

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 01-Jan-19 12:28 PM GMT

The "metaphorical bang" of a Mallow skipper would've been the perfect end but hey, what a week ? :shock: 50 species, truly amazing and with others like the Tree frog dropping in ... great memories 🙌.

I understand where you're coming from driving in a strange city, it can be very tough at times 😞. Turning into 3 lanes of oncoming traffic in Mons Belgium was one particular hairy moment for me 😞. Fortunately, we had no hassles at the ferry port. The guard had a cursory look in our boot stuffed to the gunnels (no room for a stowaway there) and waved us on. I could imagine being forced to wait in the car-port with armed police running around wasn't a particularly nice moment 😞 ... but all part of the adventure 😊😊.

I look forward to seeing your butterfly life-list some time so I can see where the huge gaps are in mine ... those gaps guaranteed to grow I'm sure 🙌😊, even in the unlikely event I do get to see Large Chequered Skipper and Large Copper next year.

And your Lisbon posts too 😊

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jan-19 08:57 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Glad you liked the 2018 Calendar, 2019 will start soon I'm a little behind as usual 😊😊 I've also got my holiday report from Lisbon 2016 still to post 😊 – although it was a bit bereft of butterflies 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 I hope to get back there not next year but the year after that finger crossed and Brexit willing 😊 It was a quite a contrast with butterflying in the UK both in terms of the range of species seen and the numbers.

Cheers Philzoid 😊 I reckon you're probably a few ahead of me – I've only got 3 Ringlets and you've got more Skippers and Blues I'm sure plus you've also got Green-striped White(?) 🙌🙌 The best thing about the holiday was that all of the species baring the Large Copper and the Geranium Bronze were seen in and around Elvensong or up at my '(Foreign but still)Local Patch' 😊😊 At least the Bomb incident meant that the holiday really did finish with a Bang! 😊😊

Have a goodun

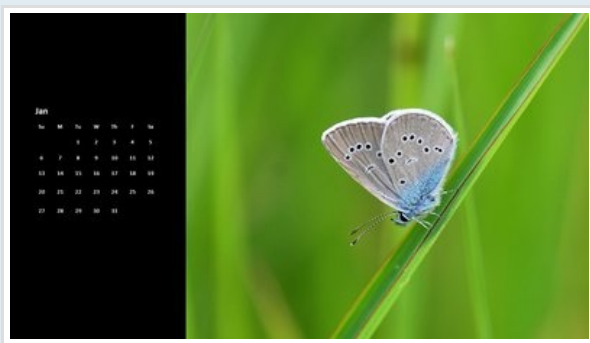
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Jan-19 03:20 PM GMT

January 2019

Only a couple of months to go now! 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Jan-19 06:13 PM GMT

Laverstock 17-09-2018

It was with some sadness that I took Little L to her tutoring today as it was the last 'proper' session. I will miss that pre-session chats with L's Tutor, those 10 minutes or so of putting the world to rights and sorting out the education system I find very soul salving and the tutor and her family are lovely people so it's always nice just chatting spending time in their company. 😊

As I walked for the penultimate time up the Down I mused over the forthcoming change in my routine my sombre tone mood wasn't matched by the weather. There was a stiff breeze but the sun shone and it was surprisingly warm, almost hot. However I didn't see a butterfly across the whole Down not even a white until I was almost at the Gully when something large and orange flew up from the grass and zigged and zagged up the Down. I followed it trying to work out what it was as the size and less so the colour reminded me of a Hedge Brown. As I made the final, slow approach I could see that it was actually a huge Small Copper. I'd gotten used to seeing miniscule butterflies over the summer but not here it was a giant.



After this encounter my mood lightened and I started working the lower slopes that lead up to the Gully. There was a conglomeration of Wasps around a rabbit hole for some reason and they seemed quite agitated so I swiftly moved on. Then I hit the mother lode, a lovely seam of Copper all on the left-hand side of the Gully. I worked around this working my way up and down and along and back to the start and round and round for a good half an hour. Over that time I reckon that I found at least 6 individuals some of whom I came across a second or third time on my sorties. They were recognisable; there was a large (female) with small marking, another (male) that was half the size of the large female, there was 'torn guy', a 2 badger and a four badger and there was the 'type' specimen. They buzzed around here and there, the large one made it clear to the smaller male in no uncertain terms that she wasn't interested though not by strutting, just vibrating her fore wings. She also embarked on a little hind wing rolling later (at least I think it was).







I also notched up a faded Common Blue, a pair of Blues in cop, a female Adonis, 2 Small heath and a Meadow Brown. But I saved space on the memory card mainly for the Coppers. They were great company and watching their antics kept me entertained, eased the stress from my shoulders and cleared my mind. I left the Down a new man thanks to those fabulous little guys and gals.



Only one more session, seriously what I am going to do after that? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Jan-19 11:06 PM GMT

Punchbowl 24-09-2018

Being back at work in full flow for almost 3 weeks meant that the heady days of France, the summer and even the Laverstock trips were becoming a hazy memory. This day was forecast to be dry and sunny with a gentle breeze; perfect conditions in fact for some late butterflies and a chance for the family to blow away the cobwebs. Much of the morning however was spent waiting or the cloud to lift and the breeze to soften but as this pre-midday drear was forecast we set out hopefully...but with coast packed just in case. A good job as the BBC once again proved how great they are with rubbish weather forecasts. They can accurately predict rain, wind and cloud when it's bad but it seems that their predictive modelling goes all to pot the minute they have to forecast sun or clement weather.

We pressed on up the hill on the first side of the horseshoe with the damp not penetrating our coats like the bitter wind was able to. Honestly it felt more like February than September, no mellow fruitfulness today just a stark reminder of what's to come. A gentle nudge in the ribs to the memory

"we'll have to get through bad times before the good".

At the half way point we stopped for a snack and watched a huge group of gulls pass over and on and down the deep chasm of the Punchbowl. Nearer to hand there was a Door Beetle but no blues or whites unfortunately. So we carried on slightly dejectedly and it wasn't until we were almost at the end of the walk that I needed to brandish my camera again. Amid the merest of slithers of sun, the very weakest Rai d'Or, a Red Admiral slowly bimbled up high on the Bramble. A few record shots were all that I could manage before it shot off casing the elusive sun.



So that was it - hopefully not the final trip of the season as it was disappointing; mostly because I feel into the trap of actually believing the weather report - lesson learnt!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 09-Jan-19 03:49 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, love your shots of the Small Copper, for the first time last year after years of the odd shot of them I saw absolutely loads, I think they timed their arrival just right. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Jan-19 07:42 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 They seemed to have a great year last year, long may it continue as they break up the 'monotony' of blues and browns nicely 🤔 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 10-Jan-19 12:03 PM GMT

That's nothing compared to the monotony of not seeing any Butterflies.
But locally there are some Snowdrops and Daffodils out, and the evenings
have started to draw out.

Patience is required!
All the best,

Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Andrew555, 11-Jan-19 06:24 PM GMT

Really enjoyed your reports from France Wurzel, you sure had an embarrassment of riches over there! Fantastic stuff. 🍷 🍷 😊

Cheers

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Jan-19 01:41 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I long for the monotony of blues! 😊

Cheers Andrew 😊 It was fantastic but threw up one problem...!m itching to get back across the channel and continue exploring 😊

Some things afoot at work – or not...05-10-2018

So after a very busy few weeks there was a bit of an upturn in the weather and so fingers crossed I'd be able to get out over the weekend for a late butterfly fix. However I didn't have to wait as long as that as one of the pupils brought in an unusual bug for me to have a look at. At first I thought it was just a Dock Shield Bug but it was more colourful than that with some lovely intricate markings. Luckily a few days later Ernie identified it as a Squash Beetle. I was so busy with the photographing that I almost missed out of the break-time cookies...almost. 😊





After work I left at the same time as the Science Technician and as we walked through the ICT room heading speedily to our cars she almost trod on what she thought was a plastic toy snake. Only it moved which was a bit a shock. I kept an eye on it (well took a few shots) while she collected a cardboard box. It was almost immaculate with only the head looking a little odd as the old skin hadn't sloughed off yet. We then encouraged it to slither into the box so that we didn't have to handle it which could have stressed it out and it would have released a noxious substance in defence. We then carried it to the 'Wildlife' area and let it loose in the leaf litter. It didn't take it long to realise that it was free to go and thankfully so we were; off to enjoy the weekend.





Hopefully there would be a few more butterflies from the weekend...
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 12-Jan-19 01:50 PM GMT

Very brave of you Wurzel, when we went to Foulshaw Moss last year we kept clear of Snakes but we did watch one slither into the Moss from near the board walk, they warn you not to go off the board walk,(of course some did) Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Vince Massimo, 12-Jan-19 02:30 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, your beetle is a Western Conifer Seed Bug which is native to the USA, but is spreading and first appeared in the UK around 2007–2008. More details here: https://www.britishbugs.org.uk/heteroptera/Coreidae/leptoglossus_occidentalis.html

Yours is one of the best photos I have seen of one.

Vince

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Jan-19 08:43 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 That's the thing with having 'a duty of care' you have to take some of the risks on behalf of others – although I can't recall seeing 'snake wrangling' on the list of expected duties 😊😊

Cheers Vince 😊 I was quite chuffed with the shot, thanks for the ID, always good to have the proper lowdown on something 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Jan-19 11:38 PM GMT

Southbourne 07–10–2018

After a winters' day yesterday I drove down to Bournemouth in the hope that the colony still persisted in the microclimate at Southbourne and also that they hadn't been knocked out by the winds and rain and cool temperatures the day before. I dropped all three of the girls off near the Odeon and started for Southbourne. It had been a few years since I'd taken the particular road so I turned on SATNAV which turned out to be a damn good idea as the road I needed was closed for a Marathon. In the end I kept to the streets and ignored the SATNAV's insistent instructions to "Turn right" because every right turn was closed. After working through a labyrinth of streets I pulled up slightly further along the beach from where I'd intended but at least I was somewhere in the right neighbourhood!

I then made my way to the front and looking left then right set of right as that took me back towards Bournemouth. I was accompanied for most of the way by runners of various calibres. I still can't work out why it's called a fun run as all the people I saw looked tired, sweaty, miserable or positively suffering. Not one of them appeared even remotely cheerful let alone like they were having fun not even the bearded fellow in a pink Tu-tu. After a while I finally reached 'The Bistro on the Beach' and started up the footpath scanning the banks on either side of the path for anything yellow. I needn't have bothered as the temperature was still below double figures and despite the sun shining unfettered by the thin streaks of cloud it was still mighty chilly, so cold in fact that I was starting to lose the feeling in my fingertips. After spying some yellow flowers and a few dead leaves I gave it up as it was too cold and settled instead for a walk along the front. It felt good to be striding along back in Dorset.

As I reached the spot where I'd decided to turn around I noticed that my back was feeling much warmer than my front being bathed in the sun. I saw a few bees and more than a few mining bees on the exposed and weathered sandstone cliff faces. I turned round and started back, now with the sun warming my front side and even my fingertips were starting to thaw. I started noticing more wildlife; a few more bees, a crow, and then as I watched and listened to a collection of 4 'ticking' Stonechats a pair of Dartford Warblers materialised out of the scrub. This siting made my day and I started back with renewed vigor.



I'd reached the Bistro and so I set off up the cliff paths once again checking all the sources of nectar but the yellow things that I saw stayed dead leaves and flowers and not the butterfly I was hoping to see. Still cheered by the Dartfords I followed one of the paths right to the top and into the car park behind the Bistro. This was actually the spot that Dave had mentioned and so I scanned across the car park even more carefully. Something went up, it was a dead leaf surely? Nope it was a Cloudy. I watched with baited breath hoping that it would end its flight quickly and land soon. It did and I was able to get in for a few shots. Job done! Dave said they'd be here and they were cheers for the directions! 😊





I spent some time (well time for me but actually 10 minutes or so) watching it as it flew around and about never straying from the bank of the car park. The sun was quite strong by now almost to the extent that a coat wasn't necessary and the butterfly was acting accordingly. As I watched it it started to land in more and more exposed areas with fewer and fewer obstructions and shadows getting in the way of the shot. The flights also got longer each time and it started to stray away from the confines of the bank veering out across the barren tarmac of the car park, standing out vividly against the dull grey. Eventually I had to leave it and make my way back to the car to pick everyone up from the film so I wished the Cloudy luck and set off across the car park. As I strolled triumphantly across the car park I spied a smaller movement on the bank. As I approached closer it resolved into a Small Copper and a Blue Badger at that. Doubly chuffed I carried on strolling back to the car and made it back in time to pick the girls up.







After this we made a pit stop in Asda for Humus and rolls and then called in at the Waldorf Shop to take advantage of their picnic benches. Food eaten we started packing up and that's when I spied the biggest Fly Agaric that I've ever seen. This species of fungus is often portrayed as a comfy seat for a cheeky Imp or Pixie but this one was so large I think it would have been used as a nightclub!
I know that I only saw two butterflies all day but a cracking one all the same!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 15-Jan-19 08:07 PM GMT

Im glad to see your dedication and persistence paid off in the end, Wurzel, with that nice Cloudie and the bonus copper too. In the right conditions, it's a really reliable spot for the Yellow ones. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 16-Jan-19 08:41 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel,
Well done with your solitary Cloudie. Southbourne sounds, from what I've heard, like a fascinating site. I no longer consider the Brown Hairstreak to be the last new Butterfly of the year. As the BH fade, fresh Clouded Yellows appear, and take us well into Autumn.

Here's to the new season!
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 16-Jan-19 06:57 PM GMT

Lovely Cloudies Wurzel, 🍷 I saw loads last year but only got the one shot they were so busy, maybe Autumn is a better month to see them if there slower 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Andrew555, 18-Jan-19 11:54 AM GMT

Wow you got really close! Great stuff, well done. 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jan-19 07:23 PM GMT

Ooh! nice Wurzel 😊

I have often read about the Cloudies at Southbourne and the fact that there seems to be a permanent, or at least semi-permanent colony there.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Jan-19 06:43 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I think I worked harder than the 'Fun Runners' 😊 Cheers for the tip off 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I know what you mean, the Brown Hairstreak has been demoted to Penultimate species. I did find it odd though seeing them there at that time of year but served as a reminder that butterflies are often tougher than we give them credit for 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I think the cooler temperatures certainly helped calm this one down – mind you it was bit of a shock to my system as at one pint it was so cold I had to put my gloves and hat on 😊

Cheers Andrew 😊 I was chuffed that I managed to get right up in it's grill 😊😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I too had read about them so it was great to finally check them out for myself. I've often promised myself that one year I'm going to go for it and break my personal '50 species in a year' challenge and having Cloudies hanging about could prove to be the ace in the hole 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by MrSp0ck, 19-Jan-19 08:32 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

I've often promised myself that one year I'm going to go for it and break my personal '50 species in a year' challenge and having Cloudies hanging about could prove to be the ace in the hole 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

I've done 50 species in a year, without going up north, that was the good year of 1996, and a male Pale Clouded Yellow at Noar Hill. I've also ended a few years at 49 Species. So it can be done without the Scotch Argus, Mountain Ringlet, Chequered Skipper, Large Heath, Northern Brown Argus etc. You should get Glannies easily in 2019 by the look of it.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Jan-19 10:37 PM GMT

Cheers for the encouragement MrSpock 😊 My personal best was 49 and I missed out on a Cloudy that year 😊 That won't happen again now 😊

Keeping it Local 20-10-2017

At either end of the year I generally find myself staying quite local and heading to one or all three of my nearest sites; Middle Street, Five Rivers and The Devenish. This afternoon was no exception and though I set off in reverse order noting a fly-by Brimstone on the way which was a nice sighting to get the ball rolling. Once parked I made my way up to the Small Paddock and scanned across the huge patches of Ivy hoping for an Admiral or Specklie to put in an appearance. I soon had to move on as I was getting covered in Ladybirds/Harlequins which seemed to be everywhere. So it was over the gates and into the Orchid Meadow where only the occasional yellow petals showed up against the dull beige background colour from all the dead vegetation. I tried right to the end which is normally inaccessible due to the huge plants that grow here but even they have succumbed to old age. I was just starting to get a little despondent, surrounded by all this death and decay, when a moff burst up from near to the ground and veered or violently in and wide descending arc. I managed to follow it and then stalk it to find a Silver-Y.

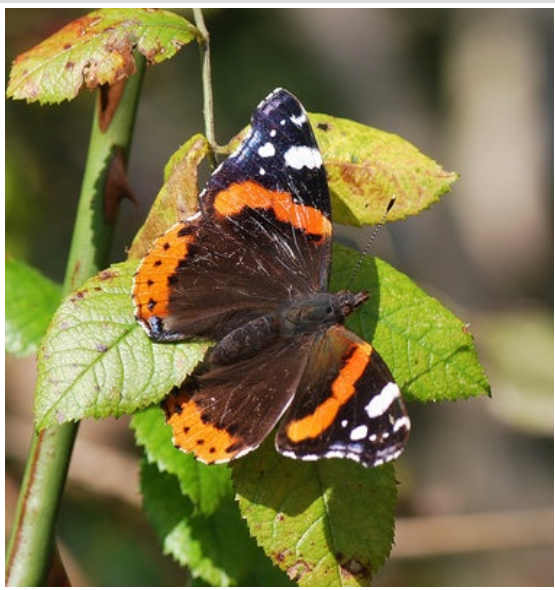


As I was appreciating this something a bit more fluttery caught my eye and there was an aged Specklie. I watched it cover the ground across the field making towards the taller scrub which demarcated one field from another and a second (and even more aged?) Specklie took off intercept it and see it on its way. The second settled back down and I made my cautious approach.



Up the hill all seems quiet including the little stretch of steep path at the very foot of the Down. Here the Bramble grows tall and the trees on either side of the path are covered in Ivy so I had high hopes which unlike the spent Bramble heads didn't come to fruition. All is quiet and still and even the border between the Beech woodland and Down is empty apart from a Common Darter. Usually there is the odd whit or even a Small Copper hanging on here but it looks like the cutting back and grazing has put paid to the bushes of Hemp Agrimony which act as such a magnet to the butterflies. At the far end of the Down I disturb a Specklie which I'd not seen and as I'm cursing my inattention I catch sight of a funny looking fence post. It's funny looking as a Red Admiral is basking, open winged on it. I manage to get a few more steps closer to it but it's gone quite quickly. I stand in the shade of a Beech tree and wait for it to come back all the while watching a Specklie that's up high in the Ivy and willing it to come down. It doesn't but the Red Admiral does after about 5 minutes of waiting. At this time of year you never know which butterfly will be your last so I made the most of this one just in case, spending more time just watching than looking down the viewfinder, savouring every detail in the hope that the memories will get me through the dark winter months.





After this encounter I strolled along the top and don't find another butterfly despite peering in every bush. I eventually end up back where I started and I was glad to be heading off as the Harlequins were starting to get really annoying - I seemed to have at least 3 somewhere on my person at any one time even though I was brushing them off every other step!

After this it was over to Five Rivers. I started by walking along the river and scanning ahead whenever a break in the riverside trees let the sun pour in across the path. Sure enough on the first such break a Red Admiral flew towards me at head height. It veered up and doubled back before flying in a few ever decreasing circles and landing. It was dead chuffed but just as I'm about to approach a load of tourists come from the opposite direction and the Red Admiral is up and gone. I manage to watch it as it cuts through the air this way and that and a second flies in and they spiral upwards losing themselves in the tree tops. I stay put reasoning that if this strategy worked before it might again and at least one of them will come back. Sure enough one does and this time there aren't any meddling kids so I can get away with stalking it and so I manage a few shots.





After this I walk to Comma Corner and all along the banks but it's a bit depressing as Bramble has inveigled itself across the various pathways that are so good for basking butterflies early in the season and once again all the butterfly friendly vegetation has passed over. I see a few Darters but even this late in the season they're still proving too quick and so I started back. On the way back I stop in roughly the same place as I stopped earlier and a Red Admiral comes down to the deck in front of me. From its looks it was a different individual and on closer inspection I can see a small white dot in the bands of red that prove my supposition.



Then it was away home as time had run away from me and there just wasn't enough of it left to get over to Middle Street and back. Still I'll be back there in about 4-5 months time and I don't think I'd have seen anything different. As I'm strolling back to the house and playing the afternoon back in my head my happy mood is turned up from 10 to 11 as I spy a Small Tort from afar basking on the side of one of the posh houses round the corner from my own humble abode. A great way to finish the afternoon!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 22-Jan-19 11:06 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, it won't belong now before it's Spring , roughly about eight weeks I think 😊 It's getting much lighter at night now and the Snow Drops are giving me encouragement ,even the Daff bulbs are growing 😊 Having said all that it's been snowing here 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Jan-19 10:40 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I now what you mean I've seen Snowdrops and Daffs in bloom and the Aconites at work are almost out 😊 I better get a wriggle on with my 2018 postings if I'm not to have a cross over 😊😊

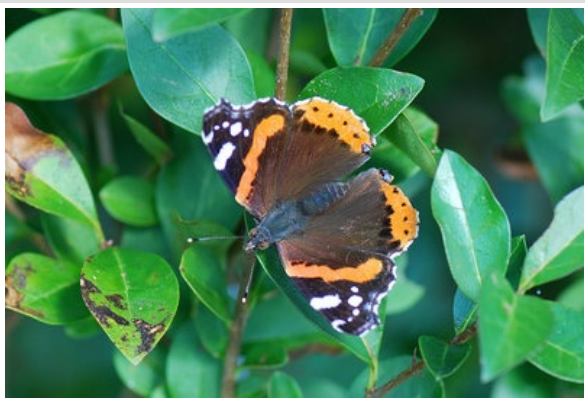
Pumpkin Picking 21-10-2018

It's that time of year again. Just as you think the weather will crack and full blown winter will ensure we experience a purple patch of 'unseasonable' weather. So when the task for the day was Pumpkin Picking I packed my camera just in case.

Once there and fully equipped with wheelbarrow we set off wandering across the huge flat field through a myriad of Pumpkins of several varieties of which the Turks' Head was probably my favourite. Smooth, long, fat and round, blue, orange, red and green with white stripes, warty or ribbed; across the top of the smorgasbord of squashes several butterflies flew. They didn't want to stop though, they just flew from one side of the field to the other, from hedge to hedge. I didn't mind as I was enjoying watching my girls running around excitedly picking perfect Pumpkins prior to people pulling the prime Pumpkins first.



I was also enjoying the late sun on my back and looked up and along the hedge. There was a Red Admiral. I cautiously approached fumbling for my camera in my bag and stealthily got into position. All was set, the butterfly was nicely posed looking resplendent in the autumnal glow. As I focused and went to click the sun was swallowed by one of the very few clouds and my image went from glorious technicolour to washed out greyscale. Oh well a butterfly shot is still a butterfly shot and with the drawing in of the season I'll take whatever I can get.



After that I reverted to Dad mode and transported a barrowful of Pumpkins home - who would have thought that there were so many perfect Pumpkins?



Have a goodun

Wurzel

PS - This actually turned into my final butterfly photograph of 2018 as despite heading out to a few different National Trust sites, keeping my eyes peeled and camera ready during any spells of warmish fine weather and spying several other butterflies (Red Admirals, Speckle and a White) I didn't get

anymore photographs.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 25-Jan-19 03:43 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, that final Butterfly before the Winter sets in is always sad to me but it spurs me on to get some Bulbs in for Spring 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Jan-19 06:53 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I know what you mean though as I have only the tiniest of courtyard gardens the final sighting spurs me on to actually catch up with my postings – I might get three up in a week instead of the usual two 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Jan-19 11:02 PM GMT

Way back in the mists of time the family Wurzel went on a city holiday to Lisbon. I didn't get round to posting it that year and was saving it for Jan 2017 but missed that window as well. Brexit willing we're off to Portugal again this year, more north and much more rural so for comparison here is Lisbon 2016...

Lisbon 2016

After the fantastic foray into Europe last year we thought we'd treat the girls to the west of Europe, so where better to head than Portugal? It was going to be a city based holiday so I wasn't too hopeful of seeing any butterflies but took my camera anyway reasoning that there might be some parks to visit or at least some green spaces which could throw up a butterfly or two...

9th August - Journey Day!

A very full breakfast, a quick check around the room and we were away from the Travelodge. When I say very full it was even bigger than the Limit Cafes Aberystwyth's breakfast so I actually rolled to the car when doing one of several trips to the load the car. During this I noted both Small and Large White but not much else. Just before we left my wife wanted to film a plane coming in to land so I enjoyed the surreal experience of watching an Emperor Dragonfly moving slowly towards me and coming to a stop to hover close in to the soundtrack of rumbling jet engines. After this it was all airport security, plane, bus, metro and a brief wander round lost until we found the apartment.

10th August First Day

A stroll around Alfama to find an open Supermercado threw up zilch butterflies during the wander out but on the way back a blue of some description did a fly-by which given the very medieval/urban habitat was quite encouraging. Later we decided to walk to one of the city's parks, the Jardim da Estrela and on the way I saw a further 3 bluey grey butterflies none of which stopped and all where gone in a flash. Discontent I took a photo of a camera shop as their emblem was a butterfly as I felt that this may be the only butterfly I was going to get a shot of!



This did change when we got to the Jardim where I saw a couple of blues and a White. However it was now ludicrously hot (35+) so they were solar charged and of the three I think I got a single shot. I think it was a Long-tailed Blue which I was chuffed to see but also gutted as with this sighting a crate of Badger Beer from Philzoid evaporated.



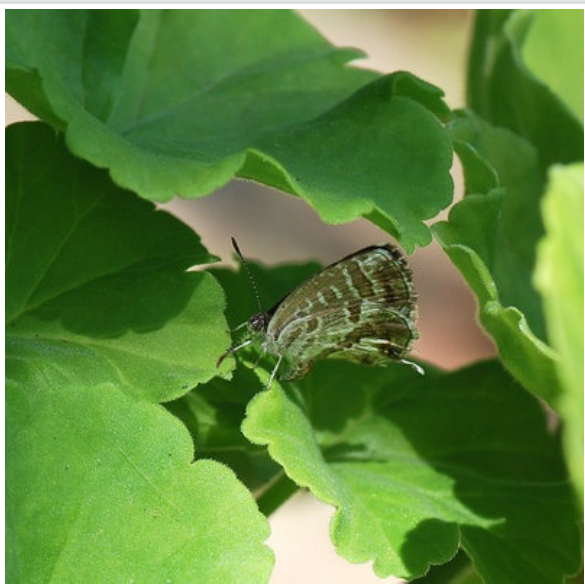
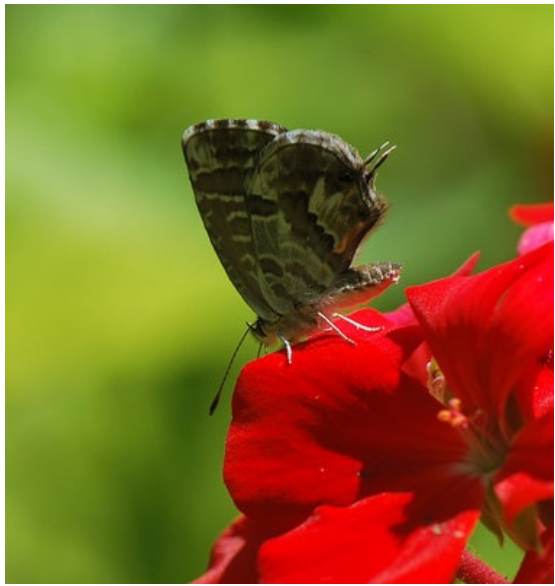
We went further into the park and the girls had a play so I nipped off. At the first little section of flowers I found a small, female Blue. I know she was a female as she saw off a second passing/interested Blue and also did some ovi-positing. I reckon she was a Lang's Short-tailed Blue as the underside didn't show the broad white line of a Long-tail.



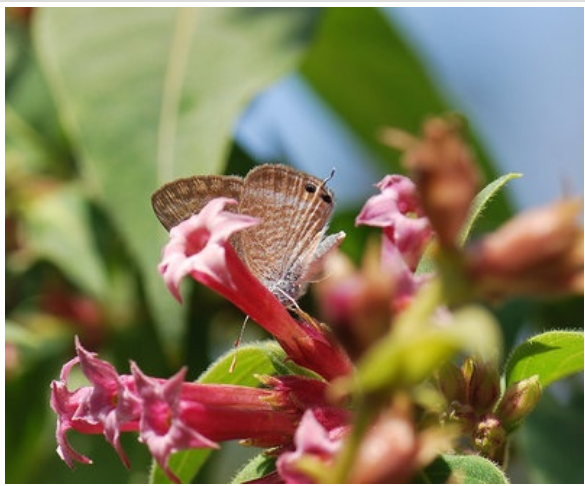


Slightly up the hill was a patch of Geraniums and this was a very active little site with Blues flying but never stopping, at least 5 of them. Also present were 3 smaller, greyer looking butterflies which turned out to be Geranium Bronzes. A Specklie fluttered by but landed far too high up for any successful photos although it was easy to see the difference between the races as this Specklie was brown and marmalade.





A small pond even further up the hill didn't look particularly good but there I got onto a photo taking opportunity of a LTB (that crate of Badger Beer was definitely gone now) and a couple of whites again fluttered by without stopping.





As we left the park there were a few more Blue/White sightings as well as a Hummingbird Hawk Moth, Parakeets and a *Xylocopa violacea* – a huge blue/violet bee. Once 'home' (via the metro so no butterflies) I happened to look out of the window. A Blue had landed 3 floors below so I rushed down the very steep flights of stairs and outside. It had landed in a tiny patch of grass and my wife had been watching the spot so I knew that it hadn't flown but it just wasn't visible. I turned to move off and then it flew and disappeared above the roofs. I slowly climbed the stairs hoping that the rest of the holiday wasn't going to be as hard as this...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 31-Jan-19 11:34 PM GMT

February 2019

Fingers crossed it won't be long now...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 01-Feb-19 08:44 AM GMT

Sounds like you'd plenty of exercise Wurzel on that holiday, 😊 Lucky you though, I've yet to see any of those Blues, it would be good to take a trip there I think. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Feb-19 03:42 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was hard work walking everywhere and I can't remember exactly but I don't think went below 35 degrees C during the day once 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Padfield, 02-Feb-19 09:54 PM GMT

Looking forward to the rest of your Lisbon report, Wurzel! Back in the '90s I often camped at the Monsanto campsite in Lisbon, before heading off to other parts of Portugal and Spain (I got the bus from Victoria to Lisbon in '91 and '92, then from Geneva or Lausanne later). Good memories! The last time was '98. I arrived on the bus at about 23h00 and tramped along to the campsite, only to discover there were no places left as it was full-on Expo '98. By chance I met some Dutch hippies and we all traipsed across the Tagus to another campsite on the other side – full of druggies but safe and cheap. It was so much more fun backpacking before booking.com and tripadvisor ... 😊

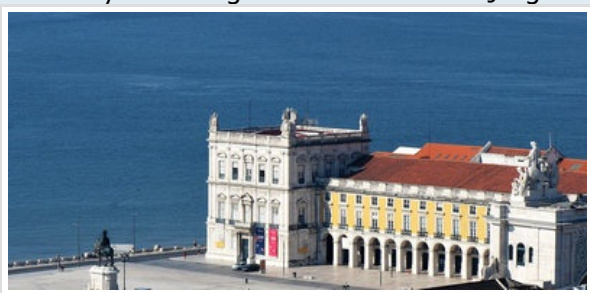
Guy

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Feb-19 11:34 PM GMT

Cheers Guy 😊 I don;t think travelling with some Dutch druggies would have gone down to well with my wife but I'd have been game 😊 It was an enjoyable holiday but as it was city based opportunities for butterflies were limited 😞 . We're heading back to Portugal, in the Guarda area this year (fingers crossed because of Brexit) so hopefully the butterflying will be a little easier and productive 😊

Thursday 11th August Castello da Sao Jorge



View from the Castle

I wasn't hopeful for today's haul of butterflies as we were set to have a 'quiet day' and just spend time up at the Castle. There were stunning views, a visit to the camera obscura and preserved archaeological digs. It was a fantastic place to visit and I leant so much about Portuguese and Lisbon's history however on the wildlife front it was pretty dire – 2 Whites, a Brimstone, Specklie and LTB all seen and not one photographed. Again because of the high temperature everything was hyper. I did enjoy the Parrots (Monks) as did Little L but I still can't see how the butterflying is going to improve. Hopefully the parks at the weekend or a visit to Sintra will be better and I can maybe persuade to the girls to visit the huge national park near Lisbon's centre...





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Feb-19 11:03 PM GMT

Friday 12th August The Oceanarium

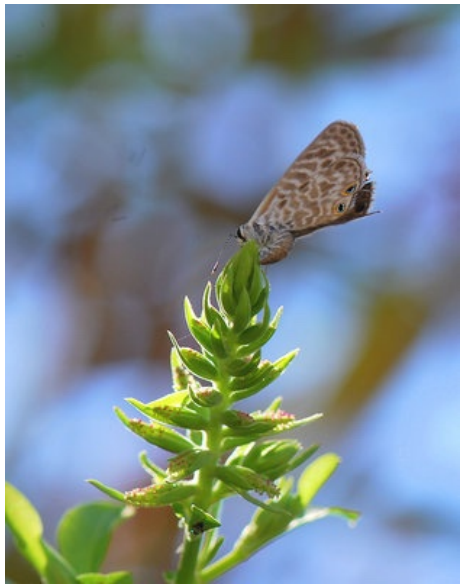
I doubted whether we would make the visit to the Oceanarium. It didn't start well with a baking Metro journey and then a walk across concrete and tarmac in the roiling heat. Having gotten the tickets we headed back out to have our lunch in the nicely shaded picnic area. Whilst the girls let their lunch go down I had a quick mooch around the tiny park which was actually more like a small collection of bushes. There were plenty of lizards around, a few dragonflies and two butterflies. One blue which flew away almost as soon as I'd noticed it and a Geranium Bronze. I was joined by Little L who was intent on feeding some of her lettuce to the lizards which she did manage a couple of times before I was quick enough to catch it on film.





After the Oceanarium my wife wanted a sit down and the girls had their ice creams so I nipped off for 15 minutes and found another park just over the road. A few whites flew by here and there along with several blues including a new species for the trip – a (Southern) Common Blue as well as a Swallowtail. I followed it as it drifted down the three levels of terrace but decided not to follow it across than the busy main road. Instead I made my way back to the top of the terraces and latched onto a Lang's egg laying.





Fifteen minutes up and back with the family the girls had finished their ice creams and fancied a dip/mess around in the fountains so I was let loose for another 15 minutes back at the Terraces. Again there were a couple of whites to greet me with the usual collection of Blues and up at the top a Clouded Yellow bombed on by. A small patch on Terrace two held the usual suspects including a Long-tail which actually stopped for long enough to enable a few shots. If only could find a Scarce Swallowtail or some of the Gatekeepers?



Oh well pleased with what I'd got I headed back to rejoin the family again by which time the girls were completely soaked. It didn't matter though as in the stupendous heat they were dry in the 10 minutes it took to walk back to the Metro station.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 07-Feb-19 12:35 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, pity you missed the Swallow Tail, I loved the time I spent in Norfolk watching them they're so lovely, maybe this year on your next holiday you'll see even more. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 07-Feb-19 10:25 PM GMT

Some great Long-tailed Blue photos there Wurzel and plenty of them 😊 I knew my bet was safe 😊

Your Dragonfly is *Sympetrum fonscolombii* Red-veined Darter 😊

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 09-Feb-19 09:09 AM GMT

You are tempting me to grow some Geraniums, after all a Geranium Bronze was discovered in nearby Lewes some years back. As for Long Tailed Blues, your challenge is to obtain some shots of one over here!. Hope your 2019 hols. are as productive as last year.

Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Feb-19 06:37 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was slightly annoyed that I didn't follow the Swallowtail but it would have meant either getting arrested for Jaywalking or getting flattened under the traffic - I just hoped that I might catch up with another one 😊

Cheers Philzoid 😊 Cheers for the ID 😊 I bet the thought of not shelling out for a crate of Badger made my pics seem even sweeter 😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I'm heading to the garden centre tomorrow 😊 Fingers crossed for 2019 and the LTBs 😊

Have a goodun

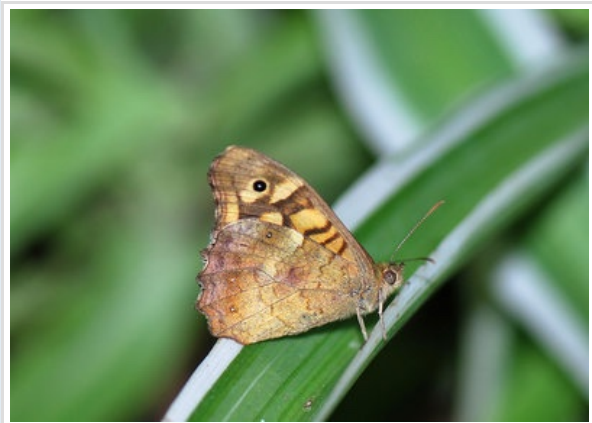
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Feb-19 10:57 PM GMT

Saturday 13th August - Round and about Lisbon

This was to be the big one - not for butterflies but for sightseeing. We started off on the Number 28 Tram which rumbled right the way through Lisbon before we alighted back at Estrela Park and wandered down to Tampodes do Neumides. Well it was more of a hike than a wander as it seems that all the street maps and the very helpful people on the internet that gave directions have no idea of scale/time. Still when we finally reached the park it was thankfully in the shade and as we enjoyed our lunch a Specklie landed and settled for some closed wing shots. I know this is a different race but it could almost be a different species, a Wall x Speckled Wood hybrid almost. Round the rest of the garden there were the ever present Geranium Bronze along with the usual 'couple of blues' but nothing was landing or settling in the blistering heat.





We then got the bus to Rato and walked down the Liberade. On one small grass verge at Pombal a Geranium Bronze and three blues were around. One actually landed and settled for long enough for a couple of shots, a Long-tail. It was clearly evident what the selective advantage was of those 'tails' as most of the Long-tails that I'd seen, including this one, actually lacked their tail, taken perhaps during a bird strike. After this there wasn't much to tell nature wise as we adapted to our urban setting perusing shops, observing the street life and absorbing the way things are done in Portugal.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

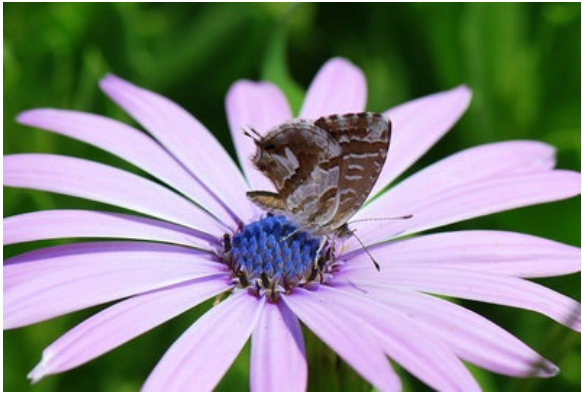
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Feb-19 11:17 PM GMT

Sunday 14th August Out and about in Lisbon...

This turned into a quiet day as after the very busy day yesterday the girls were starting to flag. So the morning was spent toodling round in the town picking up some bits and bobs and getting tram, bus and train times to various places for our final day tomorrow. We kept to the shaded side of the streets and ducked into shops where possible to take advantage of the air-conditioning.

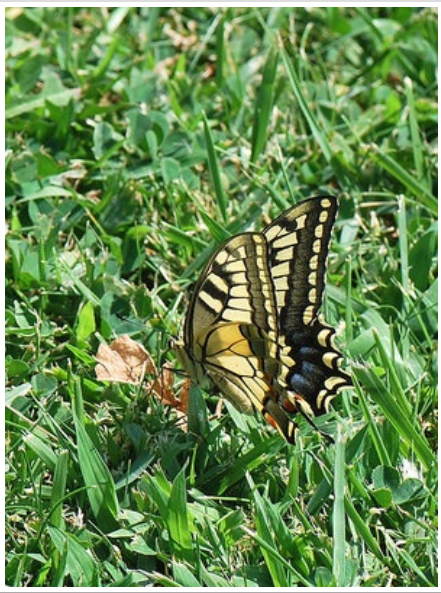
After lunch I headed out solo while the others had a siesta. I'd checked the map and followed a route which would take in a couple more of the small parks. The first stop was at Martim Monchoz which was more a piazza with a few areas of vegetation. Despite the very poor concrete to vegetation ratio I was still able to find a Geranium Bronze.



I then made my way to the promising looking Jardim de Torrell. Set on the side of the hill it stepped down the slope in a series of terraces which on the map had been coloured green but in reality were more a beige of dried vegetation and grey of concrete 😞. I didn't see a single butterfly here but consoled myself with some Wall Lizards and the sighting of a Black Redstart.



The final and furthest garden of my solo jaunt – Campo dos Marities da Patria – was flatter, greener and great. As I arrived and crossed the road to start following the little path round a Swallowtail glided into view and landed long enough for a couple of shots. It then fluttered a little further away and again landed for a few photos before sailing off down the hill heading where I did not know. Also here were the usual Geranium Bronze, Lang's and Long-tails as well as a Small White (I've checked and it's not a Southern Small White) as well as a Yellow Legged Gull.







I headed home hoping for a final massive trip to Sintra and set to researching. My hopes were quickly shattered as the combined cost of the return train journey and smallest of the available tours was prohibitive. My hopes of some non-urban Portuguese butterflying disappeared. Maybe tomorrow I could get to the National Park or some other parks?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 17-Feb-19 07:42 AM GMT

A definate 🍷 for that Swallowtail, especially as it seems to be pristine. We saw a few in France but none settled. Off to Wilts. today for half term. Will check the rubbish heap.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 18-Feb-19 09:16 AM GMT

You got the Swallow Tail Wurzel with out being knocked down I see 🍷😄 I must say though I love the Purple flower shot best 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Feb-19 11:21 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 The rubbish heap is definitely worth a check, typical though I'm in Wales this week 😊 See a few Small Torts for me 😊
Cheers Goldie 😊 Yep got there in the end 😊 I was chuffed with the GE on the purple flower – though I did get some funny looks from the people enjoying their coffee on the piazza 🤔😄😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Feb-19 10:38 PM GMT

Monday 15th August Praia de Tamariz Close to Estoril

As this was the final day it would have been a shame to have just 'toodled' around in the city again so we did what a lot of Portuguese families did and took the train to the beach. We headed to Tamariz. On the journey I eagerly watched out of the window for any butterflies and apart from a large orangey butterfly (a possible Monarch?) nothing was showing.

Upon arrival we strolled down the concourse, took the underpass and there we were already on the beach. We set of camp and the girls went for a paddle and made sand shapes in between strolling around the rocks looking for fishes. I took myself off to examine the grounds of the local park/ casino gardens and inviting looking oasis of greenery surrounded by building s on three sides and the sea on the fourth. I soon discovered that what had looked like an oasis was more like a mirage as there was nothing about not even a pigeon! I carried on checking out any and every available plant holder and shrub but only turned up a Black Redstart and a Painted Lady.



Once the girls were sated with sun and sea we took the train back and had a stroll round the local markets before heading back. While the girls got cleaned up I packed and then while they rested I took a final trip out. This time I was heading towards the Botanical Gardens. The local guides that I'd read online all seemed to suggest that this was a must visit site and so I entered hopefully. Traipsing around in the heat I was surprised by the lack of butterflies. I arrived at the 'butterfly house', a large greenhouse open to the elements and planted with a host of native plant species to encourage local butterflies to breed here, was closed for repairs. This was probably the biggest blow of the holiday. I peered through the gate and could just make out a Monarch at the furthest end of the enclosure but I couldn't get my camera to focus on it as it was so far away and the also because of the close proximity of the gate panels. So there was one of the lifers that I'd hoped for just out of reach. I checked out the other areas finding a few Lang's and Long-tails but nothing stopped. So I headed home dusted and dead tired.



The following morning we packed up and shipped out back home. So from this trip I learnt an important lesson - on city holidays take your camera just in case but don't expect too much! Still I did manage to pick up 4 lifers and get photos of three so in terms of butterflies it wasn't all bad and in terms of a family holiday it was excellent!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 21-Feb-19 10:39 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Just caught up with your latest Portugal postings. That open-wing Swallowtail shot is brilliant as is the Geranium Bronze on the purple flower 🌸. Also you've got some nice close-ups of Scarlet Darter (*Crocothemis erythraea*) 😊

Sorry to hear you missed out on the butterfly house. That would've left me feeling gutted too 😞

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Feb-19 11:00 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 Thanks for the ID I was wondering what that was as it was 'blatantly' red 😊 I did wonder about climbing over the fence at the butterfly house but didn't really fancy getting the shouts of "Oi! Saia de mim terra!" (I occasionally heard this when I was a young and innocently reckless birder – something I have in common with Bill Oddie!) 😊😊😊 More importantly can I count the Monarch on my life list? 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Benjamin, 24-Feb-19 08:26 AM GMT

Nice Portugal report Wurzel – somehow reassuring to know others are similarly frustrated when trying to blend family holidays and butterflying!

You nailed it in France though, and it sounds like you'll be much better placed in Portugal this year....

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 24-Feb-19 06:14 PM GMT

That's a great Swallowtail, and I also particularly like the Speckled Wood a bit further back. The southern version is (as you said I think) almost like a cross between a Wall and one of our Specklies. From what I remember, though, its behaviour is just the same as our familiar one.

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 25-Feb-19 10:58 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel. Unfortunately my next Wilts visit is not until April 7th (Easter Hols). The weather was not suitable for Butterflies in Wilts last week. Can you organise a field trip to Portland?, a Large Tortoiseshell was seen there today.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Feb-19 11:12 PM GMT

Cheers Benjamin 😊 The thing with family holidays and butterflying is that you have to develop a slightly different fieldcraft to make them work:wink: On our last visit to Portugal we were based in Lisbon right in the heart of the city so it was very urban – this year though we're out in the country so fingers crossed 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 Yep the Specklies do their thing the same wherever you find them from my limited experience – the different colouring just adds to their interest 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I'd love to get down to Portland again but as per usual when the weather is great and the butterflies are blooming I'm stuck in work 😊 Things will be going proper by the next time you're back in Wilts 😊

Wales 30-07-2018

It had to happen. After 6 or so weeks of wall to wall sunshine and record temperatures, after constantly feeling like I'd been boiled in a bag by the end of the day and after watching the weather and seeing the map coloured in orange and reds I had to visit my In-laws in Wales. This could mean only one thing: it was about to get cold and wet... As we left on the Saturday the clouds gathered and driving through North Wiltshire the heavens opened and threw everything they could at us; hail, lightning and rain so heavy that I couldn't really see through the windscreen. It passed but as we carried on towards the 'H' Bridge we could see a wall of thick grey cloud waiting for us on the other side. Again the heavens opened; "Welcome to Wales!" I thought. 😊

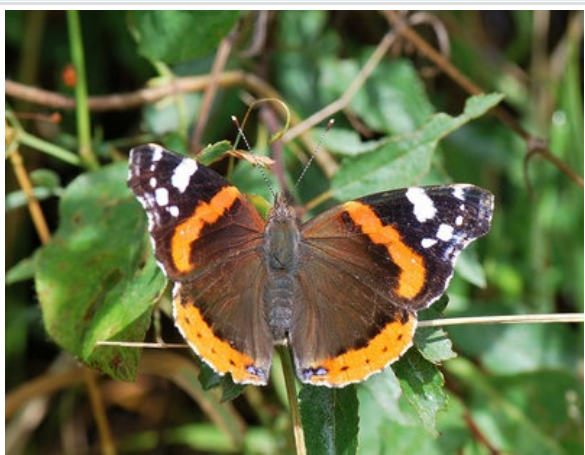
Sunday was rain on and off pretty much all day and when the rain ceased it wasn't for very long plus it was still dark and dingy and cool. Monday the weather forecast was total crap! I don't mean the weather forecasted was bad I mean the forecast was one of the most inaccurate that I'd seen. I looked out of the window at the blue sky and looked at the BBC App with its black cloud background and heavy rain "right now". The rain carried on with the thick cloud and strong breeze so we stayed in when we should have gone to Cei Bach. But then when the App said it should be raining still later it cleared up and we were able to take a stroll up the Lane and blow away a few of the cobwebs.

At the end of the cul-de-sac I spied my first butterfly, a UFW around the Buddleia of a neighbour's garden and also here was a Large White. On the other side of the road there were a few florets of what looked like Knapweed pushing up through the smallest of gaps between a wall and the tarmac along with a Common Blue.



As we carried on up numerous Hedge Browns flew about and some stopped and posed for me. After most of the journey was made a few more Whites also put in an appearance. It started with a fly-by Large and two Smalls and then there was also a Green-veined as well. Up at the turn around point two Red Admirals appeared and one kept bumbling round and landing on even the smallest cluster of Nettles, possibly looking to lay?





So we made the return journey with the same species in view as well as an additional Speckle in amongst the many, many Hedge Browns. Back at the Buddleia there were no butterflies but 5 Silver Y on various florets. Nothing spectacular but it was nice to get out and see butterflies after two and half days away.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 27-Feb-19 09:32 AM GMT

Won't be long before we see the Gate Keeper's Wurzel, March on Friday 😊

My Daughters off to Portugal in April but she's not too interested in Butterflies, I've tried my best with her but can't get through yet 😊

I've changed my Holiday plan, Eastbourne now instead of WSM 😊 I may have a better chance with the Butterflies there. We couldn't get single rooms at WSM and I like my own space, my Sister-in-Law also, we're visiting Bexhill-On-Sea, so Hope fully I'll see some thing, hope fully a Grizzled Skipper . 😊

Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Feb-19 11:33 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Off to Portugal in April - Festoons, Nettle Tree Butterfly etc etc 🇵🇹 I reckon you should smuggle yourself into your daughters suitcase Goldie 😊 I reckon you'll get a Grizzlie 😊

March 2019

Hopefully the weather over the weekend counts as "In like a Lion..." and then we can get back to proper butterflying from the end of the month 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 01-Mar-19 11:12 AM GMT

Lovely Calendar Wurzel, I'm so glad March is here and the lighter nights to come 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Mar-19 03:07 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I'm hoping that this cooler, wetter and very windy weather counts as 'in like a Lion' so that before long we'll be back in the butterflies proper 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Mar-19 10:45 PM GMT

Wales 31st July



Today we didn't even bother with the forecast and just took coats with us to Aberystwyth. We parked in Morrison's (other supermarkets are an option) and started down the town path that runs alongside the river. As to be expected as we were in an area that looked great for butterflies the cloud covered the sun and there were a few drops of rain. Despite this I saw a Speckle bomb off over the Brambles that lined the path. Further along the path split into two and we would take the right hand fork into the town centre and urbanity and as junction was insight the cloud cleared and the sun started beating down. However I still managed to get a sneaky butterfly shot as in the previous drear a Holly Blue landed and opened up vainly (at the time) trying to warm itself up. I caught it just as it was deciding if it was warm enough, got my shots and then when it felt the sun on its wings it was off.



We carried on into Aber and during our walk about I noted a couple of Whites and a Silver Y which seemed determined to get into Costa Coffee? And then we made the return journey laden with kilos of Organic Muesli. On the way a few Whites fluttered a long in front of us for most of the way. A Speckle put in a brief appearance and then when we were almost back I saw a massive Buddleia which I'd not seen on the way into town; I must have been staring intently into the bushes and so looking the other way. There was some movement and the cream tangerine colour suggested that at least one of the butterflies was a Painted Lady. I told the rest of the family that I'd catch them up and left the path fumbling for my camera as I did so. As I approached I could see that I was right there was a Painted Lady but it was very flighty. There was another which stayed up high along with a couple of Red Admirals and a Peacock. At one time all three took off and chased each other about before deciding to gang up on a hapless Large White. I then had to leg it back and catch up with everyone else.





Once back home I grabbed the camera and went to check out the Lane reasoning that if the weather app actually did prove (by some major miracle) correct then I might not get many more chances. I stopped first of all at the Buddleia in the Neighbours garden. This smaller bush was even better than the one on the walk back. At first glance I counted 2 Painted Ladies, 2 Peacocks, 4 Red Admirals and a Large White. A few moments later a Small and Green-veined White had also been added. What was strange was how autumnal this made me feel. There was a strong breeze, the sun wasn't boiling hot and kept going in behind the clouds and I was observing some of the 'last species' of the season. It felt more like October than the last day of July.



I then worked my way back down the road and round the corner onto Rhu Goch. Once here I carried on scanning the hedge in front of me. I was really disappointed to find only 2 Hedge Browns and even more so because they were 'typical'. On the plus side I also found a cracking blue female Common Blue. She kept settling a few paces away from me and then allowed me to get in closer and get some shots before she fluttered a few paces away again etc. I also noticed some earth spilling down the bank. At first I thought this was a tiny bit of subsidence as the bank had recently been shaped. But there were similar 'spills' along the length of the bank and as I got closer it happened again and this time I could see that the dirt was being pushed up and out from underneath. It was strange to think that I was within 15 cm of a Mole. Back at the Buddleia there was now only one a piece of the Peacock and Painted Lady and only 2 Red Admirals but the number of Large Whites had doubled.





Upon my return I grabbed a coffee and went and sat in the summer house with everyone else. Eventually they all drifted indoors and I was left on my own with the collapsed curtain and my camera. I put said curtain to good use, wrapping it over my head and round my arms as I sat on a chair facing out of the door and directly opposite the bird feeders. I'd made my own little Hide and it paid off as the birds carried on feeding oblivious to my presence. If the weather does get as bad as forecast then I'll have to give this another go.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Mar-19 12:33 AM GMT

1st August

We've given up checking the weather app this week and so we found ourselves, picnic lunch packed, heading off to Llanerchaeron. Upon our arrival the cloud was covering the sun and so we headed off into the woods to walk along the river a way and wait for the house and gardens to open. I didn't see any moths or butterflies while we wandered but when a group of young Mallard fly down river they were accompanied by a much smaller, darker

looking bird which to my mind was a Dipper. I walked down onto the exposed river bed and scanned downstream but couldn't relocate it at this time but on the return journey there it was sitting atop a rock on the other side of the river. It was too far away for my lens and there was nowhere near enough light to get any decent images so I stored them away in my memory rather than my memory card.

After this we made our way in the house and gardens. There were a couple of Green-veined Whites waiting for us at the entrance but after that it got a bit quiet. There was an interesting looking micro moth but not much else. Even the one half of the walled garden was exceedingly quiet with only a single Green-veined White. But as I stepped through the gate from one half to the other things seemed to improve dramatically. I noticed it as I was fussing the cats in the greenhouses, the temperature noticeably increased and I almost needed to put my sunglasses on. As I stepped out with one of the two cats following me a female Large White landed right next to me and as I looked down the path there were suddenly whites all over the place. The small Lavender boxes were bathed in whites of all three species. I did a quick count and reached 27 but there possibly a few more fluttering round the back. Also present were 4 Common Blues, one was definitely a female and I'm guessing that another was as well by the more brown background colour to the underwings.





I got called away for lunch and so made my way back but between munchings I notched up another couple of Green-veined Whites and a Specklie. The girls also brought me a moth that I'd not seen before. They thought that it was dead but after a few photos of it in K's hand it started to quiver and it became apparent that it was playing dead. There were more moths in the courtyard of the main house but that was it from Llanerchaeron for another year.





Once we got back I went for a quick stroll down the Lane. The Buddleia had only 3 Red Admirals and a single Peacock on it today, there was an approachable Large White near the post box but Rhu Goch could only rustle up a GVW, 2 Hedgies and a brown female Blue. The wind had picked up and the sun was hiding behind the clouds for longer and longer intervals. A quick walk up the Lane and there was only a single male Hedgie as well and as I took my first shot of it my camera ceased functioning. The memory card was full. I took this as the sign to cut my losses and head back to the house, trying to ignore the Painted Lady on the way!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 11-Mar-19 11:50 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel

It's a long time since I've seen a dipper and they can be pretty elusive when you do see them 😊

Your micro is an *Acleris* species possibly *laterana*. The larger moth is a Clouded Magpie *Abraxas sylvata* a moth I've never seen before 🍷!

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 15-Mar-19 07:57 PM GMT

Nice find with the Clouded Magpie Wurzel 😊 one I have yet to see.

I rather like that female Large White shot as well 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Mar-19 09:28 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 Yep Dippers don't hang around and the contrasting white and chocolate brown is surprisingly cryptic 😊 Cheers for the IDs and sorry to have bagged a tick that you don't have 😊 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I was chuffed with that LW - she just popped up while I was fussing one of the cats in the greenhouse, I think I'll have to add "fuss a cat"

into my "Methodology of butterfly finding"; the Way of the Wurzel 😊😞
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 18-Mar-19 09:15 PM GMT

That female Common Blue a bit further back is rather splendid, Wurzel – there were some lovely blue examples around last year. 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Mar-19 02:04 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 There was a great range this year and I was able to see from Brown Argus right the way across the range to ones like the one you refer to 😊 It was a good Blue year for me 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 21-Mar-19 05:05 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, I love that Common Blue on the Purple Flowers, it almost looks like the Flowers are reflecting their colour onto the Butterfly, lovely combination, Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

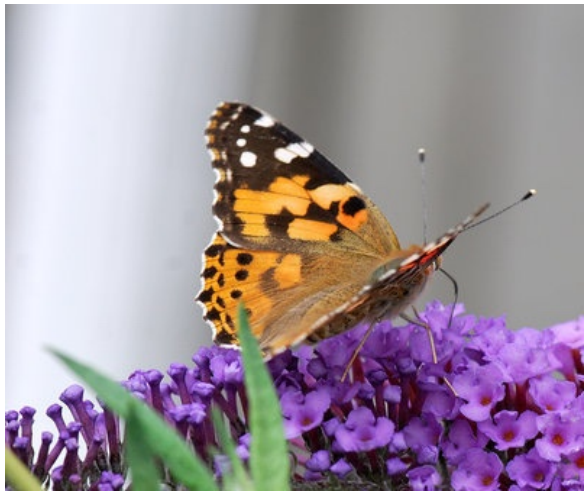
by Wurzel, 23-Mar-19 08:44 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Thistles and the like always seem to set the butterflies off nicely 😊 Hopefully Spring will start in earnest soon as I've only got another 12 or so posts left in the reserves 😊 Speaking of which...

End of the holiday 2nd August 2018

After the reasonable weather yesterday today it was back the Welsh best; thick black cloud with drizzle now and again. Despite this we took the girls for a run down to the park. After they'd sampled all the different play equipment we took a stroll along the river making our way to the seafront. The river was running really low, the lowest I've seen it with barely a trickle running over the various concrete weirs. A couple of GVWs flew by but along the other bank and I thought that would be it as we broke through from the trees in the sprawling urbanity of Aberaeron. But I was surprised to see, in the distance, a Painted Lady on a thin Buddleia. There can only have been four branches on this the spindliest of butterfly bushes. But it held not one but 2 Painted Ladies and a Peacock as well! This was the only whiff of purple amid the slate grey for as far as I could see so I guess that I shouldn't have been surprised to have found a butterfly here but three on such meagre rations was something of a shock.





After this we carried on down the seafront for a rootle at the low tide mark and the strandline. I didn't see anymore butterflies but we did find some nice seaglass K was fascinated by the Bladderwrack (*Fucus vesiculosus*) likening it to bubble wrap whilst Little L was amazed by some Oarweed (*Laminaria digitata*) with its giant fingers.

3rd August

The drive home didn't produce any butterflies but we went from comfortably wearing jeans and socks and shoes in the cool and damp drear to blazing sun and temperatures reaching the high 20's. It was a slight shock to the system but also explains why I didn't see anything flying along the hedges on the return home.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 25-Mar-19 03:30 PM GMT

Lovely Painted Ladies Wurzel, can't wait to see them, hope I do when I'm in Kent 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Mar-19 12:11 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 They do seem to hang around more in the South, hopefully it'll be a good year for them or even better an invasion year, fingers crossed 😊

End of Year Tally 2018

The new season has kind of started, it was all going so well and the British weather reverted to type and as I type this (3rd March) outside it's cool, wet and very windy...Still this means that I might have a little time to get the Tally Posts up and running prior to the season getting back up and running...

This time last year I wrote that 2017 was "a funny old year" well if that was the case then 2018 was bloody hilarious! We had the mildest of winters in 2017-18 which almost felt like the way that I remembered Autumns in my youth. Then when things just seemed to actually be starting we suddenly got Winter - with snow and ice and plunging temperatures. This seemed to hold everything back and when Spring belatedly arrived most species were emerging late and seemed to be playing catch-up. As the weather went full bore towards Summer the temperatures sky rocketed and reached record levels but not only was it hot it was also really, really dry and in my area at least there was no June gap in 2018. After this things seemed to revert almost back to normal although there were some partial 2nd broods and miniscule blues and certain species took full advantage of the climatic conditions. I remember reading that after the record breaking year of 1976 the butterflies decreased noticeably in 77 and whether 2019 will see a similar decrease only time will tell, fingers crossed that it doesn't...

The Skippers



1 Small Skipper, 22-06-2018 Duke Site

SO to business...First on the list but not the first seen was Small Skipper which I saw for the first time at my Duke Site and 5 days later. I didn't read too much into this at the time because it was only a matter of days and things were still catching up from a very late start to the season. However looking back now it wasn't the later start that stood out but the apparent decline. I still saw them at all usual sites but in far fewer numbers. I was most struck by this when thinking back over my visits to Larkhill. True I made fewer visits there this year but on those visits the fields of 'hundreds of Smessex' just weren't there. They seemed to be in their 30-40's rather than 100's. Last year at Larkhill they were almost in plague proportions but this year there was a famine of them. Possibly the high numbers I saw last year coloured my judgement and they'd just returned to a more usual balance after a very good year. Fingers crossed this is the case.



2 Essex Skipper, 28-06-2018 Work

It seems that the Essex Skipper isn't just extraordinarily alike to the Small in looks but also in their future outlook it seems. For like their slightly more ginger kin this species was also slightly later (7 days) and also notably reduced population wise. That being said I did have some more positive news for this species. I found a small colony (or more likely rediscovered...or even more likely actually noticed them) at work in the small patch of waste ground

that was once the jumping pits. It's always nice to find a species somewhere new especially when it means additional butterfly interest during a lunchtime break.



