's premier reserves in the north-east, but it's also just slightly too far for regular visiting. Today I hoped I hadn't left it too late to catch a wintering Hen Harrier!

...In the end, I was too late (or too unlucky). But there was plenty around the reserve to keep me entertained – not least the slightly unusual sight of a Peacock basking on the tops of reeds!



Both Peacocks and Small Torts were spending much of their time basking on the footpaths.



A fine supporting cast, as well, including several Toads (a couple seen – erm – with their pants down!), lots of Marsh Harriers, and plenty to keep me entertained on what was (according to the RSPB) "World Sparrow Day"...







**Re: CallumMac**

by millerd, 21-Mar-19 07:55 PM GMT

Good to see the butterflies out round your way, Callum. For once the sun is out up there, while down here in the south the cloud has been relentless...

Dave

**Re: CallumMac**

by trevor, 22-Mar-19 08:28 AM GMT

Very pleasing to see your Small Tortoiseshells, they were very scarce in Sussex last year. Great to see the north enjoying some Sun, only grey gloom here.

Trevor.

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 22-Mar-19 06:44 PM GMT

Thanks both. I was slightly surprised that there didn't seem to be much forum activity on Wednesday after such a glorious afternoon – but if it wasn't glorious down south, that explains it!

21/03/2019 – Walmgate Stray

...it remained glorious on Thursday! Just another couple of Small Tortoiseshells to show for it. Based on patterns of wing-wear I reckon I've seen at least 5 different individuals along the cemetery wall, which does indeed bode well for the rest of the summer.



**Re: CallumMac**

by millerd, 22-Mar-19 09:08 PM GMT

More 🍷🍷🍷 from me Callum, after another grey day (and chillier too 😞)

Dave

**Re: CallumMac**

by Wurzel, 23-Mar-19 05:19 PM GMT

Great set of shots Callum and a great range of fauna too – Marsh Harrier, Tree Sparrow, a few Anurans as well as some lovely Small Torts. If I had to pick though I'd go with the shot of the Peacock clinging to the tops of the reeds – brilliant 😄🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: CallumMac**

by David M, 23-Mar-19 11:15 PM GMT

**CallumMac wrote:**

...But there was plenty around the reserve to keep me entertained – not least the slightly unusual sight of a Peacock basking on the tops of reeds!

That IS unusual, Callum, and you did extremely well to capture it.

Nice supporting cast as well. Good to see somewhere in the UK had a bit of sunshine last week.

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 25-Mar-19 09:27 PM GMT

Many thanks for your kind words. That Peacock was indeed remarkable, and it was no chance shot – I watched it move from reed to reed for several minutes. I suspect that this behaviour had much to do with a hedgerow sheltering that patch of reeds from what was a chilly breeze sweeping along the footpath.

#### 25/03/2019 – Walmgate Stray

Another Walmgate Stray lunchbreak today, and as the numbers of Small Tortoiseshells on the move soared into double figures, they were finally joined by a supporting cast of Commas and Peacocks. I didn't manage a single picture of the latter species as they were being constantly harassed by their smaller cousins, and rarely spent more than a few seconds settled in one place. However, the Commas were proving quite effective at holding a territory and one chose a very attractive perch to defend, on the tip of a broken bramble stem.





It was also nice to come across a 7-spot ladybird – in the sense that these days, it's nice to find any ladybird other than a Harlequin!



### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 25-Mar-19 11:52 PM GMT

Commas in the Spring are really good value for money aren't they Callum? You can get some shots, wander away and check something else out and come back later for some more shots and there they'll be 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

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

#### CallumMac wrote:

...as the numbers of Small Tortoiseshells on the move soared into double figures, they were finally joined by a supporting cast of Commas and Peacocks.

If you can see Small Tortoiseshells in double figures then I'm highly envious, Callum. This is increasingly becoming a species to covet at this time of year, even in south Wales where they are still supposed to be common.

Right now, I've just seen but three, but I'll be keeping an eye out for them over the next few weeks.

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 27-Mar-19 09:55 AM GMT

#### Wurzel wrote:

Commas in the Spring are really good value for money aren't they Callum? You can get some shots, wander away and check something else out and come back later for some more shots and there they'll be 😊

Indeed! Although in this case, my first and last Comma shots (half an hour or so apart) were within ~50cm of each other, but looking at the wing-wear, show different individuals – I guess the first male must have been chased off in that time!

#### David M wrote:



If you can see Small Tortoiseshells in double figures then I'm highly envious, Callum. This is increasingly becoming a species to covet at this time of year

I've seen a few folk this spring saying that they're thin on the ground down south, but that's certainly not my impression here in Yorks. Perhaps our summer up here was a bit milder/wetter last year than down there? Our winter has certainly been mild enough for most to survive.

### Re: CallumMac

by Goldie M, 27-Mar-19 01:17 PM GMT

Hi! Callum, we seem to be getting a few more Tort's here this year than last year, they were so scarce at my local spot ( HLB ) and I didn't see many at all in my garden until September, I was certainly glad when they started to arrive. Goldie 😊

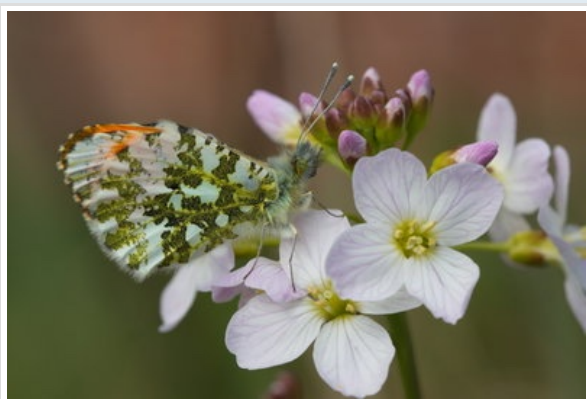
### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 08-Apr-19 08:19 PM GMT

The long silence on my PD is because I've been on holiday! Heading to the north and west of Scotland in the first week of April is not a recipe for a rich butterfly-watching experience, but no doubt I'll drip-feed a few of the amazing birds and mammals seen onto my diary in the coming weeks.

#### 08/04/2019 - Walmgate Stray

Having returned to the office, I have also returned to my lunchtime Walmgate Stray visits. Today there wasn't much about, as the sun was only occasionally popping out from behind the clouds. I did, however, manage to find my first Orange-tip of the year! 😊



Although too cool for the butterflies, there were plenty of bees about. I *think* this was a Hairy-footed Flower-bee...?



I was also intrigued by this unusual red leaf – presumably an aberration of some kind.



### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 09-Apr-19 08:50 AM GMT

Great stuff Callum the first OT of the year is always a welcome sight 😊 Looking forward to the drip fed mammals and birds having already had a sneak preview 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 10-Apr-19 06:36 AM GMT

These recent cool conditions have seen many Orange Tips becalmed and thus easier to photograph, Callum. When it's warm they're usually racing around like bullets!

I shall await your Scotland report with anticipation. I'm sure the scenery was spectacular, if lacking in butterflies.

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 15-Apr-19 08:45 AM GMT

Thanks both. Sorry to keep you waiting on tenterhooks for the holiday report... but I'm taking inspiration from the best in allowing my PD to fall behind the calendar... 😊 I finished sifting and editing last night, so hoping to start getting photos online this evening.

In the meantime, a visit to **North Cave Wetlands** on Saturday produced my second Orange-tip and first Speckled Wood of the year, in spite of an absolutely bitter easterly. Both entirely unapproachable!

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 16-Apr-19 08:17 AM GMT

15/04/2019 – Walmgate Stray

Back on Walmgate Stray yesterday lunchtime. A freezing easterly continues to ensure there's nothing to be seen except in the shelter of the eastern boundary hedge!

Nonetheless, there are still lots of very active Small Torts, some of which even look quite fresh still!



A couple of Peacocks zipped past, and I was able to find my third, fourth and fifth Orange-tips of the spring (all males – yet to spot a female). As usual, those that posed did so in awkward positions!





With the butterflies a little sparse in this wind-chilled sunshine, I have been paying more attention to the various solitary bees. This is a group I'd really like to learn more about. I'm sure somebody on this forum can confirm or correct the following tentative IDs:



*Red Mason Bee?*



*Ashy Mining Bee?*



*Harder - possibly a male Red Mason Bee?*

## **Re: CallumMac**

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-19 09:08 AM GMT

Alright there Callum? Cracking Small Torts and OT's 😊 Living of the past is the best way 😊 Your first bee is a Tawny Mining Bee, you're spot in with the



second but now I've got to go and check out the third... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-19 10:38 AM GMT

Had another look the final bee – quite tricky indeed – could it be a male Tawny Mining Bee? Best guess... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by Goldie M, 16-Apr-19 02:30 PM GMT

Lovely Orange Tips Callum , the bee's never seem to stop long enough in my garden for a photo 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 16-Apr-19 03:54 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. For the first one, I went with Red Mason Bee because in a head-on shot (below) I thought I could make out the "horns"... does this angle change your opinion or am I barking up the wrong tree? I think you may be on to something with male Tawny Mining Bee for the third one.



Thanks Goldie! A good patch of bare earth seems to bring a few down to bask – much like the butterflies in that regard. I also find it hard to get nice pictures of them on flowers.

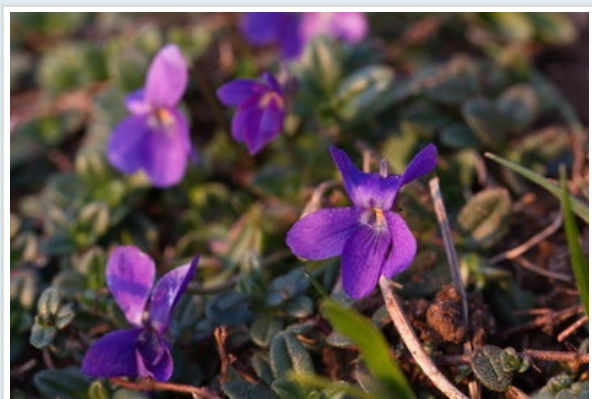
### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 16-Apr-19 04:25 PM GMT

#### Scottish sojourn part 1 – the long journey up

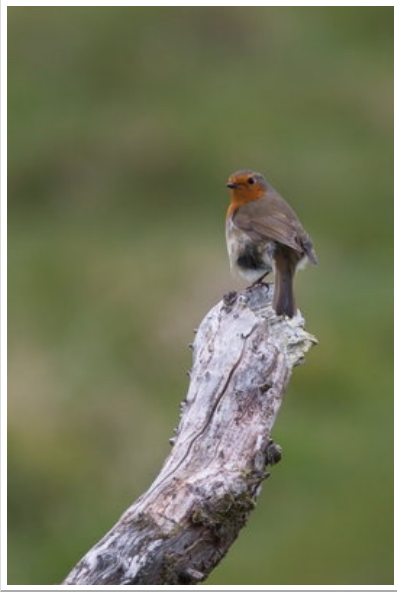
*Warning – this post is a butterfly-free zone, so feel free to skip it!*

Naturally, the obvious route from East Yorkshire to the west coast of Scotland is *via* Bristol and Oxford... The life-lesson here is "don't say yes to something without checking your calendar first"! So, on the evening of Friday 29th, between an afternoon's meetings in Briz and a weekend entomology conference in Oxford, I managed to squeeze in a brief visit to some chalk downland at **West Yatton Down**. Too late in the day for butterflies, but lovely to see some of the early flowers in bloom.



*Common Dog-violet, West Yatton Down*

First thing on Sunday morning, it was finally time to hit the road north. Rather than tackle the full distance in one go, I stopped overnight at my parents' place in the north Lakes, arriving early enough for an afternoon stroll up Binsey (one of the smallest Wainwright fells, but worth the effort for its views over Skiddaw and down Bassenthwaite), following by tea in the garden. Whilst drinking the latter, I discovered that my ever-rusty bird-song knowledge was not failing me – what sounded like a small group of Goldcrests in the hawthorn behind the garden shed (something I'd discarded as being far too unlikely!) was in fact... three Goldcrests!



*Robin, Binsey*



*Skylark, Binsey*



*Goldcrest, Lake District*



*Goldcrest, Lake District*

So to Monday, and across the border. A brief and unwelcome detour into the centre of Glasgow was necessary, and just as I returned to my car, the rains arrived. I decided to add a further detour to my journey in order to stop at the Forest Lodge visitor centre, just outside the village of Aberfoyle. I'd been before with my partner (who used to work there) and knew there was a little-frequented wildlife hide with well-stocked feeders within easy walking distance of the carpark. With the rain growing in intensity, this seemed like an ideal place for my packed lunch!

Great close up views of a range of woodland species, including some that I rarely see at home (Nuthatch, Coal Tit, Siskin). The only shame was that the Red Squirrel sightings were curtailed by the arrival of a large family group, who screamed and shouted their way all the way up the path before enthusiastically 'shushing' each other on the very threshold of the hide. They didn't see any squirrels, and I resisted the temptation to show them my photos from 10 seconds before their arrival. 😊



*Nuthatch, Aberfoyle*



*Great Tit, Aberfoyle*



*Chaffinch, Aberfoyle*



*Great Spotted Woodpecker, Aberfoyle*



*Coal Tit, Aberfoyle*



*Red Squirrel, Aberfoyle*

The final leg of my long journey passed smoothly enough; rain in Glencoe discouraged me from stopping for photographs and it was late afternoon by the time I pulled into the small carpark of the Glenloy Lodge B&B. To be continued...

### **Re: CallumMac**

by Allan.W., 16-Apr-19 06:25 PM GMT

Interesting Bee pics "Callumac", I find myself taking pictures of more or less anything that flies, hops or crawls these days, and by coincidence, I photographed a bee very similar to your first picture, and tentatively I'd'd it as Common Carder Bee (see last item in April sightings) but must say, looking at your pics I,m now not so sure !!  
Regards Allan.W.

### **Re: CallumMac**

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-19 11:03 PM GMT

Great set of bird shots Callum and great to see a proper Squirrel 😊 I'm fearful of getting to the age when Goldcrest song will be beyond my hearing range 😊  
I had another look at the Bees and then went and checked against some of my shots.  
Here's a Red Mason Bee





As you can see it's much shorter in the body and the abdomen is much more rounded which is the *Osmia* shape. It's hair is a bit sparse. The first one of yours has a longer, more tapered abdomen (classic *Andrena* shape) and is much hairier so I would still go for Tawny 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 17-Apr-19 08:25 AM GMT

Thanks Allan. Looking at your photo on the April sightings thread, I can see why you plumped for Common Carder initially but I think I agree that it's the same species as mine (and hence Tawny Mining). I must try in future to put something into these photos that gives some scale – I think in terms of size, we are talking about something equivalent to confusing Purple Emperor with Purple Hairstreak!

Thanks for the extra info, Wurzel. That Red Mason Bee does look totally different. I'm sure when I see one I'll be able to recognise it now! If it makes you feel any better, my physics teacher at school (slightly over a decade ago) once demonstrated rather neatly that I had exceptionally poor hearing at the high-pitched end of the scale – but I can still pick out the Goldcrests!

### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-19 10:39 AM GMT

Cheers for the reassurance Callum I wasn't looking forward to missing out on such delights as Goldcrest, lesser Whitethroat and Grasshopper Warblers 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 17-Apr-19 04:48 PM GMT

#### CallumMac wrote:

..Warning – this post is a butterfly-free zone, so feel free to skip it...

Not at all, Callum. We get precious few images from this glorious corner of the UK and what it lacks in butterflies is more than compensated for in other ways...such as those birds.

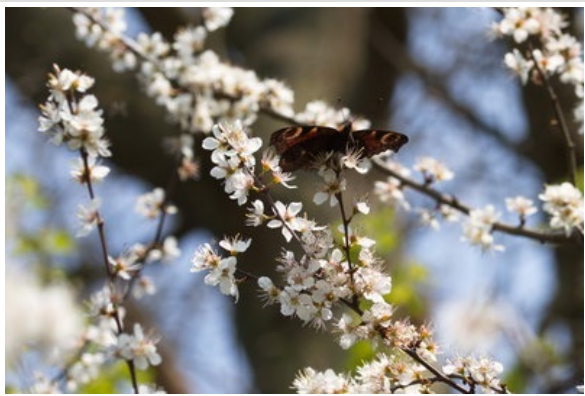
### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 17-Apr-19 08:27 PM GMT

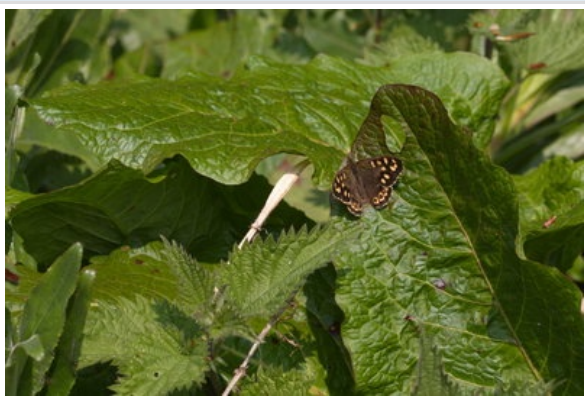
17/04/2019 – Walmgate Stray

Full-on sunshine at lunchtime today, and the butterflies were out in force!

Small Tortoiseshell, Orange-tip and Peacock were all well into double figures, and extremely active, as were several Brimstones.



A couple of nice Speckled Woods were hanging round in the more sheltered corners (that easterly is still cooling parts of the Stray down considerably!).



And along the heat-island of the cemetery wall, I spotted my first Large White of the year.



It had been weeks since I'd seen a Comma on the Stray, despite the almost continuous presence of Small Torts and occasional Peacocks. But today they showed they had just been hiding. This one even perched on the exact same bramble twig that I photographed a Comma on last month – perhaps the same individual, or perhaps just a very favourable territory!



Finally, continuing the solitary bee theme, I came across this scene which I think must be a pair of Ashy Mining Bees 'in cop'.





## Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 17-Apr-19 08:51 PM GMT

### David M wrote:

Not at all, Callum. We get precious few images from this glorious corner of the UK and what it lacks in butterflies is more than compensated for in other ways...such as those birds.

Well in that case... 😊

### Scottish sojourn part 2 – Wild Lochaber

So, I had arrived at Glenloy Lodge. I had chosen my destination extremely carefully; some of you who have seen the Scottish population of Chequered Skippers might even have stayed in the same place! Run as a wildlife tourism enterprise by the lovely Jon and Angela Mercer, the particular draw of Glenloy was its Pine Martens. And so, only a couple of hours after checking in, I took up position in the sun-lounge to await the arrival of these very special guests.

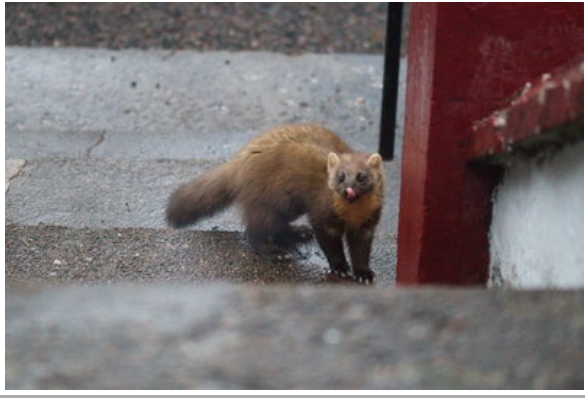


*Female Pine Marten, Glenloy Lodge*



*Female Pine Marten, Glenloy Lodge*





*Female Pine Marten, Glenloy Lodge*

Truly charming animals, and the first time I had ever seen one! Something of a brief appearance, but with two more nights booked in at Glenloy I was not too concerned. It was likely that the males (sons of this female from consecutive litters) would also appear at some point, but I didn't want to stay up late...

...because I was up again at 5am the next morning. Jon drove myself and another guest through Fort William and up onto the moorland edge. Pulling up in a passing place, we wound down the windows to the incredible bubbling and squawking noises of a Black Grouse lek!



*Black Grouse, Fort William*



*Black Grouse, Fort William*

We watched for about half an hour, before an early-morning jogger appeared over the crest of the road and that was the end of the day's lekking! Apparently this lek has been continuously active for 15 years or more, despite being disturbed almost daily by joggers and dog-walkers.

No matter, Jon had other plans to absorb some time before breakfast! Heading down to the head of Loch Linnhe (and taking up a rather unpromising vantage point at the back of an empty industrial estate!) we started scanning the estuary, coming up trumps almost immediately.



*Otter, Loch Linnhe*

Distant and fleeting, but recognisably an Otter! A brief flutter of excitement passed quickly as another V in the water turned into, not another Otter, but a Common Seal.



*Common Seal, Loch Linnhe*

There were plenty of coastal birds to be seen, including this nice pair of Goosander.



*Goosanders, Loch Linnhe*

With all three of us starting to feel the cold, we retreated to Glenloy for a marvellous cooked breakfast. Once I'd warmed up, I struck out on my own to explore the amazing sea lochs of the Lochaber area.



