

Re: Pauline

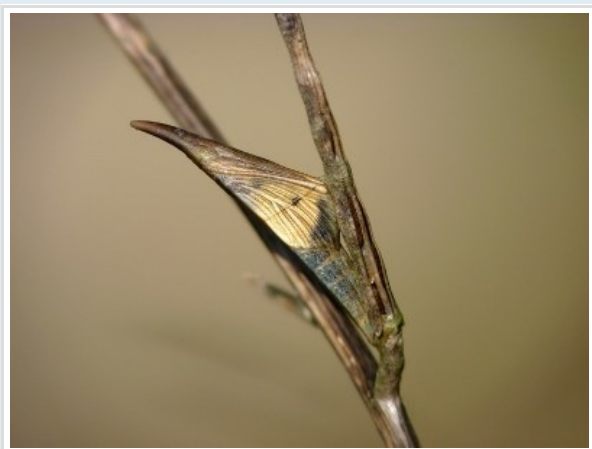
by Pauline, 09-Apr-20 05:19 PM GMT

Hi all – hope you are all keeping safe. What a strange year eh? It was not my intention to update my diary this year but I have been persuaded otherwise (not wishing to be perverse 😊).

To Allen, thank you so much for your lovely comments and to answer your question, from memory, I don't think I did use a tripod in those instances. Sometimes I do but sometimes I don't. Depends on how prepared I am. More frequently I find I am being caught unawares and barely have time to grab the camera let alone a tripod but you'll see that in the next few posts.

Thank you too David. There has been no change yet as regards the pupa so hopefully that is still to come.

Some might recall that last season I spent a stupid amount of time looking for Brimstone larva and pupa in the wild very close to where I live. I was pleased to find many larva and a couple of pupa but during my search I also stumbled across many Orange Tip larva. Recently, when taking my daily exercise I located several Orange Tip pupa close to where I had seen the larva. I have reared these in the past but have never photographed pupa in the wild so I shall start with a couple of shots:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 09-Apr-20 06:26 PM GMT

Fantastic, your back, 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 09-Apr-20 06:49 PM GMT

Wow. 🍷🍷 I have yet to find a wild Orange Tip pupa round here (or anywhere else either) despite their reasonable abundance every year.

Terrific shots – and welcome back, Pauline. I'm glad you will be posting again this year. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-20 08:58 AM GMT

Cracking images Pauline – the sheen of the pupal case gives them the appearance of pieces of jewellery 😊👍 Great to see you return to the fold 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Apr-20 05:22 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie – amazing powers of persuasion 😊

Good to hear from you Dave and thank you. They are quite well camouflaged but I had the advantage of knowing where all the larva had been. Purely by chance that I remembered about them – I was there getting some fresh willow branches for the parrots perches and stopped literally right beside them. I wonder if we will get the chance to meet up again this year – let's hope so!

Cheers Wurzel. I have always said that jewelers are missing a trick as many species have pupa that are (in my opinion) simply gorgeous and it would make a unique piece of jewellery rather than the usual butterfly on a chain.

I must confess that having visited the OT pupa several times I was concerned that a tightening of the restrictions would mean that further visits would be impossible. Added to that, following a strong breeze 2 of them were by now lying on the ground. I decided to bring them home. Just missed this one emerging – I was painting the side of the garage and when I looked up







Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 10-Apr-20 06:02 PM GMT

Those are amazing shots Pauline, 🍷 your right about the jewellers, just fancy a brooch looking like your last shot 😊

I've got a vase Jim bought for me one Christmas has a surprise, it's quite beautiful, it's a Moorcroft and it's got a Peacock Butterfly and a Red Admiral BF in all their coloured glory, I treasure it 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-20 06:41 PM GMT

A cracking sequence Pauline 😊 The only problem I can see is that a jewellery chrysalis might be mistaken for a boomerang – particularly the OT 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 10-Apr-20 07:08 PM GMT

Welcome back Pauline...and a cracking series of the emerging Orange-tip to return with 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 10-Apr-20 08:03 PM GMT

That's one way to get a well behaved Orange Tip, great sequence.
Good to see you return. Whether I will see you this season? who knows.

Keep safe and Well,
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 10-Apr-20 08:35 PM GMT

Welcome back, Pauline. Good to see you and almost as good to see that emerging Orange Tip.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Apr-20 07:15 PM GMT

Thank you M. What a wonderful gift from a very thoughtful and caring man 😊

Cheers Wurzel – personally I was thinking along the lines of ST. There is a lady at my Pilates class whose husband makes jewellery. If I ever get back there perhaps I shall suggest it. D'you reckon I should apply for copyright? 😊 😊

Good to hear from you Neil and thank you. I fear my presence this season might be a bit sporadic depending on what I see.

Thank you Trevor. I confess I am finding it very frustrating in this lovely weather but using the time to paint gates and fences and trying not to complain as many are much worse off.

Hello David - very pleased to note you have got your priorities right! 😊🤔

Today I have been hoping that perhaps one of the female Brimstone's in the garden might lay on my Alder Buckthorn but it was not to be. Perhaps I should move it into dappled shade as it is in full sun? I managed a few shots today as I was working in the garden including this one on the Primula:



I wasn't short of company as I was watched by this 'tame' collared Dove:



and the nest box which I put up for the Sparrows on the back of the garage has been taken over by Blue Tits:



The Nuthatches which come every year are in their usual box - I'll try to get a few shots soon but it was just so hot here today. I'll finish with a quick pic of Hope snoozing in the heat:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-20 12:52 PM GMT

"D'you reckon I should apply for copyright?" Definitely! 😊 Lovely Brimstone 😊 I hoe your garden is at least as productive this year as it usually is with a few extra goodies wandering in 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 12-Apr-20 05:59 PM GMT

Aah, this is what I love. Your pets and garden visitors.

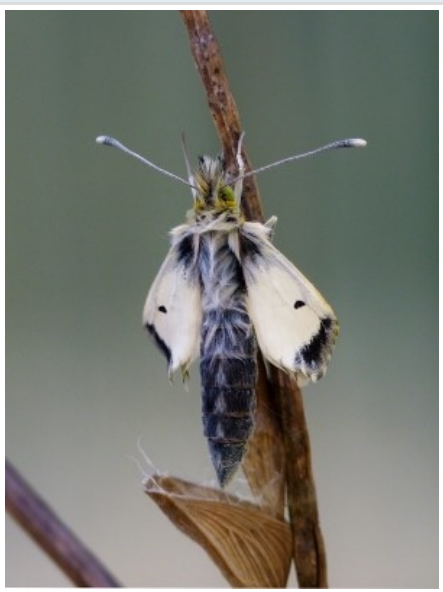
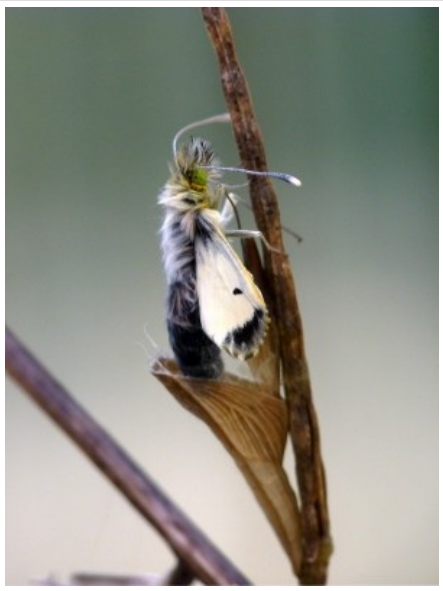
I must find some of our rabble (chickens & rabbits) and post them.

Re: Pauline

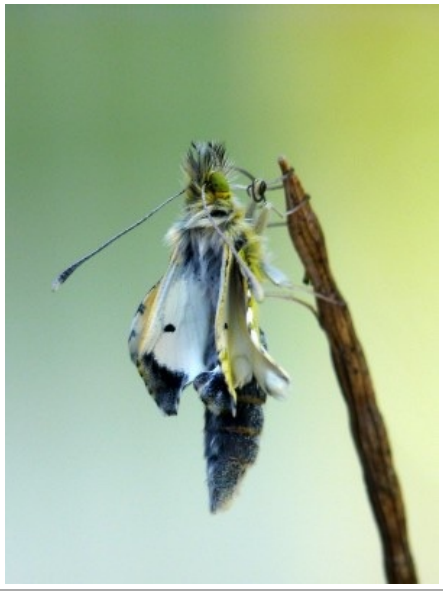
by Pauline, 12-Apr-20 06:11 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel. It will be interesting to see exactly what does come into the garden – usually, if I'm not doing chores I'm off out up Noar Hill or some such place and I'm sure I miss a lot. I did manage to see the female OT emerge the other day but it was really windy with bright sunshine and because (yet again) I was unprepared the background was poor and no tripod to hand 😊













I was a bit concerned about this little lady as it looked as though she was going to have a problem with her proboscis as it seemed to be all tangled around her legs but worked out OK in the end 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 13-Apr-20 05:08 PM GMT

Fabulous, Pauline. What a thrill it must be to watch that. The colours in fine detail are amazing. I hope she leads a productive life.

Great as well to see Hope, your rabbit, looking utterly contented.

Here's an image of our two, Boris (the white one with the black 'spectacles') and Molly:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 13-Apr-20 10:20 PM GMT

How lucky can you get Pauline 😊 One of each Orange Tip, Male and Female 🐛🐛 and your Brimstone shot is great, Give Hope a hug from me 😊

also your cute Rabbits David 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 13-Apr-20 10:32 PM GMT

Great sequence of the hatching Orange Tip, Pauline! 😊 As David mentioned, the detail of the mossy green underside is amazing (especially when you consider that it's actually not green at all, but yellow and black). Such a brilliant bit of camouflage.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by David M, 13-Apr-20 11:20 PM GMT

{quote=millerd post_id=152163 time=1586813558 user_id=9839}...Such a brilliant bit of camouflage.

Indeed. The female, lacking the orange patches, blends in perfectly with the blackthorn in the same way as she does with the cuckoo flower.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Apr-20 01:48 PM GMT

David M wrote:

Aah, this is what I love. Your pets and garden visitors.

I must find some of our rabble (chickens & rabbits) and post them.

Don't tempt me David. I'm trying to apply some restraint. Lovely shot of Boris and Molly. Waiting for the hens now 😊

David M wrote:

Fabulous, Pauline. What a thrill it must be to watch that.

Yes, it doesn't seem to matter how many times I see them emerge, it never loses its wonder.

Thanks Goldie, as you know I could do with a bit of luck this year and guess what? I saw a Small Copper today and just missed getting a shot!!! 😊

Thanks Dave – you've not been doing too bad yourself with those gorgeous shots of the Holly Blue.

I've been working really hard around the place and decided I needed a break as I haven't been out for ages – apart from down the lane. I only drove for 5 minutes to a very local spot where I was trying to get some shots of the Green Hairstreak. Sadly they were just too active but as I stood trying to watch where they might land I heard rustling at my feet. I have never seen Sand Lizards before. I think that's what these are. I understand that they are extremely rare due to loss of habitat but I am lucky to be close to a great deal of sandy heath land. I believe that the 3 I saw were all males and all were very fast and very secretive. I shall definitely go back as it was quite deserted:





Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 15-Apr-20 06:21 PM GMT

Glad you made a move Pauline, I thought about it today until I got yet another surprise 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-20 07:57 PM GMT

Great set of shots Pauline – I've seen Sand Lizards (I used to see loads when I was growing up in Dorset) and got a few shots of a female but never the green males 😊👍👍 Cracking find 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Janet Turnbull, 15-Apr-20 10:30 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, your sequences of emerging Orange tip butterflies has absolutely blown my socks off! 🍻🍻🍻 I will have a look tomorrow and see if there are any left to emerge near here, although from the numbers I've seen they have probably all emerged by now!
Janet

Re: Pauline

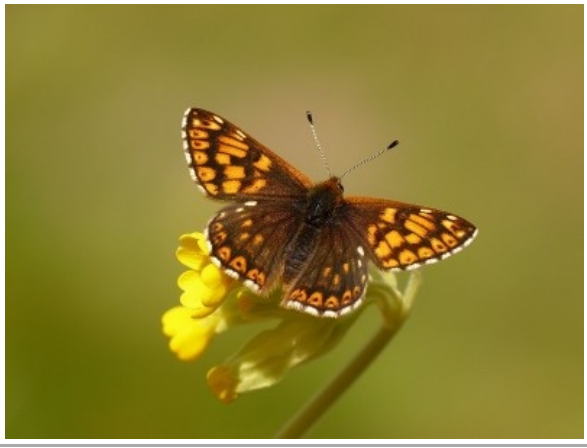
by Pauline, 16-Apr-20 12:46 PM GMT

Well Goldie, I am waiting for more fence preservative to arrive (should have been yesterday) so it was either that or clean out the garage! 😊

Cheers Wurzel – when I saw them I didn't know whether they were male or female. As one was smaller than the other 2 I had assumed the smallest was the female but having 'googled' them I now know better and hope I can get to see some females – taking great care not to disturb their environment or activities of course.

Kind of you to say so Janet. I am very critical of my own shots and can always see room for improvement. Good luck on your search for OT.

Many will recall my Duke on 1 April last year. In 2017 I was taking shots of them on 10 April:



A few shots from today – they look like they've been out at least a few days:



Closer to home, I planted a few pots of PARROT tulips, never having heard of them. Pretty don't you think but not a bit like any of the parrots I have 😊



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 16-Apr-20 01:45 PM GMT

Lovely to see the Dukes, Pauline. 😊 I do indeed remember your exceptionally early one last year.

I don't expect to be able to go to any of my usual spots for them this year unless things relax in the next month. I suspect the weather may have induced an early season too, which won't help.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-20 10:36 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Pauline 😊 Hopefully there might be a few at my Duke site or Bentley Wood when I pop in there for my exercise after work 🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Apr-20 07:35 AM GMT

It certainly was Dave. Altho' Noar Hill is probably my closest butterfly site I share your frustration – along with many others I suspect. Mind you, with the butterflies you are seeing and the shots you are getting, for the moment at least, you don't need to stray too far 😊

Cheers Wurzel – being close to Bentley should stand you in good stead 😊

David M wrote:

I hope she leads a productive life.

I can't guarantee that the same little lady was responsible of course but I was delighted to find at least 9 OT eggs in both the front and back garden yesterday. Still no sign of anything on the Alder Buckthorn.



Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 17-Apr-20 10:16 AM GMT

Mixed feelings about seeing your Dukes 😊. I doubt I'll be seeing them myself this year but at least I see a few through yours and possible some others diaries (although if Wurzel sees any we won't get to see them until September 😊)

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 17-Apr-20 11:58 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, lovely shots of the Dukes, your so lucky living so close to Noar Hill, you'll have to keep the posts coming so we can all share with you what we're missing, it'll cheer us all up, (or depress us 😊)

I think those Tulips are well named and I'll look out for some next year for the Garden 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 17-Apr-20 07:25 PM GMT

Lovely Dukes, Pauline. I'm really glad you've got to see them. This is one species I may miss out on unless restrictions are lifted somewhat in 3 weeks' time, so nice to know I can observe them vicariously through your diary. 🍷

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Apr-20 04:54 PM GMT

If it's any little consolation Paul I took 3 ticks off me after that visit – after they'd had a good feed off me 😊

Thanks Goldie – I swear there are more butterflies visiting your garden than I saw on my walk today. Mind you, I was looking for something entirely different.

Thanks David – I was really glad too after my awful start to the year. Could have turned out so very different.

I was fascinated by those Sand Lizards and had to go back for another look. 5 mins after arriving and standing quietly a female scurried past, possibly even more difficult to photograph than the males. There were several much smaller lizards scurrying about – way too fast to get any shots. I assume they are a different species as I gather it is too early for youngsters:



Back home I have a delinquent squirrel. I have many squirrels in the garden but have never known one to be so destructive. I had bought an expensive Acer as they seem to do well in the garden and this was an attractive new variety. He has bitten off every branch leaving just a few inches protruding from the soil. He has now moved on to my mature Acers and is systematically chewing off the new leaves. He then does somersaults around the garden, bouncing off the sheds and rolling over and over on the lawn. I'm thinking of having a little chew on those branches myself to see if they give me as much energy 😊 :





I have also seen what I believe to be a Bee Fly in the garden. Never seen these here before:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-20 05:53 PM GMT

Love the shot of the Bee-fly Pauline – looks like its the Greater judging by the almost black wing – they're having a good year 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 19-Apr-20 08:44 PM GMT

That lizard is superbly camouflaged, Pauline. I had to expand the image to see it.

As for your demented squirrel, how about coating your buds with some hot chilli powder? 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 19-Apr-20 11:19 PM GMT

I'd a good laugh Pauline when you said you should try chewing the branches for energy, I could just picture you rolling on the ground with the Squirrel . 😊 Please send me a branch 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Apr-20 03:09 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – I didn't even know there was more than one type 😊

Yes, amazing camouflage David with speed to match – doesn't make for easy photography. The rogue squirrel has moved onto my delphiniums and has bitten them all off at the base 😊 . The moles are now digging up my lawn faster than I can fill in the holes! I spent years attracting wildlife to the garden so I fear I am a victim of my own success!

I can send you loads of branches Goldie – they're scattered all over the lawn!!!

It was very windy today on my walk, even in the sheltered areas. For the most part it kept the butterflies low down with a reluctance to open their wings

but I did see my first Dingy of the season:



I include this shot of the Holly Blue only because it is the first shot I have managed this season – not a patch on those posted recently by Dave and David:



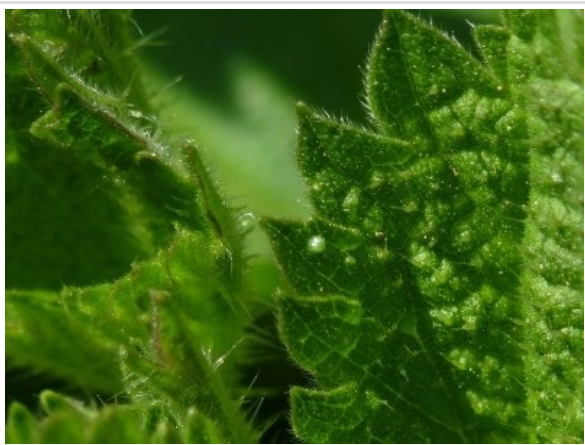
Lots of Dukes around today but the only shot I took was this one nectaring on Dandelion despite the masses of Cowslips – never seen that before. Perhaps because it was that little bit lower down out of the wind?



As I was leaving I watched a very vibrant Red Admiral egg-laying. I took a few shots:



It was only when I looked at the photos that I realised there is another egg on an adjacent leaf. Not sure what it might be. Comma?



Re: Pauline

by trevor, 20-Apr-20 05:36 PM GMT

Well done with those first sightings of the Dingy and Duke, Pauline. 🍷
The Duke in particular seems very early, but very welcome.
I may well miss seeing those two species this year, especially the Dukes,
the nearest colony is a good 40 miles from here.

Some lovely shots recently.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 20-Apr-20 07:56 PM GMT

Cracking Duke Pauline 🍷🍷 Like Trevor that could be one that I miss as the Woodland ones at Bentley can be pretty scarce so I will miss the bucket loads at Noar 🍷🍷🍷 Still I can always see your images, I think that 2020 will be the year of voyeuristic butterflying 🍷🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 20-Apr-20 11:34 PM GMT

Nice images of the the Dingy and the Dukes, Pauline. As others have said, your pictures may be the only ones coming on here this year, so congratulations from me too.

Keep 'em coming!

Re: Pauline

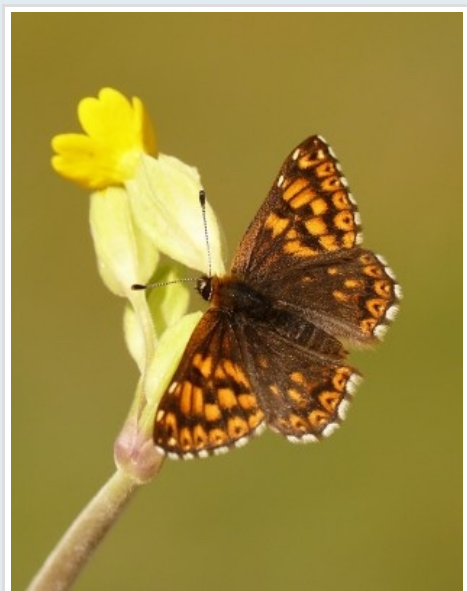
by Pauline, 21-Apr-20 12:57 PM GMT

Lovely to hear from you Mark. Hope you are keeping well and safe. Thank you for your generous comment. I am fairly confident that before too long there will be some splendid images of Dukes posted on this site (no pressure M if you are reading this 🍷🍷).

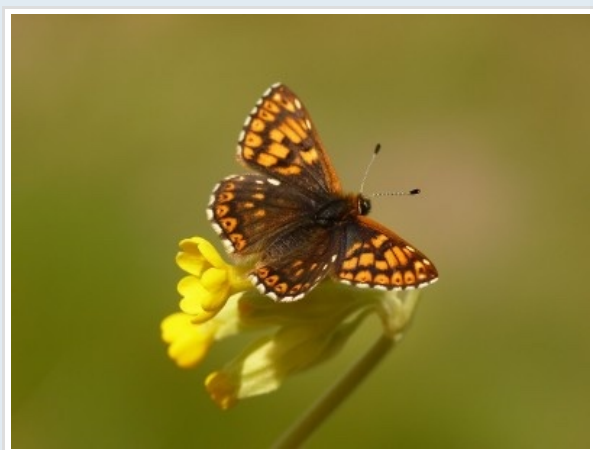
Cheers Wurzel – hopefully it won't be too long before the restrictions are relaxed and Dukes may still be around.

Thank you Trevor although I have to disagree slightly with your comment about the Dukes being early. I have reviewed my records over the last few years (and I doubt that they were the earliest sightings recorded, but here is what I found with accompanying 'proof':

2016 – 14 April:



2017 – 10 April:



2018 – 20 April

2019 – 1 April then several around by 18 April:



2020 – my first sighting was 16 April but they looked like they'd been out for a few days.

When I have some time I really should do a spreadsheet over the last 10 years or so.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Apr-20 01:02 PM GMT

Like many others I am finding things close to home that I never knew to be there. Today I saw my first Green Hairstreak of the season:



Lots of Green Longhorn moths about (also known as 'fairy' moths):



At home the demented squirrel has started on my Busy Lizzies and is digging up and eating my crocus bulbs!!!! He is kinda cute tho' 😊



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 21-Apr-20 03:18 PM GMT

A big 🍀 for the Green Hairstreaks, Pauline. Last year someone showed me a photo of one taken on my local patch, but I have yet to track them down! Well done for finding one not too far away. They are probably more common than we realise.

The squirrel is indeed a bit cute... The trouble is that at this time of year if he can't find his buried goodies from last autumn there aren't any new ones to feast on, so the little chap is no doubt starving. Spring squirrels tend to be very scrawny. However, he probably can't believe his luck finding your garden full of succulent new growth to munch!

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-20 04:14 PM GMT

Cracking Greenstreak Pauline 😊 The Squirrel is kinda cute looking but also looks very guilty at the same time – caught red-pawed 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 21-Apr-20 07:12 PM GMT

Dukes, Dingies and Green Hairstreaks!

You're practically keeping us going with all the current newbies, Pauline. Whilst you're doing it, that squirrel is running rampant in your unattended garden! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 21-Apr-20 07:37 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, before I saw your Squirrel, I saw your Squirrel looking pot with all the flowers in, maybe the Squirrel thinks it's found a mate 😄😄
I love your recent shots, I think the first one of the Green Hair Streak is fab, 😄 and well done with the Dingy you've made it look good, my shots are usually Dingy . 😄 Keep them coming 😄 Goldie 😄

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 21-Apr-20 07:53 PM GMT

Good to see your Dukes, Dingy and Green Hairstreak Pauline, three species that I will probably miss this year.

Cracking photos, particularly the GH 🍷😄

Loving the demented Squirrel 😄

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Apr-20 06:49 AM GMT

Thank you Neil. I have to say that it is more of a thrill than usual even to see the more common species and is a reminder not to take anything for granted. 😄

There are lots of squirrels in the garden Goldie and at certain times of the year mating is a regular occurrence among the shrubbery 😄. Just hope he doesn't pass on his destructive tendencies!

Cheers Wurzel – it was good to see it so close to home.

Thank you Dave. I can assure you that there are no scrawny squirrels in my garden 😄. I get through 5 sacks of peanuts (100kg) each month and there is always a plentiful supple for them. The peanut plants that spring up everywhere later in the year are quite attractive. So you see, he has no excuse and has every right to look guilty 😄

Thank you David. I really should spend more time in the garden. It wasn't just the squirrel that was running rampant. I have been checking my little sprig of Alder Buckthorn daily and I can only conclude that it was whilst I was with the Green Hairstreak down the lane that the Brimstone finally delivered. I was both excited and elated to find 5 eggs on this little plant:





A little later whilst dead-heading primulas I discovered this moth larva. I'm sure I've seen them here before but can't for the life of me remember what it is. Old Lady?



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Apr-20 03:10 PM GMT

Numbers of Dukes are building nicely at Noar Hill with a fair few fresh females emerging. Not surprising therefore that a pairing seen in a very short time:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-20 05:58 PM GMT

Woah brilliant stuff Pauline – I could really do with this species in my 'In cop' collection 🍷🍷🍷😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 22-Apr-20 11:14 PM GMT

Nice to see the female Brimstones have found your buckthorn, Pauline, even if you didn't observe them in the act of laying.

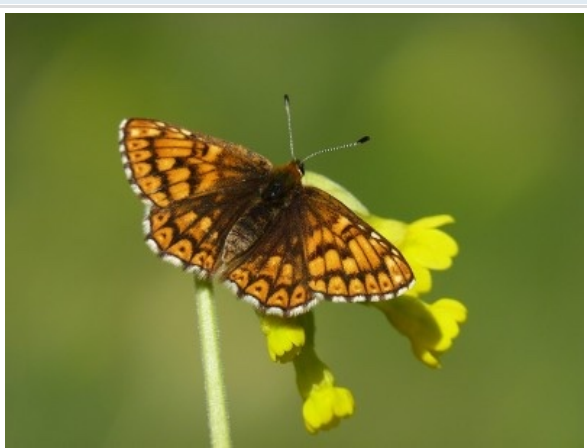
Even better is the sight of mating Dukes. Unless we have restrictions partially lifted in a couple of weeks, I fear I will miss out on this species as it does not occur in Wales. Good to see things going well on that front from afar.

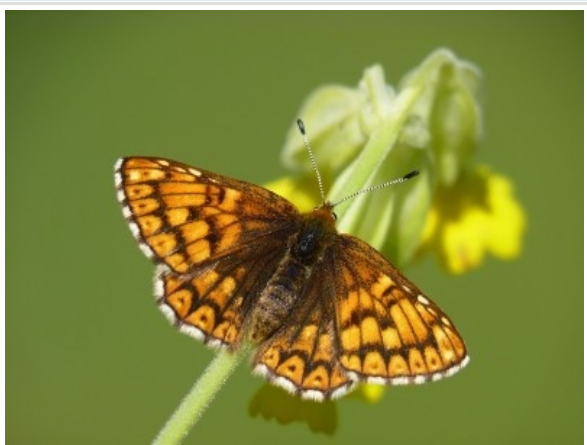
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Apr-20 02:46 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – your 'in cop' collection must be quite substantial by now? 😊

Ah, but I've seen them egg-laying before David. By far the most exciting for me was seeing those eggs on the Buckthorn. Having said that I do feel sorry for folk who are going to miss out on a number of species this season (and I include myself in that). However, whilst watching that mating pair of Dukes yesterday I was lucky enough to spot what I think is an Ab. Gracilans. I saw one last year and in 2013. Please shout if I am wrong.





and another shot of the happy couple:



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 23-Apr-20 06:51 PM GMT

I think it is *gracilens*, Pauline. They are so much lighter in colour they almost look like a different species. I saw one at Noar Hill a few years ago and it took me a while to work out what it was. Those are terrific shots as well.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-Apr-20 07:12 PM GMT

Looks good for the ab to me too 🍷🍷 They are a cracking looking ab. – as Dave says almost like a different species 😊😊 As for the 'In cop' collection I'm doing okay for most of the groups but I'm missing Aristocrats and Hairstreaks and the Duke would be a great one as that would be a whole group completed in one! 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 23-Apr-20 10:30 PM GMT

Those are lovely shots of the Dukes Pauline, keep them coming, your shots of them will do me good 😊 ab's has well 🍷🍷😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Apr-20 09:33 AM GMT

Thank you Dave, Wurzel for verification of the Ab. I thought it was spelled **Gracilens** Dave but I looked at British Butterfly Abs site and it was spelled as **Gracilans** – old fashioned spelling perhaps?

Thank you so much Goldie – I don't intend going there too often as it's a 10 min drive but I sometimes need to go over that way for animal supplies.

I wonder if I could possibly ask the experts out there to take a closer look at the shot of a Brimstone I posted earlier in April. It has been tentatively suggested to me that it looks a little like something else and I would appreciate other opinions. Thanking you in advance.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-Apr-20 10:10 AM GMT

[quote=Pauline post_id=152664 time=1587717221 user_id=1095]. I wonder if I could possibly ask the experts out there to take a closer look at the shot of a Brimstone I posted earlier in April. It has been tentatively suggested to me that it looks a little like something else and I would appreciate other opinions. Thanking you in advance.

Do you mean the one in your post from 11th April, Pauline?

