

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Jan-20 09:53 PM GMT

Thanks again to you both. This next one I'm unsure of, the blue one near the centre,



Here is a Zebra Mosaic.



This reminds me of the Hungarian glider, but is actually a Chocolate Sergeant.



And a Banded King Shoemaker



Again, I have my doubts about this.



Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 04-Jan-20 10:16 PM GMT

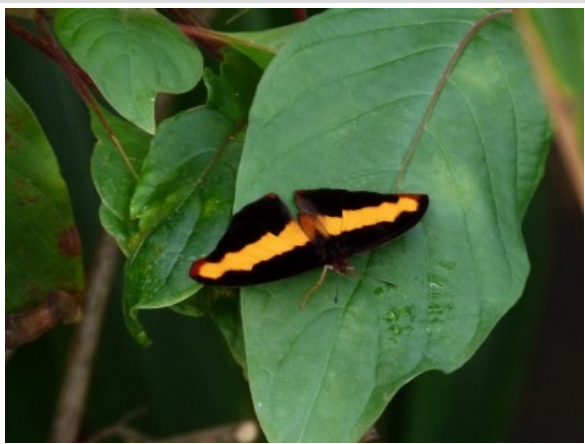
Hi Buzzard. Your first unknown is a male *Lexias pardalis*, from South and South-East Asia. The next is *Junonia lemonias*, also from South and East Asia.

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Jan-20 10:33 PM GMT

Thanks Guy, I will look those up. Here is my last instalment from the Butterfly Farm. The first is an Orange-banded Shoemaker.



The next, I believe, is a Variable Cracker, *Hamadryas feronia*.



There were plenty of these in the glass house. They are the Glass Wing.



These two I'm not so sure about, any suggestions would be welcome!



To sum up, our trip to the Butterfly Farm was most enjoyable, and I would thoroughly recommend it. True, it's a slightly artificial set-up, but what better way to beat the long winter season? Stratford has plenty of other things to keep one busy as well.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 06-Jan-20 11:38 AM GMT

Delightful, Mark. A much needed injection of colour during this dismal winter.

Hopefully, it's only a few short weeks before the return of the real thing! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 06-Jan-20 12:14 PM GMT

Hi Buzzard. Your Papilionid is *Parides iphidamas*. Not so sure about the Satyrid, without any clue to where it comes from, but I would suggest *Ypthimoides patricia* or something closely related. This is a very variable species but some forms are close to yours. See <http://tb.plazi.org/GgServer/html/03CA16194562FF97FF6AFD7AA33DFC5E>.

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Jan-20 11:45 PM GMT

Thanks David. With the New Year, we can now start to look forward, not back. And the day are getting longer--by the end of this month, it will be light until closer to 5PM in southern and western areas. Well, you have to start somewhere!

Thanks Guy, especially for the link which I will have a look at.

Well, a happy New Year to one and all. For us, it started with a visit to the Epping Ongar Railway. It is wonderful to see this charming Essex branch line given a new lease of life. I went to school at Ongar in the 1980's. Those days, Epping to Ongar was part of the London Underground network although, by then, services ran at peak times only. There was much sadness in the town when London Transport closed the line in 1994. That Friday, 30 September, many enthusiasts gathered at the station to ride, photograph or simply watch, the last LT train to leave Ongar station, signalling the end of an era.

However, by the early 2000's, enthusiasts had formed a group, with the aim to raise funds and re-open the line. A private benefactor financed materials, a Volunteer Society provided the workforce, and contractors were employed for tasks the membership were unable to carry out. The Stations were lovingly restored to their Great Eastern Railway appearance, new track was laid and, on 25 May 2012, steam hauled passenger trains were seen at Ongar and North Weald once more. Heritage busses run from North Weald to Epping and, today, the branch brings delight to a great many visitors from Essex, London and beyond.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 07-Jan-20 07:12 PM GMT

Nice story, Mark. there's something about steam railways, isn't there? I'm still fascinated by the one on the Isle of Man where my mother came from. Maybe it's nostalgia for all those photos we saw as children?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Jan-20 07:13 PM GMT

There certainly is, David. I have been on steam trains in various places, but for me, this one has much sentimental value!

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 09-Jan-20 01:45 PM GMT

Hi! essex, I used to ride the Steam Trains on a regular basis when I was younger 😊 we used to catch one about 5.30pm from Rossendale where I used to live to go to Blackpool dancing and catch the 11pm back 😊 (those were the days) 😊

They closed the rail line, (thanks to Mr Beeching) 😞 But now the Steam train has been brought back to the Valley and runs between Rossendale and Bury and on Sundays it's especially very popular. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Jan-20 10:49 PM GMT

Thanks for that, Goldie. Lovely to hear. We hope you are getting through the winter, we've now turned a corner and the days are getting longer!

Visited my local reservoir earlier this week. When I arrived, the first thing I was treated to was the extraordinary sight of this mid-winter swallow, which I just managed to get into a picture.



Great white egrets are increasing, and have been ever present for over a year now.



A smew was present. So far this winter it's been only females, known as redheads.



Long tailed ducks are uncommon inland.



Finally, a great crested grebe in it's grey winter plumage. In six weeks, they will be moulting into their splendid breeding colours.



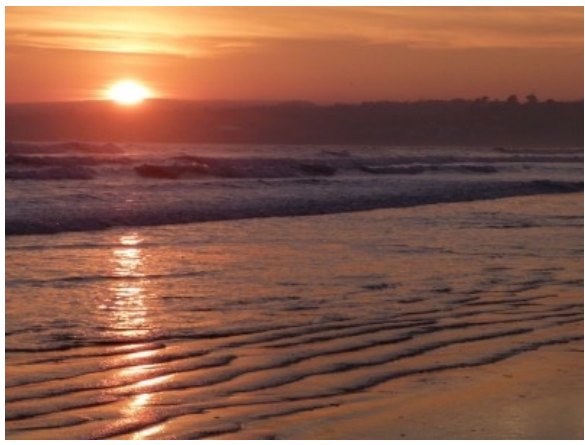
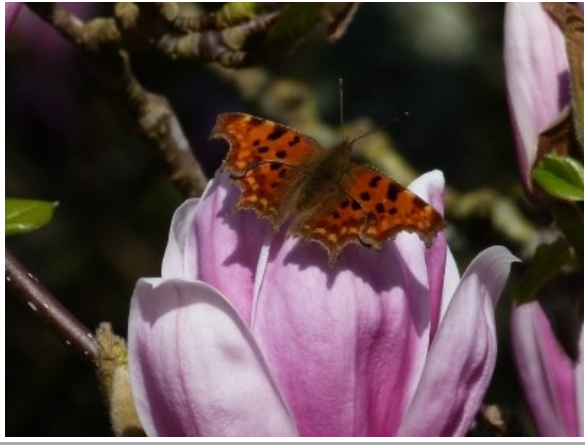
Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Jan-20 11:22 PM GMT

So, I hope we have all had a happy new year so far. A time when we start to look foreword. But first, there is chance to look back at 2019 one last time, in particularly the weather, and it's effect on butterflies and other wildlife.

Winter was mild, with no significant cold spells. And, who could forget, this cumulated in a spell of wonderfully warm sunny weather at the end of February. By sheer luck, we had a trip to Cornwall booked for this time! Never before had I seen all the hibernating butterfly species before spring began.





Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jan-20 07:35 PM GMT

Hi Mark, Just catching up on your visit to Stratford Butterfly Farm, some great photos 😊

I don't live too far from there, just about 35-40 minutes drive, but haven't visited for some years now. My oldest son Chris lives in Stratford now and could walk there in 15 minutes.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 10-Jan-20 10:20 PM GMT

Some great images Essex – that Swallow was a bit of a shocker 😲 What was that doing here so early or had it been hanging around during the mild winter we've had so far? 😊 The Smew is brilliant – I've not seen one of those for a good few years now 😊🇧🇪🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Jan-20 11:50 PM GMT

Yes, the swallow was most unexpected! It's been left behind by its parents and is now probably trapped here, being unable to accumulate enough resources to fly south. Amazingly, it has survived all the wind and rain of November and December, but still has it's work cut out to make it through to spring.

Did we all get to see the wolf moon tonight? Here it is while it was rising.



By 17.30, it had the warm glow of a typical full moon.



The difference by 19.10 was obvious, the moon had a much colder look.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 11-Jan-20 09:31 AM GMT

Great shots of the Moon essex, your first shot looks like the Blood moon of 21st Jan last year 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Jan-20 03:36 PM GMT

Spring 2019 was a typical mix, but overall was slightly warmer, drier and sunnier than average. March was sunny and fairly warm but April was cold, especially at night, with lots of overnight frosts. However, low pressure over Spain later in the month sent a surge of warm air north, resulting in a splendid warm sunny Easter weekend. Orange Tips emerged in abundance during this spell, and went on to have a good season, lasting for six weeks—slightly longer than last year. Also because of the warm weather, the bluebells were again early, and peaked in late April. I also saw my first Pearl-bordered Fritillaries for two years, with a trip to Sussex on the 29th.



May 2018 was a vintage month, and 2019 was never going to live up to that. And it didn't. Temperatures were rather low, but it was mostly dry, and most spring species seemed to do well, perhaps partly due to great conditions the previous year. The two bank holidays saw typically cloudy, cool conditions, but these were cancelled out by sunny, fairly warm weather mid month. One of butterflies that did particularly well was the Small Blue. Vast numbers were seen at many sites, and I had the pleasure of joining the action on the 22nd, with another trip to east Kent. This day was also blessed with many orchids, including these monkey orchids.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 11-Jan-20 06:09 PM GMT

Lovely look back Essex 🥰🍀 Hopefully the successes of the Small Blue will continue this year – it's nice to have a success story for a change 😊 The sight of those Bluebells has got me pining for spring 😊 – 2 months to go! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

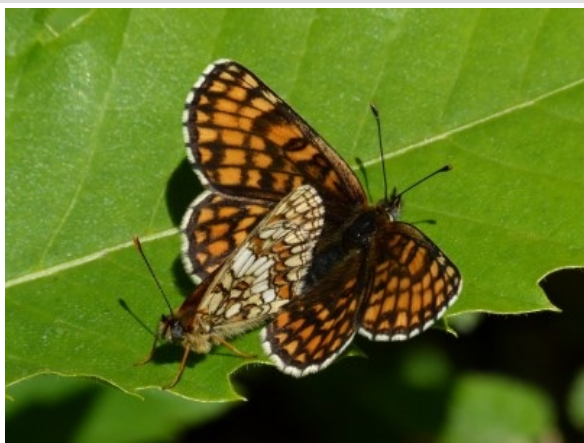
by essexbuzzard, 11-Jan-20 09:41 PM GMT

Yes, we're on the right track. Be sure to get those brownie points in the bank, Wurzel!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 12-Jan-20 10:44 PM GMT

It was a warm, fairly sunny, but not dry summer. However, it was a cold start–June was a wet month, and temperatures were mostly below average. There was a chance to visit Dorset early month, where we found Lulworth Skippers at the start of their flight season. Heath Fritillary numbers at Hadleigh were reasonable mid month, and there were plenty of White Letter Hairstreaks, again at Hadleigh, by late June.

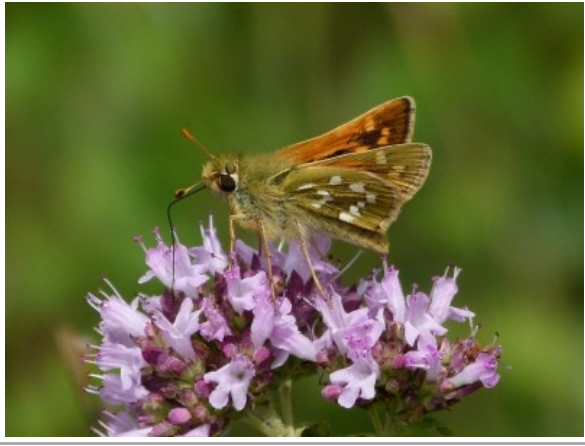




It warmed significantly in July. A European heatwave was going on at this time, with lots of temperature records being broken. We tapped into some of this heat at times, with nearly 39C recorded. However, it was also accompanied by frequent thunderstorms and downpours. Perhaps my most successful day during the month was a visit to Surrey, where I found Chalkhill Blues and Wood Whites. Chalkhill numbers were rather low, by their standards, at the sites I visited.



August was unsettled in northern and western areas, but in the south it was dry and quiet warm. Silver Spotted Skippers emerged early, and their flight season was well underway by early month. One of my favourite species, and something to look forward to in late summer. Small Tortoiseshell also emerged well in their second generation, both at home and other places I visited. The summer ended with a splendid late heatwave over the bank holiday weekend.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 14-Jan-20 10:31 PM GMT

Another cracking look back Essex 😊 That is a beautifully fresh looking Lulworth, one of my all time fave species 😊🌍 In amid the others beauties the Chalkhill would normally not stand out but not your one – those are very pronounced spots along the hind wing margins – I can't recall seeing another so well marked 😊👁️🌍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Jan-20 11:40 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, that Chalkhill from Denbies hillside was a cracking specimen.

