

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 04-Jan-19 04:00 PM GMT

A very good year draws to an end.

We consider 2018 was in general a very good year for wildlife. The very hot weather did cause issues with numbers of moths, and a mixed bag regards plants/ wildflowers. Here in Kent Orchids suffered badly from the heat, but some species, particularly Small White Orchid and Lesser Butterfly Orchid were seen in record numbers in the Highlands. Unfortunately we did not manage our visit this year so were unable to witness this spectacle. We were delighted this year to find a new breeding colony of the very rare Southern Migrant Hawker at Oare Marshes and possibly another at Appledore (Kent). We also saw the delightful Club Tailed Dragonfly in Sussex, our first sighting for years. The Downy Emerald seems to be spreading here in Kent, as does the Southern Emerald Damselfly, but alas the latter is on private property. The Scarce Emerald Damselfly seems to have found Oare Marshes to its liking with several records (previously only known from North for the County around Cliffe).

Late November and December went out with a bit of a whimper. 9 Pink Footed Geese at Scotney was of note for Kent. Pink Feet are quite scarce in Kent although of course they winter in large numbers as close as the Norfolk Coast. 12 visits to the Shirley Moor area of Kent failed to the Great Grey Shrike that was seen on just 4 dates in December and then only briefly. The Humes Yellow Browed Warbler near Dungeness was just as elusive although we caught up with that on the 4th December. A Rough Legged Buzzard near Sittingbourne on the 29th December was a nice surprise, but no Butterflies in December was a disappointment. We normally manage a Red Admiral or two.

Looking forward to what 2019 brings.



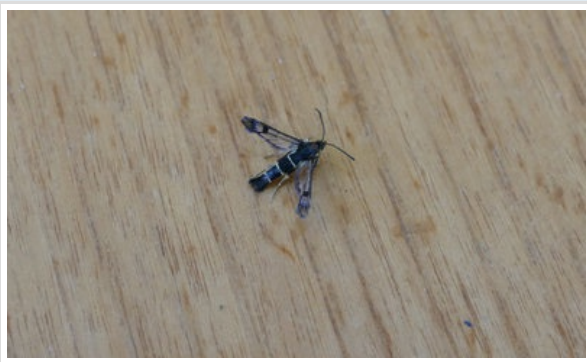
No excuses for another photo of the Rare, and in my view, most stunning of moths. The Oleander Hawkmoth at Dungeness.



Orange Tailed Clearwing (moth) at Ruckinge (Kent)



Western Conifer Seed Bug at Dungeness. Rare but currently increasing in Britain



Sallow Clearwing (moth) at Ruckinge (Kent)

Re: Dave Brown

by David M, 06-Jan-19 06:41 PM GMT

Fabulous array of insects in your last post, Dave. Pride of place goes (unsurprisingly) to that spectacular Oleander Hawk Moth. How I'd love to see one of these...they truly are the pinnacle of the moth world.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 20-Dec-19 02:46 PM GMT

I have not updated my PD for a while, actually almost a year, but I seem to have been just as busy watching wildlife as previous years, but with a slight difference. I have spent some time looking for the unusual rather than chasing the same things as every year. Not that I was that successful mind you but at least I looked. Seeing that I am so far behind with my diary I think the best thing is just to do a summary of each month supported by a few photos.

Before I get underway I would like to say that I personally found 2019 a poor year for moths and some extent butterflies. Moths in particular seemed lower in both quality and quantity, with some nights not producing much at all. Migration seemed non existent on some days, and again for many days running.

I also believe that here in Kent we had a very poor Autumn for Birds with very little to find. Days running of Westerly winds did not help.

January 2019. Birdwise nothing exceptional although enough to keep the interest going. Dungeness held varying numbers of Great White Egrets, Little Egrets and up to 4 Cattle Egrets. 35 Bewick Swans was our best total. Occasional Firecrest, what a stunning bird, 2 Whooper Swans, Black Necked Grebe and the usual Ravens. We managed a Great Northern Diver in Folkestone Harbour (3rd), 2 Velvet Scoters off Pett Level (6th), 3 Twite at Rye Harbour (8th), a wintering Whimbrel and 4 Greenshank Oare Marshes (12th), Great Skua off Hythe (17th), Black Throated Diver off Hythe (29th) and a Marsh Tit near Chilham (27th).

I mention the Marsh Tit because that seems to be an increasingly scarce bird in Kent. I hope that it does not go the same way as the Willow Tit which is now absent from Kent, but was quite regular in the Eighties, even a few pairs within a few miles of home. The Twite is another bird that is getting harder to see in the South. Always only a winter visitor to Kent and East Sussex it is now one to enjoy when it does appear with some years totally absent.

The best looking bird of January award goes to the Male Wood Duck at Godmersham although it's origins are suspect.