3 Lulworth Skipper, 24-06-2018 Lulworth Cove

When I visited their stronghold at Lulworth Cove they were already there which was earlier than I'd seen them last year. They were already in full swing and doing really well from the looks of things; crawling all over the cliff faces and venturing down to the shoreline to take slats from the recently exposed pebbles. One even decided to pay us a visit upon our arrival as we ate lunch taking up residence in our sunshade! Although I only saw than at this one site on one visit I was able to get the full gamut of shots - male, female, fresh, worn, taking salts, nectaring, a male and female in one shot and the crème de la crème, a mating pair. With favourable reports from Durlston it seems that this species protracted flight season is paying dividends as it can cope with periods of extreme weather be it cold, wet or hot and dry. Long may it continue.





4 Silver Spotted Skipper, 22-07-2018 Broughton Down

This year I was able to make two visits to Broughton Down the first of which came 2 days earlier than in 2017 yet there they were. It seemed that things had caught up and were marching ever onwards after the late start. The Silver Spots were in reasonable numbers on my first visit and were showing nicely so much so that I could see that some had already been out for a while; slightly frayed around the edges and starting to look greyer. On my second visit they were all over the place including over on the small triangle field right at the top of the site – somewhere I've not seen them before. Speaking of which I didn't relocate any at Shipton this year but then I think the one from 2017 was just a (unsuccessful) scout. Despite this I felt slightly chuffed that they were having such good year.



5 Large Skipper, 02-06-2018 Bentley Wood

Despite seeing my first slightly further East it was still a few days later this year. Species were still playing catch-up even into June. I had a few notable moments with this species this year. The first came with finding my first of the year at Bentley Wood in between Small Pearls and Marshies in the Eastern Clearing. The second was when I found my first air in cop whilst checking out the 'Meadows' at work and the third was finding my second pairing at Slop Bog in between my first pair of Silver Stud pairs. On the downside however I don't recall seeing them in the large numbers that I'm used to. Usually during their main flight they're crawling all over the place at Larkhill and Bentley Wood but I didn't see that wasn't the case this year. Was this one of the drawbacks of the old spring and then subsequent heatwave?



6 Dingy Skipper, 07-05-2018 Laverstock Down

A fortnight later this year which I can't decide whether this was due to the late start or whether it was due to them reverting back to a more normal time frame? I also saw my first Dingy before a Grizzlie this year, but only by 5 minutes. They seemed to have a positive year and I can't recall seeing as many as I saw during 2018? They were certainly out numbering the Grizzlies at Laverstock where I saw my first as well as at my Duke Site and they also cropped up at Larkhill and Bentley Wood too. My notions of them having a good year were backed up further by seeing several second brood individuals with one at Laverstock and then 2 on another occasion as well as finding one at Shipton while seeing Brostreaks.



7 Grizzled Skipper, 07-05-2018 Laverstock Down

Like their distant Dingy cousins the Grizzlies also had a bit of a lie-in this year, turning up a fortnight later than in 2017 and for the third year on the trot on the same day as my first Dingy. However the similarity ended there as they didn't seem to fair as well as in previous years; I didn't find them at Larkhill although they were at Bentley Wood in the Eastern Clearing and they were outnumbered by Dingies at almost all of the sites where I found them apart from Martin Down where they seemed to be doing quite well and were holding their own number wise compared to the Dingy - possibly due to the more suitable habitat? I also saw a Grizzlie in early August. But only because it was a malvoideae and not malvae!





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 27-Mar-19 01:08 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, love the Skipper's, I hope I see a grizzled one this year 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Mar-19 12:36 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 If you can get to the right place then you could easily get them, they are a joy to behold, little fuzzy bombshells and if you can get in close they have a wizened old man look about them 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Mar-19 09:54 PM GMT

The Whites



8 Clouded Yellow, 26-07-2018 Laverstock Down

The Clouded Yellow made a welcome reappearance on my on my yearly tally in 2018. I was planned to make a trip to Southbourne in order to make sure that I saw one this year but I needn't have worried as Laverstock Down produced the goods yet again on one of those most memorable of days; with early morning Chalkhills and Small Coppers, Brostreaks, second brood Dingy, Wall, Painted Lady all featuring amongst the cast of which the Cloudy was possibly the star.

I went ahead with the trip to Southbourne anyway as the girls wanted to see a particular film which was only showing in Bournemouth. I was glad that I did as I was able to catch up with a Cloudy looking resplendent despite the unseasonably cool weather. I'd definitely visit this site again, though possibly slightly earlier in the season when it's a tad warmer. It will be good to have a back-up site for this species in reserve should there be a dearth in subsequent years. As for how they fared this year as always it is difficult to determine - I don't recall there being mentions of masses and it definitely wasn't a 'Yellow' year. The most interesting thing for me was that people were still seeing them into October at different sites along the South coast - possibly more small populations clinging on a making it through the winter in their little microhabitats?



9 Brimstone, 05-04-2018 Salisbury

The Beast was responsible for one of latest ever sightings of this species; almost a whole month later. As usual it was on the first 'brilliant' day of the season - sun shining and barely a cloud in the sky. Despite the late start they did very well in the early part of the season and I noticed more females

this year than last. Unlike last year they didn't seem to keep going quite as strong and they seemed to peter out as the season progressed. Saying that there were still a few about and I saw my last 'proper' visit out in mid-October but I'm used to seeing many more fluttering around the floral beds of the various National Trust gardens that we visit in early Autumn. Hopefully they just got on with things and the next brood were laid and forming earlier which would explain their absence?



10 Large White, 26-04-2018 Work

A whole 24 days later this year though they were pretty early in 2017 so this may be more of a usual emergence time. Perhaps without the Beast they would have again emerged early? As like last year they seemed to do better in the subsequent broods and weren't as low in number as I've seen in previous years but I'm still waiting for that seismic shift back to them 'common' and this year they were hardly that. Perhaps the very hot/dry period through May/June knocked them back a bit?



11 Small White, 19-04-2018 Vera Jones

I've been really struggling with working out what happened with this species during 2018. For a start they were 25 days later. Next they seemed to be absent from the hedgerows on the way home and despite a pick-up in their numbers later in the season they were never easy to find and were hardly 'common'. Saying that I recall a fantastic afternoon in May when I arrived early to pick my wife up from a Yoga session. I took a quick stroll in the locale and looked out across the surrounding meadow and counted over 70 whites in one scan across the field. 70 in one field and there could have been more feeding down in the cover or obstructed from view by the dykes and rivulets. So with that in mind I really can't make my mind up how they fared...





12 Green-veined White, 14-04-2018 Mottisfont

Only eight days later this year than last and like last year they seemed to be more numerous in the later broods but even so they were still well down to what I recall. Was this because they were adversely affected by the Beast and didn't really make a comeback? Hopefully this year they will bounce back....One thing I did notice that I'd not before and will have to keep an eye out for this year was that those that I did see in the spring brood had a lovely yellow appearance whereas those in later broods appeared more contrasting black and white. This is the opposite of what I saw last year - is this a factor related to ambient temperatures during metamorphosis I wonder?



13 Orange-tip, 19-04-2018 Vera Jones

My first Orange-tip came 18 days later this year as a lot of these species were held back by the Beast from the East. However this did seem to do the butterflies a favour in that once they did arrive they were in great numbers - in fact I don't think I can recall seeing as many OTs as I did in 2018. It helped off course that I've finally found my guaranteed OT site and also found their favourite hang-out spot at said site but I saw OT at pretty much every site I visited. They were bombing along at Stourhead, Work, Coombe Bissett, may Duke site, Noar Hill, Bentley Wood etc. The list goes on and while they were in the main part of their flight I saw OTs on pretty much every trip out including a monster of an OT at my Marshie site which size wise could have been an escaped Great Orange-tip! They also lasted well this year as I found a male in really good nick at the end of May. They were a joy to

behold.



Have a goodun 🍀

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Mar-19 11:39 PM GMT

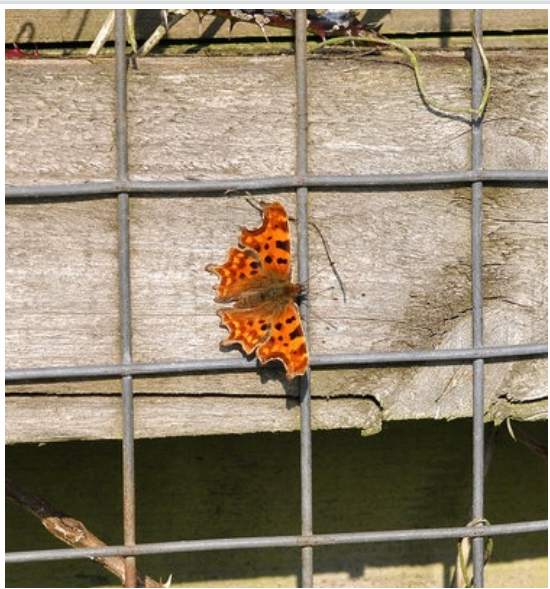
Middle Street 23-02-2019

After a week in Wales with cloud and rain and cold it as nice to get back home an enjoy the Spring weather that I'd been reading about. Unfortunately after 8 years of constant use and/or abuse my lens was starting to show signs of its age and was having a bit of a Restorative at Nikon (complete refit of the Autofocus 😞😞) and so I would be using a 'Nifty Fifty' lens 😞. Whilst any prime lens is better than the zoom lens the camera came with it was still a far cry from the 105. I wasn't looking forward to having to get really close to the butterflies and didn't think that they'd let me so as I parked up and watched several Brimstone fly along the boundary hedge I kept reminding myself that seeing butterflies out and about would be enough...

Once on site my wife sat among the reeds at the rivers' edge and watched the movement I set off round the pond to check out the hollow seeing only a few Brimstone in the process. As I completed the circuit I was joined by my wife and we started out towards the other end of the reserve. There were no more butterflies on the way but as we almost completed the return journey Brimstones fluttered around the large 'island' of Bramble in one of the drainage hollows. Also here there was a Comma, at least that's what I think it was.



On the homeward journey I pulled in at the corner of Middle and Upper Street as the little bank can be productive. So it proved today with a Comma down on the deck, a Red Admiral on the fence behind it and a pair of Brimstones bustling about. I ignored the Brimstones as they were patrolling and so wouldn't stop and decided to try for the Comma first because it was between me and the Red Admiral and so it could have spooked it. It was a good call because while I was getting my shots the Red Admiral decided it was warmed sufficiently and took off so I could have missed out and not gotten any shots!



Chuffed to find three year firsts in one sitting we headed for home.
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 31-Mar-19 11:50 PM GMT

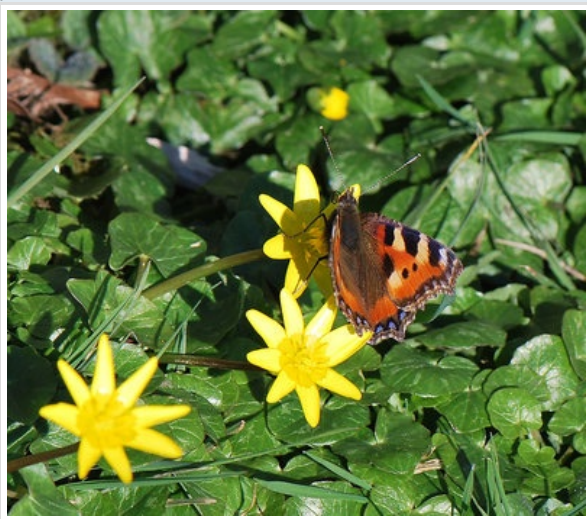
Work 25-02-2019

As the summer progressed nicely (I'm not joking as I type this it feels like that could have been it!) to our third sunny and warm day on the trot, the obligatory trip to Southampton done for at least another 8 weeks and the lovely people at Castle Cameras having issued me with a 'fill-in' lens it was inevitable that I would be stuck in work. And so indeed it was. Still I managed to make the most of it and come lunchtime I grabbed my camera and headed out to the 'field' and the surrounding pathways at the back of the school.

All was quiet as I worked along the Pits and the margins of the playing fields and it wasn't until I had taken my first step onto the path at the back that I saw my first butterfly. It was a Small Tort which unkindly kept on going when it reached the fence and decided to land too far away from my lens. I waited for about 15 seconds and it took off landing just on the other side of the fence so a quick dip down and poke of the lens through the wires of the fence and I had my first Small Tort shot of 2019. It moved around a little bit and perched for a while on an old yarrow (?) stem. As I recoiled and straightened up a Brimstone made a pass by.



I set off along the path eyes peeled for any movement but I added only one more Small Tort along the first half of the path. I wasn't too concerned as this bit of my route often only has the stragglers/travellers from the two main areas that the Small Torts seem to like. Indeed as I reached the small hummock with the break between the houses I spied a second Small Tort which was swiftly joined by three more all bustling and knocking into each other. Right at the far end was another lonesome Small Tort which brought the total to 7 and there was another Brimstone too. Not bad for this time of year.





My return route was much quicker as time had run away from me slightly and I needed to get back but I don't think I added any new Small Torts to the days tally until right up by the Primary School when I was only seconds away from being back in the block.
Not a bad start 8 Small Torts and 2 Brimstones and it was great to see Small Torts again, I've missed them more than most butterflies to be honest.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Andrew555, 01-Apr-19 11:22 AM GMT

Love the Painted Lady shots from Wales Wurzel, particularly the first. 🇬🇧 😊

Wonderful sights from your roundups, all to look forward to. 😊 Cracking Comma and Torts. 😊

Cheers

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Apr-19 06:31 PM GMT

Cheers Andrew 😊 I've actually started on the 2019 but somehow I'm still a month behind 😊😊 I keep going out at lunch each day and so I've got more and more to do 😊 Luckily it's one of those pleasant problems to have 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 01-Apr-19 06:40 PM GMT

Love the shots of the OT's from last year Wurzel, the weathers changed here today I walked round HLB and not a single Butterfly, so keep your's coming, then I'll believe Spring is here 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 02-Apr-19 08:47 AM GMT

Hope Wilts can provide a few OT's next week!
I will check out Tilshead too if the weather behaves.

Have a great Easter break,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Apr-19 06:59 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I do have a bit of a backlog Goldie so I will be happy to oblige – it's April and I'm still in February PD wise 😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 You should be okay Trevor – I saw three at one site on Saturday and there have been reports from across the county 😊, we just need the weather to play ball – sunny intervals would be ideal 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Apr-19 09:35 AM GMT

April 2019

Bit late I know but then that is the way of Wurzel...



Have a goodun

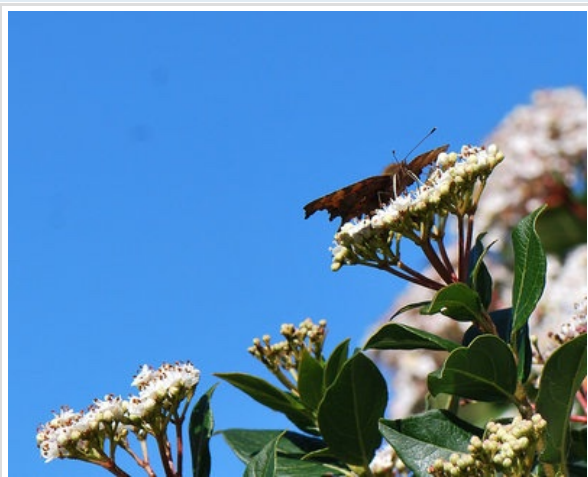
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-19 11:44 PM GMT

Work 26-02-2019

Another day and another trip to the Path during the lunch break. This time instead of working all the way round the fields and along the first half of the field I cut to the chase and made straight for the half way point and the "Bush". To do this I cut through the garages and after the obligatory check of the tiny bank (nothing today) I made my way through the estate eyeing various of the 'good spots' on the way which also drew blanks. I didn't actually see a butterfly until I reached the 'Bush' where there were two Commas feeding at about head height. One nipped off and so I made to follow it along the path and it didn't get far.





A different points along the path I was accompanied by 4 Small Tortoiseshells. I saw the first and it took off from the wrong side of the fence, flew towards me and then disturbed the second which repeated the action of the first; disturbing the third. I was pretty confident that there were three individuals here as at one point all three piled into each other in one of those great to watch Spring skirmishes. I carried on along the path spying the fourth Small Tort while the other three were still spiralling about behind me. At the far end of the path a Peacock went up from the path in front of me; the large eyes serving their purpose and dazzling me so I didn't get a shot off. I didn't mind as even though I didn't have my shot I had species number 5 for the 2019 Tally.





I was almost late back to work but as I had a free it wouldn't have mattered anyway. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 05-Apr-19 11:58 AM GMT

Love that first shot of the Comma Wurzel, it's great to get Butterflies at a distance when they're on lovely Blossom 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Apr-19 06:53 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was chuffed with those shots as there was a great contrasting blue sky background 😊 Hopefully this cooler weather is a blip and normal service is resumed soon 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 05-Apr-19 08:02 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

...Love that first shot of the Comma...

Ditto. A cracking image 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-19 03:45 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 In the past I didn't have much luck with the more distant shots like that – it could be that the total refit of my Autofocus means my fortunes could change though the more modest side of me puts it down to a fluke 😊😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

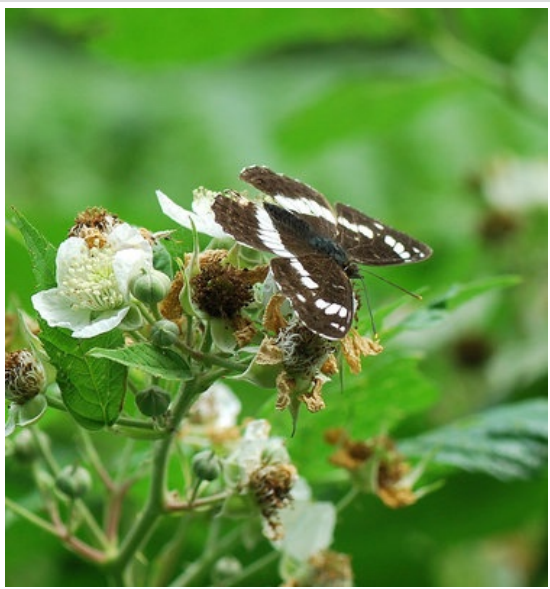
by Wurzel, 06-Apr-19 07:34 PM GMT

The "Aristocrats"



14 White Admiral, 01-07-2018 Bentley Wood

The White Admirals were running late this year (over 2 weeks) - or rather I was as I didn't get to Bentley until the start of the 'silly season' and so missed out on the first flush of WA's when they are really contrasting. Instead by the time I got to the woods they were looking a little ragged and had taken on the more dark brown appearance that seems to come with age for this species. I didn't have to work too hard to find a couple in Bentley but my later visit meant that I can't really be sure how they fared here though if I go with my digestive tract then I'd say that here at least they seemed fewer in numbers than last year?



15 Purple Emperor, 01-07-2018 Bentley Wood

It seems that the Emperors have taken to emerging early as this year they were out a day earlier than last. Mind you this could be because once again we experienced a period of searing temperatures and June really was 'Flaming'.

Last year I reckoned that I was the second year into the usual three year cycle and so this would be the year when I would find them down on the ground. And so it turned out. It was cracking and the day is emblazoned on my mind as I experienced the full gamut of Emperor behaviour. There was the meet and greet from on high in the car park, surging flights along the tops of the Oaks that line the main ride, exploratory glides down lower and the final descent onto something utterly repulsive and in this case canine in origin. To cap it all not only did I get the open wing shots that I'd been craving and envying for several years but I was granted a private audience/trousering! It was fantastic to finally enjoy some quality time with this species. They seemed to have a good year number wise and there were huge numbers coming in from other sites too.



16 Red Admiral, 05-04-2018 Middle Street

After seeing my first much later this year, two months later in fact, seeing them through the spring was actually really tricky. They just didn't seem to be around perhaps they were slowed down by the Beast from the East. The cold blast just as they were getting going possibly meant that they kept their heads down and got on with the business. Then when the summer started I started seeing them much more frequently. In fact by the end of the season, as is often the way they were at pretty much every site I visited and became the final species of the year. A much better finish than beginning.



17 Painted Lady, 15-07-2018 somewhere in Surrey...

In 2017 I saw just 4 of this species over the whole year and it felt what with their much later appearance (almost 6 weeks) that 2018 was going to follow in the same vein or maybe even worse. However after my initial sighting it seemed that the floodgates had been broken as I then saw two individuals at Laverstock, singletons at Broughton Down and Shipton Bellinger as well as at least 6 while sojourning in Wales. Whilst this isn't exactly a record busting year it certainly beats the 4 from 2017 and is one of the best years in several for this species for me. Hopefully this year will finally be the year when we get another massive invasion, it's been almost a decade since the last one...





18 Small Tortoiseshell, 21-03-2018 Work

Over a month later this year and once again I found my first at work but surprisingly I saw a Peacock prior to my first Tortie. After the masses that I saw last year I was hoping for a repeat performance this year too but whilst I could regularly find them in double figures in the short walk round the school site occasionally getting into the high teens my record number was 20 in one visit so a couple down on my highest number last year. They were also in good numbers at Middle Street but down at Five Rivers – possibly because this is an ‘early’ site for them and I missed them when Snow stopped play?

As last year they dwindled as the month progressed and rather than seeing in the teens I could occasionally find a couple with some pretty worn ones up on Pewsey Downs almost 2 months after my first. After this they were very hard to come by in the Autumn although a Small Tort was my penultimate photographed butterfly of 2018. This marked drop-off in the summer brood happened in 2017 as well and they did okay in the Spring of 2018 so fingers crossed that they’re okay for this year.



19 Peacock, 13-03-2018 Work

Normally it’s a Small Tort photo wise and a first fleeting view of a Red Admiral but not so this year. Unusually a Peacock was my first photographed and first seen butterfly of 2019. At Fiver Rivers when I was able to catch up with them there they were about in reasonable numbers but I still wasn’t convinced that they were catching up on the Small Tort – in fact they seemed to be down this year. They too showed the familiar pattern of the other

Aristos in that the Hibernators put in a good showing but then the subsequent brood was far less numerous. As always they seemed to be the first to disappear and hibernate.



20 Comma, 21-03-2018 Work

I feel like I'm writing the same thing again and again when considering the Aristos but for the sake of completeness here goes... later in emerging, not in as high numbers as last year and then much harder to find come the autumn when you're hoping for a few Aristos to maintain interest in the closing stages of the season. I'm wondering if the really cold snap in the spring followed by the almost unbearable heat have played a part in this pattern that I saw in the hibernators? Obviously the pattern gets broken though for the Comma as the H.Comma appears around July time giving us a nice fresh dose of Comma action. However this year I can't recall seeing as many of these either. Hopefully this is more down to me just being in the wrong place or at the wrong time? The unusual thing that I can recall is that the Comma was my second butterfly in 2019 knocking the usual Number 1, the Small Tort, down to third!



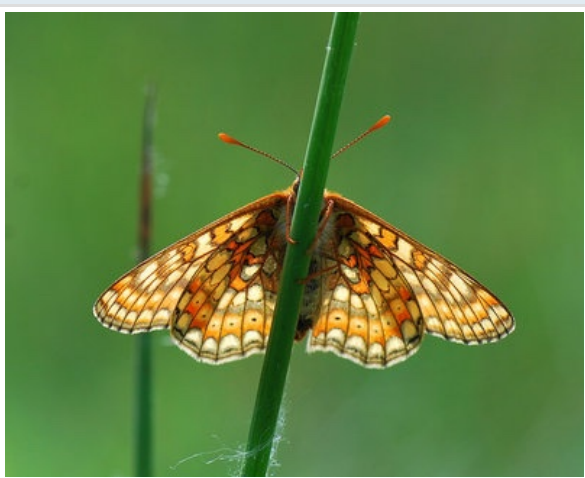
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-19 10:46 PM GMT

Fritillaries



I had a cracking year with the Fritillaries this year seeing all 8 of the British species...however this was only because I picked up the usual suspects in the UK and then took my holiday in the Dordogne where I was able to get the three trickier Frits...

21 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, 27-05-2018 Bentley Wood

Last year I saw this species twice at Bentley with a singleton and then a maximum count of 5. I said then that the Small Pearl seems to be dwindling and so it continues with only 5 seen on two occasions this year. To be fair I found my first a week later this year and it was the first record from Bentley so

they may have taken slightly longer to get going but I'm still concerned for this species here. This coming season I need to tear myself away from the Eastern Clearing and check out the various paths and rides throughout the wood which will give me a fairer reflection of their status. I still feel it's not looking good so I might need to start trying to find sites in the New Forest as a back-up.



22 Pearl-bordered Fritillary, 19-05-2018 Bentley Wood

A similar story with The Spring Fritillary as for other spring butterflies in that it was late by a good two weeks – progress slowed, emergence postponed by the Beast from the East. Even so this put it back in line with the first sighting dates from previous years coming in the first week of May and meant that the East/West time divide was slightly diminished. Unlike their smaller and swarthier cousins the Pearls seem to be not as badly number wise. Over the course of a couple of visits there were good showings of Pearls with at least 11, 8 and 6 recorded at this site. Hopefully the massive amount of clearing will be just in time to sustain this particular Frit as well as help its scarcer cousin. I kept my eye out for aberrants and melanics but only one individual seemed to have much heavier markings than usual. Also this year they seemed much more frenetic than I recall, bombing around all over the place as though on a mission, which I suppose they were; “gotta meet my Biological Imperative” was their mantra.





23 Dark Green Fritillary, 20-06-2018 Larkhill

The DGF was definitely not following the same rule book as the majority of the Frits in 2018. First up they were actually earlier than last year possibly due to onslaught of the heatwave arriving a whole 12 days earlier. They also cropped up in a massive range of sites; on the cliffs and beach at Lulworth Cove, the wastelands of Larkhill and my Duke site, the rolling Downs of Laverstock and Broughton and also in the lowland woods of Bentley. The only problem I had with this species this year was weather related. Again they lasted the distance and they were still going strong into August at Broughton. They were so solar charged in the heat that they rarely stopped for very long and even more rarely did they close up their wings allowing the much sought after under wing shots.





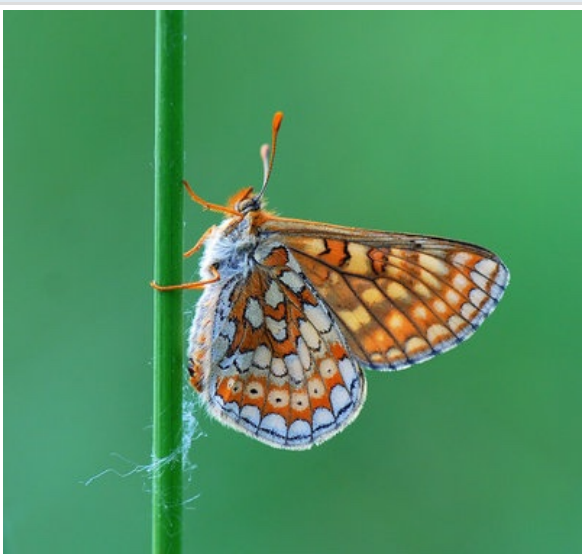
24 Silver-washed Fritillary, 01-07-2018 Bentley Wood





It felt like things had really caught up and got back onto schedule once the heatwave hit and for the Silver-washed this meant that I found them a day earlier this year compared to last. I seem to recall feeling that in 2017 they were doing okay but this year I don't think that this is the case. I did see a straggler at Shipton at the tail end of their flight but after my first few at Bentley there were only a couple at Garston and a singleton at Broughton to add to the overall Tally. It was a disappointing year for me for this species. At Bentley the walk from the car park up to the Memorial for Whitters produced only a handful and I had to really work to get any shots whereas in previous years I didn't have any worries on this score; if I missed out on one another would be encountered a short distance further on. A couple of weeks into their flight when I called in at Garston there were only a few individuals flying along the main track and they were all really worse for wear. Also this was the first year that I didn't see a Valesina on my travels. So not a very good year – perhaps the heat struck at the wrong time for this species?

25 Marsh Fritillary, 19-05-2018 Marshie Site



Nine days later this year and unfortunately I didn't find one at Larkhill – though I always had that one down as an outlier. Still it was a cracking year for the Marshie. Cotley was good but not as good as it has been in previous years though this is probably just down to the usual boom and bust cycle and a

quieter year in 2018 could mean a busier one in 2019. They were in great numbers at Martin Down – the most I've ever seen here; I only walked from the main car park along the Dyke to about half way to the hollow where the Dyke transects the path from Sillen's Lane but even so they were pretty much everywhere, littering the path and making the place look slightly untidy. However the real crème de la crème came from Bentley Wood where there were several flying on both the visits I made to the Eastern Clearing. No traipsing the length and breadth of the Wood or trying to follow narrow and winding roads to mysterious car parks deep in the impenetrable core of the wood; no 'secret squirrels' "none shall post" worries about the trip report write-up. No none of that as there they were, brazenly flying about around the boggy ground amid the tussocks and Purple Moor Grass. Brilliant! I've gone from desperately trying to find a site to see this species to being spoilt for choice!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 06-Apr-19 10:59 PM GMT

A great resume of mid and late(ish) 2018 season, Wurzel. I always feel a little melancholy as His Majesty fades, as the season has peaked by then. Personally, I thought 'the hill' performed very well in 2018. But the weather was superb when I went.

Pearls soon!
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Apr-19 09:41 AM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 The summer this year was brilliant and the grounded Emperors were the icing on the cake 😊. I'm keeping my eyes on the Sightings page – the Bentley Pearls are normally 1–2 weeks later than those in Sussex. 😊 I better get back to writing – still got Browns, Blues, Hairstreaks and Duke to do as well as 11 reports from this season to sort out 😊 Hopefully the weather will improve for the Easter week...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 08-Apr-19 10:51 AM GMT

Lovely shots of all the Butterflies Wurzel but I like the last shot of the Marshie best(it's lovely) 😊 it seems to be saying ("yahoo" look at me) 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Apr-19 09:06 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 The best thing about that one was that it came from Bentley Wood and I got that shot after spending an horrific morning in Ikea 😊😊 Only another 5 odd weeks and they should be flying again 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 09-Apr-19 09:29 PM GMT

Yes, a very nice Marshie, Wurzel – it was definitely odd to find them on both my visits to Bentley last year, as I'd never come across any there before. 😊 The plight of SPBF there is very worrying though, as you say. Incidentally, my experiences elsewhere of SWF didn't mirror yours – there seemed to be plenty at both Bookham and Chiddingfold.

Hopefully not long till Fritillary Time again! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-19 10:38 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 What we in Wiltshire really need is SPBF turning up somewhere else 😊, at Bentley I think the memo was delivered to the Marshies by mistake 😊 As for the Pearls not long now, in 2017 they were out by 23rd at least so hopefully another week or two – I can't wait 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Apr-19 12:04 PM GMT

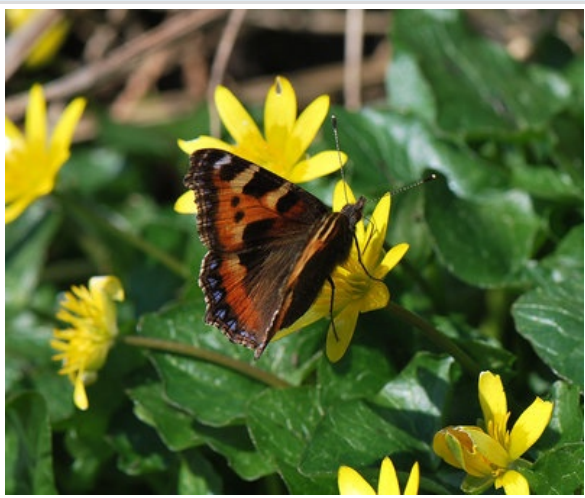
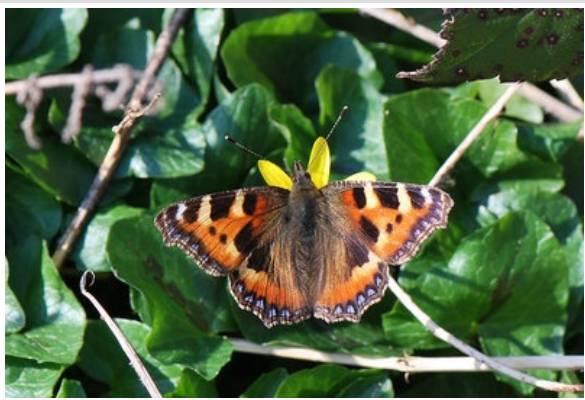
Work 27-02-2019

After things worked out so well yesterday I again cut my way through the garages and made straight to the 'Bush' but today I was stopped as a Small Tort was bumbling along the tiny bank and occasionally it stopped for the briefest of basks on the Tarmac.



Down at the bushes there were three Commas - the first of which was the closest that I've found them at here but as I came round the corner it took off and landed high at the back of the Bush away from my lens so I had to settle for some shots from slightly further away. Aware that I didn't have the luxury of a free directly after lunch I had to keep moving today and so set off on a rapid check of the path. There were a couple of Small Torts along the way, definitely three different individuals but because the vegetation hasn't been cut back over successive years they're in the habit of nipping over the fence and reappearing further along the track now rather than showing the previous behaviour of nipping to the next nectar source.





There were also a couple of Brimstones patrolling up and down the path on the return journey. Again there were three though again there could have been more. I'm basing the count of three on the fact that this was the maximum number I saw together at one time. They seemed to be slightly less inclined to keep perpetually moving and so I was able to actually get a few shots of them when they paused for breath/nectar. This is generally the way with this species at this time of year; first there is the sighting, then the feeble attempt at some in flight shots followed by distant/grab shots and hopefully eventually so decent shots while they're still in decent nick. So I'm at Brimstone Stage 2...





After a brief final check of the Bush I legged it back to work – all change weather wise tomorrow so was that our summer?



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 11-Apr-19 07:34 PM GMT

Lovely Brimstone shot Wurzel, yellow on yellow 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-19 08:18 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 That Brimstone was apparently committing a bit of a fashion faux pas, it was doubling up colours 😊😊 It's a pretty feeble attempt at camo – I mean the colour is okay but it still sticks out like a sore thumb (all be it a much more attractive digit) as it's so large 😊😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 12-Apr-19 07:28 PM GMT

Just catching up on your round-ups and thoughts on last years season Wurzel. Some interesting comments, particularly on the Fritillaries as I only managed to see the grand total of one species of these last year (Silver-washed), something I hope to rectify this year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-19 11:02 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 Still a few to go '2018 Tally' wise but I keep going out at lunch or just popping out for a quick walk so my 2019 backlog is starting to build up 😊😊 I'm sure you'll do well for Frits this year especially if you can get down to Devon again. Failing that I know a good site for Marshies – down the M5 and cut through Chippenham to Warminster... 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Apr-19 06:22 PM GMT

Hengistbury Head 17-03-2019

I'd not been to Hengistbury Head for years but the Head has provided me with several bird lifers over the years (Storm Petrel, Snow Bunting and Ring Ouzel) however today was more of a recce for future visits as the weather had reverted to more seasonally correct and there was a slight nip in the air. While I waited for the girls to visit the Ladies I hung out with the local bother boyz, the Starlings which at this time of year look like a cross between a Goth and a Punk!



Once we started walking we only stopped once for a very furry caterpillar and soon we were strolling on the sands past the beach huts looking for a secluded and empty bit of the beach to set up camp. Finding a piece of the strand which was empty from one Groyne to the other we settled down using the Groyne as a wind break and set the Kelly Kettle to boiling. The girls played chicken with the waves and explored the Groynes while I noodled around looking for Hagstones. After this it was time to head back the long way round...I'm sure we'll be back.





Velvet Swimming Crab

24-03-2019

Last week I said we'd be back and sure enough we were a week later. In the interim though I'd had a surgical procedure done 😊👍 and was still quite sore and not exactly fully mobile. Still as my nieces were coming with us at least we wouldn't be going at a great pace...then they turned up on scooters and bikes! So once again we set off along the road that winds through the woods before breaking out at the Natterjack pond and the surrounding beach huts onto the Spit. This week though it wasn't exactly a stroll, more a hobble come John Cleese silly walk. Still my somewhat slower pace meant that I found some interesting caterpillars. I got quite excited having seen the crumbling cliffs on the other side of the Head the week previously as well as noticing the red heads and black bodies but instead of Glannies they were Cream-spot Tiger cats.

Once on the beach we again found an unoccupied stretch and again got the Kelly Kettle to boiling. All the girls went off to do beaching things and the youngest was soaking wet within 5 minutes but it was great to just listen to the sounds of them playing whilst the waves cascaded in and the gulls mewed and called. As I waited for the second boil something flopped down on the sands. Grabbing my camera I scuttled bow legged towards it and managed only two record shots of a Peacock. After this I had a bit more of a mooch and concentrated on the gulls as well as eating lunch.



Yellow-legged Gull



A little later I set out to use the conveniences and on the way I caught sight of another butterfly. I didn't hold out much hope of getting any shots as it fluttered by and away from me. However it hung a right and after a few circles round dropped down to the ground. Forgetting my discomfort I reverted to stalking mode and approached using the shot-step technique before risking lowering myself to kneeling for a nice close shot. Chuffed I carried on although slightly more carefully and gingerly now as I'd been a bit reckless in my stalking and the joy of getting a Peacock shot had masked my discomfort.





On the way back there wasn't much to note just more of the Cream-spot Tiger cats but still I was chuffed with the 2 Peacocks.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

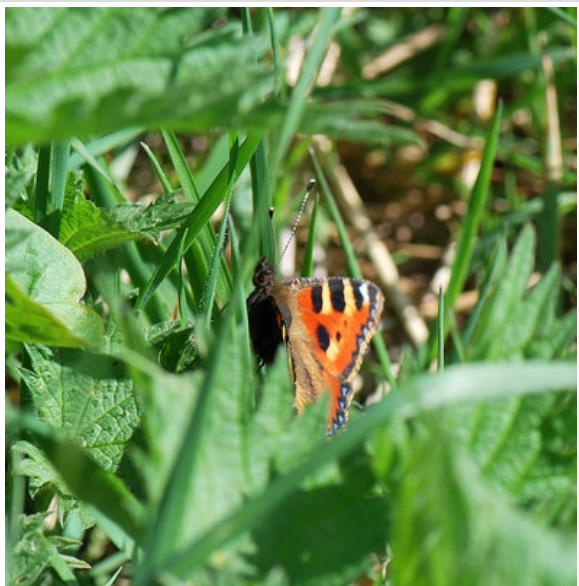
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-19 08:50 AM GMT

Work 25-03-2019

Things were going quite well with the healing after the exertions of yesterday and I was feeling almost back to normal – right up until the cat walked over me at 5am placing all his weight on one of my tender areas. Hence when I picked my camera up at the start of lunch I had to make the (less) painful decision to take the short cut through the housing estate to the back path rather than investigate what had emerged at the Pits and the back hedges.

The first butterfly I found was a Comma on the single bush but today it was too far round to get anything but a visual conformation that it was there, plus I couldn't flex too much and stretching to reach was right out. I carried on hobbling on the way along the main path and picked up several Small Tortois along the way. I reckoned there was a minimum count on the 'outward' run of 5 one of which posed really nicely on a Bramble in what I refer to as 'The Batman'. At the end there was the/a Peacock again but I was partially expecting it so this time I was ready with the camera. Even so it was more ready and so I could only manage a distant record shot as it basked annoyingly out of reach on a path in one of the back gardens.





On the return journey there were again plenty of Small Torts to keep me occupied though this time I could only manage a count of 4 though I was slightly distracted by a fly-by Brimstone which looked momentarily like it was going to land and also various twinges and aches due to the after effects of the op.



I was just girding my loins (quite literally) for the slog back through the housing estate when a fresher looking Peacock appeared (the payment for getting those poor record shots). It also didn't really play fair landed at an awkward angle just over the barbed wire fence but with very, very careful manoeuvring I managed to get some reasonable side on views of it.



So quite a pleasant half hour butterfly wise if nothing else...
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

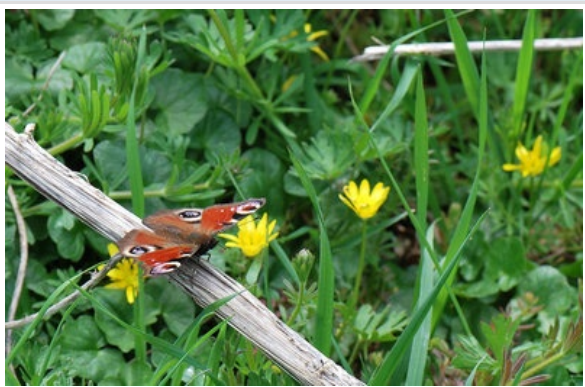
by Wurzel, 16-Apr-19 10:41 AM GMT

Work 26-03-2019

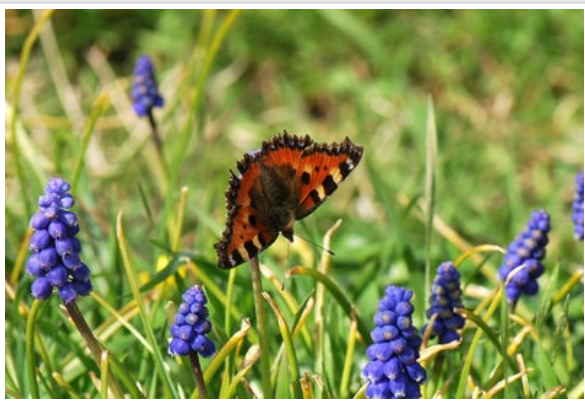
Another day and another lunchtime out – the warmth continued which made it much easier to move so much so that occasionally I had to remind myself to ease up a little or I could end up paying for it later. Again I cut through the estate and headed directly to the large Comma bush where there was only a single Comma again today.



After checking in here I set off down the narrow path bordered by the bank on one side and the field on the other. As I worked my way along it I'd stop occasionally as butterflies would come into view as I rounded the corner of the miniature scallops cut into the briars and other scrubby vegetation that litter the bank. First was a second, different Comma from the Bush and then I worked through the usual suspects. When I recited the list in my head whilst trying to remember the order of occurrence (I must start remembering my notebook) I felt like I was singing out dance steps; more of a case of Small Tort, Peacock – Peacock, Small Tort – Comma, Small Tort, Small Tort rather than slow, slow quick-quick, slow.



I then turned round and made my way back to work counting on the way and occasionally stopping. Once back at the Bush a Comma was again present and chuffed by this and the fact that I was having a good day pain wise I carried on along the path aiming to see what else I could find. In the end I managed to add a further 3 Small Torts to the tally one of which I managed to get a shot of through the diamond patterned wire fence.



By the time I'd gotten back to work the best minimum count was a brace a piece of Peacock and Comma and a quite respectful 9 Small Torts. Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Andrew555, 16-Apr-19 11:05 AM GMT

That Starling looks to have plenty of attitude Wurzel, and the crab is a beaut! Love the Peacock on sand. 😊

I like your Fritillary round-up especially, that last Marshie. 🍷 😊
I'm going to try and make it to Martin Down this year.

Cheers

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 16-Apr-19 02:25 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, you sounded very uncomfortable in March 😊 I hope your feeling much better now, it didn't stop you getting some lovely shots of the Butterflies 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

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

Cheers Andrew 😊 I was chuffed with that Peacock as the day could have been a bust without it plus I suffered a bit for that shot 😊 Good luck at Martin Down – if you work your way along Bokerley from the main car park you should easily bump into more Marshies than you can shake a stick at 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-19 12:18 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was alternating between pretty and very uncomfortable for about a fortnight but so long as it stays warm for a while I should be okay from here on 😊 A lot of those shots did take a fair bit of literal loin girding to get but were definitely worth it 😊 I've already said it but you can never have enough so good luck with the Grizzlies 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 18-Apr-19 02:02 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel it sounds like I'll be feeling some pain as well looking for Butterflies I just hope I'm as lucky as you and get some shots 😊 Goldie 😊

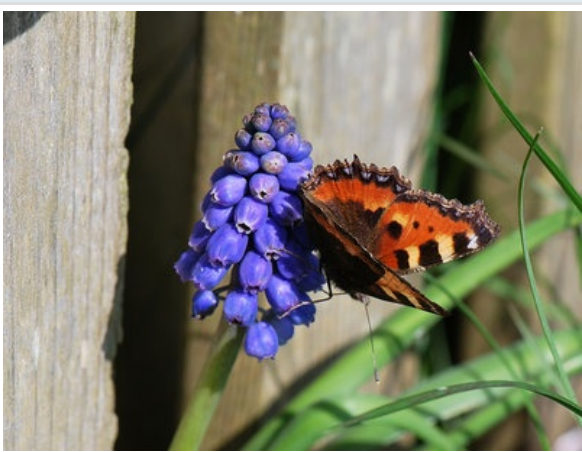
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-19 11:00 PM GMT

I just read and left two responses on your PD Goldie – hope you're mended soon 🙏 😊

Work 27-03-2019

At lunch I again decided that discretion is the better part of valour and so cut straight through the housing estate to the half-way point. This meant that I could complete half of my usual transect without suffering for the rest of the afternoon. To say this is getting to be a bit of a ball ache is literally true in this case! As I turned left to start my way along the path which is narrowing ever more each day my attention was called to a Small Tort which was just on the other side of the fence somewhere they are more commonly frequenting this year. Luckily it was close enough that I was able to place my lens close to the grille and focus through the gaps. On the other side of the path taking advantage of the Muscari which grows close by to the south facing fence (it's like a well-appointed restaurant or butterflies) was a second.



Slightly further along and a Comma seemed out of place down on the deck when it should have been behind me on the Bush. The butterflies then came thick and fast as I carried on along the path. Another 2 Small Torts, a Brimstone feeding on a Dandelion before a final flourish at the end of the path of 3 Small Torts and another Comma. The bank widens here to about the size of a small garden, raised like a plateau with more Muscari and other nectar sources growing on the edge as the 'plateau' dives down to the neighbouring field. All four of these final four were taking advantage of this little area and I spent a very extravagant four minutes here (almost a sixth of my entire time) enjoying them bimbly about.



The return journey saw a smaller count of three Small Torts and the Brimstone stopped for its photo again and I was just about to start back when a Peacock flew in and landed in the middle of the small 'valley' of the half way point. I managed to approach it and get within range of a decent-ish shot but rather than nip off as soon as I got near this one used a different evasion technique, it started by rotating it's way round the Dandelion and then one it had orientated itself in a way that it found pleasing it started rocking forward and back opening and closing its wings as it did so. This meant I have a lot of blurry photos of said Peacock (or at least I did they've now been binned).





My final stop of the lunch time visit was for an Oil Beetle which was lumbering along the path.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-19 07:33 AM GMT

Desperately trying to catch up...

Work and then later t'Vera 28-03-2019

Today was going to be a long day. Not only were the Year 11's completing their final 'walking talking Mock' but I had duty, a data analysis meeting and to cap it all tonight was the PTFA quiz which meant I was probably going to be out of the house for a good 14 ½ hours with the prospect of the final few of those hours sitting on a hard chair.

Because of this I was determined to make the most of my 'freetime' and so as soon as the bell rang at lunch I was out of the door and away down the edge of the field. As I worked along the field margin I kept an eye out at likely looking little clumps of wildflowers and rough grass that had escaped the attentions of the new groundskeepers as they grow too close to the neighbouring gardens. However my eyes were temporarily directed skywards as a trio of planes passed over head.



I didn't see my first butterfly until I reached the far corner of the field where a Small Tort played too hard to get. As I set off down the narrow path I was kept company by a trio of different yellow flying 'machines' as I counted 3 separate Brimstones by the time I'd reached just beyond the half way point. One of these was slightly frenetic than the other two so I attempted (some very poor) flight shots - they were so poor that I didn't bother with any of them.

I don't know what was up with everything today - possibly the sun was shining quite strongly revving them all up - but nothing was stopping for very long save for a solitary Comma. After my run in with him I carried on to the end adding Small Tort, 2 Peacocks and another Brimstone to the list all busy flapping about and not stopping - is there a change in the weather coming I wonder? The return journey was made on the hurry up but I didn't add anything new to the list.



Later after Bus Duty and the Data Meeting was completed I had a couple of hours to spare prior to the PTFA Quiz and so I nipped over to the Vera. Things were looking good as I got onto 2 Small Torts almost as soon as I'd walked through the gate. However I was wrong as after walking twice round the circuit, staring at every likely looking patch of leaves that showed the slightest white speckling (just in case it wasn't bird poo but it was a roosting OT) I had added zero butterflies to the Tally for the day. Shame really - give it a couple of weeks and there should be OTs a plenty here, fingers crossed I'll be able to get back.



Anyway to cut a long story short we blitzed the Quiz winning by 10 points clear 😊 though the seats were harder and more uncomfortable than I'd imagined...I'll pay for that tomorrow... 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by ernie f, 21-Apr-19 07:47 AM GMT

Wurzel. My apologies. I realised I had not caught up with your diary for awhile so I rectified that this morning.

First - Hope you are surviving your Op OK. I guess you must be as you did the trip to Noar Hill after all. Incidentally - you have convinced me to visit there today after your comment about the Dukes "taking off" there.

Also, I was fascinated by your Frit Report. I too was lucky to have visited for the Pearls and found the Marshies too. What a day that was - all three Frit species that Bentley Wood is noted for but all in one place and at the same time!

The other stand out moment was your observation about the rocking motion of a Peacock while nectaring. I have seen just this same behaviour with Red Admirals as they take the sap from wounds on Birch Trees.

Nice pic of a crab too!

Plus congratulations are in order.

You have finally caught up with the rest of us now your diary entries are in April 2019 (rather than October 2018 😊)

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-19 09:19 AM GMT

Cheers Ernie 😊 All mended now barring the odd twinge 😊 It was great to see the three Frits together - I just wish the Small Pearls were doing better there 😊😊 I've had the same three Frit Day there before with the added bonus of the honorary Frit a Duke as well 😊 Then there was another time with Small Pearl, DGF and SWF as well 😊😊. I'm getting there with the PD but still the wrong side of the month 😊😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

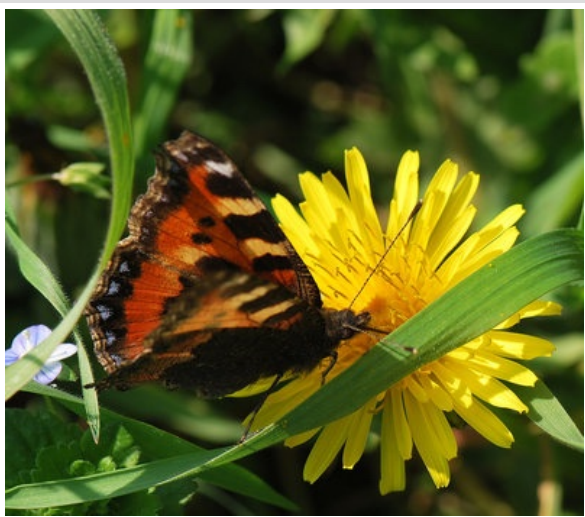
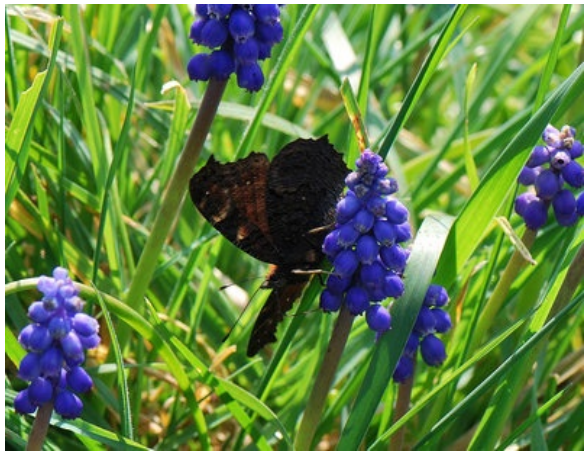
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-19 10:30 PM GMT

Work 29-03-2019

So we won the quiz but man am I in pain now - those seats didn't do anything support wise and then the shape of my car seat, squashed everything together in just the wrong way. Needless to say today's outing was a short, sharp shock!!! I hurried through the estate to get to the path and the main part of the transect as quickly as possible. Once there I slowed down slightly but I had to remind myself to bend more slowly each time I went for a shot. Apart from the discomfort from that area it was actually pleasant along the path and I was soon racking up butterflies with a maximum count of 6 Small Torts, 4 Brimstone and 3 Peacocks.





I pushed on today and carried along the path that took me round the furthest side of the field striking out towards the Pits. Along the way I added a brace of Small Torts to the tally for the day and a Brimstone looked a little lost as it quartered the recently mown part of the field looking for any nectar sources which had escaped the chop.

Once at the Pits I found another Peacock, well it found me erupting from the old wood pile and giving me a bit of a shock as well as a Small Tort which must have been roosting/basking close by. Both butterflies shot off across the field making for the unmown 'meadow'. I was just cursing them when a smaller bright white butterfly hove into view flying along the border hedge. All I could manage were a few blurry record shots but I was convinced that it was a Small rather than a Green-veined White; my first for 2019. I carried on back into work still aching and wincing from the occasional sharp tinge but happy none the less.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 22-Apr-19 11:31 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, lovely Butterflies but have you seen a Grizzled Skipper yet 🤔😄 I'm hoping you'll post one, we are suppose to be going to Dungeness tomorrow fingers crossed , where ever we've been we've not seen a great deal of Butterflies, which as surprised me, may be when I get a bit more mobile, we'll see them 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-19 11:03 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I reckon the heat has got the butterflies moving too quickly or some won't be used to it so they could be sitting out the main heat in the shade somewhere which could explain why you're not seeing loads? 😊 I got my first Grizzlies a week ago but I'm so behind with posting that I probably won't get round to them for another fortnight 😊😊 So here's a little taster of what to expect when you see them soon 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 23-Apr-19 08:55 AM GMT

Fantastic Wurzel, looking forward to more 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Apr-19 10:43 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I managed to get a few more a few days later so I better get on and try and catch up!

Middle Street 30-03-2019

Little L wanted to go fishing so we jumped in the car and drove over to Middle Street. I was hoping to walk it but I didn't want to push my luck and so vehicular locomotion was the order of the day. I kept my eyes peeled on the way but only counted 4 male Brimstones on the drive over. Once we were safely ensconced on the side of the road we strolled down the main track heading to the river. The girls wanted to set up camp at one of the Fishermen's pontoons so I let them go on ahead and get settled while I set to walking the site. A Small White flew towards me enticing me to the first Hotspot so that's where I headed first. I hung around for a while once there quartering the small patch of level ground and checking the dried up pod and the concrete paths in the neighbouring gardens on the other side of the boundary stream. A small tangerine butterfly made its way towards me - my first OT of the year and it was swiftly joined by a second. The second one flew more slowly and actually stopped down near the stream under the cover of the Willows and so I made a swift movement towards it and got a few close record shots before it realised I was there. A Peacock was also fluttering about here landing on the concrete paths and basking temporarily. Chuffed with this and also how mobile I was feeling (it must be the warmer weather) I made my way to the pontoons to check in.



On the way I saw another or possibly the same Peacock and a couple more Brimstones and after making sure that they were alright and that Little L was putting fresh water from the pond in her collecting jar I set out to walk to the other end of the reserve. Along this part I went past a couple of the 'soak-aways', the small areas of rough ground that are lower than the raised pathways. The first held a Peacock and 2 Small Torts and the one at the end had another Small Tort. The middle of the three is overgrown with Willow and shrub but will be worth checking later in the season for Specklies.



I was almost at the end of the reserve when my progress was hindered. A Peacock and Small Tort had decided to bask in the middle of the path. In order to get round the nearer Peacock without disturbing it I'd end up putting the Small Tort up so I stood and waited wondering what to do. In the end I didn't have to worry as the Small Tort noticed the Peacock and set about it! Returning the victor a few moments later and letting me get a shot or two of it basking in its glory. Well that's what I thought would happen but the Small Tort nipped off as well. On my return the Small Tort was still around but it must have mellowed as the Peacock was also back and basking. A Small White flew towards me but didn't stop and left me wondering if I'm ever going to get any shots of this species on this side of the season?





I retraced my steps finding a gorgeous Small Tort on the way and collected the girls who having released their catch of Minnows safely back into the river pointed out a Peacock that was trying to (unsuccessfully) blend in with the dead grasses. An OT and Small Tort by the reserve entrance as we were leaving. A quick check at the corner of Upper and Middle Street added another Small White to the days Tally but again it was a fly-by. I had at least a shot of an OT and my nether regions felt 'normal' and pain free so on the drive back I mentioned that a trip to Five Rivers might be on the cards...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 24-Apr-19 08:04 AM GMT

I'm envious of your frequent Small Tortoiseshell sightings. In my local area they seem to be absent.

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 24-Apr-19 08:32 AM GMT

Love the Orange Tip on the buttercup Wurzel and the lovely shots of the other's 😊 I've seen Orange Tips since I've been here but none have stopped for

shots so i'm glad I got some photos of them before I left home.Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Andrew555, 24-Apr-19 01:46 PM GMT

Yes please send some of those lovely Small Torts this way Wurzel! 😊

Wishing you a continued and speedy recovery. 😊

Cheers

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Apr-19 11:17 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 There were still a few about yesterday at work – we seem to have more Small Torts than Peacocks over this way 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was chuffed with that shot as it just sort of dropped in my lap as it were 😊 😊

Cheers Andrew 😊 Next time I see some I'll have a word 😊 I'm all healed now but my PD is 'past me' and there's still a little way to go – Im getting twinges just remembering 😊 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Apr-19 09:07 PM GMT

Five Rivers 30-03-2019

After such a great start to the afternoon I decided to check out Five Rivers to see how that was coming along. I' could afford to take my time as the girls were going for a swim and so having dropped them off early enough that they'd be in the front of the queue I was free to mooch. As I'd seen my first OT I was wondering if I could also add my first Specklie to my 2019 Tally? Due to this I took a slightly more circuitous route to Comma corner; down along the riverside path through the small glades. I didn't have any luck though so carried on resolutely to Comma Corner.

Almost as soon as I was there I spotted butterflies with a couple of Peacocks annoying a Comma just at the entrance to the small copse on the furthest side of the Corner. I moved round to the other side which forms the back of the first of the Banks and stood and waited for a reappearance of any of the butterflies. In this little area I could see a different, complete Peacock which was accompanied by two different Commas. One would take off, fly at the Peacock to hassle it and in the process send the second Comma up. Both the Commas would then spiral upwards so high that it was slightly painful to watch. A few moments later they'd be back if not in the same place very near to it.

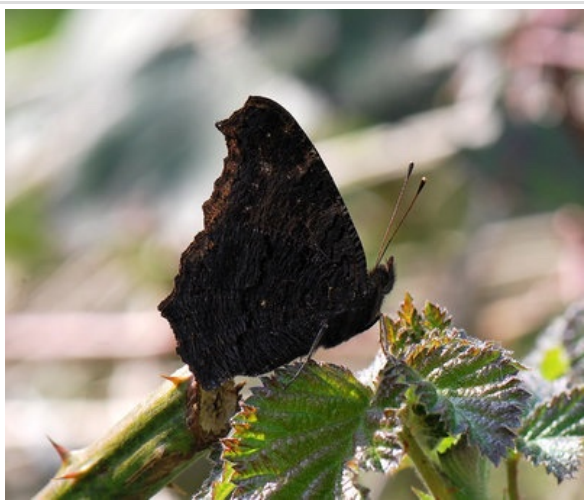




After this I made my way back down to the path to check out Comma Corner proper and from there to walk along the Banks. It seemed strange to be seeing the butterflies in amongst the nettles beds and the fast growing grasses when normally I can see the compacted earth of the tiny trackways and I only realise that the nettles are there when they sting me through my jeans. Nonetheless for all the strangeness they were a welcome sight and I started ratchetting up the tally. First a Speckle Wood, my first of 2019 and in roughly the same place as my first of 2017. It was low down on the ground and as I bent in to take a few shots it closed its wings slowly but surely in what I suppose was a vague attempt at blending in. A Comma spiralled round me at this point trying to reassert this as Comma Corner. So much so that it went down and landed on the path at the exact corner!



I carried on along the Banks stopping every now and again for this and that and by the time I reached the Bench with only the final bank to go I'd accrued two Commas, three Small Torts and 2 Peacocks the final one of which was waiting on the deck at the bench looking slightly battered/battle worn. I stopped for a little breather here and had a chat with the occupant of the bench. He remarked that it was great to see the butterflies again, rued the loss of the Grizzlies that were here up until a few years back and finally wondered where all the Small Torts were - so far only a total of 3? I carried on and down at the far end of the reserve I chanced across the most pristine Peacock I'd seen all day and so spent a little while with it.



I now had a choice – work back or carry on round the whole reserve and check the far side? My gut said “try the other side” so that’s what I did. As I made my way up the slightly winding path a Small Tort was on my right and as I continued upwards there was another on my left. By the time I’d worked half way along the path at the top of the reserve I’d seen another 4 Small Torts – looks like I’d found where they’d been hiding then! A brilliant flash of blinding white shot down the hillside and momentarily disappeared from view. I quietly crept round the corner and there was my first decent

chance of a Small White shot. I took it hoping that the strong light wouldn't lead to a bleached out image. Chuffed I cut across the reserve and down to the Bench from where I retraced my steps back to the car park. As well as the obligatory Small Tortoiseshells, Peacock and Comma on the way back I also added a male Brimstone to the visit tally which was swiftly joined by a second as I poured myself a coffee back at the car.