Autumn 2019 was cloudy and wet. It started well enough, but Adonis Blue numbers were lower than I expected at all the sites I visited. Here is one from Osmington in Dorset.



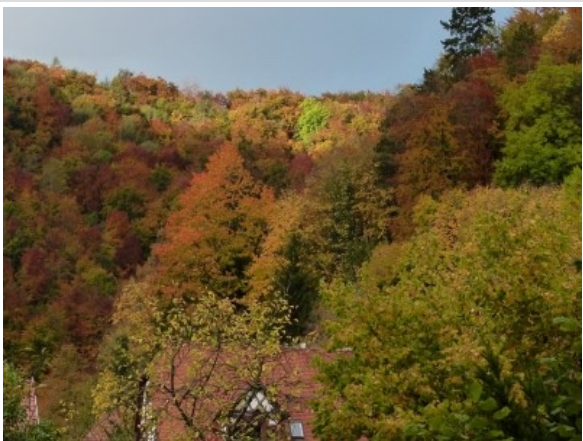
High pressure mid September brought several days of warm, sunny weather which, in the event, were the last such days of the year, as wet, dull and cold weather then set in depressingly early. It was during that last warm spell that I caught up with the Walls on Canvey Island.



October was dull, cold and wet, as if winter had arrived early. A few last Painted Lady and Long-tailed Blues emerged, but they emerged into a world that was quite unsuitable for any butterfly, never mind one of tropical origins. A rare bright day tempted me to Sussex. Even then it was cold and windy on the hill, but one Long-tailed Blue was found.



There after, it was one deluge after another, with below average temperatures and an almost total lack of sunshine. I trip to Germany mid-month brought some respite, with lots of glorious sunny weather and I felt warm, and happy, for the first time in weeks. The scenery was splendid, and the autumn leaves were the best I have ever seen. Forget New England, this was New Deutschland!





November continued the theme of dull, wet weather, and temperatures were again low. In contrast to Germany, Autumn leaf colours were poor, owing perhaps to them being blown off by the wind and rain. Sometimes I can keep the butterfly season going until the beginning of this month but, this year, the season was pretty much finished by late September. Autumn was most disappointing. 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 15-Jan-20 07:33 PM GMT

That Adonis is fantastic essex 🍷🍷 I hope I see one this year 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 16-Jan-20 10:45 PM GMT

Nice review, Mark. You've seen some good stuff in 2019, topped off by Long Tailed Blue.

It's your bluebell carpet image that's most evocative, however. Thankfully, it won't be long before we can all walk amongst them again. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 17-Jan-20 08:27 PM GMT

Good to see your Long Tailed Blue, Mark.

Yes, the hill always seemed to be a windy place, but it did come up trumps a couple of times.

As for the season end last year, I think we all got rather used to October/November butterfly sightings.

Have a great 2020 season,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 21-Jan-20 08:49 PM GMT

I know the LTB has the wow factor of being a rare vagrant but I can't help admiring the Adonis shot more 😊🍷 It's not sour grapes I swear 😊😞🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 31-Jan-20 07:40 PM GMT

I am always jealous of LTB photos being stuck up here in the midlands having usually used all my holiday by that time of year but that Adonis Blue from Osmington is a cracker.

I also love those autumn colours in Germany, very nice!

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-Mar-20 11:37 PM GMT

Spring is here! Meteorologists spring at least. The sun is now strong enough that, given a bit of shelter from the wind, butterflies will appear almost regardless of temperatures. It seems amazing that, this time last year, I had seen all the hibernators. Here, a year later, I'm still waiting for my first

butterfly sighting.

Some seemed pleased to have to have an extra day in February this year. Personally, I was pleased to see the back of the month, and any extension was the last thing I wanted.

It is certainly not butterfly weather at the moment, so today was spent on the Essex coast, where the dark-bellied Brent geese are the stars of the show. These birds breed in arctic Russia, but will remain here a while yet, some lingering until late April. Other forms of Brent spend winter in Ireland and North America.



Also common on the coast, are avocets. There has been a big increase in their numbers in recent years.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 07-Mar-20 08:16 PM GMT

Great shots of the Brents and Avocets Essex 😊 I do struggle to get my head round seeing Redwings and butterflies on the same trip out which is a possibility at this time of year 😊 Hope you get onto some butterflies soon I reckon it could to be one of those starts to the season when there is precious little activity and then there comes a day and everything suddenly bursts forth 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 08-Mar-20 07:51 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=150871 time=1583192241 user_id=11426] Spring is here! Meteorologists spring at least. The sun is now strong enough that, given a bit of shelter from the wind, butterflies will appear almost regardless of temperatures.

This year, shelter from the wind is the primary factor, Mark. I agree that temperatures and core sunlight hours are now conducive to butterflies taking to the wing, but strong winds will largely prevent them from doing so, which unfortunately is what's preventing things from kicking off in my area. 😞

Nice to see those avocets. Lovely, smart wading birds.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 12-Mar-20 12:06 AM GMT

Thanks guys. I am still waiting for my first butterfly sighting, it should come next week. So it's time to head further afield, with a trip to Newent in Gloucestershire. Here the woods are carpeted with daffodils in March. These are true wild, native daffodils, and can be found at other places dotted around the country. I have seen them in Cornwall, and they also grow in Devon and, more famously, beside Ullswater in the Lake District, where they inspired Wordsworth. In Gloucestershire, they grow not only in woods, but also on banks, road verges and old orchards.



Here, they have the company of the first wood anemones.



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 12-Mar-20 08:27 AM GMT

Great to see those wild Daffodils en masse, Mark, a sure sign of Spring. I rescued some vulnerable bulbs some years ago, and they have now seeded around the garden. They were once widespread here in Sussex and can still be found in a few places.

Looking forward to 'kick off' !.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 14-Mar-20 03:26 PM GMT

What a fabulous carpet of colour, Mark. Yes, flora wise things are ahead of normal but until we get some sustained sunshine, the butterflies will remain 'tucked up'. Like you, I'm expecting movement next week if the brighter forecast is accurate.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Mar-20 06:59 PM GMT

It surprises me, but vegetation does seem a few days ahead of even last year. This is despite the fact there has been not a single day of warm weather so far. Who can forget the wonderful spell of warm, sunny weather in February last year?

Nature is full of surprises!

I took these pictures in Harlow before work this morning.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 15-Mar-20 09:02 PM GMT

Hopefully the sunny days that have been forecast for this week will appear Essex, fingers crossed 🤞 Mind you I can't bring myself to watch the weather/check any apps just in case it's changed again 😞😞 That lovely floral display screams Spring 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Mar-20 10:18 PM GMT

AND WE ARE OFF!

This weeks much forecast sunshine has gradually been down graded, until by yesterday they said it would last just one day. Being off, I kept the day clear. So imagine my distraught when I woke to grey skies, yet again!

This lasted all morning but, lunchtime, the sun at last arrived. The buzzards were up, my first chiffchaff was singing, and I found a Peacock. Eventually, three were seen.



Further on, a Comma was found, again the first of three.



A south facing hedge, on the edge of a Common, is a good spring location for Small Tortoiseshell. Sure enough, I soon found my first of the year.



The next one was clearly a male, as it was flying up at passing bees.



After a flyby, my last of the day was on the edge of a wood. I also saw my first bee-fly here. It just shows what even half a day of sunshine can do!



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 16-Mar-20 10:44 PM GMT

Not a bad haul there, Mark. A mrgreen for the Small torts, I doubt I will see many around here. 🍀
I noticed that the latest weather forecast was for more cloud than they originally said.

Never mind, things have started to move at last!
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Mar-20 12:56 AM GMT

Thanks Trevor.

I was thinking of you while looking for my Torts, as I know you have been struggling to find them down there.

This was not a vintage day, but it is a start.

Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 17-Mar-20 08:56 AM GMT

Very nice Mark, especially the Torts. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 17-Mar-20 08:33 PM GMT

A nice haul there to start you off Mark, great stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 17-Mar-20 09:35 PM GMT

A cracking start Essex – bagging three in one day! Good to see 'multiples' of the Small Torts as well 😊 We could do with a nice run of good weather now...just before we get locked down 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 17-Mar-20 10:19 PM GMT

Clearly just ust the day those butterflies needed to get up and go, Mark. Nice Tortoiseshells – the ones I've seen have been too flighty as yet for me to get that close to. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Mar-20 11:48 PM GMT

Thanks Andrew, I was pleased with the Torts as well, as I know some have been struggling with them.

Thanks Neil, yes, thank goodness I had the day off!

Thanks Wurzel, you're right, a bit more sunshine wouldn't go amiss!

Hi Dave, this wasn't a warm day—about 11C at peak— which might have mad them more approachable. Regardless, I'm just pleased to get things going!
😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 18-Mar-20 09:53 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=151028 time=1584393513 user_id=11426]AND WE ARE OFF!

We are indeed, Mark, and thank God!

That was a nice haul you had, although given the deprivation we've all suffered it was certainly well earned.

With 'lockdown' looming, we may have to post sightings 'incognito' very soon. 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Mar-20 12:32 AM GMT

That's what I fear, David. Having been mostly stuck at home for six months, due to the dreadful weather, that's the last thing we need, just as things get interesting.

Today was sunny, but a cold east wind was blowing. In sheltered west-facing aspects, a few butterflies were found, including a couple more Small Tortoiseshell. But it was the bee-flies that got my attention today. Yesterday there was only one, but today the same place had several, suggesting an overnight emergence. I love to see them, a true sign of spring.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 23-Mar-20 09:41 PM GMT

Cracking Beefly Essex 😊

Well it happened, three weeks of staying in – just as things were kicking off nicely 😊 – but I reckon you might be able to see a few butterflies during the one exercise trip per day 😊 ...Stay safe.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Mar-20 12:21 AM GMT

Absolutely right, Wurzel. At least I have some countryside on my doorstep, where I can escape to. Not everyone is so fortunate. But, later in spring, I'm going to need to travel to see species of butterflies, orchids etc and, if I'm prevented from doing so, I'm going to struggle with that...

ATB to you and all your family.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Mar-20 10:03 PM GMT

Well, I think we could all do with a bit of cheering up!

On my local rounds yesterday, I was hoping photograph my first Brimstone. They are not that common where I live, due to a shortage of buckthorn (though I have planted a few). But I had seen a couple at the weekend, and some of the woodland rides seem quite reliable. Sure enough, we found a male, which eventually dropped down.



Peacocks, Commas and Small Tortoiseshell were found as well, but this Red Admiral was a slight surprise, my first of 2020. It was there again this morning.



Be safe, everyone.

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 25-Mar-20 10:05 PM GMT

Love the Brimstone essex, we've a shortage of them round here as well, not enough wood land near me, I'll have to try HLB my local haunt, loads of Peacocks and Torts today but no Brimstones yet. Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Mar-20 10:46 PM GMT

Good luck with your Brimstone hunting, a couple more bright days left!

Visited Stour Wood today. Although it's not too far, and is in Essex, it does involve driving which is probably against the rules, so it is likely to be the furthest I will go for a while. The woods main attraction in early spring is it's wonderful carpet of wood anemones, a sight to behold! They usually flower in early April, so are a few days early this year.



Gorse also grows nearby. I usually see it in Cornwall, but there's no chance of me getting down there at the moment. But it grows in Essex, too, especially in areas where the soil is a bit drier. On a spring day like this, with strong sunshine, the scent is glorious!



Re: essex buzzard

by Janet Turnbull, 25-Mar-20 11:12 PM GMT

The woods are full of wood anemones here too EB – spring seems to have come earlier! That's a glorious carpet of them.
Janet

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Mar-20 11:12 PM GMT

The local butterflies were enjoying the blackthorn blossom today. Only West facing bushes were suitable, as there was a cold wind blowing from the east.



The most surprising thing today was the staggering numbers of bee-flies. Walking round the south and west edge of a wood, I must have seen a hundred.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-Mar-20 12:14 AM GMT

It does seem to be a good year for Bee-flies Essex 😊 Lovely set of shots and you were right – that Brimstone was a cheery sight 😊 Keep up the good work with the exercise 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by ernie f, 27-Mar-20 09:53 AM GMT

I agree – I have even seen a Bee Fly in my garden yesterday and I have never done that before.

Also love the pic of woodland carpeted by anemones.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 27-Mar-20 01:50 PM GMT

Beautiful floral scenes, Mark. Those carpets of wood anemones are a sight to behold. The bluebells are starting to unfurl round me so it won't be long before there'll be carpets of those too! Amazing to think that as a kid these were supposed to be May flowers.

Well done with the Red Admiral too. Not many seen so far which is surprising given how mild the winter was.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 27-Mar-20 07:43 PM GMT

Beautiful images of the wood anemones Mark, I particularly like the first one of the carpet amongst the trees.