*Loch Eil*



*Loch Linnhe*



*Loch Sunart*

I managed to spot quite a good selection of coastal birds...



*Red-breasted Mergansers, Loch Linnhe*



*Oystercatchers, Loch Sunart*

...but undoubtedly the highlight of the day was this – very distant, but recognisably a Golden Eagle!



*Golden Eagle, Loch Sunart*

I headed back to Glenloy for another evening with the Pine Martens. The female put in her usual appearance at dusk, and an hour or so later one of her sons dropped by to Hoover up the leftovers. It's so magical to be able to get this close to a beautiful wild mammal – but of course, we all get to do this every summer with butterflies!



*Female Pine Marten, Glenloy Lodge*



*Female Pine Marten, Glenloy Lodge*



*Male Pine Marten, Glenloy Lodge*





*Male Pine Marten, Glenloy Lodge*

I'll leave it there for tonight. To be continued...

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 18-Apr-19 07:52 AM GMT

Absolutely fabulous, Callum. It's quite difficult to believe that it's actually the UK. One of the great truly wild areas of the country.

### Re: CallumMac

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

Absolutely cracking stuff Callum 😊 Especially those shots of the Black Grouse - 🇬🇧🇬🇧🇬🇧 My bird list has a gaping hole where the Grouse should be 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

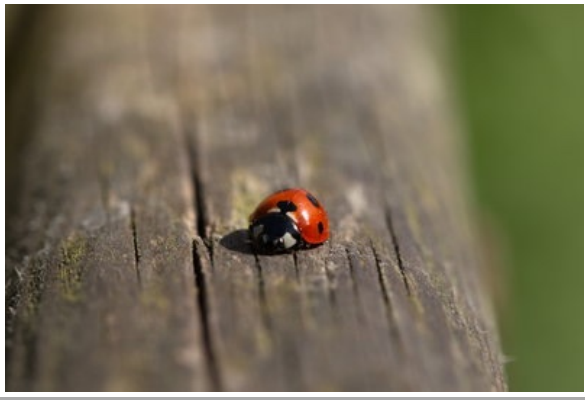
### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 21-Apr-19 09:50 AM GMT

#### 19/04/2019 - Millington Wood & Allerthorpe Common

It's a beautiful sunny Easter weekend in East Yorks. On Friday morning we headed up to Millington Wood in the hope of finding an Early Purple Orchid amongst the woodland flowers. No joy (possibly a week or two early) but there were a good number of Brimstones nectaring on the bluebells, and lots of 7-spot ladybirds.





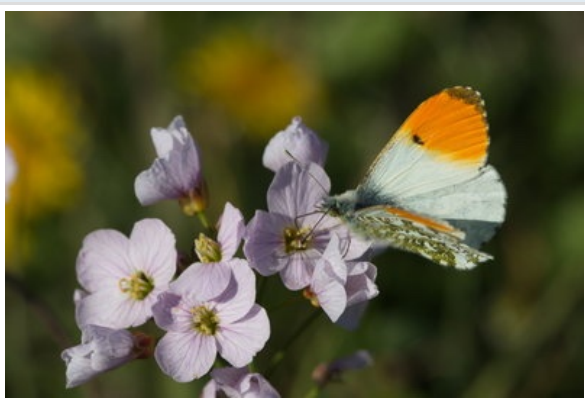
After lunch we decided to try Allerthorpe Common. I've never seen a Green Hairstreak here, but they're present on lots of local sites with superficially very similar habitat. Again no joy, but more Brimstones. Sadly a large swathe of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserve had been recently scorched (it has been such a dry winter), but at least a Peacock was able to extract some benefit.





20/04/2019 - Walmgate Stray

A day doing touristy things in York with friends, but I took my camera as we walked into and out of town across the Stray and was able to find a few Speckled Woods, Orange-tips and Peacocks.





**Re: CallumMac**

by David M, 21-Apr-19 05:12 PM GMT

Shame about the charred landscape, Callum. The same has happened here on the Gower with 3 different parts of Fairwood Common all burned recently.

Good to see some of the more mobile species are unaffected by it.

**Re: CallumMac**

by Neil Freeman, 21-Apr-19 05:42 PM GMT

I love the Pine Martins at Glenloy Lodge Callum 😊 We drove past there a couple of times on our way into the glen a few years back when we stayed in Fort William for a few days. A beautiful part of the world, would love to return again some time.

Cheers,

Neil.

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 21-Apr-19 09:07 PM GMT

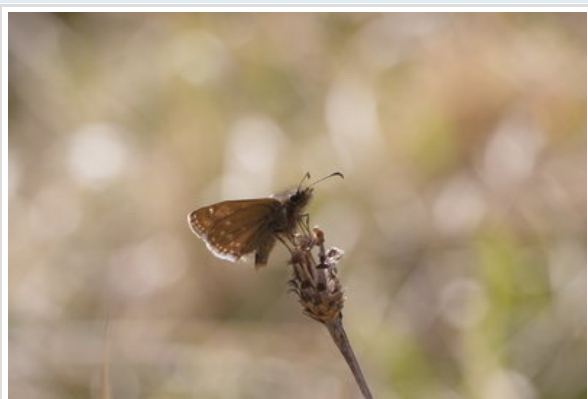
Thanks David. Everything is tinder-dry at the moment up here. As much as it's nice to have a sunny holiday weekend, we could really do with a solid month of rain!

Thanks Neil. A great place to stay – thoroughly recommended.

**21/04/2019 – patch butterflying**

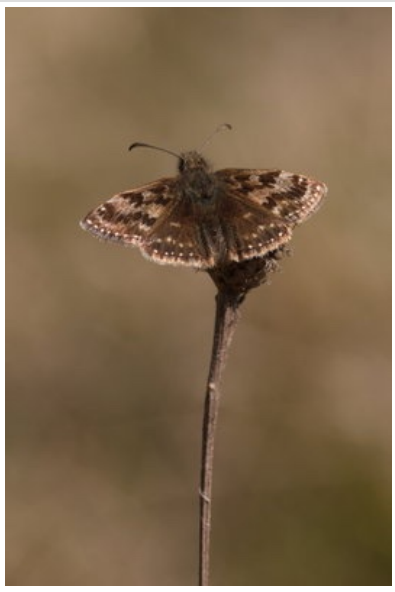
**Kiplingcotes Chalk Pit**

With my partner's friends seen safely back up the road, today and tomorrow were earmarked for catching up with the state of play at my several local patches. We started with Kiplingcotes. Often this site is very quiet in the early part of spring, and so it proved today, with barely a butterfly to be seen in the top meadow or the bottom of the Pit. However, as we reached the far eastern end (which has been sheltered from the cold easterlies that continue to dog Yorkshire!), something tiny and brown flew into view and perched on a seedhead.



As I watched, it was chased up by a second individual. I think this will be considered a very early record of Dingy Skippers by Yorkshire's standards.





#### North Cave Wetlands

From Kiplingcotes, we drove round to North Cave. A few Orange-tips and Green-veined Whites were showing interest in the blackthorn blossom along Dryham Lane, but numbers of both seem to be well down on last year. This was the first female Orange-tip I've seen this year, though, so there is still plenty of time for numbers to build.



The only other surprise was this 14-spot Ladybird, spotted (somehow!) by the very sharp eyes of my partner.



### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-19 10:25 PM GMT

Cracking find with the Dingy Callum - things are moving on a pace at the moment as the Dingies have only really been down South for a short while 🤪  
🤪 From growing up in Dorset I got used to seeing fires pretty much every year and I'd go back to the same site a few years later and it was a riot of colour from the fresh heather growth so hopefully the Common will be equally as rejuvenated 😊😊 A few drops of rain would be a blessing though it would be best if we got it Tuesday to Friday 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by Goldie M, 22-Apr-19 11:34 AM GMT

Glad you saw a Dingy Callum, it makes think of last year when I was at Gait Barrows and chased one about until I got a photo 😊  
Goldie 😊

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 22-Apr-19 11:41 PM GMT

Well done with the Dingies, Callum. I've been looking for them all weekend with no success. Can't be long till the first Common Blues are up and about.

### Re: CallumMac

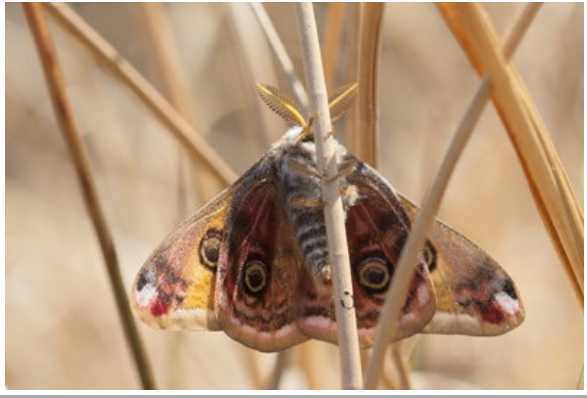
by CallumMac, 23-Apr-19 09:47 PM GMT

Thanks all 😊 I had half an inkling that they might be about but didn't really expect to see them! Common Blues were the other one I had a 'hunch' about and I was wrong about those...

22/04/2019 - Strensall Common (am)

In the morning I walked my UKBMS transect with my partner in tow, with high hopes of seeing my first Green Hairstreak of the year. That hope was fulfilled, but not to great satisfaction - a single individual flew past and promptly vanished! Otherwise there were a smattering of the common species, dominated by Specklies, but nothing to shout about.

We decided to have our packed lunches at Strensall before moving on, and I hung an EMP pheromone lure out whilst we ate. Just as I was finishing my roll, the lure worked its magic, and we spent a bit of time in the company of a delightfully tolerant male Emperor Moth!





#### Potteric Carr (pm)

Like Strensall in the morning, there was nothing particularly out of the ordinary at Potteric after lunch, but a couple of things posed for photographs. The biggest surprise was several separate sightings of voles feeding quite calmly in view of the footpath!



In other news, I have just booked a B&B for two nights back in Chequered Skipper country at the end of May. Fingers crossed for sunshine... 😊

#### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 23-Apr-19 10:36 PM GMT

Wow Callum that is a magnificent looking moth 🐛🐛🐛🐛 Great set of shots especially like the last one where you actually get an idea of the scale of



the butterfly 🤔 It reminds me of one of the atlas moths as it almost has a snake head mimic on the hook tips of the fore wing. 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by millerd, 24-Apr-19 03:35 PM GMT

Looks like I missed the Dingies at Kiplingcotes by 48 hours, Callum! That corner is amazingly sheltered, and that's where the Peacocks and Commas were on 19th. Bad luck with not getting a photo of the Hairstreak at Strensall, but that wonderful moth rather makes up for it. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 25-Apr-19 07:57 AM GMT

Lovely Emperor moth, Callum. Is that quite an unusual one with the extensive crimson suffusion?

Good luck with your McSkipper trip. Hopefully the weather will be kind to you.

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 25-Apr-19 07:18 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel – should probably complement my partner on that last photo rather than me 😊 though in the fashion industry, everybody knows the names of the models, not the photographers 😊

It's a great little corner, Dave, and almost always adds a species or two to the day's list!

Thanks David. I think it's probably on the spectrum of normal colouration, but perhaps towards the 'very crimson' end of that spectrum. I like "McSkipper" – in my school days I had the nickname "McScottish" so it's a nice parallel...

On the subject of McSkippers, and with some much-needed rain here today preventing a lunchtime Walmgate Stray break, I'll pick up my trip report again...

#### 3rd-4th April – last 24 hours in Lochaber

On the Wednesday (after a much-needed lie-in!) I decided to join my host, Jon, and a couple of other visitors for a day's guided wildlife-seeking around the region. With a poor weather forecast I reasoned I might not see much, left to my own devices! This proved to be a good choice as, with Jon's help, I managed to see much of the best that this region has to offer (outside of butterfly season!).



*Black Guillemot*



*Red-breasted Mergansers*



*Feral Goat and kid*



*Wheatear*



*Great Northern Diver*



*Red Deer stag*



*Rock Pipit*

A final evening with the Pine Martens ensued, but with new guests recently arrived I decided to cede the prime photographic spot in the lounge!



*Pine Marten, Glenloy Lodge*

The following morning I had to swing back south to pick up my partner in Tyndrum. But with the early-morning forecast set fair, I decided to get up early again and have a second look at the Black Grouse lek. Unlike on Tuesday, the lek proceeded for over 90 minutes before finally being disturbed, allowing me extended views of fighting males and even the arrival of a female. When disturbance came, I was quietly glad, since I had started to worry about the potential both for frostbite – and missing breakfast-time at the B&B!



*Black Grouse*



*Black Grouse*





*Black Grouse*

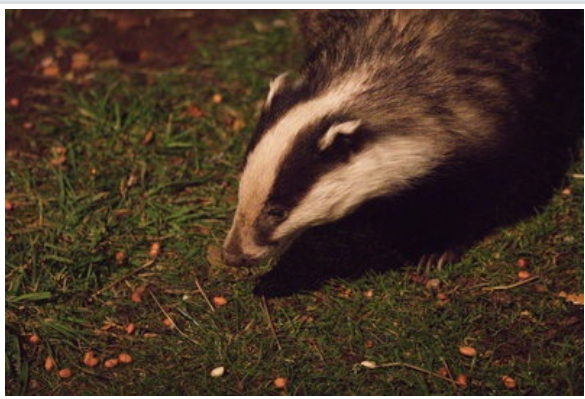


*Black Grouse*

Much of the rest of the day was occupied by travelling from Glenloy on to Aviemore – going via Tyndrum added rather a lot of miles and minutes to that trip! We had time for a walk around the RSPB's Loch Garten reserve, where we heard lots of things and saw almost nothing. In the evening we were booked in for a visit to the Speyside Wildlife hide on the Rothiemurchus Estate – hoping for more Pine Martens, but also Badgers. A single Pine Marten put in an extremely brief appearance, but we were charmed by extended views of two Badgers.

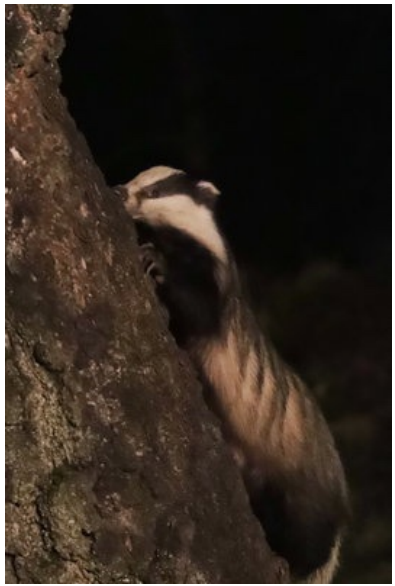


*Badger*



*Badger*





*Badger*

To be continued...

### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 25-Apr-19 09:01 PM GMT

That is fantastic stuff Callum – terrific Tystie, marvelous Martens, a wondrous wandering Wheatear (I was surprised that it'd got that far so quickly), great Grouse and a bloomin' brilliant Brocks 😊👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 26-Apr-19 09:29 PM GMT

Absolutely fabulous wildlife in that part of the UK, Callum. We in the south of the country can but dream of such wonders.

### Re: CallumMac

by bugboy, 28-Apr-19 12:57 PM GMT

Just having a browse through the last couple of pages in your diary (yes I was that far behind 😊) in the words of Wurzel, "cracking stuff" 👍👍👍

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 29-Apr-19 10:30 PM GMT

Thank you, chaps. I really had a wonderful week up there. Will be back for more at the first opportunity!

In the meantime... two great days with three butterflies added to my 'year list' and a big bogey bird to my 'life list'!

#### 28/04/2019 (am) – RSPB Bempton Cliffs

This place is always worth a visit for its incredible seabird colony, which certainly lived up to expectation yesterday. It was blowing a hoolie, so no sign of any butterflies even when the sun came out! But the highlight was undoubtedly two beautiful species of owls (Barn and my aforementioned bogey bird – Short-eared) flying alongside each other, and at one point even sharing a viewfinder! Many of those visiting to see the seabirds were totally oblivious to the drama right above their heads...







**28/04/2019 (pm) – Fordon Chalk Banks**

This site is conveniently on the route home from Bempton. It's privately-owned open access land, but managed and monitored as a butterfly reserve by BC Yorkshire branch. It seems to be attracting something of a reputation as a reliable 'early site' for many species, and we weren't disappointed yesterday. As well as at least 20 Dingy Skippers, we found several extremely fresh Brown Argus and an equally sparkling Wall Brown – the latter two my first ones of the year.







29/04/2019 - Walmgate Stray

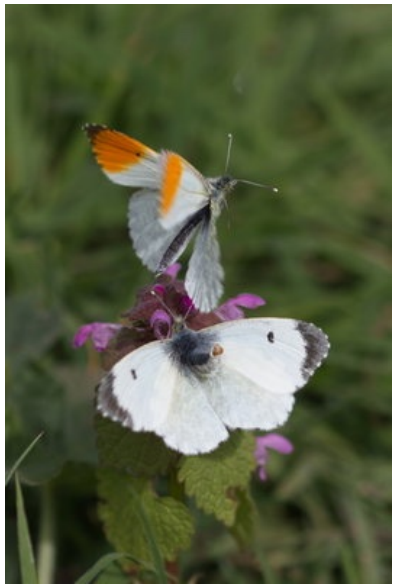
My usual Walmgate Stray stroll was particularly fruitful today! The patrolling Orange-tip males have finally been joined by a decent number of females, creating some nice opportunities for photos.



*First approach...*



*Second pass...*



Nearly...?



...rejected!

This particular female gave me pause for thought, as she seemed to have dark patches on her wings. Closer inspection revealed that these were actually patches where the scales have worn away entirely, leaving a translucent effect slightly reminiscent of an Apollo!



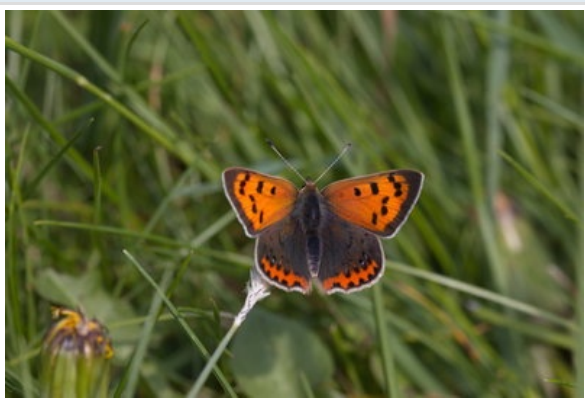
Numbers of Speckled Woods have built nicely, whereas Peacocks and Commas are all but gone. The Small Tortoiseshells are still numerous but (finally)



are showing their age.



Finally, I was thrilled to see my first Small Copper of the year – and doubly so when I realised it was a lovely "blue badger"! 😊



### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 30-Apr-19 07:01 PM GMT

Love the bird shots – did you see any 'bridled' Guillemots on the cliffs? Love the way the Shortie is checking you out in the final shot 😊🇬🇧 On the butterfly front being up that way are those Brown Argus or Salmacis? 😊



That really is a 'False Apollo' Callum 😊...I'll get me coat...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 01-May-19 08:23 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel!

**Wurzel wrote:**

did you see any 'bridled' Guillemots on the cliffs?

I'm sure there must have been some about but none that I spotted.

**Wurzel wrote:**

being up that way are those Brown Argus or Salmacis?

At this time of year they are definitely 'southern' BA.

### Re: CallumMac

by ernie f, 01-May-19 08:36 AM GMT

Callum – Just catching up with your recent posts. You have been busy and it has really paid dividends. I cannot work out what was best out of:

Emperor Moth from beneath  
A cute vole  
Pine Marten  
Badger stretching up a tree trunk  
Black Grouse lek  
Fulmar in flight – close shot  
Courting OTips  
OTip female with worn scale patches  
A Barn Owl and Short-eared Owl in the same shot

On reflection I think it has to be the picture I know I will never get in my life – the two owl species on the wing at once.

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 01-May-19 09:22 PM GMT

Callum, I thought your reports from Scotland were up there in the pantheon of rare and impressive creatures to be seen in the UK, but now I find you can match it close to your home!!

That's some place to live if you can see a range of birds such as the ones you've posted....and you threw in a few desirable butterflies too!

Impeccable!

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 04-May-19 10:02 AM GMT

**ernie f wrote:**

On reflection I think it has to be the picture I know I will never get in my life – the two owl species on the wing at once.

Thank you Ernie! I've had some fantastic luck over the last few weeks (long may it last!) but I think I agree with you – the only once-in-a-lifetime experience was these two owls flying side-by-side.

**David M wrote:**

now I find you can match it close to your home!!

Thanks David – if the weather brightens up as forecast this afternoon, I hope to have more to add!

#### 5th-7th April – Speyside and homewards-bound

Since it's raining this morning and the photos from my Scottish trip seem to be going down well, I'll continue with the rest of the week!

After a late night in the Speyside Wildlife hide, we decided to have a lie-in and spend the morning at the Highland Wildlife Park – particularly keen to see the 'baby' Polar Bear, who is most certainly not a baby anymore!