Now I was in a bit of a quandary. I'd arrived back too early to pick the girls up so I could head in and check through my shots while waiting for them to fuff about or I could maintain my sanity and head back out for a quick look at the less visited side? It wasn't much of a quandary really and so off went again. This time I couldn't add a White but instead there was a fly over by a Red Admiral and I managed to relocate 5 of the Small Tortoiseshells – most of which seemed to be quite heavy in the abdomen department so possibly females? As I made my way back to the car a brown blur flew diagonally past me and crashed into the foliage where it sat in the stunned in the shade. It was a Specklie and a nice way to round up the visit.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 26-Apr-19 10:48 AM GMT

More lovely shots Wurzel, I'm hoping the weather picks up here today before tomorrow's storm arrives, I've still not got a shot of a Brimstone yet, I'll have to leave Holly Blues and Green hair Streaks until I get home I think, unless I'm lucky and the HB's show themselves next time I visit Reculver before I journey home. Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Apr-19 08:13 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 When are you heading back? 😊 The weather reports (if they can be believed 😊) seem to suggest that Saturday is going to be atrocious but Sunday it will have cleared away and it'll be sunny intervals and up to 13 degrees so there's still a chance - fingers crossed that they get it right for once 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Apr-19 10:24 PM GMT

Mother's Day 31-03-2019

This should have been such a better report as it had all the makings of a fantastic early season Butterfly Day; a visit to the Lavender Farm with a walk in the new Forest to follow. However when we set off to the Lavender Farm for a spot of Mother's Day Lunch it was cold, really cold actually and it was grey and drear with it. At the venue the main part of the gardens were closed off and the drear became drizzle. Then when we pulled into the car park at Rhinefield Drive the drear returned but it was very cold. Even some hot Noodles a la Kelly Kettle didn't help warm me up. On the plus side I was able to see a Firecrest and a couple of Brimstones lightened my mood. The biggest plus were a pair of Red Admirals that were flying around the car park upon our return. I managed a few shots but they were very restless and I was shooting one handed. God I hope it warms up next week! 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 27-Apr-19 01:04 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, I've not seen a Red Admiral yet may be next week, I'm here for another week I've to go to the Hospital on Tuesday to get my foot checked out so we'll see what they say but it looks like I'll be here over the Bank Holiday so more Butterflies I hope 😊

Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 28-Apr-19 01:01 PM GMT

Wow Wurzel, hold your horses there, you're almost in the same month 😊. I guess things will be back to normal with a holiday coming up though 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Apr-19 03:51 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Red Admirals have been a bit sparse this year for me to, I've only seen 4 all year 😊 Go for those Grizzlies on the Bank Holiday 😊😊
Cheers Bugboy 😊 Yep almost caught up - just another 4 posts from the Tally and 14 or so to get me up to date...oh 😊😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 28-Apr-19 08:15 PM GMT

That's a nice Red Admiral, Wurzel - there seem to be a few more around now. 😊

Cheers,

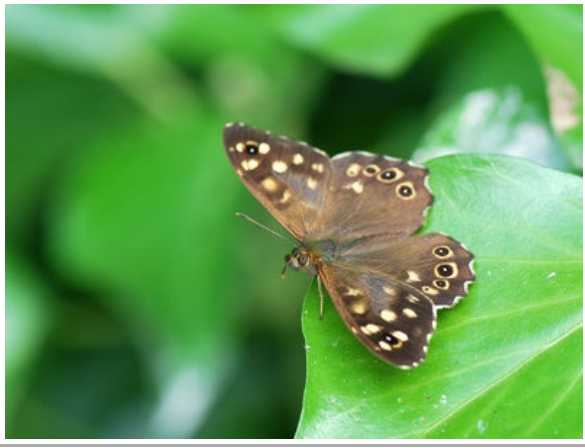
Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Apr-19 10:33 PM GMT

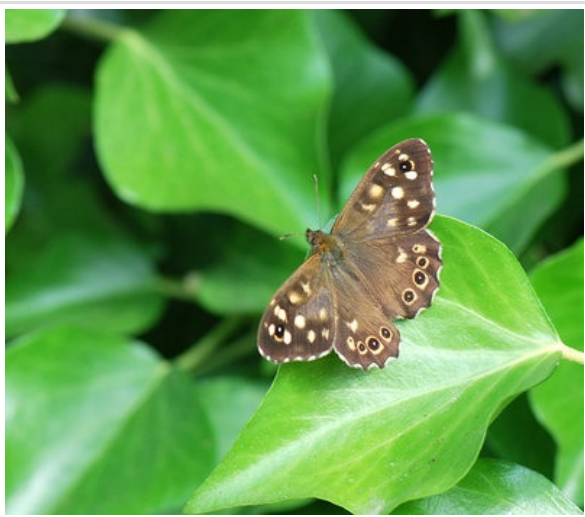
Cheers Dave 😊 I'm still struggling to see them - mind you it was the same last year - a few in the spring and then from the late summer on good numbers 😊 The Pearls are out - won't be long until the Marshies are too 😊

Browns



26 Speckled Wood, 01-05-0218 Pewsey Vale

Overall I thought it was a fairly average year for the Specklies and I don't know whether this is tied into their late arrival what with their arrival being an entire month later in 2019. Could the snow which hit in March have knocked them back considerably I wonder? The definitely seemed to have quiet phases and were down in some places whilst in others they were more noticeable. For example I found my first at work and I recall seeing a few out of place at Laverstock but in a more likely stronghold such as Bentley Wood they were much scarcer. Perhaps they were having a good year but their late arrival meant that they were busy playing catch-up and making up for lost time as well as making cats WINK. This could be what I witnessed as they were still hanging on late into the year when I managed to see a couple on my final 'proper' visit out.



27 Wall, 17-05-2018 Pewsey Downs

Last year I wrote about a associating Wall with the number two (2 weeks early, two sites and 2 individuals) but this year things in the association game got a bit trickier. First of all they weren't two weeks or even a week early but only 4 days earlier. Second up I saw them at three sites - Pewsey Downs, my Marshie site and Shipton Bellinger. At these sites the maximum number I saw was two at my Marshie site...hang on 4,3,2...I could go the whole hog and really overplay the association and say that the other sites only produced 1 individual and that there were zero coastal sites but that I think would be pushing it. Whilst it's good that I saw them at Shipton Bellinger it will still a bit worrying to see so few but hopefully by visiting different sites next year I can catch up with a few more - there were 25 reported at Morgan's Hill on one visit!



28 Marbled White, 17-06-2018 Daneways

The thing I'll remember most from 2018 about Marbled Whites was from a visit to Lulworth Cove. As I sat on the pebbles, drinking my coffee and gazing out onto the azure, millpond still waters a tiny chequered flag fluttered along the mirror like waters; too white to be a small Skull and Cross Bones it was an errant Marbled White taking the most direct route from one side of the Cove to the other. There were plenty of other moments from 2018 of Marbled Whites to add to this one single stand out memory but I don't think that this was down to their numbers being up. Actually to be honest they were again almost 'Blink and you'd miss them' once they'd emerged 2 days later than in 2017. I think this was why I had so many memories - I made a conscious effort to focus on them this year after treating them so disrespectfully last year.

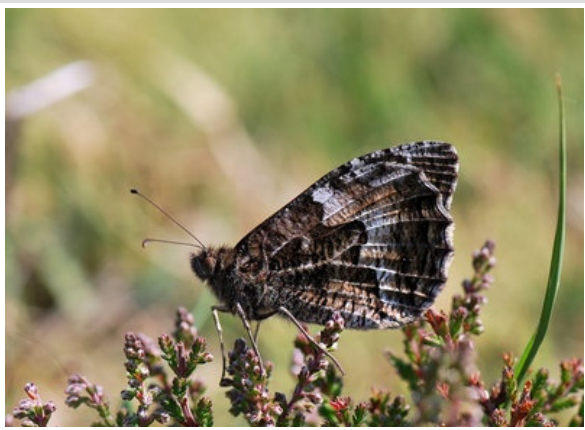




29 Grayling, 07-07-2018 Godshill

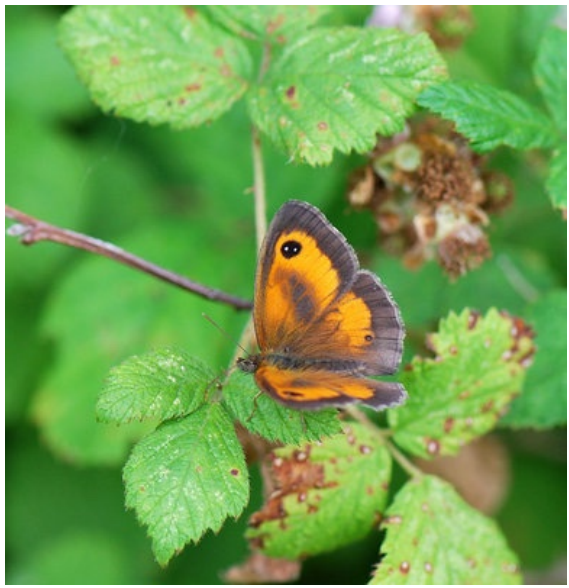
I didn't get to investigate whether there were any Grayling along the coast in West Wales as when I visited the weather was less than conducive for butterflies. In fact it wasn't a spectacular year for me with this species. When I visited the ever reliable Godshill they were much harder to locate this year and at one point I'd almost given it up as a bad job until I stumbled across a couple. To be fair though perhaps they didn't fare as poorly as I thought at first? Indeed there were two reports from within Wiltshire (right on the margins of Hampshire but still in Wiltshire) which was great news as they are considered extinct in the county. Plus I only managed to get to this one site where I know that they are and didn't make it back to Dorset and the heaths this year. On top of this when I made my visit it was a fortnight earlier than in 2017 so perhaps they were still just 'getting going'. Here's hoping...

One thing I did discover this year should prove useful in future ventures when looking for this species. Often Grayling will zip about here and there making it generally difficult to follow them visually and sometimes they will finish this off with a flourish, flying directly at you and passing you so close that you think they will collide with you. As you spin round trying to locate them again somewhere in the distance they've completely vanished from view! But they haven't. This year a Grayling carried out this 'getaway plan' on me but I happened to glance down to check my footing and there was the Grayling down on the deck directly behind me. I reckon that as it passed me it stalled and literally dropped to the ground where it waited for me to realise that I'd lost it and move off. Sorry Mr Grayling I've got your number mate! I eagerly await the Grayling 2019 season to see if this wasn't just a one-off fluke.



30 Hedge Brown/Gatekeeper, 24-06-2018 Lulworth Cove

Almost a week earlier this year and my first came unusually from Lulworth Cove; not something I'd expected as I normally plan to pick my first Hedgie up from Bentley Wood. It felt at times like the trends seen last year continues - they were earlier but also fewer in number. I was seeming in the expected places but they were definitely down. They were also over comparatively quickly. Usually I can pick up plenty on the annual summer trip to Ffos-y-ffin but this year I was able to count the total on my hands. Also there were none of the unusual beauties that this little area has thrown up in the past and I think I saw only one excessa through the whole season. In between the UK Hedgies worrying me I took a family holiday to the Dordogne. Here they were much more 'present' and interestingly looked slightly different to those seen in the UK. The underwing didn't have the noticeable cream band that runs from the bottom to the top of underside of the hind wing. Also the ground colour was much lighter and the spots were much less noticeable. In fact until I saw these slight 'eyespot' I was convinced that I'd seen a Southern Gatekeeper - is it possible that rather than the two separate species overlapping they form a graduated cline from Hedgie through to Southern?



31 Meadow Brown, 03-05-2018 Kingston Lacey

Almost three and a half weeks earlier this year and it looks like 'getting up early' did them good as it was a great year for Meadow Browns in my neck of the woods. Not only were they back to their fluttering and annoying best but that also turned up at most of the sites that I visited and they lasted well into September and beyond which was great. They were so early in fact that I wasn't expecting my first when I did. I wonder if the Beast from the East did them a favour as the cold could have knocked any parasites and microbes on the head and then after the Beast we had some gorgeous warm weather which would have brought them on? Or was it the melting snow which gave the grasses a really concentrated drink? Whatever it was it was great to see so many butterflies. They even turned up at work in the sections of uncut grasses left as a meadow.





32 Small Heath, 21-05 2018 Laverstock Down

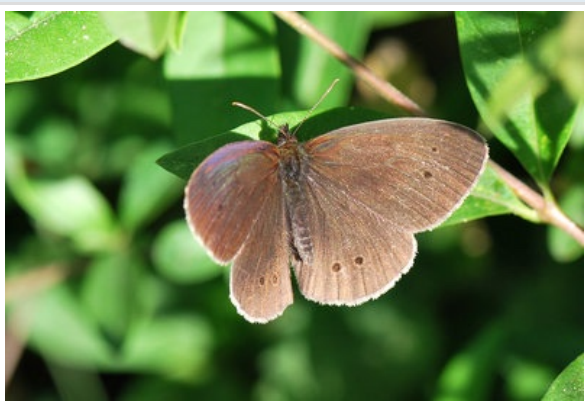
Last year I quickly moved on from this species as the report was so dire but things were much different in 2018. After arriving a fortnight later on the scene they seemed to be all over the place. One also turned up at work in the 'Meadow' which was very unexpected as I'd been worrying that we again would see a dearth of them. Instead they were often the commonest butterfly and I had to refrain from cursing them as they started on their old trick of spooking the other species I was trying to photograph. One thing I did notice this year from other peoples' reports was a slightly odd behaviour. The butterfly would perch and occasionally flick it's wings open. I saw this reported by at least three people as well as observing it personally. Why I still don't know but it was very hot last year perhaps a method of cooling down or maybe during the dry weather they were more likely to get dust between their wings? Either way it'll be something to look out for in successive seasons.





33 Ringlet, 17-06-2018 Daneways

My first Ringlet cam 4 days later this year on a dismal trip to Daneways. I was hoping that the weather forecast was correct but it changed drastically a minute before I left the house. As I said back then it was a bit of a trip for Ringlets and Marbled Whites! Again they had a good year but they were, like the Marbled Whites, almost a 'blink and you'd miss them species'. They seemed to arrive on the scene and then they were gone again; was this because of the really warm weather accelerating their behaviour? Maybe it was because they were so abundant that I became Ringlet Blind, ignoring them for other butterflies as we had a quite compressed season; we started in slow motion then the season was 'freeze framed' before the season hit fast forward. So in amongst all the frenetic catching up with slow starters and being surprised by the early arrivals I skimmed on the Ringlets.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

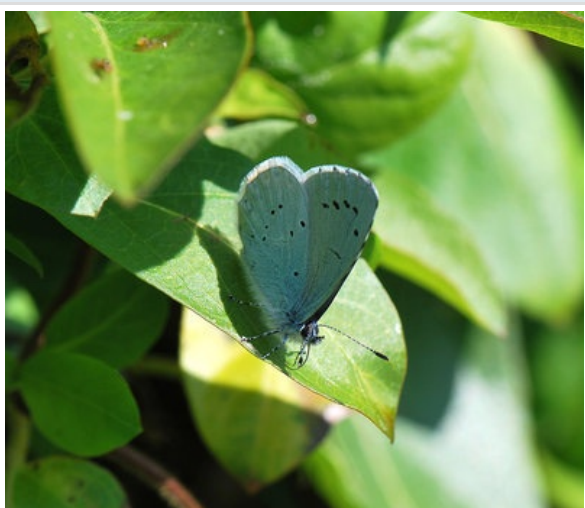
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Apr-19 07:46 PM GMT

Work 01-04-2019

As it was several degrees warmer today so I set about completing the full transect; the whole field, back path and return taking in the Pits on the way. To be fair it was the fault of a Small Tortoiseshell that I started on this venture as it fluttered by very near the start of my walk and landed in the amongst the jumble of the Pits. I couldn't relocate it but did find a Peacock as well. The rest of this part of the transect was surprisingly quiet and I didn't see another butterfly until beyond the halfway point of the path.

When I did finally see this third butterfly however I was mightily chuffed. It glittered ghost like up the path in front of me flashing blue and silver alternately and when it landed it was miniscule compared to the scale of butterflies that I'd gotten used to seeing so far this season. It was my first Holly Blue of 2019 and what a sight. I took a few flight shots and the odd record shot thinking that this would be all I would get and then I tried carrying on along the path. The Holly Blue seemed to have the same idea and so I followed it and watched and willed it to come down. A few times it looked like going up and over the hedge to disappear for good but it was just teasing me and after I started whispering "go down, go down, go down" miraculously it did! I was so stunned I forgot to start whispering "open up, open up, open up" and so instead I settled for closed wing shots, it even did a few slight wing rolls. I don't think I can recall getting shots where it looks so powder blue on the underside. It spent some time taking moisture from the leaf tips and after a while I carried on to the end of the path leaving it in peace.





After this I only found a single Brimstone on my return journey along the path although it did settle along with a travelling companion. Then when almost back by the Pits I spied a Small White, my fourth of 2019 as well, flying alongside the border hedge. It didn't stop and I was too far away for any flight shots but it was still great to add a different species to the days Tally.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by ernie f, 01-May-19 08:40 AM GMT

Wurzel - It never ceases to amaze me what an observant nature-watcher can find. A fly on a butterfly!?! Weird.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-May-19 08:02 PM GMT

Cheers Ernie 😊 I think a possible explanation was that the butterfly was so engrossed in feeding and so it didn't notice/mind the fly that landed on it 😊

May 2019

Here's hoping this month is all that it can be 😊😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 02-May-19 09:36 AM GMT

Lovely Calendar shot Wurzel, lets hope May brings me more Butterflies 😊

My Daughters garden is okay but mine is more like a Cottage Garden and I'm sure if I was at home I'd see Butterflies, (you can tell I'm now Home sick can't you 😊) Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Andrew555, 02-May-19 11:57 AM GMT

Nice round up Wurzel, love the 'Specklie in hand'. 😊 Great shots of the Holly Blue, you do see some good stuff at work! 😊

Cheers

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-May-19 02:16 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 So long as the Daily Mail doesn't start printing any stories about 'Glorious weather' or 'Early BBQ Summer' we should see an upturn in the butterflies 😊

Cheers Andrew 😊 I was really lucky last year in that 'Work' provided me with lots of all my 'firsts' for the year – there's one bit of path which is a regular Small Tort paradise 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

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

Work 03-04-2019

The temperatures remain high which is great for me. If only it was the same for the butterflies as when I looked out at break time and the lessons before lunch it looked very promising. When I got out however I'd been lied too! I tried the Pits first of all hoping to add another Specklie to the Yearly Tally and the first to the Work Tally. As I approached a butterfly hove into view and then dropped down within easy reach of my lens. It was a Small Tort which had nicely smoky front margins and contrasting bright blue rear margins.



Very shortly after this, actually within a few steps, I picked up my second butterfly of the day – a lovely looking Peacock. It was unusual in that it didn't give me the run-around like its fellows have been so far this year.



After this I carried on all round the hedges and along the path but it was surprisingly quiet. I added only another two butterflies to the days count with fly-bys from a Brimstone and a Comma. Oh well it'll be 'all change' soon and the next set of butterflies will be making their way onto the scene though I haven't written the hibernators off yet – they'll still be playing an active role for a while yet – just with a more varied ensemble! Bring it!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 03-May-19 01:42 PM GMT

That's a splendid Small Tortoiseshell, Wurzel. Not only is it really fresh with the blue marginal spots really striking, but the two black forewing spots are very small indeed – nearly ab. *ichnusoides* (I think it's called). Though vaguely ashamed of the fact now, my childhood butterfly collection had one of these in it... 😊 We are talking 50+ years ago, mind! 😊

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 03-May-19 07:33 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

... Red Admirals have been a bit sparse this year for me to, I've only seen 4 all year...

I have still never seen a Red Admiral around my patch before June, although there does seem to be a few more early sightings around the midlands over the past couple of years.

millerd wrote:

...That's a splendid Small Tortoiseshell, Wurzel. Not only is it really fresh with the blue marginal spots really striking, but the two black forewing spots are very small indeed – nearly ab. *ichnusoides* (I think it's called)...Dave

Agreed, that's a nice individual. I saw one with these small spots totally missing a couple of years back. I noticed at the time there was something different about it but didn't realise what until it was pointed out on here 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 04-May-19 09:22 AM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Wurzel, hope fully this week-end I might see some thing if the family get me out and about 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-May-19 09:23 AM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 To be honest I hadn't noticed the fact that those spots were so I was so dazzled by the blue borders contrasting with the swarthy appearance 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-May-19 10:36 AM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 Yep I only see one or two Red Admirals at the start of the season - they're more of a summer/Autumn butterfly for me 😊 I too hadn't noticed the very small spots 😊 too close to the image I suppose fresh sets of eyes often see further 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-May-19 05:10 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Fingers and toes crossed that you get out and about this week, if you do I'm sure that you'll get something - just choose lots of Grizzle friendly sites to visit 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-May-19 08:42 PM GMT

Middle Street 07-04-2019

I don't know why I did but I checked the weather on the BBC App and it told me that in Salisbury we were due sunny intervals ending at 11am and then it would be cloudy for the rest of the day. So itching to get out and make the most of the holiday I headed over to Middle Street. On arrival it was still cloudy, even more so than when I'd set off hmmm. Over the next hour I experienced the trifecta of perfect butterfly weather but unfortunately only ever having 2 out of three which in this case wasn't better than none. If the sun poked out of the cloud then the temperature was still too low and the breeze stiffened and picked up. Should the temperature start to rise the wind would maintain and the sun was swallowed by cloud etc. It was almost but never quite right. I carried on walking round becoming less hopeful of it 'turning out nice' particularly as the magic 11am approached when the cloud was due to settle in for the rest of the day.

My wanderings had taken along each and every path and right round the reserve at least twice. Each and every smattering of white among the foliage was nothing but leaves, fallen catkins or bird droppings and so in the end I decided to sit tight at the hotspot and enjoy a Mr Tom. I reasoned that this was where I saw my first OTs the previous weekend and so I might find them here should the 2 or the three weather conditions align themselves in my favour as it was on their 'patrol' route. After about 10 minutes, Mr Tom (other nut based snacks are available - but aren't anywhere near as good) well and truly masticated the wind dropped, the sun came out and the temperature noticeably increased. Right on cue a small thing fluttered about in a less than feather like fashion. My pulse quickened and I followed it with my eyes willing it and whispering at it to go down. And down it did. I used the tried and tested 'click, step' routine and then it was there filling the viewfinder a cracking male OT all glowing orangey gorgeousness! An hour worth of work for 20 seconds of reward but it was definitely worth it; the orange emblazoned on my retina.





He fluttered about after this and settled again this time in the hotspot so I got an extra 15 seconds with him before he was off again to do some proper patrolling. As I headed back home it was like a switch had been flicked - there was my first Large White in a neighbouring garden, a Small Tort to wave me goodbye and a Speckle that crossed the road with me.



Later, as the sunny and warm weather had held we took our 'Christmas walk' and I saw 2 Peacocks a Brimstone and Small White as Harnham Bridge and another OT and Peacock in the shadow of the Cathedral. So the morale of this tale is threefold; never give up, relish what you get and finally don't believe the BBC Weather App!



I hope weather gets better soon...it doesn't look like it though.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 06-May-19 08:57 PM GMT

Great to hear that the first Marshie has been seen, and Tilshead should be performing by now. I hope to be arriving in Wilts on the 26th. The place should be buzzing by then.

Keep up the good work,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 06-May-19 10:05 PM GMT

It is interesting to catch up on your summary of how each species did last year. I get the impression that 2018 wasn't that much better than 2017 for you. Here, we had a dreadful 2016 and 2017 with hardly a day of sunshine for two years. Last year the novelty of a blue sky didn't wear off and thankfully it allowed butterfly numbers to pick back up. Now I am hoping these cold north easterly winds would stop so that we can build on last year! I also note that you have seven more species than we have. I would love Gatekeepers, Marbled Whites and Brimstones to make their way up here.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-May-19 11:10 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I told a mate on Insta about the Marshie and he saw his first at Bentley Wood on the same day a few hours after mine so they're definitely on the way though I expect the cooler.wetter weather we're due over the next few days might knock them back a bit 😞

Cheers Nick 😊 I'm hoping that 2019 will be a good season after the favourable summer of 2018, it certainly looks like it could be judging by recent sightings, fingers crossed it continues 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 08-May-19 10:45 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, lovely shots of the OT's especially the one on the Blue bell 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-May-19 10:58 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was chuffed with that one as if was taken at quite a distance. It was in The Close (the poshest bit of Salisbury) so I couldn't walk up the path and pretend that I was going to call on the property owner in order to get any closer 😞 not that I've ever done that of course 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 09-May-19 08:53 AM GMT

The magic date for Marshies seems to be 20th May.
So hopefully there will be plenty around by the 26th (weather permitting!).

TO THE HILLS, YOUNG MAN!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-May-19 11:45 AM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 IF...and that is quite a big IF judging by the Met BBC Weather forecasters recent level of accuracy...we get the spell of good weather then they might even be in good numbers by next weekend 😊 What with them turning up in Bentley now I'm torn between to the Hills or to the Wood - a nice dilemma to have 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

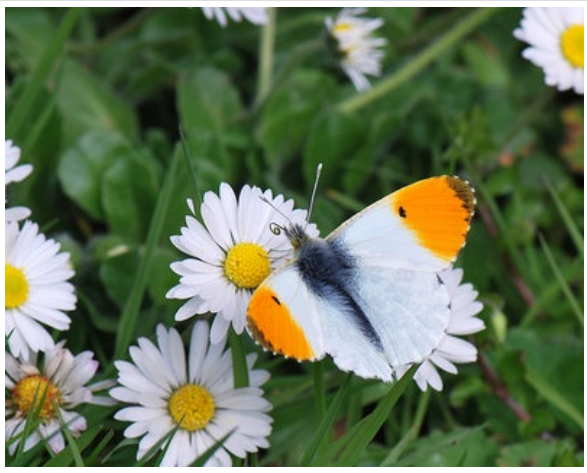
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-May-19 10:44 PM GMT

Five Rivers 08-04-2019

After the inaccurate weather forecasts of the last couple of days today I gave up checking and instead looked out of the window. After lunch I noticed that it had brightened up considerably and there were even a few tiny blue patches between the cloud cover. So I went for it and headed to Five Rivers to see how things were progressing.

As I strolled along the first stretch of path that winds alongside the river I spied an OT bombing towards me. I watched it fly round and then it cut across the path and veered upwards through the trees. A few moments later it reappeared back where I'd initially seen it as it had doubled back along the river. Again it patrolled around the small glade I was in and the best I could managed were a few distant in flight shots. On the fourth such patrol the sun slipped momentarily behind the cloud and the butterfly went down enabling me to make a quick stalk up to it and get a few shots. Chuffed I made for the Banks and soon was on the familiar path past Comma Corner. As I carried on along the path I reached the part where it narrows between the bushes and trees that line the half way line of the Bank and where a small stand of trees grow at right angles to the main 'hedge'. It was a good job that I was slowed by this as when I stared ahead I could make out a Specklie, slightly further on the silhouette of a Peacock and slightly further on than that a Comma. I didn't know which to go for first so Specklie it was as it was closest. I don't know whether over the last season I forgot but at the moment the Specklies seem very twitchy and take to the wing even if you breathe a little too heavily and so it was here. Not only did it go up but then it spied the Peacock and so started on the butterfly that was almost twice the size of it! Oh well at least I was left with the Comma. As I made to move towards it the Peacock landed again and so I helped myself to a few shots of this prior to my meeting with the Comma.





This sudden surplus of butterflies happened again as I reached the bench. An OT flew towards me, a Brimstone approached from behind, a Peacock was seemingly waiting for me at the bench and a Holly Blue fluttered by up high trying to distract me. Again I didn't know what to do and where to turn the lens first. As I ran through the list of options it felt a bit like the part of Terminator where you see things from its point of view; a bullet point list of the butterflies ran down before my eyes and I crossed off each option. In the end it didn't matter as during my decision making process all four butterflies had disappeared from view luckily they were replaced by a Small White which landed quite close.



After this I carried on round towards the other side of the reserve to complete the loop and things got back to normal with individual butterflies popping up now and again rather than confusing groups all arriving at once. First there was a Peacock and one with slight wing damage so I know it was different one, along the back another Brimstone and OT before getting onto several Small Torts. All along the bank one would occasionally pop up, land nearby and pose just long enough for me to see that "yep you are a different individual". As I was enjoying Tort-fest I had another one of those "all the butterflies at once" moments. A passing OT put up a mobbing Specklie which set off a Comma. The Specklie then turned his aggressive attentions to the Comma while the OT bumbled away but the battling brown jobs put up a Small White which proceeded to lead me on a bit of a merry dance as it constantly looked like it was just about to settle but never did. Worn out from all this activity I made my way across the site coming down the little path next to the bench before setting out back along the Bank.





On my return along the Bank the original Comma was still in the same place resting up, a Brimstone and OT did a fly-by in opposite directions again but the Specklie had doubled and the two of them were constantly antagonising each other. In between staring up into the canopy whilst waiting for the Specklie to decide to come down I caught up with a third Comma and the/another Small White. I gave up on the Specklies as again they were far too twitchy and much more interested in smashing the living be-jesus out of anything else which flew anywhere near their vicinity. The final butterflies of the day were an OT back where I'd seen the first at the start of my outing and a slightly lost looking Small Tort that was having an entire bed of nettles to itself from the look of things. Chuffed but exhausted I made for home. What a spectacular but breathless hour out.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

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

The Devenish 10-04-2019

I sat and watched out of the window most of the morning hoping for the cloud to break and finally it started showing signs that the sun was trying to

burn through the cloud so after lunch when the sun had finally broken through and the temperatures had risen I set off to The Devenish to see what the state of play was over there. To get there I went the back way mainly so that I could sweep down the zig zag bends but also so that I could stop in at my old Orange-tip site.

It was a bit of a disappointment to be honest as the swathes of Cuckoo Flower were no longer present instead there were one or two sparse patches and the odd individual flower and nothing like the former glory that was here in the past. I don't know if there are enough flowers to hold the attention of a wandering female OT so I'll have to make a pint to try and stop in at t'Vera next week. As I was wondering back to the car disconsolately a Peacock flew along one of the smaller water courses before settling just within view. It held its forewings in such a way as to appear 'blind' which had me going for a bit but when it shifted slightly I could see that it wasn't optically challenged.



I carried on my way through the Woodfords without seeing a single butterfly which is strange as I'm used to catching glimpses of white, yellow and orange as I flow past the hedges - perhaps things are still getting going as it has been a little start-stop so far this year?

At The Devenish I made my way through the small woodland path rather than hopping over the gates and cutting through the paddocks but when I got there the Orchid Meadow was still being grazed and there were only the occasional Coltsfoot flowers offering nectar. Unsurprisingly I didn't see anything here and so I moved up onto the Down. About half way up a small cloud covered the just as I was watching two dark butterflies flying towards me. They both went down and then really close to me so I was able to get some shots. They were both Peacocks and the larger one which I'm guessing was a female stayed still with its/her wings tightly closed. Whilst this was happening the smaller one took up position directly behind the other and I could see its wings trembling and shaking. It repeatedly flashed its wings open quivering all the while. I don't know whether the sudden drop in the temperature as the sun was swallowed by cloud had grounded them and the quivering was an attempt to raise/maintain their core temperatures or possibly more likely this was courtship behaviour. As the larger one wasn't wing quivering and as they stayed in the same place for a good 5 minutes once the sun came back out again I'm tempted to plump for the later explanation. Unfortunately if it was courtship it was a failed one and the larger one took off first leaving the smaller trailing after it pleadingly.





I carried on and reached the far side of the reserve where I was hoping to catch a few Specklies though this didn't happen and instead I nearly had a heart attack when a male Pheasant erupted from in front of me! It was swiftly followed, with only slightly less shock factor by a female and then with no shock value but 10 out of 10 for frustration was a grounded Holly Blue. After this I checked out various other parts but only managed to add one or possibly two OTs and another Peacock to the tally. So I headed home a little disappointed and hoping that that grazing won't have had too much of a detrimental impact on the Meadow.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 10-May-19 10:59 PM GMT

A nice sequence with those Peacocks, Wurzel, and I also like the Orange Tip on the daisy. 😊 I suppose that since they started early this year, we won't have many more weeks of them – best make the most of them!

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 11-May-19 03:39 PM GMT

I'll second Dave's post above, so nearly a mating pair as well. I note that a well known gentleman from your area has posted images of Marshies, from where exactly, he doesn't say. At this rate they'll be worn by the time I get over there.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-May-19 08:29 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I'm trying to make the most of the OTs but they don't make it easy do they 😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I saw my first one at Martin Down last week on the same day as the first one was officially recorded in Wiltshire (mine was at 10:30 am so might actually have been the first 😊). Each year the first Marshies in the area come from Battlesbury Hill which is further East and then the Marshies emerge subsequently westwards along the vale. So far the most I've seen recorded is 6 with none from The Hill so there should be plenty out

there by next weekend and they should carry on emerging over the next 2-3 weeks. I've visited on the second week of June before and there were still some in good nick and none too greasy so you should be fine for some Marshies 😊 I could always hold a couple back for you 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

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

Middle Street – The Day of Doubles 11-04-2019

Typical the day when the weather app showed full sun was the day I'd booked for my wife and I to have a Spa session. Double typical it was the first time in oh I can't remember, when it actually got the forecast reasonably correct (it was actually warmer than predicted)! Still I had about an hour free after lunch before we needed to set off for the Spa so I grabbed my camera and made towards Middle Street. I called in at one of the little roads at Fisherton Island first, well tried to. It's been a few years since I've wandered down the little dead end road and in the meantime they've put up a white painted fence bedecked in large "PRIVATE" signs. So I stood on the legal side of the road and watched as a Holly Blue busied itself on the other side of the river.



I carried on actually on my way to Middle Street across the Town Path but despite there being one or two stands of Cuckoo Flower in the surrounding fields and the fact that it was almost warm enough to take my Hoodie off I didn't see a single butterfly. That was until I reached the middle and the footpath ran over the weir. I watched a male OT fly across the body of water and flutter about in the only green bit of the hedge and then it went down. So I legged it in that direction and then slowed up putting the old 'click-step' technique into action. Chuffed after I'd gotten a few I carried on round towards Middle Street. I'd like to have gotten a few more but a, I mustn't be greedy and b, a couple of kids on BMXs flashed past me spooking it.

Passing the Old Mill pub I scanned the gardens and hanging baskets and as I rounded the corner onto Middle Street itself a second Holly Blue fluttered about but this time instead of a river between me and my quarry it was too high so all I could do was stand back and enjoy watching it bumble around.

I roused myself and carried on realising that I'd used up 15 minutes of my time and as I walked through the opening to the reserve the wind picked up and the temperature dropped. Because of this I decided to check out the hotspot first as it's almost entirely sheltered with only openings in the wind break of buildings and Spinneys where the path cuts through it. This was a good call because I'd only just turned right to make my way to the hotspot when I saw a white butterfly flying towards me. It seemed more rounded than a GVW or Small White I was wondering and hoping that it was a female OT. It dropped down and I cautiously stalked towards it and it was indeed a female OT.



I carried on finding both a Peacock and Small Tort feeding from Dandelions on the path. They were less than a metre apart from each other which would normally have meant a spiralling battle to the death but not today. A small dog off a lead bombed by growling at me and spooking the butterflies so after checking to see if its owner was nearby and growling back at it to "Buzzer off" I set to finding where the 2 butterflies had gone down. They were both on the other side of the field and again feeding from Dandelions and this time only about 30cm away from each other.



I checked my brick/phone and realised that I only had 15 minutes to get back home so I set off stopping twice on the way back. The first for a Small Tort and the second for a second Peacock which wasn't playing ball. However I didn't stop for the Small White which flew past me as I went through the exit of the reserve as that would have spoilt my Doubles theme! How very inconsiderate of it to mess up the narrative...



On the walk to the Spa I tried to avoid seeing anything but an OT decided to follow me and have a little spar with a passing Brimstone. When we took the short cut along the river path I spied a Holly Blue and two further Brimstones – luckily all of these would have been out of reach of my lens else I might have felt slightly frustrated. In previous times I've mentioned when I think I've had the easiest butterfly sighting or the most incongruous but today had the most relaxing; having had a 45 minute massage, spent 15 minutes each on the hot beds, steam room and sauna I was lazing in the Hot Tub without a care in the world and so relaxed I was almost half asleep watching a Holly Blue fluttering about in the Ivy bedecked tree above me – bliss.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by keving, 12-May-19 08:35 AM GMT

Wurzel,

What a chill out day that was. I must get me some of that.
Love the Orange Tips. I haven't managed to get one to settle for me this spring yet, so you have done well.
That Small Tort has lasted the winter well too, very colourful.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 12-May-19 05:53 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Tortoiseshells Wurzel, I'm glad I got some shots of them before I left home not seen one here, the Wall's have made up for that though 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-May-19 06:46 PM GMT

Cheers Kev 😊 It took over the 'most chilled' top spot from my trip to Poland years (drinking beer in the sun and watching Greater and Lesser Spotted Eagles flying 😊). I've been lucky with OTs this year, your experiences sound just like mine in normal, less lucky, years 😊
Cheers Goldie 😊 From what I've heard they are not as common in the part of the country. They might still be flying when you get back though as I saw 3 on Friday and two were in fine fettle. Mind you if you can pick up your Skippers then you probably won't give them a second thought 😊😊

I meant to add this in on one of my previous Diary entries but somehow missed it off the 'cut and paste'...

"I don't know if this has been seen by anyone else but all of the OTs that I watched patrolling today examined any Dandelion Clocks that were on their route? Come to think of it I've seen this now on the three occasions that I've seen OTs this year so far...When I eventually get more time one spring I think I might try setting my camera up in a OT patrol area so that it is focused on the Dandelion clock and then use a shutter release cable when the OT comes near."

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Andrew555, 14-May-19 10:02 AM GMT

You've captured those Orange-tips really well Wurzel. My fave is the female from Middle Street, lovely. 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-May-19 01:54 PM GMT

Cheers Andrew 😊 It was one of the advantages of the cooler, cloudier weather we had for a bit. Now however we need some good sunny spells but it's not looking hopeful 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-May-19 11:41 PM GMT

Middle Street 13-04-2019

Life after the App (the BBC Weather) continues unabated and so today despite it feeling cool to almost cold I took a lunch time constitutional via the Town Path across the Meadows to Harnham and onto Middle Street. As I walked with the Meadows on either side through my hoodie I could feel the temperature going up and down as the sun broke through the cloud and then was covered again. However I was hopeful that I might be able to find a roosting OT. I didn't pick up any butterflies either on the way over nor during my first 30 minutes of wandering around the more sheltered areas of the site seeking every likely looking plant, seeking every bit of white peeking out from the greenery.

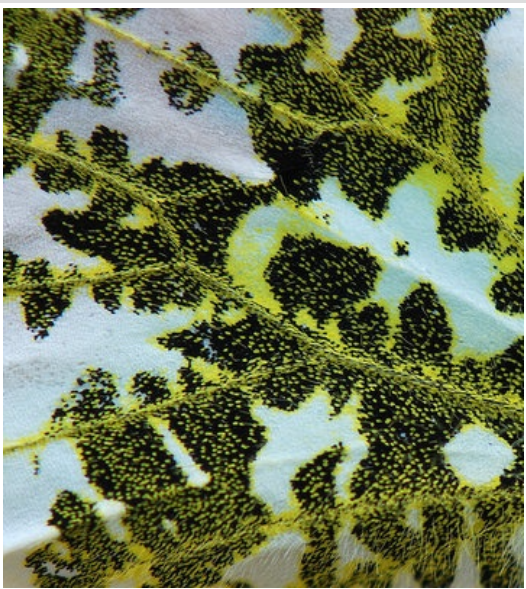
In the end I settled for looking at the birds (Blackcap, Cetti's, Chiff-chaff, Reed Bunting) and bees. Whilst following a Tawny Mining bee a Speckle erupted from the edge of the smallest stand of trees on the site and flew across to a larger one where I lost sight of it. As I was making my way back towards where I'd left the Tawny I spotted something larger and more red than orange-red. I peered a little closer and it resolved into a pair of moths locked together in cop. I think that they're Ruby Tigers which would be great as I've only had one shot in my collection and now I have a few more including definite male and female shots.



After this I wanted to get a butterfly shot to put the icing on the cake and an OT would have been ideal. So I set out for the hotspot reasoning that I'd already seen OTs here on two occasions so this is obviously a patrolled area. Once there I set to waiting and cloud watching as I was convinced that I'd need only a few moments of sun for the temperature to be warm enough for any OT to get back 'up and at em'. After what felt like an age but was actually only a couple of minutes the sun broke through the cloud, the icy breeze dropped and the temperature crept up. Sure enough I caught a pastel orange coloured object out of the corner of my eye and watched as it landed first on small sapling and then once disturbed by a passing Blackcap down lower on the ground. As the sun had again been swallowed by the cloud I slowly made my way over to the OT stumbling slightly on the way as I didn't want to take my eyes off it. And then there it was. It wasn't going anywhere and so I got my fill of shots and marvelled at how the cryptic markings changed appearance with distance. Far away is it a bird dropping/catkin, flower head? On no it's a butterfly with green and white markings, closer still and the green and white actually becomes yellow and black on a white background - stunning!



After a while I held my fingers out and it walked up them so I moved the butterfly to another Yarrow nearby and then stood guard over it. All the while I'd keep glancing upwards and on the final occasion I felt the sun start to peep out. Now I positioned myself directly over the OT and waited, willing the sun to shine. Sure enough it did and the butterfly opened up to reveal a massive pair of eyes and a stunning vibrant orange. After a few shots the butterfly took off, flew a short way and then went twice round the small hotspot area. I think it was trying to work out if it was actually warm enough for it to keep going but it didn't spend too long deciding as the sun then ducked behind the clouds and the butterfly went back to roost very close to its original position.







After a few final record shots I left it in peace and made for home still awestruck at the subtle beauty that I'd seen.
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-May-19 07:17 PM GMT

Ex-Duke Site 15-04-2019

The forecast said sunny but a strong breeze clawed the temperatures down so much that there wasn't really a nip in the air but a full on bite! Still that's the spring for you and butterflies can be hardy little beasties so I set off across the grasslands hopefully. I walked and walked checking all the usual areas; scanning less and less hopefully across the varied habitats and wishing the temperature to creep up just by a few degrees. My travels had taken me right across the site and up to the far-side of the Hill Fort and I now set off back downhill seeking any sheltered spots on the way. A large stand of Gorse seemed to offer respite and so I edged my way in to a little glade of calm. A Peacock spotted me and after only a record shot or two bugged off. It felt like it was going to be one of those days when you have to put the spadework in for little reward so as to get something great on a different visit.

As I followed the track back round and down having extricated myself from the Gorse my attentions were drawn to a Specklie that had landed in one of the 'fields' hemmed in by the trees. It was very flighty and was swiftly gone to be replaced with an OT which I spent some time with. I'm having a very good season with this species and the slightly cooler weather makes photographing them much easier.



Spot the Specklie and Hoverfly...



I then set course for an epic wander – back down to the little valley (Specklie), to the Cypresses (Peacock), down the back path (Peacock), back up to the little valley (Peacock, Brimstone, Comma) to the top of the hill and the far side of the rings (Small White and Peacock). The wind was quite frankly a pain in the arse and all the butterflies seen were during momentary lapses while the wind was getting its breath back. Having done so it set to whisking my quarry away.





I reasoned that the best idea would be to get down into the rings where the wind would be less vile and the sun would be trapped. So I set off noting 2 Peacocks down in the rings. By the time I'd reached the near side of the Fort the trees had thickened and this meant that the wind was even less of a problem. So unsurprisingly I had a little purple patch of activity. It started with a Peacock again and then there was a Specklie followed by Green-veined White. While I watched it a tiny little blur shot past me. I only caught a glimpse but it was very suggestive of a Grizzlie?



I carried on down in the hollows climbing over a fallen tree and entering into another one of those purple patches. Yet again (seemed to be the theme for the day this) it started with a Peacock and a Specklie but this time a male OT thundering by broke the monopoly the former two species seemed to have on the day. The Whites were rallying it seemed as a male Brimstone and a Green-veined White then flew into view. I followed the later back the way that I'd come, having to once again clamber over the fallen tree whilst maintaining eye contact with the butterfly. This is another one of those species that seems to be playing hard to get this year. As I leant in the grey blur was back and this time I could clearly see it was a Grizzlie and a beautifully marked and fresh individual at that. My first Grizzlie of the year is one of my favourite moments of the spring so I sat and watched the little chap for a while with a celebratory coffee.



Eventually I pulled myself away from the gravity of the Grizzlie and made back down the hills topping briefly in the little valley for yet another Peacock and my second Grizzlie. The final descent to the car saw another pair of Peacocks and as I drove back feeling the warmth that comes from just being out of the wind I contemplated the day. No Greenstreak!? Hard work? First Grizzlies? No the thing that struck me was the sheer number of Peacocks! 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 15-May-19 07:40 PM GMT

A nicely marked Grizzled Skipper indeed, Wurzel, and nice Orange-tips 😊 Why is your Duke site now an ex Duke site, apart from the obvious 😊? Sorry if you've already posted the answer eons ago, I've not always kept up 😊

Mike.

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 15-May-19 08:25 PM GMT

Love the colours on the first Peacock, pity about the damage.
Very fine Grizzlies too. Might find some tomorrow. Plans have changed, so I'm off to Tilshead early morning, from home, then onwards for some Marshies.
Staying at the Bell for one night, so should have time to check Church grounds.

It's going to be a bit hectic!
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-May-19 09:22 AM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 The site was really good when I first discovered it with Dukes all over the fields and track ways and so it continued for a couple of years but then they seemed to move up the hill and their numbers dropped off. Then for two years I was only able to locate singletons and for the last two years now 😊 Really I should have called it a 'tentative Ex Duke Site' because I'm hoping that they're there somewhere and I just haven't seen them 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Andrew555, 17-May-19 10:51 AM GMT

What a fantastic Orange-tip experience Wurzel! And you got a great set of shots too. The close-up of the scales is impressive, showing what's going on with the different colours. I like the moffs as well, great find. 🍷 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-May-19 11:29 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I know bloomin birds taking a chunk out of a cracking looking butterfly 😊 I see that you struck lucky with the Marshies - was that at the Hill? I'm hoping to head there on Sunday. How was the Church Yard? I would ask about Tilshead but I reckon that must have been brill 😊
Cheers Andrew 😊 It was brilliant and one of those whose memory will linger long 😊 😊 It also served to remind me "if in doubt just go out" 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-May-19 04:44 PM GMT

Sidbury 17-04-2019

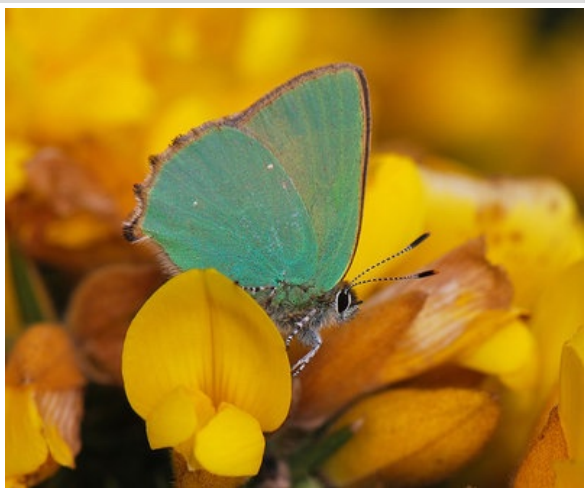
After getting blown round the site (wind not MOD) on my last visit conditions today seemed much more conducive with higher temperatures, more consistent sunshine and a much lighter breeze. Plus I had the bonus of this not really 'counting as a butterfly visit' as I was merely calling in on the way home from a holiday revision class. I pulled up in the normal place and hopped put and almost rubbing my hands together in gleeful anticipation I set off down the path.

However my excitement started to diffuse as it was very quiet all the way along the old Duke track with only a single Peacock. Then at the Cypress trees I drew a blank on Greenstreak and after checking out the field, the Duke hotspot and the springy turf area I had only added a Brimstone and pair of Peacocks to the tally. Hmmmm...Slightly less buoyantly I started along the little valley and things suddenly took an upturn. It started slowly with a Brimstone heading down the valley hugging the side of the Spinney as it did so. A male Orange-tip cut past me and as I turned to follow it I spied a much smaller brown job. It wasn't dark/silvery enough for a Brown Argus so I guessed that it was a Greenstreak. When it finally settled after a highly jinking dash here there and everywhere I could see that it was in fact so. I tried to edge closer in but it was extremely twitchy and it was off again doing it's dizzying 'escape' run.

I'd been hoping for more so I quickly made my way up to the top of the hill and the Gorsefield. It was warmer and more sheltered here and smelt gorgeously of coconut so I was hoping that this might have a soporific effect on the butterflies. It possibly did as when I located a Greenstreak it sat and posed very nicely for me. I like finding them here because the Gorse isn't too high, barely mid chest height at the tallest point and this one was on an evener lower bush so I could use my knees to make a nice steady tripod.



Badger Beer minus 1...



After a while I felt like I'd hassled it enough and so I set off to see if I could relocate the Grizzlies in the innermost ring. I cut back through the wood on a different trajectory and climbed down into the ring. As I did I immediately felt the slight increase in temperature and with it I noticed a sudden increase in butterfly activity. Straight away I could see 4 Whites; 2 male Brimstones, a female Brimstone and an even larger and pure white butterfly, a definite Large White. They were intermingling and either trying to court, fend off or mob each other with the steep side of the bank forming a green background for them. Down in the bottom a Green-veined White cruised by and had a momentary tussle with a Small White that appeared in from the opposite direction. I carried on along the bottom when it was still and warm. A Peacock took off and flew away behind me. I noted several Orange-tips (3 males and a female) and another one a piece of Green-veined and Small White. There was something different that caught my attention. A much smaller, orangey brown butterfly. It wasn't dark enough to be a Duke nor bright enough to be a Copper - it was a Small Heath! I managed a few shots and then it was offski.



By now I'd reached the section of the rings where I'd found the Grizzlie. There was the tangle of a dead tree blocking the path but there wasn't the Grizzlie. Perhaps they'd moved further down the hill in the good weather? I turned to head back when I saw a now familiar orangey blur. "The Small Heath" I thought but when I managed to get a few shots I could see that it was a different individual.



Chuffed with this I climbed out of the rings and headed back down the hill to the little valley approaching this time from higher ground. A Comma bombed past and both a Brimstone and Orange-tip patrolled. The Greenstreak was back in the same place and was just as unaccommodating but it was joined by a Small Copper glittering in the grasses like a precious stone. It was immaculate and a very fitting brilliant end to brilliant visit. Three year firsts in the bag; two of which are (currently) county firsts.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 18-May-19 09:36 PM GMT

What a great contrast that Green Hairstreak is against the bright yellow of the gorse, Wurzel. 😊 I can almost smell the coconut from here... And that Small Copper is a jewel as you say. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-May-19 08:00 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I was happy with that one (of only 2 on the day) and he was really well behaved for once 😊 It was a cracking day today and what with getting home early I bagged plenty of Brownie pints – bring on the Small Pearls 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 19-May-19 09:54 PM GMT

Your Green Hairstreak certainly stands out against the yellow Gorse flowers.
I read somewhere that GH's have a liking for Gorse, but I've seen them on everything but!

How do you plan to spend those extra brownie points you earned today?
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-May-19 10:48 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I'd read about them liking Gorse too and up until this year I'd not seen them on it 😊 I think I can use my Brownie points on either Wood Whites during half term or Small Pearls, maybe even both 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 20-May-19 07:54 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, great set of shots 📷📷 The Hair Streak on the Yellow Gorse looks fantastic but I also love the contrast of the Coppers on the White Daises 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-May-19 11:27 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was chuffed with those shots – the thing about the Small Copper was that it was immaculate so it still had the white fringes which contrasted nicely with the copper and chocolate brown 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 21-May-19 10:37 AM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

..... It was a cracking day today and what with getting home early I bagged plenty of Brownie pints – bring on the Small Pearls

I took your typo literally and imagined you musing over a successful day, with a couple of good pints of brown ale 😊

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-May-19 11:24 PM GMT

I think it was a serendipitous typo as at the time I wrote the comment I was enjoying a bottle of McKewans Champion (7.3%) 🤔😄 Brownie points of Pints of Brown either's good in my book 😊😄

Hengistbury Head 19-04-2019

So for my wife's birthday I was hoping, fingers crossed, to be heading to a National Trust site. But no joy, instead I was off to Hengistbury Head. Oh well I thought perhaps I could pop to Noar tomorrow? So loaded up with beach paraphernalia and Kelly Kettle we set off along the now familiar track. On the way a Peacock fluttered off across the bay and then a Brimstone and Small White battled it out in the field adjacent to the path.

Once we were settled and set up the girls disappeared along the strand line and I set to getting Kelly going. As I did I watched Sand Martins wheeling above and cutting through the air. Two stopped agonisingly close on part of the Groyne for just long enough to get my camera, focus...and they were gone. A pair of Peacocks fought their way along the top of the surf and after this, try as I might I couldn't quite relax so I went for a pee break. I was joined by a long Peacock that looked a little battered – the same one from a few weeks back?

After lunch I took myself off for 15 minutes or so respite between various beach doings and walked up the hill in order to see if there were any Greenstreaks on the Gorse. On the way the obligatory Peacock and a Holly Blue joined me. The rather lovely Holly Blue danced around the top of the steps, zipping from one Holly Bush to another and back repeatedly. At the top heathland stretched away in front of me and a/nother Peacock flew by and disappeared down amid the Gorse. I settled myself on the cliff top and marvelled at the aeronautical acrobatics of the Sand Martins. It was quite surreal to watch them disappear from the horizon as they dove down the Cliffside. There would be a lull in their activities every now and again before a chorus of 'chirppings' indicated a mass emergence from the cliff nests. It was a sight to behold. As I turned to head back a Speckle flew towards me looking out of place amongst the treeless heathland. As it carried on over the cliff edge and out to sea it was an even more incongruous sight.



After lunch and more beachside relaxing I went for another brief wander this time checking out the little triangle of Gorse behind the first of the Beach Huts. Guess which butterfly I saw first? Yep a Peacock. But like all the rest it was only a fleeting shot. After this I carried on mooching for a little bit when a Green-veined White hove into view. It landed several times but always took off even before I'd taken my first step towards it. Finally it landed on a Dandelion in a little nook of Bramble so I crept round the corner, pointed my camera, focused...just as a Small White turned up and started scrapping with it. It seems the larger small White won as it came back, circled and landed on its 'throne' amid the Gorse...



After this I watched as an Orange-tip appeared along the path. It settled before me and I managed one shot before it realised what it was doing and shot off probably muttering to itself "stupid OT, landing in front of someone with a camera like that, remember they like to run around all over the place after us!" On the way back to 'camp', yep a/nother Peacock and then I set to more tea making and more beachside relaxing. I even did a bit of perilous 'rock hopping' on the Groyne which took me back to being 18 again though this time it wasn't just for the fun of it but as I was stalking a Rock Pipit. It was behaving a lot like a Californian Surfbird landing on the top of a boulder and then hopping and fluttering down in between the crevices to get to the wet part before bolting back up as the waves crashed back in.





A very pleasant day all in all.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

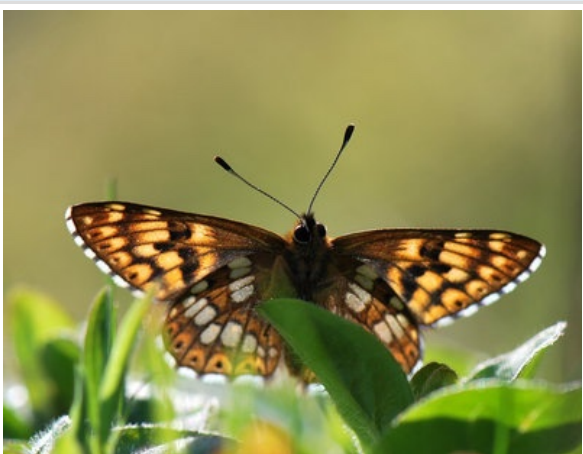
Re: Wurzel

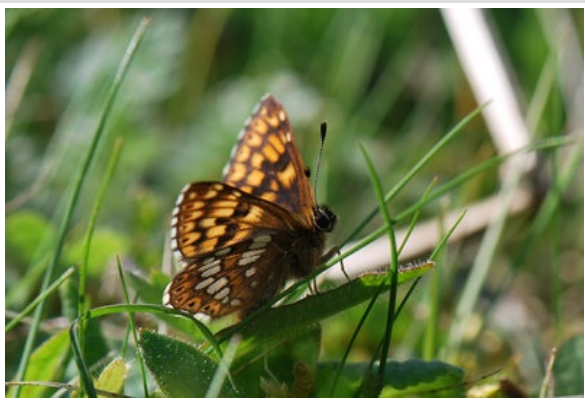
by Wurzel, 23-May-19 11:05 PM GMT

Noar Hill 20-04-2019

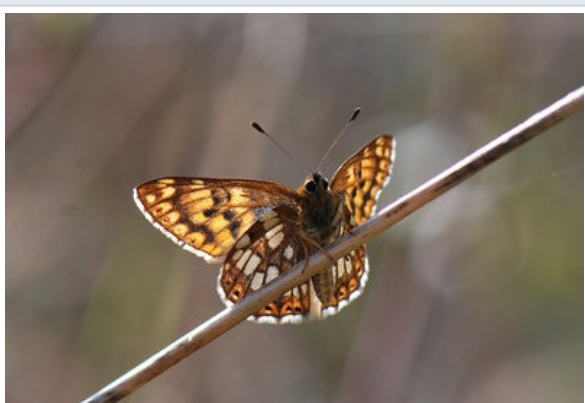
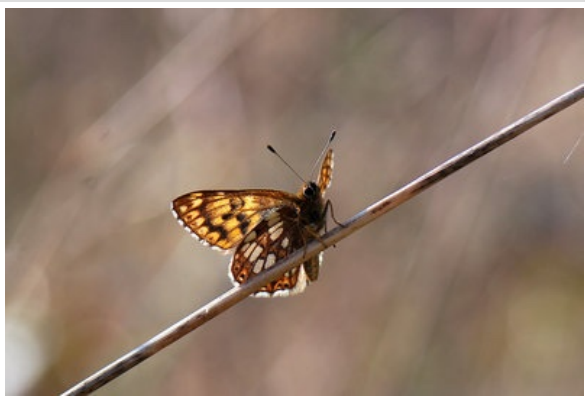
Having gotten home from a great day I was starting to think what I could do with the final remaining days of my holiday. I'd caught up with pretty much all that I could butterfly wise barring one species a Duke. We'd had good weather for a few days and as they'd started emerging 3 weeks before hand I thought that they should be starting to appear in sufficient numbers to make finding them relatively easy even in the Labyrinth that it Noar Hill. So I made the spur of the moment decision to head over to see what the score was.

Come the morning the weather looked great, my only fear was that the warmth and sunshine might make them a bit too hyper. As I obediently followed Shelia my Satnav with Iron Maiden Killers at just the right volume (loud enough to melt ear wax but not quite cause bleeding) I was happy to see butterflies along the verges en route including a Holly Blue on one of the narrowest and therefore slowest parts of the drive. I made really good time and only encountered one or two cars over the whole journey. Pulling up I grabbed my gear and made my way up the hill. Once the ascent was complete I made straight for the biggest ex working; 'Pit 1'. I climbed down into it feeling the temperature rise as I did so and slowly strolled to the other side sweeping my gaze left and right. I was almost at the end of pit when a little brown job buzzed out from the undergrowth ahead of me. Job done, it was a Duke.





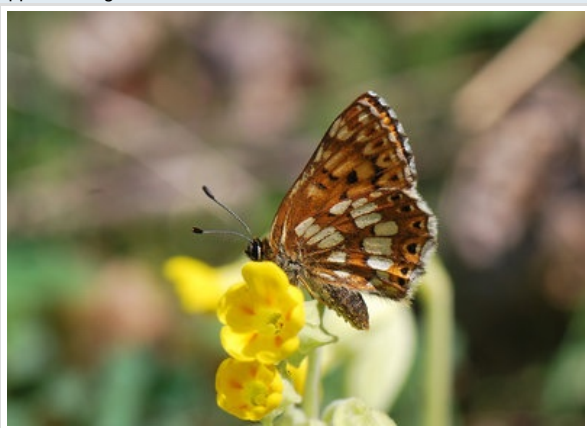
After a quick coffee and more than a few shots I checked the time and found that I had about an hour to go before I'd be joined by Philzoid and so I set off to do a recce and see if I could find some more Dukes. As I climbed up the steep bank I was joined by a male Orange-tip and as I worked into the second Pit with was more of a scrape with a few little cuttings in it I spied a couple also enjoying a Duke. It turned out that they were Mr and Mrs Whitlock 😊 and after the introductions we chatted and watched. There were two in the little, narrow cutting one of which was very really well marked with immaculate fringes. He posed well, tightrope walking along a dead grass stem so I was able to get below him with the light streaming through his wings.

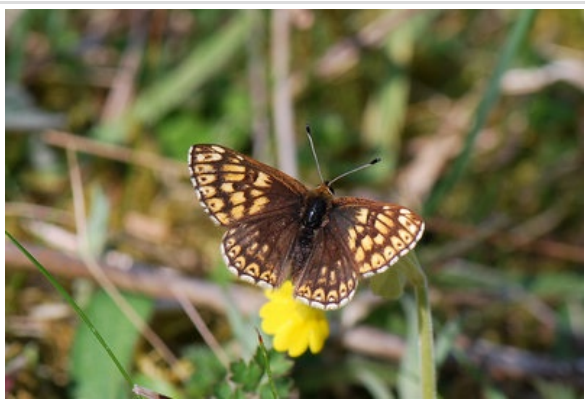


The next pit on was much quieter although there was a brief blue blur as a Holly Blue landed on a large Juniper(?). I was followed by a Greenstreak that almost played ball with us; he'd look like he was coming in to land low down and then veer up to perch above us from where he'd peer cheekily down at us. Eventually they carried on but I wanted to keep trying for the Greenstreak and so wishing them well I turned my attentions back to the cheeky little chappy. He kept up this game for a while and I was just thinking about moving off and leaving him to it when he did his last turn. Again looking like he was going to perch within easy distance of my lens but instead of the final veer upwards he landed so that was able to kneel down level to him. Brill.



As I carefully straightened up I noticed a notebook on the floor and so set off to the last pit, Pit 4, hoping to catch up with Ashleigh. Once I had and the book was safely back in the bag we had a look around. Various Whites flew by including a male and female Orange-tip and a Small White. A Specklie put in a very brief appearance. But these were just 'fillers' as I was waiting for a particularly well posed Duke on a Cowslip which was being enjoyed by another enthusiast. Once I'd had my turn I wished all luck and started to make my way back to the first Pit ready to meet Philzoid. I did alright managing to get from 4 to 3 to 2 but then things went a little strange and I got a little sucked into the space warp that is Noar Hill. I followed a very familiar path out over the top of Pit 2 and it should have been a shirt walk across the path and then down into Pit 1 where I'd started. Only it wasn't, over the top of the Pit 2 was a buckled and uneven field, no big scar dug into the earth just turf. Wandering a little confused and lost into it I stumbled across a couple of Greenstreaks one of which was exceedingly fresh, it looked so new I think the paint was still wet! As I clicked away I realised that the bushes and scrub that the Greenstreaks favoured was actually the same scrub that lined the top of Pit 1 and so I headed back into the reserve following the line of trees and there before me was Pit 1. Relieved I sank down into it, poured a coffee and reacquainted myself or possibly introduced myself to the Duke which was holding territory at the end. Occasionally I would climb back up and scan the horizon looking for Philzoid and soon there he appeared. Right to business...





