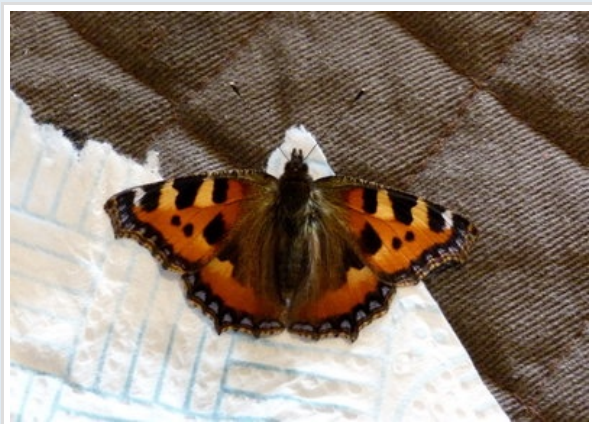


Re: David M

by David M, 12-Jan-19 05:47 PM GMT

Saturday 12th January 2019 – hibernator wakes up....

Late this morning, I had a pleasant surprise. My neighbour called with a glass jar inside of which was a Small Tortoiseshell, which she had found fluttering around in her cottage:



I duly soaked some kitchen roll in warm, sugary water so it could feed, and after a few minutes it decided to do a few circuits of my living room.

The insect is now in a cool, dark, dry place and I will check on it regularly and release it on a suitable morning in early March.

Re: David M

by trevor, 13-Jan-19 09:46 PM GMT

That Small Tortoiseshell is a lovely (and lucky) specimen, David.

Last year they were very scarce around here, I can't remember another year when I've seen so few.

The Summer garden is not the same without them.

Fingers crossed for this year.

Trevor.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 14-Jan-19 09:26 AM GMT

Hi! David , I bet that gave you lovely surprise for January 😊 It looks to be in good shape too and some thing to look after over the next couple of months. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 17-Jan-19 09:11 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments, Trevor/Goldie.

Thursday 17th January 2019 – January butterfly.....

I had to stay at home today waiting for a bed to be delivered. It was a beautiful winter's day, and at 11.40am, whilst sitting on my sofa, I became aware of a familiar flight pattern just outside my cottage.

I opened my patio doors and sure enough, there was a Red Admiral fluttering around my gutters. It flew towards the cottage two doors down from me and settled on the edge of the guttering at which point I shot back inside to get my camera.

Sadly, in the 10 seconds it took me to get back out, the insect had been disturbed by a large delivery van, and the last I saw of it was as it flew away over the row of cottages at the end of my lane.

This is the first time I have ever seen an active butterfly in the month of January in the UK, although given the mild conditions for much of this winter, I suppose it shouldn't be too much of a surprise.

Dates of first sightings 2019:

1. **Red Admiral** – 17 January, Langrove, Swansea
2. **Brimstone** – 15 February, Swansea Vale
3. **Painted Lady** – 17 February, Oystermouth Cemetery, Swansea
4. **Peacock** – 21 February, Cwm Ivy, nr. Llanmadoc, Gower, Swansea
5. **Comma** – 22 February, Swansea Vale
6. **Small Tortoiseshell** – 24 February, Swansea Vale
7. **Orange Tip** – 28 March, Whiteford Burrows, NW Gower
8. **Small White** – 28 March, Lower Kilvey Hill, Swansea
9. **Green Veined White** – 30 March, Cwm Ivy, nr. Llanmadoc, Gower, Swansea

10. **Holly Blue** – 30 March, Cwm Ivy, nr. Llanmadoc, Gower, Swansea
11. **Speckled Wood** – 7 April, Lower Kilvey Hill, Swansea
12. **Large White** – 7 April, Lower Kilvey Hill, Swansea
13. **Brown Argus** – 18 April, Whiteford Burrows, NW Gower
14. **Green Hairstreak** – 18 April, Welshmoor, Gower, Swansea
15. **Grizzled Skipper** – 19 April, Merthyr Mawr, nr. Porthcawl, Glamorgan
16. **Small Copper** – 20 April, Upper Kilvey Hill, Swansea
17. **Duke of Burgundy** – 22 April, Rodborough Common, Stroud, Gloucestershire
18. **Pearl Bordered Fritillary** – 22 April, Ewys Harold Common, nr. Pontrilas, Herefordshire
19. **Wall Brown** – 4 May, Dan-y-Graig Cemetery, Port Tennant, Swansea
20. **Common Blue** – 4 May, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
21. **Dingy Skipper** – 10 May, Swansea Vale
22. **Small Heath** – 11 May, Whiteford Burrows, Gower, Swansea
23. **Small Blue** – 12 May, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
24. **Marsh Fritillary** – 16 May, Fairwood Common, Gower, Swansea
25. **Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary** – 16 May, Fairwood Common, Gower, Swansea
26. **Meadow Brown** – 6 June, Whiteford Burrows, NW Gower
27. **Large Skipper** – 9 June, Crymlyn Burrows, Swansea
28. **Ringlet** – 27 June, Old Castle Down, nr. Ewenny, Glamorgan
29. **Dark Green Fritillary** – 27 June, Old Castle Down, nr. Ewenny, Glamorgan
30. **High Brown Fritillary** – 27 June, Alun Valley, nr. Ewenny, Glamorgan
31. **White Letter Hairstreak** – 27 June, Glanymor Park, Loughor
32. **Marbled White** – 14 July, Whiteford Burrows, NW Gower
33. **Small Skipper** – 14 July, Whiteford Burrows, NW Gower
34. **Hedge Brown** – 21 July, Castle Meadows, Abergavenny
35. **Essex Skipper** – 21 July, Castle Meadows, Abergavenny
36. **Grayling** – 25 July, Mumbles Head, Gower, Swansea
37. **Silver Washed Fritillary** – 15 August, West Williamston, Pembrokeshire
38. **Brown Hairstreak** – 15 August, West Williamston, Pembrokeshire
39. **Clouded Yellow** – 14 September, Port Eynon, Gower, Swansea

Last UK butterfly sighting – Red Admiral – 10th November, Port Eynon, Gower, Swansea

UK butterflies seen on the continent in 2019 but NOT seen in the UK:

40. **Lulworth Skipper**
41. **Chequered Skipper**
42. **Silver Spotted Skipper**
43. **Adonis Blue**
44. **Silver Studded Blue**
45. **Swallowtail**
46. **Wood White**
47. **Purple Hairstreak**
48. **Black Hairstreak**
49. **Mountain (Northern Brown) Argus**
50. **Large Blue**
51. **White Admiral**
52. **Heath Fritillary**
53. **Glanville Fritillary**
54. **Mountain Ringlet**

UK species not seen: **Purple Emperor, Cryptic Wood White, Scotch Argus, Large Heath & Chalkhill Blue.**

NON UK species seen in 2019:

French Pyrenees:

55. **Apollo**
56. **Clouded Apollo**
57. **Spanish Festoon**
58. **Iberian Scarce Swallowtail**
59. **Provence Orange Tip**
60. **Black Veined White**
61. **Berger's Clouded Yellow**
62. **Cleopatra**
63. **Southern Small White**
64. **Bath White**
65. **Tufted Marbled Skipper**
66. **Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper**
67. **Large Grizzled Skipper**
68. **Safflower Skipper**
69. **Olive Skipper**
70. **Red Underwing Skipper**
71. **Nettle Tree Butterfly**
72. **Map**
73. **Southern White Admiral**
74. **Camberwell Beauty**
75. **DePrunner's Ringlet**
76. **Bright Eyed Ringlet**
77. **Provençal Fritillary**
78. **Weaver's Fritillary**
79. **Queen of Spain Fritillary**
80. **False Heath Fritillary**
81. **Spotted Fritillary**
82. **Meadow Fritillary**
83. **Knapweed Fritillary**
84. **Pearly Heath**

85. Large Wall
86. Spanish Gatekeeper
87. Western Marbled White
88. Geranium Bronze
89. Provençal Short Tailed Blue
90. Osiris Blue
91. Mazarine Blue
92. Green Underside Blue
93. Amanda's Blue
94. Turquoise Blue
95. Chapman's Blue
96. Chequered Blue
97. Violet Copper
98. Purple-Shot Copper
99. Purple-Edged Copper
100. Sooty Copper

Italy, Piedmont Alps:

101. Niobe Fritillary
102. Marbled Fritillary
103. Titania's Fritillary
104. Scarce Fritillary
105. Lesser Spotted Fritillary
106. Nickerl's Fritillary
107. Poplar Admiral
108. Almond Eyed Ringlet
109. Piedmont Ringlet
110. Northern Wall Brown
111. Great Banded Grayling
112. Mountain Green Veined White
113. Mountain Clouded Yellow
114. Scarce Swallowtail
115. Scarce Copper
116. Sloe Hairstreak
117. Blue Spot Hairstreak
118. Lang's Short Tailed Blue
119. Baton Blue
120. Alcon Blue
121. Reverdin's Blue
122. Geranium Argus
123. Mountain Argus
124. Escher's Blue
125. Meleager's Blue
126. Mallow Skipper
127. Marbled Skipper
128. Foulquier's Grizzled Skipper

French Alps:

129. Silvery Argus
130. Mountain Alcon Blue
131. Glandon Blue
132. Idas Blue
133. Alpine Blue
134. Damon Blue
135. Eros Blue
136. Long Tailed Blue
137. Ilex Hairstreak
138. False Ilex Hairstreak
139. Small Apollo
140. Dusky Grizzled Skipper
141. Alpine Grizzled Skipper
142. Mountain Dappled White
143. Peak White
144. Large Tortoiseshell
145. Southern Comma
146. Mountain Fritillary
147. Shepherd's Fritillary
148. Lesser Marbled Fritillary
149. Balkan Fritillary
150. Cynthia's Fritillary
151. Grison's Fritillary
152. Dusky Heath
153. Darwin's Heath
154. Alpine Heath
155. Chestnut Heath
156. False Mnestra Ringlet
157. Common Brassy Ringlet
158. Large Ringlet
159. Blind Ringlet
160. Dewy Ringlet
161. Woodland Grayling
162. Great Sooty Satyr

Spain, Montes Universales:

163. Zapater's Ringlet
164. Cardinal
165. Twin-Spot Fritillary
166. Southern Gatekeeper
167. Dusky Meadow Brown
168. Oriental Meadow Brown
169. Esper's Marbled White
170. Iberian Marbled White
171. Black Satyr
172. Rock Grayling
173. Tree Grayling
174. Striped Grayling
175. False Grayling
176. Hermit
177. Southern Hermit
178. Southern Marbled Skipper
179. Sage Skipper
180. Cinquefoil Skipper
181. Rosy Grizzled Skipper
182. Mother of Pearl Blue
183. Azure Chalkhill Blue
184. Spanish Chalkhill Blue
185. Oberthur's Anomalous Blue
186. Panoptes Blue
187. Spanish Argus

Total species seen in 2019 – 187

Re: David M

by Andrew555, 18-Jan-19 11:19 AM GMT

Good job with the Small Tortoiseshell David. 😊 I was in Dorset last week, didn't see any butterflies but I did see a bee.