*Hamish the "baby" Polar Bear*

Alongside the range of usual and more unusual zoo animals were a few nice wild things, especially in the large marshy drive-through enclosure where the bison are kept.



*Barnacle Geese, HWP*



*Lapwing, HWP*



*Rook, HWP*



*Redshank, HWP*

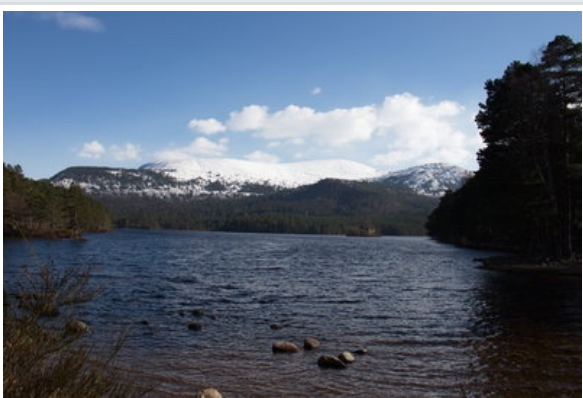


*Hooded Crow, HWP*



*Oystercatcher, HWP*

After lunch we opted for a walk around Loch an Eilean, an attractive loch surrounded by Caledonian pine forest in the Rothiemurchus estate.



*Loch an Eilean*

Lots of woodland birds around, though mostly high up in the trees and hard to spot. At the far end of the loch, we stopped to watch a Coal Tit that had approached a bit closer. As we watched, another flew past it and landed even nearer to us: I got it in my binoculars and, after a moment of shock, whispered to L - "holy \*\*\*\* it's a Crested Tit!". And so, at my fifth attempt to see this enchanting bird in the Abernethy area, we were finally able to watch this individual for a good 15 minutes as it approached very close and struck a few classic poses!





*Crested Tit, Loch an Eilean*



*Crested Tit, Loch an Eilean*



*Crested Tit, Loch an Eilean*



*Crested Tit, Loch an Eilean*

For the avoidance of doubt, of all the amazing things we saw in this holiday, finally seeing a 'Crestie' was by far and away my highlight! 😊

On the Saturday, the forecast was really grim and the idea of going for a walk anywhere quite unappealing. So we decided instead to head northwards to Fort George – a fairly impressive active military base dating back to the end of the Jacobite uprising. Although I rather liked the Romans as a schoolboy, we weren't here for historical interest, but for the fort's views over the narrowest point in the Moray Firth. The resident pod of Bottlenose Dolphins congregate here on a rising mid-tide to feast on the fish moving up-river. Not by coincidence, we arrived on a rising mid-tide, and were duly treated to a show!





*First, distant views!*



*Bottlenose Dolphin, Fort George*



*Bottlenose Dolphin, Fort George*



*Bottlenose Dolphin, Fort George*



*Bottlenose Dolphin, Fort George*

Besides the dolphins, other interest came from a few passing seabirds.



*Eiders, Fort George*



*Guillemot, Fort George*



*Common Gull, Fort George*

With (marginally) drier weather promised in the afternoon, we moved back inland to the RSPB reserve at Loch Ruthven – one of the only places in the UK to see breeding-plumage Slavonian Grebes. They were a little distant but unmistakable and breath-taking!



*Slavonian Grebe, Loch Ruthven*



*Slavonian Grebe, Loch Ruthven*

The following morning and it was time to head for home: but with one final pit-stop planned, at the Loch of the Lowes (Scottish Wildlife Trust). The long-standing Osprey nest was in use – astonishingly we saw the pair adding yet more nesting material to a structure that must already stand two metres high!



*Osprey, Loch of the Lowes*



*Osprey, Loch of the Lowes*

Mirroring the start of the holiday, in the small wood surrounding the visitor centre were a range of nice woodland birds and two Red Squirrels.



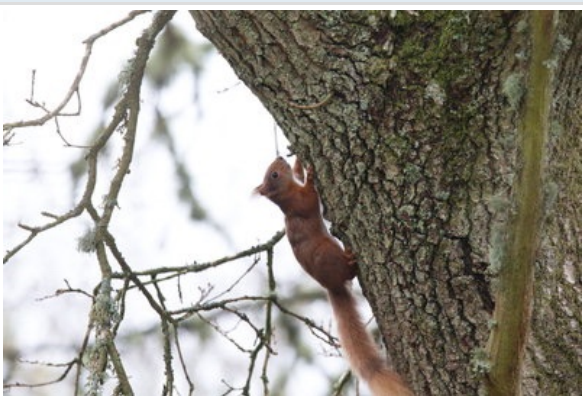
*Siskin, Loch of the Lowes*



*Yellowhammer, Loch of the Lowes*



*Great-spotted Woodpecker, Loch of the Lowes*



*Red Squirrel, Loch of the Lowes*





*Red Squirrel, Loch of the Lowes*

And so concludes my trip report! A remarkable area – highly recommended for those long butterfly-free months, and pretty good during the summer as well!

### Re: CallumMac

by ernie f, 04-May-19 04:13 PM GMT

Callum

You appear to have had a great time. I did almost the same trip as you a few years ago and saw many of the same things. We went looking for Bottle Nosed Dolphin but were unlucky. Did get Minke Whale though so I wasn't complaining. Loch Ruthven is wonderful – not just for those grebes, but the whole atmosphere of the place is enchanting.

### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 05-May-19 09:04 AM GMT

Fantastic stuff Callum the highlight of which for me is the breeding plumage Slav – I've only ever seen one like that in Poland many, many years ago 😊  
👍👍 Love the Crested Tit, Siskin, Osprey... okay all the rest too but the horns on the Slav burn into my retina 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 05-May-19 12:50 PM GMT

~~{quote}~~ Thanks David – if the weather brightens up as forecast this afternoon, I hope to have more to add!

I shall certainly look forward to that, Callum.

Meantime, thanks for sharing your remaining images from your recent trip to Scotland. There are so many wonderful sights to behold, although that osprey nest must be up there with the best?

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 05-May-19 10:01 PM GMT

Ernie, I think your comment about the atmosphere of the place applies not just to Loch Ruthven but to anywhere in that area with Caledonian pine forest!

#### 04/05/2019 – North York Moors

Dukes of Burgundy have (apparently) been on the wing in their Yorkshire populations for a little over a week. Yesterday was forecast to be the sunniest day of the BH weekend but with a strong northerly wind. Since the Duke sites are not very well sheltered, I decided to give them a go but with very little optimism!

On arriving at the first, my car door was nearly ripped off by the gale howling over the open moors! Clearly useless for the Dukes, but I remembered from last year that there was a small colony of Green Hairstreaks that would be downwind of a copse of pine trees. I decided this would make a good place to have my packed lunch – on the offchance the Greenstreaks were flying. And about halfway through my first roll, they appeared!

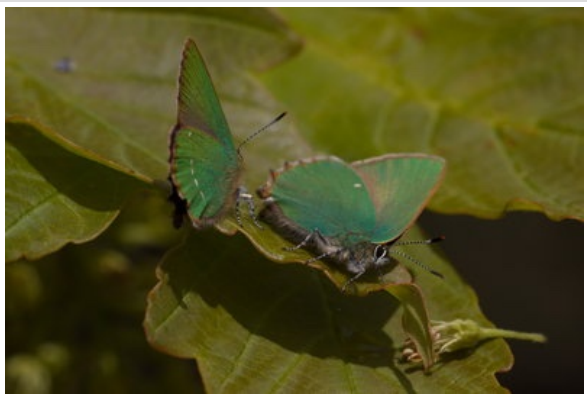


It seemed the shelter of the woodland was barely enough, since they were choosing to bask deep in the hollows between clumps of heather. For comparison, last year I was taking photos at the same site on the tops of the bilberry bushes:



*May 2018*

I followed one individual as it moved off from its basking spot, and managed to track it all the way to a leaf at head-height on a tree in the edge of the copse. As I focussed my camera on it, I suddenly spotted that it was no longer alone!



I watched this pair padding around each other for a good five minutes. At one point I thought I might be about to get an 'in cop' shot, but it wasn't to be.





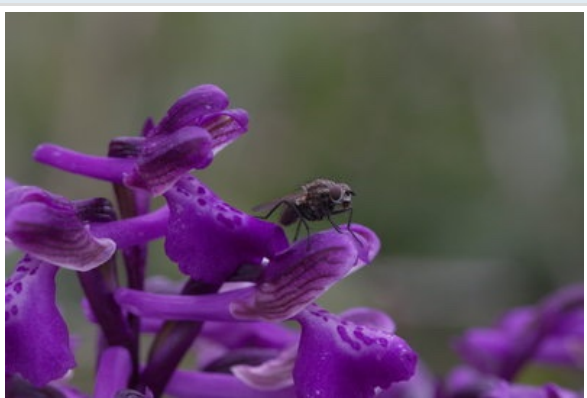
A great encounter, and more than made up for the lack of Dukes here. And, indeed, the lack of Dukes at my second site for them – which was so cold and windy that it's not even worth writing up!

**05/05/2019 – Fordon Chalk Banks**

No sunshine at all today, so exactly a week after my first visit to the Open Access land at Fordon, I was back for another go. This time I came armed with precise directions leading away from the main butterfly reserve to an obscure corner of the site. After a good dollop of wading through nettle patches, ducking through hawthorn scrub, and startling sheep, I managed to find the right spot – well, it was hard to miss! Green-winged Orchids are a pretty scarce species this far north, but this colony probably numbers into the thousands – quite a spectacle.







Being pretty used to the rhythm of photographing butterflies – creep up, fire off some frames, try to readjust to a better angle, try to follow where it flew off to, and repeat – it was quite refreshing to photograph nature at such a different speed, being able to lie down amongst the flowers, carefully compose my photos, experiment with depth of field etc. I even dug my rarely-used mini tripod out of my camera bag!

### Re: CallumMac

by essexbuzzard, 05-May-19 11:17 PM GMT

Lovely pictures Callum, especially the second to last, I'm not used to seeing green wing orchids on a hillside like that. Orchids with a view, what's not to like?

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 06-May-19 10:30 PM GMT

That green winged orchid is beautifully coloured, Callum. Surely one of the most attractive in the UK?

I like your Green Hairstreak with the strong series of spots too. I'm always on the lookout for them as they don't appear too often. 😞

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 08-May-19 04:41 PM GMT

Many thanks, both. I'm not used to seeing orchids full-stop! And can't really pass judgement on whether they're more or less attractive than all the other species I've never seen. To be honest I've never paid a huge amount of attention to orchids, but after starting to read *Orchid Summer* (Jon Dunn) over Christmas I'm keen to learn more. Lying on the valley side surrounded by these beautiful things was certainly one of those "wow" moments!

And I liked the contrast between the heavily-spotted GH and the almost unspotted one.

### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 09-May-19 11:37 AM GMT

Great set of Greenstreaks and Orchid images Callum 😊 The first Greenstreak looks good for *ab.punctata* as the spot streak runs onto the fore wing and the two together is brilliant showing the range that they show in the spotting, I think the one with the very clear streaks could be *ab.inferopunctata* 😊 Cracking stuff 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 13-May-19 10:07 PM GMT

Thanks for the extra info, Wurzel! I struggle a bit with the GH aberrations, which seem to be very abundant up here. I would struggle to tell you what a 'normal' GH should look like!

11/5/2019 - Brockdale

It was a bit showery on Saturday and I was still on a quest to track down an Early Purple Orchid (should it really be this hard?!), so we decided to head to Brockdale. A nice walk around this lovely reserve eventually produced decent numbers of fairly small orchids on a north-facing bank.





An Orange-tip dropped by in a sunny spell, and despite my best efforts at telepathy, chose to settle on a bluebell instead of an orchid!





Another point of interest was this – I think Hairy Shieldbug.

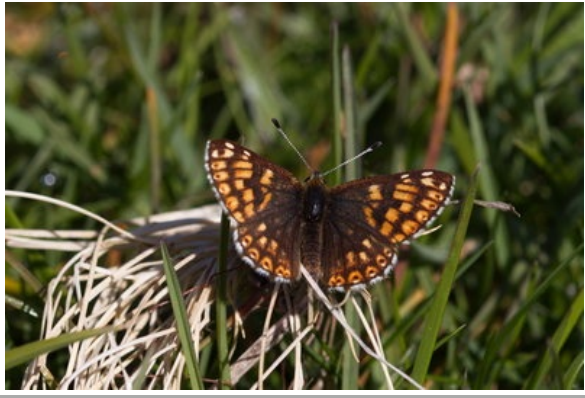


12/5/2019 – North York Moors

With a much better forecast on Sunday we decided to go for the North Yorkshire "big two". An early start (by butterflying standards) was a good decision as we arrived at the Duke of Burgundy site before everything became supercharged. Despite lots of concern about the effects of last summer's drought, numbers of Dukes were very healthy – and the primroses abundant and lush promise great things for next year!



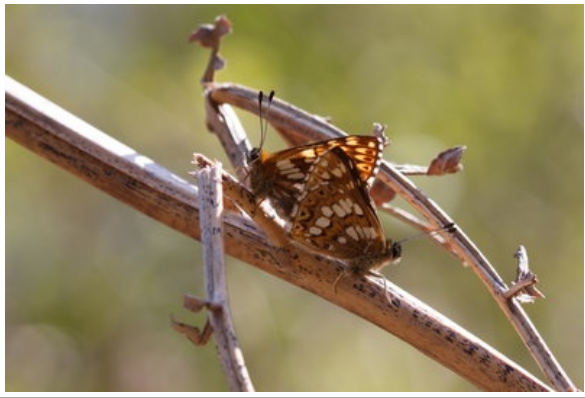




My herpetologist partner – who has an immense amount of patience with me when it comes to butterflies and orchids! – occasionally called me over to see Common Lizards.



A group of conservation volunteers from the National Park Authority were clustered around something, which turned out to be a Duke and Duchess "distracted".



I was amused to see the antennae on one of them were crossed in the moment! 😊



After getting our fill of Dukes, we decided to head back to the car for our lunch. Scrambling up the side of the hill, L's nose for herptiles came up trumps again as she narrowly avoided treading on this Slow-worm!



There was an attractive patch of Field Mouse-ear on the walk back to the car.



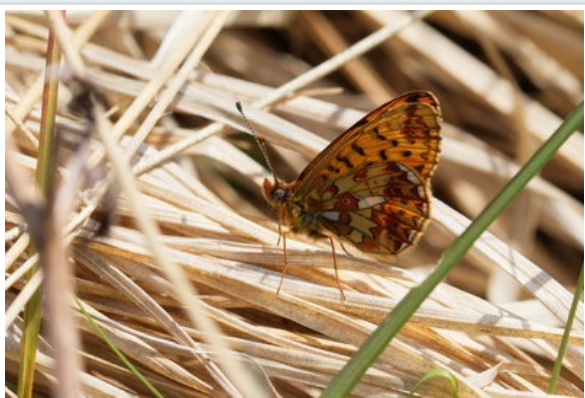
We ate lunch in the midst of the same Green Hairstreak colony as last week, which afforded a few more chances for pictures. I think about half of the individuals here show some form of punctata ab.







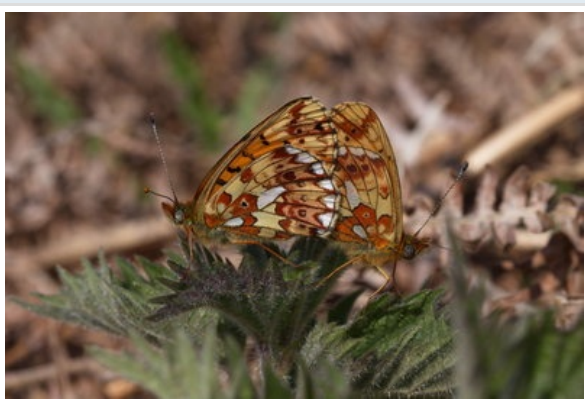
With lunch eaten, we drove a little distance east to the Pearl-bordered Fritillary site near Kirkbymoorside. Lots of Fritillaries flying, and the occasional drifting cloud gave some good photographing opportunities. I managed to get a few elusive underwing shots.







Remarkably I was able to double-up on my 'in-cop' shots for the day – although this pair proved to be extremely flighty and, reluctant to disturb them a second time, I found it impossible to find a good angle through the grasses. Still, we were able to observe them for some minutes and call in some of the other butterflies at the site for a look.





Just as we were walking, satisfied, back to the car, a final PBF perched to nectar on a cuckoo-flower, giving me a lovely view of the underside!



### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 13-May-19 10:10 PM GMT

13/05/2019 - Walmgate Stray

Much too nice a day to be trapped in an office, but I could only manage a short Walmgate Stray walk at lunchtime. Still, it turned up all the usual suspects alongside a briefly-resting female Holly Blue. Incredibly there are still a few Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells dragging on, but definitely looking worse for wear.



The butterflies have now been joined by the rather charming colony of Small Yellow Underwing moths!



**Re: CallumMac**

by Wurzel, 13-May-19 11:22 PM GMT

Was the crossed antennae near the end of the session Callum 🤪🤪 that is a brilliantly amusing shot 🤪 It almost distracted me from my envy at getting in cop shots something I've still to witness 🤪🤪 I don't know about you but I love this time of year - the species that emerge now seem to have that extra bit of charisma 😊😎

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: CallumMac**

by Neil Freeman, 14-May-19 07:26 PM GMT

A great selection of subjects and photos in your recent reports Callum

**CallumMac wrote:**

... I would struggle to tell you what a 'normal' GH should look like!...

Me too! In fact I am becoming more and more convinced that many of our butterflies show more natural variation than is often realised.

Regards,

Neil.

**Re: CallumMac**

by David M, 15-May-19 06:35 AM GMT

Sounds like a fabulous few days you've had, Callum. It's encouraging to learn how your Duke and PBF colonies seem to be doing well in spite of last year's drought. Have you any Small Pearl sites round your way?

**Re: CallumMac**

by trevor, 15-May-19 09:25 AM GMT

A couple of very enjoyable postings, Callum. Good to see what's going on in another part of the Country, quite far from Sussex.

Trevor.

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 16-May-19 10:13 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, my thoughts exactly!

Thanks Neil. I agree, and I wonder whether the Victorian enthusiasm for collecting abs led to a lot of slightly less-common forms within the normal range of variation being classified as abs. As a moth-er you'll be familiar with the extraordinary levels of variation within something like Common Rustic!

Thanks David. Yes, Small Pearl is fairly widely distributed over the North York Moors, doing much better than its larger cousin.

Thanks Trevor. I am often very jealous of the posts from those in Sussex and the south coast!

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 16-May-19 10:34 PM GMT

16/05/2019 - Heslington East

I changed up my usual lunchtime routine today, as I needed to set some moth traps out in the conservation areas on the University's new East campus. This turned out to be a very lucky decision as I stumbled across at least two Dingy Skippers in the hay-meadow. This is the first record of this species on the campus! I'm told that this species' colonisation was a (very optimistic) hope when the campus was designed, but I'm sure nobody expected it to occur within just a few years, especially as there are no known sites within several miles!



Re: CallumMac



by millerd, 17-May-19 05:48 PM GMT

Great to see the Dukes and PBF going strong in their Yorkshire fastnesses, Callum. I shall have to contrive a visit at this time of year One of these days! Also good to see Dingies spreading – I wonder where they came from? Blown in from the East? 😊 Or maybe there's another undiscovered colony not so far away...

Cheers,

Dave

### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 17-May-19 10:44 PM GMT

That field sounds like the Field of Dreams Callum;" If you plant it they will come" to misquote the film 😊 Like Dave says where did they come from – I've wondered this as butterflies just turn up sometimes 😊😊 Still better turn up than disappear 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 18-May-19 11:36 AM GMT

[quote] Yes, Small Pearl is fairly widely distributed over the North York Moors, doing much better than its larger cousin.

Good to hear, Callum. They should be out any day now, I'm sure. They've already arrived in south Wales.

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 22-May-19 12:49 PM GMT

Thanks all. We've since learnt that there's one strong colony about 5 miles south as the Skipper flies. Probably the most likely source.

18-21/05/2019 – various

A trip over to the Lakes this weekend to visit my parents, as my partner will shortly be embarking on a year-long sabbatical across the pond. The nearest thing to an interesting butterfly was this...



[Greater] Butterfly [Orchid], Latterbarrow, 18/05

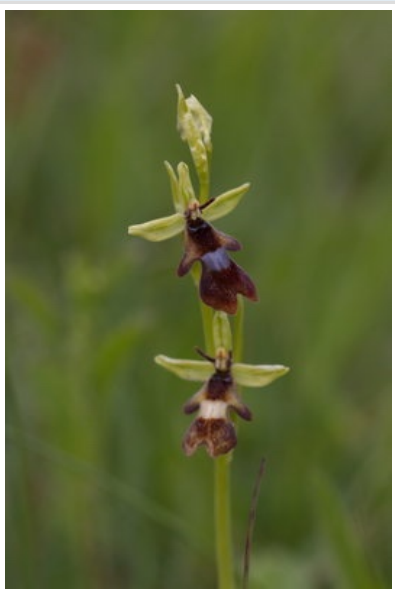
...but plenty of other points of interest. Here are a few highlights.