I usually get a few bee flies in my garden but curiously haven't yet seen any this year despite being home and having the chance to more time in it during the daytime.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Mar-20 11:28 PM GMT

Thanks Janet, Wurzel, Ernie, David and Neil.

It's seems amazing now, I only saw my first butterfly last week. Now, they are everywhere! It hasn't been particularly warm in east Anglia this week, but 12 hours sunshine per day certainly helps!

Considering the mild, wet winter, I'm surprised how many Commas, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell have survived—they are having an excellent start to the year.

There was one last day of sunshine today. The Tortoiseshells were making the most of it. They would feed on blackthorn blossom for a few minutes, then come to ground and press flat, to warm up for a while, then head back up to the blossom.

Kites and buzzards were much in evidence. Common enough nowadays, but always a pleasure. A police helicopter was also about...



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 28-Mar-20 08:15 PM GMT

Good to see the Small Torts having a good year for once – long may it continue 😊 Lovely shots too 😊 and interesting that you saw that behaviour – I witnessed the same thing during my exercise today 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 28-Mar-20 10:46 PM GMT

Envious of the numbers of Tortoiseshells you've been seeing, Mark – and also that Red Admiral. 🍷 It seems remarkably well-preserved if you ignore the tear on one forewing. 😊 I've yet to see one, and I suspect none have made it through as otherwise one would have popped up by now.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Mar-20 12:18 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, yes I'm pleased to have so many Small Tortoiseshell at the moment. As you say, long may it continue.

Thanks Dave, yes I was a little surprised to see the Red Admiral. For a species which doesn't truly hibernate, surviving six months of wind and rain can't have been easy! Provided it was not an early migrant, that is.

Nothing for me today, it seems the only sunshine was to the south of London.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 30-Mar-20 07:08 PM GMT

Yes, good to see so many adult hibernators on the wing round your way, Mark, particularly Small Tortoiseshells.

I can only conclude that few have perished from cold over the last winter. Mild and damp brings its own dangers, but perhaps fewer than an Arctic snap like we saw in March 2018 when these insects had already become active following their natural diapause only to be struck by conditions more

reminiscent of mid-winter.

Re: essex buzzard

by Old Wolf, 30-Mar-20 07:57 PM GMT

Hello Essex, lovely picture of the carpeted woodland at Stour Wood. Makes me want to get out to my local woods to see if they are the same. Unfortunately I have to devote my one exercise trip to my dogs and unless I can coax them up the Sand Hills (local wood) then I may not get a chance to see.

I had a Bee-Fly in my garden the other day and had no idea what it was so your diary has taught me something today. Thanks 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-Mar-20 10:21 PM GMT

Thanks David. I have to say I'm surprised, but very pleased, how well they have survived the wind and rain of autumn and winter. Clearly the mild weather wasn't as detrimental as I expected!

Thanks Old Wolf, glad to have helped. Bee-flies are spring insects, so keep an eye open for the next few weeks!

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 01-Apr-20 12:22 PM GMT

Love your shots of the Wood Anemones essex, also the Small Torts on the Blossom, I've not seen any Blossom out around here yet, exception being the Magnolia which opened up this last week, I'm still waiting to see some more Sun. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 02-Apr-20 01:33 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=151602 time=1585689691 user_id=11426] Thanks David. I have to say I'm surprised, but very pleased, how well they have survived the wind and rain of autumn and winter. Clearly the mild weather wasn't as detrimental as I expected!

Yes, I don't think I can ever recall seeing so many adult hibernators emerging in such fine condition. On that first sunny, mild day, perhaps everyone opened their sheds and outhouses en masse meaning that few ended up beating themselves against windows?

Whatever the reasons, it's nice to see so many looking in such good shape.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Apr-20 10:28 PM GMT

The glorious blackthorn blossom is now out in full, and presents a lovely spectacle on my local walks. Us country folk used to know it as April blossom, to separate it from May blossom or hawthorn, which flowers next month. In reality, blackthorn has been flowering since late March, and will be good for a couple of weeks yet. Set against a blue sky, it is even more attractive.



As for butterflies, still only hibernators for me so far. But the staggering numbers of Peacocks continue to give much pleasure, as do the equally staggering numbers of bee-flies, despite their rather questionable life cycle!

This Peacock was in remarkably good condition for this time of year.



Bee-flies



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 05-Apr-20 11:19 PM GMT

Great set of shots Essex 😊 There do seem to be a lot of Peacocks round at the moment 😊 Isn't that a distinct species of Bee-fly? 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 06-Apr-20 09:29 AM GMT

Yes, the Blackthorn has been amazing this year, Mark.
Almost dazzling enough to cause snow blindness!
It's almost peaked around here, with petals beginning to fall.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 06-Apr-20 06:55 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Some of my local blackthorn is already just about finished and some is just coming into blossom. Like most areas, I assume that it depends on the aspect and micro-climate of each spot.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 06-Apr-20 08:19 PM GMT

{quote=essexbuzzard-post_id=151785-time=1586122096-user_id=11426}The glorious blackthorn blossom is now out in full...

Isn't it just, Mark. One of the finest times of year without doubt.

I'm sure your non-adult overwinterers will be out very shortly. Meantime, enjoy those bee-flies; I've seen quite a few over the last few days in my neck of the woods.

Re: essex buzzard

by Chris L, 06-Apr-20 08:55 PM GMT

I have never seen one of those bee-flies before in my life ! I didn't even know they existed. My research tells me the UK has 9 species and that one looks to me like a Dark-Edged Bee-Fly or Large Bee-Fly photo that I have on my screen.

This new hobby of mine and that which folk share on here by way of photos and narrative is a marvellous and enjoyable education for me. Thank you everyone.

The Blackthorn is a mixed bag in South Derbyshire. Some dying or dead and some that is looking rather splendid.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Apr-20 10:54 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, yes these are greater bee-flies, the largest and by far the most common of the group. There is a smaller one with spotted wings, which I have seen on the North Downs in Kent.

Thanks Trevor, yes, blackthorn blossom is abundant this year, and is proving popular with butterflies, too!

Yes David, April is a great month, full of promise!

Neil, you're right, though flowering times vary slightly, even when two bushes are growing next to each other...

Otep,welcome to your new hobby, it's sure to give you much pleasure. And, of course, we are here to help!

Well, times are hard at the moment, but full of hope ,new life is appearing...



In our local park, the poets narsissi, sometimes called pheasants eye, are attracting interest...



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Apr-20 03:52 PM GMT

Did we all get to see the super moon last night? It truly was super! There was a bit of high cloud, so I didn't see it to start, but here is my picture, taken at midnight...



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 08-Apr-20 06:27 PM GMT

I've been so obsessed with this coronavirus, I have hardly looked at other news. 😞

Sadly, this escaped my attention, and I'm all the more angry because skies round here were clear.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 08-Apr-20 07:59 PM GMT

Cheers for the ID Essex – and also for the Poets Narsissi – wasn't aware of that one or even the very apt common name 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 08-Apr-20 08:42 PM GMT

Hi! Essex, great Moon shot and I think in my post my Peacock is also on a Narsissi which I called a Daffodil, I think they may be the same family but I could be wrong 😊😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Apr-20 09:52 PM GMT

Hi David, if it is clear your way, take another look tonight, still quite splendid!

Hi Wurzel, Poet's Narcissi grow wild in alpine meadows in Eastern France and the Alps, which is where I first saw them. But they grow perfectly well in gardens here.

Goldie, they are really the same thing, so it's perfectly fine to call them daffodils!

Today was all about firsts. First my first willow warbler was singing it's wonderful descending song, then my first Green-veined White flew past. Another was seen later.



Ten minutes later, my first Orange Tip was seen. No chance of it stopping on this very warm day, pictures can wait for cooler weather.

But my first Large White did stop. Picture taken at maximum zoom on the wrong setting, but it only fed for a few seconds.



A Red Admiral was also on the blackthorn.



This male peacock was trying his luck, while the female was feeding.



Later, my first Speckled Wood flew over the garden, but didn't stop.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 08-Apr-20 10:20 PM GMT

Honestly Essex just as I catch up you go and get a GVW and a Large White 😊🇩🇪 Also something of a rarity this year a Red Admiral 😊🇩🇪 Keep em coming 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Stevieb, 09-Apr-20 10:28 AM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=151935 time=1586379126 user_id=11426] Hi David, if it is clear your way, take another look tonight, still quite splendid!

It certainly was Essex. Amazing sight.



Pink Supermoon 8th April

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 10-Apr-20 09:23 AM GMT

Triple whammy there, Mark. The three species I've struggled with this year have all been captured in your sequence – Green Veined White (which I'm still to see definitively), Large White (seen two, neither stopped) and Red Admiral (just the one fly-by so far).

Can't be long before Small Coppers join the party!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Apr-20 10:11 AM GMT

Well everyone, I hope we all got to enjoy the warm weather over the weekend. Normally service has now resumed, but more sunshine is expected later this week.

Here is a nicely marked Green-veined White, in my garden.



The Orange Tips are now in full flow. This adult has a slight Nick in his wing.



This one was a bit fresher, with stronger markings. Haven't seen a female yet.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 13-Apr-20 10:21 AM GMT

That is a gorgeous looking Green-veined White Essex 😊😊 - I've still to see my first one 🌍 Lovely OT's which you van never have too many of 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 13-Apr-20 10:53 PM GMT

I particularly like the GVW on the flowering currant, Mark. Fresh spring GVW are such an attractive species, and that one is very fresh, with a vibrant lemon shade. Great contrast on the pink flowers too! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 14-Apr-20 12:07 PM GMT

Wow! That's one hell of a Green Veined White, Mark. Absolutely stunning.

Your second Orange Tip stands out too. The spot on the forewing is far more bold than normal.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Apr-20 11:21 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. That Green-veined White was a beauty, and briefly brought a bit of cheer during these dark times.

The Speckled Woods are now emerging in decent numbers. Lovely insects when freshly emerged.



The numbers of Commas and Small Tortoiseshell are beginning to decline, now, as many have probably mated, laid eggs and completed their life cycle. However, this one, photographed yesterday, was still in fair condition.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 17-Apr-20 12:04 PM GMT

Hil! essex, I've not had any Small Tort's in the Garden for a while now so I think your right, that's a nice shot of one, so you never know 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-20 06:07 PM GMT

Lovely shot of the often under appreciated Specklie Essex 😊 They certainly are building numbers wise 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 17-Apr-20 06:57 PM GMT

Just seen the Green-veined White on the flowering currant Mark, a lovely colour combination 😊

Nice Orange-tips as well, and the nice fresh Speckled Wood.

I haven't seen many Commas here this spring, far more Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks, especially the former. Interesting how the fortunes of these species (and others) are varying around the country.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 18-Apr-20 04:07 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=152341 time=1587075688 user_id=11426].The numbers of Commas and Small Tortoiseshell are beginning to decline, now, as many have probably mated, laid eggs and completed their life cycle...

Same round my way, Mark (Brimstones too). Peacocks seem to keep going though. I've probably seen more of this species than any other so far this year.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Apr-20 12:03 AM GMT

Thanks everyone. I would go so far as to say I've seen more Peacock than all the other species put together!

What a difference a month makes. A month ago, we were still watching the flood waters recede, and everywhere was full of slush and slime, making walking in the countryside more of an ordeal than a pleasure. It is surprising how quickly things dry out, once it stops raining! Ground conditions are pleasant at last.

It is no coincidence that the rain has stopped at the same time as the wind has changed direction. The prevailing westerlies are at their weakest at this time of year and, for most of us, April is statistically the driest month. Sure enough, the dominant wind direction in the last month has been from the east. A quick flick through the records finds several April's where it hasn't rained at all. April is not guaranteed to be dry of course. Who can forget the April washout in 2012?

Another mostly dry week, with decent sunshine but a chilly breeze, is expected this week, so let's all enjoy those Orange Tips, while they last.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 20-Apr-20 10:27 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=152428 time=1587251020 user_id=11426].What a difference a month makes. A month ago, we were still watching the flood waters recede, and everywhere was full of slush and slime, making walking in the countryside more of an ordeal than a pleasure. It is surprising how quickly things dry out, once it stops raining! Ground conditions are pleasant at last.

Indeed, Mark. The difference is possibly more immense than for many years. On 20th March I had only just seen my first butterfly and life was relatively normal (albeit with the anticipation of things soon to change pretty radically).

Here we are a month later and the situation is unrecognisable. That said, there is a shaft of light at the end of this grim tunnel, and in another month I expect things to be markedly brighter.

In the meantime, nature goes on with its business, and probably all the better for its principal adversary, the human race, being forced to largely take a sabbatical from its destructive behaviour.

As you say, let's enjoy those Orange Tips while they last, and hope that when they come by again in 2021, we will have greater freedom to enjoy them.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Apr-20 11:37 PM GMT

Well said David, and I wholeheartedly agree. Things are moving so fast now, that I hope there will be something left by then!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Apr-20 11:57 PM GMT

This week, the Essex bluebell woods have reached their peak. Traditionally, I always thought of bluebell woods as a May spectacle, but nowadays, they often flower in April. The glorious warm sunny weather has brought them out even earlier than last year. With a week of this month still to go, they will probably be passed their best by time May arrives.