Re: David M

by David M, 15-Feb-19 06:41 PM GMT

Friday 15th February 2019 – Too warm for February...

A second consecutive gloriously mild and sunny mid February day saw me take an hour at lunch time to see if I could succeed where I failed yesterday afternoon. Clearly, two days of 12/13c and wall to wall sunshine was enough to generate some activity – I saw at least 3 different male Brimstones, although the area where I reliably find early Small Tortoiseshells had precious few flowering celandines, so I suspect I'll have to wait until the next mild day (which could be mid March given the vagaries of the Welsh weather!)

Sadly, none of the Brimstones was in any mood to alight, even briefly. That meant I had to rely on good fortune with a few 'air shots':



In frustration, I eventually resorted to filming one on my mobile phone as it flew around the vegetation beside the stream that runs through this site:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ziz0c4LYGM>[/video]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ziz0c4LYGM>

Although south Wales is forecast cloudy over the weekend, the SE of England looks as though it may enjoy a couple more 'balmy' days, so I hope those living there can make the most of these unseasonal conditions.

Re: David M

by David M, 17-Feb-19 07:17 PM GMT

Sunday 17th February 2019 – Extraordinary.....

By noon the early mist and drizzle had cleared, and with temperatures again hovering around 12c, I decided to get out for an hour or so.

With the wind being quite fresh, I opted for Oystermouth Cemetery in Mumbles, which is extremely well protected from the elements.



I'd done a complete circuit and seen no butterflies (although bumble bees, nuthatches, green woodpeckers, jays and wrens provided company).

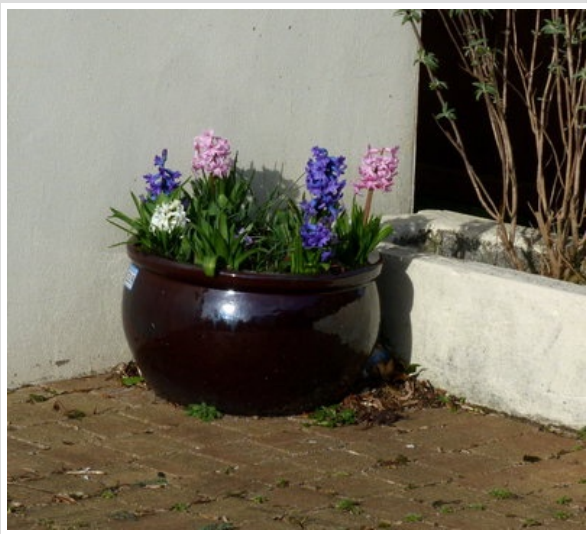
I passed one more time by the upper slope and thought I saw a butterfly, but reckoned it was more likely a falling leaf as the colour was nowhere near dark enough for a Comma or Tortoiseshell. A few seconds later, however, it took to the air, so I approached it. It was the only butterfly I saw, but it was a good one:





Three years ago, I saw a Painted Lady on 28th February in Swansea, so clearly they can get here early in the year when conditions are favourable. No doubt the prolonged spell of southerly winds has helped.

The recent mild weather has also helped my spring bulbs. This time last week they were only just beginning to show. Look at them now:



Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 17-Feb-19 08:16 PM GMT

Looks in good nick as well, David. No doubt an early immigrant, like the ones reported from Cornwall.

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 19-Feb-19 07:13 PM GMT

Nice one with the Painted Lady David 😊

There has been a bit of moth migrant activity reported over the weekend so I guess it probably came in with those.

Cheer,

Neil.

Re: David M

by David M, 21-Feb-19 05:26 PM GMT

Thanks, Mark/Neil. Yes, I'm sure the Painted Lady was a migrant. It couldn't have survived the snow and ice we had at the turn of the month.

Thursday 21st February 2019 – Beautiful February afternoon....

This afternoon was one of the loveliest I've ever experienced in February in this country. The cloud cleared around midday and the wind dropped to no more than an apologetic, light breeze, so I headed off to Cwm Ivy at the NW tip of the Gower peninsula:



I spent an hour and a half there, seeing two Red Admirals in the woodland glade, but more pleasingly, I spotted my first Peacock of the year in the damp field adjacent to the woodland.

At first, I had to use my zoom as there was a barbed wire fence stopping me from entering:



The butterfly was so avidly nectaring from this solitary dandelion though, that I carefully squeezed myself between the hooked wire and the mesh fence below it (no easy task at 92kg) in order to approach it more closely:



I was actually surprised there weren't more butterflies about, as temperatures were around 15c. With no end in sight to this abnormally mild spell, I'm sure there will be more opportunities in the next few days.

Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 21-Feb-19 07:51 PM GMT

Lovely to see a Peacock, David. Not seen one yet, though I'm sure the first ones are about. Slightly surprised by the Red Admiral sightings, both from myself and others. I wonder if any are early migrants?

Re: David M

by millerd, 24-Feb-19 06:20 PM GMT

Just spotted your Painted Lady sighting, David. Brilliant to see, and it fits well with the Hummingbird Hawk Moth I saw today. Yours turned left at the Severn Bridge and mine turned right is all... 😊

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 25-Feb-19 08:52 PM GMT

Yes, Dave. You could well be right regarding the two – they almost certainly came over from the continent!

Unforgettable....

These last few days have been quite phenomenal. Never in my lifetime have I known such mild and pleasant conditions in the month of February, and I won't be surprised if I never experience them again.

Friday 22nd February

After a glorious Thursday, Friday was equally stunning, and I had an extended lunch break at work, affording me an hour and a quarter to indulge myself once again.

I was quite disappointed not to find any Small Tortoiseshells on the banks of the stream where I regularly see them at the start of the season, but I was delighted to encounter my first two Commas of 2019 holding territory in this area:



Here's a view in the opposite direction:



...and the butterfly itself:



Two male Brimstones were flying about, and I also saw two Peacocks, with this one attracted by a discarded duvet near to the railway line:



Sunday 24th February

In a normal year, Small Tortoiseshells are generally the first of the adult hibernators I see. This year, however, I had racked up 5 other species without a sniff. So, I was determined to find them and finally did so in the most reliable spot I know for them, near my workplace, with two individuals nectaring on the celandines & dandelions by the stream that cuts through Swansea Vale:



I also saw three Commas, including this one in classic pose ready to repel intruders:



The most notable thing though was the numbers of Brimstones – I saw 16 in total, including my first female of 2019 who was fluttering unmolested around the gardens of the housing estate when I was walking back to my car! Perhaps the hyperactive males need to think outside the box! Yet again, the males were flying incessantly, although this one 'gatecrashed' this image of the hotspot where butterflies are most likely to be found on this walk:



It's quite incredible to think that by 24 February, I have seen SIX species of butterfly. I doubt very much whether that will happen again in my lifetime. It would be difficult enough to achieve on the south coast of England, let alone Wales! Ironically, after the lift I got when finally seeing Small Tortoiseshells, my thoughts turned to what I would do with myself over the next few weeks, as it will be mid March most likely by the time any other species is on the wing round here.

Definitely a February never to forget!

Re: David M

by trevor, 25-Feb-19 09:12 PM GMT

Don't give up looking yet, David, there have been several reports of Speckled Wood sightings. Whatever next!. We've had bizarre years before, but never this early in the season. Glad to see that Wales is performing too.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: David M

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

6 Species before March is quite remarkable. I've stalled at 4 but even that has to be noteworthy!

Re: David M

by David M, 26-Feb-19 08:56 PM GMT

Yes, guys, 6 is special but there must be someone who has 7 (or even 8.) We have but one more day to enjoy these conditions before normal UK service is resumed. 😊

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 27-Feb-19 09:38 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, here am I thinking I'm lucky to get two species 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 24-Mar-19 05:28 PM GMT

Sunday 24th March 2019 – Back to business....

After almost a month of inclement weather, today finally offered the opportunity to get out and about again.

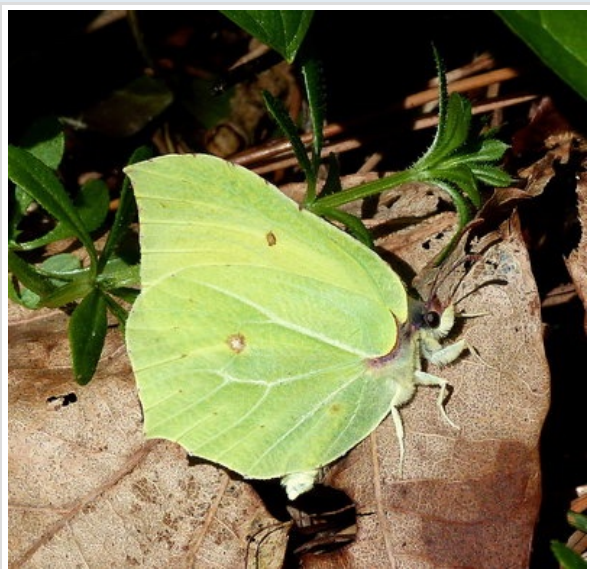
It was only about 12c, but the sun was shining for the first time in a long while here in south Wales, and I duly headed off in the early afternoon for Cwm Ivy, which is on the northwest Gower coast.