*Olethreutes arcuella*, Latterbarrow, 18/05



*Anania funebris*, Latterbarrow, 18/05



*Fly Orchid*, Sandside, 18/05



*Common Twayblade*, Sandside, 18/05



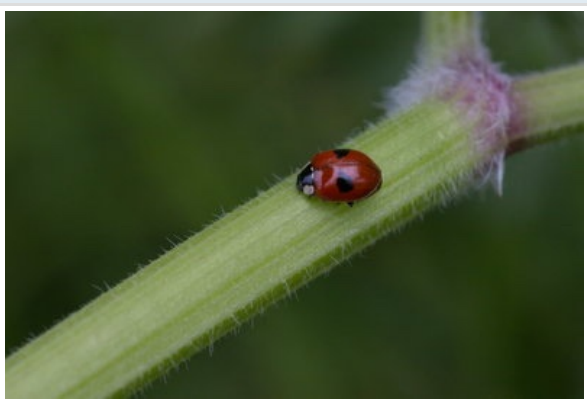
*Green-winged Orchids, Silverdale, 18/05*



*Emperor Moth, Binsey, 19/05*



*Cuckoo and Meadow Pipit, Binsey, 19/05*



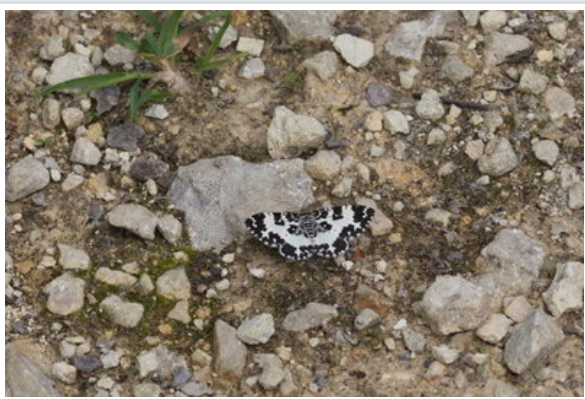
*Two-spot Ladybird, River Ure, 19/05*



*Dipper, River Ure, 19/05*



*Grey Wagtail, River Ure, 19/05*



*Argent & Sable, Bishop Wood, Selby, 21/05*



*Argent & Sable, Bishop Wood, Selby, 21/05*

## **Re: CallumMac**

by Wurzel, 23-May-19 08:31 PM GMT

Great report Callum 😊 I did brilliantly to capture the Dipper – they can be right tricky little so-and-so's when they want to, they're like the Wall of the bird world 😊😊 Mind you the Argent and Sable ain't exactly a cake walk either 🤔👍👍



Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: CallumMac**

by David M, 24-May-19 02:27 PM GMT

Fabulous sequence, Callum. You seem to find interesting stuff wherever you go and whatever the weather.

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 26-May-19 12:22 PM GMT

**Wurzel wrote:**

Mind you the Argent and Sable ain't exactly a cake walk either

Thanks Wurzel, certainly aren't! I think my best shot came after I gave up on sneaking up on them and switched over to my 600 mm 'birding' lens!

**David M wrote:**

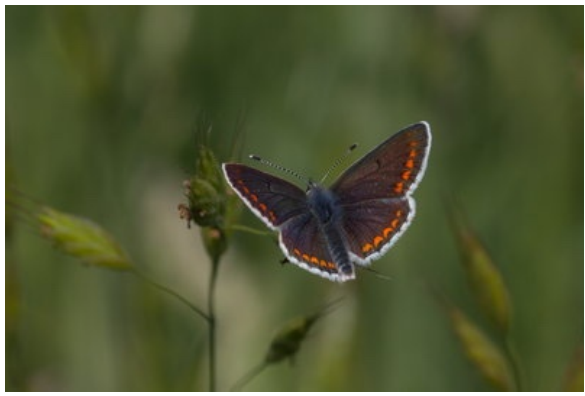
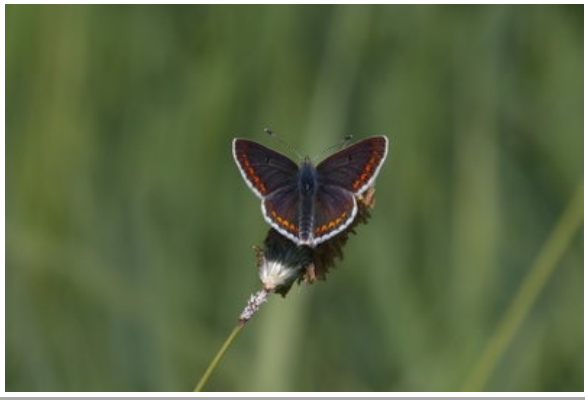
Fabulous sequence, Callum. You seem to find interesting stuff wherever you go and whatever the weather.

Thanks David. I suppose I adjust my plans when the forecast doesn't look good for butterflies!

23-24/05/2019 - York (various)

In brief - both Brown Argus and Common Blue are now on the wing around the university.



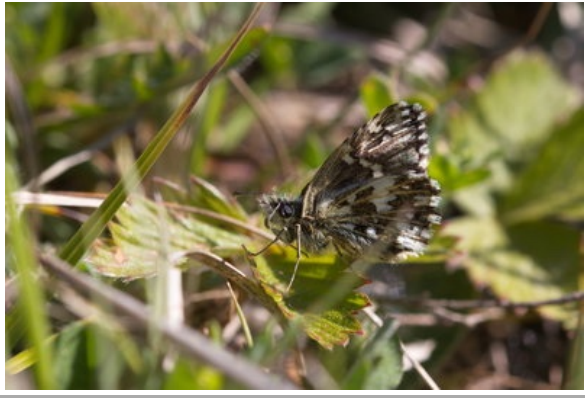


25/05/2019, am – Twyford Wood

I'd been planning a big day south of the border in Lincolnshire for some time, and with weather and phenology finally aligning, yesterday was the day! Setting off early (by our standards), we got to BC Lincs's reserve at Twyford just before 10am. This is pretty much the most northerly stronghold of Grizzled Skipper – the really glaring omission from my personal 'life list'!

It didn't take us long to find the Grizzlies. Quite a bit smaller than I was expecting (I thought they would be similar to Dingies, but actually the size difference was obvious even in flight), and totally enchanting!





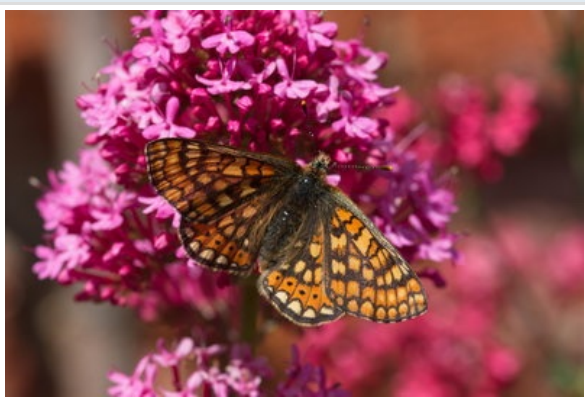
There was a nice supporting cast of the aforementioned Dingies in abundance, alongside Brown Argus, Common Blue, Green Hairstreak, a late Orange-tip, and my first Small Heaths of the year.





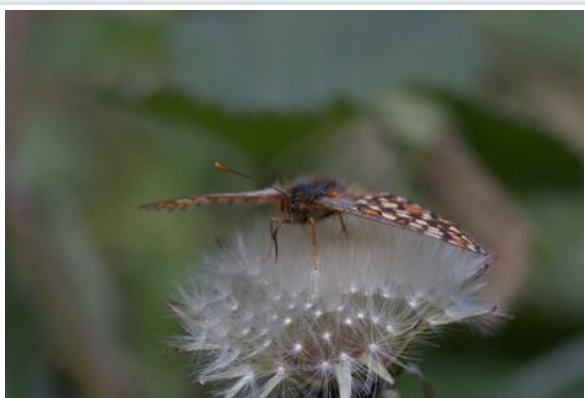
25/05/2019, pm – Chambers Farm Wood

After dallying a while, we headed back northwards to Chambers Farm Wood, hoping to take in the unbelievable glut of Marshies. On arrival, we sat in the butterfly garden to eat lunch, and started to get a sense of how remarkable this emergence was as we realised that Marshies were the most abundant species even here, several hundred metres from Little Scrubbs Meadow.



As we walked over to the meadow, the density of frits built and built. There really aren't words! I could post any number of 'standard' photos, so instead I'll post a few points of particular interest:

With a fritillary on almost every flower in the area, some butterflies were forced into searching, desperately, for nectar elsewhere:



The butterflies were undertaking their own promotional work. I've never seen such a helpful information board!





**Re: CallumMac**

by Wurzel, 26-May-19 03:54 PM GMT

Great shots Callum, the final one is a beaut 😄😄👍 Cracking Small Heath with two eyes too 😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: CallumMac**

by David M, 26-May-19 05:11 PM GMT

That final image is great, Callum. 😄 Just about sums your day up.

Interesting Small Heath too. I don't think I've ever seen a double eye spot before in this species.

**Re: CallumMac**

by Neil Freeman, 26-May-19 05:48 PM GMT

Hi Callum,

I have been reading various reports on the March Fritillary explosion at Chambers Farm Wood over the past few days. I remember hearing about similar population explosions at other sites over the years and they are almost always followed by a crash the following year, presumably due to the larvae eating themselves out of foodplant.

Interesting Small Heath with the double eye-spot, something I have never seen. Mind you I had never seen one with no eye-spot at all until yesterday afternoon (photo coming up soon in my dairy).

Cheers,

Neil.

**Re: CallumMac**

by bugboy, 28-May-19 08:05 PM GMT

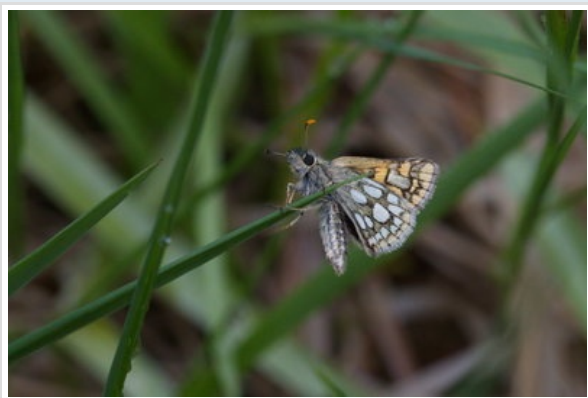
That is a very eye catching Small Heath. I've seen double eyed ones myself but I think your one is the most pronounced I've seen.

**Re: CallumMac**

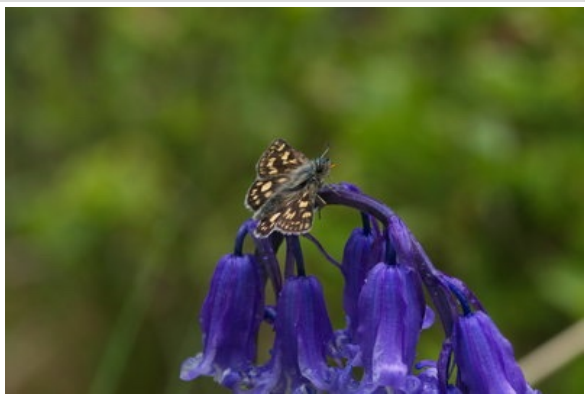
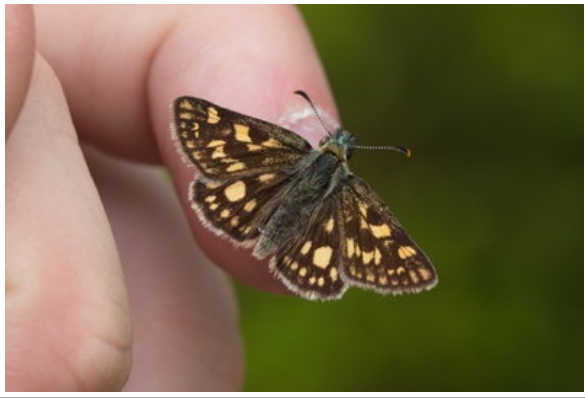
by CallumMac, 06-Jun-19 11:21 PM GMT

30/05 - 01/06/2019 - Ardnamurchan

I've been all up and down the country this week, quite literally, with only one butterfly of note to show for it. But what a corker!! My first ever Chequered Skippers. Stunning, I have no words. 😄







**Re: CallumMac**

by trevor, 07-Jun-19 06:39 AM GMT

Congrats. for finding the Chequered Skippers Callum. A lovely little species, a very long way from Sussex. If those re-introduced in Northamptonshire are successful I may have a chance of seeing them for myself one day.

Great effort, and images,  
Trevor.

**Re: CallumMac**

by Katrina, 07-Jun-19 08:03 AM GMT

The close up CS on bluebell shot is soooo beautiful! 😊👍👍👍👍👍👍

**Re: CallumMac**

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-19 09:32 AM GMT

Absolutely fantastic shots Callum 😊 This butterfly is so far away from me that at the moment I can only dream about it and enjoy them vicariously – you've done a very good job at making me very envious 😊👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: CallumMac**

by David M, 07-Jun-19 11:47 AM GMT

Well done, Callum. It's very satisfying when you get to see them.

Takes me back to 2014 when I made the long journey up to Glasdrum. Happy days!

**Re: CallumMac**

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jun-19 07:35 PM GMT

Nice set of photos of the Chequered Skippers Callum, particularly on the bluebells...lovely 😊👍.

Takes me back to 2016 when we stayed for a few days in Fort William and I saw my first ones...and last as I haven't seen them since, your photos have got me thinking about a return trip sometime.

Cheers,

Neil.

**Re: CallumMac**

by David M, 07-Jun-19 10:49 PM GMT

Quick question, Callum – does that complete the UK set for you?

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 08-Jun-19 07:38 AM GMT

Thank you Trevor, Katrina, Wurzel, David and Neil! It is indeed such a long way to travel just to see a butterfly. On this occasion we had a wedding to attend in Perth on the Sunday, which made the extra distance from there to Fort William seem a bit more acceptable!

**David M wrote:**

Quick question, Callum – does that complete the UK set for you?

As it happens, no. I know for a lot of people CS is the final piece in the puzzle! But I am yet to see Black Hairstreak, Wood White (either species), and Glanville Fritillary. Hoping to catch up with Black Hairstreak in about a fortnight, weather permitting, and if the fates align I might make a trip later in the summer to look for the second brood of Wood White. Then next summer I would love to make the trip to the Isle of Wight to complete the British 58 with Lady Glanville – which seems a suitably special species to finish on!

I may see Cryptic Wood White one day but at present I can't justify taking a flight just to tick a butterfly.

**Re: CallumMac**

by David M, 08-Jun-19 06:43 PM GMT

**CallumMac wrote:**

...Then next summer I would love to make the trip to the Isle of Wight to complete the British 58 with Lady Glanville – which seems a suitably special species to finish on!

You could pop into Wreclesham and save yourself some petrol and a ferry trip, Callum! 😊



## Re: CallumMac

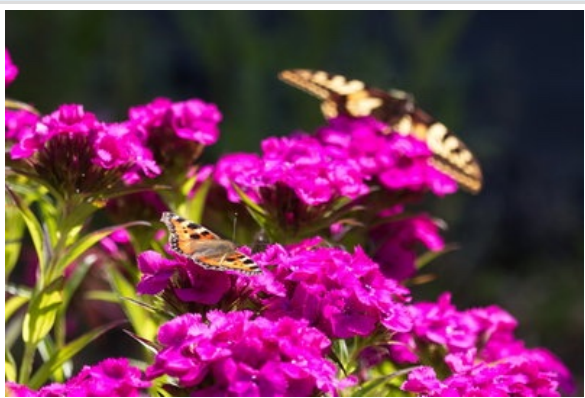
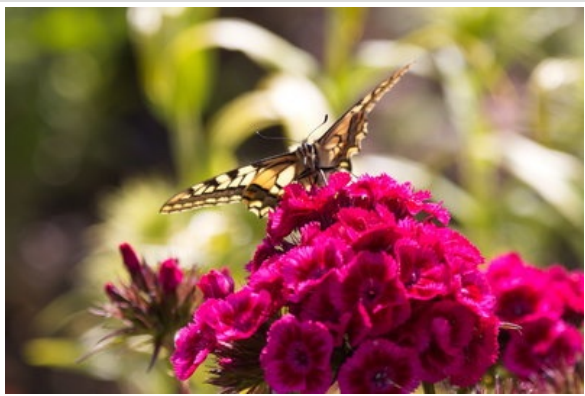
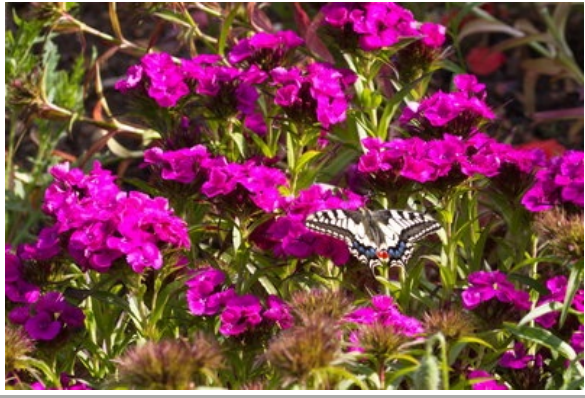
by CallumMac, 11-Jun-19 12:38 AM GMT

10/06/2019 – Strumpshaw Fen

This year marked 10 years since I had last made the trip to see the britannicus Swallowtails, and I felt it was high time for that to change! I travelled down to Norfolk on Saturday, and passed a pleasant afternoon in the rain at Strumpshaw. The weather meant no butterflies, but also practically no other visitors, meaning that there was more to be seen than might usually be the case!

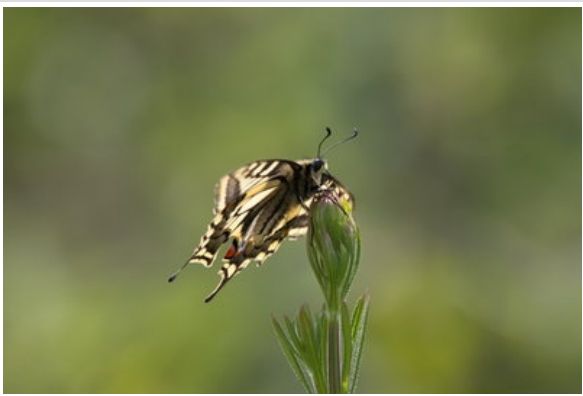


As pleasant as all that was, I was pretty glad to see the sun shining when I got up on Sunday morning! The Swallowtails certainly didn't disappoint, either. The best spot was undoubtedly the Doctor's garden, which pretty much constantly had a Swallowtail or two nectaring alongside a nice selection of vanessids.





As nice as this was, it was also nice to see the butterflies in a more natural setting along one of the paths through the reserve!







Wonderful! 😊

Plenty of other butterflies around, too, including my first Meadow Brown of the year. I guess there must have been a big influx of migrants, too, as there were good numbers of Painted Lady, Red Admiral and Large White about.







Besides the butterflies, the other main point of interest was dragonflies, and I was pleased to be able to identify both Norfolk Hawker and Scarce Chaser among a range of more widespread species.





A great trip, and I was pleased I had made the pilgrimage again at last. It's easy to forget just how much more spectacular our black-tinged Swallowtails are than their continental cousins. I don't expect I'll leave it another 10 years this time!

### Re: CallumMac

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-19 09:01 AM GMT

Just catching up Callum with the post, I think you've managed the most elusive Butterflies in your posts , the ones you've to travel far to see 😊 those Chequered Skipper shots are fantastic and the Swallow Tails always a pleasure to see 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: CallumMac

by Janet Turnbull, 11-Jun-19 11:59 AM GMT

Wonderful Swallowtail photos Callum – I'm desperately hoping there will be some left when I go on Friday!  
Janet

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 13-Jun-19 01:57 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie! Yes, a lot of travelling over the last couple of weeks to find these two. It doesn't help that their flight periods overlap so closely... 😊  
Thanks Janet, and good luck tomorrow – some of those that I saw last weekend looked fairly fresh, and they won't have been flying around much this week, so I think you'll be fine. 😊

### Re: CallumMac

by kevlng, 13-Jun-19 08:32 PM GMT

Callum,

Lovely photos of the Swallowtails at Strumpshaw Fen, especially the photobombing Small Tortoiseshell one. I had a great day there last week enjoying this rare but wonderful species.

Regards  
Kev

### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-19 10:27 PM GMT

More delectable shots of a delectable species Callum 🍷🍷🍷 The stained glass one for me is the 'I wish I'd taken that' one 🤔🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 15-Jun-19 06:48 AM GMT

Great stuff, Callum, and well done on getting the unlikely duo of Swallowtail and Small Tortoiseshell in the same image.

