

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 18-Feb-20 12:44 PM GMT

Spring is only round the corner

I haven't posted on my PD since before my trip to the USA (documented in a separate thread), mainly because I became completely bogged down by the task of sorting thousands of photos from that trip! Nonetheless I've had a busy winter chasing those feathered, back-boned, winter-active species of butterfly... 😊 Since I suspect my first 'real' butterfly of 2020 can't be far away, I thought I'd post a few highlights to bring things up to date.

For my (September) birthday, my parents and I walked the spectacular coastline of Flamborough Head. Despite a strong breeze there were a few butterflies around, including a Small Copper that gave me pause for thought. Probably just worn, though!



Later in the month, a real highlight: my first record of Comma in my small back garden. I was surprised (but delighted) that it chose the butterfly feeder given to me by my partner over the thriving buddleia a few metres away. Perhaps the swarms of Painted Ladies, Small Tortoiseshells, Red Admirals and Peacocks drove it to the quieter artificial option!



With that, I was off to the States and the butterflies were well over before my return. So some highlights from over the winter:

Kingfishers often sit in front of one of the hides at Tophill Low NR, near Beverley, but rarely this close!



A Stoat has been regularly seen at my local patch, North Cave Wetlands, but I was lucky that on this occasion I spotted it before it spotted me.



Star birds from NCW: Bullfinch, Bittern, Goldcrest and Green Woodie.





A Kestrel on a frosty morning at RSPB St Aidan's impersonates a Weeping Angel.



Wonderful Short-eared Owls on my first visit to the Nene Washes.



A close, but very obscured, encounter with a Long-eared Owl at RSPB Saltholme.



A visit to WWT Caerlaverock, with its large flock of overwintering Whooper Swans and ever-endearing Tree Sparrows.





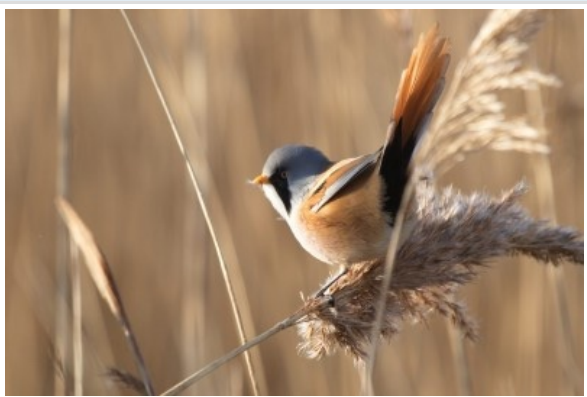
Barn Owls joining the Shorties on a return trip to the Nene Washes.



A Wallcreeper – no! A confused Treecreeper on a churchyard wall in Filey.



Brilliant Bearded Reedlings at Alkborough Flats on the south bank of the Humber.





And last but not least, a Little Owl earlier this month (by far the best work of art at the mind-bending Yorkshire Sculpture Park)!



A good winter but I am ready for warmth and winged wonderment again.

Re: CallumMac

by essexbuzzard, 18-Feb-20 10:44 PM GMT

A nice collection of birds, Callum. Bearded Reedlings, in particular, are not easy to photograph, so well done.

Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 19-Feb-20 07:32 PM GMT

A stunning array of birds Callum, they'd all look good on my year list 😊 Especially like the Kestrel shot, you've caught it in an interesting looking pose 🍷 Also love the Bearded Tits - I've not seen those for a good few years now 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 21-Feb-20 09:32 AM GMT

Thanks both. I was also very pleased with the Beardies, a bird I'd started to believe might be mythical! And that particular Kestrel was very engaging, I had a hard choice between several photos of it.

Re: CallumMac

by David M, 21-Feb-20 10:24 PM GMT

This is a butterfly forum, but the majority of us are interested in birds too, and that last sequence is right up there, Callum, particularly the bearded tits, which look absolutely divine.

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 24-Feb-20 08:25 AM GMT

David M wrote:

This is a butterfly forum, but the majority of us are interested in birds too

I wholeheartedly agree with that sentiment - I always enjoy seeing what other posters have been up to when the butterflies aren't playing ball, though I

do try to keep the bulk of my PD about butterflies.

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 06-Apr-20 07:56 AM GMT

Hope everybody's keeping well, or as well as could be expected. It's been slow going up here in Yorkshire, as the weather hasn't been playing ball, so until yesterday I've been limited to a couple of garden fly-throughs by Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells. But with sunshine forecast, cabin fever threatening to set in, and waistlines starting to creak, L and I decided to take an extended "exercise walk" and took aim for Allerthorpe Common, some three miles away.

The way there and back – along usually busy roads and then along a bridle path through freshly-ploughed fields – was surprisingly quiet, with just a couple of Small Tortoiseshells to see. But the Common itself was abuzz with insect life, including (as I'd hoped) a large number of Brimstones. Singles of Comma and Small White took my year's total up to five species.

The only butterfly photo worth sharing:



On the walk back we found an interesting colony of these tiny wasps – does anybody know what they are? They were going in and out of holes in bare dirt, but I couldn't decide whether these were their own holes or whether they were parasitizing Tawny Mining Bees (which were also present).