I had hoped to find Speckled Woods today, and maybe a Holly Blue or two, but there was no sign of either, even though the blackthorn blossom, which usually heralds their appearance, was getting well into flower.

There WAS a big surprise though, in the shape of this Hummingbird Hawk Moth, not something I often see round this way even in late summer, let alone late March:



On the butterfly front Brimstones easily led the way, with well into double figures seen. Two or three were even choosing to settle, giving me a handful of opportunities to grab an image:



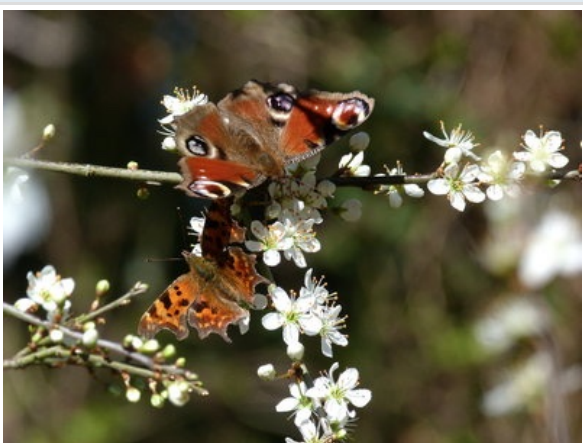
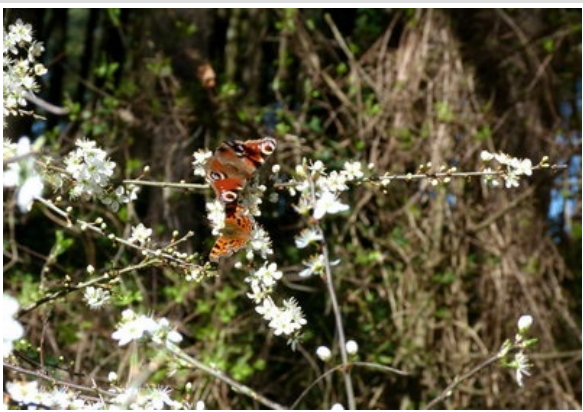
The cleared area in this woodland is a hotspot for butterflies at this time of year:



I saw five Red Admirals, including two courtship displays happening above me simultaneously. This specimen, however, was found basking on the young nettles:



Not all of the blackthorn is in flower yet, but the patch that was had plenty of insect attention, including these two:



The Comma soon flew elsewhere leaving the Peacock to itself:



With conditions forecast calm and sunny this coming week, I fully expect Whites, Holly Blues, Speckled Woods and maybe even Orange Tips to be around next weekend.....assuming the cloud and the storms don't make a return.

Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 24-Mar-19 08:21 PM GMT

I saw my first Small White today, and the Orange Tips are not usually far behind. High pressure expected next week. I guess it depends whether it's a sunny High, or a gloomy High...

Re: David M

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

Hi! David, you seem to be getting loads of Butterflies your way, send me one of those Brimstones will you 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 28-Mar-19 04:58 PM GMT

At the moment, Goldie, we've plenty of Brimstones to spare - I've never seen so many round here!

Thursday 28th March 2019 - Puzzling chronology.....

I visited Cwm Ivy and Whiteford Burrows on the north Gower coast late this morning, where I felt sure I would see my first Speckled Woods and Holly Blues of the year.

The blackthorn blossom is now approaching its peak but there wasn't a sniff of either species in the woodland glade, so I thought I'd do a circuit of the dunes before returning half an hour later.

There is a sheltered bank just at the edge of the dune system, and I was busy watching four Peacocks whizzing around taking nectar when I spotted what I thought at first was a Small White.



Its delicate fluttering and rounded wing tips soon betrayed it though - a female Orange Tip!

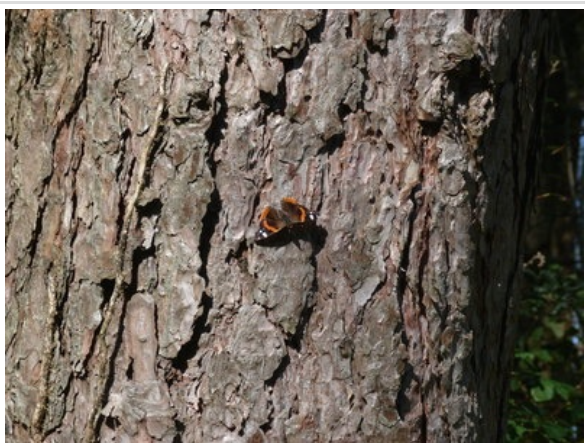
She was flighty and I could only get a couple of poor record shots, but whilst in pursuit, I then noticed a male:



This is the earliest I've ever seen this species and it was a puzzle to think I'd done so prior to any of the three Whites, Holly Blues and Specklies. To further confuse me, I saw another two females prior to leaving, and managed to vault a barbed wire fence to get this image:



Brimstones and Peacocks were numerous today, with 20+ seen of each. There were also two Commas and two Red Admirals, one of which was irresistible on this tree trunk:



I then tried Kilvey Hill, as Speckled Woods are usually quite early here on the lower tracks. Again though, there were none, but I did see my first Small White of 2019, although it remained airborne and I couldn't get an image.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 29-Mar-19 09:23 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Orange Tips David, looks like things are going to be early this year and I can be on the look out for the OT 😊 as for the Speckies not seen them yet. Goldie 😊

Re: David M

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

Saturday 30th March 2019 - Still no Speckled Woods...

Another attempt to hunt down Speckled Woods and Holly Blues at Cwm Ivy on the north Gower coast proved only half successful. Two male Holly Blues were sighted, including this one who generously flew down to settle at ground level:



However, Specklies remain mystifyingly absent, even though this wooded area is paradise for them. I had some consolation though in the form of my first Green Veined White of 2019:



Brimstones and Peacocks were again the commonest species, with around a dozen of each, including a few grounded *rhamni*:



About half a dozen Orange Tips were flying about, although I saw no females today:



Five Red Admirals and a Comma were present in the glade as well.

Re: David M

by millerd, 30-Mar-19 09:11 PM GMT

Very nice Holly Blue, David – and I speak as a connoisseur in these matters... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

by bugboy, 30-Mar-19 09:25 PM GMT

Ooooh I love that last OT shot. At the rate things are going for me at the moment I might completely miss them this year 🤔

Re: David M

by David M, 30-Mar-19 11:53 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

Very nice Holly Blue, David – and I speak as a connoisseur in these matters..

Indeed you are, Dave, and I expect that you'll trump mine many times during the course of the next few weeks!

Bugboy wrote:

At the rate things are going for me at the moment I might completely miss them this year

I'm sure your time will come, BB. OTs are usually good for a 4 week flight period....and they rarely get tatty!

Re: David M

by Andrew555, 02-Apr-19 03:35 PM GMT

I'm with BB, very nice shot. 😊

Re: David M

by trevor, 02-Apr-19 06:48 PM GMT

Two mrgreens for you David. 🍃🍃 One each for your lovely male Holly Blue shot, and locating those Orange Tips. I'm heading West next week, hope for similar luck.

Trevor.

Re: David M

by David M, 07-Apr-19 05:46 PM GMT

Thanks, both. Orange Tips are much more approachable in cool weather whilst the Holly Blue was just good luck.

Trevor, I hope your trip 'west' yields dividends for you. Fingers crossed for the weather.

Re: David M

by David M, 08-Apr-19 06:26 AM GMT

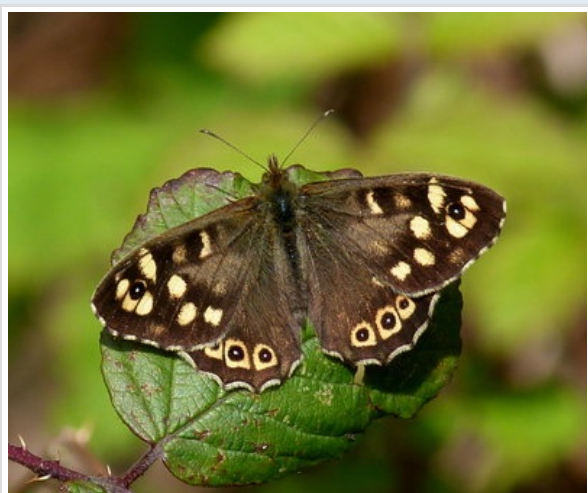
Sunday 7th April 2019 – Bonus butterfly morning....

Leaving Abergavenny this morning to leaden skies, I was somewhat surprised to see conditions clearing up once I was in the Vale of Neath, so I felt it was my duty to pop up the lower path on Kilvey Hill to see if I could catch up with my 2019 nemesis, Speckled Wood.

I saw one before I'd even got past the entrance, though it flew out to intercept a male Brimstone and went up into the canopy. About half a dozen more were sighted, mainly along this strip:



...and this one basked for long enough to have its image taken:



The other pleasant moment was when I came across this male Large White, another first for the year, and he very graciously came down just 5 yards in front of me:



Re: David M

by David M, 09-Apr-19 06:31 AM GMT

Sunday 7th April 2019 - Bonus butterfly afternoon....

After stopping off at Kilvey Hill, I returned home but the sunny weather persisted (although with increasingly hazier skies) so I treated myself to a further visit to Cwm Ivy on the north Gower coast.

The woodland glade was now buzzing with Speckled Woods, although Holly Blue numbers were well down on the previous two years. I only saw four or five, including this mint fresh male:



Several Red Admirals were zooming around the cleared area. I wonder if they are the same ones I've seen on my last couple of visits:



A handful of Brimstones and Peacocks were about, and around half a dozen Orange Tips:



A Comma and a Green Veined White were also seen.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 09-Apr-19 11:13 AM GMT

WOW! David, not a sign here yet of Orange Tips, White's or Holly Blues , those are lovely photos of all three 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 09-Apr-19 08:16 PM GMT

That's a fantastic picture of a Holly Blue, David. The other Dave (millerd) will be jealous!