We noted no Butterflies, Moths or Dragonflies.

Re: Dave Brown

by dave brown, 26-Dec-19 07:03 PM GMT

February 2019.

This winter proved hard work to see any scarce ducks here in Kent. The weather on the near Continent was not cold enough to instigate any real movement into Britain. So it was on the 02nd that we saw our only male Smew of the winter period. It stayed most of the month around the RSPB

Dungeness.

Present at Dungeness during February

Black Necked Grebe, male & female Goldeneye, Goosander, 2 Whooper Swans, maximum of 4 Cattle Egrets (10th), Great White & Little Egrets. Raven. 3 Dartford Warblers (24th). Our first Sandwich Tern of the year on the 24th. Nearby Scotney GP held a maximum of 12 Whitefronted Geese, 1 Tundra Bean Goose, 2 male & 1 female Goosander.

Walland Marsh was unusually deserted with just 35 Bewick Swans of note. Gone are the days when we used to see 200 plus there.

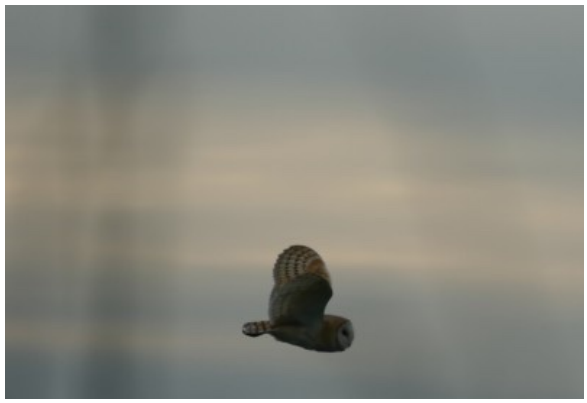
Brabourne (near Ashford) held 3 Cattle Egrets (15th).

At Godmersham the male Wood Duck was joined by 2 females. Wood Ducks are fairly common in captivity but it does seem strange that 3 managed to break out and travel together. None were ringed or pinioned. On the coast Seasalter held 3 Ravens whilst the 17th produced 2 Rough Legged Buzzards at

Funton Creek (near Sittingbourne). These stayed most of the month and were enjoyed by many.

The 23rd was our first good butterfly day of the year with 10 Brimstone, 2 Comma and 1 Red Admiral at Sheldwich in spring like sunshine.

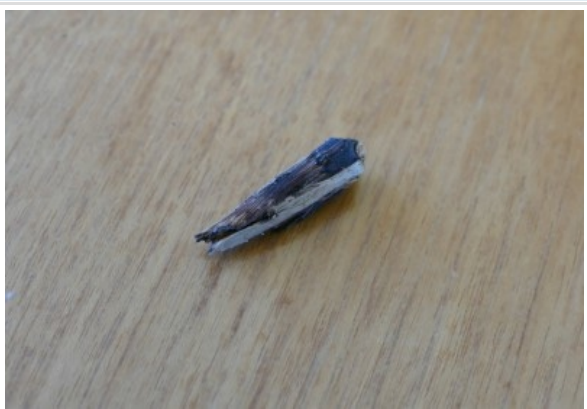
Thanks to a good friend we saw a Red Sword Grass (moth) that he trapped on the 24th at Ruckinge. This species is very scarce in the South East and almost certainly a migrant, although it is much more common in Northern England, Wales and Scotland. This was our first record. The camouflage is remarkable, looking more like a twig than a moth.



I only just managed to catch this Barn Owl as it flew past in falling light.



A distant photo of the Wood Ducks at Godmersham.



Against the right background this species would be almost impossible to see. A very scarce moth for Kent. 24th February

Re: Dave Brown

by Neil Freeman, 27-Dec-19 06:58 PM GMT

dave brown wrote:

Before I get underway I would like to say that I personally found 2019 a poor year for moths and some extent butterflies. Moths in particular seemed lower in both quality and quantity, with some nights not producing much at all. Migration seemed non existent on some days, and again for many days running.

Hi Dave,

I found 2019 a mixed year for Butterflies, some species definitely did better than others, but like you I found moths to my garden trap down in both overall numbers and number of species.

We don't get many migrants here in the midlands at the best of times.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Dave Brown

by David M, 31-Dec-19 08:53 PM GMT

dave brown wrote:

...Thanks to a good friend we saw a Red Sword Grass (moth) that he trapped on the 24th at Ruckinge. This species is very scarce in the South East and almost certainly a migrant, although it is much more common in Northern England, Wales and Scotland. This was our first record. The camouflage is remarkable, looking more like a twig than a moth.

That's a quite divine looking moth, Dave. Looks like a random ink splash on a shard of wood. Very impressive.