A real tonic for the soul – let's hope the next step isn't to ban all outdoor exercise!

Re: CallumMac

by millerd, 06-Apr-20 09:38 AM GMT

Good to hear how things are at Allerthorpe, Callum! I would normally be visiting my sister in nearby Wilberfoss for Easter, but obviously not this year, so thank you for providing the news from this spot. Hopefully further sunshine later in the week will bring out even more – maybe even some basking adders too!

Cheers,

Dave

Re: CallumMac

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

Everybody is wary of the rules at present Callum, but hope fully come Summer we'll be able to get out more, five species is great my count is just three 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: CallumMac

by David M, 06-Apr-20 06:03 PM GMT

Glad you managed to get out, Callum, and even better that you got a few butterflies.

I don't think it'll be long before you've caught up – looks like we're in for a few days of mild, pleasant conditions.

Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-20 07:45 PM GMT

Good to see you're getting your exercise Callum and a lovely looking Brimstone 🐛🌱 Your wasp is actually a Cuckoo Bee from the *Nomada* genus and you're right about it parasitizing the Tawny Mining Bees, there is one species which is quite rare called *N.signata* which parasitizes the Tawny Mining Bee though this looks more like *N.leucophthalma*? Here's a link to BWARS which might be worth a look 🐝

<https://www.bwars.com/category/taxonomic-hierarchy/nomada-apidae-bee>

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 06-Apr-20 09:38 PM GMT

Thank you all! It was good to be out and about, although I don't suspect I'll find many species this year.

Wurzel – that's truly remarkable. Not only have you nailed the cuckoo but you've also helped me correct the ID of the host... looking back at my photos of it, I had Clark's Mining Bee (*Andrea clarkella*) not Tawny!

Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-20 10:36 AM GMT

No worries Callum 😊 (blush not opps 😊) it was all down to the excellent website that is BWARS 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

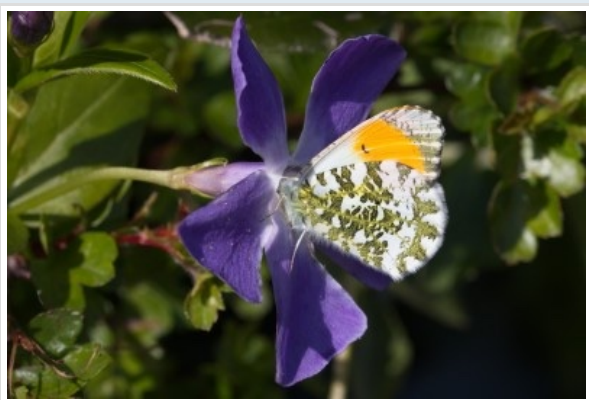
Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 08-Apr-20 07:47 AM GMT

7th April – Pocklington Canal

Sometimes, on a day like yesterday, having the freedom to work flexibly is a real blessing! So L and I headed out for a longish walk soon after lunch, resolving to make up the hours in the evening.

Pocklington Canal seems to be one of the best options for our "exercise walk", being nearby, fairly rich in wildlife, and relatively easy to maintain social distancing so long as you avoid peak dog-walking hours. Yesterday it served up a feast of spring butterflies, including our first GVW of the season (not photographed, as it took shelter within 2m of another household of walkers!) and likewise our first Orange-tips. One of the OTs virtually crawled inside a flower of (Lesser?) Periwinkle in search of nectar.





Also of note – possibly the world's chubbiest bird?



Re: CallumMac

by Goldie M, 08-Apr-20 05:50 PM GMT

Love that bird Callum, 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: CallumMac

by Neil Freeman, 08-Apr-20 07:05 PM GMT

Love that fluffed up Goldcrest Callum 😊 It almost looks like a shot taken in winter.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 08-Apr-20 07:56 PM GMT

Great stuff Callum – it looks like that OT is trying to pass itself as just another petal and failing miserably 😊😊 I know what you mean about the dog walkers 😊 but my main bugbear at the moment is the cyclists that seem to think that they're travelling too quickly to have to worry about staying at least 2m away – they just carry on regardless 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: CallumMac

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

Love the 'chubby bird', Callum, a goldcrest if I'm not mistaken?

Good to see Orange Tips out round your way too. Hope you can eke out sufficient trips to do justice to them!

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 09-Apr-20 08:26 AM GMT

David M wrote:
a goldcrest if I'm not mistaken?

Thanks everyone, yes a Goldcrest. Unusually this one sat still for more than a millisecond!

[quote=Wurzel post_id=151917 time=1586372171 user_id=9821] my main bugbear at the moment is the cyclists that seem to think that they're travelling too quickly to have to worry about staying at least 2m away – they just carry on regardless 😞

Interesting point Wurzel. I noticed this when I was one of the cyclists yesterday! I'm so unused to having to watch the pavement when riding along the road that it took a special mental effort to get into the habit of swinging out into the middle of the road to keep clear of pedestrians. Being able to do that also relies on cars keeping clear and overtaking sensibly, but luckily there weren't many of them around...

Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-20 08:30 AM GMT

From your description Callum you sound like the total opposite of the cyclists I'm having a problem with at the moment 😊, when I'm on the footpath and they're on the road I can get over to one side and it's not a problem 😊 it's when they cycle on the footpath and don't even get to one side that I'm finding frustrating at the moment 😞

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 17-Apr-20 11:43 AM GMT

Of our three regular exercise walk spots, Pocklington Canal is certainly performing best for butterflies. Yesterday (**16th April 2020**) it brought our first Speckled Wood and Large White of the season – neither one stopping to model! The numbers of male Orange-tips have built up over the past week, and yesterday were joined by the first females. Given the unbalanced sex ratio, they were inevitably spending a lot of time fending off unwanted advances!





The canal can get a little busy, especially at dog-walking time, though – so our favoured spot for walking at the moment is Millington Dale. A classic steep-sided chalk-stream valley which empties out of the edge of the Wolds just north of town. I'm holding out a faint hope that it may yield Dingy Skipper when the time comes – otherwise I probably won't see this species in 2020. For now, though, it is rich in Red: with both Kites and –legged Partridges offering good views over the last week, and –starts expected back in the wood imminently!



Re: CallumMac

by Goldie M, 17-Apr-20 11:50 AM GMT

Love the Bird shots Callum and the the Orange tip shots, there seems to be quite a lot of Female Orange Tips this year looking at people's post. Goldie 😊

Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-20 06:04 PM GMT

That is a beautifully marked female OT Callum 😊🌿 lovely and dusky 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: CallumMac

by David M, 18-Apr-20 03:47 PM GMT

Nice little montage, Callum. The partridge is very attractive. Are they common round your way?

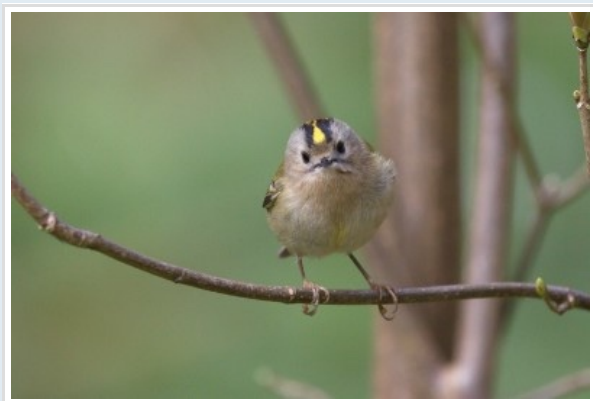
Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 19-Apr-20 09:06 AM GMT

Thank you all. Goldie - maybe they're just getting more attention this year since we can't go off chasing rarities!

David - yes, unfortunately rather too common. We have a couple of big estates in our corner of the Wolds that release thousands of them, along with thousands of pheasants. As a consequence they are easy to find for several miles in any direction.

No butterflies at all on our exercise walk yesterday morning (too cold), but since my last Goldcrest photo was so well received, here's what they look like when they haven't eaten all the pies!



Re: CallumMac

by trevor, 19-Apr-20 09:40 AM GMT

Great shot of that Goldcrest. A very difficult bird to photograph. They never keep still, even for a moment.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: CallumMac

by bugboy, 19-Apr-20 11:51 AM GMT

Lovely little birds aren't they, Goldcrests, and so bold too. Several winters ago I had a small flock of around a dozen flitting around me low down in a tree almost close enough I could reach out and touch them 😊

Re: CallumMac

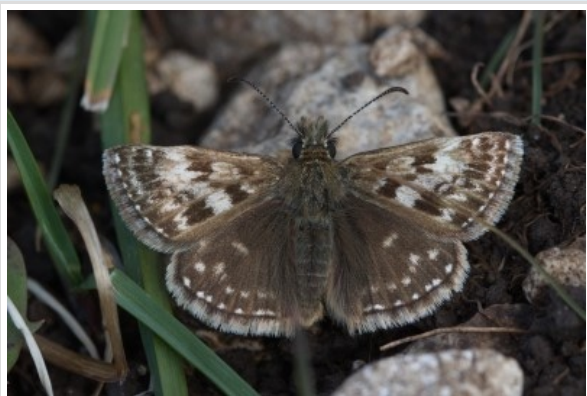
by David M, 22-Apr-20 02:50 PM GMT

That's one helluva Goldcrest image, Callum. Picture postcard stuff. 😊🌿

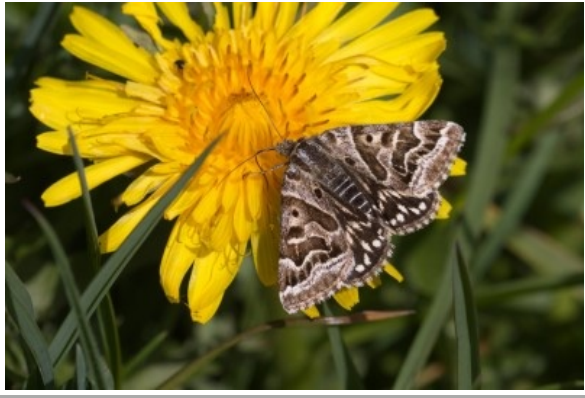
Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 08-May-20 10:15 AM GMT

No Goldcrests this week! With the much cooler weather and a succession of afternoon Zoom meetings, we haven't been out and about so much. However, last weekend's walk up Millington Dale brought unbridled joy as we stumbled upon a small colony of Dingy Skippers. I wasn't sure if I'd see this species in 2020 - I suspected they might be in Millington but had never before seen them there.