Orange Tips have also reached their peak, but numbers this year seem slightly down, perhaps due to a shortage of garlic mustard last year. There is no such shortage this year though—my garden is full of it—and out and about I am seeing it everywhere, often in great abundance. The Orange Tip females will have plenty of choice when laying their eggs this year.



The walk to the bluebell woods takes me along a river valley. This is Tortoiseshell country, and dozens of them were doing battle with Peacocks. Large nettle beds can be found here, and soon they will be full of caterpillars. The adults are showing their age now, but at least they got this far. A Small White was not so lucky...



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-Apr-20 08:49 PM GMT

Whilst slightly macabre Essex that final shot is a cracker – brilliantly caught image 🤩😄👍👍

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 29-Apr-20 08:35 AM GMT

The carpets of bluebells are one of the joys of a British spring aren't they, Mark? I've noticed lately that the red campion is emerging too along with the horse chestnut candles. It's a colourful time right now.

Does seem odd for it to be happening so early. It really seems to have accelerated these last 10 years or so. The daffodils vanished a fortnight ago and the mayflower will hardly live up to its name this year as May is yet to arrive and it's practically all finished flowering round my way!

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 29-Apr-20 09:08 AM GMT

Loving the Bluebell wood Mark 😊

A sight that I will sadly miss seeing for myself this year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-May-20 11:49 PM GMT

Welcome to May, the most beautiful month of the year. The countryside, as well as our towns, have been transformed in the last month. For so long, dingy browns and greys have dominated, but now the landscape is full colour and scent. The Orange Tips are now at their peak as is the birdsong, the hawthorn or May blossom, and the horse chestnut. Days are long. Times are tough, but scenes like these gladden the soul, and should be enjoyed.





Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 03-May-20 08:35 AM GMT

My sentiments exactly, Mark. May is a fabulous month.

While I was photographing the PBF yesterday, I heard a Nightingale blasting out his song.

I won't meet you at Cotley Hill this May, and that is another Springtime gem.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 03-May-20 08:07 PM GMT

"Times are tough, but scenes like these gladden the soul, and should be enjoyed" Brilliant sentiments Essex, so true 😊 There is talk that we may be allowed to travel to the countryside - how far I don't know but don't write The Hill off just yet, there's still time 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-May-20 11:32 PM GMT

I haven't given up yet! There are 101 places I would like to go to this month, if I am allowed, and Cotley Hill is definitely one of them!

It was a glorious day yesterday and for me, it was all about Whites. Although less dramatic, and less quintessential spring time than the Orange Tip, the Gree-veined White is equally beautiful in its own way. There are lots of them around now and in good years, when there is lots of garlic mustard, they breed in my garden. Here is a female on hawthorn.



And a male.



The markings on this one were particularly bold.



Small Whites were about, too.



And a couple of Large Whites.



No May scene would be complete without the Orange Tip, here on the blue flowers of green alkanet.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 04-May-20 08:20 PM GMT

"I haven't given up yet!" – that's the spirit, fingers crossed we hear some good news on Sunday evening 😊
Lovely set of whites Essex – especially the beautifully marked Green-veined White 🐛🌿

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 05-May-20 08:39 PM GMT

Nothing wrong with concentrating on Whites, Mark. In fact, I think we should all devote at least one day per year to doing precisely that!

The Large White in particular looks great. I've really struggled with them this year although I'm pleased to say they're far more ubiquitous than in 2019, when I saw precious few both here and abroad. 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 05-May-20 11:09 PM GMT

Great selection of white butterflies, Mark. I particularly like that heavily-marked male GVW – such a contrast to most of them, as some can be pretty well pure white. They seem to be doing pretty well so far this year.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 06-May-20 09:03 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

The Green-veined Whites around my way have suddenly increased in number and are now the most numerous butterfly seen. Still lots of Small Whites too but very few Large Whites so far.

That female is a beautiful example 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-May-20 11:14 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. That's about it from me so far, though I'm hoping that will change next week, if I'm allowed off the lead. If not, I have the wonderful sight and scent of the hawthorn to enjoy, which is glorious this year!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 08-May-20 09:24 PM GMT

`{quote=essexbuzzard-post_id=153315-time=158889699-user_id=11426}`Thanks everyone. That's about it from me so far, though I'm hoping that will change next week, if I'm allowed off the lead.

Fingers crossed for Sunday's announcement, Mark. Looks like there will only be slight concessions regarding travel/exercise but if we can get more significant ones by the end of the month we just might be able to salvage the season.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-May-20 11:25 PM GMT

So, the first day I've been let off the lead and, as luck would have it, it's my day off. The pictures I'm about to post probably ain't going to win any prizes, but they are valuable as they are of iconic Spring species, which I didn't think I was going to see this year.

In reality, conditions at Bison Hill, Whipnade were only borderline suitable today—it was cloudy, windy and rather cold, with only fleeting glimpses of sun and temperatures struggling to get into double figures. Definitely quality over quantity! But I was there, and that's all that counts. 😊





Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 14-May-20 06:18 AM GMT

Have camera, will travel, Mark!. Great shots from your first day off the leash. I've got my sights on Dukes before it's too late, just need better weather.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

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

I can empathise with those sentiments Mark – same conditions yesterday in Chiddingfold. I was interested to see your GH – was she down egg-laying. I know we have been a bit restricted but on my patch there seems to have been a distinct lack of GH compared to previous years.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-May-20 08:54 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline. In fact, I think the GH was just trying to warm up! Warmer weather again next week. No complaints, we've had a lot more warm days this

spring than cold ones.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 16-May-20 11:00 AM GMT

Cracking stuff Essex 😊 Love those shots of the Dukes – sometimes the cooler weather is a benefit but you certainly did well even when so hard pressed 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 16-May-20 02:16 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=153590 time=1589408719 user_id=11426]So, the first day I've been let off the lead and, as luck would have it, it's my day off. The pictures I'm about to post probably ain't going to win any prizes, but they are valuable as they are of iconic Spring species, which I didn't think I was going to see this year.

Absolutely agree, Mark, and you must feel a whole lot better for being able to venture that bit farther?

As you say, these are spring species that few like to miss out on, especially Duke of Burgundy, although amongst your images it is the Dingy Skipper that stands out – what a beauty!

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 16-May-20 04:26 PM GMT

Lovely shots essex, glad you got your Spring Butterflies, I to like the shot of the Dingy 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-May-20 05:59 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor, yes, I've got the travel bug back well and truly!

Yes Wurzel, they were well behaved and weren't going far.

Thanks David, yes, it's wonderful to get out and about again, I'm delighted and grateful. I know some are not so fortunate...

Thanks Goldie, shame we didn't get you your Grizzed Skippers, but eventually we will!

Next up, I was Sussex bound, on a fabulous day last Sunday. The best day so far this year.

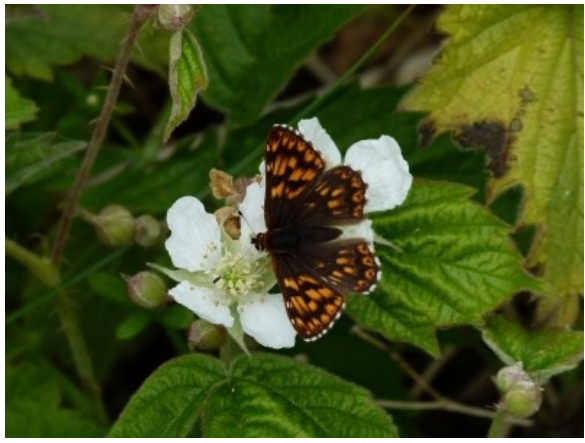
This coombe, near Storrington, was full of spring treasures!



Re: essex buzzard

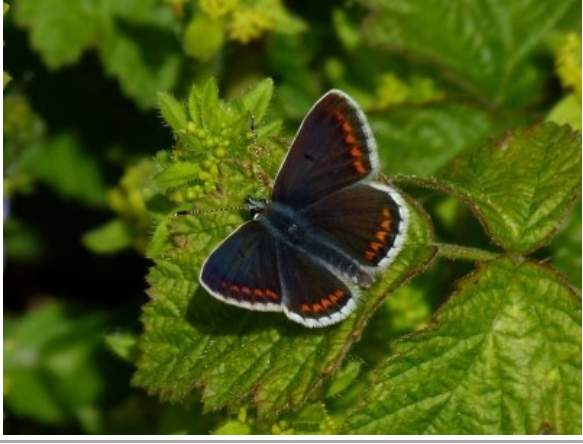
by essexbuzzard, 23-May-20 10:07 PM GMT

Duke of burgundies were present in good numbers in the gully, with smaller numbers on the surrounding slope. Many were still in good condition on this north-facing site.



Brown argues were here, too, doing battle with the various other species present. There is something stunning about a freshly emerged Brown Argus.





Several Grizzled Skippers were seen, which was a treat, as they are one of my favourite spring butterflies. This one was especially beautiful.



This is a good Green Hairstreak site, so I was surprised to find only one. However, it was a beauty.



Common Blues, as well as a single Small Blue, were here. Although I found one at home a couple of weeks ago, this was my first decent sighting.



Finally, Dingy Skippers were here. Some were showing their age, but there were still a few good ones.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 23-May-20 10:38 PM GMT

Another cracking collection Essex 😊 That Dingy is looking good for its age, really interesting markings on the fore wings 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-May-20 11:26 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. Part two still to follow...

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 26-May-20 12:45 PM GMT

That coombe looks perfect for butterflies, Mark. No wonder you filled your boots. Will look forward to the next instalment.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 26-May-20 06:48 PM GMT

A nice selection of species there Mark but I love the deep chocolate colour of the fresh Brown Argus 🍷😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-May-20 01:04 PM GMT

Then onto Mill Hill, near Shoreham. I was greeted with a glorious carpet of yellow horseshoe vetch. It was worth coming for that alone.



However, I soon began to see Adonis Blues. Lots of them. They had clearly emerged in good numbers. After a poor late-summer brood last year, they have clearly had no problems surviving a mild, wet winter at the caterpillar stage! A cracking way to end an absolutely brilliant day out. I am grateful to that government for easing the rules just in time to savour the end of spring.



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 27-May-20 02:21 PM GMT

Really lovely Adonis shots, Mark. I miss my Wiltshire site for them, so maybe 2nd brood.

Good to see you getting around now.
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-May-20 08:23 PM GMT

Woah I had to turn the brightness down on my laptop to view those images Essex, I was blinded by the light 🤩😍😍 Adonis when they're like that are simply stunning 😊😍

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-May-20 07:30 AM GMT

Wonderful stuff, Mark. 😊 This species is simply gorgeous when fresh (the horseshoe vetch is eye-catching too).

With the weather set fair for the next week at least, it could be a very productive early summer.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Jun-20 09:24 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. They positively glow, don't they?

Next up, east Kent. My main reason for visiting is to see the wonderful variety of late-spring orchids here. But if I could get a few butterflies in as well, so much the better!

First up, Denge Wood, south of Canterbury. This is a great site for Lady Orchids, with the added bonus of Duke of Burgundy too! I also found my first ever fly orchids at this site.





I couldn't resist dropping into Lydden Hill, to see this Adonis Blues there. Good numbers seen. Plenty of horseshoe vetch here, too.



Western Heights is just 10 minutes away, so it would have been rude not to pop in, and see the Small Blues there. In such hot weather, there's no way they were going to open their wings, though!



It was now early afternoon. Part two to follow.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-20 10:00 PM GMT

Looking forward to part two Essex – that is a fantastic Small Blue shot 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Jun-20 10:09 PM GMT

Then onto a site for late-spider orchids. I won't broadcast exactly where the site is, for the orchids are very rare, and found only in east Kent. They are also a target for vandals! It would be touch and go if they were out anyway, but this is a very early season. I was lucky, for I found this very first few in flower, with several more in bud.



Nearby, the first man orchids were flowering. Although unspectacular, a close inspection of these brilliant orchids reveals how they got their name.



Finally, to finish off the day, I headed to Park Gate Down. The monkey orchids is found at only three known sites. At two of these, it is scarce and declining, but here it is doing very well. Numbers of flowering monkeys varies each year, though, in fact they tend to do better in wet springs. But the overall number of plants is more stable.



Thanks Wurzel, part two coming right up!

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-20 10:17 PM GMT

Cracking Orchids Essex 🤔😏 That Spider Orchid reminds me of a chubby, jovial Spiderman 🤔😏

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Jun-20 02:48 PM GMT

Well, I hope we all enjoy the sunniest spring on record. It certainly helped that most of the lock-down period was blessed with warm, sunny weather. A total, for England, of nearly 700 hours of bright sunshine this Spring, would put most summers to shame!