The only similar species in western Europe is Cleopatra.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Apr-20 03:06 PM GMT

That's the one David (11 April) and some similarities to Cleopatra were mentioned to me recently. Personally, having looked at photos of both species I am struggling to tell the difference but I am sure those who are more experienced can explain what the differences are. I imagine you have seen Cleopatra 'in the flesh' so to speak which presumably makes it easier to differentiate.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-Apr-20 03:35 PM GMT

The females of these two species are very difficult to separate with any certainty (unless you happen to see a mating pair!)

The apical 'spike' on Cleopatra is usually a bit blunter than that of a Brimstone, though each individual butterfly might display a range of variation from what is considered normal.

I note that your female's spike does look a little blunt, but then the one I photographed on 22nd March is quite blunt also, and given that 5 minutes after taking this she was in-cop with a male Brimstone then there is no doubt as to her identity:



Also, factor in the distribution of Cleopatra. It is common near the Mediterranean but gets scarcer as you go north in France. Looking at the most recent 'repartition' charts, it is completely absent from the northern half of France, so the only likely way it could arrive in the UK would be either via a breeder or importation of a mediterranean buckthorn plant with early stages attached.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Apr-20 05:47 PM GMT

Thank you for this David. An 'orange stripe' was mentioned to me but I am not sure how significant this is. IF this was the female that laid eggs in the garden (and I don't know as I wasn't there) are there any significant differences in their larva?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Apr-20 05:56 PM GMT

Just in case anyone happens to be following this thread I thought I'd post the shot again so it is easily accessible:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 24-Apr-20 06:57 PM GMT

I think the 'blunt' part of the wing is actually a trick of the light as it were...if you zoom in it looks a lot more pointed its just that the petal behind it is

perfectly positioned making it look blunt...if that makes any sense whatsoever I'll go and buy a hat to eat it 🤔😂 but you might get what I mean... 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-Apr-20 09:20 PM GMT

[quote=Pauline post_id=152673 time=1587746871 user_id=1095] Thank you for this David. An 'orange stripe' was mentioned to me but I am not sure how significant this is. IF this was the female that laid eggs in the garden (and I don't know as I wasn't there) are there any significant differences in their larva?

There are notch-like orange markings at intervals along the costa but both species exhibit these. The larvae are very similar too, so one can't rely on that like in Pale/Berger's Clouded Yellow. Both feed on *rhamnus* species too, making differentiation even harder.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Apr-20 11:31 AM GMT

Thank you David, Wurzel - I am much better informed than I was a couple of days ago 😊

A few images from a very pleasant walk yesterday. Small Copper are now fairly numerous but were very lively in the heat and reluctant to open wings:



Green Tiger Beetles, an agile predator of caterpillars amongst other things, scurried ahead of me on the path, occasionally taking short, distinctive flights. I've photographed these before but their dazzling metallic colours warrants a couple more shots I reckon:



I wondered if it was permissible for me to pause and spend time watching the Dartford Warblers (I think that's what they are). I did so anyway. They weren't very close and you all know what my bird photography is like but I thought I'd give it a try anyway:





Last but not least were the tiny lizards – Common Lizards I believe, declining in numbers and protected by law:



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 25-Apr-20 02:52 PM GMT

[quote=Pauline post_id=152664 time=1587717221 user_id=1095] Thank you Dave, Wurzel for verification of the Ab. I thought it was spelled **Gracilens** Dave but I looked at British Butterfly Abs site and it was spelled as **Gracilans** – old fashioned spelling perhaps? I wasn't correcting your spelling, Pauline – I always put ab. names in italics! 😊 However, I always thought it was "ens" and hadn't noticed you'd spelt it "ans". In the folder of images on UKB <https://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/aberrations.php?species=lucina> it has the "ens" spelling. I suspect that this is the correct one, as "gracilens" (meaning slender) is a Latin word, whereas "gracilans" does not exist at all in Latin. (Hooray for online dictionaries... 😊)

The Tiger Beetles are splendid creatures – I've never yet got close enough to one to get a decent shot, so a definite 🇧🇧 for those. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 25-Apr-20 10:04 PM GMT

Scroll down to pages 76 to 78 on this PDF to see some of the key ID points between the Brimstone and Cleopatra 😊

http://static.malaga.es/malaga/subidas/archivos/4/8/arc_281884_v4.pdf

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 25-Apr-20 10:20 PM GMT

Great shots of the Darty Pauline – they're cracking looking birds when they eventually stop skulking around 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 26-Apr-20 09:02 AM GMT

Nice find with the Dartford Warbler, Pauline. You seem to be doing pretty well with the reptile-life this spring too. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Apr-20 06:51 PM GMT

Thank you Dave. I think those Green Tiger Beetles are quite sensitive to any vibration so a great deal of stealth was required on the approach – not sure my speed at that point would have counted towards my 'exercise' tho! 😊

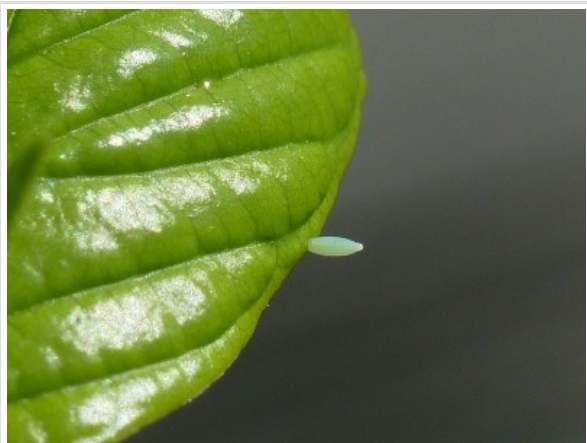
That is exactly what I was searching for Buggy – thank you. I found a Corfu site where Dr Dan Danahar had promised to upload a document which highlighted the differences and also included the Powdered Brimstone (if I've remembered that right) but I couldn't locate the actual document.

There were 2 of them Wurzel, working together, stripping the gorse of larva of some sort.

I suppose my focus is usually primarily on the butterflies David, but being restricted to local sites means I am taking more notice of other wildlife too which has to be a good thing. Today just a few from the garden. I had to top up the pond with the hose as it was getting a bit low for the resident frogs:



Presumably it was whilst I was doing this that another Brimstone laid more eggs on my little Alder Buckthorn 😊 I went to check on the first batch and noted they had changed colour. This is from 22/4:



and now, 4 days later:



If they all survive I may have to provide supplementary feeding as it is just a tiny sprig and from my experience last season, it was clear that the larva stripped the plant then moved onto the next one.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 27-Apr-20 11:23 PM GMT

Good luck with the 'baby' Brimstones, Pauline. It'll be interesting to see how you get on with them once they've hatched.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Apr-20 06:35 PM GMT

Thanks David - no sign of any Brimstone yet but quite a few of the OT eggs around the garden have hatched:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 29-Apr-20 11:24 PM GMT

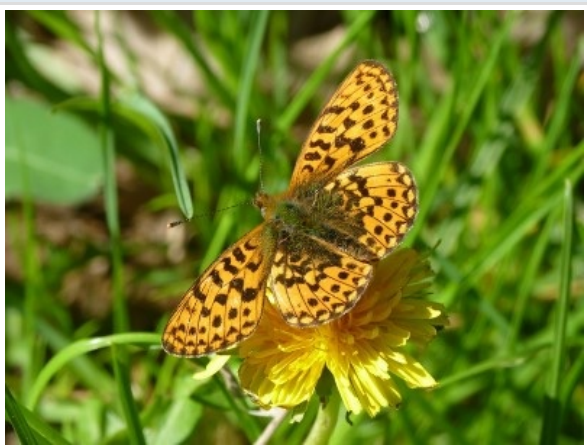
`{quote=Pauline post_id=152904 time=1588181734 user_id=1095}`Thanks David - no sign of any Brimstone yet but quite a few of the OT eggs around the garden have hatched...

Fabulous, Pauline. Two sets of desirable early stages for you to keep your eye on during lockdown. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-May-20 04:09 PM GMT

Mmmm - not sure David. They seem to be disappearing almost before they appear 😞. It makes a nice change to be able to post a few shots of an actual butterfly tho' with the weather being so good I was never going to get the wings closed or even an elegant pose - next time perhaps:



Re: Pauline

by trevor, 02-May-20 05:41 PM GMT

Lovely Pearl Bordered Fritillaries, Pauline. I am fortunate to have them close to home. I envy your recent Dukes, I won't see those this year. Hopefully things will ease by High Summer.

You might be interested to know, I get a visit from a Fox, just after dusk, most evenings probably because he/she gets a snack which I place on my drive. It is very nervous though.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 02-May-20 05:44 PM GMT

Great to see the Pearls Pauline 😊 I was at Bentley again this morning and the cloudier weather made them a bit more amenable 😊 but the last time they were a complete nightmare 😱

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 02-May-20 07:29 PM GMT

Lovely Pearls, Pauline, glad you got to see them 😊 sadly that's another species that I won't see this year 😞

Mike.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-May-20 02:40 PM GMT

Thank you Trevor but you got closed wing shots 🙄 Don't be envious about the Dukes – they'll still be there next year (at least that's what I'm telling myself about loads of species 😊). Good on you for helping out Foxy – a few shots wouldn't go amiss 😊

Cheers Wurzel – seems to be quite a delicate balance: I probably wouldn't see them at all today it's so dull and drizzly.

Thank you Mike. My journey was 21 minutes from door to door and that was dawdling and keeping well within all speed limits. I still felt guilty tho! Not sure why because I haven't been in a shop since Feb or even put petrol in the car since then so you can see I haven't been far at all.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-May-20 02:53 PM GMT

Today was like old times – going out in the rain with my camera stuffed under my jacket, but it was so good to get out. Not a butterfly in sight so I thought I'd do a quick Duke egg survey. The first dozen I found surprised me in 2 ways – first, they were all singletons like the one below which looks ready to hatch, and second, they were almost all, without exception, on plants exactly where I have found them in the past. I have found this previously with White Admirals who seem to lay in the same place generation after generation:



It wasn't long before I started to find clusters of eggs:



Still getting covered with ticks but the disposable gloves worn for the virus work equally well for them. Found a quite distinctive moth(?) larva and if anyone can put a name to it that would be good. Likewise, but less likely, some unidentified eggs:



It is early days still for the Duke but I am hoping that this year I will be able to track some of these larva through to pupation:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-May-20 05:47 PM GMT

I was about to water some houseplants earlier and found an amazing beetle sitting on one of them. I believe it is a Musk Beetle, one of the UK's longest beetles and a type of Longhorn. I have read they are widespread but scarce and take 3 years to mature on Willow. How it managed to get in will remain a mystery:





Re: Pauline

by David M, 03-May-20 09:36 PM GMT

Glad to see you're keeping busy, Pauline. I've only filled up once myself since early March (shame that it coincides with petrol being so cheap!)

Nice work with the PBFs. My chances of seeing them this year largely depend on what's announced next week. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 05-May-20 09:49 AM GMT

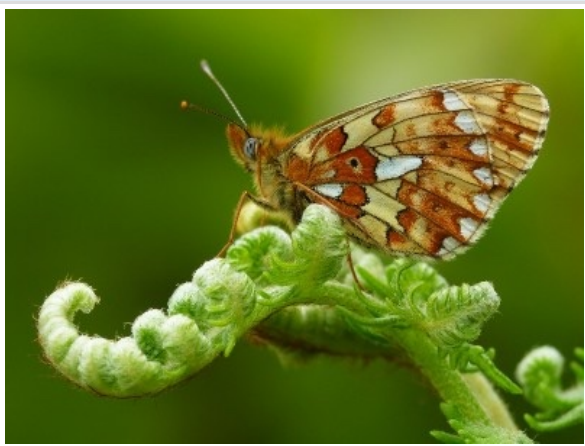
Great shots of the Pearls Pauline, your making me long for the Lake's and Kent and just to travel 😊😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

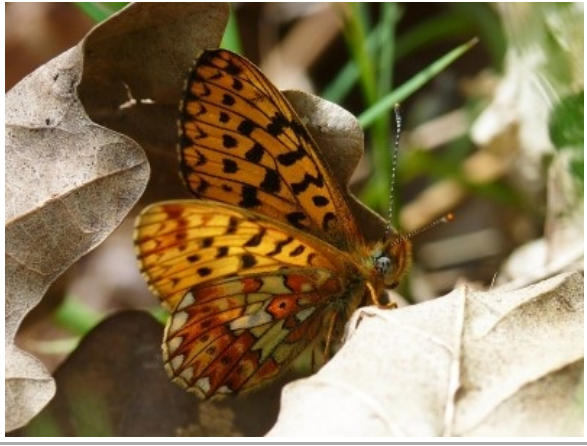
by Pauline, 05-May-20 05:19 PM GMT

Always busy David – just depends whether it's painting fences, mucking out animals or searching for eggs 😊

Thank you Goldie. I, too, would love to travel but today's Pearls were even closer than the first ones – 16 mins even keeping to the 30 limit and navigating winding country lanes:









Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-May-20 06:47 PM GMT

A few posts ago I promised a shot of the resident Nuthatches. Every year I have 2 pairs nesting in the garden – here's one to be going on with:



Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 05-May-20 07:29 PM GMT

Your Nuthatches had a good old time mudding up the hole to the right size, looks like a tight fit too! Nice Pearls in your earlier posts, I think that's about as close as I'll get to them this year 🍷

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 05-May-20 07:41 PM GMT

Lovely set of Pearls Pauline 😊 Especially like the last but one – I've not been able to get a stained glass shot yet 🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurel

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 06-May-20 07:32 AM GMT

Last evening I discovered that there are two Foxes visiting my drive for a tit-bit!
As the usual one visits after dark it's not possible to grab a shot.
However, back in 2004, we had a 'tame' young Fox at the Bluebell Railway.
Amazingly he/she would appear from nowhere, and settle down at a safe distance and watch us at work. This lasted for several months, then it was not seen again. The image here shows just how close it was possible to get to these usually timid animals.
A great set of Pearl images, where is your Pearl colony?.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.



Re: Pauline

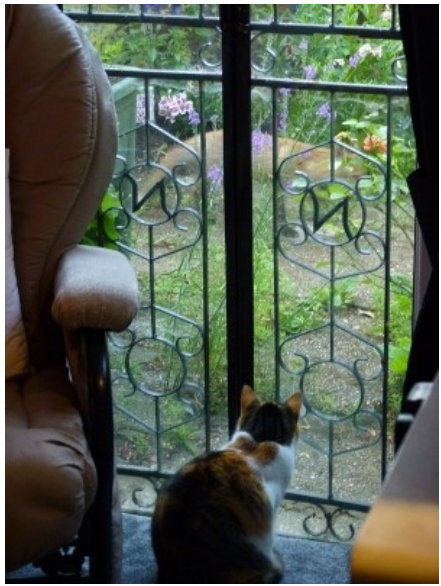
by Pauline, 06-May-20 04:47 PM GMT

Cheers Paul. It was some years ago that they plastered up the hole with mud and that was fascinating to watch – more recently they just give it a little tweak!

Cheers Wurzel – I am sure that it will happen with a little perseverance 😊

Thank you for the photo Trevor – a young dog fox by the looks of it. Trouble with 'tame' foxes is that many have neurological problems or have been clipped by a car etc. – can impact on natural instincts and make survival difficult. Don't want to get into that argument but I love these creatures (saw a cub today on Noar) so would urge you to continue to put out some bits out for them. I get loads of wild foxes in my garden – here's one from last year:





Re: Pauline

by trevor, 06-May-20 06:14 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline. My theory at the time with that young Fox was that it might have been hand reared and released, in what was a very secluded location. The one that visits me usually has a slice of corned beef, or a digestive biscuit.

Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 06-May-20 07:45 PM GMT

Hi Pauline. I've often noticed that young foxes show little fear of humans and wondered if the adult fear was learnt (or in some cases, not). I've also observed that my various dogs have taken little notice of cubs or youngsters and so I presume they lack the smell of adults. A little earlier this year, this young chap watched Minnie and me quite fearlessly as we went on our evening walk and Minnie ignored him completely:



A few posts back, I think your mystery eggs are shield bug eggs – I couldn't say which species.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by David M, 06-May-20 08:36 PM GMT

Those PBFs are just to die for, Pauline.

I'm actually starting to think it might be worth a £60 fine.....

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-May-20 12:32 PM GMT

Hope you realise how privileged you are Trevor 😊. Re PBF – it is a very (very) small colony which Neil told me about years ago and swore me to secrecy. If he wants you to know I am sure he will tell you but I hope you understand.

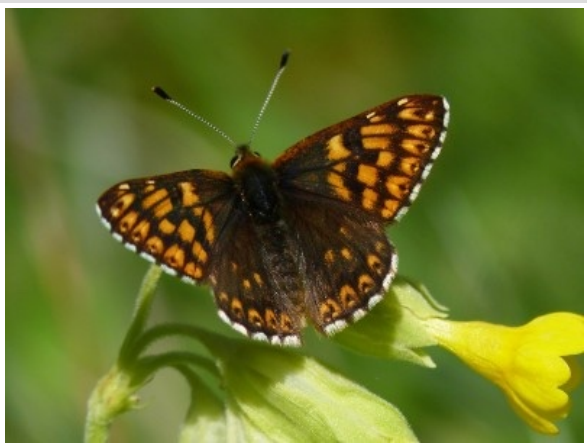
Good to hear from you Guy and thanks for the ID. You can put as many images of foxes in my diary as Pete will allow 😊😊 To answer your question as briefly as I can, in my experience all fox cubs are unique and display very different temperaments from a very early age. Some are bold and some are exceedingly nervous. Like all youngsters they are full of natural curiosity and are very inquisitive. However, whilst in their very early stages they will wander up to folk, their natural instinct is to have a healthy distrust of humans. 7-8 weeks of age is when they are most vulnerable to dog attack – I can assure you that even the smallest of cubs smell very 'foxy' and it is a tribute to your dogs and your dog training that they don't chase. Trevor touched on the 'hand reared' topic. Some folk think they make great pets but they really don't and when folk find that out and 'dump' them they are ill-equipped with the necessary survival skills (which is how I ended up with my vixen, Saffron, for 10 years). There are some great books around but Red Fox – The Catlike Canine explores development and behaviour. Guess I'd better stop there and get back to butterflies!

Not sure about that David 😊 – just hang on in there and we may find that next week is a whole lot better 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-May-20 01:37 PM GMT

Just too hot to go out today but yesterday I made a brief visit to Noar Hill. The Dingies were only just outnumbered by the Dukes (many of which are showing signs of wear) and since my last visit there has been a small explosion of Small Heath. Sadly, there were more folk there than previously and at least 50% of them hadn't heard of social distancing. At a point where I had been following a fresh female Dingy Skipper being pursued by a male for 10 mins, confident of seeing a pairing, a guy with a stick came close enough to scare them off 😊





Bemoaning the lack of anything Blue, as I was leaving I saw both Holly Blue and fresh Small Blue:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 07-May-20 06:06 PM GMT

That's the thing with butterflies Pauline – they often save the best til last, generally just as you're leaving 😊😄 I hope the stick man was Social Distancing properly – always the way though isn't just as you get the sublime shot or something interesting – boom someone/thing ruins it. 😞

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 07-May-20 08:34 PM GMT

That's a great array of mid-spring species, Pauline.

Shame the human beings tried their best to ruin things.

That's not unusual. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-May-20 01:42 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – I have a huge mask that I got for spraying chemicals on my Red Mites. Think I might start wearing that when I go out – might help keep other pests at bay! 😊

Thank you David. Sadly I have to agree with you 😊

I must return to the Brimstone eggs which were laid in my garden on 22 April. I have checked them daily, becoming more and more despondent as one by one they disappeared. 9 eggs became 4 eggs and then on 7 May I was delighted to find 4 tiny larva probably less than 2mm. They are really difficult to photograph at this size as they are the exact same shade as the leaf but I have tried. They are incredibly mobile for their size moving right across the plant and eating more than it seems possible.

7 May:



8 May:



9 May:



Magnet couldn't understand why that little plant was getting all the attention when he wasn't allowed near it!



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 10-May-20 11:05 PM GMT

Good luck with the Brimstone's Pauline, can't wait to see them 😊 Cracking shots of the Duke and the Dingy and I love the shot of the Small Blue 😊
With the news tonight it looks like I might get a few different Butterflies after all. 🤔 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 11-May-20 08:44 PM GMT

Love the image of Magnet, Pauline. How long have you had that little treasure?

As for the Brimstone early stages, is it worth netting them off to protect them, if only temporarily?

Of course, you could always bring a small number inside and rear them yourself.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-May-20 02:54 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie – just remember to stay alert if you are out cos there are morons out there that don't know what 2m looks like!!!

Hi David 😊 – I have reared Brimstones before so my interest now is to see just how they cope in the wild which is easy to do now as they are so close. As for Magnet – you've probably forgotten that in Sept 2014 I found an unconscious wild rabbit at Noar Hill (Lucky) and she needed a friend once she was well – that took 3 months and included being on a drip for over a week and subcut fluids at home:



On principle I don't agree with Lion Head rabbits but he was all that was available locally at the time and he came from a household even crazier than mine. I met him as he shared a basket with a cat who was eating one of his carrots and a huge Mastiff was licking his head. Kids ran amok creating more noise than I thought possible so he was very well adjusted when he came to me in Dec 2014.



A couple of days ago I got a vegetable delivery for the parrots and just shoved it in the fridge. I brought out the broccoli this morning and noticed there was a larva on it. I THINK it might be Small White but I shall post a shot soon.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 12-May-20 03:01 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, love your Rabbit shots, 😊 Hope that Small White comes on okay, I'll take my walking stick with me Pauline 😂 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-May-20 04:01 PM GMT

Anyone who comes too close can be on the receiving end of your stick Goldie 😊

So, here's the shot of the larva – pretty awful I know, but is it a Small White (4th instar?) and will it survive on the Broccoli as I have precious little else to offer except some Garlic Mustard? I'm pretty rubbish at ID's so an early response to this one would be appreciated for obvious reasons.



A brief visit to Noar Hill the other day where I discovered that most of the eggs I had posted earlier had disappeared with no signs of hatching. The rate of predation must be quite high (something I have noticed in previous years when monitoring them). A couple more that I found up there:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-May-20 05:33 PM GMT

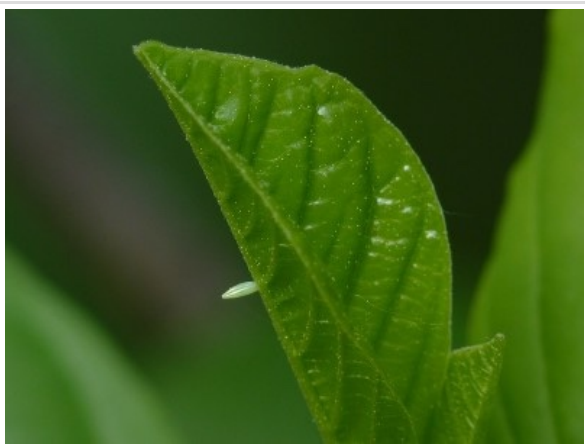
Better shot below - got to be Small White surely????:



Back to the back garden Brimstones. I have found a fifth larva, larger than the 'original' 4, bedded down on the underside of a leaf:



and a brand new egg as of today:



Of more interest to me are the original 4 larva who are now shedding their skins, moving from 1st to 2nd instar, 5 days after they hatched. The first shot was taken today at 16.09 with the head pointing down. The second shot taken at 17.03 shows the larva, having turned round, is now eating the shed skin:



Amazing how much interest one little twig can generate! 😊



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-May-20 02:46 PM GMT

Compared to recent times my 35 min drive this morning seemed like a real expedition!





Re: Pauline

by Janet Turnbull, 13-May-20 05:15 PM GMT

Love the photo of that courting couple! A drive of 35 minutes – I'm surprised you could remember what to do, but what a great feeling to get a bit further afield.
Janet

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-May-20 08:41 PM GMT

Fantastic Wood Whites Pauline – I don't think I'll be seeing them this year even with the current easing of restrictions on travel but it's always good to save something for 2021 😊😄 How did you manage to get that lovely contrasting dark background on the second one? 😊👍

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 13-May-20 08:55 PM GMT

I can guess where you've been, Pauline, and I think I may find myself down that way very soon! A lovely couple of photos there – Wood Whites make great subjects, especially when the sun regularly goes in and keeps them subdued. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 13-May-20 09:15 PM GMT

OH! Pauline, that's a fantastic shot of the Wood Whites 🍷🍷 It should be entered in a photo comp 😊 Their colour and every thing, wish I'd been there with you 😊😄 was is the place you took me to once with Jim 🤔 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

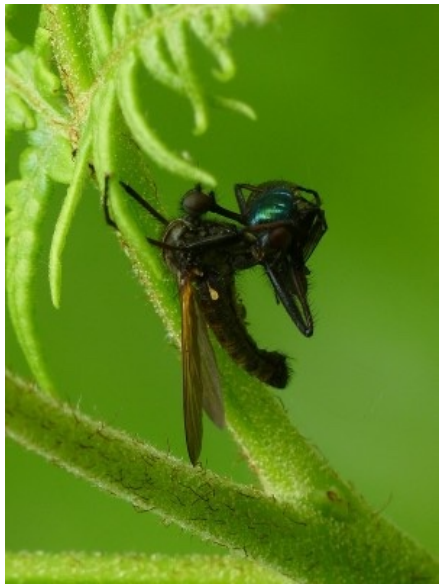
by Pauline, 14-May-20 07:02 AM GMT

D'you know what, Janet? It felt really quite weird to be out – almost as if I was doing something wrong 😊 Good to hear from you and thanks for your comment.

Thank you Dave – I might well be back there myself on a better day.

Cheers Goldie – yes, that was exactly the same place – Happy Days 😊

Cheers Wurzel – it wasn't difficult. It was so cold and overcast all the butterflies were roosting close to the trees for some shelter. The biggest challenge was finding them as they are very well camouflaged. It would have been easy to move them in their torpid state onto a pretty flower but really, what's the point? I already have loads of shots on flowers so that is just how I found them. I also found a few other things the first being this Robber Fly with its prey. There is such a tangle of legs I am not sure what is what!



There were a lot of Scorpion Flies around and because it was so cold they weren't as active as usual:



A female Large Red Damselfly (I'm guessing here) presented its own challenges as it waded about in the slightest breeze:



I'm not sure what these 2 are – perhaps a Sawfly larva and pupa of some sort?



Re: Pauline

by David M, 14-May-20 07:07 PM GMT

Love those Wood Whites, Pauline. I bet it was a huge relief to be able to get out and about again?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-May-20 06:47 PM GMT

Thank you David, but what about that wonderful little Brimstone 2nd instar eating his skin? Far more interesting in my opinion 😊 Going back to the last post I fear I may have early signs of dementia 😊 I have taken 2 shots in previous years which were almost identical (thought they looked familiar!). The first is indeed a sawfly of the Oak tree variety probably and the pupal case is that of an Ichneumon wasp of the Hyposoter genus. If I do the same thing

next year could someone please remind me to save me looking it up a third time – either that or shoot me 😊😞

I have been keeping a close eye on my little Brimstones and whilst checking them this morning I saw at first what I thought was an aphid on the back of a leaf – then I realised it was a really tiny moth. Many already know my opinion of the micro variety but I was intrigued by this to the point where I had to attempt a photo. This was the best I could do. Haven't identified it yet but it was a pretty little thing:



The squirrel continues to torment me and is now digging up my hanging clematis in front of one of the poultry sheds. I have actually managed to video some of his antics and if I ever work out how to download them



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-May-20 07:25 PM GMT

I have been feeling a bit concerned about Green Hairstreaks this season. I know we have had restrictions and limitations on where we can visit but I have not been seeing them in the numbers I would expect at the sites I have been able to visit. I would be interested to know if others have noticed a similar decline in numbers. Rake Bottom is a site fairly close to me and is one which can usually be relied upon to produce several sightings. Today I recorded 11 species there but no Green Hairstreaks. 2 other butterfly enthusiasts were there for the same reason but as far as I know they also failed to locate their target. I haven't even seen one at Noar Hill and the numbers at Broxhead are definitely down. Anyway, a few snapshots from Rake Bottom:



Lots of Grizzled Skippers but just too quick for me in the heat. Jaffa was delighted to have me home as I have been her constant companion during the lockdown:



Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 16-May-20 07:41 PM GMT

Nice Shots Pauline ,had to do a double take there with your pair of Brown Args ,thought the top one was a Common Blue at first !..... Nice one ! Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 17-May-20 08:56 AM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I have had a look at your micro and I think it may be a Firethorn Leaf Miner *Phyllonorycter leucographella* but I am not 100% sure as there are a number of very similar species.

<https://ukmoths.org.uk/species/phyllonorycter-leucographella>

[quote=Pauline post_id=153704 time=1589653555 user_id=1095] ...but just too quick for me in the heat.

You must have had it better than us here. We had a cloudy a quite cool day again with very little sun.

Great reports and photos recently. I shouldn't laugh at the squirrel tormenting you but it does make me chuckle 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-May-20 02:21 PM GMT

Thanks Allen - good to hear from you and well-spotted. I reckon there were many more Brown Argus than Common Blues around on that site yesterday.