Re: David M

by Pauline, 09-Apr-19 08:34 PM GMT

For me it's the Speckled Wood. I can never achieve such a crisp image. The Holly Blue ain't bad either 😊 😊

Re: David M

by millerd, 09-Apr-19 09:33 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

That's a fantastic picture of a Holly Blue, David. The other Dave (millerd) will be jealous!

Too right I am! 😊 Constant grey days for a week now chez moi, so the sight of a lovely male Holly Blue is most 🍷 invoking. A lovely butterfly.

In fact, a great selection – South Wales is clearly the place to be at the moment.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 11-Apr-19 08:55 AM GMT

Thanks, all. We've been a bit fortunate in south Wales lately. Although cool, the sun has been out most days and, at this time of year, that can have a positive effect as normally skittish species remain relatively docile.

Speckled Woods will bask for longer periods and Brimstones and Orange Tips actually settle!

I daresay normal service will be resumed shortly with conditions in the SE far superior to those here in Wales!

Re: David M

by David M, 18-Apr-19 06:09 PM GMT

Thursday 18th April 2019 – Transformation...

Finally, today saw some real warmth meaning I was able to leave my fleece at home and head off for Cwm Ivy and Whiteford Burrows in a T-shirt.

The woodland glade was positively buzzing with butterflies, with Holly Blues again numerous, although all but one were males and the solitary female took to the air before I could get an image.

I'd say there were about two dozen in total, and yet again they were content to settle near ground level within easy reach of the camera:





Speckled Woods were even more ubiquitous, and I managed to spot this mating pair:



However, Orange Tips were undoubtedly the commonest species, with the better part of 100 seen, including several females:



I ventured onto the dunes, hoping to find my first Small Copper of the year. I didn't manage to do that, but I got a real surprise when this Brown Argus turned up:



I wouldn't normally expect this species till mid-May, so to see one in mid-April is highly abnormal. Furthermore, the left side was washed out, with no real discernable markings – a very strange specimen.

There were still plenty of Brimstones & Peacocks, whilst two Red Admirals, a Large White, a Comma and a handful of Green Veined Whites were also seen.

Re: David M

by Pauline, 18-Apr-19 07:34 PM GMT

That's a really interesting individual David, both the timing and the appearance. Well spotted.

Re: David M

by David M, 19-Apr-19 07:43 AM GMT

Thanks, Pauline. Fair gave me a shock, I can tell you!

Thursday 18th April 2019 – Welshmoor...

On the way back from the coast, I thought I'd pop into Welshmoor to see if any Green Hairstreaks had emerged.

I checked in the usual hotspots without success, and was ready to go when my neighbour suddenly spotted one in a sheltered corner:



This gleaming individual enchanted us for 5 minutes or so. I daresay numbers will skyrocket over this Easter Weekend.



Re: David M

by trevor, 19-Apr-19 09:25 AM GMT

Some stunning images recently, David. Your most recent open wing male Holly Blue fully deserves a WOW! and those Green Hairstreaks several 🍴🍴.

South Wales is catching Sussex up!.
Trevor.

Re: David M

by kevlng, 19-Apr-19 09:51 AM GMT

What a great start to Easter for you David. 100 Orange Tips is amazing. I love the shots of the Holly Blue, I very rarely see them with their wings so wide open. As for the Brown Argus, what a surprise.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: David M

by ernie f, 20-Apr-19 07:45 AM GMT

David

I've been going back through your last few weeks posts. You've been having a great time, haven't you? I have been trying to get fully open wing shots of the Holly Blue but without real success. You seem to have nailed that one fair and square though. Then you had the mating Speckled Woods. I have yet to see that let alone capture it in a pic. But the main wonder is that oddly marked and very early Brown Argus. That gets a 🍴 from me.

Re: David M

by David M, 20-Apr-19 08:05 PM GMT

Thanks, all. The male Holly Blues have been tremendously obliging this year, frequently settling at convenient height for photography.

It helps that I have found a site with considerable numbers and have located their master tree which they spend most of their time on.

The last image posted was a male settled right at head height. I must have taken a dozen images with his wings cocked at the usual 75% angle so I figured I had nothing to lose by casting my shadow over him.

Amazingly, he immediately opened them to maximum extent, which is something I don't think I've ever seen before myself.

If only the females were visible in such numbers and were so accommodating!

Re: David M

by bugboy, 21-Apr-19 07:42 AM GMT

Doing well there David, that Holly Blue deserves a few 🍴🍴🍴. still only a few fleeting glances of Holly Blue for me so far and 100 OT 😲, that's a butterfly Nirvana surely. I've seen a good few this weekend but it's been too hot and with zero cloud cover I've had to settle for being a mere spectator.

That BA is an oddity, could it be that the pupae was in such a position so the aberrant side was caught in a sun ray, the extra warmth perhaps inducing it to emerge early 🤔

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 21-Apr-19 09:06 AM GMT

Some great reports David and excellent photos 😊

[quote]It helps that I have found a site with considerable numbers and have located their master tree which they spend most of their time on.

I wasn't aware that Holly Blues used master trees, I always thought they were more of a wandering species.

[quote]I must have taken a dozen images with his wings cocked at the usual 75% angle so I figured I had nothing to lose by casting my shadow over him.

Amazingly, he immediately opened them to maximum extent, which is something I don't think I've ever seen before myself.

Great reward for trying it 🍷 😊 I have never yet had this trick work with Holly Blues on the rare occasion that I have found them settled low enough to try.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: David M

by David M, 21-Apr-19 06:14 PM GMT

Thanks, BB/Neil.

The Brown Argus appeared to be abnormally early, but today I've seen two dozen at the same site which puts things into perspective.

Neil, both the sites near me where Holly Blues can be found in numbers have a distinct evergreen which seems to attract them in numbers. The one at Cwm Ivy can be peppered with them, in spite of there being others nearby which don't seem to have the same appeal.

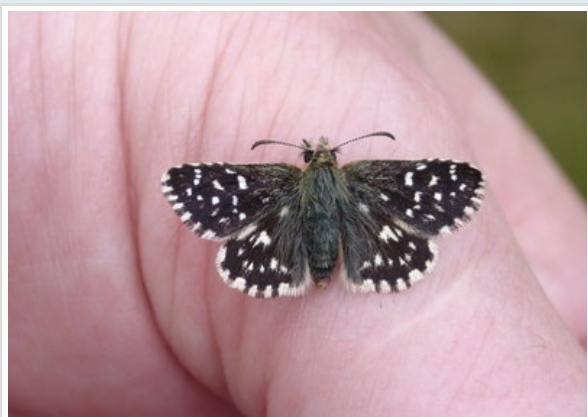
Friday 19th to Sunday 21st April - Perfect Easter....

This year is turning into something quite special. A record breaking second half of February followed by a week of mild, fine weather at the end of March followed by a uniquely glorious Easter weekend!

Friday saw me venture to Merthyr Mawr near Porthcawl to hunt down Grizzled Skippers. Unfortunately, there was hazy cloud upon my arrival, meaning I was only able to find two:



This specimen was unable to fly as the air temperature was very marginal. He willingly hopped onto my hand for a warm though:



On Saturday, a walk up Kilvey Hill failed to produce any Wall Browns, but I did see my first Small Copper of the year, although I only managed this record shot:



In the cemetery at the bottom of the hill, there were quite a few Whites flying. This was my first female Large White of 2019:



I was also able to grab my first image this year of a Small White on the same bluebell patch:



Sunday saw me return to Cwm Ivy and Whiteford Burrows, but the hot weather meant the sheltered glade wasn't the 'hotspot' it usually is, as butterflies were happy to disperse onto the nearby Whiteford Dunes.

The most notable event came in the form of some two dozen or so fresh Brown Argus, all to be found in the same dip facing the sun on the slopes of the site's highest hillock.

Clearly, the one I saw here last Thursday was just the precursor to a mass emergence, but it DOES seem strange to be surrounded by this species prior to the arrival of Dingy Skippers and Common Blues:



Yet again, Orange Tips were the most numerous companions. This one was irresistible on a bluebell:



Re: David M

by trevor, 21-Apr-19 06:55 PM GMT

You have earned another mrgreen, David. What a gorgeous Brown Argus. Talk about chocolate-orange! 🍫

PS. I agree about Holly Blues having favourite trees, there are two along the old railway, both Ivy clad, that are guaranteed to host HB's every year.

Re: David M

by CallumMac, 22-Apr-19 08:48 AM GMT

Fabulous Holly Blues, David. I've only had fly-pasts so far, but a trip to my reliable HB site may be in order! I will have to keep my eyes peeled for the appearance of Small Coppers up here as well.

Re: David M

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

I'm green with envy David 🍀🍀🍀😄 fantastic Butterflies, that Grizzle is great, no open wing shots for me ,the White Butterflies I saw all kept their wings closed after landing so no open wing shots 😞
You seem to have got loads of species, well done. Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 22-Apr-19 05:49 PM GMT

Thanks, all. Having lived in Swansea for 9 years now I like to think I know all the best spots! Sometimes though, you just **have** to travel further afield....

Monday 22nd April 2019 - Dukes....

I missed out on UK Dukes of Burgundy last year, and with the weather set fair I felt I needed a trip to Rodborough Common as next weekend is looking rather dire in comparison.

I arrived just after 10am and made my way to the hotspot, which is at the bottom of the steep dip at the right hand edge of the shrub line in this image:



Sure enough, there were a handful whizzing about down there, along with several Green Hairstreaks:





The vegetation still has a very 'early' look about it, and there were no Dingy Skippers nor Small Heaths, species that are usually seen in good numbers here in a normal season.

In fact, there were very few other species at all – a couple of Peacocks and Speckled Woods, and fly-by Brimstone, Holly Blue, Orange Tip and Small White.

Re: David M

by David M, 23-Apr-19 06:48 PM GMT

Monday 22nd April 2019 – Pearl Bordered Fritillaries...