A couple of Mother Shiptons (Mothers Shipton?) were also zipping around, making it a little tricky to count the skippers.



A brief detour into the wood at the end of the walk yielded this Dark-bordered Bee-fly, who had obviously got the memo about thorough hand-washing.



Our next outing was down the canal on Tuesday. This was the first time I have got up close and personal with a Ruby-tailed Wasp. I think this is one of those species where you don't realise how beautiful they are until you've really looked closely at one. Stunning!





Orange-tips remain abundant down the canal but most of the overwinterers are gone now, with only a single Brimstone and a couple of Peacocks this week.



This weekend's big project is a complete remodel of the bottom border of our garden. With our house being a rental I have always been a bit nervous of heavy-handed gardening, but having observed the number of butterflies that visited my rescued buddleia last autumn, I finally cracked and ripped out the two horrible, pointless bushes that dominate the back fence. I found a lovely local nursery who grow all their plants in peat-free compost without using pesticides, and bought a range of pollinator favourites from them (including a "Bowles Mauve", a verbena, and a jasmine to climb up the fence itself). I've also ordered some plug plants of Red Valerian, Cuckoo-flower and Wild Strawberry, and some mixed Silene and Birds-foot Trefoil seeds. By this time next year the garden should be much busier with bees and butterflies than it has ever been! 😊

Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 08-May-20 08:12 PM GMT

You did brilliantly with the Mother Shipton Callum – normally they're hiding away in the grass! 😊 Those Ruby wasps are cracking, like little gems – there's one which is metallic emerald green allover – lush 😊😊 However the best by far is an *Osmia caerulescens* which is sometimes a metallic gold like it had been murdered by Goldfinger himself 😊😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: CallumMac

by David M, 10-May-20 10:47 PM GMT

I'm so glad you unearthed those Dingy Skippers, Callum. It's great when you find a new species in an area where you had hitherto never seen them.

Good work with the Mother Shipton too. They are not easy to photograph, although they are an honorary butterfly if ever I saw one.

Re: CallumMac

by Goldie M, 10-May-20 11:09 PM GMT

Hi! Callum, Great shots of the Dingy Skipper, I love the shot of the Gold Crest more though. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: CallumMac

by millerd, 11-May-20 02:02 PM GMT

Very interesting to see those Dingy Skippers at Millington, Callum. 😊 Another spot I've visited, but never at this time of year – usually later on when the Marbled Whites are flying!

Cheers,

Dave

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 12-May-20 08:22 AM GMT

Thanks all!

Wurzel – I'll keep an eye out for that bee. It looks stunning! Not many records up my way but from the distribution map I suspect that it might just be under-recorded.

David – It's certainly interesting to note that I have seen a number of things in this lockdown period that I would usually have travelled further in pursuit of – the Dingies being just the latest example. However, there are also things that I have searched hard for at my lockdown walking sites and failed to find (e.g. Early Purple Orchid).

Thanks Goldie – I just can't resist posting Goldcrests, even though they aren't a butterfly, they're so special!

Dave – yes indeed. I had never properly explored Sylvan Dale (first side-dale on the right) before this spring – I often cycle up Millington but rarely walk there. But we have now seen everything there that I'd usually head to Kiplingcotes to see – Dingies, Small Heath, Wall, Small Copper, Common Blue, you name it. Lower densities, perhaps, but they are all present. However it does look less botanically interesting – a bit overgrown in places, compared to Kip.

Re: CallumMac

by millerd, 12-May-20 09:01 AM GMT

`{quote=CallumMac-post_id=153476-time=1589268137-user_id=15783}` Dave – yes indeed. I had never properly explored Sylvan Dale (first side-dale on the right) before this spring – I often cycle up Millington but rarely walk there. But we have now seen everything there that I'd usually head to Kiplingcotes to see – Dingies, Small Heath, Wall, Small Copper, Common Blue, you name it. Lower densities, perhaps, but they are all present. However it does look less botanically interesting – a bit overgrown in places, compared to Kip. The whole area along the Wolds Way looks ripe for exploration at different stages of the season. I've only ever dipped a toe in during the summer months! I do wonder if the overall warming trend has been enough to allow horseshoe vetch to grow in any of these sheltered valleys (that so resemble bits of the downland of southern England in a lot of ways). It would have to get here somehow of course, and so would any accompanying southern butterfly species – you could imagine Chalkhill Blues flying happily here in August! However, I can't see this happening without artificial help unfortunately.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 12-May-20 10:30 AM GMT

`{quote=millerd-post_id=153479-time=1589270477-user_id=9839}` I do wonder if the overall warming trend has been enough to allow horseshoe vetch

to grow in any of these sheltered valleys (that so resemble bits of the downland of southern England in a lot of ways).

There are records of Horseshoe Vetch at a couple of sites – from the BSBI maps I reckon Thixendale and Cinquefoil Brow, in the last decade. But it's far from widespread, and as you said, the butterflies wouldn't get here on their own.