We now arrive at the June gap. Fortunately, in Essex, we have a perfect gap filler. Heath Fritillaries. At HW, they started emerging last week, and are now

attracting plenty of interest. One chap had come all the way down from Derbyshire. Admittedly, these Fritillaries probably appeal more to the anoraks among us than the general visitor. I have also found it to be common in most places in Europe that I have visited. But seeing them on home soil is a little bit special.

It's hard to imagine anything more natural than a butterfly. But in fact, this fussy species depends entirely on man-made habitat. Without human intervention, Heath Fritillaries would be extinct within five years. Fortunately, more habitat maintenance has been done, and I'm confident of its future here.



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 03-Jun-20 03:11 PM GMT

Lovely to see them over there in Essex again, Mark. 😊 I always find it fascinating that they are a commonplace landscape butterfly in Europe, but have to be meticulously managed in the UK. They do at least seem to make an effort to do so in that piece of woodland.

They get earlier and earlier too – I think the first time I saw them around ten years ago was in July!

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 03-Jun-20 05:18 PM GMT

Great to see your Heath shots essex, I'll miss them again this year, their a lovely little Butterfly, when I'm in Kent I make a bee line for East Blean Woods just in case some are still a round. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-20 06:33 PM GMT

Brilliant shots Essex – a lovely gap filler indeed 😊 I've only ever seen them abroad once (in S.France) but to my mind they seemed lighter, much more orange with dark markings rather than ours which seem dark with orange markings (if that makes sense) – fingers crossed they 'split' them for an armchair 'tick' 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Chris L, 03-Jun-20 06:57 PM GMT

That Adonis Blue photo is an absolute work of art EB. I would have that photo converted in to a canvass and have it on the wall of my house if I had taken that. Excellent.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Jun-20 10:55 PM GMT

Thanks everybody.

Earlier this week, good numbers of Small Tortoiseshell males had emerged on the footpaths near Ongar. The days are now as long as they ever get in the northern hemisphere, and it was still very warm then. This means the adults didn't open their wings until 7.30 PM. Small Tortoiseshells are very common where I live, but never again will I take them for granted. Most were on the path itself, but this one was on the hedge.



This one was richly marked.



Here is a more typical male.



Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jun-20 09:22 AM GMT

Nice Heath Fritillaries Mark 🍷😊 I had planned a stop off at Greenscombe Woods on our way back from our Cornwall trip which got cancelled. Probably re-arranging this one for the same time next year now.

Good to see Small Tortoiseshells doing well down your way too. They are having a good year around here as well with lots of reports of fresh summer brood from around the midlands.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Jun-20 09:46 PM GMT

Thanks Neil, we also had a trip planned at around the same time, which obviously got cancelled too. So no Marsh of Small PB Fritillaries for me this year either. But I'm grateful to have seen Heath Fritillaries here.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 10-Jun-20 07:13 AM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=154567 time=1591394110 user_id=11426]...Earlier this week, good numbers of Small Tortoiseshell males had emerged on the footpaths near Ongar...

Same round my way, Mark. There have been heaps of Small Tortoiseshells lately. Looks like it could be the best summer for a few years for them.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Jun-20 07:52 PM GMT

Yes, it will be interesting to see what happens when the weather improves, and we get a few bright evenings. Round here, last year was very good for them too.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jun-20 10:19 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=154674 time=1591649164 user_id=11426] Thanks Neil, we also had a trip planned at around the same time, which obviously got cancelled too. So no Marsh of Small PB Fritillaries for me this year either. But I'm grateful to have seen Heath Fritillaries here.

I've one more possible iron in the fire for Small Pearls, a family holiday in Cornwall in the first week of August which has still not been cancelled. The latest info I have is they are looking to open the site again after July 5th so my fingers are crossed.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Jun-20 10:48 PM GMT

Good luck with that, Neil we were going down there in August too, for exactly that reason. But it might be heaving down there by then, which has put us off, and we haven't booked anything. So it will be good to see how you get on.

My time there is greatly missed this year.

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 17-Jun-20 05:31 PM GMT

You seem to be having more luck with the WLH than me Mark. Lovely image – looking forward to seeing it in here 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 17-Jun-20 07:26 PM GMT

Were you in Hadleigh CP on 16th, Mark? If you were I missed you somehow as I spent about three hours down there scrutinising bramble bushes all along the path at the bottom – with some success as it happens! The WLH are only just starting I'd say. Pound Wood was good for Heath Frits afterwards too.

Shame to have missed you.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Jun-20 11:00 PM GMT

Thanks, Pauline. Pictures, hopefully tomorrow night, on here as requested!

Hi Dave, I was there on Monday, the 15 th. That's why I missed you!

I did meet several other people there, but no-one I recognised. Was happy to show a couple of gentlemen the best spots.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Jun-20 09:43 PM GMT

So, last Monday it was time for a visit to Hadleigh Castle Country Park, to see if the first White-Letter Hairstreaks had emerged yet. They had, but only in low numbers so far. I will hopefully have another trip there, in a week or so, to see how things are developing. I also saw my first Essex and Small Skippers, Marbled Whites and Ringlet of the Year.

This is the most reliable site I know off for getting the Hairstreaks feeding low down, but they are still not that easy to photograph. They are very fidgety, and constantly bend and drop out of sight behind the flower head, only to reappear a couple of minutes later. But patience has it's rewards!

Here is a male.



Females are slightly larger, and lighter in colour.





And here is the habitat. Scrub elm, with plenty of brambles, are the places to look.



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 18-Jun-20 10:05 PM GMT

Superb White Letter images Mark. I'll be looking for them soon, and their purple cousins. The silly season has started!

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 18-Jun-20 10:33 PM GMT

Great photos, Mark - things were unsurprisingly very similar the following day, but clearly WLH numbers are low as yet and they were still largely up in the elms. They turned up in several separate spots, though. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 19-Jun-20 07:55 PM GMT

Cracking shots Essex 😊 I wish I had a reliable 'down low site' for this species, mine closets ones are all a bit far 🇬🇧 That third shot is gurt lush 😊 🇬🇧

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Jun-20 11:21 PM GMT

Then onto Lydden Temple Ewell downs in Kent. Few butterflies were around, as I expected, but this is a lovely site for a pleasant walk, and fragrant orchids are abundant, along with dyers greenweed, one of the few places I have seen it.



However, there were plenty of Small Heath, and it was no surprise when I found this mating pair.



Further on, another mating pair was found, this time Small Coppers.



Soon, this place will erupt with Marbled Whites, Chalkhill Blues and, by August, Silver Spotted Skippers. But for now, it was a pleasant place to enjoy an afternoon.

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 20-Jun-20 11:35 AM GMT

Hi! essex, My favourite site when I'm in Kent 😊 Roll on, I should hope fully be there for some of the arrivals, can't wait! 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 21-Jun-20 12:06 PM GMT

Always envious of your close encounters with WLH, Mark. 🍷

We do have them here in south Wales but they remain firmly wedded to the tree canopies in all the locations I know of. If we're lucky we may get the odd aged, scruffy individual nectaring on the thistles towards the end of the flight season.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-20 06:37 PM GMT

Small Coppers in cop 🍷🍷 I would dearly love those in my 'in cop' collection 🍷

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Jun-20 10:44 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, look foreword to your safe arrival down here!

Hi David, yes I am very lucky to have such a reliable site near me. But your Large Heaths run them close!

Hi Wurzel, they were nice to see, and most unexpected! One day you will get lucky.

The White Admiral, though much increased, is still less common in Essex than in woods further south. But Hadleigh Belfairs Woods , near Daws Heath, has proved reliable since I discovered their presence there over ten years ago. So yesterday, it was time to pay a visit, to see and enjoy this wonderful butterfly. A species I don't see very often, I love their graceful, gliding flight.





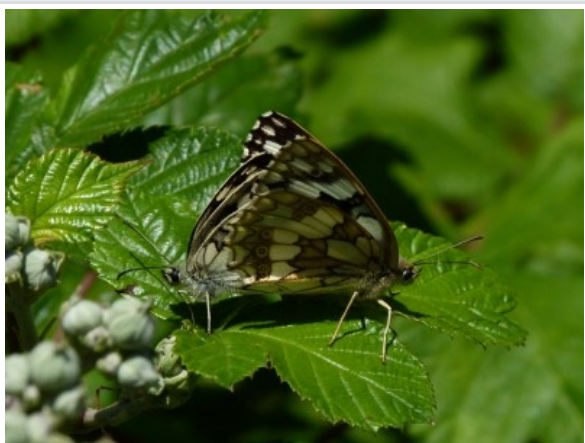
This is also a Heath Fritillary Wood, but numbers are small, as are the suitable habitat patches. In any case, these Fritillaries are on the wane now.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Jun-20 11:23 PM GMT

Then onto Hadleigh castle county park, for a fairly short, heat of the day visit. Numbers of White-letter Hairstreaks have not built in the last week, so it seems to be having a fairly poor season here. A couple of the best areas (for photography) have been demolished this year during scrub clearance, to increase the grasslands for the shrill carder bee and other species. However there were plenty of Marbled Whites, including this pair.



Lots of noisy Marsh frogs, too.



The Scarce emerald damselfly was present in the drainage ditches, as were many Scarce red-eye damsels.



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 24-Jun-20 04:06 PM GMT

Interesting to hear that the WLH are no more numerous than a week ago – that's a pity, as I had just assumed last week I was a bit early for them.

Some great WA shots though, Mark 😊 – they seem fresher than the ones over in Surrey now (though I've started seeing a few fresh females over this way too this week).

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-20 06:37 PM GMT

Great White Admirals Essex 🤩🇧🇪 They are fantastic to see cutting through the sky 😊 Interesting to see the Red-eyed Damselfly, a species I've never encountered 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 27-Jun-20 10:49 AM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=155254 time=1592948663 user_id=11426]...The White Admiral, though much increased, is still less common in Essex than in woods further south. But Hadleigh Belfairs Woods , near Daws Heath, has proved reliable since I discovered their presence there over ten years ago. So yesterday, it was time to pay a visit, to see and enjoy this wonderful butterfly. A species I don't see very often, I love their graceful, gliding flight.

Totally agree, Mark. this is probably the most graceful of all UK butterflies; it's almost ghostly at times as it silently circles you and then alights somewhere above you looking down at you.

I too don't get many opportunities to see it as it's rare in the south of France and I'm usually out of the UK during its peak flight period. Pleased to say, like you, I've had a decent audience with this species lately.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Jun-20 07:40 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. Thanks White Admiral is a glorious species and, thankfully, one that is increasing.

With my work shifts starting to return to normal, and a short heatwave last week, I was able to enjoy some glorious summer evenings on the common behind my house. Days, of course, are now as long as they ever get, and these pictures, and those that follow, were taken after 7PM.

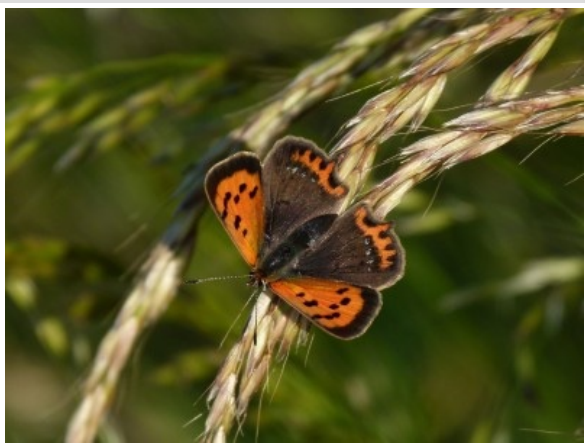
Loads of Small Skippers have emerged here.



While Hutchinsoni Commas rest on the bushes, waiting to dart out at anything that passes.



Small Coppers live on the common. This one was particularly well marked.



Ringlets have now emerged. However, even after just a few days, they are loosing the pristine appearance of newly emerged adults.



Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 28-Jun-20 09:13 PM GMT

Like your Small Red-eyed Damsel Essex, did you get any pics of the Scarce Emeralds? A species I'd dearly like to see, must try to get up to Cliffe sometime. Regards Allan.W.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Jun-20 09:21 PM GMT

Large Skippers were low in numbers. Perhaps they are already on the wane, having started in late May.



Essex Skippers are now emerging on the common.



And lastly, for now, another Hutchinisoni Comma, to celebrate some wonderful summer evenings! 😊



Purple Hairstreaks were spinning over the trees, far beyond the reach of a camera!

Hi Allan, I didn't on the day, but I was back there on Friday and photographed one, which I think is Scarce emerald. I'll find it and post it here. Let me know what you think.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Jun-20 11:53 PM GMT

Here's one for Allan. Scarce emerald usually emerge slightly earlier than emerald, and are slightly larger. But this is an early season, so who knows?



Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 29-Jun-20 07:59 AM GMT

Hello Mark,
Looks good for Scarce to me,..... Nice find ,time on my hands at present ,think a trip up to Cliffe may be in order !
Regards Allan.W.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Jun-20 12:32 PM GMT

Get there ASAP, Allan, as soon the confusion species--the Common emerald--will emerge. Though it might be an idea to wait until this dreadful wind has eased!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 30-Jun-20 12:04 PM GMT

Peak time of the season now, Mark, and plenty to look forward to if only the weather would calm down a bit.