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 24-May-19 06:29 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Dukes and Hairstreaks Wurzel and I'm guessing there is more to come. Noar Hill always delivers 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 24-May-19 11:10 AM GMT

It's nice to see the Green Hairstreaks on the gorse, Wurzel 😊 something I've only seen once before. Also nice that you got to Noar Hill, one of our favourite places, guess you didn't hear the Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs though 😊 Lovely Dukes and Greenstreaks 😊 yes that is Juniper that you saw the Holly Blue on.

Mike.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 24-May-19 03:15 PM GMT

Great shots Wurzel, lovely Green Hair Streaks and Dukes, I really miss seeing the Hair Streaks I'm wondering if I'll see any near Eastbourne when I go,

hope so. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 24-May-19 07:08 PM GMT

Just caught up with your Green Hairstreaks on the Gorse at Sidbury Wurzel, love the green on golden yellow colour combo 🍃😊

Nice selection of Dukes as well including your favourite 'stained glass' shots 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-May-19 05:43 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊 There is indeed, just got to get round to writing it, sorting and processing the photos 😊 It would be a bit a bit easier if I stopped going out looking for other stuff, like Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk Moths 😊

Cheers Mike 😊 Thanks for the ID confirmation 😊 I find the bird song just about cuts through the static after the journey 😊😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 They're still flying so you might be able to get onto them, fingers crossed you do 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I really like the gold and green, just missing the red and I'd have the Dorset shield colours 😊 (I don't like the gold, white and red flag 😊)

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 25-May-19 08:46 PM GMT

Splendid stained glass Dukes, Wurzel! 😊 I find it really tricky to get down far enough to achieve those shots, at least with any prospect of getting up again within the hour... 😊😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-May-19 04:02 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I know I joke about my knees but in all seriousness I'm getting my fill of these shots while I still can 😊😊

Have a goodun

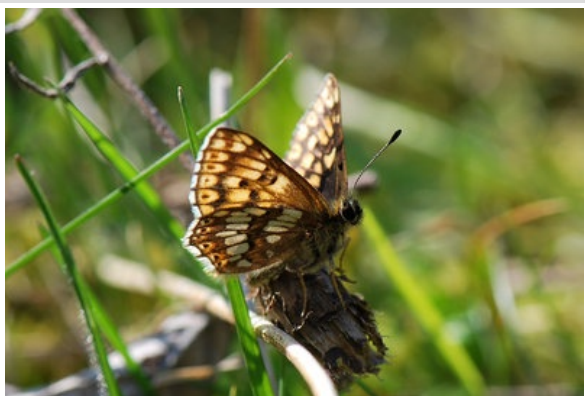
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-May-19 09:46 AM GMT

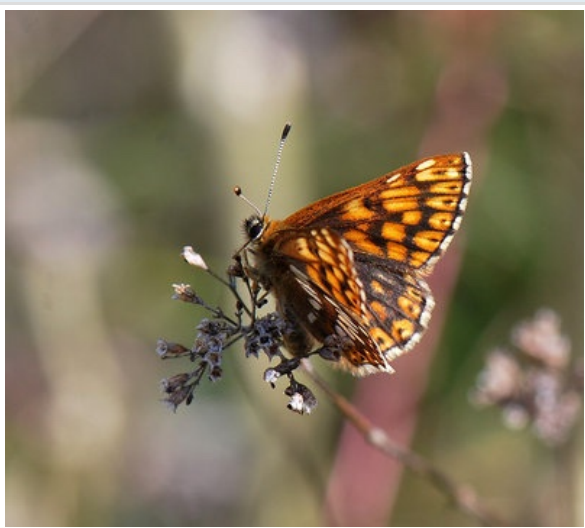
Noar Hill Part 2 20-04-2019

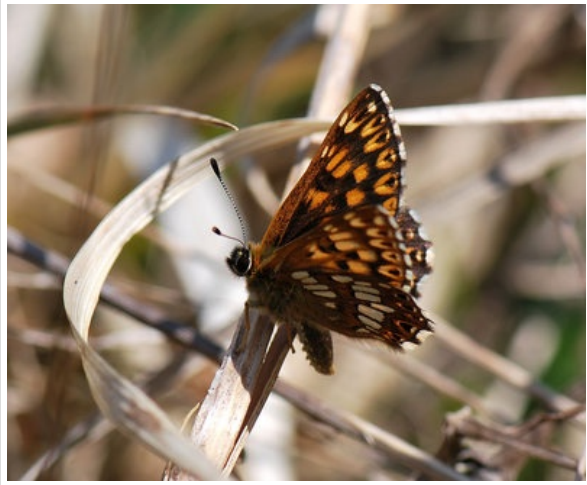
Once Philzoid had arrived we got straight onto the first Duke that was still frequenting the end of Pit 1. Happy that we'd gotten what we came for we caught up and slipped into the usual groove of chat interspersed with butterflies.



As we left Pit one we notched up and Orange-tip and three Brimstones two of which were females but they didn't stop. Climbing up and over the steep top of Pit 1 we made towards Pit 2 when another Brimstone passed us and disappeared over the edge and down the way we'd come. A Comma shot by and led us towards one of the smaller scallops in the flatter Pit 2. This proved to be a good thing as there were 2 Dukes here which we were able to spend some time with. I really wanted to try the little Gully which had been great earlier and was so good last year. Once again it held a 2 Dukes

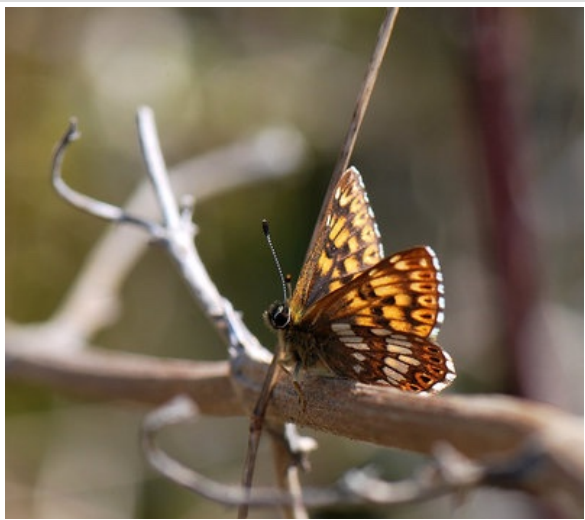
although one had the air of a Duchess about it, which much larger and longer orange markings. Looking back later at the shots I swear that I can see three pairs of legs (?). Whilst enjoying this lovely individual there were a couple of fly-bys possibly by the other Duke that was inhabiting the far end of the little gully but as one point there were three all flying together.



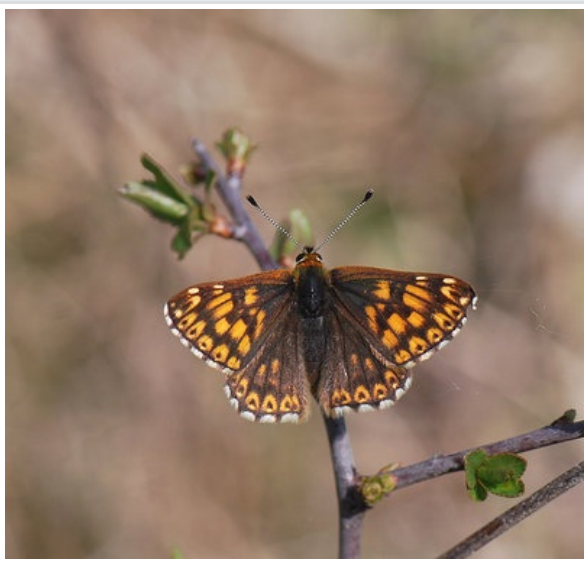
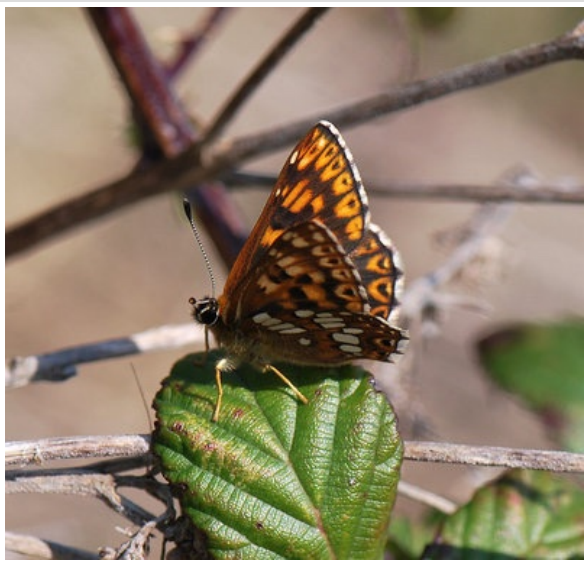


We then carried on having a bit of a wander and skirted round the edge of Pit 3 following the path that ran around the top of the of it as it dove ever so slightly down through a very spindly spinney. We were stopped momentarily on the way as moff flew about and stopped a Holly Blue. It seemed confused and so settled down on the deck possibly seeking some moisture/salts. Try as we might Philzoid and I found this little fella to be very twitchy and I came away with only a few record shots to show for quite an expense of patience. Also along this little track was a Speckled Wood and when we broke out and into the sunshine both a Brimstone and Orange-tip patrolled past us. Onwards and upwards to Pit 4 where unfortunately the well behaved Duke from earlier had done a runner and so we watched a few whites one of which was the smallest female Orange-tip that I've ever seen. As it was so quiet here we decided to try and retrace our steps. Back in Pit 3 a five minute watch saw us achieve a tally of 3 Brimstones, 2 Small Whites and a Partridge...sorry, one a piece of Orange-tip and Holly Blue. The former could possibly have been one of the two that we'd seen together meaning earlier and the Holly Blue played very hard to get high up in the Juniper.

We temporarily set up camp and I got to pour a coffee. The little cutting was missing the Dukes from earlier instead we concentrated on the more level ground above and behind the gully where the turf was nice and short and there were some large stones and exposed scrapes allowing for less cluttered images. Over the time we were here an Orange-tip, a Brimstone and Peacock all passed through but it was as if I was wearing butterfly blinkers - I'd come for Dukes and so Dukes was what I intended to (almost) solely photograph. At one pint there were three present but for most of the time we watched a pair. One would have a little fly and enter the others air space and they would both tussle, spiralling upwards before breaking apart and then fluttering down to land reasonably close to where they'd started from. It was great to see and I stood over, knelt near and once or twice even lay down clicking away merrily completely oblivious to the fact that I was going to have to sort through an awful lot of images later! Having almost had my fill of the Dukes here we set out once again to seek some more.



Once again we left Pit 3 aiming for Pit 2 only to end up in the field with lots of humps and nowhere near where we had expected to be! This place bends time and space I swear! Still we were here and so we had a look at what was about here and notched up a Duke, Small White and a further couple of Dukes. Following the lie of the land we moved on into another scalloped area and there was another Duke and finally ended up in a small area where I could have sworn I'd seen my Greenstreaks earlier in the morning. Here there were another 2 Dukes bringing the total to between 12 and 15 for the morning. I remember the very good year at my Duke Site when it had been really easy to pick up over 20 Dukes but this is an easy second place. Most of the Dukes were almost mint condish and it was a joy to see the little brown blur resolve into the chocolate and yellow as they landed.



Somehow we found our way back to Pit 1 and from there headed downhill and home as a Greenstreak waved us goodbye. We stopped briefly en route for a Holly Blue that tried to lead us into a field of Oil Seed Rape but all too quickly the day was over, I'd wished Philzoid well and was motoring home with more Maiden. Still it may have been over too quickly (that's the bending of the rules of time part of Naor Hill) but while it lasted it was brilliant.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 27-May-19 11:05 AM GMT

More great shots Wurzel, 🍷 If only I'd got wings I'd be down there 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-May-19 07:25 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I know what you mean, I'd love to get oop North for Large Heath, Scotch Argus etc 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 28-May-19 08:10 PM GMT

Looks like you had a great time with those Dukes. They are irresistible though aren't they, full of character and relatively easy to approach 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-May-19 11:34 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy 😊 There are indeed, brilliant little butterflies 😊 I've been fortunate enough to catch up with them at four different sites this season 😊

Have a goodun

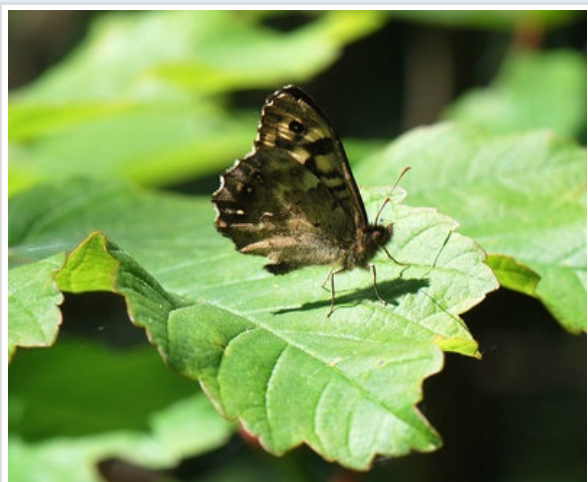
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-May-19 12:55 PM GMT

Easter Sunday Kingston Lacey

Each year we like to take the girls for an Easter Egg Hunt at one of the National Trust sites. This year was Kingston Lacey and again they seemed to be ranging through the woodland walk area. However unlike last year we were bedecked in shorts and sunnies, sun hatted up and liberally covered in sun cream. I took my camera along but only got a couple of shots during the Hunt for several reasons. First up it was the busiest I'd ever seen it here which meant that every time a butterfly would land at the edge of the path and within range of my lens it would be gone by the time I'd approached – spooked by an errant walker. Secondly it was hot! Even in the dappled light of the wood I could feel the odd prickle as sweat formed on the back of my neck. So the butterflies rarely stopped instead incessantly quartering the foliage for more nectar or mates. The main reason though was that I was just enjoying the whole experience; it was warm, the butterflies were flashing by like little fleeting jewels – diurnal shooting stars, there were marvellous scents and perfumes wafted gently by the slightest of breezes and I was surrounded by family.



Hunt done we carried on across the gardens and down the Avenue lined with Bluebells before almost completing the circuit with a quick stop in the kitchen garden. As we were approaching the Pacific Garden I mentally went through a list of the butterflies I'd seen; Brimstone, Specklie, Small White,

Orange-tip, singles of Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell, a possible Large White and a single Holly Blue. All standard fare but very few shots I realised. It was then that an OT finally stopped long enough in a place relatively undisturbed. Within a few steps I'd reeled off a few shots when it actually flew towards me and landed within reach a second time. Looking back I realised I'd gotten lucky with the positioning and lighting as I'd caught the topside with the underside markings projected through. A cracking end to a cracking day!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 29-May-19 04:34 PM GMT

You've certainly overdosed on Dukes this season, and obtained some fine shots. You mentioned Easter egg hunts, we took our three on one at Lacock. They all answered the clues successfully, but when claiming their chocolate egg prize, the person checking the answers pointed out that Jude, the six year old, had spelled Ducks as DUX. Well it sounds exactly the same!.

Hope to visit ' the hill ' again tomorrow,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by ernie f, 29-May-19 04:46 PM GMT

Wurzel – loved your commentary on your Noar Hill Duke visit.

By the way – you made a joke about a Partridge (in a Pear Tree). Of course this area has quite a lot of Red-legged Partridges (not all of them up in Pear Trees of course) but last year I also saw what is nowadays a far rarer species, the Grey Partridge – in fact two, I think it may have been a pair. When going to Noar Hill it's always worthwhile scanning the arable field boundaries en-route to the reserve proper.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-May-19 12:47 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 Good job he didn't write an 'f' instead of a 'd' 😊😊 I am having a good season with the Dukes – seen them at four sites now 😊 Hope the Hill produces 😊

Cheers Ernie 😊 Good point you've made there – I do have a tendency to 'zoom' in when on a butterfly trip so miss some of what is going on around me on a larger scale 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 30-May-19 08:16 PM GMT

I love your Dukes. A butterfly I have never seen.

Re: Wurzel

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

Cheers Nick 😊 I've been really lucky with this species this year 😊 I wonder what the likelihood is of them moving northwards as climate change hastens? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 31-May-19 08:49 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

Cheers Nick 😊 I've been really lucky with this species this year 😊 I wonder what the likelihood is of them moving northwards as climate change hastens? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Well, they can be found in North Yorkshire so you never know.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 31-May-19 10:22 PM GMT

Just a short hop then Neil 😊😊

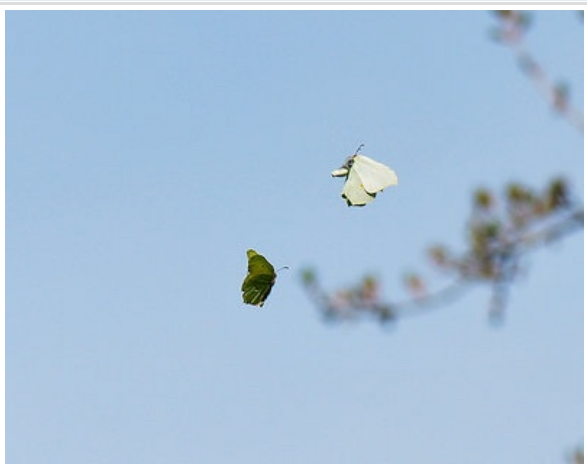
Martin Down 22-04-2019

Having been out every day for the last three days I thought that I was pushing my luck by heading out today but then I reasoned that of those three trips only one was actually a proper butterflying trip. As that had been a 'Biggy' I kept it local and opted for Martin Down in the hope of getting a few more Greenstreak shots and maybe I'd pick up my first Dingy of the season? With this in mind I headed to the Sillens' Lane end and quickly set off along the hedge aiming for the Tunnel and then onto the Hotspot and the Dyke. It felt quite chilly it still being early but the sun shone nicely above and it wasn't very long before I saw my first butterfly; a Brimstone bombing along the line of the hedge and adding a visual treat to the vocal one offered by the birds singing and calling all around me. A little further on and I saw two Holly Blues, a female and then a male both of which peeled away from the hedge and took to fluttering. The male seemed to be a bit lost as he flew away from the cover of the hedge, out across the footpath and then started flying in ever decreasing circles. I crept closer and saw him come down on the deck, only it wasn't the deck it was a pile of something not particularly nice.



After this little interlude I carried on along the hedge making good time towards the 'Tunnel'. Along the way I encountered a Specklie and for part of the way I was accompanied by another Holly Blue, two male Orange-tips and another Brimstone. Right at the edge of the tunnel a small grey blur resolved itself into a Grizzlie. My walk along the Tunnel was very slow going but I didn't mind because it was as there were so many butterflies. At the one end a Holly Blue and Greenstreak sat on guard duty, worrying those that entered. All the way along Orange-tips, Specklies and Brimstones were constantly patrolling up and down although I encountered a few Brimstones that were down on the deck hiding in the grasses possibly not quite up to temperature? At the far end a pair spiralled upwards in what looked good for a successful courtship but the shape of the female looked wrong at times and is seemed that she was arching her abdomen back showing the rejection posture in flight? I don't know if this was indeed the case, possibly it was just the way that she was flying but let's just say that the dance didn't end how the male wanted it to.







After this I broke through out into the light and made my way as directly as possible towards the Hotspot skirting round the edge of the hillfort on the way. A Peacock and a couple of Brimstones were all that I added to the list on the way. At the hotspot things were very quiet though as well as the obligatory OT and Brimstone I managed to find two Grizzlies that were frequenting the areas near the chalk scrape. It had warmed up by now and the heat had brought the butterflies out so as I set off along the bottom of the Dyke they seemed to be everywhere. Again Orange-tips and Brimstones did their thing a brace of Peacocks both made me jump when they erupted from beneath my feet and I found at least 3 different Grizzlies. I was just wondering where the Dingies were when a slightly larger, browner blur announced the arrival of my first of 2019. It didn't hang about for long, I think about 7 shots in total, before it was off veering this way and that, jinking up, down and diagonal. As I watched it go I realised that I needed to take a leaf from its book and not tarry much longer as my time was ticking away.





Pleased with my 'first' I started back along the Dyke watching and counting all the way back to the Hotspot. When I checked my tally it showed that I'd been pretty accurate on the first count as, Peacocks aside my tally carried. I'd also stopped almost immediately after I'd started as once again I witnessed a failed Brimstone courtship dance. Still bemused by this I cut back through the small field parallel to the path on the way back finding a Greenstreak in amongst the whites and then I also checked the first little bit of the Tunnel. Again there was a Grizzlie on the threshold and a couple of Greenstreaks and Holly Blue on guard duty. The final push back to the car added a few more Greensteaks (3) another Holly Blue (3) and several OTs and Brimstones as well as two new species for the days tally; a non-stop Small White and a lovely fresh Small Copper. Unfortunately it had decided to take nectar on quite a flimsy bloom so was swinging wildly forwards and backwards in the faintest of breezes. Not a bad morning when all's said and done!





Iron Maiden fan...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 01-Jun-19 07:21 PM GMT

That's a proper spring selection, Wurzel – those fresh Grizzlies especially. And what would early butterflies do without the humble dandelion? 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-19 10:47 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 Strange to thin that this was only about 5 weeks ago – so much has changed since then although the Grizzlies are just about hanging on 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 01-Jun-19 11:04 PM GMT

Great Brimstones in flight shots. It is always entrancing to see a Brimstone chase.

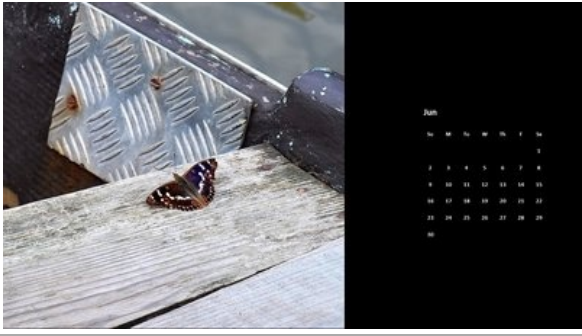
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-19 11:51 PM GMT

Cheers Katrina 😊 It is great to see – I was also lucky enough to see a few 'attempted' pairings this spring 😊

June 2019

Summer is actually here...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-19 11:03 PM GMT

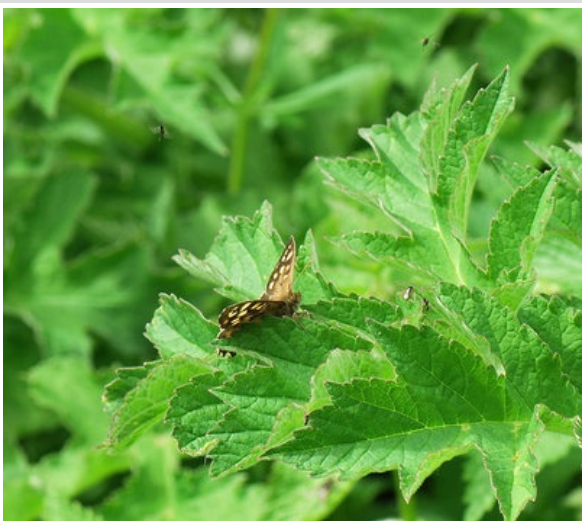
Work 23-04-2019

I hadn't seen a Small Tort for a while and I reckoned that they were possibly over for this part of the season. Because of this I changed 'up' my lunch time walk so now I walked along the Pits and the down the boundary hedge before chancing my arm and nipping 'offsite' to take the path down the hill to Sharcott Road. As I made progress I thought that I might have made the wrong choice as it was very quiet as I worked the Pits with only a distant UFW way off across the field. So it continued all down the boundary hedge. "Wrong choice" I thought only to spook a Peacock from the first bit of path on the other side of the hedge. A little further along two Small Torts erupted from some Nettle beds, one returning and stopping for a record shot. A Peacock was basking but took off after I got 2 distant record shots.



It went quiet again until there was another break in the treeline where a Small tort basked and an Orange-tip spilled down the bank from its previous quartering of the field. Nearing the bottom of the path a Specklie played very hard to get. It kept landing just ahead of me and as I'd lean in for a shot it would take off and land just slightly ahead of me etc...

At the proper bottom of the path I turned round and made my way back workwards, retracing my steps. It was actually a bit like rewinding a tape cassette. This time however the Specklie was slightly less twitchy and posed with its body lined along a twig. It might have thought that it was well hidden but it had forgotten about its wings!





Again there was a fly-by male Orange-tip and two Small Torts (different individuals or two of the original three?) but no Peacock. Back along the boundary hedge the whites seemed to have come out as the temperature had increased ever so slightly and there were 2 UFWs (possibly Small Whites?) and two definite female Brimstones. Then it was back into work – it's been a while since I've said that...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-19 10:43 PM GMT

Bentley Wood 29-04-2018

After a weekend of very strong winds and cool dull cloud it was no great surprise to wake on Monday to blue skies and an upsurge in the temperature. After being 'locked in' over the weekend I decided to take advantage of the favourable conditions and do a drop in at Bentley Wood on the way home as it would only add about 10 miles to my journey. So at the end of the day I changed in the loos and set off across country cheered by the large number of whites (OTs, Brimstone, Whites) that were flying along the verges on the way but grinning ruefully at the increasing cloud. One highlight of my rally drive was the sight of 8 or more Red Kites soaring around one field near Middle Wallop. Another highlight was that the road to the car park is in a much better state than I can recall.

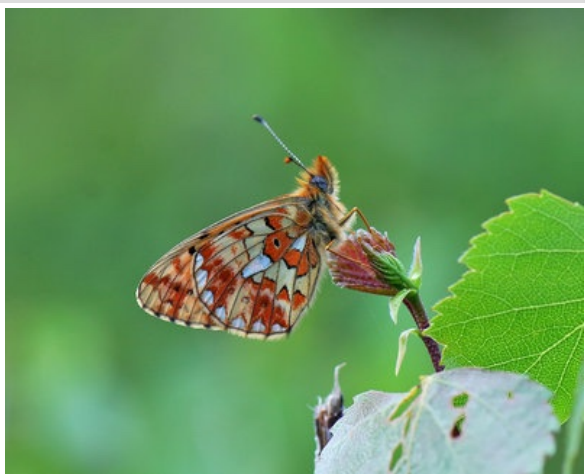
Once freed from the car I noted a pair of spiralling Specklies and then I legged I down to the Clearing which I had all to myself. The book had mentioned Pearls at the 'end' so I made my way down to the bottom part, the tussocky little field enclosed apart from two breaks in the trees. There was only the slightest breeze but here it was still and warm. A Peacock does a fly-by, Brimstone, Small White and a female Orange-tip fluttered round the Bluebells near the bench pausing long enough for some shots on occasion. On the other side the Peacock went up again and dislodged a Comma. So far it was all very typical so I wandered back to the bench to have a snack and there was a Pearl. It was joined very quickly by a second which flew in from where I don't know and couldn't say. One minute there was an airspace minus a Pearl the next 'Pop' there was an airspace occupied by a Pearl. A third appeared flying more obviously along the fence teasing and tempting me to climb over after it. This little purple patch ended with a fly-by Holly Blue and then it clouded over – still 3 Pearls ace.





The cloud had dulled the butterflies as well as the vista but I reckoned I could find some more awaiting the sun so I crossed the stream and made my way to the other side of the clearing taking the other track back down to the bottom end. As I did I scanned the piles of dead Bracken on either side of the path. Yep - there was a Pearl, then a Peacock which took off spooking the Pearl so I followed it, watched it land first on the barbed wire fence and then on a sapling. The cloud settled it nicely and I was able to spend a lot of time with it although I had to adopt 'horse pose' remembered from many a year ago when I studied Kung-fu so as to be stable and at the same level as the butterfly.





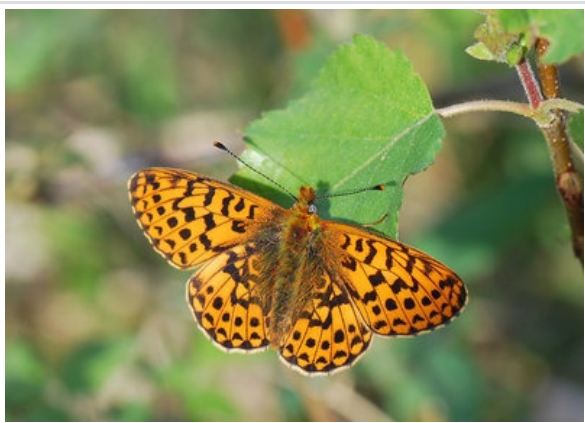
With aching thighs I bade it goodbye and set off back down the path to see if I could locate any more Pearls sitting out the cloud. It seems like I'd gotten my eye in as I managed to find a second and a third sitting still and awaiting the return of the sun. I actually looked up and could see that there was one huge cloud directly overhead and only overhead. I could make out the halos of brightness marking the edges of the clearing on the outside there was gorgeous sun but in the confines of the clearing just cloud...So after checking in with the original roosting Pearl I made as if to leave.





I'd gotten as far as the little triangle near the information board when another Pearl flew weakly before me and landed in a sapling. I wondered if it was newly emerged because it looked immaculate and also it was flying so weakly flopping down here and there. It eventually settled at the foot of the sapling, closed up and provided me with some lovely views of the underside. Close by a Specklie bombed away but I was almost as settled as the Pearl so I let it go. In my reverie; Pearl in front of me, pleasantly warm, Tree Pipits and Garden Warblers adding a musical backdrop; I'd missed the fact that was a slight break in the cloud. The light hit the Pearl and off it went. I followed and waited for it to sit, open winged and bask before moving in for some shots.





Chuffed I made for home wondering if I'd seen a maximum of 7 or a minimum of 4.
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 04-Jun-19 06:51 AM GMT

Superb photos , and a bit different from the usual on bracken shots. Very beautiful. I must investigate the horse pose! 😊

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 04-Jun-19 01:05 PM GMT

Beautiful pictures Wurzel. I have never seen a Pearl, just Small Pearls. I am pleased that summer has arrived down there. We don't appear to have had spring here yet!!

Re: Wurzel

by Janet Turnbull, 04-Jun-19 03:33 PM GMT

Lovely set of Pearls, Wurzel - I would not have thought of kung fu to zap a butterfly! 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-19 11:39 AM GMT

Cheers Katrina 😊 I was chuffed with those shots especially as I didn't get bitten by any Ticks – mind you my inner thighs have been giving me gyp ever since 😊😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 06-Jun-19 01:30 PM GMT

Great Pearl shots from Bentley Wood, Wurzel, (never been there!).
And you're right about a little cloud, a Pearl photographers friend.

Hope you are not about to go into serious brownie point debt,
With his Majesty only about two weeks away!.

Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 06-Jun-19 08:44 PM GMT

Terrific shots of the PBF, Wurzel – ideal conditions late in the day with a bit of cloud, and some yoga to finish things off nicely. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-19 11:27 AM GMT

Cheers Nick 😊 On the plus side Nick when spring does arrive there will be butterflies by the bucket load, all compressed together 😊 You'll go from famine to a glut 😊

Cheers Janet 😊 Sometimes you do need ninja speed and others a meditative zen patience pays off – I think butterflying lends itself well to Martial Arts 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-19 01:01 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 If you find yourself in Wiltshire at this time of year Bentley Wood is definitely worth a visit 😊 I'm holding back a bit on the butterfly front now in preparation...although the Large blues are about to emerge... 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jun-19 07:30 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

...although the Large blues are about to emerge... 😊😊 ...

Already out Wurzel, I have seen a couple of photos on social media yesterday and today.

So then, what is your style of Kung Fu...praying mantis, crane...or maybe dying fly 😊

Cracking set of Pearls there, particularly a couple of the underside shots. Lovely stuff 😊👍

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-19 07:58 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 Things turned out right in the end 😊 It was strange how the cloud just sat over the Clearing, the road way, the car park, the other bits of the wood were all bathed in sun yet the Clearing? Cloudy – odd 😊 but useful 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Good to know – maybe next weekend then 😊😊 It's funny that you should mention Crane as I started out learning 'Lucky Crane' and then later when I revisited it I learnt Shaolin with a mixture of animal styles. In between during my university days I perfected Drunken Monkey 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

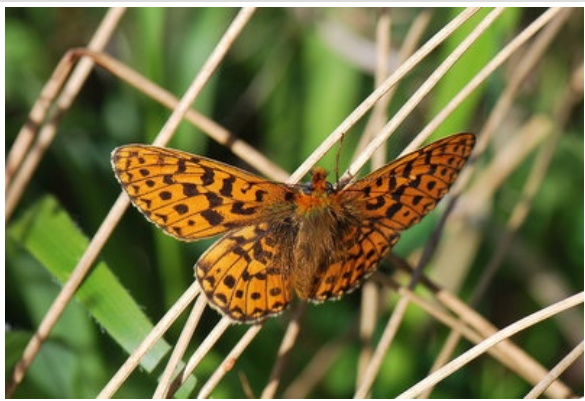
Re: Wurzel

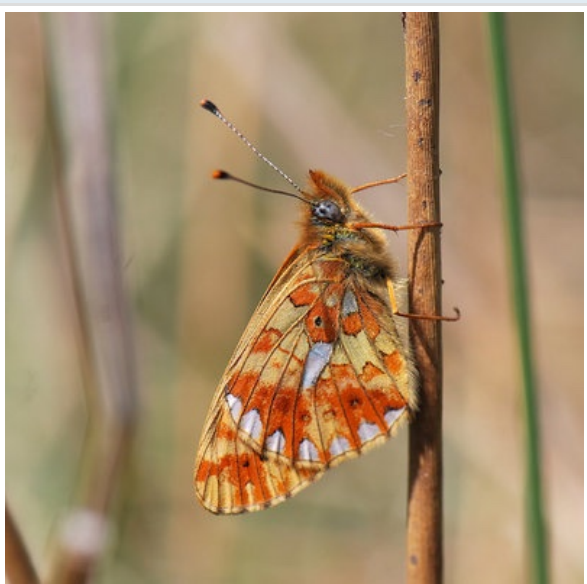
by Wurzel, 07-Jun-19 10:39 PM GMT

Bentley Wood 04-05-2019 Part 1

After my success earlier in the week at Bentley I was eager to get back and see if there were any more about plus I was about due another visit with Philzoid. Checking the weather it looked like Saturday was the best day – sunny, less windy but cool which would hopefully mean that the butterflies would fly but less frantically than usual.

I got on site before Philzoid and set about trying to find some Pearls ready to hand over on a plate as it were when he arrived. It wasn't quiet; a Cuckoo called as did a Tawny Owl, Garden Warblers, Chiff Chaff, Blackcaps and Tree Pipits sang but I didn't encounter any butterflies until I reached the far end of the clearing when two Pearls appeared just as the temperature ticked into the next degree C. Reasoning that they'd still be roosting I worked my way back around and crossed the bridge on my way to the Bracken lined path where I'd found them on Monday. It was almost like a rerun; Pearl, Peacock, Pearl and Pearl. The last one was in mint condish but looked more orange than usual. As I got in close enough I could see that the dark markings along the margins were missing and the flying chevrons were much reduced. At this juncture Philzoid arrived and as it clouded over intermittently we filled our boots and memory cards with a range of Pearl shots.







After this with the *raison d'être* met we took to wandering. The first little square clearing held a Pearl that flew and went down only to promptly disappear. There was also an Oil Beetle posing nicely on the grass stems. Further along the back path we found another Pearl and a Bentley Grizzlie which decided to play Peek-a-boo! At the top of the path some *Nomada* bees and a Specklie (flighty as ever) held our attention while we decided where to head next. It also gave me the opportunity to try out my new snack – Greggs Vegan Sausage Roll to which I'd added lashings of extra hot Lime Chilli Pickle. Bit of a taste sensation.







Cheeks still burning and sweat prickling my brow due to my volcanic snack we made for the recently cleared area just to the right of the main clearing itself. Last year a few little sections had been cleared so by now it should be productive and so it turned out. Almost immediately we stumbled onto 2 Pearls, one ahead of the other down on the path. After a bit of interaction they departed to opposite sides of the path and one very kindly landed on a Bluebell. On our return down the path/ride that took us down into the top part of the clearing we added 2 Specklies and an Argent and Sable to the days tally.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 08-Jun-19 03:42 PM GMT

Wurzell!, I'm 🇩🇪🇩🇪 look at that a Grizzled Skipper on your finger 😊 next year maybe 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Art Frames, 08-Jun-19 05:37 PM GMT

I would love to be able to get down to achieve those eye-level shots. I know you complain about a few aches, but I wouldn't be able to get up again 😊

The detail and loveliness of the pictures is even nicer when I click through to the full sized image. A shame that the diary doesn't show them a touch bigger. 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-19 04:19 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I did think of you when I got those shots – but I didn't mean to rub it in 😊. They're still flying now – so if you're down this way there is still a chance of picking them up 😊

Cheers Peter 😊 I'm lucky in that I can still get down but if I go for a kneeling shot I swear my Knees make an ultrasonic noise that alerts the butterflies to my presence. 😊😊😊 I don't know how to get the images on the diary any bigger – I minimally process them in Picasa and the save them to a portable hard drive so I don't know if that's why they're the size they are?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by kevling, 09-Jun-19 05:01 PM GMT

Wurzel,

Great set of photographs of the Pearls. They look immaculate. My one and only visit to Bentley Wood a couple of years ago was nearer the end of their flight season, so no where near as pristine. As for the Grizzlie on your finger, now that's just plain showing off 😊

Regards
Kev

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-19 08:23 PM GMT

Cheers Kev 😊 I was mighty chuffed with the Pearls (there's more to come once I've gotten the photos sorted 😊) as they're putting in a good showing this year 😊 As for the Grizzlie on the finger – that's one of the benefits of butterflying in cooler weather – I was Grizzlie's hot water bottle 😊:lol:That sounds like a prog rock album title 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-19 08:48 PM GMT

Bentley Wood 04-05-2019 Part 2

On reaching the 'triangle' we actually met other people. It came as a bit of a shock to realise that in this day and age of overcrowding and overpopulation Philzoid and I had spent the last hour or so without seeing any other humans! We spent some time here with another 2 Pearls and finally some Brimstones as by now the temperature had risen sufficiently for them to be activated.





Not wanting to intrude on the other butterflies space we made our way down to the far corner of the clearing. As we strode through the gap in the trees which felt like passing through a gateway the butterflies seemed to burst forth from the air. There were at least 5 Pearls flying about including a female that was looking to lay as she fluttered about around our feet and was constantly being bothered by smaller males. A male Orange-tip did the usual cruel trick of landing just long enough for me to make the approach and then took off just as I was focusing on him and a Holly Blue flew across the orange melee like Tinkerbell amid the Lost Boys.

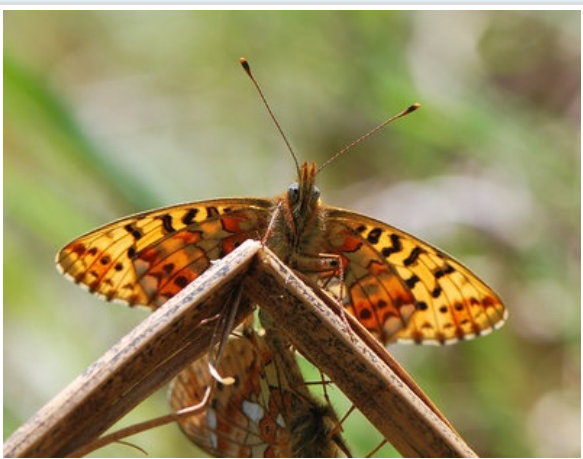


That morning I'd consulted the Oracle (my older daughter K) and she had informed me that I would be adding a pair of Pearls in cop to my collection. I didn't think this likely so I was stunned when a hither too unseen female flew past me. A smaller Pearl appeared from nowhere as well and followed her. They reached a small sapling, about 7ft high and still twiggy, and seemed to crash into each other. As we neared the sapling we could see that both Pearls were present and the male was trying to bend his abdomen round. Success; he'd latched on so we tried for a few shots. It was frustrating as they'd landed at the top of this the most exposed sapling of this bit of the wood so they were being thrown around as even the slightest breeze swayed the tree. The leaves which were flapping all over and occasionally obstructing them from view were also a pain. It became apparent that they didn't like this precarious position either and they weakly fluttered (it looked like the female doing all of the work) in a shallow descent landing low down on a dead Bracken stem. Much, much better! At one point they both opened their wings and looked like the lepidopteran 'Push-me-pull-you'. Absolutely fantastic!





Once we tore ourselves away we wandered slightly dazed I suppose around the rest of this little bit finding a few Pearls, Brimstone, Orange-tip and a Green-veined White which actually stopped for a photo. But I was drawn back to the Pearls and after yet more shots we left them in peace, still 'at it', and made for the next site. - Sidbury Hill.



A Three-fer – Stained glass, close up and in cop!

On the drive over I was wondering whether it was going to be worthwhile; I'd not seen Dukes there for a year, I was running out of time and I didn't think anything could beat the sight of a pair of Pearls in cop. When we pulled up the wind had picked up and so we started towards the usually productive spots. The Sparse Bank didn't have any Adonis, in the Tussocky grass there was an absence of Small Blues Copper Corner was Copper-less and the Cypresses were bereft of the Green ones. There was nothing, nada not even an errant Brimstone. Then we reached the little path that ran up to my old Duke hotspot and there was a tiny grey blur it looked almost like a Brown Argus as it had a greyish/silver appearance. I followed it with my eyes and it landed – it was a Grizzlie but the markings on the wing were fused to make a white bar, an intermedia. And there was the butterfly that had made this particular part of the trip worthwhile, the make or break butterfly, ace!



After this we found a Dingy and moved onto the little Valley with a fly-by by a Red Admiral, two Small Coppers, a male Orange-tip and a Green-veined White. I had run out of time so I said my goodbyes and set off, almost at a run, back to the car.





As I drove home a pair of Pearls and an aberrant Grizzlie jostled for pride of place in my memory. What a day! What a great start to the weekend!
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 09-Jun-19 09:27 PM GMT

You must be awarded a couple of mrgreens 🍃🍃 for the mating Pearls, Wurzel.
There are a couple of classic mating shots too.

At the moment it's June gap, what June gap around here,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Jun-19 09:20 AM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I was dead chuffed as they were a glaring omission in my 'In cop' collection – only Small Pearls left and then the Fritillaries are complete! 😊😊

WRT the June gap – I almost never experience it – I just get a brief respite when I can (almost) catch up with my PD 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by philm63, 10-Jun-19 09:34 AM GMT

What an excellent mix of lovely images Wurzel. I saw only two species all day yesterday, totalling 3 butterflies
Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 10-Jun-19 01:33 PM GMT

Great report of a fantastic day's butterflying Wurzel. 😊 The highlight had to be the Pearls in cop, first I'd seen since 2011. Bentley Wood is a site that delivers, somewhere I'll continue to go to as long as I can.

After you're left Sidbury Hill I made my way up to the ring but by this time the sun began to lose its battle with the clouds and it turned cool and windy 😞. As I hurriedly made my way back to the car aware of the rain clouds gathering, I got one last treat, a male Orange-tip which roosted on a dandelion clock, something they have tendency to do from time to time.

Looking forward to reading about our other Bentley excursion 😊

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 10-Jun-19 08:06 PM GMT

Some great shots of those mating Pearls, Wurzel – you must have done a bit of whispering of your own to get them to open up together like that. 😊👍

The aberrant Grizzlie is a bit special, too! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-19 09:46 AM GMT

Fantastic shots of the Pearls Wurzel 👍👍 and well done with the ab Grizzled Skipper 😊 You didn't "rub it in" with your shots of the Grizzled Skipper , It's always pot luck with Butterflies and I know I'll get them at some point 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Janet Turnbull, 11-Jun-19 11:42 AM GMT

A wonderful report on the Pearls, Wurzel – a few Mr Greens there! 👍👍 And the Grizzlies seem to be so elusive, beautiful shots. More Greens! 👍 Janet

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-19 11:35 PM GMT

Cheers Phil 😊 It was one of those butterfly filled memory forming days 😊

Cheers Phlizoid 😊 Only Small Pearl to go now for my 'In cop' collection and then the Fritillaries are done – it's a bit like finishing a team in the World Cup sticker book 😊😊 I've got a back up for Small Pearls now as well so next time we catch up remind me to fess up 😊 When I can get round to writing up the next excursion it will feel a bit like waiter service; handed on a plate 😊 That's the way I like my butterflies 😊

As OfSTED are NOT in tomorrow 😊 I need to now go and get some sleep as I am starting to hallucinate from sleep deprivation...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by kevlng, 13-Jun-19 08:41 PM GMT

Wurzel, Great set of photos of the Pearls in cop. Good luck with the SPBF and hopefully they won't be like the Bryan Robson sticker I never got for my World Cup album. I'm sure they never printed that one 😊

Regards
Kev

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jun-19 08:51 PM GMT

Cracking series of PBF images Wurzel 😊👍, even more jealous as I have missed this species again this year 👍👍 Oh well!...can't be everywhere.

Wurzel wrote:

...WRT the June gap – I almost never experience it...Wurzel

I think the June Gap mostly refers to the wider countryside species and the lull in numbers between spring ones and the summer ones getting going. The gap has always been able to be filled if you are fortunate enough to live close enough to more localised species or are willing to travel some distance. I don't have any of these 'premier' species close by hence I nearly always experience a bit of a gap...or go away for a few days in early June 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-19 10:56 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I should of known that I was going to see the paring as I'd checked with my daughter K, The Oracle and been given an unequivocal "Yes" so it was on the cards 😊 Still absolutely cracking to see. The big surprise was that Grizzlie – where that came from I have no idea I wonder if phenotype will persist in the population?

Cheers Goldie 😊 The 'Pot Luck' element of butterflying is one of its biggest attractions 😊

Cheers Janet 😊 I had almost as much fun writing up the report as on the day – it brought back all the memories 😊

Cheers Kev 😊 Was Bryan Robson from the Mexico 86 album? Every time there is one player that is almost impossible to collect 😊 Fingers crossed I don't have to start calling Small Pearls – Robsons 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 Going away in June (Swallowtails, Large blues, Heath Frits, NBAs etc) sounds like a better way to deal with the June Gap than what do, which is to stay in and try and fail to catch up on my PD 😊😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-19 11:02 PM GMT

Martin Down 05-05-2019

We all headed out for a lunchtime picnic originally intending to bathe in the beautiful blue glow of a sea of Bluebells at Garston Wood. However before I realised it we were actually bombing along the Cranborne Road which would eventually lead to Garston Wood but meant that Martin Down was nearer. So we pulled in there instead and set off for the sheltered sun trap beyond the Butts. The intermittent sun made a strong appearance just as I was finishing my final morsel of lunch and an unidentified White added another turn to the visual and sonic spectacle of May blossom, pinpricks of yellow, red and white amongst the green bedspread of turf and the cacophony of Cuckoo, Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Corn Bunting, Skylarks and Yellowhammers. I took this as my cue to have a bit of a wander round.

Starting in the small field and aiming to work my way along a section of the Dyke the first butterfly was only a few steps away, a familiar orange colour it was my third Small Heath of the year. As I knelt down to get a close shot I noticed that the 'eye' was doubled. Almost as soon as I recognised this the butterfly started playing silly buggers with me so getting decent shots proved difficult. Muttering about this obstreperous behaviour I carried on, down into the Dyke and along and consoled myself with a Grizzlie, followed by a Small Copper, then a Brimstone and finally a Dingy Skipper. All were down on the deck, down in the Dyke in a line about 4-5 paces apart from each other.





As I climbed out of the Dyke and crossed the path I followed a Peacock down into one of the small fields and it paused briefly on the slope. It seemed to like basking here but I was distracted by a vivid orange blur which announced a fantastic Small Copper. In the next field over it seemed like the Skippers were the order of the day as there were 3 Dingies and a Grizzlie. A female Holly Blue added a bit of brightness to the textures and tones of the Skippers although I was still enamoured by the lovely level of variation in the markings of the Dingies. One was chocolate brown and peppered grey, another a sandy brown and one a rich, rusty brown.





I was only a couple of footsteps away from the hollow we'd lunched in and were using as 'basecamp' when I was stopped in my tracks. There was a lime white butterfly down on the deck 'basking' wings open wide. Only it wasn't a white it was a female Brimstone. As I looked more carefully the male with closed wings moved and so 'appeared' in view. Over the next few moments I clicked away as the male pestered and hassled, cajoled and pleaded to no avail. He would walk around her, over her and then take to the air and fly at her before settling down. After a bit of a breather he'd then repeat the whole performance; more walking over her, more dive bombing and what also looked like some plain old plaintive begging. All the while the female lay on the ground, resolute, abdomen arched up. Eventually he finally got it and understood that "No means no" and he quit to try out his lines/moves on another chick. The female remained for 20 more seconds or so, possibly checking that the male was really gone before she too flew off to carry on with her business.





After checking in with everyone I set off along the Dyke to the half way point. The sun was becoming more and more intermittent so my walk would be punctuated with brief flurries of butterfly activity as the sun came out. By the time I'd reached the half way point I'd notched up a Grizzlie, Dingy, Orange-tip and a Peacock and once there I checked to no avail for Small Blues and Greenstreaks. As the sun was finally swallowed by the cloud and so I settled for two Grizzlies, one of which was so small I thought at first it was some sort of mint moth as it flew across from grass head to grass head.



With the sun gone for the foreseeable future I made my way back to the Butts and basecamp, the calls of "Wurzel" carried on the wind hurrying me homewards.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 15-Jun-19 06:39 AM GMT

Great shots of a female Brimstone rejecting male advances.
Saw this for myself while searching for Wood Whites.
A great opportunity to 'grab' a few upper side shots.
Unfortunately mine, like yours, were not in pristine condition.

Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 15-Jun-19 02:22 PM GMT

This is the only time of year when you are likely to see Brimstones like that (which annoyingly means they'll never be very fresh) and for some reason

Martin Down is the place to see them. The species was everywhere when I visited about a week later and I saw several examples of spurned courtship. Great shots, Wurzel! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-19 07:55 AM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 The day had been a bit ordinary up until then – it's great when something sets it apart from the usual 'run of the mill' trip 😊
Cheers Dave 😊 You're right about Martin Down being the place to see this – after this first encounter I saw it another couple of times on subsequent visits 😊 Does this mean that Hampshire Brimstones "bain't floozies":wink: 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 16-Jun-19 11:21 AM GMT

Love the Dingy Shots Wurzel, I've never been lucky with my shots of this species, they never seem to stay still for very long 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Jun-19 12:22 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Skippers in general can be difficult little buggers – I've developed a 'dance' step that helps me; one step, click, one step, click etc. I can get a bit carried away and forget about the butterfly sometimes though 😊 and end up waltzing all the way back to the car park 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 17-Jun-19 03:01 PM GMT

Just seen your Brimstone sequence Wurzel. Stunning! I don't think I've ever seen it captured like that with such clarity and detail. Love it!

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 17-Jun-19 06:18 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, you've cheered me up no end 😊 I can visualise you dancing 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by ernie f, 18-Jun-19 10:04 AM GMT

Cricky Wurzel, what a stroke of luck coming across those Brimstones. You sure captured the moment as it were. I can't believe how clear the upper wings of the male are.

Re: Wurzel

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

Cheers Pauline 😊 I think it was a case of "good things coming..." as I'd been waiting and hoping to see this behaviour for a number of years now 😊
Cheers Goldie 😊 Glad to be of service 😊😊😊
Cheers Ernie 😊 It was the first time I'd encountered the behaviour but since then I've seen it a couple of times 😊😊 I was a bit surprised that the wings came out in focus as I was shooting in macro and he was moving about a fair bit 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-19 01:29 PM GMT

Martin Down Part 1 06-05-2019

My fantastic Bank Holiday continued. We were due to visit friends after lunch so I had the morning clear. What with not checking the weather app I

decided to risk it and head out even though it was a Bank Holiday Monday and therefore tradition dictates that the weather should be lousy. To counteract this I set the iPod to as loud as it could manage and then cranked the speakers up with my album of the moment – Iron Maiden Killers. I reckoned that if I played it loud enough it would scare the clouds away and it seemed to do the trick as when I pulled up at the Sillen's Lane end the sun was shining amid blue skies.

Eagerly I set off along the path making for the 'Tunnel' in order to hopefully get onto a few more Greenstreaks. It was very quiet butterfly wise, still quite early in the morning and even though the sun was shining the temperature was such that I was only just warm enough in my t-shirt. I carried on along the hedge and finally when I was about half way along I saw my first butterfly, a grounded Small White. As I watched it started to open its wings and realizing that it would soon be off I got a few shots while I still could. As expected once it was sufficiently warmed it was off like a rocket, flying up and down the hedge ceaselessly. Cheered that it was now getting warm enough I carried on. With the 'Tunnel' in sight I looked back along the hedge and a blue flash caught my eyes. I got in a little closer and could see that it was a female Holly Blue. I dared to get in a bit closer and it didn't fly away, so I risked a few more steps and eventually it opened up nicely (mind you this did take a fair bit of whispering...). I turned to start back to the hedge and there was another blue glint. I couldn't believe my luck as there was another Holly Blue, this time a male. Again I approached cautiously, again whispering away a la Millerd and again it opened up giving me my best ever topside male shots.



Mightily chuffed I carried on towards the Tunnel with a Greenstreak, Small Copper and Small White all vying for my attention and I'm sorry to say they

all got ignored as I was still shocked to have had such luck with the Holly Blues. As I entered the Tunnel I shock myself mentally and got back on track to find some more butterflies. A couple of Greenstreaks held the territory at the end of Tunnel and they distracted me for a bit but then I spied another Holly Blue, a different male and this one was even more accessible and accommodating! Slightly further on and another couple of Greenstreaks caught my attention with their belligerent antics and their bold markings, one had such bright streaks that they were visible in flight. Then there was another Holly Blue, a different female, again very accommodating. It seems that I've been going after Holly Blues all wrong. Instead of hoping that they'll turn up and I'll get a picture I should have been out nice and early in the morning when they sit and pose for all they're worth. As if to prove my point by the end of the tunnel as well a couple of Specklies and a few male OTs I saw another three Holly Blues a male and female down low and basking and a third right at the far end that took off from down low when disturbed by a male OT. Brilliant!







Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 20-Jun-19 07:18 PM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Wurzel, still none here at present in spite of two reasonable days, it's been exasperating 😞 I keep going out in the garden with, first my lunch, then an Ice cream 😊 If nothing else I'm enjoying the food 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by kevlng, 20-Jun-19 08:03 PM GMT

Lovely photos of the Green Hairstreaks and Holly Blues. The last one looks like it's been in a fight, but is soldiering on. Nice Orange Tip too. For the second year running I have failed to nail such a photograph, which is a shame as they are my favourite. Looking at yours makes up for it.

Regards
Kev

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 21-Jun-19 06:04 AM GMT

Well done with that open wing male Holly Blue.
When fresh their shade of blue is really beautiful.

Hope those brownie points are stacking up, you're going to need them in a week or so!

To the Woods!
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Jun-19 08:59 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Sound pretty idyllic a few butterflies would be like the Sprinkles on top 😊

Cheers Kev 😊 Glad to be of service 😊 The OTs are one of those butterflies where I seem to have good years (they're around by the bucket load) and others when they're a real struggle – luckily for me this has been a vintage year 😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I was dead chuffed with those shots as I've been looking at others enviously for a good while now – yours included 🤩😊 I was going really well with the Brownie points until I had to cash some in today for Large Blues – but hopefully a trip out tomorrow and to Ikea in the near future (🤔😊😊) will get me back in the black in time for His Nibbs – alternatively I could go overdrawn and offer to pay back on the never-never 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 22-Jun-19 11:15 PM GMT

If you get dragged around Ikea for a couple of hours, and importantly, show some enthusiasam, you should earn enough points for a trip to see his Majesty.

I can still remember some of the tricks I used.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Jun-19 11:33 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I've found it a good idea to engage 'autopilot' and be very non-committal – it means I can just about get round without losing too much of my will to live 😊😊 Seriously if I was of a religious bent I'd swear that a particularly vicious demon had designed the Ikea layout 🤩

Martin Down Part 2 06-05-2019

Instead of following the path round the edge of the Hillfort and ending up at the Hotspot I took the other path straight across the reserve which ended up at the half way point. As I walked I looked to my right and remembered the field – this was where the Stone Curlews used breed but sadly they've found new sites now. I was brought out of my somewhat downbeat nostalgia by a gaggle of Small Coppers, four individuals in total. First there was one, then a different individual (blue badger) and finally two having a scrap which I wasn't about to get any photos of because they were far too busy beating seven shades out of each other. At the end of the path a Grizzlie stood guard and then I started up the little track at the half way point.

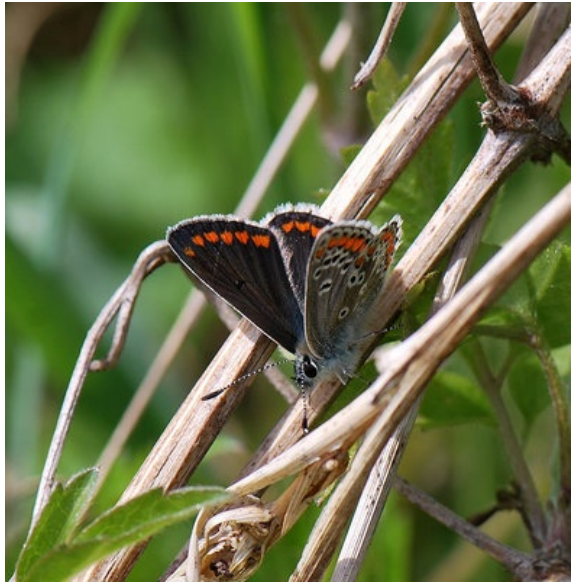




This little stand of Hawthorn and other shrubs offers the butterflies a little respite on days when the wind cuts across the grasslands. There was no worries on that front today though but there were still 3 butterflies in this little bit of land. Two were Grizzlies one of which was ridiculously small and the third was a Greenstreak occupying almost the exact same perch as one I'd seen the year before, right on the end of the treeline.



After this I set to walking the Dyke. I found my first Brown Argus of the year, saw a few Small Heath, a couple of Coppers and a couple of Peacocks but the real stars were the skippers. The bottom of the Dyke was crawling with them and by the time I'd reached the hotspot I'd actively recorded 8 Dingies and 11 Grizzlies but there were so many more; the ones I recorded were only the ones that I found down on the deck - if a little blur shot off in front of me I didn't note it down in case I misidentified it. It was fantastic. At one point there were three Dingies down quite close to each other and they put on a fashion parade showing the various shades and hues that the Dinky comes in from dark. Rich brown right through to a pale, almost creamy colour. Also here, down in the Dyke and in amongst the flying OTs, Small Whites and Brimstones I saw an unusual piece of behaviour. A Brimstone almost dropped from the sky as a small cloud briefly covered the sun. I cautiously approached it and it stayed down amid the grass showing no sign of movement. Reaching down my hand it stayed still even when I lifted it gently up cupped in the cradle of my fingers. It remained motionless the whole time and I wondered if it was dead? I laced it carefully back where I'd lifted it from and stood back. The sun had come back out and after a few minutes it suddenly took off again and was gone. Was it playing dead or had the momentary chill rendered it stupefied?





Eventually I climbed out of the bottom of the Dyke and I found myself at the hotspot. A Grizzlie skipped ahead of me as I made my way from the hollow to the scrape and a Dingy danced around me before a female Brimstone did a fly-by. As I worked my way back a larger butterfly took off from the ground. Something about its colour and its flight seemed vaguely familiar. I don't know if it's just me but I find that as the autumn progresses I forget or rather pack away knowledge about behaviour, flight styles etc. until the next season. Well something about this butterfly had me internally sprinting to the vaults and searching through the vaults of my memory - I found the file and realised that the butterfly was a Marsh Fritillary. I did two things at once - whilst keeping my eye on it I raised my arm up and took a quick look at my watch; 10:27am. I checked the time as I couldn't recall seeing reports about Marshies this season so this could have been the first. The butterfly landed and I got a few shots before calling it out to a few other enthusiasts that were at the hotspot. We took it in turns to get some photos before leaving it to its own devices.





Exceedingly chuffed I headed back to the car. There were plenty of butterflies on the return journey – mainly Grizzlies and Dingies although most of the species that I'd seen over the course of the morning put in an appearance. However the vivid colours of the Marshie were burnt onto my retina and everything after seemed pale by comparison. What a beauty!
Have a goodun

Wurzel

p.s I recorded my sighting on the Hampshire Branch site and also on the Sightings Page of UKB. However the first official record came from Wiltshire on the same day although I don't know at what time...

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-19 11:36 PM GMT

Work 10-05-2019

It had been a few days since my last outing – things were there usual hectic best but come Friday I was ready to get back out there and see what there was to see. The Pits were still quiet – when the Golden Skippers finally arrive this will possibly be as far as I get on my lunch time ventures but not so today as there wasn't a single butterfly up too and beyond this point. At the far end of the field I nipped off along the footpath and made my way quickly down the hill. At the first little open bit of hedge I surprised two Small Torts but both bombed away from me; one to the left and the other to the right into the adjacent fields. I made a mental note to tread more cautiously at this point on the way back. Carrying on down there was nothing, nada until almost at the very end. Here again there is a break into the surrounding fields used by the farmers in their tractors and here again there was a Small Tort. It went up from the nettles on one side of the path and flew strongly out and across the fields. I wasn't having much luck but pressed on to the end and then turned round and started the journey back...

I don't know whether it was because I was 'pre-warned' of the presence of butterflies or the fact that as I was heading up hill I was going more slowly but I managed to get a few shots of a/the Small Tort at the first break. It was hiding away amongst the nettles on the other side of the track this time and seemed to be struggling slightly as the cloud had covered the sun and the temperature had dropped somewhat. I reckon my initial summation was correct as it opened up its wings to try and capture more heat.



After this I carried on and again I didn't see a single butterfly until I reached the initial break where I'd seen the two Small Torts. Again there were two and again I managed to get a few shots. The first was down on the path and the second was slightly further ahead. I was now in a bit of a quandary as the Small Tort that was further away was beautifully positioned and delicately poised on a Dandelion Clock. It was one of those types of shots that I long to capture but I didn't want to force the issue of the primary Small Tort bugging off out of the way. In the end the sun helped out by creeping out from behind the cloud. This warmed the first Small Tort up enough for it to take off and bomb away over the fields. I still had a fair bit of effort to get the shot I wanted though as I needed to move quickly enough so as to reach the butterfly before it warmed up too much and disappeared yet cautiously enough that I didn't spook it. Somehow I managed to strike the correct balance and using the old 'click-step' routine I got some shots.