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 17-May-20 11:42 AM GMT

I have very mixed feelings about this week's change in lockdown restrictions. I fear it may be too far too soon, and we may see a second spike of infections. However, I'm not one to look a gift horse in the mouth, so I've been out and about, making my first visit of the year to a few favourite sites in the area.

On Thursday we took a day's leave and drove up to Pickering to walk up to **Yatts Farm**. The unexpected highlight of the walk up was a Yellow Wagtail – not a species I see often, at all – perched on a dungheap. Strangely this species seems to love dungheaps!



This is one of the best orchid fields in Yorkshire but a few weeks from its best still. Nonetheless I was pleased with my first Early Purples of the year. A single Fly was in flower but had been frost-damaged – a sad sight. I found a few more rosettes so it may be worth a revisit in a week or two!





There was also a single Duchess seen here last year – around half a mile from the nearest known colony – but despite some scrub clearance over the winter, the habitat doesn't look particularly suitable and I didn't see any this year. However, the walk back did produce another unexpected delight. Having been unable to visit my Holly Blue site during lockdown, it was lovely to find this female basking and mineral-hunting on the stony path. She was totally unfussed by our presence and let me take close-ups from several angles.





On Saturday morning, we headed over to **Kiplingcotes Chalk Pit**. A mixture of patchy sunshine and a blustery westerly was enough to keep most of the butterflies down, so we missed out on Common Blues (first Yorkshire record for 2020 reported from here last week) and Walls. However the [not so] Dingy Skippers were out and about.



As I had hoped, the Wild Pansies were at their very best. Despite being a widespread species, this is one of very few spots in the region where it still persists. I got a new low-profile tripod for my birthday back in the autumn, and spent some time with the pansies getting to grips with it.



With grey clouds and wind outside this morning, but a glorious day forecast for Wednesday, I am taking advantage of being able to work flexibly...

Re: CallumMac

by Allan.W., 17-May-20 08:19 PM GMT

Great seeing your shots of Wild Pansy ,something that's more or less absent from my part of Kent ,a plant that I,d like to see ! Nicely captured ! Although wild pansy is very scarce down here ,Field Pansy is numerous ,and we found hundreds of plants today (and yesterday !) also had a bit of luck ,with a couple of Arable plants that I,d wanted to find ,and finally managed it ! namely Venus Looking Glass and Dwarf Spurge ,funnily enough like yourself ,I,ve also just bought a low level tripod ,but haven,t tried it yet.
Regards Allan.W.

Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 17-May-20 08:33 PM GMT

Brilliant shot of the Yellow Wagtail Callum I've not seen one of those for a good few years now 🍷🤔 they used to be a 'given' 😞😞

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: CallumMac

by David M, 20-May-20 07:58 PM GMT

Very satisfying sequence, Callum, and for once I have to admit that pride of place goes to a flower – those wonderful wild pansies.

Quite why this plant's name has connotations of weakness I don't know; they're often the last to wave the white flag at altitude on the continent and, of course, they are attractive to many high-altitude butterflies, Fritillaries in particular.

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 23-May-20 08:33 PM GMT

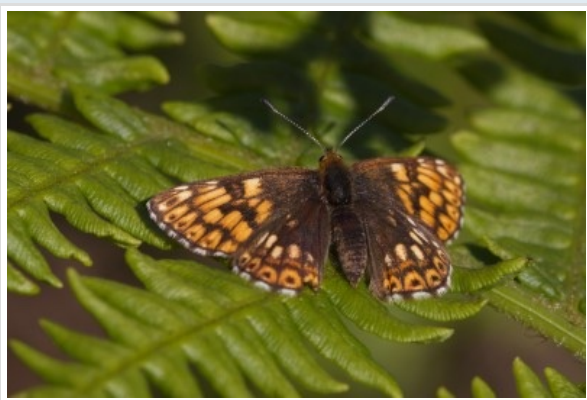
David M wrote:

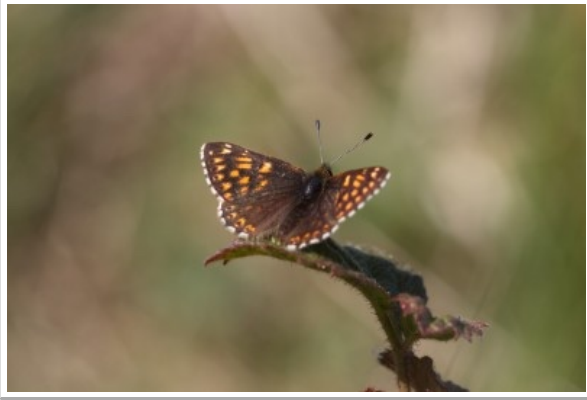
Quite why this plant's name has connotations of weakness I don't know; they're often the last to wave the white flag at altitude on the continent and, of course, they are attractive to many high-altitude butterflies, Fritillaries in particular.

Yes indeed. We recently learned that the Mountain variety grows in abundance near my parents' house in Cumbria – though sadly I won't be able to visit to see them this year!

With Wednesday forecast to be the only good day of the week, we juggled our work days to get the morning off, and made the short hop up to the North York Moors for the first genuine butterflying trip of the year.