I appreciate that ID Neil - much better than anything I could come up with which is the main reason I steer away from the micros, but do you reckon this is the start of a slippery slope? 😊 As for the squirrel words fail me 😊

Today I made an early start for OWH and I am so pleased that I did - even if it was a bit on the chilly side and fairly breezy. When I left a couple of hours later there was no room in the car park and cars were parked all along the verge outside. Thankfully I was well tucked away from the joggers and walkers and picnickers, my attention caught by the recently emerged Adonis - even if I couldn't find a pupa! I do believe this is an Ab. but have no idea yet which one - gorgeous whichever it is:





Couldn't find any WLH larva either 😞

Re: Pauline

by Chris L, 17-May-20 06:48 PM GMT

Fantastic photos Pauline. I really enjoyed looking at those. Jaffa looks in fine health too and extremely contented.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 17-May-20 08:30 PM GMT

Cracking looking ab Pauline – the lack of spots/fuss on the underside seems to make the topside 'pop' even more! 🤩😄🍀
I too have seen fewer Greenstreaks than usual this year but I was putting it down to the time I was visiting, either in the day (they seem to prefer the morning so lunchtime trips might mean seeing fewer) or in the season – seeing them at the start of their emergence and not visiting at the 'peak'? At

least that's what I'm hoping 😊 ever the optimist 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-May-20 10:25 AM GMT

Thank you Otep - much appreciated. You will quickly realise that my diary tends to be peppered with a variety of animals that share my space (especially when butterflies are a bit thin on the ground 😊).

Cheers Wurzel - would you agree it's a Krondeli? Not sure what else it could be. Re Green Hairstreaks, by now I am usually seeing females egg-laying in the afternoon or early evening and that's not happening either 😊

A couple of Dukes only a couple of minutes old:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-May-20 09:18 PM GMT

A pleasant hour spent watching the Small Blue at Paulsgrove this morning with many seen egg-laying. It is surprising how far the abdomen reaches down into the plant:



The eggs are quite tiny, fairly obvious but dreadful to photograph given their position on the kidney vetch:



Yep! that is my boot - pink with leopard skin print 🤔🤔🤔



My concerns about Green Hairstreaks were somewhat alleviated, on this site at least, as I watched 4 different females egg-laying:



One was really tiny but they were all showing signs of age:



Such was my interest in their activities I didn't make it any further than one tiny little corner of the site – didn't even get as far as the pond 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 18-May-20 11:22 PM GMT

Pauline, fantastic shots 📷📷 I can't keep up with your posts 😊 so many lovely Butterflies, so different from here, no Sun for two days now, hope fully Wednesday will be better, keep them coming. Goldie 😊
PS, Don't forget to send me that WW shot it's gorgeous 😊 M

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 19-May-20 08:36 PM GMT

From the limited sample I've had, I would tend to agree with you Pauline that Green Hairstreaks have been a bit sparse. It hasn't helped that they were early this year I think, so I've not been able to connect with them at their (and my) favourite spots.

The Adonis is very similar to ab *krodeli*, which has none of the little spots at all, just the marginal orange ones and the big one in the middle of the hindwing. I don't know what the "almost" versions are called, but I bet someone has given them all a name! 😊

I love the Small Blues, too – they can keep you entertained for hours! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-May-20 12:15 PM GMT

Thank you M. Just the opposite here – too hot for me to go out!!!!

Hi Dave – looking at the info on this site it would seem that the Ab may be *Obsoleta* so named by Tutts (not Mark 😊) in 1896 describing it as spots which tend *towards* obsolence. He then changed his mind and decided to align it with the *Krondeli* definition but looking at other shots I feel fairly confident it is *Obsoleta*.

I have been so lucky to be allowed to rear some Dukes and I am definitely making the most of it. Would you believe me if I told you I had taken 400 shots just of the eggs!!!! I shall spare you those (unless I run out of things to post! 😊) but I have managed to watch the eggs hatch. I tried to record this to the best of my ability and the little camera's capability and have pulled out a few of the many shots at random:







Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 20-May-20 01:28 PM GMT

Hello Pauline ,

Yes I agree with Obsoleta for your AdonisThat said it is very close to Krodeli . Nice find ! Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-May-20 11:55 AM GMT

Thanks for that confirmation Allan. You may want to take a look at my ID's below cos I'm notorious for getting the moths wrong 😊 I put the trap out last night for the first time in about a year. I thought the conditions would be ideal but I only got a total of 16 moths (12 big and 4 little - and loads of chafer beetles). Here's a few of those I took shots of:



Buff-tip (pretty confident about this one)



White Ermine (probably)



Swallow Prominent (or could be Lesser, can never tell the difference 😊)

Poplar Hawk-moth – no problem with this one – one of my favourites:



and last but not least, some sort of Mayfly?



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-May-20 05:17 PM GMT

Some shots from the garden as I haven't been out of it for a few days. I just had to put the hose pipe on; the plants were going crispy and the turf I have just put down was at risk. The first thing to take an interest in the moist ground was a Holly Blue desperate for moisture. He was well pleased when he found a hedgehog dropping as a bonus and hung around for about 90mins:



As I sipped a nice cold drink in the shade (it's a hard life 😊) I watched a Beautiful Demoiselle and a Large Red Damsel fly flitted around the pond:



Same old problems with these last 2 shots. The glare of the sun on the light leaf meant I was trying to cope with an extreme of light and dark and I can never get the exposure compensation right in these situations. In the other, the wings are not in the same plane as everything else and so are out of focus. Mike, in the past, has kindly come up with some suggestions to overcome these challenges but I'm still struggling 😊

PS Can I just use this opportunity to remind folk that a bowl of water for small mammals in this hot weather would be very welcome.

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 21-May-20 06:54 PM GMT

Hello Pauline ,

Funny thing ,I had the same thing a couple of weeks back with Swallow/Lesser Swallow prom ,but yours I,m pretty confident is Lesser Swallow it shows a clean cut white triangle ,in the trailing edgenice moth !

Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 21-May-20 08:09 PM GMT

Good news about the Greenstreaks Pauline 😊 As it always the way just when you doubt them you start seeing them all places (though perhaps not as

numerous 😊, 😊, 😊 I don't know about much about the Adonis aberrants but looks like some digging on your part got you your answer 😊 Lush Small Blues 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 21-May-20 09:22 PM GMT

Great shots of the hatching Dukelings, Pauline. 😊 It would be brilliant if you could see them through to adulthood. Thinking of such things, do you think the early emergence of the adults at Noar Hill this year, coupled with the almost continuous sunny weather, might lead to a second brood this year? As long as the cowslips don't dry up completely... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by David M, 21-May-20 11:10 PM GMT

Fascinating images of the tiny DoB larvae, Pauline. Good luck with the rearing and I look forward to seeing how they develop.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 22-May-20 09:40 AM GMT

Love the shot of the White Ermine Moth Pauline, it looks really Royal 😊 Can't wait to see the the Duke 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-May-20 03:32 PM GMT

Thanks for that Allan – Neil is probably sick of telling me the same things year after year but the trouble is, I just don't have the trap out enough and don't see these moths on a regular basis. Yes, I could look it up (as I often do) but there's nothing like seeing it for real to 'get your eye in'. Thank you.

Hi Wurzel – doesn't change my overall feeling that the Green Hairstreaks aren't having such a great year but we'll see – hopefully I'll be wrong! 😊

Thank you Dave. Thought there might have been an outside chance I'd see you today. Mind you, it was crowded! (well, 3's a crowd!). Let me tell you I am under some pressure with these Dukes. It is the 3rd year I have asked to rear them and the response this time was 'I suppose on this one occasion it won't make too much of a dent in the population'. I really hope it won't as I have every intention of returning the adults. Here is a shot of them from this morning:



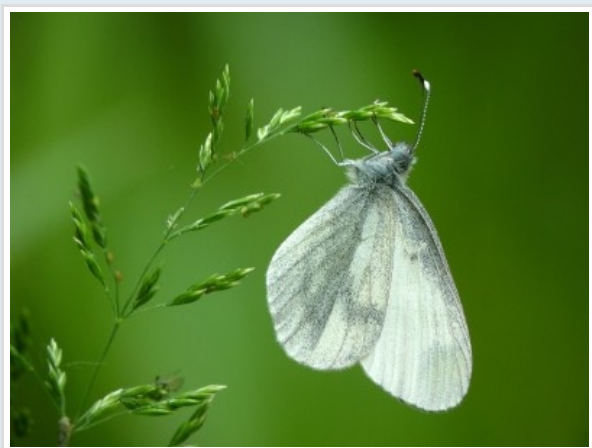
Only about another 40 days to go to pupation 😊 Re second brood – many years ago (before I started my diary) I found the first recorded 2nd brood of Dukes at Noar Hill – I believe there have been a couple more recorded since then but I am really not sure what the trigger is as there have been similar weather patterns recorded in previous years. I keep an eye out for them every year as I am there fairly frequently looking at immature BH so we shall see.

Thank you David. You can be sure that you will be seeing more images of them in due course 😊. Now here is a question for yourself and others. My tiny Brimstone larva have not just tolerated the recent extreme heat and direct sunshine but seem to have thrived on it. How can this be when so many other little cats would have been desiccated by now? Given that the adult laid them in that position I imagine she knew what she was doing but how can their requirements differ so much?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-May-20 03:47 PM GMT

I didn't find what I was looking for this morning and both the cloud and strong breeze hampered photography a little but here's a few more of the Wood Whites:









Still early days for these I reckon as few females seen. The only other species around were Speckled Wood and Speckled Yellow moth:



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 22-May-20 04:08 PM GMT

Lovely Wood Whites, Pauline. 😊 I had a session with them earlier in the week and constantly changing light made them very tricky. Your shots are far better, as you'll see soon. 🍷 There were good numbers though.

What were you expecting to see today (apart from me of course... 😊😊)? I doubt you'll have made any kind of dent in the Duke population – I imagine many hundreds (even thousands) of eggs are laid at Noar Hill every year, and the scant few you have abstracted will be a drop in the ocean, and with luck may end up with a better survival rate than the wild ones.

Good luck! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 22-May-20 07:01 PM GMT

Nice selection of moths Pauline, I was wondering if you had been using the trap lately. Jealous of the Buff-tip, still not had one of these.

[quote=Pauline post_id=153960 time=1590157952 user_id=1095] Thanks for that Allan - Neil is probably sick of telling me the same things year after year but the trouble is, I just don't have the trap out enough and don't see these moths on a regular basis. Yes, I could look it up (as I often do) but there's nothing like seeing it for real to 'get your eye in'. Thank you.

😞 No worries Pauline, to be honest I can't remember what I have told you before anyway...they say it's an age thing 😊 .

Agree with Lesser Swallow Prominent. As Alan says, the size and shape of the white triangle is diagnostic.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 22-May-20 07:22 PM GMT

There was a definite 'blow' on today Pauline so you did well with those Wood Whites 😊 Really love the close up of the one feeding with the pollen stuck to its proboscis - brill 🍷🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-May-20 10:25 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel - I've given up letting the weather dictate what I do 😞

Thank you Dave - you did good with the Wood Whites - some interesting behavioral shots there 😊😊... and yes, there are masses of Duke eggs predated every year so even if I totally fail I shouldn't think it would make much difference. Let's hope it doesn't come to that tho!

Thank you Neil for the compliment and ID confirmation. I am not good with moths - neither the names nor the shots which I really struggle with. It makes me realise how much effort and skill you put in to your lovely imaginative and creative images 🍷🍷

Thank you M. I can't give you an actual Duke just yet Goldie but look out for updates on progress from time to time 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 23-May-20 10:56 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I've been thinking, I can't get out to see the Dukes may be I can take Duke eggs, Silver Studded Blue, Wood White, etc, etc, from you and raise them here 😞 poor things, I'd have no where here to let them go 😞😞 I'm seriously bored can't you tell 🤔 Goldie 😞

Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-May-20 10:05 PM GMT

Good selection of Wood White images, Pauline, with some having quite an 'artistic' feel to them, especially the close up of the underside hindwings showing the greyish mottling.

I also like the close-up showing the pollen adhered to the proboscis. How on earth do they get rid of that?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-May-20 09:15 PM GMT

I think we're all getting a bit like that M. You need to find a little 'project' to pass the time when there are no butterflies 😊

Thank you David - for 'artistic', 'creative' or 'atmospheric' you need to take a look at Katrina's diary - some very nicely composed shots there 😊

Just a quick update on the 'little'uns' - I think the DoB are 5 days old now so this is a shot from today:



I haven't mentioned the OT's for a while now but there were originally 9 eggs. All the eggs on the Cuckoo plant disappeared but there were still 5 larva on the garlic mustard a couple of days ago. Today there are only 2. Here's one of them:



11 Brimstone eggs were laid on the Alder Buckthorn in 3 batches of 1, 9, 1. Of the 9, only 4 remain and the larva of the last egg has just gone missing. A few shots from today:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-May-20 04:50 PM GMT

I knew the Silver-studded Blues would be out at Bramshott as this is one of the earliest sites in the country. They are nearly always out by now but I have been so occupied with domestic problems (electricians etc) that I have not had much time to check them out – unlike last year when I spent hours watching the very blue Female Common Blues whilst waiting for them to put in an appearance. Given their numbers I am assuming they have been out a few days but the environment this year is so different to what I have come to expect – much of the Common looks like it has been scalped and combined with the long period of hot dry weather, rather than a carpet of yellow the butterflies had to make do with this:



I usually need jeans and boots to walk around here because the brambles can be fierce but today I was in shorts and open sandals. Close up this is what the plants looked like:



I wasn't able to spend long there today which was fine as it was too hot and humid but I took a few shots:





At first I thought one of the males was just drying his wings as he was getting a lot of attention from the ants but then I decided one wing looked a little deformed. Those thoughts were confirmed when I saw other males attacking him – hope he makes it :





As I was leaving – no worries here about lockdown:



Interestingly, I did not see a single Common Blue – each and every Blue was a SSB!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-May-20 05:37 PM GMT

I went out for a quick walk yesterday to a fairly local site which usually has loads of butterflies but it was so hot I didn't see a single one. The first thing I spotted was this spider eating a fly. I like flies even less than I like spiders so in retrospect perhaps spiders do have a limited use 😊 :



There were lots of lovely elusive (Beautiful) Demoiselles, a few Dragonflies and loads of Ladybirds including some intent on ensuring it stays that way:



Not even any day flying moths but as desperation was now setting in I took a shot of this tiny moth hiding in the shade:



As I was leaving I was pleased to at least find a larva – Red Admiral I'm thinking, possibly 4th instar????: Quite a dark individual.



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 27-May-20 08:35 PM GMT

Great to see the Silver Studs Pauline 😊😁 That really is an early site for them I'm normally thinking I need to get back to Dorset for them around Mid June 😊 As for the Boris - you'll be an arachnophile before you know it 😊😁

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 27-May-20 09:17 PM GMT

Lovely Silver-studded Blues, Pauline - I'd almost forgotten they'd probably appear before the end of May this year. 😊 I shall have to have a look at the Surrey sites and see if they are as early. That unfortunate wonky one has really deep colouring - something I've noticed happens quite often with deformed butterflies. The colours are concentrated somehow.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-May-20 10:27 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel - the only thing I'll ever like about spiders is being far away from them 😊 If ever I find one in the bath that's a huge problem for me 😊😁

Thank you Dave - I believe you could be right about the deep colouring as it is something I have noticed too on occasion.

Tuesday (at least I think it was Tuesday, I'm losing track!) whilst the electricity board were checking out my supply I noticed another Brimstone had shed his skin and was eating it. Multi-tasking as always 😊 I managed to grab a few shots whilst they did what they had to do in the cupboard under the

stairs:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-May-20 05:20 PM GMT

Ladies Day at Bramshott – the first female I saw today was a vivid blue female Common Blue egg-laying. The only Common Blue I saw today. Last year I noted that these blue females (which behaved very much like males) also emerged very early, certainly before the brown variety.



There were a fair few female SSB around but the males seemed a bit disinterested and lethargic which I assume was something to do with the heat:





Of more interest to me was the Green Hairstreak also frantically egg-laying:







Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 28-May-20 07:28 PM GMT

Cracking shots of the ovi-positing Greenstreak Pauline 🤩👍 I've had to learn to deal with Boris' as I regularly get a call from the bathroom from one of the three women in the house 😂😂😂

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 28-May-20 08:38 PM GMT

Wow! Early site or not late May seems ridiculous for SSBs! 🤩

Your usual eclectic mix of subjects these last few days, Pauline, but the ovipositing Green Hairstreak is top of my list, especially the way you've captured the ovum as it was about to be 'posited'.

Superb.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 28-May-20 08:44 PM GMT

Great shots Pauline, you've certainly got the eye for the early stages 🤩👍 I love the Green Hair Streak, don't think I'll see one now. Not to worry there's always next year!!! Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 28-May-20 10:27 PM GMT

That's a beautiful Green Hairstreak, Pauline, and terrific shots of her activities. 🤩👍 Finding a fresh one of either sex now in this early season took some doing! Nice SSB female too – I love that oily sheen the fresh ones have. 😊 I managed to catch up with the species today near Cobham where I was told they've been out a couple of days. Very early again... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-May-20 03:12 PM GMT

Thank you David – much appreciated. What is your favourite species?

Thank you Dave – that's good of you to say so but you probably know by now that the Hairstreaks are my favourite and I could spend a long time watching them. In fact I went back there today and it was just as if I'd never been away..... the Green Hairstreak was still frantically laying eggs, the Dingy Skippers were frantically trying to find females and the male SSB were totally disinterested in the females. I have found many GH eggs in the past but never on Birds foot Trefoil as they are usually very securely tucked away and notoriously difficult to locate. This shot is quite dark but I was careful to keep it well shaded as I took this shot and made sure it was safely tucked away afterwards:



Cheers Goldie – don't give up hope. Remember last year I saw that really fresh Green Hairstreak really late in the year when it flew into a military base on Thorney Island. I can only assume it was the result of a partial second brood and given that so much is early this year who knows.....?

Cheers Wurzel – I do believe you're a bit too far away to be of any use in my bathroom 😊😞

PS A moth flew off one of the bird tables this morning as I put out fresh food. I believe it's a Small Magpie – didn't even get one of these in the trap!



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-May-20 06:16 PM GMT

I have spent a fair bit of time over the last 9 days monitoring my Dukes (hatched on 20/5) as I doubt I will ever rear them again. Every day I have been taking shots of them as my own personal photographic record of their development - but I shall not include the day to day records in my diary. I shall include exceptional events and their first shedding of skin from first to second instar has been a fascinating insight into their lives. The first surprise was that it has taken probably in excess of 50 hours which means the larva are vulnerable and open to predation for a considerable period of their lives. I have no idea whether subsequent instars take as long but I am looking forward to finding out.

The second surprise was that although the eggs hatched within an hour of each other it looks (as I type) as if the first moult will be over one day later for the second larva.

I am not sure what I was expecting but I wasn't expecting a perfectly healthy little larva to settle down in a groove on the stem one evening (26/5) and overnight turn a ghostly white. I thought it had died; I thought it was parasitised. I watched it very closely over this period and became even more concerned as the body appeared to swell and it started to turn a pale khaki colour (don't know how else to describe it). At this point I had convinced myself it was a goner and left them for the night. There was no change the next morning so at this point I considered snapping the leaf off the plant and putting it in a container to see what horrors emerged from the little body. It would at least protect the other one from any nasties. Thankfully I decided to give it a bit longer. Later in the day I was astonished when I checked it to see that it had turned almost black! I wondered if it was starting to rot but other than the strange colour change it actually looked OK. I checked it every hour until 9.00pm and left it for a second evening.

Up early the next morning and the first thing I did (after feeding Jaffa!) was to check the larva. I was delighted to see that it was alive and healthy and actually shedding its skin. This was not a fast process but it was fascinating to watch.

Once the skin had been shed it started to eat around the discarded head before turning round and eating the shed skin. It left the last little bit, pushing aside a 'hairy' bit as it made its way down the stem. Really incredible to witness.

I am now looking forward to seeing how the second one compares. Rather than interrupt the text with shots I shall just include them below with timings and brief comments:

27/05 8.00am



27/05 Mid-day



28/05 7.00am



28/05 7.00pm



28/05 8.00pm



29/05 6.00am



29/05 7.00am eating discarded head, now more of a pale grey colour than the black seen earlier:



29/05 8.00am Turning round to eat shed skin:



29/05 9.00am Eating shed skin:



29/05 10.00am ignoring last little bit of skin and preparing to move down stem:



So many more shots to look through but hope this provides an overview. The hairs on its back are now arranged singly rather than in clumps but still quite long.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 29-May-20 07:28 PM GMT

Cricky Pauline the detail there is quite astounding 🤩👍

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Chris Jackson, 30-May-20 08:36 AM GMT

Interesting Duke of Burgundy cat shots Pauline.

All the more interesting for me as this species is nowhere near Marseilles.

The nice thing about the early stages is that they are relatively reliable and don't fly off all the time 😊.

Chris

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-May-20 02:27 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – I was really pleased with those shots. I have not been able to find any reference yet to the larva turning almost black prior to shedding its skin but I shall keep looking. Nothing about typical timescales either but have yet to look in my Frohawk.

Thank you Chris – interesting to me too and altho' they can't fly off you'd be surprised at how many ways they can disappear 😊

A couple from today:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-May-20 02:40 PM GMT

Also seen today:





Bit worried about this little guy as no doubt his Mum will leave him somewhere and this is an area of the Common where folk let dogs run loose. Fingers crossed that he'll be OK. Only the second time ever that I have seen this. Very exciting!

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 30-May-20 09:53 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, those are really excellent shots of the Duke of Burgundy larval moult 😊 and I will be adding the sequence to the Species Album soon. I have never seen the a first instar moult of this species photographed before in such detail and it's not really described by Frohawk, so I've learnt something new. Also it's the first occasion that I know of where it has been documented that the larva eats its old skin after a moult. It would be really useful if you could continue to monitor this particular aspect in moults of subsequent instars.

Vince

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 31-May-20 04:33 PM GMT

Thank you Vince. The following may be of interest. This larva (I shall call him No. 1) spent between 7.21am and 9.27am on 29/5 eating his skin before settling down into a groove. This was him yesterday:



You may recall that the 2 eggs hatched within about 60 mins of each other. Larva No 2 went through exactly the same process as Larva No 1 almost exactly 24 hours later – still took just in excess of 50 hours to reach the point of shedding, went through the same colour changes, however, he didn't eat his skin. He shed his skin at 9.38am on 30/5 and at 9.51am he was settled in a groove.

It is fascinating to watch the skin being shed. It splits from the back end and when the split reached half way up the body the larva threw his head and upper body back (as if to help the process) and then wriggled forward to shed it off. There was no further hesitation. He made his way to a place on the leaf but before he settled he did some strange gyrations. Interestingly, he has not moved off this leaf at all and you can still see the 2 empty eggs. The times below have been rounded to the nearest hour:

28/5 Midday



30/5 7.00am



30/5 10.00am





Just to show the context and the eggshells- you can see he totally ignores his shed skin (unlike No 1) and heads straight to a groove:



One of the several 'gyrations' before he settles:





Obviously I shall do my very best to monitor subsequent moults.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 31-May-20 07:06 PM GMT

Well done Pauline, keep it up 😊 it's really interesting, Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-20 06:35 PM GMT

Those Silver-studs are perfectly posed Pauline, love the symmetry 😊😊🌿

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 01-Jun-20 09:50 PM GMT

Fascinating insight into the early stages of this species, Pauline. I find it strange how the two larvae are behaving differently to one another. You'd expect both to eat the egg casing & skin or neither to do it.

Shows how much we still don't know.

Re: Pauline

by andy brown, 02-Jun-20 01:55 PM GMT

Lovely pics as always pauline and some good subject matter. Keep it up, i may take a photo of a butterfly this year 😊😊😊😊😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jun-20 05:29 PM GMT

Spiders!! I rest my case 😊



Thank you M. – I'll do my very best 😊

Cheers Wurzel – guess I shouldn't have posted 2 but I wasn't sure which was the best composition 😊

Thank you David – me too. The one that ate his skin was the one who shed his skin 24 hours before the other (the eggs hatched almost together remember). I did wonder if he was more advanced in his development because he ate everything at every opportunity – including his skin. I do hope I manage to see further moults which may shed more light.

Cheers Andy – you're now in a perfect place for photography so you have absolutely no excuse! 😊

I have been out and about locally quite a bit recently and each site I visit has 2 things in common – there are hardly any butterflies and everything is parched:



For the (my) record on 1 June I saw my first Meadow Brown and Large Skipper. I am also slightly reassured having seen Green Hairstreaks egg-laying on most visits:





A rather lovely moth which didn't seem to like all the attention from the ants:



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 02-Jun-20 06:48 PM GMT

I believe the moth, which I have always called the "Custard and Jam" moth, is in fact properly called a Clouded Buff. They are splendid creatures and I often see them on Denbies Hillside. That's a male - the females are marked slightly differently.

Nice Green Hairstreaks too!

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 02-Jun-20 07:10 PM GMT

Lovely Hair Streaks Pauline, I love the Green ones and the White, Purple, I'm sure I'D LOVE THE BROWN if I ever see them 🤔 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-20 06:18 PM GMT

Yep Dave's spot on with his ID Pauline – I normally see mine when looking for Silver Studs 😊 You did really well to get an unobstructed view 😊🇩🇪
Hopefully the bit of rain we've had today might make a bit of difference 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Chris L, 03-Jun-20 07:10 PM GMT

What an odd looking moth Pauline. I have never seen one of those before.

Stumbling across the deer must have been a real joy. How close were you and were they aware of your presumably distant presence?

The Silver Studded Blue photo is absolutely perfect.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 04-Jun-20 07:16 AM GMT

That is indeed a very striking little moth, Pauline. Not sure I've ever seen one of those.

Good that you found a few ovipositing Green Hairstreaks. They haven't been around in their usual numbers on my patch, although to be fair the last two years had seen far more than normal.

Not often I'm glad to see rain, but yesterday was a Godsend. I hope your area got some too – it will help to inject a little green back into the landscape, something we've all been missing.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Jun-20 06:24 PM GMT

That's a great name Dave – reckon that's what they'll be known as from now on 😊 Why can't folk be a bit more imaginative when naming these critters?

You did make me laugh Goldie. I'm also sure that you will love the Brown Hairstreak (tho' Susie's name of Flame Hairstreak is more appropriate). I'm also sure you will see them before too long.

We haven't had much rain Wurzel 😞 – a few very light showers but not enough to count. Haslemere (7 miles away) has had no water since Sunday!!!!!!
Hope the tankers are now managing to keep up with demand.

Thank you Otep for your kind words. I can't begin to tell you how excited I was at seeing that Deer. I was a fair distance away with no intention of moving closer. She was fully aware of me but as you can see she didn't seem to see me as a threat whilst keeping a careful watch in all directions.
Highlight of my year 😊

I can't recall ever seeing one either David but I don't think they are particularly rare. Sadly, the couple of very light showers here lasting very few minutes are not making a great deal of difference 😞

Just a couple of shots. I tried to capture that lovely oily effect that Dave referred to re SSB but only half succeeded 😞 The other is a skin of some sort. I am assuming it is snake as opposed to Slow Worm? If snake, is it possible to tell which one?



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 05-Jun-20 07:25 PM GMT

Lovely oily Silver Stud Pauline 🤩👍 I'll take a guess at Grass Snake – as the 'head end' looks much darker than the rest which would fit 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jun-20 09:55 AM GMT

Nice Clouded Buff Pauline 🤩😊 I too like the name that Dave has for them 😊

[quote=Pauline post_id=154555 time=1591377877 user_id=1095] I can't recall ever seeing one either David but I don't think they are particularly rare.

They seem to be fairly common on some sites down south but otherwise they are a moth of heaths and moorland and have a very patchy distribution in the UK. As far as I am aware they do not occur in Warwickshire although I have seen them in Cumbria and Scotland.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 06-Jun-20 10:28 AM GMT

[quote=Pauline post_id=154555 time=1591377877 user_id=1095].Just a couple of shots. I tried to capture that lovely oily effect that Dave referred to re SSB but only half succeeded..

When they catch the light right (as you managed to capture) they have a 'brassy' appearance, like some of the *erebia* one finds on the continent.

Always a pleasure to see.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Jun-20 10:43 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel and thanks for the ID.

Hi Neil – I am presuming they are day-flying? I guess I just got lucky as I have never seen one on that site before. Thanks for those details.

Hi David – at last we have had some rain (just when I didn't want it) but at least it will benefit those SSB and many other species 😊

Back to the Dukes. I have managed to watch my little second instar shed his skin into a mighty fine third instar, but my goodness, what a marathon it was. The whole process took a lot longer than the moult from 1st to 2nd instar and the period of time the pupa was a very dark colour was also protracted. In all fairness I don't think I should be the only one to suffer 😊😂 so here is a brief summary of the lead into the main event:

4/6 6.00am



5/6 6.00am



6/6 6.00am



7.00am



9.00am



10.00



11.00am



Midday



2.00pm



3.00pm



5.00pm



The weather conditions were not ideal with heavy winds and bouts of heavy rain – freezing cold too! Here is a shot of the one which hatched with him, still showing no signs of wanting to moult. The rate at which they are both developing seems to be widening:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Jun-20 01:16 PM GMT

The main event didn't begin until just after 6.00pm. The light was fading and it was beginning to rain. Nevertheless, it was worth waiting for and like nothing I have seen before. As before he did half a dozen of those strange bends and stretches. I can't decide whether he was stretching after being cooped up in his smaller skin or whether he was trying to dislodge the last few bits of the shed skin. I took my last shot just before 7.00pm at which time the larva was resting in a 'prayer' position. He was still like this when I checked a couple of hours later, clearly exhausted by his efforts. This morning the shed skin had gone but I assume it had blown away or dropped off the leaf as he had shown no interest in eating it immediately after shedding.