Love the damselflies. They really are delightful insects.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Jun-20 10:31 PM GMT

Thanks David, yes, with the damp and very windy weather, it's felt more like autumn the last few days!

One advantage of the collapse in weather, is I have been able to enjoy the local Ringlets at a much more leisurely pace than last week! In the woodland

rides, sheltered from the wind, these lovely smokey black butterflies have been relaxing. Not the best pictures in low light, but definitely a pleasure!



There must have been something about this leaf that made it better than all the others!



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 01-Jul-20 09:27 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=155537 time=1593552690 user_id=11426]...One advantage of the collapse in weather, is I have been able to enjoy the local Ringlets at a much more leisurely pace than last week! In the woodland rides, sheltered from the wind, these lovely smokey black butterflies have been relaxing. Not the best pictures in low light, but definitely a pleasure!

Every cloud (and there are lots of them right now) has a silver lining, Mark.

The sun has been out here today, but with 20mph+ winds any butterfly watching has been rendered near impossible. 😞

Looks like we've a few more days of it to endure, which is particularly disappointing given that this is the peak of the season.

I've never known such a bizarre year for weather in my lifetime. It's got to the point when I crave 'normal'. 🙄

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 02-Jul-20 10:47 AM GMT

Not seen a Ringlet or much else here Essex, the weather's been awful. 😞 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Jul-20 12:04 AM GMT

But what is normal, David? Our great British weather has always been rather fickle...

Same down here, Goldie, though not so wet as up your way. But plenty of cloud, wind and drizzle...

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-20 06:06 PM GMT

I wonder what is so special about that leaf Essex? I mean it looks like they've got the whole plant to choose from but they plonk themselves down next to each other - that's for you, there's always something to wonder about 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 03-Jul-20 08:46 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=155623 time=1593731051 user_id=11426]But what is normal, David? Our great British weather has always been rather fickle...

I think the climate is still settling on that one, Mark. This time last week it was almost 30 degrees yet today has seen constant wind, rain and 15c temperatures round my way.

I'd settle for 21c with sunshine and occasional showers thank you. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Jul-20 10:01 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. Nature's full of surprises!

Thanks David. Light winds would be nice, too!

In recent years, my local woods, ten minutes walk away, have been colonised by Silver-washed Fritillaries. No longer is it necessary to travel to southernmost parts of England to see this magnificent species!

With all the wind in the last week, rare sunny spells in woodland rides and clearings have been my only realistic chance to see butterflies.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-20 07:38 PM GMT

Cracking shots Essex – especially like the first where it looks like the Silver-washed has muscled its way into the shot – feel sorry for the Comma 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 06-Jul-20 03:45 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=155670 time=1593810097 user_id=11426]...In recent years, my local woods, ten minutes walk away, have been colonised by Silver-washed Fritillaries. No longer is it necessary to travel to southernmost parts of England to see this magnificent species! 😊

That's excellent, Mark. This is one species that **does** seem to be extending its range. I particularly like the females; they remind me a bit of Cardinals.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Jul-20 08:47 PM GMT

Funnily enough, it's another one of those situations, Wurzel. There were loads of bramble flowers to choose from, yet they both picked the same one!

Thanks David, it's a very welcome new colonist. And you're right, they do remind us of those magnificent cardinals, and only slightly smaller.

More good news shortly, but first,

With a short window of good weather this morning, I headed down to Denbies, in Surrey. Actually, it was fairly quiet, and Denbies has yet to really get going. But I did see my first Chalkhill Blues of the year. These are perhaps my favourite high summer butterflies, and will now be my constant companions on my downland walks for the rest of the summer.



There were also a few Dark Green Fritillaries present. By late morning, cloud had invaded, and the day was over.



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 07-Jul-20 08:58 PM GMT

I missed you again, Mark! I was at Denbies this morning as well, finding just a single Chalkhill, and getting stuck with an interesting Small Copper somewhere else on the hillside. 😊 It was generally pretty quiet like you say, but hopefully within a week or two things will change.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Jul-20 09:38 PM GMT

Yes, don't know how I missed you! I saw 4 Chalkhills, three in the first section, and one at the bottom of the hill. Congratulations on your fantastic Small Copper!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 08-Jul-20 08:38 PM GMT

Lovely to see those Chalkhills, Mark, even if it does mean that summer is now starting to wane slightly.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Jul-20 10:13 PM GMT

Still much to look forward to, David. The downs are about to come alive with Chalkhill Blues, then by the end of this month, brilliant Silver Spotted Skippers will follow. Then, in late August, second generation Adonis Blues, to name but a few!



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Jul-20 10:19 PM GMT

Well, I hope we, in England and Wales at least, got to enjoy the rain today. But life is full of surprises! When the rain stopped for a while, the common near my home produced this rather lovely, and most unexpected, Brown Argus. I had to go back and get my camera!



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Jul-20 12:37 PM GMT

More good news!

The grassy common behind my house, where I spend so much of my spare time, is being colonised by Marbled Whites. Over the last two or three years, I have occasionally seen one over there, but put it down to the odd individual, wandering through the countryside. However this year, I've had multiple

sightings, including up to three adults together.

Any increase in butterflies is welcome, but particularly so for the Marbled Whites, as they are one of the loveliest species of early to high summer. They have been common for many years near the Essex coast, and numbers have been increasing. But I live in the far west of the county, well away from these populations. The grassy common where I live is gently north-facing, and appears suitable. So I hope numbers will continue to increase in the coming years!



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-20 07:21 PM GMT

That's great news Essex – the first Marbled Whites for me are another one of the important markers of the season 😄😄 Those Chalkhills – stunning! 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 10-Jul-20 05:47 PM GMT

I had a Marbled White on my local patch the other week which is only a few miles from the Essex Border, and since I've been visiting Epping Forest more often than usual this year for obvious reasons, I've got chatting to some local enthusiasts and they seem to be colonising the plains there too by all accounts. It's all good news on that front 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 10-Jul-20 07:19 PM GMT

Hi Mark, cracking Marbled Whites.

They are popping up all over the place around my local patch this year, definitely one of the success stories around here 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 10-Jul-20 07:39 PM GMT

That's great to hear, Mark. 😊 They do seem to be spreading out everywhere – I've had a few on my local patch two years running now, and a very attractive addition to the local butterfly population they are too. I believe they are increasing their range in places like Yorkshire as well.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 12-Jul-20 08:25 AM GMT

Encouraging news, Mark. They are increasing in numbers and range in SE Wales too, although on the Gower, they remain stubbornly wedded to certain isolated locations where they can be very common.

It's odd how they go missing suddenly on seemingly suitable territory close to their established colonies. They are certainly fussier than Meadow Browns!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jul-20 11:49 PM GMT

Late last week, I had the pleasure of showing a close friend round some of my favourite Sussex sites. It was not really a day for taking masses of butterfly pictures, however, my first ever mating pair of DGF, seen at Chantry Hill, Storrington, were difficult to resist!



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-20 07:23 PM GMT

Cracking shot Essex 😊 It seems that there are now three positions in the butterfly Karma sutra – wings open, wings closed and one with wings open the other with wings closed 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 19-Jul-20 07:59 PM GMT

Nice find, Mark. Not something you come across every day.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jul-20 11:48 PM GMT

The Fleam Dyke is an ancient chalk earthworks that rises above the flat arable prairies of Cambridgeshire. Formally much overgrown and neglected, much conservation work has been done here in recent years, with spectacular results! For now it teems with butterflies in high summer, with Chalkhill Blues outnumbering all other species combined. A real success story! Hares can be seen in the surrounding arable fields as well.

Despite unsettled conditions, rather blustery weather on Saturday, the Chalkhill Blues in particular put on a good show. One of the loveliest high summer butterflies. I also found wild candytuft here, the only other places I have seen it is Aston Rowant.



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 28-Jul-20 08:54 AM GMT

Sounds like a good spot, Mark. 😊 Wild candytuft – isn't that the foodplant of the Southern Small White – worth looking out for caterpillars I suppose, if this species is currently on our doorstep waiting to (possibly) sneak over... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Jul-20 09:35 PM GMT

[quote=millerd post_id=156666 time=1595922897 user_id=9839]..Wild candytuft – isn't that the foodplant of the Southern Small White – worth looking out for caterpillars I suppose, if this species is currently on our doorstep waiting to (possibly) sneak over..

It is indeed, Dave. Any time now for this species to be recorded in the UK. I think all we need is one more summer that provides optimum conditions for them.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Jul-20 12:30 AM GMT

It's certainly is a caterpillar foodplant for SSW, I Europe at least. Hopefully it can utilise other plants as well, for wild candytuft is far too scarce to support a population on it's own.

Perhaps we need to have a big publicity drive to plant more candytuft in gardens. It's quick, easy and colourful!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 29-Jul-20 09:50 AM GMT

How readily would it grow in the UK, Mark? Does it need certain conditions that the UK is unlikely to provide?

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 29-Jul-20 04:02 PM GMT

I'm very envious of your mating DGF Mark – that's one way of getting closer to them I assume? Or are they like Meadow Brown and take off in cop as soon as you blink?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Jul-20 11:22 PM GMT

Hi David, candytuft is the easiest stuff in the world to grow though, being annual, you have to re-sow it every year. Simply spread the seeds over bare ground in April, rake it in, and water it. Simples! Packets of seeds are easy to find at garden centres or small holdings.

Hi Pauline, this pair took of several times, the female flying with the male trailing behind. But they didn't go far. My biggest worry was that they would separate, if I kept disturbing them, before mating was complete. But, after taking the pictures, I left them to it.

Mid to late July sees the Gatekeepers reach their peak. They have taken over from Meadow Browns and Ringlets, which are rapidly disappearing. Lovely butterflies, these.



The dark, summer forms of Speckled Wood are now about, too.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Jul-20 11:06 PM GMT

Chalkhill Blues are probably my favourite butterfly of high summer. So, before August begins, I had to get another trip in to see them! My choice of site was a good one, the Lydden Temple Ewell reserve in Kent. A fantastic emergence here this year and, getting here early, we managed to see many

hundreds of these wonderful butterflies before they really got going. They are now at their peak!



Females are also now about.



Small Coppers were seen in small numbers.



A couple of second generation Small Blue were found, as well as some food plants, kidney vetch.



Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the day was the sheer numbers of second generation Dingy Skippers. Never before have I seen more than a couple, but this time we found 20+, and there must have been dozens, perhaps even hundreds, on site. They ranged from worn.



To very fresh





To be continued...

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 31-Jul-20 08:50 AM GMT

Lovely Chalkhills and fascinating to hear about the numbers of Dingies. They must be having a complete second brood down there by the sound of it, though ones and twos seem to be turning up on most sites at the moment. I've seen them in three completely different spots so far. Extraordinary.

Looking forward to the next episode – you are tempting me down to Kent... 😊

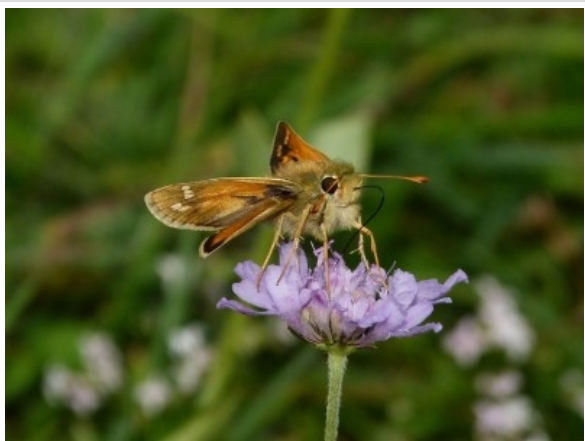
Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Aug-20 10:28 PM GMT

If you are going Dave, get down there as soon as you can, as the peak won't last much longer!

I was hoping for the first Silver Spotted Skippers, but for a long time it seemed I would be leaving empty handed. This was no disaster, as I had seen some brilliant stuff down there. However, I eventually found some at the far west end of the site, near the pine trees. Not many, there will be many more in a couple of weeks.





Finally, towards the end of the day, I found some nice groups of roosting Blues, including some nice Common Blues.



Re: essex buzzard

by kevlng, 02-Aug-20 12:41 PM GMT

Hi Essex,

I'm loving your Chalk Hill Blue photos. It's been a few years since I visited Fleam Dyke. I usually do an annual trip to nearby Devils Dyke and see them. Last year I did a count of nearly 2000. Nice to see some 2nd brood Dingies amongst your photos too. Are the Cambridgeshire sites good for 2nd broods too?

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-Aug-20 11:48 PM GMT

Hi Kev,

I think it would be worth checking Devils Dyke in the next week or two. It was closed when we were there, as the Newmarket races were on. I've never seen so many elsewhere as I am now, so this is the best year to try!