We have no way of knowing whether it was an early or late season for the Yorkshire Dukes, since nobody local enough to see them during the original lockdown reported one! But happily they are still flying. We were actually first greeted by a Duke some 50 metres or so beyond the dry-stone wall that forms the traditional boundary of the site – perhaps evidence that the population here is ready to expand? Certainly, the numbers seemed every bit as healthy as on previous visits, despite having probably missed the peak of this year's emergence.





With numbers of butterflies building rapidly and social distancing becoming harder to maintain, we beat a retreat over the hill to my Green Hairstreak colony. I was happy to confirm that they are still present in 2020... and likely to be so in 2021 as well!





The cause of some angry clucking became clear as a Red Grouse chick scurried across the path in front of us. I was able to take a few pictures of the worried parents – the only time I've seen this species at close quarters, rather than flying away! Rather beautiful; I will never understand the mindset of those who shoot them.



Not wishing to cause further aggravation, and with an afternoon of meetings sadly beckoning, we beat a retreat!

Re: CallumMac

by millerd, 23-May-20 09:22 PM GMT

Great shots of those Dukes (and especially the Duchesses), Callum. 😊 And the Green Hairstreak pair too 🦋 – not something I've ever seen and probably on my wishlist, should I ever get round to properly compiling one! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 23-May-20 10:32 PM GMT

Cracking shots Callum – lovely set of Dukes but I reserve the 🦋 for the Greenstreak pairing 😊 I'd love one of those 🦋 Also one for the Red Grouse – there is a massive gap on my Bird Life List where this family sit 🦋🦋

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: CallumMac

by essexbuzzard, 23-May-20 10:42 PM GMT

Nice work with the Duke of Burgundies, Calum.

A spring treat for sure, and I'm glad your colony is doing well up there.

Re: CallumMac

by David M, 25-May-20 09:21 PM GMT

Great to see the N. Yorks Dukes, Callum, not to mention the mating Green Hairstreaks (only ever seen that twice!)

You sure get a good range of wildlife up there.

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 26-May-20 10:08 AM GMT

Thanks all. The GH pairing was very lucky, I was fully focussed on the Red Grouse when my partner spotted them and called me over!

David M wrote:

You sure get a good range of wildlife up there.

I think what I've come to realise over the course of the lockdown restrictions is that while we get a good proportion of the southern fauna and flora (and a few specialities of our own!), we often have to work a little harder for them. So whilst some UKBers have been posting Dukes and all sorts during the most severe lockdown, we have had to wait for a little more freedom, in order to travel short to medium distances to find things.

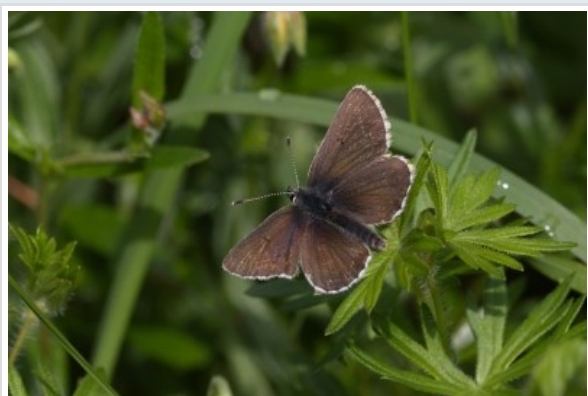
Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 15-Jun-20 07:52 PM GMT

Through one thing and another (mainly inclement weather!), butterflying outings have been relatively thin on the ground lately. However, a few good ones to report on from the last week or so!

11/06/2020 – Smardale Gill

On Thursday we took the day off work and drove over the A66 to meet my parents for a socially-distanced walk. At this time of year the reserve is mainly attractive for its many orchid species, which was just as well, since most of the day was cloudy with a brisk wind! Nonetheless, the sun came out for an hour or so in the late morning, and we were delighted to see several Northern Brown Arguses (some still pretty freshly emerged).





13/06/2020 - Crowle/Thorne Moors

On Saturday, with hot sun and light winds forecast, we made our first trip in weeks where the explicit target was a butterfly! Heading to the Humberhead Peatlands, we walked out into the reserve to the ride where, last year, I found large numbers of Large Heaths. And... hmmm! Several Large Skippers zipped about, a Speckled Wood patrolled up and down, and a Red Admiral sunned itself on a fence; but no sign at all of the main objective!

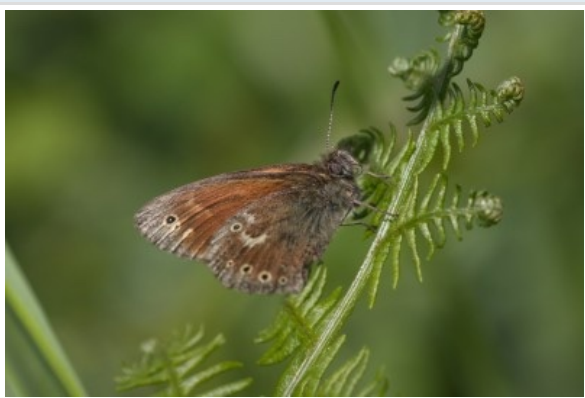




Walking on, we found absolutely masses of Peacock caterpillars (just consulted my copy of *Life Cycles* to confirm 😊), and a rather battered female Common Blue in the meadow outside the NNR base. But still no Large Heaths, even where the habitat looked excellent...