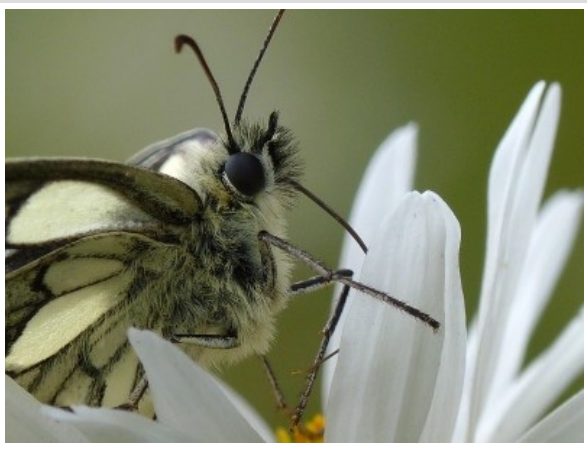




Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jun-20 03:21 PM GMT

I have been reliably informed that WLH are out in my area – and probably have been for at least a couple of days. I took an hour out to check one of my local sites but no WLH seen there. Not a complete waste of time tho' as I was pleased to see my first Marbled White of the year and a really lovely Comma:





On the way back to the car I saw some very colourful orchids and a poor Small Tortoiseshell that had clearly had a hard time:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jun-20 03:29 PM GMT

Just a quickie to record that I saw my first White Admiral of the season today at the Straits. Could only have got a distant shot so didn't bother – hopefully many more opportunities soon. There were lots of Meadow Brown and because they often don't get the attention they deserve I took a few shots. Others seen were Skippers, Speckled Wood and this Beautiful Demoiselle:



or is it?





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-20 06:06 PM GMT

Cracking close-up views of the Marbled White Pauline 🤩 – they always have the look of an alien baddy to mine mind 😊🤩

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 09-Jun-20 07:26 PM GMT

Wow! The word 'painstaking' doesn't do it justice, Pauline. One wonders how so many survive to pupate when one sees how laborious the process is of shedding the skin.

Fabulous mini documentary. I look forward to more instalments but I'm not sure if you do! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Jun-20 06:25 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – I reckon I have gotten so used to looking at larva just a few mm in size I can't cope with something as huge as a whole Marbled White 🤩

Thank you David. I appreciate that. You totally get it – it is hours and hours of time and observation. Not sure I'll ever want to see another Duke again after this 😊😊😊 – but it is revealing and educational.

I am feeling fairly confident now that Duke larva in the 1st instar eat their skin when they shed it – not all of it. Just about two thirds. Don't know why that should be – perhaps some of it is just not palatable. This doesn't seem to be the case when the 2nd instar sheds the skin tho' I shall keep watching and the 3rd instar remains to be seen. A few more shots of brand new 2nd instar eating the shed skin:





Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 10-Jun-20 12:15 PM GMT

Well done Pauline, you've found a Meadow Brown 😊 I've been searching for them but no luck 😞 It's pathetic, I'm looking for MB's and you've got all those cracking shots, 😊 love the shot of the Marbled White 🍷 keep the shots coming 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jun-20 07:42 AM GMT

Thank you Goldie. There seems to have been an explosion of Meadow Brown around here recently and everywhere I walk I am flushing them from the grass.

I think an update on the garden larva is well overdue. You will recall that because the eggs had been laid there I was determined not to interfere and

just monitor their wild lives – none of my usual 'saving and rescuing'. I had found 9 Orange Tip eggs on both Cuckoo Plant and Garlic Mustard. For some reason the eggs and tiny larva disappeared from the cuckoo plant first. The ones on the garlic mustard lasted longer but did not reach final instar. I had high hopes for the final 2 which seemed to be progressing well but there is a lot of baby birds around at the momentSo, out of 9 not a single one made it.

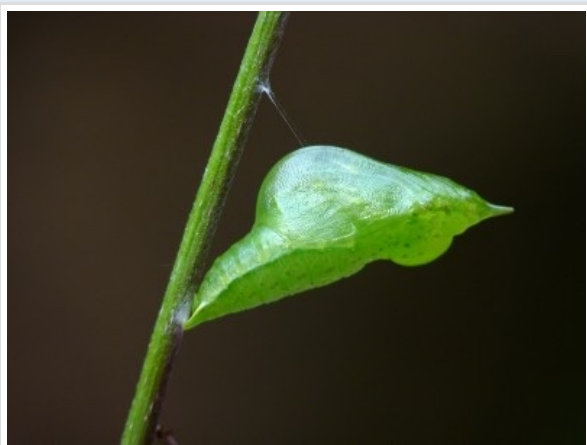
The 11 Brimstone eggs were laid in 3 batches and in the early stages more than half were predated. As they grew they seemed less susceptible to predation which was a surprise as they couldn't have been more obvious:



Of the 5 which reached final instar, 4 wandered off the plant to pupate. I tried really hard to track them at this stage to see where they pupated but found it impossible. Only one remained on the plant and I was very pleased when I saw him begin to pupate:



However, as the days wore on and there was no change I began to think that he was not going to survive this stage. Happily I was wrong and this was him yesterday:



Now, altho' not exactly a garden larva, do you remember the little larva that spent 2 days in the fridge having come in on a vegetable delivery (broccoli)? I thought it might have been a Small White but I couldn't get it to eat. Thinking there was a possibility it was a GVW and they both eat garlic mustard I offered some of that – just not interested. Because I was curious about its ID I put it in a cage where it promptly pupated on the netting making photos impossible 😞 With a bit of luck, before very long I shall find out what it is.

The Pine Hawk moth pupa found in the rabbit run last Autumn is still alive and kicking (well, wriggling) so I am hopeful it won't be long before I get to see it.

Having had the advantage of being able to monitor the development from eggs of these 2 species in a wild situation has been an eye opener. I had read that for various reasons (predation, disease etc) only a very small percentage make it through to adulthood in the wild but actually seeing it happen

makes it very real and is obviously the reason so many eggs are laid.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-20 10:59 AM GMT

Great shots Pauline, I hope you get a GVW , may be it will enjoy Broccoli when it finally surfaces 🤔 Good news, looks like I'll be in Kent before too long 🤔 Goldie 🤔

Re: Pauline

by David M, 12-Jun-20 12:46 AM GMT

Surprised you've time to function right now, Pauline, with all these larval and pupal goings-on.

Nice to know at least one Brimstone has made it, and I too will be interested to see what your 'mystery' emergee is to be.

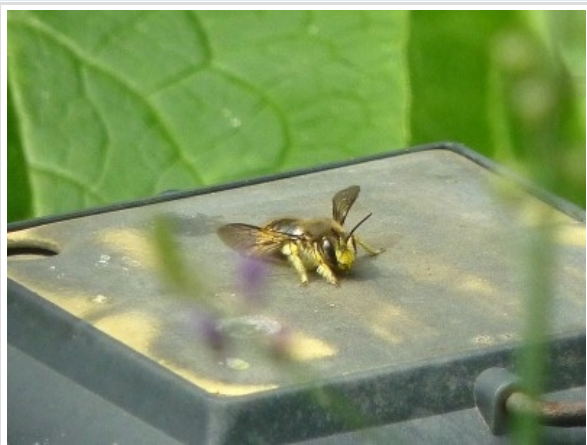
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jun-20 11:57 AM GMT

As you know M. I have only seen one GVW (briefly) this season but as long as it emerges I will be happy.

Getting thru' those moults was challenging David and at times required copious amounts of gin 😊 Not sure it did anything to improve my functioning either 🤔🤔 Not even sure the effects have worn off yet as I forgot to change the camera settings for these next shots 🤔

I have been watching a couple of dozen bees outside my kitchen window which I think are those leaf-cutter bees I spotted last year. I have been waiting for an opportunity to catch them cutting. Trouble is, I thought they were solitary and there were loads of these with frequent matings. The male just slams into the female from behind and in 20 secs he is on to the next one 🤔🤔 I don't know what the plant is that is attracting them but it seems to grow wild and spread fast. I love it even tho' the area at the side of my house now resembles a jungle!

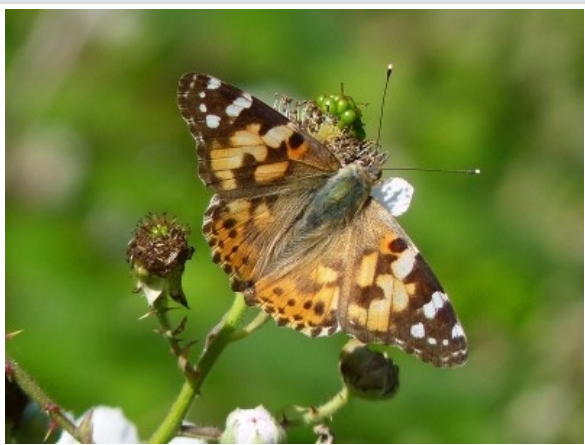




Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jun-20 05:20 PM GMT

STILL no WLH at my local site but how could I be disappointed when I was surrounded by 4-5 Red Admiral, Marbled Whites and my first Painted Lady of the season:





I WAS disappointed that I was not able to get a shot at a Large Skipper in the garden today. Not sure what the flowers are called but they are small purple daisy type flower with a yellow centre. I'll keep my eyes open in case it returns.

2 new additions to the household – their first photo shoot. Normally I remove the eggs from my white doves but somehow these 2 got overlooked:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-20 08:03 PM GMT

Cracking shot of the Painted Lady Pauline 😊 – not seen one yet this year myself 🙄 Do you name the Doves (or are there too many?) – if you do perhaps you could call them Corona and Covid – a reminder of possibly why they're here? 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Chris L, 13-Jun-20 09:46 PM GMT

Lovely photos Pauline. All first rate as ever but the first Marbled White photo on Monday 8th June is a corker. I have yet to see a Painted Lady this year

(my garden was full of them last year).

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jun-20 03:55 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – no way do I want to be reminded of this year. I think more appropriate names would be Gin and Tonic 😊

Thank you Otep. I hope it won't be too long before you see a few Painted Ladies 😊

A few shots of 2nd and 3rd instar Dukes taken over recent days – by special request 😊. It is not so easy now. In 3rd instar they tend to hide away and are very elusive. This one decided under the rim of a plant pot nicely resembled the channel on the stem of the cowslips – lucky he didn't get squashed!







Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-20 05:42 PM GMT

Gin and Tonic does ring better 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 15-Jun-20 11:14 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Doves Pauline and I really enjoy their names 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

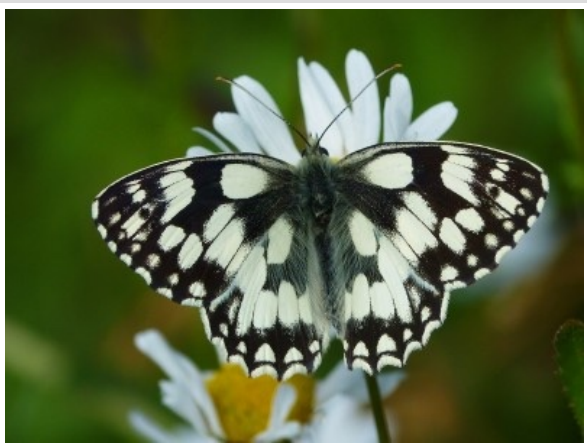
by Pauline, 15-Jun-20 02:26 PM GMT

I need to be careful Wurzel - I'll be getting a reputation! 😊

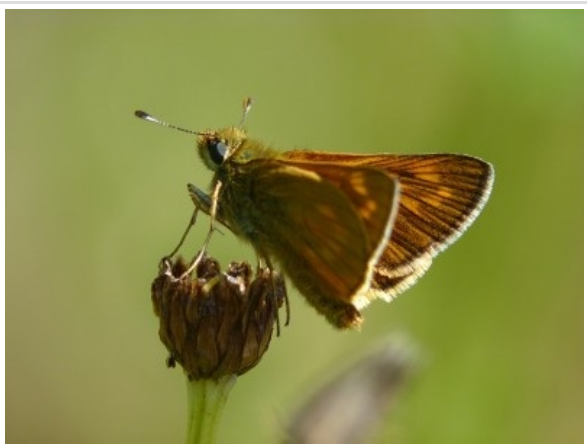
More mouths to feed M 😊😄 Shove it in one end and clean up from the other end 😊

Third time lucky. I never mind popping down to this site as there always seems to be something new. The first butterfly I spotted today was an Essex Skipper and I was delighted. Why? Just recently I have been telling anyone who would listen that the WLH will not be out at this site until the Essex Skipper appears so seeing it gave me a good feeling. I was not wrong. I only saw 2 today but the second had a huge bit of wing missing (just after you left A.) The other kept its distance so I only got a record shot but it was just lovely to be surrounded by some summer butterflies for an hour. Selection below:





The last 2 are of course Large Skipper:





Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 16-Jun-20 03:36 PM GMT

Lovely shots again Pauline, It's always great to find exactly what you're looking for 😊🍷🍷 You've certainly more Butterflies than we have here, also we've had a couple of storms 🌧️ still next week looks better, I may just take a chance and go to Brockholes CP, I keep checking to see if they've opened the car park yet.

I love the Hair streak on the Blossom 🍷😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Jun-20 05:34 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

It's always great to find exactly what you're looking for

It's not always as it seems Goldie! I certainly don't post about every outing – I'll give you an example. You might remember several years ago I had to throw away my favourite shorts as they had hundreds and hundreds of ticks on them which were still alive after a hot wash and a 3 hour dry!! Well, that was from Oxenbourne which is a dreadful site for ticks. I usually only go once a year for the SSS but I was lured there by the temptation of finding DGF. I was on the site at 6.30am today and when I saw 10 deer scarper across the field my heart sunk and I took extra special care not to brush against anything. Nevertheless, despite brushing myself down regularly I came home after just 90 mins to find about 3 dozen of various sizes embedded in me. Here is just a few of them:



...and no shots of DGF to show for it 😊

Not wanting to be defeated completely I thought I would take another look at the WLH. There is still just the 2 – one with a large square out of both hind wings and another who refused to show himself:



Wouldn't normally have posted this but just wanted to show that you can't achieve every time and just have to keep at it. I do appreciate your kind words tho' 😊

Re: Pauline

by Chris L, 16-Jun-20 07:43 PM GMT

My eyes were as big as saucers reading the 'favourite shorts' story Pauline. 🤪 So ticks can be added to the list of creatures that would survive a nuclear holocaust alongside moss bears and cockroaches.

I bought some spray the other day as a consequence of the thread on the subject and the kind words of advice from others. I was out and about the other day in my shorts and after half an hour I remembered that I had forgotten to spray myself.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 16-Jun-20 09:35 PM GMT

Nice images in your last non-tick report, Pauline. Given my lack of foreign travel, maybe this year is the one where I should at least attempt to do justice to Essex Skippers like you have done.

I can't understand why you get targeted by ticks like you do. I've never had more than half a dozen in my lifetime. Maybe it's all the garlic I eat? 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jun-20 03:45 PM GMT

[quote=Otep post_id=154975 time=1592333033 user_id=19316] So ticks can be added to the list of creatures that would survive a nuclear holocaust

Seems that way Otep. I usually end the season on antibiotics as I get bitten so much. I rarely venture out in shorts these days as I haven't yet found a spray that works. My doctor assures me that we don't have Lyme disease in my area but? As a result they are not too bothered about removing ticks and last year I had to get the local vet to remove one from the middle of my back that I just couldn't reach!!!

Thank you David. I do like garlic but clearly don't eat enough of it! The doc suggested yeast tablets as apparently they alter the composition of the blood but haven't yet tried that 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 17-Jun-20 03:56 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I went to HLB today, you'd have thought it was Winter 🤪 Jeans, socks on pulled over the jeans and a shower proof Jacket. 😊 The Temperature was 20c 😊 no wonder people give me a wide berth 😊 I expected rain and am a ware of the Ticks 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jun-20 04:11 PM GMT

Better safe than sorry M. 😊 When I want folk to give me a bit more room I just start coughing 😊

Today at the Straits there weren't many folk at all but I was pleased to see my first Small Skipper of the season and also my first SWF. The SWF and WA were both taken at quite some distance so just record shots really. I now realise I have also forgotten to ID the Dragonfly so will need to do that later.







A few from recent days including Silver Y moth – lots of them around now – and female Marbled White which I watched egg-laying:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 18-Jun-20 09:15 PM GMT

Your close up images reveal details not often appreciated, Pauline, such as the colossal eyes of the dragonfly and the gentle, blue 'pupils' in the Marbled White ocelli.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jun-20 11:08 AM GMT

To be honest David, I am a bit bored with the shots I have been taking for years and am trying different things. I have an idea of what I'd like to achieve but I think it might take some time – as you know, patience isn't one of my (many) virtues 😊😞



You might well ask why I am posting a fairly poor shot of a bird (taken yesterday thru the window) but its appearance had consequences. I wasn't sure what it was to begin with as I only occasionally get Stock Doves in the garden.

This morning I went out as usual about 5.30am to check the Duke larva. I was full of anticipation as the 3rd instar had been resting up for almost 4 days in preparation to shed and had been almost a black colour since yesterday:



I hadn't taken many shots of it over the last few days as it was in an awkward place and I didn't want to disturb it. At this stage they really do not like interference and have a tendency to drop off the plant if moved. So I was quite excited at the thought that today I would probably see it shed its skin for the last time. Unfortunately, as I crossed the lawn I saw a soaked and bedraggled bird huddled between some plant pots. At first I thought it was a fledgling Wood Pigeon but no, it was the Stock Dove that had suffered a cat attack:



By the time I had sorted out that situation and returned to the Dukes I reckon I had missed the moult by about 30 mins!!! Ah well, hopefully there will be another chance – hope I can say the same for the bird.



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jun-20 05:24 PM GMT

Sadly the Dove didn't make it. Realistically it was so traumatised and shocked all I could do was keep it warm and quiet initially. I had high hopes when it had something to eat and drink but it then went downhill very quickly. Afterwards I was able to examine it properly and could see a small puncture under the wing and obvious signs of internal bleeding. I do wish folks would at least keep their cats in at dawn and dusk, preferably all night:



On a happier note, little Broccoli emerged during the recent thunderstorms so had to stay in the cage for a day. Definitely a Small White. I'm not sure that abdominal gesture was one of appreciation and gratitude but it was all I got before flying off:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jun-20 05:58 PM GMT

I believe the Dragonfly in my earlier post is a female Black-tailed Skimmer. I am not good with ID's or Dragonflies so if not I hope someone will tell me.

Having braced myself for another visit to the ticks I thought I would try a different time and different weather conditions. I certainly did that. By the time I got there a gale was blowing, the sky had gone dark and it had started to drizzle. I have a lot to learn about DGF – they will fly in these conditions, even when it is cold, and they know you are approaching from quite some distance. I am in awe of those of you who have managed to approach this butterfly. Needless to say I didn't get the shots I wanted but I didn't bring quite as many ticks home as before and I did get a couple of shots:



Oxenbourne on a June afternoon!



I came across this Small Copper with what looks like pollen on his proboscis. I know I have posted similar shots in the past of various species but this butterfly looked like it was roosting like this. Does anyone know if this affects the functionality of the proboscis and /or the butterfly?



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 19-Jun-20 07:49 PM GMT

Cracking set of shots recently Pauline – really like the head on/X-wing view of the Small Skipper 🤔😁🌱 I'm guessing here so bear with me, but I don't think the pollen sticking to the proboscis should affect the functionality too much. True they can't 'put it away' properly but as the proboscis forms a tube and the pollen are on the outside I can't see it interfering with getting nectar up – it might stop it reaching in as far though 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 19-Jun-20 11:28 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, I agree about the DGF, they just know, don't they? Early and late in the day are perhaps best, but this is precisely the time that bits of grass and shadows get in the way!

I agree with your previous post as well, taking the same old shots can get a bit boring, always good to try something different...

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 20-Jun-20 11:30 AM GMT

Lovely shots Pauline, especially the DGF, I like the close up to of the Small Copper, I must say the detail of what I could see was great. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jun-20 03:01 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel. I was really just wondering whether the proboscis would be able to be unfurled effectively to take in nectar – hope you're right.

Thank you M. I am finding that just about every shot and every butterfly is hard work this season.

Hi Mark – I try to tread lightly, reduce any vibration and make little noise but I am struggling with this species (always have!) Mind you, I'm struggling with a lot of them this season including the WLH which is not usually so much of a challenge for me. I love your image on the leaf – the first one. I have

never seen them sit like that. I tried again today but in 90 mins just got 3 brief sightings of what might well have been the same butterfly so numbers at my local site (which is usually super early) are definitely down.



As I walked back down the track to the car park there was not a soul around but coming from the right I could faintly hear some music. As I carried on walking it got louder and I realised it was bagpipes. To the right was a deep ditch, very long grass and trees but I was curious to find the source. Having struggled through and over these obstacles a lone bagpipe player came into view in a glade thru the trees. Just disappointed he wasn't wearing a kilt!



So where was I today? Just a stones throw from Portsmouth – Spinnaker Tower in the background:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 21-Jun-20 09:53 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, your getting very adventurous 😊 Portsmouth and tracking down a Piper, (no Klit indeed) 😊

Lovely shots of the Hair Streak, I'll follow your guide on tracking that down 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-20 06:35 PM GMT

Still lovely shots of the Whitter Pauline 😊🍷 I reckon the piper was a bit concerned about Ticks and that's why he wasnae wearing a kilt, I mean one your leg is bad enough but one on your...well best not go there:wink: 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

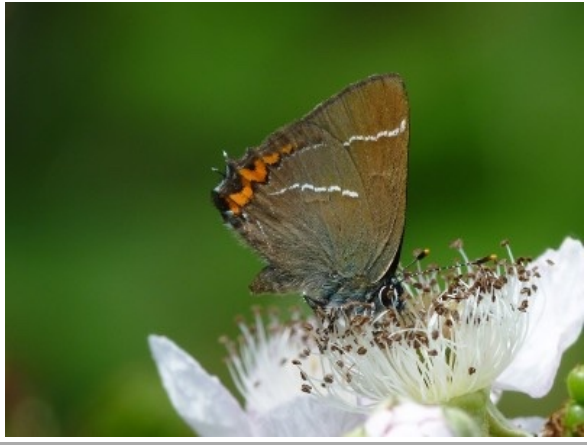
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jun-20 03:15 PM GMT

Are you speaking from personal experience Wurzel? 😊😊

Cheers Goldie – got to have an adventure from time to time 😊

Sadly the piper wasn't there today or I might have put in a personal request – for a kilt 😊 Thankfully there were more butterflies but 3 in 2 hours still doesn't cut it. I am just about on first name terms with them now. Today there was a fresh male, a worn male and a really small male – no females, despite that being the first butterfly I posted a week ago. I reckon in several visits I have seen no more than 6 different WLH (the one with the bites out of his wings didn't show today). Very poor given I was watching 6-7 down at once last season.





I might have to turn my attention to Purple stuff now. Before that I reckon I deserve a rest. During lockdown I tried to get as many chores done as possible. I was about to take some old green, rusty garden furniture with a mouldy green canopy to the tip but hey, the tip was in lockdown! Then I remembered I had some paint left in the garage from the other set I painted last year. I bought some pink 'tarpaulin' off the internet and this is the result. Headed there now with a glass of Pimms 😊



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jun-20 07:10 AM GMT

A few of the Skippers which provided both entertainment and amusement as I waited for the Hairstreaks yesterday. I always think they are such photogenic little characters with loads of attitude:



Small



Essex



Essex



Large



Essex



Small

Re: Pauline

by FISHiEE, 23-Jun-20 04:59 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

The 'pollen' on the small copper are actually polinia from an orchid it's been feeding on. I see it on butterflies quite often at this time of year. I'm not sure if it affects their feeding. It can make things look uncomfortable and it must irritate the butterflies as I do see them trying to remove them with their legs sometimes.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-20 07:59 PM GMT

Not quite personal experience Pauline but quite close 😊👁️

Lovely set of Smessex (and Large) Skipper shots – they certainly help to break up the monotony of Browns at this time in the season 😊😎

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Katrina, 23-Jun-20 08:14 PM GMT

Beautiful skipper shots Pauline. What a lovely colour they are. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Jun-20 06:35 AM GMT

Thank you Katrina. Hope you're well. Might yet see you at Chiddingfold.

Cheers Wurzel – got to have something to do with all this waiting around for things to come out of trees!

Hi John – hope all's good with you right now. Thanks for this. I looked up Pollinium and found it is 'a collection of pollen grains attached to a Viscidium, a sticky pad by means of which the pollinium is attached to the pollinating insect'. What is not clear is how it becomes detached from the insect to complete the pollination. I, too, have seen them trying to remove these without success. I assume that during the process the insect is still able to feed etc otherwise the pollination process would not be completed but as you say they seem to find it uncomfortable and a hindrance.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-Jun-20 09:16 PM GMT

So envious of your White Letter Hairstreaks, Pauline. I'd willingly swap a few dozen Dark Green Frits to have them posing as nicely as that at eye level.

**Re: Pauline**

by Pauline, 25-Jun-20 04:49 PM GMT

They've been hard work this year David but nowhere near as hard as the DGF! Hope you did a damn sight better than me today.

Now I've just received news that Brown Hairstreaks are out in Dorset!!! I'm still trying to juggle PE with PH. Not a bad start today but more to come. It was good to meet Mark and Mike again and a pleasure to meet you too David.

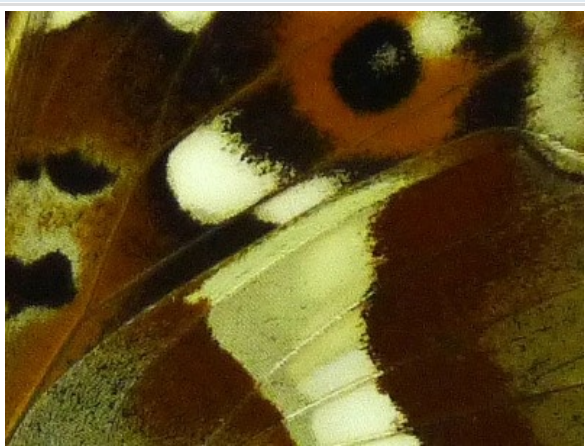




Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jun-20 04:43 PM GMT

It seems as if it has been a frustrating time as far as the PE is concerned and I am not just speaking personally. Many sightings but the butterfly skims the tracks without landing almost without exception. I can't help but think the numbers must be down and the intense heat certainly doesn't help. I was lucky enough to get a close up sighting today but sadly no open winged shots:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jun-20 04:47 PM GMT

Whilst waiting/looking for PE the SWF certainly kept me entertained:





Re: Pauline

by millerd, 26-Jun-20 05:30 PM GMT

My overall experience of the Emperor this year matches yours, Pauline. They seem unable to settle when they do come down and skip along from one patch of shade to another. Whether their behaviour will change after the change in the weather to cooler conditions remains to be seen. They have to get through a few quite windy days now as well.

Nice SWF shots, though! They've been quite amenable and have been down on the ground just as often... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jun-20 06:40 PM GMT

Glad I'm not alone in my efforts Dave. Our paths have yet to cross this season but there is still time 😊

Now, just putting this out there to gauge general feeling. On Thursday at Abbots Wood I engaged in conversation with a butterfly collector – not for the first time. He told me he came from Devon and that he bred Purple Emperors and needed some females to boost his gene pool. As usual I played dumb so when he asked me if I was a member of BC I said no and denied knowledge of Matthew Oates' website. We had a long chat about what he did and why and later on I saw him catch a female White Admiral. He explained to me how he kept them alive on the drive back to Devon. I took a photo of his number plate which has now been passed on to the Managers at Alice Holt. They seemed quite interested and I am expecting a call back from them. Obviously I am not sure if there is anything they can do as I didn't feel comfortable taking a shot whilst he caught the butterfly. I believe a group of butterfly watchers took a shot of the guy himself and threatened to post it on a website – Mark, you will remember this group (2 rugby players and a blonde female). I wonder if there is any way of contacting them for the photo in case Alice Holt wants to try to take it further. I am also interested in the general view of you folk. My personal view is that at one time it was legal to collect birds eggs – perhaps some of you did. But that is illegal now and isn't it time this activity fell into the same category? Honestly, I am sick of seeing it year after year!

Re: Pauline

by Chris L, 26-Jun-20 07:02 PM GMT

I am new to the hobby without a year under my belt yet Pauline. I therefore have quite a naive perspective. Firstly I want to congratulate your detective work.

I was reading the Patrick Barkham book (again) only yesterday and based upon my reading, I thought that this activity was consigned to history, and a long time ago too. Nevertheless I am not totally surprised to read what you wrote.

I am enjoying seeing butterflies in their chosen habitat. I really, really don't like what I have just read at all.

I ask myself a question. What if there were only 80 of a species left and they were dying off year on year because of something like a change in agricultural practices coupled with a stubbornness of the butterfly to move a few miles to pastures new? How would I feel under such circumstances if they were professionally caught, bred for a while and then relocated somewhere? That might change my view.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 26-Jun-20 09:39 PM GMT

Your certainly seeing some cracking Butterflies Pauline 🍷🍷 (I could cry) 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Jun-20 09:32 AM GMT

It has not been easy M. There are times when I, too, could have sat and cried especially when the same person spooked a grounded Emperor TWICE!

Thank you for your response Otep. I could agree with your last para if the activity was to preserve and protect the butterfly and was carried out in a

regulated manner under licence. However, these collectors are running businesses at the expense of the butterfly – selling them for profit in various forms. He actually admitted to me that he sells some but 'releases any surplus to top up local populations'. I find that very odd as he had already told me that they have no PE in Devon. Does he travel from Devon to Hants to release the surplus? I think not!!!