Rather than risk a return home on Bank Holiday Monday on the M4, I decided to detour via Ewyas Harold Common, on the border between Herefordshire and Wales.

I figured there may be an early Pearl Bordered Fritillary on the wing and fortunately, there were at least four, all concentrated in the 'hotspot' on this site, which is located in a steep gully on a SW facing bracken-covered slope.

Shame that the next week at least looks very problematic weatherwise, but I expect that by the early Spring Bank Holiday weekend, if the sun shines there could be hundreds flying on this reliable site for this rare butterfly.



Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 23-Apr-19 07:24 PM GMT

Hi David,

Interesting comment about the Holly Blue's favourite trees, and Trevor's also. I must try harder to try and find something like that around here, the Holly Blues that I see are usually behaving like male Brimstones or Orange-tips i.e. patrolling hedgerows or passing through gardens.

Nice Dukes from Rodborough Common and also the Pearls from Ewyas Harold 🍷 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: David M

by Andrew555, 24-Apr-19 02:04 PM GMT

Some brilliant sights and shots from your recent reports David, you seem to have pretty much everything covered and very nicely recorded as well! 🍷 😊

Cheers

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 24-Apr-19 02:55 PM GMT

Great find those Pearl's David 🍀 I missed them altogether last year and the Dukes , your off to a great start with the Butterflies you've posted so far 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 25-Apr-19 09:44 PM GMT

Thanks, all. We're getting to that time of the year when specialised species start to emerge, so 'covering everything' is not going to remain possible for long!

Re: David M

by Pauline, 28-Apr-19 09:32 PM GMT

Lovely Pearls David. That may be my next target if I ever get out 😊 Have to say I prefer the underside. Also remiss of me not to comment on your mating Speckled Woods – well spotted. Not something I've ever seen.

Re: David M

by David M, 28-Apr-19 11:51 PM GMT

Thanks, Pauline. Yes, the undersides are the 'big deal' with this species. One of the most striking of all UK species.

I'd put aside a moment or two this coming week or so for them. Once they've gone it'll be a year before they return. 😊

Re: David M

by ernie f, 01-May-19 09:11 AM GMT

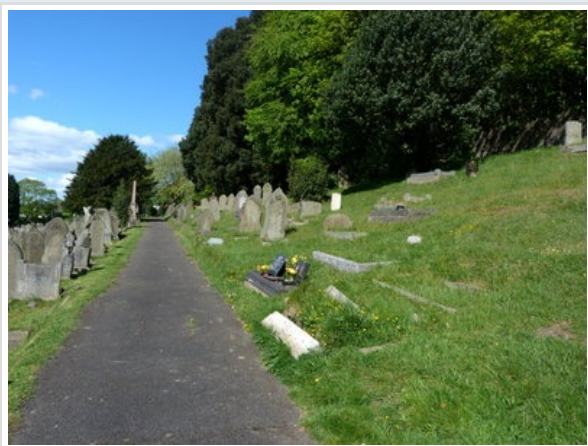
David – Nice to see your report that the Dukes are doing well at Rodborough Common. I lived only a few miles away from this site some years back but I don't think they were there then.

Re: David M

by David M, 04-May-19 05:19 PM GMT

Saturday 4th May 2019 – Wall Brown.....

I didn't fancy climbing Kilvey Hill this morning to see if the colony of Wall Browns up there was flying. Not only was it cool (around 12c) but it was quite breezy too. So, I decided to have a nose about in Dan-y-Graig cemetery at the foot of the hill, where it is warmer and more protected, particularly along this uppermost bank, which is sheltered by the perimeter wall and mature trees at the back of it:



The first butterfly I saw was a male Holly Blue, but as I was tracking him, I noticed that unmistakable, almost playful flight of a Wall Brown. He was very frisky, and I never got particularly close to him:



The only other butterfly I saw in the cemetery was this Small Copper:



A quick walk up the lowest path on Kilvey Hill threw up a handful of Speckled Woods and a male Small White.

Re: David M

by trevor, 04-May-19 08:18 PM GMT

Two very fresh male Wall Browns from your local cemetery, David. Their escape no doubt aided by the breeze today. As we both know of cemeteries with a Wall Brown population, it might be an idea for others to check their local church grounds.

Just a thought,
Trevor.

Re: David M

by ernie f, 04-May-19 09:44 PM GMT

David – Yet another person getting Walls. I am very envious 'cos I have never seen one round my way.

Re: David M

by David M, 05-May-19 08:23 PM GMT

Yes, Trevor, Wall Browns are pretty reliable in this coastal cemetery. It's amusing how they only ever settle on the grey gravestones though; never the black or the marble ones. They seem to know what camouflages them best.

ernie, there must be somewhere near the coast with rocky outcrops round your way? Surely worth a try?

Saturday 4th May 2019 – Common Blue...

After leaving Dan-y-Graig cemetery, I made my way to Crymlyn Burrows on the coast just east of Swansea.

This is a site that holds good numbers of many of the late spring grassland species, and it was here where I saw my first Common Blue of 2019:



A bit surprising that I have seen both Common Blue AND Brown Argus before Dingy Skipper, but try as I might I couldn't locate *tagis* at all. This was the only *icarus* I saw, so it is still early days. I expect the next bout of warm weather will see things explode here.



This stretch of track is always a hotspot:



There were 20+ Orange Tips, 3 Brimstones, 5 Speckled Woods, several Green Veined and Small Whites, 2 Large Whites, and 3 Peacocks. Most notably however, I saw 8 Small Coppers here, which is pretty good going for any location on my 'patch'.

Re: David M

by millerd, 05-May-19 09:54 PM GMT

A very nice Common Blue, David – as you say, no doubt the vanguard of many more once things warm up again.

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 10-May-19 10:35 PM GMT

...and it does look to be warming up by the weekend, Dave, and set to continue through next week. 😊

With any luck, we'll have a fine second half to May!

Friday 10th May 2019 – Dingy Skipper....

With all these images of Dingy Skippers abounding on here, this was one species I wanted to track down and pay a little attention to this year.

Fortunately, by my workplace, there is a plot of disused land where industrial buildings used to stand. This is covered in bird's foot trefoil, which of course attracts Dingy Skippers:



Other than a solitary male Orange Tip, the only species I saw was Dingy Skipper, but there were 7 or 8 of them, and the dull conditions meant they were reasonably approachable





Nice to be able to concentrate on this rather overlooked butterfly without the distraction of several other brighter species flying in the same spot.

Re: David M

by David M, 11-May-19 11:40 PM GMT

Saturday 11th May 2019 - Small Heath....

Finally, sun and relative warmth returned today, so a visit to Cwm Ivy and Whiteford Burrows was an easy choice to make. I hadn't gone more than 100m onto the dunes when I saw my first Small Heath:



As ever, they were troublesome to photograph, choosing to settle in areas where grass blades tended to obstruct the view:



Pleased to say I counted 22 individuals, which augurs well for better numbers when they hit their peak.

I climbed the limestone hill for the first time at this site, and here are a couple of views from the top.

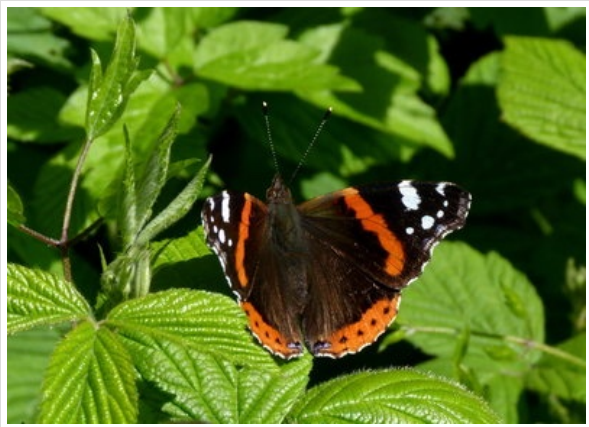
This first one is looking NE, with the woodland glade clearly visible cutting between the pine trees:

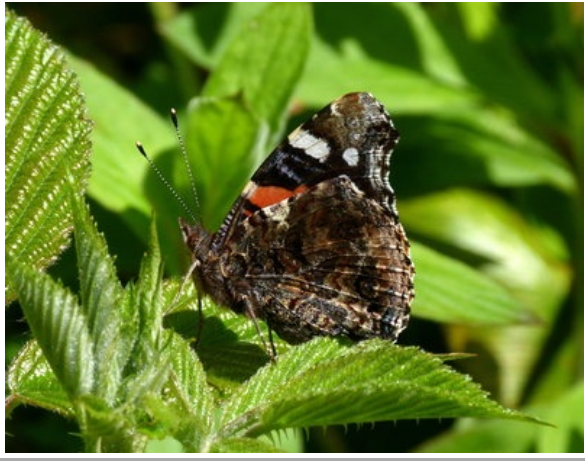


This one is looking west and out to the open sea:



The glade itself was still buzzing with butterflies, although Holly Blues were absent this time. I did see this fresh Red Admiral though:





Brimstones were surprisingly numerous again. They've had a fantastic spring:



Some males still clearly think there are virgin females around:



Orange Tips are on the wane, but I reckon I still saw a dozen plus:



Other species seen were Brown Argus, Dingy Skipper, Peacock, Green Veined White & Speckled Wood. Strangely though, there were no Common Blues.

Re: David M

by Pauline, 12-May-19 06:25 AM GMT

Stunning views David. I do miss living right next to the coast. When I left the NE it didn't have much going for it but the coastline up there is some of the best around imo.

Re: David M

by David M, 12-May-19 04:05 PM GMT

Yes, Pauline, coastal sites are always scenic, especially if there are a few hills nearby.

Sunday 12th May - Small Blue...

Encouraging signs today that butterfly numbers are increasing. However there are still things which are puzzling me, and two of those occurred during my two and a half hour trip to Crymlyn Burrows on the Swansea coast.

This is a great site for Small Blue, and it was the commonest species seen today with 40-50 spotted:





By contrast, Common Blues were practically absent. I saw just three, one of them being a female which I thought would signal plenty of males. Not to be, sadly.