That Peacock and Brimstone must be practically a year old! 😊

### Re: CallumMac

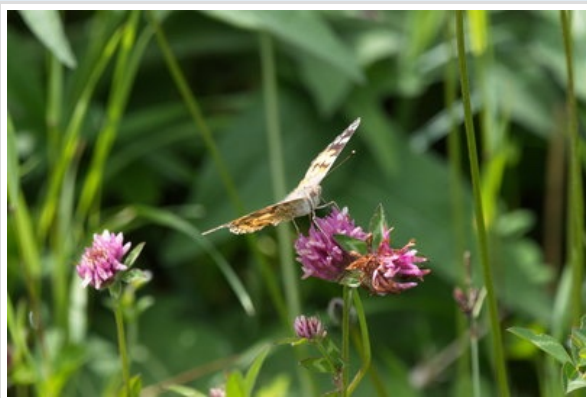
by CallumMac, 17-Jun-19 11:24 PM GMT

Thank you all!

#### 15/06 and 16/06/2019 - Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors

The weather over the last week and into the weekend was really not up to much for butterfly-chasing, so my attention has mostly been on orchids instead. Mainly in the Yorkshire Dales on Saturday, and closer to home on the North York Moors on Sunday - a few highlights below. First, though, a brief run-down of what little butterfly activity there was on Sunday, during some brief spells of sun:

The mass arrival of Painted Ladies is very evident in Yorkshire, with individuals seen at every site I visited on Sunday.





My first stop of the day was at Fen Bog, where I didn't manage to locate a Large Heath – the main area of the bog currently being far too wet to navigate safely. I beat a hasty retreat after going in up to my knees (and narrowly averting a dunking for my camera!), but my spirits were lifted on the squelchy walk back to the car, first by a very nice Small Heath, and then by my first Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries of the year!



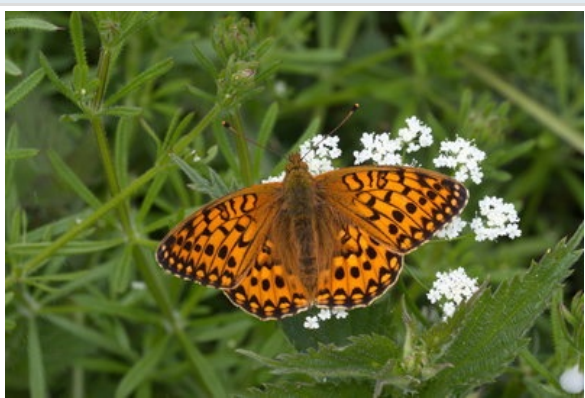
From there, I moved on to Dalby Forest and the adjacent Ellerburn Bank reserve. Nothing unusual here, but a nice smattering of the commoner species.







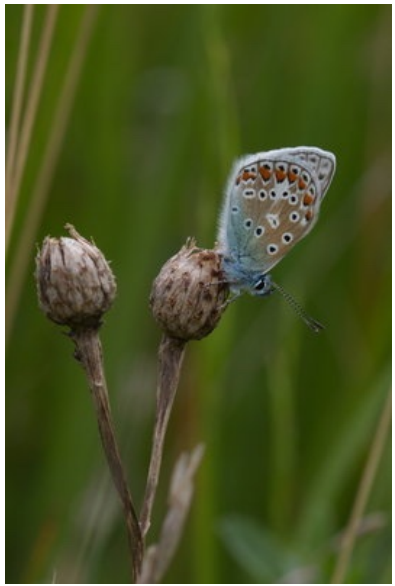
Next stop was the Yatts Farm SSSI, known to some as the best orchid field in Ryedale! It lived up to that billing, but also held my first Dark Green Fritillaries of the year (and Yorkshire's first of the year, too), with at least 5-6 individuals trying hard to warm up enough to fly.





Last port of call was Wharram Quarry, en route back through the Wolds. My first Yorkshire Meadow Brown of the year (having seen one down in Norfolk last weekend), and a nice roosting Common Blue were all I found before the heavens opened once again!





And a few other highlights from a marathon weekend of orchid-hunting...! Some five of these species were completely new to me...



*Bird's-nest Orchid, Jubilee Park, Kirkby Stephen*



*Fly Orchid, Waitby Greenrigg*





*Lesser Butterfly Orchids, Waitby Greenrigg*



*Greater Butterfly Orchid, Smardale Gill*



*Spotted Flycatcher, Smardale Gill*

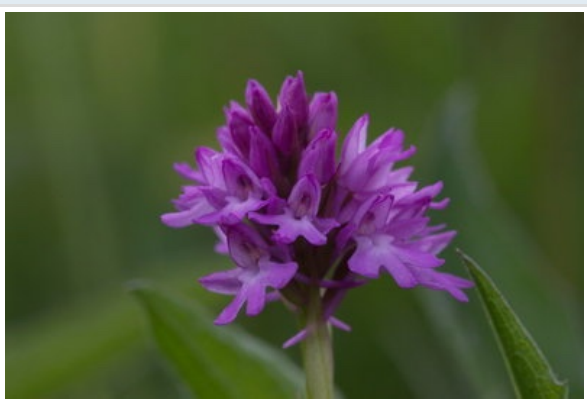




*Pugsley's Marsh Orchid, Dalby Forest*



*Heath Fragrant Orchid, Yatts Farm*



*Pyramidal Orchid, Wharram Quarry*



Common Twayblade, Wharram Quarry

### Re: CallumMac

by ernie f, 18-Jun-19 09:46 AM GMT

Callum

Nice selection of orchids, there.

I am still waiting for the Painted Ladies to get to me.

### Re: CallumMac

by millerd, 18-Jun-19 09:43 PM GMT

Not exactly a deluge of Painted Ladies round here, either! They seem to be more reliable in Yorkshire than here to be honest, and my summer visits to that part of the world always feature the species. Good to see the DGF out too - I've not seen one down here yet. Nice shots. 😊 It also appears that Fen Bog is actually a bog this year after being only slightly squishy this time last year in the heat. I will take care if I get the chance to visit! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-19 10:39 PM GMT

Brilliant shots of the Spotted Fly and the Orchids Callum - what is the difference between Greater and Lesser Butterfly Orchid? 😊 Those DGFs are cracking - so fresh I especially like shot number three 🤩👍😎

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 18-Jun-19 10:49 PM GMT

Thanks chaps! I think Spurn Head probably funnels migrant butterflies into Yorkshire, I've been there during a mass landfall of Large Whites and it's quite a spectacle.

#### Wurzel wrote:

what is the difference between Greater and Lesser Butterfly Orchid? 😊

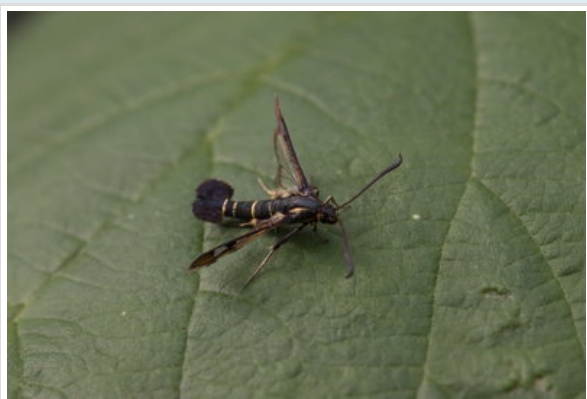
You have to look closely at the flower and find the pollinia (sometimes this takes a bit of searching on a mature plant to find a flower that hasn't yet been visited by a moth!). The way I remember it is that Greater BO has slanting pollinia, whereas Lesser BO has parallel pollinia! Helpfully, when they occur together (as at Yatts Farm) they also hybridise to produce individuals with slightly slanting pollinia... 😊

#### 18/06/2019 - Walmgate Stray, with a difference

My first lunchbreak Stray visit for a few weeks, and little has changed bar the appearance of the first few Meadow Browns. Today, rather than taking my usual meandering route, I strode purposefully to the allotments on the western boundary of the Stray intending to try out the Currant Clearwing lure

that I bought in spring as part of a batch. I wasn't letting my hopes get up, since we are on or near the northern limits for most Clearwing species, but astonishingly the first moth arrived within 60 seconds of unbagging the lure!

A tricky species to photograph since they're generally reluctant to settle, but with a little bit of deceit I got one to settle on a Bramble leaf where it sat for 10 minutes, allowing close inspection from all angles. 😊





**Re: CallumMac**

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-19 11:06 PM GMT

Cheers for the Orchid ID tip – the slantinG and paralleL looks like a god way to remember it – now I've just got to work out what I'm actually looking for ROL/LOL (the emojis seem to have stopped working). Still not seen any of the Clearwings – very distinctive looking moths SMILE.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: CallumMac**

by David M, 20-Jun-19 04:12 PM GMT

Fine, eclectic mix of flora and fauna again, Callum.

That fly orchid close up is stunning, and great that you managed to photograph a clearwing moth – they're tough to find even, let alone capture on camera. 😊

**Re: CallumMac**

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jun-19 07:15 PM GMT

Some more interesting reports recently Callum with a cracking selection of subjects 😊

Cheers,



Neil.

## Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 21-Jun-19 10:24 PM GMT

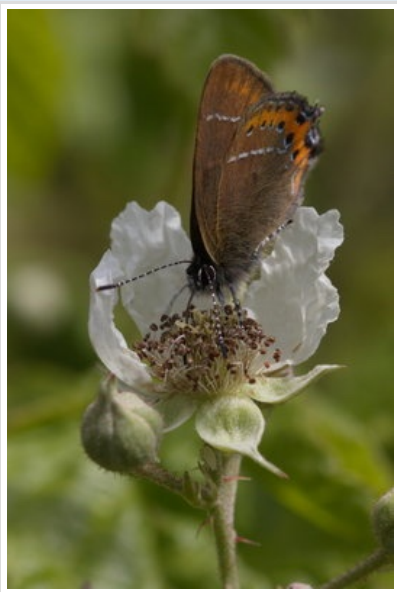
Thanks David and Neil!

Last year I travelled down to Devon and Dorset in the last week of June, under some pretty difficult circumstances, and in spite of those, managed to have some good moments tracking down butterflies I wouldn't usually see up north. So this year I decided to do it properly! Today is the first day of a week's travelling through the southern counties – hopefully the weather will play ball and I'll have lots to share on here...

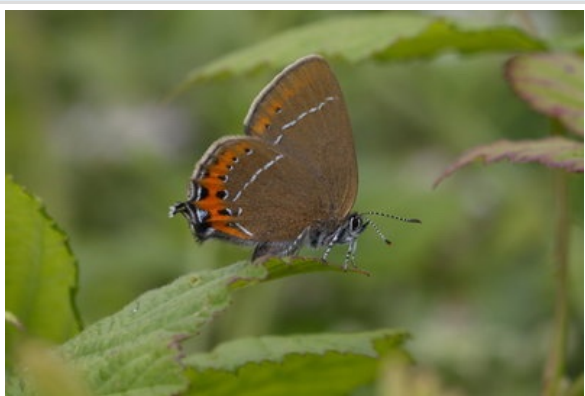
### 21/06/2019 – Glaphorn Cow Pastures, the holiday starts with a bang!

So a key target for this trip is Black Hairstreak, one of the few remaining species I haven't seen. Having wrapped up the week's jobs in double-quick time, I slipped away from work in the early afternoon and drove straight down the A1 to Glaphorn Cow Pastures, arriving in the early evening with patchy cloud occasionally covering the sun.

I walked into the reserve, not really knowing where I was heading, but soon spotted a man with a 105mm lens – always a giveaway! He was standing next to a bramble patch, and sure enough, there was my first Black Hairstreak!



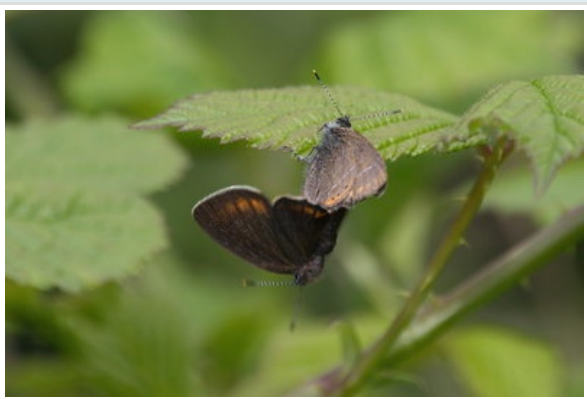
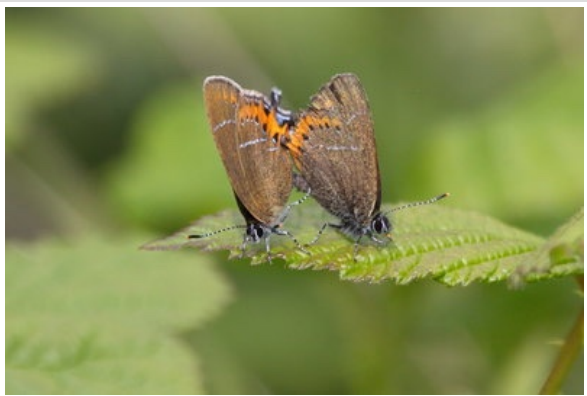
After a little bit I wandered further into the reserve, and in due course came across a much larger area of brambles and dewberry that was literally swarming with Black Hairstreaks in the evening sun! Some were certainly past their best, but others looked still very fresh, especially one female.

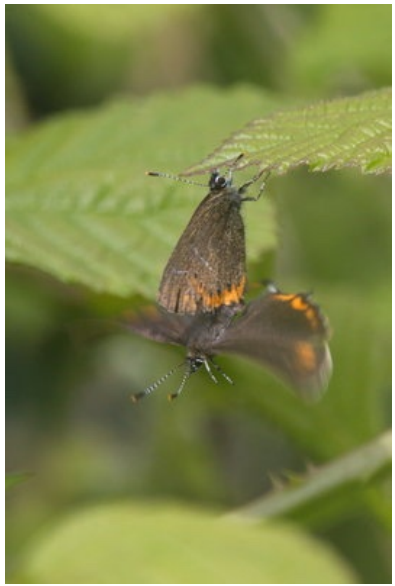


With the temperature as warm as it's been for weeks, I was sweating in my work clothes and had some regrets about having lugged my big lens out from the car. But those dissolved as I spotted something Black Hairstreak-coloured, but roughly twice the size, drop into the brambles about 2m back...



I watched this pair for the best part of half an hour! The larger, fresher individual – the female – seemed very restless and continually dragged her partner from perch to perch. On a couple of occasions she pushed it too far, and only the male's patience, and grip, saved her from a tumble! Interestingly her struggles in these moments gave rare opportunities to get half a glance of the upperside of a hairstreak.





Eventually, with the light fading and my tummy rumbling, I headed back to the car and on to my hotel. A big day planned tomorrow...

**Re: CallumMac**



by Wurzel, 22-Jun-19 08:30 PM GMT

Cricky Callum 🤔 I'd have been happy with just getting a shot of a Blackstreak (still never seen one) so to get a pair in cop AND an ultra rare topside shot :shock:my cup floweth over with 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 22-Jun-19 10:37 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

to get a pair in cop AND an ultra rare topside shot 🤔

I do feel lucky!

22/06/2019 – "in cop" a bit of this!

In theory today was a travel day, with an eventual stopping point in Kent. But I certainly didn't take the direct route!

First port of call was Salcey Forest, and a date with another of the British species I was yet to see. After half an hour wandering the rides without a single butterfly to show for it, the day was warming up and I decided to take advantage of a picnic bench in order to remove the legs of my zip-off trousers. Trousers unzipped and the legs round my ankles... boot laces undone... and in the corner of my eye, a white butterfly-ish shape coalesced at the top of a grass stem! With boot laces flapping everywhere I grabbed my camera and ran over... scaring the butterfly up, and off it flew to the back of a nettle patch. 😊 Only one thing for it, the trouser legs were zipped back up and in I plunged! Fortunately this time the butterfly let me approach, and there was my first ever Wood White!



I found a couple more around the rides before heading back to the car to hit the road south.





In brief, my journey was next punctuated by two stops to see rare orchids – Burnt Orchid (at Knocking Hoe, near Stevenage) and Lizard Orchid (Devil's Dyke, near Newmarket – I told you it was a meandering route!).



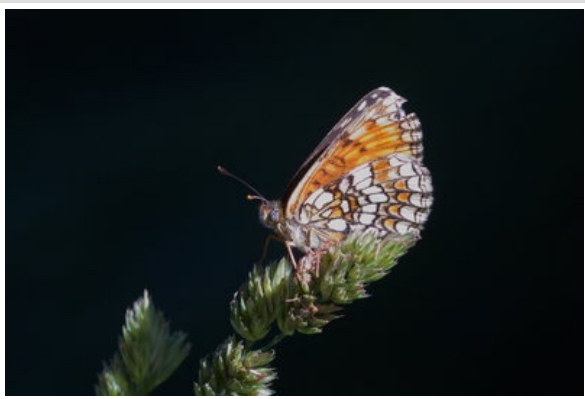


From there, I headed to Leigh-on-Sea in Essex, following some detailed directions from millerd in the hope of finally seeing White-letter Hairstreaks in a setting other than "distantly flapping around the top of a big tree"! It took me a few minutes to get my eye in, but once I had, it was clear that there were dozens of hairstreaks in a fairly small area, alongside Holly Blues, Marbled Whites and others.

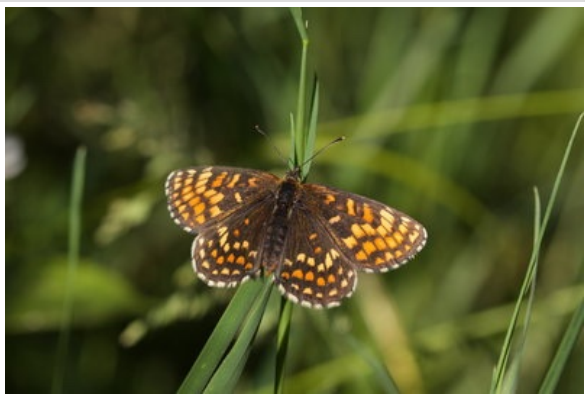
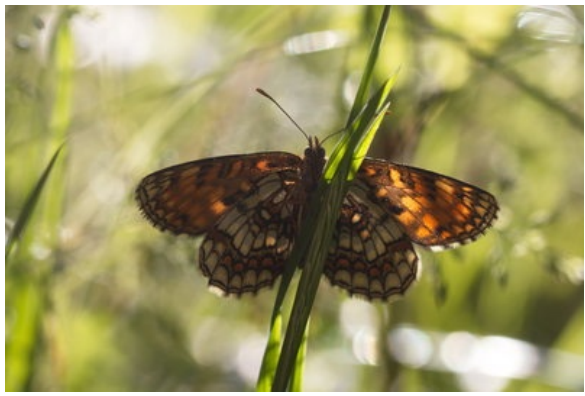




It was past afternoon and well into evening by this point, but with the sun still shining strongly, I decided to try one more stop and drove up the road to Hockley Wood. I was greeted by a jaw-dropping number of Heath Fritillaries – I would guess comfortably into three figures around the rides and scallops of this attractive woodland. Amazing!







A super start to my southern holiday, let's hope I can keep up the pace as the weather gets a bit more tricky!

**Re: CallumMac**

by trevor, 22-Jun-19 11:05 PM GMT

You are clearly starting to get a taste of what the south can offer, Callum.  
If the weather holds you should see what we resident southerners take for granted.  
Although I do need to change places with you as all my remaining ' lifers ' are up north!

Have a great safari,  
Trevor.

**Re: CallumMac**

by Wurzel, 22-Jun-19 11:21 PM GMT

More fantastic stuff Callum – are you going to be able to hang around for the 'silly season' to bag an Emperor? Mind you if not you've still seen and photographed some cracking species 😊👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 23-Jun-19 07:22 AM GMT

**trevor wrote:**

If the weather holds you should see what we resident southerners take for granted.

Thanks Trevor. Fingers crossed! Looking at the forecast, a lot may depend on which species will fly when it's hot but not sunny. My past experience is that one can find Blues in these conditions but not necessarily the other groups. We shall see!

**Wurzel wrote:**

More fantastic stuff Callum – are you going to be able to hang around for the 'silly season' to bag an Emperor?

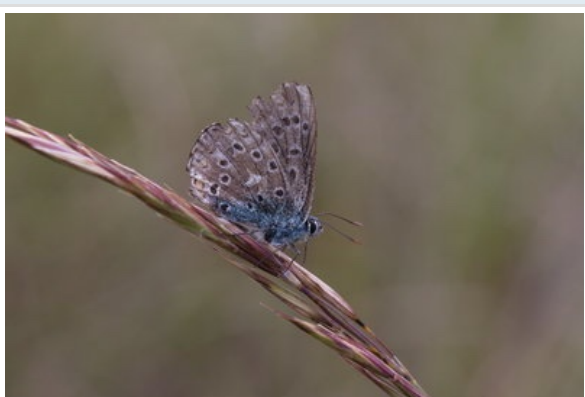
I hope so! I have a couple of options pencilled in to my schedule in case "His Nibs" shows his face – Knepp tomorrow (Monday) and Bentley Wood on Tuesday. But my return northwards is going to be up the western side of the country for Large Blue so the Emperors need to get a shuffle on! To be honest I thought they'd be out and about by now...