Having looped back around to the main ride from last year, we noticed a couple taking photos of *something* on the parallel ride – mere metres away on the other side of a ditch. Crossing the bridge to investigate, we discovered that this adjacent ride was absolutely awash with Large Heaths! Goodness knows why none of them had flown the five or so metres to the ride where I saw them last year... 😊 Anyway, several of them posed very nicely for us.





14/06/2020 - Kiplingcotes

On Sunday afternoon, with the weather still hot and windless, we decided upon Kiplingcotes (my favourite reserve) as our destination, with the possibility of Marbled Whites as a major draw (they are just getting going up here). As it turned out, the reserve is still a couple of weeks off its best – only a couple of fleeting sightings of MW (which can number in the hundreds here) and the majority of the Pyramidal Orchids were still in bud. We will return!





Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-20 08:27 PM GMT

Those NBAs are very attractive Callum even with their muted livery 😊🇮🇪 A species I've yet to catch up with and the same goes for the Large Heaths 🇮🇪
🇮🇪 Maybe next year 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: CallumMac

by David M, 16-Jun-20 09:21 PM GMT

Nice to see some of the 'northern' specialities on here, Callum. Smardale Gill is a site I have only visited once but one that I was very impressed with.

Maybe a Scotch Argus trip would be in order in a few weeks? 😊

Re: CallumMac

by Goldie M, 17-Jun-20 04:09 PM GMT

Hi! Callum, good to see the Northern BA and the Large Heath, Just wish I could get up to the Lakes, maybe next year! Goldie 😊

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 19-Jun-20 10:32 AM GMT

`[quote=Wurzel post_id=154982 time=1592335633 user_id=9821]` Those NBAs are very attractive Callum even with their muted livery 😊🇮🇪 A species I've yet to catch up with and the same goes for the Large Heaths 🇮🇪🇮🇪 Maybe next year 😊

They're lovely aren't they – despite the similarity, they always seem to me to be a deeper, more chocolatey brown. And anything that reminds me of chocolate gets a thumbs-up! Well, if you do make it up here next year to see some northern specialities I'd be happy to be your guide... 😊

David M wrote:

Smardale Gill is a site I have only visited once but one that I was very impressed with.

Smardale is lovely, as is the other end of the line (Waitby Greenrigg). Provided you're reasonably mobile it's quite possible to do both on the same day from the new Smardale car-park, which is quite centrally placed. A Scotch Argus trip is very much on the cards, especially as it should coincide with the flowering season of a few more orchids (Marsh Fragrant, Marsh Helleborine...)!

Goldie M wrote:

Hi! Callum, good to see the Northern BA and the Large Heath, Just wish I could get up to the Lakes, maybe next year! Goldie 😊

Glad to bring them to your screen, Goldie. It's a strange year not being able to travel more than a day-trip's distance from home, isn't it! I've been saying "maybe next year" about quite a lot of things.

Re: CallumMac

by CallumMac, 22-Jun-20 09:15 AM GMT

20/06/2020 - North York Moors

On Saturday, we set off for the Moors early, with a series of site visits planned that should have brought new orchids, odonates and butterflies for the year. In the end it didn't pan out that way. I know there are others on the forum whose interests are broader than solely butterflies - perhaps they can comment on the following:

We are experiencing (at least in Yorkshire) an extremely early year for butterflies, with many species on the wing two or three weeks ahead of schedule (presumably driven by the very sunny May); but an average or even late year for many other groups (including wildflowers and dragonflies; presumably delayed by the very dry May).

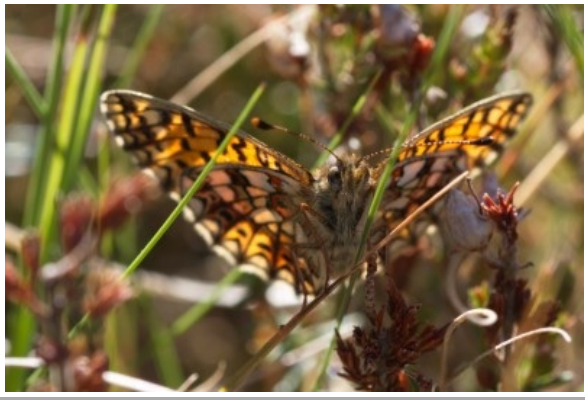
Our first site was **Tranmire Bog**, usually good for two upland dragonfly species (Keeled Skimmer and Golden-ringed Dragonfly) and Large Heath. Today, though, it was being swept by a surprisingly cold southerly, and we saw nothing at all! So we quickly moved on to **Fen Bog** - another site for all three species, plus fritillaries galore and Heath Spotted Orchids.

Our first out-and-back, through the valley floor, revealed the lateness of the season for non-butterflies - I couldn't even locate rosettes where the Heath Spotted Orchids are, having previously found them in full flower just 10 days later. No dragonflies were present either. On the butterfly front, a single Common Blue saved us from a complete bust!