With the final flourish from the sun the butterfly took off and then the sun did me another favour as it again went behind the cloud and the butterfly dropped down onto another Dandelion Clock. Brilliant!

Mightily chuffed I made my way back to work pausing briefly to watch a Holly Blue do a fly-by.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 24-Jun-19 06:04 AM GMT

You saw TWO Small Tortoiseshells in one sitting, and that's my total for the year so far in the wider area around here. One at High an Over and one in Brighton. The usual emerging hibernators were seen at Halnaker in the spring, and that's it. Fortunately I usually see a few when I visit Wiltshire in the summer.

Trevor.

PS. That's a lovely early Marshie.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-19 11:15 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I've been trying to start up another collection 'On Dandelion Clocks' for a while now but only had two species (Brown Argus and Glanville) which a collection does not make. However I reckon with three I could maybe get it started 😊😊 I was chuffed with the Marshie, fingers crossed that BC check the timings and it can get bumped up to first 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by ernie f, 25-Jun-19 08:11 AM GMT

Wurzel – lots of great pics as usual – dandelion clocks, that's a new one on me! 😊

But the pic that amazed me the most was of your Holly Blue with deep gouges out of both forewings. It almost didn't look like a butterfly at all. Its amazing how it still managed to fly.

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 25-Jun-19 01:39 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel

Pleased to see your cracking picture of the Small Tortoiseshell on a dandelion clock 😊 I've seen this myself but only with Orange-tip both which are photographed. It's a shame because one of those was taken at Sidbury not too long after we'd split. Keeping the brownie points bank well stocked can come at a price 😊😊

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 25-Jun-19 08:27 PM GMT

You got some good Holly Blue shots there, Wurzel – speaking as a connoisseur you understand... 😊 And the selection from Martin Down just underlines what a terrific place this is. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 25-Jun-19 09:13 PM GMT

Grizzled Skippers, Dingy Skippers, Brimstones, Holly Blues, Brown Argus and Marsh Fritillaries. So many exotic butterflies that we don't get up here! 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-19 02:32 PM GMT

Cheers Ernie 😊 I do have a few collections going (stained glass, in cop, close up, on Orchids, on s&t etc) so I may as well start another 😊😊 I know what you mean about that Holly Blue – I didn't take it for a butterfly when I saw it first either – it was the symmetry that dazzled me – it must have been pecked when it had it's wings closed 😊

Cheers Philzoid 😊 My Brownie point situation is a bit like my wages, looking good for a bout a minute and then when i check again – gone! 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-19 10:50 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I'm chuffed I got 'the nod' from the Holly Blue Maestro 😊 Martin Down does offer a cracking range of butterflies 😊

Cheers Nick 😊 I think that about Scotch Argus, NBA, Large Heath, Chequered Skipper, Mountain Ringlet 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 28-Jun-19 11:26 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, I'm missing all the main Butterflies this year so it's great to see your shots, the Chequered Skipper was on the news this morning seems they're doing well for their first year in England Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-19 11:47 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Fingers crossed they do well – Nottingham is a bit closer than Scotland 😊😊

Martin Down 11-05-2019

I'd done all the jobs and the girls were taking themselves off swimming so I had a few hours free...

"So Oracle what do you reckon to Common Blue, Small Blue and Adonis Blue?"

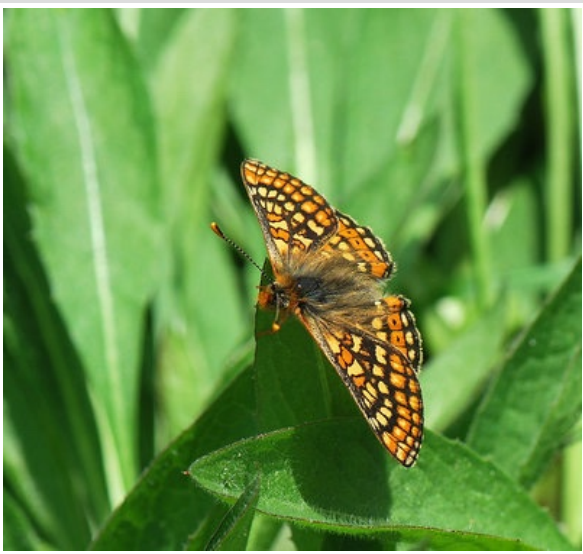
"Definitely"

So with this prediction ringing in my ears (or was that Maiden – Killers full blast?) I set off Martin Down bound. Having found the Marshies or rather a single Marshie on the wing a week previously I thought that it would be a good idea to start at the main car park and work along the Dyke. However I was ruing the decision to come after lunch as all the butterflies that I saw over the first 20 minutes or so were extremely hyper in the sun and climbing temperatures. I'd worked my way round the massive island of scrub that almost entirely encircles the car park and I'd seen Greenstreak, a couple of

Small Coppers, Dingies and Grizzlies as well as the odd Brimstone and a single Small Tort but only one of the Small Coppers had sat still long enough for a few shots, and even then it was constantly moving and pirouetting around on a flower head. In the little alcove on the other side of the main track there was also a Peacock and a Holly Blue as well as the Skippers buzzing around frenetically but still nothing would stop. I was extremely frustrating and so cursing under my breath I set off resolutely back the way I'd come and then dove down and back up the hollow to the start of the Dyke. On the way a butterfly or two started to play ball - perhaps the shelter from the breeze was calming them? It was the first of my targets - a male Common Blue. On the other side of the hollow a gluttonous Small Copper was so busy feeding that I was able to add a few shots of it as well.



Now I calmed myself and climbed down into the Dyke feeling the temperature rise as the wind dropped with each step down. This first little section is blocked off at either end as a path crosses from one side of the Dyke to the other at the same height as the banks and so I dropped my bag in the centre and strolled up and down to see what was holding territory here. A Grizzlie popped up, then a Dingy became apparent when it went for the Grizzlie. This set off a Small Copper and a passing Common Blue got involved in the fray, dragged into it by the belligerent Small Copper which seemed to be holding a territory on a small patch of ground right in the centre of this little part. Then something bigger took off from amid the grasses and half flew and half glided to the end the depression. It was a Marshie and I soon encountered a second as I tried to follow and lost the first. At the other end I watched the second Marshie get hassled by a second Small Copper. It was turning into a marvellous afternoon and I spent some time here adding a Small Heath to the list and also watching a Red Admiral laying on the bankside.



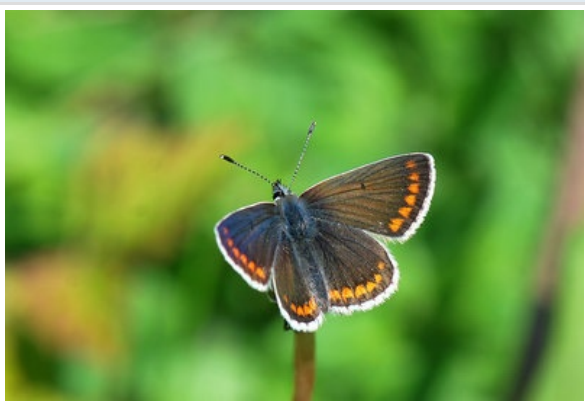


Eventually I climbed out of this microcosm; this Dyke in miniature and set off towards the Butts where the Dyke gets going properly again. On the way I saw a Peacock, more Marshies, another Common Blue, plenty of skippers but the thing that stood out here was another failed Brimstone courtship. This time the female was low in the longer grass so most of my shots have an errant stem featuring in them but I was still please with the results none the less because she was positioned vertically and an approach from the side meant that the length of her thorax and abdomen were exposed and in frame so I was able to get a totally different view from one that I'd had before. It made the butterfly look like a teddy bear with wings.





At the Butts I got back down into the Dyke again and set off once again noting rally good numbers of both Dingy and Grizzlie Skippers. The Small Coppers seem to be having a great year and I saw a further couple in this part of the Dyke. I also found a Brown Argus that posed nicely on a solitary flower head giving it the look of floating in mid-air.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 30-Jun-19 12:04 AM GMT

Great to see the early Marsh Fritillaries from Martin Down, Wurzel 😊 a site I've yet to visit 🤔

Mike

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Jun-19 10:54 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 If you can get there you really need to as it always has something to offer 😊

size=150Martin Down 11-05-2019 Part 2
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I spent a bit of time at the half way point when I got there as roosting, wings tightly shut was an Adonis Blue. At the other end there were the usual couple of Greenstreaks and Grizzlies and the odd Dingy flew by occasionally disturbing the Adonis although it would always land and quickly close its wings. Despite searching I couldn't find any Small Blues here which was surprising as they really like the little tussocky area on the corner where the Dyke crosses the path which leads up the hill and into Dorset. I had a little wander up this way today and encountered a Speckle and then a Small White which flew towards me and dislodged a hither too unseen male Orange-tip. As these two started zipping forward and backward I looked down to my right and there was a Green-veined White and it took off and joined the Fight Club. Chuckling at this misplaced display of machismo I worked back down the path into Hampshire and carried on checking out the Half-way point. Finally the Adonis opened up, not fully but enough to get a view of the stunning electric blue.







Time was pressing and so I rejoined the Dyke but not before spending a few moments with a pair of Adonis in cop. Once in the Dyke I started to lose track of the butterflies and so counting became almost impossible. There was definitely a Peacock down there with me but whether there were more I can't be sure – it could well have been just one or two that kept flying ahead of me, landing and then going up when I next approached; a pattern that played out until I'd reached the 'turn round ' point at the Hotspot! I also found plenty of Skipper of both early spring varieties far too numerous to count they were by far the most numerous species on the day. Marshies put in regular appearances, their size and colour making them stand out from the much smaller butterflies that I was getting accustomed to seeing. I saw the occasional Small Copper and a couple more Brown Argus as well but it was when I was about half way along this final stretch that I finally got my third Year Tick of the day – a Small Blue flew up before me, turned around and flew at me before landing just long enough for me to point my camera and click once before it was gone. Unfortunately it had landed on the flimsiest of platforms and the ever so slight breeze (more a breath of wind) meant that my one shot was nowhere near focused enough for my liking.





Once at the Hotspot I checked the time and staying away from the distractions of the Dyke I took to my heels and walked extremely quickly back via the main path as I was seriously in danger of being late...It was a close call but I managed to get back with minutes to spare – phew! All hail the wonder prophetic skills of the Oracle!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 01-Jul-19 04:32 PM GMT

Great shots Wurzel, I love the Adonis shot, ages since I saw Marshie's , won't be long off your Hol's now, school should be breaking up soon. Hope fully I'll be off again soon to Kent 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by kevlng, 01-Jul-19 08:53 PM GMT

Wurzel,

Nice photos of the Brimstone courtship. It's always nice to see some different behaviour. Nice Marshies too, but the prize goes to the Brown Argus on the flower head, perfect shot.

Regards
Kev

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 01-Jul-19 09:47 PM GMT

It's your Green Hairstreak that stands out for me.
Very fresh and a lovely turquoise almost malachite shade of green.

Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-19 11:07 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Unfortunately most of the butterfly action has passed by the time the holidays start – but I'm off to Portugal so fingers crossed I find a few Portugese species 😊😊

Cheers Kev 😊 I was pleased with capturing that – mind you it was a bit like buses – I'd never witnessed it before and then saw three couples in succession 😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 They do show a fair amount of variation in their colour as well as their spots don't they Trevor? 😊😊

July 2019

The silly season has started 😊 Happy July!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-19 11:13 PM GMT

[size=150]Bentley Wood 12-05-2019
[/size]

As I drove down the track I turned Maiden down and peered through the window and the bushes and I was able to make out a small group of people already in the Eastern Clearing. So it seems that I wasn't making an early a start as some, still they seemed to be peering intently at the ground so the Pearls were still flying. Once I'd parked, loaded up and made my way into the Clearing I found a svelte looking Dave in among the group and amid the chatting we set about looking or Pearls and seeing some that were so surprisingly fresh that they could have been mistaken at times for Small Pearls (which they weren't). They were surprisingly hard work, rarely settling and also they seemed to have realised that the fencing across sections of the Clearing is obviously to contain butterflies and so whenever possible they'd fly along the fence and then nip through it. This would mean anyone following had a choice to make; either walk all the way to the gap in the fence and then walk all the way back to where the butterfly was (by which time the butterfly would have dove back through to the original side) OR give it up and try their luck with the a different individual.

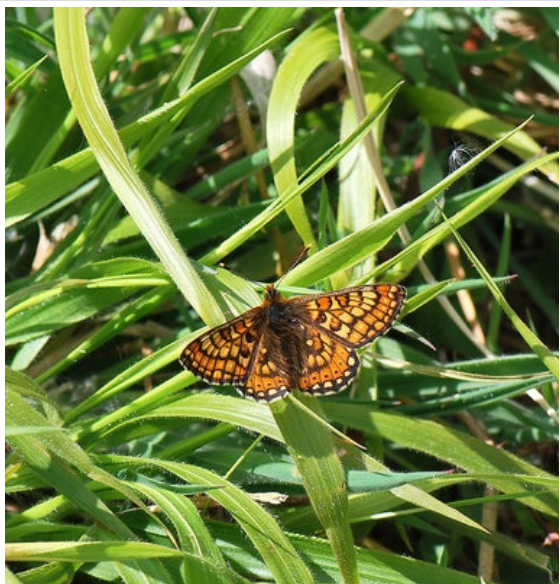




As we continue with the mix of chat and photography another butterfly arrives who turned out to be Chris who I know from Instagram. We set too looking for Pearls - a Grizzlie turns up in the very centre of the clearing and then we work back towards the triangle near the notice boards. This is a good little spot as there seems to be plenty of Violet around here as well as some Bugle, the little trackways which run all over this area mean that trampling of habitat isn't a concern and the Pearls are really starting to motor about now but the aforementioned distractions slow them down enough for some photos. This is good news and we get to see some females looking more straw coloured than the ginger males although the distractions aren't enough to allow shots of a passing male Orange-tip. It's soon gets warm enough for the Brimstones to fly and the odd Specklie appears to add a different tone to the butterflies.



All too soon the morning has almost gone and Dave decided to head off for Martin Down. As we stroll back towards the car park (him to head off, me to top up on caffeine) we cut through the 'new field' at the top of the Clearing. The relatively recent clearing has left it covered in the tussocky grass and it looks like a good spot for Marshies which I know are about somewhere here. Half way across the field I spot a Marshie. I manage a couple of record shots before it's gone not to be seen again despite quartering the entire field a couple of times. It just vanished! Still Dave has the prospect of filling his boots with Marshies at Martin Down and in a week or so the Hill will be up and running so with these consoling thoughts we carried on back to the car park.



After I'd had my caffeine fix I strolled back down through the small field without re-finding the Marshie and find a couple of people starrng at the bank of the ditch near the triangular spot instead. I cautiously approached and there was an Argent and Sable basking on the side of the bank as the sun had gone in. I waited until it was apparent that everyone had gotten their shots and then asked if it was oaky to try with my 105mm as I'd need to get in closer and I didn't want to spook it. One gent (JP) told me to go on ahead and after several reassurances I stepped in and got my shots. The moth didn't move and so I carried on down into the main middle section of the Clearing.



A Marshie on a stick had been found by some others and they'd had their fill so I returned the earlier compliment and let JP in on it first. I got a few shots of it tightly closed up and I wondered if it was the same one that I'd seen momentarily earlier? The sun came out and it started opening up revealing that in fact it was a different individual. As it took off another two crawled out of the woodwork into the sun and there were three jostling around in this little area relishing the purple moor grass and rushes. I realise I need to head for home and as I leave a Holly Blue flies by and I find my first Bentley Wood Small Copper.





I strolled back to the car park round the back paths taking the long way back but things are really warmed up by now and almost too flighty for

photography. Still it was good to see so many Pearls – if the Small Pearls can hang on here as well then this bodes well. Fingers crossed... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 04-Jul-19 06:02 AM GMT

Great Pearls and Marshies, Wurzel.
The Markings on the Marsh Fritillary are so varied that its a job to sort out normal from ab.
Off to Wilts. today after Chiddingfold. Imogen's birthday, she's taking my wallet for an airing.

Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by ernie f, 04-Jul-19 07:26 AM GMT

Great bunch of photos as usual, Wurzel. Loving the Marshies and the Argent and Sable is one I have not yet managed to get.

Re Marsh Frits. I have just heard that their re-introduction to a site in East Hants near Farnborough has been successful. I may well pay it a visit next year. Its a bit closer to me than Bentley Wood (and Martin Down for that matter).

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 04-Jul-19 05:04 PM GMT

Lovely photos Wurzel, 🍷🍷 hope your lucky in Portugal, I'll look forward to seeing your shots 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-19 09:05 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I think they mis-named the Marshie – it should have been the Variable Fritillary 🤪😂 Stash some of your cash under the mattress and not in the wallet 😊

Cheers 😊 I wish someone would –reintroduce Small Pearls near to me so I had a back up site 😊😂 Or failing that maybe some Black Hairstreaks 😊😂

Cheers 😊 Only 23 days to go now Goldie 😊😂 Really looking forward to it but there's one or two things still to catch up on in the UK before I go 😊😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-19 10:44 PM GMT

The Devenish 18-05-2019

I'd taken a sneak peek at the weather for the weekend (I know that I shouldn't have but I gave in) as I was planning to make the annual pilgrimage to the Hill. Due to this I chose to head there tomorrow as today was supposed to be dull, cloudy and wet. Imagine my surprise when the temperature rose, the wind dropped and the sun broke through the clouds. This set off the 'itch' that is a common affliction to most butterflies and one which I surrender to from the months of April to August. I comes from having the mindset that: "right time of year + reasonable weather = butterflies, therefore get out there and find them". Despite my best efforts at distracting myself with chores and errands by the early afternoon I couldn't take it anymore and so instead of pacing the house like a caged animal I grabbed camera and kids and made for the Devenish.

We were the only people at the reserve and so were treated to a melodious cacophony of birdsong as we strolled up the little track from the car park. Little L was chuffed with her gate climbing prowess so at least she was enjoying the visit. Myself less so as we were through the Paddock, across the Orchid Meadow (very grazed) and half way up the steep side of the Down before we saw anything butterfly-wise; a fast moving Dingy shot across the path. It was briefly joined by a second flying in the opposite direction when we were slightly higher up the hill. The girls set up camp and I mooched along the little trails that criss-crossed the Down managing to pick up a second Grizzlie.

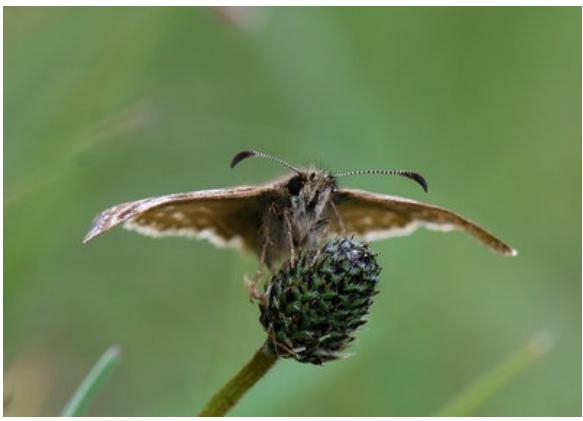


It was hard going and three butterflies across the expanse of the reserve was very meagre pickings as normally I can notch up 3 or 4 just in the car park. So slightly dejectedly I carried on across the Down, up the little gully and around and back along the top of the Down. As I neared the girls something went up a few footsteps away. It was a lovely Small Copper.



After a brief check-in with the girls – enraptured with a game of Irish Snap – I walked back across the Down finding a Brown Argus that looked fresh out of the box and either finding a new or relocating the original Dingy and Grizzlie. The sun was starting to feel much warmer now so we carefully picked out way back down the steep hill finishing in a run at the bottom as we'd gained momentum. The girls sat down by the stile-come-gate and I walked to the far end of the Orchard Meadow. The grasses had been well and truly chomped so much so that in haircut terms it was a grade 1 but hopefully this shouldn't affect the Large Skippers?





A Small White led me back to the girls and then they joined me to check out this part of the field. We managed to find another Brown Argus and three different Grizzlies which I named Past, Present and Future based upon the state of their livery. The girls wanted to get back so I only had a brief dalliance in the Paddocks but added Brimstone and a fresh Specklie to the tally as well as another fantastic looking Small Copper. A lovely afternoon out despite the dire forecast. I drove us home itchy well and truly scratched...well for today at least...



Future



Past



Present



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 06-Jul-19 01:44 PM GMT

Lovely shots again Wurzel 🍷🍷 You just described the way I feel with this boot on, Caged 😞 Can't walk too far , raring to go, can't drive, patience I'm afraid not one of my virtues 😞😞 Any way this Summer won't be a right off if I can get to Kent again. 😊 Enjoy your holiday! Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Jul-19 06:00 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was like it again this weekend as I believed a Beeb weather report and rearranged my plans only for them to totally change their reports round 😞😞 So instead of enjoying Bentley Wood I was stuck in Ikea 😞😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 08-Jul-19 10:49 AM GMT

Great report Wurzel. That hill could do with a chair-lift mind. (bloody steep!) 🤖

There seems to be a lot of grade 1 haircut fields around these days. I cannot remember the last time I saw Stockbridge down as a meadow in full bloom with insects galore. Meanwhile in my area Dawneys heath is overgrown with Gorse. It could do with a grade 1, ideally by cutting it out and not just scraping over the topsoil which was done a couple of years ago and has contributed to the problem I think 😞.

Love the face on Dingy shot with his droopy antennae 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-19 08:55 PM GMT

Cheers Philzoid 😊 It is a good gradient - L has asked about rolling down it before 🤖 I asked her if she liked having limbs... 😊😊😊 I too like the Dingy face shot - it looks like he's a right miserable old codge, which is increasingly how I feel nowadays too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by kevlng, 08-Jul-19 09:04 PM GMT

Wurzel, Loving those Pearls at Bentley Wood, they look amazing as do the Marshies. I like how your diary runs a few weeks behind. Whilst everyone is posting Emperors, Purple Hairstreaks and Admirals, it's nice to be taken back to spring.

Regards
Kev

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-19 11:09 PM GMT

Cheers Kev 😊 I try to keep up each year but as work gets busier I start falling behind 😊 ...if only I was able to retire early - I would next week 😊

Cotley Hill 19-05-2019

This was one of those trips that almost didn't happen. The weather report had been steadily getting worse as the week progressed but in the end it was all set although an early start would be necessary. Come the morning I could see that it might be a case of cloud racing and so I set off with the intention of getting there for just after 9.

The sun was still shining when I got there and so I almost ran up the track busting forth into the little depression area where I took a moment to get my breath back and readjust my eyes from 'road' to 'butterfly' mode. Boom! There was a Grizzle and so I set off along the depression. A possible Wall bombed by followed by a much smaller golden blur which reminded me of a Large Skipper. After this it was business as usual with Greenstreaks, Dingies a Brown Argus and another Grizzlie. I was surprised though that there were no Marshies to greet me so I climbed out of the depression and worked my way round to the amphitheatre. Things picked up slightly and in amongst the species that I'd already seen I added Small Heath, a couple of Marshies and a late/early Small Tort to the tally.



Scanning round I couldn't see Dave who was also going to be on site early so I checked my phone. He was on the other side of the Hill with an aberrant Marshie so I made back the way I'd come and cut through the wood which opened out onto the other side of the down. The first little depression held 5 Marshies, 2 Dingies, a Grizzlie and a Greenstreak all in an airspace of 3m X 2m! It appears that the butterflies had decided this side of the Hill was more appropriate to their needs.



I carried on round and met up with Dave though not with the aberrant. We chatted away with the occasional interruptions of 'little bugger' as our quarry took off. The whole hillside was bedecked with butterflies a lovely mix of electric blues, chocolate and orange and chequerboards. It was a fantastic sight to see. Having caught up with representatives of pretty much all of the species I'd expected to see I must confess to becoming a little blasé about some of the butterflies. So instead of trying to photograph everything I switched to trying for those that presented themselves directly to me or those that stood out from the crowd. In this way I picked up an aberrant male Adonis and two pairs of Marshies courting unsuccessfully.











Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 09-Jul-19 08:56 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, it must have been great to stand in a field full of Butterflies , lovely shots too and to add an ab as well can't be bad 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 09-Jul-19 01:40 PM GMT

Sounds like a lovely day Wurzel. I had a similar visit to an area near me, but with completely different species!

Re: Wurzel

by Old Wolf, 09-Jul-19 02:29 PM GMT

Hello Wurzel.

I am catching up on diaries and have just finished reading yours. What a lovely selection you bagged in Spring. The Fritillaries are especially exciting for me as I haven't seen either a Marshie (a particular beauty - Love the pics) or Pearl Bordered so thanks for giving me plenty to look at.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-19 11:41 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 It wasn't exactly "Forest bathing" but was pretty close 😊😊

Cheers Nick 😊 I'd like to have seen some of those species, I reckon there could have been a couple of lifers in there for me 😊🇬🇧

Cheers Old Wolf 😊 It was a cracking Spring - when it finally got going 😊 If you ever want to get some Marshies then give me a call, I know a few good sites for them 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Jul-19 11:20 AM GMT

Cotley Hill 19-05-2019 Part 2

The highlight of this technique came when an unusual coloured blue took off from a hidden spot amid the grasses. It didn't look right - not electric or lilac blue and its flight was all wrong. I followed it and when it landed I could see that it was actually a pair of Small Blues in cop. After some time with this pair we get back to scouring the hillside mooching about, marvelling at the butterflies and adding more and more Greenstreaks, Brown Argus, Adonis and Marshies to a burgeoning tally. Finally I was able to add Common Blue to the list when two males turned up at the foot of the hill. Also nearby was a pair of Marshies in cop - so it seems like at least one male had struck lucky.







Philzoid called up and so we head round to the usual side of the Hill to meet him. As we enter the depression a (definite) Wall Brown bombs along and something much, much smaller and darker takes off to intercept it. It's a Duke and a really lovely fresh one at that. It's really dark and in mint condition. Luckily for him Philzoid had joined us so all three of us get out shots. While we're celebrating this find a second Duke appears as if from nowhere proving once again what a cracking part of the site this little depression is.







On and round we go towards the Amphitheatre yet when we get there I end up almost back where I started as I try to follow a Wall Brown; determined to get a shot. It would fly at a pace, slow and flutter round sinking lower and closer to the ground looking for all intents as if it is about to land and then it suddenly accelerates away leaving me cursing and trailing in its wake. Muttering many an expletive I re-join the others and we carry on and round the bottom of the Hill looking into all the scrapes and slips although they aren't as productive as in previous years. On the way we encounter another Wall, a Small Tort and a Small Blue all of which stand out amongst the usual fare.





By now it's clouded over and the threat of sunburn has diminished to be replaced by the treat of a soaking so we wander back, still clicking away and chatting. With impeccable timing we arrive back at the cars just as the clouds start to leak. Dave heads off and Philzoid and I share a coffee in the rain reliving a fantastic morning before we head our separate ways. The Hill delivers again!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 10-Jul-19 01:05 PM GMT

What a great day that was, Wurzel. 😊 The annual pilgrimage to the Hill proves itself to be a highlight of the year once again. So far, the weather has played ball every time even if there were the odd few raindrops at the end on this occasion.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 10-Jul-19 07:50 PM GMT

Looks like your day was a good as mine the day before, although I never caught up with those Dukes. From the look of them though, I think they were still wrapped up in their sleeping bags when I was climbing up that slope so you get one 🍷 for that!

Re: Wurzel

by Old Wolf, 10-Jul-19 11:27 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

If you ever want to get some Marshies then give me a call, I know a few good sites for them 😊😄

Thanks for the offer. I have a year to get in my chaffeurs good books to take me on such a long journey for butterflies. I suppose I need to start looking into the closest place to me that they are found. I believe you are quite alot south west of where I am up in Bedfordshire.

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 11-Jul-19 06:47 AM GMT

' The dip ' to the left of the main path, at Cotley, was almost bereft of Marshies on my visits. All the action was on the A36 side of the hill. Your ' blue ' female Adonis looks familiar.

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Philzoid, 11-Jul-19 01:37 PM GMT

Alright wurzel? . I'm a bit late coming to this post but methinks you're catching up with your diary too and leaving *me* trailing in its wake 😊 .
A Cracking day's butterflying with lots of highlights and the big surprise of those two Dukes 🤔 . That makes 5 sites that I now know of where you can see them 😊 .
I don't know if it's my imagination but those two had a sort of 'woodland duke' look about them, definitely darker than the ones I've seen on the grassy slopes of Noar and Butser hills 😊

Phil

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-19 10:59 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 It was a cracking day, one of their rare times when the weather report being wrong worked in our favour 😊 Long may the Hill continue 😊

Cheers Bugboy 😊 It would be nice if they remain a common feature on the site, fingers crossed 😊

Cheers Old Wolf 😊 There are a few sites in Hampshire that might be nearer and I seem to recall there was Chambers Wood as well?? 😊 Next season give em a shout and we can see what we can organise 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 Yep they seem to have moved to pastures new this year but still on the Hill 😊 Perhaps they'll move back next year - it all depends on the grazing regime 😊

Cheers Philzoid 😊 They were much darker than those I saw at Noar Hill and my Duke site 😊 I've been meaning to email but you keep sending me cracking shots of Emperors 🇩🇪 so I feel like I can't reply until I've got some 'answering shots' 😊😊😊

Duke Site 23-05-2019

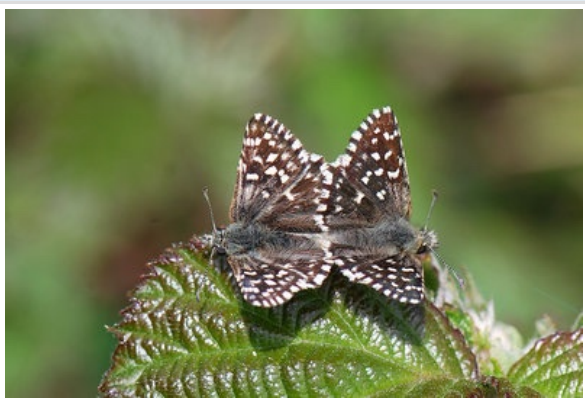
A couple of days previously I'd chipped off a quarter of a molar - one of the fringe 'benefits' of a healthy diet! It meant a couple of days of trying not to chew on one side of my mouth and now it had been drilled and filled and I couldn't talk properly as half my face was numb. If I set off back to work by the time I got back I'd have to turn around and come back home again so instead I found myself dribbling and drooling around my Duke Site (a bit of a hint there 😊).

As I strolled from the car I noted the odd Grizzlie and occasional Common Blue in among the Adonis Blues which made up the majority of the butterflies I was seeing. I carried on criss-crossing the sparsely vegetated slope adding Small heath and a few more Grizzlies to break the 'monotony' of Adonis until I reached the area of longer tussocks. I was hoping to find some Small Blues here and I wasn't disappointed with a total of 5 and a Greenstreak to keep me busy.

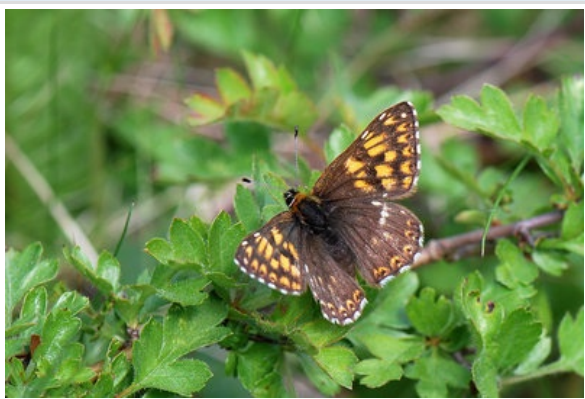


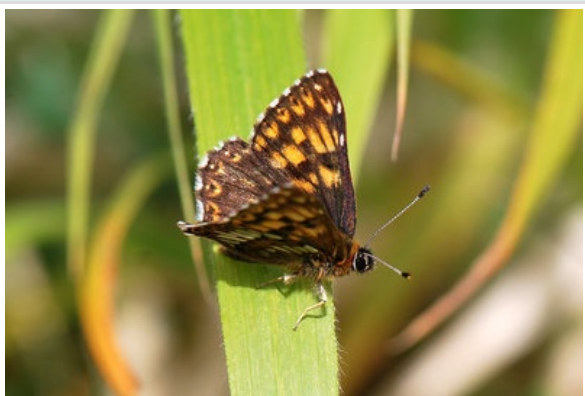


After this I started up the gradual slope of the main trackway accompanied along the way by Brown Argus and Grizzlies and Dingies galore. They would buzz around attractively at the edge of the track attempting to lure me off the path like miniature sirens. I turned right at the top and as I plodded on a Marshie and Common Blue added a bit of colour to the almost uniform beige of the track and green of the grass. A large odd looking butterfly caught my eye as it was so obvious and slightly out of place on a Bramble leaf. As I approached it resolved itself first into an odd looking large Grizzlie and then into a pair in cop.

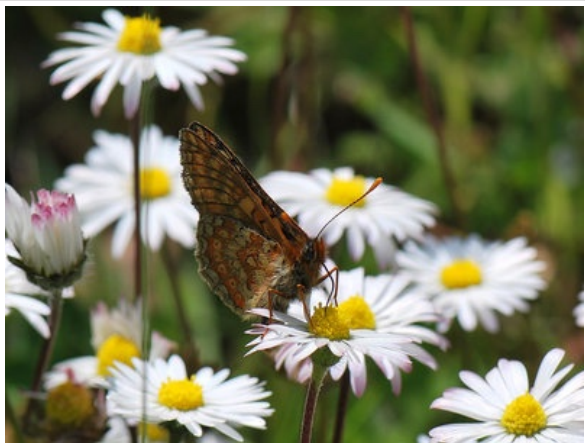


Heartened by this but still 'face dead' so I couldn't smile about it, I carried on up the track and then down to the far corner where the Dukes used to dwell. There were more of the same and then in the far corner a Duke! Brilliant! So my Duke Site can now recall its former name, but I still couldn't smile.





The walk up the Valley and into the base of the rings was reasonably quiet. It felt like Dingies, Grizzlies, Brown Argus and Greenstreaks were the butterflies of the moment as it was these that I mostly saw and no notebook is filled with BA, DS,GS,GH etc. Once in the rings though I started adding more MFs and SHs as both Marshie and Small Heath started appearing more. By the time I'd walked half way round the ring to the North side of the Hillfort I'd found at least 5 more Marshies which isn't too bad. At the far end of my adventure in the ring I stumbled across a pair of Small Coppers before my attention was diverted by a much larger, faster butterfly – a cracking Wall.





On the walk back I'd stop every now and again for a Small Copper, Greenstreak or a Marshie. A pair of Walls flashed past, not stopping and it was these that led me down the stony track rather than back down the Valley when I finally ventured forth from the rings. There was a little crossroads (or rather crosstracks) just beyond the entrance to the rings and I watched on the corner A Wall would fly along the edge of the main track, checking out the start of the little paths that branched off and into the wood before carrying on past me, turning round and then recovering its tracks. I watched it do this several times and so positioned myself on the edge of one of the larger 'branches' ready. It seemed to work as the Wall landed just long enough for a few shots.



It was all going so well – the Wall kept covering the same ground, completing the same circuit – until a second Wall appeared. They spiralled upwards locked in battle and one shot off and down the hill. The other started quartering the same area but now flew straight across the cross-tracks before turning about and starting a new circuit. This meant a change of position was necessary but there was no 'hiding place' and so I could only settle for distant shots when it finally landed.



I was starting to feel my face again by now and there were twinges and throbs starting up so promising myself that I'd return here I made my way back down the hill, past the valley and onwards to the car. A Wall met me half way down, Brown Argus and Common Blues tried to distract me from my course, one pair of blues even starting to copulate as I walked by but seeking Paracetamol I strode home regardless. Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Maximus, 12-Jul-19 11:39 PM GMT

Glad your Duke site can be called that again, Wurzel 😊😄 Grizzlies in cop is not something you see every day, and good to see the Marshies hanging on in there too 😊

Mike.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-19 08:54 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 I was right chuffed and would have been grinning from ear to ear about it – if I could have felt my face that is 😄😄 The Grizzlies also caused similar facial contortions – luckily there wasn't anyone else around as I think I had the slight look of a grinning, maniacal psycho killer 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 14-Jul-19 09:51 PM GMT

Sincere congrats. from me too for those mating Grizzled Skippers, never seen an image of those 'in cop' before. Also your mating Small Blues would be a first for me. Looking forward to your pm Purple Hairstreak shots too.

Try to keep out of Ikea, at least during the butterfly season!. Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by ernie f, 15-Jul-19 06:36 PM GMT

Wurzel – I'm playing catch-up with your PD. Just "copped" your in-cop shots. What can I say? Fantastic – all of them. I have not seen Marshie's or Grizzlie's mating yet. It's about time I gave you a mister green. What the hell – here's one for each of the two species. 🟢🟢

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-19 09:51 AM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I'm doing well with my 'In Cop' collection 😊 I do try and stay away from The-Hell-On-Earth (Ikea) but it does make for an easy way of earning Brownie points, plus their vegan hot dogs aren't too bad 😊 My PH shots won't be a patch on yours Trevor – brilliant open wings they aren't 🟢 Cheers Ernie 😊 The Marshies in cop can be quite easy to obtain but the Grizzlies need a fair bit more luck 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 18-Jul-19 10:04 AM GMT

I'm just catching up too, Wurzel – the rarity of a grey damp morning! The Grizzlie mating couple are terrific – I have seen this a couple of times, and they seem unusual in that they tend to keep their wings open unlike other species. It's great to be transported back to Spring again, the best time of year for certain in my book. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 18-Jul-19 11:40 AM GMT

WoW !Wurzel, you certainly got some great shots, that shot of the Small Heath is a belter, love it 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-19 02:42 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 you're right Dave, they didn't 'shut up shop' once but I'm glad that they didn't as that's how I was able to spot them so easily 😊 Only Chequered left in the Skippers In Cop collection now!

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was very happy with that one as the Browns have been very flighty this year. This one actually sat still and posed for a record breaking 6 seconds 🤪🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-19 07:59 PM GMT

Bentley Wood 25-05-2019

So with the Pearls well under way, the Marshies almost 3 weeks into their flight and Dukes almost over I reckoned that the Small Pearls should surely be out? I checked in with the Oracle who pronounced that indeed I'd be adding another species to the Yearly Tally. A quick check on UKB added a further affirmative. It being Saturday I had a few jobs to do but with them done and dusted I was away; Iron Maiden on and the sun shining...which was a bit of a concern. If the sun carried on shining so then getting underside shots could pose a problem.

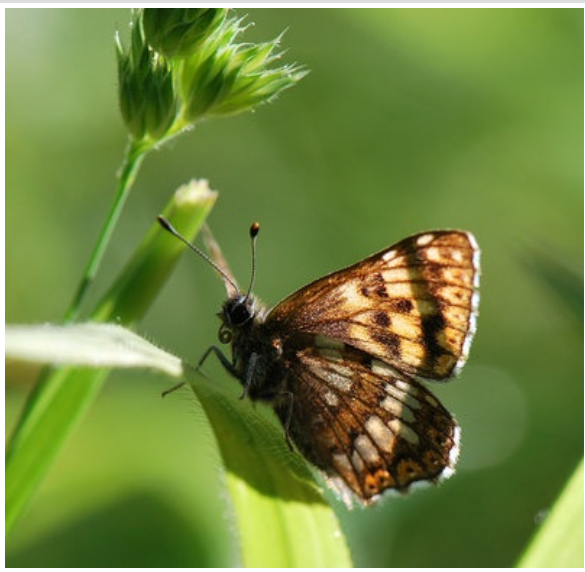
When I made it down into the EC I wandered into the middle of the site and there flying fast was a dark ginger Small Pearl, ace! It was really easy to differentiate between the Small and the Pearls which by now were faded to a pale marmalade colour. They also flew with a slower, less direct flight than the recently emerged Small which was full of vim and vigour searching lustfully for females. After a bit of meandering along the narrow trackways in this middle section I found another small Pearl and before I knew it I was through the break in the stand of trees into the bottom tussocky section.





Once here and ensconced by the surrounding trees I felt strangely calm after the frenetic antics of the butterflies in the main part of the clearing. I dawdled more and listened intently to the Tree Pipits and various warblers singing. In the far corner a tired Duke held a territory. He was still able to flit out and chase off anything that came within eyeshot. This included the occasional Pearl or Brimstone and then a third Small Pearl. This one settled on the Bracken allowing me to get some shots in between watching the Duke.





I then wandered back into the relative chaos of the main part of the clearing. There were more people here by now and so I chatted now and again whilst various butterflies buzzed around us including two Small Coppers – a smaller and more addition to the larger and varying shades of the colour offered by the Pearls and Smalls.





My meandering took me back to the tussocky corner. The Duke was still in place occasionally joined by the Small Pearl and on one foray out from this spot I stumbled cross a Bee Hawk Moth. It was really difficult to photograph as it was constantly on the move, stopping for an in-flight fuelling regularly but only for a second or two at a time. When I did manage to be in the correct orientation various blades of grass were in the way. Due to the difficult nature of the subject though I was still pleased to have gotten anything. I was even more chuffed when checking the images back as there were golden hairs splitting the black band up that made this a Narrow Bordered Bee Hawk Moth, and so a lifer.





Chuffed to bits with this I carried on back to the main clearing but the butterflies were solar charged by now, so pumped full of juice that they seemed to fly ceaselessly. Even the tired Pearls were flying all over the place, this way and that, and when they did land it was generally in a forest of grass. I settled with following a Small Pearl, keeping my distance and then nipping in while it refilled its fuel tanks. After a brief view of the Bee Hawk Moth and a few more conversations I made my homewards knackered but happy!





Have a goodun

Wurzel

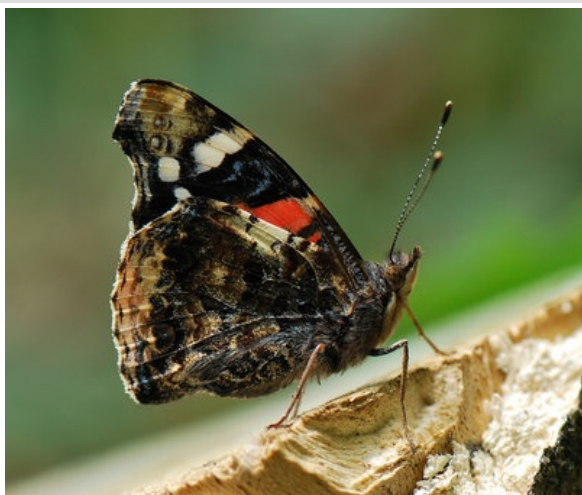
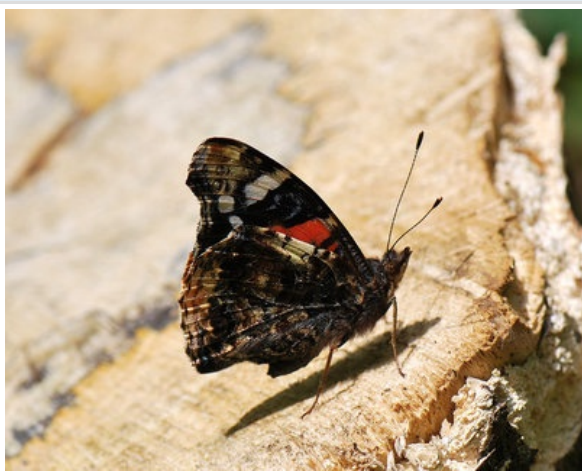
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-19 12:15 PM GMT

Kingston Lacey 27-05-2019

Another reasonable Bank Holiday Monday weather wise? What's going on - is this Climate Change in action - I didn't realise that the largest negative impact was to freak me right out! So to make the most of it and in preparation or K's upcoming Birthday we made a family visit to Kingston Lacey along with my folks.

It being still early here for Common Blues and Meadow Browns I wasn't surprised by the dearth of butterflies. In fact if it wasn't for a cracking Red Admiral that showed itself half way along the Woodland trail I mightn't have even done a report from today. As it was the Red Admiral put on a great show; slowly fluttering about low down on the first growth from recently coppiced/ cut back shrub. It showed well eventually clambering over a cut stock.



This butterfly unfortunately wasn't the first of many. Over in the Kitchen gardens and allotments which have now been decimated a lonely Small White flew through quickly looking for somewhere hospitable. A further 2 Small Whites in the Pacific Garden completed the tally for the day. So it was almost a case of nothing to write home about but butterflying can be like this sometimes; one thing that is always great is spending time with the family. Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 19-Jul-19 03:02 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, I really like the Red Admiral in your shot they always look regal and bossy 😊
On my first visit this time to Blean Woods one landed on me, I think they liked my white jacket 😊 because the White Admiral landed on me in East Blean Woods, Do you think they were saying " Glad to see to you" 😊!!!!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-19 08:25 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Red Admirals are a bit haughty – I've often wondered if they were named Admiral because of their manner as well as their livery? 😊
😊 I reckon that they saw the white jacket and thought that you were a Steward and so were waiting for you to dish out the drinks 😊😊😊 Hope you're knee deep in butterflies by now 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 20-Jul-19 09:18 PM GMT

Great Small Pearl images from Bentley Wurzel. It's good to see they are hanging on in there after the rather poor showing last year, so maybe they'll now recover. When you see them together with the Pearls, you can see how different te two species actually are. A Duke as well – you did have a good day! 😊👍

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Jul-19 07:44 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 Fingers crossed for the re-expansion of the Small Pearls – there were several there this year which was a better showing than on my first visit last year so hopefully the area they cleared a couple of years back will provide the required conditions for them 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jul-19 07:04 PM GMT

Great reports again recently Wurzel with some cracking species but I am really jealous of that Bee Hawk Moth 🐛😊 ...I have yet to see either species in the wild.

Cheers.

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-19 11:31 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 The Bee Hawks seem to be one of those species that you can try for time after time and then when you give up and forget about them "Pop" there they are 😊😊

Duke Site 30-05-2019

So all three of the girls were visiting a friend who happens to live on the route to my Duke site. Would I mind dropping them off and picking them up two hours later? Ex-squeeze me? Baking powder? Well I might be able to fit it in...

So I had just over two hours to get to my Duke Site, have a look round and get back. I was only 20 minutes away according to Sheila my SATNAV so I reckoned that by accelerating to the speed limit as quickly as possible I could shave a few minutes off and then I'd have 1 hr 20, plenty of time for a mooch around my Duke site. However I didn't bank on Mr Slow who insisted on driving at between 5 and 10 mph below the speed limit...When I eventually got onto site I'd lost an extra 10 minutes due to Mr Slow farting about. 😊

Mind you I didn't mind as when I got out of the car there were Common and Adonis Blues everywhere. I strolled across the springy turf they would erupt from my footfalls vertically like little Harrier jets, then the wind would catch them and they were gone from view. I managed to get my eye in so that I could easily make out the males and the almost black butterflies were female Adonis whilst the more Royal Blue or brownly coloured were female Commons. Then there were the grey little blurs (Grizzlie), orange flappy things (Small Heath) and silver bullets (Brown Argus). The most obvious though were the miniscule slate coloured ones that were located at the bottom of the springy turf slope in among the tussocky grass (Small Blue). After spending a while just watching and breathing it all in I set about trying for a few shots. I managed somehow to find a couple of unusual looking Blues amid the multitudes. The first was a female Adonis which only had the faintest of white spots on the underside and the other was a strikingly marked

Brown Argus (no cell spot).







After spending a while here I set off across the site towards the Cypresses. On the way there were more Blues and butterflies pretty much crawling over all of the site. Anywhere there was a showing of yellow flowers there were butterflies and 5/6 spot Burnett Moths. It was a joyous sight to behold. A little further along the main track a couple of Small Coppers played in the long grasses near Copper Corner and I located a Brown Argus with white rings around the disc spot. A Marsh Fritillary, still looking reasonable flew across the path and enticed me to follow it. It added a little bit of variation to the Lycaenid fest! Things did get back to normal though with a faded, two tone Greenstreak in a similar spot to where I found the pair of Grizzlies on my last visit.



On up the track Forester Moths were very abundant and there was the occasional Brown Argus or Dingy Skipper as well as a really fresh Greenstreak. As I reached the Duke spot there was a/the Duke waiting for me - looking very faded and a pale reflection of its former glory. It didn't want to stop for any photos, fluttering from flower top to flower top before disappearing up high and settling out of reach and sight in a tree. Perhaps it felt embarrassed by its unkempt state?



On up the hill and carrying on up the little valley the Common Blues were replaced by Brown Argus as the main butterfly. A Wall did a fly by as I clambered over the stile. I had half a mind to reverse and see if I could follow it but I thought that I would try and locate the one that had been holding a territory here last time. So I finished getting over the stile and worked up the hill. At the top a medium sized dark butterfly took off from just ahead of me. It was a rich chocolate brown uni-coloured butterfly. It was my first Meadow Brown of the year but as I tried to keep it in sight I didn't look where I was treading and went straight down into a hollow jarring my back and jolting my knee backwards. After a few moments of shock I realized that I was actually okay and so carried on - there will be plenty more Meadow Browns I'm sure.



At the cross-tracks where the Wall had been holding territory all was quiet and so I worked along the hillside and then back along the path. For the briefest of moments I thought that I'd found one basking but then the sun broke through the trees and the butterfly stayed down on the deck and also a dark brown colour. It was one of three Specklies that followed me along the path, jostling each other this way and that. I realized that my time was running out so after a quick check in at the Duke spot (no luck) I hightailed back to the car noting another Small Copper and a scattering of Common Blues on the way. Luckily Mr Slow wasn't making the return journey at the same time as me and so I got back to do the pick-up in good time.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Jul-19 10:12 AM GMT

Bentley Wood 31-05-2019

The last day of Spring and tomorrow Summer; not that you would have known that from the weather. I set out under grey skies with moisture in the still air and feeling more comfortable in my Hoodie than without. "Hopefully..." I thought "...I might be able to find some of them roosting or some flying if the sun actually breaks through for a few minutes?" Them being Small Pearls as I wasn't happy with my under side shots from my last visit. To be honest I shouldn't have even been setting out. Today was supposed to be a day of chores and errands. I was also supposed to be on Kid Duty. However yesterday I'd managed to get the lime plaster touch up jobs done and reshuffled things so I would be able to take the girls to Bentley and meet Philzoid. Then when I came downstairs the girls had decided that they wanted to go swimming (the joys of having a daughter old enough to babysit!) so I set off on my own. As I drove the sky brightened and there were even patches of blue sky...

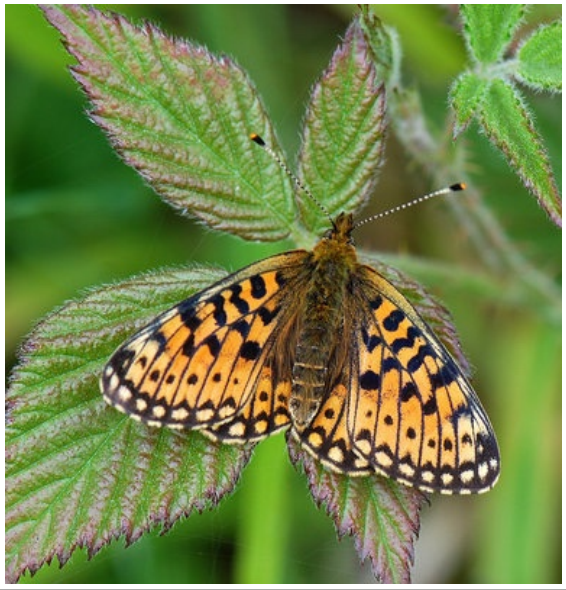
From the carpark I dove straight into the Clearing mainly hanging around in the middle area where the rushy grass grows. Straight away I got onto a Small Pearl, a delightfully ginger male. It was swiftly followed by a Common Blue. Chuffed I carried on down to the bottom area and managed to find the Duke that is holding a territory in the corner closest to the road.

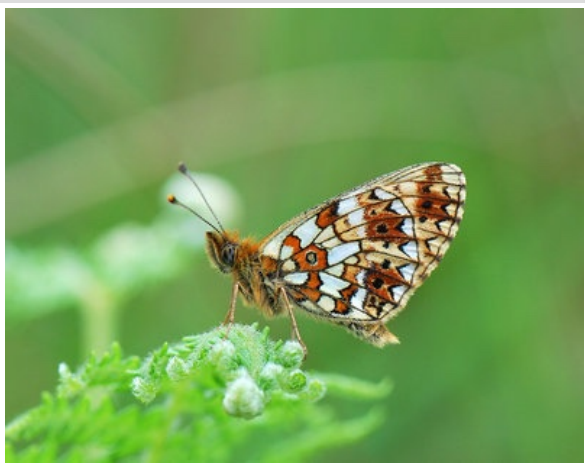


By now the sun was disappearing for longer and longer spells so the butterfly became a little more stop-start following the lead of the passing clouds. I found another Small Pearl - this time a female and followed her around for a bit as she bimbled from flower to flower, nectar source to nectar source until she finally gave in, perched and refused to come out. Luckily I'd seen where she landed and so as the sky darkened further and a few spots of rain started to fall she was shut up and locked into place. By lying down I could get level with her but unfortunately she'd chosen the flimsiest of plants to perch on and so the slightest of breezes set her off like a toddler on a rocking horse! I found a few twigs and tried to sue these to support the weedy weed and this did work reasonably well. So Small Pearl read on a plate I just needed Philzoid to arrive now...



I took another walk around discovering a third Small Pearl and a tired and worn Pearl and after catching up with the Duke (still in the same place) I followed a Small Pearl (either the first or the third) during the briefest of returns by the sun. It didn't fly far and as the sun hid away again it landed and closed its wings in an even more photogenic pose. I found a few twigs to make into a cross to mark where it was and set off back to check the female was still there. As I did I happened to glance behind me and the male I'd just marked flew for about a metre along the path before finally realising that the conditions weren't quite right for flight when it dropped onto a Bracken frond. I marked it and carried on round finding a Straw Dot and a Cream Wave at the top part of the Clearing near the entrance. I marked these as well in readiness for Philzoids arrival. I then made my way back to the female and settled down with my Extra Hot Lime Chilli Pickle sandwiches and a coffee. Occasionally I'd take a few shots of the female just to make sure that there was definitely a good one in there and also to help pass the time and I also kept an eye on the male as the sun was starting eat away at the thickest part of the cloud.



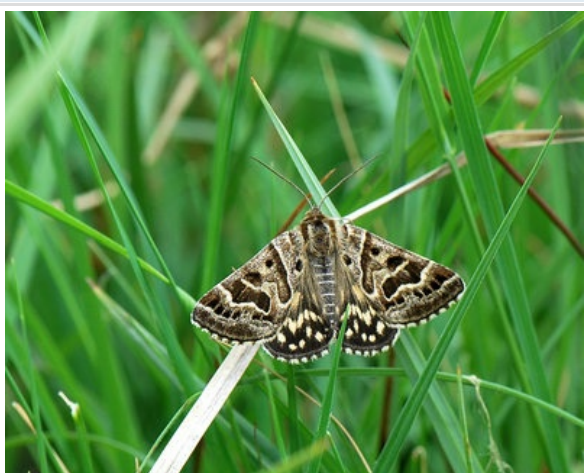


When Philzoid arrived I quickly got him onto the female and then to the male. Butterfly Imperative met 😊 we then carried on looking around to see what else we could find as with the continued brightening things started appearing – another Small Pearl and a lovely male Common Blue before Philzoid found a really fresh Marshie, a gravid female from the look of the abdomen. She was a beauty, one of the lighter more chocolate and cream/yellow variety and not as dark and orange as those I'd seen at the Hill. The Common Blue distracted us again and was soon joined by a Small Pearl and we finished off the little sojourn by looking for the Duke which was still in the same place.





We then too to strolling further afield and making over to the Bracken lined path and the newly cleared area which had been so good for Pearls. All was quiet and despite a few moths there was very little activity. As we strolled we talked about this and that and our meandering eventually brought us back to the central area of the Clearing. By now the sun was making a return and o the butterflies were getting more and more active. The Small Pearls were getting harder to follow in flight and they were moving at a noticeably higher rate of knots. The number of Common Blues doubled and a Mother Shipton put in an appearance, for once not hanging about down at the lowest level of the turf but instead happy to show off its wonderful visage markings.



I was getting close to leaving time when a tiny orangey 'Moff' erupted from the grass. It landed and I had it pegged as a Burnet Companion Moth which we'd already seen a few of. But when it landed on the path and tilted its wings towards the sun I could see that it was a Small Heath. I can't recall seeing one of those here before and so is yet another species to add to the burgeoning Clearing List.



After this I had to bid Philzoid farewell and started back. I'd left with enough time so I'd be there to pick the girls up from the pool with about 10 minutes to spare. However due to the joys of the Southampton Road, the new set of traffic lights on the 'back route' and another selfish driver stopping people getting off the bridge at Laverstock I actually got to the pool 10 minutes late 😞😞!

Later on my wife and I visited Garston Wood. The sun had arrived and we strolled through the dappled wood enjoying the birdsong and feeling the sun's warmth. It was lush and I almost forgot about butterflies. I saw almost as many Specklies would appear at junctions on the paths or in the small scallop clearings caused by a larger tree having fallen. I also saw another Large White. This one let me approach and I got some nice close shots as he opened up his wings. There is something mightily pleasing about the contrasting black edges and tips against the crisp, pure white of the wings.





All in all a brilliant day made even sweeter as it was all very spontaneous.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

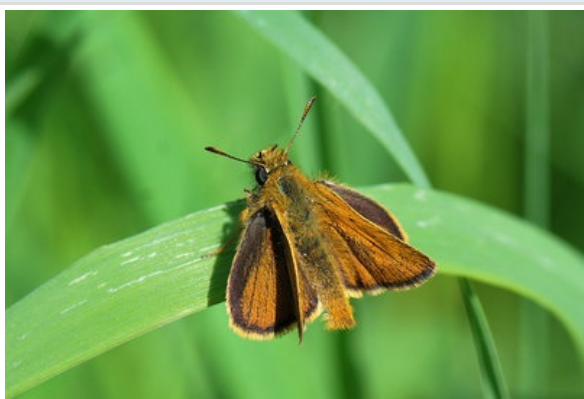
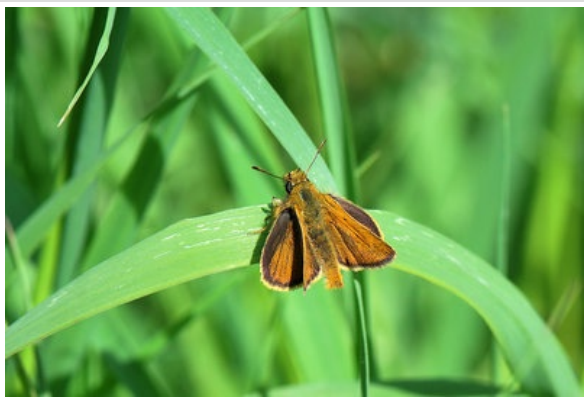
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-19 08:07 PM GMT

Lulworth Cove

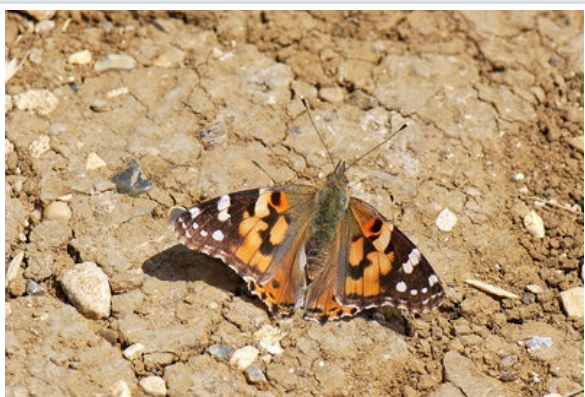
With an upturn in the weather I was keen to get out and see some butterflies but with a big trip on the cards for the following day I didn't fancy pushing my luck. However fate stepped in and as the vernacular of 'youff' goes; "Did me a solid". My wife wanted to take advantage of the sun and go to the beach. So we were off to Lulworth. I was heading 'back home' and even better a sneaky check on the Dorset branch website had revealed that a small local denizen was flying 😊. The start of the morning took the usual fashion; walking amongst the Grockles, choosing left or right and then finding the sandiest spot. As we'd taken out time setting out and driving down by the time 'basecamp' was prepared we were ready for lunch.

Having previously turned right and with lunch eaten I was now at liberty to investigate my favoured hotspot of old. So I was up the gully/collapsing path as fast as a Whippet. I'd only just reached the first 'step' when a tiny golden blur shot across the path and buried itself in the low growing yellow flowers. It was a Lulworth Skipper and with a couple of record shots on the memory card the job was done. I carried on up the track and checked the reed filled depression on the right of the track. Along the edges 2 Dingies had a scrap as did 2 male Common Blues but nestled down deeper in the reeds were another couple of Lulworths showing well and looking anything but drab.





Further up another Dingy added itself to the tally as did a further three Lulworths. They were a joy to watch, tinier than I remembered and because they were fresh much, much tidier. As I was enjoying the Lulworths buzzing this way and that something caught my eye. It seemed out of place in the flower heads, the wrong shape, colour and pattern. It took me a moment but then I realised it was the wing tip of a Painted Lady. It took off and I followed it, scrabbling, to the top of the cliff. I was worried that despite keeping a close eye on it, it would suddenly change gear and bomb away out of sight when it reached the top. Luckily it went down on to the deck and stayed still long enough for me to get my first shots of 2019 and also guess that it was freshly arrived from the continent.



I carried on round criss-crossing and traversing the cliff face along the trackways adding Lulworths each time I came to a patch of the yellow flowers. There was also another fresher looking Dingy. Back at my starting point the same group of species put on a show although there was a nice addition

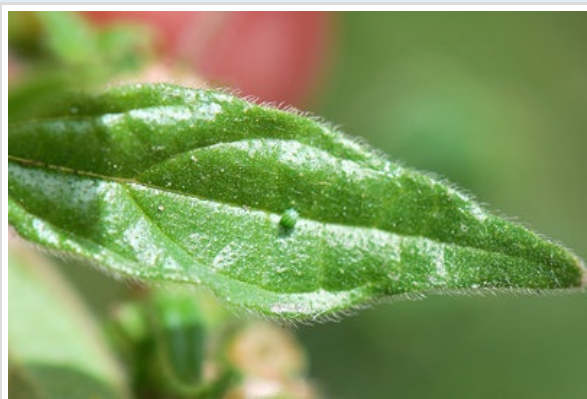
with a really fresh female, her crescent moons reflected the sun almost as effectively as Luna herself.