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 23-Jun-19 10:28 PM GMT

Into the third day of my holiday and still going strong! The cloudy weather today made looking for butterflies quite hard work, but I still saw loads of Marbled Whites (everywhere I went!) as well as my first Small Blues of the year (Windover Hill) and possibly my first Adonis Blues of the year (Denbies Hillside). Difficult to be certain with such tatty individuals – the wing margins are totally gone – but I have almost convinced myself!





However, given the weather, my main focus today was on orchids, with Musk Orchid (Park Gate Down) and Late Spider Orchid (Wye Downs) being new species for me. Also pleased to find two Man Orchids at Denbies Hillside – the first time since I've started taking an interest in orchids that I've found and identified a rare species when not actively searching for it, so that felt a bit like a milestone!



As I was about to leave Denbies, I had a nice encounter with a foxy lady, who was so busy keeping an eye on dog walkers that she failed to notice me walking up behind her!





**Re: CallumMac**

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

The butterfly fest is continuing Callum, fingers crossed that His Nibbs puts in an appearance. I've Insta-d you the hot spots at Daneways 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 24-Jun-19 05:47 PM GMT

#### CallumMac wrote:

....I headed to Leigh-on-Sea in Essex, following some detailed directions from millerd in the hope of finally seeing White-letter Hairstreaks in a setting other than "distantly flapping around the top of a big tree"!

How I empathise with that, Callum! 😊

Great that you got to see your first Black Hairstreaks, and what a treat to observe a mating pair. Excellent sequence of images.

I will look forward to reading about what followed.

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 24-Jun-19 05:47 PM GMT

#### CallumMac wrote:

....I headed to Leigh-on-Sea in Essex, following some detailed directions from millerd in the hope of finally seeing White-letter Hairstreaks in a setting other than "distantly flapping around the top of a big tree"!

How I empathise with that, Callum! 😊

Great that you got to see your first Black Hairstreaks, and what a treat to observe a mating pair. Excellent sequence of images.

I will look forward to reading about what followed.

### Re: CallumMac

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

Well you're having a fantastic time down here visiting lots of familiar sounding sites. I do have to leave a few 🍷🍷🍷 on account of your mating WLH at my regular spot. 4 years visiting that site and yet to stumble across a mating pair and you do it on your first 🍷🍷 😊

### Re: CallumMac

by ernie f, 25-Jun-19 07:39 PM GMT

Callum - I'm simply gobsmacked. Black Hairstreaks and WL Hairstreaks in-cop and your orchid haul, not to mention all the other stuff such as Wood Whites and Heath Frits. Amazing.

You deserve a lifetime achievement award.

### Re: CallumMac

by millerd, 25-Jun-19 08:11 PM GMT

You are having an amazing tour, Callum - like Bugboy I have yet to see a mating pair of WLH despite the numbers that site offers. Definitely worth a 🍷 or two. Hockley is excelling this year with Heath Fritillaries too - three figures is no exaggeration.

Best of luck with the rest of your trip (I hope Emperors feature somewhere... 😊) - incidentally Large Blues at Collard Hill were very easy at the weekend, and there will definitely be more to come if you intend to pop in there as well as at Daneway.

Cheers,

Dave

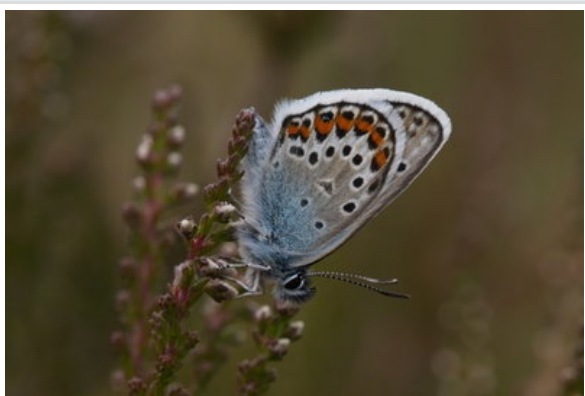
### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 25-Jun-19 11:42 PM GMT

Thank you all so much for your kind words! This holiday is really becoming the gift that keeps on giving. On which subject...

#### 25/06/2019 - Dorset coast

Most of today was spent at the RSPB reserve at Arne. Last year I visited only the Shipstal end of the reserve, and despite having a nice enough time, only saw one solitary Silver-studded Blue, reaching the conclusion that this reserve was pretty over-rated as a site to find this species. Today I visited the Coombe Heath end of the reserve and quickly realised my mistake! SSBs comfortably in three figures. The cloudy weather meant I was able to get that underwing shot of a fresh individual that my gallery desperately needed! 😊



Other highlights from Arne included a Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth in the cafe garden, and my first ever Dartford Warbler.



I made sure to leave Arne early enough to permit a quick visit to Lulworth Cove. I paced up Hambury Tout and near the summit found the first Lulworth Skippers. Always a pleasure to see these little charmers!



### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-19 02:05 PM GMT

Brilliant stuff again Callum 😊 Those Silver-studs are cracking and the Lulworths ace 🤝🌿 I used to visit Arne loads when I was a nipper and even then Shipstal was thought of as the place to send the Grockles/day-trippers while all the locals visited the other parts 😊 looks like you're now an honorary Dorsetian 😊 Greatly looking forward to the next installment 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: CallumMac**

by David M, 28-Jun-19 06:57 PM GMT

Nice pair of Lulworths there, Callum, but the image of the Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth is impeccable. I doubt that can be bettered. 🇬🇧

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 28-Jun-19 09:16 PM GMT

**Wurzel wrote:**

looks like you're now an honorary Dorsetian 😊

Cheers both. Well I have family in Dorset so I'm sure I could apply for citizenship! 😊 Glad the Lulworths stand out as I paid a heavy price for them – spending the next hour clearing ticks out of my boots!

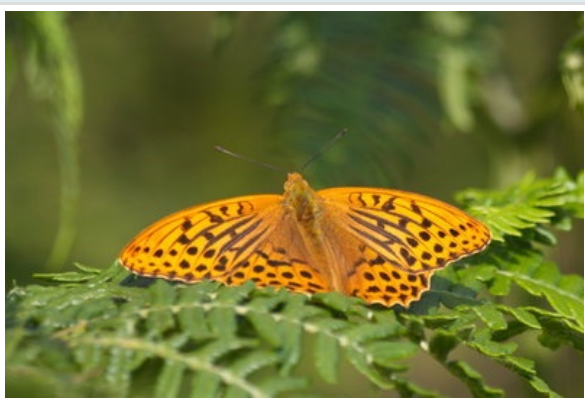
**27/06/2019 – Alners Gorse and Collard Hill**

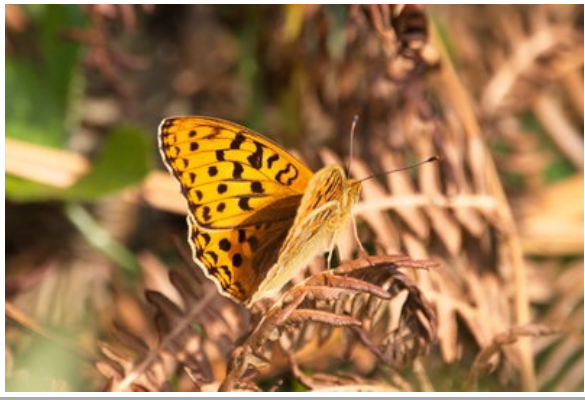
The combination of strong sun and strong wind didn't make for great butterfly-watching. I added White Admiral, Silver-washed Frit, Purple Hairstreak and Large Blue to my 'year-list' (if I actually kept one...!) but the only photos I have to show for it are of the first two – and the White Admiral was hiding at that!



28/06/2019 - Dartmoor

Up early this morning, hoping to beat the Fritillaries to Aish Tor. It definitely worked. The first one I managed to stalk turned out to be a Silver-washed, but after that I had amazing up-close encounters with a couple of High Browns. Wonderful!





Today was more about spending time with my step-grandma than seeking butterflies. She took me on a walk to the amazing ancient and twisted Wistman's Wood.



On the walk back, I spotted a late-staying Green Hairstreak flitting between the gorse and Tormentil. My gran – a very talented artist – was amazed by the colour ("it's malachite green! On a butterfly!") and promised to paint one from my photos.



Driving back to the YHA across the moors in the evening sunshine, I stopped to sit awhile with a group of Dartmoor Ponies and their frisky foals and reflect on my holiday so far. It's been a wonderful, relaxing (despite the high pace) trip. Hopefully I can round it off this weekend with a few more delights on the road northwards!





**Re: CallumMac**

by Allan.W., 28-Jun-19 09:55 PM GMT

Well Done with the High Browns Callumac ,we,re visiting Aish Tor ourselves week after next .....hope they,re still Around ! Regards Allan.W.

**Re: CallumMac**

by trevor, 29-Jun-19 05:51 AM GMT

Your Grand Tour seems to be going well, Callum.  
And clocking up some scarce species as well.  
Envious of your High Brown Fritillary, great work.

Trevor.

**Re: CallumMac**

by kevling, 29-Jun-19 08:03 PM GMT

Great photos from Dartmoor Callum. Those high brown's are delightful. Just as incredible are the number of Green Hairstreak sightings still being made as we knock on July's door. Nice find.

Regards  
Kev

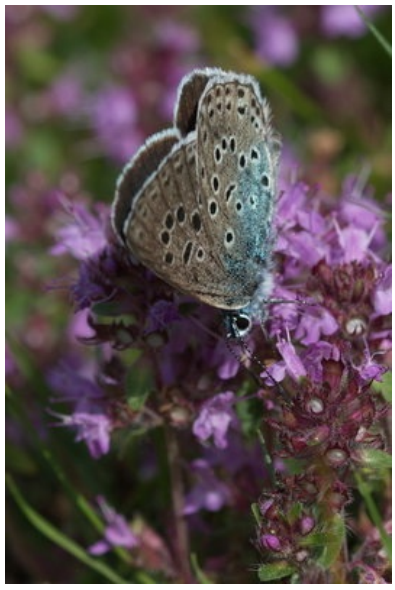
**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 29-Jun-19 10:20 PM GMT

Thanks all! It was great to see those High Browns so clearly – last year I arrived on site at 8am and they were already fully zoomy!

**29/06/2019 – Green Down and Kenfig**

Today I started meandering my way back north, beginning with a return to the Poldens and a second crack at the Large Blues. They were already fully charged by the time I arrived, though, and I only managed to grab a few shots of closed-winged, egg-laying females...



I then headed west and into David M's territory. To my surprise it had clouded over by the time I arrived at my destination and was now quite cool. However, this didn't matter as my targets here were both orchid species I'd not seen before – Fen Orchid and Marsh Helleborine. After a little searching, and some help from locals, I was successful!



## Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-19 10:52 PM GMT

More fantastic stuff Callum, I need to know the name of your Tour Operator 😊😄👍 Cracking shot of the HBF and great late Greenstreaks which one is your step-nan going to paint? 😊 I'm left trying to work out what's next on the tour of the final homeward stretch? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: CallumMac

by David M, 30-Jun-19 01:17 PM GMT

Wow. You're really showcasing Britain's 'rarest' lately, Callum. I keep getting an ever more pleasant surprise as I scroll down.

What next have you got in store for us?

## Re: CallumMac

by Neil Freeman, 30-Jun-19 06:09 PM GMT

### trevor wrote:

...Envious of your Dark Brown Fritillary, great work...

Aha! do we have a hybrid 😊😄

Seriously though, great reports of 'Callum on tour', I have really enjoyed catching up with your travels.

Cheers,

Neil

## Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 30-Jun-19 09:55 PM GMT

### Wurzel wrote:

I need to know the name of your Tour Operator

Well, I'm weighing up between "CallumTrek" or "GreenMacs"... 😊 Rates are reasonable but you need to be able to walk 10+ miles per day without complaining!

### David M wrote:

What next have you got in store for us?

### Neil Freeman wrote:

great reports of 'Callum on tour'

### Wurzel wrote:

I'm left trying to work out what's next on the tour of the final homeward stretch? 😊

Thanks all for your kind comments. I'm afraid this is now the final installment of 'Callum on tour'!

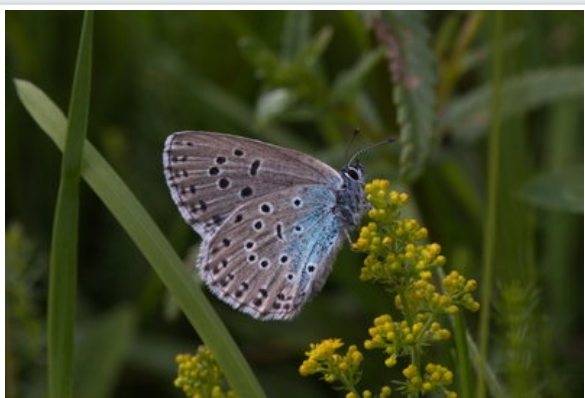
### 30/06/2019 – homeward bound

I had picked out three stops that could be made without major diversion from the best route between the Wye Valley and East Yorkshire. With some patchy cloud forecast I decided another early start was in order, and I found myself walking through the gate into Daneway Banks at 8am, an hour usually known only to birders! Although I'd already seen Large Blues (both this week and last year) I had still not managed to get that perfect photo of the upperside, so I thought I'd have one more go...

Walking through the reserve, there were a few Marbled Whites on the wing but not a huge amount else. I thought that was promising – my aim being to be in place before the first Large Blues started to wake! I headed to the top meadow, adjacent to the dew pond, which was where I'd seen the freshest individuals last year at a similar time of the flight season. I then set about walking slow laps of the meadow, and midway through the second lap, the first Large Blue appeared! Watching carefully, I managed to spot where it landed and sneak up for some pictures – a perfect, almost pristine male!

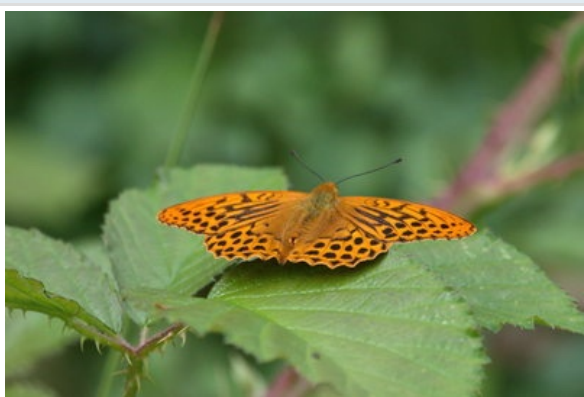
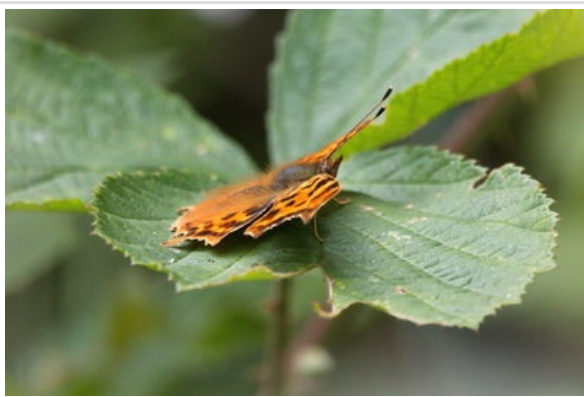


I spent another hour or so wandering the reserve, seeing plenty more Large Blues and managing to photograph some of them – including the pretty unusual sight of a Large Blue perched at eye-level in a hawthorn!



Time was already ticking on, and by 9.30 the Large Blues had switched into full zoomy mode, so I hit the road onwards to reach my next stop in time for lunch! Since I had already headed westwards by the time the Purple Emperors finally showed up at Knepp, this was the only big target for the week that I'd missed out on – so a visit to Fermyn Woods seemed worth a punt! I wandered the rides for about an hour and chatted to a few other butterflyers, but it was clear my luck was not in. No matter, there were plenty of other nice butterflies around, and you can't see them all every year!





Again, with little prospect of an Emperor suddenly appearing, I decided to press on to maximise time at my final stop of the day. I turned off the M18 south of the Humber and headed to the car-park of Crowle Moors, a Lincs Wildlife Trust reserve and one of three reserves that collectively form the Humberhead Peatlands NNR. I walked through the reserve, eventually going over the bridge and through the gate that meant I was now in the adjacent Thorne Moors section (and, more importantly, back in Yorkshire!). Here, a grassy, flower-rich ride cuts through between an open bog on one site and a birch carr on the other. With this golden combination of lots of nectar surrounded by lots of Large Heath habitat, I was not disappointed!



Amongst several typical individuals, this very dark one stood out to me. Both the body hairs and the wing colour were distinctly closer to black than the ashy grey of its compatriots.



And that concludes my trip diary! Back to work for a rest tomorrow, and then normal service will probably resume with a Walmgate Stray update... 😊

### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 30-Jun-19 10:49 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Callum 😊 I had a sneaky suspicion about Large Heaths featuring in your return journey 🤔🇬🇧 What is that Large Blue doing – I think it's a little confused and it thinks it's a Holly Blue 🤔😬 Great topside Large Blue shot – Daneways is a cracking reserve 😊😬

Just in case for when CallumTrek/GreenMacs is up and running...I can easily do 10 miles a day without complaining 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 02-Jul-19 07:34 AM GMT

I'm breathless just reading about all that, Callum!

So glad you got your Fen Orchid. It's a long way to travel to come away empty handed. They're also not easy to find so a bit of local knowledge comes in very handy!

## Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 09-Jul-19 06:41 PM GMT

A belated thanks, David and Wurzel... to be honest I was pretty breathless at times during it (especially on Green Down in 25C blazing sunshine!).

### 06/07/2019 - Bishop Middleham Quarry

After all of 5 days back in Yorkshire, on Saturday I headed up the A1 and across the border into Co Durham. I'd not visited BMQ before but had heard great things! As it turned out, several hours spent here didn't feel like enough to fully explore all the hidden corners of the quarry. Nevertheless, I saw lots of both of my targets for the day: Northern Brown Argus, and Dark Red Helleborine.









### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-19 10:41 PM GMT

Cracking shots Callum of two species that I've never seen 🍷 Is this NBA the 'Castle Eden Argus' I've lost track of the nomenclature 😊?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by Goldie M, 09-Jul-19 11:18 PM GMT

Catching up on your posts Callum, your seeing and photographing some fantastic Butterflies 🍷 I missed the Northern Brown this year so it was good to see a shot of it 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 10-Jul-19 06:54 AM GMT

Looks like a nice spot, Callum, and a bit easier for you to get to than the others you've visited lately.

Nice NBA and I'm glad you found the helleborine.

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 10-Jul-19 07:40 AM GMT

Thank you all!

#### David M wrote:

a bit easier for you to get to than the others you've visited lately

I must admit it was nice to be able to do a site visit as a day trip and still have time to run errands on the way home...!

#### Goldie M wrote:

I missed the Northern Brown this year so it was good to see a shot of it

Sorry you've missed them this year Goldie but at least my photos have given you a flavour! There were some very fresh individuals at the weekend so maybe there's still a chance for the next fortnight or so?

#### Wurzel wrote:

Is this NBA the 'Castle Eden Argus'?

Yep the Castle Eden or Durham Argus (*salmacis*). For the time being at least, until *A. agestis* arrives and pushes the 'official' range of this species even further north... I still reckon there's a population or two of "mainly NBA" hybrids clinging on in the Wolds 😊

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 26-Jul-19 05:21 PM GMT

A bit of a catch-up post! The combination of unsettled weather at weekends and nice weather during the week has meant my butterfly-watching has been a little broken over the last fortnight, but here are a few highlights:

A visit to North Cave Wetlands the weekend before last produced an assortment of the usual species. Amongst them was this interesting Gatekeeper – I

think this is probably an example of ab. excessa.



A brief field trip to Speyside that Monday coincided with some glorious sunshine and the butterfly highlight was a Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, but my camera was too deep in my rucksack and the butterfly was gone before I got it out! However, the trip did give me the opportunity to track down a couple of interesting northern orchid specialities on the journey home.

Creeping Lady's-tresses, a species of wonderful Caledonian pine forests.



Tyne Helleborine, a subspecies of Dune Helleborine that has adapted to polluted ex-coalmining locations on Tyneside.



The weather last weekend was much less amenable to finding butterflies, but a visit to the Humberhead Levels (where the Large Heaths appear to be done for the year) led to this wonderful Barn Owl encounter.



During this week's heatwave, I've made a concerted effort to make the most of the evenings. Silver-washed Fritillaries have arrived in Yorkshire within the last couple of years, and on Tuesday, I tracked down one of the new colonies, in Bishop Wood near Selby. Unexpectedly, I also found my first Broad-leaved Helleborines here.