Another appearance of those very popular pink, leopard print boots – not just popular with the butterflies but also liked by Mrs Jenner I'm told 😊 A big thank you to David for the photos:



Re: Pauline

by Chris L, 27-Jun-20 09:44 AM GMT

[quote=Pauline post_id=155348 time=1593246758 user_id=1095] However, these collectors are running businesses at the expense of the butterfly – selling them for profit in various forms. He actually admitted to me that he sells some... Sells them too ! I assumed he collected and did whatever for his own amusement. If there are sellers there must be buyers too. Where are they sold? Can the market be seen online or is all very black market?

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jun-20 10:50 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, just catching up again. Great series of SWF shots 😊

[quote=Pauline post_id=155319 time=1593186197 user_id=1095] It seems as if it has been a frustrating time as far as the PE is concerned and I am not just speaking personally. Many sightings but the butterfly skims the tracks without landing almost without exception.

I have not seen them there yet myself this year but from what I have read on social media it seems that people are having a similar experience up here at Oversley Wood in Warwickshire. The mornings have been very hot and the PEs very skittish but it seems that they are coming down in the evenings between 6.30 – 7.30pm.

Your report of the collector is concerning and well done for reporting him.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Jun-20 03:30 PM GMT

Hi Otep

there are folk who I am sure know much more than I do about the legalities of such activities and I am somewhat surprised that there has been so little comment. As I understand it, it is actually legal with regard to most species (collecting that is, as long as they are not sold on – but who can police that?). There are websites that sell larva etc – I don't know if they are sure of the provenance. There are also shows such as the Amateur Entomologist Society show where livestock is available in addition to books, equipment etc. It is certainly a complex topic. I suppose the point I am making is that I believe it should be illegal to collect, full stop. Perhaps someone like Butterfly Conservation needs to take on the issue – or a high profile individual with regular access to the media. Currently, probably the worst offence is technically theft from private land but I have had to jump through hoops for 3 years to get permission to take a few Duke eggs to rear which seems a bit inconsistent. The bottom line is that it heartily sickens me to see these butterflies caught up like that. This guy told me he usually gets his 'stock' from abroad but hasn't been able to because of the lockdown!!!

Thank you Neil – loving your moth shots as usual. Wondering when MY Pine hawk moth will emerge! I still haven't given up on PE but must check out PH.

Just to prove there are a few more species at Alice Holt a few below including what I think is a Broad-bodied Darter (I'll need to check that out!):



Lots of bird life but the only one I could get close to was this Thrush which kept me company for quite some time whilst searching for breakfast:



Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jun-20 03:50 PM GMT

[quote=Pauline post_id=155360 time=1593268205 user_id=1095]
...Wondering when MY Pine hawk moth will emerge!

They are still emerging Pauline. My son Chris had a fresh one in his garden trap last night and at least two other Warks BC members caught fresh ones this past week.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 27-Jun-20 05:18 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, frustration is my middle name at present, I see all your's

and everyone else's shots in the posts and all I'm seeing at present are repeats of what I've already taken 😊 you've got some great photos there 📷📷

I read your post about the man with the net rather quickly because men came next door to the Man's garage to put new stuff round it and they left without doing the Drain Pipes which would have emptied into my garden if it'd rained and it did!!!!
Any way it was sorted but it's going to be one of those year's 😊

Sorry! I've pressed the wrong Button 😊 Any way to get back to the man with the net, I don't like to see people with nets and the thought of people selling them is awful, some Idiot that doesn't know what care the Butterflies need could be buying them and letting them out in the wrong place. It's different when people like Chester Zoo for instance having bred them to turn them loose here in Lancashire and when they take them for good reasons but not just to justify greed , you said he was selling them?

I wonder if the owner's will take it further, keep in touch Goldie 😊

By the way the Butterflies they're letting go are Large Heath, looked it up, But there calling them Manchester Argus 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-20 05:56 PM GMT

SOMEHOW I've been missing some of your posts Pauline 😊😊 A great selection of shots and I share your frustrations with the PEs this year – mind you all I have to show PE wise after two trips is a buzzing and about 5 seconds of memory – nothing on my memory card 😊
I think you did some sterling work regarding the collector – the only people 'collecting' should have a license as part of a scientific study in my opinion – the Brown Hairstreaks still haven't recovered at Shipton Bellinger after a Japanese tourist filled his Lunchbox with them 😊 In this day and age with digital cameras and even some superb cameras on mobile phones there is no need to collect as a record for prosperity – just get a photo. 😊😊

Any way I will now go and have a green tea and calm down, rant over 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Chris L, 27-Jun-20 10:12 PM GMT

Thank you for your reply Pauline.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jun-20 11:43 AM GMT

It's still wriggling Neil 😊 You'll be the first to know!

I'll let you know what happens Goldie. The wildlife ranger is due to phone me next week and I have a few suggestions for him 😊 If they can't prosecute there are ways to make it more difficult and try to prevent in the first instance.

Thank you Wurzel. I haven't given up yet with the PE but all the walking is at least keeping me fit and my jeans are now too big – which is just as well as they're covered in pink paint and oil stains!!! Please tell me you're joking re Japanese tourist 😊

I hope it's something you never come across Otep. What would you do?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jun-20 12:05 PM GMT

I look forward to this trip every year mostly because it is by the sea which I so miss. The other reason it is so enjoyable is that the Oaks are not much taller than me. However, it is a MOD site and as such is closed frequently for military activities so this has to be juggled with the weather and other commitments. I had originally planned to go last Friday but the site was closed. Yesterday the weather was dreadful but looking at the forecasts today seemed to be the best day for about a week after which time the site is closed for about a fortnight. Now I have looked for butterflies in the rain, I have looked when it was dull, overcast and cold, and I have looked when it was quite breezy – but this has to be the first time I have searched in all these conditions combined. When I arrived in the rain and found the car parks all closed because of Covid I almost came home. Instead I put on a coat, tucked my camera under it and staggered across the shingle for 20 mins in ridiculously strong winds. See how choppy the sea is:



I didn't expect to see anything but the first Oak I looked at had a female PH tucked into the branches, really hunkered down and hanging on as if her life depended on it – it quite possibly did!





This is where they are found:



and yes, they really do land on Oaks this low:



The rain started again so camera under coat again I decided to set off for home even tho' it was only 9.15am. I hadn't gone very many steps when the sun broke through for a few minutes so I turned back and there she was with her wings open 😊



As a bonus I even came back with an arm full of cuttle fish for the birds! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jun-20 06:20 PM GMT

Obviously I'm still upset about this butterfly collection thing and to that end have been looking at the BC web site which was a bit of a revelation to me. They have a quite comprehensive policy on collecting, breeding and photography – amongst other things. Did you know for example:

Taking for rearing and release:

Taking a limited number of specimens (up to 5 eggs or caterpillars) of only the most common and widespread native species to be bred in captivity for

educational purposes is legitimate, and can be a useful way of understanding some of the details of the life history of butterflies and moths. However, there can be no conservation justification for rearing and releasing large numbers of common and widespread species (Defined for the purposes of this policy as Painted Lady, Peacock, Comma and Red Admiral. Common and widespread moth species which would fall into this category include Pale Tussock, Knot Grass and Elephant Hawkmoth, all of which are easy to rear.)

and from the commercial side:

Collecting for commercial purposes is not in the best interests of Lepidoptera conservation in the United Kingdom and Butterfly Conservation supports all measures to regulate trading of butterflies and moths. In the absence of comprehensive regulation, Butterfly Conservation expects those engaged in the trade in butterflies and moths to observe the law and encourages them to observe the principles set out in this policy.

It's well worth a read but in my opinion doesn't go far enough.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 28-Jun-20 07:29 PM GMT

I wish I had been joking Pauline 😞

Anyway on a brighter notes...That is a fantastically surreal looking site Pauline 🤪🤪 Cracking hits of the female 😄🇮🇪

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 29-Jun-20 12:35 PM GMT

What an interesting site for Purple Hairstreaks, Pauline. If in doubt, venture out. You did and were well rewarded. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jun-20 01:58 PM GMT

David M wrote:

.What an interesting site for Purple Hairstreaks, Pauline.

Ditto.

Great shots of the Purple Hairstreaks too. I want to check out a couple of local sites for these but it looks like I need to wait a couple of days now for the wind to subside. It's gone 'orrible here again.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jun-20 03:34 PM GMT

Thank you Neil. I sympathise – we've had 40mph gales for the last 3 days. Good luck!

It's a great site Wurzel as it combines 2 of my favourite things – the sea and butterflies. Grayling are also found on this site.

I ventured out again today David. It was better than yesterday (well, it wasn't raining!) and again I was well rewarded. I am just so excited. I saw plenty of butterflies, including SWF and WA but whilst I was moving in for a shot on a SWF I almost stood on a heap of Adders!!! At first I thought it was one huge snake and then I realised there were 4 of them!! 😞 I have never seen an adder before. Mark tried to find me one and Andy tried and a few others but always without success. It is a shame that I couldn't get a clearer view of them but there wasn't much I could do about that:



Initially I startled them and they quickly slid away but I stood stock still for about 20 mins and they started to come out again. I was stood so still just a foot away from these snakes when this little mite scampered across my boot. I feared for his safety – I know nothing about adders or what they will/can eat:



I reckon there's enough snakeskin here for a handbag AND a pair of shoes 😊😂



I am not even sure what gender these are or whether some are young ones. One seemed smaller, paler but well-marked. Something else for me to research!





I had just started to drive away from the site when up ahead a deer appeared in the middle of the road and just stood there looking from whence she came. I slowed to a stop expecting her mate to appear feeling slightly worried as I saw a car approach from the opposite direction. Thankfully he too drew to a standstill and as we watched two of the tiniest little fawns I have ever seen ambled up to her and she led them to the other side. I have never seen a doe with twins before – if only I could have got a shot but my camera was in the boot 😊 We both slowly drove past smiling as we went 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-20 08:31 PM GMT

Brilliant shots of the Adders Pauline 😊 It could be that they've gotten caught out by the sudden drop in temperature – from 30 down to 18 – so have gone a bit torpid?

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Jun-20 09:49 AM GMT

I was so excited Wurzel. I thought they were lone creatures but I am learning all the time.

I'm afraid I can't let this collection issue drop. It is not just in my area it is happening and although some of these guys appear to be friendly I have been told they can turn quite nasty and I have been advised to ensure my personal safety. Perhaps being female is an advantage as it may be that I am perceived as less of a threat and they are prepared to chat to me. Some folk who know it goes on have the attitude of 'what can you do?' Many folk who don't know about it are quite shocked to learn but often have the same attitude. For those on this site that do not fully appreciate what some of these collectors are capable of I enclose part of an email I received last night. If you look at that link they recommend wringing the necks of songbirds to prevent them eating the larva! I'll not say who it was from as I forgot to ask permission to publish:

<https://hathawaysofhaworth.wordpress.com/2016/05/01/devon-butterflies-a-little-shop-of-horrors/>

Interestingly I met one of other collectors yesterday – he is always with his wife who carries the bag and he has the long pole for the net – very affable – he drives a black Audi TT – he was there last year too. He may be the chap involved with Wrecclesham glanvilles?

Currently, without much backing in law, any kind of successful deterrent is very much dependent on how far the landowners are prepared to go but you've got to give it your best shot, haven't you? I'll let you know how I get on.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Jun-20 02:46 PM GMT

I'm struggling to get my head round this so if I have misunderstood anything I hope someone who knows better will tell me. After a couple of hours reading and research it would seem that these collectors really are NOT doing anything illegal – at least not openly. So, apart from 6 species of butterfly which are totally protected (and that doesn't include PE) they can continue to collect as long as they do not sell it on. This means that a collector can take an Empress, get 200 eggs from her and then sell these on legally as they are now considered 'captive bred'. He can then kill and pin the female and sell her on as one of his captive bred stock and who will know the difference.

Looking at the 1968 Theft Act he is not even carrying out an act of theft. Although wild creatures are considered to be 'property' taking one does not appear to constitute theft unless that creature has already been taken into possession. In this case I assume if you collected butterflies and put them in a butterfly house and someone stole them then that would be theft. Apparently local byelaws can be passed by the National Trust and Government Conservation agencies (eg Natural England) but I can find no evidence of such in the Alice Holt area. I have had an email from Alice Holt and they still intend to phone me to discuss this but in the current situation I fail to see what they can do when it all appears legal.

So, without any form of licencing there is no way to regulate how many folk take butterflies and no control over the numbers they take and no checks on premises to see what happens to them afterwards. As well as the PE the guy at Alice Holt also collected all the Hairstreaks and WA (and that is just what he told me about). He also told me he used MO's website to see when the egg-laying had started to save a wasted journey. Why is this sort of sensitive information not being withheld? Why is licencing not being introduced? Will it only happen when it becomes apparent that such activities are having a seriously detrimental effect on the butterfly population – a bit late then I would think. Should this situation be changed? How can this situation be changed? Who should be taking the lead? I will continue to think about this but I would love to hear other views as I feel very alone out here.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 30-Jun-20 09:59 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, you hit the jackpot with the Purple Hair Streaks 😊 your photo's are lovely 😊

I'd be careful with the Adders though, when I visited Foulshaw Moss in the lakes you were told to Keep to the board walks and whilst we were there we saw one just off the board walk,(that was a couple of years ago.)

Reading your posts about the taking of Butterflies, I can't see that's legal, I thought all these practices went on in Victorian times 😊 It does seem that BC wants people to obey the law, but they don't say what will happen if people are caught breaking it!!

I'm eager to know if those you reported the man to will get back you, then may be you'll get more info. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 01-Jul-20 12:09 PM GMT

Always a tricky question is this.

There are six UK species afforded full protection, although one, Large Copper, is not actually native: <https://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/webpage.php?name=law>

It would be nice to see a few more on that list as I believe there are quite a few that deserve to be.

Even then though, a net-wielding individual could claim to be capturing species not on the protected list, so is it time to do what Spain does and ban nets? That wouldn't really help too much with Purple Emperors, as when they're feeding you could literally go over to them and pick them up with your fingers, so totally engrossed are they in what they're doing.

Additionally, those with nets tend to operate in clandestine fashion. I was talking to one of the rangers at Daneway last week and he told me two had been stopped this year. Apparently they get suspicious if anyone turns up on the site either very early or very late, as this is not suggestive of those who have simply come to enjoy the butterflies.

The alternative would be for the owners of individual sites to forbid any taking of flora and fauna irrespective of whether it is protected or not. It's their property so they can do what they like but without surveillance determined individuals will no doubt still operate.

Another alternative would be to outlaw all trade in certain species, but then you risk driving it underground making the venture even more profitable.

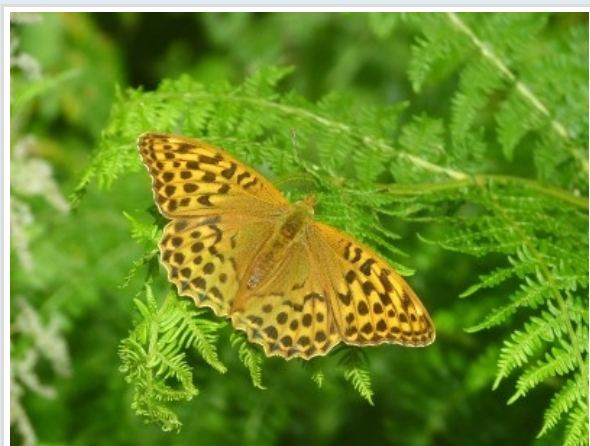
Please let us know what Alice Holt have to say regarding your recent experience.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jul-20 05:02 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel, Goldie and David for your comments and views – much appreciated. I shall continue working on this issue 'off line' but just want to make it clear that I don't have a problem with netting butterflies for valid reasons (eg identification) and where the butterfly is unharmed and released quickly. I don't have a problem with butterflies being collected for valid reasons (eg. re-introductions). I do however, think these activities should require a licence and be properly regulated. I DO have a problem with butterflies being collected for commercial gain – and there is the issue. Without an effective licencing system, properly regulated and backed in law how can you tell the difference. Today I met another collector at Alice Holt. This one was from Farnham and he told me he had successfully paired 12 female PE this year and had hundreds and hundreds of eggs. I asked him if he sold them and he said there was no demand???? Definitely wasn't admitting to the commercial bit. I said they must take up a lot of room and time but apparently he keeps them in small sleeves in the garden. He says he releases a few back into Alice Holt to make up for the ones he takes. If he doesn't sell the others? Apparently he also sometimes takes eggs. He tells me he is going to be back there at 12.30 tomorrow as he only just missed getting a female PE a bit earlier (on a back track close to the car park). I could go on but I won't. I hope you understand why I find this upsetting.

Whilst up there today I took some shots of other butterflies so I'll just post them and be gone:







Oh yeah, and the adders are still there. They have this peculiar thing about curling up on top of one another – perhaps it's a temperature thing:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-20 08:33 PM GMT

Cricky Pauline I had to go and get my sunglasses to view that Holly Blue 😳😳 Looks like it fancied itself as an Adonis 😂

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jul-20 06:55 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – he is pretty stunning isn't he 😊

A quick update on the Dukes. Now in 3rd and 4th instar they are eating me out of house and home – literally. Rather than those delicate little peppering of holes that the leaves incur in early instars, whole leaves are now reduced to a mere skeleton in several hours. I am having to dig up new plants for them daily (from my garden I haste to add). It surely can't be long before they begin to pupate – at which point I can breathe a sigh of relief. They have also become masters of camouflage making them difficult to locate. They are not always found on the plant but often hidden in leaf litter or cleverly hidden in moss. All this makes photography difficult as I am loath to disturb them once I can actually find them. If perchance they are to be found on a leaf the slightest movement causes them to fall off so I am reluctant to take many pics at the moment. However, a few I have taken in recent days below:





Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 02-Jul-20 10:43 AM GMT

Your'e doing well with the Dukes Pauline, eager to see them as Butterflies.

I agree with you about the licensing, it would stop a lot of these collector's, you sound to be meeting a lot of them which isn't good. Let's hope some things done and the land owners clamp down.

Lovely shots also of the SWF, HB, love the open wing shots. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 02-Jul-20 08:15 PM GMT

Those Duke caterpillars are splendid little beasts, Pauline, almost like little cacti with their rosettes of spines. How are you going to overwinter the pupae? I imagine there's a risk of them emerging this summer (which may possibly happen in the wild following the early spring).

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jul-20 08:17 PM GMT

You're very kind Goldie. I'll update you soon 😊

Today has been a tough one for various reasons so I didn't get out until about 3.30pm and the weather wasn't great. Showery, quite windy but a few sunny spells. I was surprised how many butterflies were about including this gorgeous fresh Peacock:

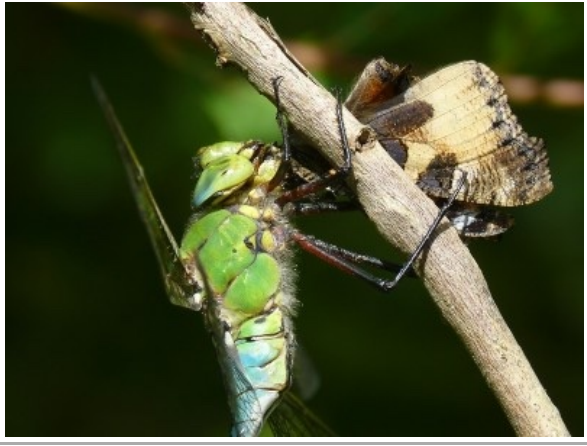


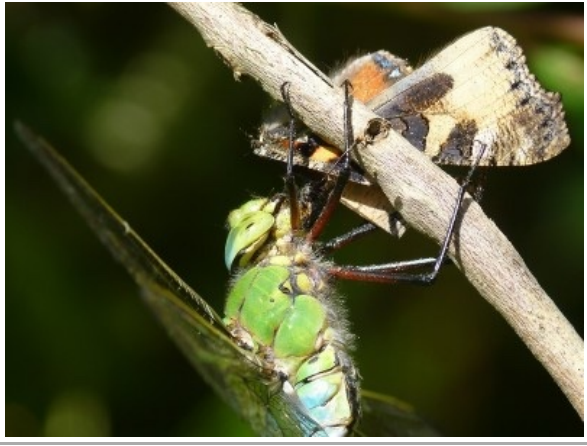
I was also delighted at seeing a Small Tortoiseshell – only the 2nd I have seen this season so I made the most of it taking a lot of shots:



As the ST made its way to some fresh thistle it was caught by the wind and somehow lost control. A different sort of sequence:









It was all over in about 90 secs as the poor little Tort was dismembered wing by wing until only one wing was left and the antennae falling away in the last shot as the Dragonfly munched through the last of the body parts. First time I have seen this and hopefully the last. A stressful day in more ways than one!

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 03-Jul-20 11:48 AM GMT

That was horrific Pauline, I've seen huge Dragon Flies at Gait Barrows chasing the High Brown Fritillaries and the Fritillaries trying their best to out fly them 😞 I've never seen one caught like that though!!!!UGH

I've blamed these huge DF for a loss of some of the Butterflies at GB but what can you do it's nature. 😞

Awful weather here at present, when the rain stops it's mostly been late in the day, so no Butterflies for over a week now 😞 Goldie 😞

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jul-20 12:23 PM GMT

I felt almost guilty M. as I had been taking shots of the poor ST not realising it was enjoying its last supper. I hope my 'interference' didn't affect its behaviour in any way but I think that strong wind was more to blame and those Dragonflies are powerful fliers. Haven't even had a chance to look up what sort it is. Today I have taken some really lovely photos that I am very pleased with so hopefully that will provide some balance.

Hi Dave. Thank you. To answer your question I hadn't even thought that far ahead – not wanting to count chickens as they say (or should that be larva). I am quite paranoid every time I introduce new food plants (which is happening quite a lot at the moment) in case a slug, snail or other nasty gets past my scrutiny. I have even taken to getting up in the middle of the night to check them! Honestly 😞 I know some folk keep pupa in the fridge but I have never done that and don't intend to. I shall try to find somewhere very safe but close to natural conditions. If they emerge this Summer so be it! I am also keeping an eye on the wild ones and am very happy that they are at the same stage as my reared ones.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jul-20 03:58 PM GMT

Yesterday I saw a beautiful fresh Brimstone in the garden and it occurred to me that perhaps at least one of my (wild/garden) final instars had made it through. It also reminded me to check the only one which had pupated on the plant. Sure enough it didn't look far off emerging. This is a shot of the pupa I took early this morning (I won't inflict the other 200 on you this time 😊😊):

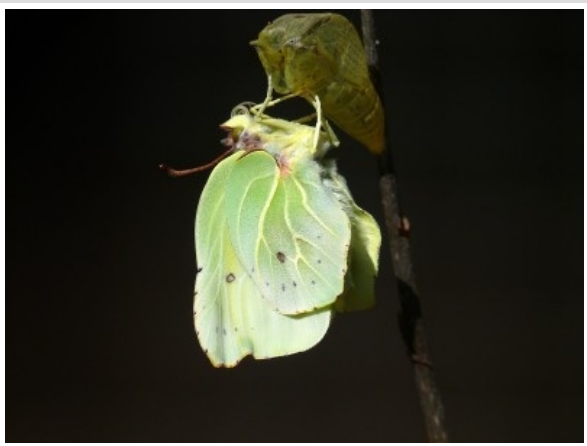


I kept a close eye on it and once the sun warmed it up it emerged. It has been flying round the garden but the very strong wind (which has made photos very difficult) has caused it to take up refuge in the rockery and it is on the underside of a leaf as I type. I did take quite a lot of shots and have tried to hone these down but to properly appreciate the way in which it emerges requires a certain number:









Beautiful when this fresh:





It has been interesting watching its development from that egg laid way back in the spring on my tiny plant.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-20 06:27 PM GMT

Really interesting sequence of shots Pauline 😊 I never realised how wide the abdomen is in proportion to the rest of the body – it looks positively huge 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 03-Jul-20 08:58 PM GMT

Shame about the Tortoiseshell, Pauline, but you've restored the balance between good and evil with your sequence of another Brimstone emerging into the adult world.

Been a few who have missed out on the actual moment of emergence in pupae they have been following lately so it's nice to see your timing was spot on. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 04-Jul-20 02:29 PM GMT

WoW!! Pauline, lovely photos and your right, it's a Blond Bomb shell 😊 Lot's of hair 😊 Your lucky to have them in your Garden, it's still raining here, over a week since I was able to get any shot's 😊

My Daughter should arrive here Thursday then we're off 😊 (Fingers crossed) Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Jul-20 06:13 PM GMT

Thank you David -

David M wrote:
so it's nice to see your timing was spot on

You know just how much I enjoy sitting for hours with the will to live slowly ebbing away 😊😁

Ahh, thank you M. - that's great news. Get your bags packed and enjoy!

I'm getting bored of this wind now so just a few shots from the garden today:



There are several Brimstones around here now and I am sure they are the garden-bred ones. They have skillfully hidden away from the heavy showers spending the night inches from the ground in the rockery:



Great camouflage. Same butterfly, same place, different angle:



Different butterfly, different plant, about one foot away:



First time I've managed a shot of either of these this season:



There were 8 species (that I saw) in the garden today. The others were Comma, Holly Blue, Ringlet and Meadow Brown but I didn't have the time and/or the opportunity to take shots of them.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 06-Jul-20 12:26 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, you got your Green Veined White at last 😊 Lovely shots, I've still to see a Holly Blue, may be this week-end 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jul-20 09:40 AM GMT

It was a long wait Goldie!

I thought I'd do things a little differently this year. Instead of my long summary at the end of my season I have decided to do a series of mini reviews at appropriate intervals. Prompted by Jack's query last season regarding my reared species I decided to look back over the last 10 years at my rearing activities. I have selected a few shots from the thousands of photos I have taken of some of those species I have enjoyed rearing (some more than once!). I am afraid the quality of the images does vary but at least it is good to know I have made some photographic improvement over the last decade!

Ova (reared)



Small Copper



Purple Hairstreak



LTB



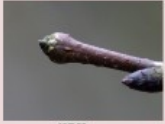
Brown Hairstreak



White Admiral



SWF



WLH



Green Hairstreak

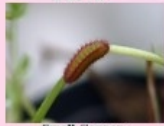


Comma

Larva



Black Hairstreak



Small Copper



SWF



White Admiral



Green Hairstreak



Small Tortoiseshell



Glanville Fritillary



Holly Blue



Brown Hairstreak

Pupa (reared)



Painted Lady



Black Hairstreak



DGF



Glanville Fritillary



Common Blue



White Admiral



Clouded Yellow



Brown Hairstreak



Small Tortoiseshell

Butterflies Emerging from Pupa



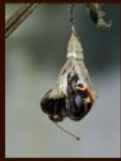
Red Admiral

Painted Lady

Peacock



Clouded Yellow



Peacock



Brimstone



White Admiral



SWF



Comma

Newly Emerged



Common Blue



Holly Blue



WLH



Green Hairstreak



Small Copper



Glanville Fritillary



Purple Hairstreak

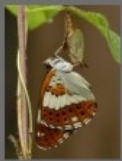


Brown Hairstreak



Black Hairstreak

Newly Emerged



White Admiral



Brimstone



Red Admiral



Glanville Fritillary



Clouded Yellow



Painted Lady



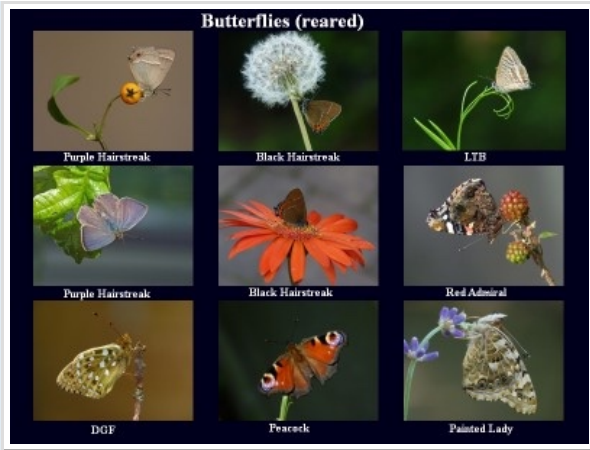
SWF



Comma



DGF



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jul-20 03:03 PM GMT

No Chalkhills yet on my local patch even tho' I usually see them between 4-6 July, but how could I complain when the number of species flying was into double figures despite persistent drizzle. White, Blue, Brown and everything in between kept me entertained. 2nd brood Common Blue very much in evidence:





The highlight of my visits to this site however, are hearing and seeing the Turtle Doves – very difficult to photograph as they are usually well hidden and very wary. I did manage a couple of very long distance shots:



so it is just as well I have 'one I prepared earlier' taken in my garden a few years back:



Driving home, a very fast, very expensive looking car passed me and as it disappeared into the distance I noticed the number plate was Y 5AVE – made me smile! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jul-20 06:23 PM GMT

A week or so ago I was looking at the last of the WLH when I noticed a fly that looked half fly and half ladybird. I have only just had time to look it up as I have never seen one before but unsurprisingly it is called a Ladybird Fly. Apparently they are parasitic on Shieldbugs and can be found on sandy soil in Sussex, Surrey and Kent. However, this one was most definitely in Hants:



Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 08-Jul-20 11:29 PM GMT

Plenty of colours there, Pauline! Congratulations on seeing and hearing turtle doves, too. They can still be found near the Essex Coast, but have disappeared from inland Essex where I live. So you get one of these. 🐢

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jul-20 03:53 PM GMT

Hi Mark

they're lovely little Doves aren't they. Until about 3 years ago I used to have a pair come into the apple tree in my garden – just for a few days each year.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jul-20 04:19 PM GMT

Thank you Dave for your generosity in giving me such explicit directions to where you saw that Ab. I really needed a change of scene as I have been getting really quite stressed at bumping into collectors at every turn lately. It must be about 3 years since I have been to Denbies. I'd almost forgotten how good it is even on a day like this – overcast with some drizzle, a fair breeze and very few bright spells in the 90 mins I was there. I have never been to that particular area before and I didn't stray from it as 15 species were on the wing here. As you predicted there were loads of Skippers, Marbled Whites and I saw the DGF but as usual my shots of the DGF were rubbish. I managed to get up close whilst it was nectaring but that strong breeze made it impossible in such an exposed area. Brown Argus, Common Blue and Small Heath were a few of the others – but I didn't see your Comma. I did however see my first Gatekeeper of the season and I was convinced it was your Ab – it wasn't! A brown moth had me fooled on more than one occasion so I grabbed a quick shot so I can find out what it is. Naturally I concentrated on the Small Coppers and I gave up counting at about a dozen. On such a dull day I had expected them to be roosting sedately on blades of grass, but no, they were zooming around, holding territories from ant hills and even indulging in a bit of courtship. I took as many shots as I could just to try to identify how many different ones there were. Surprisingly I didn't see a

single Chalkhill Blue. Overall, it was a smashing change and you will be relieved to know that I didn't spot a Large Tortoiseshell 😊 . A few shots below:







Re: Pauline

by meiga, 09-Jul-20 05:44 PM GMT

Hi Pauline
Your moth is a Shaded Broad-bar

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-20 07:18 PM GMT

Cracking set of shots Pauline – is that Common Blue an aberrant – it looks much paler, almost washed out compared to those I'm used to seeing and the fringes look in too good a condition for it to be because its worn?