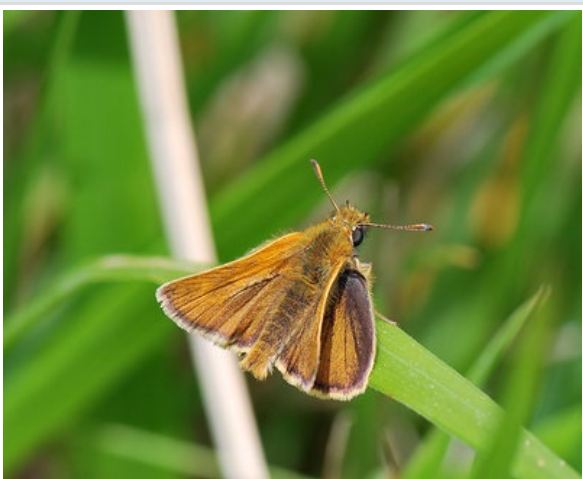


It was then back to Basecamp and I had to keep watch of the valuables so the girls (all three of them) could go off exploring. It was a hard job; sitting in the sun with the sound of waves breaking on the beach, cup of coffee at hand and reliving/remembering past butterfly trips as I scribbled away in my notebook. A pair of Dragonflies looked out of place as they quartered the small islands which the low tide had revealed. Before I knew it the girls were back and I had to take Little L for a toilet run. While I waited for her to negotiate the queue that is a feature of the Ladies I checked the little area of scrub but it didn't produce anything. We were heading back when I spotted a Red Admiral behaving oddly. It was fluttering weakly around the sparsest of flowers that were somehow growing through a brick wall and concrete path combo. It would land face on, wings open and then curve its abdomen round and up. I manged a few shots before the spectacle was ruined by a passing family who were encouraging their little lad to catch the Red Admiral. Luckily it evaded them but unluckily it was gone. I checked one of the leaves it had been making a fuss over and there was a delicate fresh ova.





After a bit more beach activity I was off on round 2 so I was able to see the same species again and add a Brown Argus to the list. After I got back we packed up and made our way over to Stairhole. To get there we ascended the cliff using my hotspot path and the same two males were still on the right in the reedy depression and further up there were another 2, a male and female. The male tried his luck, bending his abdomen around in a flurry of wings. Unfortunately for us both his advances were rejected and the female climbed stoically up the grass stem and then took to the air when she reached the top.

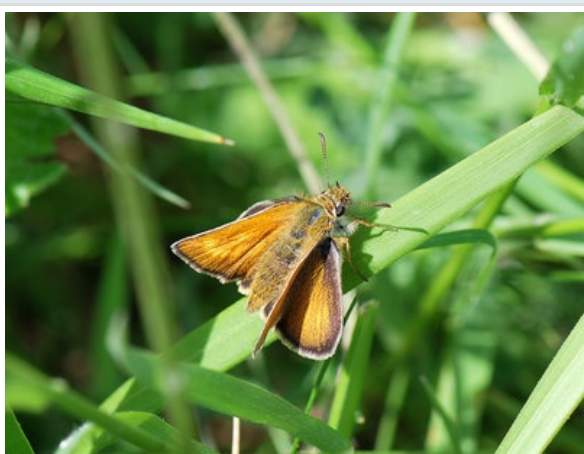




Over at Stairhole a Wall shot past us and a Common Blue followed us as we scrambled down to the beach. While the girls played with Tess, a puppy that had befriended us, I went up the slope at the other end of the beach. In an around the yellow flowers I counted a single Common blue female, 2 Dingies and at least 4 Lulworths. There were probably more but a more accurate count was unattainable as by now the little blighters were very hyperactive whizzing around all over the place and only stopping for a few seconds at a time. A larger, slower flying butterfly appeared and I clambered over to it finding it to be a female Large Skipper, my first definite of the season and unusually a female.



I made my way back down to the beach and did some rock-pooling showing the girls various molluscs and seaweeds, then we gazed for a while at the Lulworth Crumple before enjoying another coffee in the sun. We left by the slope that I'd previously investigated and I managed a few shots while people stopped every now and again; Common Blue, a male Large Skipper, but before I could contemplate going after any more Lulworths we were off away home. Still I'll be back I'm sure. A cracking 'trip to the beach'...



Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Pauline, 26-Jul-19 08:16 PM GMT

Real nice shots of the RA egg-laying Wurzel – and the egg 😊 Love how you've captured the colours on the underwing. Do you know what the plant is?

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 27-Jul-19 02:05 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Real nice shots of the RA egg-laying Wurzel – and the egg 😊 Love how you've captured the colours on the underwing. Do you know what the plant is?

Pellitory-of-the-wall *Parietaria judaica*, a plant in the nettle family that's often used further south in drier parts of it's range where nettles are less

common.

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jul-19 10:47 AM GMT

A cracking selection of Lulworth Skippers Wurzel 🍷😄 I have missed these for a few years now. I will be in Dorset again at the beginning of September, I wonder if there will be any still hanging on at Durlston this year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 28-Jul-19 11:27 AM GMT

Fantastic shots Wurzel of the Lulworth Skipper, it's another Butterfly I've yet to see, I think I'd have trouble working out the difference between the SK's and the Lulworth, 😊 I struggle with the Essex. 😊 love your shots of the Fritillaries has well in your previous post. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-19 11:05 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline 😊 I had no idea what the plant was...cue Bugboy 😊😄

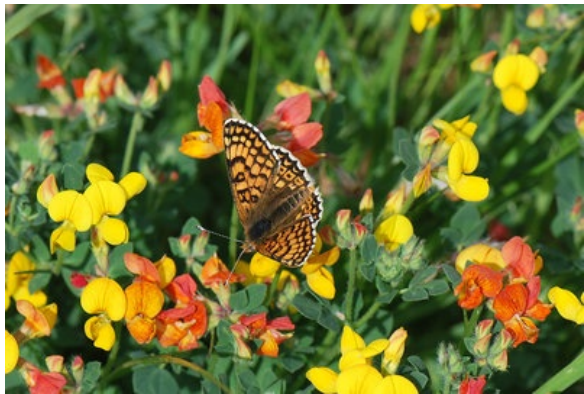
Cheers Bugboy 😊 for the plant ID, I don't know how concerned to be as there were only a few of the flowers as they were growing out of the wall - hopefully the larva will be able to crawl to some more food 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 They seem to have emerged slightly later this year so you could be good for some September Lulworths 😊 I'd check the reserves website before hand though 😊

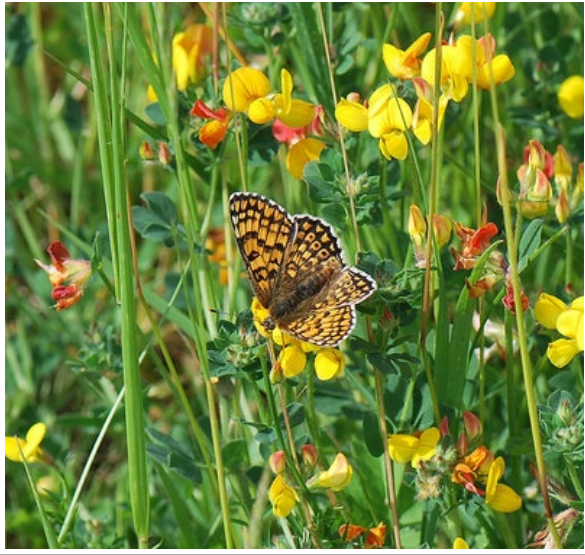
Cheers Goldie 😊 The females are easy as they have obvious crescent moons on them - the males could be confused for Smalls but they're more olive and also much smaller - it'll be a case of when you see them you'll know 😊

Big Trip 02-05-2019

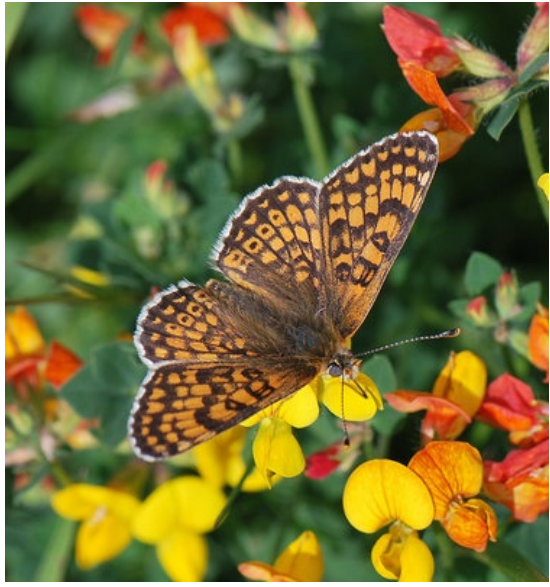
This was going to be the first Big Trip of the year. So very early on Sunday I set off for Chez Philzoid, managing to shave 14 minutes off Sheila the SATNAVs estimated arrival time by getting to the speed limits as quickly as possible and sticking to them for as long as possible. The fact the Iron Maiden Killers was a blaring also helped I'm sure. After a quick car change at Philzoid's we were off again heading towards Wrecchlesham. As we got out of the car Dave pulled up and so we three set off across the cricket pitch looking for Narnia. The directions from Maximus and Ernie were spot on and after finding our way through the hedge we were on site. As we stood in the Eastern corner, milling about and trying to work out where to head a Glanville flew past and landed just ahead of us. Brilliant! It was swiftly joined by a jovial gent who it turned out was Ernie.

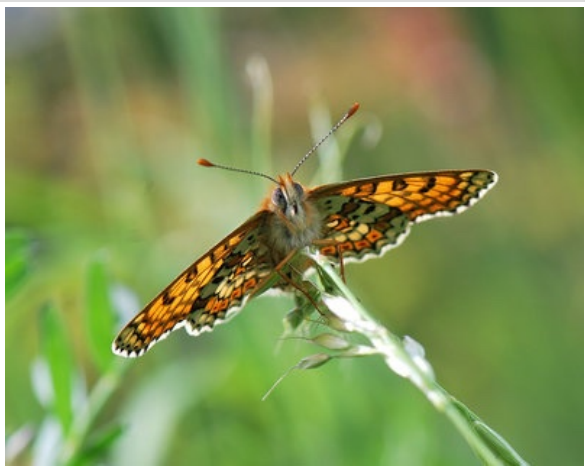


After this a second joined it and we set to following them about, calling with information about what they were doing and whether they were the first of second. A third appeared and so there we ended splitting up for a bit what with having one Glanville each. The one I was following flew into a little clearing amid some Gorse bushes and scrub. It landed in a few places in then finally settled. I waited and watched with bated breath as it started winching its wings up, ever so slightly as if it wasn't really sure. Eventually though the wings were fully raised and there before me was possibly my best ever chance for an underwing shot for this species.

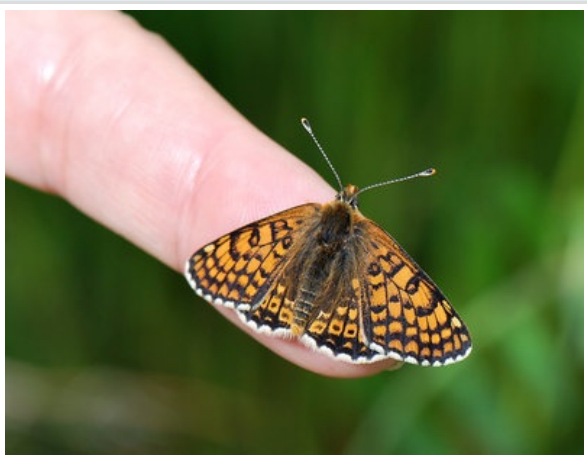


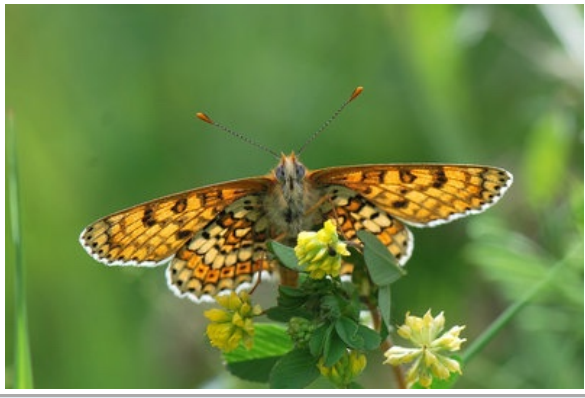
With this in the bag we strolled further along the track noting a few more Glanvilles some of which were immaculate and must only be a day or possibly even less emerged. I loved the contrast between the dark marmalade and black markings with the blinding white fringes. This was even more noticeably when contrasting against some of the very swarthy individuals that were around. All told the first little section along the path held possibly 7 Glannies. The events of the morning were starting to blur due to the delights of the Glannies.





Dave and I strolled and watched and set out to see what else there was to see. To be honest excepting the Glanvilles there wasn't much else. There were a few Common Blues, a single Brown Argus and a Mother Shipton. So we ended up back in the first corner of the site where there were now a few more visitors and the morning now took on a bit of a party atmosphere. I managed to get my stained glass shot and then somehow Philzoid and I tore ourselves away from thrall of the Glanville and found our way back through the wardrobe/hedge. Next stop Botany Bay where, in the form of Wood Whites, we would enjoy less showy and more subtle beauty...





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-19 11:13 PM GMT

Big Trip Part 2 02-05-2019

The cross country drive was great and before we knew it we were pulling up in the car park/lay by at Botany Bay. We quickly set off and started down the hardcore path. On my previous visits the Wood Whites didn't show until after the little bridge crossed the roaring torrent that is the River Lox. We'd been walking for about 15 seconds and were still on the first straight bit of the track when we saw a small and dainty white butterfly making its way towards us. Both Philzoid and I wondered if it was a small Green-veined White and shock our heads in disbelief when it got close enough to identify - it was a Wood White.



After the first bend in the path we came across another two which seemed intent on chasing each other about - it was probably the slowest chase in the butterfly world, more a dawdle to be frank. There were a few Specklies here and also a quite unusual moth. As we approached the Lox a couple more showed up and then they turned up with such regularity that I gave up trying to count. At one point I looked up one side of the path and the verge held 7 all slowly flapping about. It was a great sight to behold and worth the early morning and also dragging myself away from the Glannies. As we carried on along the path we'd stop occasionally for a few more shots particularly the face-off courting behaviour. I'd seen it before and read about it recently

in other people's diaries but to see the same strange act played out time and again was quite surreal. It has to rank as one of the most civil and tender of courtships. I'd recently seen Pearls and Marshies court - well if you can call it courting it's more 'wham bang' as well as failed attempts by Brimstones which just made the unsuccessful male look like a pathetic loser but here it felt like I was watching an intimate tete-a-tete, a candle lit seduction over a fine dinner with excellent wines.





We carried on along the track hearing Woodlark and Nightengales and seeing small moths, Brimstones, more Wood Whites and Longicornis bees and then we broke through into the small triangle field and started looking around. It was now that we started seeing a few other bits and bobs in amongst the Wood Whites. There were a few moths - Burnet Companion, Mother Shipton, a couple of Common blues and a Large Skipper. A Small Heath also turned up and in between following the Wood Whites we also came across a couple of different types of Dragonfly - one had the look of a Hawker and another paused long enough for a few shots - an immature Scarce Chaser.







Chuffed we started the slow walk back to the car still accompanied by Wood Whites at almost every step of the way as well as the occasional Brimstone and Specklie. The Wood Whites were starting to bet a bit hard work now as they would lfy ceaselessly, always looking as if they were going to land but never actually doing so. As we crossed back over the Lox they thinned out until we saw what I thought would be our last on just before the final bend in the track.



When we came round the corner a Red Admiral bombed past us and settled down on the track. A nearby Hoverfly annoyed it and it took off, flew past us, flew back towards us and then landed down on the side of the path. It then started walking about, proboscis waving and looking for some salts. Not much longer and its larger and much sought after cousin will be flying in these woods – get yer Tuna ready!



As we ate lunch and flicked Ticks off, drank our coffee and packed the car a sole Wood White flew ceaselessly at the edge of car park. Seemingly sensing that we were departing it carried on across the road hopefully spreading to more areas of the wood. A fantastic Big Trip!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 29-Jul-19 05:00 AM GMT

Some big trip!. Fresh Glanvilles (without paying Wightlink sixty plus quid), and a good selection of Wood Whites, not all fresh but in good condition. Some excellent photography too. I love days like that.

Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 29-Jul-19 10:08 AM GMT

That was a great morning, Wurzel - very sociable, some splendid butterflies and you achieved some terrific shots of them as well. One of the particularly memorable days of the year so far. 😊 Adding a Chiddingfold visit later on turned out to be a successful idea as well by the look of it - more great shots of that daintiest of butterflies. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

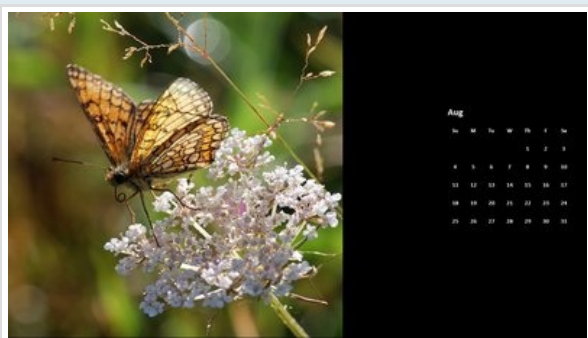
by Wurzel, 08-Aug-19 08:57 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 It was one of those days when things sort of clicked into place - great company, great chat and great butterflies 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 It was a cracking morning 😊 I think one year it might just be possible to get Heath, Glanvilles and Wood Whites in one day... 😊

August 2019

I know this is even later than usual but I've just got back from the Wurzel family holiday so please excuse the tardiness 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 08-Aug-19 09:26 PM GMT

I concluded from your recent 'silence' that the Wurzel family hols were underway!
Hope you managed to escape with the camera when no one was looking, or even before they were up.

Will try Tilshead early am Mon, Tues & Weds if you can make it, weather permitting. + Walls in Church grounds.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 09-Aug-19 06:13 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Wurzel, what a great time you had, I'm looking forward to your Holiday shots now 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Aug-19 10:25 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I managed to get our for a good while most days Trevor 😊 Mind you to be fair I didn't really need to as most of the species I saw were present actually on site 😊 I've got to go to the Outlaws in Wales on Wednesday but if I can squeeze in Brostreaks and Silver-spots before then I might be able to make it over on Tuesday? It all depends on the demands of the rest of the house 😊
Cheers Goldie 😊 I might have the reports sorted by Christmas - I'm still posting from June 😊😊 Still something for the winter months 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-19 09:59 PM GMT

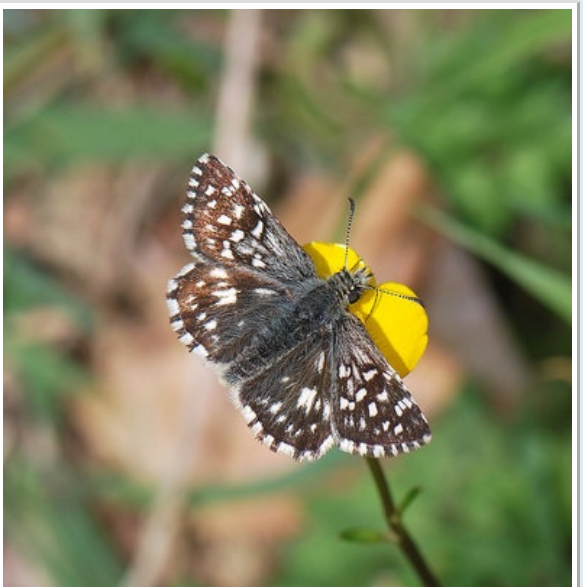
The Devenish 09-06-2019

As the weather was actually okay at times my wife and I made over to The Devenish for a cuppa al fresco courtesy of Kelly the Kettle and a nice picnic lunch. I chose the Devenish as I knew that there were a few old fire pits that we could set Kelly up on without worrying about damaging the soil. However I was quickly ruing my choice as each time I made to turn off to the reserve our way was blocked by yellow AA signs declaring that the road was closed. I drove past Old Sarum and out towards Amesbury and turned left at High Post. All was going smoothly until we got to within 200 yards of the reserve - where this time there were the big yellow signs, a van and a couple of Stewards. As they said that it was okay to walk down the road I abandoned the car and we set out on foot.

Once on the reserve we climbed over the various gates and made our way to the far paddock. Once the Kettle was lit I had a quick mooch around while waiting for it to boil. On the way in there had been a couple of Specklies in the Small Paddock and now I managed to find a couple more. One went up high the other stayed down low disappearing momentarily into the old dried grass.



After lunch I took a slightly longer wander round as I awaited cuppa coffee number 2. Just over the way two Specklies started spiralling and when they broke apart I managed to follow one as it drifted down to earth. Over in the far corner was another and this one was in very fine fettle. From here I wandered across the bottom of the hill back the way we'd come in and half way along my progress was halted by a minuscule grey blur which soon turned out to be a reasonably fresh Grizzlie. After watching it for a while I realised that I hadn't gotten any shots so set about getting a few - well it would be rude not to after the effort the little chap was putting in.



Turning back and snaking my way towards my coffee a massive butterfly shot up out of the tussock grass and perched up in a tree. A Red Admiral. It

took off at the same time as something else and I watched them both fly round a tree though neither came out the other side. As I walked over I found a Specklie but the Red Admiral must have gone on into the trees lining the Paddock and then come back out behind me and where I'd originally seen it. So I made my way back the few steps and my guess proved correct as the Red Admiral shot out of a small tree and perched on a dead branch.



Pleased I headed back but that wasn't the end of the surprises. A butterfly, darker than the Specklies, smaller than the Red Admiral was bumbling along low down near the ground. It would flap almost pathetically before dropping for a fraction of a second and then straining to pull itself up and gain some height before repeating the process again. Occasionally it would go down and after following it and watching it do this a few times I was ready. The next time it went down I leant in and there was my first photo of 2019 of a Meadow Brown. I managed to follow it a little bit more and get a slightly less cluttered but more distant shot and then I was distracted again.



Now it was because of an unusually shaped butterfly that was up in the trees. It looked like it was trailing a damaged wing but when I stepped a little closer to where it was perched I realised that it was a pair in cop - my first every Specklies at it! They seemed quite shy and after a few shots they vacated their low storey couples retreat and retired to their love-nest higher up in the canopy. Another Specklie landed before me on its own and then I took the final few steps back to 'camp' and enjoyed another lovely cuppa coffee.



We started back and made our way up the side of the Down proper and along the small paths on the middle section. On the way there was a female Common Blue and over the stile a Meadow Brown, Blue and Grizzlie all played hard to get so we carried on down the small path, hemmed in on one side by the scrubby wood and on the other by the large Bramble bushes. I had a few moments to spare in the Orchid Meadow and came across the a slightly more worn Grizzlie, Brown Argus, Common Blue and finally the butterfly I was hoping to see here at this time of year - a Large Skipper. It was a brilliant, bright male actively feeding up to keep his fuel supply topped up. It was time to go and as we walked and then drove back home all the yellow signs were gone and the roads open. A very pleasant picnic.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Janet Turnbull, 10-Aug-19 11:17 PM GMT

A lovely account of the day, Wurzel – and I particularly like the Grizzlie. I find them very difficult to see, never mind getting a photo! 📷

Janet

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Aug-19 08:28 PM GMT

Cheers Janet 😊 Yep Grizzlies are right tricky little buggers, I use the 'click-step' dance technique to get my shots of them – I look a prat when getting the shots but nothing new there 😊😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-19 10:37 PM GMT

Middle Street 15-06-2019

The weather report was again incorrect so instead of thick, dark cloud and the rain showers that I was expecting the sun eventually broke through the ever-thinning cloud and it turned into a passable sunny afternoon. To make the most of it my wife and I took a promenade in the direction of Middle Street. A Meadow Brown played hard to get in the little slipway near the weir and it was the only butterfly seen until we were actually on site and most of the way round. As we reached the far end of the pond a Red Admiral put in an appearance fleetingly before being replaced by a Common Blue.



Round the other side of the pond another or possibly the same Red Admiral did another fly-by flashing over the tops of the reeds at almost head height before veering violently upwards and over the trees that line the edge of the pond. I didn't mind this dearth of butterflies as this area is much better in the spring and as the season progresses the butterfly action seems to migrate towards the other end of the site. Besides which I was enjoying the peace and quiet wife my wife sans kids.

As we dove down through the copse the bird calls ceased and a Speckle played true to form, flitting between the dappled light and not stopping. Then as we broke out into the sunshine again the cacophony ensued - Reed and Sedge Warblers babbling, a Cetti's exploding from the opposite bank with its "one, one-two, one-two one-two one-three" call slicing through all the other calls and sounds like a knife through butter.

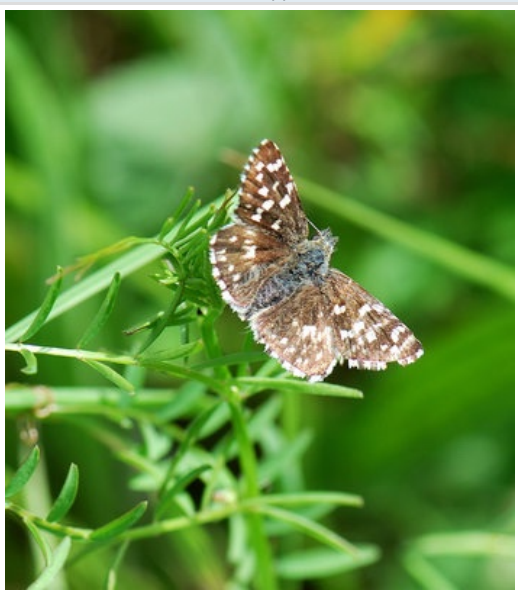
At the top of the field I descended down from the raised pathway into the grasses some of which were by now up to my waist making a wading action the most appropriate for making any progress. As expected the number and diversity of butterflies picked up. I managed to follow and pick up a few semi-distant Meadow Browns though it was hard work. They'd erupt in slow motion from an unseen hiding place low down in the grass, then flutter seemingly randomly and weakly before dropping down and disappearing from view again.



The Common Blues and a Large Skipper conversely were much easier to capture on camera and they posed nicely for me in the more sparsely covered areas of the field around the edges and on 'the bank' with the raised walkway above.



As I was winding my way out of the field along the narrow track a tiny grey blur caught my eye. At first I put it down as a moth but as I leant in and focused it became a Grizzled Skipper. A first for me at this site and a species I hadn't expected to see – a nice end to a pleasant afternoon.



Just a record/proof shot.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 13-Aug-19 08:59 AM GMT

Love the Grizzle shots Wurzel, looks like when I do see them I'll have my work cut out to shoot them 😊 Your shot of that Common Blue is great, I think they look at their best when their clouds are so pronounced 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Aug-19 10:31 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 The Grizzlie is a funny little butterfly as they can be well behaved...sometimes 😊😊 I was chuffed with the Blue shots 😊

Garston and onwards... 16-06-2019

It was a funny old morning as after the totally back to front and inaccurate weather forecast the day before I wasn't surprised when I awoke today and didn't see the blue sky and sunny intervals that had been promised. Instead there was a blanket of grey cloud through which, very occasionally, a glimpse of limpid eggshell blue showed through. Nevertheless my wife and I headed over to Gaston Wood for a wander round. On the way a Red Admiral flew by as we drove through Broadchalke and upon arrival and first setting off a Specklie appeared briefly. And then that was it...the light cloud cover darkened and it felt more like a March morning than a week away from the Solstice.

We carried on round anyway enjoying the Forest Bathing and feeling calmer and more relaxed the further we walked into the wood. About half way in I spied a mini clearing. One of the larger trees had fallen leaving a round clearing in its wake which was lit by the weak sun so it was only slightly brighter than the surrounding gloom under the canopy. As my wife concentrated on looking in the clearing I spied an unusual looking plant. It stood tall with a pair of leaves near the base and green florets reaching to the top of the stem. It looked like an Orchid to me and so I checked my Orchid ID App and worked out that it is most likely a Common Twyblade (as so often happens I started seeing Twyblades throughout the rest of the wood).





We carried on round reaching the Butterfly Enclosure though I reckon they've given up on Pearls returning here as not only has the picture gone but so too has the gate itself. While we wandered through the sun started to shine more strongly, not quite breaking through the cloud but brightening it, making it glow slightly more and with it came the life. Bumble Bees that had been torpid sitting on leaves started to move slightly the slight increase in temperature starting to resurrect them, female spiders moved to new areas dragging their egg bundles with them and moths suddenly appeared on leaves where a few seconds previously they hadn't been.





Eventually we arrived back in the car park and so headed home for lunch, seeing another Red Admiral at St Paul's Roundabout, before driving up to Mottisfont to meet up with my parents and our girls. I didn't see any butterflies on the walk in, through the grounds, round the Walled Garden and nor on the partial return journey to the house. Only as we were making our way round to the final bit of garden did any butterflies appear before my lens. There was a sole Meadow Brown on the newly created Avenue on one side of the formal lawn and another couple on the bank of the Ha-Ha. I managed a few photos y in the less than perfect light the images didn't really 'ping' as they can do. Still at least if I got out and made the best of a poor butterfly weather day. I you don't go out you're guaranteed to see now!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 14-Aug-19 06:30 PM GMT

Some of the Bee's I've had in my Garden have been huge Wurzel, I took a shot comparing two bee's together on the same plant, i'll post in my next post, (if I remember) 😊 It's getting like that these days 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 14-Aug-19 07:10 PM GMT

Great new male Meadow Browns in those reports, Wurzel. They are somehow different at the start of their season than they are now with hundreds of them flying. Subtler and more velvety? I also always notice the colour of their eyes – a shade of brownish red. Your last one shows this especially. Well done on finding the mating Specklies – not a common sight at all, as I think it usually happens somewhere up in the trees.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Aug-19 09:14 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 "(if I remember)"...I know what you mean Goldie – Im having to write lists to remind myself to complete my lists 😊😊
Cheers Dave 😊 I was chuffed with the mating Specklies – another addition to the 'In Cop' collection 😊 I know what you mean about the Meadow Browns – they're much more luxurious looking in the spring 😊 The one in the post that follows isn't so much luxurious instead it's pretty exotic looking 😊 ...

Work 20-06-019

I hadn't been out at Lunch for what felt like an age due to either the hectic nature of work recently (GCSE revision classes all over the place, huge amounts of marking from Mock exams, OFSTED etc.) or dire weather so when I stepped out this lunch time I was expecting to see a changed habitat, although how changed I wasn't prepared for. The grasses that back at the start of the season would barely reach the tongues of my shoes were now almost up to mid-thigh height. As I waded through them at the Pits heading towards the boundary hedge a Large Skipper buzzed away. Once I got to the hedge and started walking down it a Red Admiral appeared from out of nowhere, bombing along. It flew past me and into the tallest Nettles in the hedge where it spent a few moments bumbling about. I thought about parting the foliage so as to try for a few shots but the Nettles that towered over me changed my mind mighty quickly.

After this I was joined by a Meadow Brown that led me on a bit of a merry dance across one of the recently mown sections of the field. It would fly in a rough zig-zag pattern before landing and staying down on the deck just long enough for me to approach, line up my shot and start to focus. Then it would be off again. I don't know what's up with the Browns this season but they seem much more twitchy and nervy than I previously recall? The Meadow Browns merry bolero had led me into the unmown sections on the field and I was feeling the familiar feeling of dew and raindrops held on the stems starting to soak into my trousers. I carried on trying to follow the Meadow Brown but got distracted as a Small Tort erupted from the grasses near my footfall. It didn't fly far - perhaps too cool (?) but when I caught up with it it was a cracking looking butterfly - much swarthier and darker than the Spring ones.



I carried on in my seemingly futile attempts at photographing Meadow Browns but it was proving tricky. They'd fly so I'd follow only to disturb another from down in the grasses and then I would have the dilemma of which to follow? I'd generally choose incorrectly as the one I'd follow would fly on and on and when it eventually came to ground would be hidden behind multiple grass stems whilst the one I didn't would probably be perched in a miniature clearing amid the grasses, wings open wide! I persevered and amid the Meadow Browns a Small heath popped up and a gorgeous Meadow Brown finally sat for an uncluttered shot, free from interfering grass stems. It was a gorgeous looking butterfly with the slightest hint of an orange streak on the hind wing - lush and worth the hassle.





I made my way back conscious that the bell would soon be ringing, stopping for two shots of a Large Skipper, and found myself back in the Pits before I remembered that I didn't need to hurry too much as I had a double free of 'gained' time now. This was just as well as right at the end of the Pits my first Ringlet of 2019 appeared with luscious white fringes contrasting with the chocolatey-purple topside. Like all the other species from the Brown it too was being a bit of a pain as it would take off just as I was ready to fire off the shots but in the end I got a few in the bag. I'm sure there will be plenty more but it's always nice to get shots of the 'first' of the season. I must have entered a time warp as strolling back into the block I checked the time and I was only late by less than a minute - I can't work out how that happened?





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

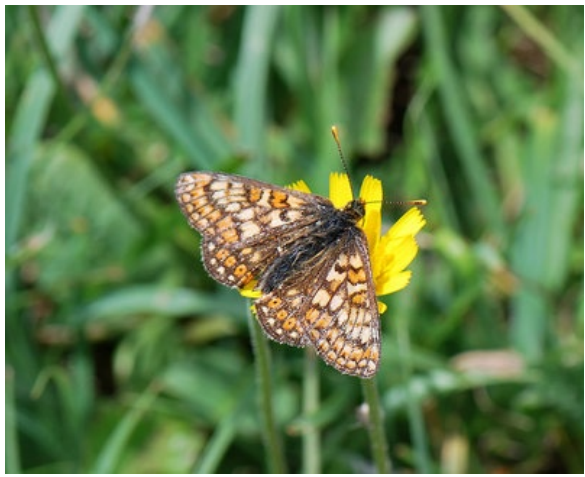
by Wurzel, 16-Aug-19 11:38 PM GMT

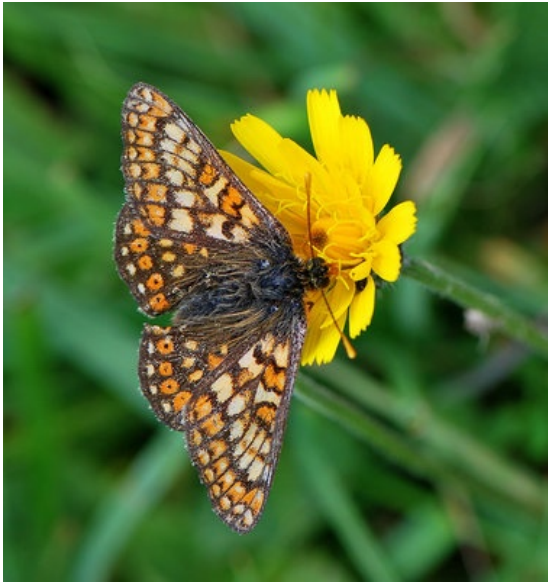
Wellbeing 21-06-2019

Teacher Training Days are normally busy affairs where ideas are shared and there is more than a fair share of sitting and listening. Well this one was very different as the focus (for once) wasn't on assessment or curriculum; OfSTED were mentioned once but I think we got away with it, and after a bit of information on various neurotransmitters/hormones and their effects during the morning the afternoon was spent focusing on one activity that would benefit our wellbeing. So I found myself leading three of my colleagues across the road from the car park at Knapp Hill and on up the Down in search of butterflies. To be honest the timing could have been better, a few weeks earlier and the species would have been at their freshest and most numerous but an afternoon of paid butterflying isn't to be sniffed at!

Once we'd negotiated some of the various obstacles that are on offer here (road, stile-less fences and wild animals...well sheep and cattle) we struck to the relatively easy going at the foot of the hill. From previous experience this often holds most of the butterflies as the hedge lining the road offers perches and a little shade and the various dykes and ditches offer shelter from the wind which whips up the hill tugging errant butterflies with it. We swiftly got onto some butterflies with my colleagues soon calling out Small heath and Meadow Brown which appeared as if from nowhere out of the grasses as we progressed. To add to this initial mix there were a couple of Common Blues.

We moved down into one of the hollows, evidence of early flint mining long since finished, and one of the stars of the show appears - a tired looking Marshie. It goes down a storm with its unusual chequerboard markings as does a second that joins it briefly. As the rest are marvelling at the Marshies a (from a distance) light grey butterfly tears towards us - my first Marbled White of 2019.





We carry on checking the next hollow out and the next. All seem jam packed with Spotted and Fragrant Orchids and in the final hollow there are also a few Bee Orchids. There is also another Marshie, looking even more Greasy than the others, along with a shed load of Small Heaths and Meadow Browns.





As the ground starts to level out we have a choice to make; walk right to the top and Adam's Grave/The Nipple or cut back along the path that is 'one step up'? We opt for the easier and lower route and as we head off there are a couple of Common Blues, a male and a female and a Large Skipper.



The walk back isn't as fruitful butterfly wise with the fore mentioned wind often picking up and carrying any butterflies off before I can get any sensible shots. I do see a Small Tort, a Wall Brown vanishes almost as quickly as it appeared and only a couple of butterflies hang around and pose for me – an Adonis and a Brown Argus. Their good nature was probably down to their decrepitude. Still it was good to be able to how a few other species to my colleagues.



As we returned for work we realised that we'd been talking about all sorts all the way round and I don't know about the others but I certainly felt in a much better place, calmer and happier.
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 17-Aug-19 01:15 PM GMT

Love that STS shot Wurzel, and the flowers really stand out, I always look out for your Marhie shots has well, they're always great,
Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Aug-19 08:25 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was a bit surprised to see those Marshies to be honest as I thought that they might be over. It was great to be paid to do butterflying – I wonder if Greenwings would like to employ another guide? 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

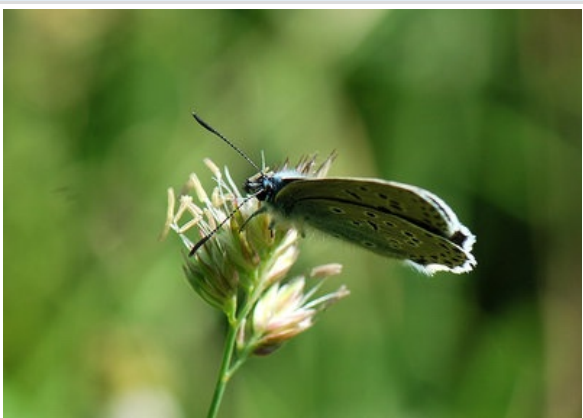
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Aug-19 08:43 AM GMT

Daneways 22-06-2019

For once the weather report seemed to be better than mildly accurate and so it was all systems go for Daneways! Hopefully the sunny intervals would mean that the butterflies weren't solar super charged, zooming all around and Philzoid and I would be able to get a mixture of open and closed winged shots. On the way there we chatted away and put the world to rights as the weather steadily improved and before I knew it we were pulled up in the car park and starting the stroll up the hill.

Instead of the trek up to the main entrance we climbed over the gate at the bottom of the reserve and made our way up the steep slope, yes it was steeper but instead of watching out for cars coming down the hill we could watch out for butterflies. In fact the first little section proved productive with Common Blues, Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Brown Argus all finding their way onto the Tally. We carried on the ascent and just as we reached the fence at the bottom of the first Bank proper we followed a Large Blue until it flew over said fence. Cracking on site for least than 5 minutes and the target species already located. We walked up and through the gate to the other side of the fence and then managed to relocate the first Large Blue and then a second. There was also a Small Tortoiseshell but one zipped off somewhere whilst the Small Tort and second Large Blue flew back over the fence so it was walking back to the gate, through the gate and then trying to relocate it which we did. It then decided to revisit the little patch back on the original side of the gate...the fence (no sure why it's there) was starting to be a bit of pain in the arse and so from this point on anything that flew over it was persona non gratis!





We wandered back and started our wanderings of the first Bank and the Large Blue did a flash by but luckily a few of the other enthusiasts called out a 'mating pair'. Thus meant that we were all able to get the classic closed wing shots and there wasn't a 'grab' shot in sight!





After this we set off to explore the rest of the site gently working our way to the other end of the site. There was another Large Blue, Small Tort, Meadow Browns and Common Blues but nothing was stopping. It seems that the weather had improved too much as the temperature rose so did the activity of the butterflies. One or two of the Common Blues did start to play ball including a lovely blue female. She wasn't all over blue but the hind wing margin and sub-margin was almost as blue as a male which contrasted nicely with the brown ground colour and dusting of blue and silver.



After this we worked up to the flatter plateau like section at the top of the Banks which runs across the site bordered by the trees. Again there were various stop-offs for the usual suspects including some nice showy Marbled Whites which were supping nectar from what I think is Coltsfoot the white and black beautifully set off by the vivid yellow.



We paused for a while where the path curves round and heads up through the wood to the top fields. We could see that two other enthusiasts were following some Large Blues further up the slope so we started checking out the slopes. I got onto a Large Blue right at the tree line which started to open up. Unfortunately as I called out it stopped basking and flew. Philzoid managed to get onto a different one slightly lower down but it wasn't stopping for long so it was a case of click as many times as possible then revert to watching to see where it would land before repeating. I climb back up to the bend and another bloke is watching a Large Blue that is threatening to open up. As we watch and wait I catch another Large Blue out of the corner of my eye. It lands and promptly opens up and starts basking. It was a really dark individual with very thick margins. This turned into a real purple patch with a further three Large Blues dropping in with one or two harrying those individual that we'd been watching.





I'll leave it there for now as I keep getting 'HTTP error' messages 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 19-Aug-19 04:53 PM GMT

Lovely Large Blues Wurzel 🦋🦋 their colour really stands out, it's one I've yet to see , just another on the list of want's 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 19-Aug-19 06:25 PM GMT

Great stuff Wurzel, those are some gorgeous Blues, but can you slow down with the postings a bit, you're only 3 weeks behind me now! You'll be losing your USP if you're not careful 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-19 09:11 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 It's good to have a wish list 😊😊

Cheers Bugboy 😊 I'll try but I've got enough posts in the bank to date to do one a week for the next 8 months 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 20-Aug-19 12:21 PM GMT

That's great Wurzel, you should take us through the Winter Months without any trouble 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Aug-19 08:39 PM GMT

I think it'll be more a case of 'It'll be over by EASTER' Goldie! 😊😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 21-Aug-19 09:53 PM GMT

Congrats for your Large Blues, Wurzel.
Open wing and a mating pair, can't be bad!
I didn't manage an open wing shot at Collard when I went, but did get two mating pairs.
They don't hang about!.

Great shots,
Trevor.

PS. I'm back in Wilts on Sept 1st for three days, Tilshead ?.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Aug-19 08:50 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 There's a bit more to come from that trip; I was having difficulty uploading the images so called it a night! I'd love to visit to Tilshead but I've got family stuff on the Sunday and Monday is back to work 😊

Daneways 22-06-2019

Chuffed we carried on following the track upwards and through the wood breaking out into the sunshine of the top field. This bit is much easier going for butterfly photography as it's relatively flat and much of the vegetation is short so flying butterflies are often easy to follow. Almost as soon as we moved from wood to grassland we saw a couple of Large Blues including one which seemed happy for us to follow it. It would fly a short distance, nectar away and drain the flower then fly a short distance and repeat. Once it landed it was so engrossed in feeding it didn't pay us any heed and so we had our second easiest set of shots for the day. It got even better as a passing cloud caused the butterfly to pause from nectaring and open up and bask - open wing shots achieved!





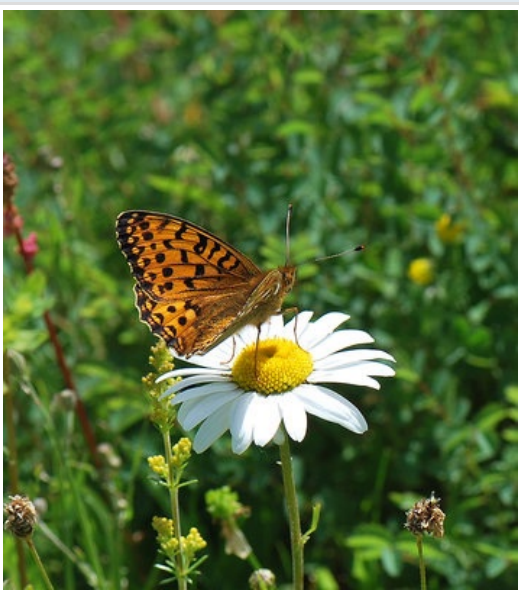
By now my stomach was feeling a little empty and in the sun we'd worked up a thirst so we walked along the top field aiming to come out roughly where we started. On the way we saw a few more Large Blues (which became scarcer as the sward got longer) Brown Argus, Common Blues including a courting couple and a Peacock. A Small Tort stopped by quite close to a Butterfly Orchid but it didn't land the flower unluckily. As the path carried on further down, curing on its way back to the gate a Painted Lady flew in and played very hard to get. You'd stalk it successfully, lean in for the shot, focus and then...then it would take off and zoom off to just far enough away for you to repeat the procedure. Eventually after a small amount of success we gave up and made our way down the steep bank and over the gate to retire to the pub for some refreshments.

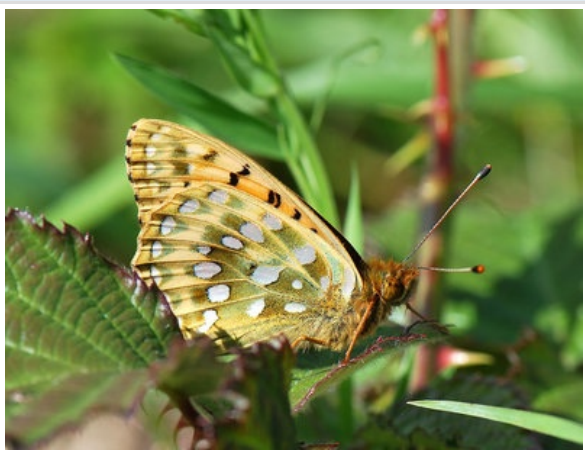




Cold drinks drunk we loaded up and headed for my Duke Site. The journey home was pretty much like the journey there apart from one very frightening moment when our conversation was interrupted by the Satnav announcing that "I'm listening to you" - so it looks like AI will overtake the world and it won't be long before Skynet takes over! 😬😬

The plan was to hike around the site until we found a few DGFs, get a few record shots for the year and then head home. As we walked away from the car there was the DGF, first butterfly at the site, so much for having to traipse about looking for one. The DGF only made a flying visit and so we set off hoping to find a few down on the deck. Down on the sparse turf zone where Adonis and Small Blues are to be found there were a few Small Heath and Common Blues as well as a further 3 DGFs - all fast moving and not camera fodder. Still with each new DGF we were seeing the chances of catching one on memory card (doesn't have quite the same ring as 'catch one on film but anyhow...) were also increasing. We followed the track that used to be so good for Dukes and then we strike out across the field where the DGFs seemed to be alternately hiding hunkered down or bombing across the grass tops. We split up and try the best we can to follow a single DGF for some shots but it is next to impossible as they were flying so frenetically. In the end I managed to find a female which behaved differently to the males in that she didn't fly as far and in when she landed she stayed for longer too. In this way I was able to get the much sought after closed wing shot showing the 'dark green' which to my mind is more of a kakhi/mossy green.





Time almost up we made it back to the car and so ended yet another fantastic trip!
Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 22-Aug-19 09:18 PM GMT

You've saved the best till last. Large Blue images don't get better than that 🍷 .
Very nice DGF too.

Don't work too hard !,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Katrina, 22-Aug-19 09:55 PM GMT

Lovely DGFs Wurzel. They look beautiful 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 23-Aug-19 07:11 PM GMT

Just caught up with your report(s) from Daneways Wurzel, having been there myself for the first time this year I can picture it in my mind as you describe your route around the site. You did better than me with the open wing Large Blue shots 📷 😊

A great selection of Dark Green Fritillary photos too, that first one is a beautiful fresh example, really jumps off the screen 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 24-Aug-19 09:41 PM GMT

I've still not been to Daneways, Wurzel – a habitual Collard Hill addict, me... 😊 However, those images of the Large Blues might make me consider a change! 😊 Very nice DGF too – fresh males really glow in the sunshine. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Aug-19 11:17 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 Those ones made up for last year when i didn't get a sniff of an open wing shot 😊

Cheers Katrina 😊 I don;t think those DGFs were long out of the pupal case 😊

Cheers Neil 😊 It was one of the view times that I was glad of some cloud otherwise it would have been closed wing shots only taking up lots of room on my memory card 😊 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 Having visited both I find Daneways a bit easier to work though I prefer Collard as an actual site if that makes sense? 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Aug-19 10:24 AM GMT

{size=150}Lavender Farm 23-06-2019
[/size]

I was settling down and spending time with the family today so after finishing the various shopping trips and munching down on Marmite sandwiches and selected fruit on the drive over we pulled into the Lavender Farm. The cloudy, muggy weather was going to make butterfly photography difficult, not because of the light but because the butterflies weren't likely to be flying. Still it would just be nice to wander round and enjoy the visual floral feast whilst mildly sedated and calmed by the all surrounding aroma. The Meadow Brown that did a fly-by as we entered was therefore a bit of a surprise but it didn't hang around after my initial sighting.

After a few turns around the garden and sometime reading the paper I decided to check out the flowers a little more closely as they seemed to be a hive of activity – with various beetles, small flies and bees. As I was watching the various Hoverflies and other bits and bobs I chanced to look up and a large cream tangerine coloured butterfly flew swiftly towards me. I kept my eye on it as it rapidly approached and so before it had landed I knew that it was a Painted Lady and also because of the pale colour, that it was worn. After the initial couple of shots I was hungry for more and so I entered into a game of hide and seek. The butterfly would take off, fly rapidly this way and that before landing somewhere in amongst the rows of Lavender; sometimes it would be on the deck, other times hidden amid the lilac stems whilst at other times it would be perched in almost plain view, relaying on its distracting underside to break up its silhouette. At one point I saw a Large White fly down the rows but I didn't want to take my eyes of my original quarry.



In the end it found what I think is Boules Mauve and then it settled down to feed. It would pirouette around the flower head before walking on tip toes to the next, it was all very balletic and was made even more so by the occasional flourish of the wings which it would close and then open wide before slightly back to a more relaxed angle. The odd passer-by would sometimes disturb the butterfly and would take off and fly off not getting very far before coming back to roughly the same place it left from; it seemed to recognise that it had hit the jackpot in terms of nectar and so was reluctant to

venture too far.



I left it there and carried on with my recce round and when we decided to pack up and head home it was still there occupying its territory. So there we go, even when you think "not a chance" butterflies can still appear and put on a show! Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-19 12:03 AM GMT

Forest School and Larkhill 25-06-2019

I was off to the Forest School at the Cotswold Water Park with all of the year 7's. However it wasn't looking hopeful with cooler than usual temperatures and a steady fall of rain adding to the dampness under foot. Through the course of the day we built shelters, lit fires with flints, toasted Marshmallows and did a Bug Hunt. In the gloom and dark and dripping darkness all that we could muster were a few snails and a Leopard Slug. At the end of the day the rain started to slow and the drear lifted. One of the instructors found a toad while the year 7's were playing Hide and Seek. Finally as we left Ringlets and Meadow Browns abounded as we walked through the meadow back to the coach and as we loaded the pupils (now steaming somewhat in the sun) onto the coach a Painted Lady stopped for nectar on a Bramble before flying off strongly in a Northerly direction.



By the time we'd returned to school the sun was shining and the temperatures had risen so I stopped for 20 minutes or so on the way home. As I pulled into the tiny lay-by and cars roared past I remembered why I've curtailed my visits here. Still safely across the road I then remembered why I liked to stop here. Amid the numerous Meadow Browns and Ringlets a Common Blue or two and a Brown Argus stood out due to their colouration and size difference. I also found three Small Blues which seemed to favour the longer sward just off from the path.



Further along the track Marbled Whites flew seemingly shunning the more exposed areas and favouring the small enclosed patches. Something zig-zagged out of one of these patches while I watched a Marbled White. It was definitely a Skipper and judging by the small size and timing probably a Small...I managed to watch it as it zipped here and there and when it landed a quick stalk meant I was able to confirm it as such. Pleased with my first non-Smessex Smessex I headed home, still slightly damp from the morning.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-19 08:09 PM GMT

Larkhill 26-06-2019

I didn't get out at lunch so instead I took a few moments out on the way home. Once again I had to take my life into my hands and pull into the smallest of pull-ins before braving the road. How come when I'm driving I always get stuck behind some geriatric Sunday driver yet when I try and cross the road I end up trying to avoid being flattened by Mansells and Sennas? 😊

Safely across the road I set off up the track, my pulse dropping 5 or so beats with every step and my blood pressure dropping precipitously, but in a good way. It isn't exactly Forest Bathing but once I'm over the hump of getting across the road stopping off definitely has a positive impact on my health. The first little area I come to holds 2 Adonis and my second Small Skipper of 2019. There was also a Common Blue and 2 Brown Argus all flying into and around the confines of this little patch of lower growing vegetation. I could have stayed here but I feared saying stationary lost I lost track of time in my, now, lackadaisical state.



Slightly further up the path I encountered a Small Blue and there soon ensued a bit of a Brown fest. Most numerous were the Meadow Browns and Ringlets which would flee forwards only for me to disturb them a few steps further. You'd think by now they'd realise that it would be better to fly around and be behind the predator? The next most numerous were Small Heath, putting in a good showing in 2019. Possibly worrying was there were only a few Marbled Whites? Perhaps they haven't gotten started properly yet? A Small Skipper popped in to keep me on my toes as it zipped about like the golden Snitch before finally settling and letting me get some shots as if deserved them.



On the walk back a Painted Lady dropped in momentarily and I was able to fire off only 2 shots before it was gone leaving a vague notion of a flying easel in my minds eye. Pleased with the haul and the relaxed manner I was now adopting I headed for home.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by ernie f, 29-Aug-19 10:08 PM GMT

You sure get some great Common Blue abs round your way Wurzel.
I also just looked back to the previous page and saw those great Large Blues too.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 30-Aug-19 11:37 AM GMT

Yes, lovely blue female Common Blues, Wurzel. When fresh like that they shine like colourful gems down in the grass. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-19 04:36 PM GMT

Cheers Ernie 😊 I see more blue females than brown, the 'textbook' brown females that can be confused with Brown Argus are so much rarer now 😊
Cheers Dave 😊 I think they should be renamed 'Semi-precious Blues' Dave which would take that into account as well as their frequency 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-19 08:51 PM GMT

September 2019

Happy September! Hopefully things aren't going to quieten down this month...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 02-Sep-19 02:59 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, some great shots in your post , particularly that lovely Blue Adonis 😊 The weather here has been awful over the week-end, at least it was nice but too hot when my Daughter was here, (we're never happy 😊) Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Sep-19 08:39 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 You're right about us butterfliers – we're like Goldilocks but we rarely experience it 'just right!' 😊😊

Larkhill and on... 27-06-2019

Stopping on the way to work is much, much easier than on the other way round as there is no road crossing to send the pulse rate soaring through the rough, instead once you've managed to fit the car into the tiny pull in you're right at old 'half way point' of the track. This morning it was already warm by the time I'd started traipsing up the slightest of inclines. On the way I noted Meadow Browns and Ringlets that were basking on the wheel ruts on the track whilst the Small Heath hung out on the taller grasses that lined the track and in the central reservation. A Small Tort stopped by all too briefly – but it was good to see them still here. The odd Marbled White took off from their open winged basking just as I got in range so instead I focused my

efforts on the Common Blues that were still hanging flag fashion in their roosting positions. They caught the light a treat in the early morning glow.



At lunch I headed straight up the field and the uncut areas are now just above the knee with various Browns hiding away within the sward. As I walked round the edge I counted those that erupted from nearby as I passed and this produced a tally of Meadow Browns in the mid-thirties along with three Small Heath and a couple of Ringlets. Over at the Pits There were a couple more Ringlets and Meadow Browns taking advantage of the nectar on offer from the huge Bramble and a Small Tort dropped in along with 2 Large Skipper.





I was staying after work for first a meeting and then the ACE Awards night. This would mean some 'locked in' time and so once I'd caught up with marking, reports and planning I nipped out to the little field in the middle of the housing estate. It came as a shock to see that it was all fenced off and the grassland had been roughly ploughed or more correctly ripped asunder and viciously gouged! Somewhat dejectedly I wandered back and made to head inside when a Painted Lady flew the length of the car park and I watched as it turned left round the building. I followed it managing to find it even after it had flown over the Nursery School. I kept up with it all the way to the Pits but my hopes of it landing and taking nectar evaporated as it veered right and cut across the Primary school's field before disappearing from view over the hedge. Still I was at the Pits so as I was here I had a look around.

It seems that some of the Meadow Browns from the field had made their way over for a feast (either that or they were hiding earlier in the day) and I counted 19 of them along with (the same?) two Ringlets but I could only find one Large Skipper – perhaps the other had gone early to bed? I wish I could but I made my way in with another couple more hours of work on the cards.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 06-Sep-19 05:08 PM GMT

Love that first shot of the Common Blues Wurzel, I've not seen too many this year. Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 07-Sep-19 06:33 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I know what you mean about the Common Blues – there was so much going on this year that I seemed to miss out seeing as many blues as I usually do 😊 Have to rectify that next year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-19 10:40 PM GMT

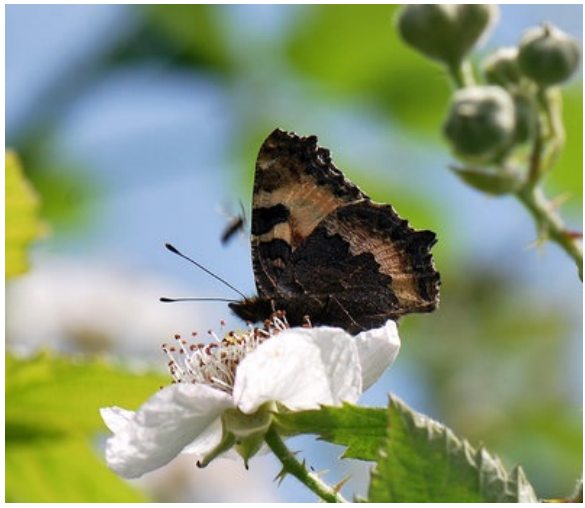
Larkhill 28-06-2019

After the very long day yesterday I was in two minds about stopping – instead preferring to just get to work and mainline on Coffee so I could get through the day but somehow in my slightly befuddled state I ended up at on the path at Larkhill. There were good numbers of Meadow Browns and Small Heath as I started the walk up the track and there was also the occasional, smaller and darker looking Ringlet (when compared to the Meadow Brown natch). I didn't see any Lycaenids until I was slightly further up the path and then I found what looked like a communal roosting site. A scan around the tops of the grasses revealed 13 tiny flags flying in the breeze, one of which on closer examination was a Brown Argus but still 12 Common Blues in one line of sight is not to be sneezed at. As I was making towards the Blues to start trying for a few shots I spied a sole Marbled White stretching out its wings to try and warm up more quickly. The wings on its left side were curled over at the edge and looked like they'd gotten stuck to the case of the chrysalis. It gave them the appearance of a singed and flame shrunk crisp packet. After dealing with the Blues I found another Marbled White which was in much better shape and it too was also stretched out basking in the weak early morning sun.



At lunch time after some cover work and plenty of marking and planning I needed to clear my head ready for a full on afternoon and so I stepped out at lunch and made for the Pits. As I strolled/waded through the grasses Meadow Browns and Ringlets erupted forth and there were a few each of these hanging around on the Bramble patch as well. A few Small Skippers (I'm going with Small as they've only just emerged and Essex are still to be reported) zipped here and there making their remaining larger cousins look positively decrepit and cumbersome. The highlight though came in the form of a Small Tort which looked glorious backlit as it sipped away. All too soon it was away from a little piece of paradise and back to reality.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by NickMorgan, 08-Sep-19 11:06 PM GMT

Reading through your diary it always strikes me how many more species of butterflies you have down there than we have up here in Scotland. Chalkhill Blues, Adonis Blues and Large Blues, Marbled Whites and Gatekeepers. Of those I have only briefly seen a Gatekeeper! I think I will have to have a visit to the south of England to lengthen my butterfly list a bit. Yes, White Admirals, Purple Emperors, Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper. So many!!

Re: Wurzel

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

Good to see your Small Tortoiseshell, saw three at the Whitehall garden centre at Laycock last week, guess what!, no camera with me. And that is a fabulous 'blue' female Common Blue from a couple of posts back. Wiltshire does seem to produce some very fine 'blue' female Blues.

Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 10-Sep-19 07:17 PM GMT

Your Marble White reminds me of chasing, I should say hobbling 😊 through the fields in Kent looking for a shot of one but unable to be quick enough to get my shot 😊 I did how ever in the end 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 11-Sep-19 08:24 PM GMT

Fresh Marbled Whites! Is it really that long since they were out? I love the inkiness of the black markings and the contrast with the creamy white – great shots, Wurzel. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-19 08:51 PM GMT

Cheers Nick 😊 If you do pay a visit down South give us a holler and I can try and put you onto some good sites and if allowed I could show you around some 😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 The Small Torts do seem to be doing much, much better in Wiltshire than in other parts – I think there were only one or two visits this year when I didn't record at least one – long may it continue 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I was looking through some of my younger daughters old Beano books (well they were actually mine but have now found a younger, more avid reader 😊) and in one of them was the solution that you could have used for your boot; you could have put a roller skate in it and then whizzed across the Downs hunting down the Marbs 😊 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 It seems like only yesterday that I was eagerly anticipating their arrival and now here we are in mid September, the nights are drawing in and the butterflies are waning 😊 😊 I blame Brexit 😊

Have a goodun

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Sep-19 08:18 PM GMT

Grovely Woods 30-06-2019

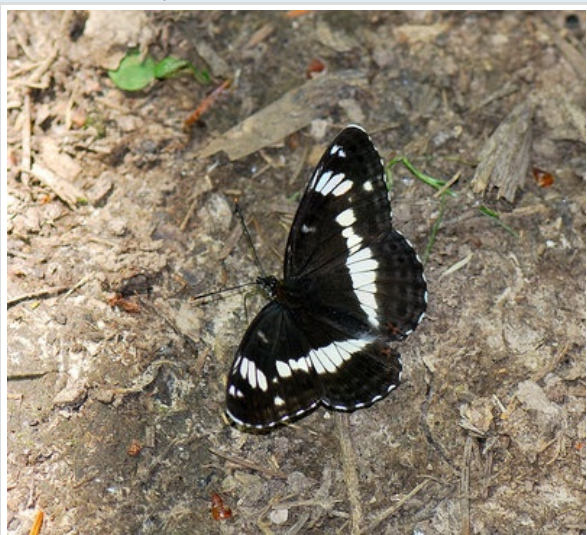
As the girls were still away my wife and I took the opportunity of a woodland walk without the moans or constant "how far is it?" questioning. We decided on Grovely Wood as my wife hadn't been there before and in the hot weather the thought of a little shade was appealing. I had no expectations but took my camera just in case.