My other main target of the week has been to find a local site where Purple Hairstreaks can be viewed at eye-level (a la Alners Gorse). So far, the closest thing has been Calley Heath, which yielded these slightly dodgy record shots. Calley is certainly promising in this regard, but more sites to try next week as well!





## Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-19 07:52 PM GMT

Great set of shots Callum 😊 yep that Hedgie looks good for an excessa 🤪 Love the Barn Owl shots 🤗🌱🌱

Have a goodun

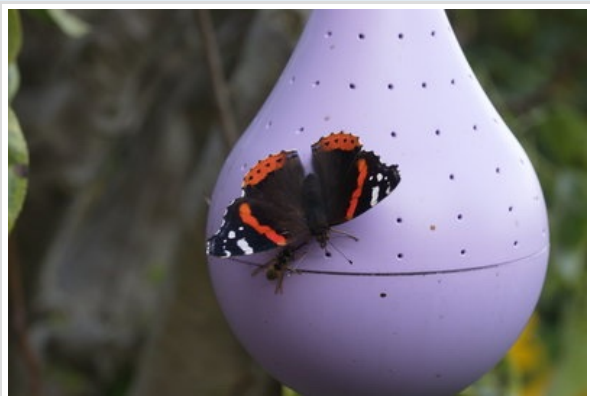
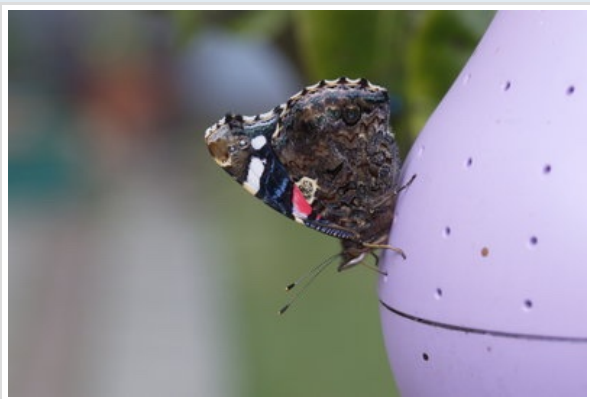
Wurzel

## Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 30-Jul-19 07:00 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel!

The weekend weather was no good at all for butterflies up here. But I had a very pleasant surprise on Monday evening as I did the dishes at the kitchen window. My partner bought me a "Belightful butterfly feeder" a few months back. I will admit to feeling pretty sceptical but it's the thought that counts! Nonetheless, I loaded it with sugar solution and hung it from the pear tree in the garden. Since then it's been visited by an assortment of flies and wasps - which at least demonstrates that the sugar solution is smelly enough to attract insects. But last night, I glanced up from the washing-up bowl to see a rather more exciting visitor!



**Re: CallumMac**

by Goldie M, 31-Jul-19 03:03 PM GMT

Hi! Callum, I've never seen those feeder's before, i must look out them, your's certainly paid off 😊 Goldie 😊

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 31-Jul-19 04:50 PM GMT

**Goldie M wrote:**

Hi! Callum, I've never seen those feeder's before, i must look out them, your's certainly paid off 😊 Goldie 😊

It did indeed. I am still at a career stage where I have to rent, and am moving around fairly regularly, so I'm limited as to how much I can control what flowers are in my garden at any time. In my current garden I have a buddleia ("rescued" from elsewhere) which should flower for the first time this autumn, and a nice patch of bird's-foot trefoil grown from seed and now at the same stage, but this feeder is a nice, immediate solution which I can take with me next time I move.

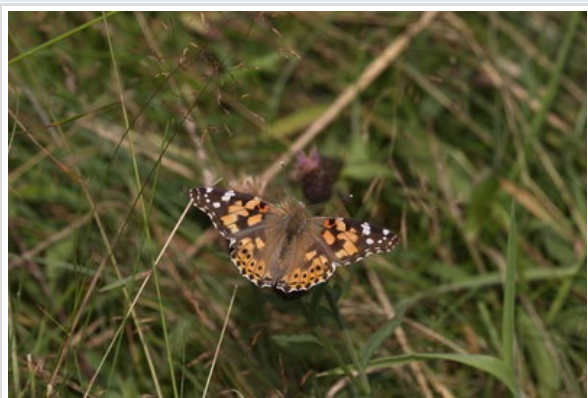
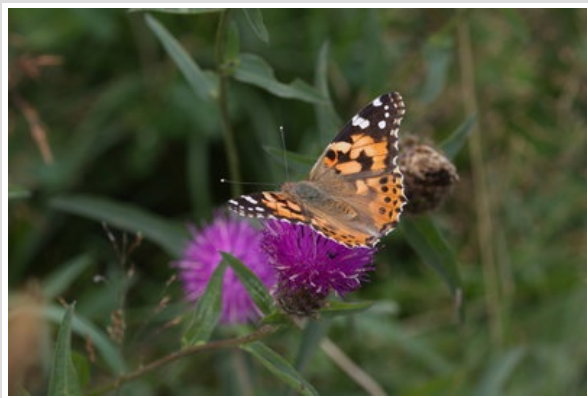
I think she bought it from NHBS.com...

**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 01-Aug-19 08:57 PM GMT

**1/8/2019 - Walmgate Stray/Calley Heath**

I popped out onto the Stray during my lunchbreak hoping to find myself some Painted Ladies. Numbers were somewhat lower than expected (given the scale of the eruption along the coast, a mere 30 miles east) but there were a few around, accompanied by Commas, Peacocks and Small Torts amongst others.

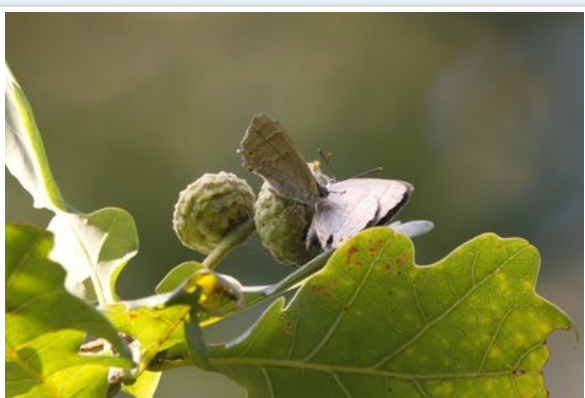




After work, I stopped in again at Calley Heath. I've been looking for a site where I can see Purple Hairstreaks low down near to home, and I'm increasingly convinced that this is it. Tonight I got my best shots yet (but still plenty of room for improvement), including open-winged images of both sexes.



The PHs here seem to be totally obsessed with a particular type of gall on the oak trees, seemingly feeding from something on them, and at times literally trampled over each other for prime position!



Also of note, a Red Admiral at Calley Heath meant that this was the first time I can ever recall seeing all five of the British vanessids on the same day.

**Re: CallumMac**

by millerd, 01-Aug-19 09:48 PM GMT

Nice shots of those Purple Hairstreaks, Callum! 😊👍 The trick now will be to find them at the start of the season when they are fresh, and with a further bit of luck down on the bracken and brambles at a decent photographable height – something I have routinely failed to do anywhere this year! I think the thing those two are fighting over is just an immature acorn, though you do sometimes see a knobby gall develop on these which prevents the nut from forming. I think they must exude something that the butterflies really like as they certainly squabble over them.

There are a fair number of oaks at Calley Heath with branches down to head height and lower on the sunny side of the trees. It will be worth checking next year's leaf buds for eggs any time from now on – I had a cursory look at a few on Monday, but didn't find anything, though I had the feeling the female I saw was checking out suitable sites.

Cheers,

Dave

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 05-Aug-19 03:50 PM GMT

Good find with the Purple Hairstreaks, Callum. I really must try to find a place near to where I live where I can reliably see them.

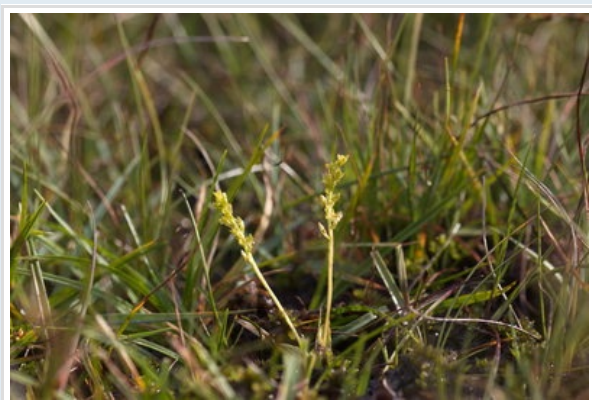
### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 07-Aug-19 10:28 PM GMT

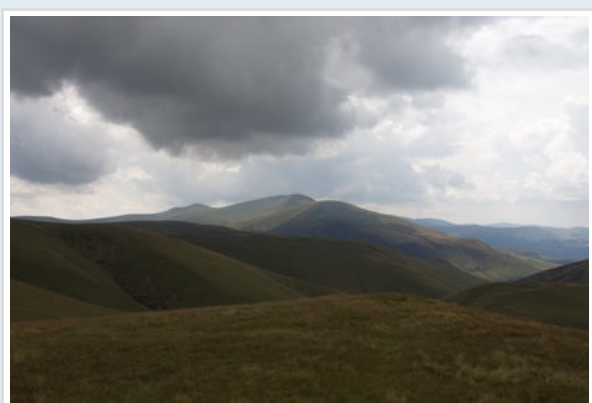
Thanks Dave and David. I suspect those were the last of 2019 for me – I haven't made it back down and won't again until next Weds at the earliest.

#### 03/08/2019 – Uldale Fells

A visit to my parents in the Lakes this weekend was tactically planned – it's a good time of year to visit Cumbria! On Saturday I set myself the challenge of proving that there are Bog Orchids growing within walking distance of their house. The first part of the challenge – finding the orchids in question – was made simple by a bang-on grid reference and some helpful marker twigs.



The second part – walking back to their house – was an 18km hike that passed over the highest summit of the Uldale Fells (the group sitting north-east of Skiddaw)!

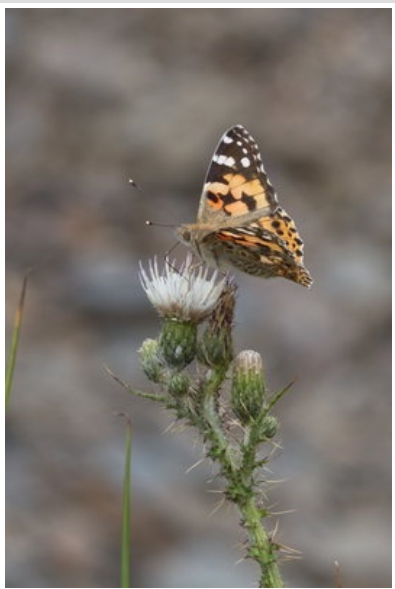


The hills themselves were swarming with butterflies – mainly Painted Ladies, Peacocks and Small Heaths, with a few whites and Small Tortoiseshells for good measure.



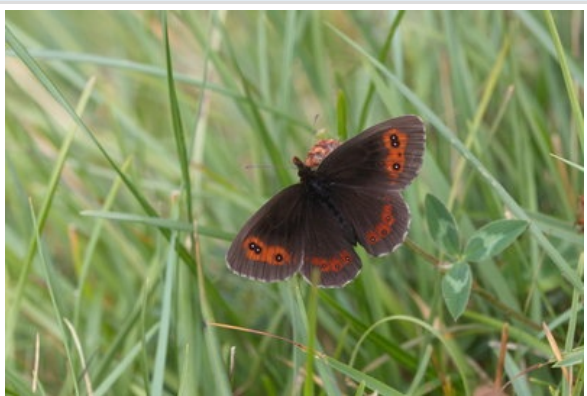


A particular highlight was the ford over Burntod Gill, just below Trusmadoor – about 13km in, and with only downhill left to go! Marsh Thistles lined both sides of the stream here and were a honeypot for the butterflies. I stripped off my boots and socks and did a 15-minute butterfly count whilst stood ankle-deep in the cool water!



**04/08/2019 – Smardale Gill**

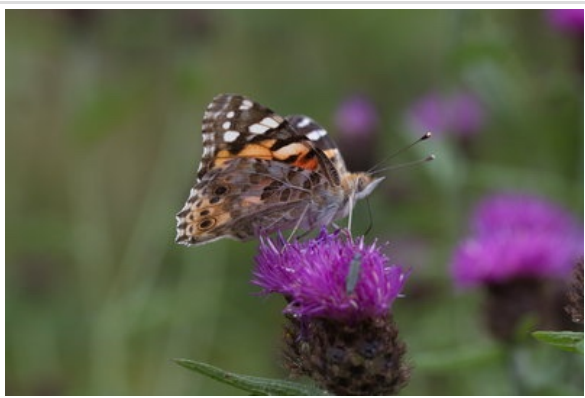
On Sunday morning, I said my goodbyes and headed back towards Yorkshire, but only as far as Smardale Gill. Obviously the target was Scotch Argus, and it was fabulous to see that this population is still thriving (given the concern expressed last year about the colony at Arnside). Numbers must have been well into triple figures, and at least one pair were ensuring there will be numbers next year, too!



To my surprise, there was also a single Northern Brown Argus still clinging on, though looking much worse for wear.



Just like Saturday, the most abundant species by some distance was Peacock, and there were lots of Painted Ladies amongst them, as well as a single, very fresh, Comma.



Every time I've visited this reserve I've seen Red Squirrels, and this was no exception.



Finally, it was interesting to see this wasp totally smashed on the intoxicating nectar of a Broad-leaved Helleborine!



From the far north last weekend, to the far south this weekend: look out for me if you are in the Surrey Hills (especially Denbies) on Saturday!

### Re: CallumMac

by bugboy, 08-Aug-19 07:21 PM GMT

Great shots Callum. I kept a sharp eye out for Red Squirrels last year up there but didn't see any, hopefully next time 😊.

Not sure about going to Denbies this Saturday, it's a rather breezy place on even the calmest of days but we have weather warnings down here due to high winds on Friday and Saturday... 😊. Sunday looks the better option at the moment

### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-19 08:25 PM GMT

Fantastic shots of the Scotch Argus Callum – that's one of the species on my 'wish list', I haven't come up with a good enough excuse/reason for making the journey for it yet 🙄🙄, I'm still working on it though 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by bugboy, 08-Aug-19 08:37 PM GMT

#### Wurzel wrote:

Fantastic shots of the Scotch Argus Callum – that's one of the species on my 'wish list', I haven't come up with a good enough excuse/reason for making the journey for it yet 🙄🙄, I'm still working on it though 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

"To see a Scotch Argus" should be reason enough for any reasonable person 😊

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 09-Aug-19 09:48 AM GMT



**bugboy wrote:**

**Wurzel wrote:**

Fantastic shots of the Scotch Argus Callum – that's one of the species on my 'wish list', I haven't come up with a good enough excuse/reason for making the journey for it yet 🤔🤔, I'm still working on it though 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

"To see a Scotch Argus" should be reason enough for any reasonable person 😊

I would second that – though actually, I think to get the full mind-blowingness, one should head a little further for the first experience of a Scotchie, and go to the Oban area. Shian Wood is highly recommended. Smardale is great but you don't get that full sense of seeing a species like no other, in a habitat like no other. Plus, it's not called an English Argus!! 😊😊

**bugboy wrote:**

Not sure about going to Denbies this Saturday, it's a rather breezy place on even the calmest of days but we have weather warnings down here due to high winds on Friday and Saturday... 😊. Sunday looks the better option at the moment

Thanks bugboy, I hadn't really considered the wind. I don't have much choice but to end up at Denbies since I'm staying at the Tanners Hatch hostel on Saturday and Sunday nights, but if the wind proves to be a problem on Sat then I may head to somewhere more sheltered during the day – perhaps Brockham Limeworks for the SSSk. Are there any sheltered corners on Box Hill, or anywhere else in the area for that matter?

**Re: CallumMac**

by millerd, 09-Aug-19 10:35 AM GMT

Great Scotch Argus at Smardale, Callum. 😊 I wish I'd seen your report before I set out yesterday as I might have made more effort to leave them at Arnside with enough time to fit Smardale in as well – the incentive of Red Squirrels would have tipped the balance for sure. 😊

As Bugboy says, the forecast for Saturday is for 40–50 mph southwesterly gusts in the southeast of England, though it will be reasonably sunny and quite warm. Sunday looks a bit calmer. I can't think of anywhere in the Denbies/Box Hill area that would afford decent shelter from this sort of wind – possibly the Zig-Zag slopes at the latter may do so a bit, and there are certainly Silver-spots in this area.

Best of luck!

Cheers,

Dave

**Re: CallumMac**

by bugboy, 09-Aug-19 09:07 PM GMT

Although I've never actually been there (silly since I'm a frequent visitor to the general area), Brockham Limeworks looks to be your best bet for shelter from the wind, although that's a relative thing when taking into consideration the winds speeds predicted. I'll probably sit tomorrow out but I may well be found hunting Brown Hairstreaks at Bookham on Sunday. A Bookham & Box Hill/Denbies day gives a good range of species. Alternatively there's always Chiddingfold for second brood Wood White (there should still be a few about) as long as you don't mind being surrounded by large trees in full leaf being blown around in gale force winds 😊

**Re: CallumMac**

by David M, 10-Aug-19 12:10 PM GMT

Good to read your Smardale Gill report, Callum. It's a few years since I went there but it is an acutely beautiful site, and as you say Scotch Argus are around there in serious numbers.

**Re: CallumMac**

by PhilBJohnson, 17-Aug-19 06:59 AM GMT

During this week's heatwave, I've made a concerted effort to make the most of the evenings. Silver-washed Fritillaries have arrived in Yorkshire within the last couple of years, and on Tuesday, I tracked down one of the new colonies, in Bishop Wood near Selby. –Reference 26th July

**August 17th 2019**

"This species appears in Sweden, further North than the Shetland Islands, so one might assume, that all it lacks further North in England or Scotland, is suitable "woodland violet habitat".

Interesting that, on BBC Look North recently, Yorkshire Water had a plan to plant more trees, to prevent hillside erosion, something that was feared after heavier "climate change rain".

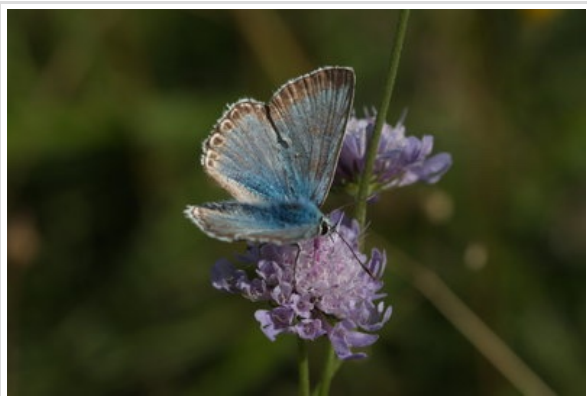
**Re: CallumMac**

by CallumMac, 17-Aug-19 12:17 PM GMT

Thanks to those who gave me tips on southern sites. Time for a trip report! I am going to call it "*False Alarm*"...

**Friday 9th – Barnack Hills and Holes**

This site is so close to the A1 that it makes a great stop on any journey south. On this occasion it also happened to be sunny, so I thought there was a decent chance of Chalkhill Blue. Of course, I hadn't reckoned on the wind! But I managed to find a few flying in a slightly sheltered hole.



**Saturday 10th a.m. – Aston Rowant**

Over the course of Saturday I needed to relocate from the northern edge of London to the southern edge. Having spent some time on Friday night inspecting the topology of a range of sites that were within striking distance of the M25 – on either side – in the hope of finding some relief from that wind, I made my way first to Aston Rowant.

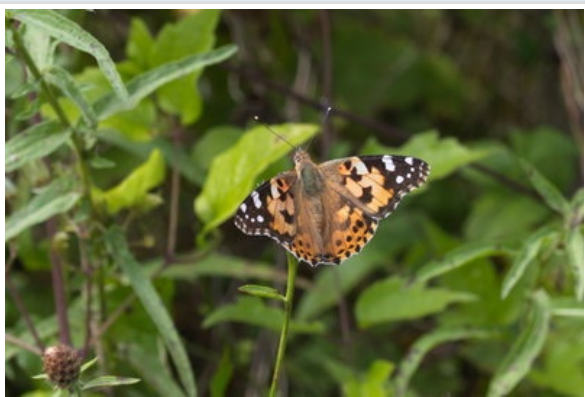
There was indeed some shelter from the wind, and I was able to track down one of my target species in the woodland on the summit of Beacon Hill – Violet Helleborine.