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 09-Jul-20 08:19 PM GMT

Just love those galleries from a couple of posts back, Pauline. First class!

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 09-Jul-20 09:47 PM GMT

I'm glad you had a good day at Denbies, Pauline, despite not finding that Copper ab. There seem to have been a few of the normal sort around, though. 😊

And on the subject of abs... As Wurzel mentions, that Common Blue looks like one: ab. *flavescens*, which has pale yellowish lunules on the underside instead of the usual orange. It's clearly not worn (it has lovely fresh fringes), and those lunules look a delicate lemon colour. It looks quite pale overall – I wonder what the upperside looked like. Though I don't think it's an especially uncommon ab., it's still a nice thing to find. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Katrina, 09-Jul-20 10:06 PM GMT

Great shots despite the weather. Well done on the common blue ab!. The Small Copper in the flower is a lovely shot too. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Jul-20 03:08 PM GMT

Really good to hear from you Maurice and thanks for the ID which has probably saved me about an hour's work. Hope all is OK with you (lost your contact details since your move).

Hi Dave, Wurzel – I had put that Common Blue down as a first brood because it was so pale but happy to take your word for it. Just assumed it had taken good care of itself 😊 I can tell you what the upper side was like as I saw it fly away – just a very vibrant normal blue. Y'never know Dave – I might just be back 😊

I'm pleased you liked them David – I enjoyed doing them. I could have done loads more butperhaps some other time 😊

Thank you Katrina. Don't ever let the weather stop you 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Jul-20 03:11 PM GMT

Hey, I have my first Duke pupa! 😊 I wonder if this will help me locate one in the wild as I have been looking for years without success – we'll see!



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Jul-20 06:32 PM GMT

I thought I was seeing things today when I stumbled across this pink Grasshopper 🤪





Re: Pauline

by millerd, 10-Jul-20 07:45 PM GMT

The Duke pupa is a splendid looking thing. 😊 Those markings really stand out against the green, but I imagine in the wild down in the soil it would be beautifully camouflaged. Clearly enough to defeat your efforts at finding one! 😊 Still, it has to keep the butterfly safe right round to next April or May, which is pretty impressive.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 10-Jul-20 07:59 PM GMT

Love the pink grasshopper Pauline ! I think I remember Neil Hulme posting one very similar a while back ,I,ve been lucky enough to see quite a few like yours,and even one which was nearly pure White..... seems to be a lot of variation amongst them. And good job with the Dukes ,I managed a couple to the pupal stage ,some years back ,but sadly ,mine never emergeda real sickener ! Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jul-20 11:33 AM GMT

Isn't it just, Dave? But here's the thing – I had assumed that they would pupate in leaf litter or soil (and there is plenty of that available to them). It is early days but this one squeezed under a white coloured pot to pupate – the same colour as the stones on Noar Hill. I have never lifted up stones to look for them (how remiss of me!) but such a location would certainly protect from footfall and grazing cows and most birds. I'll be there soon anyway looking for BH so something do whilst watching 😊

Thank you Allen. Apparently these are quite rare and are the result of a mutation called Erythrism. I appreciate your honesty re your Duke pupa. Would you be prepared to give me (and possibly others) the benefit of your experience? With hindsight is there anything you might have done differently? Have you any idea why they might not have emerged? Is there anything you would do differently? I don't want to put them in the fridge but any advice, tips, suggestions you can give me based on your experience would be very welcome. I am sure everyone on this site wants to do their very best but sometimes for various reasons mistakes happen.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jul-20 07:23 PM GMT

Not wishing to be repetitive (but I AM on a new page 😊) I couldn't resist another look at that pink Grasshopper. I probably will never see another as seemingly they ARE very rare as many of the pink nymphs don't make it to adulthood because of predation. It was quite windy and it was right in the middle of a large nettle patch surrounded by grass. So not only did I have to try to hold a bit of the grass out of the way and take the shots with one hand, I was also kneeling in a load of nettles. Furthermore, I really couldn't get in position for the angle I wanted. OK, got the excuses out of the way for the photo quality of some shots.

Whilst watching I was surprised to see her joined by a green male Grasshopper. As he approached her I was reminded of the Wood Whites as he touched her with his antennae and nudged her with his leg, edging closer and closer. He would rub his back legs together and her wings would tremble. I thought I was about to witness a mating but after 10 mins he gave up. Not all brilliant shots but hope it conveys the impression:







I haven't seen this before and it was fascinating to watch. Apparently after mating they lay their eggs in damp soil but I couldn't see much of that around.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jul-20 07:32 PM GMT

Right, back to butterflies. Whilst out and about recently I came across this lovely pair of Essex Skippers:



There were also a few of those very blue female Common Blues emerging earlier than most of the males again – just like at Bramshot last year:





and a Large White:



Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 11-Jul-20 08:14 PM GMT

Hello Pauline ,in all honesty ,I,m not sure quite what went wrong with my Duke pupae ,things seemed to be progressing well as I recall (it was probably 30 years ago) , but something obviously didn,t suit them ,and they turned a brownish colourand just didn,t emerge
Sorry I can,t be more helpful. I kept them (the pupae) in a smallish box in a fairly cool room ,maybe if I,d kept them in a colder environment and some leaf litter they may have been Ok.

With the exception of Orange-tips ,I rarely try to rear butterflies these days the Dukes put me off a bit.

I,m on holiday at present ,when I get back I,ll see if I can find ,the pic I,ve got with three different coloured grasshoppers on ,not sure ,but I think one of those was pinkish . Great picture of Essex Skips in-cop a butterfly pair I,d like to see.

Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jul-20 05:15 PM GMT

Thank you Allan. I hope you are having a lovely holiday. I shall look forward to seeing your photo.

A bit of a mixed bag today. 6 days later than I am usually seeing them at what is considered an early site, after much searching I managed to locate a single Chalkhill Blue. Very active so just a record shot to mark the day:



The Dukes are progressing well but one is less than half the size of the others (wonder if this is the one that DIDN'T eat his first shed skin). It has surprised me that given exactly the same conditions the rate of development can differ to such an extent. Still a bit wary of taking photos at this crucial stage but managed to grab a couple this morning in poor light:



The Pine Hawk pupa and Puss moth are both still wriggling. They need to get a move on!

As previously mentioned I have a ground feeder that is permanently topped up with peanuts for squirrels, birds, badgers to take as they like. Yesterday morning it had been dragged across the garden so I blamed the badgers and went to retrieve it from on top of the mole hill where it had been left. Turned out the 'molehill' was actually a hedgehog that had gotten under the tray and his spines had got caught up in the fine mesh so he had been dragging the tray along on top of him 😞. Once rescued I kept him safe until dusk last night and after a good feed of mince, carrot, apple, weetabix etc (not forgetting the water) off he went:



Still in the garden, having put the hose on for my new turf, butterflies flocked to get a bit of moisture including this very fresh Holly Blue:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-20 08:11 PM GMT

Lovely Chalkhill Pauline 🤔🤔 - the reports are starting to trickle in of these now but perhaps the poor weather we had has slowed things back down a little bit? 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 12-Jul-20 11:33 PM GMT

[quote=Pauline post_id=155915 time=1594390302 user_id=1095]Hey, I have my first Duke pupa!...

...and what an exquisite work of art it is too, Pauline. There is a precious cargo indeed within it.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jul-20 03:09 PM GMT

I've given up trying to figure out what is going on Wurzel and I've forgotten when we last had a 'normal' year weather-wise. I'd be interested in any early reports you might be able to provide (either way) re Shipton. Last year locally was a strange one with the BH. I fear it is going to be a tad difficult this year too having seen high levels of predation last season combined with lots of blackthorn having been cut down. Much of it is blackthorn that is usually peppered with eggs so I do hope they checked first.

The pressure is still on David. I check these larva regularly and the one I managed to photograph yesterday was still exposed today. I checked again at lunchtime and he was writhing around on the soil. My first fleeting thought was that this was some strange prelude to pupation but I have seen too many larva parasitised and it looks very similar. In my excitement to rear these I broke one of my own rules which is always to collect eggs I have seen being laid.



Hoping I'm wrong but can't think what else it could be.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jul-20 03:49 PM GMT

Yesterday I popped up to Noar Hill to see how it was looking. It was teeming with butterflies (and people) but no BH. I was a bit disappointed to see that

a great deal of blackthorn has been cut right back especially on the track and around the area of the Beech tree where the BH tend to congregate. In recent years this blackthorn has been peppered with eggs so I hope they checked first. I have been told that they do check. I appreciate that it is necessary and I recognise they do it on a rotational basis, but still.....it seemed to me that the level of predation of eggs at the end of last season was higher than usual so combined with the loss of Blackthorn I am bracing myself for the possible impact. However, the Hemp Agrimony is looking great and all being well it won't be too long before the BH are spotted there. A few shots from yesterday:





Elderly male DGF were patrolling territories and chasing everything that came within range before returning to a favoured stem. Females were looking to egg lay but I didn't have much time to watch them. I still cannot get close to these butterflies and sadly this was my best effort 😞



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-20 07:32 PM GMT

Love the final shot Pauline – I need to remember this one and come back to on those dark and dreary days in the winter, it'll brighten my mood considerably 😊 Lovely looking female Common Blue, love those hints of blue on the tips of her fore wings 😊😎

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 14-Jul-20 12:17 AM GMT

Doesn't look positive for that larva, Pauline, but don't give up hope; it may well be behaviour not associated with parasites. Only time will tell. At least you are in best position to observe and record, something that is beyond the overwhelming majority of the rest of us.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jul-20 10:01 AM GMT

Are you kidding Wurzel? I thought that was the worst one!? I really DO need to rethink my style of photography 😊 . Glad you liked the female Blues 😊

Thank you David. I swear rearing these Dukes has aged me by at least 10 years! 😊😊 When I found that larva I had no idea how long he'd actually been writhing about for but I watched in dismay for about 45 mins and there was no change. It even occurred to me to 'put him out of his misery' but I don't think I could have done that. I remembered what Vince had told me previously so I separated him from the others and contained him as I expected alien creatures to erupt out of him at any time. It occurred to me that he had somehow got damaged as he was secreting something from the front end (see photo) and had gone very pale. I had to go out but when I returned he had stopped writhing and was walking around making strange movements with his rear end. I potted up a new plant and put him on it but there was no change. I got up about 1.00am to check him and he was beavering away burying himself in the soft compost!!! 😱😱 This morning he was still trying to complete the job. I am beginning to think that this was just the beginning of a bizarre pupation process as I initially thought. All the compost I use is very loose and soft so I would not have thought so much effort would be needed. I shall keep watching carefully:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 14-Jul-20 10:23 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I hope it's okay and it manages to Pupate, one thing for sure your certainly learning a lot from this experience 😊

I've not had much time to check all the posts, it's a case of quickly on and quickly off at present 😊

We went to Recolover yesterday but it was too hot, the vegetation there was mostly dried up, the Butterflies seen were mostly White so I didn't bother too much taking shots, the hight light was a large Bacon Sandwich sat out under an umbrella in the Sun. 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jul-20 07:08 PM GMT

Isn't that where LTB were seen Goldie?

Goldie M wrote:

one thing for sure your certainly learning a lot from this experience

Do you think it's a gender thing Goldie? The first one just got on with it without any fuss and this one is making such a song and dance about it! Perhaps a male and female? 😊😊

Yesterday I had 30 mins to spare so I went in search of PH eggs to try to monitor them (yet again) in the wild. I only found 2 but I came across this very colourful larva which I believe is a Grey Dagger. I am not sure which instar but quite a size:



Re: Pauline

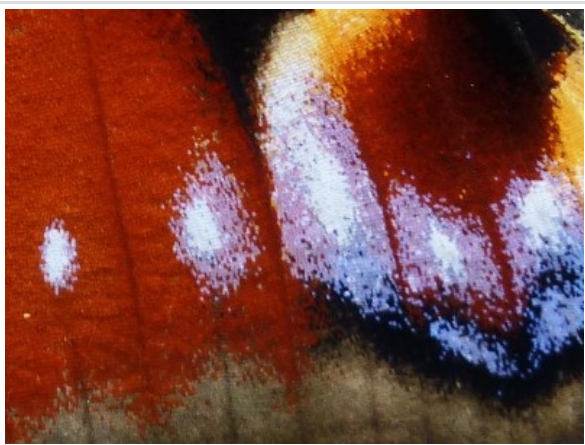
by Pauline, 15-Jul-20 04:12 PM GMT

I decided to take advantage of the weather to see how the Chalkhill Blues were progressing. It was very heavy and humid – dark skies threatening a downpour which never came. The lack of sun definitely slowed them down but the warmth encouraged them to open their wings in the hope of better things to come. There weren't many – probably about 4–5 males and no females that I could find.





An exquisite, almost immaculate, Peacock begged to have a photo taken so how could I resist:



and this Gatekeeper appears to have a single pollenium still attached to his proboscis preventing it from fully retracting:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 15-Jul-20 08:05 PM GMT

"Are you kidding Wurzel?" Nope I love the way that it will remind me of a cracking summer afternoon 😊
Great close ups of the Chalkhills and Hedge Brown 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 16-Jul-20 11:37 AM GMT

Amazing how two larvae of the same species can behave so differently. I look forward to seeing how this latest episode concludes!

Beautiful Chalkhills. Looks like the lighting was near perfect which is often the case with cloud cover. I see this regularly on the continent; the temperature is warm but the sun is behind clouds, meaning that the butterflies sit nicely with wings fully open. It's a godsend for photographers.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 16-Jul-20 04:14 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline lovely shots of the ChalkHills, I'm hoping to get some shots at LTE.

No Pauline, I think the Long Tailed Blues are mostly at Kingsland, (i think that's the name) the other side of Sandwich, I could wrong though.

Must be Male Pauline!!! 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jul-20 11:46 AM GMT

Well in that case Wurzel, thank you very much. I shall have to experiment with different styles for sure.

Thank you M. – definitely male 😊😊

I think there has to be something amiss David. His rear end is still protruding from the compost and still moving from side to side. In the meantime I have had a second pupate quietly overnight so I missed that transition:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jul-20 12:44 PM GMT

With a house full of men (electrician, carpenters, heating engineer) over the last few days, the only way for me to maintain any sort of social distancing was to go and sit in the garden with a moth book (and yes Neil, your shots are easily just as good as the ones in this book). I had forgotten how many wonderful moths there were, most of which I shall never see and many of which I would never be able to identify especially given the huge variety even within species. Many already know that I struggle with even the simple ones. Nevertheless, I thought I would give the moth trap another try last night. There must have been hundreds of moths in there this morning, especially the tiny ones. Sadly, there were also about a dozen hornets and the bottom of the trap was littered with wings and bodies 😞



Huge numbers of moths flew away before I could get any sort of photo including some that I liked enough to try to identify. One was Mother of Pearl, a real beauty, very feminine looking, whilst an Oak Hook Tip was an interesting shape and the exact colour of wood. There were 3 species of Footman and I believe they were Rosy, Dingy and Scarce. I think one might have been a Ruby Tiger – is that even likely? A rich brown colour with a furry mantle.

Anyway, on to a few that I did manage to photograph – a mixture of old favourites and a couple new.



Buff Tip - I'd be really embarrassed if I got this one wrong!



Buff Ermine



Lesser (?) Swallow Prominent

This one has to be my favourite just because of the sheer elegance of it - so streamlined and very architectural looking. It deserves a couple of shots:



Pale Prominent



Black Arches I believe?



Another guess at Peppered moth



Really wanted a shot of this Sallow Kitten but it wouldn't stay still



True Lovers Knot – about a dozen of these.



No time to identify the last 3 as have to go make more teas/coffee.

Re: Pauline

by meiga, 17-Jul-20 02:51 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

The hornets are a pain. I used to get them at the previous place but not had one here.

I.d.'s my guestimates.

Top may be Mottled Beauty

Middle.. Too worn

Bottom Rhyacionia pinicolana

I had a couple of Jersey Tiger moths here last night. Get them every other time I trap.

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jul-20 07:16 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Good to see the moth trap has been out.

I don't get hornets in my trap fortunately...but then again I don't get Buff-tips either 🍷 😊

I agree with Lesser Swallow Prominent.

Your description of Ruby tiger sounds about right.

I would go for Willow Beauty for your worn one...I think I can just make out the conjoined cross lines.

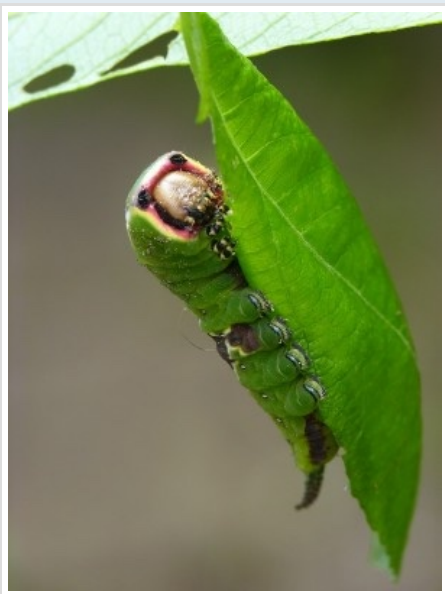
Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jul-20 09:25 PM GMT

Thank you Maurice, Neil for your ID's. I really appreciate that. You may remember a year ago I reared a Puss moth larva:



It seemed to be taking so long to emerge from the pupal casing I was getting worried. It seemed to be rattling around inside and I wondered if it had got too dry and died. It took some effort but I managed to get the pupa out of its 'construction'. It wasn't easy. No wonder they use formic acid to cut it open. Thankfully it was still wriggling so I took a shot of it beside the Pine Hawk moth pupa to compare (the puss moth is the smallest):



I had it in a cage with the Dukes and tonight when I went to check on them I realised I must have just missed the emergence:





Worth waiting for 😊

Re: Pauline

by Chris L, 17-Jul-20 10:03 PM GMT

Having been away for a few weeks Pauline I had to catch up your thread. That was a real roller-coaster of a ride starting as I did with that Devon Wildlife post and the links through to some serious unpleasantness.

Then I went through pink grasshoppers, tortoises, turtle doves, trapped hedgehogs, ladybird flies, adders, the challenges of Duke rearing. That really has been a very enjoyable last ½ an hour. Thank you.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Jul-20 02:56 PM GMT

My pleasure Otep. I try to keep things fresh and interesting- even if it means going off topic once in a while 😊

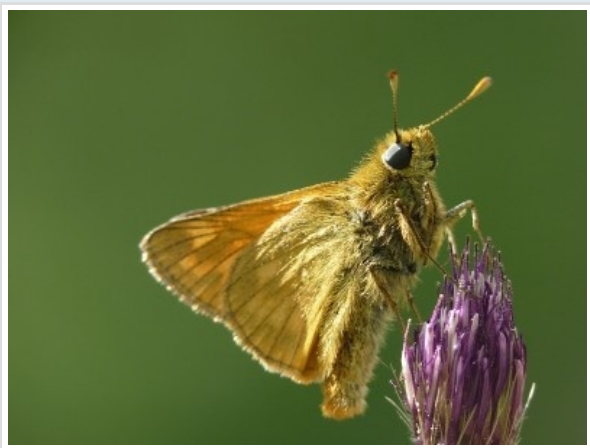
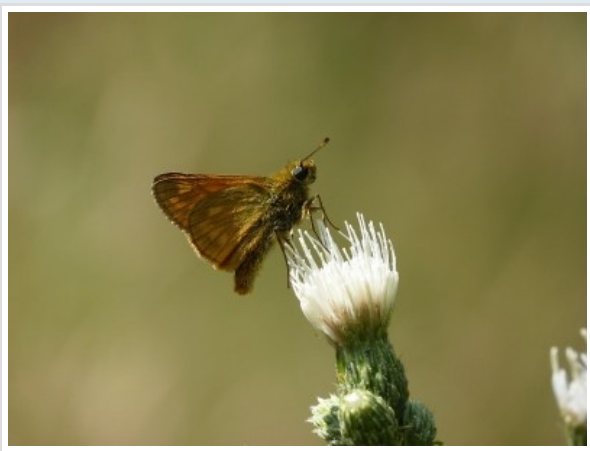
Seeing as it was Friday yesterday, all the tradesmen packed up early and went off to play golf. That was my cue to grab my camera and get out away from the kettle! A late afternoon walk on Noar Hill was lovely and as before it was teeming with butterflies. There must have been at least 60 Peacocks, possibly more, as everywhere I looked this was the view:



They have even recruited them to publicise the reserve:



Having spent much of the season struggling to find a butterfly to photograph it was now difficult to know where to point the camera:





As I was leaving, far in the distance I saw 3 guys heading towards the reserve. One had a huge pole and another carried a bag. Oh, no, I thought – not again, not here 😞. Thankfully, as they came closer they looked more like a film crew. I just had to ask them what they were up to. Apparently, they do a series of podcasts called Living Beeing (worth a look). They had a queen in a container (called a comet I believe) and they had located some drones on Noar Hill who would swarm around once they could smell the queen (guess a bit like lures for moths). Anyway, it all sounded very interesting – did you know that to create a pound of honey a colony of honey bees must visit 2 million flowers?

Re: Pauline

by Chris L, 18-Jul-20 03:23 PM GMT

I love the fact that your life seems to be 24/7 wildlife and your appreciation of it. I didn't know that honey bee fact and it fried my brain thinking about it and how it was calculated.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jul-20 07:49 PM GMT

[quote=Otep_post_id=156273_time=1595082192_user_id=19316] I love the fact that your life seems to be 24/7 wildlife

I wish! Would it disappoint you Otep to know that I have just as much mundane stuff to deal with as everyone else? If you stay around long enough you will see that I 'bow out' each winter to paint gates, fences, undertake repairs and maintenance, gardening etc etc. However, I do try to squeeze in as much as I can and give everything 100%. I am pretty shattered tonight having sat around doing nothing for most of the weekend except wait to see one of the Dukes pupate 😊 I saw one pupate a few nights ago but it was pitch black and I couldn't get any shots. It was over in about 3 minutes as the larva writhed around violently shaking off his skin. This time it was a much more sedate affair lasting all of 14 minutes which just shows how inconsistent behaviour is between individuals. Just because you have seen something happen once doesn't mean that it will always happen in the same way. Anyway, here's the results. The larva lies like this for about 3 days (very vulnerable) to all intents and purposes dead except for the odd muscle contraction if an insect lands on it:



For a couple of hours before pupation, increasingly strong muscle contractions can be detected at varying intervals before the main event:









Just one more transition to record now – but not for a while.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jul-20 01:50 PM GMT

A few shots from the garden over the weekend. I discovered a Comma has been laying on my little Elm so it will be interesting watching these 1st Instars grow:

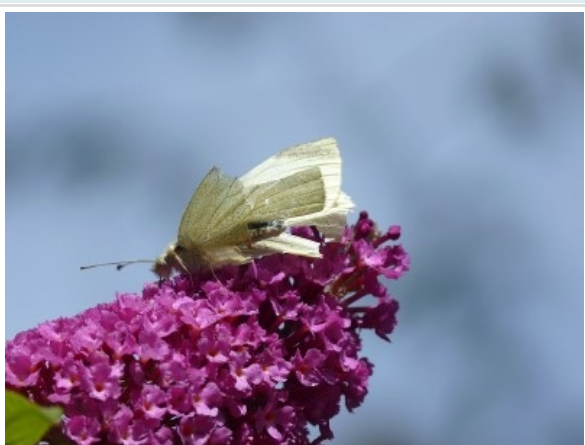


Small Whites are egg laying all over but I am not sure I shall be doing an egg count!





Sadly, one hadn't fared too well. I found it in the grass - a bit short on wings and unable to fly. During the course of the day I put it on various nectar sources which it seemed to enjoy:



The Grey Dagger which I borrowed from a friend's garden now seems to be in final instar:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jul-20 02:03 PM GMT

Have just been watching masses of Chalkhill Blues. Bumped into Roy S who had counted over 100 on this small site but out of all of these I could only find 3 females all in cop. Newly emerged butterflies were being pounced on by the males before their wings were dry – and not just the females. Time and again I watched as males tried to mate with males. It was all very frenetic and not something I have noticed before. Is this common behaviour that I have just previously overlooked? or not been in the right place at the right time?





Gosh! Haven't I got hairy arms 😊 They don't look that bad in 'real life' - honest! 😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 20-Jul-20 05:14 PM GMT

I've seen Chalkhill Blues behaving as you describe, Pauline, with males leaping upon other (freshly emerged) males. I posted a video of this once, but I don't know if it's still here anywhere. I think it's to do with the pheromones released when the new butterflies emerge – the chemicals from new males must resemble those from new females, thereby causing confusion. I've seen this with Common Blues as well, but not to the extent that I've seen it with Chalkhills.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jul-20 07:41 AM GMT

I must have missed your video Dave but that was the conclusion I had come to. The pheromones also seemed to be having an effect on other species in the location as at one point these Whites had this newly emerged male pinned to the ground and pursued him relentlessly:

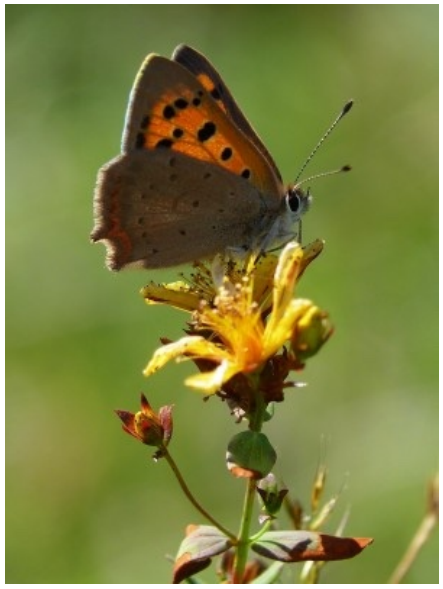


The first time this type of behaviour came to my attention was in 2012 when a DGF became very excited at a mating pair of Meadow Brown and seemed intent either on separating them or joining in. I could never decide which!

**Re: Pauline**

by Pauline, 21-Jul-20 06:51 PM GMT

I like to have a plan in mind when I go out with my camera but sometimes you just have to go with whatever is there. Today it was a Small Copper that kept me company for a while:





It is quite a while since I have seen so many butterflies at Noar Hill. Peacocks for sure, but probably as many Whites and a huge number of Gatekeepers who caused my heart to beat fast more than once, and a whole host of others:



but the best I could do with DGF from about half a mile away was 😊



Some of the Ash isn't in great condition here (Ash die back) which just adds to my concerns for the BH:



As I was meandering back to the car I stopped to take a shot in both directions:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 21-Jul-20 08:26 PM GMT

Cracking set of posts recently Pauline 😊 The stand out butterfly for me though has to be the second shot down from your Chalkhill post – the female, a blinder of a shot and the markings on her – sublime 😊👍🌿

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 22-Jul-20 07:52 PM GMT

It's a great time of the year, isn't it Pauline? Lots of stuff about, lots of things to see...

That grassy ride looks just fabulous. Good luck with the Brown Hairstreaks; they are out because I've seen one today.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jul-20 04:55 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – with time running out I'm trying to squeeze in as much as possible.

It's lovely David but also the time when I start to take stock. Today I have mixed feelings.

Plans for yesterday changed at short notice when I received an email to inform me that there was a Clouded Yellow on Noar Hill. It was not difficult to find but trying to pin it down (bad choice of words 😊) was another matter. The closest I got to anything yellow was this:



Whilst waiting for it to re-appear (which it did several times) I spent some enjoyable time looking at other stuff:





I decided to give it another try today and sure enough, same place, same time but it was still zooming round without stopping. At this rate it will be so worn before I get a photo it won't be worth it! (just like that DGF above 😊). I did find a very nice moth tho' – no surprise that I can't identify it but the best I can come up with is *Celypha lacunana*?



Back home in the garden I noticed my roses are being decimated by these creatures. Presumably some sort of Sawfly? Should they be left or disposed of?