I fortuitously managed to bag this image when a Small Blue gatecrashed this male's chosen perch:



The other puzzle was the dearth of Small Heaths. Usually, they number well into the dozens and having seen 22 yesterday at a coastal site just 15 miles away, I reckoned there would be plenty. There were just 3 though.

Dingy Skippers were absent too, but Brown Argus, which usually appears here in ones and twos, numbered 7 or 8, which may even be the best return I've ever had for them here:



The other pleasant statistic came in the form of 14 Small Coppers, which is very good going indeed. This one had a pronounced tail spike:



This female, with a hint of *caeruleopunctata* blue, was on an egg laying mission (saw one being deposited on dock) and was very accommodating:



Still good numbers of Brimstones and Orange Tips, whilst other species seen in low numbers were Large, Small & Green Veined Whites, Speckled Wood and Peacock.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 12-May-19 05:34 PM GMT

Lovely Butterflies David, not seen any of those yet CB, etc, but hope fully will before long , your shots will keep me going 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by Pauline, 12-May-19 08:21 PM GMT

Evening David. Pleased to see you caught up with the Dingy Skippers at last.... and with 40-50 Small Blues, well that must have been a great opportunity to observe interaction between them. I've never seen that many in one place 🍷

Re: David M

by Andrew555, 13-May-19 01:48 PM GMT

Great reports David, and lovely images. I like your Dingys especially, very nice. 😊

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 13-May-19 06:59 PM GMT

Looks like things are getting going nicely down in South Wales David. I love that shot of the Small Blue and Common Blue together 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: David M

by David M, 16-May-19 02:22 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments, all. Yes, things are properly on the move here now. In fact, it's probably the best time of the season here.

Thursday 16th May 2019 - Marsh Fritillary....

I hadn't expected Marsh Fritillary to be quite on the wing yet, but given the change in weather from tomorrow, I decided to spend a little time on Fairwood Common, near my home, as I wouldn't have the chance again until my return from the Pyrenees at the end of the month. I'm delighted to say that I was wrong; they HAVE emerged, and all four seen were gleaming fresh:



This is the habitat in which they were seen:



Re: David M

by Maximus, 16-May-19 08:09 PM GMT

That's a lovely fresh Marsh Fritillary, David 😊 The habitat appears very different to the chalk downland where I normally see them. I hope to take a trip out to see some very soon!

Re: David M

by David M, 17-May-19 07:50 PM GMT

Thanks, Mike. Yes, the name 'marsh' fritillary can be a little confusing in some places, but here in south Wales they all prefer boggy terrain!

Thursday 16th May 2019 - Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary....

As well as Marsh fritillaries, I was also fortunate enough to find a solitary Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary. It's unusual to see these before the ragged robin is in flower, and I reckon that is several days away:



Green Hairstreaks were numerous, probably around three dozen:



Their biggest concentration was in this sheltered bluebell patch:



A Peacock, a Small White, a Small Heath and two male Common Blues were seen too:



Re: David M

by millerd, 17-May-19 10:21 PM GMT

A Small Pearl now, David - I do like that underside... 😊 Something else to start looking for, though whichever set I go for requires a journey. I envy you having them (and the Marshies) relatively close to you. 🚗 😊

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 17-May-19 11:46 PM GMT

Thanks, Dave. Yes, it's good to have this pair within 10 minutes of my front door. However, unlike you I have to travel 2 hours+ for the chalk grassland species. 😊

Swings and roundabouts....

Re: David M

by keving, 18-May-19 07:53 AM GMT

David,

I like the SBPF that you found. I'm off to Sussex on holiday next weekend and this has wetted my appetite as this species is top of my list for that week. Please let the weather gods look down on me.

Regards
Kev

Re: David M

by trevor, 18-May-19 09:43 AM GMT

Swings and roundabouts indeed David, but myself and I suspect a few more on here are a little envious of the variety of Fritillaries you have on your doorstep. Particularly the High Brown, they are now a very long way from Sussex.

Great report and images.

Have an enjoyable trip to the Pyrenees.
Trevor.

Re: David M

by David M, 23-May-19 09:47 PM GMT

trevor wrote:

Swings and roundabouts indeed David, but myself and I suspect a few more on here are a little envious of the variety of Fritillaries you have on your doorstep. Particularly the High Brown, they are now a very long way from Sussex.

Great report and images.

Have an enjoyable trip to the Pyrenees.
Trevor.

Thanks, Trevor. Yes, we're good for Fritillaries; not so good for Emperors and Admirals. 😊

The Pyrenees are currently **very** enjoyable, btw. 😊

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 24-May-19 03:20 PM GMT

Hi! David , Great shots of the Pearls and the Hair Streaks I keep hoping I'll catch up with them once I'm on the move, that Hair Streak on the Bluebell is lovely 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 01-Jun-19 08:28 PM GMT

Friday 31st May 2019 – encouraging numbers....

I ventured out onto Fairwood Common between 3pm and 430pm to see how Marsh & Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries were doing in this relatively unspoiled area of the Gower peninsula.

In an hour and a half, I counted 75 Marsh Frits and 39 SPBFs, along with small numbers of Common Blue, Green Hairstreak & Small Heath.

Marshies were commonest in the areas with longer grass:



I kept looking for an amenable female, but sadly all seen were active males, who were combing every inch of the habitat looking for a mate.

The male Small Pearls were doing likewise, although I later found a sheltered area where both females and males were content to put the brakes on and nectar for a while.

This was not an uncommon sight:



Eventually, I latched on to a placid female who obliged with an underwing shot:



Re: David M

by David M, 02-Jun-19 10:40 AM GMT

Saturday 1st June 2019 - Finding the females....

After yesterday's glut of male Marsh Fritillaries on Fairwood Common, I wanted to return to see if I could find any females.

As people know, these are far more approachable than the males and are larger and more brightly coloured.

I managed to find a rather worn one in the first 10 minutes or so, but it wasn't till I was almost back to my car that I discovered this gem, who was

surprisingly mint fresh:



Yet again, there were good numbers of both Marsh and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries about. If anything, the SPBFs were more numerous, with a sheltered section replete with bramble flowers harbouring double figure numbers.

Hopefully they will go on to have a successful breeding season.

Re: David M

by David M, 06-Jun-19 10:48 PM GMT

Thursday 6th June - Meadow Brown

Summer is here! I saw my first Meadow Browns during an hour and a half's visit to Whiteford Burrows on the NW Gower coast this afternoon.

This was the sheltered area where I saw the first:



There were 3 in total, but all were flighty males who were not interested in posing for the camera:



Butterfly numbers weren't great. Small Heaths were the most prominent species with around two dozen:



About a dozen Common Blues were seen, including this mating pair, which, for a short while, both had their wings open:



There were about 8 Small Blues, a handful of worn Brown Argus, three Brimstones, two Red Admirals, a Speckled Wood and a Dingy Skipper.

Re: David M

by Pauline, 07-Jun-19 06:33 AM GMT

That looks like another Blue female David. Did you see any brown ones? Well done with the Meadow Brown shot. I have seen 2 and failed miserably both times 😞

Re: David M

by David M, 07-Jun-19 10:34 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

That looks like another Blue female David. Did you see any brown ones?

That was the only female I saw, Pauline! I'll have a look for them again this weekend (weather permitting).

Re: David M

by David M, 09-Jun-19 06:51 PM GMT

Sunday 9th June 2019 - Large Skipper

Today saw marginal weather conditions for butterflies, but I nevertheless ventured out to Crymlyn Burrows on the Swansea coast and stayed for just over an hour.



Temperatures weren't high enough for airborne activity, but it didn't take me long to spot my first UK Large Skipper of 2019 resting amongst the grass:





Surprisingly, the next two seen were both females. Normally, I see 1 female for about every 30 males with this species:



A few Small Heaths took to the air when the cloud lifted slightly, and there were several Small Blues and Brown Argus about too. I saw about 10 Common Blues, including two females. In keeping with the current theme of 'blue' females, this one very much belonged in that category:



Sad that the Orange Tips have gone for another year. This site seems rather bereft without them. In another week or two however, Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Dark Green Fritillaries will fill that void.

Re: David M

by David M, 09-Jun-19 09:47 PM GMT

Goodbye Marshies...

Things brightened up this afternoon, so I thought I'd have an hour or so on Fairwood Common near where I live.

With a 10 day trip to Italy looming, this was my last chance to see both Marsh and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries in the UK this year.

The count was dismal in comparison to 9 days ago. Just 6 Marsh Frits and 8 Small Pearls were seen, in contrast to the 75 and 39 respectively just over a week ago.

That said, things are constantly renewing themselves, and I spotted my first summer brood Small Tortoiseshell, looking ever so fresh and vivid:



The next time I potter around here, the place will have been taken over by Dark Green Fritillaries, Ringlets and Meadow Browns. Soon after, Hedge Browns will join the party and we'll be over the other side of the hill into late summer! 😊

Re: David M

by philm63, 10-Jun-19 09:36 AM GMT

You are getting all the species I am still waiting for David, nice group of shots. Phil

Re: David M

by millerd, 10-Jun-19 08:24 PM GMT

That certainly is a striking Small Tortoiseshell, David – the black areas are larger than normal on the forewings I think, which is what makes it stand out. 😊

Another blue female Common Blue too – I think there are more in the first brood than the second, and this may possibly be linked to cooler temperatures when in the pupa. This sort of temperature variation affects the colours of quite a few species – maybe this one too.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

by Jack Harrison, 11-Jun-19 06:44 AM GMT

{quote}Another blue female Common Blue too – I think there are more in the first brood than the second, and this may possibly be linked to cooler

temperatures when in the pupa. This sort of temperature variation affects the colours of quite a few species – maybe this one too. Not quite sure about that. Around 2009/2010 when I lived in Cambridgeshire (can't recall which year) a significant proportion of a bumper second brood were the blue females. As a parallel, in some of the great years in the 1970s, *valesina* female SW Fritillaries were numerous.

My hypothesis is that blue female Common Blues, *valesina* SW Frits and other unusual forms are always present in the gene pool but the early stages are less robust and suffer higher mortality and only survive to adults in the most favourable conditions.