Re: essex buzzard

by ernie f, 03-Aug-20 04:26 PM GMT

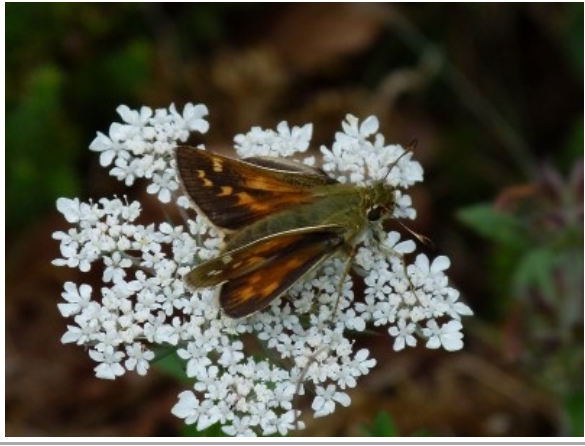
Just catching up and saw your mating pair of DGF's. That's one I don't have in my collection and I don't suppose too many people do.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Aug-20 09:59 PM GMT

Thanks Ernie, yes, I was pleased with that one!

Yesterday I had time for an afternoon trip to Aston Rowant. The main target here was, of course, the Silver Spotted Skippers. My favourite late-summer butterfly was here in good numbers, and will soon reach it's peak. I just love their character, and everything with them is top speed. Later this week, temperatures will increase and photography will become difficult. But this day was far more pleasant, at around 21C.



Chalkhill Blues are still present in good numbers, though not as many as I saw in Kent last week, and are past their best. Here is one of the better ones.



I hope to return here later in the month, to see how things are getting on.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-20 10:24 PM GMT

Fantastic set of shots Essex 😊😊 The Silver-spots are definitely one of the cutest looking butterflies which belies their temperature dependent temperament – anything above 22 degrees and they're almost impossible 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 06-Aug-20 05:35 PM GMT

Nice range of species you've seen lately, Mark. Great that Chalkhills are doing so well, and good to see second brood Small Blues and Dingies. Your underside shot of *tages* is especially nice.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Aug-20 10:31 PM GMT

On Tuesday (yesterday) I had a spare afternoon, so I headed back down to the Lydden Temple Ewell reserve. This is one of the best sites I know for Silver Spotted Skippers, and there has been a splendid emergence since my last visit a couple weeks ago. They are now abundant, with many hundreds, or more likely thousands, on site. Sometimes, whole clumps of Skippers would shot past, in pursuit of mates or rivals, and they make a wonderful sight in the late-summer sunshine.





Most of the Chalkhill Blues are now worn, and their numbers are now rapidly declining. However, a good sprinkling of fresh Adonis Blues have now emerged, though they weren't posing for picture-taking! But here are a couple I'm happy with, including this mating pair.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 19-Aug-20 10:35 PM GMT

Hi! essex, I seem to miss them every year when in Kent, I'm just too early for them, love the shot of the Adonis, hope fully I'll get them next year 😊
Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 20-Aug-20 07:49 AM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=157498 time=1597872678 user_id=11426] On Tuesday (yesterday) I had a spare afternoon, so I headed back down to the Lydden Temple Ewell reserve. This is one of the best sites I know for Silver Spotted Skippers, and there has been a splendid emergence since my last visit a couple weeks ago. They are now abundant, with many hundreds, **or more likely thousands**, on site.

🤔 Those are serious numbers, Mark. Must be wonderful to see so many at a single site.

Nice to see fresh Adonis Blues return for their late summer flight period. There's still plenty to keep us interested.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-20 08:27 PM GMT

That first female is an absolute stunner Essex 🤩👍 They are fantastic when fresh and that one looks in mint condish and you've caught the light perfectly on it = gurt lush 😊😁

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Aug-20 10:15 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie. The problem is, if you visit during the Adonis Blue season, you would miss the Chalkhill Blues, Heath Fritillaries and other stuff you saw in July. That would change if you moved down, of course...

Thanks David. Seeing Silver Spotted Skippers is special anyway, but the numbers here are phenomenal. Surely one of the very best sites in Britain, for these and other butterflies!

Thanks Wurzel. Yes, she was a lovely looking adult, and well behaved, too, posing nicely.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Aug-20 09:31 PM GMT

On Sunday, it was time for my last visit to Aston Rowant of the year. My main target this time was the chiltern gentian, as they weren't out a couple of weeks ago. They were soon found, on the southern side, I have never seen them on the north side. They are attractive, if unspectacular flowers of the end of summer and early autumn, and are special to this area.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Aug-20 09:42 PM GMT

Chiltern gentians.



Aston Rowant had an end of season feel to it, with far fewer Silver Spotted Skippers and other species than last time, and most of these were rather worn. It must be said, though, that the weather wasn't very good. We also found three Adonis Blues, though none were worthy of photography. It's time to accept the inevitable.





Ravens were much in evidence. Up to 9 together at one point, and they gave us a cracking display of synchronised flying and gliding. They are clearly much at home here, despite being a fairly recent re-colonist. They were the highlight of the day, along with the Chiltern gentians.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Aug-20 11:20 PM GMT

Yesterday I had a spare afternoon, so I headed back to the Lydden Temple Ewell reserve in Kent. Having had sunshine most of the way down, I arrived to thunder and torrential rain! However, during the few sunny spells before and after, I saw far more Silver Spotted Skippers than I had the day before at Aston Rowant. They were in better condition, too.



Adonis Blues were about too, though only in low numbers. Had the weather been better, though, I may have seen more.



Buzzards have again bred successfully, producing two young. They have found a wonderful place to set up home, and the young have found their wings far more quickly here than in the flat, arable countryside where I live. The slope offers commanding views and excellent updrafts in which to practice their flying skills. There is an abundance of food, including rabbits, here too!

Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 26-Aug-20 08:31 AM GMT

Hello Essex ,My findings were much as yours at Temple Ewell , I was there a couple of days back,started out early ,still very high numbers of Chalkhill Blues ,all past their best, on the wing ,the Adonis Blues ,seemed to take to the wing a bit later than the Chalkhills ,but when they did get going ,found a reasonable number nearly all males.....very few females !

As you say plenty of Silver Spots still about (a pretty good season !) but i only saw 1 fresh individual ,Common Blues and Brown Args (very few !) all well past there best ,but some very fresh looking Meadow Browns . also plenty of Autumn Ladies tresses.

I wondered what the irritating " squeaky gate " noise was ,which carried on all the time i was there ,i did wonder if it was young Buzzards ! Didn,t manage any Wartbiters did you ??

Do you ever have any problems with Dogs up there ,i was rushed by a big black job ,last time i was there , it stopped me in my tracks.....it was followed a few seconds later ,by an out of breath owner.....who just about managed to control it (after some antics) about three weeks back ,i watched a lercher ,chasing the cattle ,it was some time before the owner could control the mutt ,and both came VERY very close to getting kicked for their trouble !

Regards Allan.W.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Aug-20 11:43 PM GMT

Hi Allan, I echo most of what you say, though I have never seen wartbiters there myself.

Silver Spotted Skippers have had a fabulous season there, especially at the Lydden end. A sprinkling of Adonis Blues, though not as many as in spring. The weather was much better then, though!

Never had any problems with dogs there myself, but don't get me started on out of control dogs and their owners.

A male Clouded yellow was present, too.

This is one of the very best sites I visit, both for wildlife and scenery!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 27-Aug-20 10:43 PM GMT

Fair play for your determination to continue following that storm, Mark. Good to see your Silver Spotted Skippers are so numerous and that last 'electric' blue Adonis was worth the drenching on its own. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Sep-20 10:09 PM GMT

On bank holiday Monday, it was time for probably my last trip to the Lydden Temple Ewell reserve in Kent

All three Whites were found at the Temple Ewell end. Most numerous by far were Small Whites.



Meadow Browns were still abundant, having long gone from the meadows where I live.



Adonis Blues were present throughout this large reserve, but not in high numbers. Most were already showing their age, but there were a few good ones.



Perhaps the most remarkable thing I saw here was this Jersey tiger moth. When I saw it in flight, I thought it was a Painted Lady. Never knowingly seen this moth before so, although a little tattered, was a good sighting.



Numbers of Silver Spotted Skippers have crashed, and were much harder to find, having been abundant a week ago. So I'll finish with this habit picture, which clearly shows the blue hue of Devils-bit scabious. Makes you wonder what would happen if a few Marsh Fritillaries were introduced.



Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 06-Sep-20 08:47 AM GMT

You mentioned an 'end of season feel' in one of your recent posts, definitely had that feel at Mill hill yesterday, had to work hard to find anything that didn't look close to the end of its short life. A couple of freshly minted Cloudies gave me the run around before heading north so perhaps they think there's still some life left in the season. I also echo your Jersey Tiger looking like a Painted Lady, that's always my first instinct when one flies past. It's been an incredible year for them, I always see some at work but I had 10 flying around me at one point this summer! Hopefully bump into you in the coming weeks when the LTB start emerging 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-20 07:44 PM GMT

Lovely set of posts and images Essex 😊 There is a definite 'winding down' feel in the air at the moment though there's still time for a bit of rallying – fingers crossed 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 07-Sep-20 10:04 PM GMT

[\[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=157942 time=1599253765 user_id=11426\]](#)...Most numerous by far were Small Whites.

They're having a good late summer period round my way too, Mark. Wish I could say the same about Large and Green Veined. 😊

That's a very nicely marked Meadow Brown, by the way. Quite reminiscent of those found in the south of France.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Sep-20 10:55 PM GMT

Welcome to autumn. This is the season when we see things wind down. Bright days can still be warm at first, but the rapidly diminishing day length brings an inevitable decline in sightings. However, if the weather is kind, there should still be a few new emerging broods, Clouded Yellow, Small Coppers and Walls, and maybe even a few Common Blues. However, last year there was not a single spell of warm, dry weather after mid September, and very little of note was seen after. In contrast, the autumn of 2017 was so good, I saw 7 species of butterflies on 1 November! And by then, we are

just a few weeks from the shortest day.

So, it's time for a visit to Bedford's Park. Getting there early, the first thing I found was this Painted Lady, by far the best one of the half-dozen I've seen this year.



This is a good Small Copper site, and several were found, some worn, some fresh.



It was nice to see a couple of third generation Large Whites. Here is a female, a most attractive insect.



Surprisingly, I only found one Comma, this is usually a good place for them. If the weather holds, I will return in a couple of weeks, to see if numbers have increased.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-20 07:42 PM GMT

Cracking set of shots Essex – a 🍀 for the Small Copper 😊 Cracking shot that! Last year was a bit dismal at the end of the season – it was suddenly all over and just fizzled out 😞 Hopefully things might be a bit better this year.

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 11-Sep-20 08:54 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=158067 time=1599688508 user_id=11426]...Getting there early, the first thing I found was this Painted Lady, by far the best one of the half-dozen I've seen this year.

That one's mint, Mark. You can see a lustre on the hindwings so it must be exceedingly fresh.

I reckon I'm still to hit a dozen in 2020, and that includes week long trips to southern France and Spain!!!

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 12-Sep-20 07:32 PM GMT

A particularly fresh Painted Lady, Mark. Lovely shot. 😊 Some eggs must have got themselves laid somehow earlier in the year! A typical upside-down Small Copper too!

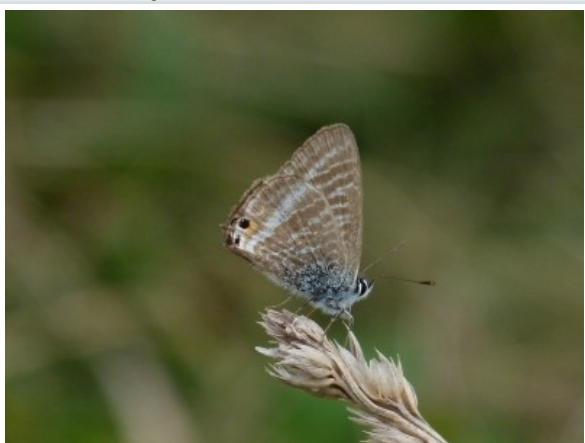
Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-Oct-20 10:22 PM GMT

On Tuesday, I headed down to Sussex. Knowing I was late to the party, I still headed first to Whitehawk Hill. It took until lunchtime to brighten up, and the LTB were disappointing, with just a couple of very worn males seen, barely recognisable by their scaleless wings. Though, of course, the underside is distinctive enough.



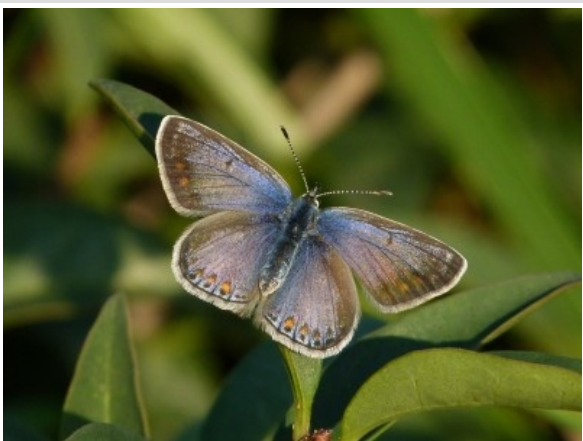
A couple of Common Blues were in better condition.