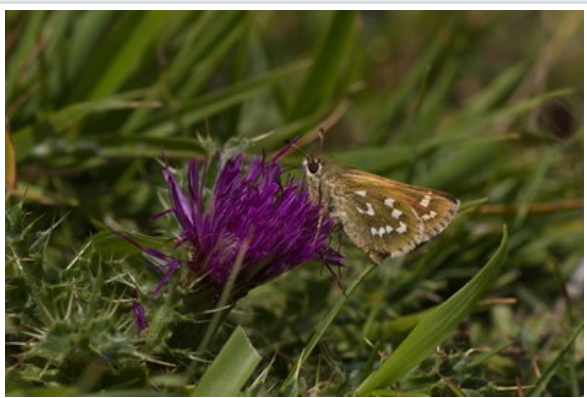
However, sod's law dictated that having found shelter from the wind, I would see no sun! So I decided to move on southwards to some more orchid sites. But as I reached the Dorking area, the clouds broke open and the sun appeared. A hasty reprogramming of the sat nav and I was on my way to...

#### **Saturday 10th p.m. – Brockham Limeworks**

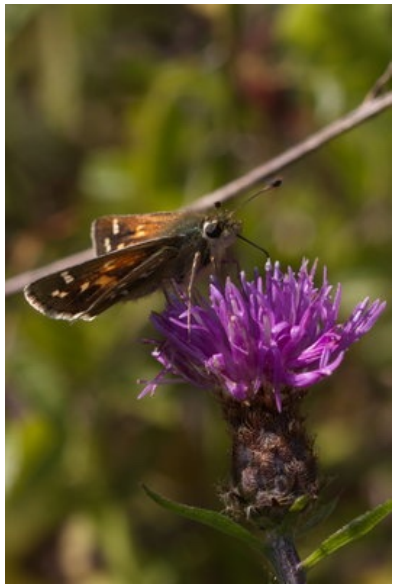
As I had expected, this site offered a little shelter from the wind – though not complete, as the gusts swirled down off the quarry face. The first thing I saw was some very fresh Painted Ladies, which surely must have been locals!



My main target for this site was not hard to find, with dozens of Silver-spotted Skipper to be found all over the site. As usual they were quite unapproachable, but over the course of an hour or two I was able to get close enough to a few for some nice shots.







As evening approached, I took a brief detour up on to Box Hill and managed to locate three more spikes of Violet Helleborine growing on the road verge near the main car park.



Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 17-Aug-19 12:38 PM GMT

**Sunday 11th - Surrey**

On Sunday morning I started out on **Denbies Hillside**. Many more Chalkhill Blues here, including a couple that were still quite fresh. Silver-spotted Skippers were also abundant but much less so, and harder still to approach, than at Brockham. An amazing show of Clustered Bellflowers and a few fresh Brown Arguses completed the picture.

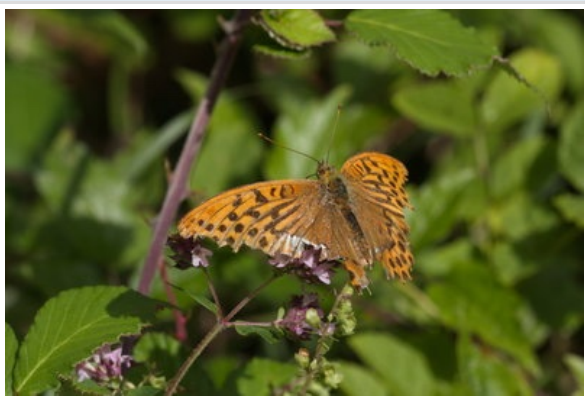




With limited time available in the day, I decided to move on and make my first pass at the real target for this trip. According I found myself walking out onto **Bookham Common**, and the false alarms began! Gatekeepers, Speckled Woods, Small Heaths, Meadow Browns, all managed to look (from the corner of an eye) a little bit Brown-Hairstreaky. I spent a nice hour wandering the alleys between the blackthorns here but nothing turned into an actual Brostreak, so I decided to move on, stopping to take a couple of pictures of dragonflies.



A brief visit to **Sheepleas** was next, where I hoped that there might be a late-stragglng Narrow-lipped Helleborine, but no such luck – all plants were in seed. However, more nice Painted Ladies and the first Small Copper of the trip were some compensation. And as I walked back to the car, a very strangely-shaped butterfly morphed into a very battered Silver-washed Fritillary!



Sunday afternoon was written off to a reunion with old friends from university, and Monday morning to a meeting with a potential collaborator. On Monday afternoon I headed west towards Salisbury, where I needed to collect a temperature logger from the Kitts Grave section of **Martin Down** NNR. I am always excited to revisit this site, the location two summers ago of my first ever *valezina*! On this occasion there were loads of SWF but nothing more special than that... However, a few Red Admirals and very fresh Brimstones were nice to see.





Into the second part of the afternoon and I decided I had time to make my second attempt at the Brostreaks, heading up to **Shipton Bellinger**. Here there were some slightly different flavours of false alarm, with lots of Holly Blues flitting hairstreakily around the tree-tops...



...and, to my surprise, a couple of very smart Wall Browns! These were, for a moment, the most convincing of the false alarms so far, just because it was a species I hadn't expected to see.



A good couple of hours were spent scanning the various hedgerows here, at the site where last year I saw my first ever Brostreak perching high up. But, other than a single rapid fly-past, it was to no avail. Somewhat discouraged, I headed on to my night's accommodation. Would my longstanding quest to see a Brostreak nectaring low down be forced on into its fourth year? To be continued...

### Re: CallumMac

by bugboy, 17-Aug-19 12:55 PM GMT

If it's any cancellation, the BH at Bookham are playing hard to get, i was there on the 11th too and only managed a flyby (my first sighting of there year) and that was thanks to Millerds sharp eyes!

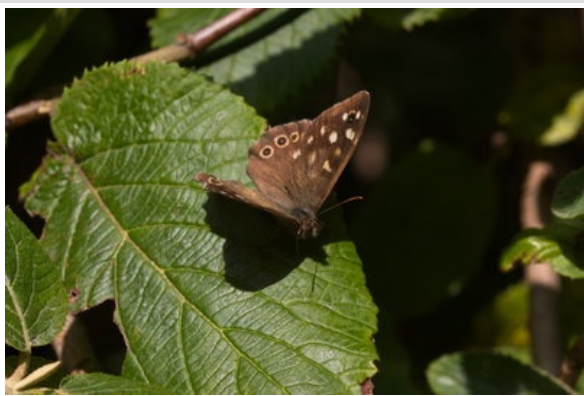
### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 17-Aug-19 01:04 PM GMT

On Tuesday I had a very basic plan with lots of flexibility: I needed to pick up one more temperature logger, from a site on the Welsh border, and make it home to Yorkshire in time for bed. So I spent Monday evening flicking between Twitter and Google maps, trying to figure out my best options for one final go at the Brown Hairstreaks. Another try at Shipton Bellinger was one option, but there was barely a single recent sighting from there on Twitter, and I was not feeling encouraged by the previous evening's failure – it didn't seem like there was much nectar left in the field to tempt them down. Alners Gorse had a few sightings but would be an enormous detour. Otmoor seemed to be the most regular site this year, and surprisingly I realised that a visit there would only add half an hour to my journey. The plan was set!

#### Tuesday 13th – RSPB Otmoor

I arrived early, just after 9am, and began searching the verges of the Roman Road. The early signs were encouraging – far more nectar here than at Shipton, and it was being enjoyed by a good selection of false alarms!



After about an hour, I noticed a fellow hairstreak-spotter looking up into an Ash tree with rather more intent than would be expected for mere scanning. I hurried over and she pointed out a female Brostreak, perching several metres up on a spray of leaves. I took a couple of quick shots before it retreated further into the leaves, giving some frustrating so-near-yet-so-far views!



I stayed for a while scanning the Ash, and was rewarded by a second individual – a rather tatty male moving from perch to perch high up.







And after all of those false alarms, when it finally happened, I nearly overlooked it as another false alarm! I spent a minute or two watching a Common Blue nectaring on Angelica...



...and as I turned to walk on, noticed a Ringlet nectaring on another cluster of the same species a couple of metres away. Just before I looked away, three things occurred to me - "That Ringlet is very dark for what must be a very late individual", "That Ringlet is very small" and "That Ringlet has very sharp, angular wings" - and suddenly it clicked. It was a male Brostreak, with wings open!!

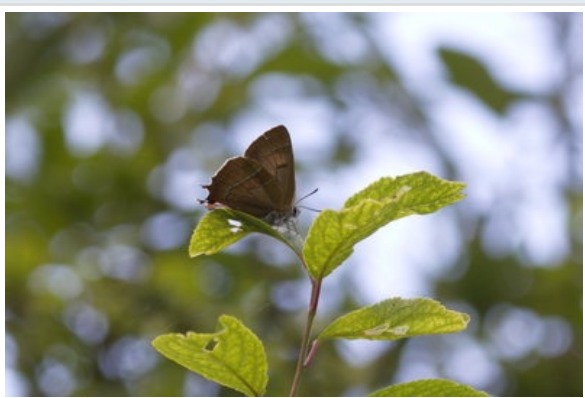
I called over the group of other people looking for butterflies, and over the next half an hour or more we were able to take turns to take close-ups of this very willing model! It was very freshly emerged, with only a slight deformity in its left wing preventing it from being the perfect specimen.







After some time, it fluttered upwards to perch just over two metres above ground and beside the path, remaining here for another five minutes. It was interesting to note here that, viewed from below with backlighting from the sky, the orange colour disappears entirely – see the difference between these two shots (the second was taken with flash).





With that, it flew upwards into the Ash tree, and I hit the road home, happy!

### Re: CallumMac

by Goldie M, 17-Aug-19 01:09 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Hair Streak Callum, 🍷 It's one I've yet to see 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 17-Aug-19 08:36 PM GMT

Cracking Brostreak Callum and a male as well which is the harder of the two to see and I prefer the subtle honeyed colour 😊🍷 Mind you if you had gone back to Shipton you could have picked up a few females 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

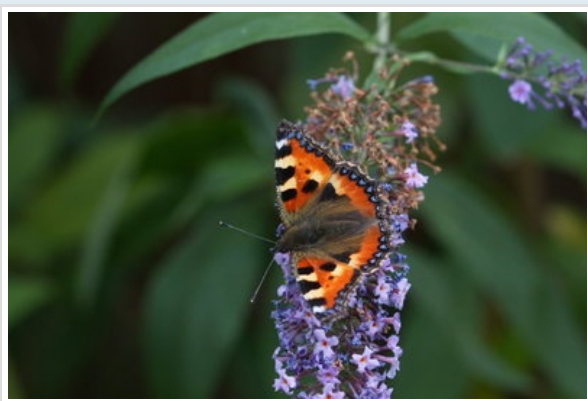
### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 19-Aug-19 05:04 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie 😊 supposedly they are at Gait Barrows, but not sure this is the year to go looking – they seem to be pretty thin on the ground in most places.

Wurzel – so I hear! Oh well. Otmoor seemed like more of a sure thing at the time and I really, REALLY didn't want to have to wait until 2020! 😊

Two summers ago, when I moved into my current house, I found a stubby little buddleia attempting to eke out a living in the narrow gap between greenhouse and house. I uprooted it into a pot and promised to plant it out if it survived the winter. Sure enough, it did, so I found a space by the bottom fence. Last summer it barely grew, doing all it could to survive the drought, but produced a few small flowers in late August. However, this summer it has exploded, and returning home on Saturday I found it covered in butterflies for the first time! 😊





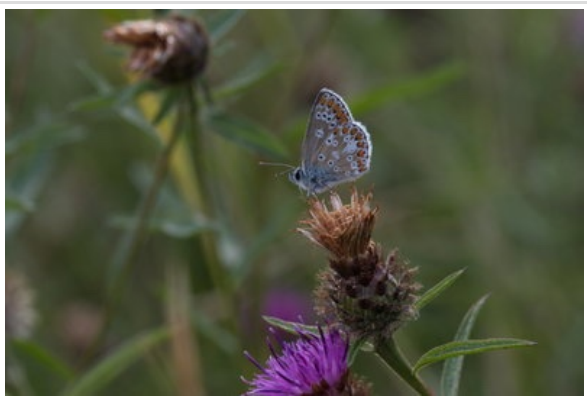
*The neighbour's cat wanted to know why I wouldn't play with it...*

On Sunday I made a trip to a site near Leeds looking for, and finding, my first Autumn Lady's Tresses. A dainty little thing, and sadly has much the same reputation as Brown Hairstreak for being a harbinger of autumn...





A walk along the scrubby hedgerow along the edge of the site produced a few butterflies, including a nice Common Blue (not so common this year!) and a Brown Argus.



Painted Ladies were still abundant but most now looking past their best.



### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-19 08:46 AM GMT

Lovely set of shots Callum 😊 "has much the same reputation as Brown Hairstreak for being a harbinger of autumn..." – I would have said that we're still in summer until I came to Wales a few days ago – it's very autumnal here – rain, strong winds, laves falling off the trees 😊 Mind you come September it'll be record temperatures and a heatwave again 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 20-Aug-19 05:31 PM GMT

Some lovely recent reports, Callum, and I'm particularly pleased you got an audience up close with that Brown Hairstreak.

You've certainly had a busy August!

### Re: CallumMac

by millerd, 24-Aug-19 10:11 PM GMT

Fascinating travelogue of your meanderings through Surrey and beyond – I'm pleased you found the Brown Hairstreaks in the end, and very envious of your male at close quarters... 😊 🗨️ As Bugboy mentioned, he and I were also at Bookham on 11th – I managed to see three BH altogether in several hours of hopeful looking. Once again I missed meeting you – this time on my stamping grounds rather than your Yorkshire ones! It can only have been by a whisker. 😊

Cheers,

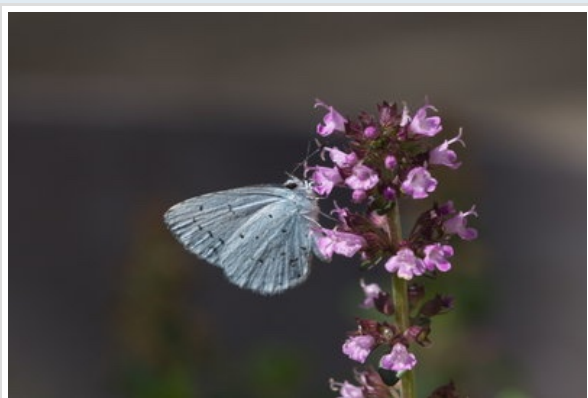
Dave

### Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 29-Aug-19 09:45 PM GMT

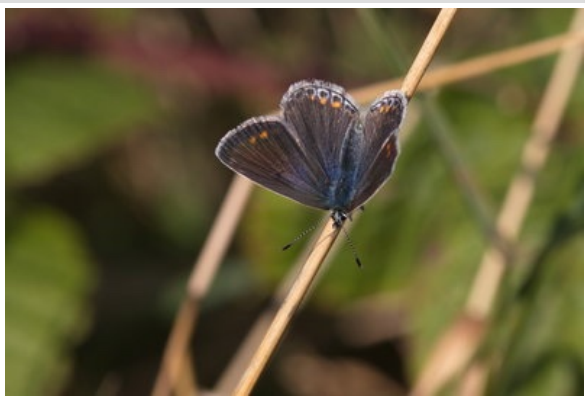
Thanks all, and sorry for a slow response – I've been offline at home ever since that Surrey trip, thanks to BT's useless customer service! For the same reason, I'm a bit behind on updates, so here's a very brief precis...

My garden, which was by no means the worst example of a suburban desert when I moved in, nonetheless has rather more accessible nectar in it two years later. My efforts in that regard paid off massively over the last fortnight, with visits from 7 species in total. The highlights were the sheer abundance of vanessids on my rescue buddleia, and a Holly Blue that happily moved from my thyme to my finger!





A visit to the migration hotspot that is Spurn Point on Sunday (hoping for Clouded Yellow and, optimistically, Long-tailed Blue!) produced neither target but a number of very nice Common Blues, a species I've seen too little of this year.



Having failed to find a single Cloudie at Spurn, it's safe to say I was pretty surprised to hear that evening that a large number (estimates between 5-10) had been seen miles inland on both Saturday and Sunday, at the new Ripon City Wetlands reserve. I headed there on Monday to see for myself, and sure enough, a considerable group of Cloudies were patrolling up and down a large area of Bird's-foot Trefoil.



Without wishing to give spoilers for millerd's PD, I agree with his assessment that these look, behaviourally, more like British-born individuals than a group of first-gen immigrants.

Back up to date just in time, as this weekend I'm heading south once more in the hope that I can get in on the LTB party!

### Re: CallumMac

by millerd, 30-Aug-19 10:33 AM GMT

Great to see your shots of the Ripon Cloudies, Callum. 😊 That second one, with its characteristic wing damage, was definitely present again yesterday. The other two look pretty fresh (as did at least one other I saw), which does tend to reinforce the idea that these are a home-grown group of butterflies. Good to see them up in Yorkshire too (considering I have drawn a blank on the south coast so far in 2019...).

Nice Blues from Spurn as well, especially the second female with its overall deep blue shade. 😊

Cheers, and good luck with the LTB quest!

Dave

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 01-Sep-19 08:54 PM GMT

Wow! If you've got Clouded Yellows in Yorkshire, Callum, I must make an effort to see if I can find any on the Gower coast over this next couple of weeks.

### Re: CallumMac

by Goldie M, 02-Sep-19 03:31 PM GMT

Well done with the Cloudies Callum I bet that was a nice surprise 😊

Your garden sounds a lot like mine, the Butterflies certainly love the Buddleia don't they 😊 Goldie 😊

## Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 02-Sep-19 09:43 PM GMT

Many thanks. I reckon Cloudies must be one of the best butterflies Britain has to offer (but then, I've probably said that about all of them at some point or other! 😊)

**31/08/2019, am - Whitehawk Hill**

With reports of the Brighton LTBs remaining consistent throughout the week, I decided to give it a go this weekend, since I'll be out of the country for most of October when the next generation are likely to appear. I travelled down to North London on Friday after work, and completed the journey on Saturday morning to arrive at Whitehawk Hill just after 10am. I was not the first there, and was reassured that the LTBs were still around, and at least one was still in good nick!

Sure enough, it only took about 5 minutes for my first ever encounter with this species to occur - alas, it wasn't so much a "Long-tailed Blue" as a "Non-tailed Blue"!







Over the next hour or so, this individual defended its territory vigorously, repeatedly chasing off another male that (from a couple of brief glimpses) looked to be in rather better condition. Eventually, though, it must have lost one of the big spiralling battle, because suddenly there was a male with intact wings, tails and all! Amazing.



This individual moved around the territory (winning a couple of battles in the process) and gave all present lots of opportunity for photos.





Remembering that interesting photo last summer of a Hairstreak, showing how the tails project out to the sides to create an impression of antennae, I tried to recreate this with the LTB. To my surprise I discovered that LTB tails project directly backwards!



After a while, the balance of power shifted again and the original, ragged individual was back. I took that as my cue to move on!

#### **31st, pm – Mill Hill and Anchor Bottom**

My other target for this weekend's trip was Adonis Blue – a species I had seen this year, but not in good condition when they truly shine! Unfortunately the weather deteriorated somewhat after lunch; although there were plenty of Adonis Blues moving around at both of the sites on the edge of Shoreham, their wings were universally opened only to fly!



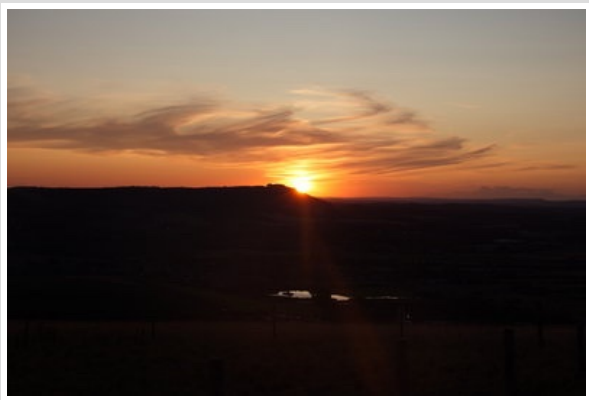
Interestingly, several individuals at Mill Hill had been marked – presumably somebody is doing some research or a census here?



At Anchor Bottom, I was amazed by both the number and the size of the Autumn Ladies Tresses – far larger than the ones I've seen in Yorkshire.



With nothing really doing in the afternoon after the intense high of the morning's LTB encounter, it felt like the universe was giving me a sign: "you've had a great butterfly season but it's over now; let it go and accept the autumn"! So I sat on the edge of the Downs, on a bench near the YHA, and as watched the sun set I reflected on another amazing summer of butterflies, in which I saw another five species for the first time, as well as discovering the wonder of orchids (very welcome on those grey dull days when the butterflies are hard to find!).



### Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 05-Sep-19 10:03 PM GMT

Cracking LTBs Callum - you did really well to find one in such great nick 😊🍷 The Autumn Tresses are interesting looking orchids with the way the florets seem to spiral round the stem 😊😁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: CallumMac

by David M, 06-Sep-19 05:26 PM GMT

I'm so glad you managed to find LTBs after investing your time in the journey, Callum.

I'm toying with the idea of doing likewise myself come the end of September/early October, but in the meantime I will be on alert in south Wales just in case any have managed to make it here.