The first part is a dusty trackway that gently climbs uphill hemmed in by Beech trees; a Painted Lady was there at the start to entice us further up the track. Occasionally there is a break between the trees and then on the other side the margins of the fields have been left to their own devices, little ecological buffer zones between the wood and the arable fields. I glimpsed golden skipper, meadow Browns, Ringlets and the occasional Marbled White as we walked. As it started to level as we neared the brow of the hill a Small White flew near us and at top a Ringlet posed nicely as we gingerly edged through the Bramble tunnel.



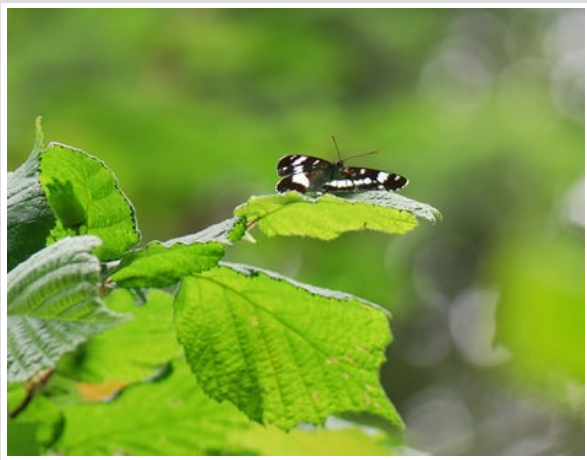
Now the shade really picked up as we were in the wood proper and so we carried on breaking out into the sun again as we walked along one of the woodland rides. The Browns (Meadow Brown and Ringlet) and Large Skippers abounded on the lush vegetation and then like a flying scimitar cutting through the air my first White Admiral of 2019. What a cracking sight!

Slightly further on I spied another White Admiral doing the familiar slow circular cruise. I waited and sure enough it came down to the deck a couple of times. Unfortunately whatever it was that had attracted it was in much shorter supply than it had anticipated and so it promptly took off again.





The wood changed now with more open wider areas from tree clearance, felling of pines. As I scanned across the butterflies that fluttered about a vivid orange butterfly flew and landed up high. Too high for a decent shot unfortunately but still identifiable as a Silver-washed Fritillary, another first for the year. 😊 Once we'd walked on through the Fairy Tale like part of the wood (massive gnarly Oaks randomly placed) and reached the crossroads we made the turn around having first added another 2 White Admirals which were gliding about near the turn around point to the tally. On the later stretches of the walk back whilst still in the wood a White Admiral hung around up high for a bit peering down at me, the undersides gloriously backlit and making rue that I'd not brought a step ladder with me. On the final stretch surrounded by dust and Beech a Specklie wished adieu. All in all a lovely and productive afternoon walk.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 13-Sep-19 09:25 PM GMT

What a lovely fresh White Admiral, Wurzel – you can see all of its chequered fringes! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-19 07:57 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I was dead chuffed with that shots as it was such a fleeting liaison, all over in 15 seconds or less 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 15-Sep-19 09:03 AM GMT

Slop Bog 02-07-2019 Part 1

The Silver-studded Blues had been flying for a while and due to one thing or another I'd not been able to catch up with them. To rectify this managed to arrange a visit after work. So come the day I was changed into my gear, coffee travel mug loaded with thick, hot black magic and with the ever popular Iron Maiden replacing my usual ear fodder for the journey home, I was away. Slightly annoyingly SATNAV had me travelling the usual route home but then on the outside of Salisbury I ended up following roads that I'd never ventured on previously before finding myself at Matchams where I was able to get my bearings. Then in no time at all it was a matter of parking, jumping out and marching through the wood before slowing as I stepped onto the boardwalk...

At this juncture of the site things suddenly change with habitat flipping from deciduous woodland to wet Dorset heathland. The trees stop suddenly to be replaced with reeds which peter out to cotton grasses and then heather. Almost as soon as I rounded the corner and spied heather before me I could see little puffs of blue floating over the tops of the Ling and Bell Heather like dyed cotton grass buds. Once off the boardwalk I was able to actually investigate rather than watching from afar and so I waded into the heather here noting that this area which is usually at east damp under foot is now bone dry. All around me Silver Studs fly most looking a bit worn and tired with chips and tears in their wings, some of them missing their margins and the worst looking a deep royal blue colour having lost the scales on their wings which give them their stunning electric blue colour when fresh. With these worn males were flying females that were in slightly better nick and they were almost as numerous as the males which left me feeling that perhaps I'd left it a little bit too late for a visit?





I carried on criss-crossing the heath and paused to watch the various shenanigans occasionally. At one point I was privy to a failed courtship. The male flew in and landed on the same perch as a female. After a bit of wing flapping she settled down slightly and things were looking good for the male I thought. They proceed with a bit of antenna touching and (the butterfly equivalent of checking out each other profile?) and shuffling along the twig. But no the female changes her mind and starts flapping her wings frantically again; a definite rebuff. The male flies off but not very far, just to a neighbouring stand of heather and where he settled down lower in the foliage to regroup and come up with a new strategy possibly. He seems to steel himself with a quick bask before flying back to the same female and having another go. He obviously hasn't learnt the 'No means No!' and once again he gets the elbow.





Second time still unlucky!

I move over from the little initial field of heather and start working my way along the edges of the main track with a sea of pink and purple before me. The range of activities I manage to witness grows with fights between males over either perching spots or females, wing rolling, basking and sitting on poo. I saw a few butterflies doing this and one notable female was not only sitting on poo (one for the collection) but was also wing rolling. Pleased to see all of this I moved on not knowing or caring where my meanderings would take me and just enjoying there being so many Silver Studs. I can't recall ever seeing so many and I'd have attempted counting but that would have been impossible as almost as soon as I'd take the next step countless butterflies would erupt from where they'd been hidden in plain sight and they bewilderingly fly off in different directions. It would have been as difficult as herding cats. I did witness another failed attempt at courtship and although the majority of the males that I found were tired looking the occasional fresher individual did turn up.





Having managed to find a few males in good nick I then started to search more actively for females. I was fairly convinced that they were about in only slightly lower numbers but they seemed to favour the more sheltered areas like the little under hangs below the crown of the heather. So instead of looking across the heath at the tops I'd reach a stand of heather and lean over to look around the lower stems. This worked out as I found a female which once she realised that I'd seen her flew up the floral bells and started prodding around them. She was a stunner and then I noticed a second female at my side only 20 or so centimetres away from the first one. I spent a good while with these ladies photographing one and then swivelling my hips to work on the second. The initial one seemed fresher and was a delicious chocolate brown occasionally showing the greens and oranges on the fore wings when the light hit them just right. The second had a few more scratches on her wings yet her margins were intact and near the body there were lovely blue hair like flecks which shimmered slightly in the early evening glow.





Slightly dozy from the heat and weary from work I wandered further afield into the heather. It felt like I was in the middle of a miniature jungle but in reality I was only three strides from the path! Heartbreakingly I witnessed yet another failed courtship but as some consolation I noticed that the males were starting to open up now. They crawl/tightrope walk along a side twig or blade of grass; ascend to the top of the heather amid the bells, and sit wings spread in the grasses. This meant I was able to pick and choose the better looking males for photographing yet the cloud wasn't helping. One or two males really stood out. One was brilliantly marked, the blue blending into pure white at the front leading edge of the wing. Another stood out because it was smaller than one of the smallest brown Argus and also because it was so stunning painted.





I'll leave it there for now - only another 500 photos to sort through! 😊😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Sep-19 10:39 PM GMT

Slop Bog 02-07-2019 Part 2

The sun was shining intermittently and it was great to watch the change in hues worn by a single butterfly as the sun waxed and waned. The males would go from a violet blue in the shade to an almost metallic sky blue in the sun whilst under the same change in lighting the females would alter from dark chocolate to the oily sheen. I found that I turned my attention more and more to the ladies as I couldn't get enough of their subtle peacock colours. One that I found early in my searching wasn't exactly oily but instead it looked like it had fallen into first a tub of glue and then a container of gold glitter - it sparkled in the golden glow of the evening sun.



After this little bit of treasure I continued my searching, wading this way and that amid the Heather. The scents and smells of the Heath took me back to my formative years and while reminiscing I stumbled across a lovely looking female Meadow Brown. She was very well marked on her upper fore wings with the orange extending almost all the way over the wing and there were also little panels of orange hind wing. With the almost double pupiled eye for a brief moment I wondered if I was seeing a massive Hedge Brown! There was also a yellow blob near the top of her abdomen – paint as part of a scientific catch and release study or had she landed in the wrong place at the wrong time? Either way she represented only the third species of butterfly seen during my visit (in the end that was the total!).





I got back to the Silver Studs which wasn't actually that difficult as they were all over the place. My wanderings had taken me to the small bit of Pine wood that acts as a buffer zone between the Heath and encroachment of the buildings. In a little clearing there is a large Bramble bush and there in the more lush and tussock like grass around it was another Large Skipper and surprisingly a male Silver Stud. He sat still for long enough to try for some close ups and I managed to get a passable stained glass shot.





After a bit of a break from butterflying to do some 'housekeeping; pee stop, drink, snack (Mr Tom and some of my own trail mix), change battery etc. I set out from the pine woodland once more to the heath. As my feet moved from the springy pine needle carpet to the harder compacted dirt tracks between the Heather the sun went in. At first I was irked as I wanted some more oily sheens and electric blues but it worked out in the end as the lack of sun calmed a Clouded Buff long enough to get a few shots.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 16-Sep-19 11:11 PM GMT

I'm pleased you managed to eventually find some fresh Silver Studded Blues, always a treat to see. I only managed one day with them this year, and my experience with them was similar to yours.
That's a stunning White Admiral in your previous post, a really dark specimen.

Great shots as usual, Wurzel.
Have fun!,
Trevor.

PS. There's a chance of a few Wilts LTB's, some were seen in Cornwall a few weeks back.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 17-Sep-19 01:22 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, some fantastic shots you've taken, I can't see one I like the best there all good and most of them I've not seen this year 😊😊 I've a good excuse though, the Roller Skate sounded good 😊 it would only have helped break the other foot though 😊😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-19 10:42 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 That WA was a nice find – it was mint 😊 I was quite surprised this year that when I went looking for Silver Studs I actually saw more than two different species of butterfly – usually it's just Silver Studs and Large Skippers 😊😊
Cheers Goldie 😊 "the Roller Skate sounded good 😊 it would only have helped break the other foot though 😊😊 Goldie 😊"...ahhh...I hadn't thought of that 😊😊😊😊 I've still got a few Silver Stud shots to sort out – I reasoned that I would probably only get one shot with them this year so I filled my boots/memory card 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 18-Sep-19 09:31 AM GMT

Terrific Silver-studded Blues, Wurzel. Difficult to single out the highlights, but for me the female with the blue next to the body is one, and the male with the striking hindwing marginal black spots is another. 🍷😊 You do need to be wary though of folk (like me! 😊) taking your words out of context:

"...I spent a good while with these ladies photographing one and then swivelling my hips to work on the second..."

Best not take up a second career as a politician – though thinking about it, persistent foot-in-mouth gaffes might actually be a qualifying criterion for the top positions! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Sep-19 10:53 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 "I spent a good while with these ladies photographing one and then swivelling my hips to work on the second..."ah I see what you mean 😊 This is what comes from trying to emulate The King during photography 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Sep-19 08:23 PM GMT

Slop Bog 02-07-2019 Part 3

It was now gone 5:30 and the butterflies were starting to clump together. Earlier there had been individuals spread unevenly across the Heather and Ling or flitting across the tracks but now I could take a few steps with nothing and then on the next step masses of blues would shine upwards like Sapphires amid the dark greens of the Heath. I've probably said it before but I'll say it again – I cannot recall ever seeing so many Silver Studs at one time. I've visited Chalk Downlands in high summer and there have been clouds of Chalkhills and this felt just like that just on a much smaller site. I'd wade through and they'd disappear off like little sky blue puffs of smoke. There were at least a hundred in sight at any one time so heaven knows how many there actually were over the whole site. A chap I bumped into reckoned that someone had recorded 200+ on a single transect walk – now bearing in mind that you only count a metre either side there could easily be 10 times that amount present. It was awesome.





I can't really recall anything after this as I walked in a daze from one clump to the next. I do recall some stunning oily females when the sun finally deemed to come out as well as so beautifully fresh males but I don't think that words would do my memories justice so instead I'll let the images do the narration.







Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Janet Turnbull, 20-Sep-19 09:34 PM GMT

What a great day! No wonder you went around in daze afterwards. I love the photos of the females, especially the first one.
Janet

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 21-Sep-19 08:03 PM GMT

I'm with Janet on the photos of the females, Wurzel – the fresh ones display incredible iridescence and turn what could in essence be just a small brown butterfly into a wonderful thing. Some of them have amazingly intense turquoise studs on the underside too. Great shots of a really lovely species. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Sep-19 10:38 PM GMT

Cheers Janet 😊 I got there a bit later in their flight this season and so the females were almost as numerous and also in much better condition than most of the males 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 I thought I'd overdone it a bit with the number of photos but they are such a photogenic species and one of the easiest to photograph especially when they're in such large numbers as they were this year 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 22-Sep-19 10:57 PM GMT

A very impressive array of SSB shots from one of my favourite named sites. I could tie that on an early Lulworth skipper hunt next year. Looking at the general area on google maps it looks like there's a few places around Ferndown that might be worth exploring!

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 23-Sep-19 04:39 PM GMT

Simply fantastic shots Wurzel 🍷🍷😊 I can't pick out which I like the best, Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 23-Sep-19 07:12 PM GMT

I am loving that female Meadow Brown from Slop Bog Wurzel 😊 I have made a point of looking for examples like that since I started seeing some like it over the past few years and there seems to be more of them around these days...or is it just because I am looking for them now?

A nice sequence of SSBs too 🍷😊, another species I have missed this year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Sep-19 01:26 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy 😊 There's lots of good habitat round there – on the way through you could stop off in the New Forest or work your way down from Bentley Wood possibly 😊😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I had the same problem hence having to break it up into three posts (as well the huge amount of time it took to sort them all out) 😊
A nice problem to have TBH 😊

Cheers 😊 It could be that you've got to adept at spotting them Neil but maybe they're becoming more common? The continental forms are quite like that so perhaps their patternation is changing in line with the climate? 😊

Have a goodun

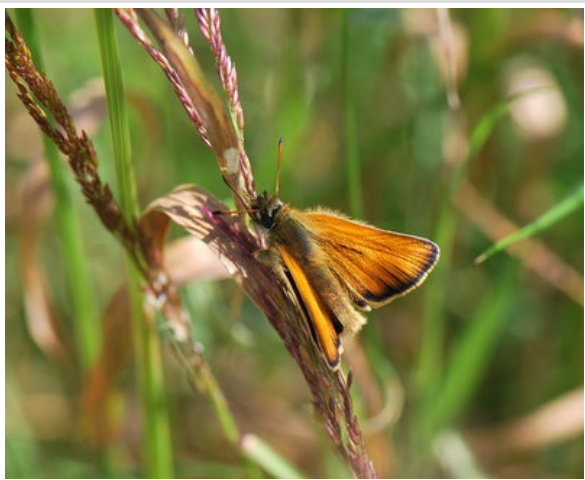
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Sep-19 10:28 PM GMT

At Work with the Smessex 04-07-2019

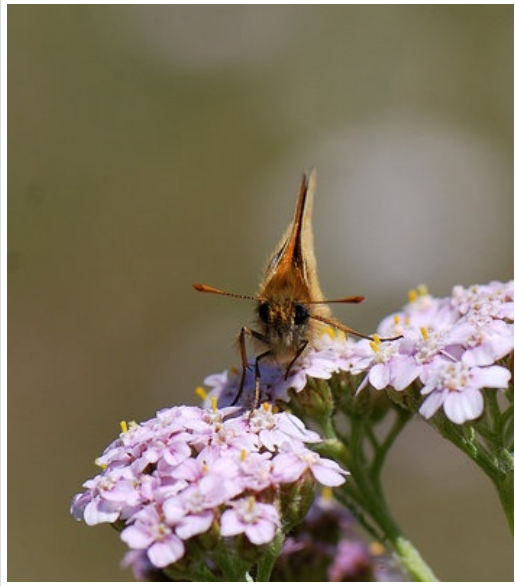
With the weather turning "Hot, hot, hot" I was a bit worried about whether a lunchtime trip would actually produce any actual photographs as the butterflies, I thought, would be turbo charged. However I headed out anyway keeping my eyes peeled on the walk therefor anything that might be of interest. I didn't see anything until I actually got to the first overgrown part of the Pits. As I wandered through taking the same path that I've worn over all of my visits this year the Meadow Browns and Ringlets flew up from their hiding places in the grass and just as I was coming to the little patch of mown grass, a bit like a reverse oasis, a tiny sandy coloured blur shot out of the sward and something in my brain made me automatically switched me to 'stalk' mode. I think it was the fact that instead of the standard orange gold colour that suggest a Small this was a more sandy gold which in my mind suggest Essex. I followed it as it flew slightly panic-y across the open field and watched as it landed, relieved, on the edge of one of the margins. I got in a bit closer and then knelt down and sure enough there were the tell-tale 'ink dabs' - my first definitive Essex of 2019. I spent a bit of time with it reacquainting myself with the salient identification features; sandy coloured fringes, yellow gold ground colour, ink dabs, drum stick shaped antenna tips and smaller straight androconia.





After this I wandered over to the large Bramble and checked it out but it was quite quiet for a change with only a single Large Skipper and 4 or 5 Smessex. The little patch on the other side where the vegetation is just recovering from a very intensive hair cut looked more lively with butterflies zipping between the flowers that grow in sparse clumps here. Amid the Meadow Browns and Ringlets a golden skipper stopped long enough for me to confirm it as a Small. Then a flying chequer board drifted in from the main field. Possibly the first Marbled White on the site (I can't remember if I've recorded them in the past) made its appearance and then flew nonchalantly right by and carried on disappearing into the hedge on the far side of the Primary school.





I realised that I would soon need to be in front of a class and so made my way back noting a total of 8 Smessex on the return journey - I'd loved to have stopped for longer to determine if there were more than the singleton Essex - maybe tomorrow...
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 25-Sep-19 11:18 AM GMT

The first shot of that Essex is my fav I think, I love it when you get the sun glinting of the body hairs and longer scales near the body 😊

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 25-Sep-19 11:53 AM GMT

If anyone had any doubts that your first butterfly was an Essex, then your fourth image (from the top) is all the confirmation needed. I have never seen the ' ink dabs ' so clearly illustrated.

Great stuff, as usual.
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Sep-19 01:04 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy 😊 Mine too - when the light catches them like that you can really see why they're classed as 'the golden Skippers' 😊😊
Cheers Trevor 😊 I managed to get that one just right - mind you I almost put my back out trying to achieve it 😊 Another 'Peril of Butterflying' to add to the list 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 27-Sep-19 08:40 PM GMT

Great series of Small and Essex Skippers Wurzel 😊 I struggled to get any decent photos of either of these this year, it always seemed to be windy when I saw them and when they settled they tucked themselves low down in the grass.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Sep-19 11:42 AM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 They did seem to have a bit of a lie-in this year and then the heat meant that they were extra hard work 😊😊 Worth the struggle though 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Sep-19 11:35 PM GMT

October 2019



As we enter into October it's good to start looking back through your shots – the Favourites thread is coming!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 03-Oct-19 09:33 AM GMT

Is it that time of year already! Just as things are hotting up around here. Where has the season gone?, seems like yesterday that I was chasing Orange Tips.

Off to Wilts. on Thurs.10th October, for our first teenager's birthday.

Great Spotted Frit. image.
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 03-Oct-19 08:43 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I know what you mean – this year has disappeared, it feels like only yesterday that I was watching Greenstreaks or Pearls and only like last week that I was setting off for the Winter Social – and now here we are with the next Social only 7 weeks or so away 😊😊 Mind you the good thing is that it'll soon be spring 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 04-Oct-19 09:24 AM GMT

That's how I see it, Wurzel. Last winter it was only three months between the winter social and the first butterflies of 2019 (and there were one or two in December as well). If that time passes as quickly as the summer seems to have done, then I can probably survive it... 😊😊 Perhaps we should all go out armed with copies of Pete's book seeing what we can find. 😊😊

By the way, when you kick off the Favourite Images thread shortly, are you going to include the Long-tailed Blue as a species on the list in its own right, or will it still be relegated to the section with vagrants and rare migrants? It deserves better than that! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 04-Oct-19 08:54 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I'd love to head out with my copy of Eeles but during the down part of the season it's my one opportunity to try and get up to date - I almost managed it this season 😊 though this season isn't looking good, I might be caught up by about May 2020 😊 Plus I have to do all those household jobs that I put off while the butterflies are about 😊😊 With regards to the LTB - technically it's still a vagrant as it isn't included in the '59' so I suppose that's where it should still be placed 😊 To be honest as it begins with 'L' I've still got a bit of time before I have to worry about where to fit it in 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 05-Oct-19 05:16 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, Love the way you've caught the light on the Skippers, just Brill!!!! Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Oct-19 07:03 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 They do sparkle nicely when fresh - I like to look back on them during the periods of drear we're experiencing at the moment as they brighten my mood somewhat 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

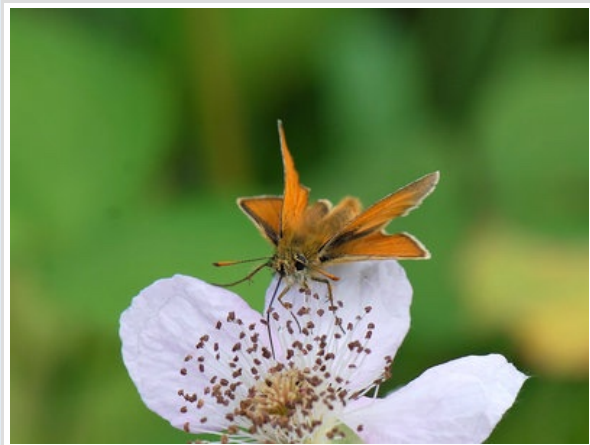
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 06-Oct-19 06:23 PM GMT

Work 05-07-2019

Yesterday I struggled to classify the Smessex into either Small or Essex so my intention this lunchtime was to try and do a better job. I did the usual walk through the grasses at the start of the Pits and a few Meadow Browns and Ringlets took to the air. A Small White added a different hue to the otherwise golden brown affair that my lunchtime walk was taking as did a non-stop Marbled White on the other side of the huge Bramble.

So now I set about Skipper ID in the little sparsely covered patch on the other side of fore mentioned huge Bramble. It was trickier than I'd reasoned as the butterflies would hear or somehow sense my approach and would vamoosh away into the longer vegetation that was encroaching on this little cleared area. So I tried a different tack and stood on the side lines and watched one of the taller plants. When a skipper flew in I'd click step in until I was able to get a proper look at the butterfly. In this way I managed to rack up 2 definite Essex and 3 definite Smalls. These tallies might not sound like a lot but none too shabby for a period of 7 or so minutes and these were only the ones that landed on this particular flower. I reckon a 2:3 ratio was probably about right and so I then set about looking for Skippers in other places around the patch.



I then saw one Skipper make a bee line for another, taking off from its perch which it was holding like a territory. It landed near the second and then without a 'please or thank you' spun its abdomen round and advanced on the immobile female Skipper. After the slightest of wing flutters that wasn't really a very convincing rejection the female accepted the males advances and the two locked together. It was a very brief courtship!





After a watching the two locked together I realised that whilst the 'stake out' technique got me my positive IDs it had taken a large slice of my time and so I set off back to the lab on the quick march. I did see some more golden Skippers on the route but as I was rushing all 9 of them will have to remain as Smessex.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 06-Oct-19 07:24 PM GMT

Great account of the courtship (or lack of it!) and pairing of those Small Skippers, Wurzel. 😊 The undersides of the two are noticeably different in shade, too and as neither seems worn this could be a very useful distinction when you can't see an upperside.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 06-Oct-19 07:44 PM GMT

Great shots of the mating Small Skippers, Wurzel.
A sight I've not seen myself, but I did see the large variety in cop last year.
They made a change from all the Black Hairstreaks that day! 😊

Don't work too hard,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Oct-19 11:13 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I had noticed that some of the Smessex that I saw very a lighter shade but hadn't really twigged that it could be sexual dimorphism – mind you one couple does not a rule make but it's definitely something to keep an eye out for next season 😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 I'll swap you all my Smessex Skipper in cop shots for one Black Hairstreak Trevor 🍷 I'll try not to work too hard but my line manager might have other ideas 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 10-Oct-19 07:37 AM GMT

Hope you'll make an appointment with Sussex next year for the Black Hairstreak.
There's no excuse, you have all the coming winter to build up masses of brownie points.
What is more, the route from Salisbury to Ditchling common is easy.

All the best,
Trevor.

PS. The BH pose for the camera like supermodels!.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 10-Oct-19 10:49 AM GMT

Wurzel, you've brightened my day no end with your Skipper shots 🍷🍷🍷 the last one in particular is a " look at us we couldn't care less who's

watching", I'm still laughing 😄 Goldie 😄

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Oct-19 06:41 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😄 I think next year it will definitely be time to bite the bullet and 'complete the Hairstreaks' – the only problem is knowing my luck the weather will be atrocious on the weekends 😞 If you have a postcode for Ditchling that would be really useful as I can plug it into Sheila Satnav. 😄
Cheers Goldie 😄 They certainly weren't shy 😄😄 Glad it brightened your day – if you're having weather up there like we're having down here then that was some achievement – it's been like the night all day 😞😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by MikeOxon, 12-Oct-19 10:02 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

Great account of the courtship (or lack of it!) and pairing of those Small Skippers, Wurzel. 😄 The undersides of the two are noticeably different in shade, too and as neither seems worn this could be a very useful distinction when you can't see an upperside.

I am wary of judging shade differences from photographs. So much can be down to the angle of the light reflecting off the different surfaces. Of course, Wurzel was actually there, so he may know if the differences were 'real'.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Oct-19 06:02 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😄 I can confirm that the different shades were 'real' however I wouldn't say that it's always the case until I've checked it out many more times, something for next season 😄😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Oct-19 11:18 PM GMT

Five Rivers 07-07-2019

A gorgeous afternoon saw me winging my way Five Rivers bound. Once on site and parked I decided to head towards the Banks via the river path and so I set off sniggering slightly at the sight of the sweaty work-out fanatics in the gym as I dove down into the shade. Some of the usual grassy knolls between the trees had been left unmown and it was cracking to see. The grasses and clumps of tall dense flowers were reaching almost to my hips and so I used the favoured technique of pointing my toes and slipping my feet in between the sward. It meant that my progress was slow but the advantages were much less trampling and also I was able to approach the butterflies better. As I reached a quarter of the way in I stopped and scanned round; initially I counted the butterflies present and then I switched to selecting my targets. There was a solitary Ringlet, to my right a tiny Small Skipper, a Speckle fluttered in amid the twigs at the treeline and all around Meadow Browns rose vertically in their beguiling, floppy yet surprisingly swift flight.



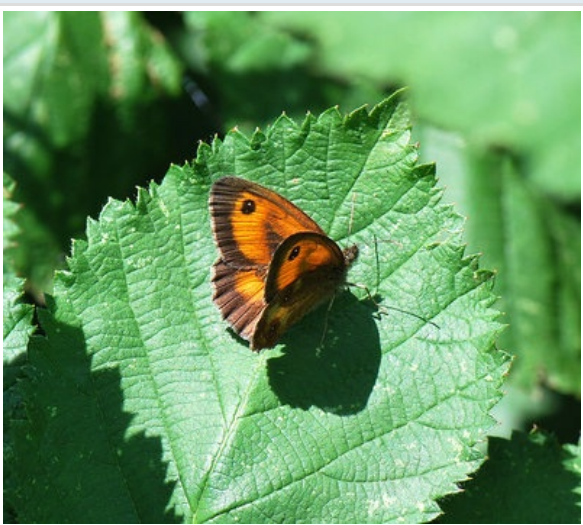


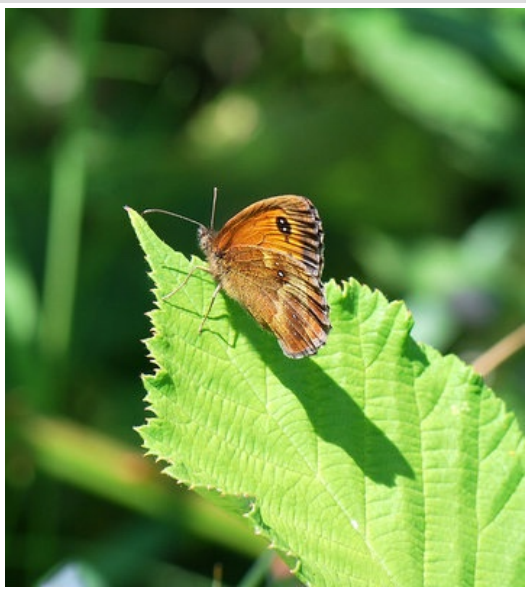
Having spent some time here and managing a few shots, including a male Meadow Brown with wings spread and still in good nick, I moved on to the small copse at the near side of the Banks. Along the low bank a Small Tort landed, probably an early riser from the small field of nettles at the other edge of the copse.





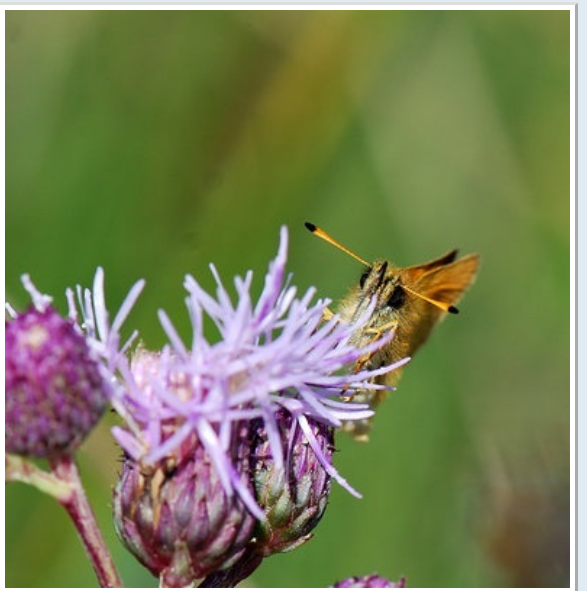
As I rounded the corner I started seeing more Browns including Marbled Whites and as I scanned across this reasonably level part of the reserve I could see there were small pockets of intense butterfly activity wherever there were clumps of colour (flowers) or green (bramble) in amongst the sea of straw. I set up shop nearest and largest green clump and followed various butterflies as they flew around and sometimes through the towering thorny clump. As well as the expected Meadow Browns and Ringlets there were also Smessex and a Large Skipper. A Painted Lady dropped in as did a Large White. The Ringlets and Marbled Whites kept me busy with their frenetic feeding activity and then I spotted a familiar orange blur and eagerly awaited its landing – a Hedgeie. But just as I was checking it for spots a second flew in and both buzzed off. This pattern played out again and again and so hoping that I had a few shots in the bag as it were I I dared to move out into the field, searching for the colourful clumps.





On the way to the first of these I was beset by a multitude of golden blurs, a mixed mess of Skippers. They were mainly Smessex with the odd Large around. Their golden hues were nicely set off by the neighbouring Marbled Whites and complimented by the lighter straw colour that is the back drop of midsummer grasslands.







faded or ab?



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 16-Oct-19 11:05 PM GMT

Five Rivers Part 2

After brushing up on my ID tricks I worked towards the Banks proper. I found that by keeping to the main track I could scan down into the individual Bank looking out for anything unusual before progressing onto the next Bank in the series. Banks 1 and 2 didn't hold any great surprises as I cast my gaze across them but then as I was moving between Bank 2 and 3 I was accosted on the corner by a flurry of activity as a group Smessex foraged out onto the track in miniature Dogfights. The Smessex were Spitfires and Messerschmits with the Large Skipper and Hedgie that got dragged into the action taking the role of Hurricanes and Mosquito respectively.



On down the hill and through the cutting I went to the other side of the Banks stopping at the large Bramble bush. Scanning over it I managed to find two Hedgies, Large Skipper, Ringlet and Meadow Brown. As I was enjoying these a huge orange butterfly came cruising in inviting the ire of the Hedgies. At first I wondered if it was a Comma but it was much bigger and far too ginger and then it dawned on me that it was a Silver Washed. I would have gone for that one sooner but it was so unexpected – a welcome addition to the site species list. Chuffed I carried on following the path round the corner and watched a mint condish Holly Blue as it gently fluttered down from higher in the trees a little like an elfin sprite. I would have stayed here but I chanced to look up and there were a couple canoodling so I beat a hasty retreat!



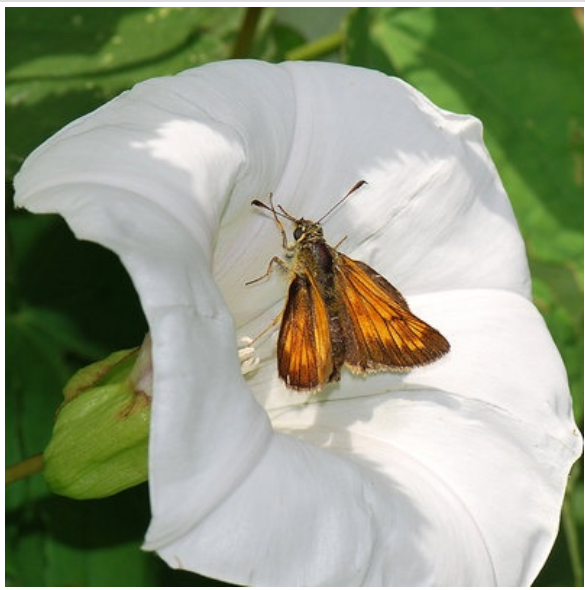
I ended up down on the River Path as there is a break in the trees that line the path which fills with the large shrubby plants. It's usually a good spot for Vanessids and so it proved today with two Hutches that were interacting with each other in sporadic tussles until one settled for long enough for me to get in close.





I didn't know what to do next as I pretty much seen everything that I expected to see so set off back up the path through the cutting to the top of the Banks and started to wind my way homewards. I tried my best not to get distracted on the way but I ended up on the opposite side of Bank 1 where it runs into the Copse. There were some really nice examples of Pyramidal Orchids here and for the briefest of seconds a Meadow Brown landed on one. Now 'Butterflies on Orchids' is one of my collections but there are only a few 'specimens' in the collection and for as long as it took for my camera to load up the image I'd just taken on the view finder I thought that I had another addition. From the image you get the general idea that it was a butterfly and some might even be able to identify it as a Meadow Brown but only just. Oh well there's always another time. Also flying here and round on Comma Corner were unsurprisingly a couple of Commas. I definitely saw 3 individuals but there could have been 5. Also of interest here were a pair of Brimstones courting. The female wasn't having any of it though, even managing the rejection thrust while in mid-flight.





My journey homewards continued and back near the initial field where it had all started a whole hour and 25 minutes earlier I paused a while to have a much needed drink and enjoy the cool shade having been caught out slightly by how hot it was and how strong the sun was shining. While I sipped at my water I watched the large bramble before me. There were the usual Brown suspects and also a Red Admiral that must have been enjoying its retirement from the look of it. And so my visit came to a close or at least I thought it had because there on the path before me as I was rummaging around in my bag to find my keys and my lens cap was a Comma. I like to think that it was one of those that I'd seen at Comma Corner that had flown ahead of me to as to be able to wish me farewell at the car!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 19-Oct-19 08:36 PM GMT

Bentley Wood 10-07-2019

Seeing the various images come pouring in and reading the various reports on various Social Media outlets had me chomping at the bit to get out. The weekend had come and gone and I'd been suckered into believing the weather reports only for them to change within the space of an hour or they were wrong and so I felt like I'd missed out. All my hopes hung on the weekend but that's never a good place to be, I always feel that having seen a species already seems to make it easier to see again and with this idea in mind I managed to organise an after work trip to Bentley Wood. I'd read that Purple Emperors are late risers but I didn't know how late they then stayed up and it was still hot so I viewed this trip as more of a recce.

As I pulled into the car park I was followed by another car and having both got out we both started off in the same direction walking down the main trackway to the Switchback. On the way I notched up Marbled Whites, Large and Smessex Skippers, Hedge and Meadow Browns and Ringlets galore. A Silver-washed bombed by and a Painted Lady tricked me momentarily into thinking that I'd encountered a Valesina as it was so tired and worn; almost all of the tangerine colour had faded so it appeared black and grey. High up small, silver blurs crossed the track from one Oak top to another - my first Purple Hairstreaks of 2019. Down at the Switchback something was on the ground supping away at some horrible horse dung. It was still nice to see even if it was only a Red Admiral.

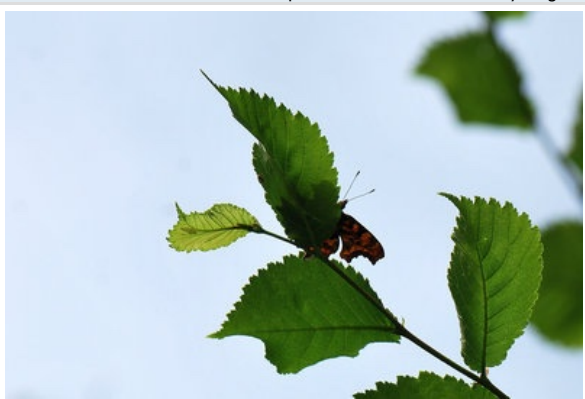


From here we slowly worked down the track to the left which headed towards Donkey Cope scanning the trees and watching the skies looking for anything that takes to the wing. On the first cleared section a Peacock drops in for a few shots and then as we carry on down there more of what I've already seen – although the Marbled Whites seemed to be more numerous here. At the end we paused for a while but things weren't looking that hopeful and so I carried on down the grassed over trackway. There were two male Silver-washed here and they were much more approachable so I managed a couple of shots before they twigged and then I started to make my way back to the main track spying an unusual looking Specklie on the way, it was missing both of its hind wings though it could still put on a good turn of speed.



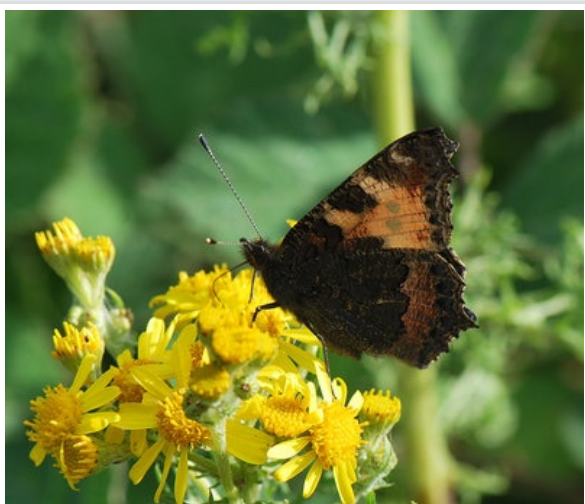
Back on the main track I caught up with the other gent and again we took to scanning the skies. A female Silver-washed was around and I watched as a Purple Hairstreak too off from the Bracken and landed just low enough that I could get a shot. I moved towards it, teasing the Bracken apart and as I reached up and focused the wind suddenly picked up moving the branch and eventually dislodging the butterfly. Cursing slightly I extricated myself and got back to the track way Tick free. As I walked along something caught my eye up high – the unmistakable shape of His Nibbs looking to all intents and purposes like a white striped bat. I called out and tried to see where it landed in amid the uppermost branches but in the end I lost sight of it. We hung around here for about 10 minutes, straining and contorting our necks as we peered up hoping to make out the silhouette of the Emperor. Suddenly it was there again flying back the way we'd come and again it was a fleeting view but like a lot of nature watching when you've seen one you know you've got the ID right. After another 10 minutes or so I gave up waiting as I'd not expected to actually see an Emperor until the weekend so I was suitably chuffed. At the Switchback a White Admiral did a fly-by almost to allow confirmation of the Emperor sighting. It was much slimmer, less bat like and also flew with more scything glides.

I carried on straight across the Switchback and walked along towards the memorial at the top of the wood. Once there I settled down to a bit more neck crunching albeit to a shallower angle. I noted a pair of Commas, a few Ringlets, a Silver-washed passed by and then a little grey rectangular butterfly jinked about – a Whitter. I watched it playing at the top of the small Wytch Elm whipping before feeling slightly depressed by its poor state and so started back on a slow walk home pleased that I'd seen all my target species.





On the walk back I stopped at the next crossroads as something dropped down onto the middle of the track. I hoped at first that it was a Hairstreak as it looked grey and was about the right size. As I cautiously approached, no mean feat in the heat, I could see that it was a female Ringlet but the greyest and smallest I'd encountered. As I'd stopped I scanned around to see if there was anything else to pick up. Amid the typical browns that are prevalent at the moment there was a Large White, 2 female Silver-washed and a Small Tort. It was nice to see something a bit more colourful amid browns even if it was the second most common colour – orange!





I cut across the recently cleared area as I had a feeling that this was the right thing to do. Marbled Whites seemed to be everywhere here and even more common than the other Browns. On the other side a large greyish butterfly was being hassled by a male Silver-washed. It was a Valesina! Annoyingly it would always land in the middle section of a large Bramble bush and so I'd have to try and poke my lens through the bush to get a shot or if it did land on the end of the brambles it was very twitchy. After this I made my way back in earnest only stopping for a female Silver washed when I was almost back at the car park.





So a great way to spend the late afternoon and I added some nice species to my yearly tally even if I didn't get shots of some of them and came away with only a handful of semi-passable shots of the others. Roll on the weekend!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 20-Oct-19 01:14 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, it's great to look back at your shots, you've certainly been busy this year 🍷🍷😄 keep them coming, you're making me more determined to make up next year for what I've missed out on this year. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 20-Oct-19 06:08 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I should be okay with keeping the posts coming – I've only got twenty or so on the back-burner 🙄😊 It must have been a good year as I'm soooooo far behind in my posting 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 21-Oct-19 06:18 PM GMT

Work 11-07-2019

After the escapades of last night I debated about whether I should head out at lunch today. However the somewhat cloudy sky lulled me into a false sense of security that the butterflies would be a little slower. As I reached the pits the usual assortment was there to greet me leaping out of the grasses on either side of the track and then either jinking and zig-zagging in such a fashion as to defy the laws of Physics (Skippers) or erupting in slow motion and fluttering off deceptively quickly (Meadow Browns and Ringlets).

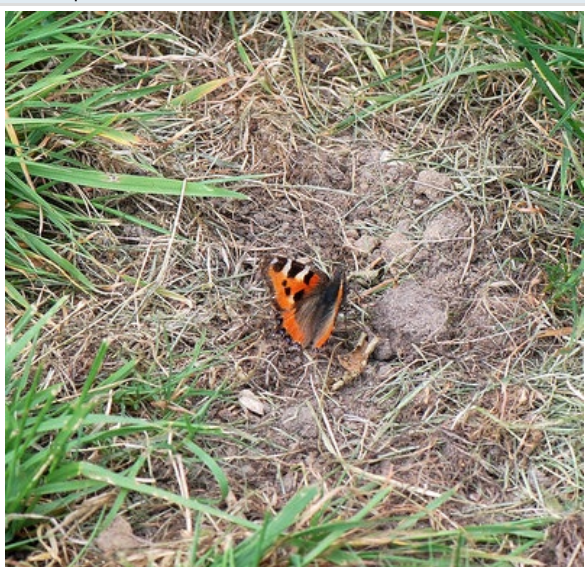
At the large Bramble patch a Meadow Brown didn't sit long enough for a photo and a handful of Smessex bolted all in different directions. I managed to watch one as it landed and I approached cautiously enough so I was able to get in nice and close. It seemed to be ovipositing as it spiralled round the blade of grass, abdomen firmly attached. Unfortunately I either couldn't see any eggs on the surrounding blades so I don't know if it was positing or posturing?



On the other side of the bush there were more of the same species so I set off to the other clump of Brambles making for the break in the line of trees. On the way I noticed an overly large Ringlet which as I leaned in became 2 Ringlets locked together in cop. I slowly reached down to try and clear some of the grass stems out of the way and one of the butterflies reached out a couple of legs. I offered it my finger and it promptly accepted clambering on board and dragging its companion with it. This was great as I can't recall if I have a Ringlet in the hand shot? The only problem was despite offering it plenty of lovely looking perches they didn't want to leave my finger. In the end I managed to persuade them onto some Dandelion leaves and thanking them I made off.



The little patch of Bramble on the edge of the hedge on the other side of the 'tree fence' held a few Meadow Browns but also a Hedgie and a Small Tort dropped in. As I waited for it to land a Large White flew by adding another 'group' to the tally. After this I followed a Marbled White back at the main Bramble patch and waited round for a few moments so that it settled - which it did and I was able to finally get some 'at work' shots after seeing them on a few previous visits here.





All too soon it was time to head back in and so grudgingly I did...
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 21-Oct-19 08:30 PM GMT

A great set of midsummer shots, Wurzel, but the one that attracts maximum 🍷🍷🍷 has to be that beautiful *valesina*. From a bit of a distance it may have been (they are naturally shy after all 😊), but it's a stunner nevertheless. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 23-Oct-19 09:03 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 We do alright for *Valesina* over this way – there's only been one year one I've not managed to see at least one 😊 Mind you I think the most unusual sighting was one at Martin Down at the Sillen's Lane end – as far as it could be from the local woods! 🤔🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Oct-19 07:57 PM GMT

Bentley Wood 13-07-2019

So having been caught out by the weather app a couple of times last week when I saw it "clouding over from 10am for the rest of the day" I didn't believe it...mistake – I should have realised that they only ever get it right when predicting weather that is non-conducive to butterflying AND you've decided to go anyway!

Still I set out hopefully from the car park down the main track towards the Switchback enjoying the huge numbers of Ringlets and Hedge Browns that adorned the Bracken like little baubles on either side of said track. The odd Large Skipper added to the mix but surprisingly there weren't any massive ginger beasts skimming over the frond tops as there has been in previous years. As I reach the half way point where the track dips down before rising back up I spied a few Purple Hairstreak fluttering overhead passing from Oak to the other from whence they carried on flying little forays out at other invading Purps or interlopers of different species. A Comma momentarily made me think that I'd gotten onto my first Silver Washed of the day as it cut across the path and dived into the fronds.



As I continued on I swapped between scanning the canopy for any gliding runs of a bat like butterfly and peering ahead at any ikcy looking lumps lest they bear the tell-tale shark fin. Things weren't looking good but then as I reached the cross roads my peering ahead at poo paid off. There, up ahead, was a shark fin indicating that there was a butterfly enjoying some salt taking. However as I got even closer I could see that it was just an Admiral and not the hoped for Emperor that was so enjoying the heap of horse manure. As I watched it I felt my eyes being drawn upwards and the tops of the adjacent Oaks seemed to be alive with Purple Hairstreaks - this had been a good year for them I reckon.

Having taken the right hand route on my previous visit and not wanting to depress myself further at the state the Whitters Wytch Elms are in I turned left today and ambled on down to the corner. On the way I was joined by both White Admirals and Silver-washed but they were keeping themselves pretty much to themselves further back from the track flying the margins of the wood. At the corner instead of flowing the track as it veers to the right I headed left on the grassed track. Unfortunately there weren't any low down Purps here which is what I was hoping for as the sun hadn't yet reached here; the tall trees were still blocking its progress. Instead I contented myself a few more Ringlets, a Green-veined White and a lovely female basking for all that she was worth and trying to catch as much of the weak sun as she could. At one point I offered her my finger and the warmth of my digit enticed her to clamber aboard - a welcome addition to my 'butterflies in the hand' collection.





I then made my way back to the main track and made for the Donkey Copse 'cul-de-sac' as I reckoned this could be a good spot for His Nibbs this year. The Purps continued to tease me making as if to come down low but then jinking back up a remaining aloft in the highest canopy. However a White Admiral played ball - stopping a couple of times so that I could get some shots.



On I went straining my neck and stubbing my toes as I walked in the opposite fashion to all those addicted to electronic devices - they're actually talking about putting light in the pavements so that people can walk along and look at their phones safely - well during the silly season I need the opposite! At the end of this track, the little bit of wider ride prior to the wood phasing out and grassy fields taking over, there were huge numbers of Hedgies and almost every step reveals another 3 or 4. I did my best to check every individual for unusual spotting but it proved to be very hard work and the bets I could come up with were a few which almost had their eyes divided in two. The stand out butterfly here was actually a Ringlet with one of the spots having a little tail and making it reminiscent of the number 9. At the furthest end a Painted Lady, tired and faded led me on a bit of a dance but I had to partake despite their abundance this year in case next year we aren't as blessed with them.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 25-Oct-19 08:06 PM GMT

Ah!, memories of summer, just what I need on a horrible, dark, wet and windy night here. 😊

Great stuff,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Oct-19 08:34 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 I think our posts crossed as I congratulated you on your positive spin – looks like we're experiencing the same weather system – it looks set for the same tomorrow as well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 26-Oct-19 12:32 PM GMT

Congrats for that Valesina a few posts back. 🍷 So they are almost an annual for you!
In my entire life I have only ever seen one, in Abbots wood near home.
I think they may be one of those butterflies that fly behind me pulling faces 😊

Must keep my eyes open, when in Wilts!
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 26-Oct-19 02:59 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, great shots 🍷🍷🍷😊 especially the Butterfly on your finger 😊 keep the photo's coming they cheer me up no end 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 28-Oct-19 01:47 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I think they may be one of those butterflies that fly behind me pulling faces 😊 I reckon that's Hid Nibbs for me 😊 The trick with Valesina is to check out the more shady rides as they seem to prefer them unlike the 'normal' females – Bentley Wood is a really good spot for them 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I'm glad you liked the 'butterfly in the hand' that's one of my 'collections' 😊 . No worries on the posts continuing – I've got such a backlog 😊 to that end I better get on and get the rest of the last post sorted out 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Oct-19 09:13 PM GMT

Bentley Wood 13-07-2019 Cont'd

Back at the Donkey Copse area as the morning wore on there were more SWFs flying around as well as a Hutch and a cracking looking Peacock. The fresh Hedgies had decided to come out of their hidey holes too and so I spent a fair time attempting to photograph the butterflies in this little area as well as peering towards the top of the trees just in case His Nibbs graced us with his presence but now the cloud had swallowed the sun entirely and there wasn't even the faintest of little blue breaks! So I headed back to the corner and the little grassy path where I was lucky enough to get a few close shots of a Green-veined White. Feeling lucky at getting Green-veined White shots isn't usually something I'd write about but these are probably only my second set of shots of this species form this season – where have they all been??







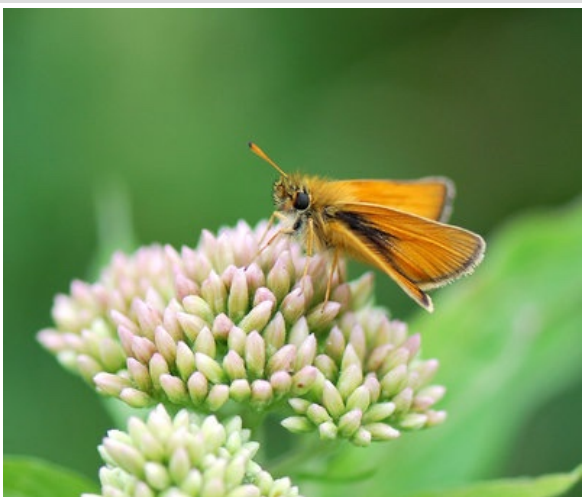


After this I started the long walk back, made all the more depressing by the onset of the gloom, the sky a dull consistent grey and not a chance of an Emperor. Even the odd Large Skipper or White Admiral on the way back didn't lighten my mood and I was back on the final stretch towards the car park before a Ringlet snapped me out of my blue mood. At first I thought there were two and I wondered if they were in cop, then as I got closer I realised there was only one and the 'other' butterfly was actually a curl of bark. I don't know what the butterfly was doing but it seemed quite attached to this strip of tree, reaching out tenderly with one of its legs as if to comfort it?



So that was Bentley - where did the great Purple Emperor enticing weather go? I bet tomorrow it'll be perfect conditions again!
Have a goodun
W...

And that's where the story should have ended but after I'd gotten back and eaten my wife and I walked to Waitrose (other higher end supermarkets that offer free coffee to members are available...) and so we set off through town and along the river path to the aforementioned supermarket. I'd not taken my camera out of my bag and so on the way when an Essex played in a small area of uncut grass on the bank I managed to pick up a few shots. It got better than this though...As we walked past the hedges and shrubs in the car park I watched a Red Admiral fly towards me and land close by. It started arching its abdomen round looking to lay.





Another good example of why you should always carry your camera – whilst it wasn't total compensation for a lack of His Nibbs it went a good way towards it.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 29-Oct-19 11:11 PM GMT

I really should read your posts more carefully, Wurzel. This is what sprang straight out of the page at me...

Wurzel wrote:

...And that's where the story should have ended but after I'd gotten back and eaten my wife...
Wurzel



What you needed that day was obviously an extra Comma... 😊 😊

Great shots of those SWF in particular, and I wonder whether that Ringlet had made the same mistake as you did and was convinced that bit of bark was another of the same species. The colour is very similar... 😊

I have to agree – always carry the camera, just in case. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Oct-19 11:52 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I don't even like Chianti and I've never tried fava beans Dave 😊 I reckon that the Ringlet had definitely gotten the wrong end of the stick 😊

Have a goodun

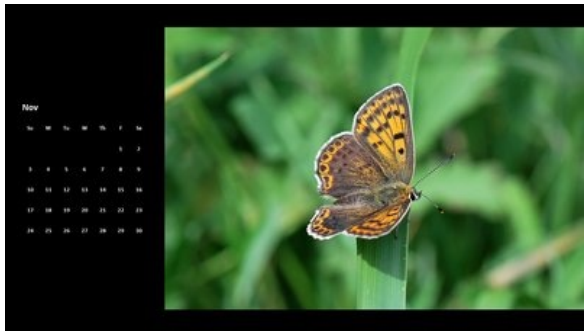
Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-19 10:41 AM GMT

November 2019

All trick-or-treated out I'm left wondering if, rather than when, I'll see another butterfly now 😊 Still at least I've got plenty of summer reports to look back on 😊 Won't be long now til the Easter Eggs are in the shops 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

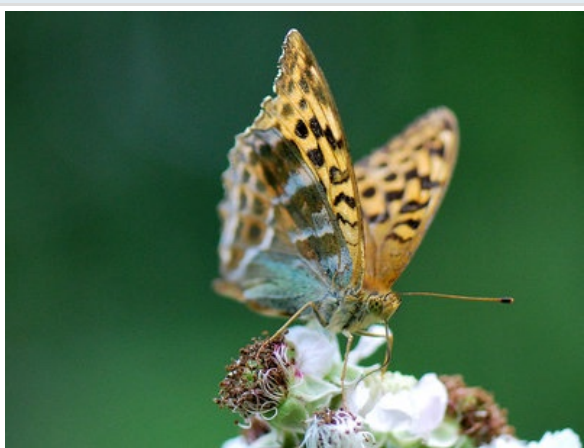
by Wurzel, 03-Nov-19 11:44 PM GMT

Bentley Wood 14-07-2019

After the constant grey the day before I awoke, unsurprisingly, to a lighter sky with blue sky poking through. As the morning progressed and I got stuck into all of the chores which I could have done yesterday the weather got better and better and the sunny spells grew longer and longer. The weather forecast had drastically changed from first thing as well and while I sorted the rubbish and recycling the sun burnt through my T-shirt and the sweat beads prickled on my forehead I resolved to try my luck for a final time at Bentley.

Once on site I started off down the track chatting on the way with a couple that had left the car park at the same time as me. It was surprisingly quiet on the way down the main track with only the occasional Purple Hairstreak flitting up high and a Red Admiral dipping in out of view as it flew amid the fronds of the Bracken. Down at the Crossroads I turned left and made my way towards Donkey Copse again employing the shambling crook necked gait for Purple Emperor searching. The usual species criss-crossed the track or flew along the wood margins on the journey down including a few Silver-washed and a couple of Peacocks which brightened up the palette of browns and sandy gold colours which are prevalent in mid-summer. At the corner I ignored the grassed left hand track and hung about chatting with a fellow enthusiast who had set up shop here. As we chatted a bat like butterfly flew by, it did a couple of circuits around eventually veering off high in the canopy from whence it didn't return. There was a similar story at Donkey Copse itself when I reached there – another enthusiast, some more chat but this time no Purple Emperor.

I carried on to the end and while I wandered the trackway as it became enclosed by the overhanging trees two things happened. First I realised that I'd not taken a single shot the whole time I'd been in the Wood and second I spied an odd looking Silver-washed. As I set to rectify my lack of shots I discovered why the Silver-washed looked so odd – half of its hind wing was missing. So as it perched and fed instead of the minty looking shark fin it was a mismatch of part minty part speckled orange.



The final stretch of the track was much livelier with a Red Admiral and two Peacocks down on the deck, Silver-washed on either side of the track and a multitude of browns taking up most of the available perch spaces. At the far end I looked through the small tunnel of trees out to the pasture beyond and then I turned about to start back. As I did a little silver butterfly detached itself from somewhere above me and fluttered down alighting on the fronds of Bracken. It was a cracking looking Purple Hairstreak. I spent some time with it as it sat looking glorious in the sun. As it shifted position I was able to watch it change colour from a light beige through to silvery grey and I also saw small orange markings on the rear end of the fore wing; markings that I wasn't aware of before. Also while shifting position it flicked its proboscis out as if scenting or more correctly, tasting, the air. After a few steps and various tongue wagging it seemed to find what it was looking for - a bit of bird dropping which it started to take salts from. It was brilliant and more than made up for the lack of shots of His Nibbs.



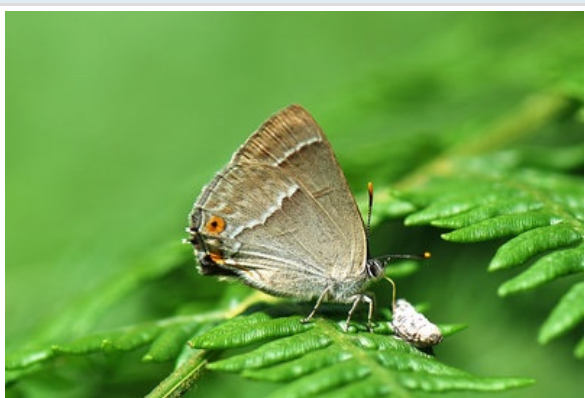
Hhhmmm that looks good...



Almost there...



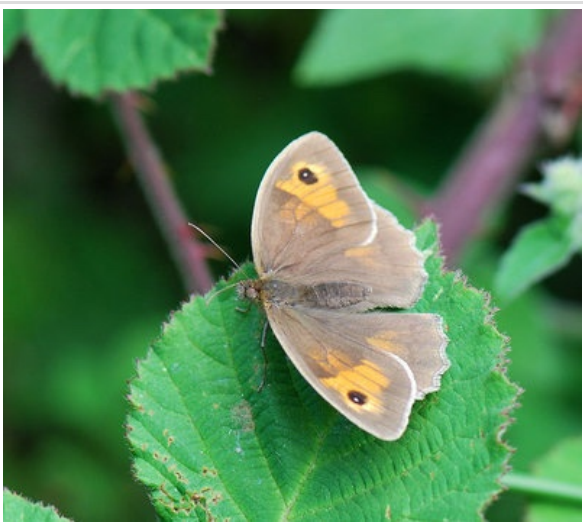
Almost there...



Yum!



The journey back to Donkey Copse was filled with pretty much similar fare as the journey from though it was nice to find a pair of Hedgies posing for a photo. Back at the Copse the pair of chaps I'd met earlier were both waiting and staring up so I settled down and waited here for a bit. Purps kept fluttering about up high and there were various Silver-washed, the odd Peacock and an interesting looking Meadow Brown as well as a Hutch to stave away the boredom of staring into the trees looking for any movement.



Eventually we decide to try back on the corner to see if His Nibbs has decided to play ball and so having become a group of four with another chap joining us, we start off. We hadn't gone far when a PE flies high, the striped markings and bat like shape making it stand out from the smaller, thinner winged White Admiral that was also scything through the air nearby. After a couple of fly-bys he disappears off further into the wood along a ride that had the look of having been forgotten. Back at the corner as I'm enjoying the 2 Peacocks and Silver-washed that were bedecking the log pile the group fragments; the late comer heads off, his first Purple Emperor seen, the original well met bloke to departs for the car park to brew up some fresh coffee

leaving myself and contestant number 2 scanning the canopy and awaiting another possible appearance of His Nibbs. Shortly this occurred with the butterfly again stubbornly remaining up high. The frustration was starting to wash off on the other butterflies as well I felt as a Purp drifts down and lands too far away for my lens in the middle of a Bramble.



I say my goodbyes and start the walk back stopping now and then for this and that including a Small Skipper and another Purp down. This one partially opened up but the light could only manage to catch a single purple scale showing up as a blue dot on the forewing. At one point I thought that my luck had finally changed but the butterfly that landed down on the deck was too dark and turned out to be a Peacock. So all too soon I was back, in the car and heading for home...