Thankfully, there are plenty of other sites nearby, so I headed to Shoreham beach. Here, in autumn, lizards love to bask on the old walls, and sometimes the newer ones as well. Nowhere else, do I see so many together.



Then onto Mill Hill, where there was just time for a short visit. What amazed me more than anything was the staggering numbers of Common Blues, far more than I ever see here in spring of summer. Granted, most were worn, but there were a few good ones.





A couple of Clouded Yellow were seen. Photo opportunities have eluded me this year, hopefully my chance will come in October. But there were still several Walls, in various stages of wear.



Despite the disappointment with the LTB's, this was still a good day.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Oct-20 01:17 PM GMT

A recent visit to Bedfords park found this nice pair of Small Coppers, but no Commas. Numbers of Hutchinsoni were reasonable, so where are they all this year?



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 04-Oct-20 02:03 PM GMT

Nice pair of Coppers, Mark. 😊 I have also noticed a dearth of Commas this autumn – just one freshly-emerged one a few days ago when normally there are quite a few still around. September weather (until the last week) was pretty good too.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Oct-20 07:09 PM GMT

Yes you're right Dave, September's weather was outstanding, so that can't be the problem.

However, it's been so wet the last few days that here, we had already beat the October average of rain by yesterday lunchtime.

Let's hope that doesn't bring an early end to sightings.

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 04-Oct-20 07:44 PM GMT

I'm with you both on the dearth of Commas this autumn. They had a fantastic spring, plenty of hutchinsoni and then almost nothing 🤔

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 05-Oct-20 10:12 PM GMT

Cracking shot Essex – a species I'd love to get in my 'In Cop Collection' 🍷 😊 Perhaps the Commas sensed something that was coming and went into hibernation early – it looks like we're in the middle of a three week cycle of crud weather now and who knows what lies beyond that? 🤔 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 08-Oct-20 10:37 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=158632 time=1601813870 user_id=11426]A recent visit to Bedfords park found this nice pair of Small Coppers, but no Commas. Numbers of Hutchinsoni were reasonable, so where are they all this year?

Been a peculiar year for Commas, Mark, and like you I'm not sure why.

Common in the earlier part of spring, but they then practically vanished, rallied a little around midsummer but failed to turn up in anything other than small numbers afterwards.

Oddly enough, I've seen one or two every time I've been out these last 3 weeks or so. 🤔

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 09-Oct-20 09:07 AM GMT

Yes, that is a shot and a half Mark, superbly captured.
I think this Autumn has been excellent for late butterflies, including Small Coppers.

Stay safe and well,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 09-Oct-20 07:06 PM GMT

Cracking Small Coppers Mark, very nice 🍷 😊

[quote=trevor_post_id=158745_time=1602230844_user_id=13654] I think this Autumn has been excellent for late butterflies, including Small Coppers.

It has been a very poor autumn for butterflies around my patch here in the midlands. Apart from the Small Coppers the other week there has been very little else still flying.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Oct-20 10:31 PM GMT

Yes, I'm with Neil on that one!

However, on Tuesday there was some sunshine, so I headed back to Bedfords park, more in hope than expectation. However, despite all the rain, the cold and lack of sunshine, there were still a few Small Coppers flying. They are clearly tough little insects!

And today, at work, I saw a Small Tortoiseshell!





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 24-Oct-20 11:20 AM GMT

Cracking Small Coppers Essex 😊😄 I think it's very nice of nature to leave such a great looking species until late in the season 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 24-Oct-20 03:53 PM GMT

Great to see those Coppers, Mark. Haven't stumbled across any for a couple of weeks now so I fear my next ones will be in late April 2021! 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Nov-20 09:42 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel and David.

GR!

Recently back from my trip to southern Greece. The fact that this holiday went ahead at all is a triumph over adversity, considering the hurdles in the way. Even once arrived, there was a chance we might be called back home at any moment. Then, while we were there, lockdown in GB was announced, and there was the anxious wait to see if our flight back would be changed or cancelled. In the event, the trip went without incident – we were incredibly lucky.

That considered, we were always going to have a great time here. There is something rather nice in being able to walk around in shirts and shorts in November! This was no butterfly trip, instead this late-autumn holiday to the Peloponnese was to see the famous array of autumn flowering bulbs, which avoided the heat and dry of the long summer by responding to the autumn rain, and flowering then. But I did see butterflies, including a couple of real belters, and as this is a butterfly site, I'll start with these.

First up was this black Skipper. My first instinct was Mediterranean Skipper. But having checked the books, it appears to be Pygmy Skipper, although it was quite large. Having never seen either before, I'm happy to be corrected by anyone with more experience!





Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 19-Nov-20 11:10 AM GMT

Well done for getting away, Mark. Your timing was excellent.

As for your skipper, I'm not even going to try to 'correct' you. I had my own issue with Mediterranean/Pygmy Skipper during my trip to Spain last August. Even Tolman & Lewington is ambiguous, or even plain wrong, on the differences/distribution of these species.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Nov-20 09:48 PM GMT

Thanks David. The joy of actually getting away in the end cannot be exaggerated.

I'm not certain on the identification of the Skipper either.

Although the White spots confirm it's a female, the differences between the black Skippers seem small and confusing, especially for those of us who are not familiar with them. But still, it was great to see it!

The other new species for me was the Plain Tiger. Good numbers of these were present at some of the coastal sites we visited. They were a splendid sight. What a great thing to see in November! 😊





They were clearly breeding here, too, for we found the caterpillars.



Whether they live here year-round, or whether the Plain Tigers migrate here in spring, breed and fly in summer and autumn, before flying south, I'm not sure. Certainly, they were an unexpected pleasure! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 20-Nov-20 07:21 PM GMT

I'm glad to hear that you got away Mark 😊

Those Plain Tigers certainly brightened up a dull and drizzly Friday 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Nov-20 10:23 PM GMT

Thanks Neil.

It's amazing to think I was seeing stuff like this a couple of weeks ago!

Other exotics were seen. Walls and Large Walls were seen in several places.



Bath Whites were common throughout the area, though few settled. This early morning adult did land to bask.



Here is a Mallow Skipper. Several were found on a patch of waste ground near Athina (Athens).



by essexbuzzard, 20-Nov-20 10:36 PM GMT

This Langs Short-tailed Blue didn't go unnoticed among the Plain Tigers.



This Speckled Wood is rather more familiar.



Brown Argus were one of the species mostly frequently seen.



Perhaps the most abundant species was the Clouded Yellow, common everywhere.



Other species seen, but not photographed ,were Large White, Small White, Small Copper,Long-tailed Blue, Common Blue, Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Small Heath and Hummingbird Hawkmoth.

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 21-Nov-20 09:28 PM GMT

Certainly a destination for a November break, Mark.
Some great sightings and images to look back on.
Glad this covid bug didn't spoil things for you in the end.

Stay well,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 22-Nov-20 07:38 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Essex – those Plain Tigers certainly hit the spot on a dreary and cold November evening 🍷 – nothing that plain about them to my mind 😊😄

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 22-Nov-20 09:34 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=159483 time=1605822508 user_id=11426].The other new species for me was the Plain Tiger. Good numbers of these were present at some of the coastal sites we visited. They were a splendid sight. What a great thing to see in November!

Great to see this stunning species in any month of the year, Mark. They look in beautiful condition too.

To make things even better, you saw early stages as well! Fabulous! The way things are going we may see them turning up here in the next 20 years or so.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Nov-20 07:06 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor. It was touch and go throughout the run up. Thank goodness it did go, the images and memories should help get me through the winter.

Hi Wurzel, no. Nothing plain about them whatsoever, far from it. They were a joy to behold!

Thanks David. Perhaps the fact I didn't expect to see them made those Plain Tigers even better! They would be splendid at any time of year, let alone November!

Of course, the main target of this trip was to see the glorious sight of the autumn flowering bulbs in this part of Europe. Especially for those of us who are more used to seeing bulbs in spring!

Here is *Crocus mazziaricus*. Normally the large flowers are pure white, but occasionally they are pale lavender, as in this picture.



Crocus melantherus is smaller, with black currant stripes on the outside.



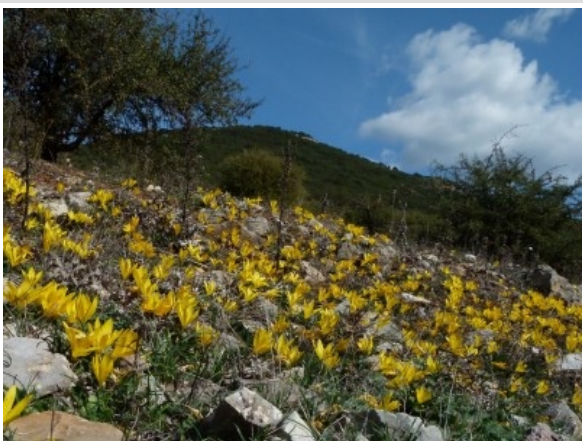
Cyclamen hederifolium is the one which grows happily in British gardens. This was the first time I had seen it in the wild.



Here is *Colchicum boissieri*. It looks like a crocus, but is in fact a smaller species of our meadow saffron.



And these are *Sternbergia*. These also look like a crocus, but are actually much more closely related to the daffodils. Even in Greece, they usually found on hot, dry sites. En masse, they make a splendid sight.





Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 01-Dec-20 06:53 PM GMT

Hard to believe that's autumn rather than spring, Mark. 🤪

That must have been a rewarding trip, particularly given the circumstances?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Dec-20 10:01 PM GMT

It was David, I can assure you!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Dec-20 10:21 PM GMT

Autumn squill was common in the Peloponnese. I have also seen it growing on the coast path in Cornwall!



The next crocus we found was *Crocus hadriaticus*.



The delicate flowers of *Allium callimischon* were quite attractive.



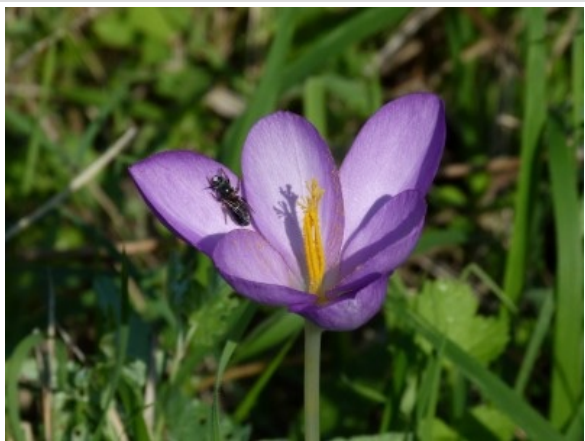
This is cyclamen crassifolium. It is very similar to hererifolium, but the flowers are scented.



The blooms of crocus boryi were small, but abundant in many places. Easily recognisable by the white stamens.



In contrast, the blooms of the endemic Crocus goulimyi come in varying shades of purple. A great rarity but, where found, it is often abundant.



Here is another of the small Colchicums, this time the endemic Colchicum psaridis.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 11-Dec-20 08:16 PM GMT

Such an eye opener these images, Mark. The good old Greeks must feel like it's spring practically all year round!

Factor in the rare butterflies and it makes you feel like relocating permanently.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Dec-20 10:42 PM GMT

Thanks David. Well, I don't know about permanently, but relocating for autumn and winter would do for me!

The last Crocus we found was the largest of all, *Crocus niveus*. Usually white, but sometimes lavender.Splendid!



The first Narcissi were starting. Here, we have the scented Narcissi tazetta.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Dec-20 11:04 PM GMT

The other daffodils we found were the rather dainty *Narcissus obsoletus*.



A highlight of the tour was seeing the Greek cyclamen, *Cyclamen graecum*. These really need hot, dry conditions. Even here, they were growing in full sun.



One of the things I was really looking forward to in Greece, was seeing the autumn flowering snowdrops, *Galanthus Reginae-olgae*. And they didn't disappoint. Autumn snowdrops are distinctive, not only by flowering in autumn, but also the leaves are small or absent at flowering time.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Dec-20 03:17 PM GMT

[quote=essexbuzzard post_id=159859 time=1608332655 user_id=11426]...One of the things I was really looking forward to in Greece, was seeing the autumn flowering snowdrops, Galanthus Reginae- olgae. And they didn't disappoint. Autumn snowdrops are distinctive, not only by flowering in autumn, but also the leaves are small or absent at flowering time.

Fascinating, Mark. I never knew there was such an array of autumn-flowering bulbs in that part of the world. Those snowdrops are delightful, but I guess they never actually see any snow? 😊

I saw my first UK snowdrops this morning and it's hard to imagine them being anything other than early season flora.

Looks like you had a productive trip which, in a year like this, is worth double! Hope you had a good Christmas and all the best for the New Year. I'll be in touch soon.