If my hypothesis has any validity then this could be tested by captive breeding where mortality of early stages should be less than in the wild. Blue female Common Blues might be in be proportionally more numerous regardless of temperature in the bred stock.

Jack

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-19 08:52 AM GMT

Hi! David, you've posted some lovely Butterflies recently, I love the Small Pearls also the Marsh Fritt's, have you been lucky with the weather? It's not been good up here in the North and we only got a day and half of Sun on the break Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 13-Jun-19 08:57 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

That certainly is a striking Small Tortoiseshell, David – the black areas are larger than normal on the forewings I think, which is what makes it stand out..

Yes, they are a bit more extensive, Dave, and I thought the ground colour was a little paler as well, so perhaps this one had a bit of a temperature shock during pupation?

Goldie M wrote:

have you been lucky with the weather? It's not been good up here in the North and we only got a day and half of Sun on the break

It's not been too good, Goldie, but I've managed to get out whenever the clouds have thinned and the sun has made an appearance. All is rarely ever lost even here in Wales! 😊

Re: David M

by ernie f, 18-Jun-19 09:55 AM GMT

David – It never ceases to amaze me the variety of female Common Blues you can get. The recent one you found is a cracker.

Re: David M

by David M, 20-Jun-19 08:50 PM GMT

David – It never ceases to amaze me the variety of female Common Blues you can get. The recent one you found is a cracker.

It's getting to the stage where I yearn for a uniformly brown specimen, ernie!

Seems like *icarus* females are getting bluer by the year in the UK, which is in direct contrast to those I see on the continent which are usually brown or at best brown with a smattering of blue.

Re: David M

by David M, 27-Jun-19 05:59 PM GMT

Thursday 27th June 2019 – High Brown Fritillary....

With another trip to the continent looming imminently, I didn't have a great deal of time today to devote to butterflies, so I was up extremely early and arrived at Old Castle Down, near Ewenny in Glamorgan, at 8.25am.



The beginning of the flight season for High Browns is always tricky, since it is the males that emerge first and they are all supercharged, whizzing around constantly looking for females (same with Dark Greens).

I was a little disappointed that I only saw 11 large Frits in total, and of those only 3 actually settled. Of these one was Dark Green but the other two were High Brown:





Of the remainder, I'm pretty confident four were High Browns, but sunny, warm, windy conditions like today, early in the flight season, are not the best in which to determine precise numbers.

I saw my first Ringlets of the year too:



Other species present were decent numbers of Painted Ladies & Large Skippers, Meadow Brown, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood & Small Heath.

On my way back I popped in to Glanymor Park, near Loughor, hoping to see White Letter Hairstreaks. There were a few tumbling around the top of the ash trees, but the wind was so strong that even when they settled up there it was impossible to photograph them.

How I wish I had a site where they routinely come down to ground level to nectar! 😞

Re: David M

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

Hi David

I'll swap you a WLH or 3 for that last shot of a High Brown Frit? A lovely butterfly and you certainly have done it justice. It looks so velvety I just want to stroke it 🍷

Re: David M

by trevor, 27-Jun-19 08:44 PM GMT

Well done with the High Browns, David. Envious image too. Lets hope your local population is at least stable and not in decline.

Apparently there was a population on Ashdown Forest up until the 70's, just up the road from my home.

Trevor.

Re: David M

by Allan.W., 27-Jun-19 09:08 PM GMT

Nice High Browns David !..... Hoping for one or two at Aish Tor ,the week after next , long gone from my neck of the woods (Kent ,around 1970) Regards Allan.W.

Re: David M

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jun-19 11:23 PM GMT

Congratulations on your High Browns, David. Let us hope you sightings are just the start, and numbers will have built up by time you get back from France

Speaking of which, good luck over there. Let us hope that thistle patch turns up a few more High Browns...

Re: David M

by ernie f, 28-Jun-19 08:38 AM GMT

Dave, your last High Brown pic is my favourite. Great stuff. Not a butterfly I have ever seen and maybe never will. I don't think there are any sites for it within a 2 hour drive of where I live (which is my limit currently).

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 28-Jun-19 11:20 AM GMT

Hi! David, lovely shots of the High Brown, I've been feeling sorry for myself lately 😞 just thinking what I'm missing, your shots make me feel better 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 29-Jun-19 08:46 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

..I'll swap you a WLH or 3 for that last shot of a High Brown Frit? A lovely butterfly and you certainly have done it justice. It looks so velvety I just want to stroke it

Done! At least WLH are approachable! These High Browns (the males at least) are like racing cars.

I think the individual I photographed had just emerged as it was on the ground and not doing much. I spent about 10 minutes with it gradually working my way through the bracken to get reasonably close.

Re: David M

by kevlng, 29-Jun-19 08:00 PM GMT

David,

Nice photos the HBF. This is a species I have seen only once in the UK (many years ago in Exmoor NP). Timings of my holidays generally mean I can't get down to the west country at this time of the year. At least I have your photos to enjoy.

Regards
Kev

Re: David M

by David M, 04-Jul-19 06:19 AM GMT

Kev, Goldie, ernie, Mark, Allan, Trevor, thanks for the comments. I am indeed fortunate not to have to travel far for this extremely rare species.

The early signs are that 2019 is a decent season for them, with better numbers than last year being picked up on the transects. In fact, more were being recorded than Dark Greens!

Re: David M

by David M, 14-Jul-19 01:56 PM GMT

Sunday 14th July 2019 – High summer....

An extremely pleasant early morning saw me down at Whiteford Burrows on the Gower coast by 9.15.



It wasn't long before I saw my first UK Marbled White of the year:



Shortly afterwards I spotted my first 'home soil' Small Skipper too:



I only saw around a dozen Marbled Whites, but the dunes were thronged with Meadow Browns, whereas Ringlets were very common close to the shrub line.

One very welcome passer-by came in the shape of this beautiful female Dark Green Fritillary:



Other species seen were Small Heath, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral & Large White. No Graylings or Hedge Browns yet!

Re: David M

by Pauline, 14-Jul-19 02:01 PM GMT

Did you set out just to make me green with envy D? That female positively gleams – what a great shot 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 14-Jul-19 09:26 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Did you set out just to make me green with envy D? That female positively gleams – what a great shot

Thanks, Pauline....and no, I didn't set out to induce envy. In fact, I had to cheat a little to get the underside image as the butterfly was continually basking with wings fully open. It took a plucked blade of grass and a gentle 'tickle' to irritate her enough to flick her wings open and shut, whereupon I took a series of images and one of them just happened to be with her wings fully closed.

Re: David M

by ernie f, 15-Jul-19 06:11 PM GMT

Dave – Well I've heard of Horse Whisperers but Butterfly Ticklers is a new one on me. 😊

Re: David M

by Pauline, 16-Jul-19 06:20 AM GMT

I usually wait for passing insects to perform that task for me but I'll remember that tip 😊 . The coastal shot looks just how I like it – not a soul in sight but are there miles of golden sands and dunes where shelter from the winds can be sought? Sadly, I've never been to Wales 😞

Re: David M

by Sylvie_h, 17-Jul-19 01:22 PM GMT

Hi David,

I was at Whiteford on Sunday 14th, was there also early, I am surprised we did not bump into one another (then again Whiteford is a big place). I saw one Gatekeeper in a very good condition (my first of the year) and 2 humming bird hawkmoths searching over bedstraw (they could have been egg laying), Dark green Fritillary and Marbled white (my first of the year also), numerous Meadow browns and ringlets. I saw some very territorial graylings (I only know them from 2 areas in Whiteford).
Whiteford is a very beautiful place to be at this time of year, there are so many flowers ! it is also very interesting for other insects (soldierflies and bees especially).
Sylvie

Re: David M

by David M, 18-Jul-19 09:29 PM GMT

Sadly, Sylvie, I saw no-one at all except for two dog walkers, so I guess our respective paths were far apart. I'm glad you saw a Hedge Brown. As for the Graylings, I usually see them on the limestone crag near the clay pigeon shooting area or in the gully nearest the woodland once you walk out onto the dunes.

It remains a beautiful site at all times of year, but it is undoubtedly at its best in April and early May, before the bracken starts to strangle the lower growing plants.

Re: David M

by David M, 21-Jul-19 03:48 PM GMT

Sunday 21st July 2019 - Castle Meadows...

Having stayed in Abergavenny since Friday evening, I decided to pay a visit to Castle Meadows early on Sunday to see if I could find any Essex Skippers. Conditions were marginal, but I felt confident that the orchard at the top of the meadow would harbour a few butterflies:



Sure enough, there were quite a few, including my first Hedge Browns of 2019:





Not long after, I found my first of three Essex Skippers:



It's always nice when you get them perched like this one:



There were plenty of Meadow Browns about, with this female having attractive twin ocelli:



Then, along came a surprise – a Marbled White. In 15 years I'd never hitherto seen one in Abergavenny. It would be most welcome if they were extending their range:



Other butterflies seen were Small White, Speckled Wood, Green Veined White and Peacock:



Re: David M

by David M, 25-Jul-19 04:57 PM GMT

Thursday 25th July 2019 - Grayling...

I usually don't get much time to devote to this lovely species due to my travel commitments, but today's glorious morning afforded me an opportunity, and I was at Mumbles Head on the Swansea coast just after 8am:



I only saw two whilst up there, but the little bit of cloud obscuring the sun, which I had initially found aggravating, allowed a close approach to the first individual:

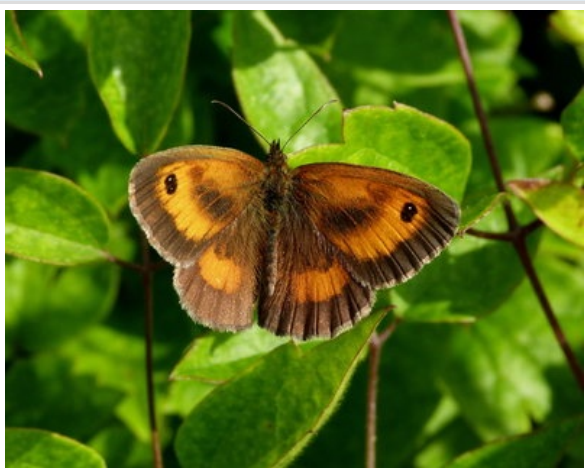




This headland affords lovely views across Swansea Bay:



Hedge Browns were the commonest species in this spot, with upwards of 40 seen:



I then crossed the road to the rocky knoll at the back of Bracelet Bay, where I found another 5 Graylings. Here's the view once I got onto the grassy slope at the back:



Other species seen were Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Small Skipper, Red Admiral, Small White, Common Blue (two females) and Peacock.