So not a vintage year – yes I saw them but it would be better if the weather reports were more accurate...Last weekend the Saturday was supposed to be the worst day and was perfect but I couldn't go and Sunday was supposed to be perfect but was cloudy all day! Then this weekend I went on Saturday and they got it right – as it clouded over at exactly the time they said it would curtailing activities and then today it was supposed to be cloudy all day only it wasn't – it was fantastic! I came away having discussed a few methods to ensure some grounded Emperor shots including:

1. Set up camp on a stretch of the main car park and remain until my memory card is full.
2. Drag along a complete novice that has no interest in butterflies whatsoever, in fact someone that has never even heard of a Purple Emperor, and then send them down the track a few paces ahead of me. Then when His Nibbs visits them I can nip and clickity click job done!
3. Give up on Bentley and replace one of my other big trips with one to Botany Bay instead!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 03-Nov-19 11:55 PM GMT

A fascinating account from Bentley, Wurzel – but unfortunately very frustrating it sounded as well! You'd always be very welcome at Chiddingfold, certainly – though even there results are often achieved only by visiting on a daily basis! We did have a solid week of decent weather this year, it has to be said. With luck you'll get to see some Wood Whites as well as all the usual suspects. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 04-Nov-19 09:11 AM GMT

At least you had some purple action of the mini variety. Locally and in other parts of Sussex I had a fabulous time with the Purple Hairstreak this year.

As Dave mentioned, forget the rest, and come to the best for His Majesty, and join in the Chiddingfold party next year.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 04-Nov-19 02:08 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, you must have been really hungry that day 😄😄😄 That's the best laugh I've had for a while 😄

I didn't see too many Green Veined White in my Garden this year which is unusual, I thought it was just a round here they seemed scarce but if you didn't see too many either they mustn't have had a good year.

More lovely shots Wurzel, keep posting 😄 Goldie 😄

Re: Wurzel

by jenks, 05-Nov-19 09:34 AM GMT

Great account and photos of your day at Bentley Wood, Wurzel. I looked back at my own 2019 records and found that I was there on 19 July so just a few days after you. (One of the advantages of being retired, I can plan trips on a weekday!) My sightings were pretty much the same as yours but no White Admirals were seen. My notes showed, in order of first appearance; Ringlet c50, Gatekeeper 25, Red Admiral 8, Purple Hairstreak 30-40, Small White 10, Small Skipper 14-15, Peacock 9-10, Large Skipper 6, Silver washed Fritillary c100 (including 1 valezina ssp), Meadow Brown 30, Large White 6, Purple Emperor 1 (over the tops of Willows at Donkey Copse), Marbled White 25-30, mostly in the meadow from the copse to the pond, Common Blue 2 here, Brimstone 1. Odonata included Emperor, Migrant Hawker, Broad bodied Chaser, Ruddy Darter, Common Blue and Azure Damselflies. Birds included Garden Warbler, Yellowhammer, Buzzard, Red Kite and Great Spotted Woodpecker.

So a good day for me but I had to wait until 25 July to see my first, and only, White Admiral for the year in Slade Wood near Caldicot.

Jenks.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 05-Nov-19 11:17 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😄 If I went to Chiddingfold I'd still have to do at least one visit to Bentley; it's a tradition or an old charter or something 😄

Cheers Trevor 😄 I reckon 2020 will be the year when I try somewhere new for His Nibbs 😄

Cheers Goldie 😄 It was all that walking and searching in vain, it means you work up an appetite 😄😄 Yep Green-veined Whites didn't have a good year from my perspective, hopefully they'll bounce back 😄

Cheers Jenks 😄 Although you didn't get the WA those are great numbers for the Silver-washed - god to see you got a Valesina too 😄😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 08-Nov-19 08:36 PM GMT

Godshill 20-07-2019

Time is heading ever forwards and so it's time to move away from the Woods and before traversing the Downs and hiking the Hedgerows I took a ramble on the Heath in search of my first (and possibly only) Grayling. After two weeks of nonsense weather forecasts today I went back to the tried and tested "have a walk round town and see what I reckon". My meteorological meanderings complete I thought that it would probably be okay and so after lunch I checked in with the Oracle and with a positive endorsement set off with Iron Maiden blaring, Killers natch...As I pulled up in the car park the eponymous track had just finished and I was psyched and ready so I didn't mind that there was a single strand of dark cloud sitting exactly over the spot I was heading to. I started off walking round the boundary of the cricket pitch before reaching the path that runs down the hill and crosses the stream.

On the way there were good numbers of Meadow Browns and Hedgies galore, some of which were almost the same size as the Meadow Browns but were distinguishable by their Ginger Nut biscuit colour and the fact that they would land on the Gorse rather than down on the ground. A Red Admiral shot past so fast and close that it almost took my hat off and then I saw my first Grayling. At least I thought I had. That's the thing with butterflying, at the end of the season you package away and store the knowledge for next year and sometimes you forget where you stored so when you encounter a species for the first time there's a bit of re-learning to do! In this case though I could be excused for my early misidentification as the butterfly even on the ground didn't look like a Meadow Brown. I've seen blonde through to almost black Meadow Browns but they always appeared Brown, this one appeared Grey and this was accentuated by having white flashes on the forewings rather than orange. It could have just been down to age but the butterfly itself was in really good nick with none of the expected tears or rips it should have owned after spending more than a week in the Gorse and Heather.





Slightly further down the hill 2 aged Silver-studs, both males tussled tirelessly with each other and after I crossed the stream I started seeing Small Heath and golden Skippers as the Bracken yielded to the low, fresh Heather growth. I carried on up the slight rise to the main Hotspot track and once there I walked about a bit and there something different flew amid the Meadow Browns and Hedgies. It looked slightly larger than the Meadow Browns, I got the impression of a dark body and creamy edges to the wings plus it flew more strongly and threw in the occasional glide - my first Grayling. I managed to follow it and eventually it landed so I was able to get a few shots. At first I thought that it was 'blind' but as I crawled in closer I could see that the 'eye' was there just much reduced and it had been obscured by the wing tip which was bent over.



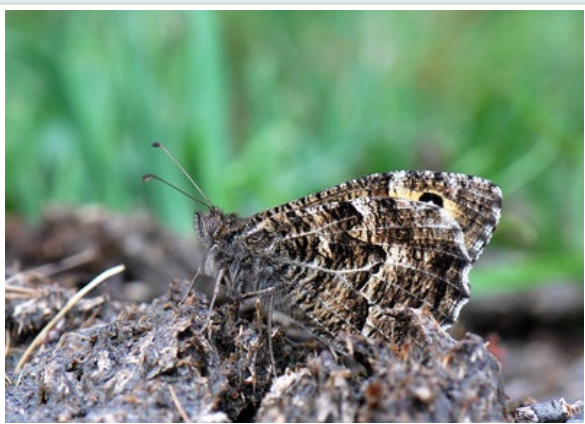


After watching it land a couple of times I left it in peace and made my way round to the large patch of Heather on the other side of the final side of the triangle. I saw my Graylings here last year and so I was wondering if they move from patch to patch every couple of years in line with the growth cycle of the Heather? Before I could look for any Grayling here however I had a Small Heath vying for my attention. It was quite large and much more sandy coloured than I recall and it was also doing the wing flicking that I observed last year.



Back on the Grayling search I was more than happy with my findings as there were at least three flying about in this little area. Each time I saw two interact my hopes were raised that they might enter into courtship but they were always dashed as after a brief 'tussle' the pair would break apart and head off in different ways. I consoled myself with stalking but it was proving difficult here. The land is pretty flat and I reasoned that even with the most cautious stalk my 6ft frame was sticking up too clearly against the horizon. In the end I took to 'walking' on my knees to get in closer for some shots and this worked out pretty well even though I made much more noise and kerfuffle...





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 08-Nov-19 11:18 PM GMT

Next year I think I'll adopt your weather forecasting technique, can't be any worse than the 'experts'! I'd say that Meadow Brown looks good to be an ab 🤔🌱

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Nov-19 06:20 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy 😊 It was good to get the confirmation – now I'll have to try and work out if this particular ab. has a name 😊 I think I need to patent my 'Wurzel's Wonderous Wandering Weather Working-out Way' 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 10-Nov-19 09:56 PM GMT

Godshill 20-07-2019

With damp knees I set off back to the Hotspot track and reacquainted myself with the original Grayling before continuing upstream a bit more. In one of the dried out stretches another two Silver-studs flew, again both were male and one was in very fine fettle for this late in the season with the wing margins totally intact and glowing out against the contrasting dark edges to the wings.



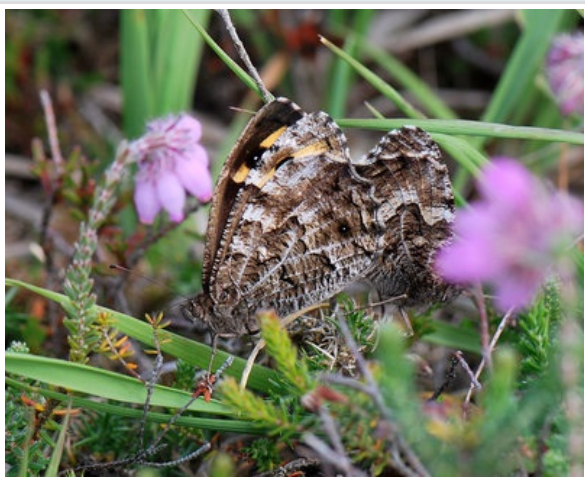


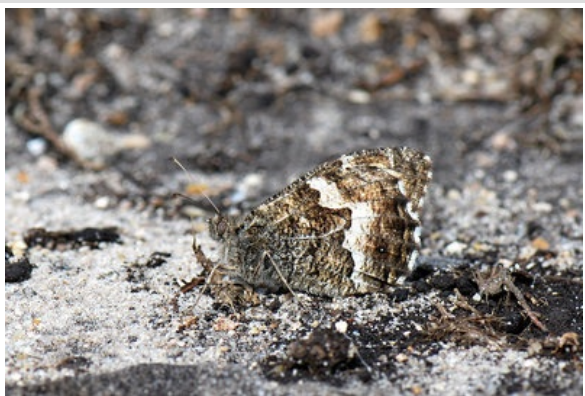
After this I decided to start making my way back. I took a slight detour away from the track onto the slight hill with the intention of walking back and stopping only for any Grayling that appeared. However this proved to be quite problematic as there were at least 8 Grayling flying in this little area, veering violently around the taller clumps of heather. I didn't know quite which one to go for and again a few 'click-steps' and the butterfly that had been sitting so sedately was gone, cutting powerfully through the air and the gliding a short way with an envy inducing joie de vivre. At one point there were three in one view, a manic flutter and glide fest and something that was great to watch though left me feeling slightly giddy! I tried for a few shots but to be honest I was just enjoying the show.





I reluctantly dragged myself away and quickened my pace so as not to get distracted. As is always the way just as you're heading home in earnest something pops up to drag you back in. On this occasion it was a massive Grayling which swiftly became a pair in cop and another addition to my 'In Cop' collection. Brilliant! Once again I set off and once again I got pulled back in this time for an Emperor Dragonfly laying eggs in the small pools that are all that remain of the stream. This could be one of the few shots that I have of a Dragonfly where I haven't had to rely on 'Sports' mode! Then there was a final Grayling on the side of the hill in pretty much the same place as my last one from 2018. At this rate I didn't think I'd ever make to the car, I had visions of some unfortunate hiker finding my mummified form stooped over a bit of branch which at one time held a Grayling LOL.





It was great to see Graylings again and even better was the fact that they were in greater numbers than last year. A fantastic afternoon!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 11-Nov-19 09:08 AM GMT

A splendidly evocative account, Wurzel. Graylings are very good value, always entertaining – I could watch them for hours. 😊 Well done on adding the pairing to your collection – whenever I find this, I always think "why wasn't I here in time to see them courting?" and have the chance to see a few flashes of the colourful uppersides. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 11-Nov-19 11:35 AM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, that's a cracking shot of the Dragon fly the colour's really stand out, I like the Grayling shots as well but that Dragon fly is super and laying eggs as well 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 11-Nov-19 07:14 PM GMT

Just catching up again Wurzel, cracking reports and photos recently 😊

That is a particularly pale looking Meadow Brown you found but I couldn't help but notice the one in your earlier report from Bentley Wood with the extra orange on the hindwings. It's become a bit of a thing of mine looking for Meadow Browns like this since I first started noticing them a few years back.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 11-Nov-19 10:31 PM GMT

You had a good time with the Graylings, Wurzel. Especially like the mating pair shot. Your Emperor dragonfly shot is amazing with a perfect reflection in the water.

Well worth damp knees!
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 12-Nov-19 11:17 PM GMT

Cheers Dave 😊 I was thinking that as well; I'd love to see the courtship or maybe a rejection but then it's always good to save something for another year 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 I got lucky with that Dragonfly shot as it suddenly just dropped down next to me, normally they just fly past at breakneck speed 😊😊

Cheers Neil 😊 I would branch out into Meadow Browns but I seem to spend so much time on Hedge Browns – I see spots everywhere 😊😊

Cheers Trevor 😊 It certainly was worth the damp knees – it would be good if the dampness got rid of the creaking which I'm sure scares away the butterflies half the time 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

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

Shipton Bellinger 25-07-2019

So I'd finally made it – another year done; books marked, detentions ran, GCSE's prepared for and to top it all a visit from The Evil That Walks With a Clipboard/iPad' – OfSTED! So with an extra half day to spare I took the back way home and called in at Shipton. I pulled up in the little break in the main Hedge and as I left the darkness of the shade it became achingly hot. This didn't bode well and so I set off down the main stretch of the Hedge already building it up in my mind as just a recce. All the fluttering or zipping orange blurs became Hedgies or Meadow Browns. There were a couple of Peacocks and an absolute shed load of Brimstones. The return journey held the same species but with Holly Blues, Common Blues and a single Comma joining the fray. It wasn't looking good and the butterflies were either flying at ridiculous speeds or were hiding away further back in the Hedge amid the shade.



I carried on up the hill and where the track widens a Red Admiral flew across and a couple of Specklies played at the top of the hill. There were also plenty of the ubiquitous Brimstones – though no Walls yet this year. Further on still I shifted my gaze more upwards, scanning for little orange triangles that I was hoping to see grinning back down at me. No joy though. When I came out to the first little break a DGF buzzed by, a few Common Blues played and a Marbled White clung to its existence with all four 'pods'.



At the next stop I was hoping to find what I'd come to see but after several careful scans and a count of all the butterflies present I only had a Peacock, Marbled White, 3 Meadow Browns, 2 Hedgies but still no Brostreak and strangely not one Brimstone either. After the return journey I cut across through the Blackthorn thickets and checked out the old trackway and 'double hedge' but this proved ridiculously quiet with only a single Red Admiral worth noting.



So all in all not the start to the holiday I was hoping for. It would have been nice to have picked up a Brostreak on the first day of the holiday but they had only just started emerging at Alners Gorse anyway with fingers crossed that the weather would play ball and I could get some after my foreign trip I headed for home and a much deserved beer.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Nov-19 12:09 AM GMT

Martin Down 26-07-2019

When I visit Martin Down I often start the season with walking along the Sillen's Lane end trackway towards the hotspot. After this I seem to alternate between this approach and reaching the hotspot by working the length Dyke from the main car park. However once a year I do like to make the hike to the top of the Down itself so that was where I set out for today. I was hoping to find some Silver Spots at the bottom of the slope and Chalkhills were also on my radar what with not having any tutor sessions at Laverstock to rely on for this species.

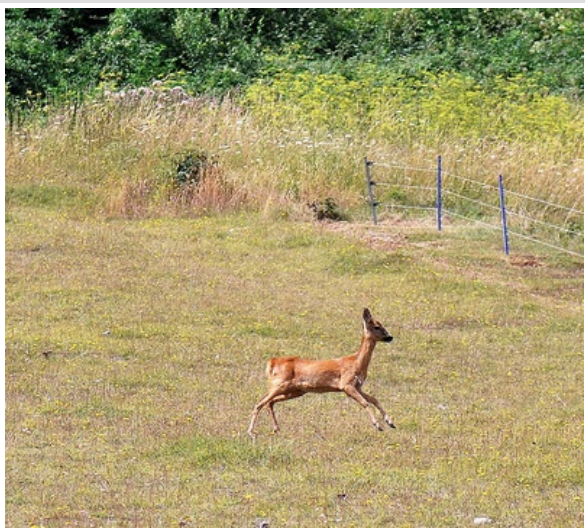
As I set out on the diagonal path heading towards the foot of the Down unsurprisingly Hedgies flew along the hedges and Meadow Browns dominated the meadows...well fields. Also present was a lovely fresh Painted Lady that cut an imposing figure amongst the sea of beige and there was also a sultry looking DGF still looking good at this later stage of their flight. A second and third DGF both played silly buggers further on my journey. They flew towards me after appearing in the distance on my left then upon reaching me they landed and appeared to settle for some nectar only to move off again into an area fenced off with electric fence.





By now my faltering meanderings had brought me to the foot of the Down where the soil is thin and sparsely covered. With the scrapes and bare chalk exposed along with the lack of plant cover the ground here seems to soak up the heat and so I wasn't surprised to see so many butterflies; Small Whites, numerous Smessex, some lovely Brown Argus and Small Copper also a couple of DGFs announced themselves on my first trip along the bottom of the Down. There were also a couple of deer which eventually (after trying to stare me down) decided that common sense is the better part of valour and sprung away. One mistimed their leap over the electric fence and came a bit of a cropper - doing a less than graceful roly-poly into the neighbouring field.





The walk back produced more of the same, in fact probably THE same butterflies but a few Brimstones, Marbs and Common Blues along with a cracking Small Copper added novel interest. Unfortunately though there was a distinct lack of Silver Spots –the species I was hoping for here in particular.

I then took one of the little trackways and scaled half way up the Down locating a track that ran across the side and would hopefully link with another that would take me to the very top. As I set off I felt like I was being watched and there silhouetted further up the slope was a Hare; it was massive compared to the Rabbits I'd seen earlier, at least twice the size.



I stuck to the path and Browns erupted everywhere, Smessex zipped here and there and everywhere. In fact there was a plethora of butterflies, so many I gave up photographing and just enjoyed watching them take off and fly. A Small Copper here, Common Blue there, multitudes of Brown Argus and good numbers of DGF. It was fabulous! What wasn't quite so fabulous was that my path stopped abruptly as it dove down into and then probably under a large tangle of Bramble and other shrubbery. A startled deer raised its head, watched me and then once it had worked out that standing still didn't actually make it invisible, tore off down the Down. I carried on picking my way round various clumps of vegetation and trying to pick up a track whilst noting the same species I had already encountered. It wasn't until the very top that I got onto a proper path again.





At the top I took in the view and tried to get my breath back from both the ascent and also from trying to follow a DGF. As I turned to walk back down along the Dyke I spied a ghostly silver blue butterfly - a Chalkhill. It was swiftly joined by a second and then a third. It was good that they were about but now for the hard part, trying to actually get some shots of them! They were a right pain flying incessantly from flower tip to flower tip and when they did alight it was for a very short period and generally on a flimsy flower so that the slightest breeze had them rocking back and forth manically.





I realised my trip across the side of the Down had cost me time wise so now I had to rush down along the Dyke if I was to have any time at the hotspot. On the way it was quite quiet luckily and so I managed to get to the bottom of the slope without too many distractions. I checked out the little part of the Dyke that's like a cul-de-sac, closed off by the path that runs to the wood. It was rich in flowers and the slope on one side and the tall shrubs/small trees at the end sheltered it from the wind. This seemed like as good a place as any to try for some shots. There were indeed a few Chalkhills about amid the chaos of Common Blues and Brown Argus. I'm still surprised at how vicious and cantankerous BA's are. As was the way today it seemed, there was another DGF, they seem to be having a good flight here even though I missed the main part of it.



By now the top of the glass was almost out of sand grains so I had to hotfoot it back to the car. A Small Copper waylaid me momentarily but as I was cutting it so fine the final Red Admiral merely got a hurried glance and a rushed mark in the notebook. Hopefully I'll be back when I have more time after my forthcoming trip to Portugal.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Nov-19 10:24 PM GMT

Oxford 11-08-2019

Each year friends of ours come down from 'Oop North' where allegedly 'It's grim' to house sit over the summer holidays. This in the past has meant a palatial manor house in Sussex surrounded with woodlands and its own stone circle but this year they returned to the Cellists house in a small village in Oxford. It's a ramshackle old building, a converted forge, with some rooms only accessible by ladder, a toilet with access to the stairs, a bath in kitchen and a rambling garden out back.

After some coffee on our arrival I ventured out to the garden to see what I could find in the tumbling flower beds. It was surprisingly active and I'd only expected to find the odd white and maybe a Hedgie but instead there were whites falling over each other and a multitude of Hedgies, at least 9 or 10 which in a 6 metre stretch of flower bed isn't to be sneezed at. Having done my survey I set to walking up and down the flower bed stopping every few stops as something else caught my eye or dropped from the air in front of me. After 10 minutes I'd racked up the full complement of Hedgies, seen both a Comma and a Small Tort bomb by and managed to capture a couple of the Whites (all Small though I did see at least 1 Large and 2 Green-veined) on 'memory card'.







After lunch we loaded up and the wagons rolled. Our hosts had mentioned a walk on the Downs which might hold good numbers of butterflies and so as I followed them I wondered if they could possibly mean Ashton Rowant. This would have been fantastic news as I knew that the Silver Spots were flying and I'd yet to see them in 2019. With an added frisson of excitement I put pedal to the metal. My hopes were confirmed later when up ahead I could see a Brown traffic sign announcing the very place I was looking forward to going! Only we carried on driving and a short time later pulled into a wood - apparently the car park would have been too busy and so we'd come to Cowley Copse instead. Never mind I hoped to notch up a few more butterflies in the wood. Only that didn't come to pass as the sun went in and the wind picked up and it became cooler. The only thing I saw was a distant Painted Lady and two Meadow Browns of which only one hung around for a photo.



Back at the house and with more coffee and now cake I consoled myself with a Comma before getting back to the 'visiting friends' mode. Still as I drove home I wondered at what could have been.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 19-Nov-19 03:17 PM GMT

Hi! Wurzel, I enjoyed your travels with the various Butterflies and hope you found the Silver spots later 😊

I missed out on the Graylings and lots more this year so it was good to see your shots, the DGF's looked really good and that unusual Meadow Brown has well, it wet's the appetite for next year 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

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

Cheers Goldie 😊 Glad to have kept the butterfly fire burning – only 3 –4 months to go til next season 😊🙄 I'm hoping to get round to the Silver-Spot report before the 2020 ones emerge 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 22-Nov-19 10:42 PM GMT

Shipton Bellinger 13-08-2019

With the prospect of a Wales ahead of me and the fact that the Brostreaks were playing silly buggers this year I realised that I needed to get my arse in gear is I was hoping to catch up with them! So the plans were made and the stage was set for a meet up with Dave on Monday but we needed to take a rain check. Instead it was Tuesday morning when I found myself pootling along towards Shipton.

Despite the rule book seemingly out of the window this year I arrived at 10ish as I was hoping to have found a Brostreak by the time Dave arrived. As I rounded the corner it seemed that others had come up with a similar plan and there was a group plonked in my favourite spot all staring into the hedge diligently. I mooched about and acquainted myself with a Comma while I waited for them to wander on a little bit. As most did one of their number remained behind and as I started my searching and scanning along the hotspot we both watched as a vivid orange butterfly detached itself from somewhere in the trees and half jinked and half fluttered down coming to land on a crown of Wild Parsnip. Perfect I was in prime position and set about getting some shots.





After a bit I stood back and watched and waited for Dave to appear. Now if this was a 'normal' year the Brostreak would have settled down and still have been feeding an hour or so later, but unfortunately this isn't a normal year and after too short a time she took to the wing and was gone. I turned away from the hedge and could see Dave walking down the path. Luckily he'd also encountered a Brostreak on his walk up from the village and so swapping war stories we set off for a quick stroll down the length of the hedge and back. Whilst we picked up various species; a pair of Painted Ladies, Common Blues, various whites and a cracking male Adonis, we didn't find any further Brostreaks and so upon reaching our starting point we carried on up the hill making for the various scallops cut into the side of track.



The walk up the hill and through the scallops was interspersed with chatting and a changing mixture of butterflies whilst we worked through various microhabitats. There was the wide bare soil track lined by mature trees with Specklies and the odd Peacock. As we reached the top of the hill the tree

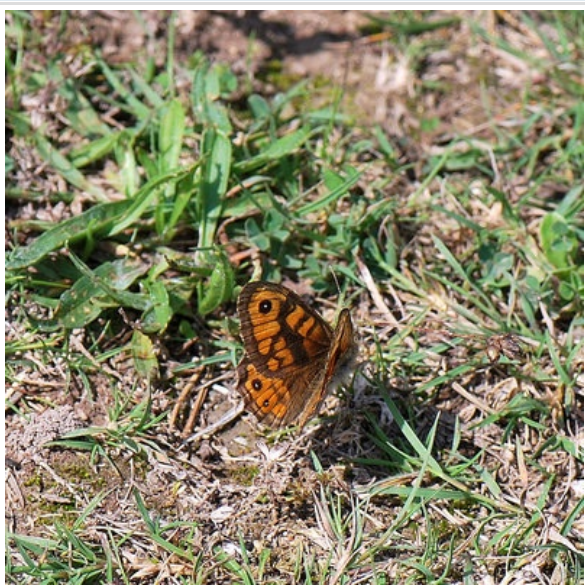
line to our left ended and we could look across grassland to the hills beyond. Here there were Small Heath, Meadow Browns and a couple of Walls which gave us the run around. The path noticeably narrowed with less mature scrub encroaching on either side of us and at times making me feel a little claustrophobic. It was darker in this part with a few Specklies and not much else and as it opened to the long and thin scallop Hedgies and Meadow Browns appeared before finally we reached the final scallop which I was pinning all of my hopes on. We settled down once here to some proper Hedge Watching. In amid the Browns and Whites Dave discovered a Holly Blue down low - which was only to be expected, I swear I didn't even see his lips move WINK. After a while our attention is drawn to a distant Brostroke. She lands further back in the hedge and up high so getting 'onto' her is a right pain, particularly due to the mass of Bramble and Briar barring our progress. She does come down a little lower and after some very slow and painful manipulation we manage to get in close enough for some shots. It hardly seemed worth it in the end as she was all cut to ribbons.





Record shot only

We decided to make our way back to check out some of the other areas and as we come into the middle scallop a female plumps down right in front of me for two shots of time. As I try to side step so Dave can get a look she flies up and is gone. The walk back throws up a few more Walls and there are some Brostreak sightings up high but it's all a little like hard work - I can't remember it being like this and the effort masked my initial triumph with the glorious female. We keep moving cutting across back towards the Master tree and from there down to the dual track, walking the lower side first before coming back on the side with the higher hedges. There are some nice butterflies - blue female Common Blue, fresh Specklies and the odd white here and there as well as glimpses of what could be Hairstreaks. Eventually after this whistle stop tour of Shipton we arrive back at the Main/Back/Hotspot Hedge.





Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 23-Nov-19 10:54 PM GMT

Your pristine female Brown Hairstreak is what certain tabloids would call a 'Stunnah'.
As for the quality of the images you must accept a bevy of mrgeens 🍷🍷🍷

Seriously, they did seem to have a strange year, and despite my efforts I only saw two.
Hope they bounce back next year.

Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 23-Nov-19 11:38 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Wurzel, looking forward to reminiscing another visit through your pictures in the near future... or not so near future 😊. When I get round to making a visit I'll have a good root around for eggs at Bookham to get a better idea of just how numerous they actually were this year.

Re: Wurzel

by millerd, 24-Nov-19 10:02 PM GMT

That was a good day, Wurzel, even if those Hairstreaks were being a bit difficult. The Wall sightings were a bonus as well, generating the excitement locally because they were in a distinctly inland part of Hampshire! Terrific shots as well, especially of that brand new female that had disappeared by the time I arrived... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 25-Nov-19 12:37 PM GMT

Fantastic shots of the Bros Streaks Wurzel 📷📷📷 How I wish to see just one, tattered or not!!! 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Nov-19 11:54 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 I was lucky in that they weren't that down number wise at Shipton – just much harder work! 😊

Cheers Bugboy 😊 The outing you're referring too might be a more than a little way in the future – lets get Xmas out the way first maybe 😊

Cheers Dave 😊 I reckon the Walls were runaways from Wiltshire as they're to be found across the Plain and on the other side of the road from Shipton 😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 Fingers crossed you get on next season – there must be some sites in Kent where they fly when you're visiting family? Next year for sure 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 26-Nov-19 10:31 PM GMT

Shipton Bellinger 13-08-2019 Part2

I know that I keep referring to previous years or that 'the Brostreaks weren't following the rules' but perhaps they were? There's the flurry of activity upon arrival, it goes a bit quiet before a finishing with a flourish at around 2pm when the females come down and start laying. Well to give the game away as it were that's exactly what happened on this visit...

Dave and I were back at the main hedge finding yet another Painted Lady for our troubles and we were about half way along and returning to the start point when there was a Brostreak in the hedge, a little bright orange triangle that just appeared from out of nowhere. There weren't the usual Bramble flowers available for it to feed on so instead she was probing her proboscis in between the drupelets of the Blackberries. I don't know whether she'd been able to pierce the fruit or whether she was taking moisture that had gotten into the spaces between the drupelets but she certainly seemed focused and so Dave and I could take it in turns to get plenty of shots from various angles.







As we were enjoying this one another pair of enthusiasts called out that they had one and she was basking. She started the behaviour pattern of basking for a bit (to raise her temperature) then crawling around in the leaves looking for places to lay (cooling all the while) which meant that we were able to get some open wing basking images to add to the various closed wing selection.





After this yet another female appeared proving once and again that Brostreaks are like buses. By this stage our faltering meanderings had brought us to the first part of the hedge which has produced so many of my Brostreaks in the past. It seemed quiet today but then it really produced the goods for Dave. Low down was a small bluish white blob. As I got in a bit nearer I realised that it was actually a menage a trois of Holly Blues. Two were locked together in full cop whilst the third was edging in backwards and trying to dislodge the first male from the coupling. He wasn't having any of it and the interloper got the message and buggered off leaving the pair in cop in prime photographing position.



After this a final sweep of the first 20 metres of the hedge threw up yet another Brostroke, this one had a folded wing which meant she was easy to tell apart from all of the others and there was also another but looking at the images she could be the same as the first that we found. Still no complaints here! I took my final shot of here at precisely 3pm and after this the hedge went quiet.



So after a cracking start the Brostrokes proved hard work but came good in the end. I'm left wondering what would have happened if Dave and I had get set up camp at the main hedge, would we have gotten anymore Brostrokes? Would they have been easier to find? But then I remember all the other things we'd seen and the fantastic final flurry which was so sweet because of the working and waiting.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 27-Nov-19 09:00 AM GMT

Absolutely fantastic Wurzel, 😊 the open wing shots are brill, I bet you were well pleased that day 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 29-Nov-19 11:02 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 it was hard work but worth it, plus I had excellent company 😊

{size=150}Wales

14th August{/size]

The first day of the trip and low and behold the family Wurzel are going to Wales so it rains. The first day was spent driving and then unpacking and then making the evening meal so no butterflies. Still if the weather report is supposed to be true tomorrow looks good...

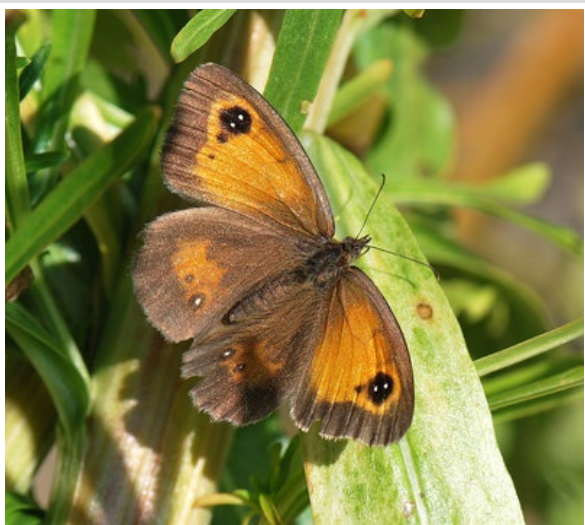
15th Llanachaeron

This time the site was actually open which was a bonus! While we waited for the Outlaws to arrive we watched the birds on the feeder – all three tits were present and a very tame juvenile Robin hung around the car. When the others arrived we set off on the woodland walk which runs over the bridge, hugs its way along the river and then doubles back up slightly higher up the hillside before dropping back down to the bridge. Along the way we were followed by a Dipper which at one pint became a pair. It was great to see it bobbing on the stones and watch as it swam through the shallows between some rocks. Once in the wood a Raven 'Gronked' overhead a few times and Nuthatches made at least 3 of their calls.



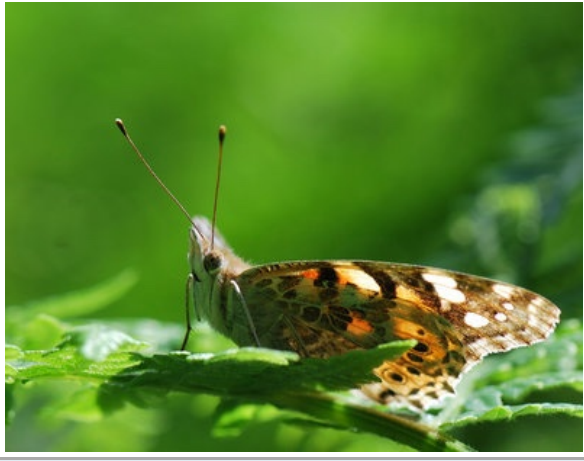


We then continued the walk on and into the gardens a Painted Lady flew across the tops of the pigsties and Swallows zoomed about overhead but I wanted to get into the Walled Garden as this is usually where most of the butterflies are to be found. As my daughter pushed open the gate/door there was a Painted Lady to greet us. This side often has few butterflies but is still worth checking out and indeed there were a few other bits and pieces. There were two Whites, a fly away Peacock and an unusual Hedgie – only my second of the year! On the other side with the glasshouses I spied at least 2 Painted Ladies and 2 Peacocks at least at the top of a large yellow flowered shrub and as usual the Lavender was really productive. There were 2 whites and 4 Painted Ladies a bush approx. 80cm in diameter. Brilliant but also a bit of a pain – which one to focus on first?





During lunch I watched a GVW and SW fly around the bushes as I munched away. I noticed what I thought was a leaf detach itself from a tree and glide down coming to rest in among some Bracken. I carried on eating and replaying the falling leaf and it didn't seem quite right. As soon as I'd finished and put things away I strolled over and had a look at the Bracken where I thought it would be. I didn't see any likely looking leaves and then as I turned round what had been a shadow became a side on view of a Painted Lady.



After lunch we toured the house and while the girls beat the carpets in the courtyard (if only they completed chores at home with such enthusiasm) I walked round the four walls. There were a couple of moths that will need identification later, a green Cricket and also a Meadow Brown down on the cobbles. As we leave a Holly Blue and Speckle each put in a brief appearance so as not to feel left out I suppose.





Because of the unpredictable weather in Wales when visiting my Outlaws I've learnt to make hay while the sun shines and so once back and unpacked and with the girls happily playing in the garden I set off up The Lane. I stopped on the end house and checked out the Buddleia first off but there was only a single Peacock and it was on the far side, too far away for any shots. Resolving to check this out again later I carried on up the Lane but my progress was slowed multiple times as it seems that the Lane is back to Hedge Brown Heaven. I'd end up stopping every 10 paces or so for another one or two Hedgies - meticulously checking and counting the number of spots if possible. It was a joy to see so many of this species, they're having a cracking year. The Hedge Brown fest was interrupted occasionally first by a Painted Lady at the Corner Cottage and then by a further 3 Painted Ladies that were hanging around on the corner of the track down to Middle Farm. On the return back to the house the same species were seen and back at the Buddleia a Red Admiral had joined the Peacock.







However I didn't stop there. When I got back rather than heading in for a coffee I stayed out and checked out the Verbena at the side of the house. I was astounded to see a Red Admiral a Painted Lady and 5 Small Torts, brilliant! Now I could retire for the day...



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 30-Nov-19 11:48 AM GMT

Neil Hulme grades Brown Hairstreaks from 1 to 10, your latest specimen must be close to 10!. And you are right about them appearing from nowhere, with most of my finds I've just happened to notice one perched on a leaf, and it wasn't there a few moments before. Probably an egg laying female that had walked down a stem to lay and was hidden from view, and reappeared to bask before flying off to find her next, young, succulent Blackthorn stem.

Great stuff as always,
Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 01-Dec-19 07:41 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 In the words The Crocketts "she was a first rate £%\$&ing stunna" for sure 😊😊 Their tendency to just appear is possibly why one of my butterfly finding techniques works; I stroll along the hedge and then at random time intervals suddenly turn and glare at a section of the hedge daring a Brostreak to appear 😊 I get some funny looks but it's worth it 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 02-Dec-19 10:49 PM GMT

December 2019

So it's almost time to make the next one...Happy Advent...from yesterday 😊😄



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 09-Dec-19 11:07 PM GMT

17th August - Aberystwyth

So the 16th came and went and it was wet and blustery all day, steadily getting wetter as the day wore on, in fact the complete opposite of the forecast. Still the girls enjoyed a swim and I was able to catch up on some bits and bobs. This morning the weather was looking much better - still blustery but warmer and brighter so we risked a trip to Aberystwyth. After braving Morrison's we headed off towards the town taking the River Path. Before we were on the path proper we walked alongside a soak away field and in the corner nearest the path a huge Buddleia (or several) towered. It looked just like a high rise made for butterflies so I let the others walk on and spent a few minutes seeing what I could see. A Red Admiral caught my eye as it was so contrasting with the lilac of the florets. And then my eye was in and I started counting. At least I tried to as I walked round the base of the bush Painted Ladies would erupt, like tangerine Meadow Browns, from beneath my feet. A few Peacocks were interspersed with the PLs and Red Admirals on the bush itself. As I got to the far end of the bush a butterfly erupted Meadow Brown style from the grass and it was actually a Meadow Brown. There was also a White which on closer inspection became a Small one. So in about three minutes I'd seen singletons of Small White and Meadow Browns, three Peacocks, three Red Admirals and at least 9 Painted Ladies.





As I ran to catch up with the rest of the family another couple of Painted Ladies flew from the Blackberries that lined the path and down by the skate park a Green-veined White caught my eye in amid the Willow Herb as well as a secret Peacock too far back for my cameras reach. After this I put my camera away as the nectar sources available would soon be next to none as we entered into Aber town proper. As usual when I've done this the butterflies pop up in unusual places. This time it was a brace of Painted Ladies on the smallest of Buddleia. It was just two sticks, two florets and delusions of grandeur but it held two butterflies somehow.



On Saturday in Aberystwyth the buses are free – a brilliant idea to try and boost trade and get cars off the road and also because it meant that while the others waited the 20 minutes for the bus I could walk swiftly back to the Buddleia to see what else had turned up. I didn't see anything until after the Skate Park when a Comma landed just long enough for me to only contemplate a few shots. There was also a Painted Lady which was feasting on Blackberries. I pressed on as I the 6 kg of muesli in my rucksack was slowing me down a bit more than I thought it would.

When I got to the Buddleia the Painted Ladies were again taking off from the ground which made counting difficult. The wind added to the complication of the counting procedure as well as the photography as almost as soon as a butterfly would land it would pick up and knock them off of their perch! Still I carried on seeing Red Admiral, Peacocks, another Small White and a Small Tortoiseshell. IN fact the whole bush was seemingly alive with butterflies. The Red Admirals had taken Obi Wan's advice and occupied the high ground whilst the Peacocks straddled the middle to lower stretches, the Small Tort never ventured above chest height and the Painted Ladies acted like the jezebels they could be named after taking nectar wherever they chose.



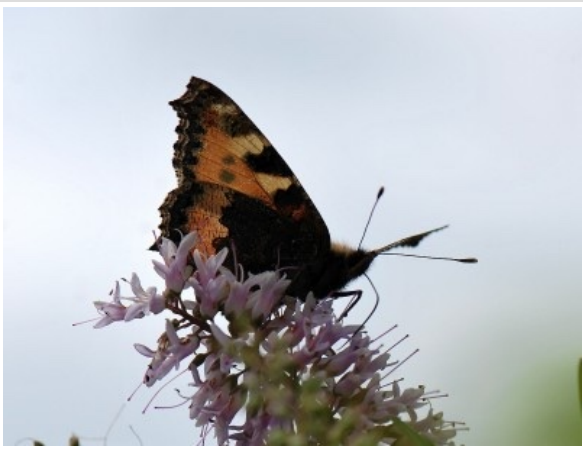


I was almost all the way back to Morrison's where I was meeting the others and contemplating whether I'd managed any decent shots of the Small Tort

when I spied a second sitting perfectly posed for me.



When we got back the sun was still shining and so I after getting the things in and put away I checked the Verbena round the corner – today only 4 Small Torts and 2 Painted Ladies.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 10-Dec-19 08:07 AM GMT

That was a lovely post to blow away those winter blues. I do look forward to your winter posts to brighten up these cold, dark days 😊.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 10-Dec-19 09:11 AM GMT

Great to see your latest shots Wurzel, they certainly brighten my moods 😊 I've been looking back through my shots has well to brighten the days until I take off for Christmas, I always think once Christmas is passed, we're on the way to Spring, 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 11-Dec-19 11:07 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy 😊 I know that I shouldn't 'showboat' but there's still a few to get through before the next season starts 😊😊
Cheers Goldie 😊 Your Marshies certainly lifted my spirits – I could do with that at the moment as Teddy our indoor Ragdoll got out of the house on Sunday. He was only out for 30 seconds and got clipped by a car – 'de-gloved' his left hind paw and dislocated his right hind ankle 😊 Luckily he's been patched up but looks very sorry for himself as he's on cage rest for the for-seeable future. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 12-Dec-19 02:57 PM GMT

So Sorry to hear about your wombed Ragdoll Wurzel , I bet the girls are upset, I'm guessing on what your rag doll is!!!!
I've had three dogs, one got killed on the road years ago, the other two we'd to put to sleep, it was awful, so bad I refuse to get another even though with Jim gone it gets lonely, hope he's better soon. Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 13-Dec-19 08:52 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 Teddy the Ragdoll Cat is a Bicolour- which means he's got dark markings on his face that look like a Zorro or bandit mask - so when he was in the cage he looked a lot like his was in the nick 😊 Hopefully things will continue to go well tomorrow at his next check up. 😊

Anyway because of this I've managed to get even further behind...

18th Dolaucothi

Not an awful lot of butterflies today. The morning was spent panning for gold and then getting kitted out with hard hats and head lamps for visiting the mines. This is a brilliant National Trust site although not really great for butterflying. Still I took my camera on the circular walk that takes in the old Roman Fort and Gold mine. There were a couple of really nice looking Specklies but they just wouldn't sit still. As we worked down the far side of the hill spied some movement on the thistles that grew through the foundations for the old workings. When I got nearer I could see that it was a Painted Lady and on the next patch there were another 3 one of which was the newest looking that I'd seen this season.



Apart from a Small White as we got back into the mine that was it butterfly wise but still a cracking day.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by trevor, 14-Dec-19 09:50 AM GMT

Good to see those Small Torts in your earlier post.
I was guilty of taking them for granted, but now it is quite a thrill to see one around here.

Sorry to read about the family pet, hopefully all will be well.

Hope those Brownie points are stacking up, you'll be needing them in 2020 for Black Hairstreak, Swallowtail and Surrey for His Majesty.

Trevor.

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 14-Dec-19 02:37 PM GMT

Lovely Painted lady that second shot Wurzel, it's been a great year for them, I certainly got my fill 😊

I hope your Cat is doing okay, they do have nine lives I believe 😊 I've had loads of cats when I was young, my Dad wouldn't let me have a dog because it would have been stuck in the house all day, (made sense at the time) so I'd loads of cats 😊 But has soon as I got married, I got a dog 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 14-Dec-19 08:51 PM GMT

Cheers Trevor 😊 The Small Torts are still 'regulars' in Wiltshire 😊 Tahnk you for asking after Teddy – one leg is fine and we're just waiting to see now whether he'll remain a quadraped or become a tripod 😊 Fingers crossed 😊😊

Cheers Goldie 😊 It was a good year for Painted Ladies – I don't know if it was the best year I've experienced but it's definitely been one of the better ones. Teddy s half way there as one of his legs is fine...the other one well I don't know 😊😊 Still at least we've still got him whether he's got three or four legs 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Goldie M, 15-Dec-19 12:57 PM GMT

Glad to hear Toby is recovering Wurzel, pets are still loved no matter what! Goldie 😊

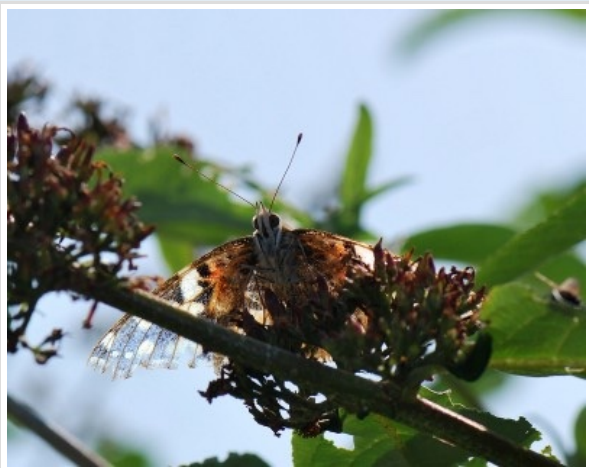
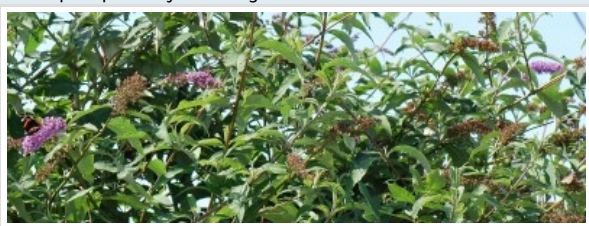
Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 18-Dec-19 11:28 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie 😊 I've still got my fingers crossed for Teddy 😊

19th The Lane

The weather report suggested that there would be full sun later in the afternoon and so during the morning I just mooched about and the girls went swimming. After lunch the sun was out more than it was in and so I headed out and up the Lane with the intention of counting the Hedgies. I checked out the Buddleia on the end house first and it again seemed to be a little oasis for butterflies. I spotted a Panted Lady first, then a Small Tort followed by two Red Admirals all in a line at roughly the same height up in the shrub. However try as I might I couldn't get a landscape shot that featured all four butterflies in it. As I was trying for one something small and blue caught my eye as it hove into view. At first I thought it was a Holly Blue but when it eventually landed in an accessible place (i.e. not round the corner and actually in the garden) I could see that it was actually a Common Blue. As a car went by all the butterflies were spooked and took off en masse. Luckily the Painted Lady landed down low, flattening itself on the boundary pillar and trying its best to look like a funny coloured piece of Lichen. The Small Tort however realising that wherever it landed it would stick out like a sore thumb plumped for just sitting on the wall.

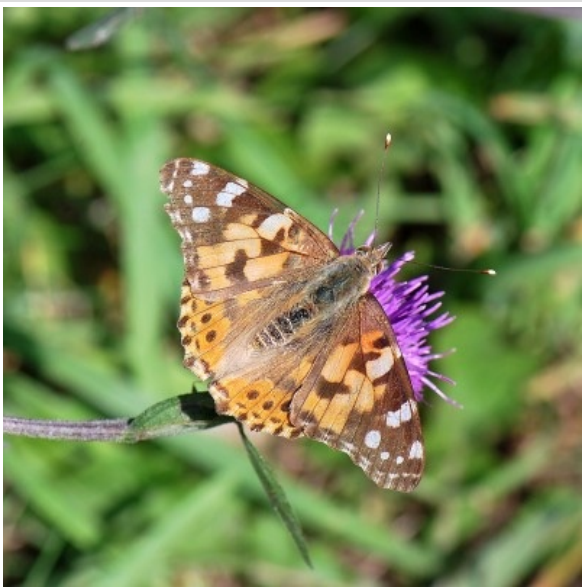




I set off taking the usual route up the Lane stopping every now and again to the Hedgies. On the corner of the bend a Painted Lady stayed still for a few shots and then I was back on the Hedgie hunt. I was going well with well into the late 20's by the time I'd reached the cottages on the corner. On the way the sun nipped behind a cloud a couple of times and the hedge dimmed shifting down several shades of green. There was also a strong breeze gusting now and again; inevitably just as I'd find a Hedgie in prime position for a photo, and it'd for this reason that my gut was telling me that whilst the count was good it was probably less than on the previous visit.



At the corner of the turning down to Middle Farm three Painted Ladies fed on some sort of Knapweed looking plant and slightly firther down where the hedge was highest a Specklie looked resplendent. I was still counting the Hedgies almost getting to 40 when I turned around and walked back up the track checking the other side of the road. A Green-veined White broke any Hedgie monotony and on the corner as I started back the three Painted Ladies were still hanging about. At this juncture I stopped the count having reached a respectable 47 in a 10 minute walk.





On the way back I took one of the farming tracks off to the left and there were a few more Hedgies which I didn't count (as I don't usually come down this bit) as well as a lovely dark Specklie and a hide away Painted Lady. Other than that there was a Red Admiral further along the road on the return journey and I was also able to pick up an Organic Cucumber from one of the cottages; it's always a good idea to turn up with something edible after butterflying as it helps boost the Brownie Points. At the Buddliea the Painted Lady and Small Tort were still messing about but the Red Admirals had moved on. A Peacock was basking on one of the neighbours lawns as I walked down Pen-Y-Bryn and then I was back 'home'. Well almost a quick check of the Verbena showed that it held a Painted Lady and a Peacock.







Have a goodun

Wurzel

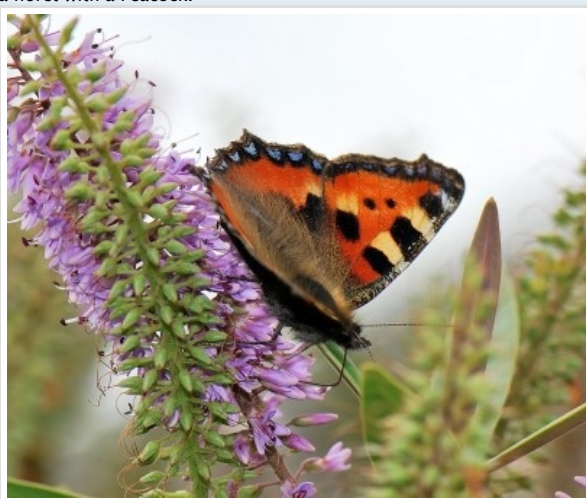
Re: Wurzel

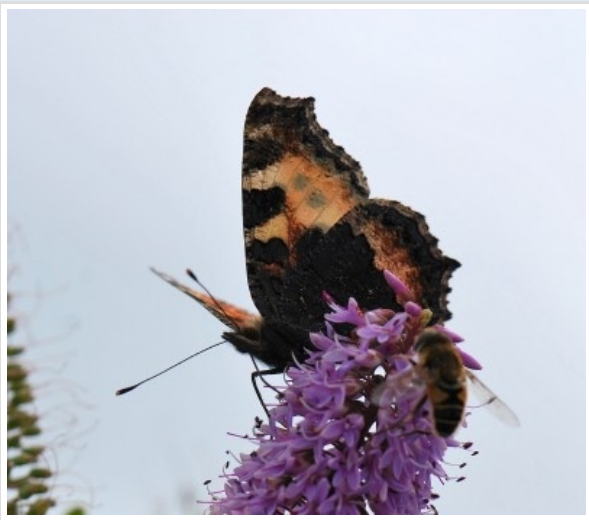
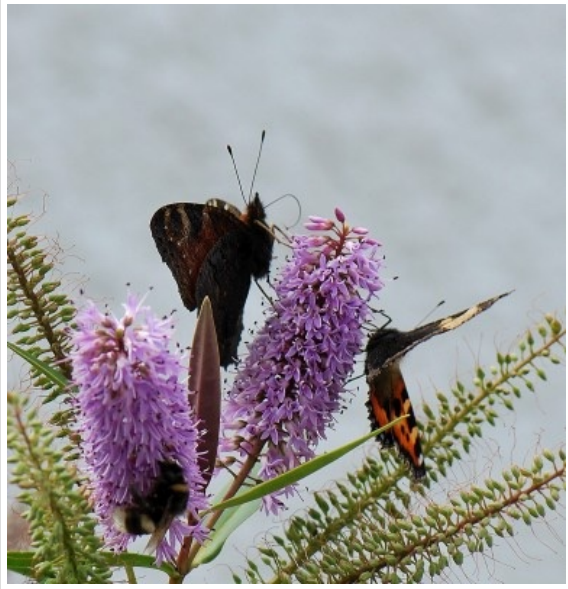
by Wurzel, 23-Dec-19 10:39 AM GMT

20th August – To the post box...

During the morning we took the 'circular' walk from the school in Aberaeron, down through the town to the sea front and back. A Sparrowhawk passed overhead as we walked to Costcutter, a few Painted Ladies played in the flowers in some front gardens and the Dipper put in a very brief appearance.

Apart from this sojourn I didn't see myself getting out again so when my wife remembered that the girls needed to post some postcards I offered my services willingly. First stop was the Verbena in the garden which today held 2 Small Torts bustling around in the middle of the bush and a third sharing a floret with a Peacock.

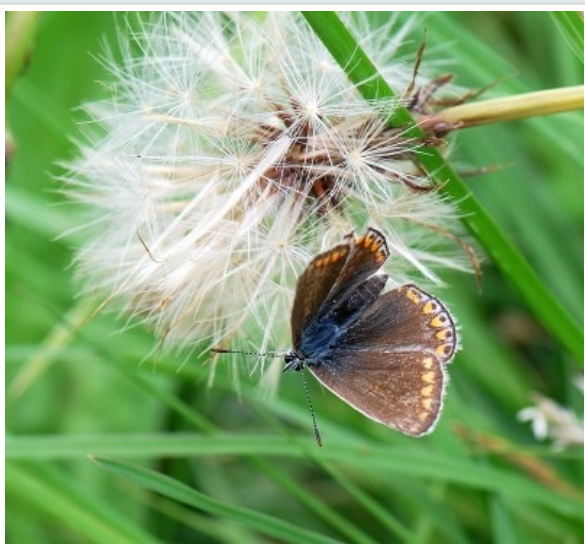




As I approached the Buddleia two Peacocks were in the air. One flew up from the grass on my left and headed away from me landing somewhere on the wall whilst the other flew from the Buddleia towards me and landed on the grass. The latter was easiest to see so I tried for a few shots whilst the former had somehow blended in perfectly with the light grey top of the wall - still don't know how that was possible? As I walked towards the wall staring intently at it trying to work out where the butterfly actually was it flew. This meant that the Buddleia itself was pretty bereft apart from a singleton Small Tort.



Once I'd walked to the end of the road and duly mailed the post I turned right and started the walk along Rhu Goch. Alas the verge has been decimated, ripped up and replaced with nice tidy, neat, shiny, black Tarmac! There is still a slither of verge remaining but it's been given a grade one haircut. To make matters worse the hedge has been trimmed and pinned back with wire fencing and so I wasn't surprised when I only saw three Hedgies. Even the wider lawn like bit of verge hadn't escaped the attentions of the path makers but it seems like the wildflowers have made the most of the limited space they've got and it was a lovely tangled mess of clover, trefoil and other floral goodies. As I made to have a proper look at it two blues took off; the male started to fly towards me and then pulled a loop the loop behind me whilst the female stayed low to the ground weakly fluttering in a rough zig-zag pattern. I chose to follow the female and I'm really glad I did as she perched tip tarsi on a Dandelion Clock - a lovely addition to another one of my collections.





There was more than a bit of moisture in the air now and so I made my way back to the Buddleia where 2 Peacocks fed whilst I had a chat with the owner of the cottage. On the stroll back there were a further 2 Small Torts – one on the grass where the Peacocks like to sit and the other getting warm from the slates shards on the drive way.

So that was Wales all very autumnal to be honest but made memorable for the plethora of Painted Ladies...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 24-Dec-19 06:16 PM GMT

Shipton Bellinger 22-08-2019

It was that time of year again – time for a meeting with Philzoid for a spot of Hedge Staring! After the briefest of catch-ups in the Central Car Park we were on our way and soon pulling up behind the Hedge. Gathering our gear together we were joined by Bugboy and, as seemed to be the way this year, as we rounded the corner there was a massive group. So we set off to check the length of the hedge sae in the knowledge that if anything turned up we'd be sure to know about it – this did mean though that I developed a crick in my neck by continually looking back over my shoulders. On the walk down the obligatory Painted Lady put in an appearance between the various Common Blues, numerous Brimstones, Hedgies, Whites and even more numerous Meadow Browns. The aforementioned Lady was also joined by an Admiral which added further interest. At the corner we waited a while before making the return walk and picking up more of the same.



The large group had vanished so reasoning that this meant that they'd drawn a blank we made our way up the hill to the scallops with fingers crossed that we weren't treading in the massive groups footsteps. Only a short way into our journey the call of 'Hairstreak' went up from a lone observer and we caught a glimpse of a distant female Brostreak. After a bit of Hedge staring and a few more steps on our way another fluttering orange Brostreak appeared – a male this time and it plopped down just in front of me and started opening up. It seemed to realise what it was doing, checked itself and then promptly buggered off!

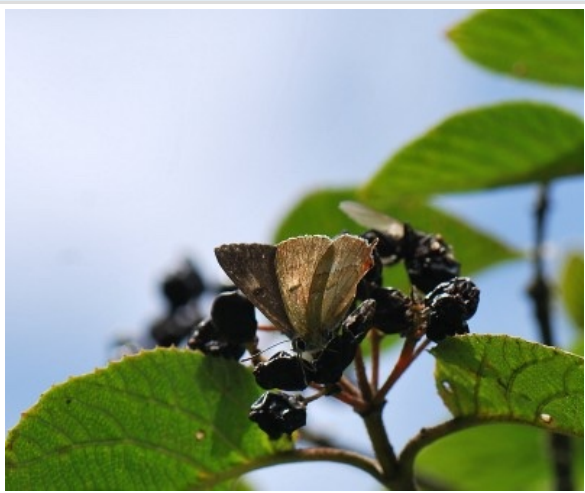


On the way to the first scallop Speckled Woods flew across the path and a pair of Walls played silly buggers with Philzoid, teasing him mercilessly! At the first scallop we drew a blank and we were soon back out in the open with a Wall or two and a surprising good nick Silver-washed dropping in. Then we were back into the cover again and on towards the second scallop when a female is visible up high. Too high unfortunately for my lens so when she takes flight I hope she comes down lower. She didn't and when I duck round to the other side of the tree there she is again but still high up. As we enter the final scallop the sun disappeared and all that we could produce was a solitary Silver-washed for our troubles.



Slightly disheartened we start making our way back and on the way there's another male up high but almost low enough that I can chance my arm, literally, and go for a few shots holding my camera out at full stretch. This still seems a poor return for all the trudging although the Walls teasing Philzoid again slightly cheered me up 😊. They'd sit still good as gold right up until Philzoid was within range and then they'd fly a few metres away, flashing their wings invitingly as they landed.





By now we were back at the Hedge and a walk along the length to the corner didn't produce anything. They seemed to be ignoring the 'golden hours' rules this year again. Plus this fact wasn't helped by the sun disappearing behind the cloud. On the final dejected 'stuff em' walk back to the car things started to happen. In fact it all went a little manic...

Slowly enough it started with a female refusing to come down to a decent level for any shots. We waited for what felt like an age but she stubbornly stayed up high. Occasionally she was disturbed and for a few fleeting seconds there were three hearts in mouths but she always remained at altitude.



Wondering if that would be that we finally found one in a great position when we were half way back and then they seemed to suddenly crawl out of the woodwork. There were at least 2 females as well as a male in this little section and all three were within reach of our lenses. While we were watching one intently the second flew off in a massive hug disappearing out across the large central field. While we continued to watch the original female another did the same thing but I reckoned it must have pulled a 'U-y' as a female shortly appeared directly behind Bugboy - it was almost sitting on his shoulder. After this we settled in and started to rack up shots onto the memory card. I think Bugboy went from 80 or so to several hundred in the course of the next half hour that we spent with them as they proceeded to work through the 'butterfly pose' catalogue; closed wing, open wing, $\frac{3}{4}$ open, stained glass, close up, behaviour etc.







Eventually Bugboy made for Dorset and Philzoid and I took a wander down the old 'dual carriageway' hedge. Whilst there were still butterflies about with Brown Argus, Common Blues and Specklies it seemed that the Brostreaks had re-read the rule book and as it was now just past 3 pm we didn't get any further sightings of them. Nevermind it had been successful in the end and now Philzoid and I concentrated on chewing the fat.



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 25-Dec-19 12:47 PM GMT

[color=#FF0000]MERRY CHRISTMAS!



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by bugboy, 25-Dec-19 04:08 PM GMT

Lots of very familiar looking butterflies there 😊 I'm secretly (well not anymore) glad no more were found after I left. A very frustrating yet very satisfying day at the same time!

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 27-Dec-19 02:40 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy 😊 They certainly made us work us work for the shots but compared to most other sites at Shipton they were almost posing in the spotlights 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Neil Freeman, 27-Dec-19 06:53 PM GMT

Nice selection of Brown Hairstreak shots Wurzel 🍷😊 A species I really must try and catch up with.

Like the shot of the Apache too. Had a couple of these fly over our house a few days ago, apparently heading into Birmingham Airport. I wondered if they were there to escort Father Christmas over Birmingham 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 30-Dec-19 05:15 PM GMT

Cheers Neil 😊 If you're down this way from mid August I could point you in the right direction – Shipton Bellinger can be a reliable site for them 😊 I reckon you're right about the Apache running escort for Santa! It's all those people on the Naughty List wanting to get some undeserved pressies 😊😊

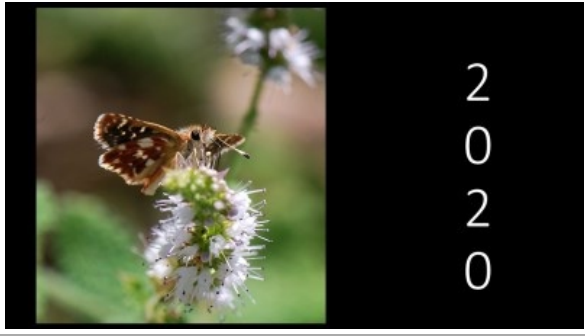
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Wurzel

by Wurzel, 31-Dec-19 12:14 PM GMT

COMING SOON...



Have a goodun

Wurzel