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-20 06:49 PM GMT

I know what you mean about the Cloudy Pauline I had one at Shipton that was exactly the same – mind you most things seem more flighty this year 😊 – it's been hard work at times 😊😊 I reckon your moth is a Dusky Sallow (*Eremobia ochroleuca*) 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 23-Jul-20 08:00 PM GMT

I missed you at Noar Hill today somehow, Pauline! 😊 I arrived at nine and left around half one I think. I did see the Clouded Yellow – if it was the same one, it was a female with a damaged hindwing. I'm pretty sure it was laying on the trefoil plants so there could be some local ones appear in early September. (I have a shot of that very same moth, too! 😊)

A great shame not to have seen you. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 24-Jul-20 09:06 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, any thing that may damage Roses is a get rid of 😊 I spray mine with some Fairy Liquid and water it doesn't always kill them but they don't stay a round for long 😊 Off back home on Sunday 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 24-Jul-20 02:20 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, your rose-eaters are Large Rose sawflies https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arge_pagana . I will let you decide how to deal with them.

Brilliant effort on getting the Duke pupation sequence. I will be adding it to the album soon, but am a bit behind at the moment.

Vince

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jul-20 10:54 AM GMT

Thank you for that ID Wurzel – much appreciated 😊

Hi Dave – reckon the reason you didn't see me was because I didn't get there until after 2.30pm and I was gone before 4pm. Perhaps it was just as well as you are always so well groomed and I usually look like I've been dragged through a hedge backwards! My paint stained jeans are now disintegrating into rags (but I'm told ripped knees are fashionable! 😊). Seriously, wish you'd told me you were planning to be there and I'd have put the kettle on (had loads of practice at that recently 😊). I think there may be 2 Clouded Yellows there as I am pretty sure the one I have seen 2 days running was an immaculate male. Looking forward to seeing your moth.

I'm afraid I have taken your advice M. Have a safe trip back and I'll give you a call soon to catch up.

I'm so pleased you liked the pupation sequence Vince – not something I'll ever do again. It has been a fascinating and educational experience but not always enjoyable to wait for hours and hours. Don't know where you get all your patience from – massive respect.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jul-20 11:06 AM GMT

A visit to Oxenbourne at the end of the week left me feeling frustrated and disappointed. For more years than I care to recall I have been moaning about the lack of management of this site and the shrinking colony of SSS hanging on by a thread. About 3 years ago I contacted the appropriate authority who informed me that there was a 3 year plan to clear the site and gave me an outline of what that would involve, starting with some clearance by hand before bringing in some machinery. I am not sure when the 3 year plan is due to begin but there are places now that I used to stroll around that are totally inaccessible to people, let alone butterflies. Perhaps it was a little early for the SSS although in the last 4 years I have seen them between 20 - 27 July but I was unable to locate any. Strangely, when looking at SSS there are usually masses of Small Skippers egg-laying all over the site but today I could only find one:



I spent a little time watching the Common Blues egg lay including a lovely blue female who produced this egg:



Each year I wonder if I have perhaps seen the last of the SSS at this site 😞

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 25-Jul-20 04:54 PM GMT

"Thank you for that ID Wurzel - much appreciated 😊" No worries - luckily I've gotten shots of one before so I've had to identify it before otherwise I'd have not had a clue 😊

Sorry to hear about the SSS site - it's gut wrenching when a site stops 'producing' though mis-management 😞 I fear the Small Pearls at Bentley Wood are going the same way 😞

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 26-Jul-20 12:08 AM GMT

Doesn't sound as though there's much enthusiasm for that SSS colony, Pauline, sadly. Is it worth contacting Butterfly Conservation HQ (or the relevant local branch)?

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jul-20 08:40 AM GMT

[quote=Wurzel_post_id=156492_time=1595526577_user_id=9821] ...I reckon your moth is a Dusky Sallow...

Hi Pauline,

I reckon Wurzels right.
Celypha lacunana is a micro, much smaller.

A shame to hear about your site at Oxenbourne. Unfortunately we have some sites up here that are supposed to be managed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust that are becoming overgrown and scrubbed up. Some of it may be down to covid 19 but a lack of management was evident before then.

Cheers,

Neil.

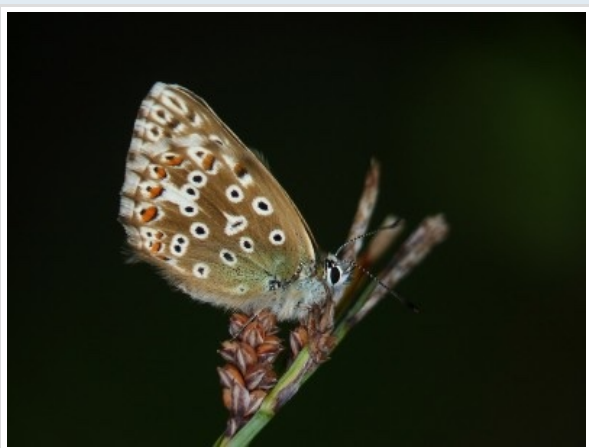
Re: Pauline

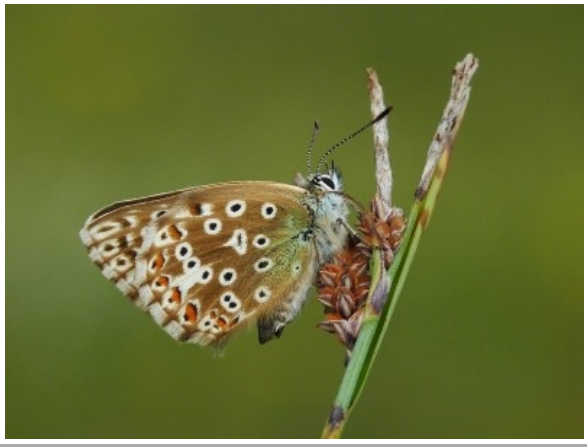
by Pauline, 26-Jul-20 05:21 PM GMT

Thank you guys for your commiserations. I wasn't able to get out until mid afternoon by which time the skies were dark, a little drizzle but such fierce winds. The journey down the A3 wasn't helped by what looked like a serious accident between a car and motor cycle which was still being cleared up on my return. Still no sign of any SSS at Oxenbourne but given the weather a surprising number of other species were on the wing. I watched a lovely Meadow Brown lay a few eggs, reluctant to disturb her – but this is one of her eggs:



I noticed a few very fresh female Chalkhills and if the weather had relented just a little I could have got some nice shots:





Back home I discovered a larva in the garage on a mission to pupate. I have had these before but for the life of me I can't remember what moth it is. Don't tell me - I shall look this one up 😊



Lastly, a couple from yesterday's visit to Noar Hill:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 26-Jul-20 08:58 PM GMT

You should thank your lucky stars you don't live near me, Pauline!

A weather forecast predicting sunny intervals all day turned out being frequent heavy showers and gale force winds. 😞

The female Meadow Brown I saw flying round my patio must have had a death wish!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Jul-20 12:38 PM GMT

David M wrote:

You should thank your lucky stars you don't live near me, Pauline!

Right back at you David 😊. The weather here is foul today so I thought it was about time for one of my mini summaries. I have chosen the Duke rearing as the shots I have previously posted have been very fragmented so I thought I would pull it all together a little and add a few initial thoughts on what I have learned:

Duke of Burgundy - eggs hatching



Duke of Burgundy - First Instar



Duke of Burgundy - Second Instar



Duke of Burgundy - Third Instar



Duke of Burgundy - Fourth Instar



Duke of Burgundy Pupation



Behaviour



Rearing the Duke of Burgundy has been a fascinating and insightful experience. It has been a challenge recording every individual transition but I wanted to get a complete and detailed understanding of the lives of these insects.

1. Eating shed skin but only in first instar.

It would seem that this is the first time that this has ever been recorded. I photographed this occurrence several times to ensure that it wasn't just a one-off.

2. Colour changes prior to shedding skin

I was initially alarmed at the dramatic colour changes of each instar as they prepared to shed their skin but they were very consistent in that the colour drained from them for 3 days prior to the event leaving them looking very pallid. The day before a remarkable colour change came about as they turned an almost jet black. At this point the shedding of skin would happen within hours.

3. Length of time for transition from one instar to the next

Given that this took between 3–4 days (mostly 4 days) I have to wonder if the colour change and transition time is linked. The larva is obviously very

vulnerable during these 3–4 days lying quite torpid on the underside of a leaf or stem of the food plant. The first time I witnessed this I thought that the larva had died. It looked dead – black and shrivelled. Likewise, when white it looked very insipid. I believe that this may be a survival mechanism to avoid predation whilst spending such a long period of time in this state. Over the life cycle of an immature stage that accounts for approximately 16 days or about 25%.

4. Difference in development times of individuals in identical conditions

Even allowing for the difference in timings of when the eggs were laid it was clear from the beginning that even as early as 1st instar the development of some individuals was much faster than others despite being kept in identical conditions. This difference appeared to widen as development progressed through the instars and I am still waiting for the last larva to pupate (although that looks imminent). Like the transition from one instar to the next, the 4th instar settles down close to the plant for about 3 days before actually pupating.

5. Behavioural changes between early and late instars

a. Mobility

In 1st and 2nd instar the larva do not stray far, mostly staying on the same leaf as where they hatched from the egg. This is also apparent in the wild, these being the easiest instars to track for that very reason. It is easy to locate them in the wild as at this stage they pepper the leaf with little holes where they have fed. They also seem unconcerned by gentle interference and monitoring. Conversely, 3rd and 4th instar roam much wider and their increased appetites leave their leaf in a skeleton form in very few hours. This increase in food intake may explain their increased mobility.

b. Camouflage

Their inclination to roam is not the only factor which causes difficulty in tracking and monitoring. Like many insects they become masters of camouflage and the slightest interference causes them to fall to the ground, similar to many other species. For the first time ever this year I have been able to find 3rd and 4th instars in the wild and this is wholly as a result of the rearing experience.

Conclusion

These are my initial thoughts. It has been an educational experience rearing these Dukes over the last 10 weeks or so and one I won't forget. At times it has been enjoyable but there have been times when it has been mind-numbingly boring, when hours, if not days, have been spent just watching and waiting for whatever was going to come next. It is a great relief that to date it has been successful and I am very much looking forward to the Spring when (fingers crossed) the Dukes can be returned to Noar Hill.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 27-Jul-20 10:26 PM GMT

That's exceptionally interesting information, Pauline. Most of what you've penned is new to me, and I suspect some of it is new to everyone.

All embellished with a seductive series of mosaics that would do justice to any book. You have been admirably conscientious and resolute during this episode, and I pray that you will be able to see this through to a natural conclusion.

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 28-Jul-20 09:10 AM GMT

Fascinating stuff, Pauline. All that needs is the final chapter of the story – fingers crossed for a successful conclusion to this incredible tale. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jul-20 03:16 PM GMT

A very generous comment David. You know how challenging it has been at times. Thank you.

Cheers Dave – I'm feeling quite positive having got to this stage but I hope I don't live to regret saying that!

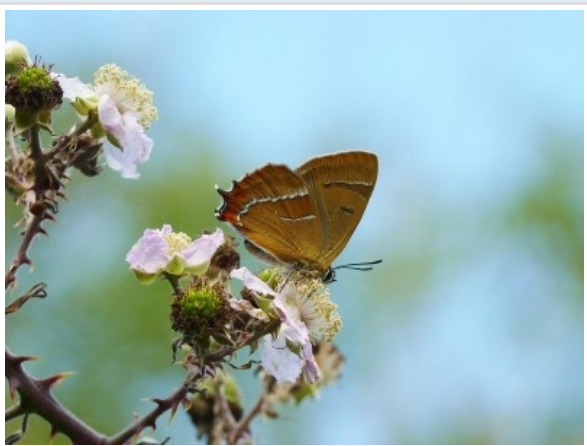
I think my concerns about the Brown Hairstreak at Noar Hill may have been a bit premature. Today in a couple of hours I saw a minimum of 6 – may have been a few more. Given all the Blackthorn that has been cut down I thought I would try a little area that has been kind to me in the past. At one point there were 3 on the same branch but as I took the shot one flew up to join 2 fighting overhead:



A few were very fresh but a couple had obviously been out a few days. I took a great many photos so I will just post a selection below:







I even managed to catch up with Dave's female Clouded Yellow which wasn't difficult as it was a little compromised by the rear wing. It still looked like it was egg-laying although I couldn't find any eggs. Definitely a different butterfly to the one I saw 2 days running:



Re: Pauline

by trevor, 28-Jul-20 05:51 PM GMT

Cracking Brown Hairstreaks, Pauline. All males by the look of them. Hopefully 2020 will be a great year for them, 2019 was terrible.

Well found!
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-20 08:16 PM GMT

Cracking set of Brostreaks Pauline 😊😎 No need for a trip to Shipton now then 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 29-Jul-20 01:20 PM GMT

Great to see, Pauline. I know you were concerned about their populations.

Nice reward for the less palatable things you've been doing lately.

Hopefully the females will put on a good show soon.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jul-20 03:58 PM GMT

Definitely all males Trevor. I'm right there with you hoping for a good year. Pleased you like the pics 😊

Cheers Wurzel – I do like Shipton just as a site (especially if the pub is open?) so you never know. I could be very tempted if you were to post more BH in your diary 😊

It's years since I've been surrounded by them like that David so yes, I hope the females will put on a good show too but more importantly, do a good job of egg-laying. Hoping I might be equally delighted I visited Oxenbourne today for the SSS. In all honesty I didn't really expect to see any. My sightings in recent years have been in single figures. 3 volunteer rangers were on site counting butterflies so I took the opportunity to express my concerns and update them on the background. They have promised to email the head ranger and copy me in – apparently they, too, have been expressing the same concern for years. They couldn't find any SSS but after they had left I managed to locate 3 (2M, 1F). I really hope there is more to come:



Chalkhill males still greatly outnumber the females. I 'rescued' this little lady who was still trying to dry her wings with 3 males competing for her. Hopefully she will be a bit less fragile when they return:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 29-Jul-20 07:20 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, back home now, 😊 Just love those BHS shots 📷📷 and you got a Clouded Yellow 😊 Just think if I move South, (what a time we'll have) you can educate me has well in how to find eggs etc 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 29-Jul-20 10:15 PM GMT

Good to see the Brown Hairstreaks have appeared at Noar Hill, Pauline – and in numbers too by the look of things. Also good to see them low down and accessible too. Some great shots there – hopefully the first of many more. I may have to come and have a look, as I've never had much luck with the species there in the past. 😊 Interesting that the rather identifiable Clouded Yellow is still there on her egg-laying mission – let's hope a good number work their way through to adulthood before the autumn. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-Jul-20 07:01 PM GMT

Thank you M. Pleased you had such a lovely time. I think a move down South sounds like a great idea 😊

Cheers Dave – if you'd like some help searching do let me know. On the other hand, if you'd rather I wasn't there then choose Wed or Thurs as I have other commitments 😊😊

A few random shots from recent visits to Noar Hill. First up, a 2nd brood Dingy Skipper flying alongside what I assume to be the earlier brood? Looks quite worn and tattered:



Nearly stood on these 2 but thankfully they flew up onto this branch:



and just a couple more.



The diversity and numbers of butterflies at Noar Hill is better than I have seen for many years. Mind you, the site is looking splendid and I have heard more than a couple of visitors complimenting the rangers on how stunning it looks – 'awesome', I think was the term used.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 30-Jul-20 08:50 PM GMT

Cracking Dingy Skippers Pauline 😊 There seems to be a cracking second brood this year – not just the one or two you occasionally get 😊 Shipton was really good today at least 9 males and 1 female (Dave got a second female too) 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 31-Jul-20 02:40 PM GMT

Thanks for the report on Shipton Wurzel – having just read Trevor's report it's good to know Shipton is doing OK.

Today is just way too hot to go out so a brief report on garden stuff. Today in the garden I have seen Large White, Small White, Brimstone (several), Gatekeeper (a handful) Meadow Brown (singleton) Red Admiral (permanent fixture I think; likes the pink table I painted earlier this year), Peacock, Holly Blue and a couple of Small Skippers including this one which was egg-laying in between seeking shade:



Not a great shot but the breeze is remarkably strong – has just taken the canopy off my garden furniture!



The Comma larva are growing fast and have just shed their skins:





Re: Pauline

by millerd, 31-Jul-20 04:07 PM GMT

I hate to say it, Pauline, but I don't think that's a Comma caterpillar. I've just had a look at the relevant bits of Pete's book (pp. 262/3) and it's not the same as the photos of any of the instars. I think it must be a moth, but I couldn't tell you which one! 😊 It will be interesting finding out of course.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 31-Jul-20 04:22 PM GMT

Doing some research, the closest match I can find is the Grey Dagger moth.
<http://www.wildlifeinsight.com/british-moths/the-grey-dagger-moth-acronicta-psi/>
Someone out there will know for certain I'm sure!

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 31-Jul-20 05:16 PM GMT

The most embarrassing thing about this Dave is that I have just reared a Grey Dagger (page 204) which is now pupating! 😊😊😊 I'll just get the excuses in first 😊 I didn't actually rear the Grey Dagger from 1st instar and I DID look at Vince's 1st instar Commas on this site which I think look very similar to the shots I posted (also Page 204). Added to this a Comma had spent time around that Elm and had laid on it before. Of course at this stage it looks nothing like a Comma but once I had that in my headJust as well there are some sharp eyed folk like yourself out there. Were you not tempted just to wait to see how long it would be before I noticed? 😊😊 Probably when it emerged!!! 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 31-Jul-20 08:57 PM GMT

I can see what you mean about how that tiny little caterpillar looked at the start, Pauline. It would have been cruel not to tell you, though, and let you wait till it pupated into something very un-Comma like! 😊 Still, it's quite an attractive little chap! Commas don't seem to be that fussy about what they lay on - near me, I've found their caterpillars on nettles, hop and shrubby elms in hedges with no particular preference for one over the others. They seem to do pretty well.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Aug-20 09:25 PM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=156786 time=1596225447 user_id=9839] It would have been cruel not to tell you

No worries Dave - having reared Commas a couple of times I think I might have realised sooner rather than later 😊 . I had a good laugh about it though. Moving swiftly on, I have had quite an exciting day - a Painted Lady has been egg-laying all over my aubretia in the garden. I only got the one

shot below:



Re: Pauline

by kevlng, 02-Aug-20 01:00 PM GMT

Lovely Dingies Pauline and I like the Gatekeepers in cop too. Nice that you have had luck with Painted Lady eggs too.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Aug-20 02:34 PM GMT

Hi Kev – good to hear from you. I'm pleased you liked the 2nd brood Dingy Skippers (I'm afraid the Painted Lady was a little joke with Dave – I have had them in the garden before but they have not yet laid eggs here).

A quick update on the Oxenbourne site and SSS (mostly for any locals reading this) – true to their word, QECP emailed me about site maintenance but their response was a bit ambiguous. I asked for clarification and the gist of it seemed to be that it was all down to resources and priorities and although they were aware of the situation they couldn't at the present time commit to any plan/timescale. I have to say that response was not unexpected but did not fill me with joy. I decided to have another quick look today to see if numbers had increased in the last week. Lo and behold, who should be there but the head ranger and 5 others checking out the situation for themselves, the outcome being that I have now been advised that work will start on that area this October. I'm keeping fingers crossed! I was also pleased to see numbers had doubled – 2 females now and 4–5 males (photos below).

I shall start with my favourite shot of the day. Whilst I was at Oxenbourne I thought I would check on the Common Blue and Meadow Brown eggs. I couldn't find the latter but was delighted to see the Common Blue had just hatched and the larva was still by the egg. First time I have seen this in the wild:



and the rest:



Thought I was about to witness a pairing but they flew off and I lost them:





and Chalkhills like blue confetti 😊



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-20 07:34 PM GMT

Cracking set of Silver Spots Pauline 😊 Hopefully the situation at Oxenbourne will improve now the 'Big Guns' have shown up 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Aug-20 07:00 AM GMT

It is nice to think I might have made some little difference Wurzel 😊

A few 'non-hairstreak' shots from yesterday's visit to Noar Hill:



The second brood Dingy Skippers seem to be doing well with several fresh specimens seen:





At home a Gatekeeper was egg laying in the garden. I managed to find one of her eggs but when I realised how poor this shot was I went back to try to relocate it. I couldn't! 😞



That brings the total of species egg-laying in the garden this year to 7 that I know of 😊

Re: Pauline

by keving, 04-Aug-20 05:00 PM GMT

Pauline, Beautiful selection of Silver Spotted Skippers, particularly on the yellow flower head. Well done with the freshly hatched Common Blue larva. I rare treat indeed.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-20 10:07 PM GMT

Greta second brood Dingies Pauline 😊 There have been quite a few of them about this year 😊 and they're getting more regular year on year 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 05-Aug-20 04:40 PM GMT

Always gives me a bit of a shock to see images of Dingies posted in August, Pauline! Don't know why really; they are regularly second brooded.

Lovely shots of the Silver Spotted Skippers too. I've been surrounded by these during the last few days but haven't managed to get any photos anywhere near as good as yours.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 06-Aug-20 12:43 PM GMT

Great shots of the SSSkippers Pauline, they behaved perfectly for you 😊 I'm getting going with Valuations 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Aug-20 03:21 PM GMT

Thank you Kev. I shall be going back to try to monitor the progress of that little Common Blue larva but so many get predated I intend to monitor a few Purple Hairstreak eggs in the wild and as I was passing the area on Wednesday I thought I would stop off and check on them. I didn't realise until I looked at my shots that a spider is showing an unhealthy interest in one of them:



Thankfully the others still looked OK:



Cheers Wurzel – SB is becoming more tempting by the day!

Welcome back David – I'm pleased the SSS have managed to hang on at that site for another year

Thank you M. – that's great news 😊

Early at Noar Hill I saw at least 4 BH flying around. One came down briefly but mostly they were really, really high. There IS one in this shot but I really wouldn't bother looking for it if I were you or you may end up as frustrated as I was:



The usual selection of butterflies were on the wing including a lovely GWV which have been in short supply this season on my patch and a few Small Tortoiseshells which were a pleasure to see:





Back in the garden 3 female Brimstones were nectaring on the Everlasting Pea but still no 2nd brood eggs on the Alder Buckthorn:



An elderly Large Skipper was taking a break on one of the Strawberry trees (at least I think that is what they are) and Gatekeepers continued their search for suitable places to egg lay. A Holly Blue taunted me by landing for only a second at a time for over 30 mins so I have given up on him now – it is just too hot:



Some might remember that last year my roses provided nesting material for what turned out to be leaf cutter bees. I really wanted to see them in action so I was delighted to see them return this year – dozens of them on a purple flower which I have now discovered is Purple Toadflax; a weed, but what a lovely one. I carefully watched the roses which were left unmolested but I couldn't see where the bees were going. Looks like it was over to my wild strawberry patch! Looks like I shall have to wait until next year now:



As most of you know I am pretty useless on plant ID's (well, ID's in general really 😊). There is another attractive plant growing around my bird tables, presumably from one of the seeds. Any ideas?



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 07-Aug-20 03:37 PM GMT

Looks like a member of the Cannabis genus to me Pauline though which of the three species it is I'm not sure – probably sativa– just keep an eye out for the Rozzers 😊

Have a goodun and stay stay

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 07-Aug-20 04:16 PM GMT

It does look like a Cannabis (sp;) Pauline , maybe a fertile Hemp seed in your bird feed mix ,although i was once told that seed used for bird seed /Angling purposes is treated somehow ,to stop germination ,although being an angler (lapsed)myself ,when they are soaked for fishing purposes they sprout quite easily. Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Aug-20 10:18 AM GMT

Blimey Wurzel! I thought you were having me on until I saw Allan's reply 😊 I was like 'nah! they wouldn't put that in birdseed!' I've now had a chance to read about it – before I compost them I must check to see if I have male or female plants 😊😊

Thank you for confirmation of Cannabis Allan. I must have led a really sheltered life 😊 You've got to laugh tho' – who would have thought!

Actually, just thinking about it, I think it might have been Neil F. who asked if my demented squirrel had access to any strange substances! Well, he certainly eats the birdseed and was chewing these plants along with my acers and delphiniums! Would certainly explain the sort of behaviour I have never seen before eg rolling around on the grass on his back! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 08-Aug-20 02:34 PM GMT

A year or two back ,a botanist acquaintance found a Cannabis plant ,growing alongside a narrow Marshland back road ,and funnily

enough he was inundated with requests from people who,d like to see it ! Needless to sayhe kept quiet .
Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by MrSpOck, 08-Aug-20 04:13 PM GMT

Ive seen it growing in infant schools around the bird tables, its in all the birdseed mixes, they say its been treated to protect themselves of course.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Aug-20 07:10 PM GMT

This is certainly something I am not going to forget Allan. I have been feeding the birds for years and have never seen this before. I don't even know which seed it is (must look that up!). It IS an attractive plant tho' and I'm not getting any distinctive smell from it that is referred to in the literature.

Hi Martin- hope you are well. I am assuming that the schools, like me, were totally unaware!

The temperature levels yesterday (Friday) kept me in until about 6.00pm. It was still very humid, overcast and quite thundery. To be honest I would have welcomed a storm but it didn't come. Having responded to Kev about monitoring the Common Blue larva I thought I would take a quick look to see if I could re-find it. There are loads of Common Blue eggs at Oxenbourne - many of them have hatched but quite a few haven't:



I think I found the original larva - it was in the same place and about the size it should be by now but they are still incredibly difficult to spot. Next time I shall take a hand lens:



I was briefly distracted by a couple of Silver Spotted Skippers that were whizzing around but when one stopped briefly for a nectar top-up I took the opportunity for a few shots:



Many of the Chalkhill Blues are now looking worn:



.... but not all of them:





As I left about 7.00pm they were starting to settle down to roost including this Common Blue which was posing nicely:



Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 08-Aug-20 07:27 PM GMT

It looks a bit like this Pauline (from my fishing baits) ,can,t say for sure whether this is the "Dodgy" one ,but its certainly related . regards Allan.W.



Re: Pauline

by David M, 08-Aug-20 10:40 PM GMT

I think Hemp seeds are a staple ingredient of a lot of bird food mix, Pauline, so that may explain how you came to have this plant growing *chez toi*. 😊

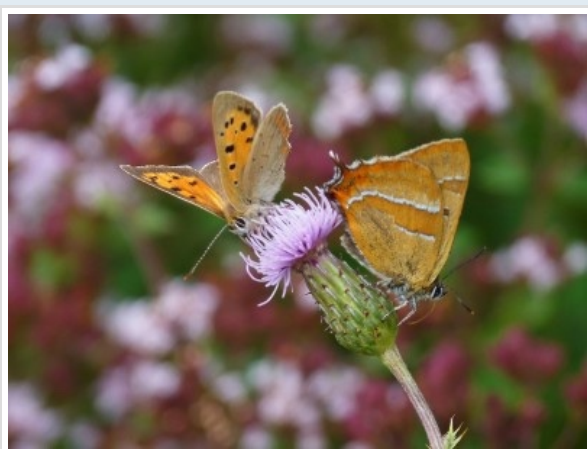
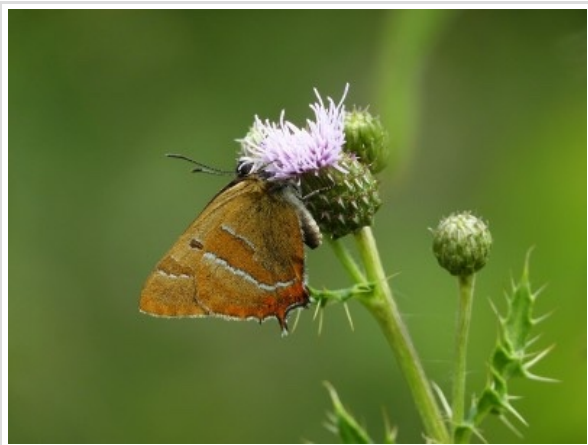
Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Aug-20 06:48 AM GMT

Thank you Allan – that's really interesting. I shall have to take a closer look at what I am feeding my birds!

Cheers David – I shall need to inform my local pet store that they are the middle man in a drugs dealing racket!! 😊🤔

I am pleased to be able to say that Noar Hill is, at last, delivering the goods. Yesterday I stopped to chat to a guy from Essex who was on his way to Arundel Castle. He had been there a while but had seen no Brown Hairstreaks. He was the only other person on site. Sadly, 5 mins after he left the action started with 4 males and 2 females down low – added to that 3 Clouded Yellow were zooming around, so fast I was only able to get a distant shot. The males are starting to look quite worn now but the females were immaculate. I watched one egg-laying and took a shot of a couple of her eggs:







Still struggling to get that full open-winged shot so still something to aim for! Not sure why it's so late here this year – or why the males seem to be avoiding the hemp agrimony in favour of just about anything else!