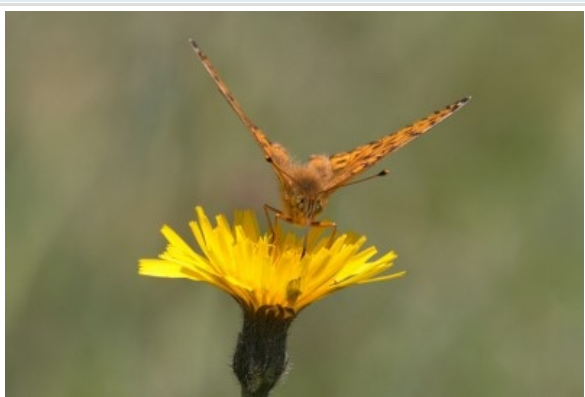
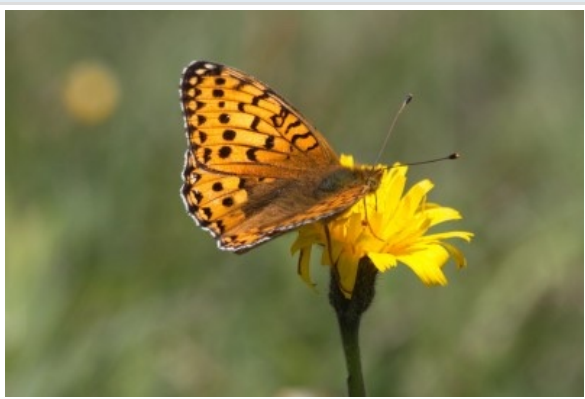
We returned up to follow the path along the side of the valley, with a few Small Heaths skipping around but nothing that credibly resembled a Large Heath. One of the "Small Heaths" suddenly appeared much brighter than the others, and following it, it morphed into our first Small Pearl of the year! I am taken aback every single year by how diddy this species can be. We spent a good 10 minutes taking photos, but it didn't really want to pose and eventually flew off downslope.





The rest of our walk around the bog revealed nothing else – a single immature Keeled Skimmer zipped away from the path. As we returned to the car, some hypercharged fritillaries were dashing about in the usual area – clearly Dark Greens based on size, but no chance of a photo!

We drove on, aiming for a lunch-break at **Ellerburn Bank**. Here, again, we were surprised – a site that is usually cloaked in orchids by this time of summer showed barely a few Common Spotted, with no sign at all of Northern Marsh. A snippet of overheard conversation revealed that the nearby population of Pugsley's Marsh Orchid were also not in flower yet – well, that saved us a fruitless trip since it was going to be our next stop! We sat and had lunch, and as we were finishing, spotted a Dark Green Fritillary behaving much more amenably, darting between flowers and regularly stopping to drink. It proved to be very skittish but I managed some photos with my telephoto lens.





Walking back to the car again, we found another couple of Dark Greens, this time nectaring on a patch of Marsh Thistles.



With the Pugsley's site ruled out, our final planned stop was at **Forge Valley Woods**, where I had just learned it was possible to find Beautiful Demoiselles (a species I had previously believed to be a southern speciality!). A short walk upstream along the valley bottom was very pleasant, and eventually yielded sightings of several females of this lovely damselfly and a single male. Unfortunately they insisted upon perching on the opposite bank, so close-ups were impossible!





We'll have to return in a couple of weeks to find the missing dragonflies and orchids. A very strange year!

Re: CallumMac

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-20 07:45 PM GMT

Lovely set of shot Callum 😊 Interesting to see the Small Pearls still in good nick at this stage 😊 – they were out at Bentley about 6 weeks ago 😊

Have a goodun and stay safe

Wurzel

Re: CallumMac

by David M, 23-Jun-20 08:45 PM GMT

`{quote=CallumMac post_id=155206 time=1592813713 user_id=15783}`...We are experiencing (at least in Yorkshire) an extremely early year for butterflies, with many species on the wing two or three weeks ahead of schedule (presumably driven by the very sunny May); but an average or even late year for many other groups (including wildflowers and dragonflies; presumably delayed by the very dry May)....

Yes. That is definitely what I am seeing too, Callum. In the early days of the warm spring, the plants kept pace with the butterflies (e.g. cuckoo flower), however they then started gasping for water and this has retarded them in my opinion.

The Marsh Fritillaries near me have long gone, but the ragged robin is still in flower; usually both emerge and die back at roughly the same time.

With every passing year, what was once considered 'strange' appears to be becoming more 'normal'.

I wonder what next year will have in store for us? 😊

Re: CallumMac

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jun-20 07:14 PM GMT

`{quote=CallumMac post_id=155206 time=1592813713 user_id=15783}` **20/06/2020 – North York Moors**

We are experiencing (at least in Yorkshire) an extremely early year for butterflies, with many species on the wing two or three weeks ahead of schedule (presumably driven by the very sunny May); but an average or even late year for many other groups (including wildflowers and dragonflies; presumably delayed by the very dry May).

Similar here in the midlands Callum. I think the thing with some of the plants is that some of them are possibly influenced as much by the lengthening daylight hours as by temperature. Timings have certainly seemed to be all over the place with some of the groups this year.

Cheers,

Neil.