Re: David M

by Janet Turnbull, 10-Aug-19 11:27 PM GMT

I do like the Mumbles coast – it was a favourite holiday destination when the children were young. I wasn't into butterflies then though! It will be interesting to see if the Marbled Whites increase in number at all.
Janet

Re: David M

by David M, 13-Aug-19 06:14 PM GMT

Janet Turnbull wrote:

I do like the Mumbles coast – it was a favourite holiday destination when the children were young...

It's a lovely area, Janet.....if only we had a bit more sunshine! 😞

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 13-Aug-19 09:33 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Graylings David , I never seem to get them in a back ground that shows their colour like that, mine always seem to meld into stones etc 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by Matsukaze, 14-Aug-19 09:11 PM GMT

A lovely stretch of coast indeed.



Re: David M

by David M, 15-Aug-19 10:47 PM GMT

Thursday 15th August 2019 – Late summer butterflies....

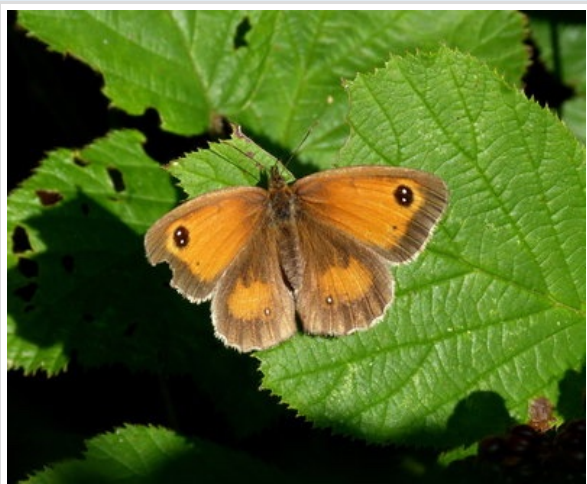
My first outing once home from European travels is always a little underwhelming, but after a 10 day hiatus, I was glad to be back in green fields surrounded by nature again.

I visited West Williamston in Pembrokeshire on a sunny if windy day, and reacquainted myself with a few familiar species.

First up was Speckled Wood, which always seems to greet me on my arrival in the car park here:



Hedge Browns were still around in reasonable numbers, although all were part worn at best:



I saw three lovely Small Coppers:



Walking onto the estuary, I was immediately aware that there were good numbers of Painted Ladies, all busy nectaring on the sea asters. I probably saw at least three dozen:



It was nice to find three Small Tortoiseshells amongst them. They've had an appalling year in south Wales in 2019:



A walk into one of the woodland glades saw a handful of tatty Silver Washed Fritillaries:



By contrast, this Peacock was immaculate:



A solitary Large White was seen flying strongly near the high tide area, and several Green Veined Whites were also observed, including this attractive female:



Several Common Blues were about, but this one initially gave me quite a shock. At first, I thought it had to be some stray male Silver Studded Blue; that was until I saw the orange lunules – it was a female *icarus*, one of the most bizarre I've ever seen:





A beaten up Meadow Brown was also recorded, but overall butterfly numbers were rather disappointing (except for the Painted Ladies).

Re: David M

by David M, 18-Aug-19 10:17 AM GMT

Thursday 15th August 2019 - Brown Hairstreak....

With few reports of egg-laying female Brown Hairstreaks around the country so far, I was prepared to draw a blank at the Pembrokeshire site, and instead was happy simply to revel in the dozen+ other species to be found in this serene location.

However, at just gone midday, I spotted what I fancied was a *betulae* amongst mature blackthorn some yards away from me. I had to wait for her to fly before I could locate her, and thankfully she plonked herself down right near me and remained there for at least 10 minutes:





I also caught her in the act of ovipositing:



In this part of Wales, numbers usually peak around August Bank Holiday, so weather permitting I shall be back to check on them again.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 18-Aug-19 05:01 PM GMT

Those are cracking shots of the HS David 🍷🍷 I've yet to see one 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by millerd, 24-Aug-19 10:16 PM GMT

A lovely unblemished Brown Hairstreak, David. A rare sighting in this season which really hasn't been very good for them. 😊🍷 I also like that blue female Common Blue – I haven't seen one quite like that (they do vary a lot) and nothing so blue since the spring brood. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: David M

by David M, 24-Aug-19 11:26 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie/Dave.

Yes, Brown Hairstreaks are behaving strangely this year and there appear to be fewer of them than normal. It'll be interesting to see whether winter egg counts reflect the scarcity of the adults.

Re: David M

by trevor, 25-Aug-19 08:09 AM GMT

I would think that your immaculate female Brown Hairstreak would qualify as your butterfly of the year. It has probably just emerged, and has yet to fly to the tree tops to find a mate.

Brilliant images too,
Trevor.

PS. A very fine ' blue ' female Common Blue as well.

Re: David M

by David M, 26-Aug-19 09:37 PM GMT

trevor wrote:

I would think that your immaculate female Brown Hairstreak would qualify as your butterfly of the year. It has probably just emerged, and has yet to fly to the tree tops to find a mate.

I saw her lay at least one egg, Trevor, so I suspect she'd been out a few days at least.

How she managed to keep so shipshape is another question!

Re: David M

by Neil Freeman, 27-Aug-19 07:50 PM GMT

That female Brown Hairstreak is a beauty David 🍷 😊

Nice one,

Neil.

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 29-Aug-19 11:19 AM GMT

Hi! David, about those Large Heath, I know there's a peat bog at Pilling but I'm not sure if that's one of the sites 🤔 Goldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 29-Aug-19 08:56 PM GMT

Neil Freeman wrote:

That female Brown Hairstreak is a beauty David

Thanks, Neil. Only one I've see thus far in 2019. 😊

Goldie wrote:

..about those Large Heath, I know there's a peat bog at Pilling but I'm not sure if that's one of the sites

Astley Moss in Manchester and Risley Moss near Warrington, Goldie.

Re: David M

by ernie f, 29-Aug-19 09:59 PM GMT

Love those Brostreak pics Dave. All three are perfect but the way you have captured the glow underneath in pic 2 is amazing.

Re: David M

by David M, 31-Aug-19 05:09 PM GMT

Thanks, ernie. They were taken moments apart...and it is (sadly) the only Brown Hairstreak I've thus far seen in 2019. 😊

At least she was a mint specimen.

Re: David M

by Katrina, 31-Aug-19 09:34 PM GMT

Lovely vivid colours on the brostreak photos!

Re: David M

by David M, 01-Sep-19 09:06 PM GMT

Katrina wrote:

Lovely vivid colours on the brostreak photos!

Thanks, Katrina. She posed very well, I must say. 😊

Re: David M

by Goldie M, 02-Sep-19 03:21 PM GMT

Hi! David, I've no idea where the sites are but thanks for the info about the LH, I'll have to look things up for next yearGoldie 😊

Re: David M

by David M, 06-Sep-19 01:43 PM GMT

Saturday 24th August 2019 – Early stages....

I took an hour out this morning to check Fairwood Common to see if I could find any Marsh Fritillary larval webs.



It was easier than I thought. I found about ten in total. This one had plenty of larvae active within it:



Re: David M

by David M, 08-Sep-19 09:46 PM GMT

Monday 26th August 2019 – Betulae blank....

What a stroke of luck – perfect weather on late August Bank Holiday. 20c, light winds and sunny skies. Surely a cue for several Brown Hairstreaks in Pembrokeshire?

Sadly not. The only *betulae* I saw were in the form of two ova:



I think this is the first time I have ever failed to see one when visiting in the second half of August on a fine, sunny day. Given that I saw only one 11 days prior on 15th August it's all rather worrying, with Ash dieback confirmed on the site which might affect this species negatively.

In addition, the best place for them by the car park is no longer grazed by horses, meaning much of the blackthorn is strangled by grasses:



That said, other butterflies were on the wing. The last few faded Hedge Browns, for example:



Speckled Woods were fairly plentiful near the woodland edges, whilst three Small Coppers were also seen.

On the foreshore, there was plenty of activity with at least 50 Painted Ladies nectaring from the copious sea asters:



Pleasingly, there were at least 20 Small Tortoiseshells doing likewise. It's a few years since I saw so many here. Perhaps I just caught them on the right day.



Other species seen were Peacock, Common Blue, Small & Green Veined White.

Re: David M

by NickMorgan, 08-Sep-19 11:19 PM GMT

It seems so hard to get the balance between over-grazing and under-grazing right! Add to that the various tree diseases that are spreading across the country and there can be a worrying lack of decent habitat for butterflies. They do appear to be quite resilient and they manage to seek out small clumps of appropriate food plants.

The valley where the Northern Brown Argus are above my house used to be grazed by sheep and it was always a bit of a concern that they may eat the Rockrose. Now the area has been planted with trees. They are not near the Rockrose, but the valley is no longer grazed, so the worry is that the Heather and Bracken may smother the Rockrose! Luckily there are regular surveys of all the suitable habitats in the area, so action can be taken when they are under threat.

Re: David M

by trevor, 09-Sep-19 08:21 AM GMT

Good to see your Small Tortoiseshell, I saw one last week, bringing my East Sussex total to five for this year so far. Hope their numbers will bounce back in the future.

Trevor.

Re: David M

by David M, 10-Sep-19 08:47 PM GMT

NickMorgan wrote:

It seems so hard to get the balance between over-grazing and under-grazing right! Add to that the various tree diseases that are spreading across