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 09-Aug-20 09:16 AM GMT

[quote=Pauline post_id=157025 time=1596878294 user_id=1095]

Actually, just thinking about it, I think it might have been Neil F. who asked if my demented squirrel had access to any strange substances! Well, he certainly eats the birdseed and was chewing these plants along with my acers and delphiniums! Would certainly explain the sort of behaviour I have never seen before eg rolling around on the grass on his back! 😊

😂😂😂 Although, I must admit Pauline, I always thought that cannabis made you more relaxed and chilled out, sounds like your squirrel had been on crack cocaine 😊

Cracking Brown Hairstreak photos, I particularly like the one with the Small Copper 🍷😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Aug-20 04:15 PM GMT

Hi Neil - I'm thinking of sprinkling some of that seed on my breakfast cereal. I could do with being a bit more relaxed 😊😊 Those BH (along with many other species this year I might add) are proving to be hard work (especially in this heat). They really take some searching out and today I could only find 3 males and no females. It was a bit breezy which didn't help with many shots when timing is down to a split second but I did manage a few worth posting (probably!):





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-20 08:10 PM GMT

A cracking set of images Pauline 😊 It seems like they're having a good season now that they've gotten going 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Aug-20 08:40 PM GMT

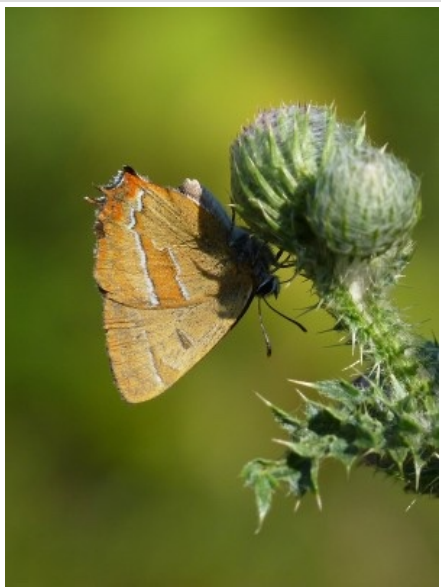
[quote=Wurzel-post_id=157144 time=1597086646 user_id=9821] It seems like they're having a good season now that they've gotten going

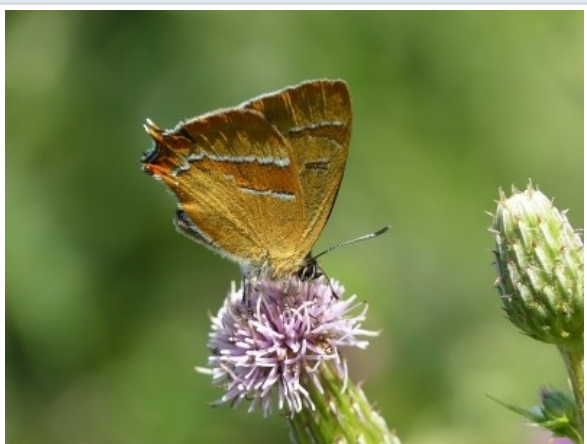
Not at all Wurzel. They're proving to be really hard work at Noar Hill this season 😞

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Aug-20 01:55 PM GMT

Another hot morning on Noar Hill and the 3-4 BH males I eventually found today are looking more worn by the day. They are not very easy to spot as they are often low down and seeking shade under some plant even whilst taking nectar. It really is hard in this heat scouring every plant for a sighting – they can be quite well hidden! I found one on that Purple plant that is all over (wild marjoram?) which is a first for me. I still haven't seen any more females so it will be interesting to have a good look round there after the predicted thunder storms when the air is a bit fresher.







Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 11-Aug-20 08:16 PM GMT

Lovely shots Pauline, 🍷 one I'm looking forward to seeing in the near future 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 12-Aug-20 07:25 AM GMT

Looks like a *betulae* fest, Pauline. 😊

Nice combo with the Small Copper. Haven't seen that before.

Hopefully there'll be more Cloudies in the autumn if numbers are picking up in the first half of August.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Aug-20 04:33 PM GMT

Cheers M. If you haven't seen one before you come down here I shall make it my personal mission to make sure you do 😊

David M wrote:

Looks like a *betulae* fest, Pauline

You wouldn't believe how hard it has been David. Hope the females (when they decide to show themselves) are not as difficult!

Well, the storm has finally arrived – and how swift. The sky darkened and before I had time to bring in the garden cushions I was being pelted with huge hailstones, a gale had sprung from nowhere and loud thunder. By the time I shut the animals away I was soaked to the skin and couldn't see with all the water and sunscreen in my eyes. Just as well I paid a brief visit to check up on my CB larva this morning. I was delighted to see that since my last visit, less than a week ago, there has been a population explosion of SSS. there must have been about 2–3 dozen and that is the most I can remember for very many years. How easy it was to get shots of them instead of trying to keep track of the odd 2 or 3. They were almost presenting themselves to be photographed. In the end I just stopped photographing them and just stood and watched them 😊 I easily saw 4 females as I was monitoring them in different locations for about 20 mins. I think they had just emerged. I'll be back shortly to watch the egg-laying.





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-20 07:33 PM GMT

Cracking set of Silver Spots Pauline – love the final shot in particular – are they just about to tuck in or is that the equivalent of a hot towel and mint? 😊

"Not at all Wurzel. They're proving to be really hard work at Noar Hill this season"...Should have gone to Shipton 😊 Sorry I couldn't resist that pop culture reference 😊 ...in my previous comment I just meant that numbers wise they seem to have picked up a little bit as earlier (much earlier) some were voicing concerns 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 12-Aug-20 08:30 PM GMT

I'm so glad your SSS appear to be thriving, Pauline. Let's hope the hailstones didn't harm them too much.

It'll be interesting to see how many female Brown Hairstreaks present themselves this year after a poor showing in 2019. I'll be checking out the

Pembrokeshire colony towards the end of the month. Last year I saw just 4 in three visits which was a record low. 🤔

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Aug-20 03:05 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – I almost feel a sense of responsibility for the future of this little colony so I am delighted at the numbers. How and why they have suddenly increased I have no idea.

I've just looked back at my diary for last year David and it was from about now until the end of the month that I saw the most female BH. I decided to have a quick look up Noar Hill between the thunderstorms. There were quite a lot of folk there and for the most part they all said the same thing – 'no, they hadn't seen anything, but the butterflies don't like it in this weather, do they?' I just smiled and nodded whilst thinking 'really?!' It was the summer of 2012 that I learned differently. The interesting things I saw today were 3 female Clouded Yellow (tho' I only managed record shots of 2 of them), an absolutely beautiful, pristine Painted Lady and 4 male Brown Hairstreaks:



The weather really hadn't slowed them down much at all hence just 'proof of sighting'.



Sadly, the 4 BH eggs that I found recently have disappeared. There were a few of these repulsive creatures on the branches where they had been. I don't know what they are but could they have eaten the eggs?



I did manage to find another one - but just the one. I wonder how long that will survive.



I was pleased to find some Ladies Autumn Tresses on the way back:



Back home, one of 'my' Brimstones (1M, 3F) was taking shelter from the storm:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Aug-20 07:29 PM GMT

Interesting to see a dozen or so SSS still active early evening, long after the Chalkhills had gone to roost. Even more interesting was watching them go to roost which for the most part seemed to be up in the trees 🤔🤔. Do they do this on other sites? I had always imagined for some reason that they would roost low down in the grass or in nooks and crannies (just an assumption not based on anything in particular). It might explain why I have been unable to find/disturb any when visiting the site really early in the morning ?



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 14-Aug-20 07:58 PM GMT

Cracking shots Pauline 😊 Interesting observations of their roosting habits which would explain why they can suddenly just appear after you've been onsite for a while 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Aug-20 11:46 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – I don't know if they roost high up elsewhere but it would be interesting to find out. On this site there are Dukes which are referred to as 'woodland Dukes' and they too roost in trees. It occurred to me that given the overgrown environment here perhaps the SSS were adapting in a similar manner?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Aug-20 05:03 PM GMT

I wish I had practised open-winged shots. If I had, I might have got some reasonable results when I saw this Small Heath recently, repeatedly flicking its wings fully open whilst nectaring. As it was, this was the best I could do 😊 :



After the event, with time to sit and think about it, I knew what I should have done 😊 I suppose I could always have tried Sports Mode! I have seen a Small Heath do this only once before a few years ago. Before it happens again, I shall make sure I am better prepared!

Slightly better (imo) are a few Small Copper shots from Noar Hill whilst searching out BH:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 16-Aug-20 07:42 PM GMT

Lovely Small Coppers Pauline 😊 Dave and I have both witnessed that behaviour before, I don't know whether it's because they've gotten something caught between the wings or whether they're a bit skittish whatever the reason it always makes me reach for Sport Mode too the trick is remembering to readjust your settings again after 😊 Something I always forget to do 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Aug-20 12:53 PM GMT

I haven't yet tried the sports mode on my camera Wurzel but I certainly shall. I usually just increase the aperture to get a faster shutter speed and bang up the ISO if there is not enough light. Hope that's right!

With the weather being what it is I decided to look through some of my past photos with a view to culling many of them. I came across this shot which I took in 2007 at OWH. I have it labelled as an Adonis Ab Semiceronus. I am sure way back then I would not have been able to work that out myself but can't remember who provided the ID. Looking at it now I am not even sure whether it is an Adonis or Chalkhill 😊 I'd appreciate it if someone could clarify please?



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 17-Aug-20 05:41 PM GMT

With regard to Silver-spots roosting in trees, down at Denbies the other day the sun was in while I was on a bit of hillside where I knew they'd be flying. When it came out, I saw several Silver-spots descend to the flowers from hawthorn/blackthorn scrub at the base of the slope. I've also found one or two sitting in hawthorn scrub in cloudy weather at Aston Rowant.

As Wurzel mentioned, I have once or twice managed to "freeze" a Small Heath as it flicked its wings. They sometimes do this to a greater or lesser extent when nectaring for some reason, and it seems to be peculiar to individuals. Some do it, some don't. I have captured this behaviour using the "burst" mode on my camera (up to ten shots in rapid succession) with as fast a shutter speed as I can with whatever light there is. If that sounds a bit haphazard – it is! 😊 The technique works well when getting shots of open winged Wood Whites and Brimstones (both very bright butterflies) and my best attempts with Small Heaths were in bright sunshine.

Now, your female blue – the patterning of the blue scaling is very similar to one or two blue female Chalkhills I have seen (including a stunning example Neil Freeman posted in my diary recently by way of example) Subtracting for the slight overall greenish cast there is in your photo, you might end up with a more Chalkhill, less Adonis colour. Either way, it must have been a stunning individual. 😊

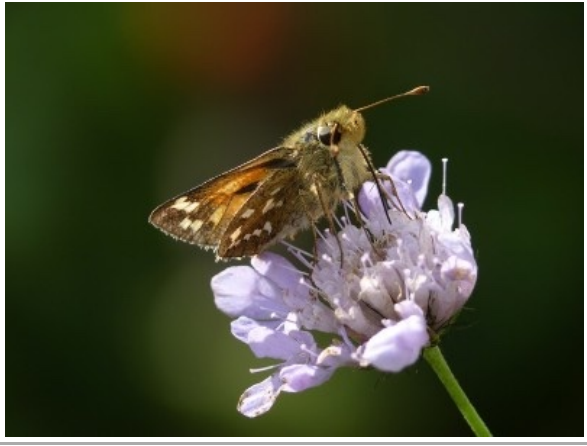
Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Aug-20 07:06 AM GMT

Thanks Dave – I've never used the burst mode either so something else to try. It's interesting to know SSS roost in trees at a different site. Previously I have only ever seen them in small Hawthorn (which is also where they go during showers) but these are definitely going about 15 ft up. I watched them again yesterday both during the showers and going to roost. Didn't see any egg-laying yet but the males are starting to look worn:





The weather yesterday 😞



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 18-Aug-20 07:30 PM GMT

You've made me want to get out and try for some more Silver Spots Pauline 😊 Love the first shot – looks like they're standing on tip-toes 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Aug-20 09:22 PM GMT

They're such a charismatic little butterfly Wurzel – even worn they look appealing 😊 Not the only ones to look worn..... the male BH at Noar Hill are sadly so worn they hardly merit a photo – and still no more females 😞



and the weather wasn't much better today either!



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 18-Aug-20 09:50 PM GMT

Perhaps we're seeing all the male Brown Hairstreaks down low this year because they have given up looking for lady companions up in the trees... 😊
Maybe they are as confused and as puzzled as we are about the lack of females. 😊

Dave

Re: Pauline

by David M, 19-Aug-20 07:44 AM GMT

That's an interesting observation with the SSS's roosting in the trees, Pauline. I'd have assumed, like other smaller butterflies, that they'd be more likely to hunker down in the grasses.

As for female BHs, I haven't had the chance to look for them myself yet (and it may be a week before I do given the dreadful weather forecast). However, one thing I've learned is that this species hates wind, so if you've had, like we have, a series of blustery days then that may explain why the females have been reluctant to descend.

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 19-Aug-20 10:20 AM GMT

David M wrote:

As for female BHs, I haven't had the chance to look for them myself yet (and it may be a week before I do given the dreadful weather forecast). However, one thing I've learned is that this species hates wind, so if you've had, like we have, a series of blustery days then that may explain why the females have been reluctant to descend.

I'll let Pauline comment on weather conditions in her part of the world – this is her diary after all – but it's worth mentioning that a bit further east, there has been mostly calm weather since the end of July, throughout the heatwave and the relatively dull and sometimes thundery days since. Whatever the mystery factor is, it therefore most likely isn't the wind, but it has encouraged males to nectar down low and has kept the females largely out of sight.

Please feel free to delete this intrusion on your diary, Pauline, if you consider it out of place. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Aug-20 08:44 PM GMT

Thank you Dave, David for your thought provoking comments. I have been reflecting on the points you have both made. I would like to be able to say 'here's what I think' but the truth is I know very little and the more I find out the more I realise I don't know. Here are a few of the things that I think I know, ie, that I have noted over the years. The same butterfly species will sometimes behave differently on different sites, presumably making the best of its environment. For example, the male BH at Noar Hill have (in the years I have been observing them) been very reliable in coming down low, mostly nectaring on Hemp Agrimony. This never used to be the case at Steyning and was, I believe, the reason Trevor visited NH a few years back.

Just because a butterfly is observed doing something once doesn't mean that this behaviour/activity is set in stone. The behaviour of butterflies can also change over a period of time. Buggy made a valid point recently about butterfly behaviour being defined by a collector in 1840 (or words to that effect) and it is often the case that butterfly behaviour is passed by word of mouth third or fourth hand and is believed whether accurate or not. Personally I have experienced this several times. eg BH is a 'morning' butterfly. It egg lays between 11.00 and 1.00pm. For Noar Hill that just isn't true – and there's the thing; I can only talk about NH as I am there probably 60+ times each year and other sites may be different. To that end I would be very interested to know how many BH you find David.

The last 2 seasons have been a struggle for BH at NH and I am not sure whether that is localised or whether it is more widespread. There seems to have been some mismanagement at Steyning which might account for the difficulties there but Shipton seems to be doing OK? As to the weather, over the

years I have watched butterflies go about their activities in weather normal sane folk wouldn't venture out in. When I saw the 6/7 male BH low down on 28 July the wind was so strong it was blowing the leaves from the top of the trees. At the time I assumed that was why the males had descended – to miss the worst of the weather. Whether males and females of the same species might behave differently is something I hadn't really considered until now. However, I have been to NH a number of times recently (twice one day) in various weather conditions and have been unable to find any more females and more worryingly, any eggs. Last year I reported that huge numbers of eggs had been predated and over the winter some prime blackthorn hedges had been destroyed. However, I couldn't even begin to speculate/predict what is going on with the BH this season. I am sure time will tell and folk more experienced than me will be able to analyse and explain.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 20-Aug-20 08:03 AM GMT

[quote=Pauline post_id=157489 time=1597866292 user_id=1095]...The same butterfly species will sometimes behave differently on different sites, presumably making the best of its environment. For example, the male BH at Noar Hill have (in the years I have been observing them) been very reliable in coming down low, mostly nectaring on Hemp Agrimony. This never used to be the case at Steyning and was, I believe, the reason Trevor visited NH a few years back.

That's particularly true with Brown Hairstreak, Pauline. For instance, ours in west Wales are **never** seen nectaring, even though there are plenty of thistles which seem to attract the species in southern England at many sites.

Also, they will fly quite happily in temperatures of 15c, which somewhat defies what I've seen written about this species requiring much warmer conditions to become active.

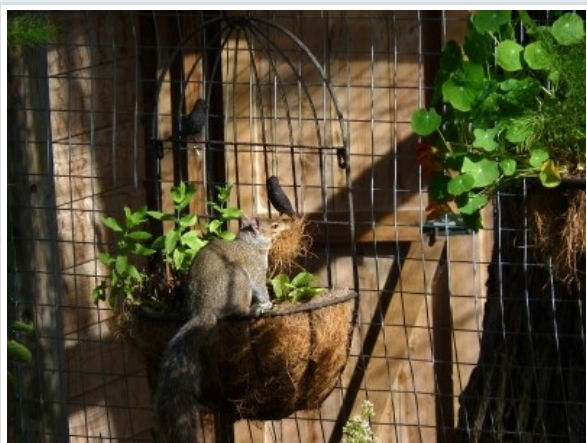
The last couple of years have been a little strange too. In 2018, when everything else was emerging early due to the prolonged heatwave, this species remained largely wedded to its normal flight period. In 2019, in spite of seemingly reasonable weather, they were very few in number throughout their range. Looks like they're creating a new conundrum for us this year!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Aug-20 04:27 PM GMT

I'm hoping that with the benefit of hindsight it will all become clearer David. It often does 😊😄

This one is just for you Neil! A couple of times a year I buy 100 mixed herbs and plant up about 20 hanging baskets and tubs and place them around the rabbit's run. This means that when I shut them away in the evening I can pick a nice fresh selection which they love. However, the squirrel (a different squirrel) is causing havoc. Thankfully (so far) she has not touched the plants but is collecting material from the liners in the basket, presumably to line her nest. Trouble is, my plants are now in danger of dropping through the bottom of the planter! But hey, who could begrudge her a comfortable bed for her little'uns 😊





'My' Holly Blues are now showing significant wear from weather and bird attack:



Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 20-Aug-20 06:52 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, for what it's worth re. the BH behaviour. From what I've noticed through here and other social media sites it would seem that poor years and good years are pretty much consistent across the board (not withstanding other factors at some sites like the browsing cows and mistakenly pruned Blackthorn at Steyning), at least from reports from all the best known sites. 3 years ago males and females were coming down in droves at Bookham and I remember reports from Knepp, Shipton etc saying much the same. The next two years sightings dropped seemingly everywhere and now this year, loads of males but only starting from late morning: play has started at 11am at both Shipton and Bookham. It would be interesting to know what their daily routine is like further south in their range in Europe. Given that we're in the middle of a climate change event perhaps they are currently trying to adjust/adapt?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Aug-20 08:06 PM GMT

Thank you for your thoughts Buggy but I am afraid as far as Noar Hill is concerned I have to disagree. There have not been many males this season and those that have been seen have mostly been between 8.00am and 9.30 am. I would be interested to know why you think otherwise. As previously stated I cannot comment on other sites as I don't visit frequently enough. I do hope you are not relying on the times from my camera as it is a 'new' one and the clock hasn't been set properly.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 20-Aug-20 08:18 PM GMT

`{quote=Pauline post_id=157529 time=1597950419 user_id=1095}` Thank you for your thoughts Buggy but I am afraid as far as Noar Hill is concerned I have to disagree. There have not been many males this season and those that have been seen have mostly been between 8.00am and 9.30 am. I would be interested to know why you think otherwise. As previously stated I cannot comment on other sites as I don't visit frequently enough. I do hope you are not relying on the times from my camera as it is a 'new' one and the clock hasn't been set properly.

It's not in any way scientific, just what I've noticed from the best known sites over the past few years. Tbh I wouldn't include Noar Hill in that simply because I don't generally see as many reports from there as some of the others, mostly just from you. As always we can say general things but there will always be an exception to the rule.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-20 09:03 PM GMT

Good to see the Squirrel collecting Hay while the sun shines Pauline – does it know something that the BBC Weather people don't 😊😄

As for the Brown Hairstreaks...well I've got two pence in my pocket and what with nowhere taking cash I may as well throw it in 😊 I reckon Noar Hill is an interesting site as I've only been to Shipton Bellinger and Alners Gorse looking for Brostreaks and in all the years I've been looking the only time I've seen them before 11 is when we had the heatwave (two years ago?), also all the reports I've seen from other sites and the 'ones and twos' that turn up in this area are also from 11 onwards so it seems like the Brostreaks at Noar Hill are early risers! The females are starting to turn up now at Shipton – at least 5 this afternoon at Shipton and only 1 (definite) male and the females we saw were egg laying so perhaps they've been around and have got on with business and are now becoming more visible? Also I've noticed over the years at Shipton that the females often start turning up later in the day than the males – so perhaps again they've been there but missed? 😊 Not bad for 2p that I reckon 😊😄

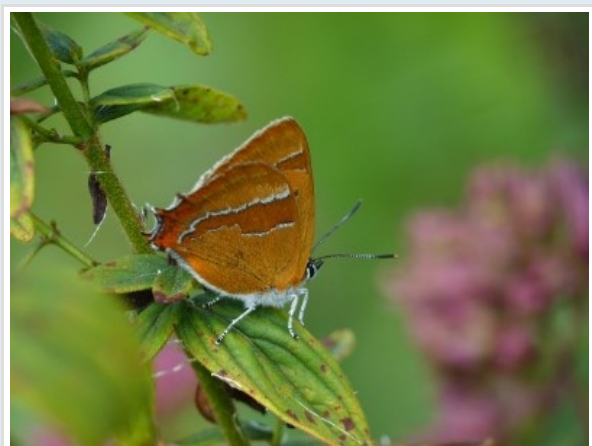
Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Aug-20 06:25 AM GMT

Cheers guys – more corroboration (if any were needed) that butterflies do indeed behave differently on different sites and highlighting the danger of generalisation. I do believe (though he may wish to confirm) that during the visits Dave made to Noar Hill this season there were not loads of males and they were down before 11.00am. I was there again yesterday and had mixed feelings about finding only my 3rd female of a season which I believe is almost over at that site. Far from pristine:



Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 21-Aug-20 01:20 PM GMT

Hello Pauline,

On the subject of roosting Silver-spots, at my local site (Temple Ewell /Lydden .Kent) i, ll admit i,ve never watched them going to roost or roosting before rain ,but what i can say is that when i have found roosting individuals ,they have normally been found on plant flower heads,such as St Johns wort or Knapweed species,early morning ,would never have thought to look "up" and into the treessomething for another time, perhaps ,as others suggested their roosting habits vary from site to site.
Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 21-Aug-20 07:09 PM GMT

[quote=Pauline post_id=157524 time=1597937253 user_id=1095]

This one is just for you Neil! A couple of times a year I buy 100 mixed herbs and plant up about 20 hanging baskets and tubs and place them around the rabbit's run.

Thanks Pauline. From your earlier posts, you can add another 'herb' to that number 😊😄

I currently have a couple of squirrels in the garden most days that seem to spend most of their time chasing each other about like mad things. Quite entertaining when they are running around and jumping across all the trees 😊.

I have an anti-squirrel baffle on my bird feeders but they do get seeds that fall to the floor. I never thought before what these seeds may include 😊

Regarding your thoughts on the Brown Hairstreaks, just to add a midlands perspective, I went to Grafton Wood yesterday but with only limited success (more details in my PD shortly). Whilst there I met the reserve manager and we had chat about the Brown Hairstreaks there. Good numbers of males were coming down to nectar on Hemp Agrimony and other plants a couple of weeks back but the recent bad weather here has ended that. No males have been seen this week but apart from yesterday the weather has been pretty awful here. The females started coming down on their egg laying forays last week and can potentially be seen any time from early morning through to late afternoon, which apparently is the normal state of play for this site.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Aug-20 12:46 PM GMT

Hi Allan – thanks for taking the time to let me know. It should be obvious really, shouldn't it, that butterflies behave according to their surroundings. I remember a time many years ago when several folk at Bentley Wood told me that PBF roosted on bracken. It seemed feasible to me as they seemed to hang under the bracken during showers. On a more local site near Fernhurst I waited late in the day to get a shot of a PBF roosting. As the sun dipped they came onto the track to warm up but as the sun disappeared they flew up into the pine trees and roosted there. I was so frustrated the next morning at 5.00am I carried a step ladder through the woods and got the shots of my roosting PBF!

I can't understand why folk don't like squirrels Neil. They are such a source of entertainment. I appreciate you taking the time to tell me about your local BH. I remember an incident from my early butterfly days when BH were a lot more reliable than they seem to be now. Mike Gibbons, along with the rest of us, had been taking shots of a female BH nectaring during the afternoon. He lived in Christchurch I believe which I imagine is well over an hour's drive from Selbourne. Having arrived home they realised his wife had left her hand bag on Noar Hill. By the time they arrived back at NH it was about 7.00pm and the female BH was still nectaring where they had left it! So there you have it – a morning butterfly 😊

PS you'd better check out that fallen seed 😊

Just a few more shots from Thursday's visit to Noar Hill:



Meadow Brown egg:



Don't really know why I take so many shots of spiders



A bit autumnal now:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Aug-20 05:28 PM GMT

I would have liked to have seen a few more female Brown Hairstreak before I go but it doesn't look as if that is going to happen any time soon. However, I couldn't just go without reflecting on my 2020 season which has been rather strange to say the least. At the start of the year I was told that I may have 2 different types of cancer. After various (and numerous) scans, x-rays, blood tests etc it turned out this was incorrect on both accounts. A worrying and stressful couple of months tho'. Just getting over that when we had to go into Lockdown, slapping on various constraints, meaning I was unable to see a few species which I had hoped to see.

I shall remember this season as it being a struggle to see many species. With the exception of the Purple Hairstreak which seemed to be everywhere it seems that the numbers of other Hairstreaks have been down on my local sites. I include the Green Hairstreak in this – although it might not have seemed obvious they were definitely not in the sort of numbers I am used to seeing around here.

I have never before been as disillusioned, discouraged, demoralised and disappointed as I have been in 2020. This was mostly as a result of my frequent encounters with collectors during the PE season. I initially brought this to the attention of various authorities (although I suspect they may have already been aware) but I am not going to let the issue drop. I feel quite strongly that there should be more transparency over such activity with an ability to monitor and manage its effects.

Another favourite of mine, the SSS have thankfully managed to thrive this year in greater numbers than I have seen for a while with the added bonus that QECP are (hopefully) going to start to manage that site from October. I'd like to think I was influential in their decision. The roosting habits of the SSS on this site do make me wonder tho' if they are adapting to their 'woodland' environment.

A highlight for me this season was rearing the Dukes and all the discoveries I made along the way. Of note was the eating of the shed skin from 1st instar only and the sequence of dramatic colour changes leading up to the skin shedding in all instars, amongst other observations. I have been led to believe that this has not been recorded previously.

Amazing things that I have seen in my pursuit of butterflies cannot be ignored – the mother deer feeding and washing her fawn, the pink grasshopper, the Sand Lizards, the nest of Adders, the Turtle Doves the list goes on and on. Encounters I shall never forget and would never have had if it weren't for the butterflies.

The weather has at times been challenging ranging from 37 degrees to torrential thunderstorms and strong gales, causing more problems for myself than it did for the butterflies I suspect. However, it has been good to see some migrants this season including Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady. There is still time to see LTB. The news that Large Tortoiseshells are breeding in Dorset was also welcome. Perhaps it won't be too long before I see one which has bred on these shores.

I always enjoy the interaction with other butterfly enthusiasts and despite the difficulties of social distancing, this year has been no exception. I am hoping that by this time next year social interaction will be a whole lot easier. In the meantime, take care and keep safe.

Butterflies 2020



Butterflies 2020



Butterflies 2020



Behaviour



Hairstreaks



Brown Hairstreak (female)



Purple Hairstreak (female)



Green Hairstreak



Brown Hairstreak (male)



Green Hairstreak



WH



Brown Hairstreak (male)



Brown Hairstreak (female)



Brown Hairstreak (male)

Immature Stages



Grey Dagger larva



Meadow Brown ovum



Red Admiral larva



Orange Tip larva



Pine Hawk moth pupa



Orange Tip pupa (female)



Brinstone ovum



Common Blue newly hatched larva



Brinstone pupa

Moths



Puss moth



Lesser Swallow Prominent



Buff-tip moth



Pale Prominent



Poplar Hawk-moth



White Ermine



Clouded Buff



Small Maggie



Buff Ermine

Non Butterfly 2020



Hedgehog (freed from mesh)



Bee fly (1st for garden)



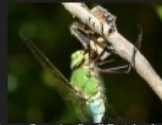
Deer feeding fawn



Rare Pink Grasshopper



Ladybird Fly



Dragonfly eating Small Tortoiseshell



Turtle Dove



Nest of Adders



Deer licking feeding fawn



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 23-Aug-20 12:40 PM GMT

Sorry your going so soon Pauline, you sound a little down, cheer up, you may have me for company yet 😊😊 Some lovely shots of the Butterflies and some interesting information you've found this year in-spite of the Virus, take care, keep in touch. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-20 05:31 PM GMT

A fantastic collection of round upshots Pauline 😊 Have a good break but I reckon maybe some LTB's might bring you out of hibernation 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 24-Aug-20 06:57 PM GMT

Blimey, that time already 😊

I hope you keep well during your hibernation Pauline and you never know, something may turn up to tempt you out.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 31-Aug-20 03:15 PM GMT

[quote=Pauline post_id=157603 time=1598113739 user_id=1095]...I have never before been as disillusioned, discouraged, demoralised and disappointed as I have been in 2020. This was mostly as a result of my frequent encounters with collectors during the PE season.

It's infuriating that people are still doing this in 2020. 😡

I sometimes wish the UK would go down the same route as Spain and make netting illegal.

[quote]The weather has at times been challenging ranging from 37 degrees to torrential thunderstorms and strong gales, causing more problems for myself than it did for the butterflies I suspect.

It has been perhaps the most bizarre summer I can ever remember. Oh to enjoy some 'normal' weather rather than these wild fluctuations.

Hopefully next year will be a little less extreme at both ends of the weather spectrum.

Lovely pictorial presentation again, Pauline. Bittersweet really, as although I love these colourful and informative smorgasbords, they also herald your absence for the year.

When you return, I hope Covid will be having a far less damaging effect upon us all.

All the best till Spring 